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FOR THE PROMOTION OF CLASSICAL STUDIES

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# **SCRIPTA CLASSICA ISRAELICA**

**YEARBOOK OF THE ISRAEL SOCIETY  
FOR THE  
PROMOTION OF CLASSICAL STUDIES**

**RA'ANANA MERIDOR VOLUME**

*Edited by*

**HANNAH M. COTTON, JONATHAN J. PRICE, LISA ULLMANN**

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## Ra'anana Meridor

Ra'anana Meridor came to Palestine from Vienna with her ardently Zionist family at the age of twelve. After attending the Hebrew Gymnasium in Jerusalem she studied Classics, History and Bible at the Hebrew University. There she studied with Prof. M. Schwabe, who had been a student of Wilamowitz and Norden in Berlin and, immediately after the Hebrew University opened in 1925, had started teaching Greek in evening classes in Jerusalem, "for the first time in two thousand years", as the saying then was.

In 1951 Schwabe asked Ra'anana, as his most outstanding pupil, to teach Greek to beginners. This was a task she pursued until her retirement as Professor of Classics at the Hebrew University forty years later; she devoted most of her formidable intellectual vigour to refining and perfecting the tradition initiated by her teacher. The teaching of ancient Greek and the spread of classical studies in this country is perhaps more intimately associated with the name of Ra'anana Meridor than with that of any other person.

She began by working from Schwabe's stencilled textbook, but after ceaseless revision little of the original remains: the latest edition, used as a teaching tool by Ra'anana's pupils and her pupils' pupils, is a masterly *Greek for Beginners*, in fifty double-lessons offering morphology, grammar and syntax in a clear manner, characteristically without cutting corners or making compromises.

Ra'anana's Greek classes were the only place where Greek was taught in Mandatory Palestine and the early years of the State of Israel. In the course of her long career she trained not only several generations of classical scholars now teaching at all Israeli universities, but also many students who were to enter a wide variety of other fields. In addition to teaching the Greek language, Ra'anana gave a full complement of courses at all levels, ranging from the principal texts of classical literature to advanced syntax and metrics. Above all, she brought to her classes a love and enthusiasm for Greek language and literature, indeed for all things Greek. Her total commitment to teaching and her devotion to her students are the shared experience of all those who were lucky enough to have studied with her.

Ra'anana's road to scholarship was not easy. She was involved in the activities of the underground which preceded the establishment of the State, and she raised a family of four while teaching at the university. Her husband Eliahu, who had been a leader of the Irgun, was a lawyer and a widely respected member of the Knesset, where eventually he became a member of its Committee for Law and Legislation. His untimely death in 1966 left Ra'anana with the responsibility of raising her family alone, and it was only some years later that she could find the time to write a doctoral thesis and start publishing some of the ideas she had

developed during her years of teaching and reflection on Greek literature, above all on her favourite genre, tragedy.

Her Ph.D. dissertation (supervised by A. Wasserstein), a commentary on the *Troades*, which was approved *summa cum laude*, remains unpublished. Among her observations on the play that have been made accessible are a fine analysis of the Andromache scene (*AJP* 110 [1989], 17-35), "Plot and Myth in Euripides' *Heracles* and *Troades*" (*Phoenix* 38 [1984], 205-215), and short notes on the text (*CQ* 28 [1978] 472, *AJP* 99 [1978], 426). Another of her favourite plays has been the *Hecuba*, whose plot she has twice brought under close scrutiny ("Hecuba's Revenge. Some Observations on Euripides' *Hecuba*", *AJP* 99 [1978], 28-35; "The Function of Polymestor's Crime in the 'Hecuba' of Euripides", *Erano*s 81 [1983], 13-20; see also *AJP* 96 [1975], 5-6). Shorter discussions of passages in other Euripidean plays focus on the *Hippolytus* (*CQ* 22 [1972], 231-5), *Medea* (*CQ* 36 [1986], 95-100) and *Alcestis* (*Mnem.* 33 [1980], 176). She also brought out short pieces on plays by the other tragedians: the *Agamemnon* (*CP* 82 [1987], 38-43), *Persae* (*AJP* 96 [1975] 348) and the *O.C.* (*CQ* 22 [1972], 229-230). Her notable contributions to this journal include "Misquotations of Euripidean Pleaders" (5 [1979/80], 8-15) and recently a return to and reassessment of an old love: "Some Observations on the Structure of Euripides' *Troades*" (11 [1991/92], 1-21; see also 1 [1974], 132-6; 8-9; [1985/88], 25-29 and on the *Medea* 3 [1976/77], 22-26). These uncollected *Marginalia Scaenica* represent the tip of the iceberg of an exceptional familiarity with Greek tragedy, to which she brought an outstanding linguistic sensitivity and unusual psychological insight. These qualities are also very much in evidence in her publications on poets such as Stesichorus (in Hebrew), and on prose and language.

This is a small country, and academic teaching and research are often pursued under circumstances not easily appreciated by colleagues abroad. The quality of much of the work that emanates from here is to a large extent due to the desire to live up to the standards set by Ra'anana Meridor.

## Editors' Note

Our original invitation to Ra'anana Meridor's friends and colleagues to contribute to this volume of *Scripta Classica Israelica* in her honour met with enthusiastic response. Unfortunately shortness of time, limited space and other constraints have prevented some of the articles written especially for this volume from appearing. The list of contributors who do not appear here is quite distinguished; we intend to include their papers in the next regular volume (XIII) of *Scripta Classica Israelica*, with an accompanying note that they were written in honour of Ra'anana Meridor. We wish to thank all those who responded to our invitation.



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