

KRISTOFORIDHI'S CONCEPT IN CLASSIFYING GHEG VOWELS

Manola Kaçi Myrta, PhD

“Aleksander Moisiu” University, Albania

Abstract

Kristoforidhi, is a linguist and scholar who has contributed to Albanian linguistics. His work has been focus of various linguists and scholars. His interests' studies, among others, have also included the phenomena of phonetic nature. In this study, we are focused on introducing Kristoforidhi's concept about Gheg vowel system based in the respective classifications according to their features. Another aim of this study is Kristoforidhi's treatment of some phonetic phenomena as elision, aphaeresis, rounded, diphthongs and consonants exchanges. Foreign researchers, who also presented their concepts about Albanian phoneme inventory, also treated Albanian phoneme vowel system. From this perspective, another aim of the study is to compare the Kristoforidhi's concept with Albanian and foreign linguists, as A. Dodd, Jorgji Gjinari Rexhep Ismaili, M. Halimi, G.S.Louman, N.S Trubeckoi, V. Polak, in order to evaluate Kristoforidhi's ideas and concepts.

Based on these ideas, Kristoforidhi's concept about Gheg vowel system is very close to the concepts of different albanologists, but also Albanian scholars as well. We may admit that Kristoforidhi's concept is very close to the contemporary concepts of this nature, therefore, the classification of Gheg vowel system.

Keywords: Vowel system, Gheg, comparison, Kristoforidhi, concepts contemporary

Introduction

Kristoforidhi works are often made the focus of study by different linguists, in which they find linguistic values that stand even today in Albanian linguistic opinion. An interesting aspect on the value of Konstandin Kristoforidhi work constitutes its concept related to the Gheg vowels system. In fact, considering Kristoforidhi's linguistic concepts, the focus of linguists has been specifically on the grammatical aspect, lexical enrichment but what is less treated is his opinion on phonetics. Shedding light on this issue, we

refer to some of his works in which it is treated and presented the vowel system "Albanian ABC book", "Grammar", "New Testament", etc., Through which we will create a full picture of Kristoforidhi's vowel system concept mainly of Gheg.

Initially we would underline that he uses the form “zantore” (vowel) and for nasal he used the form of *a*, (hundare).

In his "Albanian ABC book"³⁴, Kristoforidhi presents this vowels system for Gheg³⁵:

Vowels	a	e	ë	i	o	u	y
Short vowels	ǎ	ě		ĩ	õ	ũ	ÿ
Long vowels	ā	ē		ī	ō	ū	ȳ
Short nasal vowels	ạ̌	ẹ̌		ị̃	ọ̃	ụ̃	ỵ̈
Long nasal vowels	ạ̄	ẹ̄		ị̄	ọ̄	ụ̄	ỵ̄

The same Gheg vowel system is provided in the introduction of "The New Testament"³⁶. In contrast to these two works, *the sacred story written for the dilemma*, "The old Testament", even towards the world translated in Gheg Albanian by Konstandin Kristoforidit, Elbasanësit published in 1970, the Gheg vowel system appears as follows:

Short vowels	ǎ	ě	ĩ	õ	ũ	ÿ
Long vowels	ā	ē	ī	ō	ū	ȳ
Short nasal vowels	ạ̌	ẹ̌	ị̃	ọ̃	ụ̃	ỵ̈
Long nasal vowels	ạ̄	ẹ̄	ị̄	ọ̄	ụ̄	ỵ̄

Therefore, as noted in the 1870 edition, there is no group of 7 vowel phonemes:

a e ë i o u y

Judging based on the vowels involved in this group and, in particular, given the presence of the vowel “ë” that exists only in an unstressed position

³⁴A copy of this book is the *Bibliothèque Intervuniversitaires des Langues Orientale*, 4, rue de Lille- 75004 , with the title “Abetar shqip”, written by Kostantinit Kristoforidit Elbasanësit, Kostandinopul, 1872. This book has got 32 pages , which begins with the Albanian alphabet , followed by the vowel system of Gheg, it was published in : Kostandinopul, from the Publisher A.H. Bojagjinit 1872 etc.

³⁵ In considering the vowel system , we will use the nowadays alphabet

³⁶ The new testament of God and our servant of God Jesus Christ, translated in Gheg Albanian by *Kostantinit Kristoforidit, Elbasanësit , published in 1872.*

in Gheg, it can affirm that this group represents the Gheg unstressed vowel system (Beci, 2002, p. 101).

Therefore, within the Gheg vowel system, Kristoforidhi distinguished two subsystems or a system that took place in two different ways: in a stressed and unstressed position. Apart from this system the unstressed “ë”, considering the fact that it is a phoneme that works only in the unstressed position.

In the Gheg vowel system Kristoforidhi, differs:

- Unstressed vowel system consisting of seven vowel phonemes.
- Stressed vowel system consisting of 24 vowel phonemes, divided into four separate groups with a composition of 6 phonemes.

Unstressed vowel system consists of the following vowels:

a e ë i o u

Stressed vowel system consists of the following vowels:

- Short oral vowel phonemes: ǎ ě ĭ ǒ ŭ ŷ

- Long oral vowel phonemes: ā ē ī ō ū ŷ

- Short nasal vowel phonemes: ǎ ě ĭ ǒ ŭ ŷ

- Long nasal vowel phonemes: ǎ̃ ě̃ ĭ̃ ǒ̃ ŭ̃ ŷ̃

In his work, linguist B. Beci(2002, p. 102) makes a classification of *Gheg unstressed vowel system* in "Albanian ABC book" which is presented by the following scheme:

	Front	Central	Back
Closed	i	y	u
Semi closed	e	ě	o
Opened		a	

It is interesting to mention the fact that in this work, Kristoforidhi represents a Tosk phoneme vowel system. This system consists of 7 unstressed vowel phonemes (Beci, 2002, p. 102):

a e ë i o u y

Kristoforidhi distinguishes also the short *and long oral phoneme series*, short and long nasal, presented in "Albanian ABC book". This system can also be presented by these schemes:

Short oral vowel phonemes

	Front	Central	Back
Closed	ĭ	ŷ	ŭ
Semi closed	ě		ǒ
Opened		ǎ	

Long oral vowel phonemes

	Front	Central	Back
Closed	ĩ	û	ŷ
Semi closed	ě̃		ǒ̃
Opened		ǎ̃	

Short nasal vowel phonemes			
	Front	Central	Back
Closed	ĩ	ỹ	ũ
Semi closed	ẽ		õ
Opened		ã	

Long nasal vowel phonemes			
	Front	Central	Back
Closed	ĩ	ũ	ỹ
Semi closed	ẽ		õ
Opened		ã	

Illustrating the presence of vowel phonemes, Kristoforidhi gives examples of words, which reveal the following uses:

-Short vowels: *vãth* (earrings), *rrëth* (circle), *qësh* (laugh), *fik* (turn off), *zõt* (God), *püs* (well), *vräs* (murder), *ndës* (turn on), *ngöp* (fed up), *ngüs* (foster),

- Long vowels: *bãll* (enough), *bãr* (grass), *zãr* (dice), *vãr* (hang), *dët* (sea), *thër* (cut), *bĩr* (son), *hĩr* (grace), *gũr* (stone) etc.

- Short nasal vowels, regarding the use of these vowels, the author does not provide illustrative examples, but they are used in his texts, such as *bãhetë* (to do), *bãjënë* (do), *bãfsh* (do) etc.

-Long nasal vowels: *zã* (voice), *zãni* (the voice), *drŭ* (wood), *drŭni* (the wood), etc.

Of all the long nasal vowels, with a lower usage frequency is the vowel *ô*. It has been found in the words *thônë* (say) dhe *shkrônjë* (letter). (Beci, 2002, p. 105).

Regarding the Gheg vowels system given by Kristoforidhi, we can say that he tried to present a very rich vowel system. Kristoforidhi's rich system comes, first from the fact that he accepted the short nasals, but he also presented all the nasals and non-nasals, including / *õ* /. In the opinion of Wilfried Fiedler, it shows that Kristoforidhi, "his orthography is much more unique than that of his contemporaries", he intended to create and use a rich literary language with a structure much more polished (Beci, 2002, p. 33).

This represents roughly the features of construction and operation of Gheg dialectal vowel phoneme micro system, in Kristoforidhi's works, but mainly based on "Albanian ABC book".

Elision, Aphaeresis and Consonant Phonetic Changes

Another aspect that draws attention to the phonetic nature of Kristoforidhi's work is the fact that it also describes the phenomenon as: elision, aphaeresis, rounded, diphthongs and consonants exchanges. Kristoforidhi status also that: "When the word ends in closed "ë " and

successor starts with a closed vowel “ë “ of the first word is omitted, according to euphonia, and the apostrophe takes its place " (Gut, 2002, f. 51).

In his work, Kristoforidhi treats the elision of the other vowels. According to him, "The last vowel of nominal case of all nouns fall before the front articles i and e, for example: qeni i shtëpisë - *qen'i shtëpisë*... (the dog of the house), fusha e Myzaqesë - *Fush'e Myzeqesë*...(the field of Myzeqeja)" (Gut, 2002, f. 52).

According to Kristoforidhi “Aphaeresis is the drop of the initial vowel of the subsequent word" for example (Gut, 2002, f. 52): *mbë atë, mbë të, mbë ata, mbë ta; mbë ato, mbë to* (over them) etc., while: When two consecutive vowels are contracted in one, this relationship is called contraction. There are given examples with and without contraction: ue > u: (*shkruej > shkruj*) (write); -ye- > -y-: (*lyej > lyj*) (paint); ie > i: (*mbiell > mbill*) (seed). He also adds that the contraction affects the category of nouns as *krye > kry* (head) etc.

Regarding the phenomena affecting phonetic system Kristoforidhi specified: In Tosk and Cham there are not encounter nouns or verbs with contraction: Ghegs usually do the contraction residing in Central Albania ... and the other cities of northern Albania pronounce all the words without contractions. He admits that there is no contraction in Tosk: "All the Diphthongs affected by contraction are long ...".Kristoforidhi admits only four stressed Diphthongs: *--ua, -ue, -ye, -ie* "sometimes in the preceding vowel, and sometimes in initial one""(Gut, 2002, f. 52).

Another issue treated by Kristoforidhi is related to the exchange phenomenon of silent consonants to the voiced ones, which he calls a general Albanian phenomenon, but on the other hand, he admits that there are numerous exceptions.

These were in general some phonetic phenomenon found in the work of Kristoforidhi, which have often been treated by different Albanian and foreign linguists.

Studies on the Gheg vowel system

To understand and appreciate the viewpoint of Kristoforidhi's Gheg vowel phoneme system as they occur in "Albanian ABC book" and other Works, it is necessary to opposed his viewpoints with previous and nowadays researchers and scholars.

If we refer to the traditional study regarding this aspect, what is striking is that the viewpoints expressed by scholars about Gheg vowel phoneme system differ greatly from one another. However, the vague theoretical basis and insufficient data from Albanian dialects and, in particular, the lack of studies on the functional value of macro and micro

dialectal systems in general, and Gheg in particular, has led researchers in quite different results (Beci, 2002, p. 106).

Albanologist G. S. Louman in 1932, given the data of Shkoder dialect, he admitted Gheg 13 vowel phonemes: 8 oral vowel phonemes 5 oral and nasal vowels. Phonemes distinguished by Louman were /i, e, ε, a, o, u, y, Ø, î, ε â û ÿ/ (Beci, 2002, p. 284-285).

Meanwhile, N.S. Trubeckoi another albanologist, relying on Louman work, admitted the same Gheg vowel phoneme inventory (Beci, 2002, p. 211).

Following this review, we are presenting the work of V. Polak, who admits a Gheg phoneme inventory of 6 vowels: /i y u e o a/. According to him, "Nasal Gheg dialect has a phonological character" (Beci, 2002, p.664-666). This could be interpreted by the fact that Gheg has an inventory of 12 vowel phonemes, of which 6 oral and 6 nasals. So, unlike the above two authors, Polak has omitted from the Gheg vowel system the phoneme /Ø/.

The dialectal linguist Anastas Dodi for Gheg dialectal macro system recognized an inventory of 20 phonemes: /a e i o u y ā ē ī ō ū ŷ â ê î û ÿ Ø æ/. He thought that the two last phonemes are only found in a few Gheg variants (Dodi, 1967, p. 139 – 148). According to Dodo, Gheg has 14 oral vowel phonemes, 5 nasal vowel phonemes; 8 oral vowel phonemes are long and 6 are short.

According to the viewpoints of the above-mentioned linguists, the researcher Jorgji Gjinari, studying the Albanian dialects stated that Gheg, unlike Tosk, owns a series of nasal vowels, the opposition of long to short vowels, as well as the lack of stressed vowel /ë/. Therefore, he admitted the differences in Gheg micro system phoneme inventory in relation to the Tosk macro system. He distinguishes 4 main Gheg areoles, each of which has its phoneme inventory. According to him, the biggest Gheg inventory phoneme has is found in the Northwestern part (18-19 vowel phonemes): / ă ě ĭ ǒ ů ŷ ā ē ā ē ī ō ū ŷ Ő â ê î û ÿ / (Gjinari, Shkurtaj, 1977, p. 112, 177).

These data demonstrated that up to the seventies, researchers have accepted that Gheg dialectal macro system phoneme inventory ranges from 12 to 20 vowel phonemes: V. Polak 12 vowel phonemes, Louman and Trubeckoi 13, Gjinari 14-19 and Dodi 20 vowel phonemes. At this point, we should mention the fact that, up to this period, in Albanian and foreign linguistics dominated the viewpoint that there is juxtaposition by length in Gheg nasal vowels series (Beci, 2002, p.108).

The researcher Rexhep Ismaili, who has been the first to point out the value presence of functional length in Gheg nasal vowels series, in 1972, he

wrote: "In aspect of nasal vowels are distinguished the long and short vowels, which are not noticed by linguists (Beci, 2002, p. 367 - 373).

Ismaili admitted a Gheg inventory of 24 vowel phonemes, of which 8 long oral vowel phonemes, 6 short vowel phonemes, 5 short nasal vowel phonemes and 5 long nasal vowel phonemes. In another study, he modified his attitude when he reduced the number of Gheg nasal vowel phonemes in 19 vowel phonemes.

Even the linguist M. Halimi, in his works admitted 10 Gheg nasal vowels. Regarding this phenomenon, the author asserts, "The length of Gheg nasal and oral vowel system is meaningful" (Beci, 2002, p.87-89).

According to him, Gheg has an inventory of 22 vowel phonemes. If we make a list of these studies in the Albanian dialect system, we will distinguish three basic macro systems:

- First level macro system or northern Albania macro system (the Gheg)
- Second level macro system of the northern areas of southern Albania.
- Second level macro system of the Albanian southern areas of south.

The northern Albanian macro system or Gheg is characterized by length and nasalisation. The juxtaposition according to length extends in a series of nasal vowels. According to Beci, for the Gheg vowels macro system must first differentiate stressed and unstressed vowels. The Gheg phoneme inventory of stressed vowels macro system consists of 23 phonemes, phoneme inventory of unstressed vowel phonemes consists of 7 vowel phonemes (Beci, 2002, p.110).

We attempt to make a presentation of the Gheg vowel system studies by Albanian and foreign scholars, to create a possible approach to Kristoforidhi's viewpoints, as well as to give the space Elbasan linguist his merit in these studies. Nevertheless, how should be considered Kristoforidhi's viewpoints about Gheg vowel system?

To answer this question, let us refer to the linguist B. Beci, according to him, if we leave as a questionable presence of nasal vowel phonemes in Gheg macro system, it turns out that, Kristoforidhi for Gheg macro system accepted an inventory of 22 nasal vowel phonemes, which is nearly equal to the vowel phoneme inventory admitted after macro system functional studies of Gheg (23 vowel phonemes) (Beci, 2002, p.111).

If that does not include the -ε- juxtaposition to the northwest Gheg macro system, then we can affirm *that Kristoforidhi admitted for Gheg a phoneme inventory and system that closely approximates the viewpoint of nowadays that result after extensive analysis using functional method.* So, without hesitation, Beci states, we can say that K.Kristoforidhi "with his intuition based on his solid linguist formation, manages to propose in 1872

the Albanian language solutions that science has been able to reach in the XX century with the application of modern methods of functional linguistics. Even if this evaluation will seem enthusiastic, it remains true, because Kristoforidhi gave us solutions that anticipate the most advanced thought of today's phonetic system of Gheg dialectal macro system, but also of Albanian in general " (Beci, 2002, p.111). Kristoforidhi's idea of classifying Gheg noticed that he was a distinguishing analyser of phonetic, but the whole linguistics as well. If we refer to his work, we will notice that what Kristoforidhi has left in the field of linguistics in general and phonetics in particular, constitutes a valuable stone in the foundation of Albanian linguistics nowadays.

Conclusion

Kristoforidhi in his works "Albanian ABC book ", "Grammar", "New Testament" attempts to reflect the Gheg vowel system. In the works "Albanian ABC book" and "Grammar", he presented almost the same vowel system, with the difference in the lack of a series of 7 vowels in "New Testament". Within the Gheg vowel system, Kristoforidhi distinguished two subsystems or a system that took place in two different ways: in a stressed and unstressed position. The stressed vowel system consisted of 24 vowel phonemes; he distinguished them in short oral vowel phonemes, long oral vowel phonemes, short nasal vowel phonemes and long nasal vowel phonemes. In "Albanian ABC book ", the linguist distinguished also the short and long oral vowel phoneme series and short and long nasal ones. Phenomena such as elision, aphaeresis, rounded, diphthongs and consonants exchanges, are another aspect that draws attention to the phonetic nature treatments of Kristoforidhi's work.

Gheg vowels system has become a subject of study by Albanian and foreign linguists such as, G.S Louman, N.S Trubeckoi, V. Polak, Anastasios Dodi, Jorgji Gjinari, Rexhep Ismaili etc. The comparison between Kristoforidhi's concept and other linguists resulted that Kristoforidhi admitted a Gheg phoneme inventory and system that closely approximates nowadays. This conclusion leads to evaluate Krostoforidhi for his intuition and analysis of phonetic nature phenomena.

References:

- Beci, Bahri, *Sistemi i zanoreve të gegërishtes në "Abetar shqip (1872) të Kostandin Kristoforidhit*, në "Përmbledhje me studime për Kristoforidhin", universiteti "Aleksandër Xhuvani", Qendra kërkimore-shkencore, sektori i Albanologjisë -Ballkanologjisë, Elbasan, 2002.
- Dodi, Anastas, *Rreth sistemit vokalik të shqipes*, "Studime filologjike", 3, Tiranë, 1967.

Fielder, Wilfried, *Konceptet e Kristoforidhit për strukturën e fonetikës e të morfologjisë së shqipes*, në “Përmbledhje me studime për Kristoforidhin”, universiteti “Aleksandër Xhuvani”, Qendra kërkimore-shkencore, sektori i Albanologjisë-Ballkanologjisë, Elbasan, 2002.

Gut, Christian, *Vështrim përqasës të sistemeve fonetike të Gramatikës së Kostandin Kristoforidhit dhe asaj të Ogust Dozonit*, në “Përmbledhje me studime për Kristoforidhin”, universiteti “Aleksandër Xhuvani”, Qendra kërkimore-shkencore, sektori i Albanologjisë-Ballkanologjisë, Elbasan, 2002.

Gjinari, Jorgji; Shkurtaç, Gjovalin, *Dialektologjia*, Tiranë 1977.