

## *To aper*: A Mediaeval Italiot Relativiser<sup>1</sup>

NICK NICHOLAS

*Department of Linguistics & Applied Linguistics, University of  
Melbourne*

### ABSTRACT

Εξετάζω τη χρήση του μεσαιωνικού κατωϊταλικού αναφορικού *τό/τά/τήν άπερ*, προσπαθώντας να αιτιολογήσω τον ιδιόρρυθμό του συνδυασμό οριστικού άρθρου με πληθυντική αναφορική αντωνυμία. Συμπεραίνω: (1)Το αναφορικό δεν ανταποκρίνεται καθ' εαυτώ σε μορφή της ομιλουμένης της εποχής. (2)Σαφώς δεν πρόκειται για μετάφραση του ιταλικού *il quale* ή, συνεπώς, για μορφή του *ο [ο]ποιός*, αν και μάλλον συγκαταλέγεται στους σχηματισμούς που διευκόλυναν τη διάδοση του *ο [ο]ποιός* στα ελληνικά. (3) Συνεχίζει τάση στη λόγια, και ενίοτε και στη δημόδη γλώσσα, να προτίθεται άρθρο σε αντωνυμία. (4) Η χρήση του πληθυντικού έχει μάλλον φωνολογικό, και όχι γραμματικό υπόβαθρο.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates the relativiser *to/ta/tin aper*, occurring in mediaeval (x–xiv AD) Southern Italian and Sicilian deeds. The language of these documents largely follows the norms of the official legal language of Byzantium (*Kanzleisprache*), yet frequently displays characteristics of the vernacular of the time—most noticeably in Trinchera's (1865) collection. Because of our near-total lack of records of vernacular Greek between the Proto-Bulgarian inscriptions and Michael Glykas (viii AD–1158), these documents are significant for the history of Greek.<sup>2</sup>

There are two oddities to this construction, from the viewpoint of both Ancient and Modern Greek, to be explained: why is the relativiser *aper* preceded by the definite article—whether it acts as a determiner or itself

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<sup>2</sup>For more details on the language of these documents, see Minas (1994).

a relativiser? And why does the relativiser *aper* appear consistently in the neuter plural form (89 out of 102 instances)?

The tendency to prepose a definite article before a relativiser is not unknown in the Byzantine *Hochsprache*. Pernot (1946: 233–234) cites forms such as *ta a*, *to o* and *to oper* (*Belthandros*; *xiv* AD) and *ton on* (Georgillas' *Belisarius*; *xv* AD), as well as much earlier instances such as *ton osoi* (Anna Comnena; *xi* AD), *ta oposa* (Leontius of Neapolis; *vii* AD), *tin oianoun* (Malalas; *vi* AD) and *ton aper* (Aristides Aelios; *ii* AD). Such forms can also be found in later official documents, e.g. *tou ouper* (Acta cxi; 1353?) and *to oper* (Kambouroglou 179; 1552). Indeed, Pernot (1946) argues that such forms paved the ground for the emergence of *o opoios*, which eventually displaced all other such forms in notary Greek. But in none of these (even the early *ton aper* instance) is there the consistent conflict in number and gender noted in the Italiot documents.

### 1.1 The distribution of the relativiser

Minas (1994) has a corpus of 767 documents; in my study, I have used 548 documents, in three collections: Trinchera (Southern Italy), Cusa (Sicily), and Guillot (Messina, Sicily). A form corresponding to either *to aper* or *to oper* occurs 84 times in Trinchera (354 documents), 12 times in Cusa (173 documents), and 6 times in Guillot (21 documents). The first occurrence of the construction occurs in 984:

- (1) *igoun tou vevariou to aper kai in afierosasa i monaxi domnella eis ton pansepton naon moneis tou korufaiou petrou (Trinch. ix; 984)*

This construction competes with a variety of other relativisers in the text: Ancient Greek *os* and *osper*, Middle Greek *ostis* and *to<sub>rel</sub>*, and (less frequently) Modern Greek *opou*. The most frequent equivalent of relativisation for animate heads is the use of participles, as in *O Moun-souris, kathypograpsas ton Timion Stavron idia xeiri*.

## 2. GRAMMATICAL FEATURES OF *to aper*

### 2.1. Relativiser grammatical role

Of the 102 instances of *to aper* in the corpus, 84 are the direct object of the relative clause verb, and only 18 are the subject. What is of interest is that even those 18 cases include suspect cases. For example, six of them occur in just two documents, and another four are in documents written by John of Circlario, a notary whose idiosyncracies I will return to later.

More importantly, all 18 cases preserve the case constraints on *to<sub>rel</sub>*. When used as a relativiser in Ancient, Middle and early Modern Greek,

the definite article *to* appears only in the forms that were reflexes of Proto-Indo-European *\*to*, and not in the reflexes of *\*yo* (*o, i, oi, ai*) (Bakker 1974). In particular, while nominative *o* and *i* could not be used as relativisers, nominative neuter *to* could be:

(2a) *Ekeino to se apokeitai kai to se perimenei* (Glykas *Stixoi ous kathegrapse kath' on katesxethi kairon* 298; 1158/9)

Now, of the 18 nominative instances in the corpus, 14 are neuter, and thus do not violate the constraint on  $to_{rel}$ . Of the remaining four (all of which are feminine), one (by John of Circlario) relativises a feminine antecedent with a neuter relativiser (2b), and the other three express a relativiser in the accusative (e.g. (2c): *tou agiou onoufriou ... tin aper* (Trinch. lvii; 1093)):

(2b) *periorizetai outos kata men anatas os arxetai i odos to oper aperxetai eis ton agio seuastianou* (Trinch. cci; 1180)

(2c) *Fenometha afierountes... tin monin tou agiou onoufriou... tin aper keitai eis tin diakratisin tou theotiritou kastrov noon* (Trinch. lvii; 1093)

In both cases, we have an apparently conscious attempt not to violate the  $to_{rel}$  conditions, which indicates that the *to* in *to aper* was analysed, not as a definite article, but as a relativiser itself. This is reinforced by example (2d), where  $to_{rel}$  by itself behaves identically:

(2d) *kai rikti [o periorismos] eis tin prorithisan odon tin aperxeton eis ton agion pavlon* (Trinch. lxxxv; 1118)

## 2.2. Location of *to aper* in discourse structure

Most documents follow a very strict text grammar; this follows from the formulaic nature of legal language, and shows that Italiot notaries usually wrote these documents following a template like {*Signatures, Preamble, Performative of Sale, Listing of Borders of land sold, Penalties, Authorisation, Witnesses*}. Strikingly, 89 out of the 102 instances of *to aper* occur in either the Performative of Sale or the Listing of Borders; in particular, 54 instances—half the total— appear relativising the object of the performative verb of the document: that is, in the slot 'I declare that I am selling/donating/dedicating the land/vineyard/monastery *which...*'

The bondedness of *to aper* to particular slots in a template shows that, however this construction entered the language of Byzantine notaries, it

was perpetuated by strict adherence to convention. One would expect that, where such templates vary, the variation would be geographically specific; and indeed, whereas only 9 out of 84 instances in Trincherà occur outside the two named text segments (11%; first occurrence: 1058), 6 out of 18 instances occur outside the two segments in the Sicilian documents (33%: 1096).

### 2.3. *to* and *aper* in *to aper*

The form of *to* in the *to aper* construction is distributed thus:<sup>3</sup>

<i>to</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>tin</i>	<i>ton</i>	<i>ton</i>
62 (984)	29 (1034)	7 (1093)	2 (1142)	2 (1213)

Interestingly, for the first 125 and 150 years of the attestation of *to aper*, the distribution is:

	<i>to</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>tin</i>
Up to 1109	4	8	2
Up to 1134	11	14	5

As for aper, it appears as *aper* 88 times (984), *oper* 13 times (1034), and hypercorrect neuter *onper* once (1202). Of the instances of *oper*, five were written by John of Circlario, and a further two by a contemporary of John (Leo of Colubrario), under the authority of the same *tabularius*. Another instance (Trinch. lxxxv; 1118) uses *to oper* in the stereotypical phrase *to oper mi genoito*, which occurs extensively in Trincherà as *oper mi genoito*. So most of the instances of *oper* are themselves suspect.

Until 1134, then, *to* and *aper* agree in number 15 times out of 30 (counting instances of *to oper*), and until 1109, 9 out of 14. Overall, by contrast, there are only 41 agreements out of 102. This suggests an increasing readiness to violate number agreement, reflected in the use of relativisers as a whole in these texts. The table given below summarises all the number and gender disagreements between relativisers and their referents in Trincherà:

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<sup>3</sup>Counts are followed by year of first occurrence.

<i>Miscellaneous</i>	33
( <i>to</i> as generic relativiser; * <i>to</i> <sub>MASC.NOM</sub> substituted by <i>ton</i> , <i>tin</i> ; relative case attraction (mostly <i>xiii</i> AD); <i>outines</i> to <i>oitines</i> ; <i>oper</i> to <i>onper</i> )	
Overuse of <i>oper</i>	25
Miscellaneous <i>os</i> case/number mismatches	14
Overuse of neuter plural relativisers	13
<i>a</i> for <i>ous</i> ; <i>ta</i> for <i>o</i>	2
<i>atina</i> for <i>i</i>	1 (1191)
<i>atina</i> for <i>o</i>	3 (1191)
<i>aper</i> for <i>os</i>	1 (1198)
<i>aper</i> for <i>o</i>	6 (1135)

While the use of neuter plural *aper* with a singular referent is widespread in the documents (11 instances), the first instance dates from 1135. Given how widely *osper* is used in Trinchera, this is a rather late date for the lack of number agreement characteristic of *to aper* to surface in the relativiser without a definite article.

### 2.5. Referents of *to aper*

All the referents of *to aper* are inanimate; with two exceptions (the *to oper mi genoito* phrasal antecedent, and one case (Guillou 4; 1123) which is arguably a free relative, although in context the referent is clearly *meros* (share), all referents are either possessions or locations. The majority of referents are either fields (*xorafion*— 44 instances) or vineyards (*ampelion*— 22 instances). This correlates with the restricted discursual distribution of *to aper*.

## 3. ACCOUNTS OF *to aper*

It is difficult to provide a unique origin or analysis for this relativiser, particularly since, as the instance in Zosimos shows, it has some rather old antecedents. Rather, I will outline the likely synchronic analyses of the phenomenon, and the implications they have for our understanding of early modern Greek.

### 3.1. *to<sub>rel</sub>* + *aper*

The first possible interpretation of the phenomenon is that *to* in *to aper* is a relativiser, while *aper* is a (possibly hypercorrective) add-on. There are many precedents for such double-barrel constructions in older

Greek, particularly with complementisers such as *os oti*, *oti pos*, *oti pos na*, *oste opou*, and relativiser *o opoios pou* (Jannaris 1897). The form *to<sub>rel</sub> aper*, which resolves the problem of the sentence initial form, would thus not be out of place, although the plural *aper* would still have to be accounted for. This interpretation is argued for in particular by the fact that *to* obeys the constraints on *to<sub>rel</sub>*, as already discussed; the forms *\*o aper* and *\*i aper* are unattested, as indeed are *\*o oper* and *\*i oper* in any other Middle or Modern Greek document (compare the abundant attestation of *o opoios*, *i opoia*.)

### 3.2. *to opoio*

The second possible interpretation is that *to aper* is a hypercorrection of *o opoios*. This seems an obvious conclusion, since *o opoios* is the only relativiser bearing a definite article in Modern Greek. However this position is untenable, for the following reasons:

• While a form like *to oper* is attested as early as Zosimus, *o opoios* only turns up in *xiii* AD. Indeed, the very first attestation of *o opoios* is in Trinchera, where it occurs in only one document:

(3a) *parousia ton kriton skyllakos... eis pious os is imon kriton esinsterksamen* (Trinch. ccxciii; 1243)

Note that here the relativiser has the form *o pios*, which it retains through to the fifteenth century in western-held areas; this confirms the notion that *o opoios* started off as a calque of Italian *il quale* (although see Pernot (1947), quoted above.) In other words, *to aper* is not a hypercorrection of *o opoios*, but, if anything, a precedent.

Second, *o pios* is declinable; *aper* in *to aper* is not. So *to aper* seems an odd way to hypercorrect *o opoios*.

Third, according to Bakker (1974), *o pios* frequently has animate referents. Indeed, in Trinchera, one of the five referents of *o pios* (3a) is animate. No animate referents of *to aper* appear in the corpus.

Fourth, according to Bakker, *o pios* first occurs in the accusative; nominative instances are rare until the Chronicle of Makhairas (ca. 1432). Some 20% of all instances of *to aper* in the corpus are nominative.

Fifth, there appears to be a survival of *o pios* in Modern Italian in the relativiser *pia*, which is only used in obliques (cf. 3a); *to aper* is not used thus:

(3b) *jineka ats:e pia ivra tom batre*  
'la donna della quale vidi il padre' (the woman whose father I saw;  
Rohlf's (1950))

Finally, the same document in Trinchera that uses *o pios* also uses *to aper*; we may suppose the writer held the two relativisers to be distinct.

### 3.3. *to*<sub>def.art</sub> + *aper*

While interpreting *to* as merely a preposed definite article does not account for the constraints on its form, it does tie *to aper* in with the general Middle Greek tendency to use articles before pronouns (Pernot 1947; Anagnostopoulos 1922). It is possible that *to aper* originated as a definite article construction, and was reanalysed as a double-barrel relativiser, leading to the constraints discussed. There is sporadic evidence of such an analysis; for example, the substitution of *oper* by *to oper* in the cliché *oper mi genoito*, and the occasional adjectival use of the relativiser exemplified by (3c) (cf. Modern Greek *to opoio ampeli*), where *to* seems to act as a definite article modifying *ampelion*:

(3c) *kai apodidi eos tou ampeliou voulfpoux epen fitien agarino, to oper ampelion estin ek to disikon meros...* (Cusa: *Diplomi della chiesa cattedrale di Palermo iv; 1034*)

### 3.4. *to*<sub>def.art</sub> + *opou*

Minas (1994: 178) notes that, where *aper* and *oper* (preceded by an article or not) disagree in number and gender with their referents, "fainetai oti oi antonymies autes plisiazoun to neoell. *pou*." Indeed, the 25 cases of *oper* in Trinchera with number and/or gender mismatch point to exactly such a hypercorrection (hardly unknown in later Byzantine texts). This raises the interesting possibility that *to aper* actually hypercorrects for an extant *to opou* relativiser.

Evidence for such a construction is sporadic. We know the tendency in Greek, dating back to antiquity (Anagnostopoulos 1922) to put the definite article before interrogative complement clauses (e.g. *den ksero to giati efyge*), which in Mediaeval Greek comes to include *pos*-complements. In fact, *to pos* is the canonical complementiser in the *Chronicle of Morea*, and the following instance from Cusa may anticipate such constructions:

(3d) *o de episkopos eipen "exei i ekklesia kai sugillon kai sistasi to pos epikratei"* (Cusa: *Diplomi della capella Palatina etc. xiii; 1042*)

It is possible that, in the linguistic ferment of the Greek Dark Ages which resulted in Modern Greek, the use of the article was generalised to all subordinate clauses, including relative clauses.

The problem with this view is that we have very little attestation of *to pou*-clauses in Greek. The use of *to pou*-complements is not acceptable to all speakers of Modern Greek (S. Varlokosta & D. Videnmayer, p.c.), and there are very few examples attested of *to pou*-relative clauses, exemplified below—insufficient evidence to argue for such a significant early shift in early Modern Greek syntax.

(3e)  $\square$ ' *ekatexe ta pou*<sup>4</sup> 'prepe na kamei (Cretan folk poem; heard October 1995.)

(3f)  $\square$ De me varainoun ta floria, de me stenev' i fousta,  
mon' me varainei to paidi, **to pou** eimai gkastromeni. (Manesis 150)

### 3.5. Why *aper*?

There are two possible accounts for the insistence on *aper* rather than *oper*. The use of the plural could represent a tendency against morphological marking of number, particularly for inanimate referents. This is frequent in the world's languages, the instance best known to hellenists being the *Attiki Syntaksis* of 3SG verb endings for 3PL neuter referents.

The problem is that *aper* appears as a morphologically marked plural. This is not an insurmountable obstacle: vineyards and fields could be considered as mass nouns (cf. *ta xtimata*), and Cappadocian Greek uses *ta* as a dummy object, whether the implied referent is plural or not (Dawkins 1916). However, there is no reflex of such usage in Modern Italiot, to motivate such a problematic account. Furthermore, we have instances where *to aper* is coreferential with *oper*, which indicate the notaries were not conflating number:

(4) *di is omologo peprakene me pros se arkadion mesiton to ampelin to aper exo eis tin xoran tou agiou leontiou, oper o skolarios ekatapyteusen* (Trinch. clxxiii; 1168)

The second possibility is that *aper* represents some sort of phonetic development. Whether the 'underlying' form here is *oper* or *opou*, we know that the process  $o \square a$  does take place in Italiot, be it through dissimilation, assimilation, or influence by a preceding *ta*; thus we have examples like *opsarion*  $\square$  *azzari* and *omilo*  $\square$  *amilo* (Rohlf's 1950: 34). We also have the corroborating presence of *apou* as a reflex of *opou* in Crete, Cyprus, and the Dodecanese. Unfortunately, *apu* is not attested as

<sup>4</sup>This is a free relative, and may be an echo of *to<sub>rel</sub>*, which survived until recently in Crete as a free relative.

a relativiser in Italiot; the only reflexes of *opou* attested are *pu*, *epu* and *ipu*. And of course, *oper* was long dead as a vernacular relativiser by the time these documents were written.

Nonetheless, a phonological explanation of the phenomenon seems better motivated than a morphological one. Either *ta aper* generalised to *to aper*, thanks to a greater frequency of the plural form (showing that at least some notaries along the chain of transmission could no longer analyse *aper* as *a + per*<sup>5</sup>), or *to aper* is indeed a mental portmanteau of *oper* and *\*apu*, or *ta* and *oper*. Whatever the process involved, it was enough that it got started, around 980: the deterioration in Greek education being so great after the loss of Southern Italy and Sicily to the Normans, 'erroneous' *to aper* was perpetuated by notaries whose notion of 'good Greek' was fed simply by what they found written by their forebearers.

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<sup>5</sup>Although it must be said that *per* in general enjoys quite a vogue in these documents, with frequent forms like *otiper*, *eiper*, and (once) a relativiser *to per*.

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