

Lexicon of Oriental words in Ancient Greek

Balsam, cumin, ebony, gum, myrrh, pistachio, rice, sesame – all these words have their roots in Ancient Greek. However, their history is much longer and more complex. The Greeks borrowed them, along with many other words, from Oriental languages. The present project is devoted just to this issue. It will focus on common words that the Greeks took over from languages used in the East (generally speaking, in Asia, as well as in Egypt, the European part of Scythia and the Caucasus region). The project will also include Oriental words, transmitted by Greek authors such as Herodotus, Plutarch and many others (including ancient and early Byzantine lexica). The data under investigation will cover two millennia of the history of the Greek language, i.e. from the Mycenaean period until the 6th cent. AD. The main purpose of the project is to create a searchable internet database that will contain loanwords and glosses originating in Semitic, Iranian, Indian, Anatolian, Egyptian and other Oriental languages. It will also take into consideration vocabulary without a determined Eastern source (especially so called wandering words). In total, the lexicon will encompass approximately 1,000 entries. Apart from the lexicon, the project will deal with case studies devoted to the Oriental words in Greek. There are a lot of words of possibly Eastern origin that require a detailed investigation and are worth discussing. The whole project will constitute an important addition to knowledge of Greek etymology in general, as well as the presence of Oriental words in Greek sources.