

# Memories of the Manchu Wars of the Seventeenth Century in East Asia and Literary Descriptions of the Qing Dynasty

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## Abstract

*In this paper, I analyze the memories of the Manchu wars and the manner in which literary descriptions of the Qing dynasty were made in several seventeenth-century-era stories. The descriptions of the battle of Simha (1619) used as subject matter for novels and the portrayals of the historical figures of Nurhachi and Huangtaiji are analyzed in order to identify the perceptions of the Qing dynasty implied in the novel texts contemporary to the change of regime from Ming to Qing. The battle of Simha was depicted concretely in such tales as Choe Cheok jeon, Kang Ro jeon, and Kim Yeong-cheol jeon. In these stories, the writers described the orderly and powerful Qing army in a positive manner. Even writing in an era in which the perceptions of the Qing dynasty were negative, the authors of these three stories realistically accepted the reorganized power structure centered around the newly emerging Qing, and its emperors Nurhachi and Huangtaiji were described respectfully as positive characters with magnanimity who could gain the trust of the people and unify all of China. This description of Qing dynasty China is the result of the conscious efforts of the writers to objectively understand the entity of Qing and critically reflect on Joseon dynasty politics.*

**Keywords:** Manchu wars, Nurhachi, Huangtaiji, Choe Cheok jeon, Kang Ro jeon, Kim Yeong-cheol jeon, battle of Simha

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## Introduction

It was in the first half of the seventeenth century that a series of Manchu wars in Liaodong and the Korean peninsula broke out when the Qing dynasty (1644-1911)<sup>1</sup> appeared as the background in Korean novels. These wars, which included the battle of Simha in 1619, the Manchu invasions of Joseon in 1627 and 1636, completely reorganized the power structure of East Asia around the Qing, which gained ascendancy after the collapse of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). In addition, the perspective through which scholars view the world changed greatly. Accordingly, a series of such wars forced the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910) to sever its relations with the Ming and enter into a tributary status with the Qing, requiring Korea to pay tribute and extend its courtesy to the fullest. Despite this, the sentiment prevailed in the Joseon dynasty that deified the Ming but detested the Qing for almost 200 years, even after Korea's complete subjugation by Qing. We can still find such sentiments in historical accounts and records through such examples as the government's plan to conquer the Qing, strong pro-Ming Sinocentrism, and the Korean view that saw itself as a "Little China."<sup>2</sup>

I was personally interested in how novelists of the time depicted their perspective towards Qing in their novels. My findings showed that in the literary works from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including *Choe Cheok jeon* (The Tale of Choe Cheok, 1621), *Kang Ro jeon* (The Tale of Kang Ro, 1630), *Kim Yeong-cheol jeon* (The Tale of Kim Yeong-cheol; published in the late seventeenth century), *Im Gyeong-eop jeon* (The Tale of Im Gyeong-eop; published at the end of the seventeenth century), and *Bakssi buin jeon* (The Tale of Mrs.

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1. The author of this paper uses the official name of Qing, even when referring to the former period under the name of Later Jin dynasty.
  2. The Korean view of "Little China" is based on the premise that Joseon would become the next leader in the world as a successor of the main line of Sinocentrism, abandoning the idea of Ming's restoration. For more detailed information, refer to Kye (2009b, 157-161) and Huh (2009, 283-284).

Bak; presumed to be published in the late seventeenth to early eighteenth century),<sup>3</sup> in which the series of wars were used as background, Qing's major figures of the times and the historic realities of the regime change from Ming to Qing are of significant weight in the depictions, and in this sense they are useful texts from which we can gain a literary description of historical facts. The main historic incident depicted in the above mentioned literary works was the battle of Simha, while the Manchu invasions of Korea in 1627 and 1636 were featured less prominently. Within such works, the battlefield of Simha and the historic figures of the first Qing emperor Nurhachi (alternatively Nuerhachi 努爾哈赤) and the second emperor Huangtaiji 皇台吉, whom the main character of the novels met, were outstandingly characterized.

The battle of Simha was described somewhat differently in *Choe Cheok jeon*, *Kang Ro jeon*, and *Kim Yeong-cheol jeon*. It is very interesting that the battle of Simha, which served as the turning point of Qing's ascendancy over Ming, has been depicted in several novels in the history of Korean literature. This reflects the fact that the battle of Simha was a significant incident that gave the momentum for a historic change in power from Ming to Qing, and the fate of people at that time was therefore considered worthy of depiction. On the other hand, the Manchu invasion of Korea in 1627 is partly shown in *Kang Ro jeon*, while the Manchu invasion of Korea in 1636 is featured in both *Im Gyeong-eop jeon* and *Bakssi buin jeon*.

Acknowledging the assumption that literature reflects history, the importance of the reality depicted in literature, and of historic novels in particular, cannot be underestimated. However, the historical reality described in a novel has been described as "memory as literature, memory as politics" (M. Park 2005, 275), which simultaneously suggests that emotional and political aspects are inevitably involved in creating literary works. The author's imagination is also involved in the novel as well as the author's memory of historic incidents. The

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3. It is hard to find works other than the novels already mentioned, whose material came directly from Qing.

main historical reality depicted in a novel and the fate of humans at the time can be a shared “memory,” the memory shared between the author and the people of the time; the imagination will depend on the author’s political perspective. Based on these assumptions, this paper discusses the historical records of the Qing dynasty, focusing on the battle of Simha in particular, and studies the depictions of the Qing people, the Qing’s literary influences on Joseon, and the progressive meaning in relation to the “ideology of revering the Ming and rejecting the Qing” (*sungmyeong baeho*). This paper further deals with the writers’ intentions and their political perspectives.

### Descriptions of the Battle of Simha

The 1619 battle between the united armies of the Joseon and Ming dynasties against the Qing was called the battle of Simha or the Sharhu battle. In 1616, Nurhachi, the leader of the Aisin Gioro Clan (1559-1626), unified the Manchu area in what is today Northeastern China and founded a nation called “Houjin.”<sup>4</sup> After unification, he revamped the national system for two years, laying the groundwork for a more unified and secure society. On April 3, 1618, he proclaimed war on the Ming. The Ming was taken aback and appointed Hao Yang to the post of Governor General of Liaodong in charge of the subjugation of Nurhachi in April. At the Ming’s request, Kang Hong-rip led 13,000 soldiers and crossed the Amnokgang river to Liaodong on February 19, 1619. A few days later, Hao Yang held a departure ceremony, divided 100,000 soldiers into four squads, and headed for Nurhachi’s Hituhara castle.

The number of soldiers Qing had at that time was only 30,000, but they achieved a grand victory over the Joseon-Ming forces on March 4, 1619, after days of fierce fighting. This battle is referred to as the battle of Simha in Joseon and the battle of Sarhu in China.

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4. The Manchu first called their rule the Later Jin dynasty, but Huangtaiji changed the official name to the Qing in 1636.

Usually, the entire battle in which the expedition force of Ming fought the army of Qing is usually referred to as the battle of Sarhu, including the battle of Simha (Han 1999, 255). However, strictly speaking from the perspective in Joseon, it should be more accurate to call it the battle of Simha since Simha and Sarhu are located at some distance away from each other.<sup>5</sup>

In the battle, nearly 50,000 Ming troops were killed, and due to the great damage to the Joseon army on March 4, Joseon lost 8,000 soldiers. With the 4,000 soldiers who survived the battle, Kang Hong-rip gave in to Qing, and the captured Joseon soldiers emerged as a factor of conflict among Joseon, Ming, and Qing. On the one hand, Ming lost its governing power in the Liaodong area because of the defeat in Simha battle. On the other hand, Nurhachi was able to consolidate his power in the same region.<sup>6</sup>

The first description of the battle of Simha in a novel was *Choe Cheok jeon*. Jo Wi-han (1567-1649) used the episode of the battle of Simha and the prison break to dramatically describe the separation of Mr. and Mrs. Choe and Choe Cheok's return to his homeland.

- ① At the beginning of 1618, a barbarian with a grudge from Jianzhou 建州 gathered an army against the Ming. It penetrated into Liaoyang 遼陽, and defeated several camps in a row. The Ming Emperor was furious and ordered all the soldiers to destroy the army (437).<sup>7</sup>
- ② Finally, Choe Cheok packed his belongings and left. After his arrival at Liaoyang, he crossed the hundreds-of-kilometers span of Manchu lands, and pitched camp in line with the Joseon army

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5. Kang Hong-rip reported to the government that he had been stationed in Simha, which refers to Liudaohe 六道河 in that region. On the other hand, Sarhu is a field at the foot of Sahr Mountain in Jiefan 界藩 province. For more details, refer to S. Lee (2007, 350-357).

6. For the meaning and development of the battle of Simha, refer to Han (1999, 244-264); Kye (2009b, 161-176); S. Lee (2007, 350-357); and H. Wang (2009, 12-20).

7. For convenience, the translated version of *Choe Cheok jeon* by Park Hee-byoung (2005) was quoted, not the original text in Chinese.

in Umochae. However, the commander-in-chief looked down on Qing's army, so they were defeated. Nurhachi killed all of the Ming's soldiers *without killing a single Joseon soldier, through a strategy of threatening and coaxing the Joseon soldiers* [author's emphasis]. . . . Choe Cheok was born in Joseon. He escaped his death by a hair's breadth when he sneaked into the Joseon army that had gathered in a mass. However, Choe Cheok was taken captive when Kang Hong-rip surrendered to the Qing (438-439).

*Choe Cheok jeon* was the first novel to use the battle of Simha as literary background. Jo Wi-han, the novel's author, described the personal history of Choe Cheok against the backdrop of the battle of Simha, up until one year after the end of the battle. Jo Wi-han provided simple descriptions of the rapid ascent of Nurhachi, the expedition of Choe Cheok, the victory of Qing forces, and the defeat of the Joseon-Ming allied armies, which was when Choe Cheok was taken captive. In addition to this, Ming's attitude of looking down on Qing's capability led the defeat and the generous attitude of Nurhachi toward Joseon were also described. However, the description of not killing a single Joseon soldier did not coincide with the actual history. This description was given because the novel did not cite the left flank general Kim Eung-ha's heroic death in action or the death in battle of the 5,000 flanking soldiers. Jo Wi-han's exclusion of Kim Eung-ha's combat death appears to be intentional. Considering that since 1619, the Joseon King Gwanhaegun had been preparing for a ceremony in memory of Kim Eung-ha in order to dispel Ming's doubt,<sup>8</sup> Jo Wi-han intentionally focused the subject matter on the personal history of Choe Cheok, from his escape to his return to Joseon. As a result, in *Choe Cheok jeon*, the battle of Simha was less sensitive in the eyes of

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8. King Gwanhaegun tried to dilute Ming's suspicion about Kang Hong-rip's surrender to the Qing, being deliberate in order to protect him. As part of such efforts, he appointed Kim Eung-ha to the position of Finance Minister and ordered people to build a shrine in his memory on a path through which many envoys came and went. This seems to be purposely displayed. See Han (2000, 239); and S. Lee (2003, 27-43).

an author from the Joseon dynasty, and Jo Wi-han could depict an amicable attitude toward the Qing's army and Nurhachi.

The novel that includes the most detailed description of the battle of Simha is *Kang Ro jeon* by Kwon Chik (1599-1667), composed in 1630. *Kang Ro jeon* was written soon after the death of the historical figure the book used as the main character, Kang Hong-rip (1560-1627). In the novel, Gang was depicted as a negative character who represented the "ideology of revering the Ming and rejecting the Qing." The author described the battle of Simha as if he had seen it with his own eyes, using Kang Hong-rip as the main character.

- ③ At the battle, Nurhachi ordered Gwiyeongga to attack the Ming's army first by leading the armored soldiers, and then to obtain the surrender of the Joseon army. Gwiyeongga did so without hesitation (C. Kwon 1630, 453).
  
- ④ There were dozens, hundreds, or a thousand soldiers camped in the 40- and 50-*ri*<sup>9</sup> area from Magachai to Simha. Ming and Joseon soldiers of the left flank rushed to kill the enemy, and the death toll by decapitation was great. However, the middle and right flank followed the left flank, and waited to see what the left flank had done. . . . It was the dawn of March 4. Jeong Yu made the soldiers depart by firing a cannon three times. His commanding voice sounded like thunder, and his spirit was like a storm (C. Kwon 1630, 459).
  
- ⑤ A 20-*ri* march led the army to Buchai castle. A village lined with houses under the mountain was captured. *Ming troops scattered to lay waste to the village, raising a battle cry. In the course of this, the ranks of the army collapsed* [author's emphasis] (C. Kwon 1630, 459).
  
- ⑥ At this time 30,000 soldiers equipped with iron weapons led by Gwiyeongga attacked from out of the valley, and the Ming army was abruptly wiped out (C. Kwon 1630, 459-460).

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9. One *ri* equals to 0.4 km.

⑦ On the other hand, the army of barbarians rushed the left squad. Kim Eung-ha encouraged the soldiers to fight fiercely, and Qing soldiers were felled with an attack of bullets and arrows. Gwiyeongga drew his sword in order to encourage his soldiers, and 100 enemy cavalry soldiers took the lead to the mountain, with other soldiers then following. Even though our [Joseon] soldiers were running out of strength and the camps were destroyed, there was no one who tried to escape from the battle, and they fought to the death (C. Kwon 1630, 460).

As shown in ④, judging from the description of his voice sounding like thunder and his spirit being like a storm, the Ming army morale was high. However, once the ranks of the army collapsed, the situation grew helpless, and as shown in ⑤ and ⑥, the army was annihilated by the Qing. In contrast, Qing troops were described as having mobility and being in good order in ③ and ⑥. Kwon Chik depicted Kang Hong-rip in a negative manner, while depicting the Qing army as skilled and disciplined. This description of ③ and ⑥, while brief, show the secret of Qing victory. Excerpt ⑦ showed a scene in which the left flank took great risk and resolutely fought back against the Qing army, specifically and dramatically describing the resolute look of the general of the left flank, Kim Eung-ha, until his heroic death in the fight against Qing. With this, Kim Eung-ha was described as a positive and heroic figure<sup>10</sup> in *Kang Ro jeon*, while *Kang Hong-rip* was described as a negative figure who lacked loyalty. Of course, such descriptions were far from the truth. The manipulation of the two figures seemed to be based on adoration for Ming and aversion

10. Kim Eung-ha's activities were taken from *Kim janggun jeon* (The Tale of General Kim, 1619) and *Chungnyeollok* (The Record of Patriots, 1621). Kim's activities described in *Kang Ro jeon* were almost identical to those described in *Kim janggun jeon* and *Chungnyeollok*. The composition of these stories shows the appearance of literature under the control of a central government authority. These should thus be understood as more than simply a commemoration of an individual, but as a manifestation of the Joseon government's "ideology of revering the Ming and rejecting the Qing." In terms of the work of making Kim Eung-ha a hero, see S. Lee (2003, 27-43).



to the barbarians (H. Park 1998, 50).

Kwon's description of Gang was distorted because he did not move his army under the pretext of King Gwanghaegun's secret letter and because of Gang's disinterest in the death of 5,000 soldiers left behind. Considering that *Kang Ro jeon* was written under the epochal background of the political situation of the Joseon dynasty that King Injo (1595-1649) and the political faction in power at the time adored the Ming and rejected peace with other countries by discrediting them as barbarians (S. Lee 2003)—Gang made an effort to express his belief that Joseon should show respect to the Ming, and he also wanted to criticize King Gwanghaegun's utilitarianism and realistic political line. Nevertheless, the contrast between the high spirits of the Qing and the helplessness of the Ming in the author's detailed citation and depiction of the progress of the battle should be noted.

The original text of *Kim Yeong-cheol jeon* was written by Kim Eung-won (1628-?) in the late seventeenth century (H. Kwon 2006, 98-108). The stories were later revised and published by Hong Se-tae, and other revised texts began to appear from the early eighteenth century. It was two or three generations after the battle of Simha that the story was novelized. The novel describes the battle as a fatal incident that changed the main character's life.

- ⑧ In 1618, there was a barbarian uprising in the north and they made several incursions along the border of the Great Nation [China?]. The Ming Emperor was enraged, and ordered Hao Yang, Ting Liu, and Iqi Qiao to lead the Ming army and attack the enemy. The Ming asked Joseon to send reinforcements. Kang Hong-rip and Kim Gyeong-seo were appointed general and vice general respectively. They had the task of choosing 20,000 soldiers to take with them. Yeongyuh-yeon's Chief Magistrate Yi Yugal was appointed as the chief of the left flank; he selected soldiers from Yeongyu-hyeon and took them to General Kang Hong-rip. Yeong-cheol and his great-grandfather Yeong-hwa joined the army together (1).<sup>11</sup>

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11. The Collection of Bak Jae-yeon, *Kim Yeong-cheol jeon*.

⑨ The Joseon and Ming armies rushed deep into Gyeongmajeon, the strategic base of Ming. Kang Hong-rip suggested a strategy of joint attack. Hao Yang was very pleased with the idea, and gave 5,000 soldiers to General Kim Eung-ha, who took responsibility for the left squad to take the lead. The soldiers from Yeongyu belonged to the left squad, so Yeong-hwa and Yeong-cheol were all under subordinates of General Kim. On March 3, the army arrived at Umoryeong, and at daybreak on March 4, it fought against Qing's army. Nurhachi ordered his first son, Gwiyeongga, to defeat Hao Yang by giving him tens of thousands of soldiers. After Gwiyeongga was victorious over Hao Yang, they attacked the Joseon army (4-5).

⑩ General Kim Eung-ha threw himself into the fierce fight all day long. His voice sounded like thunder, and his spirit was like a bolt of lightning. The second son of Nurhachi rushed in, clamoring at the top of his lungs, but was killed by Eung-ha's arrow. At this time, the enemy was taken slightly aback. When Gwiyeongga encouraged soldiers by brandishing a sword, a sudden attack was made on three sides. *Despite their strong fighting, Yi Yu-gil and Ko Su were killed, and not a single soldier tried to escape from the battle. All the soldiers fought 'til the end of their strength* [author's emphasis] (6).

In *Kim Yeong-cheol jeon*, the actual battle was described briefly, centering around the day of March 4, and the episodes that took place after the main character was captured were described in a more lengthy and detailed manner. As cited in ⑧, the author mentioned the rise of Nurhachi only briefly, while the organization of the Ming and Joseon armies were described in a more detailed manner. In this part, the episode of Kim Yeong-cheol's enlistment was mentioned. The major defeat of the Ming and Joseon forces by the Qing's army was described briefly in ⑨. The rise of the Qing and the heroic death of Kim Eung-ha on the battlefield were described in a similar manner to that of *Kang Ro jeon*. As shown in ⑩, Kim was as heroic as in *Kang Ro jeon*, and his prominent role in the battlefield was also described in detail. In addition, the activities and the death of Yeongyu-hyeon's

Chief Magistrate Yi Yu-gil and Ko Su were added to *Kim Yeong-cheol jeon*.

The story of Kim Yeong-cheol is continued as Kim survived the battle. He became a Qing captive and household slave. The stories of Kim's enslavement period have both historical and literary significance in part because they provide some information on the 700 Joseon soldiers who were taken captive and never returned to Joseon.

### Generosity of Nurhachi and Huangtaiji

Historic novels provide learning and reading about what historical figures say and do. In *Kang Ro jeon* and *Kim Yeong-cheol jeon*, Nurhachi, the founding father of the Manchu Qing dynasty, and the second emperor Huangtaiji (1592-1643), personally met the main characters of the novels, and were involved in their lives. Through these descriptions, readers can vicariously experience an encounter with the emperor of an enemy country, and perceive their personalities and generosity. In *Kang Ro jeon*, scenes such as Nurhachi's personal interview with Kang Hong-rip, in which he asks him to write a letter to solidify ties with the Joseon dynasty, and the appointment of Kang Hong-rip by Huangtaiji, appear in lengthy, descriptive passages. Two of these are as follows.

- ① One day, Nurhachi held a big party at Jianzhou castle for all of the warriors of his army. Dressed in silk, all of the warriors took seats on the west side, at equal distances apart. Hong-rip was in the upper part of the row, while Kim Gyeong-seo was in the lower part. . . . After formal bows were exchanged between the two sides, Nurhachi held a goblet in his right hand and grabbed Hong-rip's hand in his left, saying, "A man who does not recognize the value of a man who shared a common spirit as I do is not a real man. Though we were born far apart, we met in battle, and this was not just due to chance. What I am pleased with is not the fact that we, Qing, defeated the Ming army, but that I

gained you. Therefore, I will show you all of the things in the repository so that I can build a frank relationship with you. I will also introduce you to my wife and daughters, so that we can build an inseparable relationship between the two of us” (464-465).

- ② Nurhachi laughed, saying, “What you’ve said is not right. Joseon is easy to invade, but the Joseon people are hard to subjugate due to their respect for politeness. . . . The best strategy we can take is to enter into friendly relations with Joseon in the east and fight against China in the south to conquer the Yanjing (present Beijing) area and then wait for the time when heaven will allow us to have the whole world. *And in ancient times, even a man is on his last legs, he did not dare to make the master he once served a slave. Why do you consider your country an enemy like this?* [author’s emphasis]” (472-473).

The writer of the above, Kwon Chik, described Kang as a negative character who abandoned his loyalty to the Ming and later betrayed his country, while Nurhachi was portrayed as a positive character who loved his people with all his heart. Kwon Chik presents Nurhachi as a generous warrior who did not take advantage of Kang Hong-rip with sweet talk, but faithfully opened his heart to him, treated him politely, and finally made him a close confidant.<sup>12</sup> As shown in excerpt ①, he introduced his wife and daughters to Kang, and remarked that he would give him his daughter’s hand in marriage. Nurhachi left the selection of the new capital in Shenyang in the hands of Kang. Kwon Chik described that Hong-rip successfully completed his mission of the construction of the new Qing capital.<sup>13</sup>

Excerpt ② showed what Nurhachi said when Kang Hong-rip

12. The historical record depicts how Nurhachi and Huangtaiji won over talented individuals from other countries to support the Manchu by offering them positions in the government or military, which greatly helped the solidification of the Qing dynasty (Im 2000, 33).

13. *Kang Ro jeon*, pp. 469-470.

appealed to him to conquer Joseon. Kang Hong-rip felt the betrayal of his country upon hearing the lie from Han Yun, who had escaped from Joseon, that his family members had all been killed. So, Kang Hong-rip made a few harsh remarks such as the defeat of Joseon and a change of kings. These episodes were of course imaginary, created by the author, and are very much different from reality. According to a study by Ko Yun Soo, while Kang was in detention as a captive, he played an important role in resolving misunderstandings that arose from Joseon envoys, in speaking for Joseon's interests, and in alleviating conflicts between the Qing and Joseon (Ko 2004, 78-88). The description of Kang as not simply a person who discarded his loyalty to the Ming but as a rebellious subject who betrayed his country was based on the author's perspective of deification of the Ming and the hatred of the Qing (H. Park 1998, 96). Nevertheless, Nurhachi instructed Kang to maintain a polite relationship with people from his home country, but also realizing Kang's ambition to be the king of Joseon, did not grant his request. This showed a ruler who was not blinded by Kang's remarks, and had a thorough understanding of Qing power on which he could base his own strategy.

The following is an excerpt from *Choe Cheok jeon*. When Choe Cheok met his son in prison, the contrast between Qing and Joseon politics can be seen from the remark of an elderly soldier.

- ③ An elderly Qing soldier said, "*There is nothing to worry about. I was once a Joseon soldier in Sakju, Pyeongando. It's been ten years since I and my family moved here to Manchu, since the deputy delegate plundered the village so badly. The people here are honest and do not harm others. Life is empty like morning dew. Why do people lead a crouching life, bearing the tyranny of government officials?* [author's emphasis] Nurhachi gave me eighty selected soldiers, ordered me to keep watch over the Joseon people. However, what you are saying is so surprising to me. I will be reprovved later, but how can I not set you free?" (440).

This soldier who kept watch over Choe Cheok and his son was an

immigrant from Joseon who had escaped from the tyranny of government officials in his homeland. In comparison to Joseon, there was no exploitation in Qing territories, and relatively fair compensation was given for meritorious deeds. Nurhachi appointed him as an officer to conduct this important duty. This shows Nurhachi's magnanimity and his policy of opening the offices to the talented, without discrimination by nationality. This is an almost fictitious story. Jo Wihan seemed to criticize the imposition of heavy taxes on people by Joseon government officials, and the reality of the fact that the Joseon government had failed to open its offices to the talented, and the old soldier's remarks brought the positive aspects of Qing's politics into relief.

On the other hand, in *Kim Yeong-cheol jeon*, Kim Yeong-cheol found the quality of a ruler who could unify the nation in the second leader, Huangtaiji.

- ④ The commander-in-chief of the Qing stared toward the south for a long time and then said, "Yeong-cheol was a Joseon person by nature, but he has been one of our people for six years. As a person of the Ming he lived another six years, and then although he became a Joseon person again, the Joseon people are also ours. He escaped at the risk of death, but he is bowing to me as an interpreter between the two countries, which is not mere chance. Moreover, his first son is in our squad, and second son is in Jianzhou, and they are all my sons. Are the two sons in Ming's territory not my subjects? Judging from this, it will not be too long before I unify the world. How can I find this man guilty?" (61-63).

Huangtaiji's remark above occurred during a scene in which Yeong-cheol, instead of a Joseon warrior, met the second Qing emperor as an interpreter after the battle of Jinzhou 錦州 (641). When he was about to leave after bowing, Yeong-cheol's former master Arana told the emperor that Yeong-cheol had escaped on horseback and asked the emperor to punish him. His remark is noteworthy in that at that time he did not consider the link between Joseon and Ming/Qing as disconnected but rather considered Yeong-cheol's appearance to be

propitious, which he believe would enable the emperor to get the entire world because Yeong-cheol's family was then scattered in the three countries. Huangtaiji not only forgave Yeong-cheol but also gave him ten rolls of silk, a horse, and a mule as reward. With these items, Yeong-cheol paid the former master for his grace and expressed his appreciation for the grace to his own family. Such depictions showed that Huangtaiji's magnanimity was large enough to be an emperor.

Like this, the remarks and behaviors of Nurhachi and Huangtaiji shown in *Kang Ro jeon*, *Choe Cheok jeon*, and *Kim Yeong-cheol jeon* show characters with a magnanimity that was large enough to gain people and the entire world. Although a series of wars with Qing did great damage to Joseon both spiritually and financially, how we can evaluate the writers' positive descriptions of the kings of the enemy country?

### **Writers' Consciousness and Sentiment of Qing Deification**

After the Manchu invasion of Joseon in 1636, elite voices in Joseon demanded that the government carry out a military expedition to attempt to conquer the Qing. These sentiments were largely based on the powerful ideology in the kingdom that deified the Ming and vilify the Qing as barbarians. For 200 years after the war, this ideology continued to influence politics and culture of Joseon society.

Kang Man-Gil (1994, 65-66) has criticized the ruling class that they blocked the only route through which advanced culture could be imported and allowed the country to fall into political strife, which caused the dynasty to exist in a state of isolationism, where the door was closed to other cultures. Further, Lee Samsung has claimed that the Qing embraced people of the Ming and transformed the country into the center of the world, and that it could unify the nation and manage the empire by promoting the ideal of the coexistence of diverse peoples and a system of integration. At that time, Korea called itself "Little China" based on absolute discrimination between

traditional China and barbarians, which resulted in Joseon adopting a rigid political ideology (S. Lee 2009, 589-590). Based on such scholarly interpretations, the expedition to conquer the Qing and the “ideology of revering the Ming and rejecting the Qing” prevented Korea from introducing advanced foreign culture and opening avenues to advancement to those who were talented. All of these caused the dynasty to become even more secluded and rigid.

On the other hand, from a slightly different perspective, Han Myung-gi takes note that Koreans who encountered people and cultural products from the Qing gradually had positive feelings about the Qing dynasty. This began to occur right after the Manchu invasion of Joseon in 1636 in such records as *Injo sillok* (The Veritable Record of King Injo), *Seunjeongwon ilgi* (Daily Records of the Royal Secretariat), and *Simyang ilseung* (Shenyang Diary), in contrast with the records of mainstream writers at the time which thoroughly promoted an attitude of Neo-Confucian righteousness (Han 2009, 383-391).

Under the atmosphere of the times, *Kang Ro jeon* and *Kim Yeong-cheol jeon* were written in a manner that acknowledged Qing as a new leading power in Northeast Asia, and thus the magnanimity and ambition of Qing were depicted in a realistic manner. Jo Wi-han depicted Qing amicably because the government held no prejudice against the selection of talented persons and the leaders of the dynasty did not appear to be greedy or tyrannical. *Kang Ro jeon* was the most outstanding in terms of depicting an overall hatred for the Qing, including a focus on disparaging Kang Hong-rip, though in specific episodes, Nurhachi and Huangtaiji were depicted in a favorable manner. The Qing Emperor, who wanted to conquer all China, had consistent and concrete strategies and a powerful army of his own, and was also described as a man of magnanimity and personality; in other words, he was a true leader. In *Kim Yeong-cheol jeon*, Nurhachi was depicted as a man of magnanimity like a real emperor who governed a large country. The author described that Nurhachi considered Kim Yeong-cheol’s connections throughout the three countries to be propitious, and provided opportunities for him to show his magnanimity as a leader to reign over the entire world. However, General



Yu Rim, Yeong-cheol's actual superior, offered nothing to Yeong-cheol for his distinguished service but imposed a great debt to the government out of a personal grudge, which made Yeong-cheol poor for the rest of his life. The author deplored the fact that there was no "reward" for loyalty and filial piety by the Joseon government, by showing the contrast between the personal grudge of the Confucian scholar of Joseon and the magnanimity of Nurhachi.

Jo Wi-han of *Choe Cheok jeon*, Kwon Chik of *Kang Ro jeon*, and Kim Eung-won of *Kim Yeong-cheol jeon* emphasized neither national consciousness nor vengeful sentiment toward the Qing. In addition, they acknowledged the changing order of reality centered around Qing power in Northeast Asia, while showing reverence to Nurhachi and Huangtaiji for opening opportunities to the talented without discrimination and offering fair rewards to those who rendered distinguished service. Particularly, what made Jo Wi-han and Kim Eung-won emphasize the positive images of the Manchu? After directly experiencing the Qing at the battle of Simha, they gained an objective recognition of the changes in China they saw and heard, escaping from their nominal Sinocentrism. In addition, the main characters of the works would get help rather than damage or harm from the Qing. This had some impact on changing the writers' consciousness about the reality of the Joseon dynasty. Jo Wi-han and Kim Eung-won narrated the suffering families experienced because of separation caused by war and the arduousness of life in *Choe Cheok jeon* and *Kim Yeong-cheol jeon*. In addition, by describing politics and leaders of Qing in a positive light, the authors may have been attempting to criticize the incompetence and corruption of their own society, as the Joseon sociopolitical structure neither provided any appropriate rewards for those who had rendered distinguished services nor selected fit persons.

In contrast to the abovementioned works, novels that showed negative images of the Qing such as *Bae Si-hwang jeon* and *Im Gyeong-eop jeon* should also be discussed. *Bae Si-hwang jeon* is a story about the Joseon army that defeated the Russian marine force at the Heungnyonggang river in 1658. The novel narrates the activities and joys and sorrows of General Sin Ryu and his subordinate Bae

Si-hwang. *Bae Si-hwang jeon* is the first novel assumed to have been written in the late seventeenth century (H. Kwon 1997, 230-231) in which the Qing was first acknowledged as the new leader of China through the use of the term “Qing dynasty” as the official name of the country and “Shunzhi 順治” as the name of the era and the emperor. Despite doing so, the content and tone of the novel was not amicable to the Qing dynasty. On the contrary, the content and tone revealed the perspective of the deep disbelief in and the “victim” mentality toward the Qing.<sup>14</sup>

*Im Gyeong-eop jeon* is a late seventeenth-century (or later) Korean novel with many different versions (H. Cho 1997, 127). In relation to the Qing, the writer described a critical conflict between the Qing Emperor and Im Gyeong-eop in which the scars of the Manchu invasion of Joseon in 1636 are seen. In *Im Gyeong-eop jeon*, Im and the writer had hostile feelings toward the Qing because the Manchu had attacked Korea, forgetting the gratitude it had gotten from them, and seriously damaged and humiliated the dynasty, as well as taking the Joseon princes hostage. The Qing invasion and subsequent political humiliation produced hatred among toward the Qing, which the writers described in detail.<sup>15</sup> Almost the same sentiment can be found in *Bakssi buin jeon*, which can be seen as a sister volume.

As has thus far been shown, the novels about the battle of Sima, including *Choe Cheok jeon*, *Kang Ro jeon*, and *Kim Yeong-cheol jeon*, negatively depicted Qing on the surface, yet these writers acknowledged the entity of the Qing dynasty underneath, granting positive images to the main characters. However, the novels in Korean whose historic background is the Manchu invasion of 1636 such as in *Im*

14. In the first part of the story, the Qing’s army was described negatively as powerless. At the end of the novel, the writer showed Generals Sin Ryu and Bae Si-hwang, who agonized over the arrogance and supremacy of the Qing, even though they had won a decisive victory over the Russian marine force. In addition, the Qing was described as being double-faced in the novel in that while they mobilized the armies of other neighboring countries in order to save their people and supplies, the Qing did not trust in them and used them in highly dispersed deployments.

15. For this part, refer to *Im janggun jeon* (The Tale of General Im), printed in Seoul, twenty-seventh book of the collection, pp. 9-12.

*Gyeong-eop jeon* and *Bakssi buin jeon* focus on the psychological humiliation and physical damage caused by the Manchu invasion, couched within language of strong national consciousness. Few novels used the Qing as direct background material, but such novels as *Im Gyeong-eop jeon* and *Bakssi buin jeon* enjoyed a great reputation among the public. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many unknown writers numerously adopted some repertoires such as *Im Gyeong-eop jeon* and *Bakssi buin jeon* and as a result the negative images of the Qing were reproduced and a vengeful sentiment emerged.

However, the Manchu invasion of Joseon in 1636 is evaluated as having played a significant role in creating the genre of the war novel, which was popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In war novels, no material related to the Manchu War was depicted on the surface. Seo Dae-seok said that the reality of the time when the Manchu War broke out, including the conflict between those who wanted to fight against the Qing and those who advocated peace, and incidents of soldiers and the queen and the royal concubines being taken as captives because Ganghwado island fell into the enemy's hands, were reflected in such novels. From the fact that Song and Ming, which were established by Chinese people, were set as the main character's homeland, while Qing was set as a country of barbaric outsiders, it can be interpreted as a reflection of the authors' vengeful sentiment toward the Qing following the Manchu invasion (Seo 2008, 28). When a historical incident or character was fictitiously created without any contextual meaning in history and reality, Qing was portrayed as cunning from an ethical perspective, and fixed as villains who disturbed the conventional order from a political perspective.

Since then, in Korean literature, actual images of the Qing dynasty have been captured in the writings of Hong Dae-yeong (1731-1783), Bak Ji-won (1737-1809), and Bak Je-ga (1750-1805?), who had been to Beijing as envoys in the late eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> When Bak Ji-won keenly satirized the nominal ideology of expedition to conquer the

16. *Nogajae yeonhaeng* (Diary of Nogaje Kim Chang-eop), *Eulbyeong yeonhaeng* (Diary of Hong Dae-yong), and *Yeolha ilgi* (Jehol Diary) by Bak Ji-won were all written in

Qing at the end of *Heosaeng jeon* (The Tale of Heo Saeng), a story published in his three-volume *Yeolha ilgi* (Jehol Diary), he emphasized the ideology of practical learning. It was to renew Joseon by giving credit to the advancement of the Qing's civilization and focusing on economic enrichment in national management (Kye 2009a, 167-168).

## Conclusion

In this article, I analyzed the memories of the Manchu invasions and the manner in which literary descriptions of the Qing dynasty were made in *Choe Cheok jeon*, *Kang Ro jeon*, *Kim Yeong-cheol jeon*, *Bakssi buin jeon*, and others. The descriptions of the battle of Simha (1619) used as subject matter for those novels and the portrayals of the historical figures of Nurhachi and Huangtaiji were analyzed in order to identify the perceptions toward the Qing dynasty implied in the novel texts in the change from Ming to Qing.

The battle of Simha was depicted concretely in *Choe Cheok jeon*, *Kang Ro jeon*, and *Kim Yeong-cheol jeon*. The writers described the orderly and powerful Qing army in a positive manner. Even writing in an era in which the perceptions of the Qing Dynasty were negative, the authors of *Choe Cheok jeon*, *Kang Ro jeon*, and *Kim Yeong-cheol jeon* realistically accepted the reorganized power structure centered around the Qing, and the emperors of the enemy country, Nurhachi and Huangtaiji, were described respectfully as positive characters with magnanimity who could gain the trust of the people and unify all of China. This description of the Qing is the result of the conscious efforts of the writers to objectively understand the entity of

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a diary style, kept during the course of visits to Qing as envoys. These records showed that the writers' viewpoints changed from negative to positive at the point of time they saw the reality of the Qing dynasty in person. For instance, Hong Dae-yong pointed out that even though the Qing was called barbaric, the dynasty had ruled over China in peace for one hundred years, and acknowledged its power. He said that he wanted to see the size of the country and the disposition of the people, and he actively learned the culture of the Qing during his visit. See more detailed description in K. Cho (2004, 250-274).

the new Manchu powers and critically reflect on Joseon politics. Except for these, however, Qing was depicted negatively in many war novels, including *Im Gyeong-eop jeon* and *Bakssi buin jeon*, in which a retaliatory spirit can be seen either implicitly or outwardly.

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