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ACADEMIA ROMÂNĂ



Ion Tudor GIURGEA

Originea articolului posesiv-genitival *al* și evoluția sistemului demonstrativelor în română



Editura Muzeului Național al Literaturii Române



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ȘI EVOLUȚIA SISTEMULUI DEMONSTRATIVELOR
ÎN ROMÂNĂ**



ORIGINEA ARTICOLULUI POSESIV-GENITIVAL AL ȘI EVOLUȚIA SISTEMULUI DEMONSTRATIVELOR ÎN ROMÂNĂ

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ADDENDA

Summary

Romanian has a very peculiar system of genitive constructions, which has posed major problems for the syntactic analysis. This system can be described as a “syntactic irregularity”. Just as morphological irregularities have a historical explanation, syntactic irregularities can become comprehensible if we discover their origin and development. Thus, the main goal of this book is to uncover the history of Romanian genitive constructions, using the methods of syntactic reconstruction (necessary because the latest Latin inscriptions in the Balkans and the first written records of Romanian are separated by 9 centuries). As the characteristic marker of Romanian inflectional genitives, the preposed agreement marker *al* (the so-called “possessive-genitival article”), stems from the Latin demonstrative *ille*, which according to some authors would also survive in the present-day demonstratives *ăl(a)*, *al(a)*, our research had to include a treatment of the history of the demonstrative system from Latin to Romanian. Moreover, the book also contains a detailed description and syntactic analysis of the genitival constructions of contemporary Romanian.

The first chapter is dedicated to the syntax of genitives in present-day standard Romanian. The genitive in Romanian is neither inflectional nor purely syntactical. It can be defined by its specific markers, which alternate in function of formal properties of the noun phrase they introduce. These markers are: the agreeing preposed marker *al* + oblique (i.e., genitive-dative) inflection for DPs headed by determiners with case morphology, *al* + possessive suffix + agreeing morphemes for 1st-2nd pronouns (and optionally for the 3rd singular), the preposition *a* for DPs headed by determiners without case inflection, the preposition *de* for bare nouns. Moreover, *al* is dropped in adjacency with the definite article of the head noun. This alternation is found in the context of complements of nouns, which entitles us to label these constructions as “genitive”. If the alternation observed in this context is found in other environments, the

label “genitive” will be extended to those cases as well. The genitive thus defined is shown to be sometimes a structural case and sometimes an inherent case (in predicate position, after certain prepositions and possibly also on adnominal adjuncts). It is shown that Romanian has two genitive positions, an argumental and a non-argumental one, which explains why genitives can co-occur except for complex event nominals. A third licensing mechanism is restricted to reflexive genitives. The introductory markers, including *al*, are analyzed as case heads. For the fact that DP-initial *al*-genitives mark the DP as definite it is proposed that *al* can encode a definiteness agreement feature, allowing definiteness marking in SpecDP like adjectives that bear the suffixal definite article (which is in fact a definiteness inflection) and superlatives. The special positions which *al*-genitives can occupy inside the DP are explained by the interaction with a functional head *Poss*, which is involved in the formal licensing of genitives (arguments as well as adjuncts). The omission of *al* after the suffixal definite article is argued to be a PF-phenomenon; it is treated as the selection of a null allomorph of *al* in the context $[_{D+def}]_{-}$ where *def* and *al* share ϕ -features.

In chapter 2, it is shown that *al* originates in a strong form of the definite article, which continues Latin *ille* in DP-initial position. The distribution of this marker is compared to the present-day strong definite article *cel*, which emerged at a later date, by differentiation, from the distal demonstrative *acel* (<Lat. *eccum ille*). Because of its restricted distribution, the strong form *al* was reanalyzed, becoming an introductory marker of certain constituents – genitives and ordinals – and a part of certain functional items – the determiner *alalt* ‘the other’ (>modern Rom. *celălalt*, by remarking with the new strong article *cel*) and *alde* (a pre-determiner mostly used with proper names, originally meaning “of X’s group/family”). It is shown that both the system with *al* as a strong article and its reanalysis go back to Common Romanian (or Proto-Romanian: the unattested linguistic stage in which the four Romanian dialects were not yet separated), because they left traces in all four Romanian dialects.

In order to elucidate the concept of strong form of the article, the chapter also analyzes present-day *cel*. It is shown that this form covers

three items: *cel*₁, a purely definite article, *cel*₂, a functional item which builds the double definiteness construction, which still keeps a deictic feature (but applied to a property) and *cel*₃, a superlative marker.

Regarding the formal evolution, *al* originally differed from the suffixal article only by position (DP-initial vs. enclitic on a noun or adjective). It became formally distinguished from it only after the enclitic article dropped its initial vowel (a development that can also be observed in clitic pronouns, which were enclitic in Old Romance). The vocal *a-* is explained by the phonological rule unstressed *e-* > *a-*. This shows that DP-initial *ille* already became an article in Proto-Romanian, losing its word stress. The oblique forms of prenominal *ille*, being stressed on the ending, underwent aphaeresis yielding the forms *lui* and *ei* which came to function as proprial oblique determiners. As the connection of these forms to the paradigm of *al* was lost, new, regular oblique forms of *al* emerged: *alui*, *aiei/alei*, *alor* (all found in old Romanian; the third is the only one accepted by the present-day norm). The chapter also discusses the emergence of the Late Latin genitive-dative forms in *-úi*, *-éi*, *-óru*, which are shown to form a system with the nominal/adjectival endings *-o/-u*, *-e*, *-i(s)*, which explains the emergence of a gender distinction in the singular (*-úi* vs. *-éi*) as well as the disappearance of the gender distinction in the plural (*-óru* instead of *-óru* vs. *-áru*). Romanian is characterized by the fact that adnominal determiners adopted the long pronominal endings.

Contrary to a widespread opinion, the preposition *a* played no role in the emergence of the genitival marker *al*. Old Daco-Romanian is consistent in using *a* as a genitive and dative marker only for the DPs without oblique morphology. As *al* characterizes only inflectionally marked genitives (including here agreeing possessors), any influence of *a* in the emergence of *al* is excluded. The invariable genitival *a* found in various Romanian varieties comes from *al* by loss of inflection, and not from Lat. *ad*. This is shown by its capacity to mark definiteness in the DP-initial position and to combine with agreeing possessors (both properties being excluded for prepositions). Moreover, old texts from the regions which today have invariable *a* clearly show a gradual replacement of *al* by *a*. In Aromanian, this invariable *a* has been extended to datives probably because of the

Greek influence (in Modern Greek, genitive and dative are homonymous), supported by the existence of the preposition *a*, which characterized both genitives and datives (originally used as an alternative to inflectional marking, as shown by Old Romanian).

Chapter 3 discusses the development of the demonstrative system, focusing on the distal demonstrative *ăl(a)/al(a)*. Contrary to the predominant opinion, this element does not continue prenominal *ille*, which is represented in Romanian only by the (former) strong article *al*. It is argued that the reanalysis of *al* and the phonetic shape of *ăl(a)* cannot be explained if *ăl* had continued *ille*. Based on historical and dialectal data, it is argued that *ăl* appeared in Daco-Romanian at a late date (probably after the XVIth century), by analogy in the system *acest:ăst:acel*, as proposed by Iliescu (1967). More precisely, the forms *ăl(a)*, *al(a)*, *(a)hăl(a)*, *(a)hal(a)*, *aiel(a)* appeared as the result of the replacement of the proximal forms with *-ce-* (*acest(a)*, *cest(a)*) by proximal forms without *-ce-* (*ăst(a)*, *ast(a)*, *(a)hăst(a)*, *(a)hast(a)*, *aiest(a)*). It is also argued that all proximal forms without *-ce-* come from the demonstrative *aiest*, *aiaastă* (<*iste* + *a-* analogical after *acel*, *acest*) and do not continue directly Lat. *iste* (as is usually claimed). Originating in the north-eastern area, these forms gradually replaced the *acest* series because they had the advantage of brevity, as shortened forms had been obtained in the *aiest* series by the fall of the intervocalic *-i-* glide (first in the feminine *astă*, then in the masculine: *ast*, *ăst*; *ahăst* < **aăst* < *aest*).

The new forms without *-ce-* gradually spread into the paradigms of the strong article *cel* and its two cognates (the double definiteness marker and the superlative marker). However, here the replacement is less extended than for the demonstrative, which is an additional argument for the anteriority of *cel* with respect to *ăl*.

Chapter 4 tries to provide an account for the reanalysis of *al* into a genitive marker. It is proposed that this reanalysis was possible because the Common Romanian strong article had a different distribution than the present-day *cel*, appearing with a reduced number of prenominal constituents: genitives and agreeing possessors ("possessives"), ordinals and the alternative *alt*. Moreover, in phrases with an empty N it was in competition with the distal demonstrative (because of a generally observed

tendency of distal demonstratives to appear in N-ellipsis contexts). Crucially, adjectives could always receive the suffixal definite article, not only in DP-initial position as in modern Romanian, but also after an empty N and in the double definiteness construction. Evidence for this possibility can be found in Old Romanian, Aromanian and Meglenoromanian.

A second fact that made the reanalysis of *al* possible was the occurrence of *al* in postnominal position, in the double definiteness construction. This construction can be assumed for Common Romanian because it constitutes a Balkanic feature of Romanian, probably due to the Greek influence (in Greek, this construction is attested since the ancient language, including with genitives).

Besides the restriction to inflectionally marked genitives, the preposed genitival marker *al* is also characterized by the fact that it did not become obligatory in two contexts: immediately after the suffixal definite article and when the head noun is a predicative bare noun. A possible explanation is offered for this peculiar distribution: this pattern originated with agreeing possessors and was then extended to all inflectional genitives; agreeing possessors, in the system which preceded the reanalysis of *al*, occupied a special position in the functional domain of the noun phrase, due to their weak pronoun status; thus, they could appear either in prenominal position or after a noun moved to D, and probably also in the double definiteness construction. Therefore, the article *al* was used in order to allow them to appear in predicative position. Starting from this context, the definite feature of *al* was lost and *al* was reanalyzed as a marker of strong agreeing possessors, which allowed them to appear in postnominal position when not adjacent to the definite D. As genitives marked by dative inflection shared with agreeing possessors the prenominal and double definiteness context, in which the definite determiner appeared as *al*, the marker *al* was extended to them too, in the same conditions as with agreeing possessors (hence, the optionality after the definite D). For predicative bare nouns, there was a competing possessive construction with pronominal possessors, using the dative: in the Latin construction *ille mihi pater est*, the dative has been reanalyzed as an adnominal structural

case. Therefore, *al* was not generalized in this environment, which led to the emergence of the adnominal dative of Old Romanian.

The genitive system which has thus been reconstructed for the stage anterior to the reanalysis of *al* is supported by the comparison with other old Romance languages: the placement of agreeing possessors in the functional domain, the existence of a syncretic genitive-dative case, realized both by inflection and by the preposition *a(d)*, the existence of a position for inflectional genitives between the definite determiner and the head noun, the coexistence of a genitive-dative with a genitive marked by *de* are facts attested in other Romance languages, especially in the old stages (see, above all, Old French). Starting from this system, Romanian has followed a very different evolutionary path regarding the syntax of genitives because of three special properties: (i) the suffixal article, which led to the necessity of using a strong form (*al*), restricted to certain contexts; (ii) the existence of the double definiteness construction and (iii) the fact that the “long” (stressed) pronominal genitive-dative endings (*-ui*, *-ei*, *-oru(m)*) were not restricted to pronouns, but were used on (adnominal) determiners as well. The last fact, providing the genitive-dative with distinctive markers, made possible its preservation up to this time. The first two phenomena ultimately led to the emergence of the agreeing genitival marker *al*, with its highly peculiar distribution.

The last section of chapter 4 examines the issue of a possible external influence in the reanalysis of *al*, suggested by the existence of a very similar genitival agreeing marker in Albanian, which, like Romanian *al*, comes from a strong definite article. It is concluded that a mere syntactic borrowing in one of the two languages from the other is unlikely because the preposed agreement marker has a much wider distribution in Albanian than in Romanian, appearing with adjectives in all positions and with cardinals in definite DPs. The similar evolution of the two systems can be due to the resemblance in the initial conditions (which preceded the reanalysis), both languages having a suffixal definite article – which required the use of a strong form when suffixation was impossible – and the double definiteness construction. What contact can explain is this similarity of the initial systems. Regarding Romanian, the influence of a

substratum language (Proto-Albanian or a language related to it) has often been invoked for the choice of the enclitic position of the definite article, whereas the double definiteness construction is a Balkanic feature, probably of Greek origin.

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