On the historical value of synchronic dialectal variation: lessons from the development of null definite articles in Cappadocian Greek

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Synchrony and Diachrony: Variation and Change in Language History
Cappadocian Greek: the speakers

- The language of the Greek Orthodox communities of the Cappadocian plateau (until 1924).

- Beginning of the 20th century: Cappadocian spoken in twenty villages in the rural areas between

  \( (a) \) Nevşehir
  \( (b) \) Kayseri
  \( (c) \) Niğde.
Cappadocian Greek: the speakers
Cappadocian Greek: the speakers

- Cappadocian-speaking communities originate in the Byzantine people that populated Asia Minor prior to the first Turkish invasions.
- 1071 AD: Battle of Manzikert.
- The control of Asia Minor passes from the Byzantine Empire to Turkic political entities.
Cappadocian Greek: the speakers

- A proportion of the Greek population of Asia Minor fled the Turkish invasion (Vryonis 1971: 169-184).
- The remaining Greek speakers entered a four-century-long period that ultimately led to their
  
  (a) religious islamisation  
  (b) linguistic turkicisation.
Cappadocian Greek: the speakers

- A number of Greek-speaking communities in northeastern and central Asia Minor were able to survive as such through the transition from the Byzantine to the Ottoman Empire.

- The Byzantine residue in Turkish Anatolia (Vryonis 1971: 451-452)

  developed local cultures derived from the particular physical and social environment that distinguished them from Greeks in other territories (Augustinos 1992: 5).
Cappadocian Greek: the language

• Greek in Cappadocia developed for a significant amount of time

  \( (a) \) in (relative) isolation from that of the contiguous Greek-speaking areas of the west;

  \( (b) \) in the context of intense language contact with Turkish.
Cappadocian Greek: the language

- Cappadocian presents

  (a) numerous grammatical features reminiscent of earlier stages in the history of Greek (Late Medieval period, *i.e.* 1100–1500 ce);

  (b) a significant number of linguistic innovations that distinguish Cappadocian from other SMGr dialects.
## Cappadocian Greek: the language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cappadocian</th>
<th>Standard Modern Greek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>①</td>
<td>no interdental fricatives (t, d)</td>
<td>interdental fricatives (θ, δ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>②</td>
<td>no grammatical gender</td>
<td>three genders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>③</td>
<td>agglutinative morphology</td>
<td>fusional morphology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>④</td>
<td>differential object marking</td>
<td>accusative-neuter marking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑤</td>
<td>head final structures (genitive-noun, relative clause-noun)</td>
<td>head-initial structures (noun-genitive, noun-relative clause)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑥</td>
<td>SOV</td>
<td>SVO (?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑦</td>
<td>interrogative particle</td>
<td>no interrogative particle</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Language contact is generally viewed as the principal cause of all grammatical developments in Cappadocian:

“[in Cappadocian] the Turkish has replaced the Greek spirit; the body has remained Greek, but the soul has become Turkish” (Dawkins 1916: 198)

“Most Asia Minor Greek dialects clearly retain enough inherited material to count as Greek dialects in the full genetic sense; a few dialects may be close to or even over the border of nongenetic development.” (Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 93-94)
The null definite article in Cappadocian

- In Cappadocian, the definite article is realised as null in the nominative (both singular and plural) when immediately preceding nouns that belong to formerly* masculine and feminine inflectional classes.

  * There are no gender distinctions in Cappadocian.

- In the remaining case/number combinations as well as before nouns belonging to formerly neuter classes, the article is always overtly realised.
The null definite article in Cappadocian

(1) Phloítá Cappadocian (Tsitsopoulos 1962: 22, 31)

a. *ton te.lsif Ø luturja, Ø papas ferisci*
when finishes mass.*F.NOM priest.*M.NOM brings

to nif so yambro konda
the.acc bride.*F.ACC to.the.ACC groom.*M.ACC close

‘When the mass is over, the priest brings the bride to the groom’s side.’
The null definite article in Cappadocian

(1) Phloítá Cappadocian (Tsitsopoulos 1962: 22, 31)

b. to θeros so xorjo
   the.nom summer.*N.NOM in.the.ACC village.*N.ACC

mas kola ena mina ce perso
our lasts one month and more

‘Summer in our village lasts more than one month.’
In this appears the influence of Turkish, which has no definite article (Dawkins 1916: 46).

ὑπὸ τὴν ἐπίδρασιν τῆς τουρκικῆς, κατὰ τὴν ὀρθὴν γνώμην τοῦ Dawkins (Anagnostopoulos 1922: 246)

There was also limited use of the definite article, apparently due to the fact that Turkish lacks one (Winford 2005: 406).
(2) Turkish

a. Ø papaz Ø gelin-i Ø damad-in tarafına getiriyor
priest. bride-ACC groom-GEN to.the.side brings

b. Ø köyümüz-де Ø yaz bir ay sürer
our.village-LOC summer.NOM one month lasts
A contact-based explanation?

- Language contact fails to account for the distribution of null realisation in terms of
  (a) case/number combinations;
  (b) inflectional class membership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>*M / *F</th>
<th>*N</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SG NOM</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td></td>
<td>to</td>
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<td>GEN</td>
<td>t(u)</td>
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<td>PL NOM</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>ta</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td></td>
<td>ta</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td></td>
<td>t(u)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A contact-based explanation?

- If the null realisation of the definite article were contact-induced, there should not be an article-like determiner expressing definiteness in Cappadocian at all.

- The Cappadocian innovation is examined in isolation, ignoring the more general dialectological context of Asia Minor and the other MGr dialects that were spoken in the same area.
The Asia Minor dialectological context

ASIA MINOR GREEK

Proto-Cappadocian

Silliot

Cappadocian/Pontic

Pharasiot

Pontic  Cappadocian

(Karatsareas 2011)
The Asia Minor dialectological context

- The various AMGr dialects can be more conservative or innovative with respect to different diachronic innovations.

- This type of dialectal divergence has great historical and methodological value: it may compensate for the lack of documentation of previous stages in the history of AMGr in cases of diachronic change whereby the different dialects are found to represent chronologically distinct developmental stages.
...the modern dialects may be used to supplement our knowledge of the history of the language, for which written direct sources are for the most part entirely absent. The key we see is this, that the rate of development of certain phenomena has been very different in different dialects, and so by comparing one dialect with another, we may establish the actual history of the development of many phenomena of the modern language.

(Dawkins 1940: 12)
In most varieties of Pontic, the definite article is realised as null in the nominative (singular and plural) when immediately preceding masculine and feminine nouns that begin with a vowel.

In the remaining case/number combinations as well as before masculine and feminine nouns beginning with a consonant, and before neuter nouns, the article is always overtly realised (Henrich 1999: 661-667; Koutita-Kaimaki 1977/1978: 264-266; Oeconomides 1958: 154-156; Papadopoulos 1933: 17-20; Tompaidis 1980: 225-227).
The null definite article in Pontic

(3) Argyroúpolis Pontic (Valavanis 1937: 84, 85)

a. ce Ø ineika epicen amon do ipen
    and woman.F.NOM did like what said

Ø andras-ats
    husband.M.NOM-her

‘And the woman did what her husband told her.’
(3) Argyroúpolis Pontic (Valavanis 1937: 84, 85)

b. *istera o jeron eyriksen-a*

later the.M.NOM old.man.M.NOM heard-it

‘Then the old man heard it.’
(3) Argyroúpolis Pontic (Valavanis 1937: 84, 85)

c. *teri so celar to cifal*
looks in.the.N.ACC cellar.N.ACC the.N.NOM head.N.NOM

c’ *i karðia kʰ’ en*
and the.F.NOM heart.F.NOM not are

‘She looks in the cellar, and the head and the heart are not there.’
The null definite article in Pontic

- The forms of the definite article that are realised as null in Argyroúpolis Pontic are those consisting of a single vowel:

  \[ [o] \leftrightarrow \text{masculine nominative singular} \]

  \[ [i] \leftrightarrow \begin{cases} \text{feminine nominative singular} \\ \text{masculine/feminine nominative plural} \end{cases} \]

- These are realised as null precisely before another vowel.

- Forms of the definite article beginning with a \( t \)- (\( ti, \ ton, \ tin, \ to, \ ta \)) are not affected.
• Papadopoulos (1955: 10) identified hiatus avoidance as the motivation underlying the phenomenon in Pontic.

• Oeconomides (1958: 155) further postulated that it must have first become manifest with masculine and feminine nouns beginning with a phonetic [o] and/or [i].

• The homophonous definite articles were dropped in front of such nouns due to their similarity with their word-initial vowels.
The null definite article in Pontic

(4) Chaldía Pontic (Drettas 1997: 112)

Ø  okneas  epien  s’(o)  orman  ce  t’(o)  orman
lazy.M.NOM  went  to.the  forest  and  the  forest

efortoθen
took.on

‘The lazy one went to the forest and took the forest to his shoulders.’
The null definite article in Pontic

- In most Pontic varieties, null realisation has been extended to masculine and feminine nouns beginning with any vowel.
- In the varieties of Áno Amisós and Sinópe, the phenomenon generalised even further, encompassing all masculine and feminine nouns irrespective of the quality, vocalic or consonantal, of their initial segment.
The null definite article in Pontic

(5) Áno Amisós Pontic (Valavanis 1928: 188)

\[ \text{asa eksi mines isteria erkundane} \]
\[ \text{from.the six months later came} \]

\[ \emptyset \text{ papos tu ce \emptyset neka tu} \]
\[ \text{grandfather.M.NOM his and wife.F.NOM his} \]

‘Six months later, his grandfather and his wife came.’
The null definite article in Silliot

- In Silliot, the definite article is realised as null in the nominative (singular and plural) before all nouns.

(6) Silliot (Costakis 1968: 120)

Ø peri meyalusi c’ ister Ø mana tu
child.N.NOM grew.up and later mother.F.NOM its

laji tu

says it

‘The child grew up, and the its mother said to it.’
The null definite article in Asia Minor Greek

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE I</th>
<th>(no rule)</th>
<th>All definite article forms are overtly realised.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STAGE II</td>
<td>phonological rule</td>
<td>The forms of the definite article consisting of [o] or [i] are dropped before nouns beginning with these two vowels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(reconstructed)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>STAGE III</td>
<td>phonological rule</td>
<td>The forms of the definite article consisting of [o] or [i] are dropped before nouns beginning with a vowel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(most Pontic varieties)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAGE IV</td>
<td>morphological rule</td>
<td>The non-neuter nominative forms of the definite article are realised as null.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Áno Amisós</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>and Sinópe</td>
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<td>Pontic,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cappadocian)</td>
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<tr>
<td>STAGE V</td>
<td>morphological rule</td>
<td>The nominative forms of the definite article are realised as null.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Silliot)</td>
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</table>
Conclusions

✓ Null realisation of the definite article is not a phenomenon isolated to Cappadocian.

✓ Its occurrence in the dialect is but one of the many reflexes of an innovation attested widely in the AMGr dialects.

✓ That these reflexes are found in such distinct dialects as Cappadocian, Pontic and Silliot suggests that the origins of null realisation go back to a time before the dialects started developing idiosyncratically.
Conclusions

✓ The differences in the distribution and extent of application of null realisation in the three dialects allow for the reconstruction of its origin and subsequent development.

✓ This kind of investigation helps to reassess the role Turkish is presumed to have played in this development.

✓ Language contact does not appear to have been a factor relevant to the early manifestation of the phenomenon.

✓ Null realisation of the definite article is a truly (Asia Minor) Greek innovation.
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Thank you!

Φως ντα μάτια σας!

(‘light to your eyes’)