Enclitics

For the general principles of Greek accentuation, see the on-line tutorial at:
http://atticgreek.org/accent/accentuation.html

For an account of how enclitics function, see:
http://atticgreek.org/accent/enclitics1.html

A glossary of relevant terms is included at the end of this sheet.

There are a variety of ways to describe how enclitics work. Essentially, however, an enclitic is a monosyllabic or disyllabic word that attaches itself onto the end of the word that precedes it, to form a new compound term. The resulting compound is not usually printed as a single unit,[1] but it would have been pronounced as a unit and is considered as such when it comes to the accentuation of the new compound.[2]

> [It should be evident that enclitics (with some exceptions, such as ἔστιν) do not normally appear at the beginning of a sentence, or after a mark of punctuation.]

Ideally, an enclitic would attach itself to its "host" seamlessly, much as proclitics do. This happens on occasion, but often some step is needed in order to make the new compound conform to the principles of contonation.

RULE #1: the natural accentuation of the "host" itself usually remains unchanged: that element of the new compound is pronounced as it would have been pronounced in isolation.[3]

If necessary, however, a second accent will be added to the new compound form in order to make certain that the rule of contonation applies to the new form as a whole. Where this step is necessary, the resulting compound will have two accents, the second of which will ensure that the compound obeys the rule of contonation.

> [It is likely that a similar phenomenon was evident in compound forms in general: as in English, one would expect there to have been secondary accents guiding the pronunciation of compound terms, some of which can be of astonishing length in Greek.]

The basic procedure is to attach the enclitic onto the "host" and see whether the resulting compound follows the rule of contonation. If it does, then no further step is needed:

δεσπότης + γε	=	δεσπότης γε
μοιρῶν + γε	=	μοιρῶν γε

[1] Thus the orthography of Greek enclitics tends to differ from that of, e.g., *-ne* and *–que* in Latin; consider, however, forms such as ὅδε, ἔγωγε.

[2] This principle does not apply when a string of enclitics appear one after another: RULE #7 below. This is only one of several places where the rules passed down by the ancient grammarians are subject to a certain doubt.

[3] Like most rules in Greek, this one has its exceptions. Generally, however, in such cases the enclitic and its "host" will be printed as one word — e.g., ἔγωγε, ἔμοιγε.

RULE #2: if the "host" has an acute on the ultima, it will remain acute in the new compound, since the ultima of the "host" will now form the penult or antepenult of the new compound:

φυτόν + γε	=	φυτόν γε
φυτόν + ἐστιν	=	φυτόν ἐστιν

RULE #3: if the resulting compound does not accord with the principle of contonation, the first inclination will be for the enclitic to throw its accent back onto the final syllable of the "host" in the form of an acute accent:

ἄνθρωπος + γε	=	ἄνθρωπός γε
μοῖρα + γε	=	μοῖρά γε
ἄνθρωπος + ἐστιν	=	ἄνθρωπός ἐστιν
μοῖρα + ἐστιν	=	μοῖρά ἐστιν

This serves, in aural terms, to bind the enclitic to the host as a unit.

RULE #4: in the case of disyllabic enclitics, the last step will not always do the trick. Consider the case of δεσπότης + ἐστιν. In this instance, the enclitic cannot throw its accent back, since a Greek word cannot have an acute accent on two successive syllables; on the other hand, the resulting compound, left unmodified, would violate the principles of contonation. As a result, the disyllabic enclitic receives an accent, but on its final syllable:

δεσπότης + ἐστιν	=	δεσπότης ἐστίν

The accent on the enclitic will follow the conventions of the particular declension or conjugation: e.g., the genitive plural of τις will receive a circumflex: ἀνθρώπων τινῶν.

There are three principal instances where this system breaks down:

RULE #5: the first (and most common) is where a paroxytone or a perispomenon is followed by a monosyllabic enclitic that contains a long vowel or diphthong (e.g., πως, μου). In these instances, the enclitic is left unaccented even though the resulting compound violates the rule of contonation:

δεσπότης + μου	=	δεσπότης μου
μοιρῶν + μου	=	μοιρῶν μου

The simple way to remember this is to note that **a monosyllabic enclitic will never retain its own accent**. (Cf. the summary of procedures outlined on the next page.)

RULE #6: the second common instance where the system breaks down is where a perispomenon is followed by a disyllabic enclitic. In this case, the enclitic is left unaccented even though the resulting compound violates the rule of contonation:

μοιρῶν + ἐστιν	=	μοιρῶν ἐστιν
τῶ + σφεων	=	τῶ σφεων

RULE #9: a small number of disyllabic enclitics end in a long vowel (e.g., *τινων, σφεων*). When these are preceded by an oxytone, they follow the usual procedure of throwing their accent back, even though the resulting compound violates the rule of contonation. This constitutes the third (much less common) instance where the system breaks down:

ὑπό + τινων	=	*ὑπό τινῶν*
δή + σφεων	=	*δή σφεῶν*

In short, a disyllabic enclitic never retains its own accent if the final syllable of the host is accented.

RULE #8: in instances where an enclitic is preceded by a proclitic, the enclitic will normally throw its accent back onto the proclitic in accordance with RULE #3. (The principal exceptions involve *ἔστιν*.) E.g. — *οἵ γε φίλοι.*

RULE #9: when two or more enclitics follow one another in a row, the first will behave normally and the others will follow RULE #3 above and throw their accents back (if possible). E.g. —

ἄνθρωπός τίς ποτέ μοι ἔλεγε …

Final Note: not all modern editors follow all of the above conventions. You will find places where some of the procedures set out above (especially in regard to the exceptional cases) are not followed by every text that you read.

Summary of Procedures

Monosyllabic Enclitic	Disyllabic Enclitic
φυτόν γε	*φυτόν ἐστιν / *ὑπό τινων*
*δεσπότης γε / *δεσπότης μου*	*δεσπότης ἐστίν / ἀνθρώπων τινῶν*
ἄνθρωπός γε	*ἄνθρωπός ἐστιν*
*μοιρῶν γε / *μοιρῶν μου*	*μοιρῶν ἐστιν / *δικαστῶν τινων*
μοῖρά γε	*μοῖρά ἐστιν*

Glossary of Relevant Terms

antepenult — the second-to-last syllable of a word (i.e., the third syllable of a word when counting back from the end). Example: δεσ-πό-της

contonation — in modern English, every word is expected to have a stress accent distinguish one of its final syllables (regularly either the penult or the antepenult: *calcific<u>á</u>tion, rem<u>á</u>rkable*). Ancient Greek does something quite similar; instead of a stress accent, however, Greek employs a change in the pitch, or musical tone, of the speaker's voice. In Classical Attic Greek, every word was marked by a rise in the pitch of the speaker's voice on one syllable near the end of the word. (You might compare, e.g., modern-day Mandarin, which also employs a set of tonal accents to help define meaning.) The pitch could rise on one syllable and fall back to the base tone on the next syllable (as indicated by an acute accent: e.g., ἄν-θρω-πος, where the pitch of the speaker's voice would rise on the initial alpha and fall back to the base tone on the omega), or it could rise and fall in the course of a single (long) syllable (as in the case of μοῖρα, where the circumflex accent indicates the rise and fall of the speaker's voice over the course of the long οι). In either case, it was expected that no more than one short syllable (if any) would follow the syllable on which the speaker's voice returned to the base tone (if any): to have more than one syllable, or a single long syllable, follow in this position would have sounded as awkward to a Greek as putting the stress on the wrong syllable sounds in modern-day English.

The principle of contonation does not, then, tell us where the accent in a particular Greek word must be placed; instead, it provides guidelines that tell us where a particular accent cannot be employed. Each Greek word will have its natural accent determined by the particular nature of the word itself. Since the endings of Greek words are notoriously subject to modification, however (as one works through the various persons, numbers, and moods of a Greek verb, for instance, or the various cases and numbers of a noun), the placement of the accent in a specific form of a word will often have to be modified in order to accord with the rules set out in the preceding paragraph.

Thus ἄν-θρω-πος accords with the principle of contonation, since the speaker's voice returns to the base tone on the omega and that syllable (-θρω-), in turn, is followed by only a single syllable (-πος), which has a short omicron.

The form ἄν-θρω-ποις, on the other hand, would violate the principle of contonation, since the syllable on which the speaker's voice returns to the base tone (-θρω-) is now followed by a single syllable (-ποις), but one that has the long οι of the dative plural ending. In order to accord with the principle of contonation, the accentuation of this form has to shift by placing the acute accent nearer the end of the word: ἀν-θρώ-ποις. The resulting form accords with the principle of contonation, since there is now (as it happens) no syllable following that on which the speaker's voice returns to the base tone (-ποις).

The form ἄν-θρω-πι-α is equally unacceptable, since more than one syllable follows the syllable on which the speaker's voice returns to the base tone (-θρω-). In order to accord with the principle of contonation, the accentuation of this form again has to shift by placing the acute accent nearer the end of the word: ἀν-θρώ-πι-α. The resulting form accords with the principle of contonation, since there is now only a single short alpha following the syllable on which the speaker's voice returns to the base tone (-πι-).

disyllable — a word comprised of two syllables

enclitic — a separate monosyllabic or disyllabic word that attaches itself to the end of the word that precedes it, to form a compound. Examples: γε, τε, τις, τινες, ποτε

monosyllable — a word comprised of one syllable

oxytone — a word with an acute accent on the final syllable. Example: ἐχθρός

paroxytone — a word with an acute accent on the penult. Example: δεσπότης

penult — the next-to-last syllable of a word

perispomenon — a word with a circumflex accent on the final syllable. Example: μοιρῶν

proclitic — a separate, unaccented monosyllabic word that attaches itself to the beginning of the word that follows it, to form a compound. Examples: ὁ, ἡ, οὐ

properispomenon — a word with a circumflex accent on the next-to-last syllable. Example: μοῖρα

ultima — the final syllable of a word