European Hellenism and Greek Nationalism: Some Effects of Ethnocentrism on Greek Linguistic Scholarship

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Greek scholarship, especially in the nineteenth century, has, in certain theoretical disciplines at least, been linked to various ideological trends prevailing in Europe. Among these disciplines, as argued by Herzfeld (1982), is that of folklore studies. As Herzfeld points out, Greek scholars reacted to the romantic image of Greece[1] that European Hellenism had projected and thus embedded folklore studies in an ideological context involving ethnocentrism, a search for a national identity, and the building of a nation-state. In particular, they "constructed cultural continuity [with Ancient Greece] in defense of their national identity . . . [but] not . . . in defiance of the facts. Rather, they assembled what they considered to be the relevant cultural materials and used them to state their case" (4). Moreover, they developed what Herzfeld calls an "externally directed ideology, ever responsive to foreign comment and criticism" (7–8).

Such a linking of scholarship with ideology was not unique to the Greeks of the time; as Herzfeld points out (11), similar trends are evident in nineteenth century Finnish folklore studies. Nor is it the case that only folklore research experienced such an infusion of ideology. Indeed, other disciplines can be shown to demonstrate such tendencies, and in particular Greek linguistic science in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries offers a picture quite parallel in many respects to what Herzfeld has shown for folklore.

Thus, in what follows, some examples are presented which show the effects of the general intellectual *Zeitgeist* induced by this "exter-

nally directed ideology'' on the interpretations Greek linguists have given to facts and questions about the Greek language. It remains a task for future research to provide, as part of the writing of the full intellectual history of Modern Greek scholarship, the detail needed to understand fully how individual scholars in Greece and elsewhere figured in these developments.[2]

An interest in the study and analysis of language and languages, especially the Greek language, has a long tradition among the Greeks.[3] For example, the Sophists and Plato were concerned with a debate over *phúsei* (by nature) versus *thései* (by convention) as the reason for words having the meanings they did, and in addition attempted to arrive at etymologies, fanciful though they may have been in some instances.[4] In addition, Aristotle and later the Stoics defined some of the basic concepts of grammatical analysis, for example the ''parts of speech,'' which serve linguists well even today. Still, as Jespersen (1964:2) has observed, ''real insight into the nature of language made little progress . . . with the Alexandrians . . . and etymology still remained in the childlike stage.''

In the nineteenth century in Greece, though, an interest in linguistics in general and in Greek linguistics in particular arose in the Greek scholarly community. The motivation behind this interest is somewhat akin to the forces which drove Plato and others centuries ago, i.e., a curiosity about linguistic origins and a concern for language as a human and social phenomenon; but the basic principles and methods of investigation were now quite different, largely as the result of the introduction into Greek intellectual and academic life of ideas and methodologies from Western Europe.

For example, two of the founding fathers of Greek linguistics, Jean Psicharis (1854–1929) and George Hatzidakis (1848–1941), were both influenced by European ideas and intellectual developments, Psicharis more by the French school and Hatzidakis more by the German school.[5] The work of these two scholars shows quite

[2]Some similar remarks on the state of etymological science among Greek scholars are to be found in Zahos (13–16).

[3]See Jespersen, and Pedersen (1959, 1983), for some discussion concerning language science in Ancient Greece and Hellenistic times.

[4]For example, in *Cratylus* 417 (following the edition of Jowett), Plato has Socrates ''derive'' *blaberón* ''harmful'' from *boulómenon háptein rhoûn* ''wanting to bind the stream,'' a derivation which fails on phonetic and semantic grounds, and is, moreover, at odds with what is now known about the historical derivation of these words (see, for instance, Chantraine).

[5]See Babiniotis for details regarding Hatzidakis and his contribution to Greek linguistic science.

clearly the beneficial results of scholarly contact between Greece and Europe in the area of linguistics. Moreover, progress in the linguistic analysis and understanding of the Greek language, especially on the part of linguists who were themselves Greeks, has come through the application of methods arrived at by scholars outside of Greece. The introduction of scientific and objective methods of observation, classification, and explanation—in sharp contrast to the accounts found in Plato and the Alexandrian grammarians for instance—led, for example, to the collection of a wide range of dialect materials, to the creation of careful lexicographic records, and to other similar significant steps in the establishment of a corpus of data from which to gain insights into the development and proper analysis of the Greek language.

The introduction of such ideas into Greece, though, particularly against the ideological backdrop referred to earlier, was not without some reaction. As a result, it is possible to find instances in which the selection of relevant data and explanations on the part of Greek linguistic scholars seems, in part at least, to have been motivated by some of the same concerns which drove their colleagues in folklore studies.

A case in point concerns nineteenth and early twentieth century accounts of the status of the infinitive in the Pontic dialects of Greek. Tombaidis (1977) has noted that nineteenth century Greek scholars uncritically accepted certain claims about the facts regarding the Pontic infinitive and ended up vastly overstating the case for the existence of an infinitive in this dialect group.

Tombaidis bases this conclusion on several facts. First, many nineteenth century descriptions of the Pontic dialects are not consistent with one another and there are in addition some internal inconsistencies in the main source on this dialect group, Deffner's study published in 1878. For example, Deffner cites *ihame afis 'nam* as an instance of an infinitive when it seems instead to be a doubly inflected perfect form, *ihame afisiname* (even if such a form might have been based on an infinitival expression in earlier stages of Pontic). Second, there is an odd syntactic restriction on the appearance of the infinitive in Deffner's material, namely that it only occurs after past tense verbs, and this restriction has a highly artificial air to it. Finally, Tombaidis' own research, based on questionnaires from and interviews with elderly Pontic refugees, showed that such speakers had no trace at all of an infinitive, even though their linguistic competence was initially formed approximately contemporaneously with the period Deffner was describing.

So why has Pontic been described as having an infinitive and in particular, why were Greek linguists so ready to accept Deffner's claims regarding the infinitive in Pontic? Tombaidis argues that chauvinistic feelings were responsible, stirred up largely in reaction to the claims of European scholars regarding the causes of the absence of the infinitive in Greek. That is, many European scholars saw this absence of the infinitive as the result of foreign influence— e.g., from Bulgarian or Albanian which similarly lack an infinitive, though to a lesser degree—and therefore as an indication that there was no continuity between Ancient Greek and Modern Greek and by extension between the civilization and culture of Ancient Greece and those of Modern Greece. Moreover, some European scholars, such as Fallmerayer (1845:2.451-2), even went so far as to castigate Greek for not having an infinitive, saying "eine Sprache ohne Infinitiv ist nicht viel besser als ein menschlicher Körper ohne Hand."[6]

It was in response to such outside pressures that Greek linguists retaliated by "finding" a dialect that still had an infinitive, thereby "proving" continuity and refuting people such as Fallmerayer. The result, though, is claims which are less than wholly accurate about the Pontic infinitive and therefore not necessarily good or sound linguistic scholarship and not in the best interests of Greek scholarship in general.

A similar ethnocentric concern for continuity with Ancient Greek, partly spurred by the claims of European scholars to the contrary, has also left its mark in Modern Greek etymological research. It is certainly true that many Modern Greek words ultimately do trace their origins to Ancient Greek. However, Greek scholars, in producing what have become the standard etymologies of Modern Greek words, have regularly looked to Ancient Greek, and in so doing often have overlooked plausible—and in some cases undoubtedly correct—etymologies which draw on material from surrounding non-Greek languages.

There are numerous such instances which might be brought forward to exemplify this etymological ethnocentrism. However, mention of just a few should suffice.

One interesting case in point is the etymology of the common deictic particle na "there!; here is!".[7] The standard etymology of na, as stated by Hatzidakis (1905:2.100, 104) and accepted by Andriotis (1967:s.v.), derives the word from an Ancient Greek source as fol-

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lows: the Classical Greek interjection e:níde "see there!" originally composed of the interjection e:n "see there!" plus the imperatival form idé "see!" was, it is claimed, reanalyzed as e:ní plus the particle de, and from this reanalyzed form, a free form e:ní was abstracted (though it actually is never attested).[8] Then by the substitution of the final –a of adverbs (cf. akóma) and other particles (e.g., da, edá) for the –i and the regular loss of initial unstressed vowels, the particle na arose.

It must be admitted that this certainly is a possible scenario, and etymology after all is to some extent a matter of taste inasmuch as one set of developments can never be proven to have occurred, but can only be judged more likely to have occurred than some other conjecture. However, the proposal under consideration does involve the positing of several unattested forms (*e:ní, and either *e:ná or *ni, depending on the chronological order of the last two changes) and moreover seems like an overly complicated etymology for what appears to be a relatively simple word. This is especially so since a straightforward etymology is available if one looks beyond the Greek language, something the Greek linguists were loath to do. Virtually all the Balkan languages have a particle na with the same meaning as Greek deictic na and moreover such a particle is found throughout the Slavic languages, even those not in the Balkans, such as Ukrainian, Russian, Byelorussian, etc. Thus it seems that na is a loan word, and from the fact that Greek linguistic influence did not generally extend as far north as the East and West Slavic languages, it may be concluded that the direction of borrowing was from Slavic into the Balkan languages, including Greek. Deictic na, therefore, is most likely a non-native word which has found its way into Greek.

Similarly, the common interjection áide meaning (roughly) "come on!" is commonly derived by Greek linguists, and is so given in Andriotis (1967:s.v.), from an Ancient Greek imperative plural ágete or from the imperative singular áge with the particle de:. Such a derivation has some semantic justification but fails on phonetic grounds, for there is no straightforward way to produce [áide] from either of the two putative Ancient Greek sources—ágete could perhaps yield an *áite and áge de: might yield *áiðe, but the plain voiced stop pronunciation ([d] and not [t] or [ð]) would not arise. A better

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[6]See Herzfeld (Chapter 4, especially pp. 75-81) for a summary of Fallmerayer's view on Greece in general.

[7]This is a condensation of views expressed in Joseph 1981.

[8]There is, to be sure, some question about possible attestation for e:ní. The seventh edition (1883) of Liddell & Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* lists e:ní under a separate entry but notes that it is a *falsa lectio* for e:n in a few occurrences of the word in Aristophanes and Plato. Later editions (e.g., the ninth) omit e:ní altogether, apparently reflecting an editorial view that it is indeed a "ghost-word."

possibility, one which is well-motivated both semantically and pho-
netically, is to treat *áide* as a compound of the interjection *ái* and the
(Modern Greek) particle *de*, both independently occurring forms.
However, since *de* is apparently of Turkish origin (cf. the Turkish
particle *de* from the verb *de-mek* "to say") and since an interjection
haydi is to be found in modern Turkish, apparently composed of an
interjection *hay* and the (Turkish) particle *de* (cf. the fourteenth cen-
tury Turkish form *hay de* for modern *haydi*), it seems more reasonable
to assume that the compounding of [ái] with [de] was actually com-
pleted on the Turkish end and that Greek *áide*, therefore, is a straight
borrowing from Turkish. In any case, it again seems likely that a
better etymology for the Greek word is to be found beyond Greece's
borders.

As a final example, again involving Turkish, the form *mára* can
be mentioned. This word occurs in the phrase *ára mára* expressing
indifference (i.e., "who cares?") and in the plural in the phrase *áres
máres (kukunáres)* meaning "nonsense." It is supposedly a dialectal
form *mára* meaning "withering" from the verb *maréno*.[9] One might
well question, though, what a derivative of the verb *maréno* would be
doing in such phrases; thus here the formal aspect of the proposed
etymology presents no problems but instead the semantic motivation
is weak. A more plausible derivation of *mára* in these uses is to take
the phrase *ára mára* as an instance of a Turkish expressive reduplica-
tion pattern by which a word is reduplicated in entirety with the sub-
stitution of *m –* for the initial consonant (or affixation of *m –* in the
case of vowel-initial words) of the repeated word; the meaning of the
phrase is "X and the like; X and such", as in *kitap mitap* "books and
the like" or *dergi mergi* "magazines and such". This pattern occurs
sporadically in Greek (or at least, many Greeks are aware of it and
use it in nonce expressions) and it is found in Byzantios' *Babylonia*,
e.g., *kafé mafé* (based on *kafé* "coffee") and *pipéri mipéri* (based on
pipéri "pepper").[10] The expressive nature of this Turkish pattern fits
in nicely with the expressive character of the two Greek phrases in
question with *mára*, so that in this case both form and function are

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[9]So Papadopoulos, who notes (and dismisses) other attempts to explain the
phrase, e.g., Politis' *ára m'ára* "*ára* with *ára*," all of which, significantly, give it a
Greek-internal derivation. It is unclear, by the way, just what *ára* derives from
(hence the absence of a gloss above); Papadopoulos derives it from Ancient Greek
ará "prayer; curse", while Zahos (62), interestingly, derives it from Albanian *ara*
"the field."

[10]See Levy for fuller discussion of the occurrence of this pattern in *Babylonia* and
for further references to the Turkish (and apparently more widely spread) reduplica-
tion process.

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better served by etymologizing outside of the native Greek linguistic
tradition.[11]

These etymological examples and the case of the Pontic infini-
tive discussed earlier all have in common the fact that ethnocentric
concerns appear to have spilled over into questions of research and to
have affected the outcome of scientific inquiries in the field of linguis-
tics. As was the case with folklore studies, though, the Greeks are not
alone in their mixing of nationalistic ideologies with linguistic schol-
arship; for example, Lithuanian scholars have long resisted the no-
tion of a Balto-Slavic linguistic unity despite some very compelling
evidence in favor of such a subgrouping within the Indo-European
languages[12] and numerous other instances could also be cited.[13]

Even though their case is not unique, the Greeks, more perhaps
than scholars of other countries, stood to lose quite a bit when pitted
against claims such as those of Fallmerayer and others. Herzfeld
(11), for instance, notes with regard to folklore studies and ideology
that "no other country was accorded such a generative role [as
Greece was] in relation to the rest of Europe, and it is this above all
which makes the Greek experience the reverse of that of virtually
every other European country."

In the case at hand, the introduction of ideology into Greek
scholarship was often in direct reaction to European ideas about
Greece and about the Greek language. Inasmuch as this resulted, in
many cases, in scholarship on the Greek language being short-
changed and even compromised, it may be concluded that in this
respect the impact of European ideas (and especially those of roman-
tic Hellenism) on Greece worked to the detriment of Greek linguistic
scholarship.

On the other hand, the establishment of a linguistic science in
Greece, partly as a result of European influence, is really what made

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[11]Some months after this article had been written, Dr. Savvas Dimakopulos of
New York brought to my attention Floros 1980, a work previously not known to me.
In it, the derivation of *ára mára* from the Turkish reduplicative pattern is given; I am
pleased to have been anticipated on this count, for it seems that a new era in Greek
etymological science is under way.

[12]See Senn for the (standard) Lithuanian view and Szemerényi for an opposing
view; as Robinson indicates, the consensus view now is in favor of Balto-Slavic
unity.

[13]For example, with regard to the loss of the infinitive in the Balkan languages,
native scholars from practically every one of the languages have claimed that their
own language lost its infinitive on its own, without the "assistance" of contact from
another language, such as Greek. See Joseph (1983: Chapter 7) for some discussion
of this example of ethnocentrism in linguistic scholarship.

it possible for these etymologies to be propounded, and even if they are wrong, the methodologies employed in producing them are far more sophisticated than those of Plato some 2300 years earlier. Moreover, the influx of new ideas about linguistics from Europe and also America into Greece continues to this day, and the net result is that the state of Greek linguistics is far more vital and far richer today than ever before. Thus, although the more negative aspects have been emphasized here, on balance, it seems fair to say that the effects of European influence on Greek scholarship in linguistics have largely been positive.[14]

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[14]Some of these ideas in this paper were presented at the MGSA Symposium on Greece and Europe in October 1983 in New York. I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer and especially my colleague Vassilis Lambropoulos for their timely and extremely helpful comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this paper.

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Addendum: More on Ethnocentrism in Greek Linguistic Scholarship

A propos of my article on the effects of Greek nationalism on Greek linguistic scholarship in the 19th and early 20th centuries, I would like to draw attention to a methodological principle enunciated by the Greek linguist Konstantinos Amantos in 1916. In an article[1] in which, among other things, he argues that the Chian place

[1]"Simvolí is to toponimikón tis Híu," *Leksigrafikón Arhíon tis Mésis ke Néas Elinikís,* 2 (1916), 12–48.

name *Atsikí* derives not from Turkish *açik* 'open' (as proposed by Kanellakis) but instead from Greek *atikí*, Amantos states: "methodologikós den epitrépetai na zitómen dánia, ótan dinámetha ek tis elinikís na etimologísomen orthós" (p. 15). Such a principle for deciding among competing etymologies, however, has no place in linguistic research, for it has no scientific or objective basis at all; etymology is a matter to be decided by facts not by policies. While many Greek scholars of the era, including Amantos himself, produced numerous careful and objective etymological discussions (evident for example in the pages of the journal *Athinas* or in the *Leksikografikon Arhion*), a statement such as the above provides prima facie evidence of the invasion of the domain of linguistic scholarship by ethnocentric feelings.