

## 'GYLBART OFF KYMLOTH LANDE': THE UNINFLECTED GENITIVE AND THE GROUP GENITIVE IN OLDER SCOTS<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

The present paper studies the genitive construction in Older Scots using the largest corpus available for this period: *The Linguistic Atlas of Older Scots (LAOS)*. It focuses, on the one hand, on the uninflected genitive, analysing its frequency in the different contexts in which it is found and, on the other, on complex structures such as the split and the group genitive. The results are compared to those obtained for other varieties (Allen 1998, Myers 2009) in order to establish whether there are differences with respect to these constructions. The historical data obtained from *LAOS* are also used to test some of the theories and hypotheses formulated about the genitive, such as those proposed by Seppänen (1997) or Allen (1997).

### *Introduction*

The present article studies the genitive construction in Older Scots using the largest corpus available for this period: *The Linguistic Atlas of Older Scots (LAOS)*, a tagged corpus compiled by Keith Williamson consisting primarily of local documents, i.e., texts which can be localised on non-linguistic grounds. The reasons for choosing *LAOS* are various: first, it is the largest electronic corpus for early Scots (with 1,234 tagged texts and a total word count of 348,530); second, it covers the period 1380–1500 and, therefore, includes the earliest records of the language; finally, it is based on diplomatic editions of the texts, transcribed directly from the manuscript or from a facsimile of the manuscript, and, therefore, offers reliable data for linguistic analysis.

The present article focuses first on the uninflected genitive, one of the syntactic features characteristic of Scots and Northern English, reaching as far back as Old Northumbrian and still preserved in modern and contemporary varieties. Although also found in other dialects, zero genitives seem to be more common in the North and are found in contexts for which there are no historical or phonetic explanations. The results of the study of the uninflected genitive in *LAOS* are compared with those obtained by Allen (1998) in her study of three Late Middle English texts of Northern origin, and those reported by Myers (2009) in her study of the genitive in six early Middle English texts from West Midlands, East Midlands and Kent, in order to establish whether there are diatopic differences with respect to this construction.

The second objective of the present paper is the study of complex structures such as the split and the group genitive in *LAOS*, in order to evaluate some of the

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theories and hypotheses formulated about them. In her discussion of the group genitive, for example, Allen (1997: 121) points out the need for further research:

The nature of these earliest examples suggests perhaps that the group genitive was most easily used when the NP could be regarded as a title, but further investigation to find other early examples is necessary in order to make a statement with any confidence about their nature.

Similarly, study of historical data is necessary in order to test Allen's hypothesis:

Unfortunately, examples of co-ordinated possessors preceding the possessed noun are much too scarce in the corpus studied for me to say with any certainty that the possessive marker shows up in the texts at the end of a conjoined possessor NP before it is found as a full-blown group genitive, that is, at the end of an NP containing a PP. (Allen 1997: 122)

The article is organized as follows:

1. Zero genitive
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2. Complex possessors in *LAOS*: A detailed quantitative analysis
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  - 2.3. Conjoined Noun Phrases
  - 2.4. Appositive constructions
3. Conclusions

### *1. Zero genitive*

#### *1.1. Introduction*

The uninflected or zero genitive is one of the syntactic features characteristic of Scots and Northern English. Although also found in other dialects, zero genitives are more common in the North and are found in contexts for which there are no historical or phonetic explanations. Mustanoja (1960: 72), for example, mentions the *s*-less genitive as mainly a Northern feature in Middle English, and Klemola (1997: 351) states that 'the loss of the genitive marker in Northern dialects is not a recent phenomenon', but 'a feature of some antiquity, probably reaching as far back in time as the early Middle English period.' Similarly, Seppänen (1997: 196) reports that 'in both ME and EModE the zero genitive was particularly common in the Northern dialects.'

With regard to Scots, Smith (1902) mentions that 'there are many examples in Middle Scots of the ... undeclined possessive, as *fadir broder* (father's brother), *a fure lenth* (a furrow's length)' (xxxii). Similar information is given in more modern accounts. Macafee (1992/1993), for example, points out that in Older Scots there are

occasional survivals of zero genitives in nouns of relationship ending in *-r* (e.g. *sister son* ‘nephew on the sister’s side’, *brother dochter* ‘niece on the brother’s side’) (15). Zero genitives are also found with personal names and with titles (e.g. *to the eryl of Herfurd cosyne*) (Macafee 2002: cvi). The same information is given by King (1997), who expands a bit on the zero genitive and mentions that some examples ‘continue to exist in Modern Scots, such as *mither side*, *sister bairn* or *sister son*’ (165).

Although there seems to be some agreement about zero genitives being a syntactic feature characteristic of Scots and Northern English, there are also a number of claims which, to the best of my knowledge, have not been verified. Talking about zero genitives, Seppänen (1997: 197) argues that

their suppression of the inflectional ending has a close parallel in the use of the same suffix as a marker of the plural with certain units of weight and measure and comparable nouns, particularly when they are preceded by a numeral (*hundreds/dozens of times and three hundred, two thousand, etc. ...*). This usage has a rather limited scope today, but was more extensive in EModE, and is even today normal usage in regional speech.

The origin of these constructions, however, is completely different, since they go back to OE neuter nouns (*hund, hundred, þusend*) which did not add *-as* in the nom./acc. plural,<sup>2</sup> regardless of whether they were preceded by a numeral (i) or not (ii), as in the following examples:

- (1) nigan hund geara 7 fiftig geara  
 ‘nine hundred of years and fifty of years’  
 ‘nine hundred and fifty years’ (AElfric’s *Catholic Homilies*)
- (2) fela hund wintra  
 ‘many hundreds of winters’ (Wulfstan’s *Homilies*)  
 (Examples taken from Sato, 2009)

Seppänen (1997: 196) also argues that ‘by the time the zero genitive made its appearance in English, the position of the genitive was invariably in front of a head noun which could be present or be ellipted.’ Examples of zero genitive, however, are already common in OE with nouns of relationship, such as *father, mother, daughter, brother, sister* (cf. Campbell 1959 and Hogg & Fulk 2011), and in this period the position of the genitive was not invariably in front of a head noun, but varied between pre- and post-position (cf. Timmer 1939 and Brown 1970, among others).

<sup>2</sup> These nouns may be indeclinable or add a vowel in the nom./acc.pl. (Campbell 1959: 285).

Besides, although in the course of the ME period the position of the genitive was fixed before the head noun, examples of postposed genitives are found in early ME:

- (3) se wæs nefa Ansealmes ærcebiscopes  
 ‘he was Archbishop Anselm’s nephew’  
 The *Peterborough Chronicle* Continuations
- (4) þes witeȝan cwide ioheles  
 ‘the prophet’s speech Joel’s’  
*The Lambeth Homilies*  
 Examples taken from Myers (2009: 38, 15).

Similarly, there are sporadic examples in LAOS in which the genitive is postposed, even as late as the second half of the fifteenth century:

- (5) in y<sup>e</sup> handis ser adam-fosstaris on y<sup>e</sup> west syd<sup>3</sup>  
 ‘in the hands of Sir Adam-Fosstar on the west side’  
 (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House B58/8/1, f. 73r – f. 81v (2), 1470)
- (6) ye lan[] [] y<sup>e</sup> awbat<sup>is</sup> & ye conuent<sup>is</sup> on ye-toyir sy  
 ‘the land of the abbot and the convent on the other side’  
 (Newburgh Court Book: 23 November 147[9?], f23v)

With regard to the syntactic contexts in which zero genitives are found, the above-mentioned authors include nouns of relationship ending in *-r* (for historical reasons), nouns ending in a sibilant or before a word starting with a sibilant (for reasons of euphony), personal names and titles. In the following section I will focus on these contexts in my study of uninflected genitives in Older Scots.

### 1.2. Zero genitives in LAOS: A detailed quantitative analysis

A search for zero genitives in LAOS returns 182 tokens of this construction, which contrasts with 1,244 tokens of {S} in the corpus,<sup>4</sup> the percentage of uninflected genitive being 12.7% as against 87.2%. Zero genitives are attested in LAOS in

<sup>3</sup> The examples taken from LAOS try to reproduce the original as faithfully as possible, and therefore superscript letters are used and expansion of abbreviations is indicated by means of italics.

<sup>4</sup> The possessive marker is realised by a variety of endings in the corpus: *-es*, *-ez*, *-is*, *-isβ*, *-iβ*, *-s*, *-β*, *-js*, *-ys*, *-yβ*, *-z*, all of which are subsumed under the label {S}.

seven different contexts, most of them identified in the studies mentioned above. They are analysed below according to their relative capacity to trigger the omission of the inflection.

### 1.2.1. Nouns ending in a sibilant

This is the strongest conditioning factor for the omission of the genitive inflection in Older Scots, since all the examples of this context found in the corpus are uninflected, both common nouns (2x) and proper nouns (43x), as in the following:<sup>5</sup>

- (7) And 3oure gracious **excellence** knowlage  
 ‘and your gracious excellence’s knowledge’  
 (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House GD12/40, 1458)
- (8) ye sad william-**knox** tenement lysis in ye sad burgh of Edinburgh  
 ‘the said William-Knox’s tenement lies in the said burgh of Edinburgh’  
 (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House B22/22/3, f. 83r–v, 1490)

The strength of this conditioning factor can be observed in the fact that the inflection is omitted even in independent genitives, a construction which strongly favours the inflection (cf. 1.2.7 for a discussion). There are two instances of zero genitive in this context in *LAOS*:

- (9) be-twixt y<sup>e</sup> land was rechart of **geddes** on y<sup>e</sup> est sid  
 ‘between the land [that] was Richard of Geddes[’s] on the east side’  
 (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House B58/8/1, f. 73r – f. 81v (22, 1471))
- (10) aland liand on y<sup>e</sup> south rau be\thwen y<sup>e</sup> land was dawy-**stanhus** on y<sup>e</sup> est part on y<sup>e</sup>-tapart & y<sup>e</sup> land of thom-3ong on y<sup>e</sup> west part on y<sup>e</sup>-toyer part  
 ‘a land lying on the south row, between the land [that] was Davy-Stanhus[’s] on the east part on the one part, and the land of Thom-young on the west part on the other part’.  
 (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House B58/8/1, f. 1r – f. 7r (27), 1457)

<sup>5</sup> The strength of the conditioning factor is measured in all cases by the percentage of tokens favouring the omission of the inflection as against those adding {S}. The higher the percentage of zero genitives found in a given context, the stronger this conditioning factor is.

Although zero ending is also found with nouns ending in a sibilant in other varieties, there are other options available in this context. In Lazamon's *Brut* (West Midlands), for example, Myers (2009: 23) reports the following alternatives for the genitive of the name *Severus*:

- (11) (a) *Seuarus hired*  
       'Severus's army'  
       (b) *Sæueres dæðe*  
       'Severus's death'  
       (c) *Sæuarusses lic*  
       'Severus's body'

Besides the addition or omission of the inflection illustrated here, there is another option available in this context: the so-called *his*-genitive,<sup>6</sup> exemplified in:

- (12) *Gorloys his wifue*  
       'Gorlois his wife' = 'Gorlois's wife'  
       Myers (2009: 24)

The *his*-genitive, however, is not attested in *LAOS* or in 16th-century Scottish texts, such as *Ane Resonyng* (argumentative text/pamphlet, following Meurman-Solin's (1993) terminology) or *The Complaynt of Scotland* (literary text) (cf. Rodríguez Ledesma 2004). It is not mentioned by Sheppard (1936) in his exhaustive study on Bellenden's language, or by Kuipers (1964) or Van Buuren (1982) in their linguistic analysis of the 16th-century texts edited by them. *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue (DOST)* offers only five instances of this construction, from the end of the 15th to the 17th century (s.v. *he* pers. pron. 3 c). The *his*-genitive, therefore, appears to have been rare in Older Scots and the few examples found are confined to formal registers.<sup>7</sup>

The situation found in *LAOS*, where the zero genitive is the only choice with nouns ending in a sibilant, continues in the 16th century. In *Ane Resonyng*, for example, all these nouns (12x) are also uninflected (cf. Rodríguez Ledesma 2004), and that is the case in other 16th-century Scottish texts as well (cf. Sheppard 1936: 257 and

<sup>6</sup> According to Waldron (1991: 67–68), the detached genitive 'is found at this date [end of the 14th century] only in South Western profiles', as evidenced by Dot Map 1188 of *LALME*.

<sup>7</sup> This is in line with Allen's claim that 'the separated genitive was not a colloquial construction in later ME' (2003: 15).

Van Buuren 1982: 75).<sup>8</sup> So there seem to be diatopic differences with regard to the surface realization of the genitive category of nouns ending in a sibilant: whereas Older Scots invariably has zero genitive in this context, other varieties alternate it with the inflection and the *his*-genitive.

### 1.2.2. Nouns of relationship ending in -r

With this group of nouns, zero genitives go back to OE and therefore examples of uninflected genitives are widespread in ME in all dialects (cf. Mustanoja 1960: 71–72 and Burrow & Turville-Petre 1996: 24, among others). Myers (2009: 40, 42), for example, reports one instance of uninflected *feder* ‘father’ in *The Lambeth Homilies* (West Midlands) and another (*fader*) in *Vices and virtues* (East Midlands). Examples are also found in northern dialects (cf. Allen 1998) and Older Scots (cf. King 1997: 165 and Macafee 2002: cvi, quoted above in section 1.1).

Although examples of zero genitives are found with this type of nouns in LAOS, not all of them behave in the same way in the corpus, which shows that the inflection of the genitive is lexically variable (cf. Allen 1998: 131). The noun *father*, for example, is more frequently uninflected: 16 tokens are attested of zero inflection, as against 13x of the inflected form:

- (13) for all the dais of his **fader** lyf  
 ‘for all the days of his father’s life’  
 (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House GD44/11/1/10, 1446)
- (14) john” can~ get his **faderis** consent  
 ‘John can get his father’s consent’  
 (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House GD28/173, 1474)

Next comes *mother*, with roughly the same number of tokens of zero inflection (8x) and {S} (9x). By contrast, the nouns *brother* and *sister* are more frequently inflected (3x and 5x respectively as against 1x and 3x), and the zero forms seem to be restricted to collocations denoting relationship which can be considered as

<sup>8</sup> With regard to early Modern English, although in den Breejen’s material the inflection is omitted ‘as a rule ... when the noun ends in a hissing-sound’ (1937: 6), there are other options available: *-es* may be found as well, and *his* also occurs, especially after masculine proper names (1937: 6–7). The situation is similar in the 17th century, according to Altenberg (1982: 46). Thus, of a total of 77 tokens in his corpus, the zero form occurs 47 times, the *his*-form 16 times, and the *-es* suffix 14 times. With some exceptions, the zero genitive is restricted in the 17th-century corpus to polysyllabic nouns with a final unstressed syllable, whereas *-es* or *his* are the normal options for monosyllabic nouns (1982: 46–47).

quasi-compounds: *brother son* ('nephew' 1x), *sister son(e)* ('nephew' 2x), *sister dochter* ('niece' 1x).

**Table 1.** LAOS results for genitive with nouns of relationship ending in *-r*

	n 0	n {S}	n Tot	% 0	% {S}
<i>Father</i>	16	13	29	55.1	44.8
<i>Mother</i>	8	9	17	47	52.9
<i>Sister</i>	3	5	8	37.5	62.5
<i>Brother</i>	1	3	4	25	75
Total	28	30	58	48.2	51.7

### 1.2.3. Proper nouns

Proper nouns are frequently uninflected in Northern dialects. Mustanoja (1960: 72) mentions this as one of the features of these varieties: 'the use of the *s*-less genitive in many proper names and other personal nouns is mainly northern'. Burrow & Turville-Petre (1996: 24) also mention that 'proper names in Northern texts often have no genitive inflection, as in *Hengyst dawes*, 'Hengest's days', *Adam kynde*, 'Adam's kindred'. Similarly, Murray (1873: 166) reports that 'proper names scarcely ever take an *-s*' in Older Scots and quotes examples such as: '*Lazar saule*, *Lazar fynger ende*, *Abraham bosom*'.

The omission of the genitive inflection with proper nouns is already attested in late Northumbrian:<sup>9</sup>

(15) *Initium euangelii ihesu christi fili dei*

fruma godspelles hælendes **crīst** sunu godes

'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.'

Gloss to the Lindisfarne Gospels. MkG1 (Li) 1.1

(cf. Rodríguez Ledesma 2016: 229)

(16) IN:**EADWARD**:DAGVM:CNG | &7**TOSTI**[:]:DAGVM:EORL+ |

*in : eadward : dagvm : cng 7 n tosti [:] dagvm : eorl +*

'in the days of King Edward, and in the days of Earl Tosti'

Kirkdale (North Yorkshire) (11th c.)

(cf. Fernández Cuesta, Rodríguez Ledesma & Senra Silva 2008: 155)

<sup>9</sup> Herold (1968: 32) reports some examples of uninflected proper nouns in King Alfred's translation of the *Orosius*, but all of them are foreign proper nouns which are supposed to show Latin inflections. With regard to native or Germanic proper names, however, he states that 'for the most part they occur with the regular OE strong suffixes.' (30)



The construction can be found in early ModE in a corpus of legal texts from Yorkshire:

- (17) (a) My brother **Christofer** children (YW1564)  
 ‘My brother Christopher’s children’
- (b) I be witt to Seynt **Wilfra** hede (TE1472)  
 ‘I bewitt to Saint Wilfra’s head’
- (cf. Fernández Cuesta & Rodríguez Ledesma 2004: 297)

and even in modern Northern English, as recorded in the *Survey of English Dialects (SED)*:<sup>10</sup>

- (18) (a) **Jack** wife (La, Y)  
 ‘Jack’s wife’
- (b) **Johnson** pigs (Y)  
 ‘Johnson’s pigs’
- (cf. Fernández Cuesta & Rodríguez Ledesma 2009: 177)

In *LAOS* the uninflected genitive is frequent with proper nouns. The following is a nice example of a list of proper nouns, all of them except for the last one with zero inflection:

- (19) & *yir* ar ye *vomen* ye *prior* of **kyltase** vife *martyn*” of **caldwel** wife *john-brone*” wife *john-thom*”son vife *john-moryson*~ vife *vil-boyd* wife *paton*~--**quhit** wife *marion-lechis* *doghter*
- ‘And these are the women: the prior of Kyltase[’s] wife, Martyn of Caldwell[’s] wife, John-Brone[’s] wife, John-Thomson[’s] wife, John-Moryson[’s] wife, Vil-Boyd[’s] wife, Paton-Quhit[’s] wife, Marion-Lech’s daughter’.<sup>11</sup>
- (Ayr Burgh Court Book: [Mon 31 Dec] [14]36, f29v)

*LAOS* offers a substantial corpus for the study of the omission of the inflection in this context: 591 tokens of proper nouns in the genitive case are attested in the corpus, most of which are inflected: 471x (79.6 %) as against 120x (20.3 %) of zero genitive. Some distinctions, however, need to be observed. As already mentioned, zero inflection is the norm with proper nouns ending in a sibilant: 43 instances

<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Reaney (1927: 140) reports that in the dialect of Penrith (Cumberland) ‘the sign of the genitive is sometimes omitted, particularly after proper names.’

<sup>11</sup> The first two are examples of the group genitive.

are documented in *LAOS*, all of which are uninflected. With regard to the tokens of {S}, 123x are of independent genitives, a construction which strongly favours the use of the inflection (cf. 1.2.7 below). If these special constructions strongly favouring the use or omission of the inflection are omitted, there are 348 instances of proper nouns taking {S} (81.8%), as against 77x (18.1%) of zero inflection.

Summing up, even though zero genitives are frequent with proper nouns in *LAOS*, the inflection is more common in this context. Since Allen (1998) does not offer figures or percentages, it is not possible to draw definite conclusions; however, a similar situation seems to be found in the late northern ME texts she studies, since she reports that in all of them

we find some examples of the uninflected possessive, especially with proper nouns, but it is only in the *Cursor Mundi* of the fourteenth century that a reasonable number of examples can be found (Allen 1998: 131).

The omission of the genitive with proper nouns is not so frequent in other varieties. Allen (1998: 131, footnote 6), for example, states that ‘noninflection of proper nouns seems to have increased in Middle English in more southerly dialects also, although this increase was much greater in the north.’ Thus, Myers (2009: 32) reports examples of zero genitives in only one of the texts she studies: The *Peterborough Chronicle* Continuations. Moreover, the four instances found occur in the same collocation, *Sancte Marie* ‘Saint Mary’s’, the uninflected form being due in this case to the influence of Latin feminine genitives [Cf. L *sanctae Mariae*], preserved as a fixed form ‘because of its high frequency and somewhat special status’ (Myers 2009: 32).<sup>12</sup>

**Table 2.** *LAOS* results for genitive with proper nouns

	n 0	n {S}	n Tot	% 0	% {S}
Proper nouns ending in a sibilant	43	0	43	100	0
Proper nouns in independent position	2 <sup>13</sup>	123	125	1.6	98.4
Other proper nouns	77	348	425	18.1	81.8
Total	120	471	591	20.3	79.6

<sup>12</sup> According to Myers (2009: 32), ‘this is supported by the fact that other saints’ names are inflected with *-es*: *Sancte Petres* [w]euod 7 *Sancte Paules* ‘Saint Peter’s altar and Saint Paul’s.’

<sup>13</sup> In both cases the proper noun ends in [s]. These two examples are therefore also included in ‘proper nouns ending in a sibilant’.

#### 1.2.4. Before nouns beginning with a sibilant

As with nouns ending in a sibilant, the omission of the genitive inflection is also found before a word beginning with [s] for reasons of euphony. In *LAOS* there are 15 tokens of the zero inflection in this context, but nine of them are found with nouns of relationship ending in *-r* (*father*, *mother*, *sister*, *brother*) and one with a proper noun ending in a sibilant, contexts which, as explained above, favour the omission of the inflection. Five tokens remain for which there is no additional factor favouring the zero genitive, which contrasts with 40x of the inflected genitive in this context, the percentage of zero genitive being 11.1%:

- (20) vnder ye said **lord** subieccione”  
 ‘under the said lord’s subjection’

(Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House B22/22/4, f. 48r–v, 1491)

- (21) vnder the **Chancelloris** sele procurit for yame all  
 ‘under the chancelor’s seal procured for them all’

(Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, W Register House, PA 2/3, f32r – f34v, 1482)

#### 1.2.5. Other nouns

The uninflected genitive is also found as a low-frequency variant with other nouns in *LAOS*. As is the case with the late ME northern texts analysed by Allen (1998), inflection of the genitive is lexically variable in the corpus, with some nouns more likely to occur with zero genitive than others. Thus, as in the *Cursor Mundi* (Allen 1998: 131),<sup>14</sup> the noun *God* is always inflected in *LAOS* (17x), even though in half of the examples it is followed by a word beginning with [s]: *service* (6x), *sake* (1x), *sufferance* (1x). *Man* also behaves similarly in both *Cursor* and *LAOS*. In the former there are 11x tokens of the noun inflected for the genitive and no uninflected possessive forms (Allen 1998: 131); in *LAOS*, there is only one example of zero genitive, as against 83x of the inflected forms.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, three out of seven examples of possessive *king* are uninflected in *Cursor* (Allen 1998: 131), whereas the inflection is the norm in *LAOS*: 215x as against only 2x of zero genitive, which confirms *DOST*’s statement that this noun is rarely found without inflection (434).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> She reports 16x of *God* in adnominal position in volume I of this work, all of them inflected.

<sup>15</sup> All of them except for 2x occur in a fixed formula: *sawand ilke manis richt(is)* ‘saving each man’s right(s)’.

<sup>16</sup> Sporadic examples of uninflected genitives are also attested in other varieties. Myers (2009: 13, 18), for example, reports two instances of zero genitives occurring with the noun *culfre* ‘dove’ in *The Lambeth Homilies*, and explains that they are probably examples of

Similar sporadic examples of uninflected genitives are attested in *LAOS* with other common nouns, such as: *balz(h)e* ('bailie', 4x out of 8x), *college* (1x out of 1x), *lord* (1x out of 134x), *person* (1x out of 1x), *sergeande* ('sergeant', 2x out of 2x in the collocation 'in the sergeant's hand'),<sup>17</sup> *soul* (1x out of 1x), *soveran* ('sovereign', 1x out of 1x),<sup>18</sup> *sun* (3x out of 3x), *year* (1x out of 5x), *wife* (1x out of 6x),<sup>19</sup> and in collocations with *hand* (7x out of 20x).<sup>20</sup>

Thus, as Allen concludes for *Cursor Mundi*:

it appears that inflection of the genitive is lexically variable, with the class of nouns that can occur in the uninflected form in the possessive greatly increased from Old English. (1998: 131)

For Allen (1998: 132), it is precisely those nouns which had no inflection for the genitive category in Old English 'the ones which occur most frequently without a genitive inflection in the Northern texts'. In Older Scots, however, judging from the evidence provided by *LAOS*, these nouns (i.e. nouns of relationship ending in *-r*, such as *father*, *mother*, etc.) come second, after those which end in a sibilant, which categorically take zero inflection.

### 1.2.6. Complex structures

The uninflected genitive is also found as a low-frequency variant in complex structures, such as conjoined NPs, appositive constructions, split and group genitives. Nine instances of zero genitives are attested in this type of constructions in the corpus, as against 96x of the inflected form. The following are some examples:

- (22) *j parte & settis ye westir land y<sup>t</sup> wes vmquhill robyne-michelson~ my grantschire*

'I divide and lease out the western land that was before Robin-Michelson's, my grandfather'

(Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House B22/22/5, f. 41r – f. 42v, 1493)

compounds rather than genitives. Similarly, in *Vices and virtues* there are three examples of uninflected genitives occurring with the nouns *helle* 'hell' (1x, derived from the OE strong feminine declension) and *heuene* 'heaven' (2x, probably examples of compounds rather than genitives) (Myers 2009: 40, 42).

<sup>17</sup> There is also variation between zero and {S} with possessive proper nouns in collocation with *hand*: 1x with zero vs. 14x with {S}.

<sup>18</sup> *Soveran* ('sovereign') is normally an adjective modifying *lord*. In this case, however, *lord* is omitted and it functions as a noun.

<sup>19</sup> The noun *lady*, however, which does not take *-es* ending in OE, being a feminine noun, is always inflected in the corpus (5x).

<sup>20</sup> Other common nouns such as *abbot*, *alderman*, *bishop*, *chalmerlane*, *earl*, etc. appear sporadically with zero inflection in complex NPs, such as conjoined NPs, appositives, split and group genitives (cf. section 1.2.6. below).

- (23) kepanð ye said william & his **wiff** thevymmais  
 ‘keeping the said William and his wife’s chimneys’  
 (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House  
 B22/22/6, f. 99v – f. 100r, 1495)
- (24) ye **Erle** son~ of doug<sup>l</sup>~ and syndry men  
 ‘the earl of Douglas’s son and sundry men’  
 (London, Public Record Office, E 39/95/11, Hand A, 1398)
- (25) gyl[\art off **kynlocht** cattall  
 ‘Gylbart of Kynlocht’s cattle’  
 (Newburgh Court Book: 28 May 1468, f28v, 1468)

(22) is an example of an appositive structure in which neither the head nor the appositive are inflected for genitive; (23) illustrates a conjoined NP where both possessors lack a genitive inflection; and (24) and (25) exemplify the omission of the inflection in split and group genitives respectively.<sup>21</sup>

### 1.2.7. Independent genitives

In their discussion of the loss of the genitive inflection, both Allen (1998: 129–30) and Klemola (1997: 351) quote Wright’s (1905 & 1892: 109–10) statement that the *-s* inflection is only lost when the possessive modifies an expressed noun, as in: *ðemz mi faðə buits* ‘those are my father’s boots’. The inflection is not lost, however, when the genitive is independent,<sup>22</sup> as in: *ðemz buits ə mi faðəz* ‘those boots are my father’s’.

Similarly, Seppänen (1997: 196) claims that ‘the zero forms are all recorded with attributive genitives and not in the semi-independent use of the form.’ He argues that

if the head noun was present, the genitival relationship was predictable from the position of the NP, and not conveying any unrecoverable information, the marking of the genitive could be dropped [...]. However, the situation is entirely different if the head noun is ellipted, because the ending of the genitive is the only carrier of the meaning difference between *That one is John* and *That one is John’s*. Not surprisingly, ME and EModE did not extend the zero genitive to this position (196–97).

<sup>21</sup> A similar situation is found in 16th-century Scots, where zero genitives are also found sporadically in complex structures. Thus, there are seven instances illustrating this practice in *Ane Resonyng*, as against 17x in which the genitive is inflected. (cf. Rodríguez Ledesma 2004: 41).

<sup>22</sup> ‘The head of the superordinate noun phrase in a genitive construction may be omitted if the context makes its identity clear. The result is the so-called independent genitive’ (Quirk et al. 1985: 329).

Evidence from the three late ME texts of Northern origin examined by Allen (1998) confirms this situation, and she concludes that ‘the Northern texts are similar to the twentieth-century Northern dialects in using only the inflected form in ‘independent’ positions, although it should be noted that relevant examples are not frequent’ (131).

In contrast with Allen’s (1998: 131) statement that examples of independent positions are not frequent in the Northern texts analysed by her, *LAOS* offers abundant evidence of this construction. A hundred and seventy examples are attested in the corpus, most of which (164x) conform to the pattern outlined above and are inflected for genitive.

In contrast with the statements reported above, however, *LAOS* also provides evidence of the omission of the genitive inflection in independent position. Six examples are attested in the corpus, all of them dating from the 15th-century. One instance is found in conjoined NPs:

- (26) *qwhen he askyt on~ y<sup>e</sup> kyngis be-half and on y<sup>e</sup> **chalm<sup>e</sup>rlane~** & on y<sup>e</sup> alderman~ be-half & y<sup>e</sup> bailȝeis*  
 ‘when he asked on the king’s behalf, and on the chamberlain[‘s] and on the alderman[‘s] behalf and the bailies’’.  
 (Ayr Burgh Court Book, 1453 October 3, 1453)

The remaining instances (5x) are found in a fixed formula: ‘the land [that] was [formerly] X’s’, X being a proper noun indicating the possessor:<sup>23</sup>

- (27) *j parte & settis ye westir land y<sup>t</sup> wes vmquhill robyne-**michelson~** my grantschire y<sup>t</sup> is to say ye haille forland vndir & abone” ye bakland*  
 ‘I divide and lease out the western land that was formerly Robin-Michelson[‘s], my grandfather, that is to say, the whole foreland under and above the backland’  
 (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House B22/22/5, f. 41r – f. 42v, 1493)
- (28) *betwene y<sup>e</sup> land of john-clark on y<sup>e</sup> est part on y<sup>e</sup>-tapart & y<sup>e</sup> land was john-**bortwyk** on y<sup>e</sup> west part on y<sup>e</sup>-toyer part*  
 ‘between the land of John-Clark on the east part on the one part, and the land [that] was John-Bortwyk[‘s] on the west part on the other part’  
 (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House B58/8/1, f. 1r – f. 7r (27), 1457)

<sup>23</sup> The fact that two of these proper nouns end in a sibilant, (9)–(10), may have favoured the omission of the genitive inflection (cf. 1.2.1. above).

- (29) aland y<sup>e</sup>-qwylyk was *john-lauson* liand at y<sup>e</sup> est end  
 ‘a land, the which was John-Lauson[’s], lying at the east end’  
 (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House  
 B58/8/1, f. 1r – f. 7r (18), 1457)

In similar constructions, however, the inflection is the norm:

- (30) y<sup>e</sup> land was *ser ion-blencis*  
 ‘the land was Sir John-Blence’s’  
 (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House  
 B58/8/1, f. 1r – f. 7r (27), 1457)

An example of uninflected genitive is also reported by Van der Gaaf (1932) in an absolute construction with ellipsis of the noun *house*, although the inflection is the norm in these constructions:<sup>24</sup>

- (31) Wyndham hath be divers tymes at my mastres *cler*  
 ‘Wyndham has been diverse times at my mistress Cler[’s]’<sup>25</sup>  
*Paston Letters*, 1451, No. 147  
 (Van der Gaaf 1932: 56)

No inflection is found either with the names of saints’ days with ellipsis of the common noun. About sixty examples are reported by Van der Gaaf, although he does not consider them as instances of the absolute genitive, but of the ‘common case’:

- (32) (a) Wrete at Norwiche, on the Wednysday after Seynt Peter  
 ‘Written at Norwich, on the Wednesday after Saint Peter[’s day]  
*Paston Letters*, 1447?, No. 53
- (b) in the morwe after Seynt Poule  
 ‘in the morning after Saint Paul[’s day]  
*Paston Letters*, 1464, No. 482  
 (Examples quoted from Van der Gaaf 1932: 62)

<sup>24</sup> For Van der Gaaf, an absolute genitive is ‘a form of ellipsis often found in designations of localities, namely the omission of a generic name like *church*, *house*, *shop*, etc. after a qualifying genitive, as ‘They were married at *St. Martin’s*’; ‘I had some dinner at *my mother’s*’ (1932: 49).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. a very similar example in which the name is inflected:

(i) I was with my maistresse your wyff at my maistresse *Cleres*  
 ‘I was with my mistress, your wife, at my mistress Clere’s’  
*Paston Letters*, 1448, x  
 (quoted from Van der Gaaf 1932: 56)

In conclusion, although the evidence provided by *LAOS* conforms to the situation described above in that the inflection is the norm in independent genitives, there is also evidence of the omission of the inflection in that position. The zero genitive, therefore, is not limited to the adnominal use in Older Scots, but seems to be a variant (although a low-frequency one) in independent position.<sup>26</sup>

**Table 3.** *LAOS* results for zero genitive vs. inflected genitive

	n 0	n -S	n Tot	% 0	% -S
Nouns ending in a sibilant	45	0	45	100	0
Nouns of relationship ending in -r	28	30	58	48.2	51.7
Proper nouns	120	471	591	20.3	79.6
Before sibilant	5	40	45	11.1	88.8
Complex structures					
	9	96	105	8.5	91.4
Independent genitive					
	6	164	170	3.5	96.4

Table 3 shows the strength of the various conditioning factors in the omission of the genitive inflection in Older Scots. As shown in the table, zero genitives are especially frequent in those contexts for which there are phonetic or historical explanations, i.e. with nouns ending in a sibilant<sup>27</sup> (for reasons of euphony), and with nouns of relationship ending in *-r* (which already in Old English added no inflection). In addition, and in contrast with other dialects, the omission of the inflection is also frequent with proper nouns, and is even attested (although sporadically) in independent genitives, a construction which is reported in the literature as invariably selecting the inflection.

## 2. *Complex possessors in LAOS: A detailed quantitative analysis*

### 2.1. *Split genitive*

The split genitive, which first appears in English texts in the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Allen 2003: 7), is explained by Jespersen in the following terms:

<sup>26</sup> A more general extension was probably checked out by the risk of confusion, since, if the head noun is ellipted, 'the ending of the genitive is the only carrier of the meaning difference between *That one is John* and *That one is John's*' (Seppänen (1997: 197).

<sup>27</sup> And to a lesser extent before a word starting with a sibilant.



a group of two sbs connected by a preposition was originally not felt as an inseparable unit; consequently, in the genitive, the group was separated by the governing word; this was the universal practice up to the end of the fifteenth century. (1942: 286)

The split or ‘combined’ genitive, following Allen’s (1997) terminology, since it combines an inflectional genitive with a prepositional one, is also recorded in Older Scots. Macafee (2002), for example, states that ‘when a noun phrase to be put into the genitive itself contains another *of* phrase, split genitives are an alternative, at least with reference to titles and family relationships, as in *the Kingis dochter of Nuby*’ (cvii). Similarly, Moessner (1997: 119) reports that with substantival syntagms in determiner position, a split genitive is occasionally found, i.e., ‘a genitive determiner which is realised as a discontinuous constituent.’

In *LAOS* there are 13 instances of the split genitive, two of which are uninflected (cf. 24). Most of them are attested in early texts: 8x are found in the late 14th century and two in the first quarter of the 15th. The following are some examples:

- (33) som othir gret lord of the **kyngis** blode of Scotland  
 ‘some other great lord of the king of Scotland’s blood’
- (34) nocht eseful til the **kyngis** messages of ingland to come  
 ‘not easy for the king of England’s messages to come’  
 (London, Public Record Office E 39/95/2 / 1398)

There are also examples of split genitives in which the possessed noun is not expressed after the head of the possessor. Six instances of this construction are attested in *LAOS*, most of them in early texts:<sup>28</sup>

- (35) the said Erle of fife sal mary ane of ye dochteris of ye said **Erle** of ye  
 leuena[x] Elizabeth or Mergarete  
 ‘the said earl of Fife shall marry one of the daughters of the said earl of the  
 Levenax’s: Elizabeth or Margaret’  
 (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House  
 GD220/2/1/2/1/33, 1392)

Table 4 below summarizes the results for split vs. group genitive in *LAOS*.

<sup>28</sup> Three examples are attested in late 14th-century texts, one in an early 15th-century text and the remaining in texts dating from the second half of the 15th century.

## 2.2. *Group genitive*

In a genitive construction where the possessor is complex and has a NP or a PP modifying the head, the possessive marker is added in PdE not to the head, but to the last element of the NP.<sup>29</sup> This construction, which is known as the group genitive, 'is first recorded in Chaucer's works, where, however, the usual type is the split genitive' (Mustanoja 1960: 79). Although first found in English texts of the late fourteenth century, the group genitive is quite rare at this time as compared with the split genitive. Wyld, for example, remarks that

while the evidence shows that this construction was used in the fifteenth century, there appears to have been, for a long time, a feeling that it was inelegant, and various devices are employed to avoid it. (1920: 318)

Mustanoja (1960: 79) reports three instances of the group genitive in Chaucer's works and remarks that 'it is worth notice [...] that all these early instances of the modern construction occur in poetry'. Allen (1997: 120–121) also finds three examples of the construction in Chaucer and one from the same period in Trevisa's translation of the *Polychronicon*, and comments that

the nature of these earliest examples suggests perhaps that the group genitive was most easily used when the NP could be regarded as a title, but further investigation to find other early examples is necessary in order to make a statement with any confidence about their nature. (121)

Discussing the origin of the construction, Allen envisages a gradual scenario and claims that 'the clitic could attach to an appositive considerably before the group genitive is found' (1997: 122). She also advances the hypothesis that 'the possessive clitic was able to attach to the end of a conjoined possessor NP before it became possible to attach it to an NP which did not end with a possessor N' (1997: 122).

In what follows I will examine the evidence found in *LAOS* concerning these structures (group genitives, conjoined NPs and appositive constructions) in order to evaluate the validity of these hypotheses.

In contrast to the relatively scarce number of examples of the split genitive found in *LAOS* (13x), 42 instances of the group genitive are attested in the corpus.<sup>30</sup> The earliest examples date from 1400, like those given by Allen (1997) as earliest attestations of the construction in English:

- (36) jone of **forbes-is** fadre was a gude man  
       'Jone of Forbes's father was a good man'  
       (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland Adv. MS 16.1.10, f. 46r–v, 1400)

<sup>29</sup> In this construction the genitive has been cliticised.

<sup>30</sup> In five of these examples the genitive takes zero inflection: cf. (25).

- (37) Thir ar ye bonndis on~ my Lord of **athollis** side  
 ‘these are the bounds on my lord of Atholl’s side’  
 (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland Adv. MS 16.1.10, f. 5v, 1400)

15 other examples of the construction are attested before 1450 and the remaining (25x) date from the second half of the 15th century. All of them illustrate the same pattern: the group genitive is especially frequent with proper nouns (27x), the prepositional phrase in these cases indicating the place of origin of the person, as in (36), and it is also used when the NP can be regarded as a title, as in (37). There are 15 examples of the latter construction in *LAOS*, with nouns such as *king*, *earl*, *abbot*, *prior*, *constable*, etc. My data, therefore, confirm and refine Allen’s (1997: 121) suggestion that ‘the group genitive was most easily used when the NP could be regarded as a title’: this is the second most frequent construction attested in *LAOS*, after proper nouns.

As was the case with the split genitive, there are also examples of the group genitive in which the possessed noun is not expressed after the possessor. Sixteen examples of this construction are attested in *LAOS*, two of them dating from 1400:<sup>31</sup>

- (38) to by al ye landys w<sup>t</sup> ye apertynance qwhilk was vmqwhil john” of **statounys**  
 ‘to buy all the lands with the appurtenance which were formerly John of Statoun’s’  
 (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House GD28/43, 1400)

In conclusion, the evidence found in *LAOS* shows that the split genitive was dominant in the 14th century, but was quickly replaced by the group genitive in the following century. The new construction is first attested in texts from 1400 and rapidly gains ground, so that it is already well established in Scots before 1450, the examples of this construction in *LAOS* outnumbering those of the split genitive in the same period: 16x vs. 6x, as shown in Table 4.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> There is another example from the first half of the 15th century, and the remaining (13x) date from after 1450.

<sup>32</sup> Although Allen (2003) does not offer the exact number of examples of the two constructions in her corpus, her results show that the group genitive was not so frequent as in *LAOS*, since for the period 1375–1429 she reports only 2 texts with group genitive as against 5 with combined (or split) genitive (Allen 2003: 14, Table 1).

**Table 4.** LAOS results for split genitive vs. group genitive<sup>33</sup>

	1380–1400	1401–1450	1451–1500	Total
Split genitive	11	6	2	19
Group genitive	4	16	38	58

The data from *LAOS* therefore run counter to Janda's (1980: 250) claim, found also in Boas (1992: 234), that 'the spread of the group genitive exactly parallels the spread of the *his* genitive.' Whereas the former was well established in Scots by 1450, spreading in the course of the century, the latter is not attested in the corpus.<sup>34</sup> This is in line with Allen's findings, since her data

show no correlation between the existence of the separated [*his*] genitive in a given text and the existence of group genitives in the same text, nor do they support the idea that the separated genitive served as a model for the group genitive. (2003: 18)

### 2.3. Conjoined noun phrases

Whereas in OE both possessors of two conjoined NPs inflected for the genitive case, in PdE the possessive marker is attached to the last possessor in the NP. In ME, the situation appears to have been variable. Thus, for texts of the 14th century, Allen (1997: 121–122) reports examples of both the old type (39a) and the new one (39b):

- (39) (a) ilke manes & womanes saule  
 'each man and woman's soul'
- (b) god and þe virgynes sone Marie  
 'God and the Virgin Mary's son'
- (examples quoted from Allen (1997: 121–122))

Although she admits that examples of coordinated possessors preceding the possessed noun are very scarce in the corpus she examined (in fact, she finds no

<sup>33</sup> The word-counts for the different periods are not equal: in *LAOS*, the largest number of texts (and therefore of words) correspond to the period 1451–1500, next comes 1401–1450 and finally the period 1380–1400. Table 4 illustrates the number of tokens of these constructions in the whole corpus and their temporal distribution, and shows that the split genitive is more frequent than the group genitive in the earliest texts (14th century) and is gradually replaced by the latter in the 15th century.

<sup>34</sup> This is in line with Mustanoja's (1960: 161) claim that until the 15th century the construction 'is very rare in the North and infrequent in the whole country.'

examples in the 1250–1350 portions and only (39a) and (39b) in the 1350–1420 portions), she thinks it ‘not unreasonable to hypothesise that the possessive clitic was able to attach to the end of a conjoined possessor NP before it became possible to attach it to an NP which did not end with a possessor N’ (1997: 122).

The evidence found in *LAOS* is similarly very scarce, but does not confirm Allen’s hypothesis. Only nine examples are attested, all of them dating from the second half of the 15th century. However, most of them (5x) are of the older type, in which both possessors of the conjoined NPs are marked as genitive:

- (40) yair **faderis** & **moderis** saulis  
 ‘their father and mother’s souls’  
 (Peebles, Burgh Records: Charter 1450 September 3, 1450)
- (41) the saidis **abbottis** & **conuentis** charteris eidenttis & fethmentis  
 ‘the said abbot and convent’s charters, documents and feftments’  
 (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland Adv. MS 34.4.3, f. 47r, item 178, 1464)

In constrast, there are only three examples of the new construction, in which the possessive marker is attached to the last possessor in the coordinated NPs, all of them from the end of the 15th century (1470–1499):<sup>35</sup>

- (42) the-quhilk landis my fader put *in* the said abbot & **conuentis** handis  
 ‘the which lands my father put in the said abbot and convent’s hands’  
 (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland Adv. MS 34.4.3, f. 63v – f. 64r, item 220, 1470)
- (43) Except ye gudis *conten*<sup>t</sup> in ye said nicholis fader & **moderis** testament  
 ‘except the goods contained in the said Nichol’s father and mother’s testament’  
 (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House B22/22/1, f. 12v – f. 13v, 1493)<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> As with the group genitive, in this construction the possessive marker behaves as a clitic rather than an inflection, in that it is attached to the last noun in the conjoined NP.

<sup>36</sup> There is also an example in *LAOS* in which none of the nouns takes the possessive marker: cf. (23).

According to Allen (1997: 122):

the problem of whether to mark each possessor or to mark the whole possessor NP is much more often avoided in the texts by a construction which could be viewed either as extraposition of the second conjunct or non-expression of the second of two conjoined possessed nouns:

- (44) in goddes peas & the kynges  
 ‘in God and the king’s peace’  
 (example quoted from Allen (1997: 122))

This alternative construction, however, is even scarcer in *LAOS*, occurring only four times. Two examples are similar to that given by Allen (1997): the possessed noun is placed after the first possessor and not expressed after the second, and both possessors are inflected for genitive:

- (45) in ye **abbotis** hand & the **conuentis**  
 ‘in the abbot’s hand and the convent’s’  
 (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland Adv. MS 34.3.4, item 113, f. 25r, 1395)
- (46) on y<sup>e</sup> **kingis** be-half & y<sup>e</sup> **chalmerlane3**  
 ‘on the king’s behalf and the chamberlain’s’  
 (Ayr Burgh Court Book: 5 May 1449, f53v, 1449)

However, in another example, very similar to the previous one, only the first possessor is inflected for genitive: cf. (26).

In conclusion, although examples of coordinated possessors preceding the possessed noun are very scarce in *LAOS*, as illustrated in Table 5, the few examples found do not support Allen’s hypothesis, since most of them conform to the older type, in which both possessors of the conjoined NPs are marked as genitive. Examples of the new type, in which the possessive marker attaches to the end of the NP possessor, are fewer in number and attested only from 1470 onwards, which suggests that this construction is ‘newer’ than the group genitive (well established in Scots before 1450, as shown in Table 4).

**Table 5.** LAOS results for conjoined NPs

	1380–1450	1451–1500	Total
Possessive marker attached to both possessors	1	4	5
Possessive marker attached to the last possessor	0	3	3
No possessive marker	0	1	1
Alternative construction	3	1	4

#### 2.4. Appositive constructions

As was the case with the conjoined NPs, in OE both the appositive and the NP it modified were inflected, regardless of the position of the former. In ME, the situation appears to have been variable, with examples of the old type (47a) coexisting with the new one (47b), in which the possessive marker is attached to the appositive:

(47) (a) Daviþess kingess kinnessmann

‘King David’s kinsman’

(47) (b) Upponn Herode kingess daz3

‘In King Herod’s day’

(examples quoted from Allen 1997: 123)

According to Allen (1997), the new pattern seems to have become standard by the beginning of the 14th century.<sup>37</sup> She further remarks that ‘it seems plausible that the first step towards clitic status was the elimination of agreement in appositives and its replacement by a single marker at the end of the entire NP’ (1997: 123).

In contrast with the low number of examples of conjoined NPs found in LAOS, there is ample evidence of appositive constructions. As shown in Table 6, 41 examples are attested in the corpus, most of them (31x) illustrating the new pattern in which only the appositive is inflected. Most of these are examples of the collocation ‘our [sovereign] lord the king’ (48), although there are also some instances of proper nouns (49):

(48) in oure lord ye **kingis** hand

‘in our lord the king’s hand’

<sup>37</sup> Fischer (1992: 229) remarks that the new pattern appears early in Middle English and is found all through the period, although less frequently than the older construction. According to her, ‘it became the rule first in the case of a title or rank followed by a proper name, which was looked upon as a unit.’

(Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House GD220/2/1/2/1/33, 1392)

- (49) tyme quhen alexr<sup>r</sup> ye **grahamys** beddyng was stollin  
 ‘time when Alexander the Graham’s bedding was stolen’  
 (Aberdeen Council Register: 10 Dec 1442, p288 – p289, 1442)

The earliest examples of the new pattern in *LAOS* date from the late 14th century (48) and antedate, therefore, those of the group genitive. Both constructions, however, seem to follow parallel developments. Thus, as was the case with the group genitive, besides the above instances illustrating the new pattern, there are also examples in *LAOS* of the older pattern, in which both the head and the appositive are inflected for genitive. Nine tokens of this earlier type are attested in the corpus throughout the 15th century, both with proper nouns (50) and in collocations with *lord* (51):<sup>38</sup>

- (50) his obbligacion for my **sisteris cristeanis** part of my falder gudis  
 ‘his obligation for my sister Cristean’s part of my father’s goods’  
 (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House GD26/1/4/44, 1458)
- (51) Resignacioun~ in our souerain **lordis** the **kingis** hand  
 ‘resignation in our sovereign lord the king’s hand’  
 (Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House B22/22/1, f. 3v – f. 4r, 1492)

The data from *LAOS*, therefore, confirm Allen’s (1997) claim that ‘the clitic could attach to an appositive [...] before the group genitive is found’ (1997: 122), since the earliest examples of this construction in *LAOS* antedate those of the group genitive in some years (1392 vs. 1400). Nevertheless, both appear to have followed parallel developments: in both cases the new patterns (with the clitic attached to the last element of the phrase) coexist with the older ones throughout the 15th century and seem to have become well established in Scots before 1450.

<sup>38</sup> There is also an example (27) in which neither the head nor the appositive take the possessive marker, and therefore it is not possible to establish whether it follows the new or the old pattern.



**Table 6.** LAOS results for appositive constructions

	1380–1400	1401–1450	1451–1500	Total
Possessive marker attached to both head and appositive	0	5	4	9
Possessive marker attached to appositive	3	10	18	31
No possessive marker	0	0	1	1

### 3. Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the uninflected genitive and the group genitive in Older Scots. With regard to the zero genitive, the study has revealed that the omission of the inflection is the norm with nouns ending in a sibilant. Although zero ending is also found in this context in other varieties, there are other options available, such as the use of the inflection and the so-called *his*-genitive, alternatives which do not seem to be available in Scots. So there appear to be diatopic differences with regard to the surface realization of the genitive category of nouns ending in a sibilant, with Older Scots invariably selecting zero genitive in this context and other varieties also using the inflection and the *his*-genitive.

Another diatopic difference between Scots and Southern English concerns the omission of the inflection with proper nouns. The evidence from LAOS shows that zero genitive is quite frequent in this context, with 120x out of 591 examples adding no possessive marker (20.3 %), thus confirming previous statements found in the literature (cf. Mustanoja 1960 and Burrow & Turville-Petre 1996, among others). The situation appears to be similar in Northern Middle English, as reported by Allen (1998). Although examples of zero genitives with proper nouns are also found in other varieties, they seem to be sporadic and, in some cases, due to the influence of Latin (cf. Myers 2009: 32).

The study has also revealed that inflection of the genitive is lexically variable (cf. Allen 1998: 131), since nouns which belonged to the same declension in OE show different patterns in the corpus. This is the case, for example, of the nouns of relationship ending in *-r*, with *father* appearing more frequently uninflected, and *brother* and *sister* normally inflected, except in collocations which can be considered as quasi-compounds.

With regard to independent or predicative genitives, although the evidence provided by LAOS conforms to the situation described by most authors (Klemola 1997, Seppänen 1997, Allen 1998, etc.) in that the inflection is the norm in these constructions, there is also evidence in the corpus of the omission of the inflection in these contexts. The zero genitive, therefore, is not limited to the adnominal use in Older Scots, but seems to be a variant (albeit a low-frequency one) in predicative position.

Data from *LAOS* and other varieties also fail to support Seppänen's (1997: 196) claim that 'by the time the zero genitive made its appearance in English, the position of the genitive was invariably in front of a head noun which could be present or be ellipted.' As mentioned above, examples of zero genitives are already common in OE with nouns of relationship, and in this period the position of the genitive varied between pre- and post-position. Besides, examples of postposed genitives are still found in the ME period, even as late as the second half of the fifteenth century.

With regard to the group genitive, the earliest examples in *LAOS* date from 1400, like those given by Allen (1997) as earliest attestations in English, the construction being especially frequent with proper nouns and titles. Judging from the evidence found in *LAOS*, the group genitive quickly replaced the split genitive and became well established in Scots before 1450, the examples of this construction in the corpus outnumbering those of the split genitive in the same period.

Finally, concerning the origin of the construction, data from *LAOS* do not support Allen's (1997: 122) hypothesis that 'the possessive clitic was able to attach to the end of a conjoined possessor NP before it became possible to attach it to an NP which did not end with a possessor N.' Although relevant examples are very scarce in the corpus, most of them conform to the old pattern, in which both possessors are inflected for genitive. In only three instances is the possessive marker attached to the last possessor in the NP, all of them dating from the end of the 15th century, which contrasts with the situation described above for the group genitive, already more frequent than the split genitive by the first half of the 15th century.

On the other hand, the data from *LAOS* confirm Allen's (1997) claim that 'the clitic could attach to an appositive [...] before the group genitive is found' (1997: 122), since the earliest examples of this construction antedate those of the group genitive in the corpus. So, judging from the evidence found in *LAOS*, the clitic seems to have attached to appositives first, then to NPs ending in a PP, and finally to conjoined nouns.

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