Albanian

Various means of writing Albanian were used into the twentieth century, adapting Latin, Greek, Cyrillic, or Arabic script, depending on the models immediately at hand to the user. The Congress of Monastir (Bitola) in 1908 was a landmark in the adoption of the currently used Latin script. Albanian dialects differ markedly from one another, with a major division between Tosk (southern) and Geg (northern, also spelt Gheg); the dividing line is roughly the Shkumbin River. A standard written language, based primarily on central Tosk, has been developed since World War II; it is accepted as such in Albania and (since 1968) in Kosovo, an administrative division of Serbia with an ethnic and linguistic Albanian majority. In the early twentieth century, various dialects were used in writing; however, a variety based on the southern Geg dialect of Elbasan was proposed as a standard, and was used as such by some people in the 1920s and 1930s. Written Geg is most readily recognizable in the use of the circumflex diacritic for nasalized vowels, which are phonemic in Geg but absent from Tosk.

TABLE 59.19: *Albanian Alphabet*

Letter[a]		Phonetic Value	Name
A	a	[a]	[a]
B	b	[b]	[bə]
C	c	[t͡s]	[t͡sə]
Ç	ç	[t͡ʃ]	[t͡ʃə]
D	d	[d]	[də]
Dh	dh	[ð]	[ðə]
E	e	[ɛ]	[ɛ]
Ë	ë	[ə]	[ə]
F	f	[f]	[fə]
G	g	[g]	[gə]
Gj	gj	[ɟ]	[ɟə]
H	h	[h]	[hə]
I	i	[i, j][b]	[i]
J	j	[j]	[jə]
K	k	[k]	[kə]
L	l	[l]	[lə]
Ll	ll	[ɫ] ("dark" *l*)	[ɫə]
M	m	[m]	[mə]
N	n	[n]	[nə]
Nj	nj	[ɲ]	[ɲə]
O	o	[ɔ]	[ɔ]
P	p	[p]	[pə]
Q	q	[c]	[cə]
R	r	[ɾ]	[ɾə]
Rr	rr	[r]	[rə]
S	s	[s]	[sə]
Sh	sh	[ʃ]	[ʃə]
T	t	[t]	[tə]
Th	th	[θ]	[θə]
U	u	[u]	[u]
V	v	[v]	[və]
X	x	[d͡z]	[d͡zə]
Xh	xh	[d͡ʒ]	[d͡ʒə]
Y	y	[y]	[y]
Z	z	[z]	[zə]
Zh	zh	[ʒ]	[ʒə]

a.   The diphthongs [iɛ], [ua], [yɛ] are written as vowel sequences: *ie, ua, ye*. The nasalized vowels of Geg, when written, take a circumflex diacritic, but are not considered distinct letters of the alphabet.

b.   *i* is normally syllabic, *j* nonsyllabic; but in some instances nonsyllabic [j] is written *i*, e.g. to preserve morphological parallelism and to distinguish [nj] *ni* from [ɲ] *nj*, [gj] *gi* from [ɟ] *gj*.

Spoken Albanian, including even the reading of a text written in standard written Albanian, is more likely than not to reveal phonetic features that deviate from a literal interpretation of the written standard; thus to say that the current orthography is generally phonemic is in a sense true, but fails to note that it is a phonemic representation of a highly idealized pronunciation—one might even argue that this idealized pronunciation is a reflection of the orthography, rather than vice versa. Thus many speakers omit word-final unstressed *ë* [ə] after a single consonant (and Geg speakers will typically lengthen the preceding vowel, thus giving rise to phonemic vowel length, not normally marked orthographically even when Geg is written). The pronunciation of stressed *ë* will normally follow that of the speaker's native dialect, ranging from [ɔ] for Geg speakers to [æ] for southeast Tosk speakers. Word-final voiced obstruents are likely to be devoiced by Tosk speakers, but not by Geg speakers. In this case the orthography is actually closer to Geg, since for Tosk speakers it is either morphophonemic (where there is morphological alternation between word-final voiceless and word-medial voiced obstruents) or historical (where there is no such alternation). Stress is partly, but not fully, predictable, given morphological information; it tends to fall on the last syllable of the stem of the word. In particular, stress is not in general subject to change when inflectional suffixes are added.

The date of the Monastir alphabet means that its originators had a wide range of models to choose from. Most of the non-digraph letters of the alphabet have standard values found in other languages of eastern Europe, while *ç* [t͡ʃ] and *q* [c] continue an older Albanian tradition. The use of *j* in digraphs to mark palatals is a logical choice, adopted in part also by Serbo-Croatian (Latin script), while the uses to which *h* is put in digraphs closely follow the English model. Letter names of vowels are simply the sounds of the vowels; those of consonants are the sounds of the consonants followed by shwa, a system also found in some other languages of the Balkans (Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbo-Croatian [Cyrillic script]).

SAMPLE OF ALBANIAN

1. Albanian:	Perëndia,	i	paçim	uratën,	si	bëri
2. Transcription:	pɛrən'dia	i	'pat͡ʃim	u'ratən	si	'bəri
3. Gloss:	God	to.him	may.we.have	the.blessing	as	he.made

1. në	pesë	ditë	tokën,	diellin	dhe	yjet,	dritën,
2. nə	'pesə	'ditə	'tɔkən	'dieɫin	ðɛ	'yjɛt	'dritən
3. in	five	days	the.earth	the.sun	and	the.stars	the.light

1. ditën	e	natën,	bimët,	malet,	kafshët	e
2. 'ditən	ɛ	'natən	'bimət	'malɛt	'kafʃət	ɛ
3. the.day	and	the.night	the.plants	the.mountains	the.animals	and

1.	gjithë	ç'na		sheh	e	nuk	na	sheh	syri,	të
2.	'ɟiθə	t͡ʃna		'ʃɛh	ɛ	'nuk	na	'ʃɛh	'syɾi	tə
3.	all	what.for.us		it.sees	and	not	for.us	it.sees	the.eye	the

1.	gyashtën,	si	pa	që	këto të	mira[a]		do të shkonin[b]	
2.	'ɟaʃtən	si	pa	cə	kə'to tə	'mira		dɔ tə 'ʃkɔnin	
3.	the.sixth	as	he.saw	that	these	good.things		they.would.go	

1.	kot,	ra	në	mendime	të	thella[a]	e	më	në	fund
2.	'kɔt	'ra	nə	men'dime	tə	'θɛɬa	ɛ	mə	nə	'fund
3.	in.vain	he.fell	in	thoughts		deep	and	more	in	end

1.	i	dha	udhë	të	krijonte		robin.
2.	i	'ða	'uðə	tə	kɾi'jɔntɛ		'rɔbin
3.	to.him	it.gave	path	that	he.might.create		the.person

'God, may we have his blessing, as in five days he made the earth, the sun and the stars, the light, the day and the night, the plants, the mountains, the animals, and all that our eye sees and does not see for us, and as, on the sixth, when he saw that these good things would go for naught, he fell into deep thought and finally it occurred to him that he might create Man.'

— *Jakov Xoxa, "Lumi e vdekur" [Blessed and dead], in Camaj 1984: 299.*

Notes:

[a]In *të mira* and *të thella*, the particle *të* is required before the adjective.

[b]In *do të shkonin*, the sequence *do të* 'wish that' plus the imperfect of the main verb expresses the conditional (future in the past).

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