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Number and possessivity in Modern Eastern Armenian postpositions

The adpositional system of Modern Eastern Armenian is a result of a radical restructuring of the Classical Armenian language state. While most of the older prepositions, which are very few, have remained intact, a new category of postpositions has developed in the course of the language's history. The overwhelming majority of these postpositions is derived from words of other parts of speech, mostly nouns, but also adjectives, adverbs, and converbal forms. Most words of this new category have retained many of the properties of the aforementioned parts of speech, most significantly nominal inflection. The majority of postpositions can inflect not only for case, but also for number and person, and can accept the definite article. What distinguishes these postpositions from nouns, however, is the semantics of the last three categories. While number used with nouns means the number of the referent denoted by the noun itself, with postpositions it denotes the number of their dependent (when it is not overtly expressed by a full noun phrase). First- and second-person markers also lose their nominal semantics of possessivity in favor of being used to express the person of said dependent. And the article becomes another category in the person inflection paradigm, expressing third person of the dependent of the postposition. Significantly, person/article and number affixes can only be used in lieu of Genitive-marked dependents and cannot be used with postpositions that assign any other cases. For example, the form *arajnerə* (PL.DEF of *araj* 'before, ahead') means 'in front of them', while **nersnerə* (pl.def of *ners* 'inside', controls Ablative) cannot be used in this sense.

This evolution of both the adpositional system and of the semantics of nominal markers is interesting from a typological point of view. The aim of our paper will be to thoroughly describe the abovementioned features of the Eastern Armenian adpositional system and, among other things, analyze the relationship between nominal and adpositional semantics of the person and number markers. Another aim of our research is to analyze this system from a cross-linguistic perspective, paying specific attention to other languages of the Caucasus Armenian has been in close contact with.