

MONOTRANSITIVE AND DITRANSITIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN BOHAIRIC COPTIC

Ewa Zakrzewska, University of Amsterdam

Coptic (Afro-Asiatic) is the last stage of the Ancient Egyptian language. The grammar of Coptic is still poorly described. Of the two main literary varieties of Coptic, viz. Sahidic and Bohairic, only Sahidic has a reference grammar that meets contemporary linguistics standards (Reintges 2004). This contribution is devoted to the other variety, i.e. Bohairic.

Coptic has a rich repertoire of grammatical devices which mark participants in transitive situations:

2nd participant		3rd participant	
NP	Clitic	NP	Clitic
head marking (verb in <i>status constructus</i>)	head marking (verb in <i>status pronominalis</i>)		
preposition <i>n-</i>	preposition <i>mmo=</i>	preposition <i>n-</i>	preposition <i>na=</i>
preposition <i>e-</i>	preposition <i>ero=</i>	preposition <i>e-</i>	preposition <i>ero=</i>

Recently, some studies on object marking in Coptic sought to explain the distribution of the particular markers in terms of the referential properties of the corresponding participants. Their results, however, seem to be contradictory (Engsheden 2006 vs. Reintges 2004: 221-226). The aim of the present contribution is to re-examine the issue on the basis of a single corpus of narrative texts, Hyvernat (1977). As this corpus is relatively homogenous from a linguistic and literary point of view, the referential status of the participants can be assessed in a relatively straightforward way and there is a chance to obtain consistent results (see e.g. Zakrzewska 2006 for marking of the first participant).

This contribution consists of two parts: a descriptive and a typologically oriented one.

In the descriptive part, designed as a case study, the following issues are examined:

- the relative frequency of the particular types of marking;
- the mutual compatibility of the particular markers of the 2nd resp. 3rd participant;
- the compatibility of these markers with individual verbs, classes of verbs and temporal forms;
- the preferred marking of participants with certain referential characteristics such as topicality, anaphoricity, animacy, definiteness, person and number.

The aim of the typologically oriented part is twofold:

- to cast the Bohairic language facts as obtained in the first part against the background of selected recent studies of the typology of object marking (in particular differential object marking and differential recipient marking, e.g. Kittilä, S. 2005, 2006, 2008; Zúñiga & Kittilä, eds., 2010).
- to have a closer look at the development of so-called prepositional objects in Romance, with special attention to a recent hypothesis that these constructions could have developed as an areal feature of the languages around the Mediterranean (Romagno 2007, see also Rice & Kabata, 2007).

Thanks to this combined approach, an important subset of Coptic language facts, still largely unexplored, will be systematically presented, explained and situated within a broader range of comparable typological phenomena.

References

- Engsheden, A. 2006. Über die Markierung des direkten Objekts im Koptischen. *Lingua Aegyptia* 14, 199-222.
- Hyvernat, H. 1977. *Les Actes des martyrs de l'Égypte*, Paris, 1886 [reprint Hildesheim, Georg Olms].
- Romagno, D. 2007. Canonical and non-canonical marking of core arguments in European languages: a typological approach. In Ramat, P. & E. Roma, (eds.). *Europe and the Mediterranean as linguistic areas: convergencies from a historical and typological perspective*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 289-313.
- Reintges, C.H. 2004. *Coptic Egyptian (Sahidic dialect): a learner's grammar* (Afrikawissenschaftliche Lehrbücher 15). Köln: Köppe.
- Kittilä, S. 2005. Recipient prominence vs. beneficiary prominence. *Linguistic Typology* 9:2, 269-297.
- 2006. Object-, animacy- and role based strategies: a typology of object marking. *Studies in Language* 30:1, 1-32.
- 2008. Animacy effects on differential goal marking. *Linguistic Typology* 12:2, 245-268.
- Zúñiga, F. & S. Kittilä (eds.). 2010. *Benefactives and malefactives: typological perspectives and case studies*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Rice, S. & K. Kabata. 2007. Crosslinguistic grammaticalization patterns of the ALLATIVE. *Linguistic Typology* 11:3, 451-514.
- Zakrzewska, E.D. 2006. The hero, the villain and the mob: topicality and focality in Bohairic Narrative discourse, *Lingua Aegyptia* 14, 325-346.