

Gregorio Alasia da Sommaripa: Vocabolario Italiano-sloveno, altri testi italiano-sloveni e testi sloveni. Udine 1607. Lubiana-Duino-Aurisina-Trieste, 1979. 311 pp.

Kopitar described the seventeenth century as 'eine Zeit, wo unsere Literatur vöellig schlummerte' (letter to Hanka dated 6 September 1831). The fact that this generalization can no longer be considered completely accurate is primarily due to the efforts of Kopitar himself in saving for posterity some of the remains of seventeenth-century Slovene. The Vocabolario Italiano e Schiavo of Alasia da Sommaripa, which Kopitar acquired from the dealer Kupitsch about 1815 for Baron Zois, is a printed book which survives in only one copy. It is a unique source of evidence as to the nature of the Slovene spoken at the beginning of the seventeenth century in the region where it borders on Italian. The reprint, produced under the auspices of Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, contains not only a facsimile of the original 221 printed pages but also a most useful essay on Alasia and his book by Lino Legiša (in Slovene and Italian parallel versions).

Alasia da Sommaripa was an Italian monk who came to Duino/Devin in 1601 at the instigation of the Count of Duino, Raimondo VI, to oversee the building of a new monastery in the vicinity of Duino Castle. It was intended that the monastery would contain a school and that it would serve to strengthen the Catholic faith, countering Protestantism, among the Slovenes. In order to do this the monks naturally needed to have some command of the local language and it was to facilitate the task of learning Slovene (or simply la lingua schiava in his terminology) that Alasia wrote his Vocabolario. It is actually more than a dictionary, for it contains in addition to the vocabulary proper several pages of grammatical information, everyday conversations, liturgical texts and hymns.

Alasia learned Slovene from several sources: the Count's son Mattia, Slovenes with whom he came into contact, and also from books. His language is consequently not uniformly that of the Slovene littoral, but includes features from other dialects, from Croatian, and from the written works of Megiser, Dalmatin and Trubar. Nevertheless the basic local features are clear: infinitives are always short, e.g. perdonare=odpustit; final l is y, e.g. biu for bil; ę → sometimes a, e.g. patec 'venerdì' (but pet 'cinque'), and so on.

The sole surviving copy passed from Zois's library to the Licealbibliothek in Ljubljana and thus into the National and University Library there. The fact that it has now been made generally available in facsimile benefits everyone concerned with the historical study of Slovene.

Gerald C. Stone
Oxford University