

BOOK REVIEW

Handbook of Comparative and Historical Indo-European Linguistics. Edited by Jared Klein, Brian Joseph, and Matthias Fritz, in cooperation with Mark Wenthe. (Handbooks of Linguistics and Communication Science/Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2017. 3 volumes, pp. 2411. \$1500.

The work reviewed here is the most comprehensive handbook of Indo-European linguistics since Brugmann's *Grundriss* (1897–1916), far outstripping volumes like Clackson (2007), Voyles & Barrack (2009), Fortson (2010), and Fritz & Meier-Brügger (2020) in scope, ambition, and content (with the caveat that comparing such one-volume works with the present work is not entirely fair).¹ It consists of 125 chapters in three volumes, all by acknowledged experts in the field, covering all of the major subfamilies of Indo-European (from Albanian to Tocharian), a number of the fragmentary Indo-European languages (for example, Messapic and Venetic), larger subgroupings (Balto-Slavic and Indo-Iranian), other possible contacts (Italo-Celtic, Greek-Anatolian), Proto-Indo-European itself, possible long-distance genetic relationships involving Indo-European, the history of Indo-European studies, methodological topics (for example, the Indo-European homeland), and the application of the comparative method to some selected non-Indo-European language families (for example, Uralic and Semitic). In what follows, I describe the contents of the work, address some of the more general chapters on methodological and/or historiographical topics, outline a typical set of chapters on an Indo-European subfamily, discuss and evaluate the chapters devoted to Germanic (which are presumably of the most interest to readers of this journal), and attempt to evaluate the work as a whole.

I begin with the prefatory material (part I, “General and methodological issues”; part II, “The application of the comparative method in selected language groups other than Indo-European”; and part III, “Historical perspectives on Indo-European linguistics”). Part I contains eight chapters, which are generally short (for example, it opens with “Comparison and relationship of languages,” by Claire Bowern [pp. 1–7]),² barring the chapter on “The writing systems of Indo-European,” by Peter T. Daniels, which is necessarily longer to include charts of the various writing systems it discusses (pp. 26–61). The chapters in this part are generally useful; the short sketches they offer will whet readers’ appetites for more detailed studies, while still giving enough information to introduce the various topics. Part II contains six chapters, none of which deal mainly with Indo-European (and most of which do not even mention Indo-European).

¹ I apologize for the delayed submission of this review. Part of the delay is due to supply chain issues, as the first copy of the book sent by the publisher never arrived; another part is due to the pandemic. I also thank Benjamin Fortson for his comments on an earlier version.

² The pagination is consistent throughout all three volumes, so volume numbers are omitted here.

Part III consists of four chapters of uniformly high quality. Pierre Swiggers contributed the first two: “Intuition, exploration, and assertion of the Indo-European language relationship” (pp. 138–170) and “Indo-European linguistics in the 19th and 20th centuries: Beginnings, establishment, remodeling, refinement, and extension(s)” (pp. 171–210). Jean-Claude Muller provided the third, “Encyclopedic works on Indo-European linguistics” (pp. 210–219), and Jay H. Jasanoff wrote the final chapter in part III, “The impact of Hittite and Tocharian: Rethinking Indo-European in the 20th century and beyond” (pp. 220–238). All of these chapters provide detailed, readable overviews of the subject matter, paying close attention to numerous relevant issues, like the emergence of new tools and methodologies (such as the use of typology in reconstruction), the various schools of Indo-European linguistics (for example, the Neogrammarians and Francophone scholars like Antoine Meillet and Émile Benveniste), important theoretical developments (such as the laryngeal theory), and the impact of new discoveries on the field (especially the identification of Hittite and Tocharian as Indo-European and the resulting effects on the reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European, as discussed thoroughly in Jasanoff’s chapter).

The parts on the Indo-European subfamilies get underway with part IV on Anatolian. These parts follow the same pattern in almost every case. There is a chapter on documentation, addressing the individual languages of the subgroup and their attestations. This is followed by chapters on phonology, morphology, syntax, and the lexicon. Next come chapters on the dialectology and the evolution of the subfamily. The parts on Anatolian and Tocharian lack the chapters on the evolution of the respective subfamily, as these subfamilies are extinct. The individual chapters vary somewhat in length and depth (to take two examples at random from volume 1, the chapter on Anatolian phonology covers 7 pages [249–256], while the chapter on Indic phonology covers 19 pages [325–344]), depending on factors like the size of the subfamily, the amount of data available, etc.

Part IX on Germanic follows this pattern as well. The chapter on documentation, by Robert Nedoma (pp. 875–888), opens with Proto-Germanic (looking mainly at early evidence in non-Germanic sources like the Negau Helmets), progresses to the major subgroups (North, East, and West, in that order), and then very briefly describes the fragmentary languages Langobardic and Old Dutch (which Nedoma equates with Old Low Franconian). In the chapter on phonology (pp. 888–912), Patrick V. Stiles outlines the Proto-Germanic system and then discusses changes from it into the various early Germanic languages. He first looks at consonants, then vowels, and finally post-tonic syllables. Topics covered here include Grimm’s Law, the Germanic *Verschärfung* or Holtzmann’s Law, the various types of Germanic umlaut, and Sievers’ Law. Jón Axel Harðarson then offers a detailed discussion of Germanic morphology (pp. 91–954). This chapter covers nouns, adjectives, numerals, pronouns, adverbs, and verbs, in that order, hitting all of the expected high points (stem classes, the case system, strong and weak verbs, preterit-presents, etc.). Next comes a chapter on syntax, by Rosemarie Lühr (pp. 955–974), which encompasses issues like word order, prepositional phrases, and the development of periphrastic constructions (for instance, in the passive). Elmar Seebold then discusses the Germanic lexicon (pp. 974–985), relying mainly on evidence from German and Gothic, which “may be taken to represent the two regional extremes of the Germanic-speaking territory” (p. 976). Seebold argues that most of the Germanic vocabulary (somewhere around 80 percent)

is in fact Indo-European in origin (in contrast to some other scholars, who have suggested that around one-third of the Germanic vocabulary is non-Indo-European in origin), and further rejects the invocation of substrates to account for previously unetymologized Germanic words (as has been done to a considerable extent in recent years by the Leiden School [for example, in Kroonen 2013] and by Theo Vennemann [most fully in Mailhammer & Vennemann 2019 and also in much earlier work]). The chapter on Germanic dialectology, by Ludwig Rübekel (pp. 986–1002), considers the problem of Germanic subgrouping, covering questions like early Germanic data attested in non-Germanic sources (for example, in various Latin texts) and the various proposals (Northeast vs. West Germanic, Northwest vs. East Germanic, etc.). The final chapter in the Germanic section, on the evolution of Germanic, by Joseph Salmons (pp. 1002–1027), covers patterns of change in phonology (umlaut, prosodic structure, etc.), morphology (the general loss of the dual, etc.), and syntax (changes in word order, etc.).

After the parts on individual subfamilies comes part XVI on fragmentary Indo-European languages. This is followed by parts XVII–XVIII on larger subgroupings (Indo-Iranian in part XVII and Balto-Slavic in part XVIII), part XIX on other possible contacts (chapter 119 on Italo-Celtic and chapter 121 on Greek-Anatolian), part XX on Proto-Indo-European itself, and part XXI on possible long-distance genetic relationships involving Indo-European. These chapters are generally solid, as far as I can tell (I am not competent to evaluate a number of these chapters fully).

Evaluating a work of this size and scope is exceptionally difficult. In his review of Robinson (1992), Cathey (1994:288) remarks that “criticizing such an ambitious, encyclopedic work is . . . like having the proverbial fish in a barrel: no room for defense and so many fish that one could keep shooting away for a very long time,” and that generalization certainly applies here as well. Having said that, the Germanic chapters are something of a mixed bag. The chapters by Stiles, Harðarson, Lühr, Rübekel, and Salmons are, in my view, excellent, packing a good deal of information into relatively short chapters, presenting the facts clearly and correctly, and providing useful references. Nedoma’s chapter, on the other hand, gives too much weight to the runic evidence (as one might expect, given Nedoma’s achievements in runology, for example, Nedoma 2004 and Düwel, Nedoma, & Oehrl 2020) at the expense of the other and somewhat later literary sources (for instance, Nedoma gives Old Saxon and Middle Low German three brief paragraphs; the Old Saxon *Heliand* is covered in one sentence, which is far too little space for such an important work). A more balanced distribution of the space available in the chapter would therefore have been useful. Seebold’s chapter could also use some revision, as it reads more like an attempt to dismiss substrate/superstrate proposals like those mentioned above than a more detailed description of the Germanic vocabulary, which unfortunately reduces its usefulness somewhat.

Some of the other chapters (especially those in part I) are probably too short, as they do not present the topic(s) in sufficient detail, which reduces their usefulness for beginners, and some of the more general chapters could have been combined (for example, in part I Bown’s chapter on linguistic relationships could easily have been combined with the chapter on “Methods in reconstruction” [pp. 15–20] by Konstantin G. Krasukhin, and possibly with Ranko Matasović’s chapter on “The sources for Indo-European reconstruction” [pp. 20–25]). Moreover, all of the chapters in part II could

have been scrapped (they are interesting, and will whet readers' appetites for the topic, but since they do not address Indo-European topics, it is a stretch to include them in a work on Indo-European, and they are moreover too short to be really valuable, as the six chapters cover a total of only 44 pages).³ There are also some surprising bibliographical omissions (to give two examples from part I, Krasukhin's chapter on reconstruction cites neither Fox 1995 nor Fox 2015 and Gaitzsch & Tischler's chapter on the Indo-European homeland does not cite the classics by Friedrich 1970 and Diebold 1985), and some topics that one might have expected to be covered are not (for example, there is no chapter on the potential relationship between Armenian and Greek, which is a surprise given how much attention has been paid to this question in the literature).⁴ A handful of chapters could have used a more careful edit by a native speaker of English.

Another question involves the intended audience. Different parts of the work are certainly suitable for different audiences. Absolute beginners should be able to make use of some of the chapters (colleagues teaching a course in the history of German, for instance, can safely point students towards most of the documentation chapters), and chapters like the historiographical ones in part III should be fairly widely accessible. Some chapters will of course most likely only be accessible to specialists (I am not sure, for instance, how much use a specialist in historical Germanic linguistics will be able to make of the more technical chapters on the non-Germanic subfamilies). And some chapters will require more theoretical sophistication than others (to name one, Mark Hale's chapter on "The syntax of Indo-Iranian" [pp. 1924–1942] is a rich and detailed work, but will be slow going for many readers). This range is to be expected for a work of this scope, however, and is therefore not to be seen as a major flaw.

In sum, this is a monumental work (the objections raised above do not contradict this statement). The individual chapters are generally very good (although some do not quite come up to this standard) and just about everyone interested in Indo-European, from specialists to beginning students, should be able to get value out of it. It will be of considerable use to the field, and the authors of the individual chapters, as well as the editors of the entire work, deserve readers' thanks.

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³ Klein justifies their inclusion in the Preface, writing that "the original title of this book, since changed, included the phrase 'An International Handbook of Language Comparison' [T]hese chapters will at the very least give the reader an overview of some of the most important literature on the language groups they cover" (p. vi). I take Klein's points, but still disagree about the inclusion of these chapters.

⁴ This issue is described to a certain extent in chapters 64 and 65 on the Armenian lexicon and Armenian dialectology, respectively; see also, for example, Clackson 1994 and Kim 2018 for more extensive discussion.

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