2 Tangut studies: Emergence of a field

Considering that scholars began reading Tangut texts only in the last four decades of the 20th century, Tangut studies is certainly a new field of research. It essentially began with the discovery of Khara-khoto and the work of Russian scholars who were privileged to have access to the materials not long after their discovery. Nevertheless, the reason why Kozlov’s discovery caused such a sensation in academic circles and why the field could develop at such pace was that by the time the ruins of Khara-khoto were excavated, the issue of the Tangut script and the history of the Tangut state was already a topic of considerable interest in the West. In a sense, the discoveries were anticipated.

Kozlov’s Mongolian and Tibetan expeditions should be viewed in light of the series of expeditions carried out by Western explorers and archaeologists in north-western China. The late 19th and the early part of the 20th centuries was truly the age of exploration for Central Asia, in the course of which Western nations surveyed China’s peripheries both geographically and culturally. At the background of such an enthusiastic scientific interest was a political and military rivalry between Britain and Russia, the two major colonial powers already in the region. This colonial rivalry, which is commonly known today as the Great Game, was also mirrored in the fields of archaeology and geography. In addition to the British and Russian expeditions, there were also expeditions organised by various other countries (e.g. Sweden, Germany, France, Hungary, Japan) who did not have an immediate colonial interest in the region but were eager to participate in its scientific exploration. Seeing Central Asia as one of the last unexplored regions of the globe, foreign expeditions came here in order to make their mark in the exploration of the world. Following a series of fortunate discoveries, the competition escalated into a race for manuscripts.

British interests were represented by Sir Aurel Stein’s four expeditions to Chinese Central Asia, which recovered a staggering amount of archaeological material, including manuscripts in hitherto unknown languages. While the Russians also carried out excavations and collected manuscripts in Xinjiang, the expeditions of Kozlov followed the path of his mentor Przhevalsky into Mongolia and Kokonor (Qinghai 青海), ever trying to reach Tibet. As we have

141 The term Great Game is usually traced back to Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) who used it in his novel Kim (Kipling 1901, 233) to denote the intrigues of the espionage work at the turn of the century. The modern use of the term seems to be much wider than this and refers to the Anglo-Russian rivalry in general.
seen earlier, one of the reasons for silencing the discovery of the location of Khara-khoto made by the Buryat officer Badmazhapov in 1907 might have been the fear of alerting the British to the location of the city and having a full-scale British expedition at the site before the Russians had a chance to carry out proper excavations. Indeed, in the spring of 1907 Stein was himself in northwest China and the news of a major discovery involving books written in a curious script would have surely aroused his interest.

In this context, the discovery of Tangut writings was only a matter of time. If Kozlov had not gone to Khara-khoto, they would have been found by Stein or one of the other Western expeditions combing through the deserts of northwestern China. Hearing the news of the discovery and seeing the samples sent by Kozlov after his first visit in 1908, the Imperial Russian Geographical Society immediately realised their significance for carving out a domain of Oriental research that could be dominated by Russian scholars working on materials in Russian institutions. Surely enough, for many decades Russia remained the undisputed leader in the field of Tangut studies. This was partly due to the fact that Russia possessed by far the largest collection of Tangut materials, but just as importantly because the study of these materials was always understood to be of strategic importance for Oriental studies in the country.

2.1 Before the discovery of Khara-khoto

The Tangut language and script survived the fall of the Tangut empire and continued to be used in a Buddhist liturgical context well into the Ming dynasty. But eventually the language died out and the script was forgotten to the extent that scholars could not even identify the script when faced with sporadic samples of Tangut writing. Following the disuse of the script, the first person to identify written Tangut was the Chinese scholar Zhang Shu 張澍 (1781–1847), a native of Liangzhou 涼州 (modern Wuwei 武威, Gansu). Around 1804 he discovered a bilingual Chinese-Tangut stele at the Qingying monastery 清應寺 in Wuwei and correctly deduced from the Chinese text on one side that the writing on other was in Tangut. This was the so-called Liangzhou bilingual stele, currently held at the Wuwei City Museum. For a monograph-length study of this important stele, see Dunnell 1996.
identifies it as written in the Xixia 西夏 (i.e. Tangut) script.\textsuperscript{143} At the end of the essay, he proudly claims credit for discovering the script:

My discovery of this stele is the first sighting of such a script under heaven, and as a result of this, epigraphers and collectors now have yet another kind of strange writing at their disposal.\textsuperscript{144}

Being a native of what used to be Tangut territory, Zhang was clearly very interested in the history of the Tanguts, as it is also shown by the fact that he took up the task of compiling their history. He mentions this in his \textit{Liangzhou fu zhi beikao} 潛州府志備考, an unpublished gazetteer-type compilation that survives in manuscript form. In the preface to the section on Xixia chronology (“Xixia jinian xu” 西夏紀年序), Zhang wrote about his historiographical endeavours the following way:\textsuperscript{145}

The bibliographic chapter (“Yiwen zhi” 藝文志) of the \textit{Song shi} 宋史 records a work called \textit{Xixiaguo shu} 西夏國書 in forty \textit{juan}, which has not survived. But Wang Yuyang 王漁洋 (i.e. Wang Shizhen 王士禛, 1634–1711) mentions in his \textit{Chibei outan} 池北偶談 that someone had seen in the studio of Wang Huaiye 王槐野 (d. 1556?) a book entitled \textit{Xia shu} 夏書, which was more voluminous than the \textit{Jin shi} 金史. In the past, I wanted to compile a history of the Xia using the \textit{Dongdu shilüe} 東都事略 and the “Xixia zhuan” 西夏傳 [chapter of the \textit{Jin shi}] as the general structure and adding information from collections and notes of Song and Yuan authors. I collected such information and kept them together but it still was not complete. When I travelled south to Yangzhou 揚州, I heard that my senior friend Qin Enfu 秦恩復 (1760–1843) was compiling a history of the Xia 夏 so I visited him and asked to see the manuscript. To this, he said: “I only wrote several hundred entries on separate sheets of paper but have not put them together into a book, there is not much to look at.” Later on, when I returned home, I took my draft and added more details to it, bringing it in total to six huge bundles of paper, which I placed on the top of the bookshelf. In the summer of 1810, I took five or six friends to the Songtao monastery 松濤寺 outside the city to escape from the heat, and in the meantime people in my family thought that this was waste paper and burned all of it. All I could do is sigh with regret and pain!\textsuperscript{146}

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{143} Yangsutang wenji 養素堂文集, \textit{juan} 19.
\item \textsuperscript{144} \textit{Ibid.} Contrary to how it is sometime assumed (e.g. Nie 1993, 329), to my knowledge Zhang Shu never made the connection between the script on the Liangzhou stele and the “unknown” script at Juyongguan 居庸關.
\item \textsuperscript{145} Zhang Shu never printed this work, perhaps because he considered it to be unfinished. It only came out in a punctuated edition relatively recently, almost a century and a half after its author’s death (Zhang 1988).
\item \textsuperscript{146} Zhang 1988, 832–833.
\end{enumerate}
Thus Zhang Shu must have had a continuous interest in Tangut history lasting for years, even if his manuscript was accidentally burned by his family members. In the long term, his discovery of the Liangzhou bilingual stele had no major consequences for scholarship and, as Zhang had himself pointed out, it merely added yet another strange form of script to the repertoire of collectible inscriptions. His notice identifying the script was essentially forgotten and did not resurface until Tangut studies was introduced to China from abroad. We cannot avoid noticing the contrast of this lack of enthusiasm on the part of Chinese historians and philologists with the sensational effect of the Kozlov’s discoveries in the West, which vividly demonstrates that great discoveries can only happen when the circumstances are right and without these, they will remain minor curiosities of little import.

Another roughly contemporaneous identification of the script comes from the epigrapher, numismatist and collector Liu Shilu 劉師陸 (1784–1850), also commonly known by his penname as Liu Qingyuan 劉青園. The *Jijin suojian lu* 吉金所見錄 compiled by Chu Shangling 初尚齡 (1759–1841) quotes Liu explaining that in 1805 locals from Liangzhou had dug up several jars full of coins, including some from the Northern Song, the Liao and the Tangut periods, and that among the coins were also several *fanziqian* 梵字錢, that is, coins with non-Chinese characters. Liu claimed that in total he acquired over a thousand coins from this discovery.\(^{147}\) He made the connection between these characters and those on the verso of the Liangzhou bilingual stele and correctly identified them as specimens of Tangut writing.\(^{148}\) The image accompanying the description (Fig. 3) shows four characters, which arguably do not resemble Tangut characters, especially the one on the left, which has a distinctly Chinese makeup. Obviously, this was due to the fact that the book carvers knew no Tangut and thus rendered the characters based on their knowledge of Chinese characters.

\(^{147}\) Chu 1827, *juan* 13, 9–10.

\(^{148}\) Ibid. Apparently, Liu did not know about Zhang Shu’s role in discovering the stele, as he simply mentions the fact that he had seen the stele in the Dayun monastery 大雲寺. Zhang, however, wrote on two different occasions that he had discovered the stele at the Qingying monastery, which is almost certainly a mistake. In addition, he also contradicts himself regarding the date of the discovery, which has led some researchers to doubt that he had identified the stele before Liu Qingyuan. For some arguments in favour of this theory, see, for example, Cui 2008.
Liu also referred to the well-known numismatic collection called *Quan zhi* 泉志, which had been compiled in 1149 by the Song epigrapher Hong Zun 洪遵 (1120–1174). Hong had listed one such coin with non-Chinese characters (*fanziqian*) among the coins of foreign countries which, as he put it, were undecipherable but probably belonged to the kind that come from Wutuo 屋馱 or Tibet 吐蕃.\(^{149}\) He showed an image (Fig. 4) which had four illegible characters that do not even resemble those of the Tangut script but among which the one on the top and the bottom show some similarity to the ones in identical position on Liu Qingyuan’s coin.\(^{150}\) Once again, individual components of the characters have a strong tendency to resemble elements of the Chinese script, betraying the background of the carvers and calligraphers responsible for the image.

\(^{149}\) It is unclear to what country Wutuo refers. In the Han there was a kingdom by this name somewhere around modern-day Yarkand in Xinjiang, halfway between Kashgar and Khotan. The *Quan zhi* also shows other samples of Wutuo coins but the writing on those, although distinct from the one show here, is completely illegible. In the West, scholars became interested in the language of these undeciphered coins towards the end of the 19th century. See, for example, the article by the Belgian scholar Charles-Joseph de Harlez (1899).

\(^{150}\) Hong Zun, *Quan zhi*, *juan* 11.
Interestingly, the 18th-century *Kangxi Dictionary* 康熙字典 included these four gibberish characters as main entries. There, under the entry for the character 𣥬, we read:

𣥬:《洪遵·泉志》載梵字錢，有𣥬𤔞𧳤𠐂四字，文不可辨，存之以資博雅。

Character 𣥬: The *Quan zhi* of Hong Zun records a *fanziqian* which bears the four characters 𣥬𤔞𧳤𠐂. The text is undecipherable but we preserve the characters here to advance higher learning.

Because of their appearance in the *Kangxi Dictionary*, they are also included in the comprehensive modern dictionary *Hanyu dazidian* 漢語大字典 as part of the historical repertoire of Chinese characters. Interestingly, they are even categorized under semantic radicals, even though there is no known meaning or pronunciation associated with them. Thus the character 𣥬 appears in the *Hanyu dazidian* under the radical 止; 𤔞 under 爪; 𧳤 under 豸; and 𠐂 under 人. Thus the garbled Tangut characters were gradually appropriated and found a place within the vast pool of historically attested Chinese characters. Although their identity as elements of the Tangut script was uncovered in the early 19th century, by that time they had become part of the Chinese lexicographic tradition and today they are also included in the Unicode set of Chinese characters.

Hence numismatics was the first entryway through which scholars of the modern age had a chance to learn about the Tangut script. Since then, numismatics remained a field with exciting discoveries with important implications for the study of the script and Tangut history in general. Although initially the number of newly identified Tangut coins was relatively low, later on during the
second half of the 20th century the numbers escalated to staggering figures and it was not unusual to find pits or caches with thousands of coins in them.151

During the 19th century two Chinese scholars compiled histories of the Tangut empire. Among the most important ones that survive to this day is Wu Guangcheng’s 吳廣成 (fl. 1820s) Xixia shushi 西夏書事, the preface of which dates to 1826.152 This was an attempt to construct a continuous narrative of the events during the existence of the Tangut state and it includes information that is unavailable elsewhere. Yet because it often draws on unidentified sources, some of the unique information is problematic from a historical point of view, creating serious doubts regarding the historical reliability of the entire book.153

Another surviving work is Zhang Jian’s 張鑒 (1768–1850) Xixia jishi benmo 西夏紀事本末, which chronicles Tangut history from the Zhonghe 中和 reign (881–885) of the Tang dynasty all the way through the destruction of the Tangut state in 1227. In general, it seems that there was a general interest among Qing scholars in the history of alien dynasties in northern China but this curiosity did not extend to the languages and scripts of these cultures.154

As for the beginnings of Tangut studies in the West, we have to acknowledge the work of Nikita Ya. Bichurin (1777–1853), a Russian Orthodox priest of partly of Chuvash descent who had collected historical information from traditional Chinese sources on the history of Tibet and Kokonor (Qinghai), including references to the Tangut state.155 Bichurin, known in contemporaneous Western literature as Father Hyacinth, was an incredibly prolific author and translator whose devotion to scholarly research caused him considerable trou-
bles with his monastic superiors. His monumental work on Tibet and Kokonor was very influential in both Central Asian studies and sinology, even though today it is largely overlooked in non-Russian scholarship.

The next noteworthy contribution to research on Tangut history was a lengthy study published in 1883 by the British scholar Henry Hoyle Howorth (1842–1923) as Part IV of a series entitled “The northern frontagers of China.” While it was primarily based on known Chinese, Mongol and other sources, this was the first continuous narrative of the Tanguts and their state available in a Western language. Howorth essentially retells the story of the Tanguts from their life under the Tang dynasty until their annihilation by Genghis khan, thereby not only recording the general sequence of events but also identifying them as a people, and state, whose history is worth writing, even if this had never been done before.

As for available specimens of Tangut writing, in addition to the Liangzhou bilingual stele and the sporadic finds of coins, another example was among the famous multilingual inscriptions at Juyongguan, a section of the Great Wall about 60 km from Beijing. The inscriptions on the Cloud Platform 云台 that used to belong to a Buddhist temple are in six different scripts and have been on public display ever since they were carved in 1345. Of the six scripts, Sanskrit, Tibetan, ‘Phags-pa, Uyghur and Chinese were easily identifiable but the sixth one was not recognised as Tangut, as there was no indication of its connection with the Tangut state, especially since the inscriptions were carved at the end of the Yuan period. In the West it was Alexander Wylie (1815–1887), a Protestant missionary working in Shanghai, who drew attention to the unknown script of the sixth inscription in an article published in 1870, advancing the hypothesis that it was written in Jurchen and providing a list of 78 characters which he called the “Neuchih Syllabary” (Fig. 5). In fact, he had alluded to this “Jurchen” inscription in a paper a decade earlier but at the time he had not been able to see it in person yet. He visited Juyongguan in 1863 and made a rubbing of some of the inscriptions, exhibiting those the following year at the first meeting of the North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in Shanghai and publishing a short paper in the society’s journal. Later on, images of all in-
scriptions also came out in a superb publication printed privately by Prince Roland Bonaparte (1858–1924), a grandnephew of Napoleon I and a scholar-explorer who was later to become the president of the Société de Géographie.  

Using the images in this publication, Stephen W. Bushell (1844–1908), an amateur Orientalist and numismatist, was able to identify the script and language of the unknown inscription as Tangut. Bushell’s connection to the Tangut script was through numismatics but he also utilised traditional historiographical sources to reconstruct the history of the Tangut empire, including a table of their rulers and reign periods.  

He was in possession of a rubbing of the bilingual Liangzhou stele and compared its characters with those at Juyongguan, pointing out more than a hundred identical ones. In addition, he also used numismatic evidence to support his thesis about the identity of the script.

About the same time, the French sinologist Gabriel Devéria (1844–1899) also arrived at similar results. He published several studies in which he clearly identified the unknown language as that of the Tangut state. He also suggested that the script may have been based on the Khitan writing system. Devéria is sometimes credited with having been the first person to identify the Tangut script, even though Bushell, with whom he worked closely together, seems to have reached this conclusion about the same time, if not earlier. Bushell claimed that he had known that the script on his rubbing of the Liangzhou stele was Tangut since at least a decade and a half earlier. In fact, he was the one who showed the rubbing to Devéria in 1879. Regardless of who of these two scholars came to realise this first, it goes without saying that Zhang Shu beat both of them to it by nearly a century. In addition, as we have seen above, this information was also available in Chinese numismatic works from the early 19th century, even if these may have arrived at this realisation independently from Zhang Shu.

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161 Bonaparte 1895.
162 Bushell 1899a.
163 Bushell 1898, 1899b, 147–148.
164 Bushell 1899a, 67. He had also written a paper on the Jurchen script where he discusses the general similarities of the Jurchen, Khitan and Tangut scripts (Bushell 1897).
165 For an overview of the life and works of Devéria, see Pottier 1900 and Chavannes 1899.
166 Devéria 1898a, 1898b, 1902.
168 Bushell 1899a, 66–67.
169 Nie Hongyin correctly points this out in his overview of the history of Tangut studies; Nie 1993, 329.
Aside from epigraphic material, samples of Tangut books were discovered by three employees of the French legation in China at the White Pagoda (Baita 白塔), in Beijing, in August 1900 during the quelling of the Boxer Rebellion. The three Frenchmen—Paul Pelliot, G. Morisse and F. Berteaux—found six concertina volumes of a manuscript book in Tangut. Morisse and Berteaux obtained three volumes each and with this new material in hand Morisse began studying the language. He published the results of his research in a report titled Contribution préliminaire à l'étude de l'écriture et de la langue Si-Hia, which was a major
contribution to this newly emerging field. From the Chinese characters someone had added next to the Tangut ones, he determined that this was a translation of the *Lotus sutra*. Based on this information, he proceeded to decipher the Tangut characters, partly relying on the works of Devéria, Wylie and Bushell. With these precedents and his volumes of the *Lotus sutra*, Morisse made significant progress and was able to establish the meaning of a series of characters, including their approximate pronunciation. He classified some 3,500 characters and arranged them under various categories. He also correctly concluded that the language itself belonged to the Tibeto-Burman family.

Following Berteaux’s death, his widow sold the Tangut volumes he possessed to several buyers but in the end they were all acquired by the Musée Guimet. Morisse eventually sold his volumes to a German buyer in 1912, not long after Kozlov’s discovery of the Khara-khoto treasures made them lose their uniqueness.

### 2.2 The discovery of Khara-khoto and Tangut studies

The Khara-khoto material was initially sent to the Geographical Society in St. Petersburg but soon after that it was divided into two parts: the books and manuscripts were deposited at the Asiatic Museum, whereas the paintings and other art objects went to the Ethnographic Department of the Russian Museum. Today the two parts of the original collection are kept at the IOM, which is the successor institution of the Asiatic Museum, and the State Hermitage Museum.

The discovery of a vast volume of Tangut material in Khara-khoto in 1908–1909 represented a breakthrough in the study of the Tangut language and brought the field to an entirely new level. The finds provided an unprecedented amount of textual material, including bilingual dictionaries and many texts translated from Chinese, all of which were essential in the decipherment of the script and the reconstruction of the language. The samples Kozlov sent to St. Petersburg following his visit to Khara-khoto in 1908 created a sensation in academic circles and were immediately studied by leading scholars. The 1909 issue of the *Bulletin of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society* came out with

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170 Morisse 1091. This was later published as a separate volume (Morisse 1904). An English review of this work was written by Bushell (1904).
172 Ibid., 146.
173 Ibid., 154.
three studies devoted to the new material. One of these was an iconographical study by the eminent Indologist Sergei F. Oldenburg; the other, an examination of Tangut paper money by the Polish-Russian scholar Władysław Kotwicz (1872–1944); and the third, strategically placed at the beginning of the journal, a paper on the Tangut manuscripts by Aleksei I. Ivanov, a young lecturer in Chinese at St. Petersburg University.174

Ivanov devoted himself to studying the Kozlov collection as soon as he gained access to the materials and published his findings in a series of academic articles.175 Towards the end of 1909 he had already discovered the bilingual glossary entitled Tangut-Chinese Timely Pearl in the Palm (Mji-Zar nyw dzij bju pja gu nji 攺攪竪聦聰漠聳), the Chinese title of which, being a bilingual work, was also provided as Fan-Han heshi zhangzhong zhu 番漢合時掌中珠.176 Because of the bilingual nature of the book, it became an important clue for the decipherment of the Tangut language. In addition, Ivanov published shorter notices on the Chinese-language documents from the dead city.177 In the course of working on the Tangut texts, he also compiled a dictionary of Tangut. Apparently, the dictionary had been sent to the publication department of the Russian Academy of Sciences where it stayed from 1919 until 1922 before Ivanov withdrew it and decided not to publish anything anymore.178 The manuscript of the dictionary was subsequently lost, possibly during Ivanov’s arrest and purge in 1937.179

In Russia, the motivations behind such a strong interest of Tangut studies were naturally connected with Kozlov’s discoveries. It is certainly no coincidence that early work on the Tangut language (prior to the discovery of Kharkhoto) was mainly conducted in France and Britain, rather than Russia. Yet with its long-standing colonial ambitions in Central and East Asia, the Russian Empire, and later the Soviet Union, had a vested interest in studying the history and culture of peoples in its border regions, including those who lived there in

175 E.g. Ivanov 1909b, 1911, 1913, 1918, 1920. His research was followed with interest in the rest of Europe, especially France. For example, the eminent French sinologist Edouard Chavannes (1920) wrote a short introduction about Ivanov 1909b, pointing out the significance of the Pearl in the Palm glossary.
176 Ivanov 1909b. Kychanov (2008b, 133) indicates that we do not actually know whether this glossary was discovered in the collection by Ivanov or Kotwitz. The Tanguts customarily used the Chinese word fan 番 to refer to themselves in Chinese.
177 Ivanov 1913.
178 Kychanov 2008b, 135.
179 Ibid.
the past. Accordingly, Mongolia, Qinghai and Tibet were among the earliest targets of Russian scientific exploration.

The newly discovered language was also of interest to linguists, regardless of their nationality. Early on in 1916, shortly after Ivanov’s first articles on the Kozlov collection, the German-born American scholar Berthold Laufer (1874–1934) published a long and important study of the “Si-hia language” which was largely based on the findings of Ivanov.180 In this, the author emphasized that the study of Tangut was “more than an isolated phenomenon of local interest, and that it even has a fundamental value for the understanding of the speech history [sic] of the Indo-Chinese family, and in many cases largely contributes to a correct appreciation of its genetic growth.”181 He firmly established that the language belonged to the Sino-Tibetan family and suggested that it was closer to Lolo and Moso than Tibetan. As it was pointed out later, Laufer’s work had many errors but these were primarily due to the mistakes in Ivanov’s publication which Laufer was using, as he did not himself have access to facsimiles of the Pearl in the Palm glossary.182 Later on, Stuart N. Wolfenden (1889–1938), an American linguist at the University of California, Berkeley, who normally worked on Tibeto-Burman dialects, also wrote a couple of short studies on Tibetan and Chinese transcriptions of Tangut words.183

In the early 1920s, when Ivanov joined the diplomatic service and became too busy to continue his studies on Tangut, the Kozlov collection was briefly studied by the young and exceptionally talented linguist Aleksandr A. Dragunov (1900–1955), even though Tangut studies never became his primary field of research and for years he worked on the collection with varying degree of intensity.184 Nevertheless, he compiled a list of titles he could identify in the collection185 and a study of binoms which has not lost its significance to this day.186 Dragunov continued to work on the cataloguing of the collection until moving to Moscow in 1951, by which time he had catalogued 2,720 items.187

As one of the first scholars working on the Kozlov collection, Ivanov had a tremendous impact on Tangut studies both through his works and by mentoring younger scholars. While still in St. Petersburg, he had taught Nikolai A. Nevsky

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180 Laufer 1916.
181 Ibid., 7.
183 Wolfenden 1931, 1934.
185 Long Guofu (Dragunov) et al. 1930.
186 Dragunov 1929.
(1892–1937), a linguist who was to become the brightest star of Tangut studies. Nevsky studied sinology with Vasily M. Alekseev (1881–1951) but in the end decided to switch to Japanese studies. A few months after his graduation, in 1915 he was sent to Japan for two years. In the meantime the Russian Revolution (1917) broke out, then the Civil War (1917–1922), and so he remained in Japan much longer, thoroughly mastering the language and eventually marrying a Japanese woman. Although his initial academic interest was the ethnography and languages of various indigenous groups, such as the Ainu in Hokkaidō and the aboriginal tribes of the Ryūkyū Islands and Taiwan, from around 1923–1924 he also took up the study of Tangut. Yet it was only after meeting Ivanov in 1925 in Beijing and hearing about the intellectual challenges involved that he began actively studying the language and the script. Ivanov allowed him to hand-copy several Tangut texts and these formed the foundation of his work for the next few years. He wrote about this important meeting the following way:

Last summer I visited Prof. A. I. Ivanov, my former teacher at St. Petersburg University, who at the moment works as an interpreter at the Soviet Embassy in Beijing. Our discussion concerned the language of the Tanguts, in which I was interested, and my professor showed me some books and documents written in this language. Among these were seven photographs of Buddhist fragments in Tangut, written in a cursive script that was quite close to the regular one. These texts were interesting in their own light but what made them especially valuable is the Tibetan transcriptions assigned to each character. [...] As Prof. A. I. Ivanov was saying, these fragmentary texts were found by Vladislav Kotwitz in the bindings of Tangut books found by P. K. Kozlov in 1908 together with a hoard of other Tangut books in a stupa near Khara-khoto. The fragments were flattened, catalogued and deposited for safekeeping at the Asiatic Museum of the Russian Academy of Sciences, where they still are.

With Prof. A. I. Ivanov’s permission I copied all of them and, after my return to Japan, categorized all characters and their transcriptions according to the first strokes of the charac-

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188 For biographical details of Nevsky, see Gromkovskaja and Kychanov 1978. A collection of material by and about Nevsky was published in 1996 in Peterburgskoe Vostokovedenie (St. Petersburg Oriental Studies) No. 8. Recently Nevsky’s 120th birthday was commemorated by a conference, the proceedings of which also came out as a separate volume (Baksheev and Shchepkin 2013).

189 Many of his early Japanese-language ethnographic publications have been collected in a posthumous volume (Nefusuki and Oka 1971). The first book-length biography of Nevsky was also in Japanese, and it has already come out in two editions (Katō 1976, 2011). A Russian biography (Gromkovskaja and Kychanov 1978) came out only two years later.

190 Nevsky relates this in two postcards sent from Beijing to Ishihama Juntarō. See Takata 2008, 184–185.
ters, added their Chinese equivalents for the ones I have come across before and the meaning of which was more or less clear to me.\footnote{Nevskij 1960, v. 1, 163.}

About a year after this meeting, the Osaka Asiatic Society published Nevsky’s short booklet called *A Brief Manual of the Si-hia Characters with Tibetan Transcriptions*, which contained a “Preface” in English and Japanese and a “Vocabulary” section that essentially functioned as a small dictionary.\footnote{Nevsky 1926.} Initially Nevsky worked from photographs provided by Ivanov but in 1929 he returned to St. Petersburg, by that time called Leningrad. Once there, he began to teach at the university and to work on the Tangut material at the Institute of Oriental Studies (present-day IOM) and the Hermitage. Following a lecture on the Kozlov collection he delivered at a meeting of the Russian Academy of Sciences in March 1935, Nevsky was assigned to work exclusively on the collection.\footnote{Kychanov 2008b, 136.} His work was suddenly interrupted in 1937 when he was arrested together with his wife on fictitious charges of spying for the Japanese government. Both of them were subsequently executed.\footnote{Some of the earlier publications state the year of Nevsky’s death as 1938, although it is now clear that he was executed on 24 November 1937, on the same day as his wife and hundreds of other victims. Their daughter, who had been raised by friends and distant family, was initially told that her father died in 1945 of myocarditis and learned the truth only in 1991 upon gaining access to her parents’ files (Nevskaja 1996, 530). In an interview given shortly before his death, Kychanov revealed that at the time of Nevsky’s rehabilitation, many scholars in St. Petersburg did not believe the news of his death and expected him to return to work on the Tangut collection. In fact, Kychanov pointed out that the time of Nevsky’s death was far from being certain since several people claimed to have seen him alive in various parts of Russia as late as 1962. See Kychanov 2012b, 9–10.} Nevsky’s magnum opus devoted to Tangut studies came out posthumously in 1960 in two large volumes under the title *Tangut Philology*.\footnote{Nevskij 1960. The 1960 edition, for which Nevsky posthumously received the Lenin prize in 1962, are today an antiquarian rarity and extremely hard to find. Fortunately, the dictionary was reprinted as a facsimile reproduction in volume 6 of Li Fanwen’s *Xixia yanjiu* 西夏研究 series.} This publication, the larger part of which is taken up by a Tangut dictionary compiled by the author on the basis of his work with the material in the Kozlov collection, to this day remains one of the most important tools for working on Tangut texts. Despite the existence of newer reference tools, it is still commonly used and is unlikely to be rendered completely obsolete in the fore-
seeable future. Nevsky is appropriately regarded today as the person who made the greatest contribution to the decipherment of Tangut.

In the mid-1920s, while working at the Osaka Foreign Languages University, Nevsky became acquainted with Ishihama Juntarō (1888–1968) who was the person who urged him to try his luck with Tangut studies in addition to his ethnographic work. The two of them collaborated, as Nevsky had access to Tangut materials through Ivanov and other colleagues in Leningrad, whereas Ishihama owned an extensive research library which was equally important. As a result, from 1927 until 1933, the two of them co-authored a series of academic papers related to Tangut texts. Even after Nevsky’s return to Russia, the two scholars continued their collaboration, until it abruptly ended with Nevsky’s arrest in 1937.

The academic interest in Tangut studies in Japan was part of a greater trend partly inspired by nationalistic sentiments. While during the Meiji period (1868–1912) Japan was interested in Western models of academic learning and scholars were accordingly focusing on learning Western languages, with Japan’s economic and military rise, and its victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, we can see the birth of a new trend which tried to move away from both Eurocentric and Sinocentric viewpoints. One of the effects of this change of direction was the development of the discipline of tōyōgaku, or Oriental studies, which engaged in a characteristically multidisciplinary and multilingual approach to Asian history. One of the major institutions cultivating this direction was Kyoto Imperial University (today’s Kyoto University), which developed its Oriental studies partly as a way to compete with Tokyo Imperial University (today’s Tokyo University) and its Western orientation. Kyoto-style Oriental studies was characterised by a strong focus on China’s historical contacts with Central Asian cultures and the study of the languages of these regions. In the case of Dunhuang studies, this turned out to be an extremely productive approach, as Dunhuang itself boasted a multicultural and multilingual community that produced manuscripts in a multitude of

197 For Ishihama’s description of this period of collaboration, see Ishihama 1934.
198 Takata 2008, 184–185. For their collaborative works, which often included reproductions of original material, see, for example, Nefusuki and Ishihama 1927 and 1930. Ishihama, as part of his general interest in newly discovered texts and languages, had published short reports on the Kozlov collection and Tangut studies already before meeting Nevsky (e.g. Ishihama 1915, 1920, 1922). For the extensive list of academic works authored by Ishihama, see the Ishihama sensei koki kinenkai 1958, 1–18.
languages and scripts. As a result of this approach, Japanese scholars moved beyond the relatively simple model of studying early editions of known or unknown Chinese texts, which characterised scholarship in China during the same period. In fact, Chinese interest in Dunhuang studies also partly began in Kyoto through the interaction of local scholars with Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 (1866–1940) and Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927) who moved to Kyoto in 1911.

To a certain extent Tangut studies was part of this larger development, which also meant that it developed in Kyoto and the Kansai region in general. As with the Dunhuang manuscripts, Luo Zhenyu and his sons played a major role during their Kyoto sojourn in absorbing the new material through their Japanese contacts. Nevsky and Ishihama worked in Osaka, merely an hour away by train but they also frequently visited Kyoto University. Even though with time the nationalistic aspect of the field was not longer part of the picture, the tradition remained and Kyoto continued to be the seat of Oriental studies in Japan. Among the people active during the pre-war period was Nakajima Satoshi 中嶋敏 (1910–2007), who started publishing on Tangut matters around the mid-1930s. Among his influential work were a study of Tangut culture in light of the changing political situation and the examination of coin casting in the Tangut state.200

In China, early studies of the Tangut script and language were made by the brothers Luo Fucheng 羅福成 (1885–1960) and Luo Fuchang 羅福萇 (1895–1921). Their involvement in Tangut studies is partly the result of meeting the Russian scholar Ivanov who from 1922 worked at the Soviet diplomatic mission in Beijing. It was here that he met the Luo brothers and Wang Jingru, another pioneer of Tangut studies in China, encouraging them to pursue the study of Tangut documents.

Luo Fucheng and Luo Fuchang were sons of the renown palaeographer and collector Luo Zhenyu who had made significant contributions to a wide range of academic fields in the late Qing and early Republican period, most notably the study of the Dunhuang manuscripts and oracle-bone inscriptions.201 He was, for example, the person who, after meeting Paul Pelliot and seeing his collection of Dunhuang manuscripts in 1908, wrote a petition to the Chinese Ministry of Culture—and then to the rector of the Imperial University (today’s Beijing University) where he held a position—urging them to purchase the manuscripts that

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200 Nakajima 1936a and 1936b.
201 For a diagram of the Luo family’s family tree, including Luo Zhenyu and his eight children, see Yang and Whitfield 2012, 10–11. For an assessment of Luo Zhenyu’s contribution to Dunhuang studies, see Zhao 1989.
were still in Dunhuang in order to prevent them from being taken out of the county by foreign explorers and archaeologists.\footnote{Rong 2013, 231–232. For Luo’s role in another major rescue operation, i.e. the saving of the Qing Grand Secretariat archives, see Brown 2007. Luo Zhenyu met Pelliot in Beijing in October 1908 and this meeting was the first time he saw Tangut texts which were included among the samples Pelliot showed him. Miao Quansun’s 繆荃孫 diary has the following entry for 25 October, 1908: “Pelliot came to the library and said that the Dunhuang Thousand Buddha Caves had over seven thousand Tang manuscript scrolls and that he had selected more than a thousand items, including the Tang work \textit{Shazhou zhi} 沙州志. There were also manuscripts written in Tangut and Uyghur, as well as printed texts from the Song and Five Dynasties. How incredible!” Quoted in Rong 2013, 228.} Hearing that there were no funds available for this, he pledged his own salary to help with the purchase. Thus the NLC collection of Dunhuang manuscripts essentially owes its existence to Luo Zhenyu. Yet his role in contemporary scholarship has been downplayed in Mainland China because of his Qing loyalist affiliations and his support for Manchukuo and Japanese presence in Manchuria. It is only recently that he is being gradually acknowledged for his academic achievements and his merits in saving the remainder of the Dunhuang manuscripts.\footnote{For his significance in late Qing-early Republican intellectual life, see Yang and Whitfield 2012.} The Luo family fled to Japan in 1911 following the Republican Revolution. Luo also brought over his soon to be famous protégé Wang Guowei, supporting him and his family financially.\footnote{Luo and Wang settled in the immediate vicinity of Kyoto Imperial University. For the significance of Kyoto in the early development of Dunhuang studies and the role of Luo and Wang in this, see the fascinating studies in Takata 2002, especially Tonami 2002.}

It was Luo Zhenyu who first introduced the \textit{Pearl in the Palm} glossary to the world, after having received photographs of ten pages from the Russian scholar Ivanov in 1913.\footnote{Luo 1918.} He later also published a study of Tangut officials seals.\footnote{Luo 1927.} His other son Luo Fubao 羅福葆 (1899–1967) distinguished himself as a palaeographer and epigrapher, also playing a minor role in Tangut studies.\footnote{Today he is mainly remembered for his work on Chinese character variants in epigraphic works, \textit{e.g.} Luo 1939.} The youngest son Luo Fuyi 羅福頤 (1905–1981) became a leading authority on Chinese seals but also compiled a volume devoted to Tangut official seals, although this was published only after his death.\footnote{Luo 1982.} As we can see, all of the members of the Luo family have made a contribution to Tangut studies but it was the eldest
brother Luo Fucheng whose work is particularly important.\textsuperscript{209} While living in Kyoto, he published a study of the Tangut version of the \textit{Lotus sutra}, continuing the work of Morisse.\textsuperscript{210} Besides Morisse’s volumes, he also relied on additional volumes, the photographs of which were made available to him by Haneda Tōru羽田亨 (1882–1955) of Kyoto Imperial University.\textsuperscript{211} On the basis of the photos of the \textit{Pearl in the Palm} obtained from Ivanov, plus the \textit{Lotus sutra} he had already studied, Luo Fucheng was able to decipher about a hundred Tangut characters which he arranged by stroke order and published as a vocabulary.\textsuperscript{212} In 1924 Luo Fucheng hand-copied Ivanov’s photographs of the \textit{Pearl in the Palm} and had them printed in Tianjin, thereby making the entire work available to the scholarly community.

In the meantime, his younger brother Luo Fuchang compiled a small booklet on the Tangut script and grammar.\textsuperscript{213} This was the first description of the Tangut language and writing system and therefore represents a major contribution to the work of decipherment. Luo Fuchang established that the Tangut characters were based on essentially the same principles as Chinese ones, and identified a small number of “radicals.” Due to his untimely death at the age of 26, Luo Fuchang did not live to see the updated and corrected version which was completed by his brother Luo Fucheng under the same title. But during his short scholarly career Luo Fuchang managed to make a number of important contributions to Tangut studies, including an annotated edition of the description of the Tangut empire in the Song annals.\textsuperscript{214}

Wang Jingru, the other important Chinese figure in Tangut studies, was part of a new generation of Chinese scholars who, having studied in European countries such as France, Germany or Britain, were heavily influenced by Western-style learning. From the late 1920s, China experienced a new wave of nationalism which, coupled with strong anti-foreign sentiments, had profound implications for the development of arts and sciences in the country. This was also the time when foreign explorers who had conducted excavations in various parts of China were banned from digging and their former activities were increasingly viewed as stealing China’s national treasures. In 1928, Academia Sinica, China’s

\textsuperscript{209} Volume 4 of Li Fanwen’s \textit{Xixia yanjiu} series is devoted to the contributions of the Luo family. This impressive list of scholars coming from one family is truly unparalleled in modern scholarship.

\textsuperscript{210} Luo 1914.

\textsuperscript{211} Nishida 1964–1966, 520.

\textsuperscript{212} Luo 1915.

\textsuperscript{213} Luo 1919.

\textsuperscript{214} This work was recently published as Luo and Peng 2004.
national research academy, was founded and a new generation of native scholars came to the forefront. Issues related to the nation’s past were of obvious importance and unsurprisingly one of the first major projects of the Academy in the field of archaeology was the excavation of oracle bones at the ancient Shang capital near modern-day Anyang (Henan province).

Wang Jingru’s academic career began at this period; he started working on Tangut from the early 1930s.215 His opus on “Shishiah studies” came out in three volumes as part of the Institute of History and Philology (Academia Sinica) monograph series.216 Attesting to the state of affairs in Tangut studies at the time, the first volume has short prefaces by eminent scholars in the three main languages of the field: an English one by Jaw Yuan renn (i.e. Zhao Yuanren 趙元任, 1892–1982), a Chinese one by Chen Yinque 陳寅恪 (1890–1969), and a Russian one by Wang Jingru himself. The first volume contains a series of shorter papers ranging from studies of the Tangut Tripitaka and official seals to the examination of specific sutras among the Khara-khoto material. The second and third volumes are largely taken up by a study of the Tangut version of the Sutra of Golden Light (T. Kie bji swew zji bu njij lwar rej 腊赦飫糥缥敒öße), in which Wang compares the text against Chinese and Tibetan versions. Finally, there are a couple of shorter studies, one on the Qiangic and Minya languages in Sichuan and one on Tangut phonetics.

In Britain there have been no significant publications related to Tangut in the pre-war period, even though the material acquired by Stein at Khara-khoto had been deposited at the British Museum. The few people who consulted the collection were foreign scholars who either had a chance to visit London or had access to photographs. A notable exception is Sir Gerard Clauson (1891–1974), an English civil servant and scholar who mostly worked on the Sanskrit, Tibetan and especially Turkic manuscripts from the Stein and Pelliot collections. Although his most important contributions were in the field of Turkology, he was also interested in Tangut studies217 and was also working on what he called A Skeleton Dictionary of Tangut.218 This dictionary was never published, even though in the early 1970s Eric Grinstead called it “a paragon of excellence” in comparison with the multitude of errors in other dictionaries, such as the index of characters to the Russian edition of the monolingual Tangut dictionary Sea of

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215 His first publication was a book on the Pearl in the Palm glossary (Wang 1930).
216 Wang 1932–1933.
217 E.g., Clauson 1940.
218 Clauson 1964, 55.
Characters (T. Jwɨr ŋjow 蔡搾) or the index in Vol. 1 of Sofronov’s grammar. Clauson himself mentioned that he had compiled the dictionary in 1937–1938 and deposited it at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), also sending a microfilm to Sofronov.

Clauson’s papers related to Tangut are currently kept in the SOAS Archives in seven thick notebook volumes. All volumes are titled “Hsi-hsia language”, and two of them in addition are also marked “Dictionary Part I” and “Dictionary Part II.” The material is diverse and includes a linguistic description of the language, lists of transliterations, notes and summaries of secondary literature (e.g. Luo Fuchang’s introduction to the Tangut language). The dictionary part has a note added to it in 1963 which claims that he had begun working on it in 1938. The two volumes of the dictionary number 441 pages, showing that this was a monumental work that would have made a significant contribution to Tangut studies had it ever been published. In terms of its breadth and erudition, it could only be compared to the two volumes of Nevsky’s Tangut Philology. Clauson probably felt that his work was still imperfect and this is why he never brought it to completion. Ironically, this parallels Nevsky’s work which was not published by the author himself but by later scholars who edited his papers long after his death. Even in its unfinished form, Nevsky’s work became a milestone in the history of Tangut studies, inspiring generations of scholars and laying down the foundations for a new field of study. Had Clauson finished his dictionary and analysis of Tangut, it would have no doubt made a similar impact on the field.

219 Grinstead 1972b, 30.
220 Clauson 1964, 55.
221 I am grateful to Nathan Hill for alerting me to the fact that Clauson’s Tangut material is still at the SOAS Archives.
222 Inserted into one of the notebooks are also some letters written to Clauson by Frederick W. Thomas (1867–1956), professor of Sanskrit at the University of Oxford, who published extensively on the Tibetan manuscripts acquired by Stein in Dunhuang and who at the time was working on the Nam and Zhangzhung languages, manuscripts of which (written with the Tibetan script) had been discovered in Dunhuang. In the letters, which date from the period of 1935–1936, Thomas compliments Clauson on making progress with the Tangut script and also mentions that he himself had tried his luck with it but had given it up. These letters testify to the fact that Clauson, and earlier Thomas, were working on the decipherment of Tangut at the same time as Nevsky.
2.3 From the 1950s onward

Russia (USSR)

Disrupted by Stalin’s purges and World War II, the study of Tangut language and texts entered a quiet period following the late 1930s and resumed only in the 1950s. The major “players” at this time were the USSR and Japan, as the newly established People’s Republic of China was still trying to solidify itself as a nation. Because the largest collection of Tangut material was in Leningrad, understandably, it was the USSR where Tangut studies emerged as an academic field during the 1950s–1960s. Although there have been individual scholars with important contributions in various countries (especially Japan), it was only in Russia that we find a group of specialists working systematically and consistently for several decades on key aspects of Tangut language and history. Moreover, most Russian “Tangutologists” worked together as a group, conducting research within the same institute on the same body of material, and their day-to-day interaction unquestionably provided additional stimulus for the advancement of the field, also resulting in a series of co-authored studies. In light of the above, we cannot but acknowledge that Tangut studies as a field of research owes its existence to the concentrated efforts of Soviet scholars from the mid-1950s onward.

In Leningrad, after Dragunov’s move to Moscow, work on the Kozlov collection was taken over by Zoya I. Gorbacheva (1907–1979), a sinologist trained as a historian. She worked on publicising the collection, drawing attention to the fact that no systematic work had been done on it for many years. She also pointed out the significance of the non-Buddhist material which was unparalleled in other collections around the world. She emphasized the need to continue efforts directed at the decipherment of the language and the creation of a Tangut-Russian dictionary. As part of her work on Tangut, she began publishing

223 The only scholar from among the important Tangut researchers of this period who worked in Moscow, rather than Leningrad, was Sofronov.
224 Thus when Eric Grinstead (1974, 38) wrote that “in the past fifteen years Tangut studies have become established as a proper discipline,” he was largely referring to the work of Russian scholars.
material from the Nevsky archives at the Institute of Oriental Studies, including Nevsky’s *Tangut Philology.*

The first preliminary catalogue of Tangut texts in the Kozlov collection came out in 1963 in a volume compiled by Gorbacheva and Kychanov. This was the result of the cumulative work of Russian scholars during the previous fifty years, combining descriptions completed by Nevsky, Dragunov, Gorbacheva and Kychanov. From the total 8,090 items in the collection, the cataloguers were able to identify about 3,000 texts, most of which was based on Nevsky’s identifications from the 1930s. Among the main issues was that of dating of the collection, and the “Preface” of the catalogue explicitly addresses this. Based on the paper money specimens recovered from the site, Kotwitz had believed that Khara-khoto was still inhabited during the period of 1287–1368. The authors of the catalogue, however, pointed out that the earliest date seen in texts from Khara-khoto was from 1085, and the latest ones were from the period of 1223–1227. Thus Kotwitz’s dating was not necessarily valid for manuscripts and printed books which seemed to contain only material from the last quarter of the 11th century to the first quarter of the 13th century. This time range corroborated the dating proposed by the sinologist Vsevolod N. Kazin (1907–1942) who had suggested that the earliest materials in Khara-khoto were from the 11th century. Thus Gorbacheva and Kychanov established that the date of the entire collection was different from the time of the sealing of the stupa in which Kozlov discovered the majority of the Tangut material, which probably happened during the last years of the Tangut state, perhaps in 1225, on the eve of the Mongol invasion.

The publication of Nevsky’s works and the catalogue of the Kozlov collection mark the beginning of a new era in Soviet Tangut studies. Among the important publications in the 1960s is a volume on Tangut translations of Chinese

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226 Gorbacheva 1956; Nevskij 1960. A detailed overview of Nevsky’s work was published by the French sinologist Paul Demiéville (1962) in *T’oung Pao.* The positive acclaim of these two volumes does not mean that it was not criticized by later scholars. Nishida (1964–1966, 522), for example, was quite critical of his work on a number of points, including him relying too heavily on Tangut lexicographic works, rather than using those to develop his own system.

227 Gorbacheva and Kychanov 1963.

228 Ibid., 17–18.

229 Kotvich 1909.


231 Kazin 1961. The author died at the age of 34 during the siege of Leningrad. His other study on the history of Khara-khoto was published only posthumously (Kazin 1990).

Confucian texts such as the *Analects of Confucius* (T. *Lji da*, 魯迅), the *Mencius* (T. *Miej tsə*, 桃隠) and the *Newly Translated Book of Filial Piety with Commentary* (T. *·Jị lhej ·wə̱ gjij dej*, 偽穎鑒贊髭) by Vsevolod S. Kolokolov (1896–1979) and Kychanov. Monographs dedicated to other texts, including facsimile copies of the originals, also came out around this time. Among these was a facsimile edition of the monolingual dictionary *Sea of Characters* with a translation and studies by leading Soviet scholars such as Ksenia B. Kepping (1937–2002), Kolokolov, Kychanov and Anatoly P. Terentiev-Katansky (1934–1998).

An important contribution to the linguistic reconstruction of Tangut was the two-volume grammar of the Tangut language compiled by the linguist Mikhail V. Sofronov. The first volume is a systematic description of the Tangut language, including the script, phonology, morphology and syntax. The second volume consists of a collection of material for the phonological reconstruction of the language, including transcriptions of Tangut words in other scripts and a list of about 6,000 Tangut characters. This was a continuation of Sofronov’s work on Tangut linguistics, which had begun with a book on Tangut phonology he co-authored with Kychanov.

Kepping wrote several important studies on Tangut grammar, including topics such as verbal prefixes, transitive verbs, a category of aspect, postpositions, and the incentive structure. Her major work in this respect was a monograph on the morphology of Tangut, which remains an important reference book even today. Simultaneously with working on the linguistic aspects of the language, she was also actively involved in studying specific texts, and these efforts resulted in the publication of several monographs. Among the most significant works in this regard was a study of the Tangut translation of the *Art of War of Sunzi with Three Commentaries* (T. *Swē tsə gja jwɨr sọ bjịj*, 春霸鬼見態形). She first began working on this text as part of her Ph.D., and over the years kept returning to it, until finally publishing a complete translation and study with facsimile copies of the original. In addition, she published facsimile editions of other important texts.

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234 Kepping et al. 1969.
235 Sofronov 1968.
236 Sofronov and Kychanov 1963. The authors also wrote a short overview of this work in English; see Sofronov and Kychanov 1965.
238 Kepping 1985.
239 Kepping 1967.
editions of the Tangut Forest of Categories (T. *Dijj bo 簡観*)\(^{241}\) and the Newly Collected Records of Compassion and Filiality (T. *Sjiw šiŋ njj wə̱ la mjј̃ ? 纏絵誌箆箆箋*).\(^{242}\) Kepping devoted her long and productive academic career almost exclusively to Tangut studies and remained an active researcher until her death in 2002.\(^{243}\)

The other important Russian Tangutologist was Kychanov who began studying Tangut history in the late 1950s and over the course of an academic career that lasted more than half a century authored over 300 publications.\(^{244}\) He made a unique contribution to the study of the history of the Tangut state and published translations and facsimile editions of several important texts from the Kozlov collection.\(^{245}\) Originally trained as a historian, Kychanov wrote a dissertation on the history of the Tangut state, a revised version of which was published as a monograph in 1968. This was the first comprehensive historiographical study that relied not only on Chinese but also on Tangut sources.\(^{246}\) Since at the time most Western scholars in the field were primarily interested in linguistic issues, this was a much-needed study that made Tangut history accessible to researchers of other areas. Using the framework of a chronological narrative, the book also discusses various aspects of Tangut culture, including literature, music, art and religion.

Besides his strictly academic publications, Kychanov was equally keen to popularize texts of the Kozlov collection and the research results of Russian scholars, making those accessible for general audiences. He authored popular articles and books on all aspects of Tangut culture, from the decipherment of the script to the life of Tangut emperors.\(^{247}\) In addition, he wrote popular books on Central Asian history in general, including one on Genghis khan and another

\(^{241}\) Kepping 1983.  
\(^{242}\) Kepping 1990.  
\(^{243}\) A volume with her partly unpublished last works was published posthumously as Kepping 2003. Having been born in Tianjin where her family was closely involved with the Russian Orthodox Mission, she also wrote a small number of publications on the history of the church (e.g. Kepping 2011). A couple of her articles on this topic were included in a recent volume on the history of the Beiguan mission (Aleksandrov 2006, 183–198).  
\(^{244}\) For a complete list of Kychanov’s publications, see Zajtsev 2012.  
\(^{246}\) Kychanov 1968. For book reviews, see Clauson 1969 and Nishida 1969.  
\(^{247}\) One of his best known books on the discovery of Khara-khoto and the decipherment of the Tangut script is Kychanov 1965.
one on Galdan Boshoktu-khan. Kychanov also made a contribution to cataloguing the Tangut materials kept in Leningrad. Besides the inventory compiled early in his career with Gorbacheva, he worked for years on identifying and describing the Buddhist texts in the collection. The work was done in collaboration with Kyoto University and the results came out in 1999 as a large catalogue of over 600 pages. This was the first complete catalogue of Buddhist texts in the Kozlov collection and, considering the high proportion of Buddhist writings in the surviving body of Tangut material, it was a major step towards the study of the entire collection. Finally, Kychanov also put his name down in the history of Tangut lexicography by compiling a new Tangut dictionary. The dictionary contains 5,803 Tangut characters as main entries and includes a large number of binoms or phrases. The Tangut words and phrases are translated not only into Chinese but also Russian and English, thereby making the dictionary a useful tool also for those not able to read Chinese.

Another Russian scholar, who became involved Tangut studies in the early 1980s, was Anatoly P. Terentiev-Katansky. A gifted artist and drawer who often made sketches of his colleagues while working in the Library of the Oriental Institute, he was most interested in material culture and especially the history of the book. His first monograph was devoted to the history of the Tangut book and was significant not only for Tangut but also for East Asian studies in general. This work provides a detailed discussion of book forms, dating issues, illustrations, peculiarities of textual material, and attempts to reconstruct some of the social aspects related to the production and use of books in Khara-khoto. All in all, this is a valuable and interesting work with a great deal of concrete information that is useful for all those working with the history of the book, regardless of the cultural context.

Almost a decade later, Terentiev-Katansky came out with another book on the history of the book in Central Asia and China, in which he discussed topics such as the invention and spread of paper, writing utensils and ink, or the histo-

249 Gorbacheva and Kychanov 1963.
250 Kychanov 1999.
251 Kychanov 2006. The dictionary was prepared with collaboration with the Japanese linguist Arakawa Shintarō 荒川慎太郎.
252 Terent’ev-Katanskiij 1981. This book was later translated into Chinese with the title Xixia shuji ye 西夏書籍業 (Terent’ev-Katanskiij 2000).
ry of book forms.\textsuperscript{253} He devoted a separate chapter to the various types of scripts (i.e. Chinese, Khitan, Tangut, Jurchen, Syriac, Manichaean, Sogdian, Uyghur, Mongolian, Runic, Arabic and Tibetan) developed and used in Central Asia. In another chapter he discussed the invention of printing and its use among the different cultures of Central Asia. Much like the author’s previous monograph, this is a fascinating study which considers the history of the book throughout the entire Chinese and Central Asian domain, rather than in the usual monocultural context. From the point of view Tangut studies, this book is significant because it places the Tangut book in a wider context, integrating it with the history of other literate cultures in the region.

Besides the material aspects of Tangut culture, Terentiev-Katansky was also interested in how this culture was reflected in the Tangut language. He tried to merge the material and lexical approaches in his next monograph on the material culture of the Tangut state.\textsuperscript{254} The book attempts to reconstruct the material culture of the Tanguts (i.e. clothing, weapons, domestic tools, food, architectural structures) by combining information available from Chinese sources with that in Tangut lexicographic works and surviving examples of Tangut pictorial art. A similar project was the publication of the facsimile edition of a text called \textit{Mixed Signs of the Three Parts of the Universe} (\textit{Sọ rjiř dji dza} \\ 教恃妖偸), which Terentiev-Katansky co-authored with Sofronov.\textsuperscript{255}

\section*{Japan}

As discussed above, Tangut studies matured into a proper academic field during the 1950s–1960s as a result of the efforts of a group of Soviet scholars working on the Kozlov collection in Leningrad. While Russia was unquestionably the leader in the field, Japan followed closely behind, which was particularly noteworthy considering the fact that the country possessed almost no collections of Tangut materials—at least not original ones. What they had, however, were photographs and dedicated scholars. Japanese researchers were extremely active in the field and we can only mention here the most important figures.

\textsuperscript{253} Terent’ev-Katanskij 1990.
\textsuperscript{254} Terent’ev-Katanskij 1993. This book was translated into Chinese as \textit{Xixia wuzhi wenhua} 西夏物質文化 (Terent’ev-Katanskij 2006).
\textsuperscript{255} Terent’ev-Katanskij and Sofronov 2002. The English title given here is based on the Russian translation, translating the term \textit{sọ rjiř} 教恃 (Ch. \textit{sAncai} 三才) as “the three parts of the universe.”
In Japan, from the 1950s onward there was a general fascination with the Silk Road, including Dunhuang and the forgotten empire of the Tanguts. The success of popular historical novels about the Silk Road by the celebrated novelist Inoue Yasushi 井上靖 (1907–1991) are a testimony to this interest. The most famous of these was the 1959 bestseller novel *Tonkō 敦煌* (i.e. Dunhuang), which saw many editions and was also turned into a TV drama shortly after its appearance.²⁵⁶ Subsequently, it was also translated into several languages, including English.²⁵⁷ The story retells the adventures of a young man called Zhao Xingde 趙行德 (spelled Chao Hsing-te in the English translation) who arrives in the Song capital Kaifeng 開封 in 1026 to take the Palace Examinations but misses his opportunity because he falls asleep while waiting for his turn. Having his immediate dreams shattered, he decides to go to the land of the Tanguts and learn their mysterious writing system. After a series of adventures he manages to do this in the Tangut capital Xingqing 興慶 and even compiles a Chinese-Tangut dictionary.²⁵⁸ In the end, amidst the war raging between the Tanguts and Chinese, the Uyghurs and Tibetans, Xingde seals off the Buddhist scrolls of the Dunhuang monasteries in a small cave at the Thousand Buddha Caves near the city, in order to save them from the imminent Tangut attack on Dunhuang.²⁵⁹ The novel was a major success and in 1988 it was made into a major motion picture by director Satō Junya 佐藤純彌 and subsequently screened in many countries around the world.²⁶⁰ The phenomenon sometimes called “Silk Road fever” in Japan was further intensified by the release of the extremely popular NHK TV series *Silk Road* in 1980 and 1983.²⁶¹

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²⁵⁶ Inoue 1959.
²⁵⁸ This is the famous bilingual dictionary *Pearl in the Palm* from the Kozlov collection, for which Inoue thus provided a fictional background.
²⁵⁹ This fictional story is based on the assumption held by Paul Pelliot and some later scholars that the Dunhuang library cave had been sealed on the eve of the Tangut invasion of Dunhuang. This explanation, however, is no longer tenable as the closing of the library cave around 1006 predates the Tangut occupation by at least three decades. For a discussion of the reasons for sealing the cave, see Rong 2013, 131–136; van Schaik and Galambos 2012, 26–28.
²⁶⁰ The Japanese version of the film followed the novel's original title (*Tonkō 敦煌*) but in English it was distributed as *The Silk Road*.
²⁶¹ Nagasawa 1992, 51. The author explains how a trend was turned into a fever by mass media and how this affected academic research. For the use of the term “Silk Road fever” in the West, see, for example, a newspaper article in the *Los Angeles Times* (24 April, 1988) which ran with the title “Exposition celebrating ancient Route opens today: Japan’s ‘Silk Road Fever’ hits all-time high.”
During the 1950s–1960s, when Tangut studies was booming in Russia, Japan once again began to carve out a piece of the field. Parallel with Sofronov’s work on the reconstruction of Tangut grammar and its phonetic system, the Japanese scholar Nishida Tatsuo 西田龍雄 (1928–2012) of Kyoto University also began his research on the Tangut language, starting on a long and productive academic career. Nishida himself became involved with Tangut by being a student of Ishihama Jun'itarō and thus indirectly grew out of Nevsky’s school. Nishida started working on Tangut texts from the mid-1950s, about the same time as Gorbacheva and Kychanov in Leningrad. He first did a study of the Tangut inscriptions at Juyongguan as part of a collaborative project led by Murata Jirō 村田治郎 (1895–1985) and Fujieda Akira 藤枝晃 (1911–1998) of Kyoto University.262 Following this, Nishida’s main aim became the reconstruction of the Tangut language, especially its phonology.

One of Nishida’s early books was a two-volume study of the Tangut language.263 The first volume was devoted to the phonological structure of Tangut, whereas the second discussed topics such as the script, grammar and the Buddhist canon. Included as appendices were a dictionary of about 3,000 Tangut characters and a ninety-plus-page English summary of the book for those who do not read Japanese. The book, which came out before Sofronov’s 1967 grammar of Tangut, was a major contribution to the field and at the time represented the cutting edge of research. In Kychanov’s appraisal, it was “unquestionably a breakthrough in Tangut studies.”264 Even though the phonetic reconstructions of Nishida and Sofronov relied on more or less the same material, the two systems were quite different.

Nishida was a prolific scholar and produced a great number of publications related to Tangut studies. Among the most important ones were his three-volume study of the Tangut translation of the Flower Garland sutra265 and his series of studies, published in instalments, on the Tangut version of the Lotus sutra.266 Yet another important contribution was his study of the Tangut ritual Poem of Monthly Pleasures (T. Lhjị lhjị bie̱j dzjo 嚠嚠亟洋), in which he advanced

262 The results of the project came out in two magnificent folio-size with complete photographs and detailed examinations of each of the six inscriptions; Murata and Fujieda 1955–1957.
264 Kychanov 2012a, 86.
the theory that the poem used two different kinds of linguistic registers of the Tangut language.267

Like many leading Japanese scholars, Nishida was also active in producing semi-popular books for the general readership, making the results of Tangut studies accessible to non-specialists. His books centred around the romantic theme of deciphering ancient writing systems and the discovery of forgotten civilisation along the Silk Road.268 Although none of these books were translated into European languages, they have been quite successful in Japan and the name of the Tangut state and its unique writing system is not entirely unfamiliar for Japanese readers.

Another Japanese linguist temporarily involved in Tangut studies during the first half of the 1960s was Hashimoto Mantarō 橋本萬太郎 (1932–1987) who had studied and taught in both Japan and the United States. While still in graduate school, he published his research on Tangut lexicography and the language’s phonological system.269 In later years, however, Hashimoto’s interests turned away from Tangut studies and he instead worked on other languages and dialects spoken in China and Taiwan.

In the field of history, we have Okazaki Seirō 岡崎精郎 (1920–1993) who began researching Tangut history at Kyoto Imperial University during World War II. His dissertation was on the development of Dangxiang tribes during the Tang, which was eventually published as a monograph in a slightly modified form in 1947.270 Okazaki also worked on the Tangut legal code,271 as well as on Tangut contacts with neighbouring states, especially the Uyghurs.272 An important work incorporating three decades of research was a monograph on the history of the Tangut state which came out only three years after Kychanov’s 1968 book on Tangut history.273 Okazaki was a productive researcher and until the late 1980s he authored about twenty different studies related to the history of the Tangut state.

Maeda Masana 前田正名 (1921–1984) of Komazawa University worked on the history and historical geography of the Hexi region. Although not involved in the study of the Tangut language, he published a number of studies that were

270 Okazaki 1947.
271 Okazaki 1968.
devoted to, or at least touched upon, Tangut history, dealing with issues such as the travel route bypassing the Hexi corridor during the Xixia period or the peculiarities of Tangut military jurisdictions. All of these studies, and many more, were included in his monograph on the historical geography of the Hexi region. Almost three decades later the book was also published in Chinese, which demonstrates its lasting value.

From the mid-1970s, the Buddhist scholar Matsuzawa Hiroshi 松澤博 (originally publishing as Nomura Hiroshi 野村博) worked on a variety of subjects related to Tangut studies, including the Tangut Buddhist canon, economic documents related to grain loans or land purchase. He is one of the few scholars of this generation who remains an active researcher to this day, identifying and deciphering ever new documents and fragments. Recently, he has been working on the Tangut fragments at various collections worldwide, drawing attention to the significance of hitherto unrecognised Buddhist fragments. In addition, he continues to work on historical topics related to the Tangut state.

**China**

After the initial momentum of Tangut studies during the 1910s–1930s, China as a country went through turbulent years and the chaotic conditions had a detrimental effect on academic research. Although sporadic publications related to Tangut occasionally appeared in academic journals, these could not compete with the new wave of scholarship in Russia and Japan. Chinese researchers could only begin to work in earnest towards the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). When research finally began again, it was scholars of the old generation who led the way. Wang Jingru, by this time an old man of over 70, had suffered severe criticism during the Cultural Revolution but was among the first to revive the field, reporting on the newly discovered Tangut manuscripts

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274 Maeda 1959, 1961, respectively.  
275 Maeda 1964.  
276 Qiantian 1993.  
279 Nomura 1979b, 1979c.  
282 Luo Zhenyu’s youngest son Luo Fuyi was yet another member of the old generation who suffered severely during the Cultural Revolution.
and woodblock prints.\textsuperscript{283} In 1962, before the Cultural Revolution, Wang Jingru had led a small group of young scholars on a field survey to study the Tangut inscriptions at the Dunhuang and Yulin caves, and with time several participants of this project grew into prominent scholars, including Li Fanwen 李範文, Shi Jinbo 史金波, Bai Bin 白濱 and Chen Bingying 陳炳應.\textsuperscript{284} Unfortunately, this promising start was soon interrupted and the field had to wait for another decade and a half until research could resume.

As a result of unfavourable conditions, there was a prolonged hiatus between the pre-war period and the second half of the century, and scholars of the new generation to a large extent had to develop their own skills, rather than being able to learn the rigours of research from the previous generation. Up to the 1970s, Chinese publications essentially consisted of general studies concerning the history of the Tangut state, which for the most part did not utilise excavated texts written in Tangut.\textsuperscript{285} Occasional discoveries of Tangut materials—such as the Buddhist texts found in the 1950s at the Tiantishan caves 天梯山石窟 near the city of Wuwei—remained unstudied for decades.

Among the influential scholars of the new generation was the linguist Li Fanwen whose interest in Tangut began in 1960 when he moved to Yinchuan 銀川 (Ningxia) to learn the language. After about a decade of studying on his own, in 1973 he was sent to Beijing where he had a chance to learn from long-time veteran Luo Fuyi through whom he gained access to new materials unavailable elsewhere. He had completed the first draft of his monumental Tangut-Chinese dictionary by 1976 but at the time it was rejected by reviewers. He continued his research on the language and from the late 1970s on published a range of articles, in the meantime also improving his dictionary. The dictionary eventually came out in 1997, after more than thirty years of work.\textsuperscript{286} Its publication was an important step in Tangut studies and made texts written in Tangut much more accessible.

Another important figure in Chinese Tangut studies is Shi Jinbo, one of Wang Jingru’s former students. Similar to Kychanov, he is one of the few scholars who made contributions in nearly every discipline related to Tangut studies,

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{283} Wang 1974; the report was about the material discovered in 1972 in Wuwei. Almost a decade later, Wang also wrote a brief introduction to the phonetic system of Tangut; see Wang 1982.
\bibitem{284} Zhang and Huang 2010, 78. Because of the adverse political conditions in China during the following years, a report of this field trip and its academic results was published only twenty-six years later by Bai Bin and Shi Jinbo (Bai and Shi 1983).
\bibitem{285} \textit{Ibid.}, 77.
\bibitem{286} Li 1997.
\end{thebibliography}
including linguistics, history, religion, material culture, art history, philology and lexicography. From the mid-1970s he began publishing on newly discovered materials, such as the Tangut texts from Wuwei or the stone pillar inscriptions at Baoding 保定. From 1973 Shi was also involved in cataloguing and organising the Tangut collection of Beijing Library which in the 1930s had acquired a group of Buddhist texts discovered in Lingwu. In time, Shi authored a long series of monographs and academic articles on such diverse topics as lexicography, culture or Buddhism. He continues active research on Tangut matters to this day.

Other scholars in the field around this time were Bai Bin, Huang Zhenhua 黃振華 and Chen Bingying who, like Shi Jinbo, worked on a wide range of topics. Up until the late 1970s, Chinese scholars were mainly concerned with Tangut materials that had been kept in China, as they had limited access to the collections in other countries. But with time their attention turned to the impressive achievements of Soviet scholars and they made an attempt to involve these in their own research. Unfortunately, Sino-Soviet relations soon deteriorated and even academic publications often had a political edge. For example, in 1978 Huang Zhenhua published an overview of post-war Tangut studies in the Soviet Union, in which he sharply criticised the work of Soviet scholars on many points. Yet in the same year, he and Bai Bin translated the catalogue of the Kozlov collection of Tangut texts compiled by Gorbacheva and Kychanov, which, even as an internal publication, played an important role in the development of Tangut studies in China.

The new wave of Tangut studies in China naturally was not without a nationalistic side. It became a matter of national pride that Tangut studies should be developed in China, and the fact that Russian and Japanese scholars were dominating the field was a bit of an embarrassment. The same was also true retrospectively with regards to the beginnings of Tangut studies and it became important to emphasise that the first person who recognized the Tangut script

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287 Shi 1974.
289 Huang 1978. While this unfriendly assessment of the work of Soviet colleagues should be understood against the background of the political situation at the time, it nevertheless had a powerful impact on the lives of those involved. See, for example, Kychanov remembering this event nearly forty years later in an interview, specifically mentioning Huang Zhenhua’s article and an anonymous one in the bulletin of Wuhan University (Kychanov 2012b, 19–20).
290 Zhang and Huang 2010, 79. Kychanov (2012b, 19) also remembers that when he finally had a chance to visit Lanzhou and Yinchuan, he was surprised to see that translations of his books and those of his colleagues circulated internally.
was not Devéria, as it was commonly asserted at the time, but native scholars such as Liu Qingyuan and Zhang Shu.\footnote{Bai 1983, Niu 1983 and 1993. Later on, regional nationalism also came into the picture and an emphasis was placed on the contribution of Tanguts to East Asian civilisation or the development of printing. See, for example, Niu 1994 on how the Tanguts were the first to use wooden movable type.}

This was also the time when similar emotions were fuelling Dunhuang studies, which had been likewise built on materials excavated and taken abroad by foreign explorers and, as a result, was dominated by Japanese and Western scholars. A telling example of the general sensitivity at the time is the public outrage following the alleged statement made by Fujieda Akira, the leading scholar of Dunhuang manuscripts in post-war Japan, who supposedly said during a lecture he gave at Nankai University that “Dunhuang is in China but Dunhuang studies is in Japan (or, according to another version, in Kyoto).” These words apparently touched a nerve and swiftly spread across the country, infuriating Chinese academics and providing additional impetus to the newly developing field.\footnote{This claim generated much resentment and its circumstances are still debated in both academia and the popular media. For sober discussions of this episode, as well as several other nationally sensitive issues in Dunhuang studies, see Rong 2005 and Liu 2007.} With time it became clear that Fujieda never made such a claim and these were the words of the Chinese scholar who introduced him to the audience. Still, these words are still remembered with indignation.

An influential figure in Tangut studies in China is the linguist Nie Hongyin 聶鴻音 who began working on Tangut phonology from the mid-1980s. In addition to Tangut books, he has also studied the Chinese-language material found at Khara-khoto, recognising their significance for the study of the local Chinese dialect and Tangut phonology. Although phonology remained one of the main directions of his research, with time Nie significantly expanded his scope of interest and studied a wide range of topics, including history, lexicography, education, literacy, literature and epigraphy. He also wrote books and articles for popular readership and continues to be a prolific researcher to this day.\footnote{One of his popular books on the history of the Khitan, Tangut and Jurchen states in northern China is Nie 1992.}

**Taiwan**

Among the influential scholars in the field was the Taiwanese linguist Gong Hwang-cherng 龔煌城 (1934–2010) who worked on the phonetic reconstruction
of Tangut. He became interested in Tangut studies through studying Chinese historical phonology, and this largely determined the direction of his research. Pointing out the existence of phonological alternations in Tangut, Gong proposed an improved reconstruction over the systems of Nishida and Sofronov. Although he was also interested in the origin and structure of the Tangut script, his legacy today is primarily his phonological research.

Another Taiwanese linguist who joined the ranks of Tangutologists is Lin Ying-chin 林英津 of Academia Sinica. She began her career working on Chinese dialectology but from the early 1990s became involved in Tangut philology and linguistics. Her first major work was a two-volume study of the Tangut translation of the Chinese military text *The Art of War of Sunzi*, which was in many ways an improvement over Kepping’s book published nearly three decades earlier. It provided a careful reading and annotation of every single character and thereby made the process of interpretation much more transparent for the reader. Lin worked on a wide variety of texts, ranging from military treatises and other secular works to Tangut translations of Buddhist literature. She remains an active researcher who continues publishing on various aspects of Tangut grammar.

**Europe**

Although the British Museum boasted the second largest Tangut collection in the world, Britain was never blessed with an abundance of outstanding Tangut scholars. Nevertheless, the boom of Tangut studies that began in Russia in the 1960s also had an effect on British scholarship. In particular, it was Eric D. Grin-

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294 For an overview and assessment of Gong’s scholarship, see Tsu-Lin Mei’s eulogy (Mei 2010).
297 In 2002, not long before his retirement, Academia Sinica republished Gong’s papers related to Tangut studies as a single volume (Gong 2002).
300 Kepping did not present an analysis of the Tangut text, only provided a Russian translation from which it was often difficult to see her understanding of particular sentences, not to speak of individual phrases or characters.
301 An example of her work on Buddhist texts is a comprehensive study of a Buddhist text called *Śījī ·wə̱ gju̱ rjur ·jij mji̱j zjɨr ɣej tshjɨ̱* 僧伽紈紕杉剳夙諂矯, a translation of the Chinese *Shengmiao jixiang zhenshi ming jing* 聖妙吉祥真實名經; see Lin 2006.
instead of the British Museum who worked on the Tangut collection acquired by Stein. He was Assistant Keeper in the Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts from 1957 until 1968. As a memento of the early days of Tangut studies in Britain, the British Library (where the entire Stein collection was transferred following the split of the Library and the Museum in 1973) still has a box with Tangut index cards created by Grinstead when he was only learning Tangut (Fig. 6).

![Fig. 6: Grinstead's index cards for his Tangut studies. (The British Library.)](image)

In turning to Tangut texts, like many others, Grinstead was inspired by the 1960 publication of Nevsky's *Tangut Philology*. An equally important influence was Gerard Clauson whom Grinstead knew personally and whose unpublished dictionary he admired. Grinstead’s initial work on Tangut primarily revolved around the Stein collection in the British Museum and he was able to identify Tangut translations of Chinese texts, including the *General’s Garden* or the

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302 I am grateful to Chris Lazenby and David Bone of the British Museum for clarifying for me the details of Grinstead’s position and dates at the Museum.

303 I came across this box entirely by accident as I was looking through the Tangut fragments in the strong room in 2009. Since then, it has been catalogued and is now officially part of the library holdings.

304 Grinstead 1961, 85.
From the 1950s onward

Dragon King of the Sea.305 His next project, already after leaving the British Museum and taking up a position at the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies in Copenhagen, was more ambitious in scope and resulted in the publication of a nine-volume facsimile collection of Tangut Buddhist texts under the title Tangut Tripitaka.306 The series was made from photographs which had been given during his visit to Russia and China to Dr Raghu Vira (1902–1963), a linguist and close friend of Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964).307 Thus the texts came from the Institute of Oriental Studies in Leningrad and the Beijing Library, the majority of which had been inaccessible to the outside world. Initially Dr Lokesh Chandra had approached Kychanov in St. Petersburg with the idea of publishing the Buddhist material collected by his father but Kychanov felt himself “inadequate for such a work” and recommended Grinstead instead.308 This is how Grinstead and the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies became involved in the publication.

Grinstead also published a book-length study of the Tangut script.309 Besides a theoretical study of the typology of the script, the book provides a list of Tangut characters arranged according to meaning, pronunciation, and the Tangut telecode system devised on the basis of the four-corner method. This telecode system was the first encoding initiative proposed for Tangut, even though it never caught on.310 The English-Tangut wordlist was the first of its kind as it provided a convenient index to look up Tangut characters according to their meaning, rather than the usual radical-type indices. The book also provided facsimile reproductions of the Tangut manuscript of the Classic of Filial Piety, the cursive characters of which Grinstead transcribed in a non-cursive script.

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305 Grinstead 1962 and 1967, respectively.
307 Grinstead 1972a. Dr Raghu Vira visited the Institute of Oriental Studies in Leningrad in 1956 and an order was given personally by Nikita S. Khrushchev to assist him in collecting microfilms of rare Buddhist manuscripts, including Tangut texts from the Kozlov collection (Kychanov 2012a, 84). Later on, the photographs were in the care of Dr Raghu Vira’s son Dr Lokesh Chandra.
310 Cook 2007, 1. Even after the publication of his book Grinstead continued to work on his telecode system and remained strongly convinced that it was essential for the field to devise “a working transcription that can be accommodated to the typewriter and the linotype machine” (Grinstead 1974, 41).
His readings of cursive Tangut characters are useful even today, as manuscripts written in a cursive hand are notoriously hard to decipher.

The new wave of Russian Tangut studies and the publication of Nevsky’s posthumous works also revived Clauson’s interest in his unfinished *Skeleton Dictionary*. Yet after several years of additional editing, he gave up the project because he felt that “a profound study of Tangut was impossible without, if not a profound, at any rate a good knowledge of Chinese, Tibetan and, if possible, some Hsifan languages,” in which respect he felt himself lacking. Consequently, he deposited the incomplete work at the library of SOAS, thereby making it available for those who wanted to use it. From this point on, although he abandoned active work on the dictionary, he continued to monitor the developments in the field.

Even though during this period there were no Tangut specialists in France, a number of researchers produced works relevant to Tangut history or literature. Among these was Wu Chi-yü (Wu Qiyu 吳其昱; 1915/1919–2011), a Chinese-born scholar who worked in Paris from 1948 and was a specialist of medieval manuscripts from Dunhuang and Central Asia. Relying on published fragments of the Tangut translation of the *Analects of Confucius*, he was able to identify the Chinese source text as the *Lunyu quanjie* 論語全解 composed by the Song scholar Chen Xiangdao 陳祥道 (d. 1093). Another scholar marginally involved with Tangut studies was the German-born French Tibetologist Rolf Alfred Stein (1911–1999) whose interests included historical geography. He worked on various aspects of Tangut history based on Tibetan sources. Among his contributions was, for example, the identification of the Tibetan toponym Mi-ñag with the Tanguts.

From the mid-1980s onward, the linguist George van Driem of the University of Bern (Switzerland), whose main field of research was the languages of the Himalayan region, also became involved with Tangut research. He did research on the ethnogenesis of the Tanguts and later became interested in linguistic

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311 Clauson 1964, 77. “Hsifan” (i.e. Xifan 西蕃) is a collective label used for ethnic minorities in Sichuan, Yunnan and Qinghai, most of whom belong to the Qiangic group of Tibeto-Burman languages. For a general description of the term, see Wellens 2012.
312 Clauson published a review of Tangut studies (Clauson 1964) and later on a couple of book reviews (Clauson 1969 and 1973).
313 Kolokolov and Kychanov 1966.
314 Wu 1969.
315 Stein 1966.
316 Stein 1951.
issues, especially the Tibetan transcriptions of Tangut characters. We know that he was working together with Kepping on a joint book that would have gathered together and indexed the available corpus of Tibetan transcriptions of Tangut characters but this publication never materialised. He also published a fascinating article on the rediscovery of the Tangut manuscripts that had disappeared at the time of Nevsky’s arrest in 1937.

Naturally there were also other European scholars, such as Joseph van Hecken, Kamil Sedláček, and Mária Ferenczy, whose research interests and publications touched upon the Tangut language or the history of the Tangut state. A complete list, however, would lead us beyond the scope of this overview.

United States

From the second half of the 1970s, the Belgian scholar Luc Kwanten, who at the time was teaching in the United States, produced a number of studies related to Tangut studies. His interests lay in the study of the Tangut script and language, and he published several articles on these subjects, some of which led to controversy. He proposed, for example, that Tangut might be an Altaic language, rather than Tibeto-Burman as it has been generally assumed since Laufer. He also argued that Tangut characters could represent multiple syllables, similar to how Chinese could be read in Japan, where the characters had multisyllabic native readings in addition to a received Chinese reading. Both of these theories were criticized by linguists who insisted that the Tangut language belonged to the Tibeto-Burman family and that the characters of the script were monosyllabic. Nevertheless, Kwanten’s arguments pointed out a number of problems in the conventional understanding of the language and the script, and at the same time raised interesting issues that had been largely ignored by the linguistic

319 A monograph by the title The Phonology of Tangut: Concordance and Analysis of the Tibetan Transcriptions of Tangut Ideograms is marked as forthcoming in van Driem and Kepping 1991, 152. Among the documentation related to the Tangut collection is also an outline of a proposed book, including a table of contents, with the title Tangut Civilisation and Language, which was going to be written by van Driem and Kepping.
320 van Driem 1993. According to van Driem, these manuscripts were recovered from the KGB archives, rather than a colleague’s library as maintained by the “official” version of the story.
community. As part of his research on Tangut language, Kwanten published a facsimile edition of the famous bilingual glossary *Pearl in the Palm* based on the photographs made during a visit to Leningrad in the late 1970s. This was an important contribution to the field because the glossary, as Kwanten pointed out himself, was uniquely significant for the decipherment of the Tangut language, and yet had never been published in its complete form. Kwanten remained active in Tangut studies until the late 1980s.

An active researcher in Anglophone academia from the early 1980s was the American scholar Ruth W. Dunnell who produced an array of studies dealing with various aspects of Tangut history. One of her contributions is the chapter on the Tangut state in the *Cambridge History of China*, which was the first thorough and coherent historical overview of the Tangut state in English. Later on, Dunnell published a book about on the Chinese-Tangut bilingual stele discovered in Liangzhou in the early 19th century where she presents a detailed analysis of this difficult inscription and used it as a starting point to examine the formation of the Tangut state and the role of Buddhism in this process.

Finally, among the scholars who contributed to Tangut studies while working at institutions throughout the United States we should also mention Scott DeLancey, a linguist at the University of Oregon, who worked on Tangut from the early 1980s as part of his general research in the field of Tibeto-Burman languages.

### 2.4 The late 1990s and after

During the 1990s, China overtook Russia and Japan and gradually became the leading power in Tangut studies. By this time, the older generation of researchers had reached senior positions in well-respected institutions and had a chance to raise their own students. In the meantime, state support persisted and as a result of the rapidly growing Chinese economy and pro-minorities policies, the

324 Kwanten 1982b. See also Kychanov 2012a, 87.
325 Although a Chinese edition of the glossary came out later as a separate book in Yinchuan in 1989 (*Fan-Han heshi zhongzhong zhu* 番漢合時掌中珠), to date there is no complete Russian edition. In an article written almost a decade later, Kepping referred to Kwanten's book as an "unauthorized" edition of the dictionary (Kepping 1991, 3).
327 Dunnell 1996. For a review article, see Kepping 1998; for a more recent book review, see Barrett 1997.
328 DeLancey 1983.
new millennium brought about additional growth in Tangut studies. From this point on, it is impossible to list all of those who contributed to the field and a comprehensive bibliography would fill a separate book. We can, however, see that research has essentially been proceeding along three main directions, which in a sense exemplify the relevance of the Tangut language and culture within the wider disciplines of social sciences and humanities. The first direction is unquestionably linguistics, as it has been the case ever since the beginning of the 20th century. The main points of interest are the Tibeto-Burman connections of Tangut and its phonetic system, yet there are also topics such as the nature of the Tangut script or techniques of translation. Representative scholars of this direction (in alphabetical order) include Arakawa Shintarō, Chang Peichih 楊佩琪, Duan Yuquan 段玉泉, Gong Hwang-cherng, Guillaume Jacques, Han Xiaomang 韓小忙, Ikeda Takumi 池田巧, Lin Ying-chin, Nie Hongyin, Ksenia Kepping, Osada Natsuki 長田夏樹, Peng Xiangqian 澎向前, Shi Jinbo, Sun Bojun 孫伯君 and Sun Hongkai 孫宏開.\footnote{Some of the names listed here appear in more than one category as these scholars did research on topics that cross disciplinary boundaries.}

The other main direction is the study of economic documents and history in general. Among scholars working on various aspects of such research we find Du Jianlu 杜建錄, Evgeny Kychanov, Li Huarui 李華瑞, Niu Dasheng 牛達生, Ono Hiroko 小野裕子, Satō Takayasu 佐藤貴保 and Shi Jinbo. The Xixia yanjuyuan 西夏研究院 (Tangut Academy) at Ningxia University is also primarily devoted to the study of Tangut history and culture.

Finally, the third major avenue of research is the study of Buddhist texts, which gives justice to the fact that most of the surviving Tangut books are handwritten or printed copies of Buddhist texts. Scholars working on this topic include Nie Hongyin, Kirill Solonin, Shen Weirong 沈衛榮 and Sun Bojun. One of the main places for such research is Renmin University of China, where several scholars and graduate students work on Tangut Buddhist texts and study the contribution of the Tanguts to the spread and development of Buddhism.

The boom of Tangut studies in China involved not only researchers but also funding agencies and academic publishers. From the mid 1990s, major Chinese academic publishers began collaborating with overseas holding institutions to publish large hard-bound volumes with good quality facsimile reproductions of Tangut and Chinese texts discovered at Khara-khoto and other sites.\footnote{Eluosi kexueyuan dongfang yanjiusuo shengbidao fensuo et al. 1996–; Xibei di’er minzu xueyuan et al. 2005; Xibei di’er minzu xueyuan et al. 2007; Ningxia daxue Xixia xueyanjiu zhongxin et al. 2005–2007; Wu and Huangchuan 2011.} The vol-
umes with the collections in Russia, Britain, France, Japan and China amount to a small library and are offered at prices ordinary libraries can no longer afford. The largest of these collections is that in Russia, of which to date twenty volumes have been published, and more are on the way.

In addition to the paper editions with facsimile reproductions, high quality images of Tangut materials have been continuously made available online, especially through the website of the International Dunhuang Project (IDP). The main site and the database behind it is at the British Library but there are mirror sites in other languages physically hosted at partner institutions around the world. At the moment the site can be accessed in Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean and Russian. Although the Tangut material is only part of the much larger pool of digital images, it steadily increases in volume as funding for the digitisation and conservation of additional fragments is becoming available.

Compared to the long history of Chinese philological tradition, Tangut studies is a relatively new field that emerged only following the archaeological discoveries at the beginning of the 20th century. In this respect, the origins of the field are analogous to those of Dunhuang studies which also owes its birth to discoveries made by foreign explorers in north-western China around the same time. A central figure in this respect was Aurel Stein, who acquired manuscripts at both Dunhuang and Khara-khoto. In both cases, Chinese academic circles were alerted to these discoveries and realised the significance of the new material far too late, only managing to keep the remaining part in China. But preventing archaeological material from being taken out of the country did not automatically guarantee its safety and protection. A well known example of the potential problems is the case of the remaining Dunhuang manuscripts which were sent to Beijing in 1910 on the orders of the Qing Ministry of Education, yet suffered serious losses en route to the capital and during their storage at the Metropolitan Library.

Because both the Dunhuang manuscripts and the Tangut books from Khara-khoto were first discovered and excavated by foreigners, most of these materials were deposited in foreign institutions around the world. The majority of

331 <http://idp.bl.uk>.

332 It is an often-told story how manuscripts were stolen on the way to Beijing and how later longer manuscripts were torn into smaller pieces—sometimes as many as 15—to make up for the missing items and complete their total count (Rong 2013, 17–18). In addition, a large number of manuscripts were stolen after their arrival in the capital by Li Shengduo 李盛鐸, Liu Tingchen 劉廷琛 and other officials, and most of these found their way into Japanese collections after the death of their owners (ibid., 506–508).
Dunhuang manuscripts ended up in Britain, France, Russia and Japan, whereas the Khara-khoto material was shipped to Russia and Britain. Chinese collections typically contain material from subsequent discoveries but their number continues to grow as ever new items are unearthed at various sites on the former territory of the Tangut state.

Because of foreign initiatives in the exploration of the sites and the ensuing dispersal of the material, from the beginning both Dunhuang and Tangut studies emerged as an international fields of research. Tangut studies was born in the 1910s–1920s in Russia and to a smaller extent in Japan, with limited Chinese participation. Until the 1980s Russia and Japan retained their leading position when Chinese scholars gradually began catching up with them. By the new millennium China took a leading role, and this trend is expected to continue as more resources are allocated for academic research.

Yet because of its history, Tangut studies remains a thoroughly international field which requires a good knowledge of the main languages used in secondary scholarship. In addition to Chinese, one should be able to read academic literature written in Russian, Japanese, English and, to a lesser extent, French and German. Knowledge of other Tibeto-Burman languages, such as Tibetan, is a plus. Finally, in addition to having so many languages in one’s linguistic repertoire, one should ideally have a thorough training in linguistics or history. These prerequisites make Tangut studies a difficult field to enter and, as a result, despite the large number of surviving material surprisingly few researchers are able to actually read them. We may remember that Gerard Clauson gave up the idea of pursuing research in the field because he did not possess the necessary skills for this. Yet he commanded a range of languages and linguistic expertise that few of us today can hope to ever achieve. The international nature of the field in a way mirrors the multicultural and multilingual composition of the Tangut state, which was home to not only Tangut residents but also a variety of other ethnicities, including Chinese, Tibetans, Khitans and Uyghurs.

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333 Clauson 1964, 77.