

CHAPTER TWO : THE EARLY YEARS OF GAO ZONG'S REGIME : INTERNAL POLITICS AND FOREIGN RELATIONS, 1127-1130A.D.

1.THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SOUTHERN SONG

In 4th/1127, the Jin army had returned to the north after a successful invasion. Song Gao Zong officially ascended to the throne the following month in Yingtianfu (modern Shangqiu in Henan).

The new emperor had carried out a lot of arrangement for the reform of government policies and administrative procedures in the Southern Song. On the appointment of government ministers, Zhang Jun (1097-1164) was offered the post of Lesser Lord of Imperial Sacrifices (*Taichang Shaoqing*).¹ Huang Qianshan (d.1130) was Executive of the Secretariat (*Zhongshu Shilang*) cum Commissioner of Imperial Encampment (*Yuyingshi*). Wang Boyan was appointed Administrator of the Bureau of Military Affairs (*Zhi Shumi yuan Shi*) cum Deputy Commissioner of Imperial Encampment (*Yuying Fushi*),² Li Gang (1083-1140) was Right Executive of the Department of Ministries (*Shangshu Youpuyc*) cum Executive of the Secretariat (*Zhongshu Shilang*). Zhu Shengfei (1082-1144) was Drafting Official of the

¹ *YL*, ch. 5, p. 116.

² *Ibid.*, p. 117.

Secretariat (*Zhongshu Sheren*).³ Lu Haowen was Right Executive Assistant of the Department of Ministries (*Shangshu Youcheng*) cum Executive of the Chancellery (*Menxia Shilang*).⁴ Finally Yan Qi (date of birth unknown) was appointed Executive Censor (*Yushi Zhongcheng*) , and Ma Shen (d.1128) as Palace Censor (*Dianzhong Shiyushi*).⁵

Other than that, Zong Ze was appointed Metropolitan Prefect (*Fuyin*) of Kaifeng, in charge of national defence at Kaifeng and Henan.⁶ In the assignment of the armies, Yang Weizhong (date of birth unknown), Wang Yuan (1077-1129) and Han Shizhong (1089-1151) were appointed to lead the army in Hebei. Liu Guangshi (1089-1142) was put in charge of the forces in Shaanxi. Zhang Jun (1086-1154) and Miao Fu (d.1129) were appointed commanders of the military camp and were in charge of former bandits who had surrendered and were recruited into the army. The Office of Imperial Guard (*Yuyingsi*) was created to take charge of overall administration in the army.⁷

³ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁶ *Ibid.*, ch. 6, p. 155.

⁷ *Ibid.*, ch. 5, p. 123.

Two important issues had to be attended to when Gao Zong ascended the throne as the emperor of the Southern Song. The first was to solve the problem of the legality of his throne. He had to gain the confidence of the people, thereby consolidating his own position on the throne. Secondly, he had to make the correct decisions with regard to the constant Jin invasions, which threatened the very existence of the empire.

It was not an easy task for Gao Zong to solve both the above problems under the circumstances of the time. To gain the confidence of his people, he had to fight the Jin. However, Gao Zong fully understood that if he were to fight the Jin, he had to face several problems. Firstly, he had to strengthen his own army. The troops gathered by him were weak in terms of fighting power and moreover, the number of soldiers in his control were not enough to carry out a major attack on the Jin because they were outnumbered. Further, they would have to deal with the local security problem as banditry and robbery were rampant. Secondly, another problem confronted by Gao Zong was that the Jin cavalry troops were much stronger than the Song infantry. Therefore, the Song army was constantly in fear of confronting their enemy. Thirdly, there was also a lack of armour and weapons in the troops because since the time of the Northern Song, private possession of weapons was illegal unless it was owned by army personnel.⁸ This had resulted in a situation where supplies of weapons were low.

⁸ Chen Dengyuan, *op.cit.*, ch. 32, pp. 279-284.

To declare war on the Jin with all the existing problems at the moment seemed ridiculous as it was bound to fail and would render Southern Song defenseless against the Jin troops. Furthermore, Gao Zong would also have to consider the fact that if the Song attacks were indeed successful and the Jin were defeated, the two ex-emperors of the Northern Song would be freed and this would put him in an extremely awkward position.

Gao Zong had to carefully consider all the problems stated above before he could make any major decisions. It is therefore understandable why he appeared to frequently change his policies in the early years of his reign.

During the beginning of his reign, Gao Zong appointed the renowned war advocate Li Gang as the chief councillor.⁹ The reason for Gao Zong's choice was that Li was a highly respectable and brilliant minister. It was hoped that with his help, the people would have faith in Gao Zong's government. However, after Li Gang became chief councillor, he had constantly raised the issue of attacking Jin and rescuing the two emperors of the Northern Song and insisted that it should work. This made Gao

⁹ The appointment of Li Gang as chief councillor had caused the displeasure of Huang Qianshan and Wang Boyan. Although they had been of help to Gao Zong, they were not so popular as Li. That was the reason why Li Gang was appointed chief councillor and both Wang and Huang were given the post of Executive of the Secretariat cum Commissioner of Imperial Encampment and Administrator of the Bureau of Military Affairs respectively. They also had different political views. Li was in favour of war while the latter advocated peace. The former advocated fighting the Jin, with the ultimate aim of recovering the lost territory and restoring the Song dynasty. The latter wanted to put an end to the war, and sought all means to negotiate for peace. Both parties had their supporters and this was the beginning of the so-called war and peace factions.

Zong very unhappy as the suggestion would mean the return of the throne to the ex-emperor and his own position would be at stake. Also Li Gang had always wanted to use military force to reclaim the lost Song territory but Gao Zong had the intention of a peaceful approach which would allow him to negotiate with the Jin and what was even more important, would prevent the return of Qin Zong . This conflict of interests between the two had resulted in the early dismissal of Li Gang as chief councillor. Gao Zong then appointed the two peace advocates Huang Qianshan and Wang Boyan to serve jointly as chief councillors.¹⁰

2. LOCATION OF THE SOUTHERN SONG CAPITAL

During the beginning of Gao Zong's reign, the Song could temporarily rely on the loyalist troops from Hedong and Hebei to counter attack and defend against the Jin invasions in the north. When the Jin troops withdrew in the heat of summer, the newly founded Southern Song regime finally had some time to recuperate. After the government was organized, the question arose as to whether the capital should be moved to a safer and better location. Various officers had different ideas and propositions. Both the civil and military officials put forth their ideas and no conclusion could yet be reached.

At the time Li Gang was the chief councillor, he was basically against the idea of moving the capital as he felt that moving to a safer place would mean the

¹⁰ See footnote 9 concerning Wang and Huang.

government was avoiding confrontation with the Jin. This would place the Jin in a stronger position and encourage them to invade further into the Central Plain and the south-eastern region. Also, it would lower the morale of the Song military. However, he was not against moving temporarily to a more advantageous location in terms of military movement. He also emphasized going back to Kaifeng, the former capital city of Song, to comfort the people there¹¹ before moving to a new place.

On the other hand, Zong Ze had strongly rejected the idea of moving. He had been assigned to reorganize the affairs in Kaifeng and was quite happy with the result he achieved. That was why he hoped the emperor would choose to go back to Kaifeng; he did not want the emperor to lose the support of the people around the capital region.¹² Also, in his military organization, Zong Ze had made great efforts in recruiting over a million soldiers, some of whom were bandits and robbers. He had full confidence on his troops as they had successfully defeated the Jin army before. This would to a certain extent deter the Jin from attacking the Song.¹³ Apart from the above reasons, Zong Ze also encountered other problems which could only be solved with the return of Gao Zong to the capital. The main reason was that even though the soldiers recruited by him were loyal to the Song, they were nevertheless recruited from all sorts

¹¹ *YL*, ch. 6, p. 143.

¹² *Ibid.*, ch. 14, pp. 300-301.

¹³ In early 1128, the army under Zong Ze had defeated the Jin troops three times. The Jin army did not dare to attack Kaifeng after that. See *YL*, ch. 12, p. 266, p. 271, pp. 286-287.

of elements in society, including vagrants and bandits. He thus wanted to fight the Jin as soon as possible, while the troops were still loyal to the Song. Gao Zong's return would greatly boost up the morale of his troops and gain the confidence of the people, and ensure endless supplies of food and arms to Kaifeng.

Although many ministers were opposed to the idea of moving the capital, some of them did agree that it should be carried out. As a matter of fact, they did not have much choice but to move south. Ever since the autumn of 1127, the Jin army had been attacking Song yearly and had been hunting for Gao Zong with the intention of eliminating the Song once and for all. With the defeat of the Song army during each confrontation, Gao Zong kept retreating southwards from 1127 to 1130 to avoid being attacked. He even had to flee to the sea to escape from the pursuit of the Jin army. Finally, the imperial entourage arrived at Lin'an (modern Hangzhou). It was then declared that the government would be stationed here temporarily as the headquarters of administration. However, it finally became the capital of the Southern Song officially in 1138.¹⁴

Hangzhou, being situated in the remote south and in a terrain consisting of many hills and waterways made up of lakes and rivers, would naturally limit the extensive use of Jin's invincible cavalry in war. Therefore, Lin'an was a suitable area chosen to be the capital of Southern Song which could also erode the attack of Jin's

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, ch. 118, p. 1908.

military. The area was also economically developed and equipped with extensive water transportation that could be used to transport supplies for the government. This would ensure that the economic foundation of Southern Song would be stable and was therefore one of the major reasons for Gao Zong's decision to establish his capital in Hangzhou.¹⁵

3. INVASIONS OF THE JIN

The Jin army invaded Song again in 9th/1127. The Jurchen went all the way forcing the emperor to evacuate to the south but the invasion was not fully successful as the Jin troops were too widely scattered in China. As a result, Gao Zong had a chance to survive the invasion. The Jin army retreated during the fourth month of the following year due to the heat in summer.

In 7th/1128, when the Jin heard the news that Zong Ze passed away due to illness, it encouraged them to draw another assault on the Song.¹⁶ Two months later, the Song military base in Wumashan was taken by the enemy. The Jin government then ordered their troops to direct their major attack further down south to Henan and Jiang-Huai area to eliminate Gao Zong and his government once and for all. At this time, Gao Zong himself and his army were based in Yangzhou (modern Yangzhou city)

¹⁵ The reason for Gao Zong to build his capital at Lin'an could be seen in Chen Lesu, "Nan Song Dingdu Lin'an de Yuanyin", *Qiu Shi Ji*, (Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 1984) Vol.2, pp. 55-67.

¹⁶ *YL*, ch. 17, p. 355.

and were ignorant of the fact that a major attack had been ordered to wipe them off. This was because both Wang Boyan and Huang Qianshan, the chief councillors of the time, were not efficient enough in their duties. Preparation from being attacked during the autumn was not carried out and more importantly, no intelligence work had been carried out at all to detect the movement of the enemy.

The Song court only found out the fact that the Jin troops were proceeding to where they were in 10th/1128. Immediately, the General Censor Zhang Jun requested that a place be fixed for the members of the imperial family to stay. Then the emperor himself would personally move around to inspect various places, rendering his movement unpredictable so that the Jin army could not detect his whereabouts and could not ascertain the target to attack.¹⁷ Gao Zong accepted his request and moved the imperial family together with the Empress Dowager Longyou to a safe location in Hangzhou.

After the death of Zong Ze, the Song army was in a bad shape. Their military base in Wumashan had been under siege, the loyalist troops in Henan had been dispersed due to insufficient control.¹⁸ The number of soldiers in the various regions was not sufficient to resist enemy attacks and Gao Zong himself did not have a strong

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, ch. 18, p. 360.

¹⁸ At that time, the military officer of Jingyuanlu, Qu Duan (1091-1131) did not want to be controlled by the military commissioner of Fuyanlu, Wang Shu (d.1142) and had disposed of all his loyalist troops so that Wang Shu would not have too large a military force. See *ibid.*, ch. 15, p. 321.

imperial army. For these reasons, the emperor could only adopt a defensive position in fighting the war. The Song thus tried their very best to defend and only attacked when the situation of the time permitted it to be carried out without any repercussion.¹⁹ This appears to be the one and only logical way Gao Zong could have thought of.

From 11th/1128 onwards, the Jin had become even more aggressive in their attacks on Song. By 1st/1129, the Jin army was already heading towards Yangzhou where Gao Zong was residing. All Gao Zong could do was to flee with only five to six of his followers and horsemen. Even the chief councillors, Wang and Huang did not have time to follow His Majesty.²⁰ When the Emperor fled south across the Yangtze River to Hangzhou, he then stationed at Hangzhou.²¹ While he was there he had sent envoys to the Jin to negotiate for peace.²² In 3rd/1129, the Jin army had taken the whole Shandong area and then retreated to avoid the summer heat.²³ In the fifth and eighth months of the same year, envoys were again sent twice to ask for peace. Gao

¹⁹ *Zhongguo Lidai Zhanzhengshi*, (Taiwan:Liming Wenhua Shiye Gongsi, 1963) thereafter *LDZZS*, Vol. 11, p. 132.

²⁰ *YL*, ch.20, pp. 389-391.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 400.

²² The envoy sent to the Jin on this occasion had brought with him a relative of Zhang Bangchang so that negotiation could be carried out. See *ibid.*, pp.397-398.

²³ *Ibid.*, ch. 21, p. 460.

Zong was even willing to give up his position as emperor and become a vassal of the Jin, so that the latter would not continue to hunt him down.²⁴

However, the Jin disregarded Gao Zong's plea for peace and launched another attack in 8th/1129. The target of this attack was aimed to take Gao Zong hostage. The remaining Song army in the north was swept away easily. Then, the Jin troops were divided into three groups. The major army with 100,000 men was led by Wanyan Zongbi (d.1148). It stormed through Caishi, crossed the Yangtze and attacked Jiankang (modern Nanjing city), then it continued to pursue Gao Zong from Hangzhou to Yuezhou. The other divisions of the Jin army crossed the river separately, pursuing the Empress Dowager until Nanchang (modern Nanchang city).²⁵

The fierce attacks of the Jin troops had forced Gao Zong to flee by waterways into the sea to evade confrontation, hoping that he would be able to escape as the Jin army was not familiar with naval warfare. After sailing for several days, Gao Zong landed on an island in Changguo prefecture (modern island of Zhoushan in Dinghai prefecture) and found out that the Jin army had caught up with him. Fortunately, there were several thousands of voluntary country soldiers who helped to defend him against the attacks from the Jin troops. As the Jin troops were not familiar with the terrain in this area and were uncertain of the number of Song soldiers who might be

²⁴ *Ibid.*, ch. 23, p. 484 and ch. 26, p. 524.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, ch. 28, p. 565.

hiding in ambush, they ceased attack for a day and this gave Gao Zong the opportunity to flee back to the sea. The Jin army again boarded their ships and pursued Gao Zong. They were just short of one day's journey in capturing him. Fortunately enough for Gao Zong, the Jin troops met with a storm and were also attacked by Song naval troops, and were forced to turn back.²⁶

This time, the Jin army led by Zongbi had driven their troops too much to the south. Being unfamiliar with naval warfare, they were really fatigued and were furthermore afraid that the Song army might attack them from behind, so they had no choice but to retreat. True enough, the retreating Jin army met with some resistance in the journey between Zhenjiang (in modern Jiangsu) and Jiankang. The Pacification Commissioner (*Zhizhishi*) of the Zhexi area, Han Shizhong, had confronted the Jin army and was engaged in battles with them several times. The Song army had struck relentlessly at Zongbi's troops. Even though the Jurchen were able to make their way back to the north, they had nevertheless suffered great casualties.²⁷

In 1130, the Jin government had set up a new puppet emperor (this will be discussed later) and it was decided that the Jin army should move their troops north-

²⁶ *Ibid.*, ch. 30, pp. 586-594.

²⁷ The Jin troops were badly defeated by Han Shizhong at the "Battle of Huangtiandang" on 3/4th/1130. See *ibid.*, ch. 32, p. 630.

west invading Shaanxi. A major battle was fought at Fuping.²⁸ Although the Song army lost in this battle, the Jin's diversion of attention towards Shaanxi for the time being had given some respite to the Song.

As Gao Zong was successful in evading the Jin army by fleeing to the sea, this tactic was subsequently used everytime the Jin troops invaded Song. During the years of Jingkang (1126-1127), the Song decided to stay put to defend the capital without retreating, and this had led to the fall of the Northern Song empire. Although this retreating tactic used by Gao Zong was often criticized by the traditional historians, as it portrayed the defeatist attitude of the Southern Song, nevertheless this appears to be the only way for Gao Zong to continue to keep his throne and ensure the survival of his regime.

There are two main factors why Gao Zong was able to survive the massive attacks by the Jin. The first was the rise of many loyalist troops from all over the country to fight against the Jin troops. This appears to be the greatest resistance movement against external invasions so far recorded in Chinese history. This was also the reason why the Jin troops could not exterminate the Song Dynasty once and for all. The second factor that assisted the Song was the way the warfare was carried out. The idea of retreating when being attacked and attacking when the enemy retreated was

²⁸ The battle of Fuping was initiated by Zhang Jun and had the support of Gao Zong and for the first time, an attack was initiated by Song against the Jin. See *ibid.*, ch. 37, pp. 711-712.

suitable for the political situation of the day. If the government did not retreat, it would be wiped off entirely by its enemy. Also, the Jin cavalry was too strong for the weak infantry of the Song. Therefore, evasive warfare appears to be the best strategy to prolong the resistance in order to survive.

An additional fact that had helped the Song Dynasty to survive was the advantage of the weather. The Jin troops were not used to the hot weather in the south. They would attack in autumn and winter and withdraw when spring approached. On the other hand, the Song soldiers were afraid of the severe cold in winter, and the respite between spring and summer provided good opportunities for them to counter-attack and recover the lost territory. Even places where the army could not reach could also be recovered through political warfare or persuasion. This means that the Jin could only use military force to attack but it failed to destroy Song completely in terms of political influence. The Jin had tried to exterminate Song by adopting two methods. First of all they hunted for Gao Zong, secondly they had even tried to set up a puppet government in order to govern Song indirectly. Both the steps taken had failed in the early years of the Southern Song from 1127 to 1130. It was even harder for them to eliminate the Song later, when the regime was able to recover from its political crises.²⁹

²⁹ *LDZZS*, p. 183.

4. THE DIFFICULTIES IN THE EARLY YEARS OF GAO ZONG'S REIGN

During the early years of his reign, even though Song Gao Zong had ultimate power and authority over all matters and was respected by all in the empire, in actual fact his political power during that time was far from stable. He might even lose his throne any moment, when the slightest problem occurred.

During the "Calamity of Jingkang", there were quite a number of scholar-officials and military leaders who had betrayed Song by pledging their loyalty to the Jin. Also, there were many civilians and officials who had defected joining the regime of Liu Yu (1073-1146), when he was enthroned as the puppet emperor by the Jin administration. Besides, there were many opportunists who were waiting for a suitable time to seek their own fortune.

Due to the reason that Jin's primary target was Gao Zong himself, many who were not in favour of war were of the opinion that the continuance of Gao Zong on his throne would do more harm than good to the situation of the time. For this reason, some of them had actually hoped that the Jin could succeed in forcing Gao Zong to leave his throne, and that peace negotiations could be carried out so that the people could live in peace and the soldiers could return to their families.³⁰

³⁰ This was one of the reasons which led to the "Miao-Liu Coup". See *YL*, ch. 21, p. 438. For the Miao Liu coup, see pp.32-33.

Under these precarious circumstances, it appears to be extremely difficult for Gao Zong to keep his throne for long but it had been proven otherwise. One main reason was that the emperor had many loyal supporters who were fully dedicated to the cause of securing the emperor's supremacy and the continued functioning of imperial government. From the viewpoint of the Song officials, after the "Calamity of Jingkang", the best option was to have a more mature and experienced ruler to govern and restore the country. However, they did not seem to have a choice but to opt for Gao Zong to take up the task because neither the Empress Dowager, being a woman, nor Gao Zong's infant son (the alternative provided during the Miao-Liu coup, to be related later), would be the suitable choice for them. Therefore, even though Gao Zong did not have the support of all the officials in succeeding to the throne, they pledged their loyalty to him because of the circumstances of the time.

In the following pages we will be discussing the major difficulties faced by Gao Zong in the early years of his reign during the Jianyan period. The various trials he had to undergo during this period had had a great impact on his administrative policies during the later years of his reign.

(i) External Invasions and Internal Rebellions

When Gao Zong was newly on the throne, he was bound to face a lot of challenges and obstruction in time. First of all, the threat of the Jin army was his major problem that needed to be solved. When he was only four months on his throne, the

Jurchen started to invade his regime. During the first four years of his reign, the Jin army had attacked Song every year during autumn and winter. The only time Song was allowed a little respite was the short interval during summer. In the eyes of Gao Zong, there appeared to be not a single individual who could help him fight the Jurchen and keep the situation under control. Consequently, while retreating in defence, he also sent envoys to the Jin to negotiate for peace and at the same time he attempted to please the Jin in various ways. For example, in 2nd/1129, envoys were sent to Jin together with a relative of Zhang Bangchang while at the same time a decree was issued to honour Zhang posthumously so as to indicate that the execution of Zhang was a mistake.³¹ It was also announced that any relatives of Zhang who had lost their office in the government because of him would have the chance of being reinstated.³² Further, knowing that the Jin disliked Li Gang, Gao Zong thus never pardoned Li at any point of time in his royal amnesty, hoping that by putting all the blame on Li Gang for what had happened, he would be able to lessen the Jin anger against himself.³³

While escaping enemy attacks, Gao Zong was faced with a coup d'état by his subordinates in Hangzhou in 3rd/1129. Two of the military officials, Miao Fu and Liu Zhengyan (d.1129), had forced Gao Zong to abdicate in favour of his three-year old

³¹ In 9th/1127, Gao Zong had to move to Yangzhou to avoid the Jin attacks. For his own safety, he had to execute Zhang Bangchang, See *YL*, ch. 7, p. 224.

³² *Ibid.*, ch. 20, p. 398.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 401.

son as the new emperor, with the Empress Dowager acting as regent.³⁴ The military officials who revolted also had the assistance and support of several civil officials in the government. They voiced their protests against the political decisions made by Gao Zong, expressing dissatisfaction over the fact that the eunuchs were allowed to meddle in governmental proceedings; they also indicated their discontent with the injustice shown by the emperor in rewarding and punishing his subordinates. More importantly, they even openly challenged the legality of Gao Zong's position.

Although this rebellion lasted only a month and Gao Zong was successfully reinstated, it had nevertheless revealed the potential danger hidden within Gao Zong's administration. The recalcitrance of the military officials and the fact that Gao Zong could be overthrown so easily shows that imperial power had greatly declined. The Miao-Liu coup was one of the more prominent crises experienced by Gao Zong during the period when confrontation was still going on with the Jin. This event subsequently was to have a great deal of influence over Gao Zong and his ministers in their decisions on internal administration and external affairs, prompting them to gather power from the military, to consolidate the absolute authority of the emperor, and at the same time, to negotiate for peace with the Jin.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, ch. 21 and ch. 22, pp. 414-467.

(ii) The Issue of the Legality of Gao Zong's Throne

Gao Zong was the ninth son of Hui Zong, and it is obvious that if not for the Northern Song debacle, he would never be able to succeed to the throne. The two reasons used in supporting his succession were not entirely legal nor reliable. Firstly, it is said that Gao Zong's accession was based on the invitation of the empress Dowager Longyou. Nevertheless, having been demoted by Emperor Zhe Zong previously, the Empress Dowager would no longer have the right nor the power to intervene in palace affairs. Moreover, the restoration of her status was actually carried out by the puppet ruler Zhang Bangchang. Thus her legal status was in itself questionable. Therefore the fact that Gao Zong was urged to take the throne at her invitation naturally cast doubt upon the legality of his position. Secondly, it is claimed that Gao Zong received the order to ascend to the throne, and that this order was issued by Hui Zong who was under captivity in Jin, and smuggled out by a member of the consort family, Cao Xun (1098-1174).³⁵ However, neither is this reliable nor proven.

As mentioned above, the reason why Gao Zong was enthroned was due to the circumstances of the time. Other than during the time of the Miao-Liu coup, the ministers at court would always evade the issue concerning the legality of Gao Zong's throne. Nevertheless, there were many who doubted the legality of his succession and

³⁵ It is reported that Hui Zong had requested Cao to bring back a piece of his personal clothing, in which was inscribed Hui Zong's order for Prince Kang to succeed to the throne and to rescue his parents. See *YL*, ch.4, p.113.

expressed their feelings openly. For example, hardly three months after his succession, the Imperial University student Chen Dong (1086-1127) had presented memorials requesting the emperor to return to Kaifeng to lead the army himself, and to rescue the two former emperors from captivity. He also referred to the legality of Gao Zong's throne and stated that if Qin Zong was to return to Song, Gao Zong would be in a very awkward position.³⁶ Also, in 10th/1127, Zong Ze in his memorial requesting the emperor to return to Kaifeng, mentioned that Gao Zong's accession to the throne was only a temporary measure, since the two former emperors were under captivity. However, he stressed that if Gao Zong did not return to Kaifeng and engage in some positive measures to fight the Jin, he would soon lose the support of the people.³⁷

Even several years after Gao Zong was on his throne, there were some who still referred to the issue above. This time it was voiced by an official in court. In 8th/1129, the Chancellery Imperial Recorder (*Qijulang*), Hu Yin (1098-1156), directly pointed out that Gao Zong's succession was largely due to the sycophantic support of his ministers, but the emperor did not appear to be aware of its incorrectness and did not make any attempt to rescue the two ex-emperors from captivity, and that this had made his reign ineffective.³⁸ It can thus be seen that Gao Zong's enthronement was accepted by some on the grounds that he should lead the

³⁶ *Ibid.*, ch. 8, p. 206.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, ch. 10, p. 232.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. 27, p. 534.

people in fighting the Jin and most importantly, to rescue the two ex-emperors from captivity.

Apart from those who directly voiced their criticism regarding the legality of Gao Zong's position, there existed several bandit leaders and rebel chiefs who took the opportunity to declare themselves as kings, openly defying the authority of Gao Zong's regime.

Even though this issue of legality had troubled Gao Zong, he could not do anything about it except to carry on with his reign. However, he did impose punishment on those who had overstepped their limits in their criticism. The student Chen Dong was executed for his daring accusation. The two coup leaders Miao and Liu who had made use of Chen Dong's argument during the coup were also executed after Gao Zong returned to power. Zong Ze was the one who was not punished as he was holding a vital post of defending the country and Gao Zong still needed his help. However, if he had not died early, and continued to live until a later stage of the Southern Song, there was no guarantee that he would not be punished when the war ended. Hu Yin was one of the more fortunate ones for he was only dismissed for his outspoken behaviour. This could be due to Gao Zong's adherence to the dynastic tradition of not executing scholar-officials. With regard to the bandits and robbers who declared themselves as kings, the government could only use other tactics. Since it did not have the power to suppress them by force, it employed the method of

pacifying them by recruiting them into the Song army, turning enemy forces into a useful resource for the court, so that it could employ other alternatives later when its army grew stronger.

(iii) The Threat of Banditry and Rebellions

The Jingkang era was a chaotic time. Because of political instability, bandits and robbers rose up everywhere, and there were also soldiers who had been dispersed from their troops. This situation worsened during the time Gao Zong was newly on his throne. This caused the people to have even greater fear for the bandits and the dispersed soldiers than for the Jin army.³⁹

There were numerous disturbances caused by bandits, robbers and soldiers who had been dispersed or who had mutinied, who were engaged in robbery, looting, murder and rape, and some of them had even defected to join the Jin in fighting the Song. Although most of these disturbances were relatively small in scale, and were mostly short-lived, and the areas affected were not large enough to pose a threat to the regime on the whole, these nevertheless were an indication that there existed certain feelings of discontent or resistance against Gao Zong's newly-founded regime.⁴⁰

³⁹ *Ibid.*, ch. 30, p. 584.

⁴⁰ Wang Shizong, *Nan Song Gao Zong Chao Bianluan Zhi Yanjiu*, (Taipei: National Taiwan University, 1989), ch.1, p. 4.

Although most of the bandits and rebels involved were merely aiming to obtain food supplies, there were some who demanded more. There were several bandit leaders who had risen in rebellion against the government of Song, declaring themselves kings of various regimes in order to attract more supporters and gather more supplies, thus openly defying the new government under Gao Zong.⁴¹ Some of these leaders had over a hundred thousand followers. Therefore apart from dealing with the external threat caused by the Jurchen, the government also had to deal with the internal disturbances caused by the rebels and bandits. They not only disrupted government administration, but also posed a potential threat to Gao Zong. As a matter of fact, Gao Zong's nightmare became a reality when his own subordinates betrayed him in the Miao-Liu coup. Even though the coup was short-lived, it finally made Gao Zong realize that his own power and influence in the country was far from sufficient. Even a small-scale uprising by Miao and Liu could render him defenseless, forcing him to abdicate in favour of his three-year-old son while he himself was held in captivity in the palace. Since then, the emperor would never underestimate any rebel activity under his reign.

⁴¹ According to *YZ*, during the early days of Southern Song, the bandits who held military forces and had made themselves kings were:

1. In 7th/1127 : Shi Bin (d. 1129) captured Xingzhou, and declared himself King (ch. 7, p.193) .
2. In 1st/1129, Yang Jin (d. 1129) captured the north of Minggaoshan, and declared his intention to rescue Qin Zong. Although he was just making some empty promises, what he declared to do was something Gao Zong would not dare to carry out, and did have an impact upon the people. (ch. 19, p. 379).
3. In 2nd/1130: Zhong Xiang (d. 1130) built his own moat and named himself King of Chu. He was able to attract many followers. (ch. 31, p.613.)
4. In 11th/1130 : Li Cheng (1091-1160) took over six to seven provinces in the Jiang-Huai areas. He also had several tens of thousand of troops and he had the intention to attack the southeast. (ch.40, p.748.)

Realizing that the imperial power had declined vis-a-vis ministerial power,⁴² Gao Zong, soon after the regime had attained stability to a certain extent, and in order to prevent the recurrence of the above event, followed the footsteps of Tai Zu by gathering power from the military and concentrating power in the central government so as to safe-guard his own interest.

(iv) The Danger posed by Prince Xin

In 2nd/1128, the eighteenth son of Hui Zong, Prince Xin, named Zhao Zhen (date of birth unknown), was rescued and invited by a leader of the loyalist troops, Ma Kuo (d.1152), to Wumashan to take charge of the loyalist soldiers there.⁴³ When the people of Hedong and Hebei heard that the prince was in charge of the army, most of them wanted to swear loyalty under him and an army of more than a hundred thousand was eventually being gathered.⁴⁴ In the following month, Prince Xin sent messages to Yangzhou, requesting Gao Zong to provide military enforcement to the loyalist army in Hebei. He also requested the emperor to appoint him chief commander of military forces to fight the Jin and recover the lost territories. Consequently, Gao Zong appointed Prince Xin General Commander of the Song forces in the outer regions

⁴² *YL*, ch. 31, p. 602.

⁴³ Prince Xin together with his father Hui Zong and brother Qin Zong and other members of the imperial family were taken in captivity to the north. He managed to escape on the way to Jin. He was later contacted by loyalist rebel leaders to be their commander to resist the Jin and rescue the two ex-emperors. See *ibid.*, ch.13, p. 392.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, ch.14, pp. 305-306.

of the Yellow River (*Hewai Bingma Dayuanshuai*). He also appointed Ma Kuo as the General Superintendent of the Infantry (*Yuanshuai Fu Bujun Duzongguan*), so that they could lead the forces back to the north. However, both the chief councillors Wang Boyan and Huang Qianshan did not have faith in Prince Xin and they only dispatched some several thousands of poor-quality troops to Ma Kuo. They had also dispatched about 500 men to keep an eye on Ma. Before Ma Kuo's troops could reach the Yellow River, a new order had been issued by the government, stating that they were not allowed to go beyond the river and should obey the order of local commanders in various regions. Knowing that his plan of attacking the Jin would not be successful Ma decided to station his troops at Daming while waiting for the opportunity to attack.⁴⁵

By 5th/1128, Zong Ze had successfully recruited most of the bandits scattered in the Henan area and the loyalist troops were also gathered in Kaifeng, waiting to join forces with Prince Xin. Again, Zong Ze petitioned the emperor to return to Kaifeng so as to raise the morale of the troops. Suspecting that Prince Xin had the intention to move his forces to Kaifeng and seeing that many troops were gathered there, Gao Zong decided to move to Kaifeng as well to prevent any untoward incident.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, ch.15, pp. 314-316.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, ch.15, p. 316 .

From 7th/1127 to 5th/1128, Zong Ze had submitted twenty over memorials to Gao Zong, requesting the emperor to return to Kaifeng, but all his petitions were disregarded. However, on this occasion his memorial was immediately accepted. This reflects Gao Zong's fear that if Prince Xin were to return to Kaifeng and join forces with Zong Ze, the prince might be chosen as the leader of the resistance forces, and form a new political power that might pose as a potential threat to Gao Zong. This was especially so since the new political force would be more active and positive in comparison to the more passive and pacifist Gao Zong.

In early 5th/1128, The Right Executive Assistant of the Department of Ministries (*Shangshu Youcheng*), Xu Jingheng (1072-1128), had requested Gao Zong to move south across the Yangzī River. That was exactly what Gao Zong intended to do all along, but he had to declare that he was returning to Kaifeng to prevent Prince Xin from making the first move. As a matter of fact, Gao Zong did not have the courage to move back to Kaifeng which was located nearer to the Jin border. He was just hoping that the announcement of moving back to Kaifeng might gain back for him some support and faith of the Song people in the capital region.

When Gao Zong was still torn by indecision at Yangzhou, the Jin had heard about the plan of the Song to launch a northern campaign. Immediately after the death of Zong Ze in 9th/1128, the Jin army launched an attack on Prince Xin in Wumashan before Ma Kuo and his military support arrived. Wumashan was captured by the Jin

and Prince Xin had disappeared ever since.⁴⁷ Although one of Gao Zong's strong military forces was demolished, he was not too unhappy about it because the Jin had also eliminated the threat posed by Prince Xin that had troubled him all this while.

(v) The Importance of Self-preservation

In his external relations Gao Zong had always tried to avoid direct confrontation with the Jurchen. The same attitude was adopted by most of his ministers and generals. Although it may be said that this was due to the fact that the Song knew its own military weakness and therefore tried to evade war as far as possible, however, on many occasions, such an attitude was due to their psychological fear of the Jin.

It should be pointed out that among the many Song scholar-officials and military personnel who received their emolument from the government, few were able to repay the government by helping it in times of trouble. Under normal circumstances, the military personnel were already noted for their disobedience of imperial orders. During the time of Jin invasions, most of the officials in charge of defence would retreat and flee from their forts without putting up a fight. There were even some ridiculous incidents where the officials put up a fight thinking that the enemy were some local robbers or bandits, but when they discovered that it was the Jin army they were confronting, they would immediately flee for their lives.⁴⁸ Thus, even

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, ch.17, p. 355.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. 30, p. 586.

if they had the ability to fight, they were constantly defeated because they were afraid of the Jin army psychologically.

Also, each time the army was defeated in battle, the troops would not be organized to confront the enemy again but would be dispersed and the soldiers left to become bandits and robbers. Even though some military leaders managed to escape to the south, they could not cooperate with one another to fight the Jin. Also due to their selfish interests, they often did not promote the able to take over important positions to fight the war. It can be said that self-interests took priority over loyalty to the emperor and government in these cases.

It is interesting to note that whenever Gao Zong heard that the Jin were invading Song, his first reaction was not to prepare for confrontation but to flee from the Jin attacks. This was most probably because he knew that few of his ministers would be totally loyal to him and would risk their lives for him in fighting the Jin. Later on Gao Zong himself had commented that "the scholar-officials were only interested in planning for themselves".⁴⁹ If the emperor did not defend himself, his subordinates would not be able to protect him; this was a bitter truth which Gao Zong had learned to accept.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, ch.124, p. 2024.

⁵⁰ Wang Fuzhi, *Song Lun* (Taipei:Jiu Shi Chubanshe, 1977), ch.10, p. 170.

Despite the above attitude of his ministers and generals, Gao Zong had to accept it and made every effort to accommodate them, so long as they did not oppose him or defect to the enemy. Therefore, despite his lofty position as emperor, Gao Zong did not openly criticize the cowardice or opportunism of his subordinates. Those who had done wrong were forgiven and pardoned⁵¹ because Gao Zong was afraid that those punished would turn against him by joining either the Jurchen or Liu Yu, or engage in rebellions against his newly-founded regime. The difficulties faced by Gao Zong in the early years of his reign can thus be clearly seen.

(vi) The Rivalry of Liu Yu

In withdrawing to the north The Jin army had crossed the Yellow River, returning to their capital Yunzhong (modern Datong City) in 4th/1130. During the eleventh month of the same year, Liu Yu was installed by Jin as the puppet ruler of Qi, and given control over the territory in between the Yellow River and the Huai River (covering present Shandong, Henan, and Shaanxi). He was given the freedom to rule the territory under his control and Qi was made a vassal state of Jin.

It was natural for the subjects of Song to reject being ruled by an alien tribe like the Jurchen, as they were eagerly waiting for the return of their own ruler to the Central Plain. However, when it was suddenly declared that someone of Han origin

⁵¹ During 1st/1130, Gao Zong had stated officially that any officer who had surrendered under the attack of Jin troop due to unsuccessful defense would be pardoned as they were acting against their will. See *YL*, ch. 31, p. 599.

was made emperor, not only the people in the Central Plain had to submit to his rule, but it also meant that the officials and people in the border regions of the Southern Song, in the face of difficulties, would have an alternative to turn to, someone whom they could willingly serve and submit to.⁵² Liu Yu was aware of this and had openly attracted the attention of the Song people to come under his rule, thus posing a challenge to the Southern Song.

In 12th/1130, Liu Yu built a temple in memory of two persons who were executed under Gao Zong's orders.⁵³ One was the Imperial University student Chen Dong and the second one was the *jinshi* Ouyang Che (1091-1127), who were both given the death penalty for directly criticizing the emperor in their memorials.⁵⁴ This move by Liu Yu could have earned him the support of the people to some extent as the execution of the two scholars above had resulted in general discontent among the people. Liu Yu thus played his game wisely by manipulating the people's emotion and putting Gao Zong in the bad light. In 4th/1134, Liu Yu further promised to give presents and awards to those who were willing to swear loyalty to him.⁵⁵ Many bandits and robbers who were pursued by the Southern Song were thus recruited to join the

⁵² Miyazaki Ichisada, "Nan Song Zhengzhi Shi Gaishuo", translated in *Chuban Yu Yanjiu*, Vol.31 (1978), p. 26.

⁵³ *YL*, ch. 40, p. 750.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, ch. 8, p. 206.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, ch. 73, p.1244.

regime of Liu Yu. He also frequently sent envoys to the Song borders to persuade the officials there to defect to Qi. He was undoubtedly a great competitor of Gao Zong and it is not surprising why Gao Zong should feel extremely insecure and threatened by Liu Yu and his regime.

The reasons mentioned above plus the fact that he had constantly suffered defeats in the war against the Jurchen, had put a great deal of pressure upon Gao Zong, who frequently feared that he might lose his throne again. This psychological make-up had greatly affected the emperor in his future decisions concerning external policies and internal administration and in the reforms carried out by him later.