Disappearance of Old French juxtaposition genitive and case: a corpus study[*]

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This paper presents a quantitative corpus study of the disappearance of the prepositionless modification of a noun by a noun from Old to Middle French. I show that if quantified in terms of its proportion of all the cases of modification of a noun by either a prepositional phrase or another noun, the use of this construction declines gradually from the oldest French texts available and disappears by the mid-15th century. I argue that this provides an argument against directly relating the loss of prepositionless modification of nouns to the loss of morphological case marking, which demonstrates a very different dynamics based on the results of a corpus case study I present. I suggest instead that the change might be related to the disappearance of a discourse related head in the extension of DP. I relate feature specification of this head to the observed correspondences between 'genitival' constructions and noun classes.

1. Introduction: 'genitival' modification in Old French

This section presents a brief overview of modification of a noun with a 'genitival' modifier in Old French (OF). In this period, usually assumed to span from the 9th to 14th centuries, we find three constructions that assumed the functions of Latin construction with moprhological genitive. The Latin construction in question is illustrated in (1) where the noun *vit-ae* in Genitive modifies the head noun in Nominative *initi-um*. In OF typical genitival relations such as part-whole relation or a relation of possession were expressed via modification either by a prepositional phrase with a preposition *de*, as in (2), or by a prepositional phrase with a preposition *a* (Modern French *à*), as in (3).

(1) vit-ae   initi-um
     life-GEN   beginning-NOM
     '(the) beginning of life'

(2) en   terre   de   promissiun
     into   land   of   promise
     'into the Promised Land' (QLR-1)

(3) fiz   a   la   bonuréé   Anne
     son   to   the   blessed   Anne
     '(the) son of the blessed Anne' (QLR-1)

I am going to refer to these two options as *deNP* and *aNP* modification respectively. Finally, a third OF correlate of Latin genitive construction is modification by a noun traditionally taken to be in oblique case or *cas régime*, which had null phonological exponent. This option is illustrated in (4). I will adopt here the term juxtaposition genitive (JG) used for this type of OF nominal modification by (Arteaga 1995) and (Delfitto and Paradisi 2009) among others. The disappearance of this construction is going to be the focus of the current study.

(4)   le   fiz   Heliúd
         the   son   Eliu
         'the son of Eliu' (QLR-1)

Concerning the distribution of the three options, (Baril 1998) notes that *a* modification was used with antecedents that were not prominent on the social hierarchy. According to (Foulet 1919), *deNP* was preferably used with animals or inanimate referents or (human) kinds or when the complement expressed the object of the head noun (cited from (Gianollo 2009)). With respect to JG, (Foulet 1919) argued that the JG complement is preferably a proper name and it must refer to a human. (Baril 1998) remarks that JG seems to be used with nouns having referents of 'high social rang', although this observation is based on one text, as the author herself notes.

Even though it seems that we do have reasons to talk about tendencies, there is no one-to-one correspondence between semantic classes of nouns and options of modification. For instance, we can find a noun denoting a human of high social rank such as 'king' playing role of possessor in either JG, or *aNP* or *deNP* modification construction[1]. However, the restriction observed by Foulet that the modifier in JG must be human seems to be hold about the corpus data. I will discuss this in more detail in section 5.

In the next section I will present quantitative data bearing on how JG 'lost' to the prepositional phrase modification during the OF period. In section 3 I discuss some existing proposals as to the cause of this change, and then in section 4 present corpus data that goes against these proposal. Section 5 outlines the current account given in terms of a discourse related head in the left periphery of Old French DP, and section 6 concludes the paper.

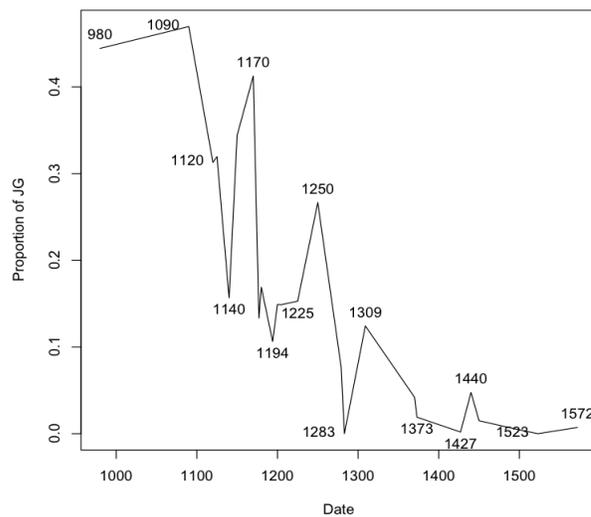## 2.   Decline and disappearance of JG

According to (Gianollo 2009), Late Latin was characterized by the prevailing use of morphological Genitive case to express nominal arguments, whereas '[t]he expression of real arguments with dē + ablative is extremely rare'. That is, at that time – 3rd to 7th centuries A.D. – *aNP* and *deNP* were not serious competitors to JG modification. In a two paragraph military treaty *Serments de Strasbourg* dated by 842 A.D., the oldest OF text we have, we find one case of relevant modification, and here JG is used. The example is given in (5).

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[1]Henceforth when discussing semantic properties of a noun I will be always referring to the noun in the modifier phrase, not the head noun.

(5) Pro   deo   amur
     for   God   love
     'For the love of God'

In *La vie de Saint Léger*, dated by 980 A.D., we find all the three options: JG, *aNP* and *deNP* modification. This situation persists until mid-15th century, when JG disappears. Some time after that *aNP* also 'loses grounds' to *deNP*, but this will not concern us here. The graph in (6) shows the dynamics of the decline of the proportion of JG on the material of the corpora MCVF and Penn Supplement to MCVF. What is plotted on the y-axis is the ratio of the number of JG constructions to the number of all the cases of 'genitive' modification (JG plus *aNP* plus *deNP*) in a text.

(6)

Legend

980	SAINT LÉGER	1194	CHIEVRES	1373	FROISSART
1090	SAINT ALEXIS	1200	AUCASSIN	1427	MORCHESNE
1120	BRENDAN	1205	CLARI	1440	XV JOIES
1125	PSEUDO TURPIN	1225	QUESTE	1450	CNNA
1140	ROLAND	1250	SERMON	1498	COMMYNES
1150	WILLELME	1279	SOMME	1523	TESTAMENT
1170	QLR	1283	ROISIN	1572	VALOIS
1177	YVAIN	1309	JOINVILLE		
1180	MARIE DE FRANCE	1370	PRISE		

Given that Late Latin virtually did not have prepositional phrase modification, and that in 980 the proportion of JG is already about 45%, we can conclude

that the decline of JG begun at the time we have no written sources for. What we see are the final stages of its disappearance. A previous quantitative study of this process was done in (Gianollo 2009). Since then some texts have been added to the corpora. The study measured a ratio of JG modification cases to the word count for each text. Since this measure depends on the number of 'genitive' modification cases in a text, the decline in one particular strategy is less pronounced. In the current study I will rely on the difference between the curve of JG decline in (6) and the dynamics of case marking degradation to be presented in section 4 to suggest that the two processes were not in direct relation.
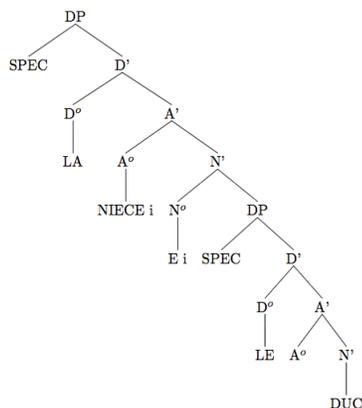
The following section is concerned with the discussion of the causes of JG disappearance in the literature.

3.   Disappearance of JG on the 'Agr(eement) approaches'

In this section I will discuss approaches of (Arteaga 1995) and (Delfitto and Paradisi 2009) to the structure underlying Old French JG. As we will see, at the centre of both approaches is a case assigning agreement head. The disappearance of JG is seen as caused by the disappearance of this head, which is also taken to be manifested by the loss of morphological case marking.

The structure (Arteaga 1995) proposes for the case of JG modification *la niece le duc* ('a niece of the duke') is given in (7).

(7)

In (7) A^o(greement) is specified as [+strong], which for Arteaga means that it does not need a specifier, and [+lexical], which means that it discharges features to the right. In the course of the derivation, N^o first raises to A^o, and then A^o assigns Genitive case to Specifier of the DP in the complement position. Concerning the causes of JG disappearance, Arteaga suggests that 'the loss of lexical AGR during the Middle French period meant that AGR no longer governed or discharged features to its right <...> This change, coupled with the loss of overt morphological case, meant that the preposition was needed to assign case to the

genitive complement.' For Arteaga the loss of lexical AGR in French was manifested by the loss of null subjects and loss of overt case marking.

In a similar vein, (Delfitto and Paradisi 2009) assumed that OF had syntactically active AGR, which made OF different from Old Italian, where 'the agreement/case projection – that correlates with *cas-régime* – is syntactically inert, since there is no overt oblique case manifestation in the Italian varieties under scrutiny.' (Delfitto and Paradisi 2009) proposed the following structure for the JG construction *la niece le duc* ('a niece of the duke').

(8) la $[_{D/PP}$ niece$_j$ [[AGR/K$^o{}_k$-D^o] $[_{IP}$ le duc $[e_k$ [e]$_j$...

In (8) NP 'niece' raises to SpecDP to lexicalize it, and the DP 'le duc' specifies AGR^o as [+definite]. AGR^o is assumed to originate as head of IP projection, which occupies the complement position of the higher D^o, and subsequently incorporate into D^o. Since AGR^o bears the feature [+definite], 'received' from the DP in its Spec, the complex head AGR^o-D^o also becomes specified with [+definite]. (Delfitto and Paradisi 2009) proposes that the feature [+definite] enables AGR^o-D^o to assign Genitive to 'le duc'. Implicitly, (Delfitto and Paradisi 2009) associates the disappearance of JG with the loss of syntactically active AGR, manifested by the loss of overt case marking.

To sum up, on these proposals JG disappeared as a result of the disappearance/deactivation of an agreement head, which was responsible for assigning case to the modifying noun. This hypothesis is taken to be supported by the fact that case marking disappeared around the same time, as well as, for Arteaga, by the loss of null subjects in French.

However, it needs to be mentioned that null subjects were lost *during* the Middle French period (1340-1610 A.D.), but not before it. In *Les chroniques de Froissart* dated by 1373 roughly 25% of matrix clauses have null subject. As (6) shows, JG by this point had virtually disappeared. We have also established above that the decline of JG must have started well before even Old French period. With respect to the disappearance of morphological case marking as a direct correlate of the loss of JG, in the next section I will present empirical evidence that what was happening to case marking had a very different dynamics from the decline of JG.

4.   Evolution of morphological case marking

It is traditionally assumed that the possessor in JG appears in the Oblique case or *cas régime* in French tradition. The Oblique was marked by zero ending on singular nouns (as opposed to *-s/-z* for Nominative) and by *-s/-z* ending on plural nouns. Table 1 gives a case paradigm from *La Chanson de Roland* for the noun *rei* 'king'.

Table 1. Old French two-case paradigm

li reis	NOM.SG	'the king'
le rei	OBL.SG	'(to) the king'
li rei	NOM.PL	'the kings'
les reis	OBL.PL	'(to) the kings'

According to (Schøsler 1984), among others, the Old French two-case system disappeared in the 15th century for nouns. (Baril 1998) notes that the inconsistency in case marking in Subject position is observed as early as in the texts of the 12th century.

Below I present the results of a case study aimed at establishing what the process of the loss of case looked like. The case study was done on the noun *reis*, which is one of the most frequent words in the corpus for that period. Table 2 gives the distribution of the form 'rei' (OBL.SG) across syntactic contexts in comparison with the form 'reis' in subject position. Given the paradigm in Table 1, the form 'rei' in the subject position is 'incorrect' case marking. I take the use of oblique forms such 'rei' in subject position to be the primary manifestation of the morphological case degradation[2].
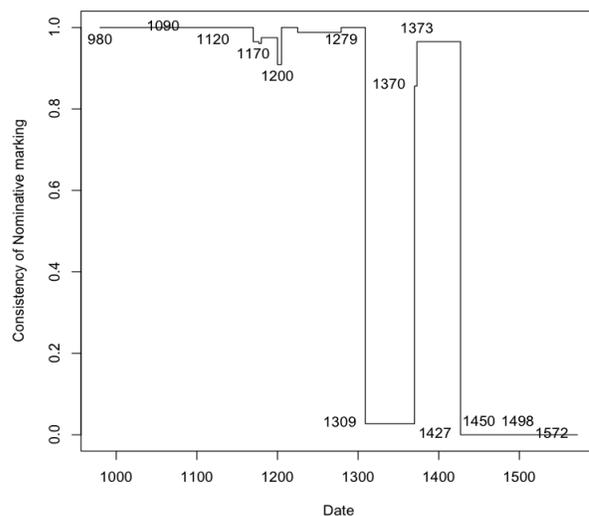
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[2]According to Palm (1977) cited in (Gianollo 2009) the definite determiner is the only real case marker in JG because of the ambiguity of *-s* between plural and nominative marking. It is difficult to agree with this given the accuracy of case marking illustrated in (9). Also, the case marking of definite determiners in the corpus goes hand in hand with the marking on the nouns. In the period when the form 'reis' are present at all, there are very few incorrect uses of the determiner of the kind 'le reis' (instead of 'li reis') and 'li rei' (instead of 'le rei'). Namely, there are 2 'mistakes' of the first kind in CLARI, 1 in PRISE and 4 in FROISSART, and there are 2 'mistakes' of the second type in QLR, 13 in CLARI, and 4 in FROISSART.

Table 2. *rei* across syntactic positions

Text	Date	Direct/Indirect Object	Subject
SAINT LÉGER	980	1	0 ('reis' = 4)
SAINT ALEXIS	1090	0	0 ('reis' = 1)
SAINT BRENDAN	1120	0	0 ('reis' = 3)
PSEUDO TURPIN	1125	0	0 ('reis' = 6)
ROLAND	1140	24	0 ('reis' = 100)
WILLELME	1150	2	0 ('reis' = 1)
QLR	1170	28	2 ('reis' = 55)
YVAIN	1177	11	2 ('reis' = 49)
MARIE DE FRANCE	1180	13	2 ('reis' = 78)
CHIEVRES	1194	0	0 ('reis' = 0)
AUCASSIN	1200	3	1 ('reis' = 10)
CLARI	1205	4	0 ('reis' = 18)
QUESTE	1225	10	1 ('reis' = 83)
SERMON	1250	2	0 ('reis' = 0)
SOMME	1279	2	0 ('reis' = 3)
ROISIN	1283	0	0 ('reis' = 0)
JOINVILLE	1309	201	468 ('reis' = 13)
PRISE	1370	55	41 ('reis' = 244)
FROISSART	1373	232	30 ('reis' = 834)
MORCHESNE	1427	1	16 ('reis' = 0)
CNNA	1440	1	0 ('reis' = 0)
XV JOIES	1450	2	4 ('reis' = 0)
COMMYNES	1498	46	161 ('reis' = 0)
NEW TESTAMENT	1523	7	2 ('reis' = 0)
VALOIS	1572	32	86 ('reis' = 0)

We see from Table 2 that until QLR, that is, ca. 1170, there are no Oblique forms in the subject position. QLR was written in Anglo-Norman, a dialect of Old French spoken in the British Islands, and it would be interesting to see if this is a reason for why we find in this texts first signs of the decrease in the consistency in the case marking. In (9) the dynamics of the change in the consistency of case marking is given in graphic form. Y-axis gives the ratio of 'correctly' marked subjects to the overall number of cases the noun 'king' was used as subject.

(9)

One conclusion we can draw from Table 2 is that the consistency of Nominative marking falls down from about 1 to 0 at the beginning of the 14th century, featuring no lengthy decline. Incidentally, according to (Baril 1998), 15th century is the time when the final sibilant [s] stops being pronounced. Although more research needs to be done on how this could be related to the drop in the accuracy of case marking, we can tentatively hypothesize that the phonological change could have been a trigger for the morphological one.

Let us now compare graphs in (6) and (9). We see that by the end of the 13th century JG had been in decline for several centuries whereas the consistency of Nominative marking of subject had stayed between 0.9 and 1 during the same period. This discrepancy makes it difficult to maintain that the two processes were direct manifestations of the same underlying change – the disappearance of an agreement head.

In the following section I will suggest that JG might have disappeared as a result of the disappearance of a discourse-related head K^o that used to be realized either by a null exponent, or by the preposition *a* or else by the preposition *de*.
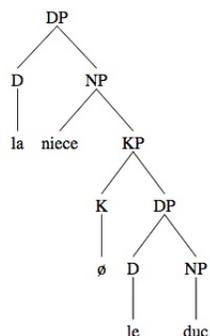
5. Proposal: disappearance of JG and the loss of a discourse-related head

In this section I am going to present a hypothesis that the disappearance of JG was a consequence of the disappearance of a functional head in the left periphery of the Old French DP that was encoding the animacy/prominence status of the referent of the modifier.
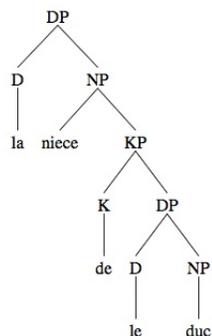
(Gianollo 2009) proposed that 'genitival' modifiers in OF were K(ase)P projections occupying the complement position of the modified noun. In the case

of *deNP* and *aNP* modification, the prepositions was merged in K^o, whereas JG modification was the result of the movement of either the noun (proper names) or the determiner/possessive pronoun to K^o. I am going to draw on this model, including, however, a modification. Namely, I propose that in the case of JG no movement took place. Rather, I propose that K^o had zero exponent. This model is illustrated in (10) for the OF expression *la niece le duc* and also for a possible expression *la niece du duc* in (11)[3].

(10)

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          DP
         /  \
        D    NP
        |    / \
       la niece  KP
                / \
               K   DP
               |   / \
               ø  D   NP
                  |   |
                  le  duc
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(11)

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          DP
         /  \
        D    NP
        |    / \
       la niece  KP
                / \
               K   DP
               |   / \
               de D   NP
                  |   |
                  le  duc
```

Presumably, in Latin K^o hosted case inflection, and was the final landing site for a noun. I will leave the discussion of the changes in the properties of K^o from Latin to Old French outside of this paper. Instead, I would like to address the question of what determined the choice between a preposition and a null exponent in the realization of K^o.

As mentioned above, it has been observed in the literature that there is some sort of correspondence between semantics of the noun and the type of 'genitival' modification. Namely, JG modification was observed to correspond to modifiers

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[3]I am using a possible expression instead of an actually attested one to keep a parallel with (10). As mentioned above, normally we expect prepositional phrase modification to be possible in all cases where JG is possible.

denoting socially prominent humans, *a*NP modification – to modifiers denoting socially non-prominent humans and *de*NP modification – to those denoting animals or inanimate objects. What complicates the picture is that some nouns allow several modification options, e.g. we find nouns denoting prominent humans both in JG and prepositional phrase modifiers. However, we do not find animals or inanimate object in JG modification. In fact, JG modification is very restricted as to the semantics of the modifier.

The corpus data we have confirms previous observations that JG modifiers are restricted to proper names and nouns denoting humans. Moreover, it seems that the class of nouns found in JG can be narrowed down even further – they overwhelmingly include social roles and kinship terms. 10 most frequent common names, all falling into this category except for the noun *autrui* ('the other one'), are accountable for 70% cases of JG with common nouns, as Table 3 demonstrates[4]. The rest of the nouns not mentioned in the table also involve only human social roles and kinship terms.

Table 3. Frequencies of common nouns and proper names in JG positions

Proper names	Occurrences	Common nouns	Occurrences
Dieu	267	*rei* ('king')	244
(Notre) Seignor	67	*seignor* ('lord')	56
Saûl	26	*empereur* ('emperor')	53
Jhesucrist	20	*mesire* ('my lord')	23
David	17	*autrui* ('the other one')	17
Israel	12	*pere* ('father')	15
Rollant	9	*roine* ('queen')	14
Sainte Souphie	8	*duc* ('conte')	12
Ysaï	8	*abét* ('abbot')	7
Benjamin	7	*fil* ('son')	7
OTHER	321		197
TOTAL	762 (+ 1 plural)		645 (+ 49 plural)
GRAND TOTAL 1457			

We are now faced with the following dilemma. On the one hand, if we were to argue that the choice of 'genitive' construction depends solely on the semantics of the noun we would have to explain why nouns such as *duc*, as well as arguably all the nouns in Table 3, are compatible with all three modification options. On the other hand, if we wanted to link the choice of 'genitive' construction to some discourse properties of the referent of the modifier, we would need an account of why JG seems to be limited only to certain nouns.

The solution I propose is to specify the head K^o with privative features [prominent] and [human] which encode discourse status of the referent of a modifier expression. Tentatively, the 'prominence' is understood here as 'uniqueness

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[4]Various spellings of the words are taken into account. For instance, the word *rei* can be spelled as 'roy', 'roi' or 'rei' depending on the text. I am using italics to refer to the lexemes

of x in a situation y'. This gives us a key to why only some nouns appear in JG. Those are the nouns whose lexical definition presumably involves situational uniqueness[5]. I hypothesize that JG is possible if the semantics of the noun is compatible with the feature specifications of K^o. I propose the following correspondence between feature specification of K^o, its morphological exponents and noun classes:

Table 4. Features and morphological exponents of K^o

feature specification	morphological exponent	noun type
prominent, human	ø	prom. hum.
human	a	hum.
ø	de	all

It follows from Table 4 that a noun denoting a prominent human is compatible with all specifications of K^o, whereas a noun denoting a non-prominent human or a non-human is not compatible with the specification [prominent][human]. This would be then the reason for why we find words like *duc* with all exponents of K^o, whereas the null exponent is limited only to lexically prominent nouns. Without going into details of it, I will assume that the 'compatibility' between feature specification of K^o and the denotation of the noun is becomes relevant at the LF level.

To sum up preceding discussion, I proposed that OF was grammatically encoding the status of the referent of the modifier in the functional head K^o. As such, K^o can be seen as a discourse related head. I argued that JG involved a null exponent of this head. The disappearance of JG is then a consequence of the disappearance of the discourse-related head in question. One possible reason for why the latter was lost is that the grammatical distinction in terms of discourse prominence of a referent disappeared because of the generalization of *deNP* modification which, unlike JG, was compatible with all lexical classes of nouns.

Interestingly, it seems that something parallel could have happened in the same period at the sentential level. Around the same time the OV(S) order, illustrated in (12), was also declining.
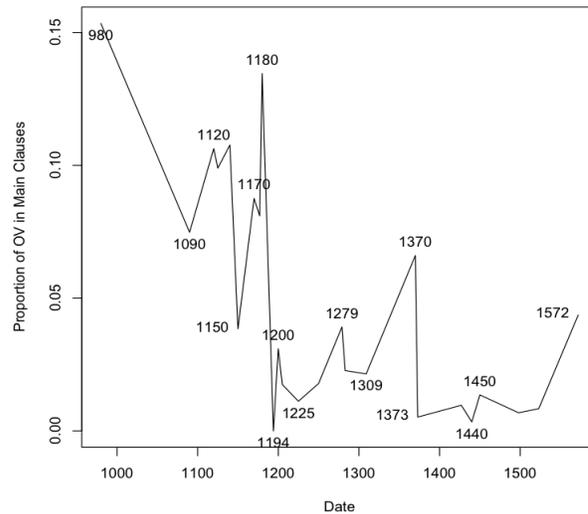
(12) La   guarisun   i   mist   odveoc
     the   food   there   put.PAST   also
     'He also put there food.' (1120-BRENDAN-WITH-NOTES,35.93, MCVF)

(Labelle and Hirschbühler 2005) proposed that construction of this kind in OF resulted from an object movement to Spec ZP, a discourse related projection. The unavailability of this projection at the later stages of the language might thus be argued to be the reason for why the OV(S) order disappeared. The following graph shows the dynamics of the decline of Direct Object-Verb word order in the

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[5]It seems that semantic treatment of Old French JG along the lines of (Schwarz 2009)'s account of German weak definite articles which involves satisfying uniqueness requirement in various situations might bring interesting results. I will not develop it here.

corpus texts. The y-axis shows the proportion of OV order among main clauses.

(13)

I leave to further research establishing whether the seeming parallelism between (6) and (13) has any real basis. In case the parallelism is not accidental, next question is what language change is responsible for the loss of discourse related projections both on the sentential level and on the level of the extended DP projection.

6.   Conclusions

In this paper I examined the decline in proportion of JG among 'genitival' modifiers and the evolution of the accuracy of morphological case marking. I suggested that this comparison does not support approaches that see the disappearance of morphological case and JG as stemming from the same structural change, namely the disappearance/deactivation of an agreement projection. According to the corpus data we have, JG construction shows gradual decline whose beginning evidently predates the oldest texts we have, whereas morphological distinction between Nominative and Oblique was observed impeccably until early 14th century.

Instead, I suggested that JG construction resulted from a phonologically null realization of a discourse related head which was encoding discourse prominence of the 'genitival' modifier. I proposed to treat prepositional phrase modifiers as resulting from alternative realizations of this head. The view of JG and prepositional phrase modifiers as being in a formal paradigmatic relation let us accommodate observations made in earlier research of the subject, namely, that the three 'genitival' constructions tend to occur with different classes of nouns. I did

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not provide evidence that the variation between JG and prepositional realization of a modifier should be really related to the discourse properties of the referent. To do this, one would need to examine contexts where a particular noun is used in JG and in prepositional phrase constructions, and try to discern whether there are any cues as to the status of the referent. On the hypothesis that JG encodes prominence or situational uniqueness of the referent, we should be finding JG in the absence of anaphoric antecedent or referents that conform to the same denotation, whereas the opposite should hold about prepositional phrase modifiers.

In the final section I pointed out a possible parallel between the disappearance of JG and OV order. The latter had been independently argued to involve a discourse related projection which later disappeared. At this point this parallel provokes questions that will have to be answered in further research.

Parsed Texts (in chronological order)

SAINT LÉGER (980)	La vie de St Léger, Penn Supplement to MCVF
ROLAND (1086)	La Chanson de Roland, MCVF
SAINT ALEXIS (1090)	La vie de St Alexis, Penn Supplement to MCVF
BRENDAN (1120)	Benedeit, Le Voyage de St Brendan, MCVF
PSEUDO TURPIN (1125)	Pseudo Turpin (Historia Caroli Magni), MCVF
WILLELME (1150)	Lois de Guillaume le conquérant en français et en latin, MCVF
QLR (1170) excerpt	Li Quatre Livres des Reis, Simonenko, Alexandra. 2010. Syntactically parsed version of the QLR (Book I), version 1.
YVAIN (1077)	Chrétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier au Lion (Yvain), MCVF
MARIE DE FRANCE (1180)	Marie de France. Les Lais de Marie de France, MCVF
CHIEVRES (1194)	La charte de Chièvres, MCVF
AUCASSIN (1200)	Aucassin et Nicolette, MCVF
CLARI (1205)	Robert de Clari, La Conquête de Constantinople, MCVF
QUESTE (1225)	La Queste del Saint Graal, MCVF
SERMON (1250)	Sermon anonyme sur sainte Agnès, MCVF
SOMME (1279)	Le Somme le Roi, Penn Supplement to MCVF
ROISIN (1283), excerpt	Le livre Roisin, MCVF
JOINVILLE (1309)	Joinville, Jean de, Mémoires ou Vie de saint Louis, MCVF
PRISE (1370)	La prise d'Alexandrie, ou Chronique du roy Pierre Ier de Lusignan, MCVF
FROISSART (1373)	Froissart, Jean, Chroniques (livre premier), MCVF
MORCHESNE (1427), excerpt	Le formulaire d'Odart Morchesne, MCVF
XV JOIES (1440)	Lex XV Joyes de Mariage, MCVF
CNNA (1450)	Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles Anonymes, MCVF
COMMYNES (1498)	Philippe de Commynes, Mémoires, MCVF
TESTAMENT (1523)	D'Ètaples, Jacques Lefèvre, Le nouveau testament, Penn Supplement to MCVF
VALOIS (1572), excerpt	Marguerite de Valois, Correspondance, MCVF

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