



PROJECT MUSE®

Indo-European language and culture: An introduction (review)

Brian D. Joseph

Language, Volume 85, Number 1, March 2009, pp. 197-200 (Review)

Published by Linguistic Society of America

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.0.0086>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/262986>

If this type of presentation has been adopted to ensure correct alignments, then it has miserably failed. I add that in the printouts of the CD-files, such example tables often come out cut into two due to page cuts.

There are further presentational problems in the CD-ROM. For instance, in Ch. 35, 'Inalienable possession' by JACQUELINE GUÉRON, words were not always separated, neither in the screen version nor in the printout of the file, making the text hard to read (e.g. 'denoting the possessor . . . languagesand . . . Englishthe'). Fortunately, in the book this problem did not arise. Given the presentational problems with the CD-version of the *Companion*, it is surprising that, at least for the moment, the publisher did not opt for simply using pdf files.

My overall conclusion is definitely positive. The *Companion* is a first-class achievement. In these five volumes is stored a lasting legacy of generative research. One can use the *Companion* as a reference work, in order to check certain data, but if one is lucky enough to have a copy available on one's desk (or in the library), one can explore the volumes by roaming through the chapters and (re)discovering sets of data described in a clear and coherent way. For the syntax teacher, the *Companion* will be an endless source of inspiration and support for classes at all levels. Students and nonspecialists find gathered in one book research results covering fifty years of research. There remain a few, mainly presentational, glitches in the printed volumes, but neither these nor the badly produced CD-ROM can diminish the achievement: these five volumes constitute a milestone in the generative literature. The *Companion* has set its aims high and it has undeniably attained them.

REFERENCES

- Broekhuis, Hans. 2002. *Adpositions and adpositional phrases*. Tilburg: University of Tilburg, Models of Grammar.
- Broekhuis, Hans. 2006. Derivations (MP) and evaluations (OT). *Linguistics in Potsdam* 25.137–93.
- Haegeman, Liliane. 2001. Antisymmetry and verb-final order in West Flemish. *The Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics* 3.207–32.
- Haegeman, Liliane. 2003. Conditional clauses: External and internal syntax. *Mind and Language* 18.317–39.
- Huybregts, Riny. 1991. Clitics. *Grammatische analyse*, ed. by Jan Model, 227–69. Dordrecht: ICG Printing.
- Larson, Richard. 1985. On the syntax of disjunction scope. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 3.217–64.
- McDowell, Joyce. 1987. *Assertion and modality*. Los Angeles: University of Southern California dissertation.
- Moro, Andrea. 1997. *The raising of predicates: Predicative noun phrases and the theory of clause structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nilsen, Øystein. 2004. Domains for adverbs. *Lingua* 114.809–47. (Special issue: *Adverbs across frameworks*, ed. by Artemis Alexiadou.)
- Poletto, Cecilia, and Jean-Yves Pollock. 2004. On the left periphery of some Romance wh-questions. *The structure of CP and IP*, ed. by Luigi Rizzi, 251–96. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- van Riemsdijk, Henk. 1978. *A case study in syntactic markedness*. Dordrecht: Foris.

Department of English
University of Ghent
Rozier 44
B-9000 Ghent
Belgium
[L.Haegeman@skynet.be]

Indo-European language and culture: An introduction. By BENJAMIN W. FORTSON, IV. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004. Pp. xviii, 468. ISBN 1405103167. \$55.95.

Reviewed by BRIAN D. JOSEPH, *The Ohio State University*

The Indo-European language family has long been the standard in historical linguistics against which progress in the understanding of the extent and history of other language families has

been measured. This is due largely to the fact that the recognition of the family in the late eighteenth century and the progress made in reconstructing the history of the family since then have been the foundation for the development of the basic methodology that has served historical linguistics well for some 200 years. Indeed, the application of the comparative method, internal reconstruction, and means for determining genetic relatedness that arose out of explorations into Indo-European linguistics has led to impressive results with the histories and relationships of dozens and dozens of language families and hundreds and hundreds of languages around the world.

It is thus incumbent on virtually all historical linguists, regardless of their particular language(s) and families of interest, to learn about Indo-European and to be at least somewhat familiar with the basic facts and the basic results of Indo-European linguistics.

But where is an aspiring historical Mayanist or Tibeto-Burmanist or Bantuist (or whatever) supposed to obtain such familiarity? The specialized literature is, well, for the specialist and someone without a knowledge of the relevant languages cannot be expected to get out of it all the necessary lessons. Thus what is needed is a survey of the languages, the facts, the problems, the methods, and the results of the historical investigation of the Indo-European family that provides the necessary information clearly, engagingly, and, above all else, accurately, and that could serve as a text for self-study or for use in a course.

There have been several books over the years that have attempted to do just this, such as Lockwood 1969, 1972, Baldi 1983, and Beekes 1995, and one could even mention Ramat & Ramat 1998, though it was not intended as a textbook,¹ but none of these is entirely successful, for different reasons.² The result is that there really is not a suitable book in English³ that fits the bill . . . until now, that is, with the publication of Fortson's book. This work is undoubtedly the best textbook-style overview available of Indo-European, with much of interest for the nonspecialist, and even the specialist alike.

F sets out for himself in his preface (xii) a rather daunting set of goals:

An Indo-European textbook . . . should be up-to-date and . . . present non-controversial views. It should not overwhelm the reader with detail, but also [should] be comprehensive. It should have copious exercises. . . . It should not only cover phonology and morphology, but syntax as well, and incorporate relevant findings from generative linguistics . . . Data should not be oversimplified or skewed . . . There should be annotated text samples in all the ancient languages, and of a sufficient size to impart a real feel for the languages and to introduce readers to the practice and importance of philology. Basic information should be provided on the archaeological, cultural, and literary history of each branch. The modern languages should not be omitted from discussion. Finally, it should outline what we know about Proto-Indo-European culture and society.

I am pleased to be able to report that he successfully accomplishes these goals. The book, fulfilling all these promises, contains chapters on methods in historical linguistics (with cogent examples that allow readers without a detailed background in this field to appreciate the methodological bases for investigating Indo-European), the reconstructed culture of Proto-Indo-European (PIE), PIE phonology, PIE morphology (foundational concepts, verbs, nouns, pronouns), and

¹ There are also some new books out now, specifically Mallory & Adams 2006 and Clackson 2007, that I am not in a position to comment on here, as well as others that can be very helpful (e.g. Mallory & Adams 1997, an encyclopedia that is not really intended as a survey or textbook even though it has a lot of useful information for the nonspecialist).

² For instance, Baldi contains numerous errors, Lockwood perhaps aims too much at a nontechnical audience and is somewhat dated in any case, and Beekes is largely focused on presenting the results of the reconstruction of the proto-language (though with some information on the individual branches and a lot on methodology, thus comparable in its aims to the present work). Ramat & Ramat offers substantive chapters on each branch of the family, and on the proto-language, but is not designed as a textbook (thus no exercises or glossary, etc.). Also, Lehmann 1993 is really about the proto-language and stages prior to reconstructed PIE and thus has very little on the languages themselves except as they inform the reconstructions.

³ Meillet 1937 is a classic work, with much to recommend it, but it is in French and thus increasingly not suitable for use in the American university classroom.

PIE syntax, followed by chapters on each of the ten major branches (with separate ones for Indic and Iranian, though stating clearly that they form a single branch), plus one on the languages known only fragmentarily. Other features include a glossary, an excellent word index (with an accompanying subject index that is moderately useful but still somewhat on the thin side), exercises for each chapter (as promised), suggestions for further reading after each chapter, and presentations on PIE vocabulary embedded in each chapter's exercises.

Importantly, there are some topics discussed in this book that are not usually covered in introductory treatments of Indo-European, such as naming practices for personal names (34–35), the schwa secundum (an epenthetic vowel in certain clusters, 61–62), reconstructible phonological rules of the proto-language (62–66), and Brugmann's Law (lengthening of **o* in certain open syllables (183), though exemplified with data only from Indic, and not Iranian, where it is also found). Curiously, though, to my way of thinking, there is less on some key topics than would be desirable; Bartholomae's Law, for instance, receives only brief mention in a few places, and Grassmann's Law is given only a very cursory treatment; moreover, nothing is said about their very interesting (and widely discussed) diachronic and synchronic interaction in Indic (on which see Schindler 1976). And, if it were up to me, I would add more discussion too of the sources, contact or otherwise, of the Indic retroflex consonants, which have generated a fair bit of controversy over the years, only hinted at on p. 188.

I admit that I have to wonder about the value of the exercises, or at least some of them. They are copious, to be sure, and some are certainly well conceived. Others strike me as rather obvious or pointless (e.g. the very first one, 'Memorize the names of all the branches of the IE family' (15)), and yet others seem to require more knowledge than is perhaps reasonable to assume for beginners (e.g. on sound change versus analogy in the outcome of *-gn-* clusters in Celtic (299) or the ordering of sound changes yielding English *stench* and *drench* from **stankja* and **drankja* (336)). Still, that does mean that there is something in them for more experienced linguists to ponder. And the text selections constitute an especially helpful feature and represent in each case an excellent exercise in and of themselves for the interested reader to work through, aided by all of the annotations that F provides.

Experts will no doubt disagree with some of the details of F's presentation of the facts and his reconstructions of PIE forms and of the historical developments that led to the attested languages, but that is because, of necessity, he often takes a stance on matters of considerable debate and controversy among specialists. But mostly, the author works from an extremely well-informed vantage point and to my way of thinking, there is little to take exception to.

Commentary on each and every potentially problematic or controversial detail is something of a tradition in reviews involving Indo-European (see Klein 1999 on Lass 1997 for instance) but doing so here would not be productive, largely because I detected relatively few mistakes per se. As for more technical, specialist kinds of concerns, I personally would take issue with F's classification of Albanian (54) as 'most likely satem', not only because (as F himself acknowledges) the traditional centum-satem division within Indo-European is contraindicated by various facts and at best is 'a useful descriptive shorthand' (54) for particular developments of the PIE palatals, velars, and labiovelars in the various branches, but also because Albanian shows three distinct reflexes of these three PIE classes of sounds (see Pedersen 1900, a position reiterated recently by Eric Hamp, as reported in Joseph & Maynard 2000:26)⁴ and thus differs from the classical satem languages such as Sanskrit or Old Church Slavonic. There are other minor errors of omission and misleading statements about Albanian,⁵ but none that cannot be corrected.⁶

⁴ Reported there (26) is the immortal pronouncement by Hamp (delivered at a lecture on November 29, 1999, at The Ohio State University) on the centum-satem 'split': 'satem–centum–shmentum'.

⁵ Some further though more minor infelicities or omissions in the Albanian material are the following: p. 390, it would be better to talk of 'Macedo-Bulgarian' or even just 'Macedonian' as the source of Slavic loanwords into Albanian; p. 391, the map should show the western parts of Sicily too, as there are many Albanian settlements there; p. 392, *shkoy* should be *shkoj*; p. 392, *do* in the Tosk future is a fossilized 3sg form, so that etymologically the future is not 'I-want that I-go' but rather 'it-wants that I-go'; p. 392,

While a comparison with Mallory & Adams 2006 and Clackson 2007 would be in order for anyone considering the present book for a course or for self-study, I have a hard time believing that they can improve on this excellent volume, and even with its occasional lapses, one cannot go wrong with it. F is to be congratulated for successfully filling a long-standing gap in the materials available to historical linguists about this vitally important language family.

REFERENCES

- BALDI, PHILIP. 1983. *An introduction to the Indo-European languages*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- BEEKES, ROBERT S. P. 1995. *Comparative Indo-European linguistics: An introduction*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- CLACKSON, JAMES. 2007. *Indo-European linguistics: An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- JOSEPH, BRIAN D., and KELLY MAYNARD. 2000. Hamp lectures on the Albanian language, Ohio State University 11/29–12/4, 1999. *Indo-European Studies Bulletin (University of California at Los Angeles)* 9.1.25–27.
- KLEIN, JARED S. 1999. Theory vs. practice in diachronic linguistics. *Language Sciences* 21.87–104.
- LASS, ROGER. 1997. *Historical linguistics and language change*. (Cambridge studies in linguistics 81.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- LEHMANN, WINFRED. 1993. *The theoretical bases of Indo-European*. London: Routledge.
- LOCKWOOD, WILLIAM B. 1969. *Indo-European philology: Historical and comparative*. London: Hutchinson University Library.
- LOCKWOOD, WILLIAM B. 1972. *A panorama of Indo-European languages*. London: Hutchinson University Library.
- MALLORY, JAMES P., and DOUGLAS Q. ADAMS. 1997. *Encyclopedia of Indo-European culture*. London: Routledge.
- MALLORY, JAMES P., and DOUGLAS Q. ADAMS. 2006. *The Oxford introduction to Proto-Indo-European and the Proto-Indo-European world*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- MEILLET, ANTOINE. 1937. *Introduction à l'étude comparative des langues indo-européennes*. 8th edn. Paris: Hachette. [Reprinted, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1964.]
- PEDERSEN, HOLGER. 1900. Die Gutturale im Albanesischen. *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 36.309–15.
- RAMAT, ANNA GIACALONE, and PAOLO RAMAT. 1998. *The Indo-European languages*. London: Routledge. [Translation of *Le lingue indoeuropee*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993].
- SCHINDLER, JOCHEM. 1976. Diachronic and synchronic remarks on Bartholomae's and Grassmann's Laws. *Linguistic Inquiry* 7.622–37.

Department of Linguistics
222 Oxley Hall
The Ohio State University
Columbus, OH 43210-1298
[joseph.1@osu.edu]

Macedonia, Aromanian, and Romani should be added to the list of 'neighboring languages of the Balkans' that show convergence; p. 392, calling the Albanian *ë* a 'schwa-like reduced vowel' is misleading since *ë* can be stressed; p. 393, *gj* in many words has corresponding dialectal forms with *glj*; p. 394, *gj* from **j* is found in Latin loans too (a fact that helps to date the time of the **j* > *gj* sound change); p. 395, the genitive/dative/ablative plural forms in the table should have the final *-t* in parentheses as an optional element; p. 397, the occurrence of weak ('enclitic') pronominal forms clause-initially is not at all unusual or atypical, as Fortson implies here; p. 398, the infinitival form is *për të qenë*, not *për qenë*.

⁶ A second edition is due out soon, addressing, as I have been assured by the author, many of the stray errors in general and especially in the Albanian chapter (though perhaps not all of the details I have fussed over here, since these may be coming to the fore late in the game, so to speak).