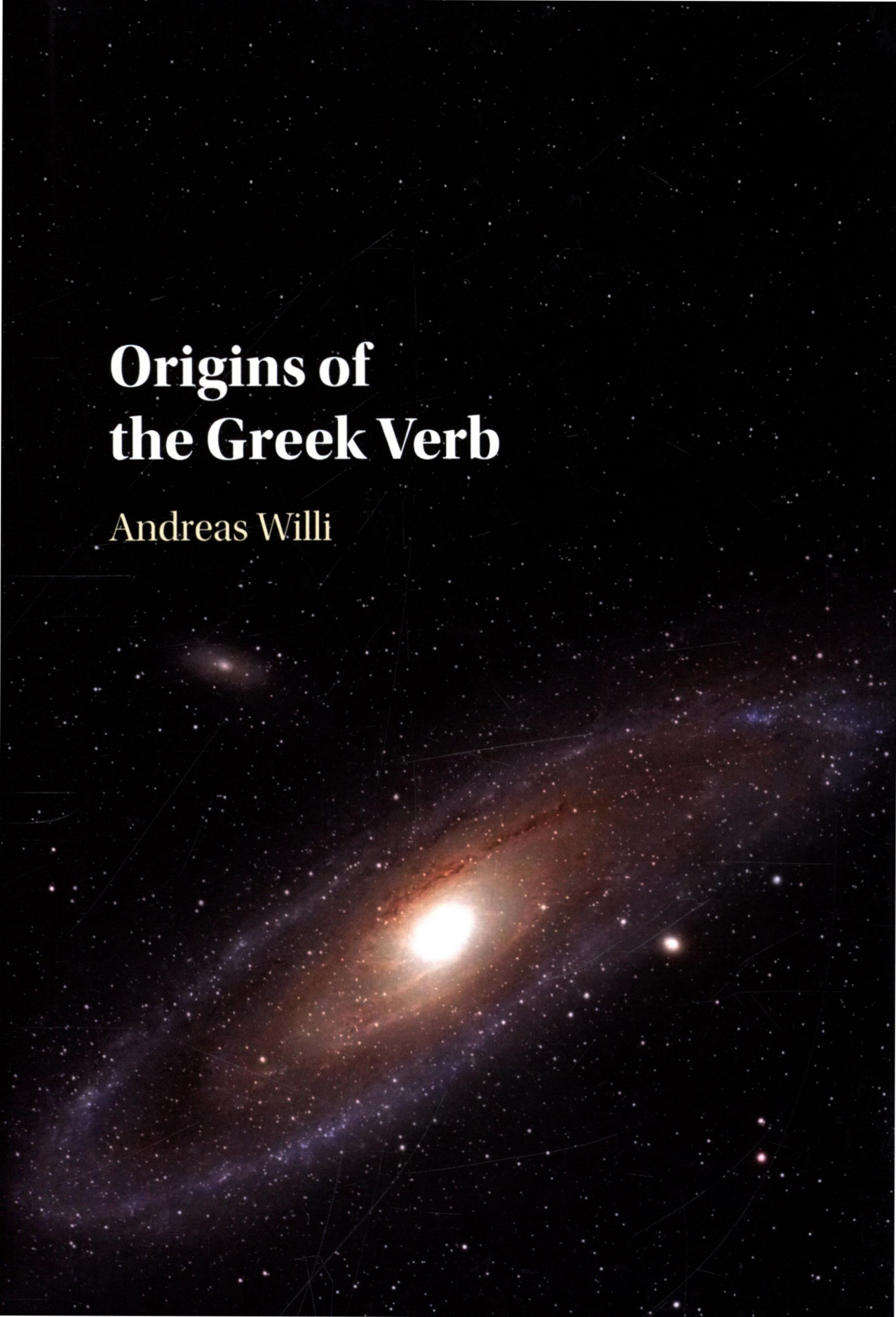


Origins of the Greek Verb

Andreas Willi



Situated at the crossroads of comparative philology, classics, and general historical linguistics, this study is the first ever attempt to outline in full the developments which led from the remotest recoverable stages of the Indo-European proto-language to the complex verbal system encountered in Homer and other early Greek texts. By combining the methods of comparative and internal reconstruction with a careful examination of large collections of primary data and insights gained from the study of language change and linguistic typology, Andreas Willi uncovers the deeper reasons behind many surface irregularities and offers a new understanding of how categories such as aspect, tense, and voice interact. Drawing upon evidence from all major branches of Indo-European, and providing exhaustive critical coverage of scholarly debate on the most controversial issues, this book will be an essential reference tool for anyone seeking orientation in this burgeoning but increasingly fragmented area of linguistic research.

Andreas Willi is Diebold Professor of Comparative Philology at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of Worcester College. He is author of *The Languages of Aristophanes: Aspects of Linguistic Variation in Classical Attic Greek* (2003) and *Sikelismos: Sprache, Literatur und Gesellschaft im griechischen Sizilien* (2008). He is editor of *The Language of Greek Comedy* (2002) and co-editor (with P. Probert) of *Laws and Rules in Indo-European* (2012).

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For Jonas, Mirjam, and Lea

Preface

Умный любит учиться, дурак учить.

The wise man loves to learn, the fool to teach.

(A. P. Čexov, Notebook I, p. 125)

The intention of this book is not to teach. The wish to write it arose when I was teaching on the topics it deals with, and when I realised how often I could not wholeheartedly agree with some of the things I had to say in order to present my students with the state of the art in the field. However, I am not naive (or conceited) enough to believe that I can do better than the great scholars whose opinions I found myself questioning. My first and foremost aim is therefore merely to set out where and why, in my view, their ideas call for discussion and improvement. If I then also offer a theory of how I think some improvement may be achieved, it is not because I believe to have found the holy grail, but because it would be too easy to criticise others without exposing one's own views to the same kind of critical scrutiny. So what follows wants to be read, not as a handbook, but as a contribution to an open debate.

Even so, the study is not without ambitions. Whoever observes recent developments in Indo-European comparative linguistics will notice that there are two ever-increasing divides. The first is a divide between national or local 'schools', which have all but stopped to engage with one another; the second, a divide between 'reconstructionists' whose aim is to uncover even the most recondite formal minutiae of the Proto-Indo-European *signifiant* without spending much thought on the *signifié*, traditional 'philologists' who could not care less for that but rather concentrate on the historical evolution of individual languages that just happen to be Indo-European, and 'typologists' for whom the big picture of grammatical design and language change counts so much that unwieldy details have to be generously ignored. To be sure, the boundaries between these groups are

never hard and fast; but neither are efforts common really to listen and respond to their adherents on an equal footing. Such an effort will be made here, partly because there is often food for thought even in ideas one feels the urge to reject, and partly because others may welcome an intentionally wide-ranging coverage of diverse opinions as much as I would have welcomed it, had it been available when I set out to write this book. Unfortunately, though, so much has been and is being published that even such an inclusive approach will inevitably overlook some contributions, and not necessarily the least valuable ones; and not every one of those that are not overlooked can be engaged with in equal depth. For such omissions and inadequacies I apologise: as best I could and space permitted, I have sought to voice assent or dissent openly, not by inclusion or exclusion.

If, then, the scope of the undertaking is avowedly Indo-Europeanist, why entitle it 'Origins of the Greek Verb'? That there is more emphasis on *origins* than on what is specifically *Greek* will quickly become clear to the reader. Although I have tried to be understandable *also* to those who have so far spent more time thinking about Greek than about Indo-European, I have had to assume some basic familiarity with many notions and concepts of historical grammar and comparative linguistics. But the choice of title is not of course meaningless, and it connects with what has just been said about my ambitions for this book. One further trend that is discernible in recent Indo-European studies is the shift of attention away from those branches of Indo-European which dominated the discussion in the earlier days of the discipline's history, notably Greek and Indo-Iranian. Though taking a long while to assert itself, this shift was essentially triggered by the discovery of Hittite and, to a lesser extent, Tocharian some one hundred years ago; but although Hittite and Tocharian still play a major role in current reassessments of fundamental parts of Indo-European grammar, their new status as 'mainstream' branches has also promoted a greater equilibrium in the study of other members of the family. Given the relative neglect from which *all* the 'non-core' branches had suffered under the previous regime, such a corrective was overdue. And yet, the pendulum may have swung too much to the other side – and perhaps especially where Greek is concerned. Thanks to its combination of a uniquely rich morphosyntactic system with an early, long, and varied attested history, no one will ever question the relevance of Greek for Indo-European linguistics. But precisely because Greek offers so much material for linguistic enquiry,

its study has somewhat detached itself from research with a comparative focus. As a result, there seems to be even less interaction than in other domains of Indo-European between ‘reconstructionists’ and ‘philologists’ in the narrow sense, to the detriment of both sides. This gap too can hopefully be narrowed, if not bridged, by the present attempt to re-establish Greek at the heart of the agenda, and to demonstrate afresh how much of crucial importance is missed if the understandable fascination for hitherto less explored subjects makes Indo-Europeanists forget what one of their most informative ‘old’ sources has to tell. In this spirit, the Greek verbal system is here used as an anchor point and primary *explanandum*, from which we set out and to which we return. But (re)assigning Greek the leading solo part it has not had for a while must not mean that other soloists will not be heard as well. Ultimately, it is only in harmony with these, and the orchestra as a whole, that Greek will be allowed to perform.

Orchestral, too, has been the support I have had in various forms while writing this book. My deepest gratitude I owe to the Leverhulme Trust, for awarding me a Major Research Fellowship that freed me from virtually all teaching and administrative duties during three blissful years of uninterrupted research: I know of no other funding body that fosters research in the humanities in an equally generous, unintrusive, and therefore fruitful manner. During this period of leave, Peter Barber covered for my absence, and did this so well that my return could have been a real loss for the students had he not continued to be with us in another role. Meanwhile, little regret will have been felt by my other philological colleagues at Oxford, Philomen Probert and Wolfgang de Melo, when I finally took over again some of the additional burdens they had to shoulder for far too long.

For invaluable advice I am grateful to Alessandro Vatri and John Penney: to the former because he made up for my ignorance in statistical matters by testing all the relevant data for their significance; to the latter not only because his unsurpassably clear lectures and lecture handouts first introduced me to the Indo-European verb many years ago, but because he also kindly read and gave much-needed feedback on several sections in which Tocharian issues are dealt with – as he put it, “what an intractable language Tocharian is!” Less directly, but no less profoundly, my thinking on all that is presented below is also indebted to Anna Morpurgo Davies, whose death overshadowed the last year of work on it. Even if the outcome is unlike anything she would have promoted, she never failed to encourage

everyone to 'think for themselves', no matter what the great and good had said. Without that encouragement, I would hardly have dared even to start.

On several occasions, I had the opportunity to air my ideas by attending conferences or giving lectures at home and abroad. So many discussions and casual conversations at such events have shaped and refined them that I would be sure to forget someone if I began to enumerate all those who (often unwittingly) helped me along. I must however single out David Langslow, Brent Vine, and Rudolf Wachter who put enough trust in my plans to write in support of my application to the Leverhulme Trust; John Lowe who – together with many other colleagues and students – eventually sat through an entire seminar series devoted to these 'Origins' and who, during that time, more than once pinpointed areas where what I thought was final was clearly not; the reviewers for Cambridge University Press who suggested further improvements at an even later stage; and finally, Michael Sharp, Marianna Prizio, Lisa Sinclair, and Kate Moreau without whose guidance the manuscript could never have turned into the book I had always hoped it would one day become.

Never before have I spent so many sleepless nights over a research project as this time, not rarely did I feel overwhelmed by the self-imposed task. If such periods did not last forever, it is because my family knew how to cure them: Helen by laughingly asking if I had discovered yet another etymology, Jonas, Mirjam, and Lea by reminding me that almost every aspect of life is more important than the life of aspect.

Abbreviations and Conventions

Authors and Texts

Greek authors and texts are abbreviated according to the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd edn., Oxford 1996).

<i>AV</i>	<i>Atharva Veda</i> (Ved.)
<i>DB</i>	Dareios inscription, Bisutūn (OPers.)
<i>RV</i>	<i>Rig Veda</i> (<i>Ṛg Veda</i>) (Ved.)
<i>V</i>	<i>Vidēvdād</i> (Av.)
<i>Y.</i>	<i>Yasna</i> (Av.)
<i>Yt</i>	<i>Yašt</i> (Av.)

Dialects and Languages

Aeol.	Aeolic (Greek)
Alb.	Albanian
Anat.	Anatolian
Arc.	Arcadian (Greek)
Arm.	Armenian
Av.	Avestan
Boeot.	Boeotian (Greek)
CLuw.	Cuneiform Luwian
CSl.	Church Slavonic
Cypr.	Cyprian (Greek)
Dor.	Doric (Greek)
Engl.	English
Finn.	Finnish
Fr.	French
Gaul.	Gaulish
Germ.	German
Goth.	Gothic

Gr.	Greek
Hitt.	Hittite
HLuw.	Hieroglyphic Luwian
Hom.	Homeric (Greek)
IE	Indo-European
It.	Italian
Lac.	Laconian (Greek)
Lat.	Latin
Lesb.	Lesbian (Greek)
Lith.	Lithuanian
Luw.	Luwian
MidPers.	Middle Persian
Mod. Gr.	Modern Greek
MW	Middle Welsh
Myc.	Mycenaean (Greek)
OAv.	Old Avestan
OCS	Old Church Slavonic
OE	Old English
OHG	Old High German
OHitt.	Old Hittite
OIr.	Old Irish
OLat.	Old Latin
OLith.	Old Lithuanian
ON	Old Norse
OPers.	Old Persian
OPhyrg.	Old Phrygian
OPr.	Old Prussian
PGmc	Proto-Germanic
PGr.	Proto-Greek
PIE	Proto-Indo-European
PIIr.	Proto-Indo-Iranian
Russ.	Russian
Skt.	Sanskrit
Span.	Spanish
Toch.	Tocharian
Umbr.	Umbrian
Ved.	Vedic (Sanskrit)
YAv.	Young Avestan

Grammatical Notation and Terminology

In reconstructed forms, *C* stands for any consonant, *V* for any vowel, *H* for any laryngeal, *I* for any semivowel (*i*, *u*), *R* for any resonant (*l*, *m*, *n*, *r*), *L* for any liquid (*l*, *r*), and *N* for any nasal (*m*, *n*). *T* is the cover symbol for any stop, *D* for any voiced stop, and *K* for any voiceless tectal stop.

In structural formulae, *-CeC-* and *-CoC-* represent *e*-graded and *o*-graded roots, *-CC-* zero-graded roots, and *-CēC-* roots with lengthened *ē*-grade (even when more than one consonant precedes/follows the syllable nucleus).

Asterisks (*) indicate reconstructed forms, obeli (†) forms that are set up for argumentative purposes, but whose (pre)historical reality is denied.

A	logical subject in a transitive clause
abl.	ablative
abs.	absolutive
acc.	accusative
act.	active
aor.	aorist
coll.	collective
dat.	dative
dir.	directional
du.	dual
erg.	ergative
fem.	feminine
fut.	future
gen.	genitive
impf.	imperfect
ind.	indicative
inj.	injunctive
instr.	instrumental
intr.	intransitive
ipfv.	imperfective
ipv.	imperative
loc.	locative
masc.	masculine
med.	middle (medium)
nom.	nominative
NP	noun phrase
ntr.	neuter

O	logical direct object in a transitive clause
obl.	oblique
opt.	optative
pass.	passive
perf.	perfect
pfv.	perfective
pl.	plural
plupf.	pluperfect
pres.	present
pret.	preterite
pron.	pronoun
ptcpl.	participle
rel.	relative
S	subject in an intransitive clause
sg.	singular
subj.	subjunctive
tr.	transitive
VP	verb phrase

Journals

<i>AGI</i>	<i>Archivio Glottologico Italiano</i>
<i>BSL</i>	<i>Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
<i>HS</i>	<i>Historische Sprachforschung</i>
<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>IF</i>	<i>Indogermanische Forschungen</i>
<i>IJ</i>	<i>Indo-Iranian Journal</i>
<i>IJDLLR</i>	<i>International Journal of Diachronic Linguistics and Linguistic Reconstruction</i>
<i>IL</i>	<i>Incontri Linguistici</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JIES</i>	<i>Journal of Indo-European Studies</i>
<i>MSL</i>	<i>Mémoires de la Société de Linguistique de Paris</i>
<i>MSS</i>	<i>Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft</i>
<i>NAWG</i>	<i>Nachrichten von der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Klasse</i>
<i>NGWG</i>	<i>Nachrichten von der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Klasse</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>Norsk Tidsskrift for Sprogvidenskap</i>