

Universal Multiple-Octet Coded Character Set
International Organization for Standardization
Organisation Internationale de Normalisation
Международная организация по стандартизации

Doc Type: Working Group Document
Title: Proposal to encode Jurchen Small Script characters
Source: Viacheslav Zaytsev and Andrew West
Status: Individual Contribution
Action: For consideration by JTC1/SC2/WG2 and UTC
Date: 2025-05-22



1. Introduction

The Chinese histories of the Liao and Jin dynasties (*Liáo shǐ* 遼史 and *Jīn shǐ* 金史) compiled during the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) indicate that four separate scripts were devised for writing the Khitan and Jurchen languages during the Liao (907–1125) and Jin (1115–1234) dynasties: Khitan Large Script [KLS] (*Qīdān dàzì* 契丹大字) and Khitan Small Script [KSS] (*Qīdān xiǎozì* 契丹小字) were developed during the early years of the Liao dynasty; Jurchen Large Script [JLS] (*Nǚzhēn dàzì* 女真大字) was commissioned by Aguda (Emperor Taizu of Jin) in 1119; and Jurchen Small Script [JSS] (*Nǚzhēn xiǎozì* 女真小字) was promulgated under the auspices of Emperor Xizong in 1138 and officially used from 1145. These four extinct scripts are not well preserved, and there is not a large corpus of surviving materials written in any of them, although over the last hundred years several dozen stone epitaph inscriptions in Khitan Large and Small Scripts have been excavated from Liao and Jin tombs, and a number of important inscriptions in the Jurchen Large Script have been identified. Nevertheless, the encoding of these scripts is essential for researchers to digitally transcribe and analyse historical inscriptions for studies of Khitan and Jurchen languages, scripts, and texts.

The encoding of Khitan and Jurchen scripts is progressively being addressed in the ISO/IEC 10646 and Unicode standards: the Khitan Small Script was added to Unicode version 13.0 in 2020; a preliminary proposal for the Khitan Large Script was made in 2014 (see WG2 N4631), but has not progressed due to unresolved issues with character repertoire and glyph unification; and a proposal for the Jurchen Large Script, commonly referred to simply as the Jurchen Script, was made in 2024 (see WG2 N5261R, N5278), and is well-advanced in the review process.

The Jurchen Small Script is the most poorly preserved of the four scripts, and the only certain attestation is a single short inscription separately engraved on three gold and silver *páizi* 牌子 (travel passes or symbols of authority) unearthed in northeast China during the

1970s and 1980s (see Figs. 1 through 3). The inscription was initially thought to be in the Khitan Small Script, but Aisin-Gioro Ulhicun, a well-known scholar of Khitan and Jurchen studies, has convincingly argued that the inscription actually represents the Jurchen Small Script (see Section 3.7 below).

		
<p>Fig. 1: Gold <i>páizi</i> found at Chengde in Hebei in 1972</p> <p>Source: Vladimir Belyaev (personal communication)</p>	<p>Fig. 2: Rubbing of gold <i>páizi</i> found at Chengde in Hebei in 1972</p> <p>Source: Zheng Shaozong 1974, p. 84</p>	<p>Fig. 3: Silver <i>páizi</i> found at Dehui in Jilin in the 1980s</p> <p>Source: Zeno #246743</p>

Whereas the Khitan Large Script and the Jurchen Large Script are “ideographic” scripts in Unicode terminology, with individual characters representing a single semantic or phonetic unit, the Khitan Small Script and Jurchen Small Script are phonetic scripts (with a small number of logographic characters), and individual characters combine together in a vertical cluster or block of up to eight characters to represent a single word. From the

limited evidence available, it seems that the Jurchen Small Script was based on the Khitan Small Script, and it forms clusters of characters in the same way. The inscription in Figs. 1 through 3 shows two clusters of three Jurchen small script characters each (see Table 1), underneath a *huāyā* 花押 symbol 𐰢. We are not proposing to encode this symbol at the present time, pending further study of this and other attested *huāyā* symbols.

Table 1: Jurchen Small Script characters on *páizǐ* inscription

Position on <i>páizǐ</i>	Code Chart Glyph	Block Layout	Facsimile Block (Chengde 1972, gold <i>páizǐ</i>)
Cluster 1 position 1	𐰚	𐰚𐰛𐰜	𐰚𐰛𐰜
Cluster 1 position 2	𐰛		
Cluster 1 position 3	𐰜		
Cluster 2 position 1	𐰝	𐰝𐰞𐰟	𐰝𐰞𐰟
Cluster 2 position 2	𐰞		
Cluster 2 position 3	𐰟		

In the above table the column labelled “Code Chart Glyph” shows the proposed glyph forms for use in the code chart, using the same style of font as the current Khitan Small Script code chart font. Because the clustering feature of the script laterally compresses the glyphs in positions 1 and 2 of each cluster, it has been necessary to unsquash the glyph forms shown in these positions on the *páizǐ* to create the code chart font.

2. Summary of Proposed Characters

As only six characters of the Jurchen Small Script survive, and as they have the same rendering behaviour as Khitan Small Script, we propose to encode them in the Khitan Small Script block (see Section 5 of this document for detailed rationale). We are essentially proposing to unify the Khitan and Jurchen small scripts in the same way that the Mongolian script in Unicode unifies the Mongolian, Todo, Manchu, and Sibe scripts.

Although the characters on the *páizǐ* inscription that we are proposing to encode do not exactly match any encoded Khitan Small Script characters, several of them bear a general resemblance to existing Khitan Small Script characters (see Table 2), and in particular the character in Cluster 2 position 3 (𐰟) is almost identical to U+18C3E 𐰟.

Table 2: Similarity between Jurchen Small Script and Khitan Small Script characters

JSS Glyph	Similar KSS Characters		
	Code Point	Glyph	Reading
扎	U+18B5E	扎	<i>ho</i>
力	U+18CA6	力	<i>en</i>
示			
委	U+18B92	委	<i>úr</i>
𠂇			
𠂇	U+18C3E	𠂇	

Our recent review of Khitan Small Script sources indicates that the character at U+18C3E (𠂇) is either absent from known Khitan texts or unattested in any texts available to us. The original encoding of this character (see WG2 N4725R, page 58, no. 319, excerpted below as Table 3) relied solely on Jiruhe & Wu (2009), with subsequent sources reproducing this reference. Notably, both Jiruhe and Wu Yingzhe, authors of the 2009 list, also co-authored *Further Research on Khitan Small Script*, a three-volume study, which omits this character from its character table (Chinggeltai et al. 2017, vol. 1, p. 100), indicating it may be a “ghost character” erroneously included in earlier documentation.¹

Table 3: Extract from WG2 N4725R Table 6

No.	Glyph	N3820	N3918	Ching. 2010	Jiruhe & Wu 2009	Wu & Jan. 2010	Take- uchi 2012
319	𠂇	J-0303 𠂇	J-0305 𠂇	424 𠂇	250 𠂇	423 𠂇	250 𠂇

Given the above evidence, we propose to unify the Jurchen Small Script character at Cluster 2 position 3 (𠂇) with U+18C3E (𠂇), as its presence appears exclusive to the

¹ However, this does not imply that the character was encoded in error, as its encoding was justified for compatibility with multiple modern scholarly works, including Jiruhe & Wu (2009), Chinggeltai (2010), Wu & Janhunen (2010), and Takeuchi (2012), where it appears (rationalized in WG2 N4765, p. 1). The 2017 study was not used as a source in proposals for encoding Khitan Small Script, as it appeared after those proposals were submitted.

Jurchen sources considered in this document. All sources for the Khitan glyph cited in proposals for encoding Khitan Small Script (e.g., modern scholarly lists of characters; see Table 3) depict the glyph with two vertical parallel legs, the right leg longer with its top extending higher than the left's, while their bottoms remain level, whereas the Jurchen glyph has slightly angled legs, similarly with the right leg longer and its top extending higher, bottoms level. However, as we do not know of any primary Khitan text where this character occurs, the angle of the legs shown in the secondary sources cannot be considered canonical, and so we recommend revising the glyph form of U+18C3E in the code charts to reflect the angled legs characteristic of the Jurchen glyph (see Table 5).

Therefore we propose to encode five new characters in the Khitan Small Script block at U+18CD6 through U+18CDA, for use in writing Jurchen Small Script, as shown in Table 4. This will leave 36 free code points at U+18CDB through U+18CFE for any future additions.

Table 4: Proposed additions to the Khitan Small Script block

Code Point	Glyph
U+18CD6	扎
U+18CD7	力
U+18CD8	示
U+18CD9	委
U+18CDA	长

Table 5: Proposed glyph modifications for existing KSS characters

Code Point	Current Glyph	New Glyph
U+18C3E	企	企

Sections 3 (*Historical Background*) and 4 (*Evidence for the Jurchen Small Script*) below present original research, providing detailed evidence for scholars to verify and review this proposal. These sections deliberately include some of our previously unpublished findings, supported by the analysis and scholarly references, to contribute to Jurchen script studies and bolster our proposal.

3. Historical Background

The Jurchens (*Nǚzhēn* 女真, 女真 or *Nǚzhí* 女直),² a Tungusic people in Northern China, rose to prominence in the early 12th century under Wanyan Aguda (完顏阿骨打), designated as Emperor Taizu (太祖, r. 1115–1123), who assumed the imperial title and founded the Jin state (*Jīn* 金, 1115–1234), commonly known as the Jin dynasty. According to the *History of Jin* (*Jīn shǐ* 金史), in the 1st year of the Shouguo era (收國元年, 1115), on the 1st day of the 1st month, day *rénshēn* (壬申), “the vassals offered [Aguda] the imperial title, and on that day, he assumed the position of emperor. His Majesty said: ‘The Liao took *bīn* iron (*bīn tiě* 賓鐵) as their name for its strength, but *bīn* iron, though strong, ultimately rusts and decays. Only gold (*jīn* 金) remains unchanged and indestructible. The colour of gold is white, and the Wanyan clan reveres white.’ Thus, the state was named Great Jin (*Dà Jīn* 大金), and the era was changed to Shouguo.”³ This marked the state’s formal establishment,⁴ with campaigns, including key victories by 1122, weakening the Khitan Liao state (*Liáo* 遼, 907–1125), commonly known as the Liao dynasty, until its collapse in 1125 under Aguda’s successor, Emperor Taizong (太宗, r. 1123–1135).

² The term *Nǚzhēn* (女真), referring to the Jurchen people, was changed to *Nǚzhí* (女直) during the Liao period to avoid the taboo name (*bìhuì* 避諱) of Liao Emperor Xingzong 興宗, Yelü Zongzhen (耶律宗真, r. 1031–1055), whose name included the character *zhēn* 真. This spelling variation, adopted in sources such as the *History of Jin* and *History of Liao*, accounts for terminological differences in texts cited in this proposal. Today, the terms *Nǚzhēn* and *Nǚzhí* can be used interchangeably. Relevant sources include:

History of Yuan (*Yuán shǐ* 元史), Chapter 59, records: “Originally called *Nǚzhēn*, they later changed to *Nǚzhí* to avoid the taboo name of Liao [Emperor] Xingzong” (初號女真，後避遼興宗諱，改曰女直).

A Qing-era source implicitly suggests this change occurred around 1033: *Continuation to the Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* (*Xù Zīzhì tōngjiàn* 續資治通鑑) by Bi Yuan 畢沅 (1730–1797), Chapter 39: “[2nd year of Mingdao (1033), 1st month], day *rénchén*, the *Nǚzhí* offered tribute to the Liao. *Nǚzhí* is *Nǚzhēn*, changed to avoid the Liao sovereign’s name” ([明道二年正月] 壬辰，女直貢於遼。女直即女真，避遼主名，改稱女直).

However, the 15th-century *History of Koryŏ* (*Koryŏsa* 高麗史) records a posthumous renaming in Koryŏ (Chapter 58): “In the 10th year of [King] Munchong (1056), Yŏngdŏk-chin (寧德鎮) changed *chin* 鎮 to *sŏng* 城 to avoid the taboo name of Khitan [Liao Emperor] Xingzong, because the character *chin* 鎮 follows the character *chin* 真, [resembling its form or sound]. It had a garrison commander. The same applies below” (寧德鎮文宗十年，避契丹興宗諱，改鎮爲城，以鎮字從真字也。有鎮使。下同). The phrase “the same applies below” implies that other garrisons listed in subsequent *Koryŏsa* entries, such as Wiwŏn-chin (威遠鎮), Chŏngyung-chin (定戎鎮), and nine others, were similarly renamed, replacing *chin* 鎮 with *sŏng* 城.

³ *History of Jin*, Chapter 2: 收國元年正月壬申朔，羣臣奉上尊號。是日，即皇帝位。上曰：「遼以賓鐵爲號，取其堅也。賓鐵雖堅，終亦變壞，惟金不變不壞。金之色白，完顏部色尚白。」於是國號大金，改元收國。

⁴ The account presented here relies on the traditional narrative from the *History of Jin*, which dates the founding of the Jin state by Wanyan Aguda to 1115 under the era name Shouguo. However, this topic remains fraught with unresolved issues, long scrutinized by Chinese scholars. Notably, Qiu Jingjia (邱靖嘉) argues for a founding date in 1117 during the Liao’s Tianqing (天慶, 1111–1120) period, supported by Song, Yuan, Liao and Koryŏ sources indicating that Aguda adopted the dynastic title Great Jin (*Dà Jīn* 大金) and the era name Tianfu (天輔) in 1117, following the advice of his counselor or court librarian Yang Pu (楊璞). Qiu Jingjia further asserts that the era name Shouguo, cited in the *History of Jin* for 1115–1116, is a retrospective fabrication created during the compilation of the *Veritable Records of Taizu* (*Tàizǔ shǐlù* 太祖實錄) in 1148 to enhance the Jin’s legitimacy by predating its founding and implying early intent to subjugate the Liao (Qiu Jingjia 2022; 2023).

3.1. Khitan Script among the Jurchens

Initially lacking a writing system, the Jurchens relied on Khitan script (*Qidānzi* 契丹字) for diplomatic, administrative and cultural purposes as they engaged with neighbouring states and absorbed Khitan and Han populations after victories over the Liao. The *History of Jin* (Chapter 66) records: “The Jurchens initially had no writing system; after defeating the Liao and capturing Khitan and Han (Chinese) people, they began to use Khitan and Han (Chinese) scripts, and thus their sons all learned them.”⁵ Chapter 73 further notes: “The Jin people (Jurchens) initially had no writing system; as the state grew stronger and engaged in friendly relations with neighbouring countries, they adopted the Khitan script.”⁶ A record from the 2nd year of the Mingchang era (明昌二年, 1191) confirms the prolonged use of the Khitan script in the National History Academy (*Guóshǐyuàn* 國史院) until 1191.⁷ Some biographies in the *History of Jin* highlight proficiency in both the Khitan Large and Small Scripts, such as that of Wanyan Zongxiong (完顏宗雄, 1083–1122). While hunting with the emperor, he was struck by an arrow but feigned illness, lest the sovereign find out and punish the shooter. During two months of recovery at home, he mastered both scripts, demonstrating significant engagement.⁸ In contrast, broader administrative and diplomatic contexts, such as those cited above, refer only to the “Khitan script” without specifying whether it denotes the Large Script, the Small Script, or both. This ambiguity is not the only one found in the concise records of the *History of Jin*. Another concerns the “adaptation” or “usage” of the Khitan script, which raises uncertainty about whether the Jurchens used it solely for the Khitan language or modified it for the Jurchen language—a question explored below.

A prominent example illustrating this uncertainty is the Record of the Younger Brother of the Emperor of the Great Jin Dynasty (*Dà Jīn huángdì dūtǒng jīnglüè lángjūn xíngjì* 大金皇弟都統經略郎君行記), a monumental inscription in Khitan Small Script dated 1134 (12th year of the Tianhui era, 天會十二年歲次甲寅仲冬 [=十一月] 十有四日). Its Jin period date and reference to the Great Jin Emperor’s Younger Brother⁹ initially led scholars to mistake it for Jurchen Large Script, created in 1119, before the Jurchen Small Script’s promulgation

⁵ *History of Jin*, Chapter 66: 女直初無文字，及破遼，獲契丹、漢人，始通契丹、漢字，於是諸子皆學之。

⁶ *History of Jin*, Chapter 73: 金人初無文字，國勢日強，與鄰國交好，適用契丹字。

⁷ *History of Jin*, Chapter 9: “On the day *guīsì* [of the 4th month in the 2nd year of the Mingchang (1191) era], it was decreed to the authorities: henceforth, Jurchen script shall be directly translated into Han (Chinese) characters, and the National History Academy’s exclusive use of Khitan script for writing shall be discontinued” ([明昌二年四月] 癸巳，諭有司，自今女直字直譯為漢字，國史院專寫契丹字者罷之)。

⁸ *History of Jin*, Chapter 73: 宗雄好學嗜書，嘗從上獵，誤中流矢，而神色不變，恐上知之而罪及射者。既拔去其矢，託疾歸家，臥兩月，因學契丹大小字，盡通之；cf. Chapter 66: 宗雄能以兩月盡通契丹大小字。

⁹ The inscription refers only to the Great Jin Emperor’s Younger Brother, without a personal name. Qian Daxin (錢大昕, 1728–1804) identified this figure as Salihe (撒離喝, ?–1150). See Qian Daxin, *Postscripts to Inscriptions on Metal and Stone from the Hall of Subtle Research* (*Qiányán-táng Jīn shí wén bāwěi* 潛研堂金石文跋尾) in 20 *juàn*, Chapter 18, or in an alternative division as *Continuation of Postscripts...* (*Qiányán-táng Jīn shí wén bāwěi xù* 潛研堂金石文跋尾續), Third Part (*zhēn* 貞 or *sān xù* 三續) in 6 *juàn*, Chapter 6. For Salihe’s biography, see the *History of Jin*, Chapter 84.

in 1138 (see below). Even after identifying it as Khitan Small Script, scholars remained uncertain whether the text was in the Jurchen or Khitan language, possibly due to the ambiguous “Khitan script” references in the *History of Jin* (see, e.g., Kiyose 1977, p. 22). It is now confirmed to be in the Khitan language, showing that some Jurchens under Jin rule used the Khitan language even for monumental inscriptions. This supports the view that the Khitan script was used by the Jurchens primarily for the Khitan language, although the question of its adaptation for the Jurchen language may be reconsidered if new evidence is found. In any case, as the sources reviewed below testify, the unspecified Khitan script was indeed a model in the creation of the Jurchen Large Script.

3.2. Jurchen Large Script (1119)

To establish an independent writing system for the Jurchen language, Aguda commissioned Wanyan Xiyin (完顏希尹, also known as Gushen 谷神, ?–1140), as recorded in the *History of Jin* (Chapter 73): “[Emperor] Taizu (Aguda) ordered Xiyin to create a national script with a complete system of rules and regulations. Xiyin modelled it on Han (Chinese) regular script, drew upon the Khitan script system, and combined it with the Jurchen language to create the Jurchen script.”¹⁰ Chapter 66 adds: “...Wanyan Xiyin modelled the Jurchen Script on the Khitan script system.”¹¹ Completed in the 8th month of the 3rd year of the Tianfu era (天輔三年, 1119) and promulgated on the day *jǐchǒu* (己丑) of the same month as a “character book” (*zìshū* 字書), this script, known as the Jurchen Large Script, was widely adopted, earning Xiyin imperial recognition.¹² Notably, while modern Western scholarship, including

¹⁰ *History of Jin*, Chapter 73: 太祖命希尹撰本國字，備制度。希尹乃依倣漢人楷字，因契丹字制度，合本國語，製女直字。

¹¹ *History of Jin*, Chapter 66: …完顏希尹乃依倣契丹字製女直字。

¹² *History of Jin*, Chapter 73: “In the 8th month of the 3rd year of the Tianfu era (1119), the script (lit. character book) was completed, greatly pleasing [Emperor] Taizu, who ordered its promulgation. Xiyin was granted one horse and one set of clothing.... Xiyin’s creation was called the Jurchen Large Script” (天輔三年八月，字書成，太祖大悅，命頒行之。賜希尹馬一匹、衣一襲…希尹所撰謂之女直大字); Chapter 2: “On the day *jǐchǒu* of the 8th month [of the 3rd year of the Tianfu era (1119)], the Jurchen script was promulgated” ([天輔三年]八月己丑，頒女直字)。

This event date is recorded in several other sources, including the inscription on the *Stele of the Divine Path of the Late Left Chancellor of the Ministry of State Affairs of the Great Jin, Prince Zhenxian of Jinyuan Commandery, Lord Wanyan* (*Dà Jīn gù shàngshū zuǒchéngxiàng Jīnyuán-jùn Zhēnxiàn wáng Wányán gōng shéndàoobēi* 大金故尚書左丞相金源郡貞憲王完顏公神道碑), composed in 1177 (大定十七年). The stele’s inscription, marred by deterioration, contains a character for the Tianfu era year that can be read as either “three” (三, 1119) or “five” (五, 1121): “In the <...> year of Tianfu, [Wanyan Xiyin] presented a script devised based on the native language. [Emperor] Taizu, greatly pleased, bestowed upon him a complete set of clothing and an imperial horse, and issued an edict to promulgate its use” (天輔□年依本國語制字以進 太祖嘉悅賜襲衣御馬詔頒行之). Certain transcriptions, such as one in the *Records of Stone and Metal Inscriptions of Manchuria* (*Mǎnzhōu jīnshí zhì* 滿洲金石志, 1937, Chapter 3, folio 12a) by Luo Fuyi (羅福頤, 1905–1981) and one in the *Draft Records of Stone and Metal Inscriptions of Manchuria* (*Manshū kinseki shikō* 滿洲金石志稿, 1936, vol. 1, p. 114), interpret it as “five,” yielding the 5th year of Tianfu (天輔五年, 1121). Consequently, some scholars have noted this variance and cited 1121 as an alternative date (see Kiyose 1977, p. 22; 1997, p. 35; Golovachev 2006, pp. 88–89 (4-Γ); p. 98, note 39). The reading of “three” for 1119 is now generally accepted.

major sources on Jurchen script like Kiyose (1977, p. 22) and Kane (1989, p. 3), typically follow this account attributing the script's creation solely to Xiyin ("or whoever [else]," per Kane & Miyake 2024, p. 84), other records in the *History of Jin* indicate at least two creators, a detail recognized in 19th-century Western studies, for example by Gabriel Devéria (1882, p. 178, note 2; p. 179, note 3; p. 180, note 3).

The second creator, [Wanyan] Yelu (Yèlǔ 葉魯 or Yēlǔ 耶魯),¹³ is sparsely documented but recognized alongside Wanyan Xiyin as a co-founder of the Jurchen script. The *History of Jin* (Chapters 10 and 35) states that in the 5th year of the Mingchang era (明昌五年, 1194), "Yelu (葉魯) and Gushen [Xiyin], who first created the Jurchen script," had posthumous honors conferred and a temple established for them at Nalihanhuang (納里渾莊) in the Supreme Capital, following the precedent of Cangjie's (倉頡 or 蒼頡) temple in Zhouzhi (盤屋 or 塾屋).¹⁴ However, the source does not specify whether their contribution pertains to

The *Records of the Great Jin State* (Dà Jīn guó zhì 大金國志) records a related event in 1122 (Chapter 2): "In the spring of the 6th year of Tianfu (1122) ... The Left Chancellor and Prince of Chen, Wushi [Wanyan Xiyin], was ordered to devise the Jurchen script for official use" (天輔六年春...仍命左丞相陳王兀室撰女真字以行). This source, as well as the *Records of the Khitan State* (Qīdān guó zhì 契丹國志), should be approached with caution, as Liu Pujiang (劉浦江, 1961–2015) suggests they were likely compiled by the same author, possibly a bookseller with limited historiographical expertise, during the Yuan dynasty (not Song, as claimed), and may contain chronological errors or conflation due to their pseudepigraphic (托名) or fabricated (偽書) nature (see Liu Pujiang 1993; 1990; 1992; 2009, p. 265).

¹³ The name was rendered as Yèlǔ (頁嚕, from Manchu *yeru*, meaning "hole, pit, den," corresponding to Chinese *xué* 穴) by Qing scholars who revised the histories of Liao, Jin, and Yuan. They standardized obscure non-Chinese names and terms, reconstructing their etymologies, many of which lie beyond modern scholarly scrutiny (for details, see Söderblom Saarela 2024, p. 214 et seq.). These reconstructed forms, adopted in Qianlong-era editions of historical texts such as the *History of Jin*, were transmitted to the West through printed versions, entering Russian and European scholarship of the time (e.g., Devéria 1882). Based on our observations, they remain in use to this day due to the uncritical reliance on primary and secondary sources, such as texts in the *Sikù Quánsū* (四庫全書) collection, or still influential classic studies. Hence, we note this alternative spelling, despite its absence in original, unedited historical works. For the gloss of this name, see *Imperially Commissioned Explanation of the National Languages of the Three Histories of Liao, Jin, and Yuan* (Qīndìng Liáo Jīn Yuán sān-shǐ guóyǔ jiě 欽定遼金元三史國語解), *Qīndìng Jīn shǐ yǔ jiě* 欽定金史語解, Chapter 9: *Yeru*. {葉額} {嚕烏}. 頁嚕: 穴也。卷三作耶魯。卷十作葉魯。卷一百十三作野驢。併改。

¹⁴ *History of Jin*, Chapter 10: [明昌五年春正月]乙亥,以葉魯、谷神始製女直字,詔加封贈,依倉頡立廟塾屋例,祠於上京納里渾莊。歲時致祭,令其子孫拜奠,本路官一人及本千戶春秋二祭。

History of Jin, Chapter 35: 貞獻郡王廟。明昌五年正月,陳言者謂「葉魯、谷神二賢創製女直文字,乞各封贈名爵,建立祠廟。令女直、漢人諸生隨拜孔子之後拜之」。有司謂葉魯難以致祭,若金源郡貞獻王谷神則既已配享太廟矣,亦難特立廟也。有旨,令再議之。禮官言:「前代無創製文字入孔子廟故事,如於廟後或左右置祠,令諸儒就拜,亦無害也。」尚書省謂「若如此,恐不副國家厚功臣之意」。遂詔令依蒼頡立廟于塾屋例,官為立廟于上京納里渾莊,委本路官一員與本千戶春秋致祭,所用諸物從宜給之。

The *Comprehensive Gazetteer of Shengjing* (Shèngjīng tōngzhì 盛京通志) erroneously identifies Wanyan Xiyin as Yelu Gushen (葉魯谷神), conflating names of two distinct individuals (1684 edition in 32 *juàn*, Chapter 22, Tombs 陵墓, folio 17a; 1736 edition in 48 *juàn*, Chapter 28, Tombs 陵墓, folio 60b-61a): "Wanyan Xiyin's tomb. [That is], Yelu Gushen. [Emperor] Jin Zhangzong (章宗, r. 1189–1208), [recognizing that] Xiyin first created the national script, granted [him] posthumous titles [and] established a temple at Nalihanhuang in the Supreme Capital, [with] annual sacrifices. The tomb should be within the present-day Wula (1736 ed.: Ningguta) boundaries, [but] its original site is untraceable" (完顏希尹墓。即葉魯谷神。金章宗以希尹始製國字,加封贈立廟於上京納里渾莊,歲時致祭。其墓應在今烏喇(寧古塔)界內,舊址無考)。

the Jurchen Large or Small Script. While Xiyin's role is well-established, Yelu's recognition as a concurrent "first creator" implies his contribution to the Large Script, as existing scholarship generally assumes. The close timeline, with the Small Script emerging under Xizong (see below), prompts speculation about Yelu's potential contribution to it, though this intriguing possibility remains unsupported by current sources and may be incorrect. Yelu (耶魯) was summoned to the capital in 1125 to teach the Jurchen script, instructing students like Nahe Chunnian (納合椿年), as noted in Chapters 3 and 83.¹⁵ Limited records leave Yelu's full contributions and biography obscure¹⁶ compared to Xiyin's, whose deeds are extensively documented in the *History of Jin* (notably his biography in Chapter 73), with the inscription on his *Stele of the Divine Path* still preserved (see Note 12).

3.3. Jurchen Small Script (1138)

Subsequently, Emperor Xizong (熙宗, r. 1135–1150) developed the Jurchen Small Script, promulgated on the 1st day, *wùzǐ* (戊子), of the 1st month in the 1st year of the Tianjuan era (天眷元年, 1138) and first used on the day *wùwǔ* (戊午) of the 5th month in the 5th year of the Huangtong era (皇統五年, 1145). The Jurchen Small Script was employed concurrently with the Jurchen Large Script, as noted in the *History of Jin*.¹⁷ In 1145, gold and silver *páizi* were also recast, possibly related to the Small Script's "first use" (cf. Section 4.2, items 4 and 5).¹⁸

¹⁵ *History of Jin*, Chapter 3: "In the 10th month, day *jiǎchén*, [of the 3rd year of Tianhui (1125)] <...>, a decree established a temple for [Emperor] Taizu in the Western Capital. Yelu (耶魯) was summoned to the capital to teach the Jurchen script" ([天會三年]十月甲辰…詔建太祖廟于西京。召耶魯赴京師教授女直字).

History of Jin, Chapter 83, Biography of Nahe Chunnian: "... After some time, selected students were sent to the capital, where Yelu (耶魯), a teacher in the Supreme Capital, taught them; Chunnian was among the chosen..." (納合椿年本名烏野。初置女直字，立學官於西京，椿年與諸部兒童俱入學，最號警悟。久之，選諸學生送京師，俾上京教授耶魯教之，椿年在選中。補尚書省令史，累官殿中侍御史，改監察御史).

¹⁶ The *History of Jin* records a distinct [Wanyan] Yelu (耶魯) (see Qiu Shusen et al. 2011, p. 279), who was the grandson of Prince of Lu, Wozhe (魯王幹者), and met a tragic end around 1150 during Prince of Hailing's reign, as detailed in Chapter 84. This other Yelu, along with Salihe (撒離喝), a prominent Jin commander identified as the "Great Jin Emperor's Younger Brother" in a 1134 Khitan Small Script inscription (see Section 3.1), and over twenty of Salihe's relatives, were executed, falsely accused of rebellion by Yaoshe (遙設) based on a forged letter in Khitan Small Script. See *History of Jin*, Chapter 84, Biography of Gao (Salihe) 杲本名撒離喝: "...魯王幹者孫耶魯候撒離喝于汴，冢魯渾執之，耶魯曰「願付有司，若法當同坐，雖死不恨。」冢魯渾亦殺之。其家訟于朝，海陵不問，但賜錢二百萬。

¹⁷ *History of Jin*, Chapter 73: "Later, [Emperor] Xizong also created a Jurchen script, used concurrently with Xiyin's script... Xizong's creation was called the Jurchen Small Script" (其後熙宗亦製女直字，與希尹所製字俱行用…熙宗所撰謂之小字); Chapter 4: "On the 1st day of the 1st month, day *wùzǐ*, in the 1st year of the Tianjuan era (1138)... the Jurchen Small Script was promulgated" (天眷元年正月戊子朔…頒女直小字); Chapter 4: "On the day *wùwǔ* of the 5th month [in the 5th year of the Huangtong era (1145)], the imperially created [Jurchen] Small Script was first used" ([皇統五年]五月戊午，初用御製小字).

¹⁸ *History of Jin*, Chapter 58: 收國二年九月，始製金牌，後又有銀牌、木牌之制，蓋金牌以授萬戶，銀牌以授猛安，木牌則謀克、蒲輦所佩者也。故國初與空名宣頭付軍帥，以為功賞。遞牌，即國初之信牌也，至皇統五年三月，復更造金銀牌，其制皆不傳。

3.4. The History of Jin on Jurchen Scripts

The *History of Jin* documents the use of the Jurchen Large and Small Scripts primarily in educational and biographical contexts, with a peak during the Dading era (大定, 1161–1189).

After Wanyan Xiyin created the Jurchen Large Script through compiling the character book (*zìshū* 字書)¹⁹ in 1119, schools (*xuéxiào* 學校) were established to teach the script, as noted in the Biography of Wendihan Dida (溫迪罕締達): “Initially, Chancellor Xiyin created the Jurchen script and founded schools.” Subsequently, the students (learners) gradually became numerous and turned to studying classics and history.²⁰ The Biography of Heshilie Liangbi (紇石烈良弼) adds that Jurchen script students were selected from various routes (諸路) and sent to the capital during the Tianhui era (天會, 1123–1137). He and Nahe Chunnian (納合椿年) were both children and were among those selected. Later, Liangbi was involved in education, being appointed as a teacher (*jiàoshòu* 教授) in Beijing at age fourteen, consistently teaching two hundred students.²¹ The Biography of Nahe Chunnian, for its part, indicates the establishment of a school (*xuéguān* 學官) in the Western Capital (西京), which he and students from various regions entered. Later, selected students including him were sent to the capital (京師), where they were taught by Yelu (耶魯), a teacher at the Supreme Capital (上京) and co-founder of Jurchen script.²² These and other evidence suggest that schools were widespread throughout the various circuits. These

¹⁹ *History of Jin* (Chapter 73, Biography of Wanyan Xiyin) mentions “character book” (字書): “The Jin people (Jurchens) initially had no writing system; as the state grew stronger and engaged in friendly relations with neighbouring countries, they adopted Khitan script. [Emperor] Taizu (Aguda) ordered Xiyin to create a national script with a complete system of rules and regulations. Xiyin modelled it on Han (Chinese) regular script, drew upon the Khitan script system, and combined it with the Jurchen language to create the Jurchen script. In the 8th month of the 3rd year of the Tianfu era (1119), the script (lit. character book) was completed, greatly pleasing [Emperor] Taizu, who ordered its promulgation. Xiyin was granted one horse and one set of clothing. Later, [Emperor] Xizong also created a Jurchen script, used concurrently with Xiyin’s script. Xiyin’s creation was called the Jurchen Large Script, and Xizong’s was called the Jurchen Small Script” (金人初無文字，國勢日強，與鄰國交好，適用契丹字。太祖命希尹撰本國字，備制度。希尹乃依倣漢人楷字，因契丹字制度，合本國語，製女直字。天輔三年八月，字書成，太祖大悅，命頒行之。賜希尹馬一匹、衣一襲。其後熙宗亦製女直字，與希尹所製字俱行用。希尹所撰謂之女直大字，熙宗所撰謂之小字)。

²⁰ *History of Jin*, Chapter 105, Biography of Wendihan Dida: 溫迪罕締達，該習經史，以女直字出身，累官國史院編修官。初，丞相希尹制女直字，設學校，使訛離刺等教之。其後學者漸盛，轉習經史，故納合椿年、紇石烈良弼皆由此致位宰相。締達最號精深。

²¹ *History of Jin*, Chapter 88, Biography of Heshilie Liangbi: 紇石烈良弼，本名婁室，回怕川人也。曾祖忽懶。祖忒不魯。父太字，世襲蒲輦，徙宣寧。天會中，選諸路女直字學生送京師，良弼與納合椿年皆童丕，俱在選中。是時，希尹為丞相，以事如外郡，良弼遇之途中，望見之，嘆曰：「吾輩學丞相文字，千里來京師，固當一見。」乃入傳舍求見，拜於堂下。希尹問曰：「此何兒也？」良弼自贊曰：「有司所薦學丞相文字者也。」希尹大喜，問所學，良弼應對無懼色。希尹曰：「此子他日必為國之令器。」留之數日。年十四，為北京教授，學徒常二百人，時人為之語曰：「前有谷神，後有婁室。」其從學者，後皆成名。

²² *History of Jin*, Chapter 83, Biography of Nahe Chunnian: 納合椿年本名烏野。初置女直字，立學官於西京，椿年與諸部兒童俱入學，最號警悟。久之，選諸學生送京師，俾上京教授耶魯教之，椿年在選中。補尚書省令史，累官殿中侍御史，改監察御史。

institutions were central to Jurchen education, teaching not only the script but also classics and history, thereby training future officials.

Xiyin's character book likely served as a foundational text in early Jurchen education. According to the Biography of Zongxian (宗憲), he was selected to enter a school at sixteen after the promulgation of the *Jurchen Character Book* (*Nǚzhí zìshū* 女直字書), a designation that clearly refers to Xiyin's work. In the early years of Emperor Taizong's reign (1123–1135), when Taizong visited the school, Zongxian recited his studies aloud and earned the emperor's prolonged praise.²³ With early Jurchen schools established shortly after the script's creation and translations of Chinese classics into Jurchen commencing only in 1164 (see below), the *Jurchen Character Book* likely functioned as a primary educational text for novices learning the Jurchen Large Script during this interim period. Some historical findings lend credence to this.

In August 1973, eleven fragmentary sheets of paper bearing a Jurchen hand-written text were discovered during renovations of the Tang dynasty Stone Platform Classic of Filial Piety (*Shítái Xiàojīng* 石臺孝經) stele in the Forest of Stelae in Xi'an (*Xī'ān Bēilín* 西安碑林) (see Fig. 5). These fragments, identified as practice writings by two novice scribes, contain a classified vocabulary list exhibiting notable similarities to the Ming dynasty *Sino-Jurchen Vocabulary*.²⁴ However, unlike the latter, the text from the fragments lacks explicit headings

²³ *History of Jin*, Chapter 70, Biography of Zongxian: "Zongxian, originally named Alan, was sixteen when the *Jurchen Character Book* (Jurchen [Large] Script) was promulgated and was selected to enter the school. When [Emperor] Taizong visited the school, Zongxian, together with other students, had an audience with [him]. Zongxian's bearing was composed and elegant, and Taizong summoned him to approach, ordering him to recite what he had studied. [Zongxian's] voice was clear and bright, and he responded skillfully. An attending official memorialized, saying, 'This is the younger brother of Left Vice Marshal Zonghan.' His Majesty sighed in praise for a long time. [Zongxian] was also proficient in Khitan and Chinese scripts" (宗憲本名阿懶。頒行女直字書，年十六，選入學。太宗幸學，宗憲與諸生俱謁，宗憲進止恂雅，太宗召至前，令誦所習，語音清亮，善應對。侍臣奏曰：「此左副元帥宗翰弟也。」上嗟賞久之。兼通契丹、漢字)。

²⁴ The term *Sino-Jurchen Vocabulary* used in our proposal refers to the vocabulary part of the Jurchen section of the *Sino-Foreign Vocabulary* series (*Huáyí yìyǔ* 華夷譯語, "Sino-Foreign Translations"), compiled by the Ming dynasty's Bureau of Translators (*Siyí guǎn* 四夷館). This Jurchen section, often called *Nǚzhí yìyǔ* 女直譯語, *Nǚzhēn yìyǔ* 女真譯語, *Nǚzhí guǎn yìyǔ* 女直館譯語, *Nǚzhēn guǎn yìyǔ* 女真館譯語, or *Siyí guǎn Nǚzhēn yìyǔ* 四夷館女真譯語 in Chinese renderings, consists of two main parts: the vocabulary part, known as *Zázi* (雜字 "miscellaneous characters") or *Nǚzhí guǎn zázi* (女直館雜字), and the memorials part, known as *Láiwén* (來文 "incoming documents or correspondence") or *Nǚzhí guǎn láiwén* (女直館來文)。

Zázi, also referred to in English as *Sino-Jurchen Vocabulary* or *Sino-Jurchen Glossary*, comprises a classified vocabulary list with Jurchen words in Jurchen Large Script, their Chinese equivalents, and pronunciations annotated in Chinese characters. *Láiwén*, also referred to in English as *Sino-Jurchen Memorials*, consists of Jurchen transcriptions and Chinese translations of original Jurchen documents, such as memorials or petitions. Terminological usage can vary among scholars. While *Nǚzhēn yìyǔ* (女真譯語) is often used as a general term for this entire compilation (both *Zázi* and *Láiwén*) (e.g., Aisin-Gioro 2009a; 2009b), it can also refer specifically to a different Jurchen vocabulary from the Bureau of Interpreters (*Huítóng guǎn* 會同館), transcribed only in Chinese characters without Jurchen script (cf. Kane & Miyake, pp. 77–78). The Bureau of Translators version is preserved in some manuscript and one blockprint editions. One notable manuscript was published by Wilhelm Grube (1855–1908) in 1896.

or clear divisions into sections (*mén* 門) or categories (*lèi* 類). The irregular and repetitive nature of the copying further suggests these fragments represent exercises by beginner scribes rather than a systematic transcription of a formal text. Based on all available evidence, Jin Qizong²⁵ dated the fragments to the early Jin dynasty, no later than the Dading period.²⁶ He argued convincingly that these fragments were likely copied from or based on the *Jurchen Character Book* compiled by Wanyan Xiyin. This suggests that Xiyin's original work was similarly structured as a classified vocabulary list, potentially serving as a prototype for the *Sino-Jurchen Vocabulary* (Jin Qizong 1979; 1996). In her subsequent studies, Aisin-Gioro Ulhicun assigned this Jurchen text the title *Jurchen Script Character Book* (*Nǚzhēnwén zìshū* 女真文字書), though in English annotations she referred to it as 'Jurchen Dictionary.' We adopt the first name in our proposal.

With the evidence regarding the early Jurchen script considered, we now turn to the historical account following the reign of Emperor Taizong (ending 1135). The Jin dynasty was then ruled by Emperor Xizong (熙宗, r. 1135–1150) and the Prince of Hailing (Hǎilíng Wáng 海陵王, r. 1150–1161). While notable developments concerning the Jurchen scripts occurred during this period, such as the creation of the Jurchen Small Script under Xizong

²⁵ The Chinese name of this scholar (金啟琮 or 金啓琮, Jīn Qǐcóng, 1918–2004) is correctly and conventionally read with the character 琮 as *cóng*, according to standard Chinese dictionaries, notably the *Great Character Dictionary of the Chinese Language* (*Hànyǔ dà zìdiǎn* 漢語大字典). However, we voluntarily adopt the reading *zōng*, rendering the name as Jīn Qǐzōng or Jin Qizong in non-bibliography contexts, despite this pronunciation being unattested in known dictionaries. This choice is based on three considerations: (1) the scholar was often recognized as Jin Qizong in international academic circles and English publications; (2) his name written in Manchu as Cidzung 𐰇𐰏𐰤, includes the element *dzung*, which corresponds phonetically to Chinese *zong* in Manchu-to/from-Chinese transliteration conventions; and (3) the character 宗, a related form sharing phonetic and semantic properties, is consistently read as *zōng*.

The mentioned Manchu name Cidzung is documented on a seal found on the cover of the scholar's book *Jin Qizong on Beijing's Manchus* (*Jīn Qǐcóng tán Běijīng de Mǎnzú* 金启琮谈北京的满族, 2009), as identified by Zaytsev and confirmed by West in 2011 (personal communication), without the clan name Aisin-Gioro (see Fig. 4). This name appears on the English Wikipedia [page](#) dedicated to the scholar and in derived sources, designated as a Manchu name, Aisin-Gioro Cidzung, without citing the seal and implying it is a well-known fact. We clarify that the seal provides the primary evidence for the name written in Manchu, at least for the authors at present, likely a transcription of the Chinese name rather than a distinct Manchu name, and that without this seal, its verification would be impossible, thus establishing the necessary source for this information.



Fig. 4. Seal of Jin Qizong
Source: Jin Qizong 2009, front cover

²⁶ The text shows interesting linguistic characteristics. Almost all characters in the text are fully logographic, representing the earliest stage of Jurchen script development. Nevertheless, a few characters, such as those for “saddle” (*əngəmar* 尙𐰇, Chinese 鞍), “hair” (*funilxai* 𐰇𐰏, Chinese 髮), etc., demonstrate early signs of phoneticization, indicating a transitional phase. To illustrate this aspect, consider the character for *əngəmar* “saddle”: while potentially originating from a purely logographic form (*əngəmar* *尙), the form found in the fragments (*əngəmar* 尙𐰇) already incorporates an element suggesting phoneticization, a feature that becomes fully developed into a syllabic representation (*ən-gə-mar* 尙𐰇𐰏) in the later *Sino-Jurchen Vocabulary* (Jin Qizong 1979, p. 11–12; 1996, p. 130).

and its subsequent use (as discussed in Section 3.3), the *History of Jin* provides relatively limited documentation regarding state activities involving the Jurchen scripts for these intervening decades.

Various accounts concerning the scripts become significantly more prominent starting with the reign of Emperor Shizong (世宗, r. 1161–1189), which marked a new era for the Jurchen Large and Small Scripts and their education. In 1164 (大定四年), Shizong initiated a translation program for Chinese classical books (*jīngshū* 經書) into Jurchen Large and Small Scripts, along with ordering the selection of two students from each *móukè* (謀克) to study these translated texts. Soon after this, he desired to promote (興) Jurchen script schools (*Nǚzhízi xuéxiào* 女直字學校), selecting many children from respectable families in *měng'ān* (猛安) and *móukè* (謀克), totaling three thousand students across various regions.²⁷ This latter initiative may represent either an expansion of early schools or a revival following a period of decline under Xizong and Prince of Hailing.

In 1165 (大定五年), translations like the *Essentials of Government of the Zhenguan Era* (貞觀政要) were presented, followed by the *Historical Records* (史記) and *History of the Western Han Dynasty* (西漢書) in 1166 (大定六年).²⁸

In the 8th month of 1183 (大定二十三年), one thousand copies of the *Classic of Filial Piety* (孝經) in Jurchen Script were distributed to the Imperial Guard, and in the 9th month, translations of the *Book of Changes* (易), *Book of Documents* (書), *Analects* (論語), *Mencius* (孟子), *Laozi* (老子), *Yangzi* (揚子), *Wenzhongzi* (文中子), *Liuzi* (劉子), and *New History of the Tang* (新唐書) were presented and disseminated to teach Jurchens benevolence, righteousness, and morality, as intended for the *Five Classics* (五經).^{29 30}

²⁷ *History of Jin*, Chapter 51: 女直學。自大定四年，以女直大小字譯經書頒行之。後擇猛安謀克內良家子弟為學生，諸路至三千人。

History of Jin, Chapter 51: 策論進士，選女直人之科也。始大定四年，世宗命頒行女直大小字所譯經書，每謀克選二人習之。尋欲興女直字學校，猛安謀克內多擇良家子為生，諸路至三千人。

History of Jin, Chapter 99, Biography of Tudan Yi: 徒單鑑本名按出…大定四年，詔以女直字譯書籍。

²⁸ *History of Jin*, Chapter 99, Biography of Tudan Yi: 徒單鑑本名按出…[大定]五年，翰林侍講學士徒單子溫進所譯貞觀政要、白氏策林等書。六年，復進史記、西漢書，詔頒行之。

²⁹ *History of Jin*, Chapter 8: [大定二十三年]八月乙未…以女直字孝經千部付點檢司分賜護衛親軍。…[大定二十三年]九月己巳…譯經所進所譯易、書、論語、孟子、老子、揚子、文中子、劉子及新唐書。上謂宰臣曰：「朕所以令譯五經者，正欲女直人知仁義道德所在耳。」命頒行之。

³⁰ An account from 1188 (大定二十八年) clarifies the status and composition of the mentioned *Five Classics* translations. In that year, when Shizong proposed testing Jurchen *jìnshì* (進士) with exegesis of the *Classics*, his chief ministers reported that among the *Five Classics*, the *Book of Changes* (易), *Book of Documents* (書), and *Spring and Autumn Annals* (春秋) were translated, while the *Book of Odes* (詩) and *Book of Rites* (禮) were pending. This indicates that by 1183, at least the *Book of Changes* and *Book of Documents* were completed, and confirms that the translation of the full *Five Classics* set was an ongoing project through the 1180s, with *Spring and Autumn Annals* completed by 1188 and the remaining two pending completion after 1188. See *History of Jin*, Chapter 51: [大定]二十八年，諭宰臣曰：「女直進士惟試以策，行之既久，人能預備。今若試以經義可乎？」宰臣對曰：「五經中書、易、春秋已譯之矣，俟譯詩、禮畢，試之可也。」上曰：「大經義理深奧，不加歲月不能貫通。今宜於經內姑試以論題，後當徐試經義也。」

In 1169 (大定九年), one hundred exceptional students were selected, sent to the capital, provided stipends, and taught ancient texts, poetry, and policy essays (*cè* 策) by Wendihan Dida (溫迪罕締達). Discussions on a policy essay-based examination system (*cèxuǎn zhī zhì* 策選之制) began in 1171 (大定十一年), and by 1173 (大定十三年), it was established, requiring one policy essay (*cè yīdào* 策一道) exceeding five hundred characters, with exemptions from township and prefectural examinations. Shizong decreed the establishment of the Jurchen Imperial Academy (*Nǚzhí guó zǐ xué* 女直國子學) in the capital and Jurchen prefectural schools (*Nǚzhí fǔ xué* 女直府學) across regions.³¹ By 1180 (大定二十年), standardized examinations required poetry in the Jurchen Small Script and policy essays in the Jurchen Large Script, emphasizing the Small Script's role in literary education.³² By 1189 (大定二十九年), Jurchen and Han *jìnshì* oversaw schools, ensuring the Jurchen Script's educational prominence.³³

Biographies of figures like Alin (阿鄰, ?-after 1161, Chapter 73), Xie Nu (謝奴, ?-1161, Chapter 81), Wanyan Wubu (完顏兀不喝, ?-1165, Chapter 90), Wanyan Kuang (完顏匡, 1152-1209, Chapter 98), Wanyan Gui (完顏瑰, ?-1192, Chapter 93), Nipangu Jian (尼龐古鑑, ?-1194, Chapter 95), and Zhao Zhongfu (趙重福, ?-1223, Chapter 128) highlight proficiency in Jurchen Large and Small Scripts as a mark of erudition, often alongside Khitan and Han Scripts.³⁴

³¹ *History of Jin*, Chapter 51: 女直學…[大定]九年，取其尤俊秀者百人至京師，以編修官溫迪罕締達教之。十三年，以策、詩取士，始設女直國子學，諸路設女直府學，以新進士為教授。國子學策論生百人，小學生百人。

History of Jin, Chapter 51: 策論進士…[大定]九年，選異等者得百人，薦於京師，廩給之，命溫迪罕締達教以古書，作詩、策，後復試，得徒單鑑以下三十餘人。十一年，始議行策選之制，至十三年始定每場策一道，以五百字以上成，免鄉試府試，止赴會試御試。且詔京師設女直國子學，諸路設女直府學，擬以新進士充教授，以教士民子弟之願學者。俟行之久、學者衆，則同漢進士三年一試之制。

History of Jin, Chapter 99, Biography of Tudan Yi: 徒單鑑本名按出…選諸路學生三十餘人，令編修官溫迪罕締達教以古書，習作詩、策。鑑在選中，最精詣，遂通契丹大小字及漢字，該習經史。久之，樞密使完顏思敬請教女直人舉進士，下尚書省議。奏曰：「初立女直進士科，且免鄉、府兩試，其禮部試、廷試，止對策一道，限字五百以上成。在都設國子學，諸路設府學，並以新進士充教授，士民子弟願學者聽。歲久，學者當自衆，即同漢人進士三年一試。」從之。十三年八月，詔策女直進士，問以求賢為治之道。

History of Jin, Chapter 105, Biography of Wendihan Dida: 溫迪罕締達…大定十二年，詔締達所教生員習作詩、策，若有文采，量才任使，其自願從學者聽。十三年，設女直進士科。是歲，徒單鑑等二十七人登第。

³² *History of Jin*, Chapter 51: 策論進士…至[大定]二十年，以徒單鑑等教授中外，其學大振。遂定制，今後以策、詩試三場，策用女直大字，詩用小字，程試之期皆依漢進士例。

³³ *History of Jin*, Chapter 51: 女直學…大定二十九年，勅凡京府鎮州諸學，各以女直、漢人進士長貳官提控其事，具入官銜。

³⁴ Script proficiency for the mentioned figures: **Alin**, **Xie Nu**: Jurchen and Khitan, Large and Small Scripts (女直、契丹大小字), Han Script; **Wanyan Wubu**: Jurchen Script (unspecified), Jurchen Small Script, Khitan Script (unspecified); **Wanyan Kuang**: Jurchen Small Script, Han Script; **Wanyan Gui**, **Zhao Zhongfu**: Jurchen Large and Small Scripts (女直大小字); **Nipangu Jian**: Jurchen Small Script, Han Script.

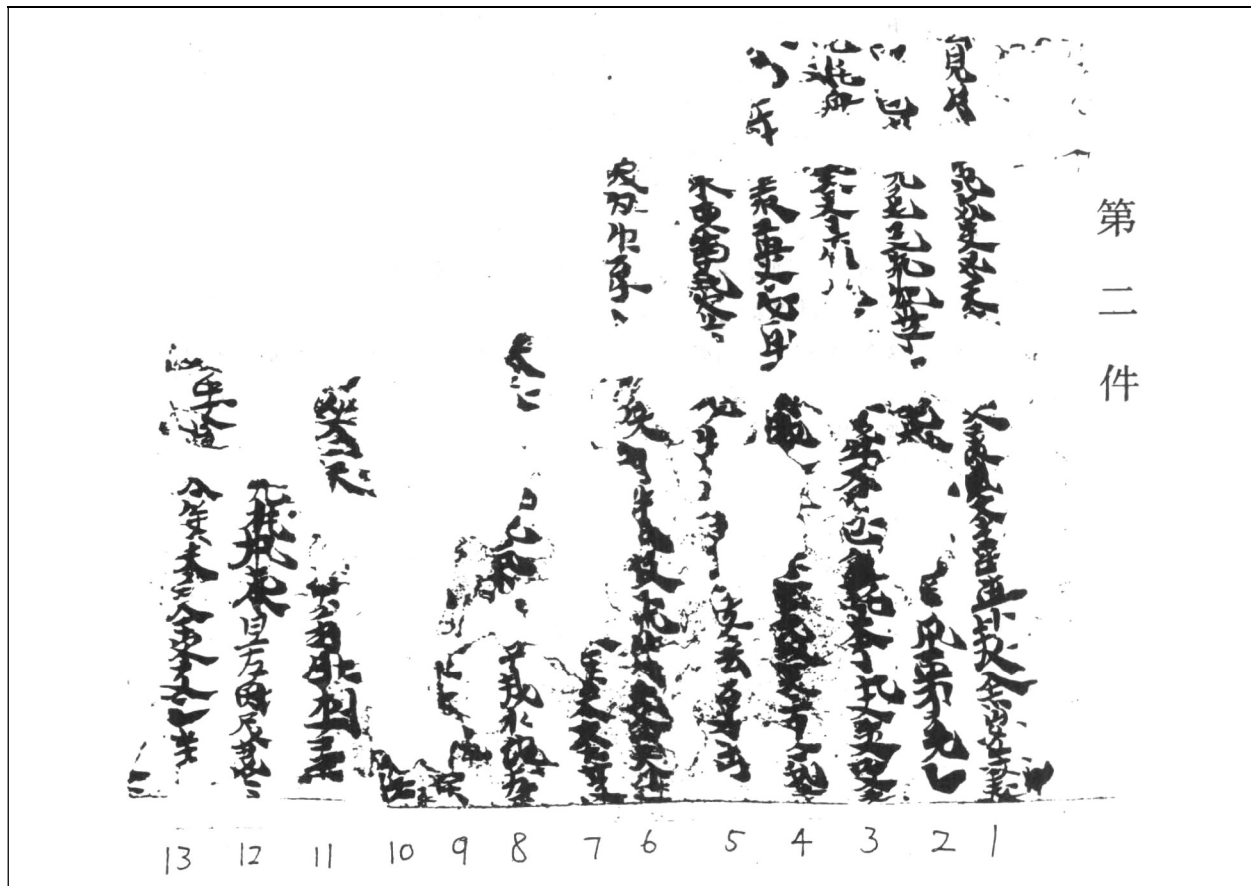


Fig. 5: Fragment of a Jurchen manuscript discovered in Xi'an in 1973

Source: Jin Qizong 1979, p. 15; Jin Qizong 1996, p. 132

3.5. End of Institutional Jurchen Script Use (1658)

Although our task does not encompass a comprehensive history of the Jurchen language and its literary monuments from the Jin to later periods, it is relevant to examine the final documented phase of institutional support for Jurchen Script use. While the Jurchen Large and Small Scripts were actively employed during the Jin dynasty, as detailed in Sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4, their institutional significance waned after the fall of Jin in 1234. By the early Qing period, the Jurchen Script had largely ceased to serve as an administrative tool, though it retained limited official recognition in specialized translation bureaus until its formal discontinuation. The *Collected Statutes of the Great Qing* records that in the 1st year of Shunzhi (順治元年, 1644), the Four Translations Bureau (*Sìyì guǎn* 四譯館) was established to translate texts from distant tribute-bearing countries. It initially comprised ten departments, including the Jurchen Bureau (*Nǚzhí guǎn* 女直館). Apparently, this continued the Ming dynasty's tradition, with the Ming's Bureau of Translators (*Sìyí guǎn* 四夷館) being renamed to avoid the derogatory "barbarian" (*yí* 夷). In the 15th year of Shunzhi (順治十五年, 1658), the Tartar and Jurchen Bureaus (韃靼女直二館) were abolished, indicating a formal discontinuation of institutional support for Jurchen Script

traditions.³⁵ Sources do not specify whether the Large or Small Script was used in these or similar bureaus through the history of previous dynasties, but surviving texts suggest that the Jurchen Large Script predominated.³⁶

3.6. Challenges in Script Differentiation

The *History of Jin* identifies two Jurchen scripts, termed Jurchen Large Script (*Nǚzhēn dàzì* 女真大字) and Jurchen Small Script (*Nǚzhēn xiǎozì* 女真小字), while the *History of Liao* (*Liáo shǐ* 遼史) and *History of Jin* reference two Khitan scripts, similarly named Large and Small. Neither source clarifies which script corresponds to each designation, leaving four undefined writing systems (cf. Kane 1989, p. 4 et seq.). Scholarly interpretations of these scripts in Jurchen and Khitan inscriptions, relative to their descriptions in historical sources, have evolved over time (e.g., Kiyose 1977, p. 22). Modern scholars, analyzing Chinese textual records and Khitan inscriptions, have distinguished Khitan Large Script by its complex ideographic forms and Khitan Small Script by its syllabic, clustered arrangements, establishing a framework for comparison.

For rigor, it should be noted that the terms “large” and “small” or “complex/difficult” and “simple,” often applied by researchers in this context, can be interpreted inversely and so

³⁵ *Collected Statutes of the Great Qing* (*Dà Qīng huìdiǎn* 大清會典), Kangxi edition, Chapter 155, folio 15a: 四譯館。順治元年。設四譯館。翻譯遠方朝貢文字。館有十。曰韃靼。曰女直。曰回回。曰緬甸。曰百譯。曰西番。曰高昌。曰西天。曰八百。曰暹羅。統隸翰林院。十五年。裁韃靼女直二館。

³⁶ Jin Qizong asserts that a taboo (*huìyán* 諱言) on Jurchen references existed during the Qing dynasty. After the Jin, designated as Later Jin (后金) in historiography, unified the Jurchen tribes, Hong Taiji's 1635 decree banned his people's ethnic name “Jurchen” (*Zhūshēn* 諸申, a Chinese transcription of *Jušen* in Manchu) in favour of “Manchu” (*Mǎnzhōu* 滿洲, *Manju* in Manchu). The consequent 1636 renaming of the state from Jin to Great Qing (*Dà Qīng* 大清) marked a shift from the initial intent to revive the Jurchen Jin dynasty to distance from its legacy (*Veritable Records of Taizong*, 大清太宗文皇帝實錄, Chapter 25, 天聰九年乙亥冬十月庚寅, folio 19b–20a; Chapter 28, 天聰十年丙子夏四月乙酉, folio 11b–12a). According to Jin Qizong, “From then on, for two hundred years, the study of Jurchen history and culture became a forbidden domain, and the Jurchen script was no exception. Only in the mid-Qing period, when literary restrictions gradually eased, did the Jurchen script begin to attract scholarly attention” (Jin Qizong 1984, p. 345).

However, the operation of a Jurchen Bureau from 1644 to 1658 within the Four Translations Bureau contradicts an immediate or absolute taboo, suggesting that practical needs for managing Jurchen-related communications persisted. Nevertheless, the reasons for the existence of such a bureau during the early Qing are definitely not clear. Despite renaming, Jurchens and Manchus remained the same ethnic group, and the Manchu language, as a descendant of the historical Jurchen language known from written monuments, was the language of the Jurchens in this period, possibly with dialectal variations (Jin Qizong 1984, pp. 359–360). Some scholars suggest the 1658 abolition of the Jurchen and Tartar Bureaus stemmed primarily from the Jurchen language's evolution into the Manchu language and widespread Manchu proficiency in Mongolian, rendering translation unnecessary, alongside administrative streamlining that reduced the ten bureaus to eight (Chunhua et al. 2018, p. 383). This explanation, however, raises further questions, such as why the bureau was established (or continued from Ming's institution) at all and maintained for a whole 14 years if it was not necessary. Perhaps it persisted as an inertial continuation of Ming tradition, but what was the bureau doing during this time? Were they translating texts (current or historical) of the same language between the Manchu script, already in use by then, and the Jurchen script, or vice versa? Or from this language into others? Or had the Jurchen script already fallen out of use entirely?

must be used with caution for evidential purposes. Thus, cluster structures are often harder to write and perceive, while ideographs may be simpler, as expressing the same content requires more characters, additional strokes, and results in longer text. Conversely, phonetic writing is better suited to agglutinative languages like Khitan (thus “simpler”) than ideographic script. Moreover, individual graphemes in clusters may appear “smaller” (“simpler”), while ideographs are “larger” (“complex”), yet clusters containing graphemes can be “larger” and ideographs “smaller” in comparison. Perhaps only the visual impression of cluster-based text, with characters appearing “smaller” because they are written more finely to fit multiple graphemes in blocks within a line, contrasted with ideographic text, whose characters look “larger” by its nature as individually written glyphs, lacks a consistent counterargument.

The hypothesis that the Khitan Large and Small Script of Chinese sources corresponds to a specific script type (of the two) observed in inscriptions is strongly supported by evidence: Chinese sources³⁷ report that the Large Script’s repertoire includes several thousand characters, and Khitan sources name it the Large Seal (or Great Ritual) Script (KLS: 天禿脊伏; KSS: *m.o SEAL.en us.gi* 𐰽𐰺𐰍 𐰽𐰺𐰍 𐰽𐰺𐰍; back Chinese translation: *Dà yìn zhī zì* 大印之字 or *Dà lǐ zhī zì* 大禮之字). In contrast, Yelü Diela (耶律迭剌) developed the Khitan Small Script after studying the Uyghur language and script, possibly influenced by them, with fewer but comprehensive characters.³⁸ Since all known Khitan seals bear inscriptions in one type of script, written in the seal writing style (*zhuàn shū* 篆書) known from Chinese calligraphy, and its repertoire, identified across the entire corpus of inscriptions, far exceeds that of the other type, a scholarly consensus on two types of Khitan script has been reached. Interestingly, characters of the other type (i.e., Khitan Small Script) may also have been written in seal writing style, as evidenced by some epitaph inscriptions, though no seals with this script have been found (see WG2 N4725R, Section 3.4). Non-genuine objects produced for the antiquary mass market are not considered in this analysis.

Jurchen texts predominantly feature one script type, which, sharing the Khitan Large Script’s blend of logographic and phonetic elements, scholars designate as Jurchen Large Script. Yet, these texts reveal variations in repertoire and spelling over time. If scholars are correct in supposing that these differences reflect the evolution of a single writing system over time, rather than indicating the existence of distinct scripts, then it may have developed in three stages: initially mostly logographic in early texts (~1119), it featured a mixture of logographic and phonetic characters in Jin dynasty inscriptions, and by the Ming dynasty, it appeared nearly syllabo-phonetic with a small amount of logographic characters,

³⁷ *New History of the Five Dynasties* (*Xīn Wǔdài shǐ* 新五代史), Chapter 72: 至阿保機，稍并服旁諸小國，而多用漢人，漢人教之以隸書之半增損之，作文字數千，以代刻木之約; *Records of the Khitan State* (*Qidān guó zhì* 契丹國志), Chapter 1: [丙戌天贊六年。]渤海既平，乃製契丹文字三千餘言。

History of Liao, Chapter 64: [名字:]迭剌，字雲獨昆。…[功:]性敏給。太祖曰：「迭剌之智，卒然圖功，吾所不及；緩以謀事，不如我。」回鶻使至，無能通其語者，太后謂太祖曰：「迭剌聰敏可使。」遣逐之。相從二旬，能習其言與書，因制契丹小字，數少而該貫。

³⁸ Khitan sources name the Khitan Small Script as the Middle (Secondary) Seal (Ritual) Script (KSS: *dau.dû SEAL.en us.gi* 𐰽𐰺𐰍 𐰽𐰺𐰍 𐰽𐰺𐰍; back Chinese translation: *Zhòng yìn zhī zì* 仲印之字 or *Fù lǐ zhī zì* 副禮之字).

suggesting a potential shift toward phonetic representation, possibly driven by grammatical needs (see Kane 1989, pp. 8–10; cf. Kane & Miyake 2024, p. 86). In contrast, inscriptions tentatively identified as Jurchen Small Script, which are exceedingly rare, may reflect the syllabic cluster structure of the Khitan Small Script. Many researchers refer broadly to all Jurchen texts as Jurchen script (*Nǚzhēnzì* 女真字), bypassing the distinctions between Large and Small Scripts. This scholarly consensus now enables references in Chinese sources to be reliably matched to specific inscription types, resolving the terminology issue for practical purposes.

3.7. Surviving Evidence

The Jurchen Large Script dominates surviving texts, comprehensively documented across over 150 pages in WG2 N5207, N5261R, and N5278 (see bibliography), which detail its 914 ideographs and 51 radicals under review for encoding in ISO/IEC 10646 and Unicode Standards as “Jurchen Script.” In contrast, evidence for the Jurchen Small Script, the focus of this proposal, is scarce, confined primarily to inscriptions on *páizǐ* (牌子, travel passes or symbols of authority). Aisin-Gioro Ulhicun (2009a) identifies these as examples of Jurchen Small Script and concludes that “after Emperor Xizong was assassinated [in 1150], the Jurchen Small Script, due to its practical value being far inferior to that of the Jurchen Large Script, was ultimately eliminated by history.”³⁹ The *History of Jin* does not explicitly address the cessation of the Small Script but attests to its active use, as outlined in Section 3.4. In our view, this extensive use challenges the vague notion of its “elimination by history” and instead raises questions about why so few archaeological monuments bearing the Small Script, primarily limited to *páizǐ*, have been found, assuming their identification is correct. If Aisin-Gioro’s conclusion is refined to apply to written monuments postdating the Jin dynasty (1234), when surviving Jurchen texts appear solely in Large Script, it could plausibly account for the scarcity of Small Script materials among Jurchen script finds. The *páizǐ* inscriptions, critical for elucidating the Small Script’s characteristics, will be analyzed in detail below.

³⁹ Some English-language sources misinterpret Aisin-Gioro Ulhicun’s (2009a, p. 35) conclusion cited above, falsely attributing to her the claim that the Jurchen Small Script was used only during the last five years of Emperor Xizong’s reign (i.e., 1145–1150) and that after his murder in a coup d’état the Jin court reverted to the Large Script (see, for example, English Wikipedia, s.v. “[Jurchen script](#),” and WG2 N5207, p. 6). Aisin-Gioro does not specify such a limited timeframe for the Small Script’s use, nor does she suggest an immediate cessation or an active decision by the Jin court to abandon it in favour of the Large Script. Her phrase “ultimately eliminated by history” implies a more gradual decline due to its perceived lack of practical value.

Aisin-Gioro argues that while the Jurchen Large Script developed within two or three decades into a clear and convenient system by inheriting logographic and phonetic features of Khitan Large and Small Scripts respectively (cf. Section 3.6), the Jurchen Small Script, created by Emperor Xizong and evidenced by *páizǐ* inscriptions, merely imitated the cumbersome Khitan Small Script, retaining its drawback of “complex” writing. Unlike the crucial supplementary role Khitan Small Script played for Khitan Large Script, the Jurchen Small Script lacked comparable significance to the Jurchen Large Script, which explains her assessment of its inferior practical value (Aisin-Gioro 2009a, p. 35).

4. Evidence for the Jurchen Small Script

4.1. Archaeological Finds

Evidence for the Jurchen Small Script comes from inscriptions on gold, silver, and wooden *páizi* found in China between 1972 and 2007, as interpreted by Aisin-Gioro Ulhicun (2009a).

1) Chengde, Hebei (1972), see Figs. 1 and 2: A gold and a silver *páizi* were discovered near Laoyangpo Cliff, Shenshuihe, Chengde (承德). Both are rectangular with rounded edges, bearing identical inscriptions: a *huāyā* 花押 symbol 主 at the top followed by two clusters of three characters each (Cluster 1: 扎力示; Cluster 2: 委长企), engraved in double-contour incised style (*yīnwén* 陰文) with gilt inlays on the silver *páizi*. The gold *páizi* measures 21 cm long, 6.2 cm wide, 0.3 cm thick, weighs 475 g, with 98% gold purity. The silver *páizi* measures 20.9 cm long, 6.1 cm wide, 0.3 cm thick, weighs 383 g. Both have a circular perforation (1.0 cm inner diameter, 1.4 cm depth; outer rim 2.5 cm for gold, 2.2 cm for silver) with a raised rim. They are housed at the Chengde City Museum (*Chéngdé shì bówùguǎn* 承德市博物館). **Additional documentation:** Zheng Shaozong 1974; He Xige 1980; Li Hui 2004.

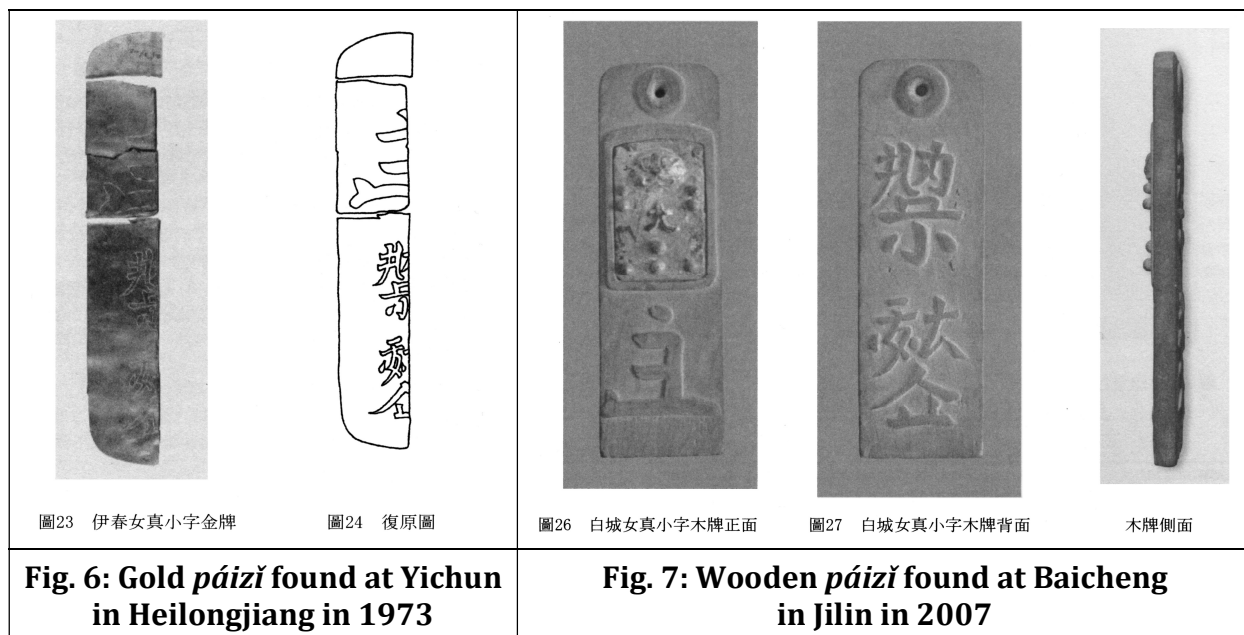
2) Yichun, Heilongjiang (1973), see Fig. 6: A gold *páizi* was unearthed in Hengshantun, Dafeng District, Yichun (伊春).⁴⁰ Found intact, wrapped in silk and gold foil, it was initially identical in form and inscription to the Chengde *páizi* but was later cut into pieces, with only the left half surviving (24.7 cm long, 3.3 cm wide, 186.4 g, 90% gold purity). It lacks a perforation and is excluded from analysis due to its fragmentary state and the inability to examine the full inscription. The fragment is housed at the Heilongjiang Provincial Museum (*Hēilóngjiāng shěng bówùguǎn* 黑龍江省博物館) in Harbin. **Additional documentation:** Tan Yingjie 1979; Wang Dongjia, Wei Guozhong 1980a, 1980b, n.d.; He Xige 1980; Li Hui 2004.

3) Dehui, Jilin (1980s), see Fig. 3: A silver *páizi* was found at the ancient city site of Lishuyuanzi, Dafangshen, Dehui (德惠). Identical in form and inscription to the Chengde *páizi*, it bears a *huāyā* and six characters in two clusters. It measures 21.5 cm long, 6.4 cm wide, 0.2 cm thick, weighs 348.8 g, with rounded edges and a circular perforation (1.1 cm inner diameter, 2.8 cm outer rim diameter, 1.2 cm depth, with raised rim). It is housed at the Jilin Provincial Museum (*Jílín shěng bówùguǎn* 吉林省博物館) in Changchun. **Additional documentation:** Wang Ze 1985, n.d.; Zou Shikui 1986; Li Hui 2004.

4) Baicheng, Jilin (2007), see Fig. 7: A wooden *páizi* was reportedly found at the Liao-Jin ancient city site of Chengsijia, Baicheng (白城). It measures 15.5 cm long, 4.9 cm wide, 0.9 cm thick (1.5 cm with carvings), weighs 60 g, with a circular perforation (0.45 cm diameter, raised rim 2 cm diameter, 0.1 cm high, 1.2 cm from center to top edge, 0.25 cm from rim edge to top). The front bears a *huāyā* in *yángwén* (陽文) relief and a gilt copper plate (5.6 cm × 3.5 cm) with a beast-head ornament, eight raised decorative studs, and a

⁴⁰ According to Tan Yingjie (1979, p. 63), the discovery occurred in 1975, while other sources indicate 1973.

character resembling Chinese *dà* 大 ‘great; big’ in *yángwén* relief. The back bears an inscription in *yángwén* relief, identical to those from Chengde and Dehui. However, Aisin-Gioro suggests that the second character 力 in Cluster 1 slightly differs in form, represented as 𠂔 (Aisin-Gioro 2009a, p. 28). We propose that the character is, in fact, identical and does not differ in form. The *páizi* is housed in the privately-run Longjiang Dragon Museum (*Lóngjiāng lóng bówùguǎn* 龍江龍博物館) in Harbin. We consider it with caution.



Source: Aisin-Gioro 2009a, p. 36, ill. 23, 24, 26, 27

5) Shuangcheng, Heilongjiang (2007), see Fig. 8: A gold *páizi* was reportedly discovered southwest of Wanlong Reservoir, Shuangcheng (雙城). It measures 11.8 cm long, 4.4 cm wide, 0.4 cm thick (0.6 cm with carvings), weighs 340 g, with 90% gold purity. The front bears a *huāyā* and six characters, engraved with fine dotted lines in double-contour incised style (*yīnwén*), with a circular perforation (0.9 cm diameter) lacking a raised rim. Cluster 1 (因东一) differs from other *páizi*, yielding three unique characters, while Cluster 2 matches those of Chengde and Dehui. The back features a left-facing dragon relief, resembling a right-facing dragon on a Khitan Large Script gilt copper *páizi* (契丹大字鑲金銅牌) from Inner Mongolia. Its craftsmanship and highly elaborate dragon relief raise authenticity concerns. The same temporal doubts apply to the Khitan *páizi*, as we have been unable to identify the specific find referenced, though such questions lie beyond the scope of this proposal. The *páizi* is housed in the same privately-run Longjiang Dragon Museum (*Lóngjiāng lóng bówùguǎn* 龍江龍博物館) in Harbin. We consider it with caution. **Additional documentation for entries 4 and 5:** studied by Aisin-Gioro (2009a) for the first time; no other studies are known to us; mentioned without concerns by Kane & Miyake (2024, pp. 86–87).

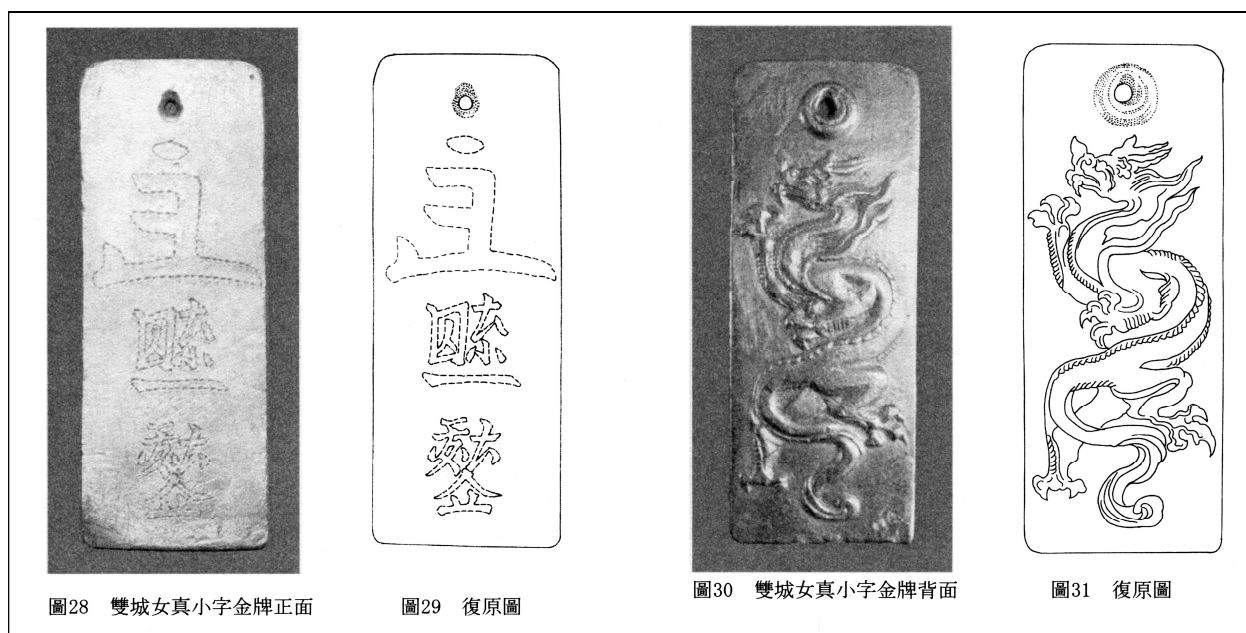


Fig. 8: Gold *pǎizǐ* found at Shuangcheng in Jilin in 2007

Source: Aisin-Gioro 2009a, p. 37, ill. 28, 29, 30, 31

This proposal prioritizes two *pǎizǐ*—Chengde (1972) and Dehui (1980s)—providing six unique characters. The Yichun *pǎizǐ* (1973) is excluded from analysis due to its fragmentary state and inability to examine the full inscription. Other finds (Baicheng 2007, Shuangcheng 2007) are noted but treated with caution pending further study.

4.2 Aisin-Gioro Ulhicun's Analysis

Aisin-Gioro Ulhicun's (2009a) study, provides the primary scholarly basis for identifying the *páizi* inscriptions as Jurchen Small Script. Building on the 1962 hypothesis of her grandfather Jin Guangping (金光平, Aisin-Gioro Hengxu, 1899–1966) that surviving Jurchen texts are Large Script and that Small Script likely resembles Khitan Small Script's syllabic structure, Aisin-Gioro argues that the *páizi* inscriptions confirm this. She presents five key arguments:

1) Similarity to Jurchen Large Script Characters: Four of the nine characters across the *páizi* resemble Jurchen Large Script characters: Cluster 1, Sign 1 扎 (扎) resembles 扎; Cluster 1, Sign 2 力 (力) resembles 力; Cluster 2, Sign 1 𠂔 (𠂔) resembles 𠂔; and Cluster 2, Sign 2 𠂔 (𠂔) resembles 𠂔's cursive form.⁴¹ These four resembling characters are from the *Jurchen Script Character Book* (see Section 3.4). This suggests a Jurchen script system, distinct from Khitan scripts. The Shuangcheng (2007) *páizi*'s Cluster 1, Sign 3 (一) appears in Jurchen Large, Khitan Large, and Khitan Small Scripts as a logograph, but its position as a final sign in the cluster indicates a phonetic role, ruling out Khitan script classification.

2) Structural Influence from Khitan Small Script: The inscriptions' structure—two clusters of three characters—mirrors a typical Khitan Small Script's method of spelling a word as a cluster of multiple phonetic characters, three in this case, arranged with two characters above and one below. Aisin-Gioro argues that Jurchen Small Script, created in 1138 under Emperor Xizong, was modelled on Khitan Small Script, as indicated by its name “Small Script” in the *History of Jin*. She further cites the evidence of Qian Daxin, who, in his *Supplement to the Record of Arts and Letters of the History of Yuan*, mentions a now-lost work titled *Nǚzhí zìmǔ* (女直字母), which suggests the existence of a Jurchen writing system consisting of “character mothers” (*zìmǔ* 字母), likely phonetic or syllabic components.⁴² As the Jurchen Large Script does not constitute a *zìmǔ* system, it is reasonable to infer that this work pertains to the Jurchen Small Script. Since the Khitan Small Script consists of numerous mostly phonetic characters resembling a *zìmǔ* system, combined in a left-to-right and top-to-

⁴¹ Characters in parentheses are facsimile glyphs from Aisin-Gioro (2009a, p. 29). Resemblance is also shown based on such glyphs from this source, though we could not always verify their forms in the Jurchen Large Script text (*Jurchen Script Character Book*) cited by the author. Additionally, the published version of her article (2009a) differs from a [PDF](#) version, internally dated to 2012 and previously available on her personal page on the Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University website, which was removed in late summer 2021. For example, the PDF version states (p. 3) that Cluster 1, Sign 1 扎 (扎) resembles 扎 from *Qingyuánjùn Nǚzhēn guóshū bēi* 慶源郡女真國書碑, differing from the published version in glyph form and source (however, we observe character 扎 in a rubbing of that text, not 扎). Since it is the author's responsibility to clarify such matters for readers, we have not undertaken textological analysis to investigate whether the PDF represents an improved version or an inadvertent revision of an earlier draft. We follow the published version.

⁴² *Supplement to the Record of Arts and Letters of the History of Yuan* (Bǔ Yuán shǐ yìwén zhì 補元史藝文志), Chapter 1, *Yìyǔ lèi* 譯語類: ○女直字盤古書。○女直字家語。○女直字太公書。○女直字伍子胥書。○女直字孫臏書。○女直字黃氏女書。○女直字百家姓。○女直字母。以上遼、金。

bottom order to form words, it is likely that the Jurchen Small Script follows the same principle for word formation, which in turn is consistent with the *páizǐ* inscriptions and confirms their identity as Jurchen Small Script. This can be expanded to note that, while the *páizǐ* inscriptions employ three-character structures, Khitan Small Script clusters can comprise varying numbers of phonetic characters, suggesting that Jurchen Small Script clusters could similarly vary in size beyond the observed three-character arrangement.

3) Presence of Jin Imperial Signature (*huāyā* 花押): The *huāyā* symbol 𐰢 above the inscriptions, resembling Chinese character *zhǔ* 主 “monarch,” matches descriptions in Song dynasty sources of Jin dynasty *páizǐ* bearing Emperor Taizu’s signature mark (*Āgǔdǎ huāyā* 阿骨打花押).⁴³ This *huāyā* also appears on a 1976 Russian silver *páizǐ* with Jurchen Large Script, but not on Liao dynasty Khitan *páizǐ*, confirming a Jin dynasty origin (see Section 4.3 for details).

4) Archaeological Dating Evidence: The Yichun *páizǐ* (1973) was unearthed simultaneously with a *Zhènglóng tōngbǎo* 正隆通寶 coin, produced between 1158–1161 during the reign of the Prince of Hailing (*History of Jin*, Chapter 48),⁴⁴ postdating the Jurchen Small Script’s creation in 1138. The identical inscriptions on other *páizǐ* (except Shuangcheng’s Cluster 1) suggest a similar timeframe, aligning with the *History of Jin*’s record of new gold and silver *páizǐ* recast in the 5th year of Huangtong (皇統五年, 1145) (Chapter 58).

5) Historical Context of *Páizǐ* Production: The initial production of gold *páizǐ*, absent from Liao and Song records, began in the 9th month of the 2nd year of Shouguo (收國二年, 1116) under Emperor Taizu (Aguda), as noted in the *History of Jin*, followed by

⁴³ The identification of the *huāyā* as Jin Taizu Aguda’s signature mark is based on descriptions in two primary Song sources:

Fan Chengda’s (範成大, 1126–1193) *Record of Grasping the Reins* (*Lǎn pèi lù* 攬轡錄) describes Jin *páizǐ*, stating: “According to northern barbarians (Jin) custom, those going on missions must carry *páizǐ*; there were distinctions of gold, silver, and wood. On it [the *páizǐ*] there was Jurchen writing ‘By imperial decree, urgently delivered’ characters, and Aguda’s *huāyā*” (虜法，出使者必帶牌，有金、銀、木之別。上有女真書「准敕急遞」字，及阿骨打花押). The record dated 1170 ([乾道六年]八月戊午).

Zhou Hui’s (周輝, 1127–?) *Record of the Northbound Cart Journey* (*Běi yuán lù* 北轅錄) likewise states regarding Jin envoys’ silver *páizǐ*: “The *páizǐ*’s appearance was like a *fāngxiǎng*; on it were four characters in foreign writing: ‘Urgent delivery.’ Above there was an imperial signature (御押), its shape like the [Chinese] character *zhǔ* 主 (‘monarch’) (牌樣如方響，上有蕃書「急速走遞」四字。上有御押，其狀如「主」字). The record dated 1177 ([淳熙四年正月]二十九日).

⁴⁴ *History of Jin*, Chapter 48: [海陵庶人貞元]三年二月，中都置錢監二，東曰寶源，西曰寶豐。京兆置監一，曰利用。三監鑄錢。文曰「正隆通寶」，輕重如宋小平錢，而肉好字文峻整過之，與舊錢通用。……[世宗大定]十八年，代州立監鑄錢，命震武軍節度使李天吉、知保德軍事高季孫往監之，而所鑄斑駁黑澀不可用，詔削天吉、季孫等官兩階，解職，仍杖季孫八十。更命工部郎中張大節、吏部員外郎麻珪監鑄。其錢文曰「大定通寶」，字文肉好又勝正隆之制，世傳其錢料微用銀云。[大定]十九年，始鑄至萬六千餘貫。[大定]二十年，詔先以五千進呈，而後命與舊錢並用。

silver and wooden *páizi* (Chapters 2 and 58).⁴⁵ These are designated credential *páizi* of the dynasty's founding (*guóchū zhī xìn pái* 國初之信牌), marking their issuance during the Jin's early years. As gold *páizi* preceded the Jurchen Large Script's creation in 1119, their inscriptions could theoretically have used Khitan script (cf. Section 3.1), though no such examples have been found. The *History of Jin* does not provide production dates for subsequent silver and wooden *páizi*, but their *guóchū zhī xìn pái* designation and a silver *páizi* found in Russia, inscribed with "Trust of the Country" (*guó zhī xìn* 國之信) in Jurchen Large Script (see Section 4.3), suggest they were produced between the Jurchen Large Script's establishment in 1119 and the recasting of gold and silver *páizi* in the 5th year of Huangtong (皇統五年, 1145), employing Jurchen Large Script during this period. The 1145 recasting likely adopted the Jurchen Small Script, established in 1138. *Páizi* described in Song records from 1170 and 1177 (see Note 43) are associated with these recast *páizi* in Jurchen Small Script, consistent with the finds examined here. In contrast, Chinese sources on the Liao only document silver *páizi*, with no textual or archaeological evidence of gold ones.⁴⁶ This distinction places gold *páizi* finds in the Jin dynasty and, with shared inscriptions, likewise assigns silver ones to that era.

Aisin-Gioro Ulhicun summarizes that, following the establishment of the Jin dynasty, Emperor Taizu commissioned Wanyan Xiyin to create the Jurchen Large Script, resulting in the *Jurchen Character Book*, a compilation of characters used to promote Jurchen literacy (see Section 3.4). Inscriptions on credential *páizi* (信牌) were written in this script. Emperor Xizong, however, developed the Jurchen Small Script in 1138, shortly after his ascension in 1135, modeling it on the Khitan Small Script with the intent to undermine Taizu's established Jurchen cultural legacy, rather than to pursue cultural reform. The reissuing of gold and silver *páizi* in the 5th year of Huangtong (皇統五年, 1145) constituted a concrete manifestation of this intent, coinciding with the first documented use of Jurchen Small Script (see Section 3.3) and aiming to supplant the Jurchen Large Script in official contexts. These actions—the creation of the Jurchen Small Script and the reissuing of *páizi*—form a causally linked sequence that, when analyzed together, supports her reasoning. This analysis leads to her conclusion that the inscriptions on the *páizi* finds are in Jurchen Small Script, distinct from Jurchen Large Script or Khitan scripts.

⁴⁵ *History of Jin*, Chapter 2: [收國二年]九月己亥，上獵近郊。乙巳，南路都統斡魯來見于婆盧買水。始製金牌; Chapter 58: 符制。初，穆宗之前，諸部長各刻信牌，交互馳驛，訊事擾人。太祖獻議，自非穆宗之命，擅製牌號者置重法。自是，號令始一。收國二年九月，始製金牌，後又有銀牌、木牌之制，蓋金牌以授萬戶，銀牌以授猛安，木牌則謀克、蒲輦所佩者也。故國初與空名宣頭付軍帥，以為功賞。遞牌，即國初之信牌也，至皇統五年三月，復更造金銀牌，其制皆不傳。大定二十九年，製綠油紅字者，尚書省文字省遞用之。朱漆金字者，勅遞用之。並左右司掌之，有合遞文字，則牌送各部，付馬鋪轉遞，日行二百五十裡。如臺部別奉聖旨文字，亦給如上制。

⁴⁶ *History of Liao*, Chapter 57: 銀牌二百面，長尺，刻以國字，文曰「宜速」，又曰「敕走馬牌」。國有重事，皇帝以牌親授使者，手割給驛馬若干。驛馬闕，取它馬代。法，晝夜馳七百里，其次五百里。所至如天子親臨，須索更易，無敢違者。使回，皇帝親受之，手封牌印郎君收掌; Chapter 34: 鑄金魚符，調發軍馬。其捉馬及傳命有銀牌二百。 *Records of the Khitan State*, Chapter 25: 銀牌。銀牌形如方響，刻蕃書「宜速」二字，使者執牌馳馬，日行數百里，牌所至，如國主親到，需索更易，無敢違者。

Aisin-Gioro additionally suggests the inscriptions may represent two words, possibly translating to “urgent delivery” (*jísù* 急速 or *jídì* 急遞), based on Song sources describing Jin *páizǐ* with terms like *jísù zǒudì* 急速走遞 (*Record of the Northbound Cart Journey*) or *zhǔnchì jísù* 準敕急速 (i.e., *zhǔnchì jídì* 准敕急遞) (*Record of Grasping the Reins*), and Liao *páizǐ* with *yísù* 宜速 (*History of Liao*) (see Notes 43 and 46). However, she indicates that the phonetic values of most signs are unclear, and the exact translation remains speculative due to limited evidence. The presence of only six characters, with some unattested in other corpora, underscores the challenge of definitive interpretation.



Fig. 9: Silver *páizǐ* found at the Shaiga site in Russia in 1976

4.3. Comparison with Jurchen Large Script *Páizi*

In 1976, a silver *páizi* (see Fig. 9) was excavated at the Shaiga site,⁴⁷ an ancient settlement in Primorsky Krai, Russia, which Russian archaeologists associate with the Jurchen Eastern Xia period (1215–1233, *Dōng Xià* 東夏) (Artemyeva 2021). Measuring 22.2 cm long, 6.5 cm wide, and 0.3 cm thick, and weighing slightly more than 384 g, with a perforation, the *páizi* likely belongs to this period, based on the site's archaeological context and historical sources like the *Azuma Kagami* (吾妻鏡), which records an event from 1224 and reproduces the full inscription of a similar *páizi* (Ivliev 2000, p. 186).⁴⁸ It is housed at the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography of the Peoples of the Far East, FEB RAS in Vladivostok (Russia) (see Museum Booklet 2021, p. 25).

The *páizi* features five Jurchen Large Script characters arranged in a block-like pattern: two horizontal pairs (*gurun* 國土, meaning “country; state” and *xada-xun* 秀旻, meaning “trust”) with a genitive suffix (*ni* 尼) placed vertically between them, reading *gurun ni xada-xun* 國土尼秀旻, or “Trust of the Country” (back Chinese translation: *guó zhī xìn* 國之信).

In the upper part of the *páizi*, above the inscription, is inscribed a sign 𐰚. Based on historical accounts (see Note 43), this sign can be identified as a *huāyā* symbol 花押 and possibly attributed to Emperor Taizu (Aguda) as his signature mark (*yùya* 御押), which, according to the same sources, should somewhat resemble the Chinese character *zhǔ* 主 (“monarch”). This *huāyā* aligns stylistically with symbols 𐰚 found on Jurchen Small Script *páizi* but differs in execution. Obviously, the graphic form of the latter fits the description of similarity to character *zhǔ* 主 better. The presence of this *huāyā* serves as a key criterion for attributing *páizi* to the Jin dynasty and supports the identification of the script found on them as Jurchen. As this mark is absent from both the archaeological record (claimed Liao dynasty *páizi*, yet unverified; see Section 4.6) and historical sources (such as the *History of Liao*) concerning the Liao dynasty, its presence thus helps differentiate Jin *páizi* from those of the Liao. Shavkunov et al. (1978) additionally proposed that this sign is a cursive form of the Jurchen Large Script character *mingan* 𐰚 (‘thousand’). This identification was

⁴⁷ The site's Russian name is Шайгинское городище (Shaiginskoye Gorodishche), comprising the noun городище (‘fortified site’ or ‘site of ancient settlement’) and the adjective шайгинское. This adjective is derived from the river name Shaiga (Шайга, also spelled Шейха; recorded under other name in various forms including Шанзуйза, Шантуйза, Шантуйца, Шанзунза in Russian sources from the late 19th to mid-20th century; now the Ratnaya River, p. Ратная), indicating the site's location by/near the river or association with the related area. In English, the name is often misrepresented. Common incorrect renderings include “Shaigino” (a distinct Russian placename) (e.g., Wikimedia Commons “[Shaigino-Jurchen-paizi.png](#),” WG2 N5207, p. 21, N5261R, p. 7) and “Šaigin” (Kane 1989, pp. 73–74). While calques like “Shaiginsky Site” (Artemyeva 2021) or “Shaiginskoye Settlement” correctly reflect the Russian adjective + noun structure, using the adjectival component alone (commonly rendered as “Shaiginsky” or “Shaiginskoye”) is incorrect. This form is grammatically incomplete without a head noun and does not represent a standalone geographical entity. Given the complexities of calqued names and the etymological origin of the Russian name, we propose using the designation *Shaiga site*, which resolves these issues. Cf. with Chinese translation *Sàijiā gǔchéng* 賽加古城 (Jurchen Antiquities 2013).

⁴⁸ For a detailed review of sources on the Jurchen *páizi* in the *Azuma Kagami*, see Fujita 2007.

supported by the account in the *History of Jin* (Chapter 58; see Note 45) stating that silver *páizi* were granted to the *měng'ān* (猛安), a Jurchen hereditary military unit. The term *měng'ān* 猛安 transcribed the Jurchen word *mingan* 猛, which in Jurchen referred to both the number ‘thousand’ and the ‘thousand-household’ unit (usually translated into Chinese as *qiān hù* 千戶).⁴⁹

Since its discovery and publication (Shavkunov 1977), the *páizi*’s inscription has been central to scholarship, particularly regarding its script identification and interpretation. In 1978, Russian researchers first identified the *páizi* as bearing Jurchen Large Script, dated it to the Jin dynasty, and provided a complete reading and interpretation of the inscription (Shavkunov et al. 1978).⁵⁰ Later publications of the same scholars refined the dating to Eastern Xia (Ivliev 2000) and introduced phonetic adjustments (Pevnov 1986, 1989), without altering the still-valid initial findings.

Subsequent international studies have sparked widespread discussion, including comparisons with *páizi* potentially inscribed in Jurchen Small Script. For instance, Kiyose Gisaburō (1997, p. 40)⁵¹ argued that the *páizi*’s inscription combines Jurchen Large and Small Scripts, interpreting the “compound” pairs (國土, 秀晃) as Small Script and the genitive suffix (某) as Large Script, based on a misinterpretation of the *History of Jin*, which notes the concurrent use of both scripts.⁵² Aisin-Gioro Ulhicun (2009a) counters this, arguing that all five characters match Jurchen Large Script forms in the *Jurchen Script Character Book*, a partially preserved text based on Wanyan Xiyin’s 1119 original work (see Section 3.4). She asserts that if the *páizi* were in Small Script, the *Jurchen Script Character Book*, containing the same characters, would also have to be in Small Script, which is “absurd” since it derives from the work of the Jurchen Large Script’s inventor. She attributes the *páizi*’s block-like arrangement to a scribal practice for marking word boundaries or, more practically, to fit characters in the limited space of *páizi*. According to her, this grouping method is found in other Jurchen Large Script inscriptions, such as one documented by Wang Shizhen (王世貞, 1529–1593) in the *Four-Category Writings of the Mountain Hermit from Yanzhou* (see Section 4.4) and a poem of Aotun Liangbi (Ao tun jun tci-in 叟奚 爻某爻) carved on stone (*Àotún Liángbì shī shíkè* 奧屯良弼詩石刻) (see Fig. 10).

⁴⁹ However, Ivliev (2000, pp. 182–184), revisiting the same historical accounts (*Record of Grasping the Reins* and *Record of the Northbound Cart Journey*, see Note 43), questioned their own earlier interpretation of the sign as representing ‘thousand,’ proposing instead that it likely serves as an imperial designation or the emperor’s personal signature mark, thus supporting its identification as a *huāyā* symbol.

⁵⁰ Their interpretation relied on the *Sino-Jurchen Vocabulary* published by W. Grube in 1896 (see Note 24).

⁵¹ Kiyose Gisaburō initially proposed that characters in *Azuma Kagami* and the *Fang Family Ink-Cake Compendium* (see below) may be Jurchen Small Script, likening their structure to that of the Khitan Small Script (Kiyose 1973a, p. 16; 1973b, p. 11; 1977, pp. 27–28). He later added the Shaiga *páizi* inscription to this category, asserting it must be Jurchen Small Script (Kiyose 1984, p. 85; 1991, pp. 373–374; 2001, pp. 36–37).

⁵² *History of Jin* (Chapter 73, Biography of Wanyan Xiyin): “Later, [Emperor] Xizong also created a Jurchen script, used concurrently with Xiyin’s script. Xiyin’s creation was called the Jurchen Large Script, and Xizong’s was called the Jurchen Small Script” (其後熙宗亦製女直字，與希尹所製字俱行用。希尹所撰謂之女直大字，熙宗所撰謂之小字).

The *Jurchen Script Character Book* similarly groups semantic units without spaces (see Fig. 5), as evidenced by 30 two-character words among 496 deciphered by 2009, predating the Small Script's creation in 1138 and ruling out script mixing. By these points collectively she reaffirms that the *páizi* is written in Jurchen Large Script.

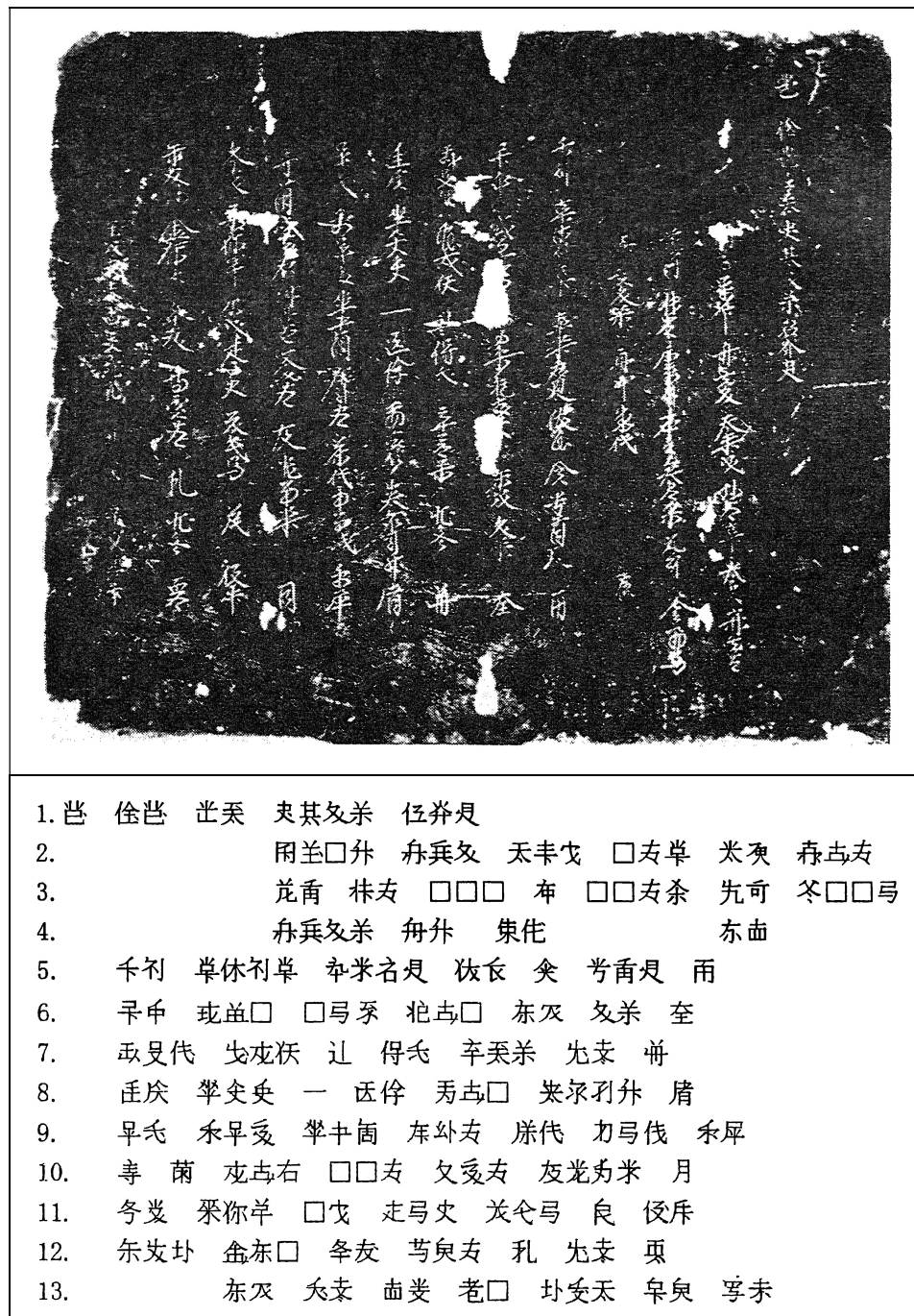


Fig. 10: Jurchen poetic inscription of Aotun Liangbi and its transcription

Source: Jin Guangping & Jin Qizong 1980 (rubbing); Aisin-Gioro 2002, pp. 212–213 (transcription)

Aisin-Gioro also notes interesting palaeographic features in the writing of the characters 國 and 秀. Although these forms are presented in the *Jurchen Script Character Book*, in monumental stone inscriptions they usually appear in the forms 圉 and 秀, respectively, which are accepted as their standard forms in the proposal for encoding the Jurchen [Large] Script (WG2 N5261R). While her work is valuable, Aisin-Gioro Ulhicun omits some prior literature, which may give the impression of originality for certain conclusions that were previously known. For instance, the idea that the inscription's arrangement reflects space constraints was advanced by Yuri Knorozov (1922–1999) and supported by Alexander Pevnov (1989, pp. 60–61), and possibly appeared before in other scholars' work.⁵³ As our focus is not on verifying such contributions or conducting a comprehensive historiographical review, we primarily draw on her work without evaluating competing scholarly perspectives on the inscription.

Unlike Small Script *páizi*, which use rigid three-character clusters inspired by Khitan Small Script, this *páizi*'s flexible groupings highlight its distinctiveness, underscoring the need to encode Jurchen Small Script *páizi* characters separately.

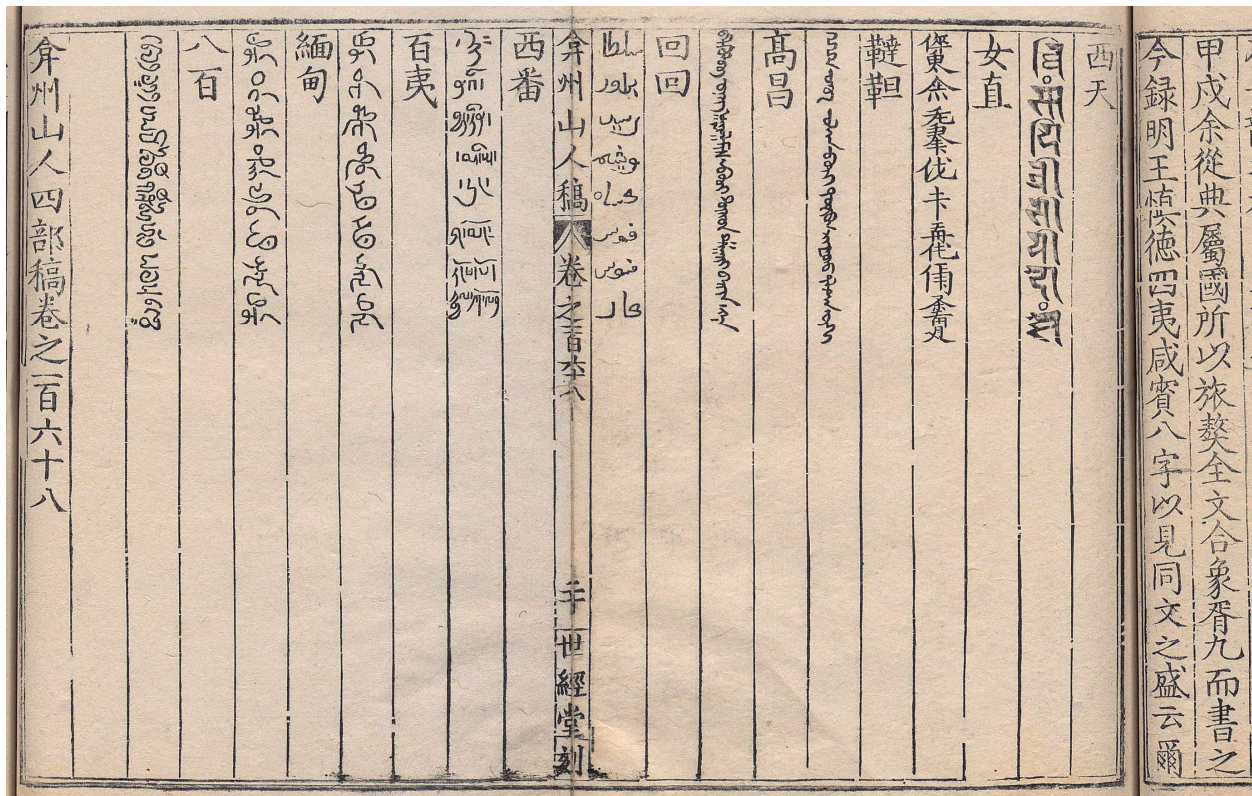


Fig. 11: Inscription in nine scripts in Wang Shizhen's *Four-Category Writings*

Source: *Yǎnzhōu shānrén sìbù gǎo* (Chapter 168, folio 19b, 20a–20b), National Archives of Japan, [317-0041](#)

⁵³ Other studies of *páizi* not cited here include Yan Hua 1979, Liu Fengzhu 1980, He Xige 1980, Li Hui 2004.

4.4. Jurchen Large Script Inscription in Wang Shizhen *Four-Category Writings*

In the *Four-Category Writings of the Mountain Hermit from Yanzhou* (Yǎnzhōu shānrén sìbù gǎo 弇州山人四部稿), a collection of poetry and prose by Wang Shizhen (王世貞, 1526–1590), known in several printings and appearing around 1577, an unusual Jurchen inscription is found, identified to be written in the Jurchen Large Script. This inscription illustrates the possibility of grouping Jurchen characters into “clusters” for multi-character words, exemplified by their vertical arrangement, unlike the horizontal grouping in a *páizǐ* inscription discussed in Section 4.3.

The history of this inscription is noteworthy and is detailed in two of Wang Shizhen’s writings included in the collection (Chapter 168, *Wǎnwěi yúbiān* 宛委餘編十三, and Chapter 132 *Mòjī bá* 墨蹟跋下).⁵⁴ We present these descriptions below in combined form.

In 1574 (year *jiǎxū* 甲戌), while in Yan (燕, old name for Beijing), Wang Shizhen visited the Bureau for Dependent States (*Diǎn shǔguó suǒ* 典屬國所) and met Wang Ruwen, Chamberlain for Ceremonials (*Wáng tàicháng Rǔwén* 王太常汝文).

Their discussion on the proficiency of interpreters in their native scripts (*guóshū* 國書) inspired Wang to commission a transcription (*shū* 書) of the chapter “Hounds of Lü” (*Lǚ áo* 旅獒) from the *Book of Documents* (*Shàng shū* 尚書) in nine scripts. Chapter 168 records his request for the full text, while Chapter 132 specifies a 165-character excerpt from *míng wáng shèn dé* (明王慎德) to *suǒ bǎo wéi xián, zé ěr rén ān* (所寶惟賢、則邇人安).

Interpreters produced nine sheets (*zhǐ* 紙) written in the following scripts: Indian (Sanskrit) (*Xītiān* 西天), Jurchen (*Nǚzhí* 女直), Tartar (Mongolian) (*Dádá* 韃靼), Gaochang (Uyghur) (*Gāochāng* 高昌), Muslim (Persian) (*Huíhuí* 回回), Tibetan (*Xīfān* 西番), Baiyi (Tay/Shan) (*Bǎiyí* 百夷), Myanma (Burmese) (*Miǎndiàn* 緬甸), and Babai (Lan Na) (*Bābǎi xífù* 八百媳婦).⁵⁵

⁵⁴ *Four-Category Writings of the Mountain Hermit from Yanzhou*, Chapter 168 (*Shuō bù* 說部: *Wǎnwěi yúbiān* 宛委餘編十三), folio 19b: 甲戌[戌]、余從典屬國所、以旅獒全文、合象胥九而書之。今錄[錄]明王慎德[德]四夷咸賓八字、以見同文之盛云爾。On folios 20a–20b, inscriptions in nine scripts, each labelled with its respective designation, follow: 西天、女直、韃靼、高[高]昌、回回、西番、百夷、緬甸、八百。

Four-Category Writings of the Mountain Hermit from Yanzhou, Chapter 132 (*Wén bù* 文部: *Mòjī bá* 墨蹟跋下, *Wài guó shū Lǚ áo juàn* 外國書旅獒卷), folio 14b–15a: 余於燕中邂逅王太常汝文、談諸譯人多精於其國書者、乃以旅獒明王慎德至所寶惟賢則邇人安百六十五字令書之、得九紙、為西天、女直、韃靼、高[高]昌、回回[回回]、西番[番]、百夷、緬甸、八百媳婦。大約多類籀[籀]草、而西天獨雄整、女直有楷法而小繁複、不知其為陳王谷神所製否也。

⁵⁵ To bypass complex nuances, we use simplified cognates here to denote historical Chinese transcriptions of regions, peoples, or languages associated with scripts used in diplomatic, tributary, and other contexts, managed by eponymous departments of the Bureau of Translators (*Sìyí guǎn* 四夷館) and Bureau of Interpreters (*Huìtóng guǎn* 會同館) during the Ming period and by similar Qing institutions (circa 15th–16th centuries and beyond). These terms conceal intricate linguistic, geographical, political, and cultural realities—for example, by overlooking differences between historical and modern scripts/languages, merging multiple languages or scripts that may share a single bureau label, or missing possible linguistic shifts in bureau texts over time, such as those influenced by different translators. Although these complexities are well-documented in existing scholarship, reviewing the literature for all nine scripts is impractical here, so we address the Jurchen script in greater detail while employing simplified cognates for the others.

Wang observed that most scripts resembled seal and clerical styles, with Indian appearing bold and orderly and Jurchen regular yet slightly intricate. He wondered if Prince of Chen, Gushen [Wanyan Xiyin], had created this Jurchen script. To illustrate the splendour of unified writing, Wang reproduced translations of the eight-character excerpt *míng wáng shèn dé, sì yí xián bīn* 明王慎德, 四夷咸賓, “When a wise prince is heedful of virtue, foreigners from the four quarters all come as guests”⁵⁶ in these nine scripts in his work (see Fig. 11).

The Jurchen rendition, transcribed as *gān-giēn oŋ atu-tfi-jo dei, duin turi-lā çien an-da-xai* 倅更 余 兀更丰 伐 丰 弄伐 俑 条育是, employs a pidgin language combining Chinese grammar with Jurchen vocabulary, likely constructed by Chinese literati rather than native Jurchen authors, resembling the style of the *Sino-Jurchen Vocabulary* (Ishida 1973, p. 77; Liu Pujiang 2002, p. 183; Aisin-Gioro 2009b, pp. 221–222).

Table 6: Jurchen inscription comparison in Wang Shizhen and Fang Yulu sources

Char. No./ Source	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	1–2	3	4–6	7	8	9–10	11	12–14
Chinese	明 <i>míng</i>	王 <i>wáng</i>	慎 <i>shèn</i>	德 <i>dé</i>	四 <i>sì</i>	夷 <i>yí</i>	咸 <i>xián</i>	賓 <i>bīn</i>
Jurchen	倅更 <i>gān-giēn</i>	余 <i>oŋ</i>	兀更丰 <i>atu-tfi-jo</i>	伐 <i>dei</i>	丰 <i>duin</i>	弄伐 <i>turi-lā</i>	俑 <i>çien</i>	条育是 <i>an-da-xai</i>
Wang Shizhen facsimile	倅更	余	兀更丰	伐	丰	弄伐	俑	条育是
Fang Yulu facsimile	倅更	余	兀更丰	伐	丰	弄伐	俑	条育是

The characters forming each Jurchen word are grouped closely together with minimal or no spacing to denote a single unit (see Table 6). Our analysis of all nine inscriptions reveals that they were deliberately crafted in this distinctive manner to fulfil Wang Shizhen’s stated purpose of demonstrating the splendour of unified writing (*tóngwén zhī shèng* 同文之盛), as evidenced by the clear segmentation into eight units, each corresponding to one of the eight characters of the Chinese original in every one of the nine specimens. We suggest this clarifies why corresponding Jurchen words requiring multiple characters to

⁵⁶ This translation follows S. W. Bushell (1898, p. 22). Alternative renderings include: “When a wise king is heedful of virtue, foreigners from all quarters come as guests” (Kane 1989, p. 71), and “[T]he intelligent kings have paid careful attention to their virtue, and the wild tribes on every side have willingly acknowledged subjection to them” (Legge 1865, *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. 3, Pt. 2, p. 346).

represent one Chinese character are written without spaces between their glyphs. If so, this does not necessarily indicate a standard practice in the Jurchen writing tradition but rather serves the specific authorial intent of Wang Shizhen.

Further discussion: Due to the limitations of our current research, we could not locate any attempts in the scholarly literature to identify the mentioned Wang Ruwen (王汝文). It is possible that this refers to Wang Zhuan (王篆, 1528 or 1532–?), whose courtesy name (*zì* 字) was Ruwen (汝文).⁵⁷ From the 4th month of the 1st year of Wanli (萬曆元年, 1573) to the 10th month of the 2nd year of Wanli (萬曆二年, 1574), he served as Vice Minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (*Tàicháng sī shàoqīng* 太常寺少卿) and Superintendent of the Bureau of Translators (*Tídū Sìyí guǎn* 提督四夷館).⁵⁸ In this case, the Bureau for Dependent States (*Diǎn shǔguó suǒ* 典屬國所), which we were also unable to identify in Ming sources, may refer to the Bureau of Translators (*Sìyí guǎn* 四夷館). This institute specialized in written translations of languages, including those listed by Wang Shizhen, used by peoples in diplomatic relations with the Ming court.

Additionally, our count of the characters in the specified passage from the “Hounds of Lü” chapter in the *Book of Documents* (Ancient Script version) yielded only 155 characters, suggesting a possible discrepancy with Wang Shizhen’s reported 165 characters.

⁵⁷ The *Register of Successful Jinshi Candidates for the 41st Year of Jiajing* (1562) (*Jiājìng sìshíyī nián jìnshì dēngkēlù* 嘉靖四十一年進士登科錄) mentions Wang Zhuan and clarifies his courtesy name Ruwen, supporting our identification. This register, issued in the 3rd month of the same year, indicates he was 31 years old, likely calculated by nominal age (*xūsui* 虛歲), suggesting a birth year of Jiajing 11 (嘉靖十一年, 1532) (see Tianyige 2016, p. 314). However, *Comprehensive Compendium on the Three Fates* (*Sānmìng tōnghuì* 三命通會) proposes a birth in the year *wùzǐ* (戊子, i.e., Jiajing 7, 1528) (see Chapter 8, folio 37b). Lei Sipei’s (雷思霈) *Congratulatory Preface for the Longevity of Vice Minister Wang Zhuan* (*Shǎozǎi Wáng Zhuàn shòuxù* 少宰王篆寿序), while not directly stating the date, allows the mentioned events and facts to be aligned with Jiajing 7 (see *Dōnghú xiàn zhì* 東湖縣志, Chapter 27, and *Yíchāng fǔ zhì* 宜昌府志, Chapter 13).

⁵⁸ *Veritable Records of Emperor Shenzong of Ming* (*Míng Shénzōng Xiǎn huángdì shílù* 明神宗顯皇帝實錄), Chapter 12, folio 14a: “[1st year of Wanli (1573), 4th month], day *jǐmǎo*: His Majesty appointed Wang Zhuan, Director of the Bureau of Appointments of the Ministry of Personnel, as Vice Minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices and Superintendent of the Bureau of Translators” ([萬曆元年四月] 己卯上吏部文選司郎中王篆為太常寺少卿提督四夷館). Chapter 30, folio 1a: “[2nd year of Wanli (1574), 10th month, day *guǐmǎo*]: Promoted Wang Zhuan, Superintendent of the Bureau of Translators and Vice Minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, to Right Commissioner of the Office of Transmission” ([萬曆二年十月癸卯] 陞提督四夷館太常寺少卿王篆為通政司右通政).

All sources in Notes 57 and 58 related to Wang Zhuan’s biography were identified by the authors of his Baidu Encyclopaedia [entry](#), who undertook the difficult task of locating information in Chinese historical accounts; we have merely verified these against published texts to confirm our identification of Wang Ruwen (王汝文) as Wang Zhuan (王篆).

4.5. Jurchen Large Script Inscription in Fang Yulu *Ink-Cake Compendium*

In 1588, a corrupted version of the same Jurchen inscription (see Section 4.4) appeared in the *Fang Family Ink-Cake Compendium* (*Fāngshì mòpǔ* 方氏墨譜), an illustrated catalogue of ink-cake mould designs by Fang Yulu (方于魯, ?–1607).



Fig. 12: Jurchen inscription in Fang Yulu's *Ink-Cake Compendium*

Source: *Fāngshì mòpǔ* (Chapter 1, folio 32b–33a), Harvard Yenching Library, Rare Book [T 6295 0212](#)

The inscription is featured on an ink-cake two-sided design in Chapter 1 (folio 32b, see Fig. 12), subtitled and devoted to “State Treasures” (*Guó bǎo* 國寶). The reverse displays the 14 Jurchen characters arranged in two vertical rows within an oblong panel, centered in a circular design and surrounded by a floral ornament. The obverse depicts two men in non-Chinese attire carrying pheasants, likely one white and one black (though the black-and-white print makes colours hard to discern), representing the traditional tribute of ancient China. It is flanked by a Chinese caption—**明王慎德** (“When a wise prince is heedful of virtue”) on the right and **四夷咸賓** (“Foreigners from the four quarters all come as guests”) on the left—which, as shown above, the Jurchen inscription translates.

In the book layout, the depictions of the obverse and reverse sides are shown one above the other, with the obverse above the reverse, and a seal impression reading *Zuǒ Qiān shì* (左千氏) printed between them, aligned to the left. Our analysis identifies this seal as belonging to Wu Tingyu (吳廷羽), a Ming dynasty painter and ink-maker known as one of several key illustrators in the compilation of the *Fang Family Ink-Cake Compendium*, among other major ink compendia of the period.

In the table of contents for Chapter 1 (folio 2b), this ink-cake design is titled “Yuechang Tribute Translation” (*Yuècháng chóngyì* 越裳重譯, literally “Yuechang Double Translation”), referring to an ancient country in Chinese sources located south of Jiaozhi (交趾), possibly corresponding to some regions of modern Vietnam or, according to some scholars, to areas among the Tay/Shan people in northern Myanmar and Laos. We identify the imagery of tribute as drawing inspiration from the historical association of the Yuechang with such offerings, as recorded in the *Book of Han* (*Hàn shū* 漢書).⁵⁹ Based on classical texts, the white pheasant in particular, presented by the Yuechang, can be interpreted as symbolizing a ruler’s moral excellence, attracting distant peoples to offer tribute in recognition of his virtue, a concept that resonates with the ink-cake’s caption and imagery.⁶⁰ This suggests that the Jurchen inscription on the ink-cake, which translates the Chinese caption, does not correspond to the depicted scene of tribute on the obverse, and the figures are likely not Jurchens, despite the presence of the Jurchen script. The use of such an exotic script (from a Han perspective) likely serves as a marker of foreignness, resonating with the caption’s theme of foreigners coming as guests. This choice likely indicates that the inscription was sourced from Wang Shizhen’s work, where the caption is translated into nine scripts, including Jurchen, as part of a broader discussion of translation practices, although the obvious rarity of such a Jurchen inscription itself further points to this specific source of borrowing (cf. Ishida 1973a, p. 85; 1973b, p. 67; Liu Pujiang 2002, p. 183–184).

The version of the Jurchen inscription in the *Fang Family Ink-Cake Compendium* contains errors in the 6th (𠂔), 11th (𠂔), 13th (𠂔), and 14th (𠂔) characters. The 6th (𠂔) and 11th (𠂔) characters have an extraneous dot in the lower left, while the 14th (𠂔) character includes an additional stroke on the right (see Table 6).

⁵⁹ The title “Yuechang Tribute Translation” and the depiction of two men in non-Chinese attire carrying pheasants reflect a passage from the *Book of Han* (Chapter 12, Chronicle of Emperor Ping 平帝紀): “In the first year of Yuanshi (元始元年, 1 CE), spring, the first month, [the head of] the Yuechang tribe, [whose speech had to be] repeatedly interpreted (重譯), presented [tribute of] one white pheasant and two black pheasants. [Shigu notes: ‘Yuechang is a distant southern country. Due to the extreme distance and the vast differences in customs, multiple interpretations were required.’] An imperial edict had the three highest ministers [use them] for sacrifice in the [imperial] ancestral temples.” (元始元年春正月，越裳氏重譯獻白雉一，黑雉二，【師古曰：「越裳，南方遠國也。譯謂傳言也。道路絕遠，風俗殊隔，故累譯而後乃通。」】詔使三公以薦宗廟). Our rendering is based on the classical English translation of this *Book of Han* chapter by Homer H. Dubs (Pan Ku 1938, p. 64).

⁶⁰ See *Imperially Reviewed Encyclopaedia of the Taiping Era* (*Tàipíng yùlǎn* 太平御覽), Chapter 917 (羽族部四), section White Pheasants (*bái zhì* 白雉), for a compilation of classical references to white pheasants and their associations with rulers’ virtue, from which our interpretation is derived. This source is indicated in the commentary by Homer H. Dubs on his translation of the *Book of Han* (Pan Ku 1938, p. 64, note 2.3) and verified by us.

4.6. Archaeological Finds of Liao Dynasty *páizǐ*

According to Aisin-Gioro (2009a, p. 30), claimed archaeological finds of Liao dynasty *páizǐ* include two of silver (銀牌), with none of gold (金牌) reported. Additionally, she mentions one of gilt copper-alloy (鑒金銅牌) (p. 28) and a set of thirteen of wood (木牌) (p. 31). Below, we provide Aisin-Gioro's descriptions and conclusions, noting that all readings and interpretations are hers alone.

The first silver *páizǐ* is described as rectangular with a perforation at the top, flanked by two cloud motifs (祥雲) at both ends of the hole, and a raised border like a hoop, inscribed with raised (*yángwén* 陽文) Khitan Small Script reading "Investiture of Emperor Daozong" (道宗皇帝之封) on the obverse and "Àoyǎn *tàishī*'s" (奧衍太師之) on the reverse (the Khitan Small Script originals are not provided by author). The term "Àoyǎn" is suggested to refer to either the Àoyǎn Turkic tribe (奧衍突厥部) or the Àoyǎn Jurchen tribe (奧衍女直部), established during the reign of Emperor Shengzong of Liao (聖宗, r. 982–1031), though the find's unclear provenance prevents precise identification. The second silver *páizǐ*, with a lotus-leaf-shaped decorative top and rectangular base, has perforations flanked by two auspicious phoenixes (瑞鳳) and a raised border like a hoop, inscribed with raised Khitan Small Script reading "Command of Emperor Tianzuo" (天祚皇帝之令) on the obverse and "General of the garrison" (*liúshǒu jiāngjūn* 留守將軍) on the reverse. This is claimed to have been found in Mongolia, within the historical boundaries of the Liao dynasty's Supreme Capital Circuit (上京道), under the jurisdiction of the Northwestern Bandit Suppression Commission (西北路招討司). The title "general of the garrison" (留守將軍 or *liúshǒu xiángwěn* 留守詳穩) is not attested in the *History of Liao*.

Additionally, a set of thirteen wooden *páizǐ*, inscribed in ink with Khitan Small Script and not mentioned in the *History of Liao*, is described as elongated and eggplant-shaped, with angular decorative patterns carved along the edges and an iron ring set at the perforation. Each reportedly bears an identical inscription on the lower obverse, reading "Present Khitan Central" (今之契丹中央), while the upper obverse is sequentially inscribed with "Great *tàibǎo*" (大太保) on the first, "Second *tàibǎo*" (二太保) on the second, "Third *tàibǎo*" (三太保) on the third, and so forth, up to "Thirteenth *tàibǎo*" (十三太保) on the last. Aisin-Gioro claims the rank of *tàibǎo* (太保), positioned below *tàishī* (太師) but above *tàiwèi* (太尉) and *sītú* (司徒), corresponds to the use of wooden *páizǐ* in the Liao dynasty. She further suggests this parallels the Jin dynasty's system, where wooden ones were worn by officials of the ranks of *móukè* (謀克) and *púniǎn* (蒲輦), as recorded in the *History of Jin* (see Note 45), indicating that the Jin inherited its wooden *páizǐ* system from the Liao, just as its gold and silver *páizǐ* were inherited from Liao's silver ones.

The gilt copper-alloy *páizǐ* inscribed in Khitan Large Script (契丹大字鑒金銅牌) reportedly found in Inner Mongolia was mentioned earlier (see Section 4.1, item 5). It bears an incised right-facing standing dragon pattern on the reverse, "strikingly similar" (極為形似) to a left-facing dragon relief on a gold *páizǐ* in Jurchen Small Script discovered in Shuangcheng (2007).

We have been unable to identify or verify the aforementioned *páizǐ* finds. Aisin-Gioro's study lacks photographs or references to publications of them, providing only brief descriptions, which prevents their identification and raises significant concerns about their authenticity due to the absence of corroboration from official sources. However, as already noted, these questions lie beyond the scope of this proposal and our study. Strictly speaking, as of today, the authors of this document have no direct evidence of any archaeological finds of *páizǐ* (artifacts specifically identified as travel passes or symbols of authority) from the Liao dynasty.

5. Encoding Options

Three options are evaluated, considering the limitations of evidence, and feasibility of implementation. The decision is deferred to the Unicode Technical Committee (UTC) and ISO/IEC JTC1/SC2/WG2.

5.1. Option 1: Encode within the Khitan Small Script block

Encoding the six characters in the Khitan Small Script block (U+18B00–U+18CFF) leverages the inscriptions’ structural similarity to Khitan Small Script (clustered characters).

This is efficient, requiring few code points, and uses existing fonts and rendering systems. It mitigates misidentification risks by avoiding a dedicated block, allowing flexibility for reclassification. However, it risks conflating Jurchen and Khitan identities, which may be confusing to users. Critically, if future Jurchen Small Script inscriptions are found and its characters are encoded in a new block, the initial characters would remain in the Khitan block, creating a split repertoire and inconsistencies in font design and text processing.

5.2. Option 2: Create a dedicated Jurchen Small Script block

Defining a new block called “Jurchen Small Script” would recognize Jurchen identity of the characters, align with the “Jurchen” block, and avoid split repertoire issues. It mirrors Khitan script distinctions.

With only six characters, a new block is premature, risking overcommitment to an unverified hypothesis. It requires new fonts and updates to the rendering systems to support clustering behaviour, delaying implementation. However, it ensures clarity and consistency if the corpus expands, making it viable long-term.

5.3. Option 3: Encode within the Jurchen Script (Jurchen Large Script) block

Encoding in the “Jurchen” block, intended for the presumed Large Script, assumes a unified Jurchen framework. This is inappropriate, as the *páizi* inscriptions differ structurally from Jurchen Large Script texts and align more with the Khitan Small Script. The Large Script (1119) and potential Small Script (1138) are historically distinct, and combining them obscures this. The current “Jurchen” block’s ideographs and radicals are tailored to the dominant script, and adding unrelated characters disrupts coherence and rendering. No significant advantages exist.

5.4. Recommendation

Encoding in the Khitan Small Script block (Option 1) is recommended due to the limited evidence, identification uncertainties, and structural similarities. This enables immediate

realisation using existing mechanisms, mitigating risks of misidentification by avoiding a dedicated block. If future evidence confirms the Jurchen Small Script or expands its corpus, a dedicated block (Option 2) could be proposed. Encoding in the Jurchen block (Option 3) is unsuitable due to historical and structural mismatches.

The “Jurchen” block’s name, covering the presumed Large Script, risks ambiguity, as “Jurchen” is a generic term. Renaming it “Jurchen Large Script” or clarifying “Jurchen = Jurchen Large” in documentation is advisable to distinguish it from potential Jurchen Small Script, following the Khitan Scripts model.

6. References

The References are formatted according to the Russian standard for bibliographic records, *ГОСТ Р 7.0.100-2018*. The entry format is generally comprehensible to users of other bibliographic conventions, though some clarifications are necessary.

The single slash ("/") introduces the statement of responsibility, such as editors, compilers, translators, or other contributors, with authors listed only at the beginning of the entry to avoid unnecessary redundancy; subsequent statements are separated by a semicolon (";").

The double slash ("/") serves as a connector indicating the source of an article (e.g., periodical or edited collection), corresponding to "In:" in English-language citation styles.

The equals sign ("=") denotes parallel publication details in another language when present in the source.

Titles of articles, journals, edited collections, or monographs are neither enclosed in additional quotation marks nor italicized, though any original quotation marks in the title are preserved, and author names may be italicized for emphasis.

General Notes: Chinese, Japanese, and Korean publications are cited with our transcription, followed by the original writing, and, where applicable, an English translation in square brackets; any information absent from the source is likewise provided in square brackets. For historiographical research (establishing publication priority), precise publication dates, rather than just the year, are included for sources where available, particularly Chinese, Japanese, and Korean publications. Such detailed elements, including parallel titles and precise dates, are rarely used in standard citations, but we have deliberately adopted this meticulous approach, driven by a commitment to bibliographic rigor for fellow scholars who value such precision. All publications cited have been examined *de visu*, ensuring no reliance on secondary references. Numerous primary sources, such as the *History of Jin*, are not included in the reference list, assuming the use of any available edition, with necessary quotations typically provided in the text.

6.1. Technical Documents

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N4725R. *Andrew West, Viacheslav Zaytsev, Michael Everson*. Towards an Encoding of the Khitan Small Script. JTC1/SC2/WG2 N4725R = L2/16-113. 2016-05-21.

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N5278. *Andrew West*, *Sun Bojun* (孙伯君), *Michael Everson*. Proposal to Encode Radicals for the Jurchen Script. JTC1/SC2/WG2 N5278 = L2/24-140. 2024-06-12.

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6.2. Academic Literature

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Proposal Summary Form

SO/IEC JTC 1/SC 2/WG 2 PROPOSAL SUMMARY FORM TO ACCOMPANY SUBMISSIONS FOR ADDITIONS TO THE REPERTOIRE OF ISO/IEC 10646⁶¹

Please fill all the sections A, B and C below.

Please read Principles and Procedures Document (P & P) from <http://www.dkuug.dk/JTC1/SC2/WG2/docs/principles.html> for guidelines and details before filling this form.

Please ensure you are using the latest Form from <http://www.dkuug.dk/JTC1/SC2/WG2/docs/summaryform.html>.

See also <http://www.dkuug.dk/JTC1/SC2/WG2/docs/roadmaps.html> for latest Roadmaps.

A. Administrative

1. Title:	Proposal to encode Jurchen Small Script characters
2. Requester's name:	Viacheslav Zaytsev and Andrew West
3. Requester type (Member body/Liaison/Individual contribution):	Individual contribution
4. Submission date:	2025-05-22
5. Requester's reference (if applicable):	
6. Choose one of the following:	
This is a complete proposal:	YES
(or) More information will be provided later:	

B. Technical – General

1. Choose one of the following:	
a. This proposal is for a new script (set of characters):	NO
Proposed name of script:	
b. The proposal is for addition of character(s) to an existing block:	YES
Name of the existing block:	KHITAN SMALL SCRIPT
2. Number of characters in proposal:	5
3. Proposed category (select one from below - see section 2.2 of P&P document):	
A-Contemporary	<input type="checkbox"/> B.1-Specialized (small collection)
C-Major extinct	<input type="checkbox"/> B.2-Specialized (large collection)
D-Attested extinct	<input type="checkbox"/> E-Minor extinct
F-Archaic Hieroglyphic or Ideographic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> G-Obscure or questionable usage symbols
4. Is a repertoire including character names provided?	N/A
a. If YES, are the names in accordance with the "character naming guidelines" in Annex L of P&P document?	
b. Are the character shapes attached in a legible form suitable for review?	YES
5. Fonts related:	
a. Who will provide the appropriate computerized font to the Project Editor of 10646 for publishing the standard?	Andrew West
b. Identify the party granting a license for use of the font by the editors (include address, e-mail, ftp-site, etc.):	Andrew West
6. References:	
a. Are references (to other character sets, dictionaries, descriptive texts etc.) provided?	YES
b. Are published examples of use (such as samples from newspapers, magazines, or other sources) of proposed characters attached?	NO
7. Special encoding issues:	
Does the proposal address other aspects of character data processing (if applicable) such as input, presentation, sorting, searching, indexing, transliteration etc. (if yes please enclose information)?	NO

8. Additional Information:

Submitters are invited to provide any additional information about Properties of the proposed Character(s) or Script that will assist in correct understanding of and correct linguistic processing of the proposed character(s) or script. Examples of such properties are: Casing information, Numeric information, Currency information, Display behaviour information such as line breaks, widths etc., Combining behaviour, Spacing behaviour, Directional behaviour, Default Collation behaviour, relevance in Mark Up contexts, Compatibility equivalence and other Unicode normalization related information. See the Unicode standard at <http://www.unicode.org> for such information on other scripts. Also see Unicode Character Database (<http://www.unicode.org/reports/tr44/>) and associated Unicode Technical Reports for information needed for consideration by the Unicode Technical Committee for inclusion in the Unicode Standard.

⁶¹ Form number: N4102-F (Original 1994-10-14; Revised 1995-01, 1995-04, 1996-04, 1996-08, 1999-03, 2001-05, 2001-09, 2003-11, 2005-01, 2005-09, 2005-10, 2007-03, 2008-05, 2009-11, 2011-03, 2012-01)

C. Technical - Justification

1. Has this proposal for addition of character(s) been submitted before?	NO
If YES explain	
2. Has contact been made to members of the user community (for example: National Body, user groups of the script or characters, other experts, etc.)?	YES
If YES, with whom? Other experts	
If YES, available relevant documents:	
3. Information on the user community for the proposed characters (for example: size, demographics, information technology use, or publishing use) is included?	NO
Reference:	
4. The context of use for the proposed characters (type of use; common or rare)	rare
Reference:	
5. Are the proposed characters in current use by the user community?	YES
If YES, where? Reference:	
6. After giving due considerations to the principles in the P&P document must the proposed characters be entirely in the BMP?	NO
If YES, is a rationale provided?	
If YES, reference:	
7. Should the proposed characters be kept together in a contiguous range (rather than being scattered)?	YES
8. Can any of the proposed characters be considered a presentation form of an existing character or character sequence?	NO
If YES, is a rationale for its inclusion provided?	
If YES, reference:	
9. Can any of the proposed characters be encoded using a composed character sequence of either existing characters or other proposed characters?	NO
If YES, is a rationale for its inclusion provided?	
If YES, reference:	
10. Can any of the proposed character(s) be considered to be similar (in appearance or function) to, or could be confused with, an existing character?	YES
If YES, is a rationale for its inclusion provided?	
If YES, reference: See Section 2	
11. Does the proposal include use of combining characters and/or use of composite sequences?	NO
If YES, is a rationale for such use provided?	
If YES, reference:	
Is a list of composite sequences and their corresponding glyph images (graphic symbols) provided?	
If YES, reference:	
12. Does the proposal contain characters with any special properties such as control function or similar semantics?	NO
If YES, describe in detail (include attachment if necessary)	
13. Does the proposal contain any Ideographic compatibility characters?	NO
If YES, are the equivalent corresponding unified ideographic characters identified?	
If YES, reference:	