

## Middle Voice Marking in Tibeto-Burman

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### 1.0 Introduction

Middle voice marking is very rarely recognized as such in the grammars written on Tibeto-Burman languages. It is often simply treated as a normal direct reflexive or as an intransitivizer. In order to draw the attention of scholars to the existence and function of middle voice marking in Tibeto-Burman languages, the present paper discusses the form and function of middle marking in several of these languages. We will first discuss key facts about middle marking in general, then discuss the individual Tibeto-Burman examples.

The middle situation is semantically like the direct reflexive situation in that the referent performing the action and the one affected by the action are the same referent, that is, both involve self-directed action, but the middle voice situation differs from the prototypical direct reflexive situation in that the nature of that referent as initiator of the action and the nature of that referent as end point of the action are not as distinct as in the direct reflexive situation. There is what Kemmer (1993) refers to as a ‘low elaboration of participants in an event’ (Ch. 3), or, on a more general level, a ‘low elaboration of events’ (Ch. 6), as the subparts of the complex action involved in a middle situation are not as distinguishable as in a reflexive situation. This can be seen in comparing the Russian examples in (1) (from Kemmer 1994:203, citing Haiman 1983:796):<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. On utomil      *sebja*  
      he exhausted RM  
      ‘He exhausted himself’  
      b. On utomil-*sja*  
      he exhausted-MM  
      ‘He grew weary’

In (1a) the use of the reflexive marker *sebja* marks it as a reflexive event, emphasizing the conceptual distinction between the actor as initiator of the action and as endpoint of the action. Use of the middle marker, as in (1b), marks it as a spontaneous event, and involves no such clear distinction as in (1a).

Just as the reflexive can be seen as an intermediate semantic type between the two poles transitive and intransitive (Hopper & Thompson 1980:277), the middle can be seen as intermediate semantically between the reflexive and intransitive situations on the total transitive-reflexive-intransitive cline represented in Figure 1 (Kemmer 1993:73):

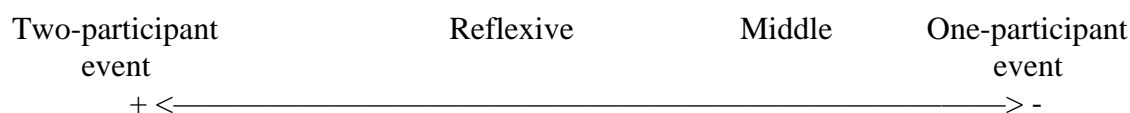


Figure 1: Degree of distinguishability of participants/events

Even when the verb used to code a reflexive or middle situation is syntactically transitive, as the reflexive and middle situations are not prototypical transitive situations, the marking of the whole clause can sometimes reflect the lower degree of transitivity. For example, many

<sup>1</sup>Abbreviations used in the examples: AGT agentive marker, ASP aspect marker, DAT dative marker, INST instrumental marker, MM unique middle marker, PP past participle, RECIP reciprocal marker, RM unique reflexive marker, R/M reflexive-middle marker. Arabic numbers refer to person, with sg, dl, pl being singular, dual, and plural, respectively.

languages do not allow agentive marking of actors in such clauses, though such marking might be obligatory in normal transitive clauses.

There is no consistency in the marking of this category cross-linguistically. Only a minority of languages in the world have distinct marking for middle situations (e.g. Russian, Old Norse, Hungarian, Turkish). In other languages the marking of middle situations patterns with either prototypical reflexive situations, as in, for example, French, German, and Quechua, or with prototypical transitive and intransitive situations, as in English and Chinese (see examples below). In languages of both the French type and those of the English type (i.e. the two types of language that do not have distinct middle marking) there are three types of marking for the categories on this cline: transitive, intransitive, and reflexive. What is different between the two types of language is what semantic categories are covered by each type of marking. In languages of the French type, the form of the reflexive prototype is used to mark middle situations, as in the French example in (2), while in languages of the English type it is the form of the intransitive prototype or the transitive prototype, and not the reflexive prototype that is used to mark middle situations, as in the examples in (3):<sup>2</sup>

- (2) Elle se lave les mains. (3) a. I rose from the chair.  
 3sg-fem R/M wash the-pl hands b. I washed my face.  
 ‘She washes her hands.’

In languages with unique marking for the reflexive (i.e. those with middle forms distinct from reflexive forms, such as Russian, and those without middle marking, such as English), it is usually possible to use a reflexive form, or a pronoun or noun interpreted as having reflexive meaning (such as *shēn* ‘body’ in example [4b] below), to a sentence which marks middle semantics in order to emphasize the dual semantic nature of the participant of the action. We saw the Russian example of this above (ex. [1a]); below are examples from English (ex. [4a]) and Chinese (ex. [4b]):

- (4) a. I got myself up (and walked out the door).  
 b. tián gūniáng zhàn qǐ shēn lái fúzhè ménkuàng  
 Tian miss stand up body come holding doorframe  
 chuǎnxī yīhuì fāng zǒu.  
 panting a.while only.then go  
 ‘Miss Tian stood herself up and, holding on to the doorframe, rested a while before leaving.’

In many of those languages where we know middle marking developed out of reflexive marking, as in French, this extended emphatic use of the reflexive simply became more consistent, lost its emphatic sense, and eventually became obligatory. In some cases, this loss of uniquely reflexive meaning led to the development of a unique middle form being created through repartition or reinforcement of the reflexive form, as in Dutch, where the original reflexive marker *zich* came to be used for middle situations, and now must be reinforced by *-zelf* (i.e. *zich-zelf*) to express reflexive situations (Kemmer 1993:184ff.). That is, as the originally emphatic use of the reflexive to mark middle situations became

<sup>2</sup>In English it is also possible to use the ‘get passive’ or a reflexive pronoun to express some middle semantic situations, e.g. *get dressed*, *enjoy oneself* (Kemmer 1993:184). See also ex. (4a).

obligatory, a new reinforced form for reflexives began to be used, and these forms then developed into a system with distinct reflexive and middle marking.<sup>3</sup>

Semantic situation types often marked by middle marking in languages that have it include grooming actions, changes in body posture, emotions, cognitive actions, perception, spontaneous events, indirect middles (e.g. Classical Greek *ktâ-sthai* ‘acquire [for oneself]’, Latin *ap̄iscor* ‘get [for oneself]’), and naturally reciprocal events.<sup>4</sup> Very often these situation types will be obligatorily marked with middle marking, so that verbs coding these situations will be listed in dictionaries with the middle marker. These verbs are often known as ‘deponents’ following the use of this term for Latin verbs of this type.

Commonly in languages with middle marking, we find that that marking can also be used for reciprocals and collectives. Below are examples of the reciprocal use of the reflexive/middle marker in French:

- (5) a. Les deux hommes se regardent.      b. Ils s’écrivent.  
       the.pl two men R/M look.3pl            3pl R/M-write.3pl  
       ‘The two men are looking at each other.’      ‘They write to each other.’

In many languages with middle marking we also find that this marker has a stativizing function. Following are examples from French ([6a]), Choctaw ([6b]; Nicklas 1974), and Chichewa ([6c]; Watkins 1937).

- (6.6) a. La fenetre s’est ouverte.      b. okhisa at tinwah  
       the window REF/MID be open            door open-MID  
       ‘The window got opened.’            ‘The door is open.’  
       c. mwana wanga wapandi:-ka  
       child my beat-MID  
       ‘My child has been beaten.’

In looking for middle marking in Tibeto-Burman languages, we will be looking for a type of reflexive-like marking that is used for situations that in English and other non-middle marking languages would be marked with plain transitives or intransitives, but with middle marking in languages with unique middle marking. We will also be looking to see to what extent this marking also covers reciprocal and collective situations, or has a detransitivizing effect.

## 2.0 Dulong

The first example from a Tibeto-Burman language is that of Dulong/Rawang, a language spoken in southeast China and northeast Myanmar (Burma). The examples given here are from the Sanxiang (三 鄉 Dulong dialect spoken in Gongshan county (貢 山) 縣 Yunnan Province in China (see LaPolla 1995a). We will here only cite examples from this one dialect, though the phenomenon we will be talking about is general to dialects in both China and Myanmar.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup>In many languages with unique reflexive and middle markers, there is an etymological relationship between the two forms, as in Russian, though this is not always the case. For example, the Latin mediopassive (middle) marker *-r* and the reflexive *se* have no etymological relationship.

<sup>4</sup>See Kemmer 1993, Appendix A, for a full listing of the categories of semantic middles.

<sup>5</sup>The data used for this section are from my own fieldwork in China and Myanmar, and first appeared in LaPolla 1995a. I would like to thank Yang Jiangling and Li Zixing, both of Kongmu Village, Gongshan

The Dulong middle voice is marked by the verbal suffix  $-\text{cu}^{31}$ .<sup>6</sup> The earliest discussion of this suffix was in Barnard 1934:17, writing on Rawang (in which this suffix is pronounced  $-\text{ci}^{31}$ ), where it is called a reflexive and intransitivizing particle. Uses that reflect its nature as a middle voice marker, such as the indirect middle, are said to be ‘idiomatic’. The first paper on Dulong was Luo 1945. In this short paper Luo simply mentioned that this affix ‘is mostly suffixed to intransitive verbs’ (p. 347).<sup>7</sup> He did not say anything about its function. Sun Hongkai (1982) has a more lengthy description of the uses of this suffix, but does not mention its reflexive use. He says its function is to mark the fact that an action is not initiated by some external force, but is purely self-initiated (p. 99-100). Liu 1988 has a similar explanation. Consider the following examples:

- (7) a.  $\text{a}\eta^{53} \text{sat}^{55}\text{-cu}^{31}$   
3sg hit-R/M  
‘He is hitting himself.’
- b.  $\text{a}\eta^{53} \text{mu}^{55}\text{gu}\text{a}^{53}\text{-mi}^{55} \text{k}\text{əp}^{55}\text{-cu}^{31}$   
3sg raincoat-INST cover-R/M  
‘He is covering himself with the raincoat.’
- c.  $\text{a}\eta^{53} \text{mu}^{31}\text{j}\text{ə}^{55}\text{-cu}^{31}$   
3sg curse-R/M  
‘He is cursing himself.’
- d.  $\text{a}\eta^{53} \text{ə}^{31}\text{-lu}\text{p}^{55}\text{-cu}^{31}$   
3sg happy-R/M  
‘He is happy.’
- e.  $\text{a}\eta^{53} \text{e}^{55}\text{wa}^{53} \text{mit}^{55}\text{-cu}^{31}$   
3sg this.way think-R/M  
‘He is thinking this way.’
- f.  $\text{a}\eta^{53} \text{et}^{55}\text{-cu}^{31}$   
3sg laugh-R/M  
‘He is laughing.’

In Sun 1982 and Liu 1988, this marker was referred to as a marker of “self-initiated” action (自 動 )態 distinct from reflexives, which were said to be marked by reflexive pronouns. No clear line was drawn between the “self-initiated” type and unmarked transitives and intransitives. We will see that self-initiated action is only one of a number of semantic situation types that can be marked with  $-\text{cu}^{31}$ , and show that the core meaning associated with the use of this suffix is self-directed action.<sup>8</sup>

The actual form that this suffix takes in the sentence can be affected by the person and number of the actor:

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County, Yunnan Province, China, and James Khong Sar Ong and Meram Rawang, both of Putao, Kachin State, Myanmar, for their help with the data.

<sup>6</sup>There are two verbal suffixes with the form  $-\text{cu}^{31}$ , one being the one under discussion here, the other being a marker of 1st and 2nd person dual number. As these two functions are quite different and marking for both functions can appear in the same clause (see example [8b,e]), I consider them two homophonous entities and not one polysemous entity.

<sup>7</sup>This is somewhat misleading: while the addition of the reflexive/middle marker does often create an intransitive verb, the verb form that the suffix is added to is generally that of the transitive form of the verb (e.g. cf.  $\text{ətal}^{55}$  ‘roll (v.i.)’,  $\text{tal}^{55}$  ‘roll (v.t.)’,  $\text{tal}^{55}\text{cu}^{31}$  ‘roll oneself’).

<sup>8</sup>The forms discussed as ‘reflexive pronouns’ by Sun (1982:81-82) are actually emphatic pronouns which are not used with reflexive meaning. That is, they reinforce or emphasize the agent of the action, as in (i):

- (i)  $\text{a}\eta^{53} \text{ə}^{31}\text{-du}^{53} \text{l}\text{ə}^{55}$   
3sg self return  
‘S/he went back by himself/herself (without anyone assisting).’

- (8) a.  $\eta\alpha^{53}$   $\text{sat}^{55}\text{-}\dot{\text{c}}\eta\eta^{55}$  1sg hit-R/M.1sg ‘I hit myself.’
- b.  $a^{53}\eta e^{55}$   $\text{sat}^{55}\text{-}\dot{\text{c}}i^{55}\text{-}\dot{\text{c}}\omega^{31}$  1dl hit -R/M-dl ‘The two of us hit ourselves.’
- c.  $i\eta^{55}$   $\text{sat}^{55}\text{-}\dot{\text{c}}i^{55}$  1pl hit-R/M.1pl ‘We hit ourselves.’
- d.  $\eta\alpha^{53}$   $\text{nu}^{31}\text{-}\text{sat}^{55}\text{-}\dot{\text{c}}\omega^{31}$  2sg 2-hit-R/M ‘You hit yourself.’
- e.  $\text{nu}^{31}\eta e^{55}$   $\text{nu}^{31}\text{-}\text{sat}^{55}\text{-}\dot{\text{c}}i^{55}\text{-}\dot{\text{c}}\omega^{31}$  2dl 2-hit -R/M-dl ‘The two of you hit yourselves.’
- f.  $\text{nu}^{31}\eta\eta^{55}$   $\text{nu}^{31}\text{-}\text{sat}^{55}\text{-}\dot{\text{c}}\eta\eta^{55}$  2pl 2-hit -R/M-2pl ‘You hit yourselves.’
- g.  $\eta\eta^{53}(\eta\eta^{55}\eta e^{55}, \eta\eta^{55}\eta\eta^{55})$   $\text{sat}^{55}\text{-}\dot{\text{c}}\omega^{31}$  3sg 3dl 3pl hit -R/M ‘S/he (they-dual, they) hit himself/herself/themselves.’

As the differences in person do not affect the function of the suffix in question, third-person singular forms will be used for all the examples in the rest of this section.

If we look at the examples in (7) in terms of the semantic situation types coded by this suffix, we can see that they are all self-directed: the referent involved is both the source of the action and the end point of the action. In (7a,b,c) we have clear examples of prototypical direct reflexive situations, while in (7d,e,f) we have examples of situations that show the same marking, but are not prototypical direct reflexive situations; they are the type of situations that are marked with middle voice marking in languages that have distinctive middle voice marking, such as grooming actions, changes in body posture, emotions, cognitive actions, perception, spontaneous events, indirect middles, and some collective events.

The use of the reflexive/middle marker in Dulong is in fact very similar to that of the reflexive pronouns in French, which also mark both reflexive and middle situations. From Table 1, below, we can see that Dulong and French have deponent middle marked verbs in many of the same semantic categories.<sup>9</sup>

| Category              | French        | Gloss          | Dulong  | Gloss          |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|---|----------------|
| grooming              | s’habiller    | ‘to wear’      | $\text{gui}^{55}\text{-}\dot{\text{c}}\omega^{31}$                      | ‘to wear’      |
| self-initiated action | se changer    | ‘to change’    | $\text{p}\eta^{55}\text{-}\dot{\text{c}}\omega^{31}$                    | ‘to change’    |
| cognition middle      | s’aviser (de) | ‘to think up’  | $\text{mit}^{55}\text{-}\dot{\text{c}}\omega^{31}$                      | ‘to think’     |
| emotion middle        | se réjouir    | ‘to rejoice’   | $\text{ə}^{31}\text{-}\text{lup}^{55}\text{-}\dot{\text{c}}\omega^{31}$ | ‘to be happy’  |
| indirect middle       | s’appeler     | ‘to be called’ | $\text{lan}^{55}\text{-}\dot{\text{c}}\omega^{31}$                      | ‘to be called’ |

Table 1: Comparison of French and Dulong middle categories with deponents

<sup>9</sup>Even in languages where the reflexive and middle markers have the same form, as in French and Dulong, there is a difference in the use of the two: middle marking is obligatory to achieve a particular meaning with certain verbs (e.g. Dulong  $\text{et}^{55}$  ‘to laugh at (someone)’,  $\text{et}^{55}\text{-}\dot{\text{c}}\omega^{31}$  ‘to laugh, smile’;  $\text{t}\eta^{55}$  ‘to throw’,  $\text{t}\eta^{55}\text{-}\dot{\text{c}}\omega^{31}$  ‘to run’), whereas reflexive marking does not change the meaning of the verb, only the relationship between the participants. Cross-linguistically there is variation as to which particular verbs will take middle marking, though there is great consistency as to which semantic categories of verbs will be marked with middle marking (Kemmer 1993).

In sentences where no undergoer aside from the actor appears, the appearance of - $\text{cu}^{31}$  on the verb marks the fact that the actor is also the undergoer, that is, it is a direct reflexive. We saw this in examples (7a-c). Following is another example:<sup>10</sup>

- (9)  $\text{a}\eta^{53}$   $\text{ma}\text{r}^{55}$  $\text{ja}\eta^{55}$ - $\text{mi}^{55}$   $\text{ja}\eta^{55}$ - $\text{cu}^{31}$   
 3sg mirror-INST look-R/M  
 ‘S/he is looking at her/himself in the mirror.’

Were the verb in this sentence to not have the suffix - $\text{cu}^{31}$ , the sentence could only be used in a context where an undergoer distinct from the actor is understood from the context (i.e., the actor is looking at someone else in the mirror).

In sentences where an undergoer other than the actor appears in the sentence, and the verb is followed by - $\text{cu}^{31}$ , that undergoer is often a body part, as in the following examples:

- (10) a.  $\text{a}\eta^{53}$   $\text{ju}\text{l}^{55}$   $\text{t}\text{ɔ}\text{t}^{55}$ - $\text{cu}^{31}$                       b.  $\text{a}\eta^{53}$   $\text{ma}\text{r}^{55}$   $\text{t}\text{c}\text{i}^{55}$ - $\text{cu}^{31}$   
 3sg fingernail cut-R/M                                      3sg face wash-R/M  
 ‘S/he is cutting his/her fingernails.’                      ‘S/he is washing his/her face.’

In these examples there seem to be prototypical transitive events, and in languages such as English and Chinese, in which some middle situations are marked the same as prototypical transitives, the marking does not differ from normal transitive marking, and the relationship between the agent and the body part affected has to be inferred (as in Chinese) or overtly marked with a genitive construction (as in English). Compare the Chinese sentence below with its English translation:

- (11)  $\text{W}\ddot{\text{o}}$   $\text{y}\ddot{\text{a}}\text{o}$   $\text{x}\ddot{\text{i}}$   $\text{l}\ddot{\text{i}}\ddot{\text{a}}\text{n}$   
 1sg want wash face  
 ‘I want to wash my face.’

The form of the Chinese sentence is that of a normal transitive sentence, and the fact that the face to be washed is the speaker’s own face must be inferred. The English translation also is in the form of a normal transitive, though here the fact that the face to be washed is the speaker’s own is overtly marked by a genitive construction modifying the noun. In Dulong, on the other hand, the addition of the reflexive/middle marker on the verb overtly specifies, for example in (10a), that the fingernails the actor is cutting are his or her own, and in (10b), that the face being washed is the actor’s own.

In some languages, such as Chinese, the meaning of certain verbs can be ambiguous between self directed action and non-self directed action. See for example the following sentence:

- (12)  $\text{W}\ddot{\text{o}}$   $\text{q}\ddot{\text{u}}$   $\text{l}\ddot{\text{i}}\ddot{\text{f}}\ddot{\text{a}}$ .  
 1sg go cut hair.  
 ‘I am going to cut (someone’s) hair’/‘I’m going to get my hair cut.’

<sup>10</sup>(9) is a good example of the morphophonemic tone change found in Dulong: the verb  $\text{ja}\eta^{53}$  has a falling tone, but when it is nominalized, as in  $\text{ma}\text{r}^{55}\text{ja}\eta^{55}$  ‘mirror’ (literally ‘face’ + ‘see’), and when the reflexive/middle marker - $\text{cu}^{31}$  is added to the verb, as in  $\text{ja}\eta^{55}$ - $\text{cu}^{31}$ , it has a level tone.

In Dulong, these two meanings must have different representations:

- (13) a. aŋ<sup>53</sup> u<sup>55</sup> ɕuɪ<sup>55</sup>-ɕu<sup>31</sup> le<sup>31</sup> di<sup>55</sup> di<sup>31</sup>  
 3sg head cut(hair)-R/M DAT go ASP  
 ‘S/he went to cut his/her hair.’
- b. aŋ<sup>53</sup> u<sup>55</sup> ɕuɪ<sup>53</sup> le<sup>31</sup> di<sup>55</sup> di<sup>31</sup>  
 3sg head cut(hair) DAT go ASP  
 ‘S/he went to cut (someone’s) hair.’

Example (13a) is ambiguous as to whether the actor represented in the sentence will do the cutting or whether the cutting will be done by someone else, but the hair being cut will definitely be that of the actor. In (13b), on the other hand, the actor is definitely doing the cutting, and the hair being cut is definitely not his/her own.

In sentences with an undergoer other than the actor, and where the undergoer NP is not a body part, the referent of that NP will often be understood to be in contact with the body of the actor, as in (14a), whereas if the form in (14b) is used, the snow being brushed off is understood to not be on the actor’s body:

- (14) a. aŋ<sup>53</sup> tu<sup>31</sup>wan<sup>53</sup> kɪɔ<sup>ʔ55</sup>-ɕu<sup>31</sup>                      b. aŋ<sup>53</sup> tu<sup>31</sup>wan<sup>53</sup> kɪɔ<sup>ʔ55</sup>  
 3sg snow shake-R/M                                      3sg snow shake  
 ‘S/he is shaking off the snow.’                      ‘S/he is shaking off the snow.’

In other cases the object may not be in contact with the actor’s body. For example, in (15a), the mosquito in question may not be in contact with the actor’s body (though of course it may be), but it must be one that is bothering the actor. In this case it might be translated as ‘S/he is hitting a mosquito (for himself/herself)’. In (15b) there is no implication that the mosquito has been bothering the actor.

- (15) a. aŋ<sup>53</sup> a<sup>31</sup>dzuɪ<sup>53</sup> a<sup>31</sup>be<sup>ʔ55</sup>-ɕu<sup>31</sup>                      b. aŋ<sup>53</sup> a<sup>31</sup>dzuɪ<sup>53</sup> a<sup>31</sup>be<sup>ʔ55</sup>  
 3sg mosquito hit-R/M                                      3sg mosquito hit  
 ‘S/he is hitting a mosquito.’                              ‘S/he is hitting a mosquito.’

In all cases, though, possession of the object is not the relevant factor involved in the use or non-use of the reflexive/middle suffix.

Another use of the suffix -ɕu<sup>31</sup> is for stativization. Compare the two examples in (16):

- (16) a. aŋ<sup>53</sup> ɕam<sup>53</sup> jaŋ<sup>53</sup>                                      b. ɕam<sup>53</sup> əjaŋ<sup>55</sup>-ɕu<sup>31</sup>  
 3sg sword see    sword see-R/M  
 ‘S/he is looking at the sword.’                              ‘The sword is visible.’

(16a) is a normal transitive clause, while (16b), with the reflexive/middle marker, is an intransitive stative predication (no actor can be represented in the sentence). Compare also the examples in (17) and (18):

- (17) a. aŋ<sup>53</sup> cam<sup>53</sup> pai<sup>55</sup>-ɕu<sup>31</sup>  
 3sg knife hang.on.hip-R/M  
 ‘S/he has a knife on.’
- b. aŋ<sup>53</sup> cam<sup>53</sup> pai<sup>55</sup>  
 3sg knife hang.on.hip  
 ‘S/he is putting on a knife.’
- (18) a. aŋ<sup>53</sup> ɟɔ<sup>55</sup> pu<sup>31</sup> sai<sup>55</sup> ti<sup>55</sup> tap<sup>55</sup> guɑ<sup>55</sup>-ɕu<sup>31</sup>  
 3sg clothing red one piece put.on/wear-R/M  
 ‘S/he is wearing a piece of red clothing.’
- b. aŋ<sup>53</sup> ɟɔ<sup>55</sup> pu<sup>31</sup> sai<sup>55</sup> ti<sup>55</sup> tap<sup>55</sup> guɑ<sup>55</sup>  
 3sg clothing red one piece put.on/wear  
 ‘S/he is putting on a piece of red clothing.’

In examples (17a) and (18a), the situation involved is presented as an existing state, while in (17b) and (18b) the situation is presented as an activity. What is involved in these examples is that use of -ɕu<sup>31</sup> emphasizes the stative nature of the result of the action (cf. [6]), while non-use of -ɕu<sup>31</sup> expresses a simple transitive action.<sup>11</sup> There is actually a privative opposition between the two forms: the unmarked form can be used for either meaning, while the marked form is used for the stative meaning.

Based on our understanding of the development of the use of -ɕu<sup>31</sup> (see LaPolla 1995b), it seems that once -ɕu<sup>31</sup> came to be used more and more to express middle situations, it came more and more to be associated with situations where there is a ‘low elaboration of events.’ Addition of this marker to an active verb then came to have a function similar to that of a ‘stativizer’: diminishing the conceptual separation of the events and participants involved, making the overall event more like a state.

Above we mentioned that, in languages without middle marking and languages with unique middle marking, the reflexive can sometimes be used to emphasize the dual semantic nature of the participant as initiator and endpoint of the action. Here we have just said that the reflexive/middle marker in Dulong can be used to reduce the conceptual separation of the two events and participants involved in the situation. These two statements seem to be contradictory, but in fact they are simply two aspects of the same phenomenon. Looking back at Figure 1, we can see that using reflexive marking in a single participant situation such as in examples (1a), and (4a,b) moves the perspective of the situation towards the left side of the cline, while using reflexive/middle marking in a two participant situation moves the perspective of the situation towards the right side of the cline. The marking then in both cases is moving the perspective towards the same area in semantic space.

The isomorphy of the reflexive, middle, and ‘stativizing’ markers in Dulong is most likely the result of a marker originally having only a reflexive use being extended to cover middle situations, and then, because of the nature of middles, being further extended to the use as a ‘stativizer’ (LaPolla 1995b).

In Dulong/Rawang the reflexive/middle form is not used for reciprocals (which are formed by adding the prefix a<sup>31</sup>- to the verb, e.g. ə<sup>31</sup>-mɔi<sup>55</sup> ‘like each other’), though it can be used for some collectives, such as tu<sup>31</sup>-x.ɯum<sup>55</sup>-ɕu<sup>31</sup> ‘to get together (of a group of people)’.

<sup>11</sup>As can be seen from the translations of the sentences in (17) and (18), English uses different verbs to express this difference in meaning.



### 3.0 Padam-Mishing

Based on the lexical items and example sentences given for Padam-Mishing (Eastern Tani) in Lorrain 1907, it seems this language also has a verbal suffix, *shu*, that marks a category which includes middle semantics. This suffix is defined by Lorrain (1907:199) as meaning ‘self or selves (also a reflexive particle following verbs) = myself; yourself, himself, ourselves, etc., etc.’ The semantic range covered by this marking includes reflexives, middles, collectives, emphatics, and possibly reciprocals. Following are some examples:

- (19) ngo pa-shu-to (reflexive)  
1sg cut-R/M-PF  
‘I have cut myself (with a dao).’
- (20) bu o:dʒok-shu-to (reflexive)  
3sg fall-graze-R/M-PF  
‘He has fallen and grazed himself.’
- (21) ngo mo-bi-shu-to (emphatic)  
1sg make-ben-R/M-PF  
‘I built it for you myself.’
- (22) Ayé o dat-shu kang (spontaneous action middle)  
‘The fruit has fallen and burst or split.’
- (23) do dâr-shu toka (benefactive middle)  
‘Eat your fill (lit. = eat and fill yourself).’
- (24) a. no-k kentu shuk-shu-toka (grooming middle)  
2sg-GEN ear.ornament take out-M/R-IMP  
‘Take out your ear-ornament (from your own ear).’  
(cf.: b. Nok kâk kâp dem shuk to-sho ‘Let me take off your finger ring.’)
- (25) no dum-muit dem aipe shum-shu mang (grooming middle)  
‘You have not done up your hair nicely (i.e. not tied it in a nice knot).’
- (26) ur-shu-toka (grooming middle)  
wash-MD-IMP  
‘Bathe yourself!’
- (27) dotke do laje lak-shuk-shu-toka (grooming middle)  
food eat HORT hand-wash-MD-IMP  
‘Let’s eat (food), and wash your hands.’
- (28) gok-shum-shu toka (collective)  
‘Call (them) together.’
- (29) Jo dum-shu bo i ka/to i ka (collective?)  
‘Help me lift (it).’

Following are some other verbs listed with the suffix in the dictionary. Again the semantic categories that these verbs fall into are the same as those for French and Dulong. In the first two items *muin* is added before the reflexive/middle suffix to form the reciprocal.

- (30) la muin shu 'to wrestle' (reciprocal/collective?)  
 gé-muin-shu 'to quarrel' (reciprocal/collective?)  
 gé-pém-shu 'to be stuck together' (reciprocal/collective?)  
 id ... it shu 'to try (to do, etc) by one's own efforts or w/o assistance'  
 ir-shu 'to learn' (cf. ir 'to teach')  
 ân-pâ-shu 'to feel'  
 kin-shu 'to feel, to experience, to know, to recollect'  
 ge-mo-shu 'to get one's self ready'  
 kúp bom-shu 'to carry on the hip or under the arm'  
 kâ rik-shu 'to meet; to see (with the idea of meeting)'  
 ked-ge-shu 'to lean back'

We find the reflexive/middle suffix, and the two-morpheme reciprocal form, in related dialects as well. Following are examples of verbs listed with the reflexive/middle suffix or reciprocal form:

- (31) Padam (Tayeng 1983)  
 ngil-yum su langka 'Smile!'  
 lak-suk su lang-ka 'Wash hand!'  
 gi'me su-to 'to be lost'  
 ngo-m lupu su lang-ka 'Talk to me'  
 mik-mue' pe'l-ri'k su lang-ka 'turn face to face'  
 ken-kai su nam 'to learn'  
 mi'te'su-nam 'to be proud'  
 pesu-nam 'to promise'  
 lumi'nsu-nam 'to quarrel'  
 poyan-sutoka 'to answer'

- (32) Nishi (Dafla) (DasGupta 1969):  
 bing-ming-su 'to speak or chat (among ourselves)'  
 lak la(k)-su-to 'wash hand'  
 ngo ang-karr-su-ta-ri-ne 'I shall stroll about the house'  
 ngo-kam no-kam do-pa-su-laja 'Let us sit together'  
 I too you too sit hortative

Das Gupta (1969:29) mentions that in Nishi, 'Some roots add -s for diminutive', though it seems this may simply be a reduced form of the reflexive/middle marker, as 'smile' is a verb that commonly takes middle marking, and 'whisper' could mean 'talk to oneself'. (Cf. Padam ngil-lang-ka 'laugh!', ngil-yum su langka 'smile!'.)

- (33) nyir-to 'laugh'                      bing-to 'speak'  
 (coi coi) nyir-s-to 'smile'                      bing-s-to 'whisper'

#### 4.0 rGyalrong

Several dialects of rGyalrong (Nagano 1984:55, Jin et al. 1958:81) have a verbal prefix *nə-* which functions as a marker of indirect reflexives and middles, and as an emphasiser of intransitiveness. This marker does not mark reciprocals; reciprocals are marked by reduplication of the verb. Jin et al. (1958:81-82) give examples of four types of usage of the prefix *nə-*:

- (i) indirect reflexive ('expresses one's doing an action to something owned by oneself'), e.g.: *ka-rzək* 'to cut' > *ka-nə-rzək* 'to cut something of one's own'.
- (ii) spontaneous action ('expresses oneself undergoing an action'), e.g.: *kə-ŋgri* 'to collapse' > *ka-nə-ŋgri* 'to collapse (by itself/of itself)'
- (iii) to do something of one's own volition, e.g.: *ka-kfut* 'to go out' > *ka-nə-kfut* 'to go out of one's own volition'; *ka-rjap* 'to stand up' > *ka-nə-rjap* 'to stand up of one's own volition'.
- (iv) an event that happens to oneself, but is caused by something else, e.g.: *ka-ɜdar* 'to be afraid' > *ka-nə-ɜdar* 'oneself to be afraid (of something)'.

From the list of lexical items in Lin 1993, we can see that it too is lexicalized in verbs with middle semantics, such as emotion middles, body movement middles, etc. E.g.: *ka-nə-rga* 'like', *ka-nə-na* 'rest', *ka-nə-jongse* 'stroll'.

In the Caodeng dialect of rGyalrong<sup>12</sup> we seem to have a situation similar to that in Dutch. In this dialect the *nə-* prefix seems to have lost much of its reflexive force, and so is supplemented or replaced by a direct reflexive marking prefix, *gje-*.<sup>13</sup> The meaning of the *nə-* prefix then is limited to expressing or emphasizing the responsibility of the actor for the action involved, often with a judgemental sense that the person brought the result on himself/herself. One interesting difference between sentences with only the *nə-* prefix and not the *gje-* prefix is that clauses where the verb is marked with *gje-* involve an actor that takes agentive marking, while those where the verb is only marked with *nə-* and not *gje-* cannot take agentive marking. The marked nature of these transitive clauses can be seen from the inverse direction marking that is required in reflexive clauses. Following are examples of the use of these suffixes in Caodeng rGyalrong. Exx. (34) and (35b) have *nə-* alone ([35a-b] contrast the *plin* verb and the verb with *nə-*); (36a,b) contrast the use of *gje-* with and without *nə-*; (37) has an inanimate 'actor':

- (34) *ogji? ó-ŋge te-nə-ŋge?-kjə*  
 3sg 3sg-clothes PF-MM-put on-EVID  
 He put on his clothes by himself (without help).

- (35) a. *ogji? mə-tə-ŋdzaŋ?-nə? seko? ó-ta ne-ntər-kjə*  
 3sg inadvertently tree 3sg-top PF-fall-EVID  
 He inadvertently fell down from the tree (objective statement).

<sup>12</sup>The data on the Caodeng dialect are from fieldwork by Jackson T.-S. Sun. I would like to thank him for making this data available to me, and also for bringing the Padam-Mishing data to my attention.

<sup>13</sup>It seems clear from the distribution of *nə-* and the fact that *nə-* is lexicalized in many verbs while *gje-* is not, that *nə-* is the older of the two markers.

- b. ogji? mə-tə-<sup>n</sup>dzaŋ?-nə? seko? ó-ta ne-nə-ntər-kjə  
 3sg inadvertently tree 3sg-top PF-MM-fall-EVID  
 He carelessly fell down from the tree (through his own fault).
- (36) a. ogji?-kə ogji? to-gjə-səsmət-kjə  
 3sg-AGT 3sg PF:INV-self-wound-EVID  
 He hurt himself (objective statement).
- b. ogji?-kə ogji? to-gjə-nə-səsmət-kjə  
 3sg-AGT 3sg PF:INV-self-MM-wound-EVID  
 He hurt himself (through his own fault) (Lit.: He hurt himself himself).
- (37) kom? ogji? tʰo-n-gjə-pe-kjə  
 door 3sg PF:INV-MM-self-close-EVID  
 The door closed by itself (lit.: closed itself).

In the Suomo dialect, there is a separate verb prefix for marking direct reflexives, *wuja* ~*wja*, possibly cognate with the Caodeng form. From the examples given by Jin et al. (1958:86-87) it seems this prefix is not used together with the *nə-* prefix. The question then is, does the Suomo dialect reflect a more advanced stage where the functions of *nə-* and *wuja* have become more clearly differentiated, or does the Caodeng dialect reflect the more advanced stage of a change where *nə-* is spreading to new uses? It is hoped that further fieldwork on rGyalrong dialects will be able to answer this question.

### 5.0 Mizo and other Chin languages

In Mizo (Lushai; Chhangte 1993, Lorrain & Savidge 1898) there is a verb prefix *in-* which marks reflexive, reciprocal, and middle semantics. As in Dulong, verbs taking the reflexive/middle marker are somewhat detransitivized, and so the ergative marker cannot be used in a clause where the verb has the *in-* prefix. Following are examples of reflexive and middle uses (from Chhangte 1993:93):

- (38) a. âma? le? âma? â-in-mèèt  
 3PRO and 3PRO 3s-R/M-shave  
 ‘He is shaving himself.’
- b. kény-ma? le? kény-ma? kâ-in-bia  
 1PRO-EMP and 1PRO-EMP 1s-R/M-speak.to  
 ‘I’m talking to myself.’
- (39) a. kâ-laphiar â-in-thiàt  
 1Poss-knitting 3s-R/m-undo  
 ‘My knitting got undone (by itself).’
- b. kôn̄ kââ â-in-hôn̄  
 door 3sg-R/M-open  
 ‘The door is open (who knows who opened it).’

Reciprocals and reflexives/middles differ only in terms of the subject agreement marker, which is plural for reciprocals and singular for reflexives/middles. Compare, for example, the reflexives in (38) and the reciprocals in (40), from Chhangte 1993:93.<sup>14</sup>

- (40) a. *bòŋ leʔ keel án-in-sii*  
 cow and goat 3s.pl-R/M-but  
 ‘A cow and goat are butting (each other).’
- b. *kéy-maʔ leʔ náŋ-maʔ kán-in-bia*  
 1PRO-EMP and 2PRO-EMP 1s.pl-R/M-speak.to  
 ‘We are talking to each other.’

It seems there is a class of deponents in Mizo, judging from the list of lexical items in Lorrain & Savidge’s dictionary that include the prefix *in-*, such as the following, all of which involve middle semantics:

- (41) *in-bual* ‘to bathe, to wallow’  
*in-chhir* ‘to regret, to repent’  
*in-lâr* ‘to appear, to show oneself (as a spirit)’  
*in-shon* ‘to move’

In other Chin languages there is a prefix *ki-* or *ng’-* (depending on the dialect), the semantics of which covers reflexive, reciprocal, stative, intransitivizer, indirect benefactive, reflexive and passive meanings, all meanings commonly associated with middle marking. Henderson (Henderson 1965:99) in fact compares this marking to the reflexive/middle marking in French. Again many of the examples given of lexicalized forms are those commonly marked with middle marking in languages with unique middle voice marking. For example:

- (42) Tiddim Chin (Henderson 1965:99):                    *α-ki-cihi* ‘it is called’  
    *kisa*            ‘to feel’
- (43) Southern Chin (Jordan 1969:43-44):                *ng’thei* ‘to learn’  
    *ng’si*            ‘to ask a question’

## 6.0 The Kiranti languages

In the Kiranti languages (Ebert 1994:52-54) there is a verbal suffix (Limbu *siŋ*, Bantawa (*na*) *ci*, Thulong *sit*, Chamling *nci~si*, Khaling *si*) that clearly covers both reflexive and middle semantics, and is often lexicalized in deponents. Examples:

- (44) Thulong    *lii-sit*                    ‘pretend’  
    *lii-sit*                    ‘fit (into a container)’

<sup>14</sup>The examples given by Lorrain & Savidge (1898:12) seem to have a simpler structure than those given by Chhangte. I am not sure if this is a dialect difference or simply a difference in explicitness of transcription, e.g.

(i) *ka in-vêl*  
 1sg R/M-hit  
 ‘I hit myself.’



and other verbal categories, thereby improving our understanding of the morphosyntax of the Tibeto-Burman languages.

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