

## The factors of variation in definiteness marking in the history of Georgian

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### 1. The issue of definite articles in Old Georgian

Like in many other languages, in Old Georgian demonstrative pronouns had adopted the function of definite articles. They are found in this function in the earliest texts already.

Statements w.r.t. the function of the demonstrative as a definite article in the literature are rather global and not in harmony with each other:

Sardjveladze (1997: 63f) acknowledges the additional function of demonstratives as personal pronouns, but not that of definite articles (“There is no article”).

Harris (1991: 22): “... Old Georgian has a productive definite article (formally identical to the demonstrative and third person personal pronoun). Presence of the article, postposed to the head noun, indicates that the nominal is definite; it is absent from indefinites.”

Fährnich (1991: 150): “Nouns without the article were indefinite, nouns with the article definite“.

Both Sardjveladze’s and Fährnich’s statements are clearly inadequate: throughout a period of about one-thousand years, there is considerable variation, both inter- and intra-textually, as to the (non-)use of articles.

Goal of the paper: to achieve a precise understanding of this variation by investigating the following conditions:

- the semantic and pragmatic factors which govern the use of articles
- the variation in terms of text sorts
- the role of language contact, in particular the influence of Greek

### 2. The system of demonstrative pronouns in Georgian

(1) Old Georgian (Sardjveladze 1997)

SINGULAR:

	proximal	medial	distal
NOM	<i>ese</i>	<i>ege</i>	<i>igi (&gt; isi)</i>
ERG	<i>ama-n</i>	<i>maga-n</i>	<i>ma-n (ima-n)</i>
DAT	<i>ama-s(a)</i>	<i>maga-s(a)</i>	<i>ma-s (ima-s)</i>
GEN	<i>am-is(a)</i>	<i>mag-is(a)</i>	<i>m-is (im-is)</i>

PLURAL:

NOM	<i>ese</i>	<i>ege</i>	<i>igi-ni (isi-ni)</i>
OBL	<i>ama-t</i>	<i>maga-t</i>	<i>ma-t (ima-t)</i>

(2) Modern Georgian

	proximal	medial	distal
NOM	<i>es</i>	<i>eg</i>	<i>is (&lt; igi)</i>
ERG	<i>am</i>	<i>mag</i>	<i>im</i>
DAT	<i>am</i>	<i>mag</i>	<i>im</i>
GEN	<i>am</i>	<i>mag</i>	<i>im</i>

The forms of the distal demonstrative *igi/man/mas/mis* were used as definite articles, and they furthermore had the function of 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronouns.

(According to Shanidze (1980: 618) and Fähnrich (1991: 152), the forms of the proximal and medial demonstrative were also used as articles. However, we have as yet encountered no more than four examples of those uses.)

Thus far, Old Georgian seems to be in line with the common path of grammaticalization (cf. Lyons 1999):

- (3) DISTAL DEMONSTRATIVE > DEFINITE ARTICLE, INDEPENDENT PRONOUN

This development is typically accompanied by phonological reduction, semantic weakening, loss of deictic features, and an increase of obligatoriness in contexts of definiteness.

In Georgian, by contrast, the demonstrative function of the forms has been maintained until today, despite some phonological reduction, while that of definiteness marking is lost (without being replaced elsewhere).

### 3. Semantic vs. pragmatic definiteness

We follow the uniqueness approach to definiteness as it is developed in the works by Löbner (1985, 1998). According to Löbner, any definite noun phrase indicates unique reference.

Unique reference may come about in two different ways:

- the uniqueness is inherent to the meaning of the noun: functional concepts such as *the sun*, *the temperature in Vienna at noon*, *John's mother* ⇒ semantic definiteness
- the uniqueness results from the (either linguistic or non-linguistic) context: anaphoric uses; situational definiteness: *the man at the corner* ⇒ pragmatic definiteness

This distinction is grammaticalized, e.g., in many Germanic varieties (cf. Löbner 1985).

### 4. Data and analysis

#### Earlier Old Georgian texts

- Fairly systematic occurrence of articles in contexts of pragmatic definiteness (especially anaphoric), but hardly in contexts of semantic definiteness:

- (4) *čika-j igi p'ir-sa šealec'a da ġvino-j igi daitxia.*  
 glass.NOM DET.NOM mouth-DAT throw and wine-NOM DET.NOM spill  
 'She threw her the glass into the face and the wine was spilled.' [Sus VI] 5<sup>th</sup> c.

- (5) *p'ilo-j igi saxe ars sik'udil-isa*  
 elephant-NOM DET.NOM face.NOM COP.3SG death-GEN  
 'The elephant is the face of death.' [Bal] 7<sup>th</sup> c.

- (6) *da šemdgomad or-isa dġ-isa movida mgel-i igi t'aZr-ad.*  
 and after two-GEN day-GEN come-AOR.3SG wolf-NOM DET.NOM court-ADV  
 'and two days later the wolf (i.e., her evil husband) arrived at his court.'  
 [Sus I] 5<sup>th</sup> c.

- (7) *xolo me viZnen adre da mivic'ie daba-sa mas,*  
 but PRON1SG.NOM go-AOR.1SG early and come-AOR.1SG settlement-DAT DET.DAT

*romel-sa-ca iq'o net'ari šušanik'.*  
 REL.PRON-DAT-also be-AOR.3SG holy-NOM Shushanik-NOM  
 'I, however, left earlier and arrived at the settlement in which Holy Shushanik lived.'  
 [Sus I] 5<sup>th</sup> c.

– Even anaphoric definiteness is not signalled throughout:

(8) *xolo k'ac-man man ver ik'adra sit'q'uad mis-a,*  
 but man-ERG DET.ERG NEG dare-AOR.3SG word.ADV PRON.GEN-ADV  
 'But the man did not dare to say a word to her.'

*xolo c'mida-j šušanik' apucebda da hk'itxvida damt'k'icebulad.*  
 but holy-NOM Shushanik-ABS implore.AOR.3SG and ask.AOR.3SG confirm-PART  
 'But Holy Shushanik implored him and asked for the truth.'

*xolo k'ac-man utxra martal-i*  
 and man-ERG tell-AOR.3SG truth-NOM  
 'And the man told (her) the truth.'  
 [Sus I, 18 to 20] 5<sup>th</sup> c.

(9) *mašin brZana mepe-man gamosxma-j p'alat'-isa-gan Z-isa tvis-isa*  
 then order.AOR.3SG king-ERG take.MASD-NOM palace-GEN-from son-GEN PRON-GEN  
 'Then the king gave the order to bring his son out of the palace.' [Bal] 7<sup>th</sup> c.

### Later Old Georgian

– Extension of the use of articles in **religious translated texts** so as to cover contexts of semantic definiteness as well:

(10) a. *gza-sa mas č'ešmarit'-sa ertgmteeb-isa-sa*  
 way-DAT DET.DAT true-DAT monotheism-GEN-DAT  
 'the true path of monotheism'  
 [Luc 9] 9<sup>th</sup> c.

b. *gandevna sibnele-j igi sul-ta morc'mune-taj.*  
 ban.AOR.3SG darkness-NOM DET.NOM soul-GEN.PL believer-GEN.PL  
 'He banned the darkness of the believers' souls'  
 [Luc 11-12] 9<sup>th</sup> c.

(11) *da gamoik'itxa mat-gan žam-i igi*  
 and ask.AOR.3SG PRON.OBL.PL-from time-NOM DET.NOM  
  
*gamočineb-ul-isa mis varsk'ulav-isa-j*  
 appear-PART-GEN DET.GEN star-GEN-NOM  
 'And he asked them when the star had appeared.'  
 [NT Athon, Mt. 2, 7] 11<sup>th</sup> c.

– By contrast, no marking of semantic definiteness in **autochthonous texts**:

(12) *odes babilon-s godol-i ağašenes*  
 when Babylon-DAT tower-NOM build.AOR.3PL  
 'after they had built the tower in Babylon'  
 [Leon I, 9-10] 11<sup>th</sup> c.

– In **autochthonous texts**, articles more and more fail to occur even in contexts of anaphoricity as early as in the 12th century:

- (13) *sxva Ze ar esva mepe-sa*  
other.NOM son.NOM NEG sit\_to\_him king-DAT  
'The king had no (other) son' [Vepx 33] 12<sup>th</sup> c.

In **translations**, by contrast, the exponence of anaphoric definiteness is, at least optionally, maintained significantly longer:

- (14) *ixiles megvip't'-el-ta dedak'ac-i igi, rametu šuenier iq'o priad*  
see.AOR.3PL Egyptian-PL-OBL woman-NOM DET since beautiful be-AOR.3SG very  
'The Egyptians saw the woman because she was very beautiful.' [Mcxet, Gen 12, 14] 16<sup>th</sup> c.

⇒ For each individual stage of Georgian, the variation is governed by distinction semantic and pragmatic factors.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

Why does the long-term development of the use of the definite article first show a drastic increase, and afterwards an equally drastic decrease, with respect to both its frequency and its contexts of application, rather than a steady development?

Our proposal: the extension of the article use is the result of foreign influence on the literary language:

- In the period of 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century, by far most translations are from Greek religious texts.
- At that time, Georgian translations followed the Greek original very closely (Kekelidze 1951).
- Even the autochthonous literature, e.g. the Shushanik text, is heavily influenced by the translation style.
- In Greek, articles were systematically used in virtually all contexts of definiteness (i.e., pragmatic as well as semantic definiteness).

⇒ The increase of the use of articles in the Georgian literature especially until the 11<sup>th</sup> century seems to be due to the high impact of Greek, the source-language of translations, rather than reflecting a change in spoken Georgian.

The following decrease in autochthonous texts, and afterwards in translations as well, is due to the rise of a Georgian self-esteem which was more and more reflected in the literary language:

- In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, a united Georgian state was founded. The 12<sup>th</sup> century is seen as the golden age of Georgian history.
- The political and cultural development gave rise to a stronger national self-esteem.
- As of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, there is an increase of non-religious literature, especially of autochthonous historical texts. (As for poetry, non-religious poetry prevails against religious poetry by the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century; Fähnrich 1981:49.)
- The national self-esteem is also reflected in the language use: by the same time, according to Kekelidze (1951), written Georgian released from foreign influence and began to develop "more naturally".

⇒ The decrease of the use of articles starting from the 12<sup>th</sup> century is a result of the decrease of Greek influence.

As far as language-internal factors are concerned, the distribution of articles within the individual texts is largely governed by the distinction of semantic and pragmatic definiteness.

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