# Epic Knees
## γνυ- / ἰγνυ-

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*Abstract*: The common Greek word for "knee", γόνυ, γόνατος, τό, has sterling Indo-European credentials: Latin *genu*; Gothic *kniu*; Hittite *genu*; etc., all pointing to I.E. *\*gonu-*. This tidy picture is blurred, however, by the single appearance in Homer of another, rather strange-looking, reflex of the word: ἰγνύη, -ης, ἡ (*Il*. 13.212). Since γνυ- is clearly the inherited I.E. form, how can we explain the prefixed iota of ἰγνυ-? All previous proposals, which have been based largely on semantics (prepositional prefix, etc.), have serious deficiencies. I propose that an answer is to be found instead in the realm of phonetics: i.e., the secondary form ἰγνυ- was a result of resegmentation in some of the common phrases that include the word for "knee": e.g., ἀμφὶ γνυ- > ἀμφ' ἰγνυ-; ἀντὶ γνυ- > ἀντ' ἰγνυ-; ἐπὶ γνυ- > ἐπ' ἰγνυ-; cf. ἐνὶ γνυ- > ἐν ἰγνυ-.

The common Greek word for "knee", γόνυ, γόνατος, τό, has sterling Indo-European credentials: cognates in other Indo-European languages abound – Latin *genu*; Gothic *kniu*; Hittite *genu*; Sanskrit *jānu*, etc. – all pointing back to I.E. *\*gonu-*. The word appears thousands of times in extant Greek texts, in many different forms and in various dialects. It is ubiquitous in Homer (122 times), where it occurs in the following third-declension neuter forms:

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| (absent in nominative singular) | γοῦνα and γούνατα |
| γουνός (from γονϝός) and γούνατος | γούνων |
| (absent in dative singular) | γούνασι(ν) / γούνεσσι(ν) |
| γόνυ | γοῦνα and γούνατα |

In addition to these forms, a zero-grade form appears three times in Homer in the adverb πρόχνυ "with the knee(s) forward" (literally) and six times in the adverb γνύξ "on the knee(s)",

both of which are probably fossilized forms of what was in origin a nominal form γνυ-.[1]

In the Homeric epics it is a word pregnant with meaning and rich in resonance. Destiny is said to lie on the knees of the gods (θεῶν ἐν γούνασι κεῖσθαι), and it is on the gods' knees that offerings are placed (θεῖναι ἐπὶ γούνασι). Among both gods and mortals the knees are the objects to be clasped by someone seeking supplication (λαβεῖν γούνων), whereby arise the denominatives γουνάζομαι and γουνοῦμαι. In the knees reside the special strength (μένος / βίη) and swiftness (λαιψηρὰ γούνατα) of the warrior; hence a wound to the knees (γούνατα λύειν) often entails death, or at least a great loss of strength and ability. Finally, parents are ideally portrayed setting their dear children on their knees (ἐπὶ γούνεσσι).[2]

This tidy lexical picture is blurred by a single appearance in Homer of another, rather strange-looking, reflex of the word: ἰγνύη, -ης, ἡ. An anonymous comrade of Idomeneus is described as having just returned from battle, carried by his comrades because he has been "struck on the ἰγνύη by the sharp bronze" (*Il.* 13.212):

Ἰδομενεὺς δ' ἄρα οἱ δουρικλυτὸς ἀντεβόλησεν
ἐρχόμενος παρ' ἑταίρου, ὅ οἱ νέον ἐκ πολέμοιο
ἦλθε κατ' ἰγνύην βεβλημένος ὀξέϊ χαλκῷ.
τὸν μὲν ἑταῖροι ἔνεικαν ...

Such a wound to the knee is thought of in Homer as particularly debilitating, as it deprives the warrior of his mobility. A similar circumstance is described later in the *Iliad* when Achilles stops the charging Trojan Demouchos in his tracks by "striking him on

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[1] So *Pokorny* sub *genu*; P. Chantraine (1958) 250-51; *DELG* sub γόνυ and ἰγνύη; *GEW* sub ἰγνύη; B. Forssman (1965) 31; E. P. Hamp (1970) 73–74; A. J. Nussbaum (1986) 267–74.
[2] On the special sanctity attached to the knees in ancient Greek culture, see R. B. Onians (1951) 174–86; J. P. Gould (1973).

the knee with a spear", a wound that is a prelude to his death (*Il.* 20.458).

Δημοῦχον δὲ Φιλητορίδην ἠΰν τε μέγαν τε
κὰγ γόνυ δουρὶ βαλὼν ἠρύκακε. τὸν μὲν ἔπειτα
οὐτάζων ξίφεϊ μεγάλῳ ἐξαίνυτο θυμόν·

The similar phrases κατ᾽ ἰγνύην βεβλημένος ὀξέϊ χαλκῷ and κὰγ γόνυ δουρὶ βαλὼν seem to describe the same type of wound, and had the form ἰγνύη occurred only here in all of Greek we could still have been confident on morphological and semantic grounds that ἰγνύη and γόνυ were cognates.

In reality various forms of ἰγνύη appear some four-hundred times in Greek texts from the Archaic period to the Byzantine, a handful or two of times in poetry but mostly in prose, where it is often to be found in medical treatises (Hippocrates, Galen, Oribasius, etc.) in describing the area behind the knee, i.e., the hollow of the knee, or, in medical jargon, the popliteal space. Yet there appears to have remained some confusion throughout these texts about the semantic range of ἰγνύη, and some sources clearly use the term to designate the knee area generally, or more narrowly the front of the knee, inside the knee, below the knee, the calf, the thigh, or the groin.

The word ἰγνύη appears from the earliest period in both first and third declension forms, and often even a single author will alternate back and forth between declensions without any apparent design:[3]

ἰγνύα, -ας, ἡ (Ionic ἰγνύη)

ἰγνύα / ἰγνύη          ἰγνύαι
ἰγνύας / ἰγνύης        ἰγνυῶν

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[3] R. J. Durling (1993) 182 defines ἰγνύα, ἡ as "the part behind the thigh and knee, ham", but ἰγνύς, ἡ simply as "knee". However this differentiation is not consistently maintained in Galen, the subject of his study, and even less so in the earlier authors.

(ἰγνύᾳ) / ἰγνύῃ            ἰγνύαις / ἰγνύῃσι[ν]
ἰγνύαν / ἰγνύην           ἰγνύας

ἰγνύς, -ύος, ἡ

ἰγνύς                       ἰγνύες
ἰγνύος                     ἰγνύων
ἰγνύι                       ἰγνύσι[ν]
ἰγνύν                      ἰγνύς

All these forms appear in Greek except ἰγνύᾳ. In addition there appears once, in Galen, an idiosyncratic neuter plural form: κατ᾽ ἰγνύα τε καὶ σφυρά. And the fifteenth-century theologian Theodorus Agallianus twice offers a dual form: ἀμφοῖν ταῖν ἰγνύαιν.

In sum, while the morphological and semantic evidence in Homer seems compelling enough to conclude that ἰγνύη and γόνυ are cognates, a survey of the lexical history of these terms within their contexts in all of Greek literature serves to remove all doubt.

As we have observed, γόνυ is the inherited Indo-European form. It remains to remind ourselves that a zero-grade form also appears to have existed in Indo-European: Greek γνύξ and πρόχνυ, Sanskrit *pra-jñu-*, Gothic *kniu*, all pointing to I.E. *gnu- (cf. locative *gn-eu-). In other words, there was very likely in the earliest period of the Greek language a zero-grade nominal form γνυ-.[4] We find corroborating evidence for this when we look more closely at the nine incidences of ἰγνυ- in the poetic tradition.

We have already looked at the single instance in Homer. Of the others, the earliest and most important is in the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes*. After a day full of mischief the precocious infant Hermes retires to his cradle in his cave, wraps his

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[4] See references in note 1.

swaddling clothes around his shoulders, and lies there playing with the coverlet "about his knees" (*H.Herm.* 152):

ἐσσυμένως δ᾽ ἄρα λίκνον ἐπῴχετο κύδιμος Ἑρμῆς·
σπάργανον ἀμφ᾽ ὤμοις εἰλυμένος ἠΰτε τέκνον
νήπιον ἐν παλάμῃσι περ᾽ ἰγνύσι λαῖφος ἀθύρων
κεῖτο ...

So read all modern editions of this text. But the manuscript tradition is in fact divided between three renderings: περ᾽ ἰγνύσι, περιγνύσι, and παρ᾽ ἰγνύσι. The third reading, παρ᾽ ἰγνύσι, though it appears in the greatest number of manuscripts, is unlikely, for it is not an epic, or even poetic, construction. The preposition παρά does sometimes occur with forms of ἰγνυ- and γο(υ)ν- (though almost always in the accusative rather than dative case), but almost exclusively in the prose of the medical writers (Hippocrates, Aristotle, Galen, etc.) to describe the tendons, bones, and blood vessels that run along the knees.[5]

The preposition περί, on the other hand, occurs regularly with forms of ἰγνυ- and γο(υ)ν-, not just in the medical writers but in prose generally, and not just in prose but also in poetry. Most importantly, περί followed by a dative form of ἰγνυ- or γο(υ)ν-, as in the passage in the *Hymn to Hermes* under consideration, is a very common dactylic hexameter construction (Homer,[6] Euripi-

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[5] The only remarkable exception to this occurs in Strabo (13.1.41), who mentions an ancient controversy regarding the wooden statue of Athena in Troy. This wooden statue, which had fallen from the heavens and after the sack of Troy was thought to have been brought to the Greek mainland, was a standing statue, whereas Homer was apparently describing a seated statue in the *Iliad*, for the Trojans offer a peplos to Athena by laying it "upon the knees" of the statue (Ἀθηναίης ἐπὶ γούνασιν ἠϋκόμοιο). As a result "some" (τινές), as Strabo relates, ignorantly preferred at *Iliad* 6.92 (cf. 6.273, 303) the reading παρὰ γούνασιν to ἐπὶ γούνασιν (which is found in all extant manuscripts); Strabo asserts that an offering "beside the knees" (παρὰ γούνασιν) of the statue would have been unthinkable. For other ancient references to the controversy, see scholia to *Il.* 6.92, Hesychius sub ἐπὶ γούνασι, and Eustathius on *Il.* 6.92.

[6] A few manuscripts read ποτὶ γούνασι rather than περὶ γούνασι at *Od.* 6.310.

des, Theocritus, Apollonius of Rhodes, Oppian, Quintus, Nonnus, Anthologia Graeca, etc.). Surely περί rather than παρά is to be understood also here in the *Hymn to Hermes*.

Of the two readings that have περί, the first, περ' ἰγνύσι, appears in several manuscripts and was also privileged in the 1488 *editio princeps* of Demetrios Chalcocondyles, which was subsequently followed by all later editions. But it is an unlikely reading, for the preposition περί never elides elsewhere in epic poetry, and other than two instances in Pindar, one in Theocritus (but on this see below), and one in the Greek Anthology, the preposition does not elide in Greek poetry generally.[7] Even in Greek prose elision of περί is very rare and very late.

The second reading, περιγνύσι, which appears in a couple of manuscripts, is evasive, since it simply obviates the difficulties of word division by inventing an unlikely compound. But it shows the way to what I regard as the true reading: περὶ γνυσί (i.e., a zero-grade nominal form, as in πρόχνυ and γνύξ).[8] That is to say, it appears that a zero-grade form of γονύ, i.e., γνυ- (as here in *H.Herm.* 152), survived in the poetic tradition side by side with its biform ἰγνυ- (as in *Il.* 13.212). And it appears that it survived in the vernacular as well, if we may trust the testimony of (Pseudo-?) Herodian and Hesychius, who preserve several evocative compounds of γνυ- and πίπτω: γνυπτεῖν = ἀσθενεῖν "to be weak"; γνυπετόν = ἀργόν "lazy" (cf. γνυπῶ, γνύπωνες, γνύπετοι, κατεγνυπτῶσθαι). Γνυ- is the form, then, that should be read here in the *Hymn to Hermes* (i.e., περὶ γνύσι).

Further support for this is found in what is probably the earliest of the remaining seven incidences of ἰγνυ- in Greek

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[7] *Allen* misprints the common construction περ ἔμπης as περ' ἔμπης at *Il.* 15.399.

[8] So the I.E. instrumental *gnubhi* > *γνυφί, and the I.E. locative *gnusu* > γνυσί. See B. Forssman (1965) 30–31; E. P. Hamp (1970) 74; *LfgE* sub γόνυ.

poetry, all of which fall in the Hellenistic period or later. A poem attributed to Theocritus contains the formula περ' ἰγνύῃσιν in describing a lion lashing its tail "about its knees" ("Theocritus" *Idyll* 25.242):

θὴρ ἄμοτος, μακρὴν δὲ περ' ἰγνύῃσιν ἕλιξε κέρκον

The formula περ' ἰγνύῃσιν here is of course subject to the same diagnosis as the formula περ' ἰγνύσι in the *Hymn to Hermes*: i.e., that since περί never elides in epic poetry, and other than in two instances in Pindar, and one in the Greek Anthology, περί does not elide in Greek poetry generally, περὶ γνύῃσιν should be read here, just as περὶ γνυσί in the *Hymn to Hermes*. What are the odds, after all, of the only two instances of elided περ' in all of Greek dactylic hexameter poetry (other than the phrase περ' ἐμεῖο in a late poem in the Greek Anthology) happening to be followed by the same word, and, what is more, that word beginning with an iota, and, what is even more, that word having a biform that does not include the iota?[9]

If we read περὶ γνυσί in the *Hymn to Hermes* and περὶ γνύῃσιν in Theocritus, it also seems advisable that we read the zero-grade form γνυ- (i.e., ἐπὶ γνύης rather than ἐπ' ἰγνύης) in a third poem, an elegy from the Greek Anthology, describing someone drawing a garment up onto his knee (12.176.2):

ὁ πρὶν ἐπ' ἰγνύης λῶπος ἀνελκόμενος.

In the remaining five poems in which forms of ἰγνυ- appear, however, the reading seems to be correct: ἐς ἰγνύαν in "Theo-

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[9] It is of course possible to overcome these odds by assuming that "Theocritus'" περ' ἰγνύῃσιν is a slavish imitation of an incorrectly divided text in a Hellenistic manuscript of the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes* (so B. Forssman [1965] 30). But the completely different contexts of the two passages – an infant in a cradle playing with a coverlet about his knees; a hunted lion lashing its tail about its knees – argues against this.

critus'" *Idyll* 26.17; ἄχρις ἰγνύων in Herodas' *Mime* 1.14; ἐν
βουβῶνι καὶ ἰγνύσιν in Nicander's *Theriaca* 278; ἰγνύας τε
διακρίνοντ' Ὀφιούχου in Manetho's *Apotelesmatica* 2.90; and
ἰγνύην φοῖνιξ πέπλος ἐλισσόμενος in the Greek Anthology
16.253.4.

This brings us to the critical question. It appears that zero-
grade nominal forms γνύς and γνύα(η), examples of which we
have seen in the *Hymn to Hermes*, "Theocritus'" *Idylls*, and
perhaps in the Greek Anthology, survived side by side in the
poetic tradition with ἰγνύς and ἰγνύα(η), examples of which we
have seen in Homer, Theocritus, Herodas, Nicander, Manetho,
and the Greek Anthology. Since γνυ- is clearly the inherited I.E.
form, how can we explain the prefixed iota of ἰγνυ-?

This "prefix" has been explained in various ways since
antiquity. The consensus of the ancients was that ἰγνύς and
ἰγνύα(η) were derived from the verb ἰκνεῖσθαι, since the knees
are what allow us "to go", "to walk", "to move". The bT scholia
on *Il.* 13.212 simply record this etymology without explication:

ἰγνύη - τὸ ὀπίσω μέρος τοῦ γόνατος, παρὰ τοῦ ἰκνεῖσθαι.

Orion, the 5th C. A.D. grammarian, clarifies a bit more (sub
ἰγνύα):

Ἰγνύα - τὸ ὄπισθεν τοῦ γόνατος, ἐπεὶ αἴτιον ἐστὶν ἡμῖν τοῦ
ἰκνεῖσθαι, ὅ ἐστι πορεύεσθαι.

Eustathius, on *Il.* 13.212, approves this etymology by explaining
that it is by virtue of bending the "knee" (ἰγνύη) that we are able
"to walk" (ἰκνούμεθα), though he remains a bit troubled by the
different breathings in the two words:

Ἰγνύη δὲ τὸ κατόπιν ἤτοι ὀπίσω μέρος τοῦ γόνατος, ὅπερ
καὶ ἀγκύλη λέγεται. γίνεται δὲ παρὰ τὸ ἰκνεῖσθαι, ἰκνύη τις
οὖσα, ἐπεὶ καμπτομένης αὐτῆς ἰκνούμεθα. Εἰ δὲ ψιλοῦται ἡ

ἄρχουσα τῆς ἰγνύης, οὐ καινόν. λείπει γὰρ τὸ κ τὸ τὴν δα-
σεῖαν προκαλούμενον, [καθὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ ἴχνος καὶ ἴχνιον.]

This is all, of course, naive folk etymologizing. Ἰγνύη is a
biform of γόνυ, from I.E. *gonu-. Ἰκνεῖσθαι and its large fami-
ly of cognates in Greek are derived from a different root alto-
gether: I.E. *seyk- ("to reach for").[10]

Some modern scholars – e.g., K. Brugmann – have suggested
that the iota of ἰγνύς and ἰγνύα(η) had its origins in *ϝι-γνύ-
"on the other side of the knee", adducing Sanskrit vi- "away
from". Hence, ἰγνύς and ἰγνύα(η) would mean "opposite the
knee".[11] But this is untenable, since the word formation is utterly
unique, and since ἰγνύη shows no trace of digamma in Homer.
This seed falls on utterly infertile ground.[12]

Many modern scholars – e.g., E. R. Wharton, A. Meillet, F.
A. Wood – have explained the iota of ἰγνύς and ἰγνύα(η) as a
"prothetic vowel", in the same category, for example, as ἰκτίς
and ἰχθῦς.[13] But Greek prothetic vowels are usually, perhaps
exclusively, limited to /e/, /a/, and /o/ in initial position before
resonant consonants, consonant clusters, and semivowels (/l m n
r w y st khth/). So this is not a normal phonetic environment for
the development of a prothetic vowel. Moreover, there is no
comparative evidence whatsoever – e.g., an analogue in Arme-
nian or Phyrgian, which in some cases share such protheses with
Greek – to suggest that the iota of ἰγνύς and ἰγνύα(η) is pro-
thetic. In the absence of any other ready explanation for the iota,
philologists have here, as elsewhere, too quickly fallen back on
this solution of last resort, which in this case simply describes an

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[10] Cf. *Pokorny* sub *seik-*.
[11] K. Brugmann (1904) 493–94.
[12] Brugmann's proposal is aptly criticized by F. Solmsen (1909) 215 n. 1
and A. Meillet (1926) 131.
[13] E. R. Wharton (1882) 137 adduces ἰκτῖνος, ἰκτίς, and ἰχθῦς; A. Meillet
(1926) 131 adduces ἰκτίς and ἰχθῦς, among many others not beginning with
iota; F. A. Wood (1931) 127–29 adduces ἰαύω, ἴγνητες, ἴκταρ, ἴκτερος,
ἰκτῖνος, ἰκτίς, ἰπνός, ἵππος, ἴσχω, and ἰχθῦς.

outcome rather than offering an explanation of what happened
and why it happened.

A much more firmly grounded proposal is that ἰγνύς and
ἰγνύα(η) are compounds that include a prepositional prefix.
Some have attempted to trace this compound's origins all the
way back to I.E. *en-gnu- "in/on the knee".[14] But there is no
support from cognates in other I.E. languages or in the testimony
of the Linear B documents that the compound goes back any
earlier than the post-Mycenaean to pre-Homeric period during
which much of the epic *Kunstsprache* was taking shape. There-
fore H. Frisk, P. Chantraine, and others before them – G. Cur-
tius, F. Solmsen, and É. Boisacq – are on much firmer ground in
deriving ἰγνύα(η) from a uniquely Greek compound ἐν + γνύη
"a place on the knee", and, more specifically, "behind the knee"
or "the bend of the knee".[15] They propose that the secondary
form ἰγνύς is created by analogy with words for other body
parts (ἰξύς, ὀσφύς).[16] Chantraine explains that the position of ἐν
before a nasal allows the phonetic change of ε to ι, offering as an
analogue ἴγνητες, the name of the ancient inhabitants of Rhodes
(so Apollonius Dyscolus, Hesychius, etc.), which he derives
from ἐν- + -γνητος.[17] But one may reasonable object that, in
the first place, ἐν + γνύ- results semantically in "on the knee" or
"in the knee", not "behind the knee", which is its usual meaning.
Secondly, the normal outcome of ἐν + γνύ- in most Greek
dialects would be ἐγγνύ- (cf. ἐν + γαῖα > ἔγγαιος; ἐν +
γενέτης > ἐγγενέτης; and n.b. ἐν + γόνασιν > Ἐγγόνασιν).
Chantraine's proposal of a phonetic shift here from *e-* to *i-* before

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[14] So B. Forssman (1965) 28, A. J. Nussbaum (1986) 267.

[15] *GEW* and *DELG* sub ἰγνύη; G. Curtius (1858–1862) 164, who adduces
*ἐγ + γνύ-; F. Solmsen (1909) 214–15, who traces it back to an early Greek
*ἐγ-γνύα, *ἐγ-γνύς (not all the way back to I.E.), with ε > ι before the na-
sal; *Boisacq* sub ἰγνύη.

[16] Cf. also, B. Forssman (1965) 29, who invokes γένυς, δελφύς, ἰξύς,
νηδύς, ὀσφύς, and ὀφρῦς; he considers the form Hellenistic (overlooking its
occurrences in Hippocrates and Aristotle, as well as, of course, the *Hymn to
Hermes*, which he considers, rightly, an incorrect reading).

[17] On this shift in some Greek dialects, see *Schwyzer* I 275.

a nasal is unlikely. While such a shift before nasals is common in Latin, Germanic, and other languages, it is not normal in most dialects of Greek: e.g., Latin *in, tingo, quinque*; Greek ἐν, τέγγω, πέντε.

R. Janko agrees with Chantraine's etymology and analogy with ἴγνητες, but he explains ἰν as the Arcado-Cyprian form of ἐν. And he understands the wound described in *Il.* 13.212 (κατ' ἰγνύην βεβλημένος ὀξέϊ χαλκῷ) as being in the back of the knee, explaining the shameful location of the wound as a result of the earlier rout of the Achaeans.[18] However the distribution of ἰγνυ- in Greek does not point to an Arcado-Cyprian origin. Arcado-Cyprian forms do appear a few times in fossilized phrases embedded in traditional epic diction where metrically useful (e.g., Hermes' traditional epithet ἐριούνιος; the epic conjunction ἰδέ), but outside these very limited contexts they largely cease to be used. Arcado-Cyprian forms appear also, of course, in inscriptions from Arcadia and Cyprus, as well as in a few glosses of the ancient grammarians and lexicographers. However what we see in the distribution of ἰγνυ- in Greek is wide-spread use, especially in prose, in many dialects, esp. Ionic in the early period, but in all dialects in later Greek. It would seem very odd that an obscure Arcado-Cyprian form, even if introduced into other dialects, would generate this distribution. Also, I am not so sure that a wound from the front is impossible, or even improbable, here at *Il.* 13.212. If it were not for the later specialized sense "the area behind the knee" (i.e., "popliteal space") witnessed in the medical writers, one would not be inclined to think that this Homeric wound was inflicted on the back of the knee during a rout of the victim. For elsewhere in Homer, as we have already observed, the Trojan Demouchos is wounded on the front of his knee by a spear cast while he is advancing (*Il.* 20.458): κὰγ γόνυ δουρὶ βαλὼν ἠρύκακε. And very similar language and word order is used in a formulaic phrase describ-

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[18] *Janko* on *Il.* 13.212.

ing a spear or arrow cast at the front of a warrior's chest: κατὰ στῆθος βάλε δουρί (*Il.* 11.108; 13.186; 15.420); κατὰ στῆθος βάλεν ἰῷ (*Il.* 8.303; 13.586).

Faced with the biforms γνυ- and ἰγνυ-, and in the absence of any convincing explanation for the iota of the latter, one may reasonably resort to some sort of morphological resegmentation as an explanation of the form. The resegmentation probably occurred in a phonetic environment where there was a preceding preposition that was mistakenly construed to have suffered elision (e.g., ἀμφὶ γνυ- > ἀμφ' ἰγνυ-; ἀντὶ γνυ- > ἀντ' ἰγνυ-; ἐπὶ γνυ- > ἐπ' ἰγνυ-), or where there existed a biform that ended in iota (e.g., ἐνὶ γνυ- > ἐν ἰγνυ-; προτὶ γνυ- > πρὸς ἰγνυ-).[19] In the case of the latter, we can even imagine the resegmentation being stimulated by historical developments in the Greek dialects: as προτί gave way to πρός, for example, the resegmentation would have served to preserve the formula.

Our surviving corpus of ancient Greek, both poetry and prose, provides many examples of collocations of prepositions plus various forms of the word for "knee" that could at some earlier time have provided an opportunity for such a resegmentation, and there once must have been many more such collocations (now lost to us). Of these, the collocations with the preposition ἐπί (i.e., "upon the knee(s)") seem to me to provide the likeliest avenue for resegmentation (cf. ἐπ' ἰγνύης in a dactylic pentameter verse in the Greek Anthology 12.176.2; ἐπ' ἰγνύας, ἐπ' ἰγνύων, and ἐπ' ἰγνύαν in the prose of the medical writers).

Given the high incidence of occurrences of ἰγνύς and ἰγνύα(η) in Greek prose (some four-hundred times), I assume that a resegmentation occurred at some point also in the evolution of the Greek vernacular that may have been independent of

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[19] One may compare ἐπ' ἰκτιδέην > ἐπὶ κτιδέην (*Il.* 10.335) and κατ' ἄκρηθεν > κατὰ κρῆθεν (*Il.* 16.548, etc.); cf. M. Leumann (1950) 53–54, 56–58.

its development in the epic *Kunstsprache*. But since I am concerned here primarily with the evolution of epic diction, I will concentrate on what I believe to be the most likely avenue for resegmentation in the epic *Kunstsprache*. That would be the collocations of the preposition ἐπί with various forms of the dative plural (i.e., "upon the knee(s)"). One may instructively compare Homeric:

θεῖναι Ἀθηναίης ἐπὶ γούνασιν ἠϋκόμοιο (*Il.* 6.92)

τὸν θὲς Ἀθηναίης ἐπὶ γούνασιν ἠϋκόμοιο (*Il.* 6.273)

θῆκεν Ἀθηναίης ἐπὶ γούνασιν ἠϋκόμοιο (*Il.* 6.303)

Ἀστυάναξ, ὃς πρὶν μὲν ἑοῦ ἐπὶ γούνασι πατρὸς (*Il.* 22.500)

τόν ῥά οἱ Εὐρύκλεια φίλοισ᾽ ἐπὶ γούνασι θῆκε (*Od.* 19.401)

ἑζομένη δὲ κατ᾽ αὖθι, φίλοισ᾽ ἐπὶ γούνασι θεῖσα (*Od.* 21.55)

This is a formula that continues to flourish in the post-Homeric hexameter tradition: Theocritus, Apollonius of Rhodes, Batrachomyomachia, Sybiline Oracles, Greek Anthology, Nonnus, etc.

I propose that at some time during the height of the development of the epic *Kunstsprache* there existed an entire family of formulae that included the collocation ἐπί plus a dative plural form of γουν- and γνυ-. This family of formulae took advantage of the various forms of the word to create a metrically useful system that would have looked something like this:[20]

1. x x / - x x    ἐπὶ γόνϝασι (ἐπὶ γούνασι in Homer 6x)

2. x x / - - / -    ἐπὶ γόνϝεσσιν + C (γούνεσσιν in Homer 3x)

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[20] Note that the naturally short upsilon of γνύσι is to be lengthened *metri causa* in γνύῃσι, as demonstrated in all the attested poetic forms of ἰγνύη.

3. x / - - / -      ἐπὶ γνύῃσ' + V (cf. ἰγνύην at *Il.* 13.212;
[ἰ]γνύῃσιν at "Theocritus" *Idyll* 25.242; ἐπ'
[ἰ]γνύης at Greek Anthology 12.176.2)

4. x / - - / - x     ἐπὶ γνύῃσι(ν) (cf. above; note that ἐπὶ γνύῃσιν
+ C with the metrical shape x / - - / - - /, would
not be easily accommodated in epic verse)

5. x / - x x        ἐπὶ γνυσί (cf. [ἰ]γνύσι at *H.Herm.* 152)

This family of formulaic phrases uses all three early forms of
"knee" – γόνυ, γνύη, and γνύς – and it creates a formulaic
system that is characterized, to use Milman Parry's terms, by
both "economy" and "scope": economy inasmuch as none of the
ἐπί + dative plural combinations have the same metrical shape;
scope inasmuch as many of the most common metrical spaces of
the dactylic hexameter verse are represented by the shapes of
these formulae:

1. x x / - x x     Two common metrical spaces: third-foot male
caesura to bucolic diaeresis; fourth-foot male caesura to end of
fifth foot.

2. x x / - - / -     Three common metrical spaces: first foot male
caesura to third-foot male caesura; second-foot male caesura to
fourth-foot male caesura; third-foot male caesura to fifth-foot male
caesura.

3. x / - - / -     Two common metrical spaces: first-foot female
caesura to third-foot male caesura; third-foot female caesura to
fifth-foot male caesura.

4. x / - - / - x     Two common metrical spaces: first-foot female
caesura to third-foot female caesura; third-foot female caesura to
fifth-foot female caesura.

5. x / - x x     One common metrical space: third-foot female
caesura to bucolic diaeresis.

Certain members of this formulaic family – ἐπὶ γνύῃσι(ν),
ἐπὶ γνυσί – were obviously ripe for resegmentation as ἐπ'

ἰγνύῃσι(ν), ἐπ' ἰγνυσί, as manifested in the many later forms in ἰγνύα(η) and ἰγνύς in the poetic tradition, and in the Greek language generally, beginning, in the earliest surviving instance, at *Il.* 13.212:

ἦλθε κατ' ἰγνύην βεβλημένος ὀξέϊ χαλκῷ.

As far as the epic tradition is concerned, then, resegmentation of γνυ- in its various forms had begun to occur in the epic *Kunstsprache* some time before the composition of the *Iliad*. There is no evidence to show whether the resegmentation in the vernacular occurred side by side with epic, or whether it took a separate and independent track.

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