Although the Chosŏn state often appears in the history books as a homogenous regime, it in fact included a considerable foreign community and was linked to networks of people extending far beyond Chosŏn’s borders. The new Chosŏn state emerged from the Koryŏ state that had been fully integrated as a subordinate kingdom into the cosmopolitan Yuan dynasty and inherited some of this diversity, including the Northeast Asian officialdom of the Yuan empire. Furthermore, both the northern terrestrial frontier of the Chosŏn state and its southern maritime frontier with Japan were chaotic, violent spaces, characterized by small polities and independent actors who subsisted partly through plunder. The early Chosŏn state responded to these circumstances by organizing petty rulers among the Jurchens to their north and the Japanese to their south into a subordinate relationship with the Chosŏn monarchy. It also encouraged outsiders to settle on Chosŏn soil as subjects of the Chosŏn monarch.

Although the early Chosŏn monarchy accepted its subordination to the Ming empire, it also asserted its own independent status. This was reflected by the institution that it employed to settle foreigners on its soil, namely submitting-foreigner (byanghwain) status. This status not only encompassed a series of bureaucratic practices for settling foreign migrants in Chosŏn but also was imbued with ideological content, namely the idea that the Chosŏn monarch was his own civilizing center, edifying outsiders who submitted to the Chosŏn state and bringing moral transformation not only to Jurchens and Japanese, but even in some cases to Chinese who chose to reside in Chosŏn.

The complexities of the Chosŏn court’s ideological position vis-à-vis China is also reflected in its dealings with those of its subjects and their descendants who had entered the state from China and Inner Asia in the period of Yuan dominance, during which time Koryŏ had become part of a vast international empire centered on the Yuan capital of Daidu. Links established at that time continued
after the fall of the Yuan, and the descendants of the Yuan newcomers were in high demand at the early Chosŏn court, where they played a vital role as technical specialists in language, law codes, and rites, albeit in positions subordinate to those of the sajok aristocrats, who alone had access to the top positions.

Yuan Subjects of Koryŏ and Chosŏn

In 1388, Yi Sŏnggye, a general from a Korean family that had served the Mongols in Ssangsŏng in northeastern Korea, refused to fight the Ming armies sent against Koryŏ, and instead turned his army against King U. By 1392, Yi Sŏnggye established a new dynasty, called Chosŏn; after a stormy beginning, under his son, Yi Pangwŏn (1367–1422), posthumously known as T’aejong (r. 1400–1418), relations with the Ming empire to Chosŏn’s west were finally stabilized. No longer integrated into the vast Eurasian Yuan empire, and free from the chaos of the Yuan-Ming transition, the Chosŏn state continued to host remnants of the period of Yuan domination—descendants of the Eurasian officialdom of the Yuan period who were integrated into the Chosŏn state in a subordinate position within the Chosŏn status hierarchy.

The early Koryŏ court had generally accepted the overall supremacy of the various Chinese empires, but, thanks to the disunion of China, was able to maintain considerable independence in its relations with them. After Koryŏ submitted to the Yuan in 1259, it was deeply integrated, in the manner of other subordinate kingdoms, into the Yuan state, with considerable exchange in officials and overlapping administrative structures.1 During the reign of King Kongmin (r. 1351–1374), the Koryŏ state reoriented itself toward the new Ming empire. Although the deep integration that had characterized relations with the Yuan came to an end, the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn accepted a far more thorough subordination to the Ming than the Koryŏ had offered Chinese dynasties before the Mongol conquest.2 The submission of the Koryŏ and Chosŏn courts to the Ming, moreover, went beyond realpolitik and involved the acceptance by both court and sajok aristocracy that the Ming emperor had achieved his position through the mandate of heaven and was required by his position to act as a transformative force over subject kingdoms. Like earlier Chinese dynasties, the Ming’s right to hegemony was seen to be based on the Ming dynasty’s position as civilized and civilizing center (Ch. hua, K. hwâ). In return, the barbarian (Ch. yi, K. ᆠ) kingdoms on its frontiers, also known as vassal, fence, or boundary kingdoms (Ch. fan, K. pŏn), were supposed to act as a defensive shield for the Chinese empire.
Yet, despite accepting such seemingly ethnicized distinctions between Chinese and non-Chinese, and despite placing itself securely within the category of vassal to the Ming, first the Koryŏ court and then the Chosŏn accepted migrants from China in distinctly subordinate roles, clearly marking them below the Korean sajok aristocracy that controlled the civil bureaucracy of the Chosŏn state. Even before its submission to the Mongols, Koryŏ had been the recipient of diverse migrants of all classes and origins, including Parhaeans, Jurchens, Khitans, Turks, Japanese, and Song Chinese traders. Once in Koryŏ, these migrants were frequently offered a range of benefits to encourage their settlement, including land, tax reductions, and even wives. Korean surnames were frequently granted to those who did not have them, and even Song people and others who already had Chinese-style names and surnames could be given new ones. Prominent migrants of all origins were granted titles and official positions to strengthen their loyalty. Although the overwhelming objective for the Koryŏ court seems indeed to have been to increase its tax-paying population, migrants entering Koryŏ were often employed in the military and as craftsmen. Others were brought in specifically for their particular skills, with some notable migrants, especially Song merchants, also gaining prominent positions in the bureaucracy.3

The period of Mongol supremacy was characterized by especially intense population exchange. As with other subordinate states, Koryŏ sent its crown princes to the Mongol capital to serve in the Yuan keshig (palace guard), Koryŏ officials to serve in the Yuan capital, and Koryŏ women and eunuchs to serve in the palace in Daidu. In exchange, Koryŏ received Chinggisid princesses as royal brides, and Yuan darughachi as administrators who linked Koryŏ’s internal administration with the administration of the broader Yuan empire. Regions on the frontiers of Koryŏ came under direct Yuan control for varying lengths of time, including Tongnyŏng in present-day North P’yŏngan Province in Koryŏ’s northwest, T’ámna on the island of Cheju to Koryŏ’s south, and Ssangsŏng commandery in present-day Hamgyŏng in Koryŏ’s northeast.4 Members of Koryŏ’s sajok aristocracy took the civil service exams in the Yuan or otherwise gained extensive experience in the Yuan capital. In fact, Yi Sŏnggye himself came from a Korean family that had served the Mongols over several generations in Manchuria and Ssangsŏng; his father, Yi Chach’un (1315–1361) submitted to Koryŏ under Kongmin (r. 1351–1374) in 1356 as Mongol power declined and Koryŏ occupied Ssangsŏng commandery.5

Not only did Koryŏ officials serve the Yuan, but Chinese and Inner Asians served in the Koryŏ court during the period of Mongol supremacy, with many continuing to serve with the Chosŏn monarchy as well. Ideologically, even as
the Koryŏ court was subject to the Chinese emperor, Koryŏ and Chosŏn civil bureaucrats saw their monarch as receiving subordinate people from abroad who were attracted to Korea’s civilized culture and manners. Thus, before and during submission to the Yuan, the Koryŏ monarch granted outsiders, whatever their origins, Korean names and clan seats (pongwon), marking them as subjects of the Koryŏ court even if their ancestors originated somewhere else and allowing them to establish minor office-holding descent-groups.6

A somewhat anomalous case is that of the southern island of Cheju, which, as T’amma, was under direct Yuan administration following 1273 and under joint Koryŏ-Yuan administration following 1294. As discussed by Kim Iru, during the period of Mongol and joint Mongol-Koryŏ rule, the area received extensive influence from the Yuan at a popular level, in the form of Mongol soldiers, prisoners, and horse breeders on the island and intermarriage between Mongols and local Cheju people. Already culturally distinct from Koryŏ, and having been under a semiautonomous ruler, Mongol influence brought even greater distinction. As Kim describes, the names of islanders appearing in The History of Koryŏ (Koryŏsa) are often Mongol in origin, suggesting that they are either Mongol descendants or from mixed Mongol-Cheju households.7 Such cultural eclecticism carried with it political implications, as the T’amma horse-breeder (Mo. hachi) elites, of mixed Mongol-Cheju parentage, had a connection to the Yuan empire that was unmediated by Koryŏ or Chosŏn. As a result, during the period of Koryŏ orientation against the Yuan, the hachi elites revolted several times, notably in 1375 when King Kongmin, in response to Ming commands, attempted to supply Cheju horses to the Ming war effort against the Northern Yuan.8

Nor did the eventual suppression of the hachi revolts bring an end to the cultural hybridity of Cheju. The Ming Hongwu emperor continued to entertain claims on Cheju even after it was restored to Koryŏ rule. Although actual Ming claims could be deflected, the Ming not only demanded special tribute in horses but also continued the Yuan practice of using the island as a prison island—exiling to Cheju, on the assumption of good treatment, defeated Mongol rivals and also members of the defeated Yunnan kingdom that formed after the collapse of the Yuan empire.9 Reflecting this fact, in The Augmented Survey of Korean Geography (Sinjung Tongguk yoji sungnam), included among the surnames for Cheju are those such as Cho, Yi, and Sŏk that are listed as having the clan seat Wŏn (implying Mongol origins) and those such as Yang, An, Kang, and Tae, whose clan seat is listed as Unnam (Yunnan), which in a note is explicitly connected to the exile of the leaders of Yunnan during the early Ming.10
Outside of the unusual context of Cheju, there were also Yuan officials who continued to serve the Koryŏ and Chosŏn courts. An example of the persistence of Yuan-period networks during the early Chosŏn may be seen with officials originating among the Uighurs, the Central Asian people who gave the Mongols their script and frequently served in a scribal capacity within the Mongol empire. The best-known Uighur official in Koryŏ and Chosŏn is Xie Xun (K. Sŏl Son). Xie's original name was Xie Boliaoxun. He was from a prominent family of Uighur semuren, officials based in the lower Yangzi who had a notable tradition of exam success. Like other Uighur semuren in the Yuan, the Xie continued to play an important administrative role as Uighur officials even after they were cut off from their homeland, the Uighur kingdom of Qocho (Ch. Gaochang), when it fell to the Chaghatai khanate in 1275. Xie Xun himself advanced both through his mastery of the Confucian knowledge and through his status as a semuren, the later identity linking him through patronage networks to the Mongol-dominated court. As with many semuren, he began first as a valet (Mo. sügûrchi) to the Yuan khan, but then showed his mastery of the Chinese literary tradition by passing the jinsbi exam in 1345, after which he held such positions as compiler in the Yuan Hanlin academy and a judge in the Bureau of Tibetan and Buddhist Affairs. He also obtained a position as a corrector of documents in the imperial heir apparent's study, for which both his knowledge of the Zhu Xi school of Neo-Confucianism and his facility in Uighur were likely useful. In 1356, the collapse of the Yuan and the rise of the Red Turban rebels drove him to Koryŏ from his residence north of Beijing. Not only was his family's home near Nanjing rendered inaccessible by the growing civil unrest, but Xie Xun had formed a connection with the king of Koryŏ, King Kongmin, when, as crown prince, he had been stationed in the imperial keshig in Daidu. King Kongmin thus welcomed Xie Xun upon his arrival in Koryŏ in 1358, granting him the titles of Marquis of Puwŏn (Puwŏnhu). In a nod to Xie Xun's Uighur origins, Kongmin also granted him the title Earl of Gaochang (Koch'angbaek), with this linking Xie to the Uighur homeland that had been under the control of the Chaghatai khanate since before he was born. As Michael C. Brose argues, it is likely that, beyond pure personal connections, King Kongmin was eager to benefit from the influence and connections of an important Yuan official from a large Yuan Uighur official family, an advantage cut short by Xie Xun's death soon after his arrival.

Indeed, while some prominent foreign families fell into obscurity during the Chosŏn period, a significant number of Yuan-origin officials, many of whom were fleeing the chaos of the Red Turban uprising, continued to serve under the
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Chosŏn court, employing their skills especially in diplomacy and the military, while providing the benefit of their linguistic abilities and their connections. These officials included Na Se, a Mongol, who served loyally under Yi Sŏnggye in a military capacity, participating in the campaigns against Japanese pirates both during the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn and dying in the harness at the age of seventy-eight in 1397, five years after Chosŏn’s founding. Another notable example is Xie Xun’s son Xie Changshou (K. Sŏl Changsu, 1341–1399). He began his career in Yuan, but took his examinations under King Kongmin and participated in diplomatic exchanges with the Ming. He may have lost some of his prominence after the assassination of King Kongmin, but he emerged once more in an influential position during the later years of King U, gaining particular importance after Yi Sŏnggye deposed King U in 1388. Notably, Xie Changshou maintained his ancestor’s connection to China and fluency in Chinese, as may be seen in the letter that Xie Changshou received from the Hongwu emperor in 1387 after a diplomatic mission. Intermixed with numerous criticisms, the emperor did state that, in contrast to the low-ranking interpreters that the Koryŏ court had previously sent to the Ming capital of Nanjing, Xie Changshou was of an old official family and could be expected to communicate properly his commands to the Koryŏ court. After 1388, Xie continued to play a prominent diplomatic role, defending Yi Sŏnggye’s overthrow of King U to the Ming’s Hongwu emperor. As Im Sŏnbin points out, the fact that his uncle was serving as envoy on the Ming side was likely a key reason for the selection of Xie Changshou, as was his ability in foreign languages; indeed, he was sent on diplomatic missions to the Ming capital of Nanjing eight times.

In Chosŏn, his linguistic skills were put to use when he was employed as a supervisor (chejo) in the Interpreters’ Bureau (Yŏgwŏn), a role in which he contributed to organizing education in Chinese, Mongolian, and the Uighur script. Socially, he intermarried with a Korean aristocratic family and maintained extensive connections with prominent officials in the Koryŏ and Chosŏn courts.

Other members of what became the Sŏl descent-group continued to play a prominent role in the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn, acting both as linguistic and ideological experts on Chunghwa civilization for the Korean court. Sŏl Kyŏngsu (b. 1376) and Sŏl Maesu (fl. 1370s–1420s), for instance, both worked as interpreters but also served in the Office for Special Councilors (Hongmun’gwan), an institution concerned not only with literary matters but also with providing advice on policy based on the tradition of Chinese classics and statecraft. In the following generation, Sŏl Sun (d. 1435) gained especial prominence, eventually rising to the position of governor of Kangwŏn Province. More significantly, he
obtained a position in the Academy of Worthies (Chiphyŏnjŏn), the institution that, under King Sejong, became a central organ for royal advice and for research on statecraft, legal matters, and indeed linguistics and natural philosophy. In this capacity, Sŏl Sun was commissioned by King Sejong (r. 1418–1450) to compile a guide to Neo-Confucian morality—The Illustrated Conduct of the Three Bonds (Samgang haengsil do).20

By no means was the Sŏl descent-group unique. Other Yuan officials and their descendants acted as officials, generally in a diplomatic capacity, frequently showing their ability specifically in such technical matters that were usually beneath the notice of prominent civil officials of Korean origin. A common feature uniting many Yuan-origin officials in Chosŏn was their close association with Yi Sŏnggye before he gained control of the Koryŏ state in 1388. For instance, Yi Hyŏn (?–1415) was another Uighur who, on account of his Chinese language ability, participated extensively in diplomatic exchanges with the Ming on Chosŏn’s behalf. He seems to have been the grandson of a man named Bayan who came to Koryŏ as retainer of the Chinggisid princess Cheguk, the daughter of Khubilai, who arrived in Koryŏ in 1286 as the bride of King Ch’ungnyŏl (r. 1274–1308). The precise history of Bayan’s descendants is not clear, but it seems that they maintained their Eurasian character, for Yi Hyŏn was employed during the early Chosŏn as both diplomat and interpreter.

As well, there were several Han Chinese–origin officials. For instance, Wu Jin (K. O Chin), of Han Chinese origin, played an active role as interpreter during the early Chosŏn, even rising to the lofty heights of second rank. This fact was pointed out in 1430, when Wu’s wife was punished brutally for committing adultery with another official. Court discussion of this case noted that the old interpreter Wu Jin “was not originally of an official family,” and despite his high rank had “failed to distinguish inner [feminine] and outer [masculine] spheres in administering his household.”21 Another interpreter, Li Mindao (K. Yi Mindo, 1336–1395), the descendant of a prominent Yuan official, Li Gongye, rose to prominence during the late Koryŏ as a supporter of Yi Sŏnggye. After Yi Sŏnggye had established the new dynasty, Li Mindao was granted the status of merit subject and was enfeoffed by Yi as Lord of Sangsan (Sangsan’gun), the hometown of his Korean wife. He reformed the clothing style according to Chinese precedent during the late Koryŏ and showed his skill in both fortune-telling and medicine.22 Tang Cheng (K. Tang Sŏng, 1337–1413), also of Chinese origin, showed a knowledge of legal statutes (yullyŏng). In a hagiographic account written after his death, he was remembered for bravely challenging Yi Sŏnggye’s rival Ch’oe Yŏng, who was ignoring the law to pursue a personal vendetta. Tang
Cheng also demonstrated his skill at writing diplomatic documents to be sent to the Ming court. Finally of note is Mae U, whose grandfather Mei Junrui (K. Mae Kunsŏ) fled the collapse of the Yuan and served in an official capacity during the late Koryŏ, as did both Mae U himself and his father, Mae Wŏnjŏ. The presence of officials skilled in translation was vital for the early Chosŏn state as it negotiated its position in a turbulent Northeast Asia. The Ming did not, however, encourage the private movement of people that had characterized the Yuan. Indeed, a few decades after Chosŏn’s foundation, the almost invariable response of the Chosŏn court to the arrival of Chinese in its borders was to repatriate them to the Ming. This limited movement of people resulted in a lack of expertise for the court in either spoken Chinese (Hanŏ or Hwaŏ) or the written vernacular of the Ming bureaucracy (imun). Under T’aejong, worry was specifically expressed that the Chosŏn court was so dependent on Tang Cheng’s ability in the written vernacular that Tang’s death would be disastrous for Chosŏn’s diplomatic capabilities. During the reign of Sejong, the contribution of the migrants from the Yuan, such as Xie Changshou, in maintaining spoken Chinese language skills among Chosŏn interpreters was well recognized. In fact, the Chosŏn court under Sejong twice went against the ordinary precedent of repatriating to the Ming any Chinese captives of the Jurchen recovered by the Chosŏn court, in both cases specifically pointing to the dearth of competent Chinese interpreters. Such cases, however, were rare and should be seen as unusual exceptions to the rule.

Frontier Peoples in Early Chosŏn

Although Chinese and other Inner Asians largely ceased to migrate to Chosŏn after the turmoil of the Ming-Qing transition, migration itself to Chosŏn did not cease. The early Chosŏn state was bounded by zonal frontiers and characterized by a mismatch between the territory claimed by the monarch and the regions in which the monarch could exert effective administrative jurisdiction. Partly as a result, the early Chosŏn monarch ruled over culturally heterogenous peoples, including Jurchens from the Hamgyŏng region, Japanese from the island of Tsushima that was claimed, but not administered, by the Chosŏn monarch, and diverse peoples who arrived from beyond the administrative reach of Chosŏn in order to pursue trade or other opportunities.

Through its relationship with these peoples, Chosŏn maintained its own separate and autonomous system of foreign affairs, whereby Chosŏn acted as the civilizing Chunghwa to barbarian peoples on its frontiers. As Kenneth R.
Robinson has said, “the King of Chosŏn Korea showed different faces to different people,” and even as it subordinated itself to the Ming emperor, it acted as an equal under the same Ming-centric order with the king of Ryukyu and the shogun of Muromachi Japan, and acted as a supreme ruler in charge of his own domain with Jurchen clan leaders on its northern border and petty Japanese and Ryukyuan potentates on its maritime frontier. These networks provided an extension of Chosŏn’s monarchical authority beyond the lands directly under its effective administrative control and created a class of intermediate people, at once subjects of Chosŏn and foreigners.

Chosŏn and Maritime Peoples

The Koryŏ-Chosŏn transition coincided with disorder in the maritime world by Korea’s coastal regions. As the Kamakura Bakufu (1185–1333) of Japan went into collapse in part because of the challenge of the Yuan invasions of the late thirteenth century, new potentates asserted their independent control within the maritime world of Northeast Asia. These potentates gained power in key locations near significant shipping routes and were able to lead multiethnic crews
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of maritime peoples on raids not only within Japan but also further afield against Chinese and Korean coasts. This disorder continued after the formation of the Muromachi Bakufu (1336–1573) in Japan.29

Partly in response to this chaos, during the late fourteenth century the Ming empire turned away from the active support for international commerce that had characterized the Yuan dynasty. Beginning in 1371, the Ming empire banned private travel overseas and restricted commerce to tribute trade at a set number of ports. This forced the Muslim merchants based in China’s coastal cities who wished to pursue overseas trade to move to other countries entirely, especially Southeast Asia.30 In their place, the Ming cultivated sea lords based in the Ryukyu island chain between Kyushu and Taiwan, allowing former raiders and pirates based on those islands to act as intermediaries in China’s maritime trade, culminating in the formation in 1429 of a single kingdom based on the island of Okinawa. Whether in its disunited form or as a unified kingdom, Ryukyu maintained a regular tribute relationship and beneficial trading connections with the Ming, which in turn hoped to redirect the potentates of islands away from piracy and toward peaceful trade.31

In Korean records, piratical groups based in Japan and Ryukyu are referred to as Japanese raiders (K. waegu, Ja. wakō), the term with which they are most often known in current scholarship. Beginning in 1350, and with increasing regularity after 1370, Koryŏ and Chosŏn suffered numerous attacks from these Japanese raiders, who came in fleets ranging from fifty to two hundred ships, at times striking deep inland, causing great destruction in southern Korea especially and interrupting tax-grain shipments to the capital.32 Both Koryŏ and Chosŏn responded militarily to the threat and some of Yi Sŏnggye’s early successes were against Japanese raiders. These campaigns continued after Yi Sŏnggye’s ascent to the throne, even extending to direct attacks onto the island of Tsushima (K. Tae- mado), located almost equidistant from Japan’s Kyushu and Chosŏn’s Kyŏng- sang Province. These military campaigns culminated in a successful attack on Tsushima in 1419.33

In addition to such military means, the Chosŏn court also attempted to use diplomacy to bring order to its coasts, initially forming relations with the state with which it could relate as a status equal, namely the Muromachi Bakufu. Chosŏn’s ties with the Bakufu, generally described as neighborly (kyorin) relations in Japanese and Korean scholarship, were of little efficacy, as the Muromachi shogun had only weak control over the Japanese potentates of Kyushu and southwestern Honshu, who were especially vital for maintaining the security of Chosŏn’s maritime frontier. As a result, Chosŏn formed direct relationships
with these potentates, whereby the Chosŏn monarch received tribute and provided in exchange bureaucratic titles, trading rights, and indeed the right to visit the Chosŏn capital. Through these ties, the Chosŏn monarch sought to eliminate the threat of Japanese raiders.

The Chosŏn court received the Japanese and Ryukyuan potentates with whom it formed relationships into four hierarchical grades, with the highest grade granted to the kings of Ryukyu and Japan; the next grade granted to powerful families of southwestern Honshu and Kyushu, such as the Ōuchi and Shōni families; the third grade granted to the governor (Ja. shugo) of Tsushima and the regent (Ja. tandai) of Kyushu; and the fourth to islanders from Tsushima and Iki as well as those Japanese who had been granted a military post by the Chosŏn court. These reception grades, along with the bureaucratic ranks that the Chosŏn court granted its Japanese allies, integrated Japanese potentates as members of the Chosŏn bureaucracy and thus subjects of the Chosŏn state. Beyond that, Chosŏn also actively promoted and participated in the reception of Japanese monk-envoys and the submission of Buddhist texts and objects to Japan and Ryukyu. By cultivating subjects in Japan, the Chosŏn court established interlocutors through whom it could, for instance, repatriate Chosŏn subjects who had been captured by raiders, and, indeed, prevent the actions of Japanese raiders in the first place. From the perspective of those Japanese potentates who had been granted such status, tribute missions to the Chosŏn capital were, above all, opportunities for trade.34

Especially following its 1419 invasion of Tsushima, Chosŏn centralized much of its diplomatic engagement with Japan on the island itself. Tsushima had played the role of intermediary between the Koryŏ court and Japanese regimes from the twelfth century until the attempted Mongol invasion of Japan from Korea. Located close to southern Korea (to the extent that it is visible from Pusan on a clear day), but otherwise infertile, it became a major center for the Japanese raiders during the late Koryŏ. In the early Chosŏn, it was under the control of the Sō family of governors, to whom, by the mid-fifteenth century, the Chosŏn court granted the right to mediate nearly all trade and diplomatic relations between it and the Japanese and Ryukyuans, including issuing passports to Japanese envoys and traders who wished to trade with Chosŏn and controlling access to the three southern ports at which much of the trade with Japan occurred.

The governor of Tsushima’s position as intermediary between Chosŏn and Japan was made possible because the Chosŏn court considered it to be originally part of Korea. This view contrasted with the attitudes of the Koryŏ court (which had recognized Tsushima as a foreign state) and, moreover, did not imply a real
attempt by the Chosŏn administration to impose any actual administration upon the islands. The court did dispatch officials for the purpose of investigation (kyŏngch'agwan), reception (sŏnwis'a), and inspection (chech'alsa). Although these offices primarily served a diplomatic purpose, the terms of their mandate were domestic, rather than diplomatic.\(^{35}\) Tsushima, in the language of the Chosŏn court, was a hedge or fence (pŏlli or pŏn) for Chosŏn, informing it of matters in Japan and acting on its behalf to facilitate the return of Chosŏn people who had been abducted during raids or whose ships had run ashore in Japan. Tsushima was at once part of, and foreign to, Chosŏn.

**Chosŏn and Northern Peoples**

Similar processes also occurred in Chosŏn's relationship with the Jurchens residing, together with other related groups, in the forested regions on the northern border of Korea and in present-day Manchuria, where they practiced a mix of agriculture, herding, and hunting. They played a significant role in Korean history, especially during the Koryŏ period, when control over the Jurchens was a key point of contention and rivalry between the Khitan Liao and Koryŏ. Jurchens also served in Koryŏ armies and were brought in to fill bureaucratic positions within Koryŏ, while those outside of Koryŏ itself were granted bureaucratic and other specialized positions.\(^{36}\) Such active influence by Koryŏ over Jurchens was inevitably curtailed with the rise of a Jin state based among the Jurchens in the twelfth century and later by the annexation of Jurchen lands in both Koryŏ and Manchuria by the Mongols in the thirteenth. After the collapse of Mongol rule in Northeast Asia, Jurchens formed independent polities in the land north of Ming Liaodong and northwest of Korea, with economies depending in part on raiding against the sedentary peoples—Chinese and Koreans—with whom they shared borders. Their rise thus required a range of military and diplomatic responses by Chosŏn to defend its northern frontier.

In contrast to Chosŏn’s almost exclusively defensive and economic relationship with its southern maritime frontier, its relationship with the Jurchens was shaped by the fact that the Chosŏn royal family itself had its original base in the northeast and extensive connections with Jurchen groups of the region that became Hamgyŏng Province. When Yi Sŏnggye’s father, Yi Chach’un, submitted to Koryŏ, he brought with him an army of personal retainers of diverse backgrounds, including Jurchens.\(^{37}\) When Yi Sŏnggye expanded his own power, he maintained his base of support in Hamgyŏng, then simply called Tongbungsmyŏn (Northeastern District). One of his key supporters was a Jurchen leader named Kulun Turan Timur (1331–1402), known more usually as Yi Chiran.
(sometimes Yi Turan), a Korean-style name that presumably was granted to him by the Koryŏ court. Yi Chiran’s father, Ara Buka, was a leader of a thousand (mingban) under the Yuan. By submitting to Koryŏ in 1371 during the reign of King Kongmin, Yi Chiran was thus allowed by the Koryŏ court to inherit his father’s position.\(^{38}\) Having chosen to take the side of Koryŏ during the turbulent Yuan-Ming transition, he also served Koryŏ loyally under the direction especially of Yi Sŏnggye, for whom Yi Chiran achieved victories against the Japanese raiders in 1377 and 1380, and against a rival Jurchen leader called Hobaldo in 1383, obtaining merit subject status as early as 1383 under King U. Most important, in 1388, he supported Yi Sŏnggye when the latter turned his armies around at the Yalu in order to overthrow King U. He also assisted the Ming in 1392 in military activities against other Jurchens and played what Yi Sŏnggye considered to be a positive role in the political strife of the early Chosŏn. As a result, he was also one of the most decorated of merit subjects, even being honored by the Ming.

Although the early Chosŏn court had a closer historical relationship with the Jurchens than with the Japanese, Jurchens nevertheless launched raids on Chosŏn’s northern borders, especially in the chaos following the collapse of the Yuan. Just as in its approach to the Japanese, Chosŏn sought to reduce Jurchen raiding activity by binding Jurchens to the Chosŏn state through the granting of bureaucratic positions and by encouraging trade and visits to Hansŏng by Jurchen leaders. Through this, the court hoped to give them a material reason for avoiding conflict and transform them, like Yi Chiran, into subjects of the Chosŏn state. Yi Chiran, especially, brought with him the loyalty of the so-called native Jurchens (t’och’ak Yŏjin), who resided to the south of Kilchu (which the Jurchens called “Haiyen”) in such districts as Hamhŭng (Ju. Hallan) and Tanch’ŏn (Ju. Tulu). Other Amurian peoples generally categorized as Jurchens—the Uriankhais (K. Orangk’ae), the Odolis, and the Udihas—who came south to the frontiers of Chosŏn after the collapse of the Yuan, were also brought into the Chosŏn social and economic orbit, through the granting of titles and trading rights, and above all the privilege of tribute missions (naejo) to the Chosŏn capital.\(^{39}\)

Thus, in the 1380s, Möngke Timur of the Odoli moved south and settled in the region of Hoeryŏng (Ju. Omohoi), even as other Jurchen leaders moved to Chosŏn’s vicinity, including Ahacu of the Hurka and Burhu of the Udiha. Following their arrival, the Odoli, along with Uriankhai Jurchen groups, raided Koryŏ’s territory, but they were successfully brought under control by the Chosŏn court, generally through the granting of rank and trade privileges. In
1392, Chosŏn granted court rank to Uriankhai leaders and, in 1395, received the tribute of Möngke Timur, who was given an honorary military rank in 1404. Ahacu, similarly, submitted to the Chosŏn court during the 1390s.\textsuperscript{40}

Chosŏn, however, was not the only power competing for influence among the Jurchens. Chosŏn’s hegemon, the Ming empire, was in fact deeply suspicious of Chosŏn’s influence in the region. The Ming, having gained control over Liaodong, placed it under a regional military commission (Ch. \textit{duzhibui shishi}), thereby making it the frontline of the Ming’s defenses against Mongols and Jurchens in the northeast. The Regional Military Commission of Liaodong also served as a key organ for managing the Ming relationship with Chosŏn. Additionally, the Ming court under Yongle (r. 1402–1424) established an additional Regional Military Commission of Nurgan, in theory to control Jurchens who were residing outside of Liaodong. In practice, it was largely ineffective and fell into terminal decline by the late fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{41} Further afield, various Jurchen groups, including the Haixi from the vicinity of Harbin, the Jianzhou from the frontier region between the Ming Liaodong and Chosŏn, and the Wild Jurchens (Ch. \textit{ye’ren}, K. \textit{yain}) to Chosŏn’s north, were organized into guards (Ch. \textit{wei}). These guards did not in fact allow for direct Ming control or administration of these Jurchen groups, but rather, like the bureaucratic titles granted by the Chosŏn court to its own Jurchen allies, they organized them into a subordinate relationship to the Ming court and facilitated Jurchen trade and tribute with the Ming.\textsuperscript{42}

Despite its subordination to the Ming, the Chosŏn actively competed against the Ming for control over the Jurchens, with the competition at times approaching the level of a proxy war. Especially during the reign of T’aejong, the Chosŏn court attempted to counter the growing interest of the Yongle emperor in forming relations with the Jurchens, as the Chosŏn monarchy believed the Jurchens to be properly under Chosŏn authority and thus actively competed against the Ming to maintain its influence. The Ming did have considerable success in luring Jurchen leaders into its own sphere of influence, notably attracting Ahacu, whose daughter was in the Yongle emperor’s harem, away from the Chosŏn sphere of influence in 1403 by granting him control over the Jianzhou guard, while his son Môngke Buka was put in charge of the Maolian guard among the Uriankhais of the upper Yalu on the Chosŏn border. The Ming even sought to exert its influence over those Jurchens who lived to the south of the Tumen River. In 1405 the Ming employed a Jurchen leader formerly associated with Yi Sŏnggye to lure Jurchens in the Tumen River region over to Ming authority and demanded that Chosŏn transfer to Ming authority even Jurchens from regions
south of the river that were clearly under Chosŏn control. Chosŏn, however, successfully resisted the Ming demands both by providing inducements and rewards to Jurchens to keep them clearly under Chosŏn control and by presenting arguments to the Ming that Hamgyŏng Jurchens had had close relations with the Chosŏn royal family, had intermarried with other Chosŏn subjects, and were paying both tax and corvée to the Chosŏn court. This did not bring the competition to an end, however— even Möngke Timur was lured into the Ming sphere in 1405. In response, the Chosŏn state briefly closed the Kyŏngwŏn border market through which they had traded with Möngke Timur and launched attacks against Jurchens who had abandoned Chosŏn for the Ming. Fearing similar revenge attacks, Möngke Timur moved with his tribe to Fengzhou, securely within the Ming sphere of influence, where he was made leader of the Left Jianzhou guard.

Such competition for influence did not cease with the defection of Möngke Timur in 1405, who, in fact, moved back into the vicinity of Chosŏn in 1423, seeking out a position between the Chosŏn and Ming spheres until his assassination in 1433. Especially after the reign of Sejo, Chosŏn generally conceded the Jianzhou Jurchens to Ming influence, in part because the Ming were hostile to Chosŏn interference and attempted to prevent Chosŏn from asserting its influence within this region. Additionally, Chosŏn viewed P’yŏngan Province, through which Jianzhou Jurchen had to travel for tribute missions to the Chosŏn capital, to be far too sensitive a region militarily to allow for the passage of potential enemies, which caused officials under Sŏngjong (referring to early policy under Sejo) to call for all interaction with the Jianzhou Jurchen to be redirected via the “back gate of Hamgil.” Otherwise, the Ming, weakened by their defeat at the hands of the Oirat in 1449, began to see Chosŏn less as a rival than as a possible ally in the control of the Jurchens, and, in fact, asked for Chosŏn support in suppressing troublesome Jurchen leaders. Among them was a descendant of Ahacu, Li Manchu, who rose in revolt along with other Jurchens in 1449, and who was defeated by a joint Ming-Chosŏn expedition in 1467, bringing an end to powerful Jurchen leaders for nearly a century.

Even as Chosŏn’s influence over the Jianzhou Jurchens waned, it remained strong over the Jurchens of the Tumen River region throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Between 1433 and 1444, Chosŏn established the six garrisons (yukchin), including Puryŏng on the Hamgyŏng range, Hoeryŏng on the upper Tumen, and then, farther downstream on the Tumen, Chongsŏng, Onsŏng, Kyŏngwŏn, and Kyŏnghŭng. Chosŏn settlers from the southern provinces of Kyŏngsang and Chŏlla were moved north to settle within this
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territory, while a line of fortifications was also constructed along the Tumen River through which Chosŏn sought to regain control over the home region of the Chosŏn royal family. These fortifications in turn involved the creation of a dense network of ties with Jurchen groups on both sides of the Tumen River, to which the Ming court largely acquiesced. In 1454–1455, for instance, the Chosŏn court compiled a census of the peoples on its border, recording their numbers, the names of their leaders, the bureaucratic ranks they had received, as well as their ethnic affiliations. Later records tended to omit ethnic affiliations but did nevertheless describe a significant number of Jurchen villages near Chosŏn’s fortifications. Much like Tsushima to the south, these Jurchen allies played the role of the eyes and ears of the Chosŏn court, acting both as a fence or hedge (pŏn) against Jurchens farther off—the deep-dwelling Jurchens (simch’ŏ hoin)—and as a source of information concerning them. They also became a source of luxury products—sable furs and ginseng—that were prized in the Chosŏn court. They became known during the sixteenth century as the “Jurchens in the vicinity of the fortifications” (sŏngjŏ hoin) or, by the reign of Sŏnjo (r. 1567–1608), as Pŏnho (fence, border, or vassal Jurchens). As also in the case of Tsushima, these Pŏnhos were on the outer fringes of Chosŏn’s effective administration—indeed, the Chosŏn court sent investigation and inspection officials to them but did not attempt to administer directly their internal affairs.

The Jurchens and Japanese who interacted with Chosŏn operated at least in part out of the desire for trade and profit, and no doubt also prestige. Their relationship with Chosŏn provided Jurchens and Japanese not only trading rights but also the ability to send tribute missions to the Chosŏn capital of Hansŏng. Alternately, receipt of a bureaucratic title from the Chosŏn court did not on its own result in much limitation to the autonomy of the Jurchen or Japanese potentates, as is revealed by the numerous Jurchens, especially before the mid-sixteenth century, who simultaneously held both Ming and Chosŏn bureaucratic titles, and the very large number of fraudulent identities, especially during the sixteenth century, assumed among Japanese and Jurchens seeking to engage in trade with Chosŏn.

For the Chosŏn court, however, these relationships were in part motivated by the desire to maintain peace on its frontiers. Thus, it frequently turned a blind eye to fraudulent Japanese, Jurchen, and Ryukyu envoys because establishing connections with fraudulent envoys nevertheless served the purpose of encouraging peaceful exchange over conflict. These ties also raised the status of the Chosŏn monarch himself. Tribute missions to Hansŏng by Japanese and Jurchens at set times of the year were structured according to established
guest rituals, similar to Chosŏn’s own diplomatic missions to the Ming capital. Jurchens would enter via Chosŏn’s military establishments on the Tumen River, follow a set route along the post road via Kyŏngsŏng, then proceed down the eastern coast through Kangwŏn Province, turning inland at Yangyang and from there to Hansŏng, where they were presented before the Chosŏn monarch. Along the way, they were put up in guesthouses especially designed for them and they participated in receptions (chŏptae) with Korean officials during which both Koreans and Jurchens were organized according to rank. A similar process occurred with Japanese envoys, who arrived first at one of the three ports in the south, after which they were directed along set routes at Chosŏn expense until they could pay court to the Chosŏn monarch at Hansŏng, where they were feasted and entertained with music in exchange for their submission. Indeed, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century records refer with great frequency to a diversity of foreigners assembling before the monarch—with Jurchens (often specified as divided into the categories Udiha, Uriankhai, and Odoli), Ryukyuans, Japanese, and others. Foreigners living in Chosŏn—as well as foreign envoys—also participated in the manggwŏllye (Rites at a Distance from the Palace) at the birthdays of the Ming emperor.

Such guest rituals themselves, as Robinson, following Catherine Bell, points out, integrated Jurchens and Japanese into the Chosŏn court hierarchy while distinguishing them, as foreigners, from other officials, and clearly locating them in a network of power relations centered on the Chosŏn monarch. Indeed, in the case of the manggwŏllye rituals, Jurchens and Japanese were brought into the hierarchy linking them to the Ming emperor via the Chosŏn monarch. The ritual participation thus had a significant ideological meaning for the Chosŏn court, something that was expressed clearly by Cho Chun’s (1346–1405) eulogy to T’aejo shortly after he took the throne, in which Cho Chun declared that the arrivals of envoys from raiders from across the sea, as well as from Ryukyu and Southeast Asia, were proof of the moral transformation achieved by T’aejo’s rule. The ideological meaning was also visible in instructions given by Sejo (r. 1455–1568) to Kwak Yŏnsŏng (?–1464), the deputy provincial commander of Hamgil Province (as Hamgyŏng was then known), shortly after Sejo had seized the throne from his nephew Tanjong (r. 1452–1455):

Jurchens (yain) and Japanese (waein) are at once our fence, and our subjects. A monarch looks upon them with equanimity and makes no distinctions, making use of their strength or the information that they provide. One must not allow small errors to discourage them from coming to submit.
Since I have ascended to the throne, a great many people from among the southern Man barbarians and the northern Di barbarians (namman pukchŏk) have wanted to become my children. That occurred through the connivance of Heaven, and not through my own wisdom or strength.61

As Pak Chŏngmin argues, this statement by Sejo reveals the prestige that the arrival of Jurchen and Japanese envoys provided to the Chosŏn monarch. By stating that the arrival of Jurchens and Japanese was not the result of his own strength or wisdom but happened thanks to the connivance of heaven, Sejo was employing the rhetoric of the Mandate of Heaven, treating the submission of Jurchens and Japanese as signs of heaven’s approval for his rule.62 To be sure, Sejo was an unusual case. In the process of seizing power from his nephew, he had killed a number of officials with particular expertise on the Jurchens of northeastern Hamgyŏng and thus needed to take an especially active policy vis-à-vis the Jurchens.63 He was also unusually willing to assert his own monarchical authority through ritual means.64 Yet, in this, Sejo differed only in degree from other monarchs of the early Chosŏn, for whom the ritual submission of Jurchens, Japanese, and other foreigners served to advertise their own role as monarchs of a kingdom that acted as its own civilizing center, even if its civilizing activities were part of the broader Ming empire.

Submitting-Foreigner Status

Chosŏn’s relations with Jurchen and Japanese potentates were shaped by the ritual structures whereby these potentates were submitting to the court as subjects, often accepting positions in its bureaucracy. These structures in turn created diverse categories of foreign subjects of the Chosŏn court. On its frontiers, the Chosŏn court cultivated the formation of fences or vassals among its Jurchen allies to the north and the island of Tsushima to the south, establishing subjects of the court who were nevertheless outside of its direct administrative jurisdiction, and who were given special privileges in exchange for acting as intermediaries in Chosŏn’s foreign relations. For foreigners who settled farther inland, Chosŏn employed a separate tax category of submitting-foreigners, which confirmed the Chosŏn monarchy’s role for transforming barbarians from abroad.

Among the bureaucratic tools available to the Chosŏn court for settling people from outside the peninsula and Chosŏn states was submitting-foreigner (hyanghwain) status. Hyanghwai (Ch. xianghua), literally turning or moving toward transformation or edification, envisioned peoples from the unstable
frontiers traveling to Chosŏn in order to receive the transformative influence of the Chosŏn monarch. The term, along with equivalent terms such as kwihwain (Ch. guihwaren—to turn to edification or turn to civilization), t'ubwain (Ch. touhuaren—to submit to edification), and hyanggugin (Ch. xiangguoren—to submit to the state) originated in Chinese antiquity. As Donald S. Sutton points out in his discussion of the Qing administration of the Miao of Southwest China during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such terms conceptualized the submission of outsiders to a Chinese polity in terms of voluntary surrender to the moral edification of the monarch, even as the actual practice of encouraging the submission was often notably violent.

In Korea, submitting-foreigner status had origins preceding the Chosŏn dynasty. It was adapted from Tang models already employed during the Three Kingdoms period and was used extensively during the Koryŏ period, especially in the forms of t'ubwa (submit to edification) and nae'tu (come to submit), although kwihwa (turn to edification) was also used—and was employed with little regard to the origin of the migrant in question, whether Jurchen, Khitan, Parhaean, Turk, or indeed Chinese. The term “hyanghwa” became dominant during the Chosŏn period, when the primary recipients of the status were Jurchens or Japanese. The Myŏngjong-era’s (1545–1567) Annotations on the Great Code for State Administration (Kyŏngguk taejŏn) glossed hyanghwa as “those among Jurchens and Japanese who have submitted to transformation (t'ubwa) with regard to the kingdom (hyangguk).” Descriptions from the early Chosŏn suggest that submitting-foreigners were settled by granting them, according to their status, land, clothing, Korean surnames, and, because of the incongruity of imposing military service obligations on those who had come from abroad, exemption from military service. Although Chosŏn imposed its authority in part through force, as in China, submission was usually phrased rhetorically as the voluntary act of outsiders in response to the moral suasion of the Chosŏn monarch. As No Sasin (1427–1498) said in 1497 during his discussion of Jurchens from the borders of P'yŏngan Province who wished to submit and become members of Chosŏn’s royal guard, “Since antiquity, emperors and kings did not refuse any outside peoples who, longing for morality, came to submit to transformation. However, I have not yet heard of a case of [outside peoples] coming to submit in response to one who [deliberately] sought to obtain [their submission].”

Duncan and Sŏ Kŭnsik, among others, have discussed submitting-foreigner relations in Chosŏn as an example of the early Chosŏn’s freedom from the nationalistic ideology of pure blood and “homogenous ethnicity” that dominated South Korean official discourse before the 1990s. Submitting-foreigner status
should not, however, be confused with naturalization of immigrants or the assimilationist practices of modern states. The status, rather, marked foreign subjects in Chosŏn as clearly distinct from the rest of the population, which itself was divided into distinct social groupings. Above all, it tended to become a hereditary status. Although the Great Code for State Administration, which was completed in 1485, simply states that “submitting foreigners are freed from tax for three years,”72 other sources suggest that several generations could enjoy aspects of that status. During the reign of Sejong, submitting-foreigner status, at least insofar as it applied to the examination of talents, was specifically limited to one generations after migration, with the grandchildren of migrants no longer allowed to claim the status.73 This rule seems to have had only limited efficacy, as during the reign of Sŏngjong, the court debated imposing military service on the grandchildren of Jurchens and Japanese who had submitted (t'uhwa)—this was considered improper by a number of officials, who considered that doing so violated the principle of “treating well those who had come from afar” upon which Chosŏn’s guest rituals were based. Eventually the opinion of the Board of Rites was followed, which is to say that, while it was considered improper to impose military service on the grandchildren of those who had come to submit, it would be acceptable to impose it upon the great-grandchildren.74

A number of scholars have argued that the ideological content of “submitting to edification” implied by the term “hyanghwa” could not, for this reason, be used to refer to Han Chinese.75 This is understandable, considering the language of the sixteenth-century annotation to the Great Code of State Administration cited above, but, in fact, both the forms of submitting-foreigner status, and at times the terminology, were used to settle Chinese speakers as well. The “Sejong Gazetteer” (Sejong chiriji), for instance, lists a number of surnames as those of “Chinese who submitted to edification” (Tang t'uhwa sŏng),76 while a request by Myŏng Kwisŏk, a descendant of Ming Sheng, for freedom from military service and corvée was rejected specifically because, according to the precedent for other submitting-foreigners (byanghwa ye), too many generations had elapsed for the rule to apply.77

More generally, just as it did with Jurchens, Japanese, and others, the Chosŏn court settled Chinese and other Sinophones through the granting of clan seats,78 in the process giving them a status as Chosŏn people and subjects of the Chosŏn monarch. The Uighur descendant Yi Hyŏn, for instance, complained during the reign of T’aejong that, although his family had received royal grace for several generations since its arrival, it still did not have a clan seat located in Korea. He thus requested that he be granted a Korean clan seat in the same manner as
others who “submitted to the state” (hyanggugin), an equivalent term to submitting-foreigner. In response to this request, the court granted him the clan seat of Imju.79 Similar grace was offered to others, including Xie Changshou, who received the clan seat of Kyŏngju; Wu Zhen, who was given the clan seat of Haeju from T’aejong in 1415; and Li Mindao, whose son apparently received the clan seat of Kyŏngju during the reign of T’aejong.80 Most vividly, during the reign of Sejong, when a descendant of Mei Junrui requested a clan seat, he lamented that, despite the service of his ancestors to both Koryŏ and Chosŏn, their clan seat was still located in the central plain. The Board of Personnel responded to this case by granting him the clan seat of Ch’ungju, using language, however, that would not be out of place in a discussion of Jurchens or Japanese: “The Emperors and Kings of Old, when people of different regions and unusual customs came in admiration [of royal rule], would at times grant surnames (sŏng) and at times clan-names (ssi). Through this they revealed their intention of comforting and embracing [outsiders].”81

Most foreigners in Chosŏn, however, were frontier people, who could securely be described as barbarians submitting to civilized rule, including both Jurchens and other continental peoples from Korea’s north and maritime peoples, especially Japanese, but also including Ryukyuans and Muslims from the seas to Korea’s south. During the very early Chosŏn, large numbers of Japanese raiders who surrendered to the court were accepted as subjects, with official titles granted to the leaders of these submitting Japanese and land to the rest. These included former raiders, and Japanese merchants, who during the reign of T’aejo had no restrictions on their entry into Chosŏn. Ryukyuans also took refuge in Chosŏn, including the self-styled son of a deposed king of the southern kingdom of Sannan, who took residence in Kyŏngsang Province, and who, during his relatively short life, was integrated into court ritual.82 While the surrender of Japanese raiders largely ceased after the reign of T’aejong, during the reign of Sejong, Japanese were also brought to the Chosŏn court after the attack by the Chosŏn army on the island of Tsushima. Japanese from Tsushima also fled to Chosŏn during the reign of Sejong and were accepted as submitting-foreigners. Additionally, a group of people called Hoehoe (Ch. Huihui) or Muslims are recorded as entering from Kyushu and Western Honshu. Although Muslims had entered in significant numbers during the period of Yuan dominance,83 this particular community seems to have been part of the Muslim diaspora trading community of coastal Chinese cities that had scattered abroad after the Ming court began instituting its policy of maritime prohibition.84 People described as Hoehoe formed part of the Chosŏn network of allies in the maritime world,
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with Hoehoe merchants in Kyushu offering the Chosŏn court tribute, and Hoehoe people from southwestern Honshu settling in Chosŏn, including one man described as a Hoehoe monk (Hoehoe samun), by which presumably shaikh is meant, who arrived in Chosŏn in 1412. Beyond that, Japanese communities were established at certain ports on the southern coast, which were formed as the Chosŏn court abandoned its earlier policy of allowing Japanese traders to pursue unrestricted commerce on Chosŏn’s southern coast. At one point, as many as three ports were designated for Japanese merchants, who rose to a total population of more than 3,000 people by 1494, although eventually (after Japanese residents revolted in the Riot of the Three Ports in 1510) greater restrictions were placed on their residency and all were concentrated in the one port of Pusan.

Jurchens, however, entered Chosŏn with Yi Sŏnggye’s armies, where they became submitting-foreigner royal guards and resided in the capital, later to be followed by many other Jurchen and Japanese submitting-foreigners who similarly sought out residence in Hansŏng with the status of royal guard. In the northeast, the Jurchen communities already present at the founding of the Chosŏn state continued to live there and were governed initially through submitting-foreigner status—in fact, during the reign of Sejong, the entire population of Hamgyŏng north of Tanch’ŏn was described as descendants of Jurchen submitting-foreigners, who had been thoroughly converted into ordinary subjects of the Chosŏn state, paying all the required taxes. By the sixteenth century, on the outer fringes of Chosŏn’s authority, Pŏnho villages had formed that were neither fully within Chosŏn authority nor completely outside of it. In 1591, the recorded population of Pŏnho villages had risen to 8,523 households. Following Han Sŏngju, when this figure is multiplied by an assumed five people per household, this suggests a Pŏnho population of 42,000. This figure surely understates the actual population of Jurchens in Chosŏn, as in addition to Pŏnho villagers on Chosŏn’s northeastern frontier, there would have been Jurchens not registered under Chosŏn authority, and, of course, submitting-foreigner Jurchens farther inland who did not reside in Pŏnho villages.

Within Chosŏn society, submitting-foreigners pursued diverse roles. Their entry itself was at times a reward for helping to repatriate Chosŏn people who had been abducted by raiders. In other cases, Japanese monks came to establish themselves in Chosŏn monasteries, while both Jurchens and Japanese in Hansŏng were employed as guards. Otherwise, in addition to farming and fishing, many were employed in a range of skilled crafts such as medicine and weapon-making. Ryukyuan boatbuilders were especially prized by the Chosŏn state, while among Hoehoe migrants, several are recorded as skilled in mining
for crystals and crafting gems. There were cases of submitting-foreigners rising to positions of significant prominence. One example is Yi Sŏnggye’s Jurchen supporter Yi Chiran, whose son Yi Hwayŏng (?–1424) also became a merit subject, and whose family, the Ch’ŏnghae Yi, became a sajok descent-group with particular success in military matters, even intermarrying with the Chosŏn royal family. Another less prominent case is that of the Chŏnju Chu family. They were the descendants of Chu In and Chu Man, two Jurchen leaders who, along with their subordinates, submitted to Yi Sŏnggye, with Chu Man being honored as a merit subject for his support. Based in Hamhŭng, the Chŏnju Chu became a locally important descent-group who were successful especially in military examinations. Beyond that, the “Sejong Gazetteer” lists a number of surnames in Hamgyŏng province as pertaining to “those who submitted to the state” (hyangguk sŏngsi), including Chu Man’s descendants in Hamhŭng, four surnames in Puryŏng, and six in Samsu. Other than the Chŏnju Chu and the Tanch’ŏn Tong (whose founder, Tong Allo, married his daughter to Yi Hwayŏng), very little is now known about the other surnames, except that they were of sufficient local prominence to be listed in the gazetteer.

The border-crossing status of many submitting-foreigners made them well suited to the roles in diplomacy, intelligence, and trade in which the Chosŏn court employed them, and there were submitting-Japanese holding official positions with the Chosŏn court living outside the boundaries of the Chosŏn state in Japan. Some submitting-foreigners rose to positions of great significance within Chosŏn’s diplomatic service, comparable to the status received by the Chinese. An example of this was P’i Sangŭi. P’i Sago, a Japanese raider who had submitted to T’aeto in 1395 and who had served in the royal guard, received a junior seventh-rank title before his death in 1399. His son P’i Sangŭi was born in 1395, possibly in Chosŏn, and, as the son of a submitting-foreigner, was given preferred access to a position in the bureaucracy, without taking examinations. In particular, as a Japanese-Korean interpreter, he participated in six diplomatic missions to Japan, as well as taking an active role in discussions with Japanese envoys who arrived in Hansŏng. Another notable example was Tong Ch’ŏngnye, a submitting-foreigner officer on patrol (hyanghwa pujang), who, as a descendant of Möngke Timur, had many relatives in Jianzhou but was trusted by the Chosŏn court. He thus was the obvious intermediary in negotiations between Chosŏn and Jianzhou Jurchens. Tong led several missions deep into Jianzhou during the late fifteenth century, well after the Ming had begun to actively discourage Chosŏn interaction with Jianzhou. Such were his ties to diverse Jurchen potentates that, after he was implicated in a conspiracy against
Chungjong and executed in 1508, Chosŏn’s relations with the Jurchens were significantly damaged, with some Jurchen leaders threatening revenge.¹⁰²

For the most part submitting-foreigners were brought in to become part of a Chosŏn monarchy that sought not to eliminate difference but to organize people according to hereditary categories. This may be seen in the attempts by the Chosŏn state to manage their marriages with Chosŏn people. As a general rule, submitting-foreigners were encouraged to marry Chosŏn women,¹⁰³ and indeed, in one of the few actual state-organized demands for assimilation, in 1427, Sejong argued that the unusual clothing, and especially headgear, of the Muslims in Chosŏn (which at one time must have made for a desirable display during court ceremony) prevented their marriage with other Chosŏn subjects. In order to further their assimilation, he banned all future use of Muslim clothing and brought an end to their prayers during court ceremonials.¹⁰⁴ References to Hoehoe in Chosŏn disappear at this point, although no doubt they lingered, outside of the interest of the court, for some time afterward. In any case, it is notable that the Sejong’s overwhelming concern was to reduce their difference from the surrounding population by encouraging intermarriage.

Actual criticism of intermarriage between foreigners and Koreans seems to have been very rare. One unusual case is in 1433, when the minister of the Board of Personnel Hŏ Cho (1369–1439) memorialized against allowing two Ryukyuan boatbuilders Obo and Yago to take wives, as Chosŏn was a country of rites and refinement, and thus incompatible with such rustic Ryukyuans. However, he was strongly opposed in this matter by Maeng Sasŏng (1360–1438) and Hwang Hŭi (1365–1452) who argued that the two Ryukyuans had lived in Chosŏn for a long time, and unless they were about to return to Ryukyu it would be harmful to prevent their marriage. Ultimately, the monarch declared that they should not be prevented from marrying if they had already started making plans in that direction.¹⁰⁵ In general, Hŏ Cho’s position seems to have been a minority position, for there are frequent references to the presumably Korean wives of Ryukyuan boatbuilders,¹⁰⁶ although in at least one case a Ryukyuan boatbuilder is described as returning to Ryukyu to visit his (presumably Ryukyuan) wife.¹⁰⁷

Prominent submitting-foreigners such as the Ch’ŏnghae Yi descendants of Yi Chiran did indeed intermarry with sajok families and even the royal family, but most submitting-foreigners married women of low status. During the reign of Sejong, in response to the request by Sigaro and Yattae, two prominent Jurchens, that they be allowed to marry, the court of Sejong specified that they, as with later submitting-foreigners, should be given daughters of women of servile
background who had married commoner men, perhaps because commoner-base unions were illegal, and thus their offspring could be easily pressed into service by the state. Commoner women who formed families with servile men could also be forced to marry foreigners as punishment, as was the case that came to light during the reign of Sejong, when a commoner woman named Ka-I was being sentenced for the murder of her Japanese husband, Sonda (Ja. Tadamasa). The background to this case was that Ka-i had been punished for illegally forming a relationship and having children with a servile man. In response, the magistrate in charge had her married to the “Japanese bastard” (waeno), an act that the Chosŏn court does not seem to have fully supported, as they considered it a somewhat mitigating factor in considering Ka-I’s sentence.

There were, of course, exceptions to this rule. When Möngke Timur’s son Tong Ch’ang (Ch. Tong Cang, 1419–1467) requested to marry a woman of a good (commoner) family from Hoeryŏng, the court of Sejong referred to it as a minor departure of protocol. Although in Chinese history the sending of women from official families or from the imperial family to marry barbarians was done only when no other solution was possible, Tong Ch’ang was merely requesting a commoner woman. While that was not in accord with the usual practice of providing base-born women or women of mixed commoner-base origins to Jurchen royal guards (including some of Tong Ch’ang’s own underlings), granting Tong Ch’ang’s wish was seen as beneficial to the Chosŏn court, as it facilitated the expansion of Chosŏn’s influence over Tong Ch’ang’s network in Jianzhou. As a result, Tong Ch’ang’s request was approved.

Not all agreed that it was undesirable for sajok women to be married to submitting-foreigners. Yang Sŏngji (1415–1482), for instance, argued that the marriage of all Jurchens, regardless of social status, to women of such low status was a violation of the duties of the Chosŏn monarch to show care for people who came from far away and also in breach of standard Confucian rituals. Instead, he asserted that Jurchen who submitted to the Chosŏn court should have marriages arranged for them according to their political strength, with those leading large communities married into families of officials who owed their position to hereditary protection (ŭm) privilege, those leading medium-size groups into families of officials in technical fields, those leading the smallest groups into commoner families, and Jurchens “in the vicinity of the fortifications” with local soldiers in the north—presumably leaving ordinary Jurchens to marry with the base born. Yang advocated, in other words, the organization of Jurchens according to Chosŏn’s social hierarchy. It does not seem that his advice was put into effect to any great extent. Nevertheless, he provides an example of an assimilationist
position, even to the extent of associating powerful Jurchen leaders with members of Chosŏn’s sajok aristocracy.

The marriage of submitting-foreigners to Chosŏn subjects was useful for the Chosŏn court. In the case of Tong Ch’ang’s marriage, some were worried that he might leave Chosŏn with his bride. Countering this concern, however, was the strengthened connection to Chosŏn that would likely result if Tong Ch’ang’s bride then returned to Hoeryŏng to visit family. As Paek Okkyŏng argues, the Chosŏn court used intermarriage ultimately as a tool, either to link Jurchen potentates more closely to Chosŏn, or to transform the objectionable or un-Confucian aspects of Jurchen culture and lifestyles. When Yi Sŏnggye sent Yi Chiran to administer the Jurchen lands of the northeast, he specifically encouraged him to “change [the Jurchens’] practice of letting out their hair, to cause them to wear hats, change their animalistic customs and accept propriety, to have them marry people of our country, to impose on them the same corvée and taxation as ordinary subjects, to make them ashamed to be led by their chief and to make them all want to become subjects of the kingdom.”

To be sure, such intermarriage could cause difficulties for the Chosŏn court, as it created people with ambiguous relationships to Chosŏn. During the reign of Chungjong, a man of Jurchen origin named Kim Inbok, who had served as a royal guard, requested a slave as payment. Although the Chosŏn officials discussing his case agreed that submitting to royal edification and serving as a royal guard were beautiful acts, they noted that Kim Inbok’s father, Kim Ch’ŏnsu, had already submitted to the Chosŏn court and served in the royal guard and that, moreover, not only had Kim Ch’ŏnsu’s mother been Korean but so was his wife, Kim Inbok’s mother. Thus, though Kim Inbok had been born in Jurchen territory, it was hard to determine whether he should be seen as having submitted himself (kisin hyanghwa) or had merely submitted by descent (chaji hyanghwa). Although the court officials did conclude that, because he had been born in the Jurchen homeland (pont’o), Kim Inbok should be treated as having submitted himself, King Chungjong personally objected to the granting of such status to one whose paternal grandmother, father, and mother had all been Chosŏn subjects. Perhaps reflecting heightened suspicion of Jurchens during the sixteenth century, both Chungjong and these high officials also expressed wariness regarding the reckless mixing in northern Hamgyŏng Province between Jurchens who had submitted and those who had not.

A more troublesome case was that of a Pŏnho named Pak San who had employed his riches and his fluent Korean to contract numerous marriages with submitting-foreigner women in northern Hamgyŏng. The magistrate of
Chongsŏng complained that the women in question were from families who submitted long ago and so were simply ordinary subjects of the Chosŏn monarch. He thus objected to their removal across the river into Jurchen territory. Moreover, concerned that there would be more of Pak San’s sort, the magistrate sought to establish bans on such indiscriminate contact between Pŏnhos and submitting-foreigners, a likely futile program that nevertheless was also characteristic of Chosŏn’s administration of Japanese submitting-foreigners in Chosŏn, who were discouraged from forming links with Japanese in Japan.

Attempts to administer and form precise distinctions between foreign groups—between Japanese abroad and Japanese settled in Chosŏn, between Pŏnhos and submitting-foreigners—were likely rendered futile by the fluid cultural and social circumstances of late medieval Northeast Asia and indeed very diplomatic structures whereby Chosŏn organized its relationships with peoples on its frontiers. There were cases of Japanese who requested the right of domicile in Chosŏn on account of Korean parents who had settled in Japan, presumably, either because their parents were taken as slaves by Japanese raiders or indeed because they participated in raiding themselves. Because submitting-foreigner status was granted not only to those within Chosŏn territory but also to those residing outside of it, the distinction between submitting-foreigners and Pŏnhos that was at the core of the Pak San case must have frequently been meaningless.

The purpose of Chosŏn’s diplomatic relations with Japanese and Jurchen potentates was generally to integrate those potentates as a different sort of subject of the Chosŏn court. In terms of cultural politics, the Chosŏn court actively sought to exploit spheres of common identification. Jurchen groups in northern Hamgyŏng had, of course, a long-lasting association with the Chosŏn court, such that the Chosŏn court could claim, in discussion with the Ming, that they were no different from any other subjects of the Chosŏn court—and while in part this was simply rhetorical, and at other times the Chosŏn could rather treat them as an outside force, to a substantial extent it was simply an expression of the reality of Chosŏn governance within the Tumen valley region. In the case of Japan and Ryukyu, while both states were outside of Chosŏn governance, Chosŏn could still rely on historical connections between Japan and Korea extending to the Three Kingdoms period, for instance, when a key ally of the Chosŏn monarchy, the Ōuchi family of western Honshu, requested that the Chosŏn court support their claim of descent from Paekche kings.

Ultimately, according to circumstances, Jurchens and Japanese could be ordinary subjects, or outsiders coming to receive protection, barbarians coming to receive edification, or untrustworthy barbarians implacably opposed to civilization.
The fourth aspect has dominated recent scholarship on Jurchens and Japanese, and it is true that there is no shortage of dehumanizing descriptions of them in the Chosŏn Veritable Records. Appearing with some frequency are phrases such as “They are not of our family, so their minds must also be different,” with descriptions of them as having “the faces of people but the minds of beasts.” While the former phrase originated during the Zhou period, when it was used to refer to rivalry among aristocratic families, it gained a new meaning within post-Han standard histories, in which it was employed to discourage close association with the Xiongnu and other nomads of the steppes. In this sense, it could be used to describe the dangers of association between barbarians and civilized peoples. It gained prevalence during Chosŏn in this sense. For instance, during the reign of Sŏngjong, an official criticized what he saw to be an excessively lax approach to interaction with the Jianzhou Jurchens, whereby “those who came were not refused and those who left were not pursued.” Such laxity toward those who “are not of our family, so whose minds must also be different” could only pose military dangers in the future.

During the reign of Chujong, the necessity of driving off Jurchens who were farming within Chosŏn territory was justified through a variation of that phrase: “Although not of our family, they are farming in our territory, so it is proper that we drive them off.” Two years later similar wording was used to justify building up fortifications around border towns “to prevent the civilized and the barbarians from mixing.”

Jurchen and Japanese subjects of the Chosŏn monarch, whether Pŏnhos or submitting-foreigners, played vital defensive, economic, and ideological roles in the Chosŏn state. They could not simply be rejected as troublesome outsiders. As Shao-yun Yang has discussed for the Tang, stereotypes concerning barbarians could be made to serve diverse purposes, including encouraging greater forbearance toward them. As was also true of the discussion of barbarians during the Tang, contemptuous phrases concerning Jurchens and Japanese during the early Chosŏn were used to argue not for limiting involvement with Jurchens but in fact for greater lenience. For instance, after the defeat of Li Manchu in 1467, his sons continued to search for titles, trade, and tribute missions to Hansŏng, and the Chosŏn court justified granting titles and ranks to them with the logic that, as entities “with the face of humans but the minds of beasts,” any failure to accommodate them would result in unrest on the frontier. More generally, Chosŏn’s Japanese and Jurchen subjects were vital members of the Chosŏn polity and played irreplaceable roles in Chosŏn’s defense. As a result, in the 1550s, during Pŏnho and Udiha revolts at Sŏsura in response to Chosŏn’s establishment of a new garrison fort north of the river, even officials, who argued that Pŏnhos
as barbarians were fundamentally inferior to Koreans, could plead in favor of forbearance (for what else could one expect of barbarians), and saw it as above all vital that the Chosŏn court show its concern to protect the all-important hedge provided by Chosŏn’s Pŏnho vassals.\textsuperscript{130} Certainly, it was accepted by most that, despite the revolt, the protection of Chosŏn’s fence of Jurchen allies was of the greatest importance. The Chosŏn monarch should, like any Confucian king, deal with barbarians by not driving off those who submitted to him and not pursuing those who left him.

How did Chosŏn’s Jurchen and Japanese subjects themselves understand their relationship to the Chosŏn court? It is rare, of course, to find any explicit documentation of their point of view. Some of the complexities of these circumstances can, however, be seen in the deathbed announcement of Yi Chiran, who is recorded as having written the following memorial to the king: “Your minister is originally a man of the homeland (pont’o) who is dying in a foreign land (iguk). Please burn my corpse and return me for burial to the homeland (pont’o). Your majesty, please have your officials bury me according to the practices of the home country. And please, your majesty, rule with prudence and cultivate your virtue and preserve Chosŏn for all time.”\textsuperscript{131}

Standing out in this passage is not only Yi Chiran’s view of Chosŏn as a foreign country, but also his confident use of “homeland” in addressing the king, who was also from the same northeastern region. Even a prominent Jurchen like Yi Chiran stood out as an outsider in the very state that he had been instrumental in constructing, although this outsider status was one he shared, in a sense, with the Chosŏn monarchy itself. More generally, Jurchens of submitting-foreigner origin were brought directly into the Chosŏn state, as subjects accepting the moral edification of the Chosŏn king. Further afield, the Pŏnhos of Chosŏn’s northern boundary stood at an ambiguous point between subjects of the Chosŏn state and aliens to it and could pass from one side of that line to the other. Chosŏn officialdom dealt with them in diverse ways according to the ideological preconceptions of the official in charge.

The Early Chosŏn, though not as diverse as Koryŏ before and during Yuan domination, was nevertheless far from a homogenous realm. Its officialdom, especially in the lower ranks, included Uighurs, Mongols, and Han Chinese, and its military was made up at least in part of Jurchens and Japanese. Although, in contrast to Koryŏ officials during the period of Mongol dominance, Chosŏn officials were no longer part of a broader Eurasian elite, they were by no means
cut off from the wider world. Yuan subjects and their descendants continued to reside in Chosŏn, Japanese were a significant presence on its southern coast, and Jurchens dominated much of the northeast. Within a status-conscious Chosŏn society, none of these outsiders were able to perturb the preeminence of Chosŏn’s sajok aristocracy, although some foreign descent-groups did achieve local prominence or distinction in technical fields such as interpreting.

Chosŏn, as a smaller Chunghwa but not the actual center, was at once a subordinate participant in the Ming world order and a separate civilizing center in its own right. These foreign elements were administered through submitting-foreigner status, which, in form at least, would seem to imply that Chosŏn was treating itself as a civilization center similar to China. Chinese and their descendants, notably, were also administered according to this status. Although the Chosŏn court after the early fifteenth century was in no position to receive Chinese, for the simple reason that there was no longer an intermediate group of Chinese travelers available for Chosŏn to receive, this did not, by any means, imply that the Chosŏn court in any way considered it improper to bring in Chinese people as supplicants in need of edification. Although the distinction between the civilized and the barbarian was a vital part of the conceptual framework by which the Chosŏn court managed foreign peoples, it should not be seen as the master key by which all of the Chosŏn officialdom’s responses to foreigners should be understood. Ultimately, the Chosŏn court’s interaction with the outside world was determined by diverse factors, including its defensive, economic, and administrative needs, and it was in the interest of the sajok aristocracy to maintain its social and political dominance against all rivals, whether Korean, Jurchens, Japanese, Uighur, or indeed Chinese.