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A page from the newly discovered Tangut xylograph Essential Selection of Mixed Homonyms Often-Transmitted. Private collection.
Wang Peipei

New Translations of Some Tangut Words

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Abstract: Some important documents, such as the Tangut legal texts “Revised and Newly Approved Code of the Heavenly Prosperity Reign (1149–1168)” (Tiansheng lüling) and “New Laws of the Pig Year” (Hainian xinfa), are not fully clarified. One reason is that some Tangut words cannot be understood correctly. The main key to finding exact meanings of Tangut words are translations of Chinese classics. In this paper it is shown how using the Tangut translation of a Chinese leishu, “Forest of Categories” (Lei lin), and finding correct interpretations of nine words results in reasonable translations of legal provisions.

Key words: Tangut Code, Tiansheng lüling, Hainian xinfa, Lei lin

More than one hundred years have passed, since the discovery of Tangut documents in Khara-Khoto by the expedition of Petr Kuz’mich Kozlov. Most of these documents have been published, and many studies interpreting these texts have been conducted. All of these works are used to reveal the truth of history. However, some important documents have not been fully interpreted, such as the Tangut legal texts “Revised and Newly Approved Code of the Heavenly Prosperity Reign [1149–1168]” (Tiansheng gaijiu xinding lüling 天盛改舊新定律令) and “New Laws of the Pig Year” (Hainian xinfa 亥年新法), even though they are very important for historical research. One reason is that Tangut dictionaries focus on meanings of individual Tangut characters, but do not pay great attention to vocabulary. So, numerous words in the legal codes remain unknown. Furthermore, these blind spots obstruct our understanding of the law.

It is known that, apart from Tangut dictionaries, the main key to finding exact meanings of Tangut words are translations of Chinese classics. These
translations are more accurate and convincing. In this article Tangut words will be looked up in the Tangut translation of a Chinese leishu (類書) titled “Forest of Categories” (Lei lin 類林) to confirm their Chinese meanings. This will clarify the meaning and reading of several articles of Tangut law. This study demonstrates that Tangut translations of Chinese classics have great research value.

1. བྱི།
This Tangut word is literally translated as “householder”. Previous studies indicate that “བྱི།” means “the head of the family”.² Looking up the word in “Forest of Categories” (hereafter Lei lin), we find the following two sentences:³

昔日郡中火，乃皆禁人夜作。
In the past, fires often occurred between residents, so night work has been forbidden.⁵

忷為广漢太守时，欲徳名而常贫，指揮吏下往住户覓钱。
When Ying Min was the Grand Guard of Guanghan, he wanted to be virtuous and stayed poor. He commanded junior officials to look for money from the residents.⁷

² PAN 2016.
³ The Tangut text of “Forest of Categories” is quoted in this article from three editions (all based on the facsimile of the same copy): KEPPING 1983; SHI JINBO et al. 1993 and ECHW 11. The sequence number of the stories in this Tangut text are given by the numbering in the Russian translation by K.B. Kepping. See KEPPING 1983. The Tangut text of “Revised and Newly Approved Code of the Heavenly Prosperity Reign” is quoted from the facsimile edition: ECHW 8. The article numbers in this text are given by the numbering in the Russian translation by E.I. Kychanov. See KYCHANOV 1987–1989. The Tangut text of “New Laws of the Pig Year” is quoted from the facsimile editions: ECHW 9 and KYCHANOV 2013. It should be noted that these editions reproduce different copies of the text kept at the IOM, RAS.
⁴ LEI LIN, Chapter 4, no. 83; ECHW 11: 250 (f. 18b); KEPPING 1983: 258; SHI JINBO et al. 1993: 88.
⁶ LEI LIN, Chapter 4, no. 90; ECHW 11: 251 (f. 21b); Kepping 1983: 264; Shi Jinbo et al. 1993: 91.
It is obvious that “憲敘” means “residents”, generally referring to people living in a certain area. Thus, the following legal provision from “Revised and Newly Approved Code of the Heavenly Prosperity Reign” (hereafter *Tiansheng lüling*) can be translated as:

When a resident captures a thief, the neighborhood residents should give immediate help. If this assistance is not timely, or they do not report, officials including the *[daren]* (大人; Tribal Overseer), *[chengzhi]* (承旨; Recipient of Edicts), *[xingxun]* (行巡), *[jianshi]* (检视) who come from inside and outside the city will be sentenced to one year’s imprisonment, and other officials, such as the *[qianliu]* (迁溜), *[jianjiao]* (检校), *[bianguan]* (边管), *[yingneng]* (盈能), *[liushouling]* (溜首领), *[xingjian]* (行监), if they know about [it] and have an official position, [they] will be sentenced to imprisonment for six months, and residents will be sentenced to imprisonment for three months. Moreover, when any people encounter a thief, have time to report but do not, in this case, officials will be punished with a fine of a horse and non-official people will be flogged 13 times.\(^9\)

2. **.convert**

This Tangut compound is literally translated as “changing one’s mind” (心归). Some articles explain this word as “surrender” (投降).\(^11\) Looking up this word in *Lei lin*, we find the following sentences:

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\(^8\)  is the symbol for a missing character.

\(^9\) *Tiansheng lüling*, Chapter 3, Article 147; *ECHW* 8: 91.


Fei Zhong, the favored minister of King Zhou. 13

The archaism 幸 means "favorite". The meaning can be expanded as "desertion to the enemy", in Chinese 投诚. It is an intentional behavior which is different from surrender. So, the following legal provision from Tiansheng lüling can be translated as:

一诸人往来敌界，提供密事，及为敌人侦查、隐藏等者，其人计划投诚他国，则与叛逃同样承罪，家门连坐，畜物没收，当依叛逃已行法办。所有获侦查者，皆以剑斩之。

People who have contacts with the enemy territory, provide secret information, as well as provide shelter for enemy spies and so on, when they plan to desert to another state, they will be punished in the same way as for defection. Furthermore, their family members will be treated as guilty associates and their livestock will be confiscated according to the law for committing defection. All those who are caught spying are executed with swords. 15

3. 非Cerrar

The first character 非 in this compound means "market", the second 实 means "long" or "all around". The whole compound 非Cerrar is literally translated as "all around the market" (遍市). Looking up the word in Lei lin, we find the following sentences:

阮宣又名宣子，陈留地方人也。出时常杖头挂百钱，行至市井。

12 Lei lin, Chapter 3, no. 21; ECHW 11: 229 (f. 15a); Kepping 1983: 177; Shi Jinbo et al. 1993: 48.
14 Tiansheng lüling, Chapter 1, Article 12; ECHW 8: 52.
16 Lei lin, Chapter 7, no. 270; ECHW 11: 300 (f. 32b); Kepping 1983: 452; Shi Jinbo et al. 1993: 185
Ruan Xuan, also known as Xuanzi, is from Chenliu County. When going out, he often hangs 100 coins on the top of his cane and walks to the market.  

From the above example, we know that 謎 means “marketplace”, where goods are traded. So, the following legal provision from “New Laws of the Pig Year” (hereafter Hainian xinfa) can be translated as:

一品边中卖市场，畜敌人不同，买卖利寻中屡捕。金多买已昌已重，疑心不觉等有，故判捕当问。

In the border and interior marketplaces, different enemies trade seeking profit and often gain it. Excessive buying of gold is widespread and frequent. If there is suspicion, officials should arrest and interrogate everyone concerned even without evidence.  

4. 宽

The characters 宽 and 柔 that always appear together are translated as “wide”. In Lei lin, however, the word means “generous, loose”, as in the following sentence:

太子性宽厚，柔而不刚。

The prince is generous, soft and weak.  

So, the following legal provisions from Tiansheng lüling and Hainian xinfa can be translated as:

18 Hainian xinfa, Chapter 7; ECHW 9: 250 (f. 23b); KYCHANOV 2013: 377.
19 cf. KYCHANOV 2013: 131, Chapter 7b, Article 2, § 27.
20 Lei lin, Chapter 6, no. 212; ECHW 11: 283 (f. 35b); KEPPING 1983: 386; SHI JINBO et al. 1993: 152.
21 Cf. SHI JINBO et al. 1993: 152.
22 Tiansheng lüling, Chapter 9, Article 577; ECHW 8: 194.
If shackles on a prisoner’s hands are removed allowing him to move freely, the prisoner will get hold of a knife, an iron rod, and other implements to commit suicide by hanging himself or cutting his throat.23

違詐盜罪之人，捕獲私畜期限寬松，恃仗盜律罪輕，與局分人知晓，亲自获得畜物，买卖造分，不论肥瘦辎骑，以低价卖。

As for those who committed a fraud, captured private livestock, [officials] can generously extend the arrest deadline a few days. However, because of less serious offenders, the person who committed the crime communicated with officials privately to capture livestock illegally and then sell them at a low price […].25

5. 必
This word is literally translated as “always, certainly”. In Lei lin, a related sentence can be found:

今比干屡屡进谏，心必有孔。26

Now that Bigan has admonished you many times, there must be holes in his heart.27

Here the words 必 means “must”. Used in law articles, this word embodies mandatory nature, authority and seriousness of the law. For example:

殫殫必蠢殫殫蠢，蠢殫殫必蠢殫殫。28

24 Hainian xinfa, Chapter 3; ECHW 9: 148 (f. 17a); KYCHANOV 2013: 310.
25 Cf. KYCHANOV 2013: 52, Chapter 3, Article 15.
28 Tiansheng luling, Chapter 6, Article 362; ECHW 8: 146.
一上述所分抄中，军首领、帐门后宿、閤门等分抄时，入下法条，
必依此执行。

The allocation of chao (抄; a unit of Tangut army) mentioned above to
junshouling (军首领), zhangmenhousu (帐门后宿), hemen (閤门) and so
on, who are related [to the allocation of chao], must follow the law given
below.29

歺陇軄麴軄，爨軄、爨軄、酥軄、場軄軄軄軄，爨軄面粉爨爨爨，
爨軄爨爨爨爨爨爨。30

一守大城者，军士、正军、辅主、寨妇等众人必须
聚集而住，城司
各自间或校验。

The defenders of the great city such as soldiers, zhengjun (正军; regular
army), fuzhu (辅主; auxiliary troops) and zhaifu (寨妇; women soldiers)
must line up and be stationed. Chengsi (城司; city administration) has to
inspect them once in a while.31

6. 龍鱉

The first character 龍 in this compound means “a long time” or “a large
number”, the second 鱉 means “large quantity”. Previous studies only
pointed out that the whole compound 龍鱉 means “amounts of”. From
the sentences in Lei lin, we find that this word means “rich”, usually referring to
riches and wealth. For example:

殽殽殽殽殽殽殽殽殽，殽殽殽殽殽殽殽殽。
蒙君厚恩，无所报恩。

Thank you for your great kindness, and I have no way to repay for it.33

如此与王愷比富。

In this way to compare who is richer than Wang Kai.35

30 Tiansheng lüling, Chapter 4, Article 205; ECHW 8: 103.
32 Lei lin, Chapter 7, no. 254; ECHW 11: 296 (f. 24b); Kepping 1983: 436; Shi Jinbo et al.
1993:177.
34 Lei lin, Chapter 8, no. 276; ECHW 11: 303 (f. 4a); Kepping 1983: 460; Shi Jinbo et al.
1993: 189.
So, the following legal provision from *Tiansheng lüling* can be translated as:

> 一盗物现有及已使用而能赔偿修整以外，说寄放诸人处、已卖、已典当、已借贷、计量已给等，所指诸处数目属实，当催促，若甚少而诬说我富有时，有短期徒刑者，当在前罪上加一等，所加勿及死罪。

As for stolen goods, apart from those that are currently available or that were used, but can be compensated or repaired, [if the thief] states [that they were] left at other people’s places, sold, pawned or lent, estimating amounts given and so on, then the amounts truly indicated for various locations should be urged [to be returned from them]. If [the quantity] is very small and [the thief] falsely states that [the keepers, lenders, buyers, pawnbrokers etc. have much] wealth, then, if he is punished with a short-term imprisonment, one should add one degree to the earlier punishment, but not adding up to the death penalty.37

7. **龜兠**

The first character 龜 in this compound means “change”, the second 兎 always follows a verb to indicate a specific place. The whole compound 龜兠 is literally translated as “changeable place”. A related sentence in *Lei lin* has been found:

> 夏禹又名文命，为舜司空。代父治水因有功。

Xia Yu was also called Wen [Ming]. He was Shun’s *sikong* (*司空*; Minister of Public Works), because he effectively prevented floods replacing his father.39

We can see here that 龜兠 means “replace, take the place of”. So, the following legal provisions from *Tiansheng lüling* and *Hainian xinfa* can be translated as:

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36 *Tiansheng lüling*, Chapter 3, Article 141; *ECHW* 8: 89.
38 *Lei lin*, Chapter 7, no. 229; *ECHW* 11: 288 (f. 9b); KEPPING 1983: 406; SHI JINBO et al. 1993: 162.
39 Cf. SHI JINBO et al. 1993: 162.
If one has enough fields, houses, lands and people, but the livestock are too few, in this case, if officials do not give the informer a sufficient reward, then [they] should give him sufficiently from nearby state grain [confiscated] instead of penalty [for] bribes. And if there is no informer, or after interrogating [the accused person] was exonerated from his charge, the property must be confiscated.

If [one of] military toujian (头监; Head Supervisor), following orders, is in charge of matters [of other officials], or he is sent to different fortified locations that belonged to junliu (军溜; a unit of Tangut army), and the military’s quanjianjiao (权检校; Temporary Inspector) replaces [the toujian] to exercise power, then the toujian should not be punished, and the substitutes are not guilty.42

Must caution the toujian (头监; Head Supervisor), zhongzhu (众主): when the criminal is arrested, if he is replaced and runs away for no reason, [the chief culprit] is fined forty strings of coins and accomplices are fined thirty strings of coins.

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40 Tiānshèng lüling, Chapter 1, Article 8; ECHW 8: 51.
41 Tiānshèng lüling, Chapter 5, Article 295; ECHW 8: 128.
43 Hainian xinfa, Chapter 1; ECHW 9: 121 (f. 6a–6b).
8. Ԩᬯᡗ and Ԩዀᡗ

The expression Ԩᬯᡗ appears in law documents frequently. It is literally translated as “to start, begin with”. In Lei lin, the following related sentence can be found:

Ԩ᭙�*, ԡHEN ԡHH �� Ԩᬯᡗ Ԩዀᡗ Ԩẳ CPF. 44
<尹虞>讨伐杜孜, 战败。二女为孜所获, 将欲妻之。
[Yin Yu] was defeated in the war by Du Zi. The two daughters who were captured by Du Zi were forced to marry him.45

In this case we know that Ԩᬯᡗ means “capture” and, by extension, an action that has been carried out. In Chinese it means 获. So, the following legal provisions from Tiansheng lüling and Hainian xinfa can be translated as:

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If the prisoner was rescued from jail by others, and was secured successfully, the conspirators commit a crime of rebellion. The person who instigated the rescue scheme, no matter if he is an official or not, will be condemned to death. Accomplices who are commoners will be strangled.47

ӥ࣫븃, ԡHEN ԡHH �� Ԩᬯᡗ Ԩዀᡗ, Ԩᬯᡗ Ԩዀᡗ Ԩifiant Ԩև Ԩᬯᡗ Ԩዀᡗ Ԩidian, Ԩᬯᡗ Ԩዀᡗ Ԩifiant Ԩᬯᡗ Ԩዀᡗ Ԩidian. 48

群盗一种, 与强盗不同, 畜物大小如何获得到, 一律造意。无论主、从, 杀断门户为重罪, 情节严重, 依据轻重考量。

[In case of] a theft committed by a gang, unlike [a theft by] a robber, no matter what they have captured, all of them will be considered instigators [who have committed an intentional crime]. If a family was murdered, the criminals will be severely punished, because the case is serious.49

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44 Lei lin, Chapter 6, no. 207; ECHW 11: 282 (f. 33b); KEPPING 1983: 382; SHI JINBO et al. 1993: 150.
46 Tiansheng lüling, Chapter 9, Article 578; ECHW 8: 194.
48 Hainian xinfa, Chapter 3; ECHW 9: 142 (f. 5a–5b); KYCHANOV 2013: 294–295.
49 Cf. KYCHANOV 2013: 45, Chapter 3, Article 2.
The negative form of [Ԩᬯᡗ] is [Ԩዀᡗ]. It means “not get”, or an action that has not been finished. A related sentence in Lei lin can be translated as:

<许褚>后为将军，与贼相遇，[未交战]。

Later, [Xu Chu] became a general. He did not wage war with the enemy, when he met with them.51

So, the following legal provision from Tiansheng lüling can be translated as:

若囚未获，但伤人时，依强盗执器物未获而伤人法判断。若未获，囚亦未伤人，则比囚之量罪减一等。

If the prisoner was not rescued, but other people were injured, he will be convicted of armed robbery when nothing was taken, but people were injured. However, if the prisoner was not rescued and no one was injured, he will be punished one degree more leniently than the prisoner.53

References


50 Lei lin, Chapter 9, no. 345; ECHW 11: 320 (f. 14b); KEPPEING 1983: 526; SHI JINBO et al. 1993: 223.

51 Cf. SHI JINBO et al. 1993: 223.

52 Tiansheng lüling, Chapter 9, Article 578; ECHW 8: 194.

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