

# Distinct mechanisms for genitive across nominalizations \*

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## 1 Overview

In possessive nominals, genitive case  $-(n)In$  (GEN) appears on the possessor and co-occurs with nominal  $\phi$ -agreement on the possessee (1).

- (1) Çayan'ın kitab-ı  
Çayan.GEN book-POSS.3SG  
'Çayan's book'

The same genitive form also appears on subjects of nominalized embedded clauses, again co-occurring with nominal agreement morphology on the nominalized predicate (2).

- (2) Yağmur [ Çayan'ın bağırdığ-ı ]-nı duy-du.  
Yağmur.NOM Çayan.GEN yell-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC hear-PST  
'Yağmur heard Çayan yelling.'

This correlation between case and agreement has led previous accounts to treat GEN and  $\phi$  in nominalizations as fundamentally parallel to their counterparts in possessive nominals.

The technical implementation differs across accounts: GEN has been derived

- via a spec-head configuration (Chomsky 1986);
- through AGREE with a nominal functional head, with variation attributed to clausal size or to properties of the case-assigning head (e.g., Kornfilt 2003; Baker and Vinokurova 2010; Miyagawa 2011; Predolac 2017);
- as unmarked case assigned within particular domains (e.g., Levin and Preminger 2015; Satık 2020).

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**IN THIS TALK** I argue that

- i) Turkish nominalizations divide into two structural classes, distinguished by the amount of nominal and clausal structure they contain;
- ii)  $\phi$ -agreement and genitive case must be dissociated;
- iii) genitive across nominalizations must be realized through two distinct mechanisms:
  - in one class of nominalizations, GEN is the spell-out of unmarked case within a DP-domain under configurational case assignment (e.g., Marantz 1991; Levin 2015; Levin and Preminger 2015; Laszakovits 2017; Satik 2020)
  - in another, GEN is a structural case assigned under Agree, parallel to possessive DPs (Kornfilt 2003).

## 2 Two classes of nominalizations

There are four types of nominalizing suffixes in Turkish: the so-called indicative/factive *-DIK* and *-AcAK*, the subjunctive *-mA* and the gerundive *-Iş* (e.g., Kornfilt 1997; Borsley and Kornfilt 1999; Kerslake and Goksel 2005; Kornfilt and Whitman 2011).<sup>1</sup>

I argue that these four nominalizers fall into **two structurally distinct classes**.

- i) **FULL-CLAUSAL NOMINALIZATIONS:** formed with *-DIK* and *-AcAK* (following a line of work by Kornfilt 1985; Borsley and Kornfilt 1999; Kornfilt 2003; Kornfilt and Whitman 2011)
  - extend a full clausal spine until CP
  - project to DP at the outer nominal layer

(3)  $[_{DP} [_{CP} [_{TP} [_{VoiceP} DP \dots v \dots] T ] C ] D ]$  *to be revised*

- ii) **PARTIALLY-CLAUSAL NOMINALIZATIONS:** formed with *-mA* and *-Iş*
  - contain a reduced clausal spine
  - introduce a lower nominal licensing head (*n*)
  - similarly project to DP

(4)  $[_{DP} [_{nP} [_{VoiceP} DP \dots v \dots] n ] D ]$  *to be revised*

Below, I motivate this two-way divide by diagnosing both the size of the clausal spine and the presence of nominal structure below D.

**Verbal core.** The contrast between the two classes is not that one is verbal while the other is fully nominal. Both full-clausal and partially-clausal nominalizations retain a verbal core (Paparounas and Akkuş 2024).

- Both full-clausal and partially-clausal nominalizations **contain verbal morphology associated with the lower clausal spine** such as causative, passive, verbal negation, and low modality.

<sup>1</sup>Nominalizations with *-DIK* lead to past or present temporal interpretations, whereas those with *-AcAK* are future-oriented. By contrast, *-mA* and *-Iş* do not introduce an independent temporal interpretation.

- (5) a. Çayan-in uyan-dır-ıl-ma-si / uyan-dır-ıl-dığ-ı...  
 Çayan-GEN wake-CAUS-PASS-NMLZ-POSS.3SG / wake-CAUS-PASS-NMLZ-POSS.3SG  
 ‘Çayan’s being woken up/the fact that Çayan was woken up’
- b. Çayan-in uyan-abil-me-si / uyan-abil-dığ-ı...  
 Çayan-GEN wake-ABIL-NMLZ-POSS.3SG / wake-ABIL-NMLZ-POSS.3SG  
 ‘Çayan’s being able to wake up / the fact that Çayan was able to wake up’

★ This shows that all nominalizations contain at least a lower clausal domain, including VoiceP.

**Operators** Full-clausal nominalizations can host clausal operators like embedded wh-dependencies (6 and relativization (not shown here) (e.g., Borsley and Kornfilt 1999; Kornfilt 2003; Kornfilt and Whitman 2011).

- (6) Koç [kim]-in koş-{tuğ/acağ}-I]-nI bil-iyor.  
 coach who-GEN run-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC know-IMPF  
 ‘The coach saw who was running.’

– Partially-clausal nominalizations do not support the clausal operator dependency available with *-DIK* and *-AcAK* e.g., no embedded-question interpretation (7).

- (7) \*Koç [kim]-in koş-{ma/uş}-(s)I]-(n)I beğen-di.  
 coach who-GEN run-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC like-PST  
 Int. ‘The coach liked who was running.’

★ This contrast motivates a clausal spine up to CP for full-clausal nominalizations, and the absence of this higher clausal layer in partially-clausal nominalizations.

**Modification & Pluralization** Full-clausal nominalizations disallow nominal modification and pluralization i.e., no nominal structure internal to the nominalization. (8) (e.g., Borsley and Kornfilt 1999; Kornfilt 2003; Kornfilt and Whitman 2011).

- (8) \*Çayan’ın son parkur-da koş-{tuk/acak}-lar-ı bunlar.  
 Çayan-GEN last track-LOC run-NMLZ-PL-3POSS these-PL  
 Int. ‘These were/will be Çayan’s last runnings at the track.’

– Partially-clausal nominalizations, by contrast, allow both modification and pluralization (9). In this respect, they behave, at least externally, like event-denoting nominals.

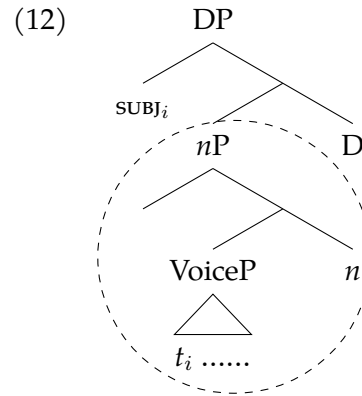
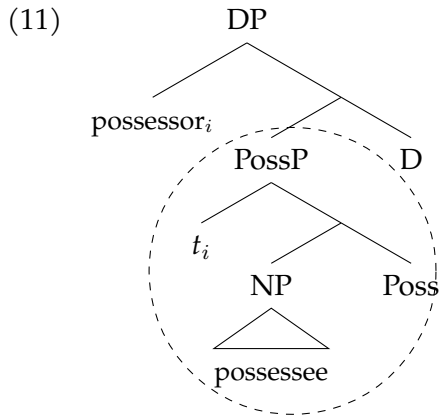
- (9) Çayan’ın son parkur-da koş-{uş/ma}-lar-ı bunlar.  
 Çayan-GEN last track-LOC run-NMLZ-PL-3POSS these-PL  
 ‘These are Çayan’s last runnings at the track.’

★ This contrast suggests that partially-clausal nominalizations contain a nominal projection, such as *n*, below D. For full-clausal nominalizations, by contrast, there is no evidence for such an internal nominal layer (see Alexiadou, Haegeman, and Stavrou 2008; Alexiadou 2020 for a review).

**Pronominal particle *ki*** A final piece of evidence comes from the pronominal particle *ki*. In possessive nominals, *ki* can replace the possessee (Kornfilt 1997; Hankamer 2004). Its function is comparable to English possessive pronouns, as in *senin performansın* ‘your performance’ vs. *seninki* ‘yours’.

- (10) A: [ Çayan’ın mezuniyet-i ]-ne katıl-dı-m.  
 Çayan.GEN graduation-POSS.3SG-DAT participate-PST-1SG  
 ‘I participated in Çayan’s graduation.’  
 B: Ben de Ali’nin-**ki**-ne.  
 I too Ali.GEN-KI-DAT  
 Lit. ‘I, Ali’s.’ (meaning; *I participated in Ali’s.*)

- Assuming the structure in (11) for possessive nominals, following Öztürk and Taylan (2016) and later Öyük and Demirok (2026), *ki* minimally replaces the nominal projection containing the possessee, represented here as PossP (dash-circled).



- While a full analysis of *ki*-replacement is beyond our current purposes, the relevant point is that *ki* is also available with partially-clausal nominalizations (13), giving rise to a similar derivation to (11) as in (12).

- (13) A: [ Çayan’ın koş-{ma/uş-(s)I }-(n)I izle-di-m.  
 Çayan-GEN run-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC watch-PST-1SG  
 ‘I watched Çayan’s running/Çayan’s way of running.’  
 B: Ben de Ali’nin(-**ki**-ni).  
 I too Ali-GEN(-KI-ACC)  
 Lit. ‘I, Ali’s.’ (meaning; *I watched Ali’s.*)

- Full-clausal nominalizations, by contrast, do not allow *ki*-replacement (14).

- (14) A: [ Çayan’ın koş-{tuğ/acağ}-I ]-nI bil-iyor-um.  
 Çayan-GEN run-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC know-IMP-1SG  
 ‘I know that Çayan was running/will run.’  
 B: Ben de Ali’nin(\*-**ki**-ni).  
 I too Ali-GEN(\*-KI-ACC)  
 Int. ‘I know Ali’s.’

★ The availability of *ki*-replacement with partially-clausal nominalizations provides further evidence that they contain a lower nominal layer. The absence of *ki*-replacement with full-clausal nominalizations, in turn, is expected if these nominalizations are CP-sized internally and become nominal only at the outer DP layer.

### 3 Disassociating GEN from $\phi$

So far, I have shown two things:

- -*DIK*/-*AcAK* nominalizations are full-clausal and
- -*mA*/-*Iş* nominalizations are partially clausal and show parallel to possessive nominals.

I now revise the structures by adding PossP to both classes as shown in (15-16) respectively.

(15) [DP [PossP [CP [TP [VoiceP DP ...*v* ...] T ] C ] Poss $\phi$  ] D ]

(16) [DP [PossP [<sub>NP</sub> [VoiceP DP ...*v* ...] *n* ] Poss $\phi$  ] D ]

I assume that PossP hosts nominal  $\phi$ -agreement, but it does not by itself license GEN. Thus, I dissociate two properties that are often treated together: **nominal agreement** and **GEN assignment** (see also Satık 2020; Paparounas and Akkuş 2024; Lim 2025; Öyük and Demirok 2026).

At first sight, GEN and  $\phi$ -agreement appear to go together: in argument positions, all four nominalizations show genitive subjects and obligatory nominal agreement.

- They can occur as complements to predicates (17-19).<sup>2</sup>

(17) Koç [ Çayan'(in) koş-**tuğ/acağ**-(\*(I)) ]-nI bil-iyor.  
coach.NOM Çayan.GEN run-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC know-IMPF  
'The coach knows that Çayan was running/will run.'

(18) Koç [ Çayan'(in) koş-**ma**-(\*(sI)) ]-nı iste-di.  
coach.NOM Çayan.GEN run-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC want-PST  
'The coach wanted Çayan to run.'

(19) Koç [ Çayan'(in) koş-**uş**-(\*(u)) ]-nu beğen-di.  
coach.NOM Çayan.GEN run-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC like-PST  
'The coach liked Çayan's running / Çayan's way of running.'

- They can also function as subjects (20-22).

(20) [ Çayan'(in) koş-{**tuğ/acağ**-(\*(I)) ] kesin.  
Çayan.GEN run-NMLZ-POSS.3SG certain  
'It is certain that Çayan ran/will run.'

<sup>2</sup>I use *argument position* descriptively here: the nominalized clause is a selected complement of the matrix predicate and bears the case expected of the matrix-internal argument. This does not mean that the predicates in (17–19) freely select all nominalization types; predicates differ in their selectional requirements.

- (21) [ Çayan'(in) koş-**ma**-(\*sı) ] imkansız.  
 Çayan.GEN run-NMLZ-POSS.3SG impossible  
 'It is impossible for Çayan to run.'
- (22) [ Çayan'(in) koş-**uş**-(\*u) ] harika-y-dı.  
 Çayan.GEN run-NMLZ-POSS.3SG wonderful-AUX-PST  
 'Çayan's (way of) running was great.'

Because of this uniform pattern in argument positions, GEN is often taken to be parasitic on **nominal**  $\phi$ -agreement (e.g., Kornfilt 2003; Kornfilt and Whitman 2011). However, this correlation breaks down in two environments.

### 3.1 Adjuncts

In adjunct environments, the otherwise uniform correlation between GEN and  $\phi$ -agreement does not always hold (Kornfilt 2003, 2008b).

- With *-DIK* and *-AcAK*, the embedded predicate bears  $\phi$ -agreement, but the embedded subject **cannot bear** genitive (23).

- (23) a. [ Çayan bağır-**dığ**-(ı) ] için, bebek uyan-dı.  
 Çayan.NOM yell-NMLZ-POSS.3SG for baby wake-PST  
 'The baby woke up because Çayan yelled.'
- b. [ Çayan yarın maraton koş-**acağ**-(ı) ] için, onu parti-ye davet et-me-di-k.  
 Çayan.NOM tomorrow marathon run-NMLZ-POSS.3SG for 3SG.ACC party-DAT invite do-NEG-PST-1PL  
 'Because Çayan will run a marathon tomorrow, we did not invite him to the party.'

- With *-mA* or *-İş*, however, both GEN and  $\phi$ -agreement **must be assigned** (24).

- (24) a. [ Çayan-(in) yarın maraton-da yorul-**ma**-(sı) ] için, onu parti-ye davet et-me-di-k.  
 Çayan-GEN tomorrow marathon-LOC get.tired-NEG-NMLZ-POSS.3SG for 3SG.ACC party-DAT invite do-NEG-PST-1PL  
 'We did not invite Çayan to the party so that he doesn't get tired in the marathon tomorrow.'
- b. [ Çayan-(in) koş-**uş**-(u) ] için herkes çok heyecanlı-y-dı.  
 Çayan-GEN run-NMLZ-POSS.3SG for everybody very excited-AUX-PST  
 'Everyone was very excited for Çayan's (way of) running.'

- Taking possessive nominals as the baseline case of a genitive–agreement co-occurrence (25), *-mA* and *-İş* nominalizations pattern with possessive nominals rather than with *-DIK*/*-AcAK* nominalizations.

- (25) [ Çayan-(in) mezuniyet-(i) ] için herkes çok heyecanlı-y-dı.  
 Çayan-GEN graduation-POSS.3SG for everybody very excited-AUX-PST  
 'Everyone was very excited for Çayan's graduation.'

### 3.2 NOM-GEN alternation (aka *Differential Subject Marking*)

Differential subject marking provides a second dissociation between  $\phi$ -agreement and genitive case: the agreement morphology remains obligatory while subject case varies.

- Embedded subjects surface as nominative under agent pseudo-incorporation/kind-level readings, and as genitive under referential or specific readings (Kornfilt 1985, 2008a; Von Heusinger and Kornfilt 2005; Laszakovits 2017; Kornfilt 2020; Sağ 2022; Sağ, Demirok, and Bal 2025).
- **Nominal agreement is obligatory** irrespective of which case the embedded subject bears (26).

(26) a. [ Sokak-ta bir adam(-**in**) bağır-dığ\*(-**1**) ]-nı duy-du-m.  
street-LOC one man-GEN yell-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC hear-PST-1SG  
'I heard **a certain man** yelling on the street.'

b. [ Sokak-ta bir adam bağır-dığ\*(-**1**) ]-nı duy-du-m.  
street-LOC one man yell-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC hear-PST-1SG  
'I heard **some man** yelling on the street.'

- The **alternation is local**: if material intervenes between the subject and the nominalized predicate, **genitive is obligatory** (27) (Kornfilt 2008a; Öztürk 2009; Sağ, Demirok, and Bal 2025).

(27) [ Bir adam\*(-**in**) {sokak-ta/biri-ne/bugün} bağır-dığ\*(-**1**) ]-nı duy-du-m.  
one man(-GEN) {street-LOC/someone-DAT/today} yell-NML-POSS.3SG-ACC hear-PST-1SG  
'I heard a (certain) man yell {on the street/at someone/today}.'

- The **pattern holds across all nominalizations** despite their difference in temporal interpretation (28).

(28) a. [ Sokak-ta bir adam(-**in**) bağır-acağ\*(-**1**) ]-nı um-ma-z-dı-m.  
street-LOC one man(-GEN) yell-NML-POSS.3SG-ACC expect-NEG-AOR-PST-1SG  
'I wouldn't expect that some/a certain man would yell on the street.'

b. [ Sokak-ta bir adam(-**in**) bağır-ma\*(-**sı**) ]-nı bekle-m-iyor-du-m.  
street-LOC one man(-GEN) yell-NML-POSS.3SG-ACC wait-NEG-IPFV-PST-1SG  
'I wasn't expecting some/a certain man to yell on the street.'

c. [ Sokak-ta-ki ses-i bir adam(-**in**) bağır-ış\*(-**1**) ]-na benze-t-ti-m.  
street-LOC-PRT sound-ACC one man(-GEN) yell-NML-POSS.3SG-DAT resemble-CAUS-PST-1SG  
'I likened the sound on the street to some/a certain man's yelling.'

- The **NOM-GEN alternation overrides the restriction on adjuncts**: embedded subjects occur even in environments where genitive would otherwise be expected i.e., within adjuncts involving *-mA* and *-Iş* nominalizations.

(29) [ Çayan-ı arı sok-ma-**ma**-sı ] için, herkes çok çaba-la-dı.  
Çayan-ACC bee sting-NEG-NMLZ-POSS.3SG for everybody very effort-DO-PST  
'Everyone tried very hard so that some bee would not sting Çayan.'

## 4 Two mechanisms for GEN: evidence from sluicing

We have seen that nominal  $\phi$ -agreement and genitive case cannot be treated as a single package. The next question is therefore how GEN is assigned.

I argue that GEN in full-clausal nominalizations is the spell-out of **unmarked case** in a nominal domain, in the sense of configurational case theory (Marantz 1991; Levin and Preminger 2015; Laszakovits 2017; Satik 2020; Lim 2025), rather than the result of AGREE with a nominal head (pace Kornfilt 2003; Baker and Vinokurova 2010).

The relevant case assignment rule is given in (30).

(30) UNMARKED CASE ASSIGNMENT

Any DP that has not been assigned lexical or dependent case is assigned unmarked case, realized morphologically as nominative in clausal domains (under TP) and genitive in nominal domains (under DP).

Evidence for this view comes from *low sluicing* (Kiper 2025, in press). In this construction, the wh-remnant bears auxiliary/copular morphology and tense. .

- Crucially, with full-clausal nominalizations, genitive case on the correlate does **not** survive on the remnant (31-32).

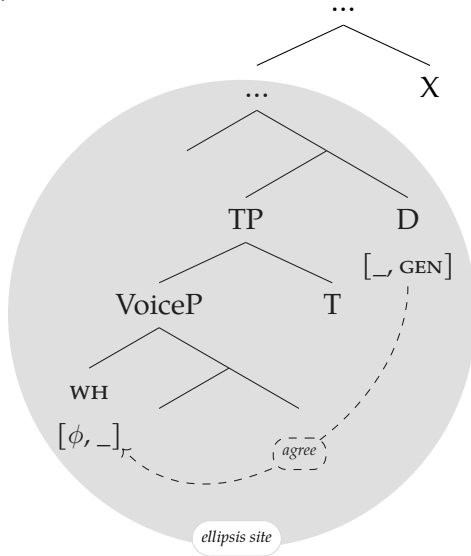
(31) \*Koç [biri-nin koş-tuğ-u]-nu duy-du ama kim-in-di anla-ma-dı.  
 coach someone-GEN run-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC hear-PST but who-GEN-AUX.PST understand-NEG-PST  
 INT. 'The coach heard that someone was running, but he didn't understand who.'

(32) \*Koç [biri-nin koş-acağ-ı]-nı duy-du ama kim-in-di anla-ma-dı.  
 coach someone-GEN run-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC hear-PST but who-GEN-AUX.PST understand-NEG-PST  
 INT. 'The coach heard that someone will be running, but he didn't understand who.'

For present purposes, I assume the movement-and-deletion analysis of low sluicing developed in Kiper (in press), where the remnant is extracted out of an elided clausal source, as in standard analyses of sluicing (Merchant 2001).

- On this view, **the absence of genitive on the remnant is expected** if GEN in full-clausal nominalizations is assigned late, as **unmarked case in the nominal domain**. By the time unmarked case is computed, the wh-remnant has already exited the relevant nominal domain that has been deleted, and therefore surfaces with nominative.
- An AGREE-based account of genitive, by contrast, **predicts the wrong result**. If D assigned genitive directly to the embedded subject, the wh-remnant would carry that genitive morphology with it under movement, incorrectly predicting case connectivity as schematized in (33).

(33) \*



The **crucial contrast** is that this disconnectivity is **not** uniform across nominal environments.

- In possessive nominals, genitive on the possessor is preserved under low sluicing. (34).

(34) Koç [biri-nin mezuniyet-i]-ne katıl-dı ama kim-in-di söyle-me-di.  
 coach someone-GEN graduation-POSS.3SG-DAT participate-PST but who-GEN-AUX.PST say-NEG-PST  
 ‘The coach participated in someone’s graduation, but he didn’t say whose.’

- The same pattern holds for partially-clausal nominalizations. *-mA* and *-Iş* nominalizations allow genitive connectivity under low sluicing. (35-36) unlike full-clausal nominalizations.

(35) Koç [biri-nin koş-ma-sı]-nı iste-di ama kim-in-di söyle-me-di.  
 coach someone-GEN run-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC want-PST but who-GEN-AUX.PST say-NEG-PST  
 ‘The coach asked someone to run, but he didn’t say who.’

(36) Koç [biri-nin koş-uş-u]-nu beğen-di ama kim-in-di söyle-me-di.  
 coach someone-GEN run-NMLZ-POSS.3SG-ACC like-PST but who-GEN-AUX.PST say-NEG-PST  
 ‘The coach liked someone’s running, but he didn’t say who.’

★ This contrast shows that low sluicing diagnoses the **timing** of case assignment. In full-clausal nominalizations, genitive is assigned late as unmarked case in the nominal domain, so extraction of the wh-remnant bleeds genitive assignment. In possessive nominals and partially-clausal nominalizations, by contrast, genitive must be assigned low/early enough that the remnant carries it under movement.

Turkish therefore has at least two sources of GEN:

- (i) late configurational GEN, realized as unmarked case in full-clausal nominalizations; and
- (ii) early local GEN, licensed inside possessive nominals and partially-clausal nominalizations.

The second type of genitive cannot simply be reduced to the unmarked-case rule in (?). Three possibilities are in principle available.

- i) **lexical case:** GEN could be assigned by particular lexical heads, as argued by Kuzgun and Atlamaz (2023) for certain postpositions.

- ii) **inherent case:** GEN could be assigned together with a semantic relation, parallel to dative goals or ablative sources.
- iii) **case licensed by functional head:** GEN could be licensed by a lower nominal head, independently of nominal  $\phi$ -agreement.

I adopt the third option. Possessive nominals and partially-clausal nominalizations contain a lower nominal licensing head, here represented as  $n$ .

- $n$  licenses GEN on the subject before the remnant moves out of the ellipsis site; and
- this licensing may be implemented through AGREE, perhaps along the lines of Öyük and Demirok (2026), though the precise mechanics are left for future research.

## 5 Conclusion

- Genitive case in Turkish nominalizations cannot be uniformly derived from nominal  $\phi$ -agreement.
- Although nominal  $\phi$ -agreement is broadly available across nominalizations, GEN has a more restricted distribution:
  - it is absent in adjunct environments,
  - it is absent under pseudo-incorporation,
  - and it fails to survive under low sluicing with full-clausal nominalizations.
- This dissociation motivates two mechanisms for GEN:
  - **Partially-clausal nominalizations** ( $-mA$ ,  $-I\dot{s}$ ):  
GEN is licensed locally by a lower nominal head, parallel to possessive DPs.
  - **Full-clausal nominalizations** ( $-DIK$ ,  $-AcAK$ ):  
GEN is the spell-out of unmarked case in a DP-domain.
- Low sluicing supports this split:
  - possessive nominals and partially-clausal nominalizations preserve genitive connectivity;
  - full-clausal nominalizations show case disconnectivity.

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