

Linda Meniku, *Gheg Albanian Reader*. Hyattsville, MD: Dunwood Press, MD, 2008. 196pp. (Hardback) ISBN: 978-1-931546-47-8.

Albanians are proud of their unique language, the roots of which are found in the Indo-European family on the rather isolated branch of Thracian-Illyrian languages. It has loan words from many other languages: Turkish, French, Italian, Greek and even shares certain terms and grammatical similarities with Serbo-Croatian. In Kosovo it takes the form of the the Gheg dialect.

Meniku has made a huge contribution to the understanding, especially for English-speakers, of the differences between the more widely spoken (in Albania) standardized Albanian language and Gheg. For those familiar with linguistic facts in Albania itself (that Gheg is the dialect of the North, while Tosk, the dialect of the South which was pronounced in 1972 to be the standardized Albanian language), it may still come as a surprise that there are further divisions within the Gheg dialect. Meniku gives us northern Gheg with a further subdivision of north eastern and north western Gheg, and southern Gheg. Explanations are given concerning minute regional differences in these Gheg subdialects (which are also charted on two maps, along with clarification on pronunciation).

The author elaborates on the first documents of written Albanian, under the title 'Gheg Literary Tradition'. She lists the earliest documents (of 1452, 1555 and 1635), noting that they were in the Gheg dialect. She also gives a brief chronology of events and personalities of influence on the language up to the publication in 1964 of *The Orthography of the Albanian Language*, in Gheg dialect published in Prishtina.

Meniku has produced a book which appeals not only to linguists, but to a much wider readership. She uses 35 topical articles, by or about public figures and events, demonstrating her careful analysis of the Gheg dialect. For each text, she gives a vocabulary for every word or expression which differs between the Gheg and the standardized Albanian. The vocabulary is followed by explanatory notes on the text itself, and finally she shows, by means of tables, any grammatical differences. The last section of the book repeats the linguistic and grammatical findings with a Glossary of all the words from all the texts, and a complete and systematic table of all the grammatical differences.

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English-language readers need not struggle to understand the texts, as translations are provided at the end of the book.

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