

Back vowel mergers in Dalmatian Latin and Dalmatian Romance*

1. Introduction

Regarding the typological classification of the vowel system of the now extinct Dalmatian Romance language, which developed from Dalmatian Latin, there is a debate as to whether, in terms of vowel mergers, it belonged to the Western, that is, symmetrical type, or the Eastern, that is, asymmetrical type of Romance language, or rather, whether it represented a subtype of the latter, being partially asymmetrical. Belonging to the Western or symmetrical type would mean that both front and back vowels merged ($\acute{e} \acute{i} > e$, $\bar{e} e \acute{i} > e$, $\acute{o} \acute{u} > o$, $\bar{o} o \acute{u} > o$), as is usually the case in Western Romance languages. Belonging to the Eastern or asymmetrical type would mean that only the front vowels merged ($\acute{e} \acute{i} > e$, $\bar{e} e \acute{i} > e$), but not the back ones, as in Balkan Romanian.¹ Finally, it is assumed that the eastern or asymmetrical type had a subtype, which can be called partially asymmetrical, where the back vowels also merged ($\acute{o} \acute{u} > o$, $\bar{o} o \acute{u} > o$), but only in open syllables and not at all in closed syllables, as may have been the case in the extinct Dalmatian language and consequently in its Latin predecessor.

Tagliavini 1972, 239 (365f and 376), Banfi 1991, 45, Bonfante 1998, 11-12 and Loporcaro 2011, 114, for example, discuss Dalmatian vocalism within the framework of the Eastern or Balkan Latin asymmetric vowel system, along with Romanian,

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1 Cf. Herman 2000, 32-34.

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and regard Dalmatian as a representative of the partially asymmetrical subtype of the eastern or asymmetrical type, where *ũ* and *ō* remained distinct only in closed syllables, while in open syllables, both *ō* and *ũ* merged into an *o*

In contrast, Hadlich 1965, 83f clearly states that ‘C.L. /*ũ*/ and /*ō*/ had merged in all positions in the Latin of Veglia’, so he thinks Dalmatian belonged to the Western Romance vowel system. Windisch 1998, 918f and Bernoth 2008, 2737 share the view that in Dalmatian, i.e. in Vegliote and in its vulgar Latin antecedents, *ō* and *ũ* merged in both open and checked syllables so the Dalmatian had not an Eastern, asymmetric but a Western, symmetric type of vowel system.

These two different interpretations depend partly on the interpretation of relevant Dalmatian words, which are available in a small number, and partly on the phonological analysis of the late Latin texts from Dalmatia, which can lend a hand in exploring which assumption may be supported from the Latin side. Accordingly, my paper consists of two parts. First I examine the Dalmatian Romance situation, and then the Dalmatian Latin situation, both from the point of view of the merger of back vowels.

2. The Dalmatian Romance evidence

Since the problem occurs primarily in the field of Romance linguistics, the problem must first be examined from the perspective of Romance linguistics. Let’s start with one of the relatively recent and certainly influential formulations of the problem, namely Loporcaro’s. In connection with the emergence of the Romance vowel systems, more specifically, in connection with the discussion of Romance language areas that differ in terms of the way vowel mergers take place, Loporcaro also discusses the asymmetric type of vowel systems, where the front vowels were merged, as in Western Romance languages,² but the difference in quality of the back vowels remained, as in Sardinian.³ The main representative of this asymmetric vowel system is Romanian (or Daco-Romance).⁴ Related to this, Loporcaro (2011, 114) writes the following: ‘[f]urther evidence for the broader geographic extension of the asymmetric vowel system [...] seems to come from Dalmatian, whose northern variety became extinct in 1898 with the death of the last speaker of Vegliote. In Vegliote, the outcomes of *ē* and *ĩ* merged in all syllabic contexts (e.g., [ˈmajk] <MĒCUM “with me” = [ˈfajd] <FĪDEM “faith” = [ˈstale] <STĒLLAE “stars” = [ˈlan̩ga] <LĪNGUAM “tongue”), whereas

2 Cf. Loporcaro 2011, 115, Table 6 ‘Common Roman vowel system’.

3 Cf. Loporcaro 2011, 112, Table 3 ‘Sardinian vowel system’. The vocalism of Latin in later Africa Proconsularis including Numidia turned out to be of the same type as of the later Latin in Sardinia, see Adamik 2020, 22–23 and Tamponi 2022, 156–157.

4 Cf. Loporcaro 2011, 114, Table 4 ‘Romanian vowel System’. This kind of asymmetrical merger is found not only in Daco-Romance (in all its branches), but also in a small area of western Lucania, cf. Loporcaro 2011, 114 and 691, note 11; for its Latin antecedents see Adamik (forthcoming). The vocalism of the Latin in later Mauretania Caesariensis might also have started to develop toward the eastern or asymmetrical type of vocalism, see Adamik 2020, 22–23.

ō and ŭ merged in open syllables, as they were both affected by diphthongization ([^lbaʊd] <UŌCEM “voice” = [^lnaʊk] <NŪCEM “(wal-) nut”), but remained distinct in checked syllables ([^lsamno] <*SŌMNIUM instead of SŌMNIUM “dream” vs. [^lbuka] “mouth” <BŪCCAM “cheek”; cf. Bartoli 1906 II:336f.)⁵

In the relevant note 13, Loporcaro 2011, 691 writes as follows: ‘[a]lthough this fact has been emphasized by many scholars (e.g., Lüdtke 1956, 293-295; Bonfante 1998, 12), Bartoli himself observed that the evidence for [a] from checked ō is scanty. At any rate, a later stratum with “common Romance” vowel system can be inferred for Dalmatian, as the Dalmatian loanwords into Slavic and Albanian (cf. Muljačić 2000, 331-333) all show a common treatment of ō and ŭ (> /o/ > /u/) as opposed to ū (> /y/):’⁶

Accordingly, it is obvious that the assessment of the Dalmatian continuation of Latin back vowels in closed syllables, and at the same time the typological classification of the Dalmatian vowel system, depends on what other examples we have for the continuation of long ō in closed syllables instead of [^lsamno] <*sōmniūm, which is problematic for various reasons and should therefore be discarded.⁷

The issues of establishing the Dalmatian continuation of the closed-syllable Latin ō are best illustrated by how works discussing the history of the Dalmatian sound system often do not provide examples of the Dalmatian continuation of the closed-syllable Latin ō. For example, Ferguson (1976, 152) expressly refrains from discussing the question, saying (referring to Bartoli 1906, II, 335) that there is no clear example of the continuation of the closed syllable long o in Dalmatian.⁸ Nor does Bernoth (2008, 2737) provide an example, referring to Rosenkranz, who stated that: ‘[b]elege für altes gedecktes geschlossenes o fehlen’ (Rosenkranz 1955, 274). In addition, most recently Maiden (2016, 127) was content to state that ‘[t]he fate of historically underlying /o/ in closed syllables is problematic.’⁹

In contrast, it might be surprising to see that others do cite examples for the continuation of ō in a closed syllable in Dalmatian, e.g. Windisch (1998, 918) uses the example *furma* <*fōrma*, which, together with *buka* <*būcca*, may well exemplify the closed syllabic merger of back vowels in Dalmatian. The example pair is also mentioned by Muljačić (1971 = 2000, 199), whose work is also referred to by Windisch

5 = Loporcaro 2015, 55. Nevertheless, the word [^lbaʊd] cited by Loporcaro is an unsatisfactorily explained, unexpected form instead of the expected [^lbaʊk], cf. Bartoli 1906, II, 385.

6 = Loporcaro 2015, 55, note 51; Muljačić 2000 = Muljačić 1993 = 2000. Cf. also Bartoli 1908, 42-49.

7 The inappropriateness of Bartoli’s *sōmniūm > *samn* (e.g. Bartoli 1906, II, 335: *samno*) example is also referred to by Hadlich 1965, 83, who claims that this sound form might have been influenced by the Serbo-Croatian word *san* ‘dream’, also drawing attention to the fact that the Latin word is *sōmniūm* with a short ō according to the Romance continuations (which in Dalmatian would have been **swamn*, as *mortem* > *mwart*; whether the *suān* variant of *samno* mentioned by Bartoli 1906, II, 47 has anything to do with this **swamn* remains to be clarified). In any case, REW classified the Dalmatian (Vegliote) word *samno* not under the lemma *sōmniūm* (no. 8085, ‘Traum’) but under the lemma *sōmnus* (no. 8086, ‘Schlaf’).

8 Cf. Ferguson 1976, 152, note 3: ‘Bartoli’s data contain no truly reliable examples of reflexes in Vegliote of original Proto-Romance */q/ – as opposed to */q/ < */q/ – in closed syllable’.

9 Cf. Maiden 2016, 127, note 5, referring to Bartoli 1906, II, 335.

(1998, 935). Muljačić obviously took the *furma* <*fōrma* example from the Hadlich monograph he referred to.¹⁰ Hadlich 1965 indeed mentions this example, once as *formam* > /furma/ (p. 72) and once as *forma* > /furm/ (p. 83). The problem with this example, however, is that this word form is not found in Bartoli's work, and REW does not include it under the relevant lemma,¹¹ so it is not at all clear where Hadlich could have taken it from.¹²

Thus, this *furm(a)* example must be discarded, while Hadlich's other example may still be accepted: the correspondence *sōricem* /surko/ 'mouse', which is also included in REW (no. 8098. *sōrex*, -īce 'Maus').¹³ Although this may seem like an open syllabic example at first, the vowel change was obviously preceded by syncope,¹⁴ which created a closed syllabic situation (*sōrice* > *sōrce* > *surko*), since in an open syllable Latin *ō* would have resulted in Dalmatian *au* = *aw*, just like *hōram* > /jawr/, *sōlem* > /sawl/, and other examples (cf. Hadlich 1965, 72) show. This way we have at least one seemingly certain example of the closed syllabic development of *ō* to *u* in Dalmatian: *sōricem* /surko/.¹⁵ At the same time, there is another possible example:

10 Rosetti 1968 = 1973, 122 also quotes the word *furma* from Hadlich.

11 In Bartoli 1906, II, 3 and 115, only the forms *fuorm* (p. 3) and *fuorma* (p. 133) can be found as the Dalmatian equivalent of the Italian *forma*, which are not mentioned by REW, only an Engadine (Romansh) *fuorma* is cited there (REW no. 3441). Unfortunately, the lemmas of none of the disputed words are currently included in the online *Dictionnaire Étymologique Roman (DÉRom)*, cf. <http://www.atilf.fr/DERom>.

12 Hadlich may have been misled by the Hungarian dialect word *furma* cited by Bartoli 1906, I, 266, which Bartoli mentions in the context of a brief discussion of words that may have entered Hungarian from Romance languages (expressing his doubts as to whether the Hungarian language would have Dalmatian loanwords at all), and in which words Romance *e* and *o* appear as *i* and *u*. However, Bartoli already adds that the theory that this vowel closure has a Dalmatian background is highly questionable, because *e* and *o* could have entered Hungarian directly or even via Serbo-Croatian mediation from the Romance languages as *i* and *u*. One of Bartoli's example words showing this kind of closure is the Hungarian word *furma*, which Bartoli obviously took (together with his other examples) from the book he referred to by Sándor Kőrösi (cf. Kőrösi 1892, 30: '[f]urma (voce bassa): berg. *furma* id.; it. *forma*'). In any case, Hungarian *furma* is an internally developed dialectal version of the Hungarian word *forma* borrowed from medieval Latin (cf. EWUNG 1, p. 411, s. v. *forma*), which has nothing to do with the northern Italian variant *furma* from Bergamo mentioned by Kőrösi. If Hadlich mistakenly considered this Hungarian dialect word *furma* to be a Dalmatian word (which Bartoli, expressing his serious reservations about loanwords from Dalmatian into Hungarian, recorded as a Northern Italian loanword), we can say that this Hungarian dialect word had a splendid career in Romance linguistic literature as a pseudo-Dalmatian (ghost) word.

13 I mention here that Mihaescu 1993, 96 cited the correspondence Latin *domna* – Dalmatian *dumna* – as the only example of closed syllabic long *ō*, but this is a bad example for several reasons: 1. The Latin form has a short *o*, cf. REW 2733. *dōmna*, 2. Its Dalmatian equivalent can be *dona* (Bartoli 1906, II, 48, 180); *dumna* is a Serbo-Croatian word, the origin of which is unclear in Bartoli (Bartoli 1906, II, 370 and 426 mentions only one form DOMINA, from which the Serbo-Croatian form can be derived); the *dōmna* lemma of REW no. 2733 does not yield a Dalmatian equivalent.

14 For the Dalmatian syncope, cf. Muljačić (1971 = 2000, 200), e.g. *dicere* > *dekro*, *pectine* > *pyakno*, etc.

15 In addition, Hadlich 1965, 83 refers to such correspondences as lat. *-ōre*, *-ōne*, *-ōr(i)a* = dalm. *-ur*, *-un*, *-ura*, which can be observed in some medieval texts from Zara. However, these examples are from open syllables, so they are not relevant here; for examples cf. Bartoli 1906, II, 336: Zara AD 1441: *-ur -ōre* (*capadur*, *protect-*, *antecess-*, *chovert-*), *cruçe* (kein Latin.), Zara AD 1449: *-un -ōne* (*guarnazun*

the Dalmatian (Vegliote) word *turta* (cf. REW no. 8802: 'vier aneinander hängende kleine Brote', Bartoli 1906, II, 258: 'quattro pani insieme'), which can be traced back to the word *tōrta* (REW no. 8802 'Torte').¹⁶ Another example of a closed syllable continuation at the end of a word can be the Dalmatian word (vegliote) *luk*, as a continuation of Latin *illōc* (cf. REW no. 4270 'da', 'dort').¹⁷

Turning to the development of short *u* in closed syllables in Dalmatian, we have more sure examples than in the case of *ō*. Among the examples mentioned by Hadlich (1965, 72), *buka* <*bucca* (REW n. 1357 'Mund')¹⁸ and *kapul* <*cēpūlla* (REW n. 1820 'Zwiebel') should be accepted based on REW, to which we can add further Dalmatian (Vegliote) correspondences mentioned by Bartoli (1906, II, 335) and also accepted by REW, such as *ultra* <*ūltra* (REW n. 9038 'jenseits', 'über hinaus'), *pulvro* <*pūlvīs, pūlvēre(m)* (REW n. 6842 'Staub') and *trufo* <*trūblium* (REW n. 8940 'Napf').¹⁹ All in all, there are more arguments in favour of the merger of *ō* and *ū* in closed syllables (> *o* > Vegliote *u*) than against it, and Rosenkranz's formulation ('[b]elege für altes gedecktes geschlossenes o fehlen') cannot be considered valid. We know of two or maybe three probable Dalmatian examples: *surko*, *turta*, and *luk*. Accordingly, the table of Windisch (1998, 918) on the Western, symmetric type of development of the Dalmatian vowel system can be considered valid, despite the single citation of the example taken from Hadlich: *furma* <*fōrma*, which is of uncertain origin (probably a ghost word).

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- izione), -ura -ōr(i)a (*farsura* FRIX-): Hadlich 1965, 83 also refers to the evidence of Dalmatian (?) loanwords that came into Serbo-Croatian, such as *neput* <*nepōte* (Dalm. *nepaut* Bartoli 1906, II, 208), *račun* <*rationē* (Dalm. *rasaun*, cf. Bartoli 1906, II, 217), but they are examples from open syllables. Perhaps *nepuča* <*nepōtia* (cf. Bartoli 1906, II, 364) could be mentioned here (if -ča <-tja, therefore a closed syllable), but the Dalmatian form is not clear, cf. dalm. *nepauta* Bartoli 1906, II, 58, and *nepoča* Bartoli 1906, II, 272 and 420; REW 5891 mentions the form *nepoča* as an Old Dalmatian example (the form Dalm. *nepauta* was declared by Bartoli 1908, 48 to be a new formation created under Venetian influence).
- 16 This is not related to REW no. 8809 *tōrtus* ('gedreht'), because its Romance continuations point back to an open *o* (as a continuation of the Latin short *ō*), while the Dalmatian *turta* and other Romance equivalents can be traced back to a closed *o*, which can only be a continuation of a Latin long *ō* (cf. REW no. 8802). Bartoli 1906, II, 335 mentioned *turta* among examples of continuations of *ū* together with *ultra* and *buka*.
- 17 Bartoli 1906, II, 418 took this as a continuation of *illac*. As another possible example, the Dalmatian continuation of Latin *mō(n)strāre* could be mentioned, but the Dalmatian variants that have been handed down in writing are not clear enough to serve as conclusive evidence, see the following contradictory examples: vegl. *mostrua* = it. *mostra* (Bartoli 1906, II, 5, 206), vegl. *muestra* = it. *mostra* (*tu*) (Bartoli 1906, II, 167, 207) and vegl. *mustruót* = it. *mostrato* (Bartoli 1906, II, 163, 207). Although DÉRom lists the *mostrúa* form (together with an infinitive *mostrúr* 'montrer' which can be inferred from it) under the corresponding lemma (* / 'mostr-a- / ~ * / 'moss-a- /), it does not give justification. As a result, following the procedure of article REW no. 5666 *mō(n)strāre* 'zeigen', it is better to omit these ambiguous words from this argument.
- 18 However, according to Muljačić 1993 = 2000, 378, *buka* is a Venetian loanword ('[b]ucca ergab allerdings *buka* statt des zu erwartenden vegl. **baka*. Es handelte sich um ein Lehnwort aus dem Venezianischen'). At the same time, the development of **baka* in Vegliote can be ruled out due to certain examples of the closed syllabic Latin *ū* > vegliote *u* correspondence.
- 19 According to Bartoli 1906, II, 53, the version of *trufo* is also *truflo*, but it is uncertain ('auch *truflo*, unsicher').

3. The Dalmatian Latin evidence

In line with the above, the next question should be whether the merger of closed syllabic $\bar{o}$ and $\bar{u}$ in Dalmatian Romance appeared as a late, secondary development, as Loporcaro 2011, 691, note 13 assumes, saying that ‘a later stratum with “common Romance” vowel system can be inferred for Dalmatian, as the Dalmatian loanwords into Slavic and Albanian (cf. Muljačić 2000, 331–333) all show a common treatment of $\bar{o}$ and $\bar{u}$ (> /o/ > /u/) as opposed to $\bar{u}$ (> /y/).’ If this were the case, i.e., if in the early Dalmatian Romance language $\bar{o}$ and $\bar{u}$ did not merge in the closed syllable, as Loporcaro assumes, then in late Dalmatian Latin we should find a vowel system with a merger of $\bar{o}$ and $\bar{u}$ in open syllables, but not in closed syllables. Accordingly, on the Latin inscriptions, especially on the later ones, we should find the confusion of letters O and V only in open syllables, but not in closed syllables (or only in a few scattered examples).

Of course, Loporcaro tried to find the antecedents of the asymmetric system he assumed for (early) Dalmatian in the Latin of Dalmatia, and for this he used Herman’s 1971 study, which he refers to as follows (Loporcaro 2011, 691, note 15): ‘As for Dalmatia, Herman’s results (1971:139–143) show that the <o/u> confusions, although not so frequent as <e/i> (as is the case in neighbouring Veneto), are not absent either (unlike in Dacia): this squares with the complex picture from the extinct Romance varieties of Dalmatia.’²⁰ At first glance, this seems to support Loporcaro’s idea. However, in the referenced section Herman 1971, 139–143 is surveying the pagan era that preceded the Christian era (i.e. roughly the first to third centuries, i.e. the early imperial period). Here, Herman indeed states that Dalmatia is somewhat behind the territory of Venetia et Histria (Regio X) in terms of O/V confusions, since while the northern Italian region shows a ratio of 0.59 (37 O/V: 63 E/I = 0.59), Dalmatia only about half of it, 0.27 (24 O/V: 89 E/I = 0.27). At the same time, in the continuation of the referenced section, Herman 1971, 144–145 also provides a brief description of the Christian era (i.e. roughly the fourth to sixth centuries).²¹ From this part, it is clear that Dalmatia had already caught up with Northern Italy in terms of O/V confusions by the Christian era: since among the two northern Italian provinces examined by Herman, Transpadana (Regio XI) shows a ratio of 0.5 (53 O/V: 105 E/I = 0.5) and Venetia et Histria (Regio X) shows a ratio of 0.41 (53 O/V: 130 E/I = 0.41), while the latter is essentially the same as the ratio of Dalmatia i.e. 0.43 (30 O/V: 70 E/I = 0.43).²² In the light of Herman’s data and analysis, in the late Christian era, Dalmatia was not behind Northern Italy at all, especially not behind Venetia et Histria, but

20 Cf. also Loporcaro 2015, 54: ‘[m]oving eastwards, Dalmatia shows also <o/u> confusions, although not so frequent as <e/i> (Herman 1971, 139–143)’.

21 Cf. Herman 1971 = 1990, 144: ‘les exemples tirés d’inscriptions chrétiennes sont assez nombreux pour permettre un recoupement chronologique au stade du v^e siècle environ’.

22 While evaluating the rates of *o-u* and *e-i* mergers, Herman used the expected ratio of 0.5 as a reference number. This reference number indicates that the number of O/V confusions in the data pool is approximately half of the E/I confusions. This number also indicates that the two changes took place more or less at the same time and with the same intensity, since the number of the *e-i* sounds is approximately the double of *o-u* sounds in Latin. Consequently, a numerical value considerably

rather completely caught up with it in terms of O/V confusions. This analysis of the Christian era, however, was not considered by Loporcaro; otherwise he would have realised that Herman's findings do not corroborate his assumption of Latin antecedents of the (early?) Dalmatian asymmetric vowel system.

In comparison, if we look at the relevant data from LLDB (the Computerized Historical Linguistic Database of the Latin Inscriptions of the Imperial Age), we can see that they support Herman's description,²³ adding further detail to it through the more precise chronological division and the more exact linguistic criteria for interpretation (see Table 1).²⁴ The division of the Christian era (easily realized in LLDB) into two periods for the fourth-fifth and a sixth-seventh centuries, which is made possible by the advanced search module of the LLDB, makes the diachronic development in the Christian era visible, showing the real position of Dalmatia in terms of *o-u* merger. Table 1 contains the distribution of the aggregated data by merger type for the phonologically based E/I and O/V confusions of the two northern Italian provinces and Dalmatia discussed by Herman 1971, excluding morphosyntactic and other, non-phonological data (e.g. archaisms).²⁵ Table 2 shows the distribution according to individual LLDB codes (corresponding to change subtypes).

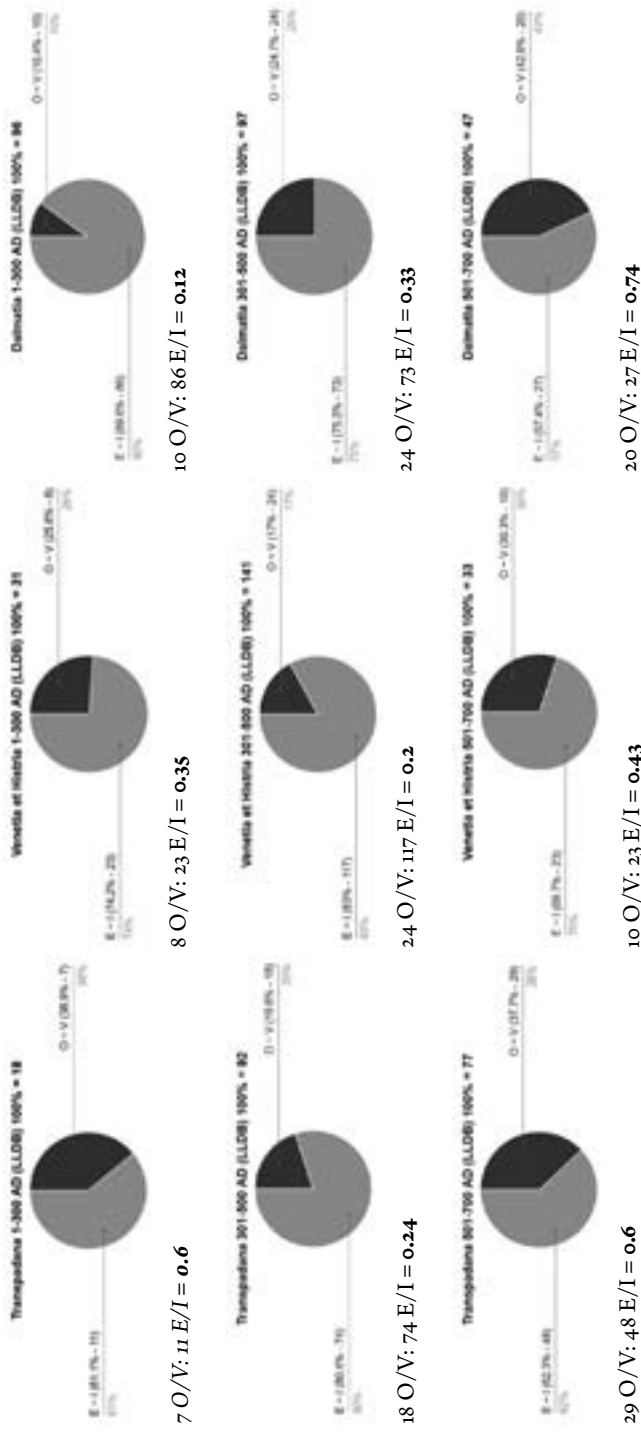
lower than 0.5 indicates that the merger of front vowels *e-i* was more advanced than that of back vowels *o-u* in a given area, or in other words, that the merger of back vowels had just started or was underdeveloped compared to the merger of front vowels.

²³ Which is basically based on data from Skok 1915 and Zamboni 1965-1966.

²⁴ Regarding the O/V confusion, I only considered confusions corresponding to Romance development, so the following codes (illustrating the change with examples from northern Italy): (*ē i* > *e*) *ē*:> I, AVRILIVS for *Aurelius* (LLDB-135561, CIL 5, 8726, 1), *i*:> E, VEDVA for *vidua* (LLDB-129678, AE 1985, 443, 3); (*ō ū* > *o*) *ō*:> V, OCTV|BR for *Octobres* (LLDB-21028, CIL 5, 3897, 8-9), *ū*:> O, ALOMNVS for *alumnus* (LLDB-11894, AE 1987, 430, 12); (*ē e i* > *e*) *e*:> I, FICIERVNT for *fecerunt* (LLDB-12030, InscrIt 10, 2, 67, 4), *e*:> I, SIVER for *Severus* (LLDB-124376, AE 2007, 618, 2), *i*:> E, VIXET for *vixit* (LLDB-90749, ICI 16, 185, 6), (*ō o u* > *o*) *o*:> V, SACERDVS for *sacerdos* (LLDB-21029, InscrIt 10, 2, 81, 2), *o*:> V, RV SARVM for *rosarum* (LLDB-135531, CIL 5, 2046, 6), *u*:> O, FAMOLA for *famula* (LLDB-59583, CIL 5, 5419, 3). Accordingly, I did not take the following codes into account: *ē*:> I (e.g. ARGINTI for *argenti*, LLDB-124711, AE 1890, 144, 4), *ō*:> V (MAVVRTI for *Mavorti*, LLDB-21922, CIL 5, 6742, 17), *i*:> E (EDVS for *Idus*, LLDB-74202, ICI 14, 10, II 4), *ū*:> O (INMONES for *immunis*, LLDB-12585, InscrAqu 3, 3393, 3), *i*:> E (ERENE for *Irene*, LLDB-12828, CIL 5, 1674, 2) and *u*:> O (FRONITI for *fruniti*, LLDB-12199, InscrAqu 3, 3129, 6). For resolving abbreviations of inscriptional corpora used in this survey see: http://lldb.elte.hu/admin/abbrev_bibl.php.

²⁵ In line with this, double-coded phenomena were excluded, such as LLDB-11843: *o*:> V / decl. IV pro II, VIXIT ANNVS XL for *vixit annos XL* (CIL 5, 1628, 3), LLDB-12273: *i*:> E / -ET pro -it (in 3. pers. praes. impf. verborum), REQVIESCET for *requiescit* (CIL 5, 8591, 1), LLDB-11758: *u*:> O / archaismus, VIVOS for *vivus* (CIL 5, 908, 7) and LLDB-57010: *o*:> V / -m> *o*, DEPOSITA VNDE|CIMV KAL for *deposita undecimo / undecimum Kalendas* (CIL 5, 5193, 1-2). Similarly, I have also excluded data forms that either contextually (e.g. SVB NVMINE for *sub nomine* or *sub numine*, cf. LLDB-37472) or technically (e.g. readings uncertain for whatever reason, e.g. LLDB-74007) might be regarded as correct, and are therefore labelled as 'fortasse recte' in the Database. Moreover, I excluded items imported from other provinces (labelled as 'import from' in the Database) using the 'excluding import and including export' submodule (see in the 'loc.' module of the extended search engine of the Database http://lldb.elte.hu/admin/search_2.php) that aggregates inscriptions (i.e. data forms) of the selected province by excluding inscriptions imported here from other provinces, but adding inscriptions exported to other provinces from here (and imported there).

Table 1. Aggregated distribution of E/I and O/V confusions by merger type and by era for the two provinces of Northern Italy and Dalmatia



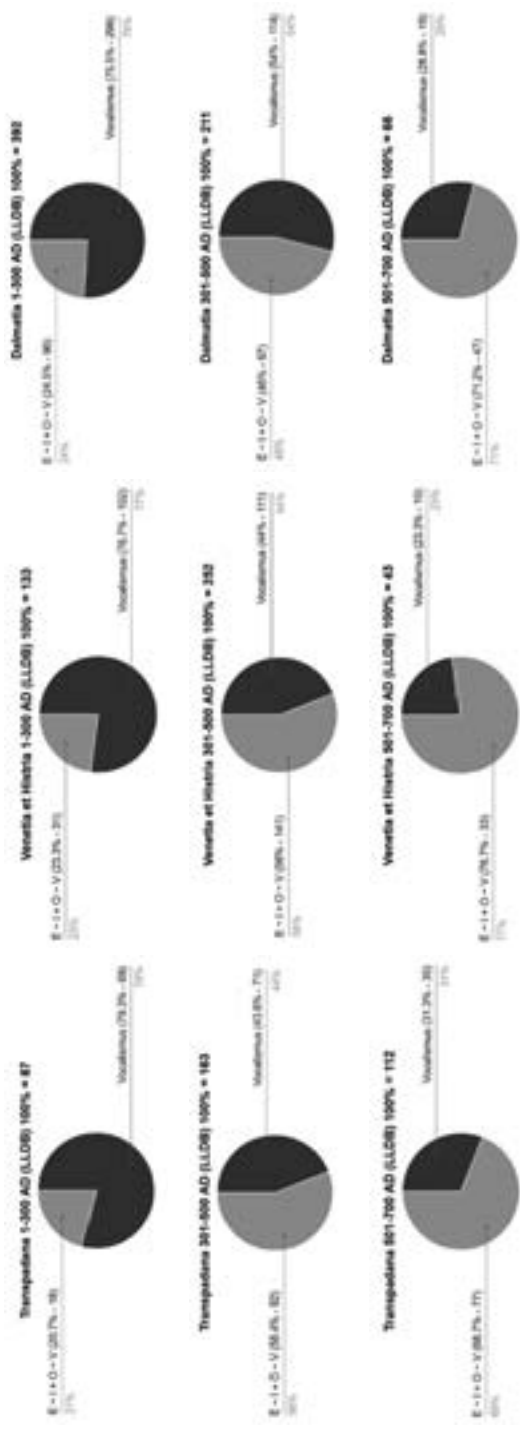
Based on the data from LLDB, it is also clear that in terms of O/V confusions in the early era, i.e. first to third century, Dalmatia (10 O/V: 86 E/I = 0.12) was significantly behind Venetia et Histria (8 O/V: 23 E/I = 0.35) and Transpadana (7 O/V: 11 E/I = 0.6). The low number of data in Transpadana (18) may raise doubts, but the number of data in Venetia et Histria (31) seems to be sufficient to assess the situation in Dalmatia, which can be well characterized by 96 pieces of data. The data from the later era, meaning the fifth to fourth centuries, clearly confirm what Herman already discovered: not only did Dalmatia (24 O/V: 73 E/I = 0.33) catch up with Transpadana (18 O/V: 74 E/I = 0.24) and Venetia et Histria (24 O/V: 117 E/I = 0.2) in terms of O/V confusions, but it also overtook them.

Almost the same can be said for the latest sixth to seventh century period, where the vast majority of data actually comes from the sixth century. In terms of O/V confusions, Dalmatia (20 O/V: 27 E/I = 0.74) preceded not only Venetia et Histria (10 O/V: 23 E/I = 0.43), but also Transpadana (29 O/V: 48 E/I = 0.6). In the meantime, it must be noted that this superiority in Dalmatia indicating that the *o-u* mergers took place more intensively than the *e-i* mergers should be considered an attempt for reaching an equilibrium, expressed by the ratio of 0.5, when both mergers are taking place with the same intensity. In the latest period, Venetia et Histria (0.43) and Transpadana (0.6) came very close to this balance, and Dalmatia (0.74) also approached it. Considering the trends, it makes sense to assume that in the seventh century, from when hardly any inscriptional data remain, Dalmatia too achieved this equilibrium. Accordingly, it is highly probable that the western-type vowel system developed in Dalmatia by the seventh century.

The extent to which Dalmatia develops together with the two northern Italian provinces is clearly visible if we compare the total proportions of mergers within all vowel system data, cf. Table 3.²⁶ In the latest (6th–7th century) period, Dalmatia has almost the same total vowel merger ratio (71%) as Transpadana (69%), but it is also close to Venetia et Histria (77%) in this regard. From Herman's data and the LLDB control study, it appears that, in terms of vowel mergers, Dalmatia behaved exactly like the two northern Italian provinces in the later and the latest periods, meaning the entire Christian era.

26 All the data displayed in Table 1, 2 and 3 represent the status of the LLDB Database on 05/08/2022. Regarding vowel errors, I excluded purely orthographic errors since they are not relevant for a linguistic analysis. The following codes were excluded as purely orthographic phenomena: *áe* > *E*, *é* > *AE*, *ê* > *AE*, *ae* > *E*, *e* > *AE*, *e:* > *AE*, *ae* / *áe* > *AI*, *i:* > *II*, *e:* > *EE*, *a:* > *AA*, *o:* > *OO*, *u:* > *VV*. Purely orthographic phenomena here include not only spelling patterns based on different (substandard) practices (which were to be avoided in standard orthography), such as geminating vowels as *VV* to denote long *u*, but also which testify to linguistic changes that have already taken place (and were no longer productive), such as confusing *AE* and *E*, cf. Herman 2000, 31.

Table 3. Comparison of aggregated vowel merger rates by era within all vowel system data



However, this is not the end of the present investigation. Dalmatian Latin material must also be examined according to syllable structure, to see if the O/V confusion can also be detected in closed syllables in the late Christian era. If Loporcaro were right in saying that ‘a later stratum with “common Romance” vowel system can be inferred for Dalmatian’;²⁷ in Dalmatian Latin we should find a vowel system that shows merger in the case of *ō* and *ū* in open syllables but not in closed syllables. This practically means that in inscriptions, especially in late inscriptions, we should only find confusions of the letters O and V in open syllables, and not in closed syllables. Since Herman 1971 did not investigate <o/u> confusions with regard to syllable structure (as this was not the purpose of his study), his data cannot be used to answer this question. For such an investigation, the data of Omeltchenko 1977 should have been taken into account, who also examined the O/V confusions found in Dalmatian Christian inscriptions based on the corpus of the ILCV according to syllable structure. The results of his analysis are summarized in the following Table 4:

Table 4. 4th-6th century Dalmatian vowel merger data based on Omeltchenko (1977, 119-318)²⁸

	<i>Stressed syllable</i>			<i>Unstressed syllable</i>							
	<i>/ō/> u</i>	<i>/ū/> o</i>	all	<i>/ō/> u</i>		<i>/ō/> u</i>		<i>/ü/> o</i>		all	In total
<i>Open syllable</i>	6	0	6	Ini.: 2	3	Ini.: 1	1	Ini.: 0	2	6	<u>12</u>
				Int.: 0		Int.: 0		Int.: 0			
				Pos.: 1		Pos.: 0		Pos.: 2			
				Fin.: 0		Fin.: 0		Fin.: 0			
<i>Closed syllable</i>	0	7	7	Ini.: 3	3	Ini.: 4	4	Ini.: 0	2	9	<u>16</u>
				Int.: 0		Int.: 0		Int.: 2			
				Pos.: 0		Pos.: 0		Pos.: 0			
				Fin.: 0		Fin.: 0		Fin.: 0			

As can be seen, there are more examples of closed syllable O/V confusion in fourth- to sixth-century Dalmatia than of open syllable confusion, so Omeltchenko (1977, 119) drew the obvious conclusion that ‘Dalmatian Latin belongs to the Italic qualitative system’.

Omeltchenko’s data and the conclusion drawn from them are confirmed by the analysis of LLDB data, which adds even more details to the picture, as seen in Table 5. On the one hand, the inclusion of material from the first to third centuries before the Christian era highlights that the *o-u* merger appeared in Dalmatia for the first time in unstressed syllables, and especially in closed syllables (8 examples versus 2). At that time, the stressed syllable is still untouched by merger (0 example).

²⁷ Loporcaro 2011, 691, note 13.
²⁸ Abbreviations are as follows: Ini. = Initial position; Int. = intertonic position; Pos. = posttonic position; Fin. = word-final, non-morphological position. Vowels are indicated according to Omeltchenko (1977) in Table 4 and according to LLDB in Table 5.

In the later, fourth- to fifth-century period, the *o-u* merger extends to the stressed syllable as well, where it appears mathematically in the same proportion in stressed and unstressed syllables (50%-50%, with 12-12 examples). However, this equality of ratios means that the stressed syllable was at that time much more exposed to merger than the unstressed one, since in general in Latin only 37.2% of vowels occur in stressed syllables and 62.8% in unstressed syllables.²⁹ The merger also occurs in mathematically equal proportions in both closed and open syllables (12-12 examples). However, this equality is again tricky. Since in general the ratio of open and closed syllables in Latin was about 53%: 47%,³⁰ the ratio indicates that the closed syllable was slightly more exposed to merger than the open one. In the latest, sixth- to seventh-century period, the distribution between stressed and unstressed syllables is evened out, as it corresponds to the expected distribution (7 and 13 examples, representing 35% and 65%). However, closed syllables in this latest period were more affected by merger than open syllables (8 and 12 examples, representing 40% and 60%), which indicates an even greater shift compared to the later period (fourth to fifth century). The data in Table 5 clearly show that in the late Christian era, the closed syllabic *o-u* merger became more and more intense in Dalmatian Latin over time.

Table 5. Vowel merger data for Dalmatia from the 1st to 7th centuries based on LLDB

	Stressed syllable				Unstressed syllable			
1st-3rd century Dalmatian vowel merger data based on LLDB								
	ó:> V	ú> O	all	o> V	o:> V	u> O	all	in total
Open syllable	o	o	o	o	o	2 ³¹	2	2
Closed syllable	o	o	o	6 ³²	o	2 ³³	8	8
(cont.)								

(cont.)

29 Cf. Herman 1968 = 1990, 197, note 5.

30 Cf. Kiss 1972, 14: exactly 53.1: 46.9.

31 LLDB-30502: u> O, ANNOPO| = *annorum*, CIL 3, 2225, 10, LLDB-33113: u> O, APOL|EI = *Apuleius*, CIL 3, 8667, 2-3.

32 LLDB-15550: o> V, MVNTAN|I = *Montani*, ILJug 1, 235, 3-4, LLDB-29419: o> V, CONSVBRINO = *consobrino*, CIL 3, 1931, 5, LLDB-32065: o> V, [D]VLCENO = *Dolicheno*, CIL 3, 2758, 2, LLDB-35849: o> V, MVNTANA = *Montana*, CIL 3, 2397, 1, LLDB-35850: o> V, MVNTANA = *Montana*, CIL 3, 2624, 4, LLDB-135599: o> V, CONS|VBRINO = *consobrino*, CIL 3, 8465, 3.

33 LLDB-33158: u> O, LATRONEBOS = *latronibus*, CIL 3, 8830, 4, LLDB-135596: u> O, IOVENTIA = *Iuventia*, CIL 3, 8732, 4.

	Stressed syllable			Unstressed syllable				
	4th-5th century Dalmatian vowel merger data based on LLDB							
	ó:> V	ú> O	all	o> V	o:> V	u> O	all	in total
Open syllable	5 ³⁴	o	5	1 ³⁵	2 ³⁶	4 ³⁷	7	<u>12</u>
Closed syllable	2 ³⁸	5 ³⁹	7	4 ⁴⁰	1 ⁴¹	o	5	<u>12</u>
	6th-7th century Dalmatian vowel merger data based on LLDB							
	ó:> V	ú> O	all	o> V	o:> V	u> O	all	in total
Open syllable	2 ⁴²	o	2	3 ⁴³	1 ⁴⁴	2 ⁴⁵	6	<u>8</u>
Closed syllable	o	5 ⁴⁶	5	1 ⁴⁷	3 ⁴⁸	3 ⁴⁹	7	<u>12</u>

- 34 LLDB-10907: ó:> V, PVNERE = *ponere*, ILJug 3, 2409, 5, LLDB-14192: ó:> V, PVN[ERE = *ponere*, ILJug 3, 2511, 2, LLDB-14366: ó:> V, PISTVRI = *pistori*, ILJug 3, 2663, 1, LLDB-135609: ó:> V, DIVNAN = *Ionas*, CIL 3, 10190, I 1, LLDB-135610: ó:> V, VICTVRI = *Victorii*, CIL 3, 9516, 1.
- 35 LLDB-9446: o> V, CORPVRA = *corpora*, ILJug 3, 2375, 4.
- 36 LLDB-224: o:> V, RVMANVS = *Romanus*, ILJug 1, 112, 5, 5, LLDB-9450: o:> V, PVREREMV| = *poneremus*, ILJug 3, 2375, 7.
- 37 LLDB-242: u> O, DOCEN = *ducenarius*, ILJug 1, 126, 8, 8, LLDB-9310: u> O, CONSOL[ATVM = *consulatum*, ILJug 3, 2250, 3, LLDB-9401: u> O, MARTORES = *martyris* (*marturis*), ILJug 3, 2360, 3, LLDB-20442: u> O, TETO[LVM = *titulum*, Salona 2, 697, 3.
- 38 LLDB-14386: ó:> V, OCTV = *Octobres*, ILJug 3, 2698, 2, LLDB-135612: ó:> V, VRNAT = *ornat*, CIL 3, 9634, 5.
- 39 LLDB-5292: ú> O, QVORE|RE = *currere*, CIL 3, 10190, IV 4-5, LLDB-5370: ú> O, PERQ[VOD-SET = *percussit*, CIL 3, 10190, IV 1-2, IV 1-2, LLDB-10863: ú> O, OXCOR = *uxor*, ILJug 3, 2397, 2, LLDB-10899: ú> O, OXOR = *uxor*, ILJug 3, 2409, 2, LLDB-20187: ú> O, ALONNV = *alumnus*, Salona 2, 384, 5.
- 40 LLDB-9437: o> V, CVNPARABID = *comparavit*, ILJug 3, 2375, 2, LLDB-10869: o> V, V[RDI] NAVI = *ordinavi*, ILJug 3, 2402, 2, LLDB-10901: o> V, VRDENAVERVNT = *ordinaverunt*, ILJug 3, 2409, 3, LLDB-18944: o> V, CVMPA[RAV = *comparavi* / *comparavit*, Salona 1, 300, 4.
- 41 LLDB-9224: o:> V, DENVS = *denos*, ILJug 3, 2129, 2.
- 42 LLDB-14223: ó:> V, DEFENSURI [= *defensori*, ILJug 3, 2541, 2. LLDB-18709: ó:> V, SARTVRI = *sartoris*, ILJug 3, 2547, 1.
- 43 LLDB-14152: o> V, IVVINVS = *Iovinus*, ILJug 3, 2481, 1, LLDB-14249: o> V, PVTITA = *potita*, ILJug 3, 2558, II 4, LLDB-14520: o> V / commutationes vocalium variae, NVOCERES = *noceres*, ILJug 3, 2792, 12.
- 44 LLDB-20315: o:> V, VICTVRINI = *Victorini*, Salona 2, 472, 1.
- 45 LLDB-24: u> O, TVMOLVM = *tumulum*, Salona 1, 96, 11, LLDB-18693: u> O, CONIOGI = *coniugis*, Salona 1, 262, 2.
- 46 LLDB-14506: ú> O, DENONTIO = *denuntio*, ILJug 3, 2792, 3, LLDB-14527: ú> O / u> O, VBI-CONQVA = *ubicumque*, ILJug 3, 2792, 14, LLDB-14534: ú> O, CORRET = *currit*, ILJug 3, 2792, 21, LLDB-14538: ú> O / u> O, VBI|CONQVA = *ubicumque*, ILJug 3, 2792, 21-22, LLDB-14540: ú> O, DENONTIO = *denuntio*, ILJug 3, 2792, 23.
- 47 LLDB-18336: o> V, PECCATVR = *peccator*, Salona 1, 96, 2.
- 48 LLDB-14153: o:> V / o> V, VST[I]ARIVS = *ostiarius*, ILJug 3, 2481, 1, LLDB-14271: o:> V, AD MEDIANVS | MARTVRES = *ad medianos martyres*, ILJug 3, 2566, LLDB-18705: o:> V / o> V, VSTEARI = *ostiarum*, Salona 1, 271, 3.
- 49 LLDB-9332: u> O, DOMOS SC = *domus sancti*, ILJug 3, 2275, LLDB-14507: u> O, INMON|DIS-SIME = *inmundissime*, ILJug 3, 2792, 3-4, LLDB-14522: u> O, INMONDISSIME = *inmundissime*, ILJug 3, 2792, 13.

The *o-u* merger was obviously present in closed syllables from the beginning. As a result, Loporcaro's claim can be rejected: there is no need to assume that 'a later stratum with "common Romance" vowel system can be inferred for Dalmatian' (Loporcaro 2011, 691, note 13), since Dalmatian Latin developed from the beginning of the Christian era according to the Western Romance vowel system, not the Eastern one.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be stated that the Dalmatian language, which is only partially known and died out by the end of the nineteenth century, did not belong to the asymmetric or Eastern Romance type in terms of vowel mergers, as a variant of it, but clearly to the Western or common Romance type. On the one hand, this is indicated by the analysis of the relevant scarce Dalmatian vocabulary, which highlighted the continuation of closed syllabic *ō* and *ū* in *u* in Dalmatian (Vegliote), and thus the merger of these sounds into closed *ɔ* in the Latin precursor of the Dalmatian language. On the other hand, the analysis of the late Latin inscriptions from Dalmatia points to the same conclusion, since this analysis clearly proves the presence of this merger even in closed syllables, and in a proportion higher than expected. Consequently, it can also be stated that the assumed subtype of the eastern or asymmetrical type, which could also be called a partially asymmetrical type, where back vowels would only have merged in an open syllable but not in a closed syllable, simply did not exist.

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▼ **ABSTRACT** Regarding the description of the vowel system of the Dalmatian Romance language, which is only partially known and died out by the end of the nineteenth century, different positions can be read in the literature about how Dalmatian behaved in terms of back vowel mergers in closed syllables and whether the Dalmatian language can therefore be dialectologically classified into the eastern asymmetric type or the western symmetrical type? The present study examines the Dalmatian situation (by reanalyzing the small number of relevant Dalmatian words) and the Latin situation (by exploring the merger of closed syllabic *ō* and *ū* in inscriptions with the help of the LLDB database) and takes the position that both Dalmatian Latin and Dalmatian Romance clearly belonged to the western symmetrical type in terms of closed syllabic back vowel mergers.

▼ **KEYWORDS** Latin; Romance; Dalmatian; vocalism; vowel mergers; inscriptions.