

Ruling China in the Twelfth Century: The Choice between Confrontation and Compromise in the Late Jin Dynasty (1115–1234)

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Herrschaft in China im 12. Jahrhundert:

Die Jurchen zwischen Konfrontation und Kompromiss in der späten Jin Dynastie (1115–1234)

Die Eroberung von Nordchina durch die Jurchen im zwölften Jahrhundert markiert den Aufstieg einer nicht-chinesischen Dynastie in der Geschichte Chinas. Die Frage, wie das große und multiethnische Reich effizient und nachhaltig regiert werden konnte, stellte eine enorme Herausforderung für den kaiserlichen Wanyan-Klan der Jin dar. Die Notwendigkeit, ihre Herrschaft über eine heterogene Bevölkerung mit einer überwältigenden Mehrheit von Han-Chinesen zu stabilisieren, zwang die ersten Jurchen-Herrscher, ihre alten Stammsysteme aufzugeben und die anspruchsvolleren Modelle der chinesischen Verwaltung aufzugreifen. Während der zweiten Hälfte der Jin-Dynastie wurde die Verschmelzung der beiden Kulturen zunehmend offensichtlich und führte schließlich zur Assimilation der Jurchen durch die Chinesen. Somit fanden sich die späteren Generationen der Jurchen-Herrscher im grundlegenden Dilemma der Erhaltung einer Balance zwischen Traditionen der Jurchen und Kulturelementen der Han-Chinesen. Die unterschiedlichen Wege der Jin, dieses Dilemma durch Konfrontationen und Kompromisse zu lösen, sind vom historischen Kontext und den ethnischen Besonderheiten der Jurchen geprägt.

Introduction

Incursions into China by nomadic and seminomadic peoples from Inner and Northeastern Asia, together with the effects of such invasions, constitute one of the most significant elements in Chinese history. As early as the first millennium B.C. nomads on the northern frontiers of China began a long conflict with their Chinese neighbors. Several times they crossed the Great Wall and set up kingdoms in China proper, such as during the prolonged era of disunity

(220–589 A.D.).¹ When the intrusions of the nomads were renewed in the tenth century, the “barbarian” menace to the Chinese became increasingly serious, resulting in the successive establishment of the Khitan Liao 遼 (907–1125) and the Jurchen Jin 金 (1115–1234) states, as well as the Mongol Yuan 元 (1271–1368) and the Manchu Qing 清 (1644–1911) empires. What makes the Jin of special interest among these states founded by non-Chinese peoples is twofold. On the one hand, in comparison to its predecessor, the Liao, the Jin is known for its occupation of the whole of North China as a rival state to the Southern Song 南宋 (1127–1279), not only militarily and politically but also culturally. On the other hand, its eventual cultural assimilation by the Chinese civilization differed the Jin from the Khitan and the Mongols, who maintained a relatively higher degree of their own traditions until their dynastic ends. Indeed, the Jin dynasty is significant in that it sets up a new pattern of foreign rule in China with its institutions being imitated and modified by subsequent non-Chinese dynasties. The Jurchen sovereigns’ consideration of stabilizing their rule over a heterogeneous Chinese populace forced the Jin rulers to adopt the more sophisticated Chinese models of government. At the same time they tried very hard to maintain an equilibrium between different sets of forces: Chinese and Jurchen, commoners and aristocrats.

Periodization of the Jin Dynasty

The successive periods of the Jin institutional history reflect different stages of the Jin adoption of Chinese institutions. By concentrating on the aspects of sinicization of the Jurchen in the early decades of the Jin and their “nativistic movement” in the latter half of the dynasty, Tao Jing-shen 陶晉生 [Tao Jin-sheng] has determined in his seminal work *The Jurchen in Twelfth-Century*

1 In North China, in particular during the period of the Sixteen Kingdoms (304–439) and the Northern Dynasties (439–589), a collection of numerous short-lived sovereign states were established by non-Chinese nomadic peoples, most of them of Xianbei 鮮卑 origin. On these states, see Wolfram Eberhard: *Conquerors and Rulers: Social Forces in Medieval China* (Leiden: Brill, 1965); Nicola Di Cosmo: “Ancient Inner Asian Nomads: Their Economic Basis and Its Significance in Chinese History”, in: *JAS* 53.4 (1994), pp. 1092–1126; Mark Edward Lewis: *China between Empires: The Northern and Southern Dynasties* (Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).

China four major periods within the 120 years of the Jin.² First, the early reigns from 1115 to 1150 constituted an era of dual institutions on the Liao pattern, in which native Jurchen institutions were retained for the Jurchen population while Chinese governing methods for Han-Chinese and other sedentary subjects were continued. Second, the later half of this period of dualism was accompanied by a rapid process of political “sinicization” as later Jin monarchs strove to elevate the emperor to the utmost heights of despotic power. This period lasted roughly from 1123 to 1161, with the most distinctive changes taking place during the two reigns of emperors Xizong 熙宗 (r. 1135–1150) and Hailing 海陵 (r. 1150–1161). Third, the period from 1162 to 1208 was characterized by a “movement of revitalization” which aimed at the recovery of Jurchen culture and the conditional adoption of Han-Chinese elements. Finally, the last decades of the Jin witnessed a dramatic fall of the Jin under the irresistible attack of their ultimate enemy, the Mongols. Since its publication in 1976, Tao’s periodization based on his hypothesis of a “Jurchen sinicization” and a “Jurchen nativistic movement” has triggered out disruptive scholarly debates on the topic.

Whereas his thesis is reflected in several other important studies of the Jin, such as *Legitimation in Imperial China*³ by Hok-lam Chan 陳學霖 [Chen Xuelin] and the chapter on the Jin dynasty in the *Cambridge History of China*⁴ by Herbert Franke, there is a growing body of scholarship which offers other versions to divide the whole of the Jin dynasty into periods by focusing on other aspects of the Jin history and adopting various approaches other than Tao’s. For instance, Zeng Daiwei 曾代偉 focuses primarily on the territorial and institutional development through the Jin and divided its history into four periods: 1115–1135, 1135–1149, 1149–1208, 1208–1234.⁵ Another version of periodization, with only slight difference to that by Zeng, is offered by Cheng

2 Jing-shen Tao: *The Jurchen in Twelfth Century China: A Study of Sinicization* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1976).

3 Hok-lam Chan: *Legitimation in Imperial China: Discussions under The Jurchen-Chin Dynasty (1115–1234)* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984).

4 Herbert Franke: “The Chin Dynasty”, in: Herbert Franke, Denis Twitchett (eds.): *The Cambridge History of China, vol. 6: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907–1368* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 215–320.

5 Zeng Daiwei 曾代偉: *Jinlü yanjiu 金律研究* (Taipei: Wunan tushu chuban gongsi, 1995), pp. 13–15.

Nina 程妮娜: 1115–1138, 1138–1155, 1156–1208, 1208–1234.⁶ Li Xihou 李錫厚 examines major changes and reforms occurred in the Jin administration in order to identify three major periods: 1115–1134, 1134–1149, 1149–1234.⁷ A more recent version is provided by Tseng Chun-yu 曾震宇 [Zeng Zhenyu], who critically analyzes the assumption of a general sinicization of the Jurchen and devotes his major attention to the developments of the Jin administration and central institutions to divide the Jin history into four periods: 1115–1149, 1149–1161, 1161–1208, 1208–1234.⁸

A glimpse at these versions reveals that historians largely agree that the years between the dynastic establishment in 1115 and around the end of Xizong's reign (1149) account for the first phase of the Jin, while they are at variance at the question of how to periodize the second half of the Jin, which in my view resulted chiefly from the disruptive discourse of "sinicization", in which disparate groups of historians adopt different approaches and offer their own interpretations.⁹ It is not my intention here to deal with the much-debated issue of cultural aspects of the "sinicization" of non-Han peoples in China's history, although it is in fact almost impossible not to touch the issue here.¹⁰ Instead of taking active part in the discourse of "sinicization", what matters for me in this article is more the changing process of the political adaptation, confrontation and compromise in the latter half of their dynasty. Whereas the first two Jin emperors were busy with military actions against the Liao and the Song and their conquest of North China, later generations of Jin rulers faced

6 Cheng Nina 程妮娜: *Jindai zhengzhi zhidu yanjiu* 金代政治制度研究 (Changchun: Jilin daxue chubanshe, 1999), pp. 292–299.

7 Li Xihou 李錫厚: *Zhongguo zhengzhi zhidu shi* 中國政治制度史 (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 2002), pp. 608–609.

8 Chun-yu Tseng: "Hai-ling Wang (1122–1161) and the Politics of the Jin Dynasty (1115–1234)" (PhD Diss., University of Hong Kong, 2007), pp. 20–28. I'm indebted to Julia Schneider for making me aware of this reference.

9 For a profound analysis on various opinions held by different historians towards the topic, see Julia Schneider: "The Jin Revisited: New Assessment of Jurchen Emperors", in: *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 41 (2011), pp. 348–362.

10 Generally, I share misgivings about this term as expressed, e.g., in Pamela Kyle Crossley: "Thinking About Ethnicity in Early Modern China", in: *Late Imperial China* 11.1 (1990), pp. 1–34; Mark C. Elliott: *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 20–35; and Naomi Standen, "Alien Regimes and Mental States", in: *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40.1 (1997), pp. 75–77. See also Schneider: "The Jin Revisited" for a more detailed discussion on the issue of "sinicization" in the Jin.

the task of how to rule this sprawling and multiethnic empire after conquest. This paper focuses on tracing the political development in the middle and late dynastic periods of the Jin and to survey the solutions adopted by the Jurchen rulers, who tried to perpetuate their rule of the conquered majority in North China. Certainly the Jin attempts were characterized by the marked Jurchen style, but a deeper consideration of the Jin options of ruling and governing can unveil more aspects of various patterns of non-Chinese rule in Chinese history.

Centralization following the Chinese Model: 1123–1161

The Jurchen tribes dwelt in the forests of Manchuria and their name “Jurchen” first appeared in Chinese history in 903.¹¹ The Wanyan 完顏 clan, which later became the imperial family of the Jin, resided in the area around the Anchuhu River, a tributary of the Sungari River, near today’s Harbin. For decades the Jurchen tribes were subjected to the Khitan and the Wanyan leaders acted as Khitan officials until the exploitative Khitan overlords drove the Jurchen to rebel in 1114. Within merely twelve years (1114–1126) they not only destroyed the Liao, but also conquered North China and overthrew the Northern Song (960–1126).

The extreme suddenness of their conquest left the Jurchen relatively unprepared for their move into north China and for their rule over the vast Chinese population. Since their own experience did not offer solutions to the unprecedented problems, it was thus quite natural for the first Jurchen

11 Tuotuo 脫脫: *Liaoshi* 遼史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 1:2 notes that the Khitan subdued the Jurchen with a military expedition, where the latter are termed *Nüzhi* 女直. In the Liao records the name of the Jurchen is given as *Nüzhi* 女直 instead of *Nüzhen* 女真. This is because the latter character *zhen* 真 occurred in the name of the Liao Emperor Xingzong 興宗 (r. 1031–1055), whose given name was Zongzhen 宗真. *Zhen* 真 was then tabooed and replaced by *zhi* 直. On this naming taboo, see Karl A. Wittfogel, Feng Chia-sheng: *History of Chinese Society, Liao (907–1125)* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1949), pp. 73, 91 and 95, respectively. Xu Song 徐松: *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿 (8 vols., Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1957), vol. 4, 78b:3916 records that the first appearance of *Nüzhi* was during the Tang 唐 Zhenguan 貞觀 reign-period (627–649), while another alternative is given in Hong Hao 洪皓, *Songmo jiwen* 松漠紀聞 (Xuejin taoyuan 學津討源 edition, Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1965), p. 1b, that it was during the Five Dynasties (907–960) that the name *Nüzhi* was for the first time documented.

monarchs to adjust their own institutions to the Khitan model of dual rule during the initial phase of conquest, preserving their own tribal practices for the Jurchen while employing Chinese institutions for the Chinese populace.¹²

Reigns of Emperors Taizong and Xizong

Since the reign of Taizong 太宗 (r. 1123–1135), the second Jin emperor, there had been a trend among the following Jin rulers toward adoption of Chinese institutions and ideas in order to centralize political power and to establish a new socio-political order. When the Jurchen entered North China, they became an ethnic minority and had no choice but to accept a certain degree of compromise to make political and cultural concessions to the Han-Chinese majority.¹³ Along with coercion and suppression, the Jin emperors continuously drew experience and methods from the Chinese to win over the recalcitrant Jurchen generals and imperial clansmen.

The reforms of 1134–1135, initiated by Taizong and his successor Emperor Xizong, were noted for the borrowing of the Chinese institution model and

12 The Liao solution to control the millions of new Chinese subjects subscribed to the principle of dualism and segregation, and came gradually into being after their acquisition of the sixteen prefectures in 938. It had been customary for the Khitan to divide offices into the “northern” and “southern” divisions, which were not strictly geographical ones. The northern administration (*beimian guan* 北面官) was responsible for the Khitan and tribal affairs, whilst the southern administration (*nanmian guan* 南面官) was responsible for the sedentary population, especially the Han-Chinese. On the Liao dual system of government, see Wittfogel / Feng: *History of Chinese Society*, pp. 434–450; Mote: *Imperial China*, pp. 39f. and 72–75.

13 No exact demographic statistics which provide detailed numbers of each ethnic groups in the Jin state are available. Based on an analysis of the figures given in the *Jinshi*, Herbert Franke has suggested that the Jurchen population has been around four million, less than ten percent of the total, whereas the Chinese made up about ninety percent. See Franke: “The Chin Dynasty”, p. 279f.; Herbert Franke: “Jurchen Customary Law and the Chinese Law of the Chin Dynasty”, in: Dieter Eikemeier, Herbert Franke (eds.): *State and Law in East Asia, Festschrift für Karl Büniger* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981), p. 215. For the geographical distribution and density of population during the middle of the Jin dynasty, see Ping-ti Ho: “An Estimate of the Total Population of Sung-Chin China”, in: *Études Song in memoriam Étienne Balazs*, series 1, no. 1 (Paris: Mouton, 1970), pp. 33–53.

the abolition of the tribal officials such as the *bojilie* 勃極烈.¹⁴ In 1138, the whole system of Chinese bureaucracy was introduced to replace the dualistic administration.¹⁵ In the new government, almost all bureaus were designed in imitation of the Chinese model. The three departments and six ministries accounted for the major body of central administration; the Censorate (*yushitai* 御史臺) came into being in 1126 and increased its power in 1138; the Chinese calendar was introduced in 1135; the civil service examinations were re-instituted in 1135 and 1138; Confucius was honored in 1140.¹⁶ Together with a series of other reforms, these actions contributed to the growth of imperial

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- 14 *Bojilie* is sometimes rendered as 孛極烈 in other Chinese transcriptions. This term is probably a transliteration of a Jurchen word. On the linguistic origin and phonetic affiliation of the *bojilie*, see Jin Qicong 金啟霖: *Nūzhenwen cidian* 女真文辭典 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1984), p. 210. The original meaning of *bojilie* seems to be “chief” or “leader”, and different prefixes were added to the *bojilie* in 1115 to create a system of what may be called a council of prime ministers. Although the title of *bojilie* was officially abolished in 1134, it survived in the Manchurian language as *beile* 貝勒 and had then been used until the beginning of the twentieth century as the designation of a high dignity. One of the first profound studies of the *bojilie* is Ikeuchi Hiroshi 池內宏: “Kin no kenkoku izen ni okeru Kanganshi no kunchō no shōgō ni tsuite” 金の建國以前に於ける完顔氏の君長の稱號について, in: *Tōyō Gakuhō* 東洋學報 20.1 (1932), pp. 99–138. A comprehensive analysis of the *bojilie* system is provided in Mikami Tsugio 三上次男: *Kindai seiji seido no kenkyū* 金代政治制度の研究 (*Kinshi kenkyū* 金史研究 2, Tokyo: Chūō-kōron bijutsu shuppan, 1970), pp. 73–162. For detailed explanations of *bojilie*, see also Karl H. Menges: “Problemata Etymologica”, in: Herbert Franke (ed.): *Studia Sino-Altica: Festschrift für Erich Haenisch zum 80. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1961), pp. 130–139; Charles O. Hucker: *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), p. 387.
- 15 Jing-shen Tao: “The Influence of Jurchen Rule on Chinese Political Institutions”, in: *JAS* 30.1 (1970), pp. 122f.
- 16 Tuotuo 脫脫: *Jinshi* 金史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 4:70f. A detailed list of key offices in the Jin central government is provided in Yuwen Maozhao 宇文懋昭: *Da Jinguo zhi* 大金國志 (punctuated and collated by Cui Wenyin 崔文印 as *Da Jinguo zhi jiaozheng* 大金國志校證, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 9:136f. On Emperor Xizong’s reforms in the Jin administration, see Tao: *The Jurchen in Twelfth Century China*, pp. 41f.; Zhao Yongchun 趙永春: “Jin Xizong de guanzhi gaige ji qi lishi diwei” 金熙宗的官制改革及其歷史地位, in: *Beifang minzu wenhua* 北方民族文化 2 (1991), pp. 78–81; Franke, “The Chin Dynasty”, pp. 268–270.

authority and government power of the Jin.¹⁷ Xizong's actions of sinicization have gone so far that there were hardly any traces of Jurchen elements to be observed in him and he himself even "looked like a young Han-Chinese man".¹⁸ At the same time, the fading of primitive and equitable tribal practices was accompanied by the introduction of some methods in tribal politics tinged with barbarism. The convention of exempting officials from floggings and other corporal punishment was apparently not honored by the Jurchen, thus the Jin bureaucracy was in general more brutal than either the Tang or the Song.¹⁹

Reign of Prince Hailing

Hailing, a grandson of Aguda 阿骨打 (r. 1115–1123) and the regicide of Emperor Xizong, did not completely follow the policies initiated by his predecessors, but he accelerated the building of a centralized state on the Chinese model. As usurper and champion of the Chinese culture, he had his reasons to increase centralization. On the one hand, his admiration of Chinese civilization stimulated his ambition to set up a legitimate Chinese dynasty; on the other hand, his fear of disobedient Jurchen aristocratic and hereditary elements compelled him to suppress opposition fiercely.²⁰

As his effort to consolidate his power and establish his authority over other Jurchen aristocrats, Prince Hailing executed many royal kinsmen who had served the fallen emperor, including at least seventy-two members of the

17 Other Chinese institutions and customs adopted by Emperor Xizong were: noble titles and privileges in 1138 (*Jinshi*, 4:72), rules of imperial audience including court dresses for officials and emperor's robes in 1139 (*Jinshi*, 4:74), titles for descendants of Confucius in 1140 (*Jinshi*, 4:76), and law code in 1145 (*Jinshi*, 4:83). For political and diplomatic developments under the reign of Emperor Xizong, see Toyoma Gunji 外山軍治: *Kinchōshi kenkyū* 金朝史研究 (Tōyō shi kenkyū sōkan 東洋史研究叢刊 13, Kyoto: Tōyōshi kenkyūkai, 1964), pp. 310–420.

18 *Wanran yi Hanhu shaonianzi ye* 宛然一漢戶少年子也; Yuwen Maozhao: *Da Jinguo zhi*, 12:179.

19 Quite often high-ranking officials were even flogged at the court. This practice, called *tingzhang* 廷杖 later, was followed by the Yuan and Ming rulers. See Tao: *The Jurchen in Twelfth Century China*, pp. 45f.

20 On Hailing's acts and reforms, see Tao: "The Influence of Jurchen Rule on Chinese Political Institutions", pp. 125–128; Liu Suyong 劉肅勇: "Wanyan Liang gaige ji qi lishi diwei" 完顏亮改革及其歷史地位, in: *Beifang wenwu* 北方文物 2 (2011), pp. 80–84.

imperial family.²¹ He also abolished the Military Command (*yuanshuai fu* 元帥府) and the mobile branch of the Department of State Affairs (*xingtai shangshusheng* 行臺尚書省) in 1150, bringing the entire territory of the Jin state under the direct administration of the central government.²² In order to better facilitate goods transport and communication and to strengthen military and economic control over north China, Hailing moved the principle capital of the Jin empire from Jurchen heartland in Acheng 阿城 near Harbin to modern Beijing in 1153 and ordered to destroy the palaces in the old capital.²³ Certainly, this move was also a major effort of Hailing to legitimize himself as the “real Chinese emperor”, entitled to rule All Under Heaven. Being a foreign ruler, Hailing felt free to discard the restrictions and balances that existed in the Chinese political heritage and preferred a more simplified bureaucracy: The Jin administrative structure was streamlined in 1156 to abandon the Secretariat (*zhongshu sheng* 中書省) and the Chancellery (*menxia sheng* 門下省) and to include the Department of State Affairs (*shangshu sheng* 尚書省) alone.²⁴ Hailing’s attempts to conquer the Song and unify China under his rule ended in failure and he himself was assassinated by rebellious Jurchens in 1161, yet most of his policies and reforms had not been reversed and were kept throughout the dynasty.

In general, the reigns of Emperor Xizong and his successor Hailing witnessed two major political transformations in the political history of the Jin. First, there was a brutal elimination of tribal impact on politics by eminent Jurchen generals and aristocrats. Second, after the destruction of the powerful

21 Hoyt Cleveland Tillman: “An Overview of Chin History and Institutions”, in: Hoyt Cleveland Tillman, Stephen H. West (eds.): *China under Jurchen Rule: Essays on Chin Intellectual and Cultural History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 29.

22 The mobile branch of the Department of State Affairs existed during the 1120s and 1130s as the major administrative organ to rule the sedentary Chinese population, with its headquarters in Datong 大同 and Yan 燕 (modern Beijing). For a detailed study of the mobile branch of the Department of State Affairs in the Jin, see Mikami: *Kindai seiji seido no kenkyū*, pp. 458–494. Until its abolishment, the Military Command, with prominent Jurchen generals as its head, took charge of civil and military affairs in Shanxi. On Hailing’s effort to reform these two organs, see Jinshi, 5:96.

23 Tuotuo: *Jinshi*, 5:100; Liu Suyong 劉肅勇: “Jin Wanyan Liang cong Shangjing qiandu Zhongdu” 金完顏亮從上京遷都中都, in: *Heilongjiang wenwu congkan* 黑龍江文物叢刊 3 (1984), pp. 40–42.

24 Tuotuo: *Jinshi*, 5:106, See also Mikami: *Kindai seiji seido no kenkyū*, pp. 243–247, 344–348.

Jurchen aristocrats, Chinese institutions, values, and customs were adopted on a large scale. With the decline of the Jurchen aristocrats and the rise of the emperor and his bureaucrats, the two reigns of Xizong and Hailing saw a significant borrowing from Chinese ritual, legal, fiscal, and administrative systems, and the Jin government continuously broadened its scope to rule both Jurchen and Chinese subjects in the state.

Revitalization and Decline: 1162–1234

Reign of Emperor Shizong

Already before the usurpation of Hailing in 1161, some Jurchen elite felt that the Jurchen culture would not be able to survive the intensified and accelerated process of adoption of Chinese traditions. As their efforts to re-establish their privileged position and to react against the encroachment of Chinese culture, the Jin experienced under the reigns of Emperor Shizong 世宗 (r. 1161–1189) and Emperor Zhangzong 章宗 (r. 1189–1208) a “movement of revitalization”, not in an attempt to convert the Chinese into Jurchen, but to preserve the national identity of the Jurchen.

Although conversant with Chinese culture himself, Emperor Shizong, a cousin of Hailing, protected Jurchen conservatives in order to consolidate his power and to save the Jurchen society from disintegration. For him, imitation of the Chinese had corrupted the Jurchen spirit, and to recover the Jurchen tradition was the best way to perpetuate the Jurchen regime in China.²⁵ He thus preferred a simple Jurchen culture to the sophisticated Chinese culture that he believed corroded the Jurchen way of life. To achieve this, Shizong began his nativist movement by improving the martial spirit of the Jurchen, with the emphasis on hunting, which he believed was the foundation of Jurchen military maneuvers.²⁶ Another lifelong task for his revival of indigenous Jurchen culture was the promotion of the Jurchen language. Although two Jurchen

25 Xu Bingyu 徐秉愉: “Jin Shizong shiqi Nüzhen minzu de weiji: Jin Shizong Nüzhen zhengce de beijing” 金世宗時期女真民族的危機: 金世宗女真政策的背景, in: *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究 19.2 (2001), pp. 255f.

26 He made hunting an annual imperial activity in 1162. Almost every year he went hunting in autumn or winter, or in both seasons, Tuotuo: *Jinshi*, 6:121, 8:204.

scripts were issued in 1119 and 1138 respectively,²⁷ studies in Chinese were evidently popular throughout the reigns of Xizong and Hailing. In the hope to promote Jurchen learning and to acquaint the Jurchen with basic virtues, Shizong published Jurchen versions of the Confucian classics, chose thousands of Jurchen to study their language, and offered the Jurchen *jinshi* 進士 degrees.²⁸ Furthermore, Shizong also made several attempts at the restoration of indigenous Jurchen customs. For instance, the imperial princes who had Chinese names had to resume their Jurchen childhood names and all the Jurchen were prohibited from dressing in the Chinese way or adopting Chinese names, though probably never succeeded in reality.²⁹ He supported the traditional Jurchen games of shooting willows and playing polo, and admonished his sons not to forget their own customs and traditions, since forgetting these customs and traditions equaled to “forgetting their origins”.³⁰

Most of the reforms launched by Emperor Shizong were carried out effectively during his reign, yet the movement on the whole was far from successful. Although he was against most “sinicization” measures, he did not alter too many institutions introduced by his predecessors. He preserved key government positions for the Jurchen, for he distrusted the Chinese. But at the same time Shizong continued Hailing’s efforts at centralizing state power. Some of his policies, however, reveal the inadequacy and superficiality of his planning. His promotion of hunting, for instance, was incompatible with the actual situation in his empire as most Jurchen were overwhelmingly engaged in agriculture. Ironically he himself had sometimes helped to create such a

27 In 1119, Aguda, the founding emperor of the Jin, ordered Wanyan Xiyin 完顏希尹, a prominent minister and also a shaman, to create a new system of Jurchen script; Xizong promulgated another script in 1138. See Tuotuo: *Jinshi*, 73:1684 and 4:72, respectively.

28 See Tuotuo: *Jinshi*, 7:159, 51:1133f., 1140f., and 99:2185. The Jin established a bureau for translation of classics in 1164 and initiated a project to translate the Confucian classics, including the *Book of History*, the *Book of Changes*, the *Confucian Analects*, and the *Work of Mencius*. For the importance of these works under the Jin, see Herbert Franke: “Chinese Historiography under Mongol Rule: The Role of History in Acculturation”, in: *Mongolian Studies* 1 (1974), pp. 21f. On Jurchen with *jinshi* degrees, see Jing-shen Tao: “The Jurchen Chin-shih Degrees in the Chin Dynasty”, in: Hok-lam Chan, Jagchid Sechin (eds.): *Proceedings of the Third East Asian Altaistic Conference* (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 1969), pp. 221–239.

29 Tuotuo: *Jinshi*, 7:159; Franke: “The Chin Dynasty”, p. 281.

30 Tuotuo: *Jinshi*, 7:158 and 39:891; Yang Jun 楊軍: “Nüzhenyu, Hanyu yu Nüzhen hanhua” 女真語、漢語與女真漢化, in: Han Shiming 韓世明 (ed.): *Liao-Jin-shi lunji* 遼金史論集, vol. 10 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2007), p. 236.

situation as he issued orders to enlarge farming activities at the cost of hunting and practices of warfare.³¹ Another difficulty was to keep Jurchen a living and prevailing language. The fundamental weakness of Shizong's language policy lay in the translation of Chinese classics. Translation of Confucian works made the Jurchen familiar with more and more Chinese culture and customs, and this learning became in fact one of the most effective methods to transform the Jurchen unwittingly into Chinese, contrary to his intentions. In the main, Emperor Shizong's movement of revitalization bore the striking weakness of lacking systematic planning and consistency. His diligence in foresting the people's livelihood and his love for peace ironically earned him the reputation of a "miniature of Yao and Shun" (*xiao Yao Shun* 小堯舜), the sage rulers of ancient China.³²

At the local level, on the other hand, the Jurchen transferred en masse into North China, became eventually acculturated to the Chinese way of life and Chinese ideas. These Jurchen immigrants would, in theory, retain their traditional values, skills and loyalties, but the fact that they did not and became "sinicized" is hardly surprising, though characterizing this process as "sinicization" is somehow misleading, because it should be apprehended rather as a practical choice than as a hegemonic narrative. Mingling with the vast sedentary Han-Chinese populace, the Jurchen gave up hunting and fishing, living on revenues collected from the Han-Chinese peasants and slowly lost their fighting spirit. Since the garrisons in which the Jurchen lived were dispersed over the whole territory of the Jin, ordinary Jurchen living in North China had surely much more in common with their Han-Chinese neighbors living in the same region than with their Jurchen overlords at the Jin court. Thus for these ordinary Jurchen, in particular those residing in North China among other Han-Chinese, their process of assimilation was, as Peter Lorge suggests, not so much one of sinicization as localization.³³ As a natural con-

31 For instance, Shizong once accepted suggestions to reduce hunting grounds so as to give more land to the farmers. He also granted the people some pasturage to cultivate, Tuotuo: *Jinshi*, 8:192 and 47:1048–1051. For other policies adopted by Shizong to promote agriculture, see Wang Depeng 王德朋: *Jindai shangye jingji yanjiu* 金代商業經濟研究 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2011), pp. 27–31.

32 Tuotuo: *Jinshi*, 8:204; Yüwen Maozhao: *Da Jinguo zhi*, 18:252. For modern studies of Shizong's career, see Mikami: *Kindai seiji, shakai no kenkyū*, pp. 233–267; Liu Suyong 劉肅勇: *Jin Shizong zhuan* 金世宗傳 (Xi'an: Sanqin chubanshe, 1987).

33 Peter Lorge: *War, Politics and Society in Early Modern China 900–1795* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 60.

sequence, most of the Jurchen living in North China became part of local society, indistinguishable from the people who lived there before them, the Han-Chinese. As Shizong's efforts to revitalize these localized Jurchen and to make them adhere to old Jurchen values could not change their living conditions, they were apparently bound to fail at the beginning.

Reign of Emperor Zhangzong

The last stronghold of Jurchen culture, Emperor Shizong, fell in 1189 and his successor was his grandson, Emperor Zhangzong. Throughout his reign, Zhangzong continued the pro forma veneration of Jurchen values. In his attempts to maintain the Jurchen customs, he encouraged intensive use of the Jurchen language, prohibited Jurchen from wearing Chinese dresses, and practiced Jurchen rituals such as the Jurchen kowtow ceremony.³⁴ However, he seems to have realized that the process of assimilation had gone on during Shizong's reign, notwithstanding the revival movement. Although Zhangzong was determined to carry on the policies launched by Shizong, he was not as enthusiastic as his grandfather about recovering the Jurchen way of life. This comparison clearly appeared in hunting. While Shizong hunted several times a year and considered it as military training, Zhangzong conceived of hunting as mere recreational activity, so he did not hunt as often as his grandfather, nor did he travel far to hunt. The Jurchen in general also no longer thought of hunting as having military functions or related to the traditional Jurchen spirit. Once the emperor intended to take a hunting trip, not only his Han-Chinese ministers but also a few Jurchen advisors showed their attitude toward the issue, reminding him not to do so.³⁵

Throughout his reign, Zhangzong endeavored to strengthen Jin's defense against the growing Mongol power and to promote the introduction of reforms that were meant to convert the Jin into a political body modeled on Tang and Song precedents. In his effort to unify the existing disparate legislations, Zhangzong promulgated in 1202 the *Taihe code* (*Taihe lü* 泰和律), the only complete legal code compiled and put in force between the Tang and Ming,

34 Tuotuo: *Jinshi*, 10:234 and 12:271; Liu Suyong 劉肅勇: "Liaodai Nüzhen Wanyanbu de shizu shenghuo" 遼代女真完顏部的氏族生活, in: *Heilongjiang wenwu congkan* 黑龍江文物叢刊 2 (1982), p. 40. For the Jurchen kowtow ceremony, see Tuotuo: *Jinshi*, 35:827f.

35 See the opinion of Liang Xiang 梁襄 (*Jinshi*, 96:2134) and Wanyan Wuzhe 完顏烏者 (*Jinshi*, 9:210). For a discussion of the problem of hunting in Zhangzong's reign, see Tao: *The Jurchen in Twelfth-Century China*, p. 86.

which marked the apogee of legal sinicization in the Jin since this code represented the culmination of a century of slow evolution toward adoption of Chinese legal traditions.³⁶ In general, the *Taihe* code remained a mixture of Chinese traditional law based on Tang codification, and customary law of the Jurchen elements, especially in the fields of family and inheritance law. Furthermore, furious disputes on the dynastic virtue and political legitimacy featured another step taken by Emperor Zhangzong. In the same year of the promulgation of the *Taihe* code, Zhangzong decided to overturn the early Jin judgment that the dynasty had gained its legitimacy from the Tang through the Liao. He changed the symbolic element of the dynasty to “earth” from among the “five elements” (*wuxing* 五行) to signify that the Jin was succeeding the Northern Song, whose element was “fire”.³⁷ This action signaled to the world at large, to the Southern Song in particular, that the Jin had assumed the position of a legitimate Chinese dynasty and denied the legitimacy of the Southern Song.³⁸

But like Shizong, Zhangzong and his successor, Emperor Xuanzong 宣宗 (r. 1213–1224), were indecisive about adopting Chinese ideas. They increased the number of Chinese scholar-officials recruited through the enlarged *keju* 科舉 examinations, but on the other hand generally degraded their positions by permitting only Jurchen to hold key posts in the government.³⁹ In the official dynastic history of the Jin, *Jinshi* 金史 (*History of the Jin*), only 49 Jurchen

36 Tuotuo: *Jinshi*, 45:1024f.; Tillman: “An Overview of Chin History and Institutions”, p. 32. The *Taihe* code was largely based on the Tang code, with minor modifications. In general, punishment for people who violated social order was more severe than in the Tang. Excellent studies of the *Taihe* code are provided in Niida Noboru 仁井田陞: “Kindai keihō kō” 金代刑法考, in: *Tōyō shi kenkyū* 東洋史研究 9.1 (1944), pp. 34–36 and 9.2 (1944), pp. 92–111; Herbert Franke, “The Legal System of the Chin Dynasty”, in: Tsuyoshi Kinugawa (ed.): *Collected Studies on Sung Dynasty Dedicated to Professor James T. C. Liu in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday* (Tokyo: Dohosha, 1989), pp. 391–393.

37 Tuotuo: *Jinshi*, 11:259.

38 See Jing-shen Tao: “Political Recruitment in the Chin Dynasty”, in: *JAOS* 94.1 (1974): p. 25, where an extensive table showing the ethnic composition of the Jin political structure is also offered.

39 The traditional Chinese idea of dynastic legitimacy is closely linked to the dynastic element theory according to which a dynasty should choose one of the five elements and adopt relevant ceremonies and practices. On the discussion of the issue in the late Jin, see Tao: *The Jurchen in Twelfth Century China*, pp. 86–89; Michael C. Rogers: “The Late Chin Debates on Dynastic Legitimacy”, in: *Sung Studies Newsletter* 13 (1977), pp. 57–66; Chan: *Legitimation in Imperial China*, pp. 73–97.

officials with *jinshi* qualifications are documented, but among them 14 eventually climbed to the rank of prime ministers, most of them during the reigns of Zhangzong and Xuanzong.⁴⁰ Beginning in Shizong's reign, the Jurchen rulers were caught in a basic dilemma posed by contradictory interests of the Jurchen and Han-Chinese elite. His successors restored to more proscriptive policies to maintain the special position of the ruling stratum. Thus while the Chinese were complaining that the Jin remained substantially a "Jurchen" state, the Jurchen were also unsatisfied that their governments were filled with Han-Chinese officials. In consequence, this alienated both the Jurchen and the Chinese under their rule. As a joint result of the Jurchen revival movement and the ongoing centralization of institutions in the Chinese style, the Jin witnessed a relatively peaceful and prosperous period until the Mongols attacked from the early thirteenth century onward. The Jurchen lost the northern half of their state in 1214 and were forced to retreat to Kaifeng 開封, where the embattled Jin lingered on for two more decades.

Conclusion

The decline of the Jin was vividly depicted in the *Guiqian zhi* 歸潛志 (*Memoirs from the Refuge*) of Liu Qi 劉祁 (1203–1250), in which the author also presented his views on the rise and the demise of the dynasty.⁴¹ Having witnessed the painful dynastic fall of the Jin to the Mongols, Liu Qi attributed the collapse of the Jin on the first place to the Jurchen rulers' inability to accomplish thorough "sinicization" so that the Han-Chinese literati and scholar-officials were dismissed and alienated.⁴² The compilers of the *Jinshi*, on the other hand, praised the Jin as it differed from the Liao in its ability to better install Chinese institutions, but then ascribed the fall of the Jin state to the adoption of the complicated literary culture of the Song, and of the

40 Tao: "Political Recruitment in the Chin Dynasty", p. 27.

41 Liu Qi 劉祁: *Guiqian zhi* 歸潛志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), pp. 7:68–79. An excellent study of the *Guiqian zhi* is provided in Hok-lam Chan: *The Historiography of the Chin Dynasty: Three Studies* (Münchener Ostasiatische Studien 4, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1970), pp. 148–163. See also Chen Xuelin 陳學霖 [Hok-lam Chan], *Jin Song shi luncong* 金宋史論叢 (Hong Kong: Xianggang zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 2003), pp. 255–274.

42 See Chan: *The Historiography of the Chin Dynasty*, p. 162.

harsh policies of the Liao.⁴³ Certainly, external factors such as the paramount Mongol military power also may have been decisive in bringing the Jin to an end. But to most Chinese scholars at the end of the Jin and during the Yuan, “sinicization” was not a cause of the decline of the Jin, on the contrary, it was rather a necessity. From the view of historical hindsight, however, the incapability of the Jurchen to transform the non-sedentary people of warrior origin to law-abiding peasants and the alienation of Chinese and Khitan officials from the Jurchen rulers may have constituted the major cause of the dynastic decline of the Jin.

Throughout the history of China, almost all tribal rulers along China’s northern frontier faced a core dilemma, summarized by Denis Sinor as “the choice was really between living in ‘honorable poverty’ – at the mercy of nature and in fairly constant conflict with other nomad groups vying for the better pastures – or asking for ‘admittance’ into the civilized world, at the risk of losing one’s national identity”.⁴⁴ The Jurchen Jin is in this sense no exception. Indeed, only twice in the history of China did nomadic tribesmen conquer the whole of China: the Mongols and the Manchus. Whereas the Mongols remained relatively loyal to their own traditions and refused to accept the Chinese way of life, which is widely believed to be one of the main reasons they did not maintain their power in China very long, the Manchus ruled China much longer, but only after they adopted the Chinese culture on a large scale and achieved a Sino-Manchu synthesis.⁴⁵ The differences in the pattern of rule between the Mongols and the Manchus can also be observed in the comparison between the Khitan and the Jurchen: the former a people of proto-Mongol stock, the latter the ethnic ancestors of the Manchus. While the Khitan seemingly lacked the ambition to occupy both the Mongolian steppe and North China, although they once crossed the Yellow River and took Kaifeng, the Jin rulers strove to establish their state as a legitimate Chinese

43 Tuotuo: *Jinshi*, 46:1030f., 125:2713.

44 Denis Sinor: “Introduction”, in: Denis Sinor (ed.): *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 13.

45 For detailed discussions on the issue of Sino-Manchu synthesis, and the sinicization of the Manchus, see Pamela Kyle Crossley: “Thinking About Ethnicity in Early Modern China”, in: *Late Imperial China* 11.1 (1990), pp. 1–34; Evelyn S. Rawski: “Presidential Address: Reenvisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History”, in: *JAS* 55.4 (1996), pp. 829–850; Elliott: *The Manchu Way*; Pei Huang: *Reorienting the Manchus: A Study of Sinicization, 1583–1795* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2011).

dynasty. Such differences in attitudes, as Karl A. Wittfogel stresses, “are as striking as the trends towards assimilation which were much more marked than under the preceding Liao dynasty”.⁴⁶

Although all the non-Han rulers had their own options of choosing from confronting with and compromising to the culture of the ruled Han-Chinese, there are mainly two dynastic patterns of non-Chinese regimes: the pastoral nomadic Khitan and the Mongols, and the hunting-fishing-farming Jurchen and Manchus. The Jurchen and Manchus fundamentally differed from the nomads, both in subsistence economy and in their cultural identity. Farming was more important to the Jurchen and Manchus than to the Khitan and the Mongols; and in that the former gradually transformed themselves into Chinese, while the latter never entirely accepted Chinese customs and culture. Precisely because the Jurchen and Manchus were not purely nomadic people, in contrast to the pastoral Khitan and Mongols, they were mentally as well as socially inclined to become full-time peasants and accept the sedentary Chinese culture after they entered China. To a large extent, this also explains why the Jurchen and Manchus ceased to be a distinguishable ethnic and cultural group in China after their dynasties vanished.

46 Wittfogel / Feng: *History of Chinese Society*, p. 8.

