

# Time in Khitan

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**Abstract** Khitan was the language of the homonymous people who founded the Chinese Liao dynasty. It is a Para-Mongolic language, mainly attested by sources in Khitan Small Script and Khitan Large Script. Most verbal suffixes identified so far are inflectional suffixes marking finite predicate forms, participles, and converbs. The aspecto-temporal values of inflectional suffixes are underexplored. So far, only generic and tentative labels, like *past* and *perfective*, were given. In my paper, I will share some thoughts on methodology, and then focus on selected critical issues concerning tense in Khitan.

**Keywords** Khitan. Para-Mongolic. Verb. Tense. Aspect.

**Summary** 1 Methodological Remarks. – 2 Aspecto-temporality in Mongolic Languages. – 3 Khitan Inflectional Verbal Markers. – 4 Khitan Finite Predicate Markers. – 4.1 Simple Markers. – 4.2 Complex Markers. – 5 Further Issues.

## 1 Methodological Remarks

In this paper, I am going to address issues on aspecto-temporality in the Para-Mongolic language Khitan, on the base of Khitan Small Script texts.

The methodological questions emerging in this field of studies concern the terminology to use in treating KSS texts, and the theoretical framework to use in treating aspecto-temporal categories.

Basic KSS characters are called **graphs**, while characters composed of 1<sup>1</sup> to 8 graphs are called **blocks**. Romanisation of KSS follows Wu and

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1 Single graphs can occur independently in texts. In this case they are counted as blocks.

Janhunen (2010), and is quoted between angle brackets. In romanisation, full stops indicate the boundaries of graphs that compose a block. Colons connect separate single graphs that are to be read together as if they were one block. Examples from KSS texts include five lines:

- KSS original;
- Romanisation;
- Dotless romanisation: full stops and colons are removed, and hyphens are inserted in order to give a reference for the glosses;
- Glosses;
- Translation.

Nominal and verbal grammatical **suffixes**, or **markers**, are often recognised as belonging together in **series**. That is to say, series contain several variants that represent allomorphs of one morpheme. Allomorphs may depend on the vowel harmony of the verbal base, on gender, and on phonotactical phenomena occurring at morpheme boundaries. Series will be indicated by means of one of their members in italics, according to the following conventional rules:

- in case of vowel harmony contrast the representative member will be the posterior non-labial variant;
- in case of gender contrast the representative will be the feminine variant, in that feminine appears to be the functionally unmarked gender;
- in case of fortis/lenis onset contrast the representative will be the lenis onset variant;
- in case of series including only one member, this will be obviously the representative;
- in case of series including phonotactic variants beginning variously with graphs <l>, <al>, <il> or <ul>, the representative will be the <l> variant.

According to the aforementioned conventions the Khitan verbal inflectional series are:

- *ai*: <ai>, <y>, <ii>, <oi>, <ui>
- *al*: <al>
- *án*: <án>, <én>, <ón>, <ar>, <er>, <or>
- *b.ñ*: <b.ñ>, <b.ún>, <bun>
- *hu*: <hu>, <ho>, <g>
- *ji*: <ji>, <ci>
- *l.ñ*: <l.ñ>, <l.ún>, <al.ún>, <il.ún>
- *ñ*: <ñ>, <ún>
- *s.ii*: <s.ii>

The only clearly established derivational series is the causative-passive *l.ha* including <l.ha>, <al.ha>, <ul.ha>, <ha>, <l.ge>, <ul.ge> and <ge>.

Tense is a grammatical category of the verb that locates a situation in time.

Aspect is the interaction between viewpoint markers and the internal phase structure (IPS) of a situation. IPSS categories are defined by parameters such as transformativity [ $\pm t$ ], dynamicity [ $\pm \text{dyn}$ ], and duration [ $\pm \text{mom}$ ].

Transformative IPSS have a crucial limit. Finitransformative IPSS have a crucial limit as their ending point, i.e. when attaining that boundary, a situation naturally ends bringing to a transformation in the state of things. Finitransformative IPSS are inherently dynamic and can be momentaneous or non-momentaneous. Non-momentaneous finitransformative IPSS have a salient cursus before the final transformation. Initiotransformative IPSS have a crucial limit as their beginning point, i.e. they begin with a transformation that is followed by a resulting state. Non-transformative IPSS do not have any crucial boundary, i.e. their limits (the beginning and the end) are arbitrary. They are inherently non-momentaneous, and they can be dynamic or static. Non-transformative dynamic IPSS need a constant input of energy in order to continue, while non-transformative static IPSS do not.

The definitions of IPSS and their parameters are based on Johanson (2000, 58-66).

Viewpoint categories are intraterminality [+INTRA], postterminality [+POST], and adterminality [+AD]. Intraterminality presents a situation as comprised between its limits. Postterminality presents a situation after the attainment of its relevant limit. Adterminality presents a situation at the attainment of its relevant limit (Johanson 2000, 29). When markers are described by means of a negative value it means that their meaning is neutral with respect to the parameter in question. Intraterminal and postterminal categories can contrast in focality. Focality is the concentration of psychological interest on the situation obtaining at the orientation point (O), "the core of *nunc*" (Johanson 2000, 85). Focality is scalar, and degrees of focality expressed by markers depend on language-internal contrasts and are language-specific. In the realms of intra- and postterminality there can be one or more focal items. Thus, there can be contrast between a focal and a non-focal item, or there can be degrees of focality, i.e. relatively high-focal, low-focal and non-focal items. High-focal intraterminals include items that under the traditional terminology are called progressives. Low-focal and non-focal intraterminals include items like Romance imperfects, general presents and habituais. High-focal postterminals include traditional statives and resultatives. Low-focal postterminals include traditional perfects. Non-focal postterminals include general pasts.

The definitions of viewpoint categories are based on Johanson (2000, 28-33).

## 2 Aspecto-Temporality in Mongolic Languages

In order to address research questions on Khitan aspecto-temporality, an overview of how these categories are expressed in Mongolic languages is in need. That is because Khitan and Mongolic lineages are – albeit it is not clear yet how closely – related, and as a consequence, we might expect to find in the Khitan verbal system features that are present in Mongolic verbal systems. This naturally does not exclude that features not found in Mongolic may be observed in Khitan.

Generally speaking, Mongolic languages have a main tense contrast between past and non-past.

As for aspect, it is common to find three focal degrees of intraterminality in non-past, and one intraterminal viewpoint in the past. On the postterminal side it is common to find two focal degrees both in non-past and past. One past neutral to intra- and postterminality is observed. Often besides this neutral past there are two evidentially marked forms expressing the opposition firsthand/non-first-hand information.

In this paper I left aside considerations about aspecto-temporality of participles and converbs, while focusing on finite predicates, these being cross-linguistically the forms where aspecto-temporal categories are most fully fledged.

What follow are tentative descriptions of Middle Mongol and Khalkha Mongolian aspecto-temporal categories of finite predicates under the framework of Johanson (2000, 28-39, 76-135). The base sources are Poppe (1955, 260-86), Rybatzki (2003, 73-8), Janhunen (2012, 156-79) and Brosig (2014, 13-17). Any shortcomings are of course mine and criticism is well accepted in order to improve these attempts where it is necessary.

In Middle Mongol, on the non-past side there is a non-focal intraterminal *-yU*,<sup>2</sup> a low focal intraterminal *-mU*,<sup>3</sup> and a high focal intraterminal *-n buyu*. Whereas *-yU* is used for general statements, *-mU* occupies an area between habituality and progressivity, while *-n buyu* is a specialised progressive. A complex structure parallel to *-n buyu*, formed by modal converb *-n* followed by copula *bü-* with a past suffix, expresses intraterminality in the past.

Low-focal postterminality is expressed by *-GsAn*<sup>4</sup> (COP-NPST) in non-past and *-GsAn* COP-PST in past. The element in brackets means that non-past copula may be omitted. High-focal postterminality is expressed by *-JU* COP-NPST or *-’A* (COP-NPST) in non-past, and *-JU* COP-PST

<sup>2</sup> *-yU* has a functionally equal variant *-yi*.

<sup>3</sup> *-mU* has functionally equal variants *-m*, *-mUi* and *-mi*.

<sup>4</sup> Plural *-GsAd*.

or *-A*<sup>5</sup> COP-PST in past. Past neutral to intra- and postterminality is represented by *-bA*.<sup>6</sup>

Evidential past markers are *-JU'U*<sup>7</sup> for non-firsthand information and *-IU'A*<sup>8</sup> for firsthand information. Specifically, the former is often used to report hearsay or inferred knowledge, while the latter is used for witnessed events or things about which the speaker is certain.

Khalkha Mongolian has three levels of focality in non-past intraterminals. Non-focal *-nA* expresses future tense when interacting with dynamic IPSS [+ dyn], while it refers to present when interacting with stative IPSS [- dyn]. Low focal *-dAg* expresses habitual situations and general statements. High focal *-J baina* is a progressive. There are two past intraterminals, i.e. non-focal *-dAg baisan* and focal *-J baisan*.

Low-focal postterminality is expressed by *-sAn baina* and *-sAn baisan* in non-past and past respectively, while high-focal postterminality is expressed by *-AA*d* baina/baisan* or *-sAA*r* baina/baisan*.

Past neutral to intra- and postterminality ends in *-sAn*. Evidential pasts descend directly from the MM forms, although they are less used. *-Jee* is used to report non-firsthand knowledge, while *-lAA* is used to emphasise one's certainty in a statement. In Khalkha, the latter's confirmative nature has developed implicational meanings such as propinquity ('to be about to v, soon I will v') and immediate past ('I have just v-ed'). When used in the last meaning, it is similar to a postterminal.

These two languages give us an example of diachronic development of Mongolic aspecto-temporal systems. The two systems are quite similar. The synthetic form *-yU* has been replaced by *-nA*, which emerged from the Classical Mongolian period on, originally in the form *-nAm*. This is the contraction of a formerly analytic marker whose structure is parallel to *-n bu-yu*, i.e. 'modal converb + COP-NPST': *-n a-mui*. After emerging as a high-focal intraterminal, it has progressively lost focality. New analytic markers are formed by means of the new copula *bai-*. While in MM it usually means 'to stand', in most modern Mongolic languages it has replaced MM copulas *a-* and *bü-*, that survive in just few fossilised forms. *-J bai-* is parallel to MM high-focal postterminal *-JU a-/bü-*, i.e. 'imperfective converb + COP', and has developed into a high-focal intraterminal. Low-focal intraterminality has been renewed by means of suffix *-dAg*, that in MM was a very rarely used action noun.

<sup>5</sup> *-A* has a functionally equal variant *-Ai*.

<sup>6</sup> *-bA* is masculine, and has a feminine counterpart *-bi*, and a variant neutral to gender agreement *-bAi*.

<sup>7</sup> *-JU'U* is masculine, and has feminine counterparts *-J'i* and *-J'iAi* (f.), and variants neutral to gender agreement *-JU'Ui* and *-JA' Ai*.

<sup>8</sup> *-IU'A* > *-lA'A* are masculine, and have a feminine counterpart *-li'i* (f.) and variants neutral to gender agreement *-IU' Ai* > *-lA' Ai*.

Low-focal postterminal *-sAn bai-* is parallel to MM low-focal post-terminal construction *-GsAn a-/bü-*, whereas its form without copula has replaced neutral past *-bA*. High-focal postterminal *-' A (+ COP)* has become obsolete, Khalkha imperfective participle *-AA* being employed in finite use only on the copula or to form the negative neutral past. As mentioned above, the structure ‘imperfective converb + COP’ in Khalkha has shifted to intraterminality. As a consequence of these facts, new high-focal postterminals emerged in the form of perfective converb or abtemporal converb plus copula, i.e. *-AA*d* bai-* and *-sAA*r* bai-*.

In conclusion we can observe several shifts belonging to the common pattern of defocalisation of analytic high-focal markers, that are replaced by new analytic markers replicating the structure ‘converb or participle + copula’. Analytic high-focals, along the process of defocalisation, may become synthetic markers.

There is a case of an analytic marker replicating the structure of a high-focal postterminal, but acquiring high-focal intraterminal meaning instead, i.e. *-J bai-*. Probably *-dAg* action noun was directly grammaticalised into a low-focal intraterminal without passing through the high-focal stage. Whereas MM has only one past intraterminal, Khalkha has two: *-J baisan* for high-focal intraterminality and *-dAg baisan* for low-focal intraterminality.

### 3 Khitan Inflectional Verbal Markers

In this paragraph, I propose a brief overview of the system of Khitan inflectional verbal markers. The base sources are Kane 2009 (41, 53-4, 90, 94, 105-6, 110, 144-7, 149-58, 187, 201), Wu, Janhunen 2010 (68, 90-1, 99, 196), and Róna-Tas 2017 (149, 167).

Khitan inflectional series are classified according to syntactical categories as follows:

- Finite predicate series are *án*, *b.ñ*, *l.ñ* and *ñ*.
- Participial series are *án*, *b.ñ* and *hu*.
- Converbial series are *ai*, *al*, *ji* and *s.ii*.

Series *án* and *b.ñ* cover both finite and participial functions. Series *ñ* is relatively underexplored, and some occurrences suggest that it also may function as a participial marker. This possibility cannot be excluded for series *l.ñ* too. Participial suffixes are employed in adjectival use to determine nominal heads (relativised clauses), and in nominal use (content clauses). Participles in nominal use can take case suffixes just like nouns.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> E.g. <a.án.er>, a-án-er, be-PTCP.F-INS (Xiao Dilu 13-25); <a.án.de.i>, a-án-dei, be-PTCP.F-ABL (Xiangwen 28-40), WJ 196: “The block 为 a.án could, at least formally, be a

Possibly, some combinations of participial markers and case suffixes are analysable as quasi-converbs, i.e. converbs on their way to grammaticalisation.

## 4 Khitan Finite Predicate Markers

### 4.1 Simple Markers

Khitan, by the present state of the art, has four series of simple finite predicate markers: *án*, *b.ñ*, *l.ñ* and *ñ*.

Series *án* includes feminine gender markers <án>, <én> and <ón>, and masculine gender markers <ar>, <er> and <or>. Markers containing vowel /a/ are attached to verbal bases with posterior vocalism, those containing vowel /e/ to bases with anterior vocalism, and those containing /o/ to bases whose last vowel is /o/. Series *b.ñ* includes feminine marker <b.ñ>, masculine marker <b.ún> and marker <bun>. There are indications that the latter might be neutral with respect to gender, so that it might take both masculine and feminine subjects. Series *l.ñ* includes feminine marker <l.ñ> and masculine marker <l.ún>. Series *ñ* includes feminine marker <ñ> and masculine marker <ún>.

Below follow four examples, one for each series.

Series *án*: suffix <én<sub>2</sub>>, allograph of <én>; anterior vocalism; feminine gender; feminine subject.

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nominal form (participle) based on the copula-existential 为 a 'to be'. Interestingly, when taking case suffixes, participles are usually in the feminine form. Nevertheless, a comprehensive study of case-marked participles is needed in order to verify eventual exceptions to this 'rule'.

- (1) 丕 朮 和 符 列 出 纛 又 为 奥 芬  
 tai shī.en                      b.hu.án    tau    GREAT    a.an.e  
 tai shī-en                      bhuán    tau    GREAT    aane  
 grand.preceptor-GEN    child.PL    five.F    eldest.F    A.an.e
- 才 为 火 州 余 朮 和 余 雨 杰 尔  
 ia deu.un                      SMALL.qu    ai.en                      s.in    ong:on  
 ia deu-un                      SMALL-qu    ai-en                      sin    ong-on  
 brothers-GEN    young-M    father-GEN    S.in    prince-GEN
- 曲 公 和 芳 公 及 丕 朮 和 曲 令 及 平 泰 与  
 go.er.en                      tu n.u    tai shī.en                      go:t                      **u.ul.ge<sub>2</sub>.én<sub>2</sub>**  
 goer-en                      tu nu    tai shī-en                      go-t                      u-ulge<sub>2</sub>-én<sub>2</sub>  
 house-GEN    Tu N.u    grand.preceptor-GEN    house-DAT    give-CAUS-PST.F  
 ‘The children of the Grand Preceptor were five. The eldest daughter was A.an.e.  
 She **was given** to the house of Grand Preceptor Tu N.u of the house of Prince  
 S.in of the Third Patriarchal Household.’  
 Xiao Dilu 24-1/19<sup>10</sup>

Series *b.ñ*: suffix <b.ún>; masculine gender; masculine subject.

- (2) 丕 余 泰 戈 考 朮 九 平 仄 火 牛 胤  
 tai z.ĩ<sub>2</sub>                      sh.iau shī                      mó.ul.û.ui                      líung  
 tai zĩ<sub>2</sub>                      shiau shī                      móulû-ui                      líung  
 crown.prince    junior.preceptor    concurrently (?)    dragon
- 朮 泰 戈 危 余 哥 几 亦 止 戛 子 哥 又  
 xu    uĩ°    sh.ang.s.iang.g.ün    p.o.ju.b.ún  
 xu    uĩ°    shang sianggün    pojū-bún  
 tiger    guard    senior.general    become-PST.M  
 ‘The crown prince *taizi* 太子, junior preceptor *shaoshi* 少師, **was** concurrently  
**appointed** senior general of the dragon and tiger brigade 龍虎衛上將軍.’  
 Xiao Zhonggong 20-42/53<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Cf. W] 102 ‘[T]he Grand Preceptor had five children. [T]he eldest [child was] A.an.e. [S]he **was given** in marriage to the house of Grand Preceptor Tu N.u of the house of Prince S.in of the junior uncles’.

<sup>11</sup> Translation from K 147.

Series *l.ñ*: suffix <l.ñ>; feminine gender; feminine subject.

- (3) 突 今火 年令 灼和 丙 业及子仲伙  
 HEAVEN t.ud ai.s ji<sub>3</sub>.en iu p.o.ju.l.ñ  
 HEAVEN tud ai-s ji<sub>3</sub>.en iu poju-lñ  
 Xianyong year-PL among not.existing become-PST.F  
 ‘She passed away during the Xianyong period.’  
 Xiangwen 14-22/27<sup>12</sup>

Series *ñ*: suffix <ñ>; feminine gender; inanimate subject.

- (4) 和事 乃令 形为失 失 去伙  
 ci.ar am.s REGION.a.an ui eu.ñ  
 ciar ams REGIONa-an ui eu-ñ  
 past border (?) region matter not.exist-PST.F  
 ‘For a long time there weren’t matters in the region.’  
 Langjun 2-1/5<sup>13</sup>

All the verbs in the preceding examples are translatable in English with a past simple. They report events happened before the moment when the scribe composed the text of the inscription. At the current state of the art, the only aspecto-temporal category that we can assign to finite predicate forms is past. Neither aspectual, nor modal, nor evidential differences between the forms have been identified. They all seem to be used for narrations of happened situations. Thus, with respect to modality, they all look like modally unmarked, i.e. indicative forms. Generally, in KSS inscriptions finite predicates report unproblematic historical facts without intraterminal perspective. The reported situations are distant events, so that postterminality may be excluded as well. For the current knowledge, Khitan finite predicates are definable as past forms neutral to intra- and postterminality, similarly to MM *-ba* and Khal. *-sAn*.

Tentatively, these synthetic finite predicate forms might be distinguished by evidential categories, similarly to what happens in MM and in Khalkha. As it was mentioned in § 2, in MM and Khalkha, three past markers differ with respect to evidential values. We have

<sup>12</sup> Cf. WJ 169-70 “[she] passed away during the years of HEAVEN t.ud’. [...] The sequence 突 今 HEAVEN t.ud [...] is known to correspond to the Liao reign title Xianyong 鹹雍 (1065-75)”. The subject is mentioned before in the text: <t.ie.èn.e pu.is.ñ> (Xiangwen 13-30/31) Lady T.ie.èn.e. She was the first wife of the tomb owner Field Marshal L.ie.èn.ñ.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. K 187; Langjun 2-4/5 in RT 149 ‘the matters [of the region] were neglected, did not exist’.

an evidentially unmarked morpheme (MM *-bA*, Khal. *-sAn*), and two contrasting marked morphemes, one indicating indirect evidentiality, i.e. reported and inferred knowledge, and the other one indicating direct evidentiality, i.e. witnessed knowledge (respectively MM *-JU'U*, Khal. *-Jee* and MM *-IU'A*, Khal. *-IAA*).

Given the shared presence of fixed segments /b/ and /l/, after which follow other segments that vary depending on gender agreement, one research question that emerges from these considerations is whether suffixes of series *b.ñ* and *l.ñ* descend from the same morphemes that yielded MM *-bA* and *-IU'A*.

The existence of verbal forms marked for non-past is another underexplored field. So far, three forms that are possibly marked for non-past may be identified.

(5) 堯 秦伏 九兩 弱 曲谷有 堯九矣

tau	is.ñ	g.ing	jau	go.er.en	us.g.de
tau	is-ñ	ging	jau	goer-en	usg-de
five	nine	classic	hundred	house-GEN	letter-DAT

列矣方者 灾泰 百灾平列 而今列 灾灾 而今此

hu.as.al.a	ia.LUCK	y.au.ul.hu	mo.t.hu	x.i	307.s.ii
huasala	iaLUCK	yauulhu	mothu	xi	307sii
disaster	luck	?	?	is.said	?

‘In the writings of the five classics, the nine classics and the hundred schools of thoughts it is said that disaster and good fortune [alternate?].’

Nu 35/36<sup>14</sup>

In KSS inscriptions, there are several instances of quotations from Chinese Classics and other Chinese works, that end with the word <x.i>. In example (5), the quotation begins with <us.g.de> ‘in the writings’. A more common quotation model is “source-DAT <t.gu> quotation <x.i>”. KSS quotations of Chinese sources have been surveyed in Ôtake (2015b). <x.i> must be a quotative verb meaning ‘to say’. It does not display any of the well known past finite predicate suffixes, and it is quite plausible that the scribe reported to the reader a passage of a book by means of quotative verb in a present form, yielding a sentence like “this book says...”.

Another verbal form used after quotations is <k.ii.g>, see example (6).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. K 93 ‘In the writings of the five classics 五經 and the nine classics 九經, and the hundred schools of thoughts 百家, disaster and good fortune [alternate?]’.

- (6) 爰金爰天 勞奕蒼焉 尚令 伴  
 sh.em.qú.i cu.úr.ge.én go.t ü  
 shem-qú-i cúr-ge-én go-t ü  
 good-F-ACC accumulate-CAUS-PTCP.F house-DAT ?

百文 业任非 才祭 叙北几

y.ie p.mu.282 ia.LUCK k.ii.g  
 yie pmu282 iaLUCK kii-g  
 ? ? luck say-PTCP

‘It is said that to families that have accumulated good deeds ... luck.’

Xiao Zhonggong 4-29/36<sup>15</sup>

Compare example (6) with example (7).

- (7) 天 字并及孔 尤安 半 灰 艾  
 HEAVEN ar.ó.o.ho ud<sub>3</sub>úr ai SIX MONTH  
 HEAVEN aróoho ud<sub>3</sub>úr ai SIX MONTH  
 Qiantong first year six month

丁 包 天 康 才祭

TWENTY THREE DAY 121 ia.LUCK  
 TWENTY THREE DAY 121 iaLUCK  
 twenty three day eternal luck

列及雨 虫生堂 力冬立为出 兮 叙北仄弱

hu.o.304 qa.bu.359 na.as.ha.a.án SEAL **k.ii.û.ji**  
 huo304 qabu359 naas-ha-aán SEAL kii-ûji  
 ? ? lie.to.rest-CAUS-PTCP.F ritual say-NPST?

‘On the twenty-third day of the sixth month of the Qiantong period at the Yongfu tomb ..., this was (is?) called the ritual of laying to rest.’

Xuanyi 5-18/30, 6-1/3<sup>16</sup>

The verbal form at the end in example (7), <k.ii.û.ji>, is attested several times in KSS inscriptions, and has been analysed as meaning ‘this was called’ (Kane 2009, 87, 89, 155) and ‘it is called’ (Kane 2009, 216). In example (7) from Xuanyi and in Daozong 6-31, <k.ii.û.ji> corresponds to the copula of Classical Chinese 也 *yě* in the correlative

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ô 4 ‘善行を積んだ家には必ずある、多くの福が。」と云うのは’.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. K 88 ‘On the twenty-third day of the sixth month of the Qiantong period, she was laid to rest together [with the emperor Daozong] in the Yongfu 永富陵 tomb with (appropriate) rituals’.

epitaphs in Chinese (ChXuanyi 6-7, ChDaozong 6-7). Comparison between <k.ii.g> and <k.ii.û.ji> points at a verbal base <k.ii.> ‘to say’ with different suffixes. The former is a participle in <g>, the anterior vocalic variant of participial series *hu*, while the latter points at a suffix <û.ji>. This suffix could be an ulterior variant of converbial series *ji*. The fact that <k.ii.û.ji> here functions as a finite predicate, could imply that series *ji* covers both converbial and finite predicate functions. Alternatively, <û.ji> could be an independent suffix of its own series. The taxonomy of <û.ji> inside inflectional series, as well as its tense value, have to be tested by surveying the several attestations of verbs carrying this ending.<sup>17</sup> A noteworthy fact that may give an interesting direction to future research on this matter, is that some forms carrying this ending are possibly deverbal actor nouns (Kane 2009, 41, 201).<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the model “V-PTCP ritual V-FIN”<sup>19</sup> interestingly recalls the frequent phrase model of the Secret History of the Mongols “V-GsAn *yosu teyi-mü*” ‘this is how X happened’. MM *yosu(n)* means ‘rule, custom, law, way of doing’,<sup>20</sup> and the finite verb carries the low-focal intraterminal present marker *-mU*.

## 4.2 Complex Markers

In KSS texts there are instances of converbs followed by the copula. The copula can occur itself in a converbial form, or in a finite predicate form. An instance with a finite copula is shown in the following example.

- (8) 天 得力 得矣 固百列 今来穴火 为乎  
 HEAVEN b.qo b.as hó.y.hu **pu.su.û.ui** a.ar  
 HEAVEN bqo bas hóyhu pusuû-ui a-ar  
 heaven child also ? celebrate-CVB be-PST.M  
 ‘Also the son of heaven was celebrating.’?  
 (Xingzong 9-3/8)

Example (8) is a sentence where the only uncomprehensible block is <hó.y.hu>. The sentence occurs in the poetic section of the Eulogy for Emperor Xingzong, and it must be recalling an occasion when Emperor Xingzong – here called “the son of heaven” – celebrated a

<sup>17</sup> The variant <u.ji> is also attested.

<sup>18</sup> E.g. <MANAGE.u.ji.de o.oi>, MANAGE-**uji-de** o-oi, manage-**PTCP?-DAT** become-CVB, ‘becoming an administrator’ (Dilie 20-11/12).

<sup>19</sup> This model is attested also in Dilie 28-6/11, Zhixian 22, Daozong 6-30/31.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Haensch 1939, 171; Lessing 1960, 435.

certain event. A converb immediately followed by a copula is reminiscent of the complex aspecto-temporal markers of Mongolic. Series *ai* + <a.> occurs other times, like for instance in Xiangwen 39-31/33 (<gi t.em.y a.ai> ‘having not been conferred’) and in Xiao Dilu 11-5/8 (<tau.su.ó.ul.ha.ai a.ar.ún s.em.ii.er t.ge.er> ‘having been advanced to the post, fell ill and died’).<sup>21</sup> It is possible that such constructions have some specific intraterminal or postterminal values similarly to MM *-n bü-* or *-JU bü-/a-* respectively. Identification and analysis of more of such predicates in Khitan may help to clarify this matter.

- (9) 今矣得及 原 兆九右 垂九令北 为出 令礼九  
 t.oi<sub>2</sub>.b.u MOUNTAIN us.g.en RECORD.g.s.ii a.án s.ri.g  
 toi<sub>2</sub>bu MOUNTAIN usg-en RECORDg-sii a-án srig  
 ? tomb letter-GEN record-cvb be-PST.F ?  
 ‘being recorded in letters/by letters’  
 (Xiangwen 46-17/22)<sup>22</sup>

Example (9) is harder to interpret. The interpretation of <us.g.en RECORD.g.s.ii a.án> given in Róna-Tas (2017, 140) makes sense, and is probably correct. There are nevertheless some problematics which are probably due to our scarce knowledge of Khitan grammar. The noun ‘letter’ is likely the object of the verb ‘to record’, however the reason why does ‘letter’ take the genitive form remains unexplained. The subject is hard to identify, even among the words that precede the example and are not reported here. It is also possible that the verb is not a finite predicate, but rather works as a participle and determines the unknown word <s.ri.g>. Leaving aside for the moment being the several interpretative problems, <RECORD.g.s.ii a.án> may contain a complex marker made of converb marker <s.ii> and copula <a.>. Like the construction exemplified under example (8), this too opens a question to be addressed in future research.

<sup>21</sup> Translation from RT 141.

<sup>22</sup> Translation of blocks 19 to 21, from RT 140

## 5 Further Issues

Investigation on the grammatical categories of the Khitan language is in its young phase. Many questions are to be answered and little systematic research has been done in this field so far. The aim of this paper was to introduce some of the questions to be addressed in future research. During the course of my PhD project, I will try to answer at least some of these questions through a systematic survey of sources. As a complete survey of all 41 KSS inscriptions would be too extensive to be accomplished in a PhD project, for the time being I am planning to survey 11 inscriptions, namely - in order of dating - Xingzong, Yelü Jue, Renyi, Xiangwen, Dilie, Daozong, Xuanyi, Taishuzu, Xiao Dilu, Gu Yelü and Langjun. Relevant examples from other inscriptions will be included when necessary.

In this paper I decided to focus on aspecto-temporality of finite predicates. Further questions to be addressed in future research include aspecto-temporal values of participles, and circumstantial relations expressed by converbs.

In the present paper, examples of issues that could be resolved in the short term were hinted at, namely, the role of finite/participial marker <bun> in the system of gender agreement between verbs and subjects/nominal heads, and the syntactical categories of series *l.ñ*, *ñ* and suffixes <ji> and <û.ji>. The suffixes at issue are relatively frequent, and a survey of the syntactic relations between these forms and other parts of speech may help to answer these questions.

On the other hand, issues related to TAME categories, that were the core of the present discussion, will probably need more time to be clarified. My aim in this paper was that of proposing some starting points for further discussions on the grammatical meaning of Khitan verbal suffixes.

In summary, thanks to previous research, series ascribable to the syntactical categories of finite predicates, participles and converbs were recognised. There is at least partial overlap between finite forms and participles, and investigation of suffixes <ji> and <û.ji> may reveal other kinds of overlaps, such as between finite forms and converbs or between participles and converbs. The most frequent and best studied finite predicate series (*án*, *b.ñ*, *l.ñ* and *ñ*) probably encode past tense categories, and are possibly contrasting with respect to aspectual, modal or evidential categories, that are to be defined yet. At the present state of the art, forms ascribable to non-past tense are few. The ones mentioned here point at the existence of non-past suffixes <û.ji>, <g> and <i>. Nevertheless, several problems emerge. The taxonomy of <û.ji> in the series is not clear, as it could be part of a new series, or belong to series *ji*. Its syntactic categories need clarification as well. The eventual belonging to series *ji* would imply that it is a converbial marker, or that series *ji* merges

converbial and finite predicate functions. Moreover, case-marked instances suggest that forms in <û.ji> may cover participial function. The possibilities are that <û.ji> marks:

- converbs;
- converbs and finite predicates;
- participles and finite predicates;
- participles, finite predicates and converbs.

In previous research <g> has been classified as belonging to the participial series *hu*, where it is the variant occurring on stems with anterior vocalism. Its use in quotative forms suggests that it was possibly used also as a finite predicate marker, and that its tense value may pertain to the non-past realm.

In previous research, <i> has been classified as belonging to the converbial series *ai*. In the present paper, this suffix has not been included in the *ai* series because its occurrences on verbal bases are relatively rarer than the other members of the series, and actually the categories of <i> as a verbal inflectional suffix<sup>23</sup> are still obscure. The quotative verb <x.i> suggests that <i> marks finite predicate forms with non-past tense value. Future research shall clarify whether other verbal forms carrying this suffix can be analysable as encoding the same categories.

There are indications that Khitan, like it is common for Mongolic languages, besides simple finite predicate markers also had complex finite predicate markers. Here two possible complex markers composed by converb plus copula have been mentioned. In the future, identification of more examples of these two markers and of other possible complex markers, may help to understand the aspecto-temporal categories encoded by constructions composed of non-finite forms plus copula.

In conclusion, many questions remain to be answered with regard to the aspecto-temporal system of Khitan, but the notable advancement of the last decades in the decipherment and translation of inscriptions is offering more and more hints that can be used in order to solve at least some of these questions. Some preliminary proposals on how to analyse Khitan aspecto-temporality have been offered in the present paper, and will be further elaborated in my PhD project, with the hope of contributing to a better understanding of Khitan grammar, language and texts.

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**23** <i> is attested also as a nominal inflectional suffix. In this use, it was given tentative definitions as accusative, genitive and pertinentive.

## Abbreviations

### Chinese Liao inscriptions

ChDaozong = *Hanzi Daozong huangdi aice* 汉字道宗皇帝哀册 *Chinese Eulogy for Emperor Daozong* (1101)

ChXuanyi = *Hanzi Xuanyi huanghou aice* 汉字宣懿皇后哀册 *Chinese Eulogy for Empress Xuanyi* (1101)

### Grammar

ACC = accusative

AD = adterminal

CAUS = causative

COP = copula

CVB = converb

DAT = dative

dyn = dynamic

F = feminine

FIN = finite

GEN = genitive

INS = instrumental

INTRA = intraterminal

IPS = internal phase structure

M = masculine

mom = momentaneous

NPST = non-past

PL = plural

POST = postterminal

PST = past

PTCP = participle

t = transformative

v = verb

### Khitan studies

K = Kane 2009

Ö = Ötake 2015

RT = Róna-Tas 2017

WJ = Wu, Janhunén 2010

### KSS Inscriptions

Abbreviations of KSS inscription titles are according to Apatóczy and Kempf (2017)

Daozong = *Daozong huangdi aice* 道宗皇帝哀册 *Eulogy for Emperor Daozong* (1101)

Dilie = *Nanzhanbuzhou Da Liao guo Gu Dilie wang muzhiwen* 南瞻部洲大遼國故耶律迪烈王墓誌文 *Epitaph of Yelü Dilie* (1092)

Gu Yelü = *Gu Yelü shi mingshi* 故耶律氏銘石 *Epitaph of the Late Mme. Yelü* (1115)

Langjun = *Da Jin huang di dutong jinglüe langjun xingji* 大金皇帝都統經略郎君行記 *Record of the Journey of the Younger Brother of the Emperor of the Great Jin Dynasty* (1134)

Renyi = *Renyi huanghou aice* 仁懿皇后哀册 *Eulogy for Empress Renyi* (1076)

Taishuzu = *Huang taishuzu aice* 皇太叔祖哀册 *Eulogy for the Imperial Grand Uncle* (1110)  
Xiangwen = *Yelü Xiangwen muzhi* 耶律詳穩墓誌 *Epitaph for Yelü Xiangwen* (1091)  
Xiao Dilu = *Xiao Dilu muzhiming* 蕭敵魯墓誌銘 *Epitaph for Xiao Dilu* (1114)  
Xiao Zhonggong = *Xiao Zhonggong muzhiming* 蕭仲恭墓誌銘 *Epitaph of Xiao Zhonggong* (1150)  
Xingzong = *Xingzong huangdi aice* 興宗皇帝哀册 *Eulogy for Emperor Xingzong* (1055)  
Xuanyi = *Xuanyi huanghou aice* 宣懿皇后哀册 *Eulogy for Empress Xuanyi* (1101)  
Yelü Jue = *Yelü Jue muzhiming* 耶律玦墓誌銘 *Epitaph for Yelü Jue* (1071)  
Yelü Nu = *Yelü Nu mizhiming* 耶律奴墓誌銘 *Epitaph of Yelü Nu* (1099)

## Languages

Khal. = Khalkha Mongolian  
KSS = Khitan Small Script  
MM = Middle Mongol

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