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THE ANCIENT LANGUAGES OF ASIA AND THE AMERICAS

This book, derived from the acclaimed *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World's Ancient Languages*, describes the ancient languages of Asia and the Americas, for the convenience of students and specialists working in that area. Each chapter of the work focuses on an individual language or, in some instances, a set of closely related varieties of a language. Providing a full descriptive presentation, each of these chapters examines the writing system(s), phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon of that language, and places the language within its proper linguistic and historical context. The volume brings together an international array of scholars, each a leading specialist in ancient language study. While designed primarily for scholars and students of linguistics, this work will prove invaluable to all whose studies take them into the realm of ancient language.

Roger D. Woodard is the Andrew Van Vranken Raymond Professor of the Classics at the University of Buffalo. His chief research interests lie generally within the areas of Greek and Roman myth and religion, Indo-European culture and linguistics, the origin and development of writing among the Greeks, and the interaction between Greece and the ancient Near East. His other books include *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology* (2007), *Indo-European Sacred Space* (2006), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World's Ancient Languages* (2004), *Ovid's Fasti* (with A. J. Boyle, 2000), *Greek Writing from Knossos to Homer: A Linguistic Interpretation of the Origins of the Greek Alphabet* (1997), and *On Interpreting Morphological Change* (1990). He has also published numerous articles and served as President of the Society for the Study of Greek and Latin Language and Linguistics from 1992 to 2001.

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ROGER D. WOODARD

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521684941

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Previously published in 2004 as chapters 26–30 and 41–4 of Woodard, Roger D.,
The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World's Ancient Languages
© Cambridge University Press 2004

First published 2008

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-68494-1 paperback

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Notes on numbering and cross-referencing

This volume is one of five paperbacks derived from *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World's Ancient Languages* (*WAL*), with the content now organized by region for the convenience of students and specialists wishing to focus on a given area of the ancient world.

Cross-references to material within this volume use its own internal chapter numbers. Any cross-references to other chapters of the original *WAL* refer to the chapter numbers in that work, and are prefixed by *WAL*. The contents list of *WAL* is reproduced at the back of this volume, as are the contents of the respective volumes of the paperback series derived from it.

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Abbreviations

Any abbreviation that deviates from the form given below is noted within the text of the individual chapter or within a chapter-specific list.

Linguistic terms

abl.	ablative
abs.	absolutive
acc.	accusative
act.	active
adj.	adjective
adv.	adverb (adverbial)
all.	allative
anim.	animate
aor.	aorist
art.	article
asp.	aspirated
aux.	auxiliary (verb)
caus.	causative
cl.	clause
coll.	collective
com.	common
comp.	comparative
comt.	comitative
conj.	conjunction
conjv.	conjunctive
conn.	connective
cons.	consonant
constr.	construct (state)
cont.	continuant
cop.	copula
dat.	dative
def. art.	definite article
dem.	demonstrative
det.	determinate
detv.	determinative
dial.	dialect
dir.	directive
dir. obj.	direct object
disj.	disjunctive
du.	dual
dur.	durative
emph.-pcl.	emphatic particle
encl.	enclitic
eq.	equative
erg.	ergative
ext.	extended
fem.	feminine
final-pcl.	final-particle
fut.	future
gdve.	gerundive
gen.	genitive
ger.	gerund
impf.	imperfect
impftv.	imperfective
impv.	imperative
inan.	inanimate
inc.	inclusive
indef. art.	indefinite article
indet.	indeterminate
indic.	indicative
inf.	infinitive
instr.	instrumental
interr.	interrogative
intr.	intransitive
iter.	iterative
juss.	jussive
loc.	locative
mediopass.	mediopassive
mid.	middle

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N.	noun
neg.	negative
neut.	neuter
nom.	nominative
NP	noun phrase
num.	number
obj.	object
obl.	oblique
opt.	optative
part.	participle
pass.	passive
pcl.	particle
per.	person
perf.	perfect
perfv.	perfective
perfvz.	perfectivizer
pert.	pertinentive
pl.	plural
pluperf.	pluperfect
poss. suff.	possessive suffix
postp.	postposition
PP	prepositional phrase
prec.	precative
preC.	preconsonantal
pref.	prefix
prep.	preposition
pres.	present
pret.	preterite
preV.	prevocalic
pro.	pronoun
prosp.	prospective
quot.	quotative particle
refl.	reflexive
rel. pro.	relative (pronoun)
rel./connec.	relative/connective
sg.	singular
soc.	sociative case
SOV	Subject–Object–Verb (word order)
spec.	specifier
splv.	superlative
stat.	stative
subj.	subject
subjunc.	subjunctive
subord.	subordinate/subordinator/subordination marker
subord.-pcl.	subordinating particle
suff.	suffix
s.v.	*sub voce*
top.	topicalizer
tr.	transitive
V.	verb
var.	variant
vent.	ventive
voc.	vocative
vow.	vowel
VP	verbal phrase

Languages

Akk.	Akkadian
Ar.	Arabic
Ass.	Assyrian
Av.	Avestan
Bab.	Babylonian
Cis. Gaul.	Cisalpine Gaulish
Eg.	Egyptian (Old, Late, Earlier)
Eng.	English
Etr.	Etruscan
Gk.	Greek
Gmc.	Germanic
Go.	Gothic
Hisp.-Celt.	Hispano-Celtic
Hitt.	Hittite
IE	Indo-European
Lat.	Latin
Lep.	Lepontic
Luv.	Luvian
Lyc.	Lycian
MA	Middle Assyrian
MB	Middle Babylonian
NA	Neo-Assyrian
NB	Neo-Babylonian
OA	Old Assyrian
O. Akk.	Old Akkadian
O. Av.	Old Avestan
OB	Old Babylonian
OHG	Old High German
OP	Old Persian
PG	Proto-Greek
PGmc.	Proto-Germanic
PIE	Proto-Indo-European
PIIr.	Proto-Indo-Iranian
PIr.	Proto-Iranian
PMS	Proto-Mije-Sokean
PS	Proto-Semitic
PSo.	Proto-Sokean
SB	Standard Babylonian

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Skt.	Sanskrit
Sum.	Sumerian
Y. Av.	Young Avestan

Other

abbr.	abbreviation
dict.	dictionary
intro.	introduction
lit.	literally
NA	not applicable
NS	new series
trad.	traditional
translit.	transliteration

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Preface

Preliminary remarks

What makes a language ancient? The term conjures up images, often romantic, of archeologists feverishly copying hieroglyphs by torchlight in a freshly discovered burial chamber; of philologists dangling over a precipice in some remote corner of the earth, taking impressions of an inscription carved in a cliff-face; of a solitary scholar working far into the night, puzzling out some ancient secret, long forgotten by humankind, from a brittle-leafed manuscript or patina-encrusted tablet. The allure is undeniable, and the literary and film worlds have made full use of it.

An ancient language is indeed a thing of wonder – but so is every other language, all remarkable systems of conveying thoughts and ideas across time and space. And ancient languages, as far back as the very earliest attested, operate just like those to which the linguist has more immediate access, all with the same familiar elements – phonological, morphological, syntactic – and no perceptible vestiges of Neanderthal oddities. If there was a time when human language was characterized by features and strategies fundamentally unlike those we presently know, it was a time prior to the development of any attested or reconstructed language of antiquity. Perhaps, then, what makes an ancient language different is our awareness that it has outlived those for whom it was an intimate element of the psyche, not so unlike those rays of light now reaching our eyes that were emitted by their long-extinguished source when dinosaurs still roamed across the earth (or earlier) – both phantasms of energy flying to our senses from distant sources, long gone out.

That being said, and rightly enough, we must return to the question of what counts as an ancient language. As *ancient* the editor chose the upward delimitation of the fifth century AD. This *terminus ante quem* is one which is admittedly "traditional"; the fifth is the century of the fall of the western Roman Empire (AD 476), a benchmark which has been commonly (though certainly not unanimously) identified as marking the end of the historical period of *antiquity*. Any such chronological demarcation is of necessity arbitrary – far too arbitrary – as linguists accustomed to making such diachronic distinctions as *Old English*, *Middle English*, *Modern English* or *Old Hittite*, *Middle Hittite*, *Neo-Hittite* are keenly aware. Linguistic divisions of this sort are commonly based upon significant political events and clearly perceptible cultural shifts rather than upon language phenomena (though they are surely not without linguistic import as every historical linguist knows). The choice of the boundary in the present concern – the ancient-language boundary – is, likewise (as has already been confessed), not mandated by linguistic features and characteristics of the languages concerned.

However, this arbitrary choice, establishing a *terminus ante quem* of the fifth century, is somewhat buttressed by quite pragmatic linguistic considerations (themselves consequent

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to the whim of historical accident), namely the co-occurrence of a watershed in language documentation. Several early languages first make a significant appearance in the historical record in the fourth/fifth century: thus, Gothic (fourth century; see *WAL* Ch. 36), Ge'ez (fourth/fifth century; see *WAL* Ch. 14, §1.3.1), Classical Armenian (fifth century; see *WAL* Ch. 38), Early Old Georgian (fifth century; see *WAL* Ch. 40). What newly comes into clear light in the sixth century is a bit more meager – Tocharian and perhaps the very earliest Old Kannada and Old Telegu from the end of the century. Moreover, the dating of these languages to the sixth century cannot be made precisely (not to suggest this is an especially unusual state of affairs) and it is equally possible that the earliest attestation of all three should be dated to the seventh century. Beginning with the seventh century the pace of language attestation begins to accelerate, with languages documented such as Old English, Old Khmer, and Classical Arabic (though a few earlier inscriptions preserving a "transitional" form of Arabic are known; see *WAL* Ch. 16, §1.1.1). The ensuing centuries bring an avalanche of medieval European languages and their Asian contemporaries into view. Aside from the matter of a culturally dependent analytic scheme of historical periodization, there are thus considerations of language history that motivate the upper boundary of the fifth century.

On the other hand, identifying a *terminus post quem* for the inclusion of a language in the present volume was a completely straightforward and noncontroversial procedure. The low boundary is determined by the appearance of writing in human society, a graphic means for recording human speech. A system of writing appears to have been first developed by the Sumerians of southern Mesopotamia in the late fourth millennium BC (see *WAL* Ch. 2, §§1.2; 2). Not much later (beginning in about 3100 BC), a people of ancient Iran began to record their still undeciphered language of Proto-Elamite on clay tablets (see *WAL* Ch. 3, §2.1). From roughly the same period, the Egyptian hieroglyphic writing system emerges in the historical record (see *WAL* Ch. 7, §2). Hence, Sumerian and Egyptian are the earliest attested, understood languages and, *ipso facto*, the earliest languages treated in this volume.

It is conjectured that humans have been speaking and understanding language for at least 100,000 years. If in the great gulf of time which separates the advent of language and the appearance of Sumerian, Proto-Elamite, and Egyptian societies, there were any people giving written expression to their spoken language, all evidence of such records and the language or languages they record has fallen victim to the decay of time. Or the evidence has at least eluded the archeologists.

Format and conventions

Each chapter, with only the occasional exception, adheres to a common format. The chapter begins with an overview of the history (including prehistory) of the language, at least up to the latest stage of the language treated in the chapter, and of those peoples who spoke the language (§1, HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS). Then follows a discussion of the development and use of the script(s) in which the language is recorded (§2, WRITING SYSTEMS); note that the complex Mesopotamian cuneiform script, which is utilized for several languages of the ancient Near East – Sumerian (*WAL* Ch. 2), Elamite (*WAL* Ch. 3), Hurrian (*WAL* Ch. 4), Urartian (*WAL* Ch. 5), Akkadian and Eblaite (*WAL* Ch. 8), Hittite (*WAL* Ch. 18), Luvian (*WAL* Ch. 19) – and which provides the inspiration and graphic raw materials for others – Ugaritic (*WAL* Ch. 9) and Old Persian (Ch. 5) – is treated in most detail in *WAL* Chapter 8, §2. The next section presents a discussion of phonological elements of the language (§3, PHONOLOGY), identifying consonant and vowel phonemes, and treating matters such as allophonic and morphophonemic variation, syllable structure and phonotaxis, segmental length, accent (pitch and stress), and synchronic and diachronic

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phonological processes. Following next is discussion of morphological phenomena (§4, MORPHOLOGY), focusing on topics such as word structure, nominal and pronominal categories and systems, the categories and systems of finite verbs and other verbal elements (for explanation of the system of classifying Semitic verb stems – G stem, etc. – see *WAL* Ch. 6, §3.3.5.2), compounds, diachronic morphology, and the system of numerals. Treatment of syntactic matters then follows (§5, SYNTAX), presenting discussion of word order and coordinate and subordinate clause structure, and phenomena such as agreement, cliticism and various other syntactic processes, both synchronic and diachronic. The description of the grammar closes with a consideration of the lexical component (§6, LEXICON); and the chapter comes to an end with a list of references cited in the chapter and of other pertinent works (BIBLIOGRAPHY).

To a great extent, the linguistic presentations in the ensuing chapters have remained faithful to the grammatical conventions of the various language disciplines. From discipline to discipline, the most obvious variation lies in the methods of transcribing sounds. Thus, for example, the symbols *ś*, *ṣ*, and *ṭ* in the traditional orthography of Indic language scholarship represent, respectively, a voiceless palatal (palato-alveolar) fricative, a voiceless retroflex fricative, and a voiceless retroflex stop. In Semitic studies, however, the same symbols are used to denote very different phonetic realities: *ś* represents a voiceless lateral fricative while *ṣ* and *ṭ* transcribe two of the so-called emphatic consonants – the latter a voiceless stop produced with a secondary articulation (velarization, pharyngealization, or glottalization), the former either a voiceless fricative or affricate, also with a secondary articulation. Such conventional symbols are employed herein, but for any given language, the reader can readily determine phonetic values of these symbols by consulting the discussion of consonant and vowel sounds in the relevant phonology section.

Broad phonetic transcription is accomplished by means of a slightly modified form of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Most notably, the IPA symbols for the palato-alveolar fricatives and affricates, voiceless [ʃ] and [tʃ] and voiced [ʒ] and [dʒ], have been replaced by the more familiar [š], [č], [ž], and [ǰ] respectively. Similarly, [y] is used for the palatal glide rather than [j]. Long vowels are marked by either a macron or a colon.

In the phonology sections, phonemic transcription, in keeping with standard phonological practice, is placed within slashes (e.g., /p/) and phonetic transcription within square brackets (e.g., [p]; note that square brackets are also used to fill out the meaning of a gloss and are employed as an element of the transcription and transliteration conventions for certain languages, such as Elamite [*WAL* Ch. 3] and Pahlavi [Ch. 7]). The general treatment adopted in phonological discussions has been to present transcriptions as phonetic rather than phonemic, except in those instances in which explicit reference is made to the phonemic level. Outside of the phonological sections, transcriptions are usually presented using the conventional orthography of the pertinent language discipline. When potential for confusion would seem to exist, transcriptions are enclosed within angled brackets (e.g., <p>) to make clear to the reader that what is being specified is the *spelling* of a word and not its *pronunciation*.

Further acknowledgments

The enthusiastic reception of the first edition of this work – and the broad interest in the ancient languages of humankind that it demonstrates – has been and remains immensely gratifying to both editor and contributors. The editor would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of all the contributors, to express his deepest appreciation to all who have had a hand in the success of the first edition. We wish too to acknowledge our debt of gratitude

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to Cambridge University Press and to Dr. Kate Brett for continued support of this project and for making possible the publication of this new multivolume edition and the increased accessibility to the work that it will inevitably provide. Thanks also go to the many kind readers who have provided positive and helpful feedback since the publication of the first edition, and to the editors of *CHOICE* for bestowing upon the work the designation of Outstanding Academic Title of 2006.

Roger D. Woodard
Vernal Equinox 2007

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Preface to the first edition

In the following pages, the reader will discover what is, in effect, a linguistic description of all known ancient languages. Never before in the history of language study has such a collection appeared within the covers of a single work. This volume brings to student and to scholar convenient, systematic presentations of grammars which, in the best of cases, were heretofore accessible only by consulting multiple sources, and which in all too many instances could only be retrieved from scattered, out-of-the-way, disparate treatments. For some languages, the only existing comprehensive grammatical description is to be found herein.

This work has come to fruition through the efforts and encouragement of many, to all of whom the editor wishes to express his heartfelt gratitude. To attempt to list all – colleagues, students, friends – would, however, certainly result in the unintentional and unhappy neglect of some, and so only a much more modest attempt at acknowledgments will be made. Among those to whom special thanks are due are first and foremost the contributors to this volume, scholars who have devoted their lives to the study of the languages of ancient humanity, without whose expertise and dedication this work would still be only a *desideratum*. Very special thanks also go to Dr. Kate Brett of Cambridge University Press for her professionalism, her wise and expert guidance, and her unending patience, also to her predecessor, Judith Ayling, for permitting me to persuade her of the project's importance. I cannot neglect mentioning my former colleague, Professor Bernard Comrie, now of the Max Planck Institute, for his unflagging friendship and support. Kudos to those who masterfully translated the chapters that were written in languages other than English: Karine Megardoomian for Phrygian, Dr. Margaret Whatmough for Etruscan, Professor John Huehnergard for Ancient South Arabian. Last of all, but not least of all, I wish to thank Katherine and Paul – my inspiration, my joy.

Roger D. Woodard
Christmas Eve 2002

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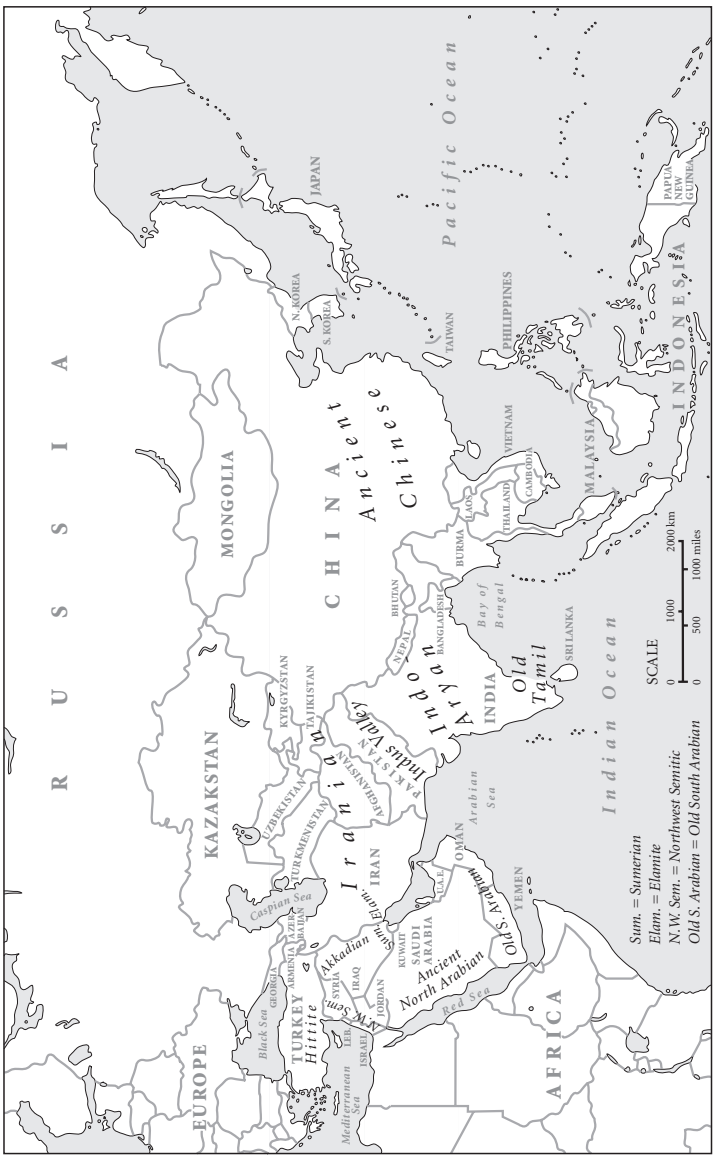

Map 1. The distribution of attested ancient languages within Asia

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