

On the Tangut Prefix ²da:-

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Abstract: The Tangut language was spoken during the Xixia (Tangut) dynasty (A.D. 1038–1227) in the northwestern part of China. The first emperor (A.D. 1036) established the Tangut script for the language. Although the Tangut language and its script are now extinct, the many documents written in the Tangut script enable us to reconstruct its phonology and grammar. Tangut belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language group (Tangut-Qiang). Its grammar possesses unique features that are not found in either Old Tibetan or Old Burman. One of such features is a “directional prefix”. Six or seven morphemes function as prefixes. Previous works have discussed the change in the function of the prefix from “directional” to “aspect (perfective)”. Some minor Tibeto-Burman languages have morphemes that are similar syllables or functions to Tangut. In this article, we present the outline of the prefixes and a description of the prefix ²da:- with sample sentences and discuss some remarks.

Key words: Tangut, verb phrase, prefix, directional prefix, perfective.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Tangut and the language

The Xixia (Tangut) dynasty occupied a dominant position in the northwestern part of China (A.D. 1038–1227). The Tangut script was established for the language by the emperor Li Yuanhao (A.D. 1036). Although the language and the script of the Tangut are now extinct, the many documents written in the Tangut script enable us to reconstruct its phonology and grammar. In addition to mainly Buddhist texts, the Tangut documents have

broad contents including the translations of the Chinese classics, law codes, treaties, poems, rhyme dictionaries, and so on. After the fall of the dynasty in 1227, the Tangut language and its script were used up to the 16th c. In the 20th c., the script was decoded by some scholars in Japan, Russia and China.¹

Tangut belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language family (hereinafter, TB), and is the most northwestern of the TB languages. It should be noted that the Tangut people did not originally live in the region but in the south. According to historical records, they originally lived in the areas in southwest China such as northern Sichuan and Qinghai. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that the characteristics of their language were similar to those of other languages in northern Sichuan. Although Tangut seems to be close to Rgyalrongic, there is no confirmed language that is a direct descendant of Tangut.

In modern linguistics, the Tangut syllable is analyzed as in classical Chinese phonology.

C(G1)(G2)V(C)/T

C= Initial, (G1)(G2)V(C)= Rhyme, and T= Tone

The round brackets () mean the additional segments. The G1 and G2 slots can be filled by the glides /j and w/. The final V(C) (-an, -ur, etc.) are the vowel features. Tangut phonology describes two tones: the “level” tone and the “rising” tone (Tangut scripts for them can be translated as 平声 *pingsheng* and 上声 *shangsheng* respectively).

One character in the Tangut script represents one syllable and one word (or one morpheme). The script is derived from square-style Chinese characters. There are more than 6,000 characters.

In terms of linguistic typology, Tangut has an SOV (Subject-Object-Verb) order for the sentence and a “Demonstrative-Noun-Adjective” order for the noun phrase. Tangut has non-obligatory case marking.

1.2. Structure of verb phrase

Grammatically, the Tangut sentence requires only a verb stem in a verb phrase. Certain verbal forms have directional prefixes indicating the direction of motion with motion verbs, but there are lexicalized perfective aspect markers with other verbs. The verb also has a demonstrative prefix and person agreement suffixes. The verb phrase can be complicated in some cases. A maximum scheme for the slots in the verbal syntagma in my analysis is as follows.

Table 1: Structure of the Tangut verb phrase (ideal)

{PrefA - Pref B- PrefC}- Verb stem -{PrefA - PrefB- PrefC}-AV -Pronominal Suf -Particle

Prefix A: Prefix series 1 and 2, and prefixes for interrogative

Prefix B: Negation or Prohibition

Prefix C: Demonstrative

{ } means “prohibition of co-occurrence”

1) So-called “Prefix series 1”: six types, indicative of the “direction of action” or “perfective”

2) So-called “Prefix series 2”: six types, with an “optative” meaning

3) Negation (𐰚¹mi:-, 𐰚²me:-, and 𐰚¹mI:-) or prohibition (𐰚¹ti:-)²

¹ See Nishida 1989b and Gong 2003 for Tangut language, and see Nishida 2001 for Tangut script.

² Concerning the negation/prohibition/interrogative sentences of Tangut, see Arakawa 2012.

- 4) Interrogative (the same form as one of the “Prefix 1” 𐰽¹a?-)
 5) Demonstrative pronominal 𐰽¹chI: : occurring with negation or interrogative

Here, however, we do not refer to the prefixes for the interrogative, negation, prohibition, and demonstrative, nor do we refer to auxiliary verbs, particles, and prefixes added to auxiliary verbs. We use the simplified structure, “Prefix-Verb-Suffix.”

Tangut has unique linguistic features, which are not found in either Old Tibetan or Old Burmese, for example: the unique set of verb-prefixes originated from “directional markers”, and the “agreement” between personal pronouns and personal suffixes. The following is an example in which there is an “agreement” between the independent pronouns and the agreement suffixes.

- (1) 𐰽²nga 𐰽²syu 𐰽¹thon 𐰽¹hwan 𐰽¹ma: 𐰽²ryor 𐰽²nga
 1sg srotaāpanna result get S1
 I got the result of srotaāpanna (Arakawa 2014b: 234).

1.3. Directional prefixes in Tangut

A great scholar of the Tangut grammar, the late Dr. Ksenia Kepping, contributed to the study of directional prefixes (Kepping 1968, 1971, 1979, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1994ab etc.). Nishida 1989b; Lin 1987, 1993, 1994 and Arakawa 2012, 2014a continued to study such matters. Based on the previous works, we present the directional prefix, follows.

The Tangut language has a variety of verb-prefixes with different functions. The prefixes are grouped into two series with similar consonants. The first series indicates the direction (or motion) or perfective, and the second series represents an “optative” meaning. The first series is usually called “Prefix series 1” (hereinafter, “Pref1”) and the second, “Prefix series 2” (hereinafter, “Pref2”). According to Nishida,³ Pref1 originally functioned as directional marker and then developed into an aspect marker expressing perfect aspect. Some of the Pref1 have pronunciation and functions that are similar to other TB languages.

Pref2 has the same initial consonants as Pref1, but all Pref2 have the same vowel (which I reconstruct as “-e”). It functions as an optative. Nishida suggested that Pref2 derived from Pref1.

Table 2 shows the set of Pref1 and 2 from Nishida 1989a: 41. The last pair shown in this table is questionable.

Table 2: the set of Pref1 and 2

the set of Pref1 and 2 from Nishida 1989a

Direction	Pref 1	Pref 2
upward	𐰽 ¹ a?-(1A)	𐰽 ¹ e:- (2E)
downward	𐰽 ¹ na:- (1N)	𐰽 ² ne:- (2N)
to here	𐰽 ¹ kl:- (1K)	𐰽 ² ke:- (2K)
over there	𐰽 ² wl:- (1W)	𐰽 ² we:- (2W)
inward	𐰽 ² da:- (1Da)	𐰽 ² de:- (2D)
outward	𐰽 ² rl:r- (1R)	𐰽 ² ryeqr'- (2R)

³ See Nishida (1989a: 418) on Tangut prefixes and Nishida (1989b: 806-807) on the topic of other TB languages.

The prefix 穢²dI:- is irregular. Each scholar has a different view concerning this prefix. According to some scholars' and in my opinion⁴ one "irregular" prefix, namely 穢²dI:-, belongs to Pref1 (1Db).

Table 3 presents the correspondence of some scholars' views on the direction indicated by these prefixes.

Table 3: The correlation of the scholar's view

Nishida 1989		Kepping 1994		Gong 2003	
1A-2E	upward	1A-2E	upward	1A-2E	upward
1N-2N	downward	1N-2N	downward	1N-2N	downward
1K-2K	here	1K-2K	here, inside	1K-2K	here, inside
1W-2W	there	1W-2W	there, outside	1W-2W	there, outside
1Da-2D	inside	1Db-2D	towards the speaker	1Db-2D	toward the speaker
—	—	1Da	away from the speaker	1Da-2D	away from the speaker
1R-2R	outside	1R-2R	(direction not found)	1R-2R	(direction not found)

Nishida (1989a: 420l) supposed that Pref2 was derived from Pref1. Table 4 shows the schema.

Table 4: The derivation of the verb prefixes (Nishida's hypothesis)

Structure	Function
Pref1 + Verb Stem	> Directional marker > Aspect marker (perfect)
Pref2 (<Pref1 + 'e:) + Verb Stem	> Optative marker

Here, we introduce an example sentence that includes the function indicating the direction of the motion.⁵

- (2) 穢²wi 穢¹kha 穢¹kI: 穢¹shI:
castle CM P1 go

(He) went inside the castle (Arakawa 2014a: 20).

According to Nishida, the prefix 穢¹kI:- indicates "to here (to the speaker)." In fact, it represents the "perfective" of the motion generally. Although it indicates the direction, this is a secondary function. In common sentences as below, the prefix 穢¹kI:- indicates not direction but perfectiveness.

- (3) 穢²jyan 穢¹chyu 穢¹e: 穢¹kI: 穢¹gyu 穢²dza:r
people CM P1 relieve

He liberated the people into nirvāṇa (Arakawa 2014b: 224).

⁴ Kepping 1985; Gong 2003; Arakawa 2012. In (Nishida 1989a: 420r), it is regarded as an "optative" marker which is out of the set.

⁵ Hereafter, we emphasize Pref 1, 2 by frame, underline verb stems and double-underline pronouns and pronominal suffixes. The just numbers in () means from the texts in this volume and the expects have the abbreviations and the references.

- (5) 魏 斫 翊 緋 離 衍 翊 猿 毓 戩 戩 翊 翊
²wi ²u ¹dzi: ¹hyu ¹eu: ¹e: ²ryen ²wI: ²ni: ¹dzi: ²dI: ²ci:q ¹lyI' ¹kI:
 Wei Wudi Xuyou CM plan P1 hear prepare transport P1
 戩 斫 緋 翊 翊 翊 翊 翊 翊 翊 翊
²pyu ¹wi: ¹'a:n ²seu: ²ldwi:q' ²me:' ¹kwan ¹thu ¹chya: ²da: ¹pha
 burn do Yuanxiao land name Guandu CM P1 beat
 Wei Wudi heard Xu You's plan, prepared, and set fire to the transport of goods?
 (of Yuan Shao), and beat Yuan Shao on the place named Guandu (Kepping 1985: 178).
- (6) 禩 尪 翊 翊 翊 翊 翊 翊 翊 翊 翊 翊
¹menq ¹tshI: ²gi: ¹dyu ¹shwi: ²aq ¹gwyI' ²wi ¹ra:r ²ngwo ²da: ²si: ¹sI:
 girl little one exist age ten nine become disease P1 die
 One girl, 19 years old, died of disease (Arakawa 2014b: 413).
- (7) 禩 禩 禩 禩 禩
¹gi: ¹se ²lhe? ²da: ²phi:
 pure land P1 abandon
 Abandoning their prosperous lands... (Arakawa 2018: 144)
- (8) 禩 嘸 禩 禩 禩 禩 禩 禩 禩 禩 禩
¹tha: ¹no" ²da: ²mi:q' ¹mI: ¹nwI ¹mi: ²senq ¹'a? ¹lo ¹han ¹ca: ²ri:r
 Dem later P1 forget Neg know Neg kow arhat way get
 Nevertheless we forgot, we did not know or understand. We attained the path of the
 arhats (Arakawa 2018: 110).
- On the other hand, there are some co-occurrences of such verbs as “finish,” “ask,”
 “become,” “send,” and “eat,” which can result in not being unhappy.
- (9) 禩 翊 猿 翊 禩 禩 禩 禩
²mIr ²do ²wI: ²lo ¹ti:q ²thi: ²da: ¹jwa:
 root place P1 return food eat P1 finish
 (Buddha) returned to his original place and finished eating (Arakawa 2014b: 220).
- (10) 翊 翊 翊 翊 翊 翊 翊 翊
¹mI: ¹pyuq ¹jo:n ¹ci:q' ²ror ... ²be:' ²da: ²rI:r
 Neg measure time around walk P1 go away
 (He) went around many times, ...and then walked away (Arakawa 2011: 189).
- (11) 禩 禩 禩 禩 禩 禩 禩 禩 禩 禩
²luq ²dzwo: ¹tha: ²ni:q ²le: ²da: ²lho? ¹zi:q' ²war ²ryeqr
 poor man Dem jewel look P1 be rich treasure property numerous
 The poor man, seeing this jewel, ... and with this rich treasure he enjoys (Arakawa
 2018: 115).
- (12) 禩 翊 翊 禩 禩 禩 禩
¹tha ¹leu ²bi:' ¹phyon ¹bi: ²da: ²wenq
 Buddha one hair white light P1 dispatch
 The Buddha emitted a ray of light from the tuft of white hair (between his eyebrows)
 (Arakawa 2018: 173).

- (13) 彫 徭 𦉳 飮 攬
²zIr ²lyenq ²da: ¹ti:q ²syu
 dew sweet P1 eat like
 The poor man, seeing this jewel, rejoices greatly and with this rich treasure he enjoys
 (Arakawa 2018: 134).

However, for example, the act of eating is “unidirectional.” It can be said to be an “irrevocable”, “not restored to its original state” act. The prefix seems to have a close relation to an irrevocable act that cannot be undone.

2.2. Notable usage of the prefix

Next, we will discuss the significant use of this prefix. This prefix precedes the verb “change into a state,” whether it is about “getting better” or “getting worse”.

- (14) 𦉳 翁 𦉳 𦉳
²lhe? ²dzyu ²da: ²wi
 king P1 become
 (He) became a king (Li 2008: 691).
- (15) 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳
²jyan ²tse: ²ngo:r ²ngo:r [?]ji? ¹ti:q ¹byu ²da: ¹shyen ²eu:
 Bodhisattva all vow CM P1 attain
 (He) attained by all the vows of Bodhisattva (Arakawa 2011: 162–163).
- (16) 𦉳 𦉳 ... 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳
²myu ²mur ... ²non ²le: ²gwI: ²zon ²ngwu ¹wiq [?]le? ²da: ²wi
 common wicked view hold CM foolish P1 become
 The man became foolish by holding on to his wicked view (Arakawa 2006: 104).
- (17) 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳
¹tha: ¹ryur ¹tha ²do ²tha ¹ti:q ²da: ¹shyen
 Dem every Buddha place great wish P1 make
 They achieved their great wishes under all the Buddhas (Arakawa 2018: 137).

Sample sentences from (14) to (17) do not express an “unfortunate” situation. These verbs can also be interpreted as referring to “change and not return” actions rather than “going in the wrong direction.”

Other prefixes may be used instead of the prefix even before verbs that mean “die”. It is clear, however, that in this context (18–20) a person who “dies” is “coming back”.

- (18) 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳 𦉳
²nga ¹pI: ²no: ¹ko ¹li: ²ne: [?]ji? ¹wi: ²lyuq ¹na: ¹tser ²ga:r ²nga
 1sg once Kali king AM body P1 break S1
 Once, I was broken by the King Kali (*Kalingarāja*) (Arakawa 2014b: 248–249).

- (19) 衧 衧 衧 衧 衧 衧 衧 衧 衧
²nga ¹pI: ²no: ¹tser ²war ²wI: ¹ʃyIr ²ka ¹wi:
 1sg once body P1 break do
 Once, I was broken (Arakawa 2014b: 248).

- (20) 衧 衧 衧 衧 衧 衧 衧 衧 衧 衧 衧
²no: ¹ko ¹li: ²ne: [?]ʃi? ¹wi: ²lyuq ¹kIr ¹na: ¹tser ²ga:r ¹wi: ²nga
 once Kali king AM body P1 break do S1
 Once, I was broken by the King Kali (*Kalingarāja*) (Arakawa 2014b: 420).

2.3. Assumption concerning the prefix (衧)

As with other directional prefixes, it is difficult to explain the function of this prefix simply by saying that it has shifted from “the function of indicating the geographical direction” to “the function of indicating the perfective.” I do not currently assume multiple origins for this prefix. As a directional prefix, it is not “either direction,” but a “far away” direction. In other words, psychologically, it might be considered as “can't come back, the direction after going”.

3. Conclusion

Although there is a so-called “directional prefix” in Tangut, the function to indicate “perfective of action” is more dominant than “direction of action” in actual example sentences. There are not many examples where a sentence in perfective voice and the direction of action is clearly indicated or traces remain.

The prefix 1D presents more issues for consideration, such as whether it should show a specific direction (real direction). As a directional prefix, it is not “either direction,” but “far away” direction. In other words, it might be considered as “can't come back, the direction after going” psychologically.

In Tibeto-Burman, especially Rgyalrongic, some of the minor languages have similar prefixes, pronunciations, and usage, therefore it is meaningful to compare them. Nevertheless, the direction of action should be identified cautiously from the actual example sentences.

Abbreviations

AM: agent marker, CM: case marker, Dem: demonstrative (pronoun), Neg: negation, Pref1, 2 (P1, 2): prefix series 1, 2, Suf (S): suffix, 1sg: first person singular, 2sg: second person singular

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О тангутском префиксе ²da:-

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Аннотация: На тангутском языке говорили при династии Сяся (1038–1227) в северо-западной части Китая, а тангутский шрифт был изобретен при первом императоре (1036 г.). Несмотря на то что и тангутский язык и письменность уже вышли из употребления, тем не менее благодаря наличию большого количества письменных источников мы можем реконструировать фонологию и грамматику этого языка. Тангутский язык принадлежит к тибето-бирманской языковой группе (тангут-цян). В его грамматике сохранились уникальные особенности, которых нет ни в старотибетском, ни в старобирманском языках. Один из них — «префикс направленности движения». В тангутском языке существует шесть или семь морфем, которые используются как префиксы. В предыдущих работах мы разбирали случаи перехода функции префикса от «направительного» к «аспектному (перфектному)». В некоторых малочисленных тибето-бирманских языках есть морфемы, по звучанию и функциям схожие с тангутскими. В данной статье на различных примерах разбирается префикс ²da:- и рассматриваются особенности его употребления.

Ключевые слова: тангутский язык, глагольная фраза, префикс, префикс направленности движения, перфект.

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