The Historical Reception of the *Yijing* in the Tangut State

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**Abstract**

The *Yijing* [Classic of Changes] was an influential Chinese text in the Sinosphere, but its reception in the non-Sinic neighboring nations of China remains largely unknown. This is a pioneering study of the popularization and uses of the *Yijing* in the Tangut state based primarily on Tangut documents unearthed in Khara-Khoto, highlighting the ways that the *Yijing*’s symbolism and divination were incorporated into Tangut traditions. *Yijing*-related ideas and practices played a considerable role in different aspects of Tangut culture such as medicine, architecture, art, military strategy, political terminology, calendars, divination and the perception of the world. The Tangut reception of the *Yijing* was selective and the preference for practical values was obvious. This pioneering study will shed new light on the popularization and localization of the *Yijing* in non-Sinic cultures in Asia and the making of a *Yijing* cultural sphere in Asia.

**Keywords**

Classic of Changes – Tangut empire – Khara-Khoto – historical reception – China-Tangut cultural relations

1 **Introduction**

The *Yijing* *易經* [Classic of Changes] and its associated teachings, theories, images, divinatory practices have been an integral part of Eastern wisdom and culture. As one of the most influential Chinese texts in the Sinosphere,¹ the *Yijing*...
was studied in depth and its symbolism and divination were incorporated into the indigenous traditions in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, while in Tibet, its symbols, concepts and oracles were assimilated into Tibetan Buddhism. However, the study and uses of the *Yijing* in non-Sinic tribes such as the Tanguts, Mongols, Jurchens and Khitans remain a research gap in contemporary scholarship on the *Yijing*. This article is a pioneering study of the historical reception of the *Yijing* in the Tangut empire, based primarily on Tangut documents unearthed in Khara-Khoto (Heishuicheng 黑水城), a medieval Tangut city located in today’s Inner Mongolia, as well as on Chinese primary sources. It will shed new light on the popularization and localization of the *Yijing* in non-Sinic cultures in Asia and the making of a *Yijing* cultural sphere in Asia.

2 The *Yijing* in Tangut History

Tangut is a collective term for various Tibeto-Burman ethnic groups who inhabited the northwestern borderlands of China. Chinese sources usually associate the Tanguts with the Qiang and suggest that Tanguts and Tibetans shared the same cultural traits. The Tanguts established the Tangut state (Xi Xia 西夏 or Western Xia, 1038–1227) in Northwest China during the Song period (960–1279). Tangut culture combined indigenous traditions with Chinese, Tibetan, Khitan, Jurchen and Indian elements, and its *Yijing* scholarship reflected this diversity and hybridity.

In 1032, Li Yuanhao 李元昊 (Jingzong, 1003–1048), the leader of the Tangut tribe, declared himself the first emperor of the Tangut state. Jingzong promoted the Tangut identity by ordering the creation of a Tangut script and

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3 K.J. Solonin suggests that the Tangut tradition was formulated by fusing indigenous Tangut culture with Chinese and Tibetan elements. See K.J. Solonin, “Buddhism and Confucianism in Xixia” (unpublished manuscript), https://www.academia.edu/ 32434498/Buddhism_and_Confucianism_in_Xixia. I have added Khitan, Jurchen and Indian elements as an integral part of the Tangut tradition.

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the adoption of ethnic apparel and surnames. Besides bolstering the Tanguts’ ethnic identity, he also studied the Chinese language, military strategy and divination. His understanding of Chinese military strategy and divination was influenced by *Yijing*-related concepts such as *yinyang* 陰陽 (two primal forces), *sancai* 三才 (three powers), *wuxing* 五行 (five phases) and *bagua* 八卦 (eight trigrams). He set up the Office of Divination in the central government to use divination in calendar-making, medicine and religion.

Li Liangzuo 李謙祚 (Yizong, 1047–1067), the second Tangut emperor, was even more enthusiastic about Chinese culture than his father. In 1063, he asked the Song court for Confucian classics and the Song emperor sent him the Nine Classics. In official records, this was the earliest importation of the *Yijing* to the Tangut state. The *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編 [Extended Continuation to the *Zizhi tongjian*] reads: “Upon request, we gave [the Tangut emperor] the Nine Classics and their commentaries printed by the National Imperial Academy along with the *Mengzi* 孟子 [Mencius] and some medical books.” The fourth emperor Li Qianshun 李乾順 (Chongzong, 1084–1139) further promoted Confucianism. He established the Imperial College in 1101 to teach three hundred aristocratic young men about Confucian classics, including the *Yijing*, and sent delegates to the Jin dynasty to purchase Confucian classics.

The Sinicization of the Tangut state reached its peak during the reign of the fifth emperor Li Renxiao 李仁孝 (Renzong, 1124–1193). He established the Imperial Academy in the capital and regional schools all over the empire to teach Confucian classics, and introduced the civil service examination to recruit officials. He also built many Confucius temples and performed memorial ceremonies for Confucius.

In the reign of Renzong, Confucian studies flourished and Tangut scholars wrote commentaries on Confucian classics and translated them into Tangut. The Prime Minister Wo Daochong 斡道沖 (-1183) was a Confucian scholar of the *Yijing* and *Lun Yu* [Analects]. He was an expert on *Yijing* divination methods, and wrote a commentary in the Tangut script entitled *Zhouyi bushiduan* 周易卜筮斷 [An Interpretation of the Divination of the *Zhouyi*]. This once

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4 The term *jiujing* 九經 [Nine Classics] appears for the first time in the *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 [New Book of the Tang]. The nine works vary depending on the source, but the *Yijing* is always included.

5 Li Tao 李燾, ed., *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編 [Extended Continuation to *Zizhi Tongjian*] (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1992), 369.
widely circulated text was the only commentary on the *Yijing* written by the Tangut people. The text survived at least until the Yuan period (1271–1368); the Yuan scholar Yu Ji 虞集 (1272–1348) wrote about Wo as follows: “[He] wrote the *Zhouyi bushiduan* in his national script. It was circulated in his nation and has remained intact [in the Yuan period].” Unfortunately, the text was subsequently lost. It has never been translated into Chinese or cited in other texts, and its content is therefore unknown to the modern reader and its scholarship cannot be assessed.

From the sixth emperor to the end of the empire in 1227, the Tangut nation declined and there were no more records concerning the *Yijing* at the Tangut court. After the Mongols destroyed the Tangut state, the Tangut people were assimilated into the Yuan Empire. Yu Que 余闕 (1303–1358), a Tangut Confucian scholar who specialized in the *Yijing* and served the Yuan government, spent twenty years writing a commentary in Chinese with fifty chapters, entitled *Yi Shuo* 易說 [Views on the *Yijing*]. But the text was never put in print and was destroyed during a battle in 1358.

### 3 The *Yijing* in Tangut Texts

During the fall of the Tangut capital, the Mongols destroyed all Tangut written records and by the Yuan-Ming period, the Tangut language was dead. Until the archeological discovery of a number of Tangut documents in the ruins of the ancient Tangut city Khara-Khoto in 1908, scholars had no way to study Tangut history and culture. The unearthing of Tangut dictionaries allowed scholars to begin to reconstruct the lost Tangut language. Tangut translations from the Chinese or Confucian classics, as well as commentaries and documents on the *Yijing* were also useful. There are three categories of *Yijing*-related texts that were unearthed at Khara-Khoto.

The first category consists of fragments of the *Yijing* that were translated into Tangut or cited in Chinese books found at the site. Printed books include the *Zuo Chuan* 左傳 [The Zuo Commentary on the *Chunqiu*], the *Mengzi, Mengzi zhuan* 孟子傳 [Commentary on the *Mengzi*, by Chen He 陳禾 (Song period)], *Xiaojing zhuan* 孝經傳 [Commentary on the *Xiaojing*, by Lu Huiqing 呂惠卿]

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(Song period)] and Lunyu quanjie 論語全解 [Complete Explanation of the Lunyu, by Chen Xiangdao 陳祥道 (Song period)]. Handwritten copies include fragments of the Yijing, Shangshu 尚書 [Book of Documents] and Daxue 大學 [Great Learning]. The fragments of the Tangut Yijing have not yet been made available to researchers.

Some unearthed Chinese texts cite passages from the Yijing. For example, F1:W45 has the following paragraph, which is indirectly quoted from the Xici zhuan 繫辭傳 [Commentary on the Appended Phrases on the Yijing]:

Pao Xi had holy virtue. He looked upward and contemplated the images in the heavens; he looked downward and contemplated the patterns on earth. From the viewpoint of a bystander, he contemplated the markings of birds and beasts and the adaptations to the regions. He proceeded directly from himself and indirectly from objects.

庖犧氏,有聖德。仰則觀象於天,俯則觀法於地,旁觀鳥獸之文,與地之宜,近取諸身,遠取諸物。

The text is borrowed from the Sanhuang benji 三皇本紀 [Principal Annals of the Three Sovereigns] in the Shiji 史記 [Records of the Grand Historian]. There are two points of difference between this quotation and the original version in the Xici zhuan. First, the Xici zhuan does not have “Paoxi shi, you sheng de” 庖犧氏,有聖德 in the beginning. Second, there is no “pang” 旁 before “guan niaoshou zhi wen” 觀鳥獸之文.

The second category of Tangut documents on the Yijing from Khara-Khoto consists of encyclopedias and dictionaries containing paragraphs or ideas from the Yijing. The Jingshi zachao 經史雜抄 [Excerpts from the Classics and Histories] is a collection of more than two hundred short passages translated into Tangut from Chinese classics. Most of its citations are selected from the late Tang encyclopedia Xinji wenci jiujing chao 新集文詞九經抄 [New Collection

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of Excerpts from the Nine Classics] and some passages are translated from the *Yijing*.\(^\text{10}\) Like many other Tangut texts, the translations are often inaccurate and perfunctory.\(^\text{11}\)

In contrast, the *Shengli yihai* 聖立義海 [Sea of Sacred Information, 1182], an encyclopedia in Tangut compiled under the order of the Tangut government, is better organized and more useful as a reference book. It contains such *Yijing*-related concepts as *yinyang*, *sancài* and *wuxing*. In particular, *yinyang* is a core concept; it is a belief that everything in the world could be explained in terms of the balance between *yin* and *yang*, including the creation of the universe: “Heaven is *yang*. When *yang* falls and mixes with *yin*, suns, moons and everything in the universe are created.” Morality also follows the law of *yinyang*: “Morality is under the natural law. When *yin* and *yang* are united, you are surrounded by *wuxing* and protected by the deities and spirits.”\(^\text{12}\)

The *Fanhan heshi zhangzhongzhu* 番漢合時掌中珠 [Tangut-Chinese Timely Pearl, 1190] is a Tangut-Chinese bilingual glossary of four hundred and fourteen words compiled by the Tangut scholar 骨勒茂才. When it was unearthed in 1909, it provided the first clues to reconstructing the Tangut language, and contains a number of *Yijing*-related entries such as *wuxing*, *yinyang hehe* 陰陽和合 (harmony of *yin* and *yang*), *da yang* 大陽 (big *yang*), *da yin* 大陰 (big *yin*), *qiankan genzhen* 乾坎艮震 [the first four of the eight trigrams], *xunli kundui* 巽離坤兌 [the last four of the eight trigrams], *tianqian* 天乾 (*qian* as heaven), *dikun* 地坤 (*kun* as earth) and *yangqi* 陽氣 (active force of *yang*).\(^\text{13}\)

The third category of texts from Khara-Khoto comprises *Yijing*-related divination manuals. Traditionally, the Tanguts practiced divination by examining celestial bodies or the bones and internal organs of sheep. During the Song period, as Chinese divination became one of the most influential aspects of Chinese culture in China’s neighboring tribes such as the Tanguts, Jurchens,

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11 Nie Hongyin 聶鴻音, “Xixiaben Jingshi zachao chutan” 西夏本《經史雜抄》初探 [A Preliminary Investigation of the *Jingshi zachao* in the Tangut Script], *Ningxia shehui kexue* [Social Science of Ningxia], no. 3 (2002): 83–86. The *Xinji wenci jiyuing chao* disappeared in China, but was rediscovered in Dunhuang.

12 Quoted in Yuan Zhiwei 袁志偉, “*Shengli yihai* yu Xixia foruronghe de zhexue sixiang” 《聖立義海》與西夏“佛儒融合”的哲學思想 [The *Shengli yihai* and the Syncretism between Buddhism and Confucianism in Xixia], *Ningxia daxue xuebao* [Journal of Ningxia University], no. 3 (2015): 45–49.

Khitans and Mongols, it replaced traditional Tangut divination. In the Khara-Khoto materials, the Tanguts’ enthusiasm for *Yijing* divination is indicated by the fact that fourteen of the thirty-two Khara-Khoto documents on divination are related to the *Yijing*. These texts in Tangut and Chinese have provided important clues about the application of *Yijing* divination in Tangut society.

The *Bushi yaojue 卜筮要訣* [Essential Secrets for Divination] is a handwritten copy of unidentified Chinese texts that explains how to consult the *Yijing* by throwing six bronze coins and gives oracles in prose and poetry. This Khara-Khoto edition contains only seven hexagrams (*qian* 乾, *kun* 坤, *tun* 屯, *meng* 蒙, *xu* 需, *song* 訟, *shi* 師); the remaining fifty-seven hexagrams are missing. Here is an example from this text’s hexagram *meng*, which begins with a divination text and a seven-character poem, as follows:

**Meng**
You should not change your investment so often. Look around and you will find a man of good fortune. Leaning on him will bring you good fortune. Dreams will come true. You will earn profits and should move forward.

有財，宜不久轉。三頭兩望得貴人。把他撐拄。身上通利，望是成。有一段財，是宜進。

Not sure if the wave is suitable for sailing a boat.

Not sure if the goal can be achieved.

We wait for the right time to get things done.

Be happy to know that things will go the way you want them to go.16

驚波淺浪尚疑舟
進志如何有滯留

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待得事謀歸己用
兩頭耗意其悠悠

The text goes on to explain the hexagram in simple words. The above excerpt suggests three characteristics of Yijing divination in the Tangut state. First, the Tangut people preferred simply throwing coins to dividing yarrow stalks in a standard way; throwing coins was a common preference among China’s neighboring tribal nations. Second, the text contains many incorrectly translated and mistakenly inserted words. Tangut transcribers was not fluent in Chinese, which exacerbated scholars’ difficulties in deciphering the handwritten Tangut documents from Khara-Khoto. Third, the najia 纐甲 method of hexagram interpretation advocated by the Western Han scholar Jing Fang 京房 (77–37 BCE), which was popular in China and surrounding regions, also prevailed among the Tanguts.

The najia method divided sixty-four hexagrams into eight palaces; each line of the hexagram corresponded to elements of the Chinese calendar and cosmology. Like the Bushi yaojue, the Liushisiqua tuge 六十四卦圖歌 [The Illustrations and Songs for the Sixty-Four Hexagrams] is based on the najia method. It was created in the early Song period by Tangut transcribers based on an unknown Chinese text. To avoid using the name of Emperor Zhenzong of Song Zhao Heng 趙恒 (968–1022), hexagram heng 恒卦 was renamed as hexagram chang 常卦.17 The Ming text Duanyi tianji 斷易天機 [The Mystery of the Interpretation of the Yijing] has similar content and some of its passages are identical to the Liushisiqua tuge, suggesting that the authors of these two texts might have used the same source as the main reference.

In the Liushisiqua tuge, each hexagram is explained in this order: fortune-telling, Chinese history, a seven-character poem, a four-character poem, and a five-character poem. In the text, there are many wrong words and lost words; seven hexagrams are missing. For example, the pertinent Chinese historical reference, the seven-character poems, the four-character poems and the five-character poems of hexagram meng are as follows:

Hexagram meng
The hexagram of August. Revealing the year of bingshu and the agent of earth. Hiding the year of yiyou and the agent of metal.
This hexagram reminds us of Wang Mang’s overthrowing the Han dynasty. Having acquired this hexagram, one knows the ruler of China.

17 This kind of naming taboo was a common practice in pre-modern China. To avoid the use of the emperor’s given name, a name with a similar sound or meaning would be used.
蒙卦。八月卦，飛丙戍土，伏乙酉金。
此卦是王莽奪漢家社稷。得此卦，知漢家大王。

Praise:
Not sure if I should go to the mountain or the sea.
Taking the risk to climb the mountain will hardly bring happiness.
Not sure if I should advance or retreat. I am waiting for someone to take me.
When the child asks, great affection comes.

頌曰：
山水蒙蒙未可行，登高涉險幾歡榮。
遲疑進退待攜接，童子求時自有情。

Praise:
*Meng* means unclear. There is a spring at the bottom of the mountain.
If I retreat, I will face danger. If I advance, I will face the mountain.
Moving back and forth nervously, I am disappointed and bored.
Worrying and making mistakes, I suffer from an illness.
Shall I advance or retreat? I am at a standstill and full of doubts.

讚曰：
蒙者昧也。山下有泉，退即困險。進□逢山。
徊惶返覆，述悶相連，多憂過失，病患相纏。
欲進欲退，疑惑不前。

Song:
When the child receives training for the first time,
He can hardly understand the language.
To advance or retreat could cause danger.
I was hesitant and worried.
The prisoner will soon be released.
The sick body remains stable.
Do not step into the water in the North.
I feel scared when I see the fish and dragon moving.¹⁸

¹⁸ Sun, Song, and Chen, *Ecang Heishuicheng hanwen feifojiao wenxian zhengli yu yanjiu (zhong)* [A Systematic Study of Non-Buddhist Documents from the Khara-Khoto Collection in Russia: Part Two], 567–68.
歌曰:
童蒙初受訓，言語未分明。進退□巇嶮，踟躇憂慮情。
囚人看即放，病體氣還生。忌涉北方水，魚龍動心驚。

Most Tangut users could not understand the allusions to Chinese history, or the seven-character, four-character and five-character poems, and thus they would only pay attention to the first part of the explanation, which would address their familial relationships and official careers or businesses.

The *Liushi jiazi ge* 六十甲子歌 [Song of the Sixty Stems], allegedly created by Guiguizi 鬼谷子 (Master of the Ghost Valley) and Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (ca. 160–93 BC), is based on the *nayin* 纳音 (containing notes) system in which sounds correlate with fate. The *Liushi jiazi ge* discovered in Khara-Khoto is written in scratchy regular script in Chinese with many mistakes and missing words.

In China, the *Liushi jiazi ge* was called the *Liushi jiazi nayin ge* 六十甲子纳音歌 [Nayin Song of the Sixty Stems]. Using seven-character poetry to connect the sixty-four stems with *wuxing*, *yinyang* and twelve earthly branches, this *nayin* system could be used for medicine as well as divination. For example, the first sentence of this song is “Jiazi yichou haizhongjin” 甲子乙丑海中金 (jiazi yichou metal in ocean). The heavenly stem and earthly branch *jiazi* represents *yang* wood and *yang* water, while *yichou* represents *yin* wood and *yin* earth. In this metaphor, people born in *jiazi* and *yichou* are like metal in ocean. The implication here is that their fortune is hidden and will underperform.

The *Gua ming* 卦名 [Name of the Hexagrams] was written by the Buddhist monk Ji 淨 in 1218, that is, the eighth year of the reign of Li Zunxu 李遵煕 (Shenzong, 1163–1226). Ji’s life remains a mystery. He used Buddhist terminology to explain hexagrams. Unfortunately, only these few words of the entire text have survived: “Monk Ji sincerely prays to the Buddha. Hexagram *qian* 乾 is the hexagram for April. *Qian*……, also……already………..” 僧幾貟謹詣佛。乾，四月卦。乾□□□□，還□□□□。既□□□□。19 In this text, hexagram *qian* 乾 is incorrectly given the symbol of hexagram *kun* 坤. Tangut transcribers were either absent-minded or uneducated about the *Yijing*. In fact, using wrong symbols for hexagrams is not uncommon in Tangut documents. For example, in F1:W44, incorrect symbols are attributed to three of the eight trigrams.20

19 Ibid., 616.
A number of Yijing-related documents written in Tangut were unearthed in Khara-Khoto, providing important information about the ways that the Tanguts applied Chinese divination methods. The Zhouyi shierqian bufa 周易十二錢卜法 [The Yijing Divination by Twelve Coins] introduces another simple divination method: throwing twelve bronze coins to make a hexagram. For instance, hexagram pi 否 is represented by six heads and six tails. The text reads: “Six heads, six tails, heaven-earth pi...Things will get done. Dispute will be settled in your way. Going out, good fortune. Go where you want to go. Return to where you want to be. Patients will get well. Good for marriage and housing.” The Li Laojun Zhouyi shierqian bufa 李老君周易十二錢卜法 [The Yijing Divination by Twelve Coins by Li Laojun] from the Buddhist caves at Dunhuang is also about using the twelve-coin method, showing that this divinatory practice was widely used among China’s neighboring tribal states, including the Tubo Kingdom. While the Chinese and Tibetans credited Laozi 老子 with inventing this method, the Tanguts attributed its invention to the Tang monk Xuanzang 玄奘. They often prayed to Xuanzang before throwing the coins.

The Jinsuan 瑾算 [Beautiful Gem Calculation] is an astrology book that uses yinyang, wuxing, eight trigrams, twelve earthly branches and twelve zodiacal signs to predict a person’s fate. Some parts of the text are untranslatable and its author and original text have remained unknown.

The Bagua quxiang ge 八卦取象歌 [Song of the Eight Trigrams and Their Images] is the Tangut translation of the song with the same title in Zhu Xi’s Zhouyi benyi 周易本義 [The Original Meaning of the Zhouyi]. This song of only twenty-four Chinese words was written to help people memorize the eight trigrams and their images. It was translated from an unidentified Song

22 Ibid., 32–37.
edition. The order of the trigrams and some words differ from those of Zhu Xi’s original version. The last sentence in Zhu’s and many other editions is xun xia duan巽下斷, while in the Tangut edition, it is xun xia xue巽下穴. The Yichuandeng易傳燈 [Transmission of the Lamp in the Yijing] by Xu Zonggan徐總幹 (Song period) also uses xun xia xue, but the order of the trigrams differs from that of the Tangut edition of the Bagua quxiang ge. It is unclear from which Song edition of the song the Tangut version took inspiration.

Unlike many other Tangut divination texts, the Wuxing miji五星秘集 [Collection of the Mystery of the Five Stars] was not translated from Chinese sources. It was compiled by the Tangut scholar Gule Renhui骨勒仁慧 in 1183 to popularize the five-color divination. The five colors (blue [or green], red, yellow, white and black) were correlated with the five agents (wood, fire, earth, metal and water) to predict and advise on such things as warfare, politics, weather, agriculture and medical treatment. Take the colors of clouds as an example: a blue cloud meant a locust invasion, a red cloud was a sign of warfare, a yellow cloud implied a harvest, a white cloud was a harbinger of disease, and a black cloud was an omen of flooding.

This five-color divination was first suggested in the Eastern Han Apocrypha of the Yijing, Yiwei tonggua yan易緯通卦驗 [Apocrypha of the Yijing: Penetrating the Potency of the Hexagrams] allegedly by Zheng Xuan鄭玄 (Eastern Han period), and later became popular in Tang-Song China and the Tangut state. According to the Xixia shushi西夏書事 [Annals of the Tangut, by Wu Guangcheng吳廣成 (Qing period)], in 1144, a comet appeared in the sky for more than fifty days and people were terrified, so Emperor Renzong changed the regnal name to avoid bad luck. One minister cited the Han Apocrypha Goumingjue鈎命訣 [The Decision: Hooking the Mandate] to predict five possible unfavorable outcomes as follows: “Comet can be any one of five colors. If blue, kings and nobles will lose and the emperor will suffer military defeat. If red, rebels appear and strong nations will be aggressive. If yellow, an evil beauty will seize power and replace the queen. If white, the general will revolt and the warfare will last for two years. If black, full of water, rivers and lakes flood, and rebels appear.”

4 The Yijing in Tangut Culture

As far as we can tell, the Tangut people did not have a deep and comprehensive understanding of the Yijing as a philosophical and cosmological text. They

were only interested in its use as a divination tool and its application to everyday life. To a certain extent, *Yijing*-related ideas, such as *yinyang*, *wuxing* and eight trigrams, influenced Tangut life, including names for the empire and the era, art, architecture, calendar-making, military strategy and medicine.

Names for the Tangut state followed the principle of *wuxing*. While the Chinese in the Song period called it “Xi Xia” (Western Xia), the Tanguts called their own nation “Dabai gaoguo” (Great White High Nation), “Daibai shangguo” (Great White Upper Nation), “Baigao daxia” (White High Great Xia), “Baishang daxiaguo” (White Upper Great Xia Nation) and “Xichao” (Western Dynasty). All these names could be explained in terms of *wuxing*. The Tanguts believed that their nation was located in the west, which belonged to the agent of metal and was represented by the white color. Historical sources also indicate how the Tangut people perceived their nation in terms of *wuxing*, as was the case in 1094, at the founding of the Cheng Tian Si Temple. The Empress Dowager wrote on the monument: “Receiving the power of metal in the West... We have emerged and become strong. We control the direction of metal [West] and regained the Hexi Region.” The *Shengli yihai* also suggests a connection between their nation and the agent of metal, describing Tangut preparations for the Laba Festival held during the twelfth lunar month as follows: “On the Day of Laba Sacrifice. Our nation belongs to metal.”

The Tangut people believed in a form of geomancy that used the ideas of *yinyang*, *wuxing* and the eight trigrams. The Tangut imperial tombs on Mt. Helan in Yinchuan were designed under Chinese geomantic principles, facing

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28 Wu Tianchi, “Xixia cheng Bangniding ji Baishangguo xinjie” [The Tangut People Called Bangniding Baishangguo: A New Interpretation], *Ningxia daxue xuebao* [Journal of Ningxia University], no. 3 (1983): 517.

29 Empress Dowager Meicang, “Xiaguo huangtaihou Xinjian Chengtiansi jiefudinggu shelibei” [A Monument to Honor the Newly Built Cheng Tian Si Temple by the Empress Dowager to House Buddhist Bone Relic], in *Jiajing ningxia xinzhi* [A New Gazetteer of Ningxia from the Jiajing Era], eds. Hu Ruli and Guan Lu (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 1985), 153.

30 The Laba Festival was held during the twelfth lunar month. The text reads: “Our nation belongs to metal. On the sixth and seventh day of the week, the king goes hunting. Food is prepared. Stars rise. Prepare to serve God. Award the ministers and play the music.” Evgenij Ivanovich Kychanov, Li Fanwen, and Luo Maokun, *Shengli yihai* [Sea of Sacred Meanings] (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 1995), 55.
south in accordance with Tang-Song practices as well as this passage in the *Shuo gua* 說卦 [Explanation of the Trigrams], one of the “Ten Wings” of the *Yijing*: “The sage faced south when he gave the audience to all under the sky. He administered the nation to make it bright. The idea in this procedure was taken from this [trigram *li*].” The Tangut imperial tombs were also built in the position of metal that matched *shang* 商 of the five musical notes. According to the Northern Song geomancy book *Dili xinshu* 地理新書 [New Book on Geomancy, 1057], the ideal burial site was made “to follow the musical note *shang*. The northwest is high, whereas the southeast is low. Water runs to the position of the trigram *xun* (southeast). This is the geography of heaven and earth.”

The Tangut imperial tombs followed this pattern in general, with Mt. Helan in the northwest, the Yinchuan Plain in the southeast, and the Yellow River in the south. As well, the nine imperial tombs were laid out in the shape of the Big Dipper, and the distribution of the eight tombs was close to the pattern of the eight trigrams.

Era names of the Tangut state also indicate the *Yijing’s* influence. Of the thirty-two era names, nine have “tian” 天 (heaven) and four have “da” 大 (great). Some scholars believe that the use of these two words might come from this line of the hexagram *lin* in the *Tuan zhuan* 象傳 [Commentary on the Judgment]: “Making great progress and being correct is the way of heaven. 大亨以正，天之道也.” Four era names were directly cited from the *Yijing*. Qiandao 乾道 (1069–1070), an era name for the third emperor Huizong 惠宗 (1061–1086), borrowed from the hexagram *qian* in the *Tuan zhuan*: “The way of *qian* (qiandao) is to change and transform so that everything will obtain its nature and destiny. 乾道變化，各正性命.”

Zhengquan 貞觀 (1101–1113) and Dade 大德 (1135–1139), two era names for the fourth emperor Chongzong, came from the following two passages in the *Xici zhuan* [Commentary on the Appended Phrases]: “The way of heaven and earth is that they are made authentically manifest, 天地之道，貞觀者也” and “the greatest virtue of the heaven and earth is to give birth. 天地之大德曰生.”

Yingtian 應天 (1206–1209), one of the era names for the seventh emperor Xiangzong 襄宗

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34 *Qian* is the first hexagram. There were three Tangut era names carrying the word *qian*: qiandao 乾道, qianyou 乾祐 (1170–1193) and qianting 乾定 (1123–1126).
(1170–1211), came from the hexagram ge革 in the Tuan zhuan: “When Tang and Wu changed the mandate, they accorded with heaven and responded to men湯武革命，順乎天而應乎人”.

Although the first emperor Jingzong introduced the Tangut calendar to replace the Song calendar, the new calendar continued to use the ten heavenly stems and twelve earthly branches, wuxing, the eight trigrams and solar terms for luck in making monthly predictions for people born in different years.35 The calendar section in the Fanhan heshi zhangzhongzhu contains such terms as “tiangan”天干 (heavenly stem), “dizhi”地支 (earthly branch), “wuxing” and “bagua.”36 A Tangut text known as #5282 in the Khara-Khoto collection in Russia is the calendar book of 1129. That year was considered a prosperous one, as it was associated with the trigram qian, heavenly stem ji己 (yin earth), earthly branch you酉 (yin metal) and the willow mansion (liusu柳宿, one of the twenty-eight constellations, whose agent was earth).37 The same collection contains a number of calendar divination books including the Bagua fa八卦法 (Methods of the Eight Trigrams), Ershisi jieqi二十四節氣 (Twenty-Four Solar Terms) and Liushi jiazi ge. In Tangut culture, calendar making was inseparable from divination, and thus the agency in charge of both was named Bosuanyuan卜算院 (Bureau of Divination).

Unearthed artifacts demonstrate Yijing-related ideas. For instance, Tangut bronze coins cast in Tangut, qianda baoqian乾大寶錢 and qianyou baoqian乾佑寶錢, contain the name of the first trigram qian. Some Tangut artworks incorporate the eight trigrams or Taijitu太極圖 [supreme polarity diagram]. A Daoist bronze bell with patterns of double dragons and eight trigrams was unearthed in Yinchuan along with other Buddhist artifacts, which is an evidence of the fusion of Buddhism and Daoism in Tangut culture.38 Influenced by Song culture, some Tangut porcelains bear the taiji symbol.

36 Shi Jinbo, Wei Tongxian 魏同賢, and Evgenij Ivanovich Kychanov, eds., Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian 俄藏黑水城文獻 [The Russian Khara-Khoto Collection], vol. 10 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji chubanshe, 1999), 3–6.
37 Peng Xiangqian and Li Xiaoyu 李曉玉, “Yijian Heishuicheng chutu de Xia-Han hebi liri kaoshi”一件黑水城出土的夏漢合璧曆日考釋 [An Investigation of a Sino-Tangut Calendar Unearthed in Khara-Khoto], Xixiaxue [Tangutology], no. 4 (July 2009): 55–56.
while Tangut stone epitaphs of prominent people feature the eight trigrams on the back.\textsuperscript{39}

In Tangut military strategy, \textit{wuxing} was a key concept. The founding emperor Jingzong was familiar with Chinese military strategy based on astrology, geomancy and the calendar. His favorite military manual was the \textit{Taiyi jinjiance} 太乙金鑒訣 [Essences of the Golden Mirror of Great Unity], a shortened version of the Tang astrology book \textit{Taiyi jinjingshi jing} 太乙金鏡式經 [Classic of the Method of the Golden Mirror of Great Unity]. It applies \textit{Yijing}-related concepts such as \textit{taiji}, \textit{yin-yang}, \textit{sancai}, \textit{wuxing} and eight trigrams to divination.\textsuperscript{40} The Tangut people were interested in Chinese military classics such as the \textit{Sunzi bingfa} 孫子兵法 [The Art of War by Master Sun] and translated some of them into Tangut, although the Tangut edition of the \textit{Sunzi bingfa} contains many inaccuracies. For example, \textit{wuxing wuchangsheng} 五行無常勝 (Of the five agents, no agent is always predominant), \textit{sishi wu changwei} 四時無常位 (Of the four seasons, no season always stands still) was translated as

\begin{center}
\textit{五行無常勝 五行無常位}
\end{center}

meaning: “There is no constant winner among the five agents. There is constant change in the four seasons.”\textsuperscript{41} Another example of adopting the \textit{wuxing} is that the Tangut women’s army corps \textit{makui} 麻魁 used the five-color flag in which white, green, black, red and yellow represented metal, wood, water, fire and earth, respectively.

Tangut medicine was influenced by Song-Jin medicine that followed the principles of \textit{yinyang}, \textit{wuxing} and the eight trigrams extensively. Acupuncture books found in Khara-Khoto apply \textit{yinyang}, \textit{wuxing} and the eight trigrams to explain their acupuncture practices.\textsuperscript{42} Applying the eight trigrams and nine

\textsuperscript{39} Du Jianlu 杜建錄, “Zhongguo cang Xixia wenxian xulu” 中國藏西夏文獻敘錄 [Introduction to the Index to Tangut Documents in China], \textit{Xixiaxue} [Tangutology], no. 3 (July 2008): 127.

\textsuperscript{40} Rong Zhijian 榮智澗, “Xixia zhanbu kao” 西夏占卜考 [An Investigation of Divination in the Tangut State], \textit{Jiannan wenxue} [Jiannan Literature] (August 2014): 159.


\textsuperscript{42} Nishida Tatsuo 西田龍雄, “Seikago yaku Rokujyomonke to Shinkyusho” 西夏語訳六十四卦と鍼灸書 [Tangut Sixty-Four Hexagrams and the Acupuncture Books], in \textit{Mikasanomiya denka beiju kinen ronshū} 三笠宮殿下米寿記念論集 [A Collection of
palaces (jiugong 九宮) to eight vessels (bamai 八脈) is a theory from Jin medicine. Medical divination was also common in Tangut medicine. In the Jin edition of the Liurenke mijue 六壬課秘訣 (Secrets of the Six Chinese Divination Methods based on Time) from Khara-Khoto, the wuxing theory is used to predict the course of a patient’s illness and suggest treatment: “In the phase of controlling metal, the patient coughs, feels bloated and has diarrhea. In the phase of controlling water, the patient feels cold and has umbilical pain. In the phase of controlling fire, the patient has a heart pain and gets hurt by cold food. In the phase of controlling wood, the patient has toothache and cannot express anger.”

Wuxing was evident even in the way patients took medication; Tangut patients usually faced eastward to do so, as the east belonged to the agent of wood and the trigram zhen 震. It was believed that this direction absorbed yang’s energy and brought good fortune – an idea from Chinese Daoist texts like the wuxingshu 五行書 [Book of the Five Agents].

A Tangut medical text from Wuwei in the Gansu Province suggests that: “This is the way to treat influenza. In the morning, the patient faces eastward and swallows twenty-one peppercorn pills with fresh cold water on an empty stomach.”

5 Concluding Remarks

This article marks the first academic treatment of the role of the Yijing in Tangut history and culture. In the Yijing cultural sphere in Asia, the position of the Tangut state was only peripheral. Its Yijing scholarship was less developed than that of nations in the Sinosphere. The Tangut people studied and used the Yijing for over 150 years, from its first importation in 1063 to the end of the Tangut state in 1227. The Tangut people adopted elements of the Yijing through Chinese texts and artifacts imported from Song and Jin dynasties as well as from the migrants of these two states. During this time, however, Tangut Yijing scholarship did not develop beyond the early stages. Tangut people did not show any interest in the text, images and numbers of the Yijing. The text was

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43 Shi, Wei, and Kychanov, Ecang Heishuicheng wenxian [The Russian Khara-Khoto Collection], vol. 4, 84.
44 The author of the Wuxing shu [Book of the Five Agents] remains unknown. It was attributed to Guiguzi from the Warring States period and was annotated by the Tang scholar Li Xuzhong 李虚中.
45 Quoted in Chen, Xixia wenwu yanjiu [A Study of Xixia Civilization], 310.
never studied seriously, and the transcriptions and translations were perfunctorily and inaccurate.46

Despite the lack of official and intellectual influence, Yijing-related ideas and practices played a considerable role in various aspects of Tangut culture, including medicine, architecture, art, military strategy, political terminology, calendar making, divination and worldview. Like other non-Sinic cultures, the Tangut reception of the Yijing was selective and the preference for practical values such as divination, geomancy and medicine was obvious. Since the Tangut people were only interested in Yijing divination, most people only read simple Yijing divination manuals about throwing coins and naja. The only Yijing commentary written by a Tangut scholar was about divination. Unfortunately, this commentary did not survive and thus we know little about the practice and quality of Yijing divination in the Tangut state.

Tangut Yijing scholarship is cross-cultural and hybridized. For geographic and historical reasons, the Tanguts were not as culturally subjective as the Tibetans were: Tangut culture was a melting pot of Chinese, Tibetan, Jurchen and Indian cultures and religions. However, its Yijing scholarship does not show the same degree of localization as Tibet’s. The kind of multiculturalism and hybridity that characterize Tangut culture is also evident in its Yijing scholarship. For instance, most Yijing-related books were imported from China, and Tangut medicine was influenced by Chinese and Jin medicine. The unearthing of a Daoist bronze bell with engraved patterns of the eight trigrams in the company of Buddhist artifacts, and a Tangut monk’s use of trigrams to explicate Buddhism reflect the fusion of Buddhism and Daoism in Tangut religion.

To a certain extent, the characteristics of Tangut Yijing studies are not unique and can also be found in other non-Sinic tribal states located near the western border of China. It shows that Yijing-related ideas and practices could be domesticated to fit in different non-Sinic traditions.

Bibliography


46 Buddhism was more influential than both Confucianism and Daoism in Tangut culture. Among Confucian classics, the Yijing was not as popular as the Lunyu, Mengzi and Xiaojing [Classic of Filial Piety]. Besides, there is no record that the Yijing was promoted officially, no reprint of Chinese commentaries, no lectures on it to the emperors and crown princes, and no emphasis on the Yijing in school curriculums and civil service examinations.
Du Jianlu, “Zhongguo cang Xixia wenxian xulu” 中国藏西夏文献叙录 [Introduction to the Index of Tangut Documents in China]. Xixiaxue [Tangutology], no. 3 (July 2008): 72–158.


