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THE SINGPHO AGENTIVE – FUNCTIONS AND MEANINGS*

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Abstract: This paper examines the Singpho noun phrase particle *i*, which functions both as a marker of agentive and also as an adverbial particle, marking locationals, temporals and causals. Based on a careful examination of our text corpus, the distribution of the agentive use of this particle, which is not obligatory, is compared with that of the obligatory anti-agentive, that marks animate patients, recipients/beneficiaries and experiencers. Its use is found to only weakly correlate with either the transitivity of the verb or the definiteness of the agent referent, being slightly more likely to be employed with verbs of stronger transitivity and agents of less definiteness. It is however very frequently employed with speech act verbs.

Keywords: Tibeto-Burman languages, agentive, anti-agentive, adverbial, Singpho

1. INTRODUCTION

Many languages of the Tibeto-Burman family have in their inventory a marker of the actor (or subject) in a transitive clause. This marker is variously referred to as agent or agentive (Chelliah 1997; Coupe 2007; LaPolla 2003) or ergative (Hyslop 2010; LaPolla 1995a), though these two terms essentially refer to the same thing. In this paper we prefer 'agentive' because it has fewer implications of being paradigmatic than 'ergative'. Many languages of the family do not have such marking at all (van Breugel 2008; Post 2007[1]), and some have a nominative marker (Burling 2004; Joseph 2007).

In the Tibeto-Burman languages that have agentive marking, it is not obligatory and is used for functions such as emphasis of agentivity and marked constituent order (Qiang, LaPolla 2003, 2011), situations contrary to real world expectations (Mongsen Ao, Coupe 2007), or disambiguating two potential agents and marking contrastive focus (Kurtöp, Hyslop 2010).

This paper discusses the agentive marking in the Numhpuk variety of Singpho. Four varieties of Singpho (Bodo-Konyak-Jinghpaw/Tibeto-Burman) are identified by Singpho speakers in Northeast India, three of which are spoken in Upper Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, and are named for the rivers on which they are

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[1] Post (2007: 720) does report that "highly individuated referents" can be marked with the topic marker to indicate a higher level of agentivity or volitionality.

spoken: the Numhpuk, Tieng and Diyun respectively. The fourth variety, Turung, is spoken in the middle Brahmaputra valley (see Morey 2010 for a full description of Turung). There are perhaps 10,000 Singpho speakers in India.

Singpho is closely related to the Jinghpaw language spoken in Kachin State, Burma (Hanson 1896, 1906; Maran 1971; Matisoff 1974a, 1974b) and in China (Dai 1992 and Dai and Diehl 2003). One of the features of Jinghpaw is a highly complex set of 'sentence final words' (SFW), which "embody such grammatical meanings of the sentential predicate as mood, subject person and number, direction and aspect" (Dai and Diehl 2003: 407). These sentence final words are not found in Singpho, the verb being marked instead by one of a number of verbal particles, the most common of which are given in (1):

(1) *de ~ re* (/de^{1}/) ~ (/re^{1}/) 'REAL'
ma (/maa^{1}/) 'FUT'
haq (/haʔ^{2}/) 'DECL'
uq (/uʔ^{2}/) 'IMP'

Noun phrases are marked by several particles, including the definite marker *wa*, the agentive *i* and the anti-agentive *hpe*. The particle *wa* is discussed in detail in Morey (2011) and exemplified in (2), where it refers to the Naga, an entity introduced in the previous line, in the form *Naga wa* 'Naga DEF'.[2]

(2) hki wa hka goi he.
khiiʔ^{2} waa^{1} khaʔ^{3} goi^{4} heʔ^{3}

3SG DEF water at PRT
'He was in the water.'
Story of the Buddha and the Naga (SDM08-2006-056), told by Gumgi Gumthoi, (19)

For *i* and *hpe*, following LaPolla (1992, 1995a, 1995b), the terms 'agentive' and 'anti-agentive' are preferred to 'ergative' and 'accusative' because the marking is not syntactically paradigmatic, but rather semantic in nature.

In (3) we see a clause with both agent and patient realised by noun phrases, the agent marked by the agentive *i* and the patient by the anti-agentive *phe*. This example is from the Turung variety:[3]

[2] The tones of the varieties Singpho are shown by means of superscript numerals. In Numhpuk Singpho tone 1 is low falling, tone 2 low and stopped, tone 3 high and stopped, tone 4 mid level and tone 5 high falling. In example (3) and others from the Turung variety of Singpho, tone 1 is low falling, tone 2 high falling and tone 3 mid level. For further discussion of tones in the Turung variety of Singpho, see Morey 2010: 167. The practical orthographies for Turung and Numhpuk Singpho differ and are still under development. These are discussed in Morey 2010: 99.

[3] In this example the asterisk marks Assamese words.

(3) dai ksa i dai jan phe biya* korai* hah.
dai[3] kəsaa[2] ii[3] dai[3] jan[3] phee[3] biya korai haʔ[1]

[that son AG]$_A$ [that girl A.AG]$_O$ marry do DECL
'... and so the son married that very girl.'
Story of the clever daughter-in-law (SDM07-200304-001), told by Jogen Shyam (Ai Mya Ko), (19)

Examples like (3), in which both *i* and agentive *phe* (spelled *hpe* in Numhpuk Singpho and also Kachin Jinghpaw) are found together in the same clause, are quite infrequent.

The function of *hpe* is to mark animate non-agents, most frequently patients, beneficiaries and experiencers, and *hpe* is almost obligatory with such animate arguments. (See Morey 2010: 350 for a discussion of the anti-agentive in the Turung variety of Singpho.) The experiencer function of *hpe* with deontic 'should' or desiderative 'want' is grammaticalised to the point that a verb is not required to convey this sense, as in (4):

(4) ngai hpe măgui mări gaw law bawng di ...
ŋai[1] phee[4] məgui[1] mərii[1] go[1] loo[1] boŋ[4] dii[1] ...

1SG A.AG elephant buy TOP PRT combine GV ...
'I should join (with him) to buy an elephant.'
Travels to Burma (SDM08-2006-101), told by Kiyang La, (197)

Since the anti-agentive can mark both patients and beneficiaries, it can appear twice if both these arguments are animate, demonstrated in (5), an example from Turung, where 'another person, or emissary' is sent to 'the father of the bride' and both those arguments are marked by *hpe* (here written *phe*).[4]

(5) numsa maang na gwa phe ...
num[3]saa[2] maaŋ[2] naa[3] gə-waa[1] phee[3] ...
[girl youth POSS AR-FA A.AG]$_{BEN}$ ...

lasa maang na gnu wa ...
laa[3]saa[2] maaŋ[2] naa[3] gə-nuu[2] waa[1] ...
[young man youth POSS AR-MO DEF]$_A$ ...

[4] This example has been substantially edited for presentation here, but the marking of both patient and beneficiary has been retained as in the original, the full transcription of which can be seen in Morey (2010: 352).

chumphoh	gleng	aima	phe	san	joh	dat.
cum^{1}pho?^{1}	gəleŋ^{3}	ai^{2}maa^{1}	phee^{3}	san^{2}	jo?^{1}	dat^{1}
[person	other	one	A.AG]$_{PAT}$	ask	PURP	send

'(Then), the father of the groom will send another person, to ask either the mother of the bride ....'

Turung Wedding Customs (SDM07-200309-009), told by Aishu Shyam, (7)

While the anti-agentive is almost always found with animate non-agent arguments, the agentive marker *i*, on the other hand, is not obligatory and frequently does not appear, even when the agent argument is expressed by a full noun phrase or a pronoun, as we will see below. Moreover, the particle *i* marks other functions, which we will group together under the heading 'adverbial', more frequently found than its agentive function. Such adverbial uses mark locationals, temporals, causals and purposives, discussed and exemplified below in Section 4. In Jinghpaw, as described by Dai and Diehl (2003), the forms of the agentive and anti-agentive are [e^{31}] and [e?^{55}] respectively, being described as 'structural particles'.

2. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

We have examined our corpus of texts[5] in both the Turung and Numhpuk varieties of Singpho and counted the raw number of occurrences of *hpe*, as well as each of the main functions of the particle *i*. I present these findings in Table 1:

Variety	*Turung*	*Numhpuk Singpho*
Corpus Size (time)	11.5 hours	4 hours
Corpus Size (number of lines)[6]	10,596	3,741
Occurrence of *hpe*/*phe* 'A.AG'	877	477
Occurrence of *i* 'AG'	130	228
Occurrence of *i* 'ADV'	126	754

Table 1. Frequency of agentive and anti-agentive markers in two Singpho varieties

Table 1 shows that the anti-agentive particle is somewhat more frequent than the agentive. This can, in part, be explained by the fact that the agent is more

[5] The full corpus can be searched at the *Tai and Tibeto-Burman Languages of Assam* website (http://sealang.net/assam).

[6] Both databases consist of a range of texts, such as stories, personal histories, cultural information and some procedural texts. The corpus does not include any elicitation or prompted texts such as *Pear Stories* or *Frog Stories*. The main difference between the Turung and Numhpuk Singpho corpora is that the latter contains a significant number of traditional songs. When this corpus was assembled, the text was divided into 'sentences', based upon the native speaker's intuitions of what formed a complete grammatical utterance. So these are not single clauses, but may be more complex structures containing multiple subordinate clauses followed by a main or matrix clause, or they may be as short as a single exclamation. See Morey (2010: 552) for a discussion of the 'sentence' in the Turung variety of Singpho.

likely to be a topical element, and consequently can be omitted, whereas the non-agent arguments are more likely to be focal and need to be spelled out. Topical elements usually appear before the focus although topical agents are also found after the verb in a position we term 'additional topic' (see Morey 2010: 508 for a discussion of topic and focus in the Turung variety of Singpho).

Arguments marked by the anti-agentive only make up a portion of all patient arguments, because the anti-agentive only marks animate patients and probably a higher proportion of patient arguments are non-animate. On the other hand it marks almost all beneficiaries and recipients because these are almost always animate.[7]

A second explanation for the lower number of agentive markers is that many agents in the corpus are not marked by *i*. We have not quantified this across the whole corpus, although in Section 3 below we make a detailed study of a single text in which most overtly expressed agents are not marked by *i*.

What we can see from Table 1 is that the frequency of agentive and adverbial uses of the particle *i* is considerably less in the Turung variety than in Numhpuk Singpho, whereas the frequency of the use of the anti-agentive is more or less the same (the Turung corpus being much larger).

We can also see that in the Numhpuk variety the adverbial function of *i* accounts for a large majority. Out of 982 tokens of *i* in Table 1, 228 (23.2%) were marking the agentive and the remaining 754 (76.8%) are adverbial in function. We will now proceed to discuss the agentive function, with the adverbial function treated in section 4.

3. THE SINGPHO AGENTIVE *I*

The agentive is demonstrated in (6), which consists of three clauses: (1) a matrix clause with a speech act verb on the first line, with the agent (the speakers) marked with agentive *i*, (2) a complex clause with two verbs, *nown* 'bring' and *ngu* 'say', the agent of both being the pronoun *nang* '2SG' marked with *i*, and (3) the main clause of the speech without any overt arguments. The blind men referred to were introduced earlier in the story and are a salient reference in this discourse.

(6)	...	miqdi	hteng	i	nga	re			
	...	mi?^{3}dii^{4}	theeŋ^{1}	ii^{4}	ŋaa^{5}	re^{1}			
	...	blind	PL	AG	say	REAL			
	a	nang	i	nawn	sa	kawq	ngu	yawng	gaw
	aa^{1}	naŋ^{1}	ii^{4}	non^{4}	saa^{1}	ko?^{3}	ŋuu^{1}	yoŋ^{5}	go^{1}
	EXCL	2SG	AG	bring	go	FUT.IMM	say	when	TOP

[7] One exception to this is in fixed phrases like *nat jawq* 'spirit give', literally meaning to 'give to the spirits', 'to propitiate the spirits'.

mai	ya	le.
mai[4]	yaa[5]	le[1]
able	BENF	EMPH

'... those blind men said "If you say that you will lead us, you may do so."'
Story of the Blind Men (SDM08-20050801-002), told by Bhupeswar Ningda, (33)

Both of the agentive-marked arguments in this example are co-occurring with speech act verbs. This appears to be the single most frequent usage of the agentive marker in modern spoken Numhpuk Singpho.

The agentive is found in subordinate clauses, as we see in (7), where the clause *gawgin i găwaq naw măchiq naw* 'being in pain from the ant's biting' modifies the frog (*suqlaq*), also an entity introduced earlier in the discourse.

(7)

dai	yawng	gaw	suqlaq	wa				
dai[1]	yoŋ[5]	go[1]	suʔ[3]laʔ[3]	waa[1]				
that	when	TOP	frog	DEF				
gawgin	i	găwaq	naw	măchiq	naw	lăgan	yawng	...
goo[1]gin[1]	ii[4]	gəwaʔ[2]	noo[4]	məciʔ[2]	noo[4]	ləgaan[1]	yoŋ[5]	...
[[ant	AG	bite	SEQ]	ill	SEQ]	jump	when	...

'And then the frog, being in pain from the ant's biting, having jumped up ...'
Story of the Ant and the Frog (SDM08-20060801PN-005), told by Sam Awn Laq, (35)

Agentive marking is frequently omitted, as in (8). This example consists of two clauses, the first of which takes up the first two lines of the transcription and with a verbal complex *dăru dat* 'attack' and the agent argument *nga* 'buffalo' marked by the definite marker. The second clause, which is the third line of transcription, has a verb complex *lung dat* 'go up' with the agent *hkiq* marked also by the definite marker. While not perhaps as salient an entity in this text as the blind men in (6) or the ant in (7), both of which those stories are about, the buffalo in (8) was nevertheless introduced several lines earlier. From this we conclude that saliency is not a factor in the decision of whether to use the agentive marking.

(8)

nga	wa	gaw	hkautang	săkau	hpe	chum
ŋaa[1]	waa[1]	go[1]	khau[1]taŋ[1]	səkau[4]	phee[4]	cum[1]
buffalo	DEF	TOP	PN	caste name	A.AG	PRT

gănoi	ri	dăru	dat	aq
gənoi[4]	rii[1]	dəruu[4]	dat[2]	aʔ[2]
narrowly escape	LV	attack	put	DECL

hkiq	wa	htaw	n-hpan	wa	lung	dat	dăgaw.
khiiʔ^{2}	waa^{1}	tho^{5}	m^{4}phan^{1}	waa^{1}	luŋ^{4}	dat^{2}	də = go^{1}
2SG	DEF	yonder	fence	DEF	go up	put	REAL=TOP

'That buffalo attacked Hkautang Săkau, and he just narrowly escaped that attack by climbing up yonder fence.'
Travels to Burma (SDM08-2006-101), told by Kiyang Laq, (63)

The verbs in both (7) and (8), *găwaq* 'bite' and *dăru* 'attack' respectively, are both strongly transitive, but one has an agent marked by *i* and the other does not. There does appear to be some correlation between the transitivity of the verb and the presence of *i*. All three expressed agents of the verb *găwaq* 'bite' in the corpus have agentive marking, as do five out of seven overtly expressed agents of various verbs meaning 'send'. Most of the expressed agents of the verb *sărin* 'teach' on the other hand were not marked with *i*, although the interrogative *kăma* 'who' was marked every time it occurred. This suggests that levels of transitivity and definiteness might play a role in determining the presence or absence of *i*, but neither is of itself a sufficient condition for its presence.

A detailed study of overt agents – expressed with nouns, pronouns or proper nouns – was done on a single text, *Travels to Burma*, spoken by Kiyang Laq.[8] Of 19 minutes duration and containing 273 lines, this text contained 29 overt agents, of which 11 were marked with the agentive, and 18 unmarked. Of the unmarked agents, none were arguments of speech act verbs, as compared with 5 out of 11 of the marked agents.

When we consider the word class type of the agent, we see that pronouns and proper nouns are slightly more likely to be unmarked, while full nouns are slightly more likely to be marked, as we see in Table 2. Since pronouns and proper nouns are always definite and referential, whereas other nouns may not be, this suggests that less referential elements are more likely to have agentive marking.

Type of Agent	*Without agentive i*	*With agentive i*
Pronoun	10 (62.5%)	6 (37.5%)
Proper Noun	5 (83.3%)	1 (16.7%)
Common Noun	3 (42.9%)	4 (57.1%)

Table 2. Word classes marked by the agentive particle i *in Numhpuk Singpho*

While this is based on a very small sample, a study of the whole corpus shows agentive marking more frequently on the 2nd person singular pronoun *nang* (40 tokens) than on either the 1st person singular *ngai* or the 3rd person singular *hkiq* (both 5 tokens). Since the 1st and 3rd person pronouns have a final vowel *-i*, the agentive marker does not always show up clearly in those cases. However there

[8] Text number SDM08-2006-101.

are clear examples of *ngai i* and *hkiq i* in the corpus. In the whole corpus, a number of the cases of 2nd person agent marked by *i* were not transitive, as in (9).

(9)	a	nang	i	sălawng	gai	săkawng	re.
	aa[1]	naŋ[1]	ii[4]	səloŋ	gai[4]	səkoŋ[1]	re[1]
	EXCL	2SG	AG	ERR	very	proud	REAL

'"Ah, you are very proud", (they said to the elephant).'
Story of the bad elephant (SDM08-20050801-021), told by Bisa Lat Nawng, (48)

The function of the agentive here is to convey that the interlocutors of the direct speech, a group of other animals and birds, are affected by the elephant's pride.

Returning to the text *Travels in Burma,* where the agent of a speech act verb is stated, that agent was always marked by the agentive *i*.[9] Given that the speaker of this text is very elderly (born in 1916), this may represent an older form of the language. We have examined two shorter stories by younger speakers, and these show that agentive marking is not required with speech act verbs.[10] This might suggest that the agentive marker is being used less frequently by younger speakers, something that we impressionistically feel after several years working with these languages.

Let us now consider the examples where a stated agent was not marked by the agentive. In Table 3 we present all of the examples from the text *Travels to Burma* which have agents that are unmarked by the agentive. We show the form, the main verb, which is always transitive or ditransitive, and details of the patient argument.

As we can see from Table 3, when the agent is not marked with *i*, the patient argument may be unstated, as in line (105), may be in a topic position, either before the agent, as in line (57), or postverbal, as in (244), or both agent and patient may be stated and in the pragmatically neutral 'canonical' AOV order. Where the patient is stated and animate, it is marked by the anti-agentive *hpe*, as in line (262).

Moreover, the agent that is not marked with *i* may or may not carry the definite marker (see Morey 2011 for further discussion of the definite in

[9] The marking of agents with speech act verbs appears to be common in Tibeto-Burman. Coupe (2007: 164) reports that the only intransitive verbs that consistently occur with agentive marking are "verbs of vocalization" such as 'bark', 'shout', 'scream', 'reply'.

[10] We have fewer texts spoken by younger people in our Singpho corpus. In text SDM08-2006-056, *Lord Buddha and the Naga*, spoken by Gumgi Gumhtoi, aged around 50, there are three speech verbs with expressed agents, one of which is marked by the agentive and the other two by the definite *wa* only, and in SDM08-2006-186, *Buddhist Story*, told by N-bawng Nawng, aged around 55, there are four speech act verbs with expressed agents, three of which are marked by the definite and agentive (*wa+i*) and one by the definite marker only.

Example No.	*Agent*	*Main Verb*	*Patient*
	Pronouns		
(13)	*niyon* '2DL'	*jawq* 'give'	*nat* 'spirit' this is part of a fixed form *nat jawq*, 'propitiate the spirits'
(49)	*niyon wa* '2DL DEF'	*yawn* 'carry'	canonical AOV order
(48)	*iyon wa* '1DL DEF'	unstated verb 'carry'	no stated patient
(57)	*hkiq* '3SG'	*la* 'take'	patient stated, but in pre-agent topical position
(70)	*hkiq* '3SG'	*dun* 'pull'	no stated patient
(196)	*ngai* '1SG'	unstated verb 'do'	no stated patient
(262)	*ngai* '1SG'	*sărin* 'teach'	both agent and patient (marked by *phe*) are in post-verbal position
(89)	*hkini* '3PL'	*gălaw* 'prepare'	patient stated, but in post-verbal additional topic position
(105)	*hkini gaw* '3PL TOP'	*gălaw* 'prepare'	no stated patient
	Proper names		
(29)	unmarked	*mădun* 'show'	canonical AOV order
(45)	unmarked	*jawq* 'give'	*nat* 'spirit' this is part of a fixed form *nat jawq*, 'propitiate the spirits'
(80)	unmarked	*dan* 'cut'	canonical AOV order
(244)	unmarked	*grim* 'catch'	patient stated, but in post-verbal additional topic position
(42)	+ *wa* 'DEF'	*la* 'take'	canonical AOV order
	Nouns		
(63)	+ *wa gaw* 'DEF TOP'	*dăru* 'attack'	canonical AOV order
(152)	+ *wa* 'DEF'	*măgaq* 'touch'	canonical AOV order
(253)	unmarked	*phoq* 'open'	canonical AOV order

Table 3. Unmarked agents, form, function and syntax

Numhpuk Singpho). Thus, neither the status of the patient, nor whether the agent is marked for definiteness, is a predictor of whether the agent will be marked by *i*.

We have already seen lack of agent marking in example (8) above. Example (10) is another case of the absence of agent marking, this time with negative polarity. In this example there are effectively two patients, *ngai hpe* '1SG A.AG' 'me' and *lătaq* 'hand'. It appears that Kiyang Laq changed his mind about the patient after commencing the line.

(10)	dau	săra	wa	ngai	hpe	...	lătaq	bai
	dau[1]	səraa[1]	waa[1]	ŋai[1]	phee[4]	...	ləta?[2]	bai[4]
	that	teacher	DEF	1SG	A.AG	...	hand	even

gălеq	n	măgaq	aq	law.
gəle?[3]	n[4]	məga?[2]	a?[2]	loo[1]
yet	NEG	touch	DECL	POL

'That teacher did not even touch my hand.'
Travels to Burma (SDM08-2006-101), told by Kiyang Laq, (152)

4. ADVERBIAL USE OF *I*

A smaller portion of the Numhpuk Singpho corpus, a subset of 16 texts, consisting of 1,146 lines (approximately 85 minutes of recorded text),[11] was examined in detail for the adverbial uses of *i*. In that portion of text, there were a total of 181 uses of *i*, of which 55 (30.4%) were marking the agent and 126 (69.6%) were marking adverbials. Table 4 presents a breakdown of the different kinds of adverbial functions recorded.

Function	*Number of Occurrences*
Adverbial, Temporal	57
Adverbial, Locational	51
Adverbial, Causal	12
Adverbial, Purposive	5
Adverbial, Numeral	1

Table 4. Functions of the particle i *in Numhpuk Singpho*

As we can see from Table 4, temporal and locational uses are the most frequent of the 'adverbial' functions of *i*. In its temporal function, *i* can appear marking a temporal relator noun, as *singdim i* 'after ADV' or a temporal noun as *măнap i* 'morning ADV'. It can also mark a subordinate clause, as we see in the first line of (11). This usage of marking a subordinate clause with *i* is not found, as far as we know, in the Turung variety of Singpho.

[11] These texts are those numbered SDM08-200308-002; SDM08-20040802-014; SDM08-20040803-013; SDM08-20050801-002; SDM08-20050801-021; SDM08-2006-032; SDM08-2006-056; SDM08-2006-057; SDM08-2006-058; SDM08-2006-059; SDM08-2006-071; SDM08-2006-087; SDM08-2006-094; SDM08-2006-098; SDM08-2006-100 and SDM08-2006-101. They are archived at ELAR (http://elar.soas.ac.uk) and can be searched at the Tai and Tibeto-Burman Languages of Assam website (http://sealang.net/assam).

(11)miqdi hteng hpe san yang i
mi?^{3}dii^{4} theeŋ^{1} phee^{4} san^{4} yaŋ^{5} ii^{4}
blind PL A.AG ask when ADV

miqdi hteng wa i nga re.
mi?^{3}dii^{4} theeŋ^{1} waa^{1} ii^{4} ŋaa^{1} re^{1}
blind PL DEF AG say REAL
'When the blind people were asked, they said.'
Story of the blind men (SDM08-20050801-002), told by Bhipeswar Ningdaq, (25)

A related form is the common connective *dai htum na i* (that+end+SEQ+ADV), which can be translated simply as 'after that' or 'then', but is literally 'that being ended ...'.

In its locational function, the adverbial appears with nouns, as in (12):

(12)htaw n-diu hkaq i yawng mu săkau ni
tho^{5} n^{4}diu^{5} kha?^{3} ii^{4} yoŋ^{4} muu^{1} səkau^{4} nii^{1}
yonder PN water ADV all also caste.name PN

bawk n-diu hkaq nga re he ti.
bok^{2} n^{4}diu^{5} kha?^{3} ŋaa^{5} re^{1} he^{1} tii^{1}
all PN water stay REAL STILL PRT
'At yonder Ndiu River, all the Săkau people are staying at the Ndiu river ...'
Travels to Burma (SDM08-2006-101), told by Kiyang Laq (10)

In its locational function, the particle *i* is also found in traditional Singpho songs. In some songs, the function of *i* appears to be more euphonic, as in (13):

(13)law n la na yawng gaw na manmu
loo^{1} n^{4} laa^{4} naa^{4} yoŋ^{5} go naa man^{4}muu^{4}
EXCL NEG take SEQ when TOP POSS knife

saw di htau da i law htau da i.
so?^{3} dii^{1} thau^{4} daa^{4} ii^{4} loo^{1} thau^{4} daa^{4} ii^{4}
withdraw LV cut keep ADV EXCL cut keep ADV
'If I cannot bring you, I will take out (my) knife and cut off (my head).'
Love song (SDM08-20040803-013), sung by Kiyang Laq (8)

It also occurs with causals, as in the common phrase *dai ninghkan i* 'that cause ADV', translated as 'because of this' as in (14):

(14)...	ya	n	mu	ninghkan	i	gaw	tam	ya
...	ya?^{2}	n^{4}-	muu^{4}	niŋ^{4}khan^{4}	ii^{4}	go^{1}	tam^{1}	yaa^{5}
...	now	NEG-	see	cause	ADV	TOP	search	BENF

ra	ngu	di	hki	htaw	nat	hpe	su	dăgaw.
raa^{5}	ŋuu^{1}	dii^{1}	khii?^{2}	thoo^{5}	nat^{3}	phee^{4}	suu^{1}	də=go^{1}
should	say	LV	3SG	yonder	spirit	A.AG	tell	REAL=TOP

‘Because she could not see (the child), she said to the *nat*, “You must search for it.”’
The story of why the Singphos have no king (SDM08-2007-077), told by Kothaq Gam, (53).

The adverbial usage of *i* can also occur with patients, as in (15), in which the noun *lătaq* ‘hand’ is marked by *i*, and where *nye numang wa na lătaq i jum* is literally ‘grab (on) the hand of my friend’.

(15)rai yawng	gaw	nye	numnang	wa	hpe	jum
rai^{1} yoŋ^{5}	go^{1}	nyee^{4}	num^{4}naŋ^{1}	waa^{1}	phee^{4}	jum^{1}
then	TOP	1SG.POSS	friend	DEF	A.AG	grab

nye	numnang	wa	na	lătaq	i	jum	u	na
nyee^{4}	num^{4}naŋ^{1}	waa^{1}	naa^{4}	ləta?^{2}	ii^{4}	jum^{1}	u?^{3}	naa^{5}
[1SG.POSS	friend	DEF	POSS	hand]	AG	grab	IMP	IMP.POL

dai	ngu	na	gaw.
dai^{1}	ŋuu^{1}	naa^{4}	go^{1}
that	say	SEQ	TOP

‘Then he said “Take my friend here, grab my friend (by) the hand!”’
The story of the blind men (SDM08-20050801-002), told by Bhupeswar Ningda, No (53).

In this function the locational use of *i* can even end up on a *hpe* marked argument, as in (16):

(16)chiqkaw	wa	ahkaiq	ngu	re	yaq
cii^{4}ko?^{3}	wa=ii^{4}	a^{4}khai?^{2}	ŋuu^{1}	re^{1}	ya?^{2}
fly	DEF=AG	wait!	say	REAL	now

nang	hpe	i	dăgoi	kăsa	di	di	ya	re.
naŋ[1]	phee[4]	ii[4]	dəgoi[4]	kəsaa[1]	dii[1]	dii[1]	yaa[5]	re[1]
2SG	A.AG	ADV	there	child	egg	lay	BENF	REAL

'The fly said (to the elephant) "Wait, now I will lay my eggs on you (in the eyes)".'
The story of the bad elephant (SDM08-20050801-021), told by Bisa Lat Nong, No (46).

5. CONCLUSION

We have seen that the Singpho agentive, *i*, is not obligatory to mark agents, whereas non-agent animate arguments are almost always marked by anti-agentive *hpe*. Where the marker does occur, it is more frequent with speech act verbs than some other verbs, particularly in the speech of the oldest generation. The agentive is also present with some high transitivity verbs but again, not in an obligatory way, and is a little more common with less definite agents. The more frequent function of this morpheme is the adverbial (most often locational and temporal). We hesitate to term this 'locative', a function carried by *goi*, exemplified in (2).

What then was the original function of *i*? LaPolla (1995b) showed that the general direction of change in Tibeto Burman languages was from oblique case markers to more core functions, namely that the agentive developed largely from ablative marking and the anti-agentive from allative/locative marking. We do not have language internal evidence for such change in Singpho and moreover after working with these languages for several years our impression is that the agentive use of *i* is falling out of use, in other words is less frequent with younger speakers. However, since our corpus is almost all texts spoken by middle aged or older speakers, we are not in a position to make any quantified claims about the direction of change in the function of this particle.

ABBREVIATIONS

A	agent-like argument of transitive verb	MO	mother
AR	another's relative (non 1st singular)	NEG	negative
A.AG	anti-agentive	O	patient-like argument of a transitive verb
ADV	adverbialiser (extended use of the morpheme *i*)	PAT	patient
AG	agentive	PL	plural
BENF	beneficiary	PN	proper name
DECL	declarative	POL	politeness
DEF	definite marker	POSS	possessive
EMPH	emphatic	PRT	particle
ERR	error	PURP	purposive (< the verb 'give')
EXCL	exclamation	REAL	realis
FA	father	SEQ	sequential
FUT.IMM	immediate future	SFG	sentence final word
IMP	imperative	SG	singular
LV	light verb	TOP	topic

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