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The Lexicographical Experiments of Korais and Gazis

Kristýna Knapková

Abstract

The Greek Enlightenment, within the sphere of language, saw the first efforts to create a comprehensive Greek dictionary. This paper deals with Adamantios Korais, one of the most significant Greek scholars of that time, and his endeavours and ideas regarding the renewed lexicon. It also describes and compares a different approach to working on Greek vocabulary in the heyday of the national revival, represented by another eminent intellectual, Anthimos Gazis. The paper notes their individual principal motives, important predecessors, and particular intentions in creating dictionary, and provides a few examples of specific entries viewed differently by these two representatives of the Enlightenment. The approaches of the two scholars differ in their depth and utility; and the more linguistic versus the rather technically specialized contribution to the lexicography task of each will be outlined and confronted.

Keywords

Korais; Gazis; modern Greek dictionaries; modern Greek lexicography

Introduction

Starting briefly with the bibliography, many publications have dealt with Korais's life-work. In comparison, his contemporary Gazis seems somewhat forgotten by modern researchers. The articles *Τα Λεξικογραφικά του Κοραή* from Ντ. Γεωργούδης and *Αντίμου Γαζή «Λεξικόν Ελληνικόν» η ιστορία μιας λεξικογραφικής προσπάθειας* written by Α. Κουμαριανού are among to the most detailed papers concerning solely the works of these scholars on Greek vocabulary. To the best of my knowledge, there has not yet been a study drawing a comparison between those two intellectuals, even though they were engaged at the same time in very similar scientific activities, and the material related to the Greek Enlightenment is very comprehensive.

Adamantios Korais, one of the most well-known Greek scholars of the European Enlightenment, who settled in Paris, has been generally recognized for his works and ideas on contemporary Greek society, politics, and language. Anthimos Gazis, a less famous but still significant personality connected with the Greek national revival, who settled in Vienna, was Korais's co-worker at *Λόγιος Ερμής*, the first Greek philological periodical. Prior to the emergence of the Greek national revolution, both of them had – in the pursuit of reviving the Greek language after a long period of non-cultivation – put their efforts into the field of Modern Greek lexicography, because in order to shape the desired form of the new 'proper' Greek language, it was necessary to create not only a grammar but also a good dictionary.

Inspiration

A few important lexicographical sources served as inspiration for Korais and Gazis, and perhaps for some other scholars at that time. Korais, especially in his later work (Γεωργούδης 1984: p. 60; Μπαμπινιώτης 2012: pp. 38–42), often cited the *Dictionary of the French Academy*, which had been published since 1694, as an example of a valuable, precious lexicon.¹ Although this dictionary was surely a legitimate model to follow, it is amusing from today's point of view how Korais appraised the French language. As he considered Latin to be a dialect of Greek, he praised French as the European language with the richest Greek and Latin lexicon (Κοραής 1986: p. 327). In his allied European country, he found the first endeavours to create a modern dictionary. In addition to French efforts at dictionary work, he also exalted the attempts of other 'enlightened nations'. Specifically, he kept an interesting correspondence with the German philologist J. G. Schneider, the author of a comprehensive and republished Greek-German dictionary (Schneider 1797; Γκουδίνας 2014: p. 128) who was later mentioned by Gazis in the introduction to his dictionary. Gazis primarily valued Schneider's lexicographical methods and chronological procedures, which Gazis himself tried to follow (Γαζής 1809:

1 *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie française dédié au Roy*. (1694). (1^{re} éd.). Paris: Jean Baptiste Coignard.

p. viii). The second edition of Schneider's dictionary actually sparked the hesitant Gazis to develop his work and publish his own dictionary (Χατζηφώτης 1965: pp. 105–106).

The first lexicographical efforts

As mentioned above, Korais felt that in order to reshape the desired form of the new 'proper' Greek language, it was necessary to create the grammar that was missing and a good dictionary, a project which his friend Gazis began to work on. Although Korais's workload prevented him from offering significant help to the other scholar, he sent his Vienna follower some useful input (Κουμαριανού 1964: pp. 169–170). However, Gazis was very excited about his lexicographical task and acted somewhat hastily in his desire for the fastest possible distribution of the dictionary, a fact which was reflected in the outcome.

Unfortunately, in his comprehensive three-volume dictionary *Αντίμου Γαζή Λεξικόν ελληνικόν προς χρήσιν των περί τους παλαιούς συγγραφείς ενασχολουμένων. Επιστοασία και διορθώσεις Σπυριδωνος Βλαντή. Εν Βενέτια, τ. Α' 1809, τ. Β' 1812, τ. Γ' 1816*, which was republished repeatedly due to great interest caused by the revolutionary period, Gazis made many mistakes and introduced inaccuracies in the translation of some entries (Χατζηφώτης 1965: pp. 105–106). Korais sharply rebuked Gazis for his ignorance of German and also because Gazis unthinkingly replicated all of Schneider's mistakes (Πάτσιου 1997: p. 221). The meanings of some entries were mixed and many translations had completely incorrect interpretations. Although there were some positive reactions among a few European philhellenes (Χατζηφώτης 1965: pp. 104–107), Korais was dissatisfied with Gazis's work from the publication of the dictionary's very first volume (Κοραής 1965: p. 6). Korais expressed this disapproval in correspondence with his friend A. Vasileu. Before he looked through the first volume of Gazis's dictionary, he wrote: ... *Τὸ Λεξικόν του [του Γαζή] δὲν τὸ γνωρίζω ἀκόμη. ἀπὸ τὴν ὁποίαν ὁμως εἶχα τὸν δώσει μικρὰν νύξιν, ἤλπιζα ὅτι ἂν ὄχι καλόν, ἤθελε κἂν τὸ κάμει ἀνεκτόν. Ἐὰν μὴδὲ τοῦτο νὰ κατορθώσῃ δὲν ἦναι καλὸς (καὶ τὸ φοβοῦμαι πολλά, ... καὶ διὰ ὅσα ἴδα εἰς τὴν πρὸ μικροῦ ἐκδοθεῖσαν ἀπ' αὐτὸν Ἑλλ. Βιβλ.) tant pis pour lui (Δαμαλάς 1885–1886: p. 52).*² After acquainting himself with the first volume, he expressed his criticism even more strongly: *Ἄν ὁ δεῦτερος τόμος τοῦ Λεξικοῦ ὁμοιάζῃ τὸν πρῶτον, ἐπροκόψαμεν ... Δὲν ἐξεύρω τί νὰ εἶπω; Ὑπομονή ... (Δαμαλάς 1885–1886: pp. 322–323).*³

In terms of purely lexicographical efforts, on which Gazis consulted with leading Viennese and Parisian intellectuals (Χατζηφώτης 1965: p. 103), Gazis focused primarily on the formation of new Greek vocabulary in the field of natural sciences. He tried to defend himself against critics with a serious argument about the difficulty of creating, for

2 'I do not yet know his dictionary. I took just a quick look and I had hoped he would try to make it bearable – if not good. He did not manage even that and I am afraid from what I have seen – from what was published – it is too bad for him.' (Author's translation).

3 'If the second edition is similar to the first, we have failed... I don't know what to say. Patience...' (Author's translation).

instance, medical terminology at a time before the founding of the first Greek scientific institutions (for example, the University of Athens), which could have provided him with useful expert opinions (Καραμπερόπουλος 2012: p. 218).

On the other hand, the dictionary Korais desired should have captured everything from antiquity to contemporary written Greek, even though the language was, according to him, for some time devalued with inappropriate words and phrases. Despite these deficiencies, the Greek language, in Korais's opinion, managed to preserve a wide range of correct and melodious expressions (Droulia 2001: p. 256) that had not yet been recorded in any dictionary (not even those few that existed) (Μαλαφάντης 1996: p. 184).

However, Korais's linguistic theory was never able to define clear rules or procedures, and thus he himself never published any dictionary or comprehensive grammar (Ταϊφάκου 1998: p. 27). Especially in his prefaces to the works of ancient Greek authors (drawn up between 1804 and 1814), which Korais dedicated to ideas about the state, the church, politics, and not least language, he tried to analyse a few chosen words and this analysis suggested his exemplary dictionary. Nevertheless, he did not approach individual entries entirely uniformly. Some words had only briefly outlined definitions, with a suitable synonym mentioned in some cases, while others were elaborated in detail with their widest objective or metaphorical meanings. Even in terms of content, the suitability or futility of some entries is debatable. While some basic words in Korais's considerations were lacking, some other tangential entries were mentioned and vice versa (Γεωργούδης 1984: pp. 59–69).

In the post-revolutionary period, a publication of Korais's extensive work, collectively known as *Ατακτα* (1828–1835), contained various comments and dialogues and a multivolume lexicon. According to some scholars, this was actually the first explanatory and etymological dictionary of Modern Greek and therefore the very beginning of Modern Greek lexicographical production (Μπαμπινιώτης 2012: p. 40); others assert that this work cannot be considered a comprehensive dictionary (Γεωργούδης 1984: p. 69).

Demonstration and comparison of the efforts

Nouns, adjectives, and verbs

As the first noun in the proposed dictionary, Korais chose *ὁ ἄνθρωπος* ('man, human'). He described its primary and metaphorical meanings with a few examples. He had looked at previously published dictionaries, and he mentioned the word's use by classical authors and its forms in different cases and verbal connections (Κοραΐς 1986: pp. 330–333). Although it is perhaps one of the most important nouns in the basic Greek vocabulary, Korais did not give it as much of his attention as some other words. Gazis, on the other hand, devoted more space to this noun, mentioning several possible combinations in various parts of speech based on one common word basis. Gazis, unlike Korais but like Schneider, connected this entry with the collective nouns *τα ἔθνη* and *τα γένη* ('nations') (Γαζής 1809: pp. 409–411).

Korais devoted a relatively large space to the noun *ὁ (τό) βίος* ('life'). In addition to some set phrases and forms of derived adjectives, he also mentioned the specifics of this substantive's gender diversity. Apart from its primary meaning 'life', he offered the additional interpretation of 'property, tangible good' (or even 'treasure') as a synonym for *τό ἔχει*, and he reflected on a possible connection with the German noun *die Habe* (Κοραΐς 1986: pp. 458–465). Although Gazis attributed several meanings to this noun, there was no space for consideration of this type of comparison in his dictionary. Furthermore, unlike Korais, he introduced the similar word *ὁ βιός* (just as Schneider had), which differs only in its accent and has the special meaning ('bowstring, bow') (Γαζής 1809: p. 819).

Since Korais's planned dictionary often included adjectives in the analysis of nouns, the selection of adjectives remained somewhat limited. For example, the analysis of *ἄργος* ('slow') offered semantic nuances. In addition to some forms of verbs and adverbs that can be derived from this adjective, Korais mentioned at this point the conceptually similar entry *βραδύς* belonging to a different declination group. He dealt with the comparison of these adjectives and proposed a range of possible options for *ἄργος* in other grammatical categories (Κοραΐς 1986: pp. 435–438). Korais also mentioned its modern antonym *γρήγορος* ('quick'), while Gazis gave the options *ὀλίγωρος* and *ταχύς* (Γαζής 1809: pp. 616–617).

With verbs, Korais made interesting remarks in the first entry *ἀγαπῶ* ('love'). He presented the word together with many synonyms and highlighted the incorrect use of certain related forms. For example, he corrected the false *ἀγαπητική* into the proper *ἀγαπητή* ('dear'). (Κοραΐς 1986: pp. 413–414). In contrast, Gazis kept both forms of this adjective in his dictionary and probably considered both to be correct. He included more possible derivations of this verb in replacements for *ἀγαπάζω*, such as the noun *τὸ ἀγάπημα* ('object of love') and the adverb *ἀγαπητῶς* ('lovably') (Γαζής 1809: pp. 23–24).

The very detailed analysis of the irregular verb *ἀφίνω* ('forsake') is worth mentioning. Korais analysed this word in terms of its grammatical concept. According to Korais, the verb was derived from the particle *ἄς*, which usually accompanies a verb in the subjunctive. He tried to compare this phenomenon of grammaticalization with the situation in German. He sought similarity in the verb *lassen* ('leave'), which in its imperative form takes the form *lasst*, e.g. *Lasst uns sehen* ('Let us see'). However, he observed a difference in connection with this form of the infinitive. Korais also expanded here on his well-known proposition about the origin of the Greek future tense form and other grammatical aspects of the verb *ἀφίνω*, but neither Gazis nor Schneider ever even mentioned this verb in their dictionaries.

Both scholars described the verb *βλέπω* ('see') in detail. They both included its metaphorical meanings *καταλαμβάνω* ('understand'), *προσέχω* ('look after'), and *φροντίζω* ('take care of'). Gazis did not aim to examine this verb in its all grammatical aspects (Γαζής 1809: p. 825). Korais, on the other hand, divided this verb into several morphological categories, as transitive or intransitive, and with a neutral or active voice (Κοραΐς 1986: pp. 334–339).

Unlike Gazis, Korais did not introduce in his proposed dictionary parts of speech, other than nouns, adjectives, and verbs. He devoted his attention to several of them in other papers relating to phonetics or grammar.

Beneficial specifics of Korais's and Gazis's lexicographical work

Apart from individual entries in the form of some parts of speech, Korais devoted considerable attention to proverbs, which he called 'folk philosophy'. In some cases, he spent more time interpreting the oldest Greek sayings than analysing the entry itself. For example, in the entry on the noun *ἡ ἀλήθεια* ('truth'), he noted several Greek proverbs, including a comparison of the classic *Χρόνος ἀλήθειας πατήρ* ('the truth will become public'), with its contemporary form *Ὁ καιρὸς φανερόνει τὴν ἀλήθειαν* (Κοραΐς 1986: pp. 423–424). Korais intended to correct certain sayings according to his ideal plan. The question is what criteria can now be used to evaluate whether the original or his variant is correct. It is not clear if his point was to make a phrase more precise in its meaning or more representative in its elegance by adding some decorative features (Mackridge 2010: p. 141). Gazis also introduced a few ancient Greek sayings within some entries, but he did so in a very laconic manner.

From a certain perspective, it is possible to appreciate that within the project Korais attempted to create his knowledge of European culture contributed to the emergence of some words that are still preserved in Greek. Frequently cited examples of these lexical forms include such terms as *ἡ λογοκρισία* ('censorship') and *ὁ πολιτισμὸς* ('civilization'). In this way, he succeeded in linking modern Western notions with classical Greek morphemes (Mackridge 2010: p. 140).

Following this outline, we can infer that Gazis and Korais each conceived of their dictionaries in their own individual way. Although Gazis practically never dealt with morphological or etymological analysis of the entries nor any set phrases, his more natural-scientific approach led to a different contribution to the formation of Modern Greek lexicographical work. For instance, he acquired some of the medical terms in his lexicon, thanks to his good knowledge of classical Greek authors which Korais never even mentioned in his project. To pick some examples at random, there are the nouns *ἡ αἰμάτῳσις* ('perfusion') from Galen (Γαζής 1809: p. 118) and *ἡ ἀορτή* ('aorta') from Hippocrates and Aristotle (Γαζής 1809: p. 476; Καραμπερόπουλος 2012: p. 221), which then could elucidate traditional Greek medical texts for Greek physicians (Καραμπερόπουλος 2012: p. 221; Γαζής 1809: p. 478). It is noteworthy about Korais that although he, unlike Gazis, had had a medical education, he did not pay any special attention to these terms. The reason for this may be that he understood his original profession only as means to ensure his livelihood, not as the centre of his attention, which was undoubtedly classical philology combined with Modern Greek, and consequently also the Greek language question as a social problem (Droulia 2001: p. 249).

Conclusion

From today's perspective, it might seem that Korais often resorted to a kind of unnecessary word splitting. Upon closer examination of his lexicographical motives, it is possible to understand his deeper intentions.

It could also be said that etymology became essentially one of the main bases of the Korais's linguistic theory. In his lexicographical work, however, his etymological considerations isolated individual entries rather than giving rise to a general lexical system. Through his research on the origin of words, he created groups of entries and phrases suitable for further analysis rather than a perfectly ordered lexicon (Γεωργούδης 1984: pp. 66–67).

Gazis, on the other hand, tried to create a dictionary that would not go as deeply into all the spheres of language but would rather be more practically and scientifically oriented, even though the task was obviously more difficult than he had anticipated and resulted in many mistakes along the way.

Nevertheless, if there had been no efforts such as those, made by these two scholars, Greek lexicography would have evolved more slowly than it did.

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