Syntactic Reconstruction and Proto-Germanic (Oxford Studies in Diachronic and Historical Linguistics)

By George Walkden

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This book offers reconstructions of various syntactic properties of Proto-Germanic, including verb position in main clauses, the syntax of the wh-system, and the (non-)occurrence of null pronominal subjects and objects. Although previous studies have looked at the lexical and phonological reconstruction of Proto-Germanic, little is currently known about the syntax of the language, and it has even been argued that the reconstruction of syntax is impossible.

Dr Walkden uses extensive evidence from the early Germanic languages - Old English, Old High German, Old Saxon, Old Norse, and Gothic - to show that syntactic reconstruction is not only possible but also profitable. He argues that while the reconstruction of syntax differs from lexical-phonological reconstruction due to the so-called 'correspondence problem', this is not insurmountable. In fact, the approach taken in current Minimalist theories, in which syntactic variation is attributed to the properties of lexical items, opens the door for syntactic reconstruction as lexical reconstruction. The book also discusses practical solutions for circumventing the correspondence problem, in particular the use of both distributional properties of lexical items and the phonological forms of such items in order to establish cognacy.

The book will be of interest to historical linguists working on syntactic reconstruction and the Germanic languages, from graduate level upwards, as well as to advanced students of syntactic change more generally.

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Editorial Review

Review
A significant empirical study of questions that abound in both synchronic Germanic linguistics and diachronic studies of Germanic inheritance. * Diachronica *

About the Author

George Walkden is a Lecturer in the Department of Linguistics & English Language at the University of Manchester. His recently-completed PhD was carried out at the University of Cambridge (Clare College) under the supervision of David Willis. He is also the founding editor of the *Historical Syntax* online section of the Linguistic Society of America's flagship journal *Language*.

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