

## The Hittite perfect

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The Hittite verb does not display the three-fold aspectual distinction traditionally reconstructed for PIE, with verbs typically featuring three different aspectual stems for the present (imperfective), the aorist (perfective), and the perfect (resultative).

From a synchronic point of view, in Hittite the meaning associated with the PIE perfect, that is, to indicate a state resulting from a change-of-state (cf. Clackson 2007), were covered by compound verb forms (cf. Di Giovine 1996), consisting of the *-ant-* participle plus the finite forms of the verbs *ḫar(k)-* ‘have, hold’, and to a lesser extent *eš-* ‘be’, as auxiliaries (cf. Friedrich 1960, Benveniste 1962, Boley 1989 and 1992, Luraghi 1998, Dardano 2005, Hoffner & Melchert 2008, Cotticelli-Kurras 2015). The origin and the function of this construction have been a matter of debate, but scholars generally agree in assigning it a resultative function, possibly developing from subject- to object-oriented (Boley 1989). In our paper, we review the standard discussion on the semantics of the Hittite compound perfect, and reassess its status and function based on an analysis of its occurrences in texts ranging from Old to New Hittite. We also show that the construction probably originated as aspectual, but later gained a past reference temporal value, much in the same way at the continuants of the PIE perfect in other languages, and of the new compound perfects in modern Romance and Germanic languages. This is consistent with well-known paths of language change, whereby resultative constructions develop into anteriors and eventually into past tenses (Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994, see Drinka forthc.).

Finally, it is not unlikely that in Hittite the so-called ‘*ḫi*-conjugation’ reflects the older PIE perfect, as has been argued both on semantic and formal grounds (Rose 2005, Kortland 2010). Though this issue is far from being settled, we discuss to what extent the putative evolution of the inherited perfect into the *ḫi*-conjugation might have influenced the rise of perfect periphrastic constructions in Hittite.

## References

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