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Att.*erôtátô*: Phonology vs. Morphology

Att. *erôtátô*, Ion. *eirôtátô* 'ask' is a close derivational relative of Att. *éromai*, Ion. *eíromai* 'ask, inquire' (**erwo/e-*), *eré(w)ô* 'id.', but the source of the *-ô-* in *e(i)rôtátô* is obscure (Chantraine: "dérivation ... inexpliquée"). Two solutions have recently been proposed, both phonological. This approach has fundamental weaknesses, leaving room for alternative explanations. Recent work by A. Nussbaum on secondary "decasuative" formations (e.g., "de-instrumental" adjectives based on instrumental case forms) suggests an attractive morphological solution to this long-standing crux of Greek word-formation.

J. Rasmussen has suggested (1986) that while *eíromai*, *eré(w)ô* require stem-forms (Pr.-Gk.) **erwo/e-*, **erewo/e-* < IE **h₁rw-o/e-*, **h₁rew-o/e-* (cf. Rix 1970), the *-ô-* of *eirôtátô* could be explained via two assumptions: (1) Greek inherited forms with laryngeal "enlargement" or "root extension" **-h₃₋* (i.e., Greek has both **h₁rew-* and **h₁rew-h₃₋*, the latter supported by the *(*H*)*ruH-ná-h₂* of OIr. *rún*, OHG *ru:na* 'secret, rune'), and (2) a zero-grade **h₁ru-h₃₋C* would regularly yield Pr.-Gk. **erwo:C*, via the "Lex Francis-Normier". Rasmussen later (1990/91) added that *o*-grade formations like ON *rauna* 'investigation' would have lost the internal laryngeal, which might explain the Greek forms that lack it.

This explanation is ingenious but problematic. The "Lex Francis-Normier" remains controversial, and no account of *eirôtátô* that depends on it can be compelling. It is also troubling that *all* the Greek material (besides *eirôtátô*) excludes a final laryngeal: besides *eíromai*, *eré(w)ô*, note *ereunáô* 'search after', Cret. *ereutáí 'zêtétaí'*, and Myc. *e-re-u-te-re* (PY), if this means 'inspector' or the like. Nor is the comparison with OIr. *rún* etc. ironclad.

Another solution involving a root-final laryngeal (E. Tichy ap. LIV) takes *e(i)rôtátô* as denominative to a **erôtátá*: < **h₁roh₁-táh₂*, with *eréô* and *eíromai* from **h₁reh₁₋*, since Hom. aor. ...*erésthai*# excludes digamma and "für *eree-* und *eire-* ist **w* nicht gesichert". This derivation avoids the Lex Francis-Normier, but substitutes an improbable morphological entity. Nor is the lack of digamma in Hom. ...*erésthai*# problematic (Kimball 2000), and the digamma in *eire-* is independently supported (cf. Hdt. *eirôtátô*). Worse, a basis **h₁reh₁₋* separates this material from *ereunáô* and Cret. *ereutáí*.

A derived iterative like *e(i)rôtátô* should begin from a participial **e(i)rôtós*; and this should be based on the plain **h₁r(e)w-* attested in *eréô*, *eíromai*, *ereunáô*. As Nussbaum has shown (1996, 1998), many IE formations in */-V:to-/* derive from "possessive instrumentals", i.e. substantival instrumentals in **-V-h₁* (e.g., *o*-stem **-o-h₁*) which are then "adjectivized" via **-to-*, as in *k^holôtós* 'angry' (: *k^hólos* 'anger'). For *e(i)rôtátô*, one need only assume an *o*-grade action noun **h₁rów-o-* '(act of) inquiring', a well-developed type in Greek. According to one scenario, **h₁rów-o-* could have had a collective **h₁rw-áh₂* 'inquiry'; the instr. sg. **h₁rw-oh₁* 'by inquiry' (with zero grade from the collective) then serves as the basis for an adjectivization (Pr.-Gk.) **erwo:tós* (cf. *kholôtós*), whence iterative *e(i)rôtátô*.