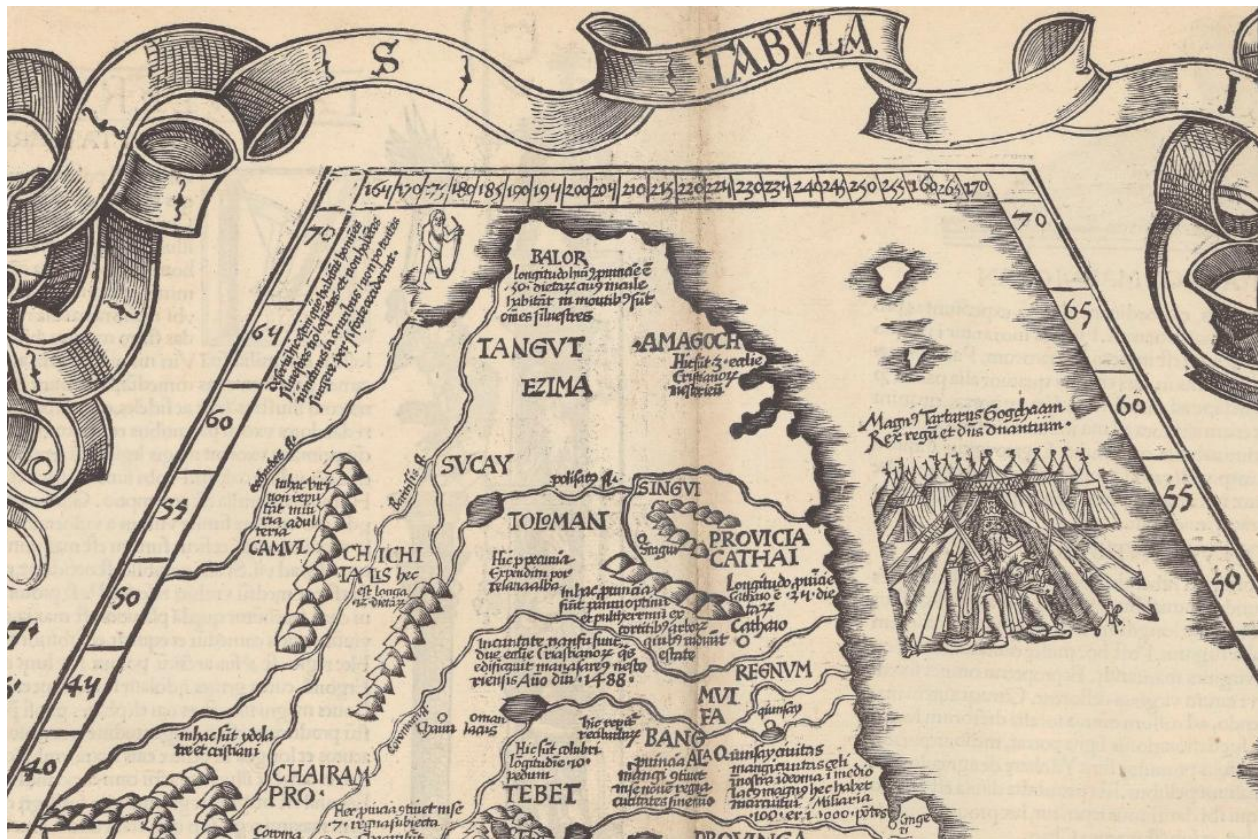


Echoes in Eurasia: the name 'Tangut' and the Xixia Tanguts in European medieval and early modern sources, ca. 1250-1750



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When I first learned of the Tanguts several years ago, I wrote a small paper on the history of Tangutology, and as part of that project I sent an email to Imre Galambos. to the ensuing correspondence eventually led to my participation in a workshop on Tangut studies at The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) of the Universität Hamburg (UH) on 14 December 2015. There I was able to present and discuss my preliminary considerations for this thesis. It is to Galambos, the other participants of the workshop, and the CSMC and UH that I owe a debt of gratitude for allowing a non-specialist into their midst. To be a skilled Tangutologist is to be a polyglot, and the Hamburg workshop participants are fine examples of their multilingual tradition. My linguistic skills, however, are underdeveloped concerning a number of Asian and European languages, and as a consequence I have mostly read sources in translation. This makes the well-known proviso all the more relevant: any and all interpretative mistakes are my own responsibility.

Conventions

A key feature of this thesis is issues of naming. It is therefore not a little ironic that, owing to spatial constraints, I can only briefly mention certain conventions here.

The following spelling conventions apply. Names given in quotation marks indicate a meta-spelling of a name (e.g. ‘Tangut’), which is done to avoid overusing variant spellings and overtaxing the reader’s attention. Most proper names and quotes from the sources are given verbatim, and proper names are italicized to indicate that they are spelled exactly in a given manner in the source (with the exception of some capitalization). For Chinese I transcribe the names using Pinyin, and characters are given in their traditional form with the exception of modern-day toponyms. For Tibetan the Wylie system is used. Mongolian names are mostly taken from Atwood 2004.

Certain adjectives are mostly indicators of intertextuality. This is especially true for the term European and Mongolian. With this European mean the body of sources and beliefs which were unified by virtue of their intertextual ties. For instance, reading this thesis it will become apparent that the description of *Tangut* by the Venetian traveler Marco Polo (1254–1324) appears time and again and acts like a glue connecting most of the sources discussed below.¹ By and large then, the term European is roughly synonymous to the old Latin West.

I use the terms medieval and early modern to denote two phases of European-Asian interaction. The first, medieval, phase spans the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This was a time when merchants and missionaries traveled to and through the Mongol empire (1206-1260) and its successor states. The result of these travels was an unprecedented increase in the knowledge of the peoples of Asia. The second phase, called early modern, spans the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries, which was the next major period in which major epistemological leaps were made. In this period missionaries of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) led the way in what might be seen as a systematic attempt to understand China and its neighbors.

¹ In her work on medieval Orientalism, Kim Phillips also notes the shared interest in Marco Polo’s account as a good reason to use the term ‘European’, certain drawbacks of this designation notwithstanding: Phillips 2014, 62.

What is often referred to in this thesis as the (greater) Gansu 甘肃 region or area is the former territory of the Xixia 西夏 ('Western Xia'; 1038-1227) and its nearest neighboring areas. Today this mostly covers the entirety of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region 宁夏回族自治区 and Gansu 甘肃 province in the People's Republic of China (PRC), as well as significant parts of adjacent areas. Central Asia refers to the former Soviet republics east of the Caspian Sea and present-day Afghanistan. Tibet, although treated in more detail below, mostly refers to the Tibetan cultural areas of the PRC. Inner Asia covers both Central Asia and Tibet, but more importantly, I use this blanket term somewhat synonymous with the old name Tartary and do so because it allows me to speak about an often poorly delimited region which stands in a sometimes unclear relation to Tibet and China. The terms Asia and Eurasia are used mostly in their everyday sense.

For bibliographic conventions see Bibliography.

Introduction

In contemporary Western academic publications, the name ‘Tangut’ refers almost exclusively to the dominant ethnic group of a so-called ‘conquest dynasty’, best known by its Chinese name, the Xixia 西夏 (‘Western Xia’; 1038-1227).² However, the name has had different connotations for our medieval and early modern forbears, which might prompt the question: What did medieval and early modern Europeans mean when they used the name ‘Tangut’? Given its present-day use, a corollary question ought to be: Did medieval and early modern Europeans have a similar understanding, or concept, of the Xixia Tanguts as we do today? It is this thesis’s main contention that the name ‘Tangut’ and the early understanding of this name in Europe stems from the same source as our current conception, that is, a Mongolian ethnonym *cum* toponym. Yet, in Europe it was long understood as mostly a toponym and it was not clearly connected to the concept of the Xixia Tanguts. Indeed, it will be argued that the Tanguts of the Xia are, albeit surprisingly, largely absent in early European descriptions of Chinese and Mongol history, compared to other ethno-historical references in European sources.

To stress what is at stake in the present work, one may turn to two hermeneutic notions outlined by the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002): ‘effective-history’ (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) and the ‘fusion of horizons’ (*Horizontverschmelzung*).³ Effective-history refers to the idea that what we deem worthy of historical investigation depends on our present-day concerns and interests. Gadamer’s fusion of horizons is related to other points about horizons as metaphors for understanding. Horizons are vantage points, the limits of our understanding, but

² Galambos 2015, 11. In the interest of restricting this discussion to the main thesis, I will not further detail two problems inherent in this sentence. The first is the notion of conquest dynasties, which Sinologists have mostly used to refer to polities characterized by a political dominance by ‘non-Chinese’ people, had the administrative trappings and shared in the political culture of prior imperial states in the present-day territory of the PRC, as well as ruling over significant parts of that country. The Xixia, or Xia, ruled in such a manner in what in Chinese is today called *Xibei* 西北 (‘the northwest’), which refers to the greater Gansu region and the lands to its east. The term ‘conquest dynasty’ has the benefit of underscoring the peculiar makeup of the Xixia in ethnic terms, but the term falls short in many ways, not least in overstating the relevance of a dichotomy between Chinese and non-Chinese. For a helpful critique of this label, see: Crossley 1999, 29f. The second problem pertains to the dating of the Xia state. Formally, the empire of the Xia was declared in 1038, but the installment of a semi-independent regime during the late Tang 唐 (618–907) period might also be seen as the beginning of that dynasty, and the ruling Li 李 family was a political force in Western China well before the 1030s.

³ The following is based on the section ‘The principle of effective-history’ of Gadamer’s magnum opus *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960): Gadamer/Glen-Doepel 1981, 267-274.

they also offer one the possibility to go beyond one's limits, because while a horizons delimits a view it is not fixed. In the engagement with the past, there are two main horizons: the historical horizon and the horizon of the present. The historical horizon requires an acceptance of the past's Otherness, and the horizon of the present signifies our own 'prejudice' (*Vorurteil*), our historical situatedness. However, the distinction between the two horizons is a heuristic one, because we are shaped by the past, which is and could become even more meaningful to us. Gadamer proposes that we fuse these two horizons in a way that we remain aware of our historical situatedness but are also open to what the historical Other might tell us without naively assimilating everything into the present Self.

To inquire about the nature of the name 'Tangut' and the Xixia Tanguts is in a way admitting to the workings of effective-history as well as being open to a fusing of horizons. It is because 'Tangut' is still used by scholars that this thesis has a particular relevance. To take one of the most important sources discussed below: the account by Marco Polo (1254–1324), the famed thirteenth-century traveler, merchant, and official to the Mongol empire (1206-1260). Scholars still use this source to learn things about the Mongol period, but for Polo's 'province' of *Tangut* it is especially necessary to be reflective about how the Venetian used the term. Scholars have invoked Polo's report as though his use of the name 'Tangut' was in reference to the people of what was then already the former Xixia and used it to write ethnographic accounts.⁴ Problematically, they often do not justify their use beyond the apparent acceptance of the name 'Tangut' as a historical connection to the Xia. This thesis shows that Polo's *Tangut* lacks the ethnolinguistic detail that these scholars attach to his account and on the whole what follows may be seen as a corrective for overhasty conclusions about what earlier European authors meant when they used the name 'Tangut'.⁵ As such, this thesis admits to the workings of effective-

⁴ For examples of Tangutologists using Polo in this way, see: Terentyev-Katansky 1974, 215f. Kepping 2003, 106, 114n54. Stephen Haw, albeit in a more careful fashion than the previous two authors, has speculated that Polo might have known Tangut, but this seems hard to prove: Haw 2006, 63. For a similar tendency of equating Polo's *Tangut* with the Xixia Tanguts among medievalists, see: Brewer 2015, 180n33 (Brewer repeats his assertion in subsequent footnotes).

⁵ Besides Polo, it struck the present author how readily modern-day scholars have considered a people called *Tanyu* in the *Novus atlas Sinensis* (1655) by Jesuit Martino Martini (1614-1661) as referring to the Xixia Tanguts: Martini 1655, 21-23. Lach and Van Kley 1993, 1767f. Bertuccioli 2002, 301n20. Like Polo's *Tangut*, this tacit acceptance about the identity of Martini's *Tanyu* is unsubstantiated. In contrast, there are good reasons to believe that more often than not the Jesuit father was referring to the Xiongnu 匈奴: Pelliot 1959, 611. Indeed, according to Davor Antonucci, the connotation of the name *Tanyu* elsewhere in the *Novus atlas Sinensis* reveals that Martini mostly used

history, in that it is aware of its ‘prejudice’ in imbuing the name ‘Tangut’ with a particular meaning. But it is also an attempt at fusing horizons, to be open to the Otherness of the past, to let it speak to us, without *a priori* deciding whether or not a given author had ‘our’ Tanguts in mind.

Tangutology, the study of Tangut language, history and culture, is a small field, but several scholars have dealt with the etymology and use of the name ‘Tangut’ and other names for the Tanguts. Yet, this has been mostly restricted to the study of Asian language sources. Less has been said about how this name ended up in European languages and how it was understood on the other side of Eurasia. Ruth Dunnell, one of the most prolific Tangutologists to publish in English, has detailed the ethnogenesis of the Tanguts and the etymology of ‘Tangut’ in several of her works, especially in a 1984 publication entitled ‘Who are the Tanguts?’. But in this article one only finds brief statements on how the term was used by Europeans from the nineteenth century onwards.⁶ In a relatively recent overview on ‘Tangut’ linguist Juha Janhunen also deals with some European conceptions of the name, but his remarks are also relatively cursory.⁷ More revealing is an entry on the Tangut language in *Languages of the Himalayas* by George van Driem, another linguist. This entry was the catalyst for the present work and among the more important points made by Van Driem is that ‘Tangut’ was used as a name for Tibet before the advent of institutionalized oriental studies in the nineteenth century.⁸ This element and others will be critically returned in greater detail. In sum, it may be said that ‘Tangut’ has had a life of its own among Europeans – or in Gadamerian terms, ‘us’ – before the beginning of Tangutology which merits further looking into.

Methodology, scope, and structure

The Gadamerian concerns outlined above form the overarching issues in this thesis, but in presenting the findings I borrow methodological tools from a particular school of historiography, which is often called by its German name, *Begriffsgeschichte* (‘conceptual history’). In particular these tools were devised by historians like Reinhart Koselleck (1923-2006), a student of Gadamer,

it in a Xiongnu-related way: e.g. Martini 1655, 50. A similar understanding of the name by Martini is found in his work on Chinese history entitled *Sinicae historiae prima decas* (1658): Personal communication, email, 17 May 2016.

⁶ Dunnell 1984, 79f., 86f.

⁷ Janhunen 2007, 65.

⁸ Van Driem 2001, 448.

and Koselleck's fellow contributors of the multivolume *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* project (1972-1997).⁹ In the main it is the idea of a concept as the object of historical inquiry, the distinction between the semasiological and onomasiological, and the relational nature of concepts and terms which helped to structure this thesis.

Gadamer and Koselleck, as well as many other thinkers of twentieth century, shared a preoccupation with the role of language in structuring understanding. *Begriffsgeschichte* embodies this preoccupation in that concepts are made the central object of study and Koselleck and others drew from structural linguistics. According to Melvin Richter this is a decidedly different focus from the usual emphasis on "individual authors, texts, schools, traditions, persisting problems, forms of argument, styles of thought, discourses, ideologies."¹⁰ Koselleck emphasizes that concepts can be drawn from sources or constructed as heuristic categories. Ideally, these should be kept apart, but Koselleck is aware that the same word can be used by authors from the past and a contemporary scholar. It is up to the conceptual historian to show how much the concepts of the sources and those of the scholar converge and diverge.¹¹ In a similar vein this thesis hopes to highlight the distinction between 'our' scholarly defined Tanguts and the use of the name 'Tangut' in European sources.

Like Gadamer's horizons, a concept is not static but susceptible to semantic change and it does not stand in isolation from other concepts. Conceptual historians map what are called semantic fields. A somewhat opaque notion, a semantic field is a cluster of terms which are historically and linguistically close-knit but also act as each other's limits. Like the difference between 'our' and 'their' concept, the possible lack of clear distinctions in names and terms exists in mapping semantic fields as well.¹² In the present work the relational nature of both the term 'Tangut' and the Tanguts as a concept is dealt with time and again. It will be shown that disjunctures arise or persist between geographical and historical vocabularies, and that it is helpful to contemplate neighboring concepts, whether other peoples or places (e.g. China, Tibet, the Mongols, Tartary, etc.). Only through a relational sense then can one situate the name 'Tangut' and the concept Tanguts with some clarity in a larger landscape of historical names and narratives which were transmitted to Europe.

⁹ On Gadamer's influence on Koselleck, see: Richter 1995, 35.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹ Koselleck/Tribe 2004, 256.

¹² Richter 1995, 48.

To deal with the tensions of nomenclature, conceptual historians distinguish between the onomasiological and the semasiological.¹³ Onomasiology means the study of various terms which might refer to what is ostensibly one concept. Semasiology is its opposite, the inquiry into connotations that one term might have. The distinction between onomasiology and semasiology forms the organizing principle of the chapters of this thesis. Chapter one forms the semasiological analysis of the present work and aims to answer the question: What were the main connotations and shifts in meaning for the name ‘Tangut’? It will be argued that as a word of Mongolian origin, ‘Tangut’ entered into European languages in periods when Mongols ruled over the areas and peoples which they referred to by that name. This also appears to have been the prime determinant when the name shifted in meaning, which first referred to Gansu and, from the mid-seventeenth century onwards, (northeastern) Tibet. It will be shown that the name was mostly understood as a toponym and that its geographical ties to other Asian regions known to Europeans were often quite vague, making ‘Tangut’ something of an in-between region.

Chapters two and three constitute the onomasiological part of this thesis, which aims to answer the question: Did medieval and early modern Europeans use ‘Tangut’ in a way similar to present-day scholars and or did they have any conception of the people of the former Xixia? In these chapters the main thesis will be that there is somewhat surprising silence in early European sources. When the name and the concept appear in these sources, thirteenth- and eighteenth-century texts, they often do so as a peripheral Other. It will be argued that this is a consequence of the Mongolian and Chinese gazes that European adopted in the medieval and early modern periods, but the problematic visibility of Tangut ethnic identity in these periods, which informs the onomasiological use or ‘prejudice’ of the present author, will also be discussed. Overall, the three chapters are cautionary in stating what ‘Tangut’ was or who the Tanguts were to medieval and early modern Europeans.

The temporal scope of this thesis roughly spans the years 1250-1750. That is, from the earliest European references to the name ‘Tangut’ to the point where the historical horizon of the early Europeans meets ours, i.e. when the Xixia of the Chinese sources is connected to the name ‘Tangut’. Owing to time and space constraints, the present work halts around the year 1750 for reasons given in chapter three, but further research on later periods might well be done. This was

¹³ Ibid., 47f.

the original intent in this project and it is the present author's contention that in the case of 'Tangut' the following imperative, given by Andrew Gow, applies: "we must undertake a history of culture over the *longue durée* – even if only via a narrow slice".¹⁴

¹⁴ Gow 1998, 66.

1. European-Mongolian perspectives on an in-between region: ‘Tangut’ and its toponymic ties

Describing Tibet in the mid-eighteenth century, one author wondered about recent Jesuit efforts to map the borderlands of China, asking among other things: “How easily might the Missioners have solved all Difficulties concerning the Situation and Extent of *Tangut*, when they were on the Spot?”¹⁵ This frustration concerning the name ‘Tangut’ will become understandable if we consider the main points to be shown in this chapter. ‘Tangut’ was a name medieval and early modern Europeans mostly used as a toponym. The details concerning the term were, however, not always clear, and ‘Tangut’ lend itself to being an especially opaque place name. In what follows the following question will be answered: What were the main connotations and shifts in meaning for the name ‘Tangut’? It will be argued that as a word of Mongolian origin, ‘Tangut’ entered into European languages in periods when Mongols ruled over the areas and peoples which they referred to by that name. At least from Polo onwards, the name referred to the Gansu region. In the seventeenth century the connotation of ‘Tangut’ shifted to nearby (northeastern) Tibet, although the Polian connotation was not lost, as will be shown in section 3.2. Overall, the toponymic ties to other Asian regions known to Europeans – China, Tibet, Tartary and ‘Gog and Magog’ – remained quite vague, making ‘Tangut’ something of an unknown in-between region.

1.1 Mongolian connotations and the adoption of ‘Tangut’ into European languages

Although possibly of Turkic origin, the name ‘Tangut’ as it was used by Europeans derived wholly from Mongolian connotations.¹⁶ These Mongolian conceptions facilitated its connection to Gansu and Tibet when used as a toponym and the Xixia Tanguts and Tibetans as an ethnonym. In this section these understandings are outlined in order to serve as a background for the discussion of the usages of ‘Tangut’ by Europeans. It will be shown, both here and elsewhere in the thesis, that the toponymic use of the name dominated European understanding.

¹⁵ Green 1747, 469 n. i. This source is described in greater detail in section 3.4.

¹⁶ On the Turkic origins of the name, see: Janhunen 2007, 66-68.

Linguistically speaking, the grammatical makeup of the word ‘Tangut’ already reveals its Mongolian origins. The $-[u]t$ or $-[u]d$ suffix is a plural marker in that language and so ‘Tangut’ refers, properly speaking, to a group of people. Historically, there are two connected Mongolian conceptions of the name ‘Tangut’. As Janhunén explains, ‘Tangut’ referred to the people of the Xixia empire, and this use of the name is attested in the oldest written Mongolian source, the *Secret history of the Mongols* (*Mongghol-un ni’ucha tobchiyan*). As the ethnolinguistic makeup of the Gansu region, the former Xixia realm, started to change and Tangut as a spoken language disappeared, whereas varieties of Tibetan remained, the name ‘Tangut’ started to shift its meaning. Mongols started to use the name **tanggud* to distinguish Tibetans of northeast Tibet, which partly overlaps with former Xixia territory, from those of Central Tibet (which Tibetans respectively call A mdo and Dbus Gtsang), whom they call **töbed* or **töbüd*. Janhunén argues that the Mongols conceive(d) of a geographical and ethnic continuity between the Xixia and the Tanguts on the one hand, and A mdo and its Tibetan-speaking population on the other.¹⁷

Janhunén does not specify when the semantic shift from Xixia Tanguts to Tibetan speakers might have occurred. Importantly, Mongolist Christopher Atwood has suggested at the beginning of the thirteenth century the Middle Mongolian *Töböd* or *Töbed*, the name for Central Tibet, was also used to refer to the A mdo Tibetans. Only later, during the period of the Yuan 元 dynasty (1271–1368), the Chinese-style state founded by the descendants of the Mongol ruler Chinggis khan (1162?-1227), did *Töböd* or *Töbed* become the name for Dbus Gtsang.¹⁸ Moreover, initially ‘Tangut’ was mostly used as an ethnonym, which among other things is clear from the *-ut* suffix. But, as Janhunén observes, in the late thirteenth-century, Marco Polo already used the name as a toponym, indicating the so-called Hexi 河西 Corridor.¹⁹ This name means ‘west of the (Yellow) river’ and more or less refers to present-day Gansu 甘肃 province, which forms a natural corridor from the central areas of China in the east to Central Asia in the west.

It is not altogether clear when and how the name was transformed into a toponym, or existed alongside the ethnonymic understanding. In the *Secret history*, ‘Tangut’ is used as an ethnonym, and the grammatical nature of the name would not seem to allow its use as a place

¹⁷ Ibid., 64f.

¹⁸ Atwood 2015a, 38, 41.

¹⁹ Janhunén 2007, 65.

name.²⁰ So was Polo's use of the name anomalous? Another authoritative Mongolian source would seem to suggest that this is not necessarily the case. The source in question is the famous *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh* (*Compendium of chronicles*), a work of history that was finished around 1308 in what had been the southwestern part of the Mongol empire, the Ilkhanate (1256–1335/56).²¹ Usually attributed to the Persian polymath and Ilkhanid vizier Rashīd al-Dīn (1247-1318), the *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh* was a collective project in which the historian was aided by many informants, including a high-ranking and experienced Mongol named Bolad Aqa (ca. 1240-1313).²² The *Compendium* provides a tantalizing etiology concerning 'Tangut':

Formerly the Mongols called it Qashin, but when Ögödäi Qa'an's son Qashi, Qaidu's father, died, [...] the name Qashin became taboo. From that time on they have also called the territory Tangqut, and that is the name by which it is known today.²³

That *Qashin* was a Mongolian name for the Xixia and its former territory is also attested in the *Secret history*, and it derives from the Chinese Hexi mentioned above.²⁴ Further inquiries may be done regarding this Sino-Mongolian name and its supposed naming taboo, but this is a task left for other scholars.²⁵ For present purposes it may be stressed that this quote shows that those in Mongol circles used, or had used, 'Tangut' as a toponym for the same region for which Polo used it.²⁶

In general, European usage of 'Tangut' that predates the Polo's report is minimal, as two reports of travelers to the Mongol empire show. In a letter to a king of Cyprus, an Armenian

²⁰ De Rachewiltz 2004a, 74f., 98, 177f., 189, 196-200.

²¹ Allsen 2001, 83.

²² Considering Rashīd al-Dīn's position at the Ilkhanid court and his sources of information the *Compendium* might be considered to represent Mongol views. For more, see: Allsen 2001, 56, 91.

²³ Rashīd al-Dīn/Thackston 1998, 73.

²⁴ Janhunen 2007, 70. Dunnell 1994, 156. Atwood 2015a, 32n34, 36.

²⁵ Christopher Atwood has expressed his doubts as to whether a naming taboo for 'Qashin' actually was in effect among the Mongols. He noted: "Certainly it ['Qashin'] was used in the SHM [*Secret history*], and in later Yuan sources (in Chinese translated from Mongolian, where we know the translated text had Qashin)": Personal communication, email, 22 June 2016. With the exception of a brief remark in the *Notes on Marco Polo* by Paul Pelliot (1878-1945) I could not find any reference to the taboo in modern-day scholarship. It seems that Pelliot accepted the story provided by the Ilkhanid historian and connects it to Polo's use of the name. Sadly, Pelliot's real thoughts will probably remain unknown. After briefly referring to the matter, Pelliot directs the reader to his entry for 'Tangut' in his *Notes*, but unfortunately, and as in more than one case in this posthumous publication, the work does not contain such an entry: Pelliot 1959, 126.

²⁶ Although, the point here is that the name is used as a toponym in reference to the Xixia important caveats have been given by Dunnell on Rashīd al-Dīn's use of the name *Tangqut*, particularly its imagined extent: Dunnell 2014, 188f.

envoy called Sempad (ca. 1208-1276) refers to a land called *Tanchat* or *Tangat*, names which have been equated with ‘Tangut’.²⁷ While detailed in references to Christianity, little concrete information is given about the location and extent of this country. In a similar vein, and also in a report to a king, the Franciscan friar William of Rubruck (ca. 1215/30-1270?) merely speaks of a people called *Tangut*, described as living east of the Uighurs.²⁸ While both reports circulated in Europe, I have found little evidence to suggest that these accounts were influential in the ways Europeans thought of the name ‘Tangut’.²⁹ Rather, as many of the sources described in this thesis show, it was Polo’s ‘Tangut’ which was referred back to by later Europeans.

As was shown in this section, any European using the name ‘Tangut’ most likely used it along the lines of the connotations which the name had for Mongols. As such, it could be used as both an ethnonym and a toponym, and both for the Xixia and Amdo. Few Europeans before Polo used the name, and in what follows the ways it will be argued that the toponymic understanding predominated and the importance of a Mongolian conception of Polo’s *Tangut* is underscored.

1.2 Polo’s province

Polo has already been referred to a number of times, and his account remains central to this thesis.³⁰ There are certain details about Polo’s description of ‘Tangut’ as a toponym that merit a

²⁷ Ramusio/Yule 1998, 162, 263.

²⁸ Rubruck/Jackson 1990, 204. For the original Latin, see: Rubruck/Wyngaert 1929, 233f., 271.

²⁹ Cf. Jackson 1990, 47, 51-53.

³⁰ There has been skepticism about whether or not Polo traveled to eastern Asia, expressed most notably in Frances Wood’s *Did Marco Polo go to China?* (1996). Considering the centrality of Polo’s account to this thesis, a few words are in order to state my conviction regarding the matter. That Polo’s account represents an itinerary and describes places all of which he himself visited has been rightly doubted. Still, Wood’s overall denial does not represent the scholarly consensus on the matter, which favors the claim that Polo went to the east: Phillips 2014, 34f. More importantly perhaps is the question of whether Polo’s information is reliable. I will argue in this section that this is not necessarily tied to whether he went to all of the regions he described or not, and that the Mongolized nature of Polo’s description is indicative of knowledge of local conditions. Polo is so precise in many ways that it is hard to imagine where he might have gotten this knowledge from besides traveling through the Mongol empire himself. To my mind, especially convincing points have been raised by Hans Vogel in his *Marco Polo was in China* (2013), who explicitly tackles some of the questions that have been raised by Wood. Among the suggestions is that of the possible influence of Arabic and Persian texts, but Vogel considers such input unlikely, because these sources at the time did not match the aforementioned precision of Polo’s geographical understanding of China. Furthermore, that Polo was privy to such information at all supports one of Polo’s claims, namely that he was an official for the Mongols. Finally, Polo’s book would most likely not have been as popular in Europe as it turned out to be if most of the geographical knowledge contained in his account was already known in the west: Vogel 2013, 414-416. To be sure, there remain serious transmission issues regarding Polo’s account and in section 1.6 I will briefly discuss how one such issue might have had an impact. For the most part I have used authoritative works like Henry Yule’s (1820-

more detailed analysis of his use of the name, hence this section. In particular, this part aims to show that although the Venetian's account was not without certain apparent anomalies, he mostly delineated 'Tangut' along the Mongolian connotation that 'Tangut' was the name for former Xixia territory as well as Gansu province. Indeed, it will be argued throughout this thesis that Polo in many respects presents a Mongolized view of Asia.

According to his narrative, Polo, together with his father and uncle, traveled to the summer capital of the supreme ruler of the Mongol empire (*qa'an*) and founder of the Yuan dynasty, Qubilai Khan (r. 1260–1294). A merchant family, the Polos arriving in Qubilai's summer capital, called Shangdu 上都, in 1275, and a still young Marco entered into the *qa'an*'s service.³¹ It seems that the Polos were in the Gansu area ca. 1273-1275, making them among the first recorded Europeans in the region.³² Polo himself notes that he and his relatives were in the Gansu region for some time, staying a year in Ganzhou 甘州 (*Canpiciou*) for what seem to have been commercial reasons.³³

As Figures 1.1 and 1.2 show, what Polo called *Tangut* covers parts of the areas described in section 1.1: the former Xixia realm and some parts of northeastern Tibet.³⁴ The sub-divisions of Polo's *Tangut* further highlight this Mongolized perspective. Atwood has shown that Polo knew Mongolian quite well and seems to have favored this language for many place names in China, as well as those of *Tangut*. Even Chinese toponyms – i.e. those ending in *zhou* 州 ('prefecture') in Fig. 1.2 – were filtered through a Mongolian phonological filter.³⁵

1889) well-known translation (i.e. Polo/Yule 1929) and the so-called Franco-Italian or F manuscript (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Fr. 1116; i.e. Polo/Ronchi 1982, 371-397). Yule also consulted this manuscript, entitled *Le devisement dou monde*, which is dated to the fourteenth century and is usually considered the most original rendition of Polo's 'book'. For more on the F manuscript and Yule's translation, see: Vogel 2013, 16n21, 30, 553f.

³¹ Vogel 2013, 69-80.

³² Ibid., 209. Pelliot 1959, 151. Haw 2006, 50. Olschki/Scott 1960, 270.

³³ Polo/Yule 1929, 220. Cf. the wording in: Polo/Moule and Pelliot 1938, 160. Pelliot 1959, 151. It has also been suggested that Polo returned to Gansu for official business in the second half of the 1270s, see: Vogel 2013, 69n253.

³⁴ For a good overview of Xixia territory, see the map in: Dunnell 1994, 171.

³⁵ Atwood 2015b.

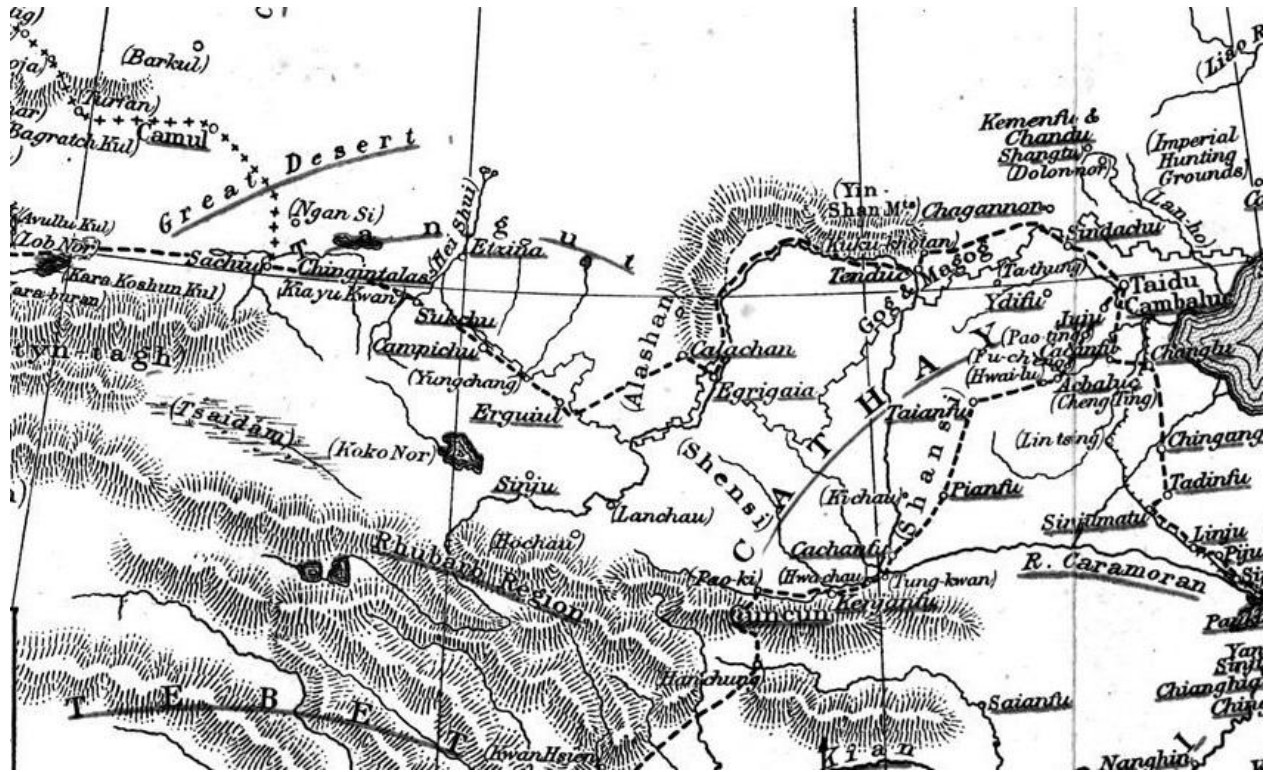


Figure 1.1: Detail of a map showing Polo's toponyms for eastern Eurasia, with *Tangut* relative to *Tebet* and *Cathay* (source: Digital Silk Road Project, Digital Archive of Toyo Bunko Rare Books).³⁶

Figure 1.2: Table of Polo's toponyms for *Tangut*.³⁷

Polo's name ³⁸	Present-day town or area in the PRC	Historical Chinese name
SACIOU / Sachiu	Dunhuang 焯煌, Gansu 甘肃 province	Shazhou 沙州
CAMUL / Camul	Hami 哈密, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region 新疆维吾尔自治区	Chinese: Hamili 合迷里 Uighur: Qomul ³⁹
GHINGHINTALAS / Chingintalas	Possibly near the Tianshan 天山 mountain range. ⁴⁰	
SUCCIU / Sukchu(r)	Jiuquan 酒泉, Gansu	Suzhou 肅州

³⁶ Polo/Yule 1929, facing p. 462.

³⁷ The information shown here is largely based on: Haw 2006, 88-91.

³⁸ Polian toponyms are given first and in capital letters in the most prevalent rendering as found in the F manuscript (Polo/Ronchi 1982) and are followed by Yule's spelling.

³⁹ Pelliot 1959, 153f.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 41, 611.

CANPICIYOU / Campichu	Zhangye 張掖, Gansu	Ganzhou 甘州
EÇINA / Etzina	Khara-khoto (ruins), Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region 內蒙古自治區	Yijinai 亦集乃
ERGINUL & ERGIGUL / Erguiul	Wuwei 武威, Gansu	Xiliangzhou 西涼州
SILINGIU & SINGIU / Sinju	Xining 西寧, Qinghai 青海 province	Xiningzhou 西寧州
EGRIGAIA / Egrigaia	Yinchuan 銀川, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region 宁夏回族自治区	Zhongxingfu 中興府 ⁴¹
CALACIAN / Calachan	Helan 賀蘭 Mountains, Ningxia and Inner Mongolia	Alashan 阿拉善 Mountains

As far as administrative terminology is concerned, Polo uses European designations like ‘kingdom’ and ‘province’, but he clearly states for a number of these locations that they belong to “the Great Kaan”, i.e. Qubilai. According to Hans Vogel and Atwood, Polo’s administrative designations might indicate now known political divisions of the Mongol and Yuan empires (although, cf. section 1.5).⁴² Most of the areas covered by Polo with the name *Tangut* were part of the Xixia and or became part of the Gansu Branch Secretariat 甘肅行省 (or, simply, Gansu province), established in 1281.⁴³

In Polo’s report one finds three places – *Camul*, *Ghingintalas*, and the *Silingiu-Singiu* area – which cannot readily be accounted for as belonging either to (the nascent) Gansu province, (northeastern) Tibet, or the former Tangut state, leading one to wonder why he considers them part of *Tangut*. One explanandum might be based on the fact that for all three locations it has been doubted whether Polo ever went there.⁴⁴ While this might seem a logical train of thought, if

⁴¹ Pelliot 1963, 642.

⁴² Vogel 2013, 399-414. Atwood 2015a, 33.

⁴³ Haw 2006, 90. Vogel 2013, 199.

⁴⁴ Polo/Yule 1929, 211n1, 214n1. Olschki/Scott 1960, 273f. Pelliot 1963, 832.

one assumes that Polo is describing his itinerary, this is not necessarily the cause for the Venetian's apparent *lapsus calami*. Polo was well-informed about local conditions and his description of those places might still have been correct or recognizable to us in some way. Vogel has noted that Polo might have had access to official documents and it would not have been strange to imagine that Polo, out of curiosity or as part of his official duties, inquired about these places.⁴⁵ Indeed, Leonardo Olschki, who has his own reservations about the lands trod by Polo, notes that in his narrative the Venetian often “halts awhile to glance at the surrounding regions”.⁴⁶

The exact location of *Ghinghintalas* has been a mystery for some time and, unfortunately, remains unidentified. It can be noted that it seems to have been too far to the west to have belonged to either to the Xia, Gansu, or Tibet. The incorporation of *Camul* (present-day Hami) is also unclear, but one might invoke what Mongolist Morris Rossabi has said about the Hami region in the period of the Yuan and Ming 明 (1368–1644) dynasties. In these periods, the northwest of China was conceived as a fluid, ill-defined, frontier area, which did not strictly separate Chinese from ‘non-Chinese’ areas. Indeed, Hami was seen as a gateway to Central Asia.⁴⁷ If this view already existed at the time when Polo penned his remarks, it might explain why he incorporated it into his ‘province’ of *Tangut*.

This leaves *Silingiu* and *Singiu*, which has been the subject of some scholarly debate. The conventional wisdom has been to say that the name(s) refers to Xiningzhou, the area around the capital of today's Qinghai province, Xining. Yet, Stephen Haw, whose other identifications I find convincing, believes that the Polian names refer to Xizhou 熙州, which is present-day Lintao 临洮 in Gansu.⁴⁸ This identification has met with some approval.⁴⁹ However, I side with the older identification, because to my mind Atwood has convincingly argued that Polo refers to Xining, noting among other things that Polo's names phonetically match the Yuan era Mongolian ones, that Xizhou was hardly ever used as a name for Lintao during the same period, and, much like

⁴⁵ Vogel 2013, 414.

⁴⁶ Olschki/Scott 1960, 23.

⁴⁷ Rossabi 2014, 20.

⁴⁸ Haw 2006, 90f.

⁴⁹ E.g. Vogel 2013, 199.

Olschki, this might simply be another instance of Polo ‘glancing’ in a particular direction to describe a neighboring area which he may or may not have visited himself.⁵⁰

In sum, the logic of Polo’s inclusion of place names as part of *Tangut* can largely be accounted for on historical and linguistic grounds. Some anomalies exist, but Polo largely presents a Mongolian understanding of the extent of ‘Tangut’ in his book at a time when the Mongols ruled the area. Whether he did so consciously in reference to Amdo or the Xixia, or was aware of either connotation, is difficult to say, and will be further discussed in chapter two.

1.3 The rhubarb of Suzhou: ‘Tangut’ as part of China?

In this section, the interim period between Polo’s report and the next major shift of the name ‘Tangut’ in European accounts is covered, roughly spanning the years 1300-1670. Central to the discussion is whether Europeans were aware of the historical and toponymic ties of Polo’s *Tangut*, i.e. as referring to Gansu, and how they incorporated it vis-à-vis a land which was increasingly becoming better known to Europeans and which had an intimate connection to ‘Tangut’: China.

Like the absence of strong competition for Polo’s *Tangut* before the Venetian’s account, few other medieval Europeans went to the Gansu area after Polo, treated the region in as much detail as he did, or were influential as he proved to be. For example, Francesco di Balduccio Pegolotti (fl. 1310–1347), another merchant from present-day Italy, only briefly mentions the distances it takes to travel to and from *Camexu*, a name which has been identified as Ganzhou.⁵¹ More striking details about the area came to Europe by way of the writings of Giovanni Battista Ramusio (1485–1577). Ramusio had not gone to the Gansu region but was an avid collector of travel tales. A Venetian like Polo, Ramusio published his multivolume *Delle navigationi e viaggi* in the 1550s, which included a version of Polo’s book, but also a story about the Gansu region which reveals how a European was able to make sense of the area centuries after Polo.⁵²

The story concerns a certain “Chaggi Memet”, described as a Persian merchant from an area near the Caspian Sea. Ramusio deals with Chaggi Memet because he felt that the salesman

⁵⁰ Atwood 2015a, 33f.n38.

⁵¹ Pegolotti/Yule 1998, 148.

⁵² Ramusio/Yule 1998, 296.

has some important knowledge to share about rhubarb, a commodity which was increasingly valued in Europe as a medicine.⁵³ Polo had described the presence of rhubarb in Gansu, calling Suzhou (*Succiu*) the place whence the plant is sold worldwide.⁵⁴ The accounts of both Venetians have been considered important sources for what was one of the most desired medicinal products in Europe, culminating in a veritable rhubarb craze in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The location of the best quality rhubarb, the Gansu kind, was long sought after, and even though Europeans would only confirm the native location of this kind in the nineteenth century, many before were evinced awareness of the vicinity in which it grew.⁵⁵

It seems that Ramusio was quite capable of pinpointing the origin of the plant based on what Chaggi Memet told him, and it yields some interesting points about the knowledge that Europeans had of the Gansu region at this time:

[Chaggi Memet] told us that he had been at Succuir and Campion, cities of the province of Tangath⁵⁶, at the commencement of the states of the Great Can, whose name he said was Daimir Can[.]⁵⁷

All of these names can be easily identified as variations of Polo's spellings and occur as such in Ramusio's version of the account of his fellow Venetian, with *Succuir* referring to Suzhou and *Campion* to Ganzhou (cf. Fig. 1.2).⁵⁸ In other words, Ramusio ties Chaggi Memet's story to the places of Polo's *Tangut*.

At the time of Ramusio's writing, the Ming dynasty, the successor of the Yuan, ruled over the Gansu Corridor, which was incorporated into the empire as part of Shaanxi 陝西 province.⁵⁹ It is not clear whether Ramusio was aware of these connections himself, seeing as he uses the term 'khan', which either means he is following Polo's terminology or hints at a Central Asian understanding of the Ming state, which would be logical considering the origin of his interlocutor. A notable indicator in Ramusio's account is his use of 'Cathay', an old European name for China based on Western and Central Asian names for the Kitans, whose Liao dynasty 遼 (907-1125)

⁵³ Ibid., 290.

⁵⁴ Polo/Yule 1929, 217.

⁵⁵ Foust 1992, xiv, 7, 24, 169.

⁵⁶ The original Italian reads *Tanguth*: Ramusio 1559, 14r.

⁵⁷ Ramusio/Yule 1998, 291.

⁵⁸ Ramusio 1559, 13r. (Libro primo of Polo's work).

⁵⁹ Cf. Tan 1990, maps 61-64.

had ruled over substantial parts of China.⁶⁰ The name ‘Cathay’ offers further clues as to how Ramusio situated ‘Tangut’:

[Chaggi Memet] went thither with the caravan that goes with merchandise from Persia and the countries about the Caspian to the regions of Cathay. And this caravan is not allowed to enter further into the country than Succuir and Campion; nor may any merchant belonging to it, unless he go as an ambassador to the Great Can.⁶¹

These remarks seem to suggest that Ramusio, based on the information given by Chaggi Memet, considered Suzhou and Ganzhou parts of *Cathay*. Doing so, he deviates from Polo’s text, in which *Tangut* is situated within the Yuan empire, which we today might consider ‘Chinese’, but not as part of ‘Cathay’.⁶²

The name ‘Cathay’ had more or less been forgotten in Europe until the Jesuit China missionary Matteo Ricci (1552-1619) made the suggestion that ‘Cathay’ and ‘China’ were one and the same. Jesuit counterparts in India were hesitant to accept this conclusion and they sent one of their members, Bento de Goes (1562-1607), to take an overland route to China in order to settle the matter. That ‘Cathay’ was indeed ‘China’ gradually dawned on Goes as he moved into Ming territory in 1605:

Nine days out of Camul, they came to the famous northern wall of China, arriving at a place called Chiaicuon. Here they had to wait twenty-five days for an answer from the Viceroy of the province, to their request to enter. Once within the wall, it took another day of travel to reach the city of Soceu, where they heard talk about Peking and other places they had heard of. It was here that Brother Bento put aside whatever doubt he may still have retained relative to the identity of Cathay and China in everything except in name.⁶³

Chiaicuon refers to Jiayuguan 嘉峪關, an outpost of the Great Wall, near Suzhou (rendered here as *Soceu*).⁶⁴ Other notable names mentioned are *Camul*, the same name used by Polo for present-day Hami, and Ganzhou (*Canceu*; Polo’s *Canpiciou*), the latter being described as an administrative hub and part of Shaanxi (*Scensi*) province.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Pelliot 1959, 229.

⁶¹ Ramusio/Yule 1998, 291.

⁶² Polo/Yule 1929, 274.

⁶³ Trigault/Gallagher 1953, 513.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 607.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 514, 606, 614, 519.

Goes' travel account is contained in *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas suscepta ab Societate Jesu* (1615) by fellow Jesuit Nicolas Trigault (1577–1628).⁶⁶ Combined with Polo's and Ramusio's account, a seventeenth-century European could have concluded that Polo's *Tangut* was part of the Chinese empire, although (s)he might not have been aware of the difference in dynasties. Besides the toponyms, clues would have been remarks about the Ming era travel restrictions, which both Chaggi Memet and Goes faced.⁶⁷ The prized rhubarb would have been another especially tantalizing clue for Europeans, and in a mid-seventeenth century account of the plant one indeed finds the expected conclusion:

Although [rhubarb] is found in all China, it is particularly common in the provinces of Suciven, Xensi, and Socieu, which are near to the wall of China. Marco Polo calls it Sociur. The Moors buy this when their caravans are in Cathay, that is China, and Cambale, or Pequin. (Once Benedict Goes, a Portuguese member of our Society, came there with them, seeking Cathay).⁶⁸

The source is *China illustrata* (1667) by another Jesuit, Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680). Like most Jesuit works discussed in this thesis, *China illustrata* is a compilation of knowledge obtained by missionaries of the Society of Jesus, and as the quote shows, Kircher aimed to synthesize what knowledge existed at the time.⁶⁹ In this case, and besides mentioning Goes, Kircher also mentions Ramusio's account of Chaggi Memet's rhubarb trek.⁷⁰

That Kircher would have thought that the 'Tangut' area belonged to China can be gleaned from the phrase that "Socieu was the first Chinese city [Goes] entered", a city he, in the quote given above, equates with Polo's Suzhou (*Sociur*).⁷¹ Yet, when one looks at a map which was published as part of Kircher's work, a strange situation arises (Fig. 1.3). In the southwestern corner of the detail one reads *Tanchut*, one of Kircher's spellings for 'Tangut', which stands close

⁶⁶ The work has a complex transmission history. Goes had died in Suzhou and was unable to convey his story himself. Rather, it was Goes's travel companion, an Armenian by the name of Isaac, who, with the help of some papers by Goes, relayed the account to Ricci. The final work itself was based on a manuscript by Ricci, but written by Trigault: Trigault/Gallagher 1953, 521.

⁶⁷ Trigault/Gallagher 1953, 515.

⁶⁸ Kircher/Van Tuyl 1987, 178.

⁶⁹ Elsewhere Kircher explicitly states that he wishes to make known the insights of his fellow Jesuits and report on lesser known lands: Kircher/Van Tuyl 1987, 225.

⁷⁰ Kircher/Van Tuyl 1987, 179.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

to *Tibet*.⁷² It is put neither as a designation for Polo's toponyms, shown in the north, nor as the last area which Goes visited, shown in the east and which is marked *Cataium* ('Cathay').

In sum, *China illustrata* stands as a synthesis of the works of Polo, Ramusio, and Trigault, and this would have given readers the impression that, and somewhat in spite of Polo's own remarks, 'Tangut' was a rhubarb rich province of China, formerly known as 'Cathay'. However, Kircher's map shows a shift in the conceptualization of 'Tangut', and this will be discussed in the next section.

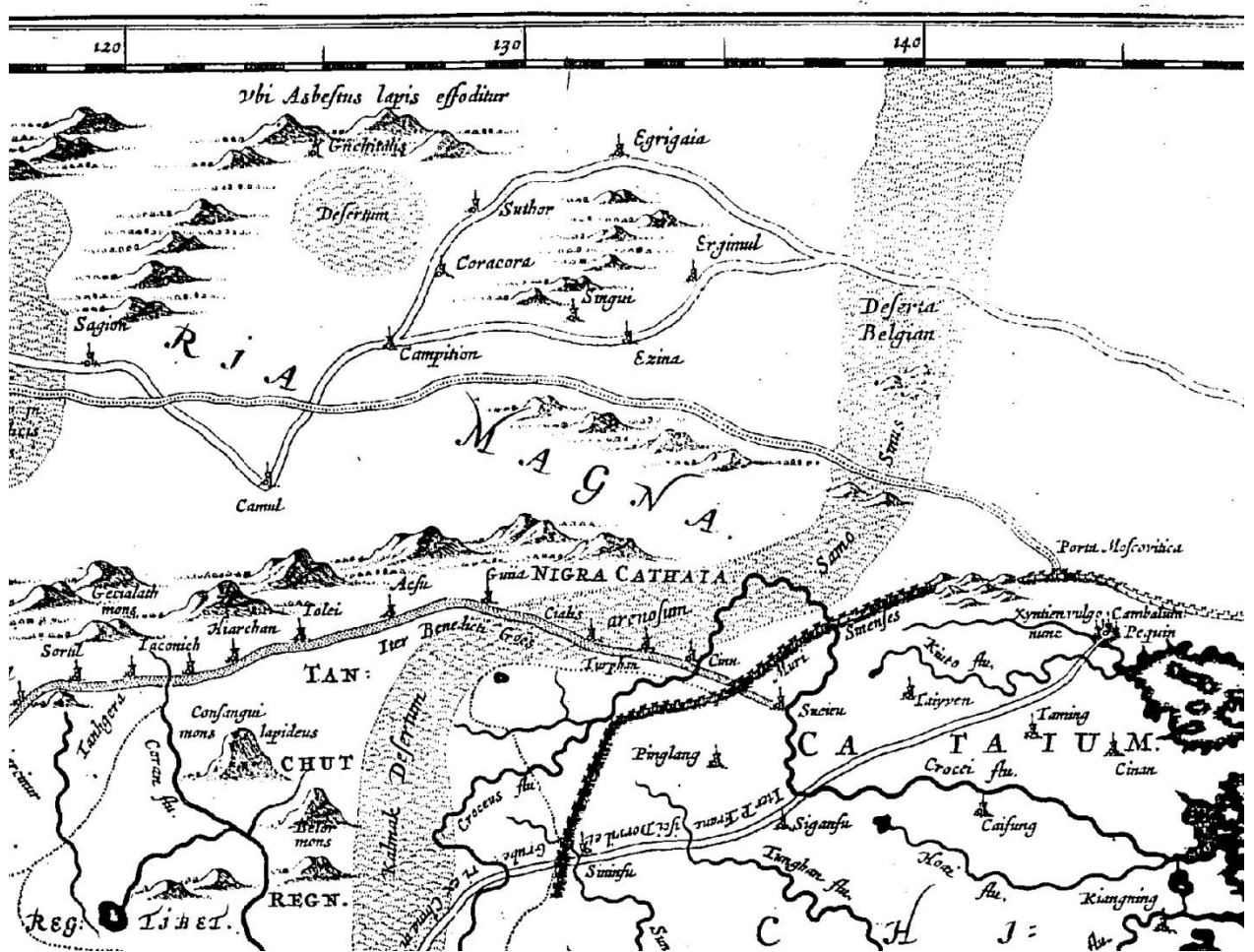


Figure 1.3: Detail of Kircher's *Tabula geodoborica itinerum a varijs in Cataium susceptorum rationem exhibens*, published as part of *China illustrata* (source: Gallica, Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter BnF)).⁷³

⁷² As translator Charles Van Tuyl has noted, Kircher was quite inconsistent when it came to the spelling of proper names, which includes toponyms like 'Tangut', which is sometimes given as *Tanchut*: Kircher/Van Tuyl 1987, i.

1.4 Ties to Tartary and Tibet: a shift in the meaning of ‘Tangut’

As was noted in the Introduction, Van Driem has shown that the name ‘Tangut’ had meant (northeastern) Tibet for early modern Europeans. Kircher’s *China illustrata* is the oldest source he invokes and it seems that it was the first widespread work to present the connotation that ‘Tangut’ is another name for northeastern Tibet.⁷⁴ Van Driem observed that Kircher distinguished ‘Tangut’ from Central Tibet, which would mean that he followed the (later) Mongolian convention to denote Amdo with ‘Tangut’ (as discussed in section 1.1). However, Van Driem offers few further details and the semantic shift of the name warrants a closer inspection. It will be shown in this section that it was one of Kircher’s informants, a fellow Jesuit named Johann Grueber (1623-1680) who most likely inspired the new understanding of the name ‘Tangut’. It will be stressed that like Polo, Grueber’s innovation stemmed from a period in which Mongols ruled an area of the Sino-Inner Asian borderlands. Yet, and again like the previous sections, it will also be shown that the new definition of ‘Tangut’ was not always as clearly presented in *China illustrata* as it would seem to be. In this section the European conception of Tartary is also introduced, which became more frequently used in reference to ‘Tangut’ and the Tanguts from the seventeenth century onwards (cf. chapter three).

Tibet and other parts of Inner Asia remained *terrae incognitae* to most Europeans for the better part of the seventeenth century, although for religious reasons Jesuits were becoming increasingly interested in Tibet.⁷⁵ There is little to indicate that before the mid-seventeenth century the name ‘Tangut’ was tied to the concept Tibet or Tibetans. Polo describes a country called *Tebet*, but as Haw explains this refers to the Tibetan areas of present-day Sichuan 四川 province and not the Mongolian name for Central Tibet, and Polo himself does not connect the names *Tebet* and *Tangut*.⁷⁶ A lack of overlap or clear ties between ‘Tangut’ and Tibet is also evident among other medieval authors. For instance, Rubruck also uses the name *Tebet*, using it as an ethnonym as he does for *Tangut*, but he too keeps the two names distinct.⁷⁷ Another

⁷³ Kircher/Van Tuyl 1987, facing p. 228.

⁷⁴ Van Driem 2001, 448.

⁷⁵ Lach and Van Kley 1993, 1755, 1773, 1778.

⁷⁶ Haw 2006, 98f.

⁷⁷ Rubruck/Jackson 1990, 158f.

Franciscan friar whose account shows little connection between the two names is that of Odoric of Pordenone (ca. 1286-1331), who talks about *Tibet*, but makes no mention of ‘Tangut’.⁷⁸

In Kircher’s own day the names ‘Tangut’ and ‘Tibet’ still appear to have been kept distinct in the minds of Europeans. For example, Kircher drew from the *Novus atlas Sinensis* (1655), a widely-read work by another Jesuit and former student of Kircher, Martino Martini (1614-1661). In a section called ‘On eastern Tartary’ (*De orientali Tartaria*), Martini describes a land named *Tanyu* which he claims Polo called *Tangu*, and which in contemporary scholarship as well as in the early modern period has been considered to refer to Polo’s ‘Tangut’.⁷⁹ The name is differentiated from *Tibet*, which he situates as a different part of eastern Tartary: *Sifan*.⁸⁰ This name is a transcription for Xifan 西蕃, a generic name used by Chinese authors for the peoples on their western borders.

That Martini treats *Tangu* and *Tibet* as two different parts of eastern Tartary is significant. Not only does it indicate a lasting sense of distinction between Tibet and ‘Tangut’, it shows where ‘Tangut’ was being situated by early modern Europeans. Tartar was a name which medieval Europeans like Polo used in reference to the Mongols. Tartary, however, became a name for what one might today term Inner Asia, the vast area between Europe and China. By the seventeenth century, the name connoted a no-man’s-land where largely undifferentiated, ‘barbarian’, peoples lived. The only two groups to be clearly described, in part owing to the work of Martini, were the western Tartars, mostly referring to the Mongols, and the eastern Tartars, referring to the Jurchens of the Jin 金 (1115-1234) and the Manchus who in the seventeenth century overthrew the Ming and conquered China.⁸¹ By describing ‘Tangut’ as part of Tartary, the increasingly difficult to understand name ‘Tangut’ was becoming part of a larger nondescript entity.

A little over a decade after the publication of the *Novus atlas Sinensis*, Kircher connects ‘Tangut’ to ‘Tibet’, in spite of a lack of an apparent precedent. The reason for this seems to lie in Kircher’s incorporation of information furnished by the Jesuit father Johann Grueber. Grueber

⁷⁸ Odoric/Yule 1998, 247-254.

⁷⁹ Martini 1655, 21f. I have used a Dutch translation of Martini’s work: i.e. Blaeu 1655. For interpretations of *Tangu* as ‘Tangut’, see: Witsen 1705, 319. Lach and Van Kley 1993, 1767. Cf. the problems concerning Martini’s *Tanyu* on p. 9 n. 5 in the Introduction of this thesis.

⁸⁰ Martini 1655, 23.

⁸¹ Osterhammel 2010, 247f. Antonucci 2015, 119.

had traveled through Tibet in 1661 with another Jesuit, Albert D'Orville (1621-1662). Their goal had been to take an alternative route to Europe, because the Jesuits were prevented from taking the usual journey out of China via Macau.⁸² D'Orville died in Agra in present-day northern India, leaving only Grueber to relay the story to Kircher who described it in his *China illustrata*, although important remarks by Grueber could have been found elsewhere in the early modern period.⁸³ It is Grueber's journey which would have provided Europeans with a novel understanding of the name 'Tangut', for it is used as the name for the country which he and D'Orville traveled through: Tibet.⁸⁴

As was shown in section 1.1, the very use of the name 'Tangut' implies a Mongolian origin. Kircher provides clues which strengthen that suspicion. For instance, he remarks that "Tartars called Kalmuck" live in 'Tangut'.⁸⁵ This most likely refers to Kalmycks, a name for the Oirat Mongols. We are further told of "the dead king Han of the Tanguth", a figure that has been identified by some scholars as the Oirat ruler Gushri Khan (1582–1655).⁸⁶ Gushri Khan had come to the aid of the fifth Dalai Lama Ngag dbang Blo bzang Rgya mtsho (1617–82), the leader of the Dge lugs pa sect of Tibetan Buddhism, conquered northeastern Tibet, and was subsequently proclaimed khan of Tibet by the Dalai lama. The khan's descendants still ruled Amdo when the Jesuits visited it and the presence of Oirats would have presented a strong Mongolian influence to the father when they traveled from the north to the south.

Some evidence exists to the effect that Grueber saw the Lands of Snows through Mongolian eyes, or heard about it through Mongolian ears, not unlike Polo. As Cornelius Wessels explains, Grueber had an "imperfect acquaintance with the Tartar language, to which he himself confesses", which in this case most likely refers to Mongolian.⁸⁷ In this remark lie two clues. First, the combination of recently established Mongol rule in Amdo, Grueber's own pioneering journey – remember that few Europeans had gone to Tibet before this time – and the fact that Grueber knew some Mongolian suggests that the Jesuit had picked up the name 'Tangut'

⁸² Wessels 1924, 175.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁸⁴ Their journey is given in: Kircher/Van Tuyl 1987, 60-70.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁸⁶ Lach and Van Kley 1993, 1769n68, 1775f. Atwood 2004, 288. Kircher/Van Tuyl 1987, 61. On Gushri Khan and the Oirats, see: Atwood 2004, 211, 288f., 573f.

⁸⁷ Wessels 1924, 183. These remarks are from a recorded conversation between Grueber and two other persons in 1666 in Florence. For more on this source, see: Wessels 1924, 170.

from Oirat Mongols in conditions similar to Polo centuries before. Consequently, this would explain why Kircher chose to use the name mainly for Grueber's new found land, rather than the areas traversed by Polo and Goes.

The second clue is that Grueber, having an imperfect grasp of the language, might explain something unaddressed by Van Driem: Why did early modern Europeans sometimes define 'Tangut' as the entirety of Tibet, rather than along the lines of the bifurcated Mongolian nomenclature for northeastern and Central Tibet (cf. section 1.1)? For example, one finds in *China illustrata* remarks like these:

Certainly our Fathers Albert de Dorville and Johannes Grueber amply testify that right up to the present day there remain traces of Prester John in the royal kingdom of Tanchut, which the inhabitants call Lassa and the Saracens call Barantola, and which they crossed while returning from China to Europe in 1661.⁸⁸

Lassa refers to Lhasa, which Grueber and D'Orville visited, and while in the main report on the Jesuits' journey the constituents of Tibet are kept relatively separate, here they are conflated.⁸⁹

After the publication of *China illustrata*, Europeans seem to have been somewhat at a loss as to what the true extent of 'Tangut' was. Kircher's usage was definitely incorporated among the conceptualizations, but as one Dutch text shows, Martini's *Tanyu* as well as Polo's toponyms could be found side by side in reference to Grueber's 'Tangut' in what the author describes as a "great Tartar realm" (*groot Tartarsch Ryk*) encompassing many lesser realms.⁹⁰ It might also be remembered that at the start of this chapter a source was quoted lamenting the lack of clarity 'Tangut' roughly eighty years after *China illustrata* had been published. Considering that Tibet was relatively unknown at the time and Grueber's limited understanding of Mongolian, it might well be that Grueber, and subsequently those reading or hearing about his account, were not able to make the distinction between the parts of Tibet that Mongols made.

This section showed that a novel way of using the name 'Tangut' entered into Europe following the report on Grueber's journey in *China illustrata*. Like Polo's account centuries before, the name came to Europe under similar conditions: a European man with some

⁸⁸ Kircher/Van Tuyl 1987, 46.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁹⁰ Witsen 1705, 319, 323f. Van Driem also refers to this text: Van Driem 2001, 448.

understanding of Mongolian, had traveled in an area of the Sino-Inner Asian borderlands which had been recently conquered by Mongols and was under strong Mongol influence, was hitherto largely unknown to Europeans, and the information was relayed in a popular work. But this new understanding also seems to have engendered a sense of vagueness about what the extent of ‘Tangut’ was, beyond a large area near, part or encompassing Tibet and Tartary. The issue of this nondescript nature of ‘Tangut’ will be further pursued in the next sections.

1.5 Kingdom, province, region, or empire? Notes on administrative terminology

If it may be said that there was an overall opaqueness regarding the extent of ‘Tangut’ in the early modern period, this was exacerbated by the use of imprecise administrative terminology. As was noted in section 1.3, Polo used terms like ‘province’ and ‘kingdom’ and Vogel and Atwood take the use of such terms as an indication of Yuan era designations. Yet, it might be noted that Polo uses the term ‘province’ somewhat inconsistently, and he uses it both in reference to *Tangut* and constituent areas like *Saciou* (Shazhou) and *Succiu* (Suzhou), both in present-day western Gansu province.⁹¹

If Polo may be said to have taken some liberties when it pertained to nomenclature, this was further compounded in later centuries. Two extreme examples can be given to highlight this, even though most early modern authors and cartographers simply, and apparently unreflectively, seem to use Polo’s ‘provinces’ and ‘kingdoms’. The first example is the 1492 globe by Martin Behaim (1459-1507). There one can find *Tangut* shown as a ‘kingdom’ in Tartary (*Koninkreich in Tartaria*), the ‘region’ of *Tangut* (*Tangut region*), and as the great mountain range *Tangut* of the land of *Tangu* (*Tanguth das gros gebirg des lands Tangu*).⁹²

The second example comes from *China illustrata*, where Kircher at one point calls ‘Tangut’ an “empire” without further commenting on why such imperial terminology was

⁹¹ One might object and say that Polo speaks of a “General Province” of *Tangut*, given as *grant provence* in the F manuscript. However, the Venetian only specifies this for *Succiu* and not when he introduces *Tangut* in his chapter on *Saciou*: Polo/Yule 1929, 203, 217. Cf. Polo/Ronchi 1982, 371, 377.

⁹² Baddeley 1964, cvii.

appropriate.⁹³ As Chen Bo 陳波 has recently shown, even a historically important concept as China was in the seventeenth century inconsistently referred to as both a ‘kingdom’ and an ‘empire’ by well-informed Jesuits like Martini.⁹⁴ However, for China this changed in the following century, partly as a result of how it was understood vis-à-vis its neighbors.⁹⁵ For ‘Tangut’, on the other hand, the terminology remained largely inconsistent (although cf. section 3.3). On the whole then, those interested in what lay behind the name ‘Tangut’ would not only have had a hard time establishing where this ‘province’ or ‘kingdom’ exactly was and how much territory the name covered, but what type of country it denoted.

1.6 ‘Tangut’ as part of a greater whole: cartography and Christian worldview

If ‘Tangut’ may have appeared as an imprecisely delineated region of Tartary, the abovementioned examples do show that geographers and cartographers incorporated the name in their works. In this final part of the semasiological analysis of ‘Tangut’ as a toponym, we will turn to the dominant cartographic representation of the name in the middle ages and early modern period. Until the late seventeenth century, many maps showed ‘Tangut’ in the northeastern corner of Asia. In what follows it will be shown that maps present us with examples of worldviews made manifest and that the northeastern positioning of ‘Tangut’ can be explained as a consequence of a combination of a Christian worldview and Polo’s place names. Importantly, and much like the previous section, what stands out in the examples given is that ‘Tangut’ itself lacks a clear character and is something of an epistemic byproduct: it is there because seemingly more important attendant names and concepts needed to figure on a given map.

In the Introduction the importance of fusing horizons and the relational nature of concepts and terms were discussed. Maps provide telltale signs of how such fusing and relationality comes together or is perceived. In his reflections on the history of European cartography, Christian Jacob describes cartographers as evincing a desire for what he calls completeness: mapmakers

⁹³ Kircher/Van Tuyl 1987, 81.

⁹⁴ Chen 2015, 405.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 406-408.

seem to aim to incorporate all available or relevant knowledge into their work.⁹⁶ However, in their attempt at creating what Jacob terms the synoptic gaze, a totalizing snapshot overview, much is lost and the genealogies of the toponyms shown on maps are often effaced.⁹⁷ One result of the synoptic and completeness tendencies of cartographers is that removing names or allowing blank spaces was for a long time disallowed, and cartographers would sometimes add multiple toponyms in one map for what is in fact one place, something also evident in Fig. 1.3.⁹⁸ This creates what to us would appear as historical disconnects, as though one would place Constantinople, Byzantium, and Istanbul in one map as three distinct cities. Good examples of curious spatial-temporal representation are the maps which feature ‘Tangut’ in the far northeast of Asia. In what follows, I maintain that ‘Tangut’ was presented in this way not by virtue of any inherent quality ascribed to the name, but as a result of a textual reference in Polo’s report on another ‘province’ neighboring ‘Tangut’, called ‘Tenduc’, and its ties to the biblical collocation ‘Gog and Magog’. In other words, ‘Tangut’ owed its steady depiction to the completeness and synoptic tendencies of cartography on the one hand, and somewhat incidental intertextual ties on the other.

Scholars have established that by ‘Tenduc’ Polo meant Tiande 天德, a region northeast of *Tangut*, where the Turkic-speaking Öng’üts lived (cf. Fig. 1.1).⁹⁹ Quite often European cartographers placed ‘Tenduc’ near the names ‘Gog and Magog’, a connection they must have based on Polo’s report on ‘Tenduc’:

Here also is what *we* call the country of Gog and Magog; *they*, however, call it Ung and Mungul, after the names of two races of people that existed in that Province before the migration of the Tartars. *Ung* was the title of the people of the country, and *Mungul* a name sometimes applied to the Tartars.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Jacob/Conley 2006, 212f.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 237f.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 210f.

⁹⁹ Polo/Yule 1929, 294n5. Pelliot 1963, 849-851.

¹⁰⁰ Polo/Yule 1929, 285.

Recently, Atwood has tried to analyze what this passage from Polo's travelogue might mean in the Öng'üt context, but the ties between 'Tangut', 'Tenduc', and 'Gog and Magog' mostly seem to be an intra-European affair.¹⁰¹

The first connection concerns the names 'Gog and Magog', the presence of which in European cartography has been outlined by Andrew Gow. The dominant understanding of the names 'Gog and Magog' is based on a passage in the final book of the Bible, specifically verses 7-8 of Revelation 20.¹⁰² There, 'Gog and Magog' are portrayed as the peoples who will have a role to play as Satan's destroyers at the end of days. In the middle ages, this prophecy had become enmeshed with other tales about the famed Greek conqueror Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), who battled with and ultimately locked up 'wild and unclean' peoples in the east, which were identified as 'Gog and Magog'. With the help of God, Alexander enclosed 'Gog and Magog' behind barriers, to be released during the eschaton.¹⁰³ The presence of 'Gog and Magog' in European maps served as a reminder of a past event, but also of an apocalyptic future still to come, and maps featuring 'Gog and Magog' depicted a history of salvation inscribed onto what might today seem as mundane depictions of the known world. In time, Polo's narrative fed into the stream of 'Gog and Magog' lore, and at least until the late seventeenth-century co-constituted a complex representation of scriptural and popular imagination.¹⁰⁴ The Alexandrian account already put 'Gog and Magog' somewhere in the east and the other elements to the story, as well as the possible influence of the Berber cartographer Muhammad al-Idrisi (1100-1165), put the biblical names in the northeast of many European maps of the medieval and early modern ages.¹⁰⁵ That 'Tangut' was placed near 'Gog and Magog' is not surprising, because the neighboring 'province' of 'Tenduc' was already connected to the apocalyptic collocation by Polo.

A second connection is of a scribal kind. Polo's narrative was spread in a variety of manuscript traditions which sometimes differ in detail, including the spelling of toponyms. Although most authoritative manuscripts keep 'Tangut' and 'Tenduc' distinct, in certain traditions 'Tangut' was used another name for 'Tenduc'. In his *Notes on Marco Polo*, the versatile scholar Paul Pelliot (1878-1945) lists several names for 'Tenduc' – e.g., *Tangut*,

¹⁰¹ Atwood 2014, 524.

¹⁰² Gow 1998, 62.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 62f.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 74f.

¹⁰⁵ Anderson 1932, 96.

Tanguth, *Trangut*, *Stangut* – which overlap so greatly with *Tangut* that anyone using these manuscripts was undoubtedly liable to mistake one for the other.¹⁰⁶ Early modern Europeans repeatedly conflated ‘Tenduc’ and ‘Tangut’ and this may well have stemmed from the use of different manuscript traditions. Besides establishing the ‘Tangut’-‘Tibet’ connection, Kircher’s *China illustrata* was important in bolstering such a conflation.¹⁰⁷

A number of striking maps are briefly discussed to show how the cartographic depiction of ‘Tangut’ in the northeast exemplifies the cartographic and textual trends discussed above. The first example is the well-known *mappa mundi* (ca. 1450) by the Camaldolese monk Fra Mauro (ca. 1390-1460) (Fig. 1.4). In the top right of the detail one finds ‘Tangut’ along with other related names. Noticeably, ‘Tenduc’ (*Tenduch*), called both a ‘kingdom’ and a ‘province’, covers a number of parts of Fig. 1.4. In some of his legends, Fra Mauro deals with ‘Gog and Magog’, but he does so in a somewhat skeptical manner.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, Fra Mauro still chose to depict a separate peninsula, bearing the name ‘Tenduc’, with a gate bordering it off from the rest of the world, and this is typical of ‘Gog and Magog’-style cartography.¹⁰⁹ As far as ‘Tangut’ is concerned, it may be noted that besides being presented as an adjacent area of ‘Tenduc’, one finds *Ezina* (*Eçina*), today’s Khara-khoto and a town of Polo’s *Tangut*, shown on the peninsula. This possibly indicates that Fra Mauro considered ‘Tangut’ and ‘Tenduc’ to be one and the same. An interesting and possibly revealing detail about the friar’s map, is that it is now known that Fra Mauro a Venetian manuscript of Polo’s account, and it was precisely Venetian vernacular traditions which sometimes conflated ‘Tenduc’ and ‘Tangut’.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Pelliot 1963, 849.

¹⁰⁷ Van Tuyl 1987, 44. The following early modern author explicitly refers to Kircher, presumably meaning his *China illustrata*: Witsen 1705, 322f.

¹⁰⁸ Falchetta 2006, 685 (*2752). Gow 1998, 80.

¹⁰⁹ Gow 1998, 68.

¹¹⁰ Cattaneo 2011, 190, 195-197. Pelliot 1963, 849. For a classification of these versions, see: Polo/Moule and Pelliot 1938, 511f., 516.



Figure 1.4: Detail of Fra Mauro's *mappa mundi* (source: British Library).¹¹¹

The next two sixteenth-century examples are important hallmarks in the history of cartography. The *Ta. superioris Indiae et Tartariae maioris* (1522) by Lorenz Fries (ca. 1490-1531) was among the earliest printed maps of the Asian region (Fig. 1.4).¹¹² One finds 'Tangut', and what appears to be the sub-regions of *Eçina* (*Ezima*) and Xining (*Singvi*), sitting close to *Amagoch* ('Gog and Magog'). 'Tangut' either substitutes 'Tenduc' or 'Tenduc' itself is merely shown by

¹¹¹ Mauro/Frazer 1804. Note that this map is oriented with south as the top.

¹¹² Chang 2003, 144.

Amagoch. According to Gow, with this map ‘Gog and Magog’ have ‘gone native’, because the legend above the tents depicts “the Great Tartar Gog-khan [*Gogchaam*] king of kings and lord of lords”.¹¹³ As may be recalled, Polo had connected ‘Tenduc’ to ‘Gog’ and ‘Magog’ to the *Munguls*, of which Polo himself notes that it is another name for the Tartars, i.e. the Mongols.¹¹⁴



Figure 1.5: Detail of Fries’s *Ta. superioris Indiae et Tartariae maioris* (source: BnF).¹¹⁵

The next sixteenth-century map was part of what is often considered the first modern atlas, the *Theatrum orbis terrarium* (1570) by Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598) (Fig. 1.5).¹¹⁶ In one respect the map is akin to that of Fries. Its title, *Tartariae sive magni chami regni typus*, indicates that one is again dealing with Tartary and the realm of the Great khan. Undoubtedly, Ortelius, like Fries before him, was indebted to using such designations based on Polo as well as the increasing

¹¹³ Gow 1998, 85.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Atwood 2014, 524.

¹¹⁵ Fries 1522.

¹¹⁶ Nebenzahl 2004, 12.

use of the name Tartary. ‘Tangut’ and Polo’s *Tangut*-related toponyms can be found in the far northeast. Remarkably, ‘Tenduc’ sits south of ‘Tangut’ and ‘Gog and Magog’ are absent. One might be tempted to say that ‘Tangut’ stands in for ‘Gog and Magog’, however the name *Arsareth* suggests otherwise. According to the legends of the map, these refer to the Ten lost tribes of Israel, another Bible-inspired story.¹¹⁷ As Gow explains, from the twelfth century onwards, Europeans equated these tribes with ‘Gog and Magog’.¹¹⁸ It appears then that Ortelius, preferring the tribes, nonetheless anchored ‘Tangut’ in the combined world of Polo’s Asia and apocalyptic cartography.



Figure 1.6: Detail of Ortelius’s *Tartariae sive magni chami regni typus* (source: BnF).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Baddeley 1964, cxxii.

¹¹⁸ Gow 1998, 68.

¹¹⁹ Ortelius 1574.

The final example is a late-seventeenth century map (ca. 1670) by Frederik de Wit (ca. 1629-1706). In it one still finds *Gog* next to *Ung* and *Tenduc* and *Magog* next to *Mongul*, in clear reference to Polo's account (Fig. 1.6). *Tanguth* is situated nearby, closer to *Cathay* than *Sina*, although both names indicate China. De Wit's map exemplifies the doubling of toponyms as well the effacing effects of the synoptic gaze discussed earlier. In general, De Wit depicts multiple worlds: the eschatological representation is still there, but new knowledge is seeping into the overall depiction. The representation of China is in part influenced by Jesuit cartographers like Martini, who was in turn inspired by Chinese mapmakers. A good example of a debt to Chinese cartography is the black haze depicting the desert of Shamo 沙漠 (*Xamo* in Martini's spelling).¹²⁰ Other discoveries also crowd the map, like newly discovered lands such as *Iedso* (Hokkaido).



Figure 1.7: Detail of De Wit's *Accuratissima totius Asiae* (source: BnF).¹²¹

These examples attest to a number of issues addressed in this section. Maps represent a holistic attempt to incorporate a wide range of cultural elements and the 'Tangut'-'Tenduc'-'Gog and

¹²⁰ Nebenzahl 2004, 128, 136. Foss 1988, 216.

¹²¹ De Wit 1670.

Magog' representations show meaningful multi-temporal worldviews: Polian toponyms grafted onto salvation which is writ large on the map. In a variation of Edward Said's (1935-2003) 'Orientalism', Gow calls such cartographic representations of 'Gog and Magog' 'septentrionalism'. Like Said's Orientalism, it represents a bias and othering of a part of the world, but is more geared towards medieval Christendom. As De Wit's map shows, this septentrionalist worldview lasted into the seventeenth century, at which point the eschatological conception of history of many Europeans diminished.¹²²

For all its staying power, however, one thing is noticeable: 'Tangut' is something of a byproduct to all of this. It owes its place to two different contingencies. In part its incorporation into maps seems due to the completeness reflexes of cartographers unwilling to delete names from their maps or allow for a sense of not-knowing, something which only became more accepted in the eighteenth century.¹²³ In another way, 'Tangut' is represented as an empty symbol in a world full of meaning. The name mostly underscores its ties to 'Tenduc' and, by virtue of this connection, to 'Gog and Magog', which is the ultimate determinant of the northeasterly placement of the toponyms in European maps. As such, while tantalizing for many reasons, these maps arguably show most of all that if Europeans thought 'Tangut' it only indicated "the Difficulties concerning the Situation and Extent of *Tangut*", as the eighteenth-century author quoted at the beginning of this chapter pointed out.

Conclusion

This chapter showed the origins and complexities concerning the name 'Tangut' in the medieval and early modern periods. A term of Mongolian origin, 'Tangut' was already infused with various meanings by the Mongols, being used both for the former Xixia territory and northeastern Tibet, two neighboring but not wholly overlapping areas in both historical and geographical terms. Moreover, 'Tangut' could be used as an ethnonym and a toponym. Europeans, following Polo, mostly used it as a toponym for the Gansu region. The Venetian's conception of the name was very Mongolized, and almost all his toponyms for *Tangut* can be understood as part of his general Mongol outlook or his writing style. There was some precision in the way later

¹²² Gow, 1998, 65, 87. Koselleck/Tribe 2004, 284.

¹²³ Jacob/Conley 2006, 146.

Europeans understood Polo's *Tangut*, and authors like Ramusio and Trigault conveyed a largely accurate geographical account of the Gansu region, which was of interest to them because of rhubarb and the 'China'-'Cathay' issue. Although Kircher correctly saw the Gansu area as part of the Ming era border province Shaanxi and connecting the various toponyms of Polo, Ramusio, and Trigault, in his *China illustrata* he presented an alternative conception of 'Tangut' as a name for Tibet. Yet, this new understanding of the name can be easily grasped if one considers that his source for this conception was Grueber, who traveled through Amdo at a time when it was ruled by Oirat Mongols. Much like Polo, the semantic shift of the name occurred as a consequence of an account by a European man with some understanding of Mongolian, who had traveled in an area of the Sino-Inner Asian borderlands which had been recently conquered by Mongols and was under strong Mongol influence, with the information being relayed in a popular work. The Mongolian conceptual fluidity of the name 'Tangut' allowed for such a shift, but beyond Grueber's possibly limited understanding of Mongolian it does not explain why Kircher, and Europeans after him, used 'Tangut' for the entirety of Tibet. Indeed, it might also be said that after Polo the understanding of the name 'Tangut' became increasingly vague. 'Tangut' was indiscriminately called a 'kingdom', 'province', or 'empire', and European cartographers used this obscure name mostly as a byword for 'Tenduc', connected to the arguably more significant 'Gog and Magog'. The overall sense that one might have gotten in mid-seventeenth century was that 'Tangut' was an in-between region of Tartary, of unclear extent and historical background. The opaqueness with which 'Tangut' was described is cause for some suspicion about what Europeans knew about the Xixia and it is for these and other reasons that we turn to the onomasiological part of the thesis which aims to further critically lay out what 'Tangut' meant, and not meant, to our predecessors.

2. A sense of the Xixia? ‘Tangut’ and the Tanguts in thirteenth-century texts

In the 1970s, Tangutologist A.P. Terentyev-Katansky (1934–1998) published an article on the appearance of the Tanguts, by which he meant the people of the Xixia. Terentyev-Katansky utilized sources from the well-known Saint Petersburg collection of Tangut texts and material culture which were transported from the ruins of Khara-khoto (Polo’s *Eçina* in present-day Inner Mongolia in the PRC) in the early twentieth century.¹²⁴ Besides using these materials, he also invokes the account of the Venetian:

Most of the records attribute a protruding nose and thick beard to the Tanguts. But Marco Polo in his book asserts that the Tanguts were snub-nosed and beardless. Iconographic material clarifies the matter to some extent.¹²⁵

There is an important supposition behind this presentation of evidence: Terentyev-Katansky assumes, rather than demonstrates, that what Polo refers to as ‘Tangut’ is what we today think of when we see this name. As was discussed in the Introduction, one of the goals of this thesis is to provide a corrective for such assumptions and this chapter urges caution when it concerns medieval European reports like that of Polo and William of Rubruck, briefly mentioned in chapter one.

Asking the question ‘Did Europeans have a conception of the Xixia Tanguts?’, this and the next chapter form the onomasiological part of the thesis. These two chapters share a similar structure. First, the concept of the Tanguts as an ethnic group vis-à-vis the sources of the two periods to be discussed will be reflected upon. The main argument will be that when the Tanguts appear in European sources, they do so as a peripheral Other or hardly at all. The relative silence on the people of the Xixia will itself be a topic of inquiry, and it will be suggested that the sources which European used engendered the marginalization of the Tanguts in European ethnographic and historical accounts.

¹²⁴ On the history of Tangutology, the Saint Petersburg collection, and the work of Terentyev-Katansky, see chapters one and two in: Galambos 2015.

¹²⁵ Terentyev-Katansky 1974, 215.

The discussions on the medieval and early modern texts are kept distinct for two reasons. First, as an ethnic group, the Tanguts were still contemporary to European travelers in the Mongol empire. The early modern sources discussed in the next chapter are by necessity historiographic, because by this time the Tanguts no longer existed as a recognizable ethnic group. Secondly, the character of the sources of the two periods is distinct. Where Rubruck and Polo evince a Mongolian perspective on the peoples of the empire drawn from their own experience or hearsay, the early modern texts are syntheses of European and Asian sources, with a strong historical focus.

2.1 Fusing horizons? The Tanguts as a concept and the Mongolized outlook of Rubruck and Polo

To set out an onomasiological analysis on the Xixia Tanguts in medieval and early modern texts requires that the present author makes plain his understanding of the concept to be discussed. In this section it will be argued that there is sufficient reason to believe that the Tanguts were a recognizable conceptual entity and indeed an important ethnic group in the Mongol empire, and would have been ‘visible’ to travelers like Rubruck and Polo.

Behind the concept of the Tanguts lies a more abstract notion: ethnicity. In his work on ethnicity in premodern Chinese history, Mark Elliott has defined the term as follows. Ethnic groups are organized around social and cultural traits, especially descent, whose most fundamental qualifiers are the political assertion of difference and the recognition thereof by insiders and outsiders.¹²⁶ Difference and recognition are important but a group does not have essential ethnic markers, these might change. This makes Elliott’s working definition a helpful concept, because conceptual historians also point to the changes which transform conceptual understanding, instead of boiling down the meaning of a term to its etymological root.¹²⁷

Based on Elliott’s definition of ethnicity one might give the following minimal definition for Tangut ethnic identity, which is, of course, not perfect and by necessity ultimately based on texts. As a descent group, the Tanguts were those people who are historically connected to the

¹²⁶ Elliott 2012, 175f.

¹²⁷ Richter 1995, 5.

Xixia as its ruling majority and spoke a Tibeto-Burman language today known as Tangut.¹²⁸ As a prime example of the assertion of difference and its recognition, the Tangut script might be pointed to. This character based writing system was created in the early Xia period as a political way to distinguish Tangut culture and the Xixia from its neighbors, especially the Chinese-style dynasties to the east.¹²⁹

While one could conceive of important caveats to the abovementioned definition, some arguments may be offered in favor of the notion that the Tanguts existed as a clearly distinguishable and politically important ethnic group in the thirteenth century.¹³⁰ The Tangut script survived as one of the most potent markers of Tangut ethnic identity, being officially used by the Mongols alongside other scripts, and indeed outliving Mongol rule in China.¹³¹ Recent studies by Michal Biran and Jesse Sloane on Kitan and Bohai 渤海 ethnic identity show that the Mongol conquests are an epistemological horizon for many ethnic groups who fell under Mongol sway, and after the Yuan period these two groups become difficult to trace in textual sources.¹³² Yet unlike the Kitans and the Bohai, the Tanguts were part of a privileged group of Western and Central Asians under Yuan rule, called the *semu* 色目 ('Various categories'). Furthermore, Tangut identity remained distinguishable within this classification.¹³³ The historical importance of the Tanguts to the Mongols has also been attested, like their role as transmitters of Tibetan Buddhism to the Mongol leadership.¹³⁴ Moreover, the Tanguts had played an important role as a major enemy of the founder of the Mongol empire, Chinggis khan (1162?-1227), and they are mentioned in authoritative Mongol sources (on which, see section 2.3).

If the Tanguts may be said to have been important and recognizable to the Mongols, what about European travelers like Rubruck and Polo? The two authors exemplify the two main groups of Europeans who traveled through the Mongol empire: missionaries and merchants. Rubruck and Polo both shared an interest in the Mongols and also made reference to the peoples of their

¹²⁸ Dunnell 1996, 26. Galambos 2015, 98.

¹²⁹ Dunnell 1996, 37.

¹³⁰ These caveats are above all relevant for the Xixia period. Dunnell has argued that identification of people who we might consider Tanguts in ethnolinguistic terms is problematic and can often not be identified beyond Inner Asian agents of the Xia state: Dunnell 1996, 147. Imre Galambos has noted that clan ties were more important for Tanguts than ethnic ones, and that there was no linguistic homogeneity among the Tanguts of the Xia: Galambos 2015, 107.

¹³¹ Galambos 2015, 119-121.

¹³² Biran 2014, 152. Sloane 2014, 392-400.

¹³³ Sloane 2014, 403.

¹³⁴ Sperling 1994, 805. On Tanguts in Mongol service, see: Franke 2002.

empire. Besides a documented interest among medieval Europeans for Asian peoples in the thirteenth century, this fascination might also be seen as part of official duties.¹³⁵ Rubruck wrote his report for the king of France who had instructed him to observe the Mongols, and Polo became an official in the service of the Mongols. There are reasons to believe that Rubruck and Polo wrote from a Mongol perspective. They both used Mongolian, directly or indirectly (i.e. through an interpreter), as the main language to learn more about the places and peoples of the empire, which explains why a name like ‘Tangut’ appears in their texts.¹³⁶ Their descriptions of other peoples are largely Mongol-centric and often comparative in how non-Mongols are described. While the exact source from which they obtained their information cannot always be identified, it is clear that Rubruck and Polo mostly heard and observed what they wrote about, although it cannot be excluded that Polo also had access to official documents.¹³⁷ A good example of the Mongol perspective shared by Polo and Rubruck is that they both record that Tibetans were cannibals, which Atwood considers an otherwise unattested early Mongol stereotype of Tibetans.¹³⁸

In summation, the Tanguts may be defined as an ethnic group historically related to the Xia, with notable ethnic markers like the Tangut language and script. Their visibility as such as well their historical importance to the Mongols was great when Polo and Rubruck visited the east. The likelihood that these travelers were aware of the Tanguts is increased by their knowledge of Mongolian language and culture, as well as a general interest in the peoples of the empire.

2.2 Ethnic markers of (the) ‘Tangut’ according to Rubruck and Polo

This part of the thesis underscores that it is perhaps best to be agnostic about what the medieval sources might tell us, instead of assuming that our onomasiological understanding and their semasiological use can be harmonized. After showing how Rubruck and Polo embed their references to the name ‘Tangut’, specific points will be given about how they address ethnic

¹³⁵ Phillips 2014, 54.

¹³⁶ As was noted in the previous chapter, Polo had a good understanding of Mongolian. Rubruck used a somewhat incompetent interpreter at first, acquiring some knowledge of the language while staying at the court of the *qa’an* Möngke (r. 1251-9): Rubruck/Jackson 1990, 198f.

¹³⁷ Vogel 2013, 414.

¹³⁸ Atwood 2015a, 39f.

markers like language and religion, before concluding that these points are too terse or vague to give the reader a clear sense of the Xixia Tanguts.

The people called *Tangut* by Rubruck and the people of Polo's province of *Tangut* are described as being subject to the Mongols. Rubruck informs the reader that the Tanguts were reduced into submission by Chinggis khan and Polo repeatedly observes that the towns of *Tangut* are subject to the "Great Kaan", referring to the *qa'an* Qubilai, Chinggis's grandson.¹³⁹ Most of the friar's comments about the Tanguts (*Tangut*) are contained in chapter XXVI, which is entitled 'Various peoples, including those who used to eat their relatives', referring to the stereotype of Tibetan cannibalism mentioned in the previous section.¹⁴⁰ In this chapter brief notes are given on the location, physical appearance, history with respect to the Mongols, and other details for the Uighurs (*Iugurs*), Tibetans (*Tebet*), Tanguts, Chinese (*Cataians*), and other peoples. Polo's chapters on *Tangut* deal with subsections of the 'province' and are structured like those elsewhere in the book: a place name and location relative to other areas is mentioned, as well as cultural traits of the people (mostly religion), and noteworthy socio-economic elements, like the cultivation of rhubarb.¹⁴¹ When considering the ethnic markers which Rubruck and Polo mention that might help to identify whether or not they spoke of 'our' Tanguts, three indicators emerge: location, history, and culture (specifically religion and language).

As was shown in the previous chapter, Polo's *Tangut* largely follows Mongol conception and covers the former Xia territory. Rubruck is accurate in that he is not wrong: he describes the *Tangut* as living east of the Uighurs and in the mountains, which is true because the core territory of the Xia state was near the Alashan 阿拉善 mountains, east of where most Uighurs lived at the time.¹⁴² Rubruck adds that the Tibetans live "beyond" the Tanguts, which again is accurate insofar that it is not incorrect. But, on the whole the friar is too vague and considering that the distinction between Amdo and Central Tibet was not as pronounced for Mongols at the time of

¹³⁹ Rubruck/Jackson 1990, 158. Polo/Yule 1929, 203, 212, 217, 274, 281.

¹⁴⁰ Rubruck/Jackson 1990, 157-159.

¹⁴¹ As such, the descriptions are akin to what has been called Polo's "well organized, "monotony"" of the urban areas of China: Vogel 2013, 412.

¹⁴² Rubruck/Jackson 1990, 157.

writing, i.e. the 1250s, ascertaining whether he was thinking of the Xixia Tanguts is difficult beyond the names given.¹⁴³

Polo has almost nothing to say about the history of the people of *Tangut*, beyond a brief anecdote about the sexual promiscuity of the inhabitants of *Camul* (Hami) and Qubilai's predecessor Möngke (r. 1251-9) (*Mangu*).¹⁴⁴ The status of *Camul* as part of *Tangut* has already been described in the previous chapter as somewhat problematic, and at least one author has noted that the behavior of the people of *Camul* refers to Uighurs rather than Tanguts.¹⁴⁵ In describing the *Tangut* as the enemies of Chinggis khan, Rubruck is arguably more specific, but a claim that the Tanguts captured the Mongol ruler is not attested elsewhere.¹⁴⁶

Polo's comments on religion and language are the most indicative of a description of ethnic markers. The towns of *Tangut* are said to be home to 'idolaters', as well as some Muslims and Christians of the Church of the East (i.e. 'Nestorians'). In Polo's text, 'idolaters', often, though not always, refers to Buddhists.¹⁴⁷ One of the more extensive expositions on the religious practice of the idolaters of *Tangut* is given in the chapter on Shazhou (*Saciou*). However, the phrasing is decidedly vague:

The Idolaters have a peculiar language, and are no traders, but live by their agriculture. [...] And you must know that all the Idolaters in the world burn their dead. [...] And these, I assure you, are the practices of all the Idolaters of those countries.¹⁴⁸

These comments underline a peculiar element of Polo's narrative: it is often too generic for a reader to conclude that the Venetian knew, or had any desire to be specific about, the Tanguts in relation to other groups. The Shazhou funerary rites themselves seem too commonplace among Chinese communities to specifically connect them to the Tanguts.¹⁴⁹ As far as the language of

¹⁴³ Atwood 2015a, 41.

¹⁴⁴ Polo/Yule 1929, 210f.

¹⁴⁵ Vogel 2013, 60.

¹⁴⁶ Peter Jackson, the translator of the Rubruck's account, suggests that the friar might have mistaken the identity of the Tanguts with the Tajyiji'ut, a leading rival Mongol clan, who in the *Secret history* do capture Chinggis: Rubruck/Jackson 1990, 158n1.

¹⁴⁷ Atwood 2015a, 40n58.

¹⁴⁸ Polo/Yule 1929, 203-205.

¹⁴⁹ Olschki/Scott 1960, 272. Polo/Yule 1929, 205. Vogel 2013, 60.

Tangut is concerned, Polo merely calls it “peculiar”, and this has led scholars to speculate whether it connotes Chinese, Tibetan, or possibly Uighur.¹⁵⁰

It may be noted that these remarks about ‘idolaters’ and their ‘peculiar’ tongue are not unique to the description of *Tangut*, because other areas in Inner Asia are described in a similarly nondescript manner.¹⁵¹ Also, Polo’s narrative is not completely devoid of connections to the Xixia. For instance, he appears to mention the Great Buddha Temple (*Da fo si* 大佛寺), also known as the Recumbent Buddha Temple (*Wo fo si* 臥佛寺), in Ganzhou.¹⁵² Yet nothing in Polo’s account shows that he was aware of its history. In sum, Polo’s conception of the people of *Tangut* is that of mostly consisting of idolaters with a peculiar language, but then, for him, this was true for many peoples who were subject to the *qa’an*.

Rubruck says nothing about the religion of the *Tangut*. He does, however, sketch in a comparative way the scripts of the peoples of the Mongol empire:

[The Cataians] write with a brush [...] of the sort painters use, and in a single character make several letters that comprise one word. The Thebet write as we do, and their figures are very like our own; the *Tangut* write from right to left, like the Arabs, though adding the lines upwards from the bottom; and the Uighur, as I have said previously, downwards from the top.¹⁵³

These remarks are tantalizing but baffling. As Peter Jackson explains, whereas Rubruck is remarkably accurate about the Chinese, Tibetan, and Uighur scripts, he is far off the mark regarding *Tangut*, which was a character-based script like Chinese rather than an abjad like Arabic.¹⁵⁴

When considering the sum total of the references by Polo and Rubruck it would appear that beyond the name ‘*Tangut*’, their accounts are too brief and opaque to give the reader the sense that they were speaking of the people of the former Xixia. The location in which the people connected to the name ‘*Tangut*’ are put is correct or roughly correct, but neither the friar nor Polo give a clear idea of what language, script, religion, and history are referred to. To say this is not

¹⁵⁰ Polo/Yule 1929, 207n2. Olschki/Scott 1960, 277n70. Note that Olschki limits the use of Uighur to Christians.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Polo/Yule 1929, 157, 164, 166, 182.

¹⁵² Polo/Yule 1929, 219, 221n2. Haw 2006, 90. Dunnell 1996, 78-82.

¹⁵³ Rubruck/Jackson 1990, 203f. Note that these observations are contained in a different chapter of Rubruck’s account on Möngke’s court.

¹⁵⁴ Rubruck/Jackson 1990, 204n1.

meant to criticize these two authors. Rather, it serves to caution modern-day scholars who might use these sources to say something meaningful about the Xixia Tanguts.

2.3 The final years of Chinggis khan as an indicator? Reflections on omission

If Rubruck and Polo might be said to be vague about the people to whom they connected the name ‘Tangut’, might they perhaps describe them in other ways? It was noted above that the Tanguts played important roles in what was still recent Mongol history or contemporary conditions. In this section, it will be considered if medieval authors showed any cognizance of the people of the Xia. Again, one meets a relative absence, but in this case it might be a telling silence, indicating an adopted bias.

Arguably one of the most momentous events in both Tangut and Mongol history was the fall of Xia to the Mongols in 1227. It spelled the end of the political independence of the Tanguts, but during the final campaign the founder of the Mongol empire, Chinggis khan, lost his life. Both the *Secret history of the Mongols*, the earliest written Mongol source, and the Ilkhanid history the *Jāmi‘ al-tawārīkh* by Rashīd al-Dīn contain accounts of Chinggis’s campaigns against the Xixia as well as his death in the period when fighting the Tanguts.¹⁵⁵

Rubruck refers to Chinggis, who is identified as the first khan and founding ancestor, and mentions that his descendants form the Mongol aristocracy.¹⁵⁶ The friar also mentions Chinggis’s conquests and encounters with other peoples, like the marriage of one of Chinggis’s daughters to a Uighur king or the puzzling example of Chinggis’s capture by the *Tangut*.¹⁵⁷ However, besides noting that the Tanguts were ultimately subdued by Chinggis, the friar says little about the final years of the khan.

In contrast, Polo describes Chinggis’ final years and gives a cause of the khan’s death. In Polo’s narrative, the main final antagonist of Chinggis is Prester John, a name used in Europe for a legendary Christian king thought to live in Asia. A possible connection may exist between

¹⁵⁵ De Rachewiltz 2004a, 177f., 196-200. Kircher/Thackston 1998, 72-74. Kircher/Thackston 1999, 261-263.

¹⁵⁶ Rubruck/Jackson 1990, 94f., 142.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 157f.

Prester John and the Tanguts in that the king is connected by Polo to ‘Tenduc’, a name often conflated by Europeans with ‘Tangut’ (see section 1.6). Yet, Atwood says Polo probably had the following two historical figures in mind for Prester John: Ong khan (d. 1203) of the Kereyids and or Ala-Qus (d. 1207?), the *digid-quri* or prince of the Öng’üts.¹⁵⁸ Ultimately, Prester John is defeated and Polo has this to say about the latter years of Chinggis:

I may tell you that Chinghis Kaan reigned six years after this battle, engaged continually in conquest, and taking many a province and city and stronghold. But at the end of those six years he went against a certain castle that was called Caaju, and there he was shot with an arrow in the knee, so that he died of his wound.¹⁵⁹

If Polo indeed had Ong Khan or Ala-Qus in mind, he mistakes the distance between the dates of death: Ong Khan died in 1203, Ala-Qus around 1207, and Chinggis died over twenty years later in 1227.¹⁶⁰ More importantly, it seems difficult to connect the tale of how the khan died by an arrow to any of the stories about how he died at the time of the campaigns against the Xixia and adding further confusion to the situation is the unidentified toponym *Caaju* (*Caagiu* in the F manuscript).¹⁶¹ One scholar’s attempt came close to tying the name to *Calacian* – Polo’s name for the area near the former capital of the Xixia – by combining the Mongolian for ‘black’ (*qara*) with the Chinese for ‘city’ (*cheng* 城). This would entail a connection to an important part of Xixia territory, but the identification has been dismissed by Pelliot as an “impossible Sino-Mongolian combination”.¹⁶² Although more specific than Rubruck, there is an important chronological gap in the Venetian’s history of Chinggis where one would have expected to find reference to the Xixia Tanguts, and the name *Caagiu* adds confusion, rather than clarification.

The absence of references to Chinggis’ final campaigns strengthens the skepticism voiced in the previous section that few definitive points can be made as to whether Rubruck and Polo had a notion of the Tanguts similar to our own. Yet, considering the importance of the Tanguts in the thirteenth century it might be wondered why Rubruck and Polo failed to refer to them in more significant ways. Three explanations can be offered as to why the friar and the Venetian remained silent about the Tanguts.

¹⁵⁸ Atwood 2014, 529n4, 532n46.

¹⁵⁹ Polo/Yule 1929, 244.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 245n1.

¹⁶¹ Pelliot 1959, 114f. Atwood 2015b.

¹⁶² Pelliot 1959, 115.

The first reason is disinterest. Rubruck and Polo had certain proclivities in writing their accounts. Of Polo especially it has been said that as someone from a merchant family he had an interest in everyday matters that would be interesting to him and his fellow Europeans. His references to rhubarb and other commercially relevant articles make sense in this regard. Additionally, as an agent of the Mongols, Polo might have been more interested in the Mongols themselves and what might interest them, rather than the peoples subdued by them. Among other things, this has been one of the reasons given for why Polo is silent on what would have been striking elements of Chinese culture.¹⁶³

The second explanation would be a lack of knowledge available to European travelers. Rubruck could hardly be called disinterested, because he too frequently refers to the culture of the Mongols, as well as Tibetans, Uighurs, and Chinese. Possibly, he was not exposed to Tangut culture as much as Polo might have, because the friar did not travel through the Gansu area, or was misinformed by his less than competent interpreter.¹⁶⁴ Kim Phillips has observed that when vagueness creeps into medieval travelogues it is often a result of the traveler not having gone to the location he describes and or the lack of a well-informed interlocutor.¹⁶⁵ Rubruck remarks that he saw *Tangut* and he describes their appearance “tall but swarthy”, a description that fits with what scholars and the Tanguts themselves have said about the physical features of the people of the Xia.¹⁶⁶ However, and much like his other remarks about *Tangut*, Rubruck offers too little information to go on.

That medieval travelers to the Mongol empire faced epistemological barriers should not be overstated. Polo and Rubruck were relatively well-informed, and a third text from the same era, the popular *Historia Mongalorum* by John of Plano Carpini (1182–1252), another Franciscan friar, contains ethnographic and historiographical information which shows just how much a European could learn from his travels. In Carpini’s text the Mongol campaigns in China (against the *Kitayans*) are referred to.¹⁶⁷ Carpini also gives a list of conquered peoples in which one finds names of groups from the Sino-Tibetan borderlands (e.g. the *Burithabet*, the Böri Tibetans of Amdo) as well as ‘conquest dynasties’ like the Xixia (e.g. the *Karakitayans*, which refers to the

¹⁶³ Vogel 2013, 23-25, 66. Haw 2006, 59.

¹⁶⁴ Rubruck/Jackson 1990, 45, and cf. the map in-between pp. 141-142.

¹⁶⁵ Phillips 2014, 22.

¹⁶⁶ Rubruck/Jackson 1990, 159. Terentyev-Katansky 1974, 215.

¹⁶⁷ Carpini/Dawson 1955, 20-21, 42.

Qara Khitai or Xiliao 西遼 (1124-1218)).¹⁶⁸ Absent again, however, are the wars against the Xixia or indeed the Tanguts themselves. Like the texts of Rubruck and Polo, Carpini's account of Chinggis's death also contains little additional details.¹⁶⁹

A third reason for the conspicuous absence of the Tanguts in medieval European accounts of the Mongol empire might be akin to why 'Tangut' was known in Europe in the first place: an unidentified Mongolian source leading to a particular perspective or understanding. Scholars have noted that Mongol chroniclers have been remarkably unspecific regarding the death of Chinggis khan. According to Van Driem this might be the result of a somewhat embarrassing end of the Mongol ruler as recounted in a Mongol legend. In the story, the khan takes the wife of a Tangut ruler. At one point the Tangut empress castrates Chinggis, and subsequently drowns herself in the Yellow River. Soon thereafter Chinggis dies.¹⁷⁰ If there is any truth to this story – whether in fact or as a widely disseminated story like the stereotype of Tibetan cannibalism – it could explain why Rubruck, Polo, and Carpini are brief about the demise of the Mongol ruler and his final enemies. Their Mongol informants might have been reticent to recount the story, and perhaps also about any information leading up to it, including what exactly had happened to the Tanguts.

In this final part of the chapter, the possible presence of the Tanguts in European medieval texts was reflected upon by looking at European accounts of Chinggis khan and other peoples of the Mongol empire. Explanations were given as to why the Tanguts were not described, ranging from disinterest to epistemological barriers and the existence of a possible taboo. All of these explananda might be considered unsatisfactory, for nothing excludes the possibility that Carpini, Rubruck, and Polo were aware of who the Tanguts were. That is, they may well have understood them as we do today: a Tibeto-Burman speaking people which ruled the Xixia in western China for several centuries before being conquered by the Mongols. At present, however, one can only remain agnostic.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 41. On the Böri Tibetans, see: Atwood 2015a, 23, 25, 39.

¹⁶⁹ Carpini/Dawson 1955, 26.

¹⁷⁰ Van Driem 2001, 455-457. Cf. Galambos 2015, 17f.

Conclusion

In this chapter the Tanguts were defined as an ethnic group historically related to the Xia, with markers like the Tangut language and script. Their visibility as such as well their historical importance to the Mongols was still great when Polo and Rubruck visited the east. Although there is reason to believe that Polo, Rubruck, and Carpini could have encountered Tangutss, and indeed Rubruck claims to have done so, on both semasiological and onomasiological grounds these authors offer too little information to go on. References to the ethnic markers of the people connected to the term 'Tangut' are vague and brief, and accounts on Mongol history are remarkably silent on the final years of Chinggis khan and the roles played by the Tanguts. Possibly this stems from a Mongol-centric bias: the friars and the merchant-official might have not been interested in non-Mongol Others like the Tanguts, but in the case of the scholarly Franciscans this seems difficult to argue. Lack of knowledge owing to unfamiliarity with a place and its people might be an explanation, but there is reason to believe that the Mongol gaze might have also contained an element of censorship about the death of Chinggis and, as a consequence, his last enemies. On the whole, definitive answers seem difficult to provide, except that caution is urged to those scholars, who, like Terentyev-Katansky, might be inclined to project our present-day understanding of the Xixia Tanguts onto these medieval texts. What is clear though, is that the Tanguts appear as Other to the Mongols, and the theme of Otherness is taken up in the next chapter.

3. Vanquished foes: the Tanguts as peripheral Other in eighteenth-century texts

In the previous chapter it was suggested that medieval travelers evinced a Mongol perspective of the peoples of the Mongol empire, leading to a marginalized position for the people called ‘Tangut’ in the works of Rubruck and Polo, and what appears to be a complete silence on aspects of Xixia history. This chapter continues that line of thought, but does so for the first half of the eighteenth century. In this period Europeans were recording historical details about the Xia, but attention for the Tanguts was, and again seen comparatively, minor. It will be again argued in this chapter that a certain bias favoring certain Asian perspectives played a role in how Europeans perceived the Xixia Tanguts. An important difference is that by this time European authors were facing large bodies of knowledge, and a key element to this part of the onomasiological analysis is how they were, or were not, able to synthesize this information. The first section discusses the type of sources to be discussed and also outlines how views about the Tanguts in this period might best be understood. The other sections in this chapter each represent an eighteenth-century text and show how Europeans portrayed the Tanguts and what the constituents of their portraits are.

3.1 Tanguts as the Other’s Other

In what follows two issues will be presented. The first is the temporal scope of this chapter, which ranges roughly from 1720-1750. Such a leap from the previous chapter as well as a limit mid-century might seem arbitrary and requires explanation. The second issue is the matter of how the Tanguts figured as Other to what were already Others to early modern Europeans. That is to say, the authors discussed below constructed their narratives mostly based on Mongolian and Chinese sources, and the Tanguts are invariably cast as antagonists from the perspective of the Mongols and the Chinese.

While little substantial information about eastern Asia reached Europe after the Mongol period, the seventeenth century saw an unprecedented increase in what Edwin van Kley has

termed “ethno-histories” of China.¹⁷¹ This increase was largely due to the efforts of Jesuits like Martino Martini, mentioned in the first chapter, who acted as both missionaries to China and Europe’s first generations of Sinologists. These ethno-histories sometimes also dealt with Inner Asia, especially since one group of Tartars, the Manchus, were garnering the attention of Europeans owing to their conquest of China.¹⁷² In spite of new epistemological richness, seventeenth-century texts are not considered in this thesis for three important reasons. Firstly, not all periods of Chinese history received equal attention in the seventeenth century. The so-called Five Dynasties (*Wudai* 五代; (907-960) period was sometimes glossed over, and even the Song dynasty 宋 (960-1279) often went relatively unnoticed.¹⁷³ Such conclusions did not bode well in a search for the Xixia Tanguts, who emerged as rulers of the Gansu area in the tenth century and whose dynasty did not outlast the better-known Song polity. Secondly, while the eighteenth-century sources contain references to the Xixia Tanguts, the authors put the people of the Xia in marginal positions. This too suggests that an older body of scholarship might not be so revealing. Thirdly, the sources which engendered the new knowledge on the Tanguts in eighteenth-century texts were non-European in origin, indicating that a given author drew from Asian sources for new knowledge on the Xixia. All of this suggests that these eighteenth-century texts presented what had been hitherto unavailable information to most Europeans and that a search for references to the Xixia Tanguts in earlier sources might not be fruitful.

Of course, once information became available the Tanguts they were bound to feature in more historical narratives on China and the Mongol empire. Owing to time constraints I do not consider these sources further, and this thesis halts after a discussion of a text from the late 1740s (see section 3.4). But there is good reason to stop there. In this text a fusing of horizons occurs between our notion of the name ‘Tangut’, as referring to the Xixia and its people, and what had then been a somewhat vague understanding of the name. By connecting the Xixia, the Chinese conceptual understanding of the Tanguts, to the Mongolian name ‘Tangut’, the author concluded something which Van Driem has noted was only done by scholars in the year 1829.¹⁷⁴ But, as will be discussed, the text presents a peculiar conception of the Xia and the name ‘Tangut’ which requires due treatment.

¹⁷¹ Van Kley 1983, 195.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 209.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 200, 206f.

¹⁷⁴ Van Driem 2001, 449.

In his book *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said famously argued that European interest in the East had engendered a situation where knowledge became implicated in the justification and spread of European domination of lands to the east. An important element was presenting the ‘Orient’ as Other to the ‘Occident’, an negative opposite of what made Europe virtuous and great. A lot could be said about the ways in which area studies scholars have dealt with Said’s thesis, but for present purposes it is important to consider two counters that have been posed to it with regards to periods and areas that were different from Said’s focus on the European colonial era and the Middle East.

In her work on medieval or precolonial variants of Orientalism, Kim Phillips has stressed that one of the most important reasons why Said’s thesis does not apply to authors like Rubruck and Polo is because even though Otherness is stressed, one is just a likely to find expressions of sameness or similarities between Europe and the East.¹⁷⁵ As was shown in the previous chapter, medieval travelers adopted a Mongol-centric view and Polo especially is considered by Phillips as someone for whom the Mongols were Same rather than Other.¹⁷⁶

According to Phillips, the decidedly more Eurocentric and negative view of Asia as described by Said was constructed centuries later in the early modern age.¹⁷⁷ For the early eighteenth century however there are caveats that ought to be addressed. The Mongols and Chinese are the protagonists of the sources discussed below and their cultures were considered in a favorable light in the first half of the eighteenth century. Chinggis khan was seen as a model ruler and cast as a hero in European plays.¹⁷⁸ Although not without controversy, Chinese culture, especially Confucianism, was portrayed positively by Jesuits and other intellectuals and Europe experienced a veritable Sinophilia in this era.¹⁷⁹ While both Chinggis and the Chinese were presented in a decidedly negative way from the late eighteenth century onwards, it is unreasonable to project that view back into the first part of the century. Indeed, as the following sections aim to show, there was a sense of favoring the Mongol or Chinese perspective to the

¹⁷⁵ Phillips 2014, 6.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 59, 63f.

¹⁷⁸ Biran 2007, 156f.

¹⁷⁹ Foss 1979, 679.

detriment of those peoples who were Other to them, a tendency also described for later Sinology.¹⁸⁰

As concerns the portrayal of the Tanguts, such perspectives are unsurprising. As much as Polo and Rubruck depended on what they could learn by observing and talking to Mongols and other people in the empire, early modern Europeans depended on what Orientalists conveyed, based on the available sources of largely Mongolian and Chinese origin. Many Xixia documents were lost after the fall of the state, and unlike other so-called non-Chinese conquest dynasties there was no official history made for the dynasty.¹⁸¹ It was not until the twentieth century, with the discovery of Tangut language texts and the advent of Tangutology, that scholars were able to find a more Tangut perspective on their own history. Nonetheless, today the study of Tangut history is still mostly possible because of Chinese sources.¹⁸²

There are more specific problems related to the eighteenth century that would have made a certain bias difficult to surmount. Unlike the thirteenth-century travelers, the authors discussed below did not travel in China or Mongolia, but even if they had, they were unlikely to encounter the Tanguts as an ethnic group with markers as strong as they were in the Mongol period. As an example, one may turn to one of the strongest markers, the Tangut script. While the latest dated example of the script dates to 1502, indicating a remarkable survival of the writing system, there are few clear signs of what had happened to speakers of the Tangut language thereafter.¹⁸³ A stunning symbol of how invisible the Tanguts had become is the inclusion of pseudo-Tangut script in the French source discussed in section 3.3. Originating from a numismatic work of the Song period, Sven Osterkamp has shown how this particular depiction traveled through Chinese, Japanese, and European sources, ending up, among other places, in the French text as a coin considered to be of unclear provenance (Fig. 3.1).¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ E.g. the treatment of non-Chinese groups in China by Swedish scholars: Johansson 2012, 8, 62, 203.

¹⁸¹ Dunnell 1996, 3.

¹⁸² Galambos 2015, 97.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁸⁴ Osterkamp 2015. I would like to thank Osterkamp, not only for bringing this image to my attention, but for kindly providing me with materials and more details about the image of the coin.

*Monnoyes incertaines ou etrangeres dont on ignore le temps,
et qui ont eu cours a la Chine.*



Figure 3.1: Depiction of a coin with pseudo-Tangut writing in Du Halde's *Description* (first one on the left, second row) (source: BnF).¹⁸⁵

A sense of the nondescript is also evident in the way the Tanguts are described in the early modern period. They are Tartars among other Tartars, but unlike the Mongols and the Manchus, who by this time were divided as eastern and western Tartars, the origins of the Tanguts are not specified beyond this imprecise ethnonym.¹⁸⁶ In dealing with the Tanguts as Other in early eighteenth-century European accounts, it might perhaps be best to see them as the Other's Other. Doing so, I borrow Christopher Miller's phrase for conceptions of Africa, in which the Other's Other is a somewhat empty name and concept standing in-between an Orient (in this case the Chinese and the Mongols) and an Occident (the European authors).¹⁸⁷

3.2 An incidental synthesis? Pétis de la Croix's *Histoire*

The first text to be considered in this chapter is the *Histoire du grand Genghizcan*, which, as the title suggest, treats the life of Chinggis khan. It was authored by François Pétis de la Croix (1622-1695) and his like-named son (1653-1713), both of whom were interpreters for West-Asian

¹⁸⁵ Du Halde 1735b, in-between pp. 168-169.

¹⁸⁶ For more on 'Tartars' and 'Tartary', see section 1.4.

¹⁸⁷ Miller 1985, 16.

languages at the court of the French king Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715).¹⁸⁸ Unlike the medieval accounts discussed in chapter three, the story of the final years of the khan contains references to the Tanguts. It will be shown that Pétis de la Croix essentially copies a Mongol perspective of late Xixia, relying strongly on the *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh* (*Compendium of chronicles*) of Rashīd al-Dīn.¹⁸⁹ Yet, the *Histoire* is also strongly influenced by Polo's report, itself Mongolized in many ways, and this section aims to outline how these two main strands of knowledge were incorporated to form a somewhat incidental synthesis.

The main plot points regarding the Tanguts in the *Histoire* can be found in its final chapters and summed up as follows. *Genghizcan* (Chinggis) and the *Moguls* (Mongols) are engaged with their conquests when, at intervals, the leader of the country of *Tangut*, called *Schidascou*, betrays and plots against Chinggis, to whom the Tanguts owed tribute. Various military engagements are mentioned, one of the most spectacular being a battle on an icy lake.¹⁹⁰ Fearing the loss of his country, *Schidascou* ultimately agrees to submit and pay tribute, which Chinggis accepts.¹⁹¹ Soon thereafter Chinggis falls ill and prepares for his death. This entails that the khan issues orders to prepare for his succession and the future of the conquests. For *Schidascou* and his country this means that the previous forgiveness is withdrawn, and the story culminates with Chinggis being unable to pardon *Schidascou* for his past rebelliousness and orders him to be killed after his death. Thus told, the Mongols keep up appearances until *Schidascou* and his retinue show up to pay tribute, falling into a trap. *Schidascou* and most of his entourage are killed, and *Tangut* is annexed.¹⁹²

As far as the overall structure of the narrative is concerned, the *Histoire* largely follows the events as described in the *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*, which contains two separate but similar accounts on the war against *Tangut*.¹⁹³ Considering his familiarity with languages such as Persian, in which Rashīd al-Dīn's work was written, it perhaps unsurprising that Pétis de la Croix sought recourse to the *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*. This work is cited time and again in the *Histoire*

¹⁸⁸ Since the elder Pétis de la Croix is listed as the author and because it is not completely clear which parts were a contribution by the father and which by the son I will simply speak of Pétis de la Croix in the singular tense. I have used the following English translation of the *Histoire*: Pétis de la Croix/Aubin 1772.

¹⁸⁹ On this Ilkhanid text, see section 1.1.

¹⁹⁰ Pétis de la Croix/Aubin 1772, 374.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 377.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 380f.

¹⁹³ I.e. Rashīd al-Dīn/Thackston 1998, 72-74. Rashīd al-Dīn/Thackston 1999, 261-263. For more on the division of the *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*, see: Rashīd al-Dīn/Thackston 1998, vii-x.

account on the Tanguts.¹⁹⁴ Today, the *Compendium* is still considered a major source for Mongol history and an appendix on ‘oriental’ authors shows that Pétis de la Croix was aware of the Ilkhanid work’s origins as a Mongol document as well as its historiographic value.¹⁹⁵

To highlight how much Pétis de la Croix drew from Rashīd al-Dīn’s *Compendium*, one may consider the following parts on the battle on an icy lake, which was the last major encounter before the submission of the Tangut ruler. The Persian text reads:

In that region are many *na’urs* [lakes] formed from the Qara Mürän [Yellow River], and they were all frozen over. Genghis Khan stood on the ice and ordered the soldiers to cross. Many were killed during the crossing. They say that three dead men were stood on their heads, for it is an established custom among the Mongols to stand one dead man on his head for every hundred thousand killed.¹⁹⁶

The French history gives the following description:

Schidascou’s Army took up a great space of Ground; but the *Moguls* were obliged to fight upon the Ice on a Lake, the Waters of which were furnish’d by a Canal from the River *Caramouran*, and were at this frozen. [...] And ’tis said, that there were kill’d in this Battel three hundred thousand Men, belonging to this Prince and his Allies.¹⁹⁷

These accounts are strikingly similar, pointing to the accuracy with which Pétis de la Croix followed the text of Rashīd al-Dīn. Not only is the very story of a battle on ice noteworthy, the Mongol name for the Yellow River, *Qara mören* (‘Black river’), and the death toll of 300,000 leave little doubt about the story’s origin.

Not all of the details in Pétis de la Croix’s work are clear. Among the most puzzling details is the name of the Tangut leader. In the *Histoire* Pétis de la Croix simply gives *Schidascou* throughout. In the *Jāmi’ al-tawārīkh* Rashīd al-Dīn gives the following names which he uses somewhat interchangeably: *Shadurghu*, *Lung Shardurghu*, and *Iluqu Burqan*. These names have been attested as Mongolian names for Xixia rulers but they are conflated in Mongol sources as

¹⁹⁴ Pétis de la Croix/Aubin 1772, 91f., 370, 372f.

¹⁹⁵ Allsen 2001, 87. Pétis de la Croix/Aubin 1772, 424.

¹⁹⁶ Rashīd al-Dīn /Thackston 1999, 261f.

¹⁹⁷ Pétis de la Croix/Aubin 1772, 373f.

they are in the Persian text, and scholars are divided about which names pertain to which exact Xixia ruler.¹⁹⁸ Based on the years given by Pétis de la Croix and the Ilkhanid historian, potentially any of the four last emperors of the Xia could be a candidate for the names.¹⁹⁹

If Pétis de la Croix is vague about the name, this is understandable based on his source, Rashīd al-Dīn. Perhaps it is more right to say that the *Histoire* is remarkable in that it represents one of the first historical narratives on the Xixia Tanguts to be widely spread in Europe. There is, however, a naming issue that would belie the suggestion that Pétis de la Croix was aware of Tangut history. Overall, the French Orientalist uses Polo's toponyms for the places where Chinggis and *Schidascou* confront each other, while also presenting some of Polo's ethnographic remarks about *Tangut* in-between the fighting.²⁰⁰ By doing so, Pétis de la Croix does something different from possibly conflating historical figures: he grafts Polo's geographical world onto the Persian-Mongol historical narrative and this sometimes creates problems.

For instance, he calls *Campion*, a Polian spelling for Ganzhou, the capital city of the country of *Tangut*. This makes sense in that Polo does this as well.²⁰¹ Yet, this designation is problematic when compared to the *Compendium*. Rashīd al-Dīn describes *Eriqaya* or *Äriqay/i* – Polo's *Egrigaia* – as the “residence” of the ruler. This is the Mongolian name for Zhongxing (today's Yinchuan), which was indeed the capital of the Tanguts in the later Xixia period. Furthermore, Rashīd al-Dīn does refer to Ganzhou, but he calls it *Qamju* and it is not given any special designation.²⁰² Still, the narrative of the campaigns against the Tanguts regarding these capitals is similar in the *Histoire* and the *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*. For instance, after ‘the capital’ has been taken by the Mongols, both Pétis de la Croix and Rashīd al-Dīn mention that while the Tangut leader was allowed to continue his rule, Mongol troops stayed behind after its capture.²⁰³

¹⁹⁸ De Rachewiltz 2004a, 199. De Rachewiltz 2004b, 903, 938, 975-977. Dunnell 1991, 185n58.

¹⁹⁹ I.e. Li Anquan 李安全 (r. 1206-1211)

Li Zunxu 李遵頊 (r. 1211-1223)

Li Dewang 李德旺 (r. 1223-1226)

Li Xian 李峴 (r. 1226-1227): Dunnell 1996, xix.

²⁰⁰ Pétis de la Croix/Aubin 1772, 367-369. A notable toponymic exception is a reference to *Cachin*, most likely based on Rashīd al-Dīn's ‘Qashin’: Ibid., 92. Cf. section 1.1.

²⁰¹ Pétis de la Croix/Aubin 1772, 91. Polo/Yule 1929, 219.

²⁰² Rashīd al-Dīn/Thackston 1999, 261.

²⁰³ Pétis de la Croix/Aubin 1772, 91. Rashīd al-Dīn/Thackston 1998, 73, 206.

The disjuncture between historical narrative on the one hand and toponyms on the other hand suggests that Pétis de la Croix was not aware that the Persian historian and the Venetian merchant, while describing the same area, referred to different historical conditions. Rashīd al-Dīn described the early thirteenth century, whereas Polo describes a late-thirteenth century Gansu, when the local capital was indeed Ganzhou.²⁰⁴ It seems then that the two areas were incidentally tied together, and it is not difficult to understand why: both Rashīd al-Dīn and Polo used the name ‘Tangut’. That Pétis de la Croix’s connection was somewhat incidental and ahistorical can be observed in that Rubruck is cited, but nothing of the friar’s remarks about the people he called *Tangut* is incorporated in the *Histoire*.²⁰⁵ The Chaggi Memet story from Ramusio’s account on Gansu is also included, including the Ming era border controls as described by the Persian merchant, but this is merely mentioned and not contextualized.²⁰⁶

Unlike Ramusio, but like Polo, Pétis de la Croix did not consider *Tangut* to be a part of China, because at certain points he mentions the “*Chinese of Mangi*”, the Polian name for the (former) Song, as distinct from the Tanguts and the Mongols.²⁰⁷ A noticeable if innocuously placed turn of phrase is when Pétis de la Croix speaks of the “*Tartars of Tangut*”.²⁰⁸ Although this connection is not mentioned elsewhere, the name Tartars is also not found in the Venetian’s account, who, like most thirteenth-century Europeans, uses the name in reference to the Mongols.²⁰⁹ As was discussed in chapter one, the rather nondescript term Tartars most likely indicates that Pétis de la Croix opted for a catch-all term common among more Europeans of his day.

The *Histoire* presents a curious mix of historically disconnected elements. While the presentation of Rashīd al-Dīn’s historical narrative is something of a milestone in European literature on Asia at this time, there is little to indicate that Pétis de la Croix was aware of the history of the Xixia Tanguts in a precise manner. His use of Polian toponyms most likely

²⁰⁴ Pelliot 1959, 152.

²⁰⁵ Pétis de la Croix/Aubin 1722, 368f. In an entry on Rubruck’s text in an appendix on European sources, references is made to what appears to be the *Relation des voyages en Tartarie* (1634) by geographer Pierre Bergeron (1580-1637): Pétis de la Croix/Aubin 1722, 445. The relevant contents can be found here, proving that Pétis de la Croix would have been able to read about the friar’s *Tangut*: Bergeron 1634, 110-112, 178f.

²⁰⁶ Pétis de la Croix/Aubin 1722, 92. Besides the Chaggi Memet story, it appears that Pétis de la Croix follows Ramusio’s edition of Polo’s account. The spellings of toponyms and certain sentences indicate this and further hints can be found in the entry on Polo in the appendix on European authors: Pétis de la Croix/Aubin 1722, 443.

²⁰⁷ Pétis de la Croix/Aubin 1722, 363. Vogel 2013, 369.

²⁰⁸ Pétis de la Croix/Aubin 1722, 368.

²⁰⁹ E.g. Polo/Yule 1929, 226-269.

stemmed from the fact that the Venetian and the Ilkhanid vizier both used the name ‘Tangut’. Yet, the subsequent interpretation of Pétis de la Croix meant that different historical conditions in the thirteenth century were mixed up, and everything point to an unclear understanding of the Mongol’s Other beyond what he had taken from the *Compendium*.

3.3 Tanguts on the Chinese periphery: Du Halde’s *Description*

If the *Histoire* might be called a curious combination of knowledge ultimately deriving from a Mongolian stock, the next source is notably devoid of any such genealogical ties. Entitled *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l’empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise*, it was authored by the Jesuit Jean-Baptiste Du Halde and published first in French in 1735 in four volumes. Like Kircher, Du Halde was a compiler of Jesuit knowledge coming out of China and his work became popular, and was soon translated in English, German, and Russian.²¹⁰ Although it contains only a brief account on the Xixia, what is striking about the *Description* is that it is one of the first sources to refer to the Xixia based on Chinese sources. The result is a remarkable level of detail concerning certain names and events, some of which would not be out of place in a present-day historical overview on the Tanguts. However, with the Chinese perspective also came a bias, which is the main topic of this section.

In the first volume of the *Description*, the Tangut state, called *Hya* by Du Halde, does not appear where one might expect it, namely the section on Chinese dynasties.²¹¹ Instead, the Xixia Tanguts are portrayed in a few pages in a larger section on non-Chinese peoples called the *Si-fan* or *Tû-fan*. In a long account on the history of these peoples, one is informed of a *Tû-fan* prince called *Pan-lo-chi* who has rallied men to fight the king of *Hya*, who is called *Li-ki-tsyen*, described as a ‘Tartar’ based at *Hya-chew*. Having previously aided the king, the *Tû-fan* seek revenge for not having been treated fairly for their efforts. To combat the threat posed by the *Hya*, *Pan-lo-chi* enters into an alliance with the *Song*. Unbeknownst to the *Hya* ruler, the *Song* “Emperor” invests *Pan-lo-chi* as “Governor General of the *Tû-fan*”. Meanwhile, the king of *Hya*

²¹⁰ I have checked the first volume of the original French text for the spelling of proper names for the main account on the Xixia: Du Halde 1735a, 50-52. However, I have mostly used, cited and quoted the translation published by Edward Cave (1691-1754): Du Halde/Gutherie and Green 1738. Du Halde/Gutherie and Green 1741. Of the two English translations published in the eighteenth century, the Cave edition is considered to be of superior quality. For more on the English editions, see: Foss 1979, 628-654.

²¹¹ What follows is a summary of: Du Halde/Gutherie and Green 1738, 27-29.

continues his conquests, but is defeated by *Pan-lo-chi*'s forces. In this battle, the *Tû-fan* prince loses his life and is succeeded by *So-tso-lo*. Following his conquests, the king of *Hya* assumes the title of "Emperor". Worried about *Hya* exploits, the "Chinese Monarch", i.e. the *Song* ruler, invests *So-tso-lo* in a manner akin to his predecessor. But the new Governor General dies quickly and a succession crisis erupts among the *Tû-fan*. Du Halde details the intrigue among the *Tû-fan* and the *Hya* appear only briefly when he comes to the early thirteenth century, a period of "common Ruin" for those facing *Jinghiz-Khân* (Chinggis khan).

While the major elements of this brief account can be identified, I have not been able to determine which exact Chinese sources engendered this particular narrative.²¹² Still, it is worth considering what this short portrayal tells us about Du Halde's understanding of the Tanguts. The protagonists are the *Tû-fan* and this name has been identified as Tufan 吐蕃, whereas *Si-fan* refers to Xifan 西蕃, a generic name for peoples living on the western borders of the Chinese heartland and which was also used by Martini.²¹³ The name Tufan historically refers to the peoples of Tibet and a substantial part of the history on the *Tû-fan* contains references to clashes with the Tang dynasty 唐 (618-907), indicating that at least at certain points in the *Description* the Tibetan empire (ca. 600-842) is meant.²¹⁴ In the Xixia period, Tufan could refer to the Qinghai-Gansu area and the names and events described by Du Halde make it clear that the historical figures of the *Tû-fan* are eleventh-century Tibetans based around Lake Kōkenuur (Qinghai). The first protagonist, *Pan-lo-chi*, refers to Panluozhi 潘羅支 (r. 1001-1004). The second protagonist, *So-tso-lo*, seems to be a conflated personage.²¹⁵ Panluozhi was succeeded by Siduodu 廝鐸督 (r. 1004-1016). However, besides not matching phonetically, the events ascribed to the life of *So-tso-lo*, as well as the names of his successors, seem to indicate that Du Halde, or

²¹² In his PhD dissertation on the *Description*, Theodore Foss points to a manuscript by fellow Jesuit Jean-Baptiste Régis (1663-1738) as well as one possible Chinese source, but expresses uncertainty about the exact origins of Du Halde's history of the *Si-fan*: Foss 1979, 213. As will become clear, I consider the relevant part on the *Tû-fan* to detail the lives of eleventh-century Tibetan leaders based near Lake Kōkenuur (Qinghai). An overview of Chinese sources on these political figures can be found in: Horlemann 2004, 26-36. Cf. n. 215 below.

²¹³ Foss 1979, 211f. Cf. section 1.4.

²¹⁴ For example, the capture of the Tang capital Chang'an 長安 (today's Xi'an 西安 in Shaanxi) in 763: Du Halde/Gutherie and Green 1738, 24.

²¹⁵ Atwood 2004, 538. Certain Chinese sources are known to gloss over details of the history of the Kōkenuur Tibetans, and confluations like this might offer clues as to which Chinese texts influenced Du Halde's report: Horlemann 2004, 30-35.

the Chinese sources on which he ultimately based his narrative is the Tsong kha confederation leader Jiaosiluo 唃廝羅 (r. ca. 1008-1065).²¹⁶

Both the context of the Kökenuur Tibetans and the spelling of names show that *Hya* refers to Xia 夏, the then contemporary Chinese name for the Xixia dynasty. The details regarding this name in the *Description* represent a significant leap in knowledge, as do the specifics regarding its rulers. *Li-ki-tsyen* is clearly in reference to the Tangut leader Li Jiqian 李繼遷 (963-1004). The toponyms, although not all in good order, can be connected to Xixia history as well. For example, Du Halde refers to *Hya-chew* and notes that this is what in the eighteenth century was called *Ning-hya*. *Hya-chew* is undoubtedly Xiazhou 夏州 and had been the base of the Tanguts led by Li Jiqian.²¹⁷ However, *Ning-hya* refers to Ningxia 寧夏, a name contemporary in Du Halde's own day for the later Xixia capital (today's Yinchuan), but which refers to a different city.²¹⁸ In other words, while Du Halde correctly conveys that these cities were of historical importance to the Tanguts, the chronology gets mixed up in the account.²¹⁹

The most notable feature of the account is that it gives a Sinocentric reading of Xixia. The the actions of the *Hya* are unfavorably contrasted with those of the Tibetans and the emphasis put on the legitimacy of the “Chinese” *Song*, i.e. the Song dynasty. For instance, in trying to counter the Xixia, the Song supported the Tibetans, in part by recognizing their authority over areas which the Tanguts sought to obtain. In terms of legitimacy this was done by bestowing titles on Panluozhi and Jiaosiluo, something to which Du Halde refers.²²⁰ Additionally, the Song is always called “the Empire” and the fact that the “king” of *Hya* declares himself an emperor is considered to stem from his hubris. Du Halde is not clear about chronology, but it is obvious that this event refers to the formal declaration of empire in 1038 by Li Jiqian's grandson, Li Yuanhao 李元昊 (r. 1032-1048), an affront in the political culture at the time, and the start of a tense period in Song-Xia relations.²²¹

²¹⁶ On these figures and their wars against the Xixia, see: Dunnell 1994, 172-176. Horlemann 2004, 97-114.

²¹⁷ Du Halde/Guthrie and Green 1738, 27. Dunnell 1994, 170.

²¹⁸ The name Ningxia dates to 1288, i.e. after the Xixia period: Pelliot 1963, 642.

²¹⁹ Another temporal issue is the dates given in the margins of Du Halde's text. There are not many dates given and they are unspecific as to which exact events they refer to.

²²⁰ Horlemann 2004, 98, 109, 111f.

²²¹ Dunnell 1994, 187.

Although noticeable, the Song-centric perspective is not altogether surprising once one realizes the importance of Chinese sources for Du Halde's narrative. Indeed, the language of legitimacy could have been even stronger. In one history on the Kōkenuur Tibetans, and based on Song sources, the Xixia Tanguts are described as "bandits".²²² The negative representation does not, however, explain why no more is said of the Xixia. In the beginning of this section it was noted that one does not encounter the Tanguts in the *Description* where one might expect, that is, the annal-style overview of Chinese dynasties.²²³ The dynasty most likely to reveal information about the Xixia, is the one that was considered to be the legitimate one in the same period, the Song and the *Description* does contain an account of Song history, yet nothing is said of the Xia. Noticeably, the history of other ostensibly 'illegitimate' contending dynasties like the Liao 遼 (907-1125) and Jin 金 (1115-1234) are mentioned precisely in this overview. Like the *Hya* these dynasties are not always portrayed favorably vis-à-vis the Song. All three polities – Xixia, Liao, Jin – are considered to be 'Tartar' states, but the seventeenth-century distinction of western and eastern Tartars is used to differentiate the Jurchens of the Jin and the Mongols of the Yuan.²²⁴ As was discussed in section 3.1, the Tanguts were not accorded an official Chinese history and this combined with the sense of illegitimacy in Du Halde's brief piece might have been the reasons why one finds so little else about the Xia in the *Description*.

In the *Description*, Du Halde provided his audience with one of the most detailed accounts yet on Xixia history. But, this account was tucked away in a narrative on Kōkenuur Tibetans and decidedly Sino- or Song-centric. Even in comparison with other so-called conquest dynasties like the Jin and the Liao, the Xixia was given scant attention, but again this might be a result of the Sinocentric tendencies found elsewhere in the *Description*. The name 'Tangut' is referred to in the Jesuit encyclopedia, but it is nowhere connected to the Xia.²²⁵ The source in the next section is remarkable for making just that connection.

²²² The source being the *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿 (published in the 1930s), translated in: Horlemann 2004, 201-284 (the 'bandit'-reference can be found on p. 207). On this source, see: Ibid., 28f.

²²³ This part of the *Description* has been considered to be of poor quality compared to other sections, like those on geography, but this in itself does not explain the relative silence regarding the Tanguts: Foss 1979, 682f.

²²⁴ Du Halde/Gutherie and Green 1738, 207-211.

²²⁵ For this reason I will forego a discussion on Du Halde's understanding, but also because his use of the name is mostly based on that of his fellow Jesuits, Kircher and Grueber: Du Halde/Gutherie and Green 1741, 385.

3.4 The Tanguts come into view: Green's *Collection* and the work of Gaubil

The last source to be discussed in this thesis is somewhat different from the *Histoire* and the *Description* as well as those from the previous chapter. Entitled *A new general collection of voyages and travels* (1745-1747) it was written by geographer and cartographer Bradock Mead (fl. 1730-1753), often better known by his alias John Green. Among other things, Green had translated Du Halde's encyclopedic work.²²⁶ The information contained in the *Collection* was relatively novel at the time, but he drew from other texts produced in Europe, and the *Collection* is not known to have been the standard work which the *Histoire* and *Description* were.²²⁷ But, as a synthesis this work stands out, for Green does something hitherto not seen in European texts: he connects Chinese knowledge about the Xixia to the Mongolian name 'Tangut'. In doing so, two conceptual worlds are fused, even though this section will show that the synthesis was still markedly different from our understanding.

Green's insights about the Xixia are presented in the fourth volume of the *Collection*. The most detailed remarks are found in section twelve of chapter three, which is on Tartary and mainly deals with the early conquests of the Mongols.²²⁸ This section provides the names of a great number of political players, both states and figures, and is quite precise about late Xia history. However, this account was meant by Green as an abridgment of a then recently published biography of Chinggis based on Chinese sources: the *Histoire de Gentchiscan* (1739) by the China-based Jesuit missionary Antoine Gaubil (1689-1759).²²⁹ If credit ought to go to Gaubil, it is the connection between Xixia and 'Tangut' which makes Green's work remarkable. As something of an aside, Green makes his conclusion in a footnote on the final Xia ruler, *Li-hyen* (Li Xian):

This must be the *Shidurkû* of *Abu'lghazi Khân*; and, if so, the Kingdom of *Hya* must be his *Tangût* and the City of *Ning-hya*, the City of *Tangût*; although *Tangût* was a different Dominion inhabited by the *Si-fan* or *Tû-fan*: But these being then subject to the King of

²²⁶ Possibly by choice, Green was often not credited for his work, which included the *Collection* series as well as part of the translation work for the English edition of the *Description* published by Edward Cave (cf. p. 63 n. 10): Foss 1979, 644-647.

²²⁷ Rubiés 2012, 40.

²²⁸ Green 1747, 429-449.

²²⁹ Green clearly states that he presents Gaubil's findings, albeit inserted with other thoughts and findings: Green 1747, 430. The pages in Gaubil's work which deal with the Xixia are: Gaubil 1739, 12-51.

Hya, and *Tangût*, which once made a great Figure, only known to the Western Historians, this seems to be the Reason why the latter make no Mention of *Hya*, or the Chinese of *Tangût*.²³⁰

The general conclusion made by Green was correct, but some of his remarks require further explanation.

Green equates the last Xia emperor with the “*Shidurkû* of *Abu'lghazi Khân*”, and elsewhere this figure is connected with Pétis de la Croix’s *Schidascou*.²³¹ *Abu'lghazi Khân* refers to Abū al-Ghāzī Bahādur (1603-1663), a Central Asian ruler who had written a history which in Green’s time had been translated as *A general history of the Turks, Moguls, and Tartars* (1730). It is clear from the near-verbatim wording in Green’s text that he drew from this translation, which he sometimes cites if not always with the greatest accuracy.²³² The account about *Schidurkû* is brief but overall very much like that of Pétis de la Croix. This is understandable because both Pétis de la Croix’s and Abū al-Ghāzī’s history go back to Rashīd al-Dīn’s *Compendium*.²³³ Although aware of Pétis de la Croix’s work, Green explicitly favors the latter because of Abū al-Ghāzī’s background, “who being himself a Mogul by Descent, and living on the Borders of Tartary, was best able to select the genuine Facts”.²³⁴

Green observes that, in spite of its merits, Abū al-Ghāzī’s account is insufficient for studying countries east of Central Asia, including *Tangût*, which is why he augments the narrative on Chinggis with that of Gaubil. It also leads to a general statement by Green still very much applicable to the study of Inner Asian peoples: one needs sources in various languages and from various parts of Eurasia in order to study their histories.²³⁵ For Green, this includes Chinese authors and “Western Historians”, a sometimes vague designation used by Green in the *Collection*, which can refer to Europeans as well as Western Asian authors like Abū al-Ghāzī.²³⁶

²³⁰ Green 1747, 447 n. a.

²³¹ Although mentioning Pétis de la Croix’s name, Green spells the Mongolian name of the Tangut ruler as *Schidasku*: Green 1747, 428 n. e.

²³² Abū al-Ghāzī 1730, 144f. Green 1747: 428.

²³³ Abū al-Ghāzī explicitly states his indebtedness to the *Jāmi‘ al-tawārīkh*: Abū al-Ghāzī 1730, 30.

²³⁴ Green 1747, 429.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 430, 448.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 469.

How exactly Green came to the conclusion that *Tangût* was a non-Chinese Asian name for what the Chinese called *Hya* is nowhere clearly stated in the *Collection*. Presumably chronology played an important role: the Chinese sources on the one hand and Abū al-Ghāzī and Pétis de la Croix on the other both present the Tanguts as the final major enemies of Chinggis khan, a figure which had been well-known in Europe for centuries. The story of the Mongols killing the final Tangut ruler after he surrendered might have an important clue.²³⁷ Whatever may have exactly prompted Green to make his conclusion, by connecting the precise Chinese historiographical accounts of *Hya* with the Mongol-centric narratives which referenced the name ‘Tangut’, he concluded something which Van Driem has previously noted was only done by Europeans in 1829.²³⁸

Still, like the medieval sources, one ought to be cautious about reading too much into Green’s account. There are a number of anomalies, at least from our present-day perspective, which show that Green’s ‘Tangut’ was not ours. In the beginning of the fourth volume of the *Collection*, Green correctly observes that the first part of ‘Xixia’ (*Si-hya*), i.e. the first character *xi* 西, means ‘western’.²³⁹ However, he immediately conflates this name with the Qara Khitai (*Hara Kitay*) or Xiliao, a dynasty founded by Kitans and which neighbored the Xia on its western borders. Green then describes the flight of some subjects of the Jin (*Kin*), to the west. The account of refugees is not incorrect, but refers to the Qara Khitai and it is clear that Green confuses the names of two neighboring states.²⁴⁰

In the pivotal footnote in which Green equates *Hya* with *Tangût* he adds an important qualification: “the Kingdom of *Hya* must be [*Abū al-Ghāzī*’s] *Tangût* [...] although *Tangût* was a different Dominion inhabited by the *Si-fan* or *Tû-fan*”. Elsewhere Green notes that “Western Historians” mistook *Hya* for *Tangût*, “because the Kingdom of *Hya* sprang-up on the Ruins of it,

²³⁷ Although all sources place the event somewhere near or in 1227, an important element is that Abū al-Ghāzī and Pétis de la Croix, undoubtedly basing themselves on Rashīd al-Dīn, describe this event as taking place after Chinggis’s death: Abū al-Ghāzī 1730, 145. Pétis de la Croix/Aubin 1722, 381. Rashīd al-Dīn/Thackson 1998 9a, 262. In his abridgment of Gaubil’s work, Green, following Gaubil, states that the khan died after the Xixia had fallen, but notes elsewhere that *Shidurkû* was killed after the khan had died: Gaubil 1739, 51. Green 1747, 428, 447. Dunnell, also using Chinese sources, notes that Chinggis’s death was concealed from the Tanguts until Li Xian and the others surrendered: Dunnell 1994, 213.

²³⁸ Van Driem 2001, 449.

²³⁹ Green 1747, 4. For the history of the Qara Khitai, see: Biran 2005.

²⁴⁰ Elsewhere Green shows that he is more aware of the history of the Qara Khitai: Green 1747, 441f.

and for the most Part consisted of Countries which formerly belonged to it”.²⁴¹ That ‘Tangut’ and ‘(Xi)Xia’ were not quite the same is also clear from the title of a map which reads “The Empire of *Hya* (including the great part of *Tangut*)”.²⁴² To be sure, Green himself expresses dismay about the use of the term ‘Tangut’, and the vague parameters ascribed to it by some of the Jesuit missionaries, complaining in a footnote: “How easily might the Missioners have solved all Difficulties concerning the Situation and Extent of *Tangut*, when they were on the Spot?”²⁴³

As was noted above, Green correctly translates the first part of ‘Xixia’ as ‘western’. But, if this seems like an accurate understanding of the name Xixia, which indeed means ‘Western Xia’, Green confuses his interpretation and again doing so in a footnote:

Si-hya signifies, properly, the Guards of the West. Perhaps those who founded this Monarchy were the Western Guards of the great Wall.²⁴⁴

Momentarily leaving aside the correctness of this etymology, the remark is clearly anachronistic. The wall as it is now known to early modern Europeans was only established in the seventeenth-century and it was Jesuit scholars like Martini, Kircher, and Du Halde who projected its significance as a barrier to Tartars into the past.²⁴⁵

While it is difficult to establish where Green got his etymology from, it seems unlikely that he drew from Gaubil, who, in a letter dated to 16 September 1730, tries to clear up the understanding of the name *Sy-Hia*. Gaubil’s respondent seems to have mistaken the use of the name for ‘Western hill’, to which Gaubil responds:

This dynasty of *Hia* had as its title *Hia*, it was called *Sy-Hia* or *Western Hia* because this kingdom was *Sy*, or west of the Chinese dynasty that reigned in the northern and southern provinces of China.

²⁴¹ Green 1747, 448 n. e.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, in-between pp. 432-433 (Plate IV).

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 469 n. i. This complaint was quoted at the beginning of chapter one.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 433 n. n.

²⁴⁵ Waldron 1990, 206-208. Van Kley 1983, 203f.

Sy: west, *hien*: collis; Sy, west, *hia*: dynastiae nomen.

Hia means summer, *aestas*.²⁴⁶

This is a description of the characters that make up ‘Xixia’ that few Sinologists today would argue with.

In light of the discussion about the Sinocentric nature of the *Description* it might be wondered whether Green framed Tangut history in moral terms. The issue of Li Yuanhao’s ‘emperorship’ is mentioned and Du Halde’s work is referred to, but the Song indignation about this perceived hubris is unmentioned.²⁴⁷ In general, ‘Tartar’ dynasties, like the Jin (*Kin*), are similarly called ‘empires’ in relatively unproblematic fashion.²⁴⁸ On the whole it seems that while Green could be critical of his fellow Europeans, he did not favor any particular Mongol or Chinese view. Indeed, as was noted above, he clearly emphasized the importance of using sources from different areas to document the history of the peoples of Asia and Green could sometimes take a critical distance from his material, noting in one case that it is a Chinese history which considers a particular act as the cause for the fall of the Xia.²⁴⁹

In many ways Green’s account is like that of Rubruck: tantalizing but puzzling. Although clearly basing himself on Gaubil’s work, his conclusion that the Xixia of the Chinese is the ‘Tangut’ of the Mongols may count as a remarkably astute observation. His remarks about the extent of ‘Tangut’ and the meaning of the name *Si-hya* were erroneous, but Green seems to have been a critical reader of Asian history, perhaps rightly complaining about the ways in which ‘Tangut’ was described and not following Chinese authors in their bias against the Xixia Tanguts as Du Halde had done, but advocating a method of combining sources that many Tangutologists and Mongolists would ascribe to today.

²⁴⁶ *Cette dynastie de Hia eut le titre de Hia, on l’appelle Sy-Hia ou Hia d’Occident parce que son royaume était au Sy, ou à l’ouest de la dynastie chinoise qui régnoit dans les provinces boréales ou australes de la Chine.*

Sy: occident, hien: collis; Sy, occident, hia : dynastiae nomen.

Ce Hia signifie été, aestas: Gaubil/Simon 1970, 257.

²⁴⁷ Green 1747, 433. It is not mentioned at all in another *Description*-based narrative: *Ibid.*, 474f.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 434.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 446.

Conclusion

In this chapter the onomasiological analysis of Tanguts in European texts was continued. This showed that, much like the medieval travelers, even though the early eighteenth-century authors presented their readers with unprecedented information about Asian history, the Tanguts were noticeably marginalized. Borrowing a phrase from Miller, the peripheral position in which the Tanguts found themselves was that of the Other's Other, leading to a somewhat hollow conception of the people of the Xia. To a large extent this position of the Tanguts may be explained by the lack of Tangut voice at this time. By the eighteenth century the Tanguts were no longer in existence as an identifiable ethnic group and documents on Tangut history were mostly written from the perspective of Mongol- and Chinese-centric authors, leading European authors to cast the Tanguts as obscure Tartars among better-known Tartars like the Jurchens, Mongols, and Manchus. Pétis de la Croix's *Histoire* was groundbreaking by channeling Rashīd al-Dīn's *Compendium*. This meant that a substantial historical narrative on the Tanguts entered into Europe. But, the Mongolized narrative is somewhat undermined by the insertion of Polian toponyms. While both the Ilkhanid historian and the Venetian merchant described the Gansu region there are serious historical disconnects that suggest that Pétis de la Croix was not acquainted with these historical conditions. Du Halde's *Description* is also a milestone by virtue of its relative precision of Chinese names for figures, toponyms, and events which can be meaningfully tied to Tangut history. But, the overall account on the Xia is brief in comparison to the Jesuit's discussion of other conquest dynasties and decidedly Sino- or Song-centric. Less biased, and more critical in its outlook, is the work by Green, who makes some tantalizing but also baffling conclusions. His correct assertions that the Mongol name 'Tangut' is in reference to the Xixia is noteworthy and his frustration regarding the extent of what the Jesuits called 'Tangut' understandable. But remarks about the meaning of the name 'Xixia' as well as mistaking the name of the dynasty for the Qara Khitai shows that for Green's *Collection*, as for all the sources in chapter two and three, should be approached with due caution.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to answer how medieval and early modern Europeans understood the name ‘Tangut’ and if they had some sense of who the people were that we today call by that name, the people of the former Xixia dynasty. Based on the work of Gadamer and *Begriffsgeschichte* historians this thesis aimed to bridge epistemic gaps, yet at the same time advocate mindfulness in the ways in which we might understand how past Europeans, our intellectual forebears. The issue presented in the Introduction is an issue of hindsight. To problematize the understanding of the name ‘Tangut’ was considered relevant, because some humanities scholars have overstated or tacitly accepted that figures like Polo and Martini had the Xixia Tanguts in mind when they spoke of *Tangut* and *Tanyu*. To fuse horizons, as Gadamer puts it, requires instead that one is simultaneously open to the Otherness of the past but also aware of one’s own situatedness. Continuing the work by Van Driem and others, this thesis aimed to do that by presenting a semasiological understanding of the word ‘Tangut’ in early European sources, followed by an onomasiological study of thirteenth- and eighteenth-century texts.

The semasiological analysis in chapter one showed that the multiple Mongolian connotations meant that ‘Tangut’ could be defined as an ethnonym and a toponym related to the Xixia and, later on, to Tibet. It was shown that Polo adopted its use for the Gansu region as a result of his Mongolized view of the Mongol empire. Europeans after him correctly identified the names of Polo’s *Tangut* with parts of the Ming province Shaanxi. Yet, the author likely to do make similar conclusions, Kircher, mostly used the name ‘Tangut’ for Tibet. Based on the Mongol connotations this too can be explained, if one considers that Grueber was Kircher’s main source for this new conception and that he had acquired this understanding of the name in conditions similar to those of Polo centuries before: a European man, with some understanding of Mongolian, visiting an area previously unknown in Europe but that was ruled by Mongols. In this regard, Grueber too had a Mongolized perspective. Yet, an important anomaly is that Kircher inconsistently extended the definition to include the entirety of Tibet, even though Mongols kept Amdo and Central Tibet conceptually distinct, only reserving the name ‘Tangut’ for northeastern Tibet. In a way this usage was an indicator of an overall vague understanding of the name ‘Tangut’, which was compounded by unclear administrative terminology and a subordinated role

in cartography, which put ‘Tangut’ as a neighbor or equivalent of ‘Tenduc’, itself made relevant by its connections to ‘Gog and Magog’. When Tartary was becoming increasingly more defined by Europeans in the seventeenth-century, ‘Tangut’ was still, or perhaps even more than in the time of Polo and Ramusio, a largely unidentified in-between region.

The second chapter was the beginning of the onomasiological part of the thesis. The first section dealt with the idea that the Tanguts as an ethnic group were a visible concept in the thirteenth century, and that the Tanguts were especially significant to the Mongols. Yet, in their descriptions of the peoples of the Mongol empire, Carpini, Rubruck, and Polo showed little sign that they had a conception of the people of the Xia. Rather, in ethnolinguistic terms, the *Tangut* of Rubruck were only briefly described and sometimes in unrecognizable ways, such as proclaiming that the Tangut script was akin to Arabic. Polo’s description of the ‘province’ of *Tangut*, although accurate as a Yuan era administrative unit, has but few elements that would have tied the area to Xixia history or the Tanguts who were still around. Indeed, what is perhaps most striking about the medieval texts, is that they deal with many aspects of the history of the Mongol empire and its peoples, but barely mention the Tanguts at all. Explananda for this might be disinterest, lack of knowledge, or a taboo regarding the death of Chinggis khan, but none of these can, at present, be demonstrably proven to be the cause of the silence found in the sources. Whatever may be its cause, this lack of detail should give future researchers pause.

The third chapter concerned historiographical texts from the early eighteenth century, a most promising period in which the Tanguts could, and did, appear in European literature on Asia. Although the Tanguts had ceased to exist as a recognizable ethnic group, the influx of Chinese and Mongolian source materials meant that Europeans were exposed to a hitherto unprecedented level of detail. As a result of an absent Tangut voice and like the medieval texts, these sources present a somewhat skewed amount of attention to the Xixia and a bias favoring a Mongol or Chinese perspective, turning the Tanguts into the Other’s Other. Pétis de la Croix’s *Histoire* presents a curious mix of Rashīd al-Dīn’s *Compendium* and Polo’s toponyms. This created certain historical disjunctures, even though the introduction of a historical narrative about the Tanguts might be considered noteworthy. Similarly, Du Halde’s *Description* might be faulted for its Song-centric bias, but is surprisingly accurate about some aspects of Xia history according to present-day historiographical standards. Finally, Green’s *Collection* contains many of the

elements discussed above and is therefore a remarkable synthesis. A judicious handling of his sources meant that he may be considered the first European to connect the name ‘Tangut’, and indeed the Rashīd al-Dīn inspired narrative dealt with by Pétis de la Croix, with the Xixia of Du Halde and Gaubil. The outstanding anomalies in the *Collection* are, however, a reminder that the early modern sources too need to be treated with due caution.

Although caution is urged, it may be reiterated that medieval and early modern sources are still used by scholars and might contain hitherto unknown useful information, and so the continuing study of these texts is also urged. Perhaps the usage of ‘Tangut’ by Grueber might be an indicator of a more fluid Mongolian use of the term than we are currently aware of. In a similar vein, Rubruck’s description of the capture of Chinggis khan by the Tanguts might turn out one day to have been a narrative circulating in the Mongol empire. The terms for Tibet had at one time been fluid and Rubruck is considered a valuable source by Mongolists and medievalists alike, so, and in good Gadamerian fashion, one should remain open to what the past might tell us. A continuation of the present study might entail an analysis of later early modern sources based on Chinese texts, which would require further identification. Recently, Nicolas Standaert has shown how fruitful such a study can be, showing that Jesuit scholars used Chinese sources that are no longer extant.²⁵⁰ Perhaps, then, one day something about the Tanguts might be found coming from a very unexpected corner, which like the name ‘Tangut’ echoed through Eurasia.

²⁵⁰ Standaert 2012.

Bibliography

Owing to spatial constraints some measures have been taken to cut back on the number of words. In spite of these deviations from bibliographic norms, interested readers should be able to find all the desired references. The measures are these:

- Titles of works are not translated unless relevant for the discussion.
- Although most of the early modern works were consulted online I only cite them as printed works.
- For early modern works only abbreviated titles are given.
- In the case of the maps, depicted in chapter one, additional information can be found in the footnotes and by following the links provided.
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²⁵⁹ Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Cartes et plans, GE DD-2005 (RES), <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b550096739/f217.item.r=Theatrum%20Orbis%20Terrarum> (accessed 27 July 2016).

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²⁶⁰ Fig. 1.1 was made from this work, the exact source is: the Digital Silk Road Project, Digital Archive of Toyoko Bunko Rare Books, <http://dsr.nii.ac.jp/toyobunko/III-2-F-c-30/V-1/page-hr/0789.html.en> (accessed 24 May 2016).

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²⁶¹ The date is based on Chang 2003, 91.

²⁶² Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Cartes et plans, GE C-8016, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53088857p/f1.item.r=Accuratissima%20totius%20Asiae%20tabula%20in%20omnes%20partes%20divisa> (accessed 30 May 2016).