Have and Be in Armenian
Bert Vaux
Harvard University
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1. Introduction

Benveniste 1952: “transitive perfect” : possession
nora e gortseal nora e handerdz
3sg.gen be.3sg do-ppl. 3sg.gen be.3sg garment
’she has done/accomplished’ ‘she has a garment’

Today’s Points:
1. The possession analysis of the transitive perfect was already known by the Armenian monks in Vienna by 1866.
2. More concrete evidence for the possession analysis occurs in Koriwn, Middle Armenian, and at least two modern dialects, which use lexical ‘have’ to form the perfect with “transitive” verbs.
3. These perfect constructions actually distinguish unaccusatives and passives (which select ‘be’) from transitives and unergatives (which select ‘have’).
4. The distinction between two classes of intransitive verbs—unaccusative and unergative—shows up in several other situations in Armenian.

2. Indo-European Background
unim ‘have’

• Has an Indo-European history (*h₁öp-ne- ‘obtain’; cf. Skt. ṣāṃyati ‘obtains’ (Meillet 1929), Latin opes ‘wealth, possessions’, Hittite habbanant- ‘rich’)
• Odd infinitive—unenal (first appears in Middle Armenian, apparently)
• Takes accusative object, yet belongs to -i- conjugation (normally associated with intransitives)
• Suppletive: the aorist stem is kal- (cf. kal-uats ‘possession, property’; cf. also Karabagh (Vank) ink-kal- ‘own’, literally ‘self-have’; cf. English my own book…)
• Has a related derivative and-unim ‘receive’ (and- ‘to’)
• Its descendant in one of the modern Karabagh dialects selects a dative subject and first-person verb agreement: indz onem ‘I have’ (literally 1sg.DAT have-1sg), etc (Grigorjan 1957:262)

3. The “Transitive Perfect”
3.1. Classical Armenian
(1) Some examples of Classical Armenian perfects
a. transitive with auxiliary ‘be’
   oťf iš: ašešqal ašer zar arar dawiṫ
   neg be.sj read.ppl 2pl.gen acc.rel did David
   ‘have you not read what David did?’ (Matthew 12:3)

b. transitive without auxiliary
   ew noša t̄ešqal wašvawaki zgortišn gnatišin zhet nora
   and 3pl.gen leave.ppl immediately acc.net.accpl.def went after 3sg.gen
   ‘and they immediately left their nets and went after him’ (Matthew 4:20)

c. intransitive with auxiliary
   zi oťf e’re mešqal e ašdjikl ažl nnše
   for neg that die.ppl be.3sg girl 2 but sleep.3sg
   ‘for the girl is not dead, but is sleeping’ (Matthew 9:24)

d. intransitive without auxiliary
   ew mašqšal ašir mi aše š̄na
   and approach.ppl scribe one say.3sg to.3sg.acc
   ‘and a scribe came up and said to him…’ (Matthew 8:19)

• N.B. the auxiliary verb does not agree with the subject in person or number in transitive constructions of types (1a-b); in these cases, the verb is 3d singular.
• Benveniste’s analysis was influential, being adopted by Kayne 1993, for example.
• However, the same analysis was already made by Ajtanean 1866 and T’Jalayeian 1886.

(2) T’Jalayeian 1886:159
“We saw above that compound tenses are formed with the forms of ‘be’ e ‘is’, er ‘was’, iš: ‘will be’ and a genitive [subject]: gortšeqal e im, iš: k’o teseal, ašeqal iš: nora, etc… The correct translation of these is gortšeqats tʃ’unim / ɪbli’diyim yoq ‘I haven’t done’, tesats unis / görduyün var m[F ‘have you seen’?], because e im, e k’o mean unim ‘I have’, unis ‘you have’ [respectively].”

3.2. Support for the Possessive Theory
There are at least two bits of evidence that possibly support the possessive theory of the transitive perfect.
1. Consider the formation of the present progressive in the Christian Hamshen dialect (Afjar jan 1947:140-1):
   1. with ‘have’: b'erim guni ‘I am carrying’, etc. (carry-1sg imperfv-have-3sg)
   2. (old Janiktsis) Nom. subject. and 3sg verb: jes eguf æ, etc.
   3. (young Janiktsis) possessive pronoun + 3sg verb: ims eguf æ, etc.
2. Perfect forms which use a nominative subject + the perfect participle + forms of unim ‘have’ occur in Classical, Middle, and Modern Armenian.

   (3) sojin arrinak ew amenajn girkʰ hoge patrikʰ nfanakeal unim zkʰ adzurʰ iams amenajn zarafʰ
      ‘this exemplar and all divinely-narrated books have noted the brave deeds of all the soldiers’ (Koriwn, page 9 of Venice 1894 edition)

(4) Aytonean 1866:2:96-97:
   “[In some varieties of Modern Armenian] the verb unim ['have'] also builds witnessed and non-witnessed perfects with the –ats participle: tesats tʃ'funim ['I haven't seen'], disats unis ['have you noticed?'], ajntʃapʰ tʃ'nametʃ's demn etats tʃ'fun in ['they hadn't faced such enemies']. These perfects indicate that it never happened/was, and generally are used interrogatively or negatively.”

   “[Middle Armenian also formed perfects with the –adz participle + unim:] zkʰ asakʰ' aɾats unei in ‘they had taken the city’, i nerkʰ se pahats unı ‘he has kept [it] inside’.”

   “This also existed in the Classical language: aɾeal unim ['I have taken'], and especially in the very frequent forms e im teseal ['I have seen'], tʃ'ikʰ im teseal ['I haven't seen'], i tʃ'še kʰ o teseal ['you will have seen'], which is the same as in Modern Armenian and Turkish. The modern European languages seem to parallel our 12th-century language, using have with transitive verbs and be with intransitives and middles.”

Karst 1901:373—the –adz participle also appears with unim, e.g. Smpad’s Chronik zkʰ asakʰ’ aɾac unęi in ‘they had taken the city’ (Dulaurier 650). Aytonean (II 97) linked this to the western European possessive + preterite participle construction. This must not have been a normal tense in Middle Armenian, because it is foreign in Modern Armenian.

(5) In Xotorjur, all transitive verbs take unim ‘have’ instead of em ‘be’ to form periphrastic tenses (Hulunean and Haf’jan 1964:408; they add (p. 409) that many dialects use unim in this way):

   a. PERFECT  kerats unim  ‘I have eaten’
   PLUPERFECT kerats unei  ‘I would have eaten’
            kerats piti unenam
kerats piti unenaji
kerats unenam
kerats unenaji

b. majs tsaj berats uni
‘my mother has born (lit. ‘carried’) a boy’
gosejn erku mard spanats unein
‘the thieves had killed two men’
dukʰ orʃintʃ imats ʧunikʰ
‘you haven’t learned anything’
menkʰ lsats unenankʰ piti
‘we should have listened’

c. All “intransitive” and “middle” verbs select ‘be’ instead (acc. to H and H 1964):

wen kʰun erats a
‘the boy was sleeping/asleep’ (unergative!!)

kovn korats er
‘the cow was lost’

orʃţajn gnuats er
‘the sheep was found’ (passive)

(5) Atfajjan 1947:144-45—[Christian] Hamshen normally forms the perfect, etc. with unim ‘have’: tʃonadz unim ‘I have strewn’ etc. However, all of his examples are transitive verbs.

(6) Baribjan 1953:402, Grigorjan 1957:422—In Hamshen the perfect tenses are formed with the perfect participle and [im or] unim (they state that both auxiliaries are possible for each verb)

(7) Dumezil 1963:15—Muslim Hamshen also uses the perfect tense (passé composé) with ‘have’, but only with transitive verbs:

kiadz unim ‘I’ve written’, etc.

3.3. Transitive/Intransitive, or Unaccusative/Everything Else?

Two kinds of intransitive verbs:

Unergative (SV): often have agentive argument, shows protagonist control, internal causation; take ‘have’ in perfect in Basque, Italian, French, Dutch, etc.
dine, golf, work, telephone, sleep, shine, laugh, bleed, smile, quarrel, travel, joke, chat, bark, dance, sing, emission verbs (ring, flare, groan, creak, gurgle, shine, sparkle, stink, boil, bubble), cough, shiver, snore, tremble, yawn, lie (down), sit, kneel, stand, shout, yell...

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Unaccusative (VO): movement, the argument undergoes a change of state, temporally bounded eventualities, telic, argument is a patient; take ‘be’ in perfect in Basque, Italian, French, Dutch, etc.

passives, raising verbs (believe, seem, etc.), arrive, come, go, return, leave, die, fall, enter, grow, arise, emerge, ensure, begin, exist, occur, follow; (sink, open, close, increase, break, drop)...

(7) Homshetsma (Muslim Hamshen, spoken in Köprücü)

a. ʣidzaz-‘adz-a he laughed (unergative) (-a = ‘is’)
    mer-‘adz-a he died (unaccusative)
    eg-‘adz-a he came (unaccusative)

b. ʣidzaz-‘adz-ui I (have) laughed
    *mer-‘adz-ui I (have) died
    *eg-‘adz-ui I (have) come

‘do’: aadzui, aadzues, aadzua...

What is the -ui, -ues, -ua, etc.?

< unim ‘have’!

(8) All of the “intransitive” perfects I have been able to find in Classical Armenian have been unaccusative (arrive, come, go, survive, approach, die, etc.); the jury is still out on unaccusatives. One possibility:

im etec tffer ekeal ew yasef seal end nosa
1sg.gen if neg.be 3sg.past come.ppl and speak.ppl to 3pl.acc
‘if I hadn’t come and spoken to them’ (John 15:22)

4. Other Manifestations of the Unaccusative/Unergative Distinction
4.1. Personal Relative Clauses in Western Armenian (Sigler 1996)

(9) (jes) (maro-i-n) *(namag-ma) sorg-‘ts-i
1sg.NOM Maro-DAT-def letter-a send-aor-1sg
‘I sent a letter (to Maro)’

(10) a. (im) (maro-i-n) srg-‘adz namag-as
1sg.GEN Maro-DAT-def send-ppl letter-1sg
‘the letter that I sent (to Maro)’
b. *(im) *namag szer-adz zarmig-ás
   1sg.Gen letter send-ppl cousin-1sg
   ‘the cousin that I sent a letter to’

(11) ing-adz ļif-ē
    fall-ppl bottle-def
    ‘the fallen bottle’
    (internal argument of unaccusative)

(12) kant-av-adz gamurtif-ē
    destroy-pass-def bridge-def
    ‘the destroyed bridge’
    (internal argument of passive)

If the verb has an external argument, that argument cannot head the PRC; it can only be the possessor:

(13) kʻırk-i-n kʻın-adz gin-ē
    book-GEN-def buy-ppl woman-def
    cannot mean: ‘the book that the woman bought’
    must mean: ‘the woman that the book bought’
    (subject of transitive)

(14) *bora-ts-adz vratši-n
    shout-aor-ppl neighbor-def
    ‘the neighbor that shouted’
    (subject of unergative)

4.2. Compound verbs with do/be
- Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995:140: Basque expresses agentive unergatives with light verb construction headed by ‘do, make’ + noun
- In Turkish, unaccusatives take olmak ‘be’, unergatives take emek ‘do’ (Özkaragoz 1986)

(15) Verbs formed from Turkish and Persian roots in the Armenian dialect of Van (Atfajian 1952:189):
   a. active/transitive → aniel ‘do’
      ḥemax aniel be greedy, hoard
      ḥæbær aniel inform
      sus aniel be quiet (?)
      pʻaralamif aniel tear, devour
      pʻözmif aniel annihilate
      kʻȳfər aniel curse
   b. neutral or passive/intransitive → elniel ‘be’
      žavslamif elniel desire
      majil elniel marvel, wonder, be amazed
      pʻarlamif elniel shine (should be unergative!)
(16) some representative examples from other dialects
a. unergative
   bas eniel  speak (Mush)
   t'elefon enuf  telephone (Homshetsma)
   kaqak anel  joke (Standard Eastern)
   ødzæke enil  hurry (Tigranakert)
   ængædʒ enil  listen (Tigranakert)
b. unaccusative
   amelijatʰ elluf  undergo surgery (Homshetsma; cf. Tk amelijat olmak)
   t'afimnif elluf  move (around) (Homshetsma)

A Homshetsma Riddle
Q: galat me kak bade tevi ‘I threw a basket of shit against the wall’
A: onguć

NPs that are logically plural but morphologically singular take plural agreement with transitive verbs, but singular agreement (normally) with intransitive and passive verbs (Bardakjian and Thomson 1977:30, 38)
yergu hokhi ayth axchig9 g9 siren
two person that girl-definite imperfective love.3pl
'two people love that girl'
yergu darin shud ganthsnì
two year.definite quickly imperfective pass.3sg
'the two years will pass quickly'
References

Ajtonyan, Arsen (1866) *K’nnakan k’erakanut’iwn af’xarhabar kam ardi hajeren lezui* [Critical grammar of the modern Armenian language], 2 volumes. Vienna: Myr’arean’ti’ Tparan. (Reprint 1987, Erevan, Erevan University Press)


Benveniste, Émile (1960) “The Linguistic Functions of ‘To Be’ and ‘To Have’,” *BSL* 113-134. (= chapter 16 of his *Problems in General Linguistics*).


