Klaas Bentein – Mark Janse (eds), Varieties of Post-Classical and Byzantine Greek (Trends in Linguistics. Studies and Monographs 331). Berlin: De Gruyter – Mouton 2021. XVIII, 429 pp. – ISBN 978-3-11-060855-7 (€ 99.95)

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The book opens with an introductory chapter by the editors titled "Varieties of Post-classical and Byzantine Greek. Novel questions and approaches", pp. 1–13, in which they stress that (socio)linguistic varieties in Post-Classical and Byzantine Greek have received much less attention in comparison with Classical Greek, for which "scholars have discussed varieties such as scientific and medical language, female speech, foreigner talk, religious language, colloquial language, profane and obscene language etc." (p. 2). The authors do not offer a reason for this situation, thus implying perhaps that it lies in the backwardness of Byzantine studies, which usually attract less attention in academic milieus. However, it would have been worth dwelling on this question, which is crucial for the purpose of the book, for it has to do with two main factors that determine, for good or ill, the results of every essay on this topic.

First, the written and spoken varieties for Classical Greek in the Classical period were very close to each other, so that the study of its written varieties reflects to a great extent the sociolinguistic uses. This is not the case in Post-Classical Greek, for here the written forms did not reflect spoken varieties and were determined and interfered with by grammatical learning and grammatical rules. The distance between spoken and written Greek widened with time and, when the testimony of non-literary papyri disappeared at the end of Antiquity, the possibility of having documents close to the spoken varieties of the language diminished. This is why nine out of the sixteen contributions in the volume are exclusively devoted to Egypt and Egyptian Greek papyri. An explanation of these circumstances would have been helpful.

Second, the study of 'horizontal' varieties in Greek obviously depends on previous knowledge of the characteristics of the diachronic registers in Post-Classical Greek. However, it is difficult to speak of varieties when the different levels of language in Byzantium are now a matter of debate

among scholars, who not only are still speaking of distinct stylistic registers for what are clearly linguistic differences, but also adhere to the so-called Byzantine diglossia without noticing that there was actually a three-level system, whereby Classical Greek (Homer and the Attic prose) was at the upper top, the vernacular or spoken languages at the bottom and the koine lay at a vast in-between grey zone, interacting with the other two levels.

It is with these two caveats in mind that we approach the short theoretical introduction of the volume, in which the editors briefly deal first with the terms 'variant', 'variety' and 'variation', and then with 'variational space' and the interrelationship between variants and varieties (pp. 3–7). The exposition is a very short overview of some key-concepts and trends, which are supposedly already familiar to the reader, and, therefore, turns out not to be particularly illuminating for the non-linguist who enters this field as a philologist. Furthermore, the editors do not apply the concepts under review to the Post-Classical and Medieval Greek, such as the much-abused term 'dialect' (understood differently among nations according to political circumstances) or the vague notion of 'diachrony' (also differently applied to Greek because of the different perceptions of the stages of the language across centuries). The single page on 'methodology' (pp. 7–8) does not refer to the one employed in the volume but briefly discusses the value of both quantitative and qualitative approaches and the credibility of the texts "which report directly on the social value of linguistic features". An "outline of the volume" follows (pp. 8–11), in which the editors state that the contributions to the volume "deal with different time periods, different dimensions and domains of variations, and use different methodologies" (p. 8). A short summary of the sixteen contributions, which are for the most part case studies on isolated linguistic patterns or local corpora, confirms this point. The contributions, however, are distributed in two sections that closely resemble each other. The first section has the title "Varieties of Post-Classical and Byzantine Greek" (pp. 15–239) and includes nine contributions which deal mainly with specific linguistic varieties as appearing in particular authors or corpora. The second section, titled "Dimensions of variation in Post-Classical and Byzantine Greek" (pp. 241–414), addresses some more general linguistic features that could be indicative of varieties at different linguistic levels and focus mainly on verb tenses, orthography and syntax.

Considering the differences in approach and the diversity of subjects, I think it appropriate to review here shortly the eight contributions dealing with the Byzantine period. The rarity of such studies in the field of Byzan-

tine literary production makes them more than welcome and their conclusions a reference point for future research.

In "Imposing psychological pressure in papyrus request letters: A case study of six Byzantine letters written in an ecclesiastical context (VI–VII CE)" (pp. 75–113) AIKATHERINI KOROLI edits and translates six letters preserved on papyrus, and comments on the communication strategies followed in them. Four are in the Fouad collection at El Cairo, written by monks of the monastery of Aphrodito in Upper Egypt. The other two, on papyrus and coming from Nessana (Palestine), are held at the Pierpont Morgan library. KOROLI focuses on politeness forms and the imperative tone and concludes that the first are always dominant and characteristic of a Byzantine 'ecclesiastical' style of letter-writing. However, the number of letters studied in the sample is too small to afford conclusions of this kind. Furthermore, the study has apparently nothing to do with linguistic varieties, but rather with literary conventions of the epistolary genre. A comparison with the current ἐπιστολικοὶ τύποι of the period should have been included in this paper.

In "Byzantine literature in 'classicised' genres: Some grammatical realities (V–XIV CE)" (pp. 163–178), GEOFFREY HORROCKS investigates the different paths followed by Byzantine authors in the learning of classical morphology and syntax. HORROCKS considers that the study of morphology was the main focus of education in classical Greek in the Imperial and Byzantine periods, because students, being native speakers, "already knew the contemporary syntax" until the very end of Byzantium and only had access to the syntactic rules by "close examination of the precedents under the guidance of a teacher" (p. 166). He thinks that "high-register Byzantine Greek... was in a very real sense a living language, used creatively by the practitioners", although "few if any Byzantine writers sought to replicate the language of classical models in any precise way" (p. 164). HORROCKS proves his point by analysing some passages of a small corpus of representative Byzantine authors, writing both in Classical Greek and in the vernacular and pointing to the incorrect use of some tenses, whereas deviations from the morphology are scarcely noted, except in mixed languages such as the *Ptochoprodromica*. Although I agree in general terms with the distinction between morphology and syntax in the learning process of Classical Greek, there are some aspects to consider in this paper, which is one of the most stimulating in the whole volume and might set standards for future research in this field:

1) There were some treatises on syntax in the Byzantine period, such as the popular one written by Michael the Synkellos in the 9th century. Contrary to the complex theorizations of Apollonios Dyskolos, they were conceived as practical treatises, focusing on the syntax of the different *partes orationis* and considering aspects such as the rection of the verbs (a field where syntax and lexis converged) or the combined use of particles and adverbs and moods. Moreover, Byzantine dictionaries also paid occasional attention to syntax. It is not true that direct reading of ancient authors provided the only guide to the study of syntax, although it is understandable that the syntactic treatises could only deal with some cases, as correct practice was a matter of learning by heart the use of many single words, namely verbs (their diathesis and case government).

2) The use of the verb by classicising authors should not be judged according to the strict rules of Attic prose, for many of them started their learning of Greek with Homer and, as is well known, Anna Komnene even imitated its vocabulary in her mixed prose. A less rigid approach to the rules is to be followed, for instance when considering the counterfactual value of the imperfect. Its use without ἄν, which appears in a verse of Paul the Silentiary quoted by HORROCKS, is explained by him as a deviation from the rule leading to ambiguous interpretations of the passage. The counterfactual imperfect without ἄν was certainly unusual in Classical prose, but there were cases of this use in the ancient texts read by the Byzantines. These cases, although systematically explained out as the result of copying errors in modern grammars,[1] could perhaps have been interpreted as elliptic by Byzantine grammarians.[2] On the other hand, the possibility of a counterfactual meaning in the surely highly recherché sentence of Akropolites ἅπερ ἂν ἐκείνοις ἐπῆλθεν εἰπεῖν quoted by HORROCKS is not completely discarded and can easily find parallels, as for instance οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν ἐπῆλθεν Ἐπικτήτῳ ταῦτα εἰπεῖν in Epictetus, *Dissertationes* 3.1.36. It is also in the imperial period where we should look for precedents for the syntax of Byzantine classicists, not only in the classical age.

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1. See for instance JOHANN M. STAHL, Kritisch-historische Syntax der griechischen Verbums der klassischen Zeit (Indogermanische Bibliothek, Abt. 1, Sammlung indogermanischer Lehr- und Handbücher: R. 1, Grammatiken 4). Heidelberg 1907, pp. 443–444.

2. Michael the Syncellus, Syntax §171 (ed. DANIEL DONNET, Le traité de la construction de la phrase de Michel le Syncelle de Jérusalem [Études de philologie, d'archéologie et d'histoire anciennes 22]. Bruxelles 1982) writes that if the subjunctive and the optative are used without ἄν it is because of an elliptic use: εἰ δὲ χωρὶς τοῦ ἄν συντάσσονται, κατ᾽ ἐλλειπτικὸν τρόπον ἡ σύνταξις ἔσται. In any case, Syncellus, ibid. §201, is perfectly aware of the use of ἄν for the conterfactual (δυνητικός, potential in his terminology).

3) There was not just a Classical Greek and a Vernacular, but, as I have already said, a third middle level, the Byzantine koine, whose syntax had already parted from the standards of Classical Greek in the Hellenistic age in such crucial aspects as word order, the use of the modes or the case government of verbs (changing depending on the preverbs). Morphology had also changed but the deviation from the classical forms was carefully and systematically avoided, as it was easily identifiable in contrast to the complex syntactic uses.

In "From highly classicizing to common prose (XIII–XIV CE). The *metaphrasis of Niketas Choniates' History*" (pp. 179–200), MARTIN HINTERBERGER compares the linguistic features that change in a passage from the 14th century metaphrasis of Niketas Choniates' *History* with regard to its model; he reviews them under different headings, the two most important being vocabulary and morphosyntactical changes. Some of the new features of the metaphrasis belong to the spoken vernacular (such as the cluster τζ or the prevalence of nominative absolutes) whereas others deviate from it and are somehow in accordance with the traditional grammar, such as the use of the dative or the existence of infinitives or participles, however imperfect their use may be. The author then lists a series of classicizing markers which are usually avoided in what he calls a middle way between Atticism and the Vernacular. This is a very important conclusion which deserves to be quoted in full:

"Returning to the initial question of how to characterize different varieties of written Byzantine Greek, I propose to use Byzantine koine as the point of reference (rather than Ancient Greek). Through the centuries, this 'common written language' can be defined by the absence of both decidedly outdated and innovative elements. It constitutes a compromise between conservatism and modernism. Innovative elements are all those which are not recorded in traditional grammars. Obsolete are all those morphological categories which had disappeared from the living language for centuries already."

According to my view – and against HORROCKS' statement quoted above – it was this middle way, the Byzantine koine – not Classical or Ancient Greek – that "was in a very real sense a living language", side by side with the vernacular. The reason for its resilience and continuity might have been the impossibility of its substitution, not only because of the absence of an alternative vernacular grammar, but also due to the lack of unity in the vernacular speech. What the real situation could have been at the level of

spoken Greek might be illustrated by the next contribution in the volume.

In "Back to the future: Akritic light on diachronic variation in Cappadocian (East Asia Minor Greek)" (pp. 201–239), MARK JANSE offers a thorough analysis of the linguistic features of an acritic song written in Cappadocian and published in 1934 by Richard Dawkins from a manuscript by Anastasios Levidis, a schoolmaster from Zincidere near Kayseri (Caesarea), who copied it in 1892. The text, therefore, belongs to a time before the 'exchange of populations' between Greece and Turkey in 1923–1924. The author is very systematic in his review of the features, centering his analysis on the phonetic and morphological characteristics of Cappadocian. He concludes that: "The Greek layer of Cappadocian is essentially Late Medieval Greek, with archaisms going back as far as the Asia Minor or Anatolian koine". The contribution also includes in the introduction a useful genealogical classification of the East Asia Minor Greek dialects, a table of the subgroup of the Cappadocian dialects (five of them), as well as some brief notes on the phases of the language defined by the linguistic origin of the loanwords: Latin for the (early) Byzantine centuries, and Turkish and Italian for the period after the settlement of the Seljuks in Asia Minor and the arrival of the Crusaders at the end of the 11th century. The existence of Cappadocian in the early Byzantine centuries excludes the possibility that this language was a product of late Byzantine political decomposition and makes us think that the fragmentation of the vernacular Greek was already established in the Middle Byzantine period. Yet, we should avoid using the somehow derogatory word 'dialect' (conceived by the Greek ἕνωσις!) for these languages derived from the Greek Koine, as they were mutually incomprehensible. It is not with 'varieties' that we deal with here (despite the title of the book), but with languages of their own. We can speak perhaps of 'Cappadocian Greek' as JANSE does in order to link this regional language to the Greek continuum, but unambiguous expressions such as 'Hellenic languages' should be established to describe the common Greek ancestry of all these medieval languages, in the same way that the word Romance is commonly used for all the languages descending from Latin.

The first contribution of the second part of the book that focuses on the Byzantine period is by JOANNE VERA STOLK and titled "Orthographic variation and register in the corpus of Greek documentary papyri (300 BCE–800 CE)" (pp. 299–326). Like HINTERBERGER, she considers again three levels of language in the documentary papyri of this millennium, high, middle and low, which, however, constitute a register continuum following the proposal of BENTEIN (presented in the last contribution of the volume).

She traces the percentage of deviation from standard orthography in an impressive corpus of 35.024 papyri and considers the variables of setting (private or official), participants (mainly considering the interaction between sender and addressee), genre (letters, contracts, declarations, pronouncements, reports, receipts, lists). The quantitative results are presented in a table. Some single archives are then separately commented in detail, among them the Dioscorus archive of the 6th century. In the conclusions, some of the reasons for the higher or lower number of non-standard orthographic features are discussed. Obviously, the different setting, participants and genres are responsible for the distribution of orthographic variation, but other factors are also important, such as the education of the sender, the method of production of the document (the role played by scribes or dictation) and the nature of the copy (draft, unofficial transcript, and so on). Thus, this contribution provides thus the editors with an important guide for tackling the orthographic problems of their texts and is a serious warning against editorial regularization, for it deprives us from an important criterion for evaluating the nature of the document.

In "Metrical variation in Byzantine colophons (XI–XV CE). The example of ἡ μὲν χεὶρ ἡ γράψασα" (pp. 353–368), JULIE BOETEN considers the reasons for the 60 variations attested in the Ghent *Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams* of the metrical colophon of the type ἡ μὲν χεὶρ ἡ γράψασα. Although it should appear as a dodecasyllable in its archetypical form, frequent metrical deviations are attested in most of the occurrences recorded so far. The author lists and categorizes these deviations and concludes that they occur because "the general rhythm of these texts prevailed over the metrical rules" (p. 366). The contribution belongs to the field of literary analysis and does not fit well with the linguistic approach prevalent in the volume.

In "Arguing and narrating: Text type and linguistic variation in tenth-century Greek" (pp. 369–380) STAFFAN WAHLGREN states that, as Vernacular was not an option for middle-Byzantine writers (particularly in the tenth century), the range of variation in the texts of this period was narrow. He tries to explain variations through discursive factors "ruled by the communicational needs the author wished to meet" (p. 369) and takes as a basis for comparison two sections of 4.000 words from the Logothete Chronicle and the collection of letters attributed to the Logothete. The hypothesis is that different constructions are to be expected, since these two works belong to two distinct text types, the Chronicle to narration and the letters to argumentation. Among the linguistic features he compares, differences

are detected, for instance, in the more frequent use of the infinitive in the letters (for it is used in periphrastic constructions) or of object clauses with a finite verb (for they are more precise than the corresponding participles, more frequent in the chronicle), whereas the use of the dative prevails in the chronicle in temporal and spatial phrases required for stating the time and place of occurrence. As already stated by STOLK in her contribution on orthography, literary genre is a fundamental determinant of the varieties of a text, for it defines the nature of the act of communication.

The final study by KLAAS BENTEIN, titled "The distinctiveness of syntax for varieties of Post-classical and Byzantine Greek: Linguistic upgrading from the third century BCE to the tenth century CE" (pp. 381–414) approaches the problem of the vertical levels of Greek by analysing three cases of linguistic upgrading, namely, the correction or modification of a Greek text according to a higher linguistic standard. In his introductory pages, based on his previous research, BENTEIN explains the methodological basis of the study. He argues for a register continuum in the Post-Classical and Byzantine Greek language with three points of reference (low, middle and high) but not for separate diachronic levels of language. He further considers that linguistic changes should be analysed in the fields of orthography, morphology, syntax and lexis (that is, vocabulary) for the degree of change varies among them depending on authors and periods. Finally, he also stresses the importance of using schoolbooks, lexica, grammatical and rhetorical treatises which are observer-centred and reflect metalinguistically the same problems addressed by recent scholarship.

The three cases under consideration in the contribution belong to different periods. The first one deals with versions of petitions preserved in papyri coming from the Serapieion archive (2nd century BCE). It shows how the original drafts of documents were linguistically improved by the brothers Ptolemaios and Apollonios, the Macedonian officials responsible for their copying. The second case study involves Phrynichus' *Ecloga*, a dictionary of Attic terms that puts emphasis on the terms that should be avoided in correct speech and suggests those that should be used instead. Finally, the *Life of Euthymios* by Cyril of Scythopolis (6th century CE) is compared to its rewritten version by Symeon Metaphrastes (10th century CE).

BENTEIN observes a high degree of changes in syntax, lexis and orthography in the first case, a clear emphasis on lexical change in Phrynichus and again in the Metaphrastic version of the *Life of Euthymios*, where,

however, syntax also plays a significant role. This comes as no surprise and is in accordance with the different diachronic stages of Greek taken into consideration in the three cases, as well as with the nature of the texts analysed. Thus, the Hellenistic Greek of 2nd century BCE was closer to Classical Greek and did not need to pay much attention to morphology and lexis (the substitution of words being rather motivated by stylistic considerations), whereas the interest in vocabulary in the *Ecloga* of Phrynichus seems so obvious in this kind of works that the syntactic remarks are in fact noteworthy for being out of place. Finally, the small number of syntactic changes in the Metaphrastic version of the *Life of Euthymios* is certainly not evidence for the lesser significance of syntax, but is related to the choices made, for Cyril of Scythopolis was not writing in a low or simple koine. If we compare, for instance, the rewriting in the Imperial Palace, in the 10th century, of the final sections of chronicle of the Logothete (to take WAHLGREN's example),[3] we will notice that syntax figures prominently, along with lexis, as the main driver of the changes. Aspects such as word order (the original sequence is frequently disturbed), the case government of verbs, the use of the diathesis and the tenses were constantly guiding the rewriting process of the original chronicle and played a no less important role than vocabulary. That morphology played a minor role was due to the fact that the new morphological forms that appeared in the vernacular in the Middle Ages were expunged from the written records before the 12th century, as WAHLGREN rightly observes in his essay: every single form that did not respond to the classical rule was easily detected and suppressed if the reviewer performed correctly his task. Vocabulary and syntax, however, were only mastered by a few highly trained writers, who tried to avoid uses non-sanctioned by Classical authors. To put it in the words of BENTEIN: "This (circumstance, the less attention paid occasionally to syntax in some sources) I have attributed to the fact that syntax is more schematic and complex, making it less 'tangible' for sociolinguistic observations and evaluations" (p. 410).

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3. This is what is usually called Logothete B. For details on this text see the documented introduction to the edition of the Logothete chronicle by STAFFAN WAHLGREN, Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae chronicon (Corpus fontium historiae byzantinae 44.1). Berlin 2006, pp. *84–*87. MICHAEL FEATHERSTONE and I are currently editing Book VI of Theophanes Continuatus which is a further version of Logothete B.