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The Optative Mood as a Distinctive Feature of the Albanian Language: A Morphological and Typological Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The Albanian language, a distinct branch of the Indo-European family, is renowned for its unique verbal system, particularly the optative mood (Alb. *Mënyra dëshirore*), a morphologically marked category with significant syntactic and semantic roles. This study provides a rigorous analysis of the optative's morphosyntactic structure, functional properties, and typological implications, drawing on foundational scholarship, including Arbër Çeliku's comparative studies of Albanian-German and Albanian-English verbal systems and Mehmet Çeliku's morphological analyses. Employing a combination of descriptive, comparative, and formal linguistic methodologies, we investigate the optative's inflectional paradigms, its syntactic behaviour in clausal structures, and its pragmatic functions in expressing wishes, blessings, and curses. The optative's morphological markers are examined within Albanian's verbal system, highlighting their interaction with tense, aspect, and agreement features. Syntactically, the optative operates as a mood-specific functional category, licensing irrealis interpretations in embedded and matrix clauses. Semantically, it encodes speaker-oriented modality, reflecting cultural and pragmatic dimensions of Albanian discourse. Typologically, the optative's retention aligns Albanian with a select group of languages, such as Ancient Greek and Sanskrit, that preserve inflectional optative, offering insights into diachronic processes of mood evolution in Indo-European. This study underscores the optative's contribution to Albanian's linguistic identity and its relevance for cross-linguistic research on mood and modality. By integrating formal and typological perspectives, it advances our understanding of Albanian's verbal system and its place within Indo-European linguistics, appealing to theoretical, historical, and comparative linguists.

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1. Introduction

Albanian, spoken by approximately seven million people in the Balkans and diaspora communities, is the sole modern representative of its Indo-European branch, exhibiting no close affinity to other languages in the family^[1]. Its verbal system is notably complex, encompassing moods such as the indicative, subjunctive, conditional, admirative, imperative, jussive, and optative^[2].

The optative mood, known in Albanian as *mënyra dëshirore* ('wishing mood'), is a hallmark of the language's verbal system, distinguished by its synthetic inflectional forms and specialized functions in expressing wishes, blessings, congratulations, or curses. Unlike the subjunctive, which often relies on periphrastic constructions, the optative's morphological autonomy makes it a rare and archaic feature among Indo-European (IE) languages, preserved robustly in Albanian alongside languages like Sanskrit and Ancient Greek^[3].

In the face of accelerating global language loss—where over 40% of languages are endangered^[4]—the Albanian optative's survival offers a critical lens for examining how minority languages maintain historical features while adapting to modern communicative needs. This study is urgently relevant to current linguistic theories, including debates on mood categorization^[5], the typological evolution of verbal systems^[6], and the role of morphosyntactic structures in encoding cultural identity in lesser-spoken languages^[7].

The Albanian optative's expressive range, from blessings (*qofsh i lumtur* 'may you be happy') to curses (*t'u thaftë dora* 'may your hand wither'), embeds sociocultural values and performative functions, making it a vital link between linguistic form and cultural practice^[8]. Robert Elsie's study not only illuminates Albanian's retention of Proto-Indo-European (PIE) verbal morphology but also contributes to pressing theoretical discussions about how languages encode modality and maintain vitality in the face of globalization.

This article investigates the optative's morphological structure, syntactic behavior, and cultural significance, situating it within Albanian's verbal system and broader Indo-

European typology. Drawing on seminal works by Albanian linguists, such as Mehmet Çeliku's morphological analyses^[9] and Arbër Çeliku's comparative studies^[10], the analysis bridges descriptive and theoretical linguistics, addressing three research questions:

- What are the morphological and syntactic characteristics of the Albanian optative?
- How does the optative contribute to Albanian's cultural and linguistic identity?
- What is the optative's typological significance within Indo-European and global linguistic frameworks?

By addressing these questions, this article provides a comprehensive analysis of the Albanian optative, contributing to urgent debates in IE linguistics, mood theory, and the preservation of linguistic diversity. The findings underscore Albanian's role as a living archive of Indo-European verbal systems, offering new insights into how morphosyntactic features encode cognitive and cultural categories in endangered linguistic contexts.

2. Theoretical Backgrounds

2.1. Proto Indo-European Origin of the Optative Mood

The optative mood in Proto Indo-European Languages (PIE) is reconstructed as a distinct verbal category, marked by specific morphological endings and ablaut patterns. It is generally agreed that the optative expresses wishes or potentiality, often with a sense of non-factuality or subjectivity. According to Fortson^[3], the optative was formed with a suffix *-yéhi-*/*-ih₁-* in the singular and *-ih₁-* in the plural, combined with thematic or athematic verb stems. The optative typically appeared in the present, aorist, and perfect stems, though its use in the perfect was less common. The PIE optative is reconstructed with endings that resemble the subjunctive in some respects, leading to debates about their relationship. Clackson^[11], notes that the optative and subjunctive may have originally been variants of a single irrealis mood, with the optative specializing in desiderative

or hypothetical functions. The following is an example of a reconstructed PIE optative form: *b^her-o-ih₁-m* (“I might carry”) or “May I carry” from the root *b^her-*, “to carry”).

The optative mood in PIE and its daughter languages is characterized by specific morphological markers that vary depending on the verb class (thematic or athematic) and the language branch. Below are some key features:

- **Thematic Verbs:** In thematic verbs, the optative is typically marked by the suffix *-oih₁-* (or *-oyh₁-*) followed by secondary endings. For example, in PIE, *h₁es-oih₁-m* (“I might be”) is derived from the root *h₁es-*, “to be”^[12].
- **Athematic Verbs:** In athematic verbs, the optative often uses the suffix *-yéh₁-/-ih₁-*, with ablaut in the root. For instance, the PIE root *g^wem-*, “to come,” forms *g^wm-yéh₁-m* (“I might come”) ^[12].
- **Ablaut Patterns:** The optative frequently shows full-grade or zero-grade ablaut in the root or suffix, depending on the tense. For example, in Sanskrit, the optative of **as-*, “to be,” is *syām* (zero-grade root *s-*)^[13].

2.2. Verb Moods in the Albanian Language

The Verb mood is a very important means in the Albanian and other languages, which can be used above all to express modality, thereby linking the linguistic sign to meanings of action.

Albanian distinguishes a total of six verb moods, each serving a different communicative purpose:

- *dëftorja* (Engl. Indicative)
- *lidhorja* (Engl. Subjunctive)
- *urdhërorja* (Engl. Imperative)
- *kushtorja* (Engl. Conditional)
- *habitorja* (Engl. Admirative)
- *dëshirorja* (Engl. Optative)

According to *Grammar I* by the Albanian Academy of Sciences these verb moods in Albanian can be classified into three groups:

The first group includes *dëftorja* (indicative) and *habitorja* (admirative), which primarily express the modality of reality, although with the admirative the text producer can also express curiosity, admiration, or astonishment.

The second group includes *lidhorja* (subjunctive) and *kushtorja* (conditional), which primarily express the modality of probability.

The third group includes *dëshirorja* (optative) and *urdhërorja* (imperative), which primarily express the modality of desire—the first one in the form of congratulations and curses, and the second one in the form of commands or requests^[2].

The use of the indicative, subjunctive, conditional, and imperative is similar to that in other Indo-European languages, except that the imperative is rarely found in written Albanian texts. In Albanian, *habitorja* (admirative) and *dëshirorja* (optative) are considered special cases^[10].

The admirative (*habitorja*) is primarily used to express curiosity, admiration, or astonishment, but this mood also frequently appears in indirect speech, primarily as a reformulation of another person’s statement (Albanian: *Ti the se ai paska ardhur dje nga SHBA-të*; English: You said that he apparently came yesterday from the US). Additionally, the admirative serves as a stylistic marker in Albanian fairy tales^[14].

Nevertheless, certain western Albanologists, in their scholarly contributions, enumerate additional verbal mood categories in Albanian, often drawing on their native language’s grammatical framework or analogizing with ancient Indo-European languages such as Sanskrit or Latin. However, these analyses frequently overlook the morphological mechanisms inherent to Albanian, which express such functions through distinct grammatical categories. For instance, Buchholz and Fiedler^[15] propose the inclusion of Jussive and Necessitative moods among Albanian verb paradigms, yet they fail to recognize the Admirative as a distinct mood, conflating it with the Indicative. Conversely, Newmark et al.^[16] classify the Admirative as a discrete verbal mood alongside the Indicative, Subjunctive, Optative, and Imperative, while also positing additional inflectional forms—namely, a Subjunctive-Admirative, Conditional, and Jussive—which, due to their semantic import, could be construed as moods. Consequently, Newmark posits a system of eight verbal moods in Albanian. Similarly, Breu^[17] identifies eight moods, incorporating complex verbal constructions that are periphrastic structures involving modal verbs (e.g., *mund të punojë* “he/she can work,” *duhet të punojë* “he/she must work,” *le të punojë* “let him/her work”). Thus, these forms are arguably better analysed as modal or aspectual uses of the verb rather than distinct morphological moods.

We, however, endorse the normative classification of

six verbal moods in Albanian and will henceforth focus on the Optative, a hallmark of Albanian's verbal system, due to its historical and cultural significance as evidenced in its rich corpus of usage in the public discourse.

2.3. The Optative Mood in the Albanian Language

The optative mood has been a focal point in Indo-European linguistics due to its historical prevalence and subsequent decline in many languages. In Ancient Greek and Sanskrit, the optative served diverse functions, including expressing potentiality, wishes, and conditional clauses. However, in most modern Indo-European languages, such as English or French, optative meanings are conveyed periphrastically (e.g., "May you prosper!"), reflecting a shift toward analytic structures^[18].

Albanian's retention of a morphological optative is exceptional. Mehmet Çeliku's works, *Problems of Morphology of Today's Albanian Language* (1997) and *Uncomplicated Forms of the Verb in Today's Albanian Language* (2000), provide detailed analyses of Albanian verb morphology, emphasizing the optative's distinct inflectional paradigms^[1]. Mehmet Çeliku argues that the optative's synthetic nature reflects Albanian's preservation of archaic Indo-European features, a view supported by Orel^[1], who links Albanian's verbal system to Proto-Indo-European mood distinctions.

Arbër Çeliku's contributions, while less focused on morphology, offer comparative insights into Albanian's semantic and pragmatic structures. His work about Realisation of text coherence between German and Albanian language^[10], explores textual realization, suggesting parallels with the optative's role in precise communication.

Typologically, the optative is rare, with only 48 languages worldwide, including Albanian, possessing an inflectional optative. This rarity aligns Albanian with non-Indo-European languages like Georgian and Navajo, highlighting its typological significance (Languages Gulper, n.d.). Dialectal studies by Desnickaja^[19] and Morozova et al.^[20] confirm the optative's presence across Albanian dialects, underscoring its stability. Unlike the subjunctive, which relies on periphrastic constructions, the optative in Albanian is morphologically autonomous, making it a rare feature among Indo-European languages.

3. Methodology

This study employs a mixed approach, combining descriptive and comparative methods. Descriptive analysis examines the optative's morphological and syntactic features, drawing on standard Albanian grammars, primarily the Grammar of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Albania^[2] and Mehmet Çeliku's morphological studies. Comparative analysis situates the optative within Indo-European and global linguistic typologies, using data from the World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS) and historical linguistics sources^[1,18].

Primary data include examples from standard Albanian, dialectal sources, supplemented by secondary sources from linguistic scholarship, especially from contrastive work Albanian-German and Albanian English from Arbër Çeliku. The analysis focuses on verb conjugations, syntactic constructions, and pragmatic functions, with qualitative interpretations of cultural significance.

Primary data comprise examples from Standard Albanian and dialectal sources, supplemented by secondary sources from linguistic scholarship, notably Arbër Çeliku's cultural analyses of the Optative Mood Albanian-German and Albanian English^[10]. The analysis examines verb paradigms, syntactic structures, and pragmatic functions, with qualitative interpretations of their cultural significance.

A key example from Jakov Xoxa's *The Dead River* (1964) illustrates the optative's expressive power in literary contexts, showcasing its role in conveying irrealis modality and cultural nuance. This multifaceted approach not only elucidates the optative's linguistic structure but also underscores its significance in Albanian identity and its contribution to cross-linguistic research on mood and modality.

As a specific example serves a fragment from the Albanian novel.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1. Morphological structure

The Albanian optative mood is distinguished by its robust inflectional morphology, which sets it apart from other verbal moods such as the subjunctive and indicative. This study delves into the optative's deep morphosyntactic structures, semantic nuances, and typological significance, situat-

ing it within the broader context of Indo-European verbal systems. The optative's synthetic nature, marked by dedicated inflectional endings, underscores its morphological autonomy and historical retention as a rare feature among modern Indo-European languages. The optative operates in two primary temporal domains: the present optative and the present perfect optative^[10]. The present optative is formed through mood-specific suffixes affixed to the verb stem, which encode person, number, and verb class distinctions. For instance, the verb *bëj* ("to do") yields *bëftë* in the third person singular ("may he/she do"), where the suffix—*ftë* functions as a distinctive optative marker. The present optative is formed by adding suffixes to the verb stem, as in *bëj* ("to do") becoming *bëftë* (third person singular, "may he/she do"). The present perfect optative uses the auxiliary *të ketë* plus the past participle of the verb, e.g., *të ketë bërë* ("may he/she have done"). The Albanian optative mood's irregular auxiliary verb forms, such as *paçi/pa* (from *kam*, "to have") and *qofsh/qofshi* (from *jam*, "to be"), are distinctive features of its morphology, reflecting its retention of archaic Indo-European structures. These irregularities distinguish the optative from other moods like the indicative or subjunctive and highlight Albanian's typological uniqueness^[2].

The optative's synthetic nature contrasts with the subjunctive's reliance on the particle *të* and auxiliary verbs, highlighting its morphological autonomy^[2]. This construction integrates tense, aspect, and mood, enabling the expression of complex irrealis semantics, such as hypothetical or desiderative states. Syntactically, the optative projects a mood-specific functional category within the clausal architecture, licensing irrealis interpretations in both matrix and embedded clauses. Unlike the subjunctive, which typically requires the particle *të* and is often restricted to complement clauses governed by specific predicates, the optative exhibits greater syntactic independence, frequently appearing in main clauses to convey culturally significant speech acts, such as wishes, blessings, or curses. This autonomy is rooted in its synthetic morphology, which contrasts with the subjunctive's reliance on periphrastic constructions, highlighting a key divergence in Albanian's verbal system. Semantically, the optative encodes speaker-oriented modality, expressing intentionality and cultural-pragmatic functions deeply embedded in Albanian discourse. Its retention aligns Albanian with a select group of languages, including Ancient Greek

and Sanskrit, that preserve inflectional optative, offering a window into diachronic processes of mood evolution within Indo-European.

This analysis not only underscores the optative's role in Albanian's linguistic identity but also contributes to theoretical and comparative linguistics by modelling its morphosyntactic and semantic properties. Future research could explore the optative's diachronic trajectories, its interaction with other verbal categories, and its pragmatic roles in discourse, further illuminating its significance in cross-linguistic studies of mood systems.

4.2. Syntactical Behaviour

Syntactically, the optative typically appears in independent clauses, expressing wishes, blessings, congratulations or curses, often without an explicit subject, as in *U bëfsh 100 vjeç!* ("May you live 100 years!") or *Të marrtë djalli!* ("May the devil take you!"). Unlike the subjunctive, which functions in dependent clauses (e.g., *Dua të bëj* "I want to do"), the optative is restricted to main clauses, emphasizing its pragmatic role^[21].

This subject-omission pattern enhances pragmatic efficiency, allowing concise, performative speech acts integral to Albanian's cultural discourse. Unlike the subjunctive, which is restricted to dependent clauses (e.g., *Dua të bëj*—"I want to do") governed by matrix predicates, the optative's autonomy in main clauses underscores its role in direct, speaker-driven expressions.

Though less common, the optative can appear in embedded clauses, such as reported wishes (*Uroj që të bëhet mire*—"I hope that it may be well"), where it interacts with agreement and tense features to maintain syntactic coherence. This flexibility highlights its adaptability within the clausal hierarchy.

The optative's syntactic behaviour, bridging matrix and embedded contexts, underscores its significance in Albanian's linguistic identity and theoretical linguistics.

4.3. Cultural and Pragmatic Functions

The optative's primary function is to convey wishes, ranging from benevolent to malevolent. It's used in blessings and congratulations as *Rrofsh sa mallet!* (Into English 1:1 translated "May you live as long as the mountains" and in

curses, such as *Vafsh në ferr!* (“Go to hell”), reflects Albanian’s expressive flexibility, embedding social attitudes in linguistic structure. This dual functionality aligns with Arbër Çeliku’s observations on Albanian’s semantic precision in comparative contexts^[10].

A stylistic peculiarity in Albanian is the use of the optative (“*mënyra dëshirore*”), whether in oral or written texts. With this mood, one expresses more than just a wish, a congratulation, or a curse: it is a form of codified behaviour that carries cultural significance and adds emotional depth to the statement. The formulas used in this context are numerous in Albanian, and sometimes it is very difficult to translate them into other languages, such as English, German, or French, at least in the same function as they operate in Albanian. This is because they are highly culture-specific and reflect the historical background of the Albanian people. Some examples of blessings and curses illustrate this:

The Albanian congratulation “*U bëfsh 100 vjet!*” translates to “May you become 100 years old” in English. But this translation does not fully capture the cultural function of the phrase in Albanian. It is commonly used as a birthday greeting. Similarly, “*Rrofsh sa malet!*” translates literally to “May you live as long as the mountains”, expressing a wish for longevity and strength.

“*U trashëgofshi!*” translates to “May you have descendants” or “May you be blessed with heirs” in English. This congratulatory phrase is specifically used at weddings, expressing the wish that the newlywed couple may have children and continue their lineage.

“*I mbajtsh me shëndet!*” translates to “May you wear it in good health” in English. This phrase is used in Albanian when someone buys new shoes or clothes, wishing them well-being and longevity while wearing them.

“*Zoti të bekoftë!*” translates to “May God bless you” in English.

“*Zoti qoftë me ju!*” translates to “May peace be with you”, similar to religious blessings in various traditions.

“*Paç fat!, të priftë e mbara!*” translates to “May you have luck, may good things come your way”, often used to wish someone success and prosperity. A colloquial equivalent in English might be “Best of luck” or “Break a leg”, though the Albanian phrase carries a broader sense of well-being.

“**Haram** të qoftë tambl i nënës!” translates to “May

your mother’s milk be forbidden to you” in English. This is a deeply emotional curse in Albanian, often used to express extreme disappointment or condemnation, particularly in the context of the mother-child relationship. The word “**haram**” is borrowed from Islamic religious terminology, meaning something forbidden or impure. In this context, it conveys the idea that the nourishment received from one’s mother is no longer a blessing. A mother might utter this phrase in frustration toward a disobedient or ungrateful child, emphasizing the gravity of their actions.

“*Të vraftë buka!*” translates to “May the bread kill you” in English. This curse is used in Albanian to express strong disapproval or condemnation, implying that someone does not deserve the sustenance they receive. It conveys a sense of moral judgment, often directed at someone perceived as unworthy or deceitful.

“*T’u thaftë goja!*” translates to “May your mouth dry up” in English. This curse is used in Albanian to silence someone forcefully, but it carries a much stronger emotional weight than simply telling someone to be quiet. It expresses deep frustration or condemnation, often implying that the person should stop speaking altogether due to their words being harmful or offensive.

“*T’i marrsha të ligat!*” translates to “May I take away your troubles” or “May I take away your misfortunes” in English. This is a blessing in Albanian, expressing a wish to absorb someone’s hardships or negative experiences, often used as a gesture of deep care and affection.

“*T’u bëfsha kurban*” translates to “May I become your sacrifice” in English. The word **kurban** originates from religious traditions, referring to the ritual sacrifice commemorating the Abraham-Isaac conflict, where animals are offered. However, in Albanian, it is also used metaphorically to express deep devotion and exaggerated love, implying a willingness to sacrifice oneself for someone dear.

“*Të shkoftë mbarë!*” translates to “May it go well for you” in English. This optative blessing is used to wish success in specific endeavors, such as exams or journeys, reflecting optimism and support. For example, it might be said to a student before a test, emphasizing communal encouragement.

“*U shoftë e bardha!*” translates to “May you see the white [day]!” in English. A wedding-specific blessing, this phrase wishes the couple a bright, prosperous future, with

“white” symbolizing purity and joy in Albanian matrimonial traditions.

“Të humbshin sytë!” translates to “May your eyes be lost!” in English. This severe curse wishes disorientation or metaphorical blindness on someone who has caused harm, reflecting the optative’s intensity in expressing moral outrage or betrayal.

“Të zëntë vendi!” translates to “May the ground seize you!” in English. This curse implies that the earth itself should reject the person, often used to condemn betrayal or grave wrongdoing, leveraging the optative’s emotional weight in Albanian culture.

“Të piftë shëndeti!” translates to “May you drink in health!” in English. Used when someone enjoys a drink, particularly during toasts at gatherings, this blessing wishes well-being and joy, tying the optative to communal rituals of hospitality.

“T’u shteroftë trashëgimia!” translates to “May your inheritance run dry!” in English. This curse wishes the loss of legacy or descendants, a severe condemnation in Albanian culture where family lineage is paramount. It’s used to express anger toward someone who has dishonored their family or community.

“T’u ndriçoftë mendja!” translates to “May your mind be enlightened!” in English. This blessing wishes clarity or wisdom, often said to someone making poor choices, encouraging better judgment in Albanian social contexts.

“T’u prishtë fati!” translates to “May your luck be broken!” in English. This curse wishes misfortune or failure, often directed at someone who has acted unjustly, reflecting Albanian values of moral retribution.

“Të lulëzoftë shpirti!” translates to “May your soul flourish!” in English. This blessing wishes inner peace and joy, often used in spiritual or emotional contexts like farewells or reunions, emphasizing the Albanian cultural focus on emotional well-being.

“T’u harroftë emri!” translates to “May your name vanish!” in English. This curse wishes the erasure of someone’s legacy or reputation, a grave insult in Albanian culture, used against those who have caused significant harm or betrayal.

“Të qofshin ditët e bardha!” translates to “May your days be white!” in English. This blessing wishes a life filled with joy and purity, often said during celebrations like weddings, with “white” symbolizing happiness in Albanian

tradition.

“Mortja të marrtë!” translates to “May death take you!” in English. This powerful curse expresses intense anger or condemnation, wishing ultimate retribution to someone who has caused grave harm or betrayal. In Albanian culture, invoking death underscores the severity of the speaker’s disapproval, reserved for extreme situations.

“T’u shtoftë drita!” translates to “May your light increase!” in English. This blessing wishes greater clarity or happiness, often said to someone starting a new chapter, like a marriage or career, reflecting Albanian values of hope and enlightenment.

“Të humbtë gjurma!” translates to “May your trace vanish!” in English. This curse wishes someone’s legacy or presence to be erased, a severe insult in Albanian culture where memory and reputation are cherished, used against those who have deeply offended.

“Të shkoftë ëmbël!” translates to “May all things be sweet for you!” in English. This blessing wishes a life of joy and ease, often used in festive contexts like holidays, with “sweet” symbolizing pleasure in Albanian tradition.

“T’u mpiftë mendja!” translates to “May your mind go numb!” in English. This curse wishes confusion or mental stagnation on someone who has acted foolishly, reflecting the optative’s role in expressing sharp disapproval in Albanian discourse.

“Të begatoftë hëna!” translates to “May the moon bless you!” in English. This blessing wishes serenity and guidance, often said to travelers or those facing uncertainty, drawing on the moon’s cultural symbolism of calm and protection in Albanian tradition.

“U shofshi deri në një!” translates to “May you all die!” in English. This severe curse expresses intense anger or condemnation, wishing death upon a group for grave offenses like betrayal or harm. In Albanian culture, such a curse carries profound emotional weight, reserved for extreme situations of moral outrage.

“T’u ndalshin këmbët!” translates to “May your feet be stopped!” in English. This curse wishes immobility or failure on someone’s endeavors, often used to condemn those who have acted unjustly, reflecting Albanian values of retribution and justice.

“T’u zezoftë fytyra / T’u bëftë katran fytyra!” translates to “May your face be darkened!” in English. This curse

wishes shame or disgrace on someone who has dishonored others, a powerful insult in Albanian culture where public reputation is highly valued.

“Paç gjithmonë bollëk!” translates to “May you always have abundance!” in English. This blessing wishes prosperity and plenty, often used during festive occasions like New Year, reflecting Albanian values of generosity and communal well-being.

This emotionally intense expression is not only found in conventionalized blessings and curses but also appears in literary works. To illustrate this, here is a fragment from the Albanian novel *The Dead River* (*Lumi i vdekur*) by Jakov Xoxa^[22].

Mbeç thatë, o lum i gjerë, pa një pikë ujë, siç ia thave kupën fëmijës për një pikë qumësht!
(May you remain dry, O wide river, without a single drop of water, just as you dried the child's cup for a drop of milk!)

Mërgofsh, largofsh e çafsh tutje, sipër, e mos t'i **pafshim** më sytë këtu o lumë i keq!
(May you migrate, flow away, and disappear far beyond, so that we never see you again here, O wicked river!)

Shporru!... **Ndafsh** Besën nga lëndinat e **bashkofsh** Lumthin me lëndinat, o lum i mal-lkuar!

(Begone!... May you separate the Besa (sacred oath) from the meadows and unite the small river with them, O cursed river!)

(Translation into English: J. A.)

These passages demonstrate how optative forms play a crucial role in shaping Albanian texts. The author emotionally curses the river, portraying it as a silent witness to the tragic fate of the Albanian people. The first sentence highlights the bitter poverty of the population, where even a drop of milk for children was lacking. The second sentence reflects forced migration, mirroring the displacement of families from Kosovo and northern Albania. The third sentence conveys the divisions among the people while calling for unity.

The optative's cultural significance is evident in its persistence across dialects, including Geg, Tosk, Arbëresh, and Arvanitika, suggesting a deep-rooted linguistic heritage^[20].

5. Discussion

The Albanian optative's morphological autonomy and restricted tense inventory distinguish it from other moods, supporting Mehmet Çeliku's argument for its archaic roots^[18]. Unlike the indicative or subjunctive, the optative employs unique inflectional paradigms, often marked by specific suffixes and vowel alternations that are not shared with other verbal forms in Albanian. Its limited tense system, primarily confined to the present and aorist, underscores its distinctiveness, as it resists the temporal complexity seen in other moods. This morphological distinctiveness, as Mehmet Çeliku argues, points to an ancient origin, potentially tracing back to Proto-Indo-European modal systems, which have largely eroded in other modern Indo-European languages. Its syntactic restriction to independent clauses enhances its expressive power, particularly in curses, which carry profound cultural weight in Albanian oral traditions. These curses, often invoking divine or supernatural forces, leverage the optative's formal structure to convey solemnity and intentionality, distinguishing them from colloquial expressions in other moods. The optative's typological rarity positions Albanian as a critical case study for Indo-European linguistics, challenging assumptions about mood loss in modern languages. Unlike many Indo-European languages that have merged or lost distinct mood categories, Albanian's preservation of the optative offers a unique window into the historical evolution of verbal systems. Arbër Çeliku's comparative work^[10] suggests that Albanian's mood distinctions contribute to its syntactic flexibility, allowing nuanced expression of speaker intent across various discourse contexts. This hypothesis warrants further exploration, particularly through cross-linguistic comparisons with other Balkan languages that lack a comparable optative mood.

The optative's stability across dialects, as noted by Desnickaja^[19] and Morozova et al.^[20] indicates its resilience despite centuries of language contact with Slavic, Romance, and Ottoman Turkish influences in the Balkans. This stability is particularly striking in Gheg and Tosk dialects, where the optative's morphological forms remain largely consistent, even as other grammatical categories show regional variation. In contrast, the subjunctive exhibits greater variability in dialectal forms, often influenced by contact-induced simplification or borrowing. This contrast suggests the optative's

core role in Albanian grammar, potentially as a marker of cultural and linguistic identity. Its endurance may reflect its deep entrenchment in the language's morphosyntactic core, resisting external pressures that have reshaped other grammatical features. Future research could investigate the optative's diachronic development, particularly its potential links to Illyrian or Thracian substrates, which remain speculative but tantalizing areas of inquiry given Albanian's debated phylogenetic origins. Additionally, exploring the optative's pragmatic variations in contemporary usage could shed light on its evolving role in modern Albanian discourse. For instance, studies could examine whether younger speakers employ the optative in new contexts, such as digital communication or urban settings, or whether its use remains tied to traditional registers like curses, blessings, or formal speech. Such investigations could further elucidate the optative's adaptability and its continued relevance in a rapidly changing linguistic landscape.

6. Conclusions

The optative mood is a hallmark of Albanian's verbal system, distinguished by its morphological distinctiveness, expressive functions, and typological rarity. Its unique inflectional paradigms, marked by specific suffixes like *-fsh* in forms such as *të bëfsh* ("may you become"), set it apart from the indicative and subjunctive, which rely on more generalized markers. This morphological autonomy, as Mehmet Çeliku argues, suggests an archaic origin, potentially linked to Proto-Indo-European modal systems that have largely vanished in other modern Indo-European languages. The optative's expressive power shines in culturally resonant contexts, particularly in wishes (*Të lumtë!*—Bravo!) and curses (*Mallkuar qofsh!*—"May you be cursed!"), which carry profound social weight in Albanian oral traditions. These forms not only convey speaker intent but also encode cultural values, such as communal blessing or moral condemnation, embedding the optative deeply within Albanian's linguistic identity. Its typological rarity—shared by only a few languages like Sanskrit, Ancient Greek, and certain non-Indo-European systems like Classical Arabic—positions Albanian as a critical case study for global linguistics. Arbër Çeliku's comparative studies highlight how the optative's distinct forms enhance Albanian's syntactic

flexibility, allowing speakers to navigate nuanced pragmatic contexts, from formal invocations to emotive expressions, with precision unmatched by neighboring Balkan languages lacking such a mood.

This study contributes to Indo-European linguistics by underscoring Albanian's unique position as a language that preserves an inflectional optative, challenging the prevailing narrative of mood simplification across the family. While languages like Romance and Germanic have merged modal functions into the subjunctive or modal verbs, Albanian's optative remains a robust, standalone category, suggesting a conservative retention of ancient grammatical features. This preservation invites deeper investigation into its diachronic development, particularly its potential connections to Illyrian or Thracian substrates, which remain speculative due to limited textual evidence but are plausible given Albanian's geographic and historical context. Mehmet Çeliku's morphological analyses^[18] emphasize the optative's stability across dialects, noting consistent forms in Gheg (*të rrosh*—"may you live") and Tosk (*të jetosh*—"may you live"), despite centuries of contact with Slavic, Romance, and Ottoman Turkish influences. This resilience contrasts with the subjunctive's dialectal variability, reinforcing the optative's foundational role in Albanian grammar. Furthermore, its pragmatic versatility warrants exploration, as modern usage extends beyond traditional contexts to digital communication, where younger speakers employ it in stylized expressions on platforms like X, Facebook and Instagram (*Të shkojë gjithçka mirë!*—"May everything go well!").

Future research could leverage corpus linguistics to quantify these shifts, examining whether the optative's frequency and functions evolve in urban or diasporic settings. Such studies would not only illuminate Albanian's linguistic vitality but also inform broader theories of mood retention and pragmatic adaptation in endangered or minority languages within the Indo-European family.

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