THE ORIGIN OF THE ROMANIAN "POSSESSIVE-GENITIVAL ARTICLE" *AL* AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEMONSTRATIVE SYSTEM

ION GIURGEA[1]

Abstract. I argue that the genitival agreeing marker *al,* used to introduce oblique-marked DPs and agreeing possessors, originates in a strong (i.e. non-suffixal) form of the definite article, Lat. *illu(m)*>**elu*>*alu*, which in an unattested stage of Romanian behaved like present-day *cel*. I show that this form underwent four different reanalyses, yielding genitival *al*, ordinal *al*, *alalt* 'the other' and *alde*. I argue that the invariable genitival *a* of southern Balkan dialects and northern Romanian varieties comes from *al* by loss of inflection. I argue that the present-day distal demonstratives *ăl(a)/al(a), aia, (a)hăl(a)* etc. do not continue Latin *ille* (which prenominally is only continued by the article *al*), but represent an innovation (as first proposed by Iliescu 1967) due to the replacement of *acest/cest* by the forms *aiest/aest/a(h)ăst/ăst*, which triggered a similar replacement of *acel* by *aiel/a(h)ăl/ăl*. I then try to reconstruct the mechanism by which the reanalysis of *al* took place.

1. INTRODUCTION. THE GENITIVE SYSTEM IN ROMANIAN

This paper intends to elucidate the development of the Romanian genitive constructions, and in particular of the so-called 'possessive-genitival article' *al*. As this article stems from a definite determiner, the paper will also address issues concerning the development of definite determiners and demonstratives. The reader might wonder why, after almost one and a half century of Romanian historical linguistics, there is still need for such a study. There are two reasons. First, in the historical linguistic literature there is disagreement regarding the origin of *al*. Secondly, the syntax of Romanian genitives is quite peculiar, raising serious challenges for a synchronic analysis (*al* has received various analyses – pronoun, determiner, preposition + determiner, agreeing preposition or case marker, ambiguous between pronoun and case marker). Just like morphological irregularity can be accounted for by considering previous stages of the language and regular

[1] "Iorgu Iordan − Al. Rosetti" Institute of Linguistics, giurgeaion@yahoo.com.

The research in this paper has been supported by the Sectorial Operational Program Human Resources Development (SOP HRD), financed from the European Social Fund and by the Romanian Government under the contract number SOP HRD/89/1.5/S/59758.

I am grateful to Dana Zamfir and Cătălina Vătăşescu for the valuable linguistic and bibliographic information with which they helped me for the elaboration of this article.

RRL, **LVII**, *1*, p. 35–65, Bucureşti, 2012

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

phonetic changes, this highly peculiar syntax of Romanian genitives, which proved to be reluctant to any simple unified account, requires a diachronic approach.

Romanian noun phrases (introduced by determiners, therefore labelled here 'D(eterminer) P(hrases)', following the current generative analysis of determiners) marked with oblique (i.e., genitive-dative) morphology can function as genitives in the following environments: (a) they immediately follow the (suffixal) definite article (which I'll notate here *-L*) or (b) they are preceded by the so-called 'possessive-genitival article' *al*, an item which agrees in gender and number with the head noun of the embedding NP (the 'possessee') or the subject of a possessive predication (see (1)b), having the forms *al* (masc. sg.), *a* (fem. sg.), *ai* (masc. pl.), *ale* (fem. pl.):

(1) a. Prietenul (bun al) mamei / Un prieten al mamei
friend.the (good *al*.MSG) mother.the.OBL a friend(M) *al*.MSG mother.the.OBL
b. Toate sunt ale lui
all.FPL are *al*.FPL he.OBL 'Everything is his / They are all his'

Pronominal agreeing possessors – the so-called "possessive adjectives", functioning as genitives of the 1st-2nd person pronouns and optionally for the 3rd singular – have roughly the same distribution (for details, see Dobrovie-Sorin, Giurgea 2011, Giurgea, Dobrovie-Sorin forth.).

Al- phrases can also appear alone in argument positions as full possessive constructions, referring to the possessee, whose features are recovered from the features of *al*:

(2) Maşina mea e stricată. O voi lua pe [a mamei]
car(F).the my is broken CL will.1SG take OBJ *al*.FSG mother.the.OBL
'My car is broken. I'll take (my) mother's'

The interpretation can involve recovery of a contextually salient N(P) (as in the preceding example) or a non-specified +human 'people' (relatives, supporters etc.), in the masculine plural, and exceptionally a -animate interpretation. These are the interpretations found in DPs with an empty noun (see Giurgea 2010) – DPs with adnominal determiners in the absence of an overt noun –, suggesting that the possessee N is projected in these phrases as an empty category, which can represent ellipsis, or as a grammatical noun which can be anaphoric. I will refer to this use of *al-* phrases as 'elliptical use'.

As can be seen from the translations of the examples, in the elliptical use, the interpretation is definite, like in English elliptical possessive constructions, although, with an overt noun, the *al-* constituent does not occupy SpecDP like the English '*s*-genitive. There are however constructions with overt nouns where the [*al* + Possessor] constituent occurs in DP-initial position and marks the DP as

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

definite (there is no other definiteness marker), but they bear some important restrictions which are lacking in the elliptical use: in the contemporary language, only with the relative-interrogative pronoun *care* 'which' is this construction normal. With pronominal possessors (agreeing as well as non-agreeing) it is highly marked, implying some affective connotation (I marked this with '!' below), and with other DPs it is restricted to the poetic register (I marked this with '(*)'):

(3) a. Oamenii [ale căror rude] au emigrat
people.the *al*.FPL which.PL.OBL relatives.FPL have emigrated
b. ! cu ai mei părinți
with *al*.MPL my parents
c. (*) ale mării valuri (only poetic)
al.(F)PL see.the.OBL waves(NEUT)

The prenominal use was more widespread in old Romanian. In the oldest attested period, the 16th century, it was still productive with pronominal possessors (it is quite frequent in the documents, the only texts of this period which are not translations, see DÎR). With non-pronominal possessors (type (3)c), it is mostly found in translations, where it can be explained by the exact observance of the word order of the original (most translations were religious texts for which this was the common practice). We can conclude that the marked constructions in (3)b-c are archaisms. Whether the last one (type (3)c) was ever current in the spoken language or was created by scholars on the model of (3)b cannot be established with certainty.

When the possessor immediately follows the definite article, *al* is impossible:

(4) * Prietenul al mamei
friend(M).the *al*.MSG mother.the.OBL

A number of arguments which I cannot present here for reasons of space (see Ortmann, Popescu (2000), Dobrovie-Sorin, Giurgea (2005) and Giurgea, Dobrovie-Sorin (forth.)) have shown that the absence of *al* immediately after *-L* is not due to a structural difference between *al-* and *al*-less possessors, but is a surface phenomenon, which should be treated by a PF-rule of the form

(5) *-L* + *al* > *-L* + Ø (*al* is deleted in the context *-L* _), if *-L* and *al* share ϕ-features[2]

[2] Deletion applies only if *-L* is the article of the head noun, not just any instance of *-L*; thus, it does not apply in *cearta cu autoritatea *(a) tinerilor* 'contest(F)-the with authority(F)-the *al*.FSG youth(PL)-the.OBL'. I formalize this as a requirement that the features of *al* and those of *-L* stand in an agreement relation (are 'shared', adopting the recent formalizations of agreement as feature sharing).

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

In DPs which are not introduced by a determiner having oblique morphology, the genitive is marked by prepositions. If the DP is introduced by cardinals, some other quantitative expressions and adjectives functioning as determiners such as *diferit* 'various', the preposition *a* is used:

(6) a. atragerea a trei mii de turişti b. părerile a diferiți analişti
attracting-the *a* three thousands of tourists opinions-the *a* various analysts

This item comes from the Latin allative preposition *ad* (used in Romance for both allative and adessive, following the disappearance of the morphological marking of the -lative/-essive distinction), but has no longer a locative meaning in Romanian, being replaced in this use by the preposition *la* 'to' (<Lat. *illac ad* 'there to')[3]. By grammaticalization, *a* yielded two distinct grammatical markers – beside the genitive use, it also appears as an infinitive particle (like English *to*). In the old language, *a* was also used as a dative marker with these DPs, reflecting the previous syncretism between the genitive and the dative (in contemporary Romanian, the preposition *la* 'to' is used here):

(7) ce deade mâncare a toată pelița (CP 262r 5)
which gave.3SG food *a* all body.the
'which gave food to all beings'

Bare nouns could also take *a* in the old language, besides the preposition *de* which characterizes adnominal nouns with a property interpretation (equivalent of English compound nominals: *rochie de seară* 'dress of evening' = *evening dress*):

(8) pentru luptarea a dobitoace (Prav 1646: 61)
for fight-the *a* animals

In the present-day language, this use has disappeared. Since bare nouns preceded by *de* do not introduce discourse referents (never have the referential or quantificational interpretation typical of argumental nominal constituents), it is not clear whether *de* might be considered a genitive marker on a par with *a*. Cornilescu (1994) argues that it should be, at least when it introduces complements of event nouns, e.g. *demolarea de biserici de către guvern* 'demolition.the of churches by (the) government'.

2. *AL < ILLE*, USED AS A STRONG DEFINITE ARTICLE

In the vast historical linguistic literature of Romanian, two etymologies have been proposed for *al*: Latin *ille*, the distal demonstrative which yielded the definite article and the 3rd person pronoun, and Latin *ad* 'to' + *ille*. The first etymology is

[3] Old Romanian still preserves some restricted locative uses of *a*.

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

immediately suggested by the DP-initial (prenominal and elliptical) use of *al*, illustrated in (2)-(3) in the previous section. It also explains the agreement of *al* with the possessee. In other words, *al meu prieten* 'al.MSG my friend' directly continues the construction 'the my friend', where the possessive is preceded by a determiner like in Italian *il mio amico*. This etymology was supported by the majority of the researches which addressed this issue (Cipariu 1864, Miklosich 1881, Meyer-Lübke 1893, Tiktin 1895, Puşcariu 1905, DAR, Găzdaru 1929, Drăganu 1936-1938, Coteanu 1969a,b, Ivănescu 1980, a.o.). However, several problems have been found with this etymology: the vowel *a-* instead of the expected *(i)e-* from the short *i* of *ille*, the use of *al-* phrases inside indefinite DPs such as *un cal al vecinului* 'a horse *al*.MSG neighbour-the.OBL', the restriction of *al* to possessives and genitives. For these reasons, quite an important number of researchers proposed that *al* continues an amalgamation of the preposition *a* (<*ad*), whose genitive and dative use we have seen in the previous section (see (6)-(7) and (8)), with the demonstrative/article *ille* (Lambrior, according to Nădejde 1884: 101, Hasdeu 1887, Densusianu 1906:16, Candrea, Densusianu 1914, Papahagi 1937, Spitzer 1950, Rosetti 1968, Lozbă 1969).

In this section I will argue in favor of the first etymology. I will show that it can be established without any doubt that *al* was once a strong (i.e. non-suffixal) definite article, similar to present-day Romanian *cel*, and this is directly continued by the genitive agreeing marker *al*, without any amalgamation with *a(d)*.

The strongest objection against the etymology *ad* + *ille* is the fact that *al* agrees with the possessee (the head noun). Prepositions in Romanian introduce either a DP or another PP/AdvP, like in the other Indo-European languages. This means that any determiner element following *a(d)* belongs to the possessor-DP, so that it must agree with (bear the ϕ-features of) the possessor. An agreement of D past *a* with a noun outside the [*a*+DP] constituent is inconceivable. Any amalgamation of P+D should have produced forms such as French *du, des,* displaying the ϕ-features of the possessor. Only two authors who embraced the *ad*+*ille* etymology addressed this problem, and I will show that their solutions cannot be accepted.

Densusianu (1906) proposed that agreement with the possessee started in agreeing possessors, which are indeed transparent for ϕ-features agreement with the head noun – e.g. *tatăl nostru* 'father.the our.MSG'. Densusianu proposed that first agreeing possessors combined with *ille*, yielding forms agreeing with the head noun – *(caballum) illum nostrum* 'horse the.MSG our.MSG', and afterwards *ad* was added before *ille* in order to mark the possessive relation, yielding (*caballum*) *a(d)-illum nostrum* > *(cal) al nostru*. This development is impossible on syntactic grounds. The possessive is already morphologically marked for the genitive function, so there is no need to mark it a second time with the preposition *a(d)* – and I don't know any other Indo-European language in which genitival prepositions are combined with agreeing possessors. Even assuming that such

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

marking could evolve, it should have appeared between the article – which is the determiner of the possessee – and the possessor, in the form **illum ad nostrum*. If it is added before the article – *ad illum nostrum* –, what is obtained is a genitive-dative of a whole [possessee+posssessor]-DP (with *ille* a determiner followed by ellipsis of the possessee noun or a pronoun referring to the possessee): *ad illum nostrum* can only mean 'to/of ours'. One cannot see how such a form could have evolved into a form meaning simply 'our(s)'.

The second attempt to account for the agreement with the possessee under the *ad-illum* etymology is due to Lozbă (1969). He also starts from pronominal possessors, noticing that in the old language they were frequent in the prenominal position, in the construction *al*+Pos+N *(a mea casă* '*al*.FSG my.FSG house(F)'). He proposes, like Densusianu, that *a(d)* was added before the possessor, something which we have already seen to be unlikely. When the [*a* + Possessor] constituent was placed immediately after the D(eterminer) position, he assumes that if D was the definite article, it could be suffixed on *a(d)*. Thus, from *ille* – [*a(d)* Pos/Gen] – N (e.g. *illa ad mea casa*), one would get, by the suffixation rule, the string *a-ille* – Pos/Gen – N (*a-illa mea casa*). But no rule of article suffixation could have targeted the position between *a* and Pos/Gen. Assuming that this rule is syntactic, resulting from the movement of a constituent to D or SpecDP, the article could never appear inside the possessor constituent, between *a* and Pos/Gen, but should have appeared after the whole constituent, yielding the order *a* – Pos/Gen – *ille* (e.g. *a(d) mea illa casa*) (as is well known, Romanian prepositions can never be separated from their complement). Assuming that the suffixation rule is phonological, being due to the enclitic character of the article (which, I believe, is the best historical explanation for the phenomenon), again, it could have never targeted the position after *a*, because *a* does not carry word accent in Romanian (it is a phonological proclitic, like all functional prepositions). We would only get the order *a* – Pos – *ille* (e.g. *a(d) mea illa casa*).

There is also positive evidence in favor of the idea that *al* was once a form of the definite article, continuing Latin *ille*. We have already mentioned the fact that in DP-initial position, *al* suffices to mark the definiteness of the matrix DP (see the prenominal and elliptical use of *al*- phrases, e.g. (2)-(3)). Crucially, the former use of *al* as a definite article can be seen in three other forms, which have nothing to do with possession and therefore cannot be assumed to contain *a(d)* or to have been contaminated with this preposition. These forms are (a) the definite alternative old Rom. *alalt* (now appearing in the extended forms *celălalt, ăstalalt, ălalt*); (b) the *al, a* element used in ordinal numeral formation; (c) the determiner *alde*.

The form *alalt* 'the other' is the clearest evidence that *al* was once a definite article. This form is decomposable into *alt* 'other' and *al*. All researchers agree that this form continues Lat. *ille alter* (late vulg. Latin **illu altru*). It is now time to say some more things about the strong forms of the definite article. In languages having a suffixal definite article, such as Romanian, there can be cases when the

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

DP is headed by a determiner interpreted as the definite article, but the structure offers no appropriate host for the article's suffixation. In these cases, the determiner has no longer a suffixal realization, but a special form in D appears instead. I call this a strong form of the article. It is not strong in the sense of having word accent – it is still a phonological proclitic – but is stronger than the suffixal form, which in Romanian behaves now like an inflectional element. Dobrovie-Sorin, Giurgea (2006) draw a parallel with English *do*- support, which appears whenever the syntax does not allow the suffixation of Infl (e.g. *he speak**s*** vs. *he does not speak*). In the present-day Romanian, this strong form is *cel*. This form is used when the D position is followed by a cardinal, which cannot receive the suffixal article, a *de*+ordinal constituent, or an empty N position resulting from N-ellipsis or a null grammatical N (see Giurgea 2010 on empty Ns in Romanian) (in the following examples, I underlined the constituents which block the suffixation of the article):

(9) [$_{DP}$ **cei** [zece copii]]
the ten children

(10) [$_{DP}$ **cel** [de-al doilea proiect]]
the *de-al* second project

(11) a. trenul de Bucureşti şi [$_{DP}$ **cel** [[$_{N}$Ø] de Constanța]]
train-the of Bucharest and the of Constanța
b. teoriile noi şi [$_{DP}$ **cele** [[$_{N}$Ø] vechi]]
theories-the new and the old

Cel is also used before comparative adjectival phrases (*mai*+AP) to build the superlative, in which case there is evidence that *cel* takes a DegP-complement (see Dobrovie-Sorin, Giurgea 2006). Here too, *cel* appears because the degree head *mai* does not allow suffixation of the article:

(12) [$_{DP}$ **cel** [mai frumos]]
the more beautiful

Moreover, *cel* is used in the double definiteness construction (the type *maşina cea nouă* 'car.the the new'), whose structure and interpretation constitute a complex issue which cannot be addressed here (see Cornilescu, Nicolae 2011).

Cel comes from the distal demonstrative *acel*, being originally a shortened form of this item, like the proximal *cest* for *acest* (*cest* is widely attested in the old language). The evolution of the distal demonstrative towards the definite article is well documented cross-linguistically (see Latin *ille* itself). Of special interest is the evolution of the distal demonstrative towards a strong form of the definite article. Such forms are encountered even in languages which do not have a suffixal definite article, in a particular situation, namely, when D is followed by an empty

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

noun (the result of ellipsis or a null grammatical N, see Giurgea 2010). In such contexts, sometimes the definite article is excluded, and we find forms of the distal demonstrative which are interpreted as definite articles (in examples (13), in a paraphrase with an overt noun we must use the definite article, not the demonstrative). In French, a special form is used (*celui*) which has previously been a distal demonstrative (now, the addition of the locative particle *-là* is necessary for the demonstrative use)[4]:

(13) a. the function of the article and [**that** [[$_N$Ø] of the demonstrative]] (English)
b. la fonction de l'article et [**celle** [[$_N$Ø] du démonstratif] (French)
the function of the article and *celui*.FSG of-the demonstrative
c. la funzione dell'articolo e [**quella** [[$_N$Ø] del dimostrativo]] (Italian)
the function of-the article and that of-the demonstrative

The use of a distal demonstrative is also encountered, among the languages with a suffixal article, in Albanian and a part of the North Germanic domain.

Demonstratives in general are subject to two opposite tendencies in the historical development. As functional elements, they tend to become weaker (see *cel* besides *acel*, and other data in section 3 below). On the other hand, their deictic function is reinforced by deictic particles (see French *celui-là* 'that-there', *ce* N-*là* 'the N there', now the only admitted forms for the distal demonstrative, and the Romance distal demonstratives coming from Lat. *eccum,ecce* + *ille*: rom. *acel,* fr. *celui,* it. *quello*, sp. *aquel,* etc.). Since there is a wide scale of accessibility of referents (see Ariel 1990), stronger/overt deictic indications are needed for less accessible referents. These conflicting tendencies often result in the evolution of shortened forms towards definite articles or demonstratives unmarked for the distance contrast and the replacement of marked demonstratives by longer forms which incorporate the deictic particles. In Romanian we find several illustrations of these diachronic tendencies: *cel*, a shortened form of *acel*, has been grammaticalized as a strong definite article. Already in the old language we find *cel* almost always used in the strong definite article contexts identified above (see (9)-(12)). There are not many examples where it can still be considered a demonstrative, appearing directly before a noun (e.g. *şi dzise cătră ia* ***cel*** *împărat* „and said towards her that emperor", CB II 147(182)).

The tendency of reinforcing demonstratives is reflected in various Romanian forms (besides the forms compound with *ecce*, which probably date from late Latin): the forms augmented by the particle *-a – acesta, cesta, acela, cela –*, which probably comes from Latin *illac* 'there.TRANSL' and/or *hac* 'here.TRANSL' (see Puşcariu 1905: 2, DAR 1913: 15, Candrea, Densusianu 1914: 86, Philippide 1928,

[4] For more on this use and the special behavior of nominal ellipsis in definite DPs, see Giurgea (2009) .

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

II 34, Găzdaru 1929: 159-161, Rosetti 1980: 373) and the Aromanian forms *aestuea, aţeluea, ţeluea, ţelaclo, aestu-aoa(ia),-aoaţi, aţelu-aclo(ia),-acloţi* (see Caragiu-Marioţeanu 1959). Notice that the augmented forms of the shortened form *cel*, i.e. *cela, ceaia* etc., were already almost regularly used as strong definite articles in old Romanian (now they survive only in the fixed form *ceea ce*, representing a 'neuter' pronoun[5] followed by a relative clause in *ce*). In a large part of the Daco-Romanian domain, new shortened distal demonstrative forms emerged – *ăl(a), a(ia)* –, as we will see in section 3, and these forms are gradually replacing *cel* in its various uses as a strong definite article. Thus, the ALR map for *caii celor bogaţi* 'horses-the *cel*.MPL.OBL rich.MPL' (ALR SN, VI, map 1608) (reflecting the use of *cel* before empty N) shows forms of *ăl(a), a(ia), (a)hăl, iel* in many places where the distal demonstrative has the forms *ăl(a), a(ia), (a)hăl(a), iel(a)* (replacing previous *acel*, see section 3) (especially in Banat, southern Transylvania and Oltenia; *cel* still survives in most of Muntenia and at the point 182 in south-eastern Transylvania, perhaps due to the influence of the literary language). In the more detailed maps 185, 186 (ALR I, 2nd volume), showing *cel* in double definiteness – *băiatul cel mare* 'boy-the the big', *băieţii cei mari* 'boys-the the big'– we see a clear predominance of the series *ăl, hăl, al, hal* in the southern half of Romania. It is interesting to notice that *cel*, which I take to be older (see section 3), is better preserved in the superlative use, where it acquired a special grammatical status less related to deixis. Thus, comparing map 194 (ALR I, 2nd volume) *femeia cea mai mică* 'woman-the the more small' ("the smallest woman") with map 185 *băiatul cel mare* 'boy-the the big', we find a significant number of places which have *cel* for the superlative (map 185) but *(h)ăl/(h)al* in double definiteness (map 186): points 708, 710, 782, 887, 922, 980 in (various parts of) Muntenia, 846, 825, 800 in Oltenia, 684 in Dobrudja, 170 and 174 in southern Transylvania.

Turning back now to the form *alalt*, it directly reflects, like *a mea casă* '*al*.FSG my house', the former status of *al* as a strong definite article. Old Rom. *alaltu omu* „the other man" reflects *al(u) altu omu* = fr. *l'autre homme,* it. *l'altro uomo* (lat. **illu altru homo*). Since *al* was no longer a definite article in old Romanian, the form *alalt* became unanalyzable and *-l-* was extended in the paradigm – feminine singular *alaltă* instead of **aaltă*, masculine plural *alalţi* instead of **aialţi*. For the same reason, the form was reinforced by adding the strong definite article again, in its new form *cel*, yielding *celălalt*, the present-day form. With the short demonstrative *ăst* (proximal) and *ăl* (distal), other forms were created, *ăstălalt, ălalalt* (with many variants), which are widespread now in regional and colloquial varieties.

Another form originating in the strong article form *al* is found in ordinals. Ordinal numerals in Romanian (except for 'first') consist of the cardinal suffixed by *-lea*, old Rom. *-le* (masculine) and *-a* (feminine) preceded by the forms *al*

[5] On 'neuter pronouns' in Romanian, see Giurgea (2008a).

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

(masculine singular) and *a* (feminine singular). The ordinal has no plural forms. The elements *al, a* are formally identical to the genitival article *al*, but are distinguished from it by the absence of plural forms and by the fact that they are not deleted when adjacent with *-L* (e.g. *camera a doua* 'room-the *al*.FSG two-*a*' "the second room"). Ordinals, like genitives, mark the DP as definite when they appear in the DP-initial position, either prenominally or with N ellipsis. Unlike for genitives, the prenominal use is not restricted, but is rather the normal one:

(14) a doua (casă)
al.FSG two-*a* (house) 'the second (house)'

This use clearly supports the proposal that *al* comes from an article.

Note that the suffixes used to build ordinals come themselves from the definite article – *-le* is a form of *-L* used after nouns in *-e* (*câine-le* 'dog-the'), and was previously restricted to the cardinals ending in *-e* – **cince* (now *cinci*) 'five', *şase* 'six', *şapte* 'seven', **noue* (now *nouă*) 'nine'; the form *-lu* could still be found in old Romanian after *patru* 'four' and *opt*(*u*) 'eight' and is still used in Aromanian after 'two', 'three', 'four' and 'eight' – *doilu, treilu, patrulu, optulu* – and optionally in other cases; the form *-a* is the same as the feminine singular of the definite article. From the moment that these endings were reanalyzed as ordinal markers, the definite article had to appear again in DPs introduced by ordinals, but, probably due to the formal homonymy, it could not be suffixed, and therefore it appeared in the strong forms *al, a*. In old Romanian, ordinal *al* still had (though very seldom) plural and case forms (see Papahagi 1937). In Aromanian, according to the same study, *al* still appears, in the form *a*, before feminine ordinals, but not before masculine ones. I believe that the absence of *al* here is a recent development (contrary to Papahagi's opinion), given the fact that *al* has been further reduced in Aromanian, as we shall see later in this section.

Among the supporters of the *ad+ille* etymology of *al*, only Spitzer (1950) addressed the problem of the presence of *ad* in ordinals. He argues that the ordinal can be obtained from a genitive of the cardinal, a situation found in Balkan Judeo-Spanish *el de tres, el de kuatro, el de sinko* 'the of three, the of four, the of five'. But the problem is that the expected order is Determiner - Preposition - Cardinal (*ille ad tres*, cf. *el de tres*), not Preposition - Determiner - Cardinal (*ad ille tres*), because the determiner belongs to the whole matrix DP, while the preposition directly applies to the cardinal. Thus, the order *ad-ille* is ruled out by syntax (just like for the genitive *al*, as we have seen).

The last form which continues *al* is the determiner *alde*, a form restricted to regional varieties. This item is used with definite DPs referring to persons – mostly proper nouns and kinship terms (but demonstratives and personal pronouns are also allowed). Its original meaning appears to be "belonging to the group/family of X"

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

(see Hasdeu 1887, DAR 1913, Zafiu 2009). The form is now unanalyzable, but a plural form *ai-de* is attested in the XVIIth century, in Dosoftei (see DAR). Given the fact that *de* had a partitive use in old Romanian (*unul de ei* 'one of them', today *unul dintre ei*), the meaning 'belonging to the group of X' follows directly from the decomposition *al* 'the (one)' + *de* 'belonging to' ('from'). Therefore I consider the etymology *al* + *de* proposed by DAR to be correct. A potential problem for this etymology is that partitive PPs typically combine with indefinite determiners (see **cel dintre Popeşti* 'the.one of Popescu.PL'). I believe that the origin of the construction is to be found in an appositional use, where belonging to a family/group is introduced as an identifying property: *Ion, al de Popeşti* 'Ion, the one from the Popescu family'.

Let us now turn to the objections to the *al*<*ille* etymology. The fact that *al* lost its definiteness feature in some environments can be explained by its reanalysis as a genitive marker. I will develop this idea in section 4, where I will argue that the restricted number of contexts in which the strong forms of the definite article were used paved the way for the various reanalyses of *al* which we have seen. Let us just notice that the same loss of definiteness in non-DP-initial positions is encountered with ordinal *al*:

(15) o a treia posibilitate
a *al*.FSG three-*a* possibility(F) 'a third possibility'

In the rest of this section, I will address the first objection, the phonological development *i* > *a* in *illu* > *al(u)*. Two accounts have been proposed for this development: (i) the regular change of pretonic word-initial *e-* to *a-* (Latin short *i* fell together with *e* in Romanian) (Miklosich 1881, Tiktin 1895, Găzdaru 1929, Ivănescu 1980) and (ii) the evolution *e*>*a* under the influence of the demonstrative *acel* 'that', yielding first the demonstrative *al/ăl, a* (Coteanu 1969a). I consider that the first account is correct. As I will also argue in the next section, the demonstrative *ăl, a* does not come directly from Latin *ille*. Stressed *ille* has yielded the strong forms of the personal pronoun (*i̯ei, i̯a, i̯ei, i̯ele*, written *el, ea, ei, ele* by a special orthographical rule of modern Romanian[6]). This means that if *ille* had survived as a demonstrative in Romanian, it would have fallen together with the personal pronoun at least in the pronominal use (like Albanian *ai* 'he; that one'). An influence of *acel* over a deictic **i̯el* turning it into *al* is implausible; the most straightforward way to keep the distinction between personal pronoun and distal demonstrative is to reserve the enlarged, deictically marked form *ecce+illu* (*acel* etc.) to the demonstrative use, and I believe this is what happened in Romanian, like in the other Romance languages. The demonstrative *al/ăl, a* is not attested in

[6] In the Cyrillic writing of Romanian, all initial *i̯e-* were noted *e-*. The modern-day orthography has *e-* for *i̯e-* only in the personal pronoun forms and in the forms of the verb 'be'.

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

the old language (XVI-XVIIth centuries; the earliest attestation appears to be *hăl*, in 1736). Moreover, the general path of weakening and reinforcement of demonstrative forms which we have presented above shows that it is unlikely that one and the same form (*al/ăl*) which, in its definite article use, became so weak that it was reanalyzed could have continued to retain a demonstrative use until today in a large part of Romania: if it still had kept the demonstrative interpretation, the reanalysis would probably have been impossible. If a form becomes too weak and looses its deictic feature, usually a more marked form takes its place. In Romanian, the deictic function of *ille* was taken over by *ecce-ille* > *acel*. This form itself developed weak forms, which became strong forms of the definite article – the form *cel*, whose uses we presented above (see (9)-(12)). The old language only has the forms *acel(a)* for the distal demonstrative and *cel(a)* for the strong definite article (with some traces of the demonstrative use, as we have mentioned above). It is only recently that the demonstrative forms *(h)al(a)/(h)ăl(a)* started to replace *cel* in some of its uses, as we have seen above (see the discussion of the ALR data). This suggests that these forms are more recent than *cel*, itself a shortened form of *acel*, which represents a reinforcement of Latin *ille*.

The other explanation, which I endorse, is that initial *e* became *a* in unstressed word-initial position. The evidence for such a rule comes from various forms, the clearest of which are *arici* 'hedgehog' < Lat. *ericius, ajun* 'I fast' < *ieiuno* and *eccum/ecce-* > *ac-* in *acest* 'this' <*ecce/eccum iste, acel* 'that' < *eccum/ecce ille, acum, acmu* 'now' < *eccum modo, acolo* 'there' < *eccum illoc, aci* 'here' < *eccum hic*, etc. Tiktin (1895) also cites *aştept* 'I wait' < *expecto* (for which other researchers have proposed *adspecto*, see DAR 1913). Miklosich (1881) further cites *aleg* 'I choose' < *eligo*. Besides *ac-, arici, al* and *ajuna*, DELR (2011) accepts as certain or probable the following etymologies with *e-* > *a-*: *aiepta* 'throw, turn (towards), indicate' < *eiectare*, *arunca* 'to throw' < *eruncare*, *ascuți* 'to sharpen' < **excotire, asmuța* 'to stir up, incite' < **exmucciare*, *astâmpăra* 'to calm down' < **extemperare, asuda* 'to sweat' < *assudare* or *exsudare, andrea* 'knitting needle' < **endrella*.

Besides these examples, the rule unstressed *e-* > *a-* has some phonological plausibility. Note that unstressed *a* was reduced to [ə] (noted *ă*) in Romanian, except in word-initial position, where it was kept as *a-* (see e.g. *aduce* 'bring' < *adducere* etc.). We can thus consider that the unstressed *e-* > *a-* development belongs to the same process of weakening of unstressed vowels, but this time applied to a position in which an open pronunciation was preferred: loosing its palatal articulation, *e-* was weakened to a central vowel, falling together with unstressed *a-*. Once the *a/ă* opposition has become phonological, this neutralized vowel fell together with *a*.

Note that this explanation implies that **elu* (<*illu(m)*) was already unstressed when the *e-* > *a-* rule applied. This means that *ille* had already become a definite article or at least an unmarked demonstrative (like fr. *ce*), being, as such, able to

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

loose the word stress. The demonstrative marked for distance was already **ecc-illu* (>*acel*) by that time (an assumption supported by the distal demonstrative forms of the other Romance languages, as we have already mentioned). We can thus assume that *ille* yielded *alu* in proclisis and *lu* in enclisis; syntactic rules of the time privileged enclisis, which led to suffixation, restricting *alu* to contexts where suffixation was disallowed.

It is easy to understand why suffixation was blocked with possessors. Since these are DP-constituents or at least embed a D (even agreeing possessors, see Dobrovie-Sorin, Giurgea 2011, a.o.), it is expected that they should not combine with a further definiteness morpheme, belonging to the matrix DP. Therefore the order **nostru'lu nome* 'our the name' was never produced, the article appearing instead in its basic DP-initial position – **illu nostru nome* > *al(u) nostru nume* '*al* our name'. We have seen above why the suffixation was impossible with ordinals, which led to the emergence of ordinal *al*. When D is followed by PPs, suffixation is impossible because prepositions are weak (therefore they cannot bear enclitics) and the following constituent is itself a DP with its own distinct D – see the present-day use of *cel* before prepositions (ex. (11)). Therefore we expect the use of *al* before [$_N$Ø] followed by a PP, which is reflected in the form *alde*. The alternative *alt* 'other' was perhaps not able to receive the suffixal article because of the determiner-like properties of *alt* (the alternative indicates that the referent of the DP is different with respect to another discourse referent); note that *alt* alone can appear in DP-initial position, marking the DP as indefinite.

The oblique forms of the definite article (*lui, l'ei*> Daco-Rom. *ăi, lor*) have received a further use in prenominal position: they appear with proper names, which normally do not receive the article, in order to mark the oblique case. While the old language still distinguished masculine *lui* (often shortened to *lu*[7]) from feminine *ăi, ii*, in modern Romanian only the masculine singular form *lui* was

[7] Meyer-Lübke (1930), followed by Coteanu (1969a,b) and Rosetti (1964), considers that this form continues a Latin dative *illo* (instead of *illi*), but this is impossible for the following reasons: (i) Unstressed *-u* and *-o* are confounded in Romanian, therefore *illo* and the nominative – accusative **illu (<illum, *illus)* would have fallen together; but *lu* is only used for the oblique case; (ii) as I argue in this article, **illu* in anteposition evolved to *al(u)*; (iii) the *-ui* ending appears as an oblique mark for the m.sg. on all determiners and pronouns (*acestui, acelui, unui, altui* etc.), including *ille* in the varieties having the article *lu*, as can be seen from the fact that the personal pronoun m.sg. oblique form in these varieties is *lui*. The form *lu* instead of *lui* is easy to explain as a reduction of a frequently used functional word in an unstressed position. In Aromanian and Meglenoromanian, where *al* lost its inflection (see discussion below), *a lu* > *alu, al* (Aromanian), *ăl, ău, lu* (Meglenoromanian). In the feminine singular, the expected form in Aromanian was *a l'i*, which was replaced by *ali* by analogy with *alu* (as suggested by Dana Zamfir, p.c.). A similar reduction of *a lui* occurred in some northern Daco-Romanian varieties (which have invariable *a*): *Vasile al Bucşoiu Pintilie, Maria al Hilip Hurdii* etc., see Coteanu (1969b), 118-119, 125-128, Drăganu (1928). In these varieties, *lui* is sometimes shortened to *li*, e.g. *Ioan a li Pătru*, leading to the form *ali*. With the feminine article *iei/ii,* a form *ai* was created, attested in Moldova and in Năsăud (north-eastern Transylvania) between the XVIIth and the XIXth centuries.

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

retained – except for some northern varieties[8] –, because most feminine nouns could mark the oblique by using the suffixal form. In the contemporary language, this form may be analyzed as a preposed case marker rather than as a determiner, because it can also be used with feminines, which shows that it lost its ϕ-features. The oblique forms of *ille* did not evolve like the direct forms because they were stressed on the first syllable of the ending in late Latin – *illúi(us), illéi, illóru(m)*. This favored the disappearance of the initial *i-*, which must have happened very early, being found in all Romance languages which retained these forms (see French *lui, leur,* Old Fr. fem. *li,* Italian *lui, lei, loro*). This means that in the initial stage, the oblique forms of *al(u)* were *lui, l´ei* and *loru*. The irregularity of the paradigm which resulted (direct *al-*, oblique *l-*) led to the constitution of new oblique forms of *al – alui, aiei (aei), aloru*, attested in the old language[9] (of which only *alor* survives in contemporary standard Romanian, in the elliptical use; *alui* and *alei*, a reshaping of *a(i)ei,* can sometimes be found but are not accepted by the norm):

(16) supuindu-se aloru săi bărrbați (CV 76v 5)
submitting-REFL *al*.PL.OBL 3rd.REFL.M.PL men 'submitting to their men'

The following example from *Codex Sturdzanus* appears to show the old oblique form of *al* (*i̯ei,* – written *ei* in the Cyrillic orthography of the times –, the direct reflex of **illǽi*):

(17) ispitele săntu ale **ei** noastre credințe (CB II 124 (241))
temptations-the are *al*.FPL *al*.FSG.OBL our faith
'The temptations are of/against our faith'

But it is also possible that we are dealing with a predicate without *al* – a 'possessive dative' – and *ale ei* should be read as *ale(i)ei*, resulting from a contamination of the old form *aiei* with the stem *al-* (cf. the curiously contaminated dative plural form *alelor* found in CV 75v 13-14).

The phonological account presented here implies that the emergence of *al* as a strong (preposed) definite article is a very early phenomenon, which must have taken place during the 'common Romanian' period, i.e. before the separation of the Romanian dialects of southern Balkans and Istria (Aromanian, Meglenoromanian, Istroromanian) from Daco-Romanian. This conclusion is confirmed by the existence of the definite alternative *alalt* in the southern Balkan dialects: Aromanian *alantu, anantu*, Meglenoromanian *lalt(u), lant(u)*. In Aromanian, the

[8] A feminine *i(i)* exists in Maramureş, see ALR SN, VI, 1601: *Dumńitru-i Nuțî* (346), *Dumńitru ii Ańĕ* (353).

[9] On the existence of these forms in old Romanian, and their misinterpretation as *a lui, a ei, a lor* by modern editors of the texts, see Costinescu (1981) 137-138.

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

genitival article *al* lost its inflection, like in northern Romanian varieties, generalizing a form *a* which is found before all genitives and possessives irrespective of the vicinity of the definite article (rule (5) is a more recent Romanian development, it was not yet obligatory in old Romanian, see section 4) and also before morphological datives. In Meglenoromanian, the same development took place, for genitives (datives are marked by the preposition *la* 'to'), but was obscured by aphaeresis of *a*-; *a* is still preserved in the varieties of Umă (in the form *ăl* < *a lui*) and Ţărnareca (in the form *ău* <**ăl* < *a lui*) (see Atanasov 2002). Many researchers derived this invariable *a* from the Latin preposition *ad* (Meyer-Lübke 1899, Densusianu 1901, Puşcariu 1913 (DAR), 1931–1933, Papahagi 1937, 1963, Coteanu 1969a,b). However, the dating of the *al-* series in common Romanian, which we hope to have proved here, supports the idea that at least in its genitival use this marker emerged from *al* by loss of inflection, like in northern Romanian, as proposed by Ivănescu (1980); the form *a* might have been chosen not only as being the simplest, but also under the influence of the genitival preposition *a* (as hypothesized by Ivănescu (1980)). In any case, this hypothesis is preferable because one would not expect the preposition *a(d)* to co-occur with oblique case marking. Latin *a(d)* combined with the accusative. The accusative, falling together with the nominative, became the unmarked case form of the Romanian non-pronominal declension system. In the whole Romance domain, *ad*+DP was used with the same function as dative DPs. In other words, *ad* and dative compete rather than combine. If *ad* had been generalized for the genitive-dative use, it would have replaced the genitive-dative morphology, like in the other Romance languages (for the dative). The genitival and dative use of *a* in old Romanian confirms this view: *a* only appears with forms which do not have genitive-dative morphology, as illustrated in (6)-(7) above (the genitival use continues in the present-day language, therefore the example (6) is from modern Romanian; absence of genitive-dative morphology means that these forms represent forms unmarked for case, which continue the Latin nominative and/or accusative). The first step in the creation of the generalized genitive-dative preposed marker *a* must have been the loss of inflection of genitival *al*. As to why this mark extended to datives, we can assume that the existence of the preposition *a* (first used with DPs without dative morphology, like in old Romanian) played a role, but the crucial factor seems to me to have been the influence of Modern Greek, where genitive and dative are always the same. As to the invariable *a* from the northern Romanian dialects, the oldest texts written in northern Romanian clearly indicate that it comes from *al*, because variable forms are still widely attested, especially with pronominal possessors, side by side with invariable forms (see Gheţie (1975: 161, 1994: 117); see also ex. (16)-(17)):

(18) numele sfânt al tău (PH 137.2)
name-the holy *al*.MSG your

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

(19) multe cuvente ale loru (CB II 233 (120)
many words *al*.FPL they.OBL
(20) nece ale beseareciei au furatu (CV 6v 10)
nor *al*.FPL church-the.OBL has stolen
(21) cu aest zapis al meu (DÎR LXXX, 1591, Moldova)
with this document(M) *al*.MSG my

In the southern Balkan Romanian dialects, there is indirect syntactic evidence that *a* originates from an article and not from a preposition: genitives still can occur in DP-initial position, prenominally or with ellipsis of the head noun, and mark the whole DP as definite (in (23), *a* is invisible due to aphaeresis, but the *lu* marker, < **a lui*, retains nevertheless the syntactic behavior of the genitival *al*; the examples (22)-(23) reflect two different varieties of Meglenoromanian):

(22) [[**ăl feata noastră**] bărbat] ăi doctor (Meglenoromanian: Atanasov 2002)
a+OBL girl.the our man is doctor
'Our daughter's husband is a doctor'
(23) Carnea di curşută mai nu-i bună di [**lu ţerbu**] (Capidan 1925)
meat-the of doe more not-is good than GEN deer-the
'The doe's meat isn't better than the deer's'
(24) Cathi unu îşi ştie [[**a lui**] caimadz] (Aromanian: Caragiu-
everybody 3rd.REFL.DAT knows *a* he.OBL pains Marioţeanu,
'Everybody knows his own pains' Saramandu 2005: 190)

The same property holds for the invariable *a* in northern old Romanian:

(25) a. Svîrşescu picioarele meale ca [a cerbului] (PH, 13r, 34)
render.1SG feet-the my like *a* deer-the.GEN
'I make my feet like the deer's'
b. Aduce-se-vor [a împăratului] feate (PH, 39r, 15)
bring-REFL-will.3PL *a* emperor-the.GEN girls
'The emperor's daughters will be brought'

Prepositional genitives, such as *a*- phrases in the other Romance languages, *of*-phrases in English or *von*- phrases in German, never have this possibility.

Finally, note that the same evolution from definite article to genitive marker has probably taken place in Albanian, whose agreeing genitive marker probably comes from the same item as the suffixal definite article – a former demonstrative –, with which it shares most of its forms (see Riza 1982, Bokshi 1980). Like in Romanian, this marker does no longer carry a determiner feature except when occurring in DP-initial position (with N-ellipsis, or, in a very marked order, prenominally), in which case it marks the DP as definite:

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

(26) a. makina/ një makinë e mësuesit
car(F).the / a car ART.FSG.NOM teacher.the.OBL
b. Makina ime është këtu, dhe **e** **mësuesit** është në garazh.
car.the my.FSG is here and ART.FSG.NOM teacher.the.OBL is in garage

In conclusion, four series of forms containing the morpheme *al* (genitive-possessive *al*, ordinal *al*, *alalt* and *alde*) are the remnants of a previous system of definiteness marking, in which *alu, a, *al´i (>ai), ale* were the strong forms of the definite article – the descendants of Latin *ille* in proclitic contexts.

3. THE ORIGIN OF *ĂL* AND THE RESHAPING OF THE DEMONSTRATIVE SYSTEM

In the picture of the evolution of the definite determiner system we sketched, there is still an unsolved problem: the short distal demonstrative *ăl(a)/ al(a)* (fem. sg. *a(ia),* m.pl. *ăi(a)/ai(a)*, f.pl. *ale(a)*), with the variants *hăl(a), hal(a), ahăl(a), ahal(a)*, which, as we have seen, is found in a large part of southern (Daco-)Romanian varieties (Banat, Southern Transylvania, Oltenia, Muntenia, Dobrudja, including the colloquial register of the standard language). As we have said, these forms are not found in the old Romanian texts, although a lot of these texts come from the southern varieties (which form the base of the literary language). They only begin to appear sporadically in the XVIIIth century. They are lacking from the southern- and western Balkan dialects separated at an early date from Daco-Romanian (Aromanian, Meglenoromanian, Istroromanian). Nevertheless, almost all researchers traced these forms back to Latin *ille*. But in the previous section we have argued that *ille* yielded the definite article forms, not only the suffixal ones (*-L*), but also the former strong forms *al, a,* etc. Even the explanation for the *i>(e>)>a* evolution of the initial vowel relies on the use of these forms as articles, which eliminated their word stress. If *ille* had continued to have a demonstrative use, it would have kept the stress and the forms *ĭel, ĭa* would have resulted, but these forms are only found as personal pronouns in Romanian. Puşcariu (in DAR 1913) proposed that the evolution **elu>ălu* took place in enclitic position after the vowel *-u* of masculine nouns, but this is impossible because *ille* in enclitic position yielded the suffixal definite article, and the phonological feature which distinguishes demonstratives (especially marked ones, such as the distal) from definite articles is precisely the possibility of bearing word stress. Therefore, an evolution characterizing clitic forms could not have extended to marked demonstratives.

There is however an explanation which is compatible with our conclusions that the demonstrative *ăl* forms are more recent than *cel, acel* and do not continue *ille*: Iliescu (1967) proposes that the *ăl-* series appeared by analogy in the system

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

acel ‘that’ – *acest* ‘this’ – *ăst* ‘this’. In other words, as two forms were competing for the proximal demonstrative use, *acest* and *ăst*, whereas the distal only had the form *acel*, a parallel form *ăl* was created for the distal. Besides the general historical considerations, this hypothesis is supported by the dialectal data, especially if we combine them with a historical perspective. Although in old Romanian southern as well as northern varieties showed almost exclusively *acest* forms for the proximal, in the spoken language of the XXth century, mapped by the ALR, we find almost exclusively *ăst/ast, aiest* and *ahăst*, i.e. forms without *-č-*. Secondly, the *acel* forms for the distal are much more widespread, covering northern varieties (Maramureş, Crişana, northern Transylvania, Moldova). Thirdly, where distal demonstrative forms without *-č-* are found, they are almost always parallel with the proximal demonstrative forms. Here are the attested systems (I do not note the phonetic peculiarities of the dialects, but give their standard Romanian equivalents, for clarity’s sake)[10]:

Table I

Demonstrative systems in spoken Romanian varieties

proximal (m.sg., f.sg.)	distal (m.sg., f.sg.)	region
aiest(a), aiastă(aiasta) (masc. also aist(a))	acel(a), ace(e)a (sometimes also cela, ceea)	Maramureş, Northern Transylvania, Moldova
aiest(a), astă(asta) (pl. often aiestea)	acel(a), ace(e)a	Crişana, Northern Transylvania, Apuseni (95), Moldova
aiesta, asta	aiela/acela, aceea (but *iel* for the strong article *cel*)	southern Transylvania 130
aiesta, asta	ahăla (260 also ala), aheaia	Northern Transylvania(260), Apuseni (250)
ahăsta, asta	(a)hăla, haia	Banat (27),
aăsta, aasta (pl. aieştia)	aăla, aaia	North-western Oltenia (836)
asta (oblique hastúia; pl. also ăştia), asta	ahăla, aia	South-Western Transylvania (Hunedoara): 833
ăsta (pl. 36 aştia), asta	aăla (36 aîăla), aia	Banat (36), Mehedinţi (2)
ăsta (pl. eştia), asta (pl. estea)	ala (157 pl. eia), aia	southern Transylvania
ăsta, asta	ăla, aia	Banat, southern Transylvania, Oltenia, Muntenia
ăsta (928 pl. eştia), asta	ala (791 pl. ăia), aia	Muntenia 791, 928
ăsta (pl. eştia, 762 also ăştia), asta	ăla (pl. eia, 762 also ăia), aia	northern Muntenia 762, southern Dobrudja 987

In this table, the order of the rows reflects to a certain extent what I take to be the course of the evolution: in the old language, the demonstrative forms *acest(a)* and *aiest(a)* co-existed, as proven by the attestation of *aiest* in XVIth century documents and of the form *astă(d)zi* ‘today’ in the oldest texts (*Codicele*

[10] This table is based on ALR SN, VI, maps 1697, 1698, 1702, 1705, 1707, 1709, 1712, 1714, 1715, 1716, 1718, 1719, 1720, 1722, 1723, 1729, 1732.

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

Voroneţean, Psaltirea Hurmuzachi) and by the existence of *aestu* in Aromanian. Then, the forms of *aiest*, probably due to the easiness of obtaining shorter forms by contraction – see *ast, asta, ăst* – gradually replaced *acest*. Where this replacement was taking place, the forms of *acel*, parallel to *acest*, were subject to the same process, being replaced by *aiel, ael, ăl, al, ăl*. The fact that the forms with disyllabic roots are older is indicated by the natural development of functional words such as demonstratives, which tend to become shorter, and also by the forms with *-h-*, which I consider to have emerged in hiatus – *aest>aăst>ahăst*, models for *aiel, ăl, ahăl*. The forms *ăsta, ăla* indicate a possible evolution from *aiest* to *ăst*: *-i-* is weakened between vowels and falls, then *e* passes to the central vowel *ă* in contact with the central vowel *a*. There are thus two possible results from the contraction of *aiest*: *ast* and *ăst*, with respect to which *ăst* is an intermediate form, from which *ahăst* was created with an epenthetic *-h-*. In **aest*, the preservation of *-e-* was favored by the presence of a front vowel in the following syllable, hence the system m.sg. *ăst(a)* vs. pl. *eşti(a)*. The forms with initial *h-* (*hăst, hastă* – found in Banat according to DAR 1913 –*, hăla, haia*) probably evolved from *ahăst, ahastă* by aphaeresis. At the contact between northern varieties with the *aiest/acel* system and southern varieties with *ahăst/ahăl,* mixed systems such as *aiest/ahăl* could emerge (see points 260 and 250), by contamination.

This explanation suggests that *acel* forms had greater chances to disappear where the demonstrative *acest* was present: suppose that due to linguistic contact, *aiest/ăst* came to replace *acest*; then, on this model, *aiel/ăl* started to replace *acel*. If the dialect had had only *aiest*, there would have been no competition and replacement in the proximal and hence less chances to change *acel*. This may explain the preservation of the old *acel – aiest* system in northern Romanian and Aromanian. Moreover, there are greater chances of replacement where the new forms are shorter, as shortness may provide a reason for replacement; this explains the better preservation of *acel* in areas having *aiest* (see Table I).

We can thus trace back the forms without *-č-* of the proximal demonstrative to a common Rom. prototype *aiestu, ai(e)astă, aieşti, ai(e)aste*. These forms must have resulted from the descendants of Latin *iste* – **iestu,* * *iastă,***ieşti, **iaste* – by the addition of an *a-* on the model of the other demonstratives *acel* and *acest* (as proposed by Coteanu 1969a). It is possible that the existence of the pairs *acest/cest, acel/cel* contributed to this evolution, as proposed by Tiktin (1895) and Candrea-Densusianu (1914)[11].

[11] Some researchers considered that the short forms *ăst/ast, astă* are direct descendants of Lat. *iste* (see Tiktin 1895, DAR 1913, Candrea & Densusianu 1914, Rosetti 1968/1986), but the explanations they provide for the *e>a/ă* change are problematic, as they all rely on the assumption that *e* was unstressed. But demonstratives often carry word stress and may occur in DP-initial position, either prenominally or as pronouns. Even if one assumes an evolution unstressed *istu > ast(u)* parallel to *illu > al(u)*, the reshaping of the stressed forms **iestu, *iastă*, expected for the deictic and pronominal use, on the model of unstressed forms is unlikely, going against the observed tendencies in the evolution of demonstratives, on which see section 3. Notice also that while the

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

Summing up, the demonstrative *ăl-* series do not continue Latin *ille*, which only yielded *al* in anteposition. The *ăl-* demonstratives are an innovation which took place when the proximal demonstrative *acest-* forms were replaced by the *aiest/ăst* series.

4. THE REANALYSIS AND GENERALIZATION OF *AL*

It is now time to address the problem of the reanalysis of *al* into a genitive marker and of the constitution of the peculiar system formalized by the rule (5), i.e. absence of *al* if and only if the genitive or possessive is adjacent to *-L*.

A general source for the reanalysis of special article forms can already be inferred from the discussion in section 2: we have seen that weak demonstratives tend to become strong forms of the definite article. We can assume that this can result in the restriction of the previous strong definite article forms to some uses, leading to their grammaticalization. The existence of varieties where *ăl* forms acquired most of the uses of the strong definite article *cel,* but *cel* is kept for the superlative, which we mentioned in section 2, illustrates this phenomenon.

A general condition for the possibility of reanalysis of article forms is that the article should not be uniform, but should have different forms according to various syntactic contexts. This condition is of course fulfilled by Romanian, where the definite article is suffixal except in certain DPs, as shown in section 2.

I make the hypothesis that at an unattested stage of Romanian (which I will call here 'early Romanian'), the contexts where the strong definite articles appeared were even more restricted than today, and this led to a great frequency of occurrence of *al* with possessives and genitives. A second observation is that even in the present-day language, for reasons which are not completely clear to me at this point, the demonstrative can more easily acquire a definite article function in some of the contexts of the strong definite article than in others. Assuming that the same factors were operative in early Romanian, we can suppose that demonstrative forms such as *cel* were competing with *al* in some of its contexts but not in all. This may have narrowed down even more the contexts of use of *al*, facilitating its reanalysis.

descendant of unstressed *ille*, the article *al*, always has *a-*, the demonstrative has masculine forms with *ă-* in many varieties. The aperture contrast between *ăst* and *astă* can be immediately explained if these forms come from *aiest* and *aiastă*, which show the same contrast. Moreover, in the XVIth century we only find forms of *aiest* and the feminine *asta*, in a small number and almost all in Moldova (in DÎR), and *est-* only in the compound *estimp*. If *astădzi* continued an old unstressed form *astă*, we should assume that it was once stressed *astădzí* (today the stress is *ástăzi*). I consider that the preservation of *iste* in old compounds such as *astăzi* and those listed in Papahagi (1963) (Aromanian *astă-* is only found in compounds) cannot be excluded; but in any case, we can be sure that the present-day forms *ast(a)/ăst(a), astă* come from common Romanian *aiestu, aiastă*.

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

Let us now tackle these points one by one. There are two uses of the present-day strong article forms which may have been absent in early Romanian: in elliptical contexts with adjectives – the type *cel bun* 'the good one' – and with cardinals – the type *cei doi (oameni*) 'the two (persons)'. There is evidence that the suffixal definite article was allowed in these uses, which excluded the insertion of a strong form.

In N-ellipsis + adjective/participle contexts, Old Romanian has not only *cel* and *cela*, but also forms with the suffixal article attached to the adjective/participle, which are impossible today. It is not easy to find such examples because in many cases we may be dealing with nominalizations, in which case the suffixal definite article must of course appear (in the present-day language, the use of the suffixal form is a criterion for nominalization). But there are contexts in which nominalization is impossible in the present-day language – (i) if the adjective/participle keeps its typically adjectival/verbal syntactic properties such as subcategorization or degree constructions or (ii) if the missing noun can only be inferred from the context, not from a stable association of the adjective with some concept, which could be encoded in the lexicon. I illustrate here these situations, showing that the modern language does not allow the suffixal definite article there, which indicates the impossibility of nominalization, whereas the old language could use the suffixal article:

(i) Verbal or adjectival syntax:

(27) nece îmblaiu cu nalţii, nece cu [**mai minunaţii de mine**]
nor walked.1SG with tall.the.MPL nor with more wonderful.the.MPL than me
(CP 255v 14-15)

(27)′ * mai minunaţii decât mine (modern Romanian)

(28) Şi [**răstignitul cu nusul**] împută lui (CT 107r)
and crucified.the.MSG with him scolded him.OBL
'And the one crucified with him scolded him'

(28)′ * răstignitul cu el (modern Romanian)

(29) veniţi, [**blagosloviţii de tatăl meu**] (CB II 457(86))
come.IMPTV.2PL blessed.the.MPL by father.the my

(29)′ * binecuvântaţii de tatăl meu (modern Romanian)

(ii) Contextual N = N-ellipsis:

(30) lua-se-va cusătura ei noa de spre **veachea** (CT 72r)
take-REFL-will seam(F).the her new.the.FSG from old.the.FSG
'Its new seam will take away from the old one'

(30)′ * Cusătura ei nouă va rupe din vechea (modern Romanian)

Aromanian preserved the use of the suffixal article with N-ellipsis; this marking can co-occur with the distal demonstrative *aţelu*:

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

(31) Feata aţea marea easti profesoarâ → (Aţea) marea easti profesoarâ
girl-the that big.the is teacher (that) big.the is teacher
'The elder daughter is a teacher' → 'The elder is a teacher'
(Caragiu-Marioţeanu, Saramandu 2005: 170)

The suffixal article can also appear on postnominal adjectives in the double definiteness construction in old Romanian, a context in which the present-day language only allows the strong form *cel*:

(32) omul (...) adause-se **vitelor necugetatelor** (PH 48.13)
man.the (...) joined-REFL cattle.the.OBL senseless.the.OBL
'Man ... joined [= made himself like one of] the senseless cattle'

As the construction with *cel* already existed in the old language, a more complex construction *N-def - cel(a) - A-def* resulted, probably from the contamination of the two constructions. This doubly marked ('triple definiteness') construction is very frequent in some of the texts of the XVIth century, such as those of *Codex Sturdzanus* (see Hasdeu 1879).

With cardinals, the use of *cel* is attested in the XVIth century, but there are also instances where the noun following the cardinal hosts the article:

(33) **doaosprădzeace neamurele** lu Israil (CV 55r 8-9)
twelve tribes.the the.OBL Israel

There are also cases when no article appears and the phrase nevertheless is interpreted as definite – for instance, although the group of 12 apostles was already introduced, it is referred as follows:

(34) Şi şezu, chemă **doisprăzeace** şi grăi lor (CT 89r)
and sat-down.3SG called.3SG twelve and spoke.3SG they.OBL
'And he sat down, and he called the twelve and spoke to them'

It is not clear to me whether these examples are translation errors (the principle of the word-by-word translation used by the authors of these texts might have prevented the use *cel* if the original did not contain a demonstrative) or reflect a possibility of the system.

In Aromanian, the suffixal article attaches to the cardinal (e.g. *doil'i* 'two.the.MPL', *doauli* 'two.the.FPL', oblique *a doilor^{u}*, *a doaulor^{u}*, see Saramandu 1984).

All these data support the possibility that early Romanian did not require the use of a strong form with cardinals, because the suffixation could occur either on N or on the cardinal.

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

The second favoring factor we identified for the reanalysis of *al* is the competition with demonstratives in a part of the contexts. For reasons which I cannot address here, distal demonstratives tend to be used in noun ellipsis context even if the language has other means of expressing a definite D in these phrases (see English *that* vs. *the one*). There is also a relation between this use and the type of overt modifier of the group, demonstratives being allowed more easily with heavy modifiers or complements, such as relative clauses and PPs, than with simple APs or participles. I illustrate this phenomenon in present-day Romanian:

(35) a. Cei / Aceia care vor să-mi spună!
the.MPL those.MPL who want.3PL SBJV-me.DAT tell.3PL
'Those who want should let me know'
b. Cei / ?? Aceia interesați să-mi spună!
the.MPL those.MPL interested SBJV-me.DAT tell.3PL
'The interested ones should let me know'
c. raportul despre vânzările de arme şi cel / acela despre droguri
report.the on sellings of arms and the / that on drogues
d. raportul vechi şi cel /??acela nou
report.the old and the/ that new

Note that the use of demonstratives for strong forms of the article is confined to the N-ellipsis and double definiteness use (the second situation may be a particular case of the first, if double definiteness constructions contain an empty N in the second member, see Lekakou, Szendrői 2009). It follows that in a part of its uses – with N-ellipsis + relative / PP –, *al* was in competition with the distal demonstrative – whose short form *cel* finally replaced it. We have seen that with adjectives, early Romanian probably could use the suffixal article in ellipsis contexts. Therefore *al* could totally be eliminated from one of the most frequent use of strong article forms, the use before empty N.

Summing up, *al* could be reanalyzed because it may have come to have few contexts of use except *al*+Possessive/Genitive, *al*+Ordinal and *al*+*alt*. The use with N-ellipsis left a trace in the +PP context in the form *alde*, as we have seen. There were thus four distinct reanalyses of *al*, one for each context, splitting the element *al* into four different items or parts of an item (the latter for *alde* and *alalt*).

But whereas in *alalt* and *alde*, the determiner status of *al* is still preserved (and transferred to the whole newly formed word), genitival and ordinal *al* lost this status in some of their contexts: as we have seen, both can appear in other positions inside the DP than the determiner position, and then they are compatible with any determiner, which means that the definiteness feature of *al* was lost. I consider that this more drastic reanalysis was made possible by the fact that *al* (as a determiner) could appear in DPs introduced by another determiner in the double definiteness construction. We have already seen at several points of this article that Romanian

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

has constructions in which a modifier of the noun inside a definite DP is preceded by a second definite determiner, which we labeled 'double definiteness constructions'. These are attested not only in the contemporary language, but also in the oldest attested texts (see (32)) and in the southern Balkan Romanian dialects:

(36) omlu aţel bun(lu) (Aromanian) (ALR I, 2nd vol., map 185)
man.the that good(the)

(37) a. fiĉoru ţela marle (Meglenoromanian) (ALR I, 2nd vol., map 185)
boy.the that big.the
b. omu ţela bun (ALR SN, VI, map 1605)
man.the that good

Quite surprisingly, this predicts that *al* was first found in definite DPs, although in the present-day language it is precisely in some of these environments, namely in adjacency with *-L*, that *al* can*not* appear (see rule (5), section 1). But the ban on the sequence *-L al* is a late development. In the old language, although in most cases *al* is absent after *-L*, there are a lot of examples with *al* immediately following *-L*:

(38) a. înrimiloru ale lor (PH 9.38)
hearts(F).the.OBL *al*.FPL they.OBL
b. înţelepciunea a lu Solomon (CT 25v)
wisdom(F).the *al*.FSG OBL Solomon
c. oamenii ai noştri (DÎR XCVII, 1593-1597, Moldova)
people.the *al*.MPL our

Such sequences are more frequent if invariable *a* is used instead of *al*. This is expected if the rule (5) was established at least in part by a haplology process (as proposed by Ortmann, Popescu 2000, Dobrovie-Sorin, Giurgea 2005). This process could only take place where the inflectional part of *al* repeated the forms of *-L*: m.sg. ***-(u)lu al(u)***, f.sg. ***-a a***, m.pl. ***-i ai***, f.pl. ***-le ale***. Sporadically, invariable *a* appears after *-L* even in present-day regional varieties[12]:

(39) cuperişu a lu casa cęia (ALR SN, VI, map 1722, point 53: northern Banat)
roof.the *a* OBL house.the that

The southern Balkan dialects in which *al* evolved into an invariable genitive marker *a* use this mark after *-L* too. We can conclude that there was no ban on the sequences *-L al* in common Romanian.

[12] Since the genitive morphology was reshaped in the dialect illustrated by this example, we cannot be sure that *a* survived here from old Romanian. There are however good chances for this, because most genitives – especially in the spoken language – appear after *-L*, and therefore a secondary extension of *a* from other contexts is not very likely.

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

The reanalysis of *al* is complete once it begins to appear in indefinite DPs. In this case, it is hard to find a syntactic source in which *al* was still an article. Drăganu (1936-1938) and Ivănescu (1980) proposed that this source was an appositional construction, in which an indefinite is followed by a definite DP with ellipsis of N, which identifies the referent: "an N, the one (which is) Gen" – *un cal, al domnului* 'a horse, the master's one'. It is possible that these constructions contributed to the reanalysis, but they seem to be too rare to constitute a sufficient basis. Another possible mechanism is the reanalysis of the double definiteness construction: suppose that the use of *al* in definite DPs, first analyzable as a double definiteness construction, lost the special meaning associated to double definiteness, under the pressure of the constructions with a demonstrative (*acel/cel*); *al* was interpreted as an item associated to the genitive or possessive (with which it also appeared prenominally, of course). Thus, it was extended to indefinite DPs.

The reanalysis of a definite determiner into an agreement marker, originating in a double definiteness construction, is probably the source of the prefixal adjectival agreement marker in Albanian – the so-called 'adjectival article' – which has the same forms as the genitival agreement marker (see section 2 above, ex. (26)), but differs from it in that it attaches at the word-level (it always comes immediately before the adjective and cannot attach to a coordination of adjectives) and is a lexical property of a class of adjectives (all primary quality adjectives and some of the derived adjectives and participles always take this article; the other adjectives never take it). This explanation implies that Proto-Albanian had a double definiteness construction with adjectives in which a strong article form appeared (like present-day Romanian). Today, Albanian does not have double definiteness constructions, and can use the suffixal definite article on adjectives. In any case, since the reanalysis of *al* is a common Romanian phenomenon, and it is likely that common Romanian was in contact with (Proto-)Albanian, it is highly probable that the two parallel developments of strong articles into agreement markers were not historically unrelated, although we cannot establish which of the two languages has been the source of the development. This article concentrates on the features of the Romanian grammatical system which made the reanalysis possible. As for the important part played by the double definiteness construction in this process, notice that this feature may have spread into the Balkan domain from Greek, being found already in Ancient Greek (and surviving in Greek to these days).

Until now we have been trying to establish what made the reanalysis possible. But why did the genitive in early Romanian need a special marker? Starting from the observation that the genitive and dative were conflated in Romanian (as shown by the oblique morphology and the use of *a* for both, in the old language, when inflectional marking was not available)[13], a possible answer is

[13] The genitive-dative conflation is a late Latin development, as shown by Meyer-Lübke (1899: III, §§37,41,42) and de Dardel (1964). In Romanian, it was probably strengthened by the contact with the other Balkan languages which have the same syncretism (first of all Greek; in

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

that this marker helped to distinguish the genitive from the dative – this was suggested by Ivănescu (1980: 216). I'd like to propose a refinement of this idea, based on old Romanian data: *al* was used to distinguish DP-internal possessive predications from possessive predications whose event variable is not bound inside a DP.

The main empirical basis of this proposal is that in old Romanian, oblique marked DPs without *al* regularly appeared in a genitival function with bare nouns in non-argumental positions. The grammars of Romanian (see, e.g., GALR 2005) analyze such DPs as datives, not genitives, assuming thus a category of 'adnominal dative'. The reason for speaking of 'dative' instead of 'genitive' is that agreeing possessors cannot appear in this context, but a dative form of the pronoun is used instead (see (41)):

(40) eu şerbul tău-s şi **fecior şerbeei tale** (PH 115.7)
I slave(M)-the your-am and son slave(F).the.OBL your
'I am thy slave, and the son of thine slave'

(41) acel e **frate mie** şi **soru mie** şi mumă-mi easte (CT 74r)
that-one is brother me.DAT and sister me.DAT and mother-me.DAT.CL is
'That one is my brother and my sister and my mother'

Because possessive datives attached to the verbal/clausal domain (outside the NP/DP) are frequent in old (as well as modern) Romanian, the adnominal (NP-internal) position of the dative is not always easy to prove. The repetition of the 1st person pronouns with each of the first two conjoined nouns in (41) supports an NP-internal position. Another piece of evidence for an adnominal position comes from the use of these datives inside appositions:

(42) Smenti-se vor de faţa lui, **tată siracilor şi giudeţ văduolor** (PH 67.6)
trouble-REFL will.3PL from face-the his father poor.the.OBL and judge widows.the.OBL
'They shall be troubled before the face of him, [who is] the father of the orphans, and judge of the widows'

It is significant that in the few examples of 'dative' inside appositions in the XVIth centuries translations of the *Psalms* I found, in the Slavonic version published by Coresi in 1577 (CP) only genitives or agreeing possessors appear. There are also many other cases in which Romanian 'datives' correspond to Slavonic genitives or

Bulgarian, it must represent an influence from the other Balkan languages, since it is not found in the other Slavonic languages; in Albanian, due to the absence of early attestations or related languages, one cannot say whether the development was old and independent or was due to the contact with (Proto)-Romanian/Late Latin and Greek).

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

agreeing possessors: in CP, I found 41 examples. Although the Slavonic version published by Coresi does not necessarily reflect the original of the translation, I think that such a number of examples cannot be exclusively due to a different original (a Slavonic version which would have datives instead of genitives in all those places).

In the Old Romanian texts, examples of *al*-genitives in non-argumental bare NPs are extremely rare, as compared to 'adnominal datives': in CP I found only one – compare the 41 examples where a 'dative' translates the Slavonic genitive/possessive; even this single example – *limba mea trestie a cărtulariului curând scrie* 'tongue.the my reed *al*.FSG scribe.the.OBL quick writes' – is probably an adaptation of the *a* + bare noun genitive found in the northern Romanian older translation which was used by Coresi, cf. PS 140 3-5 *trestie a cărtulariu currundu scrietoriu* 'reed *a* scribe quick writing' ("reed of a quick writing scribe"). CV also only has one example, and in the first two gospels of CT I could only find one example. All these facts suggest that there was a rule requiring, for the various relations expressed by genitives, the use of oblique forms without *al* if the head noun was bare in a non-argumental position.

I would like to propose a parallelism between this situation and the one found with adnominal locative PPs in the present-day language (and the old one as well). Locative (spatial as well as temporal) PPs must be introduced by *de* when they occur inside argumental DPs (with some exceptions for the generic use which I cannot address here) and normally lack *de* when they attach to a predicative bare noun:

(43) a. Mircea e [doctor la țară]
Mircea is physician at country
b. Doctorii *(de) la țară vor primi un spor de salariu
physicians.the of at country will receive an increase of salary
c. Webb e [(un) crater pe Lună]
W. is a crater on Moon
d. Craterele *(de) pe Lună sunt străvechi
craters.the of on Moon are very-old

In Giurgea (2008b), I suggested that the use of *de* with locatives signals that the event of the locative relation is indexically independent from the event of the matrix clause – its variable is bound by a DP-level operator. By indexically independent I mean that it can hold at another time and/or world. It is well known that relations expressed by modifiers or arguments inside NP can have their own time and world of evaluation – as clearly shown by modifiers such as *fost, posibil, pretins*: *un fost prieten* 'a former friend' is an entity which was a friend of *x* at a time previous to a reference time and is no longer friend of *x* at this reference time; in *posibil candidat* 'possible candidate', the predicate *x is a candidate* holds at

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

some worlds accessible from the current reference world, etc.[14] Showing that predicative bare nouns have less nominal functional structure, I suggested that they do not contain the binder for the NP-internal event variable. Indeed, in (43)a and c the time and world of the clause cannot be separated from those of the locative predications. It seems that there is a single event involved, of being a crater on the Moon or a physician in the countryside.

The use of *de* with adnominal locatives was already found in the old language. Therefore, I make the hypothesis that Romanian extended *al* in order to express the same sort of contrast in the case of alienable as well as inalienable 'possession' relations. Of course, there are a number of differences between the two situations. (i) While locative PPs are always modifiers, where the P itself expresses the relation, genitives/datives can also be arguments, in which case the head noun itself expresses the relation – see kinship terms in (40)-(42) above (a prototypical use of the genitive is with nouns expressing part-whole relations or interpersonal relations; the term 'inalienable possession' is used for this use); old Romanian also has adnominal/possessive datives as arguments of event nouns; (ii) The argument of the inalienable or alienable possession relation can also be realized NP-externally, by a dative attached to the verbal/clausal projection (possibly as a result of movement) – the so-called 'possessive dative'. This is not found with adnominal locatives. (iii) In the old language already, *al* marking can be found for genitives used predicatively, which means that unlike the *de* marking of locatives, *al* was no longer restricted to adnominal contexts. It is not always easy to decide whether an *al-* phrase in predicative position is the result of ellipsis of the possessee noun or is a predicate itself (with no embedding NP/DP), but there are examples where a paraphrase with an overt N is excluded – above all, where the subject is unique or generic (see Giurgea forth.):

(44) a. ale tale sânt ceriurele şi al tău e pământul (CP 171r 4-5)
al your are skies.the and *al* your is earth.the
'The skies are yours and the Earth is yours'
b. # Cerurile sunt cerurile tale/ ceruri ale tale şi pământul este pământul tău
skies.the are skies.the your/ skies *al* your and earth.the is earth.the your/
/ pământ al tău
earth *al* your

Although the parallelism is not complete, I suggest that *de-* marking with locatives reflects a tendency in Romanian of marking DP-bound predications, and the same

[14] Locative PPs without *de* can appear inside DPs with complex event nominals. Therefore what I proposed was that *de* is absent in case the event variable of the spatial predication is the same or can be identified with the event variable of a clausal domain (Asp/V/T). This domain can be that of the embedding clause but also a DP-internal one, in the case of complex event nominals, under the widespread assumption that complex event nominals contain a VP/AspP projection under a nominalizer.

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

tendency may have led to the generalization of *al* in argumental DPs, as opposed to predicative bare nouns. The existence of clause-attached possessive datives may have provided a source for the 'adnominal dative', but also a way of reanalyzing the adnominal oblique-marked DPs. This led to the gradual disappearance of the adnominal dative (which is now obsolete, although still understandable, being found in some XIXth century literary works; see GALR II, Atributul, 2.2.4), whereas the possessive dative still survives.

A last issue to address is the establishment of the *al-* deletion rule (5). Although I do not have a definitive answer to this issue, I'd like to suggest a possible development. I have already mentioned that one possible source is haplology. It is possible that while *al* was still not generalized, the free alternation between *casa femeii* 'house.the woman.the.OBL' and *casa a femeii* 'house.the *al*.FSG woman.the.OBL', *vârfurile munților* 'peaks.the mountains.the.OBL' and *vârfurile ale munților* 'peaks.the *al*.FPL mountains.the.OBL' was reinterpreted as reflecting a haplology process. Gradually, haplology became more frequent until it turned into an obligatory deletion rule. We have already seen that the rule (5) was not yet obligatory in old Romanian, but the absence of *al* was already overwhelmingly predominant.

CORPUS

ALR I − *Atlasul lingvistic român,* coord. by S. Pop: 2nd volume, Leipzig 1942.
ALR SN − *Atlasul lingvistic român, serie nouă,* coord. by E. Petrovici, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei (VIth vol.: 1969)
CB II − Texts from *Codex Sturdzanus* in B.P. Hasdeu, *Cuvente den bătrâni*, II, Bucureşti, 1879.
CP – Coresi, *Psaltire slavo-română,* Braşov, 1577; ed. by Stela Toma, Bucureşti, 1976.
CT – Coresi, *Tetraevanghel,* Braşov, 1561; ed. by Florica Dimitrescu, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1963.
CV – *Codicele Voroneţean,* [1563–1583]; ed. by Mariana Costinescu, Bucureşti, Minerva, 1981.
DÎR – *Documente şi însemnări româneşti din secolul al XVI-lea;* ed. by Al. Mareş *et al.*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1979.
PH – *Psaltirea Hurmuzaki* [c. 1490–1516]; ed. by Ion Gheţie, Mirela Teodorescu, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 2005.
Prav 1646 – *Carte românească de învăţătură,* Iaşi, 1646; ed. by Colectivul pentru vechiul drept românesc al Academiei, conducted by Andrei Rădulescu, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1961.
PS – *Psaltirea Scheiană,* ed. by I.-A. Candrea, Bucureşti, Socec, 1916.

REFERENCES

Ariel, M., 1990, *Accessing Noun Phrase Antecedents*, London, Routledge.
Atanasov, P., 2002, *Meglenoromâna azi*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române.
Bokshi, B., 1980, *Rruga e formimit të sistemit emëror të gjuhës shqipe*, Prishtinë.
Candrea,I.-A., O. Densusianu, 1914, *Dicţionarul etimologic al limbii române. Elementele latine*. (*A–Putea*), Bucureşti, Socec.

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

Capidan, T., 1925, *Meglenoromânii*, Bucureşti, Cultura Naţională.
Caragiu-Marioţeanu, M., 1959, „Observaţii în legătură cu sistemul pronumelui demonstrativ în aromână", *Studii şi cercetări lingvistice,* X, 3, 409-417.
Caragiu-Marioţeanu, M., N. Saramandu, 2005, *Manual de aromână – carti trâ învitari armâneaşti*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române.
Cipariu, T., 1864[2], *Principii de limbă şi scriptură*, Blaj.
Cornilescu, A., 1994, Remarks on the Romanian Ordinal Numeral. Towards a Unitary Description of Phrases Headed by AL, *Revue roumaine de linguistique,* 1, 303−334.
Cornilescu, A., A. Nicolae, 2011, "Nominal Peripheries and Phase Structure in the Romanian *DP*", *Revue roumaine de linguistique*, 56, 1, 35–68.
Costinescu, M., 1981. *Codicele voroneţean. Ediţie critică, studiu filologic şi studiu lingvistic*, Bucureşti, Editura Minerva.
Coteanu, I., 1969a, "Româna comună. II. Morfologia. 3 Articolul; 5. Pronumele", in *Istoria limbii române* (coord. by I. Coteanu), II, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 232-254.
Coteanu, I., 1969b, *Morfologia numelui în protoromână*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei.
DAR 1913 - *Dicţionarul limbii române*, coord. by S. Puşcariu, I[st] vol., A-B, Bucharest, Librăriile Socec & Comp. şi C. Sfetea.
de Dardel, R., 1964, "Considérations sur la déclinason romane à trois cas", *Cahiers Ferdinand de Saussure*, 21, 7-23.
DELR, 2011, *Dicţionarul etimologic al limbii române*, I, A-B, coord. by M. Sala, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei.
Densusianu, O., 1901, *Histoire de la langue roumaine*, I. *Les Origines*, Paris, Ernest Leroux.
Densusianu, O.,1906, report in *Buletinul Societăţei Filologice*, II, 16.
Dobrovie-Sorin, C., I. Giurgea, 2005, "Romanian Genitives and Determiners", *Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics* 7, 1, 89-101.
Dobrovie-Sorin, C., I. Giurgea, 2006, "The Suffixation of Definite Articles in Balkan languages", *Revue roumaine de linguistique*, 3−4, 113−135.
Dobrovie-Sorin, C., I. Giurgea, 2011, "Pronominal possessors and Feature Uniqueness", *Language* 87, 1, 127−157.
Drăganu, N., 1928, "Formele de dativ şi genitiv cu *ali* şi *al* prepus în dacoromână", *Revista filologică*, 2, 312−314.
Drăganu, N., 1936-1938, "Recensii", *Dacoromania*, IX, 273−312.
GALR, 2005, *Gramatica limbii române*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române.
Găzdaru, D., 1929, *Descendenţii demonstrativului latinesc* ille *în limba română*, Iaşi.
Gheţie, I., 1975, *Baza dialectală a românei literare*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei.
Gheţie, I., 1994, *Introducere în dialectologia istorică românească*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române.
Giurgea, I., 2008a, "Gender on definite pronouns", *Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics*, vol. X, 1, 97−120.
Giurgea, I., 2008b, "On Romanian predicative bare nouns", talk given at the *Workshop on bare singulars, argument structure, and their interpretation*, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.
Giurgea, I., 2009, "Elipsa nominală în grupuri cu determinanţi definiţi", in R. Zafiu *et al.* (eds.), *Studii de gramatică. Omagiu Doamnei Profesoare Valeria Guţu Romalo*, Bucureşti, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 85−97.
Giurgea, I., 2010, *Pronoms, déterminants et ellipse nominale*, Bucureşti, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti.
Giurgea, I., forth., "Agreeing Possessors and the Theory of Case", *Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics*.
Giurgea, I., C. Dobrovie-Sorin, forth., "Nominal and Pronominal Possessors in Romanian", in A. Carlier, J.-C. Verstraete (eds.), *Genitive Case and Genitive Construction*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
Hasdeu, B.P., 1879, *Cuvente den bătrâni*, II, Bucureşti, Noua Tipografie Naţională.

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)

Hasdeu, B.P., 1887, *Etymologicum Magnum Romaniae*, I-II, Bucureşti, Socec şi Teclu.
Iliescu, M., 1967, "Sur l'origine du démonstratif daco-roumain *ăl*", *Revue roumaine de linguistique*, 12, 1, 59−60.
Ivănescu, G., 1980, *Istoria limbii române*, Iaşi, Editura Junimea.
Lekakou, M., C. Szendrői, 2009, "Close apposition with and without noun ellipsis: an analysis of Greek polydefinites", *Studies in Greek Linguistics 29*, Thessaloniki, Institute of Modern Greek Studies, 151−166.
Lozbă, M., 1969, „*A* − prepoziţie, articol posesiv, pronume posesiv de reluare", *Analele Ştiinţifice ale Universităţii „Al. I. Cuza" din Iaşi*, III, XV, 97−122.
Meyer-Lübke, W., 1893, *Grammatik der romanischen Sprachen*, II: *Formenlehre*, Leipzig.
Meyer-Lübke, W., 1899, *Grammatik der romanischen Sprachen*, III: *Syntax*, Leipzig.
Meyer-Lübke, W., 1930, *Rumänisch und romanisch*, Bucureşti, Academia Română.
Miklosich, F., 1881, *Beiträge zur Lautlehre der rumunischen Dialekte*, Vienna.
Nădejde, I., 1884, *Gramatica limbii române (Fonetica, etimologia, sintaxa şi istoria limbii*), *după lucrările lui Diez, Cipariu, Hasdeu, Lambrior etc.*, Iaşi.
Ortmann, A., A. Popescu, 2000, "Haplology involving morphologically bound and free elements: evidence from Romanian", Ms. University of Düsseldorf.
Papahagi, T., 1937, *Din morfologia limbei romîne*, Bucureşti.
Papahagi, T., 1963, *Dicţionarul dialectului aromân*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei.
Philippide, A., 1928, *Originea românilor*, II[nd] vol., Iaşi, Tipografia Viaţa Românească.
Puşcariu, S., 1905, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der rumänischen Sprache.* I: *Lateinisches Element mit Berücksichtigung aller romanischen Sprachen*, Heidelberg, K. Winter.
Rosetti, A., 1968/1986, *Istoria limbii române. De la origini până în secolul al XVII-lea*, Bucureşti, Editura pentru Literatură; 1986 ediţie definitivă, Bucureşti, Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică.
Riza, S., 1982, "Probleme të nyjave të shqipes", *Studime Filologjike*, 36, 1, 121−139.
Saramandu, N., 1984, „Dialectul aromân", in V. Rusu (coord.), *Tratat de dialectologie românească*, Craiova, Scrisul Românesc, 423−475.
Spitzer, L., 1950, „Romanian *un prieten al meu* 'a friend of mine' ", *Word*, 6, 141−159.
Tiktin, H., 1895, *Rumänisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, I, Bucureşti, Imprimeria Statului.
Zafiu, R., 2009, „Utilizări actuale ale lui *alde*", in: G. Pană-Dindelegan (ed.), *Dinamica limbii române actuale – aspecte gramaticale si discursive*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române.

BDD-A394 © 2012 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:46:31 UTC)