# Postnominal Relative Clause Development in Classical Armenian

#### The Data: Classical Armenian

- OV Indo-European language, attested from the 5th century CE.
- Two relativization strategies:
- A. Adjoined correlative constructions using relative/interrogative pronoun.
- (1) z=or <u>ōrēns</u> tērs jer owni, z=noyn ew dowk' kalarowk' Obj=Rel.Nom.Sg law.Acc.Sg Lord.Nom.Sg=Det 2.Poss.Nom.Pl keep.3.Sg.Prs Obj=Corr.Acc.Sg also 2.Pers.Nom.Pl take.2.Pl.Aor.Impv

"Which laws my lord keeps, the same you, too, keep!" (Meyer 2013) **B.** Postnominal embedded relative clauses (RCs) using the relative/interrogative pronoun or the complementizers zi or et'e.

astel=n z=or tesin aijnordeac' noc'a star.Nom.Sg=Det Obj=Rel.Acc.Sg see.3.Pl.Aor guide.3.Sg.Aor Dem.Dat.Pl "The star that they saw guided them" (Meyer 2013)

# Postnominal RCs From Proto-Indo-European?

- The only securely reconstructible RC strategy for PIE is the **correlative construction**, which appears in almost all of the daughter branches.
- Many also reconstruct **participial relatives** for PIE, though this reconstruction is less certain.
- Classical Armenian postnominal RCs cannot be inherited from PIE.

#### Proposed Postnominal RC Development Pathways

Possible language-internal developmental pathways for Armenian postnominal RCs:

#### **A**. **Directly from the correlative construction**. (Lehmann 1974)

- PIE is thought to have left-adjoined correlatives only.
- Many daughter languages show looser adjunction order, and could also right-adjoin correlatives.
- Right-adjoined correlatives could have eventually become embedded after nominals.
- However, in languages that develop postnominal relatives, they always coexist with left-adjoined correlatives for a time.

#### **B**. Syntactic extension (analogy). (Harris & Campbell 1995)

- Assuming PIE had participial RCs, their adjunction distribution would likely be similar to correlatives.
- Bare participles could also directly modify nominals.
- Correlative adjunction distribution was extended to postnominal position by analogy with bare participial adjunction placement.
- Postnominally adjoined correlatives were reanalyzed as embedded RCs.
- C. An intermediate headless relative stage.
- **D**. Completely independent development. (Hendery 2012)
- However, both relativization strategies use machinery already available, including the relative/interrogative pronoun *or*.
- Should we restrict RC development to language-internal processes?

Ryan Hearn — Cornell University

Cornell Workshop on Relative Clauses, November 2015

# Proposal

Classical Armenian modeled its postnominal relative clauses on those of Middle Iranian, with which it was in close contact for hundreds of years while Armenia was ruled by the Persians.

#### Reason #1: Patterns of Language Contact

- Hendery (2012) in her typological survey of RCs notes that every language that developed a new relativization strategy during its attested history did so under the close influence of another language with the target construction.
- She specifically mentions Modern Armenian prenominal participial relative development as an example, the construction likely having been calqued from Turkish.
- In fact, languages with this participial RC strategy form a Sprachbund in the Middle East, with languages from multiple families showing strikingly similar constructions.

#### Reason #2: Persian Influence on Armenian

- Armenia was ruled by the Achaemenids and later the Arsacids for several hundred years prior to Armenian's first attestation.
- Middle Persian and Parthian heavily influenced Armenian, to the point that it was considered an Iranian language until the late 1800s.

### Reason #3: Persian and Armenian RC Similarity

- Middle Persian and Parthian both had postnominal relative clauses practically identical to those found in Classical Armenian.
- Both used their relative/interrogative pronoun as a relativizer.
  - $\bar{a}n$  frazend  $\bar{i}=\check{s}$   $a\check{s}m\bar{a}h$  fram $\bar{u}d$   $k\bar{u}$   $b\bar{e}$   $\bar{o}zan$ that child which=Acc you.Ag commanded that:  $B\bar{E}$  kill.2.S.Imp "that child which you ordered us to kill [...]" (Skjærvø 2009)

#### **Conclusion: Armenian Borrowed Postnominal RCs**

- From its correlative construction, Pre-Armenian had the exact machinery necessary to replicate the postnominal relative clause construction of Middle Iranian.
- Armenian modeled its postnominal relative clause construction on that of Middle Iranian.

conf.ling.cornell.edu/ryanhearn/

# Syntactic Similarities

- of many possible syntactic analyses below. base adjoins to IP.
- postnominal RC are already present in the correlative.

**Postnominal** (Example 2 above): (4) **Correlative** (Example 1 above): (5)



## **Open Questions & Future Research**

- similarities between Armenian RCs and correlatives.
- development back a step to Middle Iranian. clauses.
- syntax.
- well as the loss of correlatives.

# Selected References

- Kluwer, Dordrecht.
- University Press.
- Benjamins.
- (ed), Clause structure and language change. Oxford.

Lehmann, Winfred Philipp. 1974. Proto-Indo-European Syntax. University of Texas Press.

Skjærvø, Prods Oktor. 2009. Middle West Iranian. Pages 196–278 of: Windfuhr, Gernot (ed), The Iranian Languages. Routledge New York.



• To demonstrate the similarities between these constructions, I have presented two

- In (4) I adopt the analysis of Dayal (1996), in which the correlative construction

• Note that, aside from syntactic embedding, the necessary elements present in the

too you.keep

guided them

1. I have argued that postnominal RC development in Pre-Armenian is due to heavy influence from Middle Iranian, and have briefly attempted to demonstrate the

- In doing so, however, I have passed the buck for postnominal relative clause

- Many other Indo-European subfamilies also developed postnominal relative

- How and why these parallel developments occurred independently throughout Europe and Asia remains one of the biggest unanswered questions in diachronic

• Kiparsky (1995) presents an attempt to answer the question of postnominal RC development for Germanic, but his explanation is inextricably intervoven with the development of V2 word order, and cannot account for other subfamilies.

2. I have only attempted to account for Armenian RC development through the classical period. I hope to do a similar analysis for the development of Modern Armenian, in which I account for the development of prenominal participial RCs as

Dayal, Veneeta. 1996. Locality in Wh Quantification. Studies in Linguistics and Philosophy, No. 62.

Harris, Alice C, & Campbell, Lyle. 1995. *Historical syntax in cross-linguistic perspective*. Cambridge

Hendery, Rachel. 2012. Relative Clauses in Time and Space. Typological Studies in Language. John

Kiparsky, Paul. 1995. Indo-European origins of Germanic syntax. Pages 140–169 of: Battye, Adrian

Meyer, Robin. 2013. Classical Armenian Relative Clause Syntax. MA Thesis, Oxford.