# Abstract

The recent two decades have witnessed a surge of interest in the research on middles in various languages ranging from English and Greek, to Kanuri and Modern Chinese. However, the existence of middle constructions in Archaic Chinese has completely escaped the attention of linguists. This thesis constitutes the first step in achieving an understanding in the form and function of middles in Archaic Chinese. Drawn on Kemmer (1993), a comprehensive typological study which presents 13 types of uses of middle markers in 34 languages, the thesis identifies five middle constructions in Archaic Chinese: reflexive middles, reciprocal middles, emotion middles, spontaneous middles, and passive middles. Semantically and syntactically, the five types of middles in Archaic Chinese all exhibit the characteristics of "low distinguishability of participants" and "low elaboration of events", two common denominators among different uses of middle marking in world languages as proposed by Kemmer (1993). The two properties distinguish situations encoded by middle constructions from prototypical two-participant events and prototypical one-participant events. With data primarily from *Zuozhuan*, the thesis shows that the middle constructions in Archaic Chinese, parallel to other middle marking languages, have a "centralizing" effect. On a semantic map, the middles lie between typical transitive and typical intransitive constructions, and also between typical passive and typical active constructions. The thesis concludes that, in addition to the fully recognized distinction between the active and the passive, a third dimension – the middle, should be introduced into the grammatical system of Archaic Chinese with due attention.