

## 4 Primers in Tangut and Chinese

We know from the *Song shi* that when Emperor Yuanhao introduced the Tangut script, he also wanted the people of his country to learn Tangut writing and with this aim in mind commissioned the translation of the *Xiaojing*, *Erya* 爾雅 and a primer called *Siyan zazi* 四言雜字.<sup>469</sup> This record evidences that translations of Chinese primers and other educational texts were used for teaching the Tanguts to read and write in Tangut immediately after the invention of the script. This may seem counterintuitive because Chinese primers contain a good deal of language-specific information and are meant to acquaint students with Chinese characters and the nuances of literary Chinese language. Translating these into another language to be used as a tool for teaching that other language and a foreign script does not strike us as the most efficient path to literacy. Yet this was precisely what happened in the new Tangut state and the material from Khara-khoto provides evidence for the circulation of such educational works within the Tangut domain. Among these works is a Tangut manuscript copy of the *Xiaojing* with a long lost commentary and preface by Lü Huiqing 呂惠卿 (1032–1111)<sup>470</sup> but there is also a wide range of other texts not mentioned in transmitted sources, such as the text *Newly Collected Records on Compassion and Filiality* (T. *Sjiw śiq njij wə la mijj* ? 唵諷泥弊難難難), a manuscript version of a text apparently compiled from Chinese sources by an official in the Tangut state.<sup>471</sup>

Educational texts and primers are known in Chinese under the umbrella term *mengshu* 蒙書 (“beginners books”). As a parallel case to the Khara-khoto finds, we may remember that such texts also constituted a formidable body of material in the Dunhuang cave library. These have been collected together and studied by Taiwanese scholars Zheng Acai 鄭阿財 and Zhu Fengyu 朱鳳玉.<sup>472</sup> The most well-known ones are the *Xiaojing*, *Qianziwen* 千字文, *Baijiaxing* 百家姓 and *Taigong jiajiao* 太公家教,<sup>473</sup> but there are also quite a few less common or lost texts such as the *Kaimeng yaoxun* 開蒙要訓, *Baixing zhang* 百行章, *Kongzi*

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<sup>469</sup> *Song shi* 485, 13995.

<sup>470</sup> On the Tangut translation of the *Xiaojing*, see Grinstead 1972b, 277–376; Hu 2006 and Nie 2007a.

<sup>471</sup> A full transcription and translation of this text is published in Jacques 2007. See also Keping 1990, Nie 1995 and, most recently, Nie 2009.

<sup>472</sup> Zheng and Zhu 2002.

<sup>473</sup> The *Taigong jiajiao* was translated into French by Paul Demiéville (1982, 611–835). See also Wang 1986a and 1986b, Zhang 2010 and 2012.

*beiwèn shu* 孔子備問書. Besides the relatively large corpus of texts recognized as *mengshu*, the Dunhuang manuscripts contained a substantial amount of non-educational texts which may have also formed part of a school curriculum and were copied either by or for students. Victor Mair has compiled a catalogue of such manuscripts and pointed out that lay students were the main group responsible for copying the majority of vernacular narratives in Dunhuang, both religious and secular.<sup>474</sup> To this we may add that students copied as writing exercise not only vernacular narratives but all types of texts, including Confucian classics (e.g. *Lunyu*), Buddhist scriptures (e.g. *Xinjing* 心經) and even documents related to economic or administrative matters.<sup>475</sup> In general, the texts that functioned as practice material in real life were far more diverse than the genre we would normally identify as educational texts. The so-called *mengshu* were merely a small part of the total corpus of texts used by students in Dunhuang. Thus education played a major role in the process of textual transmission, and many of the texts survived not as a result of a deliberate act of transmitting to posterity but because they had been copied by students as part of their writing exercises.

The situation was no doubt similar in the Tangut state, including the city of Khara-khoto. Excavations at the ruins of the city yielded a variety of *mengshu* both in Tangut and Chinese, attesting to the multilingual character of elementary education in the region. What differs from Dunhuang is that the Khara-khoto materials include a large number of printed texts which of course cannot be explained as copies made by students, even if they belong to the genre of *mengshu*. Evidently, students could just as well rely on pre-made printed versions for reading and copying exercises. In Dunhuang even such model texts were handwritten but in the Khara-khoto corpus, which on the whole is two to three centuries later and comes from a time when printing was already widespread in East and Central Asia, we find many printed versions of texts, including educational ones.

This chapter presents three case studies of *mengshu* used by the residents of Khara-khoto in an educational context. One of them is a hitherto unnoticed manuscript fragment found by Stein in 1914 at the ruins of the city and is cur-

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<sup>474</sup> Mair 1981, 90–91.

<sup>475</sup> Thus in many cases the manuscripts with lay students' copies of longer texts also contain fragments of contracts or association circulars (*shesi zhuan tie* 社司轉帖) sent out to members of associations to announce a meeting. Typically these are written in the same hand as the other texts on the same manuscript, revealing that they were produced by the same students as a writing practice. This also explains their often fragmentary nature.

rently kept at the British Library. The manuscript consists of two pages discussing the proper moral conduct a person should strive for and citing stories of exemplary figures from classical texts and histories. Because the manuscript records dialogues between Tang emperor Taizong and his minister(s), we can provisionally name this text *\*Taizong's Questions*. I have been unsuccessful in trying to match the Tangut text to any known Chinese work but content leaves little doubt that such a work existed and that the Tangut manuscript is a translation of a Chinese original.

Another *mengshu* presented in this chapter is a fragmentary copy of a block-printed book excavated at Khara-khoto by the Russian expedition in 1908–1909, now part of the Kozlov collection in St. Petersburg. Based on its content, the text was named by modern Chinese scholars *\*Excerpts from the Classics and Histories* (*\*Jingshi zachao* 經史雜抄), as it represents a collection of short passages cited from the Confucian classics, historiographical works and other well-known texts.<sup>476</sup> Once again, this is almost certainly a translation of a Chinese text we no longer have, rather than a native Tangut compilation. Recently it has been linked with a Chinese text preserved in numerous Dunhuang manuscripts, with which it shows an apparent connection, even though there are also a number of marked differences.

The third text introduced here is the *Mengqiu* 蒙求, a Chinese primer from the Tang dynasty. Stein recovered a fragment of a Chinese manuscript with the text at the Khara-khoto, which demonstrates that it was also used among the Tanguts. Even though we do not know of a Tangut translation of the *Mengqiu*, the few examples of intertextual links with Tangut and Tibetan translations of unidentified Chinese educational texts corroborate the circulation and availability of very similar texts in non-Chinese linguistic environments. Likewise, in addition to the Khara-khoto copy, manuscript and printed fragments of the Chinese *Mengqiu* were also found in Dunhuang and the territory of the former Khitan state, further attesting to the significance of this primer on the peripheries of Chinese civilisation.

In all three examples the ultimate question is how Chinese educational texts functioned in the Tangut state. In the case of the *Mengqiu* this at first sight may seem relatively straightforward because it was found in its original language (i.e. Chinese) and we may presume that it was used to teach students to read and write in Chinese. This, however, was not necessarily the case because there is evidence from other cultures in East and Central Asia—most notably in

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476 Although the text itself only survives in Tangut, modern scholars gave it a Chinese title under which it has been known since then.

Japan, Korea and the Uyghur state of Gaochang—where texts written in Chinese characters could be vocalized either in local languages or according to a local tradition of received Chinese pronunciation. Thus the linguistic situation may be more complex than it seems on the surface.<sup>477</sup> In the other two cases the Chinese primers were translated into Tangut and this creates a different scenario for how primary education functioned in real life. It is clear that in Chinese-speaking regions primers and other didactic works were utilised not only for their content but also as practice material for reading and writing Chinese characters. This latter function was obviously very different once the text became translated into a foreign language, although an argument can be made that Tangut students could practice their writing skills with any type of text, as long as it was written in Tangut and contained material that was relatively accessible at their level.

In terms of their content, the three texts presented here as case studies consist entirely of stories originating from the classical tradition of China and teaching these to Tangut students can only mean that their education was to a large extent based on Chinese sources. Instead of relying on native stories which the Tanguts, similar to other ethnic or cultural groups, no doubt also possessed as part of their oral tradition, Tangut literacy seems to have developed through whole-scale appropriation of Chinese written culture. Essentially, an educated Tangut individual would have been fully versed in Chinese literary culture and yet potentially not understand a word of Chinese.<sup>478</sup> This chapter tries to draw attention to this massive cultural borrowing and shed some light on how it may have worked in daily practice.

#### 4.1 *\*Taizong's Questions*

The facsimile reproductions of the Tangut material from the British Library include an unidentified secular text which the editors provisionally named *\*Zashi* 雜史 (Miscellaneous Stories).<sup>479</sup> With this title the manuscript attracted little attention and remained unstudied, despite the palpable desire in Tangut studies to discover, identify and decipher ever “new” texts, especially those

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<sup>477</sup> See, for example, the complexities of using Chinese characters in early Japan in chapters 1 and 2 in Lurie 2011, 15–114.

<sup>478</sup> This phenomenon is similar to how Buddhist texts of Indian origin circulated in a translated form in China, with large numbers of believers being fully versed in their content and yet not being able to understand the language in which they had originally been written.

<sup>479</sup> Xibei di'er minzu xueyuan et al. 2005, v. 3, 156.

with non-Buddhist content. The manuscript in question is catalogued under pressmark Or.12380/2579, although Stein's original number assigned to it was K.K.II.0227.b. Yet Stein's description of the item with this code in *Innermost Asia* states that it comprised "two block-printed paper leaves, with Hsi-hsia text. One leaf decorated with two rows each of six seated Buddha figures, one row at top of page, the other at centre [...]"<sup>480</sup> Needless to say, this is not the same item because ours is a manuscript and has no images.<sup>481</sup> Even so, Stein's code reveals that he discovered the manuscript among the ruins of the shrine he marked as K.K.II, which is the same stupa from which Kozlov excavated the bulk of the texts now preserved in St. Petersburg.

#### 4.1.1 Physical description of the manuscript

The Chinese facsimile publication marks the two pages as R (recto) and V (verso), as they seem to be two sides of the same sheet of paper (Fig. 10). In reality, however, the manuscript physically consists of one thin sheet of paper folded together in a way that it appears as if it was leaf with text on both sides, about 22 cm tall and 13 cm wide. Thus the blank side of the original sheet was on the inside, invisible to the observer. The pages were most likely part of a notebook in butterfly binding and technically neither should be called recto or verso. For this reason, I will refer to them as pages A and B, using the letter B to designate the page where Stein's shelfmark appears in the lower part of the left margin. This decision is based on reading the text which permits us to establish the sequence of the pages. This sequence also corresponds with the editors' decision in the Chinese facsimile publication.

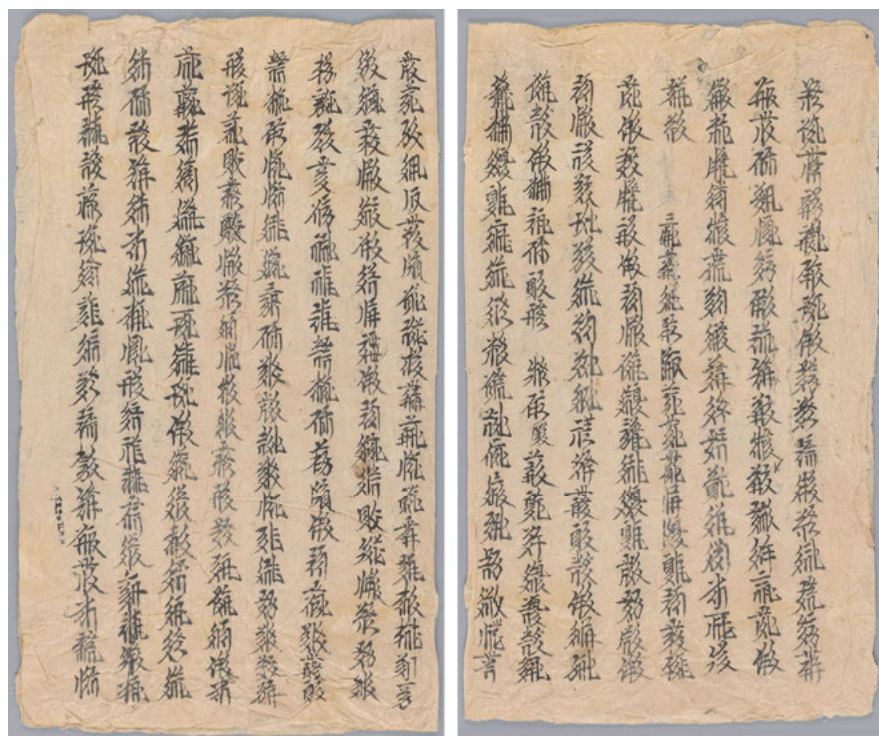
Like it is the case with many other Tangut manuscripts, Or.12380/2579 is unruled, yet the text is written in even vertical lines. Both pages contain eight lines of text but the number of characters per line varies between 17 and 20. Page B has slightly narrower upper and bottom margins and thus the number of characters per line tends to be higher than on page A. In addition, the layout of the pages is not fully symmetrical, as the text is not centred but leans to the side where the two pages connect, creating a wider margin on the other (i.e. outer) side. The side of the pages with the narrow margin is where they had originally

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<sup>480</sup> Stein 1928, v. 1, 480.

<sup>481</sup> The number "227" in the Stein code on the manuscript appears to have been written over something else (perhaps "223") which may be the reason for the mismatch between the item and its Stein number.

been sewn into the book. This edge has visible traces of having been sewn in three places: there are tiny holes at the upper and lower part of the page, about 3–4 cm from the top and the bottom, as well as in the middle. Unsurprisingly, these physical features of the pages also confirm what the reading of the text already made clear, namely, that page A precedes page B.



**Fig. 10:** Two pages, A (right) and B (left), of the manuscript *\*Taizong's Questions*. (Copyright @ The British Library Or.12380/2579.)

The fragment contains no punctuation marks but page A has two lacunae which indicate breaks in the text. The first one comes after the second character in line 4, and it equals two full characters in size. The second lacuna appears three lines later, after character 8 in line 7, and is much smaller, not even the size of a full character. The context makes it clear that the larger lacuna separates sections of the text, whereas the smaller one marks a lesser break, somewhat similar to our modern custom of starting a new paragraph. As far as we can see based on this small fragment, the lacunae were inserted in accordance with the

content of the text, although we cannot say whether this was done consistently throughout the whole manuscript.

Even though the manuscript has no punctuation, there are two corrections (see Fig. 11). In both cases a character was duplicated after an intermediary one, and then a correction was applied to fix the problem. In the first case, the “check mark” commonly attested in both Tangut and Chinese manuscripts indicates that two characters should be reversed. The mistake of dyslexically reversing characters was one of the most common ones in manuscript culture and there are hundreds of examples of such corrections in surviving manuscripts, both Chinese and Tangut. Therefore, the check mark placed on the right side between the words *bju* 𐰇𐰆 (敬 “respect”) and *ya* 𐰇𐰏 (門 “gate, door”) means that the two of them should be read in reversed order. However, this correction introduces another problem, namely, that the word *ya* 𐰇𐰏 (門 “gate, door”) now appears twice, one of which is clearly redundant. Accordingly, inserting a reversal mark between the words 𐰇𐰆 (敬 “respect”) and *ya* 𐰇𐰏 (門 “gate, door”) was the wrong solution to the problem because the mistake was not that these two words were accidentally reversed but that the word *ya* 𐰇𐰏 (門 “gate, door”) was repeated after the word *bju* 𐰇𐰆 (敬 “respect”). The correct solution would have been to place a deletion mark next to this second instance. Instead, the copyist applied the wrong correction mark and created a new mistake.



**Fig. 11:** The two corrections in the manuscript *\*Taizong's Questions*; the first one is a reversal mark and the second, a possible deletion by painting over or dotting out the character.

The second correction is on page B, and consists of the character for *mji* 𐰇𐰏 (彼 “that”) having a series of dots over it (Fig. 11). It is unclear, however, whether the character 𐰇𐰏 was painted over with black ink or there was another character underneath. It is also possible that an erroneous character was painted over with another colour, part of which had already eroded and what we see today is not how the correction used to look back when it was applied. In Chinese manuscripts we sometimes see that an erroneous character is painted over with a yellow dye, referred to in contemporary literature as *cihuang* 雌黃 (“orpiment”). While examples of this survive in medieval manuscripts, there may have been many more instances which wore off with time and are no longer visible.<sup>482</sup>

On page A, where the text begins after the smaller lacuna with a reply to a question, the word *bji* 𐰇𐰏 (臣 “servant”) used by the responder as a self-designation appears in smaller script, slightly leaning to the right side of the line. This usage is not uncommon in Chinese books (both printed and handwritten) where the name or designation of the author or speaker is written in a smaller script as a sign of humility.<sup>483</sup> This may be an indication that the person answering the question was understood to be the author, which may also mean that the book was attributed to this person and his name may have even been part of the title. Considering that this feature is quite common in Chinese texts, it is likely that it is based on how this word was written in the Chinese original used for the translation.

#### 4.1.2 Content

The manuscript is written in a clear, even hand, with all characters clearly visible. The text begins in mid-sentence, showing that in its current form the text is incomplete and that the original manuscript was longer than these two pages. There is no indication whatsoever how long the original may have been but the question-answer form suggests a number of such exchanges, which, consider-

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**482** For correction marks in medieval Chinese manuscripts, including the use of *cihuang*, see Galambos 2013.

**483** In his collection of Chinese colophons, Ikeda On (1990) records dozens of examples where the character 臣 appears in smaller script before names in colophons. In some the name itself may also be in smaller script, as in the case of a manuscript copy of a memorial drafted by Zhangsun Wuji 長孫無忌 (d. 659) in 653, which begins with the character 臣 followed by the author’s personal name Wuji 無忌, all in smaller script (*ibid.*, 196). In other cases all of the characters are written in ordinary script, showing that this rule was by no means rigidly observed.



ing that the surviving two pages record only one instance of asking, would have certainly run to more than a dozen pages. Without trying to provide a comprehensive translation of the extant text, I would like to examine four stories that appear on page B and draw attention to some related issues.

As mentioned above, in the fourth line of page A we see a larger lacuna which signals the end of a section and the beginning of a new one (see Fig. 10 above). This new section starts with a long question concerning a phoenix that descends into a garden but none of the people recognise it, except for a stranger who comes from elsewhere. The question is asked by Thej tsŭ 禩禩, who is obviously Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty (r. 626–649). This way of writing the name matches the name of Taizong in the Tangut *Sunzi*, where it appears, among other places, in Du Mu's 杜牧 (803–852) commentary as Thow Thej tsŭ 𐰇𐰏𐰤𐰭 (唐太宗 Tang Taizong).<sup>484</sup> The reply to the question comes after a smaller lacuna and begins with the words *hŭ dŭ bji mji* 𐰇𐰏𐰤𐰭𐰏𐰤 (對曰臣聞 He answered: "Your servant has heard that [...]"). This is why I provisionally name the text *\*Taizong's Questions*.

The minister's reply refers to the common literary trope about the phoenix being the foremost of the three hundred kinds of birds, being brilliant in appearance and perching exclusively on the *wutong* 梧桐 tree. The number three hundred in this case is interesting because in Chinese texts the number of birds is usually three hundred and sixty. For example, the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 quotes the *Dadai Liji* 大戴禮記 writing "of the three hundred and sixty feathered creatures, the phoenix is the foremost" 羽蟲三百六十，而鳳皇為之長。<sup>485</sup> The theme of the phoenix perching exclusively on the *wutong* tree (*fei wutong bu zhi* 非梧桐不止 or *fei wutong bu qi* 非梧桐不棲) is already found in pre-Qin texts (e.g. the "Qiushui" 秋水 chapter of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子) but it becomes relatively common during the dynastic period.<sup>486</sup>

After the reference to the phoenix perching on the *wutong* tree come a series of well-known stories about exemplary figures of the Chinese past, evidently introduced here to support the responder's point of view by citing textual authorities. The four stories, in the order of their appearance, are as follows:

484 Lin 1994, 3–9.

485 *Taiping yulan*, v. 8, 303.

486 *Zhuangzi*, 605.

## (i) Bao Jiao 鮑焦

𪚩	𪚪	𪚫	𪚬	𪚭	𪚮	𪚯	𪚰，
0707	3139	1961	4324	2937	5258	1595	4092
tšjiw	šji	phio	tsew	lhjj	·iə	lwo	khie
周	代	鮑	焦	國	土	昏	厭
Zhou	age	Bao	Jiao	country	land	darkness	hate

During the Zhou period Bao Jiao hated the depravity of the country (i.e. Zhou),

𪚱	𪚲	𪚳	𪚴，	𪚵	𪚶	𪚷	𪚸。
4379	5018	1918	4517	1475	1680	5880	5918
sji	nə	mji	dzji	bji	yiwəj	ɲwu	sji
蔬	菜	不	食	羸	瘦	而	死
vegetables	vegetables	not	eat	thin	thin	CONJ	die

so he did not eat the produces grown there, [and thus] became emaciated and died.

This is clearly a reference to the recluse Bao Jiao whose story appears in a number of early and medieval sources. According to the version in the *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳, he withdrew from public life because he believed that the land was governed by an impure king; so he lived on vegetables he gathered in the wilderness and his clothes were so worn that his skin showed through. When Zigong 子貢, the disciple of Confucius, pointed out to him that even by living in this way he still walked the king's domain and ate vegetables produced therein, Bao Jiao discarded the vegetables and withered away standing on the banks of the Luo 洛 river.<sup>487</sup> In later literature Bao Jiao is often evoked as the person of ultimate moral integrity who would rather die than compromise his ideals. While the wording of the Tangut text does not match the passage from the *Hanshi waizhuan*, there is no doubt that it relates the same story.

The story of Bao Jiao is not very common in medieval texts but it does occur in some popular encyclopaedias. Thus it appears in the encyclopaedia called

<sup>487</sup> For a translation of the whole passage, see Hightower 1952, 35–36. Although Hightower translates the term *ligao* 立槁 as “stiffened in death,” I chose the more literal way of rendering this as “withered away standing.” Other early sources are slightly more specific regarding the manner of his death; the *Shuoyuan* 說苑 (*juan* 17, 422), for example, writes that “he embraced a tree and withered away standing” 鮑焦抱木而立枯.

*Shisen* 事森 (Forest of Affairs), fragments of which have been identified among the Dunhuang manuscripts.<sup>488</sup> Similarly, the story is also found in the Chinese *Leilin* 類林 (Forest of Categories), fragments recovered from the Dunhuang, showing that it was a common trope in medieval encyclopaedias when discussing historical examples of people who would adhere to their values no matter what.<sup>489</sup>

## (ii) Yan Shuzi 顏叔子

刻	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔
5300	0102	2466	3431	1452	2373	3323	5297	3622	2983
tji	gji	lhjwi	dzju	nja	ljij	ɲia	šiow	kjir	·u
一	夜	突	雨	△	來	顏	叔	屋	中
one	night	suddenly	rain	DIR	come	Yan	Shu	house	in

One night suddenly rain came down and a woman came to Yan Shu's house,

𠂔	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔
0243	2541	0448	3431	3788	4574	3527	3501	5113	1270	2484
sji	dzjwo	gji	dzju	tsu	mji	mja	·jiw	·wji	džji	niow
女	人	一	雨	逃	他	恐	疑	為	言	因
woman	man	one	rain	flee	he	fear	suspicion	make	speak	thus

fleeing from the rain. Because he was afraid of being talked about,

𠂔	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔	𠂔
5981	0284	1826	0063	5120	0749
·a	śjwo	tjij	tśhjij	swew	phji
一	夜	燈	舉	明	使
one	night	torch	raise	bright	cause

he made her hold a torch all night in order to keep the place illuminated.

<sup>488</sup> The two fragments of the *Shisen* are Pelliot chinois 2621 and Or.8210/S.5776, where the former is the one that contains Bao Jiao's story. For a transcription of the content of these two manuscripts, see Wang 1993, 237–238, and an improved one with an introduction and copious annotations in Dou and Zhang 2010, 57–101.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*, 74, n. 32; Shi et al. 1993, 251.

This is yet another well-known story from early China with a moral lesson about maintaining one's chastity. The theme occurs in a number of sources but a version that is relatively close to the Tangut one is cited in the *Taiping yulan*.<sup>490</sup>

顏叔子獨居一室，夜雨，比舍屋崩，有女子投之。叔子令秉燭，燭盡，乃徹屋草績之。至明不亂。

Yan Shuzi lived alone in a house. One night there was a heavy rain and the roof of the neighbouring house collapsed, and a woman fled to him [to find shelter]. Shuzi made her hold a torch, and when the torch finished, he tore straw from the roof to support the fire. Thus they did not to engage in any illicit behaviour until the break of the day.

A peculiarity of the Tangut manuscript is that the name of Yan Shuzi 顏叔子 appears in an abbreviated form as Njā Śiōw 𐰇𐰺𐰍 (i.e. Yan Shu) without the final syllable, yet the context leaves no doubt that the text refers to the same person. This is not necessarily an omission as occasionally the name also appears in a two-character form in the Chinese context. Another Tangut version of the same story also occurs in the Tangut *Forest of Categories* (L182–183) but here the name appears in the much more common three-character form as Njā Śiōw-tsə 𐰇𐰺𐰍𐰆 (顏叔子 “Yan Shuzi”):<sup>491</sup>

𐰇	𐰺	𐰍	𐰆	𐰇	𐰺	𐰍	𐰆	𐰇	𐰺	𐰍	𐰆
3323	5297	5925	3566	2541	0508	1245	5356	3622	0448	2983	3099
njā	śiōw	tsə	lu	dzjwo	nwu	·jij	tjj	kjir	gji	·u	džjj
顏	叔	子	魯	人	是	自	獨	屋	一	中	居
Yan	Shu	zi	Lu	man	be	self	alone	house	one	in	live

Yan Shuzi was a native of the state of Lu; he lived alone by himself in a house.

𐰇	𐰺	𐰍	𐰆	𐰇	𐰺	𐰍	𐰆	𐰇	𐰺	𐰍	𐰆
2019	0102	2302	2064	3431	3456	0942	3349	5165	3622	2560	
thja	gji	lji	wor	dzju	lja	ljā	ljijr	twu	kjir	·jj	
彼	夜	風	起	雨	來	北	於	處	屋	宅	
that	night	wind	rise	rain	come	north	LOC	place	house	dwelling	

<sup>490</sup> *Taiping yulan*, v. 7, 915.

<sup>491</sup> For the *Forest of Categories*, including a partial translation into Russian, see Keping 1983. For a Chinese translation and study of the Tangut text, see Shi et al. 1993. In my references to the Tangut *Forest of Categories*, I use the folio numbers from Keping 1983, preceded by the letter “L” for Russian “list” (leaf), e.g. L71.

One night wind arose and rain came down, the house to the north of his collapsed,

發	蠶，	豸	禱	滌	後	帶	紉	發	紉。	蔭
1452	0907	0100	0960	5815	5297	5925	5447	1326	2775	5113
nja	kiew	lew	mjjj	tsji	śiow	tsə	do	kji	dew	·wji
△	塌	一	女	小	叔	子	△	△	奔	為
DIR	collapse	one	woman	small	Shu	zi	LOC	DIR	run	make

and a young woman fled to Shuzi's place. Shuzi made her

後	帶	緘	紉	覆	菱	發	盤，	覆	解	慨
5297	5925	2590	3159	4557	0063	5880	2396	4557	3075	1906
śiow	tsə	·wji	lhjj	zjur	tśhjj	ŋwu	dzu	zjur	sji	niow
叔	子	△	受	炬	舉	而	坐	炬	盡	後
Shu	zi	DIR	receive	torch	raise	CONJ	sit	torch	finish	after

sit holding a torch and when the torch finished, he took straw from the roof of the house

發	錯	禱	緘	後	發	羆，	發	駘	羆	羆，	
3349	3622	0089	0585	1770	1326	5192	5880	3513	5453	5856	2679
ljijr	kjir	tśhja	śji	lhjwi	kji	njwı	ŋwu	mə	bjjj	ya	nji
於	屋	上	草	取	△	燒	而	天	曉	△	至
LOC	house	on	straw	take	DIR	burn	CONJ	sky	dawn	LOC	arrive

and burned that.

滌	輶	紉	慨	禱。
5815	4027	2518	1918	0009
tsji	nji	njjj	mji	śjwo
亦	二	心	不	生

even two heart not generate

Till the arrival of the dawn he did not waver.

Needless to say, this is a more elaborate version of the story than the one in *\*Taizong's Questions*, which does not mention specific details but merely references the anecdote as part of an argument. Another difference is that in the *Forest of Categories* version Yan Shuzi made the woman hold a torch so that he would not get tempted in the dark, whereas in the *\*Taizong's Questions* this was done because he was concerned that people would gossip if the two of them spent the night in the dark.

### (iii) Zihan 子罕

𐰇	𐰇，	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇
0168	0429	5925	5916	1139	4921	2937	2541	0448	0933	5655
pji	njwo	tsə	xã	·jij	swě	lhjjj	dzjwo	gji	yjiw	lj̥i
往	昔	子	罕	之	宋	國	人	一	玉	寶
former	ancient	Zi	Han	GEN	Song	state	man	one	jade	treasure

In former times, Zihan was presented a piece of jade by a man from the state of Song.

𐰇	𐰇。	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇：	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇，	𐰇	𐰇
4342	1105	5925	5916	1045	1918	2932	2098	3583	1247	1139
dja	khjow	tsə	xã	də	mji	lej	na	tja	ŋə	·jij
△	獻	子	罕	曰	不	貪	我	者	我	之
DIR	present	Zi	Han	say	not	greedy	I	TOP	I	GEN

Zihan said: “I treasure me not being greedy,

𐰇	𐰇，	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇，	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇
5655	0508	3926	5655	1918	0245	2098	1279	5655	1918	
lj̥i	ŋwu	nja	lj̥i	mji	śjwi	ŋa	·ji	lj̥i	mji	
寶	是	爾	寶	不	求	我	謂	寶	不	
treasure	be	you	treasure	not	seek	I	say	treasure	not	

I do not seek your treasure. This is why I say that I cannot

𦵏      𦵏。  
 1374      1770  
 tshji      lhjwi  
 此      受  
 this      accept  
 accept this.”

This is a version of the story of Zihan, a high official from the ancient state of Song 宋 during the Spring and Autumn period. The *locus classicus* of the story is in the *Zuozhuan* 左傳, although variations of it occur commonly both in pre-Qin and later texts (*Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, *Hanfeizi* 韓非子, *Xinxu* 新序, *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記), always endorsing Zihan as an example of an honest and incorruptible official. The original story in the *Zuozhuan* reads as follows:<sup>492</sup>

宋人或得玉，獻諸子罕，子罕弗受。獻玉者曰：「以示玉人，玉人以為寶也，故敢獻之。」子罕曰：「我以不貪為寶，爾以玉為寶。若以與我，皆喪寶也，不若人有其寶。」  
 A man from the state of Song obtained a piece of jade and presented it to Zihan, but Zihan would not accept it. The man who presented the jade said: “I have shown it to jade workers and they thought that it was precious. This is why I dared to present it to you.” Zihan said: “I consider not being greedy my treasure, you consider the jade as your treasure. If you give it to me, both of us lose our treasure, which is not as good as if we each held onto our own treasure.”

The Tangut version of the story is not a direct quote from the *Zuozhuan*, as it is shorter and lacks a number of details. This is not surprising because the translation was not done from the *Zuozhuan* but from a much later collection compiled sometime after the reign of the Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty. The now lost Chinese version did not directly quote the *Zuozhuan* either but paraphrased the story in a more concise way in order to fit it into the argument offered by the responder in reply to Taizong's question.

Interestingly, the name Zihan is written as *Tsə xǎ* 𦵏𦵏, which uses the same two characters—in reversed order—as the name of Hanfeizi 韓非子 in the *Forest of Categories*: *Xǎ tsə* 𦵏𦵏 (韓子). Similarly, the character *xǎ* 𦵏 could also transcribe the name of the Han 漢 dynasty, even though in Chinese these syllables (*han* 罕, *han* 韓, *han* 漢) had different tones and were written with different

492 *Zuozhuan*, 813.

characters.<sup>493</sup> This demonstrates how in transliterating Chinese names, Tangut translators tended to use a limited set of characters for their phonetic value.<sup>494</sup> Although a similar tendency can also be observed in Chinese transliterations of foreign names in the medieval and late medieval period, this pattern seems to have been significantly less pronounced than in the case of Tangut transliterations.

#### (iv) Yang Zhen 楊震

𐰇	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇	[𐰇]	𐰇	𐰇,	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇,
5087	5055	4574	0152	4574	2373	5113	2205	2699	5880	2473
·jow	tšjĩ	mji	kię	mji	ljij	·wji	ljir	nwə	ɲwu	bji
楊	震	密	金	[密]	來	為	四	知	而	怒
Yang	Zhen	Mi	gold	[Mi]	come	make	four	know	CONJ	angry

Mi brought gold to Yang Zhen who became angry on account of his [principle of] “the four who know” and

𐰇	𐰇	𐰇	𐰇。
0152	1770	5643	0303
kię	lhjwi	mji	dzjij
金	受	不	肯。
gold	accept	not	agree

would not agree to accept the gold.<sup>495</sup>

The story of Yang Zhen originally appears in his biography in the *Hou Han shu*. There we learn of a certain Wang Mi 王密 who, after he had been appointed to

<sup>493</sup> The name of the Han dynasty could also be transcribed with the homophonous Tangut character *xā* 𐰇. At the same time, the ethnonym Han was consistently translated with the word *zar* 𐰇, which probably had a Tibetan origin. Thus Chinese characters (*hanzi* 漢字) were translated as *zar dji* 𐰇𐰇.

<sup>494</sup> To cite another example, the character *phio* 𐰇 in the name of Bao Jiao above, in addition to transcribing the Chinese syllable *bao* 鮑, could also stand for *bo* 玻 or *bao* 包.

<sup>495</sup> In the transcription, the character [𐰇] stands in brackets because in the manuscript it seems to have been deleted. There is no need for it to be there from the point of view of grammar and thus we may disregard it in the translation.



the post of district magistrate, came to thank Yang Zhen for recommending him:<sup>496</sup>

謁見，至夜懷金十斤以遺震。震曰：「故人知君，君不知故人，何也？」密曰：「暮夜無知者。」震曰：「天知，神知，我知，子知。何謂無知！」密愧而出。

When he paid his visit, he came at night and brought with him ten *jin* of gold as a gift to [Yang] Zhen. Zhen said, "How is it that I know you and yet you do not know me?" Mi replied, "In the darkness of the night nobody will know about it." Zhen said, "Heaven will know, the spirits will know, I will know, and you will know. How can you say nobody will know!" Mi felt ashamed and left.

Although the phrase *sizhi* 四知 ("the four who know") does not occur in the body of the biography, it is used in the postscript ("Zhuan zan" 傳贊), commending Yang Zhen for his incorruptibility. It is this principle of *sizhi* that became associated with Yang Zhen's name in later literature, including the work from which our Tangut text was translated. Although the Tangut version does not retell the entire story, it uses the very same phrase *lijir nwə* 𐽀𐽁𐽂𐽃 (四知 "the four who know"), calquing the Chinese term.

The manuscript mentions Wang Mi only by his personal name, transliterating it with the character *mji* 𐽀𐽁, which, when used semantically, usually stands for the singular second-person pronoun. Yet *bji* 𐽀𐽂 (光 "light") would work here much better as a loan and it is possible that the copyist of the manuscript has made a mistake.<sup>497</sup> The two characters, after all, differ only in a single stroke and their pronunciation is also close.

The above four stories appear in our Tangut manuscript consecutively, followed by a short summary stating that even though these four people were noble in their conduct and had a good reputation, they lived in the past, and in modern times such exemplary figures do not come around. The specific reference to "four" people shows that despite the fact that our manuscript is fragmentary, we have the full text of all four stories discussed in this section, and the text that came before was part of a different argument.<sup>498</sup> This, of course, does not give us much information regarding the size of the original manuscript.

<sup>496</sup> *Hou Han shu* 54, 1760.

<sup>497</sup> This has been suggested to me by Guillaume Jacques, to whom I am very grateful.

<sup>498</sup> The first of the four stories, beginning with the one about Bao Jiao, starts at the third character of page B.

### 4.1.3 The Chinese original

Even though the fragment in question is very short, it nevertheless allows us to make some rudimentary observations and speculate about the identity of the text. First of all, the Tangut text seems to be a translation of a Chinese original, rather than a composition created by a Tangut author. The entire content is concerned with exemplary stories from the Chinese tradition with a strong emphasis on Confucian values such as morality and proper conduct. It is improbable that a Tangut person would have compiled such a text by abstracting stories from Chinese sources, especially since the stories form part of a consistent argument, rather than a series of unrelated units merely following one another. Yet the Chinese original is yet to be identified. The appearance of Emperor Taizong as one of the protagonists should help with the identification but unfortunately I have been so far unsuccessful in tracking down the original work. Yet the presence of the name of Taizong indicates that the text in its current form cannot be earlier than the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century.

The question-answer format between Taizong and one of his ministers immediately reminds us of the *Zhenguan zhengyao* 貞觀政要 compiled by Wu Jing 武競 (670–749) on the basis of the “veritable records” 實錄 of Taizong’s reign. This work was popular not only in China proper but also in Japan, Korea and the “alien” dynasties in China (Liao, Jin and Yuan).<sup>499</sup> The treatise also survived in Tangut translation and printed fragments are held in both St. Petersburg and London.<sup>500</sup> These fragments probably belong to the same copy, as there are places where the St. Petersburg and London fragments can be joined together.<sup>501</sup> While the Tangut edition appears to have been a significantly abridged version of the text, it nevertheless provides evidence to its circulation among the Tanguts. The text of the *\*Taizong’s Questions* fragment, however, does not match that of the *Zhenguan zhengyao*, even though it likewise features a dialogue between Taizong and his ministers.

Other known texts involving a dialogue between Taizong and his ministers include the *Tang Taizong Li Wei gong wendui* 唐太宗李衛公問對, a military work attributed to Taizong’s general Li Jing 李靖 (571–649). This work was subse-

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**499** For a variorum edition of the *Zhenguan zhengyao* based on its Japanese manuscripts, see Harada 1962. For an overview of how the *Zhenguan zhengyao* was used in the Liao, Xixia, Jin and Yuan states, see Zhou 2009.

**500** For the St. Petersburg fragments, see Kychanov 2004, Nie 1997, Nie 2003. For those at the British Library, see Wang Rongfei 2012.

**501** Wang and Jing 2012.

quently included among the seven titles that comprised the Song military canon *Wujing qishu* 武經七書. Yet another text with such dialogues is the *Wei Zheng gong jianlu* 魏鄭公諫錄 by Wang Fangqing 王方慶 (d. 702), which also had a sequel entitled *Wei Zheng gong jian xulu* 魏鄭公諫續錄. None of these texts, however, match the text in our Tangut manuscript fragment.

The figure of Taizong also provided the theme for works of popular literature, such as the *Tang Taizong ru ming ji* 唐太宗入冥記, a text about Taizong's journey to the netherworld which was discovered among the Dunhuang manuscripts.<sup>502</sup> While our text is more similar in content and structure to the *Zhenguan zhengyao* than to a ballad or other literary composition, by including the four short stories translated above, it is unquestionably directed to a wider and more popular audience than the *Zhenguan zhengyao* which had originally been written for the ruler. Thus the work at hand is most likely a primer with a moral message, rather than a literary or political treatise.

As mentioned above, the name of Yan Shuzi appears in its highly unusual abbreviated form as Yan Shu, which is relatively rare in the available corpus of Chinese texts. Among the documented cases is the *Jiao shi Yilin* 焦氏易林, compiled by the Western Han 西漢 (206 BC–AD 9) scholar Jiao Yanshou 焦延壽 (fl. mid-1<sup>st</sup> century BC), but the references to Yan Shu have nothing to do with our story. Another example of the two-character form Yan Shu can be found on an Eastern Han 東漢 (AD 25–220) pictorial stone from the Wu 武 family's tomb (Jining 濟寧, Shandong province) where the image of the night scene is complemented with a caption saying “Yan Shu holding the fire (i.e. torch)” 顏淑握火, writing his personal name using the homophonous character *shu* 淑 instead of *shu* 叔.<sup>503</sup> The accompanying inscription on the right side is as follows:<sup>504</sup>

顏淑獨處，飄風暴雨，婦人乞宿，升堂入戶，燃燭自獨，懼見意疑，未明燭盡，縮竿續之。

Yan Shu lived alone. [Once] there was a great wind and violent rain, and a woman begged him to give her shelter for the night. When she ascended to the hall and entered the house, he lit a torch and kept to himself, afraid that others would view them with suspicion. The torch finished before daybreak and he pulled some boards from underneath the roof to keep it burning.

**502** This story was translated into English with the title “T'ai Tsung in Hell” by Arthur Waley (1960, 165–174).

**503** See Gao 1985, 149–150. Naturally, we would not be able to document in a Tangut translation the difference between the use of homophonous Chinese characters for a name, as the transcriptions were by default phonetic.

**504** The transcript of the inscription is from Zhong 2008, 195.

This version is also interesting because, as it is the case with our Tangut manuscript, it does not mention that the woman's house was destroyed, only that she came to ask for shelter. Yet this is a Han dynasty source, whereas the original of the Tangut *\*Taizong's Questions* must have been compiled during the Tang or later, even if it contains much older textual material. In this respect, a noteworthy connection with our text is the *Mengqiu*, which also uses a two-character form Yan Shu in order to make it fit the quadrisyllabic structure of the text: *Yan Shu bing zhu* 顏叔秉燭 ("Yan Shu held the torch"). I will examine the *Mengqiu* in more detail below but for now we can confirm that it was not used as the source for the Tangut translation either. Nevertheless, three of the four stories translated here appear in the *Mengqiu* in relative, although not immediate, proximity of each other. In the quadrisyllabic units characteristic of the *Mengqiu*, these three stories (or rather anchor references to stories) are as follows:

Zihan: "Zihan refused the treasure" 子罕辭寶

Yang Zhen: "Zhen feared 'the four who knew'" 震畏四知

Yan Shuzi: "Yan Shu held the torch" 顏叔秉燭

Clearly, these terse phrases are a far cry from the stories of the Tangut text. Yet the use of similar tropes shows that the text the Tangut translator was working from might have been a similar type of educational text.

Yet another example of a type of text which uses two of the four stories from our manuscript side by side is the *Cijin jie* 辭金戒 by the Tang dynasty official Yao Chong 姚崇 (650–721). This short text is preceded by a preface that begins with the following words:<sup>505</sup>

辭金者，取其廉慎也。昔子罕辭玉，以不貪為寶；楊震辭金，以四知為慎。Refusing the gold highlights one's integrity and cautiousness. In the past, Zihan refused the jade because he treasured in himself that he was not greedy; Yang Zhen refused the gold because he was cautious with respect to "the four who knew."

The main text of the *Cijin jie*, which is only slightly longer than the preface, elaborates on this theme and calls for honesty and integrity when serving as an official. Yet this was a text written for not officials but children who were only learning about the ways of the world. Once again, this preface cannot be directly linked with the Tangut *\*Taizong's Questions* but it is yet another example of the type of educational texts in which the same tropes occur together as a means of teaching proper behaviour to children.

<sup>505</sup> *Quan Tang wen* 206, 2085a.

The \**Taizong's Questions* fragment may have a more direct connection with another Tangut manuscript fragment kept in the St. Petersburg collection (Inv. No. 5875). This manuscript consists of five pages bound in a butterfly form, and bears the original Tangut title *Thej tsū tshji tsjir jwir* 龍蔭翥翥哀 (太宗要擇文 “The text of Taizong choosing what is important”), which was translated back into Chinese by modern researchers as *Taizong zeyao* 太宗擇要.<sup>506</sup> To avoid using the inconvenient phonetic notation of the Tangut title, I will refer to this text in English as *Taizong's Choices*. This text shows a number of similarities with the text of our manuscript. To be sure, there is no overlap between the two and while our manuscript is written in regular script, the *Taizong's Choices* is in a semi-cursive, and clearly different, hand. This confirms that the two manuscripts could not have physically been part of the same manuscript. Yet the pages of the *Taizong's Choices* also have eight lines of text, and the number of characters per line is quite similar to the format of our manuscript (19–23 vs. 17–20). Moreover, in terms of its content the *Taizong's Choices* is analogous to the text on our manuscript as they both list, as the *Mengqiu* and some other primers, exemplary historical figures with a short summary of their deeds. In the surviving portion of the *Taizong's Choices* the individual stories seem to be short and thus more akin to those in the *Mengqiu*. Nevertheless, as the length of the stories is uneven in both manuscripts, this in itself does not preclude the possibility that we are dealing with two fragmentary versions of the same text. And while the name of Taizong in the title of *Taizong's Choices* has puzzled researchers as the emperor is not mentioned at all in the body of the text, our manuscript indeed contains a reference to him.<sup>507</sup> Still, there is no direct evidence that \**Taizong's Questions* used to be part of the same text as *Taizong's Choices* and until such evidence comes to light, the question must remain open.

In the same way, I have found no evidence that our Tangut text is directly connected with the *Mengqiu* or other primers, but it seems to be a fragment from a Tangut translation of a didactic text used as a primer, and that the original Chinese text was composed sometime between the mid-seventh and early 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. We do not know whether this is a lost work or whether it will be possible to locate it in the large body of extant Chinese texts.

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506 For a study of this manuscript, see Nie 2012c.

507 Nie Hongyin (*ibid.*, 59) suggested that the name Taizong in the title was simply there for the sake of authority because of the overall positive image of the emperor in popular lore.

## 4.2 Excerpts from the Classics and Histories

The Tangut collection in St. Petersburg includes fragments of an incomplete printed book named by modern scholars *\*Excerpts from the Classics and Histories* (*\*Jingshi zachao*). The book was first recorded by Gorbacheva and Kychanov in their catalogue, who pointed out that it contained over 200 short excerpts from Chinese sources including the *Shiji*, *Zuozhuan*, *Lunyu*, *Zhuangzi*, *Sunzi*, *Mengzi*, *Xiaojing*, *Maoshi* 毛詩 and *Zhou shu* 周書.<sup>508</sup> Facsimile reproductions of the fragments were published in Shanghai in 1999, and here the text was already named using the Chinese title *\*Jingshi zachao*.<sup>509</sup>

### 4.2.1 Physical description of the fragments

The extant portion of the *\*Excerpts from the Classics and Histories* survives as several individual fragments, which were nevertheless judged by the curators to be part of the same book. The fragments are catalogued under pressmarks Inv. No. 135–138, Inv. No. 798, Inv. No. 2562 and Inv. No. 6465. The original book was bound in a butterfly form but now only 32 double pages survive. The beginning and end are missing and thus we have no information regarding its original title, author, editor or printer. As it is typical for printed material in the collection, the pages are enclosed in a frame, which is doubled on the two sides. Page numbers are printed in Chinese, proceeding consecutively from page 2 to page 32.<sup>510</sup> The first page is only half extant, with the other side, which presumably held the title and the beginning of the text, missing. Each half-page has 7 lines of text separated by vertical ruling lines, lending a sense of orderliness to the layout. In general, there are 13 characters per line but as there are frequent breaks in the text, this number is at times lower. The breaks are about one character in size and function as segmentation marks that divide quotes coming from diverse sources.

An additional fragment of the same text survives in the British Library under the pressmark Or.12380/2636 (Fig. 12). Stein's original number was

<sup>508</sup> Gorbacheva and Kychanov 1963, 35.

<sup>509</sup> Eluosi kexueyuan dongfang yanjiusuo Shengbidebao fensuo et al. 1999, v. 11, 117–132.

<sup>510</sup> Both Nie Hongyin (2002, 84) and Huang Yanjun (2009, 97) mention that the surviving part of the book consists of 32 pages, discounting the overlapping bits among the different fragments. The overlaps demonstrate that we are dealing with fragments from more than one copy of the book.

K.K.II.0275.z, revealing that it came from the same stupa outside the walls of Khara-khoto as the bulk of Tangut material. This is a fragment of a single half-page, which originally had 8 lines of text, 14–16 characters each. Even though the page is enclosed in a single-line frame as customary for printed books, the handling of the lines and of some of the characters reveal that this fragment was written by hand.<sup>511</sup> Consequently, it is not part of the same book as the fragments in St. Petersburg. The number of lines per page and characters per line is also different. More significantly, its content overlaps with the St. Petersburg fragments, which proves that the fragments represent not only the same text but also the same translation. Just like the printed version, the manuscript uses breaks to segment the quotes. Based on the layout and size of the page, it must have been part of a manuscript volume bound in a butterfly form. The discovery of printed and manuscript fragments of the same text provides evidence to the circulation of the *\*Jingshi zachao* among the Tanguts.

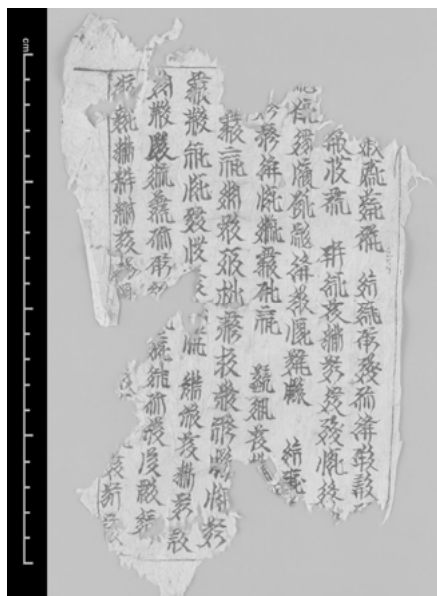


Fig. 12: The *\*Excerpts from the Classics and Histories* fragment in London. (Copyright @ The British Library Or.12380/2636.)

511 Huang Yanjun (2009, 98, n. 1) claimed that this was a printed fragment, although at the time the manuscript had not been digitised yet and he only had access to the relatively low quality facsimile image published by Shanghai guji chubanshe.

#### 4.2.2 Content

After its inclusion in the Russian catalogue, Nie Hongyin was among the first scholars to study the book, pointing out a number of additional Chinese sources behind it, including the *Shangshu* 尚書, *Zhouyi* 周易, *Chuci* 楚辭, *Guanzi* 管子, *Laozi* 老子, *Taigong jiajiao*, *Diwang shiji* 帝王世紀, *Huainanzi* 淮南子, *Lunheng* 論衡, *Kongzi jiaju* 孔子家語, *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳, *Han shu*.<sup>512</sup> He also drew attention to the significance of the *Taigong jiajiao* as a source for quotations because unlike most of the other cited texts, this was a late *mengshu* written in a relatively unrefined language, rather than a classic work associated with high literature or traditional scholarship.<sup>513</sup> Because the *\*Excerpts from the Classics and Histories* quotes from the *Taigong jiajiao*, it cannot be regarded as a work of elite scholarship either. In fact, Nie called it the most unsophisticated text among other Tangut texts of similar type. To demonstrate the inferior nature of the text, he listed a multitude of errors arranged into six categories: (i) mistakenly joining separate sections; (ii) mistakenly splitting one section into several; (iii) indicating the wrong source for quotes; (iv) confusing the main text with commentaries; (v) mistakenly interpolating text; (vi) misunderstanding the meaning of the original.<sup>514</sup> In addition, Nie also tentatively suggested that the text must have been copied from a now lost Chinese original, although this original was probably not compiled directly from written sources but rather jotted down after hearing or from memory. Similarly, the Tangut translator made no effort to verify the sources but directly translated the Chinese original with its fuzzy quotes.

More recently, Huang Yanjun 黃延軍 provided additional evidence for the existence of a Chinese original by calling attention to a text that survived in several manuscript copies in the Dunhuang cave library.<sup>515</sup> This is the *Xinji wenci jiujiing chao* 新集文詞九經鈔, a collection of excerpts from the Confucian classics specifically targeting beginners. There are at least sixteen manuscripts of this text in the major Dunhuang collections, namely, the IOM in St. Petersburg, the BnF in Paris and the British Library in London.<sup>516</sup> Some copies preserve the beginning or end and thus we know that the text was called *Xinji wenci jiujiing chao*. From the available manuscripts we can reconstruct the entire text of this

<sup>512</sup> Nie 2002, 84.

<sup>513</sup> *Ibid.*, 84–85.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*, 85–86.

<sup>515</sup> Huang 2009.

<sup>516</sup> For a study of the Dunhuang manuscripts of this text, see Zheng 1989.



work, which amounts to 435 short sections, about twice the length of the surviving portion of the Tangut text. The *Xinji wenci jiuqing chao* quotes from both classical and popular literature, but in doing so it often paraphrases the source text to make it more accessible for beginners. Obviously, this was a text whose target audience consisted of students at early stages of schooling and it did not pretend to be a piece of high scholarship. The sixteen surviving manuscript copies from Dunhuang amply demonstrate the demand for such a work in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Since it is known that some of the items in the Russian Dunhuang collection in reality come from Khara-khoto and were only mistakenly intermixed with the Dunhuang manuscripts, Zheng Acai speculates that the three fragments of the *Xinji wenci jiuqing chao* in St. Petersburg probably originate from Khara-khoto and not Dunhuang. If he is right, then we have an even closer connection between the Tangut *\*Jingshi zachao* and the Chinese *Xinji wenci jiuqing chao*. Yet on the basis of the overlaps between the St. Petersburg manuscripts and those in Paris, Huang Yanjun is of the opinion that the St. Petersburg copies must indeed come from Dunhuang.<sup>517</sup> Unfortunately at the moment we do not have conclusive evidence that could validate either theory.

Huang demonstrated that the Tangut *\*Excerpts from the Classics and Histories* and the Dunhuang text of the *Xinji wenci jiuqing chao* are very similar in nature and language, both aiming at facilitating access to classical texts in an easy to understand way, often modifying the wording of the quotations.<sup>518</sup> Unlike many other *mengshu* such as the *Qianziwen* or the *Taigong jiajiao*, these two texts do not rhyme but present the material in prose form. There are 170 sections which are identical in the Tangut and Chinese texts and the ones that do not match amount to only 57. These circumstances inevitably lead to the conclusion that the two texts are directly related to each other.<sup>519</sup> Another proof of this connection is that a series of mistakes occur in both texts, which would not be possible by mere coincidence. There are cases when the two texts agree in misattributing a quote to the same source, or when they contain the same incorrect reading. Without the Chinese text, it would be easy to ascribe many of these mistakes to the Tangut translator and his potential unfamiliarity with Chinese texts, history and culture in general. Yet now that we have a closely related Chinese version of the text, we can see that many such mistakes were already proliferating in various versions of the text before any of them was translated

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<sup>517</sup> Huang 2009, 98, n. 5.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

into Tangut. In other words, they were not caused by a non-Chinese person's inability to make sense of the original text but had been introduced in a Chinese environment, possibly by less educated Chinese speakers who were involved in the compilation or the transmission of the text.

Accordingly, Huang concluded that the Tangut text was largely based on the Chinese *Xinji wenci jiuqing chao*.<sup>520</sup> He believed that the Tangut compiler felt that the *Xinji wenci jiuqing chao* was too lengthy and chaotic and thus selected only certain sections, which he then tried to arrange into thematic categories. This conclusion, however, is perceptibly based on the comparison of the Chinese text of the *Xinji wenci jiuqing chao* and the Tangut text of the \**Jingshi zachao*, assuming that the differences were the result of the Tangut translator/editor reworking the original to adopt it to the requirements of Tangut readership. While this is certainly a viable hypothesis, it is equally possible that the same rearrangements were made by a Chinese editor to create a modified version of the *Xinji wenci jiuqing chao* long before the text found its way to Tangut land. The "Yiwen lue" 藝文略 chapter of the *Tongzhi* 通志, an encyclopaedia completed in 1161 by the Song scholar Zheng Qiao 鄭樵 (1104–1162), records books titled *Jiuqing chao* 九經抄 and *Jiuqing yaochao* 九經要抄 and although we have no other information about the actual texts, judging from their titles they seem to have been variants of the same text, possibly a fuller and an abridged version. Without further evidence it would perhaps be naive to suppose that one refers to the *Xinji wenci jiuqing chao* and the other, the abridged one, to the Chinese original of our Tangut text but the mere record of these two titles demonstrates that different versions of similar texts were in existence, even though these were subsequently lost.

There is no question that Huang is right in claiming that the Tangut text and the *Xinji wenci jiuqing chao* from Dunhuang are related and to some extent represent different versions of the same text. Yet it is worth keeping in mind that the title of the *Xinji wenci jiuqing chao* refers to a "newly collected" (*xinji* 新集) version, possibly to differentiate it from earlier ones. This raises the possibility that we may be wrong in automatically assuming that the Dunhuang text is older just because our surviving copies are older. Theoretically there is a chance that the Tangut text is based on a Chinese original that predates the Dunhuang text which may be a newer edition. After all, what seems like making a selection from a longer text from one point of view, may equally be viewed as adding new material to a shorter text from the other.

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520 *Ibid.*

This is not unlike the phenomenon discussed later in this book with reference to the Tangut *Sunzi*, printed versions of which are sometimes assumed to be later than manuscript copies merely because according to the common view of the history of the book, manuscripts preceded printed books. In a similar manner, the conjecture that the Tangut *\*Excerpts from the Classics and Histories* is an abridged and rearranged version of the Chinese *Xinji wenci jiuqing chao* originates in the notion that the Dunhuang manuscripts predate the Khara-khoto materials. This is, of course, true as far as the physical manifestations of texts are concerned. The texts themselves, however, can in principle be of any age, provided that they predate their printed or handwritten instantiations. In this manner, a copy of the Chinese *Lunyu* or *Xiaojing* found in Khara-khoto, be it print or manuscript, does not make the text itself later than a Tang poem found among the Dunhuang manuscripts.

Naturally, a Tangut translation of a Chinese text, no matter how early the original text may be, would necessarily postdate any text from Dunhuang by at least two centuries. In this respect, Huang would be correct in considering the Tangut version of the *\*Excerpts from the Classics and Histories* later than the *Xinji wenci jiuqing chao* found in Dunhuang. The problem is that this supposition only works if the Tangut text was indeed based on the *Xinji wenci jiuqing chao* and was created by editing and rearranging it. But if we allow the possibility that the Tangut text was actually a more or less faithful translation of a Chinese original, then there is no guarantee whatsoever that the Chinese source text also postdates the *Xinji wenci jiuqing chao*. We do not possess sufficient evidence to conclusively resolve the issue but based on the cases discussed in present book, I am inclined to think that the Tangut translators usually refrained from interfering with the source text and did their best to provide an accurate translation. While there may certainly be contrary examples, in most cases the discrepancies we see between Tangut translations and their Chinese originals are the result of us not having access to the versions or editions used by the translators. It is only to be expected that a Tangut translator eight centuries ago in the region that is now Inner Mongolia would have had different versions from the texts available to us today.

### 4.3 The *Mengqiu*

The *Mengqiu* is a primer attributed to Li Han 李瀚 (fl. 746) of the Tang dynasty. Although following the Song period the text fell into disuse, early copies survived in Japan, where it remained popular all the way through modern times. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century several copies of the text were discovered in regions

which were at the margins of Chinese civilisation, notably in Dunhuang, Kharakhoto and inside a Liao period pagoda in Ying county 應縣 (Shanxi province). All of these sites used to be on the territory of border regimes which at the time were not part of China proper, and thus the finds attest to the circulation of the text among the population of these states, highlighting its significance in Chinese-language education beyond the borders of China.

#### 4.3.1 Background of the Chinese version

The identity of Li Han and the time when he lived have been disputed, most likely because by the Qing period the *Mengqiu* lost its popularity and little information remained about its author. As part of the problem, even the author's personal name is uncertain (i.e. 瀚, 翰, 幹, or 澣).<sup>521</sup> One Dunhuang manuscript writes it with the character 瀚, and this is the one I am using here. Today, most researchers agree that Li Han was a Tang scholar who lived during the 8<sup>th</sup> century. According to the memorial appended to the beginning of the text, it was “submitted by Li Liang 李良, prefect of Raozhou 饒州 on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> month of the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the Tianbao 天寶 reign,” which corresponds to 746. The reliability of this claim has been called into question on several grounds.<sup>522</sup> One of them was that the character 年 was changed to 載 in 744 and yet the memorial writes “Tianbao wu nian” 天寶五年 two years later, which should not have happened. Another problem is that in 742 Raozhou was renamed Poyang commandery 鄱陽郡, yet the memorial refers to Li Liang as prefect of Raozhou.

The title *Mengqiu* is not listed in the bibliographic chapters of the *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 but appears in the Song catalogue *Chongwen zongmu* 崇文總目. Nevertheless, the *Xin Tang shu* mentions a sequel to the *Mengqiu* in three *juan* under the title *Xu Mengqiu* 續蒙求, compiled by Wang Fan 王範 (d.u.), which provides an indirect proof that the *Mengqiu* existed prior to that.<sup>523</sup> The title itself comes from the *Zhouyi*, where under the hexagram *meng* 蒙 we read the following explanation:<sup>524</sup>

蒙，亨。匪我求童蒙，童蒙求我

Meng: success. It is not that I seek the youthful ignorant, but he seeks me.

<sup>521</sup> Hayakawa 1973, 26.

<sup>522</sup> Yu 1980, 960–975.

<sup>523</sup> Yang 1967, v. 3, 721. See also Zhang 2012.

<sup>524</sup> *Zhouyi* 4, 173.

While the original meaning of the above explanation in the *Zhouyi* is far from clear, the title of the *Mengqiu* apparently meant to refer to a text designed specifically for beginners. The word *meng* 蒙 means someone without knowledge, i.e. a young child who is at the early stages of learning. In a sense, this title is analogous to that of the Tang dictionary *Ganlu zishu* 干祿字書 in which the expression *ganlu* 干祿, otherwise completely obscure, is a reference to *Lunyu* 2:18 where it is used in the sense of seeking official employment; in the title of the dictionary, this is meant to signify that the work should be perused by those who aspire to gain an official post. Along the same line of thought, in the case of the *Mengqiu* the target audience would have been elementary students. Nothing demonstrates the success and popularity of the *Mengqiu* better than later on a series of similar works were written in imitation of Li Han's work, referencing the original as an authority in the sphere of didactic texts. Such titles include the *Liujing mengqiu* 六經蒙求, *Jingzhuan mengqiu* 經傳蒙求, *Wenzi mengqiu* 文字蒙求, *Shuowen mengqiu* 說文蒙求, *Ziti mengqiu* 字體蒙求, *Kaiti mengqiu* 楷體蒙求, *Mingwu mengqiu* 名物蒙求, *Xiaoshuo mengqiu* 小說蒙求, *Lidai mingyi mengqiu* 歷代名醫蒙求, *Chanyuan mengqiu* 禪苑蒙求, *Chunqiu* 春秋蒙求, *Xunnü mengqiu* 訓女蒙求, and *Nü mengqiu* 女蒙求.<sup>525</sup> In addition, the original *Mengqiu* itself also acquired a new commentary by the Song scholar Xu Ziguang 徐子光 (fl. late 12<sup>th</sup> c.) which improved the original commentary in many respects and subsequently became part of most later editions.

From the point of view of its composition, the text is written as a series of quadrisyllabic units, with every second one rhyming. Thus it essentially consists of rhyming lines of eight characters, in which every four-character segment references a story from the Chinese literary tradition, providing compact allusions to persons and events that may serve as exemplary models for students. Naturally, four characters are insufficient to retell a whole story so instead they function as a mnemonic aid to recall stories already known. To illustrate its nature, let us look at the first eight four-character segments of the text:

王戎簡要，裴楷清通。  
孔明臥龍，呂望非熊。  
楊震關西，丁寬易東。  
謝安高潔，王導公忠。

Wang Rong: straightforward and to the point; Pei Kai: clear-minded and intelligent.

Kongming: a sleeping dragon; Lü Wang: "not a bear."

Yang Zhen: east of the Pass; Ding Kuan: the *Book of Changes* spreads eastward.

Xie An: noble and pure; Wang Dao: impartial and loyal.

525 I list most of these *mengqiu*-type titles on the basis of Zheng 2003, 177.

The last character of what is presented here as a line rhymes with that of the following one, and the same rhyme continues four times before switching to a new one. In this way, the rhyming words in the above section are *tong* 通, *xiong* 熊, *dong* 東 and *zhong* 忠. The rhymes continue according to the sequence in the *Qieyun* 切韻, starting with *dong* 東. Thus the sequence itself was designed to aid memorization. As it can be seen from the example, without knowing the background stories, the segments are decidedly cryptic and almost impossible to understand. But for someone who knows the stories behind them, the quadrisyllabic segments become meaningful. Essentially, by memorising the nearly six hundred segments in the *Mengqiu* one can gain access to a surprisingly large pool of classical narratives chosen for their educational message. Initially, Li Han also included his own commentary to the work, which was not so much a commentary but a compilation of the relevant stories as they appeared in their *loci classici* (e.g. *Hou Han shu*, *Jin shu* 晉書). This was essentially a decoding device for the cryptic phrases of the main text and was often—though not always—transmitted together with the text.

The *Mengqiu* was extremely popular in Japan where there were also local adaptations, including the *Mōgyū waka* 蒙求和歌, a partial translation with appended *waka* poems, compiled in 1204 by Minamoto no Mitsuyuki 源光行 (1163–1244). But the Chinese text itself also survived in a number of early Japanese manuscripts and editions. Some of these were rediscovered for Chinese scholars by the late Qing diplomat and collector Yang Shoujing 楊守敬 (1839–1915) who was in Japan on diplomatic service from 1880 for several years.<sup>526</sup> He brought back with him a manuscript copy from the late Heian period (794–1185), which is today kept at the National Palace Museum in Taipei. A collection of early manuscripts and block-printed editions from Japan were published in 1988–1990 as facsimile copies in four volumes by Ikeda Toshio 池田利夫 of Tsurumi University.<sup>527</sup> About a decade earlier, Burton Watson published an English translation of about one fourth of the complete text based on Hayakawa's edition under the title *Meng-ch'iu: Famous Episodes from Chinese History and Legend*.<sup>528</sup>

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fragments of the *Mengqiu* were found in various parts of China's northwest. In the following, I introduce these newly discovered early witnesses, drawing attention to their peculiarities and significance. Although the present book is primarily concerned with materials found

<sup>526</sup> Yang 1967, v. 3, 721–731.

<sup>527</sup> Ikeda 1988–1990.

<sup>528</sup> Li and Hsü 1979.

in Khara-khoto, I begin with the Dunhuang manuscripts because they supply a number of important details regarding the *Mengqiu* and the time of its composition.

### 4.3.2 The Dunhuang manuscripts

Three incomplete fragments of the *Mengqiu* were found among the Dunhuang manuscripts. One of these was acquired by a Chinese collector and eventually found its way to the Dunhuang Academy where it was catalogued under the pressmark Dunyan 敦研 95 (DY095).<sup>529</sup> The two other manuscripts (Pelliot chinois 2710 and 4877) were acquired by Paul Pelliot and are now kept at the BnF in Paris. Photographs of these manuscripts are available from Gallica, the BnF's digital library website.<sup>530</sup>

#### (i) DY045

This is a notebook fragment that contains the beginning of the *Mengqiu* with Li Han's own commentary. There are a total of eleven half-pages but the text ends midline about a third through the eleventh half-page. Based on the facsimile copies it is not possible to tell whether the rest of the page is damaged or the copyist simply interrupted his work, never to resume it. In its current form the manuscript contains exactly fifty segments, which is less than a tenth of the entire work. After the text ends there are two additional half-pages with three dates. The first is “the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the Xiantian era” 先天四年, which must refer to 715, even though the Xiantian era (712–713) only lasted two years. Then come two additional dates, both denoting the year 1913. One of them is “the *guichou* year of the Xuantonq reign of the Great Qing” 大清宣統癸丑, the other is “the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the Chinese Republic” 中華民國二年.<sup>531</sup> The date 1913 probably refers to the acquisition of this manuscript but the Tang date is hard to connect with the

<sup>529</sup> On the manuscript in the collection of the Dunhuang Academy and its comparison with the manuscript copies kept in Japan, see Zhang 2002. For a general description of the three Dunhuang manuscripts of the *Mengqiu*, see Zheng 2003 and Zheng 2002, 227–253.

<sup>530</sup> <<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8302388t.r=pelliot+chinois+2710.langEN>> and <<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8300265v.r=pelliot+chinois+4877.langEN>>, respectively.

<sup>531</sup> Theoretically the Xuantonq reign ended a year earlier with the last emperor's abdication but it was occasionally continued to be used by scholars of the old regime.

manuscript which, based on its handwriting style and type of paper, was probably copied in the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century.

The first seventeen lines of the manuscript are Li Liang's memorial recommending the *Mengqiu* to the throne ("Jian *Mengqiu* biao" 薦《蒙求》表); the next four lines, a preface ("*Mengqiu* xu" 蒙求序) by the eminent literatus Li Hua's 李華 (715–774); and the rest of the text is the *Mengqiu* with Li Han's original commentary.<sup>532</sup> The text itself closely follows that in other versions. One notable discrepancy is that the name of the ancient philosopher Mozi 墨子 appears in the manuscript as Dizi 翟子, using Mozi's personal name (Di 翟) instead of his surname.

The paper of the notebook is unruled and there are eight lines per half-page. The commentary runs in double-line small script, inserted after each rhyme (eight characters). It typically ends with the particle *ye* 也, in which the last line is often extended far down to fill the remaining empty space in the second line of the commentary. This remaining space is obviously the result of not having estimated correctly where to halve the text of the commentary so that it would be evenly distributed between the two lines. For example, at the end of the seventh half-page about a third of the last line is left blank even after having significantly extended the last stroke of the character 也. There is no punctuation except for correction marks used to reverse the order of accidentally inverted characters. The line breaks do not follow the rhythm of the text and the text on the pages is not visually segmented, other than the contrast between the large characters of the main text and the small ones of the commentary. This consistent pattern of having smaller characters after eight large ones is of course already a kind of visual pattern and is an important part of the layout.

With regard to the date of the manuscript, Zheng Acai pointed out that the characters 虎 and 世 appear with a missing stroke which is one of the ways to avoid the Tang imperial name taboo. The character 虎 appears in the name of emperor Gaozu's 高祖 (r. 618–626) grandfather Li Hu 李虎 (d. 551), whereas the character 世 was part of the name of Li Shimin 李世民, i.e. emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 626–649).<sup>533</sup> These taboos would indicate a Tang date anywhere between 618 and the end of the dynasty, as the Tang name taboos would have lost their binding effect after that. However, as far as I can tell from the facsimile images, the character 虎 in the manuscript seems to be not the tabooed form of the character but a *suzi* 俗字, that is, a non-standard variant commonly used in manuscripts. The character 世 on the other hand indeed occurs several times in its

<sup>532</sup> Zheng 2003, 180.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*



tabooed form, which would theoretically suggest a Tang date. Having said that, despite their common use for this purpose, taboo characters are admittedly not a fully reliable method of dating paper manuscripts, as medieval copyists often copied orthographic features of earlier manuscripts along with the text. Perhaps a more reliable method to date the manuscript is on the basis of its book form and hand type, both of which point to the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>534</sup>

## (ii) P.2710

Based on the online photograph available through the Gallica website, this manuscript appears to be a fragment of a scroll. It consists of only twenty-eight lines, representing the beginning of the *Mengqiu* with its original commentary. As far as we can judge from the photographs, the paper is unruled and the handwriting is relatively skilled. The manuscript begins with the memorial of Li Liang, followed by Li Hua's preface. After this comes the main text without the commentaries. There are only seven lines of this, amounting to a total of twenty-eight four-character segments, which is merely the beginning of the text. The text is continuous and there is no punctuation. The only type of spatial segmentation is between the memorial, the preface and the main text.

Although at first sight it may seem that the rest of the main text is missing because the scroll is incomplete, the manuscript may in fact be its original size. The reason for this assumption is that about two characters worth of space at the end of the last line is left unfilled. The text ends here after the twenty-eighth segment ("The three disasters of Zhou Chu" 周處三害), yet if the manuscript had originally continued, we would expect to see this space filled. Moreover, the edges of the paper sheet on both the left and right hand side are not torn but represent the original boundaries of the sheet. With twenty-eight lines on it, this seems to be a complete sheet of paper. Yet the sheet has margins on the left and right sides, and a two character empty space at the end, all of which suggest that the text was interrupted exactly where it ends today and there were no second, third or further sheets. It may have been rolled up as a small scroll but it seems to have comprised a single sheet with the unfinished *Mengqiu*. We do not know why the copyist stopped copying the text but in its current state the manuscript is similar to DY045 discussed above, which likewise ends midline. This peculiar aspect of both manuscripts is probably not a coincidence but is some-

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<sup>534</sup> The scientific analysis of paper would be another possible avenue, although to my knowledge this has not been done on this manuscript.

how connected to the way the manuscripts were produced and used in medieval times, even though we are unsure of the nature of this connection.

**(iii) P.4877**

The manuscript consists of one sheet of paper which used to form four half-pages of an original notebook. The paper is ruled so that there are six lines per half-page but the ruling is observed relatively loosely. The commentary runs in smaller script in two lines. The fragment only contains sixteen segments of the original text, plus the commentary to this part of the text. Whoever copied the text did this not with a brush but a pen which in Dunhuang is generally considered to have come into use from about the 770s, after the region came under Tibetan control. Yet based on the type of writing and the physical form of the manuscript it is likely to have been produced sometime between the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> until the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

The hand is visibly inferior to that in the other two Dunhuang manuscripts and there are also problems with adhering to the spatial arrangement of the lines. Although the paper is ruled and the copyist evidently tried to follow the traditional way of presenting the main text in a single line and the small-script commentaries in a double one, he was not able to do this consistently. In fact, the very first line of the manuscript has a single line of commentary, which should not have happened. Then on the second half-page, the second line of the double-line commentary is left empty halfway through because the copyist did not divide the text of the commentary evenly between the lines. In order not to leave a large chunk of space in the second line of the commentary, he dotted out the rest of the line. He used the same technique to remedy the same type of problem in the first line of the fourth half-page. But earlier on the third half-page, he miscounted the commentary lines and, disregarding the ruling of the page, began a line of full-size characters in a half-size commentary line. This completely disrupted the layout of the page and to rectify the problem he had to apply several ad-hoc solutions, none of which provided an adequate solution.

Such a chaotic arrangement of the text indicates that the manuscript was copied by someone who had relatively low literacy skills, perhaps a student still in the early stages of learning. This is corroborated by the numerous corrections which were applied either using the customary correction marks or simply by writing over mistaken characters. For example, in the segment “Xie Shang: the myna dance” 謝尚鷓鴣 the last character is accidentally omitted, then inserted on the right side of the line.

The above three Dunhuang fragments of the *Mengqiu* can be complimented with an interesting parallel in two Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang, currently kept at the BnF in Paris. These are manuscripts Pelliot tibétain 987 and 988 which contain two nearly identical versions of the same text, featuring a series of stories from Chinese classical works. The Tibetan text is unquestionably a translation of a Chinese one but its original has not been identified. In a study devoted to the two manuscripts, the French scholar Rolf A. Stein published a tentative description/translation of its contents, trying to decipher the apparently very difficult stories.<sup>535</sup> Among the stories there was one about a man transcribed in Tibetan as Yañ 'Chin who refused some valuables and spoke about “four [kinds of] knowledge.” Stein speculated that he might have been called Yang Tch'eng (i.e. Cheng) in Chinese but he was not able to identify this figure and, consequently, could not make sense of the passage in question.<sup>536</sup> The story in question is, however, unmistakably that of Yang Zhen and his *sizhi* (“four who know”), which also appears in the *Mengqiu*. The *Mengqiu* connection is even more apparent because the following story in the Tibetan manuscripts discusses another man whose name Stein transcribes from Tibetan as Çug(?) -cher, and who is mentioned in connection with wine and wealth. There is little doubt that this story represents the next quadrisyllabic segment in the *Mengqiu* about Yang Zhen's son Yang Bing 楊秉, whose style name is identified in the commentaries as Shujie 叔節, a perfect match for the Tibetan transcription. In the main text of the *Mengqiu*, the segment in question reads, “Bing disposed of the three vices” 秉去三惑 and it is the commentary that cites the *Hou Han shu*, which includes his style name and identifies the three vices as wine 酒, sex 色 and money 財.<sup>537</sup>

Thus the Tibetan text contains at least two consecutive stories from the *Mengqiu*, although the rest of them do not seem to match. We should also point out that the same two stories in the *Mengqiu*, consisting of two four-character segments, also appear verbatim in the postscript to Yang Zhen's biography in the *Hou Han shu*, but it is very likely that the Tibetan translation was based on a medieval text which had an annotated version of these segments that included not just the names but also the stories associated with these persons.

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<sup>535</sup> Stein 1992. An English translation of this study appeared in Stein and McKeown 2002, 273–283.

<sup>536</sup> Stein 1992, 13.

<sup>537</sup> Without identifying the person in the story, Stein (*ibid.*) was able to translate two of the three vices (i.e. “vin et richesses”) but did not succeed in identifying the third one.

Based on Stein's preliminary translation, Nie Hongyin was able to identify a number of stories in the Tibetan text, even though he did not recognize the one about Yang Zhen's son Yang Bing (i.e. Shujie).<sup>538</sup> Consequently, he did not notice that Yang Zhen's *sizhi* story and the one about his son's three vices were paired together, matching the *Mengqiu* and the postscript to Yang Zhen's bibliography. But he pointed out several cases where the stories and their sequence in the Tibetan text was very close to the *Taigong jiajiao*, suggesting that this was a translation made from a Chinese text that was similar to the *Taigong jiajiao*.<sup>539</sup>

#### 4.3.3 The Khara-khoto fragment

Among the Chinese material found by Stein at Khara-khoto was a one-page copy of the *Mengqiu* (Or.8212/1344), unearthed from among the debris and refuse heaps within the walls of the city, rather than from the stupa which contained the majority of the texts in the Kozlov collection.<sup>540</sup> A transcription of this manuscript first appeared in Guo Feng's 郭峰 book which catalogued and transcribed the Chinese manuscripts Stein acquired in Gansu and Xinjiang during his third expedition to Central Asia.<sup>541</sup> Without having seen the actual manuscript, Zhang Nali 張娜麗 drew attention to a number of problems in Guo's transcription, suggesting that they might be errors.<sup>542</sup> Now that we have access to a high quality image through the IDP website (Fig. 13), we can confirm that her suspicion was well-founded and the characters in question (i.e. 東<東; 阿<河; 計<識) were mistakenly transcribed.

<sup>538</sup> Nie 2005. For the identification of yet another story from the Tibetan manuscript, see Zhang 2011, 91.

<sup>539</sup> Nie 2005, 83–84.

<sup>540</sup> The original location of the manuscript is evident from the code Stein initially assigned to the manuscript: KK0149a, in which the letters “KK,” without additional Roman numerals attached to them, designate the area within the walled city of Khara-khoto.

<sup>541</sup> Guo 1993, 26–27, 160–161.

<sup>542</sup> Zhang 2002, 81.

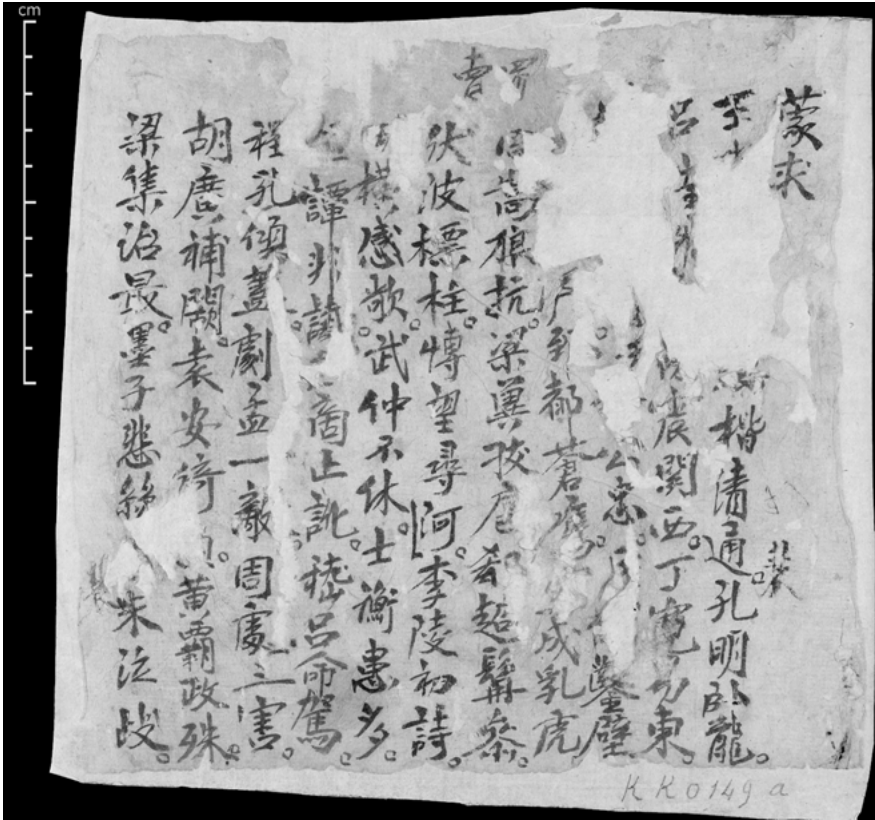


Fig. 13: The *Mengqiu* manuscript fragment from Khara-khoto. (Copyright © The British Library Or.8212/1344.)

The fragment is written on a very thin, almost transparent, sheet of unruled paper, roughly square in shape. The paper is damaged in several places, resulting in missing characters which can only be reconstructed on the basis of the transmitted text. The top of the fragment has a margin but the bottom part does not. The text is consistently punctuated with small circles (similar to full stops in modern Chinese punctuation) placed after each quadrisyllabic segment. The handwriting is relatively careless and of mediocre quality. The text is preceded by the title *Mengqiu* on a separate line. Not counting the line the title is on, the manuscript contains eleven lines. Each line has three segments, which is not ideal because the rhymes come at the end of every second segment, thus two or four segments per line would have been more in harmony with the internal structure of the text. Yet such imbalance in the layout of rhyming segments is

quite common in medieval Chinese manuscripts (e.g. Buddhist *gāthās*) and seems to have been of no concern.

The manuscript omits the four-syllable phrase “Wang Xun the short clerk” 王珣短簿, which is an obvious mistake not just because it differs from other versions of the text but also because the omission disrupts the carefully observed parallelism, not to speak of leaving out the rhyme. Once again, it is likely that this copy was made by a student, rather than a fully literate person. A noteworthy variation is writing the personal name of Liang Xi 梁習 (d. 230) as Ji 集 in the phrase which otherwise should read “In terms of governing, Liang Xi’s was the greatest” 梁習治最. Considering that Liang Xi was an attested historical figure and that manuscript DY049 from the Dunhuang Academy correctly writes his personal name as Xi, this variant may be simply discounted as a copying mistake. Nevertheless, several of the surviving Japanese manuscripts also write the name as Ji, matching the Khara-khoto copy. Therefore, even if the name is written here mistakenly, it was probably not the fault of the copyist of this particular manuscript but was a variant reading that became part of a specific textual lineage. Indeed, the fact that this character in the Khara-khoto copy matches some early Japanese manuscripts cannot be attributed to coincidence but unmistakably points to a connection between those lineages of transmission. Such a connection certainly deserves more attention and its nature and extent should be examined in detail.

The discovery of the *Mengqiu* in Khara-khoto amidst the multitude of Tangut books confirms that the text was known in the Tangut state. The bits of content that parallel the Tangut manuscript \**Taizong’s Questions* discussed above are yet another indication of this. Even though the Tangut text is not a translation of the *Mengqiu*, it was translated from a Chinese work that was similar to the *Mengqiu* and was itself a primer.

#### 4.3.4 The Liao printed version

In the summer of 1974, a printed *Mengqiu* was discovered among a large collection of printed and manuscript material inside the Buddhist pagoda at Fogong monastery 佛宮寺 in Ying county.<sup>543</sup> This is a notebook bound in a butterfly form, missing only the first page and the second half of the ninth one. The book contains the main text of the *Mengqiu* without any commentaries. The charac-

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<sup>543</sup> For reports on the discovery and the texts within, see the articles in *Wenwu* 文物 1982, No. 6. For the report on the *Mengqiu*, see Bi 1982.

ters 明 and 真 are written with missing a stroke as a form of taboo, which led modern scholars to the conclusion that the book was printed during or after the reign of the Khitan emperor Xingzong 興宗 (r. 1031–1055), whose personal name was Zongzhen 宗真.<sup>544</sup> The character 明 must have been tabooed because it formed part of the name of emperor Muzong 穆宗 (r. 951–969) who had changed his personal name from Jing 璟 to Ming 明.<sup>545</sup> On the basis of this evidence, the editors of the publication believed this to be the earliest copy of the *Mengqiu* without commentary. This, however, is clearly not the case because manuscript P.2710 from Dunhuang (with no commentary either) has to be earlier because the Dunhuang cave library was sealed around 1006, whereas the Khitan name taboos suggest a date that cannot be earlier than the beginning of Xingzong's reign (i.e. 1031).

The printed version is divided into three *juan* (*shang* 上, *zhong* 中 and *xia* 下), each clearly marked at the beginning and end. Although the beginning of the text is missing, the end has the words “a set of three *juan*” 一部三卷. The printed pages have a consistent layout in which the quadrisyllabic segments form a symmetrical pattern. Each line consists of four such segments and each half-page has ten lines. Following the text is a short lexicographic section which lists—using either *fanqie* 反切 or single-character phonetic glosses—the pronunciation of some characters in the text, presumably the ones deemed difficult for the readership. On the top margin of the same half-page there is an ink-stained drawing of a human figure with spread arms, perhaps drawn there by a young student while using the book.

All of the above copies of the *Mengqiu* come from sites that at the time when the fragments were copied or printed were not part of China. The copies from Dunhuang were produced in 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century, when the city was under the control of the Guiyijun 歸義軍 regime, a military governorship (*jiedushi* 節度使) that nominally belonged to the Tang and its successors states but in effect an independent kingdom with its own ruling house and a multicultural population. The Khara-khoto copy came from the site of a former Tangut city that was a garrison town in the Tangut state, attesting to the circulation of the work among the Tanguts. Finally, the printed version of the *Mengqiu* found in the wooden

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<sup>544</sup> Shanxi sheng wenwuju 1991, 52.

<sup>545</sup> Wang 1997, 329. In addition, on the published facsimile images the character 布 seems to be missing its last (vertical) stroke, which would indicate a Yuan dynasty taboo (*ibid.*, 34). This, however, was not taken into consideration by the organizers of the volume thus it is possible that the missing stroke is a printing error. Unfortunately, without examining the original leaves it is impossible to tell whether this is yet another case of name taboo.

pagoda at Ying county came from the Khitan empire that controlled a large part of northern China in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. Other known early copies of the *Mengqiu* survive in Japan and, to a lesser degree, Korea. There are more early manuscript copies of this work in Japan than in all of the other places together, which is not only a testimony to the popularity of this work in that country but also to its continuous use there for almost a millennium. It is an interesting situation, although by no means a unique one, that no copy has been found in China proper where the work had presumably been composed.

#### 4.4 Chinese primers among the Tanguts

The educational texts discussed above were all in use by the inhabitants of Khara-khoto, a garrison town in the northern part of the Tangut state. These three texts are merely select examples from a larger corpus of such texts (Chinese and Tangut, print and manuscript) discovered at the site. As it was the case with regard to the Dunhuang manuscripts, many other texts found in Khara-khoto may have also been produced in an educational setting, even if they fall outside the narrowly defined category of *mengshu*. Similarly, the variety of monolingual and bilingual dictionaries found at the site were probably also used for teaching purposes. But even translations of the Confucian classics, historical works, encyclopaedias or shorter Buddhist scriptures and commentaries may owe their survival to having been once used in a learning environment.

So why were the Tanguts so interested in Chinese educational texts? Why did they translate so many of them, instead of writing their own ones specifically for teaching Tangut writing? There was probably no Tangut equivalent to the written Chinese tradition that they adopted, which also means that the Tanguts had no inherent tradition of civil and military governance. It is true that excavations at Khara-khoto and other sites yielded some native Tangut *mengshu*, such as the woodblock printed and manuscript fragments of a text called *Sq rjiir dji dza* 散夥瓖𑖦𑖯 (三才字雜 “Miscellaneous Characters on the Three Parts of the Universe”).<sup>546</sup> Yet these are fewer in number than those translated from Chinese, revealing the central role Chinese *mengshu* played in Tangut education, as far as it can be judged on the basis of the surviving body of material. Note that not all the books found in Khara-khoto came from the library stupa but some of them were found at other parts of the city. Thus Stein dug up the manuscript sheet

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<sup>546</sup> Fragments of the text survive in different collections but those in St. Petersburg are the most numerous. See Terent'ev-Katanskij and Sofronov 2002; Nie and Shi 1995.



with the Chinese *Mengqiu* at the base of the city wall, and this slightly improves the statistics of how representative these fragments were for Khara-khoto or the Tangut state in general.

Evidently, the Tanguts were interested not only in the content of the primers they translated but also in the fact that these texts had been successfully used for teaching literacy skills in China. The Tanguts essentially appropriated the Chinese repertoire of such tools with little modification, apart from translating those into their own language. Yet it seems evident that besides providing practice material for writing Chinese—or Tangut—characters, the *mengshu* were also favoured for their educational message, because they upheld a set of cultural values that were both desirable and imitable in Tangut society. Many of the texts encapsulated a large pool of stories from Chinese literary and historical sources, presenting them in an accessible and easily memorisable way. It is open for discussion whether the primers designed for teaching Chinese characters worked just as efficiently for teaching Tangut characters. The choice of non-native texts for this purpose was certainly heavily influenced by the prestige of Chinese culture in East and Central Asia. We should not forget that before the invention of the native script, literacy among the Tanguts (however limited it may have been) probably entailed the ability to read and write Chinese, which also meant that those who acquired literacy skills by default had to learn and internalize a significant portion of the Chinese literary canon. Literate Tanguts must have regarded the vast world of written Chinese texts as part of their own heritage. There is very little information on how they read these Chinese texts, whether they vocalized them in Chinese or according to the phonetic and grammatical peculiarities of their native language. It is certain, however, that they knew them well. The Khara-khoto finds demonstrate that Chinese continued to be used as a written language after the introduction of the Tangut script, even if we do not have evidence to whether these were produced by Chinese speakers or individuals who were versed in two or more languages.

The prestige of Chinese culture must have been the main reason why the Tangut script was designed as a sinoform script, and the inventors did not adopt one of the phonetic systems used by literate cultures of Central Asia. Considering the linguistic affiliation of Tangut with Tibeto-Burman languages, the Tibetan alphabet would have been a particularly fitting choice for a new script. Yet Emperor Yuanhao sanctioned the invention of a script with nearly 6,000 distinct logographs assembled from the strokes of Chinese characters. The choice of the type of script on the part of the emperor was an act of affiliating himself with the cultural prestige of the Song empire, which was politically one of his major opponents. The *Song shi* suggests that the translation of Chinese *mengshu*

and their use for teaching Tangut literacy skills began as soon as the Tangut script was introduced to the general population. The *mengshu* so to speak came with the script, as a set of tools that enabled their acquisition and spread. In this sense, their translation was part of the same nation-building effort as the invention of the script.

At the same time, we should also keep in mind the larger picture of East and Central Asia, where Chinese *mengshu* were used in many cultures around China. For example, among the most popular Chinese primers in the medieval period was the *Qianziwen* which survived in numerous copies in Dunhuang, Turfan and even Khara-khoto. More interestingly, this text was also transcribed and translated into other languages, showing its utility for non-Chinese speakers and non-Chinese literacy. Fragments of different Uyghur translations of the *Qianziwen* have been identified in several collections, including the Berlin Turfan collection (Ch/U 8152) and the IOM in St. Petersburg (4bKr.181, 4bKr.182, 4bKr.185, 4bKr.194, SI 3Kr.14, SI 3Kr.15 and SI Kr.IV.260).<sup>547</sup> The Uyghurs did not use a sinoform script but translated the *Qianziwen* into their native language, most likely because they felt a close connection with Chinese literacy through their Buddhism tradition, the texts of which were mostly translated from Chinese. They translated Chinese sutras into Uyghur and this clearly developed a bond with the Chinese written tradition. More importantly, the Uyghurs also studied Buddhist texts written in Chinese, and thus understandably had a vested interest in the tools that facilitated the learning of Chinese characters. The translation of such tools into Uyghur is an indication that at times they may have used the same texts for learning to read and write in Uyghur.

The two Tibetan manuscripts with a series of Confucian maxims are yet another example of the adaptation of Chinese educational texts to a non-Chinese linguistic environment. Similar examples are known from most other cultures around China, including the Khitan state, Japan, Korea, or Vietnam. The prestige of Chinese Buddhism and Confucian high culture spread far beyond the borders of China and continued to exert an influence even in times of political and military conflict with China.

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<sup>547</sup> Shōgaitō and Yakup 2001, Sjogajto 2008.