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Nicholaus Martini scripsit:

Latin-Romance hybridity in the documents of a thirteenth-century Castilian scribe

This study presents an alternative interpretation of language represented in Latin-Romance hybrid documents of medieval Europe, focusing on local legal documents produced in 12th and early 13th century Iberia by a scribe of Burgos, Castile (these are included in Torrens' CORHEN or Corpus Histórico del Español Norteño). Most scholars tend to attribute hybrid practices to scribes' ignorance of "Latin" norms. In contrast, we highlight evidence of their communicative competence, arguing that they worked within a monolingual culture characterized by "spectroglossia" (conceptual diglossia between a literate "Latin" register and a vernacular "Romance" register, without strict functional separation). The patterns of switching, mixing, and blending of registers in Martini's texts cannot be accounted for merely as a result of incompetence. Rather, they develop as conventions in response to a number of factors: a) practical need for ease of comprehension, b) weight of discursive tradition, and c) extensive use of the rhetorical device of *variatio*. We also argue that modern scholars should not overestimate the importance of ease of comprehension to oral readings of medieval legal documents, given the ritualistic nature of these acts. Larger cultural changes also framed and favored the rise and continued use of the hybrid representations that we find in Martini's and other scribes' hybrid documents (e.g., the Gregorian reforms), as well as their demise in the mid-thirteenth century (i.e., changes in political culture). It is plausible to evaluate the hybrid textual production (or rampant "translanguaging") of this scribe/period as corresponding to a stage in the development of conceptions and practices that preceded full conceptual distinction between Latin and Romance as languages, as well as among different Romance languages.

References

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