Ergativity in Europe? Participles in periphrastic constructions

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Ergative/Absolutive patterns in Europe?
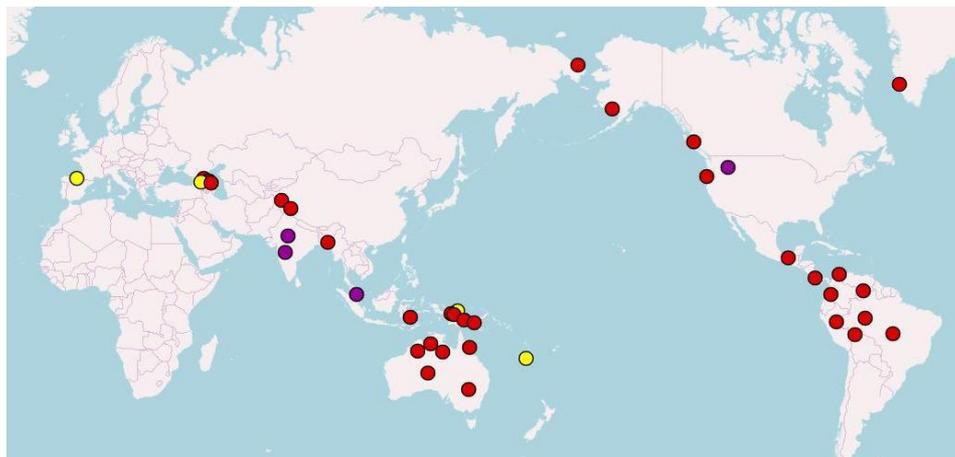

< Ergativity in case marking
(Comrie 2013)

Ergativity in verbal person
marking >
(Siewierska 2013)
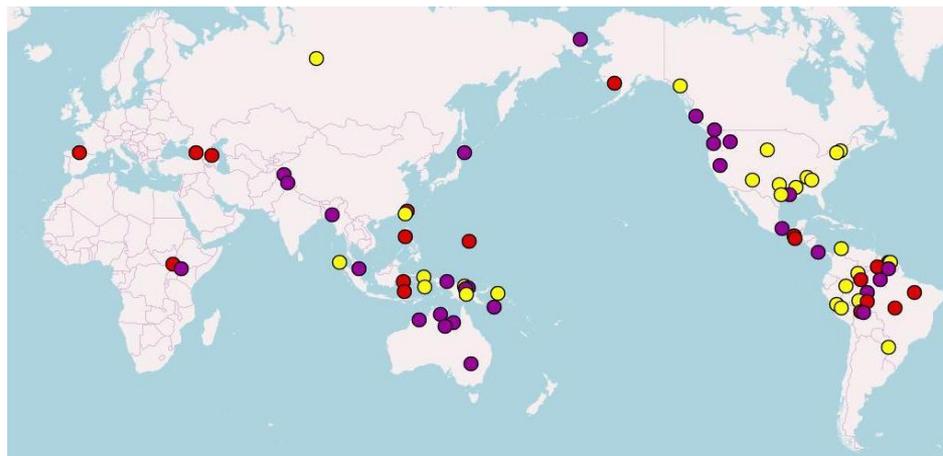
Periphrastic participial constructions

- **HAVE/BE** split for perfective auxiliaries in some European languages:

*Der Mann **hat** das Brot gegessen.* (German)
*L'uomo **ha** mangiato il pane.* (Italian)   **TRANSITIVES = HAVE**
*The man **has** eaten the bread.*

*Der Mann **ist** gefallen.*
*L'uomo **è** caduto.*   **(MOST) INTRANSITIVES = BE**
*The man **is** fallen*. (archaic English → 'has fallen' in Modern English)

★   Drinka (2017) on the perfect, Sorace (2000) on the auxiliary split

Periphrastic participial constructions

● **BE** also used for passive constructions:

*Il pane **è** mangiato (dall'uomo). (*Italian)   **PASSIVE = BE**
*The bread **is** eaten (by the man).*

*Das Brot **wird** (vom Mann) gegessen. (*German)   **(BECOME)**

Periphrastic participial constructions

HAVE: Transitive perfective: Transitive subject (**A**)

*L'uomo **ha** mangiato il pane.*

'The man has eaten'

BE:

Intransitive perfective: Intransitive subject (**S**)

*L'uomo **è** caduto.*

'The man has fallen'

Passives: Patientive subject (**P**)

*Il pane **è** mangiato.*

'The bread is eaten'

Absolutive participles: Adnominal modification

(1) *a recently murdered politician*
= a politician [whom someone recently murdered]
P-relativization

(2) *a recently erupted volcano*
= a volcano [that recently erupted]
S-relativization

★ Haspelmath (1994): resultative participles
★ Payne & Payne (2013: 107): absolutive participles

Participles demonstrating split intransitivity

Past participles derived from intransitive verbs:

- Bresnan (1982):
  Semantic role: **Theme** (1), not Agent (2)
(1)   *a fallen leaf*, *a failed writer*
(2)   **a worked clerk*, **a danced girl*
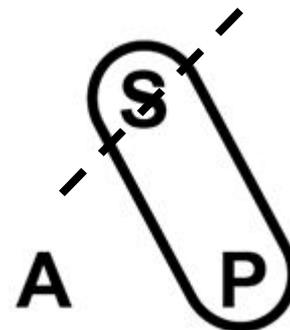
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(1) *a fallen leaf*, *a failed writer*

(2) **a worked clerk*, **a danced girl*

- Abraham (1985), Haspelmath (1994):
  Telic verbs (German)

(3) *der in einer Minute über den Hof getanzte Junge*
'the boy who danced across the courtyard in one minute'
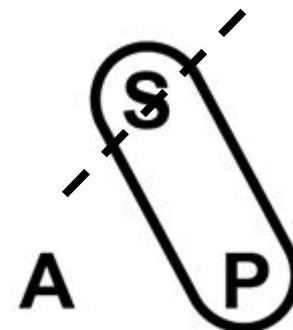
Absolutive participles in non-IE languages

- Hungarian (Kenesei et al. 1998: 46, 47)

(1) Transitive verb > P-relativization
az [*Anna által tegnap* **olvas-ott**] *könyv*
DEF Anna by yesterday **read-PTCP.PST** book
'the book read by Anna yesterday'

(2) Intransitive verb > S-relativization

a [*tegnap London-ba* **érkez-ett**] *lány*
DEF yesterday London-ILL **arrive-PTCP.PST** girl
'the girl that arrived to London yesterday'

S
A P

9

Absolutive participles outside Europe

● Panare (Cariban, Venezuela, Payne & Payne 2013: 322, 109)

(1) *Ñi-yaj*   *Toma*   *asonwa*   *kanawa*   [***kïmï-sa'***].
     see-PPERF1   Tom   three   canoe   **rot-PTCP.PST**
     'Tom saw three rotten canoes.'

(2) ***Yï-kïtë-sa'***   *mën.*
     3-cut-PTCP.PST   IN.INVIS
     'It's been cut.'
     (Passive only!)

Participles on the map (Shagal 2017)

135 languages

Absolutive participles (Shagal 2017)

19 languages

Perfects (Dahl & Velupillai 2013)
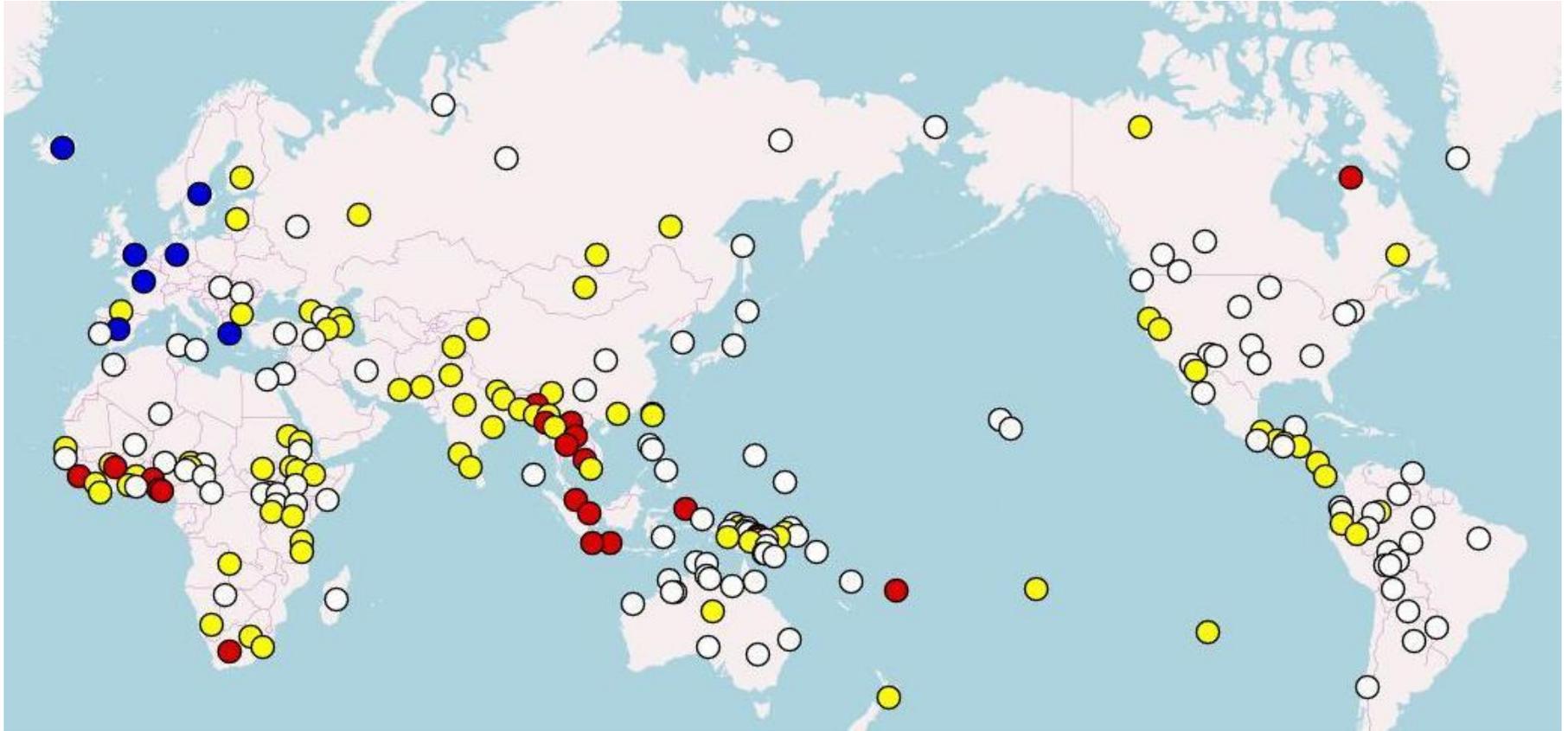
Absolutive participles: Three questions
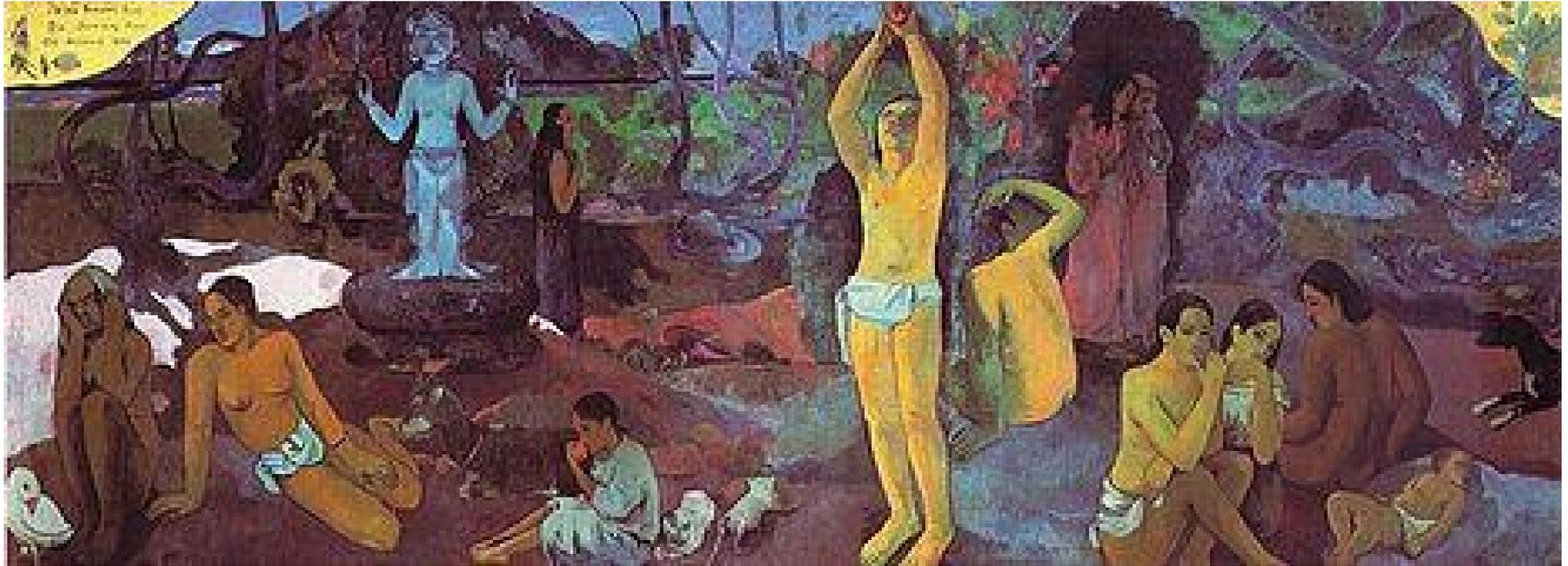
Absolutive participles: Three questions
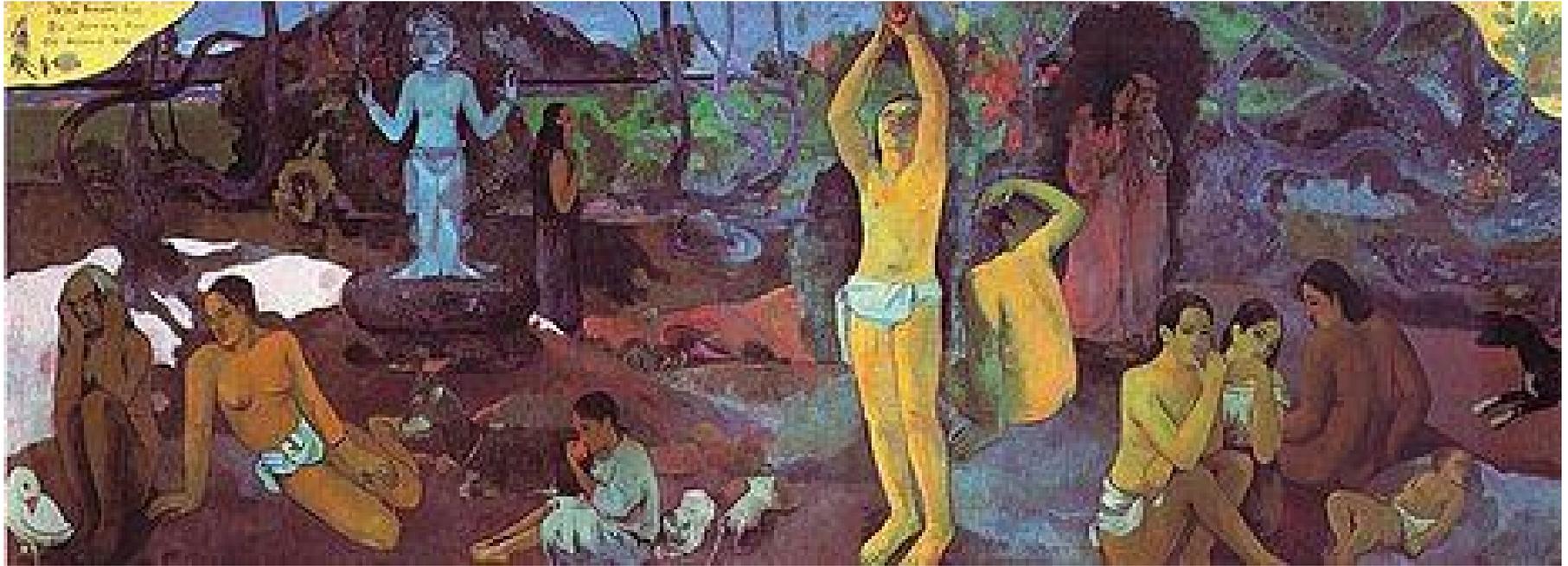
- Where do they come from?
- What are they?
- Where are they going?

Where do they come from?

- Semantics
  - Close semantic correlation between a transitive verb and its P argument (Aikhenvald & Dixon 2011)
  - Affectedness P and S_P are naturally characterized by a resulting state (Haspelmath 1994)
- Pragmatics
  - S/P relativization has a special discourse function of introducing new participants (Fox 1987)
  - S and P are most commonly relativized participants in various corpora

What are they?

- Resultative/Perfective in 16 out of 19 languages (Shagal 2016)
  - Indo-European
  - Uralic
  - Panare
  - Georgian
  - Basque
  - etc.

- Perfective || Absolutive (cf. DeLancey 1981, 1982)

Where are they going?

- Constructions involving participles and other nominalized forms > Ergative alignment in independent sentences (Sino-Tibetan, DeLancey 1986, Noonan 1997; Cariban, Gildea 1998)
- Hindi (the origin of ergativity alignment, Verbeke 2013: 76-77)

Participle in *-ta*: P- or S-relativization

(1) *devadatt-ena*   *kaṭ-aḥ*   ***kṛ-ta-ḥ***   (Sanskrit)
Devadatta-INS   mat-NOM.SG   **make-PTCP.PRF-NOM**
'The mat is made by Devadatta.'

(2) *Devadatta-ḥ*   ***ga-ta-ḥ***
Devadatta-NOM   **go-PTCP.PRF-NOM**
'Devadatta is gone.'

Hindi: example of Indo-European ergativity origins

Participles > Ergative patterns in independent sentences (Hindi)

Instrumental > Ergative

raam-ne   *ravii-ko*   *piiʈaa*   *raam*   *ravii-ko*   *piiʈegaa*
Ram-ERG   Ravi-ACC[/ABS]   beat-PFV   Ram-NOM Ravi-ACC beat-FUT
'Ram beat Ravi.' **(PAST)**   'Ram will beat Ravi.' **(NON-PAST)**
(Torrego 2012)

Mahajan (1993): Hindi ergative case marking occurs in similar contexts to the
HAVE perfective auxiliary in western Indo-European languages.

Ergativity is almost always split ergativity

"No ergative language is fully consistent in carrying through the ergative principle throughout its entire morphology, syntax, and lexicon: all languages that exhibit ergative patterning in their commonest case-marking system also exhibit some accusative pattern somewhere in the rest of their grammar."

(Moravcsik 1978, as cited in Coon & Preminger 2017; *inter alia*)

Note: In this talk, we are describing the opposite phenomenon (or other half of the puzzle), the presence of ergative elements in accusative languages.

Ergativity splits: implicational hierarchies

Splits often follow the same patterns across languages, such as the following:

FIXED DIRECTIONALITY OF PERSON SPLITS

⟵ ERGATIVE   NON-ERGATIVE ⟶

| common nouns | ≫ | proper nouns | ≫ | demonstratives, 3rd person pronouns | ≫ | 1st/2nd person pronouns |

FIXED DIRECTIONALITY OF ASPECTUAL SPLITS

⟵ ERGATIVE   NON-ERGATIVE ⟶

| perfective | ≫ | imperfective | ≫ | progressive |
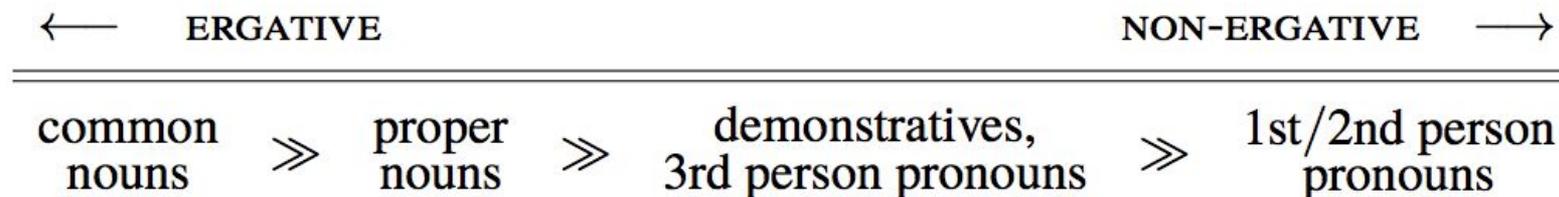
(Coon & Preminger 2017)

Aspectual splits: prominence of perfective

Perfective aspect is most likely to display ergativity (as exemplified by Hindi):

FIXED DIRECTIONALITY OF ASPECTUAL SPLITS

$\longleftarrow$ ERGATIVE   NON-ERGATIVE $\longrightarrow$

perfective $\gg$ imperfective $\gg$ progressive
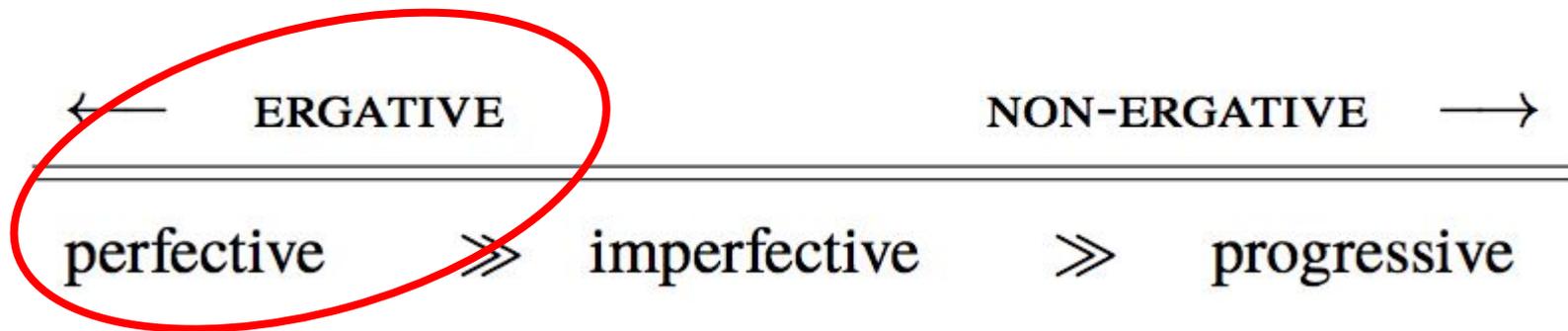
This aligns also with our description of the English perfect.

*But what is the connection to perfective?*

What connects perfectives with ergativity?

The relationship between perfectivity and ergativity has been frequently observed but is not fully understood. However, the two appear to be conceptually related in some ways (Anderson 1977; Tsunoda 1981; Dixon 1994; Haspelmath 1994; Butt & Deo 2017; Coon & Preminger 2017; *inter alia*)

resultative & perfective & completion > patient-oriented effect > ergative

- "[Ergative] marking is most likely to be found in clauses that describe some definite result, in past tense or perfective aspect." (Dixon 1994)
- Tsunoda's *Effectiveness Condition* based on ideas of effectedness, conclusiveness, definiteness, actualness, etc.
- Participles expressing *result* are likely to form perfectives (or passives)
- Transitive resultatives have a strong effect on the patient, unlike transitive imperfectives, etc., where the focus may be on the agent
- (Intran.) subjects and (trans.) patients tend to be the most affected by actions
- Passives and perfects generally describe completed actions
  - Ergativity may have an origin in passive constructions

European periphrastic perfectives
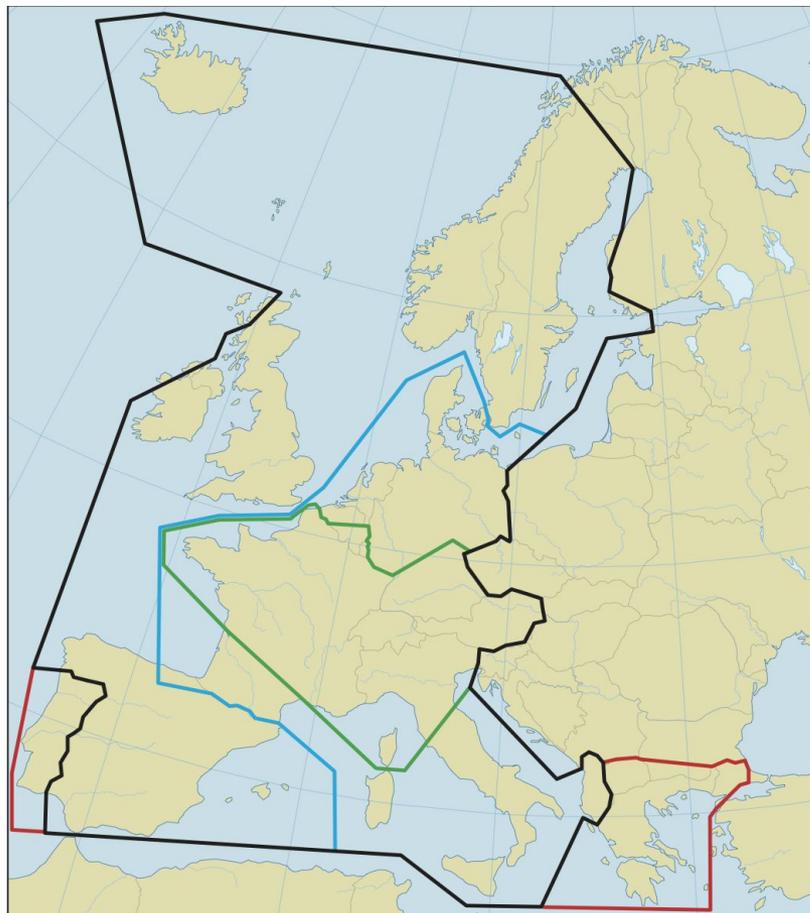
Present-day boundaries of the area where 'have' perfects (perfects based on a transitive possessive construction) and constructions derived from them occur

Peripheral area where less typical 'have' perfects are found

Area of division of labour between 'have' perfects and 'be' perfects

Area where a 'have' perfect has developed into a past or a perfective

(*WALS*: Dahl & Velupillai 2013)

Note that some of the development took place due to contact.

See also Drinka (2017) for an overview of the development of these constructions.

Origin of periphrastic BE+participle constructions

- BE links (as with other adjectives) the subject and participle's argument role
- Thus the lexical/semantic properties of the participle have a central role in determining the argument structure in the larger syntactic context.
- This construction is a stative resultative:

The window is broken. [i.e. 'in a broken state']

- The stative resultative construction can further develop:
- Intransitive BE perfectives systematize the inherent perfectivity
  - Note that transitive verbs would not naturally form perfectives this way.
- Passives can also develop from the same construction.
  - Note that once passives are grammaticalized, their tense interpretation is ambiguous with the stative resultative: 'The window *is being* broken.' vs. 'The window *has already been* broken.'
  - Others have noted this similarity in origin for perfectives and passives (e.g. Toyota 2008)

Origin of HAVE+participle construction

- Originally, HAVE+participle involved a type of secondary predication:

  I have the book written.

  (This expression is not limited to possession: Fontana, *this conference.*)

- This is also a stative resultative use of the participle.
- HAVE adds an additional argument
  - Similar to ergatives, or other agent-oriented valency-increasing constructions (e.g. causatives)

- The main argument of the lexical verb is in fact still 'book', the patient.

Split auxiliary system for perfectives

- As permitted by the argument structure of the participles, the three uses (emerging constructions) served complementary functions:

  *The man **is** fallen.*   (archaic English)

  *The bread **is** eaten (by the man).*

  *The man **has** eaten the bread.*

- Over time, this usage became systematic.
- Eventually the auxiliary split began to function as paradigmatic periphrasis.

- The passive diverged, taking on its own functions, now synchronically distinct.
  - Note the change in temporal interpretation (from perfective to now varying by tense)

Later changes: shift of BE>HAVE in English

In English, the perfective split auxiliary system has been lost.

- HAVE has generalized as a perfective auxiliary for all verbs:

Archaic English   Late Modern English
*The man **is** fallen.*   →   *The man **has** fallen.*
The man has eaten.   *The man has eaten.*

- BE is still used for passive. Therefore, the alignment has adjusted to be as expected for a nominative-accusative language like English.
- The same change occurred in Spanish (Rosemeyer 2014).

  - Additionally, another change is from aspectual to temporal use of perfective forms in Italian, French and German, replacing simple past tense in colloquial usage.

Split auxiliary systems beyond Indo-European

Basque also has HAVE/BE split (Arregi 2004), though not limited to perfectives:

Jon-Ø   *Bilbo-ra*   *joa-n*   *d-a*
Jon-ABS   Bilbao-to   go-PRF   3SG-be
'Jon has gone to bilbao.'   (Arregi 2004)

Zu-ek   *Miren-Ø*   *ikus-iko*   *d-u-zue*
you-ERG.PL   Miren-ABS   see-FUT   3SG-have-2PL
'You (PL) will see Miren.'   (Arregi 2004)

As an "ergative" language, whether Basque has a "passive" is debated (Spreng 2000). But there is a relevant construction with BE. *(Antipassives are also formed with BE.)*

Etx-a   *haiek*   *eraiki-a*   *d-a*
house-***a***   3PL.ERG   build.PRF-***a***   3SG-be   ***[Some gloss -a as 'ergative'***
'The house is built by them.' (Spreng 2000)   ***but others call it 'resultative'.]***

Auxiliary selection alignment typology

We can now explore the typology of alignment in these constructions.
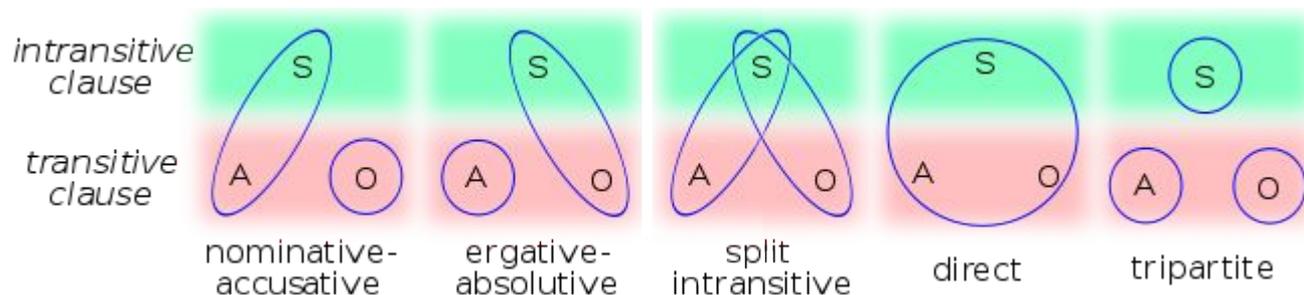
(Adapted from Wikipedia)

- Modern English and Spanish represent Nominative-Accusative alignment.
- Italian and older English, etc., represent Ergative-Absolutive alignment.

- We can also identify languages representing other patterns

Auxiliary selection alignment typology

- Although the most general pattern is Ergative-Absolutive, Italian exhibits some degree of split intransitivity:

Some intransitive verbs combine with HAVE (rather than BE):

*L'uomo **è** andato.*   *L'uomo **ha** viaggiato.*
'The man has [lit. ***is***] gone.'   'The man **has** travelled.'

The reasons for one auxiliary or the other are complex, while 'active' verbs with agent-like subjects tend to be the ones that allow HAVE (cf. Sorace 2000).

Note that some verbs can also use either BE or HAVE (in certain circumstances).

- German also exhibits this split in auxiliary selection for intransitive perfectives.

Periphrastic participle construction alignment typology

German exhibits a tripartite system, with three different auxiliares:

Transitive perfect with HAVE (haben):

Der Mann **hat** das Essen gegessen. ('The man has eaten the food.')

Intransitive perfect with BE (sein):

Der Mann **ist** gefallen. ('The man has fallen.')

Passives with BECOME (werden):

Das Essen **wird** (vom Mann) gegessen. ('The food is eaten (by the man).')

- Of course BE and BECOME are similar, but auxiliary selection is still distinct.
  - Note that BE can also be used in German (*Das Essen ist gegessen*) to describe a stative resultative meaning ('the food is all eaten up'), though not a passive per se.

Periphrastic participle construction alignment typology

Slavic languages almost exhibit 'direct' alignment without different auxiliaries

Standard Czech
Past tense > L-participle
Dopil **jsem** *mleko*. 'I drank up the milk.'   **BE.PRS.1SG**
Spadnul **jsem**. 'I fell down'   **BE.PRS.1SG**
(HAVE perfect is spoken Czech: Dickey 2013: 115)

Passive > N/T-participle
Mléko **bylo** *vypito*. 'The milk was drunk up.'   **BE.PST.N**

[Finnish (Uralic) is another example of this type: passive = BE + passive PTCP
                                                    perfect = BE + active PTCP]

- However, different participles types are used, so despite no different in auxiliary there is still a morphosyntactic contrast.
    - A larger typological sample might reveal a more appropriate example of this type.

Conclusions

Ergativity appears to exist in Europe also, not just by analogy, but similar origin.

Just as "ergative" languages are usually split, so do some "accusative" languages have some ergative features.

Participles play an active role in the argument structure of periphrastic constructions.

Parallels in the development of perfective and passive participial periphrasis.

Methodological point:
Instead of explaining the ergative features in independent sentences directly…
> Have a look at the forms they originate from (nominalizations, participles)
> Try and explain why participles behave the way they do: What are their inherent properties as adnominal modifiers that trigger S/P (absolute) orientation?

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