

## COMPARATIVE PHILOLOGY

(Indo–Graeco–Italica)

A.L. Katonis

Greek Chair, JNU

The inspiration for this project came from Indo–European linguistics: a try to make IE in Greece and India popular and acceptable. I studied, beside my degree, Comparative Philology or IE linguistics, and I attended the Dahlem IESS (Indo–European Summer School) at the Freie Universität in Berlin for ten years. Initiative and managing were those by M. Meier–Brügger, then Professor at the Seminar für Indogermanistik at the same University. The initial courses were held for two weeks, later, due to financial difficulties, for one week. The School began in 2004 and ended in 2013 when the professor retired. The first and the last sessions were dedicated to Greek ("Greek Week"). The Summer School, in one–week form, is being continued at the Friedrich–Schiller–Universität in Jena, this year (2015) for the second time.

The situation in the first years, was in Europe better than is nowadays. This gave some hopes for Greece, too. But whereas Greece, in the eyes of many, should be the *par excellence* centre for classical and historical studies, linguistics and comparative philology included, for various reasons, this is not happening. I made some efforts in Thessaloniki, since my university is there, but the situation there is less favorable than in Athens.

Although Babinotis, the first linguist in Greece, Professor of Linguistics at Athens University, now retired, understood me, the general thinking in Greece is different, without any fruitful collaboration between philologists and linguists, and especially the Indo–European idea, for a whole set of reasons, is not in the forefront. They do not know or do not care about the fact that a very big portion of Indo–European studies consists exactly in Greek studies. So that I make this approach more accepted, initially I proposed the title "Indo–Graeco–Italica" but the title should better be "Comparative Philology. Both India and Italy have a certain popularity in Greece, and conversely, Greece and Italy have a good fame in India, and this fact can be a vehicle to promote these studies.

In Greece, further, unlike the rest of the world, "Greek" is first Modern Greek, and "Greece" is first Modern Greece. This, although obvious in a relatively young state whose language is Greek, contradicts a pure classicist approach. An appropriate "algorithm" is needed that Greece as a state and its professors are interested.

All this does not mean that in Greece no word about Indo–European linguistics has ever been written. But the issue is always connected with some Greek historical topic. In Italy, Greek and other studies are being cultivated normally, although Italy is not always in the first line of research, together with France, Germany and other important countries.

My next idea was that something similar, important for Greece but at the same time definitely *international*, could be held in Delphi where the nature is superb, the place is ideal and there is a very suitable building complex, a congress centre for international programs the director of which I know well. This would only be possible if the authority of renowned scholars is taking part + finances + international audience were granted. Some of the first I have asked (e.g. J.-G. Pinault, based in Paris at the École normale supérieure, who is also an eminent Indologist, and was invited repeatedly to the IESS) agree, but realization is a further difficult step. If conditions were different in Greece, Delphi would be a most suitable place for this venture. I add that there is a previous experience: in the past, the "Delphic Idea" launched by Angelos Sikelianos and his American wife Eva Palmer was popular. Perhaps more popular abroad than in Greece where there was also resistance. An International Delphic University and Delphic Games were planned and the second also initiated. R. Tagore and M. Gandhi would have attended the First Delphic Games in 1928. Tagore, however, was unable to come because of health problems, whereas archive research to find why Gandhi did not attend has not given any answer to me. The Sikelianos couple was not clever enough. A university was never established, and the Games stopped. The Idea is not entirely in oblivion and this may give hopes. I have written about this elsewhere.

The Dahlem IESS, during its ten-year course, comprised many fields of Comparative Philology. From purely linguistic issues (phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, laryngeal theory, ablaut and more) and single languages (Greek and Latin to Slavic, Tocharian and the Silk Road Languages and cultures, and Hittite) to mythological issues, homeland and other problems, even Etruscan. Gert Klingenschmidt gave two very thorough courses in Indo-Iranian.

The audience was, during the first two weeks, amazingly big, perhaps 60 people. Later, the number went down, but at least 10–15 persons were always there. I would have liked to bring this to Greece, which, exactly because it was Greece, as a place, would have been engaging.

Pure Indo-European would not be welcomed in Greece. Pure Greek there is, and was always there everywhere. In India, as I understood, although there is tolerance, the pure IE idea is not very popular, either. There is a "colonial" implication which has *nothing* to do with scholarship and in my opinion a suitable *rescue* for this approach is needed. Additionally, in Greece, it is always Modern Greek and Modern Greece that come first, and they *often* leave ancient topics to the international scholarship and audience. Modern Greek Studies only have little to do with Indo-European. Personally, although my main interest is the ancient, even the prehistoric world and languages, I perfectly agree that "Greek Studies" have to comprise "Greek" vertically. This is also the aim of the Greek Chair at the JNU, currently being built up. In India, the linguistic situation is similar: there is a comparable continuity.

What guise to find so that "Indo-European" is admitted both in Greece and in India and one is not only not accused of being detached from present day reality but enjoys also his parallel modern priorities? "Greek Studies" are definitely not only Classical Greek Studies. Greek brings you conveniently both to present day reality and to the Indo-European level as does also Indology. Although mainly linguistically approached, let's Greek and the

other two foundational languages bring in, in their entirety. Linguistics belongs to few. Let's bring other topics as well. Greek authorities would never be enthousiastic if it were only about Ancient Greek. A very characteristic example of this thinking is the Manolis Triantaphyllidis Institute (or Institute of Neohellenic Studies) in Thessaloniki which cultivates *both* Ancient Greek and Indo-European. I don't think that anywhere in the world a Neohellenic institution would be established in order to approach earlier phases of Greek and Indo-European Linguistics. It was this institute, by the way, I tried to cooperate with. But the Director and the Institute were not influential enough, and the university would not participate. In scholarly level, let's bring in diachronically, what is comparable. Not only Modern Greek and not only Ancient Greek, and the other two languages, but also their extensions. The three foundational languages acknowledged in the other countries respectively, are, of course, Sanskrit, Greek and Latin.

Why "Indo-Graeco-Italica" as a focus within Comparative Philology? In this field, there is a fine continuity. An issue both important and one that is suitable for comparative studies. I propose focusing on a vertical continuity, and on a horizontal one. One should propose topics not just anything pertaining but *comparable* ones so that they are instructive. The courses could provide credits for the interested students although the classes would be open to everybody who is interested and has the necessary skills. (This was, and remains, the practice in Germany). But this is a detail that can be added later. First, a scholars' principal agreement is needed, then the practical issues may come. Alongside traditional IE topics like homeland, linguistic reconstruction, lexico-cultural analysis, history of the three languages and more, there could be others that satisfy also a less linguistically motivated audience, still important, both with regard to the topics and to the audience. In the given contexts, e.g., if a Modern Greek, or an Italian or an Indian poet or writer is engaged in ancient or medieval topics, our approach would help to understand him, and non-ancient dimensions would be comprised. E.g. the Modern Greek poet Sikelianos, whose work is very considerable, and is engaged, in many ways in ancient and medieval topics, can be approached better. Such aspects are in Greece, and not only, indeed, frequent. Rabindranath Tagore, who worked up ancient topics like in *Natir Puja*, influenced anyway by many readings, like the Upanishads, is a rather demanding person if one wants to understand him properly. And, moreover, Tagore and Sikelianos are comparable. I think that it is unscholarly to try to understand Tagore without having at least some knowledge of his Indian, and not only Indian, sources. This principle may be extended to Greek, Italian and other (if applicable) writers. The field is inexhaustible. I do not mean clinging strictly to these three countries and continuities, but something like this would "sell" in the world today, in Greece, and perhaps also in India. *Other* IE topics could be attached well but given the imaginary audience addressed, everything else should be attached, if applicable, to an axis indicated in the title. The superordinate category could be, "Comparative Philology and Classics", or "Classics" with an appropriate epithet.

The title first suggested is a borrowing from the Italian linguist Francesco Ribezzo. It intended to cover an engagement in the bearers of the three most important IE languages, their expansion, route, aims, contribution, etc. The present project does not want to be an imitation of Ribezzo's ideas and special Italian aims in the first half of the 20th century. "Italica" is meant

'belonging to Italy and to its people and languages' (with the subsequent radiation from there). Certainly not only what is today "Italian". Since the Latin language took shape in Italy, the term "Italica" could cover occasional comparable issues outside Italy. "Italica" in the title is intended as a *Latin* word, with the meaning 'things pertaining to the peninsula called «Italia»'. Since it was Italy where Latin took shape, this is what interests the Indo-European dimension first together with anything comparable with Indian and Greek.

In an ideal case, a summer school could be held alternatively in India, in Greece and in Italy. Another idea, if finances were there abundantly, this could be held always in Delphi (which was the *omphalos*, the "navel of the world"!), and strictly always as something international, and then, let Greek authorities think of an important *Greek* achievement ... I mention an Indian solution below. This issue must, for the time being, be left open.

The focus should resemble the IESS approach (if necessary, I can give a detailed program of the ten years of the courses being held) but with the *postclassical, medieval and the modern dimensions* added. I.e., logically, less traditional Indo-European, and more of their extensions. Always carefully chosen, satisfying India, Greece and Italy and other participant countries to provide things *comparable* and *instructive*. *Not* everything Italian would be of interest, and *not* everything Modern Greek, and *not* everything Modern Indian. A shoreless approach is not feasible. But as we draw back in time, the scope would broaden. If this workshop or summer school series proved successful, it could be continued in the future, without assigning an end, and perhaps based only in India, if an official Greek participation fails.

In the JNU, they speak about "seminars" and "workshops": this project could be one. *Seminal* courses and *workshops* should walk hand in hand. But in the given situation, in Greek and Latin matters seminal courses are, I think, for India, even more important. This is, however, an independent issue.

For the time being, *where, how* and *financing* may be left open to discussion. I mention, however, that recently I was invited to the IAS Tagore Conference in Shimla (5–7 November, 2015). The conference was a success, and the Institute made a good impression. Financing was on their part. I was informed that applying for fellowship at the Institute is possible. Their only concern is research of benefit. There is linguistics, too, although, more towards the computational direction, as I understood. I simply ask, could the *Comparative Linguistics* idea be realized in cooperation with the IAS?

Updated: JNU, April 2016

A.L. Katonis

JNU, Greek chair

As Addenda, I attach a photo coming from the Sikelianos Archives in Athens. The picture shows Eva Palmer, Sikelianos' American wife (to the left), then R.

Mahalanobis with his wife, who came with Tagore when the latter visited Greece, next the poet Sikelianos, and one more person to the right whose identity is not known. The picture seems to have been taken in Delphi during the First Delphic Games, that Tagore did not attend.



When I repeatedly carried out research in the Sikelianos Archives (Athens, Kifissia), I was aware of the fact that some kind of direct contact must have existed between the two major poets. Owing to a wrong information I vainly searched for indications of a personal contact between Tagore and Sikelianos. Now, an important letter has been found, written by Tagore to his fellow-poet from Santiniketan in 1927. The letter, found in the Benaki-Museum, has been published by Lia Papadaki in the second edition of the Tagore-Festschrift (*Rabindranath Tagore. A Tribute to His Memory on the 90th Anniversary of His Visit to Greece* [in Greek]. Edited and Introduced by Dimitris Th. Vassiliades'. Athens: ELINEPA Publications, 2016), and is the following:

Christians  
March 2, 1924

6 DWARKANATH TAGORE STREET  
CALCUTTA

Dear Port

Having badly hurt my finger  
I was compelled to delay in answering  
your very kind letter. I like nothing better  
than to attend your festival and spend some  
time in your beautiful country. But my  
resources are small and my time is occupied.  
If I ever have the means and the chance  
to visit Europe I shall certainly utilise  
the opportunity in meeting you and arranging  
for writing down my songs in Greek notation.

My finger is still bad and that is the reason  
of the slowness of this letter.

With kindest regards

Dwarkanath Tagore