

The gender system in the latin and albanian text of Kuvendi i Arbënit.

Elda RESMJA MOLLA

Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Tirana

Tirana, ALBANIA

e-mail: eldares_molla@yahoo.com

Abstract

The text of Kuvendi i Arbënit (Convention of Arbën) is one of the most important text in the history of written Albanian language. It contains the Acts of Kuvendi i Arbënit, gathered by the order of Pope Clement XI, in 14 -15 January 1703. This text published in 1706, first in Latin and then in Albanian, is an important source to elucidate most adequately the evolution of Albanian language in the beginning of XVIII century. Through this kind of text we may study Albanian common features in its grammatical structures. In fact it is not only a religious text, but also a text in which we can make several linguistic observations.

Since our text is a translation from Latin, it would be interesting to see the differences between the gender system of Albanian and Latin language; also the common features of neuter in Albanian of XVIII century, which seems rather weakened and the use of some feminine nouns instead of masculine ones, as they are in today's Albanian. These last cases can be explained as an influence of the original Latin text.

Key words: gender system, noun, influence, neuter, ending.

Latin as an indo-european language has inherited three genders system: *genus masculinum*, (masculine gender), *genus femininum* (feminine gender) and *neutrum* (neuter gender). When it comes for Latin, scholars have never expressed doubts upon the existence of this three genders system, affirming that it has been inherited from indo-european language. The ones who have studied Albanian language, scholars like Hahn, Bopp and Meyer have denied the existence of indo-european neuter in Albanian. On the other hand other linguists like Da Lecce, author of the first grammar of Albanian language, Pedersen, Weigand, Jokle, Myderrizi¹, Demiraj² Çabej³ have acknowledged the existence of the neuter gender and its indo-european character. Some of them like I.Ajeti⁴ think that nouns in neuter gender of Latin and ancient Greek are integrated into the same gender, but with the passing of time they have changed it. The ending *ë* according to these

¹ Osman, Myderrizi, *Gramatika e parë e shqipes*, Tiranë, 1944

² About a summary of linguists' opinions see. Demiraj, Sh *Gramatikë historike e gjuhës shqipe*, p. 184- 205

³ E.Çabej , “*Karakteristikat e huazimeve latine në gjuhën shqipe*”, SF, 1974/2

⁴ I.Ajeti, *Historia e gjuhës shqipe (Morfologjia historike)*, Prishtinë, 1969

scholars, is related to the ending – *a* of the neuter nouns in plural.⁵ The Albanian three gender system should have had an indo-european origin, despite the contrary opinion of some scholars.

Based on the etymology of these words, they draw the conclusion that some Latin neuters have retained this gender in Albanian, too. These inherited neuters have their equivalents in some other indo-european languages. We are talking about concrete nouns like: *brumë, drithë, dhjamë, grurë, vaj, ar, rrjetë*, a considerable part of these nouns ends in the vowel *ë*. According to Çabej⁶ this *ë* is related to the ending –*a* of indo-european neuters and especially of latin language. Still, Çabej in his study *Karakteristikat e huazimeve latine në gjuhën shqipe*, SF 2, 1974, 18, points out that “*preservation of latin neuters in Albanian attests an older period of loanwords, in which neuter was still living in latin*”.

It is true that these nouns in nowadays Albanian language are used as masculine nouns, such as *gruri, vaji, brumi, djathi, uji* ect, but in the first book written in Albanian, Meshari of Buzuku (1555), are considered as neuters, though not in a considerable number. Thus, in Buzuku we find *damtë, drithëtë, vojtë, fajtë, muojtë* which have their correspondents in latin too, respectively *damnum, triticum, oleum, fallium*. In latin they are in neuter gender of second declension ending in –*um*.

In the text of Kuvendit i Arbënit, published in 1706, original neuter nouns, mentioned in the lines above are disappeared, making a great progress compared to other old texts. As it was affirmed before, in our text these nouns have been integrated into masculine gender.

See the following examples:

ut cauta provisione revocetur ad praxim, quod pernicioza ignorantia intermissum est ad damnum (f. 36)

*te hiqiet prej Arbenit kyy **dammi**, e t'mbaronj puna, e ligjia e shendeçeemeja* (f. 27)

*pias Fidelium oblationes in **tritico, vino, et caseo**, sub districti censura rigoris, et pernicioza Sacramentorum privatione non extorqueant* (f. 52)

*Mos te ngremonjene Tefeeshimi me jinati te censurevet, e me privimi te Shiakramentavet per pune te lemoshenavet te **drithit**, te venese, ndo **diathit**, chi appene Upeshkupinjevet* (f. 46)

*ut quicumque in hoc unico signo deficit, **ab** Ecclesia se divellat* (f. 21)
*Pr'atà ai qi s'epp ketà shenjajite Feese, paa rreene banet i paa Fee, e dahet ' **n** kisce* (f. 9)

⁵Related to the origin of the ending –*ë* see Mahir Domi, *Morfologjia historike*, Tiranë 1961; Sh.Demiraj work quot. p. 187-189

⁶Ibidem, f. 18

The last example is an exception in which is found a noun in neuter gender. This conclusion is drawn because there is the presence of the ending *-të / të shenjajtë*, typical of neuter nouns, found mainly in Buzuku, the same as its correspondent in latin language, *signum*, noun in neuter gender, part of the second declension.

As it was affirmed before, neuter gender in the book of Buzuku, followed by the later books written in Albanian, the usage and the number of neuter nouns have been reduced⁷, being limited in some nouns of adjectival and participial origin, like *të mirëtë, të foluritë*, becoming part of the class of nouns. This kind of neuter nouns are encountered quite often in the Albanian text and in latin text they correspond to masculine and feminine nouns and in most cases they correspond to latin gerund.

*prestantissimum **docendi** munus (f. 23)*
*zaanati i ndershimi **i të mpsuemit** (f. 12)*

verba factis compleant (f. 51)
*fialla te i mbaronjene **me të baamitë** (f. 45)*

fidei conservandae propagationem (f. 15)
*per **te mbajtunit, të shiumuemit** të feese (f. 1)*

...quam conversionem Ecclesia Transubstantiationem appellat. (f. 17)
*e ketà **te nkthyemit** e chiuen Kishia Kattolike, Transubstantioni ... (f. 3)*

haec pollutio egressa est (f.48)
*ketà **te feligjiunit** duo i (f. 41)*

*nisi in oratione, et ieiunio, quo dum corpus atteritur, anima caelestis gratiae **pinguedine** saginatur (f. 26)*
*Se kiò dore Diemenish nuk largohet, veçe me Urat, e me anjinim.” Me te sillt ende se ligjet korpi; Shpirti pò majet me **te maimite** hiiit qielshim. (f. 15)*

*Ne, senescente iam mundo, **charitas** quoque refrigescat, cum omnes... (f. 76)*
*Tue u mplakune Shekuli, mos te ftofet end **te dashiunit**... (f. 74)*

hic est armorum delectus, hic victoria stat certa promissio: (f. 26)

*Këtu asht **të zgjedhunit** e armëvet; këtu paa droe asht dobija; (f. 15)*

⁷ About more information upon neuter nouns of today's Albanian see *Gramatika e gjuhës shqipe I*, Tiranë, 1995, p. 93

Quia vero summa divinarum ignorantia cōfitendi modum (f. 37)

P ò persè prej se paditunit se kafshiavet Hyinueshime.... (f. 28)

Sic enim quod corrigendum est, corrigent et quod sanum est, divino zeli fervore costodient. (f. 50)

se kshtu kane me nderequne ci dò asht i shtreme, e kane me rueitune ci dò asht Scendosh me te nzetit te zelit (f. 43)

quo possint reprobare malum, et eligere bonum (f. 38)

chi munden me zghiedhune temiret, e me larguem te keqit (f. 29)

Notice in the last example the translation of neuter nouns of latin language *malum/ bonum*, with a neuter noun also in Albanian *të kecchit/ të mirët*.

In the Albanian text of Kuvendi i Arbënit, not only here, but also in the books of early northern authors like Buzuku, Budi, Bogdani, we notice the usage in feminine gender of some nouns, which in modern Albanian are used as masculine nouns. We are talking about nouns like: *shëndet-ja, qytet-ja, vollundet-ja, pusctet-ja*, which are at the same time loanwords from latin. These nouns are respectively *sanitas/ sanitatis, civitas/civitatis, voluntas voluntatis, potestas, potestatis, virtus, virtutis*.⁸ These nouns belong to the third declension are feminine, except the noun *honor*, which is masculine. We find the noun *ndereja*, which can be explained like an influence of the feminine nouns, mentioned before. In all the cases in our text, the noun *ndereja* is used as a feminine noun, though it corresponds to the masculine noun in the latin text, *honor, honoris*.

See the following examples:

Speciosa germina a potestate tenebrarum eruta (f. 22)

Te hijescimat biimate Criscitit nzierre prej pusctetejese terretit mcatit (f. 10)

divinus honor in terris (f. 26)

ndereja e Hyit mbe dheete (f. 15)

Episcopalis honor dignitatis, magno ministerii oneri Angelicis... (f. 50)

Ndereja e pushtetese se madhe t' Upeshkupignenijese per pune te rande... (f. 44)

ne parochorum incuria, vel defectu, virtus, et efficacia Sacramento deficiat (f.30)

mos u mengoft Shiekramentit vertyteja, e viimi per faii, e prittese te Parrokianevet (f. 20)

quia nobiscum est magnus Dominus, et magna virtus eius (f. 350)

⁸ According to Demiraj, these nouns, times ago, have been in feminine gender, *Gramatikë historike*, p. 205.

persè me nee asht i madhi Zot, e virtyteja e madheja etii (f. 26)

qui Albanæ Synodo legitime inetrunt, consilio et assensu (f.15)

qi ndodhen mbe Koncil me volundete, e me kshiltit (f. 1)

et nostri iuris præcipua fundatur auctoritas (f. 23)

nde ketà kàa themelne puscteteja e essapit tiine (f. 12)

Potest quidem a privata persona, quæ omni caret auctoritate (f. 21)

mund jete se te pyete cush, ci s'kà pushtene (f. 9)

Nihil nobilius, nihil pretiosius, nihilque ad æternam salutem consequendam magis necessarium habet Ecclesia.... (f. 29)

As giaa maa te beganishim, as giaa maa të paçomueshime, as giaa maa te nevoishme kaa Kisha për t'u passune shendeteja e paa sossune....(f. 19)

The Albanian text of Kuvendi i Arbënit, as a large and important text in the first half of XVIII century, helped to the ulterior stabilization of writing of albanian language. It is important especially for the history of albanian language, its development. All these linguistic features and other ones that can be analyzed in other levels of language, attest a stable and rich Albanian, attributing to the text of Kuvendi i Arbënit great linguistic values.

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