

Recent studies concerned with temporal expressions in Greek have generally taken one of two approaches. Some scholars select one author to mine exhaustively for all the relevant data, but do not then explore the extent to which the patterns they discover hold true in other texts (e.g. Lopez Facal 1974, which covers Herodotus, or Jiménez 1998, which concentrates on Thucydides). As a result, they run the risk of merely uncovering the idiosyncrasies of an individual author. Others look at a broader range of texts, but, in the face of overwhelming data, have to pass over potentially revealing details (e.g. Luraghi 2003). This paper attacks the question of Greek temporal expressions from a different angle: rather than limiting the investigation to one author, it takes a single subset of temporal expressions—those involving the word *nux* and its derivative *nuktôr*—to see whether a Greek author's use of one construction over another was either strictly conditioned by linguistic rules or freely chosen as an individual stylistic feature. Clearly, such an approach carries limitations of its own: what is true of *nux* cannot be assumed to be true of other nouns. Indeed, when paired with *hêmëra*, it more often than not takes a different construction. Nevertheless, a study of this sort can give new insight into why writers of Ancient Greek would have chosen one temporal expression over another.

First, compare the temporal expressions with forms of *nux* in Xenophon with those in Thucydides, as detailed by Jiménez. One difference is immediately apparent: Xenophon uses the form *nuktôr* fourteen times, Thucydides not once. Considering that *nuktôr* is hardly limited to Xenophon—it occurs as early as Hesiod and Archilochus and as late as Plutarch and Procopius—its absence from Thucydides provides a good example of how a study focused on one author can fail to depict fully the relationships between these expressions in a wider selection of texts. Nor is such idiosyncrasy limited to Thucydides. In Polybius, eleven of the sixteen examples of *nuktôr* occur conjoined with *meth' hêmëran* in a set expression that has no parallel in Xenophon's use of *nuktôr*.

Another difficulty with Jiménez's approach lies in her emphasis on the influence of the type of modifiers found with the noun on the construction used by Thucydides. Such observations are indeed valuable: it is worth noting, for instance, that the accusative of time occurs more with nouns modified by cardinal numbers, while the genitive is associated with modifiers that indicate futurity, e.g. *tou epigignomenou therous*. Indeed, a similar pattern of correlations can be seen in Xenophon: out of twenty-seven examples, *nukta* is found eleven times with a demonstrative or its equivalent, while out of nearly one hundred examples of *nuktos*, only twice is it modified by a demonstrative. But, instead of relying on a list of which modifiers occur with which constructions, it seems better to seek the underlying reason why those modifiers would be attracted to the construction in question. In Xenophon, the accusative *nukta* is found more with durative events, the genitive *nuktos* with punctual ones: this tallies well with the standard explanation of the accusative of time as one of extent, the genitive of time as a partitive. It also seems a far more economical explanation of the difference between these constructions than one based on the modifiers found with the noun.

Finally, a look at these expressions in a variety of authors can reveal diachronic trends. While the ratio of expressions with *nuktos*, *nukta*, and *nuktôr* is surprisingly stable, there is nevertheless an increase in the use of *nuktôr* by historians, from its absence in Herodotus and Thucydides to its relative frequency in Plutarch and Josephus, in whose works the use of the simple form *nuktos* as an adverbial expression is on the decline. This is a trend that makes linguistic sense: the more ambiguous form has been sidelined in favor of the more explicit one. The genitive on its own can be used for many different syntactic purposes. Thus, if there is a specific adverb like *nuktôr* that can unambiguously serve the same function as *nuktos*, there would be pressure to use it.

Works Cited

- Jiménez, M. D. (1998) 'La expresión de relaciones temporales en ático clásico,' in *Nombres y funciones: Estudios de sintaxis griega y latina*, ed. M. E. Torrego. Madrid: 65–110.
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