

A pattern for nominalization in Homeric Greek: New insights from nominal compounds, agent, and action nouns

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Indo-European scholars debate about the internal structure of the so-called synthetic compounds (*e.g.*, Gk. [[koupo]_N[τρόφος]_N]_{N/A} vs. [[koupo]_N[τρόφ]_{RAD}]_{OC}]_{N/A} ‘nurse of children’), whose second constituent is usually related to simple agent and action nouns, due to formal resemblance (*e.g.*, Gk. [[συ]_N[φορβός]_N]_N ‘pigs’ nourisher’ : φορβή ‘nourishment, food’; Brugmann 1889, Chantraine 1933: 8-10, Benveniste 1948, Debrunner 1954: 94-102, Risch 1974: 10, Uhlich 2002, Kastovsky 2009: 518-522, and Tribulato 2016: 89-92). However, the relationship between the second constituent of those compounds and the corresponding simple *nomina agentis* and *actionis* is problematic: by looking mainly at ancient Greek and Vedic data, some scholars argue that the simple agent noun developed by backformation (*e.g.*, Gk. τροφός ‘nurse’ after [[koupo]_N[τρόφος]_N]_{N/A} ‘nurse of children’; Chantraine 1933: 8-10, Debrunner 1954: 94-102, and Risch 1974: 10); others simply noted that the second constituent of these compounds bears agentive meaning in composition, while displays action meaning if attested alone (Wackernagel 1905: 185, Kuryłowicz 1935: 169-216, Duchesne Guillemin 1936: 51 ff., Kellens 1974, and Scarlata 1999: 1-6). This contribution tackles synthetic compounds in Homeric Greek, and aims at: 1) explaining the principles underlying the behaviour of the second constituents of these compounds; 2) clearing how the relationship between these second constituents and the corresponding simple *nomina agentis* and *actionis* has to be interpreted. In order to do so, by combining both the interaction between morphological, syntactic and semantic levels and different theoretical framework (Lazzeroni 1992, Van Valin and LaPolla 1997, Benedetti 2002, Levin and Rappaport Hovav 2005, and Romagno 2005), we carry out an extensive analysis of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, addressing the lexical meaning and the argument structure of the verbal root of each compound. The results of this study show that: 1) the relationship between the second constituents of synthetic compounds and their corresponding agent and action nouns has not necessarily to be analysed in chronological terms: the verbal base, virtually able to form both compounds and *simplicia*, seems to deverbally nominalize the Subject ([S]; [O₁] for Unaccusative roots) of its argument structure if implied in composition; conversely, as far as simple words are concerned, the verb seems to nominalize, coherently with its argument structure (Lehmann 1982, 1988, Comrie and Thompson 1985, Givón 1990, Gaeta 2002, Balles 2005, and Comrie 2011): a) [O₁], [O₂], or P (*scil.*, the Direct Object, the Oblique, the Predicate), with respect to inherently Transitive verbs; b) P, with respect to inherently Unergative verbs; c) [O₁] or [O₂], with respect to inherently Unaccusative verbs. These results suggest that the deverbal nominalization strategy might be considered as an archaic feature of – at least – ancient Greek derivative morphology.

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