Microvariation in Western Romance Differential Object Marking (ad): diachrony and synchrony:

The use of preposition ad as a marker of Differential Object Marking (DOM) for animate and/or referential objects is a pan-Romance phenomenon (Rolhfs (1971), Zamboni (1993)), and proto-Romance/Latin origins have been postulated (Sornicola (1998)), namely verba vendendi (‘see’), verba iuvandi et serviendi (‘help/serve’), verba clamandi (‘shout/call’) and verba petendi et rogandi (‘ask/beg’) (Tse (2013)). Microvariations exist among Western Romance varieties in that while DOM is fully generalized for human/animate objects in some varieties (Spanish/Italian dialects), it is restricted to pronouns and proper nouns in others (Portuguese/Catalán/Gallo-Romance), which not only reveals a hierarchy of DOM-parameters at work (Roegiest (1979), Laca (2006)) but also different diachronic microparametric resettings from Latin/proto-Romance (Nocentini (1985)). In this paper, I propose to trace the historical-comparative developments of Romance DOM (ad) which can not only illuminate the formal mechanisms of DOM in Western Romance varieties but also lead to a more nuanced account of the Romance nominal domain where ad (K) is required to Case-mark different sets of features in the nominal argument (DP) as a result of different analogical forces and syntactic operations in proto-Romance formation. In Western Romance, four macrotypes of DOM-systems can be distinguished, namely Spanish where ad is generalized as a marker of animate (human/animal) objects preferably of a referential (1a) and ‘affected’ kind (1b) (Torrego (1998, 1999)), Italian dialects where ad is used preferentially with specific human objects (2a) and generally not otherwise (2b) (Nocentini (1985)), Portuguese and Catalan where ad is a marker of definite/personal pronouns (3a) and proper nouns, mainly names/titles of divine beings (3b) (Escandell-Vidal (2007), Schwenter (2014)) and Gallo-Romance where ad is exclusively a marker of personal pronouns (4) (Joly (1971)):

1a) am-a a su perro / el director busc-a (a) un empleado
   love-PRES.3SG AD his dog / DET director search-3SG.PRES AD a employee
   ‘He loves his dog’ / ‘The director searches for an employee.’ (anyone would do) (Spanish (Zamboni (1993:790))

1b) tien-e doce hij-os / mantien-e a doce hij-os
   has-PRES.3SG twelve child-PL raise-PRES.3SG AD twelve child-PL
   ‘(S)he has twelve children.’ / ‘(S)he raises twelve children.’ (Spanish (Zamboni (1993:791))

2a) vitt-i a g giovanni / io serv-o (*a) uomini e donne
   see-PRET.1SG AD Giovanni I serve-PRES.1SG AD men and women
   ‘I saw Giovanni.’ (Sicilian (Guardiano (2010:104))) / ‘I serve men and women.’ (Neapolitan (Fiorentino (2003))

2b) arrubbarru (a)-n cavadu / venne l’ora de remoner-are (a) sto gran cane
   steal-PRET.3PL AD-one horse / came the-hour of repay-INF AD this great dog
   ‘They stole a horse.’ (Guardiano (2010:105)) / ‘The time came to repay this great dog.’ (Fiorentino (2003:123))

3a) vimos (a) eles mas nao nos viram a nos / jo t’ ajud-o a tu
   see-PRET.1PL AD them but NEG us see-PRET.3PL AD us I you help-PRES.1SG AD you
   ‘We saw them but they did not see us’ (Portuguese (Roegiest (1979:39))) / ‘I help you.’ (Escandell-Vidal (2007:3))

3b) vej-o (a) Joao / deve-mos am-ar a Deus /am-es a Jesuchrist
   see-PRES.1SG AD Joao / must-PRES.1PL love-INF AD God you-PRES.2SG AD Jesus-Christ

4) e a you tabé (a estounat) / il faut l’aid-er a elle
   And AD me also have stunned EXPL necessary him-help-INF AD him
   ‘And it also stunned me.’ (Bearnais (Joly (1981:288))) / ‘it is necessary to help him.’ (French (Joly (1971:287))

A DOM-hierarchy may hence be established of pronouns (3a), 4)), names of deities (3b)), human referents (1b), 2a)) and animate beings (1a), 2b)) in descending order of obligatoriness (cf Nocentini (1994:301), Aissen (2003:437)), which may be correlated with their Latin origins. The earliest attestations of Latin ad being construed with two-place predicates are found with verbs of seeing in Plautus where ad being in origin an allative/directional preposition not only denotes a specific object but also a degree of ‘affectedness’, since it often implies
‘travelling/visiting’ whose object is not merely the ‘stimulus/goal’ of vision but also the ‘patient/beneficiary’ of one’s visit:

5) \textit{ad} era-m revide-bo
\begin{CJK}{UTF8}{min}
AD mistress-ACC.SG see.again-FUT.1SG
\end{CJK}

‘I shall revisit our mistress.’ (Plautus \textit{Truculentus} 320)

In Christian/Medieval Latin, \textit{ad} becomes associated with human ‘affected’ objects as it marks the ‘beneficiary/recipient’ of verbs of aiding (6a)) as well as the ‘recipient/experience/benefactor’ of verbs of shouting/begging (6b)), both of which become direct objects in Romance:

6a) \textit{ad} cuius imperi-um cael-um terr-a mari-a servie-bant
\begin{CJK}{UTF8}{min}
AD REL.PRO.GEN power-ACC.SG heaven-NOM.SG earth-NOM.SG sea-NOM.PL serve-IMPERF.3PL
\end{CJK}

‘… whose power heaven, earth and the seas served.’ (Jerome \textit{Epistulae} 82.3)

6b) Moyses ora-bat \textit{ad} Dominum / ego autem \textit{ad} Deu-m clama-vi
\begin{CJK}{UTF8}{min}
Moses beg-IMPERF.3SG AD Lord I but AD God-ACC.SG shout-PERF.1SG
\end{CJK}

‘Moses was begging the Lord.’ (\textit{Libri Maccabaorum} 2.10) / ‘But I shouted (something) to God.’ > ‘I called God.’ (\textit{Exodus} 14.15)

The Western Romance DOM-parameters, then, seem to analogue from Latin to varying extents: Spanish extends DOM to all animate (human/animal) beings (1a)), whereas Italo-Romance varieties retain definiteness/specificity (2a)) as a determinant for marking a subset of specific human objects (2b)). Portuguese and Catalán use \textit{ad} mainly to mark divine names/titles (3b)), which may be traced back to some of the earliest attestations of DOM which are found with names/titles of Christian Saints (Adams (2013:286), cf \textit{ad Dominum, ad Deum} (6b)):

7) et respe-xit Dominus \textit{ad} Abel et \textit{ad} munera eius
\begin{CJK}{UTF8}{min}
And look.back-PERF.3SG Lord AD Abel and AD gifts his
\end{CJK}

‘And the Lord looked back at Abel and at his gifts.’ (\textit{Genesis} 4.4)

Pronominal marking is universal in Western Romance (Nocentini (1992:228)), which could be due to the prosodic deficiencies of personal pronouns which need to be supported by \textit{ad} (Sornicola (1998:422-424)), as seen in pseudo-dative forms in Medieval Latin/Romance:

8) \textit{ad} mihi me am-at / a ti ador-o e cred-o de toda voluntad
\begin{CJK}{UTF8}{min}
AD me.DAT me.ACC love-PRES.3SG AD you adore-PRES.1SG and trust-PRES.1SG of all will
\end{CJK}

‘As for me, she loves me.’ (Pensado (1995:203)) / ‘As for you, I adore you and trust you with all my heart.’ (\textit{El Cid} 362)

These microvariations indicate that \textit{ad} is used preferentially with a combination of inherent (human/animate) and discursive (referentiality/’affectedness’) features (de Swart and de Hoop (2007)), and the higher the functional projections, the more associated they seem to be with the highest projection of K(case) (ad) (Caha (2009)), namely pronouns (Person/phi) followed by proper nouns (D) and lexical nouns (N), the inherent semantic features of the latter (human/animacy) seem to be (surprisingly) the lowest on the DOM-hierarchy. Formally, it may be argued that DOM is conditioned by Minimality of movement (‘Least Effort’) (Roberts and Roussou (2003)), which might explain why shorter chains (D-to-K) are preferred to longer ones (N-to-K).

(Select) References: