

## **Greek complex adpositions as a key to Greek adpositional development**

Pietro Bortone

University of Oxford

Greek is the Indo-European language with the longest and best-attested history: over three thousand years with relatively small gaps. This makes Greek a uniquely valuable terrain for studying, among other things, language change. In Greek, a whole system of adpositions – appearing, initially, both before and after nouns – can be observed coming into existence (in combination with an older case system), then fading and being renewed. The use of multiple adposition+case combinations (P1+case1, P1+case2, etc.) was slowly abandoned, but new combinations of adverbs with old adpositions (ADV1+P1, ADV1+P2) enabled the system to express lost semantic nuances. The strikingly rich Ancient Greek adpositional inventory was thus gradually replaced and diversified largely thanks to the use of compounds – which have become the norm in Modern Greek. Furthermore, in Modern Greek, a number of phrases distributionally comparable to prototypical adpositions are also in use. These can express meanings that Greek previously expressed with simple adpositions. One may therefore ask whether such Greek phrases, which are an open class, could be considered fully-fledged adpositions and, ultimately, where the boundaries of the ‘adposition’ category should be drawn. Those Greek phrases, after all, match constructions that are found in other modern European languages, and which some linguists want to classify as adpositions (e.g. ‘according to’, ‘at the time of’, ‘at the presence of’, ‘on the theme of’, ‘for the benefit of’, ‘under the power of’). This fact highlights also the elusive possibility that their use in Greek might be, in part, a contact-induced change.