

Voice and Non-Canonical Case Marking: Evidence from Byzantine Greek

Nikolaos Lavidas

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
nlavidas@auth.gr

Accusative case marking for subjects of finite verbs found in papyri and other texts from the Byzantine Greek period.

- DPs in the accusative can be the subjects of middle-passive finite verbs, and the subjects and verbs do not always agree in number.
- Transitional stage both for (a) the role of middle-passive voice and (b) the method of case assignment in Greek.
- Baker & Vinokurova's (2010) approach to case assignment.

1. Introduction¹

- Non-canonically marked subjects in Byzantine Greek²

(1) *táftin tin epistolín eghráfi en Thmúii*
this.ACC the.ACC letter.ACC write.MP.PST.PFV.3SG in Thmui
'This letter was written in Thmui.' (P. Par. XVIII, ii, 18, 12, 3 (lip); Byzantine Greek)

- Middle-passive suffixes do not block the assignment of the accusative to internal arguments: pre-Byzantine Greek.
- Middle-passive suffixes block the internal argument in the accusative from Early Byzantine Greek onwards.

(2) a. Stage 1

(Nominative Subject +) Middle-passive Verb + Accusative Direct Object³

¹ I refer to the following periods and time spans: Ancient Greek 8BC – 3BC, Hellenistic-Roman Greek 3BC – AD4, Late Hellenistic-Roman Greek AD2 – AD4, *Byzantine Greek AD5 – AD11*, Early Byzantine Greek AD5 – AD8, (Late) Medieval Greek AD12 – AD15, and Early Modern Greek AD16 – AD18.

² Ancient Greek has a complex voice system with middle (mediopassive) suffixes in all tenses, and additional passive suffixes only in the Aorist and Future. Middle (mediopassive) suffixes are not excluded from passive structures, and passive suffixes can be used in non-passive structures with anticausatives and even with transitives. There is no such distinction (between middle and passive in the Future and Aorist) from the end of the Hellenistic Koine Greek period onwards.

I will use the term “middle-passive transitives” for transitive verbs that bear middle-passive suffixes. These “middle-passive transitives” are also called “transitive beneficiary middles” by other scholars.

³ Of course, an active transitive sentence is possible, but not with an auto-benefactive meaning:

Cf. the active *apokrípto*: ‘hide’:

(1) *átupon gár tèn mén ousían en taís oikíais apokríptein*
strange.NOM because the.ACC PRT treasure.ACC in the.DAT houses.DAT hide.ACT.INF.PRS
'For it was strange to hide away one's treasure in the house.' (Isocrates, *To Demonius*, 1, 42; Ancient Greek)

Dēmokhárēs... ouk apokékruptai tèn ousían
 Demochares.NOM not conceal.MP.PRF.3SG the.ACC property.ACC
 ‘Demochares... has not concealed *his* property.’ (Demosthenes, Against Aphobus, 2, 28, 3; Ancient Greek)

b. Stage 2

Accusative Subject + Middle-passive Verb

táftin tin epistolín eghráfi en Thmúí
 this.ACC the.ACC letter.ACC write.MP.PST.PFV.3SG in Thmui
 ‘This letter was written in Thmui.’ (P. Par. XVIII, ii, 18, 12, 3 (Iip); Byzantine Greek)

c. Stage 3

*(Nominative Subject +) Middle-passive Verb + Accusative

**krívete tin perusía tu*
 conceal.MP.PRS.3SG the.ACC property.ACC his
 ‘He conceals his property.’ (Modern Greek)

Stage 1 (ex. 2a)

Middle-passive Voice + Accusative Object

Stage 2-Transitional stage (ex. 2b)

Middle-passive Voice + Accusative Patient

Stage 3 (ex. 2c)

*Middle-passive Voice + Accusative

Table 1. Overview of some aspects of the change in voice in Greek

- Baker & Vinokurova (2010): Some cases can be dependent cases, i.e. depend on the presence of another DP in the same phase (cf. pre-Byzantine). Some cases can be assigned by a functional head; the active voice morphology is “responsible” for them (cf. post-Byzantine).

Stage 1

The accusative is a dependent case; it depends on the presence of an agent DP.

Stage 2-transitional stage

The accusative can be analyzed as a subject marking (to avoid structures with middle-passive verbs + objects in the accusative).

Stage 3

The accusative is assigned by the Voice head (active voice suffixes are “responsible” for its presence).

Table 2. Overview of the change in case assignment in Greek

2. The data

- Kapsomenakis (1938): marking of subjects of finite verbs with the accusative case can be found in papyri in the Byzantine period.

(3) *alá ke tus Pérsus ílthen en Tíni*
 but and the.ACC.PL Persian.ACC.PL come.ACT.PST.PFV.3SG in Tini
 ‘But Persians also came to Tini.’ (P. Ross.–Georg. IV, Anhang S.100 (619/29p), 3-4; Byzantine Greek)

- (4) *alotrián jinékan eklironómisen aftón*
 foreign.ACC woman.ACC inherit.ACT.PST.PFV.3SG him.ACC
 ‘A foreign woman has inherited him.’ (P. Oxy. VII 1067, 7/9, IIIp; Byzantine Greek)
- (5) *on ta métra ke tas jitnías*
 which.GEN the.ACC.PL meter.ACC.PL and the.ACC.PL adjoining-area.ACC.PL
dhiá ton proktitikón tétakte
 by the.GEN previous-owners.GEN define.MP.PRF.3SG
 ‘The meters and the adjoining areas which have been defined by the previous owners.’ (CPR 4, 9/10, 51/3p; Byzantine Greek)
- (6) *táftin tin epistolín eghráfi en Thmúi*
 this.ACC the.ACC letter.ACC write.MP.PST.PFV.3SG in Thmui
 ‘This letter was written in Thmui.’ (P. Par. XVIII, ii, 18, 12, 3 (Iip); Byzantine Greek)
- (7) *esfrajísthi tin kélan aftú*
 seal.MP.PST.PFV.3SG the.ACC cell.ACC his.GEN
 ‘His cell was sealed.’ (P. Oxy. VII 1067, 12/3; Byzantine Greek)

- (a) The DPs in the accusative are usually the subjects of middle-passive finite verbs (examples 5-7⁴), and (b) subjects and verbs do not always agree in number (cf. examples 3 and 5).
- A period when “middle transitive structures” (middle-passive verbs with DP-objects in the accusative and an auto-benefactive interpretation) cease to be grammatical.

- (8) middle-passive transitive [Ancient Greek]
Dēmokhárēs... ouk apokékruptai tēn ousían
 Demochares.NOM not conceal.MP.PRF.3SG the.ACC property.ACC
 ‘Demochares... has not concealed *his* property.’ (Demosthenes, Against Aphobus, 2, 28, 3; Ancient Greek)
- (9) a. *Ancient Greek*
louómai tās kheîras
 wash.MP.PRS.1SG the.ACC hands.ACC
 ‘I wash my hands.’
- b. *Modern Greek*
 **plénome ta hérja*
 wash.MP.PRS.1SG the.ACC hands.ACC
 ‘I wash my hands.’
- (vs. *pléno ta hérja mu*
 wash.ACT.PRS.1SG the.ACC hands.ACC my
 ‘I wash my hands.’)

Ancient Greek: middle-passive verb + DP-object in the accusative

- (10) *álla ti meízon epitakhthésesthe [humeís]*
 other.ACC something.ACC greater.ACC impose.PASS.FUT.2PL [you]
 ‘You will be imposed some greater demand.’ (Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War, 1, 140, 5; Ancient Greek)

⁴ It is interesting that *ílthen* in (3) is related to the middle-passive voice as well, given that it is the irregular active Aorist type of the middle-passive verb *érhome* ‘come’.

← *epitáksousin állo ti meîzon humîn*
 impose.ACT.FUT.3PL other.ACC something.ACC greater.ACC you.DAT
 ‘(They) will impose some greater demand on you.’

- Cennamo (1998, 2001) for Latin: a diachronic relationship between the active/neutral realignment of grammatical relations in Late Latin manifested by accusative subjects and the temporary loss of the grammatical dimension of voice (*reorganization of voice distinctions*).

- (11) a. *Epafu Victore cadant Lydeu cadat...*
 Epafus.ACC Victor.ACC fall.PRS.SBJ.3PL Lydeus.ACC fall.PRS.SBJ.3SG
 ‘Let Epafus, Victor fall, Lydeus fall...’ (Def. Tab. 278A 3–6) [from Cennamo 2009: 316]
- b. *filios et nepotes ... memoria posuerunt*
 child.PL.ACC and nephew.PL memory.ABL build.PRF.IND.3PL
 ‘His children and nephews ... built the tomb.’ (CIL VIII, 7467) [from Cennamo 2009: 324]

3. Theory of Case and the development of Voice in Greek

(12) A. Middle-passive + Nominative + Accusative (with ‘middle meaning’ or in passives of ditransitive verbs)
 and Middle-passive + Nominative (in intransitive structures)
 B. Middle-passive + Nominative (in intransitive structures)

C. Middle-passive + Accusative

(a) According to the standard approach in recent Generative Grammar (Chomsky 2000, 2001; cf. Legate 2008), case is assigned by a functional head (for the nominative, the finite T; for the accusative, the active, transitive *v*) to the closest DP via an agreement relationship;

(b) An alternative perspective suggests that case is assigned to one DP if there is a second DP in the same local domain (Marantz 1991). The accusative is a dependent case that is assigned by the following rule: dependent cases are assigned by V+I(T) to a position governed by V+I(T) when a distinct position again governed by V+I(T) (i) does not have lexically governed case and (ii) is distinct from the chain being assigned dependent case. Moreover, if there are two DPs in a local domain, the accusative case is assigned to the lower one;

(c) Baker & Vinokurova (2010): the two ways of assigning case are complementary, given that, in a language like Sakha, for example, the accusative (and dative) case is assigned by configurational rules that do not refer directly to functional categories while the nominative (and genitive) is assigned by a functional head.

- “...having a nominative NP in a clause goes in lockstep with having a subject agreement on the finite verb”.
- there is no overt object agreement to mark the relationship between an NP in the accusative case and any particular functional head in Sakha *or in any language in*

which the accusative is a dependent case and not assigned by a functional category.

- (13) a. *Min kel-li-m*
I.NOM come-PST-1SG.S
'I came.'
- b. *Masha aqa-ta yt-y kör-dö*
Masha(GEN) father-3SG.P.(NOM) dog-ACC see-PST.3SG.S
'Masha's father saw the dog.'
- c. *Masha Misha-qa at-y bier-de*
Masha(NOM) Misha-DAT horse-ACC give-PST.3SG.S
'Masha gave Misha a horse.'
(from Baker & Vinokurova 2010)

▪ Finite verbs in Sakha cannot agree with a subject DP that has a case other than the nominative.

- (14) a. *Sonun-nar aaq-ylyn-ny-lar*
new-PL read-PASS-PST-3PL.S
'The news was read.'
- b. *Sonun-nar-y aaq-ylyn-na (*aaq-ylyn-ny-lar)*
new-PL-ACC read-PASS-PST.3SG.S read-PASS-PST-3PL.S
'The news was read.' (from Baker (to appear))

▪ The accusative case depends on whether a subject is present and does not depend on the nature of the functional heads that are available.

- (15) a. *Keskil Aisen-yi [ti kel-be-t dien] xomoj-do*
Keskil Aisen-ACC come-NEG-AOR that become.sad-PST.3SG.S
'Keskil became sad that Aisen is not coming.'
- b. *Masha Misha-ny_i [ti yaldj-ya dien] tönün-ne*
Masha Misha-ACC fall.sick-FUT that return-PST.3SG.S
'Masha returned (for fear) that Misha would fall sick.'
(from Baker (to appear))

▪ Morphological causative structures in Sakha is a productive case in which a thematic subject receives the accusative case.

- (16) a. *Sardaana Aisen-y/*Aiseŋ-ŋa yta(a)-t-ta.*
Sardaana Aisen-ACC/*DAT cry-CAUS-PST.3SG.S
'Sardaana made Aisen cry.'
- b. *Misha Masha-qa miin-(i) sie-t-te.*
Misha Masha-DAT soup-(ACC) eat-CAUS-PST.3SG.S
'Misha made Masha eat (the) soup.'
- c.

[[_{vP} Sardaana	[[_{CausP} Aisen [v _P cry] cause]	v] Past]
phase 2	(ACC)	phase 1
[[_{vP} Masha	[[_{CausP} Misha [v _P soup eat] cause]	v] Past]
phase 2	DAT (ACC)	phase 1
- (from Baker & Vinokurova 2010)

- All methods of case assignment can be attested across different historical periods of the same language.
- A transitional stage: between a period in which the accusative is assigned as a dependent case and the middle-passive transitive constructions are grammatical and a period in which the accusative is assigned by a functional category and middle-passive transitive constructions are not grammatical.
- The accusative is assigned as a dependent case (as in pre-Byzantine Greek) but the middle-passive transitive structure is ungrammatical (as in post-Byzantine Greek) in this transitional period.
- The accusative case, not the nominative (as expected), is assigned, and in parallel, there is only partial agreement (person but not number).

- Voice reorganization
- Blocking of the accusative assignment in structures with middle-passive verbs.
- Ancient Greek: The accusative could appear on complements of adjectives or on complements of nominalized verbs or as the morphological case of subjects of infinitives.

See Baker 2013 (and 2012): Sakha: “But accusative case, in addition to not being paired with visible agreement, appears in some surprising contexts: in passive clauses with a covert agent, in agentive nominalizations, and in subject raising constructions even when the matrix verb is not transitive.”

- The obligatorily active suffixes of the verbal type in Byzantine Greek and onwards function as markers of object agreement (the object case is assigned by the functional head of Voice (active) (or *v*, depending on the perspective).

<p><i>Stage 1</i> Accusative as a dependent case</p> <p><i>Stage 2-Transitional stage</i> Accusative can be analyzed as subject marking (to avoid structures with middle-passive verbs + objects in the accusative); the DP-patient can be in the Accusative (Accusative subjects)</p> <p><i>Stage 3</i> Accusative assigned by a functional category (active <i>v</i>)</p>
--

Table 3. Overview of the change in case assignment in Greek (cf. Table 2)

- post-Byzantine Greek: the accusative is assigned through agreement with a functional category, and agreement is manifest on that functional category through obligatorily active suffixes (middle-passive suffixes are ungrammatical with accusative objects).
- pre-Byzantine Greek: the accusative is not assigned through agreement (it is assigned by rules of the dependent case marking), and obligatory object agreement (in the voice suffixes of the verb) is not present (the verb can be active or middle-passive with an accusative object).
- transitional stage: agreement is manifest on the functional category through obligatorily active suffixes (middle-passive suffixes are ungrammatical with accusative objects) but the accusative can be assigned by rules of the dependent case marking in some cases (accusative subjects).

4. Conclusion

- Marking of subjects of finite verbs with the accusative case.
- DPs in the accusative are usually subjects of middle-passive finite verbs, and subjects and verbs do not always agree in number.
- A transitional stage between a period in which middle-passive transitive constructions are available and a period in which only active transitive constructions are grammatical.
- Transitional for the method of case assignment in Greek, too: between (a) a period (Ancient and Hellenistic Koine Greek) in which the accusative is not assigned by a functional head but is a dependent case and (b) a period (Medieval and Modern Greek) in which the accusative is assigned by a functional head.
- Evidence for an approach to case assignment that allows some languages to assign case only by functional heads (Chomsky's method of case assignment), other languages to assign case only as dependent cases (Marantz's method of case assignment), some languages to permit both methods (Sakha; Baker & Vinokurova's analysis), and some languages to shift between these two methods (from pre-Byzantine to Byzantine Greek).

References

- Baker, Mark C. 2012. On the relationship of object agreement and accusative case: Evidence from Amharic. *Linguistic Inquiry* 43: 255-274.
- Baker, Mark C. 2013. On agreement and its relationship to case: Some generative ideas and results. *Lingua* 130: 14-32
- Baker, Mark C. to appear. Types of crosslinguistic variation in case assignment. In *Linguistic Variation in the Minimalist Program*, Silvia Ferreiro & Carme Picallo (eds). Oxford: Oxford University Press. [www.rci.rutgers.edu/~mabaker/barcelona-case-theory-paper.pdf]
- Baker, Mark C. & Vinokurova, Nadya. 2010. Two modalities of Case assignment: Case in Sakha. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 28: 593-642.
- Cennamo, Michela. 1998. The loss of the voice dimension between Late Latin and Early Romance. In *Historical Linguistics 1997*, Monika S. Schmidt, Jennifer R. Austin & Dieter Stein (eds), 77-107. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Cennamo, Michela. 2001. On the reorganization of voice distinctions and grammatical relations in Late Latin. In *De lingua Latina novae quaestiones. Actes du Xème Colloque Internationale de Linguistique Latine*, Claude Moussy (ed.), 51-65. Louvain: Peeters.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1995. *The Minimalist Program*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1999. *Derivation by phase*. MIT Occasional Papers in Linguistics 18. Cambridge, MA: MIT Department of Linguistics.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2000. Minimalist inquiries: the framework. In *Step by step: Essays on Minimalist Syntax in Honor of Howard Lasnik*, Roger Martin, David Michaels & Juan Uriagereka (eds), 89-155. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2001. Derivation by phase. In *Ken Hale: a Life in Language*, Michael Kenstowicz (ed.), 1-52. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2008. On phases. In *Foundational issues in linguistic theory*, Robert Freidin, Carlos P. Otero & Maria Luisa Zubizarreta (eds), 133-166. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Collins, Chris T. 2005. A smuggling approach to the passive in English. *Syntax* 8 (2): 81-120.
- Embick, David. 2000. Features, syntax, and categories in the Latin Perfect. *Linguistic Inquiry* 31: 185-230.
- Kapsomenakis, Stylianos G. 1938. *Voruntersuchungen zu einer Grammatik der Papyri der nachchristlichen Zeit* [Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und antiken Rechtsgeschichte]. Munich: Beck.
- Lavidas, Nikolaos. 2013. Passives in the history of Greek: Evidence for the role of the passive suffix. *Folia Linguistica Historica* 33: 87-122.

- Lavidas, Nikolaos & Papangeli, Dimitra. 2007. Deponency in the diachrony of Greek. In *Deponency and Morphological Mismatches*, Matthew Baerman, Greville G. Corbett, Dunstan Brown & Andrew Hippisley (eds), 97-126. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Legate, Julie Anne. 2008. Morphological and abstract Case. *Linguistic Inquiry* 39 (1): 55-101.
- Marantz, Alec. 1991. Case and Licensing. In *ESCOL '91: Proceedings of the Eighth Eastern States Conference on Linguistics*, Germán F. Westphal, Benjamin Ao & He-Rahk Chae (eds), 234-253. Columbus: The Ohio State University.
- Woolford, Ellen. 2006. Lexical case, inherent case, and argument structure. *Linguistic Inquiry* 37 (1): 111-130.