Past Study of Enclitics in Indo-European and Egyptian: Some Biobibliographical Detail (As Supplement to "Neutral Tone in Chinese")

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Abstract

In the article entitled "Neutral Tone in Chinese: A Comprehensive Theory" published in the present journal, neutral tone in Chinese was interpreted entirely in light of enclitic behavior. Much has been written about how enclitic words behave in many languages, mostly Indo-European. But this large body of literature has not been applied in any significant way to Chinese. The aim of the present paper is to provide a supplement to the above-mentioned article by presenting a brief guide to literature on enclitic words. Special attention is devoted to one of the first languages for which the phenomenon was studied, perhaps the very first, also the language that is the longest attested in writing of any, ancient Egyptian (§§4 - 9). This article makes reference to both Chinese and Egyptian. It is common to compare Chinese and Egyptian because both exhibit pictorial writing. They also both have very long histories. But which has the longest? Not many articles discuss both Chinese and Egyptian. This is therefore as good a place as any to try to answer the question, which has not been done systematically. It is addressed in an Appendix.

1. Chinese and the Study of Enclitics in the West

To my knowledge, Chinese neutral tone has never been associated in any significant way with the long-standing tradition, now more than a century old, of the

study of enclitic words in the west. It will be useful to briefly review this intellectual tradition.

2. The Beginning: Wackernagel 1892

Anyone with any academic interest in enclitic words knows exactly when and where the systematic study of them began. The pioneering work is a 100-page article by the Swiss Classicist and Indo-Europeanist Jacob Wackernagel (1853-1938) entitled "On a Law of Indo-European Word Order" and published in volume one of a newly founded journal of Indo-European studies, the *Indogermanische Forschungen* (Wackernagel, 1892). It is the work for which Wackernagel is best known, by far.

Two thirds of Wackernagel's article is about ancient Greek, the rest about other Indo-European languages. There is no discussion of non-Indo-European languages.

The emphasis of Wackernagel's "Law" is entirely on second place position in the sense that enclitic words move as far forward as possible in the sentence but cannot appear at the very beginning. No clear answer is given for why enclitic words move forward, nor has there been anywhere else since then. There is some notion that it must have something to do with the fact that they are unstressed.

There is no mention in the article of the other property of enclitic words mentioned above, namely that they are pronounced together with a preceding word as a unit with a single accent.

3. Before and after Wackernagel 1892

The original German of Wackernagel's article has recently been republished, accompanied by an English translation and prefaced by a history of research on enclitics by Walkden (Wackernagel, 2020). Walkden's history should directly or indirectly lead to much if not most that is relevant. It also relieves the presenting writer from doing some of the same.

The bibliography in the republication is copious. One might add Havers (1952) and Schulze (1934), both cited by Polotsky (1961: p. 313 note 2). Polotsky singles out Havers for its generous references. I have not systematically compared Havers' bibliography of 1952 and Walkden's bibliography of 2020, though I note that Walkden does not cite Havers. So even within the western tradition of studying enclitics, there appears to be more than one line of research.

Wackernagel's article has been cited so often that it "can safely be said to have entered the coveted realm of being more cited than read" (Walkden in Wackernagel, 2020: Introduction, 3).

As to before Wackernagel, the Indo-Europeanist Berthold Delbrück had ideas similar to Wackernagel's already in 1878 and may deserve credit (Walkden in Wackernagel, 2020: Introduction 5, note †). Still, Wackernagel's seems to be the first full-fledged systematic study.

4. The First Language Whose Enclitics Were Studied in Detail: Ancient Hieroglyphic Egyptian

The present writer is an Egyptologist. It struck a personal chord to become cognizant of the fact that the first language to be studied in depth for its enclitics appears to have been ancient Egyptian, not an Indo-European language.

This study in question is a 94-page monograph by the German scholar Hans Bernhard Ambrosius Abel (1883-1927). The first 33 pages were published in 1910 more privately as a doctoral dissertation for the University of Göttingen; the entire 94 pages, later in the same year more publicly by J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung in Leipzig. Both are handwritten by the author except the table of contents in the latter, as printing hieroglyphs was prohibitively expensive in earlier Egyptology. The doctoral exam took place on July 7, 1909.

The title of the dissertation and the completed work differ slightly, *Tonverschmelzung gewisser Wortgruppen im Altaegyptischen* ("Accent Merger of Certain Word Groups in Ancient Egyptian") and *Zur Tonverschmelzung im Altaegyptischen* ("Accent Merger in Ancient Egyptian") respectively. There are two reviews of the latter by Maspero (1910) and Wreszinski (1911).

Eduard Sievers did around the same time draw attention to enclitics in his study of word order in Old Norse (Sievers, 1909). He refers to enclitic words as "wedges" (*Keile*); I will return to this concept below. But Sievers presents no systematic analysis of enclitics in Old Norse as Abel does for enclitics in ancient Egyptian.

What is most important about Abel's work is that it looks at the phenomenon of enclitic words from yet an additional angle beyond the ones presented above in a totally original way (see §8).

5. What Inspired Hans Abel's work (Abel, 1910a, 1910b) on Enclitic Words?

One wonders how ancient Egyptian could have been the first language whose enclitics were systematically studied after Wackernagel's article. I had known about Abel's dissertation for many years and was aware that its quality is first-rate although few now know of its existence in Egyptology, even among philologists. But it was not fully clear to me who Abel was and what the origin of his dissertation was. Some critical details became known to me more recently and it appears that Abel's dissertation enjoys the best of pedigrees.

The main reason for my inability to place Abel's work in the history of Egyptology is that I had been using the publication of the full 94-page version of Abel's work (Abel, 1910b). It is customary in German dissertations for the author to reproduce a one-page CV (*Lebenslauf*). However, this CV is only found in the earlier private publication of the first 33 pages as a dissertation (Abel, 1910a) and not in the full 94-page version (Abel, 1910b). Only recently did I gain access on the Internet to the earlier publication.

From the CV and the front matter found in Abel 1910a and from a couple of

other sources, seven important facts emerge.

First, Abel's dissertation was for the University of Göttingen, where he studied from 1906 to 1908/1909.

Second, Wackernagel was professor at Göttingen from 1902 to 1915. In 1915, partly owing to World War I, he returned to Basel where he had taught before coming to Göttingen.

Third, Abel studied with Wackernagel at Göttingen.

Fourth, a native of Leipzig, Abel had earlier studied at the University of Leipzig with Sievers, who wrote about enclitics in Old Norse (see above).

Fifth, at Leipzig, Abel also studied with Georg Steindorff, who did much for our understanding of the phonology and phonetics of ancient Egyptian.

Sixth, Abel's *Doktorvater* was none other than Kurt Sethe, one of the most prominent Egyptologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and in fact of all time.

Seventh, Adolf Erman, founder of modern Egyptian philology, granted Abel access to the files of the Berlin Egyptian Dictionary project, which had started up in 1897.

It thus became clear that the excellence of Abel's work can be explained by the best of pedigrees, including Erman, Sethe, Sievers, Steindorff, and Wackernagel, all leading Egyptologists or linguists.

6. Hans Abel (1883-1927)

What about Abel after his dissertation? From the afore-mentioned CV, a brief biography included in the fifth edition of *Who Was Who in Egyptology* (Bierbrier, 2019: pp. 2-3)—after Abel was not included in the second edition of 1972 (I have not checked the third and fourth editions)–, and a couple of other sources, it appears that Abel served as the assistant of the German Archaeological Institute in 1908-1911. He then taught school, or probably better Gymnasium, but remained remarkably productive in a wide-ranging manner, publishing on the grammar of Old Nubian and contributing to reports of excavations pertaining to both Coptic and Pharaonic sites.

Abel would probably have featured more prominently in common Egyptological memory by remaining active into the 1950s and 1960s had he not died of a heart attack in 1927 at age 43 while on vacation in the Riesengebirge ("Giant Mountains") (Bierbrier, 2019: p. 3 incorrectly: "Reisengebirge," that is, "travel mountains," which they otherwise are). The present article therefore also serves the auxiliary function of memorializing a first-rate Egyptologist who made a unique and pioneering contribution to ancient Egyptian grammar (see §15.8).

7. Reception of Abel's Work on Enclitics

Abel's study of 1910 appears to have been mostly forgotten in modern Egyptology. Few libraries have copies. I know of only four more recent Egyptologists who are aware of it and cite it, but there may be others. Besides the two

afore-mentioned reviewers Maspero and Wreszinski, they are Erman, Gardiner, Gilula, and Oréal.

The founder of the modern study of the philology of modern Egyptian, Adolf Erman described it as a "diligent piece of work (*fleißige Arbeit*)" (Erman, 1915: p. 184 note 1), which it surely is.[1]

Alan H. Gardiner mentions it in a marginal note though not in his bibliography in his *Egyptian Grammar* (Gardiner, 1957: p. 174), still the most prominent grammar of Classical or Middle Egyptian.

In 1968, Mordechai Gilula completed a doctoral dissertation on enclitic particles in Classical Egyptian (Gilula, 1968). The dissertation was written in Hebrew (Ivrit). It remained unpublished but copies can be obtained. A short abstract in English was published in 1972 (Gilula, 1972). Gilula cites Abel at greater length and may have been the only person ever to clearly articulate in writing what Abel's work was really all about, as is clear from the abstract of his dissertation (Gilula, 1972).

In her monograph on particles in Ancient Egyptian, Elsa Oréal (2011: p. 3 note 8 and bibliography) cites Abel's 33-page doctoral dissertation (Abel, 1910a) but not the final 94-page version (Abel, 1910b), considering the fact that the two bear different titles and she cites the earlier title.

8. An Additional Property of Enclitics Proposed by Abel: Accent Merger (*Tonverschmelzung*)

In the history of linguistics, it is an interesting fact that ancient hieroglyphic Egyptian may well have been the first language to which Wackernagel's views were applied by others coming after him. However, this first application was by no means a replication. Abel went beyond Wackernagel. He added an additional property to the three that are generally claimed for enclitic words and have already been mentioned above. The three are as follows:

1) Enclitic words have no tone and therefore no accent.

2) They share an accent with a word that precedes and does have an accent, and related to this, cannot come first in the sentence.

3) They move forward, in the case of certain languages and certain enclitic words to a preferred second position in the sentence.

What is the fourth property? Gilula (1972) may be the only who explicitly described the fourth property defined by Abel, in addition to the reviewers Abel's book, Maspero (1910) and Wreszinski (1911). What is remarkable about this property is that I have not found it reflected in all that has been written about the enclitic words of all kinds of languages, although it may be somewhere. It is clear that, if Abel's book is for the most part forgotten in a small field such as

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[1]Erman's article on Coptic appeared in the acts (*Sitzungsberichte*) of the Berlin academy for the year 1915. Owing to World War I circumstances, the acts for the humanities and the acts for the sciences were combined into one in 1915. Later in the same acts for 1915, a certain Albert Einstein writes about general relativity theory in a well-known article. It may be the first and last time that Coptic and relativity theory are discussed on the pages of the same publication.

Egyptology, it has certainly gone entirely unnoticed in the field of general linguistics.

The property concerns enclitic particles that preferably appear in second position in the sentence though never at the beginning. Abel noticed that more than one word may precede an enclitic particle. He proposed that the second position rule is still preserved in that groups of two or more words preceding a second position particle are in fact merged in terms of accent. He uses the German metaphor *Verschmelzung* for "merger," that is "melting together."

Erman (1915: p. 184 note 1) objected that the words may also merge with regard to meaning rather than accent. But how does one really know in a dead language?

Whatever may be of the matter, the undeniable fact remains that there are certain sequences of two or more words that typically cannot be "split up" by enclitic words as "wedges" (Sievers). It is therefore important to know the identities of these sequences if one wishes to write correct ancient Egyptian and Coptic.

In that regard, Layton introduces the concept of "boundness" in his detailed Coptic grammar (Layton, 2011: p. 22). Two or more words can form "bound groups." Layton links such words with hyphens throughout his grammar. Though it is not explicitly mentioned, such groups are for all practical purposes sequences of two or more words that cannot be split up by an enclitic word as a "wedge." The grammar therefore provides exhaustive detail about what cannot be split. Enclitic words are in a sense bound to what precedes. Layton (2011: p. 25) uses the term "cohesiveness" for this relation.

How is Abel's contribution to the understanding of enclitic words relevant to the study of Chinese? Word order is so important to Chinese that the enclitic words do not move all that much. The only true exception is 了 *le*. And 了 *le* cannot precede the verb that it accompanies. That limits how far it can move forward in the sentence. A more detailed record of which sequences of words 了 *le* can split up and which not is desirable.

9. The Study of Enclitic Words in Egyptian: Prospects

Treating enclitic words comprehensively in Egyptian would be a worthwhile subject. There is a wealth of interesting and unrecorded detail to be recovered. But it would be necessary to bring together what is now scattered, in three regards.

First is considering all the stages of Egyptian in a comprehensive study: Old Egyptian, Middle Egyptian, Late Egyptian, Demotic, and Coptic. Second is considering all the four properties of enclitic words discussed above together comprehensively. Different works discuss different properties. But none discuss them all together. Third is considering the different types of enclitic words together. Take Old and Middle Egyptian. There are exactly four types. It is not possible to find the following complete list anywhere:

1) Enclitic particles;
2) Dependent pronouns;

3) The preposition *n* "to, for" with suffix pronoun;

4) The so-called copula *pw*.

The membership of the list changes over time. As for 1) it vanishes mostly in Late Egyptian and Demotic to reemerge as borrowed Greek articles in Coptic; 2) is replaced by the so-called direct object pronoun in later Late Egyptian and Demotic to disappear by the time of Coptic; 3) is stable as a type throughout the history of Egyptian; 4) vanishes in Late Egyptian, to be replace by non-enclitic pAy/tAy/nAy in Late Egyptian and Demotic, which becomes enclitic in Coptic just as pw had once been in Old and Middle Egyptian. There is a need for documenting all of this in a comprehensive study.

There have been a handful of other works that discuss enclitic words in all stages of Egyptian. A majority are by members of the so-called Jerusalem School that formed around H.J. Polotsky, including myself.

There is not much explicit discussion about the nature of enclitic words in them. The exception is Shisha-Halevy's detailed description of enclitic words in Coptic, which includes much theoretical discussion (Shisha-Halevy, 1986: pp. 165-168). Shisha-Halevy also provides much useful documentation as to the order of enclitic words if two or more appear in sequence.

In addition to Shisha-Halevy (1986) and Erman (1915), Gilula (1968, 1872), Oréal (2011), and the two reviews of Abel's dissertation already cited above, one can add the following: Borghouts (1986: pp. 47–51); Depuydt (1997, 2002); and Polotsky (1961, 1987).

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix: The Length of Chinese History and the Length of Egyptian History

Ancient Egyptian civilization and Chinese civilization are often associated with one another because the writing systems of both include what may be called pictograms. But that may well be where the similarity stops.

There are various descriptions of the lengths of Chinese history and Egyptian history. The comparison of the two lengths is related to the writing systems. Because history is by definition the time period from which written sources are preserved. So how long are the two histories? The gist is as follows. Someday, Chinese history will be longer than Egyptian history. But at present, by any conceivable scenario, the Egyptian language is documented in writing over a longer period of time than any language, including Chinese.

What are the numbers? Precise numbers are not possible. The most generous estimate of the length of the documented history of ancient Egyptian is roughly 4500 years, perhaps a little more. It is difficult to estimate this same length at its shortest to be less than 3600 years by any imaginable scenario if Coptic is included, which it should be. Full-fledged robust hieroglyphic writing can probably be brought down to about 2800 years.

Meanwhile, as regards Chinese, it seems difficult to estimate the same length as more than about 3200 years. But the period is shorter when full-fledged Chinese writing is concerned, and then covers roughly the same time span as Greek, from some time in the first half of the first millennium BCE. So at present, it could be said that Chinese history is about as long as Greek history, roughly around 2800 years.

The earliest Chinese texts are oracle bone inscriptions. But they are typically not dated to before 1200 BCE. Accordingly, Chinese history would be 3200 years long, still shorter than Egyptian history by any count.