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Deponent Verbs and Middle-Voice Nouns in Temiar

Geoffrey Benjamin
Nanyang University

Abstract

The infix -α- in Temiar (Central Aslian, Peninsular Malaysia) covers a wide range of functions, both productive and non-productive. In Temiar morphology generally it serves iconically to indicate an embedded object. As a productive infix, it forms the middle voice of verbs. The main non-productive function of -α- is as a frozen infix in (1) a set of non-inflecting ‘deponent’ verbs and (2) a set of disyllabic (‘middle-voice’) nouns. The same semantic dimension underlies both, namely that the verbs and nouns in question indicate that the subject or entity is thought of as being simultaneously its own agent and patient. Culturally, the special attention paid to ‘middle-voice’ processes relates to a central Temiar interest in the specifically dialectical character of Self–Other relations.

1. Introduction

Temiar, currently spoken as a first language by approximately 27,000 people in northern Peninsular Malaysia, belongs to the Central Aslian (Senoi) division of Mon-Khmer (Diffloth 1975; Benjamin 1976a, 2004; Matisoff 2003). It is also spoken by a few thousand other people as a lingua franca among the northern Peninsular Orang Asli (Aborigines) and some Malays. Based on my own summary account of Temiar grammar (Benjamin 1976b), a moderately extensive secondary literature has emerged, concerned mostly with the rich reduplicative morphology exhibited by the Temiar verb (Tables 1 and 2). However, the majority of those analyses are based on an approach to the Temiar verb that I later revised. In my 1976 account I treated the verbal infix -α- as indicating what I called the simulactive mode. I now regard this infix as indicating, not mode (or Aktionsart), but voice (or diathesis), i.e. participant orientation. Specifically, the infix -α- indicates that the verb is in the middle voice, as part of a series that also includes an uninflected base form as well as an inflected causative in -υ-.  

1.1 Inflecting verbs

Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the forms taken by the two different morphological categories of inflecting verbs: those with a monosyllabic base and those with a sesquisyllabic base. Each form is given twice, first in

2 I first presented this revised paradigm in Benjamin 2001: 114. So far, the only secondary accounts to have incorporated it are Matisoff 2003 and Yap 2009. A fuller discussion of Temiar morphology is presented in Benjamin 2011; the present paper derives from an earlier draft of that study. Commentators have employed several different labels for the reduplicative pattern exhibited by the imperfective forms in Tables 1 and 2. My preference is for Matisoff’s self-explanatory iconic term ‘incopyfixation’ (Matisoff 2003: 28–32).
Deponent Verbs and Middle-Voice Nouns in Temiar

A strictly phonemic orthography and second in an orthography identical to my own practical orthography for Temiar. The phonemic orthography indicates the morphology more clearly, but is harder to read than the practical orthography. (Except where otherwise noted, I employ the practical orthography in the main body of this paper.) The glosses indicate some of the semantic distinctions signaled by the various forms.

Table 1: Monosyllabic: *gəl* ‘to sit’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOICE</th>
<th>PERFECTIVE</th>
<th>IMPERFECTIVE</th>
<th>PROGRESSIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Base</td>
<td><em>gəl</em> [gəl]</td>
<td><em>gəl</em> [gəl]</td>
<td><em>bar-gəl</em> [ba-gəl]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘sit’ (completed act)</td>
<td>‘sit’ (incomplete act)</td>
<td>‘currently sitting’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td><em>gəgəl</em> [gəgəl]</td>
<td><em>gəgəl</em> [gəgəl]</td>
<td><em>bar-gəgəl</em> [ba-gəgəl]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘fall asleep’ (uncontrollably)</td>
<td>‘fall asleep’ (uncontrollably)</td>
<td>‘currently seated’ (uncontrollably)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causative</td>
<td><em>tərgəl</em> [tərgəl]</td>
<td><em>tərgəl</em> [tərgəl]</td>
<td><em>tərgəl</em> [tərgəl]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘make (someone) sit’ (completed act)</td>
<td>‘make (someone) sit’ (incomplete act)</td>
<td>‘currently making (someone) sit’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Sesquisyllabic: *sələg* ‘to sleep’ (also: ‘lie down’, ‘marry’)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOICE</th>
<th>PERFECTIVE</th>
<th>IMPERFECTIVE</th>
<th>PROGRESSIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Base</td>
<td><em>sələg</em> [sələg]</td>
<td><em>sələg</em> [sələg]</td>
<td><em>bar-sələg</em> [ba-sələg]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘sleep’ (completed act)</td>
<td>‘sleep’ (incomplete act)</td>
<td>‘currently sleeping’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td><em>sələg</em> [sələg]</td>
<td><em>sələg</em> [sələg]</td>
<td><em>bar-sələg</em> [ba-sələg]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘fall asleep’ (uncontrollably)</td>
<td>‘fall asleep’ (uncontrollably)</td>
<td>‘currently falling asleep; sleep (with someone)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causative</td>
<td><em>sələg</em> [sələg]</td>
<td><em>sələg</em> [sələg]</td>
<td><em>bar-sələg</em> [ba-sələg]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘put (someone) to sleep’ (completed act)</td>
<td>‘put (someone) to sleep’ (incomplete act)</td>
<td>‘currently putting (someone) to sleep’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The imperfective aspect is formed by copying the verb’s final consonant as an infix, leftwards, before the final syllable. The middle voice is formed by infixing *-a*- into the same position. With monosyllabic verbs (Table 1) the initial consonant is copied as well, in both the imperfective and the middle forms. (For the morphophonemic changes and morphological processes involved, see Benjamin 1976b: 143–145, 168–170.)

---

3 During my initial period of fieldwork in the 1960s and 1970s verbal nouns with prefixed word-initial *n*- were heard only in the state of Perak. More recently, this form is also being heard across the watershed in Kelantan, alongside the older infixal form. Could this indicate an increasing intolerance of infixes by people living in more modern circumstances?
1.2 Non-inflecting verbs

Temiar also possesses many disyllabic verbs that exhibit almost none of the inflectional possibilities displayed by the monosyllabic and sesquisyllabic verbs. Their sole inflection is nominalization with -UnU; but they also form a progressive-cum-imperfective with the proclitic barU~baU. As Tables 3 and 4 illustrate, these fall into two subtypes: those with -aU in the first syllable (Table 3) and those with some other non-predictable vowel, such as -oU or -eU (Table 4). For reasons explained later, I shall refer to most of the verbs with -aU in the first syllable as ‘deponent’ verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perfective</th>
<th>ASPECT</th>
<th>VERBAL NOUN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>halab [halab]</td>
<td>bar-halab</td>
<td>lhalab [lhalab]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘travel downriver’</td>
<td>[bar-halab ~ ba-halab]</td>
<td>‘a journey downriver’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Deponent: halab ‘to travel downriver’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perfective</th>
<th>ASPECT</th>
<th>VERBAL NOUN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>golap [golap]</td>
<td>bar-golap</td>
<td>gnolap [gnolap]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘carry on shoulder’</td>
<td>[bar-golap ~ ba-golap]</td>
<td>‘a carrying on shoulder’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Disyllabic: golap ‘to carry on one’s shoulder’

2. The Temiar middle voice

Before proceeding to the primary topic of this paper – deponent verbs and middle-voice nouns – let me first outline the normal productive usage of the middle voice in Temiar. Temiar is the only Aslian language that makes use of -aU as a fully productive affix in the inflection of the verb; its close relative Lanoh also employs this affix, but less productively. For the reasons outlined below, it seems clear that ‘middle

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4 These include a moderate number of verbs with more than three consonants, such as sindul ‘to float’, or verbs with a further presyllable, such as somanar ‘to snore’.

5 As indicated in Tables 1 and 2, the ‘progressive’ clitic barU is almost universally attached to the reduplicated imperfective form of the verb. However, I recorded one or two cases in which barU was attached instead to the unreduplicated imperfective form of the verb, as in weAba-koy koi2 [2DU-PROG-roast.PFV fish] ‘they were roasting the fish’ (instead of the expected weAba-koy koi2). Since these instances were rare, it is impossible to determine whether they were intentional or simply speakers’ mistakes.

6 In my earlier study (Benjamin 1976b: 138), I described the minor-syllable vowel as containing a single ‘phoneme’, /ə/, with a variety of allophonic pronunciations. It would have been better simply to describe the various pronunciations of what is, in fact, a non-phonemic epenthetic transition. These pronunciations vary between [ə], [i] and zero, depending on the following consonant and the vowel in the word-final major syllable. In a strictly phonemic transcription, therefore, these ‘minor vowels’ should be omitted, but it is still useful to incorporate them into a practical orthography. In the past, I have tended to write them all as a, but in future I shall write i instead, where appropriate: sikA ‘pandanus’ instead of səkA (phonemically /skεʔ/). In the majority of Temiar dialects, the predictable non-phonemic epenthetic vowel is regularly pronounced [ɛ] in closed syllables (i.e., before -CCV-), as written in my practical orthography.

7 As noted in Section 3.2 and the Appendix below, some verbs in -aU do not qualify as deponent, and should preferably be placed in the ‘disyllabic’ category.
Deponent Verbs and Middle-Voice Nouns in Temiar

voice’ best describes the character of these -a-inflected forms. ‘Simultactive’, the term I employed previously (Benjamin 1976b: 172–174), refers to just one of the uses of the middle voice. I discuss it below under the label of ‘all-together’ middle.

The infix -a-, which also occurs in a range of non-verbal contexts, signals the notional meanings OBJECT or SALIENT OTHER. I hold that, in doing so, it reflects the iconic effects of contrasting deictic gestures made by the vocal organs:

- Opening the mouth wide, to address oneself to the rest of the world
- Closing the mouth in self-contemplation, as if in temporary retreat from the world.

The relatively open mouth position, which signifies the directing of one’s attention to the objective realm of OTHER (a generalization, perhaps, of ‘you’ [hãã]-deixis), is expressed phonetically in Temiar by the low vowel a, the back consonants ˀ and h, and vowel nasality (i.e., velic opening). The relatively closed mouth position, which conversely signifies the more subjective SELF-focused, ‘I’-deixis realm, is expressed phonetically by the high vowel i and the front consonants m, y, c and r.8

Elsewhere (Benjamin 2011), I have argued that this iconic pattern is manifested in a significant degree of phonetic and morphological syncretism in Temiar between (1) pronouns, (2) demonstratives (deictic particles), (3) definitizing clitics, (4) the inflection of human nouns for number, (5) the marking of the sentence for mood and orientation, (6) the marking of discourse continuity and (7) the inflections of the verb for voice and aspect. However, there is no space here to discuss these other features. The present paper is concerned only with the morphology of certain verb forms as well as related features displayed by some nouns.

As displayed in Tables 1 and 2, the middle voice of the Temiar verb is formed by inserting the OTHER-referring infix -a- into the presyllable This carries with it several interconnected semantic implications. First, it indicates that the middle voice is regarded as object-incorporating, and hence heavily intransitive.9 Second, these features imply in turn that the middle voice refers primarily to dynamic situations, and to events rather than processes. Third, intransitive actions or processes not proceeding beyond the self are more likely to be thought of as punctiliar than actions that bring about a change in an external object, which take more time and hence are more likely to be durative or iterative. Thus the employment of a verb in the middle voice carries with it the implication that the situation it refers to is a DETERMINATE EVENT that has become an OBJECT of attention in its own right.

This prototypically punctiliar quality of the middle voice explains the asymmetry in Tables 1 and 2, where only the base-form and causative of the verb possess distinctive inflections for the perfective and imperfective aspects. Given its peculiar semantic implications, therefore, the Temiar middle voice simply does not require a special imperfective-aspect inflection.10 I say ‘prototypically punctiliar’ because the semantic features under discussion here are connected by strong tendencies – ‘elective affinities’, so to speak (following Max Weber) – rather than strict rules of co-occurrence. The features are therefore graded in character rather than discrete. For example, non-punctiliar usages of the middle voice do sometimes occur, as in the ‘progressive’ forms with bar- mentioned below.

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8 For a detailed description of the Temiar sound-system see Benjamin 1976b: 130–151. For further discussion of iconicity in Temiar and elsewhere, see Benjamin 2011. Note that the iconicity under discussion here relates to oral-articulatory gesture rather than the acoustic properties of the sounds produced by those gestures (cf. Jakobson & Waugh 1979: 182).

9 Although I am keeping to the traditional term ‘middle voice’ (having studied a little Classical Greek in secondary school), the more recent term ‘unaccusative’ (Levin & Hovav 1995) often serves as a better characterization of these usages. Other authors, such as Comrie (1981) use ‘anti-causative’ for the same set of features.

10 An appropriate morphological pattern could nevertheless be constructed for an imperfective-middle inflection: gəl ⇒ glgəl ⇒ *galgəl [*gəlgəl] ‘sit’; səlɔg ⇒ səlɔg ⇒ *səlagɔg [*səlagɔg] ‘sleep’. Although these patterns are not found as regular inflections of the Temiar verb, they are often employed in the highly iconic lexical class known as ‘expressives’, widely employed by speakers of Temiar and other Aslian languages (cf. Diffloth 1972, 1976b, Benjamin 1976b: 177–178).
Given these semantic underpinnings, there are at least three circumstances in which Temiar speakers might choose to employ the middle voice:\textsuperscript{11}

- The action referred to by the verb is performed with reference to some salient other.
- The object of the action or process is incorporated within the verb as part of its meaning. It is this pattern that is sometimes referred to as ‘unaccusativity’ (Levin & Hovav 1995).
- The action or event referred to by the verb is a particular determinate event treated as a noteworthy object of comment.

2.1 ‘Salient-other’ middles

The middle voice is frequently employed when the verb is regarded as involving two or more actors directing their actions simultaneously to each other or to some common focus. There are at least two such usages: ‘all-together’ and reciprocal constructions. In these constructions, the actors treat each other as SALIENT OTHERS, as marked by the -a- infix of the verb.

In the following examples, the ‘all-together’ middle-voice constructions (1a) and (1c) are contrasted with their non-middle equivalents, (1b) and (1d):

(1)

\begin{itemize}
  \item a. Ɂun\-we\-\textsuperscript{\textsubscript{M}}
    3PL-depart.MID.
    ‘They all departed together.’
  \item b. Ɂun\-we\-\textsuperscript{\textsubscript{F}}
    3PL-depart.PFV.
    ‘They departed.’
  \item c. Ɂun\-ba\-sal\-\textsuperscript{\textsubscript{M}}
    3PL-PROG-sleep.MID.
    ‘They are all sleeping together.’
    [Said of a group of cats and kittens.]
  \item d. Ɂun\-ba\-seg\-\textsuperscript{\textsubscript{M}}
    3PL-PROG-sleep.PFV.
    ‘They are sleeping.’
\end{itemize}

In the following example (2), the first appearance of the verb tap ‘to plant’ is in the ‘all-together’ middle-voice form (\textit{tatap}), but in its second appearance it is in the non-middle perfective form (\textit{tap}). (This example, like many of the others in this paper, is taken from my collection of stories recorded in the 1960s.)

(2)

\begin{itemize}
  \item Ɂun\-ba\-tatap s\textsuperscript{	extsubscript{S}}laay we-na\-\textsuperscript{\textsubscript{M}}
    3PL-PROG-plant.MID
    swidden 2DU-that 3PL-plant.PFV two day.
    ‘They were all planting the two-of-them’s swidden together. They planted for two days.’
\end{itemize}

‘All-together’ verbs correspond to the ‘simultactive’ meaning that I ascribed to this form of the verb in my original account (Benjamin 1976b: 172–173). This was supported to some extent by those Temiar-speakers who explained the -a- inflection by saying that it marked a plurality of actors.\textsuperscript{12} Clearly, actions

\textsuperscript{11} On the middle voice as primarily semantic and only secondarily syntactic, see Watkins 1976: 309. Some authors, such as Arce-Arenales et al. 1994, distinguish between ‘voice’ as a syntactic category and ‘diathesis’ as the equivalent semantic category.

\textsuperscript{12} Means (1998: 12) seems to be have been told something similar by her committee of Temiar speakers. She refers to the infixed -a- form of the verb as the ‘plural’, and provides a purportedly ‘plural’ form for many of the verbs listed in her dictionary. But these -a- forms occur so frequently with singular subjects in ordinary Temiar speech (as in
carried out in or by social groups are very likely to be both determinate and simulactive, as well as indicative of the attention that the individual actors must be paying to each other: hence the bringing together of these various meanings of -a- in the ‘all-together’ middle-voice inflection. They are not necessarily punctiliar, however, as ‘all-together’ middles often occur with dual or plural subjects attached to the verb via the ‘progressive’ clitic bar-, as in (1c) and (3). I suspect therefore that these ‘all-together’ middles may be underlain by a more fundamentally ‘reciprocal’ semantic.

The reciprocal actions of two individuals are expressed by linking a dual-number pronoun to a middle-inflected verb via the proclitic bar- ~ ba- ‘progressive’, as in (3a). If the event had been non-reciprocal, with the two protagonists handing food out to third parties rather than to each other, the verb would have been in the non-middle imperfective, as in (3b).

(3) a. Lapas naˀ we-baˀ-a’esgog ˀəUlah.14
   After that 2DU-PROG-give.MID 3SG-lah.
   ‘After that, they were giving each other [some].’

b. Lapas naˀ we-baˀ-e’g’og ˀəUlah.
   After that 2DU-PROG-give.IPFV 3SG-lah.
   ‘After that, they were giving [some, to others].’

2.2 Object-incorporating (unaccusative) middles

As illustrated in the specially constructed form-sentences (4a)–(4e), the semantic interpretation of a verb inflected for middle voice depends largely on the properties of its grammatical subject. When the subject is animate and singular the interpretation will usually be that the verb refers to a body-move (4a, 4b) or to some emotional response (4c, as contrasted with 4d), either (agentively) reflexive or (non-agentively) medio-passive. In the absence of a positively agentive marking with the ‘intensive’ infix -m-, it is not always possible to tell which meaning is intended. The reason for this ambiguity is not hard to find. To say that the object of an action is incorporated within the verb (as indicated by the infix -a-) is to imply that the action (medio-passively, ‘unaccusatively’) does not proceed beyond the subject’s self. This is much the same as saying that the action is thought of as having no external source. Middle voice and intensive mode are therefore unlikely to co-occur, and I have not yet found any examples of such a combination. The simultaneous combination of agentive planning and non-agentive medio-passive ‘emotion’ depicted in (4e) is therefore unlikely ever to be more than a hypothetical example.

(4) a. Na’gagol.
   3SG-sit.MID.
   ‘He sat.’
   (What did he do?:) ‘He sat down.’
   (What happened to him?:) ‘He became seated.’

examples (7)–(9), below) that the ‘plural’ analysis cannot be correct – regardless of the attempts by my and Means’s Temiar respondents to explicate their language. Consequently, some of the -a- forms of the verb given in Means’s dictionary do not actually occur in the language, since they are semantically inappropriate or impossible, while those that do occur are actually middle-voice, not ‘plural’, forms. In Temiar, only adjectives and human nouns inflect for plurality – though not through infixation of -a-, which paradoxically indicates the singular number in human nouns (Benjamin 1976b: 185)!

Burenhult (2005: 104) reports that Jahai, a Northern Aslian language, employs the C’a-~-a- morphology as a ‘reciprocal’ inflection in a few verbs. Although he doesn’t say so, this usage was probably borrowed from Temiar, a language that most Jahais can speak.

The phrase ˀəUlah is an idiomatic expression marking the declaratory character of the sentence that it terminates, especially in story-telling. There is no satisfactory way of translating it into English.
b. \textit{Na-salxg.}  
\textit{3SG-lie.MID.}  
‘He lay down.’  
(AGENTIVE:) ‘He lay down and slept.’  
(NON-AGENTIVE:) ‘He fell asleep.’

c. \textit{Na-yayaap.}  
\textit{3SG-weep.MID.}  
‘She burst uncontrollably into tears.’

d. \textit{Na-yaap.}  
\textit{3SG-weep.PFV.}  
‘She wept.’

e. \textit{*Na-m-yayaap.}  
\textit{3SG<INT>-weep.MID.}  
\textit{*‘She intentionally burst uncontrollably into tears.’}

An authentic text-example is provided in (5), which tells of the final success of two hungry men in hunting a bird to eat. The details of the cooking are narrated in a string of straightforward perfective verbs. But the final drinking of the soup is reported in the ‘emotional’ middle voice (\textit{hahuj}, not \textit{huj}), indicating that they were so hungry that they couldn’t help but drink the soup up, and were therefore acting (medio-passively) under compulsion.

\begin{verbatim}
(5)  Gad $?-kowëës ha-cëx na?, gad yøol,  
     CuLPFV NOM-child ACC-bird that, CuLPFV finish,  
     na-pœçol ma-øos, na-didih ?çök na?,  
     3SG-cook.PFV to-fire, 3SG-boil.PFV water that,  
     we-koh, we-koh, we-ba-hahuj.  
     3DU-pour.PFV, 3DU-pour.PFV, 3DU-PROG-drink.MID.  
‘The son cut up the bird, finished cutting he cooked it on the fire, the water boiled, they poured it out and they drank it up.’
\end{verbatim}

With an inanimate subject or with a verb that carries an inherently passive or adversative meaning there is little chance of ambiguity, for then the non-agentive interpretation of the middle voice must apply. It is this that gives rise to the passive-like absolutive constructions exemplified in (6a), as contrasted with the agentive, non-middle, employment of the same verb in (6b):

\begin{verbatim}
(6)  a. Købøo’ doh na-wawoɔg.  
     fruit this 3SG-open.MID.  
     ‘This fruit split open.’

b. $?-woɔg købøo’ doh.  
     1SG-open.PFV fruit this.  
     ‘I opened this fruit.’
\end{verbatim}

From a semantic point of view (6a) constitutes a passive, as the grammatical subject governing the verb (\textit{na-'}3SG’, anaphoric to ‘fruit’, the topic) is actually the patient. This spontaneous, ‘non-controlled’ use of the middle voice is the nearest thing to a passive construction in Temiar, which possesses no overt passive inflection.

The employment of the middle voice to indicate absolutive meanings is still productive, as exemplified by (7). This was said by a Temiar as he stopped his car for a few minutes to allow it to cool
down. He could have employed the simple perfective form geej 'to burn', but this would have indicated neither the suddenness nor the apparent absence of external cause expressed by the middle-voice form that he chose.

(7) ɁiUˀiid kəretɔɔh na-gageej.
   1SG-fear that.PFV car 3SG-burn.MID.
   'I was afraid the car would burn up.'

Some verbs almost always occur in the middle-voice form, even though their ordinary perfective base forms are also occasionally used. Of these, dadoˀ ‘flee’ is an example; the non-middle forms doˀ and doˀdoˀ ‘run’ are also employed, but infrequently. Presumably, ‘fleeing’ is something that Temiars do under compulsion, either in terror or mock terror (as in children’s play), rather than as a fully ‘agentive’ act.15

2.3 ‘Determinate-happening’ middles

As already noted, the object-incorporating property of the -a- infix can also be used to indicate an event’s noteworthiness or unusual character. Examples of this usage are relatively rare, especially when unassociated with ‘all-together’, reciprocal, absolute, or ‘emotional’ meanings. One such example is (8).

(8) Na-tipuuˀ ma-leh, na-lalɔɔs, na-pedpoood ma-kəbəəˀ tɛɛˀ.
    3SG-deceive to:wife 3SG-return.MID, 3SG-eat.IPV to:fruit earlier.
    'He deceived his wife, and – believe it or not! – went back and ate the fruit.'
    [He had earlier (tɛɛˀ) forbidden her to eat the fruit, pretending it was poisonous.]

A simpler example, extracted from a conversation that I overheard, is given in (9a); contrast this with the normal non-middle expression in (9b).

(9) a. Na-tatəd.
    3SG-stand.MID.
    ‘He stood to attention’

b. Na-təd.
    3SG-stand.PFV.
    ‘He stood.’

3. Deponent (inherently middle) verbs

So far, I have been discussing examples of the productive inflectional use of the verbal infix -a-. However, as already mentioned, Temiar also possesses a large number of non-inflecting, mostly disyllabic, verbs. The sole inflection they exhibit is nominalization with -n-.16

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15 Cf. Blagden (1906: 620), entry G44, where various forms of this verb are given in different Temiar dialects: dādō [dɛˀdoˀ] and dədə (dədoˀ); dada (dada), in the phrases ‘run off’ em da dok [‘em-dada’ ‘PL.INCL<INT>=run.MID!’ or perhaps haum-dada’ ‘2SG<INT>=run.MID!’], and ‘don’t run away’, ed da dok [probably, ‘a-dada’ ‘VET-run.MID’].

16 This lack of inflection is puzzling. In Semai, the closely related Central Aslian language, such verbs do exhibit reduplicative inflectional processes. Gérard Diffloth has suggested to me that this is because Temiar has had less time than Semai to absorb these items, which presumably are largely of Austronesian provenance, and from Chamic in particular. (The verb golap in Table 4 is such an import from Chamic.) My own lexicostatistical data (Benjamin 1976a: 73) confirm that Semai has had more contact with Malay than Temiar has had. Thus, (1) disyllabic verbs, especially those (like golap) with something other than -a- in the first syllable should be examined for Austronesian etymology, and (2) forms with -a- in the first syllable should be examined for evidence of having been altered from some other vowel. While proposal (1) must await another occasion, proposal (2) is mentioned briefly in Section 5.1 below.
Ancient Greek and Latin possessed a class of verbs that carried an apparently active meaning despite an overtly middle (in Latin grammars, usually labeled ‘passive’) morphology. Traditionally, these verbs are referred to as ‘deponents’, because they appear to ‘lay aside, shed’ (Latin, deponeere) the middle or passive sense suggested by their morphology. Temiar too has such a class of deponents, consisting of a number of non-inflecting disyllabic verb-stems possessing the full vowel a in the first syllable but with meanings that appear on initial examination to be wholly active. These verbs lack almost all inflection, so that halab ‘to travel downriver’ (Table 3), for example, possesses no perfective *həlab, no imperfactive *hənlab, and no causative *hərlab or *hərblab. They do, however, take the progressive clitic bar ~ ba-, which generally serves with these verbs to express durative or imperfective meanings, as in ba-halab ‘travelling downriver’. They also form verbal-nouns by -n- infixation, as in hənalab ‘a journey downriver’. Other examples are: satah ‘to collapse’, carəəh ‘to walk down-hill’ and gabag ‘to sing’.

But do these deponent verbs really possess active meanings? Just as with some Latin deponents (Baldi 1974: 19), closer examination suggests that these verbs are interpretable as having inherently middle-voice meanings.\(^\text{17}\) For some of the verbs this is not hard to accept. When travelling downriver (halab), one passively lets one’s raft be carried by the current, and the only action the rafter takes is to steer the craft away from obstruction; the meaning in this case falls into the medio-passive category. When a house collapses (satah), that is something it undergoes, not something it does: the meaning is essentially the same as that of the absolutive unaccusative middles discussed earlier. Similarly, going downhill (carəəh) in Temiar country is hard for walkers to control, as they descend precipitously through the undergrowth. Carəəh, then, is something one suffers to some extent, and the middle-voice morphology is again quite appropriate.\(^\text{18}\) In contrast, the verb təŋuh ‘go uphill’, which undeniably denotes an action, lacks the a vowel. Indeed, I doubt whether the middle-voice form *təŋuh would be acceptable to a Temiar speaker, as it would imply an unacceptable combination of active and passive meanings.\(^\text{19}\)

But what is one to make of the middle-voice morphology of gabag ‘to sing’? Surely, singing is unambiguously an activity! It is here that culturally derived ideas intervene, for traditional Temiar songs are not primarily thought of as instances of simple self-expression or public entertainment. Temiars sing either to quietly entertain a visiting spirit-guide positioned somewhere near their own dream-soul (rəwəay), or while performing ceremonially as mediums through whom visiting spirit-guides sing out their message to the whole community. In the former case the singer will usually be transiting gradually from dreaming to waking (typically at daybreak), and the singing will in effect be self-directed. This kind of singing is semantically like a reflexive body-move (cf. Diffloth 1974), for which the middle-voice inflection – if the language possesses one – is the appropriate form of the verb. On the other hand, where the singer performs publicly as a spirit-medium, he (occasionally, she) will typically be in a light trance and his singing will be conceived of as a passive experience issuing from a supposedly external agentive source, the spirit-guide. Here again, the inherently middle-voice morphology of the verb gabag is quite appropriate to the meaning that singing possesses in Temiar culture.\(^\text{20}\)

This analysis of the verb gabag both explains and gains support from a puzzling ethnographic curiosity. During communal song-sessions, Temiars often shout encouragement to the lead-singer with the phrase ma-rii' hah ‘to your self!’. One would expect this literally to mean ‘keep it to yourself!’ (i.e. ‘quieten

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\(^{17}\) Diffloth (1976a: 242–243) presents a list of disyllabic Semai verbs with -a- in the first syllable. Although the -a- infix is not productive in Semai (unlike Temiar), many of the meanings there can nevertheless be analyzed as ‘deponent’ in character.

\(^{18}\) The likely etymology of carəəh is instructive: Mon carəh ‘to fall’, Mon garəh ‘to push, shove, fall down in pieces’, casəh da’ ‘to drop water on the ground’, Khmer jrəh (chəreh) ‘tomber, se détacher’ etc. (Pinnow 1959: 91, no. 106). Temiar therefore has added the -a-, reinterpreting the experience of precipitate downhill movement as something like ‘to fall and be made to fall’. (However, there is also a rarely used Temiar verb carəəh ‘to chop bamboo down at its base’ that could be related to carəəh.)

\(^{19}\) Conceivably, təŋuh could be employed for ‘all climbing a hill together’, but I have yet to hear this usage.

\(^{20}\) For more on the musical context, see Roseman 1984, who incorporates my analysis of gabag ‘sing’ on p. 422. For a directly parallel instance from Malay, see my discussion of the choice between the older middle-voice form bernyanyi and the now more usual active-voice menyanyi, both meaning ‘sing’ (Benjamin 1993b: 378). Present-day Temiars refer to their own and others’ pop-music ‘singing’ as papii, borrowing the Malay word.
20 Deponent Verbs and Middle-Voice Nouns in Temiar
down!’), but the attendant behavior makes it clear that even greater volume and enthusiasm are being called for. The point, of course, is that the Temiars themselves conceive of public singing-out as a self-directed, ‘middle’ activity. Here the dialectical entanglement of SELF and OTHER that is so characteristic of Temiar culture (see below) infuses both language and behavior simultaneously.

Further examples of middle-voice deponent verbs and adjectives (which in Temiar are stative verbs) are given in the Appendix below. The listing also gives suggested reasons for the middle-voice semantics exhibited by these verbs. It may seem strange that many of these deponent verbs are stative, for I earlier characterized the middle voice as being prototypically dynamic. The answer, it seems to me, is that these stative deponent verbs represent states that are assumed to be in dynamic equilibrium, held in place by the simultaneous pull of two opposed forces. Moreover, these verbs are non-inflected lexical items complete in themselves, rather than inflected middle-voice forms selected from within an inflectional paradigm that offers such other choices as causative or imperfective.

### 3.1 Partly-inflecting (semi-deponent) verbs

In the previous sections I discussed only two basic morphological classes of verbs in Temiar: inflecting and non-inflecting. However, there also exist verbs that fall between these two poles by exhibiting a restricted range of inflections. These ‘semi-deponent’ verbs fall into two subtypes: some follow a middle–imperfective distinction (Table 5), while others exhibit a middle–causative distinction (Table 6). In both cases, the least-inflected form of the verb is a deponent in -ə-; there is no simple base form in -a-.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOICE</th>
<th>ASPECT</th>
<th>VERBAL NOUN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perfective</td>
<td>Imperfective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>hyrek [henrek]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘clearing up’</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(incomplete)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>harrek [harrek]</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘cleared up’ (complete)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Causative</td>
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*Table 5: Partly-inflecting (type 1, base–middle): harrek ‘to clear up (sky, river)’*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOICE</th>
<th>ASPECT</th>
<th>VERBAL NOUN</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perfective</td>
<td>Imperfective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Base</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>kaleek [kaleek]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘to prop, be propped’</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>kuleek [kuleek]</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘set a prop in place’ (completed act)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kuleek [kuleek]</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘setting a prop in place’ (incomplete act)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6: Partly-inflecting (type 2, middle–causative): kaleek ‘to prop’*

Typical Temiar props (*kanaleek*, Table 6) are the struts set athwart a dug-out canoe, or the scaffolding (also *kanaleek*) jammed between the ground and a house or platform to stop it collapsing, or the bridges on a stringed instrument. What these have in common is that they simultaneously hold two objects apart while being held in place by those objects. Such props thus affect while being affected – which is exactly what Benveniste (1971: 149) identifies as the chief criterion of the middle voice, as opposed to the
active or passive voice. The verb *kaleek* therefore deserves its inherently middle-voice morphology; an active-voice base-form morphology (*kaleek*) would not be appropriate. The causative *kerleeek*, meaning 'to set a prop or scaffold in place', is in regular use, but the semantic implications of choosing between this and the semi-deponent middle voice are not always obvious, as illustrated in (10).

(10) Na-*kaleek* ya-*ha-jahũˀˀˀa-*na*', na-*kaleek*
3SG-scaffold.MID yes-ACC-tree 3SG-that, 3SG-scaffold.MID

gegege *balas ma-*jalãk ˀəh.
until [EXPR] all-way to-top 3SG.

‘He scaffolded the tree, he scaffolded all the way up to its top.’

Here, my story-teller chose not to employ the causative *kerleeek*, even though that might seem to have been the appropriate form. Instead, he employed the semi-deponent middle-voice form *kaleek*, regardless of the accusatively marked object (*ha-jahũˀ ‘the tree’) that it appears to govern. His aim, presumably, was to emphasize how the climber was supported himself as he ascended and to downplay what was being done to the tree. If, on the other hand, the story had required the protagonist to prop up a rickety house to prevent it collapsing, the narrator would probably have chosen the causative forms *kerleeek* or *køreleeek*.

Further examples of such ‘type 2’ partly-inflecting verbs are:

- *catək* ‘to close’ (said of a door closing by itself: absolutive, non-agentive, intransitive), *certək* ‘to close’ (said of someone closing a door: agentive, transitive)
- *lakɔˀ* ‘to break off, come off’ (said of something falling off spontaneously: absolutive, non-agentive, intransitive), as opposed to *lerkɔˀ* ‘to break something off, remove’ (agentive, transitive).

An overheard example of the latter is given in (11). This reported on the success of a surgeon in repairing the damage done to a Temiar road-accident victim.

(11) Na-*lerkɔˀ* bəsiiˀ num-*gentɔk.*
3SG-come.off.CAUS iron from-ear.

‘He removed metal from the ear.’

3.2 Non-deponent verbs in -a-

As noted earlier, there are several non-inflecting Temiar verbs with -a- in the initial syllable, but which do not exhibit any clearly middle-voice semantic. (See the ‘Unclassified’ section in the Appendix.) Examples are *sapood* ‘to wrap, make a parcel (an Austronesian loan)’ and *dalag* ‘to call (someone)’. Further investigation may yet reveal an underlying middle-voice semantic in many of these verbs. But, given that [a] is the most common vowel in the languages of the world, it is not surprising that this too sometimes occurs in the presyllable of non-deponent verbs, along with such vowels as [o] or [e].

4. Verbs in -a- and Temiar culture

As we have seen, there are at least four classes of verbs with -a- in their presyllable:

- Productive middle-voice forms, as part of a fully inflecting verb paradigm that also contains active and causative forms: *gagəl–gəl–tεrgəl* ‘sit’ (Table 1) and *salɔg–səlɔg–sεrlɔg* ‘sleep’ (Table 2).
- True ‘deponents’, non-inflecting or partly-inflecting verbs with an underlying middle-voice semantic: *halab* ‘travel downriver’ (Table 3), *harek* ‘clear up’ (Table 5).
- Partly-inflecting verbs that are agentless (and intransitive) in their primary middle-voice form, but which also possess an agentive causative-transitive inflection: *lakɔˀ* ‘to break off (intrans), *lerkɔˀ* ‘to break off (trans)’, but no *ləkɔˀ* (Table 6).
Non-inflecting -a- verbs with (as yet) no discernible middle-voice semantic: dalag ‘to call (someone)’.

This pattern discloses a more general theoretical issue. According to Comrie (1981: 161),

while the genuine derived causative [in Temiar, verbs in -r- to tem-] may be a productive process, the derived anti-causative [in Temiar, verbs in -a-] will not be, since one cannot iteratively reduce the degree of transitivity of a predicate: once it is intransitive, that is necessarily the end of the process.

But the Temiar middle voice in -a- does precisely that, as in the fully productive series gagəl (middle) – gol (active) – terəl (causative), where gol ‘sit’ (Table 1) is indeed intransitive. Thus, the Temiar middle-causative axis is not primarily syntactic, but semantic, referring to the contrast between ‘inside’ actions and external ones, with the neutral unmarked action, gol, represented by the root-form of the verb. This suggests that in Temiar the syntactic valency schema is calqued upon the semantic relations, rather than the other way round. So, while it may be syntactically irrational to further ‘reduce’ an intransitive verb like gol, it is still a meaningful thing to do, given the framework of understanding that Temiar-speakers operate within.21

The predominant orientational mode of Temiar culture is formed of the dialectical interplay of SELF and OTHER. This dialectical pattern infuses their social interactional style (Benjamin 1994: 44–47), their religious life (Benjamin 1993a: 271–273), and their musical structures (Roseman 1984). The closest that Temiars ever come to talking explicitly about this aspect of personhood is in discussing the animating subjectivities (‘souls’) that are said to inhabit a wide range of beings, including people. It is then that their ideas about the mutual entangling of SELF and OTHER become patent.

Such ‘animate’ beings are said each to possess two souls, one associated with its upper part (the head-hair roots of humans and animals, the leaves of trees, and the summits of mountains) and the other with its lower part (the heart, breath and blood, the roots, and the subterranean mass). Dreamers and spirit-mediums report that upper-body souls when encountered as spirit-guides (gonig) are like young men or women in appearance, but that spirit-guides derived from lower-body souls appear as tigers. In other words, upper-body souls are seen as familiar, domestic and SELF-like, while lower-body souls are seen as strange, wild and OTHER-like. Yet it is a person’s heart-cum-tiger soul, the hup, that is claimed to be the source of his or her will and agency: it is one’s hup that makes one do things or, alternatively, lacks the desire to do something. Tigers, of course, are clearly OTHER. But it is also possible to perceive as ‘other’ the usually autonomous beating of one’s heart (also hup)22 or one’s breathing (həmnum, the -i-infixed reduplicated form of hup), since these can be directly monitored by the individual without their needing to be controlled. The head-soul, roway, on the other hand, is clearly SELF-like in its association with the incessant but unobserved growth of the hair – the marker of bodily integrity. But the roway is also cast in the role of a patient-like, non-controlling experiencer of whatever befalls the individual in dreams, trance and sickness – one form of which carries the (imperfective) verbal label rəwəay, ‘to suffer uncontrolled soul-loss’.

Thus, for the Temiars, the controlling hup (the ‘I’) is an autonomous OTHER inside the person, while the experiencing roway (the ‘me’) is an equally autonomous, but non-controlling, SELF. In other words, hup beliefs imply that one’s actions are at the same time something that one undergoes, while roway beliefs imply that the things one undergoes (growth, dreaming etc) are at the same time one’s actions (as in one’s dreams, which Temiars sometimes talk of as if they were activities that they can monitor). The individual’s empirical self or felt subjectivity is thus portrayed as a dialectical SELF-and-OTHER composite.

This cultural connection goes some way towards explaining why it is the ‘objective’ marker -a- that indicates the middle voice in Temiar, whereas many other languages express the middle-voice meanings through a transparently ‘subjective’ marking. The -r- in the Malay middle-voice prefix ber- also follows the

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21 The increasingly common (British) English expression ‘I was sat there’ is an interesting parallel to the Temiar gagəl ‘sit.MID’, in that it too is a (covertly) middle-voice construction involving an already intransitive verb.

22 In stricter anatomical usage, as when butchering an animal, some Temiars associate hup with the liver rather than with the heart.
same SUBJECTIVE pattern (Benjamin 2009: 306–310). But since the subject of a middle-voice verb is as much affected as affecting, the option exists for it to be encoded semantically as objective (-a-) rather than subjective, even though that objectivity refers back to the grammatical subject.

This interpretation is supported by the manner in which the Temiar middle and causative voices relate to each other as the two poles of the valency schema. (As already noted, there is no inflectional passive voice in Temiar.) Whereas the middle voice carries a ‘subjective’ meaning through an iconically expressed incorporation of the syntactic object into the verb (as -a-), the causative voice expresses the ‘objective’ meaning of getting some other source or agency to do something through an iconically expressed incorporation into the verb of a SELF-refering marker, the high consonant -r-. An example would be: reŋka'-na-çatok (door 3SG-close.MID) ‘the door closed’ as opposed to ha-çatok [çatok] reŋka'-i (2SG-close.CAUS.PFV door) ‘you closed the door’ (i.e. ‘you caused the door to close’). Thus, the dialectical SELF–OTHER deixis pervades the semantic and grammatical organization of the Temiar verb, and is given phonetic expression through iconicity. 24

I end this paper by showing that this pattern extends to Temiar nouns as well as verbs.

5. Middle-voice (unaccusative) nouns and nominalizations

The idea that middle-voice nouns can exist would seem to confound linguistic common sense. However, if it is accepted that nouniness and verbiness are scalar variables rather than absolutes (Sasse 2001), then the idea should be less surprising.

In Temiar there exist many disyllabic nouns with -a- in the first syllable, as well as deverbalized forms combining -a- with the -n- nominalizer. On semantic grounds, a high proportion of these qualify as middle-voice nouns, in that they refer to entities that can be thought of as simultaneously both acting and acted upon, or as being both their own source and undergoer. 25 A categorized list of these nouns is given in the Appendix. The largest category – at least 135 items – consists of mammals, reptiles, birds and arthropods. As legged or winged animals, these make themselves move, and can therefore be thought of as their own source and undergoer. The middle-voice morphology is therefore entirely appropriate. Fish names, on the other hand (not listed in the Appendix), exhibit very few forms in -a-, perhaps because they are thought of simply as undergoers of the flow of water in which they find themselves.

Fewer plant-linked words contain the vowel -a- in the first syllable. This somewhat reduces the likelihood that they are interpreted as middle-voice nouns. But to the extent that these few words might be so interpreted, I suggest that it would be on the grounds that plants, in shaping themselves, are the undergoers of their own actions. ‘Actions’ may seem inappropriate when talking of plants, but (as pointed out earlier) Temiar animism does indeed accord agentive communicable-with subjectivity to several plant species.

Other categories of nouns with -a- in the first syllable include body parts, which can be thought of as both moving and being moved. 26 A small but significant category consists of words for human relations, which Temiar see as dialectical in character (cf. Benjamin 1994). The list of words for physical objects

23 Linguists do not usually refer to the causative as a ‘voice’ of the verb, preferring to regard it as a derivational formation. On intuitive grounds, however, it seems appropriate to include the causative in whatever grammatical category the active, passive or middle are assigned to, and these have traditionally been labeled the ‘voices’ of the verb. The purely syntactic term ‘valency’ would also be applicable, but for its failure to capture some of the semantic properties that are at issue here. There is, however, a good partial precedent for the usage I am following here in Lehmann’s reference (1974:184), while discussing the middle and passive, to ‘other meanings comparable to voices, such as the causative.’ Jakobson (1957:4) too would seem to support this view: ‘voice characterizes the relation between the narrated event and its participants without reference to the speech event or to the speaker.’

24 For further discussion of the dialectical mode of coherence that underlies Temiar culture, see Benjamin 1994: 46–47.

25 Just as with verbs, there are many nouns with this shape that have no apparent middle-voice meaning – at least not that I can discern as of this writing. I list some of these at the end of the Appendix.

26 Diffloth (1974: 128–131) discusses the same semantic issue in Semai, a close relative of Temiar, where syntactic analysis shows that there are too body-moves are not accorded a purely agentive interpretation.
in -a- contains many in which the middle-voice semantic is highly appropriate, in that they refer to entities that hold themselves in place or which produce their own reaction (as explained in the Appendix below).

Examples of middle-voice nouns include:

- *layeg* ‘night’: because, as English puts it, night falls, happening spontaneously into existence of its own accord. This word is both a noun (as in *layeg* teɛɛˀ ‘last night’) and a verb (as in *hɔj na-layeg* ‘already 3SG-night’, i.e. ‘night has fallen’).

- *sagub* ‘cloud’: because clouds appear to bring themselves into being.

5.1 Etymological considerations

Etymological evidence suggests that -a- has been (deliberately?) inserted into certain Temiar words, both nouns and verbs, at some stage in their history, to accord better with the middle-voice semantic framework I have been discussing. Consider the following Mon-Khmer cognate-sets and derivational series.

- *gatũˀ* ‘snail’, cf. Shorto’s Proto Mon-Khmer reconstruction *gtooˀ*, but on very restricted data (Shorto 2006: 85): because a snail both supports and is supported by its own shell. Also, snails are animals, and hence self-moving.


- *kalɔɔˀ* ‘stupid, silly, ignorant, dumb’, cf. Middle Mon *kamlau*, *kəmlaw* ‘dumb’ (Shorto 1971:31): because dumbness is something one undergoes despite oneself, not something one does.

- *kaniiˀ* ‘to court, flirt’, cf. Old Mon *(k)əni ~ guñi* ‘to embellish’ (Shorto 1971:78): among Temiars this is always reciprocal, the original meaning probably being ‘to adorn each other’.

- *kawaaˀ* ‘kinsperson’, cf. Spoken Mon *kəwa* ‘companion(s)’ (Shorto 1962: 227): in Temiar, kinspersons are necessarily reciprocally so.

- *ɲanʉˀ* ‘chief’, cf. Old Mon *jnok* ‘to be great, high-ranking’ (Shorto 1971: 128): Temiar chiefs become and remain such only through continuing dialectical relations with their followers.


5.2 Middle-voice deverbal nominalizations

Temiar verbs are regularly nominalized to form verbal nouns by the infixation or prefixation of -UaU, as displayed in Tables 1–4. Less productively, the infix -n- also occurs in a set of full nouns denoting physical or abstract entities. An example is *coner* ‘knife’, derived from the base-form of the verb *cɛr* ‘to pare’. However, several such nouns relate more to the middle-voice of the verb, retaining or inserting the characteristic -a- infix along with the middle-voice semantic that it marks, as illustrated in the following examples:

- *bonatsk, mənatsk* ‘eyelet-loop (on a basket)’, from *batsk* ‘to make an eyelet-loop’: because it both supports and hangs from the strap that goes through it.

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27 See also footnote 18, on the Mon-Khmer etymology of *carəəh* ‘to go downhill’.

**canaa’** ‘food’, from **caa’** ‘to eat’: ‘that which undergoes eating’. Contrast this with the verbal noun **ce’naa’** ‘an eating’.

**canuuŋ** ‘beater’, from **cuuk** ‘to beat, hammer’: because a beater rebounds in the user’s hand. Contrast this with **coner** ‘knife’, above, which is not *caner* because a knife acts more ‘transitively’ and consequently suffers no ‘feedback’.\(^{29}\) (See also Matisoff 2003: 27.)

**ganas** ‘tool for reaching fruit down from a tree’, from **gas** ‘to reach fruit down from a tree’: because a gas-ed fruit falls of its own accord, and the actor and tool ‘undergo’ the fruit-fall. This is probably an Austronesian loan: cf. Dempwolff 1938: 53, *gal* ‘entzwiesein’, Toba Batak, Javanese **gas**.

**lanɛŋ** ‘knowledge’, from **lek** ‘to know’: because in a non-literate society knowledge is attained by undergoing experience, not through active study.

**mənanuu’** ‘size, bigness’, from **mənuu’** ‘to be big’: ‘that which has become or been made big’.

**panɔɔh** ‘shamanic dancing space’, from **pɔɔh** ‘to hold a séance’: the portion of the house where both the shaman and the house itself undergo possession by a spirit-guide, which is also sometimes referred to as one’s **pɔɔh**.

**sonalɔg** ‘marriage, married state’, ‘undergoing marriage’, from **salɔg** ‘to marry’. Contrast this with the verbal noun **sɛnlɔg** ‘marrying’.

### References


\(^{29}\) The morphophonological changes involved in the derivation of **canuuŋ** from **cuuk** and of **lanɛŋ** from **lek** are explained in Benjamin 1976b: 143.
Deponent Verbs and Middle-Voice Nouns in Temiar


Appendix

Lists of deponent verbs and middle-voice nouns

This list was re-checked in the field in October 2010, but it is still not exhaustive. Malay loanwords have been excluded. Many of the words listed here were characterized by my respondents as ‘old’ (manah). Other words that I had collected previously – sometimes just two years earlier! – were now judged not to exist at all, and are accordingly not listed here. These changing evaluations may indicate that under modern conditions such middle-voice meanings are thought to be less noteworthy than previously.

Verbs

ˊadees ‘to exercise (one’s body), keep moving around’: one does this to oneself
ˊaluur ‘to shoot/be shot backwards, of felled branch’: it undergoes its own action
ˊaro ‘to talk nonsense, to joke; to flirt, entice’: a socially reciprocal activity
ˊayir (1) ‘to plait the interwoven bottom on a bag’: the strands hold themselves in place
babsh ‘to act undecidedly’: one undergoes one’s own indecision
bacuuh ‘to imitate (an animal’s sound); to echo’: because the animal sounds through the imitator; because the sound comes back upon the sounder
bagəd ‘to try something new for the first time’: both an experience and an activity
bakɔɔ ‘set a bakɔɔ trap’: such traps are self-springing
baler ‘to roll something up in a wrapper’: because the wrapping then holds itself in place
balaaw ‘to fail to catch game when hunting’: the hunter undergoes the failure
balec ‘to abuse, speak angrily to someone’: such behavior rebounds on the abuser
baloe ‘to not believe’ (religion); ‘to refuse (to do something)’: such behavior rebounds on the refuser
batɔk ‘to make a loop (bolatok) (for the straps of a basket)’: the loop holds itself in place (see the main text)
bawɛk ‘to bend a springy object to shape’: the bender both pulls and is pulled by the object
baq ‘to join things together by insertion’: the parts both join and are joined
badog ‘to dance (standing still while moving arms and hands)’: the dancer moves her body while experiencing her centre of gravity unmoved
badog ‘to decorate one’s hair or earlobe with flowers or ornaments’: the inserted decoration holds itself in place
badog ‘to sit cross-legged’: the legs hold each other in place
badog ‘to be sticky, to stick’: sticky objects both ‘stick’ and ‘are stuck
badog ‘to have specks in one’s eye’: an undergone experience
badog ‘to pour away’: the pourer senses the vessel getting lighter, thereby experiencing the pouring
badog ‘to fruit, set seed (rice, millet)’: the plant undergoes the fruiting
basa ‘to beat a gong’: the beating rebounds through the arm and ear; once started, the gong keeps itself sounding
basa ‘to descend a slope’: one undergoes one’s own descending (see the main text)
bas ‘to be interlocked’: the parts both lock and are locked
bas ‘to be physically obstructed’ (by a crowd or object): one both obstructs and is obstructed
baya ‘to open one’s legs wide (as in childbirth or intercourse)’: the legs are held in place by their own friction against the flooring or ground
bagaq ‘sing’: the singer both sings and is sung through (see the main text)
baguc ‘to collide (a body part) into something’: the body both knocks and is knocked
bagis ‘to hurry around requesting things’: one undergoes the momentum of one’s own movement
gle ‘to eat greedily; to act enthusiastically’: one is overcome by one’s own greed or enthusiasm
gle ‘to scratch, tickle’: the nails are resisted by the flesh
galok ‘to beat bamboo stampers (in song sessions)’: the bamboos bounce back into the hands
gap ‘to be trapped or tightly squeezed (as in a tree-fork)’: one undergoes the experience (semi-deponent:
ger ‘to squeeze, but no *gorpid)
gatah ‘to chip away (with a small knife)’: the action rebounds on the hand
hahaj ‘to burst out laughing’: overcome by one’s own uncontrolled laughter
halab ‘to transport/be transported downriver’: the raft is transported by the river’s flow (see the main text)
halog ‘to laugh (in company)’: because such laughing is catching
hauji ‘to cease raining’: the rain appears to stop itself
hayay ‘to nearly do something, narrowly avoid doing something’: experienced rather than carried out deliberately
jajeeh ‘to be abundant, in excess; to leave a surplus’: one finds oneself unable to finish (or reproducing too fast) through no positive action of one’s own
jaloh ‘to set (sun)’: the sun appears to do so of its own accord
jawaeg ‘to stride’: one gets caught up in the rhythm of the movement
kabad ‘to hug tightly (climbing a tree or riding piggy-back)’: climbers hold themselves in place
kabox ‘to send off tightly hugging side-shoots (plant, as on a strangling fig)’: the plant forms itself
kaced ‘to not know’: ignorance is a state one finds oneself in, not through any actions of one’s own
kacīd ‘to boil over, overflow (water)’: the vessel undergoes the overflow; ‘to give fire to (from flame or spark)’: the object undergoes the fire
kacīj ‘to crush (a louse etc) with one’s fingernail’: one experiences the ‘crunch’ of the insect
kadeeb ‘to climb something, clasping with hands and feet’: the climber both holds on and is held
kalag ‘to eat greedily’: the eater is driven by his own greed
kaleek ‘to prop’: it both supports and is supported (see the main text)
kaleh ‘to feel pity’: the pitier both extends pity and experiences it
kamum ‘chew’: the food resists the chewing.
kapok ‘to kill by beating’: the action rebounds on the killer’s hand
kapus ‘to overflow’: the vessel undergoes the overflow
karaw ‘to cry out’: an emotional response that happens to the crier
kark ‘to dry off, dry out’: both an action and a process
kate ‘to assimilate oneself; ethnically mixed (person, population)’; Gɔb kate ‘person with a Temiar mother and a Malay father’; Kuy kate ‘type of Malay language used in some song-ritual lyrics’: assimilation is something one both does and undergoes
lapoj ‘to be encrusted (eye after sleep)’: it happens to the waker
lapood ‘to be soaking wet’: this is undergone
malar ‘to follow around listlessly (like a child)’: the child cannot help itself
manuy ‘to suffer a kind of headache (believed to be caused by dew)’: an undergone experience; also a middle-voice noun
najed ‘to feel sympathy or sorry for someone’: one cannot help doing so
pacoh ‘to hurry on ahead, hurry up’: one gets caught up in the rhythm of the movement
pasu ‘to not like someone’: regarded as rebounding onto the initiator
paya ‘to not want to court someone, reject someone’: regarded as rebounding onto the initiator
raghy ‘to travel in a hurry’: one gets caught up in the rhythm of the movement
sakoh ‘to catch (of a trap)’: the trap releases itself
sagoob ‘to hold food in a bulging gullet (snake, lizard)’: the gullet and food hold each other in place
saloh ‘to lodge, stay with someone’: regarded as a reciprocal activity
saluur ‘to faint; to die’: an undergone process
sapood ‘to wrap’: because the package keeps itself wrapped
saro ‘to give way (soft ground)’: the ground and the walker undergo the subsidence
satah ‘to collapse, break off’, ‘release (of fall trap)’: the object undergoes its own collapse (see the main text)
tah ‘to hang something up for storage’: the item hangs itself
tad ‘to hold one’s hand out’: an action in expectation of receiving something; or an action in muscular dynamic equilibrium
Deponent Verbs and Middle-Voice Nouns in Temiar

**tajeeh** ‘to suspect (whether)’: suspicions come uninvited

**talaj** ‘to hang’ (trans): the item hangs itself

**takil** ‘to throw something strongly; to bowl (as in baseball, cricket)’: the thrower experiences the follow-through momentum

**takɔˀ** ‘to cut bamboo (not wood) into short sections’: the cutter’s experiences the rebound

**takuuˀ** ‘to hurl (a spear); to travel quickly (airplane)’: it covers both active and middle meanings – to hurl and be hurled

**talay** ‘to postpone (an activity)’: one is then under obligation to do it later

**talər** ‘(foot) to slip or slide on muddy ground’: the foot undergoes the slipping

**talət** ‘to be untrustworthy, deceitful’: this will rebound on the liar

**taraˀ** ‘to stop’: one brings oneself to a stop

**tayɛs** ‘to point’: because the pointer experiences the arm’s weight

**tayɔɔd** ‘to lift (a heavy object)’: because the lifter both lifts and undergoes the pull of the weight

**yayah** ‘to be crazy, wild’: one undergoes the emotion

**ˀalooy** ‘unripe, fresh’

**babuh** (1) ‘rotten (wood)’

**bahul** (1) ‘to be a big eater’: he is driven by his own greed

**gaˀɔɔˀ ~ gaˀəəˀ** ‘to be shrunken with hunger (belly)’

**gadal ~ kadal** ‘hard pan (soil), firm (ground), caked (powder)’ (semi-deponent, ~ kɛldal, but no *kədal)

**gahɛɛl** ‘out of breath, weary’

**galah** ‘straight (hair)’

**gatɔɔw** ‘thin (body, cane)’,

**gawɔɔk** ‘skinny’

**gayuh** ‘rough or soft (stony or overgrown ground)’

**harəaw** (1) ‘hairy, frizzled (hair, fur, spines, clothing)’

**hayɔ̃ɔ̃ˀ** ‘light (weight)’

**jateeg** ‘restless, promiscuous (staying in a different place each night)’

**jamiiˀ** ‘swollen-cheeked’

**kalɔɔˀ** ‘stupid, silly, ignorant, dumb’ (see the main text)

**karək** ‘to feel very cold; rigor mortis’

**karuk** ‘withered, dead (plant), weak, near death (person)’

**katũũd** ‘to swell (a boil, a tree:canker)’

**lapood** ‘soaking wet’

**latah** ‘bald in front’

**latob** ‘bald on top (with hair at the sides)’

**manah** ‘to be old, former’ (of things, not animals or humans)

**papah** ‘to be the wrong way round, upside down’

**papɔɔˀ** ‘crazy, mad, insane’

**rahem** ‘round-faced’

**ratih** ‘diligent (in work)’: carried away by one’s enthusiasm.

**rawəəj** ‘finished, used up’

**sagɔɔˀ** ‘thirsty’

**sakɔɔl** ‘white-haired, grey-haired’ (see the main text)

**saraaˀ ma-** ‘to depend on someone, to be up to someone to decide’ – dependency is mutual

**sayeep** ‘dead, dried out (bamboo)’

**takel** ‘giggly, laughing a lot’: giggling is uncontrollable

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**Stative verbs, Adjectives**

These are conditions or circumstances that the source appears to undergo.

‘alooy ‘unripe, fresh’

babuh (1) ‘rotten (wood)’

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dahah ‘bald in front’

dahob ‘bald on top (with hair at the sides)’

manah ‘to be old, former’ (of things, not animals or humans)

papah ‘to be the wrong way round, upside down’

papɔɔˀ ‘crazy, mad, insane’

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ratih ‘diligent (in work)’: carried away by one’s enthusiasm.

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saraaˀ ma- ‘to depend on someone, to be up to someone to decide’ – dependency is mutual

sayeep ‘dead, dried out (bamboo)’

takel ‘giggly, laughing a lot’: giggling is uncontrollable
talu `to be slippery (ground)`
wawar `to be out of true alignment`

Nouns

**Mammals and reptiles**

These are all legged creatures that move themselves through their own actions.

It has proved difficult to identify many of these animals more closely. Many of the animal names are avoidance names or taboo names, and are therefore not necessarily the common ones.

`’abir` `a squirrel`
`’aabɔɔŋ` `a land rat`
`’acaam` `a large squirrel`
`’aceel` `a large squirrel`
`’aceel` `a large squirrel`
`’acooh` `common grey-bellied squirrel`
`’adeen` `a small squirrel`
`’agaaj` ~ `’agaac` `common Malay squirrel, plantain squirrel`
`’ahɔl` `flat-headed cat`
`’ajɔh` `r usa deer (Cervus timorensis)`
`’ajɔr`, `’ajoor` `common tree-shrew`
`’akuub` `forest squirrel`
`’alaam` `elephant`
`’alaay` ~ `’alaaj` `elephant`
`’alul` `elephant`
`’amaah` `a small frog`
`’amɔɔ` `goat-antelope`
`’amug` `a white squirrel`
`’angaap` `a small red-tailed squirrel`
`’apaaap` `a large civet cat`
`’arpaj` `pig-tailed macaque (Macaca nemestrina)`
`’araj` `barking deer (Muntiacus muntjak)`
`’ataah` `horse-tailed squirrel`
`’ataaj` ~ `’ataaan` `tiger`
`’atul` `elephant`
`’badɔɔt` `bearded pig`
`’bagɛɛt` `monitor lizard (Varanus rudicollis)`
`’bakaaj` `small-toothed palm-civet`, `bear civet`
`’bapaak` `a white-bellied dark-backed squirrel`
`’barzɛɛ` `tapir`
`’baxkh` `white-eyed gibbon`
`’bateɛɛ` `a gibbon`
`’bawaj` `pig-tailed macaque`
`’caɛɛ` `a small house-mouse`
`’cadaa` `a small squirrel`
`’capeɛɛ` `solitary large male (of monkeys)`
`’dalɛɛk` `a lizard`
`’dari` `soft-shelled river turtle`
`’hakaa` `short-tailed mongoose`
`’hagaaj` `two-horned rhinoceros`
`’harej` `monitor lizard (Varanus salvator)`
hayum 'bamboo rat'
jajɔɔˀ 'common palm civet; tiger-civet'
jaŋɔŋ 'Muller’s rat'
kabɔŋ 'a frog sp.'
kabuc 'monitor lizard' (*Varanus salvator*)
kabuŋ 'a green snake'
kajεεˀ 'flat-backed land tortoise'
kahuul 'tadpole'
karâď 'a river-turtle, small box-tortoise'
kasiŋ 'rusa deer (*Cervus timorensis)*
kaweeb 'Malayan sun bear'
kayii 'flying lemur'
mamuug 'tiger'
pari 'a monitor lizard'
payãẽd 'a monitor lizard'
sakɔl ~ sagɔɔl 'cream-colored giant squirrel'
taŋ 'wild pig'
tabεεg 'bullfrog'
tabəək ~ tabɔɔk 'dusky leaf-monkey'
tagaat 'a snake'
tahɔɔr (1) 'striped ground squirrel'
tajuw 'snake'
talam 'elephant'
talant 'elephant'

**Birds and bats**

These are all winged creatures that move themselves through their own actions.

'ahah 'great slatey woodpecker'
'akɛ̃b 'stonechat'
'akeg̊ 'red-headed trogon'
'akul 'trogon (generic)'
'atɛ̃b 'grey-chinned minivet'
bajɔw 'cotton teal'
barat (a kind of bird?)
bayɔɔj 'a small night-calling bird'
cabaŋ 'black-crested yellow bulbul'
cabew 'chestnut-collared kingfisher'
cacer 'red-headed tailor bird'
dapɔw 'lesser short-wing'
gagoob 'large scimitar babbler'
kaka 'kingfisher'
kakeh 'hornbill (various kinds)'
kakuh 'black hornbill', 'white-billed hornbill'
kasaa 'grey-headed tree-babbler'
kasar 'black-headed bulbul'
kawεẽd 'fruit bat', 'flying fox'
lasar 'large bat, flying fox'
pahɔɔŋ 'black wood-partridge'
payɛh 'ferruginous babbler'
raboɔl 'weaver finch'
sabaat ‘hawk owl’
sagur ‘a small bird’
sayah (1) ‘red-headed tree-babbler’
sayol ‘mountain nun-thrush’
sayool ‘false vampire bat’
ta’oaj ‘hornbill sp.; ‘wrinkled hornbill’
tadoor ‘red jungle fowl’
tagok ‘gold-whiskered barbet’
tahur ‘southern pied hornbill’
tahzer ‘grey and buff woodpecker’
talxd ‘Scop’s owl’
tapar ‘white-eared fruit bat’
tatoh ‘maroon woodpecker’, ‘greater yellow-naped woodpecker’
tayet ‘grey wagtail’ (or ‘blue-throated bee-eater’?)

Arthropods and snails

These are all creatures that move themselves through their own actions.

bahul (2) ‘a small dung beetle’
bayɔɔj ‘a bird’
capood ‘a very large black, or blue or striped fly; a large biting fly’
capɔɔg ‘polydesmoid millipede’
cawaas ~ cavuus ‘earwig’
galul ‘a large black mosquito’
garεεd ‘a sunset-chirping cricket’
garɔɔk ‘a night-chirping cricket’
garuuc ‘termite’
gasɔ ‘red stinging ant’
gats ‘mite’
gatu ‘snail(shell)’ (see the main text)
jaleed ‘firefly’
jareb ‘a small noisy outdoor cricket’
jawiis ‘a seasonal cicada’
kabed ‘ant’
kajεk ‘a black biting ant’
kasɔɔd ‘fire:ant’
lawale ‘a large red swarming tree:ant’
manuay ‘scorpion’
padaaw ‘hornet’
saley ‘jewel beetle’
tahal ‘black honey bee’
talay ‘a large beetle’
talay ‘black millipede’
talsk ‘bumble bee, carpenter bee’
tanɔɔ ‘dragonfly’
taro ‘house lizard’
tawuagu ‘butterfly’
tawiik ‘spider’
wawah ‘a moth’
yayeed ‘an evening-sounding cicada’
Body parts

Body parts can be thought of as both moving and being moved.

‘ayir (2) ‘itchy scalp, from louse feces’
bakoh ‘male genitals’ (sometimes ‘penis’, ‘testicles’)
balok ‘animal’s beak or horn’
cawok ‘head, skull’
jaka’~ caka’ ‘lower jaw’ (also: ‘overhang’ of a roof)
kabooj ‘large vesicular swelling’
kadɔɔg ‘hollow of the knee-joint’
kalar ‘throat, glottis, esophagus, adam’s apple’
kalej ‘testes’
kaloo’r ‘snout of pig, bear, cat, etc.’
karəəb ‘sternum’
karɔɔl ‘knee’
katoŋ ‘knee-cap’
kaway ‘wing’
kaye’ ‘little finger’

Plants and plant parts

Plants, in shaping themselves, can be regarded as the undergoers of their own ‘actions’.

‘ādeg ‘a tasty wild tuber’
‘ajel ‘a cane’
‘apoo ‘wild ginger’
‘asaad ‘a large squash’
‘ashe ‘millet (taboo name)’
‘awaat ‘bamboo’
‘awen ‘bamboo’

Plants and plant parts
Human and spiritual relations

Temiar social relations are thought of as dialectically generating each other.

ʔayad ‘gang, group (of friends)’
balu ‘widow, widower’
cacɔˀ ‘grandchild, younger sibling’s child’
Karey ‘thunder, Thunder deity’: both cause and result
kawaaˀ ‘kinsperson (primarily consanguineal)’ (see the main text)
lapɔy ‘ghost’; also used of ‘terrorist’ during the Malayan Emergency
nanuˀ ‘chief’ (see the main text)
lage ‘newborn baby’ (also used to label various perinatal misfortunes)
pacɔg ‘a spirit-invasion disease, causing a prickly sensation’: both cause and result.
paley ‘spirit-medium’s hut’ (strictly, the palm-leaf used in its construction): it undergoes possession by the tiger-spirit
papəəd ‘infant’ (plural pɛdpəəd ~ pɛnpəəd, but no singular *papəəd)
sabat ‘a convulsive attack (associated with childhood and childbearing)’ (see Benjamin 1994: 54–55)
sape ‘pollution caused by recent death’
sarɔ ‘ghost of deceased’
sayɛ̃ɛ̃d ‘young child’ (plural sɛdyɛ̃ɛ̃d ~ sɛnyɛ̃ɛ̃d, but no singular *sayɛ̃ɛ̃d)
tajɔr ‘watery fingertip manifestation of one’s spirit-guide’s presence’
tanig ‘a gout-like disease (caused by interaction with a river-spirit)’: both cause and result
Physical objects and processes

These are thought of as being simultaneously their own source and undergoer.

ˀabat ˀsarong: it holds itself in place
ˀalεεg ˀplaited storage bag: it forms its own shape as it fills
ˀapəə ˀback-basket: it is self-hanging
ˀapil ˀmat: it lays itself down
ˀapɔk ˀtobacco pouch: it takes its own shape
ˀbakɔɔ ˀlarge noose trap, set on tree branch: it ‘springs’ itself
ˀbaliik ˀsky, position above: it appears to be self-supporting
ˀbarau ˀmain beam (of house): because it holds itself in place
ˀbawur ˀfishing rod: because it both pulls and is pulled
ˀcakuh ˀwoven roof thatch: it holds itself together
ˀcagɔɔl ˀpond: it is self-forming
ˀgadaŋ ˀwinnowing tray: it throws the grains and is thrown by them when they fall
ˀgagid ˀmiddle: it falls between two limits while holding them apart
ˀgahool ˀa depression in the ground, valley: it is self-forming
ˀgaleed ˀopen-weave rotan basket (for carrying water-tubes): it is self-hanging and weighed down by its contents
ˀgalɛ̃l ˀglowing ember: it keeps glowing of its own accord
ˀgasek ˀbrochette, sliver of wood for cooking on, ‘splinter of bamboo (for tattooing): it both penetrates and is surrounded by what it penetrates
ˀjalaa ˀthorn: it both snags and gets snagged on people’s clothing (see the main text)
ˀjalɔk ˀtree-top: a tree grows its own top (see the main text)
ˀlamuny ˀbent-over sapling: spring in various kinds of trap: it is held in dynamic equilibrium
ˀlayɛg ˀnight’ (both a noun and a verb): night falls, happening spontaneously into existence of its own accord
(see the main text)
ˀrabooŋ ˀa large back-basket: it holds itself in place
ˀranɔ ˀback-basket: it holds itself in place.
ˀsagub ˀcloud: clouds appear to bring themselves into being (see the main text)
ˀsamɔɔg ˀa kind of backbasket (for use when trapping): it holds itself in place
ˀsape ˀsection of a house affected by death-pollution: it both pollutes and is polluted
ˀsaroog ˀplaited rice-bin: it takes its own shape when filled
ˀtakooŋ ˀpool, pond: it is self-forming
ˀtakoŋ ˀsmall container (for bait, wadding): it is self-hanging

Unclassified: not obviously deponent or middle-voice

A sampling of residual verbs and nouns in -a- that cannot as yet be explained in the terms discussed in this paper

ˀabaag ˀsplit-bamboo internode used as eating dish
ˀacag ˀto plan to do something
ˀaləəh ˀto guess
ˀamɛs ˀsmall
ˀapet ˀshort
ˀarap ˀa possession
ˀdalag ˀto call someone
ˀhaləəh ˀto guess
ˀkamaay ˀkaməəy ‘to store food (against future hunger)
ˀkanex: ˀ‘we excl.’
ˀlaəɔs ‘dirty’
lagoh ‘dark leafy vegetable, like a bayas leaf’
lakɔh ‘to fold (trouser cuff, corner of a page)’
lalah ‘open terrain’
lawɛɛŋ ‘flower-odor’ (ritual language)
lawag ‘to mix and scoop food up with the fingers’
lawud ‘to cook a stew’
mareek ‘fish-weir platform’
palo ‘log of firewood’
paniy ‘eventually, in future’
rages ‘to serve oneself bit by bit from the different dishes at a communal meal’
sarag ‘to transplant (tobacco, wet rice)’
taheeh ‘to prepare something (for use)’
tahor (2) ‘hole (animal’s, in a nest or the ground)’
takaaah ‘slope’
tarɔg ‘spear’
tayεɛd ‘to pick something up between fingers and thumb’