Possessive adjectives with and without articles: the case of Piedmontese

Adjectifs possessifs avec ou sans articles : le cas du piémontais

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1   This paper addresses the use of possessive constructions in Piedmontese, focusing on the presence or absence of definite articles before possessive adjectives. Firstly, a diachronic outline of possessive constructions in written texts will be provided, from the Middle Ages to the present day. Next, the pattern of possessive constructions will be described and analysed, mainly drawing on prescriptive grammars of Piedmontese. Lastly, an overall interpretation of the data will be offered, fitting them into a theoretical framework.

1 Piedmontese

2   Piedmontese is an Italo-Romance *dialetto* spoken in north-western Italy. As is well known, Italo-Romance *dialetti* are "sisters" of Italian, locally divergent developments of the Latin originally spoken in Italy' (Maiden & Parry 1997: 2); the bulk of these *dialetti* may be regarded, in Kloss' (1967) terms, as *Abstand* languages, i.e. language systems separate from Italian. The history of Piedmontese has been characterised by the presence of a prestigious variety named Turinese, the variety spoken in the main centre of the area, Turin. As of the eighteenth century, Turinese started to be used as a sort of *lingua franca* amongst speakers of different varieties of Piedmontese, also exerting a strong influence on the phonetics and morphology of the surrounding varieties. As a consequence, it became customary to refer to Turinese as Piedmontese, and vice versa. In spite of its title, Maurizio Pipino's *Gramatica piemontese* [Piedmontese Grammar] (1783a) only describes the Turinese variety of the Savoy court; similarly, the many dictionaries published since the end of the eighteenth century (Pipino 1783b,

Capello 1814, Ponza 1830, Sant'Albino 1859, Gavuzzi 1891, etc.), though dedicated to Piedmontese, are all focused on Turinese.

3   Muljačić (1997a, 1997b, 2011) lists Piedmontese among the most outstanding *middle languages* of Italy from the sixteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, the others being Genoese, Milanese, Venetan, Neapolitan and Sicilian. A middle language is 'high' with respect to the local varieties of the Italo-Romance *dialetto* and 'low' with respect to the standard language, displaying evidence of both autonomy and heteronomy. Turinese was thus 'high' when compared with local varieties, but 'low' when compared with Italian and French. It is worth noting that French stood as a "commonly used language of culture" (Clivio 1972: 129) in Piedmont until the Unification of Italy (1861), while Italian became the only standard language after the decline of French, "which was completed by about 1870 at the latest" (Clivio 1972: 130). Both social changes and the spread of Italian in everyday conversation gradually undermined the role of Turinese as a middle language; this means that today's repertoire no longer consists of three levels (H: Italian, M: Turinese, L: local variety of Piedmontese), but rather of two (H: Italian, L: local variety of Piedmontese), with Italian gaining ground in low domains. This is what Berruto (1989: 557) has termed *dilalia*, i.e. a situation in which "the H[igh] variety is used by some social or geographical segments of the population also in ordinary conversation", the high / low dichotomy still being effective (as for 'classic' diglossia).

2 Possessive constructions from the Middle Ages to the present day

4   Written texts in Piedmontese are not equally distributed over time. Until the end of the seventeenth century, written records were quite rare and mostly belonged to non-Turinese varieties; as of the eighteenth century, however, they became abundant and deeply Turinese-centred.

5   Clivio (1969: 452) identifies two principal stages in the history of Piedmontese: that of Old Piedmontese, from the twelfth century to the sixteenth century, and that of Modern Piedmontese, from the seventeenth century onwards. I would suggest a slightly different division, with Old Piedmontese stretching to the mid-seventeenth century. This has to do with the fact that the so-called *Canzoni torinesi* [Turinese Songs], probably dating back to the mid-seventeenth century, still show archaic features, such as the fourth person ending *-'mma* ['əm:a] (vs. Modern Piedmontese *-oma* ['uma]), metaphonetic plurals (*cast* 'this' [kast] / *chist* [kist] 'these' vs. Modern Piedmontese *cost* 'this' [kust] / *costi* 'these' ['kusti]), plurals with palatalised final consonants (*putan* 'prostitute' [py'tɑŋ] / *putagn* 'prostitutes' [py'tɑɲ] vs. Modern Piedmontese *putan-a* 'prostitute' [py'taŋa] / *putan-e* 'prostitutes' [py'taŋe]) (cf. Regis 2011: 16-18), etc. Most of these features were overcome by the end of the century, paving the way for Modern Piedmontese. Henceforth, when using the labels 'Modern Piedmontese' or 'Piedmontese', I am referring to the regional koine based on the variety of Turin.

6   Piedmontese belongs *ab antiquo* to the so-called "Italia antepositiva" (Castellani Pollidori 2004 [1967]: 597), namely the area of the Italian Peninsula in which possessives are placed before nouns. Some examples[1] of possessive constructions of Old Piedmontese, listed in chronological order, are shown in Table 1[2]. Possessives with or

without articles will be referred to as 'determined possessives' and 'non-determined possessives', respectively.

Table 1

MS	Ex. *So engeig* 'his deceit' (LPI: 18), *so host* 'his army' (LPI: 73), *loor sarament* 'their oath' (LPI: 77), **so sarament** 'his oath' (LPI: 78), *nostr consegl* 'our advice' (LPI : 79), **so Segnor** 'his Lord' (TPI: 98), **Nostre Segnor Yhesu Crist** 'our Lord Jesus Christ' (LPI: 118, 120), *tò onour* 'your honor' (LPI: 185), *vòst gissorer* 'your restlessness' (LPI: 183), *me corin* 'my love' (LPI: 263)
MS+	Ex. *Lo son criator* 'lit. the his creator' (LPI: 18), *el vostr sarament* 'lit. the your oath' (LPI: 53), *lo me honor* 'lit. the my honor' (LPI: 66), *lo nostr pastoral officii* 'lit. the our pastoral duty' (LPI: 77), **lo so sarament** 'lit. the his oath' (LPI: 78), *lo so ardor* 'lit. the her passion' (LPI: 87), **lo so Segnor** 'lit. the his Lord' (LPI: 98), **lo Nostre Segnor Yhesu Crist** 'lit. the our Lord Jesus Christ' (LPI: 117, 118, 119), *el me euteuri* 'lit. the my help' (LPI: 143), *o tò giach* 'lit. the your gipon' (LPI: 206)
FS	Ex. *Ma tera* 'my land' (LPI: 28), **soa parentela** 'his kinship' (LPI: 57), *mea cha* 'my house' (LPI: 65), *nostra sedia* 'our chair' (LPI: 79), *soa rason* 'his reason' (LPI: 84), *ma via* 'my life' (LPI: 94), *toa compassion* 'your compassion' (LPI: 101), *lor marcandìe* 'their wares' (LPI: 117), *nòstra farsa* 'our farce' (LPI: 188), *mia parola* 'my word' (LPI: 259)
FS+	Ex. *La nostra salù* 'lit. the our salvation' (LPI: 27, 28), **la soa parentella** 'lit. the his kinship' (LPI: 57), *la mea voluntà* 'lit. the my will' (LPI: 64), *la soa bandera* 'lit. the his flag' (LPI: 74), *la soa presencia* 'lit. the his presence' (LPI: 83, 84), *la soa virginitaa* 'lit. the her virginity' (LPI: 86), *la soa dolemta mare* 'lit. the his sorrowful mother' (LPI: 95), *la tua faza* 'lit. the your face' (LPI: 103), *la soa pax* 'lit. the his peace' (LPI: 115), *la soa mort* 'lit. the his death' (LPI: 126)
MP	Ex. *lor sacrifici* 'their sacrifices' (LPI: 19), *sos chaitìs* 'his prisoners' (LPI: 26), *lor peccai* 'their sins' (LPI: 27), *soi trei amìs* 'her three friends' (LPI: 37), *soy og* 'his eyes' (LPI: 95), *nòstri freegl e soror* 'our brothers and sisters' (LPI: 119), *soi segurtà* 'their guarantors' (LPI: 269), *suoi v'sin* 'their neighbours' (LPI: 270)
MP+	Ex. *Li toi drap* 'lit. the your suits' (LPI: 40), *i soy ben* 'lit. his riches' (LPI: 57), *li toy desederie* 'lit. the your desires' (LPI: 64, 65), *gli soy parent* 'lit. the his relatives' (LPI: 78), *li soy consegler* 'lit. the his advisors' (LPI: 83), *li soy amì* 'lit. the his friends' (LPI: 98), *gli nostre cor* 'lit. the our hearts' (LPI: 113), *gli soy propri ben* 'lit. the his own riches' (LPI: 125), *i sòi pricau* 'lit. the their preachers' (LPI: 152), *i mei dné* 'lit. the my money' (LPI: 259)
FP	Ex. *lor desmes* 'their tithes' (LPI: 21), *nostre rei* 'our king' (LPI: 30), *nostre vigne* 'our vineyards' (LPI: 48), *soe gent* 'his populations' (LPI: 74), *lor anime* 'their souls' (LPI: 119), *lor marchandìe* 'their goods' (LPI: 117), *soe viande* 'their victuals' (LPI: 195), *so parole* 'his words' (LPI: 245), *soe msson* 'their harvests' (LPI: 279), *soe galin-e* 'their hens' (LPI: 287)
FP+	Ex. *le soe ovre* 'lit. the his deeds' (LPI: 29), *le soe main* 'lit. the his hands' (LPI: 37), *le vostre magn* 'lit. the your hands' (LPI: 53), *le vostre dolce parole* 'lit. the your sweet words' (LPI: 66), *le nostre auregle* 'lit. the our ears' (LPI: 76), *le tue man* 'lit. the your hands' (LPI: 102), *le nostre preere e oracion* 'lit. the our prayers and orisons' (LPI: 116), *le nostre anime* 'lit. the our souls' (LPI: 118, 120), *el soe botiglie* 'lit. the their bottles' (LPI: 146), *el soe scrigiure* 'lit. the their compositions' (LPI: 208)

7   The distribution of possessive patterns in Old Piedmontese is listed in Table 2. Patterns involving singular kinship nouns have not been included, since the latter are typically non-determined (see Section 4); instead, I have taken into account kinship nouns when they are diminutivised (ex. *del vostro figliol* 'lit. of the your little son [child]'), adjectivised (ex. *Lo me car figl* 'lit. the my dear son') or both (ex. *al so dilecto figliol* 'lit. to the his beloved little son [child]').

Table 2

	MS	MS+	FS	FS+	MP	MP+	FP	FP+
12th century	15	9	13	12	4	2	7	2
14th century	4	13	5	9	1	5	-	1
15th century	24	25	14	42	1	11	3	5
16th century	10	16	4	8	-	7	1	2
First half of the 17th century	1	3	1	1	2	6	4	1
TOTAL	54	66	37	72	8	31	15	11

8   The overall picture is apparently characterised by free variation, and it seems, in fact, that nothing constrains either the presence or absence of definite articles before possessives. This is confirmed by the fact that the same author and/or text sometimes shows a double pattern referring to the same noun; these examples are in bold in Table 1 (*so sarament* vs. *lo so sarament*, *so Segnor* vs. *lo so Segnor*, *soa parentela* vs. *la soa parentella*, etc.). The use of determined vs. non-determined possessives is not linked to geographical variation, as texts from Turin (or from nearby localities) exhibit the same behaviour as non-Turinese texts.

9   Some examples of possessive constructions in Modern Piedmontese are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

MS	Ex. **me coeur** 'my heart' (LPI: 299), *vostr capel* 'your hat [second person plural]' (LPI: 308), *sò onor* 'his honor' (LPI: 348), *tò sguard* 'your gaze' (LPI: 378), *mè decess* 'my death' (LPI: 492), *sò còrp* 'its body' (LPI: 519), **nòst linguage** 'our language' (LPI: 529), *sò sangh* 'their blood' (SLP: 92), *sò cit* 'her little boy' (SLP: 92)
MS+	Ex. **il me coeur** 'lit. the my heart' (LPI: 294), *'l mè sol* 'lit. the my sun' (LPI: 314), *ël nòstr mond* 'lit. the our world' (LPI: 332), *'l sò nas* 'lit. the her nose' (LPI: 369), *'l sò guadagn* 'lit. the their profit' (LPI: 506), *o nòst parlé* 'lit. the our way of speaking' (LPI: 522), **ël nòst linguage** 'our language' (LPI: 525), *ël sò costum* 'lit. the its habit' (LPII: 49), *dël vòst mal* 'lit. of the your suffering [second person plural]' (LPII: 78), *'l mè doméstich* 'lit. the my butler' (LPII: 110), *ël tò mestè* 'lit. the your job' (LPII: 475)

FS	Ex. *mia fantasia* 'my fantasy' (LPI: 294), *mia volontà* 'my will' (LPI: 315), *vòstra usansa* 'your usage [second person plural]' (LPI: 434), *toa tiranìa* 'your tyranny' (LPI: 468), **soa bela cera** 'their beautiful face' (LPI: 487), *mia situassion* 'my situation' (LPI: 492), *mia ròca* 'my distaff' (LPI: 509), *mia Gramàtica* 'my grammar' (LPI: 529), *nòstra malissia* 'our malice' (LPII: 25), *soa famija* 'his family' (SLP: 122)
FS+	Ex. *la nòstra sità* 'lit. the our town' (LPI: 321), *la nòstra cavalèria* 'lit. the our cavalry' (LPI: 332), *la soa opinion* 'lit. the her opinion' (LPI: 370), *la mia rason* 'lit. the my reason' (LPI: 468), **la soa cera** 'lit. the their face' (LPI: 486), *la mia paròla* 'lit. the my word' (LPI: 498), *la mia pòrta* 'lit. the my door' (LPI: 514), *la soa costuma* 'lit. the its habit' (LPI: 519), *la vòstr'òpera* 'lit. the your work [second person plural]' (LPI: 524), *la toa gelosia* 'lit. the your jealousy' (LPII: 489)
MP	Ex. *nòstri temp* 'our times' (LPI: 525), *nòstri prèive* 'our priests' (LPII: 26), *tò frej* 'your brothers' (LPII: 46), *nòstri vitèj* 'our calves' (LPII: 170), *vòstri epigram* 'your epigrams [second person plural]' (LPII: 191), *vòstri scrit* 'your writings [second person plural]' (LPII: 231), *nòstri botaj* 'our barrels' (LPII: 329), *sò cont* 'his sums' (LPII: 411), *mè pensé* 'my thoughts' (LPII: 590), *sò rosare* 'his rosary' (SLP: 129)
MP+	Ex. *i so euj* 'lit. the their eyes' (LPI : 293), *dij seu di* 'lit. of the his days' (LPI: 312), *ij nòstri amis* 'lit. the our friends' (LPI: 347), *dij sò fin* 'lit. of the her goals' (LPI: 465), *ij nòstri guai* 'lit. the our troubles' (LPI: 489), *ai mè parent* 'lit. to the my relatives' (LPI: 492), *ij nòstri vciat* 'lit. the our little old men' (LPI: 501), *ij nòstri sentiment* 'lit. the our feelings' (LPI: 525), *ij vòstri sagrin* 'lit. the your worries [second person plural]' (LPII: 27), *ij tò lumin* 'lit. the your candles' (SLP: 92)
FP	Ex. *vostre blesse* 'your beauties' (LPI: 297), *mie gesie* 'my churches' (LPI: 425), *soe dësgrassie* 'their misfortunes' (LPI: 466), *vòstre facessie* 'your witty remarks' (LPI: 481), *soe paròle* 'his words' (LPI: 497), *soe maraje* 'their kids' (LPI: 508), *nòstre miserie* 'our miseries' (LPII: 65), *vòstre masnà* 'your children [second person plural]' (LPII: 114), *soe piotasse* 'its ugly paws' (LPII: 131), *soe nòsse* 'your nuptials [courtesy form]' (LPII: 138)
FP+	Ex. *le soe man* 'lit. the his hands' (LPI: 293), *le soe trincere* 'lit. the their barricades' (LPI: 334), *le soe còse* 'lit. the his things' (LPI: 495), *le soe canson* 'lit. the their songs' (LPII: 57), *le nòstre stra* 'lit. the our streets' (LPII: 100), *le nòstre iniquità* 'lit. the our inequalities' (LPII: 126), *le soe facende* 'lit. the its chores' (LPII: 154), *le toe paròle* 'lit. the your words' (LPII: 488), *le mie spale* 'lit. the my shoulders' (LPII: 489), *le vòstre pere* 'lit. the your stones [second person plural]' (SLP : 129)

10   The distribution of possessives in Modern Piedmontese is documented in Table 4.

Table 4

	MS	MS+	FS	FS+	MP	MP+	FP	FP+
Second half of the 17th century	4	6	5	3	-	4	4	2
18th century	50	28	39	38	1	48	16	5
First half of the 19th century	142	34	93	18	12	77	30	6
Second half of the 19th century	95	33	69	39	3	55	10	26

20th century (until 1980 ca.)	256	87	196	152	18	122	69	46
TOTAL	547	154	456	250	34	306	129	85

11   Judging from the table above, the situation still appears rather haphazard. Nevertheless, we can notice that a change has taken place, in that the non-determined forms now prevail over the determined forms, except for the category of MP possessives, while in Old Piedmontese texts determined forms were preferred to non-determined forms, except for the category of feminine plural possessives. Let us examine the paradigms of the possessives in both Old and Modern Piedmontese (Table 5[3]).

Table 5

Person	Old Piedmontese[4]		Modern Piedmontese		Old Piedmontese		Modern Piedmontese	
	MS	MP	MS	MP	FS	FP	FS	FP
First 'my'	me	mei	mè	mè	mia, mea	NA	mia	mie
Second 'your'	to	toi, toy	tò	tò	toa	NA	toa	toe
Third 'his/her/its'	so	soi, soy	sò	sò	soa	Soe	soa	soe
Fourth 'our'	nostr(o) (nostre)	nostri (nostre)	nòstr	nòstri	nostra	nostre	nòst(r)a	nòst(r)e
Fifth 'your'	vostr (vostro)	vostri	vòstr	vòstri	vostra	vostre	vòst(r)a	vòst(r)e
Sixth 'their	lo(o)r, so	lor, soi	sò	sò	lor, soa	lor, soe	soa	soe

12   In Old Piedmontese possessives were morphologically differentiated from their singular counterparts for the first, second, third, fourth and fifth person; this would imply that the use of definite articles was not functionally motivated, the morphology of possessives encoding the relevant information for both gender and number. As for the sixth person, until the Renaissance, *lor* 'their' (< ILLORUM; It. *loro*) was the only solution for both singular and plural possessives, masculine and feminine; this form was then gradually replaced by the couple *so / soi* (masculine) and *soa / soe* (feminine), which were already used for the third person. Non-determined *lor* was a possible source of ambiguity. For example, such forms as *lor coaiutor* (*Testi chieresi,* 1336; LPI: 56) could be interpreted as both 'their assistant' or 'their assistants', since in Piedmontese number is not morphologically expressed in most nouns, especially those that are

masculine[5]. In these cases, the presence of definite articles would have proved decisive for an unambiguous interpretation, but their use is far from being regular. The occurrence of *la* 'the (feminine singular)' before *lor condicion* 'their condition' (*Sentenza di Rivalta*, 1446; LPI: 80) makes it clear that *condicion* is a singular (and feminine) name; nevertheless, in the same *Sentenza* (LPI: 77), *loor sarament* is used without the definite article and thus can be interpreted as either 'their oath' or 'their oaths'. It is ultimately the context that supplies the more likely interpretation (namely *loor sarament* as 'their oath'). The passage from *lor* to *so / soi* for masculine possessives was a way to overcome the number ambiguity, albeit conveying a possible misinterpretation in terms of third/ sixth person opposition; such examples as *i soi parent* (*Canzoni torinesi*, mid-seventeenth century; TPI: 274) could in fact mean either 'his/her relatives' or 'their relatives'. We cannot but conclude that Old Piedmontese showed a tendency towards determined possessives, even though this tendency was not functionally driven. Definite articles could be present or not, independently of the need to disambiguate the meaning of the possessive.

13 As stated above, Modern Piedmontese has progressively developed a bias for non-determined possessives, except when masculine plural forms are involved; this orientation is closely linked to the new paradigm shown in Table 5. First of all, it should be noted that in Modern Piedmontese masculine singular and masculine plural possessives for the first, second, third and sixth person have merged into morphologically unmarked forms, *mè* 'my', *tò* 'your', *sò* 'his/her/its' and *sò* 'their', respectively[6]. This levelled paradigm has enhanced the use of definite articles with masculine plural possessives, so that *sò pensé* (Ignazio Isler, eighteenth century; LPI: 462) and *ij sò pensé* (Cartiermetre, eighteenth century; LPI: 483) would mean 'his/her/ their thought' and 'his/her/their thoughts', respectively. The occurrences of non-determined masculine plural possessives are in fact reduced to a minimum, namely 34 tokens against 306 determined masculine plural possessives; yet it is worth underlining that a large part of non-determined masculine plural forms concern fourth and fifth person possessives (such as *nòstri prèive* 'our priests', LPII: 26, and *vòstri scrit* 'your writings', LPII: 231), nouns with an overt plural marking (such as *sò papaga-j* 'their parrot-s', LPII: 57) or both (such as *nòstri vite-j* 'our calf-calves', LPII: 170, and *nòstri bota-j* 'our barrel-s', LPII: 329). If we excluded all the aforementioned cases, the non-determined masculine plural possessives which could be interpreted as either singular or plural forms would be further reduced to 8 tokens.

14 In order to assess the behaviour of possessive constructions in contemporary Piedmontese texts, I have examined eight issues of *E!* (2005-2006), a magazine written exclusively in Piedmontese, with articles spanning from politics to culture, from current news to music. The results of my analysis are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

	MS	MS+	FS	FS+	MP	MP+	FP	FP+
Early 21st century	260	15	275	14	69	53	72	9

15 It is clear that in these texts the tendency to prefer non-determined possessives has moved a step forward, the rates of determined possessives being very low. The only

exception is represented by masculine plural possessives: while, until the twentieth century, they were for the most part determined, here the non-determined forms (69 tokens) prevail slightly over the determined ones (53 tokens). If we were to subtract from the total of non-determined masculine plural possessives the forms which involve fourth and fifth person possessives (ex. *nòsti sòld* 'our money' [E 11: 1; E 13: 5], *vòsti lìber* 'your books' [E 9: 17]), nouns with an overt plural marking (ex. *sò simbo-j* 'their symbol-s' [E 10: 6], *mè artico-j* 'my article-s' [E 10: 22]) or both (ex. *nòsti fieu-j* 'our son-s' [E 8: 3], *nòstri giorna-j* 'our newspapers' [E 13: 9]), the non-determined masculine plural possessives would total 32; they would be less prevalent than determined masculine plural possessives yet still proportionally outnumber their twentieth-century counterparts.

3 Possessives in the grammars of Piedmontese

16   I will now consider how the paradigm of possessives is described in the grammars of Piedmontese, i.e. the regional koine based on Turinese, from the eighteenth century to the present day.

17   Though Pipino's *Gramatica* (1783a) does not tackle the subject of possessive constructions, the model texts provided in the appendix are rather chaotic in behaviour: see, e.g., *la soa litra* 'lit. the your letter (courtesy form)' (p. 100) vs. *soa litra* (p. 118), *el nòst lingoage* 'lit. the our language' (p. 132) vs. *nòst lingoage* (p. 134), *la soa Gramàtica* 'lit. the your Grammar [courtesy form]' (p. 107) vs. *mia Gramàtica* 'my grammar' (p. 139), etc. Following the praxis of Pipino, Giuseppe Ponza's *Donato piemontese-italiano* [*Donatus* Piedmontese-Italian] (1838) maintains that the possessives may be used "o coll'articolo, o senza" [either with or without the article], so that we may find *'l mè capel* 'lit. the my hat' as well as *mè capel*, *'l tò lìber* 'lit. the my book' as well as *tò lìber* and *'l sò fusil* 'lit. the his rifle' as well as *sò fusil* (pp. 26-27). Ponza's perspective, however, is not always confirmed by his own examples: *i mè capej* 'lit. the my hats' is not mentioned alongside *mè capej*, while *i tò lìber* 'lit. the your books' occurs with *tò lìber* (pp. 26-27), the latter leading to a two-fold interpretation, namely 'your book' and 'your books'. As a whole, Ponza seems to depict a paradigm which is in line with what was happening in the first half of the eighteenth century, though avoiding any quantitative statement on the use of non-determined vs. determined possessives.

18   The grammatical sketch of Piedmontese offered in Gavuzzi's (1896) dictionary makes no mention of possessive constructions, while Aly-Belfàdel (1933: 144) points out that "generalmente i possessivi rifiutano l'articolo definito [...] al singolare [...]; ma lo pigliano al plurale [..]. Non è però affatto raro l'uso, presso certe persone, dell'articolo definito al singolare e della mancanza [sic] di esso al plurale, sebbene suonino male, perché non nell'indole del dialetto" [generally, the possessives do not take the definite article in the singular, but they do in the plural. It is not at all uncommon for some persons to use the definite article in the singular but not in the plural, even though it does not sound well, since it is not in the dialect's own nature]. Aly-Belfàdel depicts the tendencies shown by our corpus in the twentieth century. As for that period, singular possessives tend not to take definite articles (though I would not say *generally*, but rather *for the most part*), while *masculine* plural possessives *generally* need to be determined; Aly-Belfàdel's statement on the need for *all* plural possessives – not only masculine – to be determined is consistent with the behaviour of feminine plural

possessives during the second half of the eighteenth century, when they were actually preferred - 69 times out of 115 - to non-determined ones (see Table 4), probably due to analogy with masculine plural possessives. In Aly-Belfàdel's view, the usages which do not conform to the general rule have to be dismissed on purely qualitative grounds, because they do not sound well; the hint at the 'indole del dialetto' is probably reminiscent of the Humboldtian *innere Sprachform*.

19 In the paragraph devoted to the possessives, Brero's (1967: 24) grammar observes that "[ë]l possessiv, ëd régola, a arfuda l'artìcol, meno che a la 1ª-2ª-3ª përson-a singolar e la 3ª plural dël mascolin plural, che, però, a peulo avej anche un'autra forma, dova l'artìcol a ven giontà a la fin dël possessiv, e nen prima" [As a rule, possessives do not take the definite article, except in the 1st-2nd-3rd person singular and in the 3rd person plural of the masculine plural, which, however, may also display a different form, the definite article being added after the possessive, and not before]. The use of definite articles is thus limited to those possessives that have the same form both in the masculine singular and plural, i.e. *mè* (first person), *tò* (second person) and *sò* (third and sixth person). From Brero's standpoint, the omission of definite articles is possible only when a distinctive plural form is used, namely *mèj* 'my (plural)', *tòj* 'your (plural)' and *sòj* 'his/her/its/their (plural)' vs. *mè* 'my (singular)', *tò* 'your (singular)' and *sò* 'his/her/its/their (singular)'. The former are rustic variants which are still attested in the surroundings of Turin, e.g. in Testona (Moncalieri) (ALEPO; unpublished data); contrary to what Brero writes, the final -*j* is not an enclitic article, but rather a plural ending[7].

20 A more nuanced position is expressed by Griva (1980: 49-50): "Con gli aggettivi possessivi, al singolare si omette, generalmente, l'articolo determinativo [...]. Al plurale la norma è valida specialmente al femminile [...], mentre per il maschile è corretto l'uso dell'articolo" [The definite article is generally omitted before singular possessives. The rule is valid especially for feminine plural possessives, while masculine plural possessives require the article]. It is worth noting that while Brero holds that *as a rule* possessives do not take the definite article, except in the first, second and third person singular and in the third person masculine plural, Griva states that the definite article is *generally* omitted, except with *all* masculine plural possessives.

21 That *all* masculine plural possessives should be determined is also claimed by Brero (1971: 45; 1975: 47) and later on by Brero & Bertodatti (1988: 58), marking a difference with respect to Brero (1967). Brero & Bertodatti's formulation is as follows: "l'aggettivo possessivo piemontese rifiuta, per regola, l'articolo: al maschile singolare e al femminile, tanto al singolare che al plurale [...]. Il maschile plurale degli aggettivi possessivi pretende, invece, sempre l'articolo" (Brero & Bertodatti 1988: 58) [As a rule, the Piedmontese possessive does not take the definite article in the masculine singular or in the feminine, the latter both in the singular and plural. Masculine plural possessives, instead, always require the definite article].

22 While Grosso (2000: 52-53) agrees with Brero (1971; 1975) and Brero & Bertodatti (1988), Villata (1997: 90) goes back to Brero's (1967) tenet, explicitly claiming, for the first time, that the use of the article before possessives is functionally motivated: "In genere l'aggettivo possessivo piemontese rifiuta l'articolo determinativo. Lo richiede solo quando esso ha valore diacritico, cioè quando serve per distinguere il plurale dal singolare. Ciò capita solo con *me*, *to*, *so* plurali' [The Piedmontese possessive generally does not take the definite article. Instead, the latter is required when it conveys a

distinctive value, i.e. when it distinguishes the plural from the singular. This only happens with plural *me*, *to* and *so*].

23 Table 7 summarises the authors' different positions on possessive constructions.

Table 7

	Ponza (1838)				Aly-Belfàdel (1933)				Brero (1967) Villata (1997)				Brero (1971, 1975) Griva (1980) Brero & Bertodatti (1988) Grosso (2000)			
	MS	MP	FS	FP	MS	MP	FS	FP	MS	MP	FS	FP	MS	MP	FS	FP
First	-/+	-/+	-/+	-/+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-
Second	-/+	-/+	-/+	-/+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-
Third	-/+	-/+	-/+	-/+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-
Fourth	-/+	-/+	-/+	-/+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
Fifth	-/+	-/+	-/+	-/+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
Sixth	-/+	-/+	-/+	-/+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-

24 -/+ = definite articles may or may not be present; - = definite articles are absent; + = definite articles are present

25 Even though the principles proposed by Brero, Griva, Brero & Bertodatti, Grosso and Villata differ slightly from one another, it is indisputable that they are the sources for the behaviour of contemporary written Piedmontese[8]. The fact that these texts do not completely conform to the rules of the grammars has to do with three competing factors. First of all, the selection of definite articles when they are not expected to occur may be due to the influence of the national language, as Italian only allows determined possessives (*il mio cane* 'lit. the my dog', *la mia casa* 'lit. the my house', etc.). Secondly, determined possessives may be present in the native Piedmontese variety of the writers; the grammars in fact display the rules of Piedmontese (Turinese), whose behaviour in this respect is different from that of other varieties. Hence, it is very likely that writers using Turinese as a non-native variety transfer to their version of Turinese some properties of their own native variety. Most peripheral varieties of Piedmontese require determined possessives, as shown in Table 8[9]; the same may hold true for some of the non-Turinese authors using Turinese included in our twentieth century corpus.

Table 8

	Bèra dla Giarin-a (2017) Low Monferrino	Di Stefano (2017) Biellese	Musso (2004) Astigiano	Garuzzo (2003) Alessandrino	Giamello (2007) High Langarolo	Zörner (1998) Canavesano

	MS / MP / FS / FP	MS / MP / FS / FP	MS / MP / FS / FP	MS / MP / FS / FP	MS / MP / FS / FP	MS / MP / FS / FP
First	+	+	+	+	+	+
Second	+	+	+	+	+	+
Third	+	+	+	+	+	+
Fourth	+	+	+	+	+	+
Fifth	+	+	+	+	+	+
Sixth	+	+	+	+	+	+

26   + = definite articles are present

27   Thirdly, the contributors of *E!* may have overextended the rule of Piedmontese grammars, applying the use of non-determined possessives to the masculine plural as well. This hyper-corrective behaviour suggests that some authors may not be native speakers of the regional *dialetto*, having presumably learned it through grammars and/or language courses.

28   The codifiers' attitude has changed over time. Both Ponza and Aly-Belfàdel have written *ex post* grammars, i.e. grammars based on the actual usage of Piedmontese (or on what they believe to be so). A turning point is represented by Brero (1967), also the first grammar written in Piedmontese. In his grammar, Brero generally favours constructions, forms, etc. which enhance the *Abstand* between Piedmontese and Italian. Thus, right about the same time in which an initial dramatic disruption of the intergenerational transmission of Piedmontese was taking place, the norms became more rigid in order to maximise the structural distance from the predominant language, i.e. Italian. The grammar was no longer seen as a descriptive tool, but as a prescriptive reference to guide the writers' choices. Subsequent grammars all followed Brero's orientation, only rarely offering a more flexible set of rules (Griva).

29   By contrast, speakers are obviously not conditioned by grammars; for example, the data collected by ALEPO in Testona (Moncalieri), a town located 15 kilometres to the south of central Turin, display both determined and non-determined possessives in the following cases: 1) all singular and plural masculine forms, except in the first person; 2) singular and plural feminine forms in the first person; 3) singular feminine forms in the third person. It follows that, despite its proximity to Turinese, even the variety of Testona behaves differently from the regional koine codified by grammars.

4 Piedmontese, variation and economy

30   The picture offered by Piedmontese makes it hard to establish whether it is an adjectival-genitive (AG) or a determinative-genitive (DG) language. While the former allows 'definite article + possessive' constructions, the latter does not (see Lyons 1986: 139-140). This has to do with the fact that in DG languages "possessives appear in a position reserved for the definite article and other definite determiners", while "in AG

languages they are in adjectival or some other position" (Lyons 1999: 24)[10]. Italian is a typical AG language; French, instead, is an example of a DG language. Languages, however, may change (or may have changed) their status over time; in fact, Old Italian and Old French showed more fluctuating patterns than their modern counterparts. In Old Italian, in definite noun phrases, the occurrence of the article was optional, so we may find such couples as *la sua partita* 'lit. the his hem' / *mia partita* 'my part' (both from *Novellino*; late thirteenth century), *le sue arme* 'lit. the his weapons' / *sue arme* 'his weapons' (both from *Tristano Ricciardiano*; late thirteenth century), etc. (examples taken from Giusti 2009: 366). However, Kupisch & Rinke (2011: 98) argue that, quantitatively speaking, in Old Italian non-determined possessives were the exception (see also Rohlfs 1968: 127-129, Castellani Pollidori 2004 [1966]: 580-582). In Old French, until the fourteenth century, unaccented possessives could either be preceded or not by the article; thus, they still had an ambiguous status, acting as either determiners or adjectives (GGHF: 1582). Just as non-determined possessives were rarely used in Old Italian, determined possessives were a minority in Old French, mostly occurring in Anglo-Norman texts (see again GGHF: 1582). It is worth noting that in modern grammars of French, possessives are consistently termed *determinants possessifs* (see Grevisse & Goose 2008: 782).

31   It is rather clear that Piedmontese avoids such a strict classification; indeed, if we were to accept it, we would be forced to conclude that Piedmontese (Turinese) behaves (and behaved) sometimes as an AG language and in other cases as a DG language. The aforementioned non-Turinese varieties are better suited to the AG/DG dichotomy, since they always require the use of determined possessives, exactly as Italian does. We would thus have, within the same language system, the coexistence of different behaviours, i.e. a swaying behaviour on the part of Piedmontese (Turinese) and a constant AG behaviour on the part of non-Turinese varieties. Therefore, as far as possessive constructions are concerned, it is impossible to characterise the behaviour of Piedmontese as a whole, since we are confronted with such a large amount of variation. The labels AG / DG seem to be relevant mostly for standard languages, i.e. for languages which are assumed to be invariable; this is the so-called myth of linguistic homogeneity, which "rests on the assumption that a language can reach perfection and that it can be perfectly homogeneous" (Watts 2012: 595).

32   More compatible with the patterns of variation of Italo-Romance *dialetti* are Haspelmath's principles of economy and explicitness. Haspelmath (1999: 227) argues that article-possessor complementarity is economically motivated, because possessed noun phrases "have a very high chance of being definite, for semantic and pragmatic reasons". The problem with this assumption is that though the principle of economy is universal, some languages show redundant constructions, allowing both the article and the possessive. This conundrum is resolved by Haspelmath himself, who claims that "[u]tterances should not only be economical, but also explicit"; in an optimality theory framework, "one would say that both economy and explicitness are violable constraints, and that languages like English have ranked economy over explicitness, while the reverse ranking is found in languages like Italian" (Haspelmath 1999: 234).

33   Brero (1967) and Villata (1997) describe a pattern which may be defined as economical; economy is discarded in favour of explicitness only when the absence of the article would lead to an ambiguous interpretation. The pattern displayed by Brero (1967, 1975), Griva (1980), Brero & Bertodatti (1988) and Grosso (2000) is economical to a

lesser degree, allowing definite articles with all masculine plural possessives (Table 9); yet the rule turns out to be simpler from the user's perspective, since s/he knows that all masculine plural possessives require the article, regardless of their form.

Table 9

	Brero (1967) Villata (1997)				Brero (1967, 1975) Griva (1980) Brero & Bertodatti (1988) Grosso (2000)			
	MS	MP	FS	FP	MS	MP	FS	FP
First	*Mè*	*ij mè*	Mia	Mie	*Mè*	*ij mè*	mia	mie
Second	*Tò*	*ji tò*	Tua	Toe	*Tò*	*ji tò*	tua	toe
Third	*Sò*	*ji sò*	Soa	Soe	*Sò*	*ji sò*	soa	soe
Fourth	Nòstr	nòstri	nòstra	Nòstre	Nòstr	ij nòstri	nòstra	nòstre
Fifth	Vòstr	vòstri	vòstra	Vòstre	Vòstr	ij vòstri	vòstra	vòstre
Sixth	*Sò*	*ij sò*	Soa	Soe	*Sò*	*ij sò*	soa	soe

34 Conflicting forms are highlighted in italic characters

35 Explicitness prevails over economy in non-Turinese varieties, as shown in Tables 10 and 11.

Table 10

	Bèra dla Giarin-a (2017) Low Monferrino				Garuzzo (2003) Alessandrino				Musso (2004) Astigiano			
	MS	MP	FS	FP	MS	MP	FS	FP	MS	MP	FS	FP
First	*ël mé*	*ij mé*	*la mé*	*ël mé*	*ël mé*	*ij mé*	*la mé*	*ël mé*	*ël mé*	*ij mé*	*la mé*	*ël mie*
Second	*ël tò*	*ij tò*	*la tò*	*ël tò*	*o tò*	*ij tò*	*la tò*	*ël tò*	*ël tò*	*o tò*	*a tò*	*ël toe*
Third	*ël sò*	*ij sò*	*la sò*	*ël sò*	*o sò*	*ij sò*	*la sò*	*ël sò*	*o sò*	*ij sò*	*a sò*	*ël soe*
Fourth	*ël nòst(ë)r*	*ij nòst(ë)r*	la nòstra	*ël nòstri*	*o nòst(er)*	*ij nòst(er)*	la nòstra	ël nòstri	*o* nòstr	*ij* nòstri	la nòstra	*ël* nòst
Fifth	*ël vòst(ë)r*	*ij vòst(ë)r*	la vòstra	*ël vòstri*	*ël vòst(er)*	*ij vòst(er)*	la vòstra	ël vòstri	*ël* vòstr	*ij* vòstri	la vòstra	*ël* vòst

| Sixth | ël sò | ij sò | la sò | ël sò | o sò | ij sò | la sò | ël sò | ël sò | ij sò | la sò | ël sò |

36   Conflicting forms are highlighted in italic characters

Table 11

	Di Stefano (2017) Biellese				Giamello (2007) High Langarolo				Zörner (1998) Canavesano			
	MS	MP	FS	FP	MS	MP	FS	FP	MS	MP	FS	FP
First	ël mè	ij mè	la mia	ij mie	ěř me	ij me	řa mìa	ěř mìe	əl me	ij me	la mìa (mja)	le mìe (mje)
Second	ël tò	ji tò	la tua	ij toe	ěř to	ij teu	řa tùa	ěř tùe	əl to	ij tö	la tua (twa)	le tue (twe)
Third	ël sò	ji sò	la soa	ij soe	ěř so	ij seu	řa sùa	ěř sùe	əl so	ij sö	la sua (swa)	le sue (swe)
Fourth	ël nòss	ji nòss	la nòssa	ij nòsse	ěř nostr	ij nostri	řa nostra	ěř nostre	əl nos(t)	ij nös(t)	la nost(r)a	le nost(r)a
Fifth	ël vòss	ji vòss	la vòssa	ij vòsse	ěř vostr	ij vostri	řa vostra	ěř vostre	əl vos(t)	ij nös(t)	la vost(r)a	le vost(r)e
Sixth	ël sò	ji sò	la soa	ij soe	ěř so	ij seu	řa sùa	ěř sùe	əl so	ij sö	la sua (swa)	le sue (swe)

37   Conflicting forms are highlighted in italic characters

38   On the whole, Low Monferrino, Alessandrino, Astigiano and Biellese display paradigms in which the risks of overlapping between homophonous forms are higher than those observed in Piedmontese (Turinese). This particular condition may have acted as a catalyst for the use of determined possessives, which then analogically extended to non-homophonous possessives as well. Yet, in order to overcome any conflict between homophonous forms, it would have sufficed to use *determined* possessives with either a singular or plural possessive; a paradigm showing, e.g., both *ël mé* and *ij mé* is redundant, since the same result would have been attained by either *mé / ij mé* 'my (singular / plural)', as in Turinese, or *ël mé / mé*.

39   The behaviour of High Langarolo and Canavesano is definitely as anti-economical as that of the other non-Turinese varieties; nevertheless, their explicitness is not linked to the avoidance of ambiguity, the homophony clashes being restricted to the first person. The reduction of potentially conflicting forms is also due to a metaphonetic strategy, which opposes singular to plural possessives: see *to* 'your (singular)' ([to]) vs. *teu / tö* 'your (plural)' ([tø]), *so* 'his/her/its/their (singular)' ([so]) vs. *seu / sö* 'his/her/its/their plural' ([sø]), *nost* 'our (singular)' ([nɔst]) vs. *nöst* 'our (plural)' ([nøst]), etc.

40   As for singular kinship nouns, Haspelmath (1999: 235) argues that "the possessive relation is inherent in them: kinship terms, like other inalienable nouns, are semantically relational, that is they are conceptually incomplete when they are not possessed"; this means that "articles are more likely to be omitted with kinship nouns" (*ibidem*). This prediction holds true for Turinese – see, e.g., *mè pare* 'my father', *nòstr barba* 'our uncle', *soa magna* 'his/her/their aunt' – as well as for Italian – see, e.g., *mio padre* 'my father', *nostro zio* 'our uncle', *sua zia* 'his/her aunt' – but not for all peripheral varieties of Piedmontese. In High Monferrino possessed kinship nouns are only determined when they refer to either a husband (*ël mè òm* 'lit. the my husband') or a wife (*la mè dòna* 'lit. the my wife'); such possessed kinship names as *fieul* 'son' and *fija* 'daughter' are usually determined (*ël mè fieul* 'lit. the my son'; *la mè fija* 'lit. the my daughter'), but can also be used without articles (*mè fieul*, *mia fija*) (Bèra dla Giarin-a 2017: 139). In Alessandrino possessed kinship names may or may not be determined (Garuzzo 2003: 41)[11].

5 Conclusions

41   Since the eighteenth century, Piedmontese (Turinese) has shown an increasing bias in favour of non-determined possessives, except for masculine plural forms. This tendency was converted into a stricter rule by Brero (1967), according to which Piedmontese (Turinese) possessives do not take definite articles, apart from the first, second, third and sixth person in the masculine plural. A slightly different norm was subsequently postulated by Brero (1971, 1975), claiming that all masculine possessives should be determined. The behaviour of written Piedmontese (Turinese), still highly variable in the twentieth century, has (almost) completely adjusted to Brero's tenets in more recent texts. The exceptions to the rule have been addressed in Section 3. Article-possessor complementarity is thus a feature of contemporary written Piedmontese (Turinese), and explicitness prevails over economy mostly when the possessives prove to be homophonous.

42   As far as peripheral varieties are concerned, they rely on explicitness well beyond the formal overlapping of possessives, exhibiting a behaviour which is closer to that of Italian. Yet it would be rather counter-intuitive to state that peripheral varieties are more Italianised than Piedmontese (Turinese), the latter historically displaying a pronounced orientation towards the national language. As a matter of fact, non-Turinese varieties are simply more conservative than Turinese, preserving a pattern which characterised Old Piedmontese. The possible influence of Italian may be understood in terms of "contact-induced stability" (Kühl & Braunmüller 2014: 30-31), reinforcing a tendency which had been attested for a long time in peripheral varieties. All in all, Italianising patterns and archaic features cannot ever be completely disentangled.

43   The penchant for hyper-determination which characterises non-Turinese varieties pairs with their preference for articled partitive determiners (see Cerruti & Regis 2020); in other words, the varieties of Piedmontese displaying an explicit possessive construction (definite article + possessive + noun) turn out to be the same varieties using articled partitive determiners (*dël / dla / dij / dle* 'of the [masculine singular / feminine singular / masculine plural / feminine plural]'), unarticled forms (*ëd / dë* 'of') being typical of Turinese. Further research would be needed to investigate whether

such developments are independent or linked to a more general pattern of 'definiteness', affecting Turinese and peripheral varieties of Piedmontese differently.

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NOTES

1. My corpus consists of all the texts included in LPI and LPII; as for SLP, I have considered the Turinese-based texts collected from pages 10 to 305. I have also included the so-called *Sermoni Subalpini* [Subalpine Sermons] in my sample, but whether or not they actually belong to Piedmontese remains controversial (Clivio 2002: 22-23). I follow the orthographical conventions of each author.

2. I supply a maximum of ten examples for each category. MS = non-determined masculine singular possessive, MS+ = determined masculine singular possessive, MP = non-determined

masculine plural possessive, MP+ = determined masculine plural possessive, FS = non-determined feminine singular possessive, FS+ = determined feminine singular possessive, FP = non-determined feminine plural possessive, FP+ = determined feminine plural possessive.

3. As for the *Sermoni Subalpini*, in which a two-case declension is still attested, Table 5 only registers the forms of the *cas sujet*, i.e. nominative forms. See Danesi (1976: 66) for the whole paradigm.

4. Minority variants are bracketed.

5. Overt marking of gender and number is noticeable in masculine nouns with an *-l* ending (such as *caval* 'horse', plural *cava-j* 'horse-s') and (at least disyllabic) feminine nouns with an *-a* ending (such as *pòrta* 'door', plural *pòrt-e* 'door-s').

6. This a well-known development, as underlined by Grassi & Telmon (1990: 196).

7. A revised formulation is in fact offered in Brero (1971: 45; emphasis mine): "[ël mascolin plural] peul avej anche un'àutra forma, *dove a-i torna 'l plural latin* : *mèi* (i miei), *tòi* (i tuou), *sòi* (i suoi), *sòi* (i loro)" [[the masculine plural] may also have a different form, exhibiting a relic of the Latin plural].

8. Of course, this situation does not reflect the case of conversational data. See Ricca (2008: 122).

9. This overall trend has also been observed for the majority of the rural Piedmontese-speaking localities investigated by ALEPO (cf. Duberti 2018 : 110-111).

10. In Manzini & Savoia's (2005: 566) view, definite articles and possessives always occupy different positions in the sentence (D [= definiteness] and P [= possessive] / Q [= indefinite quantifier], respectively).

11. Cardinaletti (1998: 41) maintains that "with singular kinship nouns, possessives are clitic", thus avoiding definite articles. It is difficult to understand, however, why, e.g., *mè* should be: 1) a clitic possessive in Turinese; 2) a 'weak possessive' allowing definite articles in High Monferrino; 3) both a clitic and weak possessive in Alessandrino.

ABSTRACTS

According to the grammars of contemporary Piedmontese (based on the variety of Turin), the use of possessive adjectives with definite articles is restricted to the plural masculine *ij mè lìber* 'my books, lit. the my books', in contrast with such forms as *mè lìber* 'my book' (singular masculine), *mia ca* 'my house' (singular feminine) and *mie ca* 'my houses' (plural feminine). This behaviour of the masculine plural may be attributed to a functional need, i.e. that of distinguishing the plural masculine from the singular masculine. This paper aims to investigate whether the pattern described above is confirmed by both historical and non-Turinese data. The analysis will focus on similarities and differences not only between geographical varieties of Piedmontese, but also between such varieties and Italian.

D'après les grammaires du piémontais contemporain (basées sur la variété de Turin), l'usage des adjectifs possessifs avec les articles déterminatifs est limité au pluriel du masculin : *ij me lìber* « mes livres, litt. les mes livres » s'oppose aux formes *me lìber* « mon livre » (masculin singulier), *mia ca* « ma maison » (féminin singulier) et *mie ca* « mes maisons » (féminin pluriel). Ce comportement du masculin pluriel peut être attribué à un besoin fonctionnel, c'est-à-dire à l'exigence de distinguer le masculin pluriel du masculin singulier. Cette étude vise à investiguer si le modèle décrit ci-dessus est confirmé par les données à la fois historiques et non turinoises ;

l'analyse sera menée à partir des similitudes et des différences non seulement entre variétés géographiques du piémontais, mais aussi entre ces variétés et l'italien.

INDEX

Mots-clés: piémontais, adjectifs possessifs, articles déterminatifs, diachronie
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