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## **Policy versus Practice. Language variation and change in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Dutch**

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## Morphosyntactic variables (3)

### Genitive case

#### 1 The genitive case in Dutch

Dutch, like other Germanic languages, originally had a fully-fledged morphological case system with different case inflections for nominals and adnominals, depending on their function. For the Old and Middle Dutch periods, four cases are commonly distinguished, viz. the nominative, the genitive, the dative, and the accusative (e.g. van der Wal & van Bree 2008: 132-135). These cases were further distinguished by gender (i.e. masculine, feminine, neuter) and number (i.e. singular, plural). The genitive performed a number of functions, for instance, indicating possession in a broad sense, as well as partitive and temporal relations (van der Horst 2008: 148-150). Moreover, the inflected genitive case occurred both prenominally (*des konings zoon* ‘the king’s son’) and postnominally (*de zoon des konings* ‘the son of the king’).

Nevertheless, the case system had already started to decline as early as the Middle Dutch period. Similar to the developments in other Germanic languages, the increasing loss of inflection, commonly referred to as *deflection*, led to a situation in which historical synthetic forms competed with alternative periphrastic constructions. In the case of the genitive case, the inflected forms were gradually replaced by an analytical construction with the preposition *van* ‘of’ (*de zoon van de(n) koning*). According to Scott (2014: 107), “the *van*-construction had become constructionalised as an alternative to the adnominal genitive” by the Middle Dutch period. In present-day Dutch, remnants of the genitive case are for the most part restricted to fixed and fossilised expressions (e.g. *de tand des tijds* ‘the ravages of time’), or to archaic and formal language (e.g. *het pad des levens* ‘the path of life’) (cf. ANS 3.4.1)

In the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the synthetic genitive still occurred in written texts, first and foremost in the higher registers. It is generally assumed that the fully-fledged case system had no longer been used in spoken Dutch by that time (van der Horst 2008: 1074). However, in the context of language cultivation, aiming to remodel and elaborate the Dutch language based on the Latin ideal, grammarians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries continued to promote the use of four or even six cases, adding the vocative and the ablative to the four traditional cases. The latter was presented, for example, in the first printed grammar of Dutch, the *Twe-spraack vande Nederduitsche letterkunst* of 1584 (cf. e.g. van der Bree & van der Wal 2008: 191-195). These attempts to revive the old case markers created a growing discrepancy between language norms and language usage. Nominal inflection remained a widely discussed topic, though, both in

metalinguistic discourse in the eighteenth century (cf. Section 3) as well as in Weiland's (1805) national grammar of Dutch (cf. Section 2).

## 2 Discussion in Weiland (1805)

Concerning the decline of the Dutch case system and the rise of alternative (prepositional) constructions replacing the historical synthetic forms, the treatment of the genitive case in Weiland's (1805) national grammar exemplifies the gap between language norms and language practice.

As outlined in Section 1, the synthetic genitive case was primarily used in the written language and especially in higher registers, while it had practically disappeared from spoken language. Given the fact that the national grammar was aimed at the whole Dutch population, including schoolchildren, and generally had a strong educational focus (Rutten 2016e: 124), one might expect an increasing attention given to the analytical *van*-construction, which had largely replaced the synthetic genitive case in colloquial Dutch. Remarkably, Weiland's (1805) national grammar strongly promoted the synthetic forms of the case system, including the genitive case.

To begin with, Weiland (1805: 75) provided a concise definition of the genitive case in his general discussion of the traditional Dutch case inflections:

De *tweede* naamval is die, welke de betrekkingen der zelfstandige naamwoorden op elkander aanwijst, en de zelfstandige naamwoorden zamen voegt. Zoo menigvuldig nu de gesteldheden der dingen en derzelve betrekkingen op elkander zijn, zoo menigvuldig zijn ook de gevallen, waarin een zelfstandig naamwoord den *tweeden* naamval moet aannemen.

'The *second* case is that case which indicates the relations of nouns with each other, and which joins the nouns. As manifold as the conditions of the things and their relations with each other are, as manifold are also the cases, in which a noun must take the *second* case.'

Additionally, Weiland (1805: 75) illustrated the various roles the genitive case could perform, for instance in *het werk mijner handen* 'the work of my hands' and *Gods geboden* 'God's commandments' (agent), *de heer des huizes* 'the master of the house' and *de bezitter eens grooten vermogens* 'the owner of a great fortune' (possession), *de zeden onzer eeuw* 'the morals of our century' and *de aangenaamheid dezzer landboeve* 'the comfort of this farm' (time and place), and so on. Although these examples already indicate Weiland's preference for the synthetic genitive case, it was in the paradigms where his officialised choices were explicitly presented.

Table 1 provides an outline of the prescribed forms of various genitive markers offered in the paradigms in Weiland (1805).

**Table 1.** Prescribed forms of various genitive markers (singular/plural) in the paradigms by Weiland (1805).

	Genitive singular		
	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Definite art.	<i>des</i>	<i>der</i>	<i>des</i>
Indefinite art.	<i>eens</i>	<i>eener</i>	<i>eens</i>
Demonstrative pr.	<i>dezes</i>	<i>dezer</i>	<i>dezes</i>
Possessive pr.	<i>mijns</i>	<i>mijner</i>	<i>mijns</i>
	Genitive plural		
	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Definite art.	<i>der</i>	<i>der</i>	<i>der</i>
Indefinite art.	–	–	–
Demonstrative pr.	<i>dezer</i>	<i>dezer</i>	<i>dezer</i>
Possessive pr.	<i>mijner</i>	<i>mijner</i>	<i>mijner</i>

Systematically, Weiland (1805) only mentioned the synthetic forms of the genitive case in his paradigms. These included both the definite and indefinite article, forms of the demonstrative pronouns (as illustrated by *deze*) and the possessive pronouns (as illustrated by *mijn*). At least in the running text, Weiland (1805: 76) mentioned the analytical construction with the preposition *van* as a frequently used alternative for the genitive case:

In plaats van den *tweeden* naamval, bedient men zich dikwerf van het voorzetsel *van*, en zegt: *eene teekening van Rubbens, een lierzang van Klopstock, de keizerin van Rusland, de psalmen van David* enz., terwijl *een lierzang Klopstocks, de keizerin Ruslands* enz.; in den gewonen schrijfstijl, buiten gebruik, doch in poezij, misschien, te dulden is. In den verheven stijl, zegt men *Dauids psalmen* enz.<sup>78</sup>

'In place of the *second* case, one often uses the preposition *van*, and says: *eene teekening van Rubbens, een lierzang van Klopstock, de keizerin van Rusland, de psalmen van David* etc., while *een lierzang Klopstocks, de keizerin Ruslands* etc. are obsolete in the common writing style, but perhaps tolerable in poetry. In the elevated style, one says *Dauids psalmen* etc.'

Notably, Weiland's examples to illustrate the use of the *van*-construction only have proper names (*David, Rusland*) as possessors, which typically lack an adnominal such as articles or pronouns.

<sup>78</sup> Here, Weiland also commented on stylistic variation in the case of yet another alternative genitival construction, viz. the possessive *s*-construction (cf. also Rutten 2016: 130-131).

Furthermore, Weiland (1805: 76) identified three cases in which the *van*-construction is the only option. These contexts refer to (1) a specific origin of a person, (2) the material of an object, or (3) the age, size, weight or value:

In sommige gevallen wordt het voorzetsel *van* altijd gebruikt, bij voorbeeld, 1. wanneer geslacht, afkomst en Vaderland aangewezen worden: *een mensch van geringe afkomst, een Amsterdamer van geboorte* enz.; 2. wanneer de stof genoemd wordt, waaruit iets gemaakt is: *eene doos van zilver, een ring van goud* enz.; 3. wanneer ouderdom, grootte, gewigt en waarde bepaald worden: *een kind van twee jaren, een ton van twintig emmeren, een man van groote verdiensten* enz.

In some cases the preposition *van* is always used, for example, 1. when gender, descent and native country are indicated: *een mensch van geringe afkomst, een Amsterdamer van geboorte* etc.; 2. when the material, of which something is made, is mentioned: *eene doos van zilver, een ring van goud* etc.; 3. when age, size, weight and value are defined: *een kind van twee jaren, een ton van twintig emmeren, een man van groote verdiensten* etc.<sup>7</sup>

It is striking that in all three contexts illustrated here, an article is missing. Rutten (2016e: 131) explains that “since inflectional case in Dutch is primarily expressed on adnominals, typically on the article or a pronoun, they therefore disfavor the synthetic genitive”. It seems that Weiland did not take into account the crucial role of the missing article. The way in which Weiland’s acknowledged the existence of the alternative construction with *van* is thus very limited and highlights the preference for the synthetic genitive case even more.

Weiland’s (1805) distinct choice in favour of the historical genitive suggests that the Dutch population at large was supposed to learn the synthetic forms, although they had largely disappeared from colloquial language practice. One might assume that this choice further intensified the discrepancy between language norms and actual language practice, which will be investigated empirically with data from the *Going Dutch Corpus* in Section 5.2. But first, Section 3 will shed light on the developments in the normative discussion of the eighteenth century, in order to assess the position of Weiland (1805) against the background of the preceding metalinguistic discourse.

### 3 Eighteenth-century normative discussion

Throughout the eighteenth century, morphology and nominal inflection in particular were among the core topics, if not the most important, in metalinguistic discourse (Simons & Rutten 2014: 69). Rutten (2009a, 2016e) focuses on the broad developments in the eighteenth-century normative tradition, suggesting a shift from elitist (1700–1740) to ‘civil’ (1740–1770) to national grammar (from 1770 onward; cf. also Chapter 2) – changes which are also reflected in the treatment of the genitive case.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, i.e. the period of elitist grammar, metalinguistic texts more or less exclusively presented the synthetic

forms of the genitive case. In van Hoogstraten's (1700) preface, we only find inflectional case forms, for instance for the definite article *des* (m.), *der* (f.), *des* (n.), *der* (all gender plur.), and for the indefinite article *eens/eenes* (m.), *eener* (f.), *eens* (n.).

Similarly, Moonen (1706: 46-47) only mentioned the synthetic forms for the definite article, i.e. *des* (m.), *der* (f.), *des* (n.), *der* (all gender plur.), as well as for the indefinite article, i.e. *eens* (m.), *eener* (f.), *eens* (n.). On closer inspection, however, one can find a few occasional exceptions with analytical *van*-forms as options for possessives, i.e. *van onzen* or *onzes* (m.) and *van ons* or *onzes* (n.), but only *onzer* (f., all gender plur.). Furthermore, Moonen (1706: 84-85) also mentioned the *van*-construction in the running text as a frequently used alternative:

De *Teeler* is de tweede Naemval [...] Dees draegt tot Merktekens in het Eenvouwige Getal *Eens, Eener, Des, Der*; als in *Eens Mans, Des Mans, Eens Kints, Eener Vrouwe, Der Vrouwe*; en in het Meervouwige *Der*; als in *Der Mannen, Vrouwen, Kinderen*.

Waer voor veeltyts *Van Eenen, van Den, van Het* gebruikt wordt; als, *De sleutel van den hof*, voor *De sleutel des hofs, het hooft van eenen walvisch*, voor *het hooft eens walvisches, het welvaeren van de stadt*, voor *het welvaeren der stadt, de rug van het paert*, voor *de rug des paerts*.

Voornaemelyk als de Noemer van het manlyke en Onzydige Geslachte in E en S eindigt; als *Van den wille, van den vrede, van het einde, van het huis, van het vlas, van den kroes, van het mes, van den glans*; die alle de S zeer noode achter zich willen lyden

‘The genitive is the second case [...] In the singular, its markers are *Eens, Eener, Des, Der*, as in *Eens Mans, Des Mans, Eens Kints, Eener Vrouwe, Der Vrouwe*, and in the plural *Der*; as in *Der Mannen, Vrouwen, Kinderen*.

Oftentimes, *Van Eenen, van Den, van Het* are used for this, as *De sleutel van den hof*, for *De sleutel des hofs, het hooft van eenen walvisch*, for *het hooft eens walvisches, het welvaeren van de stadt*, for *het welvaeren der stadt, de rug van het paert*, for *de rug des paerts*.

Particularly if the nominative of the masculine and neuter gender ends in E and S, as *Van den wille, van den vrede, van het einde, van het huis, van het vlas, van den kroes, van het mes, van den glans*, all of which can hardly bear the S behind them?

Moonen argued that the use of the *van*-construction was phonologically motivated, mainly when the possessor is a masculine or neuter noun ending in *e* or *s*.

Verwer (1707) generally listed synthetic forms only, except for some variation attested in the neuter paradigms, viz. *des* or *van den* in the singular, and *der* or *van de* in the plural.

In contrast to his contemporary grammarians, Sewel (1708: 38-39) presented the historical genitive and the *van*-construction as two options. At least in the case of the definite article, Sewel listed both synthetic and analytical forms, e.g. *des* or *van den* (m.), *der* or *van de* (f.), *des* or *van het* (n.), but only *der* for the plural. In contrast, for the indefinite article we only find the synthetic genitive forms, i.e. *eens* (m./n.) and *eener* (f.). In the paradigms for possessive pronouns, Sewel (1708: 122-123) also showed some variation, presenting, for example, the synthetic genitive forms *myns* (m.) and *myner* (f.), but only analytical *van myn* (n.), and both *myner* and *van myne* (all gender plur.).

A different eighteenth-century approach, with a strong focus on stylistic variation, can be found in ten Kate (1723; cf. also Noordegraaf & van der Wal 2002). As summarised by Rutten (2016e: 127), ten Kate interpreted “the difference between the usage of case endings in higher registers such as formal and literary language, and the lack of case endings in other registers as a matter of style”. In the case of the genitive, he assigned the synthetic and analytical genitive forms to three stylistic levels, viz. the sublime (*hoogdravend*), the solemn (*deftig*) and the plain (*gemeenzaem*) style. As can be seen in ten Kate’s (1723 I: 337) illustration of the indefinite article, exemplified by the feminine singular forms, the synthetic genitive was assigned to the sublime style, whereas the analytical *van*-construction occurred in the solemn and plain styles:

Hoogdr<sup>79</sup>: EENER GROOTEN of GROOTER VROUWE.  
 Deft: VAN EENE GROOTE VROUWE (of ingetr: VROUW’).  
 Gem: VAN EEN’ GROOTE VROUW.

The same stylistic variation was also presented in other paradigms, for instance for the definite article and the possessive pronoun, again in the feminine singular (ten Kate 1723 I: 339):

Hoogdr: DER (en MYNER) GROOTEN of GROOTER VROUWE, of VAN DE  
 (en MYNE) GROOTE VROUWE.  
 Deft: VAN DE (en MYNE of MYN’) GROOTE VROUW’.  
 Gem: VAN DE (en MYN) GROOTE VROUW.

Notably, ten Kate also mentioned the analytical *van*-construction in the elevated style, as an alternative to the synthetic genitive. Generally, though, it can be summarised that the lower the style or register, the less case marking we find in ten Kate’s (1723) paradigms.

From van Belle’s (1748: 42ff.) paradigms illustrating the inflection of nouns, one can deduce a clear preference for synthetic forms, which he mentioned with regard to the genitive: *des Heeren (Wet)*, *der kwaade Vrouw (Ontearing)*, *des eersten Kinds (Bloedstorting)*. Interestingly, only examples of the prenominal genitive were used here. Van Belle (1755: 23ff.), referring to the genitive case as the *Afdaaler*, only presented synthetic forms, while the *van*-construction remained unmentioned:

De *Afdaaler* dient, om eene Zaak voor de stellen, zo als dezelve tót iets óf iemant, als afdaalende, voorkomt; en wordt betékend in de Lédekens *Eenes, Eener, Des*, en *Der*, en in de Naam- óf Voornaamwoorden en Eigene Naamen, door agteraanvoeginge van *e, en, r*, en *s*. Als:  
*De Sterke EENES ManS*  
*’S MensEN Zoon.*  
*De Zwakheid EENER VrouwE.*  
*De Barmhertigheid DES KoningS.*

<sup>79</sup> These abbreviations refer to the three stylistic levels distinguished by ten Kate (1723), i.e. sublime (*Hoogdr* = *hoogdravend*), solemn (*Deft* = *deftig*) and plain (*Gem* = *gemeenzaem*).



*WillemS Stoutheid.*  
*De Gunst DER KoninginNE.*  
*MynER VrouwE Moeder.*

‘The genitive serves to introduce a thing (object), as it occurs in relation to, or descends from, something or somebody. It is denoted by the articles *Eenes*, *Eener*, *Des*, and *Der*, and in the nouns or pronouns and proper names through suffixation of *e*, *en*, *r* and *s*. [...]’

From around the mid-1800s onward, i.e. the period of so-called ‘civil’ grammar, metalinguistic texts were characterised by “the plain efforts to rephrase the relatively complex grammatical descriptions of the earlier period of elitist grammar in simpler terms, and thus to make knowledge of the grammar of Dutch accessible to a larger audience” (Rutten 2016e: 125). With regard to the genitive case, the analytical *van*-construction was consistently presented as an alternative of the synthetic case forms in the paradigms of normative grammars.

A good example of this widened approach is the grammar by Elzevier (1761: 52-53), in which both analytical and synthetic forms were mentioned and illustrated:

een persoon of zaek die een’ wezentlyken eigendom heeft aen personen of zaken die by hem gestelt worden, dus zegt men: *de lof* DES *mans*, of *van den man*, *is groot*, *de lof* DER *vrouw*, of *van de vrouw*, *is groot*, *de lof* DES *konstgenootschaps*, of *van het konstgenootschap*, *is groot*. Hier blykt nu klaer dat *man*, *vrouw* en *konstgenootschap* hier in de tweeden Naemvall’ staen, of de *Eigenaers* zyn van den lof.

‘a person or thing which has an essential possession of persons or things, thus one says *de lof* DES *mans*, or *van den man*, *is groot*, *de lof* DER *vrouw*, or *van de vrouw*, *is groot*, *de lof* DES *konstgenootschaps*, or *van het konstgenootschap*, *is groot*. Here it becomes obvious that *man*, *vrouw* and *konstgenootschap* are in the second case here, or are the possessors of the praise (*lof*)’.

In Elzevier’s (1761: 60-61) paradigm for the definite article, the options with *van* were listed first, followed by the synthetic forms, i.e. *van den* or *des* (m.), *van de* or *der* (f.), *van het* or *den* (n.), *van de* or *der* (all gender plur.). The same is true for the indefinite pronoun, i.e. *van eenen* or *eens* (m.), *van eene* or *eener* (f.), *van een* or *eens* (n.). The order of mention might suggest a preference for the analytical *van*-construction. Nevertheless, by taking into account other possible genitive markers, one can only find inflected forms in Elzevier’s paradigms for possessive pronouns. Still, there were some exceptions, e.g. only *van onzen*, *van ons* (no synthetic option), signalling variation in the paradigms.

Similar to Elzevier’s approach, van der Palm (1769: 10-12) considered both synthetic and analytical options:

*Vr.* Welke zyn de merkteekens van dezen Naemval?  
*Antw.* In het enkelvoudige, in het mannelyke en onzydige geslacht, heeft hy tot merkteekens de lidwoordjes *Eens* en *Des*, als *eens mans*, *des mans*, *eens kinds*, en in het

vrouwelyke *eener* en *der*, als *eener vrouwe*, *der dochter*, in het meervouwige in alle geslachten *der*, als *der mannen*, *der vrouwen*, *der kinderen*.

*Vr.* Gebruikt men somtyds ook niet *van eenen*, *van den*, en *van het*?

*Ant.* Somtyds bedient men zich van de woorden, *van eenen*, *van den*, *van het*; hebbende dit voornamelyk plaets, wanneer de Naemwoorden van het mannelijke en onzydige geslagt in *E*, *S* of *Sch* eindigen; als *van den wille*, *van het huis*, *van het vleesch*; want dan geschiedt dit, om het wangeluidt, dat de byvoeging van eene *S* in de woorden geeft, voortekomen.

*Q:* Which are the markers of this case?

*A:* In the singular, in the masculine and neuter gender, its markers are the articles *Eens* and *Des*, as in *eens mans*, *des mans*, *eens kinds*, and in the feminine gender *eener* and *der*, as in *eener vrouwe*, *der dochter*, in the plural of all gender *der*, as *der mannen*, *der vrouwen*, *der kinderen*.

*Q:* Doesn't one use *van eenen*, *van den*, and *van het* sometimes?

*A:* Sometimes one uses the words *van eenen*, *van den*, *van het*. This primarily occurs when the nouns of the masculine and neuter gender end in *E*, *S* or *Sch*, as *van den wille*, *van het huis*, *van het vleesch*; because then it occurs to prevent the cacophony, that the addition of an *S* in these words brings.'

Moreover, in van der Palm's paradigms, for instance for the definite article (1769: 22-23), both synthetic and analytical forms were presented: *des* or *van den* (m.), *der* or *van de* (f.), *des* or *van het* (n.), *der* or *van de* (all gender plur.). Likewise, van der Palm (1769: 24) listed *eens* or *van eenen* (m.), *eener* or *van eene* (f.), *eens* or *van een* (n.) as options for the indefinite article in the genitive case. The order possibly indicates a preference for the historical synthetic forms, though. The use of *van* was phonologically motivated, mainly assigned to occurrences in which masculine or neuter nouns end in *e*, *s* or *sch*, which is probably a reference to Moonen (1706).

An extensive set of paradigms is included in de Haes (1764: 21ff.), illustrating the inflections of definite and indefinite articles, demonstrative pronouns, possessive determiners and many more. He was rather consistent in presenting both the synthetic (mentioned first throughout) and analytical forms, e.g. *des* or *van den* (m.), *der* or *van de* (f.), *des* or *van het* (n.), *der* or *van de* (all gender plur.), and *eens* or *van eenen* (m.), *eener* or *van eene* (f.), *eens* or *van een* (n.).

Tollius (1776: 46-47) consistently mentioned both synthetic and analytical forms of the definite article, i.e. *des* or *van den* (m.), *der* or *van de* (f.), *des* or *van het/van den* (n.), *der* or *van de* (all gender plur.), and the indefinite article, i.e. *enes* or *van enen* (m.), *ener* or *van ene* (f.), *enes* or *van een* (n.). Stijl & van Bolhuis (1776: 79-80) also presented both synthetic and analytical options, for example of the definite article, i.e. *des* or *van den* (m.), *der* or *van de* (f.), *van het* or *des* (n.; analytical first!), all gender plural *der* or *van de*, and the indefinite article, i.e. *eenes* (*eens*) or *van eenen* (m.), *eener* or *van een* (*eene*) (f.), *eens* or *van een* (n.).

A somewhat more conservative approach can be found in Zeydelaar (1781: 140), who mainly presented synthetic forms only, for instance of the definite article, i.e. *des* (m.), *der* (f.), *des* (n.), *der* (pl.), and the indefinite article, i.e. *eens* (m.), *eener* (f.) and *eens* (n.). We do find the analytical forms presented alongside the synthetic forms in a few neuter paradigms, e.g. *van een klein Kind* or *eens kleinen Kinds*,

and *van de* or *der kleine Kinderen*, in the case of possessives *van mijn* (n.), but *mijns* (m.), *mijner* (f.), *mijner* or *van mijne* (all gender plur.).

The final decades of the eighteenth century witnessed another development in metalinguistic discourse. In the context of the debate about a national grammar of Dutch, grammatical descriptions usually preferred the analytical *van*-construction, and in some cases even no longer took into account the synthetic forms in the paradigms (Rutten 2016e: 125-126).

Van Bolhuis (1793: 24-28) illustrated the genitive case by an example with the preposition *van*, viz. *de brand van dat huis*. The restriction to analytical forms is also reflected in the paradigms for the definite and indefinite articles: *van den* (m.), *van de* (f.), *van het* (n.), *van de* (all gender plur.), and *van eenen* (m.), *van ene* (f.), *van een* (n.), respectively. Interestingly, the inflected genitive forms occur alongside the *van*-construction in the paradigms of possessive determiners (van Bolhuis 1793: 43), i.e. *mijns* or *van mijnen* (m.), *mijner* or *van mijne* (f.), *mijns* or *van mijn* (n.), *mijner* or *van mijne* (all gender plur.), as well as in the paradigms of demonstrative pronouns (van Bolhuis 1793: 46): *dezes* or *van dezen* (m.), *dezer* or *van deze* (f.), and so forth. The complete restriction to analytical forms was thus not extended to all possible genitive markers.

Just before the turn of the century, the *Rudimenta* (1799: 6-7) presented both synthetic and analytical forms of the definite and indefinite article, i.e. *des* or *van den* (m.), *der* or *van de* (f.), *van het* or *des* (n.), *der* or *van de* (all gender plur.), and *eens* or *van eenen* (m./n.), *eener* or *van eene* (f.). The varying order of mentioning the forms is noticeable, generally listing the synthetic forms before the option with *van*, but *van* before the inflected genitive in the case of the neuter singular. There is some more subtle variation with regard to definite and indefinite nouns in the paradigms illustrating the inflection of nouns: *des Broeders* or *van den Broeder* (m.), but *van de* or *der Zusters* (f.), *van het deksel* or *des deksels* (n.) and. It is arguable whether and to what extent the (inconsistent) order of mention had any meaning, i.e. whether or not we can deduce the grammarians' preferences. In any case, the *Rudimenta* (1799) presented synthetic and analytical forms next to each other.

Rutten (2016e: 126) interprets the shift from synthetic forms in the beginning of the eighteenth-century to analytical forms towards the end of the eighteenth-century as “an ongoing effort to appropriate the language of ‘the population’ instead of solely the language of ‘the elite’”. With regard to the genitive case, this is reflected in the metalinguistic discussions by a shift from synthetic to analytical forms prescribed in eighteenth-century normative grammars.

In the light of this generalisation, i.e. that eighteenth-century normative works changed from a preference for synthetic forms, to both synthetic and analytical forms, and finally towards primarily analytical forms, Weiland's (1805) national grammar has to be assessed as conservative. Recall that he presented only the synthetic genitive forms, consistently neglecting the analytical option with *van* in his paradigms (cf. Section 2). According to Rutten (2016e: 129), Weiland's official 1805 grammar is “a return to the prescriptions of the period of elitist grammar” and “a move away from the radical choice to focus only on analytical forms in the late eighteenth century”, such as van Bolhuis (1793).

#### 4 Previous research

The genitive case in Dutch has gained a considerable amount of attention in the research literature, also from a historical-sociolinguistic perspective. Not least because of the opposite developments in language practice on the one hand, and language norms on the other, there have been several studies focusing on the genitive case, mainly in seventeenth-, and to a lesser extent, eighteenth-century Dutch. In this respect, the present case study also builds upon previous findings by extending it to the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century.

Certainly serving as a point of departure, Scott (2014) provides an in-depth analysis of the genitive case in Dutch (as well as in German), covering a wide time span between the sixteenth century to the situation in present-day Dutch. Taking into account a variety of text sources, from published prose texts to more informal ego-documents<sup>80</sup>, Scott demonstrates the influence of standardisation and codification on the use of the genitive case and alternative constructions. He argues that prescriptive grammars were influential in preserving the declining genitive case and in promoting its use, which was not only reflected in more formal published texts but also in personal ego-documents, particularly from the nineteenth century. It is one of the aims of this case study to examine whether and to what extent these findings can be confirmed with data from the *Going Dutch Corpus*. Furthermore, Scott (2014) highlights the internal factor of forms (i.e. masculine/neuter versus feminine/all gender plural), which will also be tested in this case study.

Another approach that establishes a link between the history of the genitive case and the effects of standardisation is Vezzosi (2000). Investigating a period from the twelfth to the nineteenth century, she claims that the ‘anomalous’ development of genitival constructions back towards syntheticity is probably the outcome of the standardisation process in general, and the “interference between the spontaneous drift and language standardization” (Vezzosi 2000: 115).

From a historical-sociolinguistic perspective and based on the *Letters as Loot* corpus of Dutch private letters, Nobels (2013) and Nobels & Rutten (2014) as well as Simons (2013) and Simons & Rutten (2014) investigate variation and change in genitival constructions in the late seventeenth- and late eighteenth-century, respectively. Whereas the PhD dissertations by Nobels (2013) and Simons (2013) primarily explore and map variation in genitival constructions, Nobels & Rutten (2014) and Simons & Rutten (2014) more specifically focus on the relation between norms and usage. With regard to the possible influence of codified language norms, they find only limited evidence that language users actually adhered to these prescriptions. For the late seventeenth century, Nobels & Rutten (2014) confirm the widespread assumption that the genitive case was probably rarely used in spoken language, but was rather part of fixed formulae memorised and used by

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<sup>80</sup> Scott (2014) comprises both private letters and diaries as ‘informal ego-documents’. However, it is important to note that these sources differ considerably in terms of formality and conceptual orality (Schneider 2004: 78), and are therefore distinguished as two genres in the *Going Dutch Corpus* (cf. Chapter 4).

letter writers from all social backgrounds. For the late eighteenth century, Simons & Rutten (2014) reveal that the use of the genitive case remained fairly stable – with some social variation, though. Whereas the synthetic forms continued to decrease among writers from the lower and middle ranks, the results show a rise of historical genitives in the upper (middle) ranks, possibly due to the influence of normative publications from the eighteenth century. Given the temporal overlap with the present case study, these previous findings with letter data are reassessed from a multi-genre perspective, i.e. based on the *Going Dutch Corpus*, in Section 5.

Another study on the Dutch genitive case is Weerman et al. (2013), focusing on the loss of case marking in seventeenth-century texts from Amsterdam. Based on a corpus representing varying levels of formality, such as formal prose, official documents (*Justitieboek*) and personal letters (*Sailing Letters*), they also argue that genitive case marking no longer existed in informal writing. This is more or less confirmed by a comparison with earlier findings by Weerman & de Wit (1999), based on texts from the City of Bruges from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. At the same time, the genitive case in the seventeenth century had also become a feature of formal norms, indicating a change from above. The quantitative results presented in Weerman et al. (2013) suggest a clear pattern that the higher the formality of texts, the more historical (case-marked) genitives occur.

Shifting the focus to eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century metalinguistic discourse, Rutten (2016e) portrays the changes in the normative tradition of the Northern Netherlands, illustrated by the treatment of genitival constructions. As already discussed in Section 3, he suggests a development from the period of ‘elitist’ grammar, favouring the synthetic genitive, to ‘civil’ grammar, offering both synthetic and analytical options, and to ‘national’ grammar, preferring the analytical forms. Rutten (2016e: 135) further remarks that it will be one of the main tasks for future research to investigate to what extent the normative prescriptions had an influence on actual language usage. This question is, in fact, addressed in Section 5.

## 5 Corpus analysis

### 5.1 Method

This case study investigates variation and change in the use of (1) the historical synthetic (adnominal) genitive case, both in prenominal and post-nominal position, and (2) the analytical construction with the preposition *van*, which had been the strongest competitor of the synthetic genitive forms ever since the Middle Dutch period.

In addition, two other alternative prenominal constructions have been attested as alternatives of the genitive case in the history of Dutch, viz. the

possessive *s*-construction (see example (1)), and the periphrastic possessive *z'n*-construction (see example (2))<sup>81</sup>:

- (1) *onse dierbaare Moeders ziekte*  
'our dear mother's illness'
- (2) *de kapty'n syn dogter*  
'the captain's daughter'

However, it is often claimed that the *s*-construction and the *z'n*-construction primarily occur with animate or, even more specifically, human possessors (Scott 2014: 103), although counterexamples are easily found. In contrast, the *van*-construction does not have those restrictions (Scott 2014: 103), making it the only alternative genitival construction that can be regarded as fully synonymous with the historical genitive case.

The following examples, all of which have inanimate possessors, indicate that many instances of the synthetic genitive (see (3)a and (4)a, as taken from the *Going Dutch Corpus* data) cannot be replaced by the *s*-construction (see (3)c and (4)c) and/or the *z'n*-construction (see (3)d and (4)d), whereas an alternative construction with the preposition *van* is possible (see (3)b and (4)b).

- (3) a. *de regen des vorigen daags*  
'the rain of the previous day'
- (3) b. *de regen van den vorigen dag*
- (3) c. *?de vorigen daags regen*
- (3) d. *\*de vorigen dag z'n/zijn regen*
- (4) a. *de bezorging der trommel met kaneelkoekjes*  
'the delivery of the tin with cinnamon biscuits'
- (4) b. *de bezorging van de trommel met kaneelkoekjes*
- (4) c. *\*de trommels [met kaneelkoekjes] bezorging*
- (4) d. *\*de trommel [met kaneelkoekjes] d'r/haar [z'n/zijn] bezorging*

With regard to their semantical and functional restrictions, I will not consider the *s*-construction and the *z'n*-construction as fully-fledged and entirely interchangeable variants of the (historical) genitive case in the sense of a sociolinguistic variable.

For the corpus analysis, I extracted the occurrences of several adnominal genitive markers and their analytical counterparts with the preposition *van* in the *Going Dutch Corpus*. Largely based on the selection presented in Scott (2014: 122), these markers cover articles (both definite and indefinite), demonstrative pronouns and possessive pronouns, as summarised in Table 2.

<sup>81</sup> These two alternative genitival constructions are discussed in more detail in, e.g., Weerman & de Wit (1999), Nobels (2013), Simons (2013), and Scott (2014).

This selection of markers implies that constructions without an adnominal word were categorically excluded, as they can only occur with the *van*-construction, but not with the synthetic genitive (Rutten 2016e: 132). Two examples taken from the *Going Dutch Corpus* are *de aankomst van oorlogschepen* ‘the arrival of warships’ and *de ontwikkeling van welvaart* ‘the development of prosperity’, both of which have no synthetic equivalent.

**Table 2.** List of investigated genitive markers and their analytical counterpart with *van* (normalised spelling).

	Genitive case	<i>van</i> -construction
Articles (definite, indefinite)	<i>des</i> (‘s) (m./n.), <i>der</i> (f./all plur.)	<i>van den</i> (m.), <i>van het</i> (‘t) (n.), <i>van de</i> (f./all plur.)
	<i>eens</i> (m./n.), <i>eener</i> (f.)	<i>van eenen</i> (m.), <i>van een</i> (n.), <i>van eene</i> (f.)
Demonstrative pronouns	<i>dezes</i> (m./n.), <i>dezer</i> (f./all plur.)	<i>van dezen</i> (m.), <i>van dit</i> (n.), <i>van deze</i> (f./all plur.)
	<i>diens</i> (m./n.), <i>dier</i> (f./all plur.)	<i>van dien</i> (m.), <i>van dat</i> (n.), <i>van die</i> (f./all plur.)
Possessive pronouns	<i>mijns</i> (m./n.), <i>mijner</i> (f./all plur.)	<i>van mijnen</i> (m.), <i>van mijn</i> (n.), <i>van mijne</i> (f./all plur.)
	<i>ons</i> (m./n.), <i>onzer</i> (f./all plur.)	<i>van onzen</i> (m.), <i>van ons</i> (n.), <i>van onze</i> (f./all plur.)
	<i>zijns</i> (m./n.), <i>zijner</i> (f./all plur.)	<i>van zijnen</i> (m.), <i>van zijn</i> (n.), <i>van zijne</i> (f./all plur.)
	<i>haars</i> (m./n.), <i>harer</i> (f./all plur.)	<i>van haren</i> (m.), <i>van haar</i> (n.), <i>van hare</i> (f./all plur.)
	<i>huns</i> (m./n.), <i>bunner</i> (f./all plur.)	<i>van hunnen</i> (m.), <i>van hun</i> (n.), <i>van hunne</i> (f./all plur.)
	<i>uws</i> (m./n.), <i>uwer</i> (f./all plur.)	<i>van uwen</i> (m.), <i>van uw</i> (n.), <i>van uwe</i> (f./all plur.)

All undesired occurrences were filtered out by hand. In the case of the synthetic genitive forms, I excluded the absolute genitive (mostly temporal adverbials such as *des winters* or *‘s ochtends*), the partitive genitive (e.g. *de meeste bunner*), and fixed expressions with a genitive (e.g. *des noods*), all of which lack an analytical counterpart with the preposition *van*. In the case of prepositional constructions with *van*, I filtered out proper names with *van de(n)* (e.g. *de beer van de Capelle*, *Mejufvr van den Berg*), specific verbs or phrasal verbs with the preposition *van* (e.g. *spreken van*, *afscheid nemen van*), the so-called *schat van een kind*-construction<sup>82</sup> (Simons 2013: 260; cf. also Paardekooper 1956), and temporal markers of the type *van de week* and *van de zomer*. Furthermore, possible spelling variation was taken into account, for instance *e/ee* and *s/z* variation in *dezes/deezes/deses/deeses*, *a/aa* in *haren/haaren*, *ij/y/y* in *mijn/mijn/myn*, and so forth.

<sup>82</sup> The *schat van een kind*-construction only occurs marginally in the *Going Dutch Corpus*, e.g. in *dat lieve schat van een kient*.

The selection of occurrences for the corpus analysis does include various types of more specific, fixed contexts, in which the synthetic genitive and/or the alternative *van*-construction occur, such as dates and formulae. In fact, previous historical-sociolinguistic research on the Dutch genitive case, mainly focusing on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century private letters (e.g. Nobels & Rutten 2014; Simons & Rutten 2014), has attested that “context is a major factor of influence in the distribution of the genitive case and alternative constructions” (Nobels & Rutten 2014: 40). Largely following the categorisation introduced by Nobels (2013) and Simons (2013), I thus distinguish neutral contexts from more specific contexts, viz. dates, religious formulae, and other (non-religious) formulae, such as epistolary formulae and fixed expressions. Finally, prepositional expressions like *uit hoofde* (+ genitive/*van*) will also be considered as a separate context.

To begin with, the neutral context covers practically all occurrences of the synthetic genitive and the analytical *van*-construction which are not (overly) dominated by formulae, fixed expressions, or dates. Examples (5–8) illustrate the neutral, more creative use of these constructions:

- (5) *het gegons **der** muggen om onze ooren*  
‘the buzzing of the mosquitos around our ears’
- (6) *tot dat de klok **onzer** maag zo hard begon te luiden*  
‘until the bell of our stomach began to toll so loudly’
- (7) *de deur **van de** kelder*  
‘the door of the cellar’
- (8) *het geklots **van eenen** zwaren waterval*  
‘the splashing of a heavy waterfall’

Examples (9–12) illustrate the context of dates and other temporal references in general. Previous research has shown that this context is one of the major factors affecting the distribution of genitival constructions (e.g. Nobels & Rutten 2014: 39-40). In a very typical type of the genitive case used in dates, the noun (usually *maand* ‘month’ or *jaar* ‘year’) is omitted (see example (12)). There are 126 occurrences of this type in the entire *Going Dutch Corpus*.

- (9) *den 28sten **der** vorige maand*  
‘the 28<sup>th</sup> of the previous month’
- (10) *de 26ste **van die** maand*  
‘the 26<sup>th</sup> of that month’
- (11) *In den nacht **van den** 1 Sept.*  
‘In the night of the 1<sup>st</sup> September’
- (12) *[de brief van] den 19 **deeses***  
‘[the letter of] the 19<sup>th</sup> of this [month]’



The context of religious formulae covers any kind of formulaic or fixed expressions related to religion, including biblical references, as shown in examples (13–16):

- (13) *de byzondere gunst en goedheid **des** Allerhoogsten*  
‘the extraordinary mercy and goodness of the Almighty’
- (14) *de werken **zjner** schepping*  
‘the works of his creation’
- (15) *de zalige voorproeven **van den** Hemel*  
‘the blissful foretastes of heaven’
- (16) *den dood **van onzen** zaligmaker*  
‘the death of our Saviour’

The fourth context comprises all other formulae (i.e. non-religious), which can be either epistolary formulae, typically occurring in letter writing (see examples (17–19), or other formulaic and/or fixed expressions (see example (20)). It should be noted that the occurrences categorised as epistolary formulae do not necessarily have to be entirely fixed, but typically recur in comparable forms in the introduction and/or the ending of a letter, i.e. those parts of the common structure that tend to be largely formulaic (cf. also Rutten & van der Wal 2014: ch. 3). Similarly as in example (12) (*den 19 deeses*), a specific epistolary formula omits the noun *brief* ‘letter’ (or semantically related nouns, e.g. *bericht*, *missive* ‘message’; see example (17)), occurring 13 times in the entire corpus.

- (17) *onder het schrijven **deses***  
‘while writing this [letter]’
- (18) *de betuiging **mijner** achting*  
‘the expression of my respect’
- (19) *de beste verzekeringen **van zyn** volmaakte welstand*  
‘the best assurances of his complete well-being’
- (20) *eene **dezer** daagen*  
‘one of these days’

Given the focus on letter writing in Nobels (2013) and Simons (2013), as opposed to the multi-genre approach of this dissertation, the suggested (genre-specific) context of addresses will not be considered here. Instead, another context appeared to be quite prominent in the *Going Dutch Corpus* across all genres, viz. prepositional expressions (*voorzetseluitdrukkingen*) such as *uit hoofde, ten aanzien, bij gelegenheid*, and so forth, which are varyingly followed by an inflected genitive form or by the preposition *van*. These occurrences are illustrated by examples (21–24):

- (21) *uit hoofde **der** grote warmte*  
‘in consideration of the (great) heat’
- (22) *uit hoofde **van de** drukte der straten*  
‘in consideration of the busyness of the streets’
- (23) *ten aanzien **der** burgerlijke en kerkelijke huwelijken*  
‘with regard to the civil and church weddings’
- (24) *ten aanzien **van het** beloop der wallen*  
‘with regard to the slope of the walls’

The role of contexts, i.e. neutral versus specific/formulaic, will also be taken into consideration throughout the corpus analysis in Section 5.2.

## 5.2 Results

To begin with, Table 3 presents the general distribution of the synthetic genitive case and the analytical *van*-construction in the entire *Going Dutch Corpus*.

**Table 3.** Distribution of the genitive case and *van*-construction across time.

	Period 1: 1770–1790				Period 2: 1820–1840			
	Genitive case		<i>van</i> -construction		Genitive case		<i>van</i> -construction	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Definite art.	601	38.1	978	61.9	697	43.2	915	56.8
Indefinite art.	9	6.1	138	93.9	28	22.1	99	78.0
Demonstrative	168	54.6	140	45.5	126	51.9	117	48.2
Possessive	93	24.2	292	75.8	118	32.7	243	67.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>871</b>	<b>36.0</b>	<b>1,548</b>	<b>64.0</b>	<b>969</b>	<b>41.4</b>	<b>1,374</b>	<b>58.6</b>

The overall results, comprising all genitive markers (summarised in Table 2), reveal that the analytical *van*-construction (64.0%) clearly outweighs the historical genitive case (36.0%) in the late eighteenth-century period. In the early nineteenth-century period, the *van*-construction is still the most frequently used option with a share of 58.6%, but the use of the synthetic genitive slightly increases from 36.0% to 41.4%.

When we look at the various groups of genitive markers individually, considerable differences become apparent. First of all, forms of the definite article are by far the most frequent genitive markers (roughly two-thirds of all occurrences), which is why the distribution in this group, i.e. 61.9% (*van*-construction) versus 38.1% (synthetic forms), is fairly similar to the overall results.

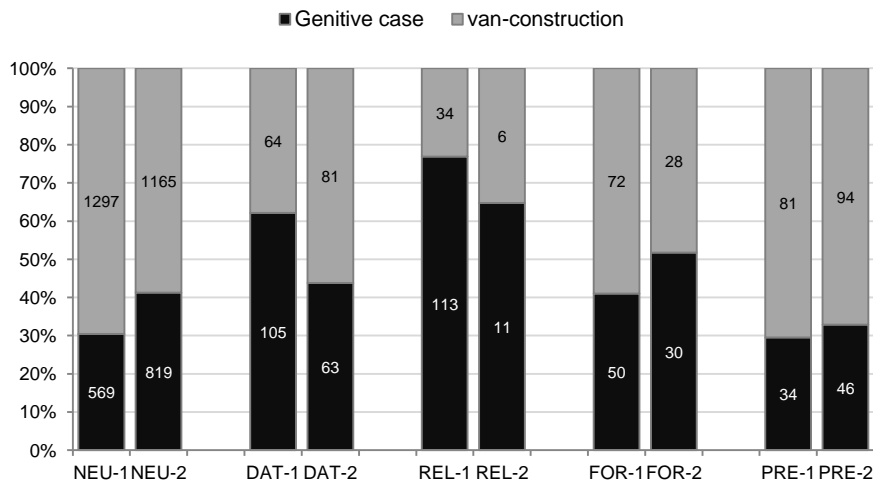
For the indefinite article, the *van*-construction is even more markedly the preferred option in the eighteenth-century data with a high share of 93.9%. The *van*-construction is also the most frequently used option with possessive determiners, occurring in 75.8%. The synthetic genitive, on the other hand, is comparatively strong in the group of demonstratives with a share of 54.6%, which can be explained by the frequent usage of inflected genitive forms of *deze*, i.e. *dezes* and *dezer*, as often preserved in dates.

In the nineteenth-century data, the distribution of constructions occurring with the definite article, demonstrative and possessive pronouns is somewhat fluctuating, but in general, synthetic and analytical constructions in these three groups of markers are fairly stable across time. In the case of the indefinite article, however, there is a notable increase of the synthetic genitive from 6.1% to 22.1%.

### Context

As mentioned before, the context in which the synthetic genitive case or the alternative with the preposition *van* occurs, is one of the major factors affecting the distribution of constructions (Nobels & Rutten 2014: 40). Therefore, Figure 1 presents the general results across the various contexts distinguished in Section 5.1, i.e. the neutral context (NEU), dates (DAT), religious formulae (REL), other formulae (FOR) and prepositional expressions (PRE).

**Figure 1.** Distribution of the genitive case and *van*-construction across context and time.



The results for the context-specific distribution of constructions indeed reveal a considerable amount of variation. In neutral contexts, the *van*-construction has a relatively high share of 69.5%, outnumbering the synthetic genitive (30.5%) in the eighteenth-century period. Interestingly, one can witness an increase of the synthetic genitive from 30.5% to 41.3% in the nineteenth-century period. On the

assumption that neutral contexts do not typically preserve historical case inflections, the increase of the genitive suggests an effect of the prescriptions in Weiland's (1805) national grammar. As outlined in Section 2, Weiland presented only synthetic forms in his officialised paradigms.

Remarkably, the rise of synthetic genitive forms is not reflected in some of the more specific (i.e. non-neutral) contexts. Particularly in the context of dates, the results show a diachronic decrease of the synthetic forms. In the eighteenth-century data, dates most frequently take the synthetic genitive (62.1%). In the nineteenth-century data, however, the use of the historical genitive in the context of dates drops to 43.8%, whereas the *van*-construction becomes prevalent with a share of 56.3%. These tendencies certainly need a more detailed investigation when zooming in on genre variation.

Religious formulae, especially in the eighteenth century, are mostly used with the synthetic genitive (76.9%). Diachronically, the alternative *van*-construction seems to gain ground in this context (from 23.1% to 35.3%), but it has to be noticed that the nineteenth-century data set comprises no more than seventeen instances in total. In fact, the absolute decrease of religious formulae is more striking than the developments in the relative distribution. It can be concluded that, at least in the genres of the *Going Dutch Corpus*, religious formulae no longer play a major role in the nineteenth century.

The context of other (non-religious) formulae, possibly the most heterogeneous category, shows the most balanced distribution. Whereas the analytical *van*-construction is slightly dominant in the eighteenth century with a share of 59.0%, the synthetic genitive is still a frequently occurring option in 41.0%. In the nineteenth century, this context practically reaches a well-balanced 50/50 distribution of constructions.

In the case of prepositional expressions, the distribution of constructions is remarkably similar to that of neutral contexts. In the eighteenth century, they mainly occur with *van* (70.4%) rather than with the historical genitive (29.6%). Diachronically, the distribution is rather stable, with only a minor increase of the synthetic genitive in the nineteenth century.

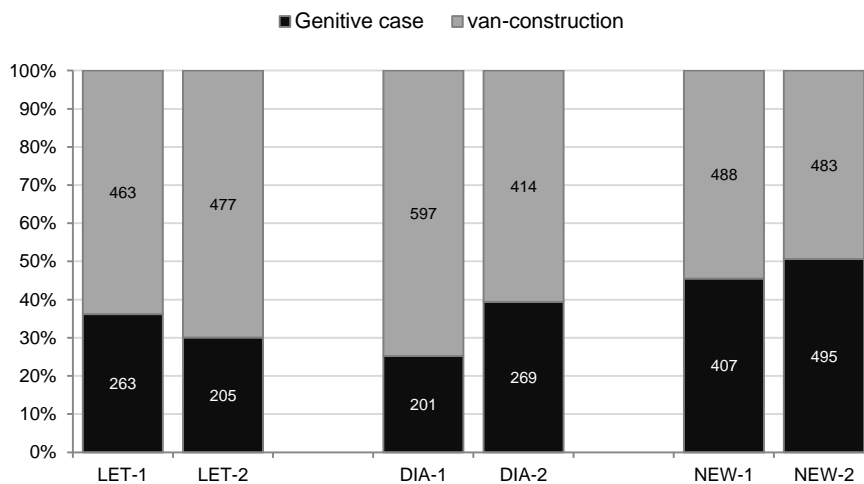
In sum, the results from the *Going Dutch Corpus* confirm earlier findings in that the role of context proves to be a relevant factor of influence on the distribution of the genitive case and the alternative *van*-construction, particularly in the late eighteenth-century period. Whereas dates and particularly religious formulae frequently occur with the synthetic genitive (diachronically decreasing, though), the *van*-construction is the preferred construction in neutral contexts as well as with prepositional expressions. At the same time, the increase of synthetic forms in neutral contexts probably indicates the normative influence of Weiland (1805).

### **Genre variation**

Whereas previous research on the Dutch genitive case has often focused on private letters (e.g. Nobels & Rutten 2014, Simons & Rutten 2014; cf. also Weerman et al.

2013 for a mixed corpus), the design of the *Going Dutch Corpus* allows a multi-genre approach to the distribution in actual language practice as well as to the possible influence of Weiland's (1805) national grammar prescribing the synthetic forms. The results across the three investigated genres, i.e. private letters (LET), diaries and travelogues (DIA), and newspapers (NEW), are presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Distribution of the genitive case and *van*-construction across genre and time.



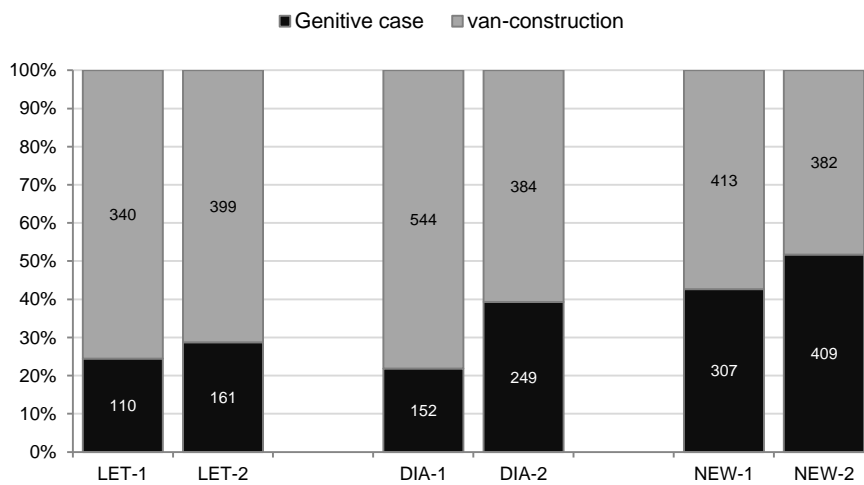
In the late eighteenth-century period, the analytical *van*-construction is prevalent in the two types of ego-documents, i.e. in private letters, occurring in 63.8%, and particularly in diaries and travelogues with a share of 74.8%. In the newspaper data, the distribution of constructions is more balanced, with the analytical construction (54.5%) occurring alongside the synthetic forms (45.5%).

In the early nineteenth-century period, the synthetic genitive case further loses ground in private letters, decreasing from 36.2% to 30.1%, while the *van*-construction consolidates its dominant position with a share of 69.9%. In diaries and travelogues, however, the use of the synthetic genitive increases from a relatively low share in the first period (25.2%) to almost 40% in the second period. A slight increase of the genitive from 45.5% to 50.6% is also witnessed in the newspaper data.

Does the increase of the synthetic forms in newspapers and especially in diaries and travelogues reflect the influence of Weiland's (1805) national grammar, clearly promoting the declining case system in his paradigms? In contrast to the increase of genitive forms in the two conceptually more 'written' genres, Figure 2 also suggests that the use of the historical genitive does not gain ground in the most 'oral' genre of the *Going Dutch Corpus*, i.e. private letters. Here, the genitive case slightly drops in favour of the analytical *van*-construction.

However, in order to assess the possible effect of Weiland (1805) on early nineteenth-century language usage, a more fine-grained investigation of the results is needed. As the various contexts have previously been argued to be a relevant factor, Figure 3 shows the distribution of the genitive case and the *van*-construction in neutral contexts exclusively.

**Figure 3.** Distribution of the genitive case and *van*-construction across genre and time (neutral contexts only).



The selection of neutral contexts demonstrates that the synthetic genitive actually increases across all three genres of the *Going Dutch Corpus*. In contrast to the results presented in Figure 2, the distribution in private letters even reveals a slight increase of the synthetic forms from 24.4% in the eighteenth century to 28.8% in the nineteenth century. However, the *van*-construction still outweighs the historical genitive case in these neutral contexts.

The increase of genitive forms is more pronounced in the other two genres. In diaries and travelogues, the share of the synthetic genitive rises from a relatively low 21.8% in period 1 to 39.3% in period 2. In newspapers, the share of the synthetic genitive is already relatively high in period 1 (42.6%), but it gains even more ground in period 2, increasing to 51.7%, alongside the more or less equally frequent *van*-construction (48.3%).

When compared to Figure 2 (all contexts included), one can see that the relative distribution of constructions in the two sub-corpora of diaries and travelogues as well as newspapers is, in fact, fairly similar to the results shown in Figure 3 (neutral context only). In the sub-corpus of private letters, however, both the distribution of constructions, particularly in the late eighteenth-century period, and the diachronic tendencies in this genre show considerable differences between the occurrences across all contexts on the one hand, and the separated neutral

context on the other. It can be assumed that these differences signal the influence of (non-neutral) contexts, especially in private letters.

In order to assess to what extent the specific and/or formulaic contexts influence the results, Table 4 displays the distribution of neutral and non-neutral contexts in the three sub-corpora.

**Table 4.** Distribution of neutral and non-neutral contexts.

	Period 1: 1770–1790				Period 2: 1820–1840			
	Neutral		Non-neutral		Neutral		Non-neutral	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Private letters	450	62.0	276	38.0	560	82.1	122	17.9
Diaries/travelogues	696	87.2	102	12.8	633	92.7	50	7.3
Newspapers	720	80.4	175	19.6	791	80.9	187	19.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,866</b>	<b>77.1</b>	<b>553</b>	<b>22.9</b>	<b>1,984</b>	<b>84.7</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>15.3</b>

In the sub-corpus of private letters, at least from the eighteenth-century period, non-neutral contexts have a relatively high share of 38.0% and, therefore, have to be taken into account as a relevant factor of influence on the overall results. The special role of formulae in letter writing comes as no surprise as previous research based on the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *Letters as Loot* corpus (Rutten & van der Wal 2014) has shown that private letters characteristically contain epistolary and religious formulae as well as formulaic references to dates. Simons & Rutten (2014: 65) point out that “historical letters offer a combination of formulaic language and more creative parts [...], and that formulaic contexts are more likely to preserve historic forms such as the genitive case”. With regard to the observation that the share of synthetic genitive forms in eighteenth-century private letters is notably higher across all contexts (Fig. 2) than in neutral contexts only (Fig. 3), these tendencies can probably also be attested in the letter data of the *Going Dutch Corpus*.

In contrast to the prevalence of formulae in (eighteenth-century) private letters, the relevance of non-neutral contexts as a factor of influence is considerably lower in the two remaining sub-corpora. In diaries and travelogues, the overall share of occurrences in neutral contexts is, in fact, remarkably high with 87.2% in period 1 and even 92.7% in period 2. In the newspaper data, the share of neutral contexts is around 80% in both periods.

Zooming in on the detailed distribution across the various contexts in the sub-corpus of private letters, Table 5a gives more insights into the role of contexts.

To begin with, it can be seen that the synthetic genitive is particularly dominant in religious formulae, first and foremost in period 1 with a share of 81.5%. Synthetic forms also occur in 47.8% in the context of dates, and in 36.0% in (non-religious) formulae. These comparatively high shares of the historical genitive case clearly affect the overall distribution in eighteenth-century private letters.

**Table 5a.** Distribution of the genitive case and *van*-construction across context and time (private letters).

	Period 1: 1770–1790				Period 2: 1820–1840			
	Genitive case		<i>van</i> -construction		Genitive case		<i>van</i> -construction	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Neutral	110	24.4	340	75.6	161	28.8	399	71.3
Dates	33	47.8	36	52.2	20	46.5	23	53.5
Religious	88	81.5	20	18.5	11	68.8	5	31.3
Formulae	27	36.0	48	64.0	8	22.2	28	77.8
Prepositional	5	20.8	19	79.2	5	18.5	22	81.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>36.2</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>63.8</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>30.1</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>69.9</b>

Diachronically, however, the overall use of religious and non-religious formulae found in the private letter data (both synthetic and analytical) decreases considerably in period 2. Moreover, the analytical *van*-construction increasingly replaces the historical genitive in the nineteenth-century remnants of these formulaic contexts. Interestingly, the rather well-balanced distribution in the context of dates, slightly in favour of the *van*-construction, remains stable across both periods. Prepositional expressions predominantly occur with the *van*-construction in both periods, with a stable share of around 80%. The neutral context is, in fact, the only context in which the synthetic forms gain ground in period 2. The (apparent) decrease of the genitive case in private letters attested in Figure 2 has to be explained mainly by the shrinking numbers of religious and other formulae.

Taking into account previous findings, the early nineteenth-century increase of the synthetic genitive in neutral contexts might be interpreted as a continuation of the diachronic developments attested for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, viz. the steep increase of the historical synthetic genitive in private letters by upper middle class and particularly upper class writers (Simons & Rutten 2014: 67). Recall that texts written by the upper middle and the upper ranks form the majority of private letters included in the *Going Dutch Corpus*, which allows a comparison with these results. Simons & Rutten (2014: 67) argue that “[t]he rise of the genitive case in neutral contexts in letters allocated to the U(M)C [...] suggests that the emphasis on case in metalinguistic discourse and its increasing normativity did influence the language use of those groups of letter writers”. Furthermore, they emphasise that the rise of the genitive case in letters linked to the upper (middle) ranks “is not accounted for by an increase of formulaic language” (Simons & Rutten 2014: 69), given that the use of formulaic language decreased diachronically, especially among the upper middle and upper class (cf. also Rutten & van der Wal 2014). With respect to Weiland’s (1805) unambiguous



preference for traditional case inflections, it can be assumed that the (slight) increase in the use of the genitive case found in neutral contexts in private letters reflects the influence of normative grammars, in this case Weiland (1805).

Table 5b zooms in on the distribution across contexts in the sub-corpus of diaries and travelogues. As shown in Table 4, the influence of non-neutral contexts on the general distribution is less relevant than in the case of private letters.

**Table 5b.** Distribution of the genitive case and *van*-construction across context and time (diaries and travelogues).

	Period 1: 1770–1790				Period 2: 1820–1840			
	Genitive case		<i>van</i> -construction		Genitive case		<i>van</i> -construction	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Neutral	152	21.8	544	78.2	249	39.3	384	60.7
Dates	12	66.7	6	33.3	3	37.5	5	62.5
Religious	25	67.6	12	32.4	0	0.0	1	100
Formulae	3	50.0	3	50.0	8	100	0	0.0
Prepositional	9	22.0	32	78.1	9	27.3	24	72.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>597</b>	<b>74.8</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>39.4</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>60.6</b>

Particularly in the eighteenth century, the analytical option is most markedly used in the neutral context (78.2%) and with prepositional expressions (78.1%). Religious formulae and dates, like in private letters, tend to take the historical genitive case.

Finally, Table 5c shows the distribution across contexts in newspapers.

**Table 5c.** Distribution of the genitive case and *van*-construction across context and time (newspapers).

	Period 1: 1770–1790				Period 2: 1820–1840			
	Genitive case		<i>van</i> -construction		Genitive case		<i>van</i> -construction	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Neutral	307	42.6	413	57.4	409	51.7	382	48.3
Dates	60	73.2	22	26.8	40	43.0	53	57.0
Religious	0	0.0	2	100	0	0.0	0	0.0
Formulae	20	48.8	21	51.2	14	100	0	0.0
Prepositional	20	40.0	30	60.0	32	40.0	48	60.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>54.5</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>50.6</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>49.4</b>

In contrast to the ego-documents, religious formulae are practically absent from newspapers, even in the eighteenth century. Interestingly, dates in newspapers seem to be predominantly used with the genitive case in period 1 (73.2%), but are increasingly replaced by the *van*-construction in period 2 (from 26.8% to 57.0%).

This remarkable shift feels somewhat counterintuitive given Weiland's (1805) prescriptions in favour of the synthetic genitive. On closer inspection, however, it is necessary to distinguish two different types of constructions falling under the category of dates. The first type, illustrated by examples (25–26), usually refers to the bigger unit of time within the date itself, most frequently *maand*, which is often omitted, highlighting the formulaic nature of this construction. The second type of construction, illustrated by examples (27–28), typically refers to the date of particular events, documents (e.g. *courant*, *brieven*, *berichten*), and so forth.

- (25)        *den 22 dezer*  
              ‘the 22<sup>nd</sup> of this [month]’
- (26)        *den 7 dezer Maand*  
              ‘the 7<sup>th</sup> of this month’
- (27)        *de aardbeving van den 26 Nov.*  
              ‘the earthquake of 26<sup>th</sup> November’
- (28)        *de Nieuw-Yorkse Courant van den 17 Nov.*  
              ‘the New Yorker newspaper of 17<sup>th</sup> November’

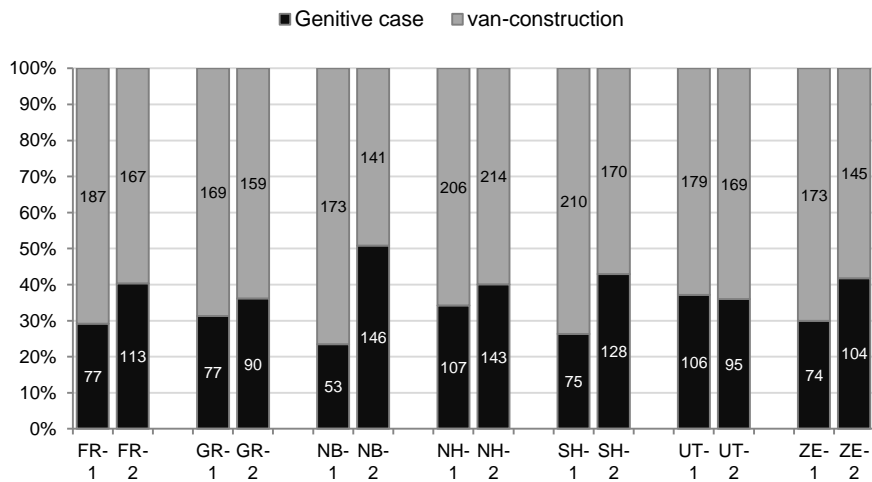
Taking a closer look at the occurrences in the newspaper data, a division of labour between the two types of constructions becomes apparent. The first type almost exclusively occurs with the synthetic genitive case, usually with formulaic *dezer*, whereas the second type favours the analytical *van*-construction, both of which is true for both the eighteenth- and the nineteenth-century period. Thus, reassessing the distribution across contexts in the newspaper data, the apparent shift in the context of dates from synthetic (period 1) to analytical (period 2) cannot be explained by the general rise of the *van*-construction in all temporal references. Instead, it might be interpreted by a slight (absolute) decrease of the *dezer*-formula and a parallel (absolute) increase of the second type of dates, clearly preferring the analytical option. Against the tendencies in Table 5c, there are no indications that the *van*-construction actually replaced the genitive in the first type of dates.

To sum up, the genre-related results presented in this section suggest that Weiland's (1805) conservative choice in favour of the historical genitive probably influenced actual language usage, as the synthetic forms increased in usage across all three genres of the *Going Dutch Corpus*. This increase is particularly visible in nineteenth-century diaries and travelogues as well as in newspapers, but to some extent also in the most ‘oral’ genre, i.e. the private letters. This tendency is also noticed by Scott (2014: 128), who describes the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as “a turning point, after which we find interference from the standard written norm in the shape of productively formed genitive phrases occurring even in personal egodocuments”.

### Regional variation

Figure 4 displays the distribution of the historical genitive and the alternative *van*-construction across the seven regions of the *Going Dutch Corpus*, i.e. Friesland (FR), Groningen (GR), North Brabant (NB), North Holland (NH), South Holland (SH), Utrecht (UT) and Zeeland (ZE). With respect to the possible influence on formulae, only the occurrences in neutral contexts were selected.

**Figure 4.** Distribution of the genitive case and *van*-construction across region and time (neutral contexts only).



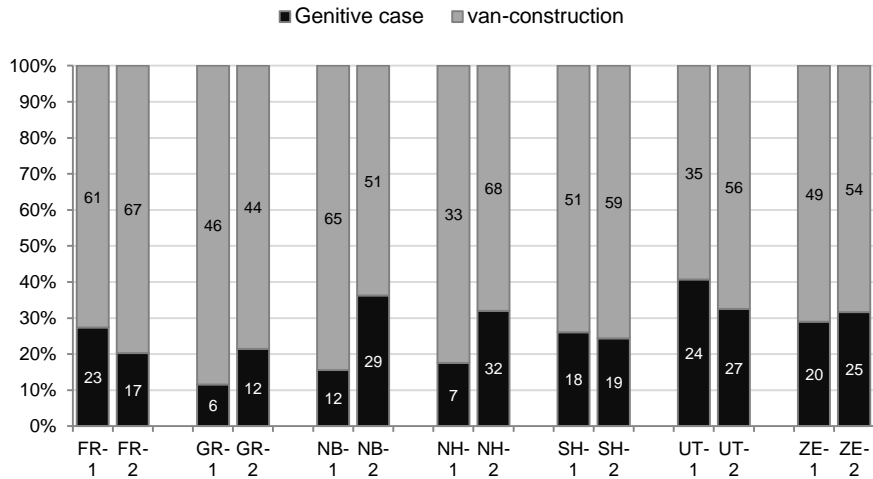
In the eighteenth-century period, the analytical *van*-construction outweighs the historical genitive in all seven regions. While the synthetic forms are particularly rare in North Brabant (23.5%), they are considerably more common in Utrecht with a share of 37.2%.

In the nineteenth-century period, the rise of the synthetic genitive case can be witnessed in practically all regions, except for Utrecht, where the distribution is more or less stable. The most notable developments are in Zeeland (from 30.0% to 41.8%), South Holland (26.3% to 43.0%) and especially North Brabant. This region has the lowest share of synthetic genitives in the first period, but at the same time shows the strongest increase of the genitive from 23.5% to 50.9% in the second period, thus co-occurring with the equally frequent *van*-construction.

Can we expect to find more marked regional patterns by looking at the distribution across regions for each genre? Figure 5a shows the results drawn from the sub-corpus of private letters.

The eighteenth-century letter data does reveal a fairly high amount of variation. Although the analytical construction is the most common option in all regions, Utrecht stands out with a considerably higher share of historical genitives, occurring in 40.7%. In contrast, the synthetic forms rarely occur in North Brabant (15.6%) and Groningen (11.5%).

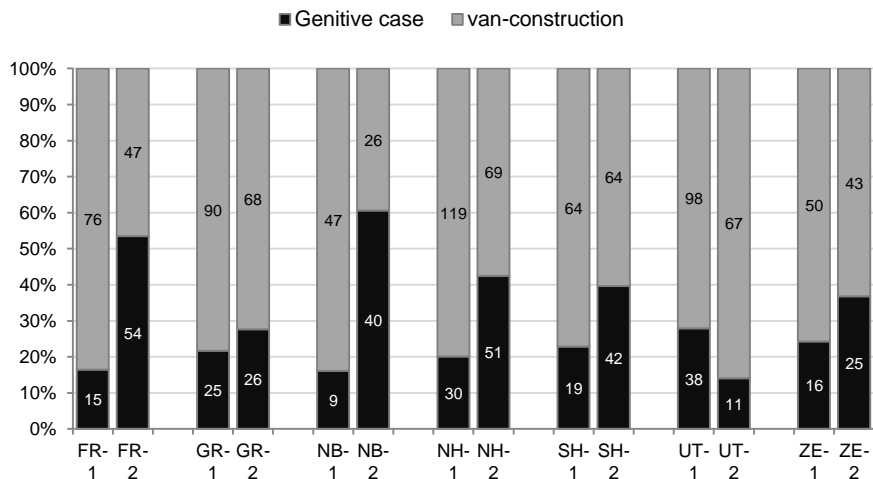
**Figure 5a.** Distribution across region and time (neutral contexts only; private letters).



In the nineteenth century, the regional differences are generally less extreme, although the developments vary. Groningen still has the lowest share of synthetic genitives with 21.4%, whereas there is a steep increase in North Brabant from 15.6% to 36.3%. The analytical option, on the other hand, gains some ground in Friesland and Utrecht.

Figure 5b presents the results in the sub-corpus of diaries and travelogues.

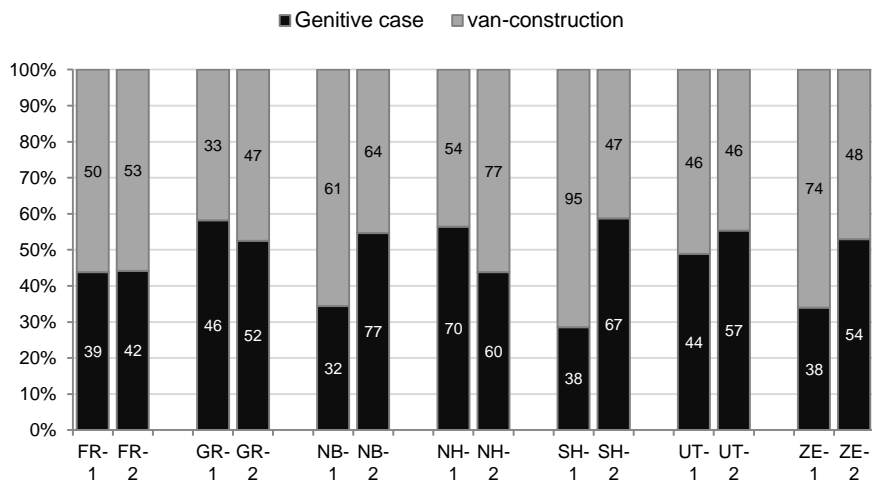
**Figure 5b.** Distribution across region and time (neutral contexts only; diaries and travelogues).



In the eighteenth-century period, the variants are more or less similarly distributed across all seven regions. The analytical *van*-construction is the most frequent option in all seven regions, ranging from 72.1% in Utrecht to 83.9% in North Brabant. Like in letters from the same period, Utrecht has the highest share of synthetic genitives (27.9%), while they are least frequent in North Brabant (16.1%). There is more variation in the nineteenth-century period. The *van*-construction becomes by far the most frequently used option in Utrecht (from 72.1% to 85.9%), whereas the rise of the historical genitive can be witnessed in the remaining regions. The synthetic forms increase in both regions of the Holland area, but most notably in Friesland (from 16.5% to 53.5%) and North Brabant (from 16.1% to 60.6%). However, we have to be careful with the results from North Brabant, as the nineteenth-century data for this region is based on only one text. The distribution presented here actually represents intra-individual variation in the text produced by one single (male) diarist<sup>83</sup>.

Figure 5c presents the results in the newspaper data, showing that both constructions occur in a more or less balanced way in most regions.

Figure 5c. Distribution across region and time (neutral contexts only; newspapers).



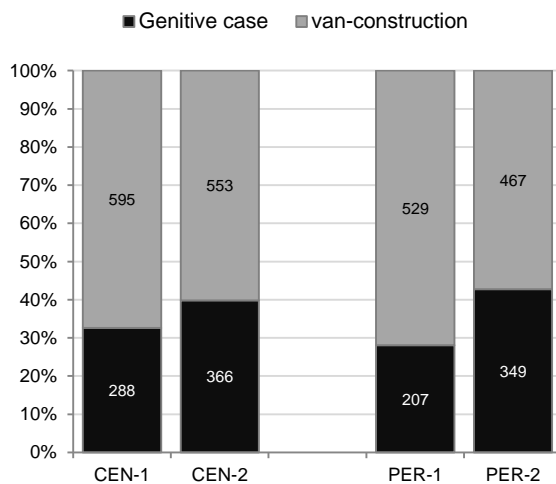
<sup>83</sup> This methodological drawback, however, allows a closer look at intra-individual variation in the writing of the male diarist from Breda (North Brabant). Except for three prepositional expressions, the majority of occurrences (66) is in the neutral context. While the diarist uses both synthetic and analytical constructions, it turns out that the different forms (i.e. masculine/neuter vs. feminine/all gender plural) play a crucial role on the choice of constructions. In fact, 95% of all synthetic genitives are feminine or plural forms. Some more variation can be found in the *van*-constructions, but these tend to be mostly with masculine or neuter nouns. Occasionally, the diarist uses both options next to each other, even within the same sentence, e.g. in *de belling eens beuvels aan den ingang van een aangenaam dal*.

The results across regions converge in newspapers from the nineteenth century, approaching the general 50/50 distribution. On the one hand, there is an increase of synthetic forms in the three southern regions, viz. Zeeland (from 33.9% to 52.9%), North Brabant (from 34.4% to 54.5%) and particularly South Holland (from 28.6% to 58.8%). On the other hand, the analytical construction gains ground in Groningen (from 41.8% to 47.5%) and North Holland (from 43.6% to 56.2%).

### *Variation across centre and periphery*

Figure 6 shows the distribution of constructions across the centre (CEN) and the periphery (PER) in neutral contexts.

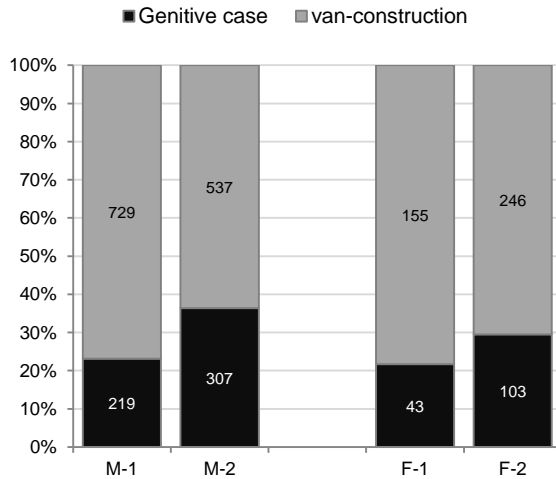
**Figure 6.** Distribution across centre–periphery and time (neutral contexts only).



In the eighteenth-century period, the differences between the centre (32.6% synthetic vs. 67.4% analytical) and the periphery (28.1% synthetic vs. 71.9% analytical) are fairly marginal. Similarly, no major distributional differences between centre and periphery can be attested in the nineteenth-century period, although the increase of the synthetic genitive is more pronounced in the periphery (from 28.1% to 42.8%) than in the centre (from 32.6% to 39.8%).

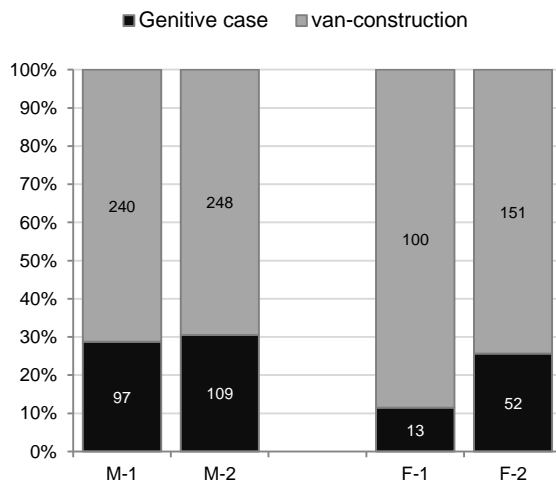
### *Gender variation*

Figure 7 shows the distribution of constructions across gender, i.e. across male (M) and female (F) writers of ego-documents in the *Going Dutch Corpus*. Only the occurrences in neutral contexts were selected.

**Figure 7.** Distribution across gender and time (neutral context only).

Hardly any gender variation can be attested in the eighteenth-century data. In fact, the analytical *van*-construction is the most frequently used option among male and female writers, occurring in 76.9% and 78.3%, respectively. In the nineteenth-century data, the synthetic genitive gains ground in ego-documents written by both men (from 23.1% to 36.4%) and, to a somewhat lesser extent, women (from 21.7% to 29.5%).

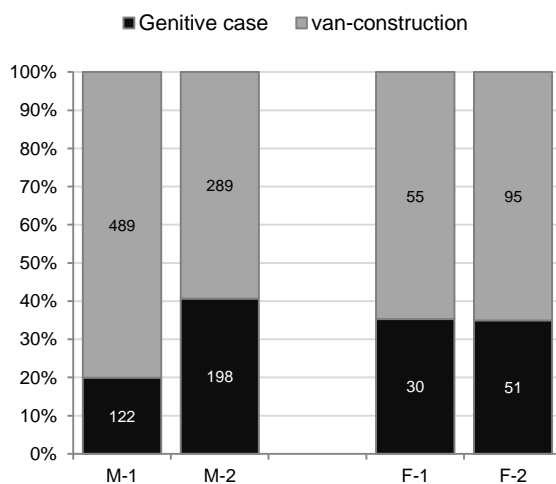
Allowing an even more fine-grained analysis and taking into consideration the genre differences between the two types of ego-documents, Figure 8a also displays the gender-related distribution of constructions in private letters.

**Figure 8a.** Distribution across gender and time (neutral context only; private letters).

As can be seen, eighteenth-century male letter writers predominantly use the *van*-construction (71.2%), more or less maintaining this share in the nineteenth-century period (69.5%). For female letter writers from the first period, the analytical *van*-construction is by far the most frequently option with (88.5%). However, the use of the synthetic genitives by women increases considerably in the nineteenth century from 11.5% to 25.6%. In other words, whereas eighteenth-century male letter writers were much more likely to use a synthetic genitive than their female contemporaries, the gender-related differences largely level out in the nineteenth-century data.

Zooming in on the second type of ego-documents, Figure 8b presents the distribution of constructions across genders in the sub-corpus of diaries and travelogues (in neutral contexts).

**Figure 8b.** Distribution across gender and time (neutral context only; diaries and travelogues).



In these texts, the gender-related distribution in neutral contexts shows a different picture than in the letter data. The *van*-construction is strikingly prevalent among male diarists in the eighteenth-century period (80.3%). In the nineteenth-century period, however, there is a steep increase of the synthetic genitive used by men, doubling its share from 20.0% to 40.7%.

In contrast, female diarists from the eighteenth century use the synthetic forms relatively frequently in 35.3%. The preference for the analytical option (64.7%) is thus less pronounced than in the case of male diarists of the same period. This distribution remains stable in period 2. Similarly to the findings in private letters, gender variation largely levels out in the nineteenth century, with a strong share of the genitive case found in diaries and travelogues by both men and women.



To sum up, gender-related differences in neutral contexts can only be attested in the eighteenth-century period, while they approximate in the nineteenth-century period in both types of ego-documents. Diachronically, one can observe a stable distribution in the case of male letter writers and female diarists, and a noticeable increase of synthetic genitive forms in the case of female letter writers and male diarists.

### *Internal variable: Forms*

Finally, the internal variable of forms will be taken into account as a possible factor of influence, as suggested by Scott (2014). Figure 9 presents the distribution of synthetic and analytical constructions across masculine/neuter singular (M/N) and feminine singular/all gender plural forms (F/Plur).

**Figure 9.** Distribution of the genitive and the *van*-construction across forms and time.

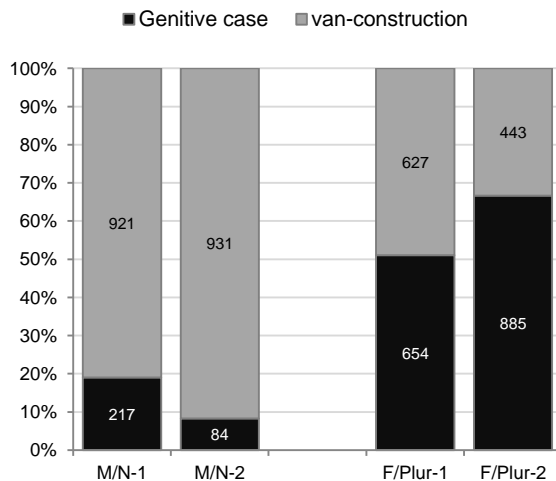
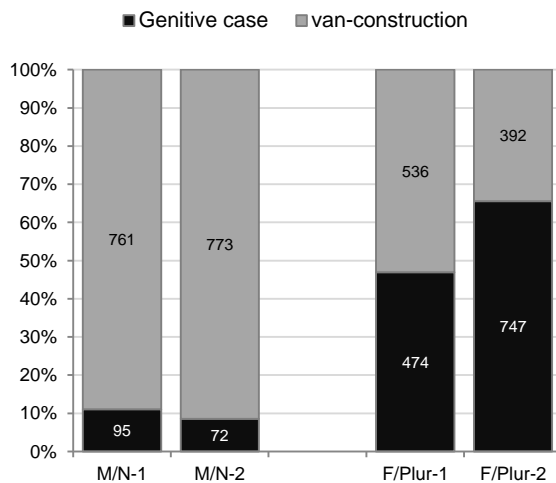


Figure 9 clearly reveals major differences between the masculine and neuter forms on the one hand, and feminine and all gender plural forms on the other hand. In the eighteenth-century data, the *van*-construction of the masculine and neuter forms (80.9%) clearly outweighs the synthetic genitive (19.1%), which further decreases in the nineteenth century, when it becomes a marginal option (8.3%).

In contrast to their masculine/neuter equivalents, the distribution of constructions with feminine/all gender plural forms is well-balanced in the eighteenth century (roughly 50/50). In the nineteenth century, the female/plural forms see a considerable increase of the synthetic genitive (from 51.1% to 66.6%) at the expense of the *van*-construction (from 49.0% to 33.4%).

Taking into account the role of contexts attested in this case study several times before, Figure 10 displays the distribution of the genitive case and *van*-construction across forms in neutral contexts only.

**Figure 10.** Distribution of the genitive and the *van*-construction across forms and time (neutral context only).



Generally, Figure 10 shows that the diachronic developments in Figure 9 are confirmed when only occurrences in neutral contexts are considered. In the case of masculine and neuter forms, we do see some influence of context reflected in the results, as the eighteenth-century share of the historical genitive is lower (11.1% versus 19.1%) when the non-neutral contexts are excluded. For the nineteenth-century data, i.e. when religious and other formulae no longer play a relevant role, the distribution in neutral context only is almost identical with the distribution across all contexts.

The same is true for the female and all plural gender forms. In the first period, we can notice a minor effect of the non-neutral contexts, viz. particularly dates and religious formulae, in that the synthetic genitive is somewhat lower in neutral contexts only (46.9%) as opposed to all contexts (51.1%). In the second period, however, the share of the prevalent genitive case (65.6%) is practically as high as across all contexts (66.6%). The preliminary conclusion drawn from the results in Figure 9, i.e. that the synthetic genitive becomes a marginal option in nineteenth-century usage in the case of masculine/neuter forms, whereas it considerably gains ground in the case of female/all gender plural forms, is confirmed by these findings. In fact, the variable of context does not crucially affect the opposite developments across forms.

The question arises whether the effectiveness of Weiland's (1805) paradigms prescribing the historical case system was largely dependent on the forms of the markers. On the one hand, Figure 10 gives evidence that the synthetic

genitive in masculine and neuter forms almost disappears from early nineteenth-century language practice – despite the officialised norms in favour of case inflections. On the other hand, the increase of the synthetic genitive in feminine and all gender plural forms suggests the influence of Weiland (1805) on actual language usage.

Scott (2014) also observes and discusses these form-related differences, taking into account the higher token frequency of feminine and plural genitive markers in the genitive as a relevant internal factor. He points out that “by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most nouns occurring in the genitive were feminine singulars and plurals of all gender” (Scott 2014: 121), viz. 90 (M/N) versus 544 (F/Plur) occurrences in his nineteenth-century data. The results drawn from the *Going Dutch Corpus* and presented in Figure 9 confirm this major difference in the token frequency of genitive markers, viz. 84 (M/N) versus 885 (F/Plur) occurrences. Scott (204: 121) argues that “[t]he high token frequency of feminine singular and all genders plural nouns in the genitive in the 19<sup>th</sup> century may well have aided the preservation of the *x der y* structure, but not a masculine/neuter equivalent”.

Also diachronically, the results from the *Going Dutch Corpus* are generally in line with Scott’s (2014: 121-122) observations for the sixteenth/seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

across the three periods, the masculine/neuter singular markers tend to decrease in use while the feminine singular/all gender plural markers tend to increase in use. The genitive structure that consistently had the highest token frequency, and which therefore would have been the genitive structure most familiar to language users, was *x der y*. In addition to having the highest token frequency of any genitive determiner, *der*, as a determiner used with any plural noun as well as feminine singular nouns, had a particularly high frequency; that is to say, it was used with a large group of nouns.

With regard to the possible Weiland effect on early nineteenth-century language practice, it can be suggested that the national 1805 grammar could boost the use of feminine/all gender plural markers. At the same time, the prescriptions in Weiland (1805) apparently failed to revive the synthetic genitive in masculine and neuter markers, which had been too low in frequency by the end of the nineteenth century, particularly in neutral contexts, and were possibly no longer familiar enough to language users. In sharp contrast, the data from the post-Weiland generation sees the rise of the synthetic genitive in feminine and plural markers. Notably, this increase is not limited to the *x der y* structure mentioned by Scott (2014), as shown in Table 6a.

The increase of the historical genitive forms can not only be attested for the definite article *der*, but also for the feminine and plural forms of the indefinite article as well as possessive pronouns. While this does not categorically rule out the special role of the *x der y* structure and its preserving effect (i.e. by far the most frequent structure with the historical genitive case), the findings in Table 6a give evidence that the early nineteenth-century rise of the synthetic case forms affects

more genitive markers than just *der*. Therefore, the influence of Weiland (1805) can probably be assumed here.

**Table 6a.** Distribution across forms and time (female/all gender plural forms).

	Period 1: 1770–1790				Period 2: 1820–1840			
	Genitive case		<i>van</i> -construction		Genitive case		<i>van</i> -construction	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Definite art.	419	47.0	472	53.0	621	67.2	303	32.8
Indefinite art.	8	44.4	10	55.6	26	59.1	18	40.9
Demonstrative	144	72.7	54	27.3	125	72.3	48	27.8
Possessive	83	47.7	91	52.3	113	60.4	74	39.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>51.1</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>49.0</b>	<b>885</b>	<b>66.6</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>33.4</b>

Table 6b confirms that no such effect can be attested for the masculine/neuter markers, where the genitive in the definite article – the equivalent *x des y* structure – as well as the synthetic forms of the indefinite article, demonstrative and possessive pronouns are for the most part replaced by the *van*-construction.

**Table 6b.** Distribution across forms and time (masculine/neuter forms).

	Period 1: 1770–1790				Period 2: 1820–1840			
	Genitive case		<i>van</i> -construction		Genitive case		<i>van</i> -construction	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Definite art.	182	26.5	506	73.6	76	11.1	612	89.0
Indefinite art.	1	0.8	128	99.2	2	2.4	81	97.6
Demonstrative	24	21.8	86	78.2	1	1.4	69	98.6
Possessive	10	4.7	201	95.3	5	2.9	169	97.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>921</b>	<b>80.9</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>931</b>	<b>91.7</b>

## 6 Discussion

Investigating another crucial morphosyntactic variable in the context of the Dutch *schrifttaalregeling*, this chapter focused on variation and change in the use of the (adnominal) genitive case and the alternative prepositional *van*-construction in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Dutch. Building upon a vivid research

tradition on genitival constructions in Dutch, primarily in the seventeenth (Nobels & Rutten 2014, Weerman et al. 2013) and eighteenth century (Simons & Rutten 2014), this case study aimed to examine the effectiveness of metalinguistic discourse and particularly Weiland's (1805) national grammar on actual language usage.

As outlined in Section 1, Dutch originally had a fully-fledged case system, including the genitive case, which had been in decline since the Middle Dutch period. As a result of the increasing loss of inflections in general, and the parallel rise of the alternative constructions, particularly with the preposition *van*, a situation of competition between synthetic and analytical genitival constructions had emerged. By the eighteenth century, inflected genitive forms still occurred in written language and especially in higher registers, while they had (presumably) disappeared from spoken and colloquial language.

Nevertheless, eighteenth-century grammarians still had a strong focus on nominal inflection. In Section 3, it was pointed out that the historical genitive forms were widely preferred in the paradigms of early eighteenth-century grammars (e.g. Moonen 1706, Verwer 1707), although the analytical *van*-construction was an increasingly accepted alternative towards the middle of the century (e.g. Elzevier 1761, van der Palm 1769), and even became the preferred option in the final decades (e.g. van Bolhuis 1793). Against the background of these developments in metalinguistic discourse, it is striking that Weiland's (1805) officialised grammar of Dutch returned to the prescription of synthetic genitive forms only. One of the central questions was whether and to what extent this conservative choice in favour of the historical case inflections influenced early nineteenth-century language practice. Did the gap between norms and usage grow even further?

In Section 5, the possible effectiveness of Weiland (1805) was investigated through a corpus-based analysis of the synthetic genitive case and its analytical alternative with the preposition *van*. The general results revealed that the *van*-construction was prevalent in the late eighteenth-century data with a share of 64.0%. However, in the early nineteenth-century (i.e. post-Weiland) period, one could see that the synthetic forms gained some ground in usage, increasing from 36.0% to 41.4%. While these tendencies suggested a 'Weiland effect', a more fine-grained analysis appeared to be necessary in order to assess the normative influence.

Previous research (e.g. Nobels & Rutten 2014, Simons & Rutten 2014) has demonstrated that the role of contexts is a crucial factor of influence, in that the genitive case is more likely to be preserved in formulaic contexts (such as dates, religious or epistolary formulae, etc.) than in the more creative, neutral contexts. Indeed, a considerable amount of variation across contexts was also attested in the present case study, especially for the eighteenth-century period. The *van*-construction was the most frequently used construction in neutral contexts, whereas dates and especially religious formulae mostly occurred with the genitive case. In the nineteenth-century period, however, the share of the synthetic genitive forms increased in the neutral context, which supports the assumption of a

normative influence of Weiland's (1805) grammar prescribing these historical case inflections.

With respect to genre variation, the general results (across all contexts) indicated that the synthetic forms gained ground in newspapers and particularly in diaries and travelogues, whereas the *van*-construction seemed to consolidate its dominant position in private letters, at the expense of the synthetic forms. By taking into account the influence of contexts and selecting only occurrences in the neutral context, the results were somewhat different, though. To begin with, the distribution of constructions in eighteenth-century private letters revealed that the *van*-construction was considerably more frequent in the neutral context than across all contexts, signalling a fairly strong influence of formulaic contexts. On closer inspection, religious formulae in letters (especially from period 1) mostly occurred with synthetic genitive forms, affecting the distribution of constructions. In the other two genres, the role of contexts turned out to be a less relevant factor of influence, though.

Furthermore, the nineteenth-century data (neutral context only) nicely illustrated the genre-related gradation also attested in previous case studies, in that the highest share of the prescribed synthetic forms was found in newspapers (around 50%), followed by diaries and travelogues (around 40%) and, with the lowest share in the most 'oral' genre, viz. private letters (around 30%). Diachronically, the synthetic genitive gained ground in all three genres of the *Going Dutch Corpus*. This general development across all genres, including private letters, suggests the effectiveness of Weiland's (1805) national grammar on language usage. In fact, these results also confirmed previous findings (e.g. Simons & Rutten 2014, Scott 2014), viz. that ego-documents written by members of the upper middle and upper ranks – which are also the socio-economic groups of writers primarily represented in the *Going Dutch Corpus* – saw the increase of the historical genitive case, most probably due to normative influence.

The analysis of possible geographical variation did not reveal marked patterns, even though there was some variation across the seven selected regions. For instance, the diachronic increase of the synthetic genitive in North Brabant was observed in all three genres. With respect to the centre and the periphery, hardly any variation could be attested. In this case study, it can probably be concluded that space was no longer a decisive external factor in the period under investigation.

The sociolinguistic variable of gender revealed that, at least when only neutral contexts were considered, the synthetic genitive case increased in texts written by both men and women. It was slightly more frequent among male users, though. Some further differences became apparent when zooming in on the gender-related results for each of the two ego-document genres individually. In the first period, male letter writers were more likely to use the genitive case than female letter writers, whereas the opposite was true in diaries and travelogues. In second period, those gender differences more or less levelled out.

Finally, the internal variable of forms was investigated, suggested to be a major factor conditioning the distribution of constructions. Indeed, very marked differences could be revealed between the masculine and neuter forms on the one

hand, and feminine and all gender plural forms on the other hand. In line with previous observations, mainly by Scott (2014), the *van*-construction was overwhelmingly used with masculine/neuter nouns, whereas the genitive case had become a marginal option by the late eighteenth century. In sharp contrast, the feminine/all gender plural equivalents were still frequently used with the historical genitive case, and even increased considerably in the early nineteenth century. Moreover, Scott (2014) refers to the conserving effect of the *x der y* structure, which was not only the most frequently used genitive structure but also the most familiar one to language users. Nevertheless, the results drawn from the *Going Dutch Corpus* demonstrated that the rise of the synthetic genitive forms was not limited to the definite article, but could also be attested for other groups of genitive markers. In sum, it is likely that a combination of the officially prescribed and promoted genitive forms in Weiland's (1805) grammar on the one hand, and a generally high familiarity among language users (especially *x der y*) on the other hand, helped to increase the use of feminine/all gender plural genitive markers in the early nineteenth century. In fact, no such effect could be attested for the masculine/neuter genitive markers. It might be assumed that they had become too low in frequency and had no longer been familiar to most language users, which is why they could not be 'revived' in actual language use – despite the official prescriptions.

Coming to the general question whether and to which extent Weiland's (1805) national grammar could influence the use of the historical genitive case in actual language practice, it may be concluded that normative influence was, at least to a certain degree, reflected in the corpus results. Not only did the use of synthetic forms (in neutral contexts) considerably gain ground in nineteenth-century diaries and travelogues as well as in newspapers, but also in the most 'oral' genre, viz. private letters. Moreover, both male and female writers increasingly used the inflected case forms in the post-Weiland period.

Nonetheless, it must not be forgotten and trivialised that the analytical *van*-construction had actually been established as the prevalent construction in late eighteenth-century language practice, certainly in handwritten ego-documents. The increasing relevance of the *van*-construction in usage is generally in line with the developments in the eighteenth-century normative tradition. Despite losing some ground in the early nineteenth century in favour of the synthetic genitive case, the *van*-construction remained the most frequently used option in handwritten ego-documents and particularly in private letters. In newspapers, i.e. the printed and most 'written' genre investigated, synthetic and analytical constructions co-occurred as equally common options.

Still, Weiland's (1805) conservative choice and his effort to officially revive the historical genitive case on a national level can be assessed as partly successful – certainly when we consider the fact that the synthetic forms had largely disappeared from spoken/colloquial language, and had primarily been preserved in the higher registers.

