

Nurhaci in Korean Sources, 1594-1622

Seung B. Kye*

Introduction

Korean sources are very useful for the study of early Manchu history. Facing the growth of the Jianzhou Jurchen led by Nurhaci (1559-1626) around the turn of the century in 1600, government officials of the Chosŏn dynasty on the Korean peninsula began to monitor Nurhaci's movements carefully for national security, subsequently recording Chosŏn's relations with the Jurchen and their thoughts of Nurhaci. By referring to these Korean sources, which provide a window into southern Manchuria during Nurhaci's rise as a new military power, we can better understand the balance of power in East Asia within the framework of the four polities, including Chosŏn Korea, Ming China, Nurhaci's Jurchen (Later Jin), and the Mongols.

The dynastic annals (*Chosŏn wangjo sillok*, Veritable Records of the Chosŏn dynasty) are by far the best of all Korean sources. Two Chosŏn kings witnessed Nurhaci's remarkable growth and were deeply involved in a series of diplomatic communications with him: King Sŏnjo (r. 1567-1608), before Nurhaci declared himself khan (a Jurchen/Mongol designation for the supreme ruler, comparable to emperor in Chinese) in a letter sent to Chosŏn in 1607; and King Kwanghae (r. 1608-1623), after Nurhaci proclaimed the establishment of his own dynasty, Later Jin, in 1616

* Professor, Department of History, Sogang University

and began expanding power in all directions. The dynastic annals of those two reigns, *Sŏnjo sillok* and *Kwanghaegun ilgi*, are full of information on Nurhaci collected by the Chosŏn government, and thus indispensable to better understand Nurhaci's diplomatic strategy within the larger context of East Asia, including the Korean peninsula.

Individual records, written by government officials who had visited Nurhaci's stronghold, are also valuable. For example, *Kŏnju kijŏng togi* (An illustrated account of a trip to Zianzhou) documents the defense system of Nurhaci's stronghold as well as the author's dialogues with Nurhaci and his staff, held in 1595 during the Hideyoshi Invasion of Korea (1592-1598). *Ch'aekchung ilgi* (A diary of a wooden fenced prison camp) is another good source, written by a military officer who joined the Chosŏn army in the Ming campaign against Nurhaci in the spring of 1619 but was captured and detained in the capital city of Later Jin for a couple of years. This source illustrates the ominous situation in Manchuria on the eve of the Jurchen conquest of Liaodong in 1621, including Nurhaci's attitude towards Chosŏn and his diplomatic strategy between the Ming and Chosŏn. There are also a number of additional, albeit fragmented, Korean sources about Nurhaci and the Later Jin.

This paper is not designed as a bibliographical research project. By fully utilizing Chosŏn sources, it will examine the way in which Nurhaci adapted himself to situations with the Ming and Chosŏn throughout his steady rise from the mid-1590s to the early 1620s, with an emphasis on Chosŏn. Although scholars working in English are generally aware of such Chosŏn sources on the rise of Nurhaci, they do not always make full or thorough use of them.¹

1 For some works that made reference to Korean sources, see Pamela Kyle Crossley, *The Manchus*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), Pamela Kyle Crossley. *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), Mark C. Elliott. *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), Seung B. Kye. "In the Shadow of the Father: Court Opposition and King Kwanghae in Early Seventeenth-Century Chosŏn Korea." Ph. D dissertation.

In this paper, I hope to suggest the great advantages of a number of these sources through an outline of the information concerning Nurhaci's rise found in some of the key sources from a diplomatic perspective. Although this essay does not pretend to be original scholarship, I hope that such an outline will provide an introduction of some sources concerning which not all scholars writing in English may be fully aware.

Nurhaci's Approach to Chosŏn during the Hideyoshi Invasions of Korea, 1592-1598

Nurhaci's first attempt to approach Chosŏn was directly related to the war on the Korean peninsula. In the late summer of 1592, he offered the Ming Board of War his assistance in the defense of Chosŏn against the Japanese invasion. He explained that he was willing to send his troops to Chosŏn to prevent the Japanese from invading Manchuria and prove himself loyal to the imperial court of China. The Ming chose to accept the offer on the condition that Chosŏn accept the assistance, to employ a traditional Chinese foreign policy aimed at 'enlisting aliens in fighting others.' The letter sent from the Ming Board of War was indeed an inquiry about Chosŏn's intention, not a notice *ex post facto* mandate of the final Ming decision.²

Chosŏn, however, differed with the Ming on this matter. The Chosŏn court was inundated with fierce opposition to the offer. Chosŏn desperately requested the dispatch of Ming troops, expressing aversion to Jurchen assistance. The An Lushan Rebellion in 755 had served as a good lesson to Korean elites: in putting down the rebellion, the Tang Chinese court had enlisted the service of contingents of non-Chinese armed bands on the

(Seattle: University of Washington, 2006), and Evelyn S. Rawski. *Early Modern China and Northeast Asia: Cross-Border Perspectives*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

2 *Sŏnjo sillok* 25.9.14, 25.9.17.

borderland, such as the Uighurs, but after it was put down, the capital city of Tang China was sacked by the former relievers. The Korean elites saw Nurhaci as another Uighur chieftain.³ For this reason, Chosŏn requested the Ming to admonish Nurhaci, stopping him from making any further advances.⁴ Subsequently, the Ming declined Nurhaci's offer.

In the summer of 1595, however, Nurhaci tried to talk directly to Chosŏn, although he was aware of the Ming tributary system in which tributary states were in principle prohibited from establishing direct relations with each other. Along with a formal letter, Nurhaci repatriated 14 Koreans, who had trespassed the Jurchen border to escape from Japanese aggression, to Manp'o, a Korean garrison town south of the upper reaches of the Yalu River. In the early fall he sent another letter suggesting the two parties communicate and establish friendly relations. Chosŏn, however, had no desire to normalize relations with the Jianzhou, fearing it would allow the Jurchen to come and go freely, collecting information on weak points of Chosŏn's defense system. Moreover, an absolute majority of court officials balked at a conference with Nurhaci, which they thought would violate the principle of the Ming tributary system, especially under the situation in which the Ming armies were stationed in the peninsula to fight against the Japanese. Chosŏn thus decided to send a letter of declination in the name of the commander of the Manp'o garrison, with some gifts in return for the repatriation.⁵

Before the letter was sent, however, an unforeseen border incident took place in which a company of Jianzhou Jurchen infiltrated Chosŏn to gather wild ginseng; twenty-seven were killed fighting with Chosŏn garrisons. Chosŏn garrisons used to decapitate Jurchen poachers on the spot, but no previous cases had ever resulted in a diplomatic dispute with the Jianzhou. This time, however, it led to a diplomatic affair of great magnitude not only because of the large number of Jurchen executed, but also because it

3 *Sŏae sŏnsaeng yŏnbo* 1:30ab.

4 *Sŏnjo sillok* 25.9.17.

5 *Sŏnjo sillok* 28.4.14, 28.7.25-26.

took place right after Nurhaci repatriated Korean transgressors in hopes of resuming traffic with Chosŏn. What is worse, rumors and faulty intelligence that the Nurhaci would invade Chosŏn in retaliation reached Seoul, giving rise to public commotion and forcing the Chosŏn court to turn its attention to its northern defense.⁶ Confronted with the Japanese invaders in the south, Chosŏn could not afford to reinforce the northern garrisons at the same time sufficiently to defend against Nurhaci, causing much consternation.

To prevent Nurhaci from making a military move against Chosŏn, the Chosŏn court asked Hu Dashou, a Ming general then in charge of training Korean soldiers at Pyŏngyang, to write a letter to Nurhaci warning him not to cause trouble. Hu readily complied with the request and entrusted the mission to his senior adjutant, Xu Xiyuan. Carrying the admonishing letter written in the name of Hu and approved by the Chosŏn king, Xu arrived at Manp'o. But he was stationed there and ordered his houseman, Yang Dachao, to deliver the letter to Nurhaci. Yang and Ha Seguk, a Korean interpreter of the Jurchen language, crossed the Yalu River and headed for Fe Ala, the capital city of the Jianzhou then.⁷

Nurhaci held banquets every day to receive Yang and Ha hospitably. During a reception, Nurhaci explained that he had already brought charges against the Jurchen border transgressors and condemned their family members for forced labor, and suggested that border transgressors be repatriated and punished according to the laws of their own country. After having this formal interview with Ha Seguk (Korean) and Yang Dachao (Chinese), interestingly enough, Nurhaci called Ha back to give a special audience to him. In this exclusive audience, he emphasized his prompt action against the border transgressors, whose wives were punished shamefully, forced to attend on Ha Seguk and his suite at night. He also explained why Ha deserved to be received in hospitality with beef: he wanted to give his thanks to Chosŏn because it sent a messenger to him

6 *Sŏnjo sillok* 28.7.27, 28.10.7, 28.11.20.

7 *Sŏnjo sillok* 28.9.17, 28.10.13, 28.11.20.

for the first time.⁸

Nurhaci's response suggests that he initially had no intention to invade Chosŏn in reprisal, even though the rumor itself proved true eventually.⁹ In other words, taking advantage of Chosŏn's confrontation with the Japanese in the south, Nurhaci seems to have intentionally put the rumor in circulation to press Seoul to dispatch a messenger to him for negotiations. It should be noticed here that he tried to communicate directly with Chosŏn (Ha Seguk), bypassing the Ming (Yang Dachao). This suggests Nurhaci's strategy aimed at gradually and indirectly challenging the existing Ming order through direct communication with Chosŏn.

Ha Seguk returned to Manp'o with Nurhaci's reply letter, purporting that Nurhaci had no grudge against Chosŏn, and requested that Hu should convey Nurhaci's homage to the Ming in Beijing.¹⁰ The Chosŏn court requested that Hu Dashou write a positive reply promptly, effectively settling the case amicably. But since Hu insisted upon writing it after he directly heard from Xu, whose return date to Pyongyang was uncertain, the Chosŏn court decided to send its own written reply to Nurhaci in the name of the commander of the Manp'o garrison. Sin Ch'ungil (1554-1622) was selected as the special emissary whose mission was to deliver the written reply to Nurhaci and spy on the Jianzhou.¹¹ To evade its responsibility for directly contacting Nurhaci, the Chosŏn court also sent a letter of explanation to the headquarters of the company charged with defending the area around Kuandian, north of the lower Yalu River under the command of the Liaodong Commandery. In the letter of explanation, it stressed the inevitability of a special emissary to Nurhaci in order to dissuade him from provoking military trouble.¹²

Accompanied by Ha Seguk, Sin Ch'ungil was stationed in Fe Ala for

8 *Sŏnjo sillok* 28.11.20.

9 Ha's talks with several Jurchen deputies in Fe Ala confirmed that the rumor was true.

10 *Sŏnjo sillok* 28.11.16.

11 *Sŏnjo sillok* 28.11.23.

12 *Sŏnjo sillok* 28.12.6, 29.1.15.

one week. In the letter Sin delivered to Nurhaci, Chosŏn clarified three points. In return for the repatriation of Korean transgressors, a banquet would be given to the Jurchen in charge at Manp'o. For the slaughter of the Jurchen border transgressors, the responsible officer had already been reprimanded. To prevent further border incidents, both countries should strictly forbid their people from trespassing across the border in obedience of the Ming order, the suzerain of the two.¹³ This imported that Chosŏn would accept Nurhaci's proposal not to slaughter border transgressors but repatriate them.

The working-level talks between Sin and Nurhaci's deputies clarified the standpoints of both Chosŏn and the Jianzhou Jurchen. The Jurchen agenda can be reduced to three items: establishment of amicable relations, conferment of Chosŏn titles upon Nurhaci, and permission to send tribute missions to Seoul—in essence, Nurhaci was seeking to normalize diplomatic relations between the two countries. Specifically, Nurhaci preferred receiving a rank and title of the Chosŏn government to gifts in kind.¹⁴ He also emphasized sending tribute missions to Seoul rather than trading at Manp'o. These facts all attest to Nurhaci's true intention: diplomatic normalization, not simple border trade. On the second item of the Jurchen agenda, Sin gave no definite answer, but replied that he would report to Seoul of Nurhaci's eagerness for a Chosŏn title. As for the last item, however, he clearly answered immediately that sending tribute missions to Seoul would be impossible under the Ming tributary system.¹⁵

Nurhaci nevertheless held banquets every day for Sin and his suite and presented profuse gifts, implying that he was satisfied anyway with the

13 *Sŏnjo sillok* 28.11.23.

14 *Kŏnju kijŏng togi* p. 190. *Kŏnju kijŏng togi* (The illustrated account of a trip to Jianzhou) was Sin's report to the court on his completed mission. In this paper I refer to the version published in *Chidan hakpo*, vol. 10 in 1939. The descriptive part, save maps and diagrams, is also recorded in *Sŏnjo sillok* (29.1.15) with a few minor differences. The *Chidan hakpo* version seems to have been used as a draft for the *Sŏnjo sillok* version.

15 *Kŏnju kijŏng togi* pp. 190-191, p. 196.

fact that he received an official letter from the Chosŏn court. After exchanging brief greetings at the initial reception, Nurhaci first asked Sin if he had brought an official letter with him.¹⁶ This first inquiry suggests that Nurhaci was foremost concerned with establishing a Jurchen-Chosŏn dialogue through the exchange of letters and messengers. Nurhaci, as mentioned, fully understood what an exchange of official letters between tributary states under the Ming order meant, and it was the very reason why he had been eager to receive a letter from the Chosŏn authority. Now, having been visited by a Chosŏn official dispatched from Seoul with an official letter, he had completed his first objective—to establish direct dialogue between the two states. For this reason, he seems to have been satisfied for the moment with this visible progress of the relations with Chosŏn. Sin interpreted Nurhaci's eagerness to enter into diplomatic relations with Chosŏn as Nurhaci's attempt to consolidate power over the other Jurchen tribes by displaying his close relations with the Ming and Chosŏn.¹⁷

Nurhaci's satisfaction was also a product of his accurate assessment of the situation at the time. If he went further to intensify his pressure on Chosŏn, it might have backfired on him: the relations between the two states would have worsened, and there was the possibility that the Ming and Chosŏn would join forces against him. Also, it was almost impossible for him to invade Chosŏn: the existence of the Haixi Jurchen at his doorstep and the possibility of Ming intervention served as a deterrent to military action. What is more, Nurhaci seems not to have been confident of his military capacity against the Ming and Chosŏn. During Sin's stay in Fe Ala, Nurhaci's deputies rained questions on him about the fighting power of the Japanese who had defected to Chosŏn and the power of Japanese muskets and Korean cannons.¹⁸ Two months after Sin returned to Chosŏn, Nurhaci sent his deputy to Manp'o to purchase Korean cannons,

16 *Kŏnju kijŏng togi* p. 186.

17 *Kŏnju kijŏng togi* p. 190.

18 *Kŏnju kijŏng togi* p. 196.

but in vain.¹⁹ He also tried to obtain Chinese cannons from Liaodong, also unsuccessfully.²⁰ These facts all attest to Nurhaci's anxiety about his lack of firearms.

For these reasons, the Jurchen policy toward Chosŏn during the war on the peninsula was the best one that Nurhaci, who accurately grasped the international situation, could employ at that time; he was able to obtain the maximum number of concessions that Chosŏn, under Ming intervention, could allow. Furthermore, it was an additional win for Nurhaci that the Chosŏn court had issued an ordinance strictly forbidding Koreans from trespassing over the border and slaughtering Jurchen transgressors.²¹ Now, even if Jurchen ginseng poachers were arrested in the territory of Chosŏn, they would be repatriated—in a sense, the Chosŏn court had opened its border to the Jurchen. Since Nurhaci did not harshly punish Jurchen transgressors in actuality, the border infringements were still at issue, a source of trouble to Chosŏn.²² In essence, Nurhaci's strategy was significant in that he had established a bridgehead for future normalization with Chosŏn through the exchange of letters and direct talks; it was a successful embarkation on an indirect challenge to the existing Ming order.

In the middle of the second offensive of the Japanese (1597-1598), Nurhaci again offered the Ming Board of War and the Liaodong Commandery his assistance with an army of 20,000 strong in fighting against the Japanese. Xing Jie, the chief commissioner of the Liaodong Commandery, wanted to inquire after Chosŏn's response to Nurhaci's offer. A Chosŏn envoy to Beijing and Yang Hao, a Ming general, warned that if the Jurchen entered the war, they could very easily spy on the weaknesses of the Ming and Chosŏn armies.²³ For this reason, Nurhaci's offer was

19 *Sŏnjo sillok* 29.3.2.

20 *Kŏnju kijŏng togi* p. 195.

21 *Sŏnjo sillok* 29.2.2.

22 *Sŏnjo sillok* 29.3.26.

23 *Sŏnjo sillok* 31.2.28, 31.3.9.

declined again. But Nurhaci himself seems not to have really intended to send his troops; Nurhaci could ill afford to dispatch an army of 20,000 strong abroad at that time. It seems that Nurhaci gave such an offer as a diplomatic gesture, albeit an exaggeration, designed to display his military power and to consolidate his place on the international stage.

Here, again, it is noteworthy that Nurhaci brought his offer to the Ming, not to Chosŏn. This provides strategic distinction in his diplomacy. Concerning the relations with Chosŏn, on one hand, he tried to establish direct relations, reserving no seat for the Ming at the table in talks with Chosŏn. In dealing with the Ming, on the other hand, he made a display of his homage to the Ming, pretending to act within the framework of the Ming-centered tributary system. His visits to Beijing during the war—at least three—can be understood in this context. In short, Nurhaci employed dual diplomacy, and it was an indirect challenge to the existing international order headed by Ming China, which was then being directly challenged by the Japanese on the Korean peninsula.²⁴

Issue of Communications with Nurhaci, 1619-1620

Nurhaci's announcement of his new nation, Later Jin, on the first day of 1616, and the ensuing declaration of war against Ming China increased military tensions in Liaodong and southwestern Manchuria. Chosŏn did not want to be involved in this complicated situation. When the Ming demanded troops from Chosŏn in the early summer of 1618, however, the Chosŏn court erupted into debates over the appropriate stance towards the Ming and the Later Jin. The Ming demand split the Chosŏn court into two: the absolute majority, represented by the Border Defense Command

24 Kye Sŭngbŏm. "Imjin waeran kwa Nurhach'i," (The Imjin War and Nurhaci) in *Imjin waeran: Tong Asia samguk chŏnjaeng*. (The Imjin War: the three-state war in East Asia) ed. Chŏng Tuhŭi and Yi Kyŏngsun. (Seoul: Hyumŏnisŭt'ŭ, 2007), pp. 355-384.

(Pibyōnsa, hereafter BDC), was in favor of an immediate dispatch of troops, while King Kwanghae was opposed to the deployment and was supported by a few officials. This court dispute lasted about six months and concluded when an imperial letter reached Seoul, demanding Chosŏn troops for the military campaign against Nurhaci.²⁵ The opposition of the minority, including the throne, was simply overpowered, and a Chosŏn force 13,000 strong finally crossed the Yalu River in the spring of 1619 to join Ming forces.

The Ming expeditionary force of about one hundred thousand advanced into Jurchen territory from four directions towards the Jurchen capital. However, they were all crushed along the way by a series of surprise attacks made by the Jurchen cavalry. The Chosŏn expeditionary force was also destroyed in a battle. The military commissioner Kang Hongnip (1570-1627) capitulated to the Jurchen with about 4,000 survivors and was welcomed by Nurhaci.²⁶ The Chosŏn court was shocked at the news of Kang's capitulation as well as this crushing defeat. In the Jurchen court, on the other hand, there was a dispute over the fate of the Chosŏn prisoners: about 400 were slaughtered in the midst of the dispute between mod-

25 For more details, see Inaba Iwakichi. *Kōkaikun jidai no Man-Sen kankei* (Manchu-Chosŏn relations in the era of King Kwanghae). (Seoul: Ōsakaya goshoten, 1933), pp. 161-196, Han Myōnggi. *Imjin waeran kwa Han-Chung kwan'gye* (The Imjin War and Sino-Korean relations). (Seoul: Yōksa pip'yōngsa, 1999), pp. 244-254, and Kye Sūngbōm. *Chosŏn sidae haeoe p'abyōng kwa Han-Chung kwan'gye* (Dispatching troops overseas and Sino-Korea relations in the Chosŏn dynasty). (Seoul: P'urūn yōksa, 2009), pp.162-175.

26 *Chaekchung ilgi* 5:10b-14a. *Chaekchung ilgi* (The diary of a wooden fenced prison camp) gives fuller explanations about the negotiations than *Qing Taizu shi lu*. Yet the two accounts give different explanations about who first proposed peace. According to *Qing Taizu shi lu*, it was Kang who first made overtures for peace. Meanwhile, Yi Minhwān, author of the diary and an adjutant general of Kang Hongnip, wrote that the Jurchen commander first dissuaded the Chosŏn force from fighting because the Later Jin bore Chosŏn no grudge. See *Qing Taizu shi lu* 6:13b and *Chaekchung ilgi* 5:10b.

erates and hard-liners.²⁷ The Jurchen court was nevertheless dominated by the moderates led by Nurhaci. Nurhaci sent Chosŏn a friendly letter, releasing five prisoners as a token of his amicable attitude toward Chosŏn, including Chŏng Ŭngjŏng, adjutant, and Ha Seguk, interpreter.²⁸ They secretly carried Kang's report and delivered it to King Kwanghae.

In the letter, Nurhaci first explained the inevitability of war against the Ming. He also wrote that he fully understood the particular situation in which Chosŏn had little option but to send troops as a Ming tributary state. Yet he also emphasized the importance of friendly relations between the Later Jin and Chosŏn, reminding Chosŏn of the relations between the Jin (1115-1234) and Koryŏ (918-1392) in the twelfth century. In conclusion, he proposed that Chosŏn join the Later Jin to punish the Ming that had already failed in meeting Heaven's expectations. He added that he would wait for a friendly reply letter signed by the Chosŏn king.²⁹ In his report, Kang Hongnip gave a full account of the battles and his peace negotiations with the Jurchen. He also proposed that Chosŏn make peace with Nurhaci.³⁰

On reading Nurhaci's letter, King Kwanghae issued an ordinance to prepare an immediate reply. He also ordered that Nurhaci's letter be kept secret from the Chinese messenger who had just arrived in Seoul, and that Chosŏn officials cordially treat the Jurchen messenger who was waiting in Manp'o for the reply.³¹ Court officials, however, made the punishment of the five released prisoners and the family of Kang Hongnip a more urgent issue than a reply to Nurhaci. The BDC contended that the released prisoners should be put in jail and punished because they shamefully sur-

27 This massacre was triggered by an incident in which some Chosŏn prisoners had raped and murdered Jurchen women and escaped. See *Chaekchung ilgi* 5:16b. This violation and murder case provided the hard-liners with a good excuse to slaughter hundreds of prisoners.

28 *Chaekchung ilgi* 5:16a)

29 *Chon Chu hwip 'yŏn* pp. 40-41.

30 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 11.4.2, *Chaekchung ilgi* 5:16ab)

31 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 11.4.2-3.

rendered to the enemy and caused the Ming court to view Chosŏn with suspicion. The Censorate and the Royal Secretariat also lined up with the BDC. With respect to writing a reply letter, the BDC proposed collecting opinions from all individual court officials. King Kwanghae, however, opposed the opinion collection (*suŭi*) and urged the BDC to stop arguing over the punishment of the prisoners and instead write a friendly reply letter immediately. Pressed by the throne, the BDC reluctantly began to draft a letter, but further conflicts arose with respect to the letter's contents. The phrases at issue can be summarized as follows:³²

(A) BDC: "Chosŏn, a subject and a son of China, cannot make peace with the enemy without China's approval." should be included.

King: The Jurchen are strong enough to call Nurhaci emperor. Do not write such a sentence.

(B) BDC: "We can resume a friendly relationship if you apologize and submit to China." should be included.

King: It will make them angry. Do not write such a provocative sentence.

(C) BDC: "The son must do what his father orders." should be included.

King: It might invite their invasion. Do not write it.

BDC: They also know about our special relations with the Ming. It is a matter of righteousness. It should be included.

(D) King: Write "We, as a tributary of China, were obliged to send troops. We returned good for good like you returned evil for evil."

BDC: This logic might also justify their invasion of China. If the Chinese hear of this, they might call it into question.

(E) King: Write "We appreciate your releasing some prisoners." and "We would believe your intention of making peace if you release all

32 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 11.4.5, 11.4.8, 11.4.9, 11.11.13.

the prisoners.” We cannot leave our skillful musketeers and archers in their hands.

BDC: If we attempt repatriation of the prisoners, they would demand in return what we cannot afford. It will be better not to mention the matter of the prisoners.

In short, King Kwanghae wanted to send a friendly reply to appease Nurhaci in fear of a possible Manchu invasion, while the BDC wanted to send a reprimanding letter in fear that communication with Nurhaci might cause Chosŏn to get into trouble with the Ming.

In the end, King Kwanghae and the BDC met halfway to complete the reply letter. It was written in the name of Pak Yŏp, northwestern provincial governor, and sent to the advisors of Nurhaci. The contents were as follows:³³

“... [We] two countries share a border with each other. Two hundred years have passed since [we] served the Heavenly [Ming] Court together. (1) [Meanwhile, our two countries] never intended to nurse hatred and a grudge against each other. Unexpectedly, [however], your country recently became estranged from the Heavenly Court. The peoples were ravaged by war and fell into extreme distress. There are many forts in all quarters. How should it be only neighboring country’s misfortune? It should not be a good occasion to your country, either. (2) The Heavenly Court is to our country

33 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 11.4.21, *Chon Chu hwip’yŏn* 43, *Qing Taizong shi lu* 6:17b-18a. Out of these three references, only *Kwanghaegun ilgi* gives the whole contents. On the other hand, we can find some evidence that the compilers of the *Chonju hwip’yŏn* distorted the contents by expurgating some sentences: such as the underlined (1), (3), and (4). Interestingly enough, they were the very issues over which there was a severe dispute between King Kwanghae and the BDC. Moreover, they were what King Kwanghae fought to include in the reply letter. This fact strongly implies that the idea of ‘serving the Ming, rejecting the Manchus’ still remained intact until the turn of the nineteenth century when *Chonju hwip’yŏn* was compiled under the royal patronage in the last decade of the eighteenth century.

what the father is to the son. How could the son not follow what the father orders? Since it is a matter of righteousness, [the son] has little option but to do so. (3) Nonetheless, how could [Chosŏn] not have a mind to get along with neighbors? (4) Since you released Chŏng Ŭngjong, [Chosŏn] could see [your] friendly attitude toward [Chosŏn]. ... If [we two countries] tread the right path together, the Heavenly Court would grant special favors immediately. If [we] two countries maintain their own lands and keep friendly relations with each other, it would truly be good of [our] two countries. ...”

(1) had been opposed by the BDC from the start, while King Kwanghae had wanted to include this sentence before in the reply. Thus, it should be understood that this sentence was included according to King Kwanghae's intention. (2) was what the BDC wanted to include in the reply letter, while King Kwanghae stood opposed. According to the context, however, (2) is concluded by (3), which was what King Kwanghae wanted to include in the letter. With respect to this issue, therefore, King Kwanghae and the BDC seemed to have made a compromise. (4) was what King Kwanghae wanted to write in the reply letter, while the BDC had strongly disagreed. Yet it seems that the issue of other prisoners was not mentioned because of BDC opposition. Thus, King Kwanghae and the BDC also met halfway with respect to this issue. On the other hand, (A) and (B), which the BDC had wanted to include contrary to King Kwanghae's wishes, were not mentioned in the reply letter. Meanwhile, (D), which King Kwanghae had wanted despite opposition by the BDC, was not mentioned either. In short, after a severe dispute over the issue of writing a reply letter to Nurhaci, King Kwanghae and court officials made a compromise, and it was reflected in the letter.

This watered down letter consequently satisfied neither the Ming nor the Later Jin, let alone King Kwanghae and the BDC. It rather amplified mutual distrust. The Jurchen court displayed its discontent with Chosŏn's equivocal reply. The Ming generals in Liaodong were offended by the correspondence per se between Chosŏn and the Later Jin and began to view Chosŏn with suspicion. This outcome strongly suggests that a strat-

egy of neutrality had been impossible from the start. In other words, in a practical sense, there was no way for Chosŏn to satisfy both the Ming and the Later Jin when the two countries were at war with each other. The situation did not let Chosŏn remain clear of the war in Liaodong. In short, the kernel of the problem was not 'neutrality' or 'compromise' but selecting one alternative or the other.

In fact, the Jurchen court was enraged by Chosŏn because they could not find any friendly phrases in the reply letter and also because Chosŏn sent no gifts in token of friendly relations. Kang Hongnip appeased Nurhaci by elucidating the meaning of the reply letter, but it was not so much a real elucidation as extemporization, taking advantage of the Jurchen ignorance of the diplomatic documents written in classical Chinese. Indeed, Kang's explanation about the reply letter could not change the situation per se. The moderates in the Jurchen court still preferred peace with Chosŏn not because of Kang's explanation but because of strategic considerations.³⁴

The second letter from Nurhaci was written in a higher tone than the previous one and urged Chosŏn to choose between the Ming and the Later Jin. It also proposed that if Chosŏn chose the Later Jin, it should declare so officially, by performing a sacrifice to Heaven and Earth with the blood of a horse and a cow. Nurhaci clarified that Chosŏn's reply should be sealed by the king.³⁵ This second letter from Nurhaci left much less room for compromise between King Kwanghae and the BDC.

Again, King Kwanghae issued an ordinance to reply to Nurhaci immediately. He argued that Chosŏn should appease Nurhaci because Chosŏn was not strong enough to fight him. He asserted that any expressions by which Nurhaci could be offended should not be included in the reply letter. He also contended that even a very short reply would be helpful to delay a possible Jurchen invasion of Chosŏn. In short, his point was that the only way to preserve the country was to avoid war, and the only way

34 *Ch'aekchung ilgi* 5:18a-20a.

35 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 11.7.14, *Chon Chu hwip'yŏn* p. 45.

to avoid war was to send a friendly reply to Nurhaci.³⁶

Meanwhile, the BDC still stuck to a ‘no reply’ policy. Many senior officials in the BDC absented themselves from office to evade a rain of royal ordinances to reply to Nurhaci. Even those who reported for duty did not hesitate to advocate that they would rather wage war against Nurhaci than reply to him. The BDC pointed out that replying to Nurhaci who *rebelled* against the Ming would give offense to the Ming and thereby be condemned by future generations. They also suggested that if Chosŏn sent a reply letter again, the Chinese, who were already viewing Chosŏn with suspicion because of Chosŏn’s reply to Nurhaci’s previous letter, would distrust Chosŏn even more. They were also concerned that if Chosŏn sent a friendly reply to Nurhaci, he might show it to the Chinese in order to estrange the Ming and Chosŏn. They also pointed out that whatever Chosŏn wrote in the reply letter, it would not be helpful in delaying a possible invasion because it would not be able to fully satisfy Nurhaci.³⁷ In short, their point was that it would be much better to reject the letter and subsequently be associated with the Ming more closely than ever. The Censorate and the Royal Secretariat gave full support to the BDC with regard to this issue. No one, except for King Kwanghae, was opposed to this ‘no reply’ policy at court.

Having difficulty standing against the throne persistently, the BDC proposed a novel idea, or a verbal reply. It was a plausible alternative plan for communications with Nurhaci without leaving evidence that might cause the Ming to regard Chosŏn with suspicion. But it was not so much a genuine proposal as a phony suggestion to soothe the king. Although King Kwanghae consented to the verbal reply as an alternative, indeed, the BDC was still very lukewarm toward sending a messenger to Nurhaci, trying every possible means to stall. For example, the BDC claimed it should wait to discuss this issue until the chief state councilor showed up in office; the messenger should be selected from low-ranking professional

36 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 11.7.14, 11.7.22, 11.8.4, 11.9.12.

37 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 11.7.15, 11.7.23, 11.7.25-26, 11.8.14, 11.8.22.

interpreters, not from court officials; and it should be approved in advance by the Ming commanders in Liaodong. Their utmost concern was to do nothing that might incur Ming suspicion. King Kwanghae urged the BDC almost every day to send a messenger immediately, saying in a fury, "If Nurhaci invades, could you fight and dislodge the enemy with brush and tongue?"³⁸ The result was that months went by without a response.

With the Chosŏn failure to reply to Nurhaci's second letter, the hard-liners in the Jurchen court began to gain strength.³⁹ Some of them even argued that all Chosŏn prisoners of war should be slaughtered. A rumor that Chosŏn troops had reentered Liaodong also made the Jurchen court regard Chosŏn with more suspicion. In this situation, in November of 1619, Nurhaci sent a messenger to Manp'o to find out whether Chosŏn would send a reply or not, and also to spy out the truth of the rumor.⁴⁰

When the messenger returned, the atmosphere of the Jurchen court changed favorably to the moderates because he reported that the commander of Manp'o had treated him much more cordially than before and that the rumor was false. In addition, when a large amount of needed commodities, such as clothes, paper, and salt, was delivered from Chosŏn about a month later, Nurhaci was very pleased and accepted it as a token of Chosŏn's friendly attitude toward him even though a written reply letter had not yet arrived. Meanwhile, some Chinese soldiers who recently defected to the Jurchen camp made a statement that Chosŏn had continued to reject the Ming demands for more troops, pleasing Nurhaci even

38 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 11.9.5, 11.11.3-5, 11.12.19.

39 The key leader of the hard-liners was Hong Taiji (Taizong, r. 1626-1643), eighth son of Nurhaci. He contended that the Later Jin conquer Chosŏn prior to launch major attacks against Liaodong. Meanwhile, the key leaders of the moderates were Nurhaci and his first son. They contended that the Later Jin needed to maintain friendly relations with Chosŏn because it would be unfavorable against the Later Jin to make neighboring countries enemies. See *Ch'aekchung ilgi* 5:19b-20a, 24b, *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 11.12.17.

40 *Ch'aekchung ilgi* 5:24b-25b.

more.⁴¹

Nevertheless, Nurhaci could not be fully satisfied without an official reply from Chosŏn. He could not wait for Chosŏn's reply longer than seven months. He ordered to send another letter, urging the Chosŏn king to make his position clear through an official letter written in the name of the king.⁴² He also wrote that he wanted to change the border town through which he had received regular gifts from Chosŏn, from Hoeryŏng to Manp'o.⁴³ He also requested the Chosŏn king revise the rules and allow the Jurchen messenger to sojourn inside the wall of Manp'o.⁴⁴

When this letter arrived to Seoul, the BDC immediately insisted that Chosŏn not send any reply. In the case of a verbal reply, they argued that a lowest-ranking interpreter should be sent to avoid Ming suspicion. They even proposed that Chosŏn close the gate of Manp'o and open only Hoeryŏng to the Jurchen. They also warned that even private letters from the families of the Korean detainees should not be written in classical Chinese but in Korean vernacular because they might be utilized as if they were official letters from the Chosŏn court. In short, the BDC wished to close the door to the Later Jin. Meanwhile, King Kwanghae contended that Chosŏn should send an official letter to Nurhaci and pointed out that the closure of Manp'o was impractical and would only offend him.⁴⁵ He wanted to maintain communications with Nurhaci in any form possible. In their final decision King Kwanghae and the court sent an interpreter to deliver a verbal reply. In the verbal reply Chosŏn first explained (1) the difficulty in sending a written reply because Ming border guards had been keeping an eye on the movements of Chosŏn since the delivery of the gifts of salt and food to Nurhaci. It was added that (2) the border town

41 *Ch'aekchung ilgi* 5:25b-28a.

42 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 12.3.4.

43 Chosŏn had been granting gifts to Nurhaci via the Ula at Hoeryŏng, a border town on the middle reach of the Tumen River, since 1609 in which the Ula was subjected to Nurhaci.

44 *Ch'aekchung ilgi* 5:28b.

45 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 12.3.4, 12.3.22-25, 12.4.15.

through which Chosŏn granted gifts to Nurhaci could not be changed for the same reason. It was also made clear that (3) the two countries should get along with each other because there had been no grudge between the two. In addition, (4) Chosŏn told Nurhaci to dispose of the Chosŏn prisoners of war at his discretion, asserting that Chosŏn had no interest in them. The verbal reply concluded by saying that (5) Chosŏn was now repatriating some Jurchen as a token of amity who had recently defected to Chosŏn.⁴⁶

Again, this verbal reply was an outcome of the compromise between King Kwanghae and the BDC. As we have seen above, (1) was BDC's idea, while (3) was what King Kwanghae had tried to include from the start of the dispute. (2) was a euphemistic refusal to Nurhaci's request for the change of the border gate. Considering that the BDC had argued for closing Manop'o, the BDC seems to have made a concession to King Kwanghae. (4) was what the BDC had strongly argued, but it was interestingly followed by (5). It means that (4) and (5) should be understood in the same context: (5) implied that the Later Jin should release the Chosŏn prisoners as Chosŏn repatriated the Manchu defectors. It seems that King Kwanghae and the BDC also made a compromise with respect to the issue of prisoners of war. In short, the repatriation of the Jurchen defectors contributed to dispelling Nurhaci's doubt about the Chosŏn stance. Indeed, he read between the lines and actually released ten Chosŏn prisoners in return.⁴⁷ This communication between Chosŏn and the Later Jin contrib-

46 *Ch'aekchung ilgi* 5:29a-30b.

47 *Chaekchung ilgi* 5:30a-32b. Yi Minhwan, author of the *Chaekchung ilgi*, was included in the ten. The moderates of the Jurchen court wanted to release all the Korean detainees. The number of releases, however, was limited to only ten because of hard-liners' opposition. (*Ch'aekchung ilgi* 5:31a) On the other hand, King Kwanghae and the BDC clashed again over the repatriates. In substance, the BDC did not want the prisoners to be released because the BDC worried that their return would be regarded by the Ming as clear evidence of friendly relations between Chosŏn and the Later Jin. For this reason, the BDC argued for the punishment of the repatriates. (*Kwanghaegun ilgi* 12.3.4, 12.3.28). When the ten prisoners re-

uted to the easing of tension to some degree for a while.⁴⁸

Communications with Nurhaci after His Conquest of Liaodong, 1621-1622

This atmosphere, however, took a turn for the worse in the spring of 1621, when the Later Jin took Shenyang and Liaoyang, the two largest cities in Liaodong. The Jurchen occupation of the main part of Liaodong was significant because Nurhaci cut off the land route between the Ming and Chosŏn. It was at this point that Nurhaci began to assume a higher-handed attitude toward Chosŏn: the choice of the word ‘imperial rescript’ (*chosŏ*) for the letter to Chosŏn for the first time, which had been allowed only for the Ming emperor, military advance into Chosŏn territory to destroy Chinese refugee camps, and the execution of a Korean interpreter.

The territorial expansion of the Jurchen, on the other hand, was temporarily stalled after they took Liaoyang, where the Ming Liaodong Commandery had been established for over 200 years, because of internal disagreements over the speed and extent of military expansion. In addition, the matter of incorporating and reorganizing new populations and territories into the framework of the Jurchen ruling system⁴⁹ also led the Jurchen to slow their expansion. For this reason, the Jurchen occupation of Liaodong did not necessarily mean that Chosŏn was included in the sphere of Jurchen influence. Although Nurhaci successfully cut off the land route between the Ming and Chosŏn, Chosŏn was still located at their rear. In other words, he still needed to maintain friendly relations with Chosŏn so as not to make both the Ming and Chosŏn their enemies at the same time.

turned, indeed, the Censorate remonstrated that they be decapitated and their heads be displayed on the Yalu River as a sign of Chosŏn’s loyalty to the Ming. The BDC gave full support to the Censorate. (*Kwanghaegun ilgi* 12.8.20, 12.8.23) Yet King Kwanghae protected them.

48 Seung B. Kye. “In the Shadow of the Father,” pp. 180-190.

About two months after he took Liaoyang, indeed, Nurhaci sent another letter to King Kwanghae. This time, interestingly, his letter was delivered to Ŭiju, not to Manp'o.⁴⁹ Chosŏn had opened Ŭiju only to the Ming, and Manp'o and Hoeryŏng to the Jurchen. This indicates that Nurhaci was consciously trying to usurp the position of the Ming in Chosŏn foreign relations. For this reason, the nature of the problem the Chosŏn court faced had now changed from whether it should reply to Nurhaci to whether it should receive Nurhaci's letter. Receiving Nurhaci's imperial rescript at Ŭiju would be taken as Chosŏn's abandonment of the suzerain-tributary relationship with the Ming.

The Chosŏn court was now filled with anti-Jurchen voices. The magistrate of Ŭiju beseeched the throne to force the Jurchen messenger to leave Ŭiju immediately for Manp'o. The BDC argued that Chosŏn should immediately launch a military attack crossing the Yalu River to behead Jurchen commanders. The chief state councilor proposed preparing for war against the Jurchen. He left communications with Nurhaci out of consideration. No one argued that Chosŏn should receive the *imperial rescript* from Nurhaci, except for the king. King Kwanghae contended that Chosŏn might as well transcribe it to find out its content to determine whether or not to receive the letter officially. He urged the BDC to write a friendly reply, going so far as to call the senior officials in the BDC 'greenhorns' ignorant of military affairs.⁵⁰

The result of the dispute was another compromise: the Chosŏn court made the decision to send a messenger to Nurhaci as a response to Nurhaci's letter, but again without a written reply. Chosŏn also reported the dispatch to the Ming under the pretext of collecting military intelligence

49 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 13.6.19.

50 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 13.5.29, 13.6.1-2, 13.6.22, 13.6.27. It seems that King Kwanghae finally failed to read the letter because of too strong opposition. (*Kwanghaegun ilgi* 13.6.11) In the letter Nurhaci called himself the 'emperor' and called the Chosŏn king 'you' instead of 'Your Highness.' The main point of the letter was to urge Chosŏn to repatriate Chinese refugees from Liaodong to Chosŏn. (*Qing Taizong shi lu* 7:22b)

to avoid raising Ming suspicion. Chǒng Ch'ungsin (1576-1636), commander of Manp'o, was selected as the special messenger. Chǒng reluctantly obeyed the decision, saying, "Without Ming approval, I would rather die than obey such a decision."⁵¹ This suggests that there were no officials at that time who wanted to be involved in an affair that might cause even the slightest damage to relations with the Ming. In fact, when Chǒng returned to Ŭiju from the Later Jin, he did not head for Seoul but went to Yongch'ŏn first, south of the mouth of the Yalu River, and visited Mao Wenlong, a Ming general who mustered Chinese refugees from Liaodong and built military camps there, to report his visit to Mao.⁵²

Chǒng was cordially received by Nurhaci's court favorites, such as Yangguri, and had some conferences with them. Nurhaci at that time wanted to forge a peace agreement with Chosŏn because he could profit from open relations with Chosŏn, namely the removal of a potential threat at his rear and the isolation of the Ming. Such intentions were clearly disclosed in the conference. #1 in the <Table 1> provides a good illustration for this: Yangguri persisted on the conclusion of an official pact, while Chǒng did not consent to any kind of official agreement. The exchange of envoys (#3) was the same case: Yangguri wanted to make an open exchange of envoys between the two countries, while Chǒng did not. Case #6 should also be understood in this way. Chǒng planned to return to Manp'o to avoid the Chinese, while Yangguri forced Chǒng to return to Ŭiju, which was then crowded with the remnants of Ming troops and refugees, because he wanted the Chinese to know about the talks between the Later Jin and Chosŏn.

The talks ended without result. None of the seven cases in the table discussed at the conference were resolved. The conference rather disclosed clearly the fundamental differences between the Later Jin and Chosŏn. Nevertheless, the conference was held in a peaceful atmosphere: The Jurchen court received Chǒng cordially from start to finish because they

51 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 13.9.2, 13.9.9-10.

52 *Manun sŏnsaeng munjip* appendix 4a.

Table 1. Talks between Yangguri and Chǒng Ch'ungsin⁵³

#	Case	Yangguri (Later Jin)	Chǒng Ch'ungsin (Chosǒn)
1	How to maintain friendly relations	A pact must be concluded.	Faith is sufficient for friendship. Concluding pact beyond my authority.
2	Relations with the Ming	How will Chosǒn treat the Southern Court (Ming)?	The suzerain-tributary and father-son relationships between the Ming and Chosǒn are unchangeable as a matter of righteousness.
3	Exchange of envoys	We will send an envoy to Seoul in token of appreciation of your visit.	It is unprecedented for a Jurchen envoy to enter Seoul. This matter is beyond my authority.
		Chosǒn says OK to our suggestion for friendly relations but barely replies to our letters and now also refuses to exchange envoys. Chosǒn jeers at us. Is this the faith you are talking about?	We do not jeer at you. I think it is plausible to exchange envoys, but it is beyond my authority. I will report to the court of your proposal.
4	Mao Wenlong and Chinese refugees	Chosǒn would help Mao if he asks for help.	No, Chosǒn will not. If we wanted to help him, we would already have done so.
5	POW	Pay ransom if you want the POWs to be released.	It is beyond my authority. Seoul has no interest in this matter.
6	Traffic route	Why do you insist that you must return to Manp'o?	I must report to Manp'o because that is where I am from.
		No, it is because you want to avoid the Chinese who stay in Yongch'ǒn. Make a clear choice whether to make friends with us or not. Take the Zhenjiang-Ŭiju route.	I see. I will return to Ŭiju via Zhenjiang.

53 Kwanghaegun ilgi 13.9.10.

still wanted peace with Chosŏn. According to Chŏng Ch'ungsin, Nurhaci was the very person who advocated peace with Chosŏn. Whenever the hard-liners spoke ill of Chosŏn, he would emphasize that Chosŏn had never been his enemy. He also warned his sons to maintain friendly relations with Chosŏn because it would be disadvantageous to the Later Jin to make many enemies.⁵⁴

As soon as Chŏng Ch'ungsin returned, King Kwanghae ordered an official letter to be sent to Nurhaci in appeasement. But this was immediately opposed by the BDC that continued to hold fast to the 'no reply' policy. The BDC even made no response to the royal ordinances and kept silent with respect to the writing to Nurhaci for about three months, despite a rain of royal ordinances commanding a letter to Nurhaci.⁵⁵ At this point another Jurchen letter arrived in Ŭiju. The content of the letter was not fully recorded, but it was a warning letter purporting that Chosŏn should not allow Chinese refugees to stay in its territory. Also, considering the fact that Jurchen forces invaded Yongchŏn to capture Mao Wenlong, the Chinese refugee leader, about ten days after the letter arrived in Ŭiju, a notification seems to have been included in the letter that the Manchus might take military action if Chosŏn took no action against the Chinese refugees. Thus, the expressions used in the letter were more forceful and direct than before. In this urgent situation, the BDC finally consented to sending a letter to Nurhaci in the name of the magistrate of Ŭiju.⁵⁶

When the Jurchen force withdrew in three days without an engagement with Chosŏn garrisons, however, the BDC went back to its original position and would not write the letter. Pressured by the throne, about two months later, the BDC reluctantly dispatched two interpreters to deliver a letter to Nurhaci, but the messengers returned on the way on some pretext or other, such as difficulty in reaching Jurchen camps because of chaotic situation in Liaodong. King Kwanghae was infuriated and urged the BDC

54 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 13.9.10.

55 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 13.9.11, 13.12.5.

56 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 13.12.9, 13.12.21.

to resend the letter, but the BDC did not respond for over four months. King Kwanghae vacillated between reprimanding and cajoling the BDC, but without result.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, the Jurchen attitude towards Chosŏn became more high-handed. They executed a Chosŏn interpreter, Ha Seguk, who had played an active role in the working-level talks between the two countries. They also detained some Chosŏn military officers who visited Liaodong as messengers. In addition, when Chŏng Ch'ungsin sent a letter to the Jurchen camp, Yangguri went so far as to tear it to pieces. The main reason for the high tension between Chosŏn and the Later Jin in 1622 was that the Chosŏn court did not take any serious action against the Chinese refugees despite repeated Jurchen demands. Moreover, Liang Zhiyuan, a Chinese military inspector, arrived in Ŭiju from Beijing by sea, commanding 4,000 Chinese troops, on a special mission to encourage Chinese refugees to harry the Later Jin from the rear and to wait for a chance to take Liaodong back.⁵⁸

King Kwanghae urged the BDC to send a letter to Nurhaci to explain that the Chinese inspector and refugees would leave Chosŏn soon for China. In the midst of increasing tensions, the BDC finally consented to sending a letter to Nurhaci in the summer of 1622. The Chosŏn court, however, faced another problem because no court officials wanted to sign the letter. Those who were nominated adamantly declined to sign it. The BDC even proposed that a fictitious character sign it. King Kwanghae was infuriated and nominated a bureau section chief of the Ministry of Rites as the signer, and ordered the Royal Secretariat not to accept any memorial of refusal with respect to this matter.⁵⁹

In October of 1622, after another two-month dispute over the format of the letter, the Chosŏn court finally sent a messenger, an interpreter, to the Later Jin to deliver the letter to Nurhaci. The letter began with the sen-

57 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 13.12.26, 14.2.27, 14.4.11.

58 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 14.2.30, 14.5.10-11.

59 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 14.6.25.

tence of “The King of Chosŏn writes to the Khan of the Later Jin, Your Highness.”⁶⁰ In the letter Chosŏn first emphasized the good will between Chosŏn and the Later Jin and then protested the murder of the Korean interpreter and unjust detention of other messengers, pointing out that it was the Later Jin who first broke faith. Chosŏn also explained a couple of surprise raids by Chinese refugees on some towns the north of the Yalu River, claiming that the Chosŏn garrison commanders, let alone the Chosŏn court, had nothing to do with these provocations. The letter concluded by saying that Chosŏn wished to receive a friendly answer.⁶¹

Nurhaci’s attitude towards this letter is not known. Although he may not have been very satisfied with it overall, he seems to have been pleased with the beginning sentence not only because it was the first letter from Chosŏn written in the name of the king but also because the Chosŏn king called Nurhaci “Your Highness” for the first time. The move of Chinese refugees to an island off the northwest coast of the peninsula at almost the same time⁶² also helped ease tensions. In fact, there were no more serious tensions between Chosŏn and the Later Jin until the first Manchu invasion of 1627. On one hand, the Palace Coup of 1623, by which King Kwanghae was dethroned and banished, took place when the possibility of Jurchen invasion was receding. To be more exact, it was only six months after King Kwanghae sent the letter, beginning with “the King of Chosŏn writes to the Khan of the Later Jin, Your Highness,” despite the tenacious opposition of all the court officials. On the other hand, Nurhaci was able to concentrate all his energy on the full-scale campaign on Liaoxi, crossing the Liao River until he died from wounds in the late summer of 1626.⁶³

60 *Yŏlcho t’onggi* p. 414.

61 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 14.9.1, *Yŏlcho t’onggi* p. 414.

62 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 14.11.11.

63 Seung B. Kye, “In the Shadow of the Father,” pp. 190-197.

Conclusion

Nurhaci's dual diplomacy discriminating between the Ming and Chosŏn, which began to take shape during the Hideyoshi Invasion of Korea in the 1590s, changed little until he declared his own khanate, Later Jin, in 1616, even though he sometimes dared to display his desire to be recognized as an independent sovereign on the international stage of East Asia. In 1608, for example, Nurhaci sent a tribute mission of 800 to Beijing, which had not been dispatched for two preceding years.⁶⁴ In Beijing they were arrogant enough to openly complain about the amount of silver granted by the Ming emperor, which a Chosŏn envoy to Beijing described later as an extreme insult to Ming China.⁶⁵ This episode suggests that Nurhaci was already prepared to withdraw from the Ming order no later than 1616, when he called Beijing the 'southern court,' openly denying the legitimacy of the emperor in Beijing as the 'Son of Heaven.'

For another example, Nurhaci's policy towards Chosŏn also changed during this time period. His policy remained unchanged for the time being even after the Japanese completely withdrew from the peninsula in 1598, and he still kept up his effort to receive a rank and title from the Chosŏn government. This suggests that he was still willing to take his position inferior to the Chosŏn king on the international stage. In 1607, however, he proclaimed himself *khan* in a letter sent to the king of Chosŏn for the first time,⁶⁶ signifying that he no longer needed a rank and title of Chosŏn because he thought he deserved to associate with the king of Chosŏn on equal footing. Concerning relations with Chosŏn, on one hand, he attempted to establish direct relations, reserving no seat for the Ming at the table in talks with Chosŏn. In dealing with Ming China, on the other hand, he wanted to display his homage to Beijing, pretending to act within the framework of the Ming-centered tributary system.

64 *Jianzhou shi zhi* 4:b.

65 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* 0.12.18.

66 *Sŏnjo sillok* 40.2.6.

Nurhaci's stance between the Ming and Chosŏn remarkably changed in 1619 when he defeated the Ming-Chosŏn joint military campaign against him. Taking the initiative in diplomatic negotiations right after his sweeping victory, Nurhaci frequently urged the king of Chosŏn to choose between the two powers, the Ming emperor and himself. To establish a direct dialogue with Chosŏn, he tenaciously demanded an official letter from the king of Chosŏn, which could be utilized to demonstrate his alliance with Chosŏn vis-à-vis Ming China. He never hesitated to repatriate some Korean prisoners to show Chosŏn his eagerness to establish a friendly relationship with Chosŏn.

When he occupied Liaodong in 1621, cutting off the land route between Beijing and Seoul, Nurhaci gained the upper hand over Chosŏn although he still sought to establish friendly relations with Chosŏn so as not to make both the Ming and Chosŏn his enemies simultaneously. By delivering his letter to Chosŏn to Ŭiju, not Manp'o, and by calling the king of Chosŏn 'you,' no longer 'Your Highness,' Nurhaci consciously tried to usurp the position of the Ming emperor in Chosŏn's foreign relations. Regardless of what happened in the Chosŏn court regarding this matter, what Nurhaci wanted from Chosŏn was always an official letter written in the name of the king of Chosŏn, while Chosŏn never wanted to disclose its friendly communications with Nurhaci, preferring verbal dialogues to the exchange of letters and messengers. In other words, Nurhaci needed hard evidence of his good relations with Chosŏn vis-à-vis Ming China, against which he was then carrying a series of military campaigns.

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<Abstract>

Nurhaci in Korean Sources, 1594-1622

Seung B. Kye

By utilizing Korean sources, this paper examines the way in which Nurhaci adapted himself to situations with the Ming and Chosŏn throughout his steady rise from the mid-1590s to the early 1620s, with an emphasis on Chosŏn. Concerning relations with Chosŏn, on one hand, he attempted to establish direct relations, reserving no seat for the Ming at the table in talks with Chosŏn. In dealing with Ming China, on the other hand, he wanted to display his homage to Beijing, pretending to act within the framework of the Ming-centered tributary system. His stance between the Ming and Chosŏn remarkably changed in 1619 when he defeated the Ming-Chosŏn joint military campaign against him. Taking the initiative in diplomatic negotiations right after his sweeping victory, Nurhaci frequently urged the king of Chosŏn to choose from the two powers, the Ming emperor and himself. To establish a direct dialogue with Chosŏn, he tenaciously demanded a letter from Chosŏn, which could be utilized to demonstrate his alliance with Chosŏn vis-à-vis Ming China. When he occupied Liaodong in 1621, cutting off the land route between Beijing and Seoul, Nurhaci gained the upper hand over Chosŏn. What he wanted from Chosŏn was an official letter written in the name of the king of Chosŏn, while Chosŏn never wanted to disclose its friendly communications with Nurhaci. Nurhaci wanted to seize a royal letter as real evidence of his good relations with Chosŏn vis-à-vis Ming China, against which he was then carrying a series of military campaigns.

Keywords: Chosŏn, Kwanghaegun, Ming, Nurhaci, Sonjŏ, Sin Ch'ungil, Yi Minhwan, Zianzhou Jurchen.

<국문초록>

조선사료 속의 누르하치, 1594-1622

계승범 (서강대학교 사학과 교수)

이 논문은 누르하치가 1590년대 중반부터 1620년대 초까지 지속적으로 성장하면서 명과 조선 사이에서 어떤 외교전략을 펼쳤는지 살핀다. 한편으로 그는 조선과의 협상자리에서 명을 제외하는 등 조선과 직접적인 관계를 수립하려 시도했고, 다른 한편으로 명을 대할 때에 그는 명 조정에 대한 존경을 표했으며, 명 중심의 조공체제 틀 안에서 행동하는 척했다. 명과 조선 사이에서의 그의 태도는 1619년, 그가 조명 연합군의 공격을 물리치면서 눈에 띄게 달라졌다. 승리 직후 가진 외교 협상에서 우선권을 가진 누르하치는 종종 조선의 왕에게 명 황제와 자신 중에서 한 쪽을 선택할 것을 종용했다. 그는 조선의 공식 서한을 요구했는데, 이는 그 서한을 공개하여 명과 조선의 전통적 우호관계를 흔들려는 속셈이었다. 1621년 요동을 점령하고 북경과 한양 사이의 교통로를 차단한 누르하치는 조선에 대해 더욱 고압적인 태도를 취했다. 그가 조선으로부터 원했던 것은 조선 국왕 명의의 공식 서한이었다. 그렇지만, 조선은 누르하치와의 은밀한 소통 관계를 국제무대에서 드러내지 않으려 했다.

주제어: 조선, 광해군, 누르하치, 선조, 신충일, 이민환, 건주여진(建州女真)

