

The Study of Jinshi in the Period of Emperor Aizong of Jin Dynasty

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Abstract: Emperor Aizong of the Jin Dynasty was suspicious and did not trust his high-ranking ministers. His reliance on the Jinshi reached an unprecedented level during his reign. Compared to other periods of the Jin dynasty, Emperor Aizong's era exhibited four distinct characteristics regarding the use of Jinshi: promoting scholars as Jinshi, too much trust in Jinshi, the emperor's decisions swayed by Jinshi and military tasks assigned to Jinshi. The negative impact of Emperor Aizong's employment of Jinshi far outweighed the positive one, causing military defeats against the Mongols, contributing to discord within the state and accelerating the downfall of the dynasty.

1. Introduction

1.1 The reign of Emperor Aizong of Jin Dynasty

In 1213, Emperor Xuanzong of Jin Dynasty was enthroned by the powerful minister Heshilie Zhizhong, making Emperor Xuanzong essentially a puppet ruler. In the wars against the Mongols, the Jin Dynasty suffered consecutive defeats and also engaged in battles on multiple fronts with the Western Xia Dynasty and the Southern Song Dynasty. These actions led to a gradual decline in the power of the Jin Dynasty. Compelled by the military pressure from the Mongols, Emperor Xuanzong of Jin Dynasty moved the capital from Zhongdu city to Bianjing city, plunging the Jin dynasty into deeper turmoil. Because of the experiences of being a puppet emperor, coupled with his suspicious nature, Emperor Xuanzong distrusted his high-ranking ministers. He treated them very harshly and often punished them severely for minor errors. The scholar Liu Qi commented: "Emperor Xuanzong of Jin Dynasty ascended to the throne with the help of treacherous officials and rebels. Timid, incompetent and suspicious, he feared powerful officials might threaten his reign again, so he would eliminate his ministers and generals at the first sign of their mistakes."^{[1](P136)} In this context, Emperor Xuanzong was willing to trust the Jinshi. Starting from Emperor Xuanzong, the Jinshi clique gradually gained power.

The term "Jinshi" refers to the Emperor's close attendant officials during the Jin Dynasty. Jinshi is also called "Jinxi", "Shicong", or "Xieyu". In the Jin Dynasty, the Jinshi were not eunuchs but rather favorite courtiers meticulously chosen by the emperor as his confidants. It is recorded in *The History of Jin Dynasty* that Emperor Xuanzong had "extreme trust in Xieyu."^{[2](P370)} Liu Qi also mentioned the power of those Jinshi became particularly strong after the relocation of the capital to

the south, maybe because Emperor Xuanzong wanted them to supervise all the officials.^{[1](P71)} Most of the Jinshi came from noble families, but they didn't have talent or abilities and some of them were even illiterate. The court of the Jin Dynasty was highly corrupt after the Jinshi gained power. It is written in *Return to Seclusion* "The ministers often had to flatter the Jinshi. When the Jinshi went to the local areas, local officials would give them large amounts of bribes, because the Jinshi were close to the emperor, and their words were easily accepted by him."^{[1](P79)} In such situations, upright officials often faced oppression, and officials who dared to fight against the Jinshi clique would face severe retaliation. Scholar-officials who were bold in speech and action to fight against the Jinshi were all exiled to remote areas. But there were still some honest officials like Wanyan Sulan, Zhang Xingxin, and Chen Gui who criticized the Jinshi. It is recorded that Zhang Xingxin was slandered by those Jinshi and was dispatched to govern Jingzhou, a desolate place.^{[1](P58)} The domination of Jinshi in power made the politics even darker and further led to the decline of the national strength. Although high-ranking officials fiercely opposed the control of Jinshi, Emperor Xuanzong never distanced himself from them.

Additionally, there were many accumulated malpractices before Emperor Aizong ascended the throne. Emperor Xuanzong's dislike for Han Chinese led to the emergence of some negative sentiments among the court. Jin Dynasty was established by ethnic minorities so Emperor Xuanzong favored officials from his own ethnic minority and alienated the Han Chinese officials, not allowing Han chancellors to intervene in important affairs. During the reign of Emperor Xuanzong, the law was often violated. According to The Chronicles of Emperor Aizong in *The History of Jin Dynasty*, Judicial officials often violated legal principles due to personal sentiments, resulting in honest people being unjustly subjected to severe punishment.^{[2](P373)} Emperor Xuanzong liked employing oppressive officials, leading to widespread grievances throughout the court and among the common people. During the reign of Emperor Xuanzong, the powerful minister Suhu Gaoqi took office and promoted the low-ranking and corrupt officials while discouraging upright scholars and high-ranking officials from expressing their viewpoints.^{[1](P137)} In 1224, Emperor Xuanzong passed away amidst domestic turmoil and external threats. With the assistance of his close officials Yila Pu'a and Wanyan Sahenian, Emperor Aizong crushed his elder brother Wanyan Shouchun's conspiracy to seize the throne and ascended to power smoothly.

1.2 Literature Review

In the academic field, there were two important articles specifically discussing Jinshi problems of Jin dynasty, which are "Preliminary Exploration of Jinshi in Jin Dynasty" by Zhou Feng and "Exploring Jinshi's Intervening State Affairs in Jin Dynasty" by Sun Xiaowei. The former discusses the family background of Jinshi, their experiences in official positions, and their political roles in Jin Dynasty and the latter suggests that the influence of Jinshi holding power was negative, and their control of power was one of the factors leading to the downfall of the Jin Dynasty.^[3] Based on Zhou Feng's article, Sun Xiaowei's further discusses the issue of Jinshi in Jin Dynasty from three aspects, firstly, the channels through which Jinshi interfere in politics; secondly the relationship between Jinshi and the Prime Minister; and thirdly, relationship between Jinshi and the Emperor.^[4] Compared to Zhou Feng's articles, Sun Xiaowei's article pays more attention to the connections between the Jinshi cliques and other social classes, approaching the issue of Jinshi in Jin Dynasty from the perspective of their relations with other social classes.

Moreover, some scholars have also touched upon the issue of Jinshi in Jin dynasty when researching Jin history, such as Yuan Cheng's "Information Game between Jin Dynasty Emperors and Courtiers" and Wei Xuan's "On the Successes and Failures of Emperor Aizong's Personnel Management." Yuan Cheng did not primarily focus on the power struggle between Jinshi cliques

and high-ranking officials but instead viewed the issue of power conflicts between the Courtiers Bureau and Bureau of State Archives. Meanwhile, Wei Xuan, while studying Jin Aizong's personnel strategies, mentioned the issue of Jinshi. Prior to this, few scholars directly focused on the eunuchs of the Emperor Aizong period. This article will analyze the characteristics displayed by Jinshi during the Emperor Aizong of Jin Dynasty based on existing research in the academic community.

2. The Characteristics of the Jinshi Cliques During the Reign of Emperor Aizong

When Emperor Aizong first ascended to the throne, his power was not secure, leading him to heed suggestions of the literati to exile cruel officials and reform laws. During this period, Emperor Aizong did not excessively appoint Jinshi to positions of importance. However, as his power consolidated, he gradually alienated both the high-ranking officials and scholar-officials, bolstered the power of his Jinshi, and used them to suppress high-ranking officials and military generals. In the middle and later stages of his reign, Emperor Aizong placed immense trust in his Jinshi, whose influence permeated personnel, military, and other sectors, allowing them to sway major decisions made by Emperor Aizong.

2.1 The Definition of Attendants During Era of Emperor Aizong

Jinshi during the reign of Emperor Aizong of Jin Dynasty were not limited to the officials of the Courtiers Bureau and Emperor Aizong's confidants should also be included. Both the officials of the Courtiers Bureau and Emperor Aizong's confidants together constituted the Jinshi cliques in Emperor Aizong's period. In a narrow sense, Jinshi refer to officials affiliated to the Courtiers Bureau, including Custodian of Archives, Regional Commissioner, Deputy Regional Commissioner, District Chief, and the emperor's closest attendant added in the 8th year of Emperor Aizong's reign (1232 AD). However, during the period of Emperor Aizong, Jinshi were not limited to the aforementioned. Emperor Aizong's favorite confidants, Wanyan Sahenian, served as the co-judge of the Grand Coordinator's Office, concurrently serving as the co-signatory of the Secretariat, neither of which was supervised by the Courtiers Bureau. However, it is written in *The History of Jin, Biography of Kang Xi* that "Sahenian, a royal relative, held real power in the Courtiers Bureau."^{[2](P461)} This indicates that the Jinshi during the reign of Emperor Aizong were not confined to officials serving in the Courtiers Bureau. In addition, Yila pu'a did not serve as an official of the Courtiers Bureau, but when Emperor Aizong was the Crown Prince, Yicipua served as the Chief of the Eastern Palace Guard, always guarding Emperor Aizong. Therefore, after Emperor Aizong ascended to the throne, Yilapupu was also trusted and wielded great power. The examples above all illustrate that when analyzing the definition of "Jinshi", researchers cannot rely solely on official titles in the Courtiers Bureau, but need to take into account some courtiers because of their close relationship with Emperor Aizong. In a broad sense, Jinshi should include two parts: officials in the Courtiers Bureau and favorite courtiers who accompanied Emperor Aizong for a long time. Both were components of Jinshi cliques during the reign of Emperor Aizong.

2.2 The characteristics of the Jinshi During the Reign of Emperor Aizong.

Due to Emperor Aizong's suspicious nature and the intense warfares at the end of the Jin Dynasty, Jinshi during Emperor Aizong's reign exhibited four notable characteristics compared to other periods of Jin Dynasty.

The first characteristic is that "Emperor Aizong utilized Confucian scholars to serve as his Jinshi."^{[5](P855)} In the early reign of Emperor Aizong, scholars such as Wanyan Sulan, Aotun Ahu, Jia Tingyang and Chen Yi served as Jinshi. During the reign of previous emperors of the Jin Dynasty,

scholars were somewhat suppressed. After Emperor Aizong ascended the throne, in order to win over the scholars and demonstrate a determination to eliminate long-standing system malpractice, he promoted a large number of scholars and appointed them as Jinshi to show intimacy. At the beginning of his reign, Emperor Aizong's power was not secure, he was short of support, and there were powerful officials like WanYan Shouchun who could threaten the emperor's power. Therefore, at this stage, Emperor Aizong chose to rely on the scholar class and the Jinshi cliques. With the help of scholars and Jinshi, Emperor Aizong quickly regained control of power. Scholars promoted during this period included Zhang Xingxin, Yang Yunyi, Zhao Bingwen, Shi Anshi, Hou Zhi, Xu Gu, Chen Gui, and so forth.

The second characteristic is that in the later period of Emperor Aizong's rule, he excessively favored and trusted his Jinsh. After smoothly navigating through the early crisis of his reign, Emperor Aizong gradually became arrogant and complacent. Cracks began to appear between the scholar-official class and Emperor Aizong, and the conflicts between the scholar-official class and the Jinshi cliques became increasingly apparent. In October of the fourth year of Emperor Aizong's reign (1238 AD), the scholar-officials launched an attack on the Jinshi cliques. It is recorded in *The History of Jin Dynasty* that Scholar-officials Li Dajie and Chen Gui impeached Wanyan Sahenian, an important Jinshi for corruption.^{[2](P379)} Emperor Aizong protected Sahenian and withheld the memorial to the throne without reporting it. Although Sahenian was subsequently sent away as the military governor of the capital city, this was essentially a disguised protection. In the third month of the fifth year of Emperor Aizong's reign (1239 AD), the scholar-official class once again impeached Emperor Aizong's Jinshi. According to *The History of Jin Dynasty*, supervising censor WuguLun bulula charged the Jinshi Zhang Wenshou, Zhang Renshou, and Li Linzhi of accepting bribes. Although it was proven that Zhang Wenshou, Zhang Renshou, and Li Linzhi accepted bribes from the enemy generals, Emperor Aizong once again pardoned them. Although Chen Gui reminded Emperor Aizong of the drawbacks of granting too much power to his Jinshi: "firstly, military generals are restrained by the Jinshi and cannot act independently; secondly, The Jinshi proclaiming the imperial edict openly accepted bribes, causing the court to lose its authority, which should be strictly prohibited; thirdly, if there are different punishments for the same crime, this cannot be acceptable to the public."^{[2](P2411)} Emperor Aizong outwardly accepted the advice with pleasure, but his behavior of favoring the Jinshi excessively remained unchanged until his suicide in 1234AD.

The third characteristic is that the power of the Jinshi during the reign of Emperor Aizong was expanded to the extent of influencing the emperor's decisions. Besides the overwhelming power of Wanyan Sahenian that has been mentioned above, other Jinshi also had the ability to sway Emperor Jin Aizong's decisions at crucial moments, directly altering the courses of events. For example, because of the siege of Bianliang City, the capital of Jin Dynasty, by the Mongol army, the city ran out of military provisions, and Wanyan Hezhou, one of Empero Aizong's Jinshi, suggested a method to alleviate the food shortage through collecting grains. During the implementation, another Jinshi Wanyan Jiuzhu killed two innocent women with the excuse of "the grain being mixed with weed seeds", causing such outrage in the capital that people threw the remaining grain into the filth.^{[2](P2516)} Wanyan Hezhou's and Wanyan Jiuzhu's actions not only failed to solve the shortage of military provisions, but also alienated the people of Bianliang City from Emperor Aizong, ultimately forcing him to flee. When choosing his flee destination, Emperor Aizong was also swayed by his Jinshi cliques, "After getting rid of the siege of Suiyang City, the Jinshi, who had been under siege for a long time and were in a desperate situation, heard that the prefecture Caizhou had strong defenses, and soldiers and provisions were plentiful, so they all persuaded the emperor to move to Caizhou."^{[2](P2549)} In reality, Caizhou was not an ideal choice, as it was not easily accessible and its defenses were not particularly strong. Despite this, Emperor Aizong was

persuaded by the strong recommendation of his Jinshi to go. When Yelu Zhongde proposed migrating westward to Sichuan Province, the Jinshi cliques vehemently opposed, citing the difficulties they had been faced in Suiyang City, and they were unwilling to move, preferring to stay and settle in Ruyang City. They continually fought against moving west, and eventually, the plan was dismissed. Under the influence of the Jinshi cliques, Emperor Aizong lost the best time to move westward. Consequently, "the Mongol troops blocked the routes for the westward relocation, and it never happened.^{[2](P2608)"} Since then, Emperor Aizong could only stay trapped in the isolated Ruyang City, waiting for the inevitable demise.

The fourth characteristic is that during the reign of Emperor Aizong, the military tasks assigned to the Jinshi increased. Sun Xiaowei has already made some summaries of Jinshi's functions in his article "Exploring the Jinshi's Intervening State Affairs in Jin Dynasty", including collecting information and conveying instructions, patrolling borders, relocating immigrants, collecting grain, and supervising wars. Compared to other periods, Jinshi, in Emperor Aizong's era, took on more temporary military responsibilities, such as diplomatic missions to local warlords, troop conscription, fortification, military inspection, leading military campaigns, as well as guarding the emperor. Emperor Aizong once dispatched Jinshi Yin Shiying and Gao Tianyou as envoys to local warlord Guo Yong'an to bestow the title of Prince Yan upon him.^{[2](P388)} In addition to sending Jinshi to win over warlords, they could also be dispatched to reprimand those warlords. Emperor Aizong had ever sent a Jinshi to interrogate the local warlord Wu Xian for not giving sufficient aid during a crisis.^{[2](P2580)} The Jinshi in Emperor Aizong's reign, also had duties such as going out for military expeditions and inspections, as well as assessing the terrain and the situation of local food storage.^{[2](P397)} Jinshi during Emperor Aizong's time might have the task of garrisoning. Wanyan Sahenian and Zhang Wenshou, who have already been mentioned above, were both sent out by Emperor Aizong after being impeached. Wanyan Sahenian was appointed as the Governor of Zhongjing City to garrison the central capital and ended up committing suicide by jumping into the water in Zhongjing when it was attacked by the Mongols. Zhang Wenshou was then sent by Emperor Aizong as the Inspector of Sui Prefecture. When the Mongolian army approached the city, Zhang Wenshou fled and was eventually killed by the Mongolian army. Wugulun Heihan, who came from a military background, defended against the Mongolian army in Tang Prefecture but was defeated and killed in the end. When Emperor Aizong was trapped in Caizhou, the Mongol army was overwhelmingly powerful and Caizhou was in imminent danger. Emperor Aizong required the Jinshi to defend the four city gates. Jinshi during the reign of Emperor Aizong also performed military duty of leading troops into battle. When regional warlord Wang Yishen rebelled, Emperor Aizong dispatched Courtier Director Nüxilie Wanchu to lead the troops from Xuzhou and Suzhou to quell the rebellion.^{[2](P399)} The most important function Jinshi performed was to guard the emperor. Wanyan ChangLe, one of Aizong's Jinshi, took charge of the troops and served as an escort to protect the emperor during his flee to Guide. The temporary military functions that Jinshi performed reflected the emperor's trust in them and the intensity of the war between the Jin troops and Mongolians. Additionally, due to the scarcity of talent in Emperor Aizong's court, the Jinshi, originally serving as imperial attendants, were forced to take on more military tasks. In summary, during the early reign of Emperor Aizong, scholar-officials stayed among the Jinshi cliques. However, as the emperor's power consolidated, rifts developed between the scholar-officials and the emperor, and they were eventually excluded from the Jinshi cliques. Thereafter, these Jinshi enjoyed extreme trust from the Emperor and were even able to influence his decisions. As the warfare intensified, the military responsibilities of the close attendants gradually increased.

2.3 The Jinshi' Political Functions During the Reign of Emperor Aizong

During the reign of Emperor Aizong of Jin Dynasty, the Jinshi mainly played two political roles: one was to counterbalance the ministers, and the other was to serve as ears and eyes to monitor officials. Emperor Aizong frequently utilized Jinshi to check and balance his subjects, relying on the Jinshi cliques and scholar-official class to consolidate power from the beginning when he first ascended to the throne. Subsequently, as conflicts with the scholar-official class emerged, Emperor Aizong turned to using Jinshi to suppress them. In the middle stage of his reign, with the intensification of the Mongol-Jin wars, he further employed Jinshi to counterbalance military commanders. During the late period of his reign, after fleeing from Bianjing, he used Jinshi to control local leaders in Guide and Caizhou prefectures. These tactics were almost consistent throughout the entire period of Emperor Aizong's rule.

Emperor Aizong was accustomed to using his attendant officials as spies and informers. He once said, "The Jinshi are my confidants. The supervising Censors are my eyes and ears."^{[6](P1)}"Aizong shared a similar disposition with his father, Emperor Xuanzong, they were both very suspicious and constantly suspected their ministers. Therefore, Emperor Aizong needed his Jinshi to help him keep an eye on his subordinates. When rumors emerged that the Pu'cha Guannu harbored thoughts of rebellion, Emperor Aizong dispatched his trusted Jinshi to investigate,"sending the cavalry commander Heshilie AliHe and the royal family member Xixian to monitor his movements."^{[2](P2547)}"While residing in Caizhou, he appointed his Jinshi as Chief Inspectors for surveillance, and to gather information. It is evident that using Jinshi for gathering intelligence was a routine tactic for Emperor Aizong in maneuvering political control. The employment of Jinshi to counterbalance the power of his ministers and act as informants was intended to strengthen his power, but such methods were bound to incite conflicts between the ministers and the Jinshi cliques.

3. The Reasons and Influence of Emperor Aizong's Heavy Reliance on Jinshi

3.1 The Reasons Behind Emperor Aizong's Heavy Reliance on Jinshi

The reasons behind Emperor Aizong's heavy reliance on Jinshi are rather complex, closely related to his personal character, early experiences, the political situation and practical needs. The first reason for Emperor Aizong's reliance on Jinshi was his weak character and strong suspicion. Liu Qi commented on Aizong's character: "He seems to be very generous and magnanimous on the outside, but in reality, he is wicked and indulgent."^{[1](P137)}" Therefore, Emperor Aizong needed Jinshi to monitor his officials for him, in order to reduce his own suspicions. The second factor is that Aizong was influenced by the treacherous official Shi Quan in his early years. Emperor Aizong "was taught by the cunning official Shi Quan when he was young to use stratagems to manipulate people."^{[1](P137)}" Shi Quan was a defector from the Hong'ao Army, and Liu Qi described him as a "cunning official." Considering Shi Quan's life, he deliberately let his own nephew defect to the enemy and was ultimately executed for intentionally delaying military operations, which demonstrates that Shi Quan was not a righteous man. Emperor Aizong learned the art of balance from Shi Quan, which became the main method of his rule later on. The third factor is that Emperor Aizong was influenced by the historical context and feared the emergence of powerful ministers among his subordinates, which led him to rely heavily on Jinshi. Emperor Aizong had witnessed the assassination of Prince Weishao by Heshilie Zhizhong. After Heshilie Zhizhong's death, another powerful minister, Shuhu Gaoqi, emerged. As a result, Emperor Aizong did not trust his generals and ministers, especially the military commanders. Whenever the generals went to battle, Emperor Aizong would send Jinshi to act as supervising officers. It is written in history that although the generals and marshals were in charge of the battlefield, a designated Jinshi from the court was also

sent to the army, known as the Military overseers.^{[1](P71)}" The fourth factor is that Emperor Aizong wished to utilize Jinshi to control state politics. At the beginning of his reign, the forces Emperor Aizong could rely on most was his attendants. Afterwards, Emperor Aizong continued to use his Jinshi to restrain central military generals and suppress scholars and local governors, both of which were moves that had helped Emperor Aizong maintain control of power. The fifth factor is that Jinshi could satisfy Aizong's personal hobbies and material desires. The favored official, WanYan SaheNian, accompanied Emperor Aizong playing polo, and helped him get hawks from farmers. These examples prove that the Jinshi, unlike ordinary ministers, could accompany Emperor Aizong in leisure activities and fulfill his personal desires.

In conclusion, before the reign of Emperor Aizong, military commanders were presumptuous, and the powerful court officials dominated the court. With a suspicious nature, Emperor Aizong was greatly influenced by the cunning officials and faced with the pragmatic needs to regain power and indulge in pleasures, so he heavily relied on the cliques of Jinshi.

3.2 The Influence of Emperor Aizong 's Reliance on Jinshi

With the help of Jinshi, the political situation was relatively stable during the early and middle periods of Emperor Aizong's reign, which was the greatest positive influence of his reliance on Jinshi. For Emperor Aizong, the Jinshi helped him successfully ascend to the throne, and during the early period of his reign, they helped him to seize power smoothly. In the middle period of his reign, he used the Jinshi cliques to balance against the scholar-official class and restrain the military generals. Between 1224 AD and 1232 AD, this period saw no powerful ministers nor political turmoil. However, the negative impact of Emperor Aizong's employment of Jinshi far outweighed the positive ones, and the excessive use of Jinshi directly accelerated the downfall of the Jin Dynasty.

Firstly, Emperor Aizong's promotion of Jinshi led to fierce factional struggles within the court. The scholar-official class engaged in frequent conflicts with the Jinshi cliques, with the leader of the former class, Shi Anshi, even dying in the strife. This directly resulted in discord within the Jin Dynasty's court. Given the continuous military defeats of the army, such internal discord would only lead to further disunity and disloyalty to the ruler.

Secondly Emperor Jin Ai Zong relied heavily on his Jinshi and appointed them as military supervisors. However, these Jinshi, serving as supervisors, often interfered with the military commanders, leading to Jin's military failures. Liu Qi criticized the dangers of having Jinshi as military supervisors, saying, "In every crisis, they are often restrained, and they flee at the first sight of the enemy, which is why the army often suffers losses".^{[2](P2447)} In the seventh year of the Zhengda era, facing the Mongol army attacking Shaanxi, the commander Wanyan Heda "feared Pu Afang's power again and did not dare to resist," so he did not attack the already exhausted Mongol army, ultimately allowing Fengxiang and Jingzhao to fall. At that time, when Tuolei planned to encircle Bianjing through a roundabout maneuver, the Jin army had the chance to defeat him while the Mongol army was crossing the river. However, Yila Pua rejected this proposal and Wanyan Heda, unable to do anything, was subsequently recalled to defend Bianjing by Emperor Aizong, along with Yila Pu'a. During the hasty march, the Jin army suffered a crushing defeat at Sanfeng Mountain, causing the elite troops of the Jin Dynasty to be nearly wiped out. It is evaluated in *The History of Jin Dynasty* that this defeat at Sanfeng Mountain was "irreversible".^{[2](P2475)} Military supervisors not only hindered the decision-making of commanders but also entrapped the main general. In the eighth year of Zhengda, Wanyan Liu'er supervised Wanyan Eke in battle, but Wanyan Eke was restricted in his actions, leading to growing mistrust between them. Military supervisors not only interrupt the commander's decision making, but some even frame the

commanding officers. For instance, in the eighth year of Zhengda era, Jinshi Wanyan Liu'er supervised the general Wanyan E'ke in battle: "Eke was restrained by the military overseer and felt unhappy, resulting in mutual suspicion between the two.^{[2](p2446)}" In such circumstances of mutual distrust between Jinshi and generals, the Hezhong district, defended by Wanyan E'ke, was eventually invaded.

Thirdly, after Emperor Aizong fled from Bianjing, his Jinshi came into conflict with local military leaders, which further worsened his predicament. The arrogant Jinshi falsely accused the local governor of Caizhou, Wugu LunHao, leading to the deterioration of his relationship with Emperor Aizong. It is recorded in *The Ru'nan County Legacy* that: "After arriving in Caizhou, the entourage jinshi were very destitute, showing signs of hunger and having no one unscathed. Everyone's provisions relied on Wugu Lunhao. Those Jinshi dissatisfied with the supplies would speak ill of Wugulun Hao in front of the emperor every day.^{[6](P9)}" Because of the Jinshi's false accusations, Emperor Aizong was unsatisfied with the local troops. In such a situation, it was difficult for Jin Dynasty to unite and resist the Mongol invasion.

In conclusion, although in the short term Emperor Aizong managed to reclaim power by making use of Jinshi cliques, in the long run, using Jinshi to counterbalance ministers would lead to severe internal discord and damage officials' morale. Furthermore, the appointment of Jinshi to supervise the army directly led to the downfall of Hezhong prefecture and the disastrous defeat at the Battle of Sanfeng Mountain.

4. Conclusion

Based on the preceding content, the author believes that Emperor Aizong's trust in his Jinshi far exceeds that of other emperors. Due to this trust and the increasingly intense warfare during this period, the Jinshi of this era exhibited some new characteristics, especially being entrusted with more military tasks. The Jinshi were referred to by their contemporaries as "villains" or "treacherous officials" because they were loyal to Emperor Aizong as an individual, rather than to the whole country. These Jinshi did not consider issues from the perspective of national interests; they were more concerned about the emperor's and their own personal benefits. When the emperor's personal preferences conflicted with the state's interests, the Jinshi cliques would unhesitatingly side with the emperor. When the emperor conflicted with the scholar-officials or military commanders, the Jinshi would not hesitate to act as tools for the emperor to suppress his subjects. These characteristics often led the Jinshi to sway Emperor Aizong into making mistaken judgments. However, such shortsightedness was not merely a mistake made by the Jinshi cliques but one easily made by the ordinary people under the autocratic imperial power.

The Jinshi appointed by Emperor Aizong also showed loyal virtue. Wanyan Jiangshan chose to die with the emperor, and he was praised by Wang E, "his spirit not yielding even against ten thousand soldiers. He died in defense of the country, willing to sacrifice for the whole nation."^{[6](P10)} Wugulun Heihan defended the city of Tangzhou for Emperor Aizong, killed his concubine to inspire soldiers, and ultimately died in a battle. Fengyu Mangge, during the Cuili Zhibian, maintained the family's honor and integrity by committing suicide. While most of the Jinshi were extremely loyal to Emperor Aizong, their loyalty not only failed to reverse the fate of the Jin Dynasty but objectively accelerated its downfall.

Based on the content of the previous text, the author believes that Emperor Aizong placed far greater trust in his Jinshi than in other eras. Due to Emperor Aizong's trust and the increasingly intense warfare, Jinshi of this period were endowed with more military tasks. Emperor Aizong's excessive trust and reliance on Jinshi led to a rift with the scholar-bureaucrat class and ineffective military leadership, which hastened the downfall of the Jin Dynasty.

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