Narratives of Inauthenticity, Impurity, and Disorder. 
Or: How Forgeries, Half-castes, and Hooligans Shaped Pre-modern Korean History

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ABSTRACT

This paper is about the 1010 invasion of Koryŏ ลุก by Liao, which gained Liao the reputation of a barbarian nation, obscuring the nature of subsequent Koryŏ-Liao relations. However, the Liao invasion did not aim at conquering Koryŏ, but at controlling the Jurchen living at Koryŏ's frontier. This paper presents new views on early Koryŏ by constructing narratives of inauthenticity, impurity, and disorder to counter the narratives of authenticity, purity, and order implied and articulated in most studies on early Koryŏ and showing how these narratives contribute to our understanding of early Koryŏ history by turning them around and interpreting them from a positive instead of negative point of view. I have chosen three emblematic historical examples around which I have structured my argument: the forging of the Ten Injunctions; Koryŏ's relationship with its multi-ethnic imperial neighbor Liao; and the formative role played in Koryŏ history by the stateless Jurchen. 

Keywords: Koryŏ, Liao, invasion of 1010, revisionist history, international relations, inauthenticity, impurity, disorder

This paper starts and ends with the 1010 invasion of Koryŏ  高麗 by the Khitan Liao 遼. This invasion laid waste to the Koryŏ capital and gained Liao a reputation as a bloodthirsty, all-conquering nation of barbarians. It was so destructive that it effectively obscured the nature of subsequent Koryŏ-Liao relations for centuries to come. Until today, one could argue. The invasion also exercised such influence that the domestic crisis Koryŏ faced prior to the invasion was against all odds averted. In the midst of the mayhem and bloodshed caused by the invasion the Koryŏ state managed to regroup and emerge stronger than before. The invasion also occasioned the forging of one of the most important early Koryŏ texts, the Ten Injunctions 《訓令十條》, a concise guide to govern the country allegedly left by the dynasty's founder to his successors. However, contrary to the generally accepted view, the invasion of Koryŏ by the Khitan Liao armies did not have as its objective the conquest of Koryŏ, but aimed at control over the Jurchen 女真, the semi-nomadic inhabitants of the northeast of the Korean peninsula and the southeast of Manchuria. With the 1010 Liao invasion of Koryŏ as leitmotiv and the divergent and mistaken readings arisen from this enormously traumatic experience, I would like to look at alternative ways of understanding pre-modern Korean history, in particular the history of the early Koryŏ dynasty (918-1170).
The early Koryo period is a fascinating era as it is a time onto which many worries, anxieties and hopes of later dates have been projected. And successfully, because until now most of these later retroprojections have stuck and shaped the view of the early Koryo period. I will present some alternative views of this era; look at subjects hitherto neglected or misinterpreted; at points of view not yet taken. I propose to do this by using forgers, half-castes, and hooligans as the subjects of my discussion. I would also like to avail myself of this opportunity to accuse good-naturedly a number of respectable Koryo scholars of the crime of forgery, to deflate (less good-naturedly) the reputation of Sinitic cultural achievements in Koryo, and to rehabilitate some of Koryo’s traditional villains: the barbaric Khitan, who looted, ransacked, and then burned the Koryo capital, and the fearsome and warlike Jurchen, who were always ready to invade Koryo villages and cities in order to kill, maim, rape, and plunder. In order to succeed in this undertaking, and do so within a reasonable amount of space, I have chosen three emblematic historical examples of this period which will help us to understand how many of the categories employed in the study of the Koryo dynasty have lost their heuristic value because of the essentialist and even teleological tendencies hidden in them. Early Koryo is described by the scholarly communis opinio as a fundamentally sinicized state locked in perpetual strife and war with its northern neighbors. I do not agree and I shall argue for different ways of understanding early Koryo by constructing narratives of inauthenticity, impurity, and disorder to counter the narratives of authenticity, purity, and order implied and articulated in the majority of studies on early Koryo. I will show how these narratives of inauthenticity, impurity, and disorder contribute to our understanding of early Koryo history by turning the concepts around and interpreting them from a positive instead of negative point of view, which, wholly contingently, is possible here. In other words, I will try to show that the prejudices and misinterpretations associated with early Koryo may be turned around and reworked in order to bring out new ways of understanding this period. But first things first: let me introduce the three historical examples that will lead us along these narratives to our destination.

The three concrete historical examples from this period which I will treat in some detail here to help support my argument are first, the forged Ten Injunctions, purportedly written by the dynasty’s founder; second, Koryo’s relationship with the eclectic, multi-ethnic and nomadic-sedentary Liao empire at its northern frontier; and third, the crucial formative role played by the stateless Jurchen, also at Koryo’s northern frontier. The leitmotiv linking these three examples is the 1010 Liao invasion of Koryo, which occasioned the forging of the Ten Injunctions, showed the intentions of Liao towards Koryo, and revealed the importance of the loosely organized bands of Jurchen.

I would like to thank the organisers and the faculty and students that attended my readings of earlier versions of this paper at USC Berkeley, the Korea Institute at Harvard, and the Oriental Institute at Oxford for their comments and suggestions. In particular, I would like to thank Professors Ken Wells, Sun Joo Kim, and Jay Lewis for inviting me and creating the opportunity to engage in discussion with them and their students.
A Narrative of Inauthenticity

Let us start with the narrative of inauthenticity. The *Ten Injunctions* left by T’aejo Wang Kon 太祖王建 (?-943), the founder of the Koryŏ dynasty, is considered his political and administrative will and one of early Koryŏ’s most important extant texts. It came to play an important role as an ideological constitution all the way to the end of the dynasty; the text outlined different approaches to problems and issues Koryŏ was habitually confronted with. I have shown elsewhere that the injunctions are a forgery of a century later. Some of Koryŏ’s most famous and influential eleventh-century scholars and bureaucrats were responsible for the forging and subsequent authenticating campaign, conveniently hiding behind their legitimate activities as state historians (re-)compiling the historical documents and histories that had been lost in the Liao invasion of 1010. Even if the forgers were of immaculate backgrounds, scions of Koryŏ’s great families, scholars who had passed the civil examinations as the best of their generation, bureaucrats and statesmen who saved the country from certain ruin when both domestically and internationally Koryŏ was facing severe threats, the injunctions remain a forgery and are as such inauthentic. This is a fact that must be accepted, even if it is not nearly as important a fact as it would seem at first sight and despite a century-long historiography aiming to prove otherwise. As a forgery however the text was instrumental in preserving crucial elements of Koryŏ identities; in this respect it was certainly authentic. A forgery is often an extension and exaggeration of something which is considered genuine, rather than something that is either false or authentic. Often, forgeries were used to create or restore order in an otherwise chaotic and turbulent world: forgeries are “expressions of deeply held beliefs and ideas, derived from a strong sense of the importance of justice and tradition.” A forgery is *per se* intended to interact in a socio-historical field with already established notions, ideas, texts, and historical events. It veers between the inauthenticity of its creation and the authenticity of its function. Let there be no mistake about it, forgeries (like the *Ten Injunctions*) may very well play a positive role.

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2 For a detailed account of how the question of Hyŏnjong’s legitimacy is connected to the forging of the *Ten Injunctions*, see Remco E. Breuker, *Forging the Truth: Creative Deception and National Identity in Medieval Korea* (Separate issue, *East Asian History* 35, Canberra: Division of Pacific and Asian Studies, 2008).

3 Ch’oe Hang and Ch’oe Chean were the most important among the group of forgers. These men were scholars, high-ranking bureaucrats, and historians, and in their daily life and work depended on that sine qua non of textual forgery, “a critical awareness of document culture – of the form, content, and role of documents in medieval society.” See Alfred Hiatt, *The Making of Medieval Forgeries: False Documents in Fifteenth-Century England* (London/Toronto: The British Library and University of Toronto Press, 2004), 13.

4 “To put it another way, the forged document is not necessarily conceived of in binary opposition to the genuine, but is the genuine taken too far, its capacity for artifice, fabrication and fiction stretched beyond the boundary of authorisation.” See Hiatt, *The Making of Medieval Forgeries*, 11.


6 The lack of value-neutral terminology to use when referring to forgeries, prejudices each discussion of a forgery to some extent, in that the author must make it very clear from the beginning that any negative connotation of the vocabulary used (inevitably used) has no bearing whatsoever on any evaluation of the socio-historical role a particular forgery played.
The Ten injunctions were meant as a practical guide for governing the state and society of Koryo over a longer period of time. Different from the normal royal last will in which urgent matters such as place and method of burial and the choice of the successor were laid down, the Ten Injunctions articulated a vision concerning Koryo’s future. This vision was shaped by the intense and often traumatic experiences of the last remaining grandson of the dynastic founder, Koryo’s eighth ruler Hyöunjong 显宗 (991-1031). Hyöunjong had witnessed the murder of his predecessor Mokchong 穆宗 (980-1009). He had been through a traumatic flight south during the Liao invasions that reduced the capital of Kaegyong 開京 to ashes, a military coup d’état, and the resounding victory over Liao in 1018. He ruled Koryo for twenty-two years. During this time the country recovered from the wars with Liao and internal unrest and had become a stable and prosperous state when he died in 1031. His own circumstances (his illegitimate birth and the details of his ascension, for which his predecessor had been murdered) made it impossible for him to present this generation-transcending vision using his own authority as ruler of Koryo and grandson of Taejo. He borrowed the incomparable aura of his grandfather to have his vision for Koryo accepted.

The importance of the Ten Injunctions as a text which has inauthenticity at its core lies in the way it was used until the end of the Koryo dynasty four centuries later. The contents of the Ten Injunctions are pluralist. Each of the injunctions contains a message that is different from and even contradictory (if not literally or conceptually then historically) to one or more of the other injunctions. A clear example is provided by the sixth injunction in which the absolute necessity of two expensive Buddhist festivals is explained. The ninth injunction on the contrary emphasizes the need for the state to spend its resources carefully. These two injunctions contradict one another historically: the lavish spending associated with the two Buddhist festivals had in the past led to the (temporary) abolishment of the festivals in an effort to distribute the necessary state funds elsewhere. Moreover, both festivals were primarily aimed at the capital elite, while the ninth injunction drew attention to the state’s obligation to adequately remunerate ordinary soldiers. If not, history had already shown that such soldiers would be likely to rise in revolt.

A more obvious ideological contradiction may be found in the first injunction’s highlighting of the crucial importance of Buddhism for the state and in the tenth injunction’s stress on the need to deal with important matters in a classically Confucian way. In this case, both the internal ideological contents of the injunctions and their respective historical backgrounds in Koryo are at odds. The contradictory contents of the Ten Injunctions led to this text having been interpreted in many different ways: it is seen as a Confucian manifesto, a nativist program, a testimony to the importance of Buddhism, a plea for Koryo’s cultural independence, or as a statist and practical guide.7 And to be true, the injunctions do contain elements of classical Confucian thought and statecraft, of Buddhism and geomancy, of matters pertaining to military strategy, of economic common sense,

7 For details, see Breuker, Forging the Truth.
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The Ten Injunctions codified the most important truths (from a state perspective) during the entire Koryo dynasty. Although the particularities of these truths changed over time, the coexistence of the worship of Buddhism and indigenous spirits of the mountains and streams, the importance of classical Confucian thought as the rudiments of statecraft, the permanent sense of crisis with regard to the northern frontier, and the importance of the Western Capital in more than one way were all seen as essential truths during much of the Koryo dynasty. And it is precisely here in these varying particulars that the true inauthenticity of the Ten Injunctions must be located, next to its obvious status as a forgery. As the extant references to the Ten Injunctions show, the injunctions were used to legitimize and support points of view, arguments that varied over time and that often were contradictory; for those people who relied on the injunctions for legitimation of their policies, for counsel in difficult times and for possible paths to be travelled, the correct interpretation had to fulfill two qualifications: it had to fit the circumstances of the times and it had to fit the injunctions. This gave Koryo a framework for its members across generations; the injunctions communicated the intentions of the dead to the living and created a bond between the different generations that inhabited the lands of the Three Han (Samhan 三韓), as Koryo called itself.

Too often, the injunctions have been studied as a text that needs to be explained rather than understood; as a contradictory riddle waiting to be deciphered. If one approaches the Ten Injunctions in this manner without appreciating the many levels of contradiction that the injunctions contained, the appearance of authenticity may be gained (the injunctions are authentic and they are Confucian/Buddhist/nativist et cetera), but significance is lost. It was not to be explained away, but to be left in peace. By doing this, many possible paths to travel were maintained in the injunctions and at the same time, by virtue of the injunctions’ many internal and external historical references, embedded and contextualized in Koryo history: although the injunctions were contradictory, inauthentic, and of historical remembrance. The Ten Injunctions showed the intentions of the dead to the living and created a bond between the different generations that inhabited the lands of the Three Han (Samhan 三韓), as Koryo called itself.

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inconsistent, at the same time their historical embedding gave a clear sense of direction. And given the fact that the injunctions found sustained use until the late fourteenth century, the text must have been considered usable. This most prominently surfaced in times of trouble, domestic and international. The injunctions possessed a bandwidth within which action was possible and within which various latent, perhaps contradictory, potentialities coexisted; sanctioned, as it were, by precedents from Koryo history. The plurality of its contents also ensured that the *Ten Injunctions* and their cross-generational charisma stood in the way of any claim to superiority by Confucianism, Buddhism, or geomancy. It also made impossible the wholesale acceptance of either Sinitic or Manchurian civilizational achievements, but permitted their piecemeal introduction, the one balanced by the other. The text combined the sacred authority of the founder of the dynasty with those truths that Koryo society needed to remain moored to its historical identity. It codified those things as real which played an important role in the kind of life the forgers of the text preferred.9

Let me conclude this narrative of inauthenticity with a short reflection on the impact the *Ten Injunctions* have had on twentieth- and twenty-first-century ideas on Koryo. When in the first few years of the twentieth century, Japanese historian Imanishi Ryū 今西龍 contended that the injunctions were a forgery, he also concluded by appealing to an impressive feat of colonialist (ir)rationality full of logical fallacies, unfounded preconceptions and non-sequiturs that Korea historically had never been really unified.10 Ever since, for more than a century now, every study of the injunctions has had to start with engaging Imanishi in a dialogue over the grave. In trying to establish Korea as a historical independent unity, Korean historians have had the unenviable task of emphasizing the injunction’s authenticity while stressing Korea’s historical unity at the other hand.11 The rebuttal strategy of most historians has been similar: you pick one or more injunctions (let us say injunctions 3, 7, 9, and 10) you can use to support your line of argument (“the injunctions and Koryo were essentially Confucian”) and devalue the remaining injunctions because they now do not any more fit the profile of the injunctions or of Koryo as you have reconstructed it.12 This rather crude approach (pioneered by Imanishi, it must be added) has resulted in readings of Koryo history that stress essentialist understandings of Koryo, be they colonialist, nationalist,
political, economical, Buddhist, or Confucian in nature, with little room for plurality. The general ideological orientation of the Koryŏ dynasty, a generalisation based on infinitely subtle patternings, was held up to the demonstrably simplistic dichotomies of Buddhism and Confucianism “and found to be lacking in crudeness.” This approach has caused both the injunctions and aspects of Koryŏ society and culture to be alternately characterized as Buddhist, Confucian, Daoist, or nativist, depending on the point of view of the observer and the dichotomies invoked. Recognizing the pluralism enshrined in the injunctions, recognizing the forged nature of the injunctions, and recognizing that they served various and contradictory but also historically anchored “inauthentic” goals is one step towards the appreciation that Koryŏ cannot be meaningfully categorized as either Buddhist, Confucian, or nativist, or analyzed only politically or economically. The penchant for maintaining ambiguity, for preferring inauthenticity over authenticity at times is also found in Koryŏ’s contacts with foreign countries, which like the injunctions have also met the historiographical fate of being crudely dichotomized. Let me continue with a narrative of impurity.

A Narrative of Impurity
The Koryŏ state is habitually looked upon as a thoroughly sinicized state. The degree of successful sinicization (usually measured by the use of classical Chinese, the establishment of civil service state examinations, diplomatic contacts with and investiture from Han Chinese dynasties, the dissemination and understanding of the Chinese classics, and to a lesser extent contemporary works) is considered a source of national pride (while maintaining a tenuous relationship with the equally important notion of cultural and political autonomy). In tandem with the idea of Koryŏ as a sinicized state, the tempestuous relationship with the Khitan Liao is understood as the epitome of antagonistic neighborship, characterized by invasion,


14 The wealth of studies dealing with the most minute influences on Koryŏ culture and particularly Koryŏ state administration and bureaucracy tell as much, especially in the absence of similar studies for Manchurian influences. It is of importance to note here that these studies are intrinsically valuable. However, the lack of a balanced approach to the study of Koryŏ has led to their domination over the field, which altogether is not a good thing. Some studies by prominent scholars that describe Koryŏ history this way are: Kim Sanggi, “Koryŏ-shidae ch'ongsŏl 高麗時代鬱絡,” *Kuhaksang-ui chemunje 國史上的諸問題* 1 (1960): 49-68; Shin Hyongshik 中涇植, *Samguk sugi yŏngu 三國史記硏究* (Seoul: Ichokak 一潮閣, 1981); idem, “Kim Pushik 金富稷” in *Han'guk yoksaga-wa yoksahak 韓國歷史札與考古학* (Seoul: Ch'angjak-kwa p'ipyojiang 创作與批評, 1994), edited by Cho Tonggŏl 趙東杰, Han Yongu 韩永愚 and Pak Ch'anşu 朴贊勝, 57-76; Yi Kangnae 李康來, *Samguk sugi ch'onggon 三國史記斷論* (Seoul: Minjoksa 民族社, 1996); Ch'ońg Kubok, “Koryŏ shidae-ui yoksah tushik 高麗時代의 考古資料” *Chŏnt'ong-gwu sansang 傳統의 三思* 4 (1990): 179-218; idem, *Han'guk ch'ungs sahahsa*; Michael C. Rogers, “The Chinese World Order in Its Transmural Extension: The Case of Chin and Koryŏ,” *Korean Studies Forum* 4 (1979): 1-22; idem, “Pyŏnymŏn tongnok: The Foundation Legend of the Koryŏ State,” *Journal of Korean Studies* 4 (1982): 3-72; idem, “National Consciousness in Medieval Korea: The Impact of Liao and Chin on Koryŏ,” in *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th to 14th Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), edited by Morris Rossabi, 151-72.
distrust, and bloodshed. Both ideas are wrong. The extent to which Koryo was sinicized, the extent to which we can meaningfully talk about sinification in the case of Koryo other than as the sum of a number of often unrelated cultural and political practices patterned on those also found in different periods of Han China, has been greatly exaggerated. This had also (unintentionally) led to an emphasis on Chinese initiative and Koryo reaction. On the other hand, the formative influence on early Koryo of Liao’s eclectic cultural, religious, and administrative patterns has been largely neglected. I propose that we do away with the idea of the Koryo-Liao relationship as a typical antagonism between sedentary civilization and barbarian nomadism and recast it as a 150-year long civilizational competition, only occasionally interspersed with war and invasion. This narrative of impurity centers on the idea that there is much to be said for a conception of Koryo as a state that benefitted from different influences and not merely from the Sinitic world. I have chosen to use the term impurity here as a reference to the often

15 There is very much literature dealing with this subject. The distrust of the Khitan and Liao attributed to Koryo is in fact a backwardly projected reconstruction of twelfth-century notions about the late tenth- and early eleventh-century Khitan invasions. Understandably, given Korea’s recent colonial past, the majority of studies dealing with this subject (post-war and up to the 1980s) looked at it from an anti-colonial perspective. This perspective denied the often-made colonialist argument that Koryo (and hence Korea) had never been able to be anything but a toy in the hands of powerful external enemies, such as the Khitan or Liao, Jin, the Mongols, and the Japanese. Post-colonial Korean studies dealing with the Koryo period exhibit a tendency to concentrate Koryo’s resistance against invaders and the formative influence this resistance exercised on the formation of a Korean nation to the exclusion of most other concerns. See for example Kim Sanggi, “‘Tang’gu-gwa-ūi hangjaeng 단구과의 항쟁,” in Kuksasang-ūi chemunje 국사상의 제문 제 (Seoul: Kuksa p’yōnch’ān wiwŏnhoe, 1959), vol. 2, 1-175. The studies by Michael Rogers also fit in this framework, in particular Rogers, “National Consciousness in Medieval Korea: The Impact of Liao and Chin on Koryo,” 151-72 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). Although it is impossible to deny that these studies have made valuable contributions to little-studied fields of inquiry and did much to leave behind the colonialist image of Korea as a passive victim of its geopolitically strategic geographic position (that incidentally one still encounters in more popular publications about Korea), these studies have perhaps inevitably and necessarily relied on a radical dichotomizing strategy to make their points. One of the more odious consequences of such dichotomizing is the often merely implied notion that somehow Koryo nativism was morally just and those literati that were seen as strongly sinicized by virtue of their (alleged) sinification morally wrong. Building on these post-colonial studies, current studies have been able to leave behind them the vestiges of the battle against colonial(ist) prejudice and arrived at nuanced studies. See for instance An Pyŏnggu 안병우, “Koryo-va Song-ūi sangho insik-kwa gyōsŏp 11segı huban-12segı chŏnhan 고려와 송의 상호 인식과 교섭: 11세기 후반-12세기 전반,” Yŏksa-va hyŏnshil 역사와 현실 43 (2002): 78-110, Kim Yongmi 김영미, “11segı huban-12segı ch’o Koryo-ŏyo oegyo kwŏngye-ge wa pulgyŏng koyryu 11세기 후반-12세기 초 고려-요 외교관계와 폐경교류,” Yŏksa-va hyŏnshil 43 (2002): 47-77, Pak Chonggi 박종기, “Koryo shidae-ŭi taee kwŏngye 고려시대의 대외관계,” in Han’guksa 한국사, ed. Han’guksa p’yōnch’ān wiwŏnhoe (Seoul: Han’guksa p’yōnch’ān wiwŏnhoe, 1994), 221-54. Also see the improbably apolitical studies of Okamura Shūji 奥村周司. Okamura, “Kōrai no gaikō shisei to kokka’ishiki 高麗の外交姿勢と国家意識,” in Rekishigaku kenkyū 历史学研究, special ed. (Tokyo: Chūseishibun kai 中学史会, 1982), 67-77, idem, “Shisetsu geisetsurei yori mita Kōrai no gaikō shisei: jūichidai kωkki ni okeru tai-Chū 世界観に対する近代の外交姿勢: 十一,二十世紀における对中関係の一面,” in Shikan 城南歴史 110 (1984): 27-42.

16 The pioneering studies by Michael Rogers in particular suffer from this notion in which agency is almost exclusively placed with China. Although historical studies of Koryo undoubtedly benefit from a serious consideration of the contemporary international circumstances, to considers each and every action by Koryo a reaction to what transpired elsewhere is not proper history and troubling in many ways. See Rogers, “The Chinese World Order in its Transmural Extension,” 4, 6, 9-11; Rogers, “National Consciousness in Medieval Korea,” 159.

17 I am not aware of any comprehensive study on this subject with the exception of art historical studies.
implicitly stated idea in modern historiography, inherited from the historical comments in dynastic histories in classical Chinese, that contacts with the Khitan were always forced, never voluntary and qualitatively impure: that is, at best a watered-down version of original sinitic achievements and at worse barbarian abominations. Focusing on this perceived impurity, at Liao consisting of cultural half-castes as it were, however, will tell us more about Koryo than ignoring it. This dichotomy, crude as it is, is still in many shapes and potencies present in modern historiographical debates on Koryo. Contemporary Koryo sources clearly indicate the importance of Liao. A perhaps surprising document written by a distinguished Koryo scholar, statesman, and diplomat speaks of the notion that there were four important categories of peoples in the world: Koryo, the Han Chinese, the Northern Court (pukcho 北朝) or Liao, and the barbarians. The author commends the Liao Emperor because he “developed and enlarged [his] territory and made both Chinese and barbarians follow [him] peacefully.”18 This text is one of the many instances in which the still current notion that Koryo strongly preferred contacts with Han Chinese states and only dealt with the barbarians in Manchuria for fear of instant violent reprisal is problematic as it suggests that the well-known dichotomy which divided the world according to the categories of Chinese (civilized) and barbarian (uncivilized) is a simplification with no validity as far as Koryo is concerned. The Northern Court (in this case Liao) forms a third category, neither Chinese, nor barbarian, but of immediate and crucial importance to Koryo as it was the incumbent dynasty in Manchuria. Koryo’s closest and most important neighbor in other words. Koryo seems to have placed itself as yet another category, close to but fundamentally outside of the categories of China, Liao, and barbarians. The shop-worn notion of the Chinese-barbarian dichotomy (which perhaps surprisingly is still the dominant interpretative paradigm in East Asian diplomatic history) loses its last shred of dignity with the realisation that Koryo considered itself to possess the necessary credentials to build a state on the cultural resources which it shared with both the Song and the Liao. Kim Yŏn, a twelfth-century scholar, put it succinctly when he remarked after returning from Song China that “the Song emperor treated our country warmly and received us with more than the customary courtesy. But everything is exceedingly luxurious and strange. One might call [this state of affairs] lamentable.”19 Koryo felt itself sufficiently civilized to judge Song China’s civilization, the standard to which Koryo civilization is still being held up, and to pick and choose carefully before accepting Sinitic cultural resources.20 This of course is a very dressed down account of Koryo-Liao relations. Let me flesh it out with some more telling examples:

The Liao and Koryo states had been interacting from the early tenth century

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19 Pohanji 補闕集 1: 74. The author Kim Yŏn was, whether incidental or not, a person admired by the Liao scholars who had visited Koryo. See KS 96: 3a-b.
onwards when both states were rapidly trying to consolidate. It was only towards the end of the tenth century, however, that Liao and Koryo came to share a border. Now a direct competitor of the Koryo state, the Liao state began to make its strength felt on the peninsula.

The 1010/1011 Liao invasion of Koryo was a pivotal incident in the history of Koryo-Liao relations. Not merely because the destructiveness of the invasion etched certain perceptions of Liao in Koryo hearts and minds, but also because after three decades of growing pressure, Liao had finally taken a radical step in its competition with Koryo by making an incisive move to control the many Jurchen groups that lived in the territory between Koryo and Liao.

Modern historiography on the reasons behind the invasion is relatively unambiguous in its judgment. Ostensibly reacting to the deposal and murder of Koryo ruler Mokchong, who was a vassal of Liao, the Liao Emperor was reported to be so enraged that he decided to lead his armies into Koryo himself. It is generally agreed that the murder of Mokchong was a mere casus belli, while the real reasons should be located in the fact that, after the profitable Shanyuan treaty of 1004/1005 with Song, Liao had its hands free and was now ready to invade and conquer Koryo. The murder of Mokchong furnished Liao with the perfect justification to do so. The plunder, massacres, and destruction that followed only strengthened the image of Liao as a state of barbarians and instigated a decade-long state of war between Koryo and Liao, during which tens of thousands of soldiers from both sides perished. After negotiations for peace were successfully concluded, from the 1020s onwards, Koryo and Liao enjoyed increasingly intimate relations and increasingly stabilizing states. Culminating in a century of stabilized exchange, the 1010/1011 invasion had a vastly different outcome than is commonly argued in both traditional and modern historiography. It is no coincidence that this century is universally regarded as Koryo’s renaissance, a century, incidentally, in which there was no official contact with Song China.

Before taking a better look at the background of the 1010 invasion, let us first consider the Liao contributions to Koryo’s renaissance, again while reminding ourselves that during this period official contacts with the Song were absent. Perhaps the most neglected field of Koryo-Liao interaction is state administration. The Liao state was equipped with a highly sophisticated dual administration apparatus in which a northern division was responsible for the Khitan and other (semi-)nomadic peoples and the southern division for the Han Chinese under Liao rule. This dualism may be argued to have furnished Chinese states with an

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administrative pattern that persisted into the twentieth century. The Liao system also recognized the *ius territorialis* according to which different legal systems applied to different ethnicities within their empire.

In early Koryo an attempt was undertaken to establish an office in the capital which to all appearances had copied its north-south orientation from the Liao system. Although Koryo was by no means a multi-ethnic empire as Liao was, it did have a significant presence of different ethnic groups within its borders: Jurgen, Khitan, Song émigrés, and Parhae refugees come to mind. The Koryo bureaucracy needed ways to deal with these different groups and Liao dualism apparently seemed a good solution. Unfortunately, there are no extant sources detailing why this experiment failed or was stopped. The Liao *ius territorialis* was also practiced in Koryo. At times, it was a contested practice which seems to have been looked upon, and at times condemned, as a Liao influence.

Closely related to these administrative influences are the numismatic policies of early to middle Koryo which seem to have been modeled completely on Liao examples. Two attempts were made to introduce a currency system following the Liao model: in 996 and in 1112. Both times detractors of the new system adopted an anti-Liao stance in order to criticize it.

Buddhism was the singularly most important part of Koryo life that was deeply influenced by Liao cultural achievements. Persvasive as Buddhism was in Koryo society (even if Koryo was not a Buddhist society, Buddhism was still everywhere), it was easy for Liao diplomats to use Koryo's thirst for Buddhist knowledge, texts and artifacts to help grease the wheels of Liao-Koryo diplomacy. Gifts from Liao at such times could be impressive. The complete Liao Tripitaka was for instance given to Munjong when this Koryo ruler was making it clear he

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24 Also, after its collapse Liao reinvented itself as the Western Liao, a Central Asian state with a Chinese/Manchurian/Central Asian administrative structure. See Michel Biran, *The Empire of the Qara-Khitai in Eurasian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

25 For the application of *ius territorialis* and *ius sanguinis* to different ethnic groups in Koryo, see KS 95.19b-20a; KSC 4.20a. This is what a senior statesman had to say about a concrete case of interethnic murder: "This bunch may have submitted to us and become our vassals, but they are still savage beasts with human faces, unfamiliar with civilized customs and not fit to be tried by civilized law. According to the codex, non-acculturated foreigners (hwaein 化外人) must be judged according to their own laws if the crime has been committed against a person of the same race." See KS 95.19b-20a; KSC 4.20a. These comments agree with the traditional application of the *ius sanguinis* in multi-ethnic states such as Liao and later Jin. The use of the legal term hwaein 化外人 suggests that familiarity with Liao legal practices. See Twitchett and Tietze, "The Liao," 93.

26 Liao financial practices, such as the use of money, were also emulated in Koryo. When Yejong, like his father Sukchong before him, attempted to promote the use of money, his officials opposed him by appealing to the fourth injunction which forbade excessive imitation of either Song China or Liao: "The monetary law was aimed by former rulers at enriching the country and making the people comfortable. My father did not intend to increase property and capital. Let alone now that the Great Liao have started to use money! If a law is proclaimed, slander and abuse of it will follow automatically. That is why it is said that the people cannot understand something that has just been started. But unexpectedly, many officials are boycotting the use of money, using Taejo's injunction not to copy Tang and Khitan customs as a pretext. But [Taejo's] prescription actually aimed at nothing but decadent customs. If we were to do away with Chinese civilization and institutions, what then?" See KS 79.12a.
would not be averse to rapprochement with the Song court in the second half of the eleventh century.\textsuperscript{27} There is a certain amount of irony involved here. The first Koryŏ Tripitaka had been carved in the early years of the eleventh century. The carving was undertaken (partially at least) to borrow the magico-religious powers of Buddhism in warding off the Khitan invasions from 1010 onwards.\textsuperscript{28} Although this aspect of the carving of the first Koryŏ Tripitaka must not be ignored, the carvings of Tripitaka in general in East Asia involved an incomparably more important issue that had nothing to do with invoking the protection of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas against foreign invaders. Undertakings of this magnitude (that could involve tens of thousands of people, huge resources, and took at least a decade) should rather be seen as projects aimed at the propagation of civilizational virtues.

It was generally accepted that the sacred right to commission a Tripitaka was exclusively held by the Son of Heaven. So when Liao and then Koryŏ commissioned their own Tripitaka to be carved, they were quite consciously positioning themselves next to the Chinese Son of Heaven.\textsuperscript{29} More importantly, however, than this rather formal notion was the hard fact that for a state to possess the ability to carve a Tripitaka (which was only possible when a state could avail of advanced Buddhist knowledge, a vibrant scholastic tradition, huge surpluses, and highly developed carving and printing techniques) and then give an edition away meant that the civilizational achievements of that state were second to none. Impinging on the territory of the Chinese Son of Heaven by appropriating a privilege traditionally associated with him was a nice bonus. The crux was the ability to successfully undertake such a huge project and benefit from its completion.

The eleventh century saw an increasingly intensive exchange of Buddhist knowledge between the Liao and Koryŏ. At the same time, it should not be overlooked that Koryŏ made sure that the fundamentals of any exchange were in place by sending frequent envoys to Liao, which included monks, entertainers and musicians, as well as young children to learn the Khitan language.\textsuperscript{30} Such practical and concrete measures demonstrated Koryŏ’s realization that Liao would be its neighbor in the north for some time to come. As such, it would be Koryŏ’s most important international partner.

Trade with Liao was vibrant from the late tenth century onwards. Trade seems to have been conducted mainly through the frontier market in Poju (Ŭiju 義州), a town right on the border. The market was established between 1008 and 1010.\textsuperscript{31} After Liao conquered the Chinese region where traditionally metal was

\textsuperscript{27} Kim Yongmi, “11segi huban-12segi ch’o Koryŏ Yo oegyo kwan’gye-wa pulgyŏng kyoryu,” 47-77.


\textsuperscript{29} Lancaster, “The Buddhist Canon,” 175-76.

\textsuperscript{30} Liang (hereafter LS) 13.6b-7a; KS 3.27a-28b.

worked, products from this region found their way to Koryo through Liao and enjoyed much popularity. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Liao also sent riding equipment and silk to Koryo. Given the large presence of non-Liao naturalized Khitan groups in Koryo, Khitan customs and products were easily spread all throughout Koryo. Regardless of the situation of the frontier, through the early Koryo period, small groups of Khitan (usually not more than a few families at a time) came to Koryo and were allowed to settle within its borders. Liao Buddhist knowledge and paraphernalia were in demand and could easily be obtained. But Liao influence went further than trade products: it has been demonstrated that Koryo religious wood architecture was influenced by Liao architectural practices.

Conversely, Koryo influences shaped Liao astronomy (through the reservoir of Koguryo astronomy present in Koryo), literati in both countries came to admire one another’s writings, and Koryo and Liao were thought to belong to the same complicated Manchurian lineage of peoples and states. Due to spatial constraints, I will not expand on this topic, but Koryo and the Manchurian dynasties shared the same history as they shared charter states in Koguryo; and perhaps even in Parhae.

The Koryo-Liao interaction during the eleventh century contributed to Koryo’s renaissance. The eclectic, multi-ethnic culture of Liao was of defining importance in the civilizational completion the two states were engaged in. If we focus only on the violent and barbarian nature of Liao culture and practices, we not only miss the most important aspect of Liao civilization: its impurity in other words, but also lose an avenue of understanding the formation of Koryo culture in the eleventh century. It may even be argued that Liao, in contrast to the Song, was no conquest dynasty. The following analysis of the background to the 1010 invasion will suggest this.

The invasion of Koryo is thought to have been occasioned by the conclusion of the Shanyuan treaty with the Song in 1004/1005, which freed Liao from a costly war with the Song. The invasion is also thought to fit within the overall

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34 This was something that was even noticed by someone who only stayed in the country for a short time. Song envoy Xu Jing wrote in his Illustrated Account of Koryo or Gaoli tujing that tens of thousands of Khitan lived within Koryo’s borders. Many of these were employed in the metal working trade. See Gaoli tujing 19.
37 Although it is exceedingly difficult to establish what astronomical knowledge was transmitted by whom to whom, judging from constellations depicted in Koryo and Liao tomb murals, Koguryo knowledge seems to have made its way to Koryo and Liao. The structure and contents of Liao and Koryo tomb murals possess a strong continuity with those of Koguryo. See Kim Ilgwon, "Koguryo pyokhwa-wa kodae Tong-Asia pyokhwa ch’onmun ch’omt’ong ko’ch’al. Ilbon K’itora ch’onmun-uui saeroum t’ongjung-’ul t’otpuch’o. 高句麗 壁畫와 古代 东亚艺术의 壁畫 天文 傳統 考察 -日本 基本的 天文羅之 新洪和 平繫" in Koguryo yon’gu (2003): 243-86.
38 See Breuker, Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918-1170: History, Ideology and Identity in the Koryo Dynasty (Brill: Leiden, 2010), Chapter Six.
pattern of Liao conquests. But much of modern historiography and a majority of the traditional sources are biased towards Liao and see little else than a conquest dynasty of soon-to-be-sinicized nomads, and biased towards the stateless Jurchen, who much like the Khitan were not deemed capable of playing a role on the international stage that did not include mindless violence, slaughter, and ransacking. To a certain extent, this is caused by a retrospective identification with the Mongols. A different look at the sources over the *longue durée* makes it possible, however, to observe a different and relevant pattern.

From the founding of Liao, simultaneous to the establishment of Koryŏ, the Jurchen were a constant menace that needed careful management. As early as 909, the Khitan armies were conquering Jurchen groups. After a period in which the Jurchen paid frequent tribute to Liao, from the 970s onwards, several larger Jurchen units became impossible to control for reasons unknown. This again resulted in several large-scale Liao expeditions against the Jurchen. Interestingly, this was the same period in which Koryŏ and Liao started to share borders. Also of note is the fact that until this time, Koryŏ had not been seriously bothered by Jurchen incursions. This was about to change. An entry in the *Liaoshi* from 981 reveals an important clue for understanding the dynamics of this period. After Koryŏ reacted lukewarmly to Liao overtures to recognize Liao as its suzerain state, it is stated that a proposed invasion of Koryŏ was cancelled in favor of another large expedition against the Jurchen. The Jurchen reacted by assuming a role they would play with verve for the next 150 years: that of the middleman in the know. They warned Koryŏ officials repeatedly that Liao was preparing to mount an expedition against Koryŏ. It is also from this period onwards that Koryŏ and the Jurchen started to clash frequently.

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39 See Dennis Twitchett and Klaus Peter Tietze, “The Liao,” 43-153, Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity in Eleventh-Century China*. Also see the articles mentioned earlier in notes 14 and 15.

40 I am still not sure how to conceptualize smaller units of Jurchen. The notion of tribe is habitually used in connection with the Jurchen, but I concur with David Sneath, who has shown convincingly how colonialist this notion is. See David Sneath, *The Headless State: Aristocratic Orders, Kinship Society and Misrepresentations of Nomadic Inner Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), Chapter Three. For entries on Liao-Jurchen altercations, see for instance *Liaoshi* [hereafter LS] 1.1b (this is incidentally the very first regular page of the *Liaoshi*); LS 8.3b; 85a. It is of interest to note that armed confrontations with Jurchen groups go hand in hand with Jurchen groups trading and bringing tribute. The same was the case in Koryŏ.

41 The *Liaoshi* frequently records expeditions against Jurchen groups. Battles (it is hard to establish how large these battles were) alternated with Jurchen representations seeking audiences at court and bringing tribute.

42 LS 10. 8a-b.

43 In the Fifth Month Jurchen in the Northwestern Frontier Region reported: “The Khitan are preparing to invade Koryŏ with their army.” Nonetheless, no defense was mounted. In the Eighth Month the Jurchen again reported that the Khitan had raised an army. Only now it was believed that the situation was urgent and military officials were dispatched to different regions.

44 See KSC 2.35b-36a. Yi Kyōmū was ordered to build fortifications along the Amnok River which would function as frontier gates, effectively sealing off Koryŏ. The Jurchen assembled an army, attacked and captured Yi Kyōmū. It turned out to be impossible to build the frontier fortifications, because the Koryŏ army collapsed in the face of Jurchen resistance. The fortifications were left unfinished and barely one out of three soldiers made it back home.
at this moment need further scrutiny, but the Jurchen's assertiveness was being noticed militarily, diplomatically, and economically.45 Simultaneously Liao pressure on Koryŏ increased, temporarily culminating in 993 when Liao armies invaded Koryŏ, only to be convinced by the Koryŏ commander to leave in return for amicable relations.46 Although there is room for doubt this incident ever took place, it does reflect Koryŏ-Liao relations in this period accurately.47 Liao's objective was to draw Koryŏ within its sphere of influence, not to conquer it. The same period was characterized by severe court in-fighting in Koryŏ, while the administrative reforms in the 990s had yet to be successfully executed.48 Koryŏ's unstable domestic situation led to a decade-long neglect of Koryŏ's northern frontier. This period is also remarkable in the sense that there seems to have been conspicuously little contact between Koryŏ and the Jurchen, which is something of an anomaly.49 These circumstances have a direct bearing on the Liao invasion of Koryŏ. After 1005, a full-scale invasion of Koryŏ became financially possible, while the maintenance of the status quo at the frontier (basically a semi-permanent state of war) between Koryŏ and Liao was also costly.50 When the Koryŏ ruler was assassinated by army commander Kang Cho, Liao was furnished with an adequate casus belli to invade Koryŏ. But I do not think the conclusion that the invasion then stemmed from a general Liao desire for conquest is warranted. The course of the invasion, too,

45 In a Koryŏsa entry from 985 the Jurchen's new role and the friction it caused with Liao and Koryŏ clearly emerges. With new-found assertiveness and confidence, the Jurchen played Liao, Koryŏ, and Song against one another, allying themselves with the party that most suited their immediate needs. These tactics proved dangerous when Liao militarily responded to Jurchen threats and actions. Faced with Liao military superiority, Jurchen groups tended to flee to Koryŏ, causing Liao and Koryŏ to clash. The famous 993 invasion of Koryŏ by Liao and So Hŭi's subsequent diplomatic victory was also occasioned by fleeing Jurchen. KS 3.9a-b.

46 "Xunning said to Hŭi, 'Your country rose in Shilla territory. Koguryŏ territory is in our possession. But you have encroached on it. Your country is connected to us by land, and yet you cross the sea to serve China. Because of this, our great country came to attack you. If you relinquish your land to us and establish a tributary relationship, everything will be alright.' Hŭi replied, 'That is not so. Our country is in fact former Koguryŏ, and that is why it is named Koryŏ and has a capital at Pyŏngyang. If you want to discuss territorial boundaries, the Eastern Capital of your country is within our borders. How can you call our move an encroachment? Moreover, the land on both sides of the Yalu River is also within our borders, but the Jurchen have now stolen it. Being obstinate and crafty, they shift and deceive, and they have obstructed the roads, making them more difficult to travel than the sea. That we cannot have a tributary relationship is because of the Jurchen. If you tell us to drive out the Jurchen, recover our former territory, construct fortresses, and open the roads, then how could we dare not to have relations? If you take my words to your emperor, how could he not accept them out of sympathy?" KS 94.4b-5a. I borrow the translation from Peter Lee (ed.), Sourcebook of Korean Civilization (New York: Columbia University, 1993), 300. For the sake of consistency, I have changed the transliteration of the Chinese names to pinyin.

47 This is at least Michael Rogers's opinion. He bases his assertion on the fact that the Liaoshi does not mention it. See Rogers, "The Chinese World Order in Its Transmural Extension: The Case of Chin and Koryŏ," Korean Studies Forum 4 (1978): 1-22. Although the fact that this occurrence was not recorded in Liao sources is indeed troublesome, elements of the story can be verified in other sources. Nonetheless, in all probability the encounter was not as surprisingly unproblematic as the Koryŏsa suggests.


49 Mokjong, however, had Han On'gŏng made clothes of marten skins, suggesting contacts with the Jurchen. See KSC 2.57a.

50 Both for Liao and Koryŏ. In Koryŏ, military expenditure on the northern frontier indirectly caused the 1015 military coup d'état.
confirms that this was not an attempt at conquest: Liao armies did not stay in Koryŏ any longer than needed and Liao failed to commit enough military force to actually subdue Koryŏ instead of punishing it. Against the background sketched above a different and more plausible scenario is possible. This scenario centers on the Jurchen. In what may perhaps be called an international *ménage à trois* the actions of the Jurchen determined to a large extent the reactions from Liao and Koryŏ and shaped Liao-Koryŏ interaction to a significant extent. The internal crises Koryŏ went through had led to the neglect of the northern frontier, which was severely weakened when Koryŏ vigilance lapsed. This was exacerbated when Kang Cho took an army of 5,000 horsemen in armor to the capital to seize the throne. In this respect, as the Liao emperor had announced before he invaded, Liao really had something to straighten out with Kang Cho; not his regicide, but his withdrawal of a sizeable force from Pyŏngyang, from which the defense of the northern frontier was coordinated. It needs little argument that it was Liao that mainly suffered from Koryŏ’s failure to keep the northern frontier strong and the territories beyond the frontier under control. Liao sources clearly confirm this. The more space the Jurchen were given, the more they tried to expand and consolidate their new-found position of importance. Although Koryŏ had tried to keep a check on the Jurchen threat during the first years of the eleventh century by increasing fortifications along the Koryŏ-Liao frontier, at the same time this period was characterized by increasingly frequent and violent Jurchen incursions.⁵¹ The withdrawal of 5,000 heavy cavalry from Pyŏngyang made two things very clear to Liao. First, Koryŏ’s control over the northern frontier was now drastically reduced and second, its internal political crisis was spinning out of control. Given the fact that Koryŏ’s political crisis had in the first place been the prevalent reason why frontier maintenance was no longer a priority, the decision to intervene in Koryŏ domestic politics and to secure Koryŏ’s northern frontier at the same time cannot have been hard to reach. Concern over the northern frontier and its relative peace may also have been behind the legendary exploits of Soŏ Hŭi and his successful negotiations with Liao. Such an explanation would certainly fit all the known facts and finally elucidate what Liao stood to gain with the compromise reached: secure borders and trade. Interestingly, right after the treaty concluded with Liao, Soŏ Hŭi immediately started to build fortifications along Koryŏ’s frontier and mounted expeditions against the Jurchen, suggesting that the issue of control over the Jurchen was at the heart of the Koryŏ-Liao altercations.⁵²

Another important factor for Liao to force Koryŏ into its orbit was trade.

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⁵¹ See for example KSC 2.61b, which reports a walled city was built in Pyŏngno-jin Garrison in 1001; KSC 2.62a states walled cities or fortifications in Tokch’u, Kaju, Wiha and Kwangha had been repaired in 1003; in 1005 Eastern Jurchen invaded Tangju and Soju and ransacked and burned more than 30 chu, chin and villages. A general was sent to stop them (KSC 2.63b-64a). In 1006 (KSC 2.64b) more fortifications were built in Tangju, Kusŏng, and Yongjin-jin. In 1007, the Khitan sent Yełû Yangui 耶律延貴, who “promoted” the Koryŏ ruler to a higher rank in the Liao system (KSC 2.64b-65a). In the same year fortifications were built in Hŭngha-jin Ing-nyŏng and Uljina (KSC 2.65a-b). The next year Tongju was walled (KSC 2.65b).

⁵² KSC 2.53b; KSC 2.55a; KSC 2.56a.
After the 993 treaty, Liao sent Koryŏ a letter in which the Liao construction of five fortifications along the Amnok is explained as a means to protect the envoys coming and going between Liao and Koryŏ. The Koryŏ ruler is also urged to inspect the works and start working simultaneously on similar projects along the Koryŏ frontier. It seems that Liao had a twofold purpose with this letter to the ruler of Koryŏ. First, the missive was sent to alleviate Koryŏ suspicions with regard to Liao construction efforts at the frontier. Second, it aimed at stimulating Koryŏ to undertake similar projects. Behind these objectives, however, two more important Liao ambitions were hidden: restraining the Jurchen in the area between the Koryŏ and Liao frontier and drawing Koryŏ into the infrastructure of the Liao Empire. Next to their obvious defensive function the fortifications along the Amnok also possessed another function: the facilitation of trade. Liao’s insistence that Koryŏ also built fortifications was in fact a plea for more trade, next to an exhortation to not underestimate the threat posed by the Jurchen. It appears that Koryŏ responded to the demands of Liao, undoubtedly also because it was realized that both objectives (restraining of the Jurchen and increased trade) would also be advantageous for Koryŏ.

In the meantime, Koryŏ-Liao relations were becoming more intimate: the ruler was invested by Liao and there was even serious talk of a royal marriage between a Khitan princess and the Koryŏ ruler. Economically, too, the Khitan influence was felt when in 996 coins were minted. These developments do not support the hypothesis that Liao invaded Koryŏ for territorial gain or loot, the two traditional prizes of the destructive nomad invader, but instead invaded Koryŏ to draw it more firmly into its own sphere of influence; to stabilize Koryŏ politics; and to stabilize the frontier. Liao’s heavy-handed tactics backfired, however, when the 1010 invasion (in contrast to the 993 invasion) became destructive, forcing Koryŏ to prepare for war. Different from 993 when Sŏ Hŭi had faced off with the
invading Liao army, Koryo was now fighting for its survival and not merely for some disputed territory, which explains Koryo’s all-out war efforts. Although von Clausewitz’s definition of war is not a definition I would in other cases subscribe to easily, here it seems to fit perfectly: in terms of objectives to be realized, Liao saw the 1010 invasion of Koryo as “the continuation of politics by other means.”

The 1010 invasion was in fact a repeat of the 993 invasion. While in 993, Koryo had reacted to the Liao show of force with a cool head, Koryo’s internal situation in 1010 had dramatically worsened to the extent of the dynasty being on the brink of collapsing. In 1010, then, the crisis in Koryo triggered a perhaps unforeseen reaction from the side of Koryo. Instead of again submitting to the forcefully proclaimed Liao demands, it seems that the Liao invasion was considered the possible final thrust that would destroy the state. As a result, Koryo leaders saw no alternative but to prepare for total war, close ranks, and fight. After the invasion, Koryo reacted strongly. It built up its neglected military, reinforced and extended its fortifications in the north, and awarded the military a more central place in society. Although the disastrous defeat of Liao in 1018 during another attempt at invading the peninsula had in fact spelled the end of Liao military inventions in Koryo, it took until 1020 for the full-blown war raging between the two states to come to an end.

Seen in this light, Koryo-Liao relations were anything but antagonistic, but mutually beneficial and formative for most of the time and destructive only for part of it. The impurity in this narrative is relative to the traditional and modern normative concept (respectively connected to ideas of ideological legitimacy and retrospective nationalism) that understands Koryo as a sinicized state with no meaningful relations with its northern neighbors, other than those of duress, force, and opportunism. The same impurity is reflected in the formation of Koryo culture in the eleventh century when its renaissance was decisively influenced by Liao cultural achievements. With regard to Koryo, Liao denies useful categorization: it was itself an amalgam of very different influences and the ways it influenced Koryo were as diverse (both as model to be inspired and to be avoided). Without impurity Koryo would not have survived nor prospered. It can be argued that Koryo’s

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57 There were more signs of Liao wanting to achieve something else than a simple conquest of Koryo once the invasion had started. While trying to sack Koryo’s strongholds in the north, there appear to have been quite extensive negotiations with Koryo commanders. All through the invasion, rumors were rife that Koryo commanders were negotiating with or had defected to Liao, suggesting that Liao continued its pre-invasion policy of trying to force Koryo to comply with its demands by both military and non-military means.

58 Koryo’s domestic political situation towards the end of the tenth century was extremely stable, while three decades later the state had been thrown into prolonged administrative and political confusion.

59 Several Liao officials had warned the emperor that Koryo would prove to be a tough opponent, not worth the trouble it would bring Liao.

60 The military build-up paradoxically brought with it a temporary neglect of the accumulated merit of retiring soldiers, since all available resources went to the construction of new defences. When the field allotted to these retiring soldiers, to add insult to injury, were illegally repossessed by some powerful ministers, a part of the Koryo army rebelled and took over the government. Their leaders were killed by a royalist faction a year later.
civilization model was impure in its very inception.

A Narrative of Disorder
We have now seen that early Koryŏ history looks different if we examine it from the angles of inauthenticity and impurity. It looks even more different when observed from the angle of disorder. It has become clear that the Jurchen occupied a central place in Koryŏ-Liao relations. In both traditional and modern historiography (and in modern popular culture, I should add, which paints them as hooligans) the autonomous Jurchen are represented as the epitome of disorder: disorganized, violent barbarians who lacked a state. But like the Khitan who bore a similar reputation, there was more than meets the eye. As with inauthenticity and impurity, disorder refers to the historiographical prejudice attached to the Jurchen, but is used here reversely and to a certain extent ironically: the perceived disorder that condemned the Jurchen to a history of neglect may be turned around and used to reevaluate Jurchen history and bring out hitherto unnoticed aspects.

Habitually, the Jurchen are left out of most historical considerations that feature Koryŏ and Liao. The Jurchen groups had profited from the 926 conquest of Parhae by Liao by claiming unprecedented freedom to move southwards from the densely forested mountain areas near the Sungari to eastern Manchuria. Alternatively, Jurchen communities seem to have also been formed by survivors from Parhae. While Liao was fighting its wars with the states in China proper and Koryŏ was trying to reunify the peninsula, Jurchen groups established themselves as a major regional power, albeit without the body of a state.

Liao-Jurchen clashes date from the inception of the Liao state, while Koryŏ-Jurchen relations date from slightly later. The early history of the Jurchen is shrouded in mystery. Once they begin their southward migration, they appear in Liao and Koryŏ sources with increasing frequency until not a week goes by without an entry mentioning the Jurchen. The Jurchen determined to a large extent whether Koryŏ and Liao were at war or at peace with each other. What interests me here, however, is through what kind of ideological and cognitive framework Koryŏ and Liao interacted with the Jurchen. To some extent, the role of classic tributary rhetoric must be recognized. The Jurchen were loosely fitted into an idealist conception of the classic Chinese tributary system, both in Liao and Koryŏ. At the same time, they were conceived of as the bastard offspring of Koryŏ and as such given a place in the lineage of Manchurian descent which was located outside of the

62 It is by no means certain that the earliest references to Jurchen in the Koryŏsa and Koryŏsa chŏr’yo actually refer to the Jurchen. Given the Jurchen’s very late arrival near or at the peninsula, it is altogether possible to suspect that these earliest references were written post factum with the by that time ubiquitous Jurchen in mind, but in fact referred to other bands of (semi-)nomadic peoples.
Chinese worldview.  

Even more than Liao, lacking a state until 1126, the Jurchen had always gotten short thrift from official historiography. When the Jurchen Jin state was finally established, it was summarily treated in official historiography as a successor state to Liao. The Jin state fell to the Mongols in the first half of the thirteenth century and its relatively short existence did not help it in gaining a firm place in Northeast Asian historiography. A third complicating factor was that the Jurchen ironically suffered a retrospective identification with the Mongols, turning them into bloodthirsty nomad warriors on horseback. The Jurchen were semi-nomadic at best, many of them were very adept sailors (indeed, their seaborne raids more than anything bring to mind the Viking raids), a sizeable part of the Jurchen was sedentary and the lack of a state did not hamper their importance in their world.

It appears that the Jurchen were at the centre of Koryo-Liao relations and played a role normally unsuspected of communities not united in a state body. The Jurchen seemed to have profited from the tense state of affairs between Koryo and Liao and actively promoted discord between them, switching allegiance whenever the power equilibrium was about to decisively tip to one side. Interestingly, despite the absence of a Jurchen state, there nevertheless seems to have been an effective system of coordinating Jurchen responses to Koryo and Liao within the various Jurchen groups, for the switch of allegiance from Liao to Koryo can be observed among all separately listed Jurchen groups.  

Even without the apparatus or organization of a state at their disposal, the various Jurchen communities were successful at working together and maintaining a united front. Nevertheless, the lack of a state at times proved cumbersome for the Jurchen. After the establishment of the Song, the Jurchen tried to establish direct trade contacts, but at every corner Koryo tried to make those contacts go through Koryo envoys to the Song.  

It may be hypothesized that the Jurchen, having no state and relying on semi-mercenary activities (guarding the frontier, gathering intelligence or scouting the terrain for Koryo or Liao, serving in Koryo or Liao armies as an advance guard), plunder, (impromptu) trade, extortion and invasions, thrived in tense situations.

64 This is a notion that appears in several Koryo sources. KMC 56.39-41; KS 14.2a-b: “Some people say that long ago, a monk from Pyongju 半州 by the name of Kim Chun 金俊 fled to the Jurchen and settled down in the village of Ajigo 阿之古村. There he became the ancestor of the Jin dynasty. Other people say that the son of Pyongju monk Kim Haengji 金幸之, Kim Kuksu 金克守 went for the first time to the Jurchen village of Ajigo, married a Jurchen woman and produced a son called Koül t’aesa 古乙太師. Koül had a son called Hwalla t’aesa 活羅太師. Hwalla had several sons. The eldest was called Haengnibal 鉢鉢, the second Yöngga 盈歌, who was the best and gained the trust of the people. When Yöngga died the eldest son of Haengnibal, Oasok 烏雅束, succeeded him and when he died, his younger brother Agolt’a 阿骨打 became chief [...]. The anecdote ends with the statement that “the Jurchen are originally the offspring of our own people and used to serve us and bring tribute to our lord. The people living in the borderlands have from olden times on always been recorded in our genealogies.”

65 The apparent coordination of the actions of the various Jurchen communities toward the Koryo court supports the assumption that they had developed an efficient way of cooperation. Trying to find concrete evidence for this assumption, however, is a self-defeating task, since this assumed system of cooperation in fact replaced the coordination a state would have offered the Jurchen. The various Jurchen tribes at this point in their history also did not avail of a writing system.

66 See Breuker, Establishing a Pluralist Society, Chapter Six.
As soon as tension between Koryô and Liao decreased or even disappeared, the various Jurchen communities were the first to suffer.

How did the Jurchen deal with Koryô? The dynamics of Jurchen-Koryô interaction need more sustained scrutiny, but there were roughly four different categories of interaction. First, there were the violent incursions of Jurchen located outside Koryô territory. Although unequivocally analyzed in Koryô historiography as mindlessly violent and purely aimed at material gain, a look at the incursions (both over land and over sea) over the *longue durée* shows uncanny timing. More detailed research and analysis are needed, but the sources strongly suggest that the various Jurchen communities coordinated their actions and used violent incursions to pressure Koryô into new agreements.67

Second, trade with the Jurchen (or through the Jurchen) was perhaps Koryô’s economically most significant trade, if the number of trade occasions and traders are a reliable index of trade volume.68 The most important merchandise seems to have consisted of horses, horse paraphernalia, animal skins, and ginseng and other medicinal herbs.

Third, the Koryô frontier was almost exclusively protected by Jurchen generals, as its chieftains were called when in service of Koryô. There were several special ranks set aside for Jurchen frontier generals.69 Here, too, it seems as if frontier service was also used as a tool to influence Koryô decision making. It should not be overlooked that Koryô only protected its northern frontier itself during war or expeditions. Most of the time and in most of the garrisons, most of the frontier soldiers were Jurchen. The Koryô military’s frontier service was often ad hoc, only present when really needed. In normal times, the Jurchen performed this task. The significance of this fact has often not been sufficiently appreciated.

Fourth and last, the Jurchen were due to their in-between position unrivaled spies. If Liao planned an invasion, Jurchen spies would tell the Koryô court (whether they were believed is another matter). Conversely, the guides for invading armies were also Jurchen and the intelligence Liao needed to plan an invasion usually came from Jurchen who had served in or on behalf of Koryô.70

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67 It goes without saying that this could lead to awkward situations, since the same chieftains that led the raids also conducted trade and negotiations with Koryô. It did from time to time happen that the Koryô court found out that a Jurchen chieftain who had entered court to bring tribute had been responsible for a violent incursion into Koryô territory or a similar crime. It would depend on the status and the usability of the Jurchen in question whether they would be forgiven (KS 4.29a-b) or apprehended and executed.

68 The impossibility to quantify Koryô trade due to an almost complete lack of sources regarding commercial activities is a major obstacle in properly understanding it.

69 See for instance KS 5.5a; KS 6.25a; KS 8.35b. Also see for example two instances from 1101. In this year the Jurchen leader Kosamo 古舍毛 and five others were admitted into Koryô, given houses and land, and formally made part of the Koryô population. The Western Jurchen Koshimo 古時毛 also submitted in that year. He was also given a house and land to live on. See KS 11.29a; KS 11.31a.

70 It seems that the news of Kang Cho’s dethronement and eventual murder of Mokchong was conveyed to the Liao by Jurchen who had dealings with Koryô. See KS 4.4b-5a. The Koryôsa recorded a very concrete example of Jurchen information dissemination from 1013, two years after the destruction of the Koryô capital. Fully engaged in war with Koryô, a Jurchen “who knows Koryô affairs” is brought to the Liao
Although the mechanisms are not yet clear, the Jurchen played an important role in Northeast Asia. The Liao invasions of Koryo were for a large part about the control of the Jurchen: Liao needed a secure frontier and Koryo was not providing it. Eventually, when Koryo failed to suppress the Jurchen in the early twelfth century, it was only a matter of time before the Jin dynasty was declared and the Jurchen for the first time possessed a state. Despite the absence of a state until the twelfth century, the Jurchen were important and full international partners of Liao and Koryo and the absence of a state actually aided them in maintaining their influential position amidst two powerful states for such a long time. The disorder apparent to so many historians when dealing with the Jurchen actually worked in their favor. Their extreme flexibility, mobility, and diversity with regard to resource acquisition made them a force to be reckoned with while living on territories that formally belonged to Koryo or Liao. The consistent underestimation of Jurchen by both Koryo and Liao, or perhaps their underestimation of the surprising levels of coordination the Jurchen communities were capable of, finally contributed to the downfall of Liao and the establishment of the Jin state.

Against Categorization
I have argued that in understanding Koryo history many of the categories employed hitherto lack heuristic value because of the essentialist and even teleological tendencies hidden in them. The emphasis on Koryo as a sinicized state, while obviously not completely without merit, is linked to a retrospective characterization of Koryo as a civilized state, equal to the Han Chinese states in China proper. At the risk of being reductionist, this again can be, again partly, seen as a colonial and postcolonial reaction to imperialist and colonialist Japanese historiography on Korea and Koryo, incidentally entities that are often conflated. Inherently, much of modern historiography has accordingly focused on the essentially beneficial nature of Koryo-Song relations, while allowing room for Koryo cultural and political autonomy, and the antagonist and destructive nature of Koryo-Liao relations. The Jurchen are not given equal treatment because they lacked a state and perhaps more importantly, because there is no contemporary successor to the Jin state.

By focusing on contingent historical events and recognizing the important roles played by inauthentic texts, impure and eclectic ideas and examples, and disordered, violent, and unreliable bands of warriors, it becomes possible to reassess the Koryo state and its society with greater freedom from the restrictive court who has the following to say: “To the east of Kaegyong, seven days distance by horse, there is a large military outpost, as large as Kaegyong itself. The precious and special tribute of the adjoining prefectures is all stored there. To the south of Surong and Naju there are again two large military outposts. Tribute is also stored there. If the great army was to march again following the road it took before [1010?], take the road north of the Hapsahan Jurchen, cross the Amnok and follow the river upstream until Kwakchu, where the important roads [of Koryo] meet, Koryo will be for the taking.” The Liao Emperor took to the advice of this Jurchen. In 1016, Liao armies crossed the Amnok River following the route proposed by him. See Liaoshi jishi benmo edited by (Qing) Li Youyang 李有棠 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1983), two volumes, vol. 1, 179. When it was clear that Koryo had decisively driven off Liao, Jurchen chiefs made efforts to get back into the good graces of the Koryo court by presenting weapons, horses, armour, battle banners and so forth. Both Eastern and Western Jurchen came to the Koryo court. See KS 4.26a-28b for some examples.
categories often associated with it. Koryŏ's sinicized nature has to make room for a perhaps equal share of Manchurian influences; its social, intellectual and ideological orientation must be recast as pluralist; Liao has to be understood as an “impure” civilizational model and an eclectic multi-ethnic empire bent on good relations with Koryŏ and a stable frontier; and the Jurchen emerge as perhaps the biggest surprise, the prize Koryŏ and Liao competed for, and perhaps the most consummate diplomats of them all. As a conclusion, I would like to offer the possibility that the 1010 Liao invasion, which was at the heart of the forged injunctions, Koryŏ-Liao relations and which were about control over the Jurchen, was no symbol of barbarian aggression and Koryŏ-Liao enmity, but instead the extreme result of a contest between Liao and Koryŏ, aimed at the consolidation of both states’ relations with the Jurchen.

**GLOSSARY**

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