Is there an aoristic drift of the Albanian perfect?

The Albanian tense system has an aorist and a periphrastic perfect with the auxiliary *kam*, “have”. It may be said that the Albanian perfect not only encodes resultative meanings but may also report past events and thus play the same role as the aorist. The question raised by this observation, illustrated by examples (1) and (2) below, makes one wonder whether the Albanian perfect is on the way to an “aoristic drift” (Fryd, 1998).

Historically the Albanian perfect has had a mirative drift (see Lazard, 1999), which has emancipated itself from the perfect and is now grammaticized into a verb inflection with the auxiliary suffixed to the short form of the participle. Nonetheless recent examples show that some occurrences of the perfect do take a mirative meaning in certain contexts.

The perfect has also a metalinguistic use as shown in (3) below.

Conversely, in other contexts and with certain restrictions, the aorist has retained a resultative meaning usually typically associated with the perfect as in (4) below.

The purpose of our paper is to verify to what extent the Albanian perfect has had an aoristic drift and explore the variety of meanings it has been led to convey historically and synchronically and examine its relationship with the aorist, which is far more complex than the extension of Benveniste’s (1966) analysis of French to the case of Albanian would indicate.

Examples

(1) Në krye të nëntë ditëve kemi marrë udhën e kthimit.
    After nine days we have taken the way back.
    (Dh. Shuteriqi, *Vërshimet e vjeshtës*, Tiranë, 1984, 150)

(2) – Më ke thënë dikur si me të qeshur, se sikur t’i mbaje shënim
    Me_Dat have_2Sg said once as if to laugh, that if hold_SubjPres2Sg note of
    gjithë veprimet e shokut Zylo, delte një tregim i mbaruar.
    all action_Pl comrade_GenSg Zylo, come out_Cond3Sg tale_Nom complete.
    – You have told me once, as if you were joking, that if you kept notes of all the action of Comrade
    Zylo, a complete tale would result.

(3) Dhe kur Islami të sigurojë disa aleatë të tillë, si unazë mbrojtëse rreth e rrotull tij,
    And when Islam secure_SubjPres3Sg a few ally_Pl such_Pl, like ring_FemNom protective_Fem around it[self]
    atëherë mund të thuhet se ai e ka fituar dananë me krishtërimin.
    then may that say_PresPass3Sg that it_Nom it_Acc have_3Sg won case_Acc with Christendom_Acc.
    And if Islam secures a few such allies, like a protective ring around itself, then it may be said that it
    has won its battle against Christendom.

(4) E zbërtheva problemin – ja rezultati
    lt_Acc solve_Ao1sg problem_NMSgAccDet – here result_NMSgNomDet
    “I solved the problem – here is the result.”

References

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