

An Unrecognized Injunctive Usage in Greek

JAN 31 1990

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The Vedic injunctive is the best preserved testimony to a primitive feature of the Indo-European verb, whereby a primary stem modified only by the so-called secondary personal endings was neutral in respect of tense and mood and could be used, when the context gave sufficient indication of function, with reference to past, present, or future, actual or imagined.¹⁾ Relics of the injunctive in Greek are generally considered to be limited to (i) parts of the imperatival system (*φέρετε, φέρου, φέρεσθε, σχέες*, etc.) and (ii) the use in high poetry, especially in narrative, of augmentless preterites.²⁾ I submit that a third category is to be recognized, namely: (iii) the use of present-stem injunctive forms in describing habitual (timeless) activities of gods or other supernatural beings.

Four examples can be quoted:

1. Hes. *Th.* 1–11

*Μουσάων Ἐλικωνιάδων ἀρχώμεθ' αἰεῖδεν,
αἴ θ' Ἐλικῶνος ἔχουσιν ὄρος μέγα τε ζάθεόν τε,
καί τε περιὲ κρήνην ἰοειδέα πόσσ' ἀπαλοῖσιν
ὄρχεῦνται καὶ βωμὸν ἐρισθενέος Κρονίωνος·
5 καί τε λοεσσάμεναι τέρενα χροῖα Περμησοῖο ...
ἀκροτάτῳ Ἐλικῶνι χοροῦς ἐνεποιήσαντο
καλοῦς ἡμερόεντας, ἐπερρώσαντο δὲ ποσσίν.
ἔνθεν ἀπορνύμεναι κεκαλυμμέναι ἤερι πολλῶι
10 ἐννύχιαι στείχον περικαλλέα ὄσσαν ἰεῖσαι,
ὑμέουσαι Δία τ' αἰγίοχον κτλ.*

This is not a narrative (like 68 ff.) but a depiction of the Muses' regular activity; cf. 36–52.

2. Hes. *Th.* 267–9

ἠυκόμους θ' Ἀρπυίας, Ἀελλῶ τ' Ὠκυπέτην τε,

¹⁾ K. Hoffmann, *Der Injunktiv im Veda* (Heidelberg 1967); O. Szemerényi, *Einführung in die vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft*, 3. Aufl. (Darmstadt 1989) 282–5 with further literature.

²⁾ E. Schwyzler, *Griech. Grammatik I* 640, 645; Schwyzler-Debrunner 315, 339; P. Kiparsky, *Foundations of Language* 4 (1968) 39–41; H. Rix, *Historische Grammatik des Griechischen* (Darmstadt 1976) 228 f., 264.

*αἶ ῥ' ἀνέμων πνοιῆσι καὶ οἰωνοῖς ἅμ' ἔπονται
ὠκείης πτερύγεσσι· μεταχρόνιαι γὰρ ἴαλλον.*

3. *Hymn. Ap.* 1-6

*Μνήσομαι οὐδὲ λάθωμαι Ἀπόλλωνος ἑκάτοιο,
ὄν τε θεοὶ κατὰ δῶμα Διὸς τρομέουσιν ἰόντα·
καὶ ῥά τ' ἀναΐσσουσιν ἐπὶ σχεδὸν ἐρχομένοιο
πάντες ἀφ' ἑδράων, ὅτε φαίδιμα τόξα τιταίνει·*

5 *Λητὸ δ' οἴη μίμνε παραὶ Διὶ τερπικεραύνωι,
ἧ ῥά βιὸν τ' ἐχάλασσε κτλ.*

4. *Hymn. Pan.* (19) 19-29

σὺν δέ σφιν τότε νύμφαι ὄρεστιάδες λιγύμολποι ...

21 *μέλπονται ...*

27 *ὕμνεουσιν δὲ θεοὺς μάκαρας καὶ μακρὸν Ὀλυμπον·
οἶόν θ' Ἑρμείην ἐριούνιον ἔξοχον ἄλλων
ἔννεπον, ὡς ὃ γ' ἅπασι θεοῖς θεὸς ἄγγελός ἐστι.*

In all these passages present tenses precede the injunctive and determine its function.³⁾

Commentators have been disconcerted by the anomalous 'imperfects'.⁴⁾ They cannot in fact be explained from any known use of the Greek (augmented) imperfect. On the other hand, they do correspond to a well attested use of the injunctive in the Ṛgveda, where it is frequently found, alternating with the present indicative, in just this function: 'Der generelle Inj. Präs. dient häufig zur Beschreibung allgemeiner Eigenschaften und Tätigkeiten von Gottheiten'.⁵⁾

In the Veda both present-stem and aorist-stem injunctives are used in this way. The Greek examples I have quoted are of present-stem injunctives. We often find aorists used in such contexts, but they regularly have the augment, e.g. Hes. *Th.* 6 *ἐνεποιήσαντο*, 7

³⁾ Cf. Szemerényi 283 (after Kiparsky 34-5): 'Verbale Merkmale können durch neutrale Formen ersetzt werden, wenn sie schon einmal genau angegeben wurden, und die neutrale Form ist eben der Injunktiv'.

⁴⁾ Cf. F.W. Schneidewin, *Die homerischen Hymnen auf Apollon* (Göttingen 1847) 4 ff.; G. Hermann, *Neue Jahrb.* 52 (1848) 131 f.; A. Baumeister, *Hymni Homerici* (Lipsiae 1860) 119, 355; A. Gemoll, *Die hom. Hymnen* (Leipzig 1886) 121; T. W. Allen and E. E. Sikes, *The Homeric Hymns* (London 1904) 70, 268; U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die Ilias und Homer* (Berlin 1916) 442 n.2; F. Jacoby, *Sitz. Ber.* Berlin 1933, 728 f. = *Kl. philol. Schr.* I (Berlin 1961) 193; T. W. Allen, W. R. Halliday and E. E. Sikes, *The Homeric Hymns* (Oxford 1936) 201; F. Càssola, *Inni omerici* (1975) 486, 576; C. Sittl, *Ἡσιόδου τὰ ἅπαντα* (Athens 1889) 59; M. L. West, *Hesiod, Theogony* (Oxford 1966) 155, 156.

⁵⁾ Hoffmann 119; he sets out the evidence in the following pages.

ἐπερώσαντο, 442 *ᾠπασε*, 443 *ἀφείλετο*, 749 *προσέειπον*, *Ηῡμη. Αρ.* 6 *ἐχάλασσε*, *ἐκλήϊσε*, 8 *ἀνεκρέμασεν*, 10 *ἔδωκε*, and *Hymns* 5.2, 3, 261; 11.4; 19.12–13; 33.12–15; Solon 13.18, 22, etc. It is true that in many cases the augment is not metrically guaranteed and might not be original, but it is guaranteed in some instances, and this is not true of the one unaugmented example I can quote, Hes. *Th.* 447 *κᾶκ πολλῶν μείονα θῆκεν*. Other kinds of ‘timeless’ aorist, in similes and in gnomic utterances, also take the augment with very few exceptions.⁶⁾

If these uses of the aorist, or some of them, derive from corresponding uses of the injunctive, some explanation seems to be required for the systematic application of augments to aorist-stem injunctives, when the few surviving present-stem injunctives are consistently augmentless. It appears paradoxical that Homer freely omits the augment, the past-signifier, from narrative aorists but hardly ever from timeless ones. I presume that this reflects the older and more formulaic character of his narrative diction, much of which was formed at an early period when the augment was still optional in the spoken language. The diction of similes and gnomic passages tends to be less formulaic, more modern,⁷⁾ and after the injunctive ceased to exist as a syntactic category, the aorist-stem injunctive came to be interpreted as an aorist indicative and accordingly augmented.⁸⁾ As an alternative to the aorist, only the present tense commended itself. The Greek aspectual system favoured the maintenance of this opposition in timeless contexts, while leaving no natural role for the imperfect which resulted from reinterpretation of the present-stem injunctive. Only in the special context of poetry about the gods and their typical activities did the present-stem injunctive, or augmentless imperfect, survive in occasional use into historical times.

The usage is quite anomalous in terms of historical Greek syntax, and it was soon to become extinct, as in India it became extinct

⁶⁾ Cf. P. Chantraine, *Grammaire homérique I* (Paris 1958) 484; M. L. West, *Hesiod, Works and Days* (Oxford 1978) 243.

⁷⁾ As demonstrated in detail by G. P. Shipp, *Studies in the Language of Homer* (Cambridge 1953, 2nd ed. 1972).

⁸⁾ Kiparsky 39 gives a somewhat different explanation. – The gnomic aorist may have been influenced also by the type of sentence exemplified in *πολλάκι καὶ ξύμπασα πόλις κακοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἀπηύρα*, where the aorist may be a real preterite, ‘it has often happened that ...’ (Wackernagel, *Vorlesungen über Syntax I* 179).

before the end of the Vedic period. Its preservation in Hesiod and two of the Homeric Hymns must be attributed to continuity of hymnic tradition from a much earlier period. It is well known that early Greek hexameter poetry and Vedic poetry show various signs of participation in a common heritage.⁹⁾ Most of the Greek evidence naturally comes from Homeric epic, and it is the tradition of heroic poetry that most readily reveals the antiquity of its origins. But beside it we must assume the existence of a distinct hymnic tradition. Homeric and Vedic hymns do not look very similar. Nevertheless it is possible, taking Hesiod and the gods of Homer into account as well as the corpus of Hymns, to isolate elements of literary form, divine epithets and predicates, and specific ideology, that are paralleled – sometimes remarkably – in the R̥gveda, and thus point to a stronger hymnic tradition in early Greece than one might have supposed in the absence of the comparative evidence.¹⁰⁾ The present discussion adds a syntactical archaism to the list of shared features.

⁹⁾ See e.g. R. Schmitt, *Dichtung und Dichtersprache in indogerm. Zeit* (Wiesbaden 1967); id. (ed.), *Indog. Dichtersprache* (Darmstadt 1968); M. Durante, *Sulla preistoria della tradizione poetica greca II* (Rome 1976); E. Campanile, *Ricerche di cultura poetica indoeuropea* (Pisa 1977); M. L. West, *JHS* 108 (1988) 152–6.

¹⁰⁾ I hope to develop this argument in detail at some future date.