

The Role of The Greek Borrowings In Albanian Lexis

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to distinguish the Greek borrowings in Albanian language and to define their role in the layers of the Albanian lexis. Even though Albanian is an Indo-European language, this fact does not mean that its entire lexical fund stems from its mother language Illyrian. The contacts and the relations with the other nations have brought even influences on the language. Borrowing the words in Albanian has come as a necessity to nominate an object or a concept under some certain historical and linguistic circumstances.

The types of the borrowings and the historical periods which mark the access of these words in Albanian lexis are clearly specified in the study. Every historical concept is provided with examples, which are encountered in the dictionaries but even in the dialects of different regions, or with old words which are used in daily life.

Keywords: Greek Borrowings, Albanian Lexis, word borrowings, lexis of a language

1.Introduction

Albanian and Greek people, whose languages are Albanian and Greek respectively, are two of the oldest nations in Europe. They are settled in the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula and have had direct and multidimensional contacts of several aspects (such as: historical, military, geographical, economical, cultural, language, psychological contacts) for more than 3000 years. *One of the Indo-European languages which is still alive is even Albanian language, which faced successfully all the challenges. This is an indicator that our predecessors preserved it generation after generation as one of the most valuable possessions, they inherited from their ancestors. Preserving their own national language, they could escape the assimilation from the conquerors who replaced each other in our territories over the centuries* (Cabej, 1997: 227). The determinant role of the Greek people, of the Greek culture and of the Greek language not only on the development of the other Indo-European peoples' culture, but even on the culture of the other nations in Europe and all over the world is obvious. After both these nations became independent from the Ottoman Empire and created their own nations (the Greek nation at the beginning of the XIX century and the Albanian nation at the beginning of the XX century), they brought contacts of a new status during the two last centuries. We can notice a significant increase of the efforts made by the scholars and the supporters of the Albanian culture to translate into Albanian the peaks of the Greek culture and to bring into Albanian the history of the Helen nation and particularly to translate into Albanian the old and the new Greek literature.

Both Greek and Albanian are part of the family of *the Indo-European languages*, which are genetically close to each-other and have been used in territories from India to Europe since the ancient times. This family includes languages which are still alive, as well as languages which have died, which have connections and share common features. This language family is divided in many branches and sub-branches. Greek and Albanian create separate branches and do not have any relations with any other language.

2. The relation between the Greek and Albanian languages

The languages of this family but even the other languages create different relations with each other, based on historical, geographical, cultural factors, etc. The relations of Albanian with Greek are very complex and have lasted for a very long period of time; they probably started in the pre-ethnical phase of these languages, in their pre-Balkan cradle and have continued without interruptions through the ethnical period until nowadays. On the other hand, these relations developed under different historical and cultural circumstances, such as their simple contacts as neighbours as well as the ethnical symbiosis and mixtures in some regions as a consequence of the displacement and the emigration of their populations (Mansaku, 2004: 109).

The studies carried out during these two last centuries have highlighted the common features these two languages share according to the Indo-European aspect. But the studies have been very important particularly for Albanian language because there have always been discussions *regarding its origin, linguistic type but even its position in the Indo-European language family*. In the XIX century, many authors (A. Shljaher, G. Shtier, Dh. Kamarda, etc.) positioned Albanian between Greek and Latin, but closer to Greek. They reached a wrong conclusion, because they could not distinguish the borrowings that Albanian language has got from Greek and Latin, from the words of the inherited fund and referred to the borrowings as words of the Indo-European heritage. . (Mansaku, 2004: 109)

Synthesizing the scientific achievements of many research studies on Albanian language, Prof. Seit Mansaku, one of the contemporary and among the most popular scholars of the Albanian language history, emphasizes the fact that: “All the scholars have already accepted the fact that Albanian language is a branch on its own in the family of the Indo-European languages, which does not have any specific relations, let alone any derivation (origin) relations, with any of its sister languages in our continent”.

When we accept the fact that Albanian is an Indo-European language, we should not imply the concept that its entire lexical richness is part of the old Indo-European fund heritage. ***During the years, the relations with the other nations have brought even influences on the language.*** Based on the source, the Albanian language lexis is divided in two main layers: its own persona layer and the borrowed one. We are emphasizing these facts *regarding the place and the language type of Albanian, of its personal and borrowed layer of its lexis*, because one of the relations of Greek language with Albanian are the borrowings, the words the languages have exchanged between each other.

We cannot analyze the phenomena that turn up during the process of the borrowings, which might not belong only to the lexical-semantic aspect, but even to the phonetic, syntax, word-formation aspect, etc., as long as we do not know the type of the relations between these two languages

because “*the first task addressed to the scholars who deal with the Albanian-Greek language relations is to distinguish the proximity ties in the Indo-European aspect in the borrowing relations*” (Ibidem, 109).

2. Word borrowings

Being based on the typical linguistic criteria but even on the extra-linguistic ones *the borrowings from Greek create an independent paradigmatic group within the layer of the Albanian language borrowings*. They have attracted the attention of many scholars including not only linguists and Albanian language scholars, but even historians, archeologists, ethnologists, etc.

As far as the category of the borrowings is concerned, they are divided in (word) borrowings and (idiomatic) borrowings. However, in this study, we are going to focus only on the word borrowings.

a. Word borrowings:

The presence of a considerable number of words which originate from the old Greek in the documented Albanian language is the testimony of the early and the long contacts among the old Greeks and the Albanians’ great grandparents.

In the chapter “Greek Borrowings”, where the relations of Albanian language during its historic period are treated, Prof. E. Çabej accepts **three layers of Greek borrowings** in Albanian language: **the old Greek borrowings, the medieval Byzantine borrowings, new Greek borrowings**, which respectively belong to the periods he divides even the history of Greek itself. According to him, “Greek language, which was documented in the written form in the XIV century BC, is generally divided in three periods: **in the old Greek, in the middle Greek and in the new Greek.**”

Even though they are in a small number, about 30, **the borrowings from the old Greek** have a special interest not only for the history of Albanian language but they have also got even the greatest semantic developments, particularly in the expansion of the semantic structures and in the word-formation and the stylistic skills. They entered in early times and Albanian language inherited these kinds of borrowings from its mother Illyrian.

So, *lakër lakën* were taken from the old Greek; even the followings come from the old Greek: *lákhanon, mokër mokën, mekhané, makhana*, which result to be even in Latin, *macchina; presh – prason* from the old Greek, but *pras* comes from the new Greek. The rotation in *lakër, mokër* etc. is a sign of the old forms (Cabej, 1976: 48). The influence of the old Greek in Albanian language is noticed specifically in the field of plants, especially of the kitchen plants and the trees. Among the other examples, here we can mention: *kerasia-qershí, péponon-pjepër, pjepën, lakhanon-lakër, lakën, lapathe-lëpjetë, prason-presh*.

Prof. E. Çabej explains that: “*these borrowings reflect a cultural influence of the old Greek language in our country. It is noticed that these borrowings are relatively just a few in numbers. But the others which come from the middle and the new Greek are much more in numbers. In some cases, it is difficult to make a precise distinction among the old, the middle and the new elements.*” (Ibidem)

b. The borrowings from the middle Greek and the borrowings from **the new Greek** compose the second and the third historical group of the Greek borrowings in Albanian. A considerable part of these borrowings belong to the time of the Byzantium studies, which continued up to the middle

time the Greek influence of the antique time. Byzantium, which united in an inseparable unity the Hellenism and the Christianity with the oriental world, influenced equally on the peoples of the Balkan on the social, economic, cultural and religious field.

According to Prof. E. Çabej “we can categorize the Greek borrowings in Albanian language – medieval or new – even with the assistance of the accent. So, the words *farmëk, kallm, qefull*, which belong partly to Geg dialect and partly to the Arbërishte spoken in Italy, are older borrowings than the respective forms of the southern Tosk dialect: *farmak, kallam*.”

Here, we can mention come main thematic (conceptual) fields with the borrowings of these two periods. (Çabej, 1976:. 48-49)

Borrowings which belong to the **religious sphere**, such as: *manastir*, at Budi *munështir*, at Bardhi as well, in Calabria *monoshtir*, in Skrapar and close to Gjirokastra they are names of places: *Munështir, kallogjer*, the older version is *kallogjën, kallogjër, ikonë*, even older *korë*, with rotation; *potir qelq* (glass), at Buzuku and Bardhi *putir*. Translations from Greek, influences from the eastern church, are even the expressions *Ujëti i bekuar, Java e Madhe*, which exist even in the Northern part, which is catholic. They are present even in toponomastics among the neighbourhood names *Ajazëm* in Shkodra, the name of the village *Sebaste* in the north, which in the south is *Sevasteri* of Vlora.

Borrowings which belong to the **traditions and customs**. We are mentioning some examples related to the traditions of birth and marriage, which are closely connected with the church, such as: *poganik, poganique* (a celebration which is organized on the third night after the birth of a boy); *mirat* (the three fairies which determine the luck of the baby on the third night after its birth); *prikë*, at Budi *përqi*. Even the expression *vë kurorë*, which is spread all over the Balkan, according to N. Jokli is a translation from Greek of the Byzantium church. The Byzantium impact is particularly influential in the wedding customs among the Albanians of Salamina in Greece, as it was noticed even by the Albanian-Greek scholar Petros Furikis (1878-1936). In the death customs, the following are included *fron, thron* among the orthodox population in the Arbëresh colonies of South Italy, for example: *Milosao* of De Rada.

Borrowings which belong to the **social life**. We can mention here: *gjini, gjiri, gjeni, gjëri* (even at Buzuku, Budi and Bardhi at the colonies of Italy), *frati* (unity, brotherhood) (at Buzuku and Bardhe), *qefali* (chairman, leader), *pronë, flamur, simahuer* (assistant in a murder); *aspër* (money).

Borrowings which belong to **craftwork**, for example *enemi* from Greek *anemi, peovol* (net).

Borrowings which belong to **the life in the house**. Let's mention *tagar, gaforre, llukanik, magjiri* (kitchen).

Borrowings which belong to **gardening, plants**. Among the others, we can mention *perivol* (garden), (even at Buzuku LIV, in Toskë, in the colonies of the Arbëreshë of Italy), *trendafil, dhjozmë, define*.

Borrowings which belong to **hunting**. Among the others, we can mention *skile* (fox), *skifter, gjeraqinë*.

Borrowings which belong to **human body, clothes, jewelry**. We can mention: *kurm* (body), in the dialects of the southern part and of the colonies: *tipar, i pastër, stoli, stolis, benevrekë*, which has travelled through all the Balkan languages. (Ibidem, 48-49)

Apart from the borrowed words, some suffixes from the Greek source have also entered in Albanian language. They have been added to the roots of the words whose source of origin is not Greek.

We would like to mention some of them: (Ibidem, 191-302)

-it: gjirokastr-it, labov-it, libohov-it etj.

-jot: himar-jot, mallakstri-jot, delvinjot, sarandjot etj.

-omë: balt-omë, bur-omë, kredh-omë, zez-omë, valomë etj.

-is: kallaj-is, paj-is, përrall-is, rast-is, tigan-is, vaj-is, përsëri-is, uj(ë)-is etj.

-os: ajr-os, barr-os, breng-os, brum-os, çelnik-os, damk-os, fund-os, gjak-os, hekur-os, plag-os, tym-os, vend-os, vul-os etj.

The lexis of a language develops and changes continuously. The same thing happens even with the lexis of Albanian language. It was processed and is still being processed, it was enriched and is still being enriched responding to the requests of the economic, social and cultural development of the country. It has been completed and is open to enrichment with new words, expressions and meanings, or even with borrowings when they are required by the language agreement in society.

At the moment the borrowings from Greek enter into Albanian, just like all the other borrowings in the other languages, they go through morphological changes and later on they change and develop in all the other language subsystems (phonetics, word-formation, semantics, etc.) gaining other important values such as: *semantic values, emotional values, stylistic values, paradigmatic values, substitutive value or skills.*

As the foreign words enter our language, they may go through changes in their form and structure. *Albanian language gets the foreign words and processes them like its own words.* They keep on developing, become units of its vocabulary and face the concrete historical conditions which determine Albanian language lexis development in general: they become producing roots. However, “the words which are produced in this way are Albanian language formations and are not considered borrowings.” (Thomai, 2009)

As we have mentioned it even before, Albanian language (but even Greek) borrowed foreign words (has borrowed from Greek in our case) if these words determined a new notion (they are taken from Greek along with the notion), if they introduced a new nuance of meaning which was not determined by the Albanian equivalents or if a special style required them (particularly the international terms). This means that the Albanian word did not enter from the beginning with all its lexical structure, but with just one meaning and mainly with the most important one. For example: the noun **πάστρα (η) (cleanliness)**, has entered in Albanian in the function of an adjective *i pastër - clean*, or as an adverb *pastër (cleanly)*. Meanwhile the abstract noun *pastërti – cleanliness* is an internal formation of Albanian from the adjective. In Greek the opposite process has happened: the adjective has been formed from the noun.

If we stop at the following words, these lexical reports are noticed: words in modern Greek/words in modern Albanian: **πάστρα (η) / pastërti,-a (cleanliness)** 1:3; **παστρέω / pastróji (clean)** 1:10; **παστρικός / pastríkós** 4:16. It is obvious that Albanian is a polysemic language (there are 6 meanings in Greek but there are 29 meanings in Albanian for those three words which create a

word-formation semantic field. So, there are 23 meanings more in Albanian language.). The words that have entered in Albanian language from Greek in different periods of time have been taken along with their semantic structure from Γ. Μπαμπινιώτη; *Λεξικό της νεας ελληνικής γλώσσας, με σχόλια για τη σωστή χρήση των λέξεων ερμηνευτικό, ετυμολογικό, ορθογραφικό, συνώνυμων – αντιθέτων, κύριων ονομάτων, επιστημονικών ορών, ακρωνυμίων; με αξιοποίηση του γλωσσικού αρχείου; Αθηνών, 2002*, as a dictionary of the big format and as one of the most qualitative published in Greece so far. While the respective words in Albanian with the developments and the full semantic structures have been taken from *Dictionary of Modern Albanian Language*, Tirana, 1980, as the dictionary with the most complete semantic structures in standard Albanian language. In case there are similar meanings in the structure of the meaning of the words, this is related to the parallel developments in each language, becoming an indicator of the common features these two nations share with each other in the material and in the spiritual world.

The Greek borrowings which particularly belong to the history and not to modern times have their own place in Albanian language lexis, because they are used based on the values they have brought, such as semantic, word-formation, expressive, stylistic values, etc. In the consciousness of the young, contemporary user, they are not treated as borrowings; therefore they have to be treated as Albanian language richness. The word-formation, semantic, paradigmatic, stylistic developments, etc. indicate their worth.

Nowadays, we have lexical borrowings particularly from English, mainly in terminology but even in the general lexis, borrowings which enrich Albanian language. But a big wave of words is coming towards the standard Albanian language. The power of this group of words gets bigger as the borrowing is intermingled with the neology. It can be said that the borrowed words are often even the most unstable ones because of neglecting the Albanian word consciously or unconsciously.

3. Conclusions

Tens of other words have interfered (entered) from Greek, such as: *cuks* (burns), *farmakos* (poison), *feks* (shine), *gremis* (drop), *honeps* (like), *karfos* (settle), *kakaris*, *katandis* (take it to a critical position/state), *kolis* (attach), *kopanis* (hit the clothes with a log to wash them), *kuis*, *kumbis*, *kumbisem* (support the body or the head), *lips* (throw away), *lajthis* (make a mistake unconsciously), *llahtaris* (scare somebody to death), *llogaris* (calculate), *mbodhis* (prevent something from happening), *miros* (to oil the body with blessed oil), *mirose* (get better), *moleps* (make something dirty, to transmit an illness to somebody), *nanuris* (make a baby fall asleep singing a lullaby to him/her), *ormis* (fix, prepare), *pikas* (notice), *pleks* (mix, intermingle), *piks* (attach), *psonis* (buy), *qëndis* (sew), *qeras* (treat somebody with drinks and cakes), *qeveris* (lead), *skalis* (inscribe), *sos* (finish something), *stis* (set up), *stolis* (ornamate), *tagjis* (feed), *taks*, *taksem* (promise), *tendos* (lay), *tromaks* (scare somebody), *vithis*, *vithisem* (tear down, destroy), *zalis* (faint), *zilepsem* (envy) etc.

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