

Probert, Philomen. 2015. *Early Greek Relative Clauses*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN 870-0-19-871382-1. 448 pages, 27 pages bibliography, a list of tables, a list of abbreviations, a glossary of technical terms, a subject index and an index locorum.

The book is divided in 15 chapters. In **Chapter 1 (pp. 1-5)** Probert (henceforth P.) starts by pointing out that Greek relative clauses have been neglected in comparison with other Indo-European languages (the last in-depth studies being those by Monteil and Ruijgh).<sup>1</sup> The book is not conceived as a new manual on early Greek relative clause syntax, nor that it will discuss the appearance of certain particles in relative clauses or the participial relative clauses. The following texts have been investigated: Mycenaean, archaic alphabetic Greek inscriptions, early literary prose; iambic, monodic and lyric, and elegiac poetry until 550 BC; the *Iliad* (book 1 to 4) and the Cretan inscriptions until 400 BC.

**Chapter 2 (pp. 6-20)** discusses the views on Greek, Proto-Indo-European (henceforth PIE) and primitive languages over the last 150 years. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was argued that the earliest language stages were always paratactic. As it had been noted already in Antiquity that Homer's syntax was much more simple than that of Demosthenes, Homer therefore represented a more primitive language stage. The next issue was if PIE had subordinate clauses. As relative pronouns were the easiest to reconstruct, it was investigated if PIE had relative clauses. Scholars concluded it had not,<sup>2</sup> and some therefore concluded that the Indo-Europeans were in origin a primitive people.<sup>3</sup> This view was later challenged on two grounds. The first argument was that the main difference between Homer and Demosthenes was not one of time: as they represented different genres, they were likely to use different styles. Homer did not employ many subordinate clauses, not because he did not know them but because the oral nature of his work made it less suited to use them.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, it was argued that there were no primitive languages, but P. considers this claim hard to (dis)prove. More problematic even is the fact that subordinate clauses are notoriously difficult to reconstruct, but the absence of a reconstructable subordinate construction does not mean that the parent language did not have it.<sup>5</sup> P. argues that the claim that primitive languages have simpler constructions can only be (dis)proved if one adheres to the principles of historical reconstruction.

In **chapter 3 (pp. 21-54)** the approaches to Indo-European relative clauses are discussed. The main problem is that two different relative pronouns can be reconstructed for PIE, a form based on PIE *\*Hyo* found in Phrygian, Indo-Aryan, Greek and Celtic, and a form based on PIE *\*k<sup>w</sup>e/o/i*, found in the Anatolian, Italic, Germanic, Slavic and Baltic languages. For this, there are several possible explanations:<sup>6</sup> there was no relative pronoun in PIE and both pronouns have other origins, the forms with *\*Hyo* were the original ones, the forms with *\*k<sup>w</sup>e/o/i* were the original ones, they existed both and competed with each other or they existed both but were used in different contexts (*\*Hyo* in poetic texts and *\*k<sup>w</sup>e/o/i* in other contexts).<sup>7</sup> Hypothesis 1 is unlikely according to P., because relative pronouns and clauses did already exist in PIE. Hypothesis 2 was preferred before the discovery of Hittite, because Greek and Indo-Iranian were the oldest languages before that discovery, while hypothesis 3 received support by the fact that Hittite used a form that could be derived from *\*k<sup>w</sup>e/o/i* and this use could not be explained by contact with Latin, Hittite being attested almost 1000 years before Latin. P.

---

<sup>1</sup> Monteil, Pierre. 1963. *La phrase relative en grec ancien*. Paris. Ruijgh, Cornelis. 1971. *Autour de "te épique"*. *Études sur la syntaxe grecque*. Amsterdam.

<sup>2</sup> See especially Windisch, Ernst. 1869. Untersuchungen über den Ursprung des Relativpronomens in den indogermanischen Sprachen. *Curtius Studien* 2, pp. 201-419 and Hermann, Eduard. 1895. Gab es im Indogermanischen Nebensätze? *Kuhns Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 33, pp. 481-535.

<sup>3</sup> Windisch (see previous note) argued that they were in origin a primitive people, but Hermann disagreed.

<sup>4</sup> P. refers to Slings (S. Slings. 1994. Een tandje lager: aanzetten voor een orale grammatica van Homerus. *Lampas* 27, pp. 411-427), the most outspoken scholar in this respect: (...) *talen zonder bijzinnen zijn er niet*. (...) *wie schrijft heeft minder moeite met gecompliceerde syntactische structuren dan wie spreekt* (There are no languages without subordinate clauses (...) someone who writes has less problems with complex subordinate structures than someone who speaks.- my underlining and translation).

<sup>5</sup> Clackson, James. 2007. *Indo-European Linguistics: An Introduction*. Cambridge, p. 164 refers to the reconstruction of conditional clauses. All daughter languages have them, but no single conditional construction can be reconstructed (this was first noted by Antoine Meillet).

<sup>6</sup> One can also refer to the discussion in Clackson 2007:171-176, who concluded that the acceptance of two pronouns fitted the evidence better than all other theories.

<sup>7</sup> This hypothesis is based on Hettrich, Heinrich. 1988. *Hypotaxe im Vedischen*. Berlin, p. 781.

pointed out that there were problems with all hypotheses, even with hypotheses 4 and 5. The former is problematic, because no language preserved traces of both pronouns which would be expected if the pronouns were in free competition, while the latter would assume that the predominance of poetic texts caused the pronoun \**Hyo* to have been generalised in Greek and Indo-Aryan, but it is difficult to imagine how this could have happened.

**Chapter 4 (pp. 55-75)** is dedicated to the notion “relative clause”. It offers a definition and describes the different types that exist in Greek. P. distinguishes between three types of relative clauses: restrictive, non-restrictive and clauses that are called “relatives of a third kind”. These relative clauses are used to denote *a unique entity, everything in a set or a complete lot of stuff*. An example is the clause (underlined): *Mike gets whatever he wants*. P. uses the term “inherently maximalising relative clauses” to refer to this third kind and proposes the following definition for a relative clause: *a relative clause is a subordinating clause either (i) restrictively modifying a noun phrase, by indicating the role that the modified item plays within the subordinate clause; or (ii) non-restrictively modifying a noun phrase, by indicating the role that the modified item plays within the subordinate clause; or (iii) itself behaving as a noun phrase (with something like the meaning of a definite article built in) and indicating the role that its referent plays within the subordinate clause* (p. 74).

**Chapter 5 (pp. 76-118)** discusses definiteness, indefiniteness, inherently maximalising relative clauses, the definite and indefinite construction, the use and value of ὅστις, and generalisation and epic τε (*τε épique*). Definiteness is what is indicated by a definite article, but indefiniteness is used for up to three different notion. First, it refers to what is expressed by an indefinite article. Second, indefiniteness can be expressed by the “indefinite construction”, which is a term used in Great-Britain to describe the use of a subjunctive with a modal particle (MP) or an optative without it in general conditionals, general temporal clauses and general relative clauses. P. points out that the MP is not mandatory in Homer and that its presence has no specific value attached to it.<sup>8</sup> The difference between the indefinite construction with subjunctive or optative and the definite construction with the indicative is that the latter refers to a generalisation over an entire species or a set of items or persons with certain characteristics independent of particular occasions, whereas the former refers to individual occasions. In addition, the indicative is rarely used in temporal clauses as it usually has a causal or adversative meaning to it as well rather than a simple temporal meaning. Thirdly, indefiniteness can be expressed by indefinite pronouns “...ever” in English. ὅστις is often considered the Greek equivalent of this and therefore P. analyses its uses. The pronoun is used to refer to a set within a rather large number of possible members (by which P. means that the possibilities are more numerous than expected) and indicates that the identity of the object or person is not known (or at least not known with absolute certainty). This is called “domain-widening use”. This “uncertainty” explains why it is never used in Homer to modify a personal name. Throughout the history of Greek, it developed uses that were not restrictive and by the time of Classical Greek, it had become a phonologically fuller version of the relative pronoun ὅς.<sup>9</sup> The last element in the chapter is the use of epic τε: from a synchronic point of view this is an adverb that appears in non-restrictive relative clauses marking a permanent state of affairs, but it is not a mandatory marker of this state, nor does it always have that notion. The chapter is concluded with a discussion on the relative clause in Sappho, fragment 31,1-6.

**Chapter 6 (pp. 119-161)** discusses the varieties of the Greek relative clauses. It first discusses the different pronouns used in Greek. Then P. proceeds to the different types, starting with the postnominal relative clauses. They are the most common ones and easily recognisable, but it is not always evident whether they are restrictive or not. She then proceeds to the “third kind”. The first type is the “free relative clause” (the type *he received what he wanted*), followed by a discussion of the same type with the antecedent incorporated in the relative clause agreeing in case and number with the relative pronoun. The next subtype is the semi-free relative clause. This is a free relative clause with a cataphoric pronoun as antecedent in the matrix clause (type: *he received that what he wanted* versus *he received what he wanted*, which contains a free relative clause). The last type is the relative-correlative clause: this is sentence that starts with a relative clause and in which the antecedent is resumed in the matrix clause (type: *who honours the gods, that man will receive blessings*).<sup>10</sup> At the

<sup>8</sup> In doing so, she followed Willmott, Jo. 2007. *The Moods of Homeric Greek*. Cambridge, pp. 199-204.

<sup>9</sup> Sometimes the difference between ὅς and ὅστις was only explainable by the metre (Ruijgh 1971:326).

<sup>10</sup> This English example is based on *Iliad* 9,508-509.

end of the chapter, P. points out that certain relative clauses are undoubtedly subordinate clauses and cannot be interpreted as paratactic variants. This is the case in a relative clause such as τὸν ἠΰκομος τέκε Λητώ (“whom fair-haired Leto begot, *Iliad* 1,36), in which the absence of a connecting particle in the relative clause proves that it never belonged to the same level as the preceding clauses.

In **Chapter 7 (pp. 162-198)** the case usage in relative clause is addressed. The first issue is the *attractio inversa* in which the antecedent adopts the case of the relative pronoun. In several instances, however, it is equally possible that we are dealing with a case of an antecedent inserted into the relative clause. According to P. this is the case when the antecedent immediately precedes the relative pronoun (or is only separated from it by a Wackernagel word),<sup>11</sup> when the antecedent is not preceded by a definite article or demonstrative pronoun and when the relative clause refers to an entire set of things or persons. Then P. discusses the *attractio relativi* (in which the relative pronoun adopts the case of the antecedent). P. stated that there are no examples of this construction before Aiskhylos and proved that all alleged earlier examples are either uncertain or can be explained otherwise. The third case issue involves the “case matching”. This refers to the fact that relative pronoun adopts the case required by the function of the relative clause in the matrix clause. When a relative pronoun has an oblique function or depends on an preposition, it is sometimes difficult to recognise the function of the relative clause in the sentence. In order to solve this, the relative pronoun could adopt the case of the function of the sentence (but this is not mandatory).

**Chapter 8 (pp. 199-242)** discusses the relative clauses in non-epic Greek until 550 BC, comprising Mycenaean, inscriptions, early literary prose, iambic, choral and elegiac poetry. P. shows that postnominal relative clauses normally cannot be replaced by inherently maximalising constructions. The latter are preferred when the relative clause is equivalent to a protasis of a characterising sentence, picking out a unique entity over which the sentence generalises (although postnominal clauses are used in these contexts in elegiac poetry as well). The choice between the different maximalising constructions is influenced (but not exclusively) by the necessity to render the function of the relative clause clear. Free relative clauses are used when the relative clause is object or subject in the matrix clause and when there is no case matching, while semi-free and relative-correlative clauses are used when the syntactic function is more difficult to recover. The choice between the last two is not decided by syntactic needs, but by the type of texts: semi-free relatives seem preferred in higher literary genres, while relative-correlative appear more often in lower and non-literary texts.

**Chapter 9 (pp. 242-299)** analyses the relative clauses in Homer, *Iliad* 1-4. First, it discusses the uses of inherently maximalising clauses: they describe everything in a set, often by excluding other entities or possible choices or by emphasising everything in a set. There are three types: meaningful exclusivity in ordinary sentences, meaningful exclusivity in sentences that generalise across situations and emphatic inclusiveness. The first type is used when the relative clause describes a choice between different options and makes this choice, excluding all the other options; this also applies to the catalogues in Book 2: all relative clauses describe one contingent at the exclusion of others. When generalisations across situations are made, the indefinite construction is used and the relative clause describes one option and excludes the others. The third type is emphatic inclusion: the relative clause does not exclude but emphasises an entire set. P. then discusses the postnominal clauses. They are not replaceable by inherently maximalising constructions, because they head an indefinite noun phrase, are non-restrictive, weakly restrictive or clarificatory. Special attention is paid to the relatives with ὅστις. In several cases a relative clause with ὅστις can be interpreted as a free clause in apposition to its antecedent, but there are instances where such an analysis is impossible.<sup>12</sup> While postnominal clauses apparently can be used in generalisations across situations, P. argues that they are better understood as clarificatory sentences. At the end, she discusses the relative clauses in the catalogues in Book 2: each contingent is described by a series of postnominal restrictive clauses, but P. suggests that it would be better to take the whole set of relative clauses as one single non-restrictive clause that enumerates the places where the people belonging to the contingent come from.

---

<sup>11</sup> I use this term to refer to words that do not have a proper accent and are therefore always placed in second position in the sentence. The name refers to Jakob Wackernagel, who first noticed this (Wackernagel, Jakob. 1892. Über ein Gesetz der indogermanischen Wortstellung. *Indogermanische Forschungen* 1, pp. 333-437).

<sup>12</sup> Ruijgh 1971:324 argued that all relatives with ὅστις were free relative clauses in apposition to their antecedent.

**Chapter 10 (pp. 300-312)** discusses how the choice between the different inherently maximalising constructions is made and concludes that the free relative construction is the usual one, unless the syntactic function of the relative clause is difficult to discern, in which case semi-free or relative-correlative constructions are used. P. then discusses the differences between the last two types and asks if the differences are stylistically motivated and finds that they are not. The difference between them is one of focus: the relative-correlative clauses do not belong to a particularly lower register but appear in prayers, wishes, predictions or generalisations and are used to put the clause content in focus. This is particularly clear in the catalogues in Book 2: the relative-correlative sentences keep the discourse structure clear.

**Chapter 11 (pp. 315-326)** treats the difference between relative clauses introduced by  $\acute{o}$ ,  $\acute{\eta}$ ,  $\tau\acute{o}$  (a demonstrative pronoun, which later becomes the definite article) and by  $\acute{o}\zeta$ ,  $\acute{\eta}$ ,  $\acute{o}$  (the genuine relative pronoun). P. only discusses examples where the difference can be seen (forms differing only by the accent are left out). The former is used in relative clauses that add new information, while only the latter can be used in sentences with epic  $\tau\epsilon$  and appears in sentences mentioning known facts applying uniquely to the antecedent.

In **chapter 12 (pp. 327-349)** the use of relative clauses in speeches and narrative is addressed. P. provides figures that prove that postnominal relative clauses are more common in speeches and that free relative clauses are more common proportionally in speeches than in narrative (tables 12.1 and 12.2). P. asks if this could be explained by the linguistic difference between speeches and narrative, but states that, while speeches are linguistically younger, this does not mean that all differences have to be explained this way.<sup>13</sup> The preference in narrative parts to introduce relative clauses by  $\acute{o}$ ,  $\acute{\eta}$ ,  $\tau\acute{o}$  is due to the fact that this adds new information and that new information (sometimes about little known participants) is more likely to occur in narrative descriptions. The higher proportion of inherently maximalising constructions in speeches can be explained by the facts that these sentences are used in contexts referring to the future, wishes, threats, predictions and generalisations and that they define events, people, things that exist now and will exist in the future, or will exist after a certain in event in the future. Postnominal clauses are more often used in speeches, not because they add necessary information but because they add emphasis and have a rhetorical value. Postnominal clauses in which new information is added (mostly about the genealogy or origin of little known characters) are used in the narrative parts. The information that is added in those sentences is mostly irrelevant for the immediate context.

**Chapter 13 (pp. 350-391)** discusses the relative clauses in Cretan inscriptions until 400 BC. There are 77 relative clauses without unsurmountable problems. P. addresses three questions: how are postnominal clauses and inherently maximalising constructions used; which one is more common; how are inherently maximalising constructions differentiated? The inherently maximalising constructions are more common. They are mostly used to describe the conditions or circumstances under which the laws have to be obeyed or applied. The relative clauses are either the equivalent of a protasis in a conditional construction or have a protasis as matrix clause. The postnominal relatives appear to be restrictive, but on closer inspection they contain information that could have been inferred from the context already and they are clarificatory rather than providing an essential restriction. Two types of inherently maximalising constructions are used: free relative clauses (which are the most common) and relative-correlative constructions. The relative-correlative sentences are used in contexts with a clear contrast and in workmanlike texts, which can be explained by the topic-comment structure of these type of relative clauses. P. concludes by stating that while the sample is too small, these findings are in agreement with what was found in Homer and other Greek texts.

In **chapter 14 (pp. 392-434)** P. addressed and refutes four archaisms attributed to Greek relative clauses and pronouns, and confirms one other. The first claim P. refutes is that the anaphoric uses of  $\acute{o}\zeta$  proved that relative clauses were in origin paratactic clauses: most instances of  $\acute{o}\zeta$  involve the masculine singular and could as well have come from the pronoun *\*sos* which is attested in Sanskrit

---

<sup>13</sup> She referred to Finkelberg, Margalit. 2012. Late features in the speeches of the *Iliad* in Andersen, Øvind and Haug, Dag. *Relative Chronology in Early Greek Epic Poetry*. Cambridge, pp. 80-95 for the linguistic innovations of the speeches and to Griffin, Jasper. 1986. Homeric words and speakers. *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 106, pp. 36-57 for the fact that not all differences between speeches and narratives can be explained by a difference in linguistic chronology.

*sas* “that one”. The second claim was that the position of the relative clauses after the matrix clause was evidence for an original paratactic construction. P. showed that the clause final position was due to the complexity of the sentence: inserting a complex sentence into another clause was avoided. The third claim stated that verbless relative clauses were proof that the relative pronoun was in origin a definite article. P. stated that these type of relative clauses were free relatives in apposition to their antecedent. The fourth claim was that a relative clause was in origin a paratactic clause because the main clause following it had a particle δέ in it: as clauses on the same syntactic level were connected by a particle, this would prove that the relative clause was in origin paratactic. This is not necessarily true, because δέ can mark a return to the main topic,<sup>14</sup> and because the use of connecting particles in main clauses after a subordinate clause is paralleled in Hebrew *waw* “and” and Middle Hittite *nu* “as it is”. P. accepted the archaism of epic τε. Following Ruijgh, she stated that the particle was in origin used in contexts such as δὸς νῦν μοι φιλότῃτα καὶ ἕμερον, ᾧ τε σὺ πάντα // δαμνᾷ ἀθανάτους ἠδὲ θνητοὺς ἀνθρώπους (“Now give me love and desire, with which you tame the immortals and mortal men.” *Iliad* 14,198-199) where the two concepts were close in meaning but not synonymous. In origin, “desire” and “with which you tame” were understood as two different things. Later, they came to be seen as synonyms and the second sentence was interpreted as a comment on the first and τε lost its connecting value and became “superfluous”. This explains the presence of a particle in sentences describing general truths or permanent state of affairs. P. concludes the chapter by stating that in origin ὅς, ἦ, ὅ and ὅ, ἦ, τό were used in different contexts. Initially, there were no non-restrictive clarificatory clauses that were introduced by ὅς, ἦ, ὅ. It was in this type of relative clause that ὅ, ἦ, τό first appeared (explaining why ὅ, ἦ, τό appears in Homer in relative clauses adding new information). As such, she agrees with Baron that the exclusive usage of ὅς, ἦ, ὅ in Attic is not an archaism, but an innovation.<sup>15</sup>

**Chapter 15 (435-448)** concludes the book. The most important conclusions are: first, the preference for inherently maximalising constructions is due to the lack of a definite article. This construction makes it immediately clear that a complete set or something unique is being referred to. Second, there is no stage in the history of the Greek language that did not have a relative pronoun or relative clauses. Third, the differences between Homer and Demosthenes are not mainly due to a difference in time, but to a difference in genre and the (non-) use of writing.

This book provides an important contribution, not only to the study of Greek relative clauses but also to historical Greek syntax and historical syntax as a whole.<sup>16</sup> The author, who has been publishing on relative clauses in Greek and other Indo-European languages before,<sup>17</sup> not only discusses Homer, but also inscriptions (which are precious evidence as they are not “tainted” by transmission problems) and early Greek prose and poetry, and also provides parallels from other Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages. The bibliography is large and includes all the important reference works and detailed studies on the topic.<sup>18</sup> All examples are quoted in full, translated, and discussed in much detail. P.’s concepts are very clearly defined and put them in tables comparing them with the standard terminology. I found only a few typos: δάνκει for δάκνει (87, 88), ἐῦ for ἐὺ (155), ἦν ὀδὸν for ἦν ὀδὸν (287), ὄν θ’ for ὄν θ’ (292) and on page 200 *accusative plural neuter* should be *accusative singular neuter*.

<sup>14</sup> See Bakker, Egbert. 1993. Boundaries, topics and the structure of discourse: an investigation into the ancient particle *dé*. *Studies in Language* 17, pp. 275-311 and Bakker, Egbert. 1997. *Poetry in speech: orality and Homeric discourse*. Ithaca, pp. 62-71. P. did not agree with everything that Bakker suggested.

<sup>15</sup> Baron, Charles. 1890. *Le pronom relatif et la conjonction en grec*. Paris, pp. 50-51.

<sup>16</sup> While historical syntax has been receiving more attention, it still remains under-investigated in comparison to historical phonology and morphology (see Lehmann, Wilfred. 1979. Internal Reconstruction and Historical Syntax. *Studies in Language* 3, p. 66; Campbell, Lyle and Mithun, Margaret. 1980. The Priorities and Pitfalls of Syntactic Reconstruction. *Folia Linguistica Historica* 1, p. 19; Clackson 2007: 157). The only complete work on Indo-European syntax is still Delbrück, Berthold. 1893-1900. *Vergleichende Syntax der indogermanischen Sprachen*. 3 Volumes. Strassburg.

<sup>17</sup> Her most important are Probert, Philomen. 2006. Clause boundaries in Old Hittite relative sentences. *Transactions of the Philological Society* 104, pp. 17-83; 2008. Mycenaean *o* is accusative, *jo* is nominative. *Glotta* 84, pp. 126-168; 2014. Relative clauses, Indo-Hittite, and Standard Average European. In: Jamison, Stephanie e.a. *Proceedings of the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual UCLA Indo-European Conference*. Bremen, pp. 137-164.

<sup>18</sup> As most of the detailed studies into Greek authors have been performed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (mostly in Germany), it is inevitable that the bibliography contains a large number of 19<sup>th</sup> century books.