

Dr. Manola MYRTA

AN OVERVIEW ABOUT “THE ALBANIAN GRAMMAR” (1882) OF KRISTOFORIDHI

Kristoforidhi, a prominent figure for Albania, has a significant position among the Albanian linguists. His contribution and merits in the field of the Albanian linguistics is well known. His work “The grammar of the Albanian language” (1882), written in Tosk dialect, it is considered the best-written work of this kind, taking into account the period when Kristoforidhi published it. This text has been in the spotlight of many scholars and linguists, either in terms of content, or in terms of structure or due to the fact that it was written in Tosk dialect, or in terms of its main purpose.

This paper aims, first, to highlight the values this work, as a unique grammar of its kind and not as a reproduction of the Albanian grammar models which is written earlier back in time, where it is provided a general description of the structure of this grammar. Secondly, the paper aims to introduce it as a work which is highly estimated as it was relied on factual material collected by the author himself. Furthermore, in the focus of this paper is on the questions raised by Albanian linguists; why Kristoforidhi published the Grammar in Greek and if there were consequences of its publication in a foreign language. In this part of the study, it is aimed to highlight the reasons why the linguist was forced to take such a decision. However, Kristoforidhi’s “The grammar of the Albanian language” constitutes a valuable work in the whole set of works of this nature in the Albanian linguistic tradition.

***Key words:* Albanian grammar, factual material, novelty, Greek language, dissemination.**

Introduction

“The Albanian grammar” is one of the most important works of Kristoforidhi. He published it in 1882 in Istanbul in Greek (Gramatiqi’tis Alvaniqi’s Glo’sis). Prior to the publishing of this grammar, we have enough notes of Albanian language, mainly, by foreign scholars and written mostly in foreign languages.

Indeed, as the facts tell us; Albanian grammatology had excellent traditions in this aspect.¹ However according to linguist Shaban Demiraj, after the grammar of De Rada, the grammar of Kristoforidhit is the second of Albanian language, written and published by an Albanian, and the best work of its kind written until that period by foreign scholars (Demiraj, 2002, p. 42). Nevertheless, at this point, the question arises: Did Kristoforidhi know the grammars aspects written before him?

A response to this question is given by the researcher, Jup Kastrati. According to him, Kristoforidhi did not know the existence of these grammars (Kastrati, 2002, p. 56), because they were manuscripts in different foreign archives, private or public, but in the country. On the other hand, some of them were discovered after the death of Kristoforidhi, during the XX century. From the other twenty-five grammars, only seven were relatively complete: others were state sketches or reproduction of any previous author. According to Kastrati, due to the fact that he was a scholar, who had broad linguistic interests, he may have had one of Albanian grammar structure designed by Da Lecce (1716), Adelung (1809), Hobhouse (1810), Leake (1814), Pouqueville (1829), Xylander (1835), Hahn (1854), Reinhold (1855), Kamarda (1864), Vreto (1866), Rossi (1866), Jubani (1870), De Rada (1871), Dozon (1879), Benloee (1879), Juny (1880), Kulluiot (1880), Janik (1881). (Kastrati 2002, p. 57)

However, Kristoforidhi did not discover everything from the begging (Kastrati 2002, p. 57), but delivered by Albanian and foreign scholars. He followed the footsteps of the predecessors, praised the heritage of Arbresh scholars of Greece and Italy, as well as foreign researchers and Albanologists. However, it is very interesting: although he was acquainted with grammars published before him, in his work are not found traces of them (Kastrati 2002, p. 57). Always, according to Kastrati, in the work of the great scholar of Elbasan there is no impact of others, and “the influx and influence of Albanian Father to successors, have been evident in some grammarians of our language“(Kastrati 2002, p. 57). He further adds that: “The originality of our honored author in his Grammar is indisputable, unquestionable. We think that he has been keen on this side. (Kastrati 2002, p. 57) Indeed, if we focus on his book, the first in the entire linguistic concepts set forth, in the treatment of grammatical phenomena, and taking into account the period in which this text was written, we evidently understand Kristoforidhi’s trend as a language researcher.

Regarding Kristoforidhi grammar, there are to be discussed some other

¹ Before Elbasan outstanding scholar, in 247 years, from 1635 to 1882, were compiled 45 grammars of our language, in English, Italian, French, German, English, Czech, Serbo-Croat and Turkish.

valuable phenomena. There is a big qualitative and quantitative difference between linguistic phenomena of the Albanian language by the Elbasan grammarian and foreign grammarians aforementioned, except Hahnit (of whom he was a teacher and collaborator) and Kamarde, the others lack the philological, linguistic, glottological, dialectological, text logical, phonological, phonetic, morphological, etymological, lexical and syntactic diapason of Kristoforidhi. The first, deep researcher of linguistic disciplines, unattainable connoisseur, of his time and the diverse dialects of Albanian, a scientist with clear vision and perspective and high native language (Kastrati 2002, p. 58). Therefore, fairer, we can assume that the first Albanian author who was born, worked and lived in Albania, who wrote a real grammar for Albanians is Kristoforidhi.

Many researchers have expressed their opinions about his grammar, among which are mentioned Gaetano Petrotta, Simon Shuteriqi, Dhimiter Shuteriqi, Jup Kasatrati etc. These researchers have made different assessments regarding the Kristoforidhi work. Some have expressed general opinions about the work or for parts of it, others have treated such problems as: why did Kristoforidhi use the Tosk, why he published his work in Greek, for whom did he write the work for etc. However, to this date has been no comprehensive analysis of the Kristoforidhi's grammar, an analysis of theoretical and practical contribution to its language, considering one by one the linguistic categories of this grammar in approach with today grammars. Starting from such a comparative perspective of this work, supported analysis of theoretical and practical in linguistic contributions in Albanian language, in general and in grammarology, in particular, we may say:

- K. Kristoforidhi grammar is mainly based in the vivid language of people and in a factual material, unlike many previous authors who in drafting of their grammar relied, primarily, on previous grammars, in published works by authors of the time, in different countries or regions, in a very limited material or heterogeneous (Çeliku, 2009, p. 103).

- Kristoforidhi appears as a collector and researcher of master data from factual materials. He gathered the material himself with enough patience, going specifically or living and working in different parts of Albania. And from that extensive material, also collected for his Dictionary, adopted the rules and laws of the Albanian grammar structure.

- The whole material shows not only the recognition of the Albanian language by the author, but also the hard work done by Kristoforidhi in the grammar design which lies far from grammatical sketches copying the schemes and material of each other. Even, in some places we are dealing with a perfect version of it.

- The material is not only rich and numerous and collected in different

regions of Albania, but it is systemized and grouped in detail. Displaying as well as the accuracy and security in the material.

- In this grammar, drafted after two Albanian spelling books and after collecting the words and editing his vocabulary, Kristoforidhi presents his good knowledge of Albanian literature, of old and contemporary authors and profound cognitive and research of its dialects (Çeliku, 2009, p. 103).

Kristoforidhi grammar can be seen as a grammar built, mainly, on Tosk material. This text is drafted with the rigorosity and seriousness of a scientist well prepared theoretically for that time which is proved, first of all, with the material gathered carefully and accurately and well presented. Generally, it is noted that he has received from Tosk the more general and most representative forms of grammatical phenomena and forms that he gives, but he sometimes presents also other forms. In the text it is done in this way :near new most general forms of the accusative: “gurinë, fatinë, motinë, gardhinë“, are given four forms: “ gurnë, gurrë; fatnë, fanë; motnë, monë; gardhnë, gardhë; for a name are also given four forms“ kalënë, kalinë, kalnë, kalë” etc. For the undistinguished consequence also provides several forms: “ qenvet, thëngjijvet and qenet, thëngjijet “(Çeliku, 2009, p. 103) etc.

Kostandin Kristoforidhi also presents some grammatical phenomena and forms which have a more limited territorial scope: so he mentions several times to southern Albania, Cham, the dialect of Gjirokastra, Berat, Permet etc. Regarding Gheg, in the grammar are given, mainly, those linguistic phenomena which constitute the fundamental differences from Tosk, especially the phonetic ones, less morphological differences as pronouns, the present “godis”, against “godit”, the future type of “kam me pasë” and “kam për me pasë” of Gheg, against “kam për të pasë” of all the albanian language (Çeliku, 2009, p. 103). Kristoforidhi K. mentioned many points of the middle Albania, such as Elbasan, Peqin, Kavaja, Durres, Ndroqi, Tirana, Preza, Ishmi as well as sometimes also the dialect of Shkodra. As it is seen, the grammar of Kristoforidhi also contains rich information for Gheg.

Kristoforidhi grammar can be seen as a scientific grammar of the Albanian language, designed and presented carefully but also in a series of other specifications by a well prepared theoretically scientist,:

- The scientific character of the work also appears in the theoretical position kept for the grammar, phonetic and dialectical categories treated. Kristoforidhi spoke with competence about the phenomena that lie in Tosk and for some Gheg phenomena, confronted the facts of two Albanian dialects.

- The distinguishing features between the two dialects discovered, first, by him are entirely accurate; generally, they are accepted also by the Albanian

dialectology of our days. Among them there are (Çeliku, 2009, p. 103): the presence of nasal vowels in Gheg and the lack of them in Tosk; the presence of the sound /ue/ in Gheg, against sound /ua/ in Tosk; the highlighted vowel /ë/ of Tosk against vowel /â/ of Gheg; the group /vo/ in Gheg and /va/ in Tosk, the passage of the root /h/ in /f/ in Gheg, the passage of the unemphasized /ë/ in /i/ in Gheg, especially in the III own of relative etc.

Being connoisseur of old Albanian authors as P. Budi etc., Kristoforidhi is aware of the developments that some linguistic phenomena have undergone, as is the case of two vowels /ua/, /ue/, /uo/ which he rightly sees as variants of each other (Çeliku, 2009, p. 103).

All the above accurate data, further strengthens the conclusion that Kristoforidhi has not just discovered the linguistic material on which he built his work, but he was also a researcher who provided a thorough analysis of linguistic facts that this language case carried itself.

1.1 The publication of grammar in a foreign language

There are many debates in the circles of scholars and linguists about the fact that why Kristoforidhi published his grammar in Greek. Regarding this issue, the linguist Kastrati J. maintains that: “The views expressed on this issue in the scientific press and on local studies need to be revised and corrected. The interpretation of the data is accurate. It may be necessary and important to look at the events in retrospect, as they were, and not as we wish they were (Kastrati 2002, p. 58).

Meanwhile, the linguist Celiku M. explains that the Greek and not the Albanian publication of Kristoforidhi grammar were imposed by the social and political circumstances of the time. “He wrote the grammar, however, not mainly for foreigners, not only for Tosk and intellectuals who knew Greek, but for all Albanians. It was better that this grammar was published in Greek, than leaving it unpublished.” (Çeliku, 2009, p. 105).

Similar opinion is also shared by Kastrati J.: “He must have had strong reasons that have prompted the author to use this language, because he knew the goals of Greek chauvinists. Apparently, political, historical and social circumstances were such, that forced Kristoforidhi to publish its own grammar of the Albanian language in Greek, because it made the Greek neighboring chauvinist realize that there is an Albanian language with a rich phonetic and morphological system, with an ancient and diverse lexical, which did not leave lack of anything the most allotted languages of the time.” (Kastrati 2002, p. 58)

According to Kastrati, the Albanian grammar, written in Greek and destined for areas of southern Albania, for Greece and Italy Arbresh, the Albanian

colonies of Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Egypt, Australia, countries which, in most migrants were Tosk, it cannot be drafted on the basis of Gheg, since there it could not be understood by them. On the other hand, Kristoforidhi drafted his Tosk grammar in Greek language to help Albanian intellectuals, who knew the Modern Greek, but then they could not read and write in Albanian language. In this way, through the southern Albanian grammar, drafted in Greek, they would have an opportunity to learn their mother language. This reinforces the fact that, at the time when this work was published, there were few Ghegs who spoke Greek, while in Tosk, especially in Gjirokastra and Korca, some Albanian intellectuals, especially orthodoxies, spoke Greek (Kastrati 2002, p. 59).

Then, while Kristoforidhi compiled this grammar in Greek, he could have written it in Gheg, when it was assigned to those south districts, when the Greek was spoken in the church and in elementary school, especially religious, and parts of in some homes? The simple logic says it should not be in Gheg, but in Tosk, especially if it was written in the Modern Greek. Here, then, there are practical reasons that pushed the author to develop his work of Albanian grammatical structure based on the southern dialect. This thesis is reinforced by another fact that Kristoforidhi, as is known, his work was translated in Tosk then published in Greek alphabet, though it was known among southern regions of Albania, while for the Gheg, he adopted the Latin alphabet, because it was in use in the north (Kastrati 2002, p. 58).

Starting from the above submissions we can say that Kristoforidhi, in the period when he wrote his grammar, the main purpose may have been not only having a grammar of native language, but above all its possible spread, vindication of its existence, which could not happen, if it would be written in Albanian language, when Albanians, excluding those who studied abroad, who did not know to write in Albanian yet, and moreover, when we still did not have a unique alphabet. Beyond the above arguments, that somehow shed light on the Greek publication of the grammar, another natural question is whether there were or not consequences of its publication in Greek and not in Albanian.

According to the linguist, Celiku M. the edition in Greek limited its spread. However, despite this fact, this grammar has not only served to the ordinary Albanian readers, but it has also been an actual, theoretical and terminological support for the design of the later Albanian grammars, starting from S. Frasheri to I. D Sheperi, S. Shuteriqi, A. Juvani and K. Cipo who observed problematic issues, in the interpretation of the phonetic and morphological phenomena, putting on the basis of their grammars the literary Tosk (Çeliku, 2009, p. 105).

This grammar has served and serves as a good base for studies in the field of historical grammar, not only because of the truth in the provision of the

materials, but also on the positions held by the author.

An important aspect related to the grammar is the fact that there are not found foreign words in Turkish, Greek, or Italian. With many Albanian names that are given as example, Kristoforidhi wanted to raise at the Albanian reader the love for the country.

The works of Kristoforidhi made Albanian a culture language, documenting to the world that Albanian was a language like other European languages with a complete and rich grammatical system.

In the opinion of the nowadays and past researchers of Albanian, the treatment of multiple linguistic phenomena, it cannot only be considered “The grammar of the Albanian language” of Kostandin Kristoforidhi, but it should also serve as a landmark for studies of this nature.

Conclusions

Based on research done on the work “The grammar of the Albanian language” of Kristoforidhi, constitutes, in itself, a non-mimetic grammar of previous grammar models, but highly original in its kind. This work is made use of an extensive linguistic material, gathered with a lot of accuracy by the author himself. It is a grammar written mainly with linguistic material belonging to Tosk dialect, from which the author has addressed the phenomenon and more general and representative grammatical forms, which he reflects.. In some cases, the author presents some phenomenon and grammatical forms that have a more limited territorial extent, such as South Albania Cham, dialect of Gjirokastra, Berat, Përmet, etc. Regarding Gheg dialect, in the grammar mostly are mention those linguistic phenomenon that constitute the fundamental differences from Tosk dialect, especially phonetic, morphological differences are displayed less. Another valuable aspect of the work constitutes the distinguishing features between the two dialects accepted or observed by him, which are generally acknowledged by the Albanian dialectology of the present day. Regarding the question about publishing the work in Greek, which often provoke the linguists to this day, it must be noted that it was precisely the social and historical conditions of that time of Albania, which pushed the linguist toward this decision. Thus for him it was better to publish it in Greek so to be recognized by Albanian intellectuals which at the time knew it, than not to publish it at all. “The grammar of the Albanian language” of Kristoforidhi, even though written in the Greek language, in a way, became conductor of the fact that the Albanian language was a language with a complete and a very a complete grammatical system.

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