

# INNOVATION IN INFLECTIONAL PARADIGMS: THE GREEK IMPARISYLLABIC PLURALS BETWEEN ALLOMORPHY AND OVERABUNDANCE\*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is customary for grammars of Modern Greek language (henceforth MG) to divide the inflectional paradigms of nouns into ‘parisyllabic’ and ‘imparisyllabic’ stems, i.e. stems which have the same number of syllables in all forms of paradigm and stems which have a different number of syllables in different forms of their paradigms<sup>1</sup>. This situation is found typically in the case of some non-neuter nouns (mostly masculine, but also feminine), typically referring to human beings, whose plural forms are characterised by the presence of a dental segment /ð/ before the inflectional endings, cf. the word ψαράς (m.) ‘fisherman’:

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|-----|---------------------------|--|
| (1) | ψαρά-ς (nom. sg.)         | ψαρά <u>ð</u> -ες (nom./acc./voc. pl.) |
|     | ψαρά (gen./acc./voc. sg.) | ψαρά <u>ð</u> -ων (gen. pl.)           |

The difference between parisyllabic and imparisyllabic nouns has always been one of the foremost topics of research in MG noun inflection, as pointed out by Angela Ralli in her well-documented state of the art of

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g., Triandafillidis 2002: 225 ff., Mackridge 1985: 136, Holton *et al.* 2012: 70. There is also a small group of adjectives that are characterised not only by imparisyllabic inflection in the masculine and feminine forms of the plural, but also by a stronger stem allomorphy in the forms of neuter singular (e.g., φαγάς, -ού, -άδικο ‘glutton’). However, since their imparisyllabic inflection is because they are non-prototypical adjectives which closely resemble imparisyllabic nouns both from a morphological and a semantic point of view, for space reasons they will be not considered in the present paper. On the proximity of these adjectives to imparisyllabic nouns, see my remarks in Dedè (fthc.).

morphology in Greek linguistics: «most of the studies focus on the distribution of nouns in inflection classes. Gender values and parisyllabicity vs. imparisyllabicity between inflected forms have been used as the basic criteria for such a distribution» (Ralli 2003: 86).

As a follow up, we will tackle the issue of the imparisyllabic plurals of MG as a case of allomorphy and compare it with the situation observed in earlier linguistic stages of Greek, where the imparisyllabic plural forms coexist with forms lacking the phonological /ð/ segment, thus resulting in a situation of morphological overabundance. This paper is structured as follows: in Section 2, the status of MG imparisyllabic plurals as an instance of allomorphy will be assessed and briefly discussed in the light of some recent contributions on the topic. Section 3 will focus on the diachronic development of imparisyllabic plurals in the history of Greek language, particularly in the Medieval and Early Modern phases, whereby some instances of coexistence of competing plural stems will be framed as a case of morphological overabundance. Finally, in Section 4, the diachronic development observed in Greek language from a situation of overabundance to one of allomorphy will be discussed and some provisional conclusions on the relationship between the two phenomena will be drawn.

## 2. THE ALLOMORPHY OF IMPARISYLLABIC PLURALS IN MODERN GREEK LANGUAGE

In her recent account of the various kinds of allomorphy, Paster (2016: 93) adopted a broad, quite standard definition of the phenomenon, labelling it as «any case of a single set of semantic/morphosyntactic features having two or more different context-dependent phonological realizations»<sup>2</sup>. She then proposed a classification into four main sub-types of allomorphy. Based on this definition, it is quite evident that MG imparisyllabic plurals constitute a case of allomorphy, but we can ask in

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<sup>2</sup> Paster (2016: 94) also points out that the terminology used by scholars to refer to allomorphy and the related phenomena is far from uniform. In this paper, we will mostly stick to the terminology set out by Paster, including the synonymic usage of the terms *suppletive allomorphy* and *suppletion*.

which sub-type they should be placed. More precisely, it can be questioned if it is a case of non-suppletive phonologically derived allomorphy or a suppletive allomorphy. Paster described the difference between these two kinds of allomorphy as follows:

suppletive allomorphy [...], which involves multiple underlying forms and is therefore a result of *morphological* functions of the grammar, versus non-suppletive allomorphy, which involves a single underlying form where variation is due to the action of regular rules/constraints in the *phonological* component of the grammar (Paster 2016: 94).

Given that the distribution of the two allomorphs in MG imparisyllabic stems is related to the morphosyntactic feature of number, it can be assumed that this is a case of morpho-syntactically conditioned suppletion<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, this is the interpretation that prevails in many contemporary analyses of Greek noun inflection based on the assumptions that imparisyllabic nouns have two different stems<sup>4</sup>. A positive aspect of such analyses is that they correctly point to a structural similarity between imparisyllabic nouns and other types of nouns. Let us take the paradigm seen above of the imparisyllabic ψαράς ‘fisherman’ and compare it with that of μαθητής (m.) ‘student’ and ελπίδα (f.) ‘hope’<sup>5</sup>:

(2)	ψαρά-ς (nom. sg.)	ψαράδ-ες (nom./acc./voc. pl.)
	ψαρά (gen./acc./voc. sg.)	ψαράδ-ων (gen. pl.)

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<sup>3</sup> We take for granted that the allomorphy here concerns the stem and not the endings. As Ralli recalls, earlier analyses considered the /ð/ segment to be part of the inflectional endings, but such approaches «would lead us to the undesirable conclusion of being forced to accept different paradigms for nouns that are basically inflected in the same way. [...] This is why more linguistically-sound analyses have been proposed since then» (Ralli 2003: 90).

<sup>4</sup> One of the most prominent lines of research that considers imparisyllabic nouns to have two stems is the one developed and conducted by Ralli after more than twenty years of research and couched in the lexicalist framework (see Ralli 2003: 86 ff. for an account of her perspective).

<sup>5</sup> It is important to point out that the data on which we rely are those relating to the standard variety of Greek. It is known that in certain dialects, e.g., those spoken in Cyprus, imparisyllabic plurals are even more widespread. In this respect, a thorough survey of the status of imparisyllabic plurals in MG dialects would be highly desirable.

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|-----|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (3) | μαθητή-ς (nom. sg.)         | μαθητ-ές (nom./acc./voc. pl.) |
|     | μαθητή (gen./acc./voc. sg.) | μαθητ-ών (gen. pl.)           |
| (4) | ελπίδα (nom./acc./voc. sg.) | ελπίδ-ες (nom./acc./voc. pl.) |
|     | ελπίδα-ς (gen. sg.)         | ελπίδ-ων (gen. pl.)           |

As can easily be observed, all these nouns show stem allomorphy between singular and plural, albeit of different kinds. In the case of *μαθητής* and *ελπίδα*, the phonologically “poorer” stem is the one that appears in the plural form, while the singular stem displays an extra vowel (unpredictable based on the plural form). This situation is not exceptional to Greek, but is the norm, as observed again by Ralli (2003: 90): «the majority of masculine and feminine nouns show a stem form ending in a vowel (*a/i*) in the singular, and an allomorphic variation without this stem-final vowel in the plural».

However, one of the major drawbacks of analyses positing a two-stem morpho-syntactically conditioned suppletion is that they tend to overlook the fact that a very similar, but not identical, pattern of allomorphy exists in a class of neuter stems, namely those ending in *-μα*, cf. the paradigm of *πρόβλημα* (n.) ‘problem’:

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|-----|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (5) | πρόβλημα (nom./acc./voc. sg.) | προβήματ-α (nom./acc./voc. pl.) |
|     | προβλήματ-ος (gen. sg.)       | προβλημάτ-ων (gen. pl.)         |

Here, the two stems in *-μα* and *-ματ-* appear with a different distribution and the genitive singular aligns with the plural forms, so that no morpho-syntactic criterion can be invoked to explain this pattern of allomorphy. Additionally, it can be noted that the phonological realisation of the allomorphy in imparisyllabic neuter nouns in *-μα* shows a close resemblance with that of non-neuter imparisyllabic nouns in that it involves the presence/absence of a dental segment (/t/ in neuter, /ð/ in non-neuter nouns) at the end of the stem.

Such a situation invites the interpretation of the allomorphy of MG imparisyllabic non-neuter nouns not as suppletive, but as phonologically conditioned, with the regular loss of the dental stop before /s/ and at word

boundary<sup>6</sup>. It can also be noted that the parallel allomorphy of non-neuter parisyllabic stems (see above examples 3-4) can be easily accounted for in phonological terms since the vowelless stem is realised before endings beginning with a vowel, in line with the tendency, clearly observed in Greek language, to avoid vowel hiatus.

Indeed, there have been many attempts to account for the allomorphy of MG imparisyllabic nouns as phonologically conditioned, each with its own strengths and weaknesses, but so far none of them has stood out among scholars, mainly for theoretical reasons (for a recent critical account of the different analyses of allomorphy in MG noun inflection, see Markopoulos 2018: 29-38).

Giorgos Markopoulos (2018) recently attempted a unified account of all the above-mentioned cases of allomorphy as phonologically conditioned. His work is embedded in the framework of Distributed Morphology integrated with the theoretical assumptions of Gradient Harmonic Grammar (Smolensky & Goldrick 2016). Within Markopoulos' approach, all non-neuter imparisyllabic nouns are thought to be synchronically formed by the means of an underlying formative element /-áð-/ whose surface realisations depend on various optimality constraints (Markopoulos 2018: 69 ff.). It can surface e.g. as /áð/ in ψαράáδες 'fishermen', as /ð/ in ταξιτζήðες 'taxi-drivers', καφέðες 'coffees', as /á/ in ψαράς 'fisherman' or as /Ø/ in ταξιτζής 'taxi-driver'.

It is important here to remark that, although the underlying representation of the suffix as /-áð-/ indeed corresponds to the phonological realisation of the suffix which historically gave rise to the

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<sup>6</sup> This was pointed out as early as 1971 by Douglas Adams in his review of Hans Ruge's book on the origin of Modern Greek noun inflection: «A more plausible explanation, then, for the imparisyllabics would be to consider them not vowel stems at all but stems ending in dh. We then have a more general rule which deletes both t and dh before word boundary or s.» (Adams 1971: 947). However, in that context Adams simply states that his interpretation is clearly better and does not pursue the question any further. Another fact that is often cited by those who support the view that imparisyllabic nouns have two separate stems is that the stem ending in /ð/ shows up in derivation processes, e.g., ψαράς 'baker' → ψαράð-ίκο 'bakery' (see e.g., Ralli 2003: 90). However, it is easily observed that the stem with the dental segment is realised before vowel-initial suffixes, just as it happens in inflection.

<sup>7</sup> The precise notation of the suffix used by Markopoulos (-a<sub>0,6</sub>ð<sub>0,8</sub>-) is somewhat different because it is linked with technical details of his theoretical approach which cannot be discussed here.

imparisyllabic noun inflection pattern in MG (see below), it must not be viewed in all instances as the concrete phonological shape of a suffix that was attached to a base to derive a noun. That is, while we can of course view the noun ψαράς, pl. -άδες as a noun derived from ψάρι ‘fish’ by the means of a suffix -αδ- phonologically realised as /að/, we cannot think of ταξιτζής, pl. -τζήδες as derived from ταξί with the addition of the suffix -τζή- and an additional suffix -αδ- (ταξί → \*ταξ-ιτζη-άδ-). Similarly, we cannot interpret καφές, pl. -έδες as derived from a base whatsoever, because it is a loanword from an underived noun (< Tur. *kahve* < Ar. *qahwa*). In Markopoulos’ approach, positing a single suffix for all imparisyllabic non-neuter nouns that show /ð/ at the end of the plural stem is just a way to account for their phonological, morpho-syntactic, and semantic similarities.

The details of Markopoulos’ theoretical framework or his analyses of the various patterns of MG noun inflection allomorphy (which have, in my opinion, many strengths but also some weak points) will be not discussed in detail as it is out of the scope of this study. However, the main point here is that, from a theoretical and purely synchronic standpoint, the allomorphy of MG imparisyllabic nouns can be described and interpreted either as a morpho-syntactically conditioned suppletive allomorphy or as a phonologically conditioned allomorphy.

This holds true even if we consider that the ultimate historical source of this allomorphy is morphological in nature. As efficiently described by Thumb (1901: 230-233), the imparisyllabic inflection originated from the overlap of the Koine and the Ionic inflection of a class of Ancient Greek *ā*-stems ending in -ᾱς in the nominative singular. While the Koine paradigm of these nouns closely followed that of Attic Greek (except for the genitive singular in -ᾱ rather than in -οῖ), in the Ionic dialect it was reshaped after the -αδ- stems of the type φονάς, -άδος ‘fugitive’. As a result, the newly built paradigm for these nouns retained the ancient inflection in the singular while adopting the Ionic inflection in the plural forms<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> The reasons of this paradigm split remain obscure, but it was undoubtedly favoured by the fact that this class of nouns originated from short forms of personal names (e.g., Ἀπολλᾱς < Ἀπολλόδορος), which normally had no plural. For the origin of this nouns from onomastics, see

Before considering the behaviour of imparisyllabic plurals in an earlier stage of the history of Greek language, it is worth highlighting a fact which is relevant for our topic and could be somewhat problematic to account for in Markopoulos' terms. There are some nouns in MG that show two plural forms, one parisyllabic and the other imparisyllabic with respect to the singular, e.g. καθηγητής 'professor':

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|-------------------------------|---|
| (6) καθηγητή-ς (nom. sg.)     | καθηγητ-ές (nom./acc./voc. pl.)<br>καθηγητ-άδες |
| καθηγητή (gen./acc./voc. sg.) | καθηγητ-ών (gen. pl.)<br>καθηγητ-άδων           |

As correctly pointed out by Markopoulos, the imparisyllabic plural forms, «limited in number, are used only in informal environments and have a potentially pejorative connotation» (Markopoulos 2018: 70 fn. 31). In our example, the difference between καθηγητές and καθηγητάδες is that the first form is semantically unmarked, while the second designates professors who are arrogant and self-important. In Markopoulos' theoretical framework, it is difficult to account for these two different outcomes in purely phonological terms. Indeed, in the same passage Markopoulos is forced to assume that «in these cases the exponent is inserted via an optional rule that is activated only in specific pragmatic contexts». This implies that we are dealing with *two* stems whose distribution is not governed by phonological factors, i.e., we are faced with a case of suppletion rather than of phonologically conditioned allomorphy. We are thus left with the conclusion – undesirable from a theoretical perspective which aims at giving a unitary explanation of these phenomena – that the same pattern of allomorphy is better explained as phonologically driven for some nouns and as a case of suppletion for other nouns<sup>9</sup>.

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the recent contribution by Laurent Dubois (2017), on the development of their inflection also refer to Horrocks 2010: 287-288, Holton *et al.* 2019: 301.

<sup>9</sup> The ambiguous status of the allomorphy of MG imparisyllabic nouns is well described in the light of the canonical typology of suppletion set out by Greville Corbett (2007). If we assess the

A possible solution to this dilemma comes from the fact that nouns with double plural forms sometimes give rise to new singular forms ending in *-άς* whose phonological shape conforms to the usual inflection patterns of imparisyllabic nouns. They also maintain the pejorative connotation associated with the imparisyllabic plural forms<sup>10</sup>. For instance, a quick search on the Internet shows that a singular form *καθηγητάς* does indeed exist and, at least in some instances, has a clearly pejorative meaning. Based on such evidence, the situation seen in (6) could be reformulated as follows:

- (7) *καθηγητή-ς* (nom. sg.)                      *καθηγητ-ές* (nom./acc./voc. pl.)  
*καθηγητή* (gen./acc./voc. sg.)      *καθηγητ-ών* (gen. pl.)
- (8) *καθηγητά-ς* (nom. sg.)                      *καθηγητ-άδες* (nom./acc./voc. pl.)  
*καθηγητά* (gen./acc./voc. sg.)<sup>11</sup> *καθηγητ-άδων* (gen. pl.)

In this scenario, the suffix */-άδ-/* simply acts as a denominal suffix that derives nouns having the same referent as their base but with an adjunct pejorative connotation<sup>12</sup>. If this were always the case, the problem of MG

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features of this allomorphy against the criteria proposed by Corbett to identify the canonical instances of suppletion, we discover MG imparisyllabic inflection to be at the extreme periphery of that category.

<sup>10</sup> This fact agrees with the well-known productivity of the suffix *-αδ-*, emphasised also by Markopoulos (2018: 69), who gave examples of recent formations (such as *χιπστεράς* ‘hipster’, alongside the non-integrated form *χιπστερ*) that are not listed by dictionaries of MG. It is worth noting that the productivity of these formations is not limited to nouns formed with the actual suffix *-αδ-*, but extends to all imparisyllabic nouns, as is confirmed by other neologisms quoted by Markopoulos. Examples of such nouns include *κουκουές* ‘member or supporter of the Communist Party of Greece’ → pl. *κουκουέδες* or *κυρλές* ‘person overly formal in style’ → pl. *κυρλέδες*. Regarding these two forms, while the former is already registered as an imparisyllabic noun in Babinotitis’ dictionary, for the latter we find only the uninflected adjective *κυρλέ* (see the relevant entries in Babinotitis 2002).

<sup>11</sup> The existence of this form has also been confirmed through online research.

<sup>12</sup> Whether we are dealing with the same suffix that derives nouns denoting human beings in relation to their profession or other relevant characters (as in *ψάρι* ‘fish’ → *ψαράς* ‘fisherman’) or with two different, homophone suffixes is not relevant for the topic of this paper. In his account of MG derivational suffixes, Sotiropoulos lists two suffixes *-α-* (not *-αδ-*, since in his view the */δ/* is a phonological insertion) associated with imparisyllabic nouns: the first is seen in agent nouns like *ψαράς*, the second is an evaluative suffix with an augmentative meaning, such as in *δόντι* ‘tooth’ → *δοντάς* ‘big tooth’ (see Sotiropoulos 1972: 81, 84). Although the pejorative



nouns with double plural stems could be easily solved simply by stating that there are in fact no such double stems.

However, this is not always the case, since there are some nouns that actually show both parisyllabic and imparisyllabic plural forms but no actual singular stem in *-α-* corresponding to the plural stem in *-αδ-*. In these cases, the imparisyllabic plural forms usually do not have a pejorative value, being only marked diaphasically and diastratically as popular forms used in informal contexts<sup>13</sup>. Having outlined the relevant characters of the allomorphy of MG imparisyllabic nouns, we will now contemplate their status in an earlier stage of the development of the language.

### 3. IMPARISYLLABIC PLURALS IN MEDIEVAL GREEK AS A CASE OF OVERABUNDANCE?

In the Greek history, we can see that the main dynamics that led to the definition of the class of imparisyllabic nouns were in progress, if not already firmly in place, in the medieval phase<sup>14</sup>. In this regard, it should first be noted that in this phase the oscillation within the same paradigms, between parisyllabic and imparisyllabic inflection is generally greater than in MG. This is not surprising considering that it was a period of profound transformation, characterised by a highly variable level of language standardisation. In this phase, we observe a great expansion of

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meaning is not included by Sotiropoulos, we can safely assign it to the augmentative suffix, given the well-known proximity of the semantic notions of augmentation and pejoration (for a recent exposition of the topic, see Prieto 2016). It is worth noting that in recent accounts of MG evaluative morphology, the two suffixes listed by Sotiropoulos are considered to be one and the same (Melissaropoulou 2016: 271). On the semantic characterisation of MG imparisyllabic nouns, including their relationship with the category of agent nouns, see also my remarks in Dedè (fthc).

<sup>13</sup> An example could be the noun βουτηχτής ‘diver’, which displays the plural forms βουτηχτές and βουτηχτάδες but no singular form βουτηχτάς.

<sup>14</sup> The data presented in this section are mostly taken from the well-documented recent descriptive grammar by Holton *et al.* 2019. For this reason, with the label ‘medieval Greek’ (henceforth MedG), which we use for the sake of convenience of reference, we actually refer to the time period covered by that grammar, which goes roughly from 1100 to 1700, thus including late medieval Greek and the first phase of modern Greek. Unless otherwise specified, it is to be understood that the phenomena in question were already present in the medieval phase.





Lastly, criterion 4 concerns the conditions to which overabundance may (or may not) be subject. To this respect, the data seem to point to a conditioned – thus less canonical – overabundance. Adopting Thornton’s (2019: 245) terminology, we can assume that the conditioning factors are both «grammatical» and «geo-socio-stylistic». Among the grammatical factors, the most prominent is phonological since the forms with /((á)ð/ are largely preferred by oxytone nouns. The second relevant conditioning factor is semantic, because imparisyllabic inflection is favoured by nouns referring to human beings, particularly family members and people referred to based on their work or their particular characteristics. As for the geo-socio-stylistic factors, imparisyllabic plurals are very often associated with diaphasic and diastratic variation, since they are marked as more popular than corresponding parisyllabic plurals<sup>18</sup>, and with diatopic variation, being particularly widespread in certain areas (such as Cyprus).

With reference to the consequences of the overabundance conditions, we observed that although in some cases the overabundance seems to be maintained (cf. the above cited κτίστες/κτιστάδες, αφέντες/αφεντάδες), there is a clear tendency towards the preferential choice of one of the cell mates based on the conditioning factors seen above. This results in a more or less strict complementary distribution of the concurring plural forms. Proof of this can be found in the treatment of loanwords, which show a clear preference for imparisyllabic plurals. Quoting Thornton’s (2019: 250) words, referring to the case of overabundance of Russian *čelovek/ljudej* ‘person.GEN.PL’, we could say that the coexistence of parisyllabic and imparisyllabic plurals in the paradigm of the same lexical item in MedG is an instance of overabundance from the point of view of the system which tends to be progressively “neutralised” at the level of norm and usage.

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<sup>18</sup> To this regard, one must of course be aware of the intrinsic limitation of considering only written, literary texts which cannot be avoided when analysing closed-corpus languages like MedG. However, the frequent occurrence of imparisyllabic plurals with basic vocabulary words and/or in texts of more popular genres, combined with the fact that they are still perceived as popular forms in MG, assures us that they had a popular connotation also in MedG.

#### 4. BETWEEN ALLOMORPHY AND OVERABUNDANCE

As it has been shown in the previous sections, the overabundance that characterises some nouns in MedG and MG is closely intertwined with the general tendency to allomorphy observable in Greek from its earliest stages<sup>19</sup>. If we look at the diachronic development of this phenomenon from MedG to MG, the following observations can be made.

First, the overabundance in Greek inflectional paradigms is a by-product of the complex process of simplification and restructuring of inflectional paradigms which began in Late Antiquity and continued throughout the medieval and modern period. During this process, the imparisyllabic inflection progressively imposed itself as the preferred inflection for nouns with certain phonological, semantic, and sociolinguistic features. Here, we can see that these diverse types of conditioning factors lead to different outcomes. When the shift to the imparisyllabic inflection is triggered by a phonological feature, namely the oxytone accentuation, the result is stem allomorphy between singular and plural forms but little to no overabundance, due to the dominant nature of imparisyllabic plurals (e.g., ψαράς → pl. ψαράδες/\*ψαρές, αλεπού ‘fox’ → pl. αλεπούδες/\*αλεπές). The same can be said for loanwords, which tend to adhere strictly to the imparisyllabic inflection whether they are oxytone or not.

On the other hand, if the emergence of imparisyllabic inflection is triggered mostly by semantic factors, such as in case of non-oxytone nouns, which refer to human beings focusing on their particular characteristics, overabundance is found to occur more often. It is also important to note that actual instances of overabundance always imply not just the bare coexistence of a parisyllabic and an imparisyllabic plural stem, but the coexistence of a singular stem ending in any vowel and a

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<sup>19</sup> This is in line with the fact that for overabundance to occur there must also be another deviation from the ideal 1:1 ratio between form and function in the morphological exponence of grammatical features. As Thornton says: «la sovrabbondanza, per realizzarsi, deve inevitabilmente ricorrere a un altro dei fenomeni non canonici sopra elencati. Quando si hanno due (o più) forme che realizzano la stessa cella di un paradigma [...] almeno una delle due forme presenta una deviazione dalla canonicità» (Thornton 2016: 291). For the key role played by allomorphy in Greek inflectional morphology see Ralli 2007.

plural stem in -άδ-, cf. the cases of the stem in /a/ πατέρας ‘father’ → pl. πατέρες/πατεράδες and the stem in /i/ κτίστης ‘builder’ → pl. κτίστες/κτιστάδες. This is particularly interesting if we consider that other nouns in /i/ that adopt the imparisyllabic inflection, particularly loanwords, develop more phonologically regular plural stems in /ið/ (e.g., the type βεζίρης ‘vizier’ → pl. βεζίρηδες). In theory, an overabundance pattern like κτίστης → pl. κτίστες/\*κτίστηδες would have been entirely possible, but in fact it is never found. We could therefore state that the kind of overabundance observed in MedG and MG, while based on allomorphy patterns well-established in the language, is a little more marked at the phonological and morphological level.

Lastly, in long term we can observe the tendency of Greek to reduce the instances of actual overabundance. The easiest way in which this is achieved is simply by establishing a preferred inflectional plural stem for each lexeme on a phonological, semantic and/or lexical basis (see above, Section 3). There is, however, another phenomenon that potentially leads to the loss of overabundance, namely the backformation of new singular forms starting from plural imparisyllabic forms in -άδ-, as in the above case of καθηγητάς ‘arrogant professor’ from καθηγητάδες, itself an overabundant plural form of καθηγητής ‘professor’ (see above, examples 6, 7, and 8).

To conclude, we have given an account of the morphological overabundance which is observed in the inflectional paradigms of some Greek nouns from its medieval stage to the present, and of its relationship with the general tendency of Greek towards allomorphy. Of course, further work needs to be done, especially as regards to quantitative analyses of the phenomenon, but this may well be a topic for future research.

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