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**The Culture of the Northern Jurchens in Medieval Times and
Amur-Choson Relations**

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Tungusic-speaking Jurchen tribes have been the primary interest of those who have studied problems related to the Soviet regions of Priamurye and Primorye. The Jurchen tribes who established the 120 year Chin dynasty in the early twelfth century influenced the historical destiny of East Asian peoples and scholars have devoted a great deal of time studying literary materials concerning them. The study of the Jurchens shifted in the 1950s when Far Eastern archaeological expedition teams of Academy of Sciences USSR began work under the leadership of Prof. A. P. Okladnikov. As a consequence, the most significant materials on the medieval period which have been gathered in the Far East are related to the Jurchens.

In Priamurye (Outer Manchuria), burial sites are important in the study of the Jurchen period but settlements are also being excavated and systematically examined. The overwhelming majority of Priamurye memorials are from the early, pre-statehood phase (9-11 C. AD), though there are some complexes dated from 7-8 C. AD. Archaeological research indicates that the Northern Jurchen culture of Priamurye had its own distinct character with a firm tradition rooted in the local cultural-historical past.

The Northern Jurchen built pit dwellings half-under-ground with ditches dug around them. Public buildings first appeared in Priamurye in the late 11 c. AD. Jurchens in Priamurye were master of building walled fortresses. We can find many original, new things in the life of the population of the Jurchen period, such as gilded bronze hairpins, iron kettles and earthenware pottery. Many remains of silk clothing which must have come to Amur from China have been found in burial sites as well.

Domestic handicrafts for use of the common folk were extensively produced in Jurchen communities. Ceramic production was especially rich and diverse.

The Priamur population was very successfully in the areas of metal extraction and metal processing. This can be deduced by the large variety of iron, non-ferrous metal and precious metal items which have been uncovered. We found about ten thousand metal items in one burial ground alone. None of the activities of the Jurchen people are conceivable without metal and items made of it. The remains of metal and slag, crucibles anvils, pincers made of precious metals, hammers, and other items are evidence of metal production and its processing.

The main production activities of Jurchen people were wood processing, spinning and weaving, bone and stone sculpture and leather working.

Distinctive items of Northern Jurchen culture are the many original belts made of fine, slim, metal boards. The Soviet archaeological world has hitherto divided them into three distributional areas, that is, Pannonia, the Amur state of southeastern Europe and the Khazar khanate of Central Asia and the Middle East. I think we should now add a fourth area, the Middle and Low Priamurye.

The Jurchens who settled in Priamurye placed great value on armaments and the craft of war. Both archaeological and chronological sources provide evidence for this. The sophistication of their equipment and their military technique indicate that the population of the Amur region was one of the advanced ethnic communities of the time. Mastering specific combat tactics peculiar to mediaeval peoples of the open steppe-zone, the Jurchens were equipped with various kinds of armaments for both offense and defense. Many hundreds of arrowheads of more than 30 different varieties have been excavated so far. Many one-edge long swords, battle axes, and remains of coats of armour and helmets in iron have been found along with daggers, maces, quivers, and equestrian accessories such as horse harnesses. The Jurchens of Priamurye obviously had knowledge and experience in conducting both offensive and defensive combat.

Shamanism occupied a special place in the Jurchen's religious life. Researches have depicted several shamanistic cult features. Burials of female shamans have aroused great interest. There were female shamans apparently functioning side by side with male shamans not only in the Jurchen milieu, but in pre-agricultural Chinese communities, and among the

Ainus, the Nivkhs, and the Eskimos. We know through literature, for example, that in the 19th and early 20th C., daughters in shaman families were obliged to become shamans. Female shamans, who were not inferior to male shamans in power and authority, were found among the Nanaitzy and other peoples of Siberia and the Far East.

While shamanism among the Jurchens was pre-eminent, we must also presume that the mediaeval population of Priamurye knew something of Buddhism. I believe that Buddhism had already come to the Jurchens in the pre-statehood period and that it first came from the Korean peninsula. The discovery of a Buddha statue of the northern mediaeval style from a tomb in Korsakovsk supports this idea. The gilded bronze statue represents a deity which was certainly Buddha. He has an elegant elongated, oval face with arched eyebrows. The eyes are a little long with half-closed eyelids, and he has a slender, slightly flattened nose. The statue is clothed in two robes. There is an inner one next to the skin and an outer one. The Buddha is holding a round vessel with a long, narrow neck in his left hand. This vessel (kuvshin in Russian) is perhaps one of the most popular Buddhist symbols in the Far East. It is one of the so-called Eight Auspicious Symbols which include the Wheel of the Law, the conch shell, the umbrella, the flag, the lotus flower, the fish and the knot of eternity.

It is presumed that artefacts of this kind reached the Amurye area from the Korean peninsula via the Bohai region. Metal statues depicting the Buddha standing on a round pedestal are seen in Koguryo works of Buddhist art. The head unearthed from a tomb in Korsakovsk resembles Buddhas found in Koguryo sculpture. This statue was buried together with the deceased who had been a patron of Buddhism.

Elements of a rich artistic tradition from the earlier culture of the Priamurye can be traced in Jurchen fine arts. Together with their local traditions, the Jurchen peoples were accustomed to works of plastic arts executed in Scytho-Suberian style already in the early Jurchen period. Turkic-speaking peoples, primarily Uighur, who had emigrated to the Far East, and apparently to Priamurye, in part, were involved in the dissemination of Scytho-Siberian styles at the end of the first millennium. Archaeological evidence plays a decisive role in resolving questions in the early Jurchen history.

The consolidation of the Jurchens as an ethnic group was a long and complicated one. Paeoasian-Amur and Tungus-speaking strata can be identified in Jurchen culture. Chronicles do not mention the Tungus-speaking Jurchens in the early half of the first millennium AD. They were subordinated to the Mohe tribes with whom they had a kinship relationship at that

time. The Jurchen culture developed independently from the early 8th century. This is reflected in the wide range of artefacts and other distinctive, physical traits found in their ceramic wares, armaments, decorations, and tombs which were located on hills. The formation of the culture of the Jurchen owed much too Turkic-speaking Uighurs, Koreans and even Mongolian communities, to some extent. Their influences were quite apparent from early ninth to late tenth centuries. Archaeological research shows that the Priamurye had continual contact with neighboring peoples and that they were no lower in economic, social, cultural, and political development than many other medieval communities.

I would also like to add that the Priamurye people and the Korean people of medieval times shared a number of common features which were a result of routine contacts alone. We must keep in mind that the descendants of Fuyu (Puyo), a Tungusic state which existed for several centuries in Manchuria (until 280 AD), were important in the ethnogenesis of the Jurchen. The culture of the Fuyu people, several groups of which may have had kinship with the people of Koguryo, deserves special consideration. When we investigate the problems concerning the formation and development of Fuyu, we will be able to explain the ethno-cultural processes which occurred in Priamurye and its neighboring areas from late ancient to early medieval times.