To aper: A Medieval Italiot Relativiser

NICK NICHOLAS
Department of Linguistics & Applied Linguistics, University of Melbourne

ABSTRACT

Ezetaçio ta chrísi stoù mesaiowiñoù kataktaliikoù anaforikoiour tó/ tó/ tìn aper, prospátheíntas aitíologí sóu idíórfyhmó tou syn煅ísmó oristikoiour aíroñhrou me plëthunátiq anaforikí antwónymia. Symperíaxou:
(1) To anaforikó dén antapókoíratei kath' eautó se morphi tís omilóyménhs tis epokhís. (2) Sarfós dén prákeita gia metáfrasi tou italiikoù il quale ñ, synepós, gia morphi tou o [jópsiós an kai málllon synkataxelgeni stoùs sýmatismoiç pou diexukolunon th diédósh tóu o [jópsiós sta ellyniká. (3) Sineçizei tássth sti lógiq, kai enióte kai sti diemóði glóssasa, na protí-thetai aírho se antwónymia. (4) H chrísi tou plëthunátiq échei málllon founológikó, kai óch ñrampmatikí upóbetaðh.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates the relativiser tólta/tín 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. 2

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

1 My thanks to my supervisor, Jean Mulder, and to Brian Joseph, Eric Hamp and Konstantinos Minas for my discussions with them on this subject. I also thank the staff of the Kentron Syntakeos tou Istorikou Leksikou tis Neas Ellinikis of the Academy of Athens for their generosity in granting me access to their archives.

2 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 Commena; 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 veivariou to aper* kai in aferosasa i monaxi domnella eis *ton pasepion naon moneis tou korufaiou petrou* (Trinch. ix; 984)

This construction competes with a variety of other relativisers in the text: Ancient Greek *os* and *asper*, Middle Greek *ostis* and *to_{rel}*, and (less frequently) Modern Greek *opou*. The most frequent equivalent of relativisation for animate heads is the use of participles, as in *O Moun-soures*, *kathypgrapsas tou Timion 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 Circulario, a notary whose idiosyncracies I will return to later.

More importantly, all 18 cases preserve the case constraints on *to_{rel}*. 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 */*, 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 our 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*_. 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 anatolas os arxetai i odos to oper aperxetai eis ton agio seuastianou (Trinch. cci; 1180)

(2c) Fenometha aferountes... tin monin tou agiou onoufriou... tin aper keitaiei eis tin diakratisin tou theotiritou kastrou noon (Trinch. lvii; 1093)

In both cases, we have an apparently conscious attempt not to violate the *to*_ 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* by itself behaves identically:

(2d) kai rikti [o periorismos] eis tin prorithisan edon tin aperxeton eis ton agion pavlon (Trinch. lxxv; 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 Trinchera 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:3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>to</th>
<th>ta</th>
<th>tin</th>
<th>ton</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62 (984)</td>
<td>29 (1034)</td>
<td>7 (1093)</td>
<td>2 (1142)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>to</th>
<th>ta</th>
<th>tin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 1109</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 1134</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 Trinchera 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 Trinchera:

---

3Counts are followed by year of first occurrence.
Miscellaneous
(tou as generic relativiser; *toMASC.NOM substituted by ton, tin; relative case attraction (mostly xiii AD);
outines to oitines; oper to onper)

Overuse of oper
Miscellaneous os case/number mismatches 25
Overuse of neuter plural relativisers 13
a for ous; ta for o 2
atina for i 1 (1191)
atina for o 3 (1191)
aper for os 1 (1198)
aper for o 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 discoursal 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_{rel} + 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 *opoios pou (Jannaris 1897). The form *apo *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 *tnrel, 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 *opoioi, *i *opoia.)

3.2. to *opoio

The second possible interpretation is that to *oper is a hypercorrection of *opoioi. This seems an obvious conclusion, since *opoioi 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, *opoioi only turns up in xiii AD. Indeed, the very first attestation of *opoioi is in Trincher, where it occurs in only one document:

(3a) parousia ton kriton skyllakos... *eis *pioi os is imon kriton esinster-ksamen (Trinch. ccxiii; 1243)

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

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

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

Fourth, according to Bakker, *pioi 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 *apoioi in Modern Italiot in the relativiser *pia, which is only used in obliques (cf. 3a); to *aper is not used thus:

(3b) i jineka ats: *e *pia ivra tom batre
'la donna *ella quale vidi il padre' (the woman *hose father I saw; Rohlfs (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_{def.art} + 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 cliche oper mi genoito, and the occasional adjectival use of the relativiser exemplified by (3c) (cf. Modern Greek to oposo ampei), where to seems to act as a definite article modifying ampelion:

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

3.4. to_{def.art} + 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 hyper-corrects 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 ekklisia 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) k’ ekatexe ta pou⁴ prepe na kamei (Cretan folk poem; heard October 1995.)
(3f) De me varainoun ta flora, 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 Syntaxis 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 to 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 ekatufytesen (Trinch. clxiii; 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 > a does take place in Italiot, be it through dissimilation, assimilation, or influence by a preceding ta; thus we have examples like opsarion > azzari and omilo > amilo (Rohlfs 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

⁴This is a free relative, and may be an echo of to_rel, 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\(^5\)), 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 deterioraion 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.

REFERENCES

Source Texts:

General References:

\(^5\)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 toper.