

Path coding and Relational Preverbs in Homeric Greek. A Native American story.

This paper is part of a larger study aiming at revisiting some ancient languages in a (functional-)typological perspective, including a grammaticalization approach. The study deals with the conceptual domain of space and more specifically with the expression of Path. I will focus here on a system of Relational Preverbs expressing the notion of Path in Homeric Greek (HomGr), through a *Perseus Library* corpus of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

Taking a typological perspective reveals the existence of a system of multiple verbal prefixation in Homeric Greek, similar to the systems of Relational Preverbs that have been described in the literature on Native American languages. This system is often left aside in the reference grammars, on the assumption that past the first prefix – which corresponds to “regular” verbal prefixation in this language – the second prefix most distant from the verb is the result of typographical mistakes attaching Postpositions to neighbouring verb stems, or even of sporadic intensifications of the original preverb.

I will demonstrate that Homeric Greek attests in fact the existence of a very interesting system of Relational Preverbs grammaticalized from Postpositions, akin to those commonly found for instance in Chibchan, Maku and Athabaskan languages.

First, several layers of this process of grammaticalization can be found in the Homeric synchrony. In fact, Postpositions are already rare in Homer, and one finds instead Relational Preverbs (**RP**) that show morphosyntactic evidence of growing attachment to the verb stem and independence from the oblique noun phrase:

(1a) (HomGr, Il. 8.291)
toi homòn lékhos **eis**-ana-báinoi
2SG:DAT same:DAT bed:DAT to-up-walk:PRES.OPT.3SG
'(A woman that) shall go up into thy bed'

(1b) (HomGr, Od. 12.306-307)
ex-ap-ébe:san etaíroi ne:ós
out-off-step:AOR.3PL comrade:NOM.PL ship:GEN
'And my comrades went forth from the ship'

(1c) Ø-anaphora of oblique (HomGr, Il. 6.393)
tòn dè tétarton **apo**-pro-ée:ke pólin=de
DEM:ACC PTC fourth:ACC **off**-forward-send: city=to
'And the fourth he had sent (from X) forth to the city'

(2a) (Rama, Craig & Hale 1988)
paalpa **ba**-an-alpi-u
manatee to-they-see-ASP
'They looked for the manatee'

(2b) (Nadëb, Craig & Hale 1988)
bxaa kalapéé **ya**-sooh
tree child on-sit
'The child is sitting on the tree'

(2c) Ø-anaphora of oblique (Rama, *ibid.*)
ka-na-ngalbi-u
RELATIVE-1SG.SUBJ-run-ASP
'I ran away from (him)'

This system of multiple prevervation allows a very explicit coding (Slobin, 2004 ; Kopecka, 2004) of several portions of Path on one verb stem, in a *satellite-framed* pattern (Talmy, 2000) now inactive in modern Greek. A study of possible combinations in morpheme order (3a-b) shows that there is a clear order constraint for these RPs (slot 2, in bold) and the basic preverbs (1, italic). For instance, Orientation is always coded closer to the verb stem than Goal, in an interesting parallel with order constraints of directionals in Jakalteq-Popti' ((3c), Grinevald, 2003):

(3a) *eis* – ana – báino:
to – up – walk
'Walk up to'
2Goal – 1Orient – V

(3b) *para* – kata – ballo:
beside – down – throw
'Throw down beside'
2Goal – 1Orient – V

(3c) xta'wi – ay – **tij**
responded – down – toward
'Answered down toward'
V – 1Orient – **2Goal**

Therefore, this paper aims at demonstrating how Homeric Greek can add interesting data to a modern linguistic description of space in the world languages, when revisited in such an approach.

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