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Who began the wars between the Jin and Song Empires? (based on materials used in Jurchen studies in Russia)

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Abstract: *Who began the wars between the Jin and Song Empires? (based on materials used in Jurchen studies in Russia).* The Jurchen (on Chinese reading – Ruchen, 女真 / 女真, Russian - чжурчжэни, Korean – 여진/ 녀진) tribes inhabited what is now the south and central part of Russian Far East, North Korea and North and Central China in the eleventh to sixteenth centuries. The Jurchen established several states, the most powerful of which was the Jin Empire (Golden Empire) (1115 - 1234), which attained a high cultural level and was the most powerful state in the twelfth century (M. Vorob'ev, 1983; E. Shavkunov, 1990).

The study of the Jurchen in Russia began in the 1820 - 30s. in Russia when Nikita Iakovlevich Bichurin (Никита Яковлевич Бичурин) archimandrite Iakin'f (архимандрит Иакинф) and Vasilii Pavlovich Vasil'ev (Василий Павлович Васильев) translated several Manchurian, Chinese and Korean texts about the Jin Empire (L. Simonovskaia, 1948; V. Nikiforov, 1970; V. Miasnikov 1977, 1979). Later Russian scholars continued conducting Jurchen studies and paid considerable attention to relations between the Jurchen and China.

The wars between the Jurchen and Song dynasties (1125 - 1142) dynasties played a large role in international relations in East Asia. After these wars the Jin Empire become the most powerful state in East Asia. However many scholars have asked the question: who provoked these wars? Russian and Soviet scholars intensively translated and researched ancient Chinese manuscripts in order to understand the situation at this time. But they didn't have one opinion about it.

If we consider only Chinese materials, we can conclude that the Jurchen began hostilities against the Song Empire, but in the process of comparing these with other sources we can see that probably China provoked war with the Jurchen.

Author of work reconsiders and analyses specifics of the relation between both empires before the war, role of leaders between China and Jin in development of the conflict, problem of inner situation in Jurchen state etc.

Keywords- Jurchen, East Asia, China, Jin Empire, Song Empire.

In 1125 the Jurchen army finally destroyed the Liao Empire. But after this major victory, Jin attacked the Song Empire and commenced a period of war against both Song Empires (Northern Song 1125 - 1127, Southern Song 1127 - 1142). These wars had a large influence on international relations in the East Asia and established the Jurchen state as the most powerful Empire in this region.

Chinese scholars were the first to begin researching the problem of the wars between the Jurchen and Northern Song. However they considered the problem from subjective positions and believed that the Jurchen began the war to acquire new land, money and other resources (Ocherki istorii Kitaia, 1959).

Before the 1960s the opinion of Chinese scholars dominated Jurchen studies in the Soviet Union. In this research Soviet scholars partially used materials of Chinese specialists. Therefore we can see the clear influence of Chinese scholars in the works of Soviet historians who wrote in the period 1950 - 1960 about the reasons for Jurchen victories in Jin-Song wars (A. Okladnikov, 1959; N. Kyuner, 1961; Istoriia Severo-Vostochnogo Kitaia, 1989). Moreover several Soviet scholars thought that the Jurchen had perfidiously broken the agreement with the Northern Song and attacked China (Istoriia stran zarubezhnoj Azii v srednie veka, 1970, p. 245).

But the Soviet Union experienced political and military conflict with China (the Damanskij

incident) in 1969. This conflict marked the highest point in the hostile relations which had existed between USSR and China for a long time. Tensions between these two powers greatly influenced research in many fields. Due to Chinese territorial claims in regard to large parts of Siberia, the Chinese side tried to find data (spread across Bohai and Jurchen history) which would support such claims. In their turn, Soviet scholars refuted these statements (needless to say, they were also under constant political pressure to do so), and in many cases deliberately played down the connections which once existed between the population of present-day Siberia and China. It is not unusual for archeological material to be used by contending nationalisms, but in this particular case the authoritarian nature of the political regimes in both states made the confrontation particularly bitter and ensured that only “politically useful” findings and conclusions could be made public. Jurchen studies were not left outside these politically driven polemics.

Therefore during the period 1960 – 1980s. Soviet scholars advanced several theories which critically considered Chinese materials about Jurchen.

Soviet scholars researching the Jurchen paid a great deal of attention to this period, translated many Chinese manuscripts (for example, 遼史 *Liao shi*, 宋史 *Song shi*, 金史 *Jin shi* and others), comparing and analyzing them. In 1975 Mikhail Vasil'evich Vorob'ev published the first part of his doctoral dissertation, “The Jurchen and the Jin state (X - 1234)” (M. Vorob'ev, 1975). In this work he used then available Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Western materials dealing with the Jurchen (L. Perelomov, 1977) and researched the Jurchen social system which he compared with the Manchurian *mukun*, the social system of one hundred households of Manchurian tribes. For a long time this work remained the most detailed study of the political, social and cultural history of the Jurchen.

Scholars in the Soviet Union, China and academics elsewhere believed that the Jurchen began these wars. Many Soviet scholars – Alexei Pavlovich Okladnikov (Алексей Павлович Окладников), Anatolii Panteleevich Derevianko (Анатолий Пантелеевич Деревняко), Mikhail Vasil'evich Vorob'ev (Михаил Васильевич Воробьев), Ernst Vladimirovich Shavkunov (Эрнст Владимирович Шавкунов), Sergei

Nikolaevich Goncharov (Сергей Николаевич Гончаров) and others actively studied Jurchen fields. For example, they translated and published materials of many medieval Chinese materials – *Song shi*, *Jin shi*, *Sanchao beimeng huibian* (三朝北盟會編) and other sources. Almost all Soviet specialists considered the problem of Song-Jin wars from the position of the theories of Marx and Lenin about class struggle and thought that class struggle divided and weakened Chinese society before the Jurchen conquest (Istoriia Kitaia, 1959); they wrote that the Jurchen knew about the weakness of the Northern Song army and considered therefore that they were assured of victory in this war (A. Okladnikov and A. Derevianko, 1973; M. Vorob'ev, 1975).

The reason for this confidence was the fact that the Song Empire could not defeat the Khitan army at 1122-1125, in spite of the Khitans fighting on two fronts against the Jurchen and Song Empire and most of the Liao soldiers were concentrated on the northern front, but the Jurchen destroyed the Liao Empire. Moreover the Jurchen had excellent cavalry which had trained in natural conditions (during hunting) and many Jin soldiers had a rich warrior experience from the wars against the Khitan, Koryo, Xi Xia and the conflicts between Jurchen tribes. In the medieval period cavalry played a big role in war and was very effective and fast (E. Kychanov, 1966).

The first period of the Jin-Song wars confirmed this – the Jurchen army destroyed the Chinese military system easily and besieged the main capital of Northern Song.

However M.V. Vorob'ev held the opinion that both sides wanted this war, but Jurchen had been prepared for the war better than their opponents (M. Vorob'ev, 1975, p. 116).

At the end of 1125 two Jurchen armies attacked Northern Song. In 1126 Jin twice besieged the capital of China. For example, from 1125 until February 1130 Chinese soldiers could not win against the Jurchen (S. Goncharov, 1986, p. 113). But in spite of such big victories in the battles against the Chinese Empire, the political activity of the Jurchen in the period 1125 - 1126 demonstrated that they were not assured of final victory and several times they agreed to peace talks with the Song Empire (G. Rozov, 1998, p. 116-119; E. Kozhanov, 1980; S. Goncharov, 1986).

However the Chinese government viewed this policy of the Jurchen state as a sign of

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weakness by the Jin Empire and continued a policy of provocation. Chinese officials, apparently, counted on the Jin to weaken in during a dragged-out war. So after the first peace talks the Jurchen received several districts from China, but the Chinese Emperor sent a security order to military troops located in these districts that they must fight against the Jurchen (S. Goncharov, 1986, p. 33). Moreover, later the Northern Song dynasty several times sent an army to support Chinese garrisons located in these areas which China had given to Jurchen. After peace talks the Chinese Emperor treacherously infringed conditions of the peace and sent an army for a night attack against the Jurchen who were located near the Song capital, but it was unsuccessful. (Ocherki istorii Kitaia, 1959, p. 311 - 312; A. Okladnikov and A. Derevianko, 1973; S. Goncharov, 1986, p. 32). It was only after Chinese leader's attempts to persuade Khitan officers who served in Jurchen administration to come to the Chinese side that Jin leaders decided to refuse of peace talks with the Northern Song Empire and to destroy the Northern Song dynasty (S. Goncharov, 1986, p. 33 -34). Because of all these perfidious acts by the Northern Song government the Jurchen command firmed in its opinion that it was impossible to support diplomatic relations with the Song imperial court. Therefore Jin officials definitively decided to release itself from Zhao (the ruling dynasty of Northern Song), including its too changeable and unreliable partner for peace talks.

However the Chinese government could not resale from a Confucian position in its foreign policy. Even though the Chinese emperor understood the power of the Jurchen army, he had to consider the opinions of the Chinese nobility and officials, who did not want to concede to the Jurchen. This situation can explain a contradiction in China's policy with the Jurchen. A major problem in foreign policy was the Chinese perception of the "eastern barbarians" (Khitan, Jurchen, Mongols and others) among Chinese nobility and officials. According to their perception, the Song Empire could not conclude equal and vassal treaties with the "eastern barbarians". China received vassal status from Khitan after several wars during the tenth and eleventh centuries in which the Khitan Empire demonstrated its military power and potential. Certainly the Northern Song Empire did not want to accept vassal status from the Jin state and wanted to become senior to the Jurchen. But Jin

officials could not understand or accept this position.

Furthermore the Jurchen had achieved their aims – they had taken away part of Central China from Northern Song, captured the Chinese emperor, forced the Chinese state to render tribute and in addition, the change of Song (Northern Song) to Nan Song (Southern Song), who usually tried not to break peace treaties, had taken place. In spite of their superiority in economical, human and technical potential, the Chinese Empire had dramatically lost this war (M. Vorob'ev, 1975).

In our opinion, the long tolerance by the Jurchen of Chinese provocations in the period 1123 - 1126 can only be explained by one thing - Jin leaders were not certain that they would succeed in a fight against Northern Song because Chinese human and material resources were very vast. The Jurchen did not have the same potential and must have been aware of this.

Moreover the Jurchen had problems with nomadic tribes on their northern border (south part of the modern Mongolia) (G. Melihov, 1970; G. Pikov, 1993) and until 1127 relations with Koryo were antagonistic too. Thus the Jurchen had to send military troops to their northern and south-eastern borders. For example, Russian scholars considered information about Jin reports from Koryo's borders. Before the establishment of Jin and war against Liao, the Jurchen had several military conflicts against Koryo which resulted in Jurchen victories (M. Vorob'ev, 1975, J. Reckel, 2001). Therefore Koryo wanted revenge and prepared an army for this purpose. However Koryo could not fight against the Jurchen alone and needed support from other countries.

During the war between Liao and Jin, Koryo soldiers often attacked Jurchen hunters and fishers; they seized two Jin boats, provoked border conflicts, supported Jurchen tribes and people who didn't like the Jin Empire and so forth (A. Okladnikov, 1959, p. 227; M. Vorob'ev, 1975; S. Kozhanov, 1980, p. 41). In spite of this activity by Koryo, the second Jurchen Emperor Wu-chi-mai established order; accordingly the Jurchen could not respond to provocations, but called Koryo "enemies". The Jurchen leader said that their enemies were hypocritical and demanded that anyone having contact with Koryo was breaking normal conventions. If Koryo warriors were to attack, Jurchen had to reject this pressure. According to the order of the Jurchen ruler,

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soldiers on Jin's south border had to prepare for this defense. If anyone dared to attack the enemy, even if they had military success, they had to be punished as infringers (G. Rozov, 1998; A. Okladnikov, 1959; A. Okladnikov and A. Derevianko, 1973).

As we can see conflicts with the Koryo were numerous and serious even if no matter how much attention the Jin emperor paid to them. The Jurchen tried to look for a compromise with their neighbor, but Koryo did not accept the Jin ambassador. However the Jurchen did not begin war against Koryo in spite of all provocations by Koryo officials. Koryo was oriented to the Northern Song side and probably therefore provoked Jurchen. Koryo reconsidered relations with Jurchen state and accepted vassal-senior relations only after the first period of war between the Jin and Northern Song empires.

As we can see, the Jurchen had many reasons to begin war against Koryo, but did not fight against this south-eastern neighbor. Moreover the Jurchen Emperor restrained Jin field commanders from attacking the Koryo border in 1125, but the Jurchen had a better army than Koryo. The Korean state did not have the same capability and resources as China, but why did the Jurchen attack Northern Song and continue this war until 1142?

To understanding the positions of the Jurchen and Northern Song before the war we must consider the activities of both sides. At the end of war against the Liao, the Jin and Song Empires had to fight together against a common enemy, but China several times tried to renege on its alliance with the Jurchen. For example, China promised the last Liao Emperor T'en-tsu that it would help and provide him with sanctuary (Ye Lunli, 1979). However the Jurchen general Lo-so arrested the Liao ruler and Jin officials received information about contacts between Khitan Emperor and Northern Song. But the Jurchen were left without consequences from this episode. As we can see, the Jurchen didn't want any conflict with its ally.

In 1123 the Jurchen passed to the Chinese side the important city Yanjing, once the capital of the former Liao Empire (modern Beijing), and return for promised payments from the China side, but Northern Song officials began to delay payments.

According to the alliance between the Song and Jin empires, Chinese officials were required to establish custom points at the border with the

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Jurchen Empire. However the Northern Song side broke this agreement about trade between both empires and didn't establish a custom system on the border with Jurchen state (S. Kozhanov, 1980). Moreover Song officers accepted refugees from the Jin area, campaigned among Khitan and Chinese who served in the Jurchen administration, and invited them to join the Song side. We can conclude that the antagonistic policy of Koryo to Jurchen 1125 resulted from the influence of Northern Song on the Koryo king's court.

Certainly the Jurchen considered Chinese policy as purely hostile towards the Jin Empire and have adopted retaliatory measures in response. As the next step of hostile relation between both empires would have been war, the Jurchen prepared for this stage.

The beginning of the war between Jurchen and China was the Ping-chou incident. The former Liao official Chang Chue, who governed Ping-chou, had come over to the side of the Jurchen. Chang Chue was Bohai person. As is known, the part of Bohai people fought for China and Liao, but many Bohai officials served in Jurchen state (Ye Lunli, 1979). Moreover, they are played an important role in foreign policy of Jin Empire (S. Goncharov, 1986). Jurchen did not have a big number of administrators and Jin invited Bohai people for work in administrative system. Therefore Jin officials trusted him and gave Chang Chue the right to govern Ing-chou and Luang-chou. However he rebelled against the Jin Empire, executed Jin officials in the Ping-chou district and declared himself and his districts (Ping-chou, Ing-chou and Luang-chou) to be subjects of the Song Empire (Ye Lunli, 1979, H. Franke, 1997, p. 68). Moreover Chang Chue sent Chinese prisoners who been arrested by Jurchen to their houses.

Jurchen mobilized three thousand soldiers and under the command of the Jin general Du Mu tried to attack Chang Chue, but could not take Ing-chou and came back north. After this incident Chang Chue sent false information to China about his victory under the Jurchen army. We should see the information about the three thousand Jurchen soldiers that attacked Ping-chou as evidence that the Jin did not have a big army in the border with China in this period and could not plan war against Northern Song at that time.

The Jurchen did not suffer defeat in the war against Liao 1115 - 1125, therefore information about incident involving Chang Chue had a very great effect on the Chinese imperial court.

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Northern Song officials did not like the Jurchen and wanted to support the rebellious general-governor Ping-chou. Therefore the Chinese Emperor rewarded Chang Chue and appointed him to the post of general-governor of the military district Taining and gave him the right of hereditary government of Ping-chou. However one thousand Jurchen soldiers suddenly attacked and occupied Ping-chou. Chang Chue fled to China and sought protection under Northern Song. Jin demanded the execution of the traitor and threatened Song with war. In spite of the Chinese executing Chang Chue and sending his head to Jin (Ye Lunli, 1979; A. Okladnikov and A. Derevianko, 1973), the Jurchen began to regard China as their enemy. Northern Song's treachery of Chang Chue only strengthened opinion among Jurchen that the Chinese empire was an unreliable partner.

Certainly Chang Chue could not rebel against Jin administration alone. In spite of the current problem in one district, Ping-chou, in the Jin Empire, he could not fight against the Jurchen. Therefore we can guess that Northern Song promised him support before the rebellion in Ping-chou. Chang Chue proved to be a good political and administrative leader during the crisis in the Liao Empire. Despite the hostility of the Jurchen he managed to gain their trust (Ye Lunli, 1979). Therefore we can only think that such a good political official could not have been short-sighted when he rebelled against Jurchen. I can guess that Chang Chue had contacts with Go (Gao) Yaoshi – he was Bohai general, who served in Liao army, but from 1120- in Chinese army. At that time he was commander of north border military troops of the Song Empire.

But such a fast destruction of the rebellion by Chang Chue was unexpected for the Chinese Empire because the Northern Song had not prepared for war against the Jurchen and underestimated the mobility of Jurchen military troops. As a developed bureaucratic system, the Northern Song Empire had a diplomatic foreign affairs department but it could not react quickly to changes in other countries and military officials could not mobilize the army swiftly enough. Therefore the Song did not have allies in the war of 1125 - 1142.

We can see the same situation in the later period of Jin to the thirteenth century. During the twelfth century Jin received Chinese cultural

influences, absorbed the Chinese style of management (J. Tao, 1977) and became a developed medieval bureaucratic state. Therefore after it began wars against the Southern Song and Mongols, the Jin Empire could not react quickly to attack by its enemies. For example, according to the *Jin shi*, in 1204 the Song Empire attacked Jin territory but only in 1205 was the Jurchen army mobilized (G. Rozov, 1998, p. 186 - 187). In 1210 Mongol troops invaded Jin but the Jurchen underestimated the situation. Therefore the Jin Empire did not have allies in the war against the Mongols and it was only in 1211 that they declared mobilization of the army (M. Vorob'ev, 1975).

Coming back again to the Ping-chou incident, we can guess that probably Chinese decided to wait for an opportunity for war against the Jurchen and executed Chang Chue. In the opinion of M. V. Vorob'ev, China did not prepare for war and didn't want to fight against the Jurchen (M. Vorob'ev, 1975). However Jurchen had their own opinion on the situation. It seems that in the morass of political intrigues, Jurchen clearly realized that the situation with its southern neighbor would worsen. Many of the Khitan and Bohai people who served in the Jurchen administration did not like Northern Song and helped Jurchen against the southern neighbor of the Jin state. They had political and diplomatic experience which were welcomed in Liao administration, knew the situation in China and could give good advice to Jurchen leaders. Some Bohai people were advisors of the Jurchen generals and held high ranks in Jurchen administration (S. Goncharov, 1986; P. So, 2000). Therefore the Jin officials tried to solve problems with its powerful neighbor with one blow – war.

The Jurchen used the Ping-chou incident as a pretext for war against the Northern Song, but, as noted above, they willingly went to peace talks. We can find the reason for this activity by the Jurchen in the position Jin held before that war.

Relations between Jin and Koryo have been described earlier in this paper. A further factor was that the internal situation of the Jurchen state had been not stable. After the Liao defeated the Jurchen they received the vast territories in which Chinese and Khitan population lived. The former subjects of Liao had not adjusted in a friendly way to the Jin Empire. This is reflected in the fact that many Khitan fled to Xi Liao (the last Khitan state, which was destroyed by Mongols in 1210), to

Koryo and to Si Xia; they also organized guerrilla groups which fought against Jurchen and kept in touch with the external enemies of the Jin Empire. Therefore in spite of many Khitans serving in the Jin army and administration, the Jurchen cannot believe them owing to several objective reasons.

The Chinese population of Jurchen state too was restless; the number of robbers which also opposed Jin had increased. Moreover the Song Chinese Empire at that time had large military forces. A large army was at hand for the Song emperor (in the eleventh century number the Song army reached the extraordinary figure of 1,200,000 soldiers (Istoriia Kitaia, 1974, p. 106) and this did not include the national home guard), as well as a wealthy population and a great number of the cities with good fortifications. In the war against the Jurchen, Chinese general mobilized two millions soldiers (S. Goncharov, 1986); this fact demonstrates the vast material and human capability of the Song Empire.

Before the war against the Northern Song, the Jurchen established a military alliance with the Tangut state Xi Xia, exploited anti-Chinese sentiment among the Khitans and mobilized them for war against the Northern Song and tried looking for mercenaries among Mongol tribes to fight against the Chinese (M. Vorob'ev, 1975). These facts demonstrated that the Jurchen could not be assured of victory in war against the Northern Song. Because Si Xia was an ally of Liao in the war against the Jurchen and had several battles with the Jin army and in 1125 Jurchen had destroyed Khitan Empire, we can understand what many Khitan felt towards Jurchen. For example, in the war against Liao, the Jurchen were not looking for allies in the first period of the war.

Certainly many scholars believe that the Jurchen army was strong and powerful, in spite of using Khitan, Bohai and other peoples in wars, but as we can see the Jin military system could not fight against China over a long period and controlled vast territories of the former Liao Empire. The Jurchen took part in the wars from 1114 and eventually tired of war. Moreover in battles against the Chinese Empires, the Jurchen must have fought in uncomfortable geographical and climate conditions in the provinces of Central and South China. These regions were very different from the districts of the North-eastern China and Manchuria in which the Jurchen had fought against the Khitans.

Based on the example of relations between Jin, Song and the Koryo in 1119 - 1127, we can hypothesize that international relations in the medieval period in East Asia developed when excessively active attempts to weaken a possible opponent and avoid conflict turned into unexpected war and long term opposition. The semi-isolation policy of the Koryo played a positive role for this Korean state – the Jin army was never at war with the Koryo kingdom though the latter was much weaker than China.

Inherently, the conflict between Jin and Song military systems appeared because of mutual fear before a possible collision, when societies almost unknown to each other unexpectedly became neighbors. The blow administered by Jurchen against China in 1125 is more similar to an action dictated by the necessity of having to go to war against a strong opponent for the sake of acquiring new territories and extraction rather than the foolish adventure it appears. Further acts of the Jurchen diplomacy and their attempts to make peace with the Northern Song show that the Jurchen well understood this. And only the unwillingness of Song emperors to advance on the world compelled the Jin state to wage a long war.

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