



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
School of Philosophy, Psychology
and Language Sciences

Workshop on the Afroasiatic Middle *t*-Morpheme

University of Edinburgh, 8-9 May 2024

Iris Kamil

Kindly funded by



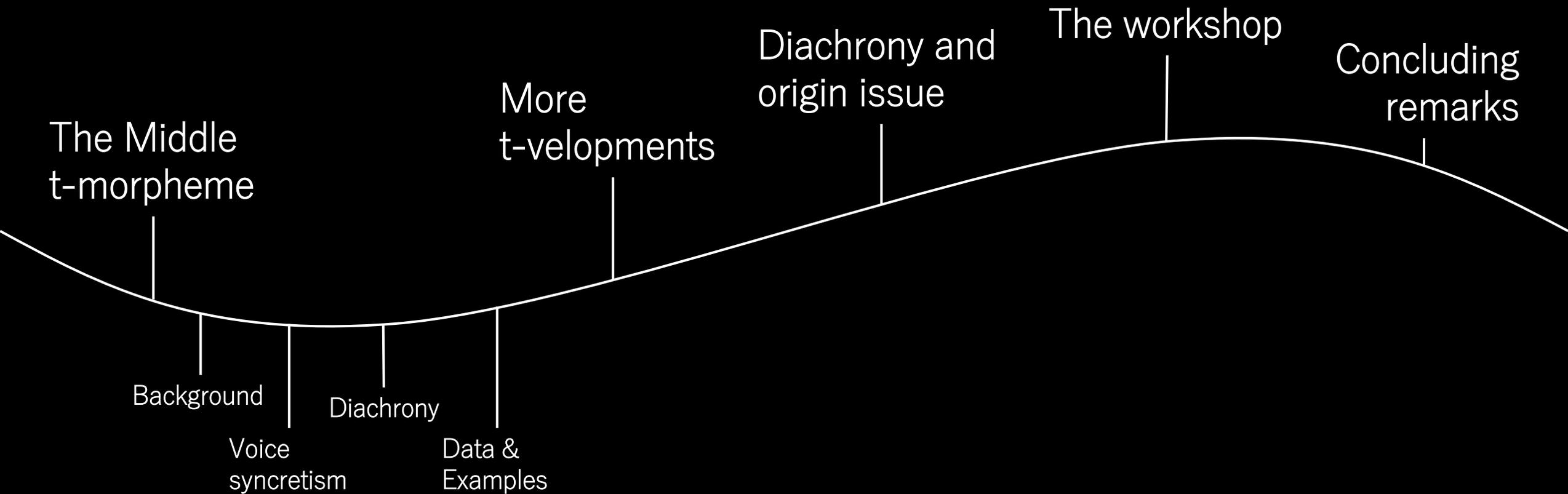
THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
School of Philosophy, Psychology
and Language Sciences

PhilSoc
The Philological Society



Angus McIntosh Centre
for Historical Linguistics

Roadmap



The Middle t-Morpheme - Background

- Studies on argument structure and transitivity alternation have received more attention in recent years, especially in theoretical discourse
 - E.g., Alexiadou et al. 2015, Borer 1994, Horvath & Sioni 2011, Ramchand 1997, 2014, Spathas et al. 2015
- Typological understanding of the mechanisms involved remains limited

The Middle t-Morpheme - Background

- Afroasiatic knows (at least) three valency-alternating morphemes: *t*-, *H/s*-, and *ʌ*-.
 - *H/s*-morpheme increases transitivity, typically causative,
 - *t*- and *ʌ*-morphemes serve as generally de-transitivising
 - Middle, passive, and anticausative functions attested (Retsö 1989, Weninger 2011)
- Studies of the morphemes in the context of the linguistic *system* of individual languages + their effects on argument structure are mostly restricted to a few Semitic and Berber languages
 - Semitic: Al Kaabi & Ntelitheos (2019), Amberber (2000), Arad (2005), and Kastner (2020)
 - Berber: Bedar et al. (To appear) and Gutova (2013)
- Similar studies for the other branches of Afroasiatic (i.e., Egyptian, Cushitic, Chadic, and Omotic) remain rare and, at most, descriptive.

The Middle t-Morpheme - Syncretism

- Across Afroasiatic, the *t*-morpheme may denote
 - a. Reflexives,
 - b. Passives, and
 - c. Anticausatives.
- In some languages its functions are clearly defined and do not overlap across event types
 - E.g. Amharic (Semitic), see Amberber 2000, or Agaw (Cushitic), see Mous 2001),
 - Amharic (Amberber 2000:313ff., Edzard 2019): passivization of transitive verbs and antipassivization/reflexivization of intransitive verbs (especially for body-altering verbs).

The Middle t-Morpheme - Syncretism

- In many other languages, no such clear patterns have been found,
 - Missing research, or
 - Functional overlap
 - E.g., in Akkadian: reflexives, passives, and anticausatives to (mostly) transitive verbs, as well as reflexives and reciprocals to intransitive & transitive verbs (see Kouwenberg 2010; Kamil, Forthcoming).
- Unclear definitions of 'Middle'

The Middle t-Morpheme - Syncretism

- Middles may be primarily defined via their morphology rather than via their syntactic properties, namely as marking a particular type of voice syncretism (Grestenberger & Kamil, Forthcoming)
 - Voice Syncretisms: Situations in which distinct syntactic alternations (e.g., passive and reflexive) are realized with identical morphology. (Embick 1998)
 - E.g., Haspelmath 1990; Kemmer 1993; Alexiadou and Doron 2012; Zúñiga and Kittilä 2019; Bahrt 2021; Inglese 2021; Oikonomou and Alexiadou 2022

The Middle t-Morpheme - Syncretism

(1) Three types of synthetic voice syncretisms (Oikonomou & Alexiadou 2022)

- Type A: The same morpheme appears at least in reflexive, (reciprocal), anticausative, and passive constructions.
- Type B: The antipassive, reflexive, (reciprocal), anticausative, passive syncretism.
- Type C: The causative/anticausative/passive syncretism (attested mostly in Korean and Tungusic languages).

The Middle *t*-Morpheme - Diachrony

- The *t*-morpheme is attested in all(?) branches of Afroasiatic, as well as in many individual languages in the family (at least in diachrony)
 - A reconstruction to Proto-Afroasiatic stands to reason.
- No bigger-scale comparative studies have attempted to trace the diachronic development of the morpheme either during its attested periods or to pre-attested stages
 - Studies like Retsö (1989) have only hypothesized a set of functions & developments for the morpheme and its later development into a de-transitiviser.
- An investigation into the functional origin and development of the *t*-morpheme could bear fruitful results for our understanding of its synchronic functions

The Middle t-Morpheme – Data & Examples

Reflexive/reciprocal

- Semitic
 - Akkadian: G *apālu* ‘pay, answer so.’ vs. Gt *atpulu* ‘reciprocate, discuss (i.e., answer each other)’
 - Hebrew: G *raḥac* ‘wash (tr.)’ vs. tD *itraḥec* ‘wash os.’
 - Amharic: G *laččə* ‘shave’ vs. tG *təlaččə* ‘shave os.’ (Amberber 2000)
 - Mehri: G *gəbūr* ‘meet so.’ vs. Gt *gatbər* ‘meet one another’ (Rubin 2010)
- Cushitic
 - Iraqw: *deeqw* ‘shave (tr.)’ vs. *deequut* ‘shave os./intr.’

The Middle t-Morpheme – Data & Examples

Passive

- Semitic
 - Akkadian: D *nuwwuru* ‘make bright’ vs. Dt *nutawwuru* ‘be made bright’
 - Gəʿəz: G *nägärä* ‘speak’ vs. tG *tänägärä* ‘be said’
 - Syriac: D *mallel* ‘speak’ vs. *?etmallal* ‘be said’ (Pat-El 2019)
- Cushitic
 - Iraqw: *tleehh* ‘do, build’ vs. *tleehharuut* ‘be completed’ (Mous & Qorro 2000)
- Berber
 - Kabyle: *enz* ‘be sold’ vs. *zz-enz* ‘to sell’ vs. *ttu-z-enz* ‘to be sold’ (Guteva 2014)

The Middle t-Morpheme – Data & Examples

Anticausative

- Semitic
 - Akkadian: G *napāhu* ‘blow, light up’ vs. Gt *nitpuhu* ‘catch fire’
 - Hebrew: D *bišel* ‘cook (tr.)’ vs. tD *itbašel* ‘cook (intr.)’
 - Gəʿəz: G *nāḥnəḥä* ‘shake (tr.)’ vs. tG *tänāḥnəḥä* ‘shake (intr.)’
 - Mehri C *hənṭawb* ‘drop (tr.)’ vs. Gt *naṭṭəb* ‘fall’ (Rubin 2010)
- Cushitic
 - Iraqw: noun *tla/a* ‘stone’ vs. denominative *tla/uut* ‘become hard like a stone’ (Mous & Qorro 2000)

More t-velopments

The t-Morpheme has had two odd developments in Akkadian

- Intensive/pluractional aspect (*ipta(n)arras*, i.e., *tan*-stems)
 - E.g., *lawû* ‘surround, besiege’ *litawwû* ‘continually encircle’
 - Apparently attested elsewhere? Cf. Amazigh Bedar @WAMt
- Event-coordination (*iptaras*, usually called ‘perfect’)
 - Verbal forms marked with this t-form denote an event in relation to one or more relational values (i.e., to other events or to a reference point)
 - Streck (1995, 1999, 2003)
 - Equivalentst???

Diachrony & Origins Issue

- Which was the original function?
 - Can we narrow it down to one (1) semantic feature, cognitive process, etc., that could account for the further developments we observe in the individual languages?
 - Is there a common 'primitive' that we could reconstruct?
- How do we account for other developments, e.g., the atelicity or event-coordination seen in Akkadian, as well as other (idiosyncratic?) developments in other branches and languages?
- Can understanding the synchrony better help us reconstruct the diachrony?

The Workshop

The goal of our workshop is primarily the **exchange of ideas and discussion** on the morpheme, from the point of view of

- a. Different phenomena in different languages and language families
- b. Synchrony vs. diachrony
- c. Different methodological backgrounds/frameworks

The Workshop – Branches & Languages

Berber

- Taqbaylit –Bedar

Cushitic

- Gawwada –Tosco
- Somali –Bendjaballah

Egyptian

- Early Egyptian & Coptic –Kilani

Semitic

- Akkadian –Inglese, Gasparini & Viano; Kamil
- Arabic –Tsukanova
- Neo-Aramaic –Kuzin
- Hebrew –Kastner; Rappaport-Hovav
- Kistane – Aaron Rubin
- Modern South Arabian
 - Bathari & Šherēt - Inglese, Gasparini & Viano
 - Mehri – Inglese, Gasparini & Viano; Rubin
 - Soqotri – Maria Bulakh

The Workshop - Approaches

Different Methodologies

- Computational
 - Kastner
- Theoretical linguistics
 - Bedar; Bendjaballah;
Rappaport-Hovav

Comparative & diachronic

- Al-Jallad; Inglese, Gasparini & Viano; Schneider; Serpone;
Souag

Concluding remarks

Bibliography

- Alexiadou, Artemis, and Edit Doron. 2012. "The Syntactic Construction of Two Non-Active Voices: Passive and Middle." *Journal of Linguistics* 48: 1–34
- Alexiadou, A., Anagnostopoulou, E., & Schäfer, F. 2015. *External arguments in transitivity alternations: A layering approach* (Vol. 55). Oxford Studies in Theoretical Linguistics.
- Al Kaabi, Meera & Dimitrios Ntelitheos. 2019. Rethinking templates: a syntactic analysis of verbal morphology in Emirati Arabic. *Glossa: A journal of general linguistics* 4(1): 132.
- Amberber, Mengistu. 2000. Valency-changing and Valency-encoding Devices in Amharic. In *Changing valency: Case studies in transitivity*, ed. R. M. W. Dixon and Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald, 312–332. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Arad, Maya. 2005. *Roots and patterns: Hebrew morpho-syntax*. Vol. 63. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Bahrt, Nicklas N. 2021. *Voice Syncretism*. Berlin: Language Science Press.
- Bedar, Amazigh, Sabrina Bendjaballah, & Martin Haiden. To appear. The verbal n-stem in Taqbaylit Berber. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, In press, Perspectives on Templatic Morphology. halshs-03924659
- Borer, Hagit. 1994. The projection of arguments. *University of Massachusetts occasional papers in linguistics* 17(20). 19–48.
- Embick, David. 1998. Voice systems and the syntax/morphology interface. In H. Harley (ed.), *Papers from the Penn/MIT roundtable on argument structure and aspect*, may 1997 (MITWPL).
- Grestenberger, Laura & Iris Kamil. Forthcoming. Voice Alternations in Diachrony. In Adam Ledgeway, Edith Aldridge, Anne Breitbarth, Katalin E Kiss, Joseph Salmons (eds), *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Diachronic Linguistics*.
- Gutova, Evgeniya. 2013. Voice, lability, and causatives in Berber (i). *Études et documents berbères* 32(1). 105–121.
- Gutova, E. 2014. Voice, lability, and causatives in Berber (II). *Études et documents berbères*, 33(1), 123–147.
- Haspelmath, Martin. 1990. "The Grammaticization of Passive Morphology." *Studies in Language* 14 (1): 25–72.
- Horvath, Julia & Tal Sioni. 2011. Anticausatives: against reflexivization. *Lingua* 121(15). 2176–2186.
- Inglese, Guglielmo. 2021. "Towards a Typology of Middle Voice Systems." *Linguistic Typology* 26 (3).
- Jasanoff, Jay H. 2003. *Hittite and the Indo-European verb*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kamil, Iris. Forthcoming. *Once Upon a Middle: Usage and Functions of the Akkadian "iptaras" in the Archives Royales de Mari*. University of Vienna MA thesis.
- Kastner, Itamar. 2020. *Voice at the interfaces: The syntax, semantics, and morphology of the Hebrew verb*. Berlin: Language Science Press.
- Kemmer, Suzanne. 1993. *The Middle Voice*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Bibliography

- Kouwenberg, Norbertus Johannes Cornelis. 2010. *The Akkadian verb and its Semitic background*. Penn State Press.
- Mous, Maarten. 2001. The middle in Cushitic languages. In *Annual meeting of the Berkeley linguistics society*, vol. 27, 75–86.
- Mous, Maarten & Martha Qorro. 2000. The Middle Voice in Iraqw. In Kuhkovele Kahigi, Yared M Kihore & Maarten Mous (eds.), *Languages of Tanzania. Studies dedicated to the memory of Clement Maganga*, 157–176. Leiden: Research School for Asian, African, & Amerindian Studies (CNWS).
- Oikonomou, Despina, and Artemis Alexiadou. 2022. “Voice Syncretism Crosslinguistically: The View from Minimalism.” *Philosophies* 7 (19).
- Ramchand, Gillian. 1997. *Aspect and predication: the semantics of argument structure*. Oxford University Press.
- Ramchand, Gillian. 2014. Argument structure. *Structuring the Argument: Multidisciplinary research on verb argument structure* 10. 185.
- Retsö, Jan. 1989. *Diathesis in the Semitic Languages: A Comparative Morphological Study*. Vol. 14. Brill.
- von Soden, Wolfram. 1995. *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik*. 3rd edn. Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico.
- Spathas, Giorgos, Artemis Alexiadou & Florian Schäfer. 2015. Middle voice and reflexive interpretations: affo-prefixation in Greek. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 33. 1293–1350.
- Streck, Michael P. 1995. *Zahl und zeit: Grammatik der Numeralia und des Verbalsystems im Spätbabylonischen*. Vol. 5. Brill.
- Streck, Michael P. 1999. Das ‘Perfekt’ iptaras im Altbabylonischen der Hammurapi-Briefe. In Norbert Nebes (ed.), *Tempus und Aspekt in den semitischen Sprachen* (Jenaer Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient 1), 101–126. Harrassowitz.
- Streck, Michael P. 2003. Die akkadischen Verbalstämme mit ta-Infix. Manfred Dietrich & Oswald Loretz (eds.). Vol. 303 (AOAT (Alter Orient und Altes Testament)). Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.
- Weninger, Stefan. 2011. Reconstructive Morphology. In *Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft; 36: The Semitic languages*, 151–178. De Gruyter Mouton.
- Zúñiga, Fernando, and Seppo Kittilä. 2019. *Grammatical Voice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
School of Philosophy, Psychology
and Language Sciences

Let's have a great Workshop on the Afroasiatic Middle *t*-Morpheme!

University of Edinburgh, 8-9 May 2024

Iris Kamil

Kindly funded by



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
School of Philosophy, Psychology
and Language Sciences

PhilSoc
The Philological Society



Angus McIntosh Centre
for Historical Linguistics