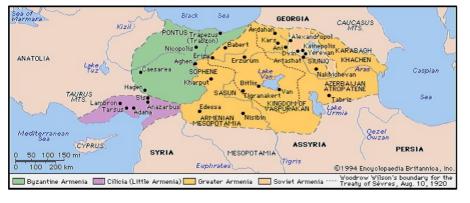# SYNTAX OF THE PERFECT IN CLASSICAL ARMENIAN

PhD Program in Historical Linguistics and History of the italian Language - 27th cycle

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Map legend: Byzantine Armenia | Cilicia (Little Armenia) | Greater Armenia | Soviet Armenia — Woodrow Wilson's boundary for the Treaty of Sèvres, Aug. 10, 1920. ©1994 Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.

INTRODUCTION

In classical Armenian, within a nominative-accusative system, a small section of the verbal system shows a costruction with genitive-marked subject.

According to Meillet and Benveniste (1952) this structure develops from a possessive construction.

Conversely, more recent studies (starting from Comrie, 1981b) explain this feature as a split in the alignment system, even if not unanimously.

SYNTAX OF THE PERFECT IN CLASSICAL ARMENIAN

In classical Armenian the perfect and the other compound tenses show a construction with a genitive-marked subject: they are verbal phrases with past participle and present/imperfect/present subjunctive tenses of the copula.

According with grammarians, the classical language shows the genitive subject only in transitive clauses (1), whereas the intransitives have, as usual in Armenian, nominative subjects (2). Only in transitive clauses the copula is always in a default third person singular form.

The same distribution is found when the participle is used without the copula as the main verb in a narrative mood.

1. "...who suddenly found somewhere the letters of Armenian language" (Koriwn, VI. 20, 329)

...oroy	yankarc	owremn	gteal	ēr
...who GEN	suddenly	somewhere	find PST PTCP	be IMPF 3° SG
nšanagirs	**ałpʻabetacʻ**	**hayerēn**	**lezowi**	
letters ACC	alphabet GEN	armenian	language GEN	

2. "Who had come with them" (Agath. 199, 2)

Or	ənd	nosa	ekeal	ēin
Who NOM	with	them	come PST PTCP	be IMPF 3° PL

AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

• Selection of an appropriate corpus (no translation literature).

• Analysis of the distribution of genitive and nominative subjects within transitive, intransitive and passive sentences. Two distinct analysis will be focused on sentences with compound tenses and on sentences with the only participle.

• Survey of the coding and the behavioural properties of the core arguments in classical Armenian.

• Formulation of a historical internal hypothesis for this linguistic feature together with further possible observations in a comparative perspective.

RESEARCH STATE OF PROGRESS

• Corpus selection: historical narrative of V-VI sec.

• The participle used without the copula with narrative mood appears in the corpus more often than the perfect and the other compound tenses; furthermore, the passive clauses show exclusively the construction withnominative-marked subject.

• Koriwn, *Life of Mesrop* shows a use rather close to that one described from the normative grammars, with the only exception that the construction with genitive-marked subject is sometimes used with the intransitives (especially with motion verbs).

• Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians* and Pʼawstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians:* the two structures co-occur both with transitive and intranstive sentences.

• Currently in progress: survey of Łazar Pʼarpecʼi, *History of the Armenians*.

MAIN REFERENCES

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