

INAUGURAL ADDRESS: REMARKS ON CELTO-SLAVICA

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Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Spectabilis, Professor Mac Mathúna, Ladies and Gentlemen!

When my friend Professor Séamus Mac Mathúna asked me to make a few remarks at the outset of our conference, I regarded this as a privilege and a signal honour.

First of all, let me congratulate our distinguished host, Professor Séamus Mac Mathúna, on the ingenious idea of forming the *Societas Celto-Slavica*.¹ I am sure you will all join me in thanking him and his colleagues most sincerely for their organisation of the first meeting of the Society so efficiently. I should also like to express my thanks to the University of Ulster, Coleraine, for their warm hospitality. Moreover, I feel an urge to wish the newly founded association a prosperous and bright future.

The participation of Germans in the establishment of the *Societas Celto-Slavica* reminds me of the quotation from Johann Caspar Zeuss (1806-1856), one of the fathers of Celtic Philology, who wrote in 1837:

Das Slowenische, Deutsche und Keltische sind die drei äußersten nordwestlichen Glieder einer großen von Indien bis Hibernien reichenden Sprachenfamilie (Zeuss 1837: 18).

Slavic, Germanic and Celtic are the three extreme north-western members of a large linguistic family reaching from India up to Hibernia.

In contrast to Zeuss, Antoine Meillet differentiated in 1908 between Slavic as an Eastern Indo-European (IE) language and Celtic as a Western IE language:

L'indo-iranien, le slave, le baltique, l'arménien, (et l'albanais) forment le groupe oriental ... Il y a d'autre part un groupe, également naturel, de dialectes occidentaux: germanique, celtique et italique (Meillet 1908: 131).

Indo-Iranian, Slavic, Baltic, Armenian (and Albanian) form the eastern group ... There is, moreover, a group which is also natural and consists of the western dialects: Germanic, Celtic and Italic.

¹ See also the Introduction to the present volume.

Meillet, however, was not the first to classify Celtic as Western IE. It was mainly Carl Friedrich Lottner's articles of 1858 and 1861 that caused the transition from the Graeco-Italic hypothesis, already established in Antiquity, to the Italo-Celtic hypothesis, the last-named being extended, in the end, in Hans Krahe's *Alteuropa*-theory (cf. Krahe 1963).

As regards Slavic, its Eastern origin is undisputed. A large quantity of common features with Baltic has led to the assumption of a Balto-Slavic unity. This theory, however, is far from being proven, since the correspondences between the two language families may well be either the result of common inheritance from IE or of convergent innovations and developments resulting from long-lasting proximity. Moreover, on the basis of toponymics, we know by now that in early historical times the Baltic area was much larger than it is today; it included parts of Pomerania as well as Kiev, Kursk, Rybinsk at the Upper Volga and the mouth of the Venta in Latvia (Schmid 1976: 15), five sixths of this area being later slavicised by the pressure of the Eastern Slavs.

Much less attested is linguistic contact between the speakers of Slavic, Baltic, and Celtic. Shakhmatov's attempt, made in the early twentieth century (Shakhmatov 1911), to discover such contact in Eastern Europe on the basis of toponymics (at the rivers Vistula, Neman, Dvina) has been disproved by the subsequent investigations of Buga (1924), Vasmer (1971), Toporov-Trubachov (1962) and others.² The well-known quotation from Tac. *Germ.* 45 referring to *Aestiorum gentes*, i.e. at that time 'Estonians' in the sense of Balts

quibus ritus habitusque Sueborum, lingua Britannicae propior (Tac. *Germ.* 45),

who have the rites and habits of the Suebi, (and) a language that is closer to Brittonic

does not prove the presence of Celts in Estonia either. On the other hand, common innovations of Celtic and Eastern IE languages in vocabulary, phonology and morphology have been discussed for more than 100 years. As early as 1896 Paul Kretschmer established the theory of prehistoric contacts between Celtic and Indo-Iranian, while Heinrich Wagner argued

...that of all western *Centum*-languages Celtic has the closest connection with the *Satəm*-group of the South-east. To locate the Celtic homeland in

² Cf. the bibliographical annotations at Schmidt 1985: 23-29, particularly footnotes 11-19.

an area west or northwest of the Thracian domain is, therefore, justified (Wagner 1969 (1970): 227).

Recent contributions to this problem have been made, among others, by Patrizia de Bernardo Stempel, Viktor Kalygin and Alexander Falileyev.

Conclusive evidence of early contact of Celtic with eastern languages are three grammatical features which are archaic, but not inherited, so that we can take them as “criteria of a closer relationship” in the sense of Leskien’s principle of 1876:

Die Kriterien einer engeren Gemeinschaft können nur in positiven Uebereinstimmungen der betreffenden Sprachen, die zugleich Abweichungen von den übrigen sind, gefunden werden (Leskien 1876: XIII).

The criteria of a closer relationship can only be found in positive agreements between the relevant languages, (agreements) which at the same time are deviations from the remaining languages.

The three grammatical features are “the future in **-sye-/*-syo-* (a), the desiderative formation (b), and the inflected relative pronoun **yos* (c)” (Schmidt 1996: 21-26):

(a) Gaulish (Chamalières) *bissiet* ‘he will split’: **b^heid-*, **b^hid-*, *pissiu mí* ‘I shall see’: OIr. *ad cí* ‘sees’ < **-k^wis-ie-t*: Vedic *kar-i-ṣ-yá-ti* ‘he will make’, *vak-ṣyá-ti* ‘he will speak’, Avest. *vax-šyā* ‘I shall speak’, OCS *byšęštee*, *byšęštee* (τὸ μέλλον) ‘what is to be’, Lith. *dúo-siu* ‘I shall give’, Gk. κείοντες κοιμηθησόμενοι (‘about to sleep’), Hes. < **k^hei-h₁-syo-nt-*: Ved. *śay-i-ṣya-nt-*.³

(b) OIr. *céla* (future) < *cechlā-* < **ki-klā-* < **kik^h-se/so-*: pres. *celid* ‘conceals’:

Skt. *cikīṣati* (desid.): *kar-* ‘make’, Part. Perf. Pass. *kṛtá-*; *śúśrūṣate* (desid.): *śru-* ‘hear’, Part. Perf. Pass. *śrutá-*.

(c) *iomui* líśTás Titaś sisonTi *śomui* (Botorrta I: A 7)

iaś osiaś uerTaTośue Temeiue roPiśeTi *śaum* (A 8)

ioś uf[.JanTiomue auseTi; afaTimue (A 10).

The use of the inflected relative pronoun **-yos* (cf. (c) above), attested in Indo-Iranian, Greek, Phrygian and Slavic, has meanwhile been confirmed by Celtiberian as well. These three features exhibit a number of characteristics which make them particularly significant:

- a) they lack Italic correspondences;
- b) they do not occur in Western IE;

³ On the Gk. equivalent cf. Hollifield 1981.

c) as already noticed by Wilhelm Schulze in 1904, the thematic *s*-stem formation of features (a) and (b) is preceded by a laryngeal when the root ends in a resonant.⁴

The late lamented Viktor Pavlovich Kalygin has accepted the three grammatical features (a), (b) and (c) as evidence for early contacts between Celtic and Slavic tribes. In his paper on ‘The Celts and the Slavs’ which he prepared just before he died and which is included in the present volume, Kalygin has also treated the question of Celto-Slavic and Celto-Balto-Slavic isoglosses, a problem that has been discussed particularly by Slavic scholars after Pokorny drew attention to it in 1936.⁵

Another field that I can only mention in passing is the literary and mythological aspects of Celto-Slavic. The importance of literary aspects becomes evident by the topic of the papers by Dr. Grigory Bondarenko, Dr. Nina Chekhonadskaya and Professor Tatyana Mikhailova, prepared for the present collection, as well as by the contribution of Professor Dean Miller. Celto-Slavic correspondences in mythology are discussed by Professor Václav Blažek.

As concerns the scope and achievement of Celtic scholarship in Russia and the USSR, this fundamental question will be discussed by Professor Séamus Mac Mathúna. He will be followed by Professor Piotr Stalmaszczyk, who will give us an insight into the impressive bibliography of Celtic Studies in Poland in the twentieth century.

Let me conclude my paper with the statement that the existence of Celtic Societies in St. Petersburg and Scandinavia and the presence of quite a number of Celtic scholars at the First International Celto-Slavica colloquium, not only from Russia and Ireland, but also from Poland, The Czech Republic, Sweden, The United States and Germany, shows impressively the growing interest in Celto-Slavic Studies inside and outside the Slavic and Celtic countries, an interest that will be strongly increased by the Societas Celto-Slavica at the University of Ulster, Coleraine, and other centres.

I should like to reiterate my very best wishes to the Society: *ad multos annos, go n-éirghidh do bhóthar leat, zhelaju Tebe bol'shikh uspekhov.*

Ending with these wishes and thanking you for your patience, I should like to open the first session of our Conference with the subtitle ‘Putting

⁴ On the Irish equivalent cf. Zimmer 1888: 128; Thurneysen 1946: 414 f.

⁵ Cf. Pokorny 1936, O'Brien 1956, Schmidt 1985, Ködderitzsch 2002, Kalyguine 1997, Falileyev 1997, etc. On Balto-Slavic, cf. now Lanszweert 1984.

Celto-Slavic Studies in Context’ by asking our host, Professor Séamus Mac Mathúna, to deliver his lecture on ‘The History of Celtic scholarship in Russia and the Soviet Union’.

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