The Liao-tung Campaign of 1619

by Ray Huang

The Liao-tung campaign of early 1619 brought an end to the Ming empire’s unchallenged military dominance in that region, while it raised the Manchus to the status of formidable rivals. In retrospect, it can be seen that as the opposing armies met, the fate of China’s millions was sealed on the battlefield, suddenly and ignominiously. For the intensity of the engagement as well as the decisiveness of its outcome, the event merits a prominent position in the Chinese annals of war. But to this date only scattered and contradictory descriptions of it exist in primary and secondary sources. This article recounts the sequence of battles in some detail to arrive at a more coherent picture.

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The situation that led to the campaign is clear enough: A year earlier Nurhaci had ransacked the city of Fu-shun and slaughtered its garrison. He then routed another Ming army sent to chastise him, killing its commander, Chang Ch’eng-Yin. He then demanded that the Ming court redress his “Seven Grievances”, calling for concessions of land along the empire’s northeast border and indemnities to be paid in gold, silver, and silk brocades. This was put aside unanswered. Since the Manchu army then continued to destroy Chinese forward posts adjacent to its territories, a de facto state of war existed between the Ming emperor and this Chien-chou chieftain.

In Peking, the court organized a punitive expedition. During the summer of 1618 Yang Hao, Vice-Minister of War and concurrently Assistant Censor-in-Chief, was appointed Supreme Commander. Several highly regarded generals – the best that the empire could muster – were also assigned to Liao-tung. Soldiers, horses and equipment from frontier and interior provinces as far off as Chekiang and Szechuan were assembled to build up the offensive force. When more personnel was required, recruits filled the ranks. The Koreans and the Ye-ho, a Manchu tribe still loyal to the Ming, provided additional resistance. To meet military expenses the Wan-li Emperor authorized a silver surcharge on land taxes in all provinces except Kweichow. Along with other revenues, the increase was expected to provide three million taels of silver. In March 1619 all preparations had ben completed.

The total strength of Yang Hao’s command remains a question. Many sources, including Manchu documents, give the figure of 200,000 men. Actually, the combined Chinese forces could not have equalled half that number, and perhaps considerably less. The above figure was calculated by adding 110,000 men, sent as reinforcements, to the 90,000 originally assigned to the Liao-tung command. But it was general knowledge
approx. line under chinese control prior to the offensive

chinese fortification

① Ma Lin  ② Tu Sung  ③ Li Ju-po  ④ Liu T'ing
Notes on Map Sketch 2
1. Tu Sung crosses the Hun River, leaving battle wagons behind.
2. 15,000 Manchu infantrymen abandon Sarhu to take position on Girin Peak; they are surrounded by Tu Sung's mainbody, said to be 20,000 men.
3. 400 Manchu cavalrymen, previously hiding in ravine, surprise the Chinese from their rear, cross the Sutzu River at Jabiyan, and re-unite with the Manchu infantry on the Girin Peak.
4. Sarhu is also occupied by Tu Sung's forces, strength unknown.
5. Nurhaci reinforces Girin Peak with 1000 mounted soldiers.
6. His attack in force commits five banners on the left.
7. After Tu Sung's forces on Sarhu are routed, the entire Manchu army closes in on the east bank of the Sutzu River. The three banners there are committed. Tu Sung is surrounded.
8. After the victory, the Manchu pursue.
that the field command had not been brought up to full strength for some time. Furthermore, due to heavy losses incurred the year earlier and the manpower needed to guard other sectors of Liaotung, personnel available for the campaign probably amounted to only a fraction of the original 90,000 men. Numerous reports also suggest that the reinforcements and recruits did not arrive in such numbers as officially reported. Chinese commanders habitually inflated their troop strength in order to obtain extra supplies. The Manchus, subsequently being victors, of course happily endorsed the inflated strength of their opponents. This helped to publicize the greater magnitude of their own military success.

Works based on Manchu sources calculate the troop strength of Tu Sung, who led one of Yang Hao’s four routes of forces, at 60,000 men. But the deputy circuit intendant attached to the route as Inspector General reported its strength to be “25,000-plus officers and men.” If the same ratio between the inflated strength and actual strength applied to all routes, a more realistic figure for Yang Hao’s attacking force probably lies somewhere close to 83,000 men. Augmented by Korean and Ye-ho auxiliaries, the combined command may have had 100,000 men, a round figure informally appearing in some Chinese accounts.

Equally unclear is the size of Nurhaci’s army. Though the Chien-chou chieftain repeatedly referred to his fighting hordes as “100,000 men under eight banners,” this figure is difficult to accept as an accurate count of his effective combat strength. Later in July at K’ai-yüan he supposedly launched an attack with 40,000 men, which gives some indication of the extent of Manchu mobilization. Also, after the battle Nurhaci handed out awards to 220 niru commanders. Since each niru contained 300 able-bodied men, 220 niru constituted a reservoir of 66,000 soldiers. During the spring campaign the Manchus fought for survival, especially on April 14, at Sarhu, where combat mounts were committed to battle in contingents as they arrived. The mobilization on this occasion probably exceeded that for the Battle of K’ai-yüan. This evidence suggests that at the high point Nurhaci probably brought 50,000 to 60,000 men to the confrontation with Yang Hao. Nevertheless, in overall strength the Chinese indisputably outnumbered the Manchus.

Yang Hao’s battle plan requires little reconstruction. On April 4 the emperor received a copy of it, still extant. The scheme divided the attacking forces into four columns, called routes, with Ma Lin commanding the northern route, Tu Sung the western route, Li Ju-po the southern route, and Liu T’ing the southeastern route. Though not specified in the plan, Heta Ala appears to be the objective. Aside from assigning defense duties to the garrison commanders at Liaoyang and Kuang-ning, the operational order did not designate a strategic reserve.

From a modern army strategist’s point of view, the plan incorporated several questionable features. It scattered the forces over a huge arc of 150 miles without focusing the main effort. Nor did the plan assign intermediate targets to the advancing columns. Having released the order, the Supreme Commander in fact divorced himself from the operation. As it turned out, all he could do was to wait news of developments in his Liaoyang headquarters.

Yang Hao received plenty of criticism from his contemporaries. One wrote: “The Supreme Commander had no intention of fighting. He merely put on airs of [launching] a major offensive in the hope of scoring minor victories by seizing a few nearby forts.” According to a supervising secretary, “Yang Hao had no assurance of victory. He pre-
pared for deep penetration only because of his subordinate commanders' clamor for battle and pressure from above. Others said that his plan was outdated, that it might do for inexperienced tribesmen but never against an opponent of substantial strength and expertise.

Yet the psychological effect of the plan warrants attention. Yang Hao may have deployed his army to intimidate. Manchu sources indicate that before the offensive the Supreme Commander sent word to Nurhaci that he was to launch a force of 470,000 men under the full moon of April 28—the date deliberately offered the intent of immediate action. But if Yang Hao hoped to gain a psychological edge over his opponent by such gestures, he was to be disappointed. Nurhaci was not unfamiliar with such maneuvers. Previously once he had told his subordinates not to take seriously certain Chinese moves. The Ming forces, he explained, were in a habit of making token appearances, and then fabricated fancy tales of victory to deceive their emperor.

In fairness to Yang Hao, several mitigating factors deserve consideration. Sending Ma Lin to the north and Liu T'ing to the south, he apparently took care of the Ming forces already there, including the Ye-ho and Korean auxiliaries, which could not effectively operate far away from their home bases. Also, in the empire's military tradition, general practice permitted civil officials to be commissioned as supreme commanders, but not professional soldiers to rise to the rank of field marshal. Usually a general officer, given the command of an army corps, had already reached the pinnacle of his career. This applied to the four senior commanders. Roughly equal in service record and prestige, they were not expected to serve under one another. This factor alone proved a substantial obstacle to consolidate the front. Even before entering Liao-tung, one of the four, Liu T'ing, in fact had already memorialized the throne, suggested that the army be divided into routes. Furthermore, terrain decisively influenced Yang Hao's scheme of maneuver. Routes leading to Hetu Ala from the west were limited. To the north the Hun river intersected all avenues of approach, while high mountains remained serious barriers in the south.

After the field order executing the aforementioned battle plan was issued, the Supreme Commander, with most officers present, officiated the ceremony to launch the campaign on March 26 at Liao-yang. Commencing April 5, the several columns were to jump off on different dates, depending upon how far each was from the enemy. But a heavy snow on March 31 made it necessary to re-set the date on April 9. From this point on no more is said about the campaign until the fall of Tu Sung on April 14.

Manchu sources do not corroborate the Chinese claim that Nurhaci had been informed of the date of Chinese offensive. They maintain that Yang Hao's advance was detected on April 13. Contact with Liu T'ing's forces was established during the day and the torch illumination of Tu Sung's march observed in the night following. On the morning of April 14 the Chien-chou chieftain personally decided to deal with Tu Sung in force first. He concluded that Liu T'ing's thrust was a feint attack designed to draw his attention to the south. Nevertheless he dispatched 500 mounts to check the advance in that direction. This agrees with the Korean account. By all appearance, Nurhaci had camped close to the day's battle scene.

In the course of the Battle of Sarhu, Chinese sources relate that Tu Sung suffered ambush twice. Early April 14 he crossed the Hun river, abandoning his battalion of battle-wagons loaded with firearms on the northern shore. In skirmishes on the south-
ern shore he quickly eliminated two enemy barriers, capturing 14 Manchus. Encouraged by the success, he dashed forward right into the trap laid by Nurhaci. Soon his forces became entangled with 30,000 enemies. During the intense fighting Tu attempted to occupy a mountain peak, only to fall into yet another ambush. Before sunset the general had perished with his two division commanders. Few of those who crossed the Hun returned.

Censorial officials accused Tu Sung posthumously of "greediness in seeking merit". His misdeeds included: Advancing the jump-off date without authorization, abandoning firearms, crossing the Hun river against the advice of his subordinates, and giving battle with a span of water in his rear. Eventually the grave responsibility of the failure of the entire campaign fell on Tu Sung — a judgement shared by the emperor himself.

From the historian's viewpoint, both the situation report and the censure lacked merit. When Tu Sung's forces were routed, the report was composed by a surveillance commissioner, based exclusively on verbal accounts furnished by three soldiers on reconnaissance duty and one actually engaged in combat. Later charges against the commanding general were added to it without further confirmation, conceivably to relieve the Supreme Commander and the censorial officials themselves. Extant records do not indicate that an official inquiry was ever held.

The document of censure repeatedly stressed the importance of exercising caution; it mentioned that the attacking forces should have held their advance once the enemy's frontline was overrun, so that better coordination could take effect. But Yang Hao's order shows no such emphasis. Circumstances suggest that the Supreme Commander himself set a tone of haste, as his order in part reads: "If the date of advancement should be missed, it clearly constitutes a case of deliberate delay. The commanding general together with his subordinates would be subject to [the death penalty by] beheading." And Yang had imperial authorization to impose and carry out death sentences on the spot. On March 26 he executed a colonel before the assembled generals, who had in a previous engagement failed to advance vigorously. Thus the applied pressure had already set the four routes of army in a race.

The charge that Tu Sung had advanced the jump-off cannot be substantiated. His D-Day was April 14, and he was said to have started in the mid-night of April 13/14; technically this was not a violation. As for abandoning the firearms battalion, even the early report bears witness that it was the battalion commander who decided to hold the advance after Tu crossed the Hun river. He testified that the current was too strong to ford, having already swept away some 50 cavalrymen. Sighting enemy mounts on the opposite bank, he simply ordered his battalion to encamp. This was hardly justifiable, considering that his commanding general had taken tens of thousands of men to the south and fought for hours. Subsequently the battalion commander said: "Crossing would be difficult even for bare-handed soldiers. Neither the wagons nor gunpowder could be carried along." Tu Sung might have displayed negligence in advancing without resolving the difficulty; but the firearms commander did not even seek alternate solutions and he did not report his decisions to encamp. By exercising discretion he thus abandoned his commanding general in the thick of fighting.

Moreover, Tu Sung's effort to seize the heights on the southern bank of the Hun river was tactically necessary, since in a meeting engagement, the early control of the hills was essential to the security of his bridgehead.
Chinese documents further disclose more blunders committed by the high command. While it is not explicitly mentioned, Yang Hao obviously did not employ his agents to gather field intelligence. Nor did he appear in person in the battle field. No one else could make the necessary readjustments in the field for him, especially in matters affecting several routes. Yet his unawareness of the Manchu troop concentration on Tu Sung’s path near Sarhu proved the most fatal oversight.

The Manchu sources lack variety. They seem to have been based entirely on the annals of Nurhaci, written in old Manchu script. Later the records were transcribed into the new script. When translated into Chinese, the entries began to take the form of traditional Veritable Records. The most notable bad feature of those sets of documents is their undue exaggeration. For instance, whereas they cite Chinese losses in battle at 100,000, they give “fewer than 200” for the total number of Manchus killed throughout the entire campaign29.

Nevertheless the annals provide more depth than Chinese records, including many point of technical detail. With whatever defects they remain the most authoritative account of the several battles. The annals’ credibility is enhanced by their consistent style, which features tactical subtlety expressed with a rather simple and limited vocabulary. As victor, Nurhaci had fewer reasons to distort the records than the Chinese, except, as already suggested, for the exaggeration of his success in order to attract more followers.

This source reveals that when the Chinese advanced, 15,000 Manchu infantrymen, scarcely armed, were constructing fortifications on the west side of Sarhu, only 400 cavalrymen were stationed with them as a security force. Apparently Nurhaci had foreseen the strategic value of the site, and so during the battle his forces converged readily on the heights.

Otherwise the battle of April 14 went on more as a meeting engagement than a large-scale ambush. Most of the Manchu combat units from the south, where, about ten miles from Sarhu, they donned their armor. When they closed in, the infantry on construction duty had already moved to the east side to take position on Girin Peak[18] (see Map Sketch 2), where they were surrounded by Tu Sung’s forces, estimated to be 20,000 men. The 400 cavalrymen, having hidden themselves in the ravine of Sarhu during the shuffle, surprised the Chinese by taking their rear. After inflicting casualties, they crossed the Sutzu river[19] near Jabiyan[20] to reunite with the infantry on the heights. With the latter’s support, they executed one more downhill charge, killing about 100 Ming soldiers. Presumably, those charges had delayed the Chinese attack and gained precious time for the Manchu command. By mid-afternoon, when Nurhaci arrived on the scene, the mountain of Sarhu was also occupied by more of Tu Sung’s men.

The Chien-chou war council proposed first to relieve the encirclement of Girin Peak. 1000 more cavalrymen should light their way to reach the besieged troops. Then four banners of Manchu forces should attack Tu Sung’s main body from the front, while four other banners kept watch on the enemy on the west side of Sarhu.

Nurhaci overruled this plan, although he dispatched the 1000 mounts to Girin Peak as it had been suggested. His main attack would be launched from the west wing rather than the east wing; for troop concentration he detached a banner from the east of the Sutzu river to reinforce the west, giving it a total strength of five banners. Only after the Ming forces on the Sarhu were routed would the three banners remaining on the east side spring into action, to be synchronized with the downhill charges of the cavalry supported infantry from Girin Peak. The exact strength of the attacking force remains un-
certain, as the banners themselves were receiving late-arriving mounts from the direction of Hetu Ala. Still, it appears that Nurhaci always had great numerical superiority in any sector of heavy fighting. Determined to wipe out the Chinese on the western bank, there his cavalry strength must be overwhelming. Once that sector was secured, the Ming forces at the foothills of Girin Peak would have little recourse. Surrounded, cut off from any orderly retreat by the Hun river and psychologically defeated, Tu Sung would fall easily.

As planned, the attack went on in a fury. Mobility, team-work, and superior striking power provided the success. According to the annals, the engagement was a typical case of Ming resistance giving way to Manchu uphill cavalry charges. Not surprised, at the beginning the Chinese arrayed their firearms in depth. Even though boo is mentioned, probably without the battle-wagon battalion, Tu’s men were firing muskets only, not inconceivably with the Korean contingent. (See below, boo is the Manchu word for p’ao.) In any case the defense proved ineffective encountering a determined Manchu drive. “In a short time all of them were annihilated,” Nurhaci’s annals declare succinctly, “as we galloped our horses without stop to enter into their position, and kept shooting and chopping.”

Tu Sung never had a chance. His whereabouts is not even mentioned. The annals devote only three sentences to the extinction of his army corps. Overpowered, the remnants of this force retreated to Sokin mountain where they were tightly surrounded by the Manchus as darkness fell. What remained for the Chien-chou warriors was merely a mopping-up action. At leisure they slaughtered those who tried to break away from the closing ring.

Pursuing the defeated, the Manchus seem to have crossed the Hun river in a due north direction, leaving Tu Sung’s firearms battalion undisturbed. On their way in the night of April 14/15 they moved close to Ma Lin’s route near Siyanggiyan, whose soldiers beat drums and clank gongs during the night watch, thus disclosing their positions to the enemy.

The appearance of Ma Lin’s forces so close to the scene of Tu Sung’s defeat involved an irony. According to a Chinese document, originally Supreme Commander Yang Hao had directed Ma to advance from San-ch’a-ehr-pao; but the general besought permission to take the route at Ching-an-pao, a point 30 miles farther to the north and away from the area of action. His wish was granted. Yet on the eve of the offensive he reversed himself and again requested permission to return to San-ch’ a as planned earlier; this was again granted. Had he actually extended the offensive front to the north, the outcome of the imminent battle might have been different.

As it happened, the emergence of his corps near Siyanggiyan only enabled the Manchus to carry their slaughter onto the next day, April 15. The Chinese high command learned about this second disaster from soldiers patrolling the rear and from a messenger escaped from the encirclement. They indicated that the entire corps was surrounded by an unknown number of Manchus. A similar disjointed follow-up report stated that P’an Tsung-yen, a civil official acting as Inspector General of the route, fell from his horse with an arrow wound in his back and died there. More than 10000 Chinese cavalrymen, however, made their way to the west. Later official history attributed the disaster to panic among Ma’s soldiers caused by news of Tu Sung’s defeat that had reached them in the previous night. Early in the morning of April 15, a disheartened Ma decided to retreat. He reached safety; but P’an Tsung-yen, in charge of the rear
echelon, was less fortunate. According to the chronicle, P’an rallied several senior officers and made an heroic stand that lasted four hours, in which they all gave up their lives.

The story, described in the simplest terms, does not agree with other accounts. There is the likelihood that by it the writer was glorifying a fallen comrade wearing the civil service robe and assigning the role of villain to the hapless Ma Lin. Three months later, it should be noted, Ma died in the battle of K’ai-yüan. Therefore, like Tu Sung, he could conveniently serve as a scapegoat.

Undeniably, disorder prevailed in the rear ranks of Ma Lin’s forces. But this must have taken place toward the end of the day, since Manchu sources assert that the entire Chinese corps of 40,000 met Nurhaci’s forces in good order, at least in the beginning.

Nurhaci’s annals state that in the morning Ma’s troops were actually advancing. Only upon sighting the approaching Manchus did they move back to the site of the previous night’s bivouac, taking advantage of the trenches already in place. The corps arrayed itself in a square formation. Outside the trenches in the vanguard position stood a line of musketeers, supported from behind by a line of cavalry, that was again backed up by more soldiers carrying muskets and boo. Behind them lay three lines of trenches, some hastily dug or deepened. Farther behind and inside the square of trenches all the cavalry squadrons had dismounted, ready to fight on foot. Those details lend authenticity to the source: Indeed the square formation typified Ming army tactics in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as attested in several military treatises.

Amba bele, Nurhaci’s second son, was assembling the Manchu troops still arriving from the south. As he watched he discovered another division of Chinese troops about 1.3 miles to the west of this main body, estimated to be 10,000 men. Clearly this refers to the rear echelon led by P’an Tsung-yen. In his field order Supreme Commander Yang Hao specified that civil officials attached to the several routes of army as Inspectors General had responsibility for army logistics, in addition to matters related to battlefield discipline and prisoners of war. Therefore P’an’s position, as described, was normal and proper, though it is doubtful that he actually had 10,000 troops at his command. Aligning the forward and rear echelons from the east to the west, the Ming forces formed a T-shape with the enemy, who was advancing on a south-to-north axis. But this strange situation did not last very long.

The presence of the Chinese rear division was in time reported to Nurhaci, who could not, however, do much about it at this point, because he had also sighted another Ming mobile column advancing toward him, also estimated to be 10,000 men. Its exact location is not specified. Yet, its movement dictated that it must be somewhere between the southern flank of the Chinese forces and the Western flank of the Manchus. As soon as the situation clarified, the Chien-chou chieftain decided to eliminate this mobile column first.

He had 1000 cavalrmen for the task. Half of them dismounted to remove the barricades hastily formed by the Chinese battle-wagons and rattan shields. This was accomplished under the rain of enemy missiles. With the obstacle removed, the soldiers on horseback took over. Typical of all Manchu chronicles of war, the passage on actual fighting is the most laconic. It is clear that the cavalry charge was effective and shortly before noon the Chinese mobile column ceased to exist.
Schematic Diagram 1
Battle of Siyanggiyan April 15, 1619

Notes on Schematic Diagram 1
(1) Nurhaci eliminates Ming mobile column.
(2) Nurhaci arrives in the east. Ma Lin’s forces are routed.
(3) The Manchus wipe out P’an Tsung-yen’s rear echelon.

Schematic Diagram 2:
Battle of Niu-Mao-chai April 20, 1619 (korean Sources: April 17, 1619)

Notes on Schematic Diagram 2
(1) Mongol detachments thrust into space between Liu Ting’s forward and rear divisions.
(2) Amba beile occupies mountain on the east.
(3) His forces encircle to the west.
(4) Hong Taiji attacks on the right.
(5) Amba beile executes central penetration.
(6) Manchus continue to wipe out Chinese resistance. Koreans surrender.
By the time Nurhaci returned to the east, Ma Lin’s main body had finally completed its preparations for a counter-attack. Dismounted cavalrmen, combat ready, emerged from the trenches to line up with their forward guards. Initially Nurhaci contemplated seizing a nearby hill to execute downhill charge; but the Chinese advance left no time for that. He then ordered his squadrons to dismount so as to fight the Ming soldiers on foot; but that too, would have let them be caught at regrouping by the Chinese. Amba beile, seeing the imminent danger, shouted warnings to his father before galloping away with two banners of troops directly toward the oncoming Chinese. Theoretically, cavalry charge was at a disadvantage in front of such an enemy, who had with them a wall of removable barriers, still supported behind by their own cavalry of greater numbers. But in this instance, according to the annals, the superior archery and horsemanship of the Manchus prevailed, not to mention Amba beile’s leadership. Inspired, the other six banners advanced, launching waves of devastating if improvised assaults. The final outcome was “the complete routing of 40000 Ming soldiers by fewer than 10000 Manchu soldiers”. Driven into a swampland, Chinese stragglers met a bitter end.

The last organized resistance was offered by the Chinese on Biyelun (Fiyelun) mountain, where 10000 of them still maneuvered muskets and rattan shields to check the Manchu onslaught. But by early afternoon these “10000 soldiers were killed to the last man”, apparently P’an Tsung-yen included. At this point the Manchus rested.

The two days engagement destroyed the entire northern sector of the Ming front, leaving only Li Ju-po and Liu T’ing in the southern sector. Li’s route was closest to the Manchu capital, but the difficult terrain made approach impracticable, in the absence of specially trained and specially equipped units of mountain troops. Hence, when the manchus detected Li’s movement, they merely dispatched 200 mounts to watch it from a distance.

After the disastrous reports about Sarhu, Siyanggiyan, and Biyefun, Yang Hao lost his will to fight. Accordingly he reported to the emperor that he was recalling the two routes of army in the southern sector. Li’s route was closest to the Manchu capital, but the difficult terrain made approach impracticable, in the absence of specially trained and specially equipped units of mountain troops. Hence, when the manchus detected Li’s movement, they merely dispatched 200 mounts to watch it from a distance.

Liu T’ing’s distance to Hetu Ala was the longest. His jump-off date was settled on April 9. His Chinese forces, said to comprise 30000 men, were probably close to one third of that number. Another 13000 men were furnished by the King of Korea. The Korean units crossed the Yalu on April 5. The combined column was expected to thrust toward the Manchu capital from the area between K’uan-tien and Huai-jen (present-day Huan-jen).

It may be noted that this was the only Chinese command which managed to flash back a few dispatches of “victories” during the early skirmishes. Yang Hao received one on April 14 which indicated that Liu’s forward elements were about 45 miles from Hetu Ala; at the time a subordinate commander observed: “A detachment of 500 barbarian insurgents, apparently battle-seasoned, occupied the mountain peak right in front of us to challenge us. They alternated retreat with enticement.” This agrees with the Korean account and coincides with an entry in Nurhaci’s annals, which reveals that the Chien-chou chieftain directed a force of this strength to be sent to delay Liu T’ing as soon as his advance in that region was observed.
Of the three *niru* commanders with these 500 men, the Manchu sources further admit that two were killed in action. But Liu T’ing’s glory was short-lived. Although he did not yet know it, the Manchus had already achieved their purpose. They had purchased the time that needed. Once the threat on their northern front was removed, they could direct their blow at him alone.

The ensuing battle, fought on the mountains called Abdari Heights but better identified by the nearby town of Niu-mao-chai, is presented in the Manchu annals with less clarity. No parallel Chinese account exists for comparison. Entries in Korean records differ from the version presented by Nurhaci’s followers on many crucial points.

The Manchus claimed that they fought the battle under no great pressure. The presence of Chinese columns had caused some anxiety, especially to the women-folk at Hetu Ala at a time when fighting took place in the north. But, having destroyed the invading forces on the Hun river, Nurhaci began to breathe easily. He dispatched to the southern mountains two vanguard units made up of Mongol components, one consisting of 1000 cavalymen on April 15, and another of 2000 mounts on April 16. That done, he took all the time to thank Heaven for his victory, sacrificing with eight oxen at Jabiyan. It was only late on April 16 that he started for the south. He himself never went beyond Hetu Ala. During the night of April 16/17 a decision was made. He would retain 4000 troops with him in the capital in case Li Ju-po should threaten it from Ya-kukuan. The operation against Liu T’ing was directed by Amba beile, with Amba’s cousin Amin taiji and brother Hong taiji participating.

The annals indicate that the princes started in the early morning of April 17 and made contact with Liu Ting’s forces on the fourth day of their march, that puts the date of the battle on April 20. As usual, the Chinese took defensive positions with their firearms. Several Manchu attacks failed to disturb their formation. Only after Amba beile ordered his troops to circle around to the west and occupy the hills there did the Ming soldiers show signs of confusion. (see Schematic Diagram 2.) And, when Hon taiji’s downhill assaults on the northern flank and Amba beile’s central penetration were aided by Mongol units cutting off the Chinese rear, the Ming army corps finally lost its poise. During the stampede Liu T’ing was captured. Contradicting all other accounts, the annals acknowledge that the general was executed after being taken prisoner.

Further south, yet another composite division of Chinese-Korean forces continued its resistance. The defenders used bamboo trees to obstruct Manchu horses; their firearms were arrayed in depth to pour out missiles. It is not clear how long they stalled the Manchu attack; but in the end wind intervened in the Manchus’ favor. It blew ferociously toward the defenders and made their cannons and muskets inoperative. The attackers seized this opportunity to overwhelm the last obstacle to their complete victory. When this composite division, said to comprise 20000 men, was finally routed, the Korean infantry units occupying the heights behind the battle scene gave up fighting. They delivered the remaining Chinese soldiers to the Manchus. The campaign came to a close.

Korean records confirm the description that Liu T’ing’s column comprised three echelons. The forward division, consisting of Chinese units, was under the control of the general himself. At an undisclosed distance two regiments of Koreans followed, presumably with most of their musketeers, no less than 3000 of them. Immediately behind them the balance of the Korean infantry, closely controlled by Kang Hongnip, formed the rear echelon. Those records further admit that Kang surrendered with some
4000 men, after Manchu cavalry had routed all other battle formations in front of him. Northwest wind is cited by the Koreans as a determining factor for the outcome of the battle, corroborating the Manchu annals. The Korean writers also substantiate the story that Kang Hongnip's men, while surrendering, turned Chinese soldiers over to the victors.

But the Korean records do not give credit to Liu T'ing's hard fighting. They claim that the forward echelon, consisting of Chinese personnel only, was ambushed rather than overpowered. One account asserts that the Chinese were looting the villages when they fell into the Manchu trap. According to the Korean sources, Liu T'ing was neither captured nor killed in action. He committed suicide. Seeing the situation untenable, he and several others ignited the gunpowder to kill themselves. The greatest discrepancy between the Manchu annals and Korean sources is the date of the battle. All Korean writers put down April 17 instead of April 20 as the day when the Chinese-Korean column met its destruction.

Local conditions in the battleground give more credence to the version of the Manchus. For one thing, only on April 16 had Nurhaci cleaned up the northern front on the Hun river. His assessment of the situation in the south and the redeployment of the forces, which counted more than 30,000 mounts according to the Korean records, would have made April 17 a date virtually impossible to meet, not the mention that there was no such urgency for his men to give battle within 24 hours on a new front 150 miles away and of a different terrain from where they had just won difficult battles.

Circumstances thus demand the present-day reader to scrutinize the nature of the Korean sources with great care. The account of the said April 17 event appears basically in two works. Kwanghaegun igil [37] is a part of the dynastic chronicle patterned after Chinese Veritable Records and compiled after King Kwanghaegun's dethronement in 1623. The entry about the battle appears under the date of April 25. On that day a report was either dispatched by a surveillance official from the P'yöngan Province [38] or received by the king's court. The document is summarized in one sentence giving the date and place of the defeat. The in-depth description following the entry, however, no longer quotes the same report. Rather, it is entwined with the general discussion of the turn of events by the chronicle compilers in retrospection. In the end they endorse the Chinese view that the defeat was caused by Tu Sung, whose premature advance south of the Hun river had been responsible for the annihilation of all attacking columns under Yang Hao's field command. It must be noted that on April 25, 1619, such thought could not have occurred to the Koreans, who were having difficulty even in assessing the situation of their front of their immediate concern — that of the southeastern route.

The other source citing April 17 as the date of Liu T'ing's downfall is a private account, written in the form of a diary, but apparently based on reminiscences. Yi Minhwang [39] was the governor of the P'yöngan province. When the campaign of 1619 was organized, he was on the staff of the Korean Commander-in-Chief, Kang Hongnip. His narratives, subsequently published as ch'akchung illok [40], cover the entire expedition from the Korean side of view, and cite day-to-day development after the crossing of the Yalu. The book describes the battle and the surrender of the Korean forces at length, including captivity at Hete Ala. The date of April 17 falls nicely into the sequence of events treated by the author.

But Yi's honesty as an eyewitness cannot be passed unquestioned. His memoirs can be said to have been written entirely as an apologia for Kang Hongnip and himself.
When the surrender of the Korean forces was brought up, the author of ch‘aekchung il-lok declares, he protested. When that came to no avail, he attempted suicide. But he was saved by his nephew and a servant, who took away his sword and dagger. This scene is contradicted by the entry in ilgi, which indicates that Yi was one person who could have thwarted the surrender attempt and kept the Koreans fighting. He explicitly refused to do so. Instead, he worked for the laying down of arms.

These and other intriguing angles compel the military historian to review what is said with its political context. Here a point cannot be put aside is that no member of the Korean elite accepted the surrender in clear conscience. As China’s protectorate, Korea had now abandoned her beneficent patron. In fact, one of the charges against King Kwanghaeun bought up by the court faction who succeeded in dethroning him four years later was that he had instructed Kang Hongnip to sit on the fence during the 1619 campaign and that he made secret with Nurhaci behind the back of the Chinese. Those unchivalrous deeds simply degraded Korea’s national character.

The state chronicle, written under such influence, undoubtedly shows bias against the deposed king. Yet the substantial entries in the records preclude all doubts that before and after campaign Sino-Korean relationship was anything but cordial. The king was dragged into a war that he had no heart to take part. In addition to their muffled resentment against the overbearing attitude of the Ming personnel, Kwanghaeun and his close followers also foresaw the failure and defeat of the Chinese, that made their participation in the campaign unwise. Only cultural usage prevented them from openly dissenting. Chinese demands were usually complied with, even though as a rule with little enthusiasm.

When Yang Hao’s campaign was being organized, King of Korea was instructed to furnish 10,000 troops. With headquarters personnel, the number was later boosted to 13,000. As commander-in-chief, Kang Hongnip took orders directly from Liu T’ing, who soon directed that among the number of troops 5,000 must be musketeers. Another contingent of musketeers, variously reported to be 300 and 400 men, was requisitioned by Yang Hao himself. They eventually saw action with Tu Sung at Sarhu; few of them returned.

Liu T’ing, a veteran commander in Korea two decades ago during the Japanese invasion, was not popular with Koreans. Before them he openly disclosed that he was at odds with Supreme Commander Yang Hao, who would like to see his ruin rather than success. Korean observes also reported that Chinese units were seriously under strength, their weapons inadequate. “Without ordnance pieces and [small] firearms”, Kang Hongnip reported to his king, “they rely entirely on us.” A resignation of Kang’s reached the king even after he had crossed the Yalu, which, of course, was promptly turned down.

Logistics remained another source of irritation. The Korean forces were supplied exclusively from the south of Yalu, the Chinese giving them no help whatsoever. This happened at a time when the king was requisitioning materials from the population for his palace construction. Either due to conflict of interest or deliberate sabotage, as some Koreans suggested, food was rarely delivered to the advancing column in time. In Yi Minhwon’s account we repeatedly see references to starving soldiers. The Koreans also complained about the muddy roads, the roadblocks set up by the Manchus, and the inability of their foot soldiers to keep pace with the Chinese troops on horseback. The
ch'aekchung illok presents a picture of a perturbed Lin T'ing rushing the slowmoving Koreans.

These factors, when put together, give the impression that had Liu T'ing's advance been better supported and pushed through with more vigor, Nurhaci could have been forced to fight a two-front war. The failure of the campaign, therefore, could be said to have been caused not so much by Tu Sung's impetuosity than by the Sino-Korean column's tardiness. That being the case, Yi Minhwan had plenty of reason to alter the date of the battle. If the southeastern route had engaged the bulk of Nurhaci's cavalry on April 17, the Koreans could say that they had done their best under the circumstances. But if the engagement actually took place on April 20, as the Manchus reported, inquiry of responsibility could have led to far more complications. Had Yi, therefore, advanced the date of battle? Had the ilgi compilers been misled by the same falsification? Had the story of Liu T'ing's suicide been fabricated so that Kang Hongnip, who had held most of the Korean musketeers from the immediate line of contact and made no attempt to revenge the Chinese commander's death, could feel less guilty?

Such questions can only be answered with speculation. Lacking hard evidence, the historian however must say that he has no easier and better way to resolve the differences between the Manchu annals and Korean records than, by logical deduction, to assume the deceit of Yi Minhwan if not that of Kang Hongnip.

The lack of an adequate coverage of this battle in the Chinese records also deserves criticism. Some Chinese sources insist that Liu T'ing was not whipped, but tricked. A legend persisted that when Tu Sung's army was destroyed, the marked arrows that his couriers carried as credentials in order to pass oral messages fell into Nurhaci's hands. Eventually the Manchus used one to deceive Liu. A Chien-chou officer, disguised as a messenger from Tu and bearing one of such arrows, called on Liu T'ing with an urgent request that his column advance. Liu, misled, dispensed with all caution to move ahead, only to fall into the Manchu trap. The story is identical to anecdotes repeatedly appearing in classical novels. It attributes to Liu T'ing a degree of naivete which is scarcely compatible with his reputation as an experienced field commander. Nor does it coincide with the combat scene as it is described in the Manchu sources. In fact, such a tale could find its way into respectable Chinese historical records attests the information gap between the fallen general's headquarters and the high command. Had communications between Liu T'ing and Supreme Commander Yang Hao been more effectively maintained, there would have been no grounds to construct such a story to insinuate that six days after Tu Sung fell, his brother officer not more than 120 miles away still believed that he was very much alive. This shortcoming illustrates a fundamental weakness of Ming operational efficiency. The high command ventured into a campaign without making sure that prompt dissemination of information was essential to its success.

Thus within a week, by delivering a series of fatal blows, Nurhaci not only eliminated the offensive capability of the Ming, but also rendered its defense of Liao-tung untenable. Three months later he took the walled city of K'ai-yüan, killing Ma Lin. Seven weeks after that he triumphantly entered T'ieh-ling. As a result, Peking finally ordered the arrest of Yang Hao, who had to endure a death sentence hanging over his head for a decade until his execution in 1629. Li Ju-po, who was also arrested one and a half years after his withdrawal from the front, chose to commit suicide rather than facing censure and criminal prosecution.
The defeat caused far greater repercussions than this. In 1619, as soon as Peking heard the news about the setback in Liao-tung, food prices suddenly increased as residents began to fear the possibility of a siege. In early 1620, the army began to report unprecedented rates of desertion; sometimes units as large as battalions and regiments disappeared overnight as soldiers ran away by the thousands. Surcharges on the land taxes, originally intended for one year only, now had to be carried on. Of the three supreme commanders who in turn filled Yang Hao’s position, one was killed in battle and the other two were eventually beheaded on the emperor’s orders. One of these two, Hsiung T’ing-pi, not only lost his life but also became a focal point of partisan controversy. The debate over his innocence or guilt led to bitter clashes among Ming bureaucrats that undoubtedly contributed to the dynasty’s downfall.

Yet most contemporaries realized that the campaign of 1619 had virtually no chance to succeed. Not much more than a year after Tu Sung and Liu Ting laid down their lives, a multi-volume book called Chou-Liao Shih-hua was in print. The 589 papers included in it, which were nearly all memorials to the emperor connected with the campaign and its sequel, were written by responsible officials, censors, southern governors, Nanking functionaries, Han-lin academicians, and even retired officers. Both the abundance of opinion in this book and the promptness of its publication were unusual. With much candor and insight, the authors of these papers point out that government forces were hastily assembled and poorly directed, that their personnel were untrained, the military logistics unsatisfactory, their equipment inferior to that of the Manchus, and their discipline far below expectation. Perhaps the most eloquent of these writers was Hsü Kuang-ch’i, a future grand secretary. The following statements of his since been widely quoted:

Tu Sung was hit by arrows on the head and P’an Tsung-yen by an arrow in the back, which means that even the commanding general and the inspector general were not protected by adequate armor. What happened, then, to the rank-and-file soldiers? Both Tu Sung and Liu T’ing moved forward with portions of their troops, and Liu Yu-chieh charged with a single mount. Was military discipline not lacking? When [our forces] were about equal with the enemy in number, and were yet divided into four routes, the enemy was enabled to attack with a constant four-to-one superiority; and we had to meet him one against four. Was this not to ignore the principle of combination and separation? Our technical advantage rested in firearms; yet [firearms] were allowed to be separated from the Fu-shun battle front by a river, and to be deployed far away [from the lines of contact] at the battles of K’ai-yüan, T’ieh-ling, and K’uan-tien. Was not that a deviation from standard procedures? Forty li outside our line of control, there was a river that could not be forded, mountain barriers that could not be surmounted, and ambushes beyond our expectation. Were not all of these due to our neglect of the terrain and of methods of reconnaissance?

Hsü then concluded: “Under these conditions, there is no hope that victory can be obtained by sheer luck.”

On another occasion, Hsü indicates that he had learned from the Koreans that on the north side of Nurhaci’s fortress there were craftsmen specializing in the manufacture of military equipment. The personnel returned from Liao-tung told him that the blacksmiths’ shops extended for miles. The helmets, breast plates, arm shields, and gauntlets worn by the Manchus were all of superior quality. In close combat, enemy soldiers dared to come up to remove the abatises placed by the defenders. The armor protection for Ming military personnel, in contrast, consisted of “nothing but scrap iron”. Manchu archers usually made a special effort to hit Chinese soldiers on the face and on the sides. “Within five paces, any hit was lethal.”
Hsü's questions seem to have provided their own answers. Yet, his charge of negligence tends to obscure the institutional causes of these failures. It attributes them to temporary and personal errors. As they provide no background analysis, they do not explain why mistakes were repeated and equipment inadequacy remained uncorrected. Why, we may ask, did the Ming generals persistently expose their flanks to Manchu assaults? Why, time after time, did they allow forces of small size to be wiped out while the main bodies of the army corps stayed idle? And why, since they had not found a tactical counter-measure to check Manchu cavalry charges, did they start an offensive at all?

Perhaps no set of answers would be completely satisfactory. But if clues to a meaningful historical explanation are to be found, Ming procurement procedures, governing both personnel induction and the supply of materials, should be given every hard look.

Even in the early seventeenth century, the Ming army logistics still followed the fundamental design set up by the dynastic founder. In 1388, the Hung-wu[46] Emperor had personally directed that 5000 taxpayers in the Ying-t'ien prefecture[47] be matched with 5000 soldiers on duty with the Chin-wu Guard[48]. The former's payments were not collected by governmental agencies, and the latter ceased to be paid by the army. Instead the grain supply flowed directly and automatically from civilian households to those of army personnel. Thus the handling by many intermediate agencies was altogether avoided. After having been in practice for a year, this unorthodox procedure was supposed to have been declared workable and extended to all army units[65]. Although we know that at no time was this order carried out to the full, it was never formally rescinded. And, during later reigns, this principle that business transactions were to be carried out at the lowest possible level was allowed to prevail. Usually a county made deliveries to a score of army units; each army depot in turn received material from several counties[66]. The substitution of silver for payments in kind altered the situation somewhat; but it could never change the basic working of the system. To integrate the management would have demanded substantial increases in fiscal efficiency, and the addition of new service facilities, together with with enlargement of administrative overhead and expansion of operating budget. The Ming government, committed to homogeneity and uniformity at a technically unsophisticated level in order to be in tune with agrarian simplicity, could not brook such a turnover.

As it was, the entire system contained built-in causes of deficit. Obviously, for one reason or another and at one time or another, some of the scheduled suppliers would be unable to discharge their obligations, while other units were neither required nor willing to make up the shortfalls. The Ming government's lack of functional maneuverability as a result of this supply system had become increasingly evident toward the end of sixteenth century. With practically every item of income disbursed before it was received, the state had great difficulty in meeting new areas of demand, which forced it to resort to ad hoc maneuvers.

The inadequate military equipment to which Hsü Kuang-ch'i referred was a necessary consequence of this style of logistical management. As Hsü himself proved later on, modern gunnery could make cavalry charge virtually impossible. Without artillery support, the Manchu banners would never have fought the 1619 campaign so successfully had the Ming army managed to update their firearms.

A testimony to the institutional weakness which led to the failure could have been supplied by Ch'i Chi-kuang[49] some forty years earlier. As the foremost sixteenth century Ming general to incorporate firearms into his standard tactics, Ch'i had left indica-
tions in his writing that he had neither an ordinance officer nor a quartermaster general. His supplies, including military equipment, were drawn from numerous civil sources. Even for firearms, Ch'i himself could only provide prototypes for his subordinate generals, who would in turn hand them over to their designated suppliers, usually civil administrators at the county or prefectural level. Their manufacture therefore could not go much beyond the level of village technology. There was a general lack of standardization. Ch'i complained that the missiles did not suit the calibre of the firearms, the gun barrels had a constant tendency to explode, or else, the ignition wicks would not burn. Equipped with muskets, soldiers would not dare to hold them close to themselves to steady the aim, so their shots usually went astray. It took a long time to reload the pieces. Evidently, no remedy was provided in the subsequent forty years. In 1618, the year before the Liao-tung campaign, the army reported that their firearms exploded at testing, causing casualties among users. Only some time after the campaign were corrections made, when Hsü Kuang-ch'i and Huang K'o-tsan recruited foreign cannon casters from Macao and the Philippines.

Nurhaci's annals reveal that the Manchus held Chinese firearms in such low esteem that they virtually disregarded them. They mention that some Manchus were hit many times yet came out unscathed. Another entry testifies that the quilted portion of one soldier's helmet was penetrated by a musket ball, yet he suffered no injury on the skull.

In its close connection, the effectiveness of Korean muskets has yet to be established by historians. Unlike the Chinese make, muskets manufactured in Korea were supposed to have been standardized, under the supervision of a general ordnance department set up in 1615. Their quality was admired by the Chinese. But obviously they produced no decisive effect in the campaign. Yi Minwan's narratives of the battle scene create an impression that the Korean musketeers were not only held way back in Liu T'ing's column but also scattered. When the Chinese units were overrun, the Koreans were still undecided as to which defense positions that they should occupy. It is not a surprise that "enemy mounts had thrust into the battle formation before the firearms, having discharged once, could be reloaded". Yi did not cite northwest wind as an intervening factor.

Significantly, Nurhaci, a man who otherwise was not inattentive to the technical aspect of warfare, did not show the slightest interest in firearms, either for their effective use or for measures against them, before and after the Liao-tung campaign. This neglect will eventually cost the Chien-chou chieftain his life. Not a sign of lacking wisdom, his reaction merely reflected the futility of his enemies that he had no desire to imitate.

Moreover, there is no evidence that during the Liao-tung campaign the heavy cannons available to the Chinese were ever deployed in the field. They were too cumbersome to be transported. For the 1619 engagement, the word p'ao or the Manchu boo did not necessarily refer to the cannon. A p'ao was usually a bamboo tube filled with gunpowder and pebbles, which was ignited and tossed to the enemy by hand as shown in illustrations. Such a device could cause limited damage at close range. As the effect was more psychological than physical, it was not an answer to a sustained and disciplined cavalry charge.

And the Ming army did not do better with conventional weapons. Until the end of the dynasty, it remained the fiscal obligation of the local district to submit these weapons to the central government. The lack of standardization was thus only to be expected. As if
to echo Hsü Kuang-ch'i, Nurhaci's annals state: "The lances and arrows handled by Khan's men always make deep penetrations. Their swords also produce sharp cuts, as if aided by heavenly gods." Implicitly, this is to claim for superiority over the Ming arsenal. The sharper the Manchu blades, the duller by comparison were those of Chinese make.

Similar contrasts existed in the quality of personnel and combat horses. In essence, to supply military personnel and cavalry mounts was also the contributor's fiscal obligation; and the various districts and different segments of the population had permanent quotas assigned to them. The replacing of conscripts with recruits could not have completely change the picture, because regardless of who actually bore arms, the financial support had to be extracted from taxpayers. So, men and horses were delivered to the army in a manner not fundamentally different from the supply of war material; it depended upon how the program was funded. Here the roots of the problem in the seventeenth century rested in the fact that while tax apportionment and tax assessment settled in the early years of the dynasty no longer corresponded to the present conditions of the populace, no sweeping reform was feasible short of a dynastic changeover. Tax administration and collection of service charges in these later days, therefore, always involved some pressure from the top, which was as a rule passed onto those most inarticulate and least able to pay. It was really a painstaking process of making up the numbers; quality could no longer be seriously regarded. This process produced only feeble soldiers, and "arrows that could not be shot and horses that could not be ridden", to quote Supreme Commander Hsiung T'ing-pi.

Aware of these weakness inherent in their commands, Ming generals avoided such impossible tasks as attempting to train the entire division of troops to top rate fighters. Instead, each commander would form around himself a battalion of battle-seasoned soldiers of special selection, called chia-ting or "household men". When Liu T'ing arrived in Liao-tung, for instance, he brought along with him 736 such household men. They were on the commanding general's payroll and moved with him when he changed posts. In battle, they also took his personal orders. As critics pointed out, those elite troops constituted the only effective fighting element within the Chinese army. The thousands of other soldiers merely filled the ranks.

The square formation of the Ming army using firearms was a legacy of Chi Chikuang. Patterned in part after the layout of city walls, this design dictated that the fighting units surrender the battlefield initiative to the enemy. Only when the opponent army had exhausted its strength at assault would the defenders come out from the square to launch a counter-attack. All this reflected an unresolved organizational problem: The Chinese never built within its armed forces a cavalry which could carry out the function specific to that branch of arms. With neither speed nor striking power, late Ming cavalry units were usually infantry on horseback, in need of barricade protection at any showdown. The Manchus, on the other hand, often unleashed thousands of mounted warriors in one sweep. The Ming cavalry, unable to match them, did not even once during the entire 1619 campaign meet them voluntarily on the open field. The lack of such an offensive arm within the armed forces denied Ming generals many possibilities of tactical maneuver. In the end their defense was also rendered ineffective. The square formation in fact invited the enemy to probe its weakness from avenues of approach that suited him, such as with wind behind him.
The defense units' sluggish and half-hearted coordination further made it difficult to counter-attack. As suggested by the Manchu sources, at Siyanggiyan Ma Lin had an opportunity to trap the out-numbered Manchu squadrons with a wall of barricades and foot soldiers. But the preparations took so long that this opportunity slipped away and Amby bile struck first. As mentioned earlier, the separate units of the Ming army were defeated again and again by Manchu forces without friendly troops being able to rescue them; the latter, too, soon fell victims to the enemy in the same fashion. Such ineptitude, we may reiterate, was inseparable from the low quality of the imperial army's men and material. The inferior soldiery and weaponry led to poor individual performance; it would have been impossible for the several units to do better at teamwork. In sum, in spite of all the talk about poor generalship and inadequate troop training a final solution to all such problems could not even be found within the army itself.

With hindsight, it may be observed that if Yang Hao's campaign had any hope of success at all, it lay in the chance that Nurhaci would blunder. If the Manchus divided their forces to meet the invading columns, the outcome of the battles could have been somewhat different. Or if the Chien-chou chieftain had committed the bulk of his forces in the early stage of the campaign in the southern front, Tu Sung and Ma Lin might have made some progress toward Hetu Ala. Since Nurhaci did nothing of this sort, Yang Hao had practically no chance to reach his objective. The clumsiness with which he directed the campaign, of course, quickened its collapse and intensified the seriousness of the failure.

The Ming court's resolution to plunge into the campaign with so little assurance of victory exposes how political requirement weighed in war decisions. Tu Sung was called "the mad man" by Nurhaci. Yet, hot-headed as he was, he is said in some Chinese sources to have told Supreme Commander Yang Hao that more preparation was needed before the army could deal with the Manchus. Korean sources give evidence that Liu T'ing was also pressed by the same supreme commander with an equal sense of urgency. Yang himself, according to consensus, had been pressed by Grand Secretary Fang Ts'ung-ch'ei. Peking was compelled to act because failure to do so could lead to internal rebellions as well as insurgency by other frontier tribes. All these supported an ideological theme that the celestial empire, because of its moral strength, could always overcome what technical handicaps were placed on it. The administrators in the capital also understood that the longer the frontier conflict dragged on, the more the war would cost. The financial burden, even over an additional year, would be difficult to bear.

In this connection, it may be noted that even the cruel punishment of Yang Hao and his successors and the unfair prosecution of Li Ju-po, that had so much to do in damaging the already sagging morale, were not incompatible with the normal reaction of the Ming bureaucracy. Under the dynasty's system, there was no such a thing as a fair trial to separate personal negligence from institutional failures. Since everyone was expected to perform to his utmost, to the extent of covering up organizational weakness with finesse and personal sacrifice, technically it would be difficult to absolve the generals and officials occupying key positions that were linked to a national disaster of unprecedented dimensions, how the charges were placed being a matter of less significance.

Thus while it seemed as if suddenly an unexpected development on the battlefield in the spring of 1619 had decided, within a week and in a freakish manner, the fate of China's millions in generations to come, the sequence of events had actually been many
years in the making, and for a number of reasons it was an inevitable consequence of the dynasty's bureaucratic constitution and its standing practices.

NOTES


3 For example, see Shen-tsung shih-lu, p. 10978. For the general unsatisfactory conditions see Huang, Ray, "Military Expenditures in Sixteenth Century Ming China," Oriens Extremus, Jg. 17, Heft 1–2 (Dec. 1970), pp. 39–62.


5 Chou-Liao shih-hua, 17.2.


8 Lao-Man-wen-yüan-tang, II. 126; Mambun rōtō, I. 150.


10 Lao-Man-wen-yüan-tang, II. 13; Mambun rōtō, 1.55; Pa-ch'i t'ung-chih[76] (Taipei: Hsūeh-sheng shu-chū[77] reprint), 1.4.

11 A contemporary Chinese observation: "Barbarian rebels have among themselves fifty to sixty thousands of daring and combat seasoned troops. With twenty to thirty thousand captured Chinese, they have a total strength of eighty to ninety thousand." See Chou-Liao shih-hua, 11.33.

12 See Shen-tsung shih-lu, pp. 10962–66.


14 Chou-Liao shih-hua, 18.16.

15 Kuo Ch'üeh, p. 5134.

16 Lao-Man-wen-yüan-tang, II. 89; Mambun rōtō, I. 119.

17 Lao-Man-wen-yüan-tang, I. 86; II. 59–60; Mambun rōtō, I. 94.

18 Liu Ting's memorial appears in Chou-Liao shih-hua, 9.22.


20 See Shen-tsung shih-lu, p. 10962, 10969; Chou-Liao shih-hua, 16.31. T'an Ch'ien is mistaken by referring the date as March 24. See Kuo Ch'üeh, p. 5131.


22 See Yanai, Marushū rekishi chiri, II. 605.

23 Shen-tsung shih-lu, p. 10970.

24 Chou-Liao shih-hua, 17.1–6; Shen-tsung shih-lu, p. 10979.

25 The paper appears in Chou-Liao shih-hua, 17.1–6.

26 Shen-tsung shih-lu, pp. 10965–66.

27 Ibid., p. 10966.

28 Chou-Liao shih-hua, 17.2.


30 Lao-Man-wen-yüan-tang, II. 93; Mambun rōtō, I. 122. The following entries refer to the forces as six banners on the left and two on the right. See Shih-erh-ch'ao Tung-hua-lu, "T'ien-ming-ch'ao," 1.22; Ta-Ch'ing T'ai-tsu Kao-huang-ti shih-lu, 1.62.

31 Lao-Man-wen-yüan-tang, I. 115; II. 94; Mambun rōtō, I. 123.

32 Chou-Liao shih-hua, 17.5.

33 Ibid., 17.3–4.

34 Shen-tsung shih-lu, p. 10971.

35 Lao-Man-wen-yüan-tang, I. 115–16; II. 95; Mambun rōtō, I. 124.
But Yang Hao was equivocal. He reported to the emperor that "two routes of army are forbidden to make deep penetrations". See Shen-tsun shih-lu, p.10979.

On April 16 the Korean army did not move; nor had it any contact with the enemy. This is recorded in Kwanghaegun ilgi, 138.3. Thereafter for nine days the annals fail to mention its disposition, until the defeat is mentioned in an entry under the date of April 25.

The author has not seen this title. References to it are made from quotations in Inaba’s Man-Sen kankei, p.177. These details seem to contradict the later report that on April 17 Liu Ting’s forces were ambushed.

As quoted in Man-Sen kankei, p.180.

Kwanghaegun ilgi, 138.9; Man-Sen kankei, pp.182–83.

Man-Sen kankei, pp.186–191. While the controversy is too complicated to be summarized in this article, evidences are overwhelming that the king, for good reasons, did not put his heart into the campaign. See Kwanghaegun ilgi, 138.3. Thereafter for nine days the annals fail to mention its disposition, until the defeat is mentioned in an entry under the date of April 25.

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Chou-Liu shih-hua, 17, 56.

See Hsi Kuang-chieh's biography in Hummel, A. W., ed. Eminent Chinese in the Ch'ing Period (Washington, D. C., 1943–44), I, p. 317. For Huang’s artillery pieces see Hsi-tsung shih-lu[96] (Taipei: Chung-yang yen-chiu-yuan reprint), pp. 0466–67. One of the guns manufactured by Huang and having his name inscribed on it is on exhibit at the Woolwich Museum in London. I owe this piece of information to Dr. L. Carrington Goodrich.

Lao-Man-wen-yuan-tang, II, 114.

Man-Sen kankei, p. 168.

Ibid., pp. 178–79.

The illustrations in Man-chu shih-lu[97] (Liao-hai Tsung-shu[98] ed.) give such an impression. Also, in chapter 15, T'ien-kung k'ai-wu[99], Sung Ying-hsing[100] refers to p'ao sometimes as a mine or a projectile missile.

Lao-Man-wen-yuan-tang, I, 58; II, 23.

Chou-Liu shih-hua, 28. 17.

Liu T'ing is supposed to have told the Koreans that he brought along "several thousand" such chia-tung. See Kwanghae gun ilji, 137. 11.


Huang-Ming chin-shing wen-pien, 349. 10.

Kuanghae gun ilji, 137. 11–12.

Kuo Ch'üeh, p. 5132.

Kuanghae gun ilji, 137. 11–12.

Kuo Ch'üeh, p. 5131; Ming-shih, 259. 2929.
Appendix 1

Appendix 2
圖陣方四守戰敵禦