

Preface

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/sigl.3.preface>

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A Comparative Grammar of the Early Germanic Languages

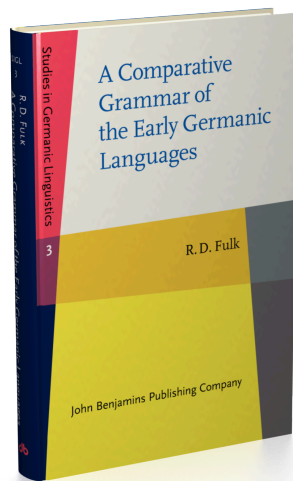
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[Studies in Germanic Linguistics, 3] 2018. xv, 420 pp.

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Preface

The present work was undertaken in response to the recognition that there exists no introduction of very recent date to the comparative study of the earliest Germanic languages and the reconstruction of Proto-Germanic suitable for student use (see §1). It is especially remarkable that there exists none in English of more recent date than 1939. Later works generally have less comprehensive aims. Moreover, even the available handbooks tend to offer limited bibliographical guidance, with the result that their prescriptions seem, at times, oracular, though in fact there are relatively few topics in early Germanic linguistics that are uncontroversial. Accordingly, the aim of this book is twofold: to provide students with an overview of early Germanic phonology and inflectional morphology and to furnish such bibliographical references as may be required in the pursuit of further research on any given topic. Naturally, given the enormous volume of published research in this area, bibliographical coverage is constrained; the aim was, rather, to provide students with sufficient references to locate the totality of the relevant literature by referral to more specialized studies. The older literature, in particular, is often left uncited in the assurance that it will be readily discoverable by reference to more recent work.

One generalization that may be gleaned from the following pages is that, as remarked above, there is hardly any topic in early Germanic linguistics about which scholarship is entirely unanimous. An effort has thus been made to refer the reader to alternative views, often without favoring a particular analysis. It would, however, be unhelpful to present every competing explanation as equally probable, and so usually it will be plain which the present writer finds most plausible. Nonetheless, it is not the aim of the present work to offer the last word on any given topic. Moreover, few new analyses are offered. It is the author's hope that this handbook will be used instead to enable future studies to probe competing hypotheses for their relative probability and to establish what is most credible, even if the preferences indicated herein prove to be unfounded.

Like most comparable works in Indo-European linguistics, the present manual confines itself to considerations of phonology and inflectional morphology, without any systematic attempt to explain derivational morphology. There are already available some excellent guides to derivational morphology in Germanic; for references to these, see §1.

The typescript was submitted to the editors at the end of July 2017, and the referees' reports were returned in the middle of March 2018. With few additions, the bibliography remains as it was nearly a year ago, since the author's present circumstances rendered it impracticable to attempt in any concerted fashion to bring it up to date. An exception is that references to Ringe 2006a have for the most part been replaced by references to the revised edition (Ringe 2017), though it was not feasible to do more with the revised edition than to update citations.

One referee for the press recommended that transliterations be supplied for Greek words. Students should be advised that it is not feasible to undertake the study of early Germanic phonology without prior acquaintance at least with the Greek alphabet, if not greater familiarity with the language. Those in need of guidance may consult any grammar of Ancient Greek (e.g. Sihler 1995) or, for the most basic information, any one of a number of Web pages devoted to the topic may be referred to, for example https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_orthography.

A book such as this could not have been compiled without the generous assistance of many individuals. Grateful acknowledgment must go first to Mary Richards, now emerita of Delaware, who probably does not remember the occasion, many years past, on which she planted the germ of an idea out of which this project sprouted. The author's sincerest thanks are also extended to the board of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation for providing the fellowship in 2013–14 that enabled work to begin on this project. It is to be hoped that the final result adequately, if belatedly, repays the debt. Anatoly Liberman, who lent vigorous support in the (otherwise anonymous) fellowship selection process, has over the years been a generous interlocutor and an inspiration. Colin J. Grant provided welcome assistance on some particular points (see §6.15 n. 8). Kari Ellen Gade, who has been the author's closest colleague and a sustaining influence over the years, lent much-appreciated encouragement and practical support.

Warmest thanks are due to David Fertig, who identified himself as one of the two referees who vetted the typescript for the publisher and who provided a meticulous, substantial, and singularly helpful set of recommendations, from which the book has benefited immensely. Any remaining deficiencies are, of course, attributable solely to the author. At John Benjamins, the editors of the *Studies in Germanic Linguistics* series, B. Richard Page, Mike Putnam, and Laura Catharine Smith, have provided invaluable help. The Acquisitions Editor at Benjamins, Anke de Looper, showed patience and latitude in the face of the challenges that a book such as this poses to the *Studies in Germanic Linguistics* series, and for that, sincere gratitude is due her.

Finally, it should be apparent on every page of this book that it owes its existence to the intellectual care devoted to comparative Germanic and Indo-European linguistics by countless teachers—most, though not all, long since reduced to words on a page—from whose instruction the author has benefited these many years. It is his great privilege to have known not a few of them.

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New York City
May 2018