

# Pre-Greek

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Mrs. Finkelberg (henceforth F.) in her *Greeks and Pre-Greeks* has a simple view about Pre-Greek (42-64): it is Indo-European according to the following reasoning. The elements -vθ- and -σσ- are probably cognates of Anatolian -nd- and -ss-, so Pre-Greek is an Anatolian language. Now several Anatolian languages have proven to be Indo-European, also Lydian, Lycian and Carian, and as it is improbable that there are still other languages (with another origin), so Pre-Greek must be Indo-European. This argumentation is clear and simple, but it is far from evident that it is correct. One might well assume that there are, or were, still other languages (e.g. I still believe that Etruscan is non-Indo-European; see Beekes 1993). The author does not argue that these -nd- and -ss- are of Indo-European origin. They occur notably in place names, and these may well belong to an older layer of language. She nowhere discusses the evidence of the language. She does not (even) mention the work of Furnée, which is the most extensive treatment of the language. With the plan to write a book on Pre-Greek I have now been studying the language for more than three years (and in fact since the appearance of Furnée's book), and the conclusion is perfectly clear: the language is non-Indo-European. We have had the period of 'Pelasgian' (which would be a form of Indo-European), but this idea has been definitely rejected by Furnée (40-55); the theory can now be forgotten. (A preliminary survey of my views can be found in Beekes 2003<sup>2</sup>.) I am now rewriting the Greek etymological dictionary to collect all Greek words of Pre-Greek origin; it can be found on the internet site [www.indoeuropean.nl](http://www.indoeuropean.nl); I now completed this. (See now also Beekes 2004, 2006.) When I was half-way I had found some 500 words, so I expect to end up with a thousand words of Pre-Greek origin.

Mrs F. even suggests that we should return to Kretschmer's *Protoindogermanische Schicht* (1925), which is completely dated (s. Furnée 37-40). There would be no non-Indo-European language west of the Semitic languages of Syria in Asia Minor, but we have Etruscan, Hattic and Eteo-Cyprian. Palmer's theory that Linear A is Luwian is now also dated. She also mentions Renfrew's theory in *Archaeology and Language*, which is generally rejected by Indo-Europeanists. She goes on to discuss the writing systems, and to stress Minoan expansion (55). Interesting, but irrelevant for the question of linguistic affiliation.

I reconstructed the phonemic system of Pre-Greek, following Palmer 1963, 39, according to whom the consonants, which had no opposition between voiced and unvoiced (or aspirated), had different features, e.g. labialisation and palatalisation. Thus I reconstruct *\*al<sup>w</sup>ak-* for 'furrow', which explains both ἀὐλαξ (through anticipation of the labial element) and ἄλοξ (with colouring of the following *a* by the labial element). Indo-European did not know a labialised *l*. Sounds developed phonetically in a way comparable to that of the IE sounds, but such a feature was sometimes simply ignored. Thus a labio-velar could become a labial, but also a velar as in ξίφος, cf. Myc. *qisipe-*. Or cf. ὀφθαλμός from *\*ok<sup>w</sup>-al<sup>ʷ</sup>-m-*, but also ὄκταλλος (< *\*ok<sup>w</sup>-al<sup>ʷ</sup>-*) 'eye' (Beekes 2006; the word has nothing to do with the IE root for 'see', *\*h<sub>3</sub>ek<sup>w</sup>-*). The non-Indo-European character of Pre-Greek is clear from these examples.

In 2003 (Pre-Greek) I collected a list of a hundred Pre-Greek suffixes. They have mostly the structure VC(C), CVC, in which the vowel is *a*, *i* or *u*; e.g. -αγ-, -ιγ-, -υγ-. Furthermore, a consonant can be prenasalized: -αγγ-, -ιγγ-, -υγγ-. All this is clearly non-Indo-European.

So Mrs F.'s idea is not convincing and refuted by the facts.

*Matrilinear elements*

The author adduces another element as typical for the Pre-Greeks. She argues that in older stories in Greece it was unusual for a son to succeed his father on the throne. In fact, what we find is that it is normal that a king is succeeded by his son-in-law, i.e. by the husband of his daughter. So the essential legitimacy was transmitted though the female line; the succession was matrilinear.

She assumes that this principle was taken over from the Pre-Greeks, who brought it from Asia Minor. She compares the succession of kingship among the Hittites. And thus she discusses the question of the Hittite *tawananna* (p. 71-79; app. 177-182). This is an extremely complicated subject, on which I have no opinion. F. stresses that "each single case, taken alone, proves nothing, but the evidence is cumulative". She then discusses the situation in Ithaca, and the marriage of Klytaimestra (69f.). On p. 88 F. mentions the importance of the mother-goddess in Asia Minor. "She is ... the mother of all things and the queen of all things. A male deity becomes her son, or, if he is her husband, assumes a subordinate position... The Goddess stood at the centre of the cult, where she was represented by the priestess, whereas her male consort had his human counterpart in the figure of the 'king-priest'." She then states that the Mycenaean *potnia* was just such a figure (89 with n. 76). This may well be correct. I note however, that this conception is clearly not an Indo-European idea, while Indo-Europeans may well have taken it over (e.g. the Phrygians). In Greece, Hera "displays all the characteristic features of the ancient figure of the Great Goddess" (164). The same may be true of Artemis of Ephesos, and of Athena (164; cf. Myc. *atana potinija*).

Instructive is the following case of kingship succession (with the comment of the author) on p. 146-8. "This would mean that, in conformity with the rules of matrilinear succession, Temenos' daughter Hyrnetho was a representative of the local matriliney, and this was sufficient to make her husband Deiphontes the

king's heir. At the same time, the struggle of the sons of Temenos to succeed their father indicates that they were guided by a concept of royal succession differing sharply from the one in accordance with which Temenos and his son-in-law [Deiphontes] acted. Thus, for the first time in our sources, we see a clash between two conflicting concepts of kingship, kingship by marriage on the one hand and a patrilinear accession to the throne on the other. ... Temenos probably assumed kingship ... by marrying the daughter of the local ruler, ... Yet, as the case of Temenos' sons shows, the model of kingship by marriage was abandoned in the next generation in favour of the model of hereditary kingship, ... Thus, although the first Dorian rulers (of Argos and Messenia) acted in accordance with the indigenous practices of kingship by marriage, their descendants adopted the model of hereditary kingship ... The Dorians seem to have been the first newcomers to Greece to whom the widespread model of Indo-European dispersal can be applied: the Indo-European immigrants would have achieved kingship by marrying the local "matriarch", and [later] sought to establish their own patriarchal system."

At this point the author should have realized that the Indo-Europeans were organized along patrilinear lines, while the Pre-Greeks were organized along matrilinear lines. The Indo-Europeans accepted the latter system only for a short period and then returned to their own system. This confirms that the (matrilinear) Pre-Greeks were not Indo-Europeans.

The author compares the oldest stage of the Hittite Kingdom (and the *tawananna*-question) and argues that the Indo-Europeans were also partly (?) matrilinear. On p. 51 she even suggests that we should adopt a picture of Indo-European society, "able to embrace both patriarchal and matriarchal Indo-Europeans". This would certainly be wrong. Thus, the mistake of taking the Pre-Greeks as Indo-Europeans would lead to the next mistake, making the Indo-Europeans (also) matriarchal. Thus one mistake would create the following. So F. did not see that her own conclusions (on royal succession) refuted the

assumption that the Pre-Greeks were Indo-Europeans. In reality the facts fit together nicely.

### *Bibliography*

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