Chapter Twenty-One
Participial Mode

Participles are verbs configured to operate as adjectives, i.e., to function in participial mode. As you have learned, Greek verb morphology uses six stems to systematically communicate twelve different combinations of aspect and voice as follows:

	Active Voice	Middle Voice	Passive Voice
Event	Aorist Active Stem		Aorist Passive Stem
Process	Present Stem		
Resultant-state	Perfect Active Stem	Perfect Middle Stem	
Future-event	Future Active Stem		Aorist Passive Stem/σ/
Future-resultant-state	Perfect Active Stem/σ/	Perfect Middle Stem/σ/	

In principle, all six stems with all twelve senses can be made into participles.

Morphology of participles

All participles are constructed from the following components:

stem /<theme vowel> **participle marker** / **<feminine gender marker>** / **case ending**

Participle Markers. Greek configures a stem to operate in participial mode by adding the appropriate participial marker. The participial markers are listed below.

Active Participles

The marker for *all active participles except the perfect* is /**ντ**/.

The marker for the *perfect active participle* is /**τ**/

Middle Participles:

The marker for *all middle participles* is /**μενο**/.

Passive Participles

The marker for *all passive participles except the aorist and future* is the middle marker: /**μενο**/.

The *aorist passive and future passive participles* use the *active* participle marker /**ντ**/. This shouldn't surprise you since the aorist passive regularly uses active markers (indicative and imperative personal endings, infinitive endings, and now participle markers).

Theme Vowels. The **participle marker** is joined to the **stem** by the appropriate theme vowel:

- Present, future, strong aorist active: **ο**/**ντ**/. Present, future, strong aorist middle: **ο**/**μενο**/.
- Perfect active: **ο**/**τ**/. Perfect middle-passive /**μενο**/ <athematic>.
- Weak aorist active: **α**/**ντ**/. Weak aorist active: **α**/**μενο**/.
- Weak and strong aorist passives: **ε**/**ντ**/ (originally **η**/**ντ**/, perhaps. Remember that the sound ηντ is almost always spelled εντ.)

Stems of ***παυ***/ and ***λεγ***/ with their appropriate theme vowels and participle markers:

	Active	Middle	Passive
Event	**παυσ**/**αντ** **εἰπ**/**οντ**/	**παυσ**/**αμενο**/ **εἰπ**/**ομενο**/	**παυσθ**/**εντ**/ **λεχθ**/**εντ**/
Process	**παυ**/**οντ**/ **λεγ**/**οντ**/	**παυ**/**ομενο**/ **λεγ**/**ομενο**/	
Resultant-state	**πεπαυκ**/**οτ**/ **εἰρηκ**/**οτ**/	**πεπαυσ**/**μενο**/ **εἴρη**/**μενο**/	
Future-Event	**παυσ**/**οντ**/ **ἐρε**/**οντ**/	**παυσ**/**ομενο**/ **ἐρε**/**ομενο**/	**παυσθησ**/**ομενο**/ **λεχθησ**/**ομενο**/

Feminine Participles. The participle markers above are configured to modify a masculine or neuter noun. *In order to configure a participle to modify a feminine noun, a marker must be added to indicate feminine gender.*

- The feminine form of the /μενο/ participle marker is /**μενα**/. That is, the feminine is first declension while the masculines and neuters are second declension—just like καλός, καλή, καλόν [καλό/, καλά/, καλό/].
- To make the feminine form of participles marked with /**ντ**/ and **τ**/, the sound **γα**/ was added in Greek prehistory. Because of the addition of **γα**/, the feminine forms are first declensions (ending in **α**) even though the masculine and neuter forms of these participles are 3rd declensions (ending in **τ**/). That primitive **γα**/ sound produced the following written forms in the historic period.

οντ/**γα**/ → **ουσα** **εντ**/**γα**/ → **εισα**
αντ/**γα**/ → **ασα** **οτ**/**γα**/ → **υια**

In later analyses, I will usually sacrifice detailed analysis for convenience and clarity and show the combined sound of **participle marker** + **feminine marker** simply as a **feminine participle marker**.

So, **stems** + participle marker in the three genders take the following forms.

		Active	Middle	Passive
Event	M	παυσ/αντ/	παυσ/αμενο/	παυσθ/εντ/
	F	παυσ/ασα/	παυσ/αμενα/	παυσθ/εισα/
	N	παυσ/αντ/	παυσ/αμενο/	παυσθ/εντ/
Process	M	παυ/οντ/	παυ/ομενο/	
	F	παυ/ουσα/	παυ/ομενα/	
	N	παυ/οντ/	παυ/ομενο/	
Resultant-state	M	πεπαυκ/οτ/	πεπαυσ/μενο/	
	F	πεπαυκ/υια/	πεπαυσ/μενα/	
	N	πεπαυκ/οτ/	πεπαυσ/μενο/	
Future-Event	M	παυσ/οντ/	παυσ/ομενο/	παυσθησ/ομενο/
	F	παυσ/ουσα/	παυσ/ομενα/	παυσθησ/ομενα/
	N	παυσ/οντ/	παυσ/ομενο/	παυσθησ/ομενο/

Case Endings.

Since participles are adjectives, they must agree with the nouns they modify in gender, case, and number. Consequently, the participial stems above must have **case endings** attached. Fortunately, you don't have to learn how to *decline* the participial forms because you already know how to decline nouns and adjectives of the same types as these participles.

- Participles that end in **μενο**/, **μενα**/, **μενο**/ decline just like καλό/, καλά/, καλό/ (καλός, ή, όν).
- Other **feminine** participles—those ending in **ουσα**/, **σασα**/, and **εισα**/—decline just like μοῦσα and other short-alpha feminines.
- The rest, which end in /**ντ**/ and /**τ**/, are 3rd-declension nouns and decline predictably. *Masculines* in /**ντ**/ decline like λέοντ/ and ἐλέφαντ/; masculines in /**τ**/ decline like ἔρωτ/; *Neuters* decline just as λέοντ/ or ἐλέφαντ/ would if they were neuter; neuters in /**τ**/ decline like σῶματ/ .

Potentially difficult forms include:

- *masculine nominative singulars:* **-ων** [ον**τ**/**ø**], **-σας** [σ/αν**τ**/**ς**], **-κως** [κ/ο**τ**/**ς**] and **-θεις** [θ/ε^{ι}ν**τ**/**ς**].
- *masculine/neuter dative plurals*, which react almost exactly the same to the addition of the **σι** marker as the nominative singulars do to the addition of the **ς**: singulars **-ουσι** [ο^{υ}ν**τ**/**σι**], **σασι** [σ/αν**τ**/**σι**], **κοσι** [κ/ο**τ**/**σι**] and **θεισι** [θ/ε^{ι}ν**τ**/**σι**].
- *athematic aorist participles*. The strong aorist and kappa aorist stems **βα**/ (ἔβην), **στα**/ (ἔστην),

γνο/ (ἔγνων), **δο**/ (ἔδωκα), **θε**/ (ἔθηκα), and **ἑ**/ (ἧκα) are athematic. In all cases except the masculine nominative singulars and dative masculine/neuter plurals, they decline just as you should predict:

Masculine and Neuter: **βα**/**ντ**/ + **3rd-declension case ending**.

Feminine: βασα/ [**βα**/**ντ**/**γα**/] + **1st-declension case ending**.

The masculine nominative singulars, though, take the case ending /**ς**, giving the following results in the three genders of the nominative singular:

βάς [**βα**/**ø**/**ντ**/**ς**], βᾶσα [**βα**/**ø**/**ντ**/**γα**/**ø**], βάν [**βα**/**ø**/**ντ**/**ø**]

στάς [**στα**/**ø**/**ντ**/**ς**], στᾶσα [**στα**/**ø**/**ντ**/**γα**/**ø**], στάν [**στα**/**ø**/**ντ**/**ø**]

δούς [**δο^{υ}**/**ø**/**ντ**/**ς**], δοῦσα [**δο^{υ}**/**ø**/**ντ**/**γα**/**ø**],δόν [**δο**/**ø**/**ντ**/**ø**]

γνούς [**γνο**/**ø**/**ντ**/**ς**], γνοῦσα [**γνο**/**ø**/**ντ**/**γα**/**ø**], γνόν [**γνο**/**ø**/**ντ**/**ø**]

θείς [**θε**/**ø**/**ντ**/**ς**], θεῖσα [**θε**/**ø**/**ντ**/**γα**/**ø**], θέν [**θε**/**ø**/**ντ**/**ø**]

εἷς [**ἑ**/**ø**/**ντ**/**ς**], εἷσα [**ἑ**/**ø**/**ντ**/**γα**/**ø**], ἕν [**ἑ**/**ø**/**ντ**/**ø**]

Meaning of participles

Participles are adjectives made from verbs. So, they describe a noun by attributing to it the ***action*** specified by the ***base*** of the participle. But the action has been carefully defined by specifying *aspect* and *voice* via (a) the aspect marker contained in the **stem** and (b) the **participle marker**.

Aspect. Your interpretation of a participle needs to begin by seeing the ***action*** indicated by the ***base*** *in the aspect* (including future time) that is contained in the **stem**. Consider the different ways we might use the verb "die" (***θαν***/) to describe a man.

A **die-process** man is a man who is "in the *process* of dying." Process participles refer to actions that are happening *at the same time as the action of the main verb*.

A **die-event** man is a man who "did the *event* of dying," i.e., a man "who died." Usually, event-participles refer to actions that happened *prior to the action of the main verb*.

A **die-resultant-state** man as a man who is "in the *condition* that results from having completed the action of dying," which is to say, "dead." Resultant-state participles refer to a state or condition that is in effect *at the same time as the action of the main verb.*

A **die**-future time man is a man who is "going to die," "about to die," or "intending to die." Future time participles refer to action that is expected to happen *subsequent to the action of the main verb*.

Voice. The meanings of the three voices are the same as in all other modes. In participial mode, using "stop" (παυ/) as an example, the meanings are as follows:

Active: performing the action of ***stop*** on somebody else.

- event: the guy who "did the event of stopping somebody."
- process: the guy "in the process of stopping somebody."
- resultant-state: the guy "in the state of having already stopped somebody." For example, the policeman whose cruiser is stopped behind the speeder.

Middle: experiencing the action of ***stop***, i.e., stopping.

- event: the guy who "experienced stopping," i.e., the guy who stopped.
- process: the guy "in the process of stopping."
- resultant-state: the guy "in the state of having already stopped."

Passive: experiencing the action of ***stop*** at someone else's hands.

- event: the guy who "was stopped" by somebody else.
- process: the guy "in the process of being stopped" by somebody else
- resultant-state: the guy "in the state of having already been stopped" by somebody else. E.g., the speeder with the police cruiser parked behind him.

So, those are the "meanings," generated by placing a stem into participial mode. You should attempt to understand participles not as English phrases, but as pictures or notions generated in your mind—a natural fusion of just what the morphological elements specify: **stem** (***base***-aspect) and voice, functioning to describe something (i.e., as adjectives).

Syntax of participles

Since participles are adjectives, your study of adjectives has already introduced you to most of their uses.

Attributive participles. A participle may specify an attribute that serves to distinguish the noun it modifies. The article must *immediately* precede the participle in this construction.

- ὁ *ἀποθνῄσκων* βασιλεύς or ὁ βασιλεύς ὁ *ἀποθνῄσκων* = the *dying* king.
- ὁ *ἀποτεθνηκὼς* βασιλεύς or ὁ βασιλεὺς ὁ *ἀποτεθνηκώς* = the *dead* king.

Predicative participles. A participle, like any other adjective, makes an assertion if it is not immediately preceded by an article and a form of *to be* is understood.

- *ἀποθνῄσκων* ὁ βασιλεύς or ὁ βασιλεύς *ἀποθνῄσκων* (ἐστιν) = the king <is> *dying*.
- *ἀποτεθνηκὼς* ὁ βασιλεύς or ὁ βασιλεὺς *ἀποτεθνηκὼς* (ἐστιν) = the king <is> dead.

Nominal participles. As with other adjectives, a participle may modify a noun that is not specified, but implied by the gender and case of the participle. In this construction the article always precedes (not necessarily immediately) the participle, which does not modify any noun in the sentence.

- ***οἱ*** *λέγοντες* = ***the*** <***men***> *speaking* = the speakers.
- ***ἡ*** *ἐρχομένη* = ***the*** <***woman***> coming = the woman who is coming.
- ***τὰ*** *πεπραγμένα* = ***the*** <***things***> in a state of having been done = the things that have been done.

Circumstantial participles. When the participle is not immediately preceded by an article and a form of *to be* is not understood, the participle tells the circumstances of the noun it is modifying. In English we can use a participle in this way, but we usually prefer to specify the logical connection between the circumstances and the rest of the sentence by inserting a ***conjunction*** and converting the participle to an indicative verb. Sometime the connection is ***temporal*** (*while, after*). Other times it is ***causal*** (*because, since*) or even ***adversative*** (*although, even though*). Be clear that specifying such logical connections is the interpretive work of the translator; the Greek participial construction on its own is ambiguous.

- *φυλάττοντες* τὸν πατέρα, οἱ δοῦλοι διαλέγονται. <In the process of> *guarding* the father, the slaves converse. = The slaves converse ***while*** *they are guarding* the father.

The participial construction in the sentence above should probably be understood as ***temporal***.

- *φυλάξαντες* τὸν πατέρα, οἱ δοῦλοι διαλέγονται. <Having completed the action of> *guarding* the father, the slaves converse. = The slaves converse ***after*** *they guarded* the father.

The participial construction in this sentence, also, should probably be understood as ***temporal***.

- ὁ υἱὸς, *φοβούμενος* τὸν πατέρα, ἀποκλείεται. The son, *fearing* his father, has him locked away = The son has his father locked away ***because*** he fears him.

I think the participial construction in the sentence above must be understood as ***causal***.

- ὁ υἱός, *φιλῶν* τὸν πατέρα, ἀποκλείεται. The son, *loving* his father, has him locked away = The son is having his father locked away ***even though*** he loves him.

I think the participial construction in the sentence above must be understood as ***adversative***.

Genitive Absolute. The genitive absolute is a variety of circumstantial participle. A typical genitive absolute will look something like this:

X [genitive noun] doing **A** [**genitive participle**], Y [nominative] did B [indicative],

The king **dying**, the people wept.

which will generally mean one of the following:

- *While* X *was* **doing A**, Y did B. While the king was **dying**, the people wept. (***temporal***)
- *Although* X was **doing A**, Y did B. Although the king was **dying**, the people wept. (***adversative***)
- *Because* X was **doing A**, Y did B. Because the king was **dying**, the people wept. (***causal***)

Formally, notice the following:

- The genitive absolute is a phrase that consists of at least the following: a genitive noun modified by a genitive participle. (The genitive participle of εἰμί, *being,* is sometimes understood rather than expressed—just as other forms of *to be* often are.)
- The genitive noun cannot be explained as performing any of the syntactic functions of the genitive that you have learned. In the example above, X is not answering a preposition and it doesn't mean "of X" in any sense. The sentence does *not* mean, for example, "The Y of X doing A did B": "The people of the dying king wept." In genitive absolutes the genitive participial phrase hangs loosely, syntactically "*dis-connected*" (*ab-solute*) from the main clause.

Semantically, genitive absolutes are *participial phrases that sketch the background circumstances* against which the foreground action of the main clause is set. The sentence is focused on what Y (the nominative) is doing, but the genitive absolute sets Y's actions against the backdrop of what X (the genitive) is doing. For example,

The children **playing** in the yard, the mother enjoyed a few moments of relaxation.

The focus of the sentence is on what the subject—the mother—did. The mother's actions, though, are set against the backdrop of someone else's—the children's—circumstances. In Greek, both children and **playing** would be set in the genitive case.

English has *absolute* (i.e., "loosely connected" or "disconnected") constructions, as the English example above makes clear. In general, though, contemporary English tends to avoid absolute constructions. Usually we prefer a tighter syntactic and semantic connection between the foreground and background action. Consequently, English translations usually avoid rendering Greek absolute constructions as English absolute constructions and prefer one of the following:

- While the children were **playing** in the yard, the mother rested.
- Because the children were **playing** in the yard, the mother rested.
- Although the children were **playing** in the yard, the mother rested.

Translation of participles

As you begin encountering participles in Greek texts (*far* more participles than in English texts), you will often find them frustrating to translate. The main reasons for your frustration will arise from two factors: (a) aspect, voice, gender, and case markers load Greek participles with much more semantic content than their English counterparts; and (b) Greek is content with a very nonspecific logical connection between the main sentence and its participial phrases, while your English mind will want the more specific logical connections provided by indicative verbs.

Semantic Content

Aspect. Look back a couple of pages to the section on *Meaning* and review what is said about aspect. Set firmly into your mind the fact that every participle has an aspect marker, which *affects the meaning of the participle—particularly in its temporal relation to the action of the main verb*. The semantic impact of the participle is felt in every participle, no matter what its syntax. To make the point, let's look at a genitive absolute in its four main aspects. (For the sake of convenience I am referring to future-event as an aspect.)

Process (*at the same time as the main verb*): τοῦ υἱοῦ *ἀποκλείοντος*, ὁ πατὴρ ἐξέφυγε.
<His> son *in the process of locking* <him> *away*, the father escaped.
While his son was locking him away, the father escaped.

Event (*prior to the main verb*): τοῦ υἱοῦ *ἀποκλείσαντος*, ὁ πατὴρ ἐξέφυγε.
<His> son *having locked* him *away*, the father escaped.
After his son had locked him away, the father escaped.

Future-event (*after the main verb*): τοῦ υἱοῦ *ἀποκλείσοντος*, ὁ πατὴρ ἐξέφυγε.
<His> son *intending to lock* him *away*, the father escaped.
Before his son locked him away, the father escaped.

Resultant-state (*indicating the status at the time of the main verb*): τοῦ υἱοῦ *ἀποκεκλεικότος*, ὁ πατὴρ ἐξέφυγε.
<His> son (being in a state of) having locked him away, the father escaped.
When the son had successfully locked him away, the father escaped.

Note that the aspectual features of participles can suggest only *time relative to that of the main verb, not absolute time*. Consider, for example, the following event participle.

Event (*prior to the main verb*): τοῦ υἱοῦ *ἀποκλείσαντος*, ὁ πατὴρ ἐκφεύξεται.
<His> son *having locked* him *away*, the father will escape.
After his son has locked him away, the father will escape.

The sentence does not say that the son has already (in absolute time) locked the father up. It does say that at some time <in the future> *after* the son locks him up, the father will escape.

I suppose you could draw up a chart that shows how you might translate the various aspects of the participle in the context of all the different tenses of the main verb. That might, in fact, be a useful and clarifying exercise. But it is no way to read and translate Greek. Instead, you should (a) accurately understand what the Greek says; and then, (b) express that same idea in good English.

Voice. You've got to notice whether the participle is describing someone as doing something (*active*), experiencing something (*middle*), or having something done to him by someone else (*passive*).

Gender, Case, and Number. As with all adjectives, you need to pay attention to these features to make sure you know what the participle is describing. In addition, in the case of nominal participles you'll need to notice the gender and number to understand the proper English noun: *the* <man, men; woman, women; thing, things> *being present*.

Remember that every participle you ever encounter will include all these features (aspect, voice, gender, case, and number), and you will have to take them all into account to properly understand and translate the participial phrase.

What now?