The Road to Literary Culture: Revisiting the Jurchen Language Examination System*

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Abstract

This essay contextualizes the unique institution of the Jurchen language examination system in the creation of a new literary culture in the Jin dynasty (1115–1234). Unlike the civil examinations in Chinese, which rested on a well-established classical canon, the Jurchen language examinations developed in close connection with the establishment of a Jurchen school system and the formation of a literary canon in the Jurchen language and scripts. In addition to being an official selection mechanism, the Jurchen examinations were more importantly part of a literary endeavor toward a cultural ideal. Through complementing transmitted Chinese sources with epigraphic sources in Jurchen, this essay questions the conventional view of this institution as a “Jurchenization” measure, and proposes that what the Jurchen emperors and officials envisioned was a road leading not to Jurchenization, but to a distinctively hybrid literary culture.

Résumé

Cet article replace l’institution unique des examens en langue Jurchen dans le contexte de la création d’une nouvelle culture littéraire sous la dynastie des Jin (1115–1234). Contrairement aux examens civils en chinois, qui s’appuyaient sur un canon classique bien établi, les examens en Jurchen se sont développés en rapport étroit avec la mise en place d’un système d’écoles Jurchen et avec la formation d’un canon littéraire en langue et en écriture Jurchen. En plus de servir à la sélection des fonctionnaires, et de façon plus importante, les examens en Jurchen s’inscrivaient...

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Dans une entreprise littéraire visant à la réalisation d’un idéal culturel. Combinant les sources chinoises avec des sources épigraphiques en langue Jurchen, l’auteur met en question l’interprétation conventionnelle des examens en Jurchen comme mesure de “jurchénisation” et suggère que ce que les empeureurs et les fonctionnaires Jurchen avaient en vue était une démarche conduisant non à une jurchénisation, mais à une culture littéraire se distinguant par son caractère hybride.

Keywords
Jin Dynasty, Jurchen language examination system, Jurchenization, literary culture.

Two concurrent yet potentially contradictory facts coexisted in the second millennium C.E. in China. On the one hand, civil service examinations based on the Confucian classics—thus distinctively Chinese—became the dominant method for the selection of civil officials.¹ On the other hand, for a better part of this period, north China, and sometimes the entirety of China, was subjected to various non-Chinese rulers. Whether and how non-Chinese rulers—more specifically those of the Liao (Khitan), the Xia (Tangut), the Jin (Jurchen), the Yuan (Mongol), and the Qing (Manchu) dynasties—accommodated themselves to the Chinese examination system is a question worth asking.²

One important aspect of such accommodation is that of language. What should the role of the conquering minority, who spoke a different language, be in the civil examinations? To this question, rulers of different dynasties had quite different answers. In the Khitan Liao, examinations were offered in Chinese and to the Chinese people. There were no Khitan examinations and the Khitan people were not allowed to participate in the Chinese examinations.³ In the Tangut Xia, many of the Chinese classics were translated into Tangut—some are among the manuscripts discovered in Kharakhoto—and education systems in both

¹) Frederick W. Mote calls it “China’s defining social institution.” See Mote, Imperial China 900–1800 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1999), 274.
²) For a general account of civil examinations in Liao, Jin, and Koryo, see Benjamin A. Elman, A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2000), 19–25. A chronology of events related to the civil examinations in the Liao, Jin, and Yuan dynasties can be found in Fang Zhuangyou 方壯猷, “Liao Jin Yuan kejubian” 遼金元科舉年表, Shuowen yuekan 3.12 (1944): 23–34.
Tangut and Chinese are known to have existed; but apparently the examinations were conducted only in Chinese. In the early and middle Mongol Yuan dynasty, the civil examination system was abolished altogether; it was only partially restored in the final decades of the dynasty (1315–1366). The participation of Mongols and *semu* people (i.e., the “various categories” of Central and Western Asian peoples) was allowed, but they took the examinations in Chinese. The situation in the Qing was more complex. In 1651, an examination in Manchu was established, to be changed in the first years of the Yongzheng emperor’s reign into the formal “translation examinations” (*fanyi ke*). But these examinations were limited in scale and, as their name indicates, they only recruited translators.

The Jin dynasty was unique among the conquest dynasties in establishing a lasting category within the civil examination system that was comparable in sophistication to the Chinese examinations, but was conducted entirely in the Jurchen language and scripts. Sixteen Prime Ministers entered the government by way of the Jurchen language

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4) For a general survey, see Shi Jinbo 史金波, *Xixia shehui* 西夏社會 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2007), 394–97.


7) There are two types of Jurchen scripts: the large script and the small script. The large script was created in 1119. The small script was created in 1138 and officially put into use in 1145. For the use of the small script, see Aisin Gioro Ulhicun, *Aishingioro Ulhicun Joshin Kit-tangaku kenkyū* 愛新覺羅烏拉熙春女真契丹学研究 (Kyoto: Shōkadō shoten, 2009), 27–39. Although there are a small number of documents written in the small script, the majority of the documents we possess are in the large script, and so were, most probably, most of the texts produced in the Jurchen examinations. Nevertheless, as most of these texts are now lost and there is no definitive way to know in what script they were written, I will use “Jurchen scripts” when referring to the writings in documents no longer extant. Our current knowledge of the Jurchen writing system is based on *Nüzhen yiyu* 女真譯語 and *Nüzhenguan laiwen* 女真館來文, preserved in the compendium *Huayi yiyu* 華夷譯語 of the bureau of translation of the Ming dynasty. The underlying language is Jurchen, from which eventually derived Manchu. Therefore philologists working on Jurchen materials, when they are not able to find the script in *Nüzhen yiyu*, usually resort to Manchu for help in understanding. For a study of this fundamental text, see Daniel Kane, *The Sino-Jurchen Vocabulary of the Bureau of Interpreters* (Bloomington: Indiana University, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1989).
examination system, a clear indication of its political significance. In other words, this particular institution should be seen as the only example of a non-Chinese examination system that was of considerable import in Chinese history. Under what circumstances did this happen? Why were the Jurchen willing and able to establish and sustain such a system? What does it tell us about the unique features of the Jurchen culture? These are the questions I propose to address in this essay.

Revisiting the History of the Jurchen Examinations

The institution of the Jurchen examinations has long attracted scholarly attention, and its history has been treated from several different perspectives. Tao Jinsheng has provided a concise general account of the history of this institution. Mikami Tsugio emphasized its impact on the meng’an mouke system, the basic unit of social and military organization for the Jurchen population. Xu Bingyu’s much longer essay centers on the circumstances of and key figures in the establishment of the Jurchen examinations, as well as the careers of people who passed them. She pays special attention to two moments in the history of the Jurchen language examination system: the time of its establishment, and its end, and examines the changes it brought about in the Jurchen government. Additionally, several studies and monographs on the civil examination system in the Jin dynasty also mention the Jurchen language examina-

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tions. However, two characteristics common to these works make revisiting this topic necessary.

Firstly, their use of sources is limited. It has long been said that the *Jinshi* is the best among the three official histories compiled in the early Yuan dynasty. The Jurchen examination system is, compared to those of the Khitan and Tangut, better known to us precisely because of the “Monograph on Examinations” in the *Jinshi* (“Xuanju zhi”, j. 51–54), thought to be an exemplary work of historical compilation. Previous studies of the examination system of the Jin dynasty have mostly relied on this source without any substantial corroboration or correction from elsewhere. Such overwhelming dependence on a single text certainly would call for a thorough evaluation of it, a crucial step that unfortunately has been overlooked by most authors.

According to Chan Hok-lam’s historiographical study of the *Jinshi*, the Monograph on Examinations was “based on the civil service regulations promulgated in the years 1138, 1148, 1150, 1156–7, 1162–3, 1168, 1173–4, 1181, 1183, 1190, 1195–6, 1203, and 1204. The more important ones were the *Hsin kuan-chih* 新官制 of 1133, the *Ho-nan-pei kuan t’ung-chu ko* 河南北官通注格, compiled by Grand Secretary Hsiao I 蕭頤 in 1152, and the *Liu-pu ko-shih* 六部格式, compiled in the T’ai-ho period (1201–9).” In other words, one of the most important features of the “Xuanju zhi” is that its record ends in 1204, meaning that the situation of the examina-

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13) This observation was made by Zhao Yi 趙翼 in his *Nian’ershi zhaji* 廿二史箋記, ed. Wang Shumin (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 597–99.

14) See Mao Wen 毛汶,*Jinshi pingyi* 金史平議, in *Liaoshi, Jinshi, Yuanshi yanjiu* 遼史金史元史研究, ed. Wu Fengxia 吳鳳霞 (Beijing: Zhongguo dabaikequanshu chubanshe, 2009), 259–60. This is a collection of historiographical works on the three official histories. The essay by Mao Wen was originally published in *Guoxue lunheng* 2 (1933): 25–35.

tions in the last thirty years of the dynasty is basically left in the dark.\textsuperscript{16} Moreover, since government regulations (geshi 格式) were constantly being updated, the Taihe ge 泰和格 reflected the situation of the examination system looking back from the Taihe period. This means that the “Xuanju zhi” is a retrospective record of the history of the Jin examinations composed between 1201 and 1209. Being a retrospective source, some of the terms adopted in it may reflect the usage of the Taihe era and are not necessarily in line with earlier usages. Indeed, pitfalls in similar retrospective sources have been recognized elsewhere in scholarship on the Chinese civil examinations.\textsuperscript{17}

More importantly, almost all of the existing research overlooks another important category of sources, namely, the epigraphic discoveries of texts written in the Jurchen language and scripts. The most important of these for the current topic is of course the Stele of the names of Jurchen jinshi in 1224 (Zhengda yuannian Nüzhen jinshi timingbei 正大元年女真進士題名碑).\textsuperscript{18} This document deals directly with the Jurchen language examination of that year and provides much information not found in the “Xuanju zhi.” Yet except for some fleeting references in the works of Tao Jinsheng and Du Xingzhi, this source has been consistently ignored in the studies of Jurchen examinations. Additionally, many other Jurchen language texts provide indirect but important information on the Jurchen language examinations. Since most of them have been deciphered and translated with a fair degree of reliability, I will try to incorporate them thoroughly in this essay.

Secondly, a methodological revision of earlier studies is also necessary. Existing scholarship on the Jurchen examination system usually

\textsuperscript{16} This lack is partly due to the fact that the Veritable Records (shilu 實錄) of the last few reigns were lost. See Su Tianjue 蘇天爵, “Sanshi zhiyi 三史質疑,” in Zixi wengao 滋溪文稿 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 422.

\textsuperscript{17} In his study of the Tang zhiyan 唐摭言 by Wang Dingbao 王定保 (870–940), Oliver Moore remarks that “this study will observe more than once that an early post-Tang discourse on recruitment frequently confused the elaborate conditions of late Tang examinations with the relatively simple structures of the system’s early Tang existence.” See Rituals of Recruitment in Tang China: Reading an Annual Programme in the Collected Statements by Wang Dingbao (870–940) (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 3.

regards this institution exclusively as a means of selecting civil officials. Yet, as the work of John Chaffee, Peter Bol, and Hilde De Weerdt has shown for the Song and Jin dynasties, the examination system also functioned to define the intellectual culture of its time. I suggest that the Jurchen language examinations functioned the same way in the development of Jurchen culture, considering in particular that one of their important features is that they were established almost at the same time as the creation of a Jurchen literary canon and the starting of an educational program in this canon. The Chinese examination system, on the other hand, was created in the Sui dynasty (581–618), at a time when an accepted Chinese literary tradition and the education in that tradition had been in existence for centuries. Therefore, unlike the Chinese examination system, which was first and foremost a method of selection of civil officials from an existing pool of literati, the Jurchen examination system was a crucial part of the creation of such a group of literati well versed in the Jurchen language and scripts. Therefore I will look at the history of the Jurchen examinations in close connection with the school system and with the creation of a Jurchen literary canon, and treat the examination system as a component of a general literary endeavor.

Because of their unique place in Jin history, there have long been broader discussions concerning the nature of the Jurchen examinations regarding Jin scholars. F.W. Mote saw them as “a way both to enhance Jurchen dignity and to counter the Jurchen tribal aristocracy’s independence from the throne.” Tao Jinsheng considered the Jurchen examination system a part of Shizong’s “revival of indigenous Jurchen culture.” Liu Pujiang, in his study of the “sinicization” of the Jin dynasty, remarks that the emperor Shizong’s goal in establishing the Jurchen examinations was to encourage the Jurchen people to learn their language and writings, thus promulgating Jurchen traditional cul-

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ture. Jin Qicong summarizes this movement under emperor Shizong as one of "Jurchenization."

Such straightforward use of ethnic terms in the study of ancient Chinese history has long been questioned as anachronistic. Scholars have made many attempts to find more nuanced concepts in their stead. In his study of Chinese literati in the Jin dynasty, Peter Bol has remarked: "The term wen, even when translated as 'civilization,' is historically more accurate and analytically more useful than the term 'sinicization' to understand how Jurchen rulers transformed their polity and why they patronized the literati." In summarizing the development of the Jurchen political system, Hoyt Tillman also circumvented the sinicization scheme by proposing a transition from the Tang/Khitan model to the Song model. Naomi Standen, in her recent study of the Liao-Song border, questions the legitimacy of using any ethnic terms and opts for the concept of "zhong (loyalty)" as the key notion of her argument. Like the "sinicization" approach, the problem with the "Jurchenization" model is not that it does not describe certain trends, but that it assumes idealized and unchanging "Chineseness" and "Jurchen-ness" and ascribes a linear and unidirectional relation between the two. Indeed, if "indigenous (or traditional) Jurchen culture," to which many scholars have claimed the Jurchen examination system was returning, means the culture of Jurchens in the pre-Jin dynasty era in Manchuria, then both the

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22) Liu Pujiang 劉浦江, "Nüzhen de hanhua daolu yu Dajin diguo de fuwang" 女真的漢化道路與大金帝國的覆亡, in Songmu zhijian 松漠之間 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009), 253–64.
23) Jin Qicong, "Jurchen Literature under the Chin," in China under Jurchen Rule, ed. Hoyt Tillman and Stephen West (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1995), 216–37. Jin’s discussion of "literature" in the Jin dynasty is an important contribution. However, his notion of "literature" as poetry and songs (thus excluding most extant Jurchen writings) and his rather straightforward use of terms such as "sinicization" and "Jurchenization" limit the effectiveness of his thesis.
form (which was the Jurchen writing system derived from the Khitan and Chinese systems) and content (which was largely based on the Chinese classics) of the Jurchen examinations were distinctively non-indigenous-Jurchen. In this essay, I would like to question the usefulness of ethnic concepts in the history of the Jurchen examinations and propose new concepts.

Prelude to the Jurchen Examinations: The Literarization of the Jurchen Writing System

There is an interesting paradox in East Asian history: whereas polities outside China proper yet under Chinese cultural influence such as Japan and Korea used the Chinese script to write their native languages, all of the “conquest dynasties” within what is usually considered as “China” developed their own scripts and did not use the Chinese writing system to write their languages. Although not all dynasties had examinations in their own writings, the creation and sufficient popularity of a writing system is naturally a prerequisite for its use in examinations. Yet, even a widely used writing system alone was not sufficient. As we know from the beginnings of writing in Mesopotamia, the earliest use of a nascent writing system typically is confined to practical realms such as economic and tax-related matters. But the civil examinations in the Chinese tradition typically tested literary composition. Therefore, the proper function of the Jurchen examination system required not only the writing systems themselves, but also an established and extensive literary canon written in those systems. Simply put, the Jurchen writing systems needed to be “literarized.”

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29) The fact that the Liao, Jin, Xixia, Yuan, and Qing had their own scripts is clear. Less known is the fact that the earliest “conquest dynasty,” the Northern Wei, also had its own script. See Miao Yue 繆鉞, “Beichao zhi Xianbei yu 北朝之鮮卑語,” in Dushi cungao 讀史存稿 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1962), 53–77. For an example of using a writing system to legitimize imperial rule, see Michael Brose, “Uyghur Technologists of Writing and Literacy in Mongol China,” T’oung Pao 91 (2005): 396–435.
31) Here I borrow Sheldon Pollock’s distinction between “literization” and “literarization.” The former signifies a “breakthrough to writing” of previous unwritten texts, while the latter
Before the establishment of a super-tribal polity, the Jurchens did not have a writing system. The emerging Jurchen state initially adopted Khitan and Chinese for official use. Emperor Taizu (r. 1115–1123), the founder of the state, then ordered the creation of a Jurchen writing system. In 1119 Wanyan Xiyin presented his work, the Book of Writing (Zishu), to the court. It is possible that the diplomatic dispute with the tottering Khitan triggered the idea of a “national script” (benguozi). Little more about the use of the Jurchen script is known until 1125, when Taizong asked Wanyan Yelu to come to the capital and serve as an instructor of the Jurchen script. The Jurchen script in use then was the large script. The small script was created in 1138, and adopted for official use in 1145. A school system for teaching the newly created script was by then also established.

In the early Jin dynasty, people with the knowledge of Jurchen writing usually worked in the Department of State Affairs (Shangshu sheng) or the Academy of National History (Guoshi yuan) as translators. The career of Heshilie Liangbi is revealing in this regard. During the Tianhui era (1123–1137), he was selected as a student of the Jurchen script in the capital. After a short period of education, he served as an instructor of the Jurchen script in Beijing when he was just fourteen years old, and became a clerk at the Department of State Affairs at age seventeen. His later rise to great prominence is less common, but the earlier experience (gaining the knowledge of Jurchen at a very young age and then working as a clerk) is typical among people who learned Jurchen in the early Jin.

Despite the effort in education, the use of the Jurchen scripts in the
early Jin seems to have remained rather limited. As is well known, many Jurchens continued to use Chinese; and even the Khitan scripts were still sometimes the preferred media among the Jurchen people. The popularity of the Khitan scripts is evident in the large number of Jurchens who were said to have mastered them.39 One telling episode on the use of the Khitan scripts and how the knowledge of them could have dire consequences in the early Jin occurred in 1150. The newly ascendant Wanyan Liang (完顏亮, posthumously known as the prince, or commoner, of Hailing 海陵王 / 海陵庶人) began his macabre career of bloodshed with the execution of a general named Salihe 撒離喝. In order to frame the latter, a certain Yaoshe 遥設, under the directives of Wanyan Liang, forged the signature and seal of Salihe on a rebellious letter written in Salihe’s name to Zong’an 宗安, Salihe’s son. This letter written in the Khitan small script was then duly “discovered” and reported by Yaoshe. Of course, no scribe could be identified. An old subordinate of Salihe named Zhege 折哥, who knew the Khitan small script, was unfortunately chosen as the missing link in the conspiracy and executed.40 This story tells us that even by 1150, thirty years after the creation of the Jurchen writing system, it still was quite normal for Jurchen officials to write letters to each other in the Khitan script.41 Only in 1191 was the use of Khitan in Jin administrative matters abolished.42

Epigraphic evidence, or rather the lack thereof, also confirms the observation made above on the use of Khitan and Jurchen scripts in the early Jin. The most famous document from this period is without doubt the Khitan-Chinese bilingual Da Jin huangdi dutong jinglue langjun xingji 大金皇弟都統經略郎君行記 (Record of the Journey of the Royal Relative, Area Commander, Younger Brother of the Emperor of the Great

39) Such as Wanyan Zongxiong 完顏宗雄 (Jinshi, 66.1558), Wanyan Xu 完顏勖 (Jinshi, 66.1559), Wanyan Yan 完顏晏 (Jinshi, 73.1672), Heshilie Hula 紇石烈胡剌 (Jinshi, 82.1840), Duji Yi 獨吉義 (Jinshi, 86.1917), Wanyan Wubuhe 完顏兀不喝 (Jinshi, 90.1998), Yila Woliduo 移剌斡里朵 (Jinshi, 90.2002), Boshulu Aluhan 杞魯阿魯罕 (Jinshi, 91.2024), Tudan Kening 徒單克寧 (Jinshi, 92.2044), and others. Many of them also knew the Jurchen scripts.

40) Jinshi, 84.1879–80.

41) However, for people like Salihe, a signature (which, as a modern signature, could be in any script) and a seal sufficed to establish authorship. A subordinate and specialized scribe was supposed to do the actual writing of the letter. Therefore, the use of Khitan scripts may have been restricted to a certain group of scribes.

42) Jinshi, 9.220.
Jin Dynasty), carved in 1134 on the backside of the famous “Stele without Writing” (wuzibei 無字碑) of Empress Wu (624–705). It was written on the occasion of the restoration of the Qianling (the tomb of the Tang Emperor Gaozong and Empress Wu) by Wanyan Zongfu 完顏宗輔. The section in Khitan precedes the one in Chinese and is carved in much larger characters than the corresponding Chinese. Since this inscription was carved well into the Jin dynasty, the Khitan section was once mistakenly thought to be in Jurchen. That a Jurchen prince would still compose a monumental inscription in Khitan is a clear indication of the esteem the Khitan language and scripts still commanded in the early Jin dynasty.

The earliest documents in Jurchen script are the Jurchen manuscripts discovered in the famous “Forest of Steles” (Beilin 碑林) in Xi’an. They were found inside a cavity in a stele together with books from the Southern Song and coins from both the Song and the Jin. No specific date is recorded on any of these Jurchen documents, but judging from the use of paper, the scribal variants (the use of characters not found in later epigraphic Jurchen), the forms of writing, and the correlated sources (the latest of the many coins found with the manuscripts is dated from the Zhenglóng era [1154–1161]), Jin Qicong has concluded that they predate all of the epigraphic Jurchen texts. These Jurchen documents contain only wordlists and may have been works in the tradition of, if not identical to, Wanyan Xiyin’s now lost Book of Writing, which was presumably a dictionary to be used for translators. They seem to indicate that around the Zhenglóng era the Jurchen writings still were limited to the technical realm and had not yet been fully literarized.

43) A picture of a clear rubbing of this inscription in the Fu Su-nien Library at Academia Sinica can be found at http://catalog.digitalarchives.tw/item/00/1b/fd/97.html (accessed on March 5, 2015). See also Daniel Kane, The Kitan Language and Script (Leiden: Brill, 2009).
44) Kane, The Kitan Language and Script, 185–89.
The creation of a literary canon in the Jurchen language and writing began in 1164, when Shizong ordered that the Chinese classics be translated into Jurchen. The actual translation was, however, a lengthy process, spanning the entirety of Shizong’s reign (1161–1189). By the end of that reign, a sizable number of the Chinese classics had been translated.\(^\text{48}\) The translation project was accompanied by the creation of a school system where the translated works were taught to as many as three thousand students, who in turn would further disseminate them.\(^\text{49}\) Therefore, on the eve of the creation of the Jurchen examinations in 1173, thanks to the development of a school system and of a literary canon on a group of people able to employ the Jurchen language and scripts in a literary manner was beginning to emerge. An illustration of this is found in the record of Lou Yue 樓鑰, the Song emissary who visited the Jin in the winter of 1169–70. When he reached a modest town named Baozhou 保州 in the Central China Plain (Huabei 華北), he saw a poster claiming to “offer Jurchen studies” 教女直學 on a small gate by the side of a road.\(^\text{50}\) This suggests that even in a small city in central China the learning in Jurchen was picking up momentum. Only with such momentum did the establishment of the Jurchen language examination system become possible.

“Opening the Road to Literary Culture”: The First Jurchen Examinations in 1173

In 1173, the thirteenth year of the reign of Shizong, Jurchen jinshi examinations 女真進士科 were held for the first time. These first examinations included a metropolitan examination (huishi 會試) and a palace examination (dianshi 殿試), but not a provincial examination. We know that the candidates had to answer a policy question (cewen 策問) in at least five hundred characters. Since in the Song system the policy question was posed in the palace examination, in the present case it must

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\(^{48}\) Lists of Jin literary works can be found in the Jin section of Jin Menzhao 金門詔, Bu sanshi yiwenzhi 補三史藝文志 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1935) and Qian Daxin 錢大昕, Bu Yuanshi yiwenzhi 補元史藝文志 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1937).

\(^{49}\) Jinshi, 51.1133.

\(^{50}\) Beixing rilu 北行日錄, in Zhibuzuzhai congshu 知不足齋叢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), vol. 8, 23.405.
also have been part of the Jin palace examination. Though there was also a metropolitan examination, we do not know the nature of the tests. The policy question submitted in the palace examination has been preserved in Chinese translation in its entirety:<sup>51</sup>

When virtuous people are born in this world, the world benefits from them. The world has always produced virtuous people, and virtuous people have always assisted the world. The world does not lack virtuous people, the question is only whether they are properly used. Men like Yi Yin, who helped emperor Tang [of the Shang], Fu Yue, who aided emperor Gaozong [of the Shang], or Lü Wang, who encountered king Wen [of the Zhou], all came from humble origins among farmers and fishermen, yet their accomplishments were of such greatness as could never be equaled by later generations: this was because the rulers of the Shang and the Zhou were able to employ them and exhaust their talents. Our dynasty subdued all-under-heaven with divine military might; our saintly emperor pacified the land within the seas with literary virtue. Combining the literary and the military, following the minutest suggestion for good, not abandoning the smallest of utilities, this is how the way to recruit talents is exhausted! Yet, We are still worrying about virtuous and talented men being left ignored in the wilderness. At present We wish to get the totality of the virtuous men in all-under-heaven and use them, so that each virtuous man will also use his talents to the full. How can this be achieved?

This question evokes the familiar motif of undiscovered talents, indicating that one important function of the examinations was to recruit such talented people into the Jin government.

But this is not the full story. Another function of the examinations is implied in the following anecdote. The palace examination was held at the Minzhong Temple 慘忠寺 (the modern Fayuan Temple 法源寺) in Zhongdu (modern Beijing). At midnight, after the candidates had entered the grounds, a pleasant sound of music was heard coming from the temple’s eastern pagoda. Wanyan Punie 完顏蒲涅, the official in charge of the examination, commented on the incident saying:<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Jinshi, 51.1141.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.
This has happened while [we were] about to open the road to literary culture (wen); it is an auspicious sign that talents will be obtained.

文路始開而有此，得賢之祥也.

In other words, for Wanyan Punie the establishment of the Jurchen examinations was as much a measure to “open the road to wen 文” as it was a mechanism to select officials. As any reader of classical Chinese is likely to agree, the term wen resists easy rendering in English. From its original meaning of “pattern” arises the more widely used meaning of “writing,” from which derive in turn the narrower sense of “literary” and the broader one of “civilization,” used in different contexts. The specific context in the current case is provided by the policy question quoted above: emperor Shizong is praised for his literary virtue (wende 文德), as opposed to the divine military might (shenwu 神武) of his predecessors who founded the dynasty. Evidently, wen here is used in contrast to wu, “military.” Therefore, by claiming that the road to wen is opening, the examination system is perceived as a crucial step in a general literary enterprise marking a drastic departure from the policy orientations of earlier Jurchen rulers.

As Tao Jinsheng has rightly pointed out, the purpose of the first examinations was to recruit teachers of Jurchen writing rather than civil officials.53 This is most clearly seen in the life of Tudan Yi 徒單鎰, who eventually became the first optimus (zhuangyuan 状元).54 Tudan started learning the Jurchen scripts at the age of seven, and because of his superb knowledge he was soon recruited into the National University, where he also mastered the Khitan and Chinese scripts.55 He went on to become the best student among his peers at the National University, and in his school years was already well known for being particularly learned in Jurchen. When the students were put through the Jurchen examinations in 1173, Tudan Yi quite expectedly gained the number one spot as optimus. Apparently, these first examinations were not particularly competitive: of the thirty-some students, twenty-eight were eventually selected and given the jinshi title. The 1173 examinations should therefore be seen as a means through which students competent in

54) His biography is found in Jinshi, 99.2185–91. But see also Jinshi, 51.1141. The translation of zhuangyuan as optimus is borrowed from Mote, *Imperial China*, 673.
55) Two accounts of this event exist (Jinshi 51.1140–41 and 99.2185), with some variations.
Jurchen writing were given the prestigious title of *jinshi*, so that they could be dispatched to serve as teachers of the language. Indeed, Shizong specified that the title of *jinshi* should be offered to all of them.⁵⁶ Although we know nothing about the content of their teaching assignments after they had acquired that status, it must have been different from what was taught in the early Jurchen writing schools, where only writing was emphasized. Teachers like Tudan Yi must also have taught the newly translated classics, which they had learned themselves only a few years earlier. These newly minted *jinshi*, rather than being recruited directly into governmental officialdom in the tradition of the Chinese civil service examinations, served to further advance the general literacy in Jurchen literature and writings.

A key component of this general literacy, the Jurchen literary canon was already in existence on the eve of the first examinations. In 1165 and 1166, Tudan Ziwen 徒單子溫 presented to the court his translations of four works: the *Zhenguan zhengyao* 貞觀政要, the *Baishi celin* 白氏策林, the *Shiji* 史記, and the *Xi Han shu* 西漢書 (that is, the *Hanshu*).⁵⁷ Except for the *Book of Writing*, no other books are known to have existed in Jurchen at this time: the translations of the Chinese Classics (*jing*) did not appear for another decade or so. Therefore, these four books were the only known resource for Tudan Yi and the other examinees in 1173. The *Zhenguan zhengyao* is the purported record of the words and deeds of emperor Taizong (r. 626–649) of the Tang and his officials. It was widely regarded after the Tang as the standard guide to wise governing. The two histories, the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu*, provided the candidates with examples to use in their compositions. If these books are to be expected in such circumstances, the inclusion in this group of Bai Juyi’s 白居易 (772–846) *Baishi celin* (Mr. Bai’s Forest of Policy Essays) is more intriguing. This work was later incorporated into the collected works of Bai Juyi, which is where we find it now.⁵⁸ However, it is known to have

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⁵⁶ For the argument on this matter, see *Jinshi*, 95.2100.
⁵⁷ Ibid., 99.2185.
circulated independently with the title *Celin* until the Ming dynasty.\(^{59}\) Bai Juyi composed *Forest of Policy Essays*, a manual of practice responses to policy questions, in collaboration with his friend Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831), at a time when they were preparing for a special examination. It contains seventy-five entries, the first three of which provide seven examples of how to introduce the response to a policy question (*cetou* 策頭). The other seventy-two entries are all thematic responses to typical questions, ranging from general ones such as “honoring modesty” 美謙讓 and “respecting the virtuous” 尊賢 to specific ones such as “cultivating animals and plants” 養動植之物 and “discussing Buddhism” 議釋教. In Jurchen translation, it would have similarly served as a guide for students to answer policy questions. Therefore, on the eve of the first Jurchen examinations, the embryonic Jurchen literary canon included a governmental manual (*Zhenguan zhengyao*), two histories (*Shiji* and *Hanshu*), and a guide for composing responses to policy questions (*Celin*). It then becomes easier for us to understand why in 1173 the *ce* (policy question) may have been the only genre tested. Indeed, the policy question quoted above, which was about the ways of selecting undiscovered men of virtue, bears uncanny resemblance to entry no. 27 in Bai Juyi’s *Celin*.\(^{60}\) Any student familiar with Bai Juyi’s work would not have much of a problem with this question.

It is against this background of promulgation and literarization of the Jurchen language through translation and education that the first Jurchen examinations were held. In turn, with their creation the literarization of the Jurchen writing gained further momentum. In contrast to the contemporary Song dynasty, where a literary canon was well established and had its own logic of change subject to the intellectual climate of the time, and where schools and examinations were usually considered as two different approaches to official selection,\(^{61}\) in the Jin

\(^{59}\) Xie Siwei, “Ming keben Baishi celin kaozheng” 明刻本《白氏策林》考證, in *Bai Juyi ji zonglun* 白居易集綜論 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1997), 105–23.

\(^{60}\) *Bai Juyi wenji jiaozhu*, 1451.

\(^{61}\) In the Song, for example, Cai Jing followed the example of Wang Anshi and established nationwide schools in order to replace the examination system (otherwise known as the “Three Hall System,” see Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China*, 77). In the Ming, emperor Taizu explicitly said that community schools should not teach examination contents and community pupils were not allowed to take the examinations. This was later overturned, but the institutional distinctness between schools and examinations remained.
the developments in the Jurchen writing system, in the Jurchen examination system, and in the Jurchen school system were so closely intertwined from the very beginning that they can hardly be treated separately—even though this is our usual practice in writing institutional history—without losing important insights. An understanding of the Jurchen examinations is only possible when they are viewed as a part of a general movement toward the rule of literary culture (*wenzhi* 文治) in the Jin dynasty.62

**Emperor Shizong’s Aim**

What were the Jin emperors and officials trying to achieve by promoting this new literary culture? Were they envisioning, as many scholars have suggested, a “Jurchenization” project? Some clues to these questions can be uncovered in a conversation that reportedly took place in 1180 between emperor Shizong and his Prime Minister Wanyan Shoudao 完颜守道, where the emperor revealed his reasons for establishing the Jurchen examinations:63

> 上曰：契丹文字年遠，觀其所撰詩，義理深微。當時何不立契丹進士科舉？今雖立女直字科，慮女直字創制日近，義理未如漢字深奧，恐為後人議論。

Prime Minister Wanyan Shoudao answered: “Initially, Chinese writings may not have been [as sophisticated] as they are [now]. It was only through the accumulated efforts of sages over many generations [that it became so]. Endowed with natural talent and wisdom, our saintly ruler ordered that the classics be translated and taught throughout all-under-heaven. Give it some time and we will be able to rival the literature (*wenzhang*) of the Chinese people!”


62) The rule of the Jin was believed to have been different from that of the Liao and was regarded as the rule of *wen*. See Jinshi, 125.2713.

63) Ibid., 51.1141–42.
丞相守道曰: "漢文字恐初亦未必能如此。由歷代聖賢漸加修舉也。聖主天姿明哲，令譯經教天下，行之久亦可同漢人文章矣！"

Thus, the intricacy of Khitan poetry made emperor Shizong wonder why there was not a Khitan jinshi examination system. Said differently, the question was: had the Khitans established Khitan language examinations, how much greater might their poetry have become? It is clear from this remark that Shizong’s purpose in having Jurchen examinations was not primarily official recruitment, but the promotion of a new type of literary culture epitomized by a poetry that would be “profound and subtle.” Even more interesting is Wanyan Shoudao’s response to the emperor’s question. Instead of directly suggesting any revision to the examination system, he proposes to sustain the efforts in two other areas: translation of the classics and education, in line with orders already handed down by the emperor. For both emperor and minister the three institutions were organic components of a greater enterprise, the aim of which was to “rival the literature (wenzhang) of the Chinese people.” This may indeed be what Wanyan Punie was referring to when he expressed his joy in the “opening of the road to literary culture” in 1173.

A recently deciphered text bears witness to such a literary enterprise in a local setting. In 1994, a new inscription with two short lines in Jurchen writing was discovered forty kilometers to the northwest of the ruins of the "Supreme Capital" Shangjing 上京, near the modern city of Harbin in Heilongjiang. Because of its poor condition, the inscription was at first extremely difficult to decipher. Only in 2008, thanks to Aisin Gioro Ulhicun’s excellent work, was it possible to know its content. She identified the second part of the text as a reference to a famous line in the Shijing 詩經, “Suye feixie” 夙夜匪懈 (“Never be unprepared, in the morning or at night”). The first part of the inscription was, according to her, an indigenous Jurchen expression meaning “the way of the writing/literary” 文字之道, also found in another inscription. Together, the two parts convey something to the effect that “the way of the writing/literary (is to) never be left unprepared, in the morning or at night.” Aisin Gioro Ulhicun suggests that this inscription may have come from what was originally a Jurchen language school during the reign of emperor Shizong.64 While the evidence for a positive identification of its provenance

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64) Aisin Gioro Ulhicun, Aishingioro Ulhicun Joshin Kittangaku kenkyū, 1–12.
is admittedly slim, the message revealed is nevertheless in line with the attitude about the propagation of Jurchen writing and literary culture expressed in the conversation between Shizong and Wanyan Shoudao: the road to a sophisticated literary culture is long and requires continuous effort.

The trajectory of the early development of the Jurchen examination system must be understood in this broader intellectual context. The second Jurchen examinations took place in 1176 with a minor change, as priority was granted to youths from the royal family and the families of high ministers. A more significant reform occurred in 1182. Two years earlier, the efforts at education in Jurchen literacy had been reported to be very successful. Such success triggered an expansion of the examination system: poetry questions were added, and provincial examinations were held in Zhongdu, Shangjing, Xianping, and Dongping in August 1181, thus creating a three-tier examination system. The dates of the sessions were designed to follow those of the Chinese examinations, and the metropolitan examination was held in the third month of 1182. With such changes, the Jurchen examinations became much more similar to the Chinese examinations conducted by the Jin.

In 1188, essay questions (lunti) were further added to the system. Initially, emperor Shizong had asked his officials if it were possible to examine students on the meaning of the classics (jingyi), and was told that while the Shangshu, Zhouyi, and Chunqiu had already been translated, the Shijing and the Zhouli had not. The emperor then decided that essay questions regarding the classics should be asked. This is yet another example of how much the Jurchen examinations depended on the translation into and literarization of the Jurchen language. Moreover, by the end of the Dading reign, after the death of emperor Shizong, people with the jinshi degree were still intimately involved in the local school system. The nature of the Jurchen examination system as an educational project thus persisted.

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65) Jinshi, 51.1141.
66) Ibid., 51.1141–42.
67) Ibid., 51.1142.
68) Ibid., 51.1134.
With the expansion of the examination and school systems, we also find in epigraphic evidence the beginnings of the use of Jurchen beyond administrative matters. In 1185, the first major dated Jurchen monument—*The Laudatory Stele of the Great Jin at Deshengtuo (Da Jin Deshengtuo songbei 大金得勝陀頌碑)*—was erected.69 This is the longest extant Jurchen inscription, and it includes a “foundation myth” of the Jin dynasty. It is written in both Chinese and Jurchen. The Chinese part is on the recto side, meaning that it is the main text, whereas the Jurchen text, written on the verso side, is the accompanying translation.70 The setting up of this “laudatory stele” (*songbei*) was inspired by the example of emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756) of the Tang who, when travelling through Taiyuan 太原 and Shangdang 上黨, both important places in the rise of the Tang, had had laudatory hymns composed.71 Another significant specimen of Jurchen writing during this period was carved in 1186: this is the *Funeral Stele of the Zhaoyong General, Associate Military Commissioner of Xiong Prefecture (Zhaoyong dajiangjun tongzhi Xiongzhou jiedushi mubei 昭勇大將軍同知雄州節度使墓碑)*.72 The inscription includes five lines of Chinese and only one line of Jurchen, the Jurchen part being a partial translation of the Chinese.

The use of Jurchen in both inscriptions indicates that the Jurchen writing system was being more widely adopted in monumental writings dedicated to both the living and the dead, and that it was replacing the Khitan language for such usages. Also significant is the fact that both Jurchen texts were attendant upon a main Chinese text, indicating that the relation between Chinese and Jurchen writings in both cases was cooperative rather than mutually exclusive. The use of Jurchen even

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69) Deshengtuo is a place in Huining 會寧 where Wanyan Aguda 完顔阿骨打 announced his campaign against the Liao dynasty.

70) The Chinese text, with annotation by Wang Renfu 王仁富, can be found in *Jinbei huishi 金碑匯釋* (Changchun: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 1989), 109–30.

71) The one composed in Taiyuan is a “Hymn for the Hall of Righteous Rise” (“Qiyitang song” 起義堂頌); the one composed in Shangdang is a “Hymn Extolling the Sage at the Old Palace in Shangdang” (“Shangdang jiugong shusheng song” 上黨舊宮述聖頌). Both were written by Zhang Yue 張說 (667–731). See *Quan Tang wen 全唐文* (Taipei: Huawen shuju, 1961), 221.11b-12a and 12a-13a, respectively.

infiltrated the daily activities of ordinary people, as suggested by the
Jurchen graffiti on the “Ten Thousand Avatamsaka Sūtra” Stūpa 萬部華
嚴經塔 written in the Dading reign.73 These traces of the beginnings
of Jurchen writing in epigraphic documents attest to the substantial suc-
cess of the project of creating a literary culture under emperor Shizong’s
rule.

Emperor Zhangzong’s Reform

Immediately following the death of emperor Shizong in 1189, his succes-
sor Zhangzong 章宗 subjected the Jurchen examination system to an
important change—indeed, one may call it a “reform”—that has not
been given due attention by most researchers.74 Because this change oc-
curred in the year of Shizong’s death, it was still technically taking place
in the Dading era. Significantly, 1189 was not a year of regularly sched-
uled triennial examinations. But Zhangzong apparently could not wait
until the next examination year to have this change instituted.

The following short royal decree is recorded in the Jinshi:75

In the 29th year of the Dading era, under Zhangzong, it was ordered that: “zhuren
(various peoples) are to be allowed to participate in celun (policy and essay ques-
tions) jinshi examinations.”

Straightforward as it may seem, two terms in this sentence need to be
elucidated. The first is zhuren (“various peoples”). In juan 53 of the Jin-
shi, when laying out a rule for promotion, government officials were di-

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The Jurchen graffiti includes the name and place of birth of a certain person. Chinese and
Khitan graffiti were also found at this same site.
74) The only comments on this short decree that I have encountered are found in Zhao
Donghui 趙冬輝, “Jindai keju zhida yanjiu” 金代科舉制度研究, Liao Jin shi lunji 4 (Beijing:
Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1989), 222–23 and Yan Xingpan 閻興潘, “Jindai Nüzhen jin-
75) Jinshi, 51.1142.
vided into two groups: Jurchens and zhuren.\textsuperscript{76} This shows that zhuren was clearly short for zhuse ren 諸色人, which denoted the non-Jurchen peoples, including the Han Chinese, Khitan, Baohai, etc., and was a predecessor of the “various types” (\textit{semu} 色目), a term for Western and Central Asian peoples widely used during the Yuan dynasty. Allowing non-Jurchen people to take part in the Jurchen language examinations was a significant change to the system.\textsuperscript{77}

The second term is \textit{celun jinshi}. According to the “Xuanju zhi” (Monograph on Examinations), \textit{celun jinshi} was the category for selecting Jurchen people.\textsuperscript{78} Scholars have thus conveniently equated this category with \textit{Nüzhen jinshi} (Jurchen \textit{jinshi}), without much reflection on the relation between these two terms.\textsuperscript{79} Yet, it is clear from the record of the “Xuanju zhi” that at least by the time of the composition of this work in the Taihe era in the late Jin, the category of Jurchen \textit{jinshi} was known as \textit{celun jinshi} 策論進士. Then what was the relation between the two terms? From the name itself it is clear that the category of \textit{celun jinshi} included examinations in both \textit{ce} (policy question) and \textit{lun} (essay question). Since \textit{lun} was added to the system only in 1188, the term \textit{celun} cannot have existed before. Because the 1189 decree from Zhangzong already spoke of \textit{celun jinshi}, we can be quite certain that the name change occurred between 1188 and 1189, perhaps with this very decree of 1189. Indeed, this change was so significant that in 1195, emperor Zhangzong himself explained to his ministers: “When talking about Nüzhen \textit{jinshi}, the words ‘nüžhen’ should not be mentioned” 凡言女真進士,不須稱女真字.\textsuperscript{80} He went on to explain that this requirement was not meant to avoid using the terms \textit{nüzhen} and \textit{qidan}, but did not specify what the real reason was. In any case, what is revealed in this explicit reference is Zhangzong’s distaste for the name \textit{nüzhen jinshi}. In 1197, a further refinement was proposed to the system when the emperor ordered that a limit be placed on the number of people taking \textit{celun}

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 53.1173.
\textsuperscript{77} For an explanation of this term, see Yan Xingpan, “Jindai Nüzhen jinshike fei ‘xuan Nüzhiren zhi ke’ kaobian,” 108–9.
\textsuperscript{78} Jinshi 53.1140.
\textsuperscript{79} Mikami Tsugio is the only author careful enough not to use \textit{Nüzhen jinshi} to replace \textit{celun jinshi}.
\textsuperscript{80} Jinshi, 46.1036.
examinations in a single household. Here again, the order is said to have been directed to both Jurchens and “various types of peoples” (zhuse ren), i.e., non-Jurchen.81

Thus, in the first year of his reign, the newly enthroned Zhangzong started a drastic reform of the Jurchen language examination system, changing its name from nüzhen jinshi 女真進士 to celun jinshi 策論進士 and expanding the pool of examinees to include non-Jurchen peoples. The “ethnic nature” of the examination was therefore greatly reduced, to the extent that it was only appropriate to continue to use the term “Jurchen examinations” in the sense of examinations conducted in the Jurchen language and writing. In 1200, an order from the Department of State Affairs stated: “In the metropolitan examinations, no more than 600 people are to be selected in the celun, cifu, and jingyi categories” 會試取策論, 詞賦, 經義不得過六百人.82 The juxtaposition of these three categories is also found elsewhere in the Jinshi.83 In all these references, no special attention is paid to the fact that one of the three, namely, the celun category, was actually conducted in the Jurchen language, while the other two were in Chinese. In other words, by emperor Zhangzong’s reign the celun category was “Jurchen” only linguistically and, at least in theory, it was ethnically diversified.84 The Jurchen examinations complemented the other two categories of civil examinations in that they focused on policy and essay questions, whereas the Chinese examinations focused on poetry and classics. The difference in genre coincided with the difference in language.

The reform and further expansion of the Jurchen examination system were accompanied by a concurrent development in the use of the Jurchen writings as reflected in epigraphic sources. Two inscriptions about Aotun Liangbi 奧屯良弼 dating from 1200 and 1210 respectively are particularly relevant in this regard. The first records a poem written by

81) Ibid., 51.1142.
82) Ibid., 11.252.
83) Ibid., 15.336–37, 51.1131.
84) However, since the examinations were still conducted in the Jurchen language and writing, they would not have been easily accessible to people with other cultural backgrounds. So, to judge from the sources available to us, most examinees who obtained the celun jinshi degree were still Jurchen. The first evidence of Chinese people taking the examinations, and indeed also gaining the degree, dates to the year 1224. See below.

T’oung Pao 101-1-3 (2015) 130-167
Aotun Liangbi and was carved in around 1200.\footnote{Luo Fuyi 羅福頤, Jin Qicong 金啟孮, Jia Jingyan 賈敬顏, and Huang Zhenghua 黃振華, “Nüzhi zi Aotun Liangbi shikeshi chushi” 女直字奧屯良弼詩刻石初釋, Minzu yuwen 1982.2: 26–32.} No Chinese originals have been found, but the heavy influence of Chinese poetic techniques is evident. The poem is composed of eight lines, the first, second, fourth, sixth, and eighth line ending in [da], [pu-a], [du], [bi-a], [zhu-a] respectively. The rhyme is clearly [a], and the poem is modeled on the rhythmic rules of Chinese regulated verse (lüshi 律詩).

The second inscription, which is carved on a rock, was preserved at one point in the collection of the modern scholar Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 (1866–1940). It contains two sections, one Chinese and one Jurchen. The Chinese part is written in much larger characters and reads: “When Aotun Liangbi returned to the Capital from the region north of the Si [River], his close friends offered him a farewell banquet by this stream. This happened on the 11th day of the 2nd month of the 6th year of the Taihe era (March 21, 1206)” (奧屯良弼自泗上還都, 心友餞飲是溪, 泰和六年二月十有一日也). The accompanying Jurchen text to the left of the Chinese text, in much smaller characters, reads: “... victory. I saw the writing of the chief clerk of Zhangde Fu 彰德府, my old friend Aotun Shunqing, reproduced it carefully and carved it into stone. On the 20th day of the 7th month of the 2nd year of the Da’an era (August 11, 1210), the wenlinlang (Jurchen: u-ən li-in la-aŋ “secretary of the literary forest,” a low-level rank), Chief Clerk of Mingshui County, Bu ciò xuŋ.”\footnote{Jin Guangping and Jin Qicong, Nüzhen yuyan wenzi yanjiu, 321–25.} Apparently, this official of Mingshui County admired his friend Aotun Liangbi’s (style name: Shunqing) Chinese calligraphy so much that he carved a short piece of his own writing on a stone. The name of this Chief Clerk, Bu Çiu xuŋ, has been reconstructed as Pu Xiu-hong 卜修洪 by Jin Guangping and Jin Qicong. Although the exact characters may not be accurate, the name still is undoubtedly Chinese.\footnote{For a list of Jurchen surnames and a general study of Jurchen names, see Mu Hongli 穆鴻利, “Jinyuan Nüzhen xingshipu ji gai hanxing zhi fenlei yu tedian” 金源女真姓氏譜及改漢姓之分類與特點, Manzu yanjiu 2005.4: 36–47.} In other words, the story this stone tells us is that a Jurchen wrote a short piece in Chinese, which after it had been carved on stone was followed by a Jurchen colophon written by a Chinese. The reason why Bu Çiu xuŋ chose to write
his colophon in Jurchen is not known, but the mere existence of this inscription forces us to abandon the rigid belief that a clear line existed at the time between what it meant to be Chinese and what it meant to be Jurchen. It is perhaps not coincidental that this example of a Chinese writing in Jurchen appeared two decades after the Jurchen language examinations began to be open to non-Jurchen peoples.

We know very little about Aotun Liangbi as a person. The official title he had in the first inscription was shiyushi 侍御史 (Attendant Censor), and he was eventually able to reach the prominent position of shangshu zuocheng 尚書左丞 (Assistant Director of the Department of State Affairs). According to Tao Jinsheng, people who entered the government through the Jurchen examinations tended to work in the Censorate (yushitai 御史臺) in their early years and ultimately to reach very high positions. As Aotun Liangbi’s career fits this description perfectly, it is quite likely that he also took part in the Jurchen examinations. Indeed, that he wrote and inscribed a poem in Jurchen following the Chinese regulated verse (lìshi) form strongly suggests the influence of the “poetry question” in the Chinese examinations. Moreover, Aotun Liangbi’s friend Bu Çiu xuŋ, though probably a Chinese, was able to use the Jurchen language and writing. This also suggests the possibility that he took the Jurchen examinations, as was theoretically possible for the Chinese after 1189. Indeed, as it was usual for people taking the examinations the same year to form close bonds as tongnian 同年, the friendship between Aotun Liangbi and Bu Çiu xuŋ may conceivably have developed from this common experience.

Admittedly, the above suggestion of a direct connection between the inscriptions and the Jurchen examinations is only tentative. Still, the emergence of such active literary productions—the composition of poetry and colophons in Jurchen—was the direct result of the advancement in the Jurchen literary culture, of which the Jurchen language examination system was an integral part.

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88) For a reconstruction of his life, see He Xige 和希格, Mu Hongli 穆鴻利, “Cong Aotun Liangbi nüzhenwen shike kan jindai minzu wenzi de yanbian” 從奧屯良弼女真文石刻看金代民族文字的演變, Beifang wenwu 2002.3 : 72–73. The translations of official titles here and elsewhere in this article are based on Charles Hucker, A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1985).

A Note on the Jurchen School System

Another related and equally important part of this advancement was the development of a school system to teach the Jurchen language and writings. Very little is known about the situation of the Jurchen examinations between the reign of Zhangzong and the year 1224. An exception is the record of a conversation between emperor Xuanzong and his ministers in 1221. Regularly scheduled examinations were held in that year, and when Xuanzong was presented with the papers of the successful candidates, he was surprised that there were only twenty-eight of them. An unnamed minister responded to his question by giving a curious description not of the examination system itself, but of the problems met by the Jurchen school system:

In the Dading era (1161–1188), schools were set up everywhere. Each *mouke* contributed two or three people as students, and they were provided with allowances and food. In the Taihe era (1201–1207), according to regulation each student was given 60 *mu* of land. With such generous grants, there were naturally many students. At present, although there is a prefectural school in the capital, its students receive only 50 strings of cash each month.

To remedy this situation, the minister suggested various measures, including the establishment of new prefectural schools and allowances of 40 *mu* of land to the students. It is possible that the reason for the lack of students, and therefore of *jinshi* in the Jurchen examinations at the time, was a result of the lack of funding for state-sponsored schools, which in turn may have been a consequence of the prolonged warfare with the Mongols and the eventual southward move of the Jin capital to Kaifeng in 1217. The minister’s answer also indicates that the majority of people taking the examinations must have been educated in the state-sanctioned schools; and it suggests that there may not have been much private teaching of Jurchen literature. That people taking the

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90) *Jinshi*, 51.1143–44.
91) One limitation to the private study of Jurchen may have been the fact that, as far as we know, no Jurchen books were ever printed. In this respect, Tangut and of course Chinese literatures were much more developed.
Jurchen examinations to obtain a degree had a higher chance to succeed may not have been a result of ethnic discrimination against examinees in the Chinese examinations, but a reflection of the fact that far fewer people, either Chinese or Jurchen, were interested in acquiring literacy in Jurchen.

More importantly, the minister's suggestion once again illustrates the close connection between schools and examinations. As pointed out by Tao Jinsheng, one of the characteristics of the Jin school system was “the schools’ considerable influence on government recruitment of literati for officialdom.” Emperor Xuanzong agreed to his minister’s suggestion, but it is difficult to know how effective the measures for expanding schools' funding were and what impact they had on the Jurchen examinations. Still, as the following discussion of the examinations of 1224 will show, at the very least the Jurchen examination system continued to be actively supported by the government well into the last decades of the Jin dynasty.

The Palace Examination of 1224

The Jinshi “Monograph on Examinations” does not cover the reign of the last emperor, Aizong (r. 1224–34). Consequently, most studies of the Jurchen examinations have left this period virtually untouched. However, a major document in Jurchen—the Stele of the Names of Jurchen jinshi in 1224—offers first-hand information on this particular year (see Figure 1). According to an eye-witness account by the Southern Song traveler Luo Shouke, preserved in Zhou Mi’s Guixin zazhi (1232–1298) Guixin zazhi, the government school of Bianjing (Kaifeng) featured “a stele bearing the names of Jurchen jinshi, written in a script that resembled Chinese seal script but could not be understood” (女真進士題名, 其字類漢篆而不可識). Luo saw the stele in 1236, twelve years after its erection. It was subsequently mentioned

92) Tao Jinsheng, “Public Schools in the Chin Dynasty,” in China under Jurchen Rule, 63.
93) Zhou Mi, Guixin zazhi (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 217. See also Ya Ming 亞明, “Nüzhen jinshi timingbei yanjiu shulue” 女真進士題名碑研究述略, Zhongyuan wenwu 1990.4: 61–63.
94) According to Zhou Mi, Luo’s trip occurred in a bingshen 丙申年. According to Ari Daniel Levine, “Welcome to the Occupation: Collective Memory, Displaced Nostalgia, and
in various works during the Ming and the Qing, until it was rediscovered by the Qing antiquarian Liu Shilu 刘师陆 (1784–1850). A long history of scholarship on this inscription followed this rediscovery.\footnote{This inscription has been known in the written record since the early Yuan. Liu Shilu identified the language as Jurchen and his essay contains a clear reproduction of the Jurchen text.} Jin Guang-

\footnote{Dislocated Knowledge in Southern Song Ambassadors’ Travel Records of Jin-Dynasty Kaifeng,” *T’oung Pao* 99 (2013): 439 n. 171, Luo Shouke’s trip took place “most likely” in 1176; however, since the inscription he describes was carved in 1224, it would have to be the next bingshen year, that is, 1236.}
ping and Jin Qicong offer the most recent and most comprehensive study, their work representing a major advancement in the understanding of the inscription, thanks particularly to their identification of Chinese themes and quotations. I largely follow their interpretation of the content of the stele in this section, but also suggest some revision where necessary.

The inscription records the course of the palace examinations (dianshi 殿試) in 1224. The text contains twenty-three lines of writing, structured as follows: line 1—title; line 2—location, time, and type of examination; lines 3–6—policy question; line 7—treatise question and poetry question; lines 8–11—officials in charge; lines 12–15—procedure; lines 16–21—names and place of origin of the new jinshi; lines 22–23—date of carving of the inscription, names of the calligrapher and of the carver. Unlike the record in the "Xuanju zhi," which is a retrospective, chronological account of the history of the Jurchen examinations, this inscription offers a close-up snapshot at one year’s palace examination. Many of the details we know from this inscription can be compared profitably with contemporary Song practices, which helps us determine


96) See Appendix I, "Nüzhen jinshi timingbei yishi" 女真進士題名碑譯釋, in Jin Guangping and Jin Qicong, Nüzhen yuyan wenzi yanjiu, 281–320. The translation of the now extinct Jurchen language is by nature problematic. It is even more so when it is translated into English. Because our basic source of knowledge of the Jurchen language, the Huayi yiyu, is a Jurchen-Chinese vocabulary list (plus Jurchen phonetic values spelled out in Chinese), translating Jurchen into Chinese includes many "replacements" of the Jurchen script(s) with the corresponding Chinese characters as found in Huayi yiyu, which was considered to be quite accurate. However, when such words are translated into English, instead of "replacement" we have a process of "translation," which is inherently less accurate. Additionally, because the first step in translating Jurchen into any language is to replace the known scripts with their Chinese equivalents, any translation is the translation of a reconstructed Chinese text. A translation from the translation of Jin Qicong and others should thus be justified.

97) According to Daniel Kane, "A remarkable achievement was their identification of the topic of the dissertation for examination, a quotation from the Book of History. Jin and Jin also decipher the rest of the inscription, including the identification (by name and rank) of the successful candidates, references to them in the History of the Jin Dynasty and other philological and historical commentaries on the text." See The Sino-Jurchen Vocabulary, 50.
the nature of the Jin dynasty examinations recorded here. As we know, the Jin had both metropolitan (huishi 會試) and palace examinations (dianshi 殿試), and both took place in the capital. Which one does our inscription record? Taking the Song situation into account, it becomes clear that the examination recorded in the 1224 stele was the palace examination, since it is stated that it was presided over by the Jin emperor himself, and because the timing agrees with Song usage, when the palace examination usually took place in the third or fourth lunar month.98 The information contained in this stele makes possible a detailed reconstruction of the course of the palace examinations of 1224.

Thus, on the fifteenth day of the fourth month (May 4, 1224),99 emperor Aizong tested the candidates on the policy question in front of the Mingjun Hall 明俊殿 in Kaifeng, then the Jin capital. Two days later, he presented the essay question and poetry question. In other words, there were three categories of questions in this particular palace examination: this is different from the Song practice where, after 1170, only policy questions were asked at the palace examination.100 After the three days of examination, Shizan Weixin 石箇畏忻 (Jurchen: ŋiŤašan weixin) was appointed supervisor (mu[T]urubie ʧiɛndaxei, equivalent to Chinese jiankao 監考),101 and four others were appointed readers (uľingi tawofo, equivalent to Chinese juandu 卷讀, that is, dujuan 讀卷 according to Chinese usage). Of the four readers, three have clearly Jurchen names (namely, un-di-xan ʒe-ʃї 溫迪罕耶失, u-guei-sun bu-gil 烏古孫卜吉, and ja-r-on ai-ʃї 斜卯愛實). Jin Guanping and Jin Qicong have reconstructed the name of the first reader, un-di-xan ʒe-ʃї, as *溫迪罕耶失, who according to them cannot be found in the Jinshi. It seems to

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98) Before 1189, eighty-four percent of the palace examinations took place in the third month, whereas after that date they usually took place in the fourth month. (However, on certain occasions they were postponed to as late as the eighth month.) In 1252, it was ordered that the metropolitan examination be held on the first day of the second month, and the palace examination in the fourth month. See Chen Gaohua 陳高華, Song Dejin 宋德金, and Zhang Xiqing 張希清, Zhongguo kaoshi tongshi 中國考試通史, vol. 2 (Beijing: Shoudu shifan daxue chubanshe, 2004): 183.
99) See Chen Yuan 陳垣, Ershi shi shuojuan biao 二十史朔閏表 (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1956), 144.
100) Zhongguo kaoshi tongshi, 185.
101) The reading of the first character is conjectural; see Jin Guangping and Jin Qicong, Nüzhen yuyan wenzi yanjiu, 300–301.
me, however, that he should be identified with 溫迪罕二十, a high official of Aizong’s time.\textsuperscript{102} The fourth reader, who was an editor in the Academy of History (guei ʃї wə-a bie-iən çiu guan 國史院編修官), had a name composed of three Jurchen characters, the first undeciphered and the second and third reading [da-u], reconstructed as dewu 德武, a common Chinese given name, by Jin and Jin. This suggests that the first character must have been his family name. Since all Jurchen family names have more than one syllable, this person was very likely Chinese.\textsuperscript{103}

On the eighth day of the fifth month, the names of the new jinshi were made public on a placard in front of the Danfeng Gate 丹鳳門. This means that the grading had taken about twenty-one days (from the seventeenth of the fourth month to the eighth of the fifth month). In the 1256 Song palace examination, by comparison, the grading took sixteen days.\textsuperscript{104} The fact that the Jurchen palace examination consisted of more categories, as mentioned above, may have contributed to this longer period. On the thirteenth day of the sixth month, the emperor presided over the final ranking in the main building of the palace, the Longde Hall 隆德殿, selecting Boshulu Changhe 孛术鲁長河 as optimus and granting the jinshi degree to thirty people. Among those selected, three were in the first rank (wəgi ʤaxa 上甲), seven in the second rank (duli-iŋ gi ʤaxa 中甲), and six in the third rank (fəʤї gi ʤaxa 下甲). There were two additional lists: the list of names specifically reported (fun ʧə xə alawa 餘敕, “supplementary decree”), and the benevolence list (baili bo-ŋ 恩榜). The phrase fun ʧə xə alawa 餘敕 must translate the Chinese term tezouming 特奏名 (particularly reported names); Jin Guang-ping and Jin Qicong translate it as fubang 附榜 (additional list), but contrary to their claim, fubang was not a common term in the Song system, whereas tezouming were frequently selected in the Song palace examinations. Besides, since the word bang (placard) was directly borrowed from the Chinese into Jurchen as bo-ŋ in the rendering of enbang, it is unsatisfactory to translate alawa (decree) also as bang.

\textsuperscript{102} His name appears in jinshi 18.397 and 107.2360.
\textsuperscript{103} Mu Hongli, “Jinyuan Nüzhen xingshipu ji gai hanxing zhi fenlei yu tedian.”
\textsuperscript{104} Chen et al., Zhongguo kaoshi tongshi, 184.
On the same day, a stele bearing the names of the new degree-holders was set up in the Dacheng Hall 大成殿. This is another departure from Song practice. Whereas in the Song, the steles with the names of jinshi were placed in the Ministry of Rites (libu 禮部), the 1224 Jin stele was erected in the main building in the Confucian Temple (Kongmiao 孔廟).\(^{105}\) In other words, whereas in the Song the steles were placed in a branch of the government, in the Jin they were erected at the quintessential center of literary culture. The location of the stele indicates yet again that in the Jin the examination system was neither merely an official selection tool nor an ethnic institution. Indeed, this was not the first time the Confucian Temple was involved in the creation of Jurchen literary culture. In 1194, under emperor Zhangzong, a proposal was made to establish temples for the veneration of Wanyan Yelu and Wanyan Xi-yin, the creators of the Jurchen scripts, so that “Jurchen and Chinese students could honor them after paying their veneration to Confucius” (令女真, 漢人諸生隨拜孔子之後拜之). After initial rejection, it was proposed again that, since there was no precedent for placing creators of writing in the Confucian Temple, it might be appropriate to build shrines for these two figures behind or on both sides of the main temple. This suggestion too was ultimately rejected, because it did not accord sufficient honor to them. Eventually, a temple was constructed in Shangjing “in accordance with the precedent of constructing a temple to Cangjie in Zhouzhi” (依倉頡立廟于盩厔例).\(^{106}\) Cangjie is, of course, the legendary creator of Chinese writing. Although the wish expressed by some to place the shrines of the inventors of the Jurchen scripts in or around the Confucian Temple did not materialize, the connection between the creation of Jurchen writing and the literary culture epitomized by the Confucian Temple was nevertheless clear.

Aside from the contrast with contemporary Song examinations, we can also observe a few changes from earlier Jin practices in the 1224 stele: the date of the examination was postponed by a few months, the sequence of the sessions was also altered,\(^{107}\) and finally, the test of archery

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\(^{106}\) Jinshi, 35.825. Mikami Tsugio, Kinshi kenkyū, 252–53.

\(^{107}\) According to Jinshi, 51.1142, starting from 1189 the poetry and policy tests took place on one day and the essay test on another. In 1224, however, the first day was devoted to the
was apparently abolished. But the general contours of the system remained largely unchanged. Indeed, if we locate the sites where the different stages of the palace examination of 1224 took place on a map of Kaifeng, it becomes clear that many of the events happened at strategically important locations in the city (see Figure 2). Such prominent display of the Jurchen examinations shaped the landscape of the capital city and demonstrated the cultural significance accorded to them by the regime.

The most important information contained on this stele, in addition to that on the procedure followed, is probably the list of the names of laureates. The name of the optimus is recorded in the following format (transliterated Jurchen text followed by Chinese translation):

bul ḏʒol wə tʃa-aŋ xo, xo bei ḏʒul wə wo-on, nu-uei gi bira mingan
孛 術 長 河,北河 東路, 內吉 河 猛安

All other entries follow the same pattern, viz. name of the new jinshi and place of origin. This information helps us understand the geographical provenance of the examinees. Only three out of thirty did not hail from a given meng’an 猛安. They are:

waŋ nuʃї mi-iŋ ḏʒou çy ḏʒou çiɛn
王 奴失 沧 州 曲周 縣

ʤa-aŋ ʤu (g)u ta ḏʒu-ʤu du yiɛn fi-iŋ çiɛn
張 住 兀 塔中 都宛 平縣

ʤa-aŋ a xai ḏʒul ə gin lia-ao jaj çiɛn
張 阿海 東京 遼陽 縣

Not coincidentally, these are also the only three people with apparently Chinese surnames: most probably, they were Han Chinese under the jurisdiction not of meng’an mouke, but of the regular prefecture-county system. Apart from these three successful candidates, we can only wonder how many Chinese participated in the 1224 Jurchen examinations.108

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108) The mention of a certain celun jinshi named Zhao Shouzhong in the “Family Biography of the Zhao Family of Lulong” by Wang Yun also falls in the Zhengda reign (1224–1231), suggesting that the participation of Chinese candidates in the 1224 examination was not excep-
Figure 2: The 1224 palace examination in the city of Kaifeng
The three questions submitted in 1224 are also partially preserved. The policy question starts with several quotations from the *Shangshu* 尚書, followed by a eulogy of the sage-kings’ great talents; it ends by asking for suggestions for improving the current policies of the state.\(^{109}\) For the essay question, the title is hard to reconstruct but seems to deal with some concerns at the court.\(^{110}\) As for the poetry question, it is a quote from the *Analects* saying that “the ministers should serve their lord with loyalty” 臣事君以忠, on which to compose a poem. The content of these questions is rather generic: nothing particularly “Jurchen” can be found in them, but they repeat familiar, indeed trite, Chinese motifs.

Thus, the 1224 stele provides us with much information previously unknown on the contents and procedure of the Jurchen language examinations in the late Jin. The text contains many Chinese words directly borrowed and represented phonetically;\(^{111}\) there are quotations from the Chinese classics, and the ancient Chinese sages are praised. In short, one may describe the stele as having “Jurchen language and Chinese content.” The complexity of its content can serve as an appropriate conclusion to the complex life of the Jurchen language examination system. Standing just ten years before the end of the dynasty in the soon to be abandoned Temple of Confucius, the 1224 stele is a last testimony to the endeavor to create a uniquely hybrid Sino-Jurchen literary culture.
Conclusion

I have attempted in this essay to incorporate previously unexplored sources and paint a more comprehensive picture of the institution of the Jurchen language examination system, not as a method to select officials, but as an aspect of the growth of a new literary culture. The advances in the Jurchen writing system, examination system, and school system may be seen as interconnected aspects of a common literary endeavor, which I believe was aptly captured by Wanyan Punie’s phrase, “the road to literary culture” (wenlu). As Peter Bol has rightly pointed out, “Jurchen rulers saw also that they could claim to be wen (participants in civil culture) without sacrificing their separate Jurchen identity and prerogatives.”112 I have tried to show that Jurchen identity was itself transformed in the direction of wen, or literary culture, through a complex yet concerted effort in the establishments of Jurchen scripts, schools and examinations.

Previous scholarship almost unanimously saw the institution of Jurchen language examinations as a symbol of “Jurchen” culture. However, we have seen in the preceding pages that both Chinese and Jurchen took the Jurchen examinations, that the procedure in these examinations largely followed established Song patterns, and that the texts submitted, the questions asked, and the very vocabulary of the examination documents all derived from the Chinese classics and histories. After the reign of emperor Zhangzong, even the name of “Jurchen jinshi” was consciously avoided and changed to celun jinshi. Many of the epigraphic Jurchen texts cited above were written to accompany parallel Chinese texts and might more appropriately be called Sino-Jurchen texts. To regard the Jurchen language examination system as an ethnic symbol of Jurchenization is clearly an oversimplification. What the Jin emperors and ministers attempted to define through the Jurchen examinations, schools, and translation projects was not an ethnically Jurchen literary culture, but a distinctively hybrid Sino-Jurchen one.

The most significant limitation to such an endeavor was the fact that the momentum toward a new literary culture mostly came from the Jin central government. It is highly doubtful that ordinary Jurchen people

reacted favorably to a cultural policy which, lacking broad and sustained popular support, could only function as long as the government held power. With the demise of the Jin dynasty, the new hybrid literary culture began to decline and eventually disappeared. Still, the relatively long life of the Jurchen scripts, which continued well into the Ming dynasty, indicates a limited, yet very real, success. The road to literary culture was at least partially covered.

\[113\) The use of the Jurchen language in the early Ming is known from the Jurchen section of the *Huayi yiyu*. See Daniel Kane, *The Sino-Jurchen Vocabulary of the Bureau of Interpreters*, 90–98. A Ming dynasty Chinese inscription with partial Mongol and Jurchen translations, dating to 1413, was discovered in what is now Khabarovsk Krai in Russia. See Jin Guangping and Jin Qicong, *Nüzhen yuyan wenzi yanjiu*, 355–76. For the activities of Jurchen people under the Yuan and Ming dynasties, see Morris Rossabi, *The Jurchens in the Yuan and Ming* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1982); Aisin Gioro Ulhicun 愛新覺羅烏拉熙春, *Mindai no Joshinjin: Joshin yakugo kara Eineiji kihi e* 明代の女真人: 「女真訳語」から「永寧寺記碑」へ (Kyoto: Kyōto daigaku gakujutsu shuppankai, 2009).