Ancient Greek Pitch Accent

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Abstract

This article extends Itô & Mester’s (2016) tone-based analysis of the recessive pattern in Ancient Greek to enclitic constructions and the so-called (sotera) words. The hub of Itô & Mester’s proposal is that recessive accentuation results from a tonal constellation that includes the basic word melody, i.e. HL, and a word-final boundary tone L % that is strictly confined to the last mora of the word, e.g. o H i L ko L% s ‘house’. This analysis, however, cannot straightforwardly account for the accentual behavior of enclitic structures, especially those in which the final syllable of the host – presumably reserved for the L % – surfaces with a H tone, e.g. o H i L ko H s tinos ‘someone’s house’. Furthermore, it cannot explain the dubious accentual behavior of word-final consonant clusters, especially in relation to the retraction of H in -type words like k H ryks ‘orator’, instead of the expected k H ry L k L% s, without postulating an additional stratum. In this article, we claim that Itô & Mester’s analysis can be easily sustained provided it is amended, first, with the notion of phonological adjunction (Itô & Mester 2007, 2009) that provides a more refined layering of phonological structure necessary for the prosodification of certain enclitic patterns and, second, the premise that phonological representations are built of symbols (e.g. segments, moras) that are numerically gradient (Smolensky & Goldrick 2016). Gradient representations allow us to distinguish between moras with different degrees of strength and hence make various tonal processes sensitive to such strength differences.