

Examining the Grammatical Functions of the Auxiliary Verb *Rijun* in the Shuri Dialect of Ryukyuan Languages

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Abstract: *This paper reexamines the functions of the auxiliary verb rijun (or riin) in the Ryukyuan languages. Ryukyuan languages, which are widely considered as sister languages to Japanese language, can be divided into Northern Ryukyuan languages and Southern Ryukyuan languages. This paper focuses on the Shuri dialect, one of the dialects belonging to the Northern Ryukyuan languages. In Ryukyuan languages, the auxiliary verb rijun can be used to express passive, potential, and honorific morpheme. In this paper, the author aims to reexamine the functions of rijun in order to clarify the grammatical functions and characteristics of rijun.*

Keywords: *Ryukyuan language, Shuri dialect, auxiliary verb, rijun, passive voice, honorifics, potential form.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ryukyuan languages are widely considered as sister languages of the Japanese language [1]. Phonological and grammatical similarities are found between Ryukyuan languages and Japanese Kyushu dialects and they also show close lexical connections [2]. Ryukyuan languages can be divided into two main groups, namely Northern Ryukyu language and Southern Ryukyu language. Northern Ryukyu language is further divided into Northern Amami dialect, Southern Amami and Northern Okinawa dialect, and South Central Okinawa dialect; on the other hand, Southern Ryukyu language can be subdivided into Miyako dialect, Yaeyama dialect, and Yonaguni dialect [3]. This paper focuses on the Shuri dialect, which belongs to the South Central Okinawa dialect of the Northern Ryukyu language and is spoken in the area which was used to be the capital of the Ryukyu Kingdom.

Ryukyuan verbs are inflected for a range of tense, modal, passive, causative, and potential. Ryukyuan verbs can be divided into three groups, regular verbs 1, regular verbs 2, and irregular verbs, in accordance to the way they inflect [4] (table 1). As we can see in table 1, Regular verbs 1 and 2 can be distinguished by the conclusive form (non past): *-un* for Regular verb 1 and *-jun/-in* for Regular verb 2. Moreover, the negative form ending of Regular Verb 1 and 2 are *-an* and *-ran* respectively.

Ryukyuan verb inflection is agglutinative and auxiliary verbs appeared after an independent verb. The auxiliary verb *rijun* (or *riin*), as shown in Table 1, is used with the irrealis form of verb to express three meanings: passive, honorific, and potential. Studies about *rijun* mainly are under the category of a particular grammar, rather than focusing on *rijun* itself. For example, Shimoji (SM) mentions that *rijun* can be used to express passive but there is no explanations about its function as potential and honorific. Nakahara (NJ) explains that *rijun* is used to express one can do an action under a certain situation or circumstances but he does not mention *rijun* when he explains passive and honorific of Ryukyuan languages. Aragaki (AT), in her study about the honorific expressions of Ryukyuan languages, analyzes that *rijun* can be explained as non-subject honorific, meaning it is used to elevate an action or the recipient of an action, instead of the subject who does the action. Funatsu (FY) mentions that *rijun* can be used as passive, honorific and potential but he does not further explain its function. Nishioka and Nakahara (NN) explain that *rijun* is used in passive sentence but no further explanation of its function as honorific and potential. Further studies are necessary in order to understand the grammatical functions of it. Thus, in this essay, the author will try to re-examine the functions of *rijun* according to the three meanings it possesses.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

By comparing it with other expressions, auxiliary verbs and suffixes which possess similar functions with *rijun*, the author will try to examine the functions and characteristics of *rijun*. For the examples in this essay, apart from secondary sources, the author also cites examples from primary sources such as conversations between descendants of former Ryukyu Kingdom's nobles recorded by Nakamatsu [NT]. Both *rijun* or *riin* can be used in the Shuri dialect; however, the author will follow the *Okinawago Jiten* (OJ)[Okinawa dictionary] by using *rijun* instead of *riin*.

3. AUXILIARY VERB RIJUN AND ITS GRAMMATICAL FUNCTIONS

As mentioned above, by attaching *rijun* to the irrealis stem of verb, it can be used to express passive, potential and honorific. It is usually written as verb affix *-arijun* due to the fact that irrealis form mostly ends in *-a* (table 1). After *rijun* is attached to a verb, it becomes an independent verb and it inflects for tense and mood (table 2). In the following, the author will re-examine the functions of *rijun* according to the three meanings it possesses.

3.1. Passive

(1) and (2) are examples of direct passives in the Shuri dialect.

(1) *Chiruu=ga* *sinsii=nkai* *humir-at-tan*.

Chiruu (female name)=NOM teacher=DAT praise-PASS-PAST

'Chiru was praised by the teacher.' (constructed by the author)

(2) *ʔari=ga* *ʔuja=nkai* *nur-aat-tan*.

3SG=NOM parents=DAT scold-PASS-PAST

'He/She was scolded by his/her parents.' (constructed by the author)

The direct passive in Shuri dialect are similar to the Japanese direct passives and English passives, with the agent (*sinsii* in (1) and *uja* in (2)) being marked by the dative *nkai*. The subject (*Chiruu* in (1) and *ari* in (2)) in direct passive sentence is the direct object in the active sentence.

On the other hand, (3) and (4) can be classified as indirect passives or adversative passives in Japanese language: someone (subject of the passive sentence) is affected by the action of the agent (which is marked by the dative *nkai*) and the implication is usually one of adversity. Scholars usually do not identify direct and indirect (or adversative) passives in Ryukyuan languages [5]. However, the author argues that sentences such as (3) and (4) possess the meaning of indirect passives in Japanese language.

(3) *wan=nee* *ʔari=nkai* *ʔisi* *nagir-at-tan*.

1SG=TOP 3SG=DAT rock throw-PASS-PAST

'I was hit by a rock thrown by him/her.' (adapted from NN and is modified by the author)

(4) *wan=nee* *ʔwencu=nkai* *ʔnum* *kakazir-at-tan*

1SG=TOP Mouse=DAT potato bite-PASS-PAST

'I had my potatoes bitten by mice' (adapted from NN and is modified by the author)

In (3) and (4), the subject (*wan*) is adversely affected by the event denoted by the rest of the sentence. In (3), I am the person who is adversely affected by his/her action because he/she threw a rock to me (so I am hurt). In (4), the mice bit my potatoes and I am adversely affected by it (e.g. because I am a farmer). Due to the fact that this usage is similar to the indirect passives in Japanese language, the author identifies it as indirect passives.

The subjects of (5) to (7) are inanimate subject and the existence of an agent is implied but they are not identified. It is used when it is not necessary to identify the agent or it is difficult to do so. This is similar to the inanimate-subject passive in the Japanese language.

(5) *ʔama=a* *tentu...* *tentu* *har-at-ti...*

That place=TOP tent... tent put up-PASS-ti form

‘The tent was put up there...’ [NT, 268]

(6) *yirimun=nu* *mata* *maci=nkai* *ʔippee* *ʔanuu* *kazar-at-ti...*

Toy(s)=NOM again/also town=DAT a lot uh decorate-PASS-ti form

‘A lot of toys were also decorated at town...’ [NT, 286]

(7) *ninzuu* *mucii-n* *cukuratti=du* *wu-kutu...*

Throughout the year muchi-also make-PASS-ti form-FOC exist-CVB.CSL

‘Because muchi (traditional rice cake) is also being made throughout the whole year...’ [NT, 301]

However, in some occasions, it is difficult to determine whether the sentence is passive, honorific or potential.

(9) *kunu ʔizun=nu* *mize=e* *numar-ij-abiin.*

This spring=GEN water=TOP drink-PASS-POL

‘The water of this spring is being drunk (by people).’ [FY, 130]

In (9), the verb *numarijabin* can be translated as passive voice of the verb *numun* (to drink). However, this sentence can be also translated as ‘the water of this spring can be drunk (is safe to drink).’ Thus, sometimes it is difficult to determine the meaning of the sentence simply by looking at the verb of the sentence.

As in Japanese language, *rijun* can attach the auxiliary verb *sun* to form the causative passive form to express one is made to do an action against one’s will (10).

(10) *jum-asa-rijun.*

read-CAUS-PASS

‘(One is) made to read a book.’ [OJ, 81]

3.2. Potential

Apart from passive, *rijun* can be used to express potential modality. In Shuri dialect, 1) auxiliary verb *rijun*, 2) the auxiliary verb *juusun*, and 3) intransitive verb *najun* (or *nain*) can be used to express potentiality. Their meanings and usages are different: 1) and 2) focus on the subject; 3) focus on the object. For the difference between 1) and 2), it is similar to the Japanese Kyushu dialect.

By attaching *rijun* to the irrealis form of a verb, it became the circumstantial potential, meaning one can do an action under a particular situation or a condition for doing an action is met. The examples of this usage are demonstrated in (11) to (13).

(11) *kuma=a* *denki-nu* *cicoo-kutu* *jum-ariin-doo.*

this place=TOP light-GEN be switched on-CVB.CSL read-POT-mood affix

‘Because the light is on here, you can read (because it is bright).’ [NJ, 141]

(12) *wan=nee* *untenshu* *ja-kutu* *sake* *num-a-ran-doo.*

1SG=TOP driver COP-CVB.CSL alcoholic drinks drink-POT-NEG-mood affix

‘Because I am the driver, I cannot drink alcoholic beverages.’ [NJ, 144]

(13) *niisaibii-siga* *kam-arij-abiin.*

(taste is)awful-CVB.CNS eat-POT-POL

‘The taste (of this food) is awful but I can eat it.’ [FY, 130]

In (11), the light is on so it is bright enough for the person to read. In (12), the speaker is going to drive the car so the speaker cannot drink alcoholic beverages in this situation because it is dangerous to do so. In (13), the focus is on the object, i.e. the food, whether it is eatable or not and it is not related to the person's ability of eating. This usage of *rijun* may come from the passive meaning: the speaker does not have the initiative in doing one action and the outside factors (other person or a particular situation) influence the person's action.

On the other hand, by attaching the auxiliary verb *juusun* with the adverbial stem of a verb (table 1), it expresses the ability potential, meaning one's ability to achieve an action.

(14) *wan=nee sansin hwici-juusun.*

1SG=TOP sanshin play-POT

'I can play sanshin (Okinawan traditional three-stringed lute).' [NN, 105]

(15) *zooji-jainee sansin hwici-tura-siga hwici-juu-san.*

Good at-CVB.ANT sanshin play-BEN-CVB.CNS play-POT-NEG

'I will play sanshin for you if I were good at it. However, I cannot (do not know how to) play it.'

[NJ, 144]

This strict distinction between circumstantial and ability potential is similar to the Japanese Kyushu dialects. In fact, in some Japanese dialects, including the Kyushu dialects, different predicates are used for circumstantial potential and ability potential as well [6]. For example, in the dialect of Munakata district of Fukuoka Prefecture, the potential form of the Japanese verb *motsu* (to hold) can be expressed in 1) *mochi-kiru*, which means one's ability to hold something (e.g. he is strong) and 2) *mota-ruru*, meaning one can hold something under a particular situation (e.g. he is not busy)[7]. In some dialects such as the Oita dialect, the circumstantial potential is further divided into subjective circumstantial potential (e.g. I cannot eat the apple because I am full) and objective circumstantial potential (e.g. I cannot eat the apple because it is rotten) [8]; however, it seems that there is no such distinction in the Shuri dialect.

The intransitive verb *najun* (or *nain*) is also used to express potential. However, its usage and meaning are different from *rijun* and *yuusun*.

(16) *zin=oo mucc-oo-kutu kooimun jaraa nai-siga*

money=TOP hold-PROG-CVB.CSL shopping be-ANT can do-CVB.CNS

haru ?ucu-se=e naran.

farm cultivate-NLZ=TOP can-NEG

'I have money so doing shopping is possible for me; however when it comes to farm cultivation, I am not able to do it.' [NJ, 144]

(17) *kunu zasice=e sizika ja-kutu sikuce=e juu nain.*

This room=TOP quiet COP=CVB.CSL work=TOP ADV can do

'This room is quiet so I can do my work very well (my work goes on well).' [NJ2, 4]

(18) *kunu sigutu ?jaa=ga naju-mi?*

This task 2SG=NOM can do-Q

'Can you do this task (well)?' (Yes/no interrogative) [OJ, 406]

(19) *kure=e waa=ga=n najun.*

This thing=TOP I=NOM=also can do

'Even I can do this task (well).' [OJ, 406]

As we can see in (16) to (19), *najun*, in contrast to *rijun* and *juusun*, is used independently without attaching to other verbs. The author argues that *najun* focuses on the object (i.e. the action), instead of

the subject (the person who does the action). In (16), the focus is on the actions: shopping and farm cultivating. Because of a particular situation (I have money), so Action A (shopping) can be achieved; however, Action B (farm cultivation) is unable to be achieved (e.g. because I am not able to do it or I do not want to do it etc.). In (17), the focus is on ‘my work’, i.e. my work goes on smoothly. In (18) and (19), both subjects are ‘this task’ and the focus of both sentences is whether the task will be finished well by a person.

3.3. Honorific

In the Shuri dialect, honorific system is divided into three classes: honorific, humble, and polite. Apart from *rijun*, regular honorific forms and irregular forms can be used to express honorific. For the regular honorific form, the adverbial stem is attached to the verb *miseen* (regular verb 1 and 2 in table 1). There are several irregular honorific verbs, including *menseen* (to go, to come, to exist), *usagajun* (to eat, to drink), and *umikakijun* (to see).

According to the *Okinawago Jiten* [Okinawan Dictionary], *rijun* can be used as a slightly less polite honorific but it can be attached to verbs such as *miseen* to form honorific form. At the same time, however, it is also written that it is rare to express honorific by using *rijun*.

According to Aragaki (AT), *-miseen* can be classified as subject honorific, meaning it is used to elevate the person who took the action. On the other hand, *rijun* can be regarded as non-subject honorific, meaning it shows respect to the action itself or the receiver of the action (e.g. god).

From Nakamatsu’s record (NT) of conversations between descendants of former Ryukyu Kingdom’s nobles, the author finds out *miseen* is used frequently when the speaker wants to elevate the person who is senior or has high social status (example (20) and (21)).

(20) *ʔure=e ʔubit-oo-misee-mi?*

that thing=TOP remember-PROG-RSP-Q

‘Do you remember that?’ (Yes/no interrogative) [NT, 296]

(21) *bideetin= nu mee=nje=e ʔasibi-misee-biran-ti-i?*

Benzaiten Temple=GEM nearby=LOC=TOP play-RSP-POL-ti form-Q

‘Didn’t you play near the Benzaiten Temple?’ (Yes/no interrogative) [NT, 266]

In (20) and (21), the speaker (same person) wanted to show respect to the person he was talking to, who was his relative and was older than him and had high social status (descendant of former nobles). Thus, he used ‘*miseen*’ when he mentioned the action of the person he had to show respect to.

On the other hand, as Arigata explained, in many occasions, *rijun* is used to show respect to the action itself or the receiver of the action. In (22), *rijun* is used to elevate the receiver (the god).

(22) *ʔure=e ʔusagi-rarii-siga...*

That thing (offerings)=TOP offer-POL-CVB.CNS

‘Offerings were made (to god)...’ [NT, 297]

However, the following usage of *rijun* is found in Nakmatsu’s record.

(23) *ʔundee-sattaru kutu=n a-siga.....*

infuriation-POL thing=also exist-CVB.CNS

‘I had incurred his wrath.’ [NT, 294]

In (23), *sattaru* is the attributive form of *sattan*, the past tense of *sarijun* (to be done)(table 2); the noun *ʔundee* means the infuriation or anger of senior people. In this sentence, the speaker is the subject of the sentence and her father got angry at her. Instead of using *nuraarijun* (be scolded), the speaker used the noun *ʔundee* with the verb *sarijun* to show her respect to her father. The speaker is the subject and her father is the agent (he was angry at her). Thus, this is similar to the indirect passives but with the agent who the subject wants to show respect to.

In (24), the speaker used *rijun* to refer an action of an old man who the speaker does not know.

(24) *ʔanu utusue=e yiikuru kuma=wuti jukurarijabin.*

That old man=TOP usually this.place=LOC rest-PASS-POL

‘That old man usually takes a rest in this place.’ [FY, 130]

Judging from the sentence, the old man neither has relationships with the speaker nor has a very high social status. However, since he is an old man, the speaker wants to show his respect to him, thus he used *rijun* instead of *miseen* in the sentence.

4. CONCLUSION

In this essay, the author re-examines the functions of the auxiliary verb *rijun* in the Shuri dialect of Ryukyuan languages. The basic usage of *rijun* is passive and the author argues that *rijun* has the function of indirect passive in the Japanese language. On the other hand, *rijun* can be used to express potential. Compared to the auxiliary verb *juusun* and intransitive verb *najun*, *rijun* can be considered as circumstantial potential, which expresses a situation which allows the person to do the action. This usage may come from the passive meaning: the speaker does not have the initiative in doing one action. Finally, the third meaning of *rijun* is to express honorific. Based on Arigata’s studies which explain that *rijun* is used to show respect to the action itself or the receiver of the action, the author further argues that *rijun* is used in indirect passive: to the agent who the speaker has to or wants to show respect to. Moreover, the author also agrees that *rijun* is used as less polite form: when the speaker describes an event carried out by a person who neither has relationships with him nor has a high social status. We can see that passive is the basic function of *rijun* and the other two functions developed from it.

Table1. Examples of regular verbs (1 and 2) and irregular verbs in Shuri dialect.

Verb conjugated forms		Regular Verb 1 <i>mucun</i> (to hold)	Regular Verb 2 <i>tujun / tuin</i> (to take)	Irregular Verb <i>cuun</i> (to come)
adverbial root (the root which forms other verb stems such as conclusive, attributive etc. and it is underlined in regular verbs 1 and 2.)	conclusive (non-past)	<u><i>mucun</i></u>	<u><i>tujun</i></u> / <u><i>tuin</i></u>	<i>cuun</i>
	attributive (non-past)	<u><i>mucuru</i></u>	<u><i>tujuru</i></u> / <u><i>tuiru</i></u>	<i>cuuru</i>
	adverbial	<u><i>muci</i></u>	<u><i>tui</i></u>	<i>cii</i>
	honorific	<i>muci-miseen</i>	<i>tu-miseen</i> (‘i’ is omitted for regular verbs 2)	<i>menseen</i>
	potential	<i>muci-juusun</i>	<i>tui-juusun</i>	<i>cii-juusun</i>
	desiderative	<i>muci-busan</i>	<i>tui-busan</i>	<i>cii-busan</i>
	polite	<u><i>mucabiin</i></u>	<u><i>tujabiin</i></u> / <u><i>tuibiin</i></u>	<i>caabiin</i>
	apocoped	<u><i>mucu</i></u>	<u><i>tuju</i></u> / <u><i>tui</i></u>	<i>cuu</i>
	yes/no interrogative	<i>mucu-mi</i>	<i>tuju-mi</i> <i>tui-mi</i>	<i>cuu-mi</i>
wh-interrogative	<i>mucu-ga</i>	<i>tuju-ga</i> <i>tui-ga</i>	<i>cuu-ga</i>	
negative root (the root which forms other verb stems such as negative, irrealis, imperative etc. and it is underlined in regular verb 1 and 2)	negative	<u><i>mutan</i></u>	<u><i>turan</i></u>	<i>kuun</i>
	irrealis	<u><i>muta</i></u>	<u><i>tura</i></u>	<i>kuu</i>
	volitional	<i>muta</i>	<i>tura</i>	<i>kuu</i>
	causative	<i>muta-sun</i>	<i>tura-sun</i>	<i>kuura-sun</i>
	passive	<i>muta-rijun</i> <i>muta-riin</i>	<i>tura-rijun</i> <i>tura-riin</i>	<i>kuura-riju</i> <i>kuura-riin</i>
	imperative	<u><i>mutee</i></u> / <u><i>muti</i></u>	<u><i>turee</i></u> / <u><i>turi</i></u>	<i>kuu</i> / <i>kuuwa</i>
	prohibitive	<u><i>mutuna</i></u> / <u><i>mutan-kee</i></u>	<i>tunna</i> / <u><i>turan-kee</i></u>	<i>kuunna</i> / <i>kuun-kee</i>

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<i>ti</i>-form root (the root which forms other verb stems such as past tense and progressive and it is underlined in regular 1 and 2)	continuative (<i>ti</i>-form)	<u><i>mucci</i></u>	<u><i>tuti</i></u>	<i>cci</i>
	conclusive (past)	<u><i>muccan</i></u>	<u><i>tutan</i></u>	<i>can</i>
	attributive (past)	<u><i>muccaru</i></u>	<u><i>tutaru</i></u>	<i>caru</i>
	progressive	<u><i>muccoon</i></u> <u><i>mucceen</i></u>	<u><i>tutoon</i></u> <u><i>tuteen</i></u>	<i>coon</i>

Table2. Examples of conjugated forms of irrealis of verb and *rijun* in Shuri dialect.

conjugated forms of irrealis + <i>rijun</i> original verb	Conclusive form (non-past)	Conclusive form (past)	Continuative (<i>ti</i> -form)	Negative form
<i>humijun</i> (to praise)	<i>humirarijun</i>	<i>humirattan</i>	<i>humiratti</i>	<i>humiraran</i>
<i>nagijun</i> (to throw)	<i>nagirarijun</i>	<i>nagirattan</i>	<i>nagiratti</i>	<i>nagiraran</i>
<i>kakaziyun</i> (to bite)	<i>kakazirarijun</i>	<i>kakazirattan</i>	<i>kakaziratti</i>	<i>kakaziraran</i>
<i>hajun</i> (to put up)	<i>hararijun</i>	<i>harattan</i>	<i>haratti</i>	<i>hararan</i>
<i>kazajun</i> (to deocrate)	<i>kazararijun</i>	<i>kazarattan</i>	<i>kazaratti</i>	<i>kazararan</i>
<i>cukujun</i> (to create)	<i>cukurarijun</i>	<i>cukurattan</i>	<i>cukuratti</i>	<i>cukuraran</i>
<i>jumun</i> (to read)	<i>yumarijun</i>	<i>yumattan</i>	<i>yumatti</i>	<i>yumaran</i>
<i>numun</i> (to drink)	<i>numarijun</i>	<i>numattan</i>	<i>numatti</i>	<i>numaran</i>
<i>watajun</i> (to cross over)	<i>watararijun</i>	<i>watarattan</i>	<i>wataratti</i>	<i>watararan</i>
<i>kacun</i> (to write)	<i>kakarijun</i>	<i>kakattan</i>	<i>kakatti</i>	<i>kakaran</i>
<i>sun</i> (to do)	<i>sarijun</i>	<i>sattan</i>	<i>satti</i>	<i>saran</i>

Abbreviations:

1SG=first person singular, 2SG=second person singular, 3SG=third person singular, ANT=anterior, BEN=benefactive, CAUS=causative, CVB=converb, CNS=concessive, COP=copula, CSL=causal, DAT=dative, FOC=focus marker, GEN=genitive, LOC=locative, NOM=subject, NEG=negation, PASS=passive, PAST=past tense, POL=polite, POT=potential, PROG=progressive, Q=interrogative, RSP=honorific, TOP=topic

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TT T. Tshako, “Okinawa Chū-nanbu Hōgen (South central dialect of Okinawa)”, K. Takashi, R. Kōnō, and E. Chino (eds.), *Nippon Rettō no Gengo* (The languages of the Japanese archipelago). Tokyo: Sanseido, 1997.

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- [4] This classification of Ryukyuan verbs into regular verbs 1, regular verbs 2, and irregular verbs is based on the studies of Nakahara Jō and Matayoshi Satomi. Nakahara classifies Ryukyuan verbs into type a (quinguagrade), type b (monograde), and irregular verbs such as *cuun* and *sun*. Satomi studies the Tsuken dialect of the Northern Ryukyuan languages and classifies Ryukyuan verbs into regular verbs 1, regular verbs 2, and irregular verbs according to inflectional morphology. The author borrows the terms of Satomi in this essay. Table 1 is adapted from Nakahara Jō (NJ) with a modification. For details, see Matayoshi Satomi, Tsuken [Okinawan], *An Introduction to Ryukyuan Languages*. Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 2010.
- [5] There is no classification of passives into direct and indirect passives in *Okinawago Jiten* (OJ) and Tshako’s introduction of the South central dialect of Okinawa (TT). Nishioka and Nakahara (NN) mentioned the expression “.....*ni**sareta*” (which is the indirect passives in Japanese) can be expressed by using the dative *nkai* to mark the agent. However, they do not use the term “indirect passives”.
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