

# The Transformation of Korea-China Relations in the 19th Century: Between Autonomy and Sovereignty

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***The Journal of Northeast Asian History***  
**Volume 18 Number 1 (Summer 2021), 27-88**

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# The Transformation of Korea-China Relations in the 19th Century: Between Autonomy and Sovereignty\*

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## Introduction

This article, along with other joint research projects, will attempt a comprehensive outline of Korea-China relations in the 19th century. This period is mainly characterized by the gradual collapse of the existing Sinocentric order (i.e., the tribute system) and the combative emergence of the new, modern order (i.e., the treaty system) following the West's advance into East Asia. Therefore, unlike the first half of the Joseon dynasty, which was not much different from the early Qing period, the changes in the East Asian order, such as the relationship between China and Japan over Joseon in the latter half, especially after the 1870s, are the focus of attention. The transition to the order based on international law was a process of accepting the new Europe-based international order of equal negotiation powers between sovereign states, each of which had inalienable independence. Still, the attitude and timing of its acceptance were quite different, and the issue of resetting the East Asian countries' bilateral relations at the same time emerged as an essential conflict.

However, as there are already so many studies on the history of Korea-China relations in the 19th century, I wish to summarize, while referring to previous studies as much as possible, Joseon's trend toward indepen-

dence from the Chinese world order and Qing's move to regard the traditional "superior-tributary state" (上國-屬邦) relations as a modern "suzerain-vassal state" (宗主國-屬國) relationship. On that note, I deliberately avoid the term "suzerainty-vassalage" (宗藩 or 宗屬) herein, which has been used elsewhere. The traditional relationship between Joseon and Qing cannot be expressed as a "suzerain-vassal state relationship" (宗藩關係), which was only used to define the hierarchical relationship between an emperor and feudal lords (藩王) in China. Many scholars have pointed out that there are no historical examples of the use of this term "suzerain-vassal state relationship" in regards to foreign relations and is, therefore, never appropriate as a concept explaining Qing's foreign relations.<sup>1</sup> Of course, in the 1880s, Qing defined Joseon as a vassal state (屬國/屬邦) and sought for this relationship to be internationally recognized, but this concept of "subjugation" fit within the "tributary state" (進貢國) in *The Elements of International Law* (萬國公法) and did not directly refer to a "vassal state" (封臣國). The term suzerainty or suzerain state is also a modern concept, and not a concept or term used in the traditional Sinocentric order.<sup>2</sup> Since any attempts

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 \* This translated article is a revised version of Kim Hyungjong, "19세기 근대 한중관계의 변용: 자주와 독립 사이," *동양사학연구* 140 (September 2017): 223-70.

<sup>1</sup> Liu Zhiyang and Li Dalong, "'Fanshu' yu 'zongfan' bianxi - zhongguo gudai jiangyu xingcheng lilun yanjiu zhi si" [A Precise Analysis of "Vassalage" and "Suzerainty"-The 4th Study of the Theory on Territory Formation in Ancient China], *Zhongguo bianjiangshidi yanjiu* 2006-3 (2006); Chen Shangsheng, "Zhongguo chuantong duiwai guanxi yanjiu chuyi" [A Study on Traditional Chinese Foreign Relations], *Anhuishixue* 2008-1 (2008).

<sup>2</sup> For the issue of incorporating Joseon in the "Biography of Vassal States" instead of the "Biography of Foreign States," as was done previously, in *The Draft History of Qing* (淸史稿) written in the beginning of the 20th century due to the influence of the situation at the end of the 19th century, see Koh Byong-ik, "Jungukjeongsa-ui oegukyeoljeon: Joseonjeon-ul jungsim-uro" [Foreign Nations in the Official Chinese History: With a Focus on Joseon], in *Dongamunhwasa-ui yeongu* [A Study on the History of East Asian Diplomacy], Koh Byong-ik (Seoul: Seoul National University Publishing Council, 1970a); Kim Hyungjong, "Jungchwainmingonghwaguk-eseoui Cheongsapyeonsu-'Sincheongsu' Pyeon-chantonron-e natanan Junggukhakgye-ui banungbunseok" [An Analysis of the Chinese Academics' Responses Revealed in People's Republic of China's Project of New Qing History], in *Jungguk-ui Cheongsagongjeong yeongu* [China's Qing History Project], Northeast Asian History Foundation, ed., (Seoul: Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2008); and Koo Bumjin, "Dongasia gukje-jilseo-ui byeondong-gwa Joseon-Qing gwangye" [The Transformation of the East Asian World Order and Joseon-Qing Relations],

of such alternation were neither successful nor approved by Western countries, it is difficult to explain the relationship between Joseon and Qing in terms of a “suzerain-vassal state relationship,” even though one may talk about it as the ‘orientation’ of Qing. Therefore, it is necessary to pay particular attention to the use of terminology when describing the Joseon-Qing relationship in the 19th century.<sup>3</sup>

## Joseon–Qing Relationship in the Middle and Late 19th Century

After Joseon was subjugated by the Manchu Invasion in January 1637, Qing built a Sinocentric relationship called the Sadae system (事大秩序) with Joseon which enforced the tribute (朝貢)-investiture (冊封) relationship and tributary trade (互市) system at the border. The principles that defined this order were ‘worshipping the stronger with politeness (事大以禮)’ and ‘comforting the weaker with kindness (字小以德),’ which were, of course, the notions and duties based on the Confucian virtues—“*li*” (禮) and “*de*” (德). Such superior-tributary relations with Qing gradually became norms replacing those with Ming and remained stable until the 1870s.<sup>4</sup> It is more appropriate to regard the Joseon-Qing relationship as

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 in *Dongasia gukjejilseo sok-ui hanjung gwangyesa: Jeoen-gwa mosaek* [The Transformation of the East Asian World Order and Sino-Korean Relations: Suggestions and Proposals], Northeast Asian History Foundation, ed. (Seoul: Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> For the controversy regarding the Joseon-Qing Relationship, see Kang Dongkook, “Zokuho no seiji shiso-shi: 19 seiki kohan ni okeru Chosen chii mondai o meguru gensetsu no keifu” [A Politico-Philosophical History of Subang: The Genealogy of Discourse on ‘the Status of Korea’ in the Late 19th Century], PhD diss., University of Tokyo (2004); and Koo Sunhee, “Cheongiljeonjaeng-ui uimi: Jo-Cheong ‘sokbang’ gwangye-rul jungsim-uro” [The Implication of the First Sino-Japanese War: With a focus on the Qing-Joseon ‘Superior-Tribute State’ Relationship], *Hanguk geunhyeondaesa yeongu* 37 (2006).

<sup>4</sup> For further details regarding this issue, see Chun Hae-Jong, *Han-Jung gwangyesa yeongu* [A Study on the History of Sino-Korean Relations] (Seoul: Ilchokak, 1970); Zhang Cunwu, *Qing-Han zongfanmaoyi* [The History of Qing-Joseon’s Tributary Trade] (Taipei: Academia Sinica Institute of Modern History, 1978). Kim Taekjung et al., trans (Paju: Gyomoon, 2001); Choi So-Ja, *Myeong-Cheong sidae Jung-Han gwangyesa yeongu* [A Study on the Sino-Korean Relations in the Ming and Qing Period] (Seoul: Ewha Woman’s University Press, 1997) and

“exceptional” rather than as an “exemplary” case, which is almost unique in the Sinocentric order.<sup>5</sup> The assessment of the Qing emperor in the early 19th century illustrates such a point well. In 1820, Emperor Jiaqing (嘉慶帝) remarked, “Joseon has long been a tributary state and has been the most respectful.”<sup>6</sup> It was not different from the previous assessment by Emperor Kangxi (康熙帝), who said, “the country [Joseon] is extremely respectful and reserved about everything, and everyone in the country is thrilled to serve.”<sup>7</sup> The following emperors of Qing were equally pleased with the Sinocentric tributary relationship with Joseon.

In the middle of the 19th century, this relationship remained unchanged even in the face of the West’s expansion and growing demand for trade and diplomatic relations, which was symbolized by the advance of Western ships into East Asia. Nevertheless, Qing’s prestige had declined with its defeat in the Opium War followed by Emperor Xianfeng’s fleeing to Chengde amid the Second Opium War (a.k.a., the Arrow War). At the same time, Qing was brought to the brink of collapse due to internal crises such as the Taiping Rebellion (太平天國), the Nien Rebellion (捻軍), and the revolt of minorities, including Muslims from various peripheries of the country, all of which caused considerable turbulence in the existing regional order and Joseon’s stance on the Sadae system and its perception. Japan

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*Cheong-gwa Joseon: Geunse dongasia-ui sanghoinsik* [Qing and Joseon: Mutual Perceptions of Modern East Asian Nations] (Seoul: Hyeon, 2005); Kim Key-Hiuk, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order: Korea, Japan, and the Chinese Empire, 1860-1882* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); \_\_\_\_\_, “19-segi jungyeop-ui dongasia gukjejeongse, geundae Han-Jung-II gwangyesa” [The Mid-19th Century East Asian State of Affairs], in *Geundae Han-Jung-II gwangyesa* [The History of Diplomatic Relations of Modern Korea, China, and Japan] (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2007a); and Zhang Liheng, *Zai chuantong yu xiandai xing zhi jian: 1626-1894 Nianjian de zhong chao guanxi* [Between Tradition and Modernity: Sino-Korean Relations from 1626 to 1894] (Beijing: Shehukexuewenxian chubanshe, 2012). Also, this paper owes much to Kim Han-Gyu, *Han-Jung gwangyesa II* [A History of Sino-Korean Relations II] (Seoul: Arche, 1999, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Lim Jongtae, “Tributary Relations between the Choson and Ch’ing Courts to 1800,” in *The Cambridge History of China*. Willard J. Peterson, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), vol. 9.

<sup>6</sup> *Renjong Shilu* 仁宗實錄 (Jianqing reign, 25th year, 9th month).

<sup>7</sup> *Kangxi Shilu* 康熙實錄 (Kangxi reign, 45th year, 10th month).

also signed the Treaty of Japan and the United States in 1854 under pressure from U.S. Navy Admiral Mathew C. Perry, and signed the Treaty of Commerce between the United States and Japan in 1858. Japan, which subsequently signed a series of unequal treaties with Western countries, was also incorporated into the treaty system.

After the Second Opium War, Qing set up a separate office, known as the Zongli Yamen (總理各國事務衙門) or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in addition to the existing offices for foreign affairs such as the Ministry of Ceremony (Lipu: 禮部) and the Court of Colonial Affairs (Lifan Yuan: 理藩院). The Zongli Yamen was exclusively in charge of diplomatic relations and trade with Western countries. Furthermore, Qing permitted diplomatic envoys to be stationed in Beijing, which it had vehemently opposed previously. These facts indicated fundamental changes in the international order of East Asia. In particular, Qing's acceptance of foreign envoys in its capital symbolized the collapse of the Sinocentric order, as the reluctance and stubborn refusal to permit a foreign envoy to be stationed in the capital, even after the signing of treaties, was also the main cause of friction and resistance in Japan and Joseon. The clash of different civilizations and world views and a paradigm shift in relations among countries characterize the international circumstances in East Asia in this period.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Kim Yong-Koo, *Segyegwanchungdol-gwa hanmal oegyosa 1866-1882* [The Clash of Worldviews and the Late Joseon's Diplomacy 1866-1882] (Seoul: Moonji Publishing, 2001); \_\_\_\_\_, *Segye oegyosa* [The Diplomatic History of the World] (Seoul: Seoul National University Publishing Council, 2006); \_\_\_\_\_, *Geomundo-wa Vla-divostok: 19-segi Hanbando-ui pahaengjeok segyehwa gwajeong* [Geomun Island and Vladivostok: The Process of Deviant Internationalization of the Korean Peninsula] (Seoul: Sogang University Press, 2008); \_\_\_\_\_, *Yaktaljegukjuui-wa Hanbando: Segyeooegyosa heurumsok-ui Byeongin-Shinmiyangyo* [Plundering Imperialism and the Korean Peninsula: the Foreign Disturbance of 1866 and the Foreign Disturbance of 1871 in the Diplomatic History of the World] (Seoul: One, 2013); Kim Key-Hiuk, "19-segi jungyeop-ui dongasia gukje-jeongse, geundae Han-Jung-Il gwangyesa" (2007a); Kang Sang-Gyu, *19-segi Dongasia-ui paradigm byeonhwan-gwa Jeguk Ilbon* [The 19th Century East Asia's Paradigm Shift and Imperial Japan] (Seoul: Nonhyung, 2007); \_\_\_\_\_, *19-segi Dongasia-ui paradigm byeonhwan-gwa Habando* [The 19th Century East Asia's Paradigm Shift and the Korean Peninsula] (Seoul: Nonhyung, 2008); and \_\_\_\_\_, *Joseon jeongchisa-ui balgyeon: Joseon-ui jungchijihyung-gwa munmyeongjeonhwan-ui wigi* [Discovering the Political history of Joseon: The Political Terrain of Joseon and the Crisis of Civilization Shift] (Paju: Changbi Publishers, 2013).

At the same time, the relaxation of the Sadae system due to the decline of Qing was becoming more pronounced. This being the case, the incidents in 1874 and 1881 in which Joseon's tributary delegation was plundered by a set of bandits, which was deemed unheard of and enough to lose face, illustrates these changes well.<sup>9</sup> Despite contact with the West and a change in perception of it,<sup>10</sup> Joseon, which was then dominated by powerful royal in-law families, refused to engage in commerce or sign treaties with Western countries and banned Christian missionary work, other than humanitarian measures for the ships from the West that had been adrift.<sup>11</sup> Joseon responded passively, yet persistently, in the form of an emphasis on "self-defense," fearing the possibility of opium or Christianity spreading.<sup>12</sup> The regime under the royal in-law families during the reign of Cheoljong had *The Annals of King Cheoljong* fabricate its fourteen years of crisis as 'a peaceful time when nothing happened,' deceiving itself that "the storm that has already entered the field of view to be a distant mountain shower."<sup>13</sup>

In the meantime, the government of Joseon took the position that

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<sup>9</sup> *Muzong Shilu* (Tongzhi reign, 15th year, 10th month); *Dezong Shilu* (Guangxu reign, 1st year, 8th month; 7th year, 7th month).

<sup>10</sup> Won Se-Yeon, *Seosedongjeom-gwa Joseonwangjo-ui daeung: dongseoyang-ui sanghoihaewa munhogaebang* [The West's Advance into the East and Joseon's Reactions: Understanding between the West and East and Open-door policy] (Seoul: Handl, 2003); Cho Kwang, *Joseon-hugi sahoe-ui ihae* [Understanding the Late Joseon Society] (Paju: Kyungin Publishing, 2010); and Noh Dae-Hwan, "Gaebang-ui segyesajeok heureum-gwa Joseon-ui seontack: soeguk-gwa gaehang" [The Trend of Opening in the World History and Joseon's Choice: Closed-door Policy and Opening Ports], in *Joseon sidaesa* [Joseon History], Hong Soon-Min et al., ed. (Seoul: Purunyoksa, 2016), vol. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Woo Chul-Koo, "Gumi yeolgang-ui tongsangyogu" [Western Powers' Demands for Trade Relations], in *Hanguksa* [The History of Korea], National Institute of Korea History, ed. (Seoul: Tamgudang, 2003a), vol. 37: 73-86.

<sup>12</sup> Min Tu-Ki, "19-segi huban joseonwangjo-ui daeowigiuisik: Je il-cha, i-cha jungyeongjeonjaeng-gwa iyangseon chulmol-eui daeung" [The Late 19th-century Joseon's Perception of Foreign Countries: Joseon's Reactions to the First and Second Opium Wars and the Intrusions of Western Ships in Its Waters], *Dong-banghakchi* 52 (1986).

<sup>13</sup> Ha Jung-Shik, *Taepyongcheonguk-gwa Joseon* [Taiping Rebellion and Joseon] (Seoul: Jisiksanup Publications, 2008), 330.

“Our country has long been under Chinese rule, but the governance and ordinances are all taken care of by ourselves; and although it is a well-known fact that [Joseon] is affiliated with China, it is also known by everyone that [Joseon] is an autonomous country” (hereafter, ‘The View of the Autonomy of the Tributary State: 屬邦自主論’).<sup>14</sup> At the same time, using the traditional logic of ‘No entitlement to diplomatic relations by subjects (人臣無外交)’ as an excuse, Joseon passed the matter of approaching the West to Qing. However, Qing was no longer able to move forward from its position,<sup>15</sup> and the fact that it made no active intervention in the French campaign against Korea (*Byeonginyangyo*: 丙寅洋擾) or the United States expedition to Korea (*Sinmiyangyo*: 辛未洋擾) in 1866 and 1871 herein explains the situation well.

Even so, this practice had gradually been challenged. Even within the Qing government, the influence of the Han Chinese officials, particularly provincial superintendents and foreign affairs bureaucrats, and the landed gentry class expanded significantly as the Self-Strengthening Movement (洋務運動) began to take place after the 1860s, and their advance and actual control of the leadership even in the diplomatic arena were also prominent. Until the 1870s, however, the existing regional order was not swayed much because the treaty system of plundering imperialism did not immediately topple the Sinocentric order. In fact, it was more likely that the treaty was treated as the expansion or reorganization of the “tributary trade” (互市), which was part of the tributary system.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, in the late 1860s, the Zongli Yamen (總理衙門) was trying to persuade and advise Joseon to recognize the treaty system (and Christian missionary work), and

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<sup>14</sup> *Tongmungwarnji*, vol. 11, *Ginyeonsokpyeon* (present king 15th year, wuintiao 戊寅條).

<sup>15</sup> Shin Ki-Suk, *Hanmaloeogyosayeongu: Cheonghanjongsokgwangye-lul jungsimuro* [A Study on the Diplomatic History of the Late Joseon: With a focus on the Suzerain-vassal Relations between Qing and Joseon] (Seoul: Ilchokak, 1967), 44-51.

<sup>16</sup> Iwai Shigeki, “Asa eki to goshi, Iwanami Kaigan Higashiajia kin gendai tsushi I higashiajia sekai no kindai” [Tribute and Mutual City, Iwanami Lecture East Asian Modern History 1 Modern East Asian World] (Iwanami Shoten, 2010); Takashi Okamoto, “Client State / Protection and Independence-Ryukyu Vietnam · Vietnam · Korea, Iwanami Lecture East Asian Modern History 1 Modern East Asian World” (Iwanami Shoten, 2010).

such attempts were met by the stubborn refusal of Joseon, which had maintained a cold relationship with Qing, though being loyal, and kept its distance to protect its autonomy.<sup>17</sup> Despite that, Joseon, which refused to sign a treaty or commerce with the West, holding the view of the *Hua-Yi Distinction* (華夷觀) or the distinction of the civilized / Chinese versus barbarians, and also insisted on its stern position to defeat the West by force should it intrude, was not at all free from inevitable changes. It was because Western military provocations, such as the French campaign against Korea (*Byeongin yangyo*) in 1866 and the United States expedition to Korea (*Sinmi yangyo*) in 1871, continued to pressure Joseon to open. Nonetheless, the Joseon Dynasty continued to resist such provocations and refused to open its doors instead by erecting *Cheokhwabi* (斥和碑), the monument to the exclusion of Western barbarians from the country.<sup>18</sup>

## Changes in East Asia in the 1870s: Challenge from Japan

The reason behind Qing's inability to escape from its opportunistic wait-and-see attitude regarding Joseon's external relations was twofold.<sup>19</sup> On the one hand, it could not guarantee Joseon's security. On the other hand, it was a problematic issue that required a "choice" between the Sinocentric Chinese order and the international order. The Zongli Yamen, which was in charge of diplomacy with the West and Japan after its establishment, began efforts to accept the treaty system by publishing a Chinese translation of *The Elements of International Law* (萬國公法), translated by William A. P. Martin (1865), and setting up the Tongwenguan (同文館), an institute in

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<sup>17</sup> Mary C. Wright, "The Adaptability of Ch'ing Diplomacy," *Journal of Asian Studies* 173 (1958).

<sup>18</sup> Woo Chul-Koo, *19-segi yeolgang-gwa Hanbando* [The 19th Century Great Powers and the Korean Peninsula] (Paju: Bopmunsa, 1999); Kim Yong-Koo, *Segyegwanchungdol-gwa hanmal oegyosa 1866-1882* (2001); \_\_\_\_\_, *Yaktaljegukjuui-wa Hanbando: Segyeoogyosa heurumsok-ui Byeongin-Shinmiyangyo* (2013); Kim Won-Mo 金源模, "Daewongun-ui daeoejeongchaek" [The Dawongun's foreign policy], in *Hanguksa* (2003a), vol. 37.

<sup>19</sup> Zhang Liheng (2012), 127-45.

Beijing that taught Western languages and scientific subjects. However, since the new principle was based on the premise of order among equal sovereign states within Christian civilization, it meant the rejection and dissolution of the Sinocentric order founded upon the concept of Hua-Yi distinction. Thus, it was virtually impossible to fully accept the treaty system at that time, and Qing used it instead as a tool to check the demands of the Great Powers.<sup>20</sup>

It was Japan, which was forced to “open its ports” after contact with the West, that strongly challenged the existing East Asian order in the 1870s. Japan, which was incorporated into the treaty system by the U.S., actively accepted international law after the Meiji Restoration (明治維新). Japan changed its position on signing a treaty with Qing first when its attempt to reshape Joseon’s relationship out of the Sadae system (事大交鄰) was thwarted. The Zongli Yamen at first refused to sign an equal treaty with Japan, which had long been outside the Sinocentric order, but eventually agreed to sign the Tianjin Treaty (清·日修好條規) in September 1871, following suggestions by Zeng Guofan (曾國藩) and Li Hongzhang (李鴻章) that this could serve Qing’s interests if used well. Qing tried to prevent Japan from keeping China in check in collusion with the West, and also to control its ambitions for Joseon.<sup>21</sup> A smooth transition of the two countries,

<sup>20</sup> Kang Sang-Gyu (2007); Kim Yong-Koo (2008); Kawashima Shin, “Jungguk-eseo mangukgongbeop-  
ui suyong-gwa geu iyong: jugwon-gaenyeom-e jumokhayeon” [China’s Adoption and Use of  
International Law: On the Concept of Sovereignty], *Concepts and Communication* 18 (2016).

<sup>21</sup> Wang Ermin, *Lihongzhang yu zhong ri ding yue (1871)* [Li Hongzhang and the Sino-Japanese  
Contract (1871)] (Taipei: Zhongyang yan jiu yuan jindai shi yan jiu suo, 1981); Gwon Hyeoksoo,  
*19-segimal Han-Jung gwangyesa yeongu: Li Hongzhang-ui Joseon insik-gwa jeongchaek-ul  
jungsim-uro* [A History of Korea-China Relations in the Late 19th Century: With a Focus on Li  
Hongzhang’s Perception and Policy toward Joseon] (Seoul: Baeksan Jaryeowon, 2000); Cho  
Byong-Han. “Haebang cheje-wa 1870-nyeondae Li Hongzhang’s Yang-muwundong” [The  
System of Maritime Defense and Li Hongzhang’s Modernization Movement in the 1870s],  
*Dongyang-sahakyongu* 88 (2004); Kim Key-Hiuk, “Guendaechogi-e isseoseo Han-Cheong-  
Il gwangye-*ui* jeongae: Gapsin jeongbyeon-e michin yeonghyang-ul jungsim-uro” [The  
Transformation of the Korea-China-Japan Relations in the Early Modern Era: With a Focus on  
the Impact on Gapsin Coup], in *Geundae Han-Jung-Il gwangyesa* [The History of Diplomatic  
Relations of Modern Korea, China, and Japan] (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2007c); Li  
Xizhu, “Li Hongzhang-*ui* daeil insik-gwa oegyochaekryak: 1870-nyeondae-lul jungsim-uro” [Li  
Hongzhang’s Perception of Japan and His Diplomatic Strategies in the 1870s], *Dongbuga Yeoksa*

especially one of which was the center of the Sinocentric order and the other the periphery of it, into the new relationship of equality and reciprocity set by the order of the international law, was possible because Japan had been the longstanding outsider of China's tributary circle.

What is noteworthy is that Article 1 of the Tianjin Treaty stipulates that, "The two countries' territories (所屬邦土), while respecting *li* (禮) bilaterally, could be permanently secured by not intruding borders." The intention of Qing [Li Hongzhang] was to keep Japan in check by interpreting the term "邦土" to denote "vassal state" (邦) and "inland" (土) to keep its suzerainty over Joseon and other subjugated states as nonaggression targets. In contrast, Japan, which desired to break Joseon away from China's subjugation, did not agree.<sup>22</sup> As a result, Japan provoked Joseon in 1875 by way of the Ganghwa Island Incident or Unyoho Incident (雲揚號事件). The incident was recognized as an illegal and planned provocation as the Okubo Toshimichi (大久保利通) regime had planned to free itself of the predicament of domestic politics. Materials released to the public in 2002 confirmed again that the official report was fabricated right after the incident.<sup>23</sup> The following January, when Mori Arinori (森有禮) was dispatched to Beijing as an ambassador, he again raised the issue by saying "Joseon is a vassal state (屬國) of China only in name." In response, the Zongli Yamen replied, "[Qing] has never engaged in the internal affairs [of Joseon], and negotiations with foreign countries are made autonomously in that country

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*Nonchong* 32 (2011).

<sup>22</sup> Shin Ki-Suk (1967), 46-48.

<sup>23</sup> Yi Taejin, "Unyangho sageon-ui jinsang: sageon gyeongwi-wa ilbongukgi geyangseol-ui jinw" [The Truth of the Un'yo Incident: The Circumstances and Truth of the Japanese Flag], *Joseon-ui jeongchi-wa sahoe* [The Politics and Society of Joseon] (Seoul: Jipmoondang, 2002); \_\_\_\_\_, "1876-nyeon Ganghwadojoyak-ui myeongam" [The Light and Shade of the 1876 Ganghwa Treaty], *Hanguksasimingangjwa* 36 (2005); Suzuki Akira, "Un'yo' kanchō Inoue Yoshika no Meiji 8-nen 9 tsuki 29 hidzuke no Kokato jiken hokoku-sho" [Unyo' Captain Inoue Yoshika's Ganghwa Island Incident Report on September 29, 1888], *Shigaku zasshi*: 111-12 (2002); Kim Heung-Soo, *Han-Il gywangye-ui guendaejeok gaepyeongwajeong* [The Modernization of Korea-Japan Relations] (Seoul: Seoul National University Publishing Council, 2009); Kim Jong-Hak, "Joilsuhogyu-nun poham-oegyo-ui sanmulioessneunga" [Was the Treaty of Ganghwa a Result of Ggunboat Diplomacy?], *Yeoksabi-pyeong* 114 (2016).

and hence cannot be forced upon each other.”<sup>24</sup> Li Hongzhang also revealed the same attitude, saying, “Who does not know that Goryeo has been a vassal state of China for thousands of years?”<sup>25</sup> Confirming Qing’s intention to not intervene in such a matter, Japan was more active in establishing diplomatic relations with Joseon, and the two countries resumed their negotiations when King Gojong, who began direct rule (親政) in December 1873, agreed to improve relations with Japan, which was proposed by Park Gyu-su (朴珪壽) and others.<sup>26</sup> Qing spoke of its determination to inform Joseon in advance of Japan’s intentions or about related matters to take precautions against and offered no opposition to “friendly relations (修好)” between Joseon and Japan, but did not intervene further.<sup>27</sup> Subsequently, it was slightly different from the previous “no-intervention” position when Li Hongzhang advised Joseon to agree to the demands of Japan because he was in a dispute with Britain and France.<sup>28</sup>

In January 1876, under the pretext of resolving the case of the Gang-

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<sup>24</sup> *Qing Guangxu Chao-Zhong-Ri jiaoshe shiliao* [Historical Document on Negotiations among Korea, China and Japan during Emperor Guangxu of the Qing Dynasty] (Guanxu 1st year, 12th month, 21st day; 2nd year, 1st month, 30th day); *Geundae Hanguk oegyomunseo* [Diplomatic Documents of Modern Korea], vol. 3. (2009): 286-87 & 319-20.

<sup>25</sup> *Qing Guangxu Chao-Zhong-Ri jiaoshe shiliao* (Guanxu 2nd year, 1st month, 30th day); *Geundae Hanguk oegyomunseo* (2009), 294-97 & 303-12; *Li Hongzhang Quanjì* [The Collected Works of Li Hongzhang], vol. 31, letter 3, 339-42.

<sup>26</sup> Tahohashi Kiyoshi, *Kindai Nissen kankei no kenkyu* [A Study of Modern Japan-Korea Relations], 2 vols (Keijo: Chosen Sotokufu Chosen Shi Henshukai [Government-General of Korea’s Joseon History Research Committee], 1940), Kim Jong-Hak trans. (Seoul: Ilchokak, 2013, 2016); Choi Deok-Soo, “Ganghwado joyak-gwa gaechang” [Ganghwado Treaty and Opening Ports], in *Hanguksa*, vol. 37 (2003): \_\_\_\_\_, *Gaehang-gwa Jo-Il gwangye: Sanghoinisik-gwa jeongchaek* [Port Opening and Joseon-Japan Relations: Perceptions and Policies toward Each Other] (Seoul: Korea University Press, 2004); Song Byung-Ki, *Hanguk, Miguk-gwaui cheotman-nam: daemigaeguksaron* [Korea’s First Encounter with the United States: The History of Its Opening ports to the United States] (Seoul: Godswinbook, 2005); and Yiyuan Zezhou, *Jin dai Chaoxian de kai gang: yi Zhong Mei Ri san guo guan xi wei zhong xin* [Modern Korean Opening to Foreign Merchants: Centering on the Relationship among China, America and Japan] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Quan Hexiu, *Tangshaoyi zai jindai chaoxian shiliu nian huodong kao shu, dongya shijie de liebian yu jindai hua* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2013), 38-53.

<sup>28</sup> It also meant a breach of the wait-and-see policy that Qing had maintained on Joseon by that time. Please, refer to Kim Yong-Koo (2001), 182-92; \_\_\_\_\_, (2006), 430-32; Zhang Liheng (2012), 143.

hwa Island Incident, Japan appointed Kuroda Kiyotaka (黒田清隆) as ambassador and Inoue Kaoru (井上馨) as deputy ambassador to Joseon to demand a treaty and open trade with all kinds of threats and menaces. In Joseon, where the focus was on the handling of the Ganghwa case (the issue of liability and reparations was not dealt with at all even in the actual treaty), opposition arose against the sudden opening of the country and trade request, but finally it approved the signing of the treaty only three days after reading the draft. The Japan-Korea Treaty of 1876 was, in fact, a copy of the unequal treaty the West had imposed on Japan. Japan inserted the phrase “Joseon holds equal rights with Japan as a sovereign state” in Article 1. As Joseon regarded itself as having sovereignty over domestic affairs and diplomacy, it did not view this provision as “independence” from China, and thus thought that it did not affect the Sinocentric order. While Joseon weighed the restoration of a friendly relationship while avoiding opposition from conservatives, Japan regarded it as an acceptance of the international order, which was more or less a one-sided interpretation. If this were true, then Joseon would have immediately started signing treaties with other Western countries, but this did not happen.<sup>29</sup> The fact that negotiations over the selection of ports to open and the collection of tariffs ran into difficulties shows that both parties did not make sufficient preparations before the signing of the treaty. Among other things, Japan needed the notable achievement of having Joseon sign the treaty under duress, and a considerable number of the provisions were hastily improvised on Ganghwa Island.<sup>30</sup>

In the late 1870s, when the Tianjin Treaty and the Treaty of Shimonoseki (日・清 修好條規) were concluded, Qing also had to actively respond to the Japanese moves, as Japan annexed Ryukyu Island (琉球) in 1879, which had previously been a tribute state of Qing. Japan’s expansion abroad was a sensitive issue that directly touched on the territorial and border issues of Qing. As the most important tributary state of China, Joseon

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<sup>29</sup> Choi Deok-Soo (2003).

<sup>30</sup> Kim Jong-Hak (2016).

could become the next example, and if that happened, Manchuria (滿洲) and even Beijing could be in danger.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, around this time, Qing was at odds with Russia over the Russian occupation of Yili (伊犁) (1871). Russia took advantage of the chaos in the Xinjiang (新疆) area and Yaqub Beg's revolt so Qing could not take a hardline policy on the Ryukyu issue. Qing dispatched Zuo Zongtang (左宗棠) to quell the rebellion of Xinjiang and Chonghou (崇厚) in order to solve the problem of Yili, but since the Livadia Treaty (1879) was of great advantage to the Russian side, Qing refused to ratify the treaty and again sent Zeng Jize (曾紀澤) to demand a revision of the treaty. The Yili conflict was settled by the signing of the St. Petersburg Treaty in 1881, but by going through this ordeal, Qing gradually realized the necessity of utilizing the concepts of borders and sovereignty in order to defend its soil and prevent Russian threats.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, Qing strengthened its border regions in Xinjiang and Manchuria in preparation for a Russian confrontation and attempted significant policy changes in the selection and dispatch of competent senior-rank Han-Chinese local officials. Traditionally, the Qing Dynasty had ruled out the appointment of Han Chinese officials in the regions of Xinjiang and Manchuria. This policy shift, from one that made an explicit distinction between inland and outer regions to one which expanded the internal governance system by installing administrative districts in the border regions, achieved significant results as demonstrated by the performance of Wu Dacheng (吳大澂) in Manchuria.<sup>33</sup> As a result, Sinicization

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<sup>31</sup> Choi Hee-Jae, "Gwangseocho (1875-1885) chejejeongbi-ui yeongu" [A Study of the System Reformation in the Early Guangxu Era], PhD diss. (Seoul National University, 1997), 232-56; Kim Yong-Koo, *Segye oegyosa* [The Diplomatic History of the World] (Seoul: Seoul National University Publishing Council, 2006), 306-07; Kang Sang-Gyu, *19-segi Dongasia-ui paradigm byeonhwan-gwa Habando* [The 19th Century East Asia's Paradigm Shift and the Korean Peninsula] (Seoul: Nonhyung, 2008), 211-47; Okamoto Takashi, "Ilbon-ui ryukyu byeonghap-gwa dongasiajilseo-ui jeonhwan: Cheongilsuhogogyu-lul jongsim-uro" [Japan's Annexation of Ryukyu and the Transformation of the East Asian Order, with Special Reference to the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Amity], *Dongbuga Yeoksa Nonchong* 32 (2011).

<sup>32</sup> Kim Yong-Koo (2006), 308-11.

<sup>33</sup> Kim Hyungjong, "Wudaecheng-gwa 1880-nyeondae Cheong-Reo dongbugukgyeonggamgye" [Wu Daecheng and the 1880s Sino-Russia Border Demarcation], *Korean Studies of Modern*

(漢化) or localization (內地化) began to a significant extent in the border regions and in the Manchuria area.

Around the same time, Qing made changes in its strategy and began to intervene more actively to retain Joseon and to induce Joseon to enter into a treaty system with other countries and start trade relations. Still, it was a diversionary tactic to rely on the international order to utilize Western countries and also to maintain the traditional Sinocentric order.<sup>34</sup> That reflected the early days of Emperor Guangxu when the regime's readjustment achieved some success and the spread of the restoration of the tradition, and the strengthening of the activities by the Han Chinese officials (清流派) who advocated a hardline foreign policy, which led to the emergence of nationalist diplomacy.<sup>35</sup>

## Relationship between Joseon and Qing in the 1880s: Toward Sovereignty in Joseon and Conflict with Qing's Vassalage System

### 1. Policy Transformation of Qing and Joseon: Opening the Gate and Intervention Policy

As the sense of crisis in Qing deepened with the view that “all our outer fences are being cut off,” opinions began to arise that Qing should be more actively involved with the situation in Joseon.<sup>36</sup> In particular, it was the

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*Chinese History* 60 (2013).

<sup>34</sup> Wang Mingxing, *Hanguo jindai wajiao yu zhongguo (1861-1910)* [Korea's Modern Diplomacy and China (1861-1910)] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998).

<sup>35</sup> Choi Hee-Jae (1997).

<sup>36</sup> Many studies have dealt with Qing's transition of Joseon policy. For instance, see Song Byung-Ki, *Geundae Han-Jung gwangyesa yeongu: 19 segimal-ui yeonmiron-gwa Jo-Cheong gyoseop* [A Study on Modern Sino-Korean Relations: Arguments for Forming Ties with the US and Joseon-Qing Relations] (Seoul: Dankook University Press, 1985); \_\_\_\_\_, “Gaehang chogi-ui jocheonggwangye” [The Sino-Korea Relations in the Early open-port period] and “Jo-Mi joyak-ui chaegyevol” [The Conclusion of the Joseon-US Treaty], in *Hanguksa* (2003a, 2003b), vol. 37; \_\_\_\_\_, *Hanguk, Miguk-gwau cheotmannam: daemigaeguksaron* (2005); Kwon Sok-Bong, *Cheongmal daeJoseon jeongchaeksa yeongu* [A Study on the History of the Late Qing's Policies

memorial from Ding Richang (丁日昌) to the emperor in 1879 that led to this transition. He argued that Qing should retain Joseon by letting it sign treaties with other countries while providing fully secured secret military aid.<sup>37</sup> When several similar opinions were voiced, the Zongli Yamen (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), through Li Hongzhang, decided to urge Joseon to sign treaties with the West. Accordingly, Li sent a letter which recommended the promotion of the treaty system and commerce with the Western Powers, to Yi Yuwon (李裕元), with whom Li had previously been in contact.<sup>38</sup> Li suggested that it would be better to use measures “attacking poison with poison and controlling an enemy with an enemy” to keep Japan in check through treaties with the Western countries.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, the Zongli Yamen also showed its intention to mediate Joseon’s negotiations [從中排解] with other countries. Such a policy shift of “help [the vassal state] with measures in place [借箸代籌]” revealed that the Qing

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toward Joseon] (Seoul: Ilchokak, 1986); Koo Sunhee, *Hanguk gundae daeCheong jeongchaeksa yeongu* [A Study on the History of Modern Korean Policies toward Qing] (Seoul: Hyeon, 1999) and “19-segi huban Joseonsahoe-wa jeongtongjeok jogongwangye-ui seonggyeok” [The 19th Century Joseon Society and the Traditional Tributary Relationship], *Sahakyeongu* 80 (2005); Quan Hexiu, *19-segimal Han-Jung gwangyesa yeongu: Li Hongzhang-ui Joseon insik-gwa jeongchaek-ul jungsim-uro* [A History of Korea-China Relations in the Late 19th Century: With a focus on Li Hongzhang’s Perception and Policy toward Joseon] (Seoul: Baeksan Jaryeowon, 2000); Kim Yong-Koo (2001, 2006); Okamoto Takashi, *Zokkoku to jishu no aida-kindai seikan kankei to Higashi-ajia no meiu* [Between Client State and Independence-Modern Seikan Relations and the Fate of East Asia] (Nagoya: Nagoyadaigaku shuppankai, 2004); \_\_\_\_\_, *Sekai no naka no Nisshin kankeishi: kōrin to zokkoku, jishu to dokuritsu* [The History of Sino-Korean Relations: Neighbour and Vassal, Autonomy and Independence], trans. Kang Jina 강진아 (Seoul: Sowadang, 2009); and Kirk W. Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade: Qing Imperialism and Chosŏn Korea, 1850-1910* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2008).

<sup>37</sup> Ding Richang, “Ci hui ban Nanyang haifang shufu qingdan” (Guangxu 5th year, 4th month, 25th day), *Ding Richang Ji*, vol. 1, book 12: 208-13.

<sup>38</sup> “Beiyang Minister Li Hongzhang’s Letter issued by the General Office,” (Guangxu 5th year, 7th month, 13th day), *Qingji Zhong-Ri-Han guanxi shiliao*, vol. 2: 363-69 (Korean trans. vol. 3: 21-43). The letters between Li Hongzhang and Yi Yuwon are all documented in *Geundae hanguk oegyomunseo* (2009), vol. 3 & 4, and for more details about their correspondences, refer to Song Byung-Ki (1985), 12-50; and Quan Hexiu (2000), 38-51.

<sup>39</sup> “Beiyang Minister Li Hongzhang’s letter issued by the General Office” (Guangxu 5th year, 7th month, 13th day), *Qingji Zhong-Ri-Han guanxi shiliao*, vol. 2: 363-69, (Korean trans. vol. 3: 28-30; 37-41); *Geundae Hanguk oegyomunseo* (2009), vol. 4: 279-80.

stance on Joseon had changed from the view of “laissez-faire theory” to a full display of Chinese suzerainty, and that the superior state had taken the initiative to change its existing policy in relation to its vassal state.<sup>40</sup>

Of course, this cautious approach was not the only option explored in and out of the Qing government. He Ruzhang (何如璋), who was well aware of the situation in East Asia as the first ambassador to Japan, wrote a letter to the Zongli Yamen in April 1880. The letter proposed three options. First, merging and localizing Joseon directly into China would be the best plan. Second, sending Chinese political leaders to manage the internal affairs and diplomatic relations on behalf of Joseon would be the next best plan. Finally, advising Joseon to sign treaties with Western countries would be the least effective plan.<sup>41</sup> When the situation in Joseon had changed significantly, He Ruzhang submitted “A Discussion on Joseon Foreign Policy (主持朝鮮外交議)” to the Zongli Yamen, excluding the merger plan, and instead proposing a plan to send Qing officials to learn about the internal and external affairs of Joseon. Contrary to what he claimed in the previous proposal, he suggested that the immediate dispatch of officials might be problematic, and so the government should adopt a measure to keep the power balance between the East and West by letting Joseon sign treaties with the West.<sup>42</sup>

Importantly, He Ruzhang was concerned that “if Joseon were allowed to make a treaty with other countries, all others would regard it as a sovereign state and it would no longer be regarded as a vassal state of China.” His nationalist diplomacy standpoint deserves credit for its apparent intention to reshape the traditional order into modern international relations and at the same time, to position Joseon as a vassal state of China as de-

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<sup>40</sup> “Beiyang Minister Li Hongzhang’s Letter Issued by the General Office” (Guangxu 5th year, 7th month, 13th day), *Qingji Zhong-Ri-Han guanxi shiliao*, vol. 2: 363 (Korean trans. vol. 3: 31-32).

<sup>41</sup> Wu Daoxuan, “He zhang shi jia chuan” [The Records of the He (何) Family], from Wu Zhenqing and Deng Zhengli, *He Ruzhang ji* [Works of He Ruzhang] (Tianjin: Tianjin People’s Publishing House, 2010): 378-79.

<sup>42</sup> He Ruzhang, “Zhuchi chaoxian waijiao yi” [A Discussion on Joseon Foreign Policy], from Wu Zhenqing and Deng Zhengli (2010), 93 and *Geundae Hanguk oegyomunseo* (2009), vol. 4: 287-88.

fined in *The Elements of International Law*.<sup>43</sup> Attempts to effectively replace the previous relationship of *Hua-Yi* distinction with that of a suzerain-vassal state under international law set the tone for Joseon policy from the 1880s, particularly since Han-Chinese officials were leading the diplomatic effort. His proposal said, “We can have it say ‘Joseon wishes to make a treaty by order of the Great Qing,’ in the treaty with Western countries,” and then the so-called “Vassal State Clause” was introduced.

However, Li Hongzhang believed in “maintaining and protecting [it] secretly” [密爲維持保護] for fear of backlash from Joseon and other countries. Li suggested to the Zongli Yamen that he would take his time and advise Joseon appropriately while looking at opportunities.<sup>44</sup> Although the Zongli Yamen agreed to this cautious approach, this policy discussion gave Li full authority over Joseon policy at the same time. In early 1881, based on a proposal from Li, the Zongli Yamen announced that it approved the proposal that the Superintendent of Trade for the North (Beiyang) [i.e., Li Hongzhang] and an envoy of the Chinese Legation in Japan directly exchange documents with Joseon on urgent matters, but that Beijing be frequently informed of these matters. It meant that Li was solely in charge of Joseon policy, and not the Libu (禮部) which had previously been in charge of the tributary relationship.<sup>45</sup>

Before that, He Ruzhang took on the crucial role of promoting Joseon’s treaty with the U.S. In August 1880, He donated *A Strategic Policy for Joseon* (私擬朝鮮策略), which was a book written by Councilor Huang Junxian (黃遵憲), to Kim Hongjip, who was on his second visit to Japan. In short, *A Strategic Policy for Joseon* spoke directly. “There is nothing more

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<sup>43</sup> Suzuki Tomoo, “Chu kuni ni okeru kuni 權 Shugi-teki gaiko-ron no seiritsu” [Establishment of Nationalist Diplomatic Theory in China], *Rekishikenkyu* 404 (1974); Song Byung-Ki (1985: 51-90); Wang Mingxing (1998).

<sup>44</sup> Li Hongzhang, “Fu zong shu lun weichi chaoxian” [General Office’s Discussion on Joseon], (Guangxu 6th year, 11th month, 21st day), *Li Hongzhang quanji*, vol. 32, letter 4: 639.

<sup>45</sup> “Zongli geguo shiwu yamen zou chaoxian yi lianluo waijiao biantong jiuuzhi zhe” [Zhongli Yamen in Charge of Changing Diplomatic Relations with Joseon] (Guangxu 7th year, 1st month, 25th day), *Qing Guangxu Chao-Zhong-Ri jiaoshe shiliao*, vol. 2, 31a-32a; Song Byung-Ki (1985), 103-118; Quan Hexiu (2000), 59-61.

urgent than stopping Russia today. What would be the strategy to stop Russia? Be close to China, cultivate national strength by signing a treaty with Japan, and establish relations with the United States.”<sup>46</sup> It held the view that even after being incorporated into the system of international law, Joseon should retain its status as a vassal state of China and rely more on Qing for military, economic, and diplomatic purposes.

Around the same time, there were similar signs of change in Joseon. In late 1875, Yi Yuwon began exchanging secret correspondence with Li Hongzhang. Such correspondence, which would have been taboo under the principle of ‘no diplomatic relations by subject’ (人臣無外交), began at the end of 1875 and reached a total of seventeen exchanges. Through this communication, Li attempted to maintain the traditional tribute system while curbing Russian and Japanese encroachments by incorporating Joseon into the treaty system. Joseon also sought to suppress public opposition and secure support to obtain knowledge and information for negotiations with Japan.<sup>47</sup> However, despite the recommendations in the 10th letter of 1879, Joseon refused them all, including signing a treaty, opening its doors, and trading with the West.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, change was apparent, Joseon later entered negotiations with the U.S. to strengthen its military power [武備密修策]. It was not until 1880 that military reforms began in earnest, but these reforms ended when the Imo Military Revolt broke out in 1882. *Yeongseongsa* (領選使) Kim Yunshik, the envoy that King Gojong sent with students to Tianjin to learn new culture (especially, weapon manufacture and use), returned to Joseon with the Qing army on September 14, 1882. Most of the students also left China early to return home.<sup>49</sup> The fact that the Joseon government installed the Office of State Affairs [Tong-

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<sup>46</sup> Huang Zunxian, *Chaioxian Celue* [Joseon Strategy], annotated Cho Il-Mun, trans. (Seoul: Konkuk University Press, 1977), 1-52.

<sup>47</sup> Song Byung-Ki (1985), 12-23; Quan Hexiu (2000), 13-51.

<sup>48</sup> “The Letter of Joseon’s Former Ambassador Yi Yuan,” (Guanxu, 5th year, 11th month, 12th day), *Qing-ji Zhong-Ri-Han guanxi shiliao*, vol. 2: 399-401 (Korean trans. vol. 3: 59-63); *Geundae Hanguk oegyomunseo* (2009), vol. 4: 283-84.

<sup>49</sup> Kwon Sok-Bong (1986), 147-88; Koo Sunhee (1999), 25-64; Quan Hexiu (2000), 52-65; Kim Yong-Koo (2001), 310-21.

nigimuamun 統理機務衙門] in January 1881 and placed twelve ministries under it, including tributary relationship, diplomatic relations, and military matters, in order to implement the policy of strengthening its military power demonstrates that policy changes between Qing and Joseon took place at around the same time.<sup>50</sup>

At any rate, Li Hongzhang, grasping the policy shift of Joseon, contacted the U.S. side again to discuss the signing of the treaty by Admiral Robert W. Shufeldt, who visited Tianjin again. At that time, Li tried to specify Joseon's subjugation to Qing in the treaty by inserting the Vassal State Clause (屬邦條項), which said "Joseon has traditionally been a vassal state of China but with autonomy for domestic policies and diplomacy." However, the Qing attempt encountered difficulties because Shufeldt refused to accept it during the five rounds of talks from March to mid-April 1882. In the end, a compromise was reached where this condition could be removed from the treaty as long as this condition was reported to the U.S. State Department. Finally, a draft of the fifteen articles was prepared, and on May 22, 1882, Joseon signed The Joseon-American Treaty of Amity and Commerce (朝美修好通商條約) [also known as the US-Korea Treaty of 1882] at Jemulpo Port. Joseon delivered the Vassal State specification separately to Shufeldt to be sent to the U.S. State Department.<sup>51</sup> After the conclusion of the treaty between Joseon and the U.S., Joseon signed treaties with the United Kingdom (June 6, 1882), Germany (June 30, 1882), Russia

<sup>50</sup> For further details of Zongli Yamen and policy changes afterward, refer to Chun Hae-Jong, "Tongrigimuamun seolchi-ui gyeongwi-e tachayeo" [On the Establishment of the Zonglijiwu Yamen], *Yoksa Hakbo* 歷史學報, 17•18 (1962); Lee Kwang-Rin, "Tongrigianmun-ui jojik-gwa gineung" [The Organization and Functions of the Zongli Yamen]. *Daehanmingukhaksulwon Nonmunjip*, 26 (1987); Chun Miran, "Tongrigyoseoptongsangamun-e gwanhan yeongu" [A Study on the Zongli jiashe tongshang shiwu yamen], *Idaesawon*, 24•25 (1989); Han Cheolho, *Hanguk geundae gaehwapa-wa tongchigigu yeongu* [The Reformists and Government Institutions in the Late Joseon Period] (Seoul: Sunin, 2009); and Sakai Hiromi, *Kaiko-ki no Chosen 戰略-Teki gaiko 1882-1884* [Korea's Strategic Diplomacy during the Opening-Port Period, 1882-1884] (Osaka: Osakadaigaku shup-pankai, 2016).

<sup>51</sup> For further details of the US-Korea Treaty of 1882, refer to Song Byung-Ki (1985), 219-22; Song Byung-ki (2003b), 283-302; Quan Hexiu (2000), 66-91; Kim Yong-Koo (2001), 306-21 & 336-69; Kim Yong-Koo (2006), 458-67; Ihara Takushu (2008), 157-226. The treaty document can be found in *Geundae Hanguk oegyomunseo* (2009), vol. 4: 480-83.

(July 7, 1884), and France (June 1886).<sup>52</sup>

The introduction of a so-called treaty system to Joseon, as in the case of China, would be assessed as a transition from Japan's "monopolistic imperialism" to "multilateral imperialism."<sup>53</sup> In reality, it was a new attempt by Qing to pursue its suzerain policy and find common ground between the tribute system and the treaty system in Joseon.<sup>54</sup> This move contributed to the escalation of numerous conflict points with Joseon, which had been attempting to establish sovereignty in the international order. The Vassal State Clause, which Li Hongzhang worked hard to secure, was difficult to accept even in an international legal sense. Consequently, the U.S. and other countries who later signed treaties with Joseon found little meaning in it. Nonetheless, this clause continued to be effective until the signing of the Joseon-Austria Treaty of 1892.<sup>55</sup>

## 2. Joseon-Qing Relationship in the 1880s: Between Autonomy and Sovereignty

### 1) Announcement of the China-Korea Treaty of 1882

After signing treaties with Japan and the U.S., Joseon felt the need to make a new treaty with Qing and also wanted to address the issue of hierarchy with Qing. In the fall of 1881 and April of the following year, Eo Yunjung and the Joseon delegates visited Tianjin to discuss these issue with Li Hongzhang and Zhou Fu (周馥). They raised questions concerning the dispatch of a diplomatic mission and residency of an ambassador and proposed that the Joseon legation be stationed in Beijing. If that occurred, then this would end the practice of sending delegates for tributes and memorials to the emperor, and the travel expenses and cost of food supplies for envoys

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<sup>52</sup> Kim Yong-Koo (2001), 370-433; Kim Yong-Koo (2006), 474-89; Woo Chul-Koo (2003b), 303-17; Koo Sun-hee (2005), 160.

<sup>53</sup> Karl W. Larsen (2008).

<sup>54</sup> Quan Hexiu (2000), 89-90.

<sup>55</sup> Shin Ki-Suk (1967), 58-66; Woo Chul-Koo (2003b), 303-17; Koo Sunhee (2005), 160.

would be abolished.<sup>56</sup> This bold request for a change in the system caused an adverse reaction from Qing, which considered it to be a presumptuous request from a vassal state. As a result, an imperial edict was issued, stating, “From now on, the Zongli Yamen is in charge of reviewing and handling trade issues with Joseon. Adjust to the old system and have Libu deal with Joseon’s tributes and memorials with the pre-existing regularity. The issue of the Joseon ambassador residing in Beijing, as requested by Joseon, has many obstacles, so this will not be allowed.”<sup>57</sup> In short, Qing permitted trade, but flatly rejected the conversion of diplomatic envoys to modern relations, as symbolized by the legation in Beijing. Taking Joseon’s request as a slight, Qing intended to completely deny any changes in the superior-subordinate relations between the two countries.

At any rate, it was not until October after the upheaval due to the Imo Military Revolt had been settled, and Eo Yunjung, Zhou Fu, and Ma Jianzhong prepared The Joseon-Qing Communication and Commerce Rules (中國, 朝鮮商民水陸貿易章程) [also known as the China-Korea Treaty of 1882]. As Zhou Fu and Ma Jianzhong explained, “A treaty with another country is bound to be made only after waiting for the counterpart country’s ratification, but the current treaty is specially allowed by the government,” indicating that the treaty was made under the unilateral leadership of Qing.<sup>58</sup> Thus, unlike a treaty, these Rules became effective with the approval of the Qing emperor after Li Hongzang sent a memorial to the emperor, and Joseon was forced to “comply with respect and treat it accordingly” (欽遵辦理).<sup>59</sup> In this process, Qing had effectively demonstrated the

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<sup>56</sup> “Chaoxian guowang zi qing zai yi kai kou’an jiaoyi bing pai shi zhu jing wen” [The King of Joseon Asks for trade at the Port and for a Dispatch of an Envoy to the Capital] (Guanxu 8th year, 4th month, 29th day), *Qingji Zhong-Ri-Han guanxi shiliao*, vol. 3: 16b; *Geundae Hanguk oegyomunseo* (2013), vol. 6: 556.

<sup>57</sup> “Junji chu ji li bu deng shang yu” [The Military Aircraft Department Sends a Letter to the Ministry of Gifts] (Guanxu 8th year, 4th month, 29th day), *Qingji Zhong-Ri-Han guanxi shiliao*, vol. 3: 18b; *Geundae Hanguk oegyomunseo* (2013), vol. 6: 558.

<sup>58</sup> “Zhao lu jin haiguan zhou dao houbo dao madao fu yu yun zhong jielue,” *Qingji Zhong-Ri-Han guanxi shiliao*, vol. 3: 984; *Geundae Hanguk oegyomunseo* (2013), vol. 6: 588.

<sup>59</sup> Originally “中國, 朝鮮商民水陸貿易章程” [The Joseon-Qing Communication and Commerce

reorganization of the traditional superior-tributary state relationship into a modern, documented “unequal” relationship, using the form of a modern treaty. The same can be seen in the deceptive phrasing of how Qing secured its privileges in written form by declaring that, “[the treaty] is meant to do a favor for its vassal state” in its preface to exclude other countries receiving most-favored-nation privileges.

The China-Korea Treaty illustrated the transitional nature of maintaining the traditional tribute system and allowing modern trade relations. The treaty was made based on an asymmetrical relation, as shown in Article 1, which states: “Qing permits the Superintendent of Beiyang to dispatch a commissioner of commercial affairs to Joseon’s open ports and overlook Chinese merchants, and the King of Joseon will dispatch his minister to stay in Tianjin, not Beijing.”<sup>60</sup> Thus, Joseon’s original attempt to actively address the system of international law became a yoke to restrict its sovereignty.<sup>61</sup> Although the treaty was markedly unequal in that it emphasized the one-sided and exceptional interests of Qing—there was no provision for the scrapping or ratification of the Treaty — Joseon found it hard to avoid Qing coercion. Qing regarded the treaty as regulations between the superior and the subordinate. The reactions of Western countries were never favorable either.<sup>62</sup>

Later, in October 1883, Li dispatched Chen Shutang (陳樹棠) as com-

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Rules] was only in Chinese, but later translated to Korean and English by the Chinese Customs House. Refer to Quan Hexiu, “Jogonggwangyecheje sok-ui geundaejeok tongsanggwangye: Jungguk-Joseon sang-minsuryukmuyeokjangjeong yeongu” [Modern Trade Relations under the Tributary System: A Study on the Marital and Land Trade Charters of Chinese and Korean Merchants], *Dongbuga Yeoksa Nonchong* 28 (2010).

<sup>60</sup> Zhang Cunwu, *Qingdai Zhong-Han guanxi lunwenji* [Collected Works on Qing-Joseon Relations] (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1987), 170.

<sup>61</sup> Kim Jong-Won, *Geunse dongasia gwangyesa yeongu: Jo-Cheong gyoseop-gwa dongasamgukgyoyeok-ul jungsim-uro* [A Study on the Diplomatic History of Modern East Asia: With a Focus on Joseon-Qing Relations and Trades among the Three East Asian Nations] (Seoul: Hyeon, 1999), 335-49; Kim Yong-Koo (2001), 101-12; Koo Sunhee “Joseon Junguksanmin suryukmuyeokjangjeong-gwa jo-cheong gwangye-ui byeonji” [Joseon and Chinese Merchants’ Trade Charters and Transformation of Joseon-Qing Relations], in *Hanguksa* (2003), vol. 38: 317-30; Koo Sunhee (2005), 161-66; Quan Hexiu (2000), 92-141.

<sup>62</sup> Shin Ki-Suk (1967), 87-95.

missioner of general commercial affairs in Joseon (總辦朝鮮各口交涉商務委員) to begin expanding the base for economic advancement, including steamer traffic and securing tax concessions. In the next two years, Chen Shutang significantly promoted the situation of Chinese merchants and the Chinese residents' community. This paved the way for Qing to gradually secure the upper hand in its competition with Japan in Joseon.<sup>63</sup> At the request of Joseon in late 1882, Li also recommended P.G. von Möllendorff (穆麟德) as his advisor for foreign affairs.<sup>64</sup>

In addition to serving as a foreign affairs advisor, Möllendorff established the Joseon Customs Service and took over the position of general tax official. In the early 1880s, the trend of Qing activism in Joseon policy continued to strengthen until the Sino-Japanese War in 1894, which led Qing to acknowledge that Joseon was an "independent state." The changes in the political situation within Joseon, such as the Imo Military Revolt (壬午軍亂) in 1882 and the Gapsin Coup (甲申政變) in 1884, served to magnify the trend further.

## 2) Imo Military Incident and Gapsin Coup

On July 23, 1882, the Imo Military Revolt began as an uprising due to the unpaid wages owed to the soldiers from the traditional military forces, the Muwiyeong (武衛營) and the Jangeoyeong (壯禦營). It led to rule by the Daewongun (King Gojong's father) and further expanded into a movement to isolate both the Min clan and the Japanese forces.<sup>65</sup> Li Shuchang of the Qing legation in Japan informed Zhang Shuesheng (張樹聲), the Acting Superintendent of Beiyang, of the revolt and asked for the dispatch of a warship. Zhang submitted a memorial expressing the need for a strong re-

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<sup>63</sup> Quan Hexiu (2007).

<sup>64</sup> Koh Byong-ik, "Mokindeok-ui gobing-gwa geu bacgyeong" [The Employment of Möllendorff and Its Background], *Donga gyoseopsa-ui yeongu* [The History of East Asian Relations] (Seoul: Seoul National University Publishing Council, 1970b); Lee Yur-bok, *West Goes East: Paul Georg von Möllendorff and Great Power Imperialism in late Yi Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988).

<sup>65</sup> Kim Yong-Koo (2001); Cho Seong-Yun, "Imogunran" [The Imo Military Revolt], in *Hanguksa* (2003), vol. 38.

sponse, fearing that “damage to the Chinese vassal state will result in Japan’s manipulative plot to deceive more people.”<sup>66</sup> The Zongli Yamen was in agreement with this view, and on August 9, Ding Ruchang (丁汝昌) and Ma Jianzhong (馬建忠) went to Incheon with three warships, followed by the Huai Army (淮軍) of Wu Changqing (吳長慶) with 63,000 troops. Xue Fucheng (薛福成), the officer of Jiangsu Province, firmly requested that the government should quickly deploy troops to subdue the Daewongun and adopt a hardline policy of directly intervening in Joseon’s internal affairs, including kidnapping him and taking him to China or dethroning the king.<sup>67</sup>

Although the Qing intervention and kidnapping of the Daewongun were arbitrary decisions made without prior consultation with Joseon (King Gojong), Qing succeeded in strengthening the Sadae system by helping King Gojong regain power through the swift dispatch of troops, the suppression of the military uprising, and overpowering Japan. The entry of Qing’s military forces into Joseon was unprecedented after the 17th century, and Wu Changqing’s army continued to be stationed in Seoul, where the Joseon Royal Army collapsed. In October 1883, Li Hongzhang called for the withdrawal of the troops in his memorial, but the Qing government ordered him formulate long-term measures, saying, “We should not take this issue lightly.”<sup>68</sup> In Joseon, the division within the reformist faction and its conflict with the conservatives deepened as Qing overturned the tradition of not interfering in Joseon’s domestic affairs at once. In China, some argued for adhering to the traditional Joseon policy, saying that

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<sup>66</sup> “Zongli geguo shiwu yamen zou chaoxian luan dang weigong riben shiguan bing jie wangong qing paibing yuanhu zhe” [The Prime Minister’s Office for National Affairs Reported that the Joseon’s Rebellious Party Besieged the Japanese Embassy, Robbed the Palace, and Requested Troops] (Guanxu 8th year, 6th month, 24th day), *Qingji Zhong-Ri-Han guanxi shiliao*, vol. 3: 31a; *Geundae Hanguk oegyomunseo* (2013), vol. 6: 96-97.

<sup>67</sup> Xue Fucheng, “Shang zhangshangshu lun yuanhu chaoxian jiyi shu” [Zhang Sushu’s Discussion on the Reason for Supporting and Protecting Joseon] (Guanxu 8th year, 6th month 29th day), from *Xue Fucheng xuanji* [Selected Writings of Xue Fucheng], Ding Fenglin ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 1987): 176-80; “Wang Xinzhong, Zhong ri jiawu zhanzheng zhi waijiao beijing” [The Diplomatic Background of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895] (Beijing: Guoli qinghua daxue yan jiu yuan, 1937), 43.

<sup>68</sup> *Guanxu Shilu* (Guanxu reign, 9th year, 9th month, xin choutiao 辛丑條).

the Chinese government would be “disgraced and ridiculed by the vassal state and other nations” for its unprecedented swift and violent approach, but the general trend was already established.<sup>69</sup>

The political situation of the Joseon Dynasty, which caused turmoil due to the conflict between the conservative and the reformist factions, played an essential role in the realignment of relations with Qing. Even during the Gapsin Coup and the Donghak Peasants Uprising, there were situations in which the Qing army intervened or dispatched troops. In other words, there was a strong sense of a movement toward autonomy and independence, but Joseon’s “dependence” on Qing also co-existed to a considerable degree. Therefore, the change in the relationship between the two countries in the 1880s cannot be defined by the unilateral intervention of Qing. This is well-illustrated by Joseon requesting aid from Li Hongzhang for domestic affairs and diplomacy after the Imo Military Revolt, as it reflected the traditional Hua-Yi relationship of mutual consideration and dependence.<sup>70</sup> To this extent, the hardline voices urging direct intervention, such as those of the Qingliu faction (清流派), were greatly strengthened in Qing. Even then, Li refused to directly intervene, citing concerns that Qing would be held responsible for incidents and that sudden policy changes would cause a backlash from Joseon. In the end, he reluctantly moved his policy in this direction. The fall of Prince Gong, who had presided over a policy of careful diplomacy as Royal Chancellor of the Zongli Yamen in March of the 10th year of the reign of Kangxi (1884) to avoid friction with the western powers, may have affected the change in Li’s direction.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Sheng Yu, “Hanlin yuan shi jiang sheng yu zou chaoxian zhi an jiang chen banli shiyi bing chen chuzhi zhi ce zhe” [The Imperial Court Attendant Sheng Yu played the Case of Joseon] (Guanxu reign, 8th year, 8th month, 22nd day), from *Qingdai Zhong-Chao quanxidangan shiliao* [Compilation of Historical Materials of Qing-Joseon Relations] (Beijing: Guojijwenhuachubangongsi, 1996): 74-75. Sheng-Yu was one of the members of the Aisin Gioro clan, the Manchurian imperial family.

<sup>70</sup> For more information on Joseon’s and Qing’s policy changes after the Imo Military Revolt, see Koo Sunhee (1999), 65-83.

<sup>71</sup> *Geundae Hanguk oegyomuseo*, vol. 6: 529-37; Tahohashi Kiyoshi (1940), vol. 2: 470-83; Lin Ming-Te, *Yu-anshikai yu chaoxian* [Yuan Shikai and Joseon] (Taipei: Academia Sinica Institute of Modern History, 1970), 84-104; Choi Hee-Jae (1997), 274-79; Kim Yong-Koo, *Imogunran-gwa*

It seems quite reasonable to see such a turnaround as a departure from, or a fundamental deterioration of, the traditional “suzerainty” rather than a strengthening.<sup>72</sup> The reformists (Gaehwa Party or Independence Party) in Joseon challenged this change. In particular, those who sought to secure independence rushed to achieve their goal by promoting a coup to fundamentally reform the Yangban aristocratic society, even by drawing in foreign powers.<sup>73</sup> Kim Okgyun and Pak Yung-hio conspired in early October to change their political situation amid the return of half of Wu Changqing’s troops in the wake of the Sino-French War, which began in August 1884. On December 4, the reformists caused a stir when Hong Yeong-sik, the chief-postmaster of the Joseon Post Office, held the inauguration ceremony for the Post Office. Koko Takezoe (竹添進一郎) of the Japanese Legation, who had returned to Seoul on October 30, changed his stance to a positive attitude and showed approval, so the Gaehwa faction received Japan’s help.<sup>74</sup>

The Gapsin Coup was a challenge to China’s revised policy as illustrated in the first principle of the platform of the new political party, stating that “[We] will bring about the Daewongun’s return to Joseon immediately and the ritual of tributes will be abolished after discussing it.”<sup>75</sup> On the afternoon of December 6, when the reform platform was announced, the

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*Gapsinjeongbyeon: sadaejilseo-ui byeonhyeong-gwa Hangukoegyosa* [Imo Military Revolt and Gapsin Coup: The Transformation of the Sadae Order and History of Korean Diplomacy] (Seoul: One, 2004), 85-100.

<sup>72</sup> Kim Key-Hiuk, *Geundae Han-Jung-II gwangyesa* [A History of Modern Korea-China-Japan Relations] (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2007), 154 & 173.

<sup>73</sup> Kim Jong-Hak, *Gaehwadang-ui giwon-gwa bimiloegyoo* [The Origin of the Enlightenment Party and Secret Diplomacy] (Seoul: Ilchokak, 2017).

<sup>74</sup> For the details on how Gapsin Coup was unfold, refer to Kim Yong-Koo (2001), Yoon Byung-Hee, “Gapsinjeongbyeon-ui baegyeong” [The Background of the Gapsin Coup] and “Gapsinjeongbyeon-ui judoser-yeok” [The Leading Force of the Gapsin Coup] in *Hanguksa* (2003), vol. 38; Shin Yong-Ha, “Gapsinjeong-byeon-ui jeongae” [The Development of Gapsin Coup] and “Gapsinjeongbyeon-ui yeonghyang-gwa uiui” [The Impact and Implications of Gapsin Coup], in *Hanguksa* (2003), vol. 38; Park Eun-Sook, *Gapsinjeongbyeon yeongu* [A Study on Gapsin Coup] (Goyang: Yeoksabipyeongsa, 2005); and Kim Jong-Hak (2017).

<sup>75</sup> Shin Yong-Ha (2003), 405-09; Kim Yong-Koo (2006), 515.

Qing army led by Yuan Shikai attacked Changdeok Palace, defeating the Joseon and Japanese armies and forcing King Gojong to move to the Qing camp. The reign of the Gaeхва Party ended on the 3rd day. This occurred because Yuan Shikai took bold action due to a letter from Shim Soon-taek, the vice premier of the Joseon government, and without Li Hongzhang's prior instructions.<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, Japan won the diplomatic victory of the Hanseong Treaty (漢城條約, [Japan-Korea Treaty of 1885], which was signed in January 1885, which stipulated compensation for Japan for the damage to its legation, despite its involvement in the Coup. In February 1885, Japan sent Ito Hirobumi (伊藤博文) to Tianjin to negotiate with Li Hongzhang, which successfully led to the withdrawal of Qing's Imperial Army in Seoul. The Tianjin Treaty (天津條約), concluded on April 18, 1885, stated that when one of the countries needs to send troops to Korea, they should first notify the other party and then withdraw immediately after the resolution of the incident. The treaty, which had not been approved by the Joseon government, authorized Japan's right to dispatch its military and threatened Qing's identity and status as a suzerain nation. With this privilege, Japan justified its war with Qing during the First Sino-Japanese War. However, after the Gapsin Coup and the Imo Military Revolt, Japan returned to its old position,<sup>77</sup> so it retreated to a policy of non-intervention for about ten years until the war with Qing. Although hardline opinions increased in Joseon thanks to the concealment of the truth behind the Gapsin Coup, the power of the reformists who had sided with Japan was weakened thereafter. As a result, Japan focused on acquiring and maintaining rights and expanding its military capabilities and urged the Qing government to step up its intervention in Joseon's affairs in order to combat Russia.

### 3) New Arrival of Yuan Shikai: Demand for 'Vassalage System'

Meanwhile, in order to avoid increased pressure from Qing after the Gapsin Coup, the Korean government turned to Russia for help. In the first se-

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<sup>76</sup> Lin Ming-Te (1970), 36-83.

<sup>77</sup> Kim Yong-Koo (2006), 523.

cret treaty of March 1885, King Gojong sent a secret envoy to Vladivostok and contacted Alexey de Speyer of the Russian Legation in Japan via diplomatic advisor Möllendorff to ask for a guarantee of neutrality, the territorial integrity of Joseon, and a military instructor.<sup>78</sup> Although Möllendorff played a leading role here, Russia avoided answering the request to protect Joseon, and subsequent negotiations failed. The previous explanation that Britain took over Geomun Island (April 1885), due to the confidential Korea-Russia agreement, has already been refuted. However, it was clear that Britain, which was at odds with Russia in various parts of the world, had taken over the island to keep Russia in check in East Asia.<sup>79</sup> Through the handling of the Geomun Island incident (the Li-Ladygensky Joint Agreement [October 1886]),<sup>80</sup> Li achieved diplomatic achievements in winning British support for Qing's Joseon policy.

However, Qing, which lost Vietnam due to its defeat in the Sino-French War, desperately needed to guard Joseon, which was its only remaining tributary state. In July 1885, Enomoto Takeaki (榎本武陽) of the Japanese Legation in China submitted “*A Proposal for Joseon Foreign Affairs Policy*” by Inoue Kaoru, Minister of Foreign Affairs, which proposed Qing's intervention in the human resources and administration of Joseon. Li accepted it and began to strengthen his control over Joseon in earnest.<sup>81</sup> Before that, Li recommended American diplomatic adviser Owen N. Denny and tax accountant H. F. Merrill instead of Möllendorff to reinforce practical control of Joseon's foreign affairs and finances. Merrill, who

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<sup>78</sup> For more reference to the secret treaty between Joseon and Russia, see Kim Jong-Heon, “Shpeyer-wa Russia-gongsa Weber-ui Joseon nae oegyohwaldong: 1884-1894” [Shpeyer's and Russian Consul Weber's Diplomatic Activities in Korea: 1884-1894], in *Geundae Han-Reo gwangye yeongu: Sugyo-wa gyoseop-ui sigi Han-Reo gwangye* [Modern Russo-Korean Relations: the Early Stage and the Negotiation Period], ed. Hong Woong-Ho et al. (Seoul: Sunin, 2008); Boris Dmitrievich Park, *Россия и Корея* [Russia and Korea], Min Kyoung-Hyoun trans. (Seoul: Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2010), 273-330.

<sup>79</sup> Kim Hyun-Soo, *Harry S. Parks: Daeyoungjeguk-ui Dongasia oegyojueok* [Harry S. Parks: Great Britain's Diplomacy in East Asia] (Seoul: Dankook University Press, 2011), 265-323.

<sup>80</sup> According to Boris Dmitrievich Park (2010, 320-24), there was no such “oral agreement.”

<sup>81</sup> Lin Ming-Te (1970), 84-113; Choi Hee-jae (1997), 281-83.

assumed the post in October 1885, was given the task of subjugating the Joseon Customs Service to Qing on the recommendation of Robert Hart, the Inspector-General of China's Imperial Maritime Customs Service. As a result, the Joseon Customs merged into the Chinese Customs.

In addition, a telegraph line (Uiju-Incheon) was constructed with loans from Qing to Joseon immediately after the Gapsin Coup. It was opened in August 1885 and it integrated Joseon into China's network, from Lushun to Fenghuangcheng (鳳凰城-旅順), which enabled the rapid deployment of the Imperial Chinese Navy and the army from Manchuria in an emergency. (Afterwards, the Seoul-Incheon line and Seoul-Busan and Wonsan lines were established, completed, and operated by Qing.) When a telegram was exchanged through this network, communication between the two countries became much faster than traditional messages, which took several months to be delivered. Furthermore, the presence of Qing's suzerainty in Seoul had grown incomparably larger than before, as its government officials, such as Chen Shuzheng (and later Yuan Shikai), were able to push Qing's positions onto the Joseon government even more strongly. Thus, although Qing withdrew its troops after the Tianjin Treaty and later gave up its support for the reinforcement and modernization of the Joseon army, Qing was able to change its "imperialist" policy over Joseon into a very efficient one. Securing various privileges for the operation of the Beiyang Fleet and steamships also changed the Yellow Sea into a Chinese domestic route. In response to Joseon's request to delay the withdrawal of General Wu Changqing's troops, Li Hongzhang replied confidentially that, "Even if the army is to be withdrawn for a while, [Qing] is able to suppress and keep solidarity by alternating vessels to Incheon." Also, "if there are any other incidents in the future, the army can be dispatched back to Joseon within a day, starting in the morning through steamers for its arrival in the evening, without a moment's delay," he could secure Joseon in this manner due to the increased efficiency of communication, transportation, and decision-making.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Li Hongzhang, "Fu chaoxian guowang" [To King of Joseon] (Guanxu reign, 11th year, 6th month,

In September 1885, Qing also sent the Daewongun, who had been in custody for three years in Baoding Prefecture (保定府), back to Korea and appointed Yuan Shikai (袁世凱), who had escorted him, as Imperial Head Official (駐紮朝鮮總理通商交涉事宜). Li's control-line policy was a major change at that very point. It was intended to significantly strengthen direct intervention in Joseon, and countering Joseon's move to "lead Russia to refuse Qing" (引俄拒清) while restraining the full power of the Min clan regime.<sup>83</sup> For this reason, Yuan Shikai, who was assigned the post on November 17, 1885, was tantamount to "supervisory nation" (監國) for active intervening in Joseon's domestic affairs as well as in trade and foreign affairs. Li's stance on Yuan Shikai was well-captured in his statement that, "Yuan is full of wisdom and stratagem, who can be contacted regularly for meetings with Joseon statesmen of the Foreign Ministry and can help restore or correct a situation when he sees a need."<sup>84</sup> Moreover, his letter to King Gojong on Yuan's inauguration stated, "[I] hope [Joseon] consults with him as often as possible, and it will be of great help to the Joseon Dynasty in the present conditions."<sup>85</sup> As a result, despite several tenacious appeals from the Joseon Court and requests for Yuan's recall to Qing due to his arrogant and insolent behavior, Li refused to replace him and further extended his term twice.

Unnerved by his power, the King Gojong and Min clan governments tried "leading Russia to refuse Qing," as stated earlier. Unfortunately, Yuan detected the move and took the lead in harsh counter-measures such as mentioning dethronement. "If there were 500 troops, I would for sure bring the king down and capture a group of petty people and send them to Tianjin for questioning."<sup>86</sup> After Yuan blocked the "movement" of the second

5th day), *Li Hongzhang quanji*, vol. 33, letter 5, 509.

<sup>83</sup> Tahohashi Kiyoshi (1940), vol. 2: 43-71.

<sup>84</sup> Li Hongzhang, "Mi bao yuanshikai pian" [Secret memo to Yuan Shikai] (Guanxu reign, 11th year, 9th month, 21st day), *Li Hongzhang quanji*, vol. 11, memorial 11: 203-04.

<sup>85</sup> Li Hongzhang, "Fu chaoxian guowang" [To King of Joseon] (Guanxu reign, 11th year, 9th month, 2nd day), *Li Hongzhang quanji*, vol. 33, letter 5, 569.

<sup>86</sup> Yuan Shikai, "Fu beiyang dachen lihongzhang mi dian" [Secret Telegraph to Minister of Beiyang

secret treaty with Russia on August 11, 1886, he presented the statement on “Joseon’s overall situation (朝鮮大局論)” on October 7, 1886. It coerced Joseon into admitting that, “The world knows that Joseon is a meager country with little competence and strength, so much so that it is unworthy of its sovereignty and cannot survive alone without the protection of a powerful nation.”<sup>87</sup> Yuan defined Joseon as a country that could only survive by relying absolutely on Qing and persistently claimed that Joseon was a “subjugated state” of Qing. He used “vassalage” (附庸) based on the definition in the *Elements of International Law* (i.e., a vassal state (封臣國), not a tributary state (進貢國)), while securing the best interests of Qing in Joseon.

His active pursuit of Qing’s interests since the 1880s had left a mark in vast areas, such as the reform of Joseon finances and currency, the introduction of loans for modern economic development, the establishment of banks, trade and transportation, intervention in the casting of money, and acquisition of fishing and mining concessions. These measures gave Qing a competitive edge in trade volume with Joseon almost to the point of overtaking Japan.<sup>88</sup> The Customs of Joseon, integrated into that of Qing, also provided a means to control the finances of Joseon. Even Merrill and other customs officers received salaries from China’s Maritime Customs, and Joseon Customs’ trade reports and statistics were incorporated into

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Li Hongzhang] (Guanxu reign, 12th year, 7th month, 6th day); “Zhi beiyang dachen lihongzhang dian” [Telegraph to Minister of Beiyang Li Hongzhang] (Guanxu reign, 12th year, 7th month, 21st day), *Yuan Shikai quanji* [The Collected Works of Yuan Shikai], Luo Baoshan, ed. (Keifeng: Henan University Press, 2013), vol. 1: 204 & 214.

<sup>87</sup> Yuan Shikai, “Chaoxian daju lun” [Joseon’s Overall Situation] (Guanxu reign, 12th year, 9th month, 10th day), *Yuan Shikai quanji*, vol. 1: 238-41; Kim Won-Mo (2003), 399-404.

<sup>88</sup> For more details on this, see Lin Ming-Te (1970); Kim Jeong-Ki, “Joseonjeongbu-ui Cheongchangwan doip” (1882-1894) [The Korean Government’s Loans from China (1882-1894)], *Hanguksaron* 3 (1976); Lew Young-Ick, “Yuan Shih-k’ai’s Residency and the Korean Enlightenment Movement (1885-1894),” *Journal of Korean Studies* 5 (1984); Robert R. Swartout, *Mandarins, gunboats, and power politics: Owen Nickerson Denny and the international rivalries in Korea* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1980), Shin Bok-Ryong and Kang Seok-Chan trans. (Seoul: Pyeongminsa, 1988); Koo Sunhee (1999); Lee, Yang-Ja, *Joseon-eseoui Yuan Shikai* [Yuan Shikai in Joseon] (Busan: Shinjiscowon, 2002); Kirk W. Larsen (2008).

those of China, confirming its “vassal” status abroad. Robert Hart had been very cooperative with Qing’s “vassalization” policy of Joseon.<sup>89</sup>

In addition, Yuan Shikai focused on Joseon’s international status and continuously reaffirmed that it was a “vassal state.” As Qing’s pressure grew stronger, King Gojong attempted to dispatch a diplomatic mission following the treaties of amity with other countries. In May 1887, Gojong dispatched Min Younghui as chief minister and Kim Gajin as a councilor to the Joseon Legation in Japan. Since this action did not provoke opposition from Qing, he appointed Park Jeongyang as ambassador to the U.S, on June 29. Concerned about the impact of the dispatch of a diplomatic mission to Western countries, Qing finally put forward the so-called “Vassal State Duty System” (屬邦分內體制) to prevent Joseon from achieving equal standing with Qing internationally. In October 1887, an imperial edict was issued stating, “All diplomatic envoys [of Joseon] sent to foreign countries must follow the vassalage system (屬邦體制) in correspondence with Chinese envoys.”<sup>90</sup> When Joseon tried to send Park Jeongyang to the U.S. despite Qing’s obstruction with the “Vassal State Duty System,”<sup>91</sup> Li offered the “Agreement on Three Steps (另約三端)” as a condition of acquiescence. The agreement stated the three steps. First, when the Joseon envoy arrives in each country, he shall inform the minister of the Qing Legation immediately and visit the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the respec-

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<sup>89</sup> Koh Byong-ik (1970b, c); Lin Ming-Te (1970); Lew Young-Ick (1984); Kim Jeong-Ki, “Cheong-ui Joseon-e daehan gunsajeongchack-gwa jongjugwon (1878-1894)” [Qing’s Military Policy on Joseon and Suzerainty (1878-1894)], in *Byeon Taeseop-baksa hoegapinyeomsahaknonchong* [The Collection of History Articles Commemorating the 60th Birthday of Dr. Byeon Taeseop] (Seoul: Samyoungsa, 1985); Lee Yang-Ja (2002); Koo Sunhee (1999, 2006); Kirk W. Larsen (2008).

<sup>90</sup> *Dezong Shilu* (Guangxu reign, 13th year, 9th month, Dingsitiao 丁巳條); Kim Soo-am, “Hanguk-ui geundae oegyojedo yeongu: oegyogwanseo-wa sangjusajeol-ul jungsim-uro” [A Study on Korea’s Modern Diplomatic Institution: Analysis on Joseon’s Diplomatic Framework and Permanent Envoy Mission in the 19th Century], PhD diss. (Seoul National University, 2000), 49-55.

<sup>91</sup> Li Hongzhang, Fu chaoxian guowang ziwen [A Supplement: Official Document of King of Joseon] (Guanxu reign, 13th year, 10th month, 20th day), *Li Hongzhang quanji*, vol. 12, memorial 12, 257.

tive country together with Qing minister. Second, when in public, the Joseon envoy must walk behind the Qing minister. Third, any important diplomatic matters would be first discussed with the Qing minister and then the Joseon envoy would follow Qing instructions.

However, despite the constant monitoring and interruptions of Yuan Shikai, Park, who departed for the U.S., ignored the “Three Steps” after his arrival there.<sup>92</sup> This clash led to persistent psychological warfare between Joseon and Qing over Qing’s reprimand and demand for Park’s return to Joseon. However, the attitude of resistance to the “vassalage system” was clearly revealed when Park, who was finally summoned, was reinstated without being reprimanded in the next few years. In the end, Li and Yuan failed to force Joseon to submit over this issue. Although Joseon’s persistent demand for the revision of the “vicious Three Steps” was not achieved, Qing also failed to implement the “vassalage system” in Joseon.<sup>93</sup> Thus, Qing might have temporarily succeeded in attaining the superficial submission of Joseon, but it could not overcome Joseon’s resistance against the plan without force.

As such, the document “Six Measures on Joseon Affairs” (朝鮮事宜六條辦法), written by the Zongli Yamen and Li Hongzhang in 1890, clearly shows Qing’s attempt to bind Joseon in vassalage since late 1880. This was not solely the decision of Yuan Shikai but the official policy of Qing. Prior to that, the Zongli Yamen’s report on the current situation of Joseon to the Emperor said, “The king of Joseon has a dark and weak character, is being cajoled by a group of petty people without knowing how to repay the kindness of Qing, and tries instead to rely on foreign aid.” It added, “Recently he has not even sent one letter to Qing, being hesitant, and as the symptoms of deep-rooted disease are getting worse, [he] is incapable of taking either tough measures or moderate methods.”<sup>94</sup> Thus, the Six Measures put

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<sup>92</sup> Horace N. Allen, *Alren-ui ilgi: Guhanmal gyeoktonggi bisa* [Allenal gyery: A Hidden History of Late Joseon], Kim Won-Mo, trans. & ed. (Seoul: Tanguk University Press, 1991), 150-51.

<sup>93</sup> Shin Ki-suk (1967), 231-64; Wang Mingxing (1998), 143-51; Koo Sunhee (1999), 157-73; Kim Won-Mo (2003), 614-51; Zhang Liheng (2012), 227-74.

<sup>94</sup> “Yi kuang deng zhe zun yi chaoxian shiyi liu tiao” [Yi Kuang and Others Discussed Six Articles

forward by the Zongli Yamen reflected these circumstances. Among them, the first two dealt with the expansion of the armed forces in the northeastern region and the construction of the railroad. The third measure addressed Qing's direct involvement in assigning and dispatching the tax officers of Joseon to comply with Qing's existing system. The fourth measure was to keep Joseon under the vassalage system and prevent its diplomatic mission from overstepping Qing authority. The fifth measure was to protect Joseon from foreign debts in order to maintain its profits, and the last measure was for Qing to frequently enlighten Joseon so as to keep it in position despite its growing political instability.<sup>95</sup>

It is hard to say that Qing's policy was an attempt to "colonize," but in fact, it is evident that Qing wanted to turn Joseon into a vassal state (or protectorate) under Qing control. Although there were some harsh acts of coercion by Yuan Shikai, these were not approved by Li Hongzhang or the Qing government and the official policy of Qing did not reflect this direction.<sup>96</sup> Qing policy toward Joseon,<sup>97</sup> which was implemented after the late 1880s, not only destroyed the existing *Sadae* system of friendly relations based on the special consideration and concessions between the two countries, but also resulted in an unfavorable position for Joseon under international law. In this regard, one view of Yuan, who was responsible for Qing imperialism in Joseon, is that "his act of provocation damaged the pride of the Joseon people and severely damaged Sino-Joseon relations by giving [Joseon] a

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 for Joseon Matters in Compliance with Imperial Orders] (Guanxu reign, 16th year, 2nd month, 10th day), *Qingdai Zhong-Chao quanxidangan shiliao*: 337-41.

<sup>95</sup> In the meantime, Empress Dowager Xi said that the first two were appropriate but the most earnest measures must be found in light of the current Joseon's situations in order to avoid delays. As for the next four measures, she thought that they were "almost an empty word" and ordered to find more appropriate methods (*Guanxu Shilo*, Guanxu 16th year, 2nd month, *Shinhae-jo*). This reveals that Qing's policy on Joseon was in name only with no substances except for the control by Yuan Shikai.

<sup>96</sup> Li Xizhu (2011).

<sup>97</sup> Kim Key-Hiuk and Kirk Larsen distinguished Qing's imperialism toward Joseon from the colonial imperialism of the West. Kim (1996) defined it as *Secondary Imperialism* while Larsen (2008) called it *Qing Imperialism*.

reason to separate from and maintain distance from Qing.”<sup>98</sup> Consequently, Joseon’s attempt to enter into the international order, regardless of the asymmetrical relationship between the “heavenly created superior state” and the “vassal state,” and its attempt at enacting a self-strengthening policy suffered greatly. Furthermore, the rise of multinational imperialism, which was introduced by Qing, added to this predicament. While Yuan blocked the advance of foreign countries by unilaterally pursuing Qing interests during the decade before the Sino-Japanese War, the failure of Qing’s Joseon policy with its defeat of the Sino-Japanese War jeopardized not only the Joseon Dynasty but also Qing itself.

## Transformation of the Joseon-Qing Relationship after the First Sino-Japanese War

### 1. The First Sino-Japanese War and Joseon-Qing Relationship

After the Gapsin Coup, there was no significant clash between Qing and Japan over the next ten years until the Donghak Peasant Uprising in 1894 triggered a new military confrontation between the two.<sup>99</sup> The Donghak rebels under the leadership of Jeon Bongjun revolted in Gobu, Jeolla-do in February 1894, and soon seized Jeonju, the capital city of Jeolla Province. On June 3, the Joseon government controlled by Min Youngjun, the head of the Min clan, requested that Qing send troops.<sup>100</sup> On June 4, Yuan Shikai informed Li Hongzhang of this request, after communicating with the act-

<sup>98</sup> Cai Jian, *Wan qing yu dahan diguo de waijiao guanxi* [The Diplomatic Relations between Late Qing and the Korean Empire (1897-1910)] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2008), 40.

<sup>99</sup> For more on the series of events that led to the First Sino-Japanese War, see Tahohashi Kiyoshi (1940), vol 2: 202-547; Shin Ki-Suk (1967), 295-376; Choi Deok-Soo, “Cheongiljeonjaeng-gwa Han-Il gwangye” [The First Sino-Japanese War and the Korean-Japanese Relations], in *Gangjwa Han-Il gwangyesa* [Lectures on the Diplomatic History of Korea and Japan], Cho Hang-Rae et al., ed., (Seoul: Hyeonumsa, 1994); Park Young-Jae, “Cheongiljeonjaeng” [The First Sino-Japanese War], in *Hanguksa* (2003), vol. 40: 15-46.

<sup>100</sup> Yi Taejin, *Gojongsidae-ui jaejomyeong* [Reexamining the King Gojong Era] (Paju: Thaehaksa, 2000).

ing Japanese minister to Korea, Fukashi Sugimura, and believed that Japan was only concerned about protecting its businessmen.<sup>101</sup> Some might say that Qing was virtually entrapped in the Japanese foreign policy scheme<sup>102</sup> but nonetheless, Li Hongzhang immediately ordered Shanx-Taiyuan General Nie Shicheng (聶士成) and Zhili Admiral Ye Zhichao (葉志超) to lead 2,000 infantrymen (plus an additional 500 later) and two battleships of the Beiyang Fleet (北洋艦隊), the modernized Qing fleet, to Asan and Incheon in Korea. Then Li notified Japan of the troop dispatch, complying with the Tianjin Treaty, and described Qing's military action as following its old tradition of protecting its tributary states.

Japan used the Donghak Uprising as a golden opportunity to send its military forces to Joseon. The intention is shown in the famous assertion by Mutsu Munemitsu (陸奥宗光), the Japanese Foreign Minister who oversaw the First Sino-Japanese War. At the start of his memoirs *Kenkenroku*, Mutsu said, "Anybody who is writing a history of Sino-China relations of that era must put the Donghak Uprising at the very beginning of its first chapter."<sup>103</sup> Although Japan had acted passively in East Asian diplomacy during the previous ten years, behind the scenes it had been fiercely strengthening its overseas expansionism<sup>104</sup> and deployed a much larger group of troops to Joseon using the excuse of the Uprising. On June 1, the Japanese government received Sugimura's telegram reporting on Joseon's request to Qing for military forces. On the very next day, Japan dismissed the Lower House and decided on the deployment of troops to Joseon, just

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<sup>101</sup> Chen Weifang, *Chaoxian wenti yu Jiawuzhanzheng* [The First Sino-Japanese War and the Problem of Joseon], Quan Hexiu, trans. (Seoul: Baeksan Jaryowon, 1999), 162-76.

<sup>102</sup> Kim Won-Mo, "Allen-ui Yuan Shikai-ron" [Allen's Theory on Yuan Shikai], in Gachwagi Han-Mi *gyoseop gwangyesa* [The US-Korean Relations in the Enlightenment Period of Korea] (Seoul: Dankook University Press, 2003c), 513.

<sup>103</sup> Mutsu Munemitsu, *Kenkenroku* [Records of Loyalty], Kim Seung-il, trans. (Seoul: Bumwoosa, 1993), 32.

<sup>104</sup> Choi Suk-Wan, "Ilbonjeongbu-ui dongasijilseo jaepyeonjeongchaek-gwa cheongi-ljeonjaeng" [The Japanese Government's Revamping Policy of the East Asian Regional Order and the First Sino-Japanese War], *Dong-yangisahakyongu* 65 (1999); Choi Deok-Soo, *Gaehang-gwa Jo-Il gwangye: Sanghoinsik-gwa jeongchaek* [Port Opening and Joseon-Japan Relations: Perceptions and Policies toward Each Other] (Seoul: Korea University Press, 2004).

one day before Joseon officially asked Qing to send troops.<sup>105</sup> Later, on June 5, Japan organized the Imperial General Headquarters and prepared for war with Qing. The mixed brigade of the 5th Division received their orders on June 5 and completed deployment of its 8,000 troops to Incheon and Seoul by June 28. Nearly half of the battleships were also dispatched to the coast of Joseon.<sup>106</sup>

When the troops and fleets of the two countries arrived in Joseon, however, they were no longer needed for their original purpose since the peasant rebels had already withdrawn from Jeonju after the conclusion of the Jeonju Peace Treaty on June 11. However, the domestic political situation did not allow the Japanese government to recall its troops back home. Hence, Japan provoked Qing instead under the pretext that the old Qing tradition of protecting its tributary state violated the Ganghwa Joseon-Japan Treaty of Amity, which stipulated that Joseon was an independent state. Japan also proposed an aggressive plan that Qing and Japan jointly reform the Joseon government. Prime Minister Ito Hirobumi, who had suppressed the aggressive overtures of Foreign Minister Mutsu and the military (including General Kawakami Soroku [川上操六], Deputy Chief of Staff in the Japanese military headquarters), decided on a showdown with Qing, spurred by domestic political trouble (the Japanese Lower House voted for the impeachment of his cabinet on May 31), public opinion, and upcoming elections.<sup>107</sup>

Qing refused Japan's proposal to jointly reform the Joseon government on June 21. Japan issued an ultimatum, refused to withdraw its troops, and declared the severance of diplomatic ties with Qing (i.e., the First Letter of Severance) on June 23. Japan demanded that the Joseon government pursue political reforms in consultation with Japan, which was obviously an attempt to interfere in Joseon's domestic affairs and infringe upon its sovereignty. The aggressive Japanese approach to Joseon was a

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<sup>105</sup> Park Young-Jae (2003), 44.

<sup>106</sup> Park Jong-Geun, *Nisshinsenso-ka no Chosen* [Korea under the First Sino-Japanese War], Park Young-Jae, trans. (Seoul: Ilchokak, 1989), 13-17.

<sup>107</sup> Takahashi Hidenao, *Ni~Tsu 清 Senso e no michi* [The Path to the First Sino-Japanese War] (Tokyo Sogensha, 1995).

complete surprise to Li Hongzhang, but he was forced to maintain a passive military stance because the western powers, including Britain and Russia, were intervening to prevent a war. Thus, Qing was unprepared for war while a thoroughly prepared Japan launched a preemptive attack on Qing troops.<sup>108</sup> Various external factors such as the Siberian railway that Russia began to build in 1891 and its subsequent advance to East Asia and Britain's approval of the amendment of the Anglo-Japan Treaty of Commerce and Navigation on July 16 also helped Japan's cause by greatly mitigating the burden of other countries' interference.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, Qing's request of arbitration to Russia and Britain and other third party interventions all failed to persuade Japan to withdraw its troops from Joseon.<sup>110</sup>

Japan sent the 2nd Letter of Severance to Qing on July 14 while preparing for war. Yuan Shikai left Seoul on July 19 after learning that there would be no withdrawal of forces from Joseon and his duties were taken up by Tang Shaoyi (唐紹儀), who would remain in Korea. When the Joseon government refused its reform proposal, Japan demanded the withdrawal of the Qing forces and the annulment of the trade treaty with Qing on July 20. As soon as the deadline had passed, two battalions of Japanese troops marched in on July 23, and took over Gyeongbokgung Palace. Thus, the First Sino-Japanese War began with Japan's attack on Joseon and instigating a war between Japan and Joseon. As both this war and the Russo-Japanese War were fought on the Korean peninsula with the goal of occupying Joseon, some people argue that those wars should be named "the First Joseon War" and "the Second Joseon War" and in fact, the First Sino-

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<sup>108</sup> Dai Dongyang, "Gabo Jungiljeongaeng gigan Cheong jeongbu-ui dae-Il jeongchaek" [Qing's Policy on Japan during the First Sino-Japanese War], in *Cheongiljeonjaengi Han-Jung-Il sanguk-ui sanghojeonryak* [The Strategies of Korea, China, and Japan during the First Sino-Japanese War], Northeast Asian History Foundation, ed. (Seoul: Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2009).

<sup>109</sup> Moriyama Shigenori, "Cheongiljeonjaeng-jung Ilbongunbu-ui dae-Han jeongryak" [Japanese Military Strategies on Korea during the First Sino-Japanese War], in *Cheongiljeonjaeng-ui jaejomyeong* [Reexamining the First Sino-Japanese War], Hallym University Institute of Asian Culture Studies, ed. (Chuncheon: Hallym University Press, 1996); Ian H. Nish, "Cheongiljeongaeng-gwa yeongguk" [The First Sino-Chinese War and Britain], *ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Tahohashi Kiyoshi (1940), vol. 2: 402-68; Park Young-Jae (2003), 64-68.

Japanese War was the Sino-Korean-Japanese War. Japan also considered their war with Qing to actually be a war with Joseon.<sup>111</sup> In reality, Japan needed to take control of the Joseon government on the pretext of reforming the domestic politics in order to have successful military logistics, transportation, and communications during its war with Qing.<sup>112</sup>

In the meantime, Japan instigated the war. On July 25, it attacked the Qing's North Sea Fleet on Pung Island (豊島) near Asan Bay and sank the ship *Gaosheng* (高陞號), which Qing had borrowed from Britain to transport troops, drowning nearly a thousand Qing soldiers.<sup>113</sup> Without comprehensive strategies nor a desire for war, Qing had been passively avoiding a military confrontation with Japan and was totally unprepared and thus its counter-measures were ineffective. Consequently, the momentum of the war belonged to Japan from the beginning. The Qing forces led by Ye Zhichao and Ye Zhicheng were crushed in the battle of Seonghwan (成歡) on July 29 and in the battle of Pyeongyang on September 15. On September 17, Qing relinquished its control of Joseon's seas to Japan after its defeat in the naval battle of the Yellow Sea, which began with the Japanese attack on the Beiyang Fleet at the mouth of the Amnok River. The war was even extended to Chinese territory, as the Japanese forces seized the entire Liaodong peninsula and marched further, threatening Beijing and Tianjin.

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<sup>111</sup> The works that investigate the First Sino-Japanese War as a Japanese invasion of Joseon include Hara Akira, *Cheong-Il Reo-Il jeonjaeng eottetge bolgeotinga: dongasia 50-nyeon jeonjaeng 1894-1945 dasi bogi* [How to Look at the First Sino-Japanese War and Russo-Japanese War: Reexamining the 50 years (1894-1945) of Wars in East Asia], Kim Yeonok trans. (Paju: Sallim, 2015); Kang Hyo-Suk, "Cheongiljeonjaenggi Ilbongun-ui Jose-onminjung tanap: Ilbongun-ui bihapbeopseong-ul jongsim-uro" [The Japanese Military Oppression of the Joseon People during the First Sino-Japanese War: With a Focus on the Illegality of the Japanese Military], in *Cheongiljeonjaenggi Han-Jung-Il sanguk-ui sanghojeonryak* [The Strategies of Korea, China, and Japan during the First Sino-Japanese War] (Seoul: Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2009).

<sup>112</sup> Choi Deok-Soo (1994); Moriyama Shigenori (1996); Wang Hyeon-Jong, "Joseon Gabogaehyeokjeonggwon-ui dae-Il jeongryak-gwa jongsok-ui simhwa" [The Gabo Reformist Government's Policy on Japan and Increasing Subjugation], in *Cheongiljeonjaenggi Han-Jung-Il sanguk-ui sanghojeonryak* (Seoul: Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2009).

<sup>113</sup> Qi Qizhang provides the most comprehensive analysis on the First Sino-Japanese War in *Jiawuzhanzhengshi* [The History of the Gabo War] (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2014).

Pushed in a tight corner, Qing was forced to begin peace negotiations with Japan. Accepting the suggestions of the Western arbitrators, Japan signed the Shimonoseki Treaty and ended the war against Qing. However, Russia, which had an eye on Manchuria and Joseon, intervened and pressed Japan along with France and Germany to return the Liaodong peninsula to China. Japan acceded to their demand and returned the Liaodong peninsula to Qing, thus receiving an additional 30 million ryang (approx. 1,125,000 kg) of gold instead, but this foreshadowed a new war in ten years (the Russo-Japanese War) over control of East Asia.

Accepting defeat, Li Hongzhang announced that China acknowledged Joseon's complete independence and promised to abolish all the conventions, such as tributes and ceremonies, which had infringed upon Joseon's independence. This announcement opened a new phase in the Qing-Joseon relationship. Now Qing was forced to view itself from the perspective of international law, as one of several sovereign states in the world equal to Joseon. As all the Qing government officials and staff had fled just before the war and all existing charters had been destroyed, the diplomatic ties between Qing and Joseon became severed, and thus the Sadae system between Qing and Joseon and the traditional Sinocentric order completely collapsed.

## 2. The Inauguration of the Korean Empire and Signing of the Korea-Qing Commerce Treaty

Although Japan expanded its control over the domestic governance of Joseon through the installation of a pro-Japanese cabinet, its authority was challenged by the three Western nations (i.e., Russia, Britain, and France). Taking advantage of this situation, Queen Min (or Queen Myeongseong) dismissed the pro-Japanese coalition cabinet led by Kim Hongjip and Pak Yung-hio and employed pro-Russian politicians, including Yi Beomjin and Yi Wanyong, providing Russia with an opportunity to expand its influence in Joseon again. Japan responded to the queen's defiance by having Consul Miura Goro, a former soldier, orchestrate her murder on October 8, 1895. The assassination of Queen Min (in the so-called Ulmi Incident) inflamed

anti-Japanese sentiment among Koreans and sparked militant uprisings in many parts of Korea. As a result, Japan ended up losing a great deal of its dominance in Korea. In light of the strong anti-Japanese uprisings and fearful for his own life, King Gojong fled his palace and situated himself in the Russian Legation for one year, which signaled the beginning of a pro-Russian period. In April 1897, Gojong returned to Deoksu Palace and changed the name of the country from Joseon to the Great Korean Empire (Daehan Jeguk) and adopted the era name of Gwangmu (光武). At the coronation ceremony, he crowned himself Emperor of Korea in an attempt to show the world that Korea was an independent nation ruled by an emperor equal to the emperor of Japan. In its first clause, the State Charter of the Great Korean Empire declared that Daehan Korea was a free, independent empire recognized by all the nations of the world.

Despite the initiation of the Gwangmu Reform, which was formed based on the principle of ‘combining old virtues with new ideas (舊本新參),’ even after the establishment of the Great Korean Empire, the relationship with Qing did not recover. It was difficult to normalize diplomatic ties when Qing was reluctant to form equal relations with one of its former “vassal” states.<sup>114</sup> However, since an increasing number of Chinese merchants returned to Joseon after the war, Qing appointed Tang Shaoyi as Chief Commercial officer to Joseon in October 1895 to take charge of the protection and commerce of Qing merchants. Since Joseon and Qing did not agree on any official treaty, Qing could not send a diplomat to Joseon.<sup>115</sup> When Tang arrived in Joseon in May 1896, the Joseon government was willing to sign a treaty with Qing, but he adamantly refused on account of King Gojong’s residing in the Russian Legation. The Zongli Yamen also declared a policy toward Joseon on June 17, 1896 by which Qing

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<sup>114</sup> Kwon Sok-Bong (1987); Cai Jian (2008), 52-104; Lee Eun-Ja, “Han-Jung geundaeogyo-ui silheom (1895-1905)” [The Korean and Chinese Experiment of Modern Diplomacy], in *Hangjunggwangye-ui yeoksa-wa hyeonsil: geundaeogyo, sanghoinsik* [The History and Reality of Sino-Korean Relations: Modern Diplomacy and Mutual Perceptions], Yoo Yong-Tae, ed. (Seoul: Hanul, 2013).

<sup>115</sup> Quan Hexiu (2013).

would allow commerce and install a consulate but would not sign a treaty, send an envoy, or submit diplomatic credentials and by which it would post a consul general in Korea to maintain the vassal system.<sup>116</sup>

Even after the Sadae system had collapsed and China itself had acknowledged the independence of Joseon,<sup>117</sup> the Qing government still could not shed its suzerain mentality. This mindset was revealed when Chinese authorities such as Prince Gong and Zhang Zhidong refused to acknowledge the independence of Joseon, despite the Shimonosheki Treaty, which prevented Qing from signing any treaty with Joseon as an equal partner or establishing an equal system. However, despite Qing's aversion to the diplomacy of forced expediency, Qing was forced by Russia and Japan into signing a treaty with Korea, but even then Qing refused to deliver diplomatic credentials or station an envoy in Joseon. Finally, on June 18, 1898, Emperor Guangxu found a way to re-establish diplomatic ties by agreeing to send diplomatic credentials and envoys to Korea.<sup>118</sup> One week later, Emperor Guangxu proclaimed the Definite National Policy [Míngdìng Guó Shì] and began the Musul Reform.

While there was still disagreement on issues such as the number of envoys and the content in the credentials, Qing's new ambassador to Korea, Xu Shoupeng (徐壽朋), was appointed on August 13, 1898, and he submitted his credentials directly to Emperor Gojong on February 1, 1899. After about six months of negotiation, the two countries signed the Korean-Qing Commerce Treaty on September 11, 1899, which normalized dip-

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<sup>116</sup> “Zongli geguo shiwu yamen zhu yu chou chaoxian tongshang banfa yi cun tizhi zhe” [The Prime Minister's Office of National Affairs Formulated Preliminary Plans to Handle Sino-Korean Trade Relations and to Preserve the Imperial System] (Guangxu reign, 22nd year, 6th month, 17th day), *Qing Guangxu Chao-Zhong-Ri jiaoshe shiliao* [Historical Document on Negotiations among Korea, China and Japan during Emperor Guang-xu of the Qing Dynasty], vol. 49: 30a-31a.

<sup>117</sup> Karl W. Larsen (2008), 2248-49.

<sup>118</sup> Mao Haijian, “Wuxu bianfa qijian guangxu di duiwai guannian de tiaoshi” [Emperor Guangxu's Adapted Ideas about International Relations during the Hundred Days' Reform of 1898], *Wuxu bianfa shi shi kao* [A Research on the History of the Hundred Days' Reform of 1898] (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 2005).

lomatic relations after having been severed for nearly five years.<sup>119</sup> Although a new type of diplomatic relationship as equal partners was formed, it did not last long. At the beginning of the 20th century, many global upheavals including the Boxer Rebellion, the Russo-Japanese War, and the acceleration of Japan's invasion of Korea soon led the two countries to sever their diplomatic ties again. The failure of China's policy toward Joseon, as manifested by its defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War, led to the near-simultaneous collapse of the two countries.

## Conclusion

China and Joseon visibly experienced numerous ups and downs, conflicts, and frictions as their relations were transformed into a modern mutual relationship in the late 19th century. Therefore, concepts such as Yu Giljun's 'dual system (兩截體制)'<sup>120</sup> or Quan He-Xiu's 'one diplomacy, two systems (一個外交 兩種體制)'<sup>121</sup> are critical to understanding the intricate diplomatic relations between Qing and Joseon. The two countries could not help but experience conflict and friction over various issues since their goals and directions had changed from the 18th to the mid-19th centuries.

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<sup>119</sup> Wang Mingxing (1998); Cai Jian (2008); Lee Eun-Ja (2013); Lee Young-Ok, "Cheongjo-wa Joseon (Daehan-jeguk)-ui oegyogwangye (1895-1910)" [Diplomatic Relations between Qing and Joseon (the Great Korean Empire), 1895-1910], *Chungkukhakpo* 50 (2004); \_\_\_\_\_, "Jogongjilseo-ui bonggoe-wa cheong-jo (daehanjeguk) gwangye-ui byeonhwa, 1895-1910" [The Collapse of the Tributary Order and Transformation of the Qing-Joseon (the Great Korean Empire) Relationship], in *Hanjung oegyogwangye-wa Jogongchaekbong* [The Korean Chinese Diplomatic Relationship and Tributary Royal Ordaining System], Koguryo Research Foundation, ed. (Seoul: Koguryo Research Foundation, 2005); Eun Jeong-Tae, "1899-nyeon Han-Cheong tongsangjoyak-chegyeol-gwa Daehanjeguk" [The Conclusion of the Sino-Korean Trade Treaty in 1899 and the Great Korean Empire], *Yoksa Hakbo* 186 (2005); \_\_\_\_\_, "Cheongiljeonjaeng jeonhu Joseon-ui daecheongjeongchaek-gwa jocheonggwangye-ui byeonhwa" [Joseon's Policy on Qing and the Transformation of Joseon-Qing Relationship during the First Sino-Japanese War], in *Cheongiljeonjaengi Han-Jung-Il sanguk-ui sanghojeonryak* (Seoul: Northeast Asian Hisotry Foundaiton, 2009).

<sup>120</sup> Jung Yong-Hwa, *Munmyeong-ui jeongchisasang: Yu Giljun-gwa geundae Hanguk* [The Political Philosophy of Civilization: Yu Giljun and Modern Korea] (Seoul: Moonji Publishing, 2004).

<sup>121</sup> Quan Hexiu (2013).

This situation exemplifies their drastically changed relationship from the previous period. In particular, Qing began to be aggressively involved in Joseon affairs immediately after Joseon transitioned to an open foreign policy and experienced the Imo Soldiers' Mutiny and Gapsin Coup, Joseon, which used to greatly rely on Qing's cooperation, attempted to assert its independence and sovereignty with help from Japan and Russia or sought to exercise independent diplomacy by sending envoys to western countries. It is apparent that Qing consistently suppressed Joseon's moves toward independence and enforced a 'vassalization' or 'imperialist' policy on Joseon with the 'vassalage system' or the 'Agreement on Three Steps.'

At any rate, the first Sino-Japanese War determined the winner of the competition over Joseon, and as a result, Joseon was able to achieve "independence" from Qing. Furthermore, Joseon changed its name to the Great Korean Empire and tried to create a diplomatic relationship with Qing as an equal sovereign state. However, because of Qing's attachment to the previous Sinocentric order and refusal to establish equal diplomatic relations with Joseon, the normalization of their diplomatic relations was delayed until 1899, when the Korea-Qing Commerce Treaty was finalized. The treaty signed at the end of the 19th century signaled a new era between the two nations, but they had little time to build a new equal relationship as modern states.

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