

Liminal morphosyntax: Georgian deponents and their kin.

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1 Deponents and deponency

The term ‘deponent’, once restricted to the specialized jargon of Latin grammar, has come to be used a bit more frequently in the linguistic literature of the past fifteen years or so. In traditional Latin descriptive grammar, deponents comprise “une catégorie de verbes actifs pour le sens, mais qui paraissent se dépouiller (*deponere*) de la forme active attendue, pour revêtir la forme passive” (Monteil 1970: 261). Verbs such as *sequor* “I follow”, *agricolor* “I cultivate land, practice agriculture”, *pergraecor* “I live in the ‘Greek manner’ (as understood by the Romans, i.e. feasting and pleasure-seeking)”, etc. are distinguished from regular active and passive verbs by their hybrid morphology — the finite paradigms are passive, whereas the present and future participles are formed as for active verbs — and the impression many Latinists have had that deponents are “passive in form but active in meaning”, as the school grammars say. Latin deponents do not ordinarily have active counterparts, a trait that has brought them to the attention of researchers exploring the morphology, semantics and syntax of middle voice, or of what Klaiman (1988) calls ‘basic voice systems’, as contrasted to ‘derived voice’ (active-passive) systems. Latin does not have a middle voice as such, but Kemmer (1993: 22) juxtaposes Latin deponents to the *media tantum* of Greek and other basic-voice languages, these being formally middle verbs which do not contrast with actives formed from the same stem. From a diachronic perspective, Kemmer’s equation of deponents and *media tantum* seems justifiable, since the personal endings of the Latin passive do go back in part to the IE middle diathesis (Szemerényi 1996: 242-243), and the roots of some Latin deponents are cognate to Greek and Sanskrit *media tantum* (e.g. Latin *sequor*, Greek *hepomai*, Sanskrit *sacate* “follow” < IE **sek*”). On the other hand, the Romans themselves are not known to have compared Latin deponents to Greek middles (Flobert 1975: 577).

In recent, as yet unpublished work, Corbett (1999, p. c.) has extended the reach of the term ‘deponency’ to accommodate any non-typical use of inflectional morphology, whether or not it has anything to do with verbs or voice. Russian *životnoe* “animal”, a syntactic noun which declines like an adjective, would be considered a deponent word by this definition. I concur with Corbett’s criticism of many past uses of the deponency concept, which tend to emphasize certain traits of Latin deponents while downplaying others. Some definitions focus on semantics (“passives with active meaning”, although the latter criterion is rarely accorded a rigorous definition); others highlight the lack of an active counterpart, or the hybrid nature of Latin deponent paradigms (Flobert 1967: xi). In the discussion to follow, I will limit the use of the term ‘deponent’ to its traditional territory, but with a more narrow definition. Consider the case of *media tantum*. Middle voice is the marked category relative to active voice. Descriptions of the semantics of middle verbs characteristically take the corresponding actives as the starting point, and describe the special function of the middle as one of foregrounding the effect of the action upon the subject (‘subject-affectedness’; Kemmer 1993, 1994), the subject’s particular involvement or ‘interiority’ in the process denoted by the verb (Benveniste 1950), or that “a process is taking place with regard to, or is affecting, happening to” the subject (Gonda 1960: 66), etc. In

many languages, middle diathesis can signal reflexive or reciprocal meaning, that the direct object of a transitive verb is somehow within the subject's sphere (possession, body part), or that the subject acts in his or her own interest. Some middles permit passive or non-causative readings (as opposed to the causative meaning of the corresponding actives). In terms of the parameter of 'degree of distinguishability of participants', Kemmer (1994: 209) situates middle and reflexive 'situation types', where they are marked by distinct morphology, in the zone between one-participant and two-participant events — both of which are associated with the active voice (Kemmer 1993: 202). What these characterizations of middle semantics have in common is that they describe the middle as a sort of 'transitive-minus' [TRANS—], i.e. middle verbs are contrasted to their active-transitive counterparts as lower in such parameters as transitivity, valence or distinguishability of participants.¹

Compared to the above construction type, the Latin deponent is not so much a 'transitive-minus' as a 'passive-plus' [PASS+]. The Latin *-r* paradigms are fundamentally passive, not middle, in meaning. For the large majority of verbs which form both active and passive paradigms, the latter signal the demotion of the agent from subject position (Risselada 1991; Kurzová 1993: 160-1). For the purposes of this paper, I will limit the use of 'deponent' to PASS+ verbs in particular, defined as verbs with PASSIVE MORPHOLOGY (or 'diathesis', following the usage of Klaiman 1988 and Duhoux 2000) but ACTIVE SYNTAX. Formal features are qualified as markers of passive diathesis if — in a clear majority of cases — they signal a syntactic transformation which promotes a non-actor argument to grammatical subject position and/or demotes the actor argument. For at least some Latin deponents, their active syntax is confirmed by the attestation of active-diathesis counterparts which assign the same case role to their subjects (*adulor* "I flatter obsequiously, like a dog" and *adulo* "I fawn, flatter" (Flobert 1975: 104-5, 287)).

2 Kartvelian TRANS— and PASS+ verb types

The Georgian language, and to varying degrees, its sister Kartvelian languages Laz-Mingrelian and Svan, have both of the construction types described above. In order to understand their structure and how each contrasts with other verb forms, it is important to take in account the following grammatical categories, which in all likelihood go back to the Proto-Kartvelian ancestral language:

(a). A fundamental distinction between two classes of verbs: those that assign ergative case in the aorist series of tense-aspect paradigms (case-shifting, or 'active' verbs), and those that do not (non-case-shifting, or 'passive' verbs). This category has been likened to voice by Georgian linguists (e.g. Shanidze 1953).

(b). An independent grammatical category known as 'version' (Geo. *kceva*), marked by a vowel morpheme placed between the person prefix and the verb root. The case-shifting and non-case-shifting verb classes can be further subdivided by

¹ Not discussed here, for reasons of space, are agentless transitives, such as Latin *me pudet* "I am ashamed" or Georgian *m-a-k'ank'al-eb-s* "I am overcome by trembling"; lit. "X (fear, chill, illness, etc.) makes me tremble", which are also of the transitive-minus type. These are transitive verbs which are not accompanied by an overt subject NP. Johanna Nichols (p. c.) has detected agentless transitives, which she calls 'deponents', in Chechen and Ingush.

lexical aspect [telic vs. atelic], as signalled by the morphology of the future-tense form, which is strongly correlated with this distinction. Verbs belonging to the telic classes, which will be designated simply ‘active’ and ‘passive’, typically form their future tense by the addition of a perfectivizing preverb to the present stem. Verbs belonging to the two atelic classes, designated ‘medioactive’ and ‘mediopassive’, have future and aorist stems different from the present stems, a characteristic mark of which is the version vowel *i-* or *e-*.

(1) **MODERN GEORGIAN VERB CLASSES (VOICES):**

| | <i>case-shifting</i> [assigns ergative in aorist] | <i>non-case-shifting</i> [cannot assign ergative] |
|--|--|--|
| FUTURE = PRESENT (ACTIVE) <i>a-šiv-eb-s</i> + PREVERB: “makes sb/sthg go hungry” FUTURE: <i>mo=a-šiv-eb-s</i> | | (PASSIVE) <i>h-šiv-d-eb-a</i> “becomes hungry” FUTURE <i>mo=h-šiv-d-eb-a</i> |
| FUTURE STEM ≠ PRESENT STEM: (MEDIOACTIVE) <i>šimšil-ob-s</i> “goes hungry, on hunger strike” FUTURE: <i>i-šimšil-eb-s</i> | | (MEDIOPASSIVE) <i>h-ši-a</i> “is hungry” FUTURE: <i>e-ši-eb-a</i> |

2.1 Subjective version, middle voice and Kartvelian ‘media tantum’

The Kartvelian category of version has been the object of intensive discussion in the specialist literature, including several detailed treatments in German and English (Deeters 1930; Schmidt 1965; Boeder 1968; Aronson 1982). Following Shanidze (1925/1981), Georgian linguists distinguish the following types of version: ‘subjective’ (Geo. *sataviso* “for oneself”, prefix *-i-*); ‘objective’ (Geo. *sasxviso* “for someone else”, prefix *-i(u-)*); ‘neutral’ (Geo. *saarviso* “for no one”, prefix *-a/Ø-*).² Shanidze (1953: 362-363) and Schmidt (1965) pointed out the considerable semantic overlap of the Georgian subjective version and the ancient Greek middle voice. Compare the following Greek middle verbs and their Georgian near-equivalents in the subjective version:

(2) Greek middle diathesis and Georgian subjective version

| GREEK MIDDLE DIATHESIS | GEORGIAN SUBJECTIVE VERSION |
|---|---|
| <i>louo-mai</i> “I wash myself” | <i>da-v-i-ban</i> “I will wash my (hands, self)” |
| <i>hetoimazo-mai</i> “I prepare myself, prepare for myself” | <i>mo-v-i-mzad-eb</i> “I will prepare for myself” |
| <i>hapto-mai</i> “I grasp, fasten myself to” | <i>da-v-i-b-am (tavs)</i> “I will bind myself” |
| <i>kikhra-mai</i> “I borrow” | <i>v-i-sesx-eb</i> “I will borrow” |
| <i>ôneo-mai</i> “I buy” | <i>v-i-q'id-i</i> “I will buy” |
| <i>orkheo-mai</i> “I dance” | <i>v-i-cek'v-eb</i> “I will dance” |

Descriptions of the semantic correlates of subjective version are strongly similar to those employed by Indo-Europeanists with respect to the middle voice. According to Vogt (1938: 8), the Georgian subjective version signals “un rapport de possession entre le sujet et le régime direct, ou bien que l’action se fait au profit du sujet en faisant du régime direct la propriété du sujet”. Shanidze’s definition is similar: Version “indicates the relation, in terms of possession or

² The ‘superessive’ (*sazedao* “for [that] upon, on top”, prefix *a-*), which typically indicates the superposition or affixing of one object onto another (e.g., *mi-a-k'er-eb-s* “sews sthg onto sthg”), was treated by Shanidze (1953: 382-5) as the mark of a distinct category called ‘situation’.

benefit, between the subject and the object” (1953: 332). Despite the similarities, Kartvelian subjective version and IE middle voice differ in significant ways. One of the principal functions of the Kartvelian version markers is to indicate the valence of the verb. The objective version vowel generally signals the presence of an indirect object (e.g. the trivalent verb *v-u-mzad-eb* “I prepare it **for someone**”), which is assigned dative case. Because of the explicit opposition of subjective version to objective version. Boeder (1968) argues that the former could be said to add a ‘latent reflexive’ dative to the verb’s underlying valence frame. The Indo-European active-middle distinction, by contrast, is associated more with the presence or absence of a direct object (there being no close IE equivalent to Kartvelian objective version), although the correlation with valence change does not appear to have been as explicit as in the case of Kartvelian version.

Corresponding to the media tantum of Greek and other languages with basic-voice systems are several Kartvelian verb types for which the subjective version is unmarked compared to objective or neutral version. (For the most part Georgian examples will be employed, but unless otherwise specified, it can be assumed that the other Kartvelian languages have comparable form classes). Shanidze (1953: 357) identified about a dozen active-transitive verbs for which the subjective version is unmarked; i.e. they do not have a neutral-version form, and their objective-version forms simply indicate the addition of an indirect object to the meaning associated with the subjective version. These verbs cluster in semantic fields consistent with this morphological trait, in that the denoted action is oriented toward the subject in some sense: 1) taking into the subject’s possession (e.g., *da=i-č’er-s* “catches, captures”); 2) maintaining one’s hold on (e.g., *še=i-naxav-s* “keeps, conserves”); 3) cognition and subjective attitude (e.g., *mo=i-c’on-eb-s* “enjoys, finds to one’s liking”).

By far the largest group of Kartvelian ‘media tantum’ are known to Georgian linguists as ‘medioactive’ or ‘medial’ verbs. The verbs composing this large, open class are generally intransitive — although some permit a facultative direct object —, aspectually atelic, and tend to cluster in particular semantic groups. The aorist-series forms of these verbs assign ergative case, whether or not they permit a direct object (Shanidze 1953: 484; Nozadze 1974; Holisky 1981).

- (3) SUBGROUPS OF GEORGIAN MEDIOACTIVE VERBS (Holisky 1981)
- (i) *celk-ob-s* “behaves naughtily” (denominal: “behave like X”)
 - (ii) *sadil-ob-s* “eats noontime meal” (denominal: “partake of/
participate in/experience X”)
 - (iii) *gor-a-ob-s* “rolls around” (deverbal; undirected motion or action)
 - (iv-a) *sisin-eb-s* “hisses (of a snake)” (sounds)
 - (iv-b) *q’iv-i-s* “crows, screeches” (animal cries)
 - (v) *gizgiz-eb-s* “flickers” (qualities of emitted or reflected light)
 - (vi) *k’ank’al-eb-s* “trembles” (motion in place)
 - (vii) *gor-av-s* “rolls” (manner of motion)
 - (viii) *kux-s* “thunders” (natural, weather phenomena)
 - (ix) Residual (older, irregular verbs; e.g. *i-cin-i-s* “smiles”)

Most Svan and Mingrelian medioactives have their basic, present-tense form marked by the subjective version vowel *i-* (see (4), data from Nozadze (1974: 43-44) and Tuite (1997)). This is also the case for a small, but probably archaic, set

of Georgian medioactives, e.g., *i-cin-i-s* “smiles”; *i-brʒv-i-s* “fights, combats”; *i-myer-(i)-s* “sings” (Nozadze 1974: 36-37). According to Nozadze, the subjective version marked appeared in all forms of all Kartvelian medioactives in the past, but was progressively lost in the present-stem forms (and even in some Old Georgian and Mingrelian aorists, such as Mingr. *lal-u* “barked”).

| | | |
|-----|----------------------------|---|
| (4) | Mingrelian medioactives | Svan medioactives |
| | <i>i-bir-s</i> “sings” | <i>i-yr-æ:l</i> “sings” |
| | <i>i-ngar-s</i> “cries” | <i>i-pšd-æ:l</i> “sighs” |
| | <i>lal-un-s</i> “barks” | <i>i-bərcan-æ:l</i> “staggers around [drunk]” |
| | <i>sxap'-un-s</i> “dances” | <i>q'u:l-i</i> “[cow] moos” |

Most Modern Georgian medioactives lack a version vowel in the present and imperfect, but all have future/aorist stems marked by the subjective version. The imperfective future of most Svan medioactives is likewise marked by the version vowel *i-* (Ch'umburidze 1986: 178-9). The neutral-version counterparts of Georgian and Svan medioactive future/aorist stems have causative meaning (cp. Georgian *i-duy-eb-s* “it will boil”, *a-duy-eb-s* “s/he boils it”), paralleling Greek middle-active pairs such as *hepse-tai* “it boils” and *heps-ei* “s/he boils it”.

2.2 Kartvelian deponents

Georgian and Laz-Mingrelian have three different types of passive: 1) root passives, an archaic class originally marked by ablaut; 2) suffixal passives in *-d/-n*, which are principally inchoative; 3) prefixal passives. (Svan has the first and third type, but no clear trace of the second). Root passives have underlying intransitive case frames. Many of them denote spontaneous changes of state (Geo. *dn-eba* “melt”, *lp'-eba* “rot”, *c'q'd-eba* “break”), movement (*sxlt'-eba* “slip, come loose”, *vard-eba* “fall”, *dzvr-eba* “creep, squeeze through”), or other sorts of single-participant phenomena. Note that many Georgian root passives correspond to Greek middles (Bakker 1994: 30-32). Prefixal passives are marked by the version vowel *i-* if they have no indirect object, and by *e-* if they do. Unlike root passives, prefixal passives have underlying transitive case frames, and most, in fact, are linked to active-transitives. Compare the single-participant root passive *cxv-eb-a* “it (e.g. bread) bakes” to the prefixal passive *i-cx-ob-a* “it is being baked (by sb)”, and its active counterpart *a-cx-ob-s* “s/he bakes it”.

Sharing certain traits with the passives is the smaller class comprising Kartvelian mediopassive verbs. Some are monovalent: a handful of verbs indicating body position (*z-i-s* “sits”, *c'ev-s* “lies”), and several dozen passives of state (*h-c'er-i-a* “is written”, *q'r-i-a* “[multiple objects] lie scattered”). The large majority subcategorize for a morphological indirect object, which has many of the privileges of a grammatical subject. These include verbs of possession, emotion, physiological reaction, and the like (*a-kv-s* “has”, *s-dzin-av-s* “sleeps”, *u-q'var-s* “loves”). The present-imperfect stems of Kartvelian mediopassives are fairly diverse, whereas their future and aorist stems — which are clearly of more recent origin — are drawn from the prefixal passive paradigms: *c'ev-s* “lies”, aorist *i-c'v-a*; *s-dzin-av-s* “sleeps”, aorist *e-dzin-a*).

The *i-* of prefixal passives is identical to the marker of subjective version, and it has been argued that the former developed from the latter (Shanidze 1953: 317-8, 362-3; Imnaishvili 1968; Schmidt 1962). Whatever its origins might have been, in

the modern Kartvelian languages, the two verb types taken together cover much of the same semantic ground as the Greek middle voice:

- (5) Greek *λυε-ται* “looses for oneself; is loosed”
 Geo. *i-xsn-i-s* (subjective-version active) “looses, undoes one’s sthg [e.g. button]; looses for oneself”; aorist *ga=i-xsn-a*;
 Geo. *i-xsn-eb-a* (passive) “is loosed, undone”; aorist *ga=i-xsn-a*

But Kartvelian prefixal passives do not always have ‘passive’ meaning in the usual sense of the term. In the oldest Georgian texts (5th-8th c. AD), and in Svan and Mingrelian, one encounters numerous prefixal passives labelled ‘deponents’ by Georgian linguists, in that they appear to be “passive in form and active in meaning” (Shanidze 1953: 305; cp. Jorbenadze 1983, Sarjveladze 1987). Not infrequently, the same passive-diathesis verb permits both passive and deponent readings, e.g. *i-c’er-eb-a* 1) “is being written”; 2) “writes (regularly), communicates through writing”. Rather than being characterized by defective paradigms, however, Georgian deponent passives are typically formed from verb stems that display most or all of the voice contrasts distinguished by the Kartvelian verb. All of the verbs listed below contrast with active, true passive, or medioactive verbs formed from the same root:

(6) Examples of Georgian deponents

| <i>DEPONENT (prefixal passive)</i> | <i>PRIMARY VERB FORM</i> |
|--|---|
| <i>i-c’er-eb-a</i> “writes to somebody, informs somebody through writing, letters” | <i>c’er-s</i> “writes” (active) |
| <i>i-coxn-eb-a</i> “ruminates, eats in an ugly, unpleasant fashion” | <i>coxn-i-s</i> “ruminates, chews [cud]” (active) |
| <i>i-p’udr-eb-a</i> “puts powder on one’s face” | <i>p’udr-av-s</i> “powders” (active) |
| <i>i-gin-eb-a</i> “curses, utters curse-words” | <i>a-gin-eb-s</i> “curses, swears at” (active) |
| <i>i-c’irp’l-eb-a</i> “sobs in an unattractive manner, blubbers” | <i>e-c’irp’l-eb-a</i> “[eyes] well up with tears” (passive) |
| <i>i-k’bin-eb-a</i> “bites somebody or something; has the habit of biting” | <i>h-k’ben-s</i> “bites” (medioactive) |
| <i>i-naz-eb-a</i> “acts cute” | <i>naz-ob-s</i> “acts cute” (medioactive) |
| <i>i-q’ep-eb-a</i> “barks continuously” | <i>q’ep-s</i> “barks” (medioactive) |

Georgian deponents, like those of Latin, are clearly of the type PASS+, in that the vast majority of verbs with the same stem morphology are genuine passives, with a patient or other non-actor NP as morphological subject. I label a Georgian verb as a deponent only if: (i) it has passive morphology; (ii) it is opposed to an active or medioactive verb from the same stem; and (iii) the grammatical subjects of the passive and active verbs have the same thematic relation (agenthood) to their respective verbs. For example, the subject of the deponent *i-purtx-eb-a* “spits continually, sprays spit all the time” is assigned the same thematic role as that of the corresponding active *a-purtx-eb-s* “spits”. Georgian deponents form a coherent set in both formal and semantic terms. Formally, they are prefixal passive verbs with active syntax. Semantically, deponents, in contrast to actives, express repeated, habitual actions, sometimes with the implication that they are characteristic of the subject. In a recent paper (Tuite 2002), I examined 78 deponents, as defined above, and divided them into semantic groups:

(7) Semantic subgroups of Georgian deponents

TYPE I. base trivalent transitive

(A) GIVING

i-3lev-a “gives to someone”

(B) COMMUNICATION

i-t'q'v-i-s, *e-t'q'vis* “will express in words [to sb]” These are the bivalent and trivalent futures of the verbs *ambobs* “says” and *e-ubn-eb-a* “tells”.

i-t'q'obin-eb-a “informs sb”

i-rc'mun-eb-a “tries to convince sb”

TYPE II. base bivalent transitive

(C) EATING

i-yeč'-eb-a “chews continually”

i-luk'm-eb-a “eats with appetite, with enthusiasm”

(D) GAZE

i-byvir-eb-a “stares menacingly”

i-č'vrit'-eb-a “peers into; examines carefully, at length”

(E) BODY-CENTERED ACTION

i-bert'q'-eb-a “shakes off sthg (dust, water-drops, etc.) from oneself”

i-txup'n-eb-a “smears (cosmetics) on one's face in unattractive fashion”

(F) AGGRESSION, CONTACT WITH OTHER'S BODY

i-k'ocn-eb-a “kisses sb or sthg”

i-rt'q'mevin-eb-a “hits sb, beats”

i-čxvlit'-eb-a “(e.g. thorn) pokes sb or sthg; has the habit of poking”

TYPE III. base intransitive or semi-transitive (medioactive)

(G) FACIAL

i-γim-eb-a “a smile comes over one, laughs slightly”

i-cingl-eb-a “sobs in an unattractive manner, with nose running”

(H) MOVEMENT, BEHAVIOR

i-p'ranč'-eb-a, *e-p'ranč'-eb-a* “flirts, acts cute, coquettish (to excess)”

i-purtx-eb-a “spits continually, sprays spit all the time (from the mouth)”

(I) SPEECH-ACT

i-loc-eb-a “pronounces words of blessing; blesses, toasts sb”

i-xvec'-eb-a, *e-xvec'-eb-a* “asks for sthg imploringly”

(J) COMITATIVE RELATIVE DEPONENT VERBS.

e-lap'arak'-eb-a “speaks with sb” (medioactive *lap'arak'-ob-s* “speaks”)

e-k'amat-eb-a “argues with sb” (medioactive *k'amat-ob-s* “argues”)

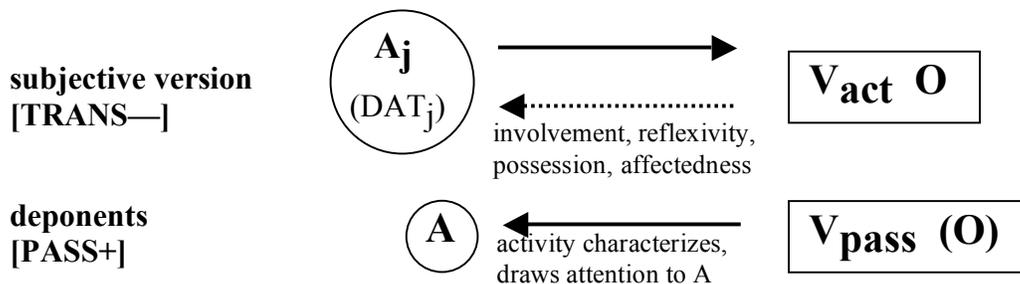
Many deponents, those of Types II and III in particular, signal a shift of focus from the end-point to the contours of action denoted by the verb (esp. its appearance, impression made on observers). Whereas the medioactive verb *coxn-i-s* “chews” is normally said of ruminant animals, with a direct object describing the grass, cud, etc. being masticated, its deponent counterpart *i-coxn-eb-a* is intransitive, and tends to be employed when the speaker wishes to emphasize the leisurely, repetitive nature of the chewing (when speaking of an animal), or to express a negative impression of a person making similar mouth movements (e.g. a child chewing gum). A sizeable proportion of deponents have a distinctly expressive nature, a feature they share with certain types of medioactive verbs (Holisky 1981), but one that is commonly deployed to point out or sanction someone's unseemly, puzzling, irritating or socially inappropriate behavior. For this reason, deponents are not infrequently uttered in the 2nd person, either with

the negative-imperative particle *nu* “don’t” (*nu icinglebi!* “Stop blubbering!”), or in the exasperated-question format *ras/rad i-X-eb-i?!* “Why do you [insist on, keep on] X-ing?!”.

Type I and II deponents are generally characterized by valence reduction relative to the corresponding active-transitive, although the valency change is not accompanied by diathesis shift, as would be expected with a passive verb. In the case of Type I deponents, it is the INDIRECT object which is backgrounded, whereas the direct object may be expressed as a dative-case NP.³ Type II deponents are almost always intransitive, with backgrounding of the direct object. In this respect, Modern Georgian morphosyntax shares some features with the ‘primary-object language’ type proposed by Dryer (1986) and Blansitt (1984). Such languages are characterized by morphosyntactic operations which treat notional indirect objects, and the notional direct objects of verbs that lack indirect objects, as a distinct grammatical relation (‘primary object’). The primary object relation is accorded a greater morphosyntactic prominence than the ‘secondary object’ relation, by which is meant the notional direct objects of verbs which also have indirect objects. In other words, Type I and II Georgian deponents have the profile of a type of antipassive, albeit one that backgrounds the ‘primary object’ rather than the direct object. Those deponents formed from verbs which are already intransitive (Type III deponents), as we have seen, do not reduce the valence, and some — the comitatives — actually increase it.

3 Liminal morphosyntax in Kartvelian and elsewhere

The basic verb-argument structures of Kartvelian subjective version and deponents can be represented schematically as in the following diagrams. (Following Boeder 1968, I have included a ‘latent reflexive dative’ in the argument structure of the subjective version. I make no claims concerning the deep-structural ‘reality’ of this virtual indirect object, except to the extent that it captures the nature of the contrast between subjective and objective version).



I will conclude with some preliminary observations concerning similarities and differences between Kartvelian TRANS— and PASS+ verb classes, and the Greek and Latin forms to which they have been compared. I wish to point out interesting differences in the historical trajectories of liminal verb types which reflect, at least in part, their position in a more or less richly elaborated set of contrasting verb types (cp. Barðdal and Molnár 2003 on the Scandinavian

³ A similar backgrounding of the indirect object accompanies the shift from neutral to subjective version for a handful of trivalent verbs identified by Shanidze (1953: 338), although in these cases the diathesis remains active. Cp. *s-txov-s* “asks s.o. for sthg.”, *i-txov-s* “asks for sthg.”; *h-p’arav-s* “steals sthg. from s.o.”, *i-p’arav-s* “steals sthg.”.

passive), and the susceptibility of TRANS— and PASS+ verb types to expressive specialization. This latter tendency derives from the nature of the morphosyntactic hybridity of the construction types shown above, which serves to foreground the grammatical subject AS subject.

3.1 Middle voice and subjective version

On the basis of her comparison of basic voice systems in over thirty languages, Kemmer (1994) identified a range of ‘situation types’ which tend to be designated by verbs marked by middle morphology. Taken together, Kartvelian active and medioactive subjective-version verbs correspond to some but far from all of the situation types composing Kemmer’s middle-voice prototype.

(8) Kartvelian verb classes corresponding to Kemmer’s situation types

| Kemmer’s situation types | Greek middles (MT = medium tantum) | Kartvelian equivalent (SV = subjective version) |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| 1. Grooming or body care | <i>xureo-mai</i> “I shave myself” | SV OF ACTIVE VERB, DEPONENT: <i>v-i-p’arsav</i> “I shave myself” <i>v-i-bert’q’eb-i</i> “I shake off” |
| 2. Nontranslational motion | <i>hallo-mai</i> “I spring, leap” (MT) | MEDIOACTIVE, DEPONENT: <i>v-xt’unaob</i> “I jump up and down” (future: <i>v-i-xt’unav-eb</i>); <i>v-i-zmoreb-i</i> “I stretch my limbs” |
| 3. Change in body posture | <i>kathezo-mai</i> “I sit down” (cp. stative <i>hê-mai</i> “I am sitting”) | ROOT PASSIVE: <i>da=v-jd-eb-i</i> “I sit down” (cp. stative future <i>v-i-jd-eb-i</i> “I will be sitting”) |
| 4. Translational motion | <i>aphiknéo-mai</i> “I arrive, come to” (MT) | ROOT PASSIVE: <i>mi=ved-i</i> “I arrived, came to” |
| 5. Naturally reciprocal events | <i>marna-mai</i> “I fight, do battle with/against” (MT) | COMITATIVE DEPONENT: <i>v-e-brdzv-i</i> “I fight against” |
| 6. Indirect middle | <i>ktao-mai</i> “I acquire, procure for myself” (MT) | SV OF ACTIVE VERB: <i>v-i-dzen</i> “I procure, obtain” |
| 7. Emotion middle | <i>musatto-mai</i> “I loathe, feel disgust (at)” (MT) | INDIRECT (MEDIO)PASSIVE: <i>m-e-zizγ-eb-a</i> “I loath” |
| 8. Emotive speech actions | <i>knuzao-mai</i> “I whine, whimper” (MT) | MEDIOACTIVE, DEPONENT: <i>v-c’k’mut’un-eb</i> “I whimper” (future: <i>v-i-c’k’mut’un-eb</i>); <i>v-i-xvec’-eb-i</i> “I implore, beg” |
| 9. Cognition middle | <i>oio-mai</i> “I expect, suppose, believe” (MT) | SV OF ACTIVE VERB, INDIRECT (MEDIO)PASSIVE: <i>ga=v-i-geb</i> “I will understand”; <i>m-gon-i-a</i> “I suppose” (<i>m-e-gon-eba</i>) |
| 10. Spontaneous events | <i>sapruno-mai</i> “become rotten, stinking” (MT) | ROOT PASSIVE: <i>lp’-eb-a</i> “it rots” |

As mentioned earlier, there are subgroups of medioactive verbs which describe undirected motion and the production of various kinds of noise and emotional displays (Kemmer’s types 2 and 8). Actives with unmarked subjective-version paradigms cluster in types 6 and 9. Deponent passives alternate with active or medioactives in situation types 1, 2 and 8; and comitative deponents (group J) have a specialized function which largely corresponds to Kemmer’s type 5. Much

of the non-overlap between Kemmer’s situation types and Kartvelian subjective version can be attributed to the history of the Kartvelian verbal system, and the association of version with transitivity and lexical aspect at different periods. Nozadze (1974) was cited earlier as having argued that all forms of medioactive verbs were originally marked by the version vowel *i-*. The evidence does not unambiguously support this reconstruction, however. It was noted that the two atelic verb classes — medioactives and mediopassives — have hybrid paradigms with distinct present-imperfect and future-aorist stems. The latter are formally identical to subject and objective-version actives in the case of medioactives, and to *i-* and *e-* prefixed passives in the case of mediopassives.⁴ In Old Georgian, and also in some Laz and Mingrelian dialects, medioactive aorists without the version vowel are attested (Nozadze 1974: 39, 42, 44). This is also the case for the Old Georgian aorists of monovalent mediopassives (Shanidze 1953: 500-501).

(9) future and aorist stems of medioactive and mediopassive verbs

| | present | future | Modern Geo. aorist | Old Geo. aorist |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| medioactive | q’iv-i-s “crows” | i-q’iv-l-eb-s | i-q’iv-l-a | q’iv-a |
| absolute mediopassive | dga-s “stands” | i-dg-eb-a | i-dg-a | dg-a |
| relative mediopassive | h-c’er-i-a “is written” | e-c’er-eb-a | e-c’er-a | (x)-e-c’er-a |

It is quite possible, then, that subjective version was originally limited to telic verbs with transitive deep-case frames. At this stage, as still can be deduced from Old Georgian evidence, only the two telic verb classes (actives and passives) would have had the full complement of tense-aspect paradigms. Atelic verbs (statives, activity verbs, verba sentiendi, etc.) would not have had distinct present-imperfect (durative aspect) and aorist (punctual aspect) stems, employing one or the other but not both. Later, in the context of a major realignment of the Kartvelian aspectual system from one centered around the opposition between durative and punctual stem types to one according greater prominence to the perfective/imperfective opposition (Mach’avariani 1974; Schmidt 1984), the paradigms of the atelic verb classes began to expand through the recruitment of forms from other verb types (Tuite 1994, 1996), and in particular, from the subjective-version actives and prefixal passives. As a consequence the distribution of the Kartvelian subjective version has come to overlap that of the Greek middle voice more than it would have in the past. Nonetheless, there has been no extension of subjective version to situation types 3, 4 and 10, these fundamentally single-participant events being denoted by root passives in Kartvelian.

⁴ The version vowel *e-* is, for the most part, the ‘objective-version’ counterpart to the *i-* of prefixal passives, in that it signals the presence of an indirect object of whatever sort (cp. *X-NOMINATIVE i-gzavn-eb-a* “X is sent”; *X-NOMINATIVE Y-DATIVE e-gzavn-eb-a* “X is sent to/for Y; Y’s X is sent”). In Georgian (especially Old Georgian) and Svan, however, *e-* appears in a handful of bivalent medioactive verbs, e.g. Old Georgian *e-glov-da* “mourned for s.o.”, Svan *x-e-ldey* “[shepherd] herds [flocks]”. This curious distribution, not attested in Laz-Mingrelian, may be a secondary effect of the spread of *i*-version to atelic verbs, paralleling the adoption of *i*-version future and aorist stems by monovalent mediopassives, and *e*-version stems by those subcategorizing for an indirect object. (The well-known occurrence of *-e-* in the 1st and 2nd-person aorist of the Georgian verb “give” (*mi-v-e-c-[i]* “I gave sthg. to s.o.”) probably derives from an original version vowel **a-* modified by umlaut linked to prehistoric stress shift in the past indicative paradigms).

3.2 Deponents and cryptoantipassives

Although structurally parallel to Georgian deponents, the *sequor*-type verbs of Latin retain unmistakable traces of their origins in the IE middle voice. Alongside deponents lacking active-voice counterparts, Latin retained a subgroup of ‘mediopassive’ verbs (Flobert 1975: 382-386), with semantic ranges comparable to those of Greek middles: *lavor* “I am washed, I wash myself” vs. active *lavo* “I wash”; *relaxor* “I relax myself” vs. active *relaxo* “I loosen, unbend” (cp. Kemmer 1993: 16-26). From the earliest Roman literature, most notably in the plays of Plautus, Flobert (1975: 42-91) extracted a diverse set comprising some 270 deponents, which he divides into the following classes:

- (10) Deponents from the time of Plautus (2nd c. BCE), glossed by Flobert (1975)
- PRIMARY DEPONENTS: *loquor* “parler”
 - INCHOATIVES: *irascor* “se mettre en colère”
 - FREQUENTATIVES: *loquitor* “bavarder”
 - DENOMINALS:
 - (a) PREDICATIVE (“process of identification between the subject and the concept marked in the verbal root” p. 66):
parasitor “faire le parasite”
 - (b) SITUATIVE:
 - (i) centripetal (“acquisition, provision”, p. 75):
lignor “s’approvisionner en bois”
 - (ii) centrifugal (“be within, lose oneself in; make use of”, p. 77)
bacchor “être en proie au délire bachique”

In subsequent periods, newly attested deponents are primarily of denominal origin, belonging to Flobert’s predicative and situative groups. In semantic terms they resemble Georgian medioactives, especially Holisky’s groups (i) and (ii), in fig. (3). Some ancient deponents shift to the active voice, but, curiously, Flobert notes as well a significant number of new deponent forms of verbs already attested as actives. These become increasingly numerous throughout Late Antiquity, from the 3rd c. AD onward; Flobert counted over 500 in works from the final centuries of Latinity (1975: 509). What is interesting about these variant deponents is the nature of their contrast to actives formed from the same root. Unlike regular *-r* verbs, which contrast syntactically (as passives), these later deponents have the same syntax as their active counterparts, but are described by Flobert (1975: 208-209) as having more expressive, intensive meanings:

- (11) *(in)lacrimor* “I dissolve into tears” vs. *lacrimo* “I shed tears, weep”
mendicor “I am reduced to begging” vs. *mendico* “I beg, ask for alms”
luxurior “I am wanton, licentious, indulge to excess” vs. *luxurio* “I am luxuriant, abound”

The association of this verb type with subject-characterizing and attention-getting behavior is, I believe, structurally conditioned. Like Georgian deponents — and unlike the old Latin ‘mediopassives’, which continue the IE middle voice — the new Latin deponents of Late Antiquity arose in a voice category which was constituted primarily by passives. They appear, therefore, to be a PASS+ comparable to Type III Georgian deponents, accompanied by a shift of focus from the end-point to the action itself, and its relation to the subject.

In the final stages of Latin literature examined by Flobert, that of the 7th-8th centuries, new deponents are attested in unusual abundance, many of them apparently nonce formations. While some of the innovations appear in the semantic fields already mentioned, a large number have no clear precedent in the deponents from earlier times, when the gap between the written standard and the spoken vernacular was not so wide. According to the evidence provided by the texts of this period, “le système est complètement bouleversé et c’est le réfléchi qui produira désormais des ‘déponents’ (*reflexiva tantum*)” (Flobert 1975: 270). The new deponents Flobert refers to appear to have been forged in the mold of the grammatical system of the Romance vernaculars, which had lost the synthetic passive voice, and were increasingly employing reflexives with middle-like meaning. Many deponents of this final period correspond to reflexives in modern Romance languages: *eor* “go” (cp. *ire sē*, Spanish *irse*); *fugior* “flee” (cp. *sibi fugere*, Spanish *fugarse*). These new reflexive-based ‘deponents’ seem far closer to the TRANS— type rather than PASS+, with a semantic range similar to the old IE middle voice. At the end of its lifespan, the Latin –r conjugation returned to the stream where it had been spawned over a millennium earlier, after a long career as a passivizer.

Also bearing a remarkable similarity to Georgian deponents, especially those of Types II and III, are Russian passive-reflexive verbs, marked by the suffix –*sja*, used with what Vinogradov (1972: 635) calls ‘active-objectless meaning’. Among the examples he cites are: *Sobaka kusaet-sja* “The dog bites, has a habit of biting” (cp. Georgian *ik’bineba*); *Krapiva žžët-sja* “The nettle (in general) stings” (cp. Georgian *ičxvliť’eba*); [This wall has just been painted] *i potomu pačkaet-sja* “and therefore it dirties” (i.e. it will dirty anyone that comes in contact with it; Babby 1975: 324). These ‘active-objectless’ verbs contrast with unmarked actives in two principal respects: 1) if transitive, they do not appear with an overt direct object, but rather imply a generic, usually human, patient; 2) the activity designated by the verb is interpreted as a “characteristic, distinctive trait of the subject itself (*xarakterističeskaja, otličitel’naja čerta samogo sub"ekta*)”. I will provisionally dub this type of construction ‘cryptoantipassivization’, in that these antipassives wear the guise of regular passives, without any distinguishing morphological mark.⁵ Jóhanna Barðdal (p. c.) informs me that cryptoantipassives also occur in Swedish (*hunden bit-s* “the dog bites, has a tendency to bite people”), where –*s*, like Russian –*sja*, is an old reflexive clitic which has come to function principally as a passivizer. According to Geniušienė, cryptoantipassives also occur in Lithuanian, Latvian, several Turkic and Finno-Ugric languages, and elsewhere (1987: 83-6, 314-5). I intend to study the cryptoantipassive phenomenon more thoroughly in the near future; my impression at present is that this curious hybrid can arise when an old reflexive and/or middle morpheme has taken on many of the functions of a marker of passive voice, but enough old deponents remain in use to provide an alternate syntactic pattern. In the case of Georgian, it would presumably be archaic deponents such as *v-i-t’q’v-i* “I [will] say” (cp. the Mingrelian deponent *v-i-t’q-u-u-k* “I say”, which is a close cognate both

⁵ The subject-characterizing intransitives (‘depatientives’) described in To’aba’ita and some other Oceanic languages are closely similar in semantic terms to cryptoantipassives. Depatientive morphology stems from a Proto-Oceanic ‘plurality of relations’ marker, the primary function of which is to signal reciprocal, collective or iterated action, typically accompanied by backgrounding of the underlying direct object (Lichtenberk 1991, 2000).

morphosyntactically and phonologically; Q'ipshidze 1914/1994) which planted the seed for Type II and III expressive, subject-characterizing deponents.

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