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The origin of the causative prefix in Rgyalrong languages and its implication for proto-Sino-Tibetan reconstruction*

Guillaume Jacques

December 16, 2015

Abstract: This paper presents the first detailed description of the two causative derivations in Japhug Rgyalrong based on a corpus of spontaneous speech, and proposes two new pathways of grammaticalization: causative from denominal derivation and abilitative from causative.

Then, it evaluates the implication of these grammaticalization hypotheses for the reconstruction of Sino-Tibetan morphology as a whole.

Keywords: Causative, Denominal verbs, Japhug, Rgyalrongic, Grammaticalization, Abilitative, Sino-Tibetan

1 Introduction

Ever since Conrady (1896)’s seminal work on comparative Sino-Tibetan, the hypothesis that a causative *s– prefix can be reconstructed for the common ancestor of Chinese, Tibetan and all related languages has been widely accepted and can be said to be the only fact about proto-Sino-Tibetan morphosyntax that is completely uncontroversial (Wolfenden 1929, Benedict 1972, Matisoff 2003, LaPolla 2003). Yet, despite this consensus, the history of the causative prefix in the ST family is by no means trivial.

In many Sino-Tibetan languages, including Old Chinese, the language with oldest attestations, the causative prefix can only be indirectly detected

*The glosses follow the Leipzig glossing rules. Other abbreviations used here are: AUTO autobenefactive-spontaneous, ANTICAUS anticausative, ANTIPASS antipassive, APPL applicative, DEM demonstrative, DIST distal, EMPH emphatic, FACT factual, GENR generic, IFR inferential, INDEF indefinite, INV inverse, LNK linker, PFV perfective, POSS possessor, SENS sensory. I would like to thank Nathan W. Hill, Laurent Sagart and three anonymous reviewers for valuable comments and suggestions on a previous version of this article. The examples are taken from a corpus that is progressively being made available on the Pangloss archive (Michailovsky et al. 2014). This research was funded by the HimalCo project (ANR-12-CORP-0006) and is related to the research strand LR-4.11 “Automatic Paradigm Generation and Language Description” of the Labex EFL (funded by the ANR/CGI).
through internal reconstruction. In phonologically more conservative lan-
guages such as Old Tibetan, the causative prefix is directly attested, but re-
stricted to a limited number of examples and completely lexicalized. Rgyal-
rong is one of the few language groups in Sino-Tibetan where the causative
is still productive (ie can be applied to recent loanwords).\footnote{There may
be other languages in which this prefix is productive, such as Jinghpo
or Dulong (see Dai 1990: 71-8 and Sūn 1982: 101-2), but additional data
is necessary, especially concerning the treatment of loanwords.} Thus, a detailed
description of the morphosyntax of the causative in Rgyalrong languages is
necessary before any further comparative research.

In this paper, we first provide an overview of the morphology and mor-
phosyntax of the causative prefixes \textit{sɯ–} and \textit{ɣɤ–} in Japhug Rgyalrong, one
of the Rgyalrong languages, and discuss the historical relationship of the
causative prefix with homophonous prefixes, in particular the abilitative
and the denominal instrumental \textit{sɯ–}. Then, we show on the basis of com-
parative evidence that the likeliest explanation for the homophony between
the causative and the denominal prefixes in Rgyalrong languages is due
to the fact that the former was grammaticalized from the latter. Finally, we
present comparative evidence from Chinese, Tibetan and Kiranti showing
that the lexicalized remnants of the causative and denominal prefixes in these
languages are compatible with the grammaticalization hypothesis presented
in section 3.

2 The causative in Rgyalrongic languages

Rgyalrongic languages are particularly crucial for understanding the mor-
phosyntax of the causative in Sino-Tibetan as a whole, as they constitute
the only subgroup of the family where the causative is still fully productive
and can be applied to recent loanwords, at least in the four core Rgyal-
rong languages Situ, Japhug, Tshobdun and Zbu. It is thus of considerable
importance, before any diachronic research, to describe the synchronic sys-
tem of these conservative languages in detail, and then evaluate how much
of this system has been preserved elsewhere. Since previous description of
Rgyalrong languages only briefly discuss the morphosyntax of the causative
constructions (see Sun 2006, Jacques 2008), it is necessary at this stage to
provide the first in depth description of the use of the causative prefixes in
a Rgyalrong language.

In this paper, we focus on the Japhug language, but similar causative
prefixes are found in Tshobdun (Sun 2006, 2014) and in Khroskyabs (Lai
2013, 2014), and the facts described for Japhug are valid for Rgyalrongic as
a whole.

This section comprises four subsections. First, we describe the morphol-
ogy and uses of the causative prefixes \textit{sɯ–} and \textit{ɣɤ–} respectively, as well as
the semantic distinctions between the two. Then, we treat the homophonous abilitative and denominal suw- and discuss their potential historical relationships with the causative.

2.1 The causative prefix suw-

Unlike most Sino-Tibetan languages, Rgyalrong languages have a complex templatic prefixal morphology (Jacques 2013b, Sun 2014) and numerous valency increasing and decreasing prefixes, including reflexive (Jacques 2010), passive, anticausative (Jacques 2012c), applicative (Jacques 2013a), antipassive (Jacques 2014a) as well as nominal incorporation (Jacques 2012d).

Of all the derivational verbal morphological processes in Japhug, the causative suw-/z-/suɣ- is the most commonly used, the most productive and the morphophonologically most complex affixal element, a fact that betrays its antiquity in comparison with other affixes, most of which can be shown to be recent developments (see in particular Jacques 2014a).

2.1.1 Morphophonology

Although not as complex as the causative in Stodsde (Sun 2007) or in Khroskyabs (Lai 2014), the Japhug causative suw- prefix presents considerable allomorphy, and numerous irregular forms. It has four regular allomorphs suw-, suɣ-, z- and suɣ- depending on the following element.

The z-allomorph appears before all derivational prefixes (or unanalysable prefixal elements synchronically belonging to the verb root) with sonorant initial (beginning in r-, n-, y- or m-). Table 1 illustrates some examples of this allomorph.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nature of the prefix</th>
<th>base</th>
<th>derived</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>non-analysable</td>
<td>mɯnmu</td>
<td>move</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nɯna</td>
<td>rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>denominal</td>
<td>nɤma</td>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>antipassive</td>
<td>rɤ-</td>
<td>write</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The distribution of the suw- and suɣ- allomorphs depends on both phonology and morphology. The latter allomorph occurs when the base verb is intransitive, has no prefixal element, has no initial cluster and no velar or uvular initial consonant, and the former appears in all other cases.

A fourth predictable allomorph of suw- appears with verbs whose stem begins in a-, where suw- and the a- passive prefix or intransitive thematic element merge as suɣ-, as in Table 3.
The causative has four additional irregular allomorphs: ɕɯ-, ɕɯɣ-, ɕ-, ʑ-, s- and j-. All known examples are presented in Table 4.

Some of the verbs in Table 4, such as tsʰi “to drink”, pʰɣo “to flee”, lɯɣ “to get free” and rga “to be glad, to like”, can appear with the regular causative sɯ-. In the first cases the meaning of the derived verbs are slightly different:

1. suy-ɕɯ- means “make s.o. drink” rather than “give s.t. to drink to s.o.”
2. suy-pʰɣo “make someone escape” instead of “take away”
3. suy-lɯɣ “cause to get free” instead of “drop”

We observe that the regular causatives also have a regular semantic derivation from the basic verbs. The irregular causatives of these verbs can be used with the additional regular causative (sɯ-ɕlɯɣ “cause to drop”). We can infer from these two facts that some of the irregular causatives (not including those in ɕɯ-) are no longer synchronically causatives or the original verb, as their meaning has begun to evolve independently.

The presence of a Tibetan loanword rga “to be glad, to like” (from Tibetan dga) in this list shows that these allomorphs were still productive relatively recently.

The original distribution of the allomorphs in alveolo-palatals ɕɯ-, ɕɯɣ-, ɕ-, and ʑ- is unclear. They are only marginally restricted by the place of articulation of the initial consonant (they occur with labial, dental, velar and uvular - all except alveolo-palatal and palatal consonants), and occur with both simple initials and complex clusters.
Table 4: The irregular allomorphs of the causative prefix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>base</th>
<th>derived</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fka</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-fka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fkaβ</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-fkaβ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mbɣom</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-mbɣom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mnɤm</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-mnɤm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mpgm</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-mpgm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ntaβ</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-ntaβ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngo</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-ngo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nɣo</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-nɣo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(tuw-mbrɯ) ngu</td>
<td>(tuw-mbrɯ) cuw-ngu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rŋgɯ</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-rŋgɯ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rga</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-rga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mu</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-mu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pʰɣo</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-pʰɣo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lɣy</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-lɣy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nɣo</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-nɣo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nga</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-ngga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mbri</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-mbri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsʰi</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-tsʰi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qanɯ</td>
<td><em>cuw</em>-qanɯ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- *cuw-, like *swu-, probably occurred with intransitive verbs without initial cluster, possibly with labial initials. We will see that a similar -ɣ- intrusive element appears with the applicative and the tropative prefixes.

- s- seems to occur with polysyllabic verb stems whose first element begins with a voiceless stop.

It is interesting to note that *nqoɣ* has two distinct irregular causatives with different meanings; *zŋoɣ* is not a causative any more from a synchronic point of view, since it can appear with a causative prefix *suw-* (meaning “hang with something”, see 2.1.2). The causative *jtsʰi* of *tsʰi* is only found in the Kamnyu dialect of Japhug. In most Japhug dialects, where the verb “to drink” is *tʰi*, its irregular causative is *ctʰi*. The Kamnyu form results from a dissimilation *cʰtʰi* > *csʰtʰi* > *jtsʰi*.

A few causative verbs not derived from intransitives in *a-* have the allomorph *sv-*, in particular *sype* “do well” (from *pe* “be good”) and *svrmi* “give a name” (from *rmr* “be named”). The latter could however perhaps be analysed as a denominal verb from *tv-rmr* “name”.

The allomorphy of the causative prefix in Rgyalrongic languages raises a more general methodological question: should we assume that Rgyalrongic
languages are innovative and that the observed allomorphy is due to relatively recent sound changes, or should this allomorphy be reconstructed back to proto-Rgyalrongic or even earlier? Given the present status of proto-Rgyalrongic reconstruction, a discussion of this issue has to be deferred to future research but we should keep in mind, when analyzing data from languages where no allomorphy is detectable that the absence of allomorphy may be due to levelling, rather than absence of innovative sound change.

2.1.2 Syntactic constructions

The causative prefix *su*- is the most common morphosyntactic device to express causation in Japhug, though not the only one.\(^2\)

When the causative is applied to an intransitive verb, the S becomes the O of the derived verb (Dixon 2000: 45). The A of the derived verb corresponds to the causer or the stimulus of the causation. The following example of the verb *su*-ʁdɤt [ɔsɗvɾ] “to cause to slip”, causative of  playerName=asɗvɾ “to slip”, illustrates this principle:

\[(1)\] tɯ-qe kɯ pɯ-wy-su-ʁdɤt nɯ pu-atvr pu-ɡu
indef.poss-dung erg pfv-inv-caus-slip dem pfv-fall ipf-be

The dung caused him to slip and he fell down. (The Demon, 51)

With transitive verbs, a different situation is observed. The causative derivation adds an argument, the causer, which becomes the A of the causative verb. Since Japhug verbs cannot encode more than two arguments in their morphology, one of the arguments of the base verb must be demoted to leave place for the causer. Four types of derivations are observed.

First, the causee (the A of the original verb) becomes the O of the derived verb, while the original O is demoted. Most causatives are formed this way: \(^3\)

\[(2)\] aʑo u-ʁɟo 3sg:poss-diluted.wine ipf-inv-caus:drink-1sg-du pu-ɔti
pst.ipf-be.emph

They gave me diluted wine to drink. (Kumbzang, 71)

\[(3)\] nɤ-tɤɲi taw kv-rvr nɯ wʃɾv-kw-z-ɰynplq-a-nɯ
2sg-staff on nmlz:O-write top qɯ-2→1-caus-observe-1sg-pl

Could you show me what is written on your staff? (The prince, 61)

\(^2\)The causative verbs *su*-ʃaw ‘cause to do’ and *ʁɤ-kʰɯ* ‘cause to be possible’ can be used with verb complements to express causation; this construction is not discussed in the present paper.

\(^3\)3→1sg and 2→1sg forms are chosen because these are the only ones where the number and person of both arguments are indexed on the verb.
Your two elder sisters forced me to spit it out. (The three sisters, 254)

Second, we find ambiguous causative forms for some verbs, where either the agent or the patient of the original verb is preserved: in other words, the O of the causative verb can either correspond to the original A of the original O. These two types of derivation would respectively belong to types iv. and v. in Dixon (2000: 48)’s typology: shift of either the A or the O of the original verb to non-core status. Note that in Japhug the non-core status of these arguments is indicated by the absence of agreement on the verb, not by any overt marking on the noun phrases.

As an example, the causative of qur “to help” sur-qur has two meanings:

(5) \[ tv-ku-suqur-a-ndzi \]
\[ PFV-2\rightarrow1-CAUS-help-1SG-DU \]
You\(_d\) caused me to help him. OR You\(_d\) caused him to help me.

Similarly the causative of mto “‘to see” su-mto means either “to cause X to be seen” or “to show to X (to cause X to see)”:

(6) \[ kum pu-a-pa cti ri, kum lv-tw-cw-t \]
door PST.IP-PASS-close be.EMP:FACT but door PFV-2-open-PST
tee, turme ra ku pu-kw-su-mto-a
LNK people PL ERG PFV-2\rightarrow1-CAUS-see-1SG
The door was closed, but you opened it, you caused me to be seen by the people. (elicited, Chen Zhen 2011)

(7) \[ ku\_ki la\_che\_a ki wuma zo nu-car-a ri, azo \]
this thing this very EMPH PFV-search-1SG but I
\[ mu\_pu-mto-t-a ri, nu\_zo ku pu-kw-su-mto-a \]
NEG-PFV-CAUS-see-PST-1SG but you ERG PFV-2\rightarrow1-CAUS-see-1SG
I looked for this thing for a long time, but could not find it, but you showed it to me. (elicited, Chen Zhen 2011)

(8) \[ ko\_la ty\_pa pu\_ku-su-mto-jo \] w\_f\_ry?
real snow IPF-2\rightarrow1-CAUS-see-1PL INTRG-be.poss:FACT
Can you show us real snow? (The snow08.25)

Here is an example of O-preservation from a narrative:
They had the two of them beaten (by people). (not to be understood as: “They made two people beat them”, Fox 126)

Preservation of the original O instead of the A occurs in verbs with human patients, when the patient is higher than the agent on the empathy hierarchy (in example 6, first person > third person indefinite), or, when all arguments are third person, when the O of the original verb is more topical than the A (example 9).

Third, the causative appears in sentences with an overt instrument in the ergative case (example 10). This specific use of the su– prefix will be referred to as ‘instrumental causative’.

At least some irregular causatives are also used in this way:

In the sentences above, using the verbs kú-wɣ-rkhə and pu-w-kaβ-a without the causative with the overt instrument is not ungrammatical; the instrumental causative is optional when the base verb is transitive. However, it is obligatory when the base verb is intransitive; using the non-causative form lo-βzi ifr-become.drunk in example 13 would result in an ungrammatical sentence.

Animates can occur as instruments in some rare cases:
The buzzard always eats small birds, and always nourishes himself with them, it is said. (The buzzard, 3)

Although both instruments and A’s are marked with the ergative, they differ from each other by their relativization patterns: instruments are relativized with the oblique participle sy- instead of the S/A participle ku- (see 15).

(15) [nuw-mtʰɤɣ sv-yxtɕɤɾ] xcvrsa ma
3PL.POSS-waist NMLZ:OBLIQUE-tie thread apart from
pjɤ-me evd.ipfv-not.exist
They only had threads to tie their waists (the only things that they could use to tie their waists were threads). (Milaraspa translation)

Fourth, the causative also occurs in very special syntactic constructions involving stative verbs. First, the causative form of a stative verb can occur with the infinitive of an action verb as its complement, expressing the manner of the action:

(16) kv-yndzɯɾ cʰɤ-sɯ-ɤmɲɤm
INF-grind IFR-CAUS-homogeneous
He ground it smooth.

In this construction, we observe raising of the directional prefix of the complement verb (in the example above, for instance, the intrinsic directional prefix of yndzɯɾ “to grind” is tʰɯ- / cʰɤ- “downstream”). Both the causative verb and the complement transitive verb share the same A and O.

Second, the causativized stative verb occurs as the first element of a serial verb construction, expressing again the manner or circumstances of the second verb:

(17) a-tsʰa ci pwu-z-myke pwu-rke
1SG.POSS-tea a.little IMP-CAUS-be.before[III] IMP-put.in[III]
Serve me some tea first.

As in all such constructions, both verbs share the verb TAM and person features.

The causee (the original A) can be marked with the ergative, as seen in the examples above. When the causee is an instrument, ergative marking is
obligatory, and one can find sentences with two ergatives, though these are rarely attested in stories:

(18) \[ nɤ-pi \quad \text{ni kw scok kw tū-wy-sw-ndw-a-ndzi} \]
\[ 2\text{DU.POSS-elder.sibling DU ERG ladle ERG IPF-INV-CAUS-hit-1SG-DU} \]
\[ pu-čti \quad tce, \quad nyzo \, kùn̥y \, nu \quad \text{ty-ste} \]
\[ \text{PST.IPF-be.EMPH LNK you also DEM IMP-do.this.way[III]} \]
\[ jřy \]
\[ \text{be.possible:FACT} \]

Your two sisters hit me with a ladle, you can do the same. (Sentence retold by Chen Zhen from the story “The three sisters”)

However, we do find causes without ergative. First, topicalized ones (with a pause after the topicalizer):

(19) \[ pʰuni \quad \text{nu, tšaqʰu ruqg taw} \]
\[ \text{broom.shrub TOP side.of.the.road rock on} \]
\[ a-z-ly-sw-mp \]
\[ \text{IRR-TRANSL-PFV:upstream-CAUS-bump.into[III] have.to:FACT} \]

With the broom shrub, you will have to touch the rock on the road. (Smanmi2.62)

Second, when the causee is human, the ergative rarely appears (though it is not ungrammatical):

(20) \[ teʰeme nu \quad \text{kuiŋu ku-wxtu-wxti zo} \]
\[ \text{girl TOP oath NMLZ:STAT-INTENS-big EMPH} \]
\[ pa-su-ta-ndzi \]
\[ \text{PFV:3→3′-CAUS-put-DU} \]

They forced the girl to take a great oath. (Fox, 141)

When the original verb is intransitive, the causee is not marked with ergative (this does not apply to cases of instrumental causative).

(21) \[ tɤ-se \quad \text{mtsʰu tū-wy-sw-mtsʰṛt} \]
\[ \text{INDEF.POSS-blood lake IPF-INV-CAUS-full} \]

Let’s fill the lake with blood. (Smanmi2.95)

The stative verb \[ mtsʰṛt \] “be full” can appear with both the container and the containee without case marking (the container is the real S, while the containee is an adjunct). Adding causative marking on the verb does not promote the containee to core argument status.

2.1.3 Compatibilities

The causative \[-sw-\] is highly productive and can appear with various other derivational prefixes, including the reflexive \[-zγr-,\] the causative \[γr-,\] the
passive a-, the autobenefactive-spontaneous -nu- and all other derivational prefixes.

The reflexive -ʑɣɤ- is the only derivational prefix that occurs before the causative. Only the order -ʑɣɤ-sw- is attested, and the reverse order is unintelligible to Japhug speakers.

The combination of these two prefixes could potentially have two interpretations: either X cause Y to do to X (scope of the reflexive over the causative), or X cause to Y to do to Y (scope of the causative over the reflexive). However, only the first interpretation is possible, as shown by the examples:

(22) *pur-ʑɣɤ-sw-sat
    PVF-REFL-CAUS-kill
    He caused (him, them) to kill himself,

(23) *uzo nuw-to-rundzaŋspa tee pʃr-ʑɣɤ-sw-mto
    he NEG-IFR-careful LNK IFR-REFL-CAUS-see
    He wasn’t careful enough and got himself seen.

The two sentences above cannot be understood as “He caused (him, them) to kill (him,them)self(s)” or “he caused him to see himself.”

The causative commonly appears with the autobenefactive-spontaneous nu-:

(24) *u-sci icqʰa u-srow nu
    3SG.POSS-replacement the.aforementioned 3SG.POSS-life TOP
    w-ky-kw-ri numu
    3SG-PVF-NMLZ:3-A-save DEM
    z-la-nuw-sw-ye-nuw
    TRANSL-PVF:3→3-AUTOBEN-CAUS-come-PL
    In his place, they (send people) to invite him to come, he who saved her life. (the demon, 162)

The causative also appears in combination with the passive as sɤ– < sw-ɣ-, but only in a limited number of verbs:

səmbi “to require something from someone” is a causative form derived from the passive a-nbi “to be given” of the verb mbi “to give”. Etymologically, the verb means “to cause someone to give to oneself”.

stəʃtʰi “to ask for something to drink” derives from the irregular lexicalized causative jitsʰi “to give to drink”. The etymological causative prefixes j- being fossilized and not analysed synchronically as such in modern Japhug, this form is not a counterexample to the verbal template. As mbi “to give”, jitsʰi has the recipient coded as the O:
Grandfather, could you give us water to drink? (Nima Vodzer 72)

*Nima Vodzer* “to prepare, to make ready to use” derives from *a-βzu*, a verb whose meaning in modern Japhug is “to grow”, but which originally was the passive of *βzu* “to make”. *sɤβzu* is therefore etymologically “to cause to be made”. The reflexive prefix *ʑɣɤ-* can further be added to form the verb *ʑɣɤ-sɯ-ɤβzu* “to transform oneself into”.

**sɤpa** “transform (tr.)” is the causative of *apa* “become”, itself the passive of the verb *pa*, which means “close (the door)” in modern Japhug (among other meaning) but used to be the regularly verb “to do” in Rgyalrongic languages. *sɤpa* is always transitive.

This verb can in turn be combined with the reflexive *ʑɣɤ-* to form *ʑɣɤ-sɯ-ɤ-pa* “to transform oneself into”:

(26)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>sɤpa</em></td>
<td>transform (tr.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is quite clear that the combination of the causative with the passive is not productive in Japhug, and that the analysis proposed above is only true from a diachronic perspective.

The causative *su-* is also compatible with the causative *γγ-* , though such examples are unusual, and appear limited to the use of the causative to mark the instrument, as in 27.

(27)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>sɤna</em></td>
<td>doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kɯ</em></td>
<td>ERG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>sɤna</em></td>
<td>medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>jo-kʰo</em></td>
<td>IFR-give</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>tee</em></td>
<td>LNK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>w-kɯ-mŋɤm</em></td>
<td>3SG-NMLZ:STAT-hurt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The doctor gave him a medicine and cured him with it.

### 2.1.4 The semantics of the causative

In his cross-linguistic overview of causatives, *Dixon* (2000: 62-68) proposes nine parameters to study the semantic specificities of causative constructions. The first two, state vs. action and transitivity, are treated in the morphology, and will not concern us here.
Of the seven remaining parameters, three (Control, Volition, Affectedness) relate to the causee, and four (Directness, Intention, Naturalness, Involvement) to the causer; in this section, we will regroup them into four groups by combining directness, naturalness and involvement, as these three parameters are most often intertwined in our examples.

We will show that the su- causative in Japhug has a wide range of uses, and can appear independently of these parameters. Is it compatible with either obligation, authorisation, accompaniment or various modes of causation.

**Control.** The prefix su- occurs both with actions on which the causee has control, but also with action on which he/it has no control, either because it is inanimate, or because the action itself is not controllable:

(28)  
\[ \text{ɯrɟɤnpanma} \]  
\[ kɯ \]  
\[ tɯɣ \]  
\[ pjɤ-lɤt, \]  
\[ ifr-\text{use} \]  
\[ tɕendɤre ]  
\[ lnk \]  
\[ nɯ-wa ]  
\[ 3 \]  
\[ pl.\text{-father} \]  
\[ ko-z-nɤndza, \]  
\[ ifr-\text{CAUS-have.leprosy} \]  
\[ Padmasambhava used a poison, and caused their father to contract leprosy. (Gesar 15) \]

**Volition.** The causative su- appears regardless of whether causee acts willingly (‘let, ask’) or unwillingly (‘make, force’).

This first example shows that the causative can be used when doing someone a favour:

(29)  
\[ a-mu ]  
\[ ndzu \]  
\[ ciny zo \]  
\[ 1SG.\text{POSS-mother chopsticks even EMPH} \]  
\[ a-nv-\text{-tu-sw-glut-nu} \]  
\[ 1RR-NEG-PFV-2-CAUS-break-PL \]  
\[ Please make sure that my mother does not even need to break chopsticks (go out to break twigs from the trees to make chopsticks; this idiomatic expression means “take care of her every need”). (Slobdpon, 220) \]

It can also be used when one asks someone to do something:

(30)  
\[ βlama kuw-wxti zo iɛy-sqvr-nu tɛɛ, tv-ɛpi \]  
\[ lama \]  
\[ NMLZ:STAT EMPH IFR-ask.to-do-PL LNK INDEF.POSS-sutra \]  
\[ kuw-wxtw-wxti zo iɛy-su-βzu-nu \]  
\[ NMLZ:STAT-INTENS-big EMPH IFR-CAUS-do-PL \]  
\[ They employed a great lama and asked him to recite a major sutra. (Rkang-rgyal, 19-20) \]

Finally, it can also express coercion, with adverbs such as tɤrkɔ̄z or myrkufisʰ⁴ “forcefully”:
I did not want to eat it, but he forced me to. (Chen Zhen, 2005)

**Intention.** The causative prefix can appear with unintentional actions:

(32)  
```
/indef.poss-clothes IFR-CAUS-blue-PST-1SG
```

```
I caused the clothes to become blue (unintentionally, by washing them the wrong way; el., Chen Zhen)
```

**Directness, naturalness and involvement.** The causative prefix _su-_ can express various degrees of involvement on the part of the causer, as exemplified by the following example:

(33)  
```
/3SG.POSS-horse ERG snake one-piece PL IFR-CAUS-trample LNK
```

```
that.is NMLZ:STAT-white TOP IFRCAUS-vomit
```

```
(Nyima Wodzer) had his horse trample one of the snakes, and caused it to throw up the white one (snake). (Nyima Wodzer,30)
```

In the first clause, the causee of the verb _pjɤ-z-rɨtɕaʁ_ “he caused him to trample” is the horse, while in the second one, the causee is the snake that was trampled; the causer (the character Nyima Wodzer) in the second case only acts indirectly (through the action of his horse).

The causative is also used to express authorisation, where the causer’s involvement is even more indirect, and only amounts to an absence of action:

(34)  
```
/3SG.POSS-meat IFR-CAUS-be.smelly-PST-1SG
```

```
Could you let me stay? (The raven, 68)
```

Finally, it can even appear in situations where the “causer” merely omits to act upon a naturally occurring event:

(35)  
```
INDEF.POSS-meat IFR-CAUS-be.smelly-PST-1SG
```

```
I let the meat spoil.
```

Some examples of _su-/z_- have a semantics which is more reminiscent of the tropative (Jacques 2013a): _znɤja_ “consider to be a shame”, _supa_ “regard as” and _znɤkɤəro_ “consider to be acceptable”.

The intransitive verb _nɤja_ means “to be a shame, to be a pity”.

---

14
That thing broke, what a shame!

The transitive $z$-$nyja$, rather than meaning “to cause to be a shame” as expected regularly, rather means “to regret, be reluctant” (Chinese 不舍得), in other words “to consider something to be a pity”:

(37) $wuma$ $zo$ $puu$-$znyja$-$t$-$a$
    very EMPH PFV-regret-PST-1SG
    I regretted it very much. (a lost cellphone cover, Dpalcan, conversation, 2010)

Another verb having unpredictable semantics with the prefix $sɯ$- is the transitive verb $sɯ$-$pa$ “to consider, to regard as”. The original verb is $pa$ “to close”, etymologically “to do”:

(38) $tɤkʰe$-$pytɕɯ$ $nu$ $u$-$p$-$pytɕɯ$ $nu$ $kɯ$-$kʰe$
    stupid-bird TOP he bird TOP NMLZ:STAT-stupid
    $tu$-$s$-$u$-$pa$-$nu$
    IPF-consider-PL

The $tɤkʰe$-$pytɕɯ$ is considered to be a stupid bird. (the buzzard, 13)

### 2.1.5 Scope ambiguity

The causative presents scope ambiguity with several other prefixes, in particular negation and associated motion.

The negative prefix can either have scope over the base verb (cause not to do = hinder) or over the causative (not cause to do). This may be an effect of the rigid verbal template, as the relative order of the negation and the causative are strictly fixed.

Examples with negation in the sense of “hinder”, “cause not to do”) are quite common:

(39) $a$-$zwŭ$ $mûj$-$s$-$u$-$ye$-$nu$
    1SG-sleep NEG:SENS-CAUS-come-PL
    They don’t let me sleep. NOT “They do not cause me to sleep”
    (Dpalcan, 2010, elicitation)

(40) $w$-$tu$-$yy$-$r$-$ra$-$plag$
    3SG-NMLZ:DEGR-make.noise ERG really
    $mûj$-$k$$u$-$z$-$r$-$y$-$β$-$joz$
    NEG:SENS-GENR:S/O-CAUS-APASS-learn EMPH
    They make so much noise that they do not let people study at all.
    (Dpalcan, 2010, elicitation)
(41) **nutcu ku-je** **tee** **tuw-ci**
there IPF-keep.in.enclosure[III] LNK INDEF.POSS-water
**tuw-mum** **muw-pjv-su-wsʔi** **nuw-ggryl**
one-swallow NEG-IFR-CAUS-drink IPF-be.usually.the.case
(The male deer) prevent (the female) to leave the place, and do not let them drink even a swallow of water. (dictionary entry on “deer”, 2005)

(42) **azo po-nw-jmɯt-a** **tee, ryulpu u-w-cki** **pyйтеw ku**
I IFR-AUTOBEN-forget-1SG LNK king 3SG-DAT bird ERG
**muw-ty-sw-tu-ta**
NEG-PFV-CAUS-say[II]-1SG
I forgot it, so on my account the bird did not convey its message to the king (literally: I did not let the bird tell the king)\(^1\)

However, the alternative interpretation, with the scope of the negation on the causation is also possible:

(43) **azo c-ty-nw-tu-ta**
*I* TRANSL-PFV-AUTOBEN-say[II]-1SG apart.from people
**muw-ty-sw-tu-ta**
NEG-PFV-CAUS-1SG
I went to convey (the message) myself, and I did not make anyone else convey it.

A scope ambiguity is also observed with the associated motion prefixes **cɯ–** ‘go and’ and **ɣɯ–** ‘come and’ (on which see Jacques 2013b). In Japhug, associated motion prefixes normally have accusative alignment: the referent undergoing the motion is either the A or the S of the verb (depending on its transitivity), never the O. However, in the case of verbs with a causative **sɯ–**, the referent in motion can be either the the causer (as in 44, where the causative is used to indicated the presence of an instrument), the causee (as in 45) or both.

(44) **wortɕʰi zo,** **kuiki jɤ-tsum** **tee,** **tʰu-ci tʃaka kura tsuku**
please EMPH this IMP-take.away LNK something thing these some
**c-ty-su-rxti**
TRANSLOC-IMP-CAUS-buy[III]
Please, take this and go to buy something with it. (The raven4 72)

---

\(^1\)This example is adapted from a traditional story; the speaker here is the shepherd Askyabs *kuhyv acɤf*, whom a bird (in fact a reincarnated queen) asks to deliver a message to the king. The bird itself does not go to see the king directly.
People from the Chinese areas, people from outside send people to come here to buy (matsutake and sell them in the areas downstream).

2.1.6 The causative *su*- with stative verbs

Although the prefix *ɣɤ*, rather than *su*-, is used with most stative verbs, some stative verbs only appear with *su*- . The following non-exhaustive list illustrates some examples:

Table 5: Examples of the *su*- causative with stative verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>base</th>
<th>causative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>anŋi</em></td>
<td>blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>wyrum</em></td>
<td>white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>paw</em></td>
<td>black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>yurni</em></td>
<td>red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mɤrtsaβ</em></td>
<td>spicy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mŋɤm</em></td>
<td>be painful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stative verbs with a prefixal element (*mɤ-, *rɤ-, *yur- etc), always appear with *z-, never with *ɣɤ*- (except some examples with the prefixal element *a-*) . This constraint explains for instance why the causative of *mɤrtsaβ* “spicy” is in *z-*, rather than *ɣɤ*- , while almost all other stative verbs denoting feelings or taste have a causative in *ɣɤ-* , for instance *tɕur* “sour” > *ɣɤ-tɕur* “make sour”, *tsri* “salty” > *ɣɤ-tsri* “make salty” etc.  

Color stative verbs and stative verbs related to disease and pain (*ngo* “sick”, *mŋɤm* etc) also do form their causative with *su*- and its variants rather than with *ɣɤ-* , as seen in the table above.  

Very few stative verbs have been found which are compatible with both *ɣɤ* - and *su*- ; the semantic contrast between the two prefixes is treated in 2.2.3.

2.2 The causative prefix *ɣɤ-*

The causative *ɣɤ* - has a much more restricted usage than *su*- treated in the previous section. The prefix *ɣɤ*- appears with most stative verbs, though
as we have seen in 2.1.6, some stative verbs also appear with suw; the semantic differences between the two prefixes for stative verbs is treated in 2.2.3. Cognates of this prefix are found in other Rgyalrongic languages (in Tshobdun and in Khroskyabs, see Sun 2014 and Lai 2013) and in Tangut (Jacques 2014b: 253-4).

Unlike suw, yyy- presents no allomorphy. With verbs having the intransitive determiner a-, this syllable is absorbed by the prefix. For instance, the causative of artɯm “round” is yyy-rtɯm “to coil (threads)”.

2.2.1 Syntactic constructions

Unlike suw, yyy- only appears with stative intransitive verbs. The added argument, the causer, is always the A, while the original S becomes the O.

(46) ɯ-mke  cʰo-yyy-ŋŋi
     3SG-neck IFR-CAUS-long
     He stretched his neck. (elicited, Dpalcan 2010)

(47) ɯ-pʰɯ 3sg.poss-price ɲɯ-wxti sens-big  tɕe, lnk  nɯ dem  ra  tʰamtɕɤt all
     NEG-IMP-2-CAUS-big
     It is expensive, don’t make it that expensive. (Bargaining, 11)

Like the prefix suw- (see 2.1.2), causative verbs with yyy- are used with a complement in ky- infinitive to express the manner in which the action takes place:

(48) paɾndza  ky-rykru pa-yyy-ndɯβ
     pig.food INF-cut PFV:3→3-CAUS-fine
     He chopped the pig food very fine. (elicited, Dpalcan 2010)

(49) kɯm  tɤ-yyy-βdi-t-a  tɕe, ky-cɯ
     door IFR-CAUS-good-PST-1SG  LNK INF-open
     ky-cɯ
     I repaired the door, so that it can be opened. (literally: I made the door openable, el. Chen Zhen, 2011)

As with the construction involving the prefix suw-, we observe that the directional prefix of the complement verb (in the infinitive) is raised to the causativized stative verb: puw- “down” and tv- “down” are respectively the intrinsic directional prefixes of rykru “cut” and cuu “open” (this verb also occurs with ky- “towards east”).

In this construction, the scope of the negation is normally on the causativized stative verb, not on the whole action:
You did not write it well ("you wrote it badly", not in the sense "you did not write it at all"), (el. Chen Zhen 2011)

Fumigate a khatag and swallow it, otherwise you would make my birth impossible. (NOT: “you did not make my birth possible”). (Gesar, 61)

The raising of the directional prefix from the complement verb to the causativizer stative verb can remain even when the complement verb is elided. For instance, with a verb such as ɣɤ-xtɯt “shorten”, one can distinguish between:

I made it shorter. (elicited, Chen Zhen)

The first form means “shorten by cutting (clothes)”, as the implicit complement verb is qrɯ “cut”, whose intrinsic directional prefix (in the meaning “to cut clothes”) is nɯ-.

nɤ-ʑɣɤ-ɣɤ-ʑo, with the prefix nɤ- “up” instead means that the clothes were made shorter by rolling sleeves up, without cutting the cloth.

2.2.2 Compatibilities

The prefix ɣɤ-, is incompatible with other valency-increasing prefixes such as the tropative nv- and the applicative nw-. However, both the reflexive zyx- and causative su- can appear before it:

May you be as light as a feather, and your horse as swift as the wind. (Smanmi Metog Koshana, 62)
Example 27 above (2.1.3) illustrates a verb with both causative prefixes.

It also with the reciprocal a–+REDUPLICATION in forms such as rlaʁ “to disappear” > yʁ-rlaʁ “to lose, to cause to be destroyed” > a-yʁ-rlu-rlaʁ “to destroy each other”. The reverse order is however not possible.

2.2.3 Semantics

Sun (2006, 2014), with regard to the causative prefixes sə– and wɐ– in Tshob-dun, has shown that in the case of some stative verbs, the former indicates an increase of degree, while the latter expresses a change of state. This contrast appears to have been lost in Japhug (at least in the variety under study). Some labile verbs, such as mto (which means ‘see’ as a transitive verb and ‘have the ability to see’ as an intransitive stative verb’) have distinct causative forms depending on the base meaning: su–mto ‘cause to see, show’ is based on the transitive mto, while yʁ–mto ‘cause (a blind person) to recover sight’ is based on the static mto.

2.3 Abilitative

The abilitative su– is homophonous with the causative, and does present two allomorphs su– and z– with the same distribution as for the causative. The abilitative expresses that the S/A is physically able to realize the action described by the verb. It is completely homophonous with the causative; for instance su–ndza means both ‘cause/force to eat’ and ‘be able to eat’. Although it appears to be quite productive (it can be applied to most transitive voluntary verbs), it is quite rare in the corpus, and most commonly appears in negative forms (see 55).

(55) t će ru ts–nu ku k u m a k a
   but INDEF.POSS-mother DEM ERG at.all
   m u–p jv-z-nv c q a,
   NEG-IFR-ABILITATIVE-bear
   But the old woman was not able to resist (couldn’t help) (and told them). (The three sisters 2014, 596)

The only case of irregular abilitative is the verb spʰɯt ‘be able to cut through (of a cutting instrument)’ (see example 56) derived from pʰɯt ‘cut, pick, pluck’, with the allomorph s– and with more restricted semantics.

(56) t s u n t u k u w–n d s r u w m u j–s–pʰɯ t m a
   scissors ERG 3SG.POSS-nail NEG:SENS-ABILITATIVE-cut because
   w–tu–r k o w–tu–j a s
   3SG-NMLZ:DEGREE-hard 3SG-NMLZ:DEGREE-thick

5Only examples with transitive verbs have been found; thus there are no allomorphs su– and s–, that can only be found on intransitive verbs.
Scissors cannot cut through her nails, as they are very hard and thick. (notes 2012.8.6)

The transitive verb *spa* ‘be able to (through learning)’ is a lexicalized abilitative that has cognates outside of the Rgyalrong group, in particular in Tangut (*Jacques 2014b: 255-6*), showing that the abilitative must be reconstructed for a larger group of languages than simply Rgyalrong.

### 2.4 Denominal derivation

In addition to the causative and abilitative *sw–*, denominal verbs in *sw/z–*/swy–*/sv–* can be either transitive or intransitive, and belong to four semantic categories: property, position, use of an instrument or body part, and causative, as presented in table 2.4.

When a verb is derived from a possessed noun, the indefinite possessor prefixes *tɤ–*/tɯ–* or the other possessive prefixes are not preserved, and the prefix is directly added to the nominal root (*Jacques 2014a*). In Table 2.4, possessed nouns are indicated with the indefinite possessive prefix between brackets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Transitivity</th>
<th>Derived verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Base noun</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>property</td>
<td>intr.</td>
<td><em>sv-ndvɣ</em></td>
<td>to be poisonous</td>
<td><em>(tv)-ndvɣ</em></td>
<td>poison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>sv-nbru</em></td>
<td>to be angry</td>
<td><em>(tv)-nbru</em></td>
<td>anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>position</td>
<td>intr.</td>
<td><em>su-ndzupe</em></td>
<td>to sit (in a special way)</td>
<td>ndzupe</td>
<td>way of sitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instrument</td>
<td>intr.</td>
<td><em>su-nejlu</em></td>
<td>be left-handed</td>
<td>vejlu</td>
<td>left hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instrument</td>
<td>tr.</td>
<td><em>sv-kʰu</em></td>
<td>to smoke</td>
<td><em>(tv)-kʰu</em></td>
<td>smoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instrument</td>
<td>tr.</td>
<td><em>su-lsag</em></td>
<td>to perform</td>
<td>lsag</td>
<td>fumigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instrument</td>
<td>tr.</td>
<td><em>swy-tsʰu</em></td>
<td>to sieve</td>
<td>tsʰu</td>
<td>sieve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instrument</td>
<td>tr.</td>
<td><em>swy-tsʰwi</em></td>
<td>to dye</td>
<td>tsʰwi</td>
<td>colour, paint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>causative</td>
<td>tr.</td>
<td><em>sw-ɕtʃi</em></td>
<td>to cause to sweat</td>
<td><em>(tvw)-ɕtʃi</em></td>
<td>sweat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>causative</td>
<td>tr.</td>
<td><em>sv-rnɨ</em></td>
<td>to give a name</td>
<td><em>(tv)-rnɨ</em></td>
<td>name</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4 shows that the instrumental denominal use of *sw–* is fully productive, as it can be applied to Tibetan loanwords (respectively *bsaŋ* ‘fumigation’, *tsʰag* ‘sieve’ and *tsʰos* ‘paint’).

### 3 Historical derivation

On the basis of the data in the previous section, we show that two grammaticalization pathways can be proposed in Japhug. First, the causative
sɯ– was derived from the instrumental / causative denominal sɯ–, following a more general path of grammaticalization well-attested in Rgyalrong languages. Second, the ablitative is grammaticalized from the causative.

3.1 From Denominal to Causative

Previous research (Jacques 2014a) has shown that several valency-changing prefixes in Japhug (and in all Rgyalrong languages) are historically derived from denominal prefixes through a two-stage process. First, the base verb is nominalized to a bare infinitive, a nominal form comprising the verb root prefixed either by an indefinite possessor prefix tɯ–/tɤ– or by a possessive prefix coreferent with the O in the case of transitive verbs. This nominalization neutralizes the transitivity of the verb. Then a denominal verb is created from this bare infinitive with a transitivity value different from the base verb.

Three voice prefixes in Japhug have been shown to originate from such a grammaticalization process: the antipassive rɤ–, the deexperiencer sɤ– (on this prefix, see Jacques 2012c) and the applicative nɯ–, respectively from the intransitive denominal rɯ–/rɤ–, the (stative verb) property denominal sɤ– (seen above) and the transitive denominal nɯ–.

This grammaticalization pathway, which is not restricted to Rgyalrong languages but also attested in language families such as Mande (Creissels 2012) and Eskaleut (Fortescue 1996), can be summarized as follows:

(57) ACTION NOMINALIZATION of transitive verb + INTRANSITIVE DE-NOMINAL DERIVATION ⇒ ANTIPASSIVE

(58) ACTION NOMINALIZATION of intransitive verb + TRANSITIVE DE-NOMINAL DERIVATION ⇒ APPLICATIVE / CAUSATIVE

The same mechanism can explain the causative as being derived from the denominal sɯ–, which changes a noun X into a transitive verb meaning either ‘use X’ (instrumental denominal) or ‘cause (people) to have X’ (causative denominal). In addition to the phonological and semantic similarity between the causative and instrumental/causative denominal prefixes, we should note the fact that both share the same allomorphy sɯ– / z– / sɯɣ–, the same double meaning (instrumental and causative proper) which makes it extremely unlikely that both prefixes could be unrelated.

The opposite direction of derivation (from causative to denominal) is highly unlikely for two reasons.

First, in the case of the antipassive rɤ–, there is strong evidence of the directionality of derivation from denominal to antipassive, as we find several examples of verbs whose nominal form and antipassive form share a common semantic or morphological innovation (Jacques 2014a). For instance, pyau ‘turn over, plough’ has an antipassive rɤ-pyau meaning specifically ‘reclaim
land (plough for the first time)’, with the same irregular restricted meaning as the derived noun *tuw-pyar* ‘land reclamation’. While such examples have not been found in the case of the causative, the parallelism with other voice markers suggest that this direction of derivation is indeed the most likely. The denominal to causative derivation is almost a synchronic process and does not involve any reconstruction (all intermediate steps of the grammaticalization pathways are independently attested).

Second, while the extension of a causative marker to instrumental denominal function could be conceivable in an omnipredicative language where nouns are predicative in their own right, this seems impossible in a language with a very strong noun / verb distinction like Japhug, unless one explains the development of the denominal as a backformation from the causative following the pathways in 57 in the opposite direction.

Thus, of the three logically possible historical relationships between the causative and denominal *sɯ–* (unrelated, causative to denominal, denominal to causative), only the last one is a likely explanation.

### 3.2 From Causative to Abilitative

Two distinct hypotheses can be put forward to explain the origin of the abilitative *sɯ–* directly from the denominal *sɯ–* or indirectly from the causative *sɯ–* after its creation from the denominal.

Although formally possible, the hypothesis that the abilitative derives from the denominal *sɯ–* is not possible on semantic grounds: there are no denominal verbs derived from a noun X whose meaning is ‘be able to do X’.

The derivation from the causative is also difficult at first glance, as abilitative and causative share little semantic commonality. Yet, there are cases where both an interpretation in terms of causative and one in terms of abilitative are possible and would have a very similar meaning, differing only in perspective. Example 59 is an example of abilitative with the verb *sɯ-rqoʁ* ‘be able to hug’.

(59) **turme lasuñalasum kumy my-kv-sɯ-rqoʁ**

people two.or.three also NEG-INF-ABILITATIVE-hug

**kɯ-ɓse** **kɯ-ŋpum** **pɯ-ɓse** cʰa

INF:STAT-be.like NMLZ:S-be.thick IPFW-do[III] can:FACT

(The Fir) can grow so thick that two or three people cannot hug (its trunk). (Fir, 6)

However, it is also possible to construe the meaning in a different way: ‘The fir can grow so thick that it prevents even two or three people from hugging (its trunk)’, with a causative interpretation. This interpretation is

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6Verb and nouns have very different morphological properties in Japhug, and there is no zero derivation from noun to verb.
possible due to the ambiguity of the scope of the negation of the causative, which generates the preventive meaning ‘prevent, hinder’ in negative form, from which a modal meaning ‘not able to’ can be derived, if the causee, rather than the causer, is reanalyzed as the real A of the \textit{swu–} prefixed verb. This kind of reanalysis is particularly easy in Japhug as all of the arguments, whether S, A, O, causer or causee can be elided.

Examples such as 59 therefore constitute the pivot construction whose reanalysis has allowed the abilitative to be created out of the causative. This hypothesis accounts for the fact that nearly all examples of abilitative in natural speech are found in negative verb forms. We can propose the previously unknown pathway of grammaticalization:

\begin{equation}
(60) \text{NEGATIVE + CAUSATIVE} \Rightarrow \text{PREVENTIVE} \Rightarrow \text{NEGATIVE + ABILITATIVE} \\
\text{not cause to X} \Rightarrow \text{prevent from X} \Rightarrow \text{be unable to X} \text{(by removing the causer and promoting the causee to A status)}
\end{equation}

The grammaticalization of the abilitative, as seen above, must predate the common ancestor of Rgyalrong and Tangut, but it is unclear whether the languages which have no trace of the abilitative have lost all traces of it or never have grammaticalized it.

4 Comparative evidence

While from a Japhug-internal point of view the derivation from denominal \textit{swu–} to causative seems straightforward, this hypothesis raises an important problem: the sibilant causative is one of the very few morphological element that appears to be ubiquitous in the Sino-Tibetan family. Indeed, even highly innovative languages such as Chinese and Lolo-Burmese appear to present traces of this prefix. In languages other than Rgyalrongic, the semantic of the causative cannot be studied in comparable detail as it has become completely lexicalized and is not any more the productive mechanism to express causation. In particular, the instrumental use of the causative attested in Japhug does not appear widespread outside of Rgyalrongic.

In this section, we present data from Tibetan and Chinese showing that data from these languages do not contradict the above hypothesis.

4.1 Tibetan

Of all ancient Sino-Tibetan languages, Tibetan is the only one which directly preserves the causative in a form that does not require a reconstruction. There is clear evidence of both the causative and the denominal \textit{s–} prefixes.

Examples of the causative are plentiful. Zhang (2009: 210-8) counts 107

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\textsuperscript{7}Tibetan in this paper is transcribed according to Jacques (2012a)’s conventions.

\textsuperscript{8}The causative has an allomorph \textit{z–} before \textit{l–}.
causative pairs in Tibetan, such as ɴgul ‘move (it)’ and  sgul ‘move (tr)’. Although some of the pairs collected by Zhang Jichuan must be explained differently (in particular the ones that involve  s–/  z–-alternations such as sub ‘rub off’,  zub ‘be rubbed off’), there are about a hundred of good examples of causatives in  s– in Tibetan.

Clear examples of the denominal  s– are rarer and are generally less transparent semantically (for instance ɲag ‘word’  bspags ‘extoll’), suggesting that productivity was lost before that of the causative.9

Yet, there is evidence also in Tibetan that the causative derives from the denominal. In almost all of these pairs, the intransitive counterpart has a prenasalized prefix ɴ– which is not usually commented on by comparativists. There is a frequent ɴ– present tense prefix appearing in intransitive verbs in Tibetan, but in the causative pairs, the ɴ– in the intransitive forms is in most cases not a tense marker: it is retained through the whole paradigm, and appears in both present and past stems.

In some cases, we find a cognate noun that does not have the ɴ– prefixal element, as in grib.ma ‘shade, shadow’ and grib ‘defilement, stain’ versus ɲgrib ‘diminish, fail, be obstructed, be obscured’ and sgrib ‘cover’. Rather than assuming, as is generally done, a direct derivation from intransitive ɲgrib to the transitive controllable sgrib, it is better for both semantic and morphological reasons to suppose that both verbs derive from the base noun, whose original meaning was ‘shadow’ (hence the secondary evolution to ‘de-

filement, stain’), by addition of the denominal intransitive  s– and denominal causative  s– prefixes:

\begin{equation}
\begin{align*}
grib(-ma) & \quad ‘\text{shade, shadow}’ \Rightarrow ɲ-grib & \quad ‘\text{fail, be obscured}’ \\
grib(-ma) & \quad ‘\text{shade, shadow}’ \Rightarrow s-grib & \quad ‘\text{cover}’
\end{align*}
\end{equation}

The intransitive ɲgrib has retained all the meanings of the original noun, and developed some more meanings, while the transitive sgrib ‘cover’ has only retained the base meaning of the noun.

Though in most cases no corresponding noun is found, it is likely that other examples of ‘causative  s–’ should be in fact historically analyzed as denominal prefixes. This question is deferred to further research, which will require corpus study of Old Tibetan texts.

4.2 Old Chinese

Already in antiquity, Chinese languages were phonologically and morphologically much more innovative than modern languages such as Rgyalrong or Kiranti. The remnants of former morphological alternations directly at-
tested in modern varieties of Chinese are few and ambiguous, and can only be accessed through reconstructions.

Not all authors agree about how to interpret and reconstruct the traces of morphological alternations found in Chinese. In particular, an important debate concerns verbs pairs presenting a voicing alternation correlated with transitivity in Middle Chinese as presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Examples of voicing alternation in Middle Chinese

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intransitive</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Transitive</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>现 yen³</td>
<td>appear</td>
<td>見 ken³</td>
<td>see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>敗 beaj³</td>
<td>be defeated</td>
<td>敗 pæj³</td>
<td>defeat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>别 bjet</td>
<td>be different, leave</td>
<td>別 pjet</td>
<td>separate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>折 deet</td>
<td>break, bend (it)</td>
<td>折 tɕet</td>
<td>break, bend (tr)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some scholars believe that this type of voicing alternation is a trace of the cognate of the causative *s- prefix, and that the transitive verbs derive from the intransitive ones, the *s- prefix having a devoicing effect on the initial consonant (Mei 2012 is a representative example of this line of thought).

However, it is clear that this view is a misconception. In all phonologically conservative languages where the causative is preserved as a distinct segment, we also find traces of a distinct and historically unrelated voice alternation: anticausative prenasalization. Table 8 shows some examples of verb pairs in Japhug (see Jacques 2012c, 7 for more details on the semantics of this derivation and for more examples). The anticausative prenasalization changes transitive verbs to intransitive with voicing of the initial stop or affricates (there are no examples of this alternation with verbs having sonorant or fricative initials). The directionality (from transitive to intransitive) is proven by two pieces of evidence.

First, the Tibetan loanword χtɤr ‘spill’ (Tibetan gtor), whose intransitive counterpart undvr ‘be spilled’ has no equivalent in Tibetan. Moreover the phonotactics of the cluster fricative+prenasalized voiced stop is incompatible with the phonotactic structure of Tibetic languages. Hence, this verb can only have been created within Japhug from its transitive counterpart χtvr ‘scatter’ after this latter had been borrowed.

Second, there are transitive verbs with aspirated or unaspirated obstruents, but this contrast is neutralized in the corresponding anticausative verbs.

Similar pairs can be found in languages such as Tibetan (Jacques 2012b, Hill 2014), Tangut (Gong 1988, Jacques 2014b: 245-8) or Jinghpo (Dai

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10In the case of velars, there was no non-palatalized g in Middle Chinese, so that the alternation γ / k is expected, and all specialists of Old Chinese reconstruction agree that Middle Chinese γ- originates from *g-, see Baxter (1992).
Table 8: Examples of the anticausative alternation in Japhug

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Derived verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>transitive</td>
<td></td>
<td>intransitive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>χtɤr</td>
<td>spill</td>
<td>ʁndɤr</td>
<td>be spilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prɤt</td>
<td>break</td>
<td>mbrɤt</td>
<td>break, cut (it)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tcɤəʁ</td>
<td>squeeze out</td>
<td>ndʑɣaʁ</td>
<td>be squeezed out (spontaneously)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pɣaʁ</td>
<td>turn over</td>
<td>mbyaʁ</td>
<td>roll about (it)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xtʰom</td>
<td>to put horizontally</td>
<td>ndom</td>
<td>to be horizontal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cʰɤβ</td>
<td>to flatten, to crush</td>
<td>ɲɟɤβ</td>
<td>to be crushed, flattened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cɯ</td>
<td>to open</td>
<td>ɲɟɯ</td>
<td>to be opened</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1990: 78), which preserve the causative prefix as a distinct segment (s– in Tibetan and ɕə– or tɕə– in Jinghpo) or as a suprasegmental feature unrelated with voicing (Gong 1999, Jacques 2014b: 250-1). Since causative and anticausative derivations are clearly distinct in Tibetan, Rgyalrong, Tangut and Jinghpo, it is not possible that the verb pairs in Chinese such as those presented in Table 7 can be explained as being traces of a causative prefix *s– (see also LaPolla 2003). It is more likely to assume, following Sagart & Baxter (2012), that the voicing alternation in Chinese is cognate to the anticausative derivation.

While Sagart & Baxter (2012) deny that verb pairs such as those in Table 7 are traces of the causative *s– prefix, they still reconstruct a causative *s– to account for different alternations (Table 9).

Table 9: Examples of the causative *s– in Old Chinese according to Sagart & Baxter (2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle Chinese</th>
<th>Old Chinese</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>視</td>
<td>dzii²</td>
<td>← *giiʔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>示</td>
<td>zij³</td>
<td>← *s-giiʔ-s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>食</td>
<td>zik</td>
<td>← *mə-lək</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>飼</td>
<td>zi³</td>
<td>← *s-m-lək-s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted however that in nearly all the verb pairs provided by Sagart 1999 and Sagart & Baxter (2012), the causative is actually indicated by a circumfix *s– –s, with the verb prefixed and suffixed by *s. The reconstruction of a causative *s– prefix is thus by no means straightforward.

11It is possible however, that in highly eroded languages like Lolo-Burmese, ancient *S+voiced obstruent clusters have become unvoiced, as specialists of these languages generally believe (??), so that distinguishing between anticausative and causative pairs is not straightforward on Lolo-Burmese internal grounds. Some verb pairs found in Lolo-Burmese (for instance Burmese prat vs phrat ‘break’) are also attested in Japhug (mbɤrt ‘break (it)’ vs prɤt ‘break, cut (tr)’), showing that at least part of these voicing or aspiration alternations originate from anticausative prenasalization, not from causative *s–.
While all authors agree on the existence of examples, there are barely any example of a verb pair that is agreed on by all scholars.

By contrast, we do find examples of denominal *s– that are accepted by all specialists, in the case of pairs between Middle Chinese l (from Old Chinese *r–) and ʂ– (from Old Chinese *sr–). Table 10 includes two of the most convincing pairs. Other pairs have been proposed, but their acceptance crucially depends on one’s particular Old Chinese reconstruction system, and a detailed discussion goes beyond the scope of the present paper.

Table 10: Examples of the denominal *s– in Old Chinese

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle Chinese</th>
<th>Old Chinese</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>吏 li³</td>
<td>← *raʔ-s</td>
<td>officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>使 ʂi²</td>
<td>← *s-raʔ</td>
<td>send</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>率 lwit</td>
<td>← *rut</td>
<td>norm, standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>率 ʂwit</td>
<td>← *s-rut</td>
<td>follow, go along</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In conclusion, the only uncontroversial fact about Old Chinese morphology is the existence of a denominal *s– prefix, whose exact semantics is unclear due to the dearth of examples. It is possible that a causative *s– prefix can be reconstructed, but the evidence is less clear and allows differing interpretations.

5 Conclusion

This paper provides the first detailed description of the two causative derivations in Japhug Rgyalrong, and in addition proposes two new pathways of grammaticalization.

First, it shows that the ʂɯ– causative in Japhug Rgyalrong is derived from the denominal instrumental / causative denominal derivation (X ⇒ ‘use X’ or ‘cause to have X’) through a two-step process already attested for antipassive and applicative derivations (Jacques 2014a). Second, it suggests that the abilitative ʂɯ– prefix evolved from the causative through reanalysis of the causee as the agent in negative forms, following pathway 62.

(62) negative + causative ⇒ preventive ⇒ negative + abilitative

The first pathway has considerable implications for this family as a whole: both denominal and causative sibilant prefixes are found across the Sino-Tibetan family. The hypothesis proposed here implies either that only the denominal derivation is reconstructible to proto-Sino-Tibetan (and that the causative has been innovated independently several times from the denominal prefix throughout the family) or that the grammaticalization took place in proto-Sino-Tibetan times.
We have shown that some apparent examples of causative s- in Tibetan are better analyzed as denominal verbs, suggesting that the reanalysis from denominal to causative was still ongoing in Old Tibetan times. In the case of Chinese, the dearth of convincing examples of causative *s- possibly implies that it has never developed a real causative prefix.

References


