

Repatriation of Deserted Soldiers and Military Diplomacy between Early Joseon and the Ming

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Introduction

Over the course of the epochal changes marked by the transition from the Yuan 元 to the Ming 明 in China and from Goryeo 高麗 to Joseon 朝鮮 in Korea, Joseon and the Ming alternated between conflict and cooperation over the matters of politics, military strategy, and diplomacy. The Yuan-Ming transition signified a shift in the international order. This was marked by a transition from the Yuan Order, longing for a global empire, to the Ming Order predicated on the ideology of the civilized versus barbarian world (*hwai* 華夷) of Neo-Confucianism. This Ming hierarchical international order, based on Confucian ritual obligations, paralleled the highly-centralized domestic political structure which the Hongwu Emperor (*Hongwu di* 洪武帝) wanted to build. It is at this juncture that the newly-founded Joseon dynasty tried to gain legitimacy by becoming a member of the tributary system presided over by the Ming and maintaining good relations with them. Despite the stormy first decades of their relationship, the Joseon state managed to adapt to changing international circumstances and

* This translated article is a revised and supplemented version of Kim Gyeongnok, “朝鮮初期 軍人送還問題와 朝明間 軍事外交,” *근사* 83 (June, 2012): 221-58.

engaged in vigorous diplomatic interactions with the Ming via the Ming representatives in Liaodong.

Extensive research in Korean historical circles allows us to paint an overall picture of foreign relations during the period of late Goryeo and early Joseon. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of in-depth research on individual topics of diplomacy, especially on the topics of military diplomacy. Even Seo Inhan's pioneering study on military relations between Korea and China from ancient times to the Joseon era does not go beyond a general survey of the subject.¹

Wada Sei was one of the first to draw attention to the topic of military deserters (*mansangun* 漫散軍) in the context of Joseon's relations with the Ming,² while Bak Wonho highlighted it as a major diplomatic issue between Joseon and the Ming in the context of the civil war between the Prince of Yan (*Yanwang* 燕王) and the Jianwen Emperor (*Jianwendi* 建文帝 r. 1398-1402).³ Going still further and drawing on chronological sources, Gang Seongmun traced the history of deserters crossing into Joseon and the repatriation procedures put in place for them, and introduced the conventional Chinese idea of *chomu* (Ch. *zhaofu* 招撫 (pacification) as an explanatory tool for understanding why the deserters were repatriated.⁴ Bak Seongju focused on refugees (*yumin* 流民) between early Joseon and the Ming, analyzing the reasons why they fled and in turn why they were repatriated to the Ming⁵ while Kim Gyeongnok conducted a similar study analyzing Joseon-Ming relations and focusing on the repatriation procedures for immigrants between the two states. However, little in-depth research

¹ Seo Inhan, *Han Jung gansa gwangyesa* (Gansa pyeonchan yeonguso, 2007).

² Wada Sei, "Mei sho no Manshū kyōryaku ka," in *Tōashi kenkyū* (1955).

³ Bak Wonho, "Myeong jeongnan cui yeok e daehan Joseon cui daejeung," *Asea yeongu*, 26, no. 2 (1983).

⁴ Gang Seongmun, "Joseon chogi mansangun cui yuip gwa songhwan," in *Han minjok eui gunsajeok jeontong* (Bongmyeong, 2000).

⁵ Bak Seongju, "15 segi Jo Myeong gan yumin cui balsaeng gwa songhwan," *Gyeongju sahak* 21 (2002).

has been done on deserters from the perspective of military diplomacy.⁶

This article seeks to fill this void by exploring the specific topic of military deserters from its emergence and development into a major issue of military diplomacy through to its ceasing to be an issue between Joseon and the Ming. Since late Goryeo, government officials had been aware of problems with migrants and runaway soldiers (*dogun* 逃軍), but the problem of large numbers of deserters in the wake of the civil war in China and military actions in Liaodong turned into a major issue in military diplomacy between Joseon and the Ming, especially in the years of King Taejong's reign 太宗 (r. 1400-1418). I will shed light on that period of intense military diplomacy over the repatriation of Ming deserters who fled to Joseon territory. Small bands of soldiers continued to desert until after the mid-15th century, the era of King Sejo 世祖 (r. 1455-1468), but these were seen as regular border events and did not provoke a strong diplomatic reaction. With the thematic accent on deserters in the aftermath of the civil war in mainland China, this study explores the circumstances of their influx into Joseon and the procedures put in place for their repatriation in the context of the military and diplomatic policies of the two states.⁷ By so doing, this approach will enable us to rethink the concept of military diplomacy and to recontextualize the military and diplomatic interactions between Joseon and the Ming in their early decades.

Military Diplomacy and Early Joseon's Relations with the Ming

The ideas of military power and diplomacy might sound incompatible, given that military action involves the use of force to attain one's goals, whereas diplomacy ideally employs negotiation by the state or a civilian group to achieve a desired result. Yet, in the real world, it is not unusual to

⁶ Kim Gyeongnok, "Joseon chogi gwihwa jeongchaek gwa Jo-Myeong gwangye," *Yeoksa wa hyeonsil* 83 (2012).

⁷ The topic of the repatriation of soldiers and civilians throughout Goryeo and Joseon is ripe for the attention of researchers.

include a military threat as a means of diplomatic negotiation. For example, it is not uncommon for superpowers like the United States to include military action as an option in diplomatic negotiations in what may be referred to as “coercive diplomacy.” As such, to achieve a national objective, the state can use the threat of military action as leverage to enforce its will.⁸

On the other hand, military cooperation in the form of personnel exchange, mutual security and defense agreements, and technological cooperation can be used as a positive means of diplomacy to achieve national security and practical benefits. Thus, military diplomacy in a positive light can be defined as military exchange and cooperation with another state or organization to achieve the state’s diplomatic and security goals.⁹

The way military diplomacy was conducted in early Joseon was quite different from the present. The international order under which early Joseon conducted diplomacy was not a world of sovereign nations, but rather a tributary system. The shift in the international order from the Yuan to the Ming witnessed the institutionalization of a more regularized and sophisticated tributary system,¹⁰ under which the Joseon state was expected to perform the role of a junior/vassal state vis-à-vis the Ming. Although it was obliged to fulfil the requirements and protocols of the tributary system, it still sought to establish diplomatic policies and to put them into practice so as to achieve state objectives. These objectives included specific military goals which were to be achieved through military policies and actions. The concept of military diplomacy in early Joseon can thus be defined as a range of external military activities that would affect diplomatic and defense policies and were designed to achieve state objectives under an inter-

⁸ Choe Yeongjong, “Uri nara gunsa oegyo eui iron gwa silje,” *Jeollyak yeongu* 32 (2004): 182.

⁹ Bae Jinsu, “Hanguk gunsa oegyoron,” *Gukje jeongchi nonchong* 37, no. 2 (1998): 292.

¹⁰ Kim Gyeongnok, “Joseon sidae jogong cheje wa dae Jungguk sahaeng,” *Myeong Cheong sa yeongu* 30 (2008): 93-98; Kim Gyeongnok, “Joseon sidae gukje jilseo wa Jo-Myeong gwangye,” in *Munhwaro boneun hanguksa*, Yitaejigyosu cheongnyeonginyeom nonchongganhaengwiwonhoe, ed. (Seoul: Taehaksa, 2009), 4-9; _____, “Joseon sidae gukje jilseo wa Han Jung gwangye eui jeongae yangsang,” *Jungguk hakbo* 60 (2009): 289-96.

national order centered on the Ming.

This study defines “external military activities” as constituting military diplomacy. As such, it is necessary to distinguish between “external military activities” and “internal/domestic military activities.” In order to distinguish external military activities related to military diplomacy, it is necessary to refer to the twenty five categories of diplomatic activities established in the *Dongmun hwigo* 同文彙考, a collection of diplomatic documents from the Joseon dynasty.¹¹ These categories indicate the way the Joseon state recognized its diplomatic activities under the Sino-Korean tributary system.¹² Out of these diplomatic categories, the following categories were the diplomatic categories of a military nature: *jinju* 陳奏 (reporting), *gyoyeok* 交易 (trade), *ganggye* 疆界 (border affairs), *beomwol* 犯越 (border incursions), *beomgeum* 犯禁 (prohibitions), *swaehwan* 刷還 (repatriation), *pyomin* 漂民 (marooned people), *gunmu* 軍務 (military operations), and *waejeong* 倭情 (Japanese affairs).

In the early Joseon military context, *jinju* 陳奏 (reporting) referred to the reporting of military events like rebellions, while *gyoyeok* 交易 (trade) referred to supplies of horses and grain. *Ganggye* 疆界 (border affairs) was very much concerned with avoiding military conflicts over territorial boundaries, and *beomwol* 犯越 (border incursions) referred to the crossing of state borders, especially by soldiers. *Beomgeum* 犯禁 (prohibitions) meant military materials prohibited by both states, with *swaehwan* 刷還 (repatriation) referring to repatriating illegal deserters who crossed the borders. *Pyomin* 漂民 (marooned people) referred to those who washed up on foreign shores as well as their ships, while *gunmu* 軍務 (military operations) meant military actions like safeguarding the king and raising armies. Finally, *waejeong* 倭情 (Japanese affairs) meant reporting on the condition or situation of the Japanese.

The military diplomacy of early Joseon unfolded in the context of the

¹¹ Kim Gyeongnok, “Joseon hugi Dongmun hwigo cui pyeonchan gwajeong gwa seonggyeok,” *Joseon sidaesa hakbo* 32 (2005): 194-95.

¹² Kim Gyeongnok, “Dongmun hwigo reul tonghan Joseon hugi oegyo saan yeongu,” *Myeong Cheong sa yeongu* 32 (2009): 74-76.

Yuan-Ming transition in China. Launching a military campaign against the Mongol Yuan, the Hongwu Emperor 洪武帝 declared a Ming-centered international order based on a dichotomous worldview of the distinction between the civilized and the barbarian. In the frontier regions beyond the Ming's direct control, the emperor used investiture to exercise Ming influence on the rulers of these frontier states, thus enhancing the international status of the Ming as an empire.¹³ The Hongwu Emperor and his successors were concerned with consolidating and expanding Ming control in border areas. As such, they established a series of guard units (*weisuo* 衛所) in the borderlands and on lands of strategic importance to enforce military control over these lands.¹⁴

The Hongwu Emperor's armies occupied Shangdu 上都, the Yuan summer capital, and following the surrender of the Yuan warlord Liu Yi 劉益, founded the Liaodong Guard 遼東衛 in Liaoyang in 1371 (20th year of King Gongmin; 4th year of the Hongwu reign), thus securing a frontier foothold to advance into the Liaodong region. However, a band of Mongol generals rose in rebellion and killed Liu Yi in retaliation. The Hongwu Emperor then ordered that the Office of Commissioner-in-Charge of Stabilizing the Liaodong Guard (Ding Liao duwei zhihuishi si 定遼都衛指揮使司), headed by Ma Yun 馬雲 and She Wang 葉旺, be established to command a network of local guards (*wei* 衛) across the Liaodong region.¹⁵ However, most of the Liaodong region still remained under the control of loyal supporters of the Yuan, such as the Mongol potentate Naghachu 納哈出. Meanwhile, Goryeo, alarmed by Ming inroads into Liaodong, attempted to maintain contact with the Yuan forces in the north, among them those led by Naghachu.

Having taken over mainland China, the Hongwu Emperor began to

¹³ Kim Gyeongnok, "Yeomal Seoncho Hongmuje eui Goryeo Joseon insik gwa oegyo gwangye," *Myeong Cheong sa yeongu* 35 (2011): 4.

¹⁴ Guo Hong and Yu Cuiyan, "Mingdai tusi weisuo zhidu yu junguanxing zhengqu," *jūnshì lishi yánjiū* 4 (2004): 79-80.

¹⁵ *Mingshi*, *juan* 134, *Liechuan* 22, She Wang; *Ming Taizu shilu*, *juan* 66 (4th year of Hongwu, 6th month).

extend imperial power into the Liaodong region where a considerable number of Koreans from Goryeo also had lived. One of his key policies for expansion was the incorporation of peoples residing in the region into Ming imperial jurisdiction. This policy was predicated on his perception that the Ming would inherit all the territories and peoples therein that hitherto had belonged to the Yuan.¹⁶ He warned the Goryeo court that since the boundaries of the two countries had already been defined, each party ought to stay within its respective territory. The aggressive policy of the Hongwu Emperor provoked a strong reaction on the part of Goryeo which went so far as to send a force to Liaodong but withdrew its forces because it gave way to the new Joseon dynasty. The emperor also tried to shift the allegiance of the Jurchen peoples away from the remaining Yuan commanders like Naghachu 納哈出 in order to prevent them from entering into any alliance with Korea.

The Ming incursions in Liaodong combined the three strategies of a military campaign, conciliatory measures towards the peoples residing there, and diplomacy with neighboring states. In 1387, the massive 200,000-strong northern expedition army under the command of Ping Sheng 憑勝 and his lieutenant generals Fu Youde 傅友德 and Lan Yi 藍玉 mounted attacks against the Yuan forces in the north.¹⁷ The northern expedition army captured Daning and advanced as far as Jinshan, pressing Naghachu and his allies hard. Heavily pressured, the remnants of the Yuan yielded to the Ming in large numbers. In particular, when Baijinwange 拔金完哥 and his allies surrendered, the Hongwu Emperor dispatched the assistant commissioners Li Wen 李文 and Go Yong 高顥 and the pacifier Du Xi 杜錫 to establish the Tieling Guard (*Tielingwei* 鐵嶺衛) in Fengji county, and made a point of notifying Goryeo of its establishment.¹⁸

In pursuit of his expansionist policy into Liaodong, the Hongwu Emperor met one serious problem: the Ming forces were suffering from the

¹⁶ *Ming Taizu shilu*, juan 187 (20th year of Hongwu, 12th month, *renxu* day).

¹⁷ *Ming Taizu shilu*, juan 180 (20th year of Hongwu, 1st month, *guichou* day).

¹⁸ *Ming Taizu shilu*, juan 189 (21st year of Hongwu, 3rd month, *shenchou* day); *Joseon Taejo sillok*, gwon 1, "Chongseo."

problem of desertion. The forces sent to Liaodong, though battle-hardened and of formidable strength, were exhausted by near constant warfare with the Mongols. Moreover, the intermediate stations (*yi* 驛) built for storing military grain along their lengthy supply lines from the mainland were vulnerable to Mongol attacks. On one occasion, Naghachu's forces raided Niujiazhuang 牛家莊, a newly-established Ming guard outpost in Liaodong, and burned 100,000 bags of grain and killed 5,000 soldiers, revealing the vulnerability of the Ming forces.¹⁹ The Ming forces responded by expanding the network of guard posts and fortifying stations and garrisons, but such problems continued.

In 1395 (28th year of the Hongwu reign), some twenty years after the start of the Liaodong campaigns, the emperor articulated his concern about such problems, when he issued an edict to Guo Ying 郭英, who was the field commander of the Liaodong armies. He ordered Guo Ying to stop the construction of the Liaodong palace, and expressed his concern about the desertion of soldiers as they came closer to the border with Goryeo.²⁰ It is highly likely that the Ming court was aware of massive numbers of desertions (Ch. *mansanjun*; K. *mansangun* 滿散軍), which were exacerbated by border issues with Goryeo, now that the Ming forces were approaching the border between the two countries.

As the Ming forces came closer to Goryeo, relations between the two countries alternated between military tension and reconciliation. The Ming had demanded that Goryeo discontinue military cooperation with the Yuan and supply war horses to them, and they became increasingly high-handed after King U's 禡王 accession to the throne, demanding a complete break in relations with the Yuan. Soon afterwards, Goryeo was replaced by Joseon, and the border issues with Korea carried over to the new dynasty.

The new Joseon dynasty was eager to engage in diplomatic activities with the Ming and ensure peace with this new dynasty of mainland China. To stay on good terms with the Ming, Joseon recognized an international

¹⁹ Kim Gyeongnok, "Gongmin wang dae gukje jeongse wa daeoe gwangye eui jeongae yangsang," *Yeoksa wa hyeonsil* 64 (2007): 221.

²⁰ *Ming Taizu shilu*, *juan* 238 (28th year of Hongwu, 4th month, *shenwei* day).

order centering on the Ming and willingly participated in it by sending tribute missions to the Ming emperor. Upon ascending the throne, King Taejo dispatched a series of tribute missions to notify the Ming of the founding of the dynasty, to offer the tribute horses requested by the Ming, and to offer condolences on the death of the crown prince in 1392. The Joseon court became the most active participant in the tributary system, frequently sending both regular and special tribute delegations to the Ming court to offer gratitude and congratulations and to join in celebrations on various occasions.

The Joseon court deemed Ming recognition of the new dynasty an essential condition of stable relations between the two states. As a goodwill gesture, it offered one thousand tribute horses to the Liaodong authorities. Following this, Yi Seonggye 李成桂, the day after his ascension to the throne in 1392, agreed with the proposal of the Deliberative Council of Top Officials (*Do pyeongeuisa sa* 都評議使司) to dispatch a special tribute mission to the Ming court. Shortly thereafter, on the 29th day of the 8th month, Jo Rim 趙琳, a former royal secretary, set out on a mission to the Ming court bearing a memorial to the throne (*pyomun* 表文) announcing the foundation of the new dynasty. This mission illustrates how Joseon intended to ensure Ming approval by recognizing it as a dominant power in Northeast Asia.²¹

Joseon cooperated with Ming demands for the repatriation of its subjects.²² Such demands came from both the Ming central government and the Ming authorities in Liaodong. The first official repatriation sent Li Shun 李順 and two more men, who had escaped from the captivity of Japa-

²¹ *Joseon Taejo sillok*, *gwon* 2 (1st year of Taejo, 11th month, *byeong'o* day); *gwon* 3 (2nd year of Taejo, 2nd month, *gyeong'in* day).

²² In fact, during the period of the Yuan dominance over Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula, Goryeo Koreans had settled *en masse* in the Liaodong area. However, at the time of the Yuan-Ming transition, many of them fled southward back to Goryeo to escape the conflict. Since they had already been included in the Liaodong military registers, however, the Ming claimed jurisdiction over them. The issue of who had jurisdiction over those Koreans, residing in Liaodong or returning to their homeland, remained problematic again after the foundation of the Joseon dynasty that pressed its claims to have jurisdiction over both Korean residents in Liaodong and those who had returned to Korea.

nese pirates (*wakō* 倭寇), to Nanjing 南京. Shortly afterward, Joseon repatriated Li Tangxin 李唐信, who had been captured during a fight with Japanese pirates, to the Liaodong authorities. In 1393, the Ming envoy Tuohuanbuhua 脫歡不花 demanded that former residents of Liaodong be repatriated. Joseon was unwilling to become embroiled in a diplomatic dispute with the Ming envoy and after some investigation acceded to his demands.²³ It was not the Hongwu Emperor in Nanjing who had sent Tuohuanbuhua 脫歡不花 but rather the Liaodong Regional Military Commission. Still, the emperor first raised the issue of repatriation when he sent an edict carried by the imperial commissioner Huang Yongqi 黃永奇 in 1394.

Despite Nanjing remaining the political and economic center of the Ming Empire in its first decades, the Hongwu Emperor stationed large armies in the north around the Beijing area in response to the ever present threat from Mongol forces. However, he understood that large armies in the frontier regions under the control of powerful local warlords would represent no less of a threat to the newly founded dynasty than the Mongols. As such, he invested his sons with the title of prince (*qinwang* 親王) of strategic territories, assigning them major responsibility for defending the new dynasty from its adversaries, in particular the Mongols.

Joseon did maintain close relations with the Princedom of Yan (*Yanwang fu* 燕王府), the Princedom of Liao (*Liaowang fu* 遼王府), and the Princedom of Ning (*Ningwang fu* 寧王府) as well as the Liaodong Regional Military Commission—a major communication channel to the Ming—. When Yi Seonggye took power in the Goryeo court, he sent An Sungno 安淑老, an associate royal secretary, to present congratulatory gifts to the newly installed Prince of Yan (*Yanwang* 燕王). In addition, he sent Bak Won 朴原, a former royal secretary, and Ryu Un 柳雲, a former deputy royal secretary, to the Prince of Liao (*Liaowang* 遼王) and to the Prince of Ning (*Ningwang* 寧王), respectively, to express his congratulations on their appointments to their princedoms.

²³ *Joseon Taejo sillok*, *gwon* 2 (1st year of Taejo, 11th month, *byeongsul* day); *gwon* 3 (2nd year of Taejo, 3rd month, *gapsul* day); (4th month, *jeongchuk* day).

Meanwhile, in terms of military diplomacy between Joseon and the Ming, several important issues were at stake in the Liaodong region, including border disputes, the repatriation of deserters, and the incorporation of the Jurchens. In logistical terms, maintaining supply lines, either by land or by sea, between the Liaodong region and the Beijing capital area was of key importance. In the Hongwu era, the newly established Guard for Stabilizing Liaodong (*Dingliaowei* 定遼衛), in attempting to suppress the northern Yuan forces, was forced to transport military grain by sea from Shandong due to the difficulty of securing overland routes from the capital.²⁴ Similarly, in his campaign against the Jianwen Emperor, the Prince of Yan (*Yanwang* 燕王) drove the Liaodong forces out of the Shanhai Pass (*Shanhaiguan* 山海關), the easternmost terminus of the Great Wall, but refrained from pursuing them further, judging that they no longer presented any serious threat. He was proved correct when the Jianwen Emperor tried to supply his military forces by sea but failed as his ships drifted to the coast of Jeolla Province in southwest Korea.²⁵

Military diplomacy between early Joseon and the Ming had several defining characteristics. First, even though political crises sometimes generated military tension, there was never an armed conflict between the two states. The earlier Goryeo expedition against Liaodong, which was forced to turn around at Wihwa Island 威化島 and eventually triggered the transition from Goryeo to Joseon, had not faced the Ming armies. Similarly, a number of diplomatic disputes, including several border disputes, did not escalate into military confrontation. Jeong Dojeon 鄭道傳, a founding member of the Joseon dynasty, did train the military with the aim of strengthening the defense of the northern border region, but it is unlikely that he had in mind an attack against Liaodong.²⁶ At any rate, a military conflict was the last thing the Joseon rulers had in mind in their efforts to secure Ming support for the legitimacy of their new dynasty.

²⁴ *Mingshi*, *juan* 130, *Liechuan* 18, Qiu Cheng; *juan* 131, *Liechuan* 19, Wu Zhen.

²⁵ *Joseon Taejong sillok*, *gwon* 1 (the ascending year of Taejong, 5th month, *musul* day).

²⁶ Bak Honggyu, "Jeong Dojeon cui gong Yo gido jaegeomto," *Jeongchi sasang yeongu* 10, no. 1 (2004): 13-14.

On the Ming side, the Hongwu Emperor, in his injunctions to posterity, admonished his subjects not to initiate hostilities with Joseon, occupied as he was with several other issues. Although Ming forces had pushed the Mongols far to the north, its armies in Liaodong frequently engaged in skirmishes with the remaining Mongols that had not been pacified. In addition to the Mongol problem, the still unsettled relations with the Jurchens and the long supply lines from the mainland worked against the Ming risking any military conflict with Korea.²⁷ Despite the thorny issue of inadequate memorials to the throne (K. *pyojeonmun*; Ch. *biaojianwen* 表箋文) in initial diplomatic relations between Joseon and the Ming, the emperor chose to rely on diplomacy via the Board of Rites (Libu 禮部) to secure the kind of relationship he wanted, dismissing the calls of his generals to send armies to Korea.²⁸

A second characteristic of military diplomacy between Joseon and the Ming was military collaboration. Both perceived Japanese pirates and to some extent the Jurchens as common adversaries. Japanese pirates in the Hongwu era were a serious challenge to the emperor's efforts to build maritime defenses,²⁹ and many guard posts were put in strategic areas to repel them.³⁰ As their attacks persisted, however, the Ming sought Joseon's cooperation in gathering intelligence about their movements. Korea saw the Japanese pirates as a plague on its coastal regions, and King Gongmin even sent an envoy to ask Japan to deter them.³¹ Notably, a Korean attack against Tsushima, a stronghold of the Japanese pirates, in the early years of King Sejong coincided with major incidents of pillaging of the Ming coasts

²⁷ *Ming Taizu shilu*, juan 255 (30th year of Hongwu, 9th month, *wuji* day).

²⁸ Kim Gyeongnok, "Joseon chogi jonggye byeonmu eui jeongae yangsang gwa dae Myeong gwangye," *Guksagwan nonchong* 108 (2006): 5-6; *Ming Taizu shilu*, juan 257 (31st year of Hongwu, 4th month, *gengchen* day).

²⁹ Wang Rigen, "Mingdai haifang jianshe yu wokou, haizei di chisheng," *Zhongguo Haiyang daxue xuebao* 4 (2004): 13-14.

³⁰ In 1387 (20th year of Hongwu), 11 guards, 13 outposts, and 44 checkpoints were put in place, and in the Yongle era, waterside stockades (*shuizhai* 水寨) were built.

³¹ Yi Yeong, "14 segi eui Dong Asia gukje jeongse wa waegu: Gingmin wang 15 nyeon (1366) eui geumwae sajeol eui palyeon eul jungsim euro," *Hanll gwangyesa yeongu* 26 (2007): 108.

and was facilitated by an exchange of information between the two states. However, cooperation between Joseon and the Ming in military diplomacy could have two contrasting results: collaborative action that had the potential to promote good relations, and at the same time, pressure from the Ming that could generate tensions between them.³²

A third characteristic of military diplomacy was the issue of the repatriation of deserters or sailors who drifted onto the Korean coast.³³ This included the return of Koreans registered with Liaodong military units and former Liaodong soldiers who had fled to Korea because of the conflict there. It also included seamen who drifted onto the Korean coast while transporting military provisions to Liaodong. The issue of repatriation was handled smoothly in most cases with the exception of a few cases complicated by problems of a political and military nature. The repatriation of large groups of deserters (*mansangun* 漫散軍) was rather rare; the repatriation of small groups of soldiers or sailors was much more common. Repatriation was, in fact, bilateral in nature, also involving the return of Koreans in Chinese territories to Korea, as demonstrated by Korean seamen marooned on China's coasts.³⁴ However, the Joseon court, despite its willingness to meet Ming demands, was nonetheless concerned about the potential for repatriates to expose state secrets and the weakness of its position.

The fourth characteristic was issues related to military supplies and weapons. The best-known example is Joseon supplying horses and other weapons to supplement Ming military preparations against the Mongols.³⁵ In principle, weaponry remained an article of contraband between Joseon and the Ming. Accordingly, Ming authorities firmly rejected Joseon demands for Chinese weapons while Joseon prevented its cannons and maps from coming into the hands of foreigners. Nevertheless, trade in horses and

³² *Joseon Sejong sillok*, *gwon* 101 (25th year of Sejong, 7th month, *imo* day).

³³ *Joseon Taejong sillok*, *gwon* 12 (6th year of Taejong, 7th month, *giyu* day).

³⁴ *Joseon Sejong sillok*, *gwon* 101 (25th year of Sejong, 7th month, *imsin* day).

³⁵ *Imun*, *gwon* 2, "Yebu wi maga sa." The Hongwu emperor asked Goryeo to supply military horses, which resulted in the trading of 10,000 Korean horses in the years 1392 and 1393, the time of the change of the royal house in Korea.

oxen took place according to Ming military needs.³⁶ The disparity in the power of the two states left Joseon with little option but to acquiesce to Ming demands. However, such accommodations benefitted its efforts to stabilize relations with the Ming.

At the same time, the repatriation of soldiers was an integral aspect of military diplomacy between Joseon Korea and Ming China, and it is necessary to examine how this came about and the actual procedures put in place to achieve it. All those subject to repatriation were deemed to have committed the serious crime of illegal entry (*beomwol* 犯越). A variety of terms were used to refer to those who committed this crime and entered Joseon territory, such as runaway soldiers (*dogun* 逃軍), refugees (*yuimin* 流移民), migrants (*doraein* 逃來人), and deserters (*mansangun* 漫散軍). The terms *dogun* 逃軍 and *mansangun* 漫散軍 both refer to soldiers who have deserted. However, *mansangun* is used in this study as its use parallels soldiers coming into Joseon in large numbers, especially during the reign of King Taejong.³⁷ In Joseon and the Ming alike, illegal entry (K. *beomwol*; Ch. *fanyue* 犯越) was considered taboo. Although there is no extant detailed elaboration of the crime, it is referenced in a collection of the Joseon dynasty's diplomatic documents (*Dongmun hwigo* 同文彙考).

The *Dongmun hwigo* 同文彙考 is a *magnum opus* of Joseon Korea's diplomatic documents. Though compiled in the late Joseon period at the time of the Qing, the protocols contained therein applied to tributary relations with China in general. It is organized according to diplomatic categories and contains diplomatic protocols for each of these.³⁸ In the categories of illegal entry (*beomwol* 犯越) and repatriation (*swaehwan* 刷還), it stipulates that those who crossed the border between Joseon and the Ming with the intention of staying temporarily or permanently were subject to thorough investigation followed by repatriation. It can thus be said that an

³⁶ *Joseon Taejong sillok*, *gwon* 2 (1st year of Taejong, 9th month, *jeonghae* day).

³⁷ The term *mansangun* 漫散軍 appears predominantly during the reign of King Taejong in historical chronicles such as *Joseonwangjo sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄 [Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty].

³⁸ Kim Gyeongnok, "Joseon hugi *Dongmun hwigo* cui pyeonchan gwajeong gwa seonggyeok," *Joseon sidaesa hakbo* 32 (2005): 197.

agreement existed between Joseon and the Ming to repatriate all trespassers and deserters.

The term *beomwol* 犯越 (illegal entry) could be used interchangeably with a similar term, *wolgyeong* 越境 (border crossing). Those crossing borders often had compelling reasons, such as war and famine, yet the dynastic government saw it as a form of revolt against the king's rule (*wangjeong* 王政), and as such, deemed it unacceptable. To the government, it undermined the stability of the state's legal order and economy. Moreover, crossing the border into Liaodong was strictly prohibited, both because of its potential to precipitate a diplomatic crisis in Joseon-Ming relations and because the Joseon court was very much concerned that Korean defectors would disclose information it wanted to hide if captured and interrogated by the Ming.

Those people crossing the border had a variety of motivations.³⁹ However, with the exception of Buddhist monks crossing the border for religious purposes, these were largely of an economic nature, for example, illegal trade with the Jurchens or cultivating fallow land. Regardless of motivation, Joseon and the Ming authorities alike strictly prohibited all such acts⁴⁰ and imposed strict penalties to deter them. During the reign of King Taejo, the Deliberative Council of Top Officials introduced capital punishment for border crossers, both principal offenders and accomplices. To show his determination not to tolerate border crossings, King Taejo ordered the decapitation of seven offenders from Pyeong'an Province. Such punishments were written into the Joseon law code, *Gyeongje yukjeon* 經濟六典.⁴¹ Border crossings continued to occur from the four border garrisons of Hamgil Province during the time of King Sejong, leading him to order the Ministry of Punishment (Hyeongjo 刑曹) to punish transgressors

³⁹ *Joseon Taejo sillok*, gwon 7 (4th year of Taejo, 2nd month, *eulchuk* day); *Joseon Taejong sillok*, gwon 11 (6th year of Taejong, 4th month, *muin* day); *Joseon Sejong sillok*, gwon 26 (26th year of Sejong, 10th month, *gyehae* day); *Joseon Seongjong sillok*, gwon 13 (2nd year of Seongjong, 12th month, *gimyoo* day).

⁴⁰ *Joseon Taejo sillok*, gwon 2 (1st year of Taejo, 12th month, *gyeongo* day).

⁴¹ *Joseon Taejo sillok*, gwon 6 (3rd year of Taejo, 6th month, *gisa* day).

severely.⁴²

There were, however, several situations in which the Joseon government authorized individuals to cross its borders. One of these was the immigration of people (*samin* 徙民) to populate the Korean-controlled borderlands captured from the Jurchens. Many Korean settlers, however, crossed the border and joined Jurchen communities, forcing the government to further tighten its control over the border. In addition, undercover Korean intelligence gatherers crossed the border to collect information about the Liaodong and Jurchen regions. However, these espionage acts met with strong protests from the Ming authorities when they arrested several of these Korean spies (*ganja* 間者), leading the Joseon court to order a halt to such acts.⁴³

Repatriation of Deserted Soldiers: The Reasons and Procedures

During the Mongol invasions of Goryeo, a large number of people were taken to Liaodong, and later on some local warlords also took many people to Liaoyang to become part of the Dongning Guard (*Dongningwei* 東寧衛). These Koreans maintained contact with their relatives and occasionally returned *en masse* during wars and famines in the Liaodong region, although this necessitated hiding from the Korean authorities.⁴⁴ However, at the time of the establishment of the Joseon dynasty, official protocols for their repatriation to the Ming did not exist.⁴⁵ When the Liaodong Regional Military Commission demanded their repatriation via official communications (K. *jamun*; Ch. *ziwen* 咨文), the Joseon court decided to repatriate them to avoid friction with the Ming, although it often proved difficult to locate these refugees from Liaodong.

⁴² *Joseon Sejong sillok*, *gwon* 97 (24th year of Sejong, 9th month, *jeongchuk* day).

⁴³ *Joseon Seongjong sillok*, *gwon* 224 (20th year of Seongjong, 1st month, *imsin* day).

⁴⁴ *Joseon Taejong sillok*, *gwon* 3 (2nd year of Taejong, 2nd month, *jeongsa* day).

⁴⁵ Kim Kyeongnok, "Joseon chogi gwihwa jeongchaek gwa Jo-Myeong gwangye," *Yeoksa wa hyeonsil* 83 (2012): 224-27.

The Joseon government's position was that regardless of their ethnicity, if they were registered with the Ming authorities, they were regarded as Ming soldiers and as such were subject to repatriation. However, these deserters were scattered across the country and often could not be located, the fact that a frequent source of friction in Joseon-Ming relations. In addition, the Joseon response to Ming demands for the repatriation of its soldiers was very much dependent on its own political and strategic considerations. Early Joseon kings sometimes chose to allow Korean soldiers who had deserted from the Ming to resettle in Korea in order to collect military information from them. For example, in King Taejo's time, a Korean conscript named Kim Song 金松, who had been involved in battles between the Ming and the Mongols and then escaped, was allowed to resettle in his homeland.⁴⁶ Similarly, in King Jeongjong's time, Korean soldiers who had joined the Dongning Guard and then deserted were also allowed to resettle. The Joseon court often gleaned important information from these Korean deserters from Liaodong, for example, the first news of the Prince of Yan's rebellion.⁴⁷

For the Ming, the issue of deserters (*taojun* 逃軍) was a matter of military administration (*junzheng* 軍政) under its legal system.⁴⁸ It was a serious offense in military administration as it could result in a disruption of military affairs. It was on the same level as other serious military offenses such as the unauthorized raising of government armies, failure to report military affairs correctly, failure to report military circumstances promptly, delay of supplies to the frontiers, mistaken reports of military affairs, avoiding military service, failure to defend an assigned post, plundering while on campaign, intimidating commoners, selling or damaging war horses and military equipment, hiding military equipment, unauthorized granting of military-service exemptions, abuse of power by military commanders, and failure to provide for the dependents of soldiers. Desertion

⁴⁶ *Joseon Taejo sillok*, *gwon* 3 (2nd year of Taejo, 6th month, *eulhae* day; *gwon* 14, 7th year of Taejo, 6th month, *gabin* day).

⁴⁷ *Joseon Jeongjong sillok*, *gwon* 1 (1st year of Jeongjong, 3rd month, *imsin* day).

⁴⁸ *Da Minglu jijie fuli*, *juan* 14, "Junzheng"; *juan* 15, "Guanjin."

was also a grave violation of the management of military checkpoints along with other offenses such as allowing unauthorized passage through military checkpoints, allowing passage through military checkpoints with forged travel documents, and causing trouble while staying in military checkpoints.

Under the Ming legal system, the concept of *yuejing* 越境 (crossing a boundary) meant not only crossing the state border, but also leaving one's registered area. In 1390 (23rd year of the Hongwu reign), the emperor ordered local officials in territorial administrative units (*fu* 府, *zhou* 州, and *xian* 縣) to examine the *lijia* 里甲 system for tax collection and forced labor in an effort to identify deserters and to send them back to their original place of registration. However, the search was ineffective and the Yongle Emperor (r. 1402-1424) issued a similar decree calling for a thorough investigation of deserters and their families (*taohu* 逃戶) in 1421 (19th year of the Yongle reign). And, as these early measures to return deserted soldiers to their original places of registration were largely ineffective, the Hongwu Emperor ordered the setting up of stations of the Military Inspectorate (*Xunjiansi* 巡檢司) at strategic points throughout the empire. In addition, the government promulgated detailed articles of punishment for those who deserted.⁴⁹ Those caught illegally crossing the state borders (*guojing* 國境) received heavier punishments than those crossing domestic boundaries (*yuejing* 越境).

It should be noted that in cases of desertion it was not only the soldiers themselves but also their family members who were included in the repatriation. During the Joseon era, deserters were usually accompanied by their family members. As such, both diplomatic documents from the Ming demanding the repatriation of soldiers and Joseon's listing of them used the unit of the household.⁵⁰ The soldiers repatriated from Joseon to the Ming can be divided into three groups. The overwhelming majority of them were

⁴⁹ *Da Ming huidian*, *juan* 19, "Hukou 1" 戶口 [Household and population], "Taohu" 逃戶 [Deserted households]; *Da Ming huidian*, *juan* 138, "Guanjin 1" 關津 [Military checkpoints], "Guanjin Xunkiansi"; *Da Minglu jijie fuli*, *juan* 14, "Binglu," "Junzheng," "Zongfan junren xieyi."

⁵⁰ *Joseon Taejo sillok*, *gwon* 4 (2nd year of Taejo, 8th month, *Imin* day).

soldiers who had run away from their units (*dogun* 逃軍) and had fled to Joseon to avoid war. A second group was war captives from the Jurchen lands who had fled to Joseon or been captured by the Joseon armies. The final group was seamen whose ships carrying military provisions had run aground in Korea.

The deserters who fled to Korea came mostly in times of war such as the Yuan-Ming transition, the rebellion of the Prince of Yan against the Jianwen Emperor, and the invasions of the Tatar 韃靼 tribes. During the turbulent Yuan-Ming transition, many ethnic Koreans residing in Liaodong migrated to Goryeo. However, their number decreased sharply as Joseon's tributary relationship with the Ming court under Hongwu stabilized. However, during the civil war between the Jianwen Emperor and the Prince of Yan (August 1399 to July 1402), an unprecedented number of deserters—referred to as *mansangun* 漫散軍 in this study—took refuge in Joseon. The *mansangun* issue involved the interests of multiple parties, including the Ming court under Jianwen, the Prince of Yan (later the Yongle emperor), and the Joseon court, and emerged as one of the biggest issues during the reigns of King Taejo and King Taejong. However, beginning with the reign of King Sejong, the numbers of *mansangun* dropped precipitously, and thereafter ceased to be a major issue between the two states.

The second group of repatriates came about as a result of border incursions by the Jurchens. The Jurchens maintained a semi-autonomous status under the competing influences of Joseon Korea and Ming China. However, they had difficulty in creating a self-sufficient economy. As they moved from a semi-nomadic and primitive agricultural stage to a more sedentary agricultural stage, they needed more agricultural labor, in particular experienced farming labor. As such, they staged frequent raids on Liaodong and Joseon to take captives to be used as agricultural slaves. Farmers made up the bulk of those kidnapped, but a substantial number were also soldiers. Joseon and the Ming considered the Jurchen encroachments a serious challenge to the frontier security of both states, creating common cause between them. Joseon habitually repatriated Ming subjects captured by the Jurchens when they fled into its territories. Between 1392 and 1494,

Joseon repatriated a total of 2,468 individuals to the Ming authorities,⁵¹ the majority after the reign of King Sejong. The Ming subjects who came into the custody of the Joseon authorities consisted of those who had fled to Joseon, those who were captured by Joseon armies during attacks against the Jurchens, and those sent as human tribute to the Joseon court by the Jurchens.

The least problematic repatriations involved seamen in charge of transporting military grain and soldiers whose ships ran aground on the Korean coast. Both military and civilian seamen were sent back according to well-established conventions of the tributary relationship between Joseon and the Ming. Few diplomatic disputes arose from such events.

Over the course of time, individual cases of repatriation gave rise to a set of conventions on how this was carried out but how to repatriate large groups of deserters was a different matter. Typically, the Joseon court was able to know about Ming deserters crossing into Joseon via a report from a border officer. Only when receiving Ming demands for their repatriation, then, the court would formally order the border officer to investigate them. After the border officer's report on the details of the deserters and their companions, including their sex, age and health status, the court ordered their repatriation to fully comply with the Ming demand. The principal destination for repatriated deserters was the Liaodong Regional Military Commission, and transfers took place in conjunction with regular Joseon missions sent to the Ming capital (*bugyeong sahaeng* 赴京使行) or specially-appointed missions to Liaodong (*Yodong sahaeng* 遼東使行),⁵² which were small and usually led by translators (*tongsa* 通事).

When deserters returned, the Ming authorities interrogated them about their motives for desertion, their companions, places of residence in Joseon, and any deserters remaining in Joseon territory. A typical case was that of the Wang Hegui 王和貴 group of 36 deserters who were repatriated

⁵¹ Bak Seongju, "15 segi Jo Myeong gan yumin cui balsaeng gwa songhwan," *Gyeongju sahak* 21 (2002): 132.

⁵² Kim Gyeongnok, "Joseon chogi tae Myeong oegyo wa oegyo jeolcha," *Hanguksa ron* 44 (2000): 23-27.

to the Liaodong Regional Military Commission and then interrogated by a Chinese general. He discovered that another group of deserters from the Tieling Guard still remained in Joseon and reported this to the Left Military Commission (*Zuojun dudufu* 左軍都督府). The Left Military Commission in turn reported this to the emperor, who ordered it to send the Joseon court an official communication demanding the repatriation of the remaining Ming deserters.⁵³

In the event of such a demand, the State Council (*Euijeongbu* 議政府) was in charge of supervising the whole repatriation procedure. It saw to it that deserted soldiers and their family members were put in the custody of local administrative units, *ju* 州, *gun* 郡, or *hyeon* 縣, and then reported them to the king. The king then appointed a special envoy to escort them to Liaodong or handed them over to a returning Ming envoy. The envoy carried an official communication to the Ming authorities, which by convention, listed the number of men and women, the number of fugitives still at large, and the number of deaths from diseases.⁵⁴

The Issue of Deserted Soldiers and Military Diplomacy between Joseon and the Ming

After the death of the emperor Hongwu, Ming China experienced great turmoil due to the struggle between the Ming court of the Jianwen Emperor and the Prince of Yan over political hegemony in the Ming empire, later referred to as the Jingnan War (*Jingnan zhi yi* 靖難之役), literally a campaign to clear away disorder, by the victors. During the bloody, three-year power struggle between the two forces, a large number of soldiers took flight to places of safety such as Joseon Korea. This presented Joseon with a serious diplomatic issue in regard to their repatriation to the Ming—initially in the reign of Jeongjong, but more seriously in the reign of Taejong.

In 1370, Zhu Di 朱棣 became the Prince of Yan (*Yanwang* 燕王). He

⁵³ *Joseon Taejong sillok*, gwon 5 (3rd year of Taejong, 1st month, *sinmyo* day).

⁵⁴ *Joseon Taejong sillok*, gwon 5 (3rd year of Taejong, 3rd month, *gihae* day).

established himself in the area around modern Beijing in 1380 and soon began to expand his power. In 1391, he commanded campaigns against the Mongols outside of the Great Wall.⁵⁵ However, at the same time, the new Jianwen Emperor was attempting to curtail the power of the princes invested by the Hongwu Emperor, and this brought him into open conflict with his uncles, in particular Zhu Di, the Prince of Yan, who commanded formidable forces. In a series of ill-thought-out actions, the Jianwen Emperor sought to destroy the power of the princedoms. He first demoted the Prince of Zhou, his half-brother, to the rank of commoner and banished him to Yunnan. Finally, he eliminated the princedoms of the Prince of Min, the Prince of Qi, and the Prince of Dai. These moves provoked the Prince of Yan into preparing a counteroffensive. The resulting massive increase in forced labor and military duties led to overwhelmed soldiers fleeing their posts. Among these, Korean soldiers attached to the Dongning Guard fled to their homeland.⁵⁶

In the initial phase of the war, the Prince of Yan defeated an army under Geng Bingwen 耿炳文, a commanding general appointed by the Jianwen Emperor, at Zhending, southwest of Beijing.⁵⁷ However, while raising an army against the Jianwen court in the south, the Prince worried about the Liaodong armies in the rear. He intended to seize control of the Liaodong region ahead of the armies of Li Jinglong 李景隆, who was stationed at Dezhou in Shandong and who had replaced Geng Bingwen. A number of Liaodong generals, including Wu Gao 吴高, Geng Huan 耿璣, and Yang Wen 楊文, heard of the Prince of Yan's uprising from Ge Liang 各亮, the general in charge of the defense of Yongping, and promptly laid siege to Yongping. In reaction, the Prince of Yan led his troops into battle against

⁵⁵ Zhu Di, the 4th son of the Hongwu emperor, was invested as the Prince of Yan at the age of eleven in accordance with the emperor's strategy of assigning fiefs to his sons as a defense against the Mongols, but he only took up residence in Beiping (modern Beijing) at the age of twenty one when he reached adulthood.

⁵⁶ *Joseon Jeongjong sillok, gwon 1* (1st year of Jeongjong, 3rd month, *imsin* day). Korean soldiers from the Dongning Guard informed the Joseon court of the outbreak of hostilities between the Jianwen emperor and the Prince of Yan.

⁵⁷ *Mingshi, juan 5*, Chengzu benji.

the Liaodong armies, leaving Beijing to his eldest son to guard against the armies of Li Jinglong.

With his armies routed in the battle at Zhending, the Jianwen Emperor summoned the Prince of Liao (*Liaowang* 遼王) from Guangning and the Prince of Ning (*Ningwang* 寧王) from Daning to form an alliance with him. While the Prince of Liao to the north of the Yan principedom responded, the Prince of Ning to the northeast declined. The Jianwen Emperor thus had the Liaodong armies as an ally, but let the Prince of Ning come under the influence of the Prince of Yan.⁵⁸ In strategic terms, this meant that the Prince of Yan had to fight against the armies of the Jianwen Emperor in the south while the Liaodong armies threatened his rear.

The armies of the Prince of Yan drove out the Liaodong armies besieging Yongping to the Shanhai Pass and attacked and captured Daning to the north, annexing the armies of the Prince of Ning to the Prince of Yan's command.⁵⁹ He also managed to convince the Mongols to attack the Liaodong armies, thus removing any threat from the rear.⁶⁰

The Liaodong armies at the Shanhai Pass under Wu Gao and Yang Wen remained largely on the defensive. Due to disinformation from the Prince of Yan, Wu Gao was demoted and exiled to Guangxi. Yang Wen continued to defend the Liaodong region and reinforced his army with men drawn from military registers.⁶¹ However, though an able general with battle experience vanquishing native tribes,⁶² Yang Wen was not able to lead his army in a major offensive against the superior forces of the Prince of Yan. Starting in 1400, this allowed the Prince, his armies reinforced with Tatar recruits, to launch major offensives against the armies of the Jianwen Emperor. In the 5th month of 1402, his armies crossed the Zhangjiang 長江 (i.e., the Yangzi River 揚子江), and finally succeeded in capturing Nanjing

⁵⁸ *Guoque*, *juan* 11 (starting year of Jianwen, 9th month, *dingmao* day).

⁵⁹ *Ming Taizong shilu*, *juan* 3 (starting year of Yongle, 9th month, *renchen* day); (*renyin* day).

⁶⁰ *Guoque*, *juan* 11 (3rd year of Jianwen, 11th month, *yimao* day).

⁶¹ *Ming Taizong shilu*, *juan* 4 (starting year of Yongle, 11th month, *yihai* day); (12th month, *dingyou* day).

⁶² *Ming Taizu shilu*, *juan* 255 (30th year of Hongwu, 9th month, *yihai* day).

南京 in the 6th month, thus putting an end to the three-year civil war.

On the 1st day of the 7th month of 1402, the Prince of Yan ascended the throne as the Yongle Emperor and immediately issued a proclamation of his accession and policy directives.⁶³ This proclamation included regulations governing the return of all Ming subjects who had fled during the conflict. In principle, all the people displaced during the civil war were to be returned to their original place of registration where they would continue their original occupations. Soldiers who had deserted were to return to their original guard posts and would avoid punishment if they returned within one month of the edict. Soldiers from regional military commissions (*dusi* 都司) and guard units (*weisuo* 衛所) who had been taken captive or killed during the war, were to be returned or investigated to ascertain their affiliation during the Hongwu Emperor's reign.

The Joseon court first became aware of the uprising of the Prince of Yan in the 3rd month of the 1st year of the reign of King Jeongjong (r. 1398-1400). The interrogation of deserters from the Dongning Guard revealed that the Prince had raised an army against the Jianwen Emperor.⁶⁴ Knowing that the Prince of Yan, or later Yongle Emperor was enlisting troops into his armies on a massive scale in his preparations for war, soldiers from many guard units including the Dongning Guard began to desert.

By the 3rd month of the 2nd year of the reign of King Taejong, the Jianwen Emperor's armies had suffered a series of defeats and the Tatar tribes had begun to invade. This precipitated some 2,000 soldiers from the Liaodong army fleeing their posts into Joseon territory. The influx of soldiers coincided with overwhelming victories by the Prince of Yan in his march on Nanjing, and with the incorporation of many troops into the Prince's forces under the Stabilizing Liaodong Guard (*Ding Liao wei* 定遼衛). Those in Liaodong who had fought against the Prince found themselves in an untenable position, and many began to flee for their lives.

King Taejong initially decided to accommodate the deserters (*mansangun*

⁶³ *Ming Taizong shilu*, *juan 10 shang* (35th year of Hongwu, 7th month, *renwu* day).

⁶⁴ *Joseon Jeongjong sillok*, *gwon 1* (1st year of Jeongjong, 3rd month, *imsin* day).

漫散軍) who had fled to Joseon. He informed the Ming authorities that though he was aware of armed men in the border areas, he could not establish their identities as Ming soldiers or other, and as such, he could not send an expedition against them.⁶⁵ Shortly thereafter, the Ming envoy Zhu Mengxian 祝孟獻 arrived at the Joseon court in 1402. Initially, Joseon officials did not divulge the fact that they knew they were harboring Liaodong soldiers, and they asked him to positively identify them as Ming soldiers. However, on learning that Zhu intended to send an official letter based on that request to the Stabilizing Liaodong Guard, the Joseon court objected to it, fearing it would lead to Ming armies approaching the borders.

The issue of how to handle the situation with the deserters caused considerable debate in the Joseon court. Taejong was in favor of accepting them on the grounds that abandoning starving deserters would cause a serious threat in the frontier areas. For instance, the head of the deserted soldiers, Impallalsilli 林八剌失里, claiming that many officers and soldiers from the Stabilizing Liaodong Guard had already sided with the Prince of Yan's cause, entreated the Joseon court for an opportunity where his party could be resettled in Joseon. Taejong knew that accepting the deserters could provoke a conflict with the Ming. However, without taking the besieged Jianwen court in Nanjing into account, he chose to make an independent decision and ignore a letter from the Ming Left Military Commission (Zuojun dudufu 左軍都督府) demanding the return of the deserters. He then ordered that they be relocated to provinces with adequate food supplies: the first group of 869 to Punghae Province, then 1,297 to Gyeong-sang Province, 854 to Chungcheong Province, 488 to Gyeonggi Provinces, and finally 1,585 to Jeolla Province.⁶⁶

Taejong, however, was inconsistent in his refusal to repatriate deserters, using them instead as leverage to achieve his diplomatic and military goals in relation to the Ming. When his court received a strong Ming demand for the repatriation of its soldiers, he chose to be receptive to the de-

⁶⁵ *Joseon Taejong sillok*, gwon 3 (2nd year of Taejong, 3rd month, *giyu* day; (4th month, *mujin* day).

⁶⁶ *Joseon Taejong sillok*, gwon 3 (2nd year of Taejong, 5th month, *eulmi* day; (5th month, *imja* day); (gwon 4, 2nd year of Taejong, 9th month, *jeongyu* day).

mand so as not to upset relations with the Ming. As soon as the Joseon court learned that a Ming envoy was *en route* with Ming demands in 1402, it ordered provincial governors to investigate the deserters from Liaodong and eventually had the party of Impallalsilli 林八刺失里 transferred to the Ming authorities in Liaodong.

Once enthroned, the Yongle Emperor sent the Joseon court a strong demand for the repatriation of deserters. The Joseon court replied apologetically that it had initially accepted the deserters as most of them were Korean expatriates residing in Liaodong and they had suffered from war and bad harvests. However, after discovering that they had killed many Ming soldiers from Shenyang and Kaiyuan, the court decided to extradite them back to Ming jurisdiction.⁶⁷ These soldiers were mostly from the Dongning Guard, the Sanwan Guard, and the Liaohai Guard, as well as garrison soldiers in defense of the Kaiyuan area. In the course of their escape, they had fought with the chasing armies of the Prince of Yan, inflicting many casualties, which served as the grounds for extraditing them to the Ming authorities. Taejong made it clear to the Ming court that his government did its best to repatriate deserters, and that the difference between the number requested by the Ming and the number actually repatriated was due to the fact that some of them had not yet entered Joseon territory, and those that had hid themselves in deep mountains and were difficult to distinguish from the local populace.⁶⁸ However, the Ming court remained unconvinced and persisted in its demands for further repatriations.⁶⁹

Ming's demand persisted throughout the Taejong era. In the wake of the repatriation of Impallalsilli's party in 1402, another group of 3,649 deserters and their family members was repatriated. King Taejong had no desire to send back all of those who had already settled in his lands. As such, he limited repatriations only to those soldiers who appeared on the listings

⁶⁷ *Joseon Taejong sillok*, gwon 4 (2nd year of Taejong, 12th month, *imsul* day and *imsin* day); (gwon 5, 3rd year of Taejong, 1st month, *sinmyo* day and *imjin* day).

⁶⁸ *Joseon Taejong sillok*, gwon 5 (3rd year of Taejong, 1st month, *sinmyo* day); (gwon 6, 3rd year of Taejong, 8th month, *gveyu* day).

⁶⁹ *Joseon Taejong sillok*, gwon 6 (3rd year of Taejong, 10th month, *imsul* day).

presented by the Ming authorities.⁷⁰ In the 3rd month of 1403, the Joseon court sent a report on the 2nd major repatriation, listing 10,920 returnees, 2,225 fugitives, and 496 dead due to disease out of a total of 13,641 deserters (both men and women). Afterwards, on receiving further Ming demands for repatriations, the Joseon court responded by sending 60 more deserters in the 4th month, 230 and 153 in the 11th month, and 28 in the 12th month of the next year (1404).⁷¹ At that point, the Ming side calculated that Joseon had returned 10,755 deserters but that 4,940 were still missing.

Joseon's cooperation with Ming's demands for repatriation helped it to achieve its diplomatic objectives, such as receiving an investiture of the crown prince from the Ming court. The investiture issue had remained a troubling one for the newly established Joseon dynasty, since its founder Yi Seonggye and his successor King Jeongjong had not received an imperial edict of investiture (K. *gomyeong*; Ch. *gaoming* 誥命) from the Hongwu Emperor.⁷² However, Taejong's proactive response to Ming demands for the repatriation of deserters facilitated the Ming's confirmation of the crown prince Yi Je 李禔. What is more, six Koreans, who had been marooned on the Ming coast, were allowed to return.⁷³

In the 3rd month of 1406, the Ming dispatched the eunuch Zheng Sheng 鄭昇 to Joseon, again demanding the repatriation of deserters. In response, Joseon returned 419 individuals the following 8th month. However, the response from Joseon fell short of Ming expectations, leading to a subsequent more strongly-worded demand containing more thorough information on the deserters, which had been gathered from a range of agencies concerned with Liaodong, such as the Left Military Commission, the Lia-

⁷⁰ *Joseon Taejong sillok, gwon 5* (3rd year of Taejong, 1st month, *eulsa* day); (2nd month, *jeongmyo* day).

⁷¹ *Joseon Taejong sillok, gwon 5* (3rd year of Taejong, 3rd month, *gihae* day); (4th month, *sinmi* day); *gwon 6* (11th month, *sinchuk* day); *gwon 8* (4th year of Taejong, 12th month, *imjin* day).

⁷² Kim Gyeongnok, "Joseon chogi jonggye byeonmu eui jeongae yangsang gwa dae Myeong gwangye," 28-29. For diplomatic characteristics of the investiture protocol, see Kim Gyeongnok, "*Dongmun hwigo reul tonghan Joseon hugi oegyo saan yeongu.*"

⁷³ *Joseon Taejong sillok, gwon 9* (5th year of Taejong, 3rd month, *imja* day).

odong Regional Military Commission, the Board of War, and the Board of Rites.⁷⁴ The Ming were quite serious in their intent to repatriate those who still remained in Joseon lands, as illustrated by their interrogation of repatriates and from their extensive intelligence-gathering activities through various channels such as the Liaodong Regional Military Commission.

In addition to demanding the repatriation of Chinese subjects, the Ming court also began to lay claim to those Jurchen subjects originally wanted by the Jurchen chieftains. Ming pressed for a group of 64 Jurchen family members residing in Korea and another group of 13 Jurchen families in 1407.⁷⁵ The Joseon court became increasingly concerned with the growing nature of Ming demands, which now included Jurchen immigrants in Korean territories. Since a top priority for the Joseon court was to maintain normal relations with the Ming and to avoid incidents deriving from the repatriation issue, the court took a more proactive attitude toward Ming demands and increased the number of those repatriated from 100 to 200 people at a time up to 500 to 2,000. Sometimes, Ming envoys were invited to visit the settlements of deserters to conduct on-site investigations. As a result, in 1407, a series of major repatriations took place: 2,000 in the third month, 746 in the 5th month, 831 in the 6th month, and 549 in the 8th month.

Despite Joseon attempting to provide the details of those people who had been repatriated, the Ming remained suspicious of Joseon. In 1407, the Ming complained that Joseon efforts to repatriate deserters were inadequate and pushed for another 2,829 deserters originally under the Ming commander Wu Dingduo to be repatriated to the Liaodong Regional Military Commission. The demand was accompanied by a request for 3,000 horses.⁷⁶ In response, though the Joseon court initially procrastinated under the pretext of the deserters being settled households and slaves, it eventual-

⁷⁴ *Joseon Taejong sillok*, *gwon* 11 (6th year of Taejong, 3rd month, *giyu* day); *gwon* 12 (8th month, *gyemyo* day); *gwon* 12 (12th month, *jeongmi* day).

⁷⁵ *Joseon Taejong sillok*, *gwon* 13 (7th year of Taejong, 1st month, *sinsa* day).

⁷⁶ *Joseon Taejong sillok*, *gwon* 14 (7th year of Taejong, 8th month, *imjin* day and *gyeongsul* day); (9th month, *gyeongsin* day).

ly dispatched commissioners to the settlements of the deserters. They were accompanied by Ming interpreters who acted as eyewitnesses. As a result, in 1408, a large number of deserters were repatriated, including 781 in the 4th month, 159 in the 5th month, 99 in the 7th month, and 114 in the 9th month.⁷⁷

The repatriations in the 9th month of 1408 concluded the process for that year. In its report to the Ming, the Joseon court noted that although the Ming had demanded the repatriation of numbers of Jurchens, the Ming Board of War (Bingbu 兵部) had asked for a total of 1,100 persons, whereas Joseon had repatriated a total of 1,153 individuals over the course of four occasions.⁷⁸ The Joseon court was of the opinion that its proactive policy had minimized the issue of Jurchen repatriation as well as facilitating the achievement of Joseon's goals in its relations with the Ming Empire.

In the years after 1408, small bands of soldiers continued to desert to Joseon territory. However, this ceased to be an issue between Joseon and the Ming, as altered domestic and foreign conditions rendered their existence far less significant than before. For the Ming, moving the capital to Beijing and a series of northern expeditions meant the rule of the Yongle Emperor was much more secure. Furthermore, the effective incorporation of the Jurchens and the suppression of the Mongols removed the threats to Ming control over the Liaodong region. For Joseon, small groups of deserters had become a routine border event with little political impact. Moreover, the Joseon state managed to maintain its influence over the Jurchen on its borders and was not especially concerned with those Jurchens incorporated into the Ming network of guard units. After 1409, small groups of Liaodongese soldiers were covertly allowed to make their way into Joseon, while large groups of armed soldiers were blocked from crossing the Yalu River. However, Ming captives of Japanese pirates, who fled to Joseon,

⁷⁷ *Joseon Taejong sillok*, *gwon* 15 (8th year of Taejong, 2nd month, *byeongsul* day and *gichuk* day); (4th month, *gapjin* day); (5th month, *gimi* day); *gwon* 16 (7th month, *imsul* day); (9th month, *gapsul* day).

⁷⁸ *Joseon Taejong sillok*, *gwon* 16 (8th year of Taejong, 9th month, *gapsul* day).

were quite often not sent back to their homeland for fear that they might report those who still stayed behind in Joseon.⁷⁹

Conclusion

The repatriation of military deserters during the reign of King Taejong 太宗 (r. 1400-1418) was a sensitive issue in relations between Joseon and the Ming. During the transition period from Goryeo 高麗 to Joseon 朝鮮 in Korea, corresponding to the immense turmoil in the international order produced by the transition from the Yuan 元 to the Ming 明, the Liaodong region saw extensive military diplomacy in the midst of military conflict. Military diplomacy in early Joseon can be defined as its military interactions with outside forces, particularly the Ming, conducted in such a way as to achieve the new dynasty's objectives of gaining Ming recognition of its legitimacy and stabilizing the security of its border areas.

In handling international issues such as the repatriation of deserters (*mansangun* 漫散軍) and exerting influence on the Jurchens, Joseon military diplomacy took place within the framework of a tributary relationship with the Ming and with the aim of achieving the dynasty's practical goals. The major issue of military diplomacy it faced was the repatriation of deserters generated by the struggle for the Ming throne between the Prince of Yan and the Jianwen Emperor. A military clash between Joseon and the Ming was a real possibility as the new Ming dynasty sought to extend its power and influence over the Liaodong region. However, both sides avoided such a clash, and the two states chose diplomatic means when tensions arose. For this reason, military diplomacy played a vital role in diplomatic interactions between them. Such diplomacy was of a cooperative and concessive nature, particularly on the part of the Joseon court, in handling such issues as joint measures against common enemies and the process of repatriation of deserters.

⁷⁹ *Joseon Taejong sillok*, *gwon* 18 (9th year of Taejong, 11th month, *muin* day); *gwon* 25 (13th year of Taejong, 1st month, *jeongmi* day).

The repatriation of soldiers presupposed border incursions (K. *beomwol*; Ch. *fanyue* 犯越), and it was a convention to repatriate such perpetrators of illegal entry or border crossing (K. *wolgyeong*; Ch. *yuejing* 越境). In principle, the Joseon state was, thus, obliged to repatriate deserters from Ming jurisdiction, although it had power to negotiate the timing, scale, and nature of the repatriation, a power it used at times to increase its diplomatic leverage.

The Ming identified three groups who were subject to repatriation: military deserters, soldiers captured by foreign forces, and seamen who drifted into foreign territorial waters. The *mansangun* 漫散軍 were the principal group of these deserters, yet little research has been done on the process of their repatriation. Based largely on the dynastic records of the two states, this study has outlined the typical process of their repatriation. The repatriation issue arose when the Ming Board of War reported the status of deserters to the emperor. This was then followed by the sending of a diplomatic letter in his name to the Joseon court demanding their repatriation. Subsequently, the Joseon court conducted on-site investigations and prepared a report about these soldiers, which eventually led to their repatriation, usually to the Liaodong Regional Military Commission. Repatriated soldiers were generally subject to interrogation by Ming authorities as they sought to confirm that their demands had been met.

The mass exodus of Ming soldiers from Liaodong to Joseon territory took place in 1402 (2nd year of the reign of King Taejong) in the midst of the civil war in mainland China, and deserters continued to come thereafter, albeit in smaller groups. The Joseon state relocated them across the country. The repatriation of these deserters emerged as a major issue of military diplomacy between Joseon and the Ming. Initially, taking advantage of the unsettled domestic conditions in China during the transition of power from the Jianwen Emperor to the Yongle emperor, the Joseon government allowed deserters to resettle under its jurisdiction. However, with the establishment of the Yongle regime's control over mainland China and Liaodong, Joseon was forced to respond to Ming demands for the repatriation of its soldiers in order to gain practical benefits like official Ming acknowledgement of the Joseon crown prince.

The Ming, for their part, often felt that the Joseon response to their demands was inadequate and thus made further demands for repatriation that even included Jurchen refugees in Joseon lands. This came to a head in 1408 (8th year of the reign of King Taejong) when the Joseon court chose to repatriate a large number of the remaining deserters in its territory. In doing so, it sought to show its compliance with Ming demands, and bring the repatriation issue to a close. Thereafter, the desertion of small groups of soldiers into Joseon continued, which ceased to be a major issue of military diplomacy between the two states.

While this study contributes to our knowledge of military diplomacy in early Joseon, further research needs to be done in order to refine its definition and to analyze its nature, procedures, and categories. New perspectives on military diplomacy between Joseon and the Ming, marked by both military tension and cooperation, would enhance research in a variety of fields of military history, such as warfare, military policy, innovations in weaponry, war strategy, and military ideology. The current prevailing approach to military history focusing on changing domestic circumstances and institutions is to be supplemented by an approach that takes into account diplomatic interactions over military issues. This aspect is particularly important for the period when the new Joseon dynasty had to confront a changing international order under the Ming hegemony.

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