

Blaže Koneski's 1945 Lecture

"Makedonskata literatura i makedonskiot literaturnen jazik"

Blaže Koneski's contributions as a linguist, scholar and writer fundamentally shaped the development of the Macedonian language and the direction of Macedonian poetry. In 1945, at the age of twenty-four, Koneski published several works which mark the beginning of several streams of his monumental career. This year marks the beginning of Koneski's published works as a poet, with the publication of *Mostot 'The Bridge'*, as a linguist and literary critic with his published lecture on language and literature *Makedonskata literatura i Makedonskiot literaturnen jazik*¹ 'Macedonian Literature and the Macedonian Literary Language'. and as a scholar devoted to the study and dissemination of Macedonian folklore with the publication of *Zbirka na makedonski pesni* 'Anthology of Macedonian Folk Songs'. Thus, already in 1945 Koneski published in the major areas of his future life's work. My article will focus on Koneski's first publication on Macedonian language and literature. The title page to this work states that this text was first presented as a lecture at the Skopje National University in May 1945.

¹ Koneski's lecture does not appear to have been the subject of any article devoted exclusively to it, though mention of the lecture is given in several works, e.g. Andreevski cited below. Stamatoski, in his work *Borba za makedonski literaturnen jazik* includes a short chapter on Koneski 208-222 in which he discusses the role of Koneski in language codification and the first meetings on language codification in Gorno Vranovci. While Stamatoski here mentions Koneski's early linguistic work, including the *Pravopis* of 1950 with Krum Toshev, and some of his work on the history of the Macedonian language, e.g. Dva priloga kon istorijata na makedonskiot jazik 1949, he does not mention this lecture of 1945 - a work which sets out the major themes of Koneski's later work. It may be that in other of Stamatoski's work, in particular *Vlogot na Blaže Koneski*, mention is given to this work, but this book was unavailable at the time of my writing this essay. I apologize to Prof. Stamatoski if my comments here inadvertently echo some of his own.

The lecture was then published as small pamphlet². The importance of this 1945 lecture lies in its strong message that language, both in its use as a language for all spheres of daily life and in its literary uses must be based in the vernacular, the language of the people. The lecture took place on the 26 of May, 1945, just three weeks after the submission of the new alphabet (3 May 1945) and in the wake of the discussions at the initial codification meetings in Gorno Vranovci the previous year.³ Koneski (cited in Andreevski 1992:142) recognized the importance of this lecture and its publication as a significant public and formal statement concerning the importance of the steps being taken at that time for codification and standardization. In particular, Koneski is refuting the notion held by some that Macedonians should bring in outside linguistics to help with codification. While speaking specifically about work on the 1945 *Pravopis* (Orthographic dictionary) (Andreevski 1991:142), Koneski also refers to the importance of this published lecture for articulating the role which Macedonians themselves had to play in these linguistic developments:

Toa beše sfakanjeto deka ne možeme da dozvolime nekoj otstrana da se meša vo rešavanjeto na našeto jazično prašanje. I vie [Andreevski] ako ja čitavte mojata mala brošura ke najdete tamu odglasi imeno vo taa smisla. A tie ne se, ne se slučajno tamu vklučeni, ami prestatuvuvaat reakcija na poinakvi razbiranja...definitivniot oblak na našot literaturen jazik treba nie sami da go napravime" A ne se sluči taka, sto nekoi drugi da se vmesuvaat kako sovetnici, kako instruktori i taka nataka. ..rabotat vrz makedonskiot pravopis vo 1945 godina e sepak eden prilog kon samostojnosti na makedonskiot kulturen razvitok

This was the understanding that we could not allow someone from outside to interfere in the decision of our linguistic question. And you, if you have read my small brochure, you will find there reactions specifically to that idea. And they weren't included there accidentally, but they represent a reaction of a different understanding. We ourselves must determine the ultimate form of our literary language.

² I am grateful to Horace G. Lunt for bringing this publication to my attention and for giving me his original copy of the work. Minova-Gurkova, in her 1995 article on Lunt's grammar, makes reference to the fact that Lunt was especially indebted to Koneski. It is interesting that this lecture was one of the works collected by Lunt while working in Skopje in preparation of his 1952 grammar.

³ For details of the work of the language commission see Stojan Ristevski 1988 and Victor Friedman 1993.

Koneski shows a commitment to a vernacular based language and a rejection, as far as possible, of foreign influence. This is not to say that this lecture carries a message of linguistic purism, but rather, that Koneski recognized the inherent wealth of the nascent Macedonian standard language with its dialect and folkloric bases as a powerful vehicle for national and literary expression. In this paper my goal is two-fold. The first is to demonstrate how both aspects of the lecture combined to form a powerful statement on the development of standard Macedonian. The discussion of Macedonian literary work of the nineteenth and early twentieth century focuses on the drive for a Macedonian language freed of Serbian, Bulgarian, Russian, and Greek domination or influence. This message is then echoed in the final short section on the Macedonian language. In the second part of the paper I will briefly comment on later editorial changes to the language of the lecture itself, and point to those changes that reflect the changing norms of standardization. This 1945 lecture is interesting in that it represents the first of Koneski's publications on Macedonian literature and language, and, it was published before the first orthographic dictionary,⁴ after acceptance of the outcome of the first language conference but before the revised codification in 1948. In this paper I will mention some of the linguistic changes that are evident between the 1945 publication and that published in the Jubilee edition of Koneski's collected works. First, however, I will give a brief summary of the themes covered in the work.

The lecture begins with a discussion of Macedonian writers of the 19th century. While discussion of Macedonia's literary heritage begins with discussion of the monk Daniil in 1762, Koneski quickly turns his attention to the nineteenth century citing the

literary contributions of Joakim Krčoski and Kiril Pečinovik. Koneski devoted later articles to these early writers, but here his focus is on their specific contribution to the establishment of Macedonian literary genres written in Macedonian vernacular. He notes how both men, while writing church literature, introduced new elements into the language; more specifically, they sought a less elevated, less artificial language, one that could be understood by the people. Of the writings of Pejčinovik, Koneski notes the particular importance of the awakening, not of nationalist sentiment per se, but of religious awakening. Koneski notes that Macedonia was, at this time, the most backward of all South Slavic nations and, therefore, was vulnerable to the influence of the Bulgarian intelligentsia which was better established and able, therefore, to play a more leading role in the church battle against the patriarch in Constantinople and in ideas coalescing in the formation of standard language and literature. Of his linguistic style, Koneski states (1945:7): ...možeme da setime darba kaj Pejčinovik da raskažue vo živ naroden stil, po način što narodot bi go razbral. 'We can sense Pejčinovik's gift to narrate in a lively folk style, in a manner such that people could understand him'.

In this section of the lecture, Koneski also mentions the significance of the fact that Macedonian intellectuals began to move away from Hellenic influence, towards their Slavic heritage. He notes the role played by Russian intellectuals in shaping the nationalist ideas of young Macedonian intellectuals who began turning to Moscow, rather than Athens, as their natural centre for study. In this context Koneski discusses the influence of Victor Grigorović on Dimitar Miladinov. It is Grigorović, who prodded

⁴ Ruža Panoska (1995: 24-25) noted similar linguistic features in her study of Koneski's 'Mostot' which was also published in May, 1945. My remarks here echo a number of her findings.

Miladinov to write a grammar in his mother tongue, stating: Ne li ste naši brakja? 'Aren't you our brothers?'

Koneski cites the works of the Miladinov brothers for their profound influence on the development of Macedonian language and literature. He credits Dimitar Miladinov as being the teacher of an entire generation of writers from the second half of the 19th century, including those who were directly influenced by him: Konstantin Miladinov, Rajko Žinzifov, Grigor Prličev, Partenij Zografski and Kuzman Šapkarev.

Echoing the importance that Koneski, himself, was to give to the collection of Macedonian poetry, and to the debt that Koneski felt to his knowledge of folklore in his poetic works ⁵ he devotes several pages of his lecture to Miladinov's collection and publication of an anthology of Macedonian Songs, published in Zagreb in 1861. For Koneski, this song anthology was a significant milestone since, as he notes on page 15: "for the first time it showed the world the wealth of Macedonian folklore".

It is the works of the nineteenth Macedonian poets, in particular the works of Rajko Žinzifov, Konstantin Miladinov, and Grigor Prličev. however, that form the central discussion of the nineteenth century writers. Koneski makes a clear distinction between those poets who were poets in the truest artistic sense, and those whose works, while important for the development of poetic genres, did not fully develop as poets due to their unwillingness or inability to seek expression in their own language. One of the

⁵ Ivanović cites an interview which Koneski gave in 1974 to the newspaper Politika:

What could I have heard then in those 6-7 years in the village? Folk traditions lived strongly, most clearly in songs, stories, legends. That tradition was an inseparable part of life: no event took place without those old folk songs, legends, fables, proverbs... At home my father's mother, Dunavka, who knew an unbelievable number of songs and stories gave me special attention. In her lived that inexhaustible folk tradition of story-telling and singing. Those songs and stories of hers undoubtedly created a deep influence on me."

principle criteria for poetic success, in Koneski's analysis, was the ability to write in one's own language, without foreign influence. It is in part for this reason, that Koneski sees the works of Konstantin Miladinov as being of singular importance. He writes (1945:19):

...with K. Miladinov Macedonian poetry begins not only in the literary-historical sense, as a fact which history must note, but rather, here begins the true artistic Macedonian poetry, vital, warm, [poetry] which can ignite hearts. Koneski (1945:18) stresses that the strength of Miladinov's writing lies in the author's ability to use a 'pure folk Macedonian language'.

Contrary to the work of Miladinov, Koneski feels that Žinzifov did not succeed as a poet, precisely because of linguistic mixing. The theme of the importance of a Macedonian language based solidly on Macedonian dialect features is particularly clear. Koneski argues (1945:27) that Žinzifov was unable to write Macedonian lyrically because he tried to push his language more towards Bulgarian. Because he did not know Bulgarian well, his language remains "an artificial blend of Macedonian elements and Bulgarian elements, and in addition, Russian, which is expressed in words and forms, as well as in accent". As a result, Žinzifov's language is missing the freshness and vigour of pure Macedonian expression.

Koneski cites a similar problem in the writings of Prličev, whose literary gift, is undeniable, yet, who suffers from the inability to accept the literary worth of his native Ohrid dialect and, then when he abandoned writing in Greek, turned to "an artificial language which was a mixture of Bulgarian, Russian, and Slavonic elements." And there, says Koneski, is the tragedy. His songs were 'dead and artificial'. Prličev became a

victim of his own attempt to bring his language closer to Bulgarian. In the end, Koneski quotes, Prličev laments in his autobiography that he was never able to master Bulgarian.

Other authors cited by Koneski in the literary section are evaluated as well on the basis of their ability to work in Macedonian. Among Cepenkov's contribution was his gathering of works in 'pure folk language' (Koneski 1945:29). The subtext of outside influence eroding the ability of Macedonian to develop as a literary language is again stated here: namely, Koneski argues that the Cepenkov's publication of folktales did not provide Macedonians with the impetus to create Macedonian artistic literature on the basis of this rich material, as happened with the publication of folk anthologies in other South Slavic languages of greater Serbian and greater Bulg. aspirations. It was this interference that then prohibited the natural expansion and teaching of Macedonian at the close of the nineteenth century. The message to those working on codification of the Macedonian literary language at the time of the lecture is clear: there is plenty of rich folk material in Macedonian, there are talented writers in Macedonian, and that these are sufficient for the Macedonians, themselves, to use as models for the codification, without outside influence, of a Macedonian literary language.

In this review of Macedonian literature Koneski makes reference to the fact that in the inter-war years Macedonian drama flourished. As he himself states, this is an unusual first step in the development of literary genres, but was a result of Serbian interests. Nonetheless, Koneski notes the significance of these dramas for the development of Macedonian, namely: These dramatic experiments undoubtedly played an historical role when one considers the thirst with which the people waited to hear their language from the stage.

Koneski ends the section on Macedonian literature with a brief discussion of the poetic works of Kočo Racin, Venko Markovski, and Kole Nedelkovski. Had Koneski included this section in later publications there would surely have been reevaluation of their work.⁶ Koneski makes only passing reference to Venko Markovski in his interview with Andreevski (1991) and does not discuss their differences of opinion of matters of codification.

The final five pages of the lecture are on the standardization of Macedonian. Here Koneski lists his basic principles for the selection of a west-central based language:

1. the fixed ante-penultimate accent, 2. the three separate forms of deictic post-posed definite article –ot, -ov, -on, 3. the clear, rather than reduced, vowels in unaccented position, 4. reflex a for the back nasal, 5. the fact that these dialects serve as a link between the western and eastern dialects. Further, Konski discusses the importance of the alphabet, whose form had just been approved days earlier. Significantly, Koneski states (34): Of course, a language does not form a literary language in a day. Time will have to pass before all the forms of the literary language would be strictly applied. Koneski states emphatically that the central dialect features must be established as the skeleton of the language, without competing forms for numerous dialects. Within this framework, however, the lexicon can be expanded and enriched by the dialects.

Koneski ends this section with a clear statement of his conviction that Macedonian must not merely adopt abstract vocabulary from other, neighbouring, languages (I will discuss this in more detail below). He argues strongly that Macedonian should build its forms and vocabulary on its own strong dialect foundations for the language to be a true mark of the Macedonian people. In short, this lecture points to the

⁶ For a discussion on Venko Markovski and his later defection to Bulgaria see, for example Friedman 1993.

recurring themes of all of Koneski's later work: the importance of the Macedonian literary language for the continuation of Macedonian literary traditions, folklore, and dialects. It is not surprising that Koneski continued to express these themes in all his later work and that his linguistic and literary works throughout his life reflect his love of Macedonia.

Koneski's collected works (*Izbrani dela vo sedum knigi* - second expanded Jubilee edition Skopje: Kultura, Makedonska kniga, Misla, Naša kniga, 1981⁷) only the text of the last five pages of the original lecture (34-38), that is, the section devoted explicitly to the Macedonian language. The types of changes we see in the text from 1945 to 1981 reflect, of course, the stabilization of the literary norm. In the discussion below, we will see similar linguistic phenomena in Koneski's lecture to that discussed in other studies on works published in the first decade after codification, in particular those works published in 1945 before publication of the first *Pravopis*, and before the elaboration of the *Pravopis* in 1948 (see Friedman 1993 and, for example, Babanova, Panova, and others, 1995).

Graphically, the lecture shows similar variation to other works published at the time. The letters ° and f had, of course, just been introduced and the fonts were not available for quite some time. In fact, these letters remained a typesetting problem into the 1950's. The journal *Nov Den* has a special note from the editor in its 1945 volume explaining that the fonts were not yet ready. Friedman 1998:39 cites a similar reference in *Nova Makedonija*. Therefore, it is not surprising to see variation in the use of these graphemes. Babanova mentions in her study (1995:77) that there was initially a great

deal of chaos in the use of these letters. Koneski, in his lecture, used kj and gi consistently, the only disparity is the lack of the diacritic on the future particle ke⁸. The diacritic is not used, for example, on the word se 'everything', though this is specified as well in the first *Pravopis*.

Babanova (1995: 74) notes in her article that by 1945 the 'chaos' cited in *Nova Makedonija* on the use of Macedonian, was already stabilizing, particularly in terms of morphology. This is not to say that there was strict uniformity, nor that the current norms were then in effect, but there was greater consistency. In Koneski's lecture we see the same type of morphologic variant forms noted elsewhere, all of which were, of course, edited in the 1981 version to conform to contemporary norms. Here we can include, for example, the change of the productive imperfectivizing suffix from –ue to –uva (for a discussion of this form and subsequent change see, for example, Friedman 1993:177) and the change of the plural of monosyllabic masculine nouns from –oi to –ovi (for discussion see Friedman 177). Examples of the change ue → uva can be seen in verb forms such as *svrzue*-> *se svrzuva* 'connect', *se vnesue* -> *se vnesuva* as well as in verbal nouns based on these imperfective forms, e.g.: *oformuenje* → *oformuvanja* 'formation'.

One interesting historical note on these forms is that Horace Lunt worked with Koneski in Skopje in 1951 prior to the publication in Skopje of his grammar in 1952. Lunt mentions this variation in his grammar. As Minova-Gjurkova (1995:141) notes: 'It is natural that he [Lunt] describes the then current state of the language, noting several

⁷ Zuzana Topolinska, in a personal communication, told me that the selections for the edition were Koneski's. It is not clear why he included only an excerpt of the original lecture. The sections on literature were not included.

⁸ It is interesting to note that even after the graphemes ° f began to stabilize, there remained instability in its use in the future particle. K. Poposki mentions the lack of the diacritic on the future particle among the persistent mistakes made by school children in his 1951 *Nova Makedonija* article.

processes in the development of the language, marking several instances of vascillation in the norm". Those forms that were in flux, are clearly seen in this work by Koneski. Lunt was aware of the difficulties in settling on variation in form, something he comments on in his article concerning this period of codification (1999-10): "Since the normalizers were starting anew, experiments and controversies were to be expected. What is surprising is the speed with which consensus was achieved. "

In addition to changes in morphology which affected entire classes of words, such as the two examples cited above, there are changes in specific forms of the verbal adjective or verbal l-form, e.g. *složni* -> *složeni* 'complex', *daena* -> *dadena* 'given'.

The use of prepositions, according to Cvetkovski (1995) became more stable after 1950. Variation in use of *na/od* has been a topic of investigation since different dialect areas tend to favour one or the other. Ugrinova cites numerous positions where the meaning and usage of the prepositions blurs, and notes the preference given to *od* by speakers of western dialects (1950 176-177). This is mentioned as well by Koneski in his grammar (cited in Cvetkovski (1995:209)). In Koneski's lecture, the pronoun *od* is used frequently with possessive meaning, e.g. *izgradbata od našiot jazik* → *izgradbata na našiot jazik*. 'the construction of our language', and *vo periodot od negovoto oformuenje* → *vo periodot na negovoto oformuvanje* 'in the period of its formation'.

There are changes that affected syntax as well. One aspect of the language of the lecture which I have not seen commentary on concerning other works published at the time, is frequent use of attributives following, rather than preceding, the noun, e.g.: *narodot naš* 'our people', *Konstantin beše priroda nežna* 'Konstantin was of a tender nature', *životot negov* 'his life'.

Another point of syntactic variation is the unexpected positioning of the clitic after the verb rather than before, in the collocation *razbira se* 'of course; it is understood' (noted as well by Babanova 1995:76). Elsewhere, Koneski consistently positions the clitics before the verb.

Koneski typically avoids use of the objective forms of masculine names, although the dependent forms occasionally occur, e.g. *nastovanjeto na Dimitra Miladinova...* 'the insistence of Dimitar Miladinov'. Babanova, in her article (1995:76), also notes the nearly complete disappearance of the dependent masculine forms.

The development of rules governing selection of relative pronoun has been a topic of numerous study.⁹ Here I will mention only that Koneski uses a range of relativizers, including *što* 'that' for both animate and inanimate antecedents, *koj što* 'who, which' *kaj što* 'where' and *kade što* 'where'. The use of these relativizers is worthy of separate study. For our purposes here it is interesting to note the editorial changes made by Koneski in the 1981 version, namely, in the two instances of relative clauses in the segment reproduced in the collected works, Koneski has deleted the *što* element from compound relatives: *koja što* → *koja*, *kojšto* → *koj*.

While the form and substance of the two versions of the essay are nearly similar, there are other minor changes affecting specific lexemes, for example: *publicističnata* -> *publističkata* 'public' *slavjanski* → *slovenski* 'Slavic' and *doprinese* -> *pridonese* 'contribute'. This last example is interesting. Both forms competed and the three-volume dictionary contains both but glosses *doprinese* by referring the reader to

⁹ There is a large and growing literature on this topic. In the early years of Nova Makedonija there was considerable discussion (see for example Koneski 1950 and Korubin 1950). Minova-Gjurkova has written on the use of the relative clause in general, and more specifically on the use of relative pronouns in the

pridoneske. In the category of lexical change we can also include the large number of collocations composed of an accentual unit made up of preposition plus adverb or noun, which are now written as one word: *preku den* -> *prekuden* through the day, *do tamu* → *dotamu* 'thus far', *na pr.* → *naprimer* 'for example', *na zaem* → *nazaem* 'loan', *do sega* → *dosega* 'up till now' and *na vidum* → *navidum* 'apparently'.

Stylistically, Babanova notes that the language of the press in that decade used of a more 'folk' lexicon which was, compared with the journalistic style which developed, more spontaneous, natural, almost colloquial (1995:74). There are elements of this colloquial language in Koneski's lecture as well. He himself made jocular reference to this early style that gave way to more formal style in his later work. While criticizing those who would adopt abstract vocabulary from Russian, Koneski refers to such a simplistic formulation as '*jazična dembelana*' 'linguistic laziness' (p. 36). In his interview with Andreevski (1992:143) he laughs while citing this expression saying: A jas na toa...*jazična dembelana* so togašniot svoj stil koj što e posočen, poživopisen, otkolku ovoj stil so koj deneska se služam" 'And I [referred] to that as...linguistic laziness – *jazic\na dembelana-* in the style which I then used which was more expressive, more picturesque than that which I now use". Other Turkisms and colloquialisms in the lecture include the use of *aren* 'good' rather than *dobar*, *esnaf* 'guild' and both *sandana* and *zatvor* for prison. In the later edition Koneski preserved these elements.

prose work of Blaže Koneski (1984). Kim Gareiss (University of Chicago) is currently writing an extensive study on the forms of the Macedonian relative pronoun. In this paper I merely note the variation.

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