

## Constraints on Differential Object Marking in Old Sardinian: insights on its diachrony

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This paper explores the differential marking of (human) objects (DOM) in a corpus of Old Sardinian texts from two different areas, Logudoro and Arborea. We investigate the constraints on the marking of O, whether *semantic*, reflecting the Individuation Hierarchy (Silverstein 1976: 122), *syntactic*, i.e., determined by verbal valency and/or the syntactic position of the O argument in relation to the verb and in the clause, or *pragmatic*, functioning as a marking device for topics (Bossong 1998; Iemmolo 2010; Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011: 18, among others).

A preliminary study reveals a change in progress in Old Sardinian. The fixing of Definiteness as the main parameter determining the occurrence of the preposition *a* (and its allomorphs) appears to interact with the V1 word order to disambiguate the function of the clause nuclear arguments, A(gent) and O, when these are highly individuated, e.g., proper/human, kinship nouns (Lombardi 2007).

Proper names, i.e., arguments highest on the Individuation Hierarchy, are already affected by the change in the early attestations of the phenomenon, although with areal differences, reflecting different diachronic stages. In both early vernaculars human Os are marked with the preposition *a(d)* if instantiated by proper names (1), rarely lacking it. Human common (2a) and kinship (2b) nouns instead less frequently take a dedicated marker, lacking *a(d)* even when [+SPEC], [ $\pm$ DEF] (3a)-(3b) (Putzu 2008: 417):

- (1) *isse levait a Gavini...* (CSPS 21.5)  
he took.3SG DOM Gavini  
'He took Gavini ...'
- (2) a. *vinkit priori Johanni [...] assu previteru* (CSNT 300.2)  
won.3SG prior Johanni DOM-the priest  
'The prior Johanni won ... the priest'  
b. *parthibi a fñios de Istefane* [+SPEC] (CSPS 24, 1-2)  
divided.1SG DOM sons of Istefane  
'I shared Istefane's sons'
- (3) a. *l'ockisit su seruu uostru (O) su seruu meu (A)* [+DEF] (CSPS 110)  
him-killed.3SG the servant your the servant my  
'my servant killed your servant'  
b. *Parthivi fñios de Gavini...* [-DEF] [+SPEC] (CSPS 296. 1-2)  
shared.1SG children of Gavin  
'I shared Gavinus' children...'

In Old Arborese, *a(d)* is instead well attested with human common nouns, also if [-DEF] in later texts (4):

- (4) *si alchuno homini hochirit at alcuno atteru homini* (CDLA 4.1)  
if some man killed.3SG DOM some other man  
'If a man killed another man'

Thus, old Sardinian reveals the role played by the notion of Individuation in the initial stages of the grammaticalization of the preposition *a(d)* as a DOM marker, progressively spreading

from human proper names, to human, kinship and then common nouns, initially definite, subsequently indefinite. Already in 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century texts, *a(d)* does not appear to differentiate A from O arguments, but is a marker of high Individuation, its use being sensitive to the notions of definiteness and humanness.

Unlike in other early Italo-Romance vernaculars such as Old Neapolitan and Old Sicilian (Sornicola 1997; Iemmolo 2009; Ledgeway 2009), in Old Sardinian the presence of the marker *a* does not appear to reflect also verb valency, and the Person Hierarchy does not appear to play a role in its occurrence, as recently noticed for the diachrony of DOM in other Romance languages (cf. Irimia & Pineda 2021; Pineda 2021 for scale reversals in Old Catalan/Old Romanian and Old Catalan, respectively).

Old Sardinian, therefore, brings interesting novel data on the rise of DOM and its possible diachronic paths, a phenomenon that will be analysed also in relation to word order changes in a V1 system (Wolfe 2015).

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