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Passivisation in Semitic, Iranian, Armenian, and Beyond

EDITED BY PAUL M. NOORLANDER
AND HIWA ASADPOUR



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PASSIVISATION IN SEMITIC,
IRANIAN, ARMENIAN AND
BEYOND

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*Edited by Paul M. Noorlander and
Hiwa Asadpour*





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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contributors..... vii

Introduction..... 1

Paul M. Noorlander

1. Passivisation in Semitic:
Case Studies from Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic 27

Nikita Kuzin

2. Passive Voice in Turoyo 109

Paul M. Noorlander

3. Passivisation in Northeastern Neo-Aramaic 149

Roohollah Mofidi and Hiwa Asadpour

4. A Contact-Induced Structural Change
with a Lexical-Functional Asymmetry:
A Passive Construction in Nayini 199

Hiwa Asadpour and Masoumeh Zarei

5. Passive Constructions in Garrusi Kurdish..... 233

Katherine Hodgson

6. Passive in Armenian..... 277

Nicolaos Neocleous

7. Passives in Asia Minor Greek..... 317

Murad Suleymanov

8. Passive Formation in Turkic:
Diachronic Developments and Synchronic Patterns
with a Focus on Azeri..... 335

Index..... 359

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INTRODUCTION

The papers in this volume were either based on or inspired by presentations held at the conference *Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives on Low-Resource Languages*, which was organised at the Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, 16–20 June, 2022. This hybrid event aimed to bring together linguists working on languages of Western Asia that are underrepresented in linguistics and often have limited resources in the digitalised world. The contributions to the conference focused on either relative clauses or passive constructions, and this volume is concerned with the latter of these two.

This volume contains contributions on passive voice constructions in Semitic languages (Noorlander, Chapter 1), especially various dialects of Neo-Aramaic, including Ṭuroyo (Kuzin, Chapter 2) and Northeastern Neo-Aramaic (Noorlander, Chapter 3); in Iranian languages, notably Nayini, a Central Iranian language (Mofidi and Asadpour, Chapter 4), and Garrusi, a Southern Kurdish dialect (Asadpour and Zarei, Chapter 5); in dialects of Armenian (Hodgson, Chapter 6); in dialects of Asia Minor Greek (Neocleous, Chapter 7); and in Turkic languages, notably Azeri (Suleymanov, Chapter 8). These represent more broadly languages of the Western Asian subregions Anatolia, the Caucasus, the Iranian Plateau, the Levant, and Mesopotamia, which together are best characterised as a transition zone in areal linguistics (Haig 2017; Haig and Khan 2019). Here, multiculturalism and multilingualism has been a widespread phenomenon and a daily necessity for centuries. The data collected and discussed in

this volume represents microvariation found in spoken dialects and often gathered among bi- or multilingual speakers. The members of the communities still speaking their identity-marking dialect are the last witnesses of the linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity that was once vibrant but is now rapidly disappearing in the area.

In the past century, the area was marked by the decline of once stable multi-ethnic empires, a struggle for independence from European powers, local and geopolitical conflicts, mass displacement, and ethnic cleansings. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the dominant narratives of nationalism in the newly emerging states promoted the idea of a homogenous nation, leading to the marginalisation and exclusion of religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities, often coupled with targeted violence, destruction of whole towns and villages, large-scale forced deportations and emigration, looting, rape and kidnapping, and confiscation of property and bank accounts. Consequently, linguistic minorities perceived as undermining loyalty to the state-promoted nationalism—be it Arab, Turkish, Iranian, Zionist—have long faced cultural and political suppression, have been discriminated against as second-class citizens, and have struggled for equality, inclusion, recognition, and autonomy, often to no avail. This suppression and suspicion of disloyalty—often under the pretext of possible rebellion—culminated in systematically organised and targeted massacres and humanitarian disasters effected by the regime, such as, among others: the genocidal campaigns in the Ottoman Empire (1914–1917), targeting Christian communities of all kinds—Greeks, Armenians, Syriac-Orthodox,

Chaldeans, Assyrians, Christian Arabs; the Greco-Turkish war and population exchanges (1914–1923); the Simele massacre of Assyrians in Iraq (1932); the *Farhūd* pogrom in Baghdad and the spread of anti-Semitism across Iraq (1941); Saddam Hussein's *'Anfāl* campaigns targeting Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan (1986–1989); and, more recently, the Syrian Civil War that spread into Iraq (2011–2024).

The freedoms of non-Muslim groups have of course generally been restricted in the Islamicate world, but restrictions were not equally severe in each period. In Iran, for instance, during the Imperial State of Iran under Mohammad Reza Shah, non-Muslim groups enjoyed greater freedoms than they received after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. In Anatolia, while not all groups were equally recognised under the Ottoman millet practice, this practice offered considerable freedom to religious leaders to oversee community-internal affairs. The Tanzimat reforms (1839–1876) aimed to provide opportunities for equality and inclusion. Missionary activities among Christians introduced Western-style education and printing presses, increasing literacy and promoting the use of the spoken language also in writing. Both reform movements, however, also increased suspicion of disloyalty and ethno-religious tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims, which amplified ethnic and territorial nationalist movements.

Generally, only the larger linguistic communities with greater autonomy or fully independent states have been able to thrive to any significant degree, such as (temporarily) recognised communities in the Caucasus under the Soviet Union. More recently in the early 2000s, restrictions on the use of Kurdish, for

instance, in Turkey have gradually been moderated under international pressure. After the fall of the Ba'athist regimes in both Iraq and Syria, Kurdish became a fully recognised language in Iraqi Kurdistan, and is now promoted in northwestern Syria. Linguistic restrictions were likewise lifted for the Iraqi Turkmen, although the language currently taught as the literary standard in Turkmen schools in Iraq is based on Istanbul Turkish rather than on the local varieties, which form a continuum with Azeri. Since the fall of Saddam Hussein, restrictions on Neo-Aramaic, recognised as the Syriac language of the so-called Syriac-Assyrian-Chaldean Christians, have decreased in Iraq. In parts of the Kurdish Regional Government, it is allowed to be used in education, TV channels, and public expression, and it enjoys full visibility in particular in the district of Ankawa in Erbil. By contrast, the heritage of the Arabic- and Aramaic-speaking Jews who had fled from Iraq to the independent state of Israel, having been evacuated from Muslim countries in the 1950s, was not included nor recognised in Zionist Israeli identity, but was identified with the culture of Israel's enemies. The pressure to use Israeli Hebrew exclusively led to the loss of new generations of speakers of these Jewish languages. Only recently has the unique historical and linguistic background of the Jews of Iraqi Kurdistan received more recognition.

Hence, several linguistic communities represented in this volume do not enjoy official recognition in their traditional homeland or place of socialisation. As a result of the aforementioned havoc as well as displacement and cultural assimilation, minorities generally lack the institutional support and protection

needed to maintain their linguistic heritage. Their languages are highly endangered, and often confined to diminishing language islands as well as diaspora communities within and without Western Asia. Education and cultural expression in minority languages has been continuously suppressed in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran, albeit to different extents for each language group across space and time, leading in extreme cases to language shift. The contributions in this volume, therefore, are all the more relevant, bringing together linguists working on languages of Western Asia that are vulnerable and have lacked recognition and support.

The focus of the contributions is on passive-voice constructions. The contributions provide language-particular descriptions of passive-voice constructions in the respective languages, taking into account typological characteristics and synchronic variation, as well as diachronic developments, areal phenomena, and/or natural language universals and tendencies. The typological considerations follow from the criteria presented in Siewierska (2005), some of which may also be satisfied by related constructions:

- i. it contrasts with another construction, the active;
- ii. the subject of the active corresponds to a non-obligatory oblique phrase of the passive or is not overtly expressed;
- iii. the subject of the passive, if there is one, corresponds to the direct object of the active;
- iv. the construction is pragmatically restricted relative to the active;
- v. the construction displays some special morphological marking of the verb.

This can be illustrated with the following alternations taken from Israeli Hebrew (1) and Turkish (2). The more common expression of an agent–patient action such as ‘to write’ is the active transitive construction given in (1a) and (2a), where the agent and patient are encoded as (nominative) subject and (accusative) direct object, respectively. This satisfies criterion (i), since the agent typically occurs as the subject and the construction is available to most agent–patient verbs. The same agent becomes an optional oblique argument in the corresponding passives in (1b) and (2b), respectively, as per criterion (ii). The objects of (1a) and (2a) are, in (1b) and (2b), respectively, treated as subject of the same lexical verb modified through special morphology, satisfying criteria (iii) and (v), respectively. In Israeli Hebrew, the entire stem of the verb is distinct from the active, while in Turkish, the suffix *-il-* is simply added to the same stem as found in the active.

(1) Israeli Hebrew

- a. *Sara katv-a et has-sefer haz-ze.*
 Sara.FSG PST\write-3FSG DOM DEF-book.MSG DEF-DEM.MSG
 ‘Sara wrote this book.’ (active transitive)
- b. *has-sefer haz-ze ni-xtav-∅ (al yedei Sara)*
 DEF-book.MSG DEF-DEM.MSG PASS-PST\write-3MSG (upon
 hand.F.CSTR.PL Sara.FSG)
 ‘This book was written (by Sara).’ (passive intransitive)

(2) Turkish

- a. *Meryem bu şarkı-yı yaz-dı.*
 Maryam.NOM this song-DOM write-PST.3
 ‘Maryam wrote this song.’ (active transitive)

- b. *bu şarkı-yı (Meryem taraf-ın-dan) yaz-ıl-dı.*
 this song-DOM (Maryam.NOM side-her-ABL) write-PASS-PST.3
 ‘This song was written (by Maryam).’ (passive intransitive)

The nonactive constructions in (1b) and (2b) are not used as freely and frequently as the corresponding active transitive constructions in (1a) and (2b), respectively, which satisfies criterion (iv). In (1)–(2), the passive verb formation is **synthetic**, i.e., the verbal inflection itself is modified, but passive formations can equally be **periphrastic** or **analytic**, i.e., achieved through word pairings. In the languages studied in this volume, the auxiliaries used are BECOME combined with a patient-orientated verbal adjective in Northeastern Neo-Aramaic (Noorlander, Chapter 3), Persian and Nayini (Mofidi and Asadpour, Chapter 4), and Garrusi Kurdish (Asadpour and Zarei, Chapter 5), as well as COME combined with a patient-orientated infinitive in Kurdish (Asadpour and Zarei, Chapter 5) and Northeastern Neo-Aramaic (Noorlander, Chapter 3). Other constructions involving a copula BE with a patient-orientated verbal adjective are found in Armenian (Hodgson, Chapter 6) and Semitic (Noorlander, Chapter 1), in particular Northeastern Neo-Aramaic (Noorlander, Chapter 3). An interesting areal phenomenon in Iran is the alternation between the light verbs ‘do’ and ‘become’, as (3) illustrates for Persian. This alternation has been transferred into Neo-Aramaic and Kurdish dialects of Iran (Noorlander, Chapter 3), Nayini (Mofidi and Asadpour, Chapter 4), Garrusi Kurdish (Asadpour and Zarei, Chapter 5), and Azeri dialects of Iran (Suleymanov, Chapter 8), as well as Armenian (Hodgson, Chapter 6).

(3) Persian

- a. *zan-ān in xāne-rā rang kard-and*
 woman-PL this house=DOM colour do.PST-3PL
 ‘The women painted this house.’ (active transitive)
- b. *in xāne (tavassote zan-ān) rang šod-Ø.*
 this house (through woman-PL) colour become.PST-3SG
 ‘This house was painted (by the women).’ (passive in-
 transitive)

Following Andrews (2007), the passive can be analysed in terms of the syntactic functions of noun phrases in the clause. Active transitive clauses by definition contain the core functions A and P, which are identified based on both semantic prototypes—i.e., agent-like and patient-like meanings—and constructional prototypes of two-argument actions, i.e., the typical way to express an agent–patient situation, which may be extended to nonactions, e.g., Hebrew *raʔa* ‘to see’ and Turkish *görmek* ‘to see’ contain an A and P, but not an agent and patient. The S function, in turn, is the single argument of a one-argument situation, such as Hebrew *met* ‘to die’ or Turkish *ölmek* ‘to die’. Thus, Siewierska’s (2005) definition can be represented by way of abstraction in a schema as follows (cf. Noorlander 2021, 62; Haspelmath 2022):

Active:	[A]	[V]	[P]	(less restricted)
	AGENT	TRANSITIVE	PATIENT	
Passive:	[S]	[V-PASS]	([OBL])	(more restricted)
	PATIENT	INTRANSITIVE	AGENT	

This means that A and P occur in sentences (1a) and (2a), but not in sentences (1b) and (2b)—and, when A and P are lacking, the clause is not considered to be transitive.

Therefore, both the active and passive are **semantically transitive**, but the passive is typically **syntactically intransitive** (Keenan and Dryer 2017; see also further below). Syntactically, the passive decreases the valency, downplaying the agent to the margins as an optional nonsubject argument ($A \rightarrow$ oblique), while the patient otherwise expressing the direct object becomes the obligatory sole argument of an intransitive construction ($P \rightarrow S$). The transitive semantics remain the same through the selection of a lexically transitive verb. The syntactic properties follow from Siewierska's (2005) criteria (ii) and (iii), which preclude an agent argument with a direct object from forming a passive clause. The passive can thus be subsumed under the category of valency-decreasing operations also commonly known as **detransitivisation**, since it involves a reduction in transitivity.

This more general operation of detransitivisation becomes clear in the **voice morphology** (criterion v) and its respective diachronic developments in the languages discussed in this volume. In all language groups concerned, namely Semitic (Noorlander, Chapters 1 and 3; Kuzin, Chapter 2), Iranian (Mofidi and Asadpour, Chapter 4; Asadpour and Zarei, Chapter 5), Armenian (Hodgson, Chapter 6), Greek (Neocleous, Chapter 7), and Turkic (Suleymanov, Chapter 8), passive voice morphology—be it through root-and-pattern modifications, agglutination, or affixation—entails extensions of former detransitivising constructions and not exclusively passive formations. Some of these would arguably fall under the scope of the so-called **middle** voice, which typically subsumes anticausative, reflexive-reciprocal, and auto-benefactive diathesis alongside passive. Thus, so-called passive

voice markers are, in fact, not purely dedicated to passive diathesis, a point that applies to the Semitic *n*- and *t*-stems as well as—albeit to a lesser extent—to passive templatic morphology in Semitic (or Afro-Asiatic), the *i*(*e/o*)-stem in Indo-European, and the Turkic suffixes *-n* and *-Xn*, as well as—albeit to a lesser extent—the suffixes *-l* or *-Xl*. We therefore regularly observe that what is conventionally referred to as a ‘passive’ voice marker on closer inspection cannot be subsumed under one single voice construction such as the passive, nor under one common semantic or pragmatic denominator. Some of the contributors, therefore, prefer to speak in terms of detransitivising derivations (Noorlander, Chapters 1 and 3; Kuzin, Chapter 2), while others use the term ‘passive’ more loosely, following the respective traditional terminology in their fields.

Moreover, it is a well-known fact that passive-voice constructions can be traced back to anticausative and reflexive constructions (e.g., Haspelmath 1990). The **anticausative voice** (Haspelmath 1987, 1993) involves valency-changing morphology that marks specifically the inchoative pendant of a transitivity alternation. The inchoative intransitive verb presents the situation as unfolding spontaneously, i.e., a change-of-state—S becomes Y— that is not controlled by the subject and has no agent-orientated semantic component, such as ‘to die’, ‘to be born’, ‘to melt’, ‘to fall asleep’, ‘to wake up’. Some verbs classified by Haspelmath (1993) as inchoative, however, could be argued to have a measure of agentivity, such as the intransitive verbs ‘to rise’ and ‘to learn’ with their transitive pendants ‘to raise’ and ‘to teach’, for instance. Nevertheless, this anticausative alternation

can be morphologically distinguished from the **causative** type of alternation, where the transitive counterpart is marked, and from the **labile** type, where neither of the two pendants is marked (see Haspelmath 1983).

Semantically, the inchoative verb, or its dedicated voice marker called the anticausative, can be distinguished from the passive in that the passive is still semantically transitive and more strongly implies an agent (e.g., Siewierska 1984). Thus, the active–passive voice distinction is a type of transitivity alternation where the valency of a two-argument verb is reduced to a single argument, without necessarily affecting its transitive semantics. The anticausative, by contrast, does affect the transitive semantics by deleting the implication of an agent; contrast the passive verbs ‘to be murdered (by somebody)’ and ‘to be broken (by somebody)’ with the inchoative/anticausative verbs ‘to die’ and ‘to break (by itself)’, respectively. These two are clearly distinguished, for example, in Iranian languages such as Kurdish (Asadpour and Zarei, Chapter 5; cf. Amin 1979, 121) and in Nayini (Mofidi and Asadpour, Chapter 4) when the synthetic passive is created on the basis of a transitive verb that is already modified by a causative affix. In Azeri, too, some inchoative/anticausative verbs are clearly distinguished from their passive counterparts by additional causative morphology (Suleymanov, Chapter 8). In Arabic, passive templatic morphology is distinguished from anticausatives and reflexives/reciprocals based on the affixes *n-* and *t-*, respectively (Noorlander, Chapter 1; cf. Khalil 1988–1989, 15).

The contributions also indicate, however, that this distinction between anticausative and passive is not always clear-cut. After all, speakers can freely add an external cause to intransitive verbal predicates that typically expresses an uncontrolled process (Croft 1994, 110), e.g., *The window opened because of the wind*, *The ice cream melted in the heat*, *She got pregnant by me*, etc. Inchoative verbs—whether marked as anticausative or not—can thus still combine with external causes, which in themselves can be expressed with the exact same morphology as the oblique agent of a passive. This is what is observed in Semitic more generally (Noorlander, Chapter 1), as well as in Neo-Aramaic and, to some extent, Kurdish (Noorlander, Chapter 3). Moreover, a labile inchoative/causative alternation has been extended to verbs with a strong agent component such as ‘to cut’ and ‘to slaughter’ in some Northeastern Neo-Aramaic dialects (Noorlander, Chapter 3).

Interestingly, however, to the extent to which a valency-changing morpheme has become a more dedicated passive voice marker, it can also be applied to verbal forms that are already marked for valency reduction. This applies, for instance, to the passive templatic morphology in Arabic, which can be applied to *t*-stems (Noorlander, Chapter 1), and the suffixes *-l* and *-Xl* in Turkic, which can be applied to verbs marked with *-n* (Suleymanov, Chapter 8); cf. also the combination of passive *-r* and middle *-yā* in Kurdish (Asadpour and Zarei, Chapter 5) and the passive morpheme *-v-* in Armenian, which can be added to a formerly ‘passive’ participle that has lost its patient-orientation (Hodgson, Chapter 6). See further below on ‘passive’ participles and on the modification of intransitive verbs by means of passive morphology.

The chapters thus indicate that such voice markers can differ drastically in their productivity, or lexical generality. In Classical Armenian (Hodgson, Chapter 6), the detransitivising stem morphology is available for a wide array of verbs, resulting in a widely generalised transitivity alternation. In Standard and Asia Minor Greek (Neocleous, Chapter 7), the detransitivising morphology is lexically restricted, and the implication of an external agent is not always obtained in the intransitive alternant, not even in the cases of some highly transitive verbs such as ‘to kill’. In Pontic Greek of Turkey, such detransitivised verbal forms generally do not imply an external agent at all. In Neo-Aramaic (Kuzin, Chapter 2; Noorlander, Chapter 3), the strength of the implication of an agent in detransitivised constructions can be contingent on both the lexical verb and whether the clause is habitual (see further below).

The passive voice has been associated with various functions in discourse (see Zúñiga and Kittilä 2019). Semantically, one of the core functions of passives has been said to be **inactivation** (Haspelmath 1990), i.e., the subject is not actively involved like an agent. This accounts for why passive-voice constructions are often created on the basis of stative constructions with an affected subject. A widely observed phenomenon is the use of verbal adjectives that express a result state, which are often referred to as ‘**passive**’ **participles** (Haspelmath 1994). These so-called ‘passive’ participles are, however, better subsumed under resultative constructions. Indeed, Neo-Aramaic (Noorlander, Chapter 3) and Armenian (Hodgson, Chapter 6) developed means of expressing the passive out of patient-orientated

resultative constructions. Resultative constructions are, however, largely voice-neutral in that they are not always patient-orientated, but can also be subject- and agent-orientated (Nedjalkov 1988). This accounts for why these verbal adjectives commonly referred to as ‘passive’ participles can have multiple orientations, of which patient-orientation is only one, as is the case for Semitic (Noorlander, Chapter 1). There is, therefore, a close correlation between so-called BE-passives and BE-perfects, and the two are known to co-exist in one language. Indeed, this patient-orientation of the resultative construction was ultimately lost entirely in some dialects of Armenian (Hodgson, Chapter 6) and Neo-Aramaic (Noorlander, Chapter 3), when agent-orientation was conventionalised for all transitive verbs in the development of a BE-perfect.

In terms of cross-linguistic distribution, passives appear to be most common in Eurasia and Africa (Siewierska 2005). The distribution of passives, however, is further complicated by the discrepancies between different **registers** as well as between different text **genres**. Thus, relying on corpora of spontaneous narratives recorded in Baku, Suleymanov (Chapter 8) indicates that the passive is seldom used among Azeri speakers in everyday spoken language. Similarly, Kuzin (Chapter 2) investigates the role of genre in Ṭuroyo Neo-Aramaic and demonstrates on the basis of corpus-based statistics that the passive is virtually non-existent in oral folklore, but more common in formal contexts such as TV shows, written materials, and cooking recipes.

A prototypical feature of passives has been said to be that they defocus the agent and place the patient in the foreground of

the discourse (Shibatani 1985; 2004; 2006, 248; Givón 1984; 2001). A key hallmark of the passive is thus to assign sentential topic status to the patient. Spoken language, however, may favour alternative strategies to achieve the same result. This may be simply achieved, for instance, through inversion of the word order in a **topicalisation** construction, as in Northeastern Neo-Aramaic (Noorlander, Chapter 3). In the passive, the agent, in turn, is the argument that is considered to be the least salient in the speaker's mind and "requires the least amount of attention" (Shibatani 1985, 832), which is reflected in its total absence in syntactic coding and indirect coding as an optional oblique argument. In the languages of the area, as in many languages outside it, a widely observed alternative strategy for obscuring the identity of the agent in spoken languages is the **impersonalisation** of the A argument. The transitive morphosyntax can be maintained but the agent is made less precise and explicit by referential reduction. The A argument is marked identically to an unspecified, unidentifiable group of people, often expressed in the third person plural—'they', 'one', 'people'. This is a characteristic of spoken Azeri, for example (Suleymanov, Chapter 8). Such generic, indefinite agents are more typically found in clause types that denote habituals, as illustrated for Northeastern Neo-Aramaic in Noorlander (Chapter 3). Such habituals are especially common in the genre of oral history, relating how people lived in the past. Such strategies have also been part of the repertoire of classical Semitic languages (Noorlander, Chapter 1).

The type of passive construction where the agent is optionally expressed as an oblique argument is the most common one,

as opposed to the more sporadically attested types where such explicit agents are impossible or obligatory (Siewierska and Bakker 2013). In Garrusi Kurdish (Asadpour and Zarei, Chapter 5), only the agentless passive is possible, which also holds true for some dialects of Asia Minor Greek (Neocleous, Chapter 7). There is, however, vast variability within and across languages in how frequently passives occur with an explicit agent (Siewierska and Bakker 2013, 160). Furthermore, explicit mentioning of the agent is also dependent on register and genre; for instance, explicit agents are far less common in passives in conversational English than they are in commentaries, e.g., sports broadcasting, event reporting (Granger 1983, 275). Genre, therefore, interacts with the extent to which the agent is downplayed in a passive. Thus, with respect to agent demotion, Kuzin (Chapter 2) shows for Ṭuroyo Neo-Aramaic that agentless passives occur in habitual clause types, which are typically found in text types that are directed to a general audience, such as cooking recipes. Interestingly, in Northeastern Neo-Aramaic (Noorlander, Chapter 3), it is precisely such habitual clause types that allow for a transitive verb to be used intransitively with the patient as its subject and a strong implication of an agent. As in Ṭuroyo Neo-Aramaic, these passive-like clause types remain agentless. Unlike in Ṭuroyo Neo-Aramaic, however, there is no valency-changing morphology on the verb. The absence of voice morphology in Northeastern Neo-Aramaic results from the loss of the detransitivising derivations.

The understanding of syntactic agent demotion as a reflection of ‘agent defocusing’ in the discourse (see above) is not, however, entirely unproblematic. In many respects, the oblique agent

will be the bearer of new information, and, in this sense, it is the agent that will be focal, which is not its most common information-structural configuration. Similar to the optional oblique agent in a passive construction, then, is the complete omission of the agent. This is possible in ergative past perfective constructions in Behdînî Northern Kurdish and Northeastern Neo-Aramaic in contexts where the agent is contextually retrievable but non-specific (Noorlander, Chapter 2). The transitive past perfective constructions that allow for agent omission are historically derived from patient-orientated resultative participles with an oblique agent. The passive is one of the expected sources from which languages with pre-existing accusative agreement systems may develop ergatively aligned agreement (e.g., Siewierska 1998), i.e., a former patient promoted to S in a passive acquires the syntactic properties of P, whilst remaining morphologically expressed in the same way as S. The passive origins of the ergative past perfective construction in Iranian and Aramaic are controversial, and so is the role of language contact (Noorlander, Chapter 1). Synchronically, the agentless past perfective construction is still semantically and syntactically transitive, and the agent remains accessible for reference tracking. While these cases of agent omission can be the translational equivalent of (impersonal) passives, they are better characterised as truncated transitive clauses where the agent coding is simply omitted.

The overt ergative marking of the agent in Northeastern Neo-Aramaic goes hand in hand with the focal, i.e., unexpected, status of the agent argument and the absence of cross-referencing of A on the verb. The omission of such verbal cross-referencing

is what we would expect when an argument is focal (Siewierska 2004, 160–62). The cross-referencing of the A argument, however, may also be absent when the agent is nonspecific, but contextually retrievable. Thus, the omission of A is primarily observed when the P argument is topical and cross-referenced by the verb, and the A argument highly given in the discourse, which is reminiscent of the passive (Noorlander, Chapter 3). This conditionality in the expression of A, however, is better understood in the context of optional A-marking or optional ergativity, which is distinct from the agent suppression found in a passive. In optional A-marking, an A argument can be omitted or zero-marked when it is an expected actor with little impact, whereas overt marking of the A argument highlights its unexpectedness and its active involvement in the situation (e.g., McGregor 2006, 2010; Chappell and Verstraete 2019).

The extent to which the patient enjoys all the properties of subject—i.e., criterion (iii)—is generally discussed in terms of **patient promotion**. As a valency-reducing device, passivisation may not be limited to the patients of monotransitive verbs, but can also be applied to ditransitive verbs, in which case either the recipient or the theme can be promoted, as discussed with respect to Semitic by Noorlander (Chapter 1). When the patient is not promoted to subject status, the construction remains partially or completely impersonal, i.e., the transitive morphosyntax can be combined with a passive. The object status of the patient is, for instance, maintained in some cases of passivisation in Biblical Hebrew, as shown by the use of the object marker *ʔet* (Noorlander, Chapter 1). The patient also remains an object in the

aforementioned agentless past perfective constructions in Neo-Aramaic (Noorlander, Chapter 3).

Passive morphology can also be compatible with intransitive verbs in Arabic (Noorlander, Chapter 1), Ṭuroyo Neo-Aramaic (Kuzin, Chapter 2), Kalhori Kurdish (Asadpour and Zarei, Chapter 5), Armenian (Hodgson, Chapter 6), and Turkic (Sulleymanov, Chapter 8). As an impersonalisation strategy, this assumes an unspecified, unidentifiable group of people as the subject, and may convey a potential or facilitative situation, i.e., ‘one can’, ‘people can’, ‘they can’.

Passive verbal morphology has been to a large extent relatively stable in the languages studied here, although the passive templates were largely lost and replaced by affixal voice markers in Semitic (Noorlander, Chapter 1), and new passive-voice markers developed in Armenian (Hodgson, Chapter 6) and Kurdish (Asadpour and Zarei, Chapter 5). Noorlander (Chapter 3) offers a study of an extreme case where a language has entirely lost the primary valency-reducing morphology in its verbal system. Language contact presumably played a role in the use of periphrastic passives, where Old Persian possibly influenced Imperial Aramaic (Noorlander, Chapter 1), and Persian influenced Neo-Aramaic (Noorlander, Chapter 3) and Nayini (Mofidi and Asadpour, Chapter 4). Presumably, Persian influence is also ultimately at play in the light verb constructions that occur in Neo-Aramaic (Noorlander, Chapter 3), Garrusi Kurdish (Asadpour and Zarei, Chapter 5), Armenian (Hodgson, Chapter 6), and Azeri (Sulleymanov Chapter 8). Kurdish and Turkic presumably also influ-

enced Neo-Aramaic (Noorlander, Chapter 3). Influence from Arabic and Turkish may have also played a role in the extension of passive morphology to intransitive verbs in Țuroyo Neo-Aramaic (Kuzin, Chapter 2) and some Armenian dialects (Hodgson, Chapter 6), respectively.

Overall, these contributions by language specialists offer insight into the typological characteristics of passives in languages of the area, which are pertinent to our understanding of universal tendencies in natural languages. Such passives clearly share typological characteristics with valency alternations, impersonal constructions, stative-resultative constructions, object topicalisation, and ergative(-like) constructions. The diachronic and areal dimensions aid us in our understanding of the historical source constructions underlying passives, their internal stability, and to what extent passive-voice markers can be transferred across languages through contact. Further research into the voice systems in these languages will help us identify the relevant factors that contribute to the typological characteristics of the respective types of passive voice construction, their stability over time, and to what extent they reflect universal tendencies as opposed to historical contingencies specific to the language and/or area.

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Abbreviations

3	third person	NOM	nominative
A	agent of a transitive clause	P	patient of a transitive clause
CSTR	construct state	PASS	passive
DEF	definite article	PL	plural
DOM	differential object marking	PST	past
F	feminine	S	single argument of an intransitive clause
FSG	feminine singular	SG	singular
MSG	masculine singular		

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1. PASSIVISATION IN SEMITIC: CASE STUDIES FROM HEBREW, ARAMAIC, AND ARABIC¹

Paul M. Noorlander

1.0. Introduction

1.1. Hebrew and Aramaic

The Semitic language family is a branch of the Afro-Asiatic phylum, spread out across West Asia, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa. The Semitic languages focused on in this chapter are Hebrew and Aramaic, which belong to the Northwest Semitic subgroup, with an occasional excursus to their close relative Arabic. Hebrew is a Canaanite language, thus closely related to Phoenician and the non-Akkadian linguistic variety attested in the Amarna letters from the fourteenth century BCE. This chapter is primarily concerned with the variety of Hebrew reflected in the Masoretic Text of the Bible, with examples presented in simplified transcription. Aramaic was one of the principal languages of

¹ I hereby acknowledge the helpful comments of the anonymous reviewers on an earlier draft of this chapter. Naturally, the final responsibility remains my own.

West Asia, serving as an international language of imperial administration from the time of the Neo-Assyrian empire until the Achaemenid. Apart from the Aramaic found in the Bible (BA), primarily in the books of Daniel and Ezra, the main Aramaic dialects discussed here served as primary vehicles of religious traditions in the Middle East from Late Antiquity onwards, namely:

- Classical Syriac (CS), a variety local to Edessa that became a dominant literary language for Jewish and especially Christian literature, and is still used today as a liturgical language in ancient churches of the Middle East—here transcribed according to eastern vocalisation;
- Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (JBA) as represented in the Babylonian Talmud, a Late-Antique eastern dialect—here transcribed in a simplified form;
- Jewish Palestinian Aramaic as represented in the Targum (TA), Late-Antique western literary varieties that were used to translate, interpret, and contemporise the Torah, a practice which originated in a liturgical setting but developed into authoritative written traditions for the study of the Bible;
- Classical Mandaic, an eastern dialect represented in the literature of the Mandaeans, a Mesopotamian gnostic sect, especially in *Ginza Rabba* ‘Great Treasury’—here the transcription is based on reconstruction.

In what follows, a typological overview of passivisation will be offered, with a focus on Biblical Hebrew and varieties of literary Aramaic, especially Syriac, as well as a few comparisons with Arabic (for passivisation in Neo-Aramaic, see Kuzin, Chapter 2, and Noorlander, Chapter 3). Here, I draw especially on the broader understanding of transitivity, as not a monolithic syntactic constellation, but rather as an accumulation of both syntactic and, importantly, semantic properties (Hopper and Thompson 1980; Tsunoda 1985; Nass 2007). The semantics of voice morphology in Biblical Hebrew especially has been the subject of considerable academic debate and discussion. Extensive references can be found in recent debates around the ‘passive’ in Van Wolde (2015; 2021), Jones (2020), and Garr (2021), but see also Baden (2010), Oren (2013), Retsö (2013), and Notarius (2023). For Aramaic, see Li (2009, 58–78), Farina (2011), Egger (2011), and Kalinin and Loesov (2022). For passivisation in Arabic, see, among others, Retsö (1983), Bubenik (1997; 2008), and Agameya (2008).

1.2. Voice Morphology in Semitic

Semitic languages are generally fully equipped with a rich voice system, including passive-voice constructions, as illustrated in (1)–(6). In the passive in (1b)–(6b), the subject expresses the patient argument corresponding to the direct object of the active in (1a)–(6a), the verb exhibits voice morphology distinct from that of the active (see further below), and the agent argument of the active voice is strongly implied but not necessarily overtly expressed.

(1) Hebrew, Biblical

- a. *way-yi-qḥ-u* *plištīm* *ʿet- ʾāron*
 SQ.PST-A.3M-take-A.PL Philistine.MPL DOM ark.SG.CSTR
hā-ʾēlohim
 DEF-God.MPL
 ‘Then the Philistines took the ark of God.’ (1 Sam. 5.2)
- b. *wā-ʾāron* *ʾēlohim ni-lqāḥ-∅*
 and-ark.SG.CSTR God.MPL PASS-take.PST.PFV-S.3MSG
 ‘and the ark of God was taken’ (1 Sam. 4.11)

(2) Akkadian, Old Babylonian

- a. *bēl* *ḥubull-ī* *-šu aššas* *-su*
 owner.SG.CSTR debt-OBL.PL.CSTR -his wife.FSG.CSTR -his
ul i-šabbat-ū
 NEG A.3-seize.IPFV-MPL
 ‘his creditors shall not seize his wife’ (*Laws of Hammurapi*, Law 151, 1789)
- b. *aššat* *awīl-im...* *lā i-šābit-∅*
 wife.FSG.CSTR man.M-GEN.SG NEG S.3-PASS-seize.PST-SG
 ‘the wife of a man was not seized’ (*Laws of Hammurapi*, Law 131, 1499)

(3) Aramaic, Syriac

- a. *ktāb-∅* *ʿl-aw* *ktābā*
 wrote.PFV-A.3PL upon-3FSG writing.MSG
 ‘and they wrote on it an inscription’ (Exod. 39.30)
- b. *n-eṭ-kteb-∅* *hānā* *ktābā* *b-ḫēnqittā*
 S.3-PASS-write-MSG DEM.MSG writing.MSG at-tablet.FSG
 ‘this inscription should be written on a tablet’
 (1 Macc. 14.48)

(4) Ethiopian Semitic, Gə‘əz

a. *wä-qäbär-o* *wəsto mäqabər ḥäddis-Ø*
 and-buried.PFV-A.3MSG.O.3MSG in grave.MSG new-MSG
 ‘And he buried him in a new tomb.’ (Matt. 27.60)

b. *rəʔy-a xaba ta-qabr-a*
 see.IMPV-FPL LOC.REL PASS-bury.PST.PFV-S.3MSG
 ‘See the place where he was buried!’ (Matt. 28.6)

(5) Arabic, Quranic

a. *wa-lā ta-qtul-ū-Ø l-nafs-a llatī*
 and-NEG A.2-kill-A.MPL-SBJV DEF-soul.FSG-ACC REL.FSG
ḥarrām-a llāh-u
 forbid.PST.PFV-A.3MSG God.MSG-NOM
 ‘And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden!’
 (Surah 17.33)

b. *wa-man qutil-a maẓlūm-an*
 and-who PASS\kill-S.3MSG do_wrong.RPP-ACC
 ‘and whoever is killed wrongfully’ (Surah 17.33)

(6) Modern South Arabian, Mehri

a. *n-əwtəg-k*
 A.1PL-kill-O.2MSG
 ‘we will kill you’ (Rubin 2010, 145)

b. *tə-ḥōm-Ø tə-wtōg-Ø*
 S.2-want-S.SG S.2-PASS\kill-S.SG
 ‘you want to get killed’ (Rubin 2010, 139)

Semitic languages have valence-changing affixes and/or mark changes in valence with stem modifications effected through non-concatenative processes, i.e., changes in patterns known as templates, vowel melodies, prosodic shapes, apophony, *Ablaut*, etc. Voice morphology relevant for passivisation comes in two main types:

Affixation:

- an *n*-prefix, as shown in (1b)–(2b), which assimilates fully to the immediately following consonant in Northwest and East Semitic;
- a *t*-affix, as shown in (3b)–(4b), which can be prefixal or infixal—or fully assimilate, like the above;

Stem template modification only, as shown in (5b)–(6b), generally called ‘internal passive’.

Although these derivations are sometimes opposed as ‘external passive’ vs ‘internal passive’, the affixal derivations also usually involve a change in stem template, e.g., Syrian Arabic *yə-ktob* ‘write’ → *yə-n-kəteb* ‘be written’ (Cowell 1964, 91), Jewish Palestinian Aramaic *yi-ktob* ‘write’ → *yi-t-kəteb* ‘be written’.

The distinct strategies mentioned above can co-exist in a single variety of Semitic; for example, in Syrian Arabic (Cowell 1964, 91, 234), where basic verbs can have the following passive derivations:

Active		Passive	
<i>katab</i>	‘write’	<i>n-katab</i>	‘be written’
<i>nəsi</i>	‘forget’	<i>n < t > asa</i>	‘be forgotten’
<i>ʾatal</i>	‘kill’	<i>ʾətəl</i>	‘be killed’

The two morphemes can also be combined, leading to a fusion of an *n*-prefix and *t*-affix into one derivation, e.g., Mishnaic Hebrew *biššēl* ‘boil’ (tr.) → *n-it-baššēl* ‘be boiled’ (Segal 1927, 67), Maltese Arabic *ʾāl* ‘say’ → *antʾāl* ‘be said’ (Retsö 1983, 125). The *n*-prefix can also be used to create passives of original *t*-formations in some varieties of Arabic, such as Bahraini Arabic *ti-farrag* ‘disperse’ → *in-ti-farrag* ‘be dispersed’ (Holes 2006, 252–53). Pattern

modification, in turn, can also be assigned to the affix-based derivations; thus in Classical Arabic, for example, the transitive *t*-verb *ta-qabbal-a* ‘accept’ has a corresponding passive formed through stem modification: *tu-qubbil-a* ‘be accepted’. For further details and overviews of diathesis and passive voice morphology in Semitic, see, among others, Retsö (1989), Hasselbach (2013, 151–56), and Peters (2021).

Importantly, in Classical Arabic, only the ‘internal passive’ represents dedicated passive voice morphology, whereas the *n*-affix generally represents an anticausative voice marker; cf. internal stem modification: *kusira* ‘it was broken (by somebody)’ vs *n*-affixation: *(i)nkasara* ‘it broke (by itself)’ (Khalil 1988–1989, 15). Thus, with the possible exception of the internal passive, all so-called external ‘passive’ formations are associated with grammatical voice operations that can generally—though strictly speaking not always—be subsumed under ‘detransitivisation’, i.e., reduction in morphosyntactic and semantic transitivity. Hence, the term ‘detransitiviser’ (DTRZ) will be used to avoid confusion with a dedicated passive (see also, for instance, Garr 2021, 243). Indeed, there is much scholarly debate as to what constitutes the defining semantic characteristic of each of the formations. In general, however, we are dealing with voice syncretism and voice neutralisation, in which semantic distinctions are based on multiple factors—such as the context, the lexical verb, etc.—and the voice morphology of the verb alone is not sufficient.

1.3. Terminology

The shorthand labels of verbal derivations that are adopted in this chapter, which are widely used in the field, are presented in Table 1. Such derivations can be found in the literature under various traditional terms, such as *binyanim* ‘structures’ in Hebrew and *ʿawzān* ‘measures’ in Arabic linguistics, whose names are formed on the basis of the dummy root p^l or f^l ‘action, verb’, respectively; see Tables 2–3 for examples from Hebrew and Aramaic (Syriac). In Semitics, they are referred to as ‘stems’, which should not be confused with the more widespread use of this terminology in, for instance, Indo-European linguistics, where the term ‘stem’ designates the base to which inflectional endings are added. These ‘stems’, or rather derivations, come with an accompanying siglum, e.g., ‘G’-stem, ‘D’-stem, etc., generally taken from the traditional German designation that was inspired by a characteristic feature of the respective derivation.

Basic—i.e., nonderived—verbs are classified under the ‘G-stem’, so called after German *Grundstamm*, for which the core transitivity derivations are the ‘D-stem’, so called after German *Doppelungsstamm* and also known as ‘factitive’ or ‘intensive’, with a characteristic geminated—or *Doubled*—second radical; and the C-stem, named after its Causative function (German *Kausativstamm*; for examples, see §2.3), although transitivity is not the only function of these forms.

Table 1: Semitic verbal derivations and their traditional terminology

		Hebrew	Aramaic	Arabic
G-stem	Root Verbs	<i>Qal</i>	<i>P'al</i>	I <i>fa'ala</i>
D-stem	Transitivisers of	<i>Pi'el</i>	<i>Pa'el</i>	II <i>fa'ala</i>
C-stem	G	<i>Hif'il</i>	(H) <i>af'el</i>	IV <i>'af'ala</i>
Gp-stem	Internal	(<i>Pu'al</i>)	<i>P'il</i>	<i>fu'ila</i>
Dp-stem	Passives of	<i>Pu'al</i>	<i>Pu'al</i>	<i>fu'ila</i>
Cp-stem	G, D and C	<i>Hof'al</i>	<i>Hof'al</i>	<i>'uf'ila</i>
nG-stem	Detransitivising <i>n</i> -prefix of G	<i>Nif'al</i>		VII (<i>infa'ala</i>)
Gt/tG-stem	Detransitivising		<i>Ethp'el</i>	VIII (<i>ifta'ala</i>)
Dt/tD-stem	<i>t</i> -affixes of	<i>Hithpa'el</i>	<i>Ethpa'al</i>	V <i>tafa'ala</i>
Ct/tC-stem	G, D and C		<i>Ettaf'al</i>	X (<i>istaf'ala</i>)

Table 2: Main derivation classes in Hebrew

	Active	Detransitiviser	Internal Passive
G	<i>lāqah</i> 'take' <i>lābeš</i> 'wear'	nG <i>nilqah</i> 'be taken' <i>niš'ar</i> 'remain'	Gp <i>gunnah</i> 'be stolen'
D	<i>kibbes</i> 'wash' <i>kissā</i> 'cover'	tD <i>hitkassā</i> 'cover oneself'	Dp <i>kubbas</i> 'be washed'
C	<i>himlik</i> 'make king'		Cp <i>homlak</i> 'be made king'

Table 3: Main derivation classes in Aramaic (examples from Syriac unless stated otherwise)

	Active		Detransitiviser		Internal Passive
G	<i>q̄tal</i> 'kill' <i>l̄beš</i> 'wear'	tG	' <i>eṭq̄teḅ</i> 'be killed' ' <i>eṣdhar</i> 'be careful'	Gp BA	<i>q̄til</i> 'be killed'
D	<i>q̄abbel</i> 'receive' <i>kassi</i> 'cover'	tD	' <i>eṭq̄abbal</i> 'be received' ' <i>eṭkassi</i> 'cover oneself'		
C	' <i>amleḵ</i> 'make king'	tC	' <i>eṭtamleḵ</i> 'be made king'	Cp BA	* <i>homlak</i> 'be made king'

2.0. Passive Marking in the Context of Derivation

2.1. 'Basic' Verbs: Active vs Stative

'Basic' verbs, i.e., those belonging to the 'G-stem', cover a wide range of semantic classes, and the majority of intransitive verbs are found in this group. Some of them comprise a special subclass which are generally considered 'stative', in opposition to 'fientive' (i.e., active-dynamic) verbs, but this category can be subsumed under the principle of inactivation through stem modification more generally (see §5.4).

First, primary transitive verbs occur in the G-stem, as listed in Table 4. Classification of a verb as primary transitive becomes more likely towards the left edge, corresponding to greater direct involvement of the object, whereas the selection of a prepositional object has been associated with a decrease in affectedness of the patient (e.g., Tsunoda 1985; for studies of transitivity in

Biblical Hebrew, see Bekins 2014 and Coleman 2018). The agent-orientated verbs that combine with prepositional objects often select for a kind of target or source, and semantically the patient is less directly or definitively affected. Examples of two-argument verbs of similar semantics with indirect objects rather than direct objects are given in (7)–(9).

(7) Biblical Hebrew

ʾal-ʾε-rʾε b- moṭ hay-yāleḏ
 NEG=A.1SG-see at- death.MSG.CSTR DEF-child.MSG

‘Let me not look at the death of the child!’ (Gen. 21.16)

(8) Targum Aramaic

u-šd-o qaššāt-ayyā b- ʿabḏ-āk
 and-threw-A.3PL bowman.M-DET.PL at- servant.MPL.CSTR-2MSG

‘And the bowmen shot at your servants.’ (2 Sam. 11.24)

(9) Syriac

lā qnaṭ-Ø men kumrā
 NEG feared-A.3MSG from priest.MSG

‘He was not afraid of the priest.’ (*Ephr. Gen. Ex.* 128.22–23)

Table 4: Main semantic classes for G-stem transitive verbs in Hebrew and Aramaic

	effective	perception	pursuit	knowledge	feeling
	‘kill’	‘see; observe’	‘follow’	‘know’	‘fear’
Hebrew	<i>hrg</i>	<i>rʾy</i>	<i>rḏp</i>	<i>yd^c</i>	<i>yrʾ</i>
Aramaic	<i>qṭl</i>	<i>ḥzy/ḥmy</i>	<i>rḏp</i>	<i>yd^c</i>	<i>dḥl</i>

Across Semitic languages, basic verbs are separated into so-called ‘fientive’ and ‘stative’ subclasses on the basis of the thematic vowels found after their second radical in the prefix and suffix conjugation, respectively. The majority of G-verbs exhibit

a low or open vowel /a/ in the suffix conjugation, and a high or close vowel in the prefix conjugation, e.g.,

(10) Inflection of Active Verbs

	Suffixal	Prefixal	
BH	<i>kāṭab</i>	<i>yi-ktob</i>	‘to write’
TA	<i>kəṭab</i>	<i>yi-ktob</i>	(BA : <i>yi-ktub</i>)
CS	<i>ktab</i>	<i>ne-ktob</i>	(WS : <i>ne-ktub</i>)

A common pattern for the so-called ‘stative’ G-verbs, some of which are two-argument verbs, is the reverse of this, with, historically, a low or open vowel /a/ in the prefix conjugation, and varying vowels, often high or close, in the suffix conjugation, e.g.,

(11) Stative single-argument verbs

	Suffixal	Prefixal	
BH	<i>kābeḏ</i>	<i>yi-kbad</i>	‘to be(come) severe’
TA	<i>təqeḥ</i>	<i>yi-tqaḥ</i>	
BH	<i>zāqen</i>	<i>yi-zqan</i>	‘to be(come) old’
TA	<i>s(?)eḥ</i>	<i>yi-s’aḥ</i>	

(12) Stative two-argument verbs

BH	<i>lābeš</i>	<i>yi-lbaš</i>	‘to wear’
TA	<i>ləbeš</i>	<i>yi-lbaš</i>	
BH	<i>yāre(?)</i>	<i>yi-rā(?)</i>	‘to fear’
TA	<i>dəḥel</i>	<i>yi-dḥal</i>	
BH	<i>yāda‘</i>	<i>ye-da‘</i>	‘to know’
TA	<i>yəda‘</i>	<i>yi-dda‘</i>	

Finally, although this active-stative distinction presumably goes back to common Semitic, and, indeed, Afro-Asiatic more

widely (see Kossmann and Suchard 2018), it has become lexicalised, mixed, and the original meanings blurred, resulting in a primarily morphological category devoid of semantic specification (see also §5.4 below).

2.2. Internal Passives of Active Transitive G-Verbs

While the G-passive is a well-known characteristic of Arabic, e.g., active *katab-a* : *ya-ktub-* ‘write’ → passive *kutib-a* : *yu-ktab-* ‘be written’ (see also §5.4), a similar strategy used to be available in Northwest Semitic as well. In the majority of cases, however, the vocalisms of the forms are unknown due to the abjad writing systems. The prefixal forms are attested with the pattern *yu-qtal* in the Canaanite of the Amarna tablets, written in Akkadian syllabographic cuneiform writing (Rayney 1996, 75–80). The same holds true for the aleph with vowel signs in the Ugaritic cuneiform alphabet (see Tropper 2000), which points to *qVtal-a* : *yu-qtal* (Notarius 2023, 74). These forms seem to have been preserved in Biblical Hebrew as well. The active–passive alternation is illustrated for *yld* ‘give birth; beget’ in (13); see Gzella (2009) and Staps (2022) for a detailed discussion of this verb and its alternations.

(13) Biblical Hebrew (Jer. 20.14)

- a. *yom* *’āšer yələd-āt-ni* *’imm-i*
 day.MSG.CSTR REL bore.PFV-A.3FSG-O.1SG mother.FSG-my
 ‘the day when my mother bore me’
- b. *hay-yom* *’āšer yullad-ti* *b-o*
 DEF-day.MSG REL PASS\bore-S.1SG at-3MSG
 ‘the day on which I was born’

The Masoretic vocalisation of such Gp-forms, however, reflects a gemination of the second consonant, as if it instantiated a Dp-form (on D-passives, see next subsection). Thus, although the root *yld* ‘give birth’ has no known active D-formation, it does have an internal passive that is vocalised as if it were a D-passive, which has been attributed to the extension of the D-forms in Hebrew starting in the Second Temple period (Fassberg 2001). The gemination is almost certainly secondary, presumably to preserve the characteristic short *u* in pronunciation. This is demonstrated by originally G-passive forms vocalised with gemination of consonants that are normally not geminated in the Masoretic text, such as the gemination of the glottal stop ʾ /ʔ/ (represented by < ʾ >) in the passive of the G-verb *rʾy* ‘see’: רָאָה *ruʾu* for originally **ruʾayū* ‘they were seen’ (Job 33.21).

In the case of the prefix conjugation of the passive forms of *lqh* ‘take’ and *ntn* ‘give’, however, this gemination can be attributed to a plausible historical process, namely the complete regressive assimilation of the first radical to the second, which also occurs in the prefix conjugation of the corresponding active forms, e.g.,

Active G-stem

3MSG	‘take’	<i>yi-qqah</i>	< * <i>yi-lqah</i>
3MSG	‘give’	<i>yi-tten</i>	< * <i>ya-ntin</i>

Passive G-stem

3MSG	‘be taken’	<i>yu-qqah</i>	< * <i>yu-lqah</i>
3MSG	‘be given’	<i>yu-ttan</i>	< * <i>yu-ntan</i>

These forms are generally considered to be better analysed as C-passive forms rather than original G-passives (Fassberg 2001,

254; on C-passives, see next subsection), but this is a moot point, since C-passives would have been indistinct from the original G-passive. After all, they are identical in Classical Arabic; cf. *yu-ṭ‘am* Gp (basic passive) ‘be eaten’ or Cp (causative passive) ‘be fed’ (Fischer 1972, 106, §219).

In epigraphic Aramaic, the internal passive also occurs, but the vocalic patterns are unknown (Degen 1969, 66; Folmer 1995, 221–22; Kalinin and Loesov 2023). In Biblical Aramaic, the G-passive only occurs in its suffixal forms and exhibits the pattern **qaṭīl* (see further §5.6). The G-forms for Old Aramaic are generally reconstructed as follows:

	G-active	G-passive
Suffixal	* <i>qaṭal</i>	* <i>qaṭīl</i>
Prefixal	* <i>ya-qtul</i>	* <i>yu-qtal</i>

2.3. Internal Passives of Other Transitive Verbs

The D-stem and C-stem are employed as valency-increasing devices, adding an additional argument to the basic verb, as illustrated for Hebrew and Aramaic in (14) and (15), respectively.

(14) Biblical Hebrew

G-stem		D-stem	
<i>lāmaq</i>	‘learn’	<i>limmed</i>	‘teach’
<i>śāmeaḥ</i>	‘be glad’	<i>śimmeaḥ</i>	‘make glad’
G-stem		C-stem	
<i>lābeš</i>	‘wear; dress (intr.)’	<i>hilbiš</i>	‘dress (tr.); clothe’
<i>ḥāreb</i>	‘be destroyed’	<i>heḥēraḅ</i>	‘destroy’
<i>yāda‘</i>	‘know’	<i>hoḏia‘</i>	‘make known’

(15) Syriac

G-stem		D-stem	
<i>bšēl</i>	‘be ripe’	<i>baššēl</i>	‘make ripe’
<i>ilēp</i>	‘learn’	ʾ <i>allep</i>	‘teach’
G-stem		C-stem	
<i>lḥeš</i>	‘wear; dress (intr.)’	ʾ <i>albeš</i>	‘dress (tr.); clothe’
<i>ḥreḥ</i>	‘be destroyed’	ʾ <i>aḥreḥ</i>	‘destroy’
<i>iḏaʿ</i>	‘know’	ʾ <i>awdaʿ</i>	‘make known’

Since the function of these derivations is not restricted to transitivity, there is considerable scholarly debate concerning the original common denominator behind the semantic distribution of these verbal derivations, a question that lies beyond the scope of this chapter. Moreover, there are many cases where both transitive derivations are available for a single verb, with no apparent semantic difference, e.g., Biblical Aramaic D *n-ḥawwe* (Dan. 2.4) ~ C *n-haḥāwe* (Dan. 2.7), both from *ḥwy* and both conveying ‘tell; show’. Sporadically, verbs have been lexicalised for one specific derivation, e.g., Biblical Hebrew D *dibber* ‘speak’ ← *dābār* ‘word’, D *teʿeb* ‘abhor’ ← *toʿebā* ‘abomination’, C *heriaḥ* ‘smell’ ← *reah* ‘smell’; common Aramaic D *mallel* ‘speak’ ← *millā* ‘word’, D *tallet* ‘divide by three’ ← *tlāt* ‘three’; Syriac D *battel* ‘violate a virgin’ ← *bṭulā* ‘virgin’ (Payne-Smith 1903, 57). Generally speaking, as a valency-increasing device, the C-stem is more readily used than the D-stem in Hebrew and Aramaic, for instance, to create causatives out of already transitive verbs, e.g., ʾ*kl* G ‘eat’ → C ‘feed’. Especially in the Hebrew C-stem, however, some measure of voice neutralisation has occurred, presumably because the C-stem was also used for category conversion, i.e.,

the verbalisation of nouns and adjectives (Gesenius and Kautzsch 1910, §53c–g).

For all formations, Hebrew has a corresponding passive derivation formed through stem modification. An example of a causative formation with passive diathesis is given in (16). These internal passives—here abbreviated as Dp and Cp—are marked by a characteristic /u/ in the first syllable of the stem, e.g.,

	D-stem	Dp-stem
Suffixal	<i>qittal</i>	<i>quṭṭal</i>
Prefixal	<i>yə-qattal</i>	<i>yə-quṭṭal</i>
Participle	<i>mə-qattal</i>	<i>mə-quṭṭal</i>
	C-stem	Cp-stem
Suffixal	<i>hiqṭil</i>	<i>hoqṭal ~ huqṭal</i>
Prefixal	<i>y-aqṭil</i>	<i>y-oqṭal ~ y-uqṭal</i>
Participle	<i>m-aqṭil</i>	<i>m-oqṭal ~ m-uqṭal</i>

(16) Biblical Hebrew (Gen. 39.1)

- a. *hay-yiṣmaʿelim ʾāšer horiḏ-ú* *-hu*
DEF-Ishmaelite.MPL REL descended.CAUS-A.3MPL -O.3MSG
šāmma
 there
 ‘the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there’
- b. *w=yosep hurad-∅* *mišrāym-ā*
and-Joseph PASS\descended.CAUS-S.3MSG Egypt-DRCT
 ‘Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt.’

Similarly, Aramaic—presumably—used to have internal passive paradigms for all derivations, which were later replaced by voice-marking affixes. In Biblical Aramaic, for instance, the internal passive is already restricted; it is only available for G-verbs and C-verbs and is only attested in the suffix conjugation, e.g.,

(17) Biblical Aramaic

q̄ṭil-at *ḥewyətā* *w-ḥubad-∅*
 PASS\killed-S.3FSG animal.DET.FSG and=PASS\destroyed.CAUS-S.3MSG

gišm-ah
 body.MSG-3FSG

‘the beast was killed, and its body was destroyed’ (Dan. 7.11)

Furthermore, the vowels in the inflection of the D-passive may have exhibited variation in Aramaic, varying between *CuCCaC* and *CuCCiC*, with the corresponding participle also exhibiting *CaCCaC*. The template of *CuCCiC* in the suffix conjugation of internal passives is considered a core innovation of Arabic against *CuCCaC* in Northwest Semitic (Huehnergard 2017, 18–22; Al-Jallad 2018, 7–8), e.g., Classical Arabic *xarriba* ‘destroy’ → *xurriba* ‘be destroyed (by sb.)’. There is evidence from Northeastern Neo-Aramaic, however, that the same pattern *CuCCiC* must have existed in some varieties of early Aramaic (see Noorlander, Chapter 3), as this pattern is common to all of the dialects and therefore must have existed prior to intense contact with Arabic.

The vowel after the first radical in the template of the D-stem passive participle also shows variation in early literary Aramaic, in this case between /u/ and /a/. Instead of the expected characteristic /u/ in the first syllable, e.g., **mVquttal*—which is reminiscent of the Hebrew passives mentioned above—we mainly find reflexes of a template **mVqattal* in literary Aramaic, which is a cognate of the Arabic D-passive participle *muqattal*. Thus, the Classical Arabic alternation between D-active participle *muqattil* and D-passive participle *muqattal* corresponds directly to the Syriac D-active participle *mqattel* and D-passive participle *mqattal*, respectively. However, in addition to Northeastern Neo-

Aramaic (see Noorlander, Chapter 3), (Western) varieties of literary Aramaic exhibit the vowel /u/ in the first syllable of the passive participle, e.g., *məbuššal* ‘cooked’ (Targum Jonathan, 1 Sam. 2.15); *mətuqqan* ‘put in place’ (Targum Onkelos, Exod. 15.17), which was borrowed into Mishnaic Hebrew—the same root *tqn*, however, occurs in the Cp-stem in Biblical Aramaic (Dan. 4.36). It is conceivable that the pattern *CuCCaC emerged either through contact with Hebrew or through analogical extension of the same template in the prefix conjugation of the G-passive, i.e., *yuCCaC.

2.4. Affixal ‘Passives’: *n-* and *t-*

Generally speaking, there is a tendency for derivation through stem modification to be marginalised or even disappear due to the extension of derivational affixes. In Hebrew, the nG-form—**naqtal*, corresponding to Arabic class VII (*i*)*nfa‘ala*—took over the formation of the G-passive. In this form, the characteristic nasal, if immediately followed by a consonant in the inflection, assimilates to it, e.g., **ya-n-qatil* > **yi-n-qâtel* > BH *yi-q-qâtel*. The nG-form exists alongside the only surviving *t-*formation (see further below) in Hebrew, which is largely confined to reflexive–reciprocal semantics, e.g.,

	Suffixal	Prefixal	Infinitive	Participle
nG	<i>ni-qtal</i>	<i>yi-q-qâtel</i>	<i>hi-q-qâtel</i>	<i>ni-qtâl</i>
tD	<i>hit-qattel</i>	<i>yi-t-qattel</i>	<i>hi-t-qattel</i>	<i>mi-t-qattel</i>

The nG-form is not a dedicated passive, but, apart from passivisation, also involves other detransitivisation semantics typical of the derivation of anticausatives (see §5.2).

The nG-form can constitute the passive counterpart to active verbs not only of the basic form, but also of derived forms. In Amos 3.12, for instance, the active causative (C-stem) *yaššil* ‘he rescues’ is paralleled by the nG-form *yinnāšlu* ‘they shall be rescued’, and not by the corresponding internal passive of the causative (Cp-stem). Similarly, in Job 22.30, the active D-form *yəmalleṭ* ‘he delivers’ is paralleled by the nG-form *wənimlaṭ* ‘and he shall be delivered’.

The *t*-affixal derivations have been available to Aramaic from the beginning, e.g., G **ya-ktub* ‘he writes’ : tG **y-it-katib* ‘it is written’, existing alongside the internal passives that gradually disappeared (e.g., Gzella 2015, 34, 44) and were lost from the beginning of the first century AD onwards (Beyer 1984, 152), with the tC-formation presumably being a later innovation (Meehan 1991; Kalinin and Loesov 2022). The same presumably holds true for Hebrew, but, here, the *t*-affix was confined to a tD-derivation. This tD-derivation became the productive basis for reflexive and reciprocal formations in contradistinction to the nG-form (Boyd 1993; Gzella 2009; Garr 2021), and only later, in Mishnaic Hebrew, did it acquire the *n*-prefix and replace the D-passive (Meehan 1991). The nG- and tD-forms are the only de-transitive voice markers in Samaritan Hebrew (Retsö 2013). A few relics of passive connotations of the *t*-affix, however, do occur in Biblical Hebrew, e.g., G *pāqad* ~ D *piqqed* ‘muster’ → tD *hitpaqqed* ‘be mustered’ (Judg. 21.9), D *berek* → tD *hitbārek* ‘be blessed’ (Gen. 22.18), D *kipper* ‘atone for’ → tD *hitkapper* ‘be atoned for’ (1 Sam. 3.14). Sporadically, the tD-derivation can also be anticausative, e.g., *hitmogeg* ‘to melt; to dissolve’ (Amos 9.13).

A peculiar case is the *t*-formation *yityaṣṣeb*, from the root $\sqrt{yṣb}$, for the position verb ‘stand’, which occurs in a suppletive relationship with the *nG*-formation of the biform root $\sqrt{nṣb}$, *niṣṣab* ‘stand’.

Thus, the *n*-affix is notably absent in Aramaic, and the *t*-formations notably limited in Hebrew, although both would have been present in Northwest Semitic. This redistribution of *n*- and *t*-based derivations parallels a situation in Neo-Arabic varieties. In North-African dialects of Arabic, one prefix has been levelled in favour of the other, resulting in so-called ‘N-dialects’ and ‘T-dialects’ (Retsö 1989, 98–99, 128–29). Elsewhere in Neo-Arabic, the *n*-prefix serves to detransitivise basic verbs, while the *t*-prefix tends to be confined to derived verbs, for instance, in Mesopotamian *qəltu*-Arabic (Retsö 1989, 78–81). In other dialects, the *Gt*-form tends to be lexicalised for verbs containing a resonant or semi-vowel (Retsö 1989, 64).

The Semitic affixes *n* and *t* have a deep history, and are presumably related to similar detransitivisation morphemes in Afro-Asiatic. In Beja, a Northern Cushitic language (Sudan, Eritrea), for instance, the suffix *-am-* and the prefix *t-* can be used to form passives (Appleyard 2007), e.g.,

(18) Cushitic, Beja (Appleyard 2007)

Active	<i>tam -nà</i> eat -PL	‘We were eating.’
Passive	<i>tam-am -nà</i> eat-PASS -1PL	‘We were being eaten.’
Active	ʔi- <i>dir -nà</i> 3M kill -PL	‘They killed.’
Passive	ʔi- <i>too-dáar -na</i> 3M PASS-kill -PL	‘They were killed.’

2.5. Ambitransitivity

Occasionally, basic verbs can be labile or ambitransitive (see Coleman 2018 for Biblical Hebrew),² which applies when the same verbal forms can have a transitive/causative or an intransitive/inchoative meaning (see example 19). Thus, in both Hebrew and Aramaic, the same forms of the verbal root **mlʿ* (see also §5.4) can convey the causative sense of ‘to fill’ as well as the inchoative sense of ‘to be filled’ (stative) or ‘to become filled’ (dynamic).

(19) Biblical Hebrew

	Causative	Inchoative
<i>yi-mlá(?)</i>	‘fill (tr.)’	‘fill (intr.); be filled’
<i>ye-ḥzaq</i>	‘overpower’	‘be(come) strong’
<i>yi-ḫroš</i>	‘breach (tr.)’	‘break out (intr.)’ ³
<i>yi-ḫ‘ar</i>	‘burn (tr.)’ ⁴	‘burn (intr.)’ ⁵
<i>ya-‘āroš</i>	‘frighten’ ⁶	‘be(come) afraid’ ⁷
<i>yi-spe</i>	‘sweep away’	‘vanish; be swept away’ ⁸
<i>ya-tte</i>	‘turn aside (tr.)’	‘turn aside (intr.)’ ⁹
<i>yá-mug</i>	‘(make) melt (tr.)’ ¹⁰	‘melt (intr.)’

² Basic verbs can also be labile in Arabic, e.g., Cairene Arabic (see Agameya 2001), Turoyo (see Kuzin, Chapter 2), and Northeastern Neo-Aramaic (see Noorlander, Chapter 3).

³ E.g., Gen. 28.14.

⁴ E.g., Ps. 83.15.

⁵ E.g., Exod. 3.2.

⁶ E.g., Job 13.24

⁷ E.g., Josh. 1.9.

⁸ E.g., Jer. 12.4; possibly also Amos 3.15.

⁹ E.g., Amos 2.8.

¹⁰ E.g., Isa. 64.6.

Moreover, several verbs belonging to the C-stem are ambitransitive, e.g., Hebrew *higia*‘ ‘to reach/touch; to make reach/touch’, *hilbin* ‘to whiten (tr./intr.)’, *hiqriḅ* ‘to come/bring near’ (see, e.g., Grasso 2021). The C-stem of *šlh* ‘to prosper, to succeed’ is ambitransitive in both Hebrew and Aramaic. An interesting case in point of the voice-neutral use of a C-stem in Hebrew is *wəhišlakṭénâ* ‘and you shall be cast out’ in Amos 4.3, which is vocalised as an active-causative form but semantically conveys the passive-causative. The latter is found, for instance, in the Syriac translation of the verse, which has a *t*-formation of the root *šdy* ‘to cast down’. Another illustrative example of an ambitransitive C-stem verb is *himṭir* ‘to send down rain’, presumably a denominative verb derived from the noun *mâṭâr* ‘rain’. In Amos 4.7, a divine oracle announces the withholding of rain as divine judgement. The active transitive C-stem occurs with the divine oracle in the first person, i.e., *lo ’amṭir* ‘I will not send down rain’. The two following verbs have *ḥelqâ* ‘a field’ (FSG) as subject and are intransitive: the first is vocalised as an nG-stem, *lo... timmâṭer* ‘rain shall not come down [upon it]’, but the second is vocalised as an intransitive (!) C-stem, *lo ṭamṭir* ‘alēḥâ, conveying ‘rain shall not be sent down upon it’. Both the Jewish Palestinian Aramaic and the Syriac translation of this verse translate the latter two verbs with the intransitive verb *nḥt* ‘come down’.

3.0. The Properties of the Subject

3.1. The Referential Reduction of the Subject

The impersonalisation of passives is possible in Hebrew and Aramaic (e.g., Muraoka 2005, 64, §79). The impersonal subject is non-referential and can be either masculine or feminine singular, e.g.,

(20) Biblical Hebrew

ʾāšer y-eʾāmer-∅ hay-yom
 CONJ 3.M-say.DTRZ-SG DEF-day.MSG

‘as people say (lit. as it is said) to this day’ (Gen. 22.14)

(21) Syriac

ʿeštma^c-∅ =wā ʿla-w b-kull-āh karkā
 heard.DTRZ-S.3MSG to-priest.MSG on-3MSG in-all-3FSG city.FSG

‘People (lit. it was) heard about him in the entire city.’ (*Ad-dai* 5.12)

3.2. Passives of Intransitive Verbs

In some languages, passive morphology can be used to impersonalise intransitive verbs—like Latin *curritur*, German *es wird gerannt*, both conveying ‘it is being run’ → ‘there are people running’. This does not seem to occur in Classical Hebrew and Classical Aramaic, but it is possible in Arabic, for both internal passives and affixal detransitives. Thus, in Arabic, the passive or detransitive morphology occurs with intransitives to form an impersonal construction. The passive verb is inflected for the 3MSG and generally occurs with a locative complement, expressed as an adverbial or prepositional phrase (Wright 1898, II, §133; Fischer 1972, §199), e.g.,

(22) Arabic

- a. *y-usār-u* *ʿilay-hā*
 S.3-PASS\travel-IND to-3FSG
 ‘People travel to it.’ (Classical Arabic, Fischer 1972, 98)
- b. *it-nām-∅* *‘ala s-sirīr*
 DTRZ-slept-S.3MSG in DEF-bed.MSG
 ‘People slept on the bed.’ (Unspecified Arabic dialect, Retsö 1983, 35)
- c. *annawb mō yə-n-qə‘əd-∅* *fə- š-šəte*
 then NEG S.3-DTRZ-sit-S.MSG in DEF-winter
 ‘In winter one cannot sit there.’ (Anatolian *qəltu*-Arabic, Kinderib, Jastrow 2003, 58)

For examples of this usage in spoken Neo-Aramaic, see Kuzin (Chapter 2). However, this does not mean that the morphology associated with passivisation of transitive actions in Classical Hebrew and Classical Aramaic is excluded from alternating with lexically intransitive verbs (see §5.2). The middle-voice constructions which the Hebrew and Aramaic forms instantiate, however, are typologically distinct from the impersonal ones found in Arabic.

3.3. Passives of Ditransitive Verbs

In Semitic, ditransitive constructions generally come in at least two types (for a typology of ditransitive constructions, see Maluchokov et al. 2010):

- (i) indirective type, where only the theme is treated like the direct object but the recipient enjoys distinct morphology, such as the preposition *l-* in (23);

- (ii) neutral type, where both the theme and recipient are expressed like the direct object.

In passivisation of the indirective type, only the theme can be selected as the subject, e.g.,

(23) Indirective type, Syriac

- a. *hab l-ī bnayyē*
 give.IMPV to-1SG son.MPL
 ‘Give sons to me!’ (*Ephr. Gen. Ex.* 90.25)
- b. *n-eṭ-yab-ūn l-ī bnayyē*
 3M-DTRZ-give-MPL to-1SG son.MPL
 ‘that sons may be given to me.’ (*Ephr. Gen. Ex.* 90.26)¹¹

The second strategy occurs in its most typical form in Classical Arabic. There, the corresponding passive of the neutral type can accordingly select as subject either the recipient, as shown in (24c), or the theme, e.g., (24d).

(24) Neutral type, Quranic Arabic

- a. *ʾātay-nā mūsā l-kitāb-a*
 gave-A.1PL Moses.M.SG.ACC DEF-book.MSG-ACC
 ‘we gave Moses the book’ (Surah 2.53)
- b. *ʾātā -∅ -nī l-kitāb-a*
 gave -A.3MSG -O.1SG DEF-book.MSG-ACC
 ‘he gave me the book’ (Surah 19.30)

¹¹ Indirective passivisation is also a feature of Mandaic, e.g., <*li-bra bukra iušamin et-iahb-at*> ‘She was given to the first-born son of Yošamin’ (Gy 374.11; Drower and Macuch 1963, 189b) and Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, e.g., *ʾiṭyab l-ḵon ʾoraytā* ‘The Torah was given to you’ (*Sab* 116b(7); Sokoloff 2002, 527b–528a).

- c. *ʿal-laḏī-na ʿūt-ū* *naṣīb-a-n*
 DEF-REL-MPL PASS\give.PST.PFV-S.3PL portion.MSG-ACC-NONDET
min al-kitāb-i
 from DEF-book.MSG-GEN
 ‘the ones who have been given a portion of the book’
 (Surah 4.44)
- d. *ʿūtīy-a* *n-nabiyy-ūna* *min*
 PASS\give.PST.PFV-S.3MSG DEF-prophet-NOM.PL from
rabb-i-him
 lord.MSG-GEN-their
 ‘[to] the prophets it has been given by their Lord’ (Su-
 rah 2.136)

Here, generally, both the recipient and the theme will be in the accusative case. In the corresponding passive, the nonsubject argument can be in the accusative, e.g., (24c), or in the nominative, e.g., (24d). In Hebrew and Aramaic, on the other hand, the neutral type is lexically more restricted than the indirective type, but several verbs can occur in both (see Noorlander 2025), e.g.,

(25) Neutral and indirective, Syriac

- a. *mušā mānā paqqed-∅* *-kon*
 Moses what commanded-A.3MSG -O.2MPL
 ‘What did Moses command you?’ (*Sinait.* Mark 10.3)
- b. *hākannā ʿet-paqqad-n* *menn-eh*
 thus DTRZ-command-S.1PL from-3MSG
 ‘We were thus commanded by him.’
- c. *lā ʿet-paqqad-∅* *l-eh*
 NEG DTRZ-command-S.3MSG to-3MSG
 ‘It had not been commanded to him.’ (*Ephr. Gen.* 19.11)

3.4. Non-Promotional Passives

In Hebrew, and Targum Aramaic for that matter, a direct object can retain its status as such in a passivised construction and remain accessible for differential marking indistinguishable from that used to mark direct objects in active constructions. Thus, example (26b) shows the prototypical passive, where the theme, which corresponds to the object in (26a), is promoted to subject. In (26c), however, the patient is both grammatically the subject, controlling agreement, and differentially marked in the same way as an identifiable and referential direct object would usually be.

(26) Indirective type, Biblical Hebrew

- a. *hinā-ni notēn-∅ 'et= hā-'ir haz-zot*
 DEIX.COP-OBJ.1SG give.APP-S.MSG DOM= DEF-city.FSG DEF-DEM.FSG
b-yad mēlek= bābel
 in-hand.FSG.CSTR king.MSG.CSTR Babylon
 'I am giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon.' (Jer. 34.2)
- b. *w-lā ti-n-nāten-∅ hā-'ir haz-zot*
 and-NEG S.3F-DTRZ-give-S.SG DEF-city.FSG DEF-DEM.FSG
b-yad mēlek 'aššur
 in-hand.FSG.CSTR king.MSG.CSTR Assyria
 'and this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.' (Isa. 36.15)
- c. *w-lā ti-n-nāten-∅ 'et= hā-'ir haz-zot*
 and-NEG S.3F-DTRZ-give-S.SG DOM= DEF-city.FSG DEF-DEM.FSG
b-yad mēlek 'aššur
 in-hand.FSG.CSTR king.MSG.CSTR Assyria
 'and this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.' (2 Kgs 18.30)

Sporadically, the corresponding passive construction is also impersonal, lacking subject agreement, e.g.,

- d. *w-nāṭat-ti* **'eṭ=** *hā-'āreš* *haz-zoṭ*
 SQ.FUT-give-A.1SG DOM= DEF-land.FSG DEF-DEM.FSG
lə-zar'ā-kā
 to-seed.MSG.CSTR-2MSG
 'I shall give this land to your offspring.' (Gen. 48.4)
- e. *y-uttan-∅* **'eṭ=** *hā-'āreš* *haz-zoṭ*
 S.3M-PASS-give-S.SG DOM= DEF-land.FSG DEF-DEM.FSG
la-'ābāḏé-kā
 to-servant.MPL.CSTR-2MSG
 'let this land be given to your servants for a possession' (Num. 32.5)

Similarly, in the neutral type of ditransitive construction, the second object can retain its object status after passivisation, e.g.,

(27) Neutral type, Biblical Hebrew

- a. *way-y-ar'e* *-hu* **'eṭ=** *ham-māqom*
 SQ.PST-A.3MSG-see.CAUS -O.3MSG DOM= DEF-place.MSG
 'he showed him the place' (2 Kgs 6.6)
- b. *wə-hor'ā-∅* **'eṭ=** *hak-kohen*
 SQ.FUT-see.CAUS.PASS-S.3MSG DOM= DEF-priest.MSG
 'it shall be shown the priest' (Lev. 13.49)

This phenomenon is cross-linguistically not uncommon; retention of object coding in the passive occurs, for instance, in Ute (Uto-Aztecan), Spanish, and Nepali (Givón 1984, 578–99), in several Slavic languages, and in Finnish (Waltisberg 2002, 50). Generally, the Targum Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible slavishly imitate the Hebrew syntax in this regard, and Targum Aramaic *yāṭ* corresponds directly to Biblical Hebrew *'eṭ*. In the Syriac

translations, however, differential marking of the object in constructions of the types in (26c), (26d), and (26b) is systematically avoided (see also Noorlander 2025).

In Biblical Hebrew, identifiable patients are also sporadically marked by *'et* in intransitive clauses (see, e.g., Kroeze 2008 for an overview of occurrences, though some of these can be analysed differently), as illustrated in (28). Some have understood this usage to suggest that *'et* is an absolutive case marker, but see Waltisberg (2002, 50) and Hasselbach (2013, 151–65) for ample argumentation against this.

(28) Biblical Hebrew

w=ʿet= hab-barzel nāpal-∅ ʿel= ham-mayim
 and+DOM= DEF-iron.MSG fell.PFV-S.3MSG toward= DEF-water.MPL
 ‘And the iron fell into the water.’ (2 Kgs 6.5)

In the case of three-argument verbs that include an object complement, i.e., the final outcome of a change of state, this theme-like argument can also freely occur as a direct object in the corresponding detransitivised form, while the more recipient-like argument is selected as the subject, e.g.,

(29) Biblical Hebrew

- a. *mālāʾ-u ʿet= hā-ʾāreṣ ḥāmās*
 filled-A.3PL DOM DEF-land.FSG violence.MSG
 ‘they have filled the land with violence.’ (Ezek. 8.17)
- b. *wat-ti-m-māle-∅ hā-ʾāreṣ ʿet= ham-māyim*
 SQ.PST-S.3F-DTRZ-fill-SG DEF-land.FSG DOM DEF-water.MPL
 ‘And the land was filled with water.’ (2 Kgs 3.20)
- c. *wat-ti-m-māle-∅ hā-ʾāreṣ ʿot-ām*
 SQ.PST-S.3F-DTRZ-fill-SG DEF-land.FSG DOM-3MPL
 ‘And the land was filled with them.’ (Exod. 1.7)

In Aramaic, it does not appear to be possible for the object complement to be pronominalised as a direct object, as shown in the Hebrew example (29c). Instead, the theme-like argument is marked by a secondary preposition, e.g.,

(30) Syriac

w-et-maly-at *'ar'ā* *men-hon*
 and-DTRZ-fill.PST.PFV-S.3FSG land.DET.FSG with-3MPL
 'And the land was filled with them.' (Exod. 1.7)

4.0. Role-Based Marking Strategies

4.1. The Expression of Agents/Causes

The agent, if expressed overtly, can be marked by prepositions belonging to the following types, the selection of which is not completely arbitrary, each having their own shades of meaning:¹³

(31) Source 'from' (cf. Greek *apo*, Latin *ab*, German *von*)

a. Biblical Hebrew

ni-ttān-u *me-* *ro'ε* *'ēhād*
 DTRZ-give-S.3PL from- shepherd.MSG one.MSG
 'they were given by one Shepherd' (Eccl. 12.11)

b. Syriac

'aykā *'et-qtel-∅* *men man-u*
 where DTRZ-killed.PFV-S.3MSG from who-COP.3MSG
 'Where was he killed? By whom?' (*Spic.* 49.9–10)

¹³ Similar idioms and prepositions serve as agent complements in Arabic; see Cantarino (1974, 53), Retsö (1983, 25–28), Hasselbach (2013, 154).

c. Jewish Babylonian Aramaic

hu d-lā 'ip-payyas-∅ minn-ay
 3MSG REL=NEG DTRZ-bribed.PFV-S.3MSG from-1SG

'He (i.e., the court's messenger) who was bribed by me.' (Švu 30b (31); Sokoloff 2002, 900a)

d. Mandaic

u-mana aḏ-min-eh 'et-enṣeb-∅
 and=Mana REL=from-3MSG DTRZ-planted.PFV-S.3MSG

'Mana by whom he was created.' (Gy 104)

(32) Foreside 'from before; from the face of' (cf. French *par*, German *vor*)

a. Biblical Hebrew

ti-š-šāhet-∅ hā-'āreš mip-pāne
 S.3F-DTRZ-destroy-SG DEF-land.FSG from-face.PL.CSTR

he-'ārob
 DEF-swarm.MSG

'the land was ruined by the swarms of flies' (Exod. 8.20)

b. Palestinian Aramaic

'it-ḥabbal-at 'ar'ā min-qadām
 DTRZ-destroyed.PFV-S.3FSG land.FSG.DET from=before

'ārobā
 swarm.MSG.DET

'the land was ruined by the swarm' (Targum Onkelos, Exod. 8.20)

(33) Instrument 'by, with, at, through' (cf. English *by*, Dutch *door*)

a. Biblical Hebrew

w=adon-i šuwwā-∅ b-Y'
 and=lord.MSG-my PASS\command.PST.PFV-S.3MSG by-LORD

'my lord was commanded by the LORD' (Num. 36.2)

b. Syriac

qāṭol-e qatḷ-u-k w=eṭ-qṭel-∅
 killer-DET.MPL killed-A.3MPL-O.2SG and=DTRZ-killed.PFV-S.3MSG

b-āḵ
 by-2MSG

‘The killers killed you and they were killed by you (MS).’ (*Ephr. Serm. of the Lord X 8.18–19*)

c. Jewish Babylonian Aramaic

girāʔā b-gir-eh miqṭil-∅
 arrow_maker.MSG by-arrow.MSG-his kill.DTRZ.PTCP-S.MSG

‘The arrow maker was killed by his own arrow.’ (JBA; *Pes 28a (10); Sokoloff 2002, 1007a*)

(34) Idiom *b-* and *yaḳ* ‘hand of’

a. Biblical Hebrew

ʔāšer ni-ttān-ā b-yaḳ moše
 REL DTRZ-give-S.3FSG at-hand.CSTR Moses.MSG

‘that was given by Moses’ (*Neh. 10.29*)

b. Syriac

d=eṭ-ēmar-∅ b-yaḳ ʔešaʔyā
 REL=DTRZ-said.PFV-S.3MSG at-hand.CSTR Isaiah

‘what was said by Isaiah’ (*Matt. 4.14*)

(35) Goal ‘to, for’¹⁴

a. Biblical Hebrew (Gesenius and Kautzsch 1910, §121f)

bāruḵ-∅ bn-i l-Yʾ
 blessed.RPP-MSG son.MSG-my to-LORD

‘Blessed be my son by the LORD!’ (*Judg. 17.2*)

¹⁴ For examples of *li-* in Classical Arabic poetry, especially with pronouns, see Reckendorf (1921, §135), e.g., *ʔal-laḏīna yusʔalūna lahu* ‘those who were asked by him’; Wright (1890, §53a), e.g., *nxadaʔnā lahu* ‘we were deceived by him’.

b. Syriac

hayllen m-et-katb-în l-eh
 DEM.PL PTCP-DTRZ-write-MPL to-3MSG

‘these things which were written by him’ (*Letters of Severus* 416.9–10)

c. Jewish Babylonian Aramaic

ʔit-nqit-u bne yhudāʔe
 DTRZ-seize.PST.PFV-S.3MPL son.CSTR.MPL Jew.MPL.DET
l-amguše
 to-Magian.MPL

‘The Jewish children were taken by the Magian priests.’ (Geonic, *IŠGS* 97:9; Sokoloff 2002, 138b, אשׁוּגוּשׁ)

d. Mandaic (Nöldeke 1875, §248)

ad-m-et-enṣeḅ -l-an pīre
 til=PTCP-DTRZ-plant =to-1PL fruit.DET.MPL

‘until fruits are planted by us’ (*Gy* 325; Nöldeke 1875, 376)

Moreover, some of these expressions denote nonhuman or indirect causation, i.e., inanimate causes, as can be demonstrated by their use with other predicates that are intransitive and denote uncontrolled events, e.g.,

(36) Biblical Hebrew

a. *way-yá-moṭ-∅ mip-pāne hā-rá‘āḅ*
 SQ.PST-S.M-die-SG from-face.PL.CSTR DEF-hunger.MSG

‘he is about to die (lit. died) of hunger’ (*Jer.* 38.9)

b. *yá-muṭ-u ba-héreb*
 S.M-die-PL DEF-sword.MSG

‘they will die by the sword’ (*Jer.* 11.22)

(37) Syriac

- a. *d-lā n-muṭ men ṣahyā*
REL-NEG S.1PL-die from thirst.MSG
'lest we die of thirst' (CS; 6th c. *KwD* 65.6)
- b. *ʾat l-ʿary-āk t-muṭ-∅*¹⁷
NOM.2SG to-cold.MSG-2MSG S.2MSG-die-S.SG
'You (MS) are going to die of (lit. your) cold.' (*Aphr.* IV 74.17)
- c. *b-saypā n-muṭ-on*
by-sword.MSG S.3-die-S.MPL
'By the sword they will die.' (*Pšitta* Matt. 26.52)

4.2. The Expression of Experiencers

In Hebrew and Aramaic, there is an evident preference for the use of the dative to express oblique experiencers, like recipients, of indirective ditransitive verbs, such as 'to give'. The detransitivised counterpart of the active form of experiencer verbs exhibits a syntactic role inversion that is reminiscent of the passive voice (on treating these datives as the agent complement of a passive, see Bar-Asher Siegal 2008; 2011; 2014), e.g.,

(38) Syriac

- a. *l-nāš lā ḥza-w ʾellā l-yešūʿ*
DOM-person.MSG.INDEF NEG saw.PFV-A.3MPL except DOM-Jesus
'They did not see anyone but Jesus.' (*Pšitta* Mark 9.8)

¹⁷ Indirect cause is presumably also a better characterisation of some of the so-called agent complements introduced by *li-* in Classical Arabic, e.g., *ḥattā mā ʾurāʿu lahu* 'until I am no longer frightened of him' (Reckendorf 1921, §135); cf. *irtāʿa lahu ~ minhu* 'He became afraid of him' (Lane 1863–1893, 1187).

- b. *nāš* *lā* 'et-*ḥzi*-∅ *l-hon*
 person.MSG.INDEF NEG DTRZ-see.PST.PFV-S.3MSG to-3MPL
'ellā *'en yešū'*
 except if Jesus.MSG
 'They could not see (lit. it was not seen to them) anyone but Jesus.' (*Sinait.* Mark 9.8)

The feature that characterises the type of construction in (37b), however, is not the agent–patient inversion that is prototypical of a passive, but an alternative construction for expressing (indirect) affectedness. The detransitivised form of *ḥzy* 'see' can denote not only a passive 'be seen', but also many other shades of meaning. It can express a state that enables someone ('*eṭḥzi* 'be seen' → 'be visible'), an uncontrolled process that is directed towards someone ('*eṭḥzi* 'appear'), or a disposition or mental state ('*eṭḥzi* 'appear' → 'seem'). This range of meaning is available for experiencer verbs such as:

	Aramaic	Hebrew
'see'	<i>ḥzy</i>	<i>r'y</i>
'hear'	<i>šm'</i>	<i>šm'</i>
'think'	<i>ḥšb, sbr</i>	<i>ḥšb</i>
'know'	<i>yd'</i>	<i>yd'</i>
'love'	<i>rḥm</i>	<i>'hb</i>
'prefer'	<i>r'y, gby</i>	<i>ršy, bḥr</i>

These mental-activity or mental-state verbs are generally combined with a dative experiencer, as illustrated in (38a) and (39)–(40) (Nöldeke 1904, 192–93, §247). By extension, other verbs may also be included, such as 'eat', where the human participant could be said to register a bodily experience, or verbs where the

human participant could be said to be a benefactor. Detransitivisation of experiencer verbs thus establishes a pragmatic angle relating to how something appears or what impressions are given by it to someone's mind or senses (consider Latin *mihi videtur* 'it seems to me', English *widely known to everyone*). In such cases, the nature of the human undergoer argument as a recipient-like argument licenses the use of a dative. Indeed, a major function of the dative case is to refer to a class of human undergoers under which experiencers are typically subsumed (Croft 1993; Næss 2007). The use of the dative to refer to the experiencer is preferred cross-linguistically as a means of expressing a decrease in agentivity (Croft 1993, 62; cf. Taube 1996 for a similar use of the dative in modern Hebrew). While the selection of the dative is thus not necessarily completely incompatible with agentivity, control over the situation is not in the foreground, and may not in fact be there at all.

(39) Biblical Hebrew

- a. *k-néga^c ni-r^a-∅ l-i b-ab-bāyit*
 as-disease.MSG DTRZ-see.PTCP-MSG to-1SG at-DEF-house.MSG
 'There seems (lit. is being seen) to me [to be] something like a disease in the house.' (Lev. 14.35)
- b. *w=^cattā yi-š-šāma^c-∅ l-am-mélek k-ad-dəbār-im*
 and-now 3M-DTRZ-hear-SG to-DEF-king.MSG as-DEF-word.PL-PL
hā-^aelle
 DEF-DEM.PL
 'And now reports such as these will come to the king's attention (lit. be heard unto the king).' (Neh. 6.7)
- c. *yi-w-wāda^c-∅ lā-kem*
 3M-DTRZ-know-SG to-3MPL
 'let it be known to you!' (Ezek. 36.32)

- d. *ʿāšo* *ṣadāqā* *u-mišpāt*
do.INF.CSTR justice.FSG and=judgement.MSG
ni-bḥār-∅ *l-Y'* *miz-zābaḥ*
DTRZ-prefer.PTCP-MSG to-LORD from-sacrifice
‘To do what is right and just is more pleasing (lit. preferred) to the LORD than sacrifice.’ (Prov. 21.3)
- e. *ʿaḗ* *ʿāšer* *y-e-ʿākel-∅* *l-koḗ* *nēpēš*
only REL S.3M-DTRZ-eat-S.SG to-each= soul.MSG
‘only what is to be eaten [as necessary] for everyone’
(Exod. 12.16)

(40) Syriac

- a. *mānā* *m-eṭ-ḥze-∅* *l-āk* *šemfon*
what PTCP-DTRZ-see-MSG to-2MSG Simon
‘How does it seem (lit. is it being seen) to you, Simon?’ (Matt. 17.25)
- b. *ʿeštam^c-aṭ* *=w-āṭ* *hī* *hāde*
heard.DTRZ.PFV-S.3FSG =was.S.3FSG DEM.FSG DEM.FSG
l-eḏn-ay-hon *d-aḅn-ay* *ʿettā*
to-ear.F-CSTR.PL-3MPL GEN=son.PL-CSTR.PL church.FSG
d=b-ūrišlem
REL=in-Jerusalem
‘This reached (lit. was heard unto) the ears of the church members in Jerusalem.’ (Acts 11.22)
- c. *kaḏ* *ger* *l-koḗ-nāš* *ʿestabr-aṭ*
CONJ PTCL to-each-person.MSG.INDEF thought.DTRZ.PFV-S.3FSG
‘Since it seems (lit. is thought) to everyone that...’
(*Joh. Eph. EH* 120.12)

- d. *ʾaykannā d- l-kull-hon bn-ay nāšā*
 as that= to-all-3MPL son.MPL-PL.CSTR human.MSG
ʾeṭ-yadʿ-aṭ w-eštarr-aṭ
 DTRZ-be_known.PFV-S.3FSG and=be_confirmed.DTRZ.PFV-S.3FSG
 ‘Just as it is known to every human being and con-
 firmed to be true’ (*Joh. Eph. EH 159.3–4*)

(41) Jewish Babylonian Aramaic

- a. *w-b-laylā hāwā-∅ d-lā ʾiṭ-ḥāzi-∅*
 and-at-night was.PFV-S.3MSG REL=NEG DTRZ-saw.PFV-S.3MSG
l-eh šappir
 to-3MSG well
 ‘It was at night when he could not see it properly (lit.
 it was not seen to him)’ (*Nid 20b (51)*; Sokoloff 2002,
 446a)
- b. *lā m-ištāmaʿ-∅ lə-ho*
 NEG PTCP-hear.DTRZ-S.MSG to-3MPL
 ‘(since everyone was making noise) they could not
 hear (lit. it was not being heard to them)’ (*Ber 50a*
 (37); Sokoloff 2002, 1160a)
- c. *qabbel -tu -n kol heḳe d-*
 received.PFV -A.2MPL -O.1 each as REL=
m-it-ḳel-∅ l-i
 PTCP-DTRZ-ate.PFV-S.3MSG to-1SG
 ‘You accepted me just as much as can be (lit. is being)
 eaten by me’ (*Pes 89b (21)*; Sokoloff 2002, 131a)

Nonetheless, in Aramaic, it is possible to express the experiencer like the agent of an action using the source preposition, e.g.,

(42) Syriac

yādaš-∅ *maryā* *ʾalāhā* *l-dil-eh*
 know.APP-MSG lord.MSG.DET God.MSG DOM-GEN-3MSG
ʾu=m-et-idaš-∅ *men dil-eh*
 and=PTCP-DTRZ-know-MSG from GEN-3MSG

‘The Lord God knows his own and he is known by his own.’

(*Joh. Eph. LES* 482.4–5)

(43) Jewish Babylonian Aramaic

ḥas w-šālom *ʾi m-eštakḥ-ā* *torā* *m-isrāʾel*
 pity and-peace if PTCP-forgot.DTRZ-S.FSG Torah.FSG from-Israel

‘Heaven forbid, if the Torah should be forgotten by Israel!’

(*BM* 85b)

5.0. Passivisation and Related Alternations and Constructions

5.1. Impersonal Subject Constructions

A common alternative to detransitivisation by means of derivational affixes is impersonalisation, where the patient is not promoted to subject status, but a dummy, i.e., non-referential and non-specific, subject is used instead. The morphosyntax of the transitive active clause can essentially remain unaltered, but the referentiality of the agent is reduced to an impersonal subject (Nöldeke 1875, 364, §255), often the 3MPL, as illustrated in (44)–(46). Example (45) illustrates how this impersonal subject construction can be used in parallel with a detransitive verbal form.

An oblique agent is not compatible with such impersonal constructions.

(44) Biblical Hebrew

- a. *yī-qrəʿ-u ʾet-hem b-šem-ot*
 A.3M-call-PL DOM-3MPL by-name.M-PL
 ‘they are mentioned (lit. they call them) by name’
 (1 Chron. 6.50)
- b. *ka-ʾāšer- yi-mḥe ʾet-ḥaṣ-ṣallāḥat*
 as-REL= A.3M-hit.SG DOM=DEF-dish.FSG
 ‘as one (lit. he) wipes a dish’ (2 Kgs 21.13)

(45) Biblical Aramaic

- libəb-eh min-ʾēnāšā yə-šann-on*
 heart.MSG-his and-stature A.3-change.CAUS-A.3MPL
u-ləbəb ḥewā y-it-yəḥab-∅ l-eh
 and-heart.MSG.CSTR animal.FSG S.3-DTRZ-gave.PFV-S.MSG to-him
 ‘Let his heart be transformed (lit. let them change his heart) from [that of] a human being and let him be given a beast’s heart [instead].’ (Dan. 4.16)

(46) Syriac

- n-ḥaww-unā-h l-kāhnā*
 A.3-show.SBJV-A.MPL-O.3FSG to-priest.MSG
 ‘It will be shown (lit. they will show it) to the priest.’ (Exod. 25.15)¹⁹

5.2. Middle Markers: Voice Neutrality and Syncretism

The nG-derivation (and Dt-derivation) in Hebrew and the tG-derivation in Aramaic can be neutral in their diathesis (argument

¹⁹ This is a translation of a Hebrew passive in the Masoretic Text.

orientation), allowing for both agentive and patientive interpretations. Any active–passive dichotomy would therefore fail to capture their position within the voice system of Hebrew and Aramaic. In general, these formations have semantics that are associated with reduced transitivity (Hopper and Thompson 1980; Tsunoda 1985; Nass 2007), i.e., detransitivisation. For studies of transitivity in Biblical Hebrew, see Bekins (2014) and Coleman (2018). Both in terms of valency reduction and in terms of semantics, the *n*-affix in Hebrew and *t*-affixes in Aramaic deviate from the prototypical semantics of agent–patient actions that constitute the basis of two-argument clauses with verbs such as ‘kill’, ‘break’, ‘steal’, and ‘build’. Detransitivisation thus leads to a decrease in the conceptual distinction between agent and patient (Næss 2007).

Indeed, with respect to the affixal ‘passive’ in Hebrew and Aramaic, recent research, primarily following Kemmer (1993), has now shifted the focus from the passive—and reflexive—to the middle voice, which is, by definition, neither strictly agent-orientated nor strictly patient-orientated. For Hebrew, see, for instance, Gzella (2009), Jenni (2012), Van Wolde (2019; 2021), Jones (2020), and Garr (2021), who provide extensive overviews with ample references, and see also Farina (2011) and Egger (2011) for Aramaic. Van Wolde (2019), however, unnecessarily restricts the passive reading to middle-voice constructions with overtly expressed agent complements and overemphasises the control aspect (Jones 2020). Crucially, the *nG*-stem is “a detransitivising (valency-decreasing) stem” (Garr 2021, 243), which

may be “spontaneous or agentive” (Garr 2021, 352). An important difference between the middle voice markers and the (former) internal passives may also lie in the relative discourse prominence of the subject, which is often more topical in the case of the internal passive (Staps 2022).

The widely held consensus is thus that the passive interpretation of the detransitivising affixes is secondary. Consider the different but parallel situation in Indo-European. Gonda (1961, 49), for instance, describes the middle voice in Indo-European as first and foremost a self-contained uncontrolled process occurring with respect to the subject.²⁰ The opposition between active and middle represents the original situation in Indo-European, and a productive passive voice only emerged later in the individual languages (Gonda 1961). The same presumably holds true for the *n*- and *t*-derivational affixes in Afro-Asiatic. In both language families, a wide range of semantics associated with reduction in transitivity was also extended to the derivation of passives from transitive actions that more strongly imply both a discrete agent and a discrete patient.

Moreover, lexicalisation obscures former derivational patterns. Numerous middle verbs have been lexicalised, some of which are compatible with direct objects (see §5.3), e.g.,

²⁰ “something comes or happens to a person (or object)... without any agents being mentioned, implied, or even known... and the process may take place... more or less automatically” (Gonda 1960, 49).

(47) Middle-only verbs lacking an active alternation

BH	nG <i>nizhār</i>	‘take care; be careful’
	nG <i>nišbā‘</i>	‘swear’
	nG <i>niḥam</i>	‘fight’
	nG <i>ne’ēbaq</i>	‘wrestle’
TA	tG <i>’izdāhar</i>	‘take care; be careful’
	tG <i>’istamar</i>	‘pay attention; be watchful’
	tD <i>’istakkel</i>	‘look’
	tD <i>’istaddel</i>	‘wrestle’

More often, however, the middle intransitive alternates with its active transitive pendant with a wide range of semantics, of which illustrative examples are given in (50)–(56) below. Often the distinction in semantics between the two pendants of an alternation for a single lexical root is not easily classified into a single subcategory. For instance, an nG-stem verb like *nimlat*, from the root *mlṭ* ‘save, rescue’, can have many shades of meaning, including ‘be rescued’, ‘escape’, and ‘save oneself’, in all of which the subject is indirectly affected. Similar patterns obtain for the valency-increasing derivations (D- and C-forms), e.g., like the detransitive of G-stem verbs, the detransitive of D-stem and C-stem verbs need not imply an agent either, as seen in Syriac *ḥawwi* causative ‘show’ → *’eḥawwī* anticausative ‘to appear’, reflexive ‘to manifest oneself’ (Payne-Smith 1903, 129a; Brockelmann 1928, 221a; Sokoloff 2009, 423).

Importantly, the active–passive alternation is available for all primary monotransitive verbs (see §3.3 on ditransitive verbs). For several verbs, however, the corresponding intransitive valence pattern (also) serves the purpose of anticausativisation, as

observed in (51). The intransitive pendant of transitive actions like ‘break’, for instance, can be used to convey an uncontrolled situation or a situation controlled by an implicit, unidentified agent. The explicit coding of the external cause is, however, not a necessary condition for a passive interpretation (*pace* Van Wolde 2019), nor is it a sufficient condition (see §4.0 and §5.4). Compare the forms in (48a–b) for Biblical Hebrew and (49a–b) for Jewish Babylonian Aramaic.

(48) Biblical Hebrew

- a. *way-yi-ppol ... wat-ti-š-šāber-Ø*
 SQ.PST-S.3MSG-fall SQ.PST-S.3FSG-DTRZ-break-S.SG
māpraqt-o way-yā-mot
 neck.FSG.CSTR-3MSG SQ.PST-S.3MSG-die
 ‘He fell over... and his neck broke and he died’
 (1 Sam. 4.18)
- b. *ti-š-šāber-Ø malkūt-o*
 S.3F-DTRZ-break-S.SG kingdom.FSG.CSTR-3MSG
 ‘his kingdom shall be broken [by somebody]’ (Dan. 11.4)

(49) Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (Sokoloff 2002, 1192b)

- a. *ʾit-t̄bar-Ø mim-millā*
 DTRZ-broke.PFV-3MSG from-thing
 ‘It broke of itself’
- b. *ʾit-t̄bar-Ø b-āh garmā*
 DTRZ-broke.PFV-3MSG at-3FSG bone.MSG.DET
 ‘A bone was broken on it.’

Illustrative examples of alternations:

(50) Passive (externally caused event)

	‘write’	→	‘be written’
BH	G <i>kāṭab</i>		nG <i>nikṭāb</i>
TA	G <i>kəṭab</i>		tG <i>ʔikəṭeb</i>
	‘build’	→	‘be built’
BH	G <i>bānā</i>		nG <i>nibnā</i>
TA	G <i>bənā</i>		tG <i>ʔibəni</i>

(51) Anticausative (internally caused event)

	‘fill (tr.)’	→	‘become full; fill (intr.)’
BH	G <i>māle</i> , D <i>millā</i>		nG <i>nimlā</i>
TA	G <i>mələ</i> , D <i>malli</i>		tG <i>ʔiməli</i>
	‘see (tr.)’	→	‘appear’
BH	G <i>rāʔā</i>		nG <i>nirʔā</i>
TA	G <i>ḥəzā</i>		tG <i>ʔiḥəzi</i>

(52) Autocausative (internally directed motion)

	‘gather (tr.)’	→	‘gather (intr.)’
BH	G <i>ʔəsap</i>		nG <i>neʔəsap</i>
TA	G <i>kənaš</i>		tG <i>ʔikəneš</i>
	‘hide (tr.)’	→	‘hide (intr.)’
BH	C <i>heḥbā</i>		nG <i>neḥbā</i>
TA	G <i>təmar</i>		tG <i>ʔittəmar</i>

(53) Stative

	‘find (tr.)’	→	‘be present, located’
BH	G <i>māṣā</i>		nG <i>nimṣā</i>
TA	G/C <i>ʔaškəḥ</i>		tG <i>ʔištəkəḥ</i>

‘comfort (tr.)’ → ‘be compassionate’²¹

BH D *niḥam* nG *niḥam*

TA D *naḥḥem* tD *ʾitnaḥḥam*

(54) Reflexive

‘reveal (tr.)’ → ‘unveil, reveal oneself’

BH G *gālā* nG *niḡlā*

TA G *gəlā* tG *ʾitgəli*

‘show (tr.)’ → ‘appear, show oneself’

BH C *hirʾā* nG *nirʾā*

TA C *ʾaḥzi* tC *ʾittahzi*

(55) Facilitative

‘inhabit (tr.)’ → ‘be(come) inhabitable’

BH G *yāšab* nG *nošab*

TA G *yəteb* tG *ʾityəteb*

(56) Autobenefactive

‘ask’ → ‘request leave’

BH G *šʾl* nG *nišʾal*²²

TA G *šʾl* tG *ʾištəʾel*

An alternation does not always, however, involve a valency change per se. In Hebrew, for instance, there exist nG-formations even of intransitive verbs, such as *ḥālā* ‘be(come) tired’ → *neḥlā* ‘be(come) exhausted; exhaust oneself’ (e.g., Jer. 12.13) and *ḥāyā* ‘to be(come), happen’ → *nihyā* ‘to be possible for sth. to happen’ (e.g., Judg. 20.3). Both Hebrew and Aramaic have middle-intransitive verbs, e.g., BH *nišqāʿ*, TA *tištəqāʿ*, that serve as an alternative of a basic active-intransitive verb, in this case *šqʿ* ‘to sink

²¹ E.g., Judg. 21.6.

²² E.g., 2 Sam. 20.6, 28.

(intr.)’, with no apparent distinction in meaning. This, therefore, undermines the value of the term ‘detransitive’ used here, as does the compatibility of ‘detransitive’ verbs with direct objects, which brings us to the next section.

5.3. Compatibility with Direct Objects

While the derivational affixes *n-* and *t-* are primarily used as a device for reducing semantic transitivity, some derived verbal forms can be compatible with morphosyntactic transitivity. A handful of ‘detransitivised’ verbs are syntactically transitive and can thus freely combine with direct objects, e.g., Biblical Hebrew nG *wayyillāḥāmu-ni* ‘they attacked me’ (Ps. 109.3), Syriac Dt *’es-taklu-y* ‘they recognised him’ (Matt. 6.54). The detransitivised verbal form can also combine with an indirect object, e.g., the detransitivised form of the stative verb *šm* ‘hear’ usually conveys a passive ‘be heard’, but it may also be a two-argument verb conveying the sense of ‘obey’, where the oblique target is expressed with the dative preposition *l-*, as illustrated in (57)–(58).

(57) Biblical Hebrew

yi-š-šāmə^c-u *l-i*
 S.3-DTRZ-hear.PST-S.PL to-1SG
 ‘they obeyed me’ (2 Sam. 22.45)

(58) Syriac

’estam^c *l-aḇāh-ay-kon*
 DTRZ.hear.IMPV to-father.MPL-CSTR.PL-2MPL
 ‘Obey your parents!’ (Eph. 6.1)

Furthermore, in Hebrew, a pronominal object suffix can be used in combination with the passive to express the experiencer, e.g., *lā tinnāše-ni* ‘you will not be forgotten to me’ (Isa. 44.21),

similarly to the recipient in *nətattā-ni* ‘you gave to me (the land of the Negeb)’ (Josh. 15.19).

5.4. Semantically Reduced Transitivity within the G-stem: Stative and Passive G-stem Verbs

Semantic transitivity (Hopper and Thompson 1980; Nass 2007) also plays a role in morphological stem changes within the class of basic verbs. Thus, two-argument G-stem verbs belonging to the stative/inactive subclass are generally semantically less transitive than those belonging to the fientive/active subclass.²³ The ‘stative’ subclass, being typically semantically less active than a primary transitive action, shares certain semantic characteristics with a middle voice, namely reduced transitivity and hence often reduced valency. However, statives rarely show the kind of alternation that would be characteristic of a middle voice proper, or of a passive voice proper. Only a few basic verbs show co-variation between thematic vowels that may, at least originally, have reflected a valency change, as exemplified in (59)–(61), where the original stative denotes the inchoative (Payne-Smith 1903; Brockelmann 1913, 140, §70l; 1928), i.e., a situation arising spontaneously, sometimes termed ‘unaccusative verb’. These therefore constitute non-directed or equipollent alternations (Haspelmath 1993, 91).

²³ There are, however, numerous exceptions. The transitive verb ‘to drink’, for instance, can also follow the ‘stative’ paradigms, e.g., TA *šəti* and CS *ʿešti*; cf. Arabic *šariba*.

(59) Syriac (see Brockelmann 1913, 140–41)

Causative/Active		Inchoative/Inactive	
<i>ḥrab</i>	‘destroy’	<i>ḥreb</i>	‘be destroyed’
<i>mlā</i>	‘fill (tr.)’	<i>mli</i>	‘be(come) full’

(60) Classical Arabic

<i>xaraba</i>	‘destroy’	<i>xariba</i>	‘be destroyed’
<i>mala’a</i>	‘fill (tr.)’	<i>malu’a</i>	‘be(come) full’

(61) Mehri (Rubin 2010, 93)

<i>təbūr</i>	‘break (tr.)’	<i>tībər</i>	‘break (intr.)’
<i>mūlə</i>	‘fill (tr.)’	<i>mīlə</i>	‘be(come) full’

Like the *n*-affixed forms in Hebrew and *t*-affixed forms in Aramaic, the vast majority of G-statives represent an intransitive valence pattern that implies no external force or agent, i.e., a situation that unfolds of its own accord. Sporadically, however, such an agent may be more strongly implied as in a passive, e.g.,

(62) Syriac

<i>ḥerb-at</i>	<i>ʾurišlem</i>	<i>byaḏ</i>	<i>bablāye</i>
become_waste.PFV-S.3MSG	Jerusalem.FSG	by	Babylonian.MPL.DET
‘Jerusalem got destroyed by the Babylonians.’ (<i>Aphr.</i> XXII, 399.2)			

(63) Biblical Hebrew

<i>hab-badd-im</i> ,	<i>lo</i>	<i>yā-sur-u</i>	<i>mim-men-nu</i>
DEF-pole.M-PL	NEG	S.3M-go_away-S.PL	from-from-3MSG
‘(in the rings of the ark are to be) the poles; they shall not be taken away (lit. they shall not go away) from it’ (Exod. 25.15)			

Rarely, the passive sense is inherent to the root semantics, as with the intransitive G-verb *laqā* ‘get whipped, smitten, punished (by someone)’ in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (see Targum Onkelos, Exod. 5.14) corresponding to the C-verb *’alqi* ‘to whip, smite, punish’ of the same root *lqy*. Thus, again, we observe that the passive reading is a secondary extension of a class of verbal forms that more generally convey uncontrolled situations.

The ‘internal passives’, by contrast, virtually always more strongly imply an agent (but see below for exceptions). In fact, G-passives can be formed from two-argument verbs belonging to the ‘stative’ subclass. Still, there is some measure of overlap, and passive and stative verbs can also merge. In Hebrew, for instance, the verb *ykl* ‘to be able’ has a G-stative form in the suffix conjugation, i.e., *yākol*, but a G-passive form in the prefix conjugation, i.e., *yukal*. Semantically, there is also, in Classical Arabic for instance, some measure of overlap between the G-stative and G-passive (Lane 1863–1893, 2668), e.g.,

	‘impregnate’	‘be pregnant, conceive’	
Suffixal	<i>laqaḥ-a</i>	<i>laqiḥ-at</i>	<i>luqiḥ-at</i>
Prefixal	<i>ya-lqaḥ</i>	<i>ta-lqaḥ</i>	<i>tu-lqaḥ</i>

Several G-passives in Classical Arabic are also lexicalised as stative verbs, e.g., *zahā* ‘incite to pride’ → *zuhiya* ‘be proud’ (Lane 1863–1893, 1265; Wehr 1961, 447), *ḥaḡara* ‘break one’s front teeth’ → *ḥuḡira* ‘be someone whose front teeth are broken’ (Lane 1863–1893, 332).

As regards morphological overlap, the primary distinction between the stative/inchoative intransitive and the passive intransitive is the vowel of the prefix in Northwest Semitic, i.e., nonpassive *yi-* vs passive *yu-*. The inflectional base is otherwise identical, thus stative **yi-qtal* vs passive **yu-qtal* but active **ya-qtul*. In Classical Arabic, one can even say that, in general, the distinction between ‘stative’ and passive is primarily made in the first syllable of both the prefix and suffix conjugations, which, in passive forms, is typically not an open/low vowel, i.e., /a/, but a close/high one, i.e., /u/, as compared below in **bold**. The thematic vowel after the second radical, however, is identical to that of the ‘stative’, e.g.,

(64) Classical Arabic

	Active	Inactive	Passive
	‘lay waste’	‘be waste’	‘be laid waste’
Suffixal	<i>xarab-a</i>	<i>xarib-a</i>	<i>xurib-a</i>
Prefixal	<i>ya-xrib</i>	<i>ya-xrab</i>	<i>yu-xrab</i>
		‘hear’	‘be heard’
Suffixal		<i>sami^ʕ-a</i>	<i>sumi^ʕ-a</i>
Prefixal		<i>ya-sma^ʕ</i>	<i>yu-sma^ʕ</i>
	‘beget, bear’		‘be begotten/born’
Suffixal	<i>walad-a</i>		<i>wulid-a</i>
Prefixal	<i>ya-lid</i>		<i>yū-lad</i>

In both Modern South Arabian and Neo-Arabic dialects that have preserved a similar system, the G-passive has partly or completely merged with the G-stative through phonetic changes such as vowel shifts and mergers. In both Mehri and Najdi Arabic, for

example, the prefixal forms of the G-stative and those of the G-passive have become identical, e.g.,

(65) Najdi Arabic (Ingham 1994, 20, 27–28)

	Stative	Passive
	‘hear’	‘be heard’
Suffixal	<i>simi</i> ^ʕ	<i>smi</i> ^ʕ
Prefixal	<i>yi-sma</i> ^ʕ	<i>yi-sma</i> ^ʕ
	Active	Passive
	‘write’	‘be written’
Suffixal	<i>kitab</i>	<i>ktib</i>
Prefixal	<i>ya-ktib</i>	<i>yi-ktab</i>

(66) Mehri (Rubin 2010, 90–93)

	Stative	Inchoative
	‘wear’	‘be spoilt’
Suffixal	<i>libəs</i>	<i>xayrəb</i>
Prefixal	<i>yə-wbōs</i>	<i>yə-xrōb</i>
	Active	Passive
	‘write’	‘be written’
Suffixal	<i>kātūb</i>	<i>kātēb</i>
Prefixal	<i>yə-ktēb</i>	<i>yə-ktōb</i>

In Syrian Arabic, the G-stative and the rarely used G-passive have completely merged, e.g.,

(67) Syrian Arabic (Cowell 1964, 76, 185, 234)

	Active	Inchoative/Passive
	‘tire’	‘get tired’
Suffixal	<i>taʕab</i>	<i>təʕeb</i>
Prefixal	<i>yə-tʕob</i>	<i>yə-tʕab</i>

	Active	Inchoative/Passive
	‘ruin’	‘be ruined’
Suffixal	<i>xarab</i>	<i>xəreb</i>
Prefixal	<i>yə-xrob</i>	<i>yə-xrab</i>
	‘kill’	‘be killed’
Suffixal	<i>ʾatal</i>	<i>ʾətel</i>
Prefixal	<i>yə-ʾtol</i>	<i>yə-ʾtal</i>

5.5. The Infinitive Used Impersonally

The infinitive can be used impersonally in Hebrew and Aramaic, allowing for a passive interpretation instead of the expected active, as illustrated in (68)–(69). With respect to the internal passive derivations, it is possible that a dedicated passive infinitive was not as productive, and the same form as the active infinitive was used instead.

(68) Biblical Hebrew

nimkar-nu ʾāni w-ʿamm-i l-hašmid
 steal.DTRZ-S.1PL I and-people.MSG-my to-destroy.CAUS.INF
la-hārog u=l-ʾabbed
 to-kill.INF and-to-annihilate.TRZ.INF

‘I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated (lit. to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate)’ (Est. 7.4)

(69) Biblical Aramaic

kol-ʾəšār u=qyām ... lā l-hašnāyā
 each-prohibition and-statute NEG to-change.CAUS.INF

‘Each prohibition and statute (that the king establishes) cannot be changed.’ (Dan. 6.15)

5.6. Verbal Adjectives

In Hebrew, the so-called ‘passive participle’ of basic verbs takes the adjectival pattern **qaṭūl* > *qāṭul*,²⁴ and that of Aramaic takes the pattern **qaṭīl* > *qṭīl*. Examples (70)–(71) below illustrate the patient-orientation of such verbal adjectives, e.g.,

(70) Biblical Hebrew

hak-késeṗ nāṭun-∅ l-āk
 DEF-silver.MSG given.RPP-MSG to-2MSG

‘The money is given to you.’ (Est. 3.11)

(71) Syriac

b-ḥēruṭā d=ihib-ā l-eh
 in-freedom.DET.FG REL-given.RPP-FSG to-3MSG

‘In the freedom which has been given to him.’ (BLC 28.11–12)

The **qaṭūl* pattern typical for Hebrew also left traces in Aramaic nominals with a resultative-stative nuance, like Syriac *rḥumā* ‘beloved’, *gnubtā* ‘something stolen’ (Nöldeke 1904, 71, §113), but the default form in Aramaic is that of **qaṭīl* > *qṭīl*—which also exists for nouns and adjectives in Hebrew, e.g., *māšīāḥ* ‘anointed’, *nāzir* ‘consecrated’, *ḥāṭīk* ‘a cut piece’, *bāri* ‘healthy’, *ḥāsīd* ‘merciful’, etc. A related adjectival pattern **qaṭṭīl-* > *qaṭṭīl* in Aramaic is generally confined to intransitive verbs in Syriac (Nöldeke 1904, 73; see also Barsky and Loesov 2021; cf. Hebrew *yi-šdaq* ‘be just’ → *šaddiq* ‘just’). This pattern is typically associated with stative verbs, motion verbs, or generally verbs exhibiting

²⁴ Cf. Gə‘əz *qəṭul-* < **qutūl-* < **qatūl* and Arabic *maqṭūl-* < **ma-* + *qatūl* (Fox 2003, 40, 129–30, 187–202).

semantically low transitivity (Joosten 1989, 476–77); hence, it is also known as a ‘stative participle’, or as a ‘participial adjective’ (Goldenberg 1983, 115). Contrast *dḥil* ‘dreaded’ → ‘dreadful’ vs *dahḥil* ‘dreading’.

The *qâṭul* and *qṭil* express the resultative-stative counterpart of participles that belong to the detransitivised derivations (Nöldeke 1904, 218; Muraoka 2005, 42, §50; Gzella 2004, 172–79, 182–83; Li 2008; see also Farina 2011). Thus, the detransitive participle of basic verbs in Aramaic, i.e., the tG-stem participle *miṭqṭel* or *meṭqṭel*, generally—though not always—denotes an ongoing dynamic process as opposed to a resultant state or completed action. By contrast, the Hebrew equivalent thereof is the nG-participle, i.e., *niqṭâl*, which typically functions as a stative adjective, e.g., *neḥmâd* ‘desirable, pleasant’ (from *ḥamad* ‘to desire, take pleasure in’), *ne’emân* ‘faithful, trustworthy’, or even as a past perfective participle, e.g., *han-nilhâm* ‘the one who fought’ (Josh. 10.15), *han-nir’â* ‘the one who appeared’ (Gen. 12.7). In general, however, both the basic resultative participle and the detransitive participles are voice-neutral and can be orientated towards an agent or patient of a transitive verb, or any type of affected subject of an intransitive verb.

Indeed, whilst Hebrew *qâṭul* and Aramaic *qṭil* are conventionally referred to as ‘passive participles’ in reference grammars, it is widely recognised in grammatical descriptions that their primary verbal function is to express a state resulting from a prior event. The so-called ‘passive participles’ of basic verbs, therefore, should be characterised as resultative participles rather than ded-

icated passive participles in line with linguistic typology (Nedjalkov 1988; 2001; see also Haspelmath 1994; Li 2008; Noorlander 2021b). The resultative of *'bd* 'to do' in Aramaic, i.e., *'bid* < **'abid* 'done; made (into)', for instance, can refer to the well-being of the subject without any implication of an agent (e.g., Gzella 2004, 185–86), e.g., *nehzē mānā 'bid-in* 'let's see how they are faring (lit. what they are made of)' (Acts 15.36). Resultative participles can be not only patient-orientated, but also subject-orientated, e.g., Hebrew *'āšub* 'grieving', and even agent-orientated, e.g., Hebrew *bātaḥ* 'confide' → *bāṭuaḥ* 'confident', *rākaḥ* 'ride, mount' → *rākub* 'riding, having mounted', *'āḥuz* 'holding', *'āsur* 'having girt', *lābuš* 'wearing', which parallel Syriac *'ettkel* 'rely' → *tḵil* 'relying', *rkeḥ* 'ride, mount' → *rḵiḥ* 'riding, having mounted', *'aḥiḍ* 'holding', *'asir* 'having girt', *lḥiš* 'wearing'. Thus, these verbal adjectives are often infelicitously described as 'passive' participles with an 'active' sense, which leads to unnecessary paradoxes.

At face value, the suffix conjugation of the G-passive in Aramaic looks indistinct from the 'passive' participle, which many scholars believe to point to the verbalisation of the participle into a passive rather than an original G-passive (e.g., Blake 1901, 46; Bauer 1915, 562; Retsö 1989): compare Biblical Aramaic 3MSG *qəṭil* 'he was killed', 3FSG *qəṭilat* 'she was killed', 3MPL *qəṭilu* 'they were killed' with the corresponding participial forms MSG *qəṭil* 'killed', FSG *qəṭilá*, MPL *qəṭiln*. In general, therefore, it is impossible to distinguish a G-passive in the 3MSG of the suffix conjugation from its identical participial counterpart (though in the feminine and the plural, such forms are clearly distinguishable).

However, it seems more likely to me that an original G-passive existed that was influenced by the parallel so-called ‘passive’ participle through analogy. This analogical extension of *CaCīC to the G-passive would explain why final-weak verbs do not show the same morphological identity, but maintain a distinction between the passive suffix conjugation and ‘passive’ participle. For example, Biblical Aramaic G-passive suffix conjugation 3MSG *gāli* ~ *gēli* ‘it was read’ and ‘passive’ participle MSG ABS *bāne* ‘built’ presumably reflect a former distinction between G-passive *CaCīy and ‘passive’ participle *CaCē. For a parallel to the extension of the original vowel *ī of the resultative participle across verbal stems in Neo-Aramaic, see Noorlander (Chapter 3).

Furthermore, convergence with the ‘stative’ inflection as found in the suffix conjugation cannot be ruled out either, and could also point to an original G-passive. For instance, several of these passive forms are indistinguishable from the G-stative in Biblical Aramaic:

		Stative	Passive
Suffixal	3PL	<i>qrību</i>	<i>kpītu</i>
	(strong)	‘come near’	‘be bound’
	3PL	<i>’ištiw</i>	<i>rmiw</i>
	(final y/’)	‘drink’	‘be thrown’
	3MSG	<i>rim</i>	<i>šim</i>
	(hollow)	‘be haughty’	‘be placed’

6.0. Possible Areal Issues

One of the major topics that has been explored in connection with diathesis and language contact is the history of the verbal system

in Eastern Aramaic and the dative perfect construction, regarding which space constraints only allow a few remarks. The emergence of a new perfect in Eastern Aramaic is generally attributed to the influence of Iranian (e.g., Kutscher 1969; Gzella 2004, 184–94; Khan 2004). A new transitive perfect and eventually past perfective emerged in Eastern Aramaic on the basis of the combination of the resultative participle—for which the conventional term is the ‘passive participle’ (see §5.6)—e.g., **qaṭil* ‘killed’, and the dative preposition *l-* expressing an agent-like argument, i.e., **qaṭil lī* ‘killed by/to/at me’ → ‘I have killed’, which corresponds to *qṭil lī* ‘I have killed’ in Late Antique Aramaic and *qṭal-li* ‘I killed’ in Northeastern Neo-Aramaic dialects, e.g.,

(72) Syriac

- a. *l-aryā* *dḥil-ā* *ḅar* *ʾalāhā*
 DOM-lion.DET.MSG fearsome-MSG son.MSG.CSTR God.DET.MSG
b-ḥašša *qaṭl-∅-eh*
 by-pain.DET.MSG killed.PFV-A.3MSG-O.3MSG
 ‘The fearsome lion God’s Son killed by his sufferings.’
 (ASD 105.18–19)
- b. *ʾaryā* *da= qṭil-∅* *=wā-∅*
 lion.DET.MSG REL= killed.RPP-S.3MSG =was.PFV-S.3MSG
l-ḅar *ʾalāhā*
 DAT-son.MSG.CSTR God.DET.MSG
 ‘The lion that God’s Son had killed.’ (ASD 105.22–23)
- c. *ḥālen kull-hon* *ʾu* *mawtā* *l-ī-hu*
 DEM.PL each-3MPL DEM.MSG =was.PFV-3MSG DAT-1SG-COP.3MSG
qṭil-īn
 killed.RPP-S.3MPL
 ‘O Death, all of these, it is **by me** they have been killed.’ (*Satan and Death*, 74.9)

- d. *qtīl-īn*
killed.RPP-S.3MPL

‘They have been killed.’

(73) Marga, Northeastern Neo-Aramaic

- a. *ʾarye b- qatīl-i -le bron-i*
lion.PL FUT- kill-A.3PL -O.3MSG son.MSG-my

‘The lions will kill my son.’

- b. *bron-i qtīl-i -le ʾarye*
son.MSG-my killed.PFV-O.3PL -A.3MSG lion.PL

‘My son killed the lions.’

- c. *ʾawwa ʾarya ʾəl-bron-i qtīl-∅*
DEM.MSG lion.MSG DAT-son.MSG-my killed.PFV-O.3MSG

‘(It was) **my son** (who) killed this lion.’

- d. *ʾawwa ʾarya qtīl-∅*
DEM.MSG lion.MSG killed.PFV-O.3MSG

‘This lion was killed.’ / ‘People killed this lion.’

The inversion in the expression of the roles, illustrated in (72a–b) and (73a–b), respectively, is reminiscent of the inversion that occurs in passivisation. Several scholars have suggested that this dative perfect construction is at least historically passive (Polotsky 1996; Khan 1999; 2002; Bar-Asher Siegal 2008; 2011; Loesov 2012, 426). The passive is one of the expected sources from which languages with pre-existing accusative agreement systems would develop ergatively aligned agreement (e.g., Siewierska 1998), i.e., a former patient promoted to S in a passive acquires the syntactic properties of the direct object, whilst remaining morphologically expressed in the same way as S. In Eastern Neo-Aramaic, the selection of the original dative to express the agent in the past perfective is conditioned on its combination

with the original resultative participle, as (73b) and (73c) illustrate. Thus, the original dative person forms, i.e., CS *qtīl-īn l-eh* ‘by him they are killed’, *qtīl-īn l-i* ‘by me they are killed’, etc., have become fully-fledged verbal endings that express the subject, i.e., Northeastern Neo-Aramaic *qtīl-i-le* ‘he killed them’, *qtīl-i-li* ‘I killed them’. Some aspects of the morphosyntax of Neo-Aramaic are further discussed in other chapters of this volume: see Kuzin (Chapter 2) and Noorlander (Chapter 3). For the most recent overviews of the variation in Northeastern Neo-Aramaic verbal person marking, see Coghill (2016, 55–101), Khan (2017), and Noorlander (2021a). For discussions of the possible historical developments, see Khan (2004; 2013), Bar-Asher Siegal (2014), Coghill (2016, 162–304), and Noorlander (2021b).

The earliest attestations of this **qtīl l*-construction occur in the Aramaic used in the Achaemenid Empire in the fifth century BC and have therefore been connected (e.g., Kutscher 1969; Khan 2004) with a parallel construction in Old Persian, called the *manā kartam* construction, which is illustrated in (74) below. The agent is expressed by a case that fuses genitive and dative. Some also consider this construction to be passive in origin (e.g., Cardona 1970; Skjærvø 1985; see also Hook 1992 and Bubenik 2001 on Indo-Aryan), but, for alternative views, see, for instance, Benveniste (1966), Trask (1979), Bynon (2005), Haig (2008), and Jügel (2015).

(74) Old Persian

- a. *ima* *adam* *akunav-am*
 NOM.DEM.NSG NOM.1SG did.IPFV-A.1SG
 ‘This I did.’ (Kent 1950, 118, DB I, 68)

- b. *ima taya manā kartam*
 NOM.DEM.NSG NOM.REL.NSG GEN-DAT.1SG done.PFV-O.3MSG
parθav-aiy
 Parthia-LOC.SG
 ‘This (is) what (was) done by me in Parthia.’ (Kent 1950, DB III, 9–10)
- c. *taya =tay gauš-āyā [xšnut-am]*
 NOM.REL.NSG =GEN-DAT.2SG ear-GEN-DAT.DL heard.RPP-NOM.NSG
 ‘this is what is heard by your ears.’ (Kent 1950, 139, *DNb* 55)
- d. *taya =maiyy framāt-am*
 NOM.REL.NSG =GEN-DAT.1SG order.RPP-NOM.NSG
 ‘what has been commanded by me.’ (Kent 1950, 142, *DSf* 19–20)

The earliest attestations in epigraphic Aramaic, however, may rather indicate that the **qaṭil l*-construction was an internal development, at least at its beginnings. First, where we might expect imposition of Old Persian syntax to occur in Achaemenid Aramaic, such as in translations from Old Persian to Imperial Aramaic, we do not observe the dative perfect in Aramaic. The Aramaic examples in (75a–b), which exhibit the default active suffix conjugation, are the translational equivalent of the genitive-dative agent constructions in Old Persian given in (74a–b), respectively. Thus, if influence from Iranian played a role, this presumably occurred in a later period (see Kutscher 1969).

(75) Imperial Aramaic

- a. *znh ’nh ‘bdt*
denā ’anā ‘abad-tī
 DEM.MSG in-Parthia did.PFV-A.1SG
 ‘This I did.’ (*Bisitun*, 56.3)

- b. znh zy bprtw ‘bdt
 denā dī b-partū ‘abad-tī
 DEM.MSG REL in-Parthia did.PFV-A.1SG
 ‘This (is) what I did in Parthia.’ (*Bisitun*, 32.29)

This notwithstanding, the fronting of the oblique agent in the so-called *passivum majestatis* may well reflect imposition of Old Persian syntax (Kutscher 1969; Makujina 1997). In Imperial Aramaic, the resultative participle, as well as any detransitivised verbal form, can be combined with the preposition <mn> *min-* or *men-* to express the initiator of a royal decree (Folmer 1995, 380–90), in particular in the idiom *šym ta‘m* ‘issue a decree’ as found in (76). This idiom is also found in Biblical Aramaic (see Dan. 3.10; 3.29; Ezra 4.19). As (76) shows, in this construction, the recipient is marked as dative, but not the agent. This use of *min-* in Aramaic converges with the equivalent source preposition *hacā* ‘from’ in Old Persian, which governs the ablative case (e.g., Haig 2008, 78), as (77) illustrates. The recipient enclitic *-šām* in (77) belongs to the category of Old Persian genitive-dative pronouns, which directly parallel the dative pronouns in Aramaic marked by the preposition *l-*.

(76) Imperial Aramaic

- zy... mny šym lk ṭ‘m
 dī minn-ī šīm-∅ l-akā ta‘m-∅
 REL from- placed.RPP-MSG to-2MSG decree.MSG-INDEF
 ‘as was ordered by me to you.’ (Naveh and Shaked 2006, 112, A6:7)

(77) Old Persian

taya *-šām* *hacā=ma* *aθah-aya*
 NOM.REL.NSG =GEN-DAT.3MPL from=ABL.1SG say-PASS

‘what was ordered to them by me.’ (Kent 1950, 142, *DB I*, 19–20)

However, in Imperial Aramaic, no examples are known where the dative argument is an agent in the strict sense (see, e.g., Folmer 1995, 379), nor the adjective **qaṭīl* a dedicated passive participle. The clearest examples of a dative perfect occur with the verb *šm* ‘to hear’, as (78) illustrates. Here, however, we are more likely dealing with a recipient-like experiencer, as discussed in §4.2. A similar case is the occurrence of datives with the verb ‘to know’ (Folmer 1995, 391–94), e.g., Imperial Aramaic <lkwm ydy> *la-kūm yadī* ‘known to you’. Indeed, the use of the dative in the novel perfect was presumably largely mediated by the semantics of experiencer verbs in Late Antique Aramaic (Bar-Asher Siegal 2014, 78; Coghill 2016, 181–97; see §4.2).

(78) Imperial Aramaic

ktbt *’grt’* *Z’* *kzy*
katab-tī *’eger-tā* *dā* *ka-dī*
 wrote.PFV-A.1SG letter.FSG.DET DEM.FSG when

kn *šmy* *ln* *l’mr*
ken šamī -∅ *l-anā lē’mar*
 thus heard.RPP-MSG to-1PL saying

‘I wrote this letter, when it was heard by us thus, saying’
 (*TAD A3.3:13*)

The combination of the dative with a two-argument experiencer verb such as *šm* ‘hear’ is thus certainly not, on language-internal and typological grounds, arbitrary (see also Bar-Asher

Siegal 2014 and Coghill 2016). The selection of the dative on the basis of verbal semantics is similar to what can be observed in other Semitic languages, such as Hebrew, e.g., *'āhub l-elohāw* 'beloved to/by his God' (Neh. 13.26; see §4.2). As the examples in §4.2 demonstrate, the selection of the dative over other prepositions in valency-reducing constructions is primarily determined by the lexical semantics, especially in contexts where the dative argument registers some (human-relevant) effect. In Aramaic, the dative is typically used to express roles other than the agent, namely recipients (see examples 23 and 68–69) and experiencers (see examples 38–43) as well as beneficiaries and possessors. See Noorlander (2021b) for a succinct overview of the manifold functions of the dative in Aramaic.

As in the study of the origins of the *manā kartam* construction, scholars have analysed the Aramaic dative argument in the dative perfect as some type of possessor; see Kutscher (1969), Cohen (1984, 515), Hopkins (1989), Goldenberg (1992), and Rubin (2005). Noorlander (2021b; with further references) offers a more detailed discussion and argues that the dative argument's primary interpretation was a type of human endpoint, including an experiencer that registers an effect as well as a predicative possessor that exercises some measure of control in maintaining another entity in the resultant state. This can be explained by the phenomenon of HAVE-drift (Stassen 2009, 208–43) where the morphosyntax of predicative possession tends to be influenced by the morphosyntax of transitive clauses. This drift is plausibly also at play in the emergence of the HAVE-perfects, and thus ultimately also played a decisive role in the development of a dative perfect

construction in Aramaic (as well as Iranian). There is a robust tendency for transitive resultatives to emerge first with so-called possessor verbs such as ‘to bind around oneself’, ‘to hold in one’s hands’, ‘to have/wear on one’s body’, etc. (Nedjalkov 1988). This applies to both resultatives that develop into HAVE-perfects and resultatives that develop into BE-perfects. In the HAVE-perfect, however, the agent is also expressed in the same way as the possessor in a predicative possession construction (see Noorlander 2021b for further argumentation).

However, it is likely that a multiplicity of source constructions were involved, which means that a passive source need not be entirely excluded. Unlike with the HAVE-perfect in, for instance, Romance and Germanic, the dative in the Aramaic **qaṭil l*-construction is an oblique argument, not an auxiliary verb, and the original copula and participle agree with the patient. The dative perfect can therefore equally be understood by language users as a BE-passive with an oblique agent, even though the oblique agent of a passive would typically be expressed by the source preposition *min*. Such a passive interpretation would not be available for an auxiliary ‘have’ in a HAVE-perfect. The dative can easily be expected to have competed with alternative prepositions used to express the oblique agent, such as the source preposition *min*. Moreover, the fact that the dative could also be used to express indirect causes may also have facilitated its extension from contexts of indirect affectedness and control to contexts of direct control, such as by a human agent. A direct example of this competition between *min*- and *l*- (see Noorlander 2021b) is the translation of a Greek passive with an agent complement introduced

by *hupó* ‘under the authority of’ in Matt. 14.8. In the corresponding Syriac gospels, the more archaic Codex Sinaiticus uses the expected preposition *min-*, while the more innovative Pšīṭta uses the preposition *l-* instead:

(79) Classical Syriac

meṭṭol d-mallp -ā -wāt
 because SUBR-taught.RPP -3FSG -be.PST.3FSG

- a. *men ʿemm-āh* (Sinait. ca 3rd century)
 from mother.FSG-her
- b. *l- ʿemm-āh* (Pšīṭta ca 5th century)
 to mother.FSG-her
 ‘because she had been taught by her mother’ (Matt. 14.8)

Moreover, the reflexes of both of these prepositions continue to be used as agent markers in passive-voice constructions in Neo-Aramaic, while only *l-* can occur as an agent marker in a past perfective ergative construction (see Noorlander, Chapter 3), alongside marking recipients, experiencers, and possessors (see Noorlander 2021c). Nevertheless, these language-internal factors certainly do not indicate that the convergence of the verbal systems in Neo-Aramaic and Neo-Iranian dialects is completely incidental. On the contrary, it is likely that contact was ultimately involved at some stage, and highly likely in the case of the south-eastern Jewish dialects of Northeastern Neo-Aramaic (Khan 2017; Noorlander 2021b). After all, the syncretism of the agent with the experiencer, recipient, possessor, and object, found in both Eastern Neo-Aramaic and Northwestern Iranian, is cross-linguistically unusual (Palancar 2002; Siewierska and Bakker 2013).

Abbreviations

Sources

<i>Addai</i>	Howard 1981
<i>Aphr.</i>	Wright 1869
<i>Bisitun</i>	Greenfield and Porten 1982
<i>BLC</i>	Drijvers 1964
<i>BM</i>	Bava Metzia, Babylonian Talmud
<i>DB</i>	Darius Bisitun Inscription in Kent 1950
<i>DNb</i>	Darius Naqš-i-Rustam B in Kent 1950
<i>DSf</i>	Darius Susa F in Kent 1950
<i>Ephr. Gen. Ex.</i>	Tonneau 1955
<i>Ephr. Sermon of the Lord</i>	Beck 1969
<i>Gy</i>	GINZA yamina (Right Ginza) in Petermann 2007
<i>Joh. Eph. EH</i>	Cureton 1853
<i>Joh. Eph. LES</i>	Brooks 1924–1926
<i>KwD</i>	Wright 1884
<i>Laws of Hammurapi</i>	Frayne 1990
<i>Letters of Severus</i>	Brooks 1902
<i>Satan and Death</i>	Brock 2009
<i>Sinait.</i>	Codex Sinaiticus Syriacus of the Gospel in Kiraz 1996
<i>TAD</i>	Porten and Yardeni 1986

Languages

BH	Biblical Hebrew
CS	Classical Syriac
TA	Targum Aramaic

Linguistic Terms

1	first person	IPFV	imperfective
2	second person	M	masculine
3	third person	N	neuter
ABS	absolute state	PFV	perfective
APP	active participle	PL	plural
CSTR	construct state	PST	past
DET	determined state	RPP	resultative participle
DRCT	directional	SBJV	subjunctive
DTRZ	detransitiviser	SG	singular
F	feminine	SQ	sequential narrative
FUT	future	tr.	transitive
IMPV	imperative	TRNZ	transitiviser
intr.	intransitive		

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2. PASSIVE VOICE IN ȚUROYO

Nikita Kuzin

1.0. Preliminaries

Țuroyo is a Neo-Aramaic language, originally spoken in the region called Turabdin. Nowadays, the borders of this region lie in the Turkish provinces of Mardin and Şırnak, in the South-East of Turkey. In its original area, Țuroyo is still spoken by ca 2000–3000 speakers (Bednarowicz 2017, 19; Talay 2017, 2), who live in the town of Midyat and in several villages close to it, mostly to the south and to the east of the town—Kfarze, ȚIwardo, Midən, Bsorino, Arkaḥ,¹ and a few others. Most of the speakers have emigrated and now live outside Turkey, with large communities having emerged in Sweden, Germany, and the Netherlands.

As far as dialectal variation is concerned, a few significant features separate the urban dialect of the town Midyat from the village dialects, but all varieties of Țuroyo are mutually intelligible.

Țuroyo has received considerable scholarly attention. The first texts in the language were published in the second half of the nineteenth century (Prym and Socin 1881), and new material

¹ The modern Turkish names of the villages are Altıntaş, Gülgöze, Öğündük, Haberli, and Üçköy, respectively.

is still being published regularly (e.g., Jastrow and Talay 2019). A description of ʿuroyo’s phonology and morphology (Jastrow 1967) and one of its syntax (Waltisberg 2016) exist, but several aspects, such as morphosyntax, (grammatical) semantics, and lexicography, require further attention. A recent general overview of the language in Häberl et al. (2024) can be consulted as well.

The present study will address the passive voice in ʿuroyo. I will focus on the main grammatical device utilised to express the passive voice—here referred to as the derived detransitive verbal stems (see below).² The preservation of derived detransitive stems with passive, anticausative, and other meanings in ʿuroyo is an archaic feature of this language, which it has inherited from the so-called *t*-stems of earlier Aramaic (see §4.0). Since the behaviour of these verbal forms is quite uniform in relation to their active counterparts, they will be analysed together under the umbrella term: the **detransitivising construction**, or **detransitive verbs**. The choice of this label is also motivated by the functions of the derived stems, which are not limited to the passive but include the anticausative, autocausative, and facilitative

² The term *stem* is commonly used in the field of Semitic studies; see also Chapter 1. Stems, also called *templates*, *measures*, *binyanim*, etc., are regular morphological patterns for producing derived verbs. Each stem is associated with a certain grammatical function, e.g., causative, detransitive/passive, applicative, but the functions are not always predictable, since most stems have a fair share of lexicalised verbs. For more information on Semitic verbal morphology, see Doron (2003); Ratcliffe (2005); Kouwenberg (2010, 245–46).

(§§3.2–3.3).³ The rest of the paper is structured as follows. In §1.1, I will briefly introduce the main aspects of the verbal morphology of ʤuroyo that are relevant for this paper, with an overview of argument marking and an overview of verbal stems. In §2.0, the data used in this study will be presented. §3.0 is a synchronic description of the passive and related meanings in ʤuroyo. §4.0 deals with the relevant diachronic aspects of the detransitive stems in Aramaic. Finally, §5.0 examines potential areal influences contributing to the functions of the passive voice in ʤuroyo.

1.1. Overview of the Verbal Morphology of ʤuroyo

1.1.1. Argument Marking in ʤuroyo

ʤuroyo possesses a complex system of argument indexing and alignment (Hemmauer and Waltisberg 2006; Noorlander 2021, chapter 5). The following two concepts will be used throughout the paper:

1. There are two main bases, labeled IPFV (imperfective) and PFV (perfective), from which the majority of the verbal forms is produced, by means of suffixes and prefixes.

³ One reviewer suggests that, in view of the apparent impossibility of ‘detransitivising’ intransitive verbs (§3.4), the main function of the construction should perhaps be understood as the suppression of the human subject, rather than detransitivisation. While this is in general a fitting description, it does not apply to the autocausative use of the construction (§3.3.2). The term ‘detransitive’ thus, in this author’s opinion, remains a better umbrella term for the phenomenon in question.

2. There are two sets of suffixes that attach to the verb and index verbal arguments. They inflect for number, gender, and person. The first series historically goes back to the enclitic personal suffixes (personal pronouns) and is thus called the E(nclitic)-series.⁴ The second series goes back to the preposition *l-* ‘to, for’, hence it is labelled the L-series.

For the forms built on the IPFV base, the E-series indexes the Agent (A) of transitive verbs and the single participant (S) of intransitive verbs. If the Patient (P) is pronominal, it is indexed with the L-series. For the forms built on the PFV base, on the other hand, the E-series indexes the S, and also the P, but only if the P is pronominal in the third person. The A is indexed by the L-series. If the P is pronominal, it is indexed by the so-called second L-series, and if it is nominal, there is no indexing. The nominal P is normally neither indexed nor flagged—i.e., neither cross-referenced nor case-marked—whereas the nominal A is flagged in some dialects with the prepositional marker *l-*,⁵ but the distribution of the *l*-marked and unmarked forms still requires further study. Diem (2012, 45) has suggested that the use of *l-* might be

⁴ See Noorlander (2021, 32–42) for an overview of the relevant morphology.

⁵ The *l-* marker had numerous functions in earlier Aramaic: it was used to mark direct objects as well as indirect ones, such as dative and goal/direction ones. Eventually it came to be used as a personal marker in the ergative construction, built with the passive participle. On the use of the *l*-marker in passive constructions in Northeastern Neo-Aramaic, see Noorlander (Chapter 3).

influenced by Verb–Subject word order, common in some narrative texts. In modern spoken Ṭuroyo, the default word order is Subject–Verb. The correlation between word order and flagging is explored in more detail in Kuzin (2018); see also Coghill (2016, 87–90) and Noorlander (2021, 319).

The indexing and flagging patterns can be summarised in two tables, for IPFV and PFV, below:

Table 1: Indexing and flagging patterns for the IPFV base

Grammatical function	Pronominal	Nominal (indexing)	Nominal (flagging)
S	E-series	E-series	∅
A	E-series	E-series	∅
P	L-series	∅	∅

Table 2: Indexing and flagging patterns for the PFV base

Grammatical function	Pronominal		Nominal (indexing)	Nominal (flagging)
	3rd	1st, 2nd		
S	E-series		E-series	∅
A	L-series		L-series	∅/l-
P	E-series	L-series	∅	∅

Importantly, the derived verbal stems used in the detransitivising construction, being syntactically one-place verbs, behave like intransitive verbs with a single participant (S): they receive the E-series indexing in both bases and no flagging.

1.1.2. Verbal Stems of Ṭuroyo

The three main verbal stems of Ṭuroyo are labelled I, II, and III, corresponding to common Semitic G-stem, i.e., earlier Aramaic *Pəʿal* (cf. Hebrew *Qal*), D-stem, i.e., *Paʿel* (cf. Hebrew *Piʿel*), and C-stem, i.e., *Afʿel* (cf. Hebrew *Hifʿil*), respectively (see §4.0 and

Noorlander, Chapters 1 and 3). Stems I and II can be considered basic, since they do not stand in a derivational relation to each other save for a few lexical items. Stem III is the causative stem: it is employed to produce causative verbs from intransitive and transitive verbs in the I stem, e.g., I *nošəf* ‘to be dry’ → III *manšəf* ‘to dry, to make dry’, I *zobəṭ* ‘to catch’ → III *mazbəṭ* ‘to make s.o. catch s.o. or to have s.o. caught’. Each of the main stems has a corresponding detransitive stem. These stems, labelled I_p, II_p, and III_p, constitute the focus of this paper; they correspond with the derived *t*-stems in earlier Aramaic.⁶ Additionally, there are four-consonant verbs (designated Q), which are conjugated in the same way as verbs of the II stem. There are a few dozen verbs that are attested only or mostly in one of the derived stems I_p, II_p, III_p, and Q_p—the so-called deponent verbs.⁷ Since this study is focused on passivisation and related valency-changing operations, I will not cover the deponent verbs. The main stem forms are summarised in the table below, on the basis of four verbs: I *gorəš* ‘to pull’, II *mʕaləq* ‘to hang’, III *maltəm* ‘to gather’, Q *mbarbəz* ‘to scatter’.

⁶ The ‘T’ label is due to the prefix *t*- used to form these stems; see §3.4.

⁷ A few prominent ones may be listed: I_p *məḡḡəl* ‘to talk’, *məfšəḥ* ‘to be glad’, *məḡbən* ‘to be offended’, *məqḥər* ‘to be angry’; II_p *minakəf* ‘to be ashamed’, *mihayər* ‘to be confused’, *mišakər* ‘to be lost’; Q_p *midaywən* ‘to be crazy’.

Table 3: Verbal stems of ʤuroyo

	Active		Passive	
	IPFV	PFV	IPFV	PFV
I	<i>goraš</i>	<i>grəšle</i> (tr.), <i>damax</i> (intr.)	<i>məgraš</i>	<i>griš</i>
II	<i>mʤaləq</i>	<i>mʤalaqle</i>	<i>miʤaləq</i>	<i>mʤaləq</i>
III	<i>maltəm</i>	<i>maltəmle</i>	<i>mitaltəm</i>	<i>mtaltəm</i>
Q	<i>mbarbəz</i>	<i>mbarbazle</i>	<i>mibarbəz</i>	<i>mbarbəz</i>

2.0. Sources of Data

In this paper, I will be mostly relying on corpus data. The corpus from which the study draws consists mostly of texts published by various researchers on ʤuroyo, including large collections, such as Prym and Socin (1881), Ritter (1967; 1969; 1971), and Jastrow and Talay (2019), as well as separate texts published in books and papers over the years. Genre-wise, these are, for the most part, oral texts, either fairy-tales or narrations about historical events. In addition to this, several publications produced by native speakers are considered, such as three long interviews recorded and published by Beṭ-Şawoçe (1995a; 1997; 2001), as well as books of different genres, e.g., recipes (Şarəke 2001). The majority of these texts are included in the Neo-Aramaic Web Corpora platform (= NAWC, Lyavdansky et al. 2019). For my doctoral dissertation (Kuzin 2024), I collected a random sample of 982 sentences containing detransitive verbs, using the NAWC corpus and some additional publications in ʤuroyo.⁸ The illustrative

⁸ See Kuzin (2024, 158) for the references to additional texts. The annotated sample is publicly available at <https://github.com/margisk/detransitive-dataset>, accessed 25 August 2025.

examples in this study come either from the sample or directly from the corpus.⁹ The sample is also the basis of the frequencies stated at the end of §3.1.

Two additional samples have been collected for this study. One is referred to in §3.5. It was likewise a random selection of examples from NAWC. The sample used for §3.8, on the other hand, was collected manually, by reading through the texts mentioned therein and counting examples manually. On its exact content, see §3.8.

3.0. Synchronic Aspects of the Passive Voice in Ṭuroyo

3.1. Prototypical Passive

The regular use of the passive in Ṭuroyo can be illustrated by the following pair of examples:

- (1) a. *qṭil-e* *u* *dewo* *l-u* *zṣur-awo*
kill.PFV-L.3MSG ART.MSG wolf L-ART.MSG boy-DEM.M
‘The boy killed the wolf.’ (RT II 67:226)
- b. *ḥəl-la* *kal* *ko-qṭil* *u* *dewo*
look.PFV-L.3FSG PRES PRS-kill.DETR.PFV.3M ART.MSG wolf
‘She looked (and saw): the wolf had been killed.’ (RT II 67:226)

⁹ The examples are referenced in slightly different ways throughout the paper. Examples from Ritter’s texts are abbreviated as RT, then the volume is indicated, then the verse in the format text:verse. For Prym and Socin’s texts, the text and the line on the page is indicated with a slash, e.g., 130/17. All other text references include the publication name and the page.

Example (1b) satisfies the criteria normally proposed for the passive in typological and cross-linguistic studies (cf. Zúñiga and Kittilä 2019, 83):

- The active verb *qoʤəl* ‘to kill, to murder’, here in (1a) occurring in the PFV, changes its form to *maqʤəl*, here in (1b) occurring in the PFV;
- The agent of *qʤl* ‘to kill, to murder’ in (1b) is not overtly expressed;
- The direct object of the active in (1a) (*dewo* ‘wolf’) is promoted to the subject position in (1b) and agrees with the verb;
- The construction in (1b) is less frequent, and its use appears to be pragmatically-motivated.

As far as the last point is concerned, it is known that passives are usually employed in specific pragmatic contexts (Shibatani 1985; Givón 2001, 125–26). For instance, a passive is used when the active agent is unknown or irrelevant. Alternatively, it can be used when the agent is easily recoverable from the context and is evident to the listener. Yet another motivation on the part of the speaker might be a desire to shift the blame or conceal the identity of the agent. Examples of the ʤuroyo passive can be found for all of the above. A couple of illustrative examples are given below.

In addition to (1b), where the agent is obvious to the listener, (2) is an example where the agent is unknown from the perspective of the relatives who are affected by the situation. In (3), the context is as follows: a son disobeys his father’s order not to open a secret room with two wells, one filled with silver and

one with gold; he goes in and puts his finger into each well; his finger becomes covered with gold; wanting to conceal this, he wraps a piece of cloth around his finger and is then questioned by his father about this.

- (2) *ħəšwi-wa k-azz-ehən an noš-atte*
 think.IPFV.3PL-PST PRS-go.PFV-3PL ART.PL people-POSS.3PL
l- Mawşal l- ədşi-wa d- ko-məqtoli
 to GN NEG know.IPFV.3PL-PST CMP PRS-kill.DETR.IPFV.3PL
 ‘They thought their people had gone to Mosul... they did not know they were being murdered.’ (Jastrow 1993, 132)

- (3) *omər qay abr-i şawf-ux maşər-to yo*
 say.IPFV.3MSG why son-POSS.1SG finger-POSS.2M tied-F COP.3SG
omər ġriħo omər me mə
 say.IPFV.3MSG injure.DETR.PFV.3FSG say.IPFV.3MSG from what
ġriħo
 injure.DETR.PFV.3FSG
 ‘(The father) said: “Son, why is your finger taped?” (The boy) replied: “It got injured.” The father said: “Injured by what?”’ (RT II 75:133-134)

Normally, the oblique agent is not expressed in the passive voice in Țuroyo. Rare occurrences of oblique marking can, however, be found; consider (3) above. There is no single established means of introducing an oblique agent. Waltisberg (2016, 207–8) lists several prepositions or prepositional phrases with the same meaning ‘with, by, by means of’ that may be used for this purpose, such as *b-*, *b-ide d-* (lit. ‘through the hand of’), *m-ide d-* (lit. ‘from the hand of’), *mu taraf d-* (lit. ‘from the side of’).¹⁰ Some

¹⁰ Cf. Turkish *tarafından*, used to introduce agents in the passive voice. See Suleymanov (Chapter 8).

alternative prepositional phrases occur in the corpus, e.g., *m-/me* ‘from’, *l-* ‘by’, *m-laf* ‘from towards’, etc. Looking at the sample of 982 examples of the detransitive stems (see §2.0 on sampling), 535 of which have been classified as passives, 36 examples show oblique agent marking (36 out of 535, so roughly 7%).

3.2. Other Types of Passive

3.2.1. Passive with an Indefinite Agent

Another prominent type of passive is commonly found when a verb in a detransitive stem is used in the Present or Imperfect—based on the IPFV. This type of passive involves the promotion of the patient, but the agent cannot be expressed. In fact, the implied agent refers to an unspecified set of people, i.e., ‘everyone’, ‘people in general’:

- (4) *u muklo heš meqəm d- məbləʃ*
 ART.MSG food still before CMP swallow.DETR.IPFV.3MSG
k-məʃəs b-aʃ ʃarš-e
 PRS-chew.DETR.IPFV.3MSG with-ART.PL tooth-PL
 ‘Before it is swallowed, the food is chewed by means of the teeth.’ (RT I 3:36)

- (5) *maḥke-no əšmo (...) ab bot-ani*
 tell.IPFV.M-E.1SG little (...) ART.PL house.PL-DEM.PL
aʃ ʃatīq-e aydarbo misomi-wa
 ART.PL old-PL how make.DETR.IPFV.3PL-PST
 ‘I shall tell you a little bit (...) how these old houses used to be built.’ (Jastrow 2002, 93)

This type of passive seems to be very common in cooking recipes:

- (6) *naqqa ħreto k-mitašigo i rezo šafiro*
 time another.F PRS-wash.DETR.IPFV.3FSG ART.FSG rice good
k-mitartəho ʕam čike d- maye d- ħalwo
 PRS-boil.DETR.IPFV.3FSG with little REL water REL milk
 ‘The rice is washed well one more time and then boiled
 with a bit of milk.’ (Jastrow and Talay 2019, 136)

In example (6), the relevance of the agent for the speaker is likely even lower than in examples (4)–(5). The recipe is by default addressed to a general audience, and the focus of the speaker is on the ingredients and how to prepare them.

3.2.2. Facilitative

The facilitative use can be seen as a predictable extension of the passive with an indefinite agent: the implied agent still refers to an unspecified set of people, but its relevance is even lower. The focus of the speaker seems to be on the properties of the patient. The construction acquires modal and potential nuances in meaning:

- (7) *i ħdo ʕayno am may-ayda*
 art.F one.F well ART.PL water-POSS.3FSG
k-məštən i ħdo mčapl-e ne
 PRS-drink.DETR.IPFV.3PL ART.FSG one.F dirty-PL COP.3PL
 ‘One well, its water is drinkable, and the other one—(its water) is dirty.’ (PS 147/28–29)

3.3. Related Meanings

The derived detransitive verbal stems of ʦuroyo are polysemous. With the exception of stem III_p, which is usually strictly passive,

they can be used for various valency-reducing operations (Comrie 1985; Haspelmath and Müller-Bardey 2004), most notably the anticausative (§3.3.1) and autocausative (§3.3.2). Individual verbs can appear in two or more functions, e.g., passive and anticausative, depending on the lexical semantics of the verb and on the context (§3.3.3).

3.3.1. Anticausative

The anticausative, in contrast to the passive, involves not merely the demotion of the agent, but rather its complete removal from the event structure. The new event is conceptualised as occurring without an external agent or cause. The cause is usually irrelevant or non-existent (Paducheva 2003; Alexiadou et al. 2006). Compare the two following examples:

- (8) a. *ʕabər lawğul d-i dukano*
 enter.PFV.3MSG inside REL-ART.FSG shop
d- mğayər ğul-e
 CMP change.IPFV.3MSG clothes-PL
 ‘He entered the shop to change his clothes.’ (RT I 49:12)
- b. *mən ɰze-lax d- mğayər*
 what see.PFV-L.2F CMP change.DETR.PFV.3MSG
b-u bayto
 in-ART.MSG house
 ‘Did you see if anything changed in the house?’ (RT I 43:47)

Alternatively, the use of a derived detransitive verb can be classified as anticausative when the context specifies another event happening before and triggering the event described by the

verb. In example (9b) below, the sword broke because it met the shield. Even though both events—swinging with the sword and blocking with the shield—are carried out by human agents, the event is arguably conceptualised by the speaker as agentless.

- (9) a. *twəl-li i ale w u niro*
 break.PFV-L.1SG ART.FSG plough and ART.MSG yoke
 ‘I broke the plough and the yoke.’ (RT I 48:32)
- b. *qayət b-u turso twir*
 touch.PFV.3MSG in-ART.MSG shield break.DETR.PFV.3MSG
u sayfo
 ART.MSG sword
 ‘The sword met the shield and broke.’ (PS 41/27)

3.3.2. Autocausative

In the autocausative¹¹ derivation, likewise, the structure of the event is modified, as the semantic roles of Agent and Patient—or Actor and Undergoer—are combined together. The starting point for this derivation is usually a transitive motion verb, such as ‘to throw’, ‘to lift’, ‘to attach’, etc. The resulting form is an intransitive motion verb with an animate agentive subject:

- (10) a. *čək-ke b-u ḥabəs*
 place_inside.PFV-L.3PL in-ART.MSG prison
 ‘They put him in prison.’ (PS 137/21)

¹¹ The term ‘autocausative’ was introduced in a typological study by Geniušienė (1987), at roughly the same time as the study by Haspelmath (1987, 27) where the same phenomenon is labelled ‘endoreflexive’.

- (12) *azz-ino ləš-li twiro i dgəšto*
 go.PFV-1SG knead.PFV-L.1SG break.DETR.PFV.3FSG ART.FSG pitcher
twiro i agono azz-e u qamḥo
 break.DETR.PFV.3FSG ART.FSG bowl go.PFV-3MSG ART.MSG flour
b-i arfo
 in-ART.FSG ground

‘I went to knead, and then the pitcher broke, the jar broke, and the flour fell on the ground!’ (RT I 56:142)

In most cases, however, the distinction can be made based on the wider context. In addition, certain verbs do not allow the derivation of the anticausative. These are the verbs that have “agent-oriented meaning components” (Haspelmath 1993, 93): the situations described by these verbs imply the presence of an active and volitional agent, whose involvement is specific and essential for the completion of the action. Such events cannot be conceptualised as spontaneous and occurring on their own, hence they are incompatible with the anticausative. Examples include: *soyəm* ‘to do, to make, to build’ → *misəm* ‘to be done, to be made, to be built’; *bone* ‘to build’ → *məbne* ‘to be built’; *forəs* ‘to publish’ → *məfrəs* ‘to be published’; *šoqəl* ‘to take, to buy’ → *məšqəl* ‘to be taken, bought’; *maḥət* ‘to put’ → *mitaḥət* ‘to be put’.

Occasionally, it might also be difficult to decide between the passive and the autocausative interpretation of an example, as in (13) below. The interpretation depends on whether the subject, represented by an abstract entity *kursi* ‘seat’, is conceptualised as agentive and quasi-animate, thus ‘the seat (= the people of the church) moved (on their own)’, or as non-agentive, thus ‘the seat (= the institution) was moved’.

- (13) *bəttər m-i muʔahada d- Lozan u kursi*
 after from-ART.FSG treaty REL GN ART.MSG seat
nqil l- Suriya
 move.DETR.PFV.3MSG to GN
 ‘After the treaty of Lausanne the seat (of the Patriarchate)
 was moved / moved to Syria.’ (RT I 11:32)

3.4. Passive and Transitivity

Besides regular passives built from transitive verbs, it is possible in *Ṭuroyo* to passivise an intransitive verb. Both one-place (14) and two-place intransitives (15) can be passivised:

- (14) *lə k-məšgəl b-u turo*
 NEG PRS-work.DETR.IPFV.3MSG in-ART.MSG hill.country
 ‘One cannot work in the hill-country (because of bad
 weather).’ (RT III 94:285)
- (15) *hğim ʕal Mədyad*
 attack.DETR.PFV.3MSG on GN
 ‘There was an attack on Midyat.’ (Beṭ-Şawoce 1997, 3)

The active counterpart of (14) would be:

- (16) *noš-e lo ko-šugli b-u turo*
 people-PL NEG PRS-work.IPFV.3PL in-ART.MSG hill.country
 ‘People do not work in the hill-country.’ (constructed)

In contrast to the regular personal passive, there is no direct object, so there is no NP to promote to the subject position. The agent gets demoted and that is all. If there is an additional verbal argument represented by a PP, as in (15), it remains unchanged. As a consequence, there is no agreement between the verb and any nominal arguments that might remain.

There are semantic restrictions on the use of this construction. The original subject of the corresponding one-place predicate must be human. Thus, even non-agentive one-place verbs with human subjects, such as *domax* ‘to sleep’, can be passivised (17), but not those that have a single inanimate participant, such as *dolaf* ‘to drip’ in (18):

(17) *lə- mādmax-wo*
 NEG sleep.DETR.IPFV.3MSG-PST
 ‘It was not possible to sleep.’ (RT I 2:31)

(18) **lə- g-mədlaf*
 NEG PRS-leak.PASS.IPFV.3MSG
 ‘There is no leaking.’ (constructed)

Among other semantic classes of verbs that can be passivised in this way are verbs of directed and non-directed motion, e.g., *əzze* ‘to go’ and *sohe* ‘to swim’, posture verbs, e.g., *yotu* ‘to sit’, and speech verbs, e.g., *maḥke* ‘to tell, to narrate’. Verbs of perception and cognition, like *hoze* ‘to see’, *šoməf* ‘to hear’, and *oḍəf* ‘to know’, which are usually transitive but can sometimes be used intransitively, behave differently. The detransitive forms of these verbs are usually patient-orientated, as illustrated by (19):

(19) *u radyo heš məšmaḥ-wo*
 ART.MSG radio still hear.DETR.IPFV.3MSG-PST
 ‘The radio could still be heard / was audible.’ (Beṭ-Şawoce 1991, 5)

Most examples of passives derived from intransitives in the corpus occur in one of the two TAM-forms based on the IPFV base—the Present or the Imperfect. The implied and demoted agent is

unspecified and general ('someone', 'everyone'), and the resulting passive sentence often carries the modal/potential meaning. This indicates that the detransitive construction as applied to intransitive verbs is a sub-type of the construction discussed in §§3.2.1–3.2.2 above and illustrated by examples (4) and (5)—the passive with an indefinite agent and the facilitative.

The features of this construction that were indicated above, namely the association with intransitive verbs with human subjects and the imperfective aspect, appear to be typical of constructions involving the application of passive morphology to intransitive verbs cross-linguistically; see Nakipoğlu-Demiralp (2001) and Abraham and Leiss (2006).

3.5. Passive and Agreement

As can be seen from example (1b) and others, the verb in the passive construction normally agrees with the subject, i.e., the patient. However, one also finds in the corpus examples like (20)–(21) where subject agreement is absent:

- (20) *qtil* *w mğarəḥ* *arbŋo ḥamšo*
 kill.DETR.PFV.3MSG and injure.DETR.PFV.3MSG four five
ŋwarnoy-e
 person_from_GN-PL
 'Four, five people from ŋIwardo were killed or injured.'
 (Beṭ-Şawoce 1997, 111)

- (21) *b-u* *madbax-ano qaḥwe* *bas misam-wo*
 in-ART.MSG kitchen-DEM.M coffee(F) only make.DETR.IPFV.3MSG-PST
 'In this kitchen only coffee was prepared.' (RT I 2:42)

In (20), the form *q̄til* is in the third-person masculine singular, whereas the NP *ḡwarnoye* is plural. In (21), *qaḥwe* is feminine singular, but *misamwo* is likewise the third-person masculine singular form. These are, however, not to be interpreted as an additional type of passive construction, e.g., as the impersonal passive. In fact, subject agreement may also be lacking in sentences with intransitive one-place verbs:

- (22) *nafəq* *tre ḡənn-at me bayn u baḥar*
 come_out.PFV.3MSG two jinn-PL from between ART.MSG sea
 ‘Two jinns came out of the sea.’ (RT II 73:218)

This has been noted by Waltisberg (2016, 250), who made an observation that the absence of agreement is typical for sentences with indefinite plural subjects.¹² Based on a random corpus sample of 150 sentences¹³ containing passive and intransitive verbs, we can verify Waltisberg’s observations (see the table below). 130 examples show agreement, and 20 do not. Of the 20 examples without agreement, 17 examples involve plural subjects, while 3 examples have feminine subjects. Indefiniteness plays a significant role: all examples without agreement have indefinite subjects. They are often preceded by a quantifier, such as *ḡalabe* ‘many’, *hən* ‘some’, or a numeral, as in example (21). However, since non-agreeing verbal forms appear with feminine subjects as well (see example 20), plurality is not the only factor at play. It seems that Verb–Subject word order is also relevant: it

¹² “Indefinite pluralische Subjekte, die eine unbestimmte Anzahl angeben oder sonst nicht näher bestimmt sind, werden fast durchaus mit singularischem Nucleus verbunden” (Waltisberg 2016, 250).

¹³ See more on the sampling in §2.0.

shows a significant correlation with lack of agreement,¹⁴ as can be seen from the table below. The difference in the distribution of the forms is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 7.591$, p -value = 0.005866).

Table 4: Distribution of the presence and absence of agreement in passive clauses with SV or VS word order

	SV	VS	Total
Agreement present	69	61	130
Agreement absent	4	16	20
Total	73	77	150

3.6. Passive and TAM

In general, when it comes to the passive, there are no restrictions on the use of any of the six main TAM-forms, i.e., Present, Subjunctive, Preterite, Imperfect, Perfect, and Plusquamperfect. There are, however, certain meaningful interactions between the two categories. The past tense forms based on the PFV—the Preterite being the default narrative form—commonly appear as personal passives, anticausatives, and autocasatives, but rarely occur as passives with an indefinite agent or as facilitatives. On the other hand, the Present and the Imperfect—based on the IPFV—are quite strongly associated with the passive with an indefinite agent, with the impersonal passive, and with the facilitative.

The use of the detransitivising construction in the Preterite form can acquire resultative meaning, most commonly in direct speech or after verbs of perception:

¹⁴ Contra to Waltisberg’s (2016, 250) statement: “die Wortstellung spielt dabei keine Rolle.”

- (23) *ħzal-le u qode (...) nfiħ*
 see.PFV-L.3PL ART.MSG judge (...) inflate.DETR.PFV.3MSG

‘They saw that the judge had become swollen.’ (PS 231/2)

According to Waltisberg (2016, 204), “das passive kann statische Bedeutung haben und so einen sich aus der Verbalhandlung ergebenden Zustand bezeichnen” (see also Wilke 2009, 96–97).

The stative-resultative meaning is also quite clear in relative clauses in which the referent of the head NP is the subject and the passive verb is attached to it:

- (24) *b-u bāston-ayda kito liwan d*
 in-ART.MSG garden-POSS.3FSG EXST niche REL
sim ħato
 make.DETR.PFV.3MSG new

‘In her garden there was a newly-made niche (lit. a niche that had been newly made)’ (RT I 11:27)

Interaction between the passive construction and modality is evident in the use of passive forms in the IPFV, for both transitive and intransitive verbs, such as examples (7), (14), and (17). The modal nuances of these uses have already been mentioned above. To be more precise, the type of modality expressed by this construction is “participant-external modality” (van der Auwera and Plungian 1998, 80). It has to do with circumstances that are external to the participant. Thus, in (14), the speaker describes the circumstances of the wintertime: it is not possible to work outside, because the weather is bad. In (17), it was not possible to sleep because the street near the house where the speaker (or the protagonist) lived was noisy.

Some examples are ambiguous: it is possible to interpret them either as passives with an indefinite agent or as facilitatives, i.e., modal passives:

- (25) *layt mede d- lə- k-toʃe u noʃo*
 EXST.NEG thing REL NEG PRS-forget.IPFV.3MSG ART.MSG person
bas i mayər-to lə k-məʃoʃo
 but ART.F bitter-F NEG PRS-forget.DETR.IPFV.3FSG

‘There is not anything that a person does not forget / cannot forget, but the most bitter things are not forgotten / cannot be forgotten.’ (Beṭ-Şawoce 1995, 153)

3.7. Passive and the Genre of Texts

In cross-linguistic studies on the passive, it has been argued that its frequency depends on the genre of texts. According to counts given by Givón (2001, 125) for written English texts, the percentage of passive forms was 18% in non-fiction, 9% in fiction, 8% in news publications, and 4% in sports texts. Given that *Ṭuroyo* so far has mostly been described on the basis of narrative folklore texts, it is necessary to introduce other texts to achieve a more balanced corpus.

To check the relative frequency of the passive in *Ṭuroyo* I have sampled texts of several genres:

- a. Oral narrative: a folklore story Mammo and Zine (Ritter 1969, Text 66), ca 6500 words.
- b. Oral narrative: a sample from an ethnographic text on the life and customs in the village of *ʃIwardo* (Ritter 1971, Text 94, Verses 1–320), ca 7600 words.

- c. A fragment from an interview with J. Beṭ-Şawoçe and Xori Brahim, including dialogues between the two and longer monologues by one of the speakers (Beṭ-Şawoçe 1995), ca 7000 words.
- d. A fragment from the transcript of a TV programme, with a discussion between several guests (Xamri 1997), ca 6800 words.
- e. Fragments from several issues of *Nsibin* magazine, including narrative non-fiction texts, essays on socio-political topics, and letters from readers, ca 6800 words—*Nsibin* #56/1, #59/1 (Beṭ-Şawoçe 1995b; 1996).
- f. Recipes: a sample from a recipe book (Şarêke 2001) and a few recipes recorded in Jastrow and Talay (2019), ca 4700 words.¹⁵

Only finite forms were counted; imperatives were excluded because there are no passive imperatives. Likewise, some pseudo-verbs, such as *omər* ‘to say’, were excluded in the cases where they are used as filler words in the narrative. The frequency data is summarised in Table 5. I have sub-divided the frequencies into three types. Since some of the detransitive forms have non-passive readings, I have included these, because otherwise the proportion of ‘true’ passives would not be accurate.

¹⁵ Note that in the examined ethnographic text (Ritter 1971, Text 94) and in the cooking recipes from Jastrow and Talay (2019), third-person plural forms are very frequent, which can be considered very similar in function to passives with implicit agents: ‘they/people used to do/do X’ > ‘X was/is done (by someone)’.

Table 5: Passive counts by genre

	Active	Passive	Non-passive detransitive	% of which are passives
a. Folklore (oral)	908	1	41	0.1%
b. Ethnography (oral)	945	14	15	1.43%
c. Interview (oral)	865	18	17	1.88%
d. TV show (oral)	745	40	14	5%
e. Magazine material (written)	1014	48	50	4.26%
f. Cooking recipes (mixed)	575	171	0	22%

One can see that the relative frequency of passive forms differs depending on the genre of text and on whether it is an oral or written text. Oral literature and ethnography have a low amount of truly passive forms. On the other hand, oral material produced in a formalised context of a TV discussion between educated speakers has more passives. Written texts also show more passive forms, with recipes showing the highest frequency.

As mentioned above, for the recipe genre I have examined texts from two different sources. They exhibit a strong split: oral recipes recorded in Jastrow and Talay (2019) have around 6% passive forms and many third-person plural active forms. This number does not represent a sharp contrast with other genres recorded in Table 5. In written recipes from *Şarëke* (2001), on the other hand, the passive form is the default one (68%). This can be explained either by a different choice on the part of the writer or by there being no established written norm in *Ṭuroyo*.

4.0. Diachrony of the Passive Voice in Ṭuroyo

The preservation of the derived detransitive stems with passive, anticausative, and other meanings in Ṭuroyo is an archaic feature of this language, relative to other Neo-Aramaic dialects. Ṭuroyo has inherited the full system of verbal stems from earlier Aramaic, consisting of three active stems, usually labelled G (after German *Grundstamm*), D (after German *Doppelungsstamm*), and C (following German *Kausativstamm*), and three corresponding detransitive stems with a characteristic prefix *t-* (see also Noorlander, Chapter 1), thus tG, tD, and tC. All Northeastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA) dialects, by contrast, have lost the derived detransitive *t*-stems (e.g., Göransson 2015). In these varieties, the passive is expressed by other means, usually through various analytic constructions (see Noorlander, Chapter 3). In Modern Western Aramaic, the original Aramaic system of stems has been strongly influenced by Arabic: the tG stem has all but disappeared, and the tC stem is very rare; these dialects have also borrowed the Arabic derived stems VII, VIII, and X (Arnold 1990). The data on Neo-Mandaic, another branch of Neo-Aramaic, is unfortunately very limited. According to Häberl (2009, 221), the tG stem is preserved, while the other two derived detransitive stems are lost.

The semantic development of the derived stems and other voice-coding morphology in Aramaic has not yet been investigated fully, but the general picture is clear. Kalinin and Loesov

(2022) have studied the internal passive¹⁶ and the detransitive *t*-stems in Old Aramaic. According to their findings, the internal passive functions as the passive past in Old Aramaic, whereas the *t*-stems have passive, anticausative, and reflexive readings and are associated with the non-past tense forms. Already at this time a new form emerges—the passive participle of the shape **qtīl*. It was initially used as passive Perfect or a property/state adjective, e.g., *dəḥīl* ‘fearful’ (Dan. 2.31).

By the Middle Aramaic period, represented by major literary dialects such as Classical Syriac, Mandaic, Jewish Babylonian, and Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, the internal passive had disappeared, and the *t*-stems filled its spot, as they came to be used in the past tense as well. The passive participle *qtīl* continued to be used. The functions and the distribution of the *t*-stems and *qtīl* in Middle Aramaic still await a detailed investigation.

Most Neo-Aramaic languages, except for Modern Western Aramaic and Neo-Mandaic, have undergone a transition from the old perfective and imperfective forms to new ones built on the base of the passive and active participle respectively. This development has also affected the derived stems (at least in ʿuroyo): the new IPFV base for the derived stems (forms *məgrəš*, *miṣaləq*, *mitaltəm* in Table 3) was built from the active participle of the

¹⁶ The internal passive is another type of voice-coding morphology used in Semitic languages; see Noorlander (Chapter 1). The morphological derivation happens through the change of the vowel melody within the verbal base (hence the name ‘internal’), e.g., Arabic *qatala* ‘he killed’ → *qutīla* ‘he was killed’.

respective derived stem (tG, tD, or tC) in earlier Aramaic. However, the PFV base posed a problem, since there were no passive participles for the derived stems. The solution was to use the passive (resultative) participle **qtil* for the new PFV base. Thus, strictly speaking, only the paradigm for the IPFV forms goes back to the earlier forms of the Aramaic derived stems, whereas the PFV base uses morphological material of different origin.¹⁷

The range of functions of the derived detransitive stems in Ṭuroyo is also quite stable and conservative. Even though, as mentioned above, further study of the derived stems in Middle Aramaic is necessary, there seems to be a significant overlap between Ṭuroyo and Middle Aramaic in this domain. For instance, both in Classical Syriac and in Ṭuroyo, the derived detransitive stems can convey passive and anticausative meanings. The reflexive meaning, which is available for the derived detransitive stems in Classical Syriac (Farina 2011, 4), cannot, however, be expressed by the detransitive stems in Ṭuroyo.¹⁸ It is normally expressed by means of a separate reflexive construction, involving the reflexive marker *ruḥ-* ‘self’:

- (26) *mašəḡ-le* *ruḥ-e*
 wash.PFV-L.3MSG REFL-POSS.3MSG
 ‘He washed himself.’ (RT II 66:59)

¹⁷ The *qtil* passive participle is preserved in various constructions in NENA as well; see Noorlander (Chapter 3).

¹⁸ Reflexivity is here understood in the strict sense, as coreference between two participants (and, accordingly, arguments) of a clause, usually between the subject and the direct object; see Haspelmath (2023).

5.0. Possible Areal Influences on the Passive Voice in ʤuroyo

Over centuries, ʤuroyo has been in prolonged contact with Arabic dialects and with Iranian languages, most notably Kurmanji (Northern Kurdish). The contact with Arabic likely began much earlier¹⁹ and was much more intensive, judging by the amount of Arabic borrowings in the ʤuroyo lexicon and the degree to which they have been adapted. According to Barsky et al. (2018), 13.5% of the items of the 200-word Swadesh list for ʤuroyo are of Arabic origin, against 8.5% of Kurmanji origin. Arabic nouns and adjectives are also more fully adapted to Aramaic morphology, as some of them have taken the Aramaic nominal ending *-o*, e.g., *darbo* ‘way, road’ (< Arb. *darb*), *xabro* ‘word’ (< Arb. *xabar*).

As far as the domain of voice and valency is concerned, the influence of Arabic seems to be restricted to verbal borrowings. By my own estimation, not less than a third of the ʤuroyo verbal lexicon is of Arabic origin. There are three strategies of verbal borrowing and adaptation (Coghill 2015; Kuzin forth.):

- 1) High degree of adaptation: verbs and roots that have been fully integrated in the verbal system of ʤuroyo. This is the most numerous group: ʤur. I *nošəf* ‘to become dry’, cf. Arb. I *našifa* (Wehr 1985, 1275); ʤur. II *mħaləq* ‘to throw’ < Arb. II *ħallaqa* (Wehr 1985, 289); ʤur. III *masləm* ‘to hand over, to betray’ < Arb. IV *ʔaslama* (Wehr 1985, 591).

¹⁹ Likely from the tenth century onward, perhaps even earlier; see Procházka (2018, 159).

- 2) Medium degree of adaptation: Arabic verbs are borrowed with their morphological markers—usually the *t*-prefix—and re-analysed as four-consonantal verbs (stem Q): Ṭur. *mtaḥmāl* ‘to tolerate, to endure’, cf. Arab. V *taḥammala* (Wehr 1985, 295).
- 3) Low degree of adaptation: Arabic verbs are borrowed together with their morphological markers, such as stem prefixes and infixes. Through this process, new verbal stems that otherwise do not exist in Ṭuroyo have been introduced: Ṭur. *məftakər* ‘to think’ < Anat. Arab. VIII *ftakar* (Jastrow 1978, 192); Ṭur. *məstaʕmāl* ‘to use’ < Anat. Arab. X *staʕmal* (Jastrow 2005, 98).

As far as type (1) is concerned, the exact mechanism of borrowing remains to be established. It is likely a combination of root extraction and adaptation based on surface similarity: e.g., II-stem verbs in Ṭuroyo usually correspond to the II- and III-stem verbs of Arabic. As argued in Kuzin (forthcoming), it is quite difficult to establish whether (a) the derived-stem verbs in Ṭuroyo have been directly borrowed from the derived stems of Arabic, such as V, VII, VII, and X, or (b) the active stems I, II, and III were borrowed first, with the formation of the passive verbs taking place later and independently in Ṭuroyo.

As for type (3), it is noteworthy that, despite the low degree of morphological adaptation, the passivisation of transitive verbs is still possible. For *məstaʕmāl* ‘to use’, a corresponding passive verb *mitəstaʕmāl* ‘to be used’ is attested.

Beyond lexical borrowings, there is no clear Arabic influence on the Ṭuroyo voice system. It is, however, possible that the

verbal stem systems of Aramaic and Arabic in this region have converged: Anatolian Arabic has likewise lost the internal passive, and its most common derived stems are VII and V, often derived from Arabic stems I and II, respectively (Jastrow 1978, 183, 187). Other verbal stems, such as VIII and X, are less frequent. This situation is to some extent mirrored by *Ṭuroyo*, where I_p and II_p are the most common derived stems, likewise in relation to I and II.

There are several features shared by the passive constructions in *Ṭuroyo*, Arabic, and Turkish (Cowell 1964, 234; Jastrow 1978, 187; König 1985):

- Voice syncretism: the passive, anticausative, and sometimes reflexive are expressed by the same morpheme or verbal stem.
- Restrictions on the use of oblique agent phrases.
- Combination of the passive form, the imperfective tense/aspect, and negation resulting in the passive acquiring the facilitative meaning. This construction can also be applied to intransitive verbs.

The restrictions on the use of oblique agents and the facilitative meaning of the negated imperfective passive might be shared by Kurmanji as well, but the data on the Kurmanji passive which I have been able to find does not allow me to conclude this with certainty. From Thackston's (2006, 68) grammar, it is clear that oblique agents can be expressed in the passive, but it is unclear if it is a frequent phenomenon or not. Haig (2004, 90) includes an example of the facilitative passive, *ev av tê vexwarin*

‘this water is drunk (i.e., is drinkable)’, but it is not specified if it can be used with negation or applied to intransitive verbs.

However, all these features are relatively common in voice systems cross-linguistically (Zúñiga and Kittilä 2019; Inglese 2022), so at the present moment it is impossible to say with certainty whether they are contact-induced.

Abbreviations

Sources

NAWC Neo-Aramaic Web Corpora platform, Lyavdansky et al. 2019

RT I Ritter 1967

RT II Ritter 1969

RT III Ritter 1971

PS Prym and Socin 1881

Languages

NENA Northeastern Neo-Aramaic

Linguistic Terms

1	first person	DEM	demonstrative (pronoun)
2	second person		
3	third person	DETR	detransitive
ART	article	E	E-series of suffixes (formerly enclitic series)
A	agent of transitive clause		
CMP	complementiser	EXST	existential predicate
COP	copula	F	feminine

GN	geographic name	P	patient of transitive clause
IPFV	imperfective (base)		
L	L-series of suffixes (formerly preposition l-)	PP	prepositional phrase
		PRES	presentative (particle)
		PRS	present
M	masculine	PST	past
NEG	negation	REFL	reflexive
NP	noun phrase	REL	relator
POSS	possessive	S	subject of intransitive clause
PASS	passive (stem)		
PFV	perfective (base)	SG	singular
PL	plural	TAM	tense/aspect/mood

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3. PASSIVISATION IN NORTHEASTERN NEO-ARAMAIC¹

Paul M. Noorlander

The Northeastern dialects of Neo-Aramaic (NENA) are spoken by Jews and Christians of southeastern Turkey, Iraqi Kurdistan, Iranian Kurdistan and Iranian Azerbaijan. The Jewish dialects east of the Great Zab river comprise a separate subgroup within NENA characterised by several unique typological traits and are collectively referred to as Trans-Zab Jewish NENA (Mutzafi 2008b). NENA dialects are closely related to the Neo-Aramaic dialects of Ṭur ‘Abdin, i.e., Ṭuroyo, discussed in Chapter 2. Other forms of Neo-Aramaic include the dialect of Mlahso (Jastrow 1994), which together with Ṭuroyo forms the subgroup of Central Neo-Aramaic, as well as the dialect of Neo-Mandaic (Häberl 2009) and the Western dialects of Neo-Aramaic (Arnold 1990), such as the dialect of the Christians of Maaloula in the Anti-Lebanon Mountains in southwest Syria.

Northeastern Neo-Aramaic represents a dialect continuum of highly varied and seriously endangered varieties spoken by

¹ I hereby acknowledge the valuable comments of the anonymous reviewers on an earlier draft of this chapter. I am grateful to Masoud Mohammadirad for helping me analyse the examples taken from Kurdish. All remaining errors are mine.

Jewish (J.) and Christian (C.) communities that used to encompass an area from western Iran to southeastern Turkey. Today, most of the Jewish dialects are extinct or on the verge of extinction, and only a rapidly decreasing number of speakers remain in Israel, where they have generally been subsumed under the category of *kurdim* ‘Kurdish Jews’ and their Neo-Aramaic language under *kurdit* ‘Kurdish’. The Aramaic-speaking Jews themselves refer to Neo-Aramaic simply as ‘our language’ in their respective dialect variant. Thus, the group of dialects spoken west of the Great Zab river is also generally referred to as *lišana deni* ‘our language’ to distinguish them from Trans-Zab Jewish NENA.

Apart from their regional and/or tribal identification, e.g., *margaye* ‘people of the town of Marga’, *txumnaye* ‘people of the Tkhuma tribe’, etc., the Christian speakers have self-identified as *suraye* ‘Syrian Christian’, referring to their language as *surət*, i.e., ‘Syriac’, or a dialectal variant thereof. The NENA-speaking Christians adhere to various ancient denominations, primarily the Chaldean Catholic Church and the Church of the East. Nowadays, their linguistic and ethnic self-identification may not coincide with their religious affiliation. Both in the homeland and in the diaspora, members of the community may ethnically identify themselves as Assyrians, i.e., *’aturaye*, or Chaldeans, i.e., *kal-danaye*, which are self-designations that have lost their former religious and/or geographic affiliations. The havoc wreaked by the tumultuous 20th century and the recent atrocities committed in the name of Islamic State during the spread of the Syrian Civil War into Iraq has resulted in massive displacement of Aramaic-

speaking Christians and the destruction of entire towns and villages. Hence, the vast majority of speakers now struggle to maintain their language outside their original homeland, and reside as diaspora communities in the Caucasus (Armenia; Georgia), Europe (e.g., Paris, France; Mechelen, Belgium), Australia (e.g., Sydney; Melbourne), and North America (e.g., Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan; San Diego, California). Still today, Christian communities in the Middle East that speak NENA dialects are found in Iran (Urmia; Tehran), Iraqi Kurdistan, and northwest Syria (along the Khabur river). The literary koine based on the variety of Urmia county in Iranian Azerbaijan is now widely used in media, education, and public events, both in the homeland and in the diaspora.

This chapter discusses the innovations in the voice system of NENA, focussing on those constructions that are used to form a passive, or those that are passive-like. NENA presents us with a unique case in Semitic, since it has almost entirely lost all traces of former (medio)passive morphology. Phonological changes and the extension of pre-existing constructions have resulted in the loss of original verbal derivations (§1.0). This not only indicates that voice systems can be highly unstable, but also raises the question as to how this loss is accommodated for. The loss of the internal passive and detransitivising derivations resulted in the partial extension of formerly intransitive inchoative constructions. In the Past Perfective, we generally observe the lingering of inflectional voice distinction, in particular in the southeastern Trans-Zab Jewish dialects. Several passive constructions have, however, been innovated by means of auxiliaries and nominal

forms of the verb, in line with cross-linguistic tendencies (§2.0). Some of the coding strategies in NENA are the result of imposition of the syntax of neighbouring Iranian languages (§3.0), including wholesale passive constructions as well as expressions of the external cause. In some constructions (§3.3), the agent can be omitted, which is reminiscent of passivisation and may similarly be used to impersonalise the agent, but reflects a pattern that is similar to an ergative pattern in Northern Kurdish. In several dialects in the western sector of NENA, the agent can be marked ergatively with the dative when the verb is in the Past Perfective and the agent is in narrow focus, which is reminiscent of the oblique agent of a passive verb but parallels Iranian ergativity.²

1.0. Valency-Changing Morphology in the NENA Dialects

1.1. Historical Background of Verbal Derivations

All NENA varieties have lost the detransitivising derivations, i.e., voice marking that reduces the valency by one argument. The voice system is thus notably different from that of other Semitic languages (see Noorlander, Chapter 1), including that of other Neo-Aramaic subgroups such as Ṭuroyo (see Kuzin, Chapter 2). The core inflectional categories of the NENA verbal system, illustrated below by the basic strong verb *qtl* ‘to kill’, are pertinent to

² The transcription, glossing, and translation of linguistic data has been modified and adapted for the sake of uniformity, unless indicated otherwise. Uncited data come from the author’s own fieldwork, unless indicated otherwise.

the expression of the passive diathesis in NENA. For extensive overviews of the morphosyntax and verbal inflection of NENA dialects, see, inter alia, Khan (2012), Coghill (2016), and Noorlander (2021a). The Imperfective (=Imperf.) and Perfective (=Perf.)—here, these terms are taken loosely as morphological designations—are the direct reflexes of participial forms of the verb in pre-modern Aramaic, which have lost all adjectival properties and replaced the original prefix and suffix conjugation, i.e., *yiqṭul* and *qəṭal* (see Noorlander, Chapter 1). The other two categories, the Resultative Participle and the Infinitive, may still exhibit nominal properties, but have been integrated into the verbal system as the novel anterior/perfect and progressive forms.

Imperf.	<i>qaṭəl</i>	< predicative active participle
Past Perf.	<i>qṭil</i>	< predicative resultative participle
Result.	<i>qṭila</i>	< attributive resultative participle
Inf.	<i>qṭala</i>	< verbal noun

The Resultative Participle—*qṭila*—is a verbal adjective and is inflected like other adjectives, thus generally:

	‘killed’	‘big’
MSG	<i>qṭil-a</i>	<i>rab-a</i>
FSG	<i>qṭəl-ta</i>	<i>rab-ta</i>
PL	<i>qṭil-e</i>	<i>rab-e</i>

Basic verbs are generally referred to as ‘G-stem’ verbs after German *Grundstamm* ‘foundation stem’. The two main verbal classes derived from G-verbs are the so-called ‘D-stem’ and ‘C-stem’, after German *Dopplungsstamm* ‘doubling stem’ and *causative*, which correspond to the classical Aramaic forms called *Pa^cel*

and *Aph'el*, respectively. On these stems in classical Aramaic, see Noorlander (Chapter 1). These two derivations are generally referred to as the second and third formation, i.e., ‘Stem II’ and ‘Stem III’, respectively, in Neo-Aramaic grammars. The original participial forms of these derivations were characterised by an *m*-augment, which is still apparent in NENA (see further below). Generally, the D-derivation and C-derivation express the transitive and causative counterparts to G-verbs, e.g.,

	G-stem		D-stem
	<i>paləṭ</i> ‘go out’		<i>mpaləṭ</i> ‘take out’ (< * <i>mpalletəṭ</i>)
	<i>bašəl</i> ‘cook (intr.)’		<i>mbašəl</i> ‘cook (tr.)’ (< * <i>mbaššəl</i>)
	G-stem		C-stem
	<i>yaləp</i> ‘learn’		<i>maləp</i> ‘teach’ (< * <i>mallep</i>)
	<i>qayəm</i> ‘rise’		<i>maqəm</i> ‘raise’ (< * <i>māqem</i>)

Depending on the dialect, the initial *m*-augment of the D-formation may be elided. As a result, the inflection of the G-verbs and that of the D-verbs merges entirely in the inflections based on the Imperfective across NENA dialects. In the Trans-Zab Jewish dialects, this has led to a restructuring of the verbal system (see further §1.3). In these dialects, the D-stem morphology has encroached upon all basic verbs (e.g., Khan 1999; 2009) and vice versa. Consequently, for a verb like *bšl* ‘to cook’, the transitive and intransitive have become completely identical in the Imperfective and Infinitive, e.g.,

	G-stem		D-stem
Imperf.	<i>bašəl, bašl-</i> →	<i>bašəl, bašl-</i> (< * <i>mbaššəl, *mbaššl-</i>)	
Inf.	<i>bšala</i> <i>bašole</i> ←	<i>bašole</i> (< * <i>mbaššolē</i>)	

Similarly, in a few dialects in the western periphery, such as the dialect of Jinnet (SE Turkey), virtually all original D-stem verbs have been completely absorbed into the G-stem, e.g.,

G-stem/D-stem

Imperf. *bašəl* intr./tr.

Inf. *bšala* intr./tr.

For all derivation classes, Aramaic used to have an internal passive paradigm alongside an active and a detransitive (see Chapter 1). This internal passive was replaced by formations based on the detransitivising *t*-affix, e.g., G **yaktub* : Gt **yV-k <t>atib*. It was fully replaced by the beginning of the first century AD (Beyer 1984, 152), but the process began long before that and presumably affected the prefix conjugation first (Kalinin and Loesov 2022). These detransitivising derivations lingered on in all varieties of Neo-Aramaic, except for NENA. The reflexes of the respective forms in Neo-Aramaic and Syriac are given in Tables 1–3 for the G-stem (basic verbs), D-stem (derivation by originally doubled second radical), and C-stem (causative derivation), respectively, each with its relevant T-stem. The order of the Imperfective and Perfective in the columns is inverted for the detransitiviser to show the similarities between the Perfective of the active and that of the detransitivising voice. The original passive participle of the derived stems served as resultative participle for both the Perfective of the active and that of the detransitiviser in Northeastern and Central Neo-Aramaic. (In Western Neo-Aramaic, the forms corresponding to the historical resultative participle express the anterior—also known as the Perfect—rather

than the Past Perfective; the latter is expressed by the suffix conjugation, e.g., perfect *fθiħa* ‘She has opened’ vs suffix conjugation *faθħ-aθ* ‘She opened’.)

Table 1: G-stem reflexes in Neo-Aramaic and Syriac (**qtl* ‘kill’)

	G-form		tG-form	
	Imperf.	Perf.	Perf.	Imperf.
NENA	<i>qaṭəl</i>	<i>qṭəl</i>	--	--
Ṭuroyo	<i>qoṭəl</i>	<i>qṭəl</i>	<i>qṭil</i>	<i>m-ə-qṭəl</i>
Mlaḥso	<i>qoṭel</i>	<i>qṭil</i>	<i>m-e-qṭel</i>	<i>m-e-qṭel</i>
Maaloula	<i>qōṭel</i>	<i>qṭil</i>	<i>qṭil</i>	<i>m-i-q- < č > -ṭal</i> ³
East Syriac	<i>qāṭel</i>	<i>qṭil</i>	<i>qṭil</i>	<i>m-eṭ-qṭel</i>

Table 2: D-stem reflexes in Neo-Aramaic and Syriac (**zbn* ‘buy/sell’)

	D-form		tD-form	
	Imperf.	Perf.	Perf.	Imperf.
NENA, majority	<i>(m-)zabən</i>	<i>(m-)zubən</i>	--	--
NENA, Hertevin	<i>zabən</i>	<i>zabən</i>	--	--
Ṭuroyo	<i>m-zabən</i>	<i>m-zabən</i>	<i>m-zabən</i>	<i>m-i-zabən</i>
Mlaḥso	<i>zaben</i>	<i>zaben</i>	<i>m-zaben</i>	<i>m-zaben</i>
Maaloula	<i>m-zappen</i>	<i>zappīn</i>	<i>č-zappīn</i>	<i>m-ič-zappan</i>
East Syriac	<i>m-zabben</i>	<i>m-zabban</i>	<i>m-zabban</i>	<i>m-ez-dabban</i>

³ The more productive counterpart, however, involves an *n*-prefix and is *m-in-qṭal* ~ *m-in-qṭōl-*, a passive verbal form borrowed from Arabic (see Arnold 1990, 128–32).

Table 3: C-stem reflexes in Neo-Aramaic and Syriac (**dmk* ‘sleep’, **šyg* ‘to wash’)

	C-form		tC-form	
	Imperf.	Perf.	Perf.	Imperf.
NENA, majority	<i>m-admæx</i>	<i>m-udmæx</i>	--	--
NENA, Hertevin	<i>m-admæx</i>	<i>m-admæx</i>	--	--
Ṭuroyo	<i>m-admæx</i>	<i>m-admæx</i>	<i>m-t-ašəg</i>	<i>m-it-ašəg</i>
Mlaḥso	<i>m-admex</i>	<i>m-admex</i>	<i>m-t-ašog</i>	<i>m-t-ašog</i>
Maaloula	<i>m-aðmex</i>	<i>ʾaðmīx</i>	<i>čč-aðmīx</i>	<i>m-ičč-aðmax</i>
East Syriac	<i>m-aðmek</i>	<i>m-aðmak</i>	<i>m-aðmak</i>	<i>m-ett-aðmak</i>

As can be observed in Tables 1–3, the absence of the de-transitivising *t*-forms in NENA leaves noteworthy gaps, which are filled by dialect-dependent innovations (see further below for how this is resolved across dialects). In the majority of NENA dialects, the originally resultative participles in the D-stem and C-stem—namely *mqtəl* (< **mqt̄tel*) and *muqtəl*, which are cognates of the equivalent Hebrew participles *mqt̄tāl* and *muqt̄āl*, respectively—still betray the reflexes of an original internal passive. The NENA verbal stems, however, reflect the same template as the internal passive found in Arabic, i.e., *CuC(C)iC, rather than what is found in literary Aramaic, i.e., *CuC(C)aC or *CaC(C)aC. The participial pattern *mqt̄tal* also occurs in some Late Aramaic literary varieties, such as Targum Aramaic (see Noorlander, Chapter 1), while /u/ is lacking in Biblical Aramaic and (East) Syriac *mqattal* and *maqtal*, respectively.

The other Neo-Aramaic dialect groups, as well as the NENA dialect of Hertevin (Jastrow 1988), have a Past Perfective template that is distinct from the majority of NENA dialects. The respective stems/inflectional bases for the D-stem and C-stem were mostly levelled in the dialects of Hertevin, Ṭuroyo, and Mlaḥso (see also Jastrow 1996). While the active and passive participle originally had distinct vowels after the second radical in the D-formation, as reflected in (East) Syriac *mzabben* vs *mzabban*, this distinction was lost in these dialects, e.g.,

	Hertevin	Ṭuroyo		East Syriac
Imperf.	<i>zabən-</i>	<i>mzabən-</i>	↓	<i>mzabben</i>
Perf.	<i>zabən-</i>	<i>mzabən-</i>	↓	<i>mzabban</i>

The Present Imperfective forms in Ṭuroyo, Mlaḥso, and Western Neo-Aramaic go back to the detransitivising participle, i.e., the original participles of the tG-, tC-, and tD-formations, subsumed under ‘Imperfective’ in the final column in Tables 1–3. Further details about Ṭuroyo voice morphology can be found in Chapter 2. The original *t*-infix can still be observed in the reflexes of the tC-formation, shown in the last column of Table 3. This is found in all dialect groups, except for NENA. In Maaloula, the Gt-stem *miqčtal* has been largely replaced by *minqtal*, which was borrowed from Arabic Form VII (see Table 1). Furthermore, the primary distinction between the active and detransitivised verbal forms in Mlaḥso is the presence or absence of the *m*-augment (see Table 2). In Maaloula, in turn, the presence or absence of the *m*-augment is primarily conditioned by whether the verb is Present

(with *m-*) or Perfect (without *m-*), which, in the tables, are subsumed under ‘Imperfective’ and ‘Perfective’, respectively (see Tables 2 and 3).

Furthermore, in Western Neo-Aramaic, the characteristic /i/ of the template of the G-stem resultative participle **qṭīl* ‘killed’ was extended from the G-stem to other stem formations by analogy. Thus, the Maaloula resultative/anterior forms (Arnold 1990, 79, 89, 91–93), which correspond to the ‘Perfective’ in Northeastern and Central Neo-Aramaic, all exhibit historical reflexes of the vowel **ī* after the second radical, e.g.,

	G-stem	D-stem	C-stem
Suffixal	<i>iqṭal</i>	<i>zappen</i>	ʾaḏmex
Result. MSG	<i>iqṭel</i>	<i>zappen</i>	ʾaḏmex
Result. FSG	<i>qṭīla</i> →	<i>zappīna</i>	ʾaḏmīxa
	↘	tD-stem	tC-stem
Result. FSG		<i>čzappīna</i>	ččaḏmīx

In the WNA dialect of Baxʿa, the vowel /a/ before the second radical was fronted/raised to /i/ only in these resultative/anterior forms through assimilation to the /i/ in the following syllable. The outcome of this is strikingly similar to the shift that characterises the suffix-conjugation forms of the *Pi^cel* and *Hiph^cil* in Canaanite languages such as Hebrew, where the forms *qittēl* and *hiqṭil* arose from **qattīla* and **haqṭīla*, respectively:

	D-stem	C-stem
WNA Baxʿa	<i>qittēl</i>	ʾiqṭel
Hebrew	<i>qittēl</i>	<i>hiqṭil</i>

A similar development took place in the Perfective Base and Resultative Participle of the Trans-Zab Jewish dialects of NENA (see Khan 1999; 2009). The characteristic /ə/ and /i/ of the G-stem spread to the D-stem and C-stem, e.g., in J. Urmi,

	G-stem		D-stem		C-stem
Perf.	<i>qtəl-</i>	→	<i>zbən-</i>		<i>mədməx-</i>
RPP	<i>qtílá</i>	→	<i>zbiná</i>		<i>mədmixá</i>

In the southeastern Trans-Zab Jewish dialects, this extension of characteristics of the D-stem to the G-stem, alongside the spread of the characteristic /i/ to the D-stem, led to a distinction in treatment between transitive and intransitive verbs in these two morphological categories, which will be discussed in §1.3.

1.2. The Extension of the Inchoative in the Imperfective

Having established the historical background of and parallels to the development of the NENA voice system, we will discuss one of the ways in which the loss of the detransitivising *t*-forms has been accommodated for, namely, the use of inchoative G-stem verbs.

First of all, in a labile transitivity alternation, there is no morphological derivation that distinguishes transitive valence patterns from intransitive. In Neo-Aramaic, labile alternations mainly occur with basic verbs (G-stem), since the verbal derivations, i.e., D-stem and C-stem, are prototypically transitive (Göransson 2015, 222). For most agentive actions like ‘to eat’ and ‘to write’, the intransitive valence pattern has an agent-orienta-

tion, which arises through indefinite object deletion and the foregrounding of the activity, as illustrated in (1). The Imperfective here thus continues the typical usage of the original active participle—**qāṭəl*—to express an action initiated by an agent.

(1) C. Urmi

- a. *cut-yum laxma* +^ʔ*axl* -*ax* -*va*
 each-day bread.MSG eat.IPFV -A.1PL -PST
 ‘We used to eat bread every day.’
- b. *qadamta jaldə* +^ʔ*axl* -*ax* -*va*
 morning.FSG early eat.IPFV -S.1PL -PST
 ‘We used to eat (sth.) early in the morning.’

Apart from dedicated passive constructions, which we turn to in §2.0, the loss of the middle *t*-forms, which would express both passive, anticausative, and reflexive meaning, has been partly accommodated for by extended lability in the expression of inchoatives. The G-stem verb by itself can thus be the translational equivalent of a passive. Historically, the inchoative sense was expressed by the corresponding participle of the detransitivising *t*-form, i.e., **meṭqṭel*; ironically, in NENA, the inchoative can be expressed by the original active participle, i.e., **qāṭel*, in the Imperfective, e.g.,

(2) C. Urmi

- a. *brun-i panjara patəx* - \emptyset -*la*
 son.MSG-my window.FSG open.IPFV -A.3MSG -O.3FSG
 ‘My son opens the window.’
- b. *panjara patx* -*a*
 window.FSG open.IPFV -S.3FSG
 ‘The window opens (by itself).’

This labile causative/inchoative alternation typically occurs with verbs that can denote a change-of-state without an efficient cause (Haspelmath 1993, 97), such as ‘to open’, ‘to close’, ‘to break’, and ‘to destroy.’ Their intransitive valence pattern is typically orientated towards a nonhuman patient, and the situation denoted by the verb is conceived of as unfolding spontaneously. Typically, a self-contained uncontrolled process is in view, like *npl* ‘to fall’, *myt* ‘to die’, etc., which is the opposite of the controlled activity denoted by verbs like *qtl* ‘to kill’, *’xl* ‘to eat’, etc. Thus, generally in NENA, processes that do not imply deliberate intent or control are compatible with the labile causative/inchoative alternation. This includes processes involving breaking, explosion, destruction, or separation, e.g., ‘to explode’, ‘to fire (a gun by itself)’, ‘to collapse’, ‘to wreck’, ‘to split’, etc., as well as those involving restoration or reconstruction, e.g., ‘to heal’, ‘to cure’, ‘to mend’, ‘to repair’, and obstruction, e.g., ‘to block’, ‘to close’ (see Haspelmath 1993 for a cross-linguistic study).

The primary distinction between inchoative/anticausative and passive is that, in a passive, the agent is more strongly implied (e.g., Siewierska 1984). This is not to say that, upon further enquiry, speakers necessarily believe that the situation in (2b) is actually uncaused or that the patient *panjara* ‘window’ is self-acting or acting on itself, as if the inanimate patient is endowed with agentivity; rather, the force that initiates this process is, for the purpose of the discourse, metaphorically not considered to be involved in the event. Inchoatives can thus still be compatible with cause phrases, particularly those that express indirect causation such as English *because of* (Croft 1994, 110; see §2.5).

Haspelmath (1993) suggests that what characterises verbs that typically form causative/inchoative pairs is the lack of an agentive semantic component. He illustrates this with an example of the English verb *to cut*, which cannot be used intransitively as an inchoative verb (**The cloth cut*), because it would minimally imply the use of a sharp instrument (Haspelmath 1993, 93). In NENA, however, the same alternation or causative/inchoative pairing can be used for verbs and contexts where an agent-orientated semantic property is present, i.e., lit. ‘the cloth used to cut’ → ‘the cloth used to be cut’. Thus, such verbs and/or contexts more strongly imply a direct effect resulting from an implicitly controlled action equivalent to a passive, as illustrated in (3)–(5). In (3), for instance, the lamps are not presupposed to burn of themselves, but are kindled by people using tallow. The same presence of an agentive semantic component is observed in (4)–(5). The widespread patient-orientation of *qaṭəl*, therefore, has been extended to expression of the passive, albeit in highly restricted contexts. The passive reading seems to be available only when the event is generic and habitual, and the patient is third person, often inanimate (e.g., Khan 2009, 311–12; 2016, II:399–402). Further research is required into which verbs are compatible with such a passive interpretation, though, generally, it seems to be confined to verbs involving a destructive or cutting effect.

(3) C. Aradhin (Krotkoff 1982, 91.72)

ʿan-šraʿaθa qamaye lāh- -i -wa b-tarba
 DEM.PL-lamp.FPL formerly burn.IPFV -S.3PL -PST with-tallow

‘Those oil lamps back then used to be kindled (by people) with tallow.’

(4) C. Urmi

a. ⁺*busra* *parəm* -∅ -*va* *ʃu* *mata*
 meat.MSG slaughter.IPFV -S.3MSG -PST in village.FSG
 ‘Meat used to be slaughtered (by people) in the vil-
 lage.’ (Khan 2016, II:232)

b. *xa jura xin-a* ⁺*tina* ⁺*tarəs*-∅ -*va*
 a type.MSG other-MSG mud.MSG mend.IPFV-S.3MSG -PST
 ‘Another type of mud used to be made (by people).’
 (Khan 2016, VI:252, B2:§21)

(5) J. Sanandaj (Khan 2009, 312)

⁺*lišan-éf* *qăté* -∅
 tongue.MSG-his SBJV.cut.IPFV -S.3MSG
 ‘His tongue will be cut off (by people).’

As noted in the previous section, in several dialects, most notably all of the Trans-Zab Jewish dialects, the inflection of the G-stem and that of the D-stem have become identical in the Imperfective, leading to a labile alternation in all inflections based on the Imperfective. The verb *paləṭ*, therefore, can mean ‘to leave’ or ‘to remove’ depending on the absence or presence of an object, respectively, as illustrated in (6) below. A passive reading, however, is generally not available for such verbs.

(6) J. Arbel (NE Iraq, Khan 1999, 426.48)

a. *gbe ... palṭ* -*ét* *min-ya belá*
 must go_out.IPFV -S.2MSG from-this house
 ‘You must leave this house.’

b. *xa ?aná la-palṭ* -*ét*
 one penny NEG-take_out.IPFV -A.2MSG
 ‘You shall not remove a penny.’

The loss of the D-stem in the Imperfective also occurs in the northern dialects of CNENA, such as Urmi; a list of relevant verbs is given in Khan (2016, II:405–6). These verbs, therefore, now exhibit a labile causative/inchoative alternation in the Imperfective, as the distinct morphological device for creating the causative, formerly D-stem, is lost, and its intransitive counterpart, formerly G-stem, has an inchoative sense.

1.3. Inchoative Perfective and Stem Modification

If the labile transitive/intransitive alternation occurs in the Imperfective, it will generally also occur in other verbal constructions, but not vice versa. In the majority of NENA dialects, detransitivisation in the other verbal constructions operates irrespective of argument-orientation, so that the Perfective, i.e., *qtalle*, treats agent- and patient-orientated intransitive constructions in identical fashion, e.g.,

(7) C. Marga

- a. *bron-i psix -a -le panjāra*
 son.MSG-my opened.PFV -O.3FSG -A.3MSG window.FSG
 ‘My son opened the window.’
- b. *psəx -la panjāra*
 opened.PFV -S.3FSG window.FSG
 ‘The window opened (by itself).’
- c. *yalunke xəl -lay xabuše*
 child.PL ate.PFV -A.3PL apple.PL
 ‘The children ate apples.’
- d. *yalunke xəl -lay*
 child.PL ate.PFV -S.3PL
 ‘The children ate (sth.).’

Thus, the handful of transitive verbs like *qṭy* ‘to cut off’ that have an intransitive counterpart with a possible passive interpretation in the Imperfective, as mentioned in the previous section, can also have that connotation of a passive in the Perfective, e.g.,

(8) C. Urmi (Khan 2016, II:400)

- a. *+xola napas-u +qṭy -a -le*
 rope.MSG breath.FSG-his cut.PFV -O.3FSG -A.3MSG
 ‘The rope cut off his breath.’
- b. *napas-u +qṭi -la*
 breath.FSG-his cut.PFV -S.3FSG
 ‘His breath was cut off.’

The southeastern Trans-Zab Jewish dialects, however, have verbal conjugations dedicated to detransitivisation in the Past Perfective with distinct patient-like subject inflection. Thus, contrary to the Imperfective, the anticausative has become available for virtually all transitive verbs in the Past Perfective in these Jewish dialects.

In the inchoative Perfective, the inflection of the subject is identical to that of the object in the third person. This is an ergative alignment pattern expressed by the so-called S-suffixes or E-suffixes, which will not be discussed in further detail here, but the relevant pattern is illustrated in (9) below. The discrepancy in verbal stems between the intransitive CCiC- and transitive CəCC is relevant here (see further below).

(9) J. Saqiz (Israeli 1998, 104)

- a. *qat-ú plit -a mən belá*
 cat.MSG-his went_out.PFV -S.3FSG from house.MSG
 ‘His cat left the house.’

- b. *qat-ú pəlt -a -le mən belá*
 cat.MSG-his let_go_out.PFV -O.3FSG -A.3MSG from house.MSG
 ‘He let his cat go out of the house.’

However, the intransitive valence pattern of highly transitive verbs like ‘to kill’ is indistinguishable from a passive, e.g.,

- (10) J. Saqiz (Israeli 1998, 44)

- broná axon-áv q̄tīl -∅ ga qrawá*
 son.MSG brother.MSG-his killed.PFV -S.3MSG in war
 ‘His nephew got killed in the war.’

Across all intransitive valence patterns, including those denoting a passive, the characteristic /i/ in the template of the G-stem has spread to the templates of other derivations throughout the Trans-Zab Jewish dialects, e.g.,

	G-stem	D-stem	C-stem
Inchoat.	<i>plīx-∅</i>	<i>bšīl-∅</i>	<i>məskīr-∅</i>
	‘opened’	‘cooked’	‘become lost’
Pass.	<i>q̄tīl-∅</i>	<i>zbīn-∅</i>	<i>mədmīx-∅</i>
	‘be killed’	‘be sold’	‘be put to bed’

When agent-orientation is maintained even after the indefinite object of a transitive action is deleted, the verb retains its transitive coding, and the situation denoted by the verb is a controlled activity. Thus, both agent-orientated transitive and agent-orientated intransitive verbs, i.e., all those verbs that strongly imply an effect of a controlled action, take the same inflectional endings in the southeastern Trans-Zab Jewish dialects. There is thus no shift from transitive to intransitive coding when the object is deleted, as (11) illustrates for J. Sanandaj. Lexical transitivity offers the simplest account of this phenomenon, i.e., the

verb is lexicalised as transitive and therefore does not take intransitive coding, even when there is no explicit object.

(11) J. Sanandaj (Khan 2009, 303)

- a. *mae* *šte* *-le*
 water.PL drank.PFV -A.3MSG
 ‘He drank water.’
- b. *šte* *-le*
 drank.PFV -S.3MSG
 ‘He drank (sth.).’

However, the distinction between the two types of inflections, one intransitive, i.e., *q̄til-∅*, and the other transitive, i.e., *q̄təl-le*, does not reflect a systematic semantic distribution between more patient-like and more agent-like subjects, respectively. This is shown in Table 4, with a scale from a passive to a controlled activity, and in between, verbs denoting a process, a state, or a reflexive activity. The implication of an agent becomes more likely from left to right, and the implication of a patient more likely from right to left. As can be observed, the semantics of the involvement of the subject, whether controlled or uncontrolled, whether dynamic or stative, whether affected or unaffected, do not reflect a neat distribution of corresponding patient and agent-like coding, respectively. Rather, the row of semantic classes with patient-like coding presumably reflects a diachronic grammaticalisation cline from left to right, starting with patient-orientated resultative adjectives denoting inactivation, later to also incorporate forms that denote activities.

Table 4: Scale from more patientive situations to more agentive situations

	Passive	Uncontrolled Process	State	Re-flexive	Controlled Activity
Intransitive	<i>xil-∅</i> 'be eaten'	<i>pqe-∅</i> 'explode (by itself)'	<i>zade-∅</i> 'fear'	<i>xip-∅</i> 'wash'	<i>rqil-∅</i> 'dance'
Transitive	--	<i>təp-le</i> 'sneeze'	<i>ʔali-le</i> 'know'	<i>lwəš-le</i> 'dress'	<i>xəl-le</i> 'eat'

The transitivity alternation illustrated in (9) is, however, strictly speaking not labile, nor could it be said that one stem is derived from the other. The alternation in (9) also shows a morphological distinction in the verbal stem between the transitive and intransitive, and, by extension, the active and passive, respectively. The pattern used for the transitive in the southeastern Trans-Zab Jewish dialects corresponds to that of the D-stem in other dialects, such as J. Amedia (Hoberman 1989, 94), e.g.,

	G-stem	D-stem	<i>pl̥t̥</i> 'move out'
	Intransitive	Transitive	
J. Saqiz	<i>pl̥t̥-a</i>	<i>pəlt̥-a-le</i>	
J. Amedia	<i>plət̥-le</i>	<i>mpult̥-a-le</i>	

Thus, when a pronominal object suffix is added in dialects like J. Saqiz, the template of originally G-stem verbs is identical to that of the originally D-stem verbs. The stages leading to the extension of the D-stem can be summarised as follows, with illustrative examples from J. Saqiz (Israeli 1998, 99):

	<i>nšq</i> ‘kiss’	<i>bšl</i> ‘cook’	<i>dmx</i> ‘sleep’
	G-stem	D-stem	C-stem
Stage I	* <i>nšiq-a-le</i>	* <i>mbušl-a-le</i>	* <i>mudmx-a-le</i>
Stage II	* <i>nšiq-a-le</i>	* <i>bušl-a-le</i>	* <i>mudmx-a-le</i>
Stage III	* <i>nšiq-a-le</i>	* <i>bəšl-a-le</i>	* <i>mədmx-a-le</i>
Stage IV	<i>nəšq-a-le</i> ←	<i>bəšl-a-le</i> →	<i>mədəmx-a-le</i>
	<i>nšəq-le</i>	<i>bšəl-le</i>	<i>mədməx-le</i>

Thus, in the second stage, the *m*-augment was elided in the inflection of the original D-stem. Then, the vowel /u/ in the first syllable was raised to /ə/ in both the D-stem and the C-stem. The primary distinction between the C-stem and the other verbal stems became the presence of the *m*-augment: compare D-stem *qətl-a-le* vs C-stem *məqətl-a-le*. Finally, the inflection of the G-stem with the pronominal object was adapted to that of the D-stem. The D-stem, in turn, merged with the G-stem in the inflection without the pronominal object.

As a result, the verbal person marking has become similar to that in the Imperfective—compare Perf. *qətl-a-le* ‘He killed her’ and *qətl-a-le* ‘She kills him’—as well as to that of final weak verbs: compare *qətl-a-le* ‘He killed her’ and *xəzy-a-le* ‘He saw her’ (Khan 2005).

Interestingly, the same extension of the D-stem and similarity to the Imperfective in transitive verbal inflection is evident in other NENA dialects, where forms with such transitive verbal person marking, i.e., *qəlle* + object suffixes, are also treated differently from those without, i.e., *qəlle* by itself. The majority of NENA dialects have developed a so-called *qamqəlle* Perfective,

which is exclusively used with transitive verbs with object pronominal suffixes. This transitive Perfective is formed by means of the preverb *qam-* and the verbal inflection of the Imperfective. (The Imperfective is generally combined with various preverbal Tense–Aspect–Mood modifiers, e.g., C. Qaraqosh *k-šaqəl* ‘he habitually takes’ < *k-* + *šaqəl* vs *lazəm Ø-šaqəl* ‘he needs to take’.) Following Fassberg’s (2015) analysis, the preverb *qam-* and its dialectal variants, which range from *gəb-* and *kəm-* to *tam-*, should be decomposed into an aspectual prefix *qa-*, which is presumably historically derived from a verb—*qym* or *qdm*—and the derivational augment *m-* taken from the Imperfective of the D-stem, i.e., **mqattəl*. The extension of the D-formation, a mostly transitive causative class, explains why this *qamqattəlle* Perfective form is restricted by morphosyntactic transitivity. Thus, once again, the D-stem, alongside acquiring inflection patterns similar to those of the Imperfective, encroached upon the G-stem, leading to a major distinction in the treatment of transitive and intransitive verbs, e.g.,

	G-stem	D-stem
Perf.	<i>šqalle</i>	<i>mbušəlle</i>
Imperf. + Obj.	<i>kšaqəl-le</i>	<i>kəmbašəl-le</i>
Perf. + Obj.	<i>qəmšaqəl-le</i>	← <i>qəmbašəl-le</i>

As a result, causative/inchoative alternations where the causative also involves verbal inflection for the object are treated distinctly from their inchoative counterpart, and rely on a distinct verbal stem, e.g.,

(12) C. Nerwa

- a. *qə- m- palt -a -le qat -ey*
 PST.PFV TRNZR let_go -A.3FSG -O.3MSG cat.MSG -their

mən beða

from house.MSG

‘She let their cat go out of the house.’

- b. *plət -le qat -ey mən beða*
 left.PFV -S.3MSG cat.MSG -their from house.MSG

‘Their cat left (lit. from) the house.’

1.4. Loss of Synthetic Detransitiviser

All in all, the loss of detransitivising morphology, which included, alongside passive meaning, also anticausative and reflexive, among others (see Noorlander, Chapter 1), has resulted in a greater reliance on ambitransitivity and thereby neutralisation of the voice system. When the lexical meaning of the verb does not lend itself to a patient-orientated event construal, the intransitive usage is not available. An intransitive valence pattern of a primary two-argument verb such as the root *xzy/hzy* ‘see’ cannot be obtained by means of ambitransitivity. The anticausative of verbs such as ‘to see’ used to be formed through *t*-forms with various shades of meaning, including ‘to appear’. In general, NENA speakers take recourse to alternative expressions for such inchoative events, e.g.,

(13) C. Nerwa

- a. *plət -le malaxa ʔal-i go xəlma*
 came_out.PFV -S.3MSG angel.MSG to-me from dream.MSG

‘An angel appeared to me in a dream.’

- b. *malaxa pəš -le xəzy-a*
 angel.MSG became.PFV -S.3MSG seen.RPP-MSG
 ‘An angel became visible.’

2.0. Dedicated Passive Constructions

Passivisation is typically expressed by various dedicated passive voice constructions across NENA dialects (see Noorlander 2021, 234–36). These include:

- a) Auxiliary BECOME and Resultative Participle (§2.3)
- b) Auxiliary BE and Resultative Participle (§2.4)
- c) Auxiliary COME and infinitive (see §3.2.)

In the Past Perfective, an agentless Perfective form can also express the equivalent of a passive, but the construction itself is generally ergative; see §3.3.

Furthermore, impersonal subject constructions—‘they’, ‘one’—and patient–agent order in NENA dialects can fulfil the equivalent function to a passive, especially when the patient is more specific and topical than the agent. We turn to these constructions first.

2.1. Impersonal Subject Construction

By far the most common means of blurring the identity of the agent is through referential reduction, in which case the morpho-syntax is indistinct from that of an active transitive clause. The agent is made unspecified through the use of a non-referential, generic third-person plural subject, as illustrated in (14). Sporadically, the third person singular is also used impersonally, as exemplified in (15)–(16).

- (14) J. Urmi (Garbell 1965, 92)

xazn-ət +*šültana* *gənw* -*a* -*wa* -*lu*
 treasury.FSG-CSTR king.MSG stolen.PFV -O.3FSG -PST -A.3PL

‘The king’s treasury had been robbed.’ (lit. ‘they had robbed the treasure of the king’)

- (15) C. Diyana-Zariwaw (Napiorkowska 2015, 456, 19.2,§4)

le möse -∅ ∅- *janü* -∅ -*lu*
 NEG can.IPFV -S.3MSG SBJV- steal -A.3MSG -O.3PL

‘They cannot be stolen.’ (lit. ‘he cannot steal them’)

- (16) C. Marga (Khan field notes)

mzubən -ne *qənyane*, *b-* *yawəl* -∅ -*wa* *xa*
 sold.PFV -A.3MSG cattle.PL FUT- give -A.3MSG -PST one
məndi *ta* *muxtar*
 thing.MSG to chief.MSG

‘If cattle was sold, something would be given to the village chief.’ (lit. ‘[if] he sold cattle, he would give something to the chief’)

2.2. Agent–Patient Inversion to Patient–Agent

Topicalisation through the fronting of the patient before the agent or through left-dislocation of the patient to clause-initial position is regularly used to express a translational equivalent of the passive in languages like English. Here, the syntax of the verb is less relevant, but rather the relative linear ordering of the agent and patient is manipulated. In the transitive pendant, the agent precedes the patient; in the passive-like equivalent, their respective order is inverted according to the information-structural configuration of topic–comment or given-before-new. Such an inversion of the order typically occurs when the patient outranks the

agent in topicality/specificity, in which case a language like English would often take recourse to a passive. In English, for instance, a sentence like (?)*Me a dog bit* would be far more typically expressed by *I was bitten by a dog*, and, similarly, scrambling with indefinite quantifiers as subjects, such as ***Someone a snake bit*, would have to be expressed by a passive in a language like English, i.e., *Someone was bitten by a snake*. In NENA, such sentences are compatible with the dominant transitive morphosyntax; see (17)–(19) below. Here, passive morphology is not required: the fronting of the topical patient to the left edge of the clause suffices alone, e.g.,

(17) C. Qaraqosh

- a. *kalba kə- m- na'əs -∅ -li*
 dog.MSG PST.PFV- TRNZR- bite -A.3MSG -O.1SG
 'The/a dog bit me.'
- b. *'ana kə- m- na'əs -∅ -li kalba*
 I PST.PFV- TRNZR- bite -A.3MSG -O.1SG dog.MSG
 'I have been bitten by a dog.'

Sometimes even an indefinite nonspecific patient can be fronted, e.g.,

(18) J. Betanure (Mutzafi 2008a, 166.§98)

- xa banyādam xuwwe g-na'əs -∅ -wā -le*
 one human snake.MSG IND-bite -A.3MSG -PST -O.3MSG
 'Someone was bitten by a snake.'

(19) J. Dohok (Molin, unpublished text)

- kutxa nobəl -le xa ta gyan-e*
 everyone took.PFV -A.3MSG one.MSG to self.FSG-his
 'Everyone was taken by someone to their own (family).'

2.3. Auxiliary BECOME or REMAIN and Resultative Participle

Across NENA dialects, the inchoative verb *pyš* ‘become; remain’, and in Trans-Zab Jewish dialects *xdr* ‘become’, is used as a passive auxiliary together with the resultative participle, which agrees in number and gender with the subject, e.g.,

(20) C. Urmi

- a. *+čant -i ʃniv -a -lux*
 bag.FSG -my stole.PFV -O.3FSG -A.2MSG
 ‘You stole my bag.’
- b. *+čant -i pəš -la ʃnəv-ta*
 bag.FSG -my became.PFV -S.3FSG stolen.RPP-S.FSG
 ‘My bag was stolen.’

(21) J. Urmi (Garbell 1965, 213, 174)

- a. *reš -i +b- qate -∅ -le*
 head.MSG -my FUT- steal -A.3MSG -O.3MSG
 ‘He will cut off my head.’
- b. *reš -öx +qəty -a xadər -∅*
 head.MSG -my cut.RPP -MSG SBJV.become -S.3MSG
 ‘Your head will be cut off.’

2.4. Auxiliary BE and Resultative Participle

Another strategy is to use a copula, be it pronominal or verbal, i.e., **hwy*, in combination with the resultative participle, which agrees in number and gender with the subject, e.g.,

(22) J. Betanure (Mutzafi 2008a, 232.§312)

- a. *ʔən xuwwe ∅- naʔəs -∅ -wa xa naša*
 if snake.MSG SBJV bite -A.3MSG -PST one person.MSG
 ‘If a snake bit someone...’

- b. ʿənkan xa naša ∅- hawe -∅
 if one person.MSG SBJV be -S.3FSG
 nʿis-a l-xuwwe
 bitten.RPP-MSG by-snake
 ‘If someone was bitten by a snake...’

In several Christian dialects of NENA, notably C. Urmi and Shaqlawa, this same construction cannot have an implicit agent, and must be agent-orientated when the verb is transitive (see also Khan 2016, II:404), e.g.,

(23) C. Urmi

- xa +čanta +ʃnəv -tə -la
 one bag.FSG stolen.RPP -FSG -A.COP.3FSG
 ‘She has stolen a bag.’
 But not: **‘A bag has been stolen.’

2.5. Oblique Agent Expressions

The agent is generally expressed by means of the source marker *mən-* ‘from’, as shown in (25), which is also used to express the indirect cause, e.g., (24). The indirect cause can also be expressed by the preposition *m-qam* ‘from before’ (see §3.2). The dative preposition (ʿəl)l-, as shown in (26), can also serve as an oblique agent marker. This is further complicated by the fact that it serves and formerly served as an ergative case marker (see §3.3). The instrument is usually expressed by *b-* ‘with; by’, as illustrated in (27). Another typical expression is the idiom ‘by/at the hand of’, based on the preposition *b-* and ‘hand’ together with a genitive construction, which (28b) illustrates.

- (24) Indirect cause marked by
- mən*
- ‘from’

ṛaba naše g- meθ -i -wa mən xuwawe
 many people IND- die -A.3PL -PST from snake.PL

‘Many people died because of snakes.’ (J. Amedia; Greenblatt 2010, 342.§1)

- (25) Oblique agent marked by
- mən*
- ‘from’

t-payəš-∅ diš-a mən anne naše
 that-become-S.3MSG trodden.RPP-MSG from DEM.PL people

‘(My house) is being trodden by these people.’ (C. Aradhin; Krotkoff 1982, 106.118)

- (26) Oblique agent marked by dative (
- l-*
-)

a. *kawdənta mxé-ta -la l-mar-aw*
 she-mule.FSG hit.RPP-S.FSG -S.COP.3FSG DAT-master.MSG-her

‘The she-mule has been beaten by its master.’ (C. Baz, Maha xtaya, SE Turkey; Mutzafi 2000, 311)

b. *awwa kas-u xəl-ta l-dəbba*
 DEM.SG belly.FSG-his eaten.RPP-FSG DAT-bear.MSG

‘This belly of his [that] has been eaten by a bear.’ (C. Lewən, SE Turkey; Talay 2009, 92.13)

- (27) Instrumental cause marked by
- b-*

biyy-əd zuyaxa qaddiš-a maṛanay-a
 through-CSTR procession.MSG holy-MSG saintly-MSG

pəš-le-wa mburx-e
 become.PFV-S.3MSG-PST blessed.RPP-PL

‘Through this holy church ceremony they had been blessed.’ (C. Diz, SE Turkey; Talay 2009, 568.25)

The dative preposition (*ʔəl*)- can also introduce the ergative agent in the Past Perfective (see §3.3) when it is focalised. For this reason, the structure illustrated in (26) can arguably also instantiate instances of focal ergative case-marking, but this is highly infrequent; see Noorlander (2021, 231, 237–48).

In the majority of NENA dialects, however, the use of the preposition *l-* to mark the agent is indistinguishable from other methods used to mark an oblique agent of a passive. This can be illustrated by the following minimal pair, where the dative preposition *l-* alternates with the clearly passive idiom, the two of which are uttered one shortly after the other by the same speaker:

(28) C. ʤal (SE Turkey)

- a. *la- payš-a šqil-ta l-miṛa*
 NEG- become-S.3FSG taken.RPP-S.FSG DAT-emir.MSG
 ‘that she should not be taken by the emir.’ Talay (2009, 294.11)
- b. *la- payš-a šqil-ta b-ʔið-e d-miṛa*
 NEG- become-S.3FSG taken.RPP-S.FSG by-hand-his GEN-emir.MSG
 ‘that she should not be taken by the emir.’ (Talay 2009, 294.17)

It seems plausible that the use of the preposition (ʔal)l- in passive constructions is an extension from its use as an agent marker in the Past Perfective. This may be evidence that the preposition *l-* encroached on the territory of the preposition *mən-* as the original general passive agent marker (see Noorlander 2021b and Chapter 1 in this volume for a discussion and further references).

3.0. Areal Dimensions

A number of passive and passive-like constructions reflect convergence with neighbouring languages, especially Iranian. Sometimes, however, such as in the case of oblique expression of the

agent, the direction of influence remains unclear, and it is possible we are dealing with a parallel development rather than the result of imposition through bilingual speakers.

3.1. Auxiliary BECOME and Light Verb Constructions

First of all, it is conceivable that the use of the auxiliary *šodan* ‘become’ in the Persian passive construction may have influenced the use of *xadər* ‘become’ in the Jewish dialects of NENA in Iran, e.g.,

(28) J. Urmi (Garbell 1965, 174)

reš *-öx* *+qəty* *-a* *xadər* *-Ø*
 head.MSG -my cut.RPP -MSG SBJV.become -S.3MSG
 ‘Your head will be cut off.’

(29) Persian

sær *-æt* *borīd* *-æ* *mi-* *š* *-æ*
 head.SG -your cut.PST -RPP PROG become.PRES -S.3SG
 ‘Your head will be cut off.’

The same verb also features in light verb constructions, or complex predicates, in Persian. Similar constructions are found in Kurdish, Azeri, and Armenian. With the possible exception of Armenian, contact with the surrounding Iranian and Turkic languages resulted in the alternation of transitive light verbs such as ‘to do, to make’ and intransitive light verbs such as ‘to be, to become, to remain’ in NENA dialects, especially in the varieties spoken in Iran. The way this works is that a light verb, typically ‘to do, to make’, combines with a nominal element to create a complex predicate, and this can lead to transitivity alternations based on light verbs. Thus, literally ‘content-make’ alternates with literally ‘content-become’ in Persian *razi kərdæn* ‘make content,

please' ~ *razi šodæn* 'become content, be pleased', as well as in Azeri *razi etmək* (transitive) ~ *razi olmaq* (intransitive) and Kurdish *razî kirin* ~ *razî bûn*. The intransitive verb *xadər* 'become' is used in Trans-Zab Jewish varieties such as the Jewish dialect of Urmi, e.g., ⁺*razi xadər* 'to become content' is the intransitive counterpart of ⁺*razi od* 'to make content'. In the Christian dialect of Urmi, the intransitive verb is generally *'avə* 'be, become' (Khan 2016, II:457–58), though sometimes also *payəš* 'become; remain', e.g., ⁺*razi payəš* 'to become content', which is the intransitive counterpart of ⁺*razi 'avəd* 'to make content'. Thus, similarly, the passive counterpart of a transitive light verb construction is created using an inchoative verb that is selected as light verb. The inchoative verb can be used to express other voices as well, e.g., C. Urmi *rad 'avə* passive 'to be removed' or reflexive 'to remove oneself', as the intransitive counterpart of *rad 'avəd* 'to remove' (Khan 2016, III:264).

3.2. Auxiliary COME, Passive Infinitive, and Oblique Agents

The auxiliary 'come' can be combined with the infinitive to express the passive, which is a pattern imposed on Neo-Aramaic through Kurdish–Aramaic bilingualism. The expression of the agent through the idiom 'by the hand of' is also a structure that converges with Kurdish; see (30) and (31). The expression of indirect causation in Kurdish is *ji ber*, literally 'from before', which converges with Neo-Aramaic *mən qam*, as shown in (32) and (33). In this case, the ultimate source of the agent complements in Kurdish may well have been Semitic.

- (30) J. Zakho (NW Iraq; Cohen 2012, 180, fn. 15)

u=b-ase-∅ *ʔəl maqoze* *b-əd* *ʔiz-∅*
 and=FUT-come-S.3MSG to CAU.burn-INF by-CSTR hand-of

Mušulman-e

Muslim-PL

‘He will be burned by Muslims.’

- (31) Northern Kurdish

ew-ê *bi dest-ê* *misliman-an*
 he-ez.MSG by hand-ez.MSG Muslim-PL

wer-e *şewit-and-in*

SBJV.come-3SG burn-CAU-INF

‘He will be burned by Muslims.’

- (32) C. Urmi (NW Iran)

⁺*tarra mən qam poxa ptax* *-lə*
 door.MSG from before wind opened.PFV -3MSG

‘The door opened because of the wind.’

- (33) Northern Kurdish

ji ber *bay-ê* *derî-∅* *vebû-∅*
 from before wind-EZ.MSG door-DIR.MSG open.PST-SG

‘The door opened because of the wind.’

Infinitives generally have active diathesis, but they can also have passive diathesis (see Khan 2016, II:233–35), which is presumably a result of convergence with Iranian, e.g., (34). Used together with the verb **hwy* ‘be’, the infinitive can express the potential passive, e.g., (34b). This usage is strictly confined to transitive verbs, and incompatible with intransitive verbs such as *myt* ‘die’, e.g., (34d). The auxiliary ‘come’, however, is compatible with intransitive verbs, and can convey an uncontrolled process, as (35) illustrates.

(34) C. Urmi (Khan 2016, II:235)

- a. *'annə dədvə +bayy -i +qtala*
 DEM.PL fly.PL want -A.3PL kill.INF
 'These flies need to be killed.'
- b. *'a-məndi c- avə -∅ +xala*
 DEM-thing.MSG IND be -S.3MSG eat.INF
 'This thing may be eaten.'
- c. *sus-avay +marxuṭə*
 horse.M-PL CAUS.run.INF
 'horses were made to gallop'
- d. ***c- avə -∅ myata*
 IND- be -S.3MSG die.INF
 Intended for: 'He may die.'

(35) C. Barwar (Khan 2008, 1592.§47, translation modified)

- mən- d-o- xamra b- rawe*
 from GEN-DEM.MSG wine.MSG FUT- get_drunk.S.3MSG
- t- aθe l-dmaxa*
 FUT come.S.3MSG to-sleep.INF
- 'From the wine he will get drunk (and then) fall asleep.'

3.3. Ergativity, Agentless Passive, and Agent Omission

The tense–aspect-based inversion in role cross-referencing on the verb in NENA, illustrated in (36a) and (36b), is reminiscent of the inversion that occurs in passivisation, where the patient is promoted to subject and the agent becomes oblique. This is paralleled by similar types of inversion that occur in neighbouring Iranian languages, as (37) illustrates for Gorani, where the agent and patient are also expressed by bound person markers. This convergence in tense–aspect-sensitive verbal person marking is generally attributed to the influence of Iranian (e.g., Kutscher 1969; Gzella 2004, 184–94; Khan 2004).

(36) C. Marga

- a. *b-šaqł-ux -lax*
 FUT-take-A.1PL -O.2FSG
 ‘We shall take you.’
- b. *šqil-ux -lax*
 took.PFV-O.1PL -A.2FSG
 ‘You took us.’

(37) Hewramî, Gorani (p. c. with Masoud Mohammadirad)

- a. *ber- -mê -ta*
 take -A.1PL -O.2PL
 ‘We take you.’
- b. *berđ -îmê -ta*
 took -O.1PL -A.2PL
 ‘You took us.’

Several NENA dialects of northwestern Iraq and southeastern Turkey sporadically drop the L-suffixes that express the agent in the Past Perfective, such as *-lax* in (36b). The resulting construction can be passive-like but is ultimately better characterised as an ergative construction. This construction has partially been transferred from southeastern Northern Kurdish. The agentless Past Perfective is a unique form where the object coding is retained but the coding of the agent is omitted (see Gutman 2008). The optionality only targets the agent and is incompatible with the subject of intransitive verbs, e.g.,

(38) C. Marga

With agent coding*qṭal-lay*

‘They killed (sb.).’

rqəz-lay

‘They danced.’

Without agent coding*qṭil*

‘(He) was killed (by sb.).’

Lit. ‘Killed (him).’

***rqiz*

Intended: ‘It was danced (by sb.)’

Lit. ‘Danced (by sb).’

This agentless form is thus only found with transitive verbs and always has a strong implication of an agent. In meaning, it can therefore express the equivalent of an agentless passive, e.g.,

(39) C. Marga

a. *se -lay gälək gure l- qəṭla gu šarre*
 came -S.3PL many man.PL to kill.VN in war
 ‘Many men were killed in warfare.’

b. *kullay qṭil -i gu šarre*
 all_of_them killed.PFV -O.3PL in war
 ‘All of them were killed in the war.’

(40) J. Betanure (Mutzafi 2008a, 231.§304)

ʿan-kepe balki ʔe -lu l- gnawa. yān la
 DEM.PL-stone.PL perhaps came.PFV -S.3PL. to steal.INF or NEG
gniw -i?
 stole.PFV -O.3PL

‘These stones were perhaps stolen. Or were they not stolen?’

The agentless construction itself, however, does not result in detransitivisation, or the patient-to-subject promotion characteristic of passivisation. It remains fully transitive, as can be seen from the object coding *-i* in (39b), distinct from that of the subjects *-lay* and *-lu* in (39a) and (40), respectively. The agent, though generally restricted to the third person, can still be referential and occur with a co-nominal that it cross-references. This construction must not, therefore, be confused with the inchoative Past Perfective in the Trans-Zab Jewish varieties (see §1.3), which does involve intransitivisation, i.e., *griš-a* ‘she was pulled’ and *qṭil-a* ‘she was killed’ are as intransitive as *dmix-a* ‘she slept’ and *mil-a* ‘she died’. But, here, the agentless Past Perfective fulfils the role of the passive in a similar way to the impersonal subject construction (see §2.1), where the reference of the agent is reduced but the third-person plural coding is maintained, i.e., *qṭil-a* ‘X killed her’ is as transitive as *qṭil-a-lay* ‘they killed her’ and *qṭil-a-le* ‘he killed her’.

Similarly to the impersonal subject construction, precisely because the identity of the agent can still be recovered, the ergative usage of this construction can only be distinguished from a passive when the speaker has a more specific agent argument in mind, e.g.,

(41) C. Marga

- a. *mburx -an Ø =u qaša xəš -le*
 blessed.PFV -O.1PL -A_i =and priest.MSG_i went.PFV -S.3MSG_i
 ‘Having blessed us, the priest left.’ (Khan field notes)
 Lit. ‘And Ø_i blessed us, the priest_i left.’

Here, the speaker recounts oral history about the wedding festivities in the village. The argument *qaša* ‘priest’ is the identifiable agent of *mburxan* ‘blessed us’, but it is left unexpressed. In this case, therefore, the agentless verb *mburxan* cannot be interpreted as an agentless passive, i.e., ‘We were blessed (by somebody)’, but exhibits ergative morphosyntax. The structure in (41b) below is equally possible, in which case the agent NP is locally present and explicit, but not cross-referenced on the transitive verb (see Gutman 2008 and Noorlander 2021, 242 for a discussion and further references).

- b. *axni qaša mburx -ax =u ∅*
 we priest.MSG blessed.PFV -O.1PL =and A_i
xəš -le
 went.PFV -S.3MSG_i
 ‘The priest blessed us and ∅_i left.’

This co-referential agent deletion converges with the Behdîni dialects of Northern Kurdish, and is presumably a direct replication of the ergative morphosyntax found in those dialects. In the Northern Kurdish ergative past construction, the agent is not expressed on the verb. Instead, the agent argument, if overtly expressed, is assigned ergative case using the so-called ‘oblique’ case declension, e.g., *me* ‘we’ in (42a), and the Past stem verb, such as *bir* ‘to take’, only agrees with the object, which is assigned the so-called ‘direct’ case, e.g., *ew her sê diz* ‘those three thieves’ in (42). When the agent argument is omitted, however, it depends on the context whether it can still be recovered as an instance of co-referential agent deletion (see Haig 2008, 263–64), but the agreement with the object is retained, e.g., (42b). The

agentless Perfective construction in NENA, as illustrated in (43), therefore, is a direct parallel of this, but, here, the agent argument is marked with an L-suffix on the verb.

(42) Behdîni Kurdish (adapted from Haig 2008, 264)

a. *me ew her sê diz bir -in*
 OBL.1PL DEM all three thief.DIR.M took -O.PL

‘we took those three thieves’

b. *ew her sê diz bir -in-e laî*
 DEM all three thief.DIR.M took -O.PL=DIREC before

‘those three thieves were taken before (him) (by somebody)’

(43) C. Marga

a. *’an ʔla ganawe nubl -i -lan*
 DEM three thief.PL took.PFV -O.3PL -A.1PL

‘we took those three thieves’

b. *’an ʔla ganawe nubl -i*
 DEM three thief.PL took.PFV -O.3PL

‘those three thieves were taken (by somebody)’

The same construction is compatible with a highly topical patient and an agent marked by the dative preposition *l-*. The dative agent is in narrow focus and often involved in the event with intensified agentivity. The agent is placed adjacent to the verb, either immediately before or immediately after it. In NENA, the overt dative marking of the agent is incompatible with accompanying cross-referencing of the agent on the verb, e.g., (44). The ergative morphosyntax in NENA as such corresponds directly with that of the ergative construction in Behdîni Northern Kurdish and Hewrami, as illustrated in (45)–(46). The example in Hewrami (46) parallels the construction in C. Marga even more

closely in that the agent clitic that is otherwise used in the past is not compatible with a focalised oblique agent.

(44) C. Marga

*ʾayya xmartā ʾəl-li qṭil-a(**-li)*
 DEM.FSG donkey.FSG DAT-1SG killed.PFV-O.3FSG(**-A.1SG)
 ‘This donkey I killed.’

(45) Behdînî Kurdish (p.c. with Ergin Öpengin)

ev ker-e min kuşt-in
 DEM donkey.FSG=DEM OBL.1SG killed-O.PL
 ‘These donkeys I killed.’

(46) Hewramî Tekht (p.c. with Masoud Mohammadirad)

*a maher-ê min(**=im) kuşt-e*
 DEM donkey.FSG.DIR-DEM OBL.1SG=(**=A.1SG) killed-O.3FSG
 ‘This donkey I killed.’

As also noted in §2.5, the same agent marker is also possible in several NENA dialects for the BECOME-passive and BE-passive. With respect to the latter, however, it can also be interpreted as an ergative agent marker; see (47). In the Complex Perfect, an object index ultimately based on the dative preposition *əl-* is attached directly to the resultative participle, as (47a) shows, whilst the copula can be mobile. Both the resultative participle and the copula agree with the agent, but the pronominal object suffix agrees with the patient. This would be equivalent to the Past Perfective *qṭil-a-le* in dialects like C. Marga; see (43a). The patient itself can also be the subject of a BE-passive, as (47b) illustrates, in which case the copula and participle agree with the patient. This would be equivalent to the intransitive Past Perfective *qṭil-a* ‘she got killed’ in dialects like J. Sanandaj (see §1.3).

However, when a focalised agent is added, the copula and participle can also agree with the patient, and the agent can be marked with the dative. This parallels the structures in (44)–(46), but it is difficult to ascertain whether the construction in (47c) is to be interpreted as fully transitive, as the constructions illustrated in (44)–(46) are. In some dialects, the dative marking of the agent seems to be optional (see also Khan 2008, 752), which would suggest that this is not a passive. Noorlander (2021a, 244–46) provides further references and argumentation.

(47) C. Nerwa

- a. *ǎya xmartá mani -le q̣ṭil-*
 DEM.FSG donkey.FSG who -COP.3MSG killed.RPP.MSG
əll -a?
 OBJ -3FSG
 ‘Who has killed this donkey?’
- b. *ǎya xmartá hola q̣ṭəl-ta*
 DEM.FSG donkey.FSG DEIC.COP.S.3MSG killed.RPP-S.FSG
 ‘This donkey has been killed (by somebody).’
- c. *ǎya xmartá l-mani -la q̣ṭəl-ta*
 DEM.FSG donkey.FSG DAT-who -COP.3FSG killed.RPP-O/S.?FSG
 Lit. ‘By whom (is it that) this donkey has been killed?’

In conclusion, rather than analysing such agentless clauses as the equivalent of agentless passives, they are better characterised as a type of optional A-marking. In optional A-marking, the coding of an agent can depend on its relative focality, expectedness, and agentivity. An agent can be omitted or zero-marked when it is an expected actor with little impact, whereas overt marking of the agent indicates its unexpectedness and its greater agentivity (e.g., McGregor 2006; 2010; Chappell and Verstraete

2019). The ‘blocking’ of agreement with a focalised agent also has cross-linguistic parallels (Siewierska 2004, 160–62). For a detailed discussion of such agentless forms as well as optional ergative case-marking in NENA and Ṭuroyo, see Noorlander (2021, 231, 237–48, 319–20).

Abbreviations

Languages

C.	Christian
CNENA	Christian Northeastern Neo-Aramaic
J.	Jewish
NENA	Northeastern Neo-Aramaic
WNA	Western Neo-Aramaic

Linguistic Terms

A	agent of transitive clause	DOM	differential object marker
CAU	causative	D-stem	second derivation
COP	copula	EZ	ezafe (Iranian linguistics)
C-stem	third derivation	FSG	feminine singular
CSTR	construct state (Semitics)	FUT	future
DAT	dative	G-stem	<i>Grundstamm</i> = basic verbs
DEIC	deictic	Imperf.	Imperfective
DEM	demonstrative	inchoat.	inchoative
DIR	direct case (Iranian linguistics)	IND	indicative
DIREC	directional	INF	infinitive

Inf.	infinitive	PL	plural
IPFV	imperfective	PRES	Present
MSG	masculine singular	Result.	Resultative Participle
O	direct object of transitive clause	RPP	resultative participle
OBL	oblique case (Iranian linguistics)	S	single argument of intransitive clause
PASS	passive		
Perf.	Perfective	SBJV	subjunctive
PFV	perfective	SG	singular

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4. A CONTACT-INDUCED STRUCTURAL CHANGE WITH A LEXICAL-FUNCTIONAL ASYMMETRY: A PASSIVE CONSTRUCTION IN NAYINI

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1.0. Introduction

Nayini is a Central Iranian language, which is genetically classified as belonging to the Northwestern Iranian sub-branch (Windfuhr 1992). Presently it is spoken in the urban community of Nayin, situated in Central Iran, and its surrounding rural areas. Nayini faces linguistic challenges owing to the pervasive dominance of Persian as the sole official language in Iran. The absence of educational and cultural activities specific to Nayini, coupled with the lack of a writing tradition, positions this local language in a role subordinate to Persian. Consequently, Nayini exhibits a proclivity towards extensive lexical and structural borrowing from Persian. The latter, being more complicated due to the multiple linguistic factors that are included in the constructions, deserves more attention in Iranian linguistics.

This paper focuses on a contact-induced construction in Nayini that is used to express the passive voice, along with native, inherited constructions that serve the same purpose. The

fieldwork data in this investigation unveil three patterns of passive formation, two of which demonstrate resistance to external linguistic influences, while the third is identified as contact-induced. The primary research questions addressed in this study are twofold:

1. What are the triggering factors for structural variation in Nayini's passivisation phenomenon?
2. Can a chronology be established to trace the development of this structural variation?

The first research question addresses the morphemic composition of the passive constructions, exploring the underlying factors contributing to structural variation. The second question delves into the potential diachronic development of these structural patterns, aiming to establish any derivational relationships among them. Given the absence of historical records for Nayini, diachronic study is restricted to historical reconstruction inferred on the basis of existing synchronic data. However, the diachronic perspective may be enriched through comparisons with other currently spoken Central or Northwestern Iranian languages and in-depth study of the recorded histories of various Iranian languages.

The paper unfolds as follows: §2.0 provides an overview of the broad and narrow sub-branches of Iranian to which Nayini belongs, along with relevant previous studies. Subsequently, §3.0 introduces the fieldwork methodology employed in this investigation and outlines the characteristics of the collected data. §4.0 provides a concise examination of Nayini's verb morphology. §5.0 and its subsections analyse the passive patterns found in

Nayini, addressing the research questions. §6.0 then introduces a change-of-state construction found in Nayini, suggesting how it may have contributed to the development of the contact-induced phenomenon in passive constructions. Finally, §7.0 serves as the conclusion, summarising the discussions presented throughout the paper.

2.0. Nayini in the Context of Northwestern Iranian Languages

The Northwestern sub-branch is a “conventional cover term for all of West Iranian languages other than Southwest Iranian,” including Zazaki and Kurdish, Tatic, Caspian, Semnan area languages, Central group, etc. (Windfuhr 2009, 12; see also Lecoq 1989). Similarly, such terms as *Central Iranian languages/dialects* or *Central Plateau dialects* are cover terms used to refer to a series of geographically-related languages that are spoken in some regions “roughly between Hamadan, Isfahan, Yazd, and Tehran” (Windfuhr 1992). Apart from a few studies that list a number of linguistic features of these languages in a comparative manner, no satisfactory comprehensive comparison of these linguistic systems is available. Many of the languages in this group lack a critical description beyond superficial observations drawn from limited, and sometimes even unreliable, data. This places them among the so-called *low-resourced* languages (for the definition, see Magueresse et al. 2020; Lin et al. 2020).

While there were preliminary studies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Sadeghi 1988), Krahnke’s (1977) extensive examination of several Central Iranian languages

stands out among the more recent studies. In an attempt to classify these languages, he identified 36 distinctive phonological, morphological, and lexical isoglosses in this group, comparing them on two northwest–southeast and north–south axes based on a wave-like model. In addition, reference should be made to Lecoq (2002), who investigated nine varieties from this group and compared their phonological and morphological characteristics. Furthermore, Stilo (2007) is a short overview of certain linguistic features of the Iranian and non-Iranian languages spoken in Isfahan province in central Iran. Other studies in the field mostly focus on individual languages, or on a restricted sub-group of Central Iranian, rather than conducting a cross-linguistic comparison. For example, Yarshater (1974) and Borjian (2011; 2012; 2018) are concerned with individual languages, while Eilam (2019) describes a sub-group, namely, the Jewish Iranian dialects.

As far as Nayini is concerned, Pur-abedi Nayini (1993) is a comprehensive description and data source, covering phonology, morphology, and syntax. Nevertheless, the author offers a limited number of passive examples, without discussing the morphological or syntactic processes involved in their formation (Pur-abedi Nayini 1993, 234). Likewise, Dabir-Moghaddam's (2013, 963–1033) chapter on Nayini, which is devoted to the case and agreement systems of this language, includes only one passive example, without providing any information about whether a passive marker appears in the examples or not (Dabir-Moghaddam 2013, 964). Even more deserving of criticism is Windfuhr (1992), who refers to Nayini's periphrastic passive construction containing the

auxiliary *gert-* ‘become’ but overlooks the more frequent marker *-š* (see §5.0). Finally, Lecoq (2002, 224) suggests that *-nišā* is the passive suffix in Nayini, adding that *-niš-* attaches to the stems of the past tense. This suggestion will be examined in §5.1 through a detailed analysis of the three examples provided by Lecoq (2002, 504, 522) in two transcribed stories narrated by native speakers.

3.0. Fieldwork and Data

In order to conduct this study, a sample of 30 native speakers of Nayini was selected based on accessibility as the primary criterion. The sampling strategy aimed at achieving a reasonable balance across certain social factors, including gender, education, and dialectal origin. Specifically, the sample consisted of 17 males and 13 females, equally divided between those with school-education and university-education. Additionally, 12 individuals were from urban areas, while 18 hailed from rural locations. However, the sampling was notably imbalanced concerning age, as 87% of the participants were above the age of 40, reflecting the challenge of accessing younger Nayini speakers.

During the data-gathering phase, each participant engaged in a structured interview involving the description of 20 pictures through storytelling, and the re-narration of a 6-minute ‘pear-story’ film (Chafe 1975). All organised interviews were audio-recorded, followed by the recording of spontaneous free speech in multiple sessions. The total recorded material duration, encompassing both organised and unorganised sessions, amounted to 16 hours, with the transcribed portion comprising at least 5400 sentences. Within the transcribed data, 94 instances of passive

constructions were identified, and these tokens will be systematically classified and analysed in §5.0. §4.0 will present a picture of verbal morphology, providing a necessary foundation for introducing the passive patterns.

4.0. Morphological Structure of Nayini Verbs

This section is dedicated to furnishing essential information for an understanding of the position of passive markers within the complex of verbal morphology in Nayini, introducing the inter-related tense and agreement systems and the markers used within them (§4.1). Following this, the valency-changing markers, specifically causative and passive, will be illustrated (§4.2), with a more detailed exploration of the passive markers to be conducted in §5.0. Finally, we will provide an overview of preverbal elements (§4.3), contrasting them with the suffixal elements discussed in the preceding subsections.

4.1. Tense and Agreement

The verbal agreement system of Nayini features a split that intricately interacts with tense.¹ In the present tense, the subject agreement markers are obligatorily suffixed to the verb, while the object agreement markers may appear as proclitics,² particu-

¹ This split might be a remnant of the ergative–absolutive case-marking system of Middle Iranian, which functioned based on a present–past distinction (Skjærvø 2009).

² These pronominal clitics, given in the third row of Table 1, can be employed to express the possessive function as well, always as enclitics.

larly when the object is animate. Preliminary observations indicate that animate objects in the present tense tend to prompt agreement marking on the verb, whereas inanimate objects in the same tense typically do not undergo cross-referencing. However, the intricacies of animacy's impact, as well as the identification of specific verbs or contexts that trigger object agreement, necessitate further investigation. Table 1 presents a list of agreement markers in the present tense, with (1) serving as an illustrative example.

Table 1: The verbal agreement markers of Nayini in present tense³

Person-number	1SG	2SG	3SG	1PL	2PL	3PL
Subject suffixes	-i/-e	-i/-e	-æ	-em	-id	-en
Object proclitics	m-	t-	š-	mi-	ti-	ši-

- (1) *dar-en*⁴ *di mere š-æ-niy-en*
 have-3PL.SUB this man 3SG.OBJ=IPFV-take-3PL.SUB
tu kiyæ-š.
 into house=3SG.POSS
 'They are taking this man into his house.'

In contrast to the present tense, which is simply the default interpretation of unmarked verbal forms, the past tense in Nayini is morphologically marked. Frequent past tense markers in Nayini include *-ay*, *-oy*, *-t*, and *-d*, which exhibit morphophonemic changes when appended to the verb stem in specific lexical

³ In Tables 1 and 2, the alternatives given for the 1SG and 2SG markers represent dialectal variation.

⁴ This auxiliary, appearing in some other examples throughout the paper as well, contributes to the formation of a construction which expresses progressive aspect.

or phonological contexts (for a brief discussion of similar changes in Iranian languages, see Windfuhr and Perry 2009, 447). In the past tense, intransitive verbs employ the same suffixes as in the present tense (with the exception that they feature a zero-morpheme for 3SG, instead of the marker *-æ* as in the present tense), as exemplified in (2). What separates past-tense verbs in Nayini from present-tense ones is the agreement system of transitive verbs. These verbs use the present-tense object proclitics to mark subject agreement. In these cases, the clitics are either encliticised to nominal objects or certain other elements of the clause, as in (3a), or they are procliticised to the verb, as in (3b). Table 2 succinctly outlines the agreement system in the past tense.

Table 2: The verbal agreement markers of Nayini in past tense

Person-number	1SG	2SG	3SG	1PL	2PL	3PL
Subject suffixes (for intransitive verbs)	<i>-i/-e</i>	<i>-i/-e</i>	$-\emptyset$	<i>-em</i>	<i>-id</i>	<i>-en</i>
Subject clitics (for transitive verbs) ⁵	<i>=(o)m</i>	<i>=(o)t</i>	<i>=(o)š</i>	<i>=(o)mi</i>	<i>=(o)ti</i>	<i>=(o)ši</i>

- (2) *se ta poræ-ču-e jī u-šoy-en.*
 three number boy-DIM-DEF also PFV-go.PST-3PL.SUB

‘The three boys went, too.’

- (3) a. *osmi kula-š-oš u-d-a go*
 now hat-3SG.POSS-3SG.SUB PFV-give-PST that
ser-oš n-æ.
 head-3SG.POSS put-3SG.SUB

‘Now, he gave (him) his hat to put on his head.’

⁵ Encliticised to objects etc. with an inserted [o], or procliticised to verbs.

- b. *mi m=u-vat ga boz=i pakessuni=yo.*
 I 1SG.SUB=PFV-say.PST maybe goat=GEN⁶ Pakistani-be.3SG
 ‘I said maybe it is a Pakistani goat.’

More generally, a comparison of Tables 1 and 2 and their corresponding examples shows two sets of person–number agreement markers, namely the suffixes and the *pro-/enclitics*. The members of the former group only appear on the verbs, while the latter group’s members can select their host from a set of available candidates, including direct object, indirect object, goal phrase, the non-verbal component of a complex predicate, negative marker, etc. An investigation of the factors that determine the host-selection process, whether syntactic, pragmatic, or discursive, requires a comprehensive study beyond this paper.

4.2. Valency-Changing Markers

Apart from the agreement markers (which appear before or after the verbal root) and temporal suffixes, two additional inflectional markers are situated in the post-root position: the causative marker *-(e)n*⁷ and the passive marker *-š*. The causative marker is

⁶ This marker, also called ‘*ezafe*’ or ‘linker’, appears in attributive constructions in Iranian languages, morphologically marking the relationship between a head noun and a dependent noun or adjective. As a bound morpheme, it is encliticised to the head noun. Diachronically, the marker originates in a relativiser that served to introduce relative clauses of head nouns in Middle Iranian (for the relevant examples, see Skjærvø 2009, 255–56).

⁷ This suffix is comparable to the causative marker *-an* in Persian and Kurdish.

exemplified in (4a) and (4b) for the present and past tenses, respectively. The passive marker will be comprehensively introduced in §5.0 and its subsections. Both markers precede the tense and agreement suffixes. In cases of their co-occurrence, the causative marker precedes the passive marker; see (6c).

- (4) a. *du dot-æ dar-en ri šen va*
 this girl-DEF have-3PL.SUB on sand on
š-æ-kiš-n-en.
 3SG.OBJ=IPFV-pull-CAUS-3PL.SUB
 ‘This girl—they are pulling her on the sand.’
- b. *iki xoy šileng ow-oš ve sibl-æ*
 one with hose water-3SG.SUB to target-DEF
paš-n-ay-æ.
 pour-CAUS-PST-PTCPL
 ‘One has poured water on the target with a hose.’

4.3. Prefixal Elements

There are three inflectional markers and a set of derivational prefixes that may be attached to the verb form in pre-root position. These markers do not interact with the post-root passive marker, but information about their usage enhances our understanding of the Nayini voice system. The three inflectional markers are the imperfective marker *e-/æ-* (dialectally varied), the negative marker *næ-/na-* (dialectally and contextually varied), and the functional marker *u-/i-* (phonologically conditioned).⁸ The derivational prefixes comprise at least four morphemes: *hæ-/ha-*, *væ-*

⁸ The marker *u-/i-* expresses non-indicative mood (including the subjunctive and imperative) when occurring with present-tense verbs, or perfective aspect when it precedes past-tense verbs.

/va-, der-, and ver-, where the allomorphy reflects dialectal variation. These derivational prefixes contribute lexical semantics that are predictable in some verbs, but not in others. Furthermore, certain inflectional markers and derivational prefixes cannot co-occur, while others exhibit the capacity to collocate, though both phenomena are subject to dialectal variation. Additionally, instead of the derivational prefixes, several nominal or adjectival elements can occupy the same pre-root position, resulting in complex predicates—also known as light verb constructions (for characteristics of these complex predicates in Persian and Kurdish, see Nemati 2013 and Mustafa and Aziz 2021, respectively). Examples (5a–b) illustrate the pre-root markers, in addition to the previous examples which included these markers.

- (5) a. *fekr=om* *væ-kæ* *ga* *golowi-ya*
 thinking=1SG.SUB re-do.PST maybe pear-PL
i-bir-æ.
 SBJV-take-3SG.SUB
 ‘I thought (s)he might take the pears.’
- b. *dina* *ji* *ger der-ræ-s-en*, *hič*
 this.PL.ANIMATE also if in-arrive-3PL.SUB nothing
æ-næ-vaj-en.
 IPFV-NEG-say-3PL.SUB
 ‘These ones, too, if they arrive in, won’t say anything.’

In (5a), *fekr* *væ-kæ* is a complex predicate in which the root is preceded by both the noun *fekr* and the derivational prefix *væ-*. Furthermore, the second verb *i-bir-æ* contains the subjunctive prefix *i-*. In (5b), the pre-root elements are the derivational prefix *der-* and the prefix-collocation *æ-næ-* in the first and second verbs, respectively.

5.0. Structural Analysis of Nayini Passives

The data extracted in this study disclose three discernible structural patterns of passive constructions. These patterns are distinguished from non-passive constructions by the use of passive markers, particular verbal forms, or constructional interpretation. These patterns will be analysed and illustrated below.

5.1. Pattern A

This predominant pattern, accounting for 80% of all passive tokens in the fieldwork data, is based on the passive marker *-š*. As discussed in §4.2, this marker consistently precedes the tense-agreement morphology and the participial marker. The following examples in (6) illustrate the passive marker in the present tense: (6a) in the indicative mood and (6b) in a subjunctive environment—i.e., without a mood marker. These can be contrasted with the corresponding past-tense examples (7a–b), which show the usage of the passive marker in perfective and imperfective aspect, respectively. Finally, example (8) represents the passive usage of a present perfect verb, which is formed with a past participle. It is noteworthy that in some of these examples, namely, (6b), (7b), and (8), the causative suffix has intervened between the verbal root and the passive marker. While this marker appears to be interacting with the verbal roots, its further investigation would require a more widespread dataset of passive forms beyond the present fieldwork.

- (6) a. *kællæ-tas-æ vin go dar-æ gærden=oš*
 head-bald-DEF see[2SG] that have-3SG neck-3SG.POSS
e-mær-š-æ.
 IPFV-break-PASS-3SG
 ‘Look at the bald one whose neck is being broken!’
- b. *dar-æ furar æ-kir-æ go ow=oš*
 have-3SG escape IPFV-do-3SG that water=3SG.IOBJ
næ-paš-en-š-æ.
 NEG-splash-CAUS-PASS-3SG
 ‘He is escaping so that the water is not splashed on him.’
- (7) a. *du diræxt u-von-š-ay hoy šemšir.*
 this tree PFV-cut-PASS-PST[3SG] with sword
 ‘This tree was cut with a sword.’
- b. *yæ væčæ darto xak e-kiš-en-š-a.*
 one child have.PST soil IPFV-pull-CAUS-PASS-PST[3SG]
 ‘A child was being pulled on the soil.’
- (8) *reng ve lubas=oš riĵ-en-š-ay-æ.*
 paint to clothes-3SG.POSS pour-CAUS-PASS-PST-PTCPL[3SG]
 ‘The paint has been poured on his clothes.’

The first generalisation regarding Pattern A is that the subject agreement marker is, in both present and past tenses, consistently selected from the set of intransitive subject suffixes (see Tables 1 and 2, depending on the tense). This selection indicates that the passive construction is morphosyntactically treated as an intransitive construction in Nayini. In Nayini, intransitive verbs are always inflected with subject **suffixes**, and never with a subject or object **clitic**.

The second generalisation is that, in all sampled regional dialects, the past tense marker of all attested tokens in Pattern A is *-a(y)*. This phenomenon might be linked to the characteristics

of -š; the selection of the past marker could be phonologically or morphologically conditioned, or it could be a consequence of a historical process. Determining whether -š belongs to the category of a suffix or an auxiliary would necessitate further investigation beyond the scope of this paper, and its classification may have implications for the constituent elements of the passive construction. In §5.2, it will be argued that both of the above-mentioned generalisations apply to all attested tokens of Pattern B as well.

Nonetheless, as mentioned in §2.0, Lecoq (2002, 224) proposes *niš-* and *nišā* as the passive markers of Nayini, with reference to three examples from his 22 pages of transcribed data for the language (Lecoq 2002, 496–539). These examples are quoted here as (9a–c), with our suggested glosses, which will be discussed subsequently. The original transcription includes only one instance of š [ʃ], with the assumption that *niš-* is a single morphological unit. However, most of the informants in this study tended to produce Lecoq’s examples with š-š [ʃ.ʃ], while admitting that one š [ʃ] is possible as well. This second š is displayed in the following examples (9a–c) in square brackets.

- (9) a. *iger ta čæl ru di næ-ni[š]-š-a,*
 if until forty day visible NEG-put?-PASS-PST[3SG]
mi hærf-i næ-dar-i.
 I talk-INDF NEG-have-1SG
 ‘If he is not seen in forty days, I won’t have anything to say (i.e., I’ll agree with you).’ (Lecoq 2002, 522, glossing and translation added)

- b. *šev si o noh-om go š-i-di*
 night thirty and nine-ORDINAL that 3SG-PFV-see.PST
por-e di næ-ni[š]-š-a, i-virit.
 boy-DEF visible NEG-put?-PASS-PST[3SG] PFV-flee.PST[3SG]
 ‘At the thirty-ninth night that she saw that the boy
 was not seen, she ran away.’ (Lecoq 2002, 522, gloss-
 ing and translation added)
- c. *osmi go xoy biden-i loxt piš-i di mere*
 now that with body-GEN naked beside-GEN this man.DEF
ve di ni[š]-š-ay-e, ...
 in visible put?-PASS-PST-1SG
 ‘Now that I was seen with the naked body in front of
 this man...’ (Lecoq 2002, 504, glossing and transla-
 tion added)

The problem with the original examples in Lecoq (2002) is that he provides no glossing and therefore no morphological analysis of the structures. What can be stated about examples (9a–b) with certainty is that *di* is neither the verbal root nor even a part of it, due to the placement of the negative marker after it in both of these two examples. This statement leaves us with two questions. First, what is the morphological category of *di*, and second, what is the verbal root that has been passivised? The answer to both of these questions may be explored in relation to example (10a), from Pur-abedi Nayini (1993, 234), as well as examples (11)–(12), which were produced by native speakers in personal correspondence with the authors of this paper.

- (10) a. *ber tag niš-š-a.*
 door open put?-PASS-PST[3SG]
 ‘The door was opened.’ (Pur-abedi Nayini 1993, 234,
 glossing and translation added)

- b. *may-oš ber-oš tag n-a.*
 mother-3SG.POSS door-3SG.SUB open put-PST
 ‘His mother opened the door.’
- (11) *sob-i zi owgušt bar niš-š-a.*
 morning-GEN early broth load put?-PASS-PST[3SG]
 ‘The broth was put on the (cooking) load in the early morning.’
- (12) *di ru-a di næ-yi.*
 this day-PL visible NEG-be.2SG
 ‘These days, you are not seen (lit. you are not visible)’

In (10b), the transitive verbal root *n-* ‘put’ has been used with the adjective *tag* ‘open’. In the passive counterpart of this example, i.e., (10a), the same combination of adjective and verbal root appears to have been used by the native speaker. However, this conclusion about (10a) remains uncertain due to an unjustified syllable in the assumed verbal root *niš* (as shown by the question mark in its gloss ‘put?’), unless a morpho-phonological rule beyond our synchronic knowledge has been active in the historical derivation of this root. This conclusion forms the foundation for the proposed analysis of examples (9a–c) as well as (11) and (12) in their respective glosses.

On the other hand, the adjectival category of *tag* in example (10) may serve as the basis for suggesting the same category for the element *di* in (9). Example (12) provides further support for this conclusion in that it combines *di* with a copula. In this example, the agreement clitic gives rise to a predication with a present-tense interpretation.

5.2. Pattern B

This less frequent pattern (12% of passives) is constructed by appending the passive marker *-š* to a dedicated passive root, following the same affix order as Pattern A. Pattern B is lexically restricted to ‘do’-verbs (as simple or complex predicates), and the passive root *ker-* belongs to a tripartite opposition of present/past/passive, as *kir-/kæ(rt)-/ker-*. In contrast, other Nayini verbal roots either possess a single present form that accommodates the past marker, as in *von-* ‘cut’, which receives the past marker *-t* in its active voice, or they maintain a bipartite present/past opposition, as in *riř-* ‘pour’ vs *rit-* ‘poured’, due to morpho-phonological changes (see §4.1). Example (13) illustrates Pattern B in the present and past tenses. In these examples, the double-marking of the passive is indicated by the double glossing of PASS.

- (13) a. *yæ qiti nušabæ-o, de la xak ker-š-æ.*
 one can cola-be.3SG in under soil do.PASS-PASS-3SG
 ‘There’s a cola can which is buried in the soil.’
- b. *i mere go tu film væ bi zæxmi*
 that man.DEF who in film in be.PST[3SG] injured
ker-š-a.
 do.PASS-PASS-PST[3SG]
 ‘That man who was in the film was injured.’

All attested tokens of Pattern B, including the above examples, adhere to the two generalisations posited in §5.1; they all receive an agreement suffix and the past marker *-a(y)*, if required. However, in contrast with Pattern A, the causative marker *-en* is never added to their roots. This limitation might be an accidental gap in the productivity of this marker or due to the lexical features of the verb *ker-* ‘do’. A comprehensive study of

Nayini verbs would be required to examine the latter possibility, but this falls beyond the scope of this paper.

5.3. Pattern C

Pattern C, which has the lowest frequency (8% of passives), exhibits a distinct structure that sets it apart from Patterns A and B while bearing similarities to the passive construction observed in Persian in terms of its constituent parts. Examples (14) and (15) illustrate the Nayini and Persian patterns, respectively. The latter examples have been elicited from individuals who are native speakers of Persian, with the aim of providing structural and lexical counterparts that closely resemble the former examples.

- (14) a. *dæss-oš xoy tunab dar-æ bæssæ*
 hand-3SG.POSS with rope have-3SG fasten.PST.PTCPL
gert-æ.
 become-3SG
 ‘His hand is being fastened with a rope.’
- b. *tunab-i go de dower-i pa-yi meræ-ši*
 rope-INDF that to around-GEN leg-GEN man-3PL.SUB
bæss-æ boridæ gert-ay.
 fasten.PST-PTCPL cut become-PST[3SG]
 ‘The rope that they had fastened around the man’s leg was cut off.’
- c. *yæg tikæ æz šaxæ-ha-yi diræxt kendæ*
 one piece of branch-PL-GEN tree cut.out
gert-ay-æ.
 become-PST-PTCPL[3SG]
 ‘A piece of tree branches has been cut out.’

- (15) a. *dæss=eš ba tæ nab dar-e bæss-e*
 hand-3SG.POSS with rope have-3SG fastened.PST-PTCPL
mi-š-e.
 IPFV-become-3SG
 ‘His hand is being fastened with a rope.’
- b. *tæ nab-i ke be do:r-e pa-ye mærd*
 rope-INDF that to around-GEN leg-GEN man
bæss-e bud-ænd, bor-id-e šod.
 fasten.PST-PTCPL be.PST-3PL cut-PST-PTCPL become-PST[3SG]
 ‘The rope that they had fastened around the man’s leg
 was cut off.’
- c. *ye tike æz šaxe-ha-ye deræxt kæn-d-e*
 one piece of branch-PL-GEN tree cut.OUT-PST-PTCPL
šod-e.
 become.PST-PTCPL[3SG]
 ‘A piece of tree branches has been cut out.’

Upon initial examination, it can be seen that, in examples (14a) and (15a), both of which are in the present tense, the passive constructions *bæssæ gertæ* and *bæsse miše*, meaning ‘is closed’ in Nayini and Persian respectively, are composed of a past participle and an inflected auxiliary (see Yousef 2018, 258–59 for an introduction to the passive construction in Persian, including various examples). This structural analysis can be extended to the constituent parts of the passive constructions in (14b) and (15b), both in the past tense, as well as (14c) and (15c), both expressing the perfect. Accordingly, the constructions *bæssæ boridæ gertay* and *boride šod*, both meaning ‘was cut’, and also *kændæ gertayæ* and *kænde šode*, both meaning ‘has been cut out’, are formed by combining a past participle with an auxiliary verb.

However, a closer inspection suggests the hypothesis that, unlike in Persian, the past participles in the aforementioned Nayini constructions may function as adjectives, while the auxiliary serves as a change-of-state verb. The assumption is that the Persian participial forms used in passive constructions are non-finite verbal forms, derived from verbal roots and augmented by the appropriate affixes. Although some of these forms may be used as predicative or attributive adjectives in other distributional contexts, they are regarded as verbal forms in passive constructions. In contrast, the Nayini forms *boridæ* and *kendæ* in the aforementioned examples of Pattern C are not derived from Nayini verbal roots through a derivational process. Rather, they have been borrowed directly from Persian as adjectives. The major supporting argument in favour of this hypothesis will be presented in §6.0. For the time being, conducting a morphological analysis of some of the participial forms provides insights into this matter:

1. The form *boridæ* in (14b) does not conform to the expected structure of past participial forms, which typically consist of a verbal root followed by a past marker. One primary reason for this is that *bor-* is not a Nayini root eligible for the usual variety of verbal inflections. Rather, Nayini employs the root *von-* to convey the lexical meaning of ‘cut’, as exemplified by the passive form *u-von-š-ay* in (7a) and the transitive form *æ-von-æ* ‘(S)he cuts’. Another reason is that the past marker *-id* is not used in Nayini, and it was not attested in any other inflected form within the fieldwork data analysed in this study.

2. Similarly, it is not feasible to suppose that the form *kendæ* in (14c) includes a past marker, because this function cannot be attributed to *-d* in this form. In Nayini, the verbal root *kin-* is realised as *kent-* in all of its inflectional forms in the past tense (see §4.1 for the morphophonemic changes that occur in the past-tense forms). These inflectional forms can be illustrated by *vur-oš-kent* (up-3SG-cut.out.PST) ‘(S)he cut out’, and *vur-oš-æ-kent* (up-3SG-IPFV-cut.out.PST) ‘(S)he was cutting out’.

Consequently, as comparison between Nayini and Persian reveals, the verbal adjectives in Pattern C are directly borrowed from Persian. The assumption that Persian is the source of the borrowing is based on the official status of this language in present-day Iran, and the fact that it is the only other language widely spoken among the members of the Nayini community alongside their own language (for the influence of Persian on the local languages of Iran, see Moradi 2019; Asadpour 2022; 2023; Mostafavi et al. 2023).

Pattern C thus represents a contact-induced phenomenon with a lexical-functional **asymmetry**. If this is correct, as we believe the evidence suggests, the lexical component of Pattern C was directly imported from Persian as a single word, apparently as an adjectival form.⁹ In contrast, as demonstrated by the above morphological analyses, the functional part of Pattern C, i.e., the

⁹ A piece of evidence in favour of the adjectival category is that these participial forms can be attributed to nouns, as in *dæss-i boridæ* ‘a cut hand’. It is interesting to note that the borrowed adjective *boridæ* alternates with its native counterpart *vonšayæ*.

inflected verb, is native, rather than replicating the lexical verb in the relevant Persian model. Among the tokens of Pattern C, two native change-of-state verbs were attested: *gert-*, as illustrated in (14), and *bo*,¹⁰ as illustrated in (16). However, despite the native, inherited status of these two verbs, both of them are conceptually equivalent to the Persian passive auxiliary *šodæn* ‘become’, as illustrated in (15). Therefore, their usage in collocation with the directly borrowed participles can be perceived as a **semantic borrowing** or **calque** from Persian (for the definition, see Nemati 2013).

- (16) *ger tir de tu kællæ-š omiy-æ, ebi*
 if shot in to head=3SG.POSS come.PST-PRF[3SG] anymore
koštæ b-o.
 killed be-3SG
 ‘If the shot has hit his head, then, he will be killed.’

The form *gert-* is comparable to the Persian change-of-state verb *gærdidæn* ‘become’, which is also used as an auxiliary in the passive constructions of Classical Persian (see Natel-Khanlari 1986, VII:378–79), as well as the written/formal variety of Contemporary Persian (see Lazard 1957), though not in its spoken variety. The final /t/-consonant of the Nayini root, as opposed to the final /d/-consonant of the Persian variant, supports the con-

¹⁰ Only one occurrence of this verb, inflected for the third person singular, was attested in the passive tokens. This verb can basically express both stative and change-of-state meanings, i.e., ‘be’ and ‘become’ respectively, and it is inflected for other person-number agreements as well.

clusion that the form is not a borrowed one. The overall similarity in the Nayini–Persian pair is due to their common genetic source, i.e., West Iranian. Furthermore, sociolinguistic findings indicate that the contact-induced change under discussion is a relatively recent phenomenon, not having been operative in previous centuries (see Mofidi and Asadpour 2023).

6.0. The Structural Ground for the Contact Phenomenon

This section aims to introduce the structural trigger(s) for the contact-induced change of adopting the Persian passive construction in Nayini via direct lexical borrowing and semantic borrowing. There are at least two inter-related structural factors that might have contributed to the development of Pattern C, namely a change-of-state construction found in Nayini, and an increase in its frequency, possibly under the influence of Persian. This change-of-state construction is illustrated in (17); there follows a discussion of the second factor.

- (17) a. *gulavi-ya hær kunom-i-š go der zimi*
 pear-PL each which-INDF=3SG.POSS each in ground
y-æ, kæsif æ-gert-æ.
 come-3SG dirty IPFV-become-3SG
 ‘The pears, each one that falls on the ground, becomes dirty.’
- b. *di dotæ-čū-e tu mosabeqæ væ bærendæ*
 this girl-DIM-DEF in race in winner
gert-ay-æ.
 become-PST-PRF[3SG]
 ‘This little girl has become a winner in the race.’

In (17), the change-of-state verbs *ægertæ* and *gertayæ* are preceded by the adjectival complements *kæsif* and *bærendæ*, respectively, like *gertæ*, *gert-ay*, and *gert-ay-æ* in (14a–c), which are preceded by their respective adjectival participles. It is therefore plausible that native change-of-state constructions such as those found in (17a–b) have functioned as the analogical basis for the formation of Pattern C.¹¹ According to this explanation, along with the outlined lexical-semantic adoption process, speakers treat the lexically borrowed adjectives as if they were being inserted into the native change-of-state construction. This posited extension of the existing construction from regular adjectives to participial adjectives might have reinforced the adoption process by means of providing a structural ground for it.

The second phenomenon that could have influenced the development of Pattern C is a rise in frequency of the use of *gert-* as a change-of-state verb. In the Nayini fieldwork data, as well as in linguistic judgments passed by the informants, several instances of an alternation between Pattern B and the *gert-* construction are observed, as illustrated by example (18).

- (18) a. *i moʃæssæmæ=yo. dar-æ reng ker-š-æ.*
 that statue-be.3SG have-3SG paint do.PASS-PASS-3SG
 ‘It is a statue. It is being painted.’

¹¹ This usage of the well-known term **analogy** relies on a user-orientated definition, as provided by Haspelmath (2014, 198): “to treat forms like other similar forms.” According to him, this tendency among speakers fundamentally represents the same tendency as is called **system pressure**, defined as “[t]he tendency of human language users to organize linguistic forms into systems, where classes of forms behave similarly.”

- b. *mojæssæmæ=yi go i-ver-ter væ=yo, dar-æ*
 statue=GEN that that-side-COMP in=be.3SG have-3SG
reng gert-æ.
 paint become-3SG
 ‘The statue that is over there is being painted.’

In Persian, the verb *kærdæn* ‘do’ is not passivised, in favour of a change-of-state alternative with *šodan*, e.g., *dæ’væt šod* ‘(S)he was invited’, but not *dæ’væt kærdæ šod* (see Yousef 2018, 260–63). This lexical restriction of passives in Contemporary Persian might have affected Pattern B of Nayini passives, as shown in (18a), by means of providing an alternative to it. Considering the high frequency of *šodæn*-predicates in Persian, the usage of its Nayini counterpart, i.e., the *gert*-construction as shown in (18b), might have increased as well. An ultimate consequence of this contact-induced phenomenon could have been an increase in the general frequency of *gert*- in Nayini, as opposed to Pattern B of passives.

Moreover, there is a lexical alternation observed among the Nayini change-of-state verbs. Although the verb *gert*- is commonly used in these constructions, there is also an alternative option available: the inflecting verb *b*-, which means ‘be’ or ‘become’ and can be used as a simple or prefixal predicate in both meanings.¹³ The former, stative meaning is irrelevant to the discussion at hand, while the relevant latter meaning is exemplified

¹³ It would be a matter for further discussion whether the possibly more fundamental stative meaning is the primary one, giving rise to a derived change-of-state meaning. In Kurdish and several Iranian languages, the verbs used to express ‘be’ can mean ‘become’ as well (see Zamani Siboni and Mofidi 2022, 159, and the references therein).

by (19), which includes examples of both simple and prefixal predicates formed with the root *b-*. It is not implausible that the aforementioned general increase in use of the *gert*-construction, triggered by Persian *šodæn*-predicates, may have lent support to the *gert*-construction in its competition with the *b*-construction. These two verbs, as exemplified by (17)¹⁴ and (19), respectively, compete to express the change-of-state meaning. The observation that these two constructions are utilised by speakers to express the same meaning suffices to assume a competitive situation between them. As argued by Petré (2014, 98), among others, in competition cases, “each time one of the two verbs is selected by a language user for use,... this prevents the instantiation of the other.”

- (19) a. *hær væxt sewdæ=š mešt æ-b-o,*
 each time basket=3SG.POSS filled IPFV-become-3SG
az niværdu?u teg æ-y-æ.
 from ladder down IPFV-come-3SG
 ‘Whenever his basket is filled up, he comes down the ladder.’
- b. *bæ:d dočærxæ=š hæ-n-æ o piyadæ*
 then bicycle back-put-3SG and walker
væ-b-o.
 back-become-3SG
 ‘Then, he puts his bicycle down and gets off.’

¹⁴ Interestingly, in example (17), even the adjectives that combine with the change-of-state verbs, i.e., *kæsif* and *bærendæ*, appear to be borrowed from Persian. It might be concluded that these lexical borrowings are a by-product of the contact-induced use of the *gert*-construction in these cases.

7.0. Conclusion

Returning to the research questions posed in §1.0, the factors that trigger structural variation in Nayini passives, as well as the order of development of the three patterns, are addressed in this section.

Beginning with a comparison between Patterns A and B, at first glance it appears that a lexical factor is responsible for the distinction between these two patterns. However, at a deeper explanatory level, the three-way distinction brought about by Pattern B might suggest that this pattern reflects an older passive mechanism which could have been productive for more verbs than those expressing 'do'. Considering the lack of any historical records of Nayini, the synchronic data of this investigation cannot substantially contribute to this hypothesis about Pattern B. Nevertheless, the change of vowel in the root occurring together with a change in the grammatical function of the form, i.e., present/past/passive, is reminiscent of ablaut, a non-linear mechanism which is quite common in Indo-European languages. If this explanation is verified through cross-linguistic investigation of Iranian or even Indo-Iranian languages, a priority of development can be ascribed to Pattern B as compared to Pattern A. In any case, neither of these two patterns was influenced by the contact of Nayini with Persian; hence, they are both to be referred to as contact-resistant patterns.

In contrast, as discussed in §5.3 and §6.0, Pattern C is a contact-induced phenomenon. Therefore, language contact is the triggering factor for structural variation in this case. In answer to

the second research question, i.e., the chronology of the development of Pattern C, it may be concluded from the discussions presented throughout the paper that this pattern developed later than Patterns A and B, which are apparently inherited constructions.¹⁵ Interestingly, the lexical and functional components of this structure do not play symmetrical roles in the contact phenomenon: the lexical component is imported directly, while the auxiliary is calqued.

In addition, §6.0 introduces a Nayini construction used to express change-of-state, which lays the ground for the structural adoption of Pattern C from Persian. This might initially have taken place through an analogical extension of this construction to accommodate past participles borrowed from Persian, leading to the formation of Pattern C. Furthermore, the rise in frequency of use of the change-of-state verb used in this construction, i.e., *gert-*, might have likewise served to lay the ground for the adoption of Pattern C. This latter phenomenon could have occurred via the influence of a restriction in Persian passive constructions, as well as via competition between *gert-* and the change-of-state verb *b-*.

In a nutshell, as a nuanced synthesis of the structural intricacies surrounding Nayini passives, this study unveils a multifaceted landscape comprising patterns A, B, and C. While Patterns A and B seem entwined in a lexical dance, potentially traceable

¹⁵ The possibility is reserved that there may be in these constructions contact-induced features introduced in earlier stages of Nayini. This possibility warrants further discussion but cannot be investigated synchronically within the scope of this paper.

back to ancient passive mechanisms, their resilience in the face of external influences marks them as contact-resistant structures. Pattern C, on the other hand, emerges as a testament to language contact dynamics, with its structural evolution influenced by the borrowing of lexical elements from Persian and the calquing of functional components. Investigation of the temporal evolution of these patterns indicates that the emergence of Pattern C is a relatively recent phenomenon. §6.0 introduces an additional layer to the narrative, illustrating how a Nayini construction expressing change-of-state serves as a pivotal structural substrate for the adoption of Pattern C from Persian. This adoption, shaped by frequency dynamics and competitive interactions, underscores the intricate interplay between linguistic evolution, contact-induced transformations, and the unique linguistic fabric of Nayini.

Abbreviations

1/2/3	first/second/third person	OBJ	direct object
		PASS	passive
CAUS	causative	PFV	perfective
COMP	comparative	PL	plural
DEF	definite	POSS	possessive
DIM	diminutive	PRF	perfect
GEN	genitive	PST	past
INDF	indefinite	PTCP	participle
IOBJ	indirect object	SG	singular
IPFV	imperfective	SUB	subject
NEG	negative	SUBJ	subjunctive

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5. PASSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN GARRUSI KURDISH

Hiwa Asadpour and Masoumeh Zarei

1.0. Introduction

The aim of this study is to describe and explain the different forms and functions of the passive voice in Garrusi. Garrusi (*garrūsi*) is a variety of Kurdish spoken in the region of Garrus (see Figure 1), formerly a province in Iran whose capital was the city of Bijar, located between the present-day provinces of Zanjan, Hamadan, and Kurdistan (Mardoukh Rouhani 2003, 435). Over time, the boundaries of Garrus shifted, and it underwent transformations. In 1937, it was reorganised into the city of Bijar Garrus, which then became part of Hamadan Province in 1946. Subsequently, with the establishment of the province of Kurdistan in 1958, it was incorporated into Kurdistan (Marivani 2009, 53–54; Yavari 2012, 4–5).

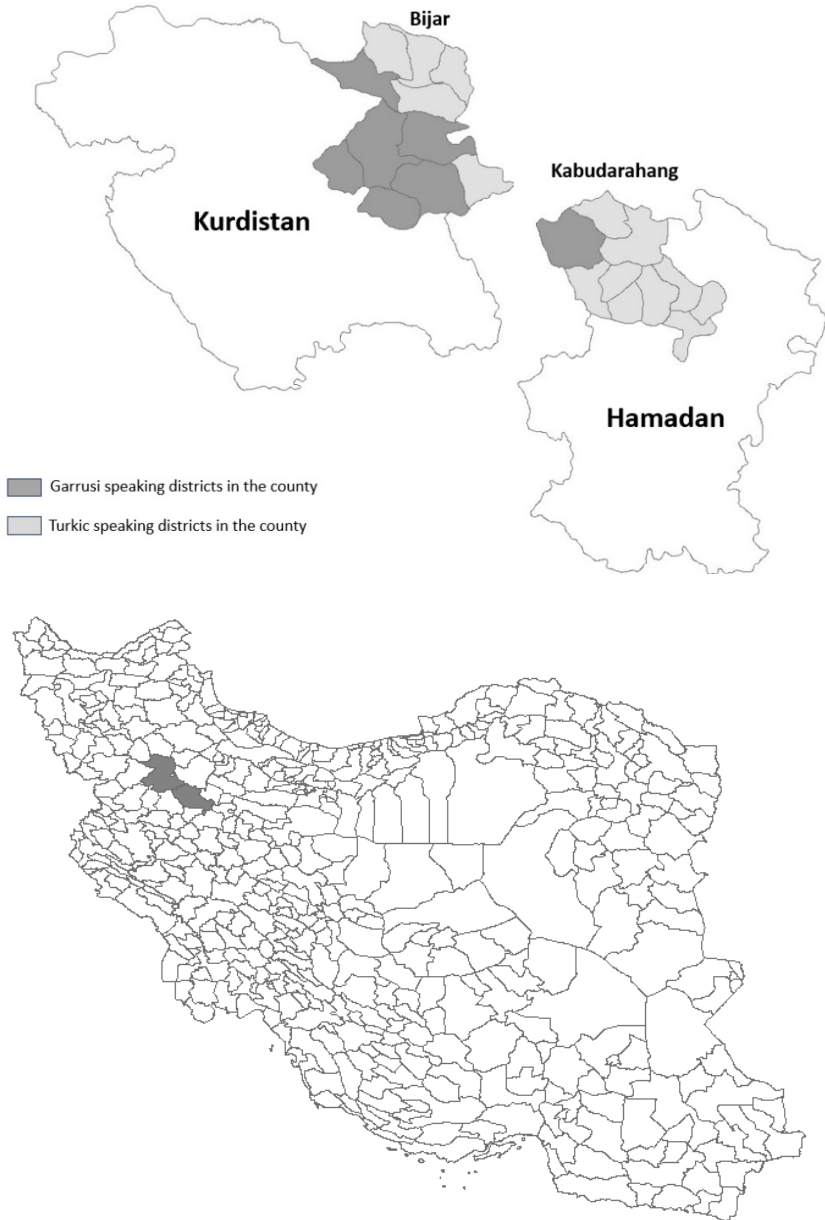
At various times in Iranian history, the Kurdish tribes living in this region have had significant military influence in Iran. As a result, political pressure under Iranian rulers forced some of these tribes to migrate from their ancestral lands and disperse to different parts of Iran (Fortescue 1922, 317; Yousefinia 1991, 315; Bitlisi 1994, 423–24; Kousha 1999, 88; Mardokh Ruhani 2003, 423–25; Marivani 2009, 28–36). During the reign of Abbas

the Great (1588–1629), the Siah Mansur tribe faced forced migration and dispersal, with many of its members moving to different regions within Iran, including Varamin, Khar, Lorestan, Khorasan, Sistan, and Baluchestan. Only a few members of the tribe remained in the present-day rural district of Siah Mansur in Bijar (Bitlisi 1994, 423–24; Mardokh Ruhani 2003, 423–25; Marivani 2009, 28). The Kvajavand tribe experienced a series of migrations in different historical periods. They were forced to move to Mazandaran province during the reign of Nader Shah (1736–1747). They later returned to the Garrus region under the rule of Karim Khan Zand (1751–1779), but were again resettled in Mazandaran, this time during the era of Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar (1789–1797; Fortescue 1922, 317; Yousefinia 1991, 315; Marivani 2009, 36).

These territorial shifts and forced migrations have had a profound impact on the Garrusi-speaking population in Iran. Today, Garrusi Kurdish is primarily spoken by a minority living in the city of Bijar and its surrounding villages, including the Mehraban-e Sofla rural district of Kabudarahang County in the northernmost part of Hamadan Province.¹

¹ In certain rural districts of Nowshahr in Mazandaran Province, there are still individuals from the Kvajavand tribe who speak Garrusi Kurdish.

Figure 1: Garrusi Kurdish Speaking Districts in Iran (Map created by the authors. © 2025)



Bijar and Mehraban-e Sofla are also home to speakers of other language varieties, including Shahsevan Turkic, Ardalani Kurdish, and both Christian and Jewish Neo-Aramaic. The Shahsevan Turkic tribe,² living in towns such as Yasukand, Tupaghaj, and Pirtaj in Bijar, accounts for one-third of the region's population. In Mehraban-e Sofla, which comprises 21 villages, seven are inhabited by Shahsevan Turks, and a Shahsevan Turkic minority also lives in some Kurdish-speaking villages in this rural district. In addition, the western and northwestern villages of Bijar are predominantly inhabited by Ardalani Kurdish speakers, and Neo-Aramaic is spoken by a minority in the region. This linguistic diversity has led to mutual influences between these language varieties, which can be seen in various linguistic features present within the Garrus region.

Scholars have not reached a consensus on the exact branch of Kurdish to which Garrusi belongs. Some scholars suggest that it lies between Sorani and Kalhori Kurdish, while others emphasise its similarities to Ardalani Kurdish or its proximity to Southern Kurdish (Kousha 2009, 75; Hama Khorshid 2011, 71; Sohrabi and Serish Abadi 2011, 8; Yavari 2012, 4; Mohammadirad et al. 2019, 29). In general, due to its specific linguistic features, Garrusi seems to straddle different branches within the Kurdish language. However, its classification is not the focus of this study.

² This consists of Azeri-speaking tribal groups who live mainly in north-western Iran. Shahsevan Turkic, along with Afshar Turkic and Sonqori Turkic, is considered to be one of the major dialects of Azeri spoken in Iran.

Despite the linguistic contact within the region, the overwhelming influence faced by Garrusi Kurdish is that of Persian, the official language of Iran, and of neighbouring Azeri Turkish. Native speakers are increasingly not passing it on to the younger generation. It is worth noting, however, that this variety of Kurdish remains relatively underrepresented in linguistic research—an under-resourced minority language variety in Iran.

2.0. Objectives and Data Collection

The aim of this study is to describe and explain the different forms and functions of the passive voice in Garrusi Kurdish. We conducted fieldwork and interviewed 30 native speakers of Garrusi Kurdish in Qohurd-e Olya, a village in the rural district of Mehraban-e Sofla. The interviews were conducted visually using a picture-story questionnaire and re-enactment of *The Pear Story*, a film made by Wallace Chafe in 1975.

In the first part of the interview, participants were presented with 20 event-driven pictures, each accompanied by three questions. First, they were asked to describe what they observed in each picture. Then they were asked two questions—one about an animate entity and the other about an inanimate entity—both of which were the subject of actions performed by an agent. These scenes also contained additional people and objects. Figure 2 serves as an example of the structure of the questionnaire we used.

Figure 2: The picture for Verb ‘to Cut’. Photo source: Montag and MacDonald (2013)

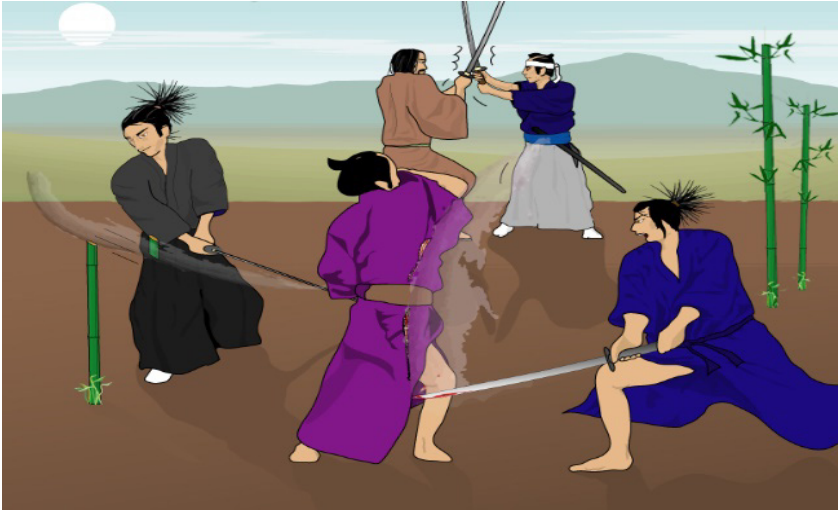


Figure 2 shows the event of cutting in the questionnaire. In this scene, an animated actor (a man) performs the action of cutting, acting on a patient (another man) or a theme (a stalk). To illustrate, Table 1 presents an example of participant AF’s answers to the questions asked about *biřın* ‘to cut’ as shown in Figure 2.⁴

Table 1: Sample of the Participants’ Responses to the Questions

Ref.	Garrusi Kurdish	English translation	Time
Q1	<i>çe d�n�d le naw eksege?</i>	What do you see in the picture?	02:34
AF_33	<i>walla pen nefer ademin</i>	By God, there are five people.	02:37
AF_34	<i>y�k� we řemřirewe daye le pay p�yage biř�ye</i>	Someone has hit the man’s leg with a sword (and so) has cut it.	02:38

⁴ AF stands as an abbreviation of the speaker’s full name for the sake of data protection.

AF_35	<i>yêkî we şemşîrewê daye le çûwege birîye</i>	Someone has hit the stick with a sword (and so) has cut it.	02:41
AF_36	<i>du neferêş ki şemşîreganî we yêk xwardîye desî yêkdîrî xwazin bûwûrîn</i>	Two of them whose swords have been crossed want to cut each other's hand.	02:45
Q2	<i>kî kurwasi benawîş kirdîyûw werî?</i>	Who is wearing purple?	02:51
AF_37	<i>ew pîya'ê ki pay birîlîyaye</i>	That man whose leg has been cut.	02:54
Q3	<i>çe sewze berg neyrî?</i>	What is green without leaves?	02:56
AF_38	<i>ewêş çûwîge ki birîlîyaye</i>	That one is also a stick which has been cut.	02:58

In the second phase of our interview, we played the *Pear Story* film for the participants and asked them to re-narrate what they observed in the film. The production of this re-telling is instantiated in Table 2 by the first five sentences expressed by participant AF.

Table 2: Instances of the Story Re-narration

Ref.	Garrusi Kurdish	English translation	Time
AF_208	<i>le naw yê küye'îge le deystî şere</i>	It is in a mountain (which) is out of the city.	15:01
AF_209	<i>yê keleşîre ki ewse bango dey</i>	There is a cock which is crowing as you see.	15:05
AF_210	<i>yê pîyage ewse rûwey bani darege</i>	There is a man (who) went on top of the tree as you see.	15:09
AF_211	<i>gulabî ewse dikenî</i>	He is picking pears as you see.	15:11
AF_212	<i>keygey naw bawuşî</i>	He puts it in his arms.	15:14

A total of 780 minutes (13 hours) of voice recordings were made during the administration of the questionnaire and the nar-

rative task. These recordings were then transcribed into the Kurdish Roman alphabet and translated into English. Finally, clauses containing passive constructions were carefully extracted from the recorded interviews. These extracted clauses were subjected to detailed analysis in order to investigate the phenomenon of passivisation in Garrusi Kurdish. This rigorous data collection and analysis process enabled us to describe the structural patterns of passivisation in Garrusi Kurdish in terms of tense, aspect, transitivity, and causativity.

3.0. Overview of Passive Constructions in Kurdish

In their study of passive constructions in Kurdish, Karimi-Doostan and Veisi Hassar (2008) explore the roots of passivisation in Kurdish varieties in ancient Iranian languages. They then study passive constructions in Sanandaji, Kalthori, Hawrami, Sorani, and Ilami and, with the exception of Sorani, identify the passive suffix in Kurdish as *-ya*⁵ in the past tense and *-ye* in the present tense (Karimi-Doostan and Veisi Hassar 2008, 141). In Sorani, they distinguish between the passive suffix *-ra* in the past tense and *-rê* in the present tense (Karimi-Doostan and Veisi Hassar 2008, 142). They argue that in all Kurdish varieties the passive suffix is a remnant of the morpheme *-ya* as found in ancient Iranian languages (Karimi-Doostan and Veisi Hassar 2008, 144—45). They suggest that the glide /y/ in the ancient Iranian suffix changed into /r/ in the Sorani Kurdish passive morpheme.

⁵ In this paper all phonetics, including those quoted from other sources, have been adapted to Roman Kurdish Phonetic Alphabet.

Veisi Hassar (2009) conducts a comparative study of passive constructions in Kurdish and Persian using the theoretical framework of Radical Construction Grammar. He identifies two structures used for passivisation in Kurdish: one that operates by means of the passive suffix *-ya* (Veisi Hassar 2009, 83, 136) and the other by means of the auxiliary *bu* (Veisi Hassar 2009, 101, 136). The suffix *-ya* does not function only as a passive-forming element, but can also, when used in combination with non-agentive verbs, signify an intransitive form of a verb (Veisi Hassar 2009, 84, 86, 136). More specifically, this suffix serves as an anticausative voice marker, as evidenced by Veisi Hassar's example: *mas-eke riş-îya* (Garrusi: *mas-ege riş-îya*) 'the copper melted' (Veisi Hassar 2009, 84, example 3). Although Veisi Hassar terms these constructions "intransitive structures," the examples he provides align with the anticausative structures analysed in the present study.

Farzin (2014) uses a typological approach to study passive constructions in Kalthori Kurdish. Kalthori exhibits two canonical passive patterns, one morphological and one periphrastic. The morphological passive is constructed by attaching the passive suffix *-ya* to the root (Farzin 2014, 154, 165) and the periphrastic passive is formed using the auxiliary 'to be' (Farzin 2014, 155, 165). In Kalthori, the agent cannot be overtly expressed in the passive construction (Farzin 2014, 156, 165). Additionally, intransitive verbs can be morphologically passivised using the suffix *-îya*, creating impersonal constructions (Farzin 2014, 157, 165). This phenomenon is illustrated by verbs such as 'to stay', 'to scream', and 'to think', which can host the *-îya* marker. For

example, the intransitive verb ‘to stay’ can be passivised, as shown in the contrast between *Ali le mal man* ‘Ali stayed at home’ and *Ali le mal man-iya* ‘Ali was stayed at home’⁶ (Farzin 2014, 157, example 13). Similarly, the verb ‘to think’ demonstrates this pattern: *Ali fire fikr kir-d* ‘Ali thought a lot’ becomes *fikr kir-iya* ‘(It) was thought’ (Farzin 2014, 157, example 14).

Bamshadi and Mirdehghan (2015) investigate the typology of diathesis and voice in Gorani Kurdish. Three voices are formed by morphemes that attach to the verb, namely, passive, causative, and conversive (Bamshadi and Mirdehghan 2015, 19). The passive construction in Gorani is basically agentless, indicating that the agent is never overtly expressed in passive diathesis. In Gorani, as in other Kurdish dialects, the morphological passive is constructed by attaching *-ye* in the present tense and *-ya* in the past tense to the verb root (Bamshadi and Mirdehghan 2015, 9–10).

Daneshpazhouh and Karimi Doostan (2016) compare passive constructions in Sorani and Kurmanji Kurdish, based on Role and Reference Grammar. Sorani uses a morphological passive, while Kurmanji uses a periphrastic passive. In Sorani, the suffix *-ra/-rê* attaches to the root as a passive marker. In Kurmanji,

⁶ The translation ‘Ali was stayed at home’ reflects the Persian construction directly and is useful for grammatical analysis or comparative syntax, especially if following Farzin’s framework. A non-literal (idiomatic) translation for clarity would be ‘Ali stayed at home’. This is the natural English equivalent and conveys the intended meaning without the grammatical ambiguity of ‘was stayed’.

hatin ‘to come’ precedes the infinitive form of a verb as an auxiliary and changes the voice to passive (Daneshpazhouh and Karimi Doostan 2016, 54–55). The Kurmanji passive construction based on ‘to come’ is an innovation that converges with neighbouring Neo-Aramaic dialects; see Noorlander (Chapter 3).

4.0. Passive Patterns in Garrusi Kurdish

4.1. Morphological Passive

Like other Kurdish varieties, Garrusi has a robust system of verbal inflection, using various affixes to form grammatical categories that convey different functions. In Garrusi, affixation gives rise to distinct groups of verbs with their own conjugation rules related to tense, aspect, and mood (TAM). The particular structure of these verb conjugations hinges on the choice of the past-tense-forming suffix employed by the verb, which may be either *-t*, *-d*, *-î*, *-ist*, *-a*, *-an*, or *-îya*.

Since the present perfect is derived from past-stem verbs by the addition of the present perfect suffix (V.PST-PRS.PRF), what applies to the past tense also applies to the present perfect. However, the past-tense markers have no morphological counterparts in present, i.e., non-perfect, tenses. In Garrusi, the present tense marker is zero and the present non-perfect (i.e., simple and progressive) stems of the verbs are encoded either without affixation—i.e., with bare roots—or with the present suppletive forms. Based on the past-tense markers, the verbal structure of Garrusi Kurdish can be classified into different groups of verbs that each display specific TAM features. These features are identified as catalysts for the formation of passive constructions in the context

of transitivity and causativity. In the following sections, we will examine the role of TAM features in the formation of passive markers.

4.1.1. Passive-forming Suffix in Garrusi Kurdish

In Garrusi Kurdish, the primary suffix used to construct the passive voice is generally formalised as *-iřilî*. It is important to note that this suffix shows variability in its phonological form and can take different forms in different phonological contexts. The articulation of *ř* does not necessarily have to be as a trill [r]; it can become an approximant [ɹ]. Moreover, it can be deleted if it coincides with the same consonant already present in the verbal root. Furthermore, the number and articulation of the vowels within this suffix can be modified by processes such as deletion and vowel harmony. In Garrusi, there is an alternative way for verbs to be passivised, through the suffix *-irî* and its allomorphs, in which the consonant *r* [r] predominantly signifies passivisation. The consonant appears as /ř/ in traditional Garrusi speech, but is pronounced as /r/ by younger speakers and those living outside the Garrus region due to contact with Persian.

Examples (1)–(7) illustrate the passivisation of representative infinitive⁷ verbs from different morphological classes (based on their past-forming markers: *-t*, *-d*, *-ist*, *-î*, *-a*, *-an*, *-îya*) showing the use of passivisation strategies in both simple past and simple present tenses:

⁷ In Garrusi, infinitives are formed from the past stem of the verb followed by *-in*.

(1) *şüş-t-in* 'to wash'**simple past**

- a. *ewe şür-îrîl-îya*
it wash-PASS-PST.INTR
- b. *ewe şür-r-îya*
it wash-PASS-PST.INTR
'It was washed.'

simple present

- ewe şür-rîlî*
it wash-PASS
- **ewe şür-rî*
it wash-PASS
'It is washed.'

(2) *nar-d-in* 'to send'**simple past**

- a. *ewe nar-rîl-îya*
it send-PASS-PST.INTR
- b. *ewe nar-r-îya*
it send-PASS-PST.INTR
'It was sent.'

simple present

- ewe nar-rîlî*
it send-PASS
- **ewe nar-rî*
it send-PASS
'It is sent.'

(3) *x-ist-in* 'to drop'**simple past**

- a. *ewe xîn-îrîl-îya*
it drop-PASS-PST.INTR
- b. *ewe xîn-îr-îya*
it drop-PASS-PST.INTR
'It was dropped.'

simple present

- ewe xîn-îrîlî*
it drop-PASS
- ewe xîn-îrî*
it drop-PASS
'It is dropped.'

(4.1) *siř-î-n* 'to wipe'**simple past**

- a. *ewe siř-rîl-îya*
it wipe-PASS-PST.INTR
- b. *ewe siř-r-îya*
it wipe-PASS-PST.INTR
'It was wiped.'

simple present

- ewe siř-rîlî*
it wipe-PASS
- **ewe siř-rî*
it wipe-PASS
'It is wiped.'

(4.2) *sen-î-n* ‘to buy’**simple past**

- a. *ewe sen-îrîl-îya*
it buy-PASS-PST.INTR
- b. *ewe sen-îr-îya*
it buy-PASS-PST.INTR
‘It was bought.’

simple present

- ewe sen-îrîlî*
it buy-PASS
- ewe sen-îrî*
it buy-PASS
‘It is bought.’

(5.1) *kut-a-gin* ‘to beat’**simple past**

- a. *ewe kut-uřil-îya*
it beat-PASS-PST.INTR
- b. *ewe kut-ur-îya*
it beat-PASS-PST.INTR
‘It was beaten.’

simple present

- ewe kut-uřilî*
it beat-PASS
- ewe kut-urî*
it beat-PASS
‘It is beaten.’

(5.2) *tîr da-gin* ‘to shoot’**simple past**

- a. *ewe tîr d-îrîl-îya*
it bullet hit-PASS-PST.INTR
- b. *ewe tîr d-îř-îya*
it bullet hit-PASS-PST.INTR
‘It was shot.’

simple present

- ewe tîr d-îrîlî*
it bullet hit-PASS
- **ewe tîr d-îřî*
it bullet hit-PASS
‘It is shot.’

(6.1) *weř-an-in* ‘to spray’**simple past**

- a. *ewe weř-îrîl-îya*
it spray-PASS-PST.INTR
- b. *ewe weř-îr-îya*
it spray-PASS-PST.INTR
‘It was sprayed.’

simple present

- ewe weř-îrîlî*
it spray-PASS
- **ewe weř-îrî*
it spray-PASS
‘It is sprayed.’

(6.2) *şîk-an-in* ‘to break (tr.)’

	simple past	simple present
a.	* <i>ewe şîk-îrîl-îya</i> it break-PASS-PST.INTR	* <i>ewe şîk-îrîlî</i> it break-PASS
b.	* <i>ewe şîk-îri-îya</i> it break-PASS-PST.INTR ‘It was broken.’	* <i>ewe şîk-îrî</i> it break-PASS ‘It is broken.’

(7) *pîç-îya-gin* ‘to wind’

	simple past	simple present
a.	<i>ewe pîç-îrîl-îya</i> it wind-PASS-PST.INTR	<i>ewe pîç-îrîlî</i> it wind-PASS
b.	<i>ewe pîç-îr-îya</i> it wind-PASS-PST.INTR ‘It was wound.’	<i>ewe pîç-îrî</i> it wind-PASS ‘It is wound.’

These examples demonstrate the relationship between tense, causativity, and the projection of the passive-forming marker in Garrusi Kurdish. Verbal forms with past stems formed by the markers *-t/-d*, such as *şûştin* and *nardin* in examples (1) and (2), as well as *westin* ‘to fasten’ and *xwardin* ‘to eat’, cannot use the second passive suffix (*-irî*) in the present tense. However, this restriction does not apply to verbal forms with past-forming suffixes *-ist/-îya*, such as *xistin* (example 3), *pîçîyagin* (example 7), *zanistin* ‘to know’, and *kîşîyagin* ‘to pull’.

In contrast, verbal forms with past-forming markers *-î/-a* exhibit dual behaviour regarding the use of the second passive suffix. Some verbs in this category, such as *senîn* in example (4.2) and *kutagin* in example (5.1), can accommodate the passive marker *-irî* in the present tense. Others, such as *siřîn* in example (4.1) and *tîr dagin* in example (5.2), cannot.

A similar dual behaviour with respect to passivisation is observed in verbal forms with the past-forming marker *-an*. For some verbs, such as *weşanin* in example (6.1), use of the second passive suffix is restricted to the past tense. Conversely, for other verbs, such as *şîkanin* in example (6.2), the appendation of both passive suffixes is blocked in both the past and present tenses.

As the examples show, use of the passive suffix *-irî* is not possible in the present tense for certain classes of verbs, as seen in examples (1), (2), (4.1), (5.2), and also (6.1). This suffix seems to have limited use in the present tense and is not admitted by certain verbs' stems.⁸ It is crucial to note that the behaviour of the passive suffix in Garrusi Kurdish differs between the past and present tenses. In the present tense, verbal roots simply take the passive suffix. In the past tense, however, the passive suffix must be followed by the past intransitive suffix. Moreover, within the class of verbs represented by (6.2), the verb does not readily take the passive suffix. In particular, these are verbs in which the past suffix also serves as a causative suffix. The complicated mechanism of passivisation in these verbs will be examined in more detail in the following section of this article.

⁸ Exploring the emergence of the second passive suffix *-irî* in Garrusi Kurdish falls outside the scope of this study.

4.1.2. Transitivity and Causativity in Morphological Passive

Among the past-tense suffixes in Garrusi, *-an* and *-îya* function as portmanteau morphemes that can also denote causativity and transitivity within a verbal event. When added to the verbal root, *-an* forms a verb that is both in the past tense and causative while *-îya* forms a verb that is simultaneously in the past tense, auto-causative or anticausative, and intransitive. However, the use of the functional equivalents of these two suffixes in the present tense is, in this variety of Kurdish, not parallel. As the following examples show, the suffix *-in*, when added to the verb root, forms a causative event in the present tense, whereas the absence of the suffix creates an autocausative or anticausative intransitive event in the same tense:

(8) Past Tense

- a. *mê kuř-e elis-an-im*
 I boy-DEF stand-PST.CAUS-1SG
 ‘I caused the boy to stand up.’
- b. *kuř-e elis-îya*
 boy-DEF stand-PST.INTR
 ‘The boy stood up.’

(9) Present Tense

- a. *mê kuř-e elis-in-im*
 I boy-DEF stand-PRS.CAUS-1SG
 ‘I cause the boy to stand up.’
- b. *kuř-e elis-î*
 boy-DEF stand-3SG
 ‘The boy stands up.’

(10) Past Tense

- a. *mê mal-ege řim-an-im*
 I house-DEF destroy-PST.CAUS-1SG
 ‘I destroyed the house.’
- b. *mal-ege řim-îya*
 house-DEF destroy-PST.INTR
 ‘The house was destroyed.’

(11) Present Tense

- a. *mê mal-ege řim-in-in*
 I house-DEF destroy-PRS.CAUS-1SG
 ‘I destroy the house.’
- b. *mal-ege řim-î*
 house-DEF destroy-3SG
 ‘The house is destroyed.’

In Garrusi Kurdish, transitive verbs, which are marked by different past-forming suffixes, can take the suffix *-îya* or *-îřilî/-îřî-îya*. This addition results in an intransitive form of these verbs, which can be either autocausative, involving a controlled activity where the subject is both agent and patient, such as ‘to stand up’ in (8b), or anticausative, involving an uncontrolled process that unfolds spontaneously without an agentive subject, such as ‘to break’ in (6.2) and ‘to be destroyed’ in (10b). Table 3 gives examples of infinitive forms of certain transitive verbs in Garrusi Kurdish, classified based on the past-forming suffix they take, together with their corresponding intransitive counterparts:

Table 3: Examples of transitive infinitives with their intransitive counterparts

	TR INF	INTR INF	PASS INTR INF
A	-t <i>wes-t-in</i> fasten-PST-INF 'to fasten'		<i>wes-irl-îya-gin/n</i> ⁹ fasten-PASS-PST.INTR-INF 'to be fastened'
B	-d <i>elvir-d-in</i> lift-PST-INF 'to lift'		<i>elvir-rl-îya-gin/n</i> lift-PASS-PST.INTR-INF 'to be lifted'
C	-ist <i>zan-ist-in</i> know-PST-INF 'to know'	<i>zan-îya-gin/n</i> know-PST.INTR-INF 'to know by itself'	<i>zan-irl-îya-gin/n</i> know-PASS-PST.INTR-INF 'to be known'
D	-î <i>nûs-î-n</i> write-PST-INF 'to write'	<i>nûs-îya-gin/n</i> write-PST.INTR-INF 'to write by itself'	<i>nûs-ürl-îya-gin/n</i> write-PASS-PST.INTR-INF 'to be written'
E1	-a <i>kut-a-gin</i> beat-PST-INF 'to beat'	<i>kut-îya-gin/n</i> beat-PST.INTR-INF 'to beat by itself'	<i>kut-ürl-îya-gin/n</i> beat-PASS-PST.INTR-INF 'to be beaten'
E2	-a <i>ney-a-gin</i> put-PST-INF 'to put'		<i>nî-rl-îya-gin/n</i> put-PASS-PST.INTR-INF 'to be put'
F1	-an <i>pîş-an-in</i> splash-PST.CAUS-INF 'to splash'	<i>pîş-îya-gin/n</i> pîş-PST.INTR-INF 'to splash by itself'	<i>pîş-ürl-îya-gin/n</i> pîş-PASS-PST.INTR-INF 'to be splashed'
F2	-an <i>řim-an-in</i> destroy-PST.CAUS-INF 'to destroy'	<i>řim-îya-gin/n</i> destroy-PST.INTR-INF 'to destroy by itself'	
G	-îya <i>kîş-îya-gin</i> ¹⁰ pull-PST.INTR-INF 'to pull'	<i>kîş-îya-gin/n</i> pull-PST.INTR-INF 'to pull by itself'	<i>kîş-ürl-îya-gin/n</i> pull-PASS-PST.INTR-INF 'to be pulled'

⁹ In Garrusi, *-îge* serves as a participle-forming suffix in present perfect forms. In infinitives, however, its role is primarily that of a mediating phoneme inserted between two vowels.

¹⁰ *Kîşîyagin* 'to pull' and *pîşîyagin* 'to wind' show identical transitive and intransitive forms. This morphological feature can be semantically

As shown in Table 3, all transitive infinitives, regardless of their past-forming suffix, have the ability to take the PST.INTR suffix, allowing them to represent their intransitive counterparts. However, verbs belonging to classes A, B, and E2 cannot take the PST.INTR suffix **unless** it is preceded by a passive suffix. Conversely, there are verbal classes such as F2 that are incompatible with the passive.

To better understand the relationship between passivisation and the presence of the PST.INTR suffix, we have provided below illustrative examples (12)–(23), showing the passive conjugation of the verb *kutagin* ‘to beat’ with different TAM markers¹² in the third person singular. In general, in terms of causative alternations, transitive, passive, and intransitive verbs in Garrusi Kurdish can be divided into three types, as shown in Table 4.

(12) Past simple: *v-iřilî-îya*

ew zařû-eg-e kut-uřul-îya

that child-DEF=DEM beat-PASS-PST.INTR

‘That child was beaten.’

(13) Past progressive: *di-v-iřilî-îya*

ew zařû-eg-e du-kut-uřul-îya

that child-DEF=DEM IPFV-beat-PASS-PST.INTR

‘That child was being beaten.’

attributed to the direction of the event with respect to the agent. Further research is needed to determine whether these verbs are the only transitive verbs that take the *-îya* past-forming suffix.

¹² We will illustrate the role of modality in the passive construction with examples of the indicative and subjunctive moods only, as, in Garrusi, the interrogative mood is expressed suprasegmentally and other moods use the same verbal structure as the subjunctive.

- (14) Past perfect: *v-iřilî-îya-îvî*
ew zařû-eg-e kut-uřul-îya-vî
 that child-DEF=DEM beat-PASS-PST.INTR-PST.PRF
 ‘That child had been beaten.’
- (15) Past perfect progressive: *di-v-iřilî-îya-îvî*
ew zařû-eg-e du-kut-uřul-îya-vî
 that child-DEF=DEM IPFV-beat-PASS-PST.INTR-PST.PRF
 ‘That child had been being beaten.’
- (16) Pluperfect: *v-iřilî-îya-t*
ew zařû-eg-e kut-uřul-îya-t
 that child-DEF=DEM beat-PASS-PST.INTR-PPRF
 ‘That child had been beaten.’
- (17) Pluperfect progressive: *di-v-iřilî-îya-t*
ew zařû-eg-e du-kut-uřul-îya-t
 that child-DEF=DEM IPFV-beat-PASS-PST.INTR-PPRF
 ‘That child had been being beaten.’
- (18) Past subjunctive: *bi-v-iřilî-îya-t*
ew zařû-eg-e tuwasa bu-kut-uřul-îya-t
 that child-DEF=DEM should.PST SBJV-beat-PASS-PST.INTR-PPRF
 ‘That child should have been beaten.’
- (19) Present simple: *v-iřilî*
ew zařû-eg-e kut-uřulî
 that child-DEF=DEM beat-PASS
 ‘That child is beaten.’
- (20) Present progressive: *di-v-iřilî*
ew zařû-eg-e du-kut-uřulî
 that child-DEF=DEM IPFV-beat-PASS
 ‘That child is being beaten.’
- (21) Present perfect: *v-iřilî-îya-îye/îge*
ew zařû-eg-e kut-uřul-îya-ye/ge
 that child-DEF=DEM beat-PASS-PST.INTR-PRS.PRF
 ‘That child has been beaten.’

(22) Present perfect progressive: *di-V-iřilî-îya-îye/îge*

ew zařû-eg=e du-kut-uřul-îya-ye/ge

that child-DEF=DEM IPFV-beat-PASS-PST.INTR-PRS.PRF

‘That child has been being beaten.’

(23) Present subjunctive: *bi-V-iřilî*

ew zařû-eg=e tay bu-kut-uřulî

that child-DEF=DEM should.PRS SBJV-beat-PASS

‘That child should be beaten.’

As examples (12)–(23) show, the past intransitive suffix can be appended to the verbal root following the passive suffix in all past tense forms. In the present tense, however, this suffix is only used when the aspect of the verb is perfect, as evident in examples (21) and (22). Consequently, the use of *-îya* in passive constructions in Garrusi Kurdish is intrinsically linked to the tense and aspect of the verbal form: if the verb is in the past tense or has perfect aspect, the passive suffix is accompanied by the PST.INTR suffix *-îya*, whereas in the non-past and non-perfect tenses the suffix *-îya* is absent.

In fact, this suffix is incompatible with the present stem of the verbal forms—that is, the bare root or the present suppletive form—when the aspect is not perfect. Since the present perfect in Garrusi consists of a past stem plus the present perfect marker, *-îya* precedes the passive suffix when the verb is passivised. However, in non-past and non-perfect tenses, i.e., simple and progressive present, the suffix does not occur. This grammatical restriction can be studied from an aspectual point of view.

However, it is worth noting that *-îya* serves to express both voice and TAM in Garrusi Kurdish. As illustrated in Table 3, transitive verbal forms can become their intransitive counterparts when their stem hosts the PST.INTR suffix. This suffix was originally anticausative, being restricted to verbal events that do not imply an agent, but its use has been extended to the formation of passives from transitive verbs that imply an agent, i.e., the suffix *-îya* in forms like *nam-ege nûs-îya* ‘the letter wrote itself’ was extended to *nam-ege nûs-ûrîl-îya* ‘the letter was written’.

Furthermore, there is a distinct class of verbs such as *şîk-* ‘break’ (class F2 in Table 3 and B3 in Table 4) that never take a passive suffix, since they have no agent component or are auto-causative.

Based on Haspelmath’s (1993) typological perspectives on “inchoative/causative verb pairs,” causative and anticausative/autocausative forms in Garrusi Kurdish, since neither of them is derived from the other, are considered to be “non-directed alternations” (Haspelmath 1993, 91). These non-directed alternations, in as much as they “are derived from the same stem” and are marked by different suffixes (*-an/-in* for causatives and *-îya/-∅* for anti-/autocausatives), are classified as “equipollent alternations” (Haspelmath 1993, 91).

Table 4: Types of Verbs in Garrusi Kurdish with Respect to Causativity

	Noncausative	Causative	Anticausative/Passive
A1	<i>da-gin</i> give/hit.PST-INF 'to give/hit'		
A2	<i>xef-t-in</i> sleep-PST-INF 'to sleep'	<i>xef-an-in</i> sleep-PST.CAUS-INF 'to cause to sleep'	
A3	<i>nûs-î-n</i> write-PST-INF 'to write'		a. <i>nûs-îya-gin</i> write-PST.INTR-INF b. <i>nûs-îr-îya-gin</i> write-PASS-PST.INTR-INF 'to be written'
A4	<i>xwar-d-in</i> eat-PST-INF 'to eat'	<i>xur-an-in</i> eat-PST.CAUS-INF 'to cause to eat'	<i>xur-r-îya-gin</i> eat-PASS-PST.INTR-INF 'to be eaten'
B1		<i>elis-an-in</i> stand-PST.CAUS-INF 'to cause to stand'	<i>elis-îya-gin</i> stand-PST.INTR-INF 'to stand by itself'
B2		<i>pîş-an-in</i> splash-PST.CAUS-INF 'to cause to splash'	a. <i>pîş-îya-gin</i> splash-PST.INTR-INF b. <i>pîş-îr-îyagin</i> splash-PASS-PST.INTR-INF a. 'to splash by itself' b. 'to be splashed'
B3		<i>şik-an-in</i> break-PST.CAUS-INF 'to cause to break'	<i>şik-îya-gin</i> break-PST.INTR-INF a. 'to break by itself' b. 'to be broken'
C			<i>mîn-îya-gin</i> stay-PST.INTR-INF 'to stay by itself'

As shown in Table 4, verbs in Garrusi Kurdish can be morphologically classified into noncausative, causative, and anticausative forms. According to Haspelmath's (1993) typology of inchoative/causative verb alternations, languages employ different morphological strategies to express these alternations. In Garrusi Kurdish, causative forms are derived through morphological marking (such as causative suffixes), while anticausative forms are created by adding passive suffixes like *-îya* or *-îrîlî/-îrî-îya* to transitive verbs, representing a morphologically marked anticausative pattern.

Haspelmath (1993) argues that noncausative/causative pairs, such as *yaz-mak* 'write' / *yaz-dir-mak* 'make write' in Turkish, "are never expressed as anti-causatives or as non-derived alternations." He does not consider them to be inchoative/causative pairs since they do not represent "cross-linguistic variation" (Haspelmath 1993, 92).

Following Haspelmath's framework, noncausative verbs in Garrusi can be further divided into four types based on their alternation possibilities:

1. **Verbs that can be neither causative nor anticausative:**
These are verbs that never take a causative or anticausative suffix, such as *dagin* 'to hit/give', shown in A1.
2. **Verbs that can be causative but not anticausative:**
This group includes verbs that have the potential to function as causative verbs but do not naturally have anticausative forms, like *xeftin* 'to sleep' in A2.

3. Verbs that can be anticausative but not causative:

These verbs can take on an anticausative form but do not have causative attributes, e.g., *nûsîn* ‘to write’ in A3.

4. Verbs that can be both causative and anticausative:

These verbs have the flexibility to take on both causative and anticausative forms, with the latter requiring the addition of a passive suffix, e.g., *xwardîn* ‘to eat’ in A4.

Type B verbs that do not have a noncausative form fall into the category of ambitransitive verbs, i.e., verbs that can function as either transitive or intransitive. The transitivity of these verbs is determined within the context of their being causative. When they function as transitive verbs, they should be conjugated with a causative suffix (*-an* in the past tense and *-in* in the present tense). Conversely, when these verbs function as intransitive verbs, they appear without a suffix in the present tense and with an anticausative/autocausative suffix (*-îya*) in the past tense.

This group of verbal forms can be further subdivided into types B1, B2, and B3. Type B1 includes verbs that have an agentive subject as one of their arguments and cannot be morphologically passivised. Types B2 and B3 represent the verbal forms previously classified as F1 and F2 respectively in Table 3. These ambitransitive verbs, when they appear in their anticausative form, provide a basis for changing the voice of the verbal event from active to passive.

Verb forms of type B2 (F1) offer two alternatives for the expression of the passive voice: the use of the anticausative suffix either alone or in combination with the passive suffix. On the other hand, the only possible way to passivise verbs belonging to

type B3 (F2) is to use the anticausative suffix alone. Examples of such verbs are *şikānin–şikîyagin* ‘to break’, *pilkanin–pilkîyagin* ‘to dirty’, *sûzanin–sûzîyagin* ‘to burn’, *rişānin–rişîyagin* ‘to pour/spill’, *řimanin–řimîyagin* ‘to destroy’, *likānin–likîyagin* ‘to attach’, and *tirsānin–tirsîyagin* ‘to frighten’.

Examples (24)–(35) show the conjugation of *rişānin–rişîyagin* ‘to pour/spill’ in the third person, in both the causative (a) and anticausative/passive (b) forms:

(24) Past simple

- a. *kuř-e gulabî-egan riş-an*
 boy-DEF pear-DEF.PL spill-PST.CAUS
 ‘The boy spilled the pears.’
- b. *gulabî-egan riş-îya-n*
 pear-DEF.PL spill-PST.INTR-3PL
 i) ‘The pears spilled.’
 ii) ‘The pears were spilled.’

(25) Past progressive

- a. *kuř-e gulabî-egan di-riş-an*
 boy-DEF pear-DEF.PL IPFV-spill-PST.CAUS
 ‘The boy was spilling the pears.’
- b. *gulabî-egan di-riş-îya-n*
 pear-DEF.PL IPFV-spill-PST.INTR-3PL
 i) ‘The pears were spilling.’
 ii) ‘The pears were being spilled.’

(26) Past perfect

- a. *kuř-e gulabî-egan riş-an-îvî*
 boy-DEF pear-DEF.PL spill-PST.CAUS-PST.PRF
 ‘The boy had spilled the pears.’

- b. *gulabî-egan řış-îya-vî-n*
 pear-DEF.PL spill-PST.INTR-PST.PRF-3PL
 i) ‘The pears had spilled.’
 ii) ‘The pears had been spilled.’

(27) Past perfect progressive

- a. *kuř-e gulabî-egan di-řış-an-îvî*
 boy-DEF pear-DEF.PL IPFV-spill-PST.CAUS-PST.PRF
 ‘The boy had been spilling the pears.’
- b. *gulabî-egan di-řış-îya-vî-n*
 pear-DEF.PL IPFV-spill-PST.INTR-PST.PRF-3PL
 i) ‘The pears had been spilling.’
 ii) ‘The pears had been being spilled.’

(28) Pluperfect

- a. **kuř-e gulabî-egan řış-an-t*
 boy-DEF pear-DEF.PL spill-PST.CAUS-PPRF
 ‘The boy had spilled the pears.’
- b. *gulabî-egan řış-îya-t-in*
 pear-DEF.PL spill-PST.INTR-PPRF-3PL
 i) ‘The pears had spilled.’
 ii) ‘The pears had been spilled.’

(29) Pluperfect progressive

- a. **kuř-e gulabî-egan di-řış-an-t*
 boy-DEF pear-DEF.PL IPFV-spill-PST.CAUS-PPRF
 ‘The boy had been spilling the pears.’
- b. *gulabî-egan di-řış-îya-t-in*
 pear-DEF.PL IPFV-spill-PST.INTR-PPRF-3PL
 i) ‘The pears had been spilling.’
 ii) ‘The pears had been being spilled.’

(30) Past subjunctive

- a. *kuř-e tuwasa gulabî-egan bi-řîş-an*
 boy-DEF should.PST pear-DEF.PL SBJV-spill-PST.CAUS
 ‘The boy should have spilled the pears.’
- b. *tuwasa gulabî-egan bi-řîş-îya-t-in*
 should.PST pear-DEF.PL SBJV-spill-PST.INTR-PPRF-3PL
 i) ‘The pears should have spilled.’
 ii) ‘The pears should have been spilled.’

(31) Present simple

- a. *kuř-e gulabî-egan řîş-in-î*
 boy-DEF pear-DEF.PL spill-PRS.CAUS-3SG
 ‘The boy spills the pears.’
- b. *gulabî-egan řîş-in*
 pear-DEF.PL spill-3PL
 i) ‘The pears spill.’
 ii) ‘The pears are spilled.’

(32) Present progressive

- a. *kuř-e gulabî-egan di-řîş-in-î*
 boy-DEF pear-DEF.PL IPFV-spill-PRS.CAUS-3SG
 ‘The boy is spilling the pears.’
- b. *gulabî-egan di-řîş-in*
 pear-DEF.PL IPFV-spill-3PL
 i) ‘The pears are spilling.’
 ii) ‘The pears are being spilled.’

(33) Present perfect

- a. *kuř-e gulabî-egan řîş-an-îye/îge*
 boy-DEF pear-DEF.PL spill-PST.CAUS-PRS.PRF
 ‘The boy has spilled the pears.’

- b. *gulabî-egan řiş-îya-y/g-in*
 pear-DEF.PL spill-PST.INTR-PRS.PRF-3PL
 i) ‘The pears have spilled.’
 ii) ‘The pears have been spilled.’
- (34) Present perfect progressive
- a. *kuř-e gulabî-egan di-řiş-an-îye/îge*
 boy-DEF pear-DEF.PL IPFV-spill-PST.CAUS-PRS.PRF
 ‘The boy has been spilling the pears.’
- b. *gulabî-egan di-řiş-îya-y/g-in*
 pear-DEF.PL IPFV-spill-PST.INTR-PRS.PRF-3PL
 i) ‘The pears have been spilling.’
 ii) ‘The pears have been being spilled.’
- (35) Present subjunctive
- a. *kuř-e tay gulabî-egan bi-řiş-in-î*
 boy-DEF should.PRS pear-DEF.PL SBJV-spill-PRS.CAUS-3SG
 ‘The boy should spill the pears.’
- b. *tay gulabî-egan bi-řiş-in*
 should.PRS pear-DEF.PL SBJV-spill-3PL
 i) ‘The pears should spill.’
 ii) ‘The pears should be spilled.’

Within Garrusi Kurdish, there are several ways to achieve passivisation, each with different characteristics:

Pattern 1: This category includes verbal forms in which the passive suffix *-îřilî* or similar is appended.

Pattern 2: Verbal forms falling in this category are characterised by the appendation of the passive suffix *-irî* or similar.

Pattern 3: In this group of verbal forms, no passive suffix is appended. Instead, anticausativity serves as a means of expressing the passive voice. These forms are marked by the intransitive/anticausative suffix *-îya* in the past and perfect tenses and are null marked in the present non-perfect tenses.

4.2. Periphrastic Passive

In addition to these morphological methods, Garrusi Kurdish offers another approach to passivisation, referred to as Pattern 4. This type of passivisation involves complex predicates formed from a nominal or adjectival preverb followed by a form of the causative auxiliary *kirdin* ‘to make’ in the passive voice. Within this structure, the verbal component of the complex predicate can be replaced by a form of the inchoative auxiliary *bîgin* ‘to become’ as an alternative to the morphological passivisation of *kirdin* (i.e., *kir-îrîlî*). As a result, the voice of the event shifts to the passive. In the following sections we will discuss the nature of *bîgin* and its function as a passive marker.

4.2.1. Passive-forming Auxiliary in Garrusi Kurdish

In Garrusi Kurdish, *bîgin* encompasses meanings related to both ‘to be’ and ‘to become’ and can function both as a copula and as an auxiliary verb. However, its form, semantics, and function are sensitive to the tense and the aspect of the context in which it is used. Table 5 shows the conjugation of this verb in the present and past tenses:

Table 5: The Conjugation of ‘to be/become’ in Garrusi Kurdish

‘be/become’ in PST	‘be’ in PRS	‘become’ in PRS
<i>b-î-m</i> be/become-PST-1SG ‘I was/became’	<i>hes-in</i> be-1SG ‘I am’	<i>dû-m</i> become.IPFV-1SG ‘I become/am becoming’
<i>b-î-d</i> be/become-PST-2SG ‘You were/became’	<i>hes-îd</i> be-2SG ‘You are’	<i>dû-wîd</i> become.IPFV-2SG ‘You become/are becoming’
<i>b-î</i> be/become-PST (S)he/it was/became’	<i>hes</i> be (S)he/it is’	<i>dû</i> become.IPFV (S)he/it becomes/is becoming’
<i>b-î-m</i> be/become-PST-1PL ‘We were/became’	<i>hes-îm</i> be-1PL ‘We are’	<i>dû-wîm</i> become.IPFV-1PL ‘We become/are becoming’
<i>b-î-n</i> be/become-PST-2PL ‘You were/became’	<i>hes-in</i> be-2PL ‘You are’	<i>dû-n</i> become.IPFV-2PL ‘You become/are becoming’
<i>b-î-n</i> be/become-PST-3PL ‘They were/became’	<i>hes-in</i> be-3PL ‘They are’	<i>dû-n</i> become.IPFV-3PL ‘They become/are becoming’

The verb *bîgin*, both in the sense of ‘to be’ and in the sense of ‘to become’, acts as a counterpart to *kirdin* ‘to make’ in the formation of dynamic and static verbs in Garrusi. When used as an inchoative auxiliary, it can be defined as a kind of periphrastic passive form of *kirdin*. Keenan and Dryer (2007, 336) describe forms consisting of “an auxiliary verb plus a strict morphological function of a transitive verb” as “basic periphrastic passive.” They note that in most languages this transitive verb is in the form of a “past participle” whose behaviour is to some extent similar to that of an adjective (Keenan and Dryer 2007, 337). However, the non-verbal part of the *kirdin-bîgin* compound verb

construction is not a past participle form of a transitive verb. Instead, it is an adjective or a noun phrase. Therefore, in this study we discuss this pattern of passivisation as a periphrastic passive which is non-basic.

Examples (36)–(47) represent the function of *bîgin* vs *kirdin* in the passivisation of a single verb, *řeng kirdin* ‘to paint’, in various possible tenses and aspects:

(36) Past simple

- a. *mal-ege řeng kir-řil-îya*
house-DEF paint make-PASS-PST.INTR
‘The house was painted.’
- b. *mal-ege řeng bî*
house-DEF paint become.PST
‘The house became painted.’

(37) Past progressive

- a. **mal-ege řeng di-kir-řil-îya*
house-DEF paint IPFV-make-PASS-PST.INTR
‘The house was being painted.’
- b. **mal-ege řeng dî-bî*
house-DEF paint IPFV-become.PST
‘The house was becoming painted.’

(38) Past perfect

- a. *mal-ege řeng kir-řil-îya-vî*
house-DEF paint make-PASS-PST.INTR-PST.PRF
‘The house had been painted.’
- b. *mal-ege řeng bî-vî*
house-DEF paint become.PST-PST.PRF
‘The house had become painted.’
‘The house should have become painted.’

(39) Past perfect progressive

- a. **mal-ege řeng di-kir-řil-ťya-vť*
 house-DEF paint IPFV-make-PASS-PST.INTR-PST.PRF
 ‘The house had been being painted.’
- b. *mal-ege řeng đť-v-ťya*
 house-DEF paint become.IPFV.PST-PST.PRF.PST.INTR
 ‘The house had been becoming painted.’

(40) Pluperfect

- a. *mal-ege řeng kir-řil-ťya-t*
 house-DEF paint make-PASS-PST.INTR-PPRF
 ‘The house had been painted.’
- b. *mal-ege řeng bť-v-ťya-t*
 house-DEF paint become.PST.PST.PRF-PST.INTR-PPRF
 ‘The house had become painted.’

(41) Pluperfect progressive

- a. **mal-ege řeng di-kir-řil-ťya-t*
 house-DEF paint IPFV-make-PASS-PST.INTR-PPRF
 ‘The house had been being painted.’
- b. *mal-ege řeng đť-v-ťya-t*
 house-DEF paint become.IPFV.PST-PST.PRF-PST.INTR-PPRF
 ‘The house had been becoming painted.’

(42) Past subjunctive

- a. *mal-ege tuwasa řeng bi-kir-řil-ťya-t*
 house-DEF should.PST paint SBJV-make-PASS-PST.INTR-PPRF
 ‘The house should have been painted.’
- b. *mal-ege tuwasa řeng bť-ya-t*
 house-DEF should.PST paint become.PST-PST.INTR-PPRF
 ‘The house should have become painted.’

(43) Present simple

- a. *mal-ege řeng kir-řilť*
 house-DEF paint make-PASS
 ‘The house is painted.’

- b. **mal-ege řeng ø*
 house-DEF paint become
 ‘The house becomes painted.’

(44) Present progressive

- a. **mal-ege řeng di-kir-řilî*
 house-DEF paint IPFV-make-PASS
 ‘The house is being painted.’
- b. *mal-ege řeng dû*
 house-DEF paint become.IPFV.PRS
 ‘The house is becoming painted.’

(45) Present perfect

- a. *mal-ege řeng kir-řilî-îya-ye/ge*
 house-DEF paint make-PASS-PST.INTR-PRS.PRF
 ‘The house has been painted.’
- b. *mal-ege řeng bî-ye/îge*
 house-DEF paint become.PST-PRS.PRF
 ‘The house has been/become painted.’

(46) Present perfect progressive

- a. **mal-ege řeng di-kir-řilî-îya-ye/ge*
 house-DEF paint IPFV-make-PASS-PST.INTR-PRS.PRF
 ‘The house has been being painted.’
- b. **mal-ege řeng dî-bî-ye/îge*
 house-DEF paint IPFV-become.PST-PRS.PRF
 ‘The house has been becoming painted.’

(47) Present subjunctive

- a. *mal-ege tay řeng bi-kir-řilî*
 house-DEF should.PRS paint SBJV-make-PASS
 ‘The house should be painted.’
- b. *mal-ege tay řeng bû*
 house-DEF should.PRS paint become.SBJV.PRS
 ‘The house should become painted.’

These examples represent a pair of morphological-periphrastic constructions formed with the same verb. They show how the choice of verb form and the addition of a passive suffix can influence the voice and the meaning of the sentence in different tenses and aspects.

In the active voice, *kirdin* is used to indicate that the subject (he) performed the action of painting his house. In contrast, when *bîgin* is used alongside *řeng kirdin*, it conveys a passive voice, indicating that the action of painting the subject's house was performed. This distinction illustrates the role of *bîgin* as a passive-forming auxiliary, allowing the expression of passive voice in Garrusi Kurdish in the context of complex predicates where the verbal component is the causative *kirdin*.

A comparison between examples (a) and (b) illustrates why there should be two possibilities for the passivisation of a single verbal form. In Garrusi, the passive form of *kirdin* never occurs as an imperfective, either in the past or in the present tense (37a, 39a, 41a, 44a, and 46a). This aspectual limitation is periphrastically compensated for by the passive auxiliary *bîgin*. However, *bîgin* cannot be used to make passive forms when the action in progression is in the past non-perfect (37b) or the present perfect (46b).

As shown in examples (36)–(47), the formal representation of the verbal root *bîgin* is influenced by various factors, including semantics, tense, and aspect. This choice is crucial for conveying the intended meaning. When the tense is past or the aspect perfect, *bîgin* is rendered as *bî*, a single form denoting both 'to be' and 'to become'. In contrast, in the present non-perfect tense, it

consistently takes the progressive form *dû*, meaning ‘to become’. *bîgin*, like some other verbs in Garrusi (e.g., ‘to go’, ‘to see’, and ‘to let’) has no simple form in the present tense (43b). It is always rendered with either progressive or perfect aspect when the event takes place in the present tense. In addition, in the past perfect and pluperfect progressive forms of this verb (39b and 41b), the sound *b* phonemically merges with the sound of the imperfective prefix, manifesting as *d*.

4.2.2. Transitivity and Causativity in Periphrastic Passive

Similarly to verbal forms that can be made passive by the PST.INTR suffix alone, the passive form of complex predicates with the [N/ADJ + *kirdin*] structure can also be interpreted as an anticausative or autocasative structure. The formal syncretism between anticausatives and passives in certain verbal events requires the establishment of a semantic condition to distinguish an event as a Pattern 3 or Pattern 4 form. Specifically, an event is categorised as a Pattern 3 or Pattern 4 form when it does not include an agentive subject among its arguments.

For example, events such as *kuře wûs-îya* ‘the boy stopped’ or *kuře sûwar bî* ‘the boy mounted’, where ‘the boy’ assumes the role of an agent, cannot be considered passive. In fact, these are autocasative events. In contrast, in events such as *kuře sûz-îya* ‘the boy was burnt’ or *kuře zexmo bî* ‘the boy was wounded’, ‘the boy’ serves as a patient, and the agent is excluded from the events of ‘burning’ and ‘wounding’. These semantic conditions help distinguish between passive (Pattern 3 or Pattern 4) and non-passive structures in Garrusi Kurdish.

A systematic analysis of passive constructions in Garrusi Kurdish reveals a consistent pattern of agent suppression in both morphological and periphrastic passive formations. This variety exhibits a structural constraint whereby the external argument (agent) is categorically excluded from passive voice constructions. This results in syntactic configurations where the internal argument (patient) is the only core argument in the clause. This phenomenon is a notable typological feature that merits closer examination within the wider field of Kurdish dialectology and cross-linguistic variation in the passive voice.

The data demonstrate that passivisation in Garrusi Kurdish invariably results in agentless constructions, regardless of the morphosyntactic strategy employed. This systematic absence of agentive phrases distinguishes Garrusi Kurdish from languages that allow for the optional or obligatory expression of the agent in passive constructions. The following examples illustrate this pattern across different morphological passivisation processes:

- (48) a. *zařû-ege çûw-ege pe-kird*
 child-DEF stick-DEF throwing-make.PST
 ‘The child threw the stick.’
- b. *çûw-ege pe-kir-řil-îya*
 stick-DEF throwing-make-PASS-PST.INTR
 ‘The stick was thrown.’
- (49) a. *zařû-ege çûw-ege řik-an*
 child-DEF stick-DEF break-PST.CAUS
 ‘The child broke the stick.’
- b. *çûw-ege řik-îya*
 stick-DEF break-PST.INTR
 ‘The stick was broken.’

- (50) a. *zařû-ege çûw-ege xem kird*
 child-DEF stick-DEF bent make.PST
 ‘The child bent the stick.’
- b. *çûw-ege xem bî*
 stick-DEF bent become.PST
 ‘The stick was bent.’

The obligatory nature of agent suppression in Garrusi Kurdish passive constructions suggests underlying grammatical constraints that prevent the syntactic realisation of external arguments in passive-voice configurations. This characteristic positions Garrusi Kurdish within a specific typological category of languages that exhibit structural restrictions on agent expression in passive diathesis, contributing to our understanding of parametric variation in voice systems across Kurdish dialects.

5.0. Conclusion

In our comprehensive descriptive analysis of passive constructions in Garrusi Kurdish, we have identified four different patterns of passivisation, including three morphological patterns and one periphrastic pattern. We found that the formation of the passive patterns in Garrusi Kurdish is highly dependent on factors such as tense, aspect, transitivity, and the causativity of the verbal event. These factors play a crucial role in determining the specific form of passive constructions.

Among the morphological passive patterns, we identified two projections of the passive suffix. The first possibility (*-iřîlî*) was used with higher productivity across various different contexts. The use of the second possibility (*-irî*), on the other hand, was limited in the present tense, and there were certain verbs

with specific past-forming suffixes that could not accommodate it as a passive marker.

In both patterns, the passivised verb did not have the same formation across the past and present tenses. The intransitive/anticausative marker *-îya* followed the passive marker in the past and perfect tenses, whereas in the present non-perfect tenses the verbal stem only accommodated the passive suffix.

We also found certain verbal forms that did not accommodate the passive marker and whose anticausative form inherently expressed the passive concept by itself. In these forms, the intransitive/anticausative marker *-îya* carried passive meaning in the past and perfect tenses, while in the present non-perfect tenses the passive voice was encoded by its zero projection.

In addition to morphological passives, we found that Garusi Kurdish also used a non-basic periphrastic passive construction. This construction took the form of complex predicates that consisted of the combination of an adjectival or a nominal phrase and a form of the causative auxiliary *kirdin* 'to make'. In this pattern, the inchoative *bîgin* 'to become' served as a passive auxiliary and replaced the verbal element of the complex predicate. The resulting form had the same function as its counterpart *kir-îrîlî*. However, the formation of both passives was bound to the tense and the aspect of the verb.

Like Pattern 3, the periphrastic pattern also functioned as an anticausative form, excluding an agentive subject. We found that these two patterns could be used as an alternative to the passive-suffix patterns in some cases. However, for certain verbal

forms and in certain grammatical contexts, they were the only choice for expressing the passive voice.

In conclusion, our study provides valuable insights into the structure of passive constructions in Garrusi Kurdish. We have identified different patterns, discussed the role of tense and aspect, and examined transitivity and causativity in passivisation. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the linguistic features of Garrusi Kurdish and shed light on the rich diversity of passive constructions in different languages

Abbreviations

1	first person	PASS	passive
2	second person	PL	plural
3	third person	POSS	possessive
ADJ	adjective	PRF	perfective
CAUS	causative	PPRF	pluperfect
DEF	definite	PRS	present
DEM	demonstrative	PST	past
EZ	ezafe	REF	reference
INF	infinitive	SG	singular
INTR	intransitive	SBJV	subjunctive
IPFV	imperfective	TAM	tense, aspect, mood
N	noun	TR	transitive
OBL	oblique	V	verb

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6. PASSIVE IN ARMENIAN

Katherine Hodgson

1.0. Introduction

In this paper, we investigate the history of passive constructions in Armenian. In Classical Armenian (CA), there was no consistent means of marking passive voice throughout the verb system. The main way that passive meaning was expressed was by correspondences between transitive *-e*-stem verbs and intransitive *-i*-stem verbs with parallel meanings. However, these correspondences did not exist for all verbs, and not all verb forms marked the difference between *-e*-stems and *-i*-stems, so there were many forms which were ambiguous between active and passive meaning. Several minor strategies were used to resolve these ambiguities, such as periphrastic expressions that clarify the roles of the participants, and complex verbs with different light verbs for active and passive. In Middle Armenian, the agglutinative morpheme *-v-* emerged, perhaps through adding the *-i*-endings to *-u*-stem verbs, providing a consistent and transparent means of expressing passive as well as reflexive, reciprocal, and anticausative meaning throughout the verb system. The passive in *-v-* is found in all modern forms of Armenian, but some dialects also preserve traces of the strategies used for expressing passive meaning in Classical Armenian, including stem alternations, ‘passive-

type' aorist endings, and the use of resultative participles without overt passive morphology.

2.0. Historical Background

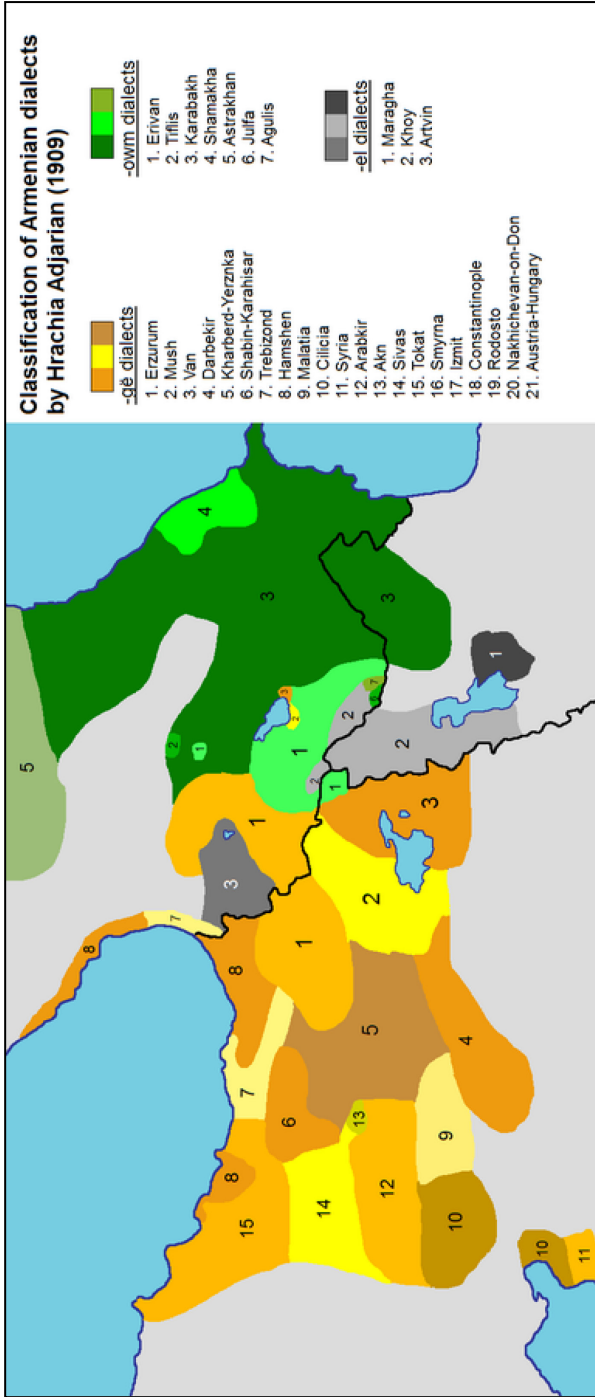
Armenian constitutes an independent branch of the Indo-European language family, with written records going back to the fifth century AD. It was originally spoken in an area corresponding to eastern Anatolia, the southern Caucasus, and north-western Iran, an area of considerable linguistic diversity, where a large number of genetically unrelated languages have been in long-lasting situations of contact. Armenian has been in intense contact with Iranian languages throughout its recorded history, and has also been in contact with Semitic languages (Aramaic/Syriac, later also Arabic), Caucasian languages, and Greek. In ancient times, it was almost certainly in contact with now-extinct languages of Anatolia, notably Urartian. In more recent times, it has been in intense contact with Turkic languages, especially Turkish and Azeri, and, in the territory of the former Soviet Union, with Russian.

The Armenian language has an unbroken literary tradition going back to the early fifth century AD. This is divided into three periods: Classical Armenian (5th–11th centuries), Middle Armenian (12th–16th centuries), and Modern Armenian (17th–21st centuries), which consists of two standard languages, Eastern and Western Armenian. Classical Armenian (CA) was presumably based on the spoken language of the early fifth century AD, but from the late fifth to late seventh centuries, translators and grammarians took artificial steps to cultivate the language, thus a situation of diglossia must have obtained from an early stage.

Middle Armenian (12th–16th centuries AD) arose as the administrative language of the Kingdom of Cilicia, which needed to be intelligible to a wider audience than those trained in Classical Armenian, and thus may be considered closer to the spoken language. However, these texts are mainly associated with Western areas, and there is no comparable evidence for the linguistic situation in Eastern areas at this time, where Classical Armenian—or other languages—continued to be used for virtually all written production until the emergence of the modern literary language in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Standard Western Armenian (SWA) is considered to have developed from Middle Armenian, with influence from the spoken language of Istanbul, although it is distinct from this and any form of colloquial spoken language. It was used by the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire, and is used by their descendants, who mainly live in diaspora communities spread throughout the world. Standard Eastern Armenian (SEA) was developed in educational institutions of the Russian Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, mainly based on dialects spoken in the area of Yerevan, and is now used in the Republic of Armenia and by Armenians from Iran, as well as other communities originating from these areas. Spoken Armenian comprised a wide variety of dialects spoken over a wide area (see Figure 1), not all of which were mutually intelligible. Although many of the dialects have become extinct or endangered, notably due to the Armenian Genocide and the expulsion of the Armenian population of what is now Azerbaijan, as well as the influence of the standard languages, some are still spoken today.

Figure 1: Classification of Armenian dialects by Hrachia Adjarian (1909) taken from Yerevanci (2012)



All modern varieties of Armenian form the passive by adding the suffix *-v-* to the verb stem—either the present or the perfective stem, depending on the conjugation pattern of the verb in question, with variation between different dialects. As well as true passives (1), this morpheme is also used to form reflexives (2), reciprocals (3), and anticausatives¹ (4) (examples from Asatryan 2004):

- (1) *Usanoγ-ner-i koγm-ic' zekuc'um er patrast-v-el.*
 student-PL-GEN side-ABL report be.3SG.PST prepare-PASS-PPT
 'A report was prepared by the students.'
- (2) *Patrast-v-um e dataran dim-el.*
 prepare-PASS-IPT be.3SG.PRS court apply-INF
 'He is preparing (himself) to go to court.'
- (3) *Suren-ə yev Ašot-ə hambur-v-ec'in.*
 suren-DEF and ashot-DEF kiss-PASS-3PL.AOR
 'Suren and Ashot kissed each other.'
- (4) *Sařnamanik'-ner-n sks-v-ec'in dektember-i kes-er-ic'.*
 frost-PL-DEF start-PASS-3PL.AOR december-GEN half-PL-ABL
 'The frosts started from the middle of December.'

¹ The term 'anticausative' was chosen by Haspelmath (1987, 6) to refer to "the marked member of a privative morphological transitive/inactive [unaccusative] alternation." This refers to the intransitive member of pairs such as 'I opened the door' (transitive) vs 'the door opened' (intransitive) in languages where the latter is morphologically marked. The anticausative differs from the passive in that, while in both cases the patient is expressed as the subject, in passives, the existence of an agent is implied and can often be expressed, while in anticausatives, the agent is deleted semantically as well as syntactically, and the action is presented as taking place spontaneously.

It has great lexical generality, i.e., there are very few transitive verbs that cannot form passives in this way,² and even greater paradigmatic generality, occurring in all tenses and aspects, and on participles as well as inflected verbs, as seen in the following paradigm of the verb *sirel* ‘to love’ in SEA.

Table 1: Active and passive forms of the verb *sirel* ‘to love’ in SEA

Verb form	Active	Passive
Infinitive	<i>sir-el</i>	<i>sir-v-el</i>
Present subjunctive (1SG)	<i>sir-em</i>	<i>sir-v-em</i>
Imperfect subjunctive (1SG)	<i>sir-ei</i>	<i>sir-v-ei</i>
Aorist (1SG)	<i>sir-ec^c-i</i>	<i>sir-v-ec^c-i</i>
Present indicative (1SG)	<i>sir-um em</i>	<i>sir-v-um em</i>
Present perfect (1SG)	<i>sir-el em</i>	<i>sir-v-el em</i>
Future (1SG)	<i>sir-elu em</i>	<i>sir-v-elu em</i>
Subject participle	<i>sir-oγ</i>	<i>sir-v-oγ</i>
Resultative participle	<i>sir-ac</i>	<i>sir-v-ac</i>

The Modern Armenian passive morpheme *-v-* was not present in Classical Armenian, but emerged in Middle Armenian (12th century) and rapidly spread throughout the system across the Armenian-speaking world. It has been proposed (Scala 2011) that this development could have been promoted by contact with Turkic languages, which also have an agglutinative passive (see example 18), but note that Classical Armenian already had an agglutinative causative at the time of its first attestation in the fifth century AD, predating Turkic influence, so the development

² There are a few exceptions, including the verbs *unenal* ‘to have’, *gitenal* ‘to know’, and *zyjal* ‘to regret’, which do not have passive forms (see Dum-Tragut 2009, 176).

of agglutinative valency-changing morphology on the verb cannot have been triggered solely by this contact situation. However, there may indeed be an areal dimension to this phenomenon, as Eastern Greek dialects also developed an agglutinative causative, beginning in the Hellenistic period (Tzitzilis 2017), and Iranian languages have had agglutinative valency and voice morphology since ancient times (see, e.g., Skjærvo 2009, 89), as did other ancient languages spoken in Anatolia (see Wilhelm 2008a, 96 for Hurrian and Wilhelm 2008b, 115 for Urartian). In any case, the development of a consistent, transparent, and universal means of marking passive voice has clear language-internal motivation, given that much of the Classical Armenian verb system had no means of marking the distinction between active and passive verbs, and the morphology that was associated with passive meaning was also used with some non-passive verbs, so there was a great deal of ambiguity.

3.0. **Passive in Classical Armenian**

3.1. **Stem Alternation**

In Classical Armenian, the main way in which passive meaning was expressed was by correspondences between transitive *-e*-stem verbs, which had active transitive meaning, as illustrated in (5), and corresponding *-i*-stem verbs, which had passive or intransitive meaning, as illustrated in (6) (both examples from Krause and Greppin 2014):

- (5) *čanač^c-e-m z-im-s-n*
 know-PRS-1SG ACC-my-ACC.PL-DEF
 ‘I know my own.’ (active transitive)

- (6) *čanač^č-i-m y-im-oc^č-n*
 know-PRS-1SG ABL-my-ABL.PL-DEF
 ‘I am known by my own.’ (passive)

The *-i*-stem verbs had distinctive endings in the aorist, known as ‘passive-type’, while *-e*-stems used a different set of aorist endings, here referred to as ‘active-type’ (Table 2):

Table 2: ‘Active-type’ and ‘passive-type’ aorist endings in CA (from Krause and Greppin 2014)

Person	‘Active-type’ aorist	‘Passive-type’ aorist
1SG	<i>-i</i>	<i>-ay</i>
2SG	<i>-er</i>	<i>-ar</i>
3SG	<i>-∅</i>	<i>-aw</i>
1PL	<i>-ak^č</i>	<i>-ak^č</i>
2PL	<i>-ek^č, -ik^č</i>	<i>-ayk^č, -aruk^č</i>
3PL	<i>-in</i>	<i>-an</i>

However, the difference in conjugation between *-e*-stems and *-i*-stems was not expressed morphologically throughout the system: in some morphological categories, such as the imperfect (see Table 3), as well as non-finite forms such as the participle and the infinitive, a formal distinction between *-e*-stems and *-i*-stems was missing, thus there was no morphological means of articulating the distinction between active and passive.

Table 3: Present and imperfect of *-e*- and *-i*-stem verbs in Classical Armenian

	Active (<i>-e</i> -stem)	Passive (<i>-i</i> -stem)
Present	<i>var-em</i> ‘I lead’	<i>var-im</i> ‘I am led’
Imperfect	<i>var-ei</i> ‘I was leading’	<i>var-ei</i> ‘I was being led’

As well as *-e*-stems and *-i*-stems, Classical Armenian also had *-a*-stems that only expressed an active/passive distinction in the present subjunctive, as seen in (7) (Abajyan et al. 2017, 282):

- (7) a. *banayc'e* 'he/she/it will open' (active tr.)
 b. *banayc'i* 'he/she/it will be opened' (passive)
 'he/she/it will open' (intransitive)

The rest of the paradigm of *-a*-stems is ambiguous, e.g., *luana-* active transitive 'to wash (sth.)', reflexive 'wash oneself', and passive 'be washed'; similarly, *bařna-* active transitive 'to lift up', intransitive 'disappear', passive 'to be taken away', etc. There were also *-u*-stems, which did not express this distinction morphologically at all: *heřu-* active transitive 'to pour (sth.)' and intransitive 'to flow out', etc. (see Luraghi et al. 2021, 375).

Thus there were many verbs that were what Luraghi et al. (2021) describe as *labile*, i.e., they could express either active or passive meaning depending on the context, a phenomenon which is apparently rare in the languages of the world, having been systematically reported mainly in certain languages of Africa (Luraghi et al. 2021, 382, who refer to Creissels 2014; Letuchiy 2009, 227), although it is also found in some languages of the Caucasus and elsewhere (Arkadiev 2023).

In addition, the *-i*-stem 'passive-type' endings cannot accurately be described as markers of passive meaning per se, as the alternation between *-e-* and *-i-* was not available for all *-i*-stem verbs, many of which were intransitive with no transitive counterpart: *ankanim* 'I fall', *p'axč'im* 'I flee', *hayim* 'I look', *unim* 'I have', etc., and some of which formed active transitive counterparts using the causative suffix *-uc'ane-*: *nsti-* 'to sit (down)' vs

nstuc'ane- 'to make sit', *meřani-* 'to die' vs *meřuc'ane-* 'to kill', *us-ani-* 'to learn' vs *usuc'ane-* 'to teach', etc. (Luraghi et al. 2021, 375). There are also transitive *-e*-verbs without a corresponding passive/anticausative *-i*-stem, such as *koxe-* 'to trample underfoot' (Luraghi et al. 2021, 369).

As we see, the *-i*-stem verbs are a class of mainly intransitive verbs, and the *-i*-suffixes came to be associated with passive meaning because some of the verbs of this class have transitive equivalents with *-e*-. According to Luraghi et al. (2021, 376, 380), the origin of the suffix *-i-* was probably Proto-Indo-European **(i)ie/o-*, which has been connected to the suffix **(e)h₁-ie/o-* of stative verbs. This would connect Armenian *-i-* to the Indo-Iranian suffix of *-ya*-stems and to the Ancient Greek passive aorists with *-ē-*.

As discussed by Luraghi et al. (2021, 380), the basic function of these suffixes, which are commonly described as stative or intransitivising, was valency reduction. Haspelmath (1990, 52), discussing intransitivising affixes and their connection to passive morphology, states:

Originally they serve to mark the inactive meaning of a verb stem. After their expansion they can be more or less freely affixed to noninactive stems and thus serve to inactivate these stems. It is this meaning that makes them suitable for use in passive constructions

Asatryan (2004) presents a similar picture of this 'inactivizing' function, stating that there was a need to express the meaning of verbs such as *řarž-* 'move', *t'ap^c-* 'spill', and *sks-* 'start' not only as transitive but also as intransitive actions, e.g., 'the milk spilled', 'the winter started', without an implied agent.

These are the meanings described by Haspelmath (1987) as ‘anticausative’. Haspelmath (1987, 38) proposes that anticausatives are key to the meaning extension of *-i-* from intransitive to passive in Armenian. An anticausative is an intransitive verb that is the marked member of an alternation with a transitive form. If there is no corresponding transitive, or if the transitive form is marked, e.g., with causative morphology, the verb is simply intransitive, and not marked for anticausative voice. However, if there is a corresponding transitive form that is considered to be unmarked, the marked intransitive counterpart can be termed anticausative. In fact, it is not totally clear that the *-i-* forms should be considered ‘marked’, at least in earlier CA, but Haspelmath (1987) still considers this an anticausative alternation. If the action is such that an agent could be imagined, as in the case of ‘move’ etc., the intransitive can be interpreted as passive, with the possibility of expressing the agent with an oblique phrase ‘move by X’, meaning ‘be moved by X’. Thus the morphology associated with anticausatives, e.g., the *-i-* endings in CA, can become associated with passive meaning. Haspelmath (1987) proposes that reflexive use, which is associated with the same morphology as passive throughout the history of Armenian, as well as many other languages, could arise from anticausative alternations in a similar way, through change-of-state verbs in which the change of state could be considered to be caused by the subject itself, in verbs with meanings such as ‘move (intransitive)’ > ‘move (oneself)’, rather than as taking place spontaneously, as with anticausatives. Perhaps as a result of its use in these con-

texts, in post-Classical Armenian, *-i-* became more clearly identified as a (medio)passive marker, and new passive forms began to be created from active transitive verbs, giving pairs such as *xonarh-em* ‘lower, abase, humble’ vs *xonarh-im* ‘bow down, lower oneself, be humbled’ and *hnazand-em* ‘subject, subdue, subjugate’ vs *hnazand-im* ‘obey, submit, subject oneself’ (Abajyan et al. 2017, 282). That is, as Haspelmath (1987, 41) puts it, a conjugation marker was reinterpreted as a passive marker, and extended to verbs of another conjugation, eventually leading to a reinterpretation of this conjugation-type marker as a passive marker for all verbs.

3.2. The Participle

According to Haspelmath (1987, 38), another potential source of passive morphology is “perfective, stative, resultative adjectives.” CA had one participle which could be placed into this category. It was Subject-orientated with intransitive verbs, and (usually) Patient-orientated with transitive verbs; it is thought that its original orientation was passive-intransitive, with the possibility of an Agent-orientation as a later development (see Meyer 2023, 101). Like other non-finite verb forms, it had no morphological voice distinction, and could be used with either active or passive meaning, as illustrated in (8):

- (8) *Sir-eal em*
 love-PTCP be.1SG.PRS
 ‘I loved (somebody).’ (active transitive)
 ‘I am loved (by somebody).’ (passive)

As well as being used predicatively, this participle is used together with the originally optional copula *em* ‘to be’ to form the perfect tense. Luraghi et al. (2021) consider this construction another type of passive in CA, as, in the absence of an Agent-argument, the construction has default passive meaning, as seen in (9):

- (9) *Tes-eal ē*
 see-PTCP be.3SG.PRS
 ‘S/he has been seen.’

In contrast to this, transitive perfects have genitive subjects, as seen in (10):

- (10) *Nora tes-eal ē z-ays*
 3SG.GEN see-PTCP be.3SG.PRS ACC-DEM1
 ‘S/he has seen this.’

Because of this, Luraghi et al. (2021, 371) consider that voice distinction in the perfect may be viewed as being encoded by the case of the subject, which, when genitive, as in example (10), triggers an active transitive reading, and when nominative, as in (11), a passive reading:

- (11) *Na tes-eal ē*
 3SG.NOM see-PTCP be.3SG.PRS
 ‘S/he has been seen.’ (Luraghi et al. 2021, 371)

Meyer (2023, 101) suggests that the Armenian perfect originally had passive-intransitive meaning, reflecting the original orientation of the participle, and that the active perfect with genitive subject and accusative object, as seen in (10), was a later development from this; it is likely that the original passive construction could express agents in the genitive, and that the accusative

case marking of the patient was extended to the active perfect from the other tense forms. By the time of attested Classical Armenian, in passive perfect constructions, if the agent is present, it receives ablative rather than genitive case, as shown in (12), in contrast to the agent of the active perfect (Meyer 2023, 82):

- (12) *erkir ew mardkan, or i nmanē*
 earth.NOM and humanity.NOM REL.NOM.SG PRP 3SG.ABL
en stēc-eal
 be.3PL.PRS create-PTCP

‘... earth and mankind, which were created by him.’ (Meyer 2023, 82)

Another difference between active and passive perfect (Meyer 2023, 82) is the fact that, in passive perfects, the copula agrees with the nominative patient, as seen in (12), as it agrees with the nominative subject of intransitives, but in active transitive perfects, such as (10), which have no nominative argument, we generally find default 3SG agreement.

Note that the difference in case-marking patterns between the perfect and the other tenses of Classical Armenian has also been viewed as an instance of split alignment rather than passive (Luraghi et al. 2021, 369).³ It is known that similar constructions with patient-orientated participles and oblique agents led to the emergence of ergativity in perfective past tenses in many languages of the area, notably in Iranian and Aramaic. However, in Armenian, this did not take place. The patient of transitive verbs

³ See Bubenik (1997, 75–79) and Scala (2009) for the passive interpretation, while Benveniste (1952) and Meillet (1936) consider the genitive NP a possessive agent.

was marked with accusative case, as seen in (10); eventually the agent came to be marked with nominative case, i.e., unmarked, as illustrated in (13), rather than genitive case, as illustrated in (10); and the participle developed an active orientation (see §3.3). Thus, to the best of our knowledge, all modern forms of Armenian have nominative–accusative alignment in the perfect as in all other tenses:

(13) SEA

Na tes-el e mard-u-n
 3SG.NOM see-PPT be.3SG.PRS person-DAT⁴-DEF
 ‘S/he has seen the person.’

3.3. Minor Strategies

Various other, minor strategies were also used to express passive meaning in CA, especially in cases where the verb forms would otherwise be ambiguous between active and passive. For example, in the case of the imperfect, which did not distinguish active and passive forms, the form *lsei*, i.e., imperfect of *lsem* ‘I hear’ and *lsim* ‘I am heard’, was mostly used in active clauses, while for passive or anticausative uses, a periphrasis consisting of the verbal adjective *lseli* ‘audible’ and the auxiliary verb *linim* ‘to be(come)’ was preferred (Luraghi et al. 2021, 369).

Similarly, the infinitive, like the imperfect, also did not initially distinguish active and passive, having the ending *-el* for both *-e-* and *-i-* conjugation verbs (although later an infinitive in *-il* began to be used for *-i-* conjugation verbs), so that here, too,

⁴ In SEA, the CA accusative marker has been totally lost: animate specific patients are marked with dative case, other patients are unmarked.

periphrastic forms were used to make the meaning clearer: *paštel* could mean ‘to serve’ or ‘to be served’, but when passive meaning was required, the periphrasis *pašton arnul* ‘to receive service’ might be used in order to remove the ambiguity (Luraghi et al. 2021, 369).

It is also reported that, for present stems in *-a-* and *-u-*, which likewise did not distinguish active from passive morphologically, when passive meaning was required, unambiguous constructions with overtly expressed agents, usually marked with the preposition *i/y-* and the noun in ablative case, seemed to be preferred (Luraghi et al. 2021, 375). This contrasts with the situation in the modern languages, where there is no such ambiguity, and overtly expressed agents are very rare, as stated by Haig (1982, 175) for SWA and Asatryan (2024, 213) for SEA.

Another strategy is found in complex verbs, where a different verb may be used with the same preverbal element in order to express voice distinctions, as in *gan harkanem* ‘to beat’ (lit. ‘beating strike’) for active and *gan əmpem* ‘to be beaten’ (lit. ‘beating drink’) for passive (Luraghi et al. 2021, 373). This type of alternation is also found in some light-verb constructions in the modern languages, such as SEA *šur tal* ‘to turn (tr.)’ (lit. ‘turn give’) for active transitive vs *šur gal* ‘to turn (intr.)/be turned’ (lit. ‘turn come’) for passive or intransitive meaning, but is not particularly widespread.

3.4. Summary of the Passive in CA

In CA, the main way that passive meaning was expressed was by oppositions between *-e-*stem verbs with active transitive meaning,

and corresponding *-i*-stem verbs with passive or intransitive meaning. However, these equivalences did not exist for all verbs, and were not articulated throughout the verbal paradigm. The participle, and the perfect tense that is based on it, is thought to have had originally passive-intransitive orientation, but later acquired the possibility of active use. Voice differences in the perfect were reflected in differences in case marking and agreement patterns, which nonetheless left considerable possibility for ambiguity, especially given the possibility of omitting both subjects and objects.

It can be seen that the existence of widespread voice ambiguity in CA created a need for more explicit constructions. According to Abajyan et al. (2017, 283), the first stage in creating a more consistent system came in the post-classical period, when *-e*-conjugation verbs developed a passive infinitive in *-il*, showing that *-i-* had come to be interpreted as a passive marker that could be added to other verbs to give them passive meaning, rather than just the marker of a conjugation that included some verbs that could express this meaning. There also developed a separate passive ending *-iwr* for the 3SG imperfect (as seen in Figure 6, the CA imperfect did not originally distinguish active and passive): *gtan-iwr* ‘he/she/it was (being) found’, *sksan-iwr* ‘he/she/it (was [being]) started’, *koč'-iwr* ‘he/she/it was (being) called’ (Abajyan et al. 2017, 283). However, this development did not last, and does not seem to have left any trace in the modern languages. It is not until the Middle Armenian period (beginning in the twelfth century) that we see the emergence of an effective means of distinguishing active and passive throughout the Armenian verb system.

4.0. Passive in Middle and Modern Armenian

4.1. The Passive in *-v-*

The most widely accepted hypothesis for the origin of the Modern Armenian passive morpheme *-v-*, which is first recorded in Middle Armenian in the twelfth century, seems to be that of Karst (1901), also accepted by Haspelmath (1987). This proposes that, after the *-i-*stem endings were reinterpreted as passive markers, being added first of all to *-e-*verbs in order to create new passive forms, for example *xonarh-il* ‘to bow down, lower oneself, be humbled’ from *xonarh-el* ‘to lower, abase, humble’, *hnazand-il* ‘to obey, submit, subject oneself’ from *hnazand-el* ‘to subject, subdue, subjugate’ (Abajyan et al. 2017, 283), the *-i-*endings then came to be added to *-u-*stem verbs to create passives from these too, for example *t’oγ-u-il* ‘to be left’ from *t’oγ-ul* ‘to leave’. Note that, in the case of the *-u-*stems, the stem vowel was not deleted, but would have been pronounced as *-v-* before the vowel *-i-* of the passive ending. Then the ending was reanalysed so that *-v-* was interpreted as expressing passive meaning, and spread throughout the system as a passive morpheme.

Another hypothesis is that of Aytenean (1867), adopted by Scala (2011, 151), according to which the passive *-v-* morpheme results from the reanalysis of forms containing the CA deverbalising morpheme *-uac* (traditional transcription *-owac*), which creates resultative *nomina actionis* or rather *nomina rei actae*, e.g., *xndrowac* ‘prayer, the object of the prayer’, *gorcowac* ‘work, result of an accomplished work’, *šinowac* ‘building, result of a construction act’. The resultative participle in *-ac* (see §3.3) developed

from these forms, with *-ac* becoming established as the resultative participle ending. The *-ow-* (pronounced as *-v-*) that preceded *-ac* was then interpreted as a passive morpheme. A third hypothesis is proposed by Luraghi et al. (2021, 357):

that this formation developed out of the aorist allomorph *tu-* (Proto-Indo-European **deh₃-*) of *tam* ‘to give’ found e.g. in 1SG AOR ACT *etu* ‘I gave’ and in 3SG AOR PASS *tvaw* ‘was given’ (marked with the medio-passive stem *-a-* and ending *-w*) beside 3SG AOR ACT *e-t* ‘gave’ < **édeh₃t*) to which a new present *tvi-* ‘be given’ was formed. The opposition PRS *t-a-* (ACT/PASS): *t-v-i-* then served as the model for the expansion of *-v-* as passive marker.

It is, of course, possible that the existence of all these models reinforced each other in promoting the use of *-v-* as a passive marker.

The forms with *-v-* are found throughout all dialects of Modern Armenian. Like the Classical Armenian *-i-* forms, they are used not only for true passives, but also for anticausatives and reflexives, as well as reciprocals, as we have seen in examples (1)–(4). They are also used for ‘potential passive’ constructions, as seen in (14), which are distinct semantically, and in many languages also syntactically, from standard passives (Haspelmath 1987, 7). These have a semantically implied actor—even if, unlike in standard passives, this cannot be overtly expressed—as well as potential meaning:

(14) SEA

Ays hac^{‘-ə} č’i ut-v-um
 DEM1 bread-DEF NEG.be.3SG.PRS eat-PASS-IPT

‘This bread cannot be eaten/is inedible (lit. is not eaten).’

In some dialects, including SWA, but also Hadrut dialect, spoken in southern Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabagh) until the expulsion of the Armenian population in 2020, we find ‘impersonal passive’ constructions. These are semantically similar to ‘potential passives’ in that the Agent or Subject referent is impersonal, and the action/situation described by the verb is potential, not actual but something that can be/should be/habitually is (not) done. The impersonal passive construction differs from potential passives in that it does not require a patient Subject or an implied agent. As seen in examples (15)–(18), impersonal passives may be formed from intransitive verbs, including those with non-agentive Subjects, also known as ‘unaccusatives’, e.g., (18).

(15) SWA (Yeghiayan 2022, 381)

Ays žam-u-n gə-barǵ-v-i?

DEM1 hour-DAT-DEF IND-lie.down-PASS-3SG.PRS

‘Can one (i.e., how could you) lie down at this time?’

(16) SWA (Yeghiayan 2022, 381)

Ays annšan pan-en č'i vaxc'-v-ir

DEM1 insignificant thing-ABL NEG.3SG be.afraid-PASS-NPT

‘One cannot be afraid of this insignificant thing.’

(17) Hadrut (Poghosyan 1965, 207)

Əndrana mutan-v-al č'i

DEM3.DAT approach-PASS-PPT NEG.3SG.PRS

‘One cannot approach him.’⁵

⁵ Poghosyan (1965, 207) gives two SEA translations for example (17), the first of which involves an impersonal passive *nran č'i motec'vi*, lit. ‘him it is not approached’, the second of which can be translated literally as ‘It is not possible to approach him’. However, for example (18),

(18) Hadrut (Poghosyan 1965, 207)

Mřə-ov-en hætən məř-v-es a?

die-SPT-ABL after die-PASS-IPT be.3SG.PRS

‘Can one (i.e., one cannot) die (just) after someone who died?’⁶

It is noteworthy that these constructions seem to be associated with dialects with a large number of speakers bilingual in Turkic languages, in that SWA is based to some extent on the Armenian dialect of Istanbul, whose speakers are mostly bilingual in Turkish, and the Armenian community of Hadrut was to a large extent also fluent in Azeri. Similar ‘impersonal passive’ constructions are found in these languages, as seen in the following example (19) from Turkish:

(19) Turkish (Legate et al. 2020, 775)

Türkiye-de her gün trafik kaza-ları-nda öl-ün-ür.

Turkey-LOC every day traffic accident-PL-LOC die-PASS-aor

‘In Turkey people die (lit. it is died) in traffic accidents every day.’

This type of construction differs from true impersonal passives, as found, for example, in German, as the latter can only be formed from transitive verbs, as well as intransitive verbs that

which has a non-agentive verb, he does not provide a SEA translation with an impersonal passive (see n. 6).

⁶ Poghosyan (1965, 207) gives a SEA translation for example (18) which can be literally translated as ‘After one who dies, it is not possible to die’. In contrast to example (17), he does not give a translation with an impersonal passive, implying that in SEA, as in German, impersonal passives may be restricted to verbs which express an agent.

express an agent (Blevins 2003, 477), as seen in example (20). This is impossible with a non-agentive verb, as illustrated in (21):

(20) German (Blevins 2003, 477)

In der Küche wurde (von vielen Leuten) geraucht.
 in the kitchen became by many people smoked
 ‘There was smoking by many people in the kitchen.’

(21) German (Blevins 2003, 478)

**In der Küche wurde (von vielen Leuten) geblieben.*
 in the kitchen became by many people remained
 (Intended) *‘There was remaining by many people in the kitchen.’

Blevins (2003, 474) argues that ‘impersonal passives’ of ‘unaccusatives’, i.e., non-agentive verbs, should not be classified as passives, because “passivization deletes ‘logical’ [i.e. agentive] subject arguments, and the lack of a logical subject argument is precisely what defines unaccusatives as a class.” For this reason, he argues that subjectless forms of unaccusative verbs should be described as impersonals, not passives. Nonetheless, in many languages, including Turkish and some forms of Armenian, passive morphology is extended to these constructions, as seen in examples (15)–(19).

Impersonal passives with agentive verbs may occasionally be used in SEA, as in example (22), given by Dum-Tragut (2009, 338), who notes that this represents colloquial spoken language (but see also a similar example in the SEA translation of (17) in n. 5), and states that, in formal SEA, an active verb with an impersonal 3PL subject would be preferred, as in (23):

- (22) (avto)mek'ena-n ayspes č^c-i k'š-v-um.
 car-DEF so NEG-be.3SG.PRS drive-PASS-IPT
 'One cannot drive the car in such a way.'
- (23) ayspes avtomek'ena č^c-en var-um.
 so car NEG-be.3PL.PRS drive-IPT
 'One cannot drive a car in such a way.'

4.2. Traces of CA Stem Alternation in Modern Armenian

In SEA, there are few traces of the morphological patterns associated with passive meaning in CA: like most Eastern Armenian dialects, it has lost the distinction between *-e-* and *-i-* stem verbs. The 'passive-type' aorist endings are only used for verbs with certain affixes, including *-an-* (used to form inchoatives from adjectives), not passives themselves, which take the same 'active-type' endings as simple *-el* verbs. Compare Table 4 with Table 2.

Table 4: Active, passive, and 'passive-type' aorist in Standard Eastern Armenian

	Active	Passive	'Passive-type'
INF	<i>bʻrn-el</i> 'to catch'	<i>bʻrn-v-e l</i> 'to be caught'	<i>mec-an-al</i> 'to become big'
1SG	<i>bʻrn-ec^c-i</i>	<i>bʻrn-v-ec^c-i</i>	<i>mec-ac^c-a</i>
2SG	<i>bʻrn-ec^c-ir</i>	<i>bʻrn-v-ec^c-ir</i>	<i>mec-ac^c-ar</i>
3SG	<i>bʻrn-ec^c-∅</i>	<i>bʻrn-v-ec^c-∅</i>	<i>mec-ac^c-av</i>
1PL	<i>bʻrn-ec^c-ink^c</i>	<i>bʻrn-v-ec^c-ink^c</i>	<i>mec-ac^c-ank^c</i>
2PL	<i>bʻrn-ec^c-ik^c</i>	<i>bʻrn-v-ec^c-ik^c</i>	<i>mec-ac^c-ank^c</i>
3PL	<i>bʻrn-ec^c-in</i>	<i>bʻrn-v-ec^c-in</i>	<i>mec-ac^c-an</i>

⁷ As seen in these examples, some verbs add an element *-(V)c^c-* to the aorist stem. The distribution of these aorist stems in *-c^c-* varies between dialects. In Khoy/Urmia, as seen in Table 6, the *-Vc^c-* has been reinterpreted as the 3SG aorist ending, and is absent from the other persons.

The form of colloquial Eastern Armenian spoken in Iran has also lost the contrast between *-i-* and *-e-* stem verbs, but differs from SEA in that the resulting class, while it takes the *-e-* endings for forms based on the CA present, has generalised the ‘passive-type’ aorist endings. Thus not only passive verbs, but also all other verbs of the *-el* conjugation, which includes the majority of transitive verbs, form ‘passive-type’ aorists in colloquial Iranian Armenian (see Dolatian et al. 2023, 118, 143):

Table 5: Aorist of passive (*bərnəvel*) and active (*bərnəl*) *-el*-verbs in colloquial Iranian Armenian, showing ‘passive-type’ endings

	Passive	Active
INF	<i>bərnə-v-el</i> ‘to be caught’	<i>bərn-el</i> ‘to catch’
1SG	<i>bərnə-v-am</i> ⁸	<i>bərn-am</i>
2SG	<i>bərnə-v-ar</i>	<i>bərn-ar</i>
3SG	<i>bərnə-v-av</i>	<i>bərn-av</i>
1PL	<i>bərnə-v-ank</i> ^c	<i>bərn-ank</i> ^c
2PL	<i>bərnə-v-ak</i> ^c	<i>bərn-ak</i> ^c
3PL	<i>bərnə-v-an</i>	<i>bərn-an</i>

In Khoy/Urmia dialect (originally spoken in Northern Iran and classified as Eastern based on the form of the present tense) and in Van dialect (classified as Western based on the form of the present tense, but sharing various features with neighbouring Eastern dialects, especially Khoy/Urmia), we find the typically Eastern merger of *-i-* and *-e-* stem verbs in forms based on the CA present, but, unlike in SEA, the distinction is preserved to some

⁸ The final *-m* of the 1SG aorist is an innovation found in this and certain other dialects, including Khoy/Urmia, as seen in Table 6.

extent in the aorist. In Khoy/Urmia, the aorists of *-el* conjugation (< *-e-* and *-i-*) verbs are distinguished according to transitivity: transitive verbs take the ‘active-type’ endings, and passives and intransitives take the ‘passive-type’ endings (Asatryan 1962, 106).

Table 6: Aorist of active and passive *-el* verbs in Khoy/Urmia Armenian

	Active Transitive	Passive
INF	<i>čärt^č-el</i> ‘to break, smash’	<i>čärt^č-v-el</i> ‘to be broken, smashed’
1SG	<i>čärt^č-im</i>	<i>čärt^č-v-am</i>
2SG	<i>čärt^č-ir</i>	<i>čärt^č-v-ar</i>
3SG	<i>čärt^č-ec^č</i>	<i>čärt^č-v-av</i>
1PL	<i>čärt^č-ink^o</i>	<i>čärt^č-v-ank^č</i>
2PL	<i>čärt^č-ik^o</i>	<i>čärt^č-v-ak^č</i>
3PL	<i>čärt^č-in</i>	<i>čärt^č-v-an</i>

In Van, the situation is similar, with the old *-e-* verbs (mainly transitive) taking ‘active-type’ aorists, and the old *-i-* verbs (mainly intransitive and passive) taking ‘passive-type’ aorists (Adjarian 1952, 157). There are some verbs that can express voice distinctions by the choice of aorist ending, taking ‘active-type’ endings with active meaning, and ‘passive-type’ endings with passive meaning, even without *-v-* in some cases (Adjarian 1952, 159), as seen in Table 7:

Table 7: Active and passive aorists in Van Armenian (from Adjarian 1952, 159)

Infinitive	Active aorist (1SG)	Passive aorist (1SG)
<i>patf^č-el</i> ‘to crack’	<i>patf^č-ic^č-i</i>	<i>patf^č-a</i> (also <i>patf^č-v-a</i>)
<i>pl-el</i> ‘to demolish’	<i>pl-ic^č-i</i>	<i>pl-a</i>
<i>xal-el</i> ‘to melt’	<i>xal-ic^č-i</i>	<i>xal-a</i>

However, many Western Armenian dialects, including SWA, have preserved more of the CA system. Although the passive with *-v-* exists in all these dialects, they also preserve many pairs of verbs for which the active–passive distinction is expressed in the contrast between (active) *-e-* and (passive) *-i-* endings in the present, without the presence of the morpheme *-v-*, as seen in Table 8:

Table 8: Active and passive verbs with stem vowel alternation in Standard Western Armenian (Yeghiayan 2022, 461), showing present subjunctive

Active Transitive	Passive/Intransitive
<i>azad-em</i> ‘I free’	<i>azad-im</i> ‘I am freed’
<i>ayr-em</i> ‘I burn (tr.)’	<i>ayr-im</i> ‘I burn (intr.)/am burned’
<i>tʻapʻ-em</i> ‘I spill (tr.)’	<i>tʻapʻ-im</i> ‘I spill (intr.)/am spilled’

In addition, all *-i-* conjugation verbs, which include all passives with *-v-*, form ‘passive-type’ aorists (see, e.g., Sakayan 2012, 91, 218).

Table 9: ‘Passive-type’ aorist of *-i-* conjugation verbs in Standard Western Armenian

INF	<i>xos-il</i> ‘to speak’	<i>gočʻ-v-il</i> ‘to be called’
1SG	<i>xos-ecʻ-a</i>	<i>gočʻ-v-ecʻ-a</i>
2SG	<i>xos-ecʻ-ar</i>	<i>gočʻ-v-ecʻ-ar</i>
3SG	<i>xos-ecʻ-av</i>	<i>gočʻ-v-ecʻ-av</i>
1PL	<i>xos-ecʻ-ankʻ</i>	<i>gočʻ-v-ecʻ-ankʻ</i>
2PL	<i>xos-ecʻ-akʻ</i>	<i>gočʻ-v-ecʻ-akʻ</i>
3PL	<i>xos-ecʻ-an</i>	<i>gočʻ-v-ecʻ-an</i>

In the Western Armenian dialect of Mush, as in SWA, there are some verbs for which the contrast between ‘active-type’ (*-e-* conjugation) and ‘passive-type’ (*-i-* conjugation) does actually

reflect voice/transitivity distinctions, as seen in the following table of examples from Baghdasaryan-Tapaltsyan (1958, 126):

Table 10: Active transitive and passive/intransitive verbs with stem vowel alternation in Mush

Active Transitive	Intransitive/Passive
<i>k-iric^c-em</i> ‘I burn (tr.)’	<i>k-iric^c-im</i> ‘I burn (intr.)/am burnt’
<i>kə-j^cart^c-em</i> ‘I break (tr.)’	<i>kə-j^cart^c-im</i> ‘I break (intr.)/am broken’
<i>kə-xaš^c-em</i> ‘I boil (tr.)’	<i>kə-xaš^c-im</i> ‘I boil (intr.)/am boiled’

However, this distinction is being weakened; there are many verbs that can take both *-e-* and *-i-* endings, but always have active transitive meaning, and, according to Baghdasaryan-Tapaltsyan (1958, 126), the *-i-* forms are more frequent, so it appears that the *-i-* endings are being generalised, at the expense of their link with passive/intransitive meaning.

4.3. Participles

As seen in (24), (25), and (26), in Mush dialect, the infinitive and resultative participle of transitive verbs can often be used with both active and passive meanings, like the infinitive and participle in CA:

Mush (Baghdasaryan-Tapaltsyan 1958, 105)

(24) *kəxtodel* ‘to make dirty’, ‘to become dirty’, ‘to be made dirty’

(25) *j^cart^cel* ‘to break (tr.)’, ‘to break (intr.)’, ‘to be broken’

When passive meaning is intended, forms of the infinitive with *-v-* may optionally be used, but for the resultative participle, *-v-* is not normally used. The resultative participle in *-adz* (SEA *-ac*) is used in perfect-tense forms, together with the auxiliary. For transitive verbs, the subject may be the agent or the patient (26):

(26) Mush (see Baghdasaryan-Tapaltsyan 1958, 130)

Kar-adz e

sew-RPT be.3SG.PRS

‘S/he has sewn’ OR ‘It is sewn’

This resultative participle is historically derived from CA deverbal nouns or adjectives formed from intransitive or passive verbs with the addition of the suffix *-(u)ac* (discussed in §3.1), some of which are still in use as such in the modern language: *arar-ac* ‘creation, creature’, *gorc-vac-k* ‘textile’ from *gorcem* ‘I work/weave’, *šin-vac-k* ‘building, construction’ (note that the latter two examples, which are current in SEA, also include the originally plural suffix *-k*). In Middle Armenian (12th century), the suffix *-ac* came to be used to create a perfect-resultative participle, which eventually became voice-neutral, acquiring the possibility of expressing active transitive meaning (i.e., referring to the agent), rather than inevitably referring to the patient as in the original usage.

At the same time, the past participle with *-eal > -el*, which is still used in another type of perfect tense,⁹ acquires active orientation (as we have seen, it was voice neutral in CA), as there appears the passive form marked with *-v-el*. Kozinceva (1988,

⁹ SWA and many other dialects have two ‘perfect’ tenses, one with the < CA *-eal* participle (which has the endings *-el*, *-al*, *-er*, *-ir*, etc. in various dialects), and the other with the *-ac* participle. The distribution of functions between the two tenses varies between dialects; in SWA the < *-eal* participle is used for evidentials, while in Agulis it replaces the aorist. In both these dialects the *-ac* form is the ‘neutral’ perfect, while in SEA the only perfect tense uses the < *-eal* form, and *-ac* is not used in regular tense forms.

467) notes that it is only in Modern Armenian since the sixteenth century that passive forms with *-v-ac* began to appear; this usage is current in SWA, as seen in example (27), but it appears that it did not spread through all the dialects, since, as we have seen, forms of the resultative participle with *-v-* are not normally used in Mush even when the meaning is passive.

(27) SWA

Ays ej-ə verjin angam xmbagr-v-ac e
 DEM1 page-DEF last time edit-PASS-RPT be.3SG.PRS
23 Mayis 2020
 23 May 2020

‘This page was (lit. has been) edited for the last time on 23 May 2020.’

In SEA, at least in prescriptive grammar, the *-ac* participle, which is not used in regular tense forms, has developed active orientation: as discussed by Asatryan (2004, 235), the use of *-v-* is recommended to express passive meaning, as seen in example (29):

(28) SEA

girk' gr-ac mard
 book write-RPT Person

‘a person who has written a book’

(29) SEA

dašnamur-i hamar gr-v-ac solo-n
 piano-GEN for write-PASS-RPT solo-DEF

‘the solo (that was) written for the piano’

However, in colloquial spoken language, it is still often used with its original passive meaning, i.e., to refer to the patient,

even when the verb is transitive, as seen in example (30) (in literary SEA, the passive form of the participle *gr-v-ac* would be used):

(30) Colloquial EA

əteγ gr-ac a anun-ə
 there write-RPT be.3SG.PRS name-DEF
 ‘The name is written there.’

Also, even in the literary language, the resultative participle can be used with patient orientation in object relative clauses where the agent (subject) is expressed in the genitive:

(31) SEA

ašakert-i gr-ac namak-ə
 student-GEN write-RPT letter-DEF
 ‘the letter (that was) written by the student’

However, when there is no agent expressed, *-v-* is used, as the construction is interpreted as a passive subject RC, rather than an object RC, as seen in (28).

Many dialects, including Mush, Tigranakert (Diyarbakir), Van, Khoy/Urmia, and Kessab, but not SEA or SWA, have, parallel to the resultative participle in *-ac* (and phonetic variants), another resultative participle in *-uk* (and phonetic variants), which, according to Haneyan (1978, 144), has the same origin as that in *-ac*, namely verbal nouns/adjectives derived from intransitive or passive verbs with the ending *-uac-kʻ* (see §3.1). This participle was created in Middle Armenian specifically to express passive meaning (Adjarian 1952, 194), presumably because the *-ac* participle had become ambiguous with regard to voice. It has retained its orientation, always referring to the patient, not the

agent of a transitive verb, in all the abovementioned dialects except Kessab. This is the case even in the absence of the morpheme *-v-*, which, according to the interpretation of Aytenean, also adopted by Scala (2011), has the same etymological origin as the *-u-* in *-uk*. This is illustrated in example (32), from a speaker resident in Armenia whose parents were from Khnus,¹⁰ speaking a form of Mush dialect:

- (32) *im mor minč^{ev} ankam es k'it^ə-ən el*
 1SG.GEN mother.GEN until even DEM1 nose-AGR3 PRT
cag-ug er
 pierce-RPT be.3SG.PST

‘My mother’s nose (lit. this nose of my mother’s) was even pierced’

In Van, the affix *-v-* has spread to this participle too, leading to pairs of alternatives with and without the morpheme, but always with passive meaning, as seen in the following examples (Adjarian 1952, 193–4):

- (33) *avir-uk : avir-v-uk* ‘ruined’
 (34) *ip^ə-uk : ip^ə-v-uk* ‘cooked’
 (35) *por-uk : por-v-uk* ‘engraved’
 (36) *p^əor-uk : p^əor-v-uk* ‘dug’

Consider also example (37) below, from Khoy/Urmia, where the *-uk* participle includes the passive morpheme *-v-*:

¹⁰ Recording made by Katherine Hodgson in Alashkert village, Armavir province, Armenia in 2015, speaker Seda Grigoryan, b. Shirak province c. 1935, transcribed by Anahit Darbinyan.

(37) Khoy/Urmia (Asatryan 1962, 102)

Tʰəʃčə-v-uk i

soak-PASS-RPT be.3SG.PRS

‘It is soaked.’

However, in some dialects, such as that of Kessab, spoken in Syria, this participle, too, has lost its exclusive patient orientation, and may be used for transitive agents under certain circumstances: for example, Čʰolakʰean (2009, 123) notes that, in Kessab, the form *fitʰeok* can mean ‘spilled’ (թափած) or ‘spilling (tr.)’ (թափող), and gives example (38), where the *-uk* participle of ‘to burn’ is used to describe a hot (burning) pepper:

(38) Kessab (Čʰolakʰean 2009, 23)

Vaʳ-ok hěmin kʰäγ-icʰä

burn-RPT pepper pick-1SG.AOR

‘I picked a hot pepper.’

Thus it appears that there is a general tendency for essentially patient-orientated participles to acquire the possibility of agent orientation, becoming ambiguous verbal adjectives denoting a property in some way connected to the verb, as with the *-eal* participle in CA, and the *-uk* participle in Kessab. The use of the *-eal* and *-ac* participles in regular tense forms may also have promoted this development, as tense forms generally need to express active as well as passive meaning. This resulted in the extension of the passive morpheme *-v-* to these participles when used with passive meaning to eliminate potential ambiguity. The existence of passive forms with *-v-* has led to the forms without *-v-* being consistently ascribed active orientation, at least in SEA. No Modern Armenian dialect has adopted the CA solution of distinguish-

ing active and passive in perfect tenses by using identical participles with differences in case marking (genitive agent and accusative patient for active, nominative patient for passive).

5.0. Conclusions

In CA, many verb forms were labile, having no morphological means for distinguishing active and passive, and the morphology that was associated with passive meaning in those parts of the system where it was available was also used for some non-passive verbs. Thus there was no consistent way of marking passive meaning, resulting in a great deal of ambiguity. In Middle Armenian, a single, invariant passive marker, *-v-*, arose, which could be added to the stem of practically any verb form, removing the ambiguities of the CA system. In SEA, the system has been totally regularised, with *-v-* as the sole marker of passivity, being found throughout the system (no verb endings or participle types are associated with passive meaning any more, and none may express passive meaning without the presence of *-v-*). Other dialects, including SWA, although they have also generalised *-v-* to avoid the ambiguities present in CA, nonetheless preserve some vestiges of the CA system, with *-i-* present endings, passive-type aorist endings, and/or resultative participles still associated with passive meaning (in some cases without the presence of *-v-*).

Note, however, that, as in CA, Modern Armenian ‘passive’ morphology is not associated only with passive meaning (in the sense of demotion of the agent of a transitive verb), but also expresses reflexive, reciprocal, and anticausative (in some dialects also impersonal) meanings. In fact, it is possible that, as proposed

by Haspelmath (1987), the original situation involved pairs of active transitive and anticausative intransitive verbs with parallel meanings (such as ‘open’ transitive and ‘open’ intransitive), and that the latter could be interpreted as passive (‘be opened by someone’) or reflexive (‘open oneself’), such that the morphological marking of these anticausatives was reanalysed as passive/reflexive, and spread throughout the system so that it could be added to virtually any verb form in order to express this meaning. There are a few other ways to express passive meaning, for example with the use of different light verbs with the same preverb to express active and passive meaning in complex verb constructions, but these are not as common as in CA, where they fulfilled a genuine need to avoid ambiguity due to the fact that many verb forms were labile, having no morphological means of distinguishing active from passive.

Abbreviations

Languages

CA	Classical Armenian
SEA	Standard Eastern Armenian
SWA	Standard Western Armenian

Linguistic Terms

ACT	Active	AGR3	3rd person agreement marker
AGR1	1st person agreement marker	AOR	Aorist
AGR2	2nd person agreement marker	DEM1	Proximal/1st-person demonstrative

DEM2	Medial/2nd-person demonstrative	PPT	past participle
		NPT	negative participle
DEM3	Distal/3rd-person demonstrative	RC	relative clause
		RPT	resultative participle
IPT	imperfective participle	SPT	subject participle

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7. PASSIVES IN ASIA MINOR GREEK¹

Nicolaos Neocleous

1.0. Introduction

In this article, we investigate passives in Asia Minor Greek (henceforth AMG)—a cluster of Greek varieties originally spoken in the area historically known as Asia Minor (present-day Anatolia, Turkey; see Neocleous and Sitaridou 2022 and references therein)—within the generative framework (see Chomsky 1995). The main objective of the article is twofold: (a) to briefly review the history of the study of passive constructions in generative grammar, starting with Chomsky’s (1957) original Standard Theory, and (b) to provide empirical data on passives from AMG.

Regarding (a), I discuss the most problematic aspects of the passive in these approaches, which are (i) the representation of implicit external arguments and by-phrases, and the relationship between the two, and (ii) the treatment of the passive as a universal cross-linguistic rule. Regarding (b), we provide empirical data from AMG varieties, which support Alexiadou et al.’s (2018)

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proposal for the existence of two types of passives across languages: a fully productive one, as found in English, and a semi-productive one showing various gaps, as found in Standard Modern Greek (henceforth SMG) and AMG. Alexiadou et al. (2018) show that this difference can be addressed by proposing that the building blocks of passive formation—or parts of them—are located either inside (for languages like Greek) or outside the verbal phase (for languages like English). This means that, in languages like SMG or AMG, passivisation will be sensitive to the properties of lexical items and may therefore be restricted to certain verbs or classes of verbs. In contrast, in languages like English, the passive is built on the active, as originally proposed by Chomsky (1957), so the only restriction on passivisation would relate to the availability—or lack thereof—of an active/transitive verbal phase. Data from AMG support the existence of structures in which passive voice combines with VP to form a VOICE projection. That is, passivisation takes place within the verbal phase, rather than involving a Passive projection (PASSP) on top of a fundamentally active VOICE projection, as in languages with fully productive passivisation, such as English.

AMG is a cluster of seven genetically related varieties, specifically those spoken in the areas historically known as Bithynia, Cappadocia, Göylde, Livísi, Phárasa, Pontus, and Sílli in Asia Minor (Dawkins 1916, 5). Christian AMG speakers were forced to relocate to Greece as refugees following the defeat of the Greek army in the Greek-Turkish war (1919–1922) because of the Treaty of Lausanne and its Convention concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations (1923).

Ever since, AMG varieties have continued to be spoken in Greece and elsewhere across the world to varying extents. However, due to robust contact with SMG in Greece and other languages abroad, younger generations have experienced language attrition.

In Turkey, a Pontic Greek variety is still spoken in the area historically known as Pontus (present-day Black Sea district, Turkey). Some Pontic Greek-speaking communities in the Pontus area, by virtue of being Muslims, were exempt from the population exchange between Greece and Turkey following the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. For Pontus, this resulted in an exodus of Greek-speaking and Turkish-speaking Christians, leaving small enclaves of Greek-speaking Muslims in Turkey. Today, there remain three Greek-speaking enclaves: Of/Çaykara, Sürmene, and Tonya (see Neocleous 2020; 2022; Neocleous and Sitaridou 2022; 2025).

The article is structured as follows: in §2.0, I discuss the sources of data used in this study; §3.0 provides a brief review of the history of the study of passive constructions in generative grammar, starting with Chomsky's (1957) original Standard Theory; and §4.0 describes the passives in AMG. The main findings of the article are summarised in §5.0.

2.0. Sources of Data

The results reported here were obtained from published works that include both diachronic and synchronic data for AMG varieties. The textual sources are cited in each linguistic example and are presented in detail in the bibliography.

3.0. Passives within the Generative Framework

The starting point of any investigation of the passive is the observation that active and passive sentences are related. Unlike other voice alternations, such as the causative alternation, the relationship between the active and the passive seems to be systematic.

According to the World Atlas of Language Structures (Siewierska 2013, Feature 107A: Passive Constructions):

A construction has been classified as passive if it displays the following five properties: it contrasts with another construction, the active; the subject of the active corresponds to a non-obligatory oblique phrase of the passive or is not overtly expressed; the subject of the passive, if there is one, corresponds to the direct object of the active; the construction is pragmatically restricted relative to the active; the construction displays some special morphological marking of the verb.

According to the Atlas, in a total of 373 languages examined, there is a passive construction in 162, while in the remaining 211 languages, there is none (see Table 1).

Table 1: Passive constructions cross-linguistically (Siewierska 2013)

Value	Representation
There is a passive construction	162
There is no passive construction	211
Total	373

However, in generative grammar, we need a theory that makes predictions about passivisation not only in the 162 languages that have a passive construction but also in the remaining 211 languages that do not.

Now, we present a brief review of the history of the study of passive constructions in generative grammar, starting with Chomsky's (1957) original Standard Theory.

In the original Standard Theory, Chomsky (1957) regarded actives as kernel sentences and passives as being derived from active sentences through phrase markers and transformational rules related to passivisation, as stated in the general condition formulated in (1):

- (1) If X is a Z in the phrase structure grammar, and a string Y formed by a transformation is of the same structural form as X , then Y is also a Z (Chomsky 1957, 73).

This condition involves the following rule pertaining to passives:

- (2) If S_1 is a grammatical sentence of the form NP_1 -Aux-V- NP_2 , then the corresponding string of the form NP_2 -Aux + *be* + *en*-V-*by* + NP_1 is also a grammatical sentence. (Chomsky 1957, 43).

Chomsky also suggested that the *by*-phrase is a PP, even in a so-called short passive (e.g., *the food was eaten*) derived from the kernel sentence.

In the subsequent Extended Standard Theory, a passive transformation was formulated as a distinct rule, namely rule (3c) below, for converting an active structural description into a passive structural change:

- (3) Chomsky (1986, 73):
- a. SD: *John saw Bill*.
 - b. SC: *Bill was seen by John*.
 - c. $(NP, V, NP) \rightarrow ({}_3, be-en {}_2, by {}_1)$

In the Presupposing Trace Theory, Chomsky (1977) attempts to account for the derivation of passive sentences through transformational rules based on syntactic structures and categories. For example, a passive sentence such as example (4) is derived from the deep structure given in (5a) by NP-postposing, which raises NP₁ *John* to the position of NP₃ in PP (see 5b), and NP-preposing, which moves NP₂ *Bill* to the location occupied by NP₁ *John* in the deep structure, as shown in (5c). Chomsky (1977) defines the two null categories, NP₁ in the subject position in (5b) and NP₂ in the object position in (5c), as phonetically unrealised traces of NP₁ (= *John*) and NP₂ (= *Bill*), respectively. These traces are assumed to be erased after the NP-movements.

(4) *Bill was hit by John.*

(5) Chomsky (1977, 7–8):

a. Deep-structure

[_{S'} COMP [_S NP₁ (= *John*) [_{VP} *be* [_{AP} *en* [_{VP} V (= *hit*)
NP₂ (= *Bill*) [_{PP} = *by* NP₃]]]]]]]

b. NP-postposing

[_{S'} COMP [_S NP₁ [_{VP} *be* [_{AP} *en* [_{VP} V (= *hit*) NP₂ (= *Bill*)
[PP *by* NP₁ (= *John*)]]]]]]]

c. NP-preposing

[_{S'} COMP [_S NP₂ (= *Bill*) [_{VP} *be* [_{AP} *en* [_{VP} V (= *hit*) NP₂
[_{PP} *by* NP₁ (= *John*)]]]]]]]

Chomsky's (1981; 1986) framework of Government and Binding Theory, which aims to account for linguistic phenomena through interactions between principles and parameters, hypothesises that passive sentences contain an A(rgument)-chain created by NP-movement. This surface-structure reflection of a

movement history must comply with the requirements of the Case Filter (6) and the Visibility Condition (7):

(6) Case Filter:

Every phonetically realised NP must be assigned (abstract) Case (Chomsky 1986, 73–74).

(7) Visibility Condition:

A chain is visible for theta-marking if it contains a Case position (Chomsky and Lasnik 1993).

For instance, (8a) and (8b) form A-chains —(*John*, e) and (*John*, e1, e2), respectively. In (8a), *John*, whose theta role is assigned by V *hit*, moves to the subject position from the object position to receive nominative case because of accusative case absorption by the passive morpheme.² In (8b), *John*, whose theta role is assigned by V *hit*, moves to the subject position of the embedded clause and then rises to the subject position of the matrix clause to receive nominative case. In both A-chains, the heads are in Case-marked positions and the tails are in theta-positions. Case is assumed to be transferred from the head to the tail in A-chain

² Case absorption by voice morphology occurs when a voice morpheme (e.g., passive or middle voice) on a verb causes the case marking on an argument (such as accusative or dative) to be neutralised or absorbed by the verb. This typically happens in passive constructions, where the object of an active sentence becomes the subject in the passive sentence, and the case marking on the object is lost or absorbed by the verb's morphology, reflecting the new syntactic role. It shows how languages can use verb morphology to indicate syntactic relations instead of case marking on noun phrases (see Kratzer 1994; Hale and Keyser 2002).

formation, making the terminal position visible for theta-marking and thereby fulfilling the Case Filter and the Visibility Condition.

(8) Chomsky (1986, 96)

- a. *John was hit e by a car.*
- b. *John seems [e₁ to have been hit e₂ by a car].*

In the framework of the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995), Collins (2005) investigates passives under the ‘smuggling’ approach to show how passives comply with the Uniformity of Theta Assignment Hypothesis, which Baker (1988, 46) defines as follows:

Identical thematic relationships between items are represented by identical structural relationships between those items at the level of D-structure.

According to this approach, *v* moves to the PART-head of PARTICIPLEP, which is located between *v*P and VP, to form the participle. Then PARTP raises to the Spec of VOICEP (‘smuggling’), thereby enabling the external theta role of the passive to be assigned in the same way as in actives.

(9) Collins (2005)

- a. [_{VOICEP} [_{VOICE'} *by* [_{VOICE} [_{vP} *John* [_{PARTP} *-en* [_{VP} *write the book*]]]]]]
- b. [_{VOICEP} [_{PARTP} *writt_j -en* [_{VP} *t_j the book*]]]_i [_{VOICE'} *by* [_{VOICE} [_{vP} *John t_i*]]]]

To sum up, all these analyses of English passives predict that passivisation is a fully productive process. This means that, in English,

almost every transitive verb is allowed to form a passive.³ This holds (more or less) for English and many other languages, suggesting that this prediction could be seen as a rule of Universal Grammar rather than just a rule of English grammar. However, it has been pointed out in the literature that passive formation is not equally productive across languages, indicating the non-generality of this prediction. Greek (both SMG and AMG) is a case in point (see Alexiadou et al. 2018).

4.0. Passives in Asia Minor Greek

In SMG and AMG, the same morphology used for a prototypical passive construction is employed also in non-active structures that are not passive in meaning and therefore lack an implicit agent (see Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou 2004 and references therein), such as verbal reflexives, reciprocals, and anticausatives. In SMG, these structures do not accept the counterparts of the English *by*-phrase, i.e., the agent of a passive sentence, which is either introduced by *apó* ‘from’ or implicit, in contrast to English, where the agent is typically marked by the preposition *by*.

³ However, it is important to note that not all transitive verbs in English can be passivised. Some transitive verbs, particularly those that are stative or involve psychological states, do not readily form passives. For example, the verb *resemble* is transitive but does not have a passive form (**Her mother is resembled by Kate* is ungrammatical). This limitation is due to semantic factors and the specific syntactic properties of certain verbs.

There are also several, sometimes poorly understood, restrictions on SMG passive formation. For instance, many change-of-state verbs strongly resist combining with the non-active (NACT) ending, necessary for forming a passive in SMG. Examples include *krióno* ‘cool.1SG’ (**kriónome* ‘cool.NACT’), *vaθέno* ‘deepen.1SG’ (**vaθέnome*.NACT), *ađinatízo* ‘thin.1SG’ (**ađinatízome*.NACT), *jernáo* ‘age.1SG’ (**jerázome*.NACT), etc. Arguably, some of these verbs belong to the group of ‘internally caused verbs’, i.e., unaccusative verbs that do not combine with an external argument. However, others, such as *krióno* ‘cool.1SG’, *vaθέno* ‘deepen.1SG’, etc., clearly have active transitive uses but still resist passivisation.

Similar restrictions are observed in AMG. For example, *anízo* ‘open’ cannot form **anizome* (Cappadocia), and *vrázo* ‘boil’ cannot form **vrázome* (Phárasa). Both verbs have active transitive uses but still resist passivisation.

Moreover, passivisation is also quite restricted with other verb classes. For instance, several mono-eventive verbs either cannot form a passive in SMG or do so marginally, unlike in English.⁴ Examples include *χαιδέvo* ‘stroke’ (**χαιδέvome*), *đerno* ‘beat’ (**đernome*), *klotsáo* ‘kick’ (**klotsáome*), and *frondízo* ‘take care of’ (**frondízome*). For example, the verb *klotsáo* ‘kick’ in sentence (10) cannot be passivised as intended in (10b) in SMG.

⁴ Mono-eventive verbs are verbs that describe a single event or action. In other words, these verbs express a single, unified activity or process. The key characteristic of mono-eventive verbs is that the action they denote cannot be divided into multiple sub-events; it is a singular, indivisible event (see Davidson 1967).

(10) Standard Modern Greek

- a. *to peđí klótsise tin bála.*
 the.NOM child.NOM kick.PST.3SG the.ACC ball.ACC
 ‘The child kicked the ball.’
- b. **klotstíθice*
 kick.PST.NACT.3SG
 ‘was kicked’

Similarly, in AMG, there are mono-eventive transitive verbs that resist passivisation. For example, *krúyo* ‘beat’ cannot form **krúyome* (Cappadocia), and *tiró* ‘take care of’ cannot form **terúme* (Pontus).

Furthermore, Alexiadou et al. (2006; 2015; 2018) noted that many SMG verbs are allowed to combine with non-active morphology, e.g., *céyome* ‘burn’, *kóvome* ‘cut’, *skotónome* ‘kill’, but only yield an anticausative, i.e., spontaneous, interpretation, not a passive one, i.e., caused by an external agent. They do not accept the SMG counterparts of *by*-phrases, for example. Similar gaps have been described for other languages, such as Palestinian Arabic (Laks 2009).

The same phenomenon occurs in AMG; for instance, *θerménome* ‘warm’ (Phárasa) has forms like *θermáθi* ‘he warmed himself’ (Dawkins 1916, 482) and *θermáθan* ‘they got warm’ (Dawkins 1916, 482); *káyome* ‘burn’ (Phárasa) has *kayúne* ‘to be burnt’ (Dawkins 1916, 526); and *kupanízo* ‘break’ (Phárasa) has *kópáne* as in *kópáne ta vráðe tune* ‘their tails broke off’ (Dawkins 1916, 500).

At this stage, it is crucial to mention that, in the Pontic Greek of Turkey, morphological passives are used but do not generally convey a passive meaning. However, the Pontic Greek of

Sürmene allows passives in constructions where both a theme and a recipient or beneficiary are present; only the theme can be passivised, as illustrated in (11) and (12a), whereas the theme of a simple transitive verb without a recipient or beneficiary cannot be passivised, as illustrated in (12b).⁵ Passivisation of the recipient or beneficiary is confined to double-accusative ditransitive clauses, where the recipient does not appear as a PP.

- (11) Pontic Greek of Sürmene (Michelioudakis and Sitaridou 2012, 236)

to *χartí* *eyráfte* *tin* *aišé.*
 the.NOM letter.NOM be.written.PST.3SG the.ACC Ayşe.ACC
 ‘The letter was written for Ayşe.’

- (12) Pontic Greek of Sürmene (Michelioudakis and Sitaridou 2012, 236)

a. *i* *pará* *tin* *aišé* *eđóste.*
 the.NOM money.NOM the.ACC Ayşe.ACC be.given.PST.3SG
 ‘The money was given to Ayşe.’

b. **i* *aišé* *eđóste* *tin* *parán.*
 the.NOM Ayşe.NOM be.given.PST.3SG the.ACC money.ACC
 ‘Ayşe was given the money.’

Languages like these pose a challenge for theories that assume every transitive verb should have a passive counterpart, and thus that it is impossible to exclude individual verbs and verb classes from forming passive constructions.

Alexiadou et al. (2018) propose two types of passive constructions across languages: one termed fully productive, where

⁵ The reason the recipient argument is preverbal in (12a) but postverbal in (11) is due to pragmatic factors (see Neocleous 2020).

passive sentences are consistently formed as observed in the Chomskyan approaches mentioned earlier; and the other termed semi-productive, which exhibits gaps in passive formation. They suggest the semantic analyses given in (13) and (14) for fully productive passives (of the type like English) and semi-productive passives (of the type like Greek), respectively.

They propose that a Passive Projection (PASSP), situated above VOICEP, selects an active VOICEP with an unchecked D-feature and lacking a specifier, as in (13b). The Voice head with a D-feature introduces an existentially bound agent variable. In contrast, the passive Voice in the other type of languages does not select a DP-specifier due to its lack of a D-feature, as shown in (14a). Passive voice introduces an existentially bound agent variable (see 14b) and combines with VP to form VOICEP, as depicted in (14c).

(13) English-type passives (fully productive):

- a. $[_{TP} T [_{PASSP} PASS [_{VOICEP} VOICE \{D\} [_{VP} V DP2]]]]]$
- b. $\llbracket PASS \rrbracket = \lambda_{fe, st} \lambda e [\exists x. f(x)(e)]$
- c. $\llbracket VOICEP \rrbracket = \lambda x \lambda e ([AGENT(e, x)] \text{ and } [V(e, DP2)])$
- d. $\llbracket PASSP \rrbracket = \exists x \lambda e ([AGENT(e, x)] \text{ and } [V(e, DP2)])$

(14) Greek-type passives (semi-productive):

- a. $[T \dots [_{VOICEP} VOICE_{\{\emptyset\}} [VP V DP2]]]]$
- b. $\llbracket VOICE_{PASS} \rrbracket = \exists x \lambda e [AGENT(e, x)]$
- c. $\llbracket VOICEP \rrbracket = \exists x \lambda e [AGENT(e, x)] \text{ and } [V(e, DP2)]$

Thus, from a semantic perspective, the difference between fully and semi-productive passives can be explained by the fact that, in semi-productive passives, but not in fully productive ones, existential closure is introduced at the level of the functional passive.

5.0. Conclusions

In conclusion, in languages like English, passivisation is a fully productive process, meaning that almost every transitive verb can form a passive. In SMG and AMG, however, passivisation is semi-productive, meaning that there are significant restrictions on the transitive verbs that can undergo passivisation. From a semantic perspective, the main difference between fully and semi-productive passives is that, in the former, the passive is derived from the active through the combination of a PASSP with an active VOICEP in an operation that occurs outside the verbal phase. Consequently, the only requirement for a verb to be passivised is that it is transitive. In contrast, in the latter, passive formation takes place within the verbal phase, where the passive voice combines with the VP to form VOICEP. As a result, this operation can be sensitive to the properties of individual lexical verbs, allowing only some verbs and verb classes to be passivised.

Abbreviations

Languages

AMG Asia Minor Greek

SMG Standard Modern Greek

Linguistic Terms

∃	existential quantifier	<i>e</i>	empty category
1, 2, 3	1st, 2nd, 3rd person	NACT	non-active ending
ACC	accusative case	NOM	nominative case
DP	determiner phrase	NP	nominal phrase

PASSP	passive projection	TP	tense projection
PST	past tense	VOICEP	voice projection
PP	prepositional phrase	VP	verb projection
SG	singular		

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8. PASSIVE FORMATION IN TURKIC: DIACHRONIC DEVELOPMENTS AND SYNCHRONIC PATTERNS WITH A FOCUS ON AZERI¹

Murad Suleymanov

Passives in Turkic languages have received little dedicated study but have been addressed in general overviews and grammatical descriptions of both historical and modern Turkic languages. This chapter examines the development of the passive voice in modern Turkic languages, with a focus on the Oghuz branch, the largest in terms of speaker population, and with particular attention to Azeri, a Western Oghuz language, spoken primarily in north-western Iran and in the South Caucasus.² The choice to focus on Azeri was motivated, first, by the fact that, in terms of both the form and function of passives, it is fairly representative of the vast majority of Turkic languages; and second, by its location at

¹ I extend my gratitude to Dorian Pastor (ENS–PSL, Paris) for his invaluable assistance and expertise which helped improve the quality of this chapter, as well as to two anonymous reviewers for their helpful commentary.

² For the purposes of this study, some glosses and translations of examples cited from published sources have been adapted.

the heart of a region where Semitic, Iranian, Armenian, and Turkic languages—those examined in this volume—are in contact. For a comprehensive overview of passive formation across Turkic languages, see Johanson (2021, 583–88).

Among the historical Turkic languages, ‘Old Turkic’ refers to the literary language of the Second Turkic Khaganate (a stage traditionally known as Orkhon Turkic) and, subsequently, of the Uyghur Khaganate (traditionally referred to as Old Uyghur). As the language of the easternmost periphery of the Turkic realm and undoubtedly a contemporary of other Turkic varieties, it is sometimes termed East Old Turkic (Johanson 2021). While it is not the direct ancestor of any Oghuz language, it represents the earliest written attestation of Turkic and is therefore a useful reference point for illustrating diachronic developments. ‘Old Anatolian Turkic’, often referred to as Old Anatolian Turkish or Old Azerbaijani, is the direct ancestor of Western Oghuz languages, spoken and written in West Asia—including beyond Anatolia—between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries.

Following conventional Turkic linguistic notation (e.g., Erdal 1991), in this chapter, capital *X* represents an archiphonemic high vowel that surfaces as *i*, *ï*, *ü*, or *u*. If the suffix is attested only with non-labial realisations, the vowel is noted as *I*; if only with labial ones, as *U*. Capital *A* represents a low vowel that alternates between *a* and *e~ä*, in accordance with the rules of vowel harmony.

1.0. Passive Morphology in Turkic

Ščerbak (1981, 109–10) and Juldašev (1988, 303–4) characterise Turkic passives as emphasising the undergoer's state of being affected, rather than the fact that the undergoer is affected by an action performed by an agent. By the time of the emergence of Old Turkic inscriptions in the eighth century AD, the passive already presented a well-established valency pattern. It was expressed through the suffixes *-(X)l*, *-tXl*, and *-tUrXl*, with the former being the most common (Erdal 1991, 651; 2004, 228). The latter two, *-tXl* (also realised as *-(X)tXl*) and *-tUrXl*, are historically a combination of the causative suffix *-(X)t* with the passive *-(X)l*, and the causative *-tUr* with the passive *-(X)l*, respectively.

ba- 'tie' → *ba-l-* 'be attached'

toki- 'strike' → *toki-til-* 'be struck'

ötün- 'present (a request)' → *ötün-dürül-* 'be humbly uttered'

The suffix *-(X)l* is found attached to both transitive and intransitive bases, e.g., *yer-* 'split' → *yer-il-* 'be split apart', *bat-* 'sink' → *bat-il-* 'be submerged' (Erdal 1991, 690–91; Clauson 1972, 298, 305, 955, 967).

Passive sentences are typically found without an explicit mention of the agent of the action (though agentive arguments are attested; see Tables 2 and 3). The construction serves to present the subject as undergoing an action, without indicating who performs it:

(1) Old Uyghur

- a. *buzaqū kim arslan-ka ked-il-ip*
 calf REL lion-DAT dress-PSV-CVB
 ‘a calf which is reincarnated [as] a lion’ (Clouston 1975, 703)
- b. *qamuğ öz yazuq-ka köm-ül-di bütün.*
 all spirit sin-DAT bury-PSV-PST:3 completely
 ‘I am completely buried in all my sins.’ (Clouston 1975, 722)

In most modern Turkic languages, the passive is formed by means of the following suffixes:

- n*, used after vowel-final stems (in Kipchak: usually with denominal verb stems ending in -*la*; in Azeri and in Karluk: with all vowel-final polysyllabic stems);
- Xn*, used after stems ending in *l*;
- l*, used in Eastern Oghuz and in Kipchak, after vowel-final polysyllabic stems not accepting -*n*;
- (*y*)*Xl*, used elsewhere.

Table 1: Passive formations in Azeri and Kumyk

	‘spend’ → ‘be spent’ ³	‘play’ → ‘be played’	‘seize’ → ‘be seized’	‘wash’ → ‘be washed’
Azeri	<i>xärj-lä-</i> → <i>xärj-lä-n-</i>	<i>oyna-</i> → <i>oyna-n-</i>	<i>al-</i> → <i>al-in-</i>	<i>yu-</i> → <i>yu-yul-</i>
Kumyk	<i>xarž-la-</i> → <i>xarž-la-n-</i>	<i>oyna-</i> → <i>oyna-l-</i>	<i>al-</i> → <i>al-in-</i>	<i>žuw-</i> → <i>žuw-ul-</i>

³ Derived from *xärj* / *xarž* ‘expenditure’.

Verbs that derive passives via *-n* and *-Xn*—henceforth *-(X)n*—may exhibit ambiguity, as they can also have reflexive or middle readings, e.g., Turkish *yıka-* ‘wash’ → *yıka-n-* ‘be washed’ or ‘wash (oneself)’, Crimean Tatar *gizle-* ‘hide’ → *gizle-n-* ‘be hidden’ or ‘hide (oneself)’ (Johanson 2021, 585). This ambiguity is widespread across most Turkic languages and results from an overlap in the morphophonological distribution of the passive suffixes with the reflexive-middle suffix *-(X)n* (Zaslansky 2023, 169). The ambiguity can also operate in the opposite direction, as some verbs formed with *-l* and *-Xl*—henceforth *-(X)l*—can also have middle interpretations, e.g., Old Turkic *sār-il-* ‘persevere’ ← *sār-* ‘bear, endure’ (Erdal 1991, 691), Azeri *göş-ul-* ‘join (itr.)’ ← *göş-* ‘connect (tr.)’, Turkish *boz-ul-* ‘break down (itr.)’ ← *boz-* ‘destroy’ (Johanson 2021, 586), Kumyk *yaz-ıl-* ‘subscribe (itr.)’ ← *yaz-* ‘write’ (Gadžiaxmedov 2014, 279), Karaim *yanč-il-* ‘beat (itr.)’ (*re* heart) ← *yanč-* ‘beat (tr.)’ (Musaev 1964, 252, who attributes this to contact with Slavic, where passive and middle morphology often overlaps).

Azeri varieties show uniformity in passive formation. For example, Khalkhal Azeri and Urmia Azeri (Karini 2009, 281, 284; Doğan 2010, 277, 289), both spoken in Iran, use *de-yil-* ‘be said’ and *ye-yil-* ‘be eaten’, in line with *de-yil-* and *ye-yil-* as found in Standard Azeri—which is based on the eastern dialects of Azerbaijan—and in contrast to Standard Turkish *de-n-* and *ye-n-*.

2.0. Origins of Passive Morphology in Turkic

There is no consensus regarding the origin of passive $-(X)l$. It is generally accepted that $-(X)l$ developed independently of $-(X)n$ and that their complementary distribution is not attested in earlier stages of Turkic, such as Old Uyghur, only emerging in the modern era (Ščerbak 1981, 108, 110; Erdal 1991, 690). Sevortjan (1962, 94–95) argues that the active–passive distinction in Turkic developed from strategies for marking transitivity, as, according to him, Turkic verbs originally lacked this distinction. He believes suffixes associated with valency reduction—which he refers to as “voice suffixes”—to be originally derivational markers of frequency and intensity (Sevortjan 1962, 487), though he does not specify their exact grammaticalisation path. Serebrennikov (1976, 31), building on Sevortjan’s idea, suggests a scenario for the grammaticalisation of hypothetical frequentative $-(X)l$, according to which it was originally used to derive verbs with stative properties, leading to a reduction in the agent’s activity as the first step towards developing into the passive. He further proposes a shared origin with the deadjectival suffix $-(A)l$, which indicates the acquisition of a quality, e.g., Azeri *ğisa* ‘short’ → *ğisa-l-* ‘become short’, *boš* ‘empty’ → *boš-al-* ‘become empty’, and even goes on to make what appears to be a somewhat questionable claim that the passive reading developed different vocalism—taking the shape of $-(X)l$ —in order to avoid ambiguity with verbs denoting the acquisition of a quality (Serebrennikov 1976, 31). A similar claim is made by Juldašev (1988, 303), who, however, does not explain why or how the two forms diverged.

Ščerbak (1981, 106), while not explicitly criticising Serebrennikov's theory regarding the frequentative origin of $-(X)l$, cites earlier works (Salemman 1891; Bang 1916), which propose that $-(X)l$ may have formed from fused constructions involving the root $(b)ol-$ 'become' originally used as an auxiliary, noting that this is a well-supported, albeit older, alternative to Serebrennikov's hypothesis. Serebrennikov (1976, 32) furthermore suggests that $-(X)n$ may have originated as a marker of recurrent action, which subsequently developed into a mediopassive marker. According to him, recurrent actions tend to be indicative of lower agentivity of the performer, which may have facilitated this semantic shift. Later, due to functional similarities, mediopassive $-(X)n$ became conflated with passive $-(X)l$ and the two began to appear in complementary distribution.

It appears that the suffix $-(X)n$ originally functioned as a generic detransitivising morpheme, possibly at one time serving to derive resultative-stative verbs from nouns and adjectives, as suggested by Juldašev (1988, 303). The suffix $-(X)l$, by contrast, was the original marker of passive voice. Subsequently, due to being increasingly associated with mediopassive semantics on the one hand (for a more detailed discussion of this process, along with typological parallels, see Haspelmath 1987) and dissimilation on the other hand, $-(X)n$ came to mark passives on l -final stems. This dissimilatory pattern seems to have extended to denominal verbs in $-lA$ (see Table 1), which also adopted the suffix $-n$ for passive formation. In Western and Southern Oghuz, given that all stems in $-lA$ are polysyllabic and vowel-final, the use of $-n$ was ultimately generalised to all polysyllabic vocalic stems.

Passives are uncommon in spoken Azeri as used in both Azerbaijan and Iran and tend to be more register-dependent than dialect-dependent. For instance, sample recordings of personal narratives by five Baku Azeri speakers, totalling 70 minutes and recorded by the author in an informal setting in 2012–2013, contained fewer than ten instances of passive verb use. By contrast, a corpus of the same duration, consisting of residents of Baku discussing topics related to their area of expertise in a format similar to TED Talks and intended for online dissemination, featured over sixty such tokens.

The high frequency of passive forms in ‘educated speech’ is likely attributable to the influence of Standard Russian (in Azerbaijan) and Standard Persian (in Iran), both of which, like Western European languages, make abundant use of passives.

In the spoken register, passive semantics are often conveyed by impersonal constructions, the most common one consisting of subjectless sentences with active verbs conjugated in the third person plural, e.g. *X tut-du-lar* [catch-PST:3-PL] lit. ‘They caught X’, as opposed to *X tut-ul-du* [catch-PSV-PST:3] ‘X was caught’.

3.0. Passives Derived from Transitive Verbs

In active sentences, most modern Turkic languages distinguish between non-referential and referential direct objects,⁴ with the former appearing in the nominative case, like the agent, and the latter in the accusative:

⁴ Johanson (2021, 944–50) refers to this parameter as “specificity.”

(2) Azeri

- a. *fatma kitab al-di.*
 Fatma.NOM book get-PST:3
 ‘Fatma bought a book/books.’
- b. *fatma kitab-ı al-di.*
 Fatma.NOM book-ACC get-PST:3
 ‘Fatma bought the book.’

When the predicate is a passive verb derived from an active transitive verb, the undergoer transforms into the syntactic subject and is thus marked in the nominative case, leading to referentiality no longer being salient.

(3) Azeri

- kitab al-in-di.*
 book get-PST:3
 ‘A book was bought / Books were bought.’
 ‘The book was bought.’

Ščerbak (1981, 106–7), quoting G‘ulomov (1941, 9), and Johanson (2021, 826) both mention a typologically remarkable, ergative-like construction in Karluk languages, which goes back to Chaghatay but is said to exist in modern-day Uzbek and Uyghur, and involves an undergoer coded as the direct object when it is topical:

(4) Chaghatay

- ol ramazān-ni xoĵand-ta ötkär-il-di.*
 that Ramadan-ACC Khujand-LOC spend-PSV-PST:3
 ‘That (month of) Ramadan was spent in Khujand.’ (Johanson 2021, 826)

(5) Uzbek

- âş-ni ye-yil-di.*
 pilaf-ACC eat-PSV-PST:3
 ‘Pilaf has been eaten.’ (Ščerbak 1981, 107)

Consulted speakers of modern Uzbek and Uyghur describe such constructions as characteristic of Chaghatay literary texts, but do not consider them grammatical in their respective native languages today.

4.0. Passives Derived from Intransitive Verbs

Intransitive verbs can also derive passives, which yields subjectless, impersonal clauses (Johanson 2021, 826–27). These passives share the same morphological structure as those derived from transitive verbs, e.g., Azeri *daniš-* ‘talk’ → *daniš-il-* ‘be talked about’; *get-* ‘go’ → *ged-il-* ‘be attended’. The oblique argument retains the case marking it bears in the corresponding active sentence, while no argument can be encoded as the syntactic subject:

(6) Azeri

- a. *fatma mäktäb-ä get-di.*
 Fatma school-DAT go-PST:3
 ‘Fatma went to school.’
- b. *mäktäb-ä ged-il-di.*
 school-DAT go-PSV-PST:3
 ‘One went to school.’ (i.e., ‘School was attended.’)

Such passives are rarely encountered in everyday speech in Azeri and are typically confined to formal registers. They were already uncommon in Old Anatolian Turkic (Sultanzade 2001, 39) but are attested in Mahmud al-Kashgari’s eleventh-century dictionary of Turkic:

(7) Middle Turkic

- a. *yer-kä baḡ-il-di.*
 place-DAT look-PSV-PST:3
 ‘Land was gazed at.’ (Nadeljaev et al. 1969, 82)

- b. *äv-din* *çık-ıl-dı*
 house-ABL exit-PSV-PST:3
 ‘The house was evacuated.’ (Dankoff and Kelly 1984, 30)

A special subset of intransitive verbs deriving passives—encountered in Turkish, though considered marginal—consists of verbs which are already passive and receive additional passive marking to form an impersonal construction expressing a property (Göksel and Kerslake 2005, 136), e.g. *vur-* ‘hit, shoot’ → *vur-ul-* ‘be hit, be shot’ → *vur-ul-un-*:

(8) Turkish

- harp-te vur-ul-un-ur*.
 war-LOC hit-PSV-PSV-AOR:3
 ‘One gets shot in war.’ (Özkaragöz 1986, 76)

A small group of intransitive Azeri verbs with ambiguous passive, reflexive, or middle readings can form unambiguously passive constructions when agentivity is more pronounced or, alternatively, when the undergoer ranks higher on the affectedness scale, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Agentive passives of reflexive-middle intransitives

Active transitive	Intransitive: passive-reflexive-middle	Agentive passive
<i>ödä-</i> ‘pay’ →	<i>ödä-n-</i> ‘be paid’ (cf. colloquial French <i>se régler, se payer</i>)	→ <i>ödä-n-il-</i> ‘be paid’ (cf. French <i>être réglé, être payé</i>)
<i>işlä-</i> ‘work, handle, process’ →	<i>işlä-n-</i> ‘be used’ (cf. colloquial French <i>s'utiliser</i>)	→ <i>işlä-n-il-</i> ‘be used’ (cf. French <i>être utilisé</i>)

(9) Azeri

- a. *maaş vaxtında* *ödä-n-ir.*
 salary in_a_timely_manner pay-MID-PRS:3
 ‘Salaries are paid in a timely manner.’ (i.e., They reach the employees’ bank accounts as scheduled.)
- b. *alimət vaxtında* *ödä-n-il-ir.*
 alimony in_a_timely_manner pay-MID-PSV-PRS:3
 ‘Alimony is paid in a timely manner.’ (i.e., The parent takes the necessary steps to ensure that payment is made.)

Interestingly, passive-reflexive-middle verbs of denominal origin ([noun + *-lan*] < [noun + *-la* + *-n*]) cannot derive agentive passives unless they are first made causative:

Table 3: Derivation of Azeri passive, causative, and agentive passive forms from nouns

Noun	Passive-reflexive-middle	Causative	Agentive passive
<i>ad</i> ‘(a) name’	→ <i>adlan-</i> ‘be called, bear the name of’	→ <i>adlan-dir-</i> ‘(to) name’	→ <i>adlan-dir-il-</i> ‘be called, be identified as’
<i>färg</i> ‘difference’	→ <i>färglän-</i> ‘differ’	→ <i>färglän-dir-</i> ‘differentiate’	→ <i>färglän-dir-il-</i> ‘be differentiated’

5.0. Passives Derived from Complex Predicates

Complex predicates have been attested in Turkic since the earliest records (Tekin 1968, 118; Anderson 2004, 9; Eraslan 2012, 423), and their inventory has expanded due to increased contact with Indo-European, with most complex predicates now featuring coverbs of non-Turkic origin. Today, alongside denominal

derivations in *-LA* (see Table 1), complex predicates are the most productive means of copying verbs from contact languages. These include transitive complex predicates formed with the light verbs *et-*, *ķil-*, and *ģin-*, all meaning ‘do, make’, and their cognates (Johanson 2021, 578).⁵

Old Anatolian Turkic uses the light verbs *it-* (cognate with *et-*), and less commonly *ķil-* and *eylä-*. Interestingly, the most common passive counterpart of these verbs is formed not with their respective passive derivatives but rather with the verb *ol-* ‘be, become’, which is a cognate of Old Turkic *bol-*, and increasingly with the latter’s passive derivative *ol-un-*, which did not exist in Old Turkic. The morphological passive of *it-*, i.e., *id-il-*, is, according to Erdem (2007, 205), unattested and occurs as the passive counterpart of *it-* only in the later Ottoman period. The Old Anatolian Turkic dictionary by Kanar (2018), however, contradicts this (see p. 273, *feth id-il-* ‘be conquered’ as the passive of *feth it-* ‘conquer’).

Table 4: Old Anatolian Turkic and Ottoman Turkish transitivity alternation for a complex predicate

Noun	Transitive verb	Intransitive verb
<i>fāth</i> (< Arabic <i>fath</i>) ‘conquest’	→ <i>fāth it-</i> , <i>fāth ķil-</i> , <i>fāth eylā-</i> ‘conquer’	→ <i>fāth ol-</i> , <i>fāth id-il-</i> , <i>fāth ol-un-</i> ‘be conquered’

Azeri has inherited this strategy; copied coversbs are commonly combined with the light verbs *et-* (descended from *it-*) and *elā-* (descended from *eylä-*) to form transitive verbs, e.g., *ģābul et-*

⁵ Anderson (2004, 9) believes the dividing point is affectedness rather than transitivity.

or *gäbul elä-* ‘accept’ ← *gäbul* ‘admission’ (← Arabic *qabül* ‘granting, consent’); *sübut et-* or *sübut elä-* ‘prove’ ← *sübut* ‘proof’ (← Arabic *ṣubūt* ‘proof’). In modern Azeri, the difference between the two is purely stylistic: *et-* is associated with formal register while *elä-* is colloquial.

The light verb *ol-* ‘be, become’ today occurs as the passive counterpart of *et-* and *elä-* only in a limited number of passive verbs, e.g., *gäbul ol-* ‘be admitted (i.e., to an academic institution)’, *xilas ol-* ‘be saved’ ← *xilas* ‘salvation’ (← Arabic *xalāṣ* ‘liberation, deliverance’). The vast majority of passive verbs are formed with either *ed-il-* (the passive of *et-*)⁶ or *ol-un-* (the passive of *ol-*), which are nearly synonymous, e.g., *sübut ed-il-* or *sübut ol-un-* ‘be proven’, *täklif ed-il-* or *täklif ol-un-* ‘be offered’ (← Arabic *taklif* ‘assignment’).⁷ Sultanzade (2001, 42) believes that the range of use of *ol-un-* was much broader in Old Anatolian Turkic than in modern Azeri, where *ol-un-* can always be replaced with *ed-il-* but not vice versa.

According to Hashemi-Zarajabad (2015, 576), in Azeri as spoken in Iran, passive counterparts of complex predicates formed with *elä-* tend to exhibit *ol-* among fully bilingual Azeri–Persian speakers and *ol-un-* among speakers with a weaker command of Persian, e.g., *ihatä elä-* ‘surround’ vs *ihatä ol-* ‘be surrounded’ (former group) / *ihatä ol-un-* ‘be surrounded’ (latter group). The author argues that an equivalence relation has been

⁶ The verb *elä-* has no passive derivative.

⁷ Alongside *xilas ol-* ‘be saved’ mentioned above, Azeri also exhibits the more agentive alternatives *xilas ed-il-* and *xilas ol-un-*, though this trichotomy is rather exceptional.

established between Azeri *ol-* and Persian *šodan* ‘become’—a typical light verb used in intransitive complex predicates in Persian—which, unlike its Azeri counterpart, does not and cannot undergo morphological passivisation.

In some cases, variation can be observed within the speech of a single individual, e.g., *istifadə ol(-un)-* ‘be used’:

(10) Urmia Azeri

- a. *yari-si istifadə ol-ardı, yari-si heş*
 half-POSS:3 usage be-EVT.PST:3 half-POSS:3 at_all
istifadə ol-mazdı.
 usage be-NEG.EVT.PST:3
 ‘One half would be used, (while) the other half would not be used at all.’ (Doğan 2010, 328)
- b. *çox belä üräyä yapışan və gözäl musiqi*
 a_lot such:PROX pleasurable and beautiful music
kimin-dä istifadə ol-un-ur.
 as=ADD usage be-PSV-PRS:3
 ‘And it is used now as a form of pleasant and beautiful music.’ (Doğan 2010, 326)

Other light verbs undergo passivisation in the same way as lexical verbs. In complex predicates where the coverb was originally a non-referential direct object, it becomes the syntactic subject of the passivised light verb, e.g., *zäng vur-* ‘telephone’ (lit. ‘strike a ring’).

(11) Azeri

- a. *fatma män-ä zäng vur-du.*
 Fatma I-DAT ring hit-PST:3
 ‘Fatma called me on the telephone.’

- b. *män-ä zäng vur-ul-du.*
 I-DAT ring hit-PSV-PST:3
 ‘I was called on the telephone.’

6.0. Agent Encoding

Old Turkic passive constructions exhibit a structure in which the agent of the action may be either omitted or overtly expressed. When verbs in *-(X)l* occur with oblique nominal arguments, these arguments may receive a wide range of interpretations, from locative to instrumental to agentive. They appear in various forms, the most frequent being in the dative case and with the postposition *üzä* ‘on, above’ (Erdal 1991, 692–93).

While earlier texts show ambiguity in the interpretation of the dative argument, later texts provide clear examples in which it functions agentively:

(12) Old Uyghur

- a. *kertgünč-süz äzüg sav-iŋa ar-il-ipan*
 faith-PRIV false word-POSS:3.OBL.DAT deceive-PSV-CVB
 ‘deceived by mendacious speech’ (Erdal 1991, 692, own translation)
- b. *an-ij ara-sin-ta bo sav-lar*
 that.OBL-GEN space-POSS:3.OBL-LOC this word-PL
pir(a)s(i)nači elig-kä äšid-il-ti.
 Prasenajit ruler-DAT hear-PSV-PST:3
 ‘In the meantime, these matters were heard by king Prasenajit.’ (Erdal 1991, 692)

Similarly to the dative case, the postposition *üzä* ‘on, above, by’ can convey either an ambiguous instrumental or agentive function (13a), or a more clearly agentive function (13b). Erdal (1991, 693) describes the agentive function of *üzä* as rare, explaining these instances either as a means of disambiguating agents (in (13), for instance, the act of throwing is performed by a different agent to the acts of pressing and burying) or as structural copies from Sanskrit:

(13) Old Uyghur

- a. *oy-ta kämiš-il-ip tut_učuz bol-maḳ-lig toz*
 hole-LOC throw-PSV-CVB ashamed become-VN-ADJVZ dust
tup'raḳ üzä köm-il-ti-lär bas-il-ti-lar.
 earth by bury-PSV-PST-3PL sink-PSV-PST-3PL
 ‘They were thrown into a hole and buried [and] pressed down by/with the dust [and] the earth of despicableness.’ (Erdal 1991, 692)
- b. *nätäg täñri burxan üzä nomla-l-miš är-sär*
 how God Buddha on profess-PSV-PTCP be-COND
ol po yertenčö-tä yaltri-yur.
 that this world-LOC shine-AOR:3
 ‘As has been professed by Buddha, who shines in this world.’ (Erdal 1991, 693)

In modern Turkic languages, the encoding of agents in passive constructions varies significantly, suggesting that this syntactic operation represents a relatively late grammatical development.

Strategies for agent encoding include the use of the ablative in Middle Kipchak and in Middle Oghuz, the instrumental in Yakut,⁸ or, in the case of Turkish, the equative—especially when the agent is a collective noun:

(14) Middle Kipchak

burun alay ayt-ıl-di päyyambär-dän.

before such:DIST say-PSV-PST:3 prophet-ABL

‘In the past, thus spoke the prophet.’ (Ščerbak 1981, 106)

(15) Middle Oghuz

çok göñül-lär yäymala-n-di sän yüzü mehparä-dän.

a_lot heart-PL pillage-PSV-PST:3 you moon + faced-ABL

‘Many hearts were ravaged by you, the moon-faced one.’

(Sultanzade 2001, 32)

(16) Turkish

bu toplantı okul-umuz-ja düzenle-n-di.

this meeting school-POSS:1PL-EQV organise-PSV-PST:3

‘This meeting was organised by our school.’ (Göksel and Kerslake 2005, 135)

In languages with a history of contact with Persian—particularly within the Oghuz, Karluk, and much of the Kipchak branch—agents are typically expressed through postpositional phrases derived from nouns meaning ‘side’. Such agentive constructions are generally restricted to formal or literary usage

⁸ Stachowski and Menz (1998, 432) and Johanson (2021, 826) mention, though without citing any examples, that the instrumental case can encode the agent in Yakut. However, this view is challenged by Ebata (2013, 20), who argues, based on elicitations, that such usage is ungrammatical, at least with human agents. Ščerbak (1981, 106) provides an example with the instrumental marking a non-human agent.

(Ščerbak 1981, 106). An example is Turkish *tarafından* (← *taraf-ın-dan* [side-POSS:3.OBL-ABL], from Arabic *ṭaraf* ‘tip, edge’, structurally copied from Persian *az taraf-e* [from side-EZ]) ‘by him/her/it’:

(17) Turkish

en iyi oyun bir-injī sınıf öğrenjī-ler-i
 SUPER good game one-ORD class student-PL-POSS:3
taraf-ın-dan hazırla-n-miş.
 side-POSS:3.OBL-ABL prepare-PSV-EVID:PST:3

‘The best play was performed by the first-year students.’
 (Göksel and Kerslake 2005, 135)

In Azeri, agent encoding is also possible with passives derived from intransitive verbs whose oblique argument is [+affected]. Nevertheless, this usage remains marked, even in formal registers—where impersonal passives typically occur—since the primary function of such constructions is to background the agent:

(18) Azeri

şikayət-ä hakim tərəf-in-dän bax-il-di.
 complaint-DAT judge side-POSS:3.OBL-ABL look-PSV-PST:3

‘The complaint was examined (lit. looked at) by the judge.’

It is noteworthy that these postpositional phrases have not been fully grammaticalised: the possessive suffix varies with the person of the agent, e.g., Turkish *tarafından* (← *taraf-ım-dan* [side-POSS:1SG-ABL]) ‘by me’, *tarafınızdan* (← *taraf-ünüz-dan* [side-POSS:2PL-ABL]) ‘by you (PL)’, etc.

7.0. Conclusion

The study of passives in Turkic reveals a complex system of voice marking shaped by historical developments, morphophonological constraints and semantic distinctions. The coexistence and partial functional overlap of the suffixes *-(X)n* and *-(X)l* reflect long-standing processes of grammaticalisation and distributional reorganisation, with each suffix tracing a distinct developmental trajectory. Modern Oghuz and Kipchak languages, especially Azeri, exhibit a high degree of morphological regularity in passive formation, although traces of earlier derivational ambiguities persist. The significant typological questions raised by the Turkic passive system—particularly those concerning voice, valency, and argument structure—as well as the considerable impact of language contact on the use and behaviour of passive constructions, call for further focussed and dialect-specific investigation.

Abbreviations

ABL	ablative	EVID	evidential
ACC	accusative	EVT	eventual
ADD	additive	EZ	ezafe
ADJVZ	adjectiviser	GEN	genitive
AOR	aorist	LOC	locative
COND	conditional	MID	middle
CVB	converb	NEG	negative
DAT	dative	NOM	nominative
DIST	distal	OBL	oblique
EQV	equative	ORD	ordinal

PL	plural	PSV	passive
POSS	possessive	PTCP	participle
PRIV	privative	REL	relativiser
PROX	proximal	SG	singular
PRS	present	SUPER	superlative
PST	past (preterite)	VN	verbal noun

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INDEX

- ablative, 87, 290, 292, 352, 354
ablaut, 29, 225
absolute, 54, 204 n. 1
accusative, 6, 17, 51, 84, 289,
291, 309, 323, 328, 330,
342, 354
A-chain, 323
active, 5–9, 11, 18, 27, 30, 33–
34, 36–39, 44–45, 47, 52,
59, 64, 66–68, 71, 73–74,
76–78, 81, 86, 110, 115,
117, 124–25, 133–35, 138,
155, 158, 169, 173, 182,
214–15, 258, 268, 277,
282–85, 288–93, 298–305,
308–10, 318, 320–21, 323
n. 2, 324, 326, 329–30, 340,
342–45. *See also* causative
active participle, *see under*
participle
actor, 18, 122, 190, 238, 295
adjective, adjectival, 41, 79–80,
88, 135, 137, 153, 168, 207
n. 6, 209, 214, 218, 219 n. 9,
222, 224 n. 14, 263–65, 272–
73, 288, 299, 304, 306, 341
verbal adjective, 7, 13–14,
79, 81, 153, 219, 291, 308.
See also participle
affectedness, 34, 60, 90, 345,
347 n. 5
affix, affixation, 9, 11, 29–31,
33, 41, 44–45, 66–67, 155,
215, 218, 243, 286, 299, 307
derivational affix, 43, 64,
67, 72, 208–9, 340
inflectional affix, 32, 167,
207–9
prefix, 30, 33, 35–36, 38,
43–45, 75–76, 111, 114 n. 6,
134, 138, 153, 155, 156 n.
3, 171, 208–9, 269
suffix, 6, 10, 12, 35–36, 41–
42, 45, 72, 75–76, 81–82, 86,
111–12, 140, 153, 156, 159,
166, 169–71, 184, 188–89,
203, 205–8, 210–12, 215,
240–44, 247–50, 251 n. 9,
252, 254–55, 257–59, 262–
63, 268–69, 271–72, 281,
285–86, 304, 336–41, 353–
54
agent, 6, 8–9, 11, 13–18, 27,
55, 60, 64, 66–69, 74–75,
80–81, 83–91, 112, 117, 118
n. 10, 119–25, 140, 152,
160–62, 165, 167–68, 173–
75, 177–81, 183–91, 237,
241–42, 250, 252, 255, 269–
71, 281 n. 1, 286–92, 296,
297 n. 6, 298, 303–4, 306–

- 9, 325, 327, 329, 337, 340, 342, 350–53
- agent complement, 55 n. 13, 59, 66, 90, 181
- agent component, 12, 255
- agent encoding, 350, 352–53
- agent-orientated, 14, 66, 81, 163, 167, 177
- demoted agent, 126
- focalised agent, 178, 189–91
- implicit agent, 132 n. 15, 177, 325
- indefinite agent, 15, 119–20, 127, 129, 131
- oblique agent, 12, 16–17, 65, 87, 90, 118–19, 139, 152, 177–79, 181, 189, 290
- agentive, agentivity, 10, 61, 66–67, 122, 124, 160, 162–63, 169, 188, 190, 250, 258, 269–70, 272, 298, 337, 341, 345–46, 348 n. 7, 350–52
- agentive passive, *see under* passive
- agentless, 16–17, 19, 122, 173, 183–88, 190–91, 242, 270
- agglutinative, 277, 282–83
- agreement, 17, 52, 84, 125, 127–29, 187, 191, 204–5, 208, 214–15, 290, 293
- agreement marker, 204–7, 211, 310
- agreement system, 17, 84, 202, 204, 206
- object agreement, 204–5
- person-number agreement, 205 n. 3, 206–7, 220 n. 10
- subject agreement, 53, 127–28, 204, 206, 211
- alignment, 111, 166, 290–91
- allomorphy, 209
- ambiguity, 123, 131, 242 n. 6, 277, 283, 285, 291–93, 306, 308–10, 339–40, 345, 350–51, 354
- voice ambiguity, *see under* voice
- ambitransitive, 46–47, 258
- A-marking, *see* optional A-marking
- Amedia, 169, 178
- analogical extension, 43, 82, 226
- analogy, 82, 159, 222 n. 11
- Anatolia, 1, 3, 278, 283, 317, 336
- animate, animacy, 205
- anticausative, 9–11, 31, 43–44, 68, 70, 110, 121, 123–24, 129, 134–36, 139, 161–62, 166, 172, 241, 249–50, 255–59, 263, 269, 272, 277, 281 n. 1, 286–87, 291, 295, 309–10, 325, 327
- aorist, 278, 282, 284, 286, 295, 299–302, 304 n. 9, 309–10, 354

- Arabic, 4, 11–12, 19–20, 25, 27, 29–30, 32–33, 37, 42–43, 45, 46 n. 2, 48–49, 73 n. 23, 76, 79 n. 24, 134, 135 n. 16, 137–39, 156 n. 3, 157–58, 278, 327, 347–48, 353
- Anatolian Arabic, 139
- Bahraini Arabic, 30
- Cairene Arabic, 46 n. 2
- Classical Arabic, 31, 39, 42, 49–50, 57 n. 14, 59 n. 17, 74–76
- Maltese Arabic, 30
- Najdi Arabic, 76–77
- Quranic Arabic, 29, 50
- qeltu*-Arabic, 45, 49
- Syrian Arabic, 30, 77
- Aradhin, 163, 178
- Aramaic, 4, 17, 25–28, 32–35, 39–49, 50 n. 11, 51, 55, 59–60, 64–66, 71, 74, 78–81, 85–87, 89–90, 110–11, 112 n. 5, 113–14, 134–37, 139, 150, 153, 155, 157, 181, 278, 290
- Biblical Aramaic (BA), 26, 34, 36, 39–43, 65, 78, 81–82, 87, 157
- Classical Aramaic, 48–49, 153–54
- Eastern Aramaic, 26, 83
- epigraphic Aramaic, 39, 86
- Imperial Aramaic, 19, 26, 86–88
- Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (JBA), 26, 56–58, 63–64, 69
- Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, 26, 30, 47, 75, 135
- Late (Antique) Aramaic, 26, 83, 88, 157
- Mandaic, *see separate entry*
- Middle Aramaic, 135–36
- Neo-Aramaic, *see separate entry*
- Old Aramaic, 39, 135. *See also* epigraphic Aramaic
- Palestinian Aramaic, 56
- Syriac, *see separate entry*
- Targum Aramaic (TA), 26, 35–36, 52–53, 68, 70–71, 73 n. 23, 157. *See also* Palestinian Aramaic
- Western Aramaic, 26, 43
- Arbel, 164
- argument, 6, 8–9, 11, 15, 17–18, 27, 35–36, 39, 51, 54–55, 61, 65–66, 72–73, 75, 83, 88–90, 111–12, 125, 136 n. 18, 152, 165, 172, 186–88, 218, 258, 269–70, 290, 298, 323 n. 2, 328 n. 5, 337, 344, 350, 353–54
- external argument, 270–71, 317, 326
- internal argument, 270
- Arkaḥ, 109
- Armenia, 151, 279, 307

- Armenian, 1–2, 7, 9, 12–14, 19–20, 180, **277–315**, 336
 Classical Armenian (CA), 13, 277–79, 282–85, 287–91, 299–300, 302–4, 308–10
 Eastern Armenian, 299–300
 Hadrut, 296–97
 Kessab, 306–8
 Khoy/Urmia, 299 n. 7, 300–301, 306–8
 Middle Armenian, 277–79, 282, 293–94, 304, 306, 309
 Modern Armenian, 278, 282, 294–95, 299, 305, 308–9
 Mush, 302–7
 Standard Eastern Armenian (SEA), 279, 282, 291–92, 295, 296–297 n. 5, 297 n. 6, 298–300, 303–6, 308–10
 Standard Western Armenian (SWA), 279, 292, 296–97, 302, 304 n. 9, 305–6, 309–10
 Van, 300–301, 306–7
 Western Armenian, 278, 302
- Armenian genocide, 279
- Artsakh, 296
- aspect, 66, 85, 110–11, 116, 127, 139, 171, 183, 205 n. 4, 208 n. 8, 210, 240, 243, 254, 263, 265, 268–69, 271–73, 282, 317
- Assyrian, *see* Neo-Aramaic
- attributive, 153, 207 n. 6, 218
- autobenefactive, 9, 71
- autocausative, 70, 110, 111 n. 3, 121–22, 124, 129, 249–50, 255, 258, 269
- auxiliary, 7, 90, 151, 173, 176, 180–82, 203, 205 n. 4, 212, 217–18, 220, 226, 241, 243, 263–64, 268, 272, 291, 303, 341
- Azerbaijan, 149, 151, 279, 339, 342
- Azeri, 1, 4, 7, 11, 14–15, 19, 180–81, 236 n. 2, 237, 278, 297, **335–58**
 Baku Azeri, 14, 342
 Khalkhal Azeri, 339
 Urmia Azeri, 339, 349
- Barwar, 183
- Bax‘a, 159
- Baz, 178
- Betanure, 175–76, 185
- Bithynia, 318
- borrowing, 137–38, 199, 219, 227
 lexical borrowing, 138, 199, 221, 224 n. 14
 semantic borrowing, 220–21
- Bsorino, 109
- calque, 220. *See also* semantic borrowing *under* borrowing
- Canaanite, 25, 37, 159
- Cappadocia, 318, 326–27
- Case Filter, 323–24

- case marking, 178, 191, 204 n. 1, 290, 293, 309, 323 n. 2, 344
- Caspian, *see under* Northwestern Iranian languages
- Caucasian languages, 278
- Caucasus, 1, 3, 151, 278, 285, 335
- causative, 11, 32, 39–41, 44, 46–47, 68, 74, 110 n. 2, 114, 153–55, 162–63, 165, 171, 191, 204, 207–8, 210, 215, 227, 242, 248–49, 255–59, 263, 268, 272–73, 282–83, 285, 287, 337, 346
- causative alternation, 12, 252, 320
- cause, 12, 55, 58, 59 n. 17, 69, 90, 121, 152, 162, 177–78, 249, 256, 323 n. 2. *See also* agent
- external cause, 12, 69–70, 152
- indirect cause, 59 n. 17, 90, 177–78
- internal cause, 70, 326
- Central Iranian languages, 1, 199, 201–2
- Nayini, 1, 7, 11, 19, **199–231**
- Central Plateau dialects, *see* Central Iranian languages
- Chaldean, *see* Neo-Aramaic
- change-of-state verbs, 10, 162, 201, 218, 220–24, 226–27, 287
- chronology of development, 200, 226
- Cilicia, 279
- clitic, 189, 204 n. 2, 206, 211, 214
- enclitic, 87, 112, 140, 204 n. 2, 206–7
- proclitic, 204–7
- colloquial, 279, 298, 300, 305–6, 345, 348
- comment, 174
- complex predicate, 180, 207, 209, 215, 263, 268–69, 272, 346–49. *See also* light verb
- contact-induced phenomenon, 201, 219, 223, 225
- contact-resistant pattern, 225
- control, 61, 66, 89–90, 162
- controlled, 10, 69, 168. *See also* agentive
- controlled action, 163, 167
- controlled activity, 162, 167–69, 250
- copula, 7, 90, 140, 176, 189–91, 214, 263, 289–90
- Crimean Tatar, 339
- cross-referencing, 17–18, 183, 188, 205
- Cushitic languages, 45

- dative, 59–61, 72, 83–90, 112 n. 5, 152, 177–79, 188–91, 291 n. 4, 323 n. 2, 350–51, 354
 determiner, 330
 detransitive, 44, 48, 64, 68, 72, 80, 110, 111 n. 3, 114–15, 119, 121, 126–27, 132–35, 140, 155. *See also* derived detransitive stems *and* detransitive stems *under* stems
 detransitive participle, *see under* participle
 detransitivisation, 9–10, 13, 16, 31, 33, 43, 45, 64, 66–67, 110, 111 n. 3, 113, 129, 151–52, 155, 157–58, 161, 165–66, 172, 186, 341
 dialect, 1–2, 7, 12, 14, 16, 20, 26, 42, 45, 49, 76, 83, 91, 109, 112, 134–35, 137, 149–55, 157–60, 164–67, 169–70, 173, 176–77, 179–81, 184, 187, 189–90, 201–2, 211, 236 n. 2, 242–43, 271, 277, 279, 281, 283, 295–97, 299–300, 302–3, 304 n. 9, 305–9, 339, 342, 354
 diathesis, 9–10, 31, 41, 65, 82, 153, 182, 242, 271. *See also* voice; transitivity
 discoursal, 207
 ditransitive, 18, 49, 53, 59, 68, 328
 Diyana, 174
 Diyarbakir, 306
 Diz, 178, 187–88
 Dohok, 175
 Dutch, 56
 enclitic, *see under* clitic
 equipollent alternations, 73, 255
 ergative, 17, 20, 91, 112 n. 5, 152, 166, 173, 177–78, 184, 186–89, 191, 204 n. 1
 evidential, 304 n. 9, 354
 existential closure, 329
 experiencer, 59–61, 64, 72, 88–89, 91. *See also* mental-state verbs
 facilitative, 19, 71, 110, 120, 127, 129, 131, 139
 fientive, 34–35, 73. *See also* active
 Finnish, 53
 French, 56, 345
 frequentative, 340–41
 functional marker, 208
 gemination, 38
 generative grammar, 317, 319–21
 genitive, 85, 87, 177, 227, 289–91, 306, 309, 354
 German, 32, 48, 55–56, 134, 153, 297–98
 goal, 57, 112 n. 5, 207
 Government and Binding Theory, 322
 Göylde, 318

- Great Zab river, 149–50
- Greek, 1–2, 9, 13, 16, 55, 90, 278, 283, 286, 317–19, 321, 323, 325, 327–30
- Asia Minor Greek (AMG), 1, 13, 16, **317–333**
- Pontic Greek, 13, 319, 327–28
- Standard Modern Greek (SMG), 318–19, 325–27, 330
- Gəʿəz, 29, 79 n. 24
- habitual, 13, 15–16, 163
- Hadrut, *see under* Armenian
- Hamadan, 201, 233–34
- Hebrew, 4, 6, 8, 18, 25, 27–28, 30, 32–33, 35, 37–49, 51–61, 65–66, 69, 71–72, 74–75, 78–81, 89, 113, 157, 159
- Biblical Hebrew (BH), 18, 27, 35–37, 39–41, 43–44, 46, 48, 52–58, 61, 65–66, 68–72, 74, 78–79
- Classical Hebrew, 48–49.
- See also* Biblical Hebrew
- Mishnaic Hebrew, 30, 43–44
- Modern (Israeli) Hebrew, 4, 6, 61
- Samaritan Hebrew, 44
- host-selection process, 207
- human, 60–61, 63, 65, 89–90, 111 n. 3, 122, 126–27, 175, 222 n. 11, 352 n. 8
- imperative, 132, 208 n. 8
- imperfect, 119, 126, 129, 282, 284, 291, 293
- imperfective, 111, 127, 135, 139, 153–55, 158–61, 164–66, 170–71, 191, 208, 210, 227, 268–69, 273
- present imperfective, 158
- impersonal, 17–18, 20, 48–49, 53, 64–65, 128–29, 241, 296–98, 309, 342, 344–45, 353
- impersonal passive, *see under* passive
- impersonal subject construction, 64, 173, 186
- impersonalisation, 15, 19, 48, 64
- imposition, 86–87, 152, 180
- inanimate, 58, 126, 162–63, 205, 237
- inchoative, 10–12, 46, 73–74, 76–78, 151, 160–63, 165–66, 171–72, 176, 181, 186, 191, 255, 257, 263–64, 272, 299. *See also* anticausative; unaccusative
- indefiniteness, 15, 119–20, 127–29, 131, 161, 167, 175, 227
- indicative, 191, 210, 252 n. 12, 282, 341
- Indo-European languages, 10, 32, 67, 225, 278, 286, 295, 346
- Indo-Iranian languages, 225, 286

- infinitive, 7, 43, 78, 153–54,
 173, 181–82, 191, 243, 244
 n. 7, 250–52, 273, 282, 284,
 291, 293, 301, 303
- instrument, 56, 163, 177
- instrumental, 178, 350–52
- intransitive, 6–10, 12–13, 19–
 20, 34, 46–49, 54, 58, 68–
 69, 71, 74–76, 79–80, 111 n.
 3, 112–14, 122, 125–28,
 130, 139–40, 151, 154, 160,
 162, 165–69, 171–72, 180–
 82, 184, 186, 189, 206, 211,
 241–42, 248–52, 254–55,
 258, 263, 272–73, 277, 281
 n. 1, 283, 285–90, 292–93,
 296–97, 301–4, 306, 310,
 337, 344–45, 347, 349, 353
- Iran, 3, 5, 7, 150–51, 180, 182,
 199, 202, 219, 233–35, 236
 n. 2, 237, 278–79, 300, 335,
 339, 342, 348
- Iranian languages, 1–2, 9, 11,
 17, 83, 86, 90–91, 137, 149,
 151–52, 179–80, 182–83,
 191, 199–202, 206, 207 n.
 6, 221, 223 n. 13, 225, 233,
 240, 278, 283, 286, 290,
 300, 336
- Central Iranian languages,
see separate entry
- Jewish Iranian dialects, 202
- Middle Iranian, 204 n. 1,
 207 n. 6
- Iraq, 3–5, 150, 164, 182, 184
- Isfahan, 201–2
- isogloss, 202
- Istanbul, 4, 279, 297
- İwardo, 109, 127, 131
- Jinnet, 155
- Karaim, *see under* Turkic lan-
 guages
- Karluk languages, *see under* Tur-
 kic languages
- Kessab, *see under* Armenian
- Kfarze, 109
- Khabur river, 151
- Khnus, 307
- Khoy/Urmia, *see under* Arme-
 nian
- Kipchak languages, 338, 352,
 354
- Middle Kipchak, 352
- Kumyk, *see under* Turkic lan-
 guages
- Kurdish, 1, 3–4, 7, 11–12, 16,
 19, 149 n. 1, 150, 180–81,
 188–89, 201, 207 n. 7, 209,
 223 n. 13, 233–45, 247, 248
 n. 8, 249–57, 259, 261–65,
 267–73
- Garrusi Kurdish, 1, 7, 16, 19,
233–76
- Gorani Kurdish, 183–84, 242
- Hawrami Kurdish, 240
- Ilami Kurdish, 240
- Kalhori Kurdish, 19, 236,
 240–41

- Kurmanji Kurdish, 17, 137, 139, 152, 182, 184, 187–88, 242–43. *See also* Northern Kurdish
 Northern Kurdish, 17, 137, 152, 182, 184, 187–88. *See also* Kurmanji Kurdish
 Sanandaji Kurdish, 240
 Sorani Kurdish, 236, 240, 242
 Kurdistan, 3–4, 149, 151, 233
 labile, lability, 11–12, 46, 160–62, 164–65, 169, 285, 309–10
 language contact, 17, 19, 82, 225, 227, 354
 Latin, 48, 55, 61
 lexical-functional asymmetry, 199, 219
 light verb, 7, 19, 180–81, 209, 277, 310, 347–49. *See also* complex predicate
 Livísi, 318
 low-resource languages, 1, 201, 317 n. 1
 Maaloula, *see under* Neo-Aramaic
 Mandaic, 50 n. 11, 56, 58, 135
 Classical Mandaic, 26
 Neo-Mandaic, 134–35, 149
 Mardin, 109
 medio-passive, 295, 341
 mental-state verbs, 60
 middle (voice), 9, 12, 65–68, 71, 73, 161, 323 n. 2, 339, 345–46, 354. *See also* de-transitive
 Midyat, 109, 125
 Midən, 109
 Minimalist Program, 324
 Mlaḥso, *see under* Neo-Aramaic
 Modern South Arabian, 29, 76
 Modern Western Aramaic, *see* Western Neo-Aramaic (WNA)
 under Neo-Aramaic
 mono-eventive verbs, 326–27
 mood, 171, 208 n. 8, 210, 243, 252 n. 12, 273
 morphology, 6, 10–13, 16, 19–20, 48–49, 110–11, 127, 134, 135 n. 16, 137, 151–52, 154, 172, 175, 200, 202, 204, 210, 278, 283, 286–88, 298, 309, 323 n. 2, 325, 327, 337, 339–40
 morphological analysis, 213, 218–19
 morphological marking, 5, 257, 310, 320
 morphological passive, *see under* passive
 voice morphology, *see under* voice
 morphophonemic change, 205, 219

- motion, 122
 directed motion, 70, 126
 motion verbs, 79
 non-directed motion, 126
- Mush, *see under* Armenian
- Nagorno-Karabagh, 296
- Nayin, 199
- Nayini, *see under* Central Iranian languages
- negative marker, 207–8, 213
- Neo-Aramaic, 1, 4, 7, 12–14, 16, 19–20, 27, 49, 82, 85, 91, 109, 115, 134–35, 140, 149–50, 152, 154–60, 181, 191, 236, 243
 Central Neo-Aramaic, 155, 159. *See also* Mlah̄so and Ṭuroyo *in this entry*
 Eastern Neo-Aramaic, 83–84, 91
 Maaloula, 149, 156–59
 Mlah̄so, 149, 156–58
 Northeastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA), 1, 7, 12, 15–17, 42, 85, 91, 134, 136 n. 17, 140, **149–97**
 Trans-Zab Jewish Neo-Aramaic, 149–51, 154, 160, 164, 166–67, 169, 176, 181, 186
 Ṭuroyo, 1, 14, 16, 19–20, 46 n. 2, **109–48**, 149, 152, 156–58, 191
 Western Neo-Aramaic (WNA), 134–35, 155, 158–59, 191. *See also* Maaloula *in this entry*
- Nepali, 53
- Nerwa, 172, 190
- nominative, 6, 51, 289–91, 309, 323, 330, 342–43, 354
- non-active, 7, 325–27, 330
- non-agentive, 124, 126, 241, 297–98
- non-causative, 256–58
- non-directed alternations, 73, 255
- non-finite, 284, 288
- non-indicative, 208 n. 8
- non-linear mechanism, 225
- non-perfect, 243, 254, 268, 272
- Northwestern Iranian languages, 91, 199–201
 Caspian, 201
 Kurdish, *see separate entry*
 Semnan area languages, 201
 Tatic, 201
 Zazaki, 201
- noun, nominal, 8, 41, 47, 57 n. 14, 79, 112–13, 125, 137, 151, 153, 180, 186, 206, 207 n. 6, 209, 219 n. 9, 263, 265, 272–73, 292, 304, 306, 323 n. 2, 330, 341, 346–47, 350, 352
- NP-movement, 322

- object, 6, 18, 20, 34–35, 52–55,
67 n. 20, 72, 91, 161, 164,
166–71, 184, 186–87, 189,
191, 204–6, 211, 237, 289,
293–94, 306, 322–23
differential object marking,
52, 54
direct object, 5–6, 9, 27, 35,
49–50, 52, 54–55, 67, 72,
84, 112 n. 5, 117, 125, 136
n. 18, 207, 227, 320, 342–
43, 349
indirect object, 35, 72, 207,
227
object agreement, *see under*
agreement
oblique, 5–6, 9, 15, 59, 72, 90,
118, 179, 183, 187, 273,
287, 320, 344, 350, 353–54
oblique agent, *see under*
agent
Oghuz languages, *see under* Tur-
kic languages
Old Azerbaijani, *see* Old Anato-
lian Turkic *under* Turkic lan-
guages
optional A-marking, 18, 190
orientation, 12, 14, 66, 79, 163,
165, 167, 288–89, 291, 293,
304–6, 308
Orkhon Turkic, *see* Old Turkic
under Turkic languages
Ottoman Empire, 2–3, 279, 347
participant-external modality,
130
participle, 12–14, 41–43, 80–82,
90, 136, 157–58, 161, 189–
90, 220, 222, 227, 251 n. 9,
282, 284, 288–91, 293, 303,
304 n. 9, 305–9, 324
active participle, 42, 135,
153, 161
detransitive participle, 80
passive participle, 42–43,
79–81, 83, 88, 112 n. 5,
135–36, 155, 158
past participle, 210, 217–18,
226, 264–65, 304
resultative participle, 17,
80–83, 85, 87, 153, 155,
157, 159–60, 173, 176, 189,
278, 282, 294–95, 303–6,
309
passive, *passim*
agentive passive, 345–46
impersonal passive, 128–29,
296–98, 353
internal passive, 30–31, 33–
34, 37–39, 41–42, 44, 48,
67, 75, 78, 135, 139, 151,
155, 157
modal passive, 131
morphological passive, 241–
43, 249, 271–72, 327, 347
passive marker, 202, 204,
207–8, 210, 212, 215, 242,

- 244, 247, 263, 272, 288, 293–95, 309
- passive participle, *see under* participle
- passive projection, *see under* projection
- periphrastic passive, 19, 202, 241–42, 263–65, 269–70, 272
- potential passive, 182, 295–96
- past (tense), 129, 135, 203, 205–6, 208, 210–11, 215, 217, 219, 240, 242–43, 248–50, 254, 258, 263, 290.
- past participle, *see under* participle
- past perfective, *see under* perfective
- patient, 6–9, 12–18, 27, 34–35, 52, 54, 60, 64, 66–67, 79–81, 84, 90, 112, 119–20, 122, 126–27, 162–63, 165–66, 168, 172–75, 183, 186, 188–90, 238, 250, 269–70, 281 n. 1, 288, 290, 291 n. 4, 296, 303–6, 308–9
- patientive, 66, 169
- Pear Story, 203, 237, 239
- perfect, 14, 83–84, 86, 88–90, 129, 135, 153, 155–56, 159, 189, 217, 227, 253–54, 259–60, 263, 265–66, 268–69, 272, 289–91, 293, 303–4, 309
- present perfect, 210, 243, 251 n. 9, 253–54, 261–62, 267–68, 282
- perfective, 111, 135, 153, 155, 159–60, 165–66, 170–71, 173, 188, 208 n. 8, 210, 227, 273, 281, 288, 290
- past perfective, 17, 19, 80, 83–84, 91, 151–52, 156, 158, 166, 173, 178–79, 184, 186, 189
- periphrastic, periphrasis, 7, 241, 268, 271–72, 277, 291–92
- periphrastic passive, *see under* passive
- Persian, 7–8, 19, 180, 199, 207 n. 7, 209, 216–21, 223–27, 237, 241, 242 n. 6, 244, 342, 348–49, 352–53
- Old Persian, 19, 85–88
- Phárasa, 318, 326–27
- phonologically conditioned, 208, 212
- possessor, 89–91
- post-root position, 207–8
- postposition, 350–51
- pragmatic, 5, 10, 61, 117, 123, 207, 320, 328 n. 5
- pre-root position, 208–9
- predicate, 12, 58, 126, 140, 180, 207, 209, 215, 223–24, 263, 268–69, 272, 343, 346–49

- predicative, 89–90, 153, 218
 prefix, *see under* affix
 preposition, 49, 55, 64, 72, 83, 87, 89–91, 112, 118, 177–79, 188–89, 292, 325
 preposition *l-*, 49, 72, 83, 87, 91, 112, 179, 188
 preposition *mən*, 179
 present (tense), 119, 126, 129, 158, 204–6, 208, 210–11, 214–15, 217, 225, 240, 242–50, 253–54, 258, 261–63, 266–69, 271–72, 281–82, 284–85, 292, 295 n. 3, 300, 302, 309
 present imperfective, *see under* imperfective
 present perfect, *see under* perfect
 preverb, 171, 263, 310
 preverbal element, 204, 292
 proclitic, *see under* clitic
 productive, 44, 67, 78, 156 n. 3, 225, 318, 324–25, 328–30, 347
 progressive, 153, 205 n. 4, 243, 252–54, 259–62, 265–67, 269
 projection, 247, 271–72, 318, 329
 passive projection, 318, 329
 Proto-Indo-European, 286, 295
 Qaraqosh, 171, 175
 resultative participle, *see under* participle
 recipient, 18, 49–51, 59, 61, 73, 87–89, 91, 328
 reciprocal, 9, 11, 44, 277, 281, 295, 309, 325
 reflexive, 9–11, 44, 66, 68, 71, 135–36, 139, 161, 168, 172, 181, 277, 281, 285, 287, 295, 309–10, 325, 339, 345–46
 relative clause (RC), 1, 130, 207 n. 6, 306
 Russian, 278–79, 342
 Russian Empire, 279
 Sanandaj, 164, 167–68, 189
 Saqiz, 166–67, 169
 Semitic languages, 1, 7, 9–10, 12, 14–15, 18–19, 25, 27–**108**, 110 n. 2, 113, 135 n. 16, 151–52, 181, 191, 278, 336
 semantics, 9, 11, 27, 35, 43, 66–68, 75, 88–89, 110, 121, 168, 209, 263, 268, 341–42
 Semnan area languages, *see under* Northwestern Iranian languages
 semi-productive, 329–30
 Silli, 318
 Şirnak, 109
 Slavic languages, 53, 339
 smuggling approach, 324
 Soviet Union, 3, 278

- Spanish, 53
- split alignment, 290
- Surat*, *see* Neo-Aramaic
- stative, 13, 20, 34–36, 46, 70, 72–77, 79–80, 82, 130, 168, 220 n. 10, 223, 286, 288, 340–41
- stem, 6, 10, 13, 29–35, 38–41, 43–44, 47, 66, 68, 73, 80, 82, 110 n. 2, 111, 113–15, 120, 134, 138–39, 153–61, 164–67, 169–71, 187, 191, 203, 205, 243, 244 n. 7, 247–48, 254–55, 272, 277, 281, 283–86, 292–95, 299–300, 302–3, 309, 338, 341
- derived detransitive stems, 110, 134, 136
- derived stems, 110, 114, 134–36, 138–39, 155
- detransitive stems, 110–11, 119–20, 134, 136
- stem alternation, 277, 283, 299
- t*-stems, 10, 12, 110, 114, 134–35, 155
- subject, 5–6, 10, 13–14, 16, 18–19, 27, 47–48, 50, 52–54, 64, 67–68, 80–81, 85, 111 n. 3, 113, 117, 122, 124–28, 130, 136 n. 18, 166, 168, 173, 175–76, 183–84, 186, 189, 204–6, 209, 211, 227, 237, 250, 258, 268–69, 272, 281 n. 1, 282, 287–90, 293–94, 296, 298, 303, 306, 320, 322–23, 337, 343–44, 349
- impersonal subject construction, *see under* impersonal subject agreement, *see under* agreement
- subjunctive, 129, 208–10, 227, 252 n. 12, 253–54, 261–62, 266–67, 273, 282, 285, 302
- suffix, *see under* affix
- suppletive, 45, 243, 254
- syntactic, 8–9, 15–17, 27, 59, 84, 202, 207, 270–71, 322, 323 n. 2, 325 n. 3, 343–44, 349, 351
- syntax, 53, 86–87, 110, 152, 174, 202
- comparative syntax, 242 n. 6
- Syria, 4–5, 125, 149, 151, 308
- Syriac, 2, 4, 27–28, 32, 34–35, 40, 42, 47–48, 50–51, 53, 55, 57–59, 62, 64–65, 68, 72, 74, 79, 81, 83, 91, 150, 155–58, 278
- Classical Syriac (CS), 26, 36, 59, 73 n. 23, 85, 91, 135–36
- system pressure, 222 n. 11
- Ṭal, 172, 179, 292
- TAM, 126, 129, 243–44, 252, 255, 273
- Tatic, *see under* Northwestern Iranian languages
- Tehran, 151, 201

- tense, 139, 171, 183, 204–5, 208, 211, 240, 243, 247, 249, 254, 263, 265, 268, 271–73, 282, 289–91, 293, 303, 304 n. 9, 305, 308–9
 tense marker, 205, 211, 243
 theme, 18, 49–52, 54–55, 238, 328
 theta role, 323–24
 Tigranakert, 306
 Tkhuma, 150
 topic, 15, 18, 67, 82, 132, 173–75, 188, 342–43
 transitive, 6–11, 13–18, 31, 34–35, 37, 39–40, 46–47, 49, 64, 67–69, 72–73, 80, 83, 89–90, 110 n. 2, 112, 114, 122, 125–26, 130, 138, 140, 154, 160, 165–71, 173–75, 177, 180–82, 185–87, 190–91, 206, 214, 218, 250–52, 255, 257–58, 264–65, 273, 277, 281 n. 1, 282–83, 285–90, 292, 297, 300–304, 306–10, 318, 325–28, 330, 337, 342–45, 347
 transitivity, 9–11, 13, 27, 31, 34, 66–67, 72–73, 80, 125, 160, 167, 169, 171, 180, 240, 244, 249, 258, 269, 271, 273, 301, 303, 340, 347
 Treaty of Lausanne (1923), 125, 318–19
 triggering factor, 200, 225
 Ṭur ‘Abdin, 109, 149
 Turkey, 4–5, 13, 109, 149–50, 155, 178–79, 184, 297, 317, 319, 327
 Turkic languages, 1, 9–10, 12, 19, 180, 236, 278, 282, 297, **335–58**
 Karaim, 339
 Karluk languages, 338, 343, 352
 Kipchak languages, *see separate entry*
 Kumyk, 338–39
 Middle Turkic, 344
 Oghuz languages, 335–36, 338, 341, 352, 354
 Old Anatolian Turkic, 336, 344, 347–48
 Old Turkic, 336–37, 339, 347, 350
 Old Uyghur, 336, 338, 340, 350–51
 Turkish, 4, 6, 8, 20, 109 n. 1, 118 n. 10, 139, 237, 257, 278, 297–98, 319, 339, 345, 352–53
 Old Anatolian Turkish, *see* Old Anatolian Turkic *under* Turkic languages
 Ottoman Turkish, 347
 Ṭuroyo, *see under* Neo-Aramaic
 Ugaritic, 37

- unaccusative, 73, 281 n. 1, 296, 298, 326. *See also* anticausative; inchoative
- uncontrolled process, 12, 60, 67, 162, 169, 182, 250
- undergoer, 61, 122, 337, 343, 345
- Uniformity of Theta Assignment Hypothesis (UTAH), 324
- Urartian, 278, 283
- Urmi, 160–61, 164–66, 174, 176–77, 180–83
- Urmia, 151. *See also* Urmia Azeri *under* Azeri; Khoy/Urmia *under* Armenian
- Ute, 53
- Uyghur, *see* Old Uyghur *under* Turkic languages
- valency, 9, 11, 18–20, 39–40, 66, 68, 71, 73, 89, 121, 137, 152, 283, 337, 354
- valency reduction, 12, 66, 286, 340
- valency-changing, 10, 16, 114, 152, 204, 207, 283
- Van, *see under* Armenian
- variation, 5, 42, 73, 85, 257, 270–71, 281, 349
- contextual variation, 208
- dialectal variation, 109, 150, 171, 205, 208–9
- structural variation, 200, 225
- Visibility Condition, 323–24
- voice, 1, 5, 9–14, 19–20, 27, 31, 40–41, 44, 47, 59, 65–67, 73, 80, 91, 110, 118 n. 10, 134, 135 n. 16, 137, 139, 151–52, 155, 173, 181, 199, 215, 233, 237, 239, 241–44, 255, 258, 263, 268, 270–73, 277, 283, 287–89, 292–93, 301, 303–4, 306, 318, 320, 323 n. 2, 324, 329–30, 335, 340–41, 354
- voice ambiguity, 293
- voice morphology, 9, 16, 27, 29, 31, 158, 283, 323 n. 2
- voice system, 20, 27, 66, 138, 140, 151–52, 160, 172, 208, 271
- vowel harmony, 244, 336
- wave-like model, 202
- word order, 15, 113, 128–29
- World Atlas of Language Structures, 320
- zero-morpheme, 206
- Yazd, 201
- Zakho, 182
- Zazaki, *see under* Northwestern Iranian languages

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Passivisation in Semitic, Iranian, Armenian, and Beyond

Edited by Paul M. Noorlander and Hiwa Asadpour

This volume brings together research on passive voice constructions in low-resource languages of Western Asia, a region marked by extraordinary linguistic diversity as well as a long history of cultural suppression and marginalisation. The contributions showcase the passive voice in Semitic, Iranian, Armenian, Greek, and Turkic languages, many of which are endangered, understudied, or confined to diaspora communities and disappearing language islands. Education and cultural expression in these languages remained heavily restricted across parts of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran, underscoring the urgent need for documentation and revitalisation.

The chapters explore the rich typological variation of passive voice constructions, examining their typological traits, synchronic microvariation and diachronic developments. Drawing on Siewierska's definition, the studies investigate processes of agent demotion and patient promotion, reductions in transitivity, and the fuzzy boundaries between passive and other detransitivisation strategies such as middles, anticausatives, statives and light verbs as well as impersonal subjects and agent omission. They also shed light on the impact of text genre, verbal aspect, and language contact on passivisation.

By integrating theoretical, typological, historical, and areal perspectives, the volume discusses the internal stability of detransitivisation strategies, their evolution from earlier source constructions, and their position in voice systems more broadly. It raises fundamental questions about whether cross-linguistic tendencies in passives reflect universal patterns or area-specific historical contingencies.

This collection thus provides an essential resource for scholars of all theoretical persuasions that are interested in voice and valency and/or in Western Asia's linguistic diversity, while foregrounding the pressing need to support communities whose linguistic heritage is at risk.

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