Argument structure and Case assignment in Greek nominals revisited: the role of VoiceP

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**Problem:** There is a subset of Greek -m-nouns like *xtipima* and *vlema* which do not behave like most -m-nouns with respect to a number of properties, the most important being that their external argument is not introduced with a by-phrase.

**Claim:** On the basis of this empirical evidence I argue that Genitive Case assignment in the nominal domain relies on the status of VoiceP in a given derivation.

**Data:** Contra to Alexiadou (2009) who treats all -m-nouns in a uniform way, the -m-nouns discussed here differ in that they can be pluralized, take the indefinite article and have a result interpretation while retaining their argument structure. However, what is more intriguing about these -m-nouns is that they can realize both their external argument (EA) and their internal argument (IA) with Genitive, in a way that their IA and EA compete with each other for being assigned Genitive case. In this competition the EA is the winner. Evidence for this competition is given in *to xtipima tu Jani sti Maria*, where the noun obligatorily needs a PP, in order for the nominal bearing postnominal Genitive to be interpreted as an agent, because otherwise it is interpreted as a theme. The general idea is that certain -m-nouns are not equivalent to passivized structures as is the case for destruction-type nouns (see Chomsky et al. (1968) on the derived nominals of non-passivizable verbs, such as *to marry*).

**Proposal:** In cases of competition between the two arguments of certain -m-nouns, it is the highest one that gets Genitive. I assume a dependent case system in the nominal domain, where the highest argument receives Genitive and the lower argument is forced to be introduced as a PP. While the lower argument is merged as complement of v (the verbalizer), it is not clear where the EA is merged. One solution is to assume that the EA is merged in Spec, VoiceP (Kratzer, 1996) in non-passivized structures. This means that by-phrases in passive configurations are adjuncts, since the VoiceP in such configurations has been rendered incapable of introducing an EA. A more traditional view is to assume that vP is responsible both for verbalizing and introducing the EA (Maranz, 1997), so the EA is merged in Spec, vP and Voice is not projected. For theory-internal reasons, I opt for the first solution. Thus, Spec, VoiceP in passivized constructions is filled, so the argument in this position gets Genitive. In non-passivized structures Spec, VoiceP is empty, so Genitive is assigned to the IA. I assume that (postnominal) Genitive is a structural case in the nominal domain. This dependent case system is similar to the one proposed by McFadden (2009) in the sense that the filled Spec, VoiceP determines whether structural case is assigned. This proposal shifts the locus of Genitive from lower verbal projections to VoiceP (Alexiadou, 2001).

**Conclusion:** I have argued that Genitive case assignment in derived nominals depends on the ability of VoiceP to introduce an EA.