

Recent Armenological Research of Indo-European Relevance

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A comprehensive review of Armenological research relevant to Indo-European studies should begin from 1972, the year of Rüdiger Schmitt's "Die Erforschung des Klassisch-Armenischen seit Meillet (1936)". Unfortunately, constraints of time and space make this task unfeasible here. Instead, I shall limit my discussion to what I consider to be the most important works of the last ten years or so from representative subfields of Armenian studies. Given the interests of Indo-Europeanists, I will focus on traditional Indo-European materials—etymology, folklore, and so on—rather than on research that has been conducted in the context of theoretical linguistics (for the latter see Sigler 1996, Vaux 1998, and references therein).

Etymology and Genetic Classification

We start with Clackson 1994, which has probably received more attention among Indo-Europeanists than any other recent work dealing with Armenian (see for example Greppin's review in *Language*, 1996). The author's stated aim is to "ascertain the nature of the relationship between the Greek and Armenian languages" (27); he concludes that the two do not form a subgroup within Indo-European (199). The majority of the book is devoted to etymologies that have been cited in support of an Armeno-Greek (and often -Indic) subgrouping, though some phonological and morphological affinities are considered in chapters 2 and 3.

For example, Clackson considers the parallels that have been drawn between the Armenian instrumental suffix *-w/-v/-b-* and Greek *-phi-*, both of which have extended to the singular declension in certain situations (68-74). He rejects the possibility that this represents a common Armeno-Greek innovation, preferring to suppose that the singular usages are either independent innovations or shared archaisms (72-73). (It is unclear whether Greppin's claim (806) that Armenian *-ov* and Gk *-phi* "cannot be from the Indo-European instrumental **-bhis* because that is plural" is supposed to refer to Clackson, or rather is Greppin's own notion. Clackson uses no such reasoning, though, so I assume that Greppin is presenting his own argument. However, this argument is contradicted even within Armenian, where the Old Armenian genitive/dative/ablative *i*-stem plural *-ic'* has become the marker of the ablative singular in modern Eastern Armenian.)

Though Greppin's evaluation of Clackson's work is excessively harsh (e.g. "C[ackson]'s repeated overstatements are the errors of inexperience" (806)), I agree with his ultimate conclusion that Clackson disposes of the Armeno-Greek parallels too easily. Nevertheless, Clackson's book is a must-read for Armenologists and Indo-Europeanists, if only for its compilation of a century's worth of work on Armenian etymology.

Watkins (1995) views the Armeno-Greek-Indo-Iranian hypothesis in a more favorable light. In chapter 14 of his important work on Indo-European poetics, Watkins reconstructs a collocation in the common poetic language of Indo-Iranian, Greek, and Armenian which consists of the doubly alliterative set of adjectives {**h₂rǵi-*, **h₁ōku-* 'swift', *h₂aku-* 'sharp'} combined with the alliterative set of nouns {**pet(h₂-* 'flying', **pet-r-/pt-er-/per-* 'wing(ed)', **ped-* 'foot(ed)'} . The formula surfaces in epithets such as Armenian *arcui sratew* 'sharp-winged eagle', Homeric Greek *ōkúpteros írēks* 'swift-

winged hawk’, and Vedic *āsúpátvā śyenáh* ‘swift-flying eagle’. When defending the putative relationship between Sanskrit *ṛjipyá-* ‘swift-flying’, Avestan *ərəzifīia-* ‘eagle’, Greek *aigupios* ‘vulture’, and Armenian *arcui* ‘eagle’ (*pace* de Lamberterie 1978, who considered the Armenian and Greek forms to be Iranian loans), Watkins states that “since Indo-Iranian, Greek, and Armenian constitute a dialect area on independent grounds...I see no good reason not to regard [the above words] with their epithets and collocations as an inheritance from the poetic proto-language of the same dialect area.” (171) However, the Latin word for ‘hawk’, *accipiter* (< **h₂aku-petr-* ‘sharp winged’), which combines both components of the reconstructed formula, suggests that the figure may not have been an Armeno-Greco-Indo-Iranian innovation; this is perhaps what prompts Watkins to hedge his conclusion: “it could well belong to a layer of Indo-European (or Greco-Armeno-Indo-Iranian) poetic language.” (172)

Folklore and Mythology

The Armeno-Greco-Indo-Iranian hypothesis also comes into play in a forthcoming paper by James Russell, who uses a detailed survey of Armenian songs, legends, and buildings involving the *tux manuk* (‘dark child’), together with comparisons to the legends of *bāla kṛṣṇa* in India and Melanthos in Greece, to reconstruct an Indo-European mythological type of the Black Youth. The Black Youth that Russell reconstructs is “beautiful of hair and body, associated with springs or the purification of water, with love and fertility, and the devotions of women.” The Indian Krishna slays Kāliya, the serpent who poisons the river Yamunā, and “enters the crowd of cowherdresses by the riverbank to tease them in amorous play”; the Armenian *tux manuk* rides on horseback into the village square from the source of the springs in the mountains, and seduces the girls there by asking for water from their jugs.

Russell sees a Greek manifestation of the same mythological complex in the etiological myth of the Kourēotis rite, celebrated on the third day of the Apaturia festival. As the story goes, there was a dispute between Athens and Boeotia over a border district that lay between them, Melainai (‘the black (land)’). In the process, Melanthos (‘the black one’) slew Xanthos (‘the fair one’) by trickery. Here, according to Russell, “the element of trickery so prominent in the folk-religious character of Krishna is expressed...in the context of war rather than theft or love-play.”

Russell toys with the idea that the mythological complex surrounding the Black Youth was simply brought westwards from India to Armenia and Greece by the Gypsies, but ultimately concludes, based on the Greek evidence, that the Black Youth is an Indo-European mythological type, variously developed in the different cultures where he is encountered: religious figure in India, martyr in Armenia, and soldier/statesman in Greece. However, one must also consider two other possible interpretations of the myths discussed by Russell: the various elements of the Black Child legend are plausible candidates for folkloric universals (as Russell himself implies at various points in his paper); and the existence of parallel legends in the Germanic world (Joe Harris, personal communication) suggests that the Black Youth may be Indo-European rather than Armeno-Greco-Indo-Iranian (Russell in fact assumes the former option, though he does not mention the Germanic facts).

Indo-Europeanists should also be aware of Charles de Lamberterie’s (1981) thesis on Armenian folklore and myth from an Indo-European perspective, which to date has

remained unpublished and therefore relatively obscure. Part One of the book, “The Birth of Sanasar,” deals with parallels between Sanasar (one of the heroes of the Armenian epic *David of Sasun*), Vahagn (the Armenian version of Iranian *vərəθraγna*), and Indra. The author ultimately concludes that the legend of Sanasar continues intact the legend of Vahagn mentioned by Movsēs Xorenac’i, which in turn is a reflex of the Indo-European myth of the dragon-slaying hero, continued also in the Vedic legend of Indra. The Armenian legend, he says, is not borrowed from Iran, but rather represents a direct inheritance from Indo-European mythology. Part Two, “The Armenian Language: Conservator of Traditions” proposes a number of new Indo-European etymologies for Armenian words, with the ultimate goal of demonstrating that Armenian preserves reflexes of the same words used by the Vedic priests to celebrate the slaying by Indra of the dragon Vrtra. Scholars of Indo-European language and culture alike will find de Lamberterie’s work to be well-argued and enlightening. (The same can be said for his overview of Armenian from an Indo-European perspective in Ramat and Ramat 1998, *The Indo-European Languages*.)

Phonology

Another thesis that appears to have gone largely unnoticed is Erling Ravnæs’ *The Chronology of the Sound Changes from Proto-Indo-European to Classical Armenian* (1991). Written at the University of Oslo under the direction of Lindeman, this thesis traces the development of the Indo-European vowels, consonants, and consonant clusters into Old Armenian. The prose is extremely sparse, but many readers will find this to be a welcome change from the turgid density of some other works in the field. Several of my colleagues have expressed dissatisfaction with Ravnæs’ limited discussions and disputable conclusions, but I find myself consulting his book more often than Clackson’s, because the range of Armenian forms and phenomena covered is significantly greater. In addition, Ravnæs is to be commended for attempting to formulate a relative (and even an absolute!) chronology of the sound changes that occurred between Indo-European and Old Armenian (pp. 172-182).

Indo-Europeanists who are interested in phonological typology, and especially voiced aspirates and consonant shifts, will want to examine Andrzej Pisowicz’s newest take on the consonant shifts that occurred between Proto-Armenian and the modern dialects (1997; a more detailed discussion can be found in Pisowicz 1976). Pisowicz is of the opinion that the following developments occurred in the history of the Armenian consonant system:

PIE	<i>b</i>	<i>bh</i>	<i>p</i>
	↓	↓	↓
Old Armenian	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>ph</i>
	↓	↓	↓
Common Armenian (source of the modern dialects)	<i>p</i> (fortis)	<i>bh</i>	<i>ph</i>

The interesting claim here of course is that Armenian lost the Indo-European voiced aspirates, but then innovated a new set of voiced aspirates. For a different view on this topic, see Garrett 1991.

Morphology

Joshua Katz of Harvard University is currently finishing a thesis on the Indo-European pronouns, of which chapter 6 treats Armenian pronouns. Katz develops an account for the recalcitrant oblique 1pl. *me-* and oblique 2pl. *je-* in Armenian on the basis of a full examination of plural and dual oblique pronouns throughout Indo-European. According to his theory, the *me-* form derives from **s-mé*, the aphaeretized variant of ** η s-mé* (cf. Skt. *asmá-*, etc.); the same aphaeresis is found also in Celtic and Tocharian. The 2pl. *je-* is taken back to **us-wé*, which he shows in earlier chapters to be the oldest form of the second-person plural (**-wé* is replaced by **-mé* in Indo-Iranian and Greek [and also Tocharian]). As in Celtic, Germanic, Anatolian (in part), and Tocharian (and Greek), this form also supposes the aphaeretized variant **s-wé*. Before the famous Armenian sound change **sw > k'* applies, a new dative **swé-ghi* is formed (cf. **(-)ghi* in other Armenian oblique pronominal forms such as *inj*, *kez* (< **t-wé-ghi*), *mez*). This form then assimilates to **s η heghi*, which then regularly emerges as *jez*. The stem *je-* is then abstracted from the dative *jez*. Katz ties this development to a tendency for dative-instrumental-locatives to “win out” in the pronominal system (cf. Gk. 3pl. *sphi*, etc.; Hittite dative plural *-a(:)s* extended to the accusative in pronouns).

Lexicography

Indo-Europeanists should be aware that two nice reverse dictionaries of Classical Armenian have recently appeared; these of course are primarily useful for identifying word-final phonological sequences and morphemes. (†)Jungmann and Weitenberg 1993, however, goes beyond the usual functionality of reverse dictionaries by including such useful information such as author citations, chronological classification of lexical entries, morphological information such as declension and conjugation membership, plus a reverse index by morpheme, which has the advantage of being in Romanized transcription. I have found it to be quite helpful when I need to know quickly if a word is attested in the oldest texts or not. Palandjian 1991 is easier to use than Jungmann and Weitenberg’s dictionary and contains more words; for this reason, I find myself using it more often than J & W. However, the fact that it is presented entirely in the Armenian script may deter many Indo-Europeanists.

Syntax

In the domain of traditional syntax, Klein’s (1996) study of the deictic clitics *-s*, *-d*, and *-n* in Classical Armenian is worth mention. Klein restricts his attention to the two oldest manuscripts of the Armenian Gospels (887 and 989 A.D.) in order to maximize his chances of approaching a coherent synchronic system of usage. The obvious disadvantage of this scheme is that the Armenian Gospels are translations of Greek originals, and therefore are prone to extended fits of Greek syntax and usage. As Klein notes, however, “the fact that the three-way Classical Armenian and two-way Hellenistic Greek systems of deixis do not match up is helpful in allowing us to perceive independent features of Armenian usage.” (3) The monograph is quite short (115 pages of prose), but serves as a helpful categorization of the semantic roles played by the deictic clitics in Classical Armenian. Readers interested in syntactic analysis of the behavior of these clitics in Wackernagel’s position in relative clauses can consult Vaux 1994.

Armenians and Aryans

For readers interested in the history of Indo-European scholarship, Christina Maranci's 1998 Princeton thesis *Medieval Armenian Architecture and the Aryan Myth: Josef Strzygowski and his Legacy* is well worth examining. The thesis focuses on the work of Joseph Strzygowski, professor of Art History at the University of Vienna until his death in 1941. Strzygowski attempted in his 1918 magnum opus to draw on the success and popularity of Indo-European linguistics in order to develop a theory of Indo-European architecture, of which he found traces in monuments ranging from the stave churches of Scandinavia to the cruciform churches of Armenia to the temples of Kashmir. I think most linguists would agree that the principles governing the development and diffusion of architectural styles are significantly different from those governing languages, and efforts such as Strzygowski's therefore will not lead to valid reconstructions. However, Indo-Europeanists will enjoy reading about the ways in which Strzygowski attempted to apply linguistic methodology to architecture, and may even wax nostalgic about the influence Indo-European linguistics once had over other disciplines.

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