

Electricity, Water, and Mining Concessions Granted to Collbran & Bostwick Co. during the Russo-Japanese War*

Heeyeon Kim

National Institute of Korean History

Introduction

In 1884, Horace N. Allen (1858-1932) arrived in the country. He had been stationed in Korea for 20 years. He was the first resident Protestant missionary in Korea and the founder of Chejungwŏn Hospital. However, he spent most of his time in Korea as a diplomat representing the United States. In 1890, he was appointed Secretary of the American Legation in Korea, and he served in that capacity until his departure in 1905. He has been recognized for his contributions to Korea's quest for independence. However, he also faced criticism for his role in Korea relinquishing its lucrative mining rights. Since the early 1880s he had kept his eyes on various lucrative business. He strove to make sure that American interests were represented in the Seoul-Chemulp'o Railway concession, the Unsan Gold Mine mining concession, and electricity and water concession. Among them, this paper focuses on three interests of electricity, water, and mining that American businessmen acquired during his final years in office and during the Russo-Japanese War.

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In May 1902, Allen criticized the current state of Korea and its future direction:

For nearly five years the Koreans have had no overlord; a condition that has not happened before. ... The Koreans are very far from ready for it [self-government] as yet, and the present chaotic state will sooner or later end in interference from the outside, which will probably give to Korea the guiding hand she so greatly needs.¹

However, in February 1905, at the height of the Russo-Japanese War, his tone had changed: “I never enjoyed Korea as I have the past winter, the house having much to do with it. ... My relations with the Japanese and Koreans are all that I could ask, and American interests are promising.”² This abrupt shift was due to the acquisition of three concessions by the US-based company Collbran & Bostwick Co., or C&B. C&B, acting as a subcontractor for the Seoul Electric Company (漢城電氣會社), undertook a range of projects involving streetcars, lighting, waterworks, and communications. Yi Ch’ae-yŏn (1861-1900) had served as the charge d’affaires of the Korean legation in Washington D.C. He was also a prominent figure of the so-called “pro-American” Koreans and a member of the Independent Club. In 1896, he assumed the role of governor of Seoul, akin to the mayor of modern Seoul, where he facilitated numerous initiatives spearheaded by American entrepreneurs.

Allen was proud of the modern transformation of Seoul as a result of his various projects.³ However, following Yi’s premature demise in

¹ Horace N. Allen to John Hay, May 31, 1902, *diplomatic despatch*, no.470 in *Despatches from U.S. Ministers to Korea, 1883-1905 (M134)* (Unless otherwise noted, ‘diplomatic despatch, no. #’ in this article refers to materials in this US State Department records from The National Archives holding in Washington, D.C.); Scott S. Burnett, ed., *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States*, vol. 3: The Period of Diminishing Influence, 1896-1905 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), 171-172, unless otherwise noted as “Korean-American Relations (KAR).”

² Horace N. Allen to Jennie A. Everett, February 6, 1905, Allen Papers.

³ “We came in last night after dark and arrived at the station amid a crowd of people, with a great

1900, tensions arose between Americans, including Allen, and the aide to King Kojong (r. 1863-1907)⁴ Yi Yongik (1854-1907), encompassing a range of issues. This ultimately led to a disagreement concerning a debt owed by Seoul Electric Company to C&B. The dispute began in 1902 when the Korean government refused to reimburse C&B for services rendered on behalf of the Seoul Electric Company.

After the Russo-Japanese War, Kojong awarded electricity, water, and mining concessions to C&B.⁵ However, the award was kept secret at the time. Shrouded in secrecy, the C&B acquisition remained undisclosed for a significant period before exploding into public awareness. A web of intrigues started to surround the grant of concessions, with questions swirling concerning the signing date, the circumstances of its execution, and the potentially undisclosed connections between Allen and C&B.

There has been something of a dearth of research on the three concessions obtained by the United States in the latter years of Allen's time in Korea.⁶ Prior research has relied on official sources such as *Desp-*

confusion and whistles blowing, electric cars and lights snapping, a great torch light funeral procession going by and confusion everywhere, with porters trying to get our things away from our servants, and the general hubbub of a metropolitan R.[railroad] Station. How utterly strange it seemed. I could not realize that it was Korea. The old slow Korea that we used to know." Horace N. Allen to Harry & Maurice Allen, October 14, 1900, Allen Papers.

⁴ In October 1897, Kojong established the Korean Empire and proclaimed himself emperor. As a result, his title changed from King Kojong to Emperor Kojong. However, for the sake of brevity, I will simply refer to him as Kojong throughout the article.

⁵ C&B, a contracting firm, undertook various projects for Seoul Electric Co. The company required Koreans to settle the accrued expenses, though full payment had not yet been made due to disputed claims.

⁶ Lee Bae Yong, 1971, "Guhanmal Miguk ui Unsan Geumgwang Chaegulgwan hwoekdeuk e daehayeo," *Yoksa hakbo* 50/51: 43-109; _____, 1989, *A Study on the History of Mining Pillage in Modern Korea*, Seoul: Ichogak; No In-hwa, 1980, "A Study on the Seoul Electric Company during the Korean Empire and Aspects of U.S. Concession Interests," *The History Review of Ewha Woman's University* 17; Kim Jae-ho, 1997, "Water Peddlers and Seoul's Waterworks: The Problem of 'Measurement' and Institutional Change," *Review of Economic History* 23; Yang Sang Hyun, 1998, "Management and Operation of the Mines by the Office of Royal Properties during the Korean Empire," *Quarterly Review of Korean History* 27; _____, 2004, "Economic Plunder of the Mines of the Office of Royal Properties by the Imperial Japanese," *The Journal of the Ulsan Historical Society* 11; Kang Chang-seok, 1999, "Mining in Korea before the Establishment of the Residency-General," *Pusan Sahak* 37: 93-125; Nagai (Matsuzaki) Yuko, 2001, "Colonization

atches from U.S. Ministers to Korea, 1883-1905 (M134) and records from the Legation of Japan in Korea. However, these studies have not delved into the role played by Allen or the specific terms of the agreements. Although *Despatches from U.S. Ministers to Korea, 1883-1905 (M134)* includes official records of Allen's reports to his government, they are subject to certain constraints. Diplomats frequently concealed or downplayed their role in real events in order to adhere to Diplomatic Instruction No. 64,⁷ which prohibited diplomats from meddling in the internal affairs of their host countries. This was particularly evident in U.S.-Korean negotiations regarding concessions. As such, it is necessary to look at the entirety of Allen's tenure as a mediator between Korea and the United States and to compare his activities with previous negotiations. Furthermore, through a comprehensive analysis of the accusations made against him during this period, it is possible to get a sense of the realities underlying the relationship between Korea and the U.S. Allen sought to secure American interests in Korea, at times charting an independent course unbeknownst to his fellow Americans. This article examines some of the accusations made against him by Leigh S. J. Hunt (1855-1933) and Raymond E. L. Krumm (1873-1948) regarding his ties with C&B.

This paper uses *Diplomatic Dispatches from United States Ministers*

of Korea and Collbran & Bostwick's Concession", PhD diss., University of Nagoya; Oh Jin Seok, 2006, "The Development of the Electricity Industry and the Kyongseong Electric Co. in Modern Korea", PhD diss., Yonsei University; _____, 2021, *A History of Korea's Modern Electric Power Industry, 1898-1961*, Seoul: Purūn Yōksa; Choi In-Young, 2014, "The Meaning & Alteration Patterns of Tram Traffic in the Seoul Area (1899-1968)", PhD diss., University of Seoul; Kim Heeyeon, 2019, "The Seoul Waterworks Concession: The Activities of Horace N. Allen," *Journal of Korean Modern and Contemporary History* 88.

⁷ "The attention of Diplomatic Agents is especially called to the provision of law by which they are forbidden to correspond in regard to the public affairs of any foreign government or in regard to any matter which may be a subject of official correspondence or discussion with the Government to which they are accredited, with any newspaper or other periodical, or with any person other than the proper officer of the United States. It is forbidden to Diplomatic Agents abroad to participate in any manner in the political concern of the country of their residence; and they are directed especially to refrain from public expression of opinions upon local, political, or other questions arising within their jurisdiction." Department of State, *Personal Instructions to the Diplomatic Agents of the United States in Foreign Countries* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1885), 14-15.

to Korea⁸ and the *Horace Newton Allen Papers*⁹ as its source material. It also investigates other pertinent documents and the accusations leveled against Allen at the time. It further attempts to contextualize these analyses by cross-referencing a variety of sources including the *Diplomatic Documents of Germany*.¹⁰ I will begin by looking at the concessions granted to the Americans and the multitude of allegations made regarding the award of the electricity, water, and mining concessions to C&B.

Kojong's Grant of Triple Concession

On January 21, 1904, the Korean government issued a proclamation of neutrality in anticipation of the impending conflict between Russia and Japan.¹¹ Five nations—Britain, the United States, Germany, Denmark, and Italy—responded positively to the declaration of neutrality. Kojong interpreted their responses as an assurance of non-aggression on Korean territory. However, this was not the case. The five countries were simply acknowledging Korea's declaration of neutrality, something which implied no commitment to non-aggression.¹² Subsequently, on February 6, Japanese forces captured Chinhae Bay and took control of the Korean telegraph station. Two days later, they launched an unexpected assault on

⁸ *Despatches from U.S. Ministers to Korea, 1883-1905 (M134)*, US State Department records from The National Archives holdings in Washington, DC. With regard to reference in the footnotes, 'the State Department's instruction to Allen' will be labeled 'diplomatic instruction no.' and 'Allen's report to the State Department' will be labeled 'diplomatic despatch, no.'

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¹⁰ Korea University German Studies Institute, ed., 2019-2021, *Diplomatic Documents of Germany: Korea (1874-1910)*, 15 vols. Seoul: Pogosa.

¹¹ Suh Younghee, 2003, *Daehan jeguk jeongchisa yeongu*, Seoul: Seoul Taehakkyo Ch'ulp'anbu, 179-88; Ku Daeyeol, 2005, "A Damocles Sword? - Korean Responses to the Russo-Japanese War," *Korean Political Science Review* 39, no. 4: 53-72; Boris Dmitrievich Pak, 2010, *Reosia wa Han'guk*, trans. Min Kyoung Hyun, Seoul: Dongbuga Yöksa Chaedan, 664-74.

¹² Horace N. Allen to John Hay, January 30, 1904, diplomatic despatch, no. 653; Burnett, *Korean-American Relations*, vol. 3, 116; Jordan to the Marquess of Lansdowne, telegram, no. 23, January 30, 1904, The National Archives (TNA), 405/146; Jordan to the Marquess of Lansdowne, telegram, no. 26, February 1, 1904, confidential, Then National Archives (TNA), FO 405/147.

Lushun. Then, on February 9, they attacked the Russian cruiser *Varyag* and the gunboat *Korietz* at Chemulp'o (Inch'ŏn). Finally, on the February 11, the Russo-Japanese conflict was formally declared.¹³

On the same day, Kojong dispatched Yi Hakkyun (?-?) and Hyŏn Sanggŏn (1875-1926) to the residence of Henry Collbran, the representative of C&B, with a plea for reconciliation between Russia and Japan.¹⁴ Then, Kojong gave three concessions to C&B.¹⁵ The three concessions were outlined as follows.

Electricity

Collbran and Bostwick agree to commence measures for the incorporation, under the laws of America, of a Company to be known as the AMERICAN-KOREAN ELECTRIC COMPANY. This Company shall possess a capitalization of not less than Yen 1,500,000, or its equivalent in American money. One half of the Capital shares of the American-Korean Electric Company Company shall be delivered to His Majesty, the Emperor of Korea, and the other half shall belong to Collbran and Bostwick. When the American-Korean Electric Company is organized, Collbran and Bostwick will immediately transfer to that Company all of the railway, lighting and telephone plant, trucks, poles, wires, machinery, equipment and buildings, including the main office building at Chong No, but not including any supplies that may be on hand. [Signed February 19, 1904]

Water

The exclusive rights and privileges of building a system of public

¹³ Wada Haruki, 2019, *The Russo-Japanese War: the Origin and Outbreak*, vol. 2, trans. Lee Woong Hyeon, Seoul: Hangilsa, 1098-1143.

¹⁴ Henry Collbran, May 24, 1905, "Remarks in Regard to Opposition Experienced in Connection with Mining Concession Dated Feb. 15th 1904," Allen Papers. While the Allen Documents DB at the Academy of Korean Studies lists the date of the document as February 15, 1904, the date of Collbran's signature suggests that it was written on May 24, 1905.

¹⁵ Nagai (Matsuzaki) Yuko, 2001, "Colonization of Korea and Collbran & Bostwick's Concession," PhD dissertation, University of Nagoya, 88-90.

waterworks for the City of Seoul given to the Americans, Collbran and Bostwick, in the agreement made between them and the Governor of the City, dated December 26th, 1898, confirmed in a second agreement dated July 14th, 1900, and again confirmed by the authority dated September 29th, 1900, bearing the seal of the Home Department of the Korean Government is hereby further approved and renewed. In addition to possessing these rights and privileges, Collbran and Bostwick or their assigns are now hereby given a full and exclusive franchise whereby they are empowered to build, own and operate a system of public works throughout all the districts contained in the City of Seoul and outlying towns and to supply the Imperial Palace and all Government buildings and offices including military barracks and headquarters with water. [Signed December 9, 1903]

Mining

Collbran and Bostwick shall own and operate a mining concession, in a District to be selected by them, and which is to be incorporated into an American-Korean Electric Company. When the Company is incorporated, His Majesty the Emperor of Korea will subscribe one half of the capitalization and receive one half of the shares and profits, but in the event of His Majesty not wishing to subscribe the half capital ... then the capitalization shall be subscribed by Collbran and Bostwick or their representatives, who will then own all the share, but they shall pay to the Korean Government twenty-five percent (25%) of the profits. ... Collbran and Bostwick shall be permitted to choose one from among the Districts reserved for Imperial Korean Department of Household. Collbran and Bostwick or their assigns, must inform the imperial Korean Department of Household ... of the place¹⁶ selected as early as many be

¹⁶ In June 1898, the Korean government officially designated mines as being under the purview of the Department of Household (宮內府). Preceding this measure, in January 1898, the Korean government implemented a ban on foreigners engaging in contracts with domestic railroads and mines. Subsequently, in June of the same year, ownership of the primary mines across 43 counties was transferred to the department. Foreigners were not allowed to mine these resources. Further changes occurred in 1901 when an additional eight mines, originally under the jurisdiction of the

convenient to them, but not later than two years from the date or restoration of Peace between the Governments of Russia and Japan. [Signed February 15, 1904].¹⁷

These concessions were the last the United States was to receive. A new protocol between Korea and Japan, signed on February 23, 1904, barred Korea from entering into any further concessions or agreements with foreign entities without Japan's explicit consent.¹⁸ However, the electricity and mining concessions facilitated the establishment of the American-Korean Electric Company and the American Korean Mining Company, with Korea contributing fifty percent of the capital.¹⁹ The con-

Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, were also transferred to the department.

¹⁷ For further information on the electricity concession, see Horace N. Allen to John Hay, March 8, 1904, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 693; Allen Papers, R2-B3-05-001; Burnett, *Korean-American Relations*, vol. 3, 238-239. For the water concession, see Horace N. Allen to John Hay, June 10, 1904, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 755; "Seoul Water Works," Allen Papers, R2-B3-17-001. For the mining concession, see Horace N. Allen to John Hay, March 30, 1905, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 891; Contract for the mining concession 奎23203, Seoul: Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies.

¹⁸ *Kojong sillok*, 8th year of Kwangmu [1904], February 23; Choi Deok-soo et al., 2010, *Choyak ūron han'guk kŭndaesa*, Paju: Yöllin ch'aektŭl, 572.

¹⁹ Electricity Concession:

6. Upon the payment of the Yen 350,000 Collbran and Bostwick agree to commence measures at once for the incorporation, under the laws of America, of a Company to be known as the American-Korean Electric Company.

8. One half of the Capital shares of the American Korean Electric Company shall be delivered to His Majesty, The Emperor of Korea, and the other half shall belong to Collbran and Bostwick. Mining Concession:

4. Collbran and Bostwick shall at any time after this date incorporate an American Company which shall own this concession and which shall develop the district selected.

5. This Company shall be called the American Korean Mining Company.

6. The Imperial Korean Household Department will be informed through the United States Legation when this Company is incorporated, and shall if it desires to do so subscribe one-half of the capitalization and receive one-half of the shares issued, and one-half of the profits. The Imperial Korean Household Department shall enjoy this privilege for a period of one hundred (100) days from the date it is informed of the incorporation of the company by the official representative of the United States Government at Seoul, Korea. The capitalization of the Company shall be about one million United States Gold dollars, fully paid up, but this capitalization may be increased at such future dates as may be deemed advisable. For further information on the electricity concession, see Horace N. Allen to John Hay, diplomatic despatch, no. 693, March 8, 1904; Allen Pa-

cept of developing the palace mines through a joint U.S.-Korean company was set out in Hunt's mining plan.²⁰ Korea's share in the company comprised a limited partnership structured under U.S. law, an attempt to safeguard at least half of the mining rights through an American entity. However, Article 18 of the mining rights agreement stated the following:

Should the Imperial Korean Household Department at any time during the life of this concession give mining concessions or make agreements or contracts with any other party or parties which possess greater benefits to the receiver of the concession than are given in this concession, or which provides for a payment less than twenty-five (25%) percent of the profits to the Imperial Korean Household Department, then and in that event, similar benefits shall be given to the owners of this concession.²¹

This provision enabled C&B to reap the benefits of any future mining agreements and potentially reduce its payment to the Household Department of Korea. As with the "most favored nation" clause, which functioned as a poison pill within A Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce and Navigation (Shufeldt Treaty in 1882), this provision was more of a "most favored company" clause. The agreement also gave the Americans the right to renegotiate the concession if mining operations proved unprofitable within 10 years of initiating operations (Article 13). Considering the Germans had on multiple occasions sought to renegotiate their gold concession due to unprofitable operations, this was a significant

pers, R2-B3-05-001.

²⁰ Leigh S. J. Hunt was an American who acquired the Unsan gold mining concession from James R. Morse in 1897 and operated the Oriental Joint Mining Company. Hunt's proposal entailed lending 5,000,000 won to the Korean government at an annual interest rate of 3.5%. They would then establish a company with both American and Korean stakeholders, tasked with the development of any or all mines under the Department of Household for a duration of 50 years. However, the plan ultimately collapsed. Horace N. Allen to John Hay, November 18, 1899, confidential, Enclosure 3: "Horace N. Allen to E. Stein" (October 30, 1899), *diplomatic despatch*, no. 214.

²¹ Horace N. Allen to John Hay, March 30, 1905, Enclosure 3: "American Concession" (February 15, 1904), *diplomatic despatch*, no. 891.

gesture.²² The Americans received favorable conditions in a number of other areas, including gemstones, petroleum, and other oils, as well as gold, silver, copper, and other minerals (Article 16), and the authority to transfer cemeteries, located in these areas, following consultation with the pertinent authorities (Article 24).

The contract for the water-works concession in Seoul was even more biased toward the Americans. C&B secured the rights to build waterworks through two agreements with the governor of Seoul, Yi Ch'aeyŏn, in 1898 and 1900. In contrast to the electricity and mining concession contracts, the water contract did not mandate a joint venture with the Korean government. As a result, C&B had exclusive control over both the business operations and jurisdiction of the company. The agreement included provisions for complete exemption from all taxation, including taxation on revenue generated from water supply. The concession also had a maximum length of 49 years, beginning from the date of the first water supply rather than the date on which the contract was signed. The contract also gave the company a monopoly on water sales, including water for electricity generation. In essence, it proved to be even more disadvantageous to Korea than the existing railroad and mining concessions.

It seems clear that Kojong granted C&B such an exceptional arrangement in anticipation of U.S. support.²³ This view is supported by the manner in which the contract was signed. According to Collbran, Kojong sent Yi Hakkyun and Hyŏn Sanggŏn to his residence to sign the contract under utmost secrecy, and the signing took place clandestinely, circumventing the Foreign Office of Korea, the recognized official diplomatic body of Korea. In addition, Kojong paid the Americans the debt

²² Horace N. Allen to Leigh S. J. Hunt, December 2, 1899, Allen Papers. The German concession in Danghyeon gold mine in Gangwon Province was not successful. After spending 300,000-400,000 taels, the Germans failed to meet their obligations to pay any government taxes. "Miscellaneous," *Chekuk Sinnum* [Imperial Newspaper], May 23, 1900; "Miscellaneous," June 6, 1900, *Chekuk Sinnum*; "Efforts and Gains," *Chekuk Sinnum*, May 1, 1902.

²³ Fred H. Harrington, 1944, *God, Mammon, and the Japanese: Dr. Horace N. Allen and Korean-American Relations, 1884-1905*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 192, 198.

owed by the Seoul Electric Company, providing 400,000 won in cash and a promissory note for 350,000 won, a total of 750,000 won.²⁴ Upon learning of the payment, a prominent politician Yun Ch'ihō (1865-1945) criticized the agreement “just to get the American protection falsely promised by Collbran and Bostwick through Lee [Yi Hakkyun].”²⁵ As evidence of the expectation of U.S. protection, several researchers have highlighted Yi Yongik's remark during an interview with Frederick A. McKenzie who visited Korea to cover the Russo-Japanese War. Yi Yongik stated, “We have the promise of America. She will be our friend whatever happens.”²⁶

While Kojong may have expected the concessions to lead to American protection, subsequent developments indicate that this was not his only objective. He also aimed to cause a rift between the American and Japanese ministers and to enlist American enterprises in his struggle against increased Japanese influence in Korea.²⁷ At Kojong's behest, the U.S. side remained silent regarding the payment by the Seoul Electric Company, leading to a dispute between the Japanese residency-general of Korea and the U.S. Legation in Tokyo. The following year, after the conclusion of the Korea-Japan Treaty in 1905, Kojong told Collbran that the treaty was illegal and proposed a protectorate of several powers be established to represent Korea. Collbran contacted Allen, who had returned to the United States,²⁸ to locate the legal avenues for contesting the treaty's

²⁴ Oh, “The Development of the Electricity Industry,” 74; _____, *A History of Korea's Modern Electric Power Industry*, 101.

²⁵ Yun Ch'ihō, *Yun Ch'ihō's English Diaries*, vol.5, trans. Bak Mi-gyeong, 2015, Kwach'ōn: National Institute of Korean History, 21-22.

²⁶ Frederick A. McKenzie, 1920, *Korea's Fight for Freedom*, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 77-78. See also, Oh, *A History of Korea's Modern Electric Power Industry*, 98-99; Lee Yoon-sang, 2021, “LeeYong-ik's Administrative Roles and His Misguided Perceptions of the Economy During the Era of Daehan Empire,” *Journal of History and Culture* 77: 71-72.

²⁷ Allen commented, “The Emperor has the faculty of playing off one against the other.” Horace N. Allen to John Hay, May 31, 1902, *diplomatic despatch* no. 470; Burnett, *Korean-American Relations*, vol. 3, 171-72.

²⁸ However, Allen deemed the proposal unfeasible and disadvantageous for Korea. After corresponding with several lawyers, he notified the U.S. agents that his attempts to appoint legal

illegality.

When signing the triple concession agreement, Allen did not use the title of “United States Minister to Korea.” Instead, he used the term “official representative of the United States government in Korea.” This distinction was significant in that if Japan revoked Korea’s diplomatic autonomy and designated it as a protectorate, it was possible for a consul or other government representative to represent the interests of American companies, making the term used more appropriate.²⁹ It would allow C&B to look after its interests regardless of any change in Korea’s status.

Even, without mentioning the lucrative triple concession agreement with Korea, Collbran also proposed a collaborative venture to the Japanese aimed at establishing a joint enterprise encompassing electricity, streetcars, electric lighting, and communications and water services.³⁰ In late February, the Japanese minister to Korea, Hayashi reported that Kojong had given 400,000 won to Collbran via Yi Yongik.³¹ However, he did not give any details about the negotiations between Kojong and Collbran. Similarly, the German minister to Korea did not grasp the significance of the negotiations. He reported that Kojong’s payment of 400,000 won was “compensation” which resolved the debt dispute, but he failed to see that this laid the groundwork for a collaborative U.S.-Korea venture.³² At the insistence of Allen, U.S.S. *Cincinnati* was dispatched to

representatives had been unsuccessful. Lee Yeong-mi, 2017, “Horace N. Allen’s View and Action concerning King Kojong’s Attempt to Negotiate with the United States: An Analysis of Horace N. Allen Papers, 1883-1923,” *Journal of Korean Modern and Contemporary History* 82.

²⁹ “As this country is now to be more under the control of Japan than Egypt is under that of England, I think that an Agent and Consul General will soon be more fitting for our representation here than an Envoy Extraordinary, and if such suggestion is acted upon I would be through with my service here.” Horace N. Allen to Edwin V. Morgan, February 26, 1904, Allen Papers.

³⁰ Henry Collbran to Hagiwara Moriichi, March 8, 1904, *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 25; Hayashi Gonsuke to Komura Jutarō, confidential, no. 24, March 20, 1904, Appendix, “Collbran’s Letter on the Organization of the U.S.-Japan Limited Partnership” (Henry Collbran to Hagiwara Moriichi, March 10, 1904).

³¹ Hayashi Gonsuke to Komura Jutarō, telegram, no. 291, March 10, 1904, *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 25.

³² Saldern to Bülow, K.No. 28, March 13, 1904, *Diplomatic Documents of Germany: Korea (1874-*

Peng Yang (P'yŏngyang), with a view to bringing refugees from the mines and northern Province of Korea to Seoul. Interestingly, the U.S.S. *Cincinnati* gave passage to Yi Hakkun and Hyŏn Sanggŏn, who negotiated with Collbran under Kojong's secret order, to Shanghai, China.³³ At the behest of Allen, Hayashi granted permission for the American vessel to proceed unhindered, and further apprised Japanese military authorities in the vicinity to refrain from impeding maritime traffic.³⁴ Misconstruing Kojong's strategic gambit, Germany and Japan solely viewed his connection with the U.S. company through an economic lens, thus missing his attempt to leverage this relationship as a diplomatic springboard to solidify Korea's ties with the United States.

Issues Surrounding the Triple Concessions

1. The Contract Date

The concessions raised suspicions in a number of areas. A month after the signing of the agreement, Hayashi, the Japanese minister, discovered that the agreement entailed a 50/50 division of profits between Korea and the United States and that the Americans would oversee the administration of the new electricity company.³⁵ He remarked, "This agreement is fraught with numerous objections pertaining to both its structure and substance, warranting its complete annulment."³⁶ In addition, John N. Jordan (1852-1925), the British minister to Korea, accused the Americans of securing the concessions through deceptive means. He claimed that Kojong

1910), vol. 11, 226.

³³ Horace N. Allen to John Hay, March 9, 1904, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 696.

³⁴ Hayashi Gonsuke to Komura Jutarō, telegram, no. 285, December 12, 1904, *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 23; Hayashi Gonsuke to Commander Saito (齋藤司令官) and Consul Mimasu (三増領事), no. 21, March 15, 1904, *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 23.

³⁵ Hayashi Gonsuke to Komura Jutarō, telegram, no. 305, March 20, 1904, *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 25.

³⁶ Hayashi Gonsuke to Komura Jutarō, telegram, no. 324, March 25, 1904, *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 25; Hayashi Gonsuke to Komura Jutarō, telegram, no. 34, March 26, 1904, *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 25.

had shown him a retroactively dated contract, implying that the U.S. concessions had likely been forged during the early stages of the Russo-Japanese War.³⁷

The retroactive dating of the water concession was certainly suspicious. The contract was officially signed on December 9, 1903, by Yi Hayöng (1558-1929), the acting minister for foreign affairs. It was then signed two days later by Allen, Collbran, and Gordon Paddock, the secretary of the U.S. Legation in Seoul. Appended to the contract was the Black Seal Document 啟字印 dated November 4, 1903. During the Chosön Dynasty, a black Seal with the character kye (啟) was placed on documents that the king had read, reviewed, and approved. Kojong directed Yun Cheong-gu, the councilor of state, to draft a contract for the design of the waterworks and entrusted it to Yi Hayöng, who delivered it to C&B.

I contend that both the contract and the Black Seal Document were retroactively dated. There are several pieces of evidence for this. First, in 1903, Allen started his vacation on June 1 and did not resume his duties until November 20. It seems improbable that the secretary of the legation could have procured the Black Seal Document during Allen's absence. Secondly, Allen was in conflict with the Korean government at the time over the opening of Ŭiju, which he supported, and was also dealing with the unresolved Seoul Electric Company debt dispute. In regard to this, on December 20, Allen wrote, "Ye Yong Ik sent Krumm home [to the U.S.] with Yen 2,000 to 'upset Collbran and Bostwick matters and injured me.'"³⁸ By late December, Allen was advising Collbran to sell the fore-

³⁷ "As illustrating the manner in which documents of this kind were fabricated in the early stages of the war, I may mention that in March last a contract, antedated, signed, and sealed by the Household Minister, and made out in favour of a British subject, was sent to me by the Emperor with a request that I would attest its execution by attaching my signature and the seal of this Legation. When I declined to have anything to do with a transaction which was fictitious on the face of it, the messenger seemed to be genuinely surprised that conscientious scruples should be allowed to stand in the way of British interests." Jordan to the Marquess of Lansdowne, no. 23, very confidential, February 15, 1905, The National Archives (TNA), FO 405/146.

³⁸ Horace N. Allen to Heinrich Weipert, December 20, 1903, Allen Papers.

closed assets, caused as a result of the Korean default, to the Japanese.³⁹ Thus, it appears unlikely that the water rights would have been granted while the debt dispute remained unresolved.

What is more, Allen was quite willing to flout U.S. legislation, including directives from the State Department, if it meant securing monopolies or commercial advantages for American companies in Korea. One example of this is the advice he offered Hawaiian plantation owners looking to import Korean labor on how to sidestep U.S. laws. At the time, the United States prohibited immigrant contract labor in Hawaii and on the mainland to shield its domestic workforce from foreign competition. It was illegal to employ an immigrant before their arrival in the U.S., or for an employer to cover their travel expenses.

Allen set to work persuading Kojong of the advantages of allowing Korean emigration to Hawaii. The Chinese Exclusion Act effectively prohibited further immigration from China, thus opening up opportunities for Koreans.⁴⁰ Eventually, the Korean government established the Department of Emigration of the Empire of Korea (緜民院) on November 16, 1902. Min Yŏnghwan (1861-1905) assumed the role of president, while Sŏ Pyŏnggyu (?-?) was appointed as the chief or general manager of the department.⁴¹

However, Allen did not report this to the State Department until all the formal procedures had been concluded.⁴² He explained to the State Department that he had “inadvertently” broached the immigration topic while responding to a query from Korean officials.⁴³ David W. Deshler

³⁹ “I think your best course is to wait and go in with the Japanese.” Horace N. Allen to Henry Collbran, December 30, 1903, Allen Papers.

⁴⁰ Wayne Patterson, 1988, *The Korean Frontier in America: Immigration to Hawaii, 1896-1910*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

⁴¹ *Kojong sillok*, 6th year of Kwangmu [1902], November 16, November 23, and November 27.

⁴² Horace N. Allen to John Hay, December 10, 1902, diplomatic despatch, no. 552; Burnett, *Korean-American Relations*, vol. 3, 180-81.

⁴³ Some contend that Allen employed indirect rather than direct language in his report to obfuscate his direct involvement in the immigration enterprise. See Kim Won Mo, 2003, *Kaehwagi han-mi kyosŏp kwan'gyesa*, Seoul: Tan'guk taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 918.

ultimately secured the monopoly on immigration to Hawaii from Korea.⁴⁴ Deshler was the adopted son of George K. Nash, the former governor of Ohio, who had played a pivotal role in the appointment of Allen as minister to Korea in 1897.⁴⁵ It would appear that Allen repaid his debt to Nash by arranging the immigration concession to Nash's adopted son five years later.

In this instance, Allen went against both U.S. law and State Department directives, which cautioned against meddling in Korea's internal affairs. This exemplifies how adept Allen was at circumventing legal constraints. He had previously shown this side of his character in 1900 when he procured the seal of the minister of the Foreign Office, Pak Chesun (1858-1916) in the ratification of the Unsan gold mine concession. On that occasion, he had claimed that the whole idea was a "suggestion" from Pak.⁴⁶ Allen's track record suggests that he may have had some involvement in the retroactive dating of the triple concessions with Korea.

The sustained pattern of Kojong's debt defaults motivated Collbran to inform the Japanese of the electricity agreement with Korea. The protracted debt dispute between Kojong and C&B had persisted for over two

⁴⁴ Horace N. Allen to William Irwin, August 16, 1902, Allen Papers.

⁴⁵ David W. Deshler was from Columbus, Ohio, and was the adopted stepson of Ohio governor George K. Nash. In 1895, he went to Yokohama to pursue a career in banking, subsequently expanding his business endeavors to Chemulp'o and other locales in Korea. He played a mediating role in negotiations for projects such as the Seoul-Chemulp'o Railway and Unsan Gold Mine. Tasked with labor recruitment for the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association (HSPA), he founded the East and West Development Company in 1902 to facilitate the recruitment and relocation of Korean immigrants to Hawaii. Deshler entrusted the financial management of these ventures to Deshler Bank. "Advertisement of Deshler Bank," *Hwangŏng Sinnum* [Imperial Capial Gazzett], December 6, 1902.; "Campaign Launched to Dispatch Workers (to Hawaii)," *Hwangŏng Sinnum*, February 9, 1903; "Deshler Bank," *Hwangŏng Sinnum*, May 15, 1903.; "Navigating Your Way to Hawaii," *Chekuk Sinnum*, May 12, 1903. "American Marries a Japanese," *New York Times*, January 23, 1900; Horace N. Allen to Clayton W. Everett, September 19, 1896, Allen Papers; Horace N. Allen to Harry & Maurice Allen, May 12, 1905, Allen Papers, R5-B5-02-016; "Former Columbus Man Now U. S. Minister to That Country," *Ohio State Journal*, January 31, 1904 ; Roberta Chang and Wayne Patterson, 2003, *The Koreans in Hawai'i: A Pictorial History, 1903-2003*, Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press.

⁴⁶ Horace N. Allen to John Hay, August 30, 1900, Enclosure 5: "A Ratification of the Mining Concession on April 28 and May 16, 1900," *diplomatic despatch*, no. 274.

years, with Kojong making repeated assurances of repayment that went unfulfilled. Collbran clearly believed that Kojong would once more fail to honor his commitment. As such, when he traveled to Japan with a letter of introduction from the Japanese legation, Collbran engaged in negotiations with representatives from the Industrial Bank of Japan and the Mitsui Co., Ltd.⁴⁷ He told them that he believed that the Korean government would not pay the remaining balance of 350,000 won.⁴⁸ Allen had also been skeptical about Kojong's intentions, calling it "a marvel" when Kojong finally paid.⁴⁹ However, this led to the establishment of the American-Korean Electric Company, the successor to the Seoul Electric Company, on July 1, 1904, in Hartford, Connecticut.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, due to these Americans keeping the acquisition of the three concessions secret and even withholding this information from their own government, the Japanese remained unaware of the agreements for some time. Hayashi did not hear of the water contract until May 1904,⁵¹ and he did not report it to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, until June 1904.⁵² It was not until February 1905 that Hayashi himself discovered that a mining contract had been signed between Korea and the U.S.⁵³

⁴⁷ Collbran departed Korea for Japan on March 22 and met with his Japanese counterparts in Tokyo on March 31. Komura Jutarō to Hayashi Gonsuke, telegram no. 331, March 29th, 1904, Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea, vol. 25; Henry Collbran to Hagiwara Moriichi, April, 1, 1904, *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 25.

⁴⁸ Komura Jutarō to Hayashi Gonsuke, confidential, telegram, no. 33, May 15, 1904, *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 25.

⁴⁹ Horace N. Allen to James R. Morse, June 7, 1904, Allen Papers.

⁵⁰ Allen to Henry Collbran to [Recipient], May 24, 1905, Allen Papers, R2-B3-08-001.

⁵¹ Hayashi Gonsuke to Komura Jutarō, telegram, no. 453, May 6, 1904 *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 25.

⁵² Hayashi Gonsuke to Komura Jutarō, telegram no. 546, June 15, 1904, *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 23; Hagiwara Moriichi to Komura Jutarō, confidential, telegram, no. 62, June 15, 1904, *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 25. Hayashi became aware of the contract following Allen's objection to the establishment of water works by the Household Department. Kim Heeyeon, "The Seoul Waterworks Concession," 31-34.

⁵³ Hayashi Gonsuke to Komura Jutarō, no. 72, February 23, 1904, *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 26.

The question persists regarding the rationale behind retroactively dating the waterworks contract to December 9, 1903. Waterworks procurement had been ensured through “reservations” in 1898 and 1900 and the retroactive dating was most probably a ploy to obtain the endorsement of the Minister of the Foreign Office for the contract. Allen knew the significance of the Seal of the Ministry of the Foreign Office, since in 1885, the Korean government had stipulated that all agreements with foreign nations must bear this seal.⁵⁴ If he could attain the seal, it would smooth the process of guaranteeing American interests, regardless of the future direction of Korea. However, the ministry was in a period of flux at the time. Yi Hayōng became acting Minister of Foreign Office on October 5, 1903, but he was succeeded by Yi Chiyong (1870-1928) on December 23, 1903. Then, in March 1904, Cho Pyōngsik (1823-1907) took over, only for Yi Hayōng to be reinstated on April 19 of the same year.⁵⁵ Given that Allen had a close relationship with Yi Hayōng, he would have asked or urged Yi to sign the contract, which was retroactively dated, during Yi’s time in office.

2. The Underlying Motive behind the Deployment of Marines and the Fire in Kyōngun Palace

This section looks at Allen’s request for Marines to guard the U.S. Legation in Seoul⁵⁶ and the theory that the fire in Kyōngun Palace was started to mask Kojong’s escape to the U.S. Legation.⁵⁷ On December 8, 1903, Allen sent a telegram to the State Department asking for the deployment of a warship to safeguard American lives and assets in Korea in the event

⁵⁴ George C. Foulk to Secretary of State Thomas. F. Bayard, August 6, 1885, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 212.

⁵⁵ *Kojong sillok*, 7th year of Kwangmu [1903], October 5 and December 23. See also *Kojong sillok*, 8th year of Kwangmu [1904], March 12 and April 19.

⁵⁶ Horace N. Allen to John Hay, December 8, 1903, telegram received in cipher, *diplomatic despatch*; Horace N. Allen to John Hay, December 9, 1903, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 629.

⁵⁷ Mumm To Bülow, no. 173, May 1, 1904, *Diplomatic Documents of Germany: Korea (1874-1910)*, vol. 11, 228; Saldern to Bülow, K.No.66, May 3, 1904, *Diplomatic Documents of Germany: Korea (1874-1910)*, vol. 11, 254.

that a war broke out between Russia and Japan. He cited the presence of 10,000 “disorderly” Koreans in the capital and emphasized the need for a protective force.⁵⁸ The State Department accepted his request, and Rear Admiral Stirling, temporarily overseeing the Asiatic Fleet, ordered the *Vicksburg* to sail from Shanghai to Chemulp’o. Given the limited Marine contingent aboard the *Vicksburg*, the Americans decided to also deploy a detachment of Marines stationed in the Philippines.⁵⁹

The prevailing view regarding Allen’s request for Marine Corps support posits that he may have exaggerated the severity of the situation in Korea to bolster the case for deploying naval forces. This interpretation suggests that Allen might have seized upon an unsubstantiated rumor as a pretext to mobilize substantial troop reinforcements. He did this as he knew that the presence of U.S. troops would greatly bolster Kojong, who could seek sanctuary in a foreign legation in the event of an emergency.⁶⁰

The problem with this interpretation is that it accepts the date of the contract (December 9, 1903) at face value. However, as previously mentioned, it is probable that this date was retroactively assigned. This inference gains further credence from the fact that by mid-December 1903, Allen anticipated significant gains if the war between Russian and Japan were to ensue.⁶¹ The “disturbances” referenced by Allen as justification for deploying the Marines were not unfounded. Canadian missionaries were also worried by the situation,⁶² while the French minister to Korea

⁵⁸ Horace N. Allen to John Hay, December 8, 1903, telegram received in cipher, Allen Papers; Horace N. Allen to John Hay, December 9, 1903, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 629.

⁵⁹ “Uncle Sam Interested,” Santa Fe New Mexican, December 26, 1903; “Vicksburg Sails For Korea,” *New York Times*, December 27, 1903; “Vicksburg Goes to Korea,” *Madison Daily Leader*, December 28, 1903,.

⁶⁰ Oh, “The Development of the Electricity Industry,” 71-72; _____, *A History of Korea’s Modern Electric Power Industry*, 97-98.

⁶¹ Horace N. Allen to Heinrich Weipert, December 20, 1903, Allen Papers.

⁶² Jordan to the Marquess of Lansdowne, No. 17, January 20, 1904, Enclosure: “Memorandum by Mr. Gale” (January 20, 1904), The National Archives (TNA), FO 405/147,.

feared disturbances were a definite possibility.⁶³ The British minister to Korea reported the arrival of the U.S. Marines and requested a force to protect the legation, and other ministers followed suit.⁶⁴ In fact, every country except Germany and China deployed soldiers from their respective countries.⁶⁵

Out of the 100 U.S. Marines who arrived in January 1904, 36 were accommodated in the U.S. Legation, while the remaining 64 were stationed in the offices of the Seoul Electric Company.⁶⁶ Allen contended that without the immediate presence of the Marines, chaos would have ensued.⁶⁷ During a discussion with an official from the Korean Foreign Office, Allen expressed doubt regarding the reliability of the Korean military. He referred to an incident on September 30, 1903, when Korean soldiers had tried to intervene when an enraged mob attacked a streetcar and attempted to harm Americans, prompting the Japanese Legation to request protection. At the time, Allen had expressed his lack of faith in the ability of the Korean troops to provide an escort for the U.S. Legation.⁶⁸ In 1904, the Minister of Foreign Office, Yi Chiyong, opposed the

⁶³ Fontenay to Delcassé, no. 68, December 24, 1903, *Diplomatic Documents of Modern Korean-French Relations*, vol. 1, ed. Center for Francophone Studies of Sungkyunkwan University, trans. Lee Ji-sun, Bak Gyu-hyeon, Kim Byeong-uk (Seoul: Sönnin, 2018), 234-236.

⁶⁴ John N. Jordan to the Marquess of Lansdowne, telegram, no.2, January 2, 1904, *The National Archives* (TNA), FO 405/146; John N. Jordan to the Marquess of Lansdowne, telegram, no. 8, January 8, 1904, *The National Archives* (TNA), FO 405/146.

⁶⁵ Saldern To Bülow, no. 11, February 1, 1904, *Diplomatic Documents of Germany: Korea (1874-1910)*, vol. 11, 213.

⁶⁶ Horace N. Allen to John Hay, January 5, 1904, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 638; Horace N. Allen to John Hay, March 1, 1904, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 687; Burnett, *Korean-American Relations*, vol. 3, 186-187; "Entry of the Captain into Seoul," *Hwangšöng Sinnmum*, January 5, 1904.

⁶⁷ Horace N. Allen to John Hay, January 14, 1904, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 647; Horace N. Allen to John Hay, January 24, 1904, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 652; Horace N. Allen to John Hay, February 18, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 671; Horace N. Allen to Harry & Maurice Allen, January 24, 1904, Allen Papers.

⁶⁸ "Questions of the Foreign Office, verbal, and verbal replies, written down by the U.S. Minister on January 4, 1904, in connection with dispatch of January 3 regarding Marine Guard," 奎23249; *Old Korean Diplomatic Documents: Correspondences with America* 3, no. 2839, Gordon Paddock to Yi Chungha, October 1, 1903, 508.

dispatch of the U.S. Marines.⁶⁹ Allen was under the belief that the Ministry of Foreign Office was being instigated by Yi Yongik.⁷⁰ He wrote, “Now I am having all sorts of impudence from the Foreign Office which is in the hands of haters of the ‘American party.’”⁷¹ This suggests that there was unresolved conflict between Allen and the Korean government.

In fact, German diplomats were also suspicious regarding the arrival of the U.S. Marines, suspecting that it was related to the evacuation of Kojong. Following a fire at Kyōngun Palace on April 14, 1904, Alfons Mumm von Schwarzenstein, the German minister to Qing China, suggested that Kojong had orchestrated the fire as a pretext to seek sanctuary within the U.S. Legation,⁷² an assertion that was quickly refuted by Conrad von Saldern, the German minister to Korea:

Regarding the dispatch dated the 3rd of this month concerning the origin of the fire at the Emperor’s palace, it is apparent that it relies on confidential intelligence from the Russian Minister to Korea, forwarded to Peking. It comprises unidentified terms procured by the Acting French Minister to Korea. While I acknowledge the perspectives of the Acting French Minister, they appear to be grounded solely in deductive reasoning, which tends to embellish raw facts in a distinctly French fashion. The contention made by the French is contradicted by the actual destruction of significant valuables in the fire. I can confirm that the belongings, valued at 500,000 won, of Lady Ŏm, the consort of Kojong, or the Emperor’s spouse was indeed consumed by the flames. Furthermore, it

⁶⁹ Horace N. Allen to Yi Chiyong, January 4, 1904, *Old Korean Diplomatic Documents: Correspondences with America*, vol. 3, no. 2889; Yi Chiyong to Horace N. Allen, January 4, 1904, *Old Korean Diplomatic Documents: Correspondences with America*, vol. 3, no. 2890; Horace N. Allen to Yi Chiyong, January 5, 1904, *Old Korean Diplomatic Documents: Correspondences with America*, vol. 3, no. 2891, 537-540.

⁷⁰ Horace N. Allen to John Hay, January 5, 1904, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 638.

⁷¹ Horace N. Allen to James R. Morse, January 27, 1904, Allen Papers.

⁷² Mumm to Bülow, no. 173, May 1, 1904, *Diplomatic Documents of Germany: Korea (1874-1910)*, vol. 11, 228; Saldern to Bülow, K.No.66, May 3, 1904, *Diplomatic Documents of Germany: Korea (1874-1910)*, vol. 11, 254.

is known that the wind blew in the direction of the building where the Emperor currently resides and towards the American Legation on that fateful night, posing a threat to these structures. It seems improbable that the Emperor would willingly endanger the place he sought refuge in. It is conceivable that several months ago, in January and February, the Americans devised ambitious plans of such nature. This possibility is not implausible at all. The rationale behind this speculation stems from the perplexity surrounding the sudden deployment of a garrison of 200 soldiers into the otherwise tranquil city of Seoul by the Americans.⁷³

While Saldern dismissed the notion of the fire being deliberate, he confirmed the possibility that the Americans might have attempted to evacuate Kojong in January or February. This was based on Allen's 'dubious' request for the support of U.S. Marines. The fire at Kyōngun Palace was actually sparked by a misfire during the repair of the *ondol* in Hamnyōng Hall (咸寧殿),⁷⁴ which in turn almost destroyed the imperial palace.⁷⁵

The outbreak of the fire provided a pretext for Kojong to seek refuge in Chungmyōng Hall (重明殿), which was adjacent to the U.S. Legation in Seoul. Allen was uncomfortable with the proximity of Kojong to the Legation, remarking, "It looks as if I had stolen the 'Queen Bee.'"⁷⁶ The Japanese minister to Korea made considerable efforts to persuade Kojong to relocate to Ch'angdōk Palace on the east side of Seoul; however, Kojong refused.⁷⁷ Hayashi had made this request due to the close

⁷³ Saldern to Bülow, no. 66, June 1, 1904, *Diplomatic Documents of Germany: Korea (1874-1910)*, vol. 11, 255.

⁷⁴ Hayashi Gonsuke to Komura Jutarō, telegram, no. 382, April 15, 1904, *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 23; Chōng Kyo, *Taeahan kyenyoŋsa*, vol. 7, trans. Byun Ju-seung. (Seoul: Somyōng, 2004), 75. Hwang Hyeon, *Maecheon yarok*, vol. 2, trans. Im Hyeongtaek et al. (Seoul: Munhak kwa chisōng, 2005), 168; Yun Ch'ihō, *Yun Ch'ihō's English Diaries*, vol. 5, April 15, 1904, 19-20.

⁷⁵ Kim Heeyeon, "The Seoul Waterworks Concession," 32.

⁷⁶ Horace N. Allen to David J. Hill, April 17, 1904, Allen Papers, R4-L7-13-038; Horace N. Allen to Horace Lee Washington, April 17, 1904, Allen Papers, R4-L7-13-039; Horace N. Allen to A. Dufour, April 17, 1904, Allen Papers, R4-L7-13-040.

⁷⁷ Saldern to Bülow, no. 27, strictly confidential, April 20, 1904, *Diplomatic Documents of Ger-*

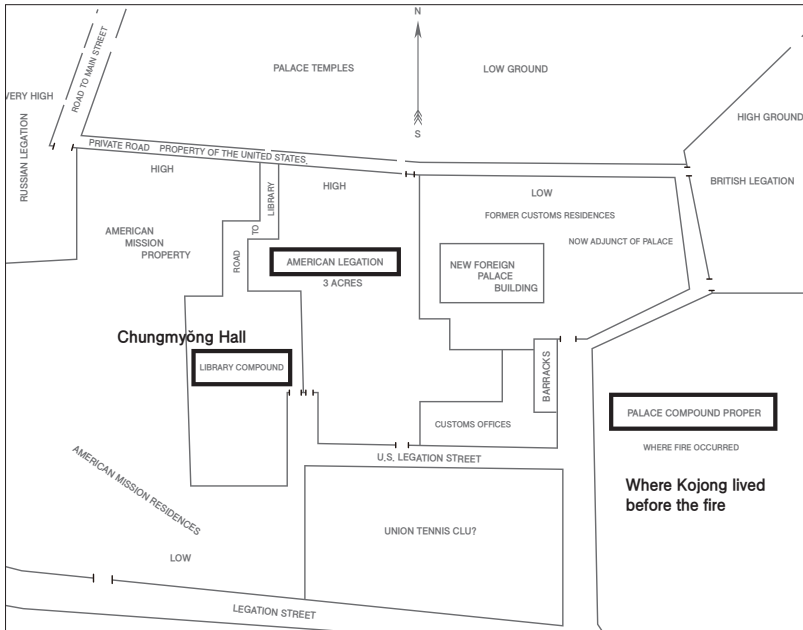


Figure 1. The Locations of the American Legation in Seoul and Chungmyŏng Hall (重明殿) Horace N. Allen to John Hay, diplomatic despatch, no. 724, April 22, 1904, "Reduction of Marine Guard/Residence of Emperor adjoining Legation," Enclosure 2

proximity of Chungmyŏng Hall to the U.S. Legation.⁷⁸ However, Allen was intent on not politicizing the situation.⁷⁹ To avoid the perception that the U.S. Legation was guarding Kojong, he arranged for 75 of the 100 marines to be dispatched elsewhere.⁸⁰

many: Korea (1874-1910), vol. 11, 222.

⁷⁸ Saldern to Bülow, no. 55, May 18, 1904, *Diplomatic Documents of Germany: Korea (1874-1910)*, vol. 11, 249.

⁷⁹ Horace N. Allen to Henry T. Allen, April 17, 1904, Allen Papers; Horace N. Allen to William W. Rockhill, April 19, 1904, Allen Papers; Horace N. Allen to Edward T. Miller, June 7, 1904, Allen Papers; Horace N. Allen to James R. Morse, June 7, 1904, Allen Papers.

⁸⁰ Horace N. Allen to Jennie, Georgia, and Heber Allen, April 23, 1904, Allen Papers; Horace N. Allen to C. S. Sperry, April 23, 1904, Allen Papers; Hayashi Gonsuke to Komura Jutarō, telegram, no. 419, April 23, 1904, *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 25.

In fact, Allen did not bring the U.S. Marines in to help Kojong escape to the U.S. Legation. He had been reprimanded in October 1903 by John Hay, the secretary of state, who told him, “Be careful about expressing yourself on public matters as in recent interviews,” after a meeting Allen had with President Roosevelt.⁸¹ In addition, on three occasions after 1904, he informed the State Department of requests by Kojong for asylum at the U.S. Legation while highlighting the fact that there were considerable objections to Kojong’s residence being so close to it.⁸² Additionally, Allen declined Kojong’s request to retain the 300,000 won.⁸³ The last of these requests was in January 1905.

I shall not allow anything of the kind [Kojong’s flight to the Russian Legation] to take place in connection with this Legation, and should the Emperor scale the wall into this compound, I would have to ask him to withdraw and the Japanese would probably, in that event, take him to one of the distant palaces. All of which I fully explained to the messenger of the Emperor today.⁸⁴

Kojong had briefly fled to the Russian Legation in 1896 and the Japanese were concerned that he might attempt another escape. Hayashi was also aware of a plan to relocate Kojong to the French mission, a plan orchestrated by Yi Yongik, Hyŏn Sanggŏn, and other figures,⁸⁵ and it was, in fact, the French Legation that was actively facilitating negotia-

⁸¹ John Hay to Horace N. Allen, “Diplomatic Instruction,” October 28, 1903, telegram received in cipher, Allen Papers; Horace N. Allen, *Allen ūi ilgi: kuhanmal kyŏktonggi pisa*, trans. Kim Won Mo (Seoul: Tan’guk taehakkyo ch’ulp’anbu, 1991), 296.

⁸² Horace N. Allen to John Hay, January 2, 1904, diplomatic despatch, no. 636; Horace N. Allen to John Hay, February 21, 1904, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 673; Horace N. Allen to John Hay, confidential, January 19, 1905, diplomatic despatch, no. 863; Burnett, *Korean-American Relations*, vol.3, 107, 117, 190.

⁸³ Horace N. Allen to James R. Morse, September 30, 1904, Allen Papers.

⁸⁴ Horace N. Allen to John Hay, January 19, 1905, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 863.

⁸⁵ Wada Haruki, *The Russo-Japanese War: the Origin and Outbreak*, vol.2, 1111-1112; Suh, *Taehan cheguk chŏngchi sa yŏngu*, 190.

tions for Kojong's evacuation.

It is improbable that Allen would have sanctioned an evacuation of Kojong to the U.S. Legation. His predecessor, John M. B. Sill (1831-1901) was dismissed for providing shelter to Koreans, and Allen was confident that the State Department had no intention of intervening in Korean affairs. Allen himself had refused a previous request from Kojong for shelter at the U.S. Legation before his flight to the Russian Legation in 1896.⁸⁶ Furthermore, Allen was preoccupied with refuting "Pro-Russia and Anti-Japanese" accusations against him at the time.⁸⁷

If Allen indeed sought to exaggerate the crisis to justify the deployment of the U.S. Marines in Korea, his objective may have been to exert pressure on Korea to open up Ŭiju and address the debt dispute.⁸⁸ This is given some credence by his insistence on establishing a naval base at Chinhae Bay to resolve the debt dispute. Nonetheless, the remaining Marines stayed in Seoul even after the withdrawal of British troops from the British Legation in June 1905, leaving the U.S. as the sole foreign legation in Seoul responsible for its own security.⁸⁹ In addition, Kojong continued to stay at Chungmyōng Hall until the signing of the Korea-Japan Treaty of 1905 on November 17, 1905. The German minister to Korea summed up the situation as follows:

Among all the white [western] representatives present, those from America wield the most significant influence. American missionaries are dispersed throughout the country, and the American settlements, predominantly inhabited by missionaries, are plentiful. The imperialistic agenda of the United States is also evident in this context and is likely

⁸⁶ Kato Musuo to Ōkuma Shigenobu, confidential, no. 27, May 20, 1897, *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 11.

⁸⁷ Kim Heeyeon, "Dismissal of U.S. Minister Horace N. Allen," 146-150.

⁸⁸ Harrington also indicated that Allen "called up several score marines ... to deal with the refractory Ye Yong Ik" and "most of the men were quartered on street-car property." Harrington, *God, Mammon, and the Japanese*, 190.

⁸⁹ Hayashi Gonsuke to Komura Jutarō, no. 232, June 21, 1905, *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 26.

to gain further prominence once the current upheaval subsides. The American Minister to Korea has fulfilled the role of missionary physician in Korea for over twenty years, enjoying the trust of the Korean emperor. He is highly capable and reliable, deserving of the emperor's [Kojong's] trust. On the evening when the Korean imperial palace was engulfed in flames, the emperor [Kojong] sought refuge in a residence adjacent to the American legation, where he has resided ever since. Opposite this improvised imperial residence lies a parcel of land owned by an American missionary. Arrangements were made by the Korean emperor for its acquisition. Still, the premises are still occupied by the American legation guard, with the American flag proudly displayed. This situation was regarded as a source of irritation by the Japanese who made every effort to prevent the Korean monarch from falling under American influence.⁹⁰

It was evident to external observers that American soldiers were accompanying Kojong. This may have given Kojong the impression that he was under the protection of the United States.⁹¹ Following Allen's departure in June 1905, the Marines continued to protect the U. S. Legation until October, just prior to the conclusion of the Korea-Japan Treaty of 1905.⁹² The presence of the Marines probably encouraged external observers to believe that they were protecting Kojong and possibly led Ko-

⁹⁰ Saldern to Bülow, K.No.5, January 10, 1905, *Diplomatic Documents of Germany: Korea (1874-1910)*, vol. 11, 312.

⁹¹ Edwin V. Morgan asked Admiral Train, Commander of the Asiatic Fleet, to dispatch one of his vessels to retrieve the detachment of U.S. Marines. Morgan was wary that "the retention of the guard at the present juncture might also be construed to have a political significance." He also indicated that "the proximity of the guard has tended to encourage His Majesty [Emperor Kojong] in a belief ... that the American detachment is stationed in Seoul and housed virtually within the Palace walls for his personal protection, an impression which is as unfortunate as it is unfounded." Edwin V. Morgan to Elihu Root, *diplomatic dispatch*, no. 21, October 17, 1905; Burnett, *Korean-American Relations*, vol. 3, 146.

⁹² Edwin V. Morgan to Elihu Root, *diplomatic dispatch*, no. 16, September 15, 1905; Edwin V. Morgan to Elihu Root, *diplomatic dispatch*, no. 21, October 17, 1905; Burnett, *Korean-American Relations*, vol. 3, 146.

jong to believe this as well.

3. Ties between Collbran & Bostwick and Allen

Suspicious of ties between Allen and C&B were raised by some of Allen's American partners. Both Raymond Krumm and Leigh Hunt had been assisted by Allen during his time at the U.S. Legation. Allen believed that his removal stemmed from his challenge to the president, the allegations made by Hunt and Krumm, and the political lobbying of his former secretary and successor, Edwin V. Morgan (1865-1834).⁹³ On August 27, 1904, Hunt, the proprietor of the Unsan Gold Mine and manager of OCMC (Oriental Consolidated Mining Company), opposed the favoritism shown to Collbran by the Korean government.⁹⁴ The State Department immediately demanded an explanation from Allen.⁹⁵ According to Collbran, Hunt's accusations were threefold: first, that Collbran had acquired his interests improperly during the Russo-Japanese War; second, that he was not a U.S. citizen⁹⁶ and thus the State Department's involvement is not necessary in this case; and finally, that C&B and Allen had questionable financial connections. Allen responded to these allegations in October 1904.

These matters [concessions recently secured by C&B] were not new and while their settlement was undoubtedly hastened by the approach of the present war, they would have had to be settled had the war not

⁹³ Horace N. Allen to Henry Collbran, May 1, 1905, Allen Papers.

⁹⁴ Hunt also apprised Henry W. Denison, general counsel of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, regarding Collbran's mining investments. Horace N. Allen, "Narrative of Facts Regarding Development of Korean Enterprises," n.d., Allen Papers; Harrington, *God, Mammon, and the Japanese*, 199.

⁹⁵ Alvey A. Adeo to Horace N. Allen, September 1, 1904, *diplomatic instruction*, no. 274.

⁹⁶ Henry Collbran held American citizenship through naturalization. However, his mining enterprise in Korea (OCMC) was not solely American financed. Reports indicated that "considerable British capital was invested in the American ventures by prominent South African magnates," leading to the characterization of the company as an Anglo-American endeavor, albeit registered as an American corporation. "American Gold Mining Interests in Korea," *Arizona Silver Belt*, January 14, 1904.

taken place. Further, the Japanese Authorities know fully of these matters, have copies of the documents, and are likely to become interested financially, in the resulting companies. They have made no objections whatever to these settlements. ... The Koreans, high and low, seem to make no complaint regarding these new acquisitions by the Americans, but seem rather to wish that we would take a greater interest in these matters and acquire other interests, possibly as an offset to the Japanese. ... These concessions cannot but tend greatly to the development of American commercial interests in this land, since every such company constitutes a center for the introduction of "American capital." ... I cannot well conceive therefore of the American Government looking with disfavor upon other Americans acquiring similar large interests in this land where we enjoy the unique advantage of leading in large commercial undertakings."⁹⁷

Allen believed that Hunt harbored resentment against him. In 1899 and 1900, Hunt applied for a monopoly of all the household mines in Korea, but he failed to receive the concession and left Korea. Allen pointed out that "had Hunt remained in Korea as did Collbran and Bostwick, he might have secured at least a part of this."⁹⁸ In 1903, Hunt visited Allen in Geneva and tried to get him to refine support to Collbran and Bostwick. However, Allen assured him he was only doing his official duty and would be obliged to do the same for any American.⁹⁹

Hunt and Allen found themselves in conflict on numerous occasions. In 1896, following the completion of negotiations for the Seoul-Chemulp'o Railway and Unsan Gold Mine, Hunt proposed that Allen grant John M. B. Sill, the U.S. minister to Korea at the time, a share in

⁹⁷ Horace N. Allen to John Hay, October 4, 1904, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 800.

⁹⁸ Horace N. Allen to Clayton W. Everett, September 3, 1904, Allen Papers; Horace N. Allen to Henry Collbran, April 18, 1905, Allen Papers; Horace N. Allen to James R. Morse, April 26, 1905, Allen Papers.

⁹⁹ Horace N. Allen, *Allen üi ilgi*, 269-270; Henry Collbran, May 24, 1905, Allen Papers, R2-B3-08-001.

the company. He insisted that Allen personally correspond with him, a request Allen deemed unnecessary.¹⁰⁰ In 1901, Allen was forced to deny rumors that he had spoken disparagingly of Hunt, particularly regarding Hunt's purported "fabulous wealth extracted from Korea" and his indulgence in "high-stakes gambling."¹⁰¹ In 1902, when Allen requested materials for a report on the management situation of the mining company in Unsan (Oriental Consolidated Mining Company), Hunt refused. Furthermore, he prevented Allen from compiling any report on the mines, accusing the government of interfering in his business affairs.¹⁰²

Raymond Krumm, a former engineer in the Board of Survey for the Korean government, also accused Allen of unlawful activities.¹⁰³ He alleged that Allen had engaged in fraudulent interference with C&B's business operations and amassed substantial profits through manipulative concession contract and real estate dealings. He also claimed that Allen was responsible for the fire that had engulfed Seoul Electric Company's Chongno Office, where crucial documents pertinent to debt disputes were housed, as well as the untimely demise of a Korean government official, Yi Ch'ae-yŏn. Krumm recommended that Allen be recalled to the United States in light of escalating anti-American sentiment within Korea,¹⁰⁴ highlighting the intense animosity towards Allen, contractors, and Americans among Koreans.¹⁰⁵ In response to a State Department follow up on the allegations, Allen questioned Krumm's character and high-

¹⁰⁰ Horace N. Allen to James R. Morse, May 9, 1896, Allen Papers.

¹⁰¹ Horace N. Allen to Leigh S. J. Hunt, February 19, 1901, Allen Papers.

¹⁰² Horace N. Allen to Harry. F. Meserve, November 3, 1902, Allen Papers.

¹⁰³ Horace N. Allen, *Allen ūi ilgi*, 288; Raymond E. L. Krumm to John M. Hay, April 21, 1904, Allen Papers; Horace N. Allen to John M. Hay, June 13, 1904, Allen Papers; Horace N. Allen to James R. Morse, July 28, 1904.4, Allen Papers.

¹⁰⁴ Allen and Sands suspected that Yi Yongik might have been involved in the sudden demise of Yi Ch'ae-yŏn. Horace N. Allen to William W. Rockhill, January 4, 1904, Allen Papers; William F. Sands, 1930, *Undiplomatic Memories: The Far East 1896-1904*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 126-127.

¹⁰⁵ Horace N. Allen to John Hay, June 13, 1904, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 758; Horace N. Allen to John M. Hay, June 13, 1904, Allen Papers.

lighted his assault on a Korean Board of Survey member and his menacing behavior towards Deshler, an American entrepreneur.¹⁰⁶ The complaint was ultimately dismissed.¹⁰⁷

Krumm's allegations against Allen were documented in a Japanese publication that was disseminated in diplomatic circles in Seoul at the time. The newspaper in question, *the Japan Daily Advertiser*, published in Yokohama, alluded that approximately 630,000 won belonging to the Seoul Electric Company was unaccounted for, prompting President Roosevelt to ask Allen for an explanation. Hagiwara Moriichi (1868-1911), the acting Japanese minister to Korea, remarked that the incident had gained attraction in Korean newspapers, with reports detailing Krumm's allegations against Allen.¹⁰⁸ Durham Durham W. Stevens, the foreign adviser to Kojong, apprised Allen of the rumor with a comment that the rumor was immediately refuted.¹⁰⁹ The State Department disregarded Krumm's allegations, while Allen remarked, "no decent paper seems to have published it."¹¹⁰

In response to allegations that he was not American, Collbran pointed out that he had completed his naturalization long before the dispute arose. He presented his Final Certificate of Naturalization, dated

¹⁰⁶ In his correspondence to Secretary of State John M. Hay, Krumm misrepresented himself as being "employed by the Koreans," a claim which was unsubstantiated. His contract, due to expire on August 31, 1903, was brought to Allen's attention by Yi Hayōng, then minister for foreign affairs, in April 1903. Yi informed Allen that the Korean government had no intention of extending Krumm's contract, thus indicating his imminent dismissal upon its expiration. Horace N. Allen to John Hay, May 20, 1902, diplomatic despatch, no. 462; Horace N. Allen to John Hay, December 2, 1902 *diplomatic despatch*, no. 545.

¹⁰⁷ Francis B. Loomis to Horace N. Allen, October 11, 1905, Allen Papers, R1-B1-02-008. Francis B. Loomis, the U.S. assistant secretary of state, became acting secretary of state after the death of John Hay on July 1, 1905.

¹⁰⁸ Hagiwara Moriichi to Komura Jutarō, confidential, no. 212, October 21, 1905, *Records of the Japanese Legation in Korea*, vol. 25.

¹⁰⁹ Durham W. Stevens to Horace Allen, October 26, 1905, Allen Papers.

¹¹⁰ Horace N. Allen to Wayne MacVeagh, October 19, 1905, Allen Papers. Still, Krumm continued to level accusations. Charles A. Towne, June 19, 1906, Allen Papers; Wayne MacVeagh to Horace N. Allen, June 27, 1906, Allen Papers; Horace N. Allen to Wayne MacVeagh, July 2, 1906, Allen Papers.

June 20, 1891. In addition, he argued that there were no “applications, negotiations, or manipulations of any kind.” He claimed that the concession was voluntarily “offered” by the Korean government.¹¹¹

Even though Allen and Collbran refuted the accusations, their arrangement was not entirely above board. Although Allen might not have possessed a direct interest in the enterprise, he anticipated an honorarium for his endeavors, akin to his compensation for brokering the Seoul-Chemulp’o Railway concession for James R. Morse and the Unsan gold mining concession for Hunt.¹¹² Collbran & Bostwick also loaned Allen 40,000 won against his Chemulp’o villa, a property he was unable to sell before his return home.¹¹³ In addition, Allen continued to advocate to the State Department for the reconstruction of the Legation, and he procured a cost estimate from C&B for the work.¹¹⁴ If Congress had not overruled him, Allen would likely have awarded the \$50,000 job to C&B. He also urged Collbran to petition the president and vice president to retain him as the U.S. minister to Korea.¹¹⁵ When Harry R. Bostwick learned of Allen’s dismissal, he offered a number of possible strategies to help Allen retain his position.¹¹⁶ In essence, the relationship between Allen and

¹¹¹ Henry Collbran, May 24, 1905, Allen Papers, R2-B3-08-001.

¹¹² In October 1901, Collbran & Bostwick offered Allen one third of their profits from the Seoul water-works concession if he succeeded in securing it. Allen did not accept the offer outright; however, he anticipated accepting an honorarium from them upon successful conclusion of the matter. Horace N. Allen, “Memorandum,” October 1, 1901, Allen Papers. In May 1905, in a letter addressed to his brother-in-law Everett, Allen stated, “I had some money from Morse, Hunt and Fassett and will now expect eventually to have some from the other firm.” Horace N. Allen to Clayton W. Everett, May 2, 1905, Allen Papers.

¹¹³ Lee Yeong-mi, 2018, “Horace N. Allen’s Summer Place: Plan, Building, and Proposal, 1897-1905,” *Journal of Incheon Studies* 29; Horace N. Allen to Collbran & Bostwick, May 24, 1905, Allen Papers. Essentially, Allen had divested himself of ownership of the villa to them. Horace N. Allen to Walter D. Townsend, May 25, 1905, Allen Papers.

¹¹⁴ Horace N. Allen to Edwin V. Morgan, October 5, 1902, Allen Papers; Horace N. Allen to John Hay, April 6, 1903, *diplomatic despatch*, no. 596.

¹¹⁵ Horace N. Allen to Henry Collbran, December 26, 1904.

¹¹⁶ In an effort to retain Allen in office, Bostwick proposed several strategies, including cabling Morse for assistance, asking Yi Hayōng and others to request a cable be sent to Washington in Kojong’s name, and organizing a petition among American residents in Seoul to present to the

C&B was one of mutual vested interest.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

The triple concessions granted by Kojong to American businessman shortly after the onset of the Russo-Japanese War symbolize the final phase of U.S.-Korean relations, just before Korea became a Japanese protectorate. Kojong ended a long-standing debt dispute and made a conciliatory gesture to the American entrepreneurs. He also took refuge in the vicinity of the U.S. Legation, which was guarded by U.S. Marines, creating the impression of his being protected by America. Allen, however, was thoroughly preparing for Korea's imminent change, by using the title of 'official representative of the U.S. government in Korea', instead of 'minister', in the concession contract, so that the American interests would be protected properly.

The triple concessions met with considerable suspicion. Speculation arose regarding the retroactive dating of the contract, Kojong having orchestrated a palace fire as a pretext for his escape to the U.S. Legation, and the alleged connections between C&B and Allen. In this paper, I have looked at the probability of the contract being retroactively dated. I have also argued that Allen was not involved in a plot to evacuate Kojong to the American Legation. However, I have also revealed that despite their denials, Allen and Collbran shared common interests. Meanwhile, the very people Allen had helped charged him with regard to the concessions. This suggests that it is important to look at the clash of personal interests and the competition between individuals, as well as competition among nations, to understand this period.

 U.S. president. Harry R. Bostwick to Horace N. Allen, March 20, 1905, Allen Papers.

¹¹⁷ After Allen became U.S. minister to Korea, Collbran wanted to grant Allen a stake in the Street Railway. However, Allen declined, instead urging Collbran to compensate Deshler, who had played a pivotal role in Allen's promotion. Despite never accepting any remuneration, this interaction constituted a form of transaction between Allen and Collbran. Horace N. Allen to James R. Morse, April 26, 1905, Allen Papers.

In this light, this article offers a fresh perspective on how power relations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including the 1905 Korea-Japan Treaty, shaped Allen's role as a mediator between Korea and the United States. This complex interplay of power dynamics also influenced the relationship between the two countries, with Allen at times pursuing an independent course to further his own ambitions. He may have gone against his own government's policies and circumvented legal constraints. Yet did his step ultimately contribute to Korea's independence? Rather, we should look at the ways in which he learned to recognize the differences between the two countries and deploy them to his advantage.

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