

# The Logic and Method of Justifying Foreign Invasions: Comparing the Hideyoshi and Manchu Invasions of Chosŏn\*

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This article attempts to establish a comprehensive understanding of the many international wars that beset East Asia from the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth century. These wars can be summarized as attempts by newly unified polities in Manchuria and Japan to subjugate the “Chinese cultural sphere” represented by Chosŏn Korea and Ming China—attempts that were ultimately successful. Although the aggressors in the Imjin War on the one hand and the *Chŏngmyŏ-Pyŏngja* Wars on the other were different and did not mutually influence each other, they showed similar logic in trying to legitimize their invasions of Chosŏn. By comparing documents produced before and during the conflicts by the Japanese and the Manchu, this article will ascertain how both sides justified their invasions and how they tried to impose this historical memory on the invaded country, Chosŏn. By retracing the discourse of a “just war” that was developed in pre-modern East Asia, this study shows how both Manchu and Japanese documents regarding the foreign invasions refer to ancient Chinese concepts of “punitive expedition” (*zhengfa*) and Heaven (*Tian*), which are either used in different ways (in the case of the former), or in broadly similar ways (in the case of the latter) by both sides. The relevant documents, which were composed either during the war or shortly after, show how both sides employed similar strategies to try and argue that their invasions were cases of righteous wars. Rather than taking Chosŏn’s experience of being invaded as unique and absolute, this article tries to reevaluate this experience from a world history perspective, and makes a case for seeing these conflicts as part of a series of interconnected events that took place at a turning point in East

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## Introduction

An extended series of international military campaigns from the late sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries occupied a prominent place in early modern East Asian international relations. These include the Japanese invasions of Korea launched by Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1592 and 1597 (*Imjin waeran* and *Chōngyu chaeran*),<sup>1</sup> the invasion of the Ryūkyū Kingdom by forces of the Shimazu clan in 1609, the Manchu invasions of Korea in 1627 and 1636, and the Three Feudatories' Revolt and Koxinga's conquest of Taiwan—the latter two conflicts being broadly connected to the Ming-Qing transition. This period of international aggressions can be characterized as the invasions of the Sino-centric world—represented by Chosŏn Korea and Ming China—by foreign powers, the Japanese and Manchu leaders who pacified the archipelago and the northeastern periphery of China proper, respectively. Thus, rather than looking separately at each country or each particular battle, this study takes the view that these are part of a long-term regional conflict that erupted intermittently.

My article will build upon and contribute to the established body of historical and literary scholarship on the Imjin War and the Manchu invasions over the last century. In particular, I intend to show the process through which Japan and the Manchu state prepared the ideological grounds for military mobilization in support of foreign attacks. Kitajima Manji in his wide-ranging analyses of the Imjin War analyzes the ideological programs employed by Japanese leaders to show the legitimacy of the military campaigns in Korea.<sup>2</sup> Ch'oe Kwan suggests Japan invoked the “mandate of Heaven” to secure the legitimacy of military attacks on Korea in the Tokugawa period.<sup>3</sup> Han Myōnggi's work reveals the dominant narratives and rationales that the Manchu leaders employed in support of their military actions against Korea during the time of

1. For brevity's sake, the conflict will be referred to mainly as the “Imjin War” in this article.

2. Manji Kitajima, *Toyotomi seiken no taigai ninshiki to Chōsen shinryaku* [The Toyotomi Regime's foreign policy and the invasion of Korea] (Tokyo: Azekura Shobō, 1990), 89-133.

3. Ch'oe Kwan, *Ilbon kwa Imjin Waeran* [Japan and the Imjin War] (Seoul: Korea University Press, 2003), 319-332.