

Quasi-Suffixaufnahme in Classical Armenian

The phenomenon of *Suffixaufnahme*, or case stacking, refers to a type of morphosyntactic agreement whereby a dependent noun or phrase shows case agreement with its head noun in addition to its regular, functional case marking. Prototypically, the dependent noun occurs in the genitive case, signifying appurtenance, but other cases may also be involved (PLANK 1995).

The phenomenon is most well known from its occurrence in Old Georgian (BOEDER 1995), Hurrian (WEGNER 2007:69–75), and Urartian (SALVINI AND WEGNER 2014:29–31), but also occurs in other languages of the Caucasus and ancient Middle East as well as in some languages of Australia (e.g. Lardil, cf. RICHARDS 2013); the vast majority of the languages concerned exhibit agglutinative morphology. Examples (1) and (2) illustrate this structure in Old Georgian and Hurrian, respectively.

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| (1) | <i>šəçevn-ita čmid-isa sameb-isa-jta</i>
help-INS holy-GEN trinity-GEN-INS
“with the help of the Holy Trinity” (Sos 1980 no. 2) | (2) | <i>sen(a)=iffu=ue=ne=z asti=i=z</i>
brother-1SG.POSS-GEN-CON-ERG wife-3SG.POSS-ERG
“my brother’s wife” (Mil. III 7) |
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Agreement by *Suffixaufnahme* is not obligatory in all languages which possess the pattern, but may be used to disambiguate or in a limited subset of case combinations.

Indo-European languages are not commonly known to exhibit this particular agreement pattern, although limited parallels exist (e.g. in Slavonic, cf. CORBETT 1995). In Classical Armenian, however, a very similar type of agreement does occur: dependents of heads in the accusative marked by the direct object proclitic *z=* may optionally also receive the same proclitic marking regardless of their functional case. This type of agreement is most common with genitive dependents (3), but also extends to other cases (4) and even subordinate clauses (5).

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| (3) | <i>covac’uc’anēr z=vardapetut’ean=n z=xorut’iwn</i>
plunge-into.3SG.PST OBJ=teaching.GEN.SG=DET OBJ=depth.ACC.SG
“he plunged into the depth of the teaching” (Koriwn §111) |
| (4) | <i>xoselov z=noc’anē z=amenayn č’arut’iwn</i>
tell.INF.INS OBJ=3PL.ABL OBJ=all wickedness.ACC.SG
“relating all their (lit. from them) wickedness” (Elišē III.234) |
| (5) | <i>varesc’ē z=tiezerakan išxanut’iwn=d z=or awandeał ē dma</i>
use.3SG.AOR.SBJV OBJ=universal power.ACC.SG=DET OBJ=REL.NOM.SG give.PTCP be.3SG 3SG.DAT
<i>y=Astucoy</i>
from=God.ABL.SG
“he will use the universal power which was given to him by God” (Elišē II.130) |

This paper aims to explore two dimensions of this agreement phenomenon in Classical Armenian: firstly, a classification of its usage in 5th-century texts by types of cases and nominal phrases involved; and secondly, an attempt at an explanation of the development of this pattern.

Historically, the direct object proclitic is a preposition; other prepositions in Classical Armenian do not, however, show similar agreement by repetition in non-translated texts. Since Armenian nominal morphology rarely distinguishes NOM and ACC, an internal explanation based on the need or wish to disambiguate cannot be excluded. Yet, given the occurrence of *Suffixaufnahme* in the linguistic area, potential interference from Old Georgian or Urartian cannot be excluded *a priori* despite the limited evidence of other contact phenomena (cf. YAKUBOVICH 2010 on morphological interaction between Armenian and Urartian).

References

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