

VSO orders in the *Egeriae* and *Antonini Placentini itineraria*; new evidence for the evolution towards Old Romance inversion systems

It is well documented that the Old Romance languages featured more subject-verb inversion than their modern descendants. Although many modern varieties of Italo-Romance and Ibero-Romance allow inversion with unaccusative verbs, inversion with transitive verbs is heavily constrained and not freely available outside particular constructions, such as for examples *wh*-questions (Rizzi 1990). In most documented varieties of Old Romance on the other hand, inversion is found with all types of verbs without distinction, a fact that has prompted some historical Romanists to consider these varieties 'V2 systems' because of the similarity with Modern Germanic V2 languages (Vance 1997; Poletto 2014; Wolfe 2018).

The origin of the Old Romance inversion systems is poorly understood, but their wide diatopic distribution suggests internal development within the Latin/Romance-family. Evidence has been sought in Late Latin, and one text in particular, the *Itinerarium Egeriae*, has attracted much attention. In this late 4th century text, VSO order is quite widespread, leading Ledgeway to the conclusion that the position of the verb is already the same as in Old Romance (Ledgeway 2017)

I will present data showing that this claim is too strong. A full quantitative and qualitative analysis of *Itinerarium Egeriae* reveals that the VSO orders are not the result of very high verb movement, but rather arise through a very low position of the subject. Furthermore, I will add data from a complete analysis of a text that has not featured prominently in the debate on the evolution of word order, namely the late 6th century *Itinerarium Antonini Placentini*. While VSO-order is quantitatively even more robust in this text than in *Egeria*, closer qualitative analysis shows that inversion is almost exclusively found with intransitive verbs and passives:

- (1) *Illic currit fluvius Asclepius*
there runs river.NOM Asclepius.NOM
'There the river Asclepius runs'
- (2) *Super his locis descendit ros sicut pluvia*
Over this places.ABL descends dew.NOM as rain.NOM
'Over these lands a dew falls like a rain'
- (3) *In qua etiam synagoga posita est trabis*
In which indeed synagogue placed is beam
'In this synagogue a beam is placed'

The combined evidence of these textual witnesses suggests that, while we need not abandon the hypothesis of a Romance-internal evolution of inversion, we should reconsider its diachrony. The new data from the youngest text reveals a new alignment system for the arguments of the verb which is sensitive to theta-roles, with thematic arguments liberally appearing in postverbal position, while agent arguments (in transitives) favour the preverbal position. If correct, this analysis entails that generalised inversion in Old Romance cannot have developed as early as the late 4th century, but must rather be postponed until at least the 7th century, thereby adding a new important piece to our understanding of the diachrony of word order in Romance.

References

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