

A History of Ancient Greek: From the Beginnings to Late Antiquity. Edited by A.-F. CHRISTIDIS. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. xli + 1617. Cloth, \$250.00. ISBN 978-0-521-83307-3.

This monumental interdisciplinary volume is a translation of the Modern Greek edition (Ιστορίας της ελληνικής γλώσσας) published in 2001 under the editorial eye of the late A.-F. Christidis, Professor of Linguistics at the University of Thessaloniki. Designed as a comprehensive survey of Ancient Greek, it contains contributions by some 75 scholars (the majority Greek, and the balance predominantly from other European countries), including archaeologists and historians as well as linguists and philologists specializing in a variety of ancient languages. As such, it is an indispensable treasure-chest of information not only on ancient Greek and its historical development, but on linguistic and cultural contact between Greeks and other neighboring peoples.

The main body of the book is divided into nine clearly articulated and organized sections, each followed by a full bibliography. Many individual chapters within these units are followed by a selection of exemplary primary texts.

The first section is introductory, covering language as a general phenomenon, with chapters on the nature of language, the units of linguistic analysis, the relationship of language to the brain and to thought, and language acquisition and linguistic change. The second section focuses more particularly on the development of Greek as a language from Proto-Indo-European through the Roman Empire; here, particular attention is paid to the relationship between language change and historical and social conditions. The range is admirable: individual contributions include multiple chapters on the evidence for Indo-European language and culture, on the origins of Greek and its early written forms, on pre-Greek languages, and on the introduction and development of writing, as well as on orality and literacy in the Classical Period.

The third section focuses on the Greek dialects, with individual chapters devoted to the classification of the dialects and the relation of Mycenaean Greek to the dialects of later periods, as well as synoptic discussions of the phonology and morphology of individual dialects. The inclusion of Macedonian among the Greek dialects makes sense in the larger organization of the volume, though given how politically charged the question is (and given the frankness and balance with which the volume elsewhere deals with the ideological importance of Ancient Greek for the modern Greek state), one might wish that the "fierce debate over whether or not Macedonian should be classed among the Greek dialects" were passed by less quickly.

The fourth section deals with Greek phonology, morphology, syntax, pronunciation and vocabulary, and their development over time. Individual chapters consider the various “Koinés” of the Greek East, Jewish Greek, and the Greek of the New Testament, as well as personal names and the traces of movement toward Modern Greek.

The fifth section offers a particularly valuable assembly of separate chapters on the points of contact between Greek and other ancient languages, including Thracian, Illyrian, Phrygian, Carian, Lycian, Lydian, Iranian, Etruscan, Latin, Hebrew, Egyptian and Coptic, Syriac, Celtic, Indian languages and Arabic. These discussions lead nicely, in the sixth section, to a discussion of translation and bilingualism in antiquity, with individual chapters on the Septuagint, the Greek of Roman texts, Phoenician bilingualism and Greek translation of Lycian and Syriac.

The seventh section, on language and culture, is divided into three subparts. The first treats the enormous topic of the language of literary texts, with (unavoidably cursory) discussions of a range of ancient genres and periods. Included here is a chapter on the use of dialects in literary texts, unfortunately treating only the Archaic and Classical periods with no mention of post-Classical poetry; Hellenistic literature is consigned to a very short chapter of its own. The second subsection surveys specialized and technical languages, including those of law, medicine and philosophy, as well as the vocabularies of democracy and early Christianity, and the semantic development of select words, including *ἑλληνισμός*, *ἅγιος*, *ψυχή*, *φιλοτιμία*, and *παράδεισος*.

The eighth section, entitled “Ancient Greeks and Language,” includes a discussion of ancient education, an all-too-brief chapter on ancient grammarians, and a useful survey of Atticism from the Hellenistic period on.

The final section briefly covers the fortune of Ancient Greek from the medieval period to modernity, concluding with a fascinating treatment of the ideologically complex place of Ancient Greek in the development of Modern Greek and of the Greek state.

An extremely useful set of appendixes includes discussions of diacritics and punctuation as well as a wide range of other important issues, including proverbs, maxims and riddles, spells, prophetic discourse, the language of the gods in Homer, obscenity, the representation of foreign speech in literature, music, non-verbal communication, texts preserved on lead tablets, and analogy and sound change. Although some of these make good sense as appendixes, many would have been better incorporated as chapters in the main body of the book. The volume concludes with a useful glossary and comprehensive indexes of proper names, words in Greek and other languages, and terms and subjects.

In sum, this monumental volume will serve as an important resource for students and scholars in a variety of fields. Students looking for an easily manageable overview of Ancient Greek and its development may find it easier to start with a handbook like L.R. Palmer's classic *The Greek Language* or G. Horrocks's *Greek: A History of Its Language and its Speakers*. But no other volume of a comparable range or scope exists, and this book should and will be widely consulted by anyone interested in the history of Ancient Greek and its afterlife in the Byzantine, Renaissance and Modern periods.

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