GREEK *and* LATIN *in* ENGLISH TODAY

by
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Greek and Latin in English Today

Richard M. Krill

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Introduction

Our Language Family

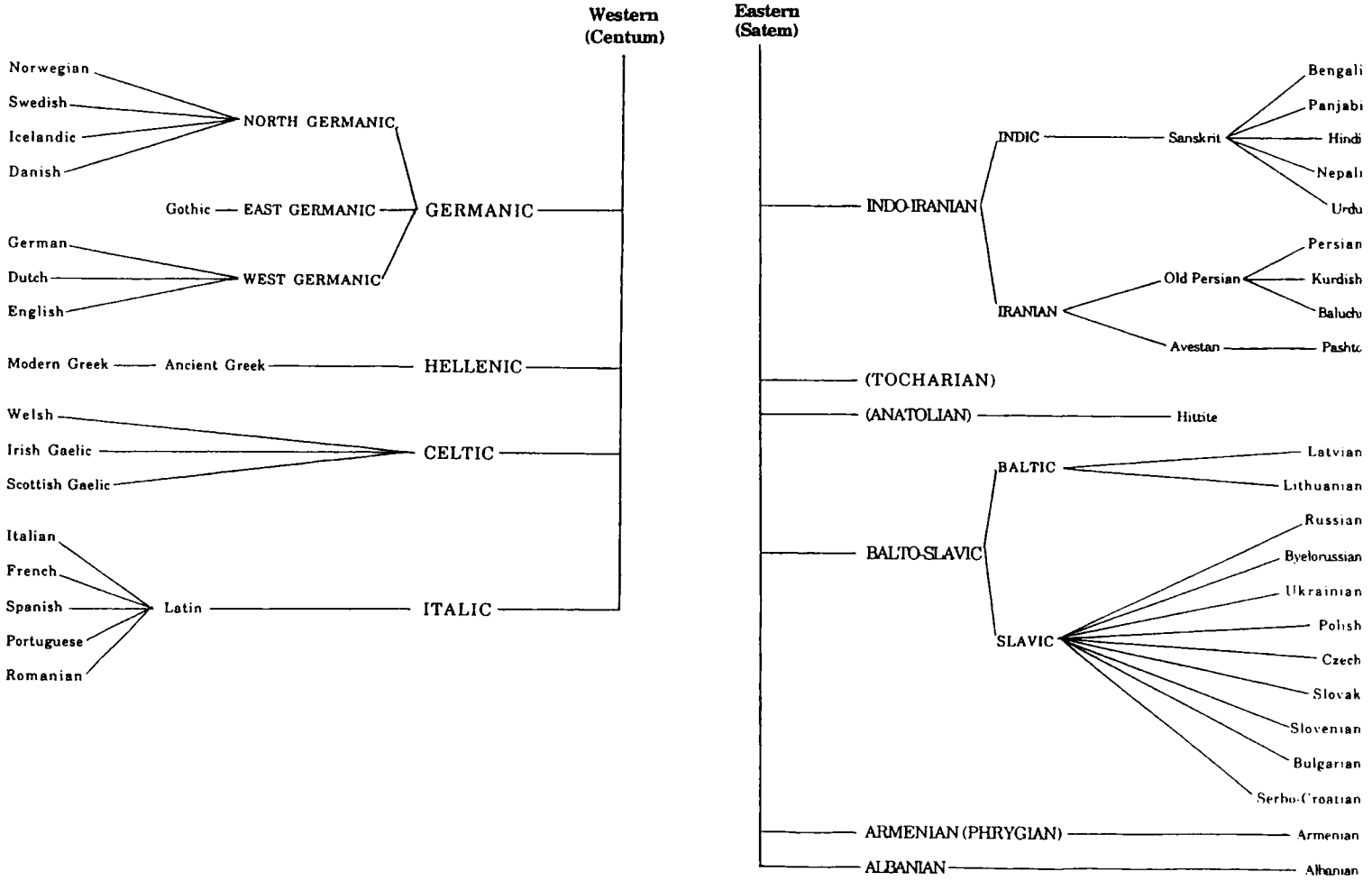
Language can be defined as the expression of thoughts or emotions between or among humans. It is the principal tool of communication for the powers of speech and hearing. Sometimes it is regarded more narrowly as the vocabulary we employ to communicate. In this setting so long as the words spoken remain mutually understandable in a gathering of people, we maintain that the *same* language is being spoken. In situations where only minor variations of expression exist, we acknowledge the presence of *dialects* of the same language.

Many factors account for the development of new languages and dialects. Foremost among them must be man's own imprecise and inconsistent use of verbal communication. Migrations for whatever reasons and isolation, brought on by natural obstructions such as mountains, seas and deserts, certainly have also contributed to the process in the past. Moreover, climatic conditions so variously affect different regions of the world as to produce unique resources and specimens of life in isolated areas wherever man has settled. For these and similar reasons separate vocabularies and languages have developed and spread throughout the earth. Today one can only wonder in retrospect how much less language change would have taken place in antiquity if mankind possessed then the fantastic technological devices of radio, television and space communication satellites which we commonly use today.

The study of the origins of language and the relationship of languages to one another is called *linguistics*. Scholars engaged in this work over the past few centuries have determined which languages are more closely related to one another and which show no kinship at all. Their conclusions are usually based upon the study of thousands of similar-sounding words which identify similar things in the different languages. Words that specify the designation of family relationships, such as "mother," "father," "brother" and "sister," as well as numbers frequently provide sound clues. Basing their conclusions upon such studies, nearly all linguists accept the premise that in the distant past a certain few "mother" tongues predominated and that in the passage of time these languages, at different rates, produced "daughter" languages with the process repeating itself over

Indo-European Family of Languages

(With major surviving examples on the far left and right sides)



and over again up to the present time. Indeed within this framework some daughter languages were quite prolific with respect to the number of their offspring, while others remained more constant or dwindled to the point of extinction. Those languages which demonstrate a closer kinship to one another are said to belong to the same language *family*. The family of greatest importance to western civilization, if for no other reason than the sheer multitude of its speakers, is the *Indo-European* (later referred to in abbreviated form as IE) family of languages. It is spoken today in one or another of its descendent languages by approximately half of the world's population. Since it also happens to be the original source of our nation's principal tongue, English, greater attention is given to it here. Examine the language graph on the opposite page for some examples of contemporary languages which belong to this family. Included in each branch are only the major language developments. The first division of this family, you will note, occurs simply as a split between western (*centum*) and eastern (*satem*) groups. The two are so labeled from a common pronunciation difference observable in the initial velar or guttural "k" sound in the word meaning "hundred." Many centuries ago in the western languages a hard "k" sound was more commonly applied, while in the eastern group a softer "s" sound usually prevailed. English and French can therefore both be classified as centum languages. The one appears under the Germanic branch, more particularly, the Western Germanic, while the other is derived from Latin in the Italic branch. Armenian and Russian fall into the satem division. Today not all linguists recognize the twofold split of centum and satem groups. They rather proceed directly to the many sub-groups of this large family. Each of these possesses a unique history. Some of the more interesting facts pertaining to each division follow.

1. ***Germanic*** This branch is sometimes referred to as *Teutonic* to avoid confusion with the modern language German. *Gothic,* an extinct language today from the eastern section, is known mostly from a fourth century edition of the Bible and is therefore very important as a linguistic tool for understanding early developments in the entire language branch. Our own language *English* is thought to have developed from the western Germanic tribes known as Angles, Saxons and Jutes, all of whom migrated to the British Isles from the mainland around the fifth century A.D. Although its name is derived from only one of these groups, the Angles, most of its earliest surviving texts are of Saxon origin. The other western Germanic languages include principally German and Dutch, but the

student of linguistics should also be aware of *Flemish* (spoken in Belgium) and *Frisian* (employed by some people in the Netherlands). The northern Germanic languages include *Norwegian, Swedish, Icelandic* and *Danish.*

2. ***Hellenic*** From as far back as the first millennium B.C. many dialects of ancient Greek can be identified. These include *Ionic, Aeolic, Doric* and *Attic.* The last of these, spoken around the cultural metropolis of Athens, dominated in literature. Following the conquest of Asia Minor by Alexander the Great in the latter part of the fourth century B.C., *koine* (common) Greek assumed greater importance throughout the eastern Mediterranean. The Christian Bible, for example, was written for the most part in koine Greek.

3. ***Celtic*** In antiquity the Celts occupied several areas of western and central Europe before finally settling mostly on the British Isles. Indeed one Celtic segment, the Galatians, migrated in an eastward direction and settled in Anatolia, present-day Turkey. Today, however, in spite of the vast geographical area once occupied by Celtic tribes, relatively few people speak languages from this branch. *Welsh* is spoken in Wales, *Irish Gaelic* in Ireland, and *Scottish Gaelic* in Scotland. A few traces of the nearly extinct language *Manx* may yet be found on the Isle of Man. On the European mainland in Brittany, France, the Celtic language *Breton* is spoken today, the result of a migration back from England following the Anglo-Saxon invasion in the fifth century.

4. ***Italic*** In antiquity several Italic languages were spoken on the Italian peninsula. Foremost among them were *Latin, Oscan* and *Umbrian.* On the other hand, a highly civilized and powerful people known as *Etruscans* occupied central Italy just north of Rome in the first millennium B.C. These people of unknown origin spoke a non-Indo-European language which to this date, in spite of its survival in numerous extant writings, has not been fully deciphered. As the political power of Rome expanded, the language of its speakers, Latin, assumed a dominant position among the city's conquered neighbors. In time these subjugated tribes suffered a complete displacement of their native tongue. Beyond Italy the same thing occurred as the mighty Roman forces exerted their influence during the late Republic and early Empire. Indeed the strong centralized government at Rome employed Latin as the official language for all its western provinces (from Britain and Germany to North Africa) and Greek for its eastern bloc subordinates. Throughout so vast an area and over a period of time lasting

several centuries, it was only natural for the Latin language itself to suffer a similar breakdown. The name given to colloquial Latin speech in its many corrupted forms, prior to its finding a new identity in several distinct modern languages, is *Vulgar Latin.* The word *vulgus* in Latin, like *koine* in Greek, means "common," and in both instances refers to the language as spoken by the common people. As might be expected, Jerome's Latin edition of the Bible, known as the *Vulgate,* is so called because it was written in the common man's tongue. The languages descendent from Latin are known as the *Romance Languages.* Emerging first simply as dialectical variants of Latin, they later developed into *Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese,* and *Romanian.* Included in this same category, but not listed on the IE graph, are *Catalan* (in northeastern Spain) and *Provencal* (in southeastern France).

5. ***Indo-Iranian*** This family branch is sometimes referred to merely as *Aryan* and, as its name suggests, is geographically located in the areas of India and Iran today. Classical *Sanskrit,* one of the most important of all ancient IE languages, developed in this branch. Standardized for literary purposes in the fourth century B.C. by a grammarian named Panini, it was employed continuously down into the Middle Ages. Among the Indic languages, however, Sanskrit was preceded in time by an even older *Vedic* language which provided hymns similar in length to the Greek poet Homer's epics, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey.* Several of India's principal languages, including *Hindi, Urdu, Bengali,* and *Panjabi,* belong to this family branch, and all can be traced from Sanskrit. On the other hand, several languages in the southern portion of the Indian peninsula are not part of this family at all. To the Iranian portion of this branch belong *Farsi (Modern Persian), Kurdish, Baluchi, Tajiki, Pashto* and the ancient *Persian* and *Avestan,* all geographically located between eastern Turkey and northern India.

6. ***Tocharian*** and ***Hittite*** Two separate IE language groups in Asia, known from antiquity but extinct today, are Tocharian and Hittite. Not much can be said with certainty in either case except that both appear to be clearly distinct from the other Indo-Iranian languages of the area. While Hittite is readily identified historically with the great empire which flourished in Asia Minor from 1400 to 1200 B.C., Tocharian is noteworthy for having been traced even to the western frontiers of China.

7. ***Balto-Slavic*** This language group spans the broad geographical area of much of eastern Europe and western Asia. From the northern Baltic area come *Latvian* and *Lithuanian.* Located below these districts, a bit toward the east, are *Russian, Ukrainian* and *Byelorussian.* In the western portion are *Czech, Slovak* and *Polish,* while in the south are *Bulgarian, Macedonian, Slovenian* and *Serbo-Croatian.* One has to be careful not to include in this sub-group languages spoken in neighboring areas, such as Hungarian, Romanian and German (in Austria).

8. ***Albanian*** and ***Armenian*** These two language branches are extraordinary for developing in antiquity but not breaking down into subgroups. Today *Albanian* is spoken in the country bearing that name and in its surrounding areas. *Armenian* originated east of the Black Sea in areas today under Soviet and Turkish rule.

Theories abound about where the first speakers of Indo-European were located several millennia ago. Some would place them in central Europe, others in the southwestern corner of the Soviet Union before migrations dispersed them in various directions. Not only is the location a matter of debate. Many scholars have criticized the very name "Indo-European" as a label inappropriately applied to this family. To them the greatest problem stems from the implication that all the languages in India are members of this family, which indeed is not the case (*cf.* Indo-Iranian above). The same holds true for the "European" portion of the label because not all the languages in Europe belong to this family either. Non-members in this continent include *Finnish, Hungarian,* and *Basque,* spoken in the western Pyrenees. Also, the earlier-mentioned *Etruscan* language, once spoken by the powerful settlers just north of Rome, is not an IE language either. To date, however, a more satisfactory name has not been found so Indo-European, as imperfect as the label is, remains as the preferred name of this group.

OTHER LANGUAGE FAMILIES	Languages/(Locations)
I. SINO-TIBETAN	Chinese,Burmese, Thai
II. SEMITIC-HAMITIC	Arabic, Hebrew, Berber, Ethiopic, Sudanic
III.URAL-ALTAIC	Finnish, Magyar (Hungarian), Turkish

IV. JAPANESE	Japanese, Korean
V. DRAVIDIAN	(Southern India)
VI. MALAY-POLYNESIAN	(Pacific Islands, Indonesia)
VII. AFRICAN NEGRO	(Central & Southern Africa)
VIII. AMERICAN INDIAN	(North & South America)

In addition to the large Indo-European family of languages, there are several other language families. These are listed in the graph above on the left, with examples in some cases of modern languages that belong to each class on the right.

It has been pointed out earlier in this introduction that the daughter languages of Indo-European possess a kindred relationship to one another. For this reason they are said to be *cognate* languages. The Latin word *cognatus,* from which this term comes, means "sprung from the same stock," hence "related." In similar fashion words themselves among the various cognate languages are said to be *cognates.* Some examples of cognate words follow.

English	**Greek**	**Latin**	**Russian**	**Sanskrit**
mother	meter	mater	mat'	matar
brother	phrater	frater	brat'	bhratar
is	esti	est	jest'	asti

These words are similar because they derive from a common parent source. For example, the reconstructed Indo-European root for "mother," given in most etymological dictionaries, is **mater.*[1] The conjecture for this and most other IE roots is based strictly on examples surviving in the descendent languages. Proof for the working of this backward, reconstructive process can be no more convincingly demonstrated than in the case of the

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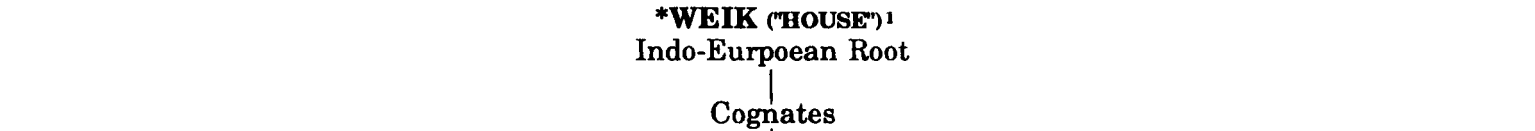
[1] Since no actual words from the ancient Indo-European language survive, reconstructed roots are usually identified in printed form with an asterisk placed before them.

Language Graph Showing Cognates & Word Derivatives



VIS[2]	WEIHS	WICH[3]	WIC[4]	OIKOS, OIKIA[5]	VICUS[6]	VILLA[7]
Sanskrit	Gothic	Old High German	Old English	Greek	Latin	Latin
			Eng. Deriv. from this root	Eng. Deriv. from this root	Eng. Deriv. from this root	Eng. Deriv. from this root
			bailiwick	ecology	vicinage	villa
			Berwick	ecological	vicinal	village
			Norwick	ecologist	vicinity	villager
			Warwick	ecosystem		villain
				ecotype		villainess
				ecophysiology		villainous
				ecotone		villainy
				ecosphere		villanelle
				ecocide		villatic
				ecospecies		
				economy	ecumenical	
				economic	ecumenism	
				economical	ecumenicity	
				economize	monoecious	
				econometrics	dioecious	
				diocese	trioecious	
				parish	autooecious	
				parishioner	heteroecious	
				parochial	paroecious	
				parochialism	perioecious	
				ecesis	androecious	
				ecestics	gynoecious	

1. WEIK - clan, social unit above the household
2. VIS - dwelling, house
3. WICH - village, town
4. WIC - dwelling, village
5. OIKOS, OIKIA - house, dwelling (In certain early Greek dialects a digamma appeared at the beginning of this word. In time, this letter, which had the sound of a "w," simply disappeared.)
6. VICUS - village, hamlet, quarter of a city
7. VILLA - countryhouse, farm

Romance languages with Latin where we can actually take thousands of parallel words from the modern languages, reconstruct a parent form and then actually see that form in Latin. The parent language may be a "dead" language in that it is no longer spoken, but it nevertheless can be read in thousands of pages of text that survive. Check the samples that follow. It does not matter whether one works backward from the existing modern languages to the parent or from the parent language to its descendent offspring.

Latin:	**Italian**	**Spanish**	**French**	**(Meaning)**
mater:	madre	madre	mere	(mother)
manus:	mano	mano	main	(hand)
tempus:	tempo	tiempo	temps	(time)

Theories about word relationships or linguistics in general can nearly always be verified by scholars by comparing examples from the Romance languages with the parent word in Latin.

In spite of the presence of cognates among the various related languages, all of which came into existence quite naturally in the early development of each language, another linguistic process played an important role in the enhancement of English vocabulary. This phenomenon is known simply as *word borrowing.* In this situation words existing in one language are simply brought over directly into another with little or no change. All languages throughout the world are continuously being modified by enrichment of this sort. The only requirement is usually a strong contact with speakers of different languages. In the case of English, word borrowing has taken place on all fronts with the result that hundreds of French, Spanish, American Indian, Japanese and Chinese words have been incorporated into our vocabulary by this process. The combined strength of all these sources taken together, however, reveals only a small fraction of our indebtedness to word borrowing from other languages. This is not the situation with Greek and Latin from which sources literally tens of thousands of words have been directly borrowed. So extensive has the process become of coining English words from these two ancient languages that a novice paging through a standard English dictionary, upon first glance at sample word etymologies, might well suspect that the entire English language was a direct offshoot from either Greek or Latin. It is in recognition of this extraordinary phenomenon that numerous attempts have been made in recent years to familiarize students with the basic

vocabularies of these two classical languages. By learning a few hundred Greek and Latin words and the process by which they enter English in word borrowing, the meanings of thousands of less familiar words can often be understood today. Moreover, since these roots often tend to be recognized from their appearance in more familiar English words, vocabulary enrichment is not all that difficult. Understanding this process is important not just because it gives us a better perspective about the past development of our language. It is also important for dealing with the formation of future words. Judging from the hundreds of word entries admitted into English in the past few years, it seems that Greek and Latin will continue to be the primary word borrowing sources in the creation of words for decades to come.

Exercise[2]

A. Name the five principal Romance Languages. From what language are they commonly descended?

B. Name three languages spoken in Europe today that are not derived from Indo-European.

C. Which of the following languages belong to the Indo-European Family of languages and which do not?

1. Danish	*3. Arabic*	*5. Polish*	*7. Romanian*
2. Czech	*4. Chinese*	*6. Hebrew*	*8. Albanian*

D. Using Your Dictionary.

1. Give the *abbreviations* used by your dictionary to identify the following languages:

1. Gaelic	*3. French*	*5. Greek*	*7. Portuguese*
2. Russian	*4. Danish*	*6. Persian*	*8. Japanese*

2. Which languages are indicated by the following abbreviations?

1. G	*3. LL*	*5. ME*	*7. ON*
2. Skt	*4. OHG*	*6. ML*	*8. LG*

---

[2] It is recommended that students record their answers in a notebook for the exercises below and for those in the chapters that follow.

3. Identify from which Indo-European language each of the following English words are derived. Usually this is explained in the etymology section near the word's definition.

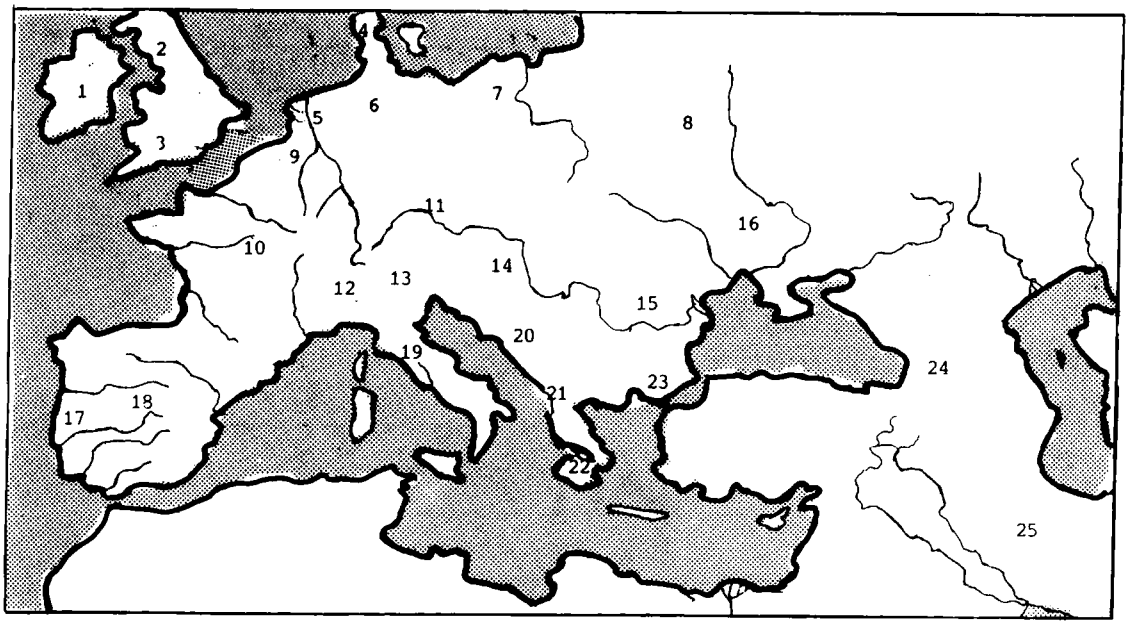
1. bonanza	*6. maestro*	*11. scathe*	*16. mayonnaise*
2. slogan	*7. magi*	*12. ski*	*17. babushka*
3. garage	*8. shawl*	*13. sulfur*	*18. rathskeller*
4. pizza	*9. kilt*	*14. mascot*	*19. dynamic*
5. cobra	*10. khaki*	*15. martyr*	*20. bankrupt*

4. Identify from which non-Indo-European language or language family the following English words are derived.

1. algebra	*5. tea*	*9. typhoon*	*13. admiral*
2. saffron	*6. opossum*	*10. manna*	*14. kimono*
3. ginkgo	*7. sherbet*	*11. maize*	*15. moccasin*
4. taboo	*8. alcohol*	*12. shekel*	*16. coffee*

E. Study the language graph for the IE word *weik* on p. 8 and explain how the general meaning of "house" appears in any ten English word borrowings that come from the Greek root "(o)ec-."

F. Study a map of Europe and western Asia and then identify the principal languages spoken in the numbered areas on the map below.



Subatomic Particles

	Particle	Symbol	Mass	Lifetime in Seconds
	PHOTON	γ	0	Stable
	NEUTRINO	ν	0	Stable
	ANTI-NEUTRINO	$\bar{\nu}$	0	Stable
	ELECTRON	e^-	1	Stable
	POSITRON	e^+	1	Stable
	PROTON	p	1836	Stable
	ANTI-PROTON	$\bar{p}$	1836	Stable
	NEUTRON	n	1839	1010
	ANTI-NEUTRON	$\bar{n}$	1839	1010
	MU MESONS	μ^- μ^+	206	2.22×10^{-6}
	PI MESONS	π^- π^+	273	2.56×10^{-8}
	NEUTRAL PI MESON	π°	264	$<10^{-15}$
	K MESONS	K^- K^+	967	1.2×10^{-8}
	NEUTRAL K MESON$_1$	K_1°	$\sim$ 973	10^{-10}
	NEUTRAL K MESON$_2$	K_2°	$\sim$ 973	$\sim 8\times10^{-8}$
HYPERONS	LAMBDA	Λ°	2182	2.6×10^{-10}
	ANTI-LAMBDA	$\bar{\Lambda}^\circ$	2182	2.6×10^{-10}
	SIGMA POSITIVE	Σ^+	2328	$\sim 8\times10^{-11}$
	ANTI-SIGMA POSITIVE	$\bar{\Sigma}^+$	2328	$\sim 8\times10^{-11}$
	SIGMA NEGATIVE	Σ^-	2342	1.7×10^{-10}
	ANTI-SIGMA NEGATIVE	$\bar{\Sigma}^-$	2342	1.7×10^{-10}
	NEUTRAL SIGMA	Σ°	2326	$<10^{-11}$
	NEUTRAL ANTI-SIGMA	$\bar{\Sigma}^\circ$	2326	$<10^{-11}$
	XI NEGATIVE	Ξ^-	2585	$\sim 10^{-10}$
	ANTI-XI NEGATIVE	$\bar{\Xi}^-$	2585	$\sim 10^{-10}$
	XI NEUTRAL	Ξ°	....	....
	ANTI-XI NEUTRAL	$\bar{\Xi}^\circ$	....	....

Modern physics also is heavily indebted to Greek root words, prefixes and suffixes to form new technical terms. In this list the key terms are entirely Greek, with Latin adjectives as modifiers when required.

Part I

Derivatives from Greek

Μνημοσύνη μήτηρ Μουσάων
Memory, the mother of the Muses.[1]

Chapter One
The Greek Alphabet & Transliteration

History of the Alphabet

The subject of writing in antiquity is indeed a fascinating topic and one of relative importance for those studying English vocabulary from Greek and Latin words. Although many types of picture drawings, commonly known as *pictographs*, can be examined from prehistoric times, only those developments leading more directly to the alphabet, and more specifically the Greek alphabet, are treated in this text. The English alphabet we employ today is basically the same as that used in antiquity by the Romans. Therefore, in the chapters ahead it will be necessary to learn only one new writing script and that will be for words of Greek origin.

Two important writing systems were in use in the eastern Mediterranean area *prior* to the arrival of the Greek alphabet and for this reason deserve special mentioned here. They are *cuneiform* and *hieroglyphics*. The first of these received its name from the "wedge-shaped" look of its characters produced by the tip of a stylus upon a soft material such as clay. The Latin word *cuneus* means "wedge." Cuneiform was in use throughout much of Asia Minor from approximately 3000 B.C. until the start of the Christian era. Having first appeared in the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, this unusual script was first employed by the Sumerians and later by their conquerors, the Assyrians. Over the centuries it came to be employed by people of many different languages, some Semitic, some Indo-

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[1] Hymn to Hermes, 429-430.