

## Western Formation, (South-)Eastern Reconfiguration: The Making of Romanian

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Romanian occupies a distinctive position within the Romance languages. Its history may be understood, very broadly, as a process of **Latin-Romance formation**, followed by a prolonged **reconfiguration within the linguistic and cultural space of South-Eastern Europe** and, in the modern period, by renewed contacts and exchanges with Western Europe that reshaped Romanian language and culture.

As one of the historical continuations of Latin, Romanian was cut off at an early stage and for centuries from the principal centres of Western Romance, while developing in close and sustained **connection** with the languages and cultures of South-Eastern Europe, a condition that fostered distinctive patterns of structural **innovation**. The lecture focuses on the first part of this historical trajectory: how contact with the languages of South-Eastern Europe shaped Romanian's Latin inheritance. Drawing on Alexandru Niculescu's concept of Romanian as "the other Latinity", it will examine how part of the language's **diversity** within the Romance domain emerged from the continuous interaction of inheritance, contact, and structural reorganization.

Particular attention will be devoted to features that originated in Latin but acquired a specific form in Romanian through contact with neighbouring languages. The discussion will focus on two less familiar case studies that fall outside the well-known patterns of the Balkan *Sprachbund*: one phonetic-phonological and one morphological. The first concerns the so-called "Romance velar palatalization", interpreted as the result of a complex interaction between inherited phonetic tendencies and contact-induced developments. The second addresses the emergence of the inflectional class illustrated by *stea* ~ *stele*, exploring how an inherited pattern was expanded and reorganized through contact within the South-East European linguistic environment.

Through these examples, the lecture will show that Romanian's Eastern reconfiguration did not simply overlay an already formed Western Romance system with external, marginal features. Rather, contact with the languages of the Balkans acted at the core of Romanian phonetic-phonological and morphological structure, in some cases directing the preservation, development, and even extension of Latin-Romance features and processes.