ONUS TESTIS, NULLUS TESTIS?
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A SINGLE TOKEN IN A PROBLEM OF LATER MEDIEVAL GREEK SYNTAX.

Panayiotis A. Pappas

Abstract

In this brief paper I examine the placement of weak object pronouns in Later Medieval Greek when the verb is preceded by the negative marker oů. For the first time a detailed list of the occurrences of this phenomenon in 10 texts is presented and the distinction between oů "not" and ēv oů "if not" is taken into consideration. The results show that pronouns are placed postverbally if oů precedes the verb, but preverbally if ēv oů precedes the verb. I propose a tentative explanation for this differentiation based on the singular but robust occurrence of a counterexample in the same body of texts.

One of the more puzzling and under-examined phenomena of Later Medieval Greek syntax is the apparent variation concerning weak object pronoun placement in the verb phrase. The pronoun may appear either preverbally or postverbally as can be seen in examples (1) and (2) where both the verb and the element preceding the verb are the same, thus leaving us with no obvious explanation as to what causes the variation. In the following pages I will present the results of an investigation into a well defined sub-area of

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1 Although Mackridge (1993, 1995) and Horrocks (1990, 1997) use the term clitic for these object pronouns I will refer to them as weak (object) pronouns, a theory-neutral term. I will refer to the string weak pronoun-verb or verb-weak pronoun as the verb-pronoun complex, while the elements that are believed to affect the ordering in this complex I will refer to as environment.
2 Only the finite non-imperative verb forms are considered here.
3 Mackridge's (1993, 1995) accounts are descriptive and do not capture any generalizations. Horrocks' (1990, 1997) accounts are given within the scope of much larger studies concerning the history of Greek and seem to have misinterpreted the data from this particular era (more on this below). Philippaki-Warburton's (1993) account lacks even descriptive adequacy (cf. Pappas forthcoming), while finally Rollo (1989) combines Byzantine and Cypriot Greek in his corpus, thus vitiating his analysis (see Mackridge 1993:326)
this problem, namely the position of the weak pronoun when the verb-pronoun complex is immediately preceded by the negative adverb ou (pronounced [u]).

(1) πάλαιν λέγω σας
polin leyo sas
again say-1sg pres you-ACC pl
WP

"Again I say to you" (Digenis 1750)

(2) πάλε σας λαλάω
pale sas laolo
again you-ACC pl WP say-1sg pres

"Again I say to you" (Moreas, 715)

The particular problem of weak object pronoun placement in the environment of ou provides an ideal case for investigation as here alone do we find published disagreement about the facts concerning the variation. Horrocks (1990), while examining the placement of clitics (his word) throughout the history of Greek, wrote the following concerning ou and weak pronoun placement in Later Medieval Greek:

...the clitic was naturally drawn to second position within that complex, in accordance with the pattern we have seen many times already. This also tends to happen with the negative ou, which must similarly have been felt to "belong" to the verb in a particularly close way, both phonologically and semantically.

Although Horrocks is never explicit about it, I believe that the only way to interpret this statement is that Horrocks is identifying ou as one of the environments in which weak pronouns are placed in preverbal position. This is also evident from the example that he offers:

(3) ἐὰν οὐ τὸν εἶπο
an u ton ipo
COND NEG he-ACC sg WP say-1sg Perfactive Pres

"If I do not say to him" (Ptochoprodromos III 43) (Horrocks (28))

On the other hand, Mackridge (1993:340), in his rule 1(b) makes the claim that "when the verb phrase comes immediately after ... the negative adverb ou the order V+P is more or less obligatory" (cf example 4).

(4) οὐκ ἔμαθεν τὸ
ouk emothe to
NEG learn-3sg Perf Past it-ACC sg WP

"He did not learn it" (Belissarios 269)

4 The entire phenomenon is the subject of my upcoming dissertation Weak object pronoun placement in Later Medieval Greek.
5 By complex Horrocks refers to the string complementizer (or negative marker)-verb, and not the weak pronoun-verb string as I do in this paper.
6 Mackridge's use of the term verb phrase should be equated to the term verb pronoun complex in this paper. It definitely does not refer to VP in standard syntactic theory.
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What makes it especially difficult to assess the two contradictory statements is that the example offered by Horrocks is precisely the type of construction that Mackridge (1993:329) identifies as the only instance where the preverbal order is allowed:

where ou coexists with ἀν in the same clause, the pronoun is placed before the verb:

(19) ἀν ou to ἐπαρι
COND NEG it-ACC sg WP take-3sg Perfective Pres
"If he does not take it" (Ptochoprodromos IV 514)

In Pappas (1997) I noted this discrepancy, but I felt I could not comment on it due to the small amount of data I had available at the time. Since then I have expanded my database, and the results of a search concerning weak object pronoun placement in the environments of ou, ἀν ou, and ἀν can be seen in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXTS</th>
<th>oū P+V</th>
<th>V+P</th>
<th>ἀν ou P+V</th>
<th>V+P</th>
<th>ἀν P+V</th>
<th>V+P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>IGENIS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLUKAS</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTOCHOPRODROMOS</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPANEAS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOREAS (ln. 125-1630)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPANOS (ms. D)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POULOLOGOS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELISSARIOS (ms. N,V)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EROTOPAIGNIA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FALIEROS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Variation of weak object pronoun placement in the environments of oū, ἀν ou, and ἀν

The detailed catalogue of the data shows clearly that Mackridge's evaluation was correct on both points. It does appear that when the verb-pronoun complex is immediately preceded by ou the pronoun is placed postverbally. On the other hand, when the conditional conjunction ἀν also precedes ou then the pronoun is placed preverbally in all instances but one. It seems then that Horrocks was indeed misled by the example he cited, or just the tokens with ἀν in general.

At the same time, even though Mackridge correctly identified the role that the preceding environments play in affecting the variation in weak pronoun placement his account is in essence descriptive and lacks explanatory force. The exact wording of his exception is (once again) that "where ou coexists with ἀν the pronoun is placed preverbally". Indeed, it is difficult to interpret the word "coexists" in any theoretical way. For instance does Mackridge use it as a synonym for "when ἀν precedes ou" i.e. for the case at hand?, or does he also mean "when ou precedes ἀν"?, a case that is not of any interest to us; after all this case is covered by Mackridge's (1993:340) rule 2: "the order V+P is more or less obligatory when the verb phrase is immediately preceded by the conditional conjunctions ἢἀν, ἀν".

It seems to me that the most reasonable interpretation of Mackridge's statement is that he assumes that when ἀν and ou 'coexist', i.e. when they are placed side by side before the

7 pronounced [an].
verb pronoun complex, there is some type of formal conflict between the two affecting environments, which is resolved by postulating a rule precedence hierarchy in which the \( \dot{\alpha} \nu \) rule overrides the \( \ov \) rule. Indeed in the (1995) paper, which is essentially the Greek version of the (1993) treatise Mackridge (1995:912) refers to conflict between rules 1(b) and 2: "Σε περιπτώσεις, ὅπου συγκρούονται οἱ κανόνες (1θ) καὶ 2...". The verb συγκρούονται literally means 'to collide', thus validating the interpretation I offer of his (1993) term 'coexist'. Even this interpretation, however, runs into two problems.

First, both rules require that the affecting environment be immediately before the verb pronoun complex, so that in the \( \dot{\alpha} \nu \ov \) cases there really is no formal conflict between the two rules, which means that the \( \dot{\alpha} \nu \) rule cannot override the \( \ov \) rule.

The second problem, is that even if the rules were to be rewritten in order to accommodate cases like this one we would run into trouble in the case of the negative marker \( \ov \mu \bar{\eta} \) (\[\mu \bar{\mu} \]) where the pronoun is always placed preverbally (see Table 2, and examples (6, 7)).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXTS</th>
<th>PlV order</th>
<th>V+P order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIGENIS</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLUKAS</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTOCHOPRODROMOS</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPANEAS</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOREAS (ln. 125-1630)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPANOS (ms. D)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POULOLOGOS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELISSARIOS (ms. N,V)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EROTOPAIGNIA</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FALIEROS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>116</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Variation of weak object pronoun placement in the environment of \( \mu \bar{\eta} \)

(6) \( \ov \mu \bar{\eta} \ov \epsilon \) \( \beta \alpha \rho \varepsilon \theta \alpha \)  
\( \u \ \ov \ \mu \bar{\eta} \ \sigma \epsilon \) \( \nu \varepsilon \theta \)  
NEG NEG you-ACC sg WP be bored-1sg Perfective Pres  
"(so that) I am not bored with you" (Poulologos, 366)

(7) \( \ov \mu \bar{\eta} \ov \tau \) \( \gamma \varepsilon \nu \varepsilon \alpha \)ai  
\( \u \ \ov \ \mu \bar{\eta} \ov \tau \) \( \gamma \varepsilon \nu \varepsilon \)  
NEG NEG it-ACC pl WP taste-2sg Perfective Pres  
"you do not taste them" (Ptochoprodromus, II 103)

Mackridge (1993:340—rule 2) also identifies \( \mu \bar{\eta} \) as an environment associated with preverbal pronoun placement. Thus, what we have here is two cases where \( \ov \), an environment associated with postverbal pronoun placement is either preceded or followed

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1 This counterexample reads:

(5) "\( \dot{\alpha} \)\( \nu \) \( \ov \) \( \mu \bar{\eta} \) \( \phi \theta \alpha \sigma \eta \) \( \mu \epsilon \)  
\( \alpha \)\( \eta \) \( \u \)\( \eta \) \( \mu \bar{\eta} \) \( \f\beta \)asi  
COND so NEG suffix-3sg Perfective Pres you-ACC sg WP  
"So if it is not enough for me" (Ptochoprodromos, I 271)
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(immediately) by an environment associated with preverbal pronoun placement (āν and μη). In both cases the result is preverbal placement of the pronoun. Trying to sort this out with rule precedence arguments would fail since we would have to posit that in one case it is the environment closest to the verb that takes precedence (as in οὐ μη), while in another case it is the factor furthest from the verb that wins out (as in āν οὐ). Clearly this is not a desirable way to construct the grammar.

I believe, instead, that the solution may be found in the special status of οὐ. According to both Mackridge and Horrocks, οὐ seems to have been not an independent word, but rather a clitic. For instance Mackridge (1993:328) writes: "As for ελ and οὐ they are clitics (i.e. unaccented), which may be the reason why they do not attract the object to the pre-verbal position" and we have already seen Horrocks' statement that οὖ "belonged" to the verb both phonologically and semantically. I interpret these statements to mean that οὖ and the verb form a single prosodic unit that either cannot be interrupted by the pronoun, or is simply considered as a verb form that has no independent word preceding it, so the pronoun has to appear postverbally according to Mackridge's (1993:340) rule 1(a) which states that "the order V+P is more or less obligatory when the verb phrase stands at the beginning of a clause" (cf. example 8):

(8) 'Αφῆκες με μνημοσύνον οὖν
afikes me mnimosino
leave-2sg Perf Past Ι-ACC sg WP memento-ACCsg
"You left me a memento" (Glukas 207)

I suggest that in the case of āν οὐ the negative marker is cliticizing onto the conditional conjunction āν instead of onto the verb. Although this position may be hard to substantiate without evidence from intonation and prosody (e.g. some clever way of looking at the metre of the lines in which āν οὐ appears), it is a more principled approach to explain the difference between the two cases than Mackridge's rule precedence argument for the reasons outlined above. Furthermore, by positing that the clitic negative marker οὐ could phonologically attach either to the following verb or the preceding āν we are also allowing for the logical possibility that even when āν is present the negative marker οὐ could still possibly attach to the verb creating the order āν οὐ Verb-Weak Pronoun, instead of the canonical āν οὐ Weak Pronoun-Verb. Such an example exists, as can be seen in table 1 and it reads:

(9) āν οὐκ εἰπὼ το
ān uk ipo to
COND NEG say-1sg Perfective Pres it-ACC sg WP
"If I do not say it" (Poulologos 316)

Even though this type of example occurs only once in the database, and the traditional wisdom is that of unus testus, nullus testus I believe it would be wrong to dismiss this particular example on the basis that it is probably a scribal error, or any other kind of corruption of the original. First, there is the expert opinion of Tsavari (1987:89) who accepts the authenticity of this example and the fact that other editors (including Wagner, Zoras and Krawczynski) do not contest its authenticity either (cf. Tsavari (1987:222-239)) preferring it over other textual traditions. Secondly, we need to take into consideration that we are not discussing a case of a unique counterexample to a well-attested construction. Instead we are dealing here with the rare possibility of an exception to a construction that is in itself so rare that in almost 12,000 lines of text there are only 12 occurrences of the norm. This number is so small that we cannot even build a statistically
valid sample for the construction (cf. Woods et al (1986)); from this numerical perspective the existence of a single token is indeed fortuitous. And third, this is not a case where we are left with a token for which no theoretical exegesis can be found. Instead we have a principled explanation that can account for this counterexample as a valid alternative construction based on the unique behavior of the negative adverb oū.

Thus, although my proposal that o'i could attach either to a host before it (i.e. ἀν) or after it (i.e. the verb) is only a working hypothesis, I believe it offers the best promise for arriving at a full explanation of the interesting facts of weak pronoun placement in the environment of oū and ἀν oū in Later Medieval Greek.

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