

Gender trouble? Some puzzles in Greek gender morphology

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1 Introduction

- Three-gender system (m./f./n.) well-established in most older IE languages/branches (Indo-Iranian, Greek, Italo-Celtic, Balto-Slavic, Tocharian with some changes)
- The traditional Brugmannian view: The three-gender system is inherited from PIE
- ... in its attested form: derivational suffixes are inherently marked for gender.

“Die *o*-Stämme waren zur Zeit der idg. Urgemeinschaft alle Masculina oder Neutra, die *ā*-Stämme alle Feminina. Es bestand damals bereits die sogen. Motion substantivischer und adjektivischer *o*-Stämme, wie masc. **ek̑uo-s* ‘Pferd’ fem. **ek̑uā* ‘Stute’ (ai. *ásva-s* *ásvā* lat. *equo-s* *equa*), masc. **rudhro-s* fem. **rudhrā* neutr. **rudhro-m* ‘rot’ (ai. *rudhirá-s* *-irá* *-irá-m* gr. ἐρυθρό-ς -ρά -ρό-ν, lat. *ruber rubrā rubru-m* aksl. *rŭdrŭ rŭdra rŭdro*).”

Brugmann 1892: 102

- But growing consensus (strongly based on evidence from Hittite) that the classical three-gender system was a post-Anatolian innovation
- PIE (pre-Anatolian split-off) only had an animate/inanimate gender distinction (cp. common vs. neuter gender in the Anatolian languages)
- Some relevant literature on the development of the PIE feminine: Harðarson 1987a (from adjectival abstracts/collectives), Harðarson 1987b (from collectives/from PIE **g^uenh₂* ‘woman’), Tichy 1993 (from collectives), Stüber 2007 (**-ih₂* from collectives of patronymic/appurtenance **-i*-stems), Pinault 2011 (from the deictic/allative particle **-(e)h₂*), etc.

What can “Greek from within” contribute to this debate?

Goals of this paper:

- “*Inner-Indo-European languages*” like Greek also provide evidence that the three-gender system was a late innovation, *pace* Brugmann
- Case studies: evidence for “late” feminine gender in Greek: gender/agreement mismatches
- This suggests that PIE/Pre-Greek did not have masc./fem. distinction in animate nouns
- It did, however, have all the “ingredients” (derivational suffixes) that would develop into the attested gender system

→ Ultimately, these are further arguments that the “Anatolian view” of the original PIE gender system is correct — but we need the comparative method for “deeper” reconstruction.

1.1 Masc. & fem. gender in Greek

Feminine derivational & inflectional morphology in Greek:

1.1.1 Thematic

- Masc. o-stem : Fem. \bar{a} -stem

- (1) a. \acute{o} θεος : η θεά
b. $\acute{\epsilon}$ ρυθρός : $\acute{\epsilon}$ ρυθρά; νέος : νεά, etc.

- Masc. o-stem : Fem. \acute{i} δ-stem

- (2) a. \acute{o} Λοκρός : η Λοκρίς
b. \acute{o} Βοιωτός : η Βοιωτίς

Especially common with nouns of geographical location/origin/appurtenance (Meier 1975).

- Masc. o-stem (rarer: athematic stem): Fem. α δ-stem:

- (3) a. λευκός 'bright' : λευκάς (Od. 24.11 Λευκάδα πέτρην)
b. *δρομός 'running' (cp. \acute{o} δρόμος 'course, race') : δρομάς (e.g., Eur. Orest. 317 δρομάδες ... θεαί)
c. πτώξ 'covering' : πτωκάς (e.g., Soph. Phil. 1093 πέλειαι ... πτωκάδες 'the cowering doves')

1.1.2 Athematic

- f. $i\bar{a}$ -stem

- (4) a. participles: φέρων : φέρουσα 'carrying'; δούς : δοῦσα 'giving', etc.
b. adjectives: ἡδύς : ἡδεῖα 'sweet'
c. substantives: ἄναξ 'king' : ἄνασσα 'queen'

- f. $i\delta$ -stem

- (5) a. place names, origin: Ἑλλην, Ἑλληνες : Ἑλληνίς; Μακεδών, Μακεδόνες : Μακεδωνίς
b. substantives: ἥρως 'hero' : ἡρώϊς
c. feminines to nouns in -(τ)ης: ἰκέτης 'one who seeks help': ἰκέτις; ἐργάτης 'worker' : ἐργατίς, etc.

2 “Common gender” behavior in an inner-IE language: Greek

- “Mismatches” in noun gender morphology (inflectional & derivational) have long been observed and contradict Brugmann’s claim that “*-o- was masc./neut., *-ā was fem.” already in PIE.

2.1 Thematic stems

Exceptions:

- (6) Masculine \bar{a} -stems
- Simplex: ὁ ναύτης ‘sailor’, ὁ νεανίης ‘young man’
 - Compound: ὁ Ὀλυμπιονίκης ‘winner at the Olympic games’, οἱ περικίται ‘neighbors’ (< ‘around-dwellers’; see Fellner and Grestenberger Forthcoming)

Fem. o-stems:

- (7) ὁ/ἡ βροτός ‘mortal’, e.g., Homer, Od. 5,334:
Λευκοθέη ἦ πρὶν μὲν ἔην βροτὸς ἀδῆγεσσα “Leocothea, who was mortal before, speaking with a human voice”

< adj. **mr-tó-* ‘mortal; dead’

- (8) ἡ θεός ‘goddess’
- Homer, Il. 1.515–16:
ὄφρ’ ἐὺ εἰδέω
ὄσσον ἐγὼ μετὰ πᾶσιν ἀτιμοτάτη θεός εἰμι
“... (so) that I shall well know to what extent I am the most dishonored goddess among all.”
 - Homer, Il. 8.7–8:
μήτε τις οὔν θήλεια θεὸς τό γε μήτε τις ἄρσην
πειράτω διακέρσαι ἐμὸν ἔπος
“Let not any goddess or god attempt to thwart my word ...” (or: “any female or male deity”)
 - ἡ παρθένος ‘young girl’, ἡ νῆσος ‘island’, ἡ φηγός ‘beech’, ἡ νυός ‘daughter-in-law’, etc.

- Homer also has θεᾶ, e.g., Il. 1.280 εἰ δὲ σὺ καρτερός ἐσσι θεὰ δέ σε γείνατο μήτηρ ... “if you are strong and a divine mother gave birth to you”

- < adj. **d^hh₁s-o-* ‘(of the) divine’

- (9) No derived feminines (“Motionsfeminina”):

- ὁ/ἡ βοῦς ‘ox/cow’
- ὁ/ἡ ἵππος ‘horse/mare’
- ὁ/ἡ κύων ‘dog/bitch’

2.2 Athematic stems

Exceptions to the pattern athematic masc. nouns: fem. * $\check{i}\check{a}$ -stem have a different status than those for the pattern masc. o-stems : fem. \bar{a} -stems.

- No cases of masc. * $\check{i}\check{a}$ < * $\check{i}h_2^d$ (“*devī*”) in Greek (or elsewhere in IE?), that is, no “gender mismatches”
- But there are plenty of cases in which an athematic suffix acts simply as “animate” and can have both a masc. or a fem. referent without overt feminine morphology:

- (10) Agent nouns in -τωρ, -τήρ:
- e.g., Il. 18.477 ῥαιστῆρα κρατερῆν ‘a might hammer’ (ἡ ῥαιστήρ); Aesch. Ag. 664 τύχη σωτήρ ‘fate/*túkhē* (as) the savior’

- b. vs. the much more common overtly feminine agent nouns in -τετρα, -τρια and (rarer) -τρις (Schwyzer 1939: 530).

- Possessive compounds generally do not have overt feminine morphology:

- (11) a. εὐ-δαίμων ‘happy, in good spirits’ (m./f.)
 b. ἄ-παις m./f. ‘without children, childless’;
 c. fem. -ωψ in Soph. Ant. 530 εὐῶπα παρειάν ‘beautiful cheek’ vs. ubiquitous Homeric γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη, etc.)

This is expected given the analysis of these compounds as exocentric, with a zero/unexpressed adjectival head:

- (12) [[δεῖν-]ADJ [ὠψ]N ∅]ADJ ‘fierce-eyed’ (not: ‘fierce eyes’)

However, such exocentric compounds alternate with (descriptively endocentric) compounds in which the adjectival derivational suffix is overtly expressed (see Schindler 1986, Fellner 2011, Fellner and Grestenberger Forthcoming):

- (13) [[δεῖν-]ADJ [ωπ-]N -ός]ADJ ‘fierce-eyed’

And once this has happened, a derived feminine is also possible (Note choice of -ίδ- over -ᾱ-):

- (14) [[δεῖν-]ADJ [ῶπ-]N -ις]ADJ ‘fierce-eyed’

- Simplex athematic adjectives vary at the oldest stage in whether they are “common” gender or masc./fem., e.g.:

- (15) Od. 12.369 ἡδὺς ἀντμη ‘sweet breath’ instead of f. ἡδεῖα.

2.3 Summary

Taken together, this suggests that overt feminine marking was a recent addition to the Greek nominal system, both in noun phrase agreement and in nominal derivation.

- Greek -ᾱ-, -ίδ- and -ός- all have a variety of uses in addition to being derivational feminine markers → suggests that gender marking was a secondary function
- Long noted identity between *-eh₂ and the collective/neuter pl. suffix (Schmidt 1889), but is this the best starting point for the development of a feminine marker?

Final note: no mismatches with the demonstrative/definite article ὁ ἡ τό < *so *seh₂ *tod ... but this is generally thought to be a post-Anatolian innovation.

3 -ίδ-

- makes derived feminines from masc. (predominantly thematic) bases
- but not exclusively: also makes nouns of appurtenance (“Zugehörigkeitsbildungen”) and (related function) patronymics:

- (16) nouns of appurtenance
 a. ὁ κέδρος ‘cedar’ : ἡ κεδρίς ‘fruit of the cedar tree’
 b. ὁ/ἡ αἴξ ‘goat’ : ἡ αἰγίς ‘goatskin’

Long noted that this is similar to the Ved. *vrkī-* type (Lohmann 1932, etc.), cp. Ved. *rathá-* ‘chariot’ → *rathī-* ‘charioteer’ (‘belonging/pertaining to the chariot’); *meṣá-* ‘sheep’ → *meṣī-* ‘sheepskin’, etc.

- (17) patronymics
- a. Κρέων : Κρεωντίς
 - b. Ἄκτωρ : Ἀκτωρίς
 - c. Νηρεύς : Νηρείδες (< *-*eu-id-*)

- Patronymics can be masc. or fem., so (17) is a likely starting point for the development into a feminine marker

But appurtenance semantics are not always recoverable, e.g., το μῆλον ‘apple’ : ἡ μηλίς ‘apple tree’ (also the name of a region in Thessaly) < possessive ‘having apples’?

Some *íδ-* formations seem to be endocentric substantives to *o-* adjectives:

- (18) Endocentric *íδ-* stems:
- a. ἄργυρος ‘silver’ : ἡ ἀργυρίς ‘silver cup’ (‘silver thing, of silver’ rather than ‘belonging to silver’)
 - b. πάννουχος (more often παννύχιος) : ἡ παννουχίς ‘feast that lasts all night’
 - c. σύμμαχος ‘allied, ally’ : ἡ ξυμμαχίς ‘alliance’
 - d. νύκτερος ‘by night’ : ἡ νυκτερίς ‘bat’
 - e. πηκτός ‘put together, fixed’ : ἡ πηκτίς ‘Lydian harp’ (< ‘thing put together, consisting of several parts’)

- Leukart 1994: 301ff.: *-*i-d-* = substantivization of an *-*i-* stem expressing appurtenance (cp. Ved. *n̄d̄á-* ‘nest’ → *n̄d̄í-* ‘nest-mate’, Av. *Zarathuštra-* → *Zarathuštri-* ‘Zarathushtrian’, etc.)
- Cp. Nussbaum 2004’s analysis of Gk. Μακεδών, ἀλγεδών and the suffix *-*ed-/d-*:

- (19) a. **makō/es-* ‘length’ (Av. *masah-*; Gk. μακρός) → **make-(e/o)d-* ‘tall (one)’ → **make-(e/o)d-(ō)n-* ‘tall one’
- b. cp. Gk. δεκάδ- < **dek̄m-d-*

- -*íδ-* provides a parallel for the development of *-*eh₂-* into a feminine marker: starting point was an *animate* individualizing/substantivizing suffix with appurtenance semantics

4 -*ád-*

By now a familiar picture: not exclusively used for making derived feminines (see Schwyzer 1939: 507ff., Rau 2004 [2010] on -*ád-*):

- masc./fem. substantives and adjectives (abstracts = fem.)
- deverbative or (exocentric) denominative

- (20) Denominative
- a. (ἦ) Κυκλάς ‘encircling’ : ὁ κύκλος ‘wheel’
 - b. (ἦ) πεδίας ‘of the plain; flat’ : τὸ πέδιον ‘plain’

- (21) Deverbative
- a. (ἦ) μηγὰς ‘bleating’ (μεγάδας ἀγας) : μῆγαομαι ‘bleat’
 - b. (ἦ) κρεμάς ‘hanging’ : κρεμάννυμι, ἐκρέμασα ‘hang’

c. (ῆ) ἄμαρτάς ‘fault, fail’ : ἄμαρτάνω ‘fail’

- We have seen that -αδ- occurs as a feminine agreement suffix, overlapping in distribution with -ᾱ- and -ιδ-
- But originally the αδ- adjectives could agree with both masc. and fem. nouns (note that the neuter is rare!):

- (22)
- νομάς ‘wandering, roaming’ : Soph. Trach. 271: ἵππους νομάδας ‘roaming horses’
 - στροφάς ‘turning, circling’ : Soph. Trach. 130: στροφάδες κελυθοὶ ‘the circling paths’ (of the Bear, Ἄρκτος), ῆ (!) κέλυθος ‘path’
 - λογάς ‘chosen, picked’ : Hdt. Histories, 1.36.2: λογάδας νεηνίας ‘chosen young men’

Substantives in -αδ- are not necessarily derived feminines/*Motionsfeminina*: some seem to be collectives of the base noun, others are exocentric or endocentric derivatives (from differing bases, very often *o*- or *a*-stems):

- (23)
- ὁ λίθος ‘stone’ : ῆ λιθάς ‘stone-shower’
 - ὁ οἶνος ‘wine’ : ῆ οἰνάς ‘vine’
 - ῆ ὀλκή ‘dragging’, ὁ ὀλκός ‘hauling engine’ : ῆ ὀλκάς ‘trading vessel’
 - ῆ σκιά ‘shade’ : ῆ σκιάς ‘canopy’

- No obvious parallel for this suffix outside Greek, but suspiciously similar to -ιδ- in semantics and distribution
- makes it likely that this, too, was always animate

Rau 2004 [2010]: “individualizing -δ” (cp. Μακεδών, etc., above):

- (24) **solkéh₂* ‘act of dragging’ (Gk. ὀλκή) → **solkh₂-ó-* ‘(connected with) dragging’ (cp. **roteh₂* ‘wheel’, Lat. *rota* → **roth₂-ó-* ‘connected with wheels, having wheels’ > Ved. *rathá-* ‘chariot’) → *solkh₂é-(e)d-* ‘the one (connected with) dragging’ > ὀλκάς ‘trading vessel, ship’

5 -ᾱ

Functions of -ᾱ/*-(*e*)*h₂* (besides derived feminines):

- (25)
- f. abstracts: Gk. φυγή ‘flight’, τομή ‘stump, rest’ (“what is cut off”), νίκη ‘victory’, etc.
 - collectives/n. pl. (*-*h₂*): ζυγόν ‘yoke’ : pl. ζυγά, etc.

→ not the best starting point for the development into a feminine marker

- Nussbaum 2014, Melchert 2014: *-*eh₂* originally made *animate* individualizations (“(the) big one”, “(the) red one”)

- (26) **h₁rud^h-ró-* ‘red’ → *h₁rud^h-reh₂(-)* ‘red one’ → ‘red one’ (fem.)

- Under this scenario, *-*eh₂* already referred to an animate individual in the proto-language — but it wasn’t necessarily a *feminine* individual.

Evidence:

- Greek βαθυδίνης ‘deep-eddying’, βουζύγης ‘cattle-yoking’, ... etc.: synchronic “gender mismatches” (= archaisms, cp. Lat. *agricola* ‘farmer’ < ‘country-dweller’, see Fellner and Grestenberger Forthcoming).
- Hajnal (1994), Melchert (2011): Lycian *-(a)za-* < **-t₂eh₂-* also preserves the individualizing function of **-eh₂-*, e.g., Lyc. *kumaza-* ‘priest’, *maraza-* ‘judge’, *zaxaza-* ‘fighter’, *xddaza-* ‘slave’ etc.

6 Conclusion

- Three (very brief) case studies of Greek feminine suffixes:
 - *-ᾱ-*: pre-Greek/PIE
 - *-iδ-*: Proto-/early Greek
 - *-ᾰδ-*: within Greek (NB already Mycenaean)
- In all cases, gender mismatches and a wider variety of uses suggest that “feminine” was not the original function of these suffixes
- In all cases, good evidence that the suffix was *always* animate/referred to individuals, but without being specifically masc. or fem.
- While the Greek evidence by itself is enough to confirm the “pre-feminine” use of these suffixes, comparative reconstruction remains indispensable for understanding their deeper prehistory

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