

ROBERTO GUSMANI (1935–2009)

Roberto Gusmani, a long standing member of *Kadmos*' advisory board, passed away in Udine on October 16, 2009. He was born in 1935 and his death, two days before his 74<sup>th</sup> birthday, at a time when he was as active as ever and full of projects and initiatives, was sudden and completely unexpected. It came just one year after he had been elected a member of the Accademia dei Lincei, one of Italy's most signal honours.

*Kadmos*' readers will probably know him as an Indo-Europeanist and above all as an expert in Anatolian languages. Early in his career he had started to concentrate on Lydian and it is now impossible to work on this language without using Gusmani's innumerable articles and above all his *Lydisches Wörterbuch* (1964) which in spite of its title is not limited to the lexicon but also contains a grammar and a corpus of the known Lycian inscriptions. Three supplements (1980, 1982, 1986) have kept the work up to date together with the *Neue epichorische Schriftzeugnisse aus Sardis* (1975) and the later articles and editions of newly found texts. At present the study of ancient Lydian and consequently of Lydia would be inconceivable without the background and direction provided by Roberto Gusmani's oeuvre.

During Roberto's lifetime the study of the ancient Indo-European languages of Anatolia changed beyond all recognition. Most of the major developments are due on the one hand to the increasing realization that we should avoid identifying Anatolian with the best attested language, Hittite, as was often done, and on the other to the enhanced understanding of both Hittite and the minor Anatolian languages which we gain from comparing them with each other. In the 1970s Emmanuel Laroche was fond of saying that his teacher Benveniste, and indeed most of his contemporaries, far too often tended to confuse Proto-Hittite and Proto-Anatolian without realizing how profoundly they differed, as shown by the comparative study of the minor languages. And yet in the later 1950s Roberto Gusmani's first articles, written when he was in his very early twenties, covered Hittite, Lycian, Lydian, Luwian as well as another

Anatolian language of a different group, Phrygian. In this, like another great Italian Anatolianist, Piero Meriggi, he was well ahead of his times. On the other hand, it would be misguided to assume that even then his work was limited to the Anatolian languages; ancient Greek linguistics was and remained a permanent interest and in addition to Anatolian and Greek soon his list of publications began to include articles on the Germanic languages, on Oscan and Umbrian, on Latin, on Messapic, on Slavic, etc. In 1968 the second book, *Il lessico ittito*, concentrated on lexical phenomena, albeit still within the range of Anatolian. Looking at it again one is struck by how innovative and advanced, though cautious, the discussion is. In Italy in the 1960s laryngeal theory was largely ignored, but Gusmani while expressing reservations, highlighted the coincidence between the *set*-roots of Indo-European and the *h*-roots of Hittite and maintained that it could not be due to chance; a decade later he had moved further in a laryngealistic direction but pleaded (correctly) for what in fact happened soon after: a detailed analysis of the correspondences postulated between all the Indo-European laryngeals and Hittite <ḫ>/<ḫḫ>. Similarly in 1968 he reacted to the prevailing fashion which assumed that the Hittite lexicon was largely non Indo-European stressing how much Indo-European material was available in the lexicon while at the same time emphasizing that Hittite was in this no different from most Indo-European languages which had been heavily influenced by contacts and substratum phenomena. The discussion precluded what became the other main focus of his work: the study of borrowing, of linguistic calques and finally of linguistic interference in general. It is notable how different factors, academic, intellectual and personal, converged in this interest. Nobody working on the striking multilingualism of ancient Anatolia can avoid being also interested in the way in which different languages influence each other, but Roberto Gusmani had also encountered multilingualism and interference in his personal life. He was born in Novara (Piedmont), had studied at Milan with Vittore Pisani, but then for six years (1958–1964) had been an Italian lecturer at Erlangen-Nürnberg, which explains why a large part of his articles is written in German. His first academic appointment in Italy was at the University of Messina, where the Sicilian dialect that he encountered could hardly have been more different from the Gallo-Italian dialects of his youth. After another six years in 1972 he accepted a chair in Udine. There he spent the rest of his life in an area which is certainly one of the most complex linguistic

areas of Italy; in the autonomous region of Friuli Venezia Giulia next to the official Italian language there coexist three recognized minority languages, Friulian, Slovenian and German, with differing but substantial numbers of local native speakers. It is not entirely surprising then that in the 1970s we see a series of papers on borrowing, calques, loanwords, etc. as well as a book on *Aspetti del prestito linguistico* (1973), where the phenomena are discussed both in general terms and with specific reference to individual languages; in the early 1980s two volumes of *Saggi sull'interferenza linguistica* (1981, 1982) appear and are republished in an increased version in 1986. No doubt because of new experiences and the needs of teaching the concern for linguistic diversity and plurilingualism then turns to more modern data and we find a new series of discussions on the linguistic position of Europe, on ethnicity and plurilingualism. Obviously work on Lydian and Anatolian continued with an added interest in Carian, but in addition yet another new interest emerges; through a logical path which takes him from borrowing to semantics and from semantics to ancient thought and philosophy, from the 1990s we begin to find papers on the linguistic theory of Aristotle and St Augustin, as well as a new concern for the history of linguistics with papers on Schuchardt and Saussure and Ascoli. Here, as elsewhere, philology, linguistics and general thought merge.

So much for the main strands of some, but by no means all, of Gusmani's contributions. A list of his writings in 1995 included some 190 papers and books; just a short selection of the papers was reproduced in the *Itinerari linguistici* (1995), published by a group of his students and colleagues to mark his sixtieth birthday. A further list at the start of *Studi linguistici in onore di Roberto Gusmani*, the three volume festschrift for his seventieth birthday (2006), adds some sixty papers and books. They are figures which conjure the image of a dedicated scholar tied to his desk and to pure research. This is obviously correct but it is not the whole story. On the one hand there was a teacher who was prepared to surrender some of his research concerns in order to energize the typical student more interested in the general problems of language diversity than in the detailed analysis of Anatolian, but who from this form of accommodation gained new impulse for his own research. On the other, there was the incredibly energetic promotor and administrator, one of the mainstays of the University of Udine. He joined the *Facoltà di Lingue* in 1972 when it was still a branch of the University of Trieste; was for 22 years director of the *Istituto di Glottologia e Filologia*

*Classica*, for other seven of the homonymous department, and in different periods Chairman of the whole faculty and Rector of the University. From 1993 he also directed the *Centro Internazionale sul Plurilinguismo* and contributed to its numerous conferences and publications. He was largely responsible for the lively and successful development of linguistics at Udine. As a founder member of the *Società di Glottologia Italiana* he developed the *Corsi di Aggiornamento in Discipline Linguistiche* held every summer in Friuli (Udine and San Daniele). He also was a co-founder and editor of *Incontri Linguistici*, one of the most distinguished Italian linguistic periodicals. But even this is not enough. In an academic world which is not devoid of quarrels and disputes, Roberto Gusmani stood for calm and rationality. One could count on him not only to do what he had promised with the minimum of fuss and no attempt to show off or exalt his own image, but also to provide a dispassionate, unbiased analysis of what needed doing with unfailing courtesy and serenity. *Era un gran signore*, as his colleagues would say, and one could not help admiring the way in which he combined his wholehearted commitment to his subject, his teaching and his institution with a broad international outlook and above all with a level of humane warmth and availability which one does not often encounter in those who are so successful. In his case it is not a platitude to say that he is desperately missed.

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