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journal or publication title	JAPANESE STUDIES AROUND THE WORLD
volume	2020
page range	99-117
year	2021-03-31
その他の言語のタイトル	百年来の中国における万曆朝鮮の役（文禄・慶長の役） 研究の回顧
URL	http://doi.org/10.15055/00007630

A Review of China's Research on the Wanli Korean War in the Past Hundred Years

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Over the past hundred years, the Chinese research approach to the Wanli Korean War has changed from “no emphasis placed on the Wanli Korean War” to “high emphasis placed on it,” from research subject to serious political interference to rigorous academic research, and from research focused specifically on the Ming's participation in the war to research aimed at reaching a comprehensive understanding of the war from various East Asian perspectives. Research results were published mainly in monographs rather than in systematic academic books. Moreover, the research results mainly presented the description of historical facts and a list of historical materials because of a long-standing lack of academic interest. However, since the early 2000s, the number of researchers in this field has increased. They have made extensive use of historical materials from China, Japan, and Choson Korea and have comprehensively advanced the investigation of this topic from the perspectives of East Asia and new cultural history, gradually integrating it into the mainstream of international academic research.

Keywords: Wanli Korean War, Imjin War, Bunroku Keicho's Korean War, Sino-Korean Relations, Ming Dynasty

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The Wanli Korean War lasted for seven years (1592–1598) and had a pivotal influence on the premodern East Asian world. The war has also been a topic of ongoing discussion in academic circles in modern China, Japan, and Korea. Many Japanese and South Korean scholars have engaged in fruitful academic research on this topic, to which they have attached great importance. Not only do the academic journals in the field conduct reviews every year but Japanese and Korean scholars engage in joint research and hold conferences to discuss their research status and existing problems.¹ In China, scholars have been studying the Wanli Korean War since the 1920s, and their accumulated scholarship warrants review. This article will sort out the relevant scholarship of various Chinese academic circles during the past hundred years, listing academic publications according to time period and providing a critical evaluation.

I. Overview of Publications in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

Since the early twentieth century, historical studies in China have been vigorously promoted through the establishment of modern universities and the development of higher education, the introduction of modern subject-based history, and the specialization and institutionalization of academic research. From the early 1900s on, several historical works on Japanese history and the history of Sino-Japanese relations were published to warn the Chinese people about a Japanese military invasion, and these works provided a corresponding narrative for the Wanli Korean War. At the same time, certain essential Ming and Choson historical books, such as Song Yingchang's *Jinglue fuguo yaobian* and Mao Ruizheng's *Wanli sandazheng kao* and *Xuanmiao zhongxin zhi*, were published by academic journals and newspapers.

During the Republican era of Chinese history, Wang Chongwu was the most important scholar of the Wanli Korean War. At the end of 1947, he published “On the Issues of the Wanli Eastern Expedition” in *Jingshi Daily*² as he began his research

1 More than a decade years ago, Japanese and Korean scholars conducted joint research and published relevant papers. 六反田豊 Rokutanda Yutaka, et al., 「文禄・慶長の役」[Bunroku Keicho's Korean War]; 朴哲暎 Park Sil-Kuang, 「壬辰倭乱（文禄・慶長の役）研究の現況と課題」[On the Current Status and Research Issues on the Imjin Japanese Revolt (Bunroku Keicho Korean War)], 『日韓歴史共同研究報告書 第2分科篇』[Japan-Korea History Joint Research Report], Tokyo: 日韓歴史共同研究委員会 [Japan-Korea History Joint Research Committee], 2005.

2 王崇武 Wang Chongwu, 《萬曆東征問題》[On the Issues of the Wanli Eastern Expedition], 《經世日報·讀書週刊》[“Reading Weekly,” in *the Jingshi Daily*], November 26, 1947.

on this war. In 1948, he published four academic papers in the *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology*.³ In “On Reading the ‘Choson Biography’ in *Mingshi*,” he conducted a comparative study of the Qing, officially compiled *Mingshi* and “The Records of the Choson Dynasty,” and pointed out that the *Mingshi* had made many mistakes in recording the histories of foreign countries. He urged that *Mingshi* be compared with foreign history books to expose its fallacies and find the truth, thus emphasizing the importance of other countries’ historical data in the studies of Ming history. This study and other articles by Wang Chongwu, which also use Korean historical records to amend or supplement the records in the *Mingshi* about Ming generals Li Rusong and Yang Gao on the Korean battlefields, had far-reaching implications.

At the same time, Li Guangtao began to publish papers⁴ criticizing the Japanese scholar Masaru Aoki’s viewpoint in “The Figure of Toyotomi Hideyoshi in Chinese Operas and Novels.”⁵ He noted that Masaru Aoki devalued the achievements of the Ming army. Li Guangtao analyzed the Battle of Pyongyang and the Sea Battle of Ryohei using the historical materials of China and Choson Korea to systematically evaluate the achievements of Li Rusong and Deng Zilong in these two battles.

This period before 1949 was the earliest stage in the study of the Wanli Korean War in China. Since China had been in a difficult position during the Japanese military invasion from 1931 to 1945, Chinese scholars often studied the Wanli Korean

3 王崇武 Wang Chongwu, 《讀〈明史·朝鮮傳〉》[On Reading the ‘Choson Biography’ in *Mingshi*], 《中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊》[Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology] 12, 1948, pp. 1–25; 《劉綎征東考》[A Study on Liu Ting’s Eastern Expedition], 《中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊》[Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology] 14, 1948, pp. 137–149; 《李如松征東考》[A Study on Li Rusong’s Eastern Expedition], 《中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊》[Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology] 16, 1948, pp. 343–374; 《論萬曆征東島山之戰及明清薩爾滸之戰：讀〈明史·楊鎬傳〉》[On the Battle of Island Mountain in the Wanli Korean War and the Battle of Saerhu in the Ming and Qing Dynasties: Reading ‘Ming History-Yang Gao Zhuan’], 《中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊》[Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology] 17, 1948, pp. 137–164.

4 李光濤 Li Guangtao, 《朝鮮壬辰倭禍中之平壤戰役與南海戰役：兼論〈中國戲曲小說中的豐臣秀吉〉》[The Battle of Pyongyang and the Battle of the South Sea in the Choson Imjin War: On ‘The Figure of Toyotomi Hideyoshi in Chinese Operas and Novels’], 《中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊》[Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology] 20, 1948, pp. 275–298.

5 青木正兎 Aoki Masaru, 「支那戲曲小説中の豊臣秀吉」[The Figure of Toyotomi Hideyoshi in Chinese Operas and Novels][1927], 『青木正兎全集』[The Complete Works of Masaru Aoki] vol. 7, 春秋社 Shunjū-sha, 1970, pp. 75–81.

War from the perspective of Ming and Qing history, emphasizing the anti-Japanese fighting spirit while narrating historical facts. Wang Chongwu perceptively used Korean historical materials to test many mistakes in the books on Chinese history and clarified the original history. He was a pioneer in the study of the Wanli Korean War in modern China and had great influence.

II. An Overview of Research from 1949 to 1978

The founding of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949, had a crucial impact on the development of Chinese historiography. Moreover, the outbreak of the New Korean War in 1950 forced Chinese scholars to pay considerable attention to the study of the Wanli Korean War because of the similarities between these two wars. In June 1950, Zhou Yiliang published "The Historical Relationship between China and Korea" in *New Construction*,⁶ which traced the history of the Chinese and Korean peoples' fight against foreign aggression. During that period, many published papers focused on Li Rusong's victory in Pyongyang, the victory of Yee Shun-shon's navy, the heroic warfare of the Chinese and Korean coalition forces in the Nolyang Naval Battle, and the protests of the Choson Korean people. Unlike scholarly research during the Republic of China, these studies adopted the perspective of economic and class struggles, and because of the special background of the times, included many political ideas in the text to resist the United States and promote nationalism and patriotism.

In the early 1960s, many papers and books were published. Zhou Yiliang and Li Jingwen each published a book through the *Zhonghua shuju* (Zhonghua Book Company) and the Commercial Press, respectively, in 1962.⁷ Although neither book is long, nor a highly professional academic work, they incorporated the latest research results. In the 1960s and 1970s, Liu Shuren completed a manuscript titled "The Renchen War of Resisting the Japanese," which was not published until 1987. He bequeathed the manuscript to the Yanbian Institute of History, which was published

6 周一良 Zhou Yiliang, 《中國與朝鮮的歷史關係》 [The Historical Relationship between China and Korea], 《新建設》 [New Construction] no. 3, 1950, pp. 25–31.

7 周一良 Zhou Yiliang, 《明代援朝抗倭战争》 [The War of the Ming Assisting Choson Korea and the Resistance Against Japan], Beijing: 中华书局 [Zhonghua Book Company], 1962. 李景温 Li Jingwen, 《朝鲜壬辰卫国战争》 [The Choson Imjin War], Beijing: 商务印书馆 [The Commercial Press], 1962.

in the second volume of *The Studies of Yanbian History*.⁸ Liu Shuren was born in Korea. During the Japanese colonial era, he fled to China with his family and settled down there. In his later years, he specialized in the history of Sino-Korean relations. During the Cultural Revolution, he completed “The Renchen War of Resisting the Japanese.” This is perhaps one of the most important academic works on the Wanli Korean War published in Chinese academic circles in the twentieth century. It contains seven chapters drawn from the historical materials of China, Japan, and Korea elaborating on the causes, course, and influences of the war. At the time, it was rare to find such a broad experience emerging from that rigorous academic environment.

Wu Han was one of the important scholars of the Wanli Korean War. Even though he did not write any paper on this issue, he compiled a series of books titled “Chinese Historical Materials in the Records of the Choson Korean Dynasty,” incorporating years of painstaking effort and bringing convenience and significance to the study of the Wanli Korean War.⁹ This work is an essential historical record for studying the war. However, for a long time, this series was a rare collector’s item in Chinese libraries and is not easy to get. Moreover, this set of books contains many volumes that are very difficult to read through, but the historical materials compiled by Wu Han make up for this shortcoming. This set, which contains twelve volumes, was completely typeset in 1966 but was not officially published by Zhonghua shuju until 1980. The seven years of the Wanli Korean War (1592–1598) take up almost four volumes, accounting for approximately one-third of the set. The books are mainly based on the original historical materials and are occasionally abridged. The text is often accompanied by words of interpretation and labeling added by Wu Han. This series of books not only conveys historical facts but also facilitates those who are not familiar with Korean history and reflects Wu Han’s historical research and observation of events.

Before the 1980s, Li Guangtao was the most important representative in Chinese Taiwan of those scholars studying the Wanli Korean War. In 1948, he published the article mentioned earlier (“The Battle of Pyongyang and the Battle of the South Sea in the Choson Imjin War: On ‘The Figure of Toyotomi Hideyoshi in Chinese Operas and Novels’”), and he continued to study the war, publishing

8 柳树人 Liu Shuren, 《壬辰抗倭战争》[The Renchen War of Resisting the Japanese], 《延边历史研究》[The Studies of Yanbian History] vol. 2, 1987, pp. 1–156.

9 吳晗 Wu Han, 《朝鮮李朝實錄中的中國史料》[Chinese Historical Materials in the Records of the Choson Korean Dynasty], Beijing: 中華書局 [Zhonghua Book Company], 1980.

seventeen papers from 1950 to 1982.¹⁰ Moreover, he published two academic books titled “Materials on Choson Renchen Japanese Harassment”¹¹ and “A Study on Ming’s Giving Toyotomi Hideyoshi a King Seal of Japan on the 23rd Year of Emperor Wanli,”¹² in addition to editing a five-volume book for a collection of the selected original materials from the “Records of the Choson Dynasty” titled “Materials of Choson Renchen Japanese Harassment.” His research covers various topics, such as Song Yingchang, Li Rusong, Yang Gao, Chen Lin, and other Ming generals related to the Battle of Pyongyang, the Battle of Ulsan, and the Battle of Lushan; a study of peace talks between the Ming and Japan; Ding Yingtai’s debates; and the resignation of the descendants of the generals of the Ming Eastern expedition. Li Guangtao’s work deepened the knowledge of the Wanli Korean War. His research, which is mainly based on Korean historical materials, such as “The Records of the Choson King Seon-jo,” “The Corrected Records of the Choson King Seon-jo,” “Choson King Seon-jo’s Promotion,” and others, has considerable academic significance.

After the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, many political movements influenced academic research, including the study of the Wanli Korean War. In the early 1950s, because of the new Korean War, a series of studies were published on the Wanli Korean War, but their practical significance and social influence were greater than their academic significance. Of course, there was also robust scholarship such as Wu Han’s “Chinese Historical Materials in the Records of the Choson Korean Dynasty” and Liu Shuren’s “The Renchen War of Resisting the Japanese,” which had a great influence on future academic research. Li Guangtao was

10 李光濤 Li Guangtao, 《朝鮮“壬辰倭禍”研究》[A Study on the Choson Imjin Disaster of the Japanese], Taipei: 中央研究院歷史語言研究所 [Institute of History and Language, Academia Sinica], 1972; 《朝鮮“壬辰倭禍”與李如松之東征》[The Choson Imjin War and Li Rusong’s Eastern Expedition], 《中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊》[Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology] 22, 1950, pp. 267–297; 《明人援韓與楊鎬蔚山之役》[Ming Soldiers Assisting Choson Korea and Yang Gao’s Uisan Battle], 《中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊》[Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology] 41 (4), 1969, pp. 545–566; 《明人援韓與稷山大捷》[Ming Soldiers Assisting Choson Korea and the Jishan Victory], 《中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊》[Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology] 43 (1), 1971, pp. 1–14.

11 李光濤 Li Guangtao, 《朝鮮“壬辰倭禍”史料》[Materials on Choson Renchen Japanese Harassment], Taipei: 中央研究院歷史語言研究所 [Institute of History and Language, Academia Sinica], 1972.

12 李光濤 Li Guangtao, 《萬曆廿三年封日本國王豐臣秀吉考》[A Study on Ming’s Giving Toyotomi Hideyoshi a King Seal of Japan on the 23rd Year of Emperor Wanli], Taipei: 中央研究院歷史語言研究所 [Institute of History and Language, Academia Sinica], 1972.

the most important scholar of this war in Chinese Taiwan, and his research still has reference value as well.

III. An Overview of Research from 1978 to the Present

After 1978, China implemented a policy of reformation and openness, and since then, academic research in China has been flourishing. With the popularization of electronic resources after 2000, the academic ecology took on new characteristics. As a result, the research can be divided into the following two time periods to introduce relevant academic developments.

A. Academic Trends from 1978 to 2000

In the early 1980s, academic studies of the Wanli Korean War in China began to increase as represented by the work of Yang Zhaoquan. He had long studied the history of Sino-Korean relations, especially the history of major bilateral events. In 1980, he published a paper titled “An Evaluation on the End of the Ming Wanli Korean War,” which marked the beginning of his studies on the topic.¹³ By 1988, he had published eight papers on the nature, causes, endings, tributes, and discussions of this war. He also reviewed North Korean historical achievements and Chinese scholarship, covering the causes and nature of the war from the perspective of Japan, victory or defeat in the Battle of Bitiguan, the reasons for negotiations and the responsible persons in the Ming Dynasty, and the relations between Chinese and Korean soldiers and civilians, all of which had far-reaching influence.¹⁴

From the late 1980s to the 1990s, more and more scholars began to focus on this field of research. The number of published papers increased, and the specific topics of research expanded in scope. Zhao Jianmin published, in 1998, an article focusing on the introduction of Korean Neo-Confucian studies, medical technology, printing, and ceramic technology into Japan both before and after the war, which strengthened

13 杨昭全 Yang Zhaoquan, 《明代援朝御倭战争的结局和评价》[An Evaluation on the End of the Ming Wanli Korean War], 《朝鲜史通讯》[Korean History Communication] 2, 1980, p. 32.

14 杨昭全 Yang Zhaoquan, 《论丰臣秀吉发动朝鲜战争的原因与性质》[On the Causes and Nature of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's Launching the Korean War], 《学术研究丛刊》[Academic Research Series] 3, 1980, pp. 59–66.

Japanese culture and technology during the Edo period and caused them to flourish.¹⁵ In 1989, Wei Xusheng published a book on the study of the famous Choson novel “Records of the Imjin War” from the perspective of literary history to show its unique historical value.¹⁶ In 1990, Wu Fengpei compiled a book titled “A Collection of the Historical Materials of the Imjin War,” which was divided into two volumes, including the following five historical records: *Jinglue fuguo yaobian*, *Liangchao pingrang lu*, *Wanli sandazheng kao*, *Chengbilu*, *Zhengan weilue*. These provide important materials for the study of the Wanli Korean War.¹⁷

After the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea in August 1992, scholarship on the history of Sino-Korean relations prospered. One of the typical topics of interest was the Wanli Korean War. Many textbook-style general history books were published in various fields, such as Ming and Qing history, the history of Sino-Korean relations, Korean history, the history of Sino-Japanese relations, and Japanese history. These texts were published in large numbers, most of which addressed the Wanli Korean War in basically similar ways but from slightly different perspectives.

During this period, the representative scholar in Chinese Taiwan was Professor Zheng Liangsheng from Tamkang University. He was a famous expert on the history of Sino-Japanese relations in the Ming Dynasty. On the basis of Li Guangtao’s research, he promoted the study of the Wanli Korean War in Taiwan. His masterpiece is titled “A Study on Sino-Japanese Relations in the Ming Dynasty: Focusing on Several Issues Seen in the Japanese Biography in Mingshi.”¹⁸ The fifth chapter, in more than 100 pages, focuses on Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s foreign policies and war preparations, the process of the war and negotiations, the effects of the war, and other

15 赵建民 Zhao Jianmin, 《文禄·庆长之役与朝鲜文化的传播》[The Battle of Bunroku Keicho and the Spread of Korean Culture], 《复旦学报》[Journal of Fudan University] 5, 1998, pp. 118–123.

16 韋旭昇 Wei Xusheng, 《〈抗倭演義〉（〈壬辰錄〉）及其研究》[Stories of the Choson Resisting the Japanese Invasion: “Records of the Imjin War” and Its Studies], Taiyuan: 北岳文艺出版社 [Beiyue Literature and Art Publishing House], 1989.

17 吳丰培 Wu Fengpei, 《壬辰之役史料汇编》[A Collection of the Historical Materials of the Imjin War], Beijing: 全国图书馆文献缩微复制中心 [National Library Document Microcopy Center], 1990.

18 鄭樑生 Zheng Liangsheng, 《明代中日關係研究：以明史日本傳所見幾個問題為中心》[A Study on Sino-Japanese Relations in the Ming Dynasty: Focusing on Several Issues Seen in the Japanese Biography in “Mingshi”], Taipei: 文史哲出版社 [Wen Shizhe Publishing House], 1985.

issues. In addition to using the historical materials of China and Choson Korea, he made extensive reference to Japanese diaries, genealogies, document files, et cetera, and attached many Japanese diplomatic documents, maps, and other image data, and widely absorbed Japanese and Korean research results. He was the only scholar on both sides of the Taiwan Strait who could be so skillful at using Japanese and Korean original materials, and who could engage with Japanese and Korean scholars at that time. In addition, he published a twelve-volume set, "A Collection of Studies on the History of Sino-Japanese Relations," which includes articles about the Wanli Korean War.¹⁹

From 1978 to the early 2000s, Chinese research on the Wanli Korean War was characterized by Marxist historiography in the early period, which had inherited the historical research methods common to a time before the Cultural Revolution. In this era, scholars paid attention to class struggles, Sino-Japanese ethnic differences, and traditional friendship, as practical reality was of greater concern than academic exploration. From the mid-1980s to the 1990s, as scholarship bloomed, scholars broke through their original practice of historical and political examination and began to deepen their interest in cultural and economic history, expanding their investigations, and paying attention to exchanges with Japanese and Korean historians, which became an academic trend.

B. Research Trends from 2000 to the Present

Since the early 2000s, with the increasing wealth of electronic resources, many electronic databases in China, Japan, and Korea have become available. Extra-territorial data have become easy to access. A completely different academic ecology has been useful for the study of the Wanli Korean War, which has attracted increasing attention from Chinese scholars, resulting in many new academic studies.

In 2002, Chen Wenshou began to study this topic from the viewpoint of the Tokugawa shogunate to rediscover Japan's position in the Chinese world order, focusing on the negotiation process between Japan and Choson Korea. In the same year, he completed his doctoral thesis, deepening his research. In the following

19 鄭樑生 Zheng Liangsheng, 《明代中韓兩國靖倭政策的比較研究》[A Comparative Study of Suppressing Policies between China and Choson Korea in the Ming Dynasty], and 《壬辰倭亂期間的和談始末》[The Beginning and End of the Peace Talks during the Wanli Korean War], 《中日關係史研究論集》[A Collection of Studies on the History of Sino-Japanese Relations], respectively vol. 8 and 10, Taipei: 文史哲出版社 [Wen Shizhe Publishing House], 1998 and 2000.

decade, he successively published several papers that studied the monastic diplomacy between Japan and Choson Korea, the rise of the Qing Dynasty in East Asia after the Imjin War, and the problem of the desecrated people. In 2013, he published a book titled “From War to Peace: A Study of Japan’s Relations with Ming–Qing China and Choson Korea after the First Korean War.”²⁰ Generally speaking, he studied the war from the perspective of the Chinese world order and modern Japanese foreign relations, pointing out that the Wanli Korean War had a huge impact on the Chinese world order during the Ming Dynasty and continued to have an impact on events even after the establishment of the Qing Dynasty.

Wan Ming has also studied the Wanli Korea War for many years and has published several valuable academic articles.²¹ She noted that the Wanli Korean War was a turning point in the political history of the late Ming Dynasty. She explored the change in the Ming’s foreign policy and the truth of the peace talks to show the deep political crisis in the Ming court, and she concluded that this war was the prelude to the Ming Dynasty’s decline. She discussed the important role that sixty-nine Ming generals played in the war as described in the newly discovered Korean text *Song Jinglue Shu*. At the same time, she considered the currency transformation after Zhang Juzheng’s reform as the background for her study and used silver as a central element in her analysis of the financial problems of the wartime Ming Dynasty. She discovered that throughout the war, the Ming Dynasty invested more than 20 million *yuan* in silver, which laid a solid economic basis for the final victory in the war.

Chen Shangsheng published a paper in 2008 on the reaction of the Ming Dynasty to the war and pointed out that the tributary system played an active role in

20 陈文寿 Chen Wenshou, 《从战争走向和平：第一次朝鲜战争后日本与中国和朝鲜关系研究》 [From War to Peace: A Study of Japan’s Relations with Ming–Qing China and Choson Korea after the First Korean War], Hong Kong: 香港社會科學出版社有限公司 [Hong Kong Social Science Press], 2013.

21 万明 Wan Ming, 《万历援朝之战与明后期政治态势》 [The Wanli Korean War and the Political Situation in the Late Ming Dynasty], 《中国史研究》 [Journal of Chinese History Studies] 2, 2001, pp. 119–134; 《朝堂与战事之间：明朝万历援朝之战官将群体的初步考察》 [Between the Court and the War: A Preliminary Investigation of the Group of Ming Generals in the Wanli Korean War] 《烟台大学学报》 [Journal of Yantai University] 3, 2017, pp. 90–107; 《万历援朝之战时期明廷财政问题—以白银为中心的初步考察》 [The Financial Issues of the Ming during the Wanli Korean War: A Preliminary Study Centering on Silver], 《古代文明》 [The Journal of Ancient Civilization] 3, 2018, pp. 93–107.

national security after the Wanli Korean War.²² Subsequently, he published a series of papers discussing the issue of the envoys during the tributary peace talks, the supply of grain and grass during the Ming Dynasty, the issue of East Asian international order before and after the war, and the means of “civilian diplomacy” between the Ming Dynasty and Choson Korea, and further explained the maintenance of the Ming Dynasty.²³ He paid special attention to the case of the Wanli Korean War as a means of examining the changes in the tributary system from the late Ming to the early Qing. Since 2017, he has hosted “The International Workshop on the Wanli Korean War” at Shandong University every year, and scholars from China, Japan, and Korea have participated in academic discussions on relevant issues at the workshop. Under his guidance, many graduate students have pursued studies on the Wanli Korean War. As of 2018 at Shandong University, twelve Ph.D. and master’s theses were related to the Wanli Korean War, which indicates that the research team will definitely push the study of the Wanli Korean War to a new level.

In 2007, Sun Weiguo published a book based on his doctoral thesis titled “The Great Ming Flag and the Choson Korean Consciousness of Little China: A Study on the Thoughts of Choson Koreans Respecting the Zhou and Missing the Ming, 1637–1800.”²⁴ In that work, he explores the ideological origins of the Choson Koreans’ respect for the Ming soldiers and their descendants and the construction and influence of the King Guanwang Temples in Choson Korea. The “grace of rebirth” provided by Emperor Wanli’s assistance to Choson Korea in its defense against the Japanese invasion was one of the most important reasons Choson Koreans paid respect to the Ming. It was the Ming soldiers who built the King Guanwang Temples,

22 陈尚胜 Chen Shangsheng, 《字小与国家利益：对于明朝就朝鲜壬辰倭乱所做反应的透视》 [To Protect the Small and National Interests: A Perspective on the Reaction of the Ming to the Japanese Invading Choson Korea], 《社会科学辑刊》 [Social Science Journal] 1, 2008, pp. 116–123.

23 陈尚胜 Chen Shangsheng, 《壬辰战争之际明朝与朝鲜对日外交的比较：以明朝沈惟敬与朝鲜僧侣四溟为中心》 [Comparison of the Ming Dynasty’s and North Korea’s Diplomacy with Japan during the War of Yuchen: Focusing on Shen Weijing in the Ming Dynasty and the Four Monks of the Korean Monk], 《韩国研究论丛》 [Journal of Korean Studies] 18, 2008, pp. 329–354; 《壬辰御倭战争初期粮草问题初探》 [A Preliminary Study on the Problem of Grain and Grass in the Early Days of the Imjin War], 《社会科学辑刊》 [Social Science Journal] 4, 2012, pp. 174–182.

24 孙卫国 Sun Weiguo, 《大明旗号与小中华意识：朝鲜王朝尊周思明问题研究, 1637–1800》 [The Great Ming Flag and the Choson Korean Consciousness of Little China: A Study on the Thoughts of Choson Koreans Respecting the Zhou and Missing the Ming, 1637–1800], Beijing: 商务印书馆 [The Commercial Press], 2007.

which brought the faith of King Guanwang directly to Choson Korea. Eventually, the faith of King Guanwang became integrated into the political and social life of Choson Korea. At the same time, the concept of respecting the Zhou in Choson Korea meant regarding the Qing as uncivilized barbarians to strengthen the legitimacy of the regime of Choson Koreans, which promoted the Koreanization of the beliefs of King Guawang. The images of Ming generals such as Shi Xing, Li Rusong, and Yang Gao were reshaped, and their descendants were thus treated with courtesy, and many legends were created. Sun Weiguo discovered many distortions in the historical records of the Ming-Qing dynasties. He pointed out the need to reconsider the process of writing books about the Ming and Qing dynasties from the East Asian perspective. He published a series of papers on the historical status of Yang Gao, Ding Yingtai, and Song Yingchang in the Wanli Korean War.²⁵ He systematically examined how, because of political interference, the records of the Qing Dynasty were interpreted, and how and why the *Mingshi* and Gu Yingtai's *Mingshi jishi benmo* presented this war as they did. In fact, he shows that the Ming-Qing historical records are seriously inaccurate concerning the Wanli Korean War.

Yang Haiying has long been engaged in the study of military history and characteristics of the Ming and Qing dynasties. She was famous for studying Hong Chengchou in her early years. Recently, she has focused on the southern Ming generals and soldiers in the Wanli Korean War and has published a series of papers on the Ming teachers who trained the Korean army, as well as the military achievements of Luo Shangzhi, Wang Bidi, Wu Weizhong, Wu Zongdao, Mao Guoke, Zhang Yingzhong, and others during the war.²⁶ She also published a book titled “The Great

25 孙卫国 Sun Weiguo, 《朝鲜史料视野下的石星及其后人事迹略考》 [A Textual Research on Shi Xing and His Descendant in the Perspective of Korean Historical Materials], 《古代文明》 [The Journal of Ancient Civilization] 4, 2012, pp. 63–72; 《万历援朝战争初期明经略宋应昌之东征及其对东征历史的书写》 [General Song Yingchang in the Early Period of the Ming Eastern Expedition and His Writing of the History of the Ming Eastern Expedition], 《史學月刊》 [Journal of Historical Science] 2, 2016, pp. 39–50; 《清官修〈明史〉对万历朝鲜之役的历史书写》 [The Historical Narrative of the Wanli Korean Campaign in the Qing Official *Ming History*], 《历史研究》 [Historical Research] 5, 2018, pp. 21–37. Sun Weiguo's latest book about this war, titled 《“再造藩邦”之师：万历抗倭援朝明军将士群体研究》 [The Ming Troops of “Rebuilding the Vassal State Choson Korea”: a study on the Military Officers and Groups of the Ming Wanli Armies Resisting the Japanese Aggression and Aiding Choson Korea] is forthcoming.

26 杨海英 Yang Haiying, 《万历援朝战争中的南兵》 [The Ming Southern Soldiers in the Wanli Korean War], 《军事历史研究》 [Journal of Military History] 1, 2016, pp. 16–23.

Wall Outside the Territory: The Yiwu Troops in the Wanli Korean War,”²⁷ which is the first systematic study published in China on the group of southern Ming soldiers. She focuses on the family relationships of the generals and their social networks by studying historical materials of the Ming-Qing period, such as the official history, the records, notes, genealogies, local records, and essays, to clarify the living conditions of the martial groups within the political dynamics of the Ming period.

Zheng Jiexi is a relatively young scholar primarily concerned with personnel exchanges, intelligence transmission, and Shen Weijing’s activities during the Wanli Korean War. He studied in Japan for many years and is skilled in Japanese materials. As early as 2006, he completed his master’s thesis titled “The Study of the Event of the Ming Borrowing Siam Soldiers during the Imjin War.” In 2011, he obtained a doctoral degree from Kansai University, completing a thesis titled “Research on the History of Sino-Japanese Relations in the Ming Emperor Wanli Period.”²⁸ In the past decade, he has published a series of papers on issues such as cross-border personnel during the war, including the Siamese, Japanese, Blacks, and other Southeast Asians in the Ming armies, and Ming citizens in the Japanese armies, which show the movement of people in East Asia and Southeast Asia during the Wanli Korean War.²⁹ At the same time, he published a series of papers on information gathering and foreign policy during the Ming Dynasty, which reflect positive factors and objective environmental constraints to the Ming’s diplomatic strategy. Most of his research results have been included in his monograph “Cross-border Personnel, the Intelligence Network, the Tribute Crisis: The Wanli Korean War and East Asia at the End of the 16th Century,”³⁰ which is an important representative work of Chinese scholarship in the current century.

27 杨海英 Yang Haiying, 《域外长城：万历援朝抗倭义乌兵考实》[The Great Wall Outside the Territory: The Yiwu Troops in the Wanli Korean War], Shanghai: 上海人民出版社 [Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe], 2014.

28 郑洁西 Zheng Jiexi, 『明代万曆時期の中日関係史の研究』[Research on the History of Sino-Japanese Relations in the Ming Emperor Wanli Period], Ph.D. degree thesis, Kansai University, 2011.

29 郑洁西 Zheng Jiexi, 《万历朝鲜之役前后的在日明朝人》[The Ming People in Japan before and after the Wanli Korean War], 《唐都学刊》[Tangdu Academic Journal] 2, 2009, pp. 80–83.

30 郑洁西 Zheng Jiexi, 《跨境人员、情报网络、封贡危机：万历朝鲜战争与16世纪末的东亚》[Cross-border Personnel, the Intelligence Network, the Tribute Crisis: The Wanli Korean War and East Asia at the End of the 16th Century], Shanghai: 上海交通大学出版社 [Shanghai Jiaotong University Press], 2017.

Lo Lee-hsin, a professor at Chung Hsing University, has been representative of scholarship in Taiwan during the early twenty-first century. Her research on the Wanli Korean War focuses on Japanese armies, and especially on the location, construction, and internal structure of Japanese castles, showing that Japanese castles played a major role in Japanese military activities.³¹ She has also studied reports claiming that high-ranking Japanese generals prohibited harm to the Korean people, but Japanese soldiers were still arbitrarily killing Koreans and even cutting off the Koreans' ears and noses.³² Moreover, she explores the captured Choson Korean people's life in Japan, the dissemination of production techniques, culture, and art, et cetera, as well as the issue of religious communication in the era of great navigation. She is interested in the actions of Catholics and Western missionaries in the Japanese army as well as the contacts between Koreans and missionaries. She discusses the role of Japanese and Korean monks in diplomatic negotiations; she has also studied the issues of wartime epidemic prevention measures, medical methods, and intelligence networks formed through people's cross-border exchanges from the perspective of medical history.

Puk Wing-kin, a professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, has also been actively involved in research on the Wanli Korean War in recent years. He has published two papers, adopting the perspective of traditional Ming political history to study the wartime decisions of the high-level officials in the Ming court, as well as the political struggles between the party advocating war and the party advocating peace.³³

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- 31 羅麗馨 Lo Lee-hsin,《豐臣秀吉侵略朝鮮期間日軍在朝鮮半島之築城：以日本史料為核心》[City Walls Built in Korea by Invading Japanese Troops in the 1590s: Focusing on Japanese Historical Materials],《漢學研究》[Chinese Studies] 30 (4), 2012, pp. 93–132;《萬曆朝鮮戰爭：日軍之戰術》[Japanese Tactics during the Korean War in the Ming Dynasty],《明代研究》[Ming Studies] 28, 2017, pp. 65–88.
- 32 羅麗馨 Lo Lee-hsin,《豐臣秀吉侵略朝鮮期間日軍在朝鮮半島的殺掠及朝鮮俘虜在日本的生活》[Toyotomi Hideyoshi's Pillage in Korean Peninsula and the Lives of Korean Prisoners in Japan],《國立政治大學歷史學報》[The Journal of History] 39, 2013, pp. 93–143. The third part titled《十六世紀末的朝鮮戰爭》[The Korean War at the End of the 16th Century] in her latest book《十九世紀前的日韓關係與相互認識》[The Japan-Korean Relations and Mutual Understanding before the 19th Century] (Taipei: Ainosco Press, 2020) is a compilation of her studies on this war.
- 33 卜永堅 Puk Wing-kin,《萬曆朝鮮戰爭第一階段 (1592–1593) 的明軍：以〈中國明朝檔案總匯〉衛所選簿為中心之考察》[The Ming Army during the First Stage of the Wanli Korean War (1592–1593), An Investigation of the Selected Books of the Guardian System in the *Archives of China's Ming Dynasty*],《明史研究論叢》[Journal of Ming Studies] 12 (1), 2014, pp. 132–141;《十六世紀朝鮮戰爭與明朝中央政治》[Ming Court Politics and the Sixteenth-Century Japanese Invasions of Korea],《明代研究》[Journal of Ming Studies] 28, 2017, pp. 39–64.

Since 2013, he has taught a seminar titled “War and Society” at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, in which he organizes the reading of historical materials and related research works centered on the Wanli Korean War. In December 2016, under his auspices, the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the University of British Columbia in Canada jointly organized “A Workshop on the War in Pre-modern East Asia (1592–1598), Context and Structure.” After the meeting, three papers were published on the “16th Century Korean War” in the *New Asia Institute of Advanced Chinese Studies* (vol. 34).³⁴ At the same time, he organized the “Special Issue of the Wanli Korean War in the Sixteenth Century” and published four papers in the *Journal of Ming Studies* (vol. 28).³⁵ The authors of the two columns, from China and other countries, embody international cooperation, which shows that the study of China’s Wanli Korean War has become common to the international academic community.

Chinese scholars studying the Wanli Korean War are far more numerous than those mentioned above. It is impossible to discuss them all in one paper. Publications in China about the Wanli Korean War have made great progress in the past two decades in terms of quantity, quality, depth, and breadth.³⁶ Many graduate students

34 卜永堅 Puk Wing-kin, ed.,《十六世紀朝鮮戰爭》專欄 [Special Column on “Korean War in the 16th Century”]: 孫衛國 Sun Weiguo,《董一元與泗川之役略考》[Dong Yiyuan and the Battle of Sacheon], pp. 231–258; 洪性鳩 Hong Sung-ku,《丁酉再亂時期明朝的糧餉海運》[Ming Maritime Logistics during the Second Stage of the Korea War], pp. 259–284; 許南麟 Hur Nam-lin,《丁酉再亂時期豐巨秀吉的撤退嘗試與戰爭的終結》[Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s Effort of Retreat and the Ending of the Korea War], pp. 285–314,《新亞學報》[New Asia Institute of Advanced Chinese Studies] vol. 34, 2017.

35 卜永堅 Puk Wing-kin, ed.,《十六世紀朝鮮戰爭》專號 [Special Issue on “Korean War in the 16th Century”]: 劉曉東 Liu Xiaodong,《“服遠”與“治近”: 嘉靖二十六年明廷的遣明使處置》[“Pacifying the Distant” and “Managing the Near”: The Ming Court’s Handling of the Japanese Diplomatic Mission in 1547], pp. 1–37; 卜永堅 Puk Wing-kin,《十六世紀朝鮮戰爭與明朝中央政治》[Ming Court Politics and the Sixteenth-Century Japanese Invasions of Korea], pp. 40–64; 羅麗馨 Lo Lee-hsin,《萬曆朝鮮戰爭: 日軍之戰術》[Japanese Tactics during the Korean War in the Ming Dynasty], pp. 65–88; 中島樂章 Nakajima Gakusho, 郭陽 Guo Yang, trans.,《十六世紀末朝鮮戰爭與九州—東南亞貿易: 以加藤清正的呂宋貿易為中心》[The Korean War and Kyushu-Southeast Asia Trade in the Late Sixteenth-Century: Katō Kiyomasa’s Conducted Trade in Luzon], pp. 89–120,《明代研究》[Journal of Ming Studies] 28, 2017.

36 There are still two important latest books that should be mentioned: 王煜焜 Wang Yukun,《万历援朝与十六世纪末的东亚世界》[Wanli Emperor Aid to Korea and the East Asian World at the End of the 16th Century], Shanghai: 上海大学出版社 [Shanghai University Press], 2019; 朱尔旦 Zhu Erdan,《万历朝鲜战争全史, 1592–1598》[The Imjin War, 1592–1598], Beijing: 民主与建设出版社 [Democracy and Construction Press], 2020.

have chosen the Wanli Korean War as a thesis topic, and they have studied it from various angles. By 2018, there were eight relevant Ph.D. doctoral theses and sixty-seven master's theses in China on the topic. With so many young students investigating this war, there is a bright future in China for research on the war. At the same time, related popular historical works and novels have also appeared recently. Several works by foreign scholars have been translated into Chinese and published; the Korean classical novel "A Record of the Imjin War" has also been published in China. All this activity shows that the history of the Wanli Korean War is gaining considerable attention.

Generally speaking, since the early 2000s, the study of the Wanli Korean War in China has developed several characteristics. First, many representative scholars have formed a relatively stable team to ensure the continuous research work on this topic.

Second, because of the popularity of databases, research data are relatively easy to obtain. Researchers use not only the historical materials of the Ming and Qing dynasties in China but also data from Choson Korea and Japan. The historical data have become more sufficient in the twenty-first century, and the research level is higher.

Third, various research perspectives, such as new theories and new methods, have been adopted. The methods of new cultural history and post-modern theory have greatly expanded the research horizon. The post-modern perspective of the deconstruction of historical material and historical writing has a place in current scholarship, as do personnel exchanges, economic and trade issues under the global history paradigm, medical history, emotional history, religious exchange research, and so on, from the perspective of new cultural history, thus enhancing academic research.

Fourth, the research of Chinese scholars has been integrated into the international academic scholarship. In the current century, academic exchanges at home and abroad have become more frequent, and Chinese academics have also been following the new approaches. At various international academic conferences, whether in Shandong, Hong Kong, Korea, Canada, or other places, Chinese scholars have become an integral part of any gathering where scholars of various countries have in-depth discussions and exchange ideas, thus forming a trend of international cooperation.

IV. An Evaluation and a Brief Summary

Throughout this review of research on the Wanli Korean War in China during the past hundred years, several outstanding features have emerged.

First, many changes in interpretations of the research data have taken place, including a wider perspective on the war from the domestic to the international, from China to Asia and beyond. Although the Wanli Korean War was an international war that swept the East Asian world during the Ming and Qing periods, it was long regarded as a rebellion within the Ming Dynasty itself. Scholars in the Ming and Qing periods rarely paid attention to the particularities and the international character of the war because Choson Korea was one of the tributary countries of Ming and Qing China. For quite a long time, reference was made only to the historical materials and related works in China from the Ming and Qing dynasties, and rarely were there references to the historical materials of the Japanese and the Choson Koreans. With the establishment of the modern discipline of professional history in the early twentieth century, a group of specialized historical scholars became the main research force. Wang Chongwu established an academic precedent by conducting research on this subject with the professional consciousness of a modern academic. However, the special historical situation in the first half of the twentieth century, namely, the longstanding threat of Japanese aggression against China, influenced academic research on this war. In addition, in the 1950s, political resistance outweighed academic pursuits. Rigorous academic research began after China's reformation and opening-up. At that time, because it was not easy to access historical materials abroad, Wu Han's "Chinese Historical Materials in the Records of the Choson Korean Dynasty" were of great importance and convenience for researchers studying the war. Since the early 2000s, because of the popularization of electronic resources, a group of scholars with strong professional literacy have been able not only to make extensive use of the materials from China, Japan, and Choson Korea but also to expand their research topics and to have an Asian perspective of "seeing China from its periphery." Now there is also a global historical perspective, which greatly advances research on this topic.

Second, the publications during the past century have increased in length and substance from short articles to various carefully researched books and even multivolume sets. Initially, there were a few simple records about the Wanli Korean War.

Because of the influence of the party struggles in the Ming court, there were many mistakes in “The Veritable Records of the Emperor Ming Shengzong.” The historians who wrote the Qing official history book *Mingshi* deliberately engaged in misinterpretation, devaluation, and obliteration to extensively wipe out the achievements of Ming generals and soldiers. Wang Chongwu was the first modern academic to study this war. He used Choson Korean historical materials to successfully correct mistakes in the records and books written during the Ming and Qing dynasties. For a long time, scholars mainly used special research papers. Even though some of these works analyzed this war, most of them used narrative history. During the 1960s and 1970s, Li Guangtao compiled several books in Taiwan that used historical materials. After the 1980s, the number of researchers increased, and many of them published articles. After the turn of the twenty-first century, a group of scholars contributed their own unique perspectives, mostly based on special studies. Although several monographs have been published, they focus only on certain aspects of the war. Most of the existing research focuses on the situation of the Ming soldiers on the battlefield. Not much attention has been paid to the situation of the Japanese army and the Choson Koreans. Such publications rarely rely on direct dialogue with the Japanese, Koreans, and Westerners because most of these researchers have not fully understood their research perspective. This situation must change. Although there have been several popular publications, so far, no Chinese book has provided a comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth study of this war. Compared with academic achievements in Japanese and Korean academic circles, there is still a big gap in Chinese scholarship.

Third, as for the researchers, they have gradually developed diverse perspectives on Chinese history, drawn from personal hobbies and team research. In the early twentieth century, such original researchers as Wang Chongwu and Li Guangtao mostly centered their attention on the study of the Wanli Korean War from the perspective of Ming and Qing history. They focused their studies on the Ming and Qing dynasties and the activities of Ming generals and soldiers. Subsequently, a few researchers began to view this subject from the historical perspectives of Korea and Japan. Since the early 2000s, academic circles have included researchers who have grown up in China as well as those who have studied in Japan and Korea. More importantly, research teams have come to reflect the multidisciplinary nature of some professors’ research. The development of a series of research projects on the war is the embodiment of such teamwork. With the convenient communication of information, Chinese academics have become integrated into international academic circles,

and it is common for Chinese scholars to host and attend international academic conferences. The development of this situation is definitely pushing the study of the Wanli Korean War to a new level.

In short, after nearly one hundred years of development, especially since the early twenty-first century, the Chinese academic community has made considerable progress in the study of the Wanli Korean War, but problems remain. So far, no Chinese monograph has comprehensively, systematically, and thoroughly expounded on the causes, processes, and influences of this war. We still need to work hard to make up for this shortcoming.

百年来の中国における万曆朝鮮の役（文禄・慶長の役） 研究の回顧

孫 衛国*

この百年来、中国における万曆朝鮮の役（文禄・慶長の役）研究は、「軽視」から「大いに重視」へ、深く政治的干渉を受けた研究から厳密な学術研究へ、明の参戦を中心とする研究から多様な東アジア的視点から戦争の包括的理解を目指す研究へと変化してきた。研究成果は主として学術論文として発表されており、体系的な学術書はさほど多くない。さらに、長い期間にわたる学術的関心の欠如から、研究成果も主として史実の叙述と史料の羅列であった。しかし21世紀に入ってからこの分野の研究者が増加し、中国、日本、朝鮮・韓国三国の史料を幅広く活用し、東アジアの諸視点と新しい文化史の方法を用い、包括的にこのテーマの調査を進めることで、国際的な学術研究の一翼を担うようになった。

キーワード：万曆朝鮮の役、文禄・慶長の役、中国朝鮮関係史、
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