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# Ancient Greek

Phonology – Part 2: Accentuation



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# Roadmap

- Accentuation
  - Evidence and realization
  - Accent Laws
  - Accent Assignment

## Evidence for AGr. accent

- Accent marks and their names:
  - $\acute{\alpha}$  (*acutus*, ὀξεῖα, acute)
  - $\tilde{\alpha}$  (*circumflexus*, περισπώμενον) on long vowels/diphthongs
  - $\grave{\alpha}$  (*gravis*, βαρεῖα, grave) on final syllables (variant of acute)
  
- Evidence for realization as pitch accent:
  - ancient sources speak of rising and falling tones
  - absence of vowel weakening in unaccented syllables
  - Greek metre is not accent-based, but quantitative

# Morae

- Morae: measuring duration
- Syllabic nucleus = short vowel: 1 mora (V)
- Syllabic nucleus = long vowel or diphthong: 2 morae (VV)
  - á = /á/ (rising tone)
  - ǎ = /aá/ (rising tone on second mora)
  - ã = /áà/ (rising-falling tone on long vowel)
  - oí = /oí/ (rising tone on second mora)
  - oĩ = /ói/ (rising-falling tone on diphthong)

## Law of Limitation

- Acute accent may lie on one of the three final syllables, cf.  
ἄνθρωπος ‘man, human being’  
ὀλίγος ‘little, few’  
μιαρός ‘dirty’
- Circumflex accent may lie on one of the two final syllables, cf.  
τιμῶ ‘I honour’  
σωτήρα ‘saviour’ (acc.sg.)

## Acute vs. circumflex

- Are acute and circumflex distinctive accentuations?

- ‘Yes’ for final syllables:

ῆ̃ ‘he said’                      vs.                      ῆ̃ ‘or’

- Mostly ‘No’ for penultimate syllable, due to the σωτήρα-rule:

- “an accented penultimate is acute when followed by a bimoraic syllable, but circumflex when followed by a monomoraic syllable”

acc.sg. σωτήρα            /sɔɔ.té̃ε.ra/

gen.pl. σωτήρων        /sɔɔ.tε̃έ.ρɔɔn/

## Final Diphthongs

- Acute vs. circumflex: distinctive accentuation?
- Final -αι -οι are normally monomoraic ('light for accentual purposes')
- But they are bimoraic ('accentually heavy')
  - in opt. 3sg. endings -οι (thematic) and -αι (sigmatic aorist)
  - in relic locative forms in -οι
- Hence exceptionally distinctive penultimate accents like:
  - οἴκοι (nom.pl.) 'houses' vs. οἴκοι (adv. < loc.sg.) 'at home'

## Law of Limitation

- Word pitch may lie on one of the three final morae, cf. again

acc.sg. σωτήρα /sɔɔ.téɛ.ra/

gen.pl. σωτήρων /sɔɔ.tɛé.rɔɔn/

pres. τιμῶ /tī.mɔ́ɔ/

nom.sg. πειθῶ /pei.t<sup>h</sup>ɔ́ɔ/

- But it can be on the fourth mora from the end if the final syllable is monomoraic

ἄνθρωπος /án.t<sup>h</sup>rɔɔ.pos/





## Accent assignment in nominals

- Monosyllabic stems: usually mobile accent
  - accented root in nom. and acc.: θήρ, θῆρα, θῆρες, θῆρας
  - accented ending in gen. and dat.: θηρός, θηρί, θηρῶν, θηρσί
- Polysyllabic stems: keep accent of nom.sg.
  - σωτήρ, σωτήρα, σωτήρος, ...
- Subject to Law of Limitation:
  - ἄνθρωπος, ἄνθρωπον, ἄνθρωποι
  - ἀνθρώπου, ἀνθρώπῳ, ἀνθρώπους, ...



