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Cover photograph: Terracotta boat with figure of horse from Chandraketugarh. 1st-2nd Century CE. *Courtesy:* Indian Museum, Kolkata

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Indo-Graeco-Italica: Ideas on an international cooperation project in Classics, Linguistics, History, Archaeology, and related topics,

The underlying concept in proposing a workshop dealing with the topic indicated in the title is that we face three cultured languages of high importance, with their equally important heritage that has influenced the world for many centuries, and which, still today, is operative in many instances.

The three languages in question are Sanskrit, Ancient Greek and Latin with their respective dimensions and influences. These languages and cultures, having many features in common, have been studied both individually and in comparative approach. They are among the most important subject-matters of a discipline which is termed in our days Comparative Philology. The English usage traditionally distinguishes between Comparative Philology, Classical Philology and Classical Scholarship, although these labelings were never entirely firm or generally accepted. The present approach suggests to attribute to "Comparative Philology" mainly, but not exclusively, a linguistic tenor¹, to "Classical Philology" the

traditional concept of studying, interpreting and drawing important conclusions from Greek and Latin authors and other texts transmitted, and to the third one, also called Classics, a multi-dimensional approach to the ancient world, understood "classical", so that we comprehend it better in order to draw conclusions relevant to our world, with India, Greece and Italy in the foreground.²

Though this suggestion does not aim at Comparative Philology proper with its broad horizon, yet it argues in favour of a multi-faceted interdisciplinarity. So that Indology is not excluded terminologically, the label "Indo-Graeco-Italica" is proposed. Informally, perhaps, also "Classics" could do this work since both this term and "Classical Philology" would suggest that the Indic tradition is not classical. Such a claim, however, cannot be accepted.

The aim of this Indo-Graeco-Italica project is to express the respect that the present writer, like every classicist feels when engaged in the three languages and cultures, respect which these, undeniably,

¹ It is perhaps not unimportant to remark that this term is officially used in Oxford University where it covers the concept of Indo-European Studies in their complexity, i.e. studies beyond linguistics, though linguistically centered.

² These terms exist more or less also in French and in Italian. In the German world, where often top-ranking results were attained, the equivalent of the first is 'Indogermanistik' (with emphasis on the languages and on linguistics), the second is 'Klassische Philologie', and the third is '(Klassische) Altertumswissenschaft'. Only the first of these comprises Indology, which, naturally, exists also independently.



deserve. The project is meant to be a bow to the classical world and to its study, to classical and comparative philology, and to everything and everyone interested in and searching into the past and trying to exploit it to the benefit of the present. During the last century, and increasingly in the second half of it, classical studies came under attack, in our view, unduly and pointlessly in many cases. To give an appropriate response a knowledge is necessary which, in our time, is often absent. To follow Wiseman³, scholars in other fields often express reservations, ranging from doubts to rejection with regard to both the importance of the classics and the value of linking linguistics to them. Only in the new millennium do there seem to be some slight changes: regret for the lack of an education that rests on recognized values resulted in a belated awareness. Using his words, we could, perhaps, hope that the "pendulum" has swung and Latin and Greek are popular again. Hopefully, this swing will give a boost to the whole field. To be added: the interest and the respect for India never ceased to exist in the Western world.

A valuable feature for comparative studies is the linguistic and the cultural continuity: today, the living successor languages are Hindi (as well as other related tongues of India), and respectively, Modern Greek and Italian. Also, in the three respective countries, Italy, Greece and India, the spiritual heritage is still tangible. In this way, a main and a secondary focus for study

may be suggested: the first should be the respective early and the classical periods, and the second the post classical-medieval ones, and occasionally, modern times.

The common features belong to two levels: the prehistoric or the Indo-European level (restricted to the first focus), and the historical one which may reach from antiquity down to our days. The matter of the first domain is the inherited features, and that of the second is the rich history of relations between Greece and the Roman world, and those between Greece, Rome, the Byzantine Empire on the one hand, and India on the other. The inherited features cover a very broad area. They are most conspicuous in the languages the relationship of which is beyond any doubt, although the relations are to be understood hierarchically, i.e. their degree is not the same everywhere. This is an issue linguistics is capable of managing easily. We feature a fascinating branch of linguistics (traditionally: "philology") that has been studied extensively. This does not mean, however, that there aren't still several questions remaining to be solved. In the spiritual domain, too, we meet very fascinating issues. The most important among them is, perhaps, mythology. No need to underline that disciplines like archaeology have an interdisciplinary dimension: to evaluate archaeological findings, history, philology, mythology, art and other fields are essential. There is a difficult but promising perspective for

³ T.P. Wiseman (Ed), *Classics in Progress. Essays on Ancient Greece and Rome* (London: The British Academy 2002, see p. XV).



the cooperation between archaeology and linguistics to which I return below.

An "Indo-Graeco-Italica" Workshop could be realized in several forms: as a Summer School, as congresses held regularly, as university curricula. The easiest of attainment is, perhaps, a two week Summer School organized each year at a university with professors invited from India and from other parts of the world. Since the classes are meant to be of a higher than undergraduate level, the prospective audiences could consist of doctorands, postgraduate students, and any interested academic, scholar or student who has an appropriate grounding.

TOPICS

Tentatively, the topics for such a project might be:

- the importance of the Graeco-Roman tradition for Asia and for India (their cultivation), and the importance of Indology for Europe, for Italy, and for Greece respectively (the history of Indological studies in Italy, in Greece, and in Europe in general included).
- roots and history of European and Indic thinking (philosophy)
- the grammatical tradition in India
- the grammatical tradition in Greece and Rome
- aspects of common features in the three great traditions (similarities, contacts):
 - linguistic
 - prehistoric (archaeology, mythology)
 - historical (contacts in historical times)

- study and comparison of literary works
- a systematic investigation of the philosophical tradition in India and in Greece
- comparison of works of art

CONNECTIONS

At an advanced level, the three traditions and languages could be analyzed in their linguistics and cultural contexts:

- Greek in its historical context, Greek Linguistics
- Greek Studies (what is now termed Ελληνογνωσία in Greece)
- Sanskrit in its historical context, Sanskrit, Indo-Iranian or Indo-Aryan Linguistics
- Indology
- Latin in its historical context, Latin and Italic Linguistics
- Latin and Italic Studies
- The linguistic and cultural environment of Greek, Sanskrit and Latin. This means prehistoric linguistic and cultural factors in three regions: in Greece, in Italy and in India, before Greek, Latin and Sanskrit became dominant in their historical territories.

The linguistic and the cultural aspects could be expanded into interdisciplinary directions:

- linguistics and archaeology: a nineteenth century term suggested for the cooperation between the two disciplines is "linguistic palaeontology". Some scholars, however, prefer the modern "lexico-cultural analysis". The technique requires an



appeal to archaeological and palaeo-environmental evidence to set broad limits on where and when a proto-language might have been spoken. This approach may interest both European and Indian linguists and archaeologists. Some difficulties caused certain specialists in both fields to be cautious, and sometimes reserved. I would, however, remind that the linguist John Chadwick, who contributed to M. Ventris' decipherment of Mycenaean Linear B, called, in a lecture given in the Academy of Vienna in 1975, "fatal" that gap which divided linguists and archaeologists and stood up for a cooperation.

- classical philology and linguistics: the present writer thinks that these two fields represent sister disciplines which should cooperate seamlessly. Such a concept has a long tradition, most tangibly perhaps in Germany. The periodical *Glotta* shows a convincing concern.
- history and philology: there is no need to underline the importance of literary sources for history
- philology and literature, and
- art and archaeology, are related fields. Their cooperation is supposed to bring mutually fruitful results.

SPECIAL CLASSES

From time to time, special classes could be organized on some important and/or controversial theories or persons. Certainly, a course on G. Dumézil e.g. would not be inexpedient, to which French scholars might be invited, as well as opponents from other countries.

Another interesting and important topic could be the Silk Road issue: this road-network connected the Eastern Roman world with India and China. It existed for about one thousand years, and along it multicultural centres developed, with many linguistic, religious and cultural records and monuments, Greek and Sanskrit included. Archaeology plays here a major role. With the exploration of this road great names have been connected, like those of Sir Aurel Stein, Sven Hedin, and also of living American scientists.

The Byzantine and Roman cultural and commercial presence in India (e.g. in Western Central India) is important and could serve as a material for many special classes.

PROSPECTS

An important contribution could be a mediator function. As this writer has experienced, the respect and interest for each country among the three, and especially between India and the two European ones, exists, yet concrete knowledge as well as possibilities of study are restricted. Especially



in Greece there are no systematic Sanskrit or Hindi studies, although this happens sometimes, and happened also in the past. It would be very advisable that in the three

countries both Graeco-Roman (Latin) and Indic studies existed. To this claim only Italy seems to correspond in a satisfactory way.⁴

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⁴ A desirable positive outcome would be if, following the Workshop, classes of the three languages could be organized for the interested, either as part of university curricula or preparing more systematic university classes of this kind.

