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A comparative study of Eastern Armenian and Ossetic spatial systems

This article deals with the means of expressing spatial relations in two languages of the Caucasus, (Iron) Ossetic and Eastern Armenian. Both of these languages belong to the Indo-European language family, and both have experienced contact with neighbouring languages of other linguistic lineage, namely North-East and North-West Caucasian, Kartvelian and Turkic.

Both languages have developed a complex but not overdetailed system of spatial markers. Ossetic possesses four spatial cases: Allative, Ablative, Superessive and Locative/Inessive (identical to Genitive), while Eastern Armenian possesses a recently developed Locative case along with the already existing Dative, Nominative, Instrumental and Ablative cases, which can also be used to express spatial relations. Moreover, both languages have a set of spatial adpositions (most of them being postpositions), which can also inflect for case, thus creating even greater variety in the spatial system.

In Armenian, the basic spatial meaning of Locative is Inessive, Dative being used as Superessive in the majority of cases. Nevertheless, there exist postpositions *meĵ* 'in' and *vra* 'on', which leads to an interesting distribution between the cases and the corresponding postpositions. The situation in Ossetic is similar: along with the cases, there exist postpositions *midæg* 'in' and *šær, šærəl* 'on'. In Ossetic postpositions can also combine with the spatial cases, making the system even more flexible, as demonstrated by e. g. *šærəl*, Superessive of *šær* 'on'. Similar instances also exist in Armenian, although their use is much more limited.

Spatial systems of both languages have never been explored systematically in prior research, let alone compared. We have found a number of interesting correspondences in them, which may have developed due to mutual influence or experiencing the influences of other languages of the Caucasus. Our paper will focus on describing the spatial systems of both languages from an areal perspective, taking into account the influences of neighbouring Caucasian languages.