

## The system of spatial cases in Nakh: between Differential Place marking and inflection classes

Within the East Caucasian language family, the Nakh branch (often assumed to be the first to have split off from the protolanguage) has often been described as typologically dissimilar to all other languages of the family (collectively known as Daghestanian) with respect to its marking of spatial relations. Where Daghestanian languages of various branches typically display two-slot systems, with one suffix marking location (in, on, under, through, at, near) and another marking direction (allative, ablative, essive) (Daniel & Ganenkov 2012), the Nakh languages have been analysed as having fewer, mostly monomorphemic spatial cases and as making use of more postpositions (e.g. Imnaishvili 1942, Gagau 1943, Desherieva 1974, Nichols 2011, Hauk & Harris, forthcoming).

Two recent advancements have shed new light on the Nakh data. Firstly, reanalysis of the Tsova-Tush data (the third Nakh language besides Chechen and Ingush) has allowed the recognition of a Daghestanian-style two-slot system of spatial cases, (Wichers Schreur 2024). See Table 1 for 12 of the 33 (combinations of) spatial cases in Tsova-Tush. Secondly, the Tsova-Tush data displays clear features of Differential Place Marking. The notion of Differential Place Marking identifies splits in the coding of locative, allative or ablative roles depending on subclasses of nouns, in particular place names (toponyms), inanimate common nouns and human nouns (Haspelmath 2019).

	Goal	Location	Source	Compatible nouns
'near, at'	-go	-go-ħ	-go-ren	animates
'among, in'	-lo	-lo-ħ	-lo-ren	liquids, masses, collections
'in'	-i	-i-ħ	-i-ren	rooms, buildings, containers, place names
Default	-∅	-ħ	-ren	other

Table 1: Tsova-Tush spatial cases (excerpt)

Chechen and Ingush show cognate suffixes for all morphemes in Table 1, but does not combine them with the same sets of nouns. Based on these findings, three questions arise:

- Should a two-slot system be reconstructed for Proto-Nakh, and if so, are the morphemes cognate with those found in Daghestanian languages?
- Is Differential Place Marking an innovation in Tsova-Tush, or is it inherited from Proto-Nakh?
- What is the exact historical connection between Differential Place Marking and inflection classes, both for Nakh as well as cross-linguistically.

This paper has four goals. (1) It puts the Tsova-Tush data in typological and areal perspective, and concludes that it shows clear parallels with the Daghestanian-style system, and furthermore that it obeys the typological universals concerning Differential Place Marking (i.e. there is less phonetic material in spatial suffixes on place names compared to other nouns, there is more phonetic material in spatial suffixes on animate nouns, and more phonetic material in non-spatial cases on place names. (2) It re-evaluates the Chechen and Ingush data, concluding that they show clear traces of a former two-slot system. (3) It reconstructs the spatial case system for Proto-Nakh, with some, but not many, cognates to Daghestanian languages (as reconstructed by Alekseev (1997)). The scarcity of cognate case endings can be explained by the possibility in East Caucasian to combine adverbs with spatial cases, resulting in two-slot spatial cases with the first element grammaticalised from a different adverb for each branch. The paper also concludes that the Differential Place Marking features of Tsova-Tush are secondary. (4) It explores the connections between Differential Place Marking and inflection classes and attempt to establish a historical pathway from the former to the latter. It has been suggested that differences between inflectional classes might be viewed as a diachronic effect

of “morphologization” of a previously semantically constrained DAM (Witzlack-Makarevich & Seržant 2018), but investigations into this process are scarce, a gap which the present study aims to fill.

By answering the above questions, this paper aims to be an important case-study in (1) the grammaticalisation of locative markers; (2) the history and internal branching of the East Caucasian family, where often cognate sets of morphemes are established (e.g. Desheriev 1963:436), but attempts at reconstruction are few and far between; and (3) the recent topic of Differential Place Marking in Caucasian languages, where related phenomena such as Differential Subject Marking have been observed previously (see Arkadiev 2017).

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