QUANTIFYING THE POSTPOSITIVE POSITION IN HOMER

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After Wackernagel’s seminal article (1892) there has been a great deal of literature aiming to better define the postpositive position. Fraenkel (1933) showed that the particle án can occupy the second position within not only the sentence and clause but also smaller constituents, named cola. Building on Fraenkel, Dover (1960: 17) suggested that the position of postpositives may be determined by phonology, they following the first mobile word of a “word-group” recognizable “by the pauses of the voice which precede and follow it.” A similar position has also been supported by Janse (1990; 2000), who defines the second position—be it within either the sentence or the clause or the colon—as second within the intonational unit (cf. also Taylor 1996). Marshall (1987), focusing on án, aut-, m-, and tis, tried to provide a more detailed account of postpositive placement by proposing that they, and probably many other postpositives, can usually occupy (i) the peninitial position within the sentence/clause or colon or be (ii) directly after, but rarely (iii) later than directly after, the verb or noun with which they are associated. Since the pattern verb-postpositive increases in post-Homeric Greek, Marshall hypothesizes that grammatical relationship may have been responsible for the deferment. Luraghi (1990) argues against such a stance, claiming that the deferment of pronominal enclitics is exploited for pragmatic purposes (see also Ruijgh 1990: 229–230).

What clearly emerges from the previous research is that postpositives are such a heterogeneous class of objects varying diachronically and sometimes synchronically that the exact quantification of their placement in any single author is a necessary prerequisite for a full understanding of their behavior. In the present article, therefore, we aim to present a detailed account of the placement of postpositives by searching Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey available at Perseus’s Ancient Greek Dependency Treebank through TrEd. We provide the number of occurrences of postpositives with respect to their position in the sentence: these data are then interpreted in the light of the foregoing literature.

As an example, our data show that the particle gár mostly occurs in absolute second position. To these occurrences have to be added almost all those in absolute third position, for they almost always result from clustering of particles: i.e., gár is normally in absolute third position because the second position is already occupied by another postpositive (see Marshall 1987: 9). Of the very few remaining occurrences in third position, a small number are only apparent, being due to the presence of an initial quotation mark (e.g., “ei gár ép’ arēisin tēlos hēmetērēisi génoito, Od. 17.496); some are of the type conjunction-word-gár (e.g., all’ou gár tis prêkis egígneto myroménoisin, Od. 10.202); some others show the order preposition-dependent-gár (e.g., en moirēi gár pánta diíkeo kai katēleksas, Il. 19.186). These last two configurations are of theoretical importance: though differing from the cases of absolute second-position occurrence, they can be assimilated to them if one posits that the first two words may count as a single position by forming a phonological constituent. This is clearly suggested by some examples where the first word is an accentless prepositive, such as en. Moreover, there is good evidence that even accented prepositions and conjunctions, such as katá and allá, may have been prepositive and hence form a prosodic phrase with the
following word (Devine-Stephens 1994: 356–361). This is exactly in line with the above definition of second position as second within the intonational unit (Janse 1990; 2000).

The occurrences in a position after the third are about one seventh. They can all be related to the cases discussed above. For example, the presence of a vocative in initial position (and/or that of a punctuation mark) can very often determine the rightward deferment of gàr, as in Atréidē, sói gàr [...], Il. 23.156: the vocative is extraclausal, and hence gàr can be regarded as being in second position within its own clause/prosodic domain. Deferment of gàr is instantiated by a great variety of cases: for example, in álloisin dé taut’ epitélleō, mē gàr émoige [...] (Il. 1.295), the particle clearly belongs to the second clause, within which gàr is in second position. The particle gàr is also often in a parenthetical clause, as in allà Zeùs alápakse Kroníōn—éthele gàr pou—hós [...], Od. 17.424.

Our analysis suggests that gàr can always be taken to be in second position within a prosodic phrase: its position varies on the basis of its scope being the sentence (absolute second position) or the clause (later than the absolute second position).

REFERENCES