

ANCIENT GREEK ΣΤΑΧΥΣ AND ΑΣΤΑΧΥΣ: SEMANTIC AND MORPHOLOGICAL DISCREPANCIES

by

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ABSTRACT: The Greek appellative στάχυς m. ‘ear of corn’ cannot be treated as a synonym of ἄσταχυς. The latter form represents a compound noun ἄ-σταχυς with the primitive meaning ‘grain growing in the field; (mowed) cereal plant with the stem and ear’ (< Proto-Greek *ἄ-σταχυς ‘(of corn) having the ear; with the ear’). The original sense is securely preserved in Homeric poems (*Il.* II 148; *HH. Cer.* 454, 456), as well as in the works of Herodotus of Halicarnassus (*Hdt.* V 92), Callimachus of Cyrene (*Call., H.* 4, 284; 6, 20; *Aet. fr.* 75, 46) and Aratus of Soli (*Arat.* 150). It is suggested that the confusion of these two terms appeared in late antiquity (see the Hesychian gloss ἄσταχύεσσι· τοῖς στάχυσιν), probably not earlier than the 1st century BC. Most modern dictionaries of the Ancient Greek language suggest an incorrect meaning of the compound ἄσταχυς.

1. INTRODUCTION

We are of the opinion that the Greek appellative ἄσταχυς has not received a proper semantic explanation in the existing lexicographic literature. It is not a synonym of the word στάχυς m. ‘ear of the corn’, but rather an independent derivative with the specialized meaning of ‘grain growing in the field; (mowed) cereal with the stem and ear’. In the present article, we intend to perform both a semantic and morphological analysis of this lexeme. To that end, we will discuss all attestations of the term ἄσταχυς in Greek literary and lexicographic sources in order to establish the correct meaning of the word. Additionally, we will shed new light on the word formation and etymology of the lexeme discussed.

2. THE GREEK APPELLATIVE ΑΣΤΑΧΥΣ IN LEXICOGRAPHIC TRADITION

The dictionaries of Ancient Greek are in agreement regarding the three basic definitions of the Greek appellative ἄσταχυς:

2.1. ‘ear of corn’ (LIDDELL, SCOTT 1899: 125; 1996: 260; BEEKES 2010: 155; DIGGLE 2021: 232) or ‘spike of grain’ (MONTANARI 2018: 320), cf. also