

The Qing Dynasty's first invasion of Korea in 1627:
The establishment of the relationship
between the Joseon Dynasty and Aisin Gurun

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Diplomatic relations between the Joseon and Qing Dynasties were first established in 1637, marking the most important event in the history of the Korea's foreign relations to date. However, the circumstances leading up to that event have still not been made sufficiently clear. This article takes up the 1627 Chǒngmyo 丁卯 War, which marked the Qing Dynasty's first invasion of Korea as the starting point in the process by which diplomatic relations between the two countries were established. First, the author examines the relations between the Joseon Dynasty and the Jurchen Kingdom of Aisin Gurun, the Qing Dynasty's predecessor, leading up to the 1627 invasion. Although the Joseon government at the time had emphasized friendly relations with the former Ming Dynasty, it also was planning to dispatch envoys to Aisin Gurun in order to resume diplomatic negotiations. However, Aisin Gurun, out of intimidation by the forces of Ming General Mao Wen-Long 毛文龍 and a serious famine, decided to launch an invasion of Korea. The attack was thwarted by internal strife within the Aisin Gurun ranks over lack of preparedness in their military operations, and the disorganization also posed difficulties in suing for peace.

The author then turns to diplomatic relations in the wake of the Chǒngmyo War. Due to differences in perception that arose between Hong Taiji, who remained in the Aisin Gurun capital of Shenyang, and Amin, the commander in chief at the front, two different peace treaties were concluded with Korea, one at Kanghwa, the other at Pyongyang. The Joseon Dynasty chose ally to itself with Aisin Gurun based on the former treaty, since it agreed with Hong Taiji that this treaty did not specify the political superiority or advantage of either party.

The author ends the article with an examination of the first dispatch of envoys by the two states based on the Kanghwa Treaty. He concludes that the extremely proactive attitude shown by the Jeoson government resulted in the withdrawal of the Aisin Gurun army from Uiju on the northern border. Furthermore, in the peace negotiations there were no discussions of exchanging tributary gifts on a regular basis or opening trading posts on the border, indicating an agreement far different from setting up mutual relations of friendship between the two states. From that time on such fluidity characterizing Jeoson-Aisin Gurun relations would continue to a certain extent, which is directly attributable to the vagueness of the peace treaty concluded after the Chōngmyo War.