# Adnominal ὁ ἡ τό in the Language of Homer:
## Syntactic Change or Stylistic Variation?

Adnominal ὁ ἡ τό in Homer does not display the syntactic behavior of a grammaticalized definite article (as in Classical Greek, Guardiano 2003). Yet, usages that obey constraints similar to those which act on the behavior of definite articles in Classical Greek can be found sporadically throughout the poems (Bozzone/Guardiano 2015). We can interpret this distribution in two ways:

a. *Diachronic change*: the Homeric corpus witnesses the gradual spread of the definite article in epic Greek.
b. Stylistically-motivated *synchronic variation*: while the definite article was likely largely grammaticalized by the time our poems were composed, poets tended to avoid it in elevated style (cf. Wackernagel 1924: XVI). Incomplete avoidance resulted in synchronic variation within the *Kunstsprache*.

This problem has important ramifications for philology (is the usage of the definite article a clear sign of "late textualization"?), as well as for linguistics (is Homer our best and only witness to the development of the Greek definite article?).

This contribution:

a. Presents quantitative data on the ratio of expected vs. found cases of adnominal ὁ ἡ τό in Homer, sorted by formal syntactic criteria.
b. Compares the results with existing accounts of the development and properties of definite articles in other language groups (e.g. Lyons 1999; Roberts and Roussou 2003; Guillemin 2009).

Our analysis suggests that the distribution of adnominal ὁ ἡ τό in Homer is best explained as stylistic variation (which however is more skewed in some books, such as *Il.* 10), analog to what found in post-classical epic poetry (Svennson 1937).

While similar variation phenomena are well documented for Homeric phonology and morphology (Hackstein 2010), adnominal ὁ ἡ τό represents a rarer example of syntactic variation (along with *tmesis*, Haug 2012). Nowadays, similar syntactic variation affecting the definite article is found in abbreviated languages (Stowell 2007).

## References

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