About one category in the languages of Caucasus.
Areal or typological phenomena?

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During centuries the Caucasian languages (Kartvelian, Nakho-Dagestanian and Abkhaz-Adyge) are in contact with the Turkic languages (Azeri, Kumyk, Balkar, Nogai), the Indo-European (Armenian), and, particularly, with the Iranian languages (Ossetic, Tat, Talish and Kurdish (Kurmanji)) in one geographical and cultural area.

According Christopher Lyons "marking of simple definiteness often is an "areal feature. It is well known that languages which are geographically contiguous, even genetically unrelated languages, may develop common characteristics." [LYONS 1999:48]

In presentation I consider the category of definiteness and indefiniteness and its grammatical markers in some languages of Caucasus with a purpose find out the nature of the resemblance. In other words the intention of the presentation is to make out whether the category of definiteness and indefiniteness is areal or typological phenomenon in this area. Here I am just enumerating some well known linguistic data, which became the basis of the investigation.

There is a category of definiteness and indefiniteness in Kabardian language. The marker of definiteness is -*r*, -*m*, which convey the meaning of definiteness in combination with the meaning of Absolutive and oblique Ergative cases.

1. *ЛIы-р ма-жэ*

   man DEF ABS to run PRES [KUMAKHOV:12]

   The man runs.

The indefiniteness is conveyed by Ø and indefinite particle *гуэр*.

2. *Пщащэ-гуэр   ма-тхе* [KUMAKHOV:13]

   girl INDEF   S3SNG to write PRES

   A girl writes.

There are the definite and indefinite articles in Armenian (both Old Armenian and Modern Armenian). The indefinite article in Eastern Armenian is *mi*, which precedes the noun:

3. *mi gɪɪkʰ* 'a book', Nom.sg

   mi gɪkʰi 'of a book', Gen.sg

The definite article is a suffix attached to the noun. It is conveyed by two forms, either -*ə*, or -*n*, depending on whether the final sound is a vowel or a consonant, and whether a preceding word begins with a vowel or consonant:

4. *maɪd-ə* 'the man', Nom.sg

   gaɪi-n 'the barley' Nom.sg

The Old Georgian language has got a definite article, although this opinion is not shared by all linguists. There is even a special term *naçevari* to designate the article in Georgian. It is also well approved, that the Georgian case markers originated from postposed articles. In Old Georgian the definiteness is designated by demonstratives:

5. *ese* - I series; the nearest distance from a speaker.
saxl-i ese DEF 'the house'

6. *ege* – II series; the middle distance from a speaker.
saxl-i ege DEF 'the house'

7. *igi* – III series the furthest distance from a speaker.
saxl-i igi DEF 'the house'

References:

KUMAKHOV, MUKHADIN & VAMLING, KARINA (1998): Dopolnitelnie konstrukcii v kabardinsom yazike. Department of Linguistics, Lund University.

LYONS, CHRISTOPHER (1999): *Definiteness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.