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Steinmetz's Dictionary and its Structure -The linguistic area of the lexicon

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Abstract

Karl Steinmetz's German–Albanian dictionary can be considered a dialectal-regional glossary, as it reflects the spoken language of Northern Albania, especially around Shkodër. Though limited in scope, with around 980 entries, the dictionary captures everyday vocabulary, cultural expressions, and lexical forms used in early 20th-century Albanian society. It aligns with broader trends in Albanian lexicography, such as the earlier *Fjaluer i Rii i Shchypes* (1908), which had a similar dialectal focus.

Despite its size, Steinmetz's work retains lasting value as a linguistic and ethnographic document. It not only served foreign learners of Albanian but also preserved dialectal features and vocabulary otherwise at risk of fading. Echoing Jani Thomai's views on pre-World War II bilingual dictionaries, Steinmetz's glossary contributes to the documentation of regional speech and cultural identity. It is a significant resource for further research in dialectology, historical linguistics, and sociolinguistics.

Keywords: historical lexicography; Albanian dialectology; Northern Albanian; Turkisms; Gheg dialect.

1. Introduction

Karl Steinmetz, one of the lesser-known German-speaking Albanologists, made a distinct contribution to the study of the Albanian language, particularly the northern Gheg dialect. He was active at the beginning of the 20th century and undertook fieldwork in northern Albania, gathering firsthand linguistic and ethnographic materials. Steinmetz traveled across Albanian territories in the years 1903–1905, focusing primarily on Shkodër and its surrounding areas. His travels were documented in three books written in German: *Eine Reise durch die Hochländergaue Nordalbaniens* (A Journey through the Highlands of Northern Albania), Vienna 1904; *Ein Vorstoß in die nordalbanischen Alpen* (An Excursion into the Northern Albanian Alps), Vienna 1905; and *Von der Adria zum Schwarzen Drin* (From the Adriatic to the

Black Drin), Sarajevo 1908. In 1913, Steinmetz compiled a grammar of the Albanian language, written entirely in German and Albanian, the latter in the northwestern Gheg dialect. That same year, he produced a practical glossary — *Albanisches Not-Wörterbuch (Nordalbanischer Dialekt)* — also written in the Gheg dialect, and published in Sarajevo.

Steinmetz was deeply fascinated by the landscape and culture of the northern Albanian highlands. He worked diligently as a teacher and field researcher, meticulously collecting linguistic data from the mountainous dialects of Dukagjin and Malësia e Madhe. In addition to his linguistic focus, he showed a profound interest in documenting folkloric and ethnolinguistic phenomena of the region, viewing them as essential to understanding the cultural and linguistic identity of local communities. His grammar comprises 40 pages and primarily focuses on morphology, with limited data on phonetics and syntax.

2. Conceptual Framework and Methodology

This study aims to analyze Karl Steinmetz's *Albanisches Not-Wörterbuch (Nordalbanischer Dialekt)*, focusing on its structure, lexical content, and sociolinguistic function. The dictionary continues the author's broader aim of documenting the richness of the Albanian Gheg dialect, specifically through a practical glossary of northern speech.

The German term *Not-Wörterbuch* (literally “emergency dictionary” or “essential dictionary”) does not imply a comprehensive lexicographic work. Instead, it refers to a concise, utilitarian wordlist designed to support immediate, practical communication. Steinmetz's title makes it clear that this is not a full scientific work, but rather a functional pocket dictionary intended for German speakers in need of basic interaction in northern Albanian. In this light, a more appropriate Albanian rendering of the title would be “Fjalorth i domosdoshëm i shqipes veriore” (Essential Northern Albanian Glossary).

The terminology used reflects the work's pragmatic nature and its alignment with the sociolinguistic context of its time. The dictionary was published in Sarajevo in 1913, with some evidence suggesting an earlier edition in 1912. In the preface, Steinmetz (1913) emphasizes: “*This essential dictionary has been compiled solely from the perspective of practical use (and not for philologists). The words are written phonetically; the only principle has been to ensure that pronunciation is as easy as possible. The finer distinctions of sounds, which can only be learned through practice, have not been taken into account (for example, the differences between c and ç, gj and x). The letters are pronounced as in German (with the exception of certain specific Albanian cases). The circumflex over a vowel (â, ê, î, û) indicates that it should be pronounced nasally. In doubtful cases concerning stress, the stressed syllable is marked with an accent (').*”

In the Albanian language, the definite article is added to the end of the noun; in the dictionary it is separated from the noun with a hyphen (e.g., dor-a “the hand”). Beginners, in general, should use the words without the article, as this is correct in most cases (e.g., eine Hand = nji dor; in der Hand = n-dor).”

This research adopts a qualitative methodology, analyzing the dictionary's internal structure, lexical fields, and sociolinguistic features. Entries are examined thematically by semantic domains (e.g., agriculture, politeness, anatomy, Turkisms), and historical comparisons are drawn with contemporary and later Albanian lexicographic works to assess its linguistic significance and practical scope.

3. Analysis and Discussion

In the process of drafting the Albanian grammar, Karl Steinmetz chose as a basis the unified alphabet of the Congress of Manastir (1908), which at the beginning of the 20th century was widely accepted as the standard for writing Albanian. This principle followed in his grammar is likewise applied in the German–Albanian Dictionary of his. The Albanian part of the work is therefore presented with the Manastir alphabet, thereby ensuring full alignment with the unified norm of the time and avoiding other graphic systems that still circulated among Arbëreshë or in certain separate publications.

On the other hand, since the dictionary is conceived as German–Albanian, the ordering of the words is built upon the German alphabet. The alphabetical arrangement thus follows the 26 letters of the German alphabet, thereby respecting the orthographic rules of the author's language. However, it is noticed that two letters, "x" and "y", are missing in the structure of the dictionary. This choice is not simply random, but relates to the lack of direct lexical equivalents in the Albanian language for those sounds. The author, due to lack of material or to avoid artificial gaps in ordering, left these units out.

This fact demonstrates that Steinmetz conceived the dictionary not as a complete and systematic lexicographic work, but as a practical instrument, adapted to the needs of the German user who required quick orientation in the Albanian language. In this way, Steinmetz's dictionary reflects a typical reality of bilingual works of the time: the respect of the native linguistic norm and simultaneously the adaptation of the material according to the cultural and linguistic code of the reader for whom it was intended.

The letters are to be pronounced just as in German. The dictionary is German–Albanian, i.e., each word in German corresponds to the respective word in Albanian, in the dialect of the northern Gheg. The work has 38 pages. The number of words is about 980, including variants and expressions. A few cases can be mentioned: *tief* – *kthell*, *thell*; *schwierig* – *vštir*, *fštir*; *bohnen* – *pasül*, *fasul* etc.

It must be borne in mind that the period when Karl Steinmetz drafted his grammar and dictionary for the Albanian language coincided with a special historical phase in its development, in which the process of undertaking unification of the language had begun, but no final decision had yet been reached. The efforts to create a common linguistic norm, undertaken by patriots and intellectuals of Albania, had started early, being expressed in various initiatives of an educational, cultural and linguistic character. A culminating point of this process was the Congress of Manastir of 1908,

which, although focused mainly on the unification of the Albanian alphabet, laid the foundations for further steps toward its standardisation. Also, an important role in this direction was played by the Society “Bashkimi”, founded in 1899, which published 32 works in the field of the Albanian language and literature, thereby contributing significantly to its enrichment and codification.

These efforts were partly crowned by the activity of the Literary Commission of Shkodër (1916–1918), which was distinguished for its standpoints based on scientific principles and for an impartial approach in the languageplanning of Albanian. Its decisions, drafted on the basis of detailed linguistic analyses and on a spirit of national unity, led to the formulation of an official usage norm, which, although not definitive, laid the groundwork for further development of the standard form of Albanian in subsequent decades. In this context, Steinmetz’s activity must be seen not as an isolated effort, but as part of a broader historical process, in which various authors, local and foreign, contributed to the construction of the Albanian linguistic identity.

The dictionary compiled by Steinmetz includes a wide lexical range, mostly derived from everyday spoken discourse, reflecting the living language used by native speakers in different communicative contexts. Lexemes that cover the domain of gratitude and expressions of politeness are found in it, which testify not only to the verbal codes of communication, but also to the social and cultural norms of the time. We list them below:

bitten: ich b. dich – po t’lútem; *bitte?* (in the sense of: how? what is desirable?) – lépe
danken: danke! – éjvala! more politely – tu rit nera!

Likewise, a significant place is occupied by terms that relate to the sector of agriculture, livestock, clothing, thereby offering a rich overview of the vocabulary that describes the vital activities of the traditional rural Albanian economy, as in the examples below:

Names of animals and birds:

gans – *pata* (goose)

hammel – *daši* (ram)

huhn – *pula* (chicken)

hund – *čeni* (dog)

kalb – *viči* (calf); kalbfleisch – *miš vičit* (veal)

katze – *mica* (cat)

kuh – *lopa* (cow)

lamm – *kindži* (lamb)

ochse – *kâu* (ox)

schaf – *déle/delja*; *schafe* (Collective designation) *dhent* (sheep)

schlange – *džarpni* (snake)

schwein – *thiiu* (pig)

vogel – *zogu* (bird)

ziege – *dhiija* (goat)

ente – *rika* (duck)

pferd – *kali* (horse)

Also included are lexemes from the sphere of foodstuffs, which reflect both traditional life and the culture of hospitality, as well as from the area of clothing, which provide valuable data on the tradition of production and use of folk costumes.

Nouns in the food sphere:

apfel (tree and fruit) – *molla* (apple)

bier – *birra* (beer)

bohnen – *pasúl, fasúl* (beans)

branntwein – *rakíja* (brandy)

brot – *buka* (bread)

butter – *tlüni* (butter)

ei – *vöja* (egg)

essig – *ufla* (vinegar)

feige – *fiku* (fig)

fleisch – *mišI* (meat); rindfleisch – *miš muzätit*; kalbfleisch – *miš vicit* (beef);

hammelfleisch – *miš dasit* (mutton); schweinefleisch – *miš thiut* (pork)

frühstück – *cila*; frühstücken – *me hanger cílen* (breakfast)

gerste – *elbi* (barley)

getreide – *drithi* (grain)

hafer – *tršána* (oats)

kartoffel – *kertólla* (potato)

käse – *djathi* (cheese)

kohl/kraut – *lakna* (cabbage)

mehl – *milli* (flour)

oel – *voji* (oil)

pflaume/zwetschke – *kúmulla* (plum)

reis – *orízi* (rice)

salz – *krüpa* (salt)

suppe – *čorba* (soup)

thee – *čaji* (tea)

weintrauben – *ruši* (grapes)

zucker – *šecéri* (sugar)

Names of trees and fruittrees:

baum – *lisi* (fruit tree) – *pêma* (tree)

blume – *lule* – *lulja* (flower)

buche – *ahi* (beech)

eiche – *lisi* (oak)

holz – *drûni* (wood)

weingarten – *vnešta* (vineyard)

Nouns that include parts of the human body:

hals – čafa (neck)
knie – gjûni (knee)
kopf – krüet (head)
mund – goja (mouth)
rücken – špina (back)
zahn – dhami (tooth)
auge – süni (eye)

Names of clothing:

kleid – pétku, téša (dress)
schuh – kúndura (halfshoe of the city dwellers) kpuca, (Bundshoe of the country population) opénga, (shoe)
schuhmacher – kundurdžija (shoemaker)
strumpf – čarápi sock)
stück – copa (piece)
mantel – mallóta (coat)

A small part of the dictionary is devoted to tool names and handworking implements, elements that demonstrate the development of craftsmanship and folk technologies of the time.

Household tools of everyday use:

gabel – pirûni (fork)
hacke – sakica (hoe)
löffel – luga (spoon)
mühle – mulîni (mill)
nadel – džülpáni needle)
teller – činíjja (plate)
topf – vegši (pot)

This thematic selection, which interweaves elements of material and spiritual life, gives the work manifold value: as a lexical source for historical linguistics, as an ethnographic testimony and as a useful material for the study of the interaction between language and culture in the early 20th century.

A considerable presence of words of Turkish origin is noticed in the Albanian language, a phenomenon closely connected with the longstanding influence of the Ottoman Empire in the Albanian territories. The influx of Turkisms reached its peak in the 18th century, a period in which the bejtexhinj literature blossomed and became one of the main carriers of this linguistic and cultural influence. Cities such as Berat, Shkodër, Gjirokastër and Elbasan became important centers where Turkisms spread faster and more widely, visibly influencing the vocabulary of written and spoken Albanian of the time. But, according to Kostallari (1989), the flooding of Turkisms in the Albanian language had begun before Ottoman rule. Surely there were few words such as: çarçaf, çorape, gajtan, penxhere, fitil, mejdan etc.

According to Çabej (1989), Turkish influence on Albanian was much stronger in

urban life than in the countryside. This is evidenced by the fact that the terminology of agriculture and animal husbandry in these areas is much smaller compared with the portion that Turkish holds in the vocabulary of urban districts.

The followings are examples :

antworten – me dhan dževap; Antwort – dževapi (to answer / answer)

arzt – hečimi (doctor)

bereit – házer (ready)

danken – danke! – éjvala! (thank / thanks!)

darum – praněj, per ket sebét (therefore, for this reason)

diener – hizmečári (servant)

fenster – pedžére – pedžérja (window)

fremder – jabandžiija (stranger)

graben – hennèku (ditch)

handwerker – zanatlíja (craftsman)

minute – dekíku (minute)

noch – halá, édhe (still, also)

preis – pazári (price)

rechnen – me bâ hesáp ; Rechnung – hesápi (to calculate / bill)

revolver – altiia, altipatláre (revolver)

ruhig – rahat (calm)

schüssel – sahani (bowl)

sicher (wahr, gewiss) – sakt; (sure) – saglám (safe)

soldat – nizami; soldaten – askéri (soldier / soldiers)

spagat – sidžimi (cord / twine)

astadt – šehri (city)

strasse – džáde/džadja (street)

stunde – saháti (hour)

suppe – čorba (soup)

umsonst (gratis) – bedihava; (vergebens) – kot (free / in vain)

verwandte – ilakaaja (relatives)

welt – dünjaaja (world)

wirtshaus – mejhánemejhánja; (zum Übernachten) – hani; host – handžiija (tavern / inn / host)

4. Conclusion

The dictionary compiled by Karl Steinmetz can rightfully be considered a dialectal-regional glossary due to its content, which is primarily focused on the spoken lexicon of a specific region and the preservation of linguistic forms used in everyday communication. Beyond its value as a practical tool for foreigners learning the Albanian language, this dictionary represents a valuable testimony to the lexical richness and dialectal features of the period in which it was compiled.

At the time when Steinmetz undertook the work of compiling this dictionary, *Fjaluer i Rii i Shchypes* (1908) had already been published—a dialectal-regional dictionary

that contained approximately 13,500 words. Carefully compiled and lexically rich, this publication represented a significant achievement in the field of Albanian lexicography and remained for a long time the most comprehensive work of its kind. In fact, it served as an irreplaceable reference for linguists, dialectologists, and Albanologists until the publication of the Dictionary of the Institute of Sciences in 1954, which marked a new stage in the standardization and systematization of the Albanian lexicon.

A comparison between Steinmetz's dictionary and the *Fjaluer i Rii* shows that, although more limited in scope, Steinmetz's work retains its value as an authentic document of the spoken language of the time, reflecting not only the structure and lexical richness of a specific area but also the nuances of the material and spiritual culture of Albanian society at the beginning of the 20th century.

As Jani Thomai (2001) stated, "...the bilingual dictionaries compiled before the Liberation, as has already been observed, had a markedly dialectal or regional character, regardless of the 'intentions' of their authors. Thus, the inclusion in these dictionaries of lexical and phraseological material limited to various regions also has its own value, because, in this way, this material was brought to light, recorded in writing, and circulated to become a shared asset, to be generalized."

The bilingual German–Albanian dictionary by Karl Steinmetz can be seen in the light of Thomai's observation: that dictionaries compiled before the Liberation often had a dialectal or regional character. Steinmetz's glossary, although a serious foreign effort to document the Albanian language, clearly reflects the dialectal features of the northern speech, particularly that of Shkodër and its surrounding areas. This regional lexical material is of great importance because it documents the spoken language of a specific historical period and becomes part of Albania's linguistic heritage.

In this sense, Steinmetz's dictionary is not merely a lexicographic attempt to translate German words into Albanian, but an important linguistic and cultural document that contributes to the reconstruction of dialectal varieties of the Albanian language in the early 20th century. It reflects not only the phonetic, lexical, and semantic features of the contemporary speech, but also the interaction between languages and the influence of historical and social factors on language development. In this way, Steinmetz's work constitutes a valuable source for further historical, dialectological, and sociolinguistic studies.

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