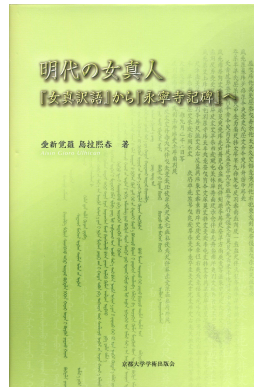


Jurchens in the Ming Era: From the *Nüzhenyiyu* to the *Yongningsi jibei*

by

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This book attempts a comprehensive analysis of the language used by the Liaodong Jurchen scribe who wrote the *Yongningsi jibei* 永寧寺記碑 and the slightly different language found in the *Nüzhenyiyu* 女真訳語 from the 15th century in terms of the characters, phonology and grammar used in both on the basis of a complete deciphering of the *jibei*, written in 1413, and the “Zazi” 雜字 section of the *Nüzhenyiyu*, which was edited by the Siyiguan in the early Ming era. The work also attempts an ethnological consideration of shifts in the cultural history and development and migration of the Jurchen tribes.

Previous studies on the history of Jurchens in the Ming era have seldom used sources written in the Jurchen scripts. However, studies of the history of Jurchens during the Ming era must view the Jurchen world from Jurchens' viewpoint. Written from this standpoint, this book attempts to study primary sources written in the Jurchen scripts to obtain a true grasp of the Jurchen people of the Ming era. The *Yongningsi jibei* records in the Jurchen large script the rule of the Ming dynasty in Northeastern Asia and the history of Manchu-Tungus and Palaeo-Asian peoples who inhabited the borderlands of the Far East. It is valuable as a primary source. The “Zazi” of the *Nüzhenyiyu* are derived from the *Nüzhezishu* 女直字書 of the Jin era. The abundance of vocabulary items and the clarity of the phonologic shifts found in the work mark this as a unique historical source to reconstruct the Jurchen cultural history in the Ming era. In this sense, this new book will surely have epoch-making significance similar to that of the author's previous book, A

Study of the History of the Liao Era in View of Khitai Epitaphs, which made a major contribution by reexamining the history of Khitai people by using sources written in the Khitai scripts. This volume will undoubtedly serve as a starting point for future studies of the history of Asian peoples.

Eleven of the 12 extant stone monuments inscribed in the Jurchen large script are concentrated during the 12th and 13th centuries of the Jin dynasty, and two of the three sources written on paper also come from the same era. There is lacunae of more than 170 years in primary sources written in Jurchen script between the *Nüzhen Jinshi Timing bei* 女真進士題名碑 from the end of the Jin era, and the *Nüzhenyiyu* 女真訳語 from the early Ming era. The *Yongningsi jibei* and the *Nüzhenyiyu* are thus indispensable sources in the study the history of Jurchen people of the 15th century. The term *yeren Nüzhen* 野人女真 seen in the Chinese historical sources of the Ming era simply refers in fact to the Zhuzhong *yeren* 諸種野人 recorded in the stele, which generally corresponds to present-day southern Tungus peoples. The fact that the government of the Ming dynasty intentionally carved the Jurchen large script on this stele demonstrates that the government treated these peoples as *yeren*, who were seen as culturally more undeveloped than the Liaodong Jurchen, but it also indicates that these peoples belonged linguistically to the Jurchen-language group in the broad sense of that term and that the use of the Jurchen script flourished in the northeast Asia of the time. It likewise reveals the significance of studies of Jurchen sources.

Studies of Jurchens of the 15th century have a long history and have proven extremely fruitful. However, as inter-disciplinary studies that have paid special attention to relations between northeastern Asian peoples and the Japanese islands have been flourishing in recent years, it has become necessary to reexamine the Jurchens of the 15th century from new viewpoints. A consideration of the written records composed by Jurchens themselves will provide an opening that makes it possible to create a new historical image differing from that of the past. Situating this newly acquired historical image of the Jurchens in this manner within in the context of the history of northeastern Asia and China will surely make a great contribution to historical studies on the Yuan and Ming dynasties as well as the Ainu people.

Studies of the history and culture of the Jurchens have a long history in Japan, Russia, China, and Korea, because the Jurchens historically had relations with many peoples such as the Nivkh,

Ainu, and the Chinese on Sakhalin, Primorye, and China proper. The interpretation of the primary sources written in the Jurchen large script of the 15th century presented in this book provides an opportunity to overcome the dependence on Chinese sources that has predominated internationally. *Buddhist Temples of the 15th century in the Lower Amur*, which was published in Russia in 2005, is the important product of several excavations of the Yongningsi site by Russian archaeologists, but it makes only a cursory introduction of the invaluable stele inscriptions in the Jurchen large script. *History and Archaeology of Medieval Northeastern Asia*, which was published in Japan as a result of Grant in Aid for Scientific Research on Priority Areas for 2003-2007, referred to the Jurchens of the 15th century, but it did not dwell deeply on the content of primary sources written in the Jurchen scripts. This volume in this manner presents extremely significant sources for various studies of medieval northeastern Asia.

Part 1: Jurchens in the Yuan and Ming eras

In the Yuan and Ming eras, Jurchens maintained a remarkable level of contact with Mongolian, Chinese, and Korean peoples, and these contacts left a deep impact on the Jurchen culture and economy, influencing directly and indirectly the history of disunion, union, and migration of Jurchen tribes. Jurchen culture of the Jin era changed under the influence of Mongolian culture for a century during the Yuan era, and a new, deeply Mongolized Jurchen culture was gradually formed during the Ming era. This became the foundation of the Manchu culture of the Qing era. The Jurchens who remained in Manchuria during the Yuan era were influenced by the Chinese and Korean cultures, and their agricultural economy gradually spread northward. As a result of the tribute trade with the Ming dynasty and Korea, Jurchen trade developed remarkably and a commercial economy emerged. Economic development deeply changed Jurchen society, and wars of unification among tribes gradually made Ming rule ineffective. At the end of the Ming era, Nurhachi of the Jianzhou Jurchen unified the Jurchen tribes and established the Later Jin dynasty.

Part 2: The *Nüzhenyiyu*

The “Zazi” section of the *Nüzhenyiyu*, which was edited by the Siyiguan of the Ming dynasty in the early 15th century, was a collection of vocabulary items written in the Jurchen

large script. It was directly related to the *Nüzhizishu*, which had been compiled in 1119 and remains the sole textbook of the Jurchen script from the Jin dynasty. In this section, the author attempts a comprehensive study of the Jurchen large script collected in the *Nüzhenyiyu*, contrasting it with the scattered remnants of manuscripts of the *Nüzhizishu* and stone monuments written in Jurchen scripts. First, the author accurately calculates the number of characters and vocabulary items, resulting in totals of 699 characters and 815 vocabulary items based on collected original texts. Second, the author comprehensively explains the phonetic system of the Jurchen large script, whose origin can be traced back to the Khitai large script. Based on this analysis and using the shared characters that are also seen in the *Nüzhizishu* and stone monuments as clues, she classifies the scripts into ideograms, imperfect ideograms, and phonograms, reconstructs phonemes of the characters and vocabulary items, and explains declined endings in terms of their grammar. Third, the author corrects many scribal errors seen among the “Zazi,” checks “Chinese-style Jurchen” vocabulary elements, that have been intermixed into various categories to a much greater extent than would be anticipated, and seeks to restore the original “Zazi” section. Fourth, the author examines several problems of transliteration in into Chinese characters found the “Zazi” section, dividing them into seven categories, such as those transliterated on the basis of sheer expediency, and those transliterated on the basis an arbitrary link to the meaning of a Chinese word. Furthermore, through a comparison with the contemporary Liaodong dialect as recorded in the *Yongningsi jibei*, the author confirms the language recorded in the *Nüzhenyiyu* differs only slightly from the Liaodong dialect. Fifth, the author concludes that the present text of the *Nüzhenyiyu* is not the original because the number of vocabulary items in each category is inconsistent, because supplemental vocabulary items from different eras have been added, and because many of its collocations did not originate with the Jurchens themselves, but were fabricated by Chinese translators of the Siyiguan. The author also theorizes the date of the addition of these supplemental collocations was the Zhengtong era (1436-49) of the Ming, when the use of the Jurchen language started to decline.

Part 3: The *Yongningsi jibei*

In this chapter, the author presents the newest and the most comprehensive decipherment of the version in the Jurchen large script on the stele, which inscribed trilingually in Chinese,

Mongolian, and Jurchen. She deciphers 231 words and reconstructs 676 characters, the most deciphered so far. The *Yongningsi jibei* is the only stone monument erected after the fall of the Jin dynasty to have been discovered, and it is remarkably different from the stone monuments created during the Jin era in several aspects, such as the form of characters and phonological representations. The Jurchen language that was used on the stele was a Jurchen dialect employed by the Liaodong Jurchen Kang An himself, the scribe of the Jurchen large script, and it postdated that of the *Nüzhenyiyu* produced by the Siyiguan and differed from both that of the *Nüzhenyiyu* of the Siyiguan and that of the *Nüzhenyiyu* of the Huitongguan, and it was especially far removed from the Haixi Jurchen dialect used in the latter. The most important phonological characteristic of the Jurchen language on the stele is the universal omission of final consonants or syllables of word or stem endings. Reflected in such a change in the script is the emergence of the phenomenon called a “return to ideograms,” the frequency of which exceeds that of the *Nüzhenyiyu* of the Siyiguan. Another characteristic is a decrease of grammatical endings due to a laxness in maintaining vowel harmony. Given these facts, one sees that there is a clear indication of a tendency to consolidate nonverbal endings, dative-locative endings, and accusative endings. The author concludes that the Mongolian and the Jurchen versions of the text on the monument were more abbreviated than the Chinese text and that they all originated from the same text. By comparing the Mongol script with the Jurchen large script, she also concludes the Jurchen large script was the original of the two, though both texts fundamentally correspond. By deciphering the words, she reconfirms that the Liaodong Jurchen language recorded in the Jurchen large script on the stele was profoundly related to the southern Tungus languages. Although the Chinese of the *Chongjian Yongningsi jibei*, erected in 1433, had no corresponding Jurchen text, it records that Kang An acted as a translator and was appointed as an official, i.e. baihu, so it is clear that the use of Jurchen language was declining in the region.

Jurchen studies have not been as popular as Manchu studies because of the scarcity of primary sources and difficulty of interpreting the Jurchen scripts. The achievement of reconstructing a large number of Jurchen characters and deciphering of vocabulary items guarantees that this book will have remarkable significance, offering new prospects for future study, and that it will have a great international impact. It can be anticipated that greater attention to Jurchen studies will result from the publication of this book.

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