

LESSON 38

Genitive Case 1

38.1. Introduction

This Lesson deals with Genitive phrases which qualify a noun or pronoun; hence, they are sometimes called ‘adnominal’ Genitives. The function of such phrases is similar to that of an adjective; hence, they are also sometimes called ‘adjectival’ Genitives. All types of usage in this Lesson are basically Possessive.

38.2. Simple Possessive Genitive

The qualified noun belongs to the person or thing denoted by the Genitive phrase.

ἤδη δὲ τόνδε Θάνατον εἰσορῶ πέλας,
ἱερῆ θανόντων, ὅς νιν εἰς Ἄιδου δόμους
μέλλει κατὰξειν. (E.*Alc.* 24–26.)

*And now I see Death here nearby,
priest of the dead, who is going to lead her down
to the house of Hades.*

The ‘house’ belongs to ‘Hades’.

38.3. Subjective Genitive

Many Genitive phrases of a generally ‘possessive’ type may be subdivided as either ‘Subjective’ or ‘Objective’. The Subjective Genitive corresponds to the Subject of a verb equivalent in meaning to the qualified noun.

οὐκ ἤρεσκέ σοι μόρον Ἀδμήτου
διακωλύσαι, ...; (E.*Alc.* 32–33.)

*Was it not sufficient for you to prevent
the fate of Admetus ...?*

‘Admetus’ (Subject) was due to suffer his ‘fate’.

38.4. Objective Genitive

The Objective Genitive corresponds to the Object of a verb equivalent in meaning to the qualified noun.

... μετὰ δὲ τὴν **τῶν τυράννων** κατάλυσιν ἐκ τῆς Ἑλλάδος οὐ πολλοῖς ἔτεσιν ὕστερον καὶ ἡ ἐν Μαραθῶνι μάχη Μήδων πρὸς Ἀθηναίους ἐγένετο. (Th. 1.18.1.)

... and after the removal of the tyrants from Greece, not many years later the battle at Marathon of the Persians against the Athenians also took place.

The Spartans ‘removed’ ‘the tyrants’ (Object) from Greece.

38.5. Partitive Genitive

The Partitive Genitive denotes the whole class of which the qualified noun forms a part.

ἦσαν δὲ καὶ τοῖς Κορινθίοις ἐν τῇ ἡπείρῳ πολλοὶ **τῶν βαρβάρων** παραβεβοηθηκότες. (Th. 1.47.3.)

And many of the foreigners, having come to help, were also <available> on the mainland for the Corinthians.

The ‘many’ constitute a part of the total number of ‘the foreigners’.

38.6. Genitive of Definition (or Apposition)

The Genitive of Definition is a more specific term which defines a more general word. Since both terms refer to the same reality, this usage is also called the Genitive of Apposition.

σπεύσεις **θανάτου** τελευτάν;
μηδὲν τόδε λίσσου. (E.Med. 153–154.)

*Will you hasten the end **that is death**?
Make no prayer for this.*

The ‘end’ is more closely defined as ‘death’.

38.7. Genitive of Description (or Quality)

The Genitive of Description or Quality expresses the character or purpose of the qualified noun.

ὦ πατρίς, ὦ δώματα, μὴ
δῆτ’ ἀπολις γενοίμαν
τὸν **ἀμηχανίας** ἔχουσα δυσπέρατον αἰῶν(α)... (E.Med. 645–648.)

*O fatherland, O home, may I certainly
not become city-less,
having that life **of helplessness**, hard to cross over ...*

‘Helplessness’ indicates the character of ‘that life’.

38.8. Genitive of Material

The Genitive of Material (as also of Measure, and of Price or Value) may be considered a subtype of the Genitive of Description. The Genitive of Material indicates what the qualified noun is made of, or consists of.

... πρῶτοι δὲ ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν νόμισμα **χρυσοῦ** καὶ
ἀργύρου κοψάμενοι ἐχρήσαντο, ... (Hdt. 1.94.1.)

*... and they first among men whom we know stamped coinage **of gold** and
of silver and used it ...*

The material of the ‘coinage’ is ‘gold’ and ‘silver’. (Ionic τῶν = Attic ὧν, attracted to Case of antecedent. Ionic ἴδμεν = Attic ἴσμεν.)

38.9. Genitive of Measure

The Genitive of Measure describes the qualified noun by indicating its size or duration.

... κίνδυνόν τε τοσόνδε ἀνερρίψαμεν διὰ τῆς ἀλλοτρίας **πολλῶν ἡμερῶν** ὁδὸν ἰόντες καὶ πᾶν τὸ πρόθυμον παρεχόμενοι· (Th. 4.85.4.)

... *we ran so great a risk by travelling on a journey **of many days** through enemy territory and while showing all eagerness.*

The ‘many days’ indicate how much time the ‘journey’ takes.

38.10. Genitive of Price or Value

The Genitive of Price or Value describes the cost or worth of the qualified noun.

καίτοι ὁ μὲν ἐμὸς πατήρ **πέντε καὶ τετταράκοντα μνῶν** μόνων ἑκατέρω, ἐμοὶ καὶ τῷ ἀδελφῷ, τὴν οὐσίαν κατέλιπεν ... (D. 42.22.)

*And yet my father bequeathed to each, my brother and me, the estate **of forty-five minae** only ...*

The ‘estate’ was worth ‘forty-five minae’.

References

Smyth (1956), *Greek grammar*, §§1289–1338.

EXERCISE 38

Translate the following passages. Briefly indicate the particular function of the Genitive phrases in **bold** type. For example, Partitive Genitive, Genitive of Material, etc. In passages 2 and 3, the Genitive phrases are either Subjective or Objective; briefly indicate the reason for your choice between these two possibilities.

1. ἀνέστησαν δὲ καὶ ἐκ τῆς νῦν Ἑορδίας καλουμένης Ἑορδούς, **ὧν** οἱ μὲν πολλοὶ ἐφθάρησαν, βραχὺ δὲ τι **αὐτῶν** περὶ Φύσκαν κατώκηται ...

ἀνιστάναι *to remove* (people from a place)
 βραχὺ ... τι (Nom. adj.) Understand a noun such as *group*.

2. ... καὶ προῖκα ἐπιδίδωμι Ἀρχίππη τάλαντον μὲν τὸ ἐκ Πεπαρήθου, τάλαντον δὲ τὸ αὐτόθεν, συνοικίαν **ἑκατὸν μνῶν** ...

προῖξ, προικός, ἡ *dowry*
 Πεπάρηθος, -ου, ἡ (an Aegean island)
 αὐτόθεν (adv.) *from here* (referring to Athens)
 συνοικία, -ας, ἡ *tenement house*

3. βρόχον κρεμαστὸν **ἀγχόνης** ἀνήψατο.

ἀνήψατο The implied Subject is fem.

4. ἔκληρον οὖν τὸν τε λιμένα εὐθύς τὸν μέγαν, ἔχοντα τὸ στόμα **ὀκτῶ σταδίων** μάλιστα, τριήρεσι πλαγίαις καὶ πλοίοις καὶ ἀκάτοις ...

κλήρειν *to shut up, to block* (here 3rd pers. pl.)
 τε Anticipates a καί (not quoted);
 need not be translated.
 λιμῆν, -ένος, ὁ *harbour*
 μάλιστα *approximately*
 πλάγιος, (-α,) -ον *placed sideways, broadside on*
 ἄκατος, -ου, ἡ (ὁ) *light vessel*

5. ... πάρεισιν **ἀνδρὸς τοῦδε** παῖς τε καὶ γυνή ...

6. τοιάδ' ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ἦλθε συμφορὰ **πάθους**, ...

7. ... πέμπει ἐπὶ τὴν νέα τὴν Ἀδειμάντου τάλαντα **ἀργυρίου** τρία.

πέμπει Hist. Pres.
 ἀργύριον, -ου, τό *silver*

8. ... οὐκ οἶδα **τοιούδ' ἀνδρὸς** ἔργα ...
9. ... ἡ Δεκέλεια ... πολλὰ ἔβλαπτε τοὺς Ἀθηναίους, καὶ ἐν τοῖς πρῶτον **χρημάτων** τ' ὀλέθρῳ καὶ **ἀνθρώπων** φθορᾷ ἐκάκωσε τὰ πράγματα.

Δεκέλεια, -ας, ἡ	<i>Decelea</i> (place)
πολλά	internal Acc.
ἐν τοῖς πρῶτον	<i>in the first place</i>
φθορά, -ᾶς, ἡ	<i>annihilation</i>

This text is taken from *Intermediate Ancient Greek Language*,
by Darryl Palmer, published 2021 by ANU Press, The Australian
National University, Canberra, Australia.