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Locative-Inessive in the South-Caspian-Aturpatakan Iranian Sprachbund

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Abstract

The Aturpatakan-Caspian Sprachbund encompasses a cluster of closely-related Northwestern Iranian languages and dialects, including Zazaki, Gorani, Talishi, Tati, Gilaki, Mazandarani, the languages of the Semnan region, Central Caspian dialects, and transitional dialects of the Central Alborz. This linguistic area is characterised by shared phonological, morphological, and lexical cross-isoglosses, a notable example of which is the expression of locative-inessive with the descendants of Old Iranian **zṛd-* 'heart', attested in almost all languages of this region.

***Keywords*:** Aturpatakan-Caspian Sprachbund – Northwestern Iranian Languages – **zṛd-* 'Heart' – Locative-Inessive

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The Aturpatakan-Caspian Sprachbund encompasses a cluster of closely-related Northwestern Iranian languages and dialects, including Zazaki, Gorani, Talishi, Tati, Tatoid dialects, Gilaki, Mazandarani, the languages of the Semnan region, Central Caspian dialects, and transitional dialects of the Central Alborz. These languages and dialects exhibit extensive shared lexical isoglosses across various semantic domains, including terms related to body parts, animals, celestial objects, landscape features, household utensils, temporal concepts (such as parts of the day and seasons), plant names, abstract nouns, verbs, adjectives, and more. Morphological isoglosses, particularly in grammatical categories of verbs and nouns, as well as phonetic isoglosses, are also prominent within this linguistic area (for further details, see Hakobian 2022).

A notable example of morphological isoglosses is the expression of the locative-inessive case through descendants of the Old Iranian **zṛd-* ('heart'), which is found in nearly all the languages encompassed by this Sprachbund.

More broadly, the use of body part terminology in spatial conceptualisation—particularly in landscape nomenclature—highlights the intricate relationship between human cognition, embodied experience, and linguistic expression. Across diverse cultures, terms for body parts frequently serve as metaphors to describe spatial relationships and geographic features, reflecting the human tendency to project embodied experiences onto the external world. In the context of Iranian languages, such patterns are well-documented (see Hakobian 2018).

Below, the expression of the locative-inessive case is illustrated across several languages within the proposed Sprachbund.

Zazaki

In Zazaki, *zarā* ('inside') exhibits multifunctionality in spatial expressions. It can function as a preposition, often used with an ezafe construction; a circumposition, in combination with various postpositions indicating direction; or as an adverb, either with or without an accompanying postposition. The examples below illustrate its usage in Northern and Southern Zazaki dialects.

Northern Zazaki

zarā-yē xayma da čiyē wardī ū simitišī asto.

"There is food and drink inside the tent". (Ismet Konak)

mā maktubān kanīmē zarāyē qutiya.

"We put the letters in the box". (Ismet Konak)

Kay ka šawkē roǰī ā vaznē rā, ā zarāyē čayī da kutēna ra.

"She was sleeping inside when rays of the sun woke her up". (Nuray Atmaja)

Southern Zazaki

kaya kuča rā parīšān āsayēna lā zarāyē ji rindak, wašik bi.

"The house looked shabby from the street, but it was fine on the inside". (Roshan Lezgin)

gāmā ka tabar da vāritī dawām kardēna vārāyēna tutē ka hīt biyē ajala kardēna ka dakawē zarāyē bīnā.

"Wet children hurried to get inside the building as the rain continued to pour down outside". (Roshan Lezgin)

zarā-yē šikafta da vang činē bi.

"There was no sound inside the cave". (Roshan Lezgin)

Talishi

The postposition *dəl*/*dəlān*/*dela*/*dila* 'in, inside, into' (cf. *dəl*/*dil*/*del* 'heart') serves multiple grammatical functions. It exhibits inessive, locative, and directional usages, reflecting its versatility in spatial and conceptual expressions.

Anbarani

hiün dəlān gandəm zārd bə.

"In the fields, the wheat was yellow". (Paul 2011: 170)

Masulei

šo raxtexābe dela.—"He goes into his bed". (Lazard 1978: 258)

Paul (2011: 171) suggests that "where the location is unambiguously a container (e.g., a bag, a pocket), the use of this suffix is optional and a generalized case clitic (e.g., anda in Anbarani, *kā* in Asalemi and simply the Oblique in Masali) is sufficient to express location 'in', but where the object is unspecified, or generalized location is potentially ambiguous between 'in' and 'on'/'at', the word is required".

Leriki

višā dəla-da i karan banem glay šə beše.—"In the forest all of a sudden I see something came out". (Stilo 2018: 814)

Asalemi

darafandəša daryā delakā.—"He threw (him) into the sea". (Paul 2011: 171)

Masulei

howze dela-ko āvdaneše kari.—"She was swimming in the pool". (Lazard 1978: 258)

According to Miller (1953: 83, 85) and Schulze (2000: 18), in Northern Talishi, *dəl* is consistently used in conjunction with the locative postposition (*a*)*da* 'in'. For example, *boγi dəlada* 'in the garden'.

Tati

The postposition dela 'into' (cf. Tat. *del*/*dəl*/*dil* 'heart') is commonly employed across most Tati dialects (Yarshater 1970: 459).

For example,

Kafteji

čela ke dəla nehāyā.

"The spindle is in the house". (Stilo 2018: 705)

Taleqani

The postposition *dele*/*dol* 'in; inside; into' (cf. *del* 'heart') necessitates that the preceding object be in the oblique case.

sang bakate hawzi dele.

"The stone fell into the pool". (Borjian MS)

tandiri dele hime dare.

"There is firewood in the oven". (Borjian MS)

Mazandarani

The postposition *dele*/*dela* 'in, inside, into' (cf. *del* 'heart') functions as a postposition and requires its preceding object to be in the oblique case, which is marked by the suffix *-e*/*-i*.

Saravi

me otāq-e dele 'in my room'
čā-e dele 'in(*to*) *a hole'*
de-e dele 'in a village' (Yoshie 1996: 23).

Kordekheyli

me nɛnā o me xāxer, Mašti Habbā, vɛšun ō-rɛ bavɛrdɛnɛ kɛlum-e dɛle.

“My mother and my sister, Mashti Habbā—they brought the water into the stable”. (Borjian/Borjian 2007: 230, 231)

zamin-sar nano kɛrdɛmi vačɛ-rɛ nano-e dɛle dingumi.

“We would build a hammock at the field, and put the child inside it”. (Borjian/Borjian 2007: 236)

However, according to Šokrī (1374 [1995]: 139), the postposition attaches directly to the preceding word without the use of an oblique marker.

payruz te o te berār re bāzār dele badime.

“She day before yesterday I saw you and your brother in the market”.

In Tabaroid Ziarati dialect of Gorgan, del appears as a preposition and connects with the following noun with ezafe.

demriten del-e deq.

“They used to pour [it] in the pot”. (Borjian 2013a: 206, 207).

The Transitional Dialects of the Central Alborz

The postposition *dela*/*dɛla* ‘in, inside, into’ (cf. *del*/*dɛl* ‘heart’) is found in the Tabaroid and transitional Caspian dialects of Central Alborz. Similar to Mazandarani proper, it is connected to the preceding noun through the oblique marker.

For example,

Laluni (Tabaroid)

ǰir kata ǰub-i u-i dela.
“It fell down into the water of the ditch”. (Borjian 2013b: 435)

Shahrestanaki (Tabaroid)

anār yaxdun-čun-i dela qām-kord dāšdena, yā si qām-bokord dāšdena.

"In their icebox they had pomegranates hidden, or they held apples out of sight". (Borjian 2013b: 440)

Velatrui

ye ɣadr-i asal hɔita, xaši dɔkkun behɛšta, ya kɔisa-i dɛla behɛšta—xɔd-ɛš har kɛja vɛse buare.

"He bought some honey, placed [it] in a bowl in his shop—he himself must go somewhere". (Borjian 2012: 244)

be šɔgerda būta: "īn kɔisa dɛla zahr dara. agar baxardi mīrni".

"He told his apprentice: "in this bowl there is poison. If you eat (ate) [it], you will die"". (Borjian 2012: 244)

dukkun-i dɛla hɛrɛso, bana kɛrda tamāšā bakɛrda.

"He stood in the shop and kept watching". (Borjian 2012: 245)

Yushi (Caspian)

telār-e dela dav-emi.

"We were in a cave". (Borjian 2013c: 133)

In Yushi, it can also precede its object, thereby forming a compound.

For example,

dela-asiow "inner room of the mill". (Borjian 2013c: 131)

The Central Caspian dialects

In Central Caspian dialects, *dele*/*del* 'in, inside, into' (cf. *del* 'heart' in the dialects of this region) functions as a postposition. The oblique marker *-e* is suffixed to the objects of postpositions, although it may either elide or transform into a glide following vowels.

For example,

Ramsari

hayāt-e dele 'in (inside) the yard'

čamedān-e del 'inside the suitcase'. (Šokrī 1385 [2006]: 52)

Kalardashti

daryā-ye dele nāhāl bezāme, dār babuye bolbol boxone…

"I planted a seedling in the sea, so that it became a tree, a nightingale sang…". (Kalbāsī 1376 [1997]: 159)

piyāle-ye dele re 'u dakordeme, zelāl babuye me dus boxore 'o me došman lāl babuye.

"I poured water into a cup, so that it became cold (clear), my friend drank it and my enemy became dumb". (Kalbāsī 1376 [1997]: 159)

The Languages of the Semnan

Semnani

In Semnani, *dale*/*delɛ*/*d*(*e*)*la*/*del*(*e*) 'into, in, inside' (cf. Semn. *dal*/*del* 'heart') is employed both as a postposition and a preposition (see Morgenstierne 1958: 114ff.; idem 1960: 76f.; Sarāǰ/Sarāǰ 1392 [2013]: 10)

For example,

šamā kāγa vā-kard(*a*)*n, ba-dian *adun del*(*e*) *čund suāli be-neviščitun ku a ǰavāb hā-dun.*

"I opened your letter, (and) saw that in it you had written some questions which I shall answer". (Morgenstierne 1958: 117)

As a preposition it functions as an adverb of location and takes *ezafe*.

For instance,

agar šamā eǰāza hā-din, a daley-e muzumbali i lə: da-karun…

"If you give me a permission, I shall make a hole in the tank…".

an mirdakā muzunbāli loi pi āšxāl delɛye un muzunbali mɛ-riǰeš.

"That man poured dirt from a hole into the pond". (Morgenstierne 1958: 114)

vājebi o ḥeni ham me<r>-gire, ma-šu d(e)la-e ḥamumi.

"He takes the depilatory and the henna, and he enters into the bath". (Morgenstierne 1958: 114, 115)

fouran mä-šu d(e)la-e vāǰebi-keš xuna.

"Immedietely, he enters the depilation-room". (Morgenstierne 1958: 114, 115)

a šamā pi xeili mamnun-um ki šamā h(o)stun dela-e kāγa mu pi qadr(e)dāni hā-k(a)rǰitun.

"I am very grateful to you that you have shown me appreciation in your letter". (Morgenstierne 1958: 117)

Biyabuneki

In Biyabuneki, *del* 'into, inside, in' (cf. Biyab. *del* 'heart') appears as a preposition with *ezafe*.

For example,

iki be-šu, xar barün kardaš, peika dim-i xar vandaš, be-šu del-e bāzār.

“One of them went, took out his ass, loaded a sack on it, and went into the bazar”. (Morgenstierne 1960: 98, 99)

Aftari

In Aftari, *dele* ‘inside, in, into’ (cf. Aft. *del*/*dal* ‘heart’) is used as a postposition.

For instance,

mon das dele hečči denaboa.

“There is nothing in my hand”. (Borjian 2008: 281)

sizze ǰur xoreš dukennen pelā dela.

“They put/pour thirteen ingredients into the pilaf stew”. (Borjian 2008: 281)

Sangesari

In Sangesari, *dalɛ*/*dɛlɛ* ‘in, in the middle of, inside’ (cf. Sang. *dal*/*del* ‘heart’) functions as a postposition. (Christensen 1935: 130; Rastorgueva 1999: 169)

For example,

vo šišeǰe-dalɛ dara.

“There is water in the bottle”. (Christensen 1935: 130)

əštun lombāri-dalɛ kard.

“He put in his pocket”. (Christensen 1935: 130)

It also appears in combination with various postpositions, such as *daler* (< *dalɛ-ra*[1]), *dɛlɛ-dɛ*[2] etc.

For instance,

yaka rāzi-daler bošo.

"He went to a garden". (Christensen 1935: 130)

xorǰini-dɛlɛ-dɛ dɛkɛ.

"He put it in the saddlebag". (Rastorgueva 1999: 169)

Shahmirzadi

In Shahmirzadi, *dala*/*dela* 'in, into' (cf. Shahmir. *dal*/*del* 'heart') occurs both as a postposition and a preposition.

For instance,

ū dala šiša dārā.

"There is water in the bottle". (Christensen 1935: 137)

varf āftāb-e dela ū buna.

"Snow melts in the sun". (Borjian 2019b: 368)

mo xoštena āyne dala badima. (Borjian 2019b: 368)

"I saw myself in the mirror".

Gorani

In Gorani, *dila*/*dilī*/*dile* 'inside, into, in; among; at; to' (cf. Gor. *dil* 'heart') functions as a preposition. It may also appear in combination

[1] In Sangesari, *ra* 'at; to; because of' primarily functions as a postposition indicating purpose, reason, or direction. For example, *tā-ra bemiyi* "I came because of you", *Semin-ra bəšuyi* "I went to Semnan" (Christensen 1935: 131).

[2] The postposition *dɛ* is used to mark the direct object in Sangesari, e.g., *čaši dāva-dɛ bɛgi biya* "bring the eye medicine" (Rastorgueva 1999: 169).

with various postpositions. Cf. Kand. *zil*, which, most likely, borrowed *dilī* from other Gorani dialects (Hadank 1930: 131f., 245; MacKenzie 1966: 55).

Hawrami

awwal ǰār luā dile[1] darbannewī wa pī ǰora kašakara wiard.

"First it went into a gully and so (in this manner) traversed the mountain". (MacKenzie 1966: 63)

kārakara šawe darmāniš karδana dile čāyī wa dāš ba ḥamay u aδεš.

"At night the servant put the opiate into the tea and gave it to Hama and his mother". (MacKenzie 1966: 74, 75)

Kandulai

Tāyar miyāū dilī bāxakān.

"Tahir comes into the gardens". (Hadank 1930: 172)

qaīrī kāšī mīriyā kardaniš sūrate pūlī, mataniš dilī gīrefāniš, vä gi rūī ǰa dilī bāzāre Isfahānī gīlēī…

"He made coin-like [things] from broken porcelain, put them in his pocket, and walked around the bazaar of Isfahan every day…". (Hadank 1930: 300, 301)

Zardai

čanī ya kuřa hanī hāmsin wēš, wātim šima dile ī galaya binīšdē wa pāwa tā ēma nān mwarmē.

"To another boy of his age, I said: "you wait in this flock on your feet, until we eat"". (Mahmoudveysi/Bailey 2013: 143)

[1] Benedictsen/Christensen (1921: 67, 68), give the prepos. *dala-u…na* with genitive *ezafe* and postposition *na* 'in', e.g., *dala-u-ruēna* 'au milieu du visage'.

Gawrajui

hēmē dile marāsimaka walē dür īštanmān mayrām.

"(If) we are at such celebrations, we ourselves keep (ourselves at) some distance". (Mahmoudveysi et al. 2012: 159)

sīyāwaxš čwār pališ mayasin mašē dile ī āyira.

"They bind Siyavosh hand and foot (and), he goes into this fire". (Mahmoudveysi et al. 2012: 122)

manāša dile ya gila sabad, sabadakay mayirna daswa, āna dāmādaka magardinēš, hanāka-yč 'arūsaka.

"They lay them (i.e., the bags with sweets) in a basket, (then) they place the basket in the hands (of the bridegroom), (and) the bridegroom offers it (to the guests), and the henna, the bride offers it". (Mahmoudveysi et al. 2012: 156)

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