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Morphosyntactic variation in Early Modern Greek notary acts: Assessing the evidence

It has been observed (cf. e.g. Wagner, Outhwaite & Beinhoff, 2013) that medieval notarial acts can constitute an important source of linguistic information, mainly because of the ‘advantages’ they hold in comparison to literary texts: They typically are of a certain date and author, they are mostly autographs, and are usually found in large numbers. This is especially important in the case of the history of Greek, given the well-known ‘diglossic’ situation in Greek writing (cf. e.g. Horrocks, 2010), as well as the quite problematic metalinguistic information (or lack of) surrounding the literary texts of late medieval – early modern Greek period (cf. Manolessou, 2008). On the other hand, the often formulaic character of notary texts, usually accompanied by interference from archaizing constructions / registers, mitigates to an extent the authenticity of the early Modern Greek notary texts. This might explain the near total lack of linguistic studies into this rich linguistic source, with some exceptions (e.g. Manolessou & Lentari, 2003, Markopoulos, 2008) that have ascertained the lesser amount of variation observed in these texts, chiefly in comparison to contemporary literary ones.

Against this background, this paper seeks to address the issue of the intra-writer variation in early Modern Greek notary acts (ca. 15th–17th c.), mainly from Crete. On the basis of some preliminary observations in studies of the history of Greek (e.g. Markopoulos, 2008, 2015), it will examine the morphosyntactic variation attested for specific constructions (mainly analytic comparative constructions and periphrastic future-reference constructions), in an attempt to provide answers to the following questions:

- a. To what extent can we speak of ‘intra-writer’ variation in notary texts, at least with regard to the morphosyntactic level?
- b. How can we interpret instances of such variation in those texts?
- c. What is the relationship between ‘intra-writer’ and other types of variation?

References

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