

The History and the Creation of Standard Albanian Language and the Role of Elbasan Dialect in this Development

Manola Myrta, Ph.D Cand.

"Aleksander Moisiu" University, Durrës
e-mail: manola.myrta@yahoo.com

Abstract Every country represents and identifies itself, through its mother tongue, everywhere in the world. If we focus on this matter, we will understand the importance of taking the so-called representative version of a language or its standard version, the existence of every language and nation that uses it. In this context, we naturally will arise the question: When and how is created the standard Albanian language? Which is the way that it has pursued to consolidate itself? What were the general historical, political and social factors? Which are in favor of or sometimes even a hindrance to the creation of this version? What is the role of Elbasan dialect in this development? This study aims to present the history of the foundation of standard Albanian language starting from the early fourteenth century till nowadays. We will highlight the rates that have been based on two principal Albanian dialects in different historical stages, we will also represent the general historical factors and social policy that defined "tosk", (southern) version on which the Albanian standard model is created. This paper will focus on the importance of Elbasan dialect or elbasanishtes, as a variant that was proposed to be settled as the official standard language, but it never becomes. We will draw out language and nonlanguage circumstances where such decisions were based on and at the same time, rejected the reality. This study will help linguists who study the history and the creation of the standard Albanian language.

Keywords: Albanian standard language, creation, development, Tosk, Elbasan dialect.

The process of forming the standard Albanian language has gone through a series of stages, which have been closely linked with the social, historical and general conditions of Albania, as a country. However, external social factors, as well as internal language factors, are those who have defined the way of forming the standard Albanian language (Samara, 1989: 24). Based on studies of different authors and researchers, there are two periods of the development of literary Albanian language: the pre-national period and national period with their respective subdivisions.

1. The pre-national period

This period constitutes the formation of the Albanian language as the language of the Albanian nationality, which reached a high stage in the era of Skanderbeg. At this time, our people lived in certain territories and Albanian nationality was already established as a cultural and spiritual entity, but highly fragmented economically and politically. "Mergers and consolidation of ethnic Albanians in an ethnic nationality called 'Arber' is associated with formation at this time of the general language of the Albanian nation. This time precisely determined the beginnings of the written Albanian" (Samara, 1989: 41). At the beginning of the pre-national period, relying on the language of the earliest written document dated in 15-16 century concluded that Albanian with two major groups of dialects that correspond, respectively, dialects of Gheg and Tosk, existed as a community and develops their unique place in the converging roads. However, at this time we could not consider it as a language with a genuine literary character. To shed light on this issue, we have made a detailed study of the works of old authors, a study that will help us to follow the general structural and functional development of Albanian in XIV - XIX Century.

The oldest document written in Albanian coincides exactly with the XV century (1462); it concerns "The formula of baptism", of Pal Engjëlli, a short formula with religious content written in Latin alphabet. However, the first book, "Meshari" of Gjon Buzuku (1555), is considered as the first written monument of Albanian.

There are many opinions on this issue, which considered the fact that Albanian was written long before the XV century. There are data that indicate an earlier period of written Albanian. Among them is worth mentioning a description of our country dated to 1332, known as the work of a French monk named Brokard, who wrote: Although Albanians have a language quite different from that of Latin, however they use Latin letters in their books. (Samara, 1989: 43). Likewise, the Ottoman chronicler called R.Çelebi in XV century proved that Albanians write their own language, but their writing is not very clear. (Samara, 1989: 43). These data show that Albanian was written before Buzuku. Thus, given this evidence, it would be appropriate to conclude as the researcher M. Samara, wrote, "The period of written Albanian after Buzuku is

only seen as a small part of the history of the Albanian language and as a relatively new stage of its development (Samara, 1989: 43).

Observing Buzuku language work, we note that it is written in northern dialect Gheg, using the Latin alphabet of Gothic type, where the four Cyrillic letters are used. There are also some typical patterns of Tosk, which prove that the distinctions between Tosk and Gheg dialect at that time were not large and that the dialects were based on very common element (mainly in grammatical forms). Different scholars have concluded that Buzuku may have followed a tradition that existed before writing it. On this view are N. Nokli and E.Çabej, while Sh.Demiraj claims that the double use of long vowels, not only by Buzuku, but also by Matrënga (which it thought might not have known Buzuku) indicates the existence of a tradition throughout the early writing (Samara, 1989: 44). After Buzuku's work, Matrëngë's work conveys an important role (1560-1616), because it is the oldest known full text of Tosk. The language of this work owns the Tosk dialectal features. Some features of this period may be inferred by observing the work of Pjeter Budi (1566-1623). Purely religious language Budi's work, as well as Buzuku's work is a Gheg variant very close to Tosk variant. Not much different from the language of other writings on the old northern language is the work of Frank Bardhi (1606-1643); his most important work remains "Latin Albanian Dictionary" (with 5000 words). The works of Pjeter Bogdani (1625-1689), were written in the northern dialect, but they appear richer, more fluid and more elaborate. In general, Bogdani's work reflects the development of the language in a higher stage of Albanian literature in the XVII century. Furthermore, for this reason, some scholars claimed that with Bogdani started the history of the formation of national literary Albanian.

From a brief overview of the language used in works of this period, it results that: ranging from "Formula of Baptism", "The Gospel of Easter", "Missal" Buzuku, and other works of XVI-XVII centuries, we find the written Albanian in two variants literary documented on the base of dialects. Taken in their entirety Albanian writings of XVI-XVII centuries attain their highest processing in Bogdani's prose, even though there are distinguished some features which belong to Pre National period of Albanian literary language. Their linguistic features, as well as their social functions, which have prevailed among religious function, define this.

Even in the XVIII century, Albanian written language continued to function more as a language of ecclesiastical literature. In Elbasan, we note the activity of Theodor Haxhifilipi (Dhaskal Todri) who created an alphabet of 53 letters. By this alphabet of a large number of letters, he had intended to create conditions to develop a standard Albanian language. Todri's work is written in an archaic Elbasanishte very close to Tosk. Features similar to language used by Todri, contains the same language of Anonymous work of Elbasan (XVIII century). In this period, the interest of study is in works of Kostë Berati and Grigor Gjirokastro (late eighteenth century and beginning of XIX century) whose language presents the Tosk features of their regions. In XVIII-XIX, centuries should not be left out the written language of Arbëresh. Observations on the language works of Arbëresh in the XVIII century, as Jul Variboba, Nikole Filia, etc, and other writers of the XIX century, as Jeronim de Rada, Gavril Dara, Anton Santori, Zef Serembe etc Appears evident that there was a consistency to Arberesh writing tradition which lies very close to spoken language. In general, the Arbëresh spelling of this period had a phonetic character so the words were written as they were spoken.

Obviously, at this period Albanian was written in three basic dialectal variants: Gheg, Tosk and Arbërisht. The main of these three options for a relatively long time was Gheg, which have the most ancient documents of the Albanian writings. Only by the end of the XIX century, it began to expand its functions to Tosk. At the end of the pre national period had overcome the structure of tribal dialect and dialects with literary variants had passed into a new phase of development. "It was very clearly outlined a dialectical-territorial structure that is typical of nationality in terms of feudalism and is the second phase in the evolution of dialects" (Kostallari, 1973: 64).

By the middle of the XIX century, Albanian standard language could not do the quality step that made at the end of that century. After missing objective and subjective conditions, had not arisen domestic market production of goods yet. It was not created the class that was interested in the creation of domestic market, which removes obstacles to the development of language and instilling it in literature. There were not necessary conditions for creating truly national standard language and the general historical conditions for ruling the country. All these factors were a strong and insurmountable barrier for the free development of the Albanian standard language.

2. National period of creating standard Albanian

	First stage	The first phase (1860-1879) The second phase (1879-1912)
National period	Second stage	The first phase (1912-1923) The second phase (1923-1939) The third phase (1939-1944) The first phase (1944-1956)

Third stage

The second phase (1956-1972)

The third phase (1972 –up to now)

The question is "When was the passage from one period to the other?"

This passage was made before the Declaration of Independence and it should be noted that the transition was not nor could be done immediately, but was the result of several decades. The first real warning that a new period in the history of Albanian literature began was "Evetari" Naum Vegjilharxhit who was drafted in `20 years of the XIX century and were published in 1844 and 1845. Although it was, a small booklet, as the primer book, played a major role in learning Albanian. This is exactly the period when it starts to climb the Albanian National Renaissance.

Drawing on historical and social features of language that period can be divided into three stages with their respective subdivisions. These three stages, as stated Kostallari "in which they walked along the tillage, the study of Albanian literature, binds a single straight-line development of linguistic convergence always increasing without returns, which had as a support in national economic , social ,political and cultural convergence," (Kostallari, 1973: 20).

3. The first stage of Albanian development.

This stage coincides with the national Renaissance. It was the century of a major turning point in the history of Albania, which had a significant impact in the development process of our literary language.

The first stage of literary development of our language can be divided into two phases:

- First phase starts from `60 years of the XIX century and continued until 1879

-The second phase starts from 1879 until 1912.

The first phase coincides exactly with the creation of the League of Prizren (1978) whose demands, in terms of the language, influenced the spread of the Albanian language and its disbursement. In this period began his linguistic and literary activity Kostandin Kristoforidhi. He has a particular merit in forming the national literary language, as he attempted to bring in writing two main Albanian dialects of that time: Tosk and literary Gheg. With this initiative, he testified that two Albanian dialects were not only very close to each other, but were variants of a single language. Kristoforidhi was the first to make a real historic step for the unification and unifying the written language. To prove such a phenomenon he developed a vocabulary that was called 'Dictionary of the Albanian language'. His first publication was in 1904, and the second in 1961, entitled `Greek-Albanian Dictionary'. This dictionary was the codification all Albanian words, without making any distinction as to the source, of one or another dialect. At this stage, no Albanian schools were still open and there was a unique alphabet. Most of the publications used the Latin alphabet.

The second phase of development of standard Albanian began with the founding of the Society of the Albanian letters (established on October 13, 1879 in Istanbul) which was intended as Primary Resurrection of the Albanian language of "coming together of ``dialects, as well as S.Frashëri said `` many language dialects bring division and exile (Samara, 1989: 62). In the statute of the society at the beginning stating that `` any nation that does not write his own language, it is in dark ", so this definition led directly taking the initiative to establish a common alphabet, which shall serve the issue of unification of the written standard language. This stage, in itself, relates to the Renaissance period that precisely allows a great historical turning point in terms of creation of the standard Albanian. The activity of the Renaissance was characterized by a set of requirements, fulfillment of which constituted the main goal of their activity. These requirements were:

1. To learn reading and writing to all Albanian masses of people
2. Official language was Albanian in all occupations and social activity in Albania.
3. Standard Albanian that would to be taught in schools should be unique, for all Albanians.
4. To create a single alphabet. A lack of a unique alphabet was a major obstacle to the unification of the literary language, for the dissemination of publications in Albanian and education in Albanian language.

Efforts to establish a common alphabet became even before the Congress of Manastir, in 1864 in Istanbul, but only in 1879 with the founding of the Letters Society succeed in creating an alphabet with 36 mixed letters (Latin, Greek the special characters), which was spread over the center and southern Albania.

Despite these efforts, the date that entered the history of the Albanian language, as the date of the alphabet is the Congress of Manastir that decided the unification of Albanian alphabet. His definition was important because:

- Affirm the existence of the Albanian nation as a unique nation over religious differences.
- Emphasize national unity and close an ideological and political path for foreign invaders.
- Open the way for unification of spelling.

“ Now that we have solved the issue of Alphabet, - wrote Luigj Gurakuqi- we will try to agree even on matters of orthography, which has a strong importance on establishment of a literary language ” (Samara, 1989: 72).

Regarding literary variants used in this period, we can say that in pre- national period, as outlined above, many variants were present, at this stage two options were created on two literary bases dialect:

a- Southern variant dialect or Tosk

b-Northern variant expressed in two variants: the center variant or Southern Gheg (Elbasanishte) and in northwestern variant (Shkodranishte).

From these two literary variants, Tosk dialect had advantage over Gheg dialect, while up on the eve of the Renaissance, northern literary variant had the advantage. Inversion of the ratio of the Albanian literary variants occurred during the Renaissance period. The results of periodicals in Tosk dialects in the period of 1884-1912, were two times more numerous than those in Gheg literary variant. However, what is the main reason that literary Tosk gained precedence over literary Gheg in this phase of our national language is that the characters of written works in the Tosk were more secular than those in Gheg variant. In this period, the written works in Gheg still distinguished their religious character. Thus, while in the Renaissance was reached an establishment of a Southern literary Koine, on the other hand, failed to create such a Northern Koine. While Tosk variant existed in a literary form, Gheg variant existed in two forms: in the center variant (Elbasanishte) and in the northwest variant (Shkodranishte)

In conclusion, we can say that the Renaissance brought our written language by the backward state of the centuries, raised the issue of the present literary language, which was designed as the main direction of its further development.

4. The second stage of the development of standard Albanian language

The second stage in the history of our national literary language begins with the beginning of the creation of the Albanian state and literary language had already served them strengthening its development. If the process of development of the Albanian literary language in the first stage was related entirely to the Renaissance period, in the second stage, the process of its development was conducted in other conditions which were related to:

- Raising the flag in Vlora, on November 28, 1912 and establishing the independent Albanian nation, which from the beginning felt the necessity of a unique national language.
- Creating the capital, a center that would link and coordinate economic, political and cultural activities.
- Formation of the party and the National Liberation struggle
- Expansion of school with a publication, scientific, artistic and literature character, since 1912.

This stage can be divided into three phases:

- The first phase started from 1912 and ran until 1923, when the state declared by a decree Elbasanishten as the Albanian official state language.
- Second-phase started from 1923 and continued until 1939 (the period of occupation of Albania by Italy)
- Third-phase started from 1939 and continued until 1944.

The first phase (1912-1923). During this phase, a valuable contribution gave the Literary Komisia of Shkoder (1916-1917). The most important decision of it was the unification of spelling, which is considered as a hanger for the unification of the national literary language. In connection with the problem of creating a common literary language and dialect of its base in the Komisi showed different opinions:

- One party thought to hold a bilingual literary system, Gheg based in Shkodranisht and literary Tosk.
- Another opinion supported by Luigj Gurakuqi that proposed secondary dialect of Albania or Elbasanishte to put under Albanian literary language. Gurakuqi formulated the decision of Elbasanishte, as the basis of the Albanian literary language in this way: "Because Elbasanishtja from the phonetic and grammar point of view is a bridge between the Gheg and Tosk should be chosen as the common language writing" (Samara, 1989: 80). However, the idea of putting Elbasanishte as the Albanian literary language is given in advance, at the Congress of Elbasan (1909). At the conclusion of the Congress, in point 11 of his decision in which all writers were required to use in their writings precisely "the dialect" of this city. This decree also widely reflected by press time. In the newspaper "Freedom," published in Thessaloniki in 1909, the decision reflected in this form: "Congress shall submit all Albanian writers to use in their writings the dialect of Elbasan, because it is understood widely in Albanian "(Albanian Alphabet and Congress of Manastir, 1972: 251). However, this issue was reflected by the Journal "Dielli" (1909). Point 11 of the Congress, which proposed the use of Elbasanisht dialect to all Albanian writers, as a "dialect" which is understood throughout the country. More specifically, it states, "Congress shall submit all writers to use in writing roughly as far as they can the dialect of Elbasan, because it is understood in all the country". Literary Commission decisions to unify the spelling of standard Albanian language were

echoed in the entire country. The Educational Congress of Lushnja, 1920, approved them. So based on the facts we noticed that at this stage, Gheg dialect with the dialect of Elbasanishte took priority, which was decreed to be established as the basis of creating standard Albanian language.

The second phase, which extends over the years 1920-1923, began with a decree of the Albanian state in January 1923 under which the official state language used the Southern Gheg or Elbasanishtja. Therefore, thesis to put Elbasanishte as a national literary language appeared in an official manner. At this stage began to bear a new democratic literature with democratic representative writers of 30-es generation. They began to publish journals with the progressive spirit. However, the literary version usable with very broad social functions continued to be the literary Tosk, where Noli's writings played a key role, but also the periodical press was widespread in this dialect. Therefore, the decision of Literary Commission (1917) and the 1923 government decree did not comply with the reality of Albanian literary language development. Consequently, secondary or literary variant of Southern Gheg dialect (Elbasanishtja) remained a very limited variation. Another reason why the Elbasanisht literary variant was limited was that Catholic clergy sabotaged the decision of Literary Commission immediately. Also, the weakness of the spread of Gheg - Elbasanishten explained by the fact that there was not a literary tradition in this variety, nor any particular institution through his reputation had been able to come to the aid of a new literary rate, to be accepted by all. Therefore, we can say that at this time Elbasanishtja was used more as a language of administration, while Tosk as the language of the press and literature. In terms of Northwest literary variant, Shkodranishte, it must be said that it had not an influential role in shaping the national literary language that had Tosk dialect and, furthermore, to establish it as a literary language, the difficulty in understanding of Albanian's southern provinces.

The third phase (1939-1943) .It relates to the period of occupation of Albania by the Nazi fascist occupiers who were intended to realize the spiritual conquest of Albanians in the so-called "Albanological Assembly ". Italo-Albanian M. Merlika 1940 delivered a speech, in which it held up the earlier decision to set the dialect of center Albania (Elbasanishten) as the status of literary language. It was also proposed that all textbooks should be published only in this dialect. As outlined above, we can say that during the second stage still failed to find literary solutions about the issue of Albanian language. The government's decision in 1923 to use as the official language, Elbasanishten, for a time created discord and opposition between variations existing in literature, which seemed like someone from an insoluble contradiction. In writing this opposition reflected this: on one hand the official language of the law, public administration the textbook was based on a medium variant and, on the other hand, the language of fiction and a piece of literary language based on the version of Tosk and Shkodranishten. The process of convergence, despite the positive results brought about the end of this stage, did not lead to the complete unification of literary options.

5. Third Stage of development of standard Albanian language

The third stage is in itself the decisive stage for the formation and crystallization of the Albanian literary language. On the historical side, it relates to important historical turnaround of our people, the liberation from the invaders. This historic turning point for Albania created qualitatively new conditions for the life and literary development. This stage coincides with the imposition of popular power and builds socialism.

The process of developing our literary language in the third stage of the national period can be divided into three phases:

-The first phase covered the period 1944-1956. At this stage, its development had been slower and more complicated. Journalism had played an important role in its crystallization at this stage, making a 'Dictionary of the Albanian language "(1954) and" Rules of spelling "(1956).

-In the second phase, extending the period 1956-1972, development trends of our literary language became clearer and its crystallization rate became more rapid pace, especially under the influence of the language of fiction.

Third-phase began after the Congress of Spelling and it is considered as a new phase of development that had as a main shaft structural and functional perfection of standard Albanianin lower levels of it.

This stage coincided with the final resolution of the issue of creation of the Albanian literary language and the non-language factors played a decisive role, such as:

- The rapid development of education and culture

- Profound changes within the population

-Increasing the role of capital as a center of economic concentration

- Undertaking a series of linguistic policy of the single party in power (at the time of the Labour Party). This policy found its expression most clearly in the scientific sessions of the year 1952 about the national literary language. Institute of

Sciences was established in 1947, UT in 1957, the other higher institutes of the Academy of Sciences later and all was set the task of linguists to study and uncover the rules of literary development in accordance with changes and demands of society.

During this period, until the Congress of Spelling, there were a number of attitudes regarding the creation of the Albanian literary language, expressed in various sessions, which will be classified into two categories:

- The first category defended the idea that literary language is based on Gheg dialect (Elbasanishten)
- The second category of researchers advocated the creation thesis based on literary Albanian Tosk dialect.

Idea of creating a literary language based on Gheg dialect and, respectively, based on Elbasanishte, was defended by Mustafa Kruja (1940), senator and president of the Institute for Studies in Tirana, who expressed the opinion that literary Albanian was built on Elbasanishte or the center dialect, but was against the concept of mixing dialect (Ismajli, 2005: 61). From this point of view have been a number of foreign scholars such as German researcher Georg von Hahn, who was considered as the father of Albanology. He discussed the division of the Albanian dialects and indicated that the future of our common language should be sought out, "where there is not a final separation between the Tosk and Gheg, where elements of the two main dialects approach each other" (Ismajli, 2005: 69). The scholar Gustav Vajgand claimed that "the Southern Gheg dialect, which should not be considered as a mixed dialect of Tosk and Gheg, is in its phonetic character, summarizes all the characteristics of Gheg; is not just understandable to all Albanians, is the dialect that may be learned more easily. The simplicity of the bending of nouns and pronouns against multiple traits of Tosk, the number traits of poor verbal and short participle, all these are enough facilities for learning the Southern Gheg (Ismajli, 2005: 70). At the same stream of thinking was the scholar Rajko Nachtigall, who proposed the dialect of the center of Elbasan, because of its central geographic position, it is understood by all (Ismajli, 2005: 71).

Idea of creating a literary language based on Tosk has also been supported by a number of researchers. Selman Riza linguist (in 1936) held pro attitude toward Tosk and considered Elbasanishten as "a dialect with a shallow cultural meaning, with a few idiomatic wealth, and especially with no literary development." (Ismajli, 2005: 85). In 1952, Idriz Ajeti expressed the opinion, "with some required effort of some researchers on the literary dialect of Elbasan, results showed that, in this dialect there was no value in the written literature." (Ismajli, 2005: 90). Dhimiter Shuteriqi, vice president of the League of Albanian Writers and a member of the Institute of Sciences (1952) defended the idea of Tosk as "South brought key leaders of the movement who were very numerous" (Ismajli, 2005: 121). Then went on: "postwar period made the Tosk dialect the official, educational, science, media and propaganda, language." (Ismajli, 2005: 127). The same opinion was Aleksander Xhuvani (1952) who thought, "the issue found the solution from the war and the time of reconstruction, when Tosk got a great push, and moved in the formation of a common written language" (Ismajli, 2005: 122). On the other hand, Lirak Dodbiba carrying this attitude: "The fact that the Tosk variant is used by our Labour Party during the war... These facts show that our nation, and all speaking dialects, has a common national language represented by Tosk" (Ismajli, 2005: 124).

Discussions have continued further about this matter until all efforts were finalized exactly in the Spelling Congress in 1972, which together with the unification of spelling was confirmed the unification of Albanian literary language, which will take as its base Tosk dialect. "On this basis the new dialect, the underlying elements include the elements of both dialects. Hence it is not fair to say that today literary Albanian language - says S. Comora-rely on a single dialect (in Tosk)" (Ismajli, 2005: 98).

In this period also began the process of influence on the dialects and the literary languages completed crystallization of the literary rate in terms of spoken language. Associated with this process A.Kostallari says, "Under the influence of literary language, distinctive features of Albanian dialects start extinguishing slowly" (Kostallari, 1973: 60.) A very important role for instilling unique literary rate in this stage plays "Dictionary of Modern Albanian Language" (1980).

This reality has remained nearly intact throughout the period of socialism in Albania. During this time, it was consolidated, widespread and used in all social spheres, the Albanian literary language based on Tosk variant, which remains in the same status today. Anyway, we must say that after the socialist period are again reopened debates in circles subtracting linguists regarding language of this dialect. It is discussed increasingly about the possibility of incorporating a variety of linguistic elements of Gheg in this representative variant.

Conclusions

The process of creation of the Albanian literary language has been relatively difficult due to the general historical background of our country. Anyway, the attempts for such a process date early in time and this is also proved by the historical documents. Throughout the whole way there have been continuous attempts on the part of different writers, linguists and well known characters to create and consolidate a single common written language. The first achievement

was made in the Manastiri Congress which defined the alphabet of the Albanian language, but on the other hand there have been lots of controversial issues about the dialect of the standart albanian language. Until Renaissance the Gege dialect was the one which predominated, but late after this period priority was given to Tosk dialect. An important place was given to the dialect of Elbasan which have kept going long from the Litarary Commisia of Shkodra until 1940. Anyhow, despite the state ordinance and the continuous support of various local linguists it was never achieved the standartization of the albanian language with the dialect of Elbasan. In the Spelling Congress in 1972 the issue of defining a standartized albanian language was finally resolved being based on the the Tosk dialect. In the last decades there have been attempts to be integrated in the standart variation elements of the Gege dialect as well which is well known for being rich in lexical grammatical forms.

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