

The Middle in Cushitic Languages

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The Middle in Cushitic Languages*

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0. Middle Marking in Cushitic

This article provides an overview and discussion of the semantic properties of the middle derivation in a number of Cushitic languages. It builds on earlier typological work on the semantics of the middle, such as Kemmer (1993). Cushitic languages, and Afroasiatic languages in general, were not included in Kemmer's typology, as remarked by Palmer (1995) in his review of Kemmer (1993). On the Cushitic side, the paper builds on Hayward (1977), Saeed (1995) and Mous and Qorro (2000).

In Cushitic languages middles are expressed on the verb not inflectionally but derivationally. In (1) an example from Iraqw is given. In (1a) the agent is the first person singular, expressed on the verb, and the patient, the ankle, is object; in the sentence with the derived middle, (1b), the agent is now conceived to be the body (part) itself, expressed as subject. Lexicalizations of middle derivations also occur, e.g., *bu'uu* 'be sufficient' which originated in a middle derivation from *buu* 'pay' but no longer has any semantic link to 'pay'.¹

(1a) ya'e-r-'ée' a-ga tunquláa/
leg-F-my O.F-PF sprain:1SG
'I sprained my ankle.'

(1b) ya'e-r-'ée' aa tunqulu/-út
leg-F-my S3:PF sprain-MIDDLE:3F
'My ankle sprained.'

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¹ The following abbreviations are used: 1SG for first person singular, etc, CS for causative, F for feminine, IMPS for impersonal subject, INSTR for instrumental, M for masculine, O for object, PF for perfect, PST for past, REC for reciprocal/reflexive, S for subject, SR for subject-reflexive (=middle). The letter *c* in Somali, / in Iraqw and *q* in Afar represents the voiced pharyngeal fricative; in Iraqw *sl* is the lateral fricative, *ts* and *tl* are ejective affricates and *hh* the voiceless pharyngeal fricative.

Middle affixes are often described as argument reducing or detransitivizing elements. Such a unified and purely syntactic effect cannot be attributed to the middle in Cushitic languages. Saeed (1995:83) shows that transitive middles do exist in Somali, (2). Among the middle or “subject-reflexive” verbs of Oromo too, some are clearly transitive, (3).

- (2) *daaqso* (ditransitive) ‘put animals to pasture for oneself’ (Somali)
culubo (transitive) ‘remember, recall’
- (3)a. húcc’úu bit -ád’d’-é (Oromo, Owens 1985: 170)
 clothes buy -SR -PST
 ‘I bought myself clothes’
- (3)b. at isá eerúu k’occi -siif -at -t -e (Oromo, Owens 1985: 170)
 you him field dig -CS -SR -2 -PST
 ‘You made him cultivate the field for your own benefit.’

Transitive middles are not restricted to autobenefactive readings as in the above examples. In Iraqw, which does not have the autobenefactive as a productive meaning of the middle, an impersonal is possible with a middle verb, (4). Note that this sentence has both an agent and a patient.

- (4) qware’amo-síng ku-na ma’a-r islkúut (Iraqw)
 calabash-that IMPS:O.M-PST water-INSTR draw:PST
 ‘One took water with that calabash.’

In addition to a middle derivation all the Cushitic languages under discussion also have a reflexive/reciprocal pronoun which cannot be related to the middle marker. In Kemmer’s terms, these are two-form non-cognate systems and the domains of middle and reflexive are easily separated. Since the Cushitic languages have reflexive/reciprocal pronouns, middle reflexives — i.e., a reflexive with middle meaning — could in principle exist. There are no indications that they do. For Iraqw I dare to claim that these do not exist. Iraqw does have cases of lexicalized combinations of the reflexive/reciprocal *ti* + verb, but they always acquire specialized meanings along the reciprocal line and not as middles, e.g., (5)

- (5)a. ti aw-áan b. ti tsaahh-áan (Iraqw)
 REC go-1PL REC recognize-1PL
 ‘we fight’ ‘we like each other’

Inherent reciprocal middles such as *hhatliit* ‘share, receive one another, take turns’ require the reciprocal pronoun, e.g., (6).

- (6) kuunga' ti hhatlitá' (Iraqw)
2PL REC share:2PL
'you share'

The Cushitic languages with middle derivation in *t* (or related sounds) include all of East Cushitic—in these languages the middle has a productive autobenefactive meaning—and all of the Southern Cushitic languages where there is no productive autobenefactive meaning. There is no middle in Agaw or other Central Cushitic languages, where the Cushitic middle corresponds to a passive and the Cushitic neuter-passive corresponds to the reciprocal, Appleyard (1980). There seems to be no middle derivation in Beja. We will concentrate here on Afar, Iraqw, Oromo, and Somali for practical reasons, such as availability of dictionaries that can be accessed from the meaning side and familiarity with the languages. The middle in Afar has the form *-(i)t* which is followed by an inflectional vowel *e* in the citation form; the middle derived verbs in Oromo end in *-ad'd'-a*; those in Iraqw end in *-VVt*; the Somali middle derivation is *-at* but the citation form is the imperative form in which the middle is recognizable as a suffix *-o*. Hayward (1977, 1984) contain a historical-comparative study of Cushitic middles.

1. Overview of Semantics of the Middle in Cushitic

In this section we study the semantics of Cushitic middle derivations using Kemmer's (1993) semantic typology. Derivational middles in Cushitic languages can be observed not only as clearly derived stems but also as frozen forms in stems which lack a base without the middle derivation, so-called deponents or *media tanta*, and thirdly in middle derived denominal verbs as against causative or inchoative derived denominals, (7). In fact, the latter two groups are more rewarding for the study of the semantic aspects of the middle in those languages in which the productive meaning of the middle is autobenefactive and most derived verbs show only that particular semantic aspect². The number of middle deponents is relatively high, a common trait among languages with morphological middle markers, cf. Kemmer (1993: 22). The deponents fall into the same subsets of meaning that Kemmer has set up in her typology of middle markers. Apparently verbs with a lexical meaning in the middle semantic domain tend to vacuously add a middle affix. In the following I consider all three of the above realizations of the middle marker together, but with an indication whether the verb is derived, deponent or denominal. Apart from the productive autobenefactive meaning seen in Afar, Oromo and Somali, the three types of marking do not show differences in semantic subclassification.

² For the same reason, i.e. that their meaning is not restricted to 'for one's own benefit', Hayward (1976) considers the denominal verbalizer a suffix that is different from the (homophonous) middle. The verbs that are derived with this suffix do, however, fall into the semantic subdomains that we discuss below.

- (7) Three different types of middle marking:
1. middle derived from a base verb (derived)
 2. frozen derived middles (deponents)
 3. middle derived from a nominal (denominal)

In the individual languages some but not all verbs belonging to a certain semantic subdomain can take a middle. There are two reasons for this. First of all, since the marking is derivational there is no need to add a middle marker to a verb with a lexical middle meaning. Secondly, languages have different lexical units, words, e.g., not every language has a lexeme ‘to loose wings’ or ‘to teethe’. We will investigate this lack of uniformity in some detail below for the subdomains of body activity and of body position.

Because of the relative arbitrariness of semantic subclassifications by the individual researcher, the contents of these subdomains may vary. For example, what Saeed has classified as inherent reflexive middle verbs denote actions applying to the body of the subject, such as ‘anoint oneself’, ‘treat oneself with medicine’, ‘scratch oneself (on a part of the body)’; I characterize such verbs as body oriented rather than as inherently reflexive.

I now investigate the coverage of the semantic domains that Kemmer (1993,1994) has set up by middle marked verbs in Afar, Oromo, Somali (all Eastern Cushitic) and Iraqw (Southern Cushitic). For Afar I use Parker and Hayward (1985) and Hayward’s (1976) thesis; for Oromo I use Stroemer’s (1995) Boraana Oromo lexicon, for Somali I use Saeed’s (1995) article and sporadically Puglielli’s (1985,1998) dictionaries; for Iraqw I use Mous and Qorro’s (2000) article and Mous, Qorro and Kiessling’s (in press) dictionary. The results of the survey are schematized in the table in (11).

The Grooming or Body Care domain includes actions of dressing, bathing, shaving which apply to the whole body or part of the body. These events are “very frequently, if not universally, middle-marked in languages with middle markers” (Kemmer 1994:195). The Cushitic middles form no exception. However, this domain is relatively poorly attested for the Southern Cushitic languages. In particular, verbs of washing and bathing are often not middle marked in Southern Cushitic. Middle marked verbs in the Grooming or Body Care domain in the Cushitic languages include the following: Somali has *tidco* ‘braid one’s hair’ middle derived from *tidic* ‘braid (hair)’ and *diibso* ‘use scent, perfume oneself’ middle denominal derived from *diib* (m) ‘perfume, fragrance’. Iraqw had *deequut* ‘shave’ middle derived from *deeqw* ‘scrape’. Oromo has two deponents for ‘to dress oneself’ *uyi-fad’d’a* ‘dress oneself’ and *keeyad’d’a* ‘put on clothes, dress’, and Afar likewise: *sarite* ‘wear’, *bilqite* ‘be dressed up, be embellished, be titillated, be dandified’. Most verbs in this domain denote activities that one usually does to oneself. ‘To shave’ is usually done to oneself if it refers to shaving the beard and this verb is middle marked in Iraqw, but it is typically done by someone else if it refers to shaving the head, and such an activity is expressed by a different, non-middle marked verb in Iraqw, *naal*. ‘To braid (hair)’ is an activity that is usually done to someone

else and the middle derived verb is used to indicate that one does the action to oneself. In this respect the middle comes close to a reflexive marker but a reflexive marker is not needed with these verbs, (8a), and when it is used it stresses an unusual conceptual separation of the body and the agent, (8b).

(8a) aako i deequut
 father S3 scrape:MIDDLE:3SG.M
 'Father is shaving/will shave.'

(8b) aako ti deequut
 father REC shave:MIDDLE:3SG.M
 'Father is shaving *at himself*.'

The domain of Nontranslational Motion or Body Motion includes verbs "which denote actions of motor manipulation of the body or part of the body, without any particular change of location of the body, [such as ...] 'turn', 'twist', 'bend', 'nod', 'shake' (e.g. one's head) and 'bow'", Kemmer (1994:197). For the Cushitic middles this also includes verbs that take the body (part) as subject, as was the case with the Iraqw middle derived *tunqulu/-út* 'sprain' in (1b) which takes the leg as subject. Iraqw middle deponents in this category include *kweetliit* 'stretch', *kurunkuriit* 'shrink'. Oromo has *hollad'd'a* 'tremble, shiver', *eganjad'd'a* 'trample, stand on', *birbifad'd'a* 'wriggle, vibrate, struggle get free from a strong grip or a trap'. Somali has the deponents *jimicso* 'stretch oneself, exercise, work out', *jirroorso* (transitive) 'tense one's muscles, bear (pain)', *duco* 'strain (in childbirth or defecation), contract body muscles'. Afar has the deponent verbs *kadiidimite* 'shiver, tremble from fever' and *waleeliqite* 'wriggle, trickle'.

A particular set of verbs of body motion are those that denote movements of the hands. These are typically middle marked, e.g., Iraqw deponent middle verbs *hiriit* 'sew', *kwatiit* 'touch', and *kwahhuut* 'forge, break off by hand, husk grain' (the last is middle derived from *kwahha* 'throwing'). In this subdomain, Oromo has the deponent middle verbs *harirad'd'a* 'go over an animal with one's hand, before slaughtering', *hambaarad'd'a* 'scoop (e.g. grain) with both hands' and we might also include *d'aafad'd'a* 'draw water from a well'. I also take 'to scratch' as part of this domain: Afar has denominal middles *waybite* 'scratch an itch' and *filite* 'scratch one's skin' and the deponent *fitfite* 'scratch the ground, e.g. chicken'; and Somali has *xoqo* 'scratch oneself (on a part of the body)', a middle derived verb from *xoq* 'to scratch'. The middle verbs that denote movements of the hands have a subject that controls the action; this is not necessarily the case for the other Body Motion verbs.

Body as Agent (non-volitional) is a domain that Kemmer (1994:201,1993:61) mentions only briefly. This category is very consistently middle marked in Cushitic, as is evidenced by the table in (9). Others such verbs are 'to itch', which is middle marked in Oromo, or 'to teethe', middle marked in Somali, and 'to develop an allergy' in Iraqw, but for these we do not have enough comparative evidence to

include them in the table. Body activities are not all expressed by a middle marked verb. A counterexample is 'to nose bleed' in Oromo and Iraqw. The degree of control of the self over these activities varies from uncontrolled 'get goosebumps', to difficult to control 'sneeze', 'hiccup', 'cough', 'yawn', to controllable but by necessity typically uncontrolled 'breathe'. What these activities have in common is that they involve initiation from the body as opposed to initiation from the 'self'; therefore I do not include 'scratch' in this category.

(9) Table of Middle marking in verbs of Body Activity (not necessarily cognate)

body activity	Afar	Iraqw	Somali	Oromo
cough	depon	depon	-	-
sneeze	denom	denom	-	denom
hiccup	denom	de-ideophonic	-	denom
breathe	-	-	derived	derived
get goosebumps	?	depon	depon	?
yawn	denom	-	denom	denom

The domain of Body States contains verbs that denote a particular state of the body of the subject. This does not occur as a domain in Kemmer's typology, but I find these verbs to be consistently middle marked in the Cushitic languages. Again for some of these verbs it is the body (part) which is subject. In Iraqw this category includes the deponents *xufiit* 'be drunk', *slaqaat* 'be tired', and the middle denominals *talanderuut* 'be numb (body part is subject)' from *ta/anteeri* 'numbness' and *hootuut* 'be drastically overdue in pregnancy' from *hoota* 'pregnancy'. Oromo has the deponents *meelad'd'a* 'become dislocated (joints), distorted', *k'and'ad'd'a* 'feel ill, have a fever, get malaria', *k'irk'irfad'd'a* 'feel tickled', *bowafad'd'a* 'have a headache', *nad'd'a* 'have desire for salt', *folad'd'a* 'be ready to deliver, feel birth pangs (animals)', *hifad'd'a* 'tired, be impatient, be annoyed with someone'. Afar has denominal middle verbs *taanite* 'be lazy, get tired' and *daalicite* 'fear, be defeated, be tired', and deponent middle verbs *tutaanite* 'be tired out, be weary', *dahite* 'be paralysed, be dumbfounded, get tired', *soonibite* 'become pregnant' and *luwute* 'hunger, be hungry', and a denominal middle verb *luwaate* 'have morning sickness (of expectant mother)'. Somali has denominal middle verbs *baaho* 'be hungry', *daabo* 'become sick, get diarrhea (of young animals)', *foolo* 'be in labor, start to give birth'. It is striking that most of these middle body state verbs denote negative situations.

(Change in) Body Position: For the Cushitic languages this is a central and one of the most consistent domains of the middle. It contains verbs that indicate a position of the body rather than a movement into that position, including numerous very specific body position verbs as well as the basic body positions such as 'sit', 'stand' and 'lie down', see the table in (10). An example of a body position verb that is not expressed by a middle is 'crouch down' in Oromo.

(10) Table of middle marking in verbs of Body Position (not necessarily cognate)

body position	Iraqw	Somali	Oromo	Afar
sit	depon	depon	-	-
lie down, sleep	depon	depon	depon	denom
kneel	depon	deriv	deriv	-
lean	depon	depon	depon	-
squat	deriv	deriv	deriv	-
sit with knees together	depon	depon	depon	-

The verbs for 'to hide oneself', and 'to remain, to stay' tend to be middle marked in the Cushitic languages and I take this to be a development of verbs for Body Positions: Oromo *k'ubad'd'a* 'settle somewhere, dwell, wait, shelter, emerge safely', Iraqw *iwiit* 'sit, stay', and for 'to hide oneself' Afar has deponent *qellite* 'disappear, hide oneself', Oromo has deponents *d'ofad'd'a* 'hide, conceal', *d'ok'ad'd'a* 'hide, hide oneself, simulate', Iraqw has a deponent *nahhaat* 'hide oneself', and Somali has middle marked verbs *dhako* 'hide oneself', *dhuumo* 'hide oneself', *gabbo* 'hide oneself, duck, dodge', *jirso* 'shelter oneself (from e.g. rain)'.

The domain of Translational Movement contains motion verbs. For the Cushitic languages the middle marked motion verbs are those that could be described as Body Focussed Displacement, i.e., verbs that emphasize the nature of the motion and the way the body moves in the motion rather than emphasizing the displacement per se. Such middle verbs are the Iraqw deponents *hi'iit* 'take a step, walk, go', *natiit* 'dart off, jump', *hapapa'amiit* 'walk like an old man (close to the ground), grow a little', and the denominal middle *tsaxuut* 'jump fast' from *tsaxway* 'grasshopper sp.'. Oromo has the deponents *tarkaafad'd'a* 'make steps, cross by stepping on stones, transgress', *gangalad'd'a* 'roll on the ground'. In this category we also find various manifestations of the verb 'to slip, slide': Somali *dagiigoxo* 'slide down, slip', *sulxo* 'slip, slide', *sisibo* 'slip, slide', Oromo *sirrink'ad'd'a* 'slip, slide', Iraqw *ninkiritsiit* 'slip', but these verbs have no middle marking in Afar.

The above mentioned domains all relate to the body of the subject, and the following subdomains do so as well, insofar as the mind is part of the body. Emotional middle or (Negative) State of Mind middle is a domain that covers verbs that are comparable to Body State but relate to the state of mind. Like the Body State verbs these verbs predominantly but not exclusively depict a negative state of affairs in the Cushitic languages. This also holds for the examples that Kemmer (1993) gives. The subdomain contains the Iraqw deponent *dawiit* 'be annoyed', and the denominal middles *xuruut* 'suspect, be in doubt' from *xuree* 'doubt, thought', *muumuut* 'sulk' from *munee* 'anger', and *dayuut* 'fear' from *da'ee* 'liver, fear'. Afar has denominal middles *dannite* 'blame, suspect, be bitter towards, be dissatisfied with', *cunxite* 'fear', *nammabagite* 'doubt, be of two minds'. Oromo has deponents *maraad'd'a* 'be(come) mad, confused', *dagad'd'a* 'be careless, unwatchful', *harifad'd'a* 'be frightened', *burungefad'd'a* 'grimace in scorn, despise', *ofad'd'a* 'be hypocrite, dishonest'. Somali has deponents *cabso* 'fear, be afraid', *gedmo* 'be confused or mistaken', and the derived middle *dhibso* 'be annoyed at, feel irritated by'.

Kemmer distinguishes a related subdomain Emotional Speech Action containing verbs like 'complain', 'lament', 'blame'; and a domain of other Speech Actions including verbs like 'confess', 'boast', 'accuse', 'threaten', 'deceive', 'refuse'. In this domain Somali has *cabo* 'complain, reproach', *barooro* 'mourn, keen, wail' from *baroor* 'high-pitched women's lament'. Afar denominals include a set of negative or emotional speech verbs: *xamite* 'slander', *itrite* 'invoke some name when startled', *sahite* 'reprove', *warqite* 'talk incessantly', *malkite* 'complain', Hayward (1976:413), while other verbs for 'complain' are not middle.

Kemmer distinguishes two subdomains for Cognitive Events: Simple and Complex. This distinction is not important here because the Cushitic verbs in the domain of Cognitive Events are primarily 'forget' and 'consider': Iraqw has a deponent middle *alqaytsiit* 'go and look, consider' and denominal *gunqaruut* 'forget' from *gur'a+qara* stomach+poison, Afar has middle deponents *karcite* 'be inattentive, forget', *cisaabite* 'consider, try to remember', *wagite* 'look at, notice, consider, expect, oversee, try out', *ayreynite* 'deceive', Oromo *irraafad'd'a* 'forget'.

The domain of Spontaneous Events, where there is no agent at all (or the agent is essentially irrelevant) is the most important semantic domain of middle verbs that are not directly conceptually linked to the "body". Saeed (1995) has termed this domain more appropriately Uncontrolled Inchoation and it contains many examples in the Cushitic languages and particularly for those lexical units mentioned in Kemmer (1993), i.e., 'sprout', 'grow', but also 'appear' and 'spill'. Iraqw has deponents such as *ti'iit* 'appear, come out', *harasliqiit* 'come upon by chance', *bintloqiit* 'shake and spill over', *ku'uut* (intransitive) 'spill', middle denominal *slaaslakuut* 'come up, grow (of crops)' from *slaaslakwi* 'vertical sticks of the wall'; Somali has denominals *caleemayso* 'sprout and put forth leaves (of a tree)', *ubaxayso* 'flower, produce flowers', *daado* 'spill down, pour down, flow away'; Oromo has deponents *mul-lad'd'a* 'appear', *bilc'aad'd'a* 'become ripe, mature, be fit for cultivation', *mulk'ad'd'a* 'get out off balance, slope, slant (of a load that is going to fall from a beast of burden), separate from a group'.

The domain of Facilitative middles is also called Passive middle by Kemmer (1993) because of its characteristic of genericity. It is the productive meaning in Fulfulde of middle verbs in the future/habitual tense/aspect, e.g., *deftere nde'e nde janngoto* 'is this book readable?' Abu-Manga and Jungraithmayr (1988: 72 note 4). I noted only one derived middle in Iraqw which renders the verb facilitative, *waraahhaat* 'be passable' from *waraahh* 'to pass'.

Natural Reciprocal or Inherently Reciprocal events are a clear subdomain of middle semantics in Somali: *beecso* 'sell (a possession)', *ganacso* 'do business, trade, *jarayso* 'play Somali checkers', *qooggaaleyso* 'pose a riddle, play a game of riddles'. The domain also contains a set of family reciprocals: *dhaxso* 'marry, get married, take a wife', *qaraabayso* 'treat as one's own relative, consider as a relative' derived from *qaraabo* 'relatives'. Very few examples of Inherently Reciprocal middles were found in the other Cushitic languages. Candidates are Oromo *fakaad'd'a* 'seem, look like, resemble', *mald'ad'd'a* 'discuss a matter, give an opinion', and Afar middle deponent *abite* 'marry' and derived *digibaasite* 'marry (polite)'. How-

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ever, typical inherently reciprocal verbs like ‘play’, ‘discuss’, ‘agree’, ‘resemble’, ‘sell’, ‘borrow’, ‘hire’, ‘rent’, ‘exchange’ show no signs of middle marking in Afar.

The domain of Indirect middle is the productive meaning of the middle in the sense of “for one’s own benefit” in Afar, Oromo and Somali. Indeed the middle derivation is commonly termed Autobenefactive in Cushitic studies. In Iraqw and other Southern Cushitic languages, however, there is no productive autobenefactive meaning of the middle suffix, and Indirect middle verbs such as ‘acquire’, ‘request’, and ‘receive’ have no middle marking.

Kemmer’s domain of Commissive, Intensive verbs such as ‘intend’, ‘promise’, ‘vow’, is not represented in Cushitic middles. Her domain of Logophoric middles has no relevance for Cushitic.

A semantic domain of Intensive Action might have to be added to the typology of middles. Abu-Manga and Jungraithmayr (1988: 70) note that Fulfulde has pairs of (unrelated) verbs where the difference in meaning is solely that the middle verb expresses an intensive action, e.g., *yid’a* (active) ‘like, want, love’ versus the middle marked verb *beegoo* ‘love earnestly’. Moreover, active verbs are transformed into the middle accompanied by perfect tense to express intensity of action. I have noticed something similar in Tunen, where ‘think hard’ is expressed as the middle form of ‘think’ (Mous to appear). The Cushitic languages do not show evidence of intensive action meaning for the middle verbs.

We have noted that a high proportion of the verbs in the subdomains of State of Body and of State of Mind have negative connotations. A similar tendency towards negative connotations led Kemmer to single out “Emotional” Speech Actions verbs such as ‘complain’, ‘blame’. In fact, nearly all of the denominal middles in Iraqw have negative connotations, e.g., ‘covered by soot, dust’, ‘be bitter’, ‘be old, worn out’, ‘be worn out’, ‘be spoilt, bad’, ‘become bad (of food)’, ‘be greedy’ (see Mous and Qorro 2000). Apparently there is a recurrent tendency for middle marked verbs to acquire negative connotations.

Another remarkable recurrent semantic feature is that of Separation. Several of the middle marked verbs in the various subdomains have separation as part of their meaning or have an additional sense which involves separation, e.g., Oromo *bargafad’d’a* ‘spread the legs, split, bifurcate’, *hitad’d’a* ‘stretch out one’s limbs’, *mulk’ad’d’a* ‘get out off balance, slope, slant (of a load that is going to fall from a beast of burden), separate from a group’, *birbifad’d’a* ‘wriggle, vibrate, struggle to get free from a strong grip or a trap’, Afar *sissiibite* ‘take divergent paths’, *seecite* ‘go away angry, be indignant, go off in a huff’; Iraqw *palaat* ‘be split’, *binkiliit* ‘spread aside’, *gweeriit* ‘open’, *haatliit* ‘transplant seedlings’; to which we may add the recurrent verbs for ‘to spill’ in the subdomain of Spontaneous Actions.

- (11) Semantic subdomains of middles in Cushitic (++ = productive, (+) = poorly attested)

subcategory	Iraqw	Somali	Oromo	Afar
body care (groom and wear)	(+)	+	+	+
body motion (nontranslational motion)	+	+	+	-
motion of hands	+	+	+	-
body activity	+	+	+	+
(negative) body state	+	+	+	+
(change in) body posture	+	+	+	(+)
hide oneself	+	+	+	+
remain-stay	+	+	+	-
body focused displacement/transl. motion	+	+	+	+
(negative) state of mind (emotion)	+	+	+	+
cognition	+	+	+	-
commissive, intensive	-	-	-	-
(emotional) speech	-	(+)	-	+
(inchoative) non-control/spontaneous action	+	+	+	+
facilitative	-	-	-	-
inherent reciprocal	-	+	-	-
autobeneficactive	-	++	++	++
logophoric	-	-	-	-
intensive	-	-	-	-
separate	+	-	+	+
negative connotations	+	-	+	+

3. Conclusion

The Cushitic languages ascribe a strikingly high degree of centrality to the body in the semantics of middles. The evidence for this lies in the presence of the subcategories of the body in all the languages in the table in (11) and the fact that a number of derived verbs are used for actions performed by the *body* per se as opposed to the individual. The fact that the marking is derivational allows for a more lexical or concrete and a less grammatical meaning, when compared to inflection and to syntactic constructions. For Creek, where the middle suffix is also derivational, Hardy proposes (1994:66) that “in the absence of a reflexive source for the Creek middle, Creek could have exploited the low elaboration of a marker of ‘bodily action’ to develop a middle marker.”

The Spontaneous Action middles are well represented in Cushitic; this poses a problem for Kemmer’s analysis, whereby the essential characterization of middles involves indistinguishability of agent and patient. It is significant that such middles find expression in Cushitic via derivation, i.e., the most lexical and least syntactic way of encoding middles. Spontaneous action, being a possible function of syntactic middles too, is represented across the morphological range of expression of middles. For this reason there are no arguments to exclude it from the core functions of middle marking.

The Facilitative use, which is closely connected to the Spontaneous Action middle (Kemmer 1993: 148), is not or rarely present in the Cushitic languages.

The most noticeable aspect of Cushitic middles is the development of a productive Autobenefactive meaning.

In the Cushitic languages there is less use of Inherent Reflexive and Inherent Reciprocal middle meanings, which is not surprising given the presence of reciprocal/reflexive pronouns. Equally the absence of Logophoric uses is expected since Cushitic languages have no logophoric pronouns. Remarkable is the near absence of certain lexicalization patterns: There are virtually no Commissive, Intentional middles and relatively few Emotional Speech middles. On the other hand lexicalization patterns emerge that have not been observed before, such as the middle marking of verbs for 'to hide', 'to remain, stay', and a middle denominal verb 'to work'. Finally there are indications that additional categories of middles need to be posited for Cushitic, categories not included in Kemmer's typology: Negative Connotations and Separation.

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