

Armenian morphosyntactic alignment in diachrony

Robin Meyer

9.1 Introduction

Classical Armenian was a language at the crossroads, both linguistically and culturally. Beyond its Indo-European heritage and, arguably, phylogenetically close relationship to Greek, Armenian was heavily influenced by West Middle Iranian languages (most significantly Parthian), Classical and early Byzantine Greek, and (to a lesser extent) Syriac.¹ The influence of the Iranian languages went so far as to impact not only the lexicon and phraseology of Armenian, but its syntax as well.

This syntactic influence is most patent in a set of diachronic alignment changes in the morphosyntax of the Classical Armenian periphrastic perfect, a discussion of which forms the core of this chapter. It is argued that, on the basis of or at least in convergence with the West Middle Iranian tense-sensitive split-ergative verbal system, Armenian ‘borrowed’ the construction of the Iranian ergative–absolutive past tense onto its periphrastic perfect by means of pattern replication. Owing to morphosyntactic pressures, this replicated pattern was adapted and resulted in the largely tripartite alignment of the perfect attested in the earliest Classical Armenian texts. Over the course of time, this split-tripartite alignment was ousted in favour of nominative–accusative alignment, which dominated the non-periphrastic tenses.

Section 9.2 outlines the basic alignment structures of Classical Armenian, focusing on two contrasts: that between periphrastic tenses based on the *-eal* participle and the synthetic tenses; and that between definite and indefinite objects, which influences surface interpretations of the alignment pattern.

In Section 9.3, traditional explanations of the development and loss of this split-alignment pattern are discussed with a view to their explanatory power and potential problems.

An alternative approach is presented in Section 9.4: it is argued that the primary cause of this alignment pattern is to be found not language-internally, but

¹ There are further a number of loanwords from Hurro-Urartian and the Kartvelian languages; their numbers are, however, so small that the influence of those languages, compared to the others named above, is negligible. See Greppin and Diakonoff (1991), Greppin (1996) on Hurro-Urartian, Deeters (1927: 111–114), Vogt (1938), Djahukian (2003), and Gippert (2005: 153–155) on Kartvelian.

in language contact with West Middle Iranian. This proposal is backed up both by other syntactic similarities between the two languages as well as typological observations. The discussion ends in an outline of the loss of split alignment in late Classical Armenian.

Section 9.5 addresses the subsequent developments in Medieval and Modern Armenian, all of which show nominative–accusative alignment without significant exception.

9.2 Morphosyntactic alignment in Classical Armenian

Before going *medias in res* of morphosyntactic alignment in Classical Armenian, it is worth briefly outlining its morphosyntactic categories. Both the verbal and nominal systems are derivable from Proto-Indo-European without too much effort and compare readily to those of other Indo-European languages; they have, however, undergone simplification and much syncretism, broadly speaking.

Armenian nouns and verbs are differentiated for two numbers (singular and plural); a dual does not exist. The case system consists of seven cases (NOM, ACC, GEN, DAT, LOC, ABL, INS), some of which have, to a greater or lesser degree, syncretized with one another.² There is no gender category. The verbal system differentiates three persons, three moods (IND, IMP, SBJV) and two voices (ACT, MP). There are three synthetic tenses (PRS, PST, AOR) next to two analytical tenses (PRF, PLPF) formed with a participle and a copulative verb;³ the PST only occurs in IND. A consistent voice distinction exists only in the AOR; the future is expressed by means of the SBJV.

Table 9.1 1.SG.IND forms of *sirem* ‘to love’ and *hetum* ‘to pour; to flow’

| Tense | Voice | | | |
|-------|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| | ACT | MP | ACT | MP |
| PRS | <i>sirem</i> | <i>sirim</i> | | <i>hetum</i> |
| PST | | <i>sirei</i> | | <i>hetui</i> |
| AOR | <i>sirec’i</i> | <i>sirec’ay</i> | <i>heli</i> | <i>helay</i> |
| PRF | (<i>im</i>) <i>sireal ē</i> | <i>sireal em</i> | (<i>im</i>) <i>heleal ē</i> | <i>heleal em</i> |
| PLPF | (<i>im</i>) <i>sireal ēr</i> | <i>sireal ei</i> | (<i>im</i>) <i>heleal ēr</i> | <i>heleal ei</i> |

² The details of case syncretism are dependent on number and declension; for a general overview, see Jensen (1959: 49–67), for more historical detail, see Godel (1975: 92–107), Matzinger (2005), and Schmitt (2007: 89–114).

³ Armenian possesses other participial forms which are of no interest here, however, since they are not systematically used to form a specific tense; for an overview of these forms, see Stempel (1983).

Table 9.1 illustrates that the voice distinction in Classical Armenian is inconsistent; only *-em* verbs show separate synthetic MP forms outside the AOR.⁴ This, in turn, results in ambiguities: *hehu* (3.SG.PRS.IND) can be read as ACT ‘he pours (transitive); he flows (intransitive); but equally as MP ‘he is poured’. This inconsistency has been afforded great importance by some scholars in the question of the diachronic development of morphosyntactic alignment in Armenian, as detailed in Section 9.3.

Table 9.2 Declension of the noun *am* ‘year’, and the personal pronouns of the 1.SG and 3.SG

| Case | Number | | | | | |
|------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| | ‘year’ SG | ‘year’ PL | 3.SG | 3.PL | 1.SG | 1.PL |
| NOM | <i>am</i> | <i>amkʻ</i> | <i>na</i> | <i>nokʻa</i> | <i>es</i> | <i>mekʻ</i> |
| ACC | <i>am</i> | <i>ams</i> | <i>na</i> | <i>nosa</i> | <i>is</i> | <i>mez</i> |
| GEN | <i>ami</i> | <i>amacʻ</i> | <i>nora</i> | <i>nocʻa</i> | <i>im</i> | <i>mer</i> |
| DAT | <i>ami</i> | <i>amacʻ</i> | <i>nma</i> | <i>nocʻa</i> | <i>inj</i> | <i>mez</i> |
| LOC | <i>ami</i> | <i>ams</i> | <i>nma</i> | <i>nosa</i> | <i>is</i> | <i>mez</i> |
| ABL | <i>amē</i> | <i>amacʻ</i> | <i>nmanē</i> | <i>nocʻanē</i> | <i>in(j)ēn</i> | <i>mēnj</i> |
| INS | <i>amaw</i> | <i>amawkʻ</i> | <i>novaw</i> | <i>nokʻawkʻ</i> | <i>inew</i> | <i>mewkʻ</i> |

Table 9.2, in turn, exemplifies the types of syncretism prevalent across the nominal and pronominal system. In general, NOM and ACC have syncretized across both systems in the singular, with the exception of the 1.SG and 2.SG personal pronouns; they remain distinct in the plural, however. Other types of syncretism are common too (GEN=DAT and often also =LOC in the singular; GEN=DAT=ABL and ACC=LOC in the plural), but depend on declension class. Again, the formal identity of some NOM and ACC forms has an impact on questions of alignment as discussed below.

In the case of Classical (and indeed modern) Armenian, the three categories of syntactic interest are subject (S), agent (A), and direct object (O). For the present purpose, further differentiation, e.g. of more or less goal-like objects in three-place arguments, is not necessary, nor is the consideration whether S is more agentive or more patientive.⁵ As might be expected of an Indo-European language, for the

⁴ These MP forms in PRS are supplied by *i*-stem forms, which also exist in isolation, consisting of intransitive verbs without transitive counterparts; for historical notes on these verbs, see Meillet (1936: 107–108), Godel (1975: 120), Klingenschmitt (1982: 9–11).

⁵ More detailed analyses of alignment structures, such as presented in Dowty (1991) and Bickel and Nichols (2009), are of course available and could be applied to Armenian, too; they would, however, not shed any further light on the alignment pattern of Armenian at least given the present state of research.

most part Classical Armenian expresses S and A as NOM, and O as ACC. The finite verb agrees with S or A in number and person.

This general rule must be qualified in two ways, however. First, since NOM and ACC are not morphologically differentiated in all instances, and given that there is no fixed constituent order,⁶ Armenian effectively exhibits both direct (or neutral) alignment (S=A=O) as well as NOM-ACC alignment (S=A≠O). The frequency of direct alignment patterns is diminished, however, by the second qualification, namely differential object marking. Definite, or at least individuated objects are commonly marked by the proclitic *z*.⁷

The following examples illustrate the relevant sentence types for the synthetic tenses: active, intransitive (1); passive, no agent (2); passive, agent expressed (3); active, transitive, indefinite object (4); active, transitive, definite object (5).⁸

- (1) S = NOM (ACT)

hasanēr ar is hraman arn
arrive.3.SG.PST to 1.SG.ACC **order.NOM/ACC.SG** man.GEN.SG
mioy patuakani Yovsēp' koč'ec'eloy
INDF.GEN.SG venerable.GEN.SG PN called.GEN.SG

'There arrived for me the order of a venerable gentleman called Yovsēp.'

(Kor. 1.1)

- (2) S = NOM (PASS)

ayl ibrew satakeč'aw kaysr=n
CONJ when kill.3.SG.AOR.PASS **emperor.NOM/ACC.SG=DET**
darjan amenayn hoviwk' episkoposk'n ork'
return.3.PL.AOR all shepherd.NOM.PL bishop.NOM.PL REL.NOM.PL
ak'sorealk' ěin
exile.PTCP.NOM.PL be.3.PL.PST

'But when the emperor was killed, all shepherding bishops returned who had been exiled.'

(PB IV.13)

- (3) S = NOM (PASS); PP (agent/instrument)

Zi gitac' t'ē y=Astucoy patrastec'aw
CONJ understand.3.SG.AOR COMP by=god.ABL.SG prepare.3.SG.AOR.PASS

⁶ Little research has been done on this subject. Grammatical surveys largely reiterate the same point, that constituent order is largely pragmatically motivated; see Meillet (1936: 138), Schmitt (2007: 158), Klein (2017:1109).

⁷ It should be noted that even inherently more individuated or definite entities (e.g. personal pronouns, personal names) can be and frequently are marked by this proclitic, but that this is not always the case. For the present purpose, [±DEF] refers to the presence or absence of this proclitic.

⁸ In all examples, constituents fulfilling S/A function are marked in **bold**, while those with O function are underlined.

koč'el *z=na* *ĵatagov* *čšmartu'e'an=n* *ar i*
 call.INF OBJ=3.NOM/ACC.SG protector.NOM/ACC.SG truth.GEN.SG=DET to
tal *patasxani*
 give.INF answer.NOM/ACC.SG
 'For he understood that it was ordained by God to summon him as protector
 of the truth to give a rebuttal [to the heretics]' (PB IV.8)

- (4) A = NOM; O = ACC_{-DEF}
ew *ard* *kamik'* *p'oxanak* *K'ristosi* *ararč'i=n*
 CONJ now wish.2.PL.PRS instead Christ.GEN.SG maker.GEN.SG=DET
jeroy *carayel* *jez* *anastuac=n* *magu'e'an*
 2.PL.POSS.GEN.SG enslave.INF 2.ACC.PL godless=DET magism.DAT.SG
 'And now, instead of Christ [your] maker, you wish to enslave yourself to the
 godless religion of the Magians ...' (PB IV.51)

- (5) A = NOM; O = ACC_{+DEF}
ayl *tēr* *Astuac* *z=zōrutiwn=n*
 CONJ lord.NOM/ACC.SG God.NOM/ACC.SG OBJ=might.NOM/ACC.SG=DET
iwr *yayteac'*
 own show.3.SG.AOR
 'But the Lord God showed his might ...' (PB III.3)

It is worth noting that Armenian is a pro-drop language; both S and O can be left unexpressed where the context allows for it. In PASS, the agent is most commonly expressed in a PP (*i* + ABL); INS is used for instruments.

In the analytical tenses, viz. PRF and PLPF, the picture is more complex. S and O remain marked by NOM and ACC, respectively, with the same qualifications as above regarding definiteness and case syncretism. What changes are the case of A and verbal agreement. A is marked as GEN, wherefore in the analytical tenses, Armenian exhibits both ergative alignment (S=O≠A) and tripartite alignment (S≠A≠O), depending on the type and definiteness of O.⁹ Further, in the analytical tenses, the finite verb agrees only with S; with transitive verbs, the copula appears in the 3.SG form independent of the number or person of A or O.

These patterns are exemplified by the following sentences: active, intransitive (6); passive, no agent (7); passive, agent expressed (8); active, transitive, indefinite object (9); active, transitive, definite object (10).

- (6) S = NOM (ACT)
ew *minč'čew* *na* *ekeal* *ēr*
 CONJ before 3.NOM.SG arrive.PTCP be.3.SG.PST
 'And before he had arrived, ...' (PB III.20)

⁹ As a result of the morphological details described above, the ergative pattern is effectively restricted to O_{-DEF} in SG in settings not involving speech acts and thus pronominal references.

- (7) S = NOM (PASS)

zi yařaj nax and šineal ēr surb
 CONJ first first there build.PTCP be.3.SG.PST holy

ekelec'i=n

church.NOM/ACC.SG=DET

'For there was built for the very first time the holy church.' (PB III.14)

- (8) S = NOM (PASS); PP (agent/instrument)

z=surb uxt ekelec'woy=n or
 OBJ=holy covenant.NOM/ACC.SG church.GEN.SG=DET **REL.NOM/ACC.SG**

oč ēr heřaceal i zawrakenē=n
 NEG be.3.SG.PST abandon.PTCP by soldiery.ABL.SG=DET

'The holy covenant of the Church, which had not been abandoned by the soldiers.' (Eł. p. 106)

- (9) A = GEN; O = ACC
- _{-DEF}

oroy yankarc uremn ēr gteal
REL.GEN.SG unexpectedly somewhere be.3.SG.PST find.PTCP

nšanagirs alp'ap'etac' hayerēn lezui
sign.ACC.PL alphabet.GEN.PL Armenian language.GEN.SG

'Who somewhere had unexpectedly discovered alphabetic signs for the Armenian language.' (Kor. VI.3)

- (10) A = GEN; O = ACC
- _{+DEF}

ew ēr sora ankaleal z=k'orepiskoposut'ean
 CONJ be.3.SG.PST **3.SG.GEN** receive.PTCP OBJ=rural-bishop.GEN.SG

jernadrut'iwn astičani=n i jerac'
consecration.NOM/ACC.SG rank.GEN.SG=DET from hand.ABL.PL

meci=n Grigori
 great.GEN.SG=DET PN.GEN.SG

'And he had received the consecration to the rank of bishop from the hands of the great Grigor.' (PB III.14)

Four complexities need to be added. First, in PRF, the finite copula is optional, meaning that the participle may stand on its own as a full verb (11). Second, the tripartite alignment pattern dominant in the analytical tenses has exceptions: occasionally, S is expressed as GEN (12) or A as NOM (13); these seem to be free, unconditioned variants. Third, the participle may be used converbially with other tenses, and in such instances A may be expressed as NOM or GEN (14).¹⁰ Finally, since NOM=ACC in most instances (as mentioned above) and the two cannot be

¹⁰ A corpus analysis of fifth-century texts indicates that statistically the converbial use is, by far, the single most common application of the participle, accounting for 40 to 68 per cent of all participles in the texts surveyed (Meyer 2017: 196).

distinguished except if O is definite, the alignment of some sentences may appear as ERG–ABS (15; see also Table 9.3).

- (11) PTCP as full verb without copula
ew ert'éal i kotmans Arami i k'alak's erkus
 CONJ arrive.PTCP to side.ACC.PL PN.GEN.SG in city.ACC.PL two
Asorwoc'
 Assyrian.GEN.PL
 'And he arrived in the region of Aram, in two cities of the
 Assyrians ...' (Kor. VII.1)
- (12) S = GEN
apa ekeal ēr ark'ayi=n i teli
 then come.PTCP be.3.SG.PST king.GEN.SG=DET to place.NOM/ACC.SG
čakatu=n ew and nma mec
 front.GEN.SG=DET CONJ with 3.DAT.SG great
episkoposapet=n Hayoc'
 chief-bishop.NOM/ACC.SG=DET Armenian.GEN.PL
 'Then the king came to the frontline and with him the great chief-bishop
 of the Armenians ...' (PB III.7)
- (13) A = NOM
ew č'aragorc=n meławor Meržuan=n z=iwr
 CONJ evil-doer.NOM/ACC.SG=DET sinful PN=DET OBJ=REFL.POSS
z=zēn=n ew zard ew
 OBJ=arms.NOM/ACC.SG=DET CONJ ornament.NOM/ACC.SG CONJ
z=nšan=n salawarti=n bazmac'
 OBJ=insignia.NOM/ACC.SG=DET helmet.GEN.SG=DET many.DAT.PL
edeal ēr z=noyn ōrinak
 give.PTCP be.3.SG.PST OBJ=same fashion.NOM/ACC.SG
 'And the sinful evil-doer Meržuan had given as identical copies his arms,
 ornaments, and the insignia on his helmets to many [people].' (PB V.43)
- (14) PTCP used as CVB; S unexpressed
ew haseal gayr handēp Gardmanakan joroyn
 CONJ arrive.CVB come.3.SG.PST opposite Gardman valley.GEN.SG
 'And he arrived opposite the valley of Gardman ...' (Kor. XVIII.1)
- (15) O_{-DET} = NOM/ACC
ew nora tueal hraman ark'ayagund
 CONJ 3.GEN.SG give.PTCP order.NOM/ACC.SG royal-guard
banakac'=n
 army.DAT.SG=DET
 'And he gave an order to the royal army ...' (Ag. §829)

Table 9.3 ventures to summarize the alignment system of Classical Armenian at its most conservative, viz. as represented in the earliest attested texts dating to the fifth century CE. It does not take into account the diachronic trends leading to the loss of tripartite alignment in the analytical tenses over the course of the following three centuries, which result in the predominantly NOM-ACC alignment of late Classical Armenian and subsequent forms of the language. These developments are discussed in Sections 9.4–9.5. On the surface, viz. from a solely morphological perspective, the synchronic data suggests that Classical Armenian shows a two-dimensional alignment split: tense-sensitive alignment (TSA) between synthetic and analytical tenses; and a split along lines of definiteness. From a broader, morphosyntactic perspective, and considering accounts of contemporary Armenian grammarians, it seems more appropriate, however, to treat the formal identity of NOM and ACC in some categories as coincidental. For the purposes of *morphosyntactic* alignment, it is after all the morphosyntax that plays the pivotal role. The result is that, generally speaking, Armenian is best understood as showing only TSA along the lines mentioned above; for this purpose, the solidly shaded column in Table 9.3 need not be seen as a separate dimension.

For a satisfactory diachronic explanation of this pattern, any explanation needs to answer or at least address the following questions:

- (a) How and why did TSA arise?
- (b) Why does GEN mark A?
- (c) Why is the finite copulative verb in PRF optional?
- (d) Why does the finite copulative verb in PRF.TR show Ø-agreement?

These questions will be addressed in the following two sections.

Table 9.3 Summary of constituent marking and morphosyntactic alignment

| Domain | 1./2.SG/PL; 3.PL; PN.PL; N.PL | 3.SG _{+DEF} ; PN.SG _{+DEF} ; N.SG _{+DEF} | 3.SG _{-DEF} ; PN.SG _{-DEF} ; N.SG _{-DEF} |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Marking | NOM ≠ ACC S ≠ A | NOM = ACC S ≠ A | NOM = ACC S = A |
| Synthetic tenses | S = NOM A = NOM O = ACC | S = NOM A = NOM O = Z+NOM(=ACC) | S = NOM A = NOM O = NOM(=ACC) |
| Alignment | <i>nominative-accusative</i> | <i>nominative-accusative</i> | <i>direct</i> |
| Analytical tenses | S = NOM A = GEN O = ACC | S = NOM A = GEN O = Z+NOM(=ACC) | S = NOM A = GEN O = NOM(=ACC) |
| Alignment | <i>tripartite</i> | <i>tripartite</i> | <i>ergative-absolutive</i> |

9.3 Traditional explanations of this alignment pattern

Over the course of the twentieth century, there have been different attempts at explaining this split-alignment pattern. The following selection is representative if not exhaustive:

- (1) a nominal construction (*nomen actionis* + *genitivus auctoris*);
- (2) a 'have'-perfect with a *genitivus possessivus*;
- (3) the genitive is a prototypical agent case;
- (4) language contact with Caucasian languages;
- (5) the result of analogical shifts.

While there is an ongoing debate whether (Pre-)Proto-Indo-European was a language with an alignment pattern other than NOM-ACC, this is of no consequence for the present question, as the type of alternative alignment envisaged by some revolves around questions of animacy or gender rather than tense or definiteness.¹¹

In what follows, the historical explanations listed above are discussed briefly with a view to demonstrating why they fall short of explaining alignment in Classical Armenian to a sufficient degree.¹²

9.3.1 Meillet and the nominal construction

The first attempt at explaining GEN-marking in PRF goes back to Antoine Meillet, who in the 1936 edition of *Esquisse d'une grammaire comparée de l'arménien classique* proposes that the construction be construed as a *genitivus auctoris* with a *nomen actionis*:

[L]emploi au premier abord étrange, du génitif dans les tours [participaux] provient sans doute de ce que les participes en *-eal* représentent d'anciens substantifs: *nora bereal ē* 'il a porté' a dû signifier originairement 'il y a porter de lui', c'est-à-dire que l'infinitif et le participe seraient des formations également nominales, mais de structure distincte.¹³

(Meillet 1936:129; italics added)

¹¹ For a recent and thorough discussion, see Willi (2018: 504–546).

¹² For a more detailed discussion of these and other approaches, see Meyer (2017: 113–131). In particular, a discussion of the historical morphology and its implications for the valency of the participle in *-eal* has been avoided for reasons of space; on this matter, see Meyer (2014; 2017: 39–82) with bibliography.

¹³ 'While strange at first glance, the usage of the genitive in all [participles] doubtlessly originates in the fact that the participles in *-eal* represent old nouns: *nora bereal ē* 'he has brought' must originally have meant 'there is a bringing of his', that is, that the infinitive and the participle were equally nominal forms, but with different structure.'

While it addresses all the questions asked above,¹⁴ this explanation—also presented in the first edition of Meillet’s *Esquisse* from 1903—had already been refuted by Deeters on different grounds: Meillet does not explain the difference between the intransitive PRF (S = NOM) and the transitive PRF (A = GEN). In polemic terms: why is it ‘there is my carrying him’ but not ‘there is my coming’ (Deeters 1927: 80)? Benveniste (1952: 58) further objects that Meillet’s analysis requires a different morphological history for the intransitive and transitive participle, respectively, since the *-cal* participle would have to be a participle *sensu stricto* in the intransitive construction, but a *nomen actionis* in the transitive sense.

9.3.2 Benveniste and the ‘have’-perfect

Trying to improve on Meillet’s explanation, Benveniste (1952) suggested that the Armenian perfect should be construed as a ‘have’-perfect with its agent in the *genitivus possessivus*; the construction starts out with the possessed entity in NOM (‘I have a written letter’ ~ ‘There is unto me a written letter’), which is over time reanalysed as the object of a transitive sentence and expressed as ACC. This explanation is still accepted even in more recent scholarship, so Schmitt (2007: 152). For Benveniste, the Armenian construction is similar to its Old Persian counterpart, the so-called *taya manā kṛtam* construction.¹⁵ Pointing out the possessive function the Armenian GEN/DAT fulfils,¹⁶ Benveniste sees the perfect as ‘une expression possessive bâtie en arménien même sur un modèle idiomatique pour rendre ce qui était apparemment le sens propre du parfait transitif’ (1952: 60).¹⁷ The fact that Armenian, as opposed to Old Persian, marks O as ACC is explained as a cogent development of its transitive nature (Benveniste 1959). The 3.SG copula, in turn, Benveniste sees as part of the possessive construction: ‘I have’ is the same as ‘there is unto me’.

His approach does, however, not explain why possessed entities in the plural do not receive a 3.PL copula (‘there are unto me’); equally, it offers no cogent explanation as to why, in a diachronically increasing trend, A can be expressed by NOM in some instances, or why, at an early stage, S can be expressed by GEN on occasion.¹⁸

¹⁴ In Meillet’s eyes, this alignment pattern is the result of a retained nominal construction; the copula does, historically, agree with the *nomen actionis* and is optional because the copula generally is in Armenian and many other Indo-European languages.

¹⁵ Exhaustive discussions of this construction can be found in Haig (2008:23–88) and Jügel (2015).

¹⁶ GEN and DAT are morphologically indistinguishable in Armenian except in pronouns. The perfect must construe with GEN, however, since it never occurs with a DAT pronoun.

¹⁷ ‘a possessive expression built in Armenian itself on an idiomatic model in order to express that which seemingly was the sense of the transitive perfect.’

¹⁸ See (12)–(13). The proposal that GEN is ‘préférée parce qu’elle faisait mieux ressortir le rapport d’antériorité’ [‘preferred because it better brought to light the anteriority relation’] (Benveniste 1959: 63) is ad hoc and lacks any reasoning.

Finally, Benveniste does not take into account that the copula is an innovation and unlikely to have been a part of the original construction, as evidenced by its overwhelming absence in the earliest texts.¹⁹

9.3.3 Schmidt and the prototypical genitive agent

Since the role of GEN as the case marking A is pivotal in the discussion of the origin of the split alignment in Classical Armenian, the question whether GEN may simply be a prototypical agent case is worth asking. Such a point was made by Schmidt (1963), pointing to a number of other Indo-European languages in which GEN fulfils such or similar functions when combined with verbal adjectives or participles, like for instance Latvian, Lithuanian, Vedic, and Tokharian.²⁰ He admits, however, that in each case this agentive function is a secondary development based on the original role of GEN with the nominal, non-finite forms of the verb (1963: 11). Hettrich (1990: 94, 97) adds that the use of GEN as an agent was originally restricted to qualifications of verbal adjectives with PASS force as evidenced by Vedic, Greek, and Old Persian data; it cannot be considered a separate function of that case, but is a manifestation of its basic appurtenative use, wherefore any agentive uses must have developed *einzelnsprachlich* and thus independently.²¹ Since even the closest comparandum to the Armenian construction, namely Tokharian verbal adjectives, has a different aetiology,²² the idea of a prototypically agentive GEN can be rejected.

¹⁹ Schmidt (1962: 231–232) elaborates on Benveniste's approach and does take into account the copula-less, appositive, or converbial use of the participle; he argues that the participle is 'primär unempfindlich gegen eine Diathesenunterscheidung [und] stimmt [darin] mit anderen armenischen ... Verbalnomina überein' ['fundamentally insensitive towards a diathesis opposition [and thereby] concurs with other Armenian ... verbal nouns'] and that, despite its passive origins, the construction derives its transitive use from the appositive, copula-less variant. This assumption is, however, unmotivated; if at all, a transitive reinterpretation could only arise from the 'have'-perfect use, and the argument runs the risk of becoming circular. For a more detailed discussion, see Meyer (2017: 116–117).

²⁰ For Latvian, see Endzelīns (1923: §774); for Tokharian, Thomas (1952); for Vedic, Jamison (1979: 133–137).

²¹ An earlier analysis by Jamison (1979: 133–137) corroborates Hettrich's position. Jamison shows convincingly that so-called agentive uses of GEN in Greek and Vedic are so marginal as to be virtually non-existent.

²² In Tokharian, the deontic verbal adjective in TA *-l*, TB *-lle/-lye* < PIE **-lo-*, like its Armenian counterpart, is used primarily as a passive, agreeing with its patient, while the agent is found in GEN (Thomas 1952: 19). The fact that the construction is largely passive, expresses a deontic modality, and that the Tokharian GEN has through syncretism taken on functions of the lost DAT (Zimmer: 1985: 568–569; Pinault 2008: 463, 2011: 383) suggests that there is no relation to the Armenian construction; in fact, closer comparanda can be found in the deontic constructions of other Indo-European languages, e.g. Hittite, Vedic, Avestan, Greek, and Latin (Luraghi 1995: 262; Hettrich 1990: 64–66).

9.3.4 Lohmann and contact with languages of the Caucasus

The proposal that the construction of the Armenian perfect should be due to contact with other languages of the Caucasus, many of which have or had ergative alignment, goes back to Meillet who suggests that the Armenian construction ‘rapelle [...] le “caractère passif du transitif dans les langues du Caucase”’ (1899–1900: 385).²³ Despite clear and convincing refutations by Deeters (1927), who makes the point that constructions with neither agent nor patient in NOM are equally unusual in Caucasian languages, this line of argumentation was further pursued by Lohmann (1937). The latter adopts Meillet’s historical analysis of the construction (see Section 9.3.1) and seeks to explain the ACC object as the equivalent of NOM in the Kartvelian transitive perfect constructions (effectively ABS in ergative alignment; 1937: 53). The agent expressed by GEN in Armenian is analogous to the Kartvelian DAT–ACC; since Armenian does not distinguish GEN and DAT consistently, Lohmann believes the DAT functions to be sufficient for, in modern terms, polysemy copying.²⁴ This comparison with the Kartvelian ergative construction and the suggestion of a historical link with the Armenian construction have also been advocated by Tumanyan (1974).

The suggestion is, however, untenable. The contact situation between Armenian and other languages of the Caucasus except Greek and the West Middle Iranian languages was not sufficiently well developed to result in such significant changes: morphological and syntactic borrowings are not found; lexical borrowings are not numerous, and even they have been called into question recently.²⁵

9.3.5 Stempel and analogical shift

An entirely different approach is presented by Stempel, who rejects the attempts outlined above for similar reasons. Together with Benveniste and Schmidt, Stempel assumes that the perfect construction arose from an earlier passive construction of the type **nora gorceal ē gorc* ‘the deed was done by him’, where *gorc* ‘deed’ is the clausal subject; according to Stempel, this initial stage fits best with the intransitive-passive and adjectival nature of the *-eal* participle (1983: 83). Instead of the possessive explanation of Benveniste, Stempel provides an ‘innerarmenisches Motiv’ for the diathetic shift from passive to active.

²³ ‘is reminiscent of [...] the “passive character of the transitive in the languages of the Caucasus”’.

²⁴ For the term polysemy copying, see note 28 below and Matras and Sakel (2007: 852), Heine and Kuteva (2005: 100), Heine (2012).

²⁵ Deeters (1927: 111–114) and Vogt (1938) present some findings, suggesting that the pre-literary contact between the Kartvelian languages and Armenian was not comparable in degree to the latter’s contact with Iranian languages or Greek. Even the elements listed there are, however, problematic (Gippert 2005: 153–155).

Under the assumption that the participle is originally intransitive-passive, he proposes that, at least initially, the perfect only existed in a passive sense (1983: 84). He explains the GEN agent as inherited from the proto-language, comparable to similar usages in Tokharian, Lithuanian, and in remnants of Greek. Since the agent in passive constructions was otherwise expressed by *i* + ABL, the advent of the perfect passive led to the coexistence of two types of agent marking in that tense.

It is at this point that Stempel suggests an analogical shift: the coexistence in the perfect passive of two possibilities of marking the agent taken together with the system pressure exerted by the synthetic tenses, in which an active diathesis existed next to the passive, left open the possibility of one of the two agent-marking patterns being reanalysed. He suggests that the original perfect passive construction **nora gorceal ē gorc*, whose function was now performed by the more common *i* + ABL agentive expression, was reinterpreted as an active according to the pattern illustrated in Table 9.4.

While the perfect had thus acquired an active diathesis as well, the participle itself had not yet followed suit. Further steps were required to arrive at the attested grammatical *status quo*: in the new perfect active, the former grammatical subject in NOM had to be reanalysed as the logical object in ACC, a process simplified by the identity of NOM and ACC in the singular of nouns and most pronouns. Subsequently, any potential congruence in number marking between former subject and participle was likely eliminated; since adjectives preceding their head nouns do not normally agree with the latter in Armenian anyway, and only optionally do so when following them, this pattern may have been adopted for postposed predicative adjectives, too (Stempel 1983:85). In a final analogical step, and owing to the reinterpretation of NOM subject as ACC object, the latter could be marked by the definite object proclitic *z=*, as is frequently the case in all other tenses.

Table 9.4 Analogical shift explanation of morphosyntactic alignment in Classical Armenian (Stempel 1983)

| | ACT | PASS |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| AOR | <i>na gorceac'(z=)gorc</i> | <i>gorc gorcec'aw i nmanē</i> |
| PRF | ∅ | <i>gorc ē gorceal i nmanē</i> <i>*nora gorceal ē gorc</i> |
| ↓ analogical shift ↓ | | |
| | ACT | PASS |
| AOR | <i>na gorceac'(z=)gorc</i> | <i>gorc gorcec'aw i nmanē</i> |
| PRF | <i>nora gorceal ē (z=)gorc</i> | <i>gorc ē gorceal i nmanē</i> |

In the course of time, so Stempel, these processes allowed for an active interpretation of even attributively used participles, which in turn required the maintenance of a morphologically marked difference between active and passive participle, thus *PASS na teseal ē* 'he has been seen' vs *ACT nora teseal ē* 'he has seen [something]' (1983: 86).

Stempel's explanation cannot work, however. To begin with, it is based on the erroneous assumption that genitive agents are an inherited Indo-European feature; this has been rejected in Section 9.3.3. Second, the extent of the analogical remodelling proposed is implausible. While the reinterpretation of *NOM* subject as *ACC* object may have taken place as such, two questions arise: given that an alternative agent marking for *PASS* already existed, and that non-*NOM* subjects are not otherwise found in Armenian, why was the *GEN*-marked agent not simply lost? Similarly, why is the copula a fossilized 3.SG form, and only arises after the establishment of the perfect, as borne out by the earliest texts? As in the other explanations discussed, these questions remain unresolved.

9.4 A language contact approach

While none of the approaches outlined above wholly explain the development of the Armenian perfect to a satisfying degree, many partly plausible suggestions have been made. In what follows, a different approach is laid out which aims to answer the four questions posed at the end of Section 9.2.

The background of this approach is the firmly established contact relationship between Armenian and the West Middle Iranian languages, particularly Parthian, which is the result of extended Iranian rule over the Armenian kingdom and finds its most well-known and patent expression in the great number of Iranian lexical loans in Armenian.²⁶ Furthermore, extralinguistic as well as linguistic evidence strongly speaks in favour of this contact situation having been strong enough as to have gone beyond lexical influence and having an impact on Armenian syntax as well.²⁷

With this in mind, an Iranian origin of the Armenian perfect construction must be considered. The West Middle Iranian languages also show *TSA*, with the tenses

²⁶ For an overview, see Schmitt (1983), Meyer (forthcoming (a)); a more thorough, though dated discussion can be found in Bolognesi (1960).

²⁷ In particular, this refers to the strong social ties between the Arsacid Parthian rulers of Armenia and the nobility otherwise in charge of the region. These close relationships find an expression in Iranian–Armenian intermarriage and tutelage of young nobles in other families; the Christianization of the Iranian rulers together with their Armenian subjects; and frequent political and military struggles with the Sasanian neighbours. A more detailed treatment of this question and of other Armenian syntagmata replicated on the basis of Iranian models can be found in Meyer (2017: 295–339), Meyer (2022).

based on the present stem aligning NOM-ACC, whereas the participle-based tenses show ERG-ABS alignment.²⁸ Examples (16)–(19) illustrate this briefly.

- (16) PRS, explicit A and O
 'w 'm'h hrw'yn bwxtqyft wynd'm
 CONJ 1.PL all salvation seek.1.PL.SBJV
 'And we all shall seek salvation.' (BBB 302–303; Parthian)

- (17) PRS, explicit A, O enclitic
 ky=m wys'h'h 'c hrwyn gryhcg w
 INTERROG=1.SG.OBL liberate.3.SG.SBJV from all abyss and
 zynd'n
 prison
 'Who will free me from all [these] abysses and prisons ...?'
 (H/IVa/1a = Durkin-Meisterernst 2014: 292)

- (18) PST, copula with S-agreement; A as enclitic, copula with O-agreement,
 O marked DIR
 qd tw 'br sd 'yy 'w=t 'z
 when 2.SG up ascend.PTCP be.2SG.PRS CONJ=2.SG.OBL 1.SG.DIR
 hyšt hym syywg
 leave.PTCP be.1.SG.PRS orphan
 'When you ascended and left me [as] an orphan ...'
 (M42/R/i/14–16 = Durkin-Meisterernst 2014: 394)

- (19) PST, A as enclitic, O in 3.SG, no copula
 kw 'ym, cy=m 'c Tw wx'st, 'w mn
 COMP DEM REL=1.SG.OBL from 2.SG request.PTCP to 1.SG.OBL
 w'c'h
 say.2.SG.SBJV
 'That which I requested from you, may you tell me [it]!' (MKG 1610–1611)

When comparing the West Middle Iranian PST to the Armenian PRF, however, there are a number of notable differences: the copula agrees in person and number with o, except in 3.SG where it is absent;²⁹ West Middle Iranian has lost most of its case morphology, and with the exception of 1.SG pronouns and clitic pronouns for all persons, constituent function is derived from word order; the alignment of the

²⁸ The nominal morphology of West Middle Iranian is very limited: a case distinction is only made in the 1.SG pronoun and, in early sources, in some kinship terms (Skjærvø 1983: 49, 176); enclitic pronouns, when used, only code OBL functions, i.e. O and A as well as possessive marking. The standard constituent order is SOV.

²⁹ The absence of the 3.SG copula applies only to PST, where the copula would be a PRS form of 'h 'to be'; in the PLPF, a PST copula or auxiliary in 3.SG can occur (Durkin-Meisterernst 2014: 246–247, 376–377).

West Middle Iranian PST is ERG–ABS, with S=O. How, then, can this situation be related to the tripartite alignment pattern of Classical Armenian presented above?

As the data suggest, the tripartite pattern is a secondary development of a previous, less clearly attested ERG–ABS alignment in Armenian, too; see (15). At first, it is this alignment pattern which Armenian imitates, likely by extending the usage of the participle beyond its basic attributive use, copying the usage of the West Middle Iranian participle. Examples (20)–(21) illustrate this usage in both languages.³⁰

(20) Attributive PTCP in Armenian

ant'erc'uack' [ēin] surb groc' katareal
 lesson.NOM.PL be.3.PL.PST holy scripture.GEN.PL complete.PTCP
uraxut'iwnk'
 happiness.NOM.PL
 'The lessons in holy scripture were supreme happiness.' (Eġ. 125)

(21) Attributive PTCP in Parthian

hrw 'st'r 'ndryn 'wd b'yn 'ndyš'd w'xt 'wd
 each sin internal and external think.PTCP speak.PTCP and
qyrd cy myhg'r
 do.PTCP INTERR damage
 'Each sin, external and internal, thought, spoken, and done [entails] what damage?' (HLS 284–287)

The ensuing process of pivot matching, in which the functions of the key components of the model construction (the West Middle Iranian PST) are mapped onto Armenian counterparts,³¹ accordingly needs to find appropriate expressions for the involved constituents and the copula. The initial matching of S and O, where the Pth. DIR is mapped onto the Arm. NOM, is trivial; as regards the marking of A, however, the mapping of Pth. OBL onto Arm. GEN is not immediately obvious. It stands to reason, however, that in another case of polysemy copying, it was the Pth. OBL enclitic pronouns which made the Arm. GEN the obvious choice; the former frequently occur as A, but are also used for marking possessive and appurtenative relationships, like the Arm. GEN.³² This possessive function is shown in (22).

³⁰ Jügel (2015: 273–274).

³¹ Particularly in bilingual speakers, syntagmata can be copied in a language-processing mechanism which identifies 'a structure that plays a pivotal role in the model construction, and matching it with a structure in the replica language, to which a similar, pivotal role is assigned in a new, replica construction' (Matras and Sakel 2007: 830). This process is called pivot-matching; the resulting replica constructions do not usually involve borrowing of lexical items at the same time (Matras 2009: 26–27). It relies on another process termed polysemy (or polyfunctionality) copying, in which the bilingual identifies an element in the replica language that shares some semantic or functional features with a pivot element in the model language and extends (or 'copies') some or all of the model language features onto the replica element.

³² Given the absence of morphological distinction in the WMIR. nominal system, the pronominal system is the logical locus for polysemy copying. The choice of GEN, beyond the reason mentioned here, is surely also structurally motivated: large-scale isomorphism in the Arm. oblique cases results in the

- (22) Parthian enclitic pronoun expresses possession

gy'n=wm j'm 'w whyšt 'nwšg
 soul=1.SG lead.IMP to paradise immortal
 'Lead my soul to immortal Paradise!' (MMiii 887)

The copula is a different matter. Given that in the earliest sources, the copula is still a relatively uncommon occurrence, it must be assumed that its increasing presence is an Armenian innovation. The West Middle Iranian model, then, is likely the 3.SG in which the copula is not found anyway; this also goes to explain why, when the copula is introduced later, it exhibits a different agreement pattern than its model.

The rise of the copula and its Ø-agreement in transitive expressions is likely the result of system pressure from the synthetic tenses, in which all verbs are finite and marked for person and number. This does not pose a problem for the intransitive PRF, where S-agreement is readily marked since S is expressed by NOM. In the transitive PRF, however, where A is marked by GEN, agreement does not appear to be licensed and the copula defaults to the 3.SG;³³ this kind of behaviour can be observed in other languages undergoing similar alignment changes, too, which lends further credence to this suggestion.³⁴

These are the mechanisms most likely at play leading to the replication of the West Middle Iranian PST alignment pattern in Armenian and to the development of a fossilized 3.SG copula. This accounts for the right-most column in Table 9.3. To account for the tripartite alignment pattern, however, one further step of reanalysis is required.

As pointed out in Table 9.1, the voice distinction in Classical Armenian is inconsistent; only *-em* verbs show separate synthetic MP forms outside the AOR. This, in turn, results in ambiguities: *hehu* (3.SG.PRS.IND) can be read as ACT 'he/she/it pours (transitive); it flows (intransitive)', but equally as MP 'it is poured'. This inconsistency has been afforded great importance by some scholars in the question of the diachronic development of morphosyntactic alignment in Armenian, as detailed in Section 9.3.

Table 9.2 illustrates that there is considerable isomorphy between NOM and ACC in Armenian, particularly in the SG. Since O is marked as ACC in the synthetic

undifferentiability of, e.g. GEN, DAT, and often ABL and their associated functions (e.g. appurtenance, recipient, origin marking). The exceptions are the majority of instances of GEN in the pronominal system (all personal pronouns; SG of demonstratives, etc.), which exhibit different forms. Therefore, the choice of GEN is motivated not only by functional equivalence with its Pth. model, but by unambiguous and economic coding of grammatical functions as well.

³³ It is worth noting that even in the non-standard patterns mentioned above (where unexpectedly S=GEN or A=NOM), copula agreement with either A or O did not arise. The fossilized 3.SG copula appears to be an Armenian-internal development, with incidence rising sharply in the course of the fifth century (Meyer 2017: 185–189). Were a model like that of Benveniste to be correct (see Section 9.3.2), traces of O-agreement with plural objects might be expected and a greater initial incidence, if not obligatoriness, of the copula.

³⁴ See Pirejko (1966) and Payne (1979: 442) on Talyši, Comrie (1978: 342) on Dănesfăni, Anand, and Nevins (2006: 7) on Hindi.

tenses, a reanalysis in the PRF of O as being marked ACC rather than NOM is not difficult to imagine, particularly if taking into account the role of the proclitic *z=* in marking definite O.

This situation prevails for the majority of the history of Classical Armenian; as pointed out above (see (12)–(13)), the grammaticalization process behind the establishment and later ousting of the tripartite alignment pattern is evidenced already in certain early uses not conforming to the perceived standard, thus e.g. NOM-marked A or GEN-marked S; these alternative constructions indicate that the split-alignment system strove to normalize the NOM–ACC alignment of the synthetic tenses, no matter which case took S=A function; system pressure resulted in NOM winning over GEN. The statistical data gleaned from a corpus analysis shows that the NOM-marked A rises significantly already over the course of the fifth century (Meyer 2017: 182–184); by the end of the eighth century, NOM–ACC alignment has been established, though in more elevated literature, some remnants of the old construction still crop up owing to literary imitation.

9.5 Morphosyntactic alignment in Medieval and Modern Armenian

After the loss of the split-alignment system as outlined above, the NOM–ACC alignment of post-classical Armenian has remained stable throughout the Middle Ages in all variants of the language. The Armenian verbal system, however, and to a lesser extent the nominal system have undergone significant morphological and, subsequently syntactic, changes.³⁵

Both major variants of modern Armenian—Modern Eastern Armenian as spoken in the Republic of Armenia and Modern Western Armenian as spoken in the diaspora³⁶—have developed a highly analytical verbal system with few synthetic forms remaining.³⁷ As an example, consider the development of the PRS as outlined in Table 9.5.

³⁵ There is next to no literature on the linguistic changes in Middle Armenian; the standard reference remains Karst (1901).

³⁶ Owing to the nature of the diaspora, Modern Western Armenian is pluricentric and for a large number of speakers a heritage language, a linguistically unified description of which is difficult to achieve; cf. Chahinian and Balakian (2016). For a map and general description of dialect distinctions prior to the emergence of the modern diaspora in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Adjarian (1909); for a more general and modern discussion of Armenian dialects, see Greppin and Khachaturian (1986).

³⁷ Most verbal forms are composed of a non-finite form of the lexical verb and a finite form of an auxiliary; the remaining synthetic forms are found in AOR, (dynamic) SBJV, (dynamic) COND, and IMP (in the terms of Dum-Tragut 2009: 214–277).

Table 9.5 Diachronic development of the Armenian PRS as seen in the 1.SG.ACT of *grem* ‘I write’

| Classical Arm. | Early MArm. | Late MArm. | MEA | MWA |
|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>grem</i> IND → | <i>grem</i> IND/SBJV → | <i>grem</i> SBJV → | <i>grem</i> SBJV | <i>grem</i> ~ SBJV |
| | ↳ ↑ | <i>ku grem</i> IND → | <i>kgrem</i> COND/FUT | <i>kə grem</i> ≠ IND |
| | (modal particle) | ↑ (PTCP periphrasis) | <i>grum em</i> IND | |

Next to these changes, modern Armenian has developed a standard, unmarked constituent order, SOV; this order can, however, be altered for pragmatic reasons, e.g. to emphasize one specific constituent;³⁸ particularly with O_{+DEF}, the order SVO is similarly very common (Dum-Tragut 2009: 562). S and O continue to be expressed as NOM and ACC, respectively; as in Classical Armenian, these two cases are morphologically identical in the nominal system but have different expressions in the pronouns.³⁹ Owing to its greater uniformity and better linguistic description, only Modern Eastern Armenian will be discussed in what follows. It is worth noting that, like Classical Armenian, neither S nor A need not be expressed explicitly if they can be inferred from context (pro-drop).

The following examples illustrate this alignment pattern: (23) intransitive; (24) transitive; (25–27) PASS without agent, with agent, and with instrumental expression, respectively.

(23) intransitive ACT

aysōr, uriš hogsī ařjew enk’:
today another concern.GEN.SG before be.1.PL.PRS.IND

sočiner=n en č’oranum.
pine.NOM.PL=DET be.3.PL.PRS.IND wither.IPFV.PTCP

‘Today, we are faced with another concern: the pines are drying up.’

(*Arawōt*, 08/06/2002)⁴⁰

³⁸ Compare, for instance, *es namakə greč’i* ‘I wrote the letter’ (SOV, unmarked) vs *es greč’i namakə* ‘It is I who write the letter’ (SVO, marked); Dum-Tragut (2009: 555–644).

³⁹ The standard grammar of Modern Eastern Armenian (Dum-Tragut 2009) does not operate with a category ACC for the nominal system. Instead, it differentiates O into NOM objects [-human, -definite] and DAT objects [+human, +definite]; cf. the situation in Spanish *He visto el libro* [-human] vs *He visto a Juan* [+human]. At the same time, the pronominal system retains a category ACC which is formally identical to DAT. For the purpose of this chapter, any O with the feature [-human] will be glossed as ACC in continuation of the practice found in Classical Armenian.

⁴⁰ Where not otherwise specified, the Modern Eastern Armenian examples are taken from the Eastern Armenian National Corpus (EANC), www.eanc.net.

(24) transitive ACT

ir *herťin* *K'ank'anyan=a* *vrdovvac*
 LOG.GEN.SG turn.DAT.SG PN.NOM.SG=DEF outrage.RES.PTCP
namak *ē* *grum.*
 letter.ACC.SG be.3.SG.PRS.IND write.IPFV.PTCP

'In turn, K'ank'anya writes an outraged letter.'

(Harut'yunyan and Melik'yan, *Cicalum en vanic'nera*, 2006)

(25) PASS, no agentive expression

ayo, *petk'ē* *uraxanal*, *or* *karmir* *lenter*
 yes it-is-necessary be-happy.PRS.INF COMP red lens.NOM.PL
en *ktrvum.*
 be.3.PL.PRS.IND cut.IPFV.PASS.PTCP

'Yes, one can be glad that red lenses are cut.'

(*Arawōt*, 05/12/2002)

(26) PASS, with agentive expression

verjini=s *ordi=n* [...] *spanvel*
 latter.GEN.SG=DET son.NOM.SG=DET kill.PF.PASS.PTCP
ē *erku* *ambastanyalneri* *kolmic'*
 be.3.SG.PRS.IND two defendant.GEN.PL side.ABL.SG

'The son of the latter was killed by the two defendants.'

(*Arawōt*, 16/01/2003)

(27) PASS, with instrumental expression

spanut'yun=n *irakanac'vel* *ēr*
 murder.NOM.SG=DET carry-out.PF.PASS.PTCP be.3.SG.PST.IND
danakov
 knife.INS.SG

'The murder was carried out with a knife'

(*Arawōt*, 29/07/2003)

Like Modern English, then, the alignment of Modern Armenian is largely direct/neutral from the perspective of nominal morphology and its usage, but word order, verb agreement, and pronominal morphology evidence that NOM-ACC is a more accurate description from a morphosyntactic perspective.⁴¹

Similarly, like many other languages, Armenian makes an animacy-based differentiation in the optional argument found with PASS predicates: animate agents are marked by a postpositional phrase (GEN + *kolmic'*), while inanimate instruments are expressed as NPs in INS.⁴²

As mentioned above, however, pragmatic considerations and definiteness can affect word order. The resulting variants, largely SVO or OVS, may be caused by

⁴¹ Compare the similar situation in Classical Armenian, briefly discussed at the end of Section 9.2.

⁴² Particularly with affective verbs, this postpositional phrase can often be replaced by an NP in ABL of the agent (Dum-Tragut 2009: 94).

dislocating O_{+DEF}, 'heavy' O_{-DEF}, or indeed pragmatically marked S—to name but a few—to the right. These scenarios are exemplified in (28)–(30).

- (28) SVO, O_{+DEF}
na tesel ē miayn žołovrdi
3.NOM.SG see.PF.PTCP be.3.SG.PRS.IND only people.GEN.SG
storac'um=ə
humiliation.ACC.SG=DET
 'He saw only the humiliation of [his] people.'
 (Sovetakan dproc', 17/02/1956)

- (29) SVO, 'heavy' O_{-DEF}
es kardac'el em erku gorc
1.NOM.SG read.PF.PTCP be.1.SG.PRS.IND two work.ACC.SG
orok' šat hetak'rk'rakan ēin
 REL.NOM.PL very interesting be.3.PL.PST.IND
 'I have read two pieces which were very interesting.' (Azg, 11/12/2004)

- (30) VS, emphasizing S
Moskvayum loys ē tesel
 MOSCOW.LOC.SG light.ACC.SG be.3.SG.PRS.IND see.PF.PTCP
Karen Brutenc'i nor girk'=ə
 PN.GEN.SG new **book.NOM.SG=DET**
 'In Moscow, Karen Brutenc's new book has appeared.' (Azg, 19/05/2006)

In (30), VS word order is presumably the result of the topicalization of the subject, which continues to be of relevance for the ensuing paragraph.

Beyond matters of word order changes, the only further complication in constituent marking lies in the so-called partitive subject, which is marked by ABL. These partitive subjects only occur with passive verbs, only refer to non-human actants, and denote that 'the action is only carried out on one part, or partially [on] this grammatical subject' (Dum-Tragut 2009: 313).⁴³ An example is provided in (31):

- (31) partitive S
Radijov he'arjakvum ēin
 radio.INS.SG broadcast.IPFV.PASS.PTCP be.3.PL.PST.IND
Hovhannes T'umanyani patmvack'neric'
 PN.GEN.SG **story.ABL.PL**
 'On the radio, [some] of Hovhannes T'umanyan's stories were being broadcast.'
 (see Dum-Tragut 2009: 313)

⁴³ See further Abrahamyan (2004: 40), Papoyan and Badikyan (2003: 142–143).

Since this type of expression is highly constrained, the question arises whether it does indeed represent an independent subject category, or is just an instantiation of the very common partitive ABL. Given that Armenian is a pro-drop language, this ABL could be interpreted as depending on a \emptyset head, an implied indefinite quantifier. While further studies are necessary, native speaker grammaticality judgements suggest that the ABL does not pass subjecthood tests.

Overall, the morphosyntactic alignment of Modern Eastern Armenian is an interesting example of NOM-ACC alignment with certain complications owing to the role definiteness and animacy play in the case assignment of O.⁴⁴ Given that syntactic function is expressed by a combination of morphological case marking and constituent order, however, no systematic ambiguity arises, nor is a different interpretation of this alignment possible.

9.6 Conclusions

The development of morphosyntactic alignment in the history of Armenian is uncomplicated for the most part, as NOM-ACC dominated for most of its existence and in the majority of tenses. The Classical Armenian periphrastic perfect stands alone, showing tripartite alignment for at least the beginning of the attested history of this language, but is eventually ousted in favour of NOM-ACC alignment towards the end of the classical period. Its preliterary history and genesis has been the topic of a hundred-year-long debate, during which a great number of solutions internal and external to this language have been proposed.

The approach advocated here, based on the well-attested, extensive, and prolific contact between Classical Armenian and the West Middle Iranian languages, chief among which Parthian, suggests that the tripartite alignment of the periphrastic perfect is the result of a grammaticalization process which started with the replication of the Parthian ERG-ABS aligned past tense. This participle-based tense, through pivot matching and polysemy copying, was replicated in Armenian with the participle in *-eal* and a GEN agent; the reanalysis of the original nominative object as accusative resulted in part from the large-scale isomorphy between those cases as well as from system pressure from the synthetic tenses. The introduction and later quasi-obligatorification of a fossilized 3.SG copula with \emptyset -agreement is an Armenian-internal development.

The eventual loss of tripartite in favour of NOM-ACC alignment is caused once more by system pressure, since the identity of S and A prevails in the synthetic tenses, and even in the perfect the subject of intransitive verbs is marked as

⁴⁴ As indicated above, on the morphological level there is a split between the nominal (direct/neutral alignment) and pronominal (NOM-ACC alignment) system. The main reason to consider the alignment system on the whole NOM-ACC lies in the morphosyntax, since verb agreement is consistently with S=A and constituent order also clearly separates S=A from O.

NOM. Once this transition was concluded, the alignment pattern of Armenian has remained stable even though its verbal morphology and constituent order rules have undergone significant changes.

While the prehistory and early stages of alignment in Armenian have been documented and investigated thoroughly, the later transition period between Classical and Middle Armenian, and thus between the two alignment types, remains a subject further enquiry into which should prove fruitful.

Acknowledgements

The research on which most of this chapter is based was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, for whose support I am very grateful. I also owe thanks to the anonymous reviewers for their keen eyes and constructive comments; all errors and omissions are, of course, mine.

Abbreviations of primary sources

- Ag. Ter-Mkrtč'ean and Kanayeanč'(1909)
- BBB Henning (1937)
- Eł. Thomson (1993)
- HLS Durkin-Meisterernst (2006)
- Kor. Mat'evosyan (1994)
- MKG Sundermann (1981)
- MMiii Andreas and Henning (1934)
- PB Garsoïan (1984)