

## **Regulation of Agricultural and Livestock Relations in the Legal System of the Tangut State (Si Sya)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article analyzes the economic foundations of the legal system of the Tangut state (Si Sya) during the 11th-13th centuries, focusing specifically on the legal norms regulating agriculture and livestock. The study is based on the fundamental monograph by renowned Tangut scholar Y.I. Kichanov, *"The History of the Tangut State"* (1968). The research examines specific provisions from the Tangut legal code, the "Laws Written in Iron of the Heavenly Prosperity Era," particularly concerning land ownership structures, the inheritance system of agricultural land (where priority was given to male children under the age of 14), water resource distribution, and the ninefold fine for livestock theft (the "ninefold penalty"). The article demonstrates that the Tangut state had a well-developed legal framework that efficiently governed its mixed economy, consisting of settled agriculture and nomadic livestock farming.

**KEYWORDS:** Tangut State, Si Sya, Y.I. Kichanov, Tangut law, "Laws Written in Iron", agrarian law, agriculture, livestock, land ownership, ninefold penalty, irrigation system.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Tangut state (Si Sya), which existed in Asia during the 11th-13th centuries, was distinguished by its complex socio-economic structure. The economic foundation of the state was based on the synthesis of two different forms of economic activities: settled agriculture and semi-nomadic livestock farming. To ensure the stable functioning of this mixed economy and prevent conflicts of interest between different social groups, a solid and comprehensively developed legal framework was essential. The relevance of this issue lies in its ability to demonstrate how, in historically complex economic conditions, the state ensured social stability through legal mechanisms. The goal of this research is to analyze the legal norms regulating the agricultural and livestock sectors within Tangut state legislation, based on the work of the prominent scholar Y.I. Kichanov.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

An analysis of scholarly literature indicates that the most significant and reliable source on the history and legal system of the Tangut state is the scientific legacy of Yevgeny Ivanovich Kichanov. His 1968 monograph *"Tangut State History Sketches"* is based on the direct study of original Tangut legal sources, specifically the "Laws Written in Iron of the Heavenly Prosperity Era" (1149-1169). In this work, Kichanov not only examined the text of the Tangut laws but also conducted a thorough analysis of their practical significance in social and economic life. Although other scholars such as N.A. Nevskiy and G. Kara have contributed to the field of Tangut studies;

Kichanov's work remains the most comprehensive and fundamental research on the legal aspects of economic relations. This article is directly based on the information provided in Kichanov's monograph.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology used in this article includes historical-comparative analysis, a systems approach, and source criticism. Tangut legal norms and specific articles within the laws have been systematized and their practical significance in the agricultural and livestock sectors has been elucidated through Kichanov's interpretations. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how the legal system governed economic relations within the Tangut state. As Kichanov emphasizes, the Tangut legal system aimed to cover all aspects of life, with particular focus on economic relations, especially in sectors crucial to the state's stability, such as agriculture and livestock. In the Tangut state, the regulation of agricultural land, water resources, and taxes was essential, as agriculture was one of the main sources of the state treasury. Consequently, the laws meticulously governed these areas. According to Kichanov's analysis, agricultural lands (referred to as "nadellars") were considered state property, but the right to use these lands was passed down through inheritance. Interestingly, inheritance was governed by a clear hierarchy: land was first granted to the deceased farmer's male children under the age of 14. If the deceased had no male heirs, the land was passed on to a close relative. This regulation aimed to ensure the continuity of labor and the stability of agricultural production. Furthermore, the buying and selling of land were strictly regulated and could only take place with special state permission. Water resource management was another critical issue, especially in the arid climate of the Tangut region, where water was vital for agricultural production. Tangut laws treated damage to irrigation systems as one of the most serious crimes. According to Kichanov, anyone who damaged an irrigation canal or diverted water to their own fields without permission was sentenced to 100 lashes. If the action destroyed crops, the offender was required to fully compensate for the damages. Water distribution was monitored by community elders and special state-appointed officials.

## **LIVESTOCK SECTOR**

In the livestock sector, which was central to the military strength and livelihood of the nomadic population, property rights over animals were firmly protected by the law. One of the most well-known provisions in Tangut law was the penalty for cattle theft. As Kichanov notes, for every stolen head of cattle, horse, or camel, the thief was required to return nine times the value of the stolen animal as compensation. This was known as the "ninefold penalty." If the thief was unable to pay this compensation, their property was confiscated, and they could be turned into a slave or subjected to severe physical punishment. For example, if a person stole a horse, they were required to return nine horses as compensation. This harsh penalty served to protect livestock and maintain order in the nomadic society. The laws also regulated the relations between settled farmers and livestock owners. It was strictly prohibited for livestock to damage crops. If an animal caused damage to agricultural land, the owner of the livestock was required to fully compensate the farmer for the loss. Kichanov suggests that there were also specific seasonal migration routes for livestock, though this information is less documented in the legal texts.

### **Equine Industry**

Special attention was paid to horse breeding, as horses were considered a strategic resource. The state actively promoted the development of horse breeding and had special state-run horse farms.

Additionally, a horse tax was collected from the population to support the military needs of the state. In conclusion, the legal system of the Tangut state provided a well-developed and detailed regulatory framework for managing both settled agriculture and nomadic livestock farming. The clear legal norms, especially regarding land inheritance, water distribution, and livestock protection, helped maintain social stability and economic productivity. Further research is needed to explore in greater detail the seasonal migration patterns of livestock and the role of women in agricultural production, as these aspects remain under-researched in existing scholarship. Additionally, the integration of Tangut legal norms with broader East Asian legal traditions offers a rich area for comparative study.

## CONCLUSION

An analysis of Y.I. Kichanov's *"Tangut State History Sketches"* reveals that the Tangut state developed a comprehensive and well-organized legal framework to effectively manage its complex mixed economy. In the agrarian sector, the legislation clearly defined the rights of land ownership and usage, especially concerning inheritance laws, which ensured the continuity of agricultural production. The strict regulation and fair distribution of water resources allowed for the stable development of agriculture in the arid climate. In the livestock sector, the integrity of property rights was guaranteed through harsh penalties, such as the "ninefold penalty" for cattle theft. These severe measures played a critical role in protecting the livestock, which was the primary wealth of the nomadic population, and maintaining social order. Tangut law successfully harmonized the interests of sedentary farmers and nomadic livestock herders, integrating them within the broader state interests.

Overall, the legal system of the Si Sya state was progressive for its time, serving not only a punitive but also a regulatory and governing function. Thanks to the scholarly contributions of Y.I. Kichanov, we are able to appreciate the advanced statecraft and legal thinking of this unique civilization, which demonstrated a high level of sophistication in both governance and legal thought.

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