# *There* sentences in extreme southern Italy:
# on the rise of a "Greek-style" pattern

Among the morphosyntactic patterns through which Italo-Romance varieties code existential sentences, a peculiar structure emerges in extreme southern varieties, particularly in Salento and in southern Calabria:

1.  *ave*          *soruta*          *intra*   *la*    *cucina*
    have.3SG       sister=your       inside   the    kitchen
    'Your sister is in the kitchen' (Soleto [Lecce], Cruschina 2015: 46)

2.  [nˈtɛrra        nˈdaːvɪ          mud̢ˈd̢ɪːki]
    on=ground      PF=have.3SG      crumbs
    'There are crumbs on the ground' (Mèlito di Porto Salvo [Reggio Calabria], our fieldwork)

3.  [kˈka    nˈdaːvɪ a       sˈsɔːrɪ=ta]
    here    have.3SG       DOM     sister=your
    'Your sister is here' (San Luca [Reggio Calabria], our fieldwork)

As the examples show, such a structure involves the lack of the so-called proform (= PF) – at least in Salentino – (see ex. 1); an inflected form of HABĒRE, with no agreement with the postcopular NP (= the pivot) (see ex. 2); a differential marking of the pivot, headed by the preposition *a*, when it is [+human, +animate] (see ex. 3) (in Salentino, the use of DOM is more restricted, coding only 1st and 2nd person pronouns, see Cruschina 2015: 50, De Angelis 2019).
Even though this pattern is attested in other Romance languages too, it proves, however, to be peculiar, insofar as it hosts top-ranking definite NPs (especially 1st and 2nd personal pronouns), which are generally disallowed within 'to have' *there* sentences in the Romance varieties.
We infer that this pattern depends on the contact with Italo-Greek, which displays similar constructions, with an invariant 3rd sg. form of 'to have', the lack of the proform, the pivot marked as accusative, and no constraints on the definiteness of the NP (see ex. 4 with a definite NP, ex. 5 with an indefinite NP):

4.  *'Mbrò*        *sto'*        *portuna,*   *iche*       *es*
    In front of    to=the       gate        had.3SG     the.ACC.F.PL
    *guàrdie*
    guards
    'The guards were in front of the gate' (Calimera [Lecce], *O kunto ma ta sika* 'The tale wit the figs', Tommasi 1998)

5.  *Éna vyággo*   *íχe*        *énan*       *górako*
    One time       had.3SG      a.ACC.M.SG   crow
    'Once there was a crow' (Roccaforte del Greco [Reggio Calabria], Rossi Taibbi & Caracausi 1959: 23)

However, a diachronic investigation reveals that neither the extreme southern Italo-Romance varieties nor Italo-Greek displayed in their Mediaeval stage a similar construction, since both of them exhibited the definiteness effect. Sociolinguistic factors can explain how the two systems influenced each other, by ruling out the definiteness effect from the respective patterns at the end of the interference process.

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