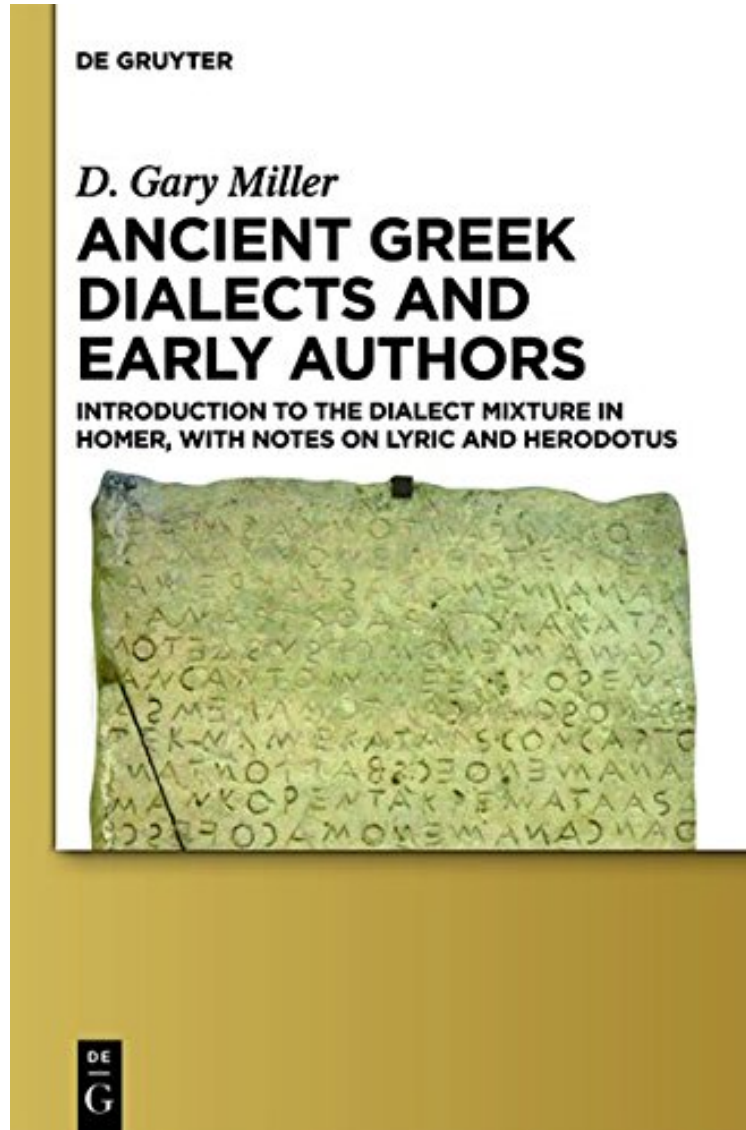


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D. Gary Miller

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Ancient Greek Dialects and Early Authors

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2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Useful for readers with considerable prior training, but not suitable as an "introduction" to anythingBy Christopher CulverD. Gary Miller's ANCIENT GREEK DIALECTS AND EARLY AUTHORS is essentially just what it's title says: a vast catalogue of the dialects of ancient Greek and the linguistic peculiarities of early figures like Homer or Herodotus. The book ties together a wide array of research from recent decades, presenting a more up-to-date survey than Buck's classic work, and one that firmly takes Mycenaean

and Indo-European studies into account. There is a vast amount of information here, and for those with a firm grounding in historical linguistics your understanding of Greek dialects will grow enormously. However, this book is something of a mess. In his introduction, Miller talks of writing for a less specialist audience, but your average Greek student at university will be scared away by the rigorous discussion of historical phonology on virtually every page. Colvin's *A Historical Greek Reader: Mycenaean to the Koine* is a much more successful introductory text. Miller also fails to make a real synthesis of his research, casting it all in the voice and vision of a single author; this is one of those books where the author just throws references to whatever he has been reading slapdash onto the page.

Epic is dialectally mixed but Ionic at its core. The proper dialect for elegy was Ionic, even when composed by Tyrtaeus in Sparta or Theognis in Megara, both Doric areas. Choral lyric poets represent the major dialect areas: Aeolic (Sappho, Alcaeus), Ionic (Anacreon, Archilochus, Simonides), and Doric (Alcman, Ibycus, Stesichorus, Pindar). Most distinctive are the Aeolic poets. The rest may have a preference for their own dialect (some more than others) but in their Lesbian veneer and mixture of Doric and Ionic forms are to some extent dialectally indistinguishable. All of the ancient authors use a literary language that is artificial from the point of view of any individual dialect. Homer has the most forms that occur in no actual dialect. In this volume, by means of dialectally and chronologically arranged illustrative texts, translated and provided with running commentary, some of the early Greek authors are compared against epigraphic records, where available, from the same period and locality in order to provide an appreciation of: the internal history of the Ancient Greek language and its dialects; the evolution of the multilectal, artificial poetic language that characterizes the main genres of the most ancient Greek literature, especially Homer / epic, with notes on choral lyric and even the literary language of the prose historian Herodotus; the formulaic properties of ancient poetry, especially epic genres; the development of more complex meters, colometric structure, and poetic conventions; and the basis for decisions about text editing and the selection of a manuscript alternant or emendation that was plausibly used by a given author.

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