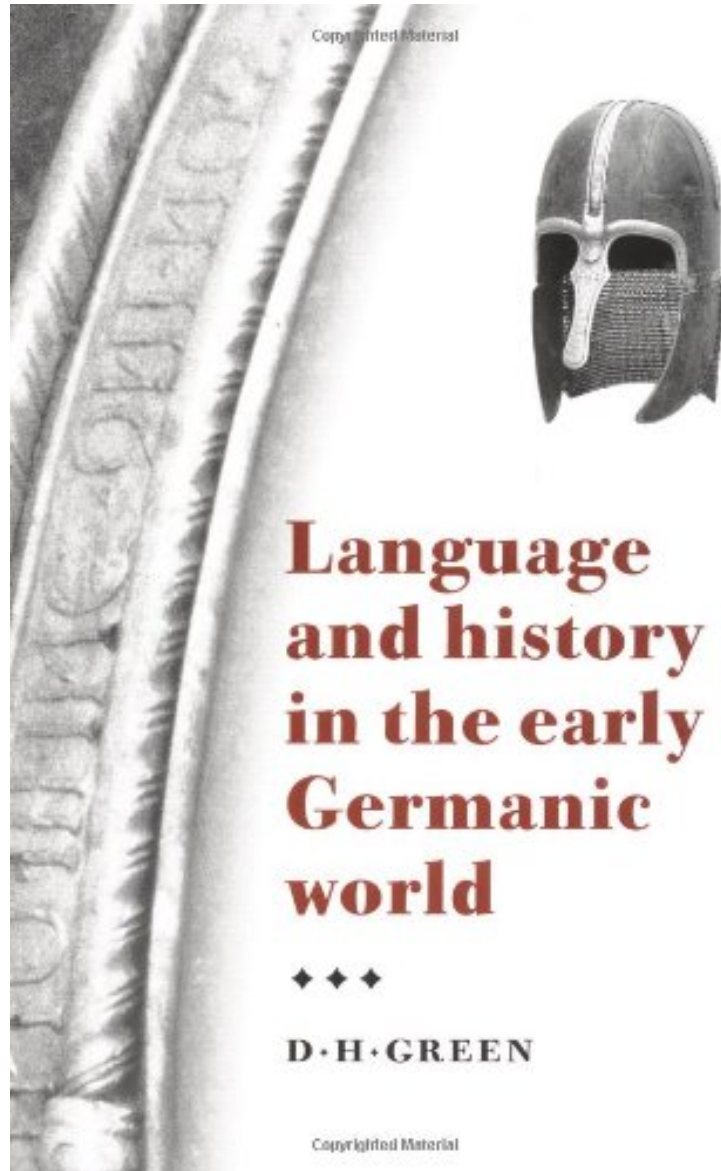


(Download free pdf) Language and History in the Early Germanic World

Language and History in the Early Germanic World

D. H. Green

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#602545 in Books Cambridge University Press 2000-08-28 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.98 x 1.02 x 5.981, 1.53 #File Name: 0521794234464 pages | File size: 43.Mb

D. H. Green : Language and History in the Early Germanic World before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Language and History in the Early Germanic World:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Delightful for a Select Audience By Karen M. Carlson The general content of this book has been ably described by some other reviewers, so this is more of an addendum than a complete review. This is not a book that is likely to appeal to the general public, but you certainly don't need professional

credentials in either Germanic languages or early medieval history to understand and enjoy it. I have some knowledge of Old English and Old High German, which was useful. Some Latin (mine is limited to what has worked its way into modern English) would have been helpful, but I don't think I missed much on that account. I found it fascinating how the history of languages gives clues as to cultural developments, and I got a better feel for some aspects of our Germanic culture from this book. (If you speak English, you are an heir to Germanic culture.) Green does an excellent job of showing differences in world-view between the pre-Christian Germanic culture on the one hand, and both classical and Christian cultures on the other. I also found the etymologies interesting and sometimes revealing in social/psychological terms. Two groups of readers (and I fit in both groups) will likely enjoy this book: (1) Those interested in pre-Christian Germanic culture and religion. Green demonstrates through the use of language how Germanic heathenry was not somehow just like Christianity with the name of the deity changed and the ten commandments slightly rearranged. The ancient Germanic concepts of "ethics" or "virtue" were quite different from our modern conceptions; their view of the nature of deity was different from that of the Abrahamic religions in much more than the multiplicity of gods. (2) Those interested in the history of our own language and its close relatives (German and the Scandinavian languages, for example). Around 300 Old English and 400 Old High German words (judging from the index of words at the back of the book) are discussed. It was eye-opening, for example, to see how many words we think of as quite basic (e.g., kitchen) were imported from Latin, centuries before the Norman conquest.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. amazing book
By Shane I got it for my class in college, history of the english language, and this book is amazing. a tough read because it contains SOOOO MUCH information but a great read and super informative
11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Detailed, Dense, but Interesting - if You're Willing to Work at it
By Curt Emanuel
In this book DH Green uses the changes in and development of Germanic languages to provide evidence of Germanic cultural and societal changes, and to discuss how interactions between different cultures impacted these changes, during the late Roman and Early Medieval periods. The book is divided into three main sections. In the first Green tracks the evolution of Germanic culture and uses language evidence to show how culture changed over time. In the second section Green, largely through the use of loanwords, shows how different population groups such as Goths, Alamanni, Romans, etc., impacted Germanic culture. In the third section he follows the Christianization of Germanics and shows how this occurred, both in terms of geographical spread as well as the methods used in conversion. I think there are two ways to read this book. One is as a linguist or philologist, examining how Germanic languages evolved through cultural changes. The other way is as a work where cultural or societal changes are traced through the evolution of language, and as a study of what language can tell us about these changes. I used this second method myself - considering language as another piece of evidence to add to textual and archaeological evidence which I'm more familiar with. I've read some reviews which state that knowledge of Germanic languages or Latin would be valuable before reading this book. As someone with almost no knowledge of Germanic and only a passing familiarity with Latin, I don't agree with this. While some knowledge might make it a bit easier to read, I don't believe it's required. I don't need to know whether Clovis was converted to Christianity in 496 or 507 to understand the implications of this for Merovingian Gaul. Similarly, I don't need to memorize "truhtin" or "kuning" to follow the discussion involving how the uses of these words indicate a movement from where the leader was a temporary head of a war-band to one where the leader was a hereditary king. Nor do I need to know the word "frauja" to follow its discussion and how it implied a depiction of God as pacifist in early attempts at conversion and to contrast it with later acceptance of God as a military figure helping lead Christians to success in war. Rather than having some knowledge of the study of language, I'd recommend that you only read this if you're fairly familiar with the development of Germanic society from the 4th through the 7th centuries. This will allow you to take Green's linguistic evidence, which is considerable, and use it to enhance your knowledge. He does not provide any sort of narrative history and dives right into discussing specific concepts. If you're reading this as one of your first books on Late Antiquity or Germanic society, I think it would be very easy to become lost. This was an interesting book. I was familiar with most of the Germanic cultural changes Green discusses, however the use of language provides an interesting perspective and the detailed way in which word usage is discussed helped provide some additional specifics into how cultural change happened. As an example, the language Ulfila used in his early translation of the Bible into Gothic provides a very interesting window into how early Christianity stressed God as a peaceful deity and how important this was in the 4th century, while this point of emphasis was largely gone by the 6th when the concept of God bringing success in warfare was noted as a reason for Clovis and others to convert. Not being a linguist, I'm unable to comment on the accuracy of Green's evidence and his use of it. However I will say that he provides very sound reasoning and he uses a great deal of detail to illustrate exactly what language changes revealed about changes in society. The arguments are detailed and must be followed with care. This is not a book I could just casually read (perhaps it would be for a philologist) and at times it became very dense. There are some specific aspects, such as feudalism and some migration patterns, where I question stated assumptions. In addition, the footnoting is sparser than I'm used to and many of Green's sources are quite old. Nevertheless, it's worthwhile for the new perspective it provides, particularly when it comes to using language as evidence. I always knew language was used in this way, however this book gave me a much fuller understanding of how.

This book offers a distinctive and accessible approach to the earliest encounters of the barbarian societies of Northern Europe with classical antiquity and with early Christianity. It brings together linguistic evidence from across Europe and dating from before Caesar to about 900 AD, to shed light on important aspects of Germanic culture. It shows how historical phonology and semantics, often avoided by nonspecialists, can provide important clues for historians and archaeologists of the period. Likewise, it demonstrates that philologists and linguists ignore historical evidence at their peril.

"...[its] appeal lies in the author's ability to provide a broad survey by way of linguistic evidence and historical findings." *Choice*"Green has assembled here virtually all of the evidence, and all of the interpretations of that evidence, regarding the advance of the Germanic peoples from prehistory into history, and presents it in an erudite and thoroughly engaging manner...[He] effectively demonstrates that the study of language is an indispensable prerequisite to the understanding of cultural institutions. Students and seasoned scholars alike will benefit enormously from a careful reading of this book." *Michigan Germanic Studies*"Fortunately, as far as this reviewer is concerned, most of the prerequisites necessary to enjoying this book fully were present, and I did enjoy it...readers without much knowledge of historical Germanic linguistics or of Latin will find this book interesting and satisfying, and they should emerge, as I did, with a much clearer understanding of the underpinnings of early medieval Europe." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*"It almost goes without saying that this book is a major contribution to the fields that its title encompasses, representing decades of work by one of the world's foremost scholars of medieval literature and philology...To readers unfamiliar with the history of the Germanic populations of Europe, the period Green covers is one of the most interesting and surprising...Language and History in the Early Germanic World represents an extremely important contribution, one that anyone interested in the period or the peoples it addresses will most certainly consult. Its detail and exhaustive scope will leave readers with the taste of the best that rigorous philological investigation has to offer." *Anthropological Linguistics*"This well-written and highly readable volume belongs in the library of any medievalist interested in the early Germanic peoples." --*Speculum, A Journal of Medieval Studies*