Multiple preverbation in Homeric Greek: Affix-order constraints in Path coding

This paper deals with ordering constraints in the affixation of Path-coding items and the question of their conceptual motivations crosslinguistically. This paper proposes an original study of revisited data from an ancient language. It is concerned with a system of multiple affixation of Path preverbs, which is still a blind spot in the reference grammars. It shows that there are clear semantic constraints on the ordering of these preverbs; further, it intends to demonstrate that these semantic constraints are driven by conceptual motivations and work in interaction with parameters of the syntactic scope of the preverbs.

This paper revisits Homeric data[1] within the frame of typological affix-ordering studies (Greenberg, 1963; Bybee, 1985) and Motion event typology (Talmy, 2000). First, it demonstrates that the order constraints on the Homeric Path preverbs consist of semantic distinctions between the different portions (initial, final…) and types (orientation, location…) of Path that they code. For instance, Orientation ('up, down…') will always be coded closer to the verb stem than Goal ('to, at…'). Table 1 presents the pattern that is systematically attested in the data; the "string" of preverbs can involve up to three slots:

Table 1 – Semantic order constraints on Path preverbs in Homeric Greek

PV3- **Direction**	PV2- **Location**	PV1- **Orientation** or **Median**	VERB STEM

Examples (1)-(4) illustrate some of these constraints on preverb combinations:

(1) eis–ana–ago: (*ana-eis-ago:)
PV3/to–**PV1**/up–lead
'Lead up to'
Direction–Orientation–V

(2) en–kata–pe:gnumi (*kata-en-pe:gnumi)
PV2/in–**PV1**/down–thrust
'Thrust down into'
Location–Orientation–V

(3) epi–en–baino: (*en-epi-baino:)
PV3/onto–**PV2**/in–walk
'Tread upon' (lit. 'be in and tread onto')
Direction–Location–V

(4) ek-hupo-ana-istemi (*other orderings)
PV3/out–**PV2**/under-**PV1**/up–start
'Start up from under'
Direction-Location-Orientation-V

Second, this paper recasts these semantic order constraints within the frame of cognitive semantics. It shows the *correlation of relevance* (Bybee, 1985) between the semantic ordering of the preverbs (PV1, PV2, PV3) and the conceptualization of the different entities involved in a Motion event. Overall, the closest the preverb is affixed to the verb stem, the more relevant it is to the determination of the *moving entity* (the *Figure*) and the way it moves along its Path. Conversely, the furthest the preverb is affixed to the verb stem, the more relevant it is to the determination of the *reference entity* (*Ground*) and its relation to the Path. For instance, slot *PV1-* may determine whether the Figure is oriented on its axis (verticality, horizontality…), slot *PV2-* may determine the location of the Figure with respect to the Ground during the Motion event (detached, overhanging…), and slot *PV3-* may determine the relation of the Path with respect to the Ground (inclusive or non inclusive Ground, attainment or near-attainment of Ground, brutal contact with Ground...). To address this question, this paper examines the morphosyntactic behavior of the preverbs with respect to their position in the string of preverbs affixed to the verb stem. Interestingly, this morphosyntactic examination clearly shows that the preverb in the most "Ground-biased" slot of the string – the one furthest from the verb stem – systematically introduces and commands the case of the oblique argument (i.e. the surface element coding the Ground). This syntactic

[1] Collected from the complete texts of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* via the *Perseus Digital Library*.

behavior is not attested with the preverb(s) that are put in the other slot(s). Thus in (5), PV2 *en-* 'in' introduces the oblique argument 'sheath' and commands the dative case:

(5) (Od. 11.98)

xíphos	arguróe:lon	kouleô:i	**en**-kat-épe:x'
sword:ACC	silver-studded:ACC	sheath:**DAT**	**PV2/in**-PV1/down-thrust:AOR.1SG

'I thrust my silver-studded sword down into its sheath'

These semantic ordering patterns thus appear to respond to conceptual motivations that can be observed in morphosyntactic constructions.

Finally, this paper draws an interesting parallel between the ordering patterns of the Homeric Path preverbs and similar patterns for the suffixed Path directionals of Jakaltek Popti' (Mayan family; Craig, 1993; Grinevald a.k.a. Craig, 2003). Table 2 presents these striking mirror-image ordering patterns. It clearly shows how the different portions and types of Path coded in three different slots by the affixed items appear in the same slot order. The cells in grey indicates slots that do not have correspondents in both languages:

Table 2 – Mirror-image ordering patterns of Homeric Path preverbs and Jakaltek Path directionals

PV3-Direction	PV2-Location	PV1-Orientation or Median	**VERB STEM**			
			VERB STEM	-DIR1 Aspect	-DIR2 Orientation or Median	-DIR3 Direction

This typological parallel is argued here to support the analysis proposed for the Homeric Greek ordering patterns. This paper will propose further questions and investigations as to crosslinguistic patterns of affix-ordering in Path coding.

Therefore, within the frame of recent studies on affix ordering and Path coding, this paper revisits old data from an ancient language and identifies a clear case of multiple affixation responding to multidimensional affix-order constraints. It reveals patterns in the ordering of Path affixes, akin to those found in Mayan languages such as Jakaltek Popti'.

In a broader perspective, this paper is in direct continuation of a talk presented at the NRG4 conference[2] in 2008. This talk identified in the Homeric system of multiple preverbation a sub-system of relational preverbs, by recasting the data into the same type of analysis that, twenty years ago, identified a similar category of relation preverbs in Chibchan Rama (Craig & Hale, 1988). That talk and the present paper thus demonstrate the productivity of a systematic back-and-forth between typology and the description of languages.

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[2] For the sake of anonymity, the reference is for now not included in the abstract.