

# Buddhism in Central Asia I

*Patronage, Legitimation, Sacred Space, and Pilgrimage*

*Edited by*

Carmen Meinert  
Henrik H. Sørensen



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# Contents

Foreword	vii
Acknowledgments	ix
Illustrations and Tables	x
Abbreviations	xv
Notes on Contributors	xvii

Introduction—Piety, Power, and Place in Central and East Asian Buddhism	1
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*Carmen Meinert and Henrik H. Sørensen*

## PART 1

### *Patronage and Legitimation*

- 1 Who Is Legitimizing Whom? On Justifying Buddhism's Place in the Body Politic 15  
*Sem Vermeersch*
- 2 Images of Patronage in Khotan 40  
*Erika Forte*
- 3 Uyghur Legitimation and the Role of Buddhism 61  
*Yukiyo Kasai*
- 4 Donors and Esoteric Buddhism in Dunhuang during the Reign of the Guiyijun 91  
*Henrik H. Sørensen*
- 5 The Formation of Tangut Ideology: Buddhism and Confucianism 123  
*Kirill Solonin*

## PART 2

### *Sacred Space and Pilgrimage*

- 6 From Padmasambhava to Gö Tsangpa: Rethinking Religious Patronage in the Indian Himalayas between the 8th and 13th Centuries 151  
*Verena Widorn*

- 7 Sacred Space in Uyghur Buddhism 189  
*Jens Wilkens*
- 8 Pilgrims in Old Uyghur Inscriptions: A Glimpse behind  
Their Records 204  
*Simone-Christiane Raschmann*
- 9 Looking from the Periphery: Some Additional Thoughts on  
Yulin Cave 3 230  
*Max Deeg*
- 10 Creation of Tantric Sacred Spaces in Eastern Central Asia 244  
*Carmen Meinert*
- Bibliography 273
- Index of Deities and Buddhas 310
- Index of Dynasties, Kingdoms, and Empires 311
- Index of Personal Names 312
- Index of Places 314
- Index of Technical Terms 316
- Index of Text Names 320

# The Formation of Tangut Ideology: Buddhism and Confucianism

*Kirill Solonin*

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Tangut ideology is represented through two large bodies of texts: secular books on the one hand and Buddhist scriptures on the other. The former was generally associated with Tangut Confucianism, although the majority of texts in this category are in fact *books for beginners* (Chin. *mengshu* 蒙書). This category includes both Chinese and Tangut materials (e.g. the translations of the Chinese category books (Chin. *leishu* 類書), as well as the Tangut versions of Chinese classics). This category further includes Tangut-Chinese textbooks such as the famous *mji<sup>2</sup>zar<sup>1</sup>dzji<sup>1</sup>bju<sup>1</sup>pja<sup>1</sup>gu<sup>1</sup>nji<sup>1</sup>* 級糝糝糝糝 [Timely Pearl in Hand] and encyclopedic compilations, such as *šji<sup>2</sup>gu<sup>1</sup>wo<sup>2</sup>njow<sup>2</sup>* 彙彙彙彙 [The Sea of Meanings Established by the Sages], a collection of essential materials concerning the Tangut State.<sup>2</sup>

Another important part of the category of secular texts are Tangut poetry and collections of Tangut proverbs, which were probably also used for educational purposes. There existed several genres of Tangut poetry characterised by their specific use of language and variety of content. Some of the poems demonstrate a direct connection with Buddhist ideas, whereas other poems are based on what could be referred to as native Tangut ideology. In many cases, the poems gravitate around the figure of the Tangut emperor.

One more group of texts in the secular category are the lexicographic materials, including Tangut dictionaries, rhyme tables, etc. The most famous among these is the so-called *jwir<sup>2</sup> njow<sup>2</sup>* 彙彙 [Ocean of Writing], generally known under its calqued Chinese title *Wenhai* (文海). This division of texts is observed

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- 1 The first draft of this paper is published in the journal *Entangled Religions* of the Käte Hamburger Kolleg 'Dynamics in the History of Religions Between Asia and Europe' at CERES. Kirill Solonin, "Buddhism and Confucianism in the Tangut State," *Entangled Religions* 8 (2019). In this chapter, all references to Chinese Buddhist texts are given by CBETA edition, 2014.
  - 2 On the Tangut *leishu* see Imre Galambos, *Translating Chinese Tradition and Teaching Tangut Culture* (Berlin, Morton: De Gruyter, 2014), 156–160.

in the native Tangut texts, such as the “Preface” to the dictionary *ɣwə<sup>1</sup>ɣie<sup>2</sup>-we<sup>2</sup>bju<sup>1</sup>* 𐰇𐰺𐰏 [Division of Rhymes According to the Five Categories of Sounds].<sup>3</sup>

From the perspective of Tangut intellectual history, the major obstacle in reconstructing the history of adaptation of both Buddhism and Confucianism is that Tangut Buddhism is identifiable in terms of its origins, languages, lineages of transmission, and scholarly (or sectarian) affiliations (Chin. *zong* 宗). One can trace distinctions between ‘official’ and ‘popular’ versions of Buddhism among the Tanguts, and speculate about the nature of Tangut Buddhist institutions, and so forth. That is, Tangut Buddhism is a concrete entity, whereas the nature of Tangut Confucianism remains evasive. We are in possession of several translations of the Chinese classics, as well as information concerning the role of Confucian scholars in Tangut politics and education, whereas we have strong reasons to believe that most of the Tangut Confucian scholars remained Buddhists from the perspective of their religious affiliation. Importantly, the *ɣwə<sup>1</sup>lji<sup>1</sup>kie<sup>1</sup>dzji<sup>2</sup>* 𐰇𐰏𐰺 [Law Code of the Tiansheng Era] (from 1147–1168) contains detailed entries on both Buddhist and Daoist institutions in the Tangut Empire, but no Confucian rituals or practices are mentioned therein. This means Confucianism in the Tangut Empire should be treated as a heuristic device that allows one to group together the collection of various materials pertaining to the art of government.<sup>4</sup>

The term Confucianism is in itself a scholarly construct, and thus the fact that a native Tangut term for this cannot be found is not surprising. In the cases we have, the closest analogue terms are the Teaching of Humanity (Tang. *dzjwu<sup>1</sup>tsjir<sup>1</sup>* 𐰇𐰏) and Secular Books (Tang. *mur<sup>1</sup>jwir<sup>2</sup>* 𐰇𐰏) in relation to non-Buddhist literature. There are several other terms to be discussed below, including an important term *rjir<sup>2</sup>* (𐰇), which translates Chinese *ru* (儒, Confucian(ism)). Such a terminological variety indicates the original ambiguity and volatility of scholarly labels when applied to the actual source materials. The term Confucianism and its various implications developed primarily from the study of Sinitic culture and history, whereas the Tanguts themselves came from a different historical background. Thus the application of imposed terminology to their culture produces associations that are not necessarily congruent with the source materials. This is also obvious for Tangut Buddhism, which is an easier case, and would seem to be even more correct for Confucianism. At the same time, Tangut culture reveals obvious traces of the ideological

3 The Preface is to be found in a publication of the texts from Karakhoto preserved in Russia. *Ezang Heishui cheng wenxian* 俄藏黑水城文獻 [Documents from Khara-Khoto preserved in Russia], ed. Shi Jinbo, Wei Tongxian and E.I. Kychanov, vol. 7 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1997), 258–259.

4 This approach was suggested by one of the anonymous reviewers of the present paper.

system, which is generally referred to as Confucianism understood in a very broad sense.<sup>5</sup> These elements emerge in a complex combination with other constituents of the Tangut ideological whole. Here I discuss some aspects of this multifaceted relationship in regard to the formation of the Tangut ideology. I continue to use the term Confucianism as a heuristic device and to label a variety of non-Buddhist ideologies traceable to what is generally identified with Confucianism in Chinese history. On the contrary, in my understanding, Buddhism remains an identifiable entity, open to a positivist description.

Scholars generally concur that during the periods when power was usurped by the clans of the empresses'—i.e. during the reigns of Yizong (r. 1047–1067, 毅宗) and Huizong (r. 1067–1086, 惠宗), as well as the early period before 1092 during the reign of Chongzong (r. 1084–1139, 崇宗)—Buddhism was a major factor in political legitimation in the Tangut Empire.<sup>6</sup> Confucian political doctrine was promoted when emperors tried to restore the sovereignty of their Ngwemi (Tang. *ŋwe<sup>2</sup> mji<sup>1</sup>* 纒纒, Chin. Weiming 嵬名) clan. In other periods Confucianism was limited to its specific sphere of the art of government (Chin. *rushu* 儒術), while the ideological agenda in the Tangut state remained dominated by Buddhism. That is, the manner in which Buddhism, or Confucianism, and to a lesser extent Daoism, emerged in the Tangut Kingdom, differed substantially from the Sinitic paradigm of the Three Teachings (Chin. *sanjiao* 三教).

5 See the discussion Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism. Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization*. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997)

6 Many of the published texts and inscriptions discussed in this paper were originally used in Ruth Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996), which is the first—and by far the most—influential Western publication on the subject. However, I have chosen not to use any of her translations and interpretations in what follows. The approach taken in Dunnell's monograph is that Buddhism was a major instrument of political legitimation in the Tangut State, especially during the so called 'regencies,' i.e. the period from the death of the first monarch Yuanhao (1038–1048, 元昊) until the late 11th century, when the young Emperor Qianshun (1086–1139, 乾順) finally emancipated himself and the imperial clan from the domination of the empress-dowager's Liang clan. As Dunnell argues, the Tangut model of 'Buddhist' legitimation proved so powerful that its remainders are discovered throughout the history of the former Tangut realm, even after the demise of the Tangut State in 1227. A partially similar but broader set of sources is collected by Shi Jinbo in his work on the Tangut society. See, Shi Jinbo 史金波, *Xixia shehui* 西夏社會 [The Tangut Society], vols. 1–2 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2007). Shi's work, although fundamental from the perspective of the variety of source materials used, is generally descriptive and not analytic. His interpretations and translations of the sources are quoted only in those cases where I did not have direct access to the primary sources.

## 2 Terminology: Issues Regarding the ‘Teaching’ and the ‘Law’

Chinese sources on the Tangut Empire hardly ever mention Buddhism, but in turn emphasise the elevated position of Confucianism. Even though Confucius was promoted to the rank of Emperor by Renzong (r. 1139–1193, 仁宗), the exaggeration of the role of Confucianism in the Tangut State is obviously a later creation by Yuan (1260–1368, 元) period writers, including those responsible for finalizing of the *Xiaguo zhuan* 夏國傳 [History of the Tangut Empire], as found in the *Songshi* 宋史 [History of the Song Dynasty]. This, in turn, can be explained through the influential position of the Tangut scholar-officials (most notably from the Gao (高) and Wo (斡) clans) in Yuan China. That is, the image of the Tangut civilization fluctuated with the passage of time, depending on the ideological stances of various authors, who for various reasons had chosen to write about the Tanguts. That is, external evidence naturally contains ideological bias, which needs to be juxtaposed with evidence found in the primary sources.

As is clear from the extant Tangut sources, the relationship between Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism was never explicitly problematised by the Tanguts, and the paradigm of the Three Teachings was not mechanically applied by them to their specific situation either. However, the Tanguts did in fact develop their own local version of the Three Teachings.

The privileged position of Buddhism in Tangut society has been recognised by both Tangut rulers and scholars. Chronologically, Sinitic Buddhism was widespread in the area of Helan Mountain Range (Chin. Helan shan 賀蘭山) prior to the Tangut resettlement there in the mid-8th century. The role of Buddhism in the formation of the Tangut State is corroborated by the fact that the earliest surviving texts in both Tangut and Chinese are epigraphical records dealing with state sponsored Buddhist activities. The famous *Chongxiu Huguo-si Ganying ta bei* 重修護國寺感應塔碑 [Stele Commemorating the Renovation of the Gantong *Stūpa* from the State Protection Monastery] is one such example.

Even a superficial scan of the works of native Tangut origin (odes, collections of proverbs, dictionaries, rhyme tables, etc.) reveals a terminological and metaphorical uniformity observed throughout the textual corpus. This means that the same set of terminology is applicable in a variety of discourses, i.e. those concerned with Sinitic Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, native Tangut Buddhism, Confucianism, legal matters, Tangut poetry, etc. This is not much different from the situation in China, or anywhere else.

The one major difference is that the set of Tangut ideological terms emerged in its entirety within a relatively short span of time. Moreover, its evolution

cannot be chronologically traced. One can, however, be certain that by the 1050s, the major part of the relevant vocabulary was in place, something which allowed the commencement of the Buddhist translation project. This means that for the Tanguts the invention of terminology and its application were simultaneous processes, and thus the creation of the terminological repertoire was dictated by the necessity to put into writing all aspects of Tangut lore: Buddhist, secular, native Tangut mythology, etc.

The Tangut version of *Quanfa puti xin wen* 勸法菩提心論 [Admonition to Develop *bodhicitta*] by Pei Xiu (791–864, 裴休) mentions three types of teachings: The Teachings of the *sūtras* (Tang. *lwər<sup>2</sup>rej<sup>2</sup>* 禪經), the Teaching of the Immortals (Tang. *šji<sup>2</sup> tšhji<sup>2</sup>* 參禪), and Secular Books (Tang. *mur<sup>1</sup>·jwir<sup>2</sup>* 雜書). The last term literally translates as ‘secular literature’ (Chin. *sushu* 俗書), as opposed to Buddhist and Daoist books, and essentially indicates Confucian writings. This Tangut term is a compound representing the original Chinese term *rujia* (儒家), traditionally translated as Confucianism.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, proceeding from the contexts, the Tangut word *rjijr<sup>2</sup>* 儒 (Chin. *ru* 儒), is believed to translate ‘Confucians,’ imply a ‘scholar,’ or imply ‘someone with a scholarly degree.’ Chinese *rujia* (儒家) is translated in Tangut as ‘learned people’ (Tang. *rjijr<sup>2</sup> mjir<sup>2</sup>* 儒翻); the Confucian connotations of this term are the result of a semantic transfer and are not etymologically determined.

Other fundamental terms such as the Way of Sage (Tang. *šjij<sup>2</sup> tšja<sup>1</sup>* 仙道, Chin. *shengdao* 聖道), Sage (Tang. *šjij<sup>2</sup>* 仙, Chin. *shengren* 聖人), and so forth, are originally Buddhist (meaning Buddhism and Buddha respectively) in the Tangut language, rather than Confucian, and are also attested in translations from Tibetan. The formative process for the development of ideological terms in Tangut followed a pattern markedly different from what we find in China. In the Tangut language, the terminology did not evolve from being Confucian to being Buddhist, but *vice versa*.<sup>8</sup> One rather obvious example is the term Treatise (Tang. *mər<sup>2</sup> mja<sup>1</sup>* 禪經), based on the Sanskrit *mūlamātrkā* in relation to the Confucian classics.<sup>9</sup>

The Tangut terms for Daoism are *šji<sup>2</sup> tšhji<sup>2</sup>* (參禪, Chin. *xianjiao* 仙教) or *gju<sup>2</sup> tšhji<sup>2</sup>* (焮禪), which returns to the Chinese *jiufa* (救法). The terms

7 For the Chinese text see, *Quanfa puti xin wen* 勸發菩提心文 [Admonition to Develop *bodhicitta*], XZJ 1010.58, 486b18.

8 The process might in fact have been even more complicated with regard to the Chinese terms, which, when developed to render Buddhist ideas on the basis of the indigenous Chinese thought, had to be conveyed into meaningful Tangut.

9 Peng Xiangqian 彭向前, *Xixia wen Mengzi zhengli yanjiu* 西夏文《孟子》正理研究 [Edition and Research of the Tangut Translation of *Mengzi*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2014), 166.



respectively originate in the teaching of immortals or the art of salvation (implies healing, etc.); still another term is the Teaching of Laojun (老君, Tang. *nar<sup>2</sup> gor<sup>2</sup> 𪛗𪛗*).

The most important among the Tangut ideological terms is *tsjir<sup>1</sup>* (𪛗), usually translated as the *dharma* (Chin. *fa* 法 in all of its connotations) or teaching (Chin. *jiao* 教), which places Tangut religious discourse outside the Sinitic paradigm of the Dao. The Tangut analog of this term emerged in contexts where it was determined by the usage in the translated texts. Although the contexts allow us to discern specific Confucian or Buddhist connotations of the term “*tshji<sup>2</sup>*,” the primary meaning of *tsjir<sup>1</sup>* was probably neither entirely Buddhist nor Confucian, but implied the sense of maintaining that which is correct.<sup>10</sup> Hence, although the modern Chinese translations of this term as *fa* or *jiao* may be adequate, they remain context-dependent, whereas etymologically the word means ‘true teaching.’ Application of this denomination to a specific teaching elevates it to a higher level in the ideological hierarchy. The connotations of this term are indicative of its superior position in the Tangut ideology, exceeding the value of the “written law,” which was known in Tangut as the translation of the Chinese term *lü ling* 律令.<sup>11</sup>

The term *tsjir<sup>1</sup>* equally applies to Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism, which generally means that in theory there were the three ‘laws’ in the Tangut Empire:

1. The Law of the Buddha
2. The Law of Immortals
3. The Law of Humanity

Among these, the Buddhist law was represented by the ‘sacred’ scriptures, whereas the ‘secular domain’ consisted of a variety of literature of different backgrounds, including the Confucian classics. This is not a purely speculative reconstruction, since such a model is confirmed by some original Tangut sources, among which the most clear-cut example is the introductory verse to

10 Li Fanwen 李範文, ed., *Xia Han zidian* 夏漢字典 [Tangut–Chinese Dictionary] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2011), 467. The Tangut dictionary known under the Chinese name *Wenhai* analyses this character as the combination of 𪛗 and 𪛗, i.e. correct ritual and correct actions (𪛗𪛗). This last word is used in Buddhist texts to translate the Sanskrit *carita*. The closest analogy to this Tangut character is the modern Chinese suffix *fa* 法, which nominalizes the verbs in the ‘manner of action.’ The character *tjji<sup>2</sup>* (𪛗) is interpreted as correct law (Li Fanwen, *Xia Han zidian*, 1910).

11 It remains to be proven to what degree the Chinese discourse on religions is applicable to the Tangut materials. For the discussion of the relevant matters, see: R. Company, “Chinese History and Writing about Religion(s): Reflections at a Crossroad,” in *Dynamics in the History of Religions Between Asia and Europe: Encounters, Notions, and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Volkhard Krech and Marion Steinicke (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 273–295.

*The Sea of Meanings Established by the Sages*,<sup>12</sup> where the ‘laws’ are listed together with their respective literary genres. This same text introduces a dichotomy of the Law of the Buddha versus the Law of the Kings (*nji<sup>2</sup> tsji<sup>1</sup>* 席禩), which—according to the text—should be listed together with the Law of the Buddha. The clarification of the relationship between these categories remains one of the most fundamental tasks of Tangut Studies. However, the manner in which Daoist texts should be classified (in case they were translated into Tangut) is unclear.

It is tempting to reconstruct the ideological system of the Tangut Empire similarly to the paradigm of the Three Teachings of the Song. However, the situation in the Tangut Empire was probably not as straightforward. One possible way of interpreting the Tangut ‘ideological vocabulary’ is that it was either primarily Buddhist or ideologically neutral. The relevant terminological sets for Confucianism and Daoism are probably derivatives from the Buddhist system. This is probably due to the hierarchical priority of Buddhism in the Tangut State. This point remains to be proven on the basis of a broader selection of source materials, but here it is adopted as a working hypothesis. In short, from a philological perspective, one can postulate the priority of Buddhism in the process of formation of the ideological system of the Tangut Empire. At the same time, the idea of the Tangut Emperor exercising his power within the framework of the Tibetan donor recipient (Tib. *mchod yon*) paradigm is probably applicable only (if at all) to the final period of the Tangut history;<sup>13</sup> one simple reason for that is that the institute of the “imperial preceptor” remained an extraordinary position outside the Tangut administrative system, and was not listed in the Tangut legal codes.

### 3 Buddhism and the Beginnings of Tangut Statehood

Monuments of Tangut epigraphy, especially the *Da Xiaguo zang sheli jieming* 大夏國葬舍利碣銘 [Inscription on Burying the Relics in the Great Tangut

12 Keqianuofu 克恰諾夫, Li Fanwen 李範文, and Luo Maokun 羅矛昆, *Shengli Yihai yanjiu* 圣立義海研究 [Study of the Sea of Meanings Established by the Sages] (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 1995), 46. The translation needs to be revised but nonetheless provides an idea of the general message of the text.

13 David S. Ruegg, *Ordre spirituel et ordre temporel dans la pensée bouddhique de l'Inde et du Tibet. Quatre conférences au Collège de France* (Paris: Collège de France—Publications de l'Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1995), 34–37. I thank the reviewer of this paper for directing me to this publication.

State], the *Chengtian si beiji* 承天寺碑記 [The Record of Chengtian Temple],<sup>14</sup> and the *Stele Commemorating the Renovation of the Gantong stūpa from the State Protection Monastery*, all dating to the period before the 12th century, reveal the early existence of Buddhist-oriented policies as well as the practice of Buddhist state protection. Significantly, state protection rituals persisted as part of officially sanctioned political practice from the earliest times in recorded Tangut history until the demise of the Tangut Empire. In contrast, attempts to institutionalise Confucianism can only be traced to the 12th century, especially to its later years.<sup>15</sup> In this regard Zhang Shi (fl. mid. 11th c., 張陟), one-time advisor (Chin. *moyi* 謀議) to Emperor Jingzong (1038–1048, 景宗), wrote in the *Inscription on Burying the Relics in the Great Tangut State*:

Our Imperial Majesty endowed with literary abilities of a Sage and military prowess of a hero, [blessed] with superior humanity and supreme piety,<sup>16</sup> whose wisdom and eloquence exceeds that of Tang Yao, who is as heroic as the Han [Gao]zu, majestically reveres the Way of the Buddha, and had invented the Fan [i.e. Tangut script]; the ‘apple garden’ and ‘lotus palace’ wholeheartedly with the closed palms adorn and protect the Golden Vehicle and Precious Realm. Now it so happened, that the famous scholars from the East and Realized Masters [(Skt. *paṇḍita*)] from the West presented hundred and fifty pieces of relics [(Skt. *śāriṛa*)], and a joint of Buddha’s finger, Buddha’s arm and one *uṣṇīṣa* bone. Those were all put into a silver casket and golden vault, covered with iron armour and put into a stone box, covered with precious items, with Vaiśrāvana [...]. The stream was dug below it, and above it the *stūpa* touching the skies

14 Collected in: Li Fanwen 李範文, ed., “Xixia wencun 西夏文存 [Tangut Literary Heritage],” *Xixia yanjiu* 西夏研究 [Tangut Studies] 4 (2007): 880–881.

15 The *Songshi* 宋史 [History of the Song Dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 4257 contains paragraphs on the establishment of the so-called Tangut School (Chin. *fanxue* 番學) and Chinese School (Chin. *hanxue* 漢學) by Jingzong, and puts Yeli Renrong (d.u., 野利仁榮) in charge of the Tangut School. The exact nature of both institutions is debatable, but these were not institutions designed to promote Confucianism. The Tangut version of the Chinese Academy of the Sons of the Country (Chin. *guozijian* 國子監) and Hanlin Academy (Chin. *hanlin xueshi yuan* 翰林學士院) were established by Chongzong under the title of Guoxue (國學). These policies were further continued by Renzong.

16 Sun Bojun believes that “shengwen yingwu chongren zhixiao huangdi” 聖文英武崇仁至孝皇帝 (‘sage in literature, heroic in battle, revering humanity, profoundly filial’) might be one of the official titles of Emperor Jingzong. However, this title is not otherwise attested. See Sun Bojun 孫博君, *Xixia wenxian congkao* 西夏文獻叢考 [Collection of the Research Materials on Tangut Manuscripts] (Shanghai: Shanghai guiji chubanshe, 2015), 92–95.

was erected, the fragrant flowers always scent there and metal and stone surround [the *śarīra*]. We wish: the state is protected, and Southern Mountains remain strong for the eternity, so that the sacred household continues as long as the spring beans [continue to grow],<sup>17</sup> [we pray the] the officials serve their Lord with sincerity, we pray for the safety of the ten thousand households, and the cessation of hostilities around the border fortresses, and for the abundance of vegetables and wheat in our storehouses [...].<sup>18</sup>

The text reveals the role of Buddhist relics in the cult of Tangut state protection, as well as the connections with both Indian Buddhists and Chinese monks as early as the reign period of Emperor Jingzong. The 'Golden Vehicle' might be interpreted as some type of Esoteric Buddhism. However, the paragraph is too concise to warrant any further speculation as to the nature of Buddhist faith implied therein. Nonetheless, this again corroborates the records in the *History of the Song Dynasty* concerning presenting Jingzong with Buddhist *sūtras*, even before he became the first Tangut Emperor.<sup>19</sup>

The *Liangzhou Huguo si Gantong ta* 涼州護國寺感通塔 [Stele of the Gantong *stūpa* in the State Protection Temple in Liangzhou], which is in fact the record of a Dharma ceremony commemorating the restoration of the *stūpa* in question, demonstrates that the Tangut elite was primarily interested in the ritual side of the religion and its state-protection implications. Note that the technical ritual vocabulary is already in place in the text of this stele despite its relatively early date, and the same vocabulary continues to emerge throughout the remaining years of Tangut history. If one accepts the information from the *Xixia shushi* 西夏書事 [Records of Events in the Tangut Empire], then the situation concerning the Buddhist policies of the Jingzong reign period becomes even clearer:

17 I.e. a perennial plant.

18 *Da Xiguozang sheli jieming*: 我聖文英武崇仁至孝皇帝陛下，敏辯邁唐堯，英雄□漢祖；欽崇佛道，撰述蕃文，奈苑蓮宮，悉心修飾，金乘寶界，合掌護持。是致東土名流，西天達士，進舍利一百五十鬘，并中指骨一節，獻佛手一枝，及頂骨一方，罄以銀椁金棺、鐵甲石匱，衣以寶物，□以毗沙。下通掘地之泉，上构連雲之塔，香華永馥，金石周陳。所願者：保佑邦家并南山之堅固，維持聖嗣同春葛之延長，百僚齊奉主之誠，萬姓等安家之懇，邊塞之干戈偃息，倉箱之蔬麥豐盈 [...]. The translation follows Lou Fuyi's copy of the text, in: Li Fanwen 李範文, ed., *Xixia yanjiu* 西夏研究 [Tangut Studies], vol. 4 (Beijing: Shehui kexue chubanshe, 2007), 877–879. The date of the stele is Xixia Tianqing (西夏天慶) 3, i.e. 1096.

19 *Songshi*, 186.

Nangxiao [i.e. Jingzong] was born on the fifth day of the fifth month and he established this day as a day of celebration. The original custom was to celebrate the winter solstice, Nangxiao determined that the first week of every season should be a sacred holiday, so that officials and common people should revere the Buddha and pray for happiness for him. For this, at a distance of fifteen *li* from Zhongxing [i.e. the Tangut capital], corvée laborers built many pagodas, all as tall as fifteen *zhang*, as well as the Gaotai Temple [...], where the *Great Collection of sūtras* [i.e. *tripiṭaka*], presented by the Middle Kingdom, was preserved. He invited many Uyghur monks to dwell there, explain the texts of the scriptures and render them with the Tangut writing.<sup>20</sup>

The colophons to the surviving publications of Tangut Buddhist texts indicate that fundamental Mahāyāna scriptures had been translated during the reign of Huizong (i.e. during the latter half of the 11th century). Surviving epigraphy informs us that temples were established to further propagate the religion among the Tanguts at least as early as this era, although evidence for Buddhist piety among Tangut elites can be traced back as early as the 10th century, if not earlier. A major event in the early history of Tangut Buddhism is certainly the establishment of Chengtian Temple (Chin. Chengtian si 承天寺) around 1050 by Yizong's mother, Empress Dowager Liang. As was the norm at that time, the empress was a Buddhist and an ardent promoter of Tangut national uniqueness.

To further propagate Buddhism, Yizong requested a copy of the Chinese Buddhist Canon, complete with book covers and shelf-marks. Combined with another acquisition of the canon by Huizong in 1072 and the continuing influx of 'new translations' from the Office for the Translation of Buddhist Scriptures (Chin. *yijing yuan* 譯經院), an institution that existed for a hundred years (982–1082) in the Song capital Bianliang (汴梁, modern Kaifeng 開封), these acquisitions formed the textual basis for large-scale Buddhist translation projects that continued throughout Tangut history, initially with the help of Uyghur monks, and later with the assistance of Tibetan teachers. Concerning

20 *Xixia shushi*: 曩霄五月五日生，國中以是日相慶賀。舊俗止重冬至，曩霄更以四孟朔為聖節，令官民禮佛，為己祈福。至是，于興慶府東一十五里役民夫建高台寺及諸浮圖，俱高數十丈，貯中國所賜《大藏經》，廣延回鶻僧居之，演繹經文，易為蕃字。See Wu Guangcheng 吳廣成, Gong Shijuan 龔世俊, Hu Yubing 胡玉冰, eds., *Xixia shushi jiaozheng* 西夏書事校證 [Punctuated and Corrected Records of Events in the Tangut Empire] (Lanzhou: Gansu wenhua, 1995), 212. The accuracy of this record cannot be completely verified.

Huizong's request, Song Emperor Shenzong (1048–1085, 神宗) replied with an edict, which reads:

Order to the Lord of the Tangut Realm: [We] have examined the report requesting to purchase Buddhist scriptures, The Great *Tripitaka*, together with the book covers and shelf-marks, both old and new translations of the *sūtras* from various periods [...]. Especially for this purpose, we have ordered the responsible officials to collate and verify [the texts], so that the titles are not missing, all the editions are properly bound and both paper and ink are excellent, [...] [we] have already commanded the *Sūtra Printing Office* to publish the available *sūtras* according to the standard, and present them. Order Baoan jun [(保安軍)]<sup>21</sup> to officially notify Youzhou [(宥州)], so that people will be dispatched to the border to complete the transaction, and thus [the texts] will be obtained.<sup>22</sup>

Both Tangut requests and the Song court responses appear generic, and continue to remerge throughout the relevant sources. Combined with data from extant Tangut epigraphy and legislation, both stele inscriptions and book requests demonstrate the existence of so-called Buddhist policies in the Tangut Empire, and an apparent desire to 'transform' the Tanguts through Buddhism.

From a chronological perspective, one can infer that the creation of the Tangut script coincided with the famous case when Emperor Jingzong had nine Indian monks detained while travelling with 'tribute' to the Song in 1036. The *Records of Events in the Tangut Empire* reports this as follows:

In the first month of the 3rd year of Jingyou [(景佑), i.e. 1036], the Indians came with tribute. On their way East, after six months they reached Dashi, after two months they arrived to Xizhou, and again after three months they came to Xiazhou. At first the monk Shancheng [(善稱)] and his group of nine arrived to the [Song] capital [Bianliang], presented the Sanskrit *sūtras*, Buddha bones and an effigy of a bodhisattva with the bronze teeth (?). They stayed in the capital for three months, Renzong

<sup>21</sup> Tangut administrative unit on the Song border.

<sup>22</sup> 詔夏國主，省表乞取贖釋典《大藏經》并簽帙復帕，前後新舊翻譯經文，[...] 特降旨命，令有司點勘，無至脫漏卷目，所有印造裝成，紙墨工直 [...] 已指揮印經所，應有經本，并如法印造給賜，令保安軍移牒宥州，差人于界首交割，至可領也。The original request by Huizong also survives. For Shenzong's edict see, Zhang Jian 張鑿, *Xixia jishi benmo* 西夏紀事本末 [*Records of Events in the Tangut Empire* from the Incept to Completion] (Lanzhou: Gansu renmin chubanshe, 1998), 142; punctuation follows the original. A similar request was presented by Yizong in 1058.



presented them with *shubo* and sent them on the return journey. When they arrived to Xiazhou Yuanhao [i.e. Jingzong] kept them at the relay station and requested Sanskrit *sūtras*, but to no avail, and thus detained them. Since then there were no monks from the Western regions bearing tribute.<sup>23</sup>

As already stated above, state support and control over Buddhism continued until the demise of the Tangut Empire, which was marked, among other things, by the establishment of the translation platform (Chin. *yichang* 譯場) in 1214 to re-translate the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra* to protect the state after the first assault by Mongol forces.<sup>24</sup> Imperial support of and control over Buddhism is also demonstrated by notes on several extant Buddhist scriptures, such as imperially translated (Tang. *me<sup>2</sup> lhej<sup>2</sup>* 效纛), imperially revised (Tang. *me<sup>2</sup> njar<sup>1</sup>* 效纛), or provided with imperial prefaces.

Another indication of direct imperial patronage is the organisation of the nation-wide *dharma* Assemblies (Chin. *fahui* 法會),<sup>25</sup> which might be taken as a way to explain the Tangut textual heritage preserved at Karakhoto. These pro-Buddhist policies culminated in the production of a Tangut version of the Buddhist Canon, attested as early as Chongzong's time.<sup>26</sup> The above indicates that Buddhism remained within the focus of the Tangut imperial attention, and implies that Buddhist texts were translated from early on as one of the components of the state-building policies. This observation obviously contradicts the note in the *History of the Song Dynasty* and several Yuan period compilations concerning the exclusive role of Confucianism in the Tangut

23 *Xixia shushi*: [景佑三年正月] 天竺入貢，東行經六月至大食國，又二月至西州，又三月至夏州。先是僧善稱等九人至京師，貢梵經、佛骨及銅牙菩薩像，留京三月，仁宗賜束帛遣還。抵夏州，元昊留于驛舍，求貝葉梵經不得，羈之，由是西域貢僧遂絕。 This record is partially corroborated with entries from the *Songshi*, and thus is probably more reliable than other records in the *Xixia shushi*, 140. The “Since then there were no monks from the Western regions coming with the tribute” seems to be an addition by Wu Guangcheng.

24 For the transcription of the Tangut text and preliminary translation, see Shi Jinbo 史金波, *Xixia fojiao shilue* 西夏佛教史略 [A Concise History of Tangut Buddhism] (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 1988), 280–282.

25 We know of two such assemblies, one to commemorate Renxiao's fiftieth anniversary as emperor (1184) and the second held in commemoration of his passing (1193).

26 According to the reading of the seal on the Tangut translation of the *Chang Ahan jing* 長阿含經 [Skt. *Dīrghāgama*]. Kychanov Evgenij Ivanovich, *Katalog Tangutskiykh Buddhiskiykh Pamyantnikov iz Sobrania SbF IV RAN* [Catalog of Tangut Buddhist Texts from the Collection of the Ios RAS] (Kyoto: University of Kyoto Press, 1999), 45. What is implied under the title *tripitaka* remains to be clarified.

State<sup>27</sup> but agrees with the Tangut native sources. That is, one can suggest a close connection between the invention of the Tangut script and the making of Buddhist translations. This generally places Buddhism at the core of Tangut statehood, whereas similar records regarding the purchase of Confucian literature did not develop to such a scale.

#### 4 Buddhism, the Writing System, and Tangut Rituals

The sources in both Tangut and Chinese contain vague indications of the existence of an ideological tension that persisted at the Tangut court throughout recorded Tangut history. This conflict is epitomised as the competition between non-Chinese, i.e. Tangut, and Chinese Rituals (Chin. *fanyi hanli* 番儀漢禮). The nature of the Tangut Rituals is discussed at length in the famous imperial proclamation of Jingzong, addressed to the Song court.<sup>28</sup> These included the Tangut style of clothing, haircut, music, rituals, and script, which were designed to discriminate the Tangut population from the subjects of the Song. From the Tangut sources, the situation appears to be more complicated.<sup>29</sup>

The Tangut word *mji<sup>2</sup> dzjo<sup>2</sup>* (𐞑𐞐𐞑) is the direct source of the Chinese term *fanli* (番禮), the Tangut Rituals, known from Chinese sources. However, Tangut sources also mention *lhjwj<sup>2</sup> dzjo<sup>2</sup>* (𐞑𐞐𐞑), the Rituals of Lhi, which would return the same Chinese translation. Despite this, the terms were obviously different from the Tangut perspective, as indicative of the two layers in Tangut society and their respective ritual systems. However, the relationship between the two is beyond the scope of the present study. The nature of the Chinese Rituals (Tang. *zar<sup>1</sup>tjij<sup>2</sup>* 𐞑𐞐𐞑) is not so easy to determine (although for Yizong these also included Sinitic clothing style).<sup>30</sup> The tension between the two ritual systems reveal two possible civilisational choices: to promote Tangut identity, or to follow the Sinitic pattern. The tensions culminated during the reigns of Yizong and Huizong, the latter having been deposed by his mother as part of an attempt to introduce Sinitic rituals instead of the Tangut ones. The mutiny of Ren Dejing (fl. 12th c., 任德敬), during the reign of Renzong in the 1140s, was partially inspired by this character's anti-Chinese stance. At the same time,

27 According to the *Songshi*, 4257 the first to have been translated were the *Xiaojing* 孝經 [Scripture on Filial Piety], the oldest Chinese dictionary known as *Erya* 爾雅, and the *Siyanzazi* 四言雜字.

28 *Songshi*, 4258.

29 Some Chinese sources use *fan* (蕃) in the same capacity, *fan* (番) is used throughout this paper.

30 *Songshi*, 4260.



there are no indications that the conflict between the two ritual systems actually reflected tensions between the various nationalities of the Tangut Empire, or otherwise of a reflection of alternative loyalties, as might have been the case elsewhere.<sup>31</sup>

According to the sources presented below, Buddhism was generally associated with Tangut 'nationalism,' as one of the tokens of Tangut sovereignty, and thus, together with the writing system, a part of the Tangut Rituals. The *phiow<sup>1</sup> bji<sup>2</sup> lhji<sup>2</sup> tha<sup>2</sup>sjiw<sup>1</sup> lhej so<sup>1</sup> u<sup>2</sup> sjij<sup>2</sup>dzjij<sup>2</sup> bu<sup>1</sup>* 禪尾隨教慨襪散龍勿該 [Imperial Preface to the Newly Translated *tripiṭaka* of the Great State of White and High] (date unknown) states the following:

People are stupid and unwise; [they] indulge in evil and do not understand the good teaching; the Great Sage realised his compassion and instructed using skillful means [...]. [The Buddha] preached the teaching with his golden mouth for the benefit of all the sentient beings, [...] so that the dust of the *sahā* world was brought into order. [When his] days of transforming the world came to an end, the Buddha entered *nirvāṇa*. [Then] the 'Semblance Dharma' was collected in the West; Sanskrit texts were [...] East and were widely spread in the world [...]. Original literature [(Tang. *jiwir* 莪, Chin. *wen* 文)] is smooth and eloquent, [thus] the benefit of the Lhi Realm [i.e. the Tangut Empire] is great, [...] and incalculable. The meaning [of the teaching] is vast and encompasses all things. The womb of the secret mind of all Buddhas, sea of nature of *tathāgata* teaching, all in [...] and discriminate between big and small according with one's *karma*. The sun of wisdom traverses the heaven, and illuminates the three worlds, compassion [...] delivers four [kinds] the sentient beings. I, the king, with the compassion in my mind, extended benevolent thought onto the outside, [...], safety of the Realm. In the past, The Wind Emperor [i.e. Jingzong] initiated the translation of the *sūtras*, and afterwards, the teaching of the master Laojun [(?)] was still incomplete, the 'August things'<sup>32</sup> were not yet in their entirety and the virtue remained deficient. People [...] were not pursuing the way of purity, desire was the most frequent of the ten evils [which they] did; the gate of three liberations [...], the water from the source [...] is polluted, and the profanes took from it what they needed. The good words are like gold, the sentient beings [...] transform. [The sentient beings] abide [in the cycle

31 Yang Shaoyun, "Stubbornly Chinese? Clothing Styles and the Question of Tang Loyalty in Ninth-Century Dunhuang," *International Journal of Eurasian Studies* 5 (2016): 152–188.

32 Tangut 效龍, i.e. the responsibilities of an emperor.

of] birth and death, and are not seeking liberation from it, love and desire [...], [...] search.

The good rule of the Realm originates from the sacred teaching, transforming the people proceeds from the discipline; six *pāramitās* [...], purity rises from the great vow. Peoples are the same, but their languages differ, their lands are diverse, and their rituals vary, [their] scripts [...], [...] to be taught accordingly. Thus, to nourish and educate the people, imperial translation was commissioned, together with the eloquent expositions, all arranged as the chain of jewels, so that [...] the three vehicles and five parts of the teaching are concisely presented. The vast [...] of the eighty-four thousand [...], entry into the gate of non-duality, as the moon, bright in the night, [...]. [As soon as the cause and (?) the fruit are understood, the attainment of the [true] vision is manifest. Stupid and wise are equally blessed and will reach the other shore. Broadly undertake [...] became the law for the ten thousand [generations] to follow. Rivers and streams cannot be measured with *dou*, can earth be calculated with [...]?<sup>33</sup>

This preface reveals some of the more significant foundations of Tangut identity: the Tangut Realm as such, the Tangut Rituals, and the language itself. All three relate to the state propagation of Buddhism, i.e. the sacred teaching referred to in the text. This epitomises Tangut statehood and national identity. The preface allows us to further suggest that Buddhism was in an intimate way related to the well-being of the Tangut Realm, and thus with the domain of the rituals of state protection. In its turn, the Tangut writing system, as is known from a variety of the Tangut sources (e.g. the Preface to the *Division of Rhymes*

33 *phiow<sup>1</sup> bji<sup>2</sup> lhij<sup>2</sup> tha<sup>2</sup>sjiw<sup>1</sup> lhej<sup>1</sup> sɔ<sup>1</sup>·u<sup>2</sup> sjij<sup>2</sup>dzji<sup>2</sup> bu<sup>1</sup>*: 瓶徽徽肩，徽瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶；徽兮乖  
 瓶，□□□瓶瓶瓶。瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶；[徽]□□□，瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶  
 瓶。瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶[瓶]□□  
 □，□瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶[瓶]□□瓶瓶□瓶瓶瓶  
 瓶。瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶。瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶，瓶□□□瓶瓶瓶。瓶  
 瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶，[瓶瓶]□□，□□□□。瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶  
 瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶。瓶□□□，瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶  
 瓶瓶；瓶瓶瓶瓶□□，□瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶；瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶□□□  
 瓶瓶。瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶  
 瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶□□，□瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶。瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶  
 □□□，□瓶瓶瓶。瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶  
 □□瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶□□□瓶□□□□□□。瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶  
 □□□□□□□□□瓶。□瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶。瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶。□□瓶  
 瓶，瓶瓶瓶瓶。瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶瓶，瓶□□□瓶瓶瓶。 Transcription of the text in  
 Shi Jinbo, *Xixia fojiao shilue*, 230.

According to the Five Categories of Sounds mentioned above), was an essential part of the Tangut ritual system as well. This allows further speculation on the possible confluence between the Law of the Kings and the Law of Buddha, which are both expressed through the writing system as literature (𐰇, Chin. *wen* 文), and to hypothesize that the Tangut figure of the bodhisattva, Son of Heaven (*tshji<sup>1</sup>tsji<sup>2</sup>mə<sup>1</sup>zji<sup>1</sup>* 𐰇𐰏𐰏𐰏, i.e. the Tangut Emperor), which often appears in Tangut poetry, was a trope indicative of the coalescence of all the major constituents of formal Tangut identity. By this, one can suggest that for the Tanguts, invention of the Tangut script was a truly royal endeavor.

This allows one to further speculate that the category of secular texts was associated with the domain of Chinese Rituals, and could be elevated to the status of Law only through translation into Tangut. From this, one can further imagine that Tangut identity was closely associated with the language and writing system, in a way resembling the Sinitic concept of *wen* (文), i.e. the culture associated with and rendered through writing. The writing system was one of the foundations of the Tangut Rituals, which, according to native texts, were essential for Tangut self-identification. Thus, one may suggest a connection between Buddhism and Tangut ‘nationalism.’

## 5 Confucianism in the Tangut Empire

The founder of the Tangut state, Jingzong, as well as his father, who was posthumously recognised as Taizong (981–1103, 太宗), are unequivocally referred to as Buddhists by both native Tangut and Chinese sources.<sup>34</sup> The first request for Buddhist texts by Jingzong dates to the first years of his reign; his father had made a similar request in 1030. Jingzong does not appear to have shown any interest in Confucianism, and may have even have despised Daoism, though he was certainly interested in Chinese military texts.<sup>35</sup> His overall concern seems to have been to preserve Tangut identity through the enforcement of Tangut Rituals, the writing system, and educational institutions.

The first attempt to establish what might be called Confucianism and Chinese Rituals was undertaken by Yizong in the 1060s. This Sinitication project is normally interpreted as a part of the plan to reestablish sovereignty of the

34 Taizong requested a copy of the Buddhist Canon in 1030 (*Xixia shushi*, 128). Jingzong did the same in 1035 (*Songshi*, 185).

35 *Liaoshi* 遼史 [History of the Liao Dynasty] and *Songshi* mention that Yizong was carrying with him two texts, the *Yezhan ge* 野戰歌 [Yezhan ge] and *Taiyi Jinjian jue* 太乙金鑿訣 [Mirror of Taiyi], supposedly military and divination texts. These texts are mentioned in other sources as well. However, their actual nature remains unclear (*Songshi*, 4257).

Tangut imperial clan against the clan of the Empress-dowager. Infatuated by the Chinese style of clothing, Yizong abandoned the Tangut Rituals in 1062 and asked for permission to adopt Chinese court rituals. Permission was granted by the Song court, together with the permission to continue the usage of the 'bestowed surname' (Chin. *cixing* 賜姓) instead of the Tangut surname Ngwemi, which had been adopted by Yizong.<sup>36</sup> He further requested editions of the Chinese classics later in the same year, including the *Jiu jing* 九經 [Nine Canons], the *Tangshi* 唐史 [History of the Tang Dynasty], and the encyclopedia *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 [Prime Tortoise of the Record Bureau].<sup>37</sup>

This first request was followed by another in 1063, when Yizong asked for the Academy of the Sons of the Country, an edition of the *Nine Canons*, including the standard commentary (Chin. *zhengyi* 正義), a copy of the *Mengzi* 孟子 [Book of Mencius], and various medical books. Yizong simultaneously petitioned to be allowed to purchase a number of goods, including belts, as well as a request for workers, and a group of artisans to be sent to the Tangut capital.<sup>38</sup> This request was granted by the Song court because it was seen as the responsibility of the Chinese empire to 'transform and educate' 'Western Barbarians' in the correct and civilised manners, i.e. Chinese culture. Dispatching artisans was meant to promote and enhance a 'transformation' in the Tangut royal clan along the Chinese path through what was perceived as superior workmanship.<sup>39</sup>

However, attempts to introduce Chinese Rituals, which also implied the importation of both Confucian books and concepts, did not affect Yizong's Buddhist devotion. Requests for Chinese editions of the *Tripitaka* continued throughout his reign, and he remained a devoted Buddhist up until his death, as is reported in the *Mengxi bitan* 夢溪筆談 [Records of Discussions in Mengxi].<sup>40</sup> *Song Da zhaoling ji* 宋大詔令集 [Collection of the Song Orders]

36 Si Yizu 司儀組, ed., *Song Dazhaolingji* 宋大詔令集 [Collection of the Song Orders] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 912.

37 諒祚獻馬五十匹欲建書閣寶藏之。并求九經，唐史，冊府元龜，及本朝正至朝賀儀。仁宗賜以九經，還所獻馬。表求太宗御制，詩》草，隶石。I quote this paragraph from *Xixia shushi*, 237 (the source is *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編 [Extended Continuation of the Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance]).

38 *Song Dazhaolingji*, 912.

39 *Xixia jishi benmo*, 130.

40 This story emerges in all the standard histories of the Tangut State. *Mengxi bitan* 25, Zazhi 雜誌 [Various Records] 2: "[...] the Emperor as he rushed into the Buddhist temple to pray and bled to death, but the herdsman, who stayed therein, did not dare to show up." [...] 馳入一佛祠。有牧牛儿不得出，懼佛座下，見其脫靴，血流于踝。See the version in the Chinese texts project, accessed May 29, 2017. <<http://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=en&res=338826&search=%E8%Bo%85&remap=gb>>.

contains an undated *Ci Xiaquo zhu ling zunshou fanyi zhao* 賜夏國主令遵守番儀詔 [Decree to the Lord of the Tangut Empire to Respect the Original Tangut Clothing Style]. The decree was probably addressed to Yizong, indicating that the pro-Song ritual policies were abandoned soon after they had been adopted.<sup>41</sup>

Huizong had only petitioned the Song court for permission to revert to the Tangut Rituals and clothing under pressure from his mother, the Empress Dowager, who was both a devoted Buddhist and a strong advocate of Tangut uniqueness. The Tangut petition was granted, something which marked a triumph for Tangut nativism and Buddhism in particular.<sup>42</sup> Thus, in the 2nd year of *Xining* (Chin. 熙寧, 1069), the Chinese Rituals were officially abandoned. Even though Huizong was deposed by the empresses' clan, it stands to reason that the role Buddhism played in the Tangut Empire was institutional. Hence, Buddhism always remained a primary instrument for legitimising and protecting the realm.

Available textual sources seem to indicate that the restoration of the Tangut royal clan Ngwemi by Chongzong took place simultaneously with the increase in the royal patronage of Confucianism, which culminated in the establishment of the State Academy (Chin. *guoxue* 國學), with three hundred scholars and students assigned to it.<sup>43</sup> Chinese texts on Tangut history mention Confucianism as an important political factor since as early as the 12th century.

Yet it appears that the influence of Confucianism culminated as late as the mid-12th century, when a Tangut version of the Chinese Hanlin Academy was established by Renzong. State-sponsored Confucian education remained an important part of Tangut ideology throughout the rest of Tangut history, and its influence was made manifest in the establishment of an examination system. At least three nationwide examination sessions took place during the 12th century, covering the reigns of both Chongzong and Renzong. The practice of adolescent examinations (Chin. *tongzi ke* 童子科) was also introduced during the 1140s.<sup>44</sup> From the period of Chongzong onwards, provincial and county schools were built and/or renovated, and enrollment in the Confucian school in the capital grew from three hundred students to almost three thousand during Renzong time. Renzong reestablished (or rather, rebuilt) the Imperial Academy (Chin. *taixue* 太學), set up an Inner Academy (Chin. *neixue* 內學),

41 *Song Da zhaoling ji*, 913.

42 *Xixia jishi benmo*, 146; *Song Da zhaoling ji*, 917.

43 *Songshi*, 4266.

44 Zhou Lasheng 周臘生, "Xixia gongju gouchen 西夏貢舉鉤沉 [Tangut Examination System]," *Xiaogan Xueyuan xuebao* 孝感學院學報 [Journal of Xiaogan Institute] 31.2 (2011): 14–21.

and appointed famous scholars (Chin. *mingru* 名儒) to preside over it. Furthermore, he developed a nation-wide educational network. In 1146, Confucius was elevated to the rank of emperor with the title Emperor Promoting Culture (Chin. *wenxuan di* 文宣帝). The restoration of the Imperial Academy was commemorated with an eulogy:

Ode for the Renovation of the Imperial Academy

The Star of Literature [sent] by the Will of Heaven, the treasure of the State/Humanity and Virtue transform the State to happiness; the Sages of the Mi [Realm],<sup>45</sup> made<sup>46</sup> sacred words and sacred phrases as texts, so that [they] became the Teachers of Virtue for the thousands of the Black-Headed; August Plans and August Words<sup>47</sup> composed verses, the ten thousand of the Red-Faced took them as examples. [Texts and verses] are [similar to] building a fortress [lit. 'wall'] without earth, [this] city of no-earth is as eternal as Heaven and Earth, beautiful and marvelous; [again, texts and verses] are [similar to] the fire without ashes to feed it, there is no ashes to feed it, but it shines like the Sun and the Moon, bright and brilliant; After that, in the *renzi* year, the Great Temple<sup>48</sup> was rebuild on the Old Shadow [i.e. Ancestral Temple], the new hall for the Lord of Scholarship<sup>49</sup> was established, and very soon the gods and the spirits

45 Tang. *gor<sup>1</sup>no<sup>2</sup>* (紉羆), the Teacher, translates as Chin. *junshi* (君師) or *fuzi* (夫子), implying Confucius, to discriminate from other teachers (Peng Xiangqian, *Xixia wen Mengzi zhengli yanjiu*, 54–55). Thus, the Tangut expression in the ode translates as ‘Tangut Confucius.’ This might also imply Yeli Renrong. However, to comply with the next line, a generalised translation was selected.

46 Tang. *thjwi<sup>1</sup>* (覲) (Li Fanwen, *Xia Han zidian*, 70) probably should be interpreted as the Chin. *kai* (開). Its usage here is determined by the matters of rhyme with Tang. *yir* (羆) ‘to make.’

47 Tang. *me<sup>1</sup> phji<sup>1</sup> me<sup>2</sup>njwo<sup>1</sup>* (效羆效羆) translate as Chin. *yumou yuci* (御謀御詞). In this compound, Tang. *me* (效) is a standard epithet for the ‘Emperor’; the compound indicates Tangut emperors in general.

48 Tang. *tha<sup>2</sup> mjijr<sup>2</sup>* (鞞羆) translates as Chin. *da gong* (大宮). However, according to the *Tongyin* gloss, *mjijr<sup>2</sup>* (鞞) is explained as: ‘all what Augusts and Sages do, is accomplished.’ In other occurrences, this word translates Chin. *ruì* (睿). Considering the above, the suggested translation is Imperial Ancestral Temple (Chin. *taimiao* 太庙). This term obviously parallels Tang. *pju<sup>2</sup>* (鞞) in the capacity of an Imperial palace in the next line. The meaning of the line is not completely clear, and the translation is tentative. *Renzi* year indicates 1192, see: Nie Hongyin 聶鴻音, ‘Xixia wen *Xin xiu Taixue ge* kaoshi 西夏文《新修太學歌》考釋 [On the Tangut Ode For the Renovation of the Imperial Academy], in *Xixia wenxian lungao* 西夏文獻論稿 [Papers on the Study of Tangut Texts], ed. Nie Hongyin 聶鴻音 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2012), 197.

49 Tang. *rjijr<sup>2</sup> njij<sup>2</sup>* (鞞羆) is literally translated as Chin. *ruwang* (儒王) or *shiwang* (士王), i.e. the Lord of the Scholars-officials. Considering that the title of Emperor was bestowed









reform and development extends from 1145 to 1149.<sup>63</sup> Opposition to this course was represented by a powerful minister, Ren Dejing as mentioned above.<sup>64</sup>

The success of Renzong's reforms was secured by a group of Confucian-oriented scholars. One of them was Wo Daochong (d. 1185, 斡道冲), a 'professor' in both the Chinese and Tangut schools. He had been promoted by Renzong and was loathed by the Ren Dejing for his opposition to the latter's plan to split the Tangut State into two domains, one of which he intended to rule independently.<sup>65</sup> Others include Luo Shichang (fl. mid. 12th c., 羅世昌) and Wo Zhaze (fl. mid. 12th c., 斡札贊), who are mentioned as responsible for compiling the Tangut historical records and other books.<sup>66</sup> Wo Daochong's descendants continued to be important officials during the Yuan Dynasty, and arranged for the famous literatus Yu Ji (1278–1342, 虞集) to compose an eulogy in Chinese for their progenitor. Part of the text reads:

#### Eulogy to the Image of Prince Wo from the Tangut Empire

The Prince belonged to the Wo family, his ancestors were from the Lingwu area, later moved to Xingzhou following the Tangut Lord. Their hereditary occupation was that of 'historiographer of the Tangut State'. His name was Daochong, second name Zongsheng. At the age of eight, he qualified for the children examinations with the *Shangshu* 尚書 [Book of Documents], was well trained in the Five Canons. He was appointed as the teacher in both the Tangut and Chinese schools, translated *Lunyu zhu* 論語註 [The Commentary to the Analects], and wrote an explanation of its meaning, entitled *Lunyu xiaoyi* 論語小義 [The Concise Meaning of the Analects] in 20 *juan*, he also composed the *Zhouyi bushi duan* 周易卜筮斷 [Interpretation of Divinations *bu* and *shu* of the *Yijing*]. These were written in the national [Tangut] script, and distributed throughout the realm, and still remain in circulation up to now. In his official career, he was promoted to the palace secretariat [(Chin. *zhongshu* 中書)], as prime minister [(Chin. *xingxiang* 宰相)] of the realm, and then passed away.

63 Chronology in *Xixia jishi benmo*, 222–223.

64 Nie Hongyin 聶鴻音, "Fan Han erzi yuan biazheng 番漢二字院辨正 [Study on the Tangut and Chinese Schools]," in *Xixia wenxian lungao* 西夏文獻論稿 [Papers on the Study of Tangut Texts], (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2012), 134–136.

65 Details of Ren Dejing's mutiny are widely available; the most concise version is found in the *Xixia jishi benmo*.

66 Biographies available in: Zhou Chun 周春, Hu Yubing 胡玉冰, eds., *Xixia shu jiaobu* 西夏書校補 [*Xixia shu* with Punctuation and Comments] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), *juan* 14, *liezhuan* 列傳 [Biographies].

Originally, the people of the Tangut Empire, revered Confucius as the Sage Emperor, the Promoter of Culture. Therefore, the painted image of the Prince was prepared, and sacrifices were established. Other regional and county schools followed this pattern. When the Tangut Empire collapsed, the regions and counties were abolished by warfare, the temples [of Confucius] and the schools were all destroyed, and the traces only survive in Ganzhou. The door plaques from the temple of the Emperor [i.e. Confucius] can still be seen in Xingzhou, together with the stone carving of the *Lingzhi ge* 靈芝歌 [Lingzhi Hymn] composed by the Tangut Lord<sup>67</sup>; the main hall and the galleries [of the ancestral temple] have survived in Liangzhou. [...] The Eulogy says: When the Tangut Empire was prosperous, it worshipped Confucius in the most respectful and intimate manner, and imperial sacrifices were established for him. There was a Confucian official, who completely understood the *Book of Documents*, understood canonical texts and literary works, transformed the capital of the realm, and then served his lord as chancellor [...].<sup>68</sup>

The *Eulogy to the Image of Prince Wo from the Tangut Empire* is actually the most authoritative Chinese source on Tangut Confucianism and corroborates to some extent the *Ode for the Imperial Academy*. Although the text is indicative of the development of the Tangut educational system, as well as of the large number of translations of the classic texts, the rise of Confucianism was in many ways politically motivated. Confucianism in the Tangut Empire remained strong among Tangut officials and scholars, who continued their service under the Yuan. The son of Wo Daochong, Gao Zhiyao (1206?–1271?, 高智耀), qualified for a *jinsi* degree during the Tangut Empire, and later, after a period of seclusion following the demise of the empire, he served as a senior scholar-official under Godan Khan (1206–1251). Crucially, the Confucian

67 Composition by the Emperor Chongzong, attested in other sources.

68 西夏相幹公畫像贊 公姓幹氏，其先靈武人；從夏主遷興州，世掌夏國史公。諱道沖，字宗聖。八歲以《尚書》中童子舉，長通五經，爲蕃漢教授，譯《論語註》別作解義二十卷曰：《論語小義》，又作《周易卜筮斷》，以其國字書之，行於國中，至今存焉。官至其國之中書，宰相而歿。夏人嘗尊孔子爲至聖文宣帝，是以畫公象，列諸從祀，其國郡縣之學，率是行之。夏亡郡縣廢於兵，廟學盡壞，獨甘州僅存其迹。興州有帝廟門榜，及夏主靈芝歌石刻，涼州有殿及廡。[...] 述贊曰：西夏之盛，禮事孔子，極其尊親，以帝廟祀，乃有儒臣，早究典謨，通經同文，教其國都，遂相其君 [...]。See, Yu Ji 虞集, “Xixia xiang Wo gong huaxiang zan 西夏相幹公畫像贊 [Eulogy to the Image of the Tangut Prince Wo],” in *Daoyuan xue gu lu* 道園學古錄 [Records of the Studies of the Past in Daoyuan] 3, in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 [Complete Collection of the Books in Four Repositories], ch. 16330 (*Yuan wen lei* 元文類 [Collection of the Yuan Prose], 80).

learning of these Tangut officials does not seem to have affected their Buddhist sympathies. In his report, another official Wang Yun (王惲, 1227–1304), describes Gao Zhiyao as follows:

Inspector Gao Zhiyao is by nature soft and irresolute, [his] accomplishments are unheard of; his joy is serving the Buddha and paying homage to the monks, by his intentions and behavior he is [like] no one else, but a monk with hair. That is, he does not have the abilities to carry out his official duties in a disciplined and rigorous manner, and has difficulties accomplishing tasks which require confronting [others].<sup>69</sup>

Gao Zhiyao was considered an exemplary Confucian scholar and official, and yet, as Wang Yun has observed, his true allegiance was to Buddhism. There is no reason to believe that other Tangut Confucians behaved in a different manner. That is, the sources quoted above indicate that there existed a complementary relationship between Buddhism and Confucianism, and not that the two teachings presented alternatives to each other.

Despite the above, there is very little concrete information about the ‘Confucian’ translations; more importantly, there is no data indicative of a connection between the Tangut writing system and the Chinese classics. What there is, however, are indications of the imperial connection between the Tangut language and the writing system, and, as shown above, with the Buddhist scriptures.

## 6 Provisional Conclusions

The above discussion, fragmentary as it is, indicates that the Tanguts created a multifaceted ideological complex that incorporated elements of both

69 使高智耀，資性罷輒，不聞有爲，事佛敬僧，乃其所樂，迹其心行，一有髮僧耳，既乏風憲之材，難處搏擊之任。The report is of course politically motivated, implying that Gao Zhiyao’s Buddhist faith did not allow him to reveal the abuses of the *samgha* members, who were confiscating agricultural land from the peasants, an important issue in Yuan politics. Wang Yun 王惲, *Qiuqian xiansheng Daquan ji* 秋澗先生大全集 [Collected Works of Master Qiuqian] 86, in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 [Complete Collection of the Books in Four Repositories]. The electronic version (accessed November 24, 2018, <[http://skqs.guoxuedashi.com/wen\\_2385a/52013.html](http://skqs.guoxuedashi.com/wen_2385a/52013.html)>) contains the following information: “Exposition of inappropriate performance of duties by Inspector Gao Zhiyao in the Tangut province of Zhongxing” (彈西夏中興路按察使高智耀不當狀), and “The local customs in the Hexi [region] are generally monastic” (河西土俗，大半僧祇). Gao Zhihui was himself a Tangut descendant, the son of the last Tangut governor of the Tangut capital Zhongxing (中興).

Buddhism and Confucianism. The role of Daoism was probably negligible. Although no one can claim to possess a complete understanding of the texts presented here, their overall purport to establish Tangut national identity nevertheless seems clear. This, in turn, means that traditional interpretation of the educational and ritual policies of Tangut emperors as following either a Confucian or a Buddhist agenda needs some adjustment.

As it appears now, the core of the ideological system was the concept of Tangut Rituals, which in turn gravitated around the Tangut writing system, which again was associated with the figure of the Tangut emperor. The writing system endowed Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism with the status of Teachings (Chin. *jiao* 教), thus all teachings were probably believed to be complementary to each other. Nevertheless, priority was obviously given to Buddhism, because this religion was more closely associated with the idea of the unique position of the Tanguts in the world. Promotion of Confucianism during the later period of Tangut history from the mid-12th century onwards did not induce or cause any neglect of Buddhism.

In fact, we can enumerate a rather long list of Buddhist triumphs during Renzong's reign period, including a large-scale project to edit earlier Buddhist translations, the significant growth of Tibetan Buddhism, an expanding number of translations from Tibetan, the establishment of the office of the Imperial Preceptor (Chin. *dishi* 帝師), and so forth.

At the same time, monuments of Tangut encyclopedic learning, as well as the publication of the Tangut odes, which codify the Tangut national lore, also date from Renzong's period and immediately thereafter. Such a tremendous growth has to be explained, and one way to do so is to hypothesize the final formalisation of the idea of what constituted Tangut Rituals, which in turn determined the nature of Tangut self-identity. As a nation they showed themselves to be endowed with their own specific version of culture, i.e. Chinese *wen*, which legitimised and secured their position in the world *vis-à-vis* their neighbours, who were recognised as possessing similar, but inferior, qualities.

Hence, the Tangut emperors starting from Chongzong, generally followed Jingzong's line by not promoting Sinitic culture as an alternative to Tangut; nor did they seek to promote Buddhism per se (especially, to promote Tibetan Buddhism as an alternative to the Sinitic version of Buddhism), but instead they sought to nourish what they perceived as the Tangut national spirit. It only so happened that Buddhism was more intimately associated with the Tangut national idea than Confucianism.