

The emergence of reflexive markers: the case of Hittite

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Typological research has shown that reflexive markers come about from different sources following selected paths of grammaticalization (cf. König & Siemund 2000, Schladt 2000, Heine & Kuteva 2002, Evseeva & Sakeberri 2018). In the case of polyfunctional markers that encode multiple valency reducing operations, already Kemmer (1993) suggested that it is reflexives that constitute the cross-linguistic dominant source of other functions, such as passive and anticausative. A textbook example of this development is the history of the reflexive marker in Romance languages (cf. Kemmer 1993, Puddu 2005). The unidirectionality of the REFLEXIVE > ANTICAUSATIVE (> PASSIVE) cline has remained virtually unchallenged in the literature (Haspelmath 1990, 2003, Heine 2002). However, this is not the entire picture. Even though with a much narrower distribution, reverse developments have been indeed documented (e.g. Dik 1983 on PASSIVE > REFLEXIVE in Uto-Aztecan). In this paper, in contrast with the received view concerning the unidirectionality of the development of reflexives, I argue that evidence for yet another possible source of reflexives, i.e. anticausatives, can be found in Hittite.

Hittite features a two-fold system of verbal voice opposition between the active and the middle inflection (Neu 1968, Hoffner & Melchert 2008, Luraghi 2012). Verbs that belong to the middle voice can either be *media tantum*, i.e. they inflect in the middle voice only, e.g. *kiš-a(ri)* ‘become’, or they can be opposed to corresponding active verbs. Oppositional middles encode a range of intransitivizing functions, including reflexive, anticausative, passive, and reciprocals, as in (1). Based on the cross-linguistic behavior of reflexive markers, one expects the Hittite middle to originate as a reflexive marker and later expand its functional scope to the encoding of the other functions. However, a closer look at the distribution of middle verbs in the corpus of original Hittite texts shows that this hypothesis is untenable. In the earliest phase of the language, i.e. Old Hittite, most middle verbs belong to the *media tantum* (Tab. 1), and the few oppositional ones are predominantly anticausatives (Tab. 2), while reflexive middles remain rare throughout the history of the language. Moreover, since their earliest attestations, reflexive middles are often additionally reinforced by the reflexive particle =*za* (cf. Hoffner & Melchert 2008, Cotticelli Kurras & Rizza 2011, 2013). These facts suggest that reflexivity hardly constituted the original core of the middle inflection. As an alternative scenario, I argue that the Hittite middle was originally confined to the group of *media tantum*, which included verbs that denote spontaneous change-of-state events. These were liable to be opposed to active counterparts, giving rise to the anticausative alternation. The anticausative function then served as the starting point for the rise of the other oppositional functions, including the reflexive. In this shift, autocausatives events of self-induced motion, e.g. *ne-ari* ‘turn (intr.)’, constitute a key bridging context. This scenario is also fully compatible with recent models of reconstruction of verbal voice in Proto-Indo-European (Luraghi forthc.).

Examples

- (1) *zinna-tta(ri)* ‘finish (intr.)’ (anticausative), *tamašš-ta(ri)* ‘be oppressed’ (passive), *šuppīyahḫ-ta(ri)* ‘purify oneself’ (reflexive) *zahḫ-anda* ‘hit each other’ (reciprocal).

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Tables

Table 1: Distribution of *media tantum* in Old Hittite

| | <i>Media tantum</i> | Oppositional middles |
|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Old Hittite | 27 (79%) | 7 (21%) |

Table 2: Diachronic distribution of oppositional middles in Hittite

| | Anticausative | Passive | Anticaus./Pass. | Reciprocal | Reflexive |
|--------------------|---------------|---------|-----------------|------------|-----------|
| Old Hittite | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|----|---|---|---|
| Middle Hittite | 6 | 7 | 6 | 0 | 1 |
| New Hittite | 9 | 13 | 8 | 0 | 0 |