

## Pindar as Indo-European Poet in Pythian Ode 1.

Calvert Watkins, in the introduction to the American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots writes, “The comparative method when applied to the poetry and mythology of the speakers of Proto-Indo-European also reveals the same Indo-European origins of the formulaic language used by those speakers to convey those myths and narratives: in short, the ‘Indo-European touch’” (2011:xxxii). My paper will attempt to trace that “touch” throughout Pindar’s first Pythian ode.

Analyzing archaic Greek poetry from the perspective of its Indo-European (IE) inheritance has been the impetus for many scholarly studies. Scholars such as Calvert Watkins, Martin L. West, and Gregory Nagy have used this perspective to gain insight on the levels of myth, language (linguistics), and poetics. More often than not, however, the archaic Greek evidence is brought to bear as a testimony that furthers the larger argument of the study at hand. Certainly, explication of the Greek is a common by-product of these forms of inquiry, but only rarely is it the immediate goal.

My paper attempts to test the possibility of reversing this directionality, using instead the IE evidence as a device for clarifying the meaning and poetic resonance of the Greek. In particular, I will analyze several passages of Pindar’s first Pythian, focusing on the myths of *Typhon* and the *Dioskouroi*, and illuminating aspects of IE culture and poetics as they are exemplified in the poem. For this purpose, in addition to scholars already noted, I will have recourse to works by Walter Burkert and Benjamin Fortson.

I argue that by making the results of previous IE studies work towards the unraveling of Pindar’s first Pythian I can restore and explain much of the poetic shading. Later in the paper I

will use Émile Benveniste's investigation into the IE root-meanings of Greek *μισθος* and *ἄρνημαι*, in his *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, to hone and clarify Pindar's collocation using the uncovered associations. Far from meaning something along the lines of "taking a paystub," Benveniste's inquiry shows that Pindar's phrase resonates much closer to "victorious achieving of a prize." This same use of previous IE studies allows me to show that Pindar's use of the *Typhon* and the *Dioskouroi* myths is not merely topical or satisfactory, but charged with religious meaning.

## Works Cited

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