

FIRST DIALECTOLOGISTS



PIER ENEA GUARNERIO
(1854-1919)

“Sardinian is, between the two Romance zones, the Western and the Eastern one, an independent linguistic group, in which “logudorese” is the most typical variety; from there, Sardinian splays, towards South, in the “campidanesi” dialects, that are in contact with Sicilian ones, and, towards North, in the “sassarese” and “gallurese”, that, through the “western” Corsican, join the “eastern” Corsican, that is a member of the Italian dialects’ family, or, better, of the Tuscan ones” (“Il dominio sardo. Relazione retrospettiva degli studi sul sardo fino al 1910”, *Revue de dialectologie romane*, III, 1911, 200).

1. Biography

Born in Milano in 1854 (July, 1st), at his hometown University he attended the courses of Linguistics held by Graziadio Isaia Ascoli, and, after graduation, he began his career of teacher of Italian and Humanities in the schools of Sardinia, where he lived for five years. This long experience, very important both from the human and professional point of view, led him to put the focus of his scientific interests on Dialectology — specially on linguistic varieties and traditions of that island, and on the texts written in old Sardinian. For this reason, he became within few years, and until the publication of Max Leopold Wagner's essays in 20th century, perhaps the best specialist of Sardinian dialectology. Nobody before him listened to Sardinian spoken dialects with a scientific hear.

In his ethnographic inquiries, he cooperated with the important journal *Archivio per lo studio delle tradizioni popolari*, directed by Giuseppe Pitrè and Salvatore Salomone Marino. As university professor, he worked in the next periods in the Universities of Geneva and finally, in Pavia, where in 1903 he succeeded to Carlo Salvioni as the incumbent of the chair of Romance and Classic Glottology. During these years, he continued his researches in Sardinian Dialectology and History of Italian dialects (old Ligurian and others), but he also developed his interests in Indo-European linguistics, Latin and Greek etymology, toponymy, ethnography and literature, by publishing either linguistic essays or handbooks and articles with a larger target.

He died in Milano, after a long illness, in 1919 (December 1st).

2. Main works

Among the most relevant essays written by Pier Enea Guarnerio about Sardinian varieties, we can mention *I dialetti odierni di Sassari, della Gallura e della Corsica*, in *Archivio glottologico italiano*, XIII (1892), 125-140; XIV, 131-200, 385-422 (for this essay he got a grant from the *Accademia dei Lincei*, the most prestigious scientific Academy in Italy) and *Il sardo e il còrso in una nuova classificazione delle lingue romanze*, in

Archivio glottologico italiano, XVI (1904), 491-516; in the contribution *L'intacco latino della gutturale di ce, ci*, in *Supplementi dell'Archivio glottologico italiano*, IV (1897), 21-51, the author discusses one of the problems of historical phonetics that he analyzed several times (see § 3). The language of the Catalan linguistic minority of Alghero (Sassari, Sardinia) is described in a very precise way in *Il dialetto catalano di Alghero*, in *Archivio glottologico italiano*, IX (1886), 261-364, taken in consideration for all the next inquiries about this community.

To the old Sardinian Guarnerio dedicated the articles *La lingua della Carta de Logu, secondo il ms. di Cagliari*, in *Studi sassaresi*, III (1905), 67-145, and *L'antico campidanese dei secoli XI-XIII secondo "le antiche Carte volgari dell'Archivio Arcivescovile di Cagliari"*, in *Studi romanzi*, IV (1906), 189-259, and other articles, but, during his period at Genova University he studied also *La Passione ed altre prose religiose in dialetto genovese del sec. XIV*, in *Giornale linguistico*, XX (1893), 270-295, 369-383.

Very important, in toponymy are the two contributions *Intorno al nome del Monte Rosa*, in *Athenaeum*, IV (1916) and *Ancora sul nome del Monte Rosa*, in *Athenaeum*, V (1917), in which he explained very clearly that the name of this mountain in Western Alps is not related to the name of the colour but is a pre-Romance form that survives in Franco-Provencal dialects (*ruise, ruiza, reuse*, etc.) to mean 'glacier'.

The big etymologic dictionary of Italian words with a Greek origin, *Dizionario etimologico di dodicimila vocaboli italiani derivati dal Greco*, Milano, 1901 (written in cooperation with Amato Amati), was considered even several decades later one of the more reliable etymologic studies. For his Indo-European researches, we mention *Le sorti latine dell'ide. dw- iniziale*, in *Reale Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere. Rendiconti*, XL (1907), 419-32.

To the lexicography of Italian Switzerland (Canton Ticino) is connected his memory *Appunti lessicali bregagliotti*, published in Milano — still the cultural capital of that corner of Switzerland - in the review *Reale Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere. Rendiconti*, XLI (1908), 199-212, 392-407; XLII, 970; XLIII, 372-390, with plenty of data and materials coming from the Val Bregaglia.

A good success had, in 1910, the handbook *Gli Italiani e il bel paese. La letteratura*, Milano, Vallardi, 1910, an introduction to Italian literature for students and teachers, very clear and useful from the didactic point of view, thanks to the personal experience of Guarnerio as teacher of Humanities in several schools of different regions.

In his ethnographic production are relevant the articles *L'origine di Meneghino*, in *Natura ed Arte*, (1907-1908), II, 232-238, 311-316 - that got several positive comments and reviews in his hometown, the fatherland of the traditional stock character *Meneghino* — and *Il fantoccio del Carnevale e il giovedì grasso a Sassari*, in *Wörter und Sachen*, III (1912), a research concerning history and meanings of the Carnival folk traditions in Sassari (Northern Sardinia).

Only one year before his premature death, he published also a handbook of Romance Phonology (*Fonologia romanza*, Milano, Hoepli, 1918) that was generally welcome even if, because of the changing cultural climate of that period, it was also sometimes criticized, especially in reference to complete author's fidelity to the interpretative schemes of Graziadio Isaia Ascoli, created still in 19th century.

3. Some linguistic questions discussed by Guarnerio

In Guarnerio's and Ascoli's opinion, the Sardinian phonetic groups *ke*, *ki* (as in *kentu* 'hundred', *kimbe* 'five' etc.) are not, in the varieties of the island, the direct continuation of the classic Latin pronunciation, but the regression till the velar consonant of a sound that already in Latin had a little palatal development, from *k* to *k'*.

Besides, the linguistic position of Northern Sardinian ("gallurese", "sassarese") was, for Guarnerio, inside the group of Sardinian varieties, and not external, as, for instance, in Matteo Bartoli's contributions.

Both these opinions are now out-fashioned, even if Gino Bottiglioni e Carlo Tagliavini still agreed with Guarnerio's classification of Sardinian; but, of course, this is not a good reason to consider useless or antiquated the whole Guarnerio's scientific production.

4. Some author's words

“Il sardo costituisce, di mezzo alle due zone orientale e occidentale delle lingue romanze, un gruppo linguistico indipendente, di cui il logudorese è il tipo fondamentale, donde si degrada a mezzogiorno nel campidanese, che va a toccarsi coi dialetti siculi, e a settentrione nel sassarese e gallurese, che traverso al còrso oltremontano finiscono nel còrso cismontano, spettante alla famiglia dei dialetti italiani e più propriamente toscani” (“Il dominio sardo. Relazione retrospettiva degli studi sul sardo fino al 1910”, *Revue de dialectologie romane*, III, 1911, 200).¹

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¹ “Sardinian is, between the two Romance zones, the Western and the Eastern one, an independent linguistic group, in which “logudorese” is the most typical variety; from there, Sardinian splays, towards South, in the “campidanese” dialects, that are in contact with Sicilian ones, and, towards North, in the “sassarese” and “gallurese”, that, through the “western” Corsican, join the “eastern” Corsican, that is a member of the Italian dialects’ family, or, better, of the Tuscan ones” (“Il dominio sardo. Relazione retrospettiva degli studi sul sardo fino al 1910”, *Revue de dialectologie romane*, III, 1911, 200).

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