

Bilingual and Trilingual Inscriptions of the Ottoman Buildings in Greece: A Search for the History of Late Ottoman Period

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Abstract

The subject of this paper is based on studying bilingual and trilingual inscriptions of the ottoman buildings in Greece and their production contexts. This paper presents the historical layout of production of early Islamic bilingual inscriptions with reference to the reasons of this phenomenon.

This paper also provides a statistic inventory of the existed foundation inscriptions of the ottoman buildings in Greece. There are 315 inscriptions in total. Among which 47 are in Arabic, 178 are in ottoman, 60 are in Greek, 4 are in Byzantine, 3 are in Modern Turkish, two are in French, 9 are only in numbers, and 17 are bilingual and trilingual ones. The latter are our main intention in this paper. Furthermore it highlights the analysis of these inscriptions' numbers and their classification according to their language, date, place and content.

It documents and examines in details, as far as concerned, the bilingual and trilingual inscriptions of the ottoman buildings in Greece. From my perspective, these inscriptions are divided into 5 groups: 1) Arabic–Ottoman inscriptions, 2) Ottoman–Greek inscriptions, 3) Arabic–Greek inscriptions, 4) Ottoman–Italian inscriptions, 5) and those are written in Ottoman–French–Greek languages. These inscriptions identify 11 ottoman buildings including: 3 mosques, one tekke, two fountains (Çeşmesi), three residential houses, one commercial building, and one clock tower. Their inscriptions date back to the last decades of the 19th c. and early 20th c. and distributed over different regions in Greece.

The paper ends with a contribution explains the meaning of the existence of bilingual and trilingual inscriptions belonging to the ottoman buildings in Greece. Moreover, it links between these inscriptions and the developments of the contemporary historical, political, social, economic, and cultural contexts. Interpreted another way, it shows to what extent these inscriptions reflect the history of late ottoman period in Greece.

It concludes that these multilingual inscriptions monitor the shifting in the Greek history during the last decades of the ottoman rule. In which, in some regions as in Crete, Greeks were not followers as previous, but they were real effective partners with Ottomans peer to peer in governing their territories.