

Some remarks on the history of ἔχω with infinitive

Abstract: The ἔχω + infinitive construction has a long, interesting and contentious history. Its use as a future periphrasis has been examined time and again in the past century and a half. The latest and most influential study of its history is the one by Th. Markopoulos. We have reexamined the works and documents written between Homer and the end of the 3rd century A.D. The resulting changes in the chronology of the passages containing this construction have led us to reevaluate its development.

Key words: ἔχω with infinitive, obligation, possibility, future in the past, Late Greek.

The ἔχω + infinitive future construction has long been a vexed question in Late Greek studies. Its interest lies in two important facts. Firstly, it is the source of one of Medieval Greek future periphrases and, through some fundamental restructuring, of one of the two ways of building the perfect tense in Modern Greek. Secondly, it strangely coincides with a Late Latin construction which was to give the majority of Western Romance languages their synthetic future and conditional forms.

The major modern study on the history and development of Greek periphrastic future construction is MARKOPOULOS 2009. Let us first recapitulate his findings on this topic. He traces the development of the original ability meaning in the archaic and classical periods in four stages (MARKOPOULOS 2009:34):

- ἔχω τι (possessive) "I have something"
- ἔχω τι εἰπεῖν (goal-denoting infinitive) = "I have something to say".
- ἔχω τι εἰπεῖν (the possessive meaning is neutralized – "bleached") = "have something to say"
- ἔχω εἰπεῖν τι (ἔχω now has a different meaning).

He also draws attention to the fact this construction is used very frequently with verbs of saying (MARKOPOULOS 2009:35), something which, as he says, could be due to the nature of our texts, but he also calls attention to the fact that the identical phenomenon can be found in the earliest attestation of this construction in Latin.

Markopoulos singles out a very important place in Aeschylus' *Choephorae*:

1. ἀλλ' ἢ σάφ' ἦνει τὸνδ' ἀποπτύσαι πλόκον
εἴπερ γ' ἀπ' ἐχθροῦ κρατὸς ἦν τετμημένος,
ἢ ξυγγενῆς ὧν εἶχε συμπενθεῖν ἐμοί,
Aesch. *Choephorae*, 197-200.

Which he translates: "but [I wish] it clearly said to disregard this tress/ if it were cut from the head of an enemy/ or if it were a kinsman's that it could / would mourn with me..."

He understands εἶχε συμπενθεῖν as the apodosis of the conditional ὧν clause, with both an ability/potential and irrealis, counterfactual apodosis, as distinct possibilities, illustrating a dose relationship between an "ability-in-the-past" and irrealis modal interpretations (MARKOPOULOS 2009:37).

We shall return to these verses later on.

MARKOPOULOS (2009:63) dates the future referring meaning of this construction in the 1st century A.D., and its spread to the 3rd to 4th century. He argues that there is no need to assume a stage in which it had an obligation meaning. He seems to suppose that the main pathways from possibility to futurity were negative clauses (I cannot (I am not able) --> I cannot (It is not possible that I) --> I will not), and εἶχον + infinitive, the meaning of which was inherently associated with futurity (in the past), as it conveyed the meaning of ability in the past, which would, especially in the case of unrealized action, approximate the meaning of futurity in the past.

However, most of Markopoulos' examples need to be reevaluated.

The texts most likely to show a linguistic change are exactly the ones most prone themselves to change. Anonymous hagiographic texts are fluid works, their fluidity surpassed only by that of apocrypha.

Apocrypha are, as a rule, pseudonymous, datable only indirectly and often heavily interpolated. The majority of manuscripts they are found in are, as we shall see, very late and there are usually multiple recensions of each text. The exact wording of a passage cannot be taken at face value.

Hagiography fares somewhat better, but the tradition remains fluid. Dating texts of this kind by linguistic criteria can easily become an exercise in circular argumentation.

Keeping this in mind, we have reviewed the record using the TLG and the Papyrological Navigator databases. Our search in the Packard Humanities

Institute epigraphic database did not yield any results. The texts searched ranged from Homer to the early 4th century A.D. After examining the whole record, we have eliminated all the examples of the possibility meaning. We will quote the examples at length and try to give as complete a picture as possible, with the hope that readers will find it more useful than vexing. They start very early, and can be found until very late. There is an interesting fact – until the Attic prose writers of the 5th – 4th century BC, the scope of the construction seems to be somewhat wider, admitting of verbs other than those of saying (very loosely defined - δείκνυμι “demonstrate”, for example, qualifies). In later prose the scope is narrower¹, which could only be a matter of deliberate stylistic choice.

2. Χο. πέπονθας αικέες πῆμ' ἀποσφαλεῖς φρενῶν
 πλανᾶ², κακὸς δ' ἰατρὸς ὧς τις ἐς νόσον
 πεσῶν ἀθυμεῖς, καὶ σεαυτὸν οὐκ ἔχεις
 εὐρεῖν ὅποῖοις φαρμάκοις ἰάσιμος
 Aesch. *Prometheus vinctus*, 472-5.

Chorus: You have suffered a shameful harm, your mind has strayed and wanders. Like a bad physician, you have fallen ill and lost all hope and you cannot find by which medicine you could be cured.

3. κύκλω γὰρ αὐτὸν Μήλιεὺς ἅπας λεῶς
 κρίνει περιστάς, οὐδ' ἔχει βῆναι πρόσω.
 Sophocles *Trachiniae*, 194-5.

Standing around him the whole Melian people judges him, and he cannot go any further.

We will not be dealing with the ability construction any more, the reason for that being exactly its ubiquity. Having become a stylistic fixture, it tended to keep more or less the same meaning. We will focus on the obligation/possibility and future uses of this construction. Some early examples of these uses have escaped notice, while others have been wrongly dated.

The first possible examples, that from Aeschylus' *Choephorae*, has already been quoted. But this passage is not without its problems. First of all, it needs to be read in context. Secondly, the reading itself is somewhat problematic. Where Markopoulos' text reads ἢ σάφ' ἦναι, the manuscript reading is εἶ

¹ Narrower, and yet not exclusive. There are still instances of verbs other than those of saying later on.

² We have tacitly replaced all the adscript iotas with subscript ones. It is in all instances we have quoted a merely cosmetic difference.

σαφηνῆ. In Garvie's edition, this passage reads:

4. εἶθ' εἶχε φωνὴν ἔμφρον' ἀγγέλου δίκην,
ὅπως δίφροντις οὔσα μὴ ἴκινυσσόμην,
ἀλλ' εὖ σάφ' ἦνει τόνδ' ἀποπτύσαι πλόκον
εἶπερ γ' ἀπ' ἐχθροῦ κρατὸς ἦν τετμημένος,
ἢ ξυγγενῆς ὧν εἶχε συμπενθεῖν ἐμοί,
ἄγαλμα τύμβου τοῦδε καὶ τιμὴν πατρός.

Aeschylus, *Choephorae*, 195-200.

Would that it had. a rational voice, like a messenger, so that I would not, being in two minds, waver, but that it would clearly say to abhor this tress, if it were cut of from an enemy's head., or that it would, being a kinsman's, mourn with me for the adornment of this tomb and my fathers honour.

In the text as given in ΜΑΡΚΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ (2009:37), ἢ σάφ' ἦνει and ἢ ξυγγενῆς ὧν εἶχε συμπενθεῖν ἐμοί are parallel clauses. In Garvie's reading, the two εἶχε clauses are parallel, both in imperfect denoting an unfulfilable wish. This parallelism raises the possibility that συμπενθεῖν should be understood as a nominalized infinitive with ἔχω, found often enough in later philosophical prose, but known to tragic writers as well.

5. διὰ τί οἱ ἐριστικοὶ λόγοι γυμναστικοὶ εἰσιν; ἢ ὅτι ἔχουσιν τὸ νικᾶν ἢ τὸ ἥττασθαι πυκνὸν, φιλονείκος οὖν εὐθὺς ποιοῦσιν
Aristotle, *Problemata* 916b
"Why are contentious disputations useful as a mental exercise?
Is it because they involve frequent victories and defeats?"³
6. φθειροῦ· τὸ γὰρ δρᾶν οὐκ ἔχων λόγους ἔχεις
Euripides, Fr.610
Begone!⁴ For you have but words and no actions.

One of the three examples ΜΑΡΚΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ (2009:65) quotes, a papyrus, is easily datable. The other two are not.

7. εἰς αὐρίον δὲ ἔχομεν πρὸς Σωτήρι-
χ[ον] ἐλθεῖν ἐπεὶ βάλλεται τινα ἐπ' αὐτόν⁵
BGU 2629. 18-19, 4. BC
"Tomorrow we have to / will go to Soterichus, as someone
is being hostile against him; when we get there, . . ."

³ FORSTER (1927).

⁴ For this use of φθειρῶ see STEVENS AND COLLARD (2018:55).

⁵ This is a revised reading from papyri.info. Markopoulos gives: ἐπεὶ ἐπιβάλλεται τις.

8. και ἐξαλείψω τὸ γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων. και οὐκέτι ἦ κόσμος. και εἶπεν ὁ προφήτης· και πῶς ἔχει δοξάζεσθαι ἡ δεξιὰ σου;
Apocalypsis Esdrae, 27.15
“...and I will annihilate the race of man, and there will be world no more. And the prophet said: and how will your right side be glorified?”⁶
9. λέγει τῷ Ἀδὰμ ἡ Εὐα· διὰ τί σὺ ἀποθνήσκεις κἀγὼ ζῶ; ἡ πόσον χρόνον ἔχω ποιῆσαι μετὰ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν σε:...” οὐ γὰρ βραδύνεις ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ. ἀλλ’ ἴσα ἀποθνήσκομεν ἀμφοτέρω.
Vita Adam et Evae 31.2-7
“Eve says to Adam: why are you dying while I’m still alive? And how long will I live after you die?... You will not be long after me, but we’ll both die together”⁷

The *Apocalypsis Esdrae* has been preserved only in a single 15th century manuscript, and its 16th century copy.⁸ There is no way of knowing how close to the original the phrasing is. As for the *Vita Adam et Evae*, TROMP (2005:28), its most recent editor, dates the text to 1st – 3rd century A.D., and he reconstructs the text with relative confidence. However, neither the Latin version of the *Vita*, nor the armenian version, have the paragraph containing this sentence. The Latin must predate the ninth century, the date of the earliest manuscript⁹. The Armenian version cannot be dated.¹⁰ Nonetheless, this passage should not be used for dating a rare construction.

On the other hand, there may be some examples earlier than any hitherto mentioned.

10. Καὶ εἶπεν· Ἐπειδὴ ἔχω λαλῆσαι πρὸς τὸν Κύριον, ἐὰν δὲ εὐρηθῶσιν ἐκεῖ εἴκοσι; και εἶπεν· οὐ μὴ ἀπολέσω ἕνεκεν τῶν εἴκοσι.
Gen. 18.31
And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy *it* for twenty’s sake.

This construction translates the Hebrew $\text{לֵאמֹר לַיהוָה} / h\bar{o}alf\bar{i} l\bar{e}dabber/$. The same phrase is translated as ἡρξάμην λαλῆσαι in Gen. 18.27. The verb $\text{לָאָר} / at-$

⁶ MARKOPOULOS (2009:61)

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ SHUTT (1984:928).

⁹ MEYER (1878:209).

¹⁰ STONE (1981a:XIII). For translation, see STONE (1981b

tested only in hiphil conjugation, means ‘to show willingness, undertake to do’,¹¹ and usually expresses politeness or modesty¹², ἄρχομαι is the usual, almost the only way of translating this verb into Greek. It is unclear how the translator(s) came up with this translation, but, tentatively, this may be understood as an instance of the obligation meaning “I need to speak”, however this is impossible to verify.¹³

There are a few examples of this construction from the 1st century A.D. The first, and the least easy to explain, is from the New Testament.

11. βάπτισμα ἔχω βαπτισθῆναι, καὶ πῶς συνέχομαι ἕως οὗ τελεσθῆ
Lk 12.50
But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and
how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

Although ΜΑΡΚΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ (2009:64) explains it as (scheduled) future, this is more likely to be an instance of the obligation meaning. The next example should, we think, be quoted at length:

vac. ? Πάνυχος καὶ Πω [- ca.5 -]
γενιώσκειν σε θέλομεν ὅτι
οὐκ ἠθέλη[σ]εν λαβεῖν τὰς δύο
δραχμάς ἀλλὰ ἐθήλησέν σοι
. ρ . . ς χάριταν παρέχε<σ>-
θαι· ὁ δὲ ἔπαρχος πρὸς
ὄνομα ἐπόησεν καὶ ἐ . .
τησεν ὑμᾶς καὶ πολλὰ
ἐστομάχησεν. ἔχεις
τὸ πρόσλοιπον τῆς
φυλακῆς
ἀποδοῦναι.
O.Krok 99 9-12
Panychus and....
I'd like you to know that he wouldn't take the two drachmae, but
wanted.... do a favour. As for the praefect, he made a roll call and

¹¹ BDB s.v.

¹² Holladay (2000) s. v.

¹³ Very cautiously we may put forward this, maybe fanciful, explanation: the translator may have misread the rare Hebrew verbal form and read ילני, aramaic form for “there is to me”, meaning “I have”. The more normal spelling would be הני, but this spelling is also attested. The 3.sg.m. future הניל must have helped. In Syriac this is the only spelling.

looked for you and had a fit. You need to give the rest to the guards¹⁴.

In the 2nd century this construction is already better documented.

12. ἐ]

γὼ γὰρ οὐτ[ε τὸν ἄ]ροτρον ἔσχ[ο]ν οὐτε εἶ-
πό[ν] σοι αὐτῶ[ι δού]ναί τι. καὶ εἰ καθεστά
κειν δὲ, οὐκ ἄ[ν] εἶχες αὐτῶ δοῦναι
χωρὶς ἐμοῦ ἢ ἐξουσίας, εἰ εὐνοεῖς μοι,
οὐδὲ [ἐν]ετειλάμην σοι διδόναι ἀκολου-
θήσαντ[ί] μοι...

P.Brem 59, 114. A.D.

I did not take the plow, and I did not tell you to give him anything.
And even if I had appointed him, you should not have given it to
him without me, or my authorization, if you meant well for me,
and I haven't told you to give it to the one who followed me...

13. Με[γ]άλως αμειν εἶχατε πέμψαι μοι φάσιν
περὶ τοῦ κτήματος, πότερον ἐτρυγήσατε ἢ οὐ,
ἵνα αὐτάρκες πλοῖον τ[ῶ]ν ὄλων παραλαβῶν.
πέμψω.

P.Oxy. 12. 1585, late 2nd or early 3rd A.D.

Greatly.... you were to send me news about the prop-
erty, whether you gathered the grapes or not, so that I
would take a boat sufficient in all respects and send it.

14. καὶ τοῦτο ἐπίδειγμα ἐποιήσατο τῆς αὐτοῦ λαμπρότητος, ὅτι
πολλῶν καὶ μεγάλων ἔσχε στερηθῆναι.

Aelius Aristides *Ῥώμης ἐγκώμιον*, 202, 14-15

And this too he made an example of his splendour,
for he was to be bereaft of many great things.

15. οἱ μὲν γὰρ ὧν εἶδον, οἱ δ' ὧν εἶχον ἰδεῖν τὰ κάλλιστα
ἀπεστέρηνται.

Aelius Aristides, *Ὑπὲρ τῆς πρὸς Ἀθηναίους εἰρήνης* 401.19-26

Some lost the most beautiful things they have ever seen,
while others the most beautiful they were yet to see.

16. ὥστ' εἰ τῆς γῆς νοτὶς ἦν τὸ ὕδωρ, οὐκ ἂν εἰς τὸν ποταμὸν εἶχε
συρρεῖν, ἀλλ' ἐξεχεῖτ' ἂν ἐπὶ θάτερα τοῦ ποταμοῦ.

Aelius Aristides, *Αἰγύπτιος* 353. 1-3

So that if the water were earth's moisture, it would not gath-

¹⁴ Or, less sinisterly and with better grammar: you need to serve the rest of your guard-duty.

er into the river, but it would spill over both its banks.

17. κὰν <εἰ> μεταβάλλειν εἶχον τῆς λέξεως ταύτης ἕκαστον, ἠδυνάμην ἂν ἅπαντα ὅσα γινώσκειν χρήσιμόν ἐστί σε διδάξαι μὴ πολλὰ πληρώσας βιβλία καθάπερ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἐξῆς λεγομένων

Galenus, *In Hippocratis de victu acutorum commentaria IV*, 906. 4-5.

Even if they had changed everything in that word, I would still be able to teach you everything which is useful to know, without filling many books, as in the matter of things which will be said next.

18. 4.2.7 ὁ δὲ τὰ ἔπι ποιήσας τὰ Κύπρια Πρωτεσιλάου φησὶν, ὃς ὅτε κατὰ τὴν Τρωάδα ἔσχον Ἕλληνες ἀποβῆναι πρῶτος ἐτόλμησε, Πρωτεσιλάου τούτου τὴν γυναῖκα Πολυδώραν μὲν τὸ ὄνομα, θυγατέρα δὲ Μελεάγρου φησὶν εἶναι τοῦ Οἰνέως.

Pausanias, *Graeciae descriptio*, 4.2.7.

The one who wrote the *Cypria* says that she was the wife of Protesilaus – who, when the Greeks were about to land in the Troas, dared first to land – he says that the wife of this Protesilaus, Polydora by name, was the daughter of Oeneus.

Importantly, in all of these examples are we find the imperfect of ἔχω with infinitive, functioning as future in the past. There are only three more¹⁵, all of them with the present of the construction.

19. Ἐγὼ τί ἔχω διψυχῆσαι οὕτω τεθεμελιωμένος ὑπὸ τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ἰδῶν ἔνδοξα πράγματα;

Hermas, *Pastor*, 22.4

¹⁵ MARKOPOULOS (2009:68) quotes *Martyrium Carpi, Papyli et Agathonicae* as pertaining to the 2nd century. Some editors do date the original text to the 2nd century (although Musurillo cautiously avoids any dating), but the only certainty is that it was written some time before Eusebius who mentions it in his *Historia ecclesiastica* 4.14.10. A 3rd century date, during the reign of Decius is well argued for by JONES (2009). KOZLOWSKI (2019) dates the *Martyrium* to 166-68, arguing mostly from possible intertextual relationship between the *Martyrium Carpi* and *Acta Perpetuae et Felicitatis* on the one hand and of the *Martyrium Carpi* and *Martyrium Polycarpi*. But arguments from literary similarities are unreliable in cases such as this. Similarities between two texts could be due to their relationship to a third text. His theological arguments, namely that Agathonice's self-imposed sacrifice seems to be early is much stronger. Nonetheless, even if the earlier dating is accepted, we still hesitate to include the passage in question in the argument. It reads: ... ἀλλ' εἰμι Χριστιανός καὶ πλέον τούτου παρ' ἐμοῦ ἀκοῦσαι οὐκ ἔχεις... (34.3). The Latin translation has: iam uero me amplius audire non poteris. So the Latin translator took this construction to mean possibility, although, as MARKOPOULOS (2009:68) says, the future meaning is also possible. Still, it seems to us that the wording of the Latin should not be taken lightly.

Ego quid habeo dubitare, sic fundatus a Domino et qui vidi honorificas res.
What have I to doubt, the Lord made me this firm, and I have seen glorious things.

20. ἐγὼ δὲ ἐπελαβόμεν αὐτοῦ τῆς πήρας καὶ ἠρξάμην αὐτὸν ὀρκίζεῖν κατὰ τοῦ κυρίου, ἵνα μοι ἐπιλύσῃ ἃ ἔδειξέ μοι. λέγει μοι μικρὸν ἔχω ἀκαιρεθῆναι καὶ πάντα σοι ἐπιλύσω.
Hermas, *Pastor*, 87.5

At ego apprehendi peram eius et coepi eum rogare per Dominum, ut mihi omnia quae ostenderat exsolveret. Ait mihi: Habeo modicam occupationem et omnia tibi exsolvam.
And I caught his bag and started beseeching him by the Lord that he would explain to me everything he had shown me. And he says: I have something to do, and then I will explain to you everything.

21. τὸ δὲ καινότερον καὶ φοβερώτερον ἀκοῦσαι ἔχετε
Melito, *De Pascha*, 155.

"But the strangest and most terrifying thing you are yet to hear."¹⁶

In 20), it seems to be an equivalent of a dubitative subjunctive, in 21) it could be an obligation meaning, whereas the construction in 22) is best understood as a future equivalent. TORNAU AND CECCONI (2014:10), the latest editors of the Latin version of the Shepherd date the translation to c. 200 A.D. *De Pascha*, was written by Melito of Sardis between 160-170 (PERLER, 1966:24). Although the earliest papyri post-date the original composition by a century or so, its tight composition filled with parallelisms makes it unlikely that the text suffered any significant changes.

As soon as we enter the third century, the number of occurrences of the future meaning of this construction rises sharply. By this time it seems to be established well enough. The particularities of its use merit to be investigated further and in their own right.

Looking at all these examples, there seems to be a progression from obligation, or maybe scheduled future, use around the turn of the era to the predominantly future-in-the-past/irrealis use in the second century. There does not seem to be any transition between a possibility/ability and future/obligation meanings. The two constructions, similar in form, but different in function and use coexist, and will keep coexisting for a long time, but there is no evidence of one being a linear descendant of the other. That does not mean this could

¹⁶ STEWART-SYKES 2001:43

not have been the case, but the evidence does not bear it out.

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Неколико бележака о историји ἔχω са инфинитивом

Анстракт: Konstrukcija ἔχω + infinitiv ima dugu i kontroverznu istoriju. Njena upotreba u funkciji futurske perfiraze više puta je bila predmet istraživanja tokom prethodnih vek i po. Najnoviju i najuticajniju studiju o njoj napisao je T. Markopoulos. Preispitali smo hronologiju njenih pojava od Homera do kraja trećeg veka naše ere. Nešto izmenjena hronologija dovela je i do toga da preispitamo njen razvoj.

Кључне речи: ἔχω са инфинитивом, облигација, могућност, будућност у прошлости, позни грчки.