

# The Two Systems of Diplomacy of Late Qing China

## External Relationship, Modernization and Transitional Phase

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## The Two Systems of Diplomacy of Late Qing China: External Relationship, Modernization and Transitional Phase

A dual system in which the traditional tributary system paralleled the modern treaty system for half a century, characterizing the external relations of Late Qing China. Under this system, two agencies uniquely coexisted, one dealing with traditional tributary affairs and the other responsible for matters pertaining to the modern treaty system. Peripheral states in a tributary relationship with China, particularly Korea, noticed this dual system. “Two systems under the diplomacy of one” served as the norm of the China-centered world, indicating that Chinese institutions were unprepared to deal with new challenges associated with an increasingly complex network of external relations. The institutional duality of diplomacy was a fleeting phenomenon characteristic of a transitional stage leading to modernization.

# The Two Systems of Diplomacy of Late Qing China

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John K. Fairbank asserts that Qing China adhered to the traditional tributary relationship with its subject states as the base for diplomacy in relation to the modern western countries.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the traditional relationship of China to its peripheral states remains crucial to understanding the changing patterns of Chinese diplomacy after the influx of Western powers, as well as the status of inter-state relations in ancient China.<sup>2</sup> The modern history of China corresponds to a transition from tradition to modernity, and Chinese diplomacy appears in this context. Liu Jinzao's *Qing chao xu wen xian tong kao* (清朝續文獻通考) states that the traditional tributary relationship of China with its peripheral states did not constitute diplomacy in the true sense, since

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<sup>1</sup> John King Fairbank and Ssu-yu Teng, "On the Qing's Tributary System," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 1941 June.

<sup>2</sup> Quan Hexiu, "Zhong guo gu dai chao gong guan xi yan jiu ping shu" (Study on the Old Tributary Relationship of China), *Zhong guo bian jiang shi di yan jiu* (Study on the Peripheral Region of China), 2005-3.

China arbitrarily directed the subject states.<sup>3</sup> It viewed as the semblance of diplomacy in China and the Nanjing Treaty dominates Western scholarship had not existed before the Opium War. This view comes from the failure of China to treat diplomatic affairs in accordance with the international law, and the failure to send Chinese diplomatic missions to other countries on a reciprocal basis.<sup>4</sup>

The replacement of the tributary relation with treaty diplomacy<sup>5</sup> represented a landmark event in the transition of China. An alternation between resistance and adaptation led to a stage that replaced the traditional relationship with the pattern of Western diplomacy.<sup>6</sup> At the end of Qing China, the government dispatched diplomatic missions abroad in accord with the practices of Western countries, and this phase of diplomatic transition served as the springboard for China's entrance to the family of nation states.<sup>7</sup> This interpretation is not confined to Western scholars; diplomatic literature in China echoes the same view by defining the Opium War as the starting point of modern diplomacy. From this time on, an all out transition gained momentum to modernize the country.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Liu Jinzhao (劉錦藻), *Qing chao xu wen xian tong kao* (清朝續文獻通考), vol.4, p.337, "Wai jiao kao" (外交考, Study on Diplomacy), Zhejiang guji Publishing (浙江古籍出版社), 2000 Jan. Second ed.

<sup>4</sup> Liang Bohua (梁伯華), *Great Changes in the Modern Diplomacy of China; on the Diplomatic Institution and External Relations*, Taiwan Institute of Trade Research, 1980 Nov., p.6.

<sup>5</sup> John King Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: the Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1964, pp.462-468.

<sup>6</sup> Masataka Banno, *China and the West 1858-1861. The Origins of the Zongliyamen*, Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1963.

<sup>7</sup> Hsu Immanuel C. Y., *China's Entrance into the Family of Nations: the Diplomacy Phase 1858-1880*, Cambridge, Mass. Harvard: University Press, 1960.

<sup>8</sup> Liu Peihua (劉培華), *Jindai zhongwai guanxi shi* (近代中外關係史, History of Modern Diplomacy of China), Beijing University Press, 1986 July; Gu Mingyi (顧明義), *Zhongguo jindai waijiao shi* (中國近代外交史, History of Chinese Modern Diplomacy), Changchun: Jilin wenshi Publishing, 1987 Mar. (first ed.); Wang Shaofang (王紹芳), *Qingmo waijiao shi* (清末外交史, History of Late Qing's Diplomacy), Zhengzhou: Henan renmin Publishing, 1988 Aug.; Yang Gongsu, *Wanqing waijiao shi* (清晚外交史, History of Late Qing's Diplomacy), Beijing University Press, 1991 Sept. (first ed.); Wang Cengcai (王曾才), *Zhongguo waijiao shi yaoyi*

Three issues arise with regard to the modern diplomacy of Qing China. First, studies excluded the traditional relationships of China because the tributary system did not meet the Western definition of diplomacy. According to Paul A. Cohen, China could not initiate the change and had to rely on the Western countries in modernization. Having overcome this jaundiced view, Chinese scholars committed another mistake of regarding those studies that accord with the Western concept of diplomacy as worthwhile to conduct studies.<sup>9</sup>

Second, obsession with the modern diplomacy of Qing China in relation to the Western powers and modern Japan also glosses over the time-honored relations of China with its neighboring states, despite the important role that China's neighbors played in the modernization of China. Dissolving the traditional relationship with its neighboring states posed a more serious threat to Qing China, ultimately precipitating its downfall. In this respect, justice should have been done to the implications of the tributary system for modern diplomacy. It is worthwhile to heed warnings quoted from the "two recently compiled Chinese chronicles, *Qing shi gao* (清史稿), "Shu guo zhuan (屬國傳)," which contain worthwhile warnings, These Chronicles refer to subject states as the wall surrounding the Middle Kingdom: "If the wall crumbles, the Middle Kingdom is laid open to attack by outsiders. Foreign incursions cause internal chaos."<sup>10</sup> All the descriptions of modern China's relations with other countries reflect the oversimplification of the complicated network of relations with its

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(中國外交史要義, Summary of the History of China's Diplomacy), Taipei: Wunan Publish Co., 1993 Feb.; Yu Jiansheng (于建勝) and Liu Chunrui (劉春蕊), *Luori de wange-19shiji wanqing duiwai guanxi Jianlun* (落日的挽歌-19世紀晚清對外關係簡論, The Diplomacy Late Qing in 19<sup>th</sup> Century), Shangwu Publishing, 2003 Sep. (first ed.).

<sup>9</sup> Paul A. Cohen, *History was found in China; the Fermentation of China-Centered Perspective in the United States*, translated by Lin Tong Gi, Zhonghua Publication. 2001, p.233.

<sup>10</sup> Zhao Erxun (趙爾巽), *Qing shigao* (清史考), vol.48, Zhonghua Pub. 1977 Aug. (11th ed.), p.14576.

neighboring states, and to the rites involved. Some of the descriptions derive from conjecture and they are treated as an appendage. Modern China's relation with Ryuku, for example, appears as part of China's relationship with Japan. The China-Choson relationship, though proudly presented as the longest period of harmonious bonds, appears truncated after the Sino-Japan War. The same can be said of the China-Vietnam relationship that paled after the conclusion of China's agreements with France. Highlighting the Western powers as the major protagonists on the diplomatic stage of China has necessarily brought apathy to its neighboring states which made their presence felt by a tributary relation and investiture. Such a biased treatment of history reflects "the western dominant perspective."<sup>11</sup>

Third, disjuncture exists between the traditional and modern foreign relations of China. This view colors the modern diplomacy of China as an abrupt departure from the traditional one. In other words, there is no account of how Chinese diplomacy advanced from the traditional to modern one. In reality, Chinese diplomacy transformed slowly, by evolution, and along a tortuous path. Although highlighting China's dispatch of diplomatic missions abroad represents a small step in a complicated, daunting journey into an uncertain future: "It should be noticed that one step does not make a whole story of diplomacy whose transformation was so complicated."<sup>12</sup>

Although the 1839 Opium War is taken as the starting point of modern Chinese history, tributary relations survived the Opium War until the conclusion of the Simonoseki Treaty following the Sino-Japan War in 1895. Indeed, half a century saw the co-existence of the traditional and modern relations of China with other countries. It characterizes the rare

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<sup>11</sup> Paul A. Cohen, *History was found in China; The Fermentation of China-centered Perspective in the United States*, translated by Lin Tongqi (林同奇), pp.106~165. Author derives imperialism from the European dominant perspective.

<sup>12</sup> Liang Bohua (梁伯華). p.109.

parallel of the two systems as “One Diplomacy and Two Systems.”<sup>13</sup> This appellation derives from an inductive analysis and synthesis of materials regarding this particularistic transition.

## I. In-depth Study on Tributary Relationships: An Objective Reality Viewed from Inside

The Nanjing Treaty concluded in 1842 not only began modern Chinese history, but it also clearly indicated that China could no longer maintain its traditional tributary relationships with other countries. Hosea Ballou Morse’s *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire*, Volume 2 describes the historical significance of the Opium War: “China was the master ordering its relationship with its subject states. Now she has been deprived of mastership under the pressure of the Western powers.”<sup>14</sup> However, China’s new relationship with the Western powers did not terminate its tributary relations with neighboring states. After the Opium War, the traditional relation continued over a considerable span of time. According to rites prescribed for the performance of tributary relations, China remained high-handed, continuing to demand obedience to its policies,<sup>15</sup> while subject states busily sent tributary missions to Beijing. During this period, inter-state relations appeared to be static, as if nothing had changed.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Quan Hexiu (權燁秀), “The Advisory Activities of Ma xiangbo in Choson: from Nov. 1882 to April 1884,” *Jindai shi yanjiu* (近代史研究), vol.5, 2003; Quan Hexiu, “Study on the Modern Chosun-China Relations,” Chinese Society of Korean History ed., *Zhongguo chosun shi yanjiu* (中國朝鮮史研究), Hong Kong Social Science Publishing, 2004 June, pp.34~58; Quan Hexiu, “Chen Shutang (陳樹棠)’s Commercial Attach Activities at Choson and Choson-China Relations,” *Shehui kexue yanjiu* (社會科學研究), vol.1, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Hosea Ballou Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire*. vol.1, translated by Zhang Huiwen (張匯文), Shanghai Book Publisher, 2000 Aug. (second ed.), p.696.

<sup>15</sup> Liang Bohua (梁伯華), *Great Change of Modern Chinese Diplomacy: Diplomatic Institution and China’s Foreign Relations*, Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Publication, 1991 Nov. (first ed.), p.37.

<sup>16</sup> Fei Zhengqing (費正清) ed., *The Cambridge History of China vol.11 Late Chi’ng, 1800-1911*,

Table.1 Tributary Relationship of Late Ching China<sup>17</sup>

Nation/ Section	Frequency of Tribute	Last Investiture	Tributary relations ended	Total frequency
Choson	Once a year	1864 (King) 1866 (Queen)	1894	54 times
Ryuku	Once in two years	1866 (King)	1862	11 times
Vietnam	Once in four years	1849 (Queen)	1880	7 times
Myanmar	Once in ten years	None	1875	3times

The historical literature regarding the tributary relationship of Qing China with its neighboring countries does not accord with facts. According to *Da qing hui dian* (大清會典), Choson, Ryuku, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Philippines and Myanmar maintained a tributary relationship with Qing China. However, this list does not exclude others. *Ching shi gao* “*Shu guo zhuan*” lists tributary countries in the order of Choson, Ryuku, Vietnam, Myanmar, Uzbekistan, Thailand, Laos, Philippines, Nepal and Parkistan. The major tributary countries, namely; Choson, Ryuku, Vietnam and Myanmar, continued tributary relations into the period 1840-1894.

After the Opium War, Western powers pressured Qing China to conclude treaty trade. However, despite these pressures Chinae failed to

Chinese Social Science Press, 1985 Feb. (first ed.), p.288.

<sup>17</sup> Quan Hexiu, *Study on Choson-China Relations in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century; Focusing on Li Hongzhang's Perception of Choson*, Baeksan Research Press, Seoul, 2000 Aug.; Liu Wei (劉爲), *A Study on the Exchange of Tributary Missions between Choson and Qing China*; Mi Qing-Yu (米庆餘), *A Study on Ryuku History*, Tianjin People's Publishing, 1998 June.; Xie Bizhen (謝必震), *A Study on Maritime Trade between Ming-Qing China and Ryuku*, Beijing Sea Publication, 2004 Mar.; Sun Hongnian, *A Study on the Hierarchical Relation of Qing China and Vietnam*, Harbin: Heilongjiang Education Publishing, 2006 Jan. (first ed.); Wang Po Leng (王婆楞), *The History of China-Myanmar Relations*, Chongqing: Zhengzhong Publication, 1933 Dec.; Yu Dingbang (餘定邦), *The History of China-Myanmar Relations*, Guang ming ri bao publication (光明日報出版社), Beijing, 2000 Dec.

Table.2 Examples of Balhae’s accompanying Japan envoys<sup>18</sup>

Nation/Section	Countries of treaties	Last year of the tribute relationship	Remarks
Choson	Japan, U.S.A, England, Germany, Italy, Russia, France, Austria	1894	China exhorted Choson treaties with others, indicative of its treatment of Choson as its subject
Ryuku	U.S.A (1854) France 1862	1862	The same demand imposed on treaty
Vietnam	France (1862 / 1874 / 1883 / 1884)	1880	Colonized by France in 1884
Myanmar	England (1826/1866) France (1884)	1875	Since 1824, three wars with England. Colonized in 1866

discontinue the tributary relationship with neighboring countries. The tributary mission and investiture constituted the twin pillars of the traditional relationship, and a set of rites that guided the formal procedure of tribute. Even after Qing China lost the Opium War, China did not lose its status as the Middle Kingdom lordling over the bevy of little kingdoms. At the same time, Western Powers also pressured the subject states. The following table shows the status of each tributary country in relation to the Western powers.

<sup>18</sup> Kim Won-mo ed., *Geundae Hankuk Oekyosa Yeonpyo* (Chronicles of Modern Diplomacy of Korea), Seoul: Dankook University Press, 1984 April; Quan Hexiu, “Study on Chosun-China Relations in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Focusing on Li Hongzhang’s Perception of Choson Zhang Qi Xiong,” (張啓雄) *The Ryuku Identity and Controversial Return to Japan*, the Central Research Institute, Taipei, 2001 Dec.; Zhang Xiaomei (張笑梅) and Guo Zhenduo (郭振鐸) ed. *The History of Vietnam*, Chinese People’s University Press, 2001 Sep.; Sun Hongnian (孫宏年), *A Study on the Hierarchical Relation of Qing China and Vietnam*; Wang Po-leng (王婆楞), *Relations between China and Myanmar*: He Shengda (賀聖澂), *The History of Myanmar*, People’s Publication, 1992 Oct.; Yu Dingbang (餘定邦), *The History of China-Myanmar Relations*; Myanmar was not subject to investiture from China from 1840 to 1894. There is no record regarding the last investiture.

While maintaining a tributary relationship with Qing China, the tributary states subject to China also concluded trade treaties with the Western powers. Treaties concluded between Choson and other countries and between Ryuku and France were written in Chinese and used the Chinese calendar years. Even after concluding these treaties, memoranda of understanding appended to the treaties forced China's neighboring states were forced to affirm that they were the subject states of China. In the case of Myanmar, tributary missions went to China even after it was colonized by England. Qing China did not oppose or overtly resist the conclusion of treaties with other countries by its subject states. Whether Qing China was powerful enough to intervene in the internal affairs of its subject states is beyond the scope of this essay. In the case of Choson, Qing China went so far as to exhort the former to conclude treaties with other countries.<sup>19</sup> This means that Choson was free to conclude treaties under the sanction of China. Despite the trend to conclude treaties with others, the tributary relation remained intact for a considerable span of time.

As noted above, Choson served as an exemplary model with the longest tributary relationship to China. The renowned Choson reformist Yu Kiljun defended the so-called "dual diplomacy system." He reasoned that: "Choson was in a position to continue the traditional relationship with China while maintaining treaty relations with others. Likewise, China, the master of tributary relations, was not able to escape the dual system of foreign relations."<sup>20</sup> The dual system of foreign relations in

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<sup>19</sup> Qing China and Li Hongzhang exhorted Choson to conclude treaties with the Western powers with an intention to apply a brake on Japan and Russia rising to a dominant position in Korea. See Kwon Sokbong (權錫奉), *The History of Choson Policies in Late Qing China*, Seoul: Iljogak, 1986 Mar.; Song Byongki (宋炳基), *Modern History of Relationship between Korea and China*, Seoul: Dankook University Press, 1985 July; 原田環, *The Opening of Choson and Modernization*, Hiroshima: 溪水社, 1997 Feb.; Quan Hexiu (權焯秀), *A Study on Choson-China Relations in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Focusing on Li Hongzhang Perception of Choson, Secret Diplomatic Channel in the Transitional Phase of Choson-China Relations: Around Epistles Exchanged between Li Hongzhang and Li Youwon (李裕元)*, *Keimyung Korean Studies Journal*, vol.37, 2003.

accordance with China's policy of "one diplomacy and two systems" represents a universal trend during a period that saw interplays between the two systems creating a mood conducive to modern treaty diplomacy.

"One diplomacy and two systems" provides the ground for the continuance of traditional tributary relationships not confined to major tributary states. The second Qing-Nepal War in 1855 failed to alter the tributary relation of Nepal to Qing. In 1902 Qing's Emperor accorded the Nepal king the title of "King of Military Bravery (兵馬果敢王)," the Chinese equivalent of an imperial Roman "margrave" responsible for defending the peripheral regions of the empire. Nepal submitted to tributary rites once every five years until 1908. With the birth of the Republic of China in 1924, Nepal expressed its willingness to revive the tributary relationship.<sup>21</sup> The Butan-Britain treaty concluded in January 1910 entitled Britain to control the external relations of Butan. Reacting with a symbolic gesture to indicate that Butan remained China's subject state, the Qing envoy resident in Tibet conveyed a letter of protest to the King of Butan in a high-handed manner.

The mystical co-existence of two different systems is not only in the master country but its peripheral states where something parallel is rarely found. The mutual acceptance of the "dual diplomacy system" in both the master country and its peripheral states indicates Qing China's aversion to the Western model, even while tacit efforts were made to adapt to it. Notwithstanding the changing milieu, Qing China thought itself the center of the world, and it must have been inconceivable to

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<sup>20</sup> Yu Giljun (俞吉浚), *Seoyu Gyeon'mun* (西游見聞, *Tales of the Western Countries*), The Collection of Yu Gil-jun's Writings, Seoul: Iljogak, 1995, pp.116~117. Originally written in Korean and Chinese characters, author translated into Chinese. Chung Yonghua and others translated 兩截體制 into a dual system or inconsistency system. It may imply two side system. See Chung Yong-hua's *A Civilized Political Thought: Yu Gil-jun and Modern Choson*, Munhak kwa Jiseong Sa, 2005 June, p.219.

<sup>21</sup> Liu Hongxuan (劉宏燿), *The History of China's Neighborly Relations with the Surrounding States*, Shijie Zhixing Publishing (世界知性出版社), 2001 May, p.325.

discard the tributary relations with its underling states. In a longer perspective, the co-existence of the two different systems may well be viewed as a prelude to the dominance of the Western model.

## II. A Long-sustained Co-existence of Two Different Systems

Since 1804, Western gunboats forced Qing China to conclude treaty diplomacy. The tributary relations of Qing China with its neighboring states lost relevance to the Western powers. After the Nanjing Treaty, Qing China concluded the Wangxia Treaty with the United States, and The Huangpu Treaty with France. Qi Ying, the Governor-General in Guangdong and Guangxi, represented Qing China in signing the treaties. He confided to Emperor Daoguang: “It is impossible to treat the Western barbarians as our subject states. They are not subject to investiture and will not be content with the status given to Ryuku and Vietnam. They are obtuse and defiant.”<sup>22</sup> His statement implies that the Western powers did not fully understand Qing China as the master lording over a bevy of little subject states. However, the problem does not reside in the failure of Western powers to understand China, but rather that China was accustomed to tributary relationships repellent to the Western model.

After the second Opium War in 1860, Gongqin Wang, Yi Xin reported to Emperor Xianfeng “...they want to befriend China but do not want to be a subordinate state to Qing China. They have in mind an urge to engage in trade with China, but make believe they don’t want to do it. Obviously, they don’t want to lose face.”<sup>23</sup> *Hui Dian* (會典) in the reign of Qianlong categorically described the Western powers as willing to initiate a tributary relation with China. Comparison with this traditional

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<sup>22</sup> *Dao guang chao chou ban yi wu shi mo* (道光朝籌辦夷務始末), vol.73, pp.18–20.

<sup>23</sup> “Qin chai da chen yi xin zou he ui jing xing zhe” (欽差大臣奕欣奏和議精形折), *The Second Opium War* (5), Shanghai People’s Publisher, 1978 July, pp.269–270.

perception of the Western powers shows that the Opium War drastically altered the Chinese perception of the Western powers.<sup>24</sup> Thereafter, China adopted a treaty diplomacy with the Western powers that represented a significant departure from traditional relationships, and this turnabout stemmed from the need for a realistic approach to the changing political milieu.

The unequal treaties concluded by Qing China with the Western powers after the Opium War brought forth changes in the bureaucratic structure of China. Article 11 of Nanjing Treaty stipulates that the British consul resident in China should be able to communicate, by writing, with the representatives of Qing China in Beijing and anywhere else.” Article 31 of the China-U.S. Treaty provides that a Special Envoy in the name of the Qinchaidachen or Governor General in Guangdong and Guangxi or Fujian and Zhejiang is responsible for processing diplomatic affairs in relation to the Western powers. Article 34 of the China-France Treaty made the trade envoys of the five trade ports or governor generals in the afore-mentioned regions responsible for processing diplomatic affairs.<sup>25</sup> These were the new institutional agencies inaugurated to deal exclusively with the Western powers in diplomatic affairs, while Libushangshu (禮部尚書, the Ministry of Rites) and Lifanyuan (理藩院), stationed in Beijing, continued to deal with affairs pertaining to the traditional tributary relationship. The necessity of dealing with Britain, the U.S.A, and France, all neither subjects of China nor willing to accept Chinese dominance, forced this institutional arrangement on Qing China. Thus, Qing China moved toward the Western model of modern diplomacy.<sup>26</sup>

The posts for the five trade port envoys were created vis-à-vis the

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<sup>24</sup> *Da qing hui dian* (大清會典), vol.56 Libu. See Qian Shifu (錢寶甫), *Diplomatic Agencies in Qing China*, Sanlian Shudian Pub. Beijing, 1959 July, pp.19~20.

<sup>25</sup> Wang Tieya (王鐵崖) ed., *Zhong wai jiu yue zhang hui bian*, vol.1, Sanlian Shudian. Beijing, 1957, p.32, p.56, p.64, p.58 Article 4 of China-France Treaty shows.

<sup>26</sup> Qian Shifu, *The Diplomatic Agencies of Qing China*, p.58.

Qinchaidachen, who represented the highest authority in charge of treaty diplomacy. Emperor Xianfeng promoted Qi Ying, Governor General in Guangdong and Guangxi, to Qinchaidachen, and sealed his authority to supervise the affairs of treaty diplomacy.<sup>27</sup> The Qinchaidachen concurrently shouldered affairs pertaining to China's new relationships with countries. Unlike Shibosi (市舶司) and Lifanyuan, the Qinchaidachen held the same status as Yiguan (夷官). With this institutional arrangement, Qing China broke new ground for its role commensurate with the heightened status of modern diplomacy.<sup>28</sup> The Qinchaidachen held a standing equivalent to the standing Minister of Foreign Affairs, who concurrently assumed the post of Governor General in Guangdong and Guangxi.<sup>29</sup> His responsibilities departed significantly from traditional tributary affairs, and his status equal to Yiguan accorded with the principle of modern diplomacy. In 1847, a Ryuku tributary envoy reported to the Qinchaidachen on British and French incursions, the British invasion into Tibet, and the refusal to accept the overture of British Consul, Winham, and that of a Belgium envoy for direct negotiation without Chinese sanction.

The placement of the governor general and the Qinchaidachen indicated the institutional unpreparedness of Qing China for dealing with the Western powers in a consistent and pre-meditated manner. Rather, this institutional arrangement resulted from improvised reactions to emerging needs, as illustrated by the appointment of one person responsible for the role of governor general and Qinchaidachen, or the alternation between the two. Qi Ying, Xu Guangjin (徐廣縉), Ye Mingchen (葉名琛), and Huang Zonghan (黃宗漢), paraded across the stage. From January 1859 Governor General He Guiqing (何桂清),

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<sup>27</sup> *Dao guang chao chou ban yi wu shi mo* (道光朝籌辦夷務始末), vol.71, pp.18-19.

<sup>28</sup> Qian Shifu, *Ibid*, p.61, p.72.

<sup>29</sup> Fan Baichuan (樊百川), *Qingjide Yangwu Xinzheng* (清季的洋務新政), vol.1, Shanghai Book Publisher, 2003 April, p.532.

concurrently became Qinchaidachen.<sup>30</sup> The Zongliyamen (總理衙門) was inaugurated in January 1861, followed by Qinchaidachen and the five trade port envoys. Putting these appointments together, the governor general and the Qinchaidachen served in parallel for sixteen years. The merging of the two posts into one person in January 1859 constituted a landmark change in the internal politics of Qing China in confrontation with the Western powers.<sup>31</sup> However, this post made its presence felt until Spring 1859 when the exchange of diplomatic documents took place in Shanghai. From then on, the Western powers declined to deal with the official whose works split between the two posts on the grounds that this situation lacked a degree of professionalism. An attempt by the Western powers to deal directly with the Beijing government met China's flat refusal, which caused the second Opium War to break out. Although the concurrent performance of the two posts did not obtain legal status. Merging the two into one represented a dramatic turnabout after long-sustained institutional inertia typical of the changeless tributary relationship. Indeed, the tributary relation of Qing China with its peripheral states paralleled a succession of armed clashes with Western powers trying to bring China into complete surrender. Qing China never recognized its inferiority to the Western "barbarians,"<sup>32</sup> even after defeat in the Opium War. The continued denial of audience with the Son of Heaven in Beijing indicated China's persistence in looking down on their Western trading partners as barbarians.<sup>33</sup>

Britain, France, the United States and Russia exerted pressures on

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<sup>30</sup> *Xian feng chao chou ban yi wu shi mo* (咸豐朝籌辦夷務始末), vol.32, pp.15~18. Xianfeng's edict issued on August 12, 1859. The trade agency in Shanghai is far from Guangdong. Therefore, Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi is appointed to Qinchaidachen to deal with trade-related matters.

<sup>31</sup> Qian Shifu, *The Diplomatic Agencies of Qing China*, p.107.

<sup>32</sup> Qian Shifu, p.62.

<sup>33</sup> Wang Licheng (王立誠), *The Diplomatic History of China*, Gansu People's Pub, 1991 May, p.52.

Qing China to expand trades.<sup>34</sup> The open path to direct negotiations with Beijing whetted the Western powers' predatory ambitions. In Spring 1850, British Consul, Winham, dispatched a message to Mu Zhange (穆彰阿), Daxueshi (大學士), the highest civilian authority in the Qing court, requesting him to arrange for a meeting. The Qing court declined, citing the China-Britain Treaty that prohibited any direct contact between a high-ranking Chinese official and a British envoy, with additional words exhorting the former to send a message to the Qinchaidachen in Guangdong, should he honestly want a meeting with a Chinese official.<sup>35</sup> During the second Opium War in 1856, Britain and France demanded that foreign consuls should be permitted to have a direct negotiation with the Qing court in Beijing. The proposed presence of foreign officials in Beijing was nothing other than prelude to an overt predatory scheme. The British Department of Foreign Affairs commissioned Bowling, a new Consul to Qing China, to initiate with top priority a new round of negotiations to obtain the latter's approval on the presence of British officials in Beijing. Britain's repeated pleas reflected the recognition that "no path to Beijing" would stymie further progress toward realizing its predatory ambition.<sup>36</sup> The Tianjin Treaty concluded in June 1858 after the first phase of the second Opium War specifically manifested this predatory ambition. The Tsian Chin Treaty upgraded the official counterpart to the British consul in the name of Huangshangtejianneiged axueshishangshu (皇上特簡內閣大學士尚書). The China-U.S. Treaty made it possible for an American resident official to communicate, by writing, on an equal basis with the Minister of the Greater Qing Cabinet 'Daqingneigeaxueshi (大清內閣大學士).' The China-Russia Treaty was

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<sup>34</sup> H. B. Morse, translated. by Jang Huiwen, *The History of Foreign Relations of Qing Empire*, vol.1, p.539.

<sup>35</sup> *Xian feng chao chou ban yi wu shi mo* (咸豐朝籌辦夷務始末), vol.1, p.10, p.16.

<sup>36</sup> Hsü Immanuel C. Y. *China's Entrance into the Family of Nations: The Diplomacy Phase 1858-1880*, p.26.

more specific about the free-wheeling exchange of memoranda of understanding between the Minister of Military Affairs or his representative and the Russian consul.<sup>37</sup>

The new treaty provision invalidated the role of not only the Lifanyuan but the local-based five trade port envoys and the Qinchaidachen.<sup>38</sup> Modern diplomacy in its true sense started from this time, not simply because the principle of treaty diplomacy functioned, but because the shift to treaty diplomacy represented an irreversible trend. The role of Lifanyuan became obsolete with the Russian initiative in dispatching a memorandum of understanding to the Minister of Military Affairs.<sup>39</sup> After the Beijing Treaty with Russia, the Russian Office in Beijing was upgraded to the Ministerial Office in China.<sup>40</sup> In Spring 1859, Britain and France declined to negotiate with He guiqing, the new appointee to General Governor and Qinchaidachen, because the General Governor held responsibility for trade affairs, while state affairs remained beyond the scope of his authority.<sup>41</sup> The demands of the Western powers in coping with the Second Opium War became increasingly intractable, so the war entered its second phase.

After Beijing fell to Franco-British troops in 1860, the British representative F.W. Bruce declared that local officials serving the role of Qinchaidachen were not acceptable, and he demanded to negotiate with the Plenipotentiary, or the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Earl Elgin

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<sup>37</sup> See Wang Tieya ed., *Zhong wai jiu yue zhang hui bian*, vol.1, p.97, p.87.

<sup>38</sup> Fan Baichuan, *Qingji de Yangwu Xinzheng*, vol.1, p.535.

<sup>39</sup> Xian feng chao chou ban yi wu shi mo (咸豐朝籌辦夷務始末), vol.72, p.20.

<sup>40</sup> Zhao Yuntian (趙雲田), "Qing chao Lifanyuan he Zhonghe Guan xi (清朝理藩院和中俄關係)," *Xibeishidi* (西北史地), vol.3, 1981; Zhao Yuntian, *Qingdai zhili bianchui de shuniu-Lifanyuan* (清代治理邊陲的樞紐-理藩院), Wulumuqi: Xinjiang People's Pub., 1995 (first ed.); Zhang Yongjiang (張永江), *Qingdai Fanbu yanjiu-yi zhengzhi bianqian wei zhongxin* (清代藩部研究-以政治變遷為中心), Haerbin: Heilongjiang education publication, 2000 (first ed.); Cai Hongsheng, *Eluosiguan jishi* (俄羅斯館紀事), revised version, Beijing: Zhonghua publication, 2006 (first ed.).

<sup>41</sup> *Xian feng chao chou ban yi wu shi mo* (咸豐朝籌辦夷務始末), vol.53, p.41~42.

dispatched a message to Gongqin Wang, Yi Xin, to the effect that he would no longer recognize Qinchaidachen. He much desired that a person of mild character like Yi Xin should be made the Minister of Foreign Affairs.<sup>42</sup> Upon his arrival, the French chargé d'affaires Alphonse de Bourboulon dispatched a message saying that he regarded Yi Xin as the Minister of Foreign Affairs.<sup>43</sup> What these diplomatic representatives had done boiled down to a high-handed demand for the establishment of an office which would exclusively deal with the affairs of imperialist incursions. They not only indicated the kind of offices to be established but designated the people who fit the bill and even the names to be given to the offices.<sup>44</sup> The Qing court concluded Beijing treaties with Britain, France and Russia, and the Tianjin Treaty concluded in 1858 formally recognized the presence of diplomatic missions in Beijing. These treaties accord with the formalities of international law, but reading between lines, one can discern the specific manifestation of predatory ambition. This found the Qing court torn between public outcries for blockading foreign penetration and the persistent Western demand for lifting all restrictions, legal and institutional, on foreign establishments. It became increasingly difficult to maintain the dignity of the celestial kingdom and Chinese were not free to use “Yi (夷)” to refer to the infiltrating barbarians.<sup>45</sup> As H. B. Morse stated, with China no longer in a position to order its underling states, the Western barbarians gained a position that reduced China to a compliant performer of their orders.<sup>46</sup> Not long after concluding the Beijing Treaty on November 8, 1860, The Qing court

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<sup>42</sup> Masataka Banno, *China and the West 1858-1861, The Origins of the Zongliyamen*, p.210.

<sup>43</sup> “Xian feng shi nian shi yue er shi wu ri qin chai da chen Yi xin deng zou fu jian yi (咸豐十年十月二十五日欽差大臣奕訢等奏附件一),” Qi Sihe (齊思和) ed. *The Second Opium war* (5), p.309.

<sup>44</sup> Fan Baichuan, *Qingji de Yangwu Xinzheng*, vol.1, pp.536~537.

<sup>45</sup> Qian Shifu, *The Diplomatic Organ of Qing China*, pp.130~131.

<sup>46</sup> H. B. Morse, translated by Zhang Huiwen (張匯文), *The History of Foreign Relations of Qing Empire*, vol.1, p.696.

dispatched Heng Qi (恒祺) and Chong Hou (崇厚) to Tianjin to take charge of trade affairs.<sup>47</sup> Within a month, an agency entitled Zongligeguoshiwuyamen (總理各國事務衙門) was established in Beijing to deal with foreign affairs related to countries affiliated with China.

On January 1, 1861, Yi Xin and other key officials filed a memorial to Emperor Xianfeng: “The treaty provides a reciprocal guarantee of non-aggression. Therefore, it is desirable to show a friendly face to the Western barbarians while slowly restricting their acts in China.” In order to implement this diplomatic imperative, Zongligeguoshiwuyamen was inaugurated in Beijing and this central agency dispatched minister-level representatives to deal with trade affairs at the trade ports.<sup>48</sup> Yi Xin held the opinion that by demanding the presence of the minister-level officials the Western powers intended to treat China as an adjacent country, and to promote trade in practical terms, rather than to reduce China to an underling with a loss of face.<sup>49</sup> However, the ruling class of the Qing court remained determined to preserve the celestial order of the traditional China-centered world. The slogan “Exult the country and despise foreigners” underpinned the establishment of Zongliyamen (總理衙門), lower in rank than Libu (禮部), the Ministry of Rites. Xianfeng ordered Libu to confer the imperial seal on the Zongliyamen, and he delegated its responsibility to the lower agency.<sup>50</sup> The lower status of the Zongliyamen derived from the following: “Our intention was to establish an agency which deals with foreign affairs. Libu is an office whose major works are related to lofty rites and morality, unfit to deal with affairs related to lowly Western barbarians. Duidang (對當) is a meeting place for the officials of Libu; such a sacred place would be contaminated by meeting foreign barbarians. Zongliyamen will offer the

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<sup>47</sup> *Xian feng chao chou ban yi wu shi mo* (咸豐朝籌辦夷務始末), vol.68, p.17.

<sup>48</sup> *Xian feng chao chou ban yi wu shi mo* (咸豐朝籌辦夷務始末), vol.71, pp.19–20.

<sup>49</sup> Qi sihe ed., *The Second Opium War* (5), pp.269–270.

<sup>50</sup> “Shang yu (上諭),” *Chou ban yi wu shi mo* (籌辦夷務始末), (Xianfeng Reign) 8, pp.2691–2692.

place for our meeting with the Western barbarians. It is enough to give them a minimal degree of rites so that they feel that they are treated with courtesy. The rites involved in treating foreigners will be simplified in a manner that they deserve in distinction from civilized Chinese.”<sup>51</sup>

The Zongliyamen began as a place that brought together all foreigners in Beijing to get to know each other. With a slight change, it developed into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and later into the Yangwu Neige (洋務內閣), with sole authority regarding all international affairs.<sup>52</sup> With regards to this institutional change, Mary C. Wright attributed this feat to the hard work of Yi Xin, which resulted in a successful grafting of an old system onto a modern one. This is one of the most monumental reforms that China had ever attempted, leading to the practices of today.<sup>53</sup> The Zongliyamen is a product of China’s effort to adapt to modern diplomacy on the basis of old wood left intact. Although China wavered between tradition and Western demands, China saw a new path open to modern diplomacy patterned after the Western model.<sup>54</sup> A marked gap between the initial intention of establishing the Zongliyamen and what it is today is not the result of an abrupt process of progressive change in China’s diplomacy, but rather evolved from the interplay of external demands with the internal situation through a transitional stage fraught with many ups and downs. The belated modernization of China caused by extraneous factors finds its manifestation in the present profile of China’s international relations. The modern diplomacy of China concluded peace treaties over four decades.<sup>55</sup> However, this institutional

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<sup>51</sup> “Yi xin gui liang wen xiang zhou zong li ya men wei jin shi yi ni zhang cheng shi tiao cheng lan zhe (變訢桂良文祥奏總理衙門未盡事宜擬章程十條呈覽折),” *Chou born yi wu shi mo* (籌辦夷務始末), (Xianfeng Reign), 8, pp.2714–2719.

<sup>52</sup> Qian shifu, *The Diplomatic Organ of Qing China*, p.279.

<sup>53</sup> Mary C. Wright, translated by Fang Delin (房德隣), *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: the Tung-chi Restoration, 1862-1874*, Beijing: Chinese Social Science Press, 2002 Jan., p.9.

<sup>54</sup> Wang Licheng, *The History of China’s Modern Diplomatic Institution*, p.71.

<sup>55</sup> Wu Fuhuan (吳福環), *Study on Zongliyamen of Qing China*, Taipei: Munjin Pub, 1995 Jan., p.147.

change fell far short of the expectations of the Western powers that had exerted pressures on China in one way or another.<sup>56</sup> On the day when the allied troops of eight countries occupied Beijing (24 July, 1901), the Qing court upgraded the Zongliyamen to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which headed the list of ministries. On September 7, the allied powers reflected this institutional change in Article 12 of the Beijing Protocol.<sup>57</sup> The dubious legal status of the Zongliyamen had confronted the Qing court, but the inauguration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs resolved this legal problem. Invested with the sole authority on Qing China's external affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs met all formal requirements.<sup>58</sup> The unitary system of modern diplomacy had gone through a long tortuous path of development, starting with tributary relationships, through sixteen years of special control under the Qinchaidachen and governor-generals, and four decades of the dual system, including the Zongliyamen.<sup>59</sup> The historical process marked a steady adaptation to the capitalistic system of diplomacy, expected to continue beyond this time horizon.

Despite the transition to modern diplomacy, the Libu processed matters related to the traditional tributary relationships in accord with a set of rites existing in parallel with the system of treaty diplomacy. These two systems were incompatible. Of all, the tributary relationship of the Choson Dynasty with China was most exemplary; it not only enjoyed the longest history but all simmering feuds and conflicts were sublimated into harmony. This relationship had continued until 1894 when Sino-Japanese War broke out. The defeat of Qing China at the hands of Japan

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<sup>56</sup> Banno, Masataka, *China and the West, 1851-1861: The Origins of the Zongliyamen*, pp.244-246; Meng Ssu-ming, *The Zongliyamen (夢思明): Its Organization and Function*, Cambridge, Mass., 1962.

<sup>57</sup> Wang Tieya ed., *Zhong wai jiu yue zhang hi bian*, vol.1, p.979.

<sup>58</sup> Wang Licheng, *The History of China's Modern Diplomatic Institution*, vol.1, p.175.

<sup>59</sup> Qian shifu, *The Diplomatic Organ of Qing China*, p.291.

terminated the subordinate status of Choson both in theory and practice, resulting in the demise of the master-vassal relationship, the manifestation of a cosmic order in the relationship between countries.<sup>60</sup> In 1895 the Simonoseki Treaty dealt the tributary relationship a critical blow as the treaty deprived Qing China of Taiwan and the Liaodong peninsula. However, this treaty did not directly lead to the dissolution of the institutional organ which had been responsible for matters related to the traditional relationship. The two components, Zhuokeqinglisi (主客清吏司) and Huitongsiyiguan (會同四譯館), of Libu, continued their existence until 1903.<sup>61</sup>

From the institutional viewpoint, the transitional phase lies between the conclusion of Nanjing Treaty in 1842 and 1901, when the dissolution of the Zongliyamen gave way to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This time span accounts for 83 percent of the late Qing period (1840-1911). Should the transitional phase be extended to 1903 when the Huitongsiyiguan of Libu was dissolved, it lasted for sixty one years, accounting for 85 percent of the late Qing period. Liu Jinzao characterizes the tributary relationships of China vis-a-vis treaty diplomacy with the Western powers in *Huangchao xu wen xian tong kao*, where he defines tributary relationships as not qualified to be called “diplomacy,” because dispatching an envoy expressed paternalistic concern for the vassal state.<sup>62</sup> This view reflects the presence of a dual system during the late Qing era under which two imperatives governed relations between countries. The dual system juxtaposed two incompatible ways of handling international affairs, disclosing the contradictions of China’s foreign relationship.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> John King Fairbank, ed., *The Cambridge History of Late Qing China, 1800-1911*, vol.2, p.88.

<sup>61</sup> Wang Jing (王靜), *The History of the Central Government of Old China*, Heilongjiang Education Pub., Harbin, 2002 Dec., pp.254~255.

<sup>62</sup> Liu Jinzao (劉錦藻), *Qing chao xu wen xian tong kao* (清朝續文獻通考), vol.331.

<sup>63</sup> Liang Bohua (梁伯華), *Great Change of Modern Chinese Diplomacy: A Study on Diplomatic*

It took note of the fact that the two incompatible systems co-existed for longer than half a century. Out of this unique transitional period came two chronicles that stand out for their accurate documentation of the diplomatic transition in Qing China, the “Bang jiao zhi (邦交志)” and the “Shu guo zhuan (屬國傳).”<sup>64</sup> The co-existence of “old and new” inherent in this transitional phase reflects a stubborn obsession of the ruling elite with a China-centered order of the world. At the same time, it may well be the result of diplomatic modernization, galvanized by the heightening awareness of accountability for implementing obligations imposed by a succession of trade treaties. It is the manifestation of concern for balance between subjective conservatism and objective progressivism, and leaning toward “either one or the other” defeats an effort for an objective evaluation. The tributary relations of China with its surrounding states resulted from an historical process marked by an over-arching Chinese influence. Adaptation to modern diplomacy became an irreversible trend set into motion by contacts with the Western powers. It may follow that the subjective conservatism does not necessarily contradict China’s belated resolution to “learn it from the west and strengthen itself.”

A similar trend occurred in Korea during its transitional phase. In December 1880 during the reign of Kojong, the Tonglijiwuyamen (統理機務衙門) was established to direct twelve executive branches. Two agencies came under its supervision; the Shidasi (事大司) responsible for tributary relations with China, and the Jiaolinsi (交隣司) dealing with neighborly relations with Japan, which largely concentrated on treaty diplomacy. This new institutional mechanism was modeled on China’s Zongliyamen. Compiled in 1880, the *Tong Wen Guan Zhi* (通文館志) documents the changing profile of Choson’s inter-country relations. On the advice of Ma Jianchang (馬建常) and Von Mollendorf, the

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*Institution and Foreign Relations*, p.109.

<sup>64</sup> Jiang Tingbo (蔣廷黻), *On the Foreign Relations of Qing China*, Beihai tushuguan yuekan (北海圖書館月刊), vol.2, 1929.

Tonglikimuamun split into two parts: the Tonglijiaosheshiweyamen (統理交涉事務衙門), and the Gunguksamuamun (君國事務衙門). The Tongligyosopsamuamun assumed overall responsibility for dealing with foreign relations with Japan, the Western powers and China. In 1884, Choson dispatched a resident trade mission to Tianjien, the first of its kind under the supervision of the new organization. The presence of tradition and modernity in tandem, as reflected in this dual institutional system resembled what happened in the transitional phase of late Qing China.

### III. Conclusion

The modern history of China corresponds to the late Qing Dynasty which began in 1840, the year of the Nanjing Treaty with Britain. A strange co-existence of two different systems of diplomacy which lasted longer than half a century sets apart the late Qing period from other historical eras. The tributary relations of China with its surrounding states continued until 1894 when the Sino-Japanese War broke out. During this time, the traditional tributary relationships continued in parallel to the so-called treaty diplomacy with the Western powers whose penetration posed a grave threat to the heartland of China. Such a dual system of foreign relations also occurred in the transitional phase of Choson Dynasty. “Two systems under one diplomacy” gained prevalence in China, which claimed it to be the Middle Kingdom, and also in Choson, which earned the name of a “peripheral state” With regard to China. The co-existence of two different systems resulted from the non-institutional reactions of the ruling class of Qing China to a new diplomatic call for a systematic institutional approach to diplomacy. A transient phenomenon, the dual system tore China’s international relations between tradition and modernity. Study on the “two systems under one diplomacy” remains in its infancy, and still requires in-depth and comprehensive treatment.