

Cross Cultural Borders: Marriage Customs of Non-Han Peoples in Jin China (1115–1234)

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1 Introduction

After decades of political and social rumours following the fall of the Tang dynasty (618–907), China experienced another peak of its civilization under the Song dynasty (960–1276). The constant military conflicts between the Song, Liao (907–1125), and Jin (1115–1234) dynasties meant that it was the first time in Chinese history to bear the term of “coexistence”.¹ The region of greater China between the tenth and thirteenth centuries also experienced intensive communication between the regimes of different ethnics. This communication is not only to be observed through the visible evidences of war and trade, but also more apparently through invisible cultural interactions between the multi-cultural societies. These visible and invisible interactions inevitably resulted in a new interpretation of multi-ethnicity and multi-culturalism, in which the Chinese and nomadic cultural traditions mixed with each other and formed a new lifestyle.

An inquiry into the historical studies on the history of the Jin may well begin with an examination of the two official dynastic histories of Liao and Jin, *Liaoshi* 遼史 (*History of Liao*) and *Jinshi* 金史 (*History of Jin*). Thanks to their status as official histories, which provided their compilers with convenient access to official documents, these histories could embody the most authoritative records over the categories with which they dealt. Nevertheless, deficiencies in these official standard histories are also comparatively obvious, in particular with regards to

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1 In-depth studies on the diplomatic relations between the Song and Liao are provided in Schwarz-Schilling 1959; Tao 1988; Wright 2005. For an excellent study on the political and diplomatic interactions between the Song, Liao, and Jin, see Rossabi 1983.

specific cultural and folkloristic aspects.² First, the two aforementioned official compilations, similar to other earlier standard histories, also employed the composite annals-biographies form. Based prominently on the veritable records, a dominant focus of these official writings is centred on the biographies of emperors and eminent ministers, rites, regulations and political institutions, as well as brief economic policies. It is thus not surprising that neither of them does appropriate justice to the social and cultural features of the period involved. Second, this selective neglect of the fields involved is accompanied by a poor effort to elucidate changes and alterations of the subjects dealt with in different historic stages. The records devoted to cultural and customary features of the societies are markedly scattered and scanty, and most of them owe their account to the occurrences in the past decades of the realms, whereas circumstances in their formative stages come off exceedingly poorly.

For these reasons, the two dynastic standard histories related to the period may have to be read by researchers in conjunction with other relevant references on the cultural traditions and reciprocities between diverse ethnic groups of people in medieval China. Fortunately, a voluminous apparatus of primary unofficial historical records composed by Song contemporaries offers the historians specializing in these foreign societies the possibility of not being confined to their official counterparts, and the rich body of data contained in these records allow precious insights into various aspects of their non-Han neighbours. Among them, the most important are perhaps *Qidan guozhi* 契丹國志 (*History of the Qidan*), attributed to Ye Longli 葉隆禮 (?– after 1267), Yüwen Maozhao's 宇文懋昭 (?–1234?) *Da Jin guozhi* 大金國志 (*History of the Great Jin Kingdom*), Hong Hao's 洪皓 (1088–1155) *Songmo jiwen* 松漠紀聞 (*Records of Hearsay on the Pine-Forests in the Plains*), and Xu Mengxin's 徐夢莘 (1126–1207) *Sanchao beimen huibian* 三朝北盟會編 (*Collected Accounts of the Treaties with the North under Three Regimes*).³ In spite of their unequal character, all these works accommodate various accounts of different ethnic groups residing in the realm of north

2 A profound study on the *Liaoshi* is provided in Feng 1959a. The best modern study of the compilation and sources of the *Jinshi* is Chan 1970.

3 For a general account of the historiographical significance of these works, see their entries in Hervouet 1978, 86f, 90, 90f, 109f, respectively.

China and are therefore excellent and in some respects unrivaled sources for the life of these non-Han people.

Of course, even a cursory sketch of the entire records on all non-Han ethnics in Song China is beyond the scope of a brief essay such as this. My main purpose here is to proffer a few preliminary observations concerning the life and culture of these people through an examination and translation of the excerpts devoted to the marriage customs of the Jurchen, the Uighur, as well as the Bohai and the Ware from the above-mentioned works. Although the scope of this study is rather limited and it certainly requires further laborious researches to consummate the features dealt with, the translation and annotation can still cast a valuable insight into the cultural interactions of these people and reveal some aspects of the extent in which their marriage customs could be accepted or frowned upon by the Han Chinese.

2 Translations

2.1 Jurchen 女真⁴

金國舊俗多指腹為婚姻。既長，雖貴賤殊隔亦不可渝。婿納幣，皆先期拜門，戚屬偕行，以酒饌往，少者十餘車，多至十倍。飲客佳酒，則以金銀旒貯之，其次以瓦旒。列於前以百數，賓退則分餉焉。先以烏金銀杯酌飲，貧者以木。酒三行，進大軟脂、小軟脂，如中國寒具。次進蜜餠，人一盤，曰「茶食」。宴罷，富者淪建茗，留上客數人啜之。或以粗者煎乳酪。⁵

According to traditional Jurchen customs, there are often parental betrothals arranged before children are born.⁶ When children grow up, even the separating between noble and humble cannot change [their fixed marriage arrangement]. Before the betrothal gifts are delivered, the bridegroom will pay a visit to the bride's family, accompanied by his family relatives and dependents. They bring food and wine, ranging from more than ten carriages up to ten times that. While serving the guests, for fine wine gold or silver pair-vessels are used, for the second class [of wine] pottery pair-vessels. The vessels

4 The Jurchen were of Tungusic origin and had resided in a wide area of Manchuria and southern Siberia. On the prehistory and different names of the Jurchen, see also *Sanchao beimen huibian* 3.1a-2a; *Jinshi* 1.1-17; H. Franke 1994, 218.

5 *Da Jin guozhi* 39.553f.

6 As Sun Jinji 1985 suggests, originally the marriage form of the Jurchen should be rather free and unbounded, while more restricted forms like the parental betrothal existed only in later periods of the Jin.

arranged in the front are to be counted in hundreds. [After] the guests have left, then the food of the banquet is shared [by the family]. [They] firstly drink with dark gold or silver vessels. Poorer ones use wooden vessels. After three rounds of wine, the “big soft grease” (*ruanzhi* 軟脂)⁷ and the “small soft grease” are served, which are similar to the “cold tool” (*hanju* 寒具)⁸ in the Central Kingdom. Then the “honey pastry” (*migao* 蜜糕) is served. Every one gets one plate which is called the “tea confections” (*chashi* 茶食).⁹ After the banquet is finished, rich households cook the Jian tea (*jianmin* 建茗) and urge several of the most honored guests to stay and drink the tea.¹⁰ Some also take the rough leaves to boil them with milk.

全國婦家無大小，皆坐炕上，婿黨羅拜其下，謂之「男下女」。禮畢，婿牽馬百匹，少者十四，陳其前，婦翁選子姓之別馬者視之，好則留，不好則退。留者不過什二三，或皆不中選，雖婿所乘亦以充數。大抵以留馬少為恥，女家亦視其數而厚薄之。一馬則報衣一襲，婿皆親迎。¹¹

Family members of the bride, regardless of age, all sit on the brick-bed (*kang* 炕),¹² and those of the bridegroom form a line around the bed and then bow. This is called “males under the females” (*nan xia nü* 男下女). After the ceremony is finished, the bridegroom leads a hundred horses, or a mini-

7 *Ruanzhi* is a kind of fried wheaten food which can be made into various forms, cf. *Hanyu dacidian*, vol. 9, 1230.

8 *Hanju* is a category of fried cakes of wheat, sugar, honey and milk, cf. *Hanyu dacidian*, vol. 3, 1548.

9 Tea confections in Jin usually consisted of fried rice or flour cakes with a honey dip and were offered by the Jurchen only when they received important guests. For a detailed account of the tea confections, see also *Sanchao beimen huibian* 20.9b; Zhu Ruixi 1998, 27f.

10 The “Jian tea” was a famous tea which was produced in the region of modern Jianxi in Fujian province. Among the varieties of tea produced in Fujian, the “wax tea” (*lacha* 蠟茶) was the finest and the most expensive, and it became favoured by the sinicized Jurchen elite; cf. Chan 1979, 110. It is noted in H. Franke 1994, 299, that tea had already become the Jin’s largest import item shortly after the establishment of their dynasty.

11 *Da Jin guozhi* 39.554.

12 This was a form of bed built of bricks or clay, so that it could be heated with a fire underneath. In winter people sat and worked on it for warmth. This kind of brick-bed is until today typical and still widely used in northern China and Korea, but seems to have been unknown to the Song author of this text. The monograph on Gaoli in *Jiu Tangshu* 199.5320 and *Xin Tangshu* 220.6186 indicates that “the poor people in Korea have a pit (*keng* 坑) in their houses where they light a fire in order to keep warm.” This must also be referring to the brick-bed as described in our text. For a more detailed description of the brick-bed, see also *Sanchao beimen huibian* 3.3b; Eberhard 1942, 19; Torii Ryuzō 1948, 190f.

mum ten, and displays them in front of the bride's family. The father of the bride chooses one of his descendants who knows horses well to inspect them. Good ones are kept while bad ones are sent back. The horses being kept [normally] do not exceed twenty or thirty percent [of the whole]. In some cases [if] none is chosen, [then] even the one that the bridegroom rides will also be taken to make up the number. Probably, it is seen as shaming if only few horses are chosen to be kept. The family of the bride also pays the bridegroom back according to the number of horses being kept. For one horse, one suit of clothes is paid back, (these are the clothes which the bridegroom has to put on before) he goes to the bride's home [to later escort her back to his home].

既成婚，留婦氏執僕隸役，雖行酒進食，皆躬親之。三年，然後以婦歸。婦用奴婢數十戶，牛馬十數羣，每羣九牝一牡，以資遣之。夫謂妻為「薩那罕」，妻謂夫為「愛根」。¹³

After the marriage has been completed, the groom stays [in the household of the bride] to carry out the servants' duties. Even during drinking or eating, he serves everyone personally. After three years, the wife then belongs to the household of the husband.¹⁴ [The parental family of] the wife takes several tens of male and female servants, along with several dozen herds of horses and cows with each herd consisting of nine females and one male, as a sort of dowry to be presented [to the family of the husband]. The husband calls his wife "sanahan" 薩那罕,¹⁵ and the wife calls her husband "aigen" 愛根.¹⁶

Traditionally, the Chinese practiced the exchange of betrothal gifts and dowries and considered it as a crucial component of Chinese marriages and a major distinction between "barbarian" and "Chinese" marriages.¹⁷

13 *Da Jin guozhi* 39.554.

14 The similar custom of seeking suitors was not only to be observed among the Jurchen, but also in the Korean peninsula. It was seen as a kind of compensation for the households of women since they lost a member of their workforce after their daughters were married into their husbands' households. On the Jurchen's suitor service, see also *Sanchao beimen huibian* 3.3a; Tao 1976, 12.

15 This word corresponds to Manchu *sargan*, which also means "wife", cf. H. Franke 1975, 135.

16 Jin Qicong notes (in *Nüzhenwen cidian*, 53) that the word for "husband" in the Jurchen language is also pronounced as *ei-e*. This word is also closely related to Manchu *eigen*, meaning "husband", cf. H. Franke 1975, 135.

17 According to Confucian ritual texts, a proper marriage required an exchange of property between the groom's and the bride's families. Such an exchange was to be followed for a marriage to be ritually complete. Until the Song period, families of the grooms generally seem to have had to spend more on betrothal gifts than the families of the brides had to spend on dowries. Dowry escalation grew in the early Song, and

When a Chinese woman married, she took all her property into the household of her husband as a “dowry.” The assets included in a woman’s dowry belonged to her throughout the marriage, and even after the death of her husband she was entitled to keep anything remaining from the dowry. The Song law allowed all of this property, plus income and interest on these personal assets, to be taken out of the husband’s household and into a remarriage in the case of divorce or widowhood.¹⁸ Among the northern neighbours of China, however, the practices of betrothal and dowry varied considerably from their Chinese contemporaries.

In pastoralist cultures, wealth is always counted in terms of possessions and livestock. Considering the bride-price daughters could bring to their natal families, the birth of a girl in nomadic society was not viewed as a cause for disappointment, which required the family to prepare a dowry for her, but rather as a reason for joy, because of the goods and services she would bring upon her betrothal and marriage. Indeed, a Jurchen groom was obliged to serve the bride’s natal family for three years before he could finally take his wife to his own household. In pastoralist societies, this suitor service was seen as a kind of compensation for the brides’ households since they lost a workforce after their daughters were married into the households of their husbands.

父死則妻其母，兄死則妻其嫂，叔伯死，則侄亦如此。無論貴賤，人有數妻。¹⁹

When the father dies, [the son] then marries his mother. When the elder brother dies, [the younger] then marries his sister-in-law. When the elder or younger uncle dies, then the nephew also acts the same [to marry his aunt].²⁰ Regardless of [their status of being] humble or noble, everyone has several wives.

in some cases families of the brides even had to borrow money in order to provide proper dowries for their daughters. On the amount of dowries during the Song, see Ebrey 1993, 101ff.

18 On the Song women’s control over their dowries and the relevant Song law on women’s private assets, see Ebrey 1993, 107ff.

19 *Da Jin guozhi* 39.554.

20 The practice of levirate was quite common among the Khitan and the Jurchen, as sons were obliged to marry the deceased father’s concubines; nephews, those of uncles; and brothers, the other brothers’ widows. Levirate was obviously conflicting with the Chinese usage, thus an imperial edict was given by the Jin Emperor Shizong

一云：婚家，富者以牛、馬為幣，貧者以女年及笄行歌於途。其歌也，乃自敘家世、婦工、容色，以伸求侶之意。聽者有求娶欲納之，即攜而歸，後復方補其禮，偕來女家，以告父母。²¹

There is a saying: The rich ones give oxen and horses as betrothal presents. The daughters of the poor, when they have reached the age to marry, walk along the streets singing. In these songs, they tell [others] of their family ancestry, their skill in female work and their beauty in order to show their intention to obtain a partner. If there is among the audience somebody not yet married who wishes to marry her, he just takes her by the hand and leads her to his home. Only afterwards a ceremony will be arranged. In the company [of the girl] he goes to her family and informs her parents.

Young women in the Liao and Jin states, in general, were not sequestered from contact with men prior to marriage and benefited from relative sexual latitude within which they could mingle with men. Girls were allowed to stroll freely in public spaces and socialize with men. Undoubtedly, such marriage customs must have appeared alien and objectionable to the Chinese, to whom arranged marriages with the help of a match-maker had been customary since antiquity. This pattern of marriage by elopement, for sure, does not mean violently stealing a girl against her will, but rather a tacit consent or knowing agreement between a young guy and a girl. Real abduction of women and wife-stealing were common practices among non-Chinese folks and these seem to have been carried out in earlier times by the Khitans and Jurchens alike. The coercive marriage by abduction, however, seems to have gradually evolved into the ritualized and frolicsome folkway as shown above. Rolf Stein, to whom we owe a profound study of this and other Khitan and Jurchen customs, has stressed the sociological aspect of this custom as serving to establish relations with another family and initiating matrimonial alliances.²² In this sense, the marriage by elopement can be understood as a reflection of these people's intention of ensuring exogamy.

金國治盜甚嚴，每捕獲，論罪外，皆七倍責償。唯正月十六日則縱偷一日以為戲。妻女、寶貨、車馬為人所竊，皆不加刑。是日，人皆嚴備，遇偷至，則笑遣之。既無所獲，雖畚鍤微物亦攜去。婦人至顯入人家，伺主者出接客，則縱其婢妾盜飲器。

世宗 (r. 1161–1189) to prohibit this custom among the Bohai 渤海 and the Chinese, but further allowed among the Jurchen. Cf. *Jinshi* 6.144, H. Franke 1994, 288.

21 *Sanchao beimen huibian* 3.4b.

22 Stein 1939, 144-147.

他日知其主名，或偷者自言，大則具茶食以贖〔謂羊、酒、餠饌之類〕。次則攜壺，小亦打袴取之。亦有先與室女私約，至期而竊去者，女願留則聽之。自契丹以來皆然，今燕亦如此。²³

The Jin punish crimes of theft quite severely.²⁴ Every time such crimes are caught, apart from the punishment on the nature of the guilt, all criminals have to compensate seven times the value [of the things involved].²⁵ Only on the sixteenth day of the first lunar month, are thefts indulged for one day as entertainment.²⁶ If wives and daughters, treasures and wares, carriages and horses are stolen by others [on that day], no punishment will be put upon [the thieves]. On that day, people are all extremely alert, and if thieves arrive, they will be sent off with smiles. Since [the thieves sometimes] cannot get anything, they even take straw baskets, mattocks, or other tiny objects. [In some cases], some women enter others' homes at night. They wait until the hosts go out to receive guests, and then indulge maids and concubines [of the household] to steal drinking vessels. On the other day, if [people] get to know the names of the owners of these things, or those who have stolen them declared themselves, then in order to redeem the things, the bold families prepare tea confections, [such as lamb, wine, or meat and fish dishes.] The second-rate [families] then carry vessels [of wine], and even the small ones take rice cakes (*dagao* 打糕)²⁷ in order to redeem [their stolen

23 *Songmo jiwén*, 15a.

24 The punishment for theft was according to the law of the Jurchen extremely harsh, while exile and capital punishment was quite common for theft of goods exceeding a certain value, cf. *Jinshi* 45.1014f; H. Franke 1989, 390; H. Franke 1994, 289.

25 A different figure is argued by Herbert Franke, namely that the thief had to pay ten times the value of what he had stolen as compensation. As for the possible reasons to explain this difference, he interpreted it as evidence of a gradual reduction in the compensation payments, or because the legal customs of the Jurchen were not uniform and so the sentences imposed could differ greatly, cf. H. Franke 1981, 222; H. Franke 1989, 389.

26 This custom was probably inherited from the Khitan, as they had the custom of allowing theft for three days from the thirteenth day to the fifteenth day of the first lunar month. Cf. *Qidan guozhi* 27.254. *Sanchao beimen huibian* 221.11b has almost the same record, only the time of the “free stealing” there is on the first day of the lunar month. A profound analysis of this custom among the Khitan is done in Stein, where he stressed the sociological aspect of this custom as establishing relations with another family and setting up matrimonial alliances; see Stein 1939, 144-147. This custom seems to have a long tradition as in 537, the Eastern Wei (534-550) formally prohibited the game of “free stealing”. However, it remains unclear whether this custom was a result of the Toba domination over northern China. For general aspects of the “free stealing”, see also Niida Noboru 1959, 471; H. Franke 1981, 230f.

27 *Dagao*, literally meaning “slam cake”, is a kind of cake made with glutinous rice flour. It is also known as Tteok in Korean, and it is relatively popular among the Koreans and

things]. There are also some guys who privately date with unmarried girls in advance and secretly elope [with the girls] on that day.²⁸ If the girl is willing to stay [with the boy], then [her wish] will be obeyed. It has always been like this since the time of Khitan, and [the custom in] today's Yan is also like this.

The text illustrates a playful and ritualized pseudo-elopement of wooing which was strongly ritualized and condoned at a particular time of “carnival”. But this custom was not a Jurchen creation. Indeed, “wife stealing” has been a long-established tradition among the northern neighbors of the Chinese, because the Eastern Wei (534–550) formally issued a decree to prohibit the “playful stealing” (*touxi* 偷戲) as early as 537 A.D.²⁹ However, it remains unclear whether this custom was a direct result of the Toba domination over northern China or from other folks. Marriages by consent between young boys and girls, as in the form of “free stealing,” was an unique way for these non-Chinese peoples to initiate marriages and implied a considerable amount of premarital sexual freedom on the part of the girls. In consequence, the lax attitude of the ruling non-Chinese toward a relative sexual freedom also exerted clear influence upon the ruled Chinese living under the Liao and Jin.

2.2 Huihu 回鶻³⁰

婦人類男人，白皙，著青衣，如中國道服。然以薄青紗罩首而見其面。其居秦川時，女未嫁者先與漢人通，有生數子年近三十始能配其種類。媒妁來議者，父母則曰，吾女嘗與某人某人昵。以多為勝，風俗皆然。³¹

people in northeast China. The mention of this term in *Songmo jiuwen* is probably the first time in Chinese sources.

- 28 Elopement was also quite common among the Jurchen and the Bohai, however, it was formally prohibited during the reign of the Jin Emperor Shizong. Cf. *Jinshi* 6.144; H. Franke 1994, 288.
- 29 On the tradition of “free stealing” among other peoples, see also Wittfogel and Feng 1949, 278, note 197; H. Franke 1981, 230f.
- 30 The Huihu, also known as Uyghur or Uighur, were a group of people of Turkic origin and were the ancestors of today's Uighur ethnics living in the northwest of China and the eastern part of Central Asia. They had once dominated the eastern Eurasian steppe to the north of China during the eighth and ninth century, especially after they assisted Tang to overcome the rebellion of An Lushan in the middle of the eighth century. After a series of military conflicts with the Kirghiz, as well as “the twin forces of political factionalism and the revolt by restive subjects”, the Huihu empire experienced a rapid decline and then its final destruction in the middle of the ninth century. Cf. Mackerras 1990, 317f; Drompp 2005, 22ff, 33-38.

The [Huihu] women look similar to the men, white-skinned. They dress up in blue robes, which are like the Taoist priests' robes in the Central Kingdom. However, they cover their heads with flimsy blue gauze allowing only the faces to be seen. During the time when they resided in Qinchuan 秦川 [Shaanxi], unmarried women for the first time fornicated with Han people.³² Some are able to marry members of their own people only until they are nearly thirty and have given birth to several children. If a matchmaker comes to negotiate a marriage, parents [of the girl] will say that their daughter is intimate with someone. They consider the large number [of intimacies] as a success, and their custom is just like this.

An inference from these texts is that virginity did not matter much with a girl of lower origin. For girls of lower classes, to sleep with other men before their marriage was not considered as a sin and it would not impair their chances of later marriage, whereas married women, in particular those of the upper classes, were supposed to remain chaste and virtuous.

2.3 Ware 嗚熱³³

女真貴遊子弟及富家兒月夕被酒，則相率攜尊，馳馬戲飲。其地婦女聞其至，多聚觀之。聞令侍坐，與之酒則飲，亦有起舞歌謳以侑觴者。邂逅相契，調謔往反，即載以歸，婦之父母知亦不為之願。留數歲有子，始具茶食酒數車歸寧，謂之「拜門」，因執子婿之禮。其俗謂男女自媒，勝於納幣而昏者。³⁴

Noble young elegants and the sons of rich families of the Jurchen prepare³⁵ wine on moonlight nights, one after another [go there] carrying goblets, gal-

31 *Songmo jiwén*, 5a-b.

32 Qinchuan refers to the Guanzhong plain in central China, which corresponds to the lower valley of the Wei River. The Uighur Empire which once controlled a large territory consisting of Mongolia, south Siberia and Central Asia collapsed in 848 and caused a diaspora of the Uighur people across Central Asia, some of which headed for the Guanzhong plain.

33 In other primary Chinese sources, the name is written in various characters. For instance, it is *Wure* 兀惹, *Wushe* 烏舍 or *Wure* 烏惹. English sources often employ “*wu-jo*”. As for their ethnicity, these people are normally considered as groups of the Bohai people, cf. Wittfogel and Feng 1949, 97; Twitchett and Tietze 1994, 102. This chapter was also taken in *Sanchao beimen huibian* 3.4b-5a to describe the marriage customs of the Jurchen, while a translation of it is provided in H. Franke 1975, 127. It is possible that the Jurchen and Ware shared similar customs.

34 *Qidan guozhi* 26.247.

35 It is not impossible that the character *bei* 被, meaning “to suffer”, is mistaken from *bei* 備, meaning “to prepare”.

loping, larking and drinking. As local girls hear them approaching, they often gather to watch them. Sometimes they are asked to sit in attendance, and they would drink if wine is offered. Some will dance or sing to encourage the guests to drink a toast. Improvised rendezvous are pledged, and suggestive jokes go to and fro. Then they are carried home [by the men]. Parents of those girls will not turn against them even though they are aware of it. [Only when] the girls have stayed away for years and had children, then they prepare several carts of tea confections and wine to come back to their parental home for a visit. This was called “to pay homage at the gate” (*bai-men* 拜門), [and on that occasion] the rites for presenting a new husband are performed. Their custom is to regard self-matched pairs of boys and girls higher than those who got married through paying betrothal presents [but not a freewill self-matching].³⁶

In *Qidan guozhi*, this text is ascribed to the tribe of Ware in north-eastern Manchuria, but it is vague as to the nationality of the girls. However, considering the numerous customary continuities between the Khitans and Jurchens, it should be safe to assume that such considerable freedom of girls to marry the partner of their own choice also existed among the Khitans. These texts clearly indicate that the Jurchen girls, probably also girls of the Khitan, Ware, and other peoples, had the chance to select their own mates by individual consent, in particular with regard to girls of the lower classes.

2.3. Bohai 渤海³⁷

婦人皆悍妒，大氏與他姓相結為十姊妹，迭稽察其夫，不容側室及他游，聞則必謀置毒，死其所愛。一夫有所犯而妻不之覺者，九人則羣聚而詬之，爭以忌嫉相誇。³⁸

36 A similar marriage custom was carried out by the Bohai, Khitan and Jurchen people as well. The Bohai people practiced marriage through elopement until this was formally forbidden in 1177, see *Jinshi* 7.169. For the Jurchen custom of marriage by elopement (Raubehe), cf. *Sanchao beimen huibian* 3.4b-5a; H. Franke 1981, 227.

37 Bohai was also known under the name Balhae (698–926), a Korean kingdom that was established after the fall of Koguryō and existed during the North-South division period of Korea along with Unified Silla. Bohai was defeated by the Khitans in 926, and most of its northern territories were absorbed into the Liao while the southern parts were absorbed into Goryeo, cf. O. Franke 1948, 43 and 87. The people of Bohai were descendants of Sumo-Mohe 粟末靺鞨, a tribe of the ancient Mohe. For detailed studies of the Bohai, see Wang Chengli 1984; Reckel 1995. There is a German translation of this passage presented here in Reckel 1995, 124.

38 *Qidan guozhi* 26.247f.

The women [of Bohai] are all stropky and jealous; most of them built up a sistership with ten women of other families, which frequently inspect their husbands. They do not tolerate [their husbands] having concubines or strolling about elsewhere. Once they learn about it, then they will plan [together] and prepare poison to kill the ones whom their husbands love. If there is one man who has an affair without his wife realizing it, then the other nine women will convene and scold the man. They vie with each other to see who can be (praised for being) the most jealous.

As the text above shows, the Bohai people, the neighbours of the Jurchen living in eastern Manchuria, clearly had a different attitude towards prostitution in comparison with the other peoples. Prostitution was rare in Bohai society because of an especially high degree of non-repression of the Bohai women. At the same time, it also reveals another hidden context that prostitution, together with concubinage, was in fact quite common amongst the Liao and Jin.

3 Concluding Remarks

It should be clear that the basic unit of Chinese society under the Jin, as in other periods, was the family. Marriage, the same as filial piety, is a manifestation of humanity. In traditional Chinese society it was one of the most significant institutions and at the same time a fundamental element of what could be considered a civilized society. Confucian rules of propriety did not allow any intimacy between the sexes before marriage and even disapproved of showing any affection in public after marriage.³⁹ Marriage forms, which involved promiscuity, polygamy, or the levirate were condemned by Confucian orthodoxy.⁴⁰ At the same time, the subordinate role of women in the couple was well defined.

The Jurchens and other ethnic peoples, on the other hand, offer an alternative model of sexual relations and womanhood in the Chinese sphere, to set against conventionally understood images of Song and later Chinese. As the above translations have shown, marriage customs of the non-Han ethnics in China under the Jin differed to a great extent from their Chinese counterparts. A recent and profound study on women in the Liao and Jin by Linda Cooke Johnson suggests that marriage cus-

39 Cf. Wong 1979, 23.

40 Cf. Miyakawa 1960, 32.

toms, female sexuality, and the status of women contrasted markedly with the conventional standards for familial values and feminine behavior in the Chinese realm.⁴¹ At a time in Song China when the sexes were separated from childhood and women were increasingly becoming segregated inside their homes, as shown in Patricia Ebrey's classic work *The Inner Quarters*,⁴² Liao and Jin women were hunting from horseback and conducting military campaigns.

Such phenomena, for instance the apparent promiscuity of the Uighur women who had the approval of their parents and the common practice or the marriages of Ware boys and girls by elopement, could probably not be acceptable for the Han-Chinese. Customary practices of levirate and sororate, which prevailed to some extent among the Jurchen, were also conflicting with Chinese usage.⁴³ In other cases, such as the Bohai women's ganging together against their henpecked husbands and interfering with their taking concubines, and the suitor service of Jurchen husbands, unveil to us another picture of the Chinese roles of man and woman within a family. A further glimpse into the distinct attitudes of these people toward marriage is offered by the interesting event of "free stealing" that allowed a certain degree of free marriage. But on the other hand, in many cases the similarity of the ceremonies suggests that these people were considerably influenced by the dominant Chinese culture.

Not infrequently we can observe significant cultural continuities between the Khitan, the Jurchen, and other peoples in many fields, above all that of daily life which includes marriage customs. In general, the birth of a girl baby was cherished in Jin society, for under the bride-system their marriage would enrich the family. This fact conferred a relatively high position of these girls in their natal families and they had a certain degree of freedom and even independence in selecting a partner for marriage, different from their contemporary Chinese sisters. After their marriage, however, the women became assets of the family of their husbands and the family would spare no efforts in retaining the women even after the death of their husbands. In some respects it seems that the

41 Johnson 2011, esp. ch. 1 to 4.

42 See Ebrey 1993.

43 For detailed descriptions on the customs of levirate and sororate among the Jurchen, see Tao 1976, 12; H. Franke 1994, 288.

Jurchen indeed had different customs, for instance with regard to their attitudes towards divorce and how they valued women in their societies.

It is obvious that this brief essay cannot do justice to all the primary Chinese sources devoted to the social customs of these foreign ethnic groups since the selection of titles has been, to a certain extent at least, subjective. There are, to my knowledge, other abridgements and excerpts scattered throughout various Song contemporary literature, especially in the travelogues and diaries composed by Song diplomatic envoys, who had traveled to the Jin on commission. However, most of them are rather fragmentary and anecdotal and therefore cannot be relied on for solid historical research without careful examination. It should also be noted that it is extremely hard to draw a general conclusion for the marriage customs of the peoples dealt with above, particularly because of the limitation of data. All extant written sources with regard to these issues were composed by Chinese observers, such as Hong Hao, Xu Mengxin or Fan Chengda 范成大 (1126–1193), whereas literary records pertaining to the other side, from the Khitan and the Jurchen, are absent. The neighboring peoples of China were almost exclusively observed through the lens of Chinese cultural judgements and coloured by the attitudes, prejudices and records of Chinese officials, whereas own accounts of the Khitan on these issues and their own views are largely absent. Although archaeological discoveries of the last three decades provide historians with more abundant material on the Liao, they are limited to the Khitan aristocracy and information on commoners is exceptionally sparse. As for the Jin, the situation is even much less clear. The absence of archaeological evidence for the Jurchen, with only few exceptions such as the tomb of Prince Qi of the Jin, leaves a major gap.⁴⁴

44 The tomb of Prince Qi of the Jin is one of the few tombs of upper-class Jurchens that have been excavated. Because of the great wealth of burial objects, in particular the delicate garments and other silk products, this tomb is of special importance in the study of indigenous Jurchen culture and customs. On the tomb and the excavated objects, see Zhao and Chi 1998.

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