Book review

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SIČANSKE RIČI [SIČE WORDS] BY EMINA BERBIĆ KOLAR AND LJILJANA KOLENIĆ

The book *Sičanske riči* was published in 2014 by the Faculty of Education, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. It was written by the accomplished linguists and professors Ljiljana Kolenić from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek and Emina Berbić Kolar from the Faculty of Education in Osijek. The authors have already produced numerous scientific papers and contributions to Croatian dialectology. The book is not only intended for linguists and dialectologists, but also for a wider audience interested in linguistic diversity and non-standard language. *Sičanske riči* or *Siče words* are in fact the words of native speakers of the little village of Siče in Brod-Posavina county, Croatia. The Siče vernacular is protected and included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list for Croatia. It belongs to, according to the authors, a bigger language group called the Slavonian dialect, and the Slavonian dialect belongs to the most widespread Croatian dialect, the Shtokavian dialect. At the time of omnipresent globalisation, vernaculars are prone to extinction, which is why this book plays an important role in preserving the intangible cultural heritage and preventing dialect extinction. The book contains three hundred and eighteen pages which include text, five geographical and dialectological maps, one table, one graph and one photograph. Recent scientific studies do not point to many authors and works that deal in as much detail with the Slavonian dialect issue in the contemporary world as *Sičanske riči* does. Therefore, *Sičanske riči* is a valuable attempt to popularise and revitalise the Slavonian dialect.

The book is divided into two larger segments. The first part is written by Ljiljana Kolenić and introduces readers to the wider linguistic context of Siče vernacular, which is the Posavina subdialect, the Slavonian dialect and the Shtokavian dialect. The author emphasises the importance of the Slavonian dialect within the Croatian Studies because it is primarily spoken by Croats named Šokci in Slavonia. In addition to the theoretical basis of the Siče vernacular within the frame of the Croatian language, the first part of the book deals with the geographic dispersion of dialects in Croatia and abroad, the classification of the Croatian dialects, the Slavonian dialect references overview, the linguistic description of the Slavonian dialect, as well as that of the Siče vernacular. Moreover, the book informs readers on the geographic position of the village of Siče, the graphic display of the number of inhabitants in the village per year, and the short description of the respondents, the native speakers who made their contribution to this linguistic research. The part of the book that is especially important is the one in which the linguistic features of both the Siče vernacular and the Slavonian dialect are described, allowing the reader to compare them and determine which Slavonian dialect features are found in the Siče vernacular and to what extent they are preserved in that particular area. Based on the references and field research, the author gives examples of the features of the Siče vernacular, such as the fifth accent called *akut*

(*vodẽ, dõjdẽ*), Ikavian-Jekavian reflexes of the *yat* sound, *-l* sound at the end of the syllable (*položil, uplel*), the appearance of *šć* sounds in words, which is called *šćakavism* (*godišće* instead of *godište, šćuka* instead of *štuka)*, the omission of the sound *h* (*odali* instead of *hodali*, *gra* instead of *grah*), and many more. The book is not only of linguistic importance, but also has anthropological and cultural significance because it depicts the life outside the linguistic reality by means of archaic words which represent objects, occupations and life in general. Based on these archaic words, readers may discover that Siče inhabitants provided for their families primarily by engaging in agriculture and that carving was a good source of income ((*flajbaz* denotes the pen for wood carving, *glajfuz* is the carving equipment, *živinar* is a veterinarian, *baščovan* is a gardener, etc.). The first part of the book encompasses eighty-seven pages. At the end of the book the author provides the conclusion in which it is stated that the Siče vernacular has maintained the majority of the Slavonian dialect features in phonology, accentuation, morphology, syntax and lexis.

The second part of the book is written by Emina Berbić Kolar and it represents the dictionary of Siče words, including their accentuation and grammar features. The dictionary dominates most of the book and spans across two hundred and thirteen pages. Therefore, the main purpose of the book is to preserve the old vernacular, organic idiom which does not exist in its written form. In an effort to provide the written form of this organic idiom, the author creates the dictionary which lists the archaic, old Shtokavian words of Siče in alphabetical order. Therefore, the title of the book fully corresponds to the content of the book because it provides a holistic approach to the Siče vernacular, contextualising it within the wider linguistic frame and highlighting its indigenous words. The greatest number of words in the dictionary begin with letters *p*, *k* and *š*, and the words that are least represented begin with letters *dž*, *nj* and *lj*. Each word has its accentuation and the description of its meaning. The nominal words have their gender and number denoted. The foreign words contain their etymological description including the original words, which means that the dictionary is also of etymological and historical importance. By observing the dictionary it can be concluded that the majority of the words were adopted from the German and Turkish languages, which is intangible proof of the influence of the historical rule in this area. However, the dictionary is not only significant for the Croatian Studies, but also for the more encompassing Slavic Studies because the Slavonian dialect vernaculars are the most archaic Shtokavian vernaculars.

The book is an example of original scientific work because it includes a systematic linguistic field research and data analysis at each linguistic level: phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic, and dialectological. The content is divided into chapters with headings which enable an easier navigation through the book. The main chapters are: *Slavonian dialect, Croatian language, Slavonian dialect and its geographic location, Basic facts about the Slavonian dialect, Linguistic features of the Slavonian dialect, Siče vernacular, Siče dictionary, References, and Notes about the authors*. Some headings are also further specified with subheadings. The chapter *Croatian language* consists of the subchapter Croatian dialects, the chapter *Slavonian dialect and its geographic location* consists of the subchapters Slavonian dialect within the Croatian borders, Slavonia, Baranya and Western Srijem, Posavina, Podravina, Našice vernaculars, The Croatian part of Baranya, Slavonian dialect outside the borders, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Hungary, and Slavonian dialect divided into subdialects. The heading *The Linguistic features of Slavonian dialect* includes the subchapters denoting Accent, Phonology, Morphology, Nouns, Pronouns, Adjectives, Verbs, Invariable parts of speech, Word formation, Syntax, Lexis. The chapter *Siče vernacular* consists of subchapters on Accent, Phonological features, Morphological

features, Nouns, Pronouns, Adjectives, Verbs, Invariable parts of speech, Adverbs, Prepositions, Connectors, Exclamations, Syntactic features, Word formation features, Lexical features, Semantic fields, Word etymology and Conclusion. The data are accompanied by a table, maps, a graph and a photograph. The theoretical background of the book is based on the relevant studies of Croatian linguists which date from as early as 1913, when the great Croatian dialectologist Stjepan Ivšić conducted the linguistic research of the Slavonian dialect, up to 2011 marked by Josip Užarević's academic contributions. Therefore, the book provides an overview of the historical development of the Slavonian dialect and its vernaculars. It is written in a language that is comprehensible to the general public, but also contains valuable dialectological notes in the dictionary which are targeted at linguists specifically. The first and the second part of the book complement each other, the first part being the introduction to the second and the second superbly exemplifying the first. The authors have managed to enrich the Croatian dialectology and culture by exploring the previously untraversed Croatian language territory, and most importantly, have managed to leave a written trace of the Croatian language diversity.

The book *Sičanske riči* has a linguistic, cultural, historical, anthropological and social significance because it provides a holistic approach to the Siče vernacular. In addition to the linguistic features of the Siče vernacular and its position within the frame of the Croatian language, the book is also about the life, history and culture of Siče. From a larger perspective, the book deals with the Siče vernacular and the Slavonian dialect, listing them among the old, archaic, Shtokavian vernaculars which are part of the world heritage. Today, when English has become a lingua franca in the age of globalisation and its circumstances, it takes much effort to find the kind of work that depicts minority language varieties and tries to preserve them. The authors know the value of preserving and revitalising language diversity and identity in the multicultural world. Accordingly, they popularise this underestimated issue by emphasising the problems of depopulation and language extinction. It is a challenge to retain significance in today's world, especially for smaller communities, and in this way this book is a great contribution to the Croatian language and culture. It also represents a great motivation for linguists and individuals who are interested in language varieties with the aim of participating in language revitalisation and preservation. *Sičanske riči* raises awareness of language diversity and its importance. It is also crucial to emphasise that this book, in addition to being great proof of intangible cultural heritage, is not enough for Siče vernacular preservation. In order to preserve the vernacular, its speakers and the awareness of vernacular preservation are required as well; it is necessary to teach it and pass it on to younger generations. Only in this way can the vernacular truly stay alive.