

VARIATION ON AN ALTERNATION: THE FATE OF THE
KASNA PALATALIZACIJA IN SELE FARA, CARINTHIA

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INTRODUCTION

In an earlier article (Priestly 1977) I treated the consonant alternations in the dialect of the Carinthian village of Sele Fara, and concluded that further extensive study, of a sociolinguistic nature, was urgently needed. After over three months' stay in Sele Fara, I can now report that my conclusion was an understatement. I shall briefly present some material which in itself may appear extensive, but which may be seen upon reflection to barely scratch the surface of the problem; and this problem is but a small part of the total picture of the morphophonemics of the Sele Fara [SF] dialect.

My subject is the linguistic variation in one particular morphophonemic alternation, namely the one that resulted from a particular sound-change: the kasna palatalizacija. Everything that I have so far had occasion and opportunity to study in any detail seems to be involved in, and have a possible influence upon, the variation in question: PHONOLOGY, LEXICAL FREQUENCY, GRAMMAR and SEMANTICS on the linguistic side; and "DIALECT", age and perhaps SEX on the sociolinguistic/sociological side (to which LEVEL OF EDUCATION, CULTURO-POLITICAL ATTITUDE and perhaps SOCIOECONOMIC CLASS must probably be added). What I attempt here is a sketch of some of these factors and some of the interrelationships among them.

SELE FARA: BACKGROUND

The population of Sele Fara is close to 830; all but four or five families speak the Slovene Carinthian dialect as their first language. Most also speak, with varying degrees of fluency, one or more forms of German, and also some form of Standard Literary Slovene [SLS]: of these linguistic abilities, fluency in German does not appear to be involved with the problem I am dealing with; but (active or passive) fluency in SLS is probably involved. I have not yet however attempted to assess the fluency in SLS of my informants.

Map I shows the topographical character of Sele Fara in detail. Its official characterization as a 'zerstreutes Dorf' is clearly well-founded; and this scattered character is definitely influential upon the speech habits of its inhabitants. (I should mention here that I have no data from the sub-district of Hmelše, which is administratively part of Sele but linguistically more akin to the villages of Apače and Čmarjeta in the north.)

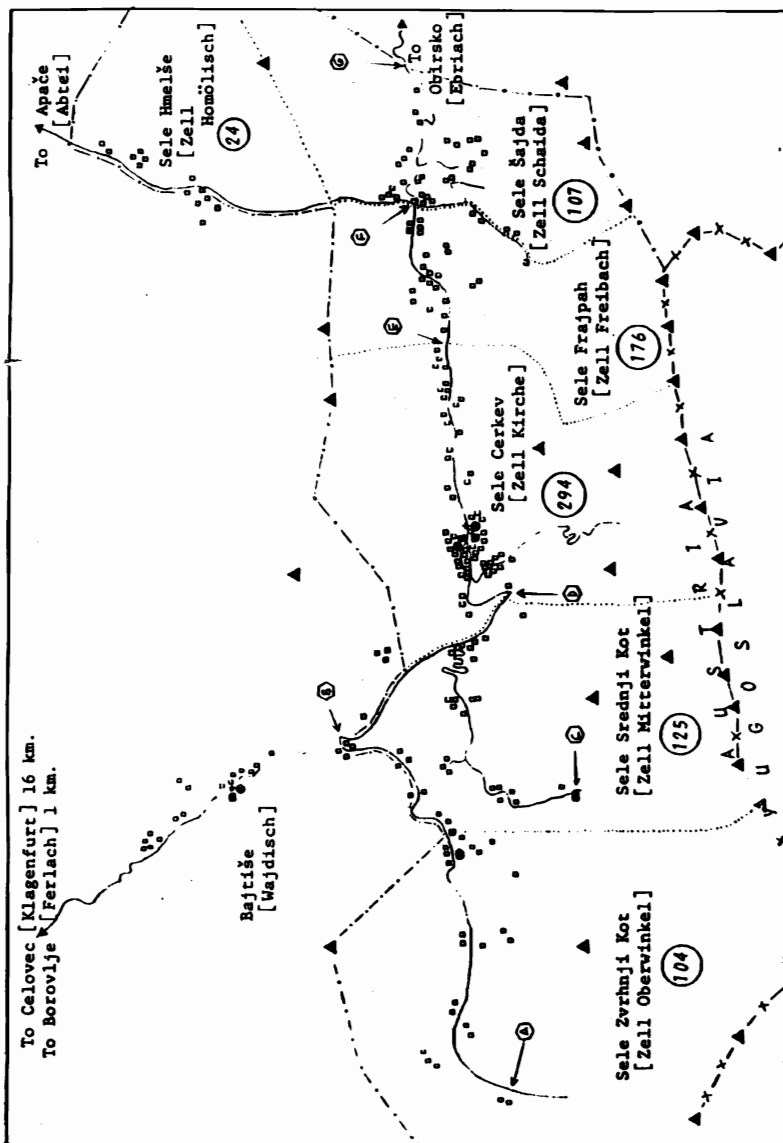
THE MORPHOPHONEMIC ALTERNATIONS

Four sound-changes form the linguistic background to this problem: the lenition of *g > γ > h; the second regressive palatalization, *k > c, (*g>) γ > z, *x > s; the kasna palatalizacija, *k > č, *γ > j, *x > š; and the change of *k > q (the glottal stop). One set of alternations resulting from these changes is featured in feminine "a-stem" nouns: thus the stem mwáq- "swampy pond" alternates with mwác- and mwáč-; wáh- "scales" with wáj-; and bówx- "flea" with bówš-.¹

The alternants -c/č, -j- and -š- may occur in eight case forms in a-stem nouns: Gen. Dat. Loc. Sing., Nom. Du., Nom. Acc. Inst. Loc. Plur. The VARIATION to be discussed can be summarized as follows: these alternants occur variously, in as many as eight to as few as zero case-forms; and the relative occurrences vary from word to word and from speaker to speaker. For one speaker, for example, designated #20, róqa "arm", nóha "leg", rəjúxa "sheet" and streaxa "roof" have the alternants in all eight case-forms, while e.g. žáha "saw" has alternants in five case-forms, pápriqa "paprika" in two, and mačixa "mother-in-law" in none at all. Speaker-to-speaker variation can be exemplified with dəwáqa "animal hair": speaker #20 has alternants in six case-forms, speaker #13 has them in five, speaker #28 in three, and speaker #29 in none at all.

DATA COLLECTION

I collected my data as follows. By the time I could speak and understand enough of the SF dialect for my purposes, I had amassed a long list of vocabulary, of which there were 40 nouns in -qa, 10 in -ha, and 9 in -xa. Some of these are omitted from this analysis for the sake of simplicity: they either involved phonetic problems, or were words not known to all the informants, or were used in the singular only and thus produced incomplete data. Sixteen such nouns have been omitted; the remaining 43 are presented



To Celovec [Klagenfurt] 16 km.
 To Borovlje [Ferlach] 1 km.

LEGEND:
 • dwelling ⚪ church • inn ● school ▲ mountain
 ○ reference-point (see text) ○ population of sub-district
 boundaries: -x-x- international - - - - district sub-district

MAP I: SELE FARA / ZELL PFARRE

0 1 2 3 km.

in Table I; note that where an informant claimed that two forms (with and without the alternant) occurred in his/her speech, a half was counted.

The maximal data set for the nouns presented today was 344 forms per informant (43 nouns x 8 case-forms each); rather than spend my lifetime studying one declension, I decided to proceed as follows. First, I elicited all 344 forms (in at least three separate sessions each) from a limited number of informants, eight in all. Second, from the complete list of 35 informants I restricted myself to eliciting the Nom. Pl. forms only for each of the 43 nouns. I chose the Nom. Pl. because I had ascertained that (for all but a very few words) the Nom. Pl. is the case-form which most frequently shows the palatal alternant (č, j or š).

Ideally, I believe, I should have elicited each form in GUIDED CONVERSATION (e.g., for 'swampy pond', I should have steered the conversation round to the topic of swampy ponds and waited to hear the word mwáqa in each of the 8 case-forms required). To save what might have lasted a dozen man-lives, I decided to request the forms directly, thus: téqəli ji mwáqa; hóčim mārwat ud mwá--? bōnam pər mwá--? To check the reliability of this approach, I subjected one informant to a three-way elicitation procedure: (a) by guided conversation, (b) by translation from German, and (c) by the direct approach just described. A comparison of the different responses shows that the differences are insignificant.

VARIATIONAL ONE: GEOGRAPHICAL

Variation in the spatial dimension is probably the first thing the dialectologist looks for. In this instance, the shape and length (over 20 km.) of the whole village encourages this first step, as does the fact that local differences between the various sub-districts, at least in phonology and in lexis, are both obvious to an outsider and well-known to the villagers themselves. In addition, the isogloss of two sub-parts of the kasna palatalizacija (namely, q > č and x > š) runs along the eastern boundary of the parish of Sele Fara (a fact which I checked with a speaker from the next village, Obirsko); and it might be guessed that, the closer one comes to an isogloss, the fewer words and/or forms might be affected by the changes in question.

I therefore started by making a traditional dialect map, by plotting the SCORES (i.e., the number of words in

TABLE I

DATA

Q/C words (e.g., dēwáqa / dēwáci):

| | | | |
|--------|-------------|--------|-----------|
| dēwáqa | animal hair | putéqa | drugstore |
| mwáqa | swampy pond | róqa | arm, hand |
| póreqa | wedding | | |

Q/Č words (e.g., sméréqa / sméréči; jájqa / jánči):

| | | | |
|-----------|----------------|------------|-----------------|
| biwəhúšqa | snake (t.) | plísqa | bird (t.) |
| cidíwqa | sieve | pumarájqa | orange |
| črnéwqa | bird (t.) | séəwqa | Sele villager |
| déəqa | decagram | sméréqa | larch |
| flášqa | bottle | sráqa | magpie |
| hrúšqa | pear | šéətqa | brush |
| jájqa | skirt | tášqa | Easter present |
| máčqa | cat | trafíqa | corner store |
| mutíqa | hoe | tríəsqa | spill, splinter |
| pápriqa | paprika | tripitlíqa | tree (t.) |
| páwqa | bass drum | wójsqa | war |
| péqa | batch (loaves) | žlipéqa | pig trough |

H/J words (e.g., jáha / jáji):

| | | | |
|--------|------------|------|-----------|
| jáha | witch (t.) | šóje | bird (t.) |
| nóha | leg, foot | wáha | scales |
| prédha | sermon | žáha | saw |
| šéha | custom | | |

X/S words (e.g., bówxa / bówši):

| | | | |
|--------|---------------|---------|----------------|
| bówxa | flea | rəjúxa | sheet |
| máčixa | mother-in-law | stréəxa | roof, umbrella |
| múxa | fly | zélxa | drying cellar |
| pwóxa | rainstorm | | |

which the alternation occurred; or, in other words, a measure of the degree of productivity of the sound-change in question) at different cartographic points. There were some indications, but the map was very difficult to interpret; it is not presented here.

VARIATIONS TWO AND THREE: AGE AND SEX

I next plotted the SCORES on a graph showing both age and (by using different-shaped symbols) the sex of the informants. Again, the graph was not very easy to interpret, but did seem to suggest two things. First, it apparently showed that younger speakers have much less palatalization than middle-aged speakers. Second, it seemed to show that, at least for speakers in their 40's and 50's, males tend to palatalize less than females of about the same age.

There were however wide divergences on this graph. Part of the problem lies in the fact that I try to cope with three variables at once; I will return to this below. Another aspect is that ATTITUDINAL factors are apparently involved.

EXCURSUS: OTHER NON-LINGUISTIC FACTORS

I will digress a moment to make a few speculative remarks about some more of the non-linguistic factors involved. These may be introduced by the fact that two data from the 20-40 age group stand out as widely divergent. One informant, female, 24 years, had a score for the Q/Č alternation of 15, compared to the mean for this age-group of 8.25; while another informant, male, 22 years, had a score for the same alternation of only 1. Both informants were ones which I considered sociolinguistically unreliable the moment I interviewed them. The first-named, a white-collar worker in Klagenfurt, had had a number of courses in Slavic and Slovene linguistics, and during elicitation interviews it was apparent she took pleasure in producing forms with the palatal alternants; also, from conversations it became clear that she had a strong attachment to her roots in the village of Sele Fara and in the culture of the village. Whereas she was suspect because of deliberate over-palatalization, the male informant with the score of 1 was suspect for the opposite reason. When, at the end of the elicitation session, I asked him why he did not produce Nom. Pl. forms with /č/ in words such as smərəčī, hrúšči, jānči and so on, which showed palatalization in almost every other informant's

speech, he replied: "Ker neumno zvoni".

I suspect therefore that factors such as the following will eventually have to be taken into account:

(a) CULTURO-POLITICAL STANDPOINT: in Carinthia, language is very closely linked in the attitudes of great sections of the population with cultural questions, with economics, and with problems of politics and nationalism.² It is debatable which way the influences will affect the inhabitants of Sele Fara with respect to the alternations studied here: they may cling to them (as does the first aberrant informant just mentioned) as part of their ethnic heritage; or they may reject them (as does the informant for whom they "sound stupid") because they prefer to strive for the model of SLS, which may be regarded as culturally superior and/or as a permanent authorized standard and thus as a model to be emulated. Political views will also be involved--inclinations toward or away from nationalists, toward or away from communists, and so on.

(b) EDUCATIONAL LEVEL: as far as these alternations are concerned, a good knowledge of SLS, with its complete lack of consonant alternations in feminine nouns, may well play a significant role. When a lexical item is involved which has a close parallel in SLS, or which is even a word 'borrowed' into SF from SLS (e.g., tripitlifa, plisqa, biwəhúšqa), then SLS patterns of declension may exert their influence. On the other hand, it is possible that the better educated speakers may better perceive the differences between SLS and SF and not confuse the two styles. Here again, I dare speculate no more.

(c) SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASS: nearly all inhabitants of Sele Fara appear to be of similar socio-economic class (with a few obvious exceptions) but inquiries into recent history show that this was not the case even two generations back: within remembered history there was a semi-feudal kind of class system with peripatetic farm-hands and maids earning wages on larger farms; and there is still a wide range of income and of house-size. This factor must not be ruled out.

EXCURSUS: LINGUISTIC FACTORS

I do not discuss the LINGUISTIC variables. I will briefly mention them, before returning to the main conclusion of this paper, and hope to discuss them elsewhere.

First, there is the problem of LEXICAL VARIATION: different words are affected in different ways. My investigations suggest that some or all of the following factors must be considered: GRAMMATICAL CASE; PHONETIC STRUCTURE; FUNCTIONAL LOAD; and, perhaps, even ETYMOLOGICAL HISTORY.

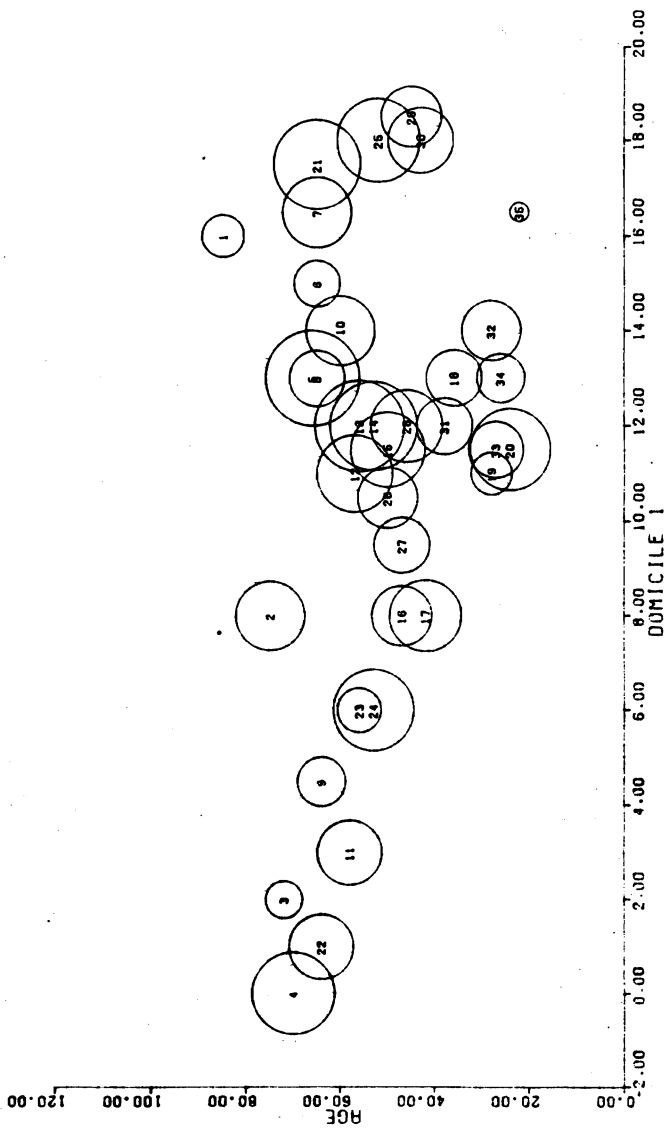
Second, there is GRAMMATICAL VARIATION: different cases are affected differently (for example, the Acc. Pl. is NOT palatalized to the same extent as the Nom. Pl., although both case-forms might be expected to behave in identical fashion since they have had identical histories for many centuries). Analysis of the data seems to support a Jakobsonian marking-system as an explanation for the different treatment of the cases.

DIALECT, AGE AND SEX: RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM

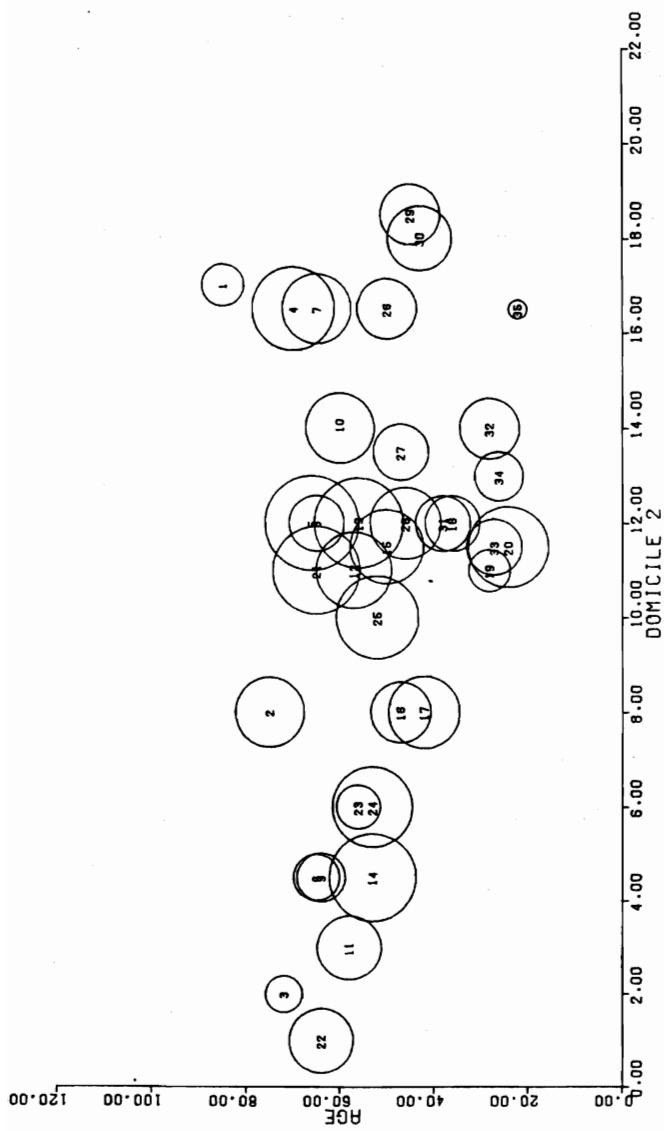
Above, I stopped in mid-air, so to speak, with respect to my analysis of three sociolinguistic variables which appeared to be involved in this variation: age, sex, and dialect. I can now approach a resolution of the problem.

The first step was to simplify the geographical aspect. I was aided here by the peculiar toponymy of Sele Fara, which is strung out like a ribbon along its alpine valley. My procedure was to collapse the usual two dimensions of geolinguistics into one dimension -- one horizontal line representing the E-W axis; and on this basis have been able to graph "dialect" along one axis (versus other parameters). This collapsing involves some inaccuracies and oversimplifications -- after all, not everyone lives along the one road; and in one section, the roads in Zvrhnji Kot and in Srednji Kot run parallel. But I designed a unidimensional map by superimposing point B on Map I (the road fork at the exit from Zvrhnji Kot onto the main road) upon point C (the uppermost all-year inhabited house in Srednji Kot). The resulting line, ABCDEFG, can be used to calculate the distance BY ROAD between any two points.

The second step was to resort to the computer. First, I restricted myself to the 24 -qa nouns, because there were strong indications that -ha and -xa nouns behaved in a different way. Analysis of these data will be incorporated later. Second, I analyzed the data for Nom. Pl. forms for all 35 informants: this gave a base for statistical analyses. With the help from colleagues at the University of Alberta,³ I was able to produce computer graphs (Graphs I, II) which



SCORE



SCORE

show three dimensions: dialect along the horizontal axis (termed DOMICILE); AGE along the vertical axis; and SCORE (i.e., extent of, or productivity of, the palatalization) by the relative size of the circles.⁴ Two graphs were computed: the first with 'DOMICILE 1', i.e., place of birth and early childhood; and the second with 'DOMICILE 2', i.e., place of longest residence. The sex of informants is not shown. Incidentally, the two aberrant younger informants have been left on this graph, and are represented by, respectively, the large circle #20 (domicile 11.4, age 23) and the small circle #35 (domicile 16.6, age 22). From these graphs the following deductions can be made:

First, as a general rule, the score is higher at point 12.00 -- i.e., at the center of Sele Cerkev: namely, the location of the church, the school, the administrative office, two inns, and in all respects the most densely settled area. Further, incidence of palatalization decreases as one moves away from this point. This suggests that this point serves as a kind of communicative center, with innovations spreading out from it to outlying areas.

Second, again as a general rule, the score decreases with decreasing age, at least below age 65. Between 85 and 65 the generation involved seems, if anything, to have INCREASED the amount of apatalization; but ever since, succeeding generations have DECREASED that amount.

(It may be pointed out that a decrease in productivity is as much an innovation as an earlier increase therein; and, if my first point is valid, that areas lying further away from the church should show LESS palatalization for the 60-year-olds and MORE palatalization for younger age-groups. I do not however have data from younger informants living in the outlying areas; this remains to be demonstrated.)

The computer was also used for calculations of significance with respect to the three variables - age, sex and place of residence. The last-named posed a problem, for it was important to consider two different kinds of geographical distinction: (1), between place of birth and early childhood on the one hand, and place of longest residence on the other (as in Graphs I, II); and (2), between a simple one-way dialectal difference - i.e., one end of the village versus the other, East versus West - on the one hand, and the two-way dialectal difference between outlying areas and the "center" - i.e., Zvrhnji/Srednji Kot/Šajda/Frajpah versus

Sele Cerkev, the 'relatively rural' versus the 'relatively urban' - on the other hand. Computations were therefore made not only for 'DOMICILE' but for 'DISTANCE (FROM CHURCH)'. The findings of a multiple regression analysis are given in Table II with F values and associated levels of significance as indicated. DOMICILE 1 refers to the same data that are presented in Graph I, and DISTANCE 1 is based on relative distances from point 12.0 on the horizontal axis of that Graph; DOMICILE 2 and DISTANCE 2 have the same respective relationships to Graph II. From these data, the following conclusions are drawn.⁵

First, a comparison of "DOMICILE" versus "DISTANCE" data show conclusively that the former are far less indicative than the latter; i.e., that the distance of the speaker's place of residence from the 'center' of Sele Cerkev has much greater bearing on his morphophonemic score, than does his 'dialect' when this is taken as a measure of the distance from one or other end of the village.

Second, the only results of statistical significance are obtained from calculations involving DISTANCE 2 rather than DISTANCE 1; i.e., place of longest residence influences the productivity of this particular morphophonemic alternation much more than place of birth and early childhood.

Third, place of (longest) residence is a much more important factor than age (levels of confidence, respectively, < .01 and < .05); and sex is not significant.

CONCLUSION

I have so far demonstrated a significant DIALECT effect on the extent to which the kasna palatalizacija is productive, i.e., is used, by individual inhabitants of Sele Fara; and I have also proved a significant AGE effect. Of the two, DIALECT is much more significant, and is to be interpreted here in a very restricted and special sense; "the place of longest residence, as measured by its distance from the center of the village of Sele Cerkev."

Further, the computer analysis has even provided me with a mathematical formula for a VARIABLE RULE; of the 24 -qa nouns on my list, a given speaker will have the palatal /č/ in the Nom. Pl. of the following number of -qa- words:

$$8.00 - .53D_2 + .09A (\pm 3.40)$$

TABLE II

F VALUES AND SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS FOR THE VARIABLES
OF 'DIALECT', AGE AND SEX

| | DOMICILE 1 | DOMICILE 2 | DISTANCE 1 | DISTANCE 2 |
|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 'DIALECT' | 0.229 | 0.088 | 1.518 | 6.064** |
| AGE | 1.087 | 1.008 | 2.240 | 4.089* |
| SEX | 0.212 | 0.191 | 0.000 | 0.005 |

** < .01 * < .05

where D_2 is the distance of place of longest residence in kilometers from Sele Fara church, and A is the age in years. A 65-year-old speaker living by the school in Zvrhnji Kot, for example, may be expected to have palatals in $8.00 - (.53 \times 9) + (.09 \times 65)$ words, i.e. in about 9 words (plus or minus 3 or 4). Analysis of the lexical variation should eventually allow the prediction as to which words will show the palatalization, and analysis of the grammatical variation should eventually allow the prediction as to which cases (for each word) the palatalization will occur in.

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Footnotes

¹For phonetic and historical details, see Isačenko 1939, Priestly 1976, 1977. Two problems will be ignored here: the survival of -c- versus the disappearance of -z- and -s- in a-stem alternations; and the relative frequency of usage of the -c- and -č- alternations in qa nouns.

²See Stermole 1978 and the references there, also Priestly (to appear).

³I wish to thank, in particular, Terrence Nearey for his time and his patience.

⁴On the representation of sociolinguistic 'structures' by simple mathematical functions (including the representation of linguistic geography by a single line) see De Camp 1970:165-66.

⁵Note that the data from the two 'aberrant' younger speakers have NOT been omitted from these calculations. Such an omission would have only involved a loss of 6% of the data; these two speakers - however strong their conscious approach to the situation may have been - are nevertheless real people who may merely exemplify (albeit in an extreme form) attitudinal factors which affect many other, or indeed all, villagers. Note also that there are insufficient data for a statistical analysis of 'dialect' versus age with respect to informants living a long way from the church versus those living close to it. There are indications on the two graphs which are suggestive, but far too vague; their consideration must await the collection of further data.

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