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CHAPTER 1

STATE BUILDING BEFORE 1644

Gertraude Roth Li

On June 6, 1644, Ch'ing troops entered Peking and claimed the throne for their six-year-old emperor. The military success in 1644 and the subsequent expansion of the Ch'ing empire were rooted in two centuries of Jurchen¹ multilateral relationships with Koreans, Mongols, and Chinese in the Northeast. By the early seventeenth century, Nurhaci (Nu-erh-ha-ch'ih; 1559–1626),² the founder of the dynasty, shifted the goal from seeking wealth and local power to pursuing a vision of an empire, and toward this end he created a sociomilitary organization that was capable of unifying the Jurchens. He laid the foundation for a political system that allowed Chinese and Mongol participation in his endeavor. Following Nurhaci's death, his son, Hung Taiji (Huang T'ai-chi; 1592–1643)³ built on the accomplishments of his father and consolidated the conceptual and institutional foundation for a Ch'ing empire by drawing heavily on Ming traditions. The glory of taking the throne in Peking fell to Hung Taiji's six-year-old son.

THE JURCHENS DURING THE MING

The place and its people

The Liao valley is the heartland of a region known to Westerners as Manchuria, a place where forest, steppe, and agricultural lands overlap. In the sixteenth century, this region extended southward from the Amur River (Heilungkiang) and included a Ming administrative area in the lower Liao valley and the Liao-tung peninsula. In the east, it reached the Tatar Strait, the Sea of Japan, and the Korean border. In the west, it connected to what

¹ Jurchen, an Anglicized term, is used instead of Jürchen or Jürched, with the final *d* reflecting the Mongol plural ending. However, when referring to the Uriyangkad and Tümed, two Mongol tribes, the Mongol plural ending is retained.

² Biography in *ECCP*, pp. 594–9. The name is also written as Nurhachi or Nurgaci. Nurgaci is an old Manchu form and appears in some early Manchu records.

³ Hung Taiji is erroneously known in some secondary literature as Abahai. The mistake is traced by Giovanni Stary, "The emperor 'Abahai': Analysis of an historical mistake," *Central Asiatic Journal*, 28, Nos. 3–4 (1984), pp. 296–9. His biography, *ECCP*, pp. 1–3, can be found under "Abahai."

in the twentieth century was Jehol,⁴ extending northwest from the Great Wall to the Mongolian pasturelands on the slopes of the Greater Khingan Mountains (Ta Hsing-an ling). Because most Chinese activities in Manchuria were carried out via Jehol, this area – particularly its southern portion, also known as Liao-hsi – was of great importance to the history of Manchuria. During the Ming this area was home to various groups of Eastern Mongols, who in Chinese records are often referred to as Tatars, though this term at times included Jurchens.

Manchuria's main ethnic group was the Jurchens, a people who in the twelfth century had established the Chin dynasty (1115–1234). The name Jurchen itself dates back at least to the beginning of the tenth century, or perhaps, if it is to be identified with the name of the Su-shen tribes, even as far back as the sixth century B.C. "Jurchen," the standard English version of the name, derives from the Chin dynasty Jurchen word *jusen*, which may have reached the West via its Mongolian version of Jürchen.⁵ The original meaning of *jusen* remains uncertain.

During the Ming dynasty, Chinese distinguished three groups of Jurchens: the Wild Jurchens (Yeh Nü-chen), the Hai-hsi Jurchens, and the Chien-chou Jurchens. At times they also referred to the three groups collectively as Wild People (*yeh-jen*). The Wild Jurchens occupied the northernmost part of Manchuria, which stretched from the western side of the Greater Khingan Mountains to the Ussuri River and the lower Amur, and bordered on the Tatar Strait and the Sea of Japan. This area was a sparsely populated hinterland to the more populous Liao valley and contained various tribal groups, primarily the Hürha (Hu-erh-ha),⁶ the Weji (Ma. "forest"; Chin. Wo-chi, Wu-chi, or Wu-che), and the Warka (Wa-erh-ha or Wa-erh-k'ö). Wild Jurchen hunters and fishermen supplemented their economy by pig raising and, where possible, migratory agriculture. Mongolian influences were considerable, especially in the west.

Named after the Sungari River (Sung-hua Chiang), which during the Yüan and Ming dynasties was also called the Hai-hsi River, the Hai-hsi

⁴ Jehol was a province from 1929 to 1955. Its southern portion is now part of Hopei and its northern portion is part of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (Nei Meng-ku tzu-chih ch'ü).

⁵ The Chinese transliteration of the original Altaic word is *nü-chen*, which was changed to *nü-chih* as the result of the Liao dynasty taboo on the character *chen*. In the tenth century the character *nü* served to render an affricative *ju* (= *džu*) and seems to have soon been replaced by characters like *chu*. Henry Serruys, *Sino-Jürčed relations during the Yung-lo period (1402–1424)*, Göttinger Asiatische Forschungen Band 4 (Wiesbaden, 1955), p. 1, n. 1. In Manchu the Jurchen word *jusen* becomes *jušen*, but *nioi jy*, reflecting the Chinese *nü-chen*, also occurs.

⁶ After T'ang times Hürha, sometimes also written as Hürka (Hu-erh-k'ö), referred to the region along the Hürha River (Hu-erh-ha Chiang), an early name for the Mudan River (Mu-tan Chiang). By the Chin period Hürha was also known as Huligai (Hu-li-kai). During the Ming the word Hürha was used more loosely, referring to the area or the tribes of the Mudan River area, but sometimes including the Weji and Warka tribes. See Lucien Gibert, *Dictionnaire historique et géographique de la Mandchourie* (Hong Kong, 1934), p. 281.

Jurchens⁷ lived in modern Heilungkiang, east of the Nonni River (Nenchiang), around Harbin and on the various tributaries of the Sungari River. Crop cultivation predominated toward the east, and pastoralism predominated toward the west, where the pastoral frontier zone bordered on the Mongolian steppes. The Mongols' cultural influence was most strongly felt among the Jurchens of this area.

The Chien-chou Jurchens lived along the Mudan River and in the vicinity of the Long White Mountain (Ma. Šanggiyan alin or Šanyan alin; Chin. Ch'ang-pai-shan) in what became Kirin province. They hunted for food and for furs, fished, and engaged in agriculture. They also gathered pearls and ginseng, and were proficient at spinning and weaving. The population in this area was mixed, with Koreans and Chinese living alongside Jurchens.

Communication between China and Liao-tung often went by sea from Shantung. When the first Ming emperor sent troops to Liao-tung, military provisions were shipped that way. For a while the established route from Peking to Liao-tung was via Hsi-feng Pass (Hsi-feng k'ou), Ta-ning (modern Ning-ch'eng), and Kuang-ning (north of Pei-chen in Liaoning). However, because the area came to be occupied by the Uriyangkad Mongols after the Ming offered them their patronage in 1389, the main route between China and Manchuria shifted to the Shan-hai Pass route. Since that route, too, was susceptible to disruption by Mongols, the Ming government built strong fortifications along that line.

Communication between the various parts of Manchuria was limited. In the southern part the Ming maintained a horse postal relay system to facilitate military communications, the exchange of official envoys, and government trade. Waterways, and in some places dog relay stations maintained by the Jurchens, supplemented the Ming system.⁸

Jurchen relations with the Ming

After the fall of the Yüan dynasty (1267–1368), various pockets of Mongol power remained in the Northeast, and Ming China continued to be preoccupied with its northern defense.⁹ In 1375, Nahacu (Na-ha-ch'u), a local leader loyal to the Yüan dynasty, invaded Liao-tung. He was defeated in 1387, but in order to protect themselves from further Mongol incursions, the Ming

⁷ Hai-hsi, meaning "west of the sea," initially referred to Jurchen territory in general. During the second half of the Ming, Hai-hsi referred to the area exclusive of Chien-chou Jurchens. See Henry Serruys, *Trade relations: The horse fairs (1400–1600)* (Bruxelles, 1975), p. 58, n. 33.

⁸ Serruys, *Sino-Jürčed relations*, p. 21, n. 39; Li Hsün Hsüeh Hung, ed., *Ch'ing tai ch'üan shih*, Vol. 1 of *Ch'ing tai ch'üan shih*, ed. Hsü Che Kao Hung (Shen-yang, 1991), pp. 19–21.

⁹ For a general discussion in English on Manchuria during the Ming, refer to an old but still excellent article by T. C. Lin, "Manchuria in the Ming empire," *Nankai Social and Economic Quarterly*, 8, No. 1 (April 1935), pp. 1–43; also Morris Rossabi, *The Jurchens in the Yüan and Ming* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1982).

set up a military form of government by dividing the area under its control into twenty-five guards (*wei*), supervised by a Regional Military Commission (*tu-chih-hui shih-ssu*) in Liao-yang. Then, following the traditional policy of using one barbarian group to control another, the Ming courted or “pacified” (*chao-fu*) the Jurchens in order to control the Mongols.

In 1388, immediately after the defeat of Nahacu, the first Ming emperor dispatched a mission to the San-hsing area (I-lan or Ilan Hala)¹⁰ and established contact with the Jurchens at the confluence of the Sungari and Mudan Rivers. Two strong tribes, the Odoli (Wo-to-li) and Huligai (Hu-li-kai; or Hūrha), were ruled by fraternal clans who had split into two groups in the 1380s. Though a relationship was forged between the Ming and these Jurchens, difficulties with maintaining supply lines to their outpost on the Sungari forced the Ming representatives to retreat back south.¹¹

A southward push of more northerly people precipitated a general southward migration among the Jurchens. Around 1402 the Hai-hsi group appears to have moved from the Hulan (Hu-lan ho) and Sungari Rivers to the area north of K'ai-yüan. The Odoli, Huligai, and T'o-wen tribes established themselves in the vicinity of the Tumen River (T'u-men Chiang), the meeting point of Korea, China, and Russia, the Huligai around Yen-chi, and the Odoli around Hui-ning. Those Jurchens who settled south of the Sui-fen River (Sui-fen ho) became known as Mao-lien Jurchens.¹²

Not long after these southward moves, the Ming Yung-lo emperor (1402–24) sent numerous missions to the various Jurchens – often led by envoys of Jurchen descent – and began establishing Jurchen guards (*wei*) and posts (*so*). In 1403 a special Ming mission to the Huligai obtained the submission of their chief Ahacu (A-ha-chu; d. 1409–10) and extended official Ming recognition to Ahacu as commander of the Chien-chou Guard (Chien-chou wei), named after a Yüan dynasty political unit in the area. In 1405 the Ming also created a Mao-lien Guard to the northwest of Hui-ning under the leadership of one of Ahacu's sons. A Ming embassy reached Möngke Temür (Meng-ko-tieh-mu-erh, or Meng-t'e-mu; d. 1433),¹³ chieftain of Odoli, on the Tumen River. Though the Korean government tried to persuade him not

¹⁰ The name San-hsing came into use during the Ch'ing dynasty. The original name was San-wan, a translation of Ilan Tumen, meaning “Three myriarchies.” These myriarchies were: Odoli, Huligai, and T'o-wen. Serruys, *Sino-Jürched relations*, p. 49.

¹¹ Lin, “Manchuria in the Ming empire,” p. 15.

¹² According to Erich Hauer, the name Mao-lien (sometimes also written as Mo-lin) appears to have been derived from the Manchu word *morin* – “horse.” See Hauer, “Neue Nachrichten über die Vorfahren des Mandschuhauses,” *Asia Minor*, 9 (1933), p. 615. As immediate neighbors of Korea, the Mao-lien tribes are frequently mentioned in the Korean sources, which refer to them as Wu-liang-ha, or Orankha, a name also used for the Uriyangkad Mongols in the West. In Korean the word *orankha* has come to mean “barbarian, a savage.” Serruys, *Sino-Jürched relations*, p. 32.

¹³ Biography in *DMB*, pp. 1065–6.

to yield to Ming pressure and presented him with a title of its own, Möngke Temür accepted Ming recognition as leader of a separate Chien-chou Left Guard.¹⁴ He also accepted the Chinese surname T'ung, a name that generations later the first Manchu emperor, Nurhaci, used to claim descent from Möngke Temür.¹⁵

Between 1406 and 1440 the two Chien-chou groups undertook several short-distance moves, at times separating, other times rejoining. Between 1406 and 1411 they moved west to evade Wild Jurchen attacks and Korean pressure, but in 1423 Mongol invasions in the west forced their return to the Korean border.¹⁶ In 1436, following several defeats at the hands of the Koreans, the Huligai Chien-chou Guard, then under the leadership of Li-Man-chu (d. 1467), moved west and settled on the Suksuhu River (Su-k'o-su-huo ho or Su-tzu ho), with its headquarters near Hsing-ching in modern Hsin-pin County (Hsin-pin hsien). At about the same time, the Chien-chou Left Guard also freed itself from Korean control and settled to the north of them.¹⁷

In 1442, a succession dispute between Möngke Temür's son, Cungšan (Ch'ung-shan; d. 1467) and Cungšan's half-brother, Fanca (Fan-cha; d. 1458), led to a division of the Chien-chou Left Guard. Cungšan inherited his father's position in the Chien-chou Left Guard and Fanca received Chinese recognition for a new Chien-chou Right Guard. Cungšan later succeeded in bringing the Chien-chou Right Guard under his control, but for a while there were three Chien-chou Guards.

The Ming created as many as two hundred guards among the Hai-hsi Jurchens. Judging from the level of titles the Jurchen leaders received, the Chien-chou guards were of considerably higher concern to the Ming government than the Hai-hsi or other Jurchen groups. Chien-chou leaders were

¹⁴ The exact date of establishment of the Chien-chou Left Guard is unknown. It is believed to have been first established in 1405, and then reestablished in 1412. Serruys, *Sino-Jürčed relations*, p. 77.

¹⁵ New clan names were used to develop a hereditary consciousness and to strengthen the spirit of local "patriotism" among the different units so as to hinder their mutual amalgamation. They were also intended to inculcate in the chieftains' families a tradition of loyalty and attachment to the benefactor, the Ming imperial house. Lin, "Manchuria in the Ming empire," p. 37.

¹⁶ The Huligai Chien-chou Jurchens settled on Tung-chia River (Tung-chia Chiang), then also called P'o-chu Chiang, which is the modern Hun River (Hun Chiang), a tributary of the Yalu River. Möngke Temür's Chien-chou Left Guard returned to their earlier habitat on the Tumen River around Hui-ning.

¹⁷ Scholars have discussed the various moves of the Chien-chou Jurchens at length and minor differences remain. Compare Wang Chung-han, "The question of the place where the Manchu ancestors originated," *Central Asiatic Journal*, 35, Nos. 3-4 (1991), pp. 279-301; Li, *Ch'ing tai ch'ian shih*, pp. 9-10, 43-5; and Kawachi Yoshihiro, *Mindai joshinsbi no kenkyū*, Oriental Research Series No. 46 (Kyoto, 1996), pp. 141-70. For a German translation of the part in the *Ch'ing shih kao* that deals with the Chien-chou Jurchens during the Ming (under Ahacu, in the ninth biography), see Hauer, "Neue Nachrichten," pp. 612-42; Serruys, *Sino-Jürčed relations*, pp. 38-9; and Lin, "Manchuria in the Ming empire," pp. 18-20.

given titles of commanders (*chib-hui shib*) and commissioners-in-chief (*tu-tu*). None of the other Jurchens were so honored.¹⁸

In order to oversee the Jurchen guards and subdue additional tribes, the Ming in 1409 established a Nurgan Regional Military Commission (*Nu-erb-kan tu-chib-hui shib-ssu*) near the mouth of the Amur River. Supplying provisions to this northern Ming outpost proved expensive, and the Nurgan Regional Military Commission was abandoned in 1435. The Ming retreat meant the loss of contact with many of the more northerly tribes. Though the existence of Jurchen guards consisted of nothing more than Ming diplomatic and commercial recognition, Jurchen chiefs bore military titles and were viewed as Ming local officials. Since the Ming neither occupied Jurchen territory nor made efforts to tax its population, the Jurchen tribes acquiesced in the fiction of Ming authority. They employed the Ming calendar rather than the traditional twelve-animal cycle; they went by their guard names and their Ming official titles; and they presented tribute and submitted to the required ritual of the Ming court.

The practice of granting titles to native leaders in outlying regions was ancient, but the scope of its use in Ming times was new. Of the 384 guards listed in Ming records,¹⁹ more than a third were created between 1368 and 1426. The guards' territories expanded, contracted, and moved. Tribes that had been recognized as guards might divide or be absorbed into other tribes. If the people moved, the name moved with them. In theory guards needed permission to relocate to another area, but in practice this was not necessarily so. If a guard ceased to exist, its name would likely remain on government books. There is no reason to suppose that Ming officials' fantasies regarding its guards bore much relationship to the local power structure and subdivisions.²⁰ Even though not all guards were real, those that did exist owed their title and allegiance to the Regional Military Commission, which served the Ming goal of divide and rule.

Jurchen relations with Korea

The Ming effort to stake out its sphere of interest and jurisdiction in the northeast clashed with Korean activities aimed at expanding its influence

¹⁸ Li, *Ch'ing tai ch'üan shib*, p. 45. Other titles bestowed on the Chien-chou Jurchens were vice commissioner-in-chief (*tu-tu t'ung-chib*), assistant commissioner-in-chief (*tu-tu ch'ien-shib*), vice commander (*chib-hui t'ung-chib*), and assistant commander (*chib-hui ch'ien-shib*).

¹⁹ Chang T'ing-yü et al., *Ming shib*, 1736; rpt. Chang Ch'i-yün et al., eds. (*Yang-ming-shan*, 1962), ch. 90, p. 19b.

²⁰ Serruys, *Sino-Jurchen relations*, p. 26.

among its northern neighbors.²¹ Korea was itself a participant in the Ming tributary system and valued Ming protection against the northern tribes, but it also sought to draw the Jurchens on its northern borders into its own orbit. Like the Ming, the Korean rulers conferred ranks on the Jurchen chiefs and received Jurchen envoys at court. In some cases Korea even provided monetary stipends to Jurchen chiefs who accepted formal recognition from Korea. Members of the Jurchen elite, and later Jurchen commoners, also served in the Korean royal bodyguard.

Ming embassies sent to the Jurchens usually stopped in the Korean capital before going farther, expecting and usually receiving a Korean official to accompany the embassy to its final destination. This approach served notice to both Korea and the Jurchens that Jurchen allegiance to the Ming was on a higher level than their relationship with Korea. In spite of complying with Ming expectations, the Korean government was apprehensive over Ming penetration into the area to the north, claiming that “its throat was strangled and its right arm held” when the Ming emperor founded the Chien-chou Guard to the northwest of Korea’s borders.²² Overall the Chien-chou Jurchens remained loyal to the Ming, but recognition of Jurchen chiefs did not insure peaceful borders for either the Ming or Korea. Moreover, Ming insistence that its Jurchen and Korean vassals discontinue their relationship with each other was only sporadically obeyed.

When the Chien-chou Jurchens retreated once more toward the Korean border – this time due to a Mongol invasion into Liao-tung around 1450 – their arrival there coincided with a new Korean policy which actively courted the Jurchens. The Korean-Chien-chou relationship recovered, and increasing numbers of Jurchens again went to the Korean court to receive titles and rewards for being vassals of Korea. Later, however, Jurchen border raids provoked renewed conflicts.

In 1467, a joint Korean-Ming counterattack against the raiding Jurchen resulted in the death of Li-Man-chu and his son. Unable to recover from this event, Li-Man-chu’s lineage fell into obscurity. Cungšan was assassinated by Ming agents that same year, but even though the Ming reinstated his son as leader of the Chien-chou Left Guard, Chien-chou Jurchens’ power was severely weakened. After a second joint Korean-Ming campaign in 1478, major hostilities between the Chien-chou Jurchens and Ming ceased. The Ming government once again invited them to acknowledge

²¹ For an excellent study on Jurchen-Korean relations, see Kawachi Yoshihiro, *Mindai joshinshi no kenkyū*, ch. 8, pp. 267–337; ch. 10–12, pp. 365–452; ch. 16, pp. 539–60; and ch. 19–20, pp. 657–716.

²² Serruys, *Sino-Jurchen relations*, p. 56.

Ming suzerainty and participate in the tribute system. For several decades the Jurchens did not produce powerful leaders, though border raids continued to increase.

Mongol developments and their impact on the Jurchens

Aside from their involvements with Ming and Korean interests and interventions, the Jurchens were intertwined with Mongol alliances and hostilities. After the fall of the Yüan dynasty in 1368, the Mongols split into three main groups: the nomadic Western Mongols or Oirats (Oyirods), the Uriyangkad in the northeast, and the Eastern Mongols or Tatars between the two. The Uriyangkad, the Jurchens' most immediate neighbors, inhabited the area extending from the Shira Muren River (Hsi-la-mu-lun ho) in the south to the upper Sungari in the northeast and the Greater Khinghan Mountains in the west. Because this was the area the Ming troops traversed on their way to defeat Nahacu in 1387 and 1388, they sought and obtained the allegiance of the Uriyangkad. They organized them into three guards: the Dö-en (To-yen), T'ai-ning, and Fu-yü Guards, collectively referred to as the Three Guards (*San-wei*). When the Uriyangkad subsequently supported the future Yung-lo emperor in his struggle to win the throne, the Ming moved the Jehol Regional Military Commission closer to Peking, abolished the garrison system in Liao-hsi, and invited the Uriyangkad to settle in Liao-hsi (on the upper Lao-ha River). This change neglected the importance of Liao-hsi for the security of North China and Manchuria, and removed from Jehol the Ming defense structure which protected the route leading from the Hsi-feng and the Ku-pei Passes (Ku-pei k'ou) to the northeast.²³

From their new base the Three Guards participated in the horse markets at Kuang-ning and K'ai-yüan and brought tribute to the Ming court. They also undertook periodic raids into Ming and Jurchen territories and became entangled in the wars between the Ming and the Eastern and the Western Mongols, at different times joining one side or the other. After 1431 Mongol power shifted from the Eastern to the Western Mongols, whose leader Esen (Yeh-hsien; r. 1430–54) united the various Mongols and, with the participation of the Uriyangkad, invaded Ming territory. Since 1408 the Western Mongols had maintained an on-again off-again tribute relationship with the Ming. But disputes over the size and frequency of Mongol missions led to conflicts. In 1449, complaining about defective goods in the tribute trade and hoping for still greater profits, Esen defeated the Ming army at T'u-mu, captured the emperor, and threatened Peking. However, Esen was more inter-

²³ Lin, *Manchuria in the Ming empire*, pp. 10–13.

ested in economic gain than in conquest, and so withdrew. A year later he sent the emperor back and resumed regular tribute relations. About 1450 the Western Mongols invaded Liao-tung, devastated Hai-hsi territory, and killed many of the local leaders. The Chien-chou Jurchens managed to evade the Mongol threat by temporarily moving back toward the Korean border.

Following Esen's death in 1454 – he was assassinated for his audacity in assuming the title of Great Khan (*kbagan*)²⁴ – power shifted back to the Eastern Mongols, who reasserted their leadership under Batu Möngke (c. 1464–1532), a legitimate heir to the Yüan emperors. Though Batu Möngke, commonly known as Dayan Khan,²⁵ threatened Ming border areas with almost yearly raids and attacked the environs of Peking in 1523, internal disunity prevented the Eastern Mongols from posing a serious threat. After Batu Möngke's death, the title of Great Khan remained with the Chahar tribe, but power was not in the hands of the holder of this title. The leaders of Batu Möngke's subdivisions, which he had organized into a right and left flank, each consisting of smaller units, became independent. The result was a proliferation of new tribal names among the Eastern Mongols, which besides the Chahars included the Ordos, Tümed, Karachins, Korchins, and the Five Khalkas.²⁶ The Uriyangkad lost their existence as a distinct group. Their Fu-yü were absorbed by the Korchins after these moved to the Nonni River, and the two other Uriyangkad, the Dö-en and the T'ai-ning, were absorbed by the Five Khalkas.

Power shifted to the Tümed tribe, which was based in Jehol. Under their leader, Altan Khan (1507–82), the Tümed expanded their power by leading successful campaigns into Tibet, Turfan, Dzungaria, and Ming territory. They recaptured Karakorum, the former Mongolian imperial capital, from the Western Mongols. Between 1548 and 1571 Altan Khan raided Ming nearly every year, invading Ta-t'ung in 1548 and marauding near Peking around 1551. He also repeatedly solicited peace with the Ming. Mongol overtures were commonplace throughout the Ming and rarely sincere, but Altan Khan's conversion to Tibetan Buddhism and his reliance on Chinese advisors in his newly built city of Huhehot (also known as Köke khota or Kui-hua ch'eng)

²⁴ Following the Yüan dynasty, only direct descendents of Chinggis Khan, that is, from sons or nephews on the male side, could hold the title khan and become the leader of all Mongols. Power holders therefore usually picked a suitable candidate from this group, someone who was beholden to them, to serve as legitimate but nominal leader. For Esen, who was not a legitimate heir, the breach of this tradition led to his death.

²⁵ The name Dayan is derived from Ta Yüan, referring to the Great Yüan Dynasty.

²⁶ The Five Khalkas are also called the Inner Khalkas. They are not to be confused with the Khalkas of northern Mongolia. The Five Khalkas emerged when the five sons of one of Batu Möngke's sons divided their heritage. Li, *Ch'ing tai ch'üan shih*, pp. 206–7; David M. Farquhar, "The origin of the Manchus' Mongolian policy," *The Chinese world order: Traditional China's foreign relations*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), p. 330, n. 1.

may have made him more inclined toward a settled life. A 1571 peace treaty with the Ming earned Altan Khan the title of Obedient Prince (Shun-i wang) as well as trade privileges for the Tümed and Ordos Mongols. But following his death in 1582, the Tümed's dominations of other tribes fell apart.

Altan Khan's activities had an impact on the Jurchens. Getting out of harm's way when Altan Khan went to conquer Karakorum, Tümen Khan (T'u-man; r. 1558–92), leader of the Chahars and legitimate Chinggisid heir, in 1552 led his people eastward over the Greater Khingan Mountains to pastures in Manchuria. From there Tümen Khan fought Altan Khan, and, with the support of Jurchens and Altan's brother, leader of the Karachin Mongols, invaded Liao-tung and Ming territory. Fortunately for the Jurchens, the Chahar khan's overlordship over the other Mongols, limited under Tümen Khan, disappeared under his son's rule. The last legitimate Mongol great khan was Tümen's grandson, Ligdan (r. 1603–34). Ligdan tried to revive the khanate of the Eastern Mongols, but even though a new Jurchen threat in the northeast made the Ming government eager to maintain an alliance with him, Ligdan's unpopularity among the Mongols led to his downfall and eventually to the loss of Mongol independence.

Jurchen cultural concepts

Besides feeling the effects of Mongol political rivalries, the Jurchens' cultural orientation overlapped, to some degree, that of the Mongols.²⁷ Jurchen chiefs generally lived by traditions that reflected the pastoral culture of the early steppe peoples, the Khitans, and more recently, the Mongols. These included pride in horsemanship, archery, falconry, the battue (shaving the hair on the front of the head and wearing queues²⁸ behind), and shamanic cults. Superimposed on these was a belief in a supreme sky god (*abka-i enduri*, *abka-i han*, or simply *abka*), identified with the Turco-Mongolian *tengri*, and much later with the Chinese *t'ien* (heaven).²⁹ The idea of a universal monarch, mandated by Heaven, though it might have been originally developed through Chinese influence on Inner Asia, also came through the Mongolian filter. The founder of the Yüan dynasty, Chinggis, was called *tengri-yin jayaγatu*, "destined by

²⁷ This section draws on David M. Farquhar, "The origin of the Manchus' Mongolian policy," *The Chinese world order: Traditional China's foreign relations*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 199–205; see also Farquhar, "Mongolian versus Chinese elements in the early Manchu state," *Ch'ing-shih wen-t'i*, 2, No. 6 (June 1971), pp. 11–23.

²⁸ For a general article on queues, see Kurakichi Shiratori, "The queue among the peoples of North Asia," *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Tōyō Bunko*, 4 (1929), pp. 1–69.

²⁹ For a discussion on the characteristics of the Turco-Mongolian tradition of rulership, see Joseph F. Fletcher, "Turco-Mongolian tradition in the Ottoman empire," *Studies in Chinese and Islamic Inner Asia* (Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, 1984), ch. 7.

Heaven,” a direct model for the later term *abka-i fulingga*, referring to Nurhaci’s reign title.

The most striking example of the Jurchens borrowing from the culture of the steppe was in the realm of language. Jurchen language is affiliated with the Tungusic branch of the Altaic language family. The early Jurchens adapted the Khitan script to write their own language. Literary Jurchen died out soon after the fall of the Chin dynasty in the thirteenth century, but spoken Jurchen remained current as the lingua franca of the Manchurian region. For correspondence and record keeping, Jurchen chiefs used Mongolian, though some records, both commercial and governmental, were kept in Chinese with the aid of Chinese scribes.³⁰ It was not until the end of the sixteenth century that associates of Nurhaci adapted the Mongolian alphabet to write Jurchen and thus created a new Jurchen literary language, which became known as Manchu.

Even prior to the adaptation of the Mongolian script, the Jurchen language contained many words and concepts of Mongol origin. An estimated 20–30 percent of the Manchu vocabulary is of Mongolian origin.³¹ The large proportion of Mongolian terminology related to Jurchen political institutions, concepts, and titles reflects the Mongol orientation of Jurchen political culture. Expressions such as *doro*, meaning “government, way,” which translates the Chinese *tao*, and *doro šajin*, “the laws ordained by heaven,” are borrowed from Mongolian *törö šasin* or *törö šajin*, a concept which sees the world divided into secular and religious spheres.

Both Mongols and Jurchens used the title *han* for the leaders of a political entity, large or small, whether referring to the Chinese emperor (*buang-ti*) or to the heads of their appanages. And Jurchen chiefs, and later the Manchus, used various Mongolian titles for their princes and officials. For example, when a particularly powerful chief succeeded in expanding his power, he might distinguish himself from lesser leaders by assuming the title of *beile* (“prince, nobleman”), cognate with Mongolian *beki* and Turkish *beg* or *bey*. The Jurchens also borrowed the system of dividing officials into two classes: the great ministers or high officials (Mo. *sayid*; Ma. *amban*), and regular officials (Mo. *tüsimel*; Ma. *hafan*), and of reckoning time by combining names of colors and animals.³²

³⁰ A 1444 declaration from Jurchen chiefs stated that “in these forty commandries there is nobody who has a command of the Jurchen script and we request that in the future the Tatar (= Mongol) script be used in all documents.” Serruys, *The Mongols and Ming China*, p. 141.

³¹ Nicholas Poppe, *Introduction to Altaic linguistics* (Wiesbaden, 1965), pp. 160–1.

³² Examples of other terms taken from Mongolian: *baturu* (Mo. Bayatur) “hero,” *jargūci* (Mo. jarγuci) “judge,” *taiji* (Mo. tayiji) “male member of the family of Chinggis khan, a noble,” *biya* (Mo. kiya) “guard,” *baksi* (Mo. baysi) “teacher, literary advisor to the ruler,” and *elcin* (Mo. elci(n)), “envoy, messenger.”

Like the Mongols and the Turks, the Jurchens did not observe a law of primogeniture or other regular principles of succession. According to tradition, any capable son or nephew could be chosen to become leader, though in practice, he was ordinarily expected to be one of the deceased ruler's sons. As far as possible, the ruler would try to predetermine the choice during his lifetime, but there was no way to avoid infighting or at least tension among his heirs, with likely candidates forming coalitions of personal supporters and sometimes trying to hasten their father's demise so as to ensure the desired outcome. At a ruler's death, a fast-moving candidate might insure his own accession by killing off his rivals in order to preserve the beileship for himself. Not uncommonly tribes dissolved in succession struggles, sometimes never to be reunited.

After a ruler emerged, no matter how crafty the manipulation or how intense the pressure applied to obtain the position, he likely had to depend – at least initially – on some kind of consultative rule. Often the collegial rule was short-lived, lasting only until the ruler was able to consolidate his power. Confederal decision making among several tribes, on the other hand, was a commonly used strategy when undertaking mutually beneficial warfare, either for defense or attack.

Jurchen social organization

During Ming times the Jurchen people lived in social units that were subclans (*mukūn* or *bala mukūn*) of ancient clans (*bala*).³³ Theoretically Jurchens acquired their clan membership at birth, whereas their subclan depended on their place of residence. But by the Ming period the *bala* were mostly forgotten and the *mukūn* became the primary clan identification. Whether *bala* or *mukūn*, members of Jurchen clans shared a consciousness of a common ancestor and were led by a head man (*mukūnda*). Not all clan members were blood related. If households moved away, they might either join another existing subclan or establish a new one, in which case they would no longer consider themselves related to the earlier lineage. Thus, the Odoli and Huligai, who recognized a common ancestor, could marry into each other's clan after their subdivision. Later, Möngke Temür's clan divided into two sections, one under Fanca, the other under Cungšan. A similar process of division occurred in many clans.

Often the emergence of new clans was accompanied by a disintegration of existing clans. When a ruler made conquests, the conquered people became

³³ For this section on Jurchen clans I have relied on Li, *Ch'ing tai ch'üan shih*, Vol. 1, pp. 31–8. Also see Pamela Crossley, *The Manchus* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 24–33; and Ch'en Wen-shih, "The creation of the Manchu niru," *Chinese Studies in History*, 14, No. 4 (Summer 1981), pp. 18–24.

members of his clan. In this case their own clan name continued to have significance for marriage and ancestral sacrifices, but they were part of the ruler's clan when organizing for activities. In some cases, an outsider taken into a clan could become that clan's leader. In the region's multiethnic environment this meant that Mongol chiefs at times headed Jurchen clans. The loose structure of the clans suggests that this social unit was evolving into a geographically based group, a trend which was further accelerated by the Ming policy of appointing the clan headmen as guard officers.

Jurchen households (*boo*) lived as families (*booigon*), consisting of five to seven blood-related family members and a number of slaves, usually people from other ethnic groups who had been captured during raids. Though each household owned land independently, they formed squads (*tatan*) to engage in tasks related to hunting and food gathering. For overall coordination of large-scale activities, such as wars or raids, temporary companies (*niru*; literally "arrow") were formed. Both the squads and the companies chose leaders (*tatan-i da* and *niru-i ejen*) for the duration of their tasks.

During early Ming, the Jurchens lived in villages (*gašan*) and continued their traditional hunting and gathering practices while also engaging in agriculture, as seen from their expanding purchases of farm implements and oxen. However, most of the people who worked Jurchen fields were not Jurchens, but Korean and Chinese slaves who had been captured during raids across the Korean and Chinese borders. The connection between Jurchen military activities and an agriculture maintained by slave labor accounted for the simultaneous development of their traditional and agricultural economic sectors. It also accounted for the development of towns. By the mid-sixteenth century, fortified towns and villages with protective earth walls (*boton* or *becen*) were common.

Trade and tribute

Because succession was contestable due to the lack of a tradition of primogeniture, Jurchen chiefs sought to receive titles from the Ming or Korean governments in order to bolster their legitimacy over rival claimants to power. They also vied for imperial gifts and the right to trade.³⁴ When extending official recognition to Jurchen leaders as guard officials, the Ming

³⁴ For two basic essays on the Chinese tribute system, see Mark Mancall, "The Ch'ing tribute system: An interpretive essay," *The Chinese world order: Traditional China's foreign relations*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 63–89; and Joseph F. Fletcher, "China and Central Asia," *The Chinese world order* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 206–24. An old but still useful article in English is T. C. Lin's "Manchuria trade and tribute in the Ming Dynasty: A study of Chinese theories and methods of control over border peoples," *Nankai Social and Economic Quarterly*, 9, No. 4 (January 1937), pp. 855–92.

government presented them with printed patents (Ma. *ejebe*; Chin. *ch'ib-shu*). These credentials appointed the holder to a specific position and also served as identification at the border when they entered China for a tribute mission. Jurchen chiefs who acknowledged Ming suzerainty were expected to visit the capital with a certain number of men and at certain intervals to make symbolic presentations of local products. In return they received gifts, usually far exceeding the value of their tribute goods. They were also allowed to trade in the capital for a given number of days, and along the route during their journey.

During the early fifteenth century (1403–35), the Ming court actively encouraged Jurchen leaders to come to the capital to bring tribute. As long as someone had an official seal, there was no limit on the number of people he could bring. Intense Jurchen interest in trade led the Ming to implement restrictions and introduce patents to try to control the frequency and size of Jurchen tribute missions. The number of Jurchen missions continued to increase as Jurchens changed names or titles on the patents and used them repeatedly in order to overcome the restrictions. During the Ch'eng-hua period (1465–87) Chien-chou missions arrived with eight or nine hundred people, in some years bringing over one thousand. Some Hai-hsi missions came with nearly two thousand people. Such practices led the Ming to deny further entries once a given number of people per patent had entered from a given guard. The effect of this change was an escalation of internal fights over patents, as each Jurchen leader sought to maximize the number of patents under his control.

Apart from the right to lead tribute missions and control the accompanying tribute trade, Ming official recognition meant access to border markets. In 1405, two years after the creation of the Chien-chou Guard, the Ming government opened three horse markets in Liao-tung, two bimonthly ones for the Uriyangkad at Kuang-ning and K'ai-yüan, and two monthly markets for the Jurchens, also at K'ai-yüan, but in locations different from the Uriyankhad market. Not only in the political sphere, but also in the economic sphere, the Ming government adhered to a policy of "divide and rule" by establishing separate markets for separate groups. The time restrictions were later abandoned so that by the late sixteenth century markets were held nearly every day.³⁵

Except for the the two Uriyangkad markets, which were closed from 1449 to 1478 as punishment for the Uriyangkads having joined Oirat invasions

³⁵ For a detailed account of the Liao-tung border markets for the Mongols and Jurchens, see Serruys, *Trade relations: The horse fairs (1400–1600)*.

into China, the Jurchen markets remained open into the seventeenth century. In the beginning K'ai-yüan was the only trade center for Jurchen traders, but in the 1460s the Chien-chou Jurchens were granted a separate market at Fu-shun. Located in the heart of Liao-tung and close to their home base on the Hun (Hun ho) and Suksuhu Rivers, the Fu-shun market offered the Chien-chou Jurchens excellent trade profits and accelerated their familiarity with Chinese ways. In 1576 another three markets were opened for them at Ch'ing-ho, Ai-yang and K'uan-tien (places southeast of Shen-yang), multiplying the advantages. No other Jurchen group had more than one or two markets.³⁶

When the horse markets were first opened during the Yung-lo reign (1403–24), the Ming government had an extreme need for military and postal relay horses. Besides horses, the Jurchens sold camels, furs (sable, leopard, bear, tiger, deer, roebuck, fox, lynx, otter), wax, honey, mushrooms, lumber, ginseng, gold, silver, pearls (including the precious freshwater pearls – *tana*), walrus teeth, copper, mercury, cinnabar, and *songkon*, a much-admired gerfalcon known in Chinese as *hai-tung-ch'ing*. In return for these goods, the Jurchens acquired foodstuff (grain, pigs, sheep, and salt), textiles, iron implements, and as time went by more farm oxen and agricultural tools. Luxury items received from the Ming court as return gifts were commonly exchanged for more ordinary goods.

Officially the Ming disallowed the trade of weapons, ironware, copper cash, and certain silks. But Jurchens routinely requested and obtained pots and other implements made of iron and copper. Even when special restrictions were announced on iron, as was occasionally the case because the Ming authorities feared that these objects would be melted down and turned into weapons, the Jurchens did not seem to have had much difficulty purchasing them through unofficial channels, both from China and Korea. The Jurchens had their own blacksmiths who supplied soldiers with arrowheads made from iron. After the Ming military's most urgent need for horses was satisfied by the 1420s, the horse markets developed into government-sponsored markets, where the government collected taxes from both sides, but then returned some of the money to the Jurchens in the form of gifts.³⁷

Toward the end of the fifteenth century, profits from an expanding sable trade greatly increased the Jurchens' profits. Sable became a fashion item, first at the Ming and Korean courts, then among the broader elite in both countries. By 1500, sable was a main item of trade between the Jurchens and China and Korea, and its volume continued to increase. In 1583, 47,243 pelts

³⁶ Lin, "Manchuria trade and tribute in the Ming dynasty," pp. 867–70. ³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 876.

were said to have been traded within a six-month period.³⁸ Sable, along with ginseng, presented the Jurchens with an export product that was handsomely priced in relation to the goods they desired themselves.

The flourishing Jurchen trade had several important effects. Trade profits possible outside the tribute system meant that economic opportunities were no longer restricted to patent-holding chiefs. Anybody could accumulate wealth, and thereby power, and aspire to political leadership. Many apparently did. "Brigands and freebooters appeared everywhere, like (swarms of) honeybees. All of them, acclaiming themselves khans, beiles, or ambans, made themselves rulers of every village and heads of every clan and warred against one another."³⁹ As a result of this development, Jurchen society in the more southerly portions of Manchuria became more differentiated than it had been when group hunting was the major pursuit. There were now rich and poor Jurchens, with the rich increasingly residing in the new fortified towns. Trade profits also enabled the Jurchens to buy more weapons, which in turn meant more effective raids, more captives, and more manpower for the fields.

The sable trade also broadened the Chien-chou Jurchens' contact with the northern Jurchen tribes because high-quality black sable came from Siberia and the Amur River. Connections established and knowledge gained about the northern regions benefited Nurhaci when he later incorporated the Wild Jurchens into his expanding empire. Nurhaci may also have benefited from a growing desire among the Jurchen merchants for a strong administrative power that could deal successfully with the instability of trade conditions.⁴⁰

New Jurchen power through confederation building

A weakening tribal and clan cohesion in the ethnically diverse south made it easier for successful Jurchen chiefs to build confederations that cut across tribal and clan lines. By the mid-sixteenth century, following several decades of a rather murky Jurchen history, the Ming guard structure had mostly disappeared and two Jurchen confederations appeared. The Hai-hsi Jurchens, after having been devastated during the Mongol invasion following the T'u-mu incident in 1450, had moved south to areas north and east of T'ieh-ling and were known as the Hūlun confederation, or the Four Hūlun States

³⁸ Yoshihiro Kawachi, "Ming dynasty sable trade in Northeast Asia," *Proceedings of the 35th Permanent International Altaistic Conference, September 12-17, 1992, Taipei, China*, ed. Ch'en Chieh-hsien (Taipei, 1993), p. 193.

³⁹ *Man-chou shih-lu* (ca. 1780, rpt. Taipei, 1964), pp. 20-1. Refers to 1569, when Nurhaci was 10 years old.

⁴⁰ Yoshihiro, "Ming dynasty sable trade in Northeast Asia," p. 197.

(*Hu-lun ssu-kuo*).⁴¹ The Chien-chou confederates, who continued to live to the east of Liao-tung and north of the Yalu River, incorporated five Jurchen groups.

Each of the Four Hūlun States, the Ula⁴² (Wu-la), Hoifa (Hui-fa), Yehe (Ye-ho), and Hada (Ha-ta), occupied a certain district (*golo*), often named after a river. Each was ruled by a subclan belonging to the Nara (Na-la) clan. Established in 1403 on the Hulan River north of Harbin as one of the earliest guards recognized by the Ming government, the Ula continued to be the northernmost tribe within the Hai-hsi group even after they moved south to the region around Kirin. The Hoifa were founded by members of a clan from a different tribe, but, for some reason, they were invited to join the Nara clan. The Yehe tribe was founded by a Tūmed Mongol who conquered a Nara-ruled tribe, adopted the surname Nara and established his realm on the banks of the Yehe River (Ye-ho ho) south of Ch'ang-ch'un. Living to the south of the Yehe, east of K'ai-yüan, the Hada were the southernmost of the Hai-hsi.

In 1548 Wang T'ai (also called Wan; d. 1582)⁴³ succeeded as chieftain of the Hada and asserted his hegemony over the Four Hūlun States. He contracted various intertribal marriage ties with both Jurchens and Mongols, and warred energetically to expand his state. Not content with the title of beile, he adopted the grander one of khan and enlarged his khanate so that it came to include not only the Hada, Ula, Yehe, and Hoifa, but also the Hunehe (Hun River) tribe of the Chien-chou Jurchens. Holding all of the Hai-hsi patents, Wang T'ai maintained good relations with the Ming court, which supported him as an ally to help them contain the Mongols and other Jurchens.

After Wang T'ai's death in 1582, Hada control over the Four Hūlun States diminished. The corruption of Wang T'ai's eldest son caused widespread disaffection among his allies and provided an opportunity for two Yehe brothers (Cinggiyanu [Ch'ing-chi-nu or Ch'eng-chia-nu], d. 1584; and Yangginu [Yang-chi-nu or Yang-chia-nu], d. 1584) to assert their leadership. The two detached the Yehe and Ula tribes from Hada control and founded a new Yehe confederation. Recognizing Yehe independence from the Hada, the Ming government gave them separate border markets. From then on the Yehe did business at the North Customs Barrier (Chen-pei-kuan, or Pei-kuan), northeast of K'ai-yüan, and the Hada traded at the South Customs Barrier

⁴¹ Earlier the Hai-hsi Jurchens were also known as Hu-la-wen, or Hu-lan Jurchens, because their first guard was on the Hulan River, north of Harbin.

⁴² The word *ula* means "river" in Manchu. By itself *ula* refers to the upper Sungari River around Kirin, which is where the Ula people lived.

⁴³ Biography in *ECCP*, pp. 799–800.

(Kuang-shun-kuan, or Nan-kuan). Though holding separate markets for different Jurchens or Mongol groups was part of the Ming political strategy of divide and rule, the effect was counterproductive when applied to the subgroups of the Hūlun confederation. The division of the Hūluns made them a less effective balance against the growing power of the Chien-chou confederation.

Under the leadership of Wang Kao (d. 1575), a contemporary of Wang T'ai, the Chien-chou confederation consisted of the Suksuhu River tribe, the Hunehe tribe, the Wanggiya, Donggo, and Jecen tribes. A few other tribes, such as the Neyen (Nei-yen) and Jušeri (Chu-sheh-li) along the Long White Mountain and the Yalu River tribes, had become distinct entities but were still considered Chien-chou Jurchens. A powerful leader, Wang Kao frequently allied himself with Mongols to harass the Liao-tung frontier. But when he captured and killed the Ming commander at Fu-shun in 1573, he provoked a counterattack during which the Ming military burned Wang Kao out of his fort and killed over a thousand of his followers. Wang Kao fled to Hada territory, where Wang T'ai seized him and handed him over to the Ming general Li Ch'eng-liang (1526–1618),⁴⁴ who executed Wang Kao in 1575.

After Wang Kao's death the Chien-chou confederation fell apart, but within the Suksuhu River tribe several leaders stood ready to take his place. Among them were Wang Kao's son Atai (A-t'ai), Nikan Wailan (Ni-k'an Wai-lan; d. 1586),⁴⁵ and Giocangga (Chüeh-ch'ang-an or Chiao-ch'ang; d. 1583), chief of Beiles of the Sixes (Ma. *Ningguta-i Beile*; Chin. *Liu wang*), who occupied Hetu Ala⁴⁶ on the upper Suksuhu River. Even though only a secondary chieftain under Wang Kao, Giocangga was an established leader who frequented the Fushun market as official delegation leader.⁴⁷

In 1582, when Atai plundered Ming territory, Nikan Wailan hoped to advance his own fortune. He persuaded the Ming commanders to join him in an attack against Atai. Li Ch'eng-liang and Nikan Wailan proceeded against Atai's Fort Gure (Ku-le) in 1583. In the meantime, Giocangga seems to have played both sides. Though secretly allied with Li Ch'eng-liang, he now feared for his granddaughter, who was married to Atai. Taking his fourth son Taksi (T'a-k'o-shih or T'a-shih) with him, Giocangga hurried to Gure. During the ensuing battle Giocangga and Taksi, along with the fort's inhabitants, were massacred.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 450–2. ⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 591–2. ⁴⁶ Near Yung-ling in Liaoning Hsin-pin County.

⁴⁷ Giocangga's name appears in Ming records on Fu-shun market activities. Wang Wei-pang, comp., *Ming-tai Liao-tung tang-an hui-pien* (Shen-yang, 1985), Vol. 2, pp. 809, 812, 814.

With the Chien-chou Jurchens weakened by this fighting and the Hada disrupted by a succession struggle following Wang T'ai's death in 1582, the Yehe tried to rebuild the Hūlun confederation under their own leadership. But when they invaded Hada territory, Li Ch'eng-liang, in the spirit of supporting the weak and controlling the strong, assisted the Hada, assassinated the two Yehe brothers, and invaded the Yehe. However, substantial losses in his own ranks forced Li to withdraw. Though another Ming attack on the Yehe in 1588 ended in a similar stalemate, Li Ch'eng-liang's actions prevented the revitalization of the Hūlun confederation and gave Nurhaci, Taksi's eldest son, the chance to tip the balance in favor of the Chien-chou Jurchens.

NURHACI: FORGING A MANCHU POLITY

From Nurhaci's rise to the conquest of Liao-tung (1583–1619)

The background of Nurhaci

While the Hada and Ming troops feuded with the Yehe, Nurhaci sought revenge against Nikan Wailan for having caused his father's and grandfather's deaths. Starting out with thirteen sets of armor left by his father and a core of Chien-chou Jurchens from the Suksuhu River tribe, Nurhaci gradually expanded his power by creating a Manchu nation-at-arms. The term Manchu (*manju*) occurs in the records of Nurhaci's time.⁴⁸ However, it was formally adopted only in 1635.⁴⁹ At the risk of being anachronistic, this chapter uses "Manchu" to refer to the political entity Nurhaci was constructing and to persons central to that effort.

According to later, Ch'ing dynasty sources, Nurhaci belonged to the Aisin Gioro (Ai-hsin chüeh-lo) clan. Nurhaci also claimed to be a descendant of Möngke Temür, whose clan name was T'ung.⁵⁰ The oddity of belonging to two clans is not explained. Based on recent research, Nurhaci was probably not a T'ung because the two figures (Sibaoci Fiyanggū [Hsi-pao-ch'i pien-ku] and Fuman [Fu-man]) who were to have connected Nurhaci's

⁴⁸ In the old Manchu documents, the term *manju* first occurs in an entry for 1613: *Chiu Man-chou tang*, Vol. 1, p. 81; Kanda Nobuo et al., *Mambun Rōiō* (Tokyo, 1955–63), Vol. 1, p. 37. However, according to Huang Chang-chien the term *manju* was already used in a 1605 Korean report. See Chang's "Man-chou kuo kuo hao k'ao," *BIHP*, 37, No. 2 (1967), p. 468. The early significance of the term has not been established satisfactorily.

⁴⁹ *Chiu Man-chou tang*, Vol. 9, p. 4509; *Chiu Man-chou tang: T'ien-tsung chiu nien*, trans. Kanda Nobuo et al. (Tokyo, 1972), Vol. 2, p. 318.

⁵⁰ According to a diary kept by a Korean visitor to Fe Ala in 1596, Nurhaci signed as "T'ung Nurhaci" in a communication to the Korean king. Shin Chung-il, *Kōnju jichōng dorōk*, Vol. 6 of *Ch'ing shih tzu liao, K'ai kuo shih liao* (3) (Taipei, 1971), p. 20.

grandfather Giocangga to Möngke Temür's son, Cungšan, seem to have been fictitious.⁵¹ Nurhaci signed his name as T'ung a few times, but did so only during the time he was establishing himself as leader of the Chien-chou Jurchens when it was advantageous to appear as heir to Möngke Temür. Moreover, he did so only vis-à-vis Korea and the Ming. No evidence has been found which would prove that Nurhaci referred to his T'ung lineage when addressing his fellow Jurchens.⁵² There is little doubt that Nurhaci was a Gioro, though at the time of his birth probably not an Aisin Gioro. Most likely Nurhaci started a new clan after he became powerful, probably some time around 1612.⁵³ He named this clan Aisin Gioro. He used the word "gold" (Ma. *aisin*; Chin. *chin*), which alluded to the earlier Jurchen dynasty, for his clan as well as for the name of his new state, the later Chin dynasty.

Due to the untimely deaths of his grandfather and his father, Nurhaci, like Chinggis Khan and Tamerlane, got an early start on his own career. Born in 1559, he lost his mother when he was young, and for a time he made a living by collecting ginseng and cones and selling them in the Fu-shun market. According to several Chinese sources, Nurhaci lived in the household of the Ming general Li Ch'eng-liang in Fu-shun and accompanied his master on official tours to various places, possibly including Peking. He learned to read Chinese, and from Chinese novels he gained some knowledge of Chinese history and military strategy.⁵⁴

Nurhaci appreciated the value of written language. In 1599 he had two of his advisors create what became the Manchu script by adapting the Mongolian alphabet. Many of the earliest documents written in this script are preserved in the Old Manchu Archives (*Chiu Man-chou tang*), a collection of Manchu documents from 1607 to 1636.⁵⁵ Nurhaci's personal abilities earned him the appellation of Wise Beile (Ma. *sure beile*; Chin. *ts'ung jui wang*). Yet,

⁵¹ For evidence in support of this interpretation, see Li, *Ch'ing tai ch'üan shih*, Vol. 1, pp. 54–8. Li argues that according to Korean sources Cungšan did not have a son named Sibaoci Fiyanggu and that none of the Ming records regarding border trade or tribute missions ever mention Fuman. Nor does a Korean visitor to Nurhaci's residence in 1595/6 seem to have known about Fuman, who as commissioner-in-chief would have been a famous father of Giocangga, who had died only twelve years earlier. Furthermore, when the graves of Nurhaci's ancestors were moved from Hetu Ala to Liaoyang, there is no mention of Fuman. Walter Fuchs, "Frühmandjurische Fürstengräber bei Liao-yang," *Asia Major*, 10 (1934–35), pp. 94–122. Thus, it appears that Nurhaci was probably not a member of the T'ung clan.

⁵² Li, *Ch'ing tai ch'üan shih*, p. 55.

⁵³ Kanda Nobuo suggests that Nurhaci created the name Aisin Gioro in 1616, at the time he formally acceded to the throne. See "A study of 'Aisin Gioro,'" *Contacts between cultures. Selected papers from the 33rd International congress of Asian and North African Studies, Toronto, August 15–25, 1990*, ed. Bernard Hung-Kay Luk (Lewiston, 1992), Vol. 4, pp. 46–9.

⁵⁴ Official Ch'ing sources do not mention Nurhaci's years in Fu-shun. The sources that do contain this information are discussed in Yen Ch'ung-nien, *Nu-erb-ha-ch'ih chuan* (Peking, 1983), pp. 19–22; see also T'eng Shao-chen, *Nu-erb-ha-ch'ih p'ing chuan* (Shen-yang, 1985), pp. 31–7.

⁵⁵ *Chiu Man-chou tang*, foreword by Ch'en Chieh-hsien, 10 vols. (Taipei, 1969).