

## LINGUISTICS

PROBERT (P.) **Early Greek Relative Clauses.**  
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp.  
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Greek relative clauses have received quite some attention in recent years: among others, doctoral theses have been composed on relative clauses in Classical Greek (E. Perna, *La frase relativa in greco antico*, [add place] 2013), post-Classical Greek (E. Kriki, *Μορφολογικοί νεωτερισμοί στη γλώσσα των μη φιλολογικών παπύρων: οι αναφορικές δομές*, [add place] 2013) and modern Greek (A. Chatziou, *A Lexical Functional Grammar Approach to Modern Greek Relative Clauses*, [add place] 2010). So far, an up-to-date analysis of Archaic Greek was still lacking. With this new book, Probert presents us with such a study.

Any analysis of Archaic Greek needs to include the Homeric epics, but Probert does not limit herself to a synchronic analysis of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; she also takes into account other Archaic texts such as alphabetic inscriptions (to 400 BC), early literary prose, iambic poetry (to 550 BC), monodic and choral lyric (to 550 BC) and elegiac poetry (to 550 BC). Moreover, the book is not purely synchronically oriented; Probert discusses the relevance of her findings for the reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European subordination, for which relative clauses provide key evidence.

The book contains 15 chapters, which are organized as follows. After the first, introductory chapter, the second chapter introduces the debate about languages of a few thousand years ago, with the third chapter focusing on the debate about relative clause syntax in the prehistory of the Indo-European language family. The following four chapters are largely theoretical in nature: chapter 4 attempts to define the notion ‘relative clause’, looking into the threefold classification of relative clauses as ‘restrictive’, ‘non-restrictive’ and ‘inherently maximalizing’; chapter 5 discusses a number of key theoretical concepts, such as definiteness, maximality and indefiniteness, focusing in particular on features and constructions signalling indefiniteness; chapter 6 gives an overview of different kinds of relative clauses in ancient Greek, going into the different types of relative pronouns and the different types of relative clause constructions (including ‘postnominal’, ‘free’, ‘noun-incorporated’, ‘semi-

free’ and ‘relative-correlative’); chapter 7 addresses matters of case, in particular *attractio inversa* and *attractio relativi*, both of which are connected to maximalizing semantics. Chapters 8–13 then proceed with the synchronic analysis of relative clauses in the different text types under analysis. Chapter 8 looks into non-epic genres, chapters 9–12 focus on Homer and chapter 13 is dedicated to Cretan inscriptions up to 400 BC. What emerges from these chapters is that the same basic relative clause system can be found, with remarkable consistency, across all the text types which Probert considers. Probert shows that the different relative clause constructions that occur are used under specific semantic, syntactic and pragmatic conditions, whereby she makes a major distinction between ‘inherently maximalizing’ relative clauses and ‘postnominal’ relative clauses. The 14th chapter is again diachronically oriented; Probert argues against four syntactic relics – (1) anaphoric uses of ὅς, ἧ, ὅ, (2) clause-final placement of postnominal relative clauses, (3) verbless relative clauses and (4) apodotic δέ – and in favour of one → epic τε. The 15th chapter wraps up the synchronic and diachronic analysis and makes some further suggestions about relative clauses in Proto-Indo-European.

There is much to recommend about this book: Probert’s in-depth engagement with various text types and languages; her thorough-going knowledge of modern linguistic literature, typological literature in particular; her novel semantic analysis of morpho-syntactic phenomena such as *attractio inversa*, noun-incorporated relative clauses, indefinite constructions, etc.; the attractive illustrations to semantic phenomena; her detailed philological discussion of examples; and her profound knowledge of long-forgotten 19th-century studies on relative clauses.

As is inevitable for any work of this size and nature, some points of criticism can be made. For example, including S.J. Bakker’s study of the noun phrase in ancient Greek (*The Noun Phrase in Ancient Greek*, Leiden 2009) would have been enlightening for the discussion of (in)definiteness in chapter 5, as well as for the discussion on the extraposition of heavy constituents in chapter 14. Given the importance attached in the book to the little-known notion of the ‘inherently maximalizing relative clause’, it would have been worth clarifying the concept a bit more in chapter 4. What is meant becomes clear throughout the book, but for the reader with little background on the subject the definition in the glossary will provide

little to no help ('a relative clause which, by virtue of its construction, has a meaning and distribution similar (and arguably identical) to that of a definite clause'). The structure of the book (with 15 relatively short chapters in an 'egg-shaped' structure) will be of value to the reader interested in one or more specific topics, but it does not entirely benefit the coherence of Probert's account. Overall, these are minor points of criticism; Probert's book constitutes a very important step forward towards a more comprehensive understanding of relative clauses in all stages of Greek.

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