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On Revision and Reconstruction: A Discussion about the Founding Year of the Jin Dynasty and Related Questions

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Abstract

According to records in the *Jinshi*, Wanyan Aguda established the Jin dynasty and proclaimed himself emperor in the year 1115. He selected the dynastic name Da Jin and the era name Shouguo. Liu Pujiang's publications, however, have raised serious doubts about the *Jinshi* version of the Jin dynasty's founding narrative and sparked a scholarly debate on the matter. On the basis of Liu Pujiang's research and by careful analysis of records on the founding of the Jin state in Song and Yuan dynasties documents and stone inscriptions, this article manages to restore a rough picture of the real history of the early Jin. On advice by his counsellor Yang Pu, Aguda established the Jin dynasty and declared himself emperor in the seventh year (1117) of the Tianqing period of the Liao. He proclaimed the dynastic name Da Jin and the era name Tianfu. The founding history of the Jin dynasty as described in the *Jinshi* should be considered the product of historical revision that occurred during the rewriting process of the *Taizu shilu*. The era name Shouguo was only created retrospectively.

Keywords

Jin dynasty – state founding history – dynastic name – era name – distortion of history

1 Introduction: Thought Traps and New Revelations

According to the *Jinshi* 金史, the commanding prefect (*jie du shi* 節度使) of the “uncivilized” Jurchens (*sheng Nüzhen* 生女真) tribe Wanyan Aguda 完顏

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阿骨打 (r. 1115–1123) led an armed rebellion against the Liao dynasty (916–1125) in the ninth month of the fourth year (1114) of the Tianqing 天慶 (1111–1120) period. After victory in the battles of Ningjiangzhou 甯江州 and Chuhedian 出河店, Aguda established a new dynasty and proclaimed himself emperor on the first day of the first month of the new lunar year (1115). He adopted the dynastic name Da Jin 大金 and the first regnal or era name Shouguo 收國 (1115–1116). In the twelfth month of the second year, he designated “the next year as the first year (1117) of the Tianfu 天輔 period.”¹

For several hundred years, until the end of the twentieth century, this account of the founding history of the Jin remained universally accepted. The first to raise credible doubts about the facts presented in the *Jinshi* account was Liu Pujiang 劉浦江 (1961–2015). In his research, Liu primarily relied on conflicting records on the founding of the Jin state in Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1271–1368) documents that he combined with a detailed analysis of the Jurchen military actions during the late Liao. He was of the opinion that the founding history recorded in the *Jinshi* was not authentic and was probably compiled in retrospect during the revision of the *Taizu shilu* 太祖實錄, a history book written in the middle of the Jin dynasty. Liu’s preliminary conclusion stated: “After Wanyan Aguda staged a rebellion in the year 1114, he probably established the nation in 1117 or 1118. The dynastic name was the Jurchen (*Nüzhen* 女真) and the era name Tianfu. In the year 1122, the dynastic title was changed to Da Jin.” The era name Shouguo, he argued, never existed.² Liu Pujiang’s research sparked many reactions in academic circles with scholars both supporting³ and opposing his views.⁴ Liu himself declared that the results of his work only amounted to preliminary opinions that were still “far from a final conclusion”

1 *Jinshi* 金史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 2.24–30.

2 Liu Pujiang 劉浦江, *Liao Jin shilun* 遼金史論 (Shenyang: Liaoning daxue chubanshe, 1999), 1–22.

3 See for instance: Jakhadai Chimeddorji 齊木德道爾吉 and Wu Yingzhe 吳英喆, “Yi Liu Pujiang er san shi” 憶劉浦江二三事, in *Dajie luoluo gaowen bingbing: Liu Pujiang jiaoshou jinian wenji* 大節落落 高文炳炳—劉浦江教授紀念文集, ed. Deng Xiaonan 鄧小南, Rong Xinjiang 榮新江 and Zhang Fan 張帆 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2016), 108–11; Li Xiulian 李秀蓮, “Aguda cheng Dubo jilie yu Jinchao kaiguo shi zhi zhenwei yanjiu” 阿骨打稱都勃極烈與金朝開國史之真偽研究, *Shixue yuekan* 史學月刊, no. 6 (2008): 43–49.

4 See for instance: Dong Sili 董四禮, “Ye tan Jin chu jianguo ji guohao nianhao” 也談金初建國及國號年號, *Shixue jikan* 史學集刊, no. 6 (2008): 94–98; Aishinkakura Urakishun 愛新覺羅烏拉熙春, *Aishinkakura urakishun joshin kitangaku kenkyu* 愛新覺羅烏拉熙春女真契丹學研究 (Kyoto: Shokado shoten, 2009), 13–22; Xin Shidai 辛時代, “Jinchao jianguo shijian kaobian” 金朝建國時間考辨, in *Liao Jin shi lunji* 遼金史論集, ed. Liu Ning 劉甯 and Qi Wei 齊偉 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2017), 15: 107–27.

on the matter. He argued that “a thorough reconstruction of the real features of the early history of the Jin dynasty will still require our ongoing efforts.”⁵

If we seek to explore the true nature of the founding of the Jin dynasty, a key question becomes how to explain the many differing accounts of the Jurchen founding in Song, Liao, and Jin documents and how to determine the authentic historical record. For a considerable time, most scholars regarded the *Jinshi* as a credible historical source since its contents were compiled during the Jin dynasty and primarily based on the *shilu* 實錄 (veritable records) type of historical documents of the Jin emperors. Documents from the Song dynasty, on the other hand, were considered unreliable since their records on historical events from the Jin dynasty were necessarily based on hearsay and prone to contain mistakes. The majority of experts on Liao and Jin history therefore reject Song records and continue to rely on the *Jinshi* version of the founding history of the Jin dynasty.

While there is a certain logic to this view, it also appears overly simplistic. Records of historical events in the *Jinshi* may also contain inaccuracies or even be the result of Jin authors attempting to alter the nation’s history intentionally. Authors from the Song dynasty, on the other hand, based their records on a comparatively broad range of sources that contained both credible information from the Jin dynasty as well as information that was passed down erroneously. When making use of historical documents from the Jin and Song dynasties, we should therefore not rely on preconceived ideas. Instead, we should discuss specific historical events on the basis of the study of historical sources, investigate the original sources of all records, and analyze how these written records were created. It is important to deal with each question on its own merits, to distinguish clearly between authentic and erroneous information, and to avoid falling victim to any thought traps.

In order to reevaluate the founding history of the Jin dynasty, we not only need to discard our preconceived ideas about Jin and Song historical documents but can also benefit from a number of new research discoveries. With regard to the date on which the Liao dynasty was founded, there are also major contradictions between official records and the actual historical events in question. The *Liaoshi* 遼史 states, for instance, that the Emperor Taizu 太祖 (r. 916–926) Yelü Abaoji 耶律阿保機 proclaimed himself emperor and established the Liao dynasty in the year 907 and that he inaugurated the first era name Shence 神册 (916–922) in 916. In reality, however, Abaoji merely replaced the khan of the Yaonian 遙輦 tribe to become the leader of the Khitans (*Qidan* 契丹) tribal federation in 907. It was not until the year 916 that he was officially

5 Liu Pujiang, *Liao Jin shilun*, 22.

proclaimed emperor and established the great empire of Qidan (*Da Qidan guo* 大契丹國).⁶ During the late Liao, the founding history of the Khitans nation was predated to the final year of the Tang dynasty (618–907) in order to establish the Liao dynasty's political legitimacy as well as its legitimacy of succession. The extremely important political date of the founding year of the Liao dynasty was thus intentionally distorted.⁷ The Jin dynasty succeeded the Liao dynasty and displayed a certain continuity with regard to its political system, as well as in terms of thought and culture. This further intensifies existing doubts about the founding history of the Jin and introduces the possibility that Jin authors followed the Liao example to alter the founding date of the Jin dynasty for political reasons.

An additional piece of historical data shows that the *Jinshi* version of the Jin state founding during the first month of the fifth year of the Tianqing period is unreliable. *Sanchao beimeng huibian* 三朝北盟會編 contains an anecdote of the Jin Emperor Taizu 金太祖 Wanyan Aguda from Miao Yao's 苗耀 *Shenlu ji* 神麓記. In contrast to the *Jinshi*, this record notes that after his first rebellion in Ningjiangzhou during the fourth year of the Tianqing period, Aguda "was proclaimed emperor, and he assumed a new era name and imperial title."⁸ The record found in the *Shenlu ji* was probably a comparatively early version of the state's founding history that official Jin court historians created during the compilation of the *Taizu shilu*. This version was eventually discarded, and the founding of the state was dated to the first month of the following year instead.⁹ Since the exact point in time when Aguda established the Jin dynasty could be determined by officials at will, it becomes even more apparent that the *Jinshi* records on the Jurchen founding do not necessarily correspond to actual historical events.

The re-examination of records from the Song, Liao, and Jin dynasties as well as new academic findings all urge us to further question the founding history of the Jin.

6 See Liu Pujiang 劉浦江, "Qidan kaiguo niandai wenti: lizu yu shiyuanxue de kaocha" 契丹開國年代問題—立足于史源學的考察, *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 中華文史論叢, no. 4 (2009): 245–72.

7 Miao Runbo 苗潤博, "Bei gaixie de zhengzhi shijian: zai lun Qidan kaiguo niandai wenti" 被改寫的政治時間：再論契丹開國年代問題, *Wen shi zhe* 文史哲, no. 6 (2019): 94–106.

8 Xu Mengshen 徐夢莘, *Sanchao beimeng huibian* 三朝北盟會編 (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2013), 18.4b–5a.

9 Qiu Jingjia 邱靖嘉 and Li Jingze 李京澤, "Guanyu Jin Taizu de yize yishi: jian lun Jinchao xiushi de gaicuan wenti" 關於金太祖的一則佚史—兼論金朝修史的改纂問題, *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 中華文史論叢, no. 4 (2021): 259–85.

2 The Real Story of How Aguda Founded the Jin State in the Seventh Year of the Tianqing Period

The familiar theory of the Jin dynasty having been established during the first month of the fifth year (1115) of the Tianqing period comes from the *Jinshi*. Liu Pujiang has already demonstrated that the original source of this version of the founding history of the Jin can be traced back to the creation of the *Taizu Shilu* in the eighth year (1148) of the Huangtong 皇統 (1141–1149) regnal period. Historical works from the Southern Song (1127–1279), on the other hand, contain a different record of how the Taizu emperor Aguda established the Jin dynasty. *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu* 建炎以來繫年要錄, for instance, notes that in the first year (1118) of the Chonghe 重和 (1118–1119) period, “Aguda accepted the plan of the court librarian Yang Pu 楊璞 (d. ca. 1132) and assumed the position of emperor.”¹⁰ The *Taiping zhiji tonglei* 太平治跡同類 states that during the eighth month of the eighth year of the Zhenghe 政和 (1111–1118) period (the first year of the Chonghe period was proclaimed during the eleventh month) “Yang Pu from Liaodong 遼東 persuaded Aguda to proclaim himself emperor, and to adopt the surname Wang 王 and the given name Min 旻. Since the state produced gold, he decided on the dynastic name Da Jin (the great gold empire). The first era name was Tianfu.”¹¹ These records state clearly that Aguda proclaimed himself emperor and founded the Jin dynasty during the eighth month of the first year of the Chonghe period of the Song dynasty. Other written works merely note that these events took place during the first year of the Chonghe period or the eighth year of the Zhenghe period without specifying the exact month. The “Jinguo zhuan” 金國傳 chapter of the *Dongdu shilüe* 東都事略, for instance, simply notes that “Yang Pu from Liaodong urged Aguda to proclaim himself emperor. Since the state produced gold, it was called Da Jin guo 大金國. The first era name was *Tianfu*. The date was the eighth year of the Zhenghe period.”¹² The contents of Southern Song documents are mostly consistent and record that Aguda founded the Jin state in the first year of the Chonghe period, proclaimed the dynastic title Da Jin, and announced the first era name Tianfu. Many documents also mention that Aguda’s actions followed the recommendations of his counsellor Yang Pu and that the Jin sent envoys to the Liao court to request a document of investiture. These accounts clearly

10 Li Xinchuan 李心傳, *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu* 建炎以來系年要錄, comment. Hu Kun 胡坤 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), 1.4.

11 Peng Baichuan 彭百川, *Taiping zhiji tonglei* 太平治跡統類 (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1966), 25.1789–90.

12 Wang Cheng 王稱, *Dongdu shilüe* 東都事略 (Taipei: Guoli zhongyang tushuguan, 1991), 125.1925.

diverge from the *Jinshi* version that dates the state founding to the first year of the Shouguo period.

Yang Pu's recommendations, Aguda's state founding, and the Jin request for a document of investiture are all recorded in detail in the *Yiyi mouxia lu* 裔夷謀夏錄 and the *Sanchao beimeng huibian* from the Southern Song, as well as in the *Qidan guozhi* 契丹國志, a forged book from the Yuan dynasty.¹³ While the records of historical events are roughly identical in these three sources, they still differ with regard to details and contain a number of omissions. It is clear that they share a common source in the *Jinren wang Liao lu* 金人亡遼錄 that Shi Yuan 史願, a presented scholar (*jinsshi* 進士) of the late Liao dynasty, compiled in the fourth year of the Xuanhe 宣和 (1119–1125) regnal period after joining the Song.¹⁴ The scholarly value of these historical sources should be considered high. Passages from the three sources discussed above show that the original record of Aguda's enthronement and his request for investiture were described in considerable detail in the *Jinren wang Liao lu*. The original record even contains details about Yang Pu's appeal for Aguda to ascend to the throne, Aguda's ten demands, as well as the text of the Liao document of investiture. This demonstrates rather convincingly that these events were not fabricated. Since its contents can be corroborated by available records from the Liao, Jin, and Song dynasties, the credibility of the *Jinren wang Liao lu* should be considered as comparatively high.

It nevertheless remains important to highlight the question of when exactly Aguda proclaimed himself emperor and established the Jin dynasty. The *Yiyi mouxia lu* and the *Qidan guozhi* both date the founding of the Jin dynasty to the eighth year of the Liao Tianqing period (the first year of the Song Chonghe period), which is 1118. According to both sources, the Jin dispatched an embassy to the Khitans with a request for investiture during the eighth month of the same year. This shows that the account of the Jin state founded in the eighth year of the Tianqing period in the *Jinren wang Liao lu* served as the original source for the records in the Song documents discussed above. A number of

13 Liu Zhongshu 劉忠恕, *Yiyi mouxia lu* 裔夷謀夏錄, in *Quan Song biji* 全宋筆記 (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chubanshe, 2012), 5: 1: 85–88; Xu Mengshen, *Sanchao beimeng huibian*, 3.12b–14a; Ye Longli 葉隆禮, *Qidan guozhi* 契丹國志, comment. Jia Jingyan 賈敬顏 and Lin Ronggui 林榮貴 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 10.126–28.

14 See Miao Runbo 苗潤博, “Youguan *Yiyi mouxia lu* zhu wenti de xin kaosuo” 有關《裔夷謀夏錄》諸問題的新考索, *Wenshi* 文史, no. 2 (2016): 125–47; Gao Yu 高宇, “*Qidan guozhi yanjiu*” 《契丹國志》研究 (PhD diss., Beijing University, 2012), 31–37; Qiu Jingjia 邱靖嘉, “Nüzhen shiliao de shenfan yu jiantao: *Sanchao beimeng huibian* juan san yandu ji” 女真史料的深翻與檢討—《三朝北盟會編》卷三研讀記, *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 中華文史論叢, no. 2 (2019): 195–229.

works such as the *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu* mistakenly use the eighth month of the first year of the Chonghe period, the date when the Jin sent an embassy to the Liao court to request investiture, as the date when Aguda declared himself emperor of the Jin dynasty. The *Dongdu shilüe* and other works, on the other hand, choose a more cautious approach and only note that Aguda declared himself emperor during the first year of the Chonghe period.

Does this mean that the record in the *Jinren wang Liao lu* that Aguda proclaimed himself emperor and founded the Jin dynasty in the eighth year of the Tianqing period is credible? We might do well to first investigate the time period for which the era name Tianfu was used during the Jin dynasty. Historical records from the Southern Song all accord with the *Jinren wang Liao lu* and note that Aguda inaugurated the first era name Tianfu after proclaiming himself emperor. The same is true for books from the Yuan dynasty such as the *Qidan guozhi* or the *Da Jin guozhi* 大金國志.¹⁵ These documents also record that Aguda died in the fifth year of the Song Xuanhe period, the fifth month of the third year (1123) of the Liao Baoda 保大 (1121–1125) period, and that the Jin Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 1123–1135) Wuqimai 吳乞買 changed “the sixth year of the Tianfu period into the first year of the Tianhui 天會 (1123–1135) period” after he ascended to the throne.¹⁶ This would mean that the era name Tianfu was in use for only six years. The *Jinshi*, however, dates the proclamation of the Tianfu era name one year earlier than Song documents or the *Qidan guozhi* and *Da Jin guozhi*, namely to the seventh year of the Song Zhenghe period (the seventh year of the Liao Tianqing period, 1117). The records on the year Aguda died and Wuqimai ascended to the throne and declared the first year of the Tianhui period, on the other hand, are consistent.¹⁷ This would mean that the Tianfu period actually lasted for seven years. There is evidence to show that during the early Jin dynasty a seven-year Tianfu period did indeed exist. The *Sanchao beimeng huibian* notes that in the second month of the fifth year of the Xuanhe period, the Jin sent Ning Shuge 寧術割 with official state documents to the Song court. The documents included a carefully collated list of “goods that originate in the areas under the administration of Yanjing 燕京”

15 See Liu Pujiang 劉浦江, “Guanyu *Qidan guozhi* de ruogan wenti” 關於《契丹國志》的若干問題 and “Zai lun *Da Jin guozhi* de zhenwei: jianping *Da Jin guozhi jiaozheng*” 再論《大金國志》的真偽—兼評《大金國志校證》 both in *Liao Jin shilun*, 323–56.

16 For instance, Yang Zhongliang 楊仲良, *Tongjian changbian jishi benmo* 通鑑長編紀事本末, in *Song shi ziliao cuibian* 宋史資料萃編 (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1967), 8: 143.4347; Ye Longli 葉隆禮, *Qidan guozhi* 契丹國志, comment. Jia Jingyan 賈敬顏 and Lin Ronggui 林榮貴 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 12.150.

17 *Jinshi*, 3.48.

that was signed “second month of the seventh year of the Tianfu period.”¹⁸ In the fourth month of the same year, the Jin sent Yang Pu to the Song with a document that opened with the following words: “Eighth day of the fourth month of the seventh year of the Tianfu period, correspondence by the Emperor of the Da Jin to the Emperor of the Song.”¹⁹ The fifth year of the Song Xuanhe period corresponds to the seventh year of the Tianfu period as recorded in the *Jinshi*. The list of goods and official court documents are original archival documents of Jin diplomacy with the Song that clearly record the year as the seventh year of the Tianfu period. In the third year of the Huangtong 皇統 (1141–1149) period, the *Shi Lǐ'ai muzhi* 時立愛墓誌 also recorded that “in the seventh year of the Tianfu period, the Taizu emperor of the Jin Aguda suppressed the Liao and captured Yanjing.”²⁰ This tomb inscription was written before the *Jin Taizu shilu* 金太祖實錄 was compiled in the eighth year of the Huangtong period. The tomb inscription was therefore not yet influenced by the final version of the history of the Jin state founding and refers to a seventh year of the Tianfu period. This shows that the Jin Emperor Taizu began to use the era name Tianfu from the seventh year of the Tianqing period onwards. When the Emperor Taizong ascended to the throne in the seventh year, that year was declared the first year of the Tianhui period. This corresponds to the Tianfu era as recorded in the *Jinshi*. From this we can conclude that the *Jinren wang Liao lu* record that Aguda founded the Jin dynasty and proclaimed the first year of the Tianfu period during the eighth year of the Liao Tianqing period is incorrect.

The complexity of the issue lies in the following question. Even if the *Jinren wang Liao lu* dates Aguda's state founding and declaration of a new era name incorrectly, this does not necessarily render the entire narrative about how the Jin dynasty was founded unreliable. According to records in the *Jinren wang Liao lu*, Aguda proclaimed himself emperor and founded the Jin dynasty on Yang Pu's suggestion. Aguda's decision to negotiate with the Liao court and request a document of investiture was equally based on Yang Pu's advice. This shows that Yang Pu from Bohai 渤海 played a central role throughout the founding process of the Jin dynasty. As Aguda's principal advisor and an important figure both before and after the founding of the Jin dynasty, Yang Pu's historicity is not in question.²¹ He advised Aguda to first proclaim himself

18 Xu Mengshen, *Sanchao beimeng huibian*, 14.12b.

19 Ibid., 15.12a.

20 Shi Yongshi 石永士 et al., eds., *Hebei jin shijilu* 河北金石輯錄 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 1993), 282.

21 See Jiao Hui 焦慧, “Yang Pu Jin chu huodong kaobian” 楊璞金初活動考辨, *Liaoning daxue xuebao* 遼寧大學學報, no. 6 (1990): 26–27; Li Xiulian 李秀蓮, “Yang Pu zai

emperor and then request a document of investiture from the Liao in order to attain political legitimacy. Since both steps were closely related, we should not rely on either one of them individually when evaluating the record of Aguda's state founding in the *Jinren wang Liao lu*. We need to consider the process in its entirety in order to fully evaluate the record's level of credibility and uncover the reasons behind the erroneous dates in the *Jinren wang Liao lu*. If Yang Pu "surrendered to the Jurchen during the Gao Yongchang rebellion" and Gao Yongchang's 高永昌 (d. 1116) rebellion in Dongjing 東京 (the Eastern Capital) occurred during the first month of the sixth year of the Tianqing period (1116), then Yang Pu cannot have encouraged Aguda to ascend the throne before the sixth year of the Tianqing period. The *Jinren wang Liao lu* records on the Liao and Jin embassies during the negotiation process for investiture remain incomplete. Despite the negotiation process being rather complicated, the *Jinshi* merely states that "the Liao dispatched envoys thirteen times, but the peace talks eventually proved unsuccessful."²² The details of the thirteen embassies can be studied by referring to the "Tianzuo Huangdi ji" 天祚皇帝紀 in the *Liaoshi* and the "Taizu ji" 太祖紀 in the *Jinshi*.²³ These two sources can also be used for comparison and to verify the *Jinshi* account.

In the fourth year of the Tianqing period, Aguda mobilized his troops and quickly rose in power after the battles of Ningjiangzhou and Chuhedian. In the fifth year, he successfully captured Huanglong fu 黃龍府, a location of strategic military importance. In the sixth year, Aguda's power expanded further with the suppression of Gao Yongchang's uprising and the occupation of Dongjing. In the seventh year of the Tianqing period, the first year of the Tianfu period (1117) according to the *Jinshi*, the Liao court sent troops against the Jurchen. During the twelfth month, however, they were soundly defeated at Jili Mountain 蒺藜山. During the first month of the eighth year of the Tianqing period, the Liao and Jin entered into peace negotiations. By the time relations were severed in the third month of the tenth year of the Tianqing period (the second to the fourth year of the Tianfu period, 1118–1120), both sides "had exchanged envoys thirteen times." According to the *Jinren wang Liao lu*, Aguda issued ten demands when he requested investiture from the Liao during the eighth month of the eighth year of the Tianqing period. By comparing extant sources, we can conclude that these demands were probably raised officially during the

Jinshi zhong de yindun yu Jin chu zhengzhi 楊樸在《金史》中的隱遁與金初政治, *Heilongjiang minzu congkan* 黑龍江民族叢刊, no. 4 (2010): 71–74.

²² *Jinshi*, 84.1881.

²³ *Liaoshi* 遼史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2016), 28.371–79; *Jinshi*, 2.25–34.

sixth round of negotiations between the Liao and the Jin.²⁴ The *Jinren wang Liao lu* also records that the Emperor Tianzuo 天祚 (r. 1101–1125) dispatched Xiao Xinilie 蕭習泥烈 and others to perform the rites and convey the official document of investiture, stating “they departed during the tenth month and arrived at the Jin court during the twelfth month.” By the third month of the following year, Aguda ordered the envoys to return to the Liao since neither the rites nor the document had fulfilled the expectations of the Jin court. This incident is clearly recorded both in the *Liaoshi* as well as the *Jinshi*, albeit with differences regarding the travel dates of the envoys. During the third month of the ninth year of the Tianqing period, “the Liao court sent officials such as the Vice Grand Counsellor (*zhiyou yilibi shi* 知右夷離畢事) Xiao Xinilie and others to invest the head of the Jin state as emperor of the Donghuai guo 東懷國.”²⁵ When the envoys arrived at the Jin court during the sixth month, they were ordered to return since Aguda was dissatisfied with the contents of the document of investiture.²⁶ If we compare these accounts, it becomes clear that the record in the *Jinren wang Liao lu* of envoys such as Xiao Xinilie travelling to the Jin court is mostly accurate but contains slight mistakes with regard to the dates. According to the *Jinren wang Liao lu*, the Liao intentionally delayed further progress after this crisis until “the peace negotiations came to an end.” In reality, however, both sides continued to engage in another three rounds of negotiations in an attempt to revise the document of investiture. It was not until the third month of the tenth year of the Tianqing period that the Jin eventually ended peace talks with the Liao and once more resorted to arms.

On the question of investiture, there are also records from the Song dynasty. On the eighteenth day of the third month of the first year of the Xuanhe period (the ninth year of the Tianqing period, the third year of the Tianfu period, 1119), the Song dispatched Zhao Youkai 趙有開, Wang Gui 王瓌, and Li Shanqing 李善慶 as envoys to the Jin. “Before they had departed, Zhao Youkai passed away. At this point in time, the emperor received word from Hebei 河北 that informants had learned that the Khitans had already ceded the eastern part of the Liao and invested the Jurchen Aguda as head of the Donghuai guo.” “As a result, the diplomatic mission was abandoned. Hu Yanqing 呼延慶 and others were sent to the Jurchen with an official document from Dengzhou 登州 instead.”²⁷ This shows that the Northern Song had already learned about the Liao-Jin peace negotiations as well as the request for investiture via their

24 *Liaoshi*, 28:377.

25 *Ibid.*, 28:378.

26 *Jinshi*, 2:33.

27 Xu Mengshen, *Sanchao beimeng huibian*, 4.1a–2b.

network of informants in Hebei. Hu Yanqing was detained by the Jin during his visit and not released until the twelfth month. During this time, he met Aguda personally on several occasions and heard him speak about the question of investiture.²⁸ This account is completely consistent with relevant records in the *Liaoshi*, the *Jinshi*, and the *Jinren wang Liao lu*.

Based on the comparison of various sources, the original record in the *Jinren wang Liao lu* of Aguda accepting Yang Pu's suggestion to negotiate with the Liao and request a document of investiture appears credible on the whole. The *Jinren wang Liao lu*, however, does not outline the entire process of the thirteen embassies between the Liao and the Jin. Instead, it focuses on the dramatic parts of the narrative and describes how Xiao Xinilie and others delivered the document of investiture, how Aguda beat and expelled them, and how the peace talks were finally abandoned. We can confirm that the Jin requested investiture from the Liao court, one of two important steps that led towards the founding of the Jurchen. The account that Yang Pu advised Aguda to proclaim himself emperor is most likely also based on historical facts. It is especially noteworthy that the *Sanchao beimeng huibian* contains a passage with the contents of Yang Pu's speech that appears to be genuine. The peace negotiations between the Liao and the Jin began during the first month of the eighth year of the Tianqing period. Aguda's reply to the Liao during the second month contained the following passage: "treat me according to the propriety deserving of an older brother, pay tribute in local products on a yearly basis."²⁹ These were early versions of two of Aguda's ten demands described in the *Jinren wang Liao lu*, namely to "communicate as older and younger brothers," and to "deliver silver and silk on a yearly basis."³⁰ Aguda also referred to himself as "zhen 朕" and requested "the imperial edicts and documents the Liao uses in their diplomatic relations with the Song, Xia, and Koryŏ."³¹ This shows that the Jurchen desired to study and imitate the system of correspondence that the Liao used in its diplomatic relations with the Song, Xia, and Koryŏ. These circumstances suggest that the Jin state had already been established at this point in time. Yang Pu therefore appears to have urged Aguda to establish the Jin and declare himself emperor after he surrendered to the Jurchen in the sixth year of the Tianqing period and prior to the first month of the eighth year. It is possible that Shi Yuan, the author of the *Jinren wang Liao lu*, was not aware of the exact time the Jurchen state was founded. He might have created a cause for

28 Ibid., 4.2b–3a.

29 *Liaoshi*, 28.377.

30 Xu Mengshen, *Sanchao beimeng huibian*, 13a.

31 *Liaoshi*, 28.377.

misunderstanding for later generations by tentatively dating the state founding to the first year of the Liao-Jin peace negotiations.

What then was the exact point at which Aguda heeded Yang Pu's advice to proclaim himself emperor and found the Jin dynasty? The most likely date is the seventh year of the Tianqing period. There are three pieces of evidence to support this. First, the most direct information can be found in the records of the "Tianzuo Huangdi ji" in the *Liaoshi* which state that at the end of the seventh year of the Tianqing period: "In this year, Jurchen Aguda adopted the plan of Yang Pu from Tiezhou 鐵州; he was crowned emperor and proclaimed the first year of the Tianfu period and the dynastic title Jin. Yang Pu also stated that since antiquity heroes had founded their dynasties by either accepting abdication or by requesting investiture from an important power. Aguda therefore dispatched envoys to negotiate peace with the Liao and request investiture."³² This record can also be found in the "Shuguo biao" 屬國表 of the *Liaoshi* and reads: "In this year, the head of the Jurchen Aguda ascended to the position of emperor, proclaimed the first year of the *Tianfu* period, and chose the dynastic title Jin."³³ The record in the "Shuguo biao" consists of passages from the basic annals (*benji* 本紀) chapter in Yelü Yan's 耶律儼 (d. 1113) *Huangchao shilu* 皇朝實錄 from the Liao dynasty and Chen Daren's 陳大任 version of the *Liaoshi* from the Jin dynasty. Research has shown that the account in the "Tianzuo Huangdi ji" in the *Liaoshi* was originally based on the concise records of the annals of the Tianzuo Emperor in Yelü Yan's *Huangchao shilu* as well as additions by other Liao authors. Official historians of the Yuan dynasty took these records as a framework and added passages from the *Jinren wang Liao lu*, such as "adopted the plan of Yang Pu from Tiezhou" or "Yang Pu also stated" and other more detailed content. In other words, the narrative of the "Tianzuo Huangdi ji" in the *Liaoshi* that Aguda proclaimed himself emperor in the seventh year of the Tianqing period is based on contemporary records by official historians of the late Liao dynasty. This fact makes the document a very convincing piece of evidence that is more authoritative and precise than the *Jinren wang Liao lu*, a historical work created by a private author.³⁴

Second, we should consider the time when the era name Tianfu was first used. Both the "Tianzuo Huangdi ji" in the *Liaoshi* and the *Jinren wang Liao lu* record that having declared himself emperor, Aguda proclaimed the first

32 Ibid., 28.376.

33 Ibid., 70.1301.

34 See Miao Runbo 苗潤博, "Liaoshi 'Tianzuo Huangdi ji' shiyuan xinshuo" 《遼史·天祚皇帝紀》史源新說, in *Tang Song lishi pinglun* 唐宋歷史評論, ed. Bao Weimin 包偉民 and Liu Houbin 劉後濱 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2020), 7: 75-105.

regnal era Tianfu. As already shown above, the Tianfu period of the Jin dynasty began during the seventh year of the Tianqing period of the Liao.

Third, we can refer to records of diplomatic documents of the Jin court in the *Koryŏ sa* 高麗史. The *Koryŏ sa* states that on the Guichou 癸丑 day of the third month of the twelfth year (the first year of the Tianfu period, 1117) of King Yejong 睿宗 (r. 1105–1122), Aguda sent a diplomatic document to the King of Koryŏ in which he referred to himself as “elder brother, Emperor of the Da Nüzhen Jin guo 大女真金國.”³⁵ At this point in time, Aguda had obviously already proclaimed himself emperor and chosen the dynastic title Jin. This record further clarifies that the founding of the Jin dynasty must have taken place between the first and the third month of the seventh year of the Tianqing period.

Based on this investigation of historical sources and analysis of historical events, we can determine the following: Song records of Aguda having proclaimed himself emperor and established the Jin state during the eighth year of the Tianqing period are based on a misunderstanding in Shi Yuan's *Jinren wang Liao lu*. In fact, Aguda followed the suggestion of his advisor Yang Pu in the seventh year of the Tianqing period, ascended to the position of emperor, chose the dynastic title Da Jin, and proclaimed the first year of the Tianfu period. This should be considered an accurate account of the founding of the Jin dynasty.

3 A Discussion about the Era Name Shouguo and the Dynastic Title Da Jin

In order to explore the history of the founding of the Jin state further, we should also analyze the authenticity of the era name Shouguo and consider the question of when the dynastic title Da Jin was inaugurated. According to the *Jinshi*, Aguda proclaimed himself emperor during the first month of the fifth year of the Tianqing period (1115) and chose the first era name Shouguo. Liu Pujiang has already demonstrated clearly that this narrative should be considered unreliable and that the so-called era name Shouguo never actually existed. The literal meaning of the characters in the era name Shouguo can be ascertained with reference to the *Sanchao beimeng huibian*. The book records the *Jinren guoshu* 金人國書 from the fourth year of the Xuanhe period that contains passages such as “by the time the Liao have been captured” and “the enemy nation

35 Chŏng Inji 鄭麟趾 et al., *Koryŏ sa* 高麗史 (Pyongyang: Chosŏn Minjujuŭi Inmin Konghwaguk Kwahagwŏn, 1957), 14.209.

has recently been subdued.”³⁶ This shows that the era name Shouguo originally referred to the idea of the submission of the Liao dynasty. As Liu Pujiang has pointed out, however, the Jurchen had only won two small-scale battles by the beginning of the fifth year of the Tianqing period. At this point in time, their actual strength was still limited, and they had neither the ability nor the intention to destroy the Liao dynasty. There could thus not have been an era name such as Shouguo. As shown above, Aguda proclaimed himself emperor and established the Jin state on Yang Pu’s advice during the seventh year of the Tianqing period. The *Jinren wang Liao lu* denotes the first era of the Jin dynasty as the Tianfu era. Original records from the Liao dynasty also clearly state that “the head of the Jurchen state ascended to the position of emperor and established the Tianfu period.” Throughout the Jin dynasty, the memories of the nation’s founding days were always connected to the belief in a “mandate of heaven” (*tianming* 天命). During the twenty-fifth year (1185) of the Dading 大定 period (1161–1189), Emperor Shizong 世宗 (r. 1161–1189) commemorated the founding of the Jin dynasty and the achievements of Emperor Taizu on the *Da Jin deshengtuo songbei* 大金得勝陀頌碑 memorial stele, on which the inscription reads in part “received the blessings and protection of the heavens and meted out their punishment.”³⁷ This expression signifies the conviction that the founding of Jin dynasty had indeed received the support of the heavens. The *Shi Liai shendaobei* 時立愛神道碑 memorial stele that was engraved during the sixth year (1195) of the Mingchang 明昌 regnal period (1190–1196) reads: “in the seventh year of the Tianfu period, the Jin dynasty came into existence, and Emperor Taizu destroyed the Liao and complied with the way of the heavens.”³⁸ The tomb inscription *Wugulun Yuanzhong muzhi* 烏古論元忠墓誌 from the first year (1201) of the Taihe 泰和 period (1201–1208) had the following words inscribed: “the Jin dynasty began to accept the mandate of heaven.”³⁹ All these expressions convey similar ideas, and the literal meaning of the era name Tianfu corresponds entirely to the traditional Jin believe in the mandate of heaven. The Emperor Taizong and the Emperor Xizong 熙宗 (r. 1135–1149) successively established the Tianhui and the Tianjuan 天眷 periods (1138–1141). The era names they selected were not only alike in meaning but can also be traced back to a common origin. It therefore seems credible that Aguda should

36 Xu Mengshen, *Sanchao beimeng huibian*, 7.4a–4b.

37 See Luo Fuyi 羅福頤, *Manzhou jinshi zhi* 滿洲金石志, in *Shike shiliao xinbian* 石刻史料新編 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 1982), 1: 23: 17299.

38 See Wang Xinying 王新英, *Quan jinshi kewen jijiao* 全金石刻文輯校 (Changchun: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 2012), 377.

39 Mei Ninghua 梅甯華, ed., *Beijing Liao Jin shiji tuzhi* 北京遼金史跡圖志 (Beijing: Beijing yanshan chubanshe, 2004), 2: 213.

have chosen the era name Tianfu after declaring himself emperor. The *Jinshi* record of the era name Shouguo, on the other hand, appears questionable.

This article has argued that Aguda proclaimed himself emperor and inaugurated the dynastic title Da Jin during the seventh year of the Tianqing period (1117). Liu Pujiang, on the other hand, has pointed out yet another interpretation. Lü Yihao's 呂頤浩 (1071–1139) *Shang bianshi shanhou shice* 上邊事善後十策 from the seventh year (1137) of the Shaoxing 紹興 period (1131–1162) of the Southern Song contains a commentary that states “the Jurchen only proclaimed the dynastic title Da Jin in the fourth year of the Xuanhe period.”⁴⁰ According to this version, the early Jin state was originally called *Nüzhen guo* 女真國 (the Jurchen state) and the dynastic title Da Jin was not adopted until the fourth year of the Xuanhe period (the second year of the Baoda period of the Liao, the sixth year of the Tianfu period of the Jin, 1122). Liu Pujiang concludes that there are reliable sources to support this interpretation.

In addition to Lü Yihao's writing, there are also other records of relevance to this question. The “Liao guo zhuan” 遼國傳 chapter of the *Dongdu shilüe*, for instance, contains an account of historical events of the late Liao dynasty and states “the Jurchen had already attacked the Yunzhong fu 雲中府 and reached the Juyongguan 居庸關, the power of the state was already exceedingly strong and the dynastic title was therefore changed to Da Jin.”⁴¹ If the Jin troops controlled the Yunzhong fu in Xijing 西京 (the Western Capital) by the fourth month of the sixth year of the Tianfu period (the second year of the Baoda period, the fourth year of the Xuanhe period, 1122) and attacked Yanjing and the Juyongguan during the twelfth month,⁴² the Jurchen could have “changed the dynastic title to Da Jin” in the fourth year of the Xuanhe period. The *Sanchao beimeng huibian* quotes from the *Xiaochen gufen yelu zongxu* 小臣孤憤野錄總敘 and states “during the tenth month of the fourth year of the Xuanhe period, the Liao empress declared the nation a vassal state of the Song. When the Jurchen destroyed the Liao dynasty, they were called Jin guo 金國.”⁴³ The records in these two historical sources are entirely consistent with the version presented in Lü Yihao's writings. Does this mean the Jurchen state was called *Nüzhen guo* after it was founded, and its dynastic title only changed to Da Jin in the fourth year of the Xuanhe period?

40 Lü Yihao 呂頤浩, *Zhong mu ji* 忠穆集, in *Yingyin Wenyuange siku quanshu* 影印文淵閣四庫全書 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1986), 1131: 2.268.

41 Wang Cheng, *Dongdu shilüe*, 124.1916.

42 *Jinshi*, 2.37, 39.

43 Xu Mengshen, *Sanchao beimeng huibian*, 100.3a.

This article has already shown that on Yang Pu's suggestion, Aguda proclaimed himself emperor and declared the dynastic title Da Jin in the seventh year of the Tianqing period. The records to support this claim are clear. The *Jinren wang Liao lu*, for instance, relates the negotiations between the Liao and Jin during the eighth year of the Tianqing period. This account suggests that when the Jin submitted their request for investiture, one of the ten demands was for the "dynastic title to read Da Jin." When the Jin eventually declared the contents of the document of investiture to be unsatisfactory, one of the reasons provided was the Liao's failure "to employ the term Da Jin." The "Shuguo biao" chapter of the *Liaoshi* also states that "the head of the Jurchen state Aguda ascended to the position of emperor, proclaimed the first year of the Tianfu period, and chose the dynastic title Jin." These documents all show that when Aguda proclaimed himself emperor, he had already created the dynastic title Da Jin. Diplomatic documents from the Song and Jin dynasties also contain evidence to show that the dynastic title Da Jin was already in use prior to the fourth year of the Xuanhe period. The *Sanchao beimeng huibian* records that on the eighteenth day of the seventh month of the second year of the Xuanhe period, the Jin sent Sici Xilu 斯刺習魯 as an envoy to the Song. He carried a diplomatic document from the Jin court that opened with the following line: "document written during the seventh month by the Emperor of the Da Jin to his Excellency the Emperor of the Da Song 大宋."⁴⁴ On the twentieth day of the ninth month, the Song formulated a reply that employed the corresponding phrase "document written during the ninth month by the Emperor of the Da Song to his Excellency the Emperor of the Da Jin."⁴⁵ This shows that the creation of the dynastic name Da Jin by the Jurchen could not have occurred later than the fourth year of the Xuanhe period.

How should we then understand the account that Lü Yihao presented? The term Jurchen had in fact long been in use for the political body of the north-eastern ethnic groups with the Wanyan tribe at its center. After the founding of the Jin state, the ethnic name was not immediately abolished, but for a time used in combination with the term Da Jin guo to describe the newly established political entity. The *Koryŏ sa* records that during the third month of the twelfth year of King Yejong (the first year of the Tianfu period, 1117), Aguda sent a diplomatic document to the King of Koryŏ that opened with the words "document by the elder brother Emperor of the Da Nüzhen Jin guo to the younger brother King of the Gaoli guo 高麗國."⁴⁶ At the beginning of the document, Aguda referred to his own state as "Da Nüzhen Jin guo." He combined the tribal

44 Ibid., 4.7b–8a.

45 Ibid., 4.9b.

46 Chŏng Inji et al., *Koryŏ sa*, 14.209.

title with its unique political meaning with the Chinese style dynastic title. This is identical to the use of the terms Da Liao Da Qidan 大遼・大契丹 in the Liao dynasty and Da Yuan Da Menggu guo 大元・大蒙古國 in the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) and reflects the system of dual state names that was popular with the imperial courts of the northern tribes during the Liao, Jin, and Yuan dynasties.⁴⁷ For the Liao and Yuan, however, the system of dual state names basically remained in use until the final days of the dynasties. In the context of the Jin dynasty, on the other hand, the use of a dual state name has so far only been observed in the context described above. In the diplomatic correspondence between the Jin and the Song that followed, the single state name Da Jin was used consistently. This change probably occurred during the sixth month of the second year of the Tianfu period when the Jin received “the imperial edicts and documents the Liao used in their diplomatic relations with the Song, Xia, and Gaoli.”⁴⁸ The Jin court most likely began to follow their system of official correspondence and eventually opted for the term Da Jin as a form of mutual address. Thereafter, the use of a dual state name seems to have gradually stopped in the Jin dynasty. Lü Yihao’s statement that “the Jurchen proclaimed the dynastic title Da Jin in the fourth year of the Xuanhe period” might have referred to the fact that the Jin dynasty officially abolished the ethnic state name Jurchen in favor of the single state name Da Jin. Lü Yihao and other Song authors might have been unaware of the underlying reasons and mistakenly assumed that the Jurchen had only just established the dynastic title Da Jin at this point in time. What then caused the Jin to alter the state name in the fourth year of the Xuanhe period? It might have been a symbol of power and the decisive victory the Jin had achieved over the Liao by the twelfth month of that year. The Jin troops had captured Yanjing, brought all five Liao capitals under their control, and forced the Tianzuo Emperor to flee. By the end of the year, the Jin might therefore have reformed their state name system as recorded in the *Xiaochen gufen yelu zongxu*: “as soon as the Jurchen had destroyed the Liao, they were called Jin guo.”

4 Conclusion

According to research presented in this article, Aguda’s proclamation as emperor, the establishment of the Jin dynasty, and the efforts by Jin authors to rewrite the history of the state founding can roughly be outlined in the

47 Chen Xiaowei 陳曉偉, “Liaochao guohao zai kaoshi” 遼朝國號再考釋, *Wenshi* 文史, no. 4 (2016): 95–106.

48 *Liaoshi*, 28.377.

following manner. During the Gao Yongchang rebellion in the sixth year (1116) of the Tianqing period, Yang Pu from Tiezhou surrendered to the Jurchen. In the seventh year (1117), Yang Pu advised Aguda to proclaim himself emperor and establish the Jin dynasty. Aguda consequently ascended to the position of emperor, and proclaimed the dynastic title Da Jin and the era name Tianfu. The following year (1118), Aguda again chose to follow Yang Pu's suggestion to enter into peace negotiations with the Liao and issue a request for investiture. But despite "envoys being dispatched thirteen times; the peace talks eventually proved unsuccessful." During this period, however, the Jin and the Song began to establish their alliance at sea. The Jin eventually followed a new strategy and decided to launch a full-scale war against the Liao with the intention to destroy the dynasty. When official Jin historians later began to compile the *Taizu shilu*, they did not mention these details about the nation's founding history but fabricated an entirely different version of the narrative instead. They erased the important role that Yang Pu played both before and after the Jurchen state was established. Instead, they described how Aguda had followed appeals from Wuqimai and other members of the Wanyan clan to establish the state, proclaim the dynastic title Da Jin, and adopt the era name Shouguo on the first day of the first month of the fifth year of the Tianqing period (1115). With these changes, the authors predated the founding of the Jin state by two years and created the imaginary era name Shouguo. The term Shouguo (literally 'receive country') clearly 'implies the meaning of subjugating the Liao state. This notion, however, should only have existed after the breakdown of the peace talks in the fourth year of the Tianfu period and after the Jin had decided to end the Liao dynasty. The era name Shouguo was designed to show that, shortly after the start of their rebellion, the Jurchen already had the ambition to overthrow and replace the Liao dynasty and establish the Jin as a legitimate successor state. When the *Jin Taizu shilu* was compiled in the eighth year of the Huangtong period, it constructed an entirely new version of the history of the Jin state founding. Jin authors resorted to altering their state's founding history in the same manner as authors from the Liao dynasty and displayed a sense of history that allowed for distortions and misrepresentations. These actions seem to reflect a change in Khitan and Jurchen mentality after the Liao and Jin dynasties were founded and point towards a common political tradition of reconstructing national history. Such similarities may allow us to study in more detail how northern ethnic groups chose to narrate their national histories after they successfully established state power.

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