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ИНСТИТУТ ВОСТОКОВЕДЕНИЯ
РОССИЙСКОЙ АКАДЕМИИ НАУК



УЧЁНЫЕ ЗАПИСКИ ОТДЕЛА КИТАЯ

Выпуск 47

**Тангутская и китайская
филология
К юбилею М. В. Софронова**



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The Memorial Tablet for Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù and the Evidence for Prenasalized Voiced Obstruents in Tangut^{*}

Andrew West

The Memorial Tablet for Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù

In September 2013 a tomb dating to the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) was uncovered during building work at a site at Chénzhuāng Village 陳莊村, just east of the original city walls of Dàmíng town 大名鎮 in Hebei province. A small stone memorial tablet (60 cm × 35 cm × 11 cm) with inscriptions in Chinese on one side and Tangut on the other side was discovered inside the tomb (see Fig. 1)¹.

The text of the Chinese inscription (477 characters in 21 lines), headed “Grave Epitaph Inscription for Lord Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù” 小李鈐部公墓誌銘 in seal script calligraphy, provides a summary of the life of a renowned Tangut official called Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù 小李鈐部 (1191–1259) and his descendants². Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù came from an aristocratic Tangut family of reputed Shatuo Turkic ancestry who had been bestowed the Tang royal surname of Lǐ 李, but in order to distinguish themselves from the Western Xia royal family, who had also been bestowed the Tang royal surname of Lǐ, they modified their surname to Xiǎolǐ 小李 “Little Lǐ”³. This name is given as Xīlǐ 昔里 in Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù’s biography in ch. 122 of the *Yuan History* (*Yuán Shǐ* 元史) and as Xīlǐ 錫哩 in the account of the ancestors of Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù’s grandson Lǐ Jiàohuà 李教化 written by Chéng Jùfū 程鉅夫 (1249–

^{*} Рукопись получена 5.03.2020.

¹ The memorial tablet is now held at the Museum of Stone Inscriptions (Shíkè Bówùguǎn 石刻博物館) at Dàmíng.

² See West 2015-01-29 for my preliminary study of the memorial tablet for Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù. See Áotègēn 2004 and Wáng 2009 for studies of the historical sources for the life of Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù.

³ See Áotègēn 2004 p. 130.

1318)⁴. In the memorial for Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù written by Wáng Yùn 王惲 (1227–1304) it is noted that Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù’s original personal name was Yilishān 益立山⁵. As discussed below, it is likely that the family’s original name was a Tangut name sounding like Xili, which was later sinified to Xiǎolǐ 小李.

In 1226, when the Mongols were besieging Sùzhōu 肅州 (modern Jiǔquán 酒泉 in Gansu), the ancestral home of the Xiǎolǐ family, Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù’s elder brother, Jǔlishā 舉立沙, sent a secret letter to the besiegers, offering to surrender, but when his plan was discovered he was killed by the other defenders⁶. Because his brother had been executed by his Tangut compatriots, and perhaps fearing for his own life as the brother of a traitor, Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù defected to the Mongols. Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù had a distinguished military career under Genghis Khan, and he was particularly noted for leading ten men on a suicidal attack on the Alans’ capital of Maghas during the winter of 1238, for which action he was awarded the title *Baghatur* (Hero). In 1240 Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù was appointed *Jarquchi* (Judge) at Yànjīng 燕京 (modern Běijīng), and six years later promoted to *Yeke Jarquchi* (Grand Judge). In the spring of 1251, he was appointed as *Darughachi* (Governor) of Dà míng Route (Dà míng Lù 大名路; centred on modern Dà míng County in Hebei province). According the *Yuan History*, Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù was responsible for providing provisions for the Mongol army under Kublai Khan during the Mongol campaign

⁴ *Xuělóu Jí* 雪樓集 (*Siku Quanshu* ed.) *juan* 25: “Account of the Ancestors of the Duke of Wèi” 魏國公先世述.

⁵ *Qiūjiàn Jí* 秋澗集 (*Siku Quanshu* ed.) *juan* 51: “Spirit-Way Stele Inscription for Duke Li, the Late Imperial Envoy for Dà míng Route” 大元故大名路宣差李公神道碑銘.

⁶ The historical sources have somewhat contradictory accounts of the fall of Sùzhōu. The *Yuan History* (ch. 122) does not record the failed surrender of Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù’s brother, but states that Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù’s unnamed elder brother was in charge of the defenders at Sùzhōu after Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù had pledged allegiance to Genghis Khan and had been sent to take Sùzhōu; but other sources indicate that after the execution of Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù’s brother in Sùzhōu, the defence of the city was given to Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù’s uncle, Xīlǐ Dūshuǐ 錫哩都水, and so it was his uncle who led the resistance to Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù’s siege of Sùzhōu (see Áotègēn 2004 pp. 131 and 137). Áotègēn suggests that Xīlǐ Dūshuǐ was the father of Jǔlishā, and thus Jǔlishā was a paternal cousin of Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù, but there seems to be no reason to suppose that Xīlǐ Dūshuǐ was not the uncle of both Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù and Jǔlishā. Indeed, it would have been exceedingly odd if Jǔlishā’s father had been put in charge of the defence of Sùzhōu after his fellow defenders had executed his son.

against the Southern Song in 1259, but he fell ill and had to return home, where he subsequently died. His coffin was temporarily kept in Dàmíng, with the intention of eventually sending him back to Sùzhōu for burial at the ancestral tombs, but this never happened, and so in 1278 his grandson Jiàohuà 教化 had him interred in a tomb at Dàmíng.



Fig. 1. Memorial tablet for Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù
Photograph courtesy of Prof. Niè Hóngyīn 聶鴻音

After Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù's death, the position of *Darughachi* of Dàmíng Route was inherited by his eldest son Àilǚ 愛魯 (1226–1288), but in 1267 Àilǚ was removed from office for misappropriation of official funds, and sent to fight against the tribes of southwest China and modern Vietnam, where he died of miasma (in March 1990 his tomb was discovered at Dàmíng, close to where the tomb of Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù would be uncovered 23 years later). The position of *Darughachi* then

passed to Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù's third son, Xiǎo Qiánbù 小鈐部 'Little Qiánbù' (?–1276), but in 1276 he was executed for taking bribes. The position was then inherited by Àilǚ's eldest son, Jiàohuà, and it was Jiàohuà who caused the memorial tablet to be set up on the 5th day of the 2nd month of the 15th year of the Zhìyuán era (27th February 1278 in the Julian calendar). The Chinese text engraved on the memorial tablet, reproduced below, is quite short and omits some of the details of Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù's career that are present in his biography in the *Yuan History*, but it is still an important historical document as it provides some otherwise unknown information, and clarifies some parts of the *Yuan History* account that are confused.



Fig. 2. Rubbing of the Chinese inscription on the memorial tablet for Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù
 Photograph courtesy of Prof. Niè Hóngyīn 聶鴻音

Transcription of the Chinese text

小李鈐部公墓誌銘

宣差大名路達魯花赤小李鈐部公墓誌

公鈐部其先河西肅州之世系祖塋在焉公生而通敏長有才略丙戌間遭家不造歸附

上國遂命公征開西既回復輔阿荅赤忽都怙木兒取沙州彼恃衆堅守戰鬥不一時忽都馬乏不克前進以己馬負之而出公獨進攘敵俱免其難後蒙上顧問向之臨陣以己之馬濟人之危何其自輕耶公伏

奏曰彼則有功于

國信任已久臣則新附未有寸効故爾

上奇之沙州既平賜人口一百有六後征阿思克千戶隨行未幾城陷皆公之佐欵遂命公同合荅行斷事官事丙午復命公同牙魯花赤行天下斷事官辛亥改授大名路都達魯花赤戊午祿七月廿有八日以病卒年六十九歲夫人田氏六十五歲男三人孫三人長愛魯襲父爵寵授虎符至元四年十月間改授雲南安撫使次子羅合中統三年

宣授大名等路行軍萬戶至元元年八月十二日卒次子小鈐部以兄愛魯出仕南國襲爵如前加昭勇大將軍至元十三年二月內卒長孫教化是年四月有四日祇授

宣命虎符襲爵加嘉議大夫兼大名路諸軍奧魯達魯花赤次孫怙木兒次孫萬奴噫一門之中襲爵承

宣枝葉不替非公之積德累功焉能至此耶長孫教化以父之出仕未還念祖之權厝未葬是以改卜新塋仍刻貞石以誌其後至元十五年二月有五日嘉議大夫大名路達魯花赤兼諸軍奧魯達魯花赤孝長孫教化誌

Translation of the Chinese text

Grave Epitaph Inscription for Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù

Grave Epitaph for Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù, by imperial appointment *Darughachi* of Dàmíng Route.

The lord Qiánbù's ancestors lived for generations at Sùzhōu in Héxī, and that is where the tombs of his ancestors are⁷. When the lord was born he was quick-thinking and clever, and when he grew up he was talented and

⁷ Héxī 河西 'West of the Yellow River' is the Chinese name for the Tangut homeland under the rule of the Western Xia, encompassing parts of modern Shaanxi, Yinchuan, Gansu, and Inner Mongolia.

understood strategy. In the cyclic year *bǐngxū* (1226) his family encountered a misfortune, and he switched his allegiance to the Superior Country (i.e. the Mongols)⁸.

The lord was commanded to campaign west of the pass⁹. After returning he assisted the *Aghtachi* Khutugh Temür to take Shāzhōu¹⁰. Relying on their great numbers to staunchly defend [the city], there were several battles. When Khutugh's horse was exhausted and unable to go forward, [Qiánbù] carried him on his own horse, so they escaped. The lord alone attacked and dispelled the enemy, and thereby avoided disaster¹¹. Later the Mongol emperor enquired of him: "Previously in battle when you used your horse to help someone in danger, how come you showed no concern for yourself?" The lord prostrated himself, and reported: "He had already done great deeds for the kingdom, and had long held a trusted position; but I, on the other hand, had only recently joined, and had never yet achieved an inch of merit, that is the reason why." The emperor thought this remarkable. After Shāzhōu had been pacified he was given a retinue of one hundred and six men¹². Later, he accompanied

⁸ The misfortune seems to obliquely refer to the death of Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù's elder brother at Sùzhōu.

⁹ The term "west of the pass" (Guānxī 關西, here written with the character 關 for 關 *guān* 'pass') refers to the region to the west of the Tangut homeland of Hélixī. In the *Yuan History* the phrase "campaign west of the pass" 征關西 only occurs twice, and one of these occurrences is with reference to the Tangut general Tǎhǎi Gānbǔ 塔海甘卜 (ch. 123).

¹⁰ *Aghtachi* is the title for the official in charge of breeding horses, sometimes translated into English as 'groom'.

¹¹ The *Yuan History* (ch. 122) provides more details for this episode: "The generals of Shāzhōu pretended to surrender, and they prepared beef and wine to welcome the [Mongol] army, but had troops waiting in ambush. When the Commander arrived the ambush was deployed and [the commander's] horse was tripped up. Qiánbù gave the Commander the horse he was riding and sent it galloping away, while he himself rode the horse that had been tripped, and from the rear guard he attacked and defeated the enemy." (州將偽降，以牛酒犒師，而設伏兵以待之。首帥至，伏發馬蹶，鈐部以所乘馬與首帥使奔，自乘所蹶馬而殿後擊敗之。)

¹² According to the *Yuan History* (ch. 122), Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù was sent to pacify Sùzhōu after first taking Shāzhōu, but as the city would not surrender Genghis Khan ordered the inhabitants to be massacred. However, Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù pleaded with him to save the lives of his elder brother and his family who were among the defenders. When

the campaign against the Chiliarhy of the Alans, and before long their city had fallen—all due to the lord's assistance¹³! Then the lord was ordered to join Qada as a judicial official. In the cyclic year *bǐngwǔ* (1246) the lord was then commanded to join [Mahmud] Yalavach as a national judge¹⁴. In the cyclic year *xīnhài* (1251) he was promoted to *Darughachi* of Dàmíng Route¹⁵. On the 28th day of the 7th month in autumn of the cyclic year *wùwǔ* (28th August 1258) he died from an illness, in the 69th year of his life¹⁶.

the city finally fell, Genghis Khan spared the lives of Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù's brother and one hundred and six members of his household. This account is confused, and appears to conflate the failed surrender of Sùzhōu by Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù's brother in 1226 with Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù's participation in the taking of Shāzhōu in 1227. The one hundred and six people mentioned in the text of the memorial tablet were probably the relatives and retainers of Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù residing at Shāzhōu, which is where he was based before joining the Mongols.

¹³ The *Yuan History* (ch. 122) explains the role Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù played in the campaign against the Alans: "In the 11th month during winter of the cyclic year *jǐhài* (1239) they reached the Alans' [capital] city of Maghas (in the Greater Caucasus), which was stoutly defended, and for a long time could not be taken. In the first month in the spring of the following year, Qiánbù led a suicide squad of ten men. They climbed up scaling ladders before anyone else, captured eleven men, and shouted out 'The city has fallen!', whereupon the host swarmed over [the walls] and seized [the city]." (己亥冬十有一月，至阿速滅怯思城，負固久不下。明年春正月，鈐部率敢死士十人，躡雲梯先登，俘十一人，大呼曰：「城破矣！」衆蟻附而上，遂拔之。)

¹⁴ Qada is presumably the same Qada who was the last Jin dynasty governor of the Central Capital (modern Běijīng), and who surrendered to Genghis Khan in 1215 (Rachewiltz 1993 pp. 80–82). An account of the life of Mahmud Yalavach (?–1254), who was the first head of the Turkestan Chancellery, is given by Thomas T. Allsen in Rachewiltz 1993 pp. 122–128.

¹⁵ The account in the *Yuan History* ch. 122 is rather confused, suggesting that Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù was made *Darughachi* of Dàmíng Route in 1246, but was subsequently ordered to take an administrative position, and only when that appointment was over was he sent to Dàmíng. On the other hand, Wáng Yùn states that Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù was ordered to take up an administrative post in the Branch Department of State Affairs at Yànjīng 燕京 (modern Běijīng) in 1244, and only appointed as *Darughachi* of Dàmíng Route in spring 1251, which accords with the text of the memorial tablet.

¹⁶ The *Yuan History* ch. 122 records that Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù was appointed to supply provisions for the army during Kublai Khan's campaign against the Southern Song in the cyclic year *jǐwèi* 己未 (1259), but that he fell ill, and returned home where he died in his 69th year. The *Yuan History* only gives the year of his death, whereas Wáng Yùn specifies that it was the 7th month of the *jǐwèi* year. In the epitaph for Àilǚ composed by Yáo Suì 姚燧 (1238–1313) (*Yáosui Jí* 姚燧集 or *Mù'ān Jí* 牧庵集 *juan* 19) the full date of death is

His lady wife, Madam Tian, was in her 65th year [when she died], and had three sons and three grandsons¹⁷. The eldest son, Àilǔ, inherited his father's titles, and the tiger tally was bestowed on him¹⁸. During the 10th month of the 4th year of the Zhìyuán era (1267) he was promoted to Pacification Commissioner for Yúnnán¹⁹. The next son, Luóhé, was appointed military Commander of Ten Thousand Households for Dàmíng and associated routes in the 3rd year of the Zhōngtǒng era (1262). On the 12th day of the 8th month of the 1st year of the Zhìyuán era (3rd September 1264) he died. The next son, Xiǎo Qiánbù (Young Qiánbù), due to his elder brother Àilǔ having gone to serve in the south of the country, inherited his previous titles, and was additionally made Clear and Brave General-in-Chief. During the 2nd month of the 13th year of the Zhìyuán era (1276) he died²⁰. The eldest grandson, Jiàohuà, on the 4th day of the 4th month of the same year (18th May 1276), respectfully received the [emperor's] proclamation of the tiger tally, and inherited the family titles; additionally he was made Grand Master for Excellent Counsel, as well as *Darughachi* for Military Provisions in Dàmíng Route. The

given as the 28th day of the 7th month in the cyclic year *jǐwèi* (18th August 1259). As Kublai Khan's campaign against the Southern Song did not commence until the second half of 1259, we must conclude that the memorial tablet is mistaken about the year of death.

¹⁷ Wáng Yùn records that Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù had a second wife, Madam Bái (白氏), and that both wives were buried with their husband.

¹⁸ The tiger tally was a symbol of military authority issued to a commander by the imperial court.

¹⁹ According to the *Yuan History* (ch. 6), in the 7th month of the 4th year of the Zhìyuán era (1267) "Àilǔ, *Darughachi* of Dàmíng Route, and Zhāng Hóngfàn, Supervisor-in-chief, misappropriated official funds, and were removed from their positions" (大名路達魯花赤愛魯、總管張弘範等盜用官錢，罷之). It may be assumed that his being sent south never to return was a punishment rather than a promotion.

²⁰ The *Yuan History* (ch. 122) records that in the 1st month of the 13th year of the Zhìyuán era (1276) "Xiǎo Qiánbù, *Darughachi* of Dàmíng Route, was executed for taking bribes, and his property was confiscated" (大名路達魯花赤小鈐部坐奸贓伏誅，沒其家). The text of the memorial tablet is understandably silent on the cause of his death.

next grandson was Temür, and the next grandson [after him] was Wànnú²¹.

Ah! In one family the titles are inherited, branch and leaf are not replaced. Without the merits accumulated by the lord and his many deeds, how could it come to this?! The eldest grandson, Jiàohuà, because his father had gone to serve [in Yúnnán] but had not yet returned, was concerned that his grandfather's coffin had been placed in a temporary location and had not been interred. Therefore he divined a new burial spot, and carved a memorial stone to record his deeds for posterity²².

Recorded by the Grand Master for Excellent Counsel, *Darughachi* of Dàmíng Route, and *Darughachi* for Military Provisions, the filial eldest grandson Jiàohuà, on the 5th day of the 2nd month of the 15th year of the Zhìyuán era (27th February 1278).

On the opposite side of the Chinese inscription, there is a brief inscription in Tangut script (Fig. 1), consisting of two parallel columns of text, in total eleven characters, which record the names of Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù and his wife. There is some damage to the bottom right of the inscription, perhaps where a mechanical digger scraped its surface, but fortunately the Tangut text is still entirely legible.

²¹ Chéng Jùfū records that Jiàohuà's younger brothers were called Esen Temür and Qutudai, but Wáng Yùn agrees with the memorial tablet that that Ālǔ 阿魯 (= Àilǔ) had three sons: Jiāhún 嘉琿 (= Jiàohuà), Temür (特穆爾), and Wànnǔ 萬努. The *Zhèngdé Era Records of Dàmíng Prefecture* 正德大名府志 *juan* 6 records that the title of *Darughachi* of Dàmíng passed from Jiàohuà to his son Wànnú, then to his son Yěsù Pǔhuā 也速普花 (1295–1335), and then to his son Pǔyán 普顏. However, in the epitaph text for Yěsù Pǔhuā 野速普花 recorded in the *Zhèngdé Era Records of Dàmíng Prefecture* *juan* 10 it states that the title passed from Wànnú to his younger brother named Qutudar 忽都荅兒, and only then to Yěsù Pǔhuā, so Qutudar may have been the youngest son of Āilǔ, born in exile to a second wife after the erection of the memorial tablet for Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù in 1278. This epitaph also notes that Yěsù Pǔhuā's wife was Madam Wēimí 威彌氏 (1290–1347), whose Chinese name may be a transcription of the Tangut royal family name Ngwemi 纓纓.

²² Wáng Yùn records the site of the tomb as the “new burial ground” (新阡) at Tàitóu village (台頭里) in Dàmíng County, which is presumably the original name for the site where Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù's tomb was discovered in 2013.

character used in *Pearl in the Palm* to phonetically gloss the Chinese characters 二 èr, 兒 ér, and 耳 ěr, so these two characters are likely to be the Tangut transcription of Madam Tian's Chinese given name. Unfortunately, her given name is not recorded in the Chinese inscription on the memorial tablet or in the *Yuan History*, but I interpret the two Tangut characters as a transcription of the Han Chinese name Fú'ér 福兒 'Fortunate Child' or possibly Fù'ér 富兒 'Wealthy Child'²³. The last two characters (𐰽𐰚·a ma) mean 'mother', so the entire line may be translated as "Mother, Madam Tian Fu'er".

The column on the left reads 𐰽𐰚𐰚𐰚 (Sofronov: *seu liē nga mbju khwei*), and refers to Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù. The first two characters (𐰽𐰚 *seu liē*) phonetically transcribe the Chinese name 小李 Xiǎolǐ, and the next two characters (𐰚𐰚 *ngam bju*) correspond to Qiánbù 鈐部, as discussed below. The final character (𐰽 *khwei*) means 'great, grand', and in *Pearl in the Palm* (30.1B and 31.1C) is used to gloss the Chinese word 大人 dà rén 'great man', which is a term of address for a superior official. On this inscription, as it is parallel with 'mother' on the adjacent column, the word may have been used as an honorific term meaning 'father'²⁴.

The third character (𐰚 *nga* 'army') and fourth character (𐰽 *mbju* 'commander'), which together correspond to the word Qiánbù 鈐部 in the Chinese inscription on the memorial tablet, form the common Tangut word meaning 'army commander' or 'general'²⁵.

²³ Liú and Zhū2014-05-21 give the translation 夫人 fūrén 'madam, lady' for the two characters 𐰽𐰚, although it is not clear who the authority for this translation is. However, the Tangut character 𐰽 (Sofronov *zje*) is not a good phonetic match for 人 rén 'person', and is elsewhere only used to transcribe the Chinese characters 兒 ér, 爾 ěr, 耳 ěr, and 二 èr. In contrast, the Chinese character 人 rén is commonly transcribed using the Tangut character 𐰚 (Sofronov *zên*), so it seems unlikely that 𐰽 here represents Chinese 人 rén.

²⁴ Niè 2006 suggests that 𐰽 by itself originally meant 'tribal chief', and it was extended to refer to officials due to the cultural and linguistic influence of Khitan, and was related to the Khitan and Jurchen use of the word 'big' to mean 'official' (*amban*).

²⁵ The word 𐰚𐰚 occurs in *Pearl in the Palm* (28.1A) in the entry for 𐰚𐰚𐰚, glossed in Chinese as 統軍司 tǒngjūnsī 'Office of the Army Commander'; in *Mixed Characters* (*ndi*

Wáng Yùn explains that Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù's father held the position of Qiánbù of Sùzhōu, and for this reason he gave his son the alternate name of Qiánbù (皇考府君用級爵受肅州鈐部，其後因以官稱為號)²⁶. Wáng Yùn also records that Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù held the position of Qiánbù of Shāzhōu 沙州 (modern Dūnhuáng), and so a more plausible explanation for his name is that Yilishān (as he was originally called) adopted the title Qiánbù when he was stationed in Shāzhōu.

The term Qiánbù (literally “ministry of seals”) is only recorded in relation to Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù and his close relatives (his father who was Qiánbù of Sùzhōu; his elder brother, Jǔlishā, who may have inherited his father's position; and his third son, “Little Qiánbù”), and does not appear elsewhere in historic sources. However, the *Yuan History* (ch. 122) notes that “Qiánbù (*Kempu) is also called Gānbǔ (*Gambu) — the pronunciation is similar and they are mutually interchangeable” 鈐部亦云甘卜，音相近而互用也. Furthermore, Chéng Jùfū refers to Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù as Xīlǐ Kānbù 錫哩堪布, and notes that “Kānbù (*Kambu) is a military position in Héxī” 堪布者，河西軍職也. The *Yuan History* and other historical sources record a number of Tangut men who have Gambu as a name or title:

- Asha Ganbu (Aša Gambu), Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù's nephew (son of Jǔlishā) and Grand *Darughachi* of Sùzhōu, who is commemorated on a memorial stele erected in 1361²⁷;

ndza 颯敕 = Zázì 雜字) 20B2 and 21B7; multiple times in *Forest of Categories* (*ndje mbo* 嵒敕 = Lèilín 類林); twice in *New Collection on Parental Love and Filial Piety* (*sjeu sjioun wə la* 颯嗣託軒籜 = Xīnjí Cíxiào zhuàn 新集慈孝傳); and as part of the title of *The General's Garden* (*nga mbju rai mbo tshje* 嵒績嵒敕 毬 = Jiàng Yuàn 將苑).

²⁶ See Áotègēn 2004 p. 130. In the version of the text preserved in the *Zhèngdé Era Records of Dàmíng Prefecture* 正德大名府志 *juan* 10 the term 紺部 gānbù is given instead of 鈐部 qiánbù.

²⁷ The memorial stele entitled “Stele for the Great Yuan Hereditary Grand *Darughachi* of Sùzhōu Route” 大元肅州路也可達魯花赤世襲之碑, was discovered at Jiǔquán in 1962. The stele has epitaphs for Asha inscribed in Chinese on the front and in Uighur on the back. The Chinese inscription only names him as Āshā 阿沙, but the Uighur inscription calls him Aša Gambu. He may be the same Asha Gambu recorded in the *Secret History of the Mongols*, but the stele records that Genghis Khan rewarded him because of his father's intention to defect to the Mongols, which does not fit with the description of Asha Gambu in the *Secret History*, who is depicted as an implacable opponent of Genghis Khan.

- Āshā Gānbù 阿沙敢不 (Aša Gambu), a Tangut general mentioned several times in the *Secret History of the Mongols* (§§256, 265–266), and notorious for his defiant stance against Genghis Khan²⁸;
- Zháhé Gānbù 札合敢不 (Ĵaqa Gambu), younger brother of Toghrul (Khan of the Keraites from 1165 to 1194), father of Sorghaghtani Beki (wife of Tolui, and mother of Möngke Khan and Kublai Khan), and possibly father-in-law to the last Tangut emperor, who features prominently in the *Secret History of the Mongols* (§§107–108, 142, 150, 152, 186, 208)²⁹;
- Shùnányù Gānbù 東南玉紺部, a cousin of Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù mentioned in the Epitaph of Xīlǐ Bó 昔李勃 composed by Ōuyáng Xuán 歐陽玄 (1283–1357)³⁰;
- Yěpú Gānbǔ 也蒲甘卜, a Tangut commander who surrendered with his troops to Genghis Khan in 1221 (*Yuan History* ch. 123);
- Shuòsījīyì'ér Gānbǔ 搠思吉亦兒甘卜 (*Yuan History* ch. 35);
- Tǎhǎi Gānbǔ 塔海甘卜 (*Yuan History* ch. 123).

It would seem that Qianbu, Kanbu, and Ganbu are alternative phonetic transcriptions for the same Tangut word, and from the memorial tablet for Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù it is clear that the Tangut word in question is 叢纘³¹.

In *Pearl in the Palm* (28.1A) 叢纘 is phonetically glossed as 遏暮 è mù and semantically glossed as 統軍 tǒngjūn ‘army commander’. The title 統軍 tǒngjūn had been used for various military positions during the Tang dynasty (Hucker 1985 #7482), but was no longer a regular military position during the Song dynasty, although it was a hereditary

²⁸ Rachewiltz 2015 pp. 178, 186–187. See also Ruth Dannel’s discussion in Franke and Twitchett 1994 pp. 210–211.

²⁹ Rachewiltz 2015 pp. 36, 60, 69, 71, 102, 133. Although Ĵaqa Gambu was not himself a Tangut, Ruth Dannel notes that in his youth he lived in the Tangut kingdom, where he was given the title Gambu (Franke and Twitchett 1994 p. 206).

³⁰ *Zhèngdé Era Records of Dàmíng Prefecture* 正德大名府志 juan10: “Tomb Epitaph for Lord Xīlǐ, Supervisor of the Court of Ceremonial Propriety during the Yuan dynasty” 元禮儀院判昔李公墓誌銘.

³¹ The title Gambu in the *Secret History of the Mongols* has previously been taken to be a transcription of the Tibetan religious epithet sGam-po སྐམ་པོ་ ‘one who is fully-accomplished’ (e.g. Rachewiltz 1984 p. 140), but that would seem to be a very odd title for a military commander, and the vowel of the second syllable does not match the Chinese transcriptions, so I think this theory can be discarded.

position held by tribal chieftains during the Liao dynasty³². As the Tangut Gambu 𐰇𐰆𐰏 also seems to have been a hereditary position (Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù’s elder brother may have inherited his father’s position as Gambu of Sùzhōu), it is quite possible that the Tangut term is a direct translation of the Khitan word 𐰇𐰆 ‘army commander’³³.

The various Chinese phonetic transcriptions of 𐰇𐰆 are given in the table below, with Old Mandarin readings from the 14th-century Phags-pa script rime dictionary 蒙古字韻 *Měnggǔ Zìyùn*.

Table 1. Chinese transcriptions of Tangut 𐰇𐰆

Chinese characters	Modern Standard Mandarin	Old Mandarin
鈐部	qián bù	kem pu
堪布	kān bù	k‘ambu
甘卜	gān bǔ	gam bu
敢不	gǎn bù	gam bu
紺部	gàn bù	gam pu

The various modern phonetic reconstructions of the Tangut characters 𐰇 ‘army’ and 𐰆 ‘commander’ are given in Table 2³⁴.

Table 2. Phonetic reconstructions of Tangut ‘Army Commander’

Tangut	Meaning	Sofronov	Nishida	LǐFànwén	Gong Hwang-cherng	Miyake
𐰇	army	nga	ŋhafi	ga	gia	¹ ga ₄
𐰆	commander	mbju	mǐofi	biu	bju	² bu ₄

³² Hucker 1985 #7483 defines 統軍使 *tǒngjūnshǐ* ‘Army Commander’ as “one of the titles used for hereditary chieftains of Tribal Armies”.

³³ The Khitan large script word 𐰇𐰆 ‘army commander’ is attested in the “Epitaph for the Grand Prince of the North” (北大王墓誌) column 17, and the “Epitaph for Yelü Qi” (耶律祺墓誌) column 11. The character 𐰇 has been identified as a transcription for Chinese 統 *tǒng* and 同 *tóng*, and the character 𐰆 has been identified as a transcription for Chinese 軍 *jūn*, so the word 𐰇𐰆 is a phonetic transcription of Chinese 統軍 *tǒngjūn*.

³⁴ Sofronov’s reconstructions are from Kychanov 2006; Nishida’s are from Nishida 1966; Lǐ’s and Gong’s are both from Lǐ 2008; and Miyake’s are from <http://amritas.com/Tangut/tangutdb-4-0.xls>

Comparing the Old Mandarin readings in Table 1 with the modern phonetic reconstructions in Table 2, it is clear that the gān bǔ 甘卜 (*gambu) and gǎn bù 敢不 (*gambu) transcriptions are closest to the modern reconstructions of the Tangut characters, and that the qián bù (*kempu) transcription is anomalous, with voiceless initials for both syllables and a front vowel instead of a back vowel in the first syllable. All reconstructions of the first Tangut character (𐰇𐰺) show an open syllable, so the final -m of the first syllable of the Chinese transcription must belong to the second Tangut character (𐰇𐰺), which Sofronov alone reconstructs with a prenasalized voiced stop (mb-). Evidently, the Tangut word *ga-mbu was segmented as gam-bu in Chinese transcription because that is what the spoken Tangut word sounded like to the Chinese. It is possible that the first Tangut character was pronounced with a prenasalized ŋg- initial rather than as g- or ŋ-, but as Old Mandarin could not represent ŋg- at the start of a word, the Tangut sound was of necessity transcribed with characters which had a g- initial.

The anomalous Qianbu (*kempu) transcription seems to have been an idiosyncratic variation of Ganbu (*gambu) used only by Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù for his own name and for the name of his third son. I believe that Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù deliberately chose ‘Qiánbù’ as a phonetic approximation for the Tangut word ‘army commander’ that also acts as an approximate Chinese translation of the Mongolian title *Darughachi* (Chinese 達魯花赤 dālǔhuāchì). Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù and his heirs were *Darughachi* of Dàmíng Route, and several Tangut army commanders ended up as military or civil *Darughachi* under the Mongols³⁵. Thus the Mongolian position of *Darughachi* may have been seen as equivalent to the Tangut position of Army Commander, and Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù may have deliberately phonetically mistranscribed *gambu* as *kempu* so that it also had a similar meaning in Chinese as the Mongolian word *Darughachi*.

The word *Darughachi* (daruʁači 𐰇𐰺𐰍𐰏) is formed from the word *Darugha* (daruʁa 𐰇𐰺𐰍) with the person-forming suffix -či. *Darugha* seems to have the same meaning as *Darughachi*, so in Mongolian

³⁵ See West 2015-01-11 for an account of the life of the Tangut official Lǎosuǒ 老索 (1188–1260), who was *Darughachi* of Bǎodíng, 300 km north of Dàmíng.

Phags-pa monumental inscriptions such as the 1276 “Edict of Mangala” the Phags-pa word *daruqas* (plural of Darugha) is translated as 達魯花赤 *dálǔhuāchì* = *Darughachi* in the corresponding Chinese text. Miyake suggests that the word Darugha is a survival of the early Xiongnu word for a tribal chieftain, transcribed in Chinese as Chányú 單于 (reconstructed as *dar-fiwa by Baxter and Sagart)³⁶. However, most sources derive Darugha from the Mongolian verb *daru-*, meaning ‘to press’, ‘to repress’, ‘to conquer’, ‘to print’, ‘to stamp’, ‘to seal’, presumably with the continuative nominal suffix *-ya* meaning ‘one who always presses’. The ambiguity of the verb *daru-* has led the term *Darughachi* to be translated in modern Chinese as either 掌印者 *zhǎngyìnzhě* ‘keeper of the seal’ or 鎮守者 *zhènshǒuzhě* ‘oppressor’. In the *Cambridge History of China*, Hsiao Ch’i-ch’ing explains *Darughachi* thus:

Darughachi is a Mongolian term that literally means the “one who presses”, in the sense of affixing a seal, hence the chief official of an office. Under the Yüan system, the *darughachi* were placed above titular official of many central and local government offices. Their function was mainly supervisory rather than executive. With few exceptions, only Mongols and the *se-mu* were qualified to serve as *darughachi*³⁷.

On the other hand, Bayarsaikhan Dashdondog explains the term as deriving from the same root, but with rather different semantics:

The Mongolian *darugha* or *darughachi* is derived from the root *daru*, which means to press or suppress, and could be interpreted as oppressor³⁸.

For the present discussion, it is not important whether Darugha is an ancient word ultimately derived from the Chányú of the Xiongnu or whether it is a native Mongolian word derived from the verb ‘to press’, because it is only what Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù thought the word meant that matters. I have been unable to find any contemporary discussions of the meaning of *Darughachi* in Chinese sources, but it is not

³⁶ See Miyake 2015-01-27.

³⁷ Franke and Twitchett 1994 p. 521 note 134.

³⁸ Dashdondog 2010 p. 105.

unreasonable to assume that Mongols of the time either knew that Darugha was a reflex of the verb ‘to press’, or, if it was an ancient word meaning ‘tribal chieftain’, that they created a folk etymology for it based on the verb ‘to press’. Either way, a literal Chinese translation of *Darughachi* would reflect Mongolian *daru-* ‘to press, to stamp’. Turning to the Chinese word Qiánbù, we find that the first character, qián 鈐, does indeed mean ‘to stamp a seal’, and the second character, bù 部, means ‘ministry’, so Qiánbù literally means ‘ministry for stamping seals’ in Chinese³⁹. This is not an exact translation of Mongolian *Darughachi*, nor is *kempu* an exact phonetic transcription of Tangut* *gambu*, but it is a very clever loose translation of the Mongolian word at the same time as being an approximate phonetic transcription of the Tangut word.

Not only did Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù alter the title Gambu to Qianbu, but I believe that he also sinified his original family name. The *New Yuan History* 新元史 (1922) and the *Historical Records of the Mongols* 蒙兀兒史記 (1934) both state that the surname of Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù’s ancestors was originally Xiǎolǐ 小李 (‘Little Lǐ’, to distinguish them from the Western Xia royal family), but it later became corrupted to Xīlǐ 昔里⁴⁰. It seems highly unlikely that the *Yuan History* and contemporaneous authors such as Chéng Jùfū would miswrite Xiǎolǐ (小李) as Xīlǐ (昔里 or 錫哩), and it is much more plausible that his family name was originally a native Tangut surname pronounced something like Sili (Xili), which Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù changed to the Chinese Xiǎolǐ (‘Little Lǐ’)⁴¹. The associated backstory that his ancestors were Shatuo Turks who had been bestowed the Tang royal surname of Lǐ must also be a fiction invented by Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù. In conclusion, we can hypothesise that when Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù moved away from the Tangut homeland of Hélixī (the land west of the Yellow River), he adopted the more elegant

³⁹ Cf. 鈐轄 qiánxiá ‘Controller of the Seal’, the title for a military administrator of an army on campaign under the Song and Jin dynasties (Hucker 1985 #898).

⁴⁰ See Áotègēn 2004 p. 130.

⁴¹ There are no recorded Tangut family names matching Sili, although 纒 (Sofronov: sì) is the first character in eight Tangut family names, and 纒 (Sofronov: lìe) is the second character in two Tangut family names, so 纒纒 would be a hypothetical match for the Chinese transcription Xīlǐ.

name Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù 小李鈐部 in preference to the meaningless phonetic transcription Xīlǐ Gānbǔ 昔里甘卜.

The Evidence for Prenasalized Voiced Obstruents in Tangut

One key unresolved issue in the reconstruction of phonetic readings for Tangut characters is whether voiced obstruents were prenasalized or not. All systems of phonetic reconstruction for Tangut posit four contrasting series of initials for *Homophones* Classes I, III, V, VI, and VII: unvoiced unaspirated obstruents (e.g. p-, t-, k-, ts-, tʃ-), unvoiced aspirated obstruents (e.g. p^h-, t^h-, k^h-, ts^h-, tʃ^h-), voiced obstruents (e.g. b-, d- g-, dz-, dʒ-), and nasals and fricatives (e.g. m-, n-, ŋ-, s-, ʃ-). There is little significant disagreement over the reconstructed phonetic values for unvoiced unaspirated obstruents, unvoiced aspirated obstruents, nasals, and fricatives, but there are two opposing schools of thought regarding the voiced obstruents. On the one hand, M. V. Sofronov and Nishida Tatsuo have separately reconstructed voiced obstruents with prenasalization (e.g. mb-, nd- ŋg-, ndz-, ndʒ-); whereas, Hwang-cherng Gong, Lǐ Fànwén, and Arakawa Shintarō have reconstructed ordinary voiced obstruents without any prenasalization. Since Gong's reconstructions have been used in Lǐ Fànwén's *Tangut-Chinese Dictionary* (1st ed. 1997; revised ed. 2008) they have become the most widely used readings for Tangut characters in current scholarship. In contrast, Sofronov's reconstructions, although used in a revised form for E. I. Kychanov's *Tangut-Russian-English-Chinese Dictionary* (2006), are less commonly referred to by Tangut scholars, and consequently Tangut readings which do not show prenasalization of voiced initials have become the norm.

In his 1968 *Grammar of the Tangut Language*, Sofronov reconstructs prenasalized voiced initials mb-, nd-, ndz-, and ndʒ- instead of ordinary b-, d-, dz-, or dʒ-, although he reconstructs ng- (i.e. ŋ-) where ŋg- might be expected (Sofronov 1968 vol. I pp. 102–104). This system of reconstruction is used with some revisions, corrections and orthographic modifications for the readings given in Kychanov's 2006 *Tangut Dictionary*.

Nishida's reconstructions of Tangut readings, published in his "Little Dictionary of Tangut" in 1966, include a broader range of prenasalized initials than Sofronov: mb-, mʋ-, nd-, nɢ-, ŋg-, ⁿdʒ-, ⁿdz- (Nishida 1964 p. 149; Nishida 1997 p. 50). However, these do not correspond exactly to

Sofronov's reconstructions of prenasalized initials. Of the 172 characters which Sofronov reconstructs with an mb- initial and which also have readings in Nishida 1966, only 58 are also reconstructed by Nishida as mb-, whereas 76 are reconstructed as m-, 2 are reconstructed as p-, 4 are reconstructed as ph-, and 32 are reconstructed agnostically as B- (indicating a bilabial initial of uncertain value).

Gong 1981 argues strongly against the reconstruction of prenasalized initials in Tangut by Sofronov and Nishida, and concludes that “what has been reconstructed as mb-, nd-, ŋg-, ndz- and ndž- are in reality b-, d-, g-, dz-, and dž- respectively.” (Gong 1981 pp. 8–9). Gong initially used Sofronov's reconstructed readings, modified to remove all prenasalizations⁴², but later developed his own system of reconstructed readings for Tangut, with ordinary voiced obstruents wherever Sofronov has prenasalized voiced obstruents, which were incorporated into Lǐ Fànwén's *Tangut-Chinese Dictionary* (1997).

Lǐ Fànwén himself reconstructed phonetic readings for the Tangut characters recorded in the *Homophones* (·êileu 𐞁𐞃𐞄 = *Tóngyīn* 同音), which were published in his 1986 *Study of the Homophones*. In a revised form, these reconstructions were included in the *Homophones* entries given in Lǐ's *Tangut-Chinese Dictionary*. Lǐ does not systematically reconstruct prenasalized voiced initials, but like Gong he normally reconstructs b- where Sofronov has mb-. However, in the 1997 and 2008 editions of his dictionary, there is a single instance where Lǐ does seem to reconstruct a mb- initial: the character 𐞁𐞃𐞄 ‘kind of bird’ is anomalously given the reading *mbui* where *bui* would be expected (Lǐ 2008 p. 59), although the same character is read as *mui* under the entry for 𐞁𐞃𐞄 ‘kind of bird’ (Lǐ 2008 p. 376). In his 1986 study of *Homophones*, 𐞁𐞃𐞄 is reconstructed as *bui* (Lǐ 1986 p. 224), so it is not clear whether the reading *mbui* in his dictionary is a genuine reconstruction of mb- for this one character only, or whether it is a mistake.

More recently, the reconstructed readings for Tangut characters given in Arakawa Shintarō's edition of the Princeton University Library volume of the Tangut *Lotus Sutra* (2018) show ordinary voiced obstruents rather than prenasalized voiced obstruents. On the

⁴² See Gong 1988 pp. 786–793.

other hand, Marc Miyake posits the existence of prenasalized voiced obstruents such as *b-< *Nb-* in his sketch of the hypothetical ancestor of Tangut which he calls Pre-Tangut (Miyake 2012 pp. 248–249). However, he appears to be agnostic about the presence of prenasalization in the Tangut language of the Western Xia, merely remarking that “[v]oiced obstruents may have been prenasalized: e.g., *b-* may have been [mb], etc.” (Miyake 2015-02-07).

Although modern Tangut scholarship tends to affirm, or at least not explicitly deny, Gong’s position on prenasalized voiced obstruents, the question is far from having been definitively resolved, so it is worthwhile revisiting the evidence. The three main sources of evidence that have been used to argue for or against prenasalization in Tangut are discussed below, with specific reference to Tangut characters which Sofronov reconstructs as having prenasalized voiced stops (mb-).

A. Tangut-Chinese glosses

Firstly, there is the evidence of the phonetic glosses given in the Tangut-Chinese bilingual glossary *Pearl in the Palm*. All Tangut characters that Sofronov reconstructs with a mb- initial which occur in *Pearl in the Palm* are listed in Table 3⁴³. The column headed ‘Glossed by’ gives the Chinese characters that gloss the Tangut character, whereas the column headed “Glosses” gives the Chinese characters that are glossed by the Tangut character, with the number in parentheses giving the number of occurrences of each gloss. For reference, the reading in Modern Standard Mandarin (MSM) are given after the Chinese character⁴⁴. Almost all the Mandarin readings corresponding to Tangut characters which Sofronov reconstructs with a mb- initial have a nasal m- initial, with only a single exception which has an initial bilabial stop. This is the Chinese character 寶 *bǎo* ‘precious’ which is phonetically glossed by the Tangut character 𐰚 (Sofronov mbɔ) in the entry for 寶瓶 *bǎopíng* ‘precious vase’ (07.1C), although in the entry for 寶物 *bǎowù* ‘valuable object’ (12.5C) the same Chinese character is glossed by the Tangut character 𐰛 (Sofronov po).

⁴³ In Tables 3, 4, and 5, the Sofronov readings are taken from Kychanov 2006, and the Gong readings are taken from Lǐ 2008.

⁴⁴ In this paper I deliberately do not refer to reconstructed Middle Chinese readings.

In contrast to the Mandarin nasal glosses for Tangut b- or mb-initials, Tangut characters which Sofronov reconstructs with p- and ph- initials are generally glossed by Chinese characters with Mandarin b- and p- initials respectively. For example, 𐰇 (p̥i̯u) and 𐰈 (p̥i̯u) are glossed as 北 běi; 𐰉 (p̥i̯u), (p̥i̯u), (p̥i̯u), and 𐰊 (p̥i̯u) are glossed as 哺 bǔ; and 𐰋 (ph̥i̯u), 𐰌 (phu) and 𐰍 (phu) are glossed as 普 pǔ.

**Table 3. Chinese glosses for Tangut characters
in *Pearl in the Palm***

Tangut Characters	Sofronov	Gong	Glossed by	Glosses
𐰇𐰈𐰉𐰊𐰋𐰌	mbi	bji	迷 mí(7) 覓 mì(1)	
𐰍𐰎𐰏𐰐	mbin	bjiꝯ	唎 mìng(6)	
𐰑𐰒𐰓	mbiɛ	bjiꝯ	唎 mìng(3)	
𐰔	mbiɛ	bjiꝯ	唎 mìng(1)	
𐰕𐰖𐰗	mbə	bə	没 mò(3)	
𐰘𐰙𐰚	mb̥i̯u	bju	謀 móu(6) 暮 mù(4)	
𐰛𐰜𐰝	mb̥i̯u ⁴⁵	bju	莫 mò(1) 暮 mù(3)	
𐰞𐰟	mbu	bu	謀 móu(2) 沐 mù(1)	
𐰠𐰡	mbe ⁴⁶	be	墨 mò(3) 末 mò(1)	
𐰢𐰣	mbɛi	mɛ	每 měi(2)	
𐰤	mbɔ	bɔ		寶 bǎo(1)
𐰥	mba	bja	味 mò(1)	

⁴⁵ Kychanov 2006 p. 513 gives the reading v̥iɛ for both 𐰛 ‘storehouse’ and 𐰛 ‘kind of bird’, but this reading should only apply to the former character. Based on the reading mbu given in Sofronov 1968, the correct reading for 𐰛 ‘kind of bird’ should be mb̥i̯u.

⁴⁶ Kychanov 2006 p. 403 gives the reading mbə for 𐰡, but based on the reading mbe given in Sofronov 1968, the correct reading should be mbe.

Tangut Characters	Sofronov	Gong	Glossed by	Glosses
𪚩𪚪	mbĭe ⁴⁷	bji		米 mǐ(6) 密 mì(2) 眉 méi(1) 迷 mí(1) 床 mí(1) 蜜 mì(1)
𪚫	mba	ba		袜 wà(1)
𪚬𪚭	mbju	bju	暮 mù(4)	
𪚮𪚯	mbĭe ⁴⁸	mji	名 míng(5) 命 mìng(1)	
𪚰𪚱	mbĭe	bji	唸 mìn(2)	
𪚲	mbê	bie	麥 mài(1)	
𪚳	mbe	bē	墨 mò(1)	
𪚴𪚵	mbâ ⁴⁹	bia	馬重 mǎ(2)	
𪚶𪚷	mbēi	bē	墨 mò(2)	
𪚸	mba	bā	末 mò(1)	
𪚹	mbau	bā		末 mò(1)
𪚺𪚻	mbjou	bjo	藐 miǎo(1) 貌 mào(1)	
𪚼	mbou	bō		墨 mò(1) 毛 máo(1) 牡 mǔ(1) 牧 mù(1) 目 mù(1) 謀 móu(1) 鷺 mù(1)

⁴⁷ Kychanov 2006 p. 697 gives the reading mĭe for 𪚩, but based on the reading mbĭe given in Sofronov 1968, the correct reading should be mbĭe.

⁴⁸ Kychanov 2006 p. 446 gives the reading mĭe for 𪚮, but based on the reading mbĭe given in Sofronov 1968, the correct reading should be mbĭe.

⁴⁹ Kychanov 2006 p. 322 gives the reading mba for 𪚴𪚵, but based on the reading mbâ given in Sofronov 1968, the correct reading should be mbâ.

Tangut Characters	Sofronov	Gong	Glossed by	Glosses
𐞊𐞋	mban	bã	末 mò(1) 抹 mǒ(1)	
𐞊	mbuo	bowr	謀 móu(1)	
𐞊	mbu	bü		畝 mǔ(1)
𐞊	mbo	bo	魔 mó(2)	
𐞊	mbü	bur	謀 móu(1)	
𐞊	mbâu	biä		馬 mǎ(10) 瑪 mǎ(1) 麻 má(1) 𐞊màn(1)
𐞊𐞋	mbju	bju	暮 mù(2) 暮 mù(1) 謀 móu(3)	
𐞊	mbëi	bië	麥 mài(2)	麥 mài(3) 脉 mài(1)
𐞊	mba	bä	末 mò(1)	
𐞊	mbjə	bjir	没 mò(1)	
𐞊	mbja	bja	味 mò(1)	
𐞊	mba	bar	末 mò(6)	
𐞊	mbô	bio	藐 miǎo(1)	
𐞊	mbu	bü		木 mù(6) 母 mǔ(3) 莫 mò(2) 墓 mù(1)
𐞊	mbe	bë	没 mò(1)	

Gong 1981 explains away the apparent contradiction between Tangut characters reconstructed as voiced obstruents and corresponding Chinese glosses with a nasal initial in MSM by suggesting that prenasalized voiced stops and affricates existed in the variety of Chinese spoken in the Tangut lands during the Western Xia (hereafter ‘Xia Chinese’ or XC), and that such prenasalized consonants were the closest phonetic match for Tangut voiced stops

and affricates, but that the corresponding Tangut initials did not have prenasalization themselves (i.e. MSM m- = XC mb- = Tangut b-). As to the use in *Pearl* of Chinese glosses such as 尼 ní plus an unvoiced affricate character to phonetically represent Tangut characters which Sofronov reconstructs as prenasalized voiced affricates (e.g. 尼卒 nízú glosses Tangut 𐰽𐰚 ‘person’ which Sofronov reconstructs as *ndziwo*), Gong suggests that the initial 尼 ní was not intended to transcribe the actual sound of the Tangut character, but rather was a device intended to indicate to Chinese learners of the Tangut language that the following unvoiced Chinese character should be read as a voiced affricate, which was necessary because the Tangut variety of Chinese did not have an initial dz- or ndz- (Gong 1981 pp.7–8).

However, I do not find Gong’s arguments convincing. If we accept that MSM m- readings correspond to XC mb-, then it is equally possible that XC mb- corresponds to Tangut mb-. Therefore, the evidence of the *Pearl* glosses is not conclusive, and we cannot reasonably use it to determine whether Tangut voiced obstruents were prenasalized or not.

B. Sanskrit transcriptions

Secondly, there is the evidence of the Tangut phonetic transcriptions of the Sanskrit *Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī-sūtra* (Dharani-Sutra of the Victorious Buddha-Crown) and *Tathāgata-hṛdaya-dhāraṇī-sūtra* (Dharani-Sutra of the Tathagata Heart) which were engraved on the inner walls of the arch at Juyong Pass north of Běijīng between 1342 and 1345⁵⁰. It has long been realised that some Tangut characters which Sofronov reconstructed as mb- and nd- are used to represent Sanskrit b- or bh-, and d- or dh- in these texts, which Gong takes as evidence that Tangut voiced stops were not prenasalized (Gong 1981 p. 7).

Table 4 shows all the Tangut characters reconstructed with mb-, p-, or ph- initials by Sofronov that are used to transcribe Sanskrit words on the Tangut large character inscriptions at Juyong Pass, with

⁵⁰ See Murata 1957 for transcriptions of the Juyong Pass inscriptions. Nishida Tatsuo’s transcriptions of the Tangut large character inscriptions (East and West walls) on pp. 181–186 and the Chinese large character inscriptions (East and West walls) on pp. 197–203 are the sources for the Sanskrit readings given in Table 4.

the part of the Sanskrit word that the Tangut character corresponds to in bold. As the Tangut transcription of the Sanskrit text may have been made via Chinese rather than directly from the Sanskrit, the corresponding Chinese character in the Chinese version of the engraved text is also given where it exists. Looking at Table 4, it can be seen that the Chinese transcription does not clearly distinguish Sanskrit voiced and unvoiced bilabial stops, so for example Chinese 把 bǎ is broadly used to transcribe Sanskrit bha, va, pa and pha. On the other hand, the Tangut transcription does make a clear distinction, with 𑖑 and 𑖒 (Sofronov mba) corresponding to Sanskrit bha or va; 𑖓 (pa) corresponding to Sanskrit pa; and 𑖔 (pha) corresponding to Sanskrit pha. This indicates that the Tangut transcription cannot have been made via Chinese, but must have been made directly from Sanskrit or via another language such as Tibetan.

Table 4. Tangut transcriptions of Sanskrit at Juyong Pass

Tangut	Sofronov	Gong	Sanskrit	Chinese
𑖑	mba	bja	b hagavate (1)	把 bǎ
			b hagavati (1)	
			b hara (1)	巴 bā
			b havatu (2)	拔 bá
			b haya (1)	
			v ajra (4)	把 bǎ
			v ajrapāṇi (1)	
			v ajraṃ (1)	把 bǎ
			v ajraye (1)	
			v ajre (1)	把 bǎ
			v ajriṇi (1)	把 bǎ
			v ādī (1)	把 bǎ
			avab h āsa (1)	
			odb h ave (1)	把 bǎ
			prab h avā (1)	把 bǎ
			samb h ara (1)	
			samb h araṇi (1)	巴 bā
			samb h ave (1)	把 bǎ
			su v ajre (1)	
			tejovati (1)	把 bǎ
			...mavaya (1)	哇 wā

Tangut	Sofronov	Gong	Sanskrit	Chinese
𐰇𐰣	mba	ba	vajra (1) svabhāva (2)	把 bǎ 把 bǎ, 杷 pá
𐰇𐰏	mbo	bo	bodhaya (2) vibodhaya (2)	補 bǔ 補 bǔ
𐰇𐰏	mbi	bji	vibodhaya (2) vijaya (4) vikāṣita (1) vilokite (3) vimale (6) vimocaya (2) vimuni (3) viśodhani (3) viśodhaya (6) visphuṭa (1) viśuddhe (6) kilbiṣa (1) prativīṣiṣṭāya (1)	畢 bì 畢 bì, 陞 bì 尾 wěi 尾 wěi 畢 bì 畢 bì 畢 bì, 必 bì 必 bì 畢 bì, 必 bì, 尾 wěi 尾 wěi 畢 bì
𐰇𐰏	mbja	bja	vasa (1) evaṃ (1)	
𐰇𐰏	mbm	bjij	garbhe (6)	必 bì
𐰇𐰏	mbo	bo	vyavalokite (1)	尾 wěi
𐰇𐰏	mbow	bō	bhuje (1) bhūta (1) bodhani (2) buddha (1) buddhāya (1) buddhe (2) buddhi (1) buddhya (2) sambodhani (3)	補 bǔ 補 bǔ 冒 mào 補 bǔ 補 bǔ 補 bǔ 補 bǔ 補 bǔ 補 bǔ 滿 mǎn
𐰇𐰏	pa	pja	pade (2) padme (3) pāpaṃ (4) pāramitā (1) paripūraṇi (1) pariśuddhe (4) pariśuddhir (1) pariśuddhiś (1)	把 bǎ 把 bǎ, 巴 bā, 播 bō 把 bǎ 把 bǎ 把 bǎ 把 bǎ 把 bǎ

Tangut	Sofronov	Gong	Sanskrit	Chinese
𐰇	pi	pji	pāramitā (1) paripūraṇi (1) prabhavā (1) prade (1) prasaratu (1) prati (1) pratihana (2) pratinivartaya (1) pratiṣṭhite (1) prativīṣiṣṭāya (1) supraṭiṣṭha (1)	把 bǎ 把 bǎ 把 bǎ 把 bǎ 不 bù 不 bù 不 bù
𐰇	pu	pu	punya (3) sphuṭa (2) sphoṭaya (3) paripūraṇi (1)	普 pǔ 普 pǔ 布 bù
𐰇	pha	phja	sphara (1) spharaṇa (1) sphāraya (2)	拔 bá 把 bǎ 拔 bá
𐰇	pha	phja	avaraṇe (1)	哇 wā
𐰇	phja	phjar	phaṭ	

Whereas Tangut characters with p- and ph- initials generally correspond to Sanskrit p and ph, Tangut characters which Sofronov reconstructs with mb- initials correspond to Sanskrit b, bh, or v. On the surface this does seem to suggest that the Tangut initials corresponding to Sanskrit b- and bh- should be b- not mb-. However, it could be argued that if Tangut did not have any ordinary voiced obstruents, then prenasalized voiced obstruents such as mb- would have been the closest phonetic match for Sanskrit b- and bh-, especially as the Tangut unvoiced initials p- and ph- were reserved for transcribing Sanskrit p- and ph- and so could not be used for this purpose. Therefore, we should be cautious in drawing any conclusions about prenasalization in Tangut from the Tangut transcriptions of Sanskrit.

C. Tibetan phonetic glosses

Finally, there is the evidence from Tibetan glosses of Tangut Buddhist texts, which should be more enlightening as the Tibetan script possesses the ability to distinguish phonetic values that were not possible to represent easily in Chinese transcription. The use of the five prefix letters (ga^Ṃ, da^Ṃ, ba^Ṃ, ma^Ṃ, and 'a^Ṃ) in about a third of the extant Tibetan glosses suggests an attempt to indicate certain phonetic distinctions in Tangut, and in particular the presence of the prefix letter 'a in many of the Tibetan glosses has been taken as a mark of prenasalization in the corresponding Tangut character. However, Gong considers that the Tibetan phonetic glosses of Tangut characters do not unequivocally indicate prenasalization because Tangut characters reconstructed with prenasalization by Sofronov may be glossed in various ways in Tibetan (Gong 1981 pp. 6–7).

In Tai Chung-pui's 2008 dissertation on the Tibetan phonetic glosses of Tangut, he states that Tibetan glosses with voiced obstruents and the prefix letter 'a could certainly be taken to represent prenasalization in the corresponding Tangut character if prefixed 'a was used consistently for Tangut characters reconstructed as voiced obstruents. However, as actual usage seems to be inconsistent, with the prefix letter 'a alternating freely with prefix letters ga, da, and ba, Tai rejects this hypothesis, and considers instead that the prefix letters all represent some phonetic feature of Tangut that is difficult to represent in Tibetan, perhaps glottalization (Tai 2008 p. 203).

However, prefix letters were not randomly interchangeable, but their use in the glosses of Tangut characters seems to have been constrained by Tibetan orthography, which only allows each of the five prefix letters to occur before certain base letters. As 'a and da are the only two prefix letters which may occur before the base letter ba, we do not find any glosses with prefix letters ba, ga, or ma before ba. Conversely, the prefix letter 'a may only occur before certain letters, so, for example, the base letter nga may be prefixed by ba or da but never by 'a. Likewise, the prefix letter ma, which might have been expected to indicate prenasalization, only occurs before the letters kha and dza in the glosses, and then only very rarely. For this reason, no single prefix letter could be used to indicate prenasalization in the corresponding Tangut character.

**Table 5. Tibetan glosses for Tangut characters
with bilabial stops**

Tangut	Sofronov	Gong	Tibetan Gloss		Instances
𗵑	mba	ba	bāng	བར	2
𗵒	mbai	biej	dbe'	དབེའ	1
𗵓	mbâu	biā	'bar	འབར	1
𗵔	mbe	be	dbī'	དབྱེའ	1
𗵕	mbê	bie	dbi'	དབེའ	2
			'bhi'	འབྱིའ	1
			'bi	འབི	1
𗵖	mbei	bej	'bi'	འབིའ	1
𗵗	mbə	bə	'bu	འབུ	1
𗵘	mbi	bjī	'bī	འབྱི	5
			'bhi	འབྱིའ	4
			dbhi	དབྱི	1
			dbhi'	དབྱིའ	1
			dbī'	དབྱིའ	1
			'bi'	འབིའ	1
𗵙	mbi	bjī	'bhi'	འབྱིའ	3
			'bi	འབི	2
			dbhi'	དབྱིའ	1
			dbhi	དབྱི	1
𗵚	mbje	bjī	'bi	འབི	1
𗵛	mbje	bjij	'be	འབེ	3
𗵜	mbje	mjjj	dme'	དམེའ	1
𗵝	mbju	bju	'bu'	འབུའ	1

Tangut	Sofronov	Gong	Tibetan Gloss		Instances
𐰇𐰺	mbju	bju	'bu 'bū dbu'	འབྲུ འབྲུ དབྲུ	23 3 2
𐰇𐰻	mbju	bju	'bu	འབྲུ	2
𐰇𐰼	mbɪ	bji	dbhi' dbhi	དབྱིའ དབྱི	1 1
𐰇𐰽	mbin	bjiŋ	'bhe' 'bhe	འབྱིའ འབྱི	1 1
𐰇𐰾	mbô	bio	dbu'	དབྲུ	2
𐰇𐰿	mbouu	bɔ	'bho	འབྲོ	1
𐰇𐱀	mbu	bü	'bu 'bu' 'bū bū	འབྲུ འབྲུའ འབྲུ བྲུ	8 1 1 1
𐰇𐱁	piu	pju	bu' bu 'bu	བྲུའ བྲུ འབྲུ	2 2 1
𐰇𐱂	piu	pju	dpu'	དབྲུའ	1
𐰇𐱃	piu	pju	bu	བྲུ	1
𐰇𐱄	piu	pju	bu	བྲུ	3
𐰇𐱅	piu	pju	pu	བྲུ	1
𐰇𐱆	po	po	bho	བྲོ	2
𐰇𐱇	phe	phie	phi phi'	ཕི ཕིའ	2 1
𐰇𐱈	phi	phji	phi pi	ཕི ཕི	1 1

Tangut	Sofronov	Gong	Tibetan Gloss		Instances
𗵑	phi	phji	phi	ཕི	19
𗵒	phjouu	phjo	pho 'pho	ཕོ འཕོ	1 1
𗵓	phju	phju	pho pho' phuo	ཕོ ཕོའ ཕོུ	8 3 1
𗵔	phu	phu	phu	ཕུ	1

Table 5 lists all Tibetan glosses for Tangut characters that Sofronov reconstructs with mb-, p-, or ph- initials⁵¹. All but one of the Tibetan glosses corresponding to Sofronov's mb- initials have a ba base letter (mostly b- but sometimes bh-). Only Tangut 𗵑 (Sofronov mbje) is glossed in a single instance as dme' with a ma base letter (there are no other surviving Tibetan glosses for 𗵑). In the case of this particular character and its homophones (*Homophones* Edition B 06B72–06B76: 𗵑𗵑𗵑𗵑𗵑), it seems likely that Sofronov's reconstruction is wrong, and that Gong's reconstruction with a nasal initial is correct. With only two exceptions, the glosses with a ba base letter are preceded by either an 'a prefix letter (66 instances of 22 glosses) or a da prefix letter (15 instances of 12 glosses). The first exception is the single occurrence of Tangut 𗵑 (Sofronov mbu) glossed as bū, but as the glosses for the other ten occurrences of 𗵑 all have an 'a prefix we can assume that the omission of the 'a prefix letter was a mistake in this one case. The other exception is the glossing of Tangut 𗵒 (Sofronov mba) as bāng in two instances in the same manuscript (the character does not occur in any other Tangut-Tibetan manuscript), but the -ng final is anomalous, and throws some doubt on the validity of this particular gloss.

⁵¹ All known Tangut manuscripts with Tibetan phonetic glosses have been consulted, and all instances of Tibetan glosses for the Tangut characters reconstructed with mb-, p-, or ph- initials by Sofronov are listed in the table, except where incomplete or illegible.

Many of the glosses show alternation of 'a and da prefixes for glosses to the same Tangut character, even within the same manuscript, so there does not seem to be any significance as to which prefix was used. I think that any permissible prefix was used to indicate some particular phonetic characteristic of the base letter, and in the case of the base letter ba, either 'a or da were used for the same purpose (i.e. with no phonetic distinction between 'b- and db-). The 'b- and db- glosses for Tangut characters reconstructed as mb- by Sofronov contrasts with the Tibetan glosses for Tangut characters with p- and ph- initials, which almost all have no prefix letter. Of the thirteen instances of Tibetan glosses for Tangut characters with p- initials, eight have b-, two have bh-, one has p-, and there is one each of 'b- and db- which are anomalous. Of the thirty-nine instances of Tibetan glosses for Tangut characters with ph- initials, all but two have ph- with no prefix letter (the two exceptions are one instance of p- and one of 'ph). The evidence thus indicates a three-way contrast for bilabial stops:

- Tibetan 'b- or db-(and 'bh- or dbh-) correspond to Sofronov mb- or Gong b-
- Tibetan b-(and bh-) corresponds to Sofronov and Gong p-
- Tibetan ph- corresponds to Sofronov and Gong ph-

The question then is how to interpret the contrast between prefixed ba glosses ('b- and db-) and unprefixed ba glosses (b-). There are two possibilities: A) Tibetan b- corresponds to Tangut p-, and Tibetan 'b- or db-corresponds to Tangut b-; or B) Tibetan b- corresponds to Tangut p-, and Tibetan 'b- or db-corresponds to Tangut mb-. However, both possibilities are equally plausible, and so the Tibetan evidence turns out to be as inconclusive as the evidence of the Chinese glosses in *Pearl in the Palm* and the evidence of Sanskrit transcription at the Juyong Pass Buddhist inscriptions.

Conclusion

In the end, we need to return to the memorial tablet for Xiǎolǐ Qiánbù, which I think provides the only concrete evidence that can resolve the issue. The memorial tablet shows that the Tangut word 𐰇𐰏𐰐 'army commander' corresponds to the Chinese word qiánbù 鈐部,

and other historical sources equate qiánbù with the Chinese transcription 甘卜 gān bǔ, which in Old Mandarin was pronounced *gam bu*. Thus, the Tangut word 𐰇𐰆𐰏 would have been pronounced *gambu* during the period of the Mongol Empire and Yuan dynasty. As 𐰇 is an open syllable in all reconstructions, the ‘m’ in *gambu* must reflect prenasalization of the following syllable, i.e. 𐰆𐰏 was pronounced **mbu*, and Tangut **ga-mbu* was segmented as *gam-bu* in Chinese transcription. It is only possible to identify this example of prenasalization because the sound of the complete Tangut word 𐰇𐰆𐰏 was transcribed into Chinese, whereas in *Pearl in the Palm* it seems that the Chinese phonetic glosses transcribe the individual sound of each Tangut character, independent of the word as whole, and so do not indicate where a nasal initial to a voiced obstruent may sound like a nasal coda to the preceding syllable. The example of qiánbù confirms Sofronov’s reconstruction of 𐰇𐰆𐰏 as *mbju*, and thus provides strong evidence in support of the systematic presence of prenasalized bilabial stops as reconstructed by Sofronov.

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