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17106A/2274 22-223 Armenian

Armenians (Hajk^h in Armenian) live in the (former Soviet) Republic of Armenia in Transcaucasia and constitute the majority population in the neighbouring enclave of Nagorno Karabagh (Azerbaijdzhan). The attempted genocide of the indigenous and christian Armenians by the Ottoman Turks in 1895 and 1915 led to mass-migrations producing a diaspora which created/reinforced Armenian communities all over the Middle East, in France, England, America, etc... The native word for their homeland is Hajastan. The term 'Armenians' derives from the Greek 'Arménioi, which in turn is adapted from Persian.

According to the 1989 Soviet census the total Soviet Armenian population was 4,627,227, of whom 3,081,920 resided in Armenia itself. This made Armenia ethnically the most homogeneous of the then-republics (with a 97.3% native population), even though a higher proportion of Armenians also lived outside their home-republic than any other nationality among the union-republics. Since 1989 most of the Armenians living in Azerbaijdzhan (sc. other than Nagorno Karabagh) have moved to Armenia, whilst most of Armenia's Azerbaijdzhanis have gone to Azerbaijdzhan. In 1989 437,211 Armenians lived in the third Transcaucasian republic of Georgia, constituting 8.1% of Georgia's population.

Armenian is an Indo-European language of the satan-type. For many years it was believed to be an Iranian dialect owing to the large number of Persian loans. Hübschmann in the late 19th century finally succeeded in demonstrating its true status as a separate branch of the Indo-European family. It has been suggested that Phrygian may have been a close relative, but it is difficult to prove or disprove this hypothesis because of the paucity of Phrygian data. Modern Armenian is divided into two main dialectal groups: Eastern and Western, which roughly correspond to what is spoken on (formerly) Soviet territory vs the speech of the diaspora-communities respectively. There are

many sub-dialects, whose evidence is crucial in the investigation of, for example, the thorny question of Armenian consonantism. Unfortunately, the loss and/or dislocation of sources for Western Armenian complicates such research.

The classical written language (Grabar) dates from the early 5th century A.D., and, although Old Armenian was probably extinct as a living form of the language as early as the 11th century, it continued to exert an influence on literary norms until replaced by the contemporary spoken Modern Armenian (Ashkharhabar) in the 19th century. The true 'Golden Age' of literature is confined to the 5th century, though works for another two centuries do not differ greatly from their antecedents. The newly devised script permitted the dissemination of the Bible and other ecclesiastical works, mostly translated from Greek or Syriac, in the native language. Among original works Eznik Koybats^{hi}'s 'Against the Sects' is regarded as the epitome of the classical style. History made an early appearance with Agath^{ange}gos and P^hawstos Biwandats^{hi}, followed by Gazar P^harpets^{hi} and Eyishē. The history of Movsēs Khorenats^{hi} is known only in later redactions. Byzantine and Seljuk Turkish incursions interrupted the development of Armenian in the 11th and 12th centuries. The creation of an independent kingdom in Cilicia saw a flourishing of poetry, so that Cilician Armenian is the best known of all the Middle Armenian dialects. From the 16th century émigré-communities in Venice, Constantinople, Rome, Amsterdam, Madras and Calcutta played an important role particularly in printing Armenian books. The first Armenian book was printed in Venice in 1512, and the first press established in Constantinople in 1567. The great national epic 'David of Sassoun' is a cycle of folk-tales built up over many centuries; it was first written down only in the 19th century. Lord Byron actually composed and published a grammar of Armenian in English. Throughout the Soviet period and subsequently Armenian has flourished in Armenia as the language of education and literature. Of the Republic's Armenian population 99.6% claimed native-speaker fluency in 1989, with 44.3% acknowledging command of Russian.

The unique, angular script, which distinguishes upper and lower case forms, is reputed to have been invented by Bishop Mesrob early in the 5th century A.D. There are basically thirty-six characters, though two more were added in the 11th century, and today a further addition represents a contraction of *ew* [jEw]. The letters were ordered after the pattern of the Greek alphabet, with non-Greek sounds being fitted in where judged appropriate. The last letter of the alphabet with the value [f] was one of the late creations to allow accurate rendition of foreign names with voiceless labio-dental fricative, itself absent from the native Armenian phoneme-inventory. The modern script remains essentially unaltered. The historical difference between rolled and continuant rhotics [ʀ vs r respectively) has virtually disappeared, though orthographic convention preserves their written status. The distinction between *~* (conventionally transcribed as *ē* though apparently having the Classical value [e]) and *e* (Classical [E] or initially [jE]) has been neutralised in favour of [E], except that the latter character has retained its old value in anlaut. There has been a similar neutralisation between *ø* (from the 12th century [ɔ:] in closed syllables deriving from Classical *aw* [aw]) and *o* (Classical [O], initially [wO]) in favour of [O], except that the latter character represents the pronunciation [vO] in anlaut.

Classical Armenian had 28 consonants, 2 semi-vowels, which played a role in diphthongs, and the 7 vowels /a, e, E, ə, i, o, u/. The first six of these had their own individual letters, whilst /u/ was written (after the Greek fashion) as a digraph *ow* (= 'ow').

The main phonological differences between the Classical and Modern varieties of Armenian relate to the changes in the articulation of the triple series of plosives and affricates, which in turn raises the question of the precise original nature of these oppositions. To take the dental plosives as illustration, the traditional view gave the following values to the letters concerned:

	<u>Old Armenian</u>	<u>Modern Eastern Armenian</u>	<u>Modern Western Armenian</u>
d	[d]	[d]	[t(h)]
†	[tʰ]	[t(h)]	[t(h)]
ⵀ	[t]	[tʰ]	[d]

Whilst Modern Eastern Armenian has essentially continued the Classical pattern, one of the distinctions was neutralised in Modern Western Armenian, though the modern voiced segment seems to correlate with the ‘wrong’ antecedent. This picture is complicated by the fact that the segments concerned have somewhat different realisations across the sub-dialects and in different positions within words. The presence of glottalised consonants in Eastern Armenian (and the other Indo-European language of the Caucasus, Iranian Ossetic) has traditionally been ascribed to the influence of neighbouring Caucasian languages, where these sounds are innate. However, recent proposals (notably by the American Hopper, the Russian Ivanov, and the Georgian Gamqʹrelidze) concerning the nature of Proto Indo-European consonantism have suggested that Proto Indo-European might itself have possessed a glottalised series, lost in all daughter-languages apart from Armenian (and Ossetic). This would re-shape Classical Armenian as follows: d = [d(h)], † = [t(h)], ⵀ = [tʰ]

Classical Armenian’s nouns were divided into a number of declensional paradigms differentiated by thematic vowels. The patterns were inflecting after the usual Indo-European model, with differing syncretisms in singular and plural, as demonstrated by the y-stem tsoy ‘sea’ and the a-stem am ‘year’:

SINGULAR

Nominative-Accusative	<u>tsoy</u>	<u>am</u>
Genitive-Dative-Locative	<u>tsovu</u>	<u>ami</u>
Ablative	<u>tsovē</u>	<u>amē</u>
Instrumental	<u>tsovu</u>	<u>amaw</u>

PLURAL

Nominative	<u>tsovk^h</u>	<u>amk^h</u>
Accusative-Locative	<u>tsovs</u>	<u>ams</u>
Genitive-Dative-Ablative	<u>tsovuts^h</u>	<u>amats^h</u>
Instrumental	<u>tsovuk^h</u>	<u>amawk^h</u>

Both modern dialects have remodelled their nominal systems on clearly agglutinative principles, e.g.

Modern Eastern Armenian

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
Nominative	<u>ts'ov</u>	<u>ts'ov-er</u>
Genitive-Dative	<u>ts'ov-i</u>	<u>ts'ov-er-i</u>
Ablative	<u>ts'ov-its</u>	<u>ts'ov-er-its</u>
Instrumental	<u>ts'ov-ov</u>	<u>ts'ov-er-ov</u>
Locative	<u>ts'ov-um</u>	<u>ts'ov-er-um</u>

Modern Western Armenian

Nominative	<u>dzov</u>	<u>dzov-er</u>
Genitive-Dative	<u>dzov-u</u>	<u>dzov-er-u</u>
Ablative	<u>dzov-ê</u>	<u>dzov-er-ê</u>
Instrumental	<u>dzov-ov</u>	<u>dzov-er-ov</u>

Only in the pronouns has the Accusative ever been formally distinct from the Nominative. Classical Armenian's definite article suffix had three forms distinguishing deixis. These have been replaced by -n (after vowels) or -ə (after consonants; the language's word-final stress may not fall on final schwa), though the three-way deixis is retained in the demonstrative pronouns.

The verbal system has been re-cast from being essentially synthetic to an analytic structure with wider use of auxiliaries. The old Present Indicative has been formally retained but endowed with the function of marking the Present Subjunctive, whilst each modern variant has created a new Present Indicative by innovating in different ways:

Modern Eastern Armenian

<u>sir-um em</u>	I love
<u>sir-um es</u>	you (Sg.) love
<u>sir-um ē</u>	X loves
<u>sir-um enk</u>	we love
<u>sir-um ek</u>	you (Pl.) love
<u>sir-um en</u>	they love

where sir-um is the Locative case-form of a verbal noun coupled with the copula (literally 'I etc. am in loving') -- under negation the negated auxiliary must stand before the lexical verb (e.g. gr-el em 'I have written' vs ch-em gr-el 'I have not written'). Modern Western Armenian, however, employs the invariant auxiliary ga in association with the Present Subjunctive, which conjugates according to verb-class with one of the vowels e, i, a, as in sir-el 'to love', xos-il 'to speak', gart-al 'to read':

Modern Western Armenian

<u>ga sir-em // xos-im // gart-am</u>
<u>ga sir-es // xos-is // gart-as</u>
<u>ga sir-ē // xos-i // gart-aj</u>
<u>ga sir-enk // xos-ink // gart-ank</u>
<u>ga sir-ēk // xos-ik // gart-ak</u>
<u>ga sir-en // xos-in // gart-an</u>

The origin of the auxiliary here is obscure, but the formally equivalent structure in Modern Eastern Armenian serves as the Future Indicative (e.g. k'a k'ard-am 'I shall read'), whilst in Modern Western Armenian this tense is built by means of the invariant particle bidi + Present Subjunctive (e.g. bidi gart-am 'I shall read'). In Old Armenian there was no Future paradigm, either the Present or Aorist Subjunctive taking its place, depending upon aspect (exactly as in Old Georgian).

In Classical Armenian the passive was not a well developed category, only some verbs in some of their parts distinguishing an active in -e- from a

passive in -j- (e.g. ber-el 'to carry//be carried' => ber-em 'I carry' vs ber-im 'I am carried'), whereas today the passive is universally produced by infixation of -y- (e.g. sir-el 'to love' vs sir-y-el 'to be loved'). Causatives are still formed synthetically.

Armenian has always been a Nominative-Accusative language. In Classical Armenian a definite direct object was marked by the preposition z- (e.g. jorzham dustr z-majr anardits^hā 'whenever a daughter dishonours (her) mother'). In Modern Eastern Armenian, if the direct object is a person, it will stand in the Dative case, which is regularly differentiated from the Genitive by the addition of the definite article (e.g. Nunik'a gurgurum ē ir t'ik'nik'-i-n 'Nunik flatters her queen-DATIVE-ARTICLE'). A much discussed peculiarity of Classical Armenian was the use of the Genitive to mark a transitive subject accompanying the past participle in -eal, whether this was in a participial construction or, in association with the copula, part of the periphrastic Perfect (e.g. t^hoyeal Jisus-i zzhoyovurdsn ekn 'Jesus-GENITIVE, having left the crowds, came...'; Mihrdat, zor kaleal ēr Pompē-i 'Mithridates, whom Pompey-GENITIVE had captured,...'); an intransitive subject in the participial construction could also stand in the Genitive (or Nominative) (e.g. matuts^heal ashakert-ats^h-n nora, asen ts^hna 'His pupils-GENITIVE-ARTICLE having come, they say to him...'). A reflexion of this is perhaps seen today when instead of a full relative clause the participial construction is used, the transitive subject standing in the Genitive, as in the following Western Armenian example: Tser desats digina horakojs ē 'Your having seen lady is my aunt' (or Digina, zor desak, horakojs ē 'The woman whom you saw is my aunt'), though this does parallel the Turkish construction. Classical Armenian's most common subordinating conjunctions were zi and (e)t^hā, the former being largely factual, the latter non-factual. The former has been replaced by (y)or, homonymous with the old nominative, masculine, singular of the relative pronoun, whilst the latter still introduces protases.

By far the strongest influence on Armenian, essentially in terms of its lexical stock, has come from Persian; other borrowings have occurred from Syriac, Arabic, Greek, French and most recently Russian. Rather than borrow widely used foreign roots, Armenian often likes to create neologisms from its own lexical stock, so that 'university' is hamalsaran. The shift from inflexion to agglutination within the nominal system would seem to be the result of Turkish influence. Whilst Classical Armenian was prepositional, the modern forms are predominantly postpositional, as are Turkish and Georgian to the north.

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