The diachrony of adnominal genitives in Ancient Greek

Introduction. This paper proposes an analysis of the distribution of genitive phrases within nominal structures across the history of Greek. The diachronic changes observed are explained as the result of discrete operations of parameter resetting, crucially independent of morphological changes.

Theoretical background. With the label 'genitive', we refer here to any syntactic expression of a case-relation between a nominal head and its arguments. Within the nominal domain, genitive Case expresses "the arguments of nouns whose verbal thematic correspondents bear […] formally distinct Nominative and Accusative […]. Such a Case is also normally employed to express P[ossessor]" (Longobardi&Silvestri 2013). Crosslinguistically, formal realizations of genitive Case belong to two major classes: *adpositional/free* and *non-adpositional/functional*. Genitives of the functional type are bound to precise structural positions, which cannot be duplicated: (1) a higher one, before structured adjectives (which are merged prenominally and ordered according to the semantic hierarchy *S-Or>M1>M2>Arg*, Longobardi et al 2013), call it GenS, best represented in Hungarian, or by Germanic prenominal *-s* genitive; (b) a lower one, after structured As (GenO). The pre-/post-nominal position of functional genitives depends on N-movement. In Indo-European, GenS is available, for instance, in Mainland Scandinavian and West Germanic; GenO is available in Celtic, some Germanic languages (e.g. German, Icelandic, Old English, Gothic), most Slavic ones (with the exception of Bulgarian), Farsi, etc.; in Romance, residual instances of a GenO have been spotted in Old French (Delfitto&Paradisi 2009) and, among contemporary languages, in Northern Calabrese (Silvestri 2013). When more than one argument relation is represented in a DP, and when at least one genitive in such a DP is functional, their ordering depends on the hierarchy *P[ossessor]>S[ubject]>O[bject]* (Longobardi 2001). Free genitives occur either before D or as postnominal complements, can be iterated, are not subject to any kind of hierarchical ordering, and can be realized either in the form of adpositional phrases (prepositional genitives normally occur DP-finally, postpositional ones DP-initially), or by means of rich inflectional morphology; Romance languages uniformly exhibit prepositional Free genitives; in Indo-European, prepositional Free genitives are also available in Germanic, Bulgarian, Indo-Iranian, etc. Finally, in certain languages, such as Latin (Gianollo 2005) and, as we will see below, Classical Greek (Guardiano 2003, 2011), exhibit an inflected genitive, labeled "Uniform Genitive", that displays, with the same morphology, both the distributional properties normally associated with Free genitives (it is phrase-final and freely iterable) and those typically associated with functional ones (it occurs prenominally, to the left and to the right of structured As and, in such positions, it is not iterable). The analysis of the formal representation of genitives in the history of Greek (Guardiano 2003, 2011) is particularly interesting because it instantiates change from a system with Uniform Genitive (Classical Greek), into a system where only a (postnominal) GenO is available (Standard Modern Greek and most non-Standard dialects/varieties). Such a change is likely to have started from a process of internal reanalysis (presumably triggered by N-movement) of postnominal (Free) inflected genitives as GenO, happened presumably in Hellenistic Greek: thus, it seems not to depend in any respect on changes in the morphological realization of Genitive case (and/or case syncretism).

Data. We explore empirical evidence coming from the following sources: (1) Classical Attic (henceforth CG): Plato's *Apology*, *Cratylus* and *Symposium* (Guardiano 2011); Demosthenes' *Philippics* 1-3 and *Olinthiacs* 1-3, Isocrates' *Aegineticus* and *Against the Sophists*, Lysias' *On the murder of Eratosthenes* and *On the refusal of a pension* (Bernasconi 2011). (2) Hellenistic *koinè* (henceforth NTG): Gospels (Guardiano 2003, 2011, Manolessou 2000). Such data will be compared with currently spoken varieties of Greek, specifically Standard Modern Greek, Italiot Greek and Asia Minor Greek (Guardiano et al 2016). We first propose a broader analysis of the internal structure of DPs in Greek, focusing in particular on the structure of adjectival modification, that displays an interesting combination of diachronically stable properties (i.e. the availability, at all diachronic stages and in all the explored synchronic varieties, of structured As) and more variable (synchronically and diachronically) ones (e.g. the availability and properties of the structural configuration(s) which induce

the so-called 'polydefinite' construction, Alexiadou 2014, Guardiano&Stavrou 2017, Crisma et al 2017, a.o.), and is crucially affected by N-movement: with the exception of Italiot Greek (Guardiano&Stavrou 2014), the noun never crosses over structured As in any variety of Greek. Against this background, the following empirical facts concerning the behavior of adnominal genitives will be highlighted and commented: (1) at all diachronic stages of Greek, genitive Case is realized by means of inflectional morphology: no adpositional genitives are attested; (2) in CG, inflectional genitives occur both pre- and post-nominally (like As). The pre-nominal field is subject to constraints substantially different from those acting on the post-nominal field. In particular, prenominal genitives occur both before and after structured As, and, in each such position, they are never iterable. Also, their distribution is governed by strict constraints on the realization of thematic arguments, identical to those governing functional genitives (P>S>O). Such properties make them compatible with GenS and GenO, respectively. On the contrary, postnominal genitives can be iterated, are not constrained to any hierarchy of argument function, and do not require strict adjacency to the head noun: these properties make them compatible with a Free genitive; (3) in NTG, the great majority of genitives are postnominal, strictly adjacent to the head noun: the sequence NGen is never interrupted by any noun modifier. Moreover, sequences with two postnominal genitives modifying one and the same head noun are never found. Finally, prenominal genitives strongly decrease in frequency, and never occur after (prenominal) As; (4) in Modern Greek, genitives are generally inflected, postnominal, strictly adjacent to the head noun, and non-iterable. Such properties are coherent with a (postnominal) GenO (Longobardi et al 2013), and are also found in Italiot Greek (Guardiano 2014). These facts suggest that CG had a Uniform Genitive, unlike NTG, where genitive seems instead to be compatible with a (postnominal) GenO, like in contemporary Greek: this signals a major change in the structure of adnominal genitives, that presumably took place in the Hellenistic period. To explain it, we will pursue and revise, over a novel theory of genitive Case (Longobardi 2018) and broader empirical evidence, a hypothesis put forward in Guardiano (2011) along the following lines: (1) CG: (a) the availability of hierarchically ordered (*S-Or>M1>M2>Arg*), post-D, prenominal As provided evidence for the absence of N-movement over structured As; (b) similarly, the availability of two prenominal positions for inflected genitives, presumably interpreted as GenS and GenO, provided evidence for the absence of N-movement over GenO; (c) postnominal genitives were interpreted as Free, iterable and not (necessarily) strictly adjacent to the noun (they can follow postnominal modifiers of N); (2) NTG: (a) the availability of hierarchically ordered, post-D, prenominal As provided evidence for the absence of N-movement over structured As; (b) instances of prenominal, pre-adjectival inflected genitives were interpreted as GenS; (c) postnominal genitives were interpreted as GenO crossed over by the noun rather than as postnominal Free genitives, according to a crosslinguistic principle on acquisition formulated by Crisma&Gianollo 2006 as the *functional first principle*: "interpret a genitive as functional whenever possible; resort to alternative analyses only in case of contrary evidence"; (d) this, in turn, provided evidence of N-raising over GenO (and, as a consequence, the resetting of the relevant parameter). In Standard Modern Greek, this picture has become enduring and the exceptions progressively disappeared.
Conclusion. Syntactic change is assumed to be constrained by 'inertial' principles (Keenan 1994; Longobardi 2001), namely to be induced either from changes in other domains or from external alterations of primary corpora. In the varieties relevant for our analysis, no change is visible in the morphological realization of genitives. Thus, we assume that the observed change depends on structural reanalysis due to alteration in the primary corpus, i.e. the increase in frequency of postnominal genitives, in turn perhaps triggered by pervasive contact between (some varieties of) Greek and non-Indo-European languages (e.g. Semitic) in Hellenistic times (Horrocks 1997, Bubenik 1989, Janse 2002, a.o.). Notice, finally, that the triggering evidence (i.e. postnominal genitives) was crucially already available in the original grammar(s): this further validates Guardiano et al's (2016) *Resistance Principle,* a generalization addressing the mechanisms of structural reanalysis under contact according to which structural change "under the influence of interference data is possible only if the new triggers are similar enough to triggers already unmistakably present in the interfered language".