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# LOCATIVES ARE NOT CASES: EVIDENCE FROM LAK

**Intro**: In the generative tradition case can be structural (assigned in a certain configuration) or inherent (assigned together with a theta role). Locative cases, however, do not fit either definition: there are neither enough configurations nor theta-roles that would yield the entire spectrum of locative cases. To see this consider Lak, a Northeast Caucasian language from Dagestan, as an example of a rich locative case system.

| (1)   Lak locative cases | essive I | allative II | ablative III | translative IV | versative V |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a.   *-v(u)* 'in' | ∅ | *-n* | *-a(tu)* | *-x* | *-maj* |
| b.   *-j* 'on' | ∅ | *-n* | *-a(tu)* | *-x* | *-maj* |
| c.   *-lu* 'under' | ∅ | *-n* | *-a(tu)* | *-x* | *-maj* |
| d.   *-x* 'behind' | ∅ | *-n* | *-a(tu)* | *-x* | *-maj* |
| e.   *-č'a* 'near' | ∅ | *-n* | *-a(tu)* | *-x* | *-maj* |
| f.   *-c'* 'next to' | ∅ | *-n* | *-a(tu)* | *-x* | *-maj* |
| | *at* | *to* | *from* | *via* | *towards* |

Like other Dagestanian languages, Lak is highly agglutinative. The combination of a "series" suffix indicating LOCATION and the MODE suffix (indicating the type of motion) yields the 30 locative cases in (1), as exemplified in (2); for case labels see, e.g. Kibrik 1998.

(2)   a.   q:at-   lu-v(u)                                                    inessive, I-a, Zhirkov 1955:36
          house-   OBL-IN
          *in the house*

      b.   q:at-   lu-vu-x                                               intranslative, IV-a, Zhirkov 1955:36
          house-   OBL-IN-TRS
          *through the house*

      c.   q:at-   lu-lu-x                                               subtranslative, IV-f, Zhirkov 1955:37
          house-   OBL-UNDER-TRS
          *across under the house*

**The issue of the case-assigner**: If we were to regard the subtranslative in (2c) as a case, what would the source of such a case be? Verbs are not usually assumed to assign theta-roles to adjuncts, so subtranslative, etc., would have to be assigned by a null preposition or rather, by the complex of a null Path and a null Place (Koopman 2000, den Dikken 2010, etc.), as in (3):

(3)                                                                       subtranslative, IV-f (2c)



Several issues arise with this view. Is the entire complex of affixes after *q:at-* in (2) one case or several? If one, assigned by the ~~under~~ + ~~through~~ combination, how does this complex case end up realized by several suffixes in a cross-linguistically stable order (cf. Radkevich 2010)? If several and the location suffix is the result of case-assignment by Place and the direction suffix, by Path, up to four (7) cases end up assigned to the same NP and case-assignment to a PP (from ~~through~~ to PlaceP in (3)) or across a preposition (Place⁰) must be stipulated. Under both views, the source for the additional case suffix (*-lu-* in (2)) is unclear. Moreover, each of these cases ends up linked to only one lexical item (or a complex head).

**To resolve these issues**, I argue that the Lak "series markers" are not cases, but rather bound roots (like the English *-ware* in *silverware* or *-top* in *tabletop*, *rooftop*, etc.) with axial-part semantics (Svenonius 2006, 2008, Matushansky and Zwarts 2019). Independent evidence comes from derivation, freestanding "postpositions" and the versative suffix (V in (1)).

**Derivation**: A closer look at the base form that the "series markers" combines with reveals not the citation form (absolutive), but a stem derived with a suffix (glossed as OBL in (2)) that Zhirkov 1955:41 observes to also appear in compounds (4)-(5) and identifies as the truncated genitive-ergative suffix (confirmed by Murkelinsky 1971:124). Irrespective of whether this identification is correct, essive forms (I in (1)) can be reasonably assumed to have the syntax of compounding, with the "series marker" functioning as the head (as in *tabletop*).

(4) a. ttar -lil           (5) a. lasn            -al
       conifer -GEN             husband, spouse -GEN
       *of {a/the} pine, fir-tree*      *of the husband*

   b. ttar -li -x'a-v            b. lasn           -a -ussu
       conifer -GEN$_2$-copse-IN        husband, spouse-GEN$_2$-brother
       *in {a/the} conifer copse*        *brother-in-law*

The non-inflectional status of "series markers" is also clear from the fact that they appear in complex nouns formed with the location suffix *-alu-* (6) (Abdullaev and Èl'darova 2000:27):

(6) a. lamu- x- alu            b. vi- v- alu
       bridge BEHIND AREA        inside IN AREA
       *the area beyond the bridge*    *the interior*

Further support comes from Lak so-called "**spatial postpositions**", freestanding morphemes with the same spatial semantics and similar phonological form (cf. (6b)). Though traditionally viewed as Ps, they (a) systematically appear with genitive NPs, (b) can function as nouns and (c) combine directly with the same "mode suffixes" (Zhirkov 1955:130). All these facts can be explained if they are free locative nouns (e.g., *č'arav* 'side', *jalu* 'top'), while the "series markers" (*-v*, *-j*) are their deficient counterparts. Independent evidence comes from bare axial nouns functioning as locatives in other languages (e.g., Chalcatongo Mixtec (Brugman 1981, see also Svorou 1994), Kîîtharaka (Muriungi 2006) and in Lak itself (Zhirkov 1955:127). The lack of other cases is unsurprising, given both the area-specific lack of non-locative cases for some classes of nouns (see Daniel and Ganenkov 2009 for Bagvalal, Zhirkov 1955:127 for Lak itself; apudlocative forms support this intuition) and the proposed denotation.

**The status of versative**: Clear evidence for treating versative as a separate functional head comes from the fact that it **contains a class marker** (7) agreeing with the subject of motion (Zhirkov 1955:39-40, Murkelinsky 1971:87), i.e., with the absolutive (an agreement pattern characteristic of many Lak locative adverbials, including *šava* 'home').

(7) a. o'rč' q:at- lu- vu- n- **aj** lavgunni.         Zhirkov 1955:42
       boy.ABS house-OBL-IN- ALL- **AGR$_I$.VERS** went
       *The boy went towards the inside of the house.*

   b. ssil ninu q:at- lu- vu- n- **naj** durcunii.
       sister.GEN=ERG mother.ABS house-OBL-IN- ALL- **AGR$_{III}$.VERS** brought
       *The sister brought the mother inside the house.*

**The status of allative**: Unlike other modes, the versative mode does not combine with the essive NP directly: an intervening *-n-* suffix must be present (7), usually taken to be allative. We observe, however, that allative in Lak is syncretic with dative (Zhirkov 1955:39), a core structural case whose cross-linguistic use is consistent with being assigned by a directional morpheme. Following this intuition allows us to assume the expected straightforward (= "towards") semantics for versative and further supports the intuition that the "series markers" yield nominal constituents: only NPs can be case-marked.

**Extensions**: The question now arises of the status of the ablative and translative suffixes (III-IV in (1)). With the allative treated as a dative assigned by a null directional adposition, the ablative and the translative will be reanalyzed as postpositions themselves. We can now also explain why in some other Dagestanian languages (though not in Lak) distal marking is attached outside the "series markers" (Comrie and Polinsky 1998, Radkevich 2010) and why

there is no overt essive marker (I in (1)). Finally, we will discuss the broader implications of our findings for locative case systems both in Dagestanian languages and in general.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| ABS: | absolutive |
| AGR$_I$: | agreement in class I |
| ALL: | allative |
| ERG: | ergative |
| GEN: | genitive |
| OBL: | oblique |
| SUB-: | sub(lative) or sub(essive) |
| TRANS: | translative |
| VERS: | versative |