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Greek and Latin in contact: an example of ‘Roman Greek’ from Isthmia

This paper presents initial findings from a project on language contact between Latin and Greek in inscriptions from imperial Greece, mostly from the Greek perspective (Latin influence on Greek). The starting point was inscriptions from the Corinthia dating from after the re-founding of Corinth as a Roman colony (44 B.C.), when the area became «a hybrid of both cultures, in which one language [Latin] became the mode of expression within the public sphere and another [Greek] within the private» (Millis 2010: 31). Among the texts investigated so far, some relevant examples of language contact have been found in a dedication discovered at Isthmia and connected to a group of five inscriptions in that they all mention the same Roman dignitary, viz. the *archiereus* of the imperial cult in the *koinon* of Achaëa. They are dated approximately to the beginning of A.D. II. The elements which seem to show Latin influence are the following: use of the Roman form of filiation; clause-final position of all the main verbs; use of the conjunction $\tau\epsilon$ which resembles Latin *-que* more than Greek usage; some inconsistencies in the use of the definite article with gods’ names. This last feature looks like the uncertain language use of a person who is still learning how to use the definite article because his native language, Latin, did not possess it. This study takes into account the location and content of the texts which mention our dignitary, using both an interdisciplinary and multifactored approach, including reference to typological studies of other languages. Study of further inscriptions is progressively informing our assessment of the apparent deviations. My current working hypothesis is that we have here an example of ‘Roman Greek’ born of a process of accommodation, or even of translation.

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