

AN ANALYSIS OF BE-PASSIVES*

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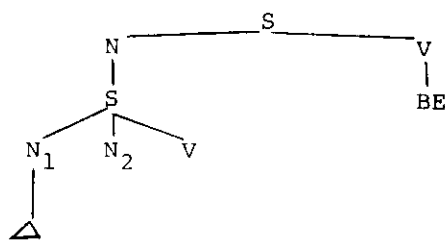
The presence of the equivalents of the verb 'to be' in the passive constructions of various languages has prompted several analyses in which this verb was explicitly or implicitly considered a characteristic feature of passive in general. This is particularly true for transformational and some post-transformational grammars. This in turn has led to certain conclusions concerning the meaning of passive.

The present paper shows that such analyses were in error and that 'be' is not an attribute of the passive. This is demonstrated by analyses of the meaning and form of passives in some thirty languages.

The paper also presents a hypothesis as to why 'be' is present in the passive constructions of so many languages, namely because 'be-passives' are a subset of a set of sentences with nominal predicates. This hypothesis is supported by data from synchronic analyses of over thirty languages and by historical developments in several unrelated languages.

1. The problem

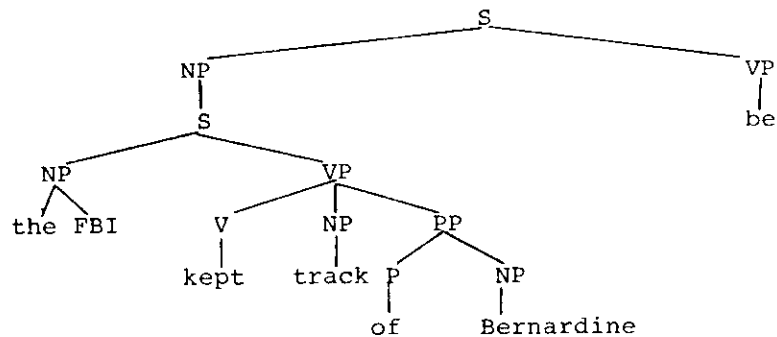
Langacker and Munro (1975) postulate the verb BE to be a part of the underlying passive construction, which they represent by the following phrase marker:



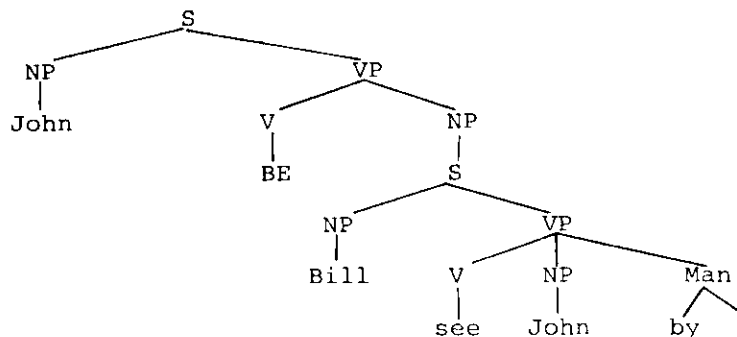
* The present paper is part of a larger study on the nature of passives. I would like to thank the Council on Research and Creative Work, University of Colorado, for the partial support of this project. I am grateful to Jean Charney, David Rood and Dorothy Siegel for comments on the style and content of this paper. All errors are of course my sole responsibility.

In the above tree BE “is considered a predicate with real semantic content, not simply a semantically empty grammatical marker that could be inserted transformationally” (Langacker and Munro 1975: 791).

Lakoff (1971: 153) reports an unpublished analysis of *be*-passives by Lakoff-Ross-Postal of which the following phrase marker is an example:



These analyses were preceded by Hasegawa (1968), who appears to have been the first to postulate the verb BE in the underlying structure of passive sentences, for which he proposed the following structure:



These three analyses are some of the most important proposals made within the theory of transformational grammar since Chomsky (1965). The difference between the Langacker-Munro analysis and that of Lakoff-Ross-Postal and Hasegawa lies mainly in the fact that the former postulates that the underlying subject of the complement clause remains unspecified.

Hasegawa intended to provide an analysis of the English passive without claims to the universality of the proposed model. Langacker and Munro (1975), despite all the reservations they make (790ff), intended their

analysis for much wider application than Uto-Aztecan and Mojave. Lakoff (1971: 149) does not limit the Lakoff-Ross-Postal analysis to English only, but she is not very explicit about the universality of the analysis. She claims that forms of BE-passive similar to those in English occur in "language after language" and she asks "why these verbs (i.e. BE or have [get]) are chosen, rather than, say eat or go" (Lakoff 1971: 149). Her question was apparently concerned with the surface structure occurrence of the verbs of being and having in passive sentences.

Langacker and Munro (1975: 798) claim that the "existence of a special relationship between BE and passivization is apparent from more familiar languages".

Since no other support is provided for this statement, one has to assume that 'relationship' means the presence of the verb 'to be' in the surface structure of the passive constructions. The position of Langacker and Munro seems to be prompted by the same facts that prompted Lakoff's remark mentioned earlier.

Another justification which L. and M. provide (820ff) for postulating BE in the underlying structure of passive sentences is the analogy to Ross' (1972) postulation of DO in the underlying structure of active sentences; but analogy cannot serve as evidence. It is important to note that the only evidence that Langacker and Munro do provide for the presence of BE in the underlying structure of the passive sentences is the presence of the equivalents of 'to be' in the surface structure of the passive construction in some languages. This is clearly indicated by their use of this evidence in the discussion of the Uto-Aztecan and Mojave data. Therefore, if one could show that 'to be' in the surface structure has some other source, one would eliminate the only evidence for the presence of BE in the underlying structure of passives. Throughout this paper the term BE will refer to the hypothetical constituent of the underlying structure with the meaning assigned to it by Langacker and Munro (1975: 820), viz. 'stative, existential' indicating 'existence of state'.¹ The term 'be' will refer to the constituent of the surface structure. These designations will be used in reference to any language considered here.

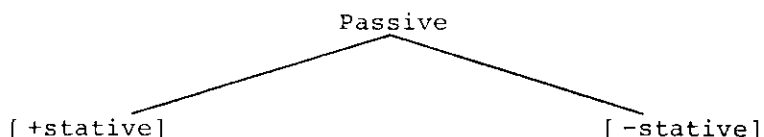
¹ The discussion throughout this paper deals only with the type of sentence which has come to be known as 'agentless passives'. There are enough languages which have only this type of passive (cf. Eckman 1974) to warrant that limitation of the scope of this paper. Langacker and Munro (1975) do not claim the agential 'by' phrase to be an inherent part of the passive sentence, and I follow them in this statement although I differ in the account of the source of the 'by phrases'.

2. Evidence against the claim that BE is a constituent of the underlying representation of passive sentences

The evidence will consist of three parts. Part 1 will discuss the semantic implications of postulating BE in the underlying structure of passives. Part 2, based on a cross-language comparison, will show the relationship between 'be' and other means of indicating passive. Part 3 will show that in a few languages 'be' as a marker of passive developed later than other means of marking passive.

2.1. *Semantic implications*

L. and M. throughout their paper claim that 'stative' or 'existential' is an inherent meaning of passive sentences. This hypothesis is intended to provide support for the postulation of BE in the underlying structure of passives. The claim that the meaning of passives is 'stative' or 'existential' can be shown to be false in more than one way. Here I will consider only one aspect of this claim, leaving the fundamental problem of the function and meaning of passives for a later study. In a number of languages there are at least two ways of marking passive voice. When this is the case, one of these will have the function of explicitly indicating a nonstative meaning, while the other form may indicate the stative. This can be represented by the following diagram:



As will become evident, L. and M.'s error consists of generalizing one branch of this diagram and extending its meaning to the whole category of passives. Langacker and Munro (1975: 798), recognizing the existence of nonstative passives, dismiss the problem in the following way: "We take the semantic representation of 'become' as something approximating INCEPT [BE]; i.e. inchoation can be regarded as the inception of the existence of a state" and "In either case, there would seem little doubt that 'be' and 'become' are closely related semantically (granted that 'be' is not semantically empty), regardless of what specific structures one posits". While the above is a plausible analysis of the relationship between 'be' and

'become' it by no means accounts for all types of the nonstative category. It cannot even be regarded as an analysis of inchoative in the accepted meaning of this term, namely a category which indicates beginning of an action. Thus inchoative can indicate either inception of the existence of a state, as in the case of the examples in L. and M., or it can just indicate inception of any action as in Latin *cresco* 'I am growing', *senesco* 'I am getting old' or in Russian *zapet'* 'to start to sing' or *zagovorit'* 'to start to talk' (Marouzeau 1960: 169).

The nonstative category does not necessarily indicate the inception of the existence of a state. In the area of lexicon there are a number of verbs which are [-stative] and which do not have a [+stative] counterpart, e.g. 'slip' in English and 'poskol'znutsja' in Russian. The following sentence is an example of a nonstative passive which does not mark inception of a state:

p'esn'a p'elas' 'the song was being sung'
p'esn'a sp'eta 'the song is sung' (stative).

The relationship between stative and nonstative is thus a relationship of antonymy as it were: the only different feature is stative. Thus the [-stative] feature does not indicate inception of the existence of a state and should be considered as a separate semantic category. The distinction between the stative and nonstative categories is not even an exclusive characteristic of passives. In many languages it permeates the whole verbal system of which passives are only one part and thus reflect this category as well. The distinction between the two types of passives will be illustrated with examples from several unrelated languages. It is known, of course, in every branch of the Indo-European family. The following examples from a few branches of Indo-European serve merely to illustrate the point:

Germanic

Swedish

nonstat. Bilen blev stulen, medan jag var borta
car become stolen, while I was away
'The car was stolen while I was away'
stative Bilen var stulen, när jag kom tillbaka
when come back
(Beite et al. 1970: 106)

*Romance**Italian*

- nonstat. In casa, la sera si accendono i lumi
 In casa, la sera vengono accesi i lumi
 (Regula and Jernej 1965: 190)
- stative In casa, la sera sono accesi i lumi

*Indo-Iranian**Persian*

- nonstat. darb baste šod 'the door was closed'
- stative darb baste bud 'the door was closed'

Compare the following sentence which contains both forms:

nemidānam če mouqe² darb baste šod vali midānam dar sa² ate šeš darb
 baste bud
 I don't know what time door closed became but I know hour six door
 closed was
 'I do not know at what time the door became closed but I know it was
 closed at six'

*Slavic**Russian*

- nonstat. kartina piasalas' 'the picture was being painted'
- stative kartina byla napisana 'the picture was painted'

Notice that in all of the above examples the verb 'be' occurs in the stative sentences only. The above examples are only an illustration of a general observation, namely, that if a language has two devices to indicate passive, and one of them uses a form of 'be', then the stative meaning of the passive will be realized by this form and not by the form that does not employ 'be'.

When the two meanings of passive are realized by different forms, it is not necessary that one of them contain 'be', even if it indicates the stative meaning of passive. This is the situation in most of the Chadic and Semitic languages, e.g. in Hausa (Chadic) a stative passive may be indicated by any of at least three different forms, two of which do not include the verb 'to be' (cf. Frajzyngier 1977). One of the constructions consists of an NP and a verb form ending in *-u*, e.g.

daaki yaa ginu 'the house is well built'
house build

In Hausa the form ending in *-u* along with the meaning stative has an additional meaning of an action well done. Similarly, the stative passive in Hungarian did not contain the verb 'be', e.g.

A levél megíratott 'The letter has been written' (Károly 1972: 112)

Hungarian has also a form to express nonstative passive, e.g. *bemocskolódik* 'becomes dirty', *becsuk-ódik* 'closes' (Károly 1972: 100).

If a language has only one form to indicate passive this form will be ambiguous with respect to the value of the feature [stative]. Although I did not come across such a language, the point of ambiguity may be illustrated with the English *be*-passives which are often disambiguated by the context only, despite the fact that there are other means to express nonstative passive. We have thus demonstrated that stative is only one of the meanings of the passive construction; and claiming, as L. and M. do, that it is a characteristic of all passive constructions is an unjustified generalization. Obviously, the alleged stative meaning of the passive cannot be used to support the claim that all passive constructions contain an underlying BE.

2.2. *Is 'be' a typical device in passive constructions?*

The aim of this cross-language comparison of the devices to mark passive is to test the claim implicit in Lakoff (1971) and L. and M. (1975) that 'be' is the most frequently encountered device in the formation of passives, that it is somehow typical for the passive construction. The test does not pretend to be exhaustive, but the number of languages tested (ca. 40) and to assure diversity, the number of families considered (eight) is larger than that of L. and M. Lakoff (1971) did not support her claim with any examples or other kinds of evidence.

The test is considered to be important for the following reasons: if indeed BE were to be the constituent of the underlying structure of passives, and if 'be' were to be derived from it, then one would naturally expect 'be' to occur in the surface structure of passive sentences. Cases in which 'be' does not occur in the surface structure of passives being apparent exceptions, should be accounted for. In particular, a theory of grammar or a grammar of a given language should be able to show the process or

processes by which the underlying semantically nonempty BE came to be realized by some other means rather than by the expected surface structure 'be'. L. and M., although recognizing that there is more than one device to mark passive, do not attempt to provide an explanation of why those devices are used instead of 'be'. Such an explanation is obviously not obtainable, for the simple reason that the principle of arbitrariness of language prevents us from predicting by what form a given semantic element of language will be realized.

Chart 1 represents only a summary of the test, therefore not all the languages tested are listed. Inflectional devices, derivational devices and periphrastic constructions containing verbs other than 'be' have all been grouped under the heading of non-*be*-passives. A description of some of these devices can be found in Perlmutter and Postal (1977) and Comrie (1977).

Chart 1²

	<i>be</i> -passive	non- <i>be</i> -passive	Language
Type I	yes	yes	Most of IE Aramaic (Semitic) Mojave (Yuman)
Type II	no	yes	Ossetian (I.E.) Most of the Semitic Galla, and other Cushitic lgs. Berber, Egyptian All Chadic lgs. Japanese, Turkish Indonesian, Chinese Swahili Foe, Puli (New Guinea)
Type III	yes	no	none

Type I. Most of the Indo-European languages are included in this group. In my analysis I have taken into consideration periphrastic passives and forms labeled 'middle', because they represent the nonstative passive in most cases. In including these forms I have followed a tradition of Indo-European scholarship as represented by Kuryłowicz (1964) where it is assumed and convincingly shown that the difference between middle and

² The data for the particular languages in the chart 1 and in chart 2 to follow later are: Chinese: Hsu (1974); Turkish: Lewis (1967); Caddoan: David Rood, personal communication. Sources for other languages are indicated in the text.

passive consists of the feature stative, 'middle' indicating the nonstative form and 'passive' indicating stative. As Kuryłowicz (1964: 74) says "The fundamental fact is that the middle is not to be distinguished from the passive use in bipartite constructions. This means that in bipartite constructions the two uses are combinatory variants with a semantic distinction resting exclusively upon a wider context".³

Among the Germanic languages Gothic still had the synthetic passive, Swedish has the *s*-passive along with two periphrastic forms, and Latin had a synthetic passive before it was replaced by a periphrastic construction. English has, along with the *be*-passives, the *get*-passives, Slavic languages still have two forms in current usage, the passive marked by what is called the reflexive pronoun and the *be*-passives. A similar situation exists in Lithuanian and other Baltic languages. In Celtic languages along with the synthetic passive in *-r* (Lewis and Pedersen 1961: 310) there is a periphrastic passive (ibid: 311). Some of the Indic languages will be discussed below.

Among the Semitic languages only some dialects of Aramaic and some of the Ethiopian Semitic languages have a 'be' passive along with a synthetic passive, several forms of which occur in all Semitic languages. Mojave has three forms of passive, one of which involves the use of the verb 'to be'. Two other types of passive involve an impersonal suffix and a passive suffix (Langacker and Munro 1975: 809–812).

Type II. Among the non-*be*-passives there are, of course, various forms to mark this category. Thus, among the Semitic languages there are at least two widespread devices, one involving the vocalic changes as in Arabic, and another involving prefixes as in Ethiopian Semitic.

In Chinese the passive particles *bei* or *rang* are not considered to be inflectional morphemes, but they are not equivalents of the verb 'to be' either, and that is why Chinese is included in Type II.

In Chadic languages there are several devices used for the expression of the passive, some of them inflectional and some syntactical. 'Be' passive, however, is rare in those languages even for stative passives (see Frajzyngier 1977).

The survey shows that there are languages that have both a *be*-passive and a non-*be*-passive (Type I); that there are languages that have non-*be*-passives only (Type II) and that there are no languages that have a *be*-passive only (Type III is not represented).

³ For a different than Kuryłowicz's version of the passage from middle to passive see Parker (1976).

Type III is crucial for our conclusions. I would like to use the type of argument which, to my knowledge, was first used by Ferguson (1963) in the discussion of the nasals, and which was later repeated by Greenberg (e.g. in 1968: 146ff and 159). The argument, illustrated by Greenberg on nasal vowels, runs as follows: if we find languages which have both nasal and oral vowels, and if we find languages that have oral vowels only, and if we do not find languages that have nasal vowels only, then we may conclude that the oral vowels are primary and that the nasal vowels are derived. Oral vowels, then, are going to be postulated for every language while nasal vowels are not. And while one does not have to explain the presence of oral vowels one should be able to explain in each case the process through which the nasal vowels emerged. As the cross-language review in chart 1 indicates the *be*-passives are by no means typical, and whenever they do occur the language will also have some other means to indicate passives. Therefore, applying the argument illustrated with nasal vowels, we could claim that *be*-passives are not a characteristic feature of passives in general, but are derived by some process, which is possible because the passive construction shares some semantic characteristics with some other construction. Such a process will be proposed later in this paper.

Whether from this one can conclude that *be*-passives are diachronically later devices in comparison to some other means of indicating passive is not absolutely clear if one considers the synchronic devices only, because among them we might find devices which are even younger than the periphrasis with 'be'. There are, however, some diachronic data which indicate that, in some languages at least, the periphrasis with 'be' is an innovation.

2.3. Historical development of the form of passive

If the L. and M. hypothesis about underlying BE and surface structure 'be' were true, then, if there are two passive constructions from different periods of the same language, one would expect 'be' to occur in the earlier of the two constructions and certainly one would not expect it to occur exclusively in the later constructions, i.e. one would not expect it to be an innovation.

The following review of the development of passives considers several unrelated or remotely related languages for which historical records exist to corroborate the linguistic reconstruction. In order not to arrive at

biased conclusions I have refrained from providing my own interpretations or analyses of facts, limiting the review to the interpretations and data present in my sources. The only exception is made for Uto-Aztecan, where I differ from the interpretation provided by L. and M., although relying completely on their data.

Indo-European

Indian

Concerning the Indian languages Bloch (1965: 295) writes:

As for the relationship between the subject and the personal verb, it is expressed in Sanskrit by endings of two kinds: active and middle. Of these last the passive alone have retained a definite significance in classical Sanskrit, at the same time making use of a special suffix. As we have seen, the category has survived into middle Indian, while losing its characteristic endings. In Neo-Indian the category no longer exists except to a limited extent, the passive expressing itself in a large number of cases by periphrastic equivalents; yet the decay of the old passive is incomplete.

Baltic

Otrebski (1956: 236), noting that each of the Baltic languages forms the periphrastic passive with the help of a different auxiliary verb, e.g. Latvian *būt, tapt, tikt* and *klut*, Prussian *wirst* and *postāt*, concludes that each of the Baltic languages has formed the periphrastic passive independently, thus excluding the possibility that it is an inherited form. He points to the influence of Slavic languages and German as a possible factor in the development of these forms.

Persian

Old Persian had a synthetic passive similar to the Sanskrit passive, marked by an affix *-i-*. The following examples are from Brandenstein and Mayrhofer (1964: 72):

a-bar-ya	'I will be brought'
pah-yā-mahy	'we were named'

Modern Persian has the periphrastic passive only, formed with the verb *šodan* 'to become', e.g. *Ali dida šod* 'Ali seen became' 'Ali was seen'

(Moynes 1974: 249).⁴ There is also a form indicating stative only, formed with the verb *budan* 'to be' and past participle.⁵ Thus in Persian 'be' occurs in the surface structure of stative passives only.

Semitic

Most of the Semitic languages have only a synthetic passive, marked either by changes in the vocalization of the stem as in Arabic or by prefixes, as in Amharic and other Ethiopian languages. For proto-Semitic Moscati et al. (1964: 126ff) postulate *n-* and *t-* as Proto-Semitic passive markers, along with the vocalic marker *u-i-a* which is attested in Arabic, Ugaritic, and Hebrew, and traces of which may be found in Aramaic.

However, in some of the Semitic languages it is possible to express the passive by means of a passive participle; various copulas or auxiliary verbs in such sentences indicate tense. Thus for Tigré, Cohen (1924: 156) gives the following example, which he analyzes as containing a complex tense rather than a passive construction

'ttā ad zamūt hallā
this tribe ravaged was
'This tribe was ravaged'

Mandaic (East-Aramaic)

In Old Mandaic the passive sentence normally did not have a verb 'be', e.g.

arza mn gintai qir
cedar from my garden eradicated
'a cedar was eradicated from my garden'

⁴ Moynes in his article argues against the existence of passive sentences in Modern Persian. His argument is based on the evidence that the Persian sentences with the verb *šodan*, similar to the one given in the present paper, never had an agent in the deep structure and that the opposition *John saw Mary* vs. *Mary was seen by John* does not exist in Persian. I will not take up this argument now. Suffice it here to mention that the Modern Persian sentence is very similar to the passive sentence in other languages discussed in this paper. Also, I do not see any reason, why English constructions should serve as litmus paper in the linguistic discussion of other languages.

⁵ I am grateful to Mahmoud Farrokhpour for drawing my attention to this form of the passive.

*Uto-Aztecan**Cupeño*

The evidence from Cupeño is provided by the following statement (Langacker and Munro 1975: 799): “In Cupeño, a new passive construction evolved, using the stative suffix *-yax* or *-yax* on verbs that normally require the active suffix *-in*.

gəyiinə təm-pə-yəx- wə
 chicken enclose-it-STAT-DUR
 ‘A chicken was cooped up’

Usually, in the expanded form *miy(a)x*, *-yax* is the basic copular verb in the Cupeño languages.”

The relationship between the passive marker and the verb ‘to be’ in other Uto-Aztecan languages is not as direct as in Cupeño, and at best it shows the etymological relationship between the passive marker and the verb **ti* ‘to be’ which Langacker reconstructs for Proto-Uto-Aztecan. The data from Tarahumara and other languages indicate that the passive constructions there may be considered as synthetic rather than periphrastic. Since there are no examples given of copular sentences in Cupeño it is possible that the quoted Cupeño example represents a synthetic passive as well, and the relationship between the passive marker *yax*, *yax* and the copular verb is only etymological, *yax*, *yax* being derived from **yika* ‘be’. If it were so, i.e. that in Uto-Aztecan languages the passive marker is etymologically related to the verb ‘to be’, then it is obvious that it is not comparable to other languages in which the passive construction involves the verb ‘to be’ and not a morpheme which can only be historically related to this verb. Thus it appears that the third type of forming passive sentences in Mojave (a Yuman language), which will be discussed below, and the data from Tarahumara and Kawaiisu are of essentially different types: Mojave represents a periphrastic passive, while Tarahumara has a synthetic passive. There is no synchronic derivation of the Tarahumara passive sentences in Langacker and Munro and I do not see how they can be derived from a deep structure that would contain a ‘be’ verb. Thus, in four unrelated language families it has been shown that *be*-passives are innovations when compared with some other means of indicating passive voice. From this evidence it follows that the *be*-passive cannot be derived

from an underlying BE because if it were we would expect it to occur in the oldest passive sentences and not exclusively in the innovations. Note that, although in the four unrelated language families *be*-passive was shown to be an innovation, one cannot claim that *be*-passives are innovations in all languages of all families in which they occur. One can conceive of a situation in which there is a simultaneous emergence of two forms of passive, and one of these forms, *be*-periphrasis, marks the stative passive.

3. An attempt at explanation

After it has been shown that there is inadequate evidence for positing universal presence of BE in the underlying structure of all passive sentences, one must nevertheless explain why the passive constructions do contain 'be' in so many unrelated languages. In other words, one should answer the question put by Lakoff (*op. cit.*) about the source of 'be' in some passive constructions. Although one can conceive many sources for 'be' in the passive I would like to limit the discussion to the three most plausible hypotheses:

(a) There is a separate underlying structure for *stative passive*, which contains BE, from which the surface structure 'be' is derived.

(b) The source of 'be' is different for every language. Essentially, this hypothesis claims that 'be' evolved from some other structure not related to passive.

(c) The passive sentences containing 'be' are part of the class of nominal sentences. This hypothesis in fact represents a particular instance of (b).

3.1. 'be' derived from underlying stative 'BE'

There is no single language that gives any evidence that this has taken place. The type of evidence that one would seek was alluded to earlier. But there is independent evidence from several languages that a stative does not have to have 'be'. Such languages are Foe, Huli and Pole (Papua New Guinea), Swahili (Congo-Cordofanian), Wichita (Caddoan family), Akkadian (Semitic), and many of the Chadic languages. The strength of the negative evidence with the absence of any positive evidence makes this hypothesis untenable.

3.2. 'be-passives' as a product of evolution of some non-passive construction

In the absence of any general hypothesis as to what these different constructions might have been I would like to discuss two instances in which passive constructions containing 'be' derive diachronically from certain periphrastic tense markers. The discussion does not imply that this is a universal tendency. It only indicates that these are some of the possible sources for 'be' passive.

Romance

The following chart from Väänänen (1963: 138) shows the system of tenses of the passive paradigm in two stages of the development of Latin. Stage I still has the synthetic passive in a part of the paradigm; in Stage II, the synthetic passive is replaced by the periphrastic passive:

	<i>Stage I</i>	<i>Stage II</i>
Present	laudor	laudātus sum
Perfect	laudātus sum	laudātus fui
Imperfect	laudābar	laudātus eram
Pluperfect	laudātus eram	laudātus fueram

In this partial paradigm of the passive in Stage I the periphrastic form occurs along with the synthetic forms, but, interestingly, they do not occur in what is the least marked form of the paradigm, present. While the form *laudor* indicates [-state] the form *laudātus sum* indicates state. In Stage II, the form *laudātus sum* replaced *laudor* and triggered a whole series of changes necessary to denote the tense distinctions. The basic change from *laudor* to *laudātus sum* is well documented and explained in a number of works, e.g. in Bourciez (1967: 75 and 267), Väänänen (1963: 137) and especially Kuryłowicz (1964: 56ff). Thus, according to Kuryłowicz, this change is mainly due to the fact that the passive participle in Latin has two meanings, perfective (e.g. 'praised') and imperfective ('being praised'). It is this second meaning that becomes the primary meaning of the passive participle and this in turn is the reason for the forms *laudor* and *laudātus sum* coming to mean the same thing, thus providing the necessary condition for a possible disappearance of the form *laudor*. Väänänen (1963: 138) gives the following examples of the use of synthetic and periphrastic passive during the same period: *domus ... Ciceronis cum domo Fulvii Flacci*

coniuncta esse (Cic. Dom. 102) and *insula ... cum oppido coniungitur* (Caes. Gall. 3, 112, 2).

The above discussion shows that the historically earlier function of the passive participle + verb 'to be' was to indicate state and not passive in general; it thus supports the previous discussion which indicated that whenever there is a 'be' construction as the only indicator of passive, it may be an innovation.

Semitic

In Semitic languages the various forms of the verb 'to be' are auxiliaries of the various tenses and are combined with the verbs in either perfective or imperfective 'aspects'. Cohen (1924: 108) writes that in those combinations the verb 'to be' designates the tenses and the duration while the main verb expresses the process. The Semitic examples given in 2.3 illustrate this function of the verb 'to be' in Aramaic. Notice that in the older texts 'to be' has the function of either an indicator of a non-present tense or of an emphatic auxiliary. In modern Mandaic this function of 'be' is lost and the sentences containing it become the nonmarked, neutral sentences. This process is similar to the one that is postulated for the development of periphrastic passive in Latin.

3.3. 'be-passives' as a subclass of nominal sentences

3.3.1. Hypothesis

Since the term 'nominal sentence' is crucial for the hypothesis that is going to be advanced, and the term has not been widely used in the recent linguistic literature, the following description seems appropriate here.

This term describes sentences with nominal predicates. Chomsky (1965: 107) has postulated the rule VP → Copula Predicate in order to account for those sentences in English. Langacker and Munro (1975: 812), use the term 'copular construction'. The term 'nominal sentence' is used by Lehmann (1974: 115), Hodge (1975), Benveniste (1971) (the term was always more popular in French linguistic literature). This term seems to be preferable to the term 'equational sentence' or 'equative sentence' since it refers to the syntactic rather than semantic characteristics of the sentence. It is also an older term, and since there is nothing new that it covers, there is no reason to change it. The logical structure of such sentences can be either $X = Y$, e.g. 'Elizabeth II is the present Queen of England', or $X \in Y$, e.g. 'Salt is white' (both examples from Suppes 1957: 101).

The hypothesis of the present paper is that the *be*-passives are structurally a subclass of nominal sentences. They differ from other nominal sentences only in the fact that in *be*-passives the predicate is morphologically derived from a lexical class of verbs, while in other nominal sentences the predicate does not have to be a derived nominal. Conceivably, there is no distinction between *be*-passives and other nominal sentences whatsoever, because we might have languages, such as Semitic, in which not only verbal adjectives are derived from verbs but such nominal categories as agent, instrument, name of action and place of action as well.

This hypothesis is not completely new. It has some antecedents in 19th-century linguistics as reflected in traditional grammars of many languages where the stative passive with 'be' was not even considered to be a passive form, as for instance in the grammars of Persian. It has some antecedents in modern linguistic literature as well. Thus Bach (1967: 482) in a footnote mentions the possibility of dividing English verb phrases into adjectival constructions (to contain true adjectives, passives, *ing*-constructions and predicate nominals) and all other types. Presumably 'passives' in his note means *be*-passives. Essentially the same proposal can be found in Freidin (1975).

In the next two sections I will provide some arguments in support of this hypothesis. One of the arguments will be synchronic, based on a cross-language comparison, and the other diachronic, attempting to explain the synchronic data.

3.3.2. *Distribution, correlation and similarities of be-passives and nominal sentences*

The synchronic arguments will begin with a chart (chart 2) showing the correlation of distribution of 'be-passives' and nominal sentences formed with copula 'be' or some other type of copula. It is a summary of the results obtained from examining over thirty languages, chosen at random from several language families.

Chart 2 shows that there are languages that have 'be-passive' and nominal sentences, and there are languages that have a nominal sentence and no 'be-passive'. Most important, it shows that there are no languages that have *be*-passive but no nominal sentences. One can claim that the above correlation is purely accidental since one would expect sentences with nominal predicates to occur in every language anyhow, and that the *be*-passives have no relationship with the nominal sentences. Against this argument one can point out one more correlation which shows the

Chart 2

<i>be</i> -passive	nominal sentence	Language
yes	yes	Most of I.E. Mojave (Yuman)
no	yes	Most of the Semitic, Chadic, Cushitic, Caddoan, Siouan, Chinese, Turkish Ossetian
yes	no	none

dependency of *be*-passives on nominal sentences. The correlation can be summarized in the following way: the passive form in a language will contain the equivalent of 'be' only if the nominal sentence contains 'be'. What this means is that if a language does not have an equivalent of 'be' in a nominal sentence it will not have it in the passive sentence. The examples of this correlation are numerous; it suffices here to bring only a few from unrelated languages, although they all are instances of the same, frequently found and well-known phenomenon, of the absence of copula in present tense and third person:

Russian

There is no copula in the present tense of nominal sentences regardless of person, e.g.:

<i>Nominal sentence</i>	<i>Stative passive</i>
on vrač 'he is a doctor'	on pojman 'he is captured'
ja vrač 'I am a doctor'	ja pojman 'I am captured'

In the non-present tense the nominal sentence requires the copula and so does the passive sentence, e.g.:

on byl vračem 'he was a doctor'	on byl pojman 'he was captured'
ja byl vračem 'I was a doctor'	ja byl pojman 'I was captured'

Mojave

In Mojave there is a type of passive construction, which has the verb 'be' in the surface structure and so is the sentence with the nominal predicate, e.g.:

ʔavaa vidanʷ ʔinʷepʔ-nakut uučoo-č ido-pč
 house this my-father make-NOM be-TWS
 'This house was built by my father'

John kʷa -idee-č ido-pč
 doctor -NOM be-TWS
 'John is a doctor'
 (Langacker and Munro 1975: 812)

The 'be' in either sentence may be deleted:

Mary kʷaθəʔ idee-č
 doctor -NOM
 'Mary is a doctor'

modiilʷ vidanʷ ʔinʷepʔ-intay uučoo-č
 bread this my- my-mother make-NOM
 'This bread was made by my mother'
 (L. and M. 1975: 813).

An additional bit of evidence for the relationship between the nominal sentences with 'be' and the 'be-passives' is the fact that in many languages the form of the predicate in these sentences is identical. Thus there is identity between verbal adjectives and other types of adjective in Russian (see Babby and Brecht 1975), and similar identity of behavior of past participles and adjectives in English (see Freidin 1975).

3.3.3. *A historical explanation*

The relationship that exists between *be*-passives and nominal sentences cannot be accidental and it should be explained in an explicit way. As has been pointed out previously, passive sentences have inherently at least two types of meaning: one is stative and the other is nonstative. Other terms applied to this meaning are "dynamic" (Visser 1973) and, wrongly, inchoative and inceptive. In addition to the examples cited in section 2.2 here is an example from German, where the distinction is marked morphologically:

Die Tür war um sechs geschlossen, aber ich weiss nicht, wann sie geschlossen wurde.

'The door was shut at six, but I don't know when it was shut'
 (Curme 1913, quoted in Visser 1973: 2087).

Nominal sentences, according to the formulations given above, have only stative meaning. So, if a language has a passive construction, of whatever type, there exists a situation where there are two means to indicate the category stative: the passive construction and the nominal sentence. But if a language has only one passive form this form will be ambiguous with respect to the stative/nonstative distinction. (Thus in present day English *be*-passives are ambiguous just in this respect.) Therefore, it is quite likely that when the passive construction is ambiguous, another form will be brought in to disambiguate the construction. I will illustrate this process of disambiguation in the evolution of passive in English, and in a dialect of Aramaic. An extensive description of the history of passive in English can be found in Visser (1973: 2084ff) and a shorter and somewhat different account in Traugott (1972: 81ff) and in Curme (1931: 445ff).

It appears that in Old English the first stative form was the periphrastic passive, since it used the construction with *wesan/beon* plus past participle. The nonstative passive was indicated by the verb *weorþan* 'to come to be', 'to get to be'. Most probably, the *be*-passive became ambiguous when the verb *weorþan* "was falling into disuse" (Visser 1973: 2088). Then came other disambiguating devices, such as the structures of the type 'the book is a-reading', and from the latter part of the 18th century structures of the type 'is being + past participle'. As Visser points out (op. cit. 2089) 'get' is becoming the most important auxiliary to indicate nonstative passive in Modern English. In the course of the history of English the form with 'be' was preserved, having sometimes ambiguous and sometimes stative meaning only. One can conceive, however, of a different situation, in which the stable form, or the original form, is nonstative or ambiguous and, then, in order to disambiguate it one would have to use a form that is essentially stative. An excellent example of this is described by Kutscher (1969: 146). Two eastern dialects of modern Aramaic disambiguated the synthetic form of the passive in two different ways. In the Urmi dialect emerged a periphrastic form with the verb *pyš* 'remain' (thus a stative form has been added) while in the Azerbaijani dialect of Aramaic emerged a periphrastic form with *xdr* 'become' (thus a nonstative form has been added). A similar disambiguation process must have occurred in Kurdish and Ossetian. In Kurdish the passive construction consists of the verb 'to come', *hatan*, and the nominal category describing the name of action in the oblique case (Bakaev 1966: 274). In Ossetian (Isaev 1966: 249) the passive voice is realized by the past participle of the indicative verb and the finite form of

the verb 'to go'. Both of these forms are primarily nonstative, just as English *be*-passive is primarily stative.

The historical explanation presented above accounts for those cases where there is clear evidence of the later emergence of 'be-passives'. It does not make a claim that all *be*-passives emerged through a disambiguation process. It does, however, indicate that a nominal sentence presented a suitable structure for the realization of stative passive. In languages for which the *be*-passives are attested in the oldest available texts, one can claim that actually there is no distinction between *be*-passives and nominal sentences.

4. Conclusions

It has been shown in this paper that BE with the meaning 'stative' or 'existence of state' cannot be a part of the underlying structure of the passive sentences since one meaning of passive is specifically nonstative, and that meaning is morphologically marked in many languages from various families. Moreover, it has been stated that neither stative nor nonstative are exclusive properties of passive. Passive is just one of the categories in which the stative/nonstative distinction is formally marked. This statement was not provided with evidence, because it is readily available in linguistic literature.

It has also been shown that the source of the surface structure 'be' in the passive construction is not an underlying BE. Instead, it was proposed that nominal sentences are the model for the formation of the *be*-passives.

One can still maintain that BE with the meaning assigned to it by Langacker and Munro is a part of the underlying structure of the stative passive only. But, since it has been shown that the surface structure 'be' is derived from other sources, I do not see what the linguistic theory is going to gain by postulating the existence of an element which has no implications for the actual form of languages. Besides, postulating that stative passives have an underlying BE with the meaning 'stative' amounts to nothing more than tautology.

One of the implications of this paper is that it adds to the growing list of arguments against the use of passive transformation to derive the *be*-passives in English and other languages. This is done by claiming that any base structure rule that will provide a model for the nominal sentence will also account for the *be*-passives. The only difference that exists between

these two types of sentence is lexical in nature, the predicate of the *be*-passives usually being a deverbal adjective.

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