

# The Journal of Northeast Asian History

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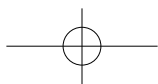
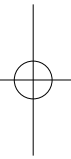
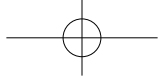
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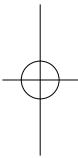
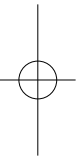
# Special Topic





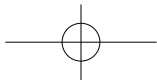
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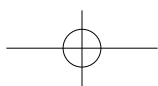
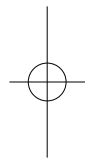
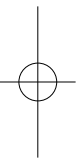
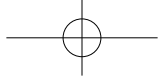
Dong-uk LEE  
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# The Qing Dynasty's Response to the Question of "Tributary States" from the 1840s to the 1860s\*

Dong-uk LEE

Northeast Asian History Foundation

## Introduction

The Opium Wars and the entry of the Qing Dynasty(1636-1912) into an unequal treaty system were so shocking that they have been called the "collapse of the Heavenly Dynasty" (天朝).<sup>1</sup> However, the Qing did not in fact lose its hegemonic position as above in the traditional world order of East Asia. Both the unequal treaty system and the tributary system co-existed for some time in East Asia. The real question is how the Qing's relationship with Western powers gave rise to conflict with its neighboring states. It is thus necessary to investigate the nature of the suzerainty that the Qing claimed over its neighboring countries, a topic that has received scant attention in research to this point.

The question of whether the relationship that the Qing had with its neighboring countries, including Joseon, operated merely formal and ceremonial or contained substantial authority over these states was a seminal

\* This translated article is a revised and supplemented version of Dong-uk Lee, 「1840-1860년대 청조의 '속국' 문제에 대한 대응」, 『중국근현대사연구』(June, 2020) 86: 1-30.

<sup>1</sup> Mao Haijian, *Tianchao de beng huai: Apian zhanzheng zai yanjiu* (Beijing: Shenghuo·Dushu·Xinzhishi Sanlian Shudian, 2005).

issue in the foreign relations of the Qing in the late 19th century.<sup>2</sup> From the late 1870s, the Qing claimed suzerainty over Ryukyu, Vietnam, Joseon, and several other countries, resulting in wars with France and Japan. In the early 20th century, it then claimed sovereignty over Tibet and Outer Mongolia, resulting in confrontations with Britain and Russia. There has been continuous debate on whether Chinese suzerainty was “in all but name or ‘worthy of the name’” in the premodern East Asian order.<sup>3</sup> This debate is directly related to the view of Qing interventionist policy in Joseon as either strengthening traditional suzerainty or as a modern imperialist policy. The essence of this debate is whether tributary states or vassal states were sovereign states in the modern sense or dependent states. Whether Qing intervention in the Joseon question was an illegitimate violation of sovereignty or a legitimate act of a suzerain state against a dependent state is related to the aforementioned question.<sup>4</sup> This paper attempts to determine the nature of the suzerainty that existed in premodern East Asia in terms of lawful international sovereignty.

In this respect, it is necessary to take note of recent research on Korea-China relations focusing on the doctrine of vassal state autonomy (屬國自主論). Okamoto Takashi points out that the idea that “Joseon was a Qing vassal state, but its internal governance and diplomacy was autonomous” was a convenient explanation that allowed each country to emphasize the concepts of vassal state or autonomy according to its needs.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See Bang Hyangsuk et al., *Han-Jung oegyo gwangye wa jogong chaekbong* (Goguryeo Yeongu Jaedan, 2005); Dongbuka Yeoksa Jaedan, *Han-Jung-Il haggye ui Han-Jung gwangyesa yeongu wa jaengjeom* (Dongbuka Yeoksa Jaedan, 2009); Lee Dong-uk, “Cheongmal gukjebeop beonyeok gwa ‘beonsok’ gwallyeon gaenyeom ui hwakjang,” *Jungguk geunhyeondaesa yeongu* 80 (2018): 2–3; Son Seong-uk, “Choegeun Junggukhak gye ui geundae Han-Jung gwangyesa yeongu, 2007–2016,” *Dongyang hak* 69 (2017).

<sup>3</sup> Wang Yuanzhou, *Xiao zhonghua yishi de shanbian* (Minzu Chubanshe, 2013), 40.

<sup>4</sup> Gu Seon-hui, “Geundae Han-Jung-gwangyesa ui yeongu gyeonghyang gwa jaengjeom bunseok,” in *Han-Jung-Il haggye ui Han-Jung-gwangyesa yeongu wa jaengjeom*, ed. Dongbuka Yeoksa Jaedan (Seoul: Dongbuka Yeoksa Jaedan, 2009), 187–236; Lee Dong-uk, “Cheongmal gukjebeop beonyeok,” 2–3.

<sup>5</sup> Okamoto Takashi, *Zokkoku to jishu no aida: Kindai Shin-Kan kankei to Higashi Ajia no meiuin* (Nagoya: Nagoya University Press, 2004).

He takes the starting point of this theory of vassal state autonomy as the 1866 French Expedition to Korea and the 1871 United States Expedition to Korea, and traces the process of the transformation of Qing-Joseon relations from this point. However, he fails to fully apprehend the triangular relationship between Joseon, the Qing, and the West given that he dismisses explanations for the origin of the so-called "theory of vassal state autonomy". On the other hand, while Korean historians have begun to critically reinterpret the theory of vassal state autonomy, their research has not paid adequate attention to the modalities from the 1840s to 1860s.<sup>6</sup> This article will thus pay special attention to the period when the Qing went through the First Opium War (1839-1842), the Second Opium War (1856-1860), and the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) without any enthusiasm for intervening in conflicts between its neighboring countries and the Western powers. In particular, it will focus on the changes in the way the Qing responded to conflicts between its neighboring states and the Western powers before and after the Second Opium War, and the flexibility of the Qing in terms of utilizing the concept of suzerainty.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, the Qing did respond to requests from Joseon and Ryukyu to mediate with the Western powers, a departure from their policy before 1840. During the Qianlong reign (1735-1796) and the Jiaqing

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Kim Hyeon-cheol, "Geundae Hanguk ui 'jaju' wa 'dongnip' gaenyeom ui jeongae: 'Sokbang jaju' eseo 'jaju dongnip' euro," *Geundae Hanguk ui sahoe gwahak gaenyeom hyeongseongsa* 2, eds. Ha Yeong-seon and Son Yul (Seoul: Changbi, 2012), 171-200; Yu Ba-da, "19 segi huban Joseon ui gukje beopjeok jiji e gwanhan yeongu" (PhD diss., Korea University, 2016); Kim Hyeong-jong, "19 segi geundae Han-Jung gwangye ui byeonjong - jaju wa dongnip ui sai," *Dongyang sahak yeongu* 140 (2017): 223-270.

<sup>7</sup> For earlier research on Qing policy towards Joseon in this period, see Sin Seung-ha, "Cheonggye Jungguk joya ui Joseon munje insik: Munho gaebang eul jungsimeuro," *Sahakji* 7 (1973): 119-42; Gweon Hyeok-su, *Geundae Han-Jung gwangyesa ui jaejomyeong* (Seoul: Hyeon, 2007); Jiang Bo, *Yang rao zhong de tianchao: Xifang qinrao chaoxian yu qing zhengfu de yingdui* (Master's diss., Shandong University, 2016); Son Seong-uk, "'Woegyo' ui gyunyeol gwa mosaek: 1860-70 nyeondae Cheong-Jo gwangye," *Yeoksa hakbo* 240 (2018): 525-70. In particular, Sin Seung-ha's work diachronically examines the perceptions of the Joseon question inside and outside of the Qing government after the Opium Wars. On the other hand, Min Du-gi deals with information gathering activities and perceptions of Joseon in relation to the first and second opium wars from the 1840s-60s. See Min Du-gi, *Sigan gwa ui gyeongjaeng* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2001), 119-42.

reign (1796-1820), the Qing dynasty had refused several times to intervene in conflicts among vassal states or between vassal states and neighboring countries, espousing the idea of “*yi shi tong ren*” (一視同仁, equal treatment).<sup>8</sup> As such, even after its defeat in the Opium Wars, the Qing attempted to intervene in conflicts among Joseon, Ryukyu, and the Western powers.

In this respect, it is important to take note of the argument of Lee Yeong-ok that “how the Tianchao [Heavenly kingdom] managed crises needs to be understood beyond the conceptualization that Tianchao faced aggression merely due to corruption and perceived weakness”.<sup>9</sup> While Lee’s focus is mainly on the domestic arena, his argument can also be applied to the Qing’s foreign relations. The hegemonic claim of the Heavenly Dynasty was made possible because the emperor exerted his influence not only in Qing but also in the neighboring countries. That is, the Qing adhered to the traditional perception that guarding the emperor lies in the For Barbarians, namely its neighboring countries.<sup>10</sup> As such, Qing

<sup>8</sup> He Xinhua, *Zuihou de tianchao: Qing dai chaogong zhidu yanjiu* (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 2013), 33–43. He describes the foreign policy of the Qing dynasty as “non-interference in the internal affairs of vassal states,” “non-intervention in wars among neighboring countries,” “Xing mie ji jiue” (興滅繼絕, restoring the fallen and joining the disconnected), and “En xu hou yang” (恩恤厚養, sympathy and nurture for the needy), and evaluates it as a passive defense policy contributing to the stability of the regional order by not intervening in wars among neighboring states. However, considering that the Qing dynasty conquered continental Asia and fought the wars against Vietnam, Myanmar, and the Gurkha during the Kangxi and Jianlong years, this argument makes selective use of historical materials in order to glamorize the “Tianxia zhixu” (天下秩序, world order) of the Qing period. The reality was that the Qing dynasty made choices on whether or not to intervene in the matters of a vassal state according to actual national power and both external and internal circumstances. It conducted a flexible foreign policy in the spirit of “Congsu cong yi” (從俗從宜, conform to local custom) and “Yin su er zhi” (因俗而治, rule by custom), while at the same time arbitrarily using the traditional concepts of “Yi shi tong ren” (一視同仁) and “Xing mie ji jiue” (興滅繼絕) as justifications for intervention.

<sup>9</sup> Lee Yeong-ok, “1840 nyeondae Cheongjo ui punggyeong,” in *Dong Asia gukje gwangyesa*, ed. Kim Jun-yeop Seonsaeng Ginyeomseo Pyeonchan Wiwoenhoe (Seoul: Ayeon Chulpanbu, 2010), 399.

<sup>10</sup> “Gu zhe tianzi shou zai siyi; tianzi bei, shou zai zhuhou” (古者天子守在四夷; 天子卑, 守在諸侯 In ancient times, defence of the son of heaven was against the four barbarians; when he was weak, his protection lay in the hands of the lords and barons). “Zaogong 23rd year;” Zuo zhuan; “Tianxia you dao, shou zai siyi, yi xiu dezheng, yi huai bu fu” (天下有道, 守在四夷, 宜修德政, 以懷不附

intervention between Joseon / Ryukyu and the Western powers after the Opium Wars can be seen as its crisis management in diplomacy. With these in mind, I will chart the changing attitude of the Qing regarding both the traditional tributary relations in East Asia and the concept of suzerainty while examining the background against which the theory of vassal state autonomy emerged, particularly in terms of the crisis management policy of the Qing. This approach will show that the flexibility and variation of Qing foreign policy was entwined with its own domestic situation, its interpretation of the Western international order, and the changes in the relationship between the Qing and the Western powers.

## The Qing Policy towards Joseon after the Treaty of Nanking

In April 1844, the Daoguang Emperor appointed Keying (耆英), the Governor-General of the two Guang, as imperial commissioner to assume full charge of foreign affairs. The position was normally called the Minister and Commissioner Extraordinary of the Trade and Foreign Intercourse of the Five Ports or Minister of Commerce of Nanyang.<sup>11</sup> From this time until the establishment of the Zongli Yamen (總理衙門 Office of Foreign Affairs), the Governor-General handled diplomatic relations between the Qing government and the Western powers. In a way, this was an extension of the traditional diplomacy in which the Shengjing jiangjun (盛京將軍, the Manchu General of Mukden) handled affairs related to Joseon while the governor of Fujian handled those related to Ryukyu and the Governor-General of the two Guangs handled those related to Siam (暹羅) and the Western countries.

Unlike envoys from the tributary states, who could enter Beijing and directly and engage with the Ministry of Rites (*libu*, 禮部), negotia-

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There is a way in the world; defend against the four barbarians, and rightfully deliver good governance, then there will be no regret to be attached to it). "Chenshi chuan, Fuzi ji," *Hou Han Shu*.

<sup>11</sup> Quan He Xiu, "Wan qing duiwai guanxi zhong de 'yige waijiao liang zhong tizhi' xianxiang chuyi," *Zhongguo bianjiang shidi* 19, no. 4 (2009): 76.

tions with the Western powers took place at a local level, with the Governor-General of the Two Guang holding the position of imperial commissioner. This meant that the negotiation process in disputes between the Western powers and tributary states, such as Joseon and Ryukyu, was rather cumbersome. On the other hand, when Joseon or Ryukyu consulted the Ministry of Rites, the latter submitted the matter to the throne. If the emperor accepted the petition, the Minister of the Trade of the Five Ports negotiated with the representatives of the Western powers and then reported the result to the emperor. If the emperor agreed, his decision was conveyed to the Ministry of Rites which then informed Joseon or Ryukyu of the result. Consequently, the Ministry of Rites was in charge of the exchange of official documents, a typical traditional diplomacy.

Between 1845 and 1847, at the request of Joseon and Ryukyu, the Qing conducted negotiations with representatives of Britain and France on three occasions. These three cases illustrate the attitude of the Qing towards conflicts between Joseon / Ryukyu and the Western powers. In 1845, the British warship HMS *Samarang* appeared in Joseon waters and began to survey the coast in attempts to persuade local officials to trade with the British. The *Annals of the Joseon Dynasty* recorded Joseon's response:

Kim Dohui, Left State Councillor, presented an official letter stating, "That is, the behavior of Westerners is hard to fathom. In the year of Imjin [1832] of the late king [Sunjo, r.1800-1834], a British ship came and anchored in Hongju. Although it quickly left, the event was reported at that time to the Ministry of Rites [of the Qing dynasty] for consultation. Some time later, in the year of Gyeongja [1840], their ship again came to Jeju Island and anchored there, but because it disappeared as suddenly as it had come and the matter became very cumbersome, it was laid aside without discussion. This time, as it is difficult to predict the intent of the barbarians compared to the year of Imjin, and information gathered during the preliminary investigation suggests that it was accompanied by a translator from the Qing state, it won't do without any precautions. It is appropriate, therefore, to transmit a request for con-

sultation to the Ministry of Rites, following the precedent of the year of Imjin, via the envoy sent to receive the calendar, and to make a request to promulgate by imperial decree that the port [番泊所] of Guangdong is forbidden land [禁斷之地]". It was done accordingly.<sup>12</sup>

The precedent of the Imjin year in the above quotation refers to an incident in 1832 when Lord Amherst made a demand for trade with Joseon. The Joseon government refused and notified the Qing of the incident, an action which earned the praise of the Daoguang Emperor. In the 1845 incident with HMS *Samarang*, the Joseon government again sent a letter to the Ministry of Rites and emphasized its refusal to trade with the Western powers on the grounds that Joseon had insufficient resources for trade with foreigners and it was geographically too close to the Qing. If the Western powers came and caused civil unrest in Joseon, it would affect the Qing state.

Joseon also requested an imperial edict to the department responsible for administering the ships of the Western powers so that Joseon could remain safe and peaceful under the protection of 'the principle of prohibition'.<sup>13</sup> The Daoguang Emperor accepted Joseon's request and instructed Keying to investigate the case and to persuade the British not to go to Joseon.<sup>14</sup> This principle was repeated in an imperial speech about the incident.

That Joseon submitted itself to the Tianchao as a vassal and has kept itself strictly within the law and institutions of vassalage is not comparable to the other states. *After the conclusion of the treaties, the English barbarians need to observe all their regulations. Yet why did they go*

<sup>12</sup> Heonjong (憲宗), *Joseon wangjo sillok* (Seoul: Guksa Pyeonchan Wiwonhoe, 1986).

<sup>13</sup> "Consultation requesting the prohibition of the traffic of British barbarian ships" (請禁斷英夷船來往咨), in Guksa Pyeonchan Wiwonhoe, ed., *Dongmun hwigo*, vol. 4, 'Wonpyeonsok' (原編續) pyomin ryuk sanggukin (滌民六上國人).

<sup>14</sup> Wen Qing et al., eds., *Daoguang chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 74 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2008), 2936–37.

*to the vassal state of the Tianchao and stir up trouble? ... Instructions shall be given to Keying to make detailed inquiries with the English envoy about this incident; to question whether the ship allegedly seen by Joseon was indeed sent by the English barbarians and what the intentions of their leader were, and to make every effort to subdue them without fail in the right words, “and to submit themselves of their own accord by persuading them surreptitiously;” and by making them hereafter duly observe the treaties and live in peace with each other, and by ensuring that their warships will not ever again intrude into Joseon’s territory and make commotion, express the Tianchao’s intention to keep vassal territories peaceful.*<sup>15</sup>

Here, rebuking Britain for breaching the treaties it had made with the Qing, the Daoguang Emperor issued an order to ensure that the British observe these treaties and not go to Joseon. It is thus clear that the Daoguang Emperor understood “the principle of prohibition” as being the treaties between the Qing and Britain.

In requesting the application of “the principle of prohibition,” Joseon showed such a degree of awareness of the Western powers, stating that “as our small country, leaning towards the eastern fringe, we do not know the circumstances of the farthest west and north of these barbarians, but from what we have heard, they are solely engaged in trade and always reside in the midst of the sea of Guangdong, in places such as Macao.” Joseon knew through the frequent dispatch of envoys that the Opium War had broken out because of British demands for trade and that the Qing had eventually accepted this demand. However, it did not seem to have a detailed understanding of the content of the treaties between Britain and the Qing. The Joseon envoys of 1844 reported that “the open market, which previously existed only in Guangdong, has been expanded to four other places, and there is peace both at home and abroad as

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<sup>15</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Daoguang chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 74, 2936–2937 (italics added).

before.”<sup>16</sup> Joseon appears to have requested that it should not be included in the areas open to trade with the Western powers.

In 1864, *Wanguo gongfa* (萬國公法, literally “Public Law of Nations”), was published. It was the first book to introduce Western international law into China. As such, it seems unlikely that the Qing in the 1840s had a high level of understanding of the Western international legal system or the new international order that would later be called the “treaty system.” Still, both sides had an obligation to observe the terms of the treaties that had already been signed. The preamble to the Treaty of Hoomun-Chae (虎門條約, Treaty of the Bogue) referred to the Treaty of Nanking (南京條約) as “a treaty of perpetual peace and friendship” (萬年和約). Then, it stated that the “articles shall be binding, and of the same efficacy as though they had been inserted in the original treaty of perpetual peace and friendship.”<sup>17</sup> The treaty was thus perceived as one that bound both parties to the observance of the articles within it. The Daoguang Emperor expected that the Westerners would be to some extent constrained by the treaties, making Joseon safe and secure.

However, in the series of treaties concluded with Britain, America, and France beginning with the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, there was no reference to matters concerning Joseon and Ryukyu. Only in the Treaty of the Bogue was the following article included:

After the five ports of Canton [廣州], Fuchow [福州], Amoy [廈門], Ningpo [寧波] and Shanghai [上海] are opened, English merchants shall be allowed to trade only at those five ports. They shall not they repair to any other ports or places, nor will the Chinese people at any other ports or places be permitted to trade with them. If English merchant vessels, in contravention of this agreement, and of a proclamation of the same to be

<sup>16</sup> Min Du-gi, *Sigan gwa ui gyeongjaeng*, 122–127.

<sup>17</sup> “凡此條款實與原繕萬年和約無異，兩國均須專一奉行，切不可稍有乖違，致背成約。”“五口通商附粘善後條款” [General regulations under which British trade is to be conducted at the five ports of Canton, Amoy, Fuchow, Ningpo, and Shanghai]. Wang Teyea, ed., *Zhongwai jiu yuezhang huibian*, vol. 1 (Sanlian Shudian, 1957), 33.

issued by the British plenipotentiary, repair to any other ports or places, the Chinese government officers shall be at liberty to seize and confiscate both vessels and cargoes. And should Chinese people be discovered clandestinely dealing with English merchants at any other ports or places, they shall be punished by the Chinese government in such manner as the law may direct.<sup>18</sup>

The historical evaluation of the treaties signed by the Qing has focused largely on the opening of the five ports and the unequal terms imposed by the Western power. In the treaties of Nanking and the Bogue, the Qing opened the five ports and agreed to pay reparations for war expenses. It also approved the ceding of Hong Kong to the British, the creation of concessions, the application of 5 percent agreed tariffs, unilateral consular jurisdiction, the right of anchorage for warships in normal ports, and most-favored-nation treatment. Through the treaties of Wanghsia (望廈) and Whampoa (黃埔), it guaranteed the right of foreign ships of war to freely navigate the coastal waters of China and to dock at any of its ports to protect their commercial interests.

However, the Qing was not unilaterally giving way in these treaties. Although it approved the opening of the five ports, it prohibited trade in places other than these ports and detailed substantive methods through which to sanction foreigners in contravention of this provision. As a result, Joseon understood its territory as a forbidden land<sup>19</sup> where contact with foreigners was restricted. For their part, the Qing made clear to the British that Joseon was to be untouched and the British appeared to accept the request. Keying reported the outcome of negotiations with the British representative as follows:

*I asked them again the reason why, even though Joseon is a vassal of the Tianchao and they should duly observe everything [in the treaties], after*

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<sup>18</sup> Wang Tieya, ed., *Zhongwai jiu yuezhang huibian*, 33–34.

<sup>19</sup> Heonjong, *Joseon wangjo sillok*.

*the signing of the treaty, they again sent warships and went to Joseon to survey their mountains and waters and to demand trade. They answered that ... they have no intentions other than to allow the prince of their country to send these ships through all the seas to survey waterways, to set up sea marks, and to draw sea charts in order for merchant vessels to seek shelter from the winds. The ship which went to Joseon set sail from Hong Kong in April this year. Its name was reportedly HMS *Samarang* ... and it will go back to their own country and not return to Joseon again after finishing the survey ... They claimed that because they knew very well that discussions about trade would be of no avail, they would never happen. As I was worried about their sincerity, I once again made clear the content of the treaties, and over and over again made it understood in the right words in an indirect way. Their leader strongly asserted that his words were all true and there was no other intention behind them. Examining their circumstances and statements, they seemed trustworthy.<sup>20</sup>*

The Daoguang Emperor was satisfied with this report and issued an instruction to make another agreement with the British so that their warships would not cause any unrest in Joseon.<sup>21</sup> From the Western point of view, this would clearly have suggested that the Qing was claiming suzerainty over Joseon. For the Qing, preoccupied with extricating itself from military conflict and making an agreement with the British, it may simply have been an expedient response to Joseon's request.

Importantly, this expedience was the first example of the Qing dy-

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<sup>20</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Daoguang chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 74, 2943–44 (italics added). On the other hand, Mary C. Wright claims that Keying said to the British: "As tributary states are not part of Qing, Qing cannot force Joseon to trade with other states. As tributary states are not independent states, they cannot try to trade on their own, either. At any rate, Joseon is so poor that the trade with Joseon would bring no profit." Mary C. Wright, "The Adaptability of Ch'ing Diplomacy: The Case of Korea," *Journal of Asian Studies* 17, no. 3 (1958): 369, quoted in Kim Han-gyu, *Han-Jung gwangyesa 2* (Seoul: Areuke, 1999), 822–23. The author tried to verify this statement, but no such content could be found in the materials suggested by the original author as the source of the citation.

<sup>21</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Daoguang chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 74, 2945.

nasty defining both the extent of its suzerainty under international law and the scope of the sovereignty of Joseon / Ryukyu. Although the Daoguang Emperor and Keying did not intend it, the claim that the British demand for trade with Joseon was in breach of its treaty with the Qing signaled the superior status of the Qing that takes responsibility for the security of Joseon.

Having received assurances from the British that they would adhere to the terms of the treaty, the Qing attempted to expand the application of the treaty to conflicts between Joseon / Ryukyu and the Western powers. From 1843, France and Britain sent warships to Ryukyu and pressured the government to conclude a treaty with them and open up the islands to trade. Although the king of Ryukyu refused it, they made their stewards stay within the boundaries of Ryukyu and built a hospital. The king appealed for help to the Qing on the grounds that the country was too poor to open itself up to trade and being a vassal state of the Heavenly Dynasty, it could not conduct foreign relations with other countries. Despite these entreaties, Britain and France both established a footing on the territory of Ryukyu, which led to a number of incidents.<sup>22</sup>

The Daoguang Emperor stated, “Ryukyu is the most docile in submissiveness. Despite their frequent entreaties, if we do not put an end to their fear and commotion, control of other vassals will be lost.”<sup>23</sup> He then gave instructions to Keying to make the representatives of Britain and France aware that treaties should be observed and to persuade them to withdraw their remaining personnel from Ryukyu.<sup>24</sup> In his negotiations with the two countries, Keying received a promise from the French to withdraw all their personnel within a year, and he was optimistic about a British withdrawal.<sup>25</sup> The Qing based their demands on both the Treaty

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<sup>22</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Daoguang chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 77, 3074.

<sup>23</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Daoguang chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 77.

<sup>24</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Daoguang chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 77.

<sup>25</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Daoguang chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 77, 3075.

of the Bogue and Article 2 of the Treaty of Whampoa.<sup>26</sup> However, while the French withdrew within a year as promised, the British did not. Consequently, Ryukyu had to again appeal to the Qing for help in forcing the British to leave.<sup>27</sup>

Both Joseon and Ryukyu called for the protection of the Qing according to its traditional role as the leader of East Asian World Order. The Qing, pointing out that trade between Western powers and Joseon / Ryukyu was in contravention of the treaties banning trade in places other than the five ports, tried to prevent incursions by the former into the latter. In addition, by keeping the neighboring states peaceful, it sought to preserve the dignity of the Heavenly Dynasty.

For the Qing, the only method of restraining the Western powers was to continually make them aware of the provisions of the various treaties they had signed.<sup>28</sup> However, these treaties already contained provisions that would allow the Western powers to circumvent their main articles. For example, Article 30 of the Treaty of Whampoa permitted warships to enter any port, not just the five ports open to commerce.

All French ships of war, in protecting the commerce of their country, shall receive friendly treatment in all the ports of China where they present themselves. These ships of war may procure there the diverse provisions that they will need, and if they have been damaged, repair them and buy for this purpose the necessary materials, all of these without the least opposition. It will be the same with regard to French merchant

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<sup>26</sup> "Henceforth the French and their families may move, reside and engage in commerce ... in the ports and places of Canton, Emoui, Fou-chou, Nin-po and Chan-hai. French ships may trade freely in the said ports, stay there, and circulate from one to the other, according to their convenience. But they are strictly forbidden to enter and carry out commercial dealings in any other port of China, as well as to practice clandestine sales or purchases on the coast. In the event of contravention of this Article, and subject to the exceptions mentioned in Article XXX, the cargo of the said vessels may be confiscated for the benefit of the Chinese Government." (unofficial English translation). For the Chinese text of the treaty (五口貿易章程: 海關稅則). See Wang Tieya, ed., *Zhongwai jiu yuezhang huibian*, 58.

<sup>27</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Daoguang chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 79, 3156–3157.

<sup>28</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Daoguang chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 77, 3074.

ships, which as a result of major damage or for any other cause, shall be constrained to seek refuge in any Chinese port (unofficial translation).<sup>29</sup>

Between 1846 and 1847, French warships appeared twice on the Joseon coast to protest the execution of three French missionaries and demanded the conclusion of a treaty and trade agreement. Joseon considered France, like Britain, a “country that trades and navigates along the coast of the Qing under its control” and once again asked the Qing to “issue an order to the governor-general of the Two Guangs to prevent the French from causing unrest.”<sup>30</sup> The Qing instructed Keying to negotiate with the French who avoided mentioning their demand for trade and missionary work in Joseon and focused instead on the deaths of their three missionaries. They also insisted that they were merely discussing friendship with Joseon and would send warships to Joseon waters every year.<sup>31</sup> This response did not please the Daoguang Emperor but he could do little other than to instruct Keying “to give guidance to them and to urgently advise them to stop.”<sup>32</sup>

Shortly thereafter, the French changed tack and claimed that their warships were in Joseon waters solely to monitor trade, to draw nautical charts, and to search for the goods belonging to a vessel wrecked there earlier. Keying reported this to the Daoguang Emperor and suggested that he tell Joseon, “If in the future French warships arrive inside its boundary, it should treat them with courtesy.”<sup>33</sup> Just as the Qing had tried to use the articles of the Whampoa Treaty to include the territories of the vassal states, the French apparently changed their objectives so that they were not in conflict with the treaty. As long as the Qing interpreted the

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<sup>29</sup> For the Chinese text, see Wang Tieya, ed., *Zhongwai jiu yuezhang huibian*, 63.

<sup>30</sup> “Report on the Activities of French Warships and the Reason for Consultation” (報佛蘭船來往緣由咨), in Guksa Pyeonchan Wiwonhoe, *Dongmun hwigo*, vol. 4, ‘Wonpyeonsok’ pyomin ryuk sanggukin.

<sup>31</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Daoguang chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 78, 3112-14; 3121-22.

<sup>32</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Daoguang chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 79, 3131.

<sup>33</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Daoguang chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 79.

Whampoa Treaty as the treaty that applies to the territories of Joseon / Ryukyu, French warships would have the right to navigate the coastal waters of Joseon to protect their merchant ships and to enter its ports. As a result, Joseon was now obligated to provide friendly treatment to French warships.

Meanwhile, in the negotiations with Britain over Ryukyu, the British did not accept the claim that it was a vassal state of the Qing dynasty. They pointed out that as Ryukyu was also a vassal state of Japan, it could not be under the suzerainty of the Qing. In the end, Keying proposed, the power of the Qing could not reach Ryukyu in times of emergency so the passage of Western warships for trade and medical activity in Ryukyu would be open to the Ryukyu, whose government then should make strenuous efforts to limit the interactions of local residents with the British.<sup>34</sup>

After the coronation of the Xianfeng Emperor in 1851, Ryukyu on several occasions asked the Qing to intervene and secure the removal of the British missionary Bernard Jean Bettelheim who conducted medical activities there for several years.<sup>35</sup> Xu Guangjin, the imperial commissioner and Governor-General of the Two Guangs refused the Ryukyu's request. Why? Ryukyu could not hope to control the interactions between a mere doctor and the locals. Xu also argued that this was not a matter of necessity to negotiate with the British:

Generally speaking, the way to control barbarians is this: If you say a word, it should be implemented at all costs, so that the body politic is not damaged. If a note is sent out despite clearly knowing that it cannot be implemented, it will get slighted. Moreover, what is more worrying is that even if things that could be done were demanded afterwards, it would fall into the position in which they would purposefully make matters difficult.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Daoguang chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 79, 3072.

<sup>35</sup> Jia Zhen et al., eds., *Xianfeng chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 4 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2008), 122; *Xianfeng chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 7, 296; *Xianfeng chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 15, 512.

<sup>36</sup> Jia Zhen et al., *Xianfeng chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 4, 135.

The policy of the Qing to “keep its neighboring countries peaceful” had begun as an attempt to control the Western powers but it ended up acknowledging the reality of their presence and influence.<sup>37</sup> By the 1860s, the Qing changed its position to the extent that “All the questions of politics and religion and prohibitory rules are autonomously determined by the king of that country.”<sup>38</sup> This new position appeared after the conclusion of the Treaty of Tientsin (1858) and the Convention of Peking (1860) and seems at first glance to contravene the policies of the Daoguang reigns. However, it was actually a continuation of existing Qing policy.

### The Treaty of Tientsin and the Emergence of “Vassal State Autonomy”

The Qing policy of dissuading the great powers from contacting Joseon / Ryukyu while demanding that these states have amicable relations with the great powers, was a consistent feature after the Second Opium War and even after the establishment of the Zongli Yamen (Office of Foreign Affairs) to deal with negotiations with the West. The Zongli Yamen continued to deter the great powers from going to Joseon while advising Joseon to get information about negotiations with the West through the Ministry of Rites. However, unlike the Daoguang reigns, the Zongli Yamen of the Tongzhi reigns stated that “though a vassal state, Joseon is a *de facto* autonomous state,” meaning that the treaties between the Qing and Western states did not apply to it.

The background of Qing’s forward-looking stance was the Second Opium War and the very change in the treaty system after the Treaty of

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<sup>37</sup> Until the early 1860s, with the exception of the Russian ship Pallada, no demands for trade and the conclusion of a treaty were made to Joseon. See Bak Cheon-hong, *Angnyeong-i chulmolhad-eon Joseon ui bada: Seoyang gwa Joseon ui mannam* (Hyeonsil Munhwa, 2008).

<sup>38</sup> 一切政教禁令，向由該國王自主。” “Statement of the Ministry of Rites Received by the Office of the Governor-General” (總署收禮部文), in Yanjiu Yun Jindai Shi Yanjiu Suo, *Qing ji zhong ri han guanxi shiliao*, 165.

Tientsin in 1858. Before the Second Opium War, the Qing had prohibited the Western powers from trade and commercial activities in regions other than the trade ports stipulated in the treaties, but the Second Opium War changed this situation. In the Treaty of Tientsin, the Qing conceded the right of the Western powers to travel, trade, and do missionary work within its borders.

#### Article 8

The French who wish to travel to the cities of the interior, or to the ports where foreign ships are not admitted, may do so in complete safety, on the express condition of being provided with passports written in French and in Chinese, legally issued by diplomatic agents or French consuls in China, and countersigned by the Chinese authorities.

#### Article 13

... effective protection shall be given to missionaries who travel peacefully in the interior of the country, provided with the regular passports mentioned in Article 8. No obstacle shall be brought by the authorities of the Chinese Empire to the recognized right of every individual in China to embrace Christianity, if he wishes, and to follow its practices, without being liable to any punishment inflicted for this fact (unofficial translation).<sup>39</sup>

Through the Treaty of Tientsin, as long as holding passports or permits, the Westerners could travel anywhere and continue their missionary work. Furthermore, the Qing could no longer claim that Joseon and Ryukyu were the areas closed to foreigners. As such, the Westerners soon began to apply for passports to travel to Joseon.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> For the Chinese text, see Wang Tiejia, ed., *Zhongwai jiu yuezhang huibian*, 105–07.

<sup>40</sup> "Memorial from the Office of the Governor-General" (總署奏摺), in *Zhongyang Yanjiu Yun Jindai Shi Yanjiu Suo*, *Qing ji zhong ri han guanxi shiliao*, 30; "Note to France" (法國照會), in *Zhongyang Yanjiu Yun Jindai Shi Yanjiu Suo*, *Qing ji zhong ri han guanxi shiliao*, 27.

If the Qing wanted to retain their role in “keeping its neighboring countries peaceful” and if Joseon continued to refuse contact with the Western powers, the Zongli Yamen had to find a new way of blocking the demands of Western powers. The Qing believed that Joseon was not included in the scope of the Tientsin Treaty.<sup>41</sup> The Zongli Yamen made it clear both to the Western powers and Joseon that “as all the articles of the treaty, concluded with France, and every clause of the treaties, concluded with other states, merely mention the land of China and do not refer to its neighbors, they have no relation at all with Joseon.”<sup>42</sup> By confining the scope of the treaties to the territory under the direct rule of the Qing, it placed Joseon outside the scope of the treaties.

Nonetheless, seen from the perspective of international law, the Qing’s argument for Joseon as an autonomous vassal state came to undermine Qing’s claims to suzerainty over Joseon. The French understood the argument of the Zongli Yamen to mean that “Joseon pays tribute to China, but all its state affairs are handled autonomously.”<sup>43</sup> Henry Wheaton, the author of *Elements of International Law*, which was translated into Chinese in 1864, explained that vassal states or tributary states, in other words, states having a feudal relationship with a particular state, were considered independent states, as long as their sovereignty was not affected by this relationship.<sup>44</sup> Following this perspective, the explanation of the Zongli Yamen amounted to a *de facto* declaration that while Joseon was tantamount to a nominal tributary state that “had received the calendar with reverence and paid tribute on occasion,”<sup>45</sup> this relationship

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<sup>41</sup> “Note to France,” in Zhongyang Yanjiu Yun Jindai Shi Yanjiu Suo, *Qing ji zhong ri han guanxi shiliao*, 27.

<sup>42</sup> Wen Qing et al., eds., *Tongzhi chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 47 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2008), 1995.

<sup>43</sup> “Note to France,” in Zhongyang Yanjiu Yun Jindai Shi Yanjiu Suo., *Qing ji zhong ri han guanxi shiliao*.

<sup>44</sup> Henry Wheaton, *Elements of International Law*, 6th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1855), 51.

<sup>45</sup> “Memorial from the Office of the Governor-General,” in Zhongyang Yanjiu Yun Jindai Shi Yanjiu Suo, *Qing ji zhong ri han guanxi shiliao*.

did not affect the sovereignty of Joseon in any manner. It was thus possible to argue that Joseon was an autonomous state not subject to the substantive jurisdiction of the Qing, that is, an independent state under international law.

In extant historical materials, the theory of vassal state autonomy was presented not by the Zongli Yamen but by Henri de Bellonet, the French chargé d'affaires in China. In 1865, the French minister Jules Berthemy requested several times both the issuance of route permits for French missionaries to Joseon, but the Zongli Yamen refused his request.<sup>46</sup> The Zongli Yamen explained, "Joseon has merely received the calendar with reverence and paid tribute every year. As China cannot force this state to accept the Christian religion, it is difficult to send a diplomatic note."<sup>47</sup> However, in July of the following year, Bellonet, after hearing the news of the 1866 French Expedition to Korea, sent a note to Prince Kung (or Gong) which declared that France would send a fleet to Joseon according to "the order of the French government" to inquire into the killings of the French missionaries and to conquer the country.<sup>48</sup> The final paragraph of the note is as follows:

The Chinese government has declared to me many times that it has no authority or power over Corea; and it refused on this pretext to apply the treaties of Tientsin to that country, and give to our missionaries the passports which we have asked from it. We have taken note of these declarations, and we declare, now, that we do not recognize any authority whatever of the Chinese government over the kingdom of Corea.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> "Memorial from the Office of the Governor-General," in Zhongyang Yanjiu Yun Jindai Shi Yanjiu Suo, *Qing ji zhong ri han guanxi shiliao*.

<sup>47</sup> "Memorial from the Office of the Governor-General," in Zhongyang Yanjiu Yun Jindai Shi Yanjiu Suo, *Qing ji zhong ri han guanxi shiliao*.

<sup>48</sup> "H. de Bellonet (July 13, 1866) to Prince Kung (恭親王)," in Geundae Hanguk Pyeonchan Wiwonhoe ed., *Geundae Hanguk oegyo munseo*, vol. 1 (Seoul: Dongbuk Asia Yeoksa Jaedan, 2009), 193.

<sup>49</sup> "H. de Bellonet (July 13, 1866) to Prince Kung (恭親王)," in Geundae Hanguk Pyeonchan Wiwonhoe, *Geundae Hanguk oegyo munseo*, vol. 1, 193.

However, the Chinese translation of Bellonet's rather forthright official document in French softened his message somewhat.

The present Minister has requested several times your noble Yamen [the Qing Office of Foreign Affairs] to issue route permits to the missionaries to go to Joseon. Always evading responsibility, the Yamen stated that, *although Joseon has paid tribute, all the state affairs are handled autonomously* [自主] *and thus [Joseon] was not specified in the Treaty of Tientsin.* Now my country will wage war against Joseon, but again China cannot intervene. Because [China] has never interfered with that country.<sup>50</sup>

These two letters confirm that while the Zongli Yamen argued that the Treaty of Tientsin was not applicable to Joseon in issuing travel permit to the French, it was Bellonet who created the theory of vassal state autonomy. He further claimed that the Qing's denial of suzerainty over Joseon was simply to evade responsibility for Joseon. The Zongli Yamen made use of vassal autonomy to recommend that French missionaries not go to Joseon whereas Bellonet used it as a means to deny Qing suzerainty over the country.

The Zongli Yamen faced a dilemma in terms of the autonomy of Joseon. If Joseon was an autonomous state, the Qing had no business intervening in a dispute between Joseon and a third party. If not, then, the Qing had to take responsibility for the security of Joseon. In reality, the Qing was exhausted with the ensuing defeats in the Second Opium War and the Taiping, Nian, and Dungan Rebellions. As far as the Zongli Yamen was concerned, if the Western powers "manage to draw China into the affairs of Joseon, afterwards when they cannot satisfy their avaricious

<sup>50</sup> Author's translation from the Chinese text (emphasis added). (再本大臣曾有數次 於貴衙門請發路照於傳教士 前赴朝鮮 均經推脫 據言雖高麗於中國納貢 一切國事 皆其自主 故天津和約 亦未載入 茲當本國於高麗交兵 自然中國亦不能過問 因與彼國原不相干涉也). "H. de Bellonet (July 13, 1866) to Prince Kung (恭親王)," in Geundae Hanguk Pyeonchan Wiwonhoe, *Geundae Hanguk oegyo munseo*, vol. 1, 193.

desire in Joseon, they will try to achieve it in China."<sup>51</sup> As such, it felt that it had to avoid any involvement in the conflict between Joseon and the Western powers.

This predicament placed the Zongli Yamen in a situation where "it would be awkward either to recommend or to prohibit the expedition to Joseon."<sup>52</sup> As such, the Zongli Yamen proposed to the French minister a "mediation between the two states" and recommended that before launching a war, he make inquiries as to whether the killing of Christians by Joseon had really occurred and whether any reasons could be found for the incident.<sup>53</sup> In this way, it neither disagreed with Bellonet's argument that "China cannot intervene in this matter, for in China's relations with Joseon, neither has interfered with the other,"<sup>54</sup> nor did it imply that the Qing would protect Joseon. It merely emphasized that "hostilities between the two countries would drastically affect the lives of people,"<sup>55</sup> which could be a more palatable choice for arbitration. The attitude of the Zongli Yamen was thus to maintain its neutrality in the Franco-Korean dispute and to try to mediate a reconciliation between the two countries.

For several months, however, Bellonet ignored the Qing's suggestion for mediation. Through the Ministry of Rites, the Zongli Yamen informed Joseon about the movements of the French and suggested that it be prepared for any eventuality.<sup>56</sup> Several more months passed without any response from the French minister, at which point the Zongli Yamen sent a new a note for secret consultation to Joseon in November 1866

<sup>51</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Tongzhi chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 45, 1906.

<sup>52</sup> "Memorial from the Office of the Governor-General," in Zhongyang Yanjiu Yun Jindai Shi Yanjiu Suo, *Qing ji zhong ri han guanxi shiliao*.

<sup>53</sup> "Note from the Office of the Governor-General to France" (總署發法國照會), in Zhongyang Yanjiu Yun Jindai Shi Yanjiu Suo, *Qing ji zhong ri han guanxi shiliao*, 28.

<sup>54</sup> "Note from the Office of the Governor-General to France," in Zhongyang Yanjiu Yun Jindai Shi Yanjiu Suo, *Qing ji zhong ri han guanxi shiliao*, 27.

<sup>55</sup> "Note from the Office of the Governor-General to France," in Zhongyang Yanjiu Yun Jindai Shi Yanjiu Suo, *Qing ji zhong ri han guanxi shiliao*, 28.

<sup>56</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Tongzhi chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 42, 1787.

and emphasized that ‘it should not ruin the affair (事機) by the slightest neglect’.<sup>57</sup> The Qing government confirmed that the French nationals were killed in Joseon and heard a rumor that Britain and the United States would retaliate against Joseon in coalition with France. This led the Qing to recommend to Joseon that it deal with Britain and the United States separately from France. Joseon informed the Qing of the outbreak of a war and the declaration proclaimed by the French fleet in October, 1866. The Zongli Yamen then sent a memorial to the emperor on how a reconciliation might be achieved between France and Joseon.<sup>58</sup>

On November 11, 1866, Bellonet sent a note which again strongly criticized Prince Kung. He also claimed that the Qing did not act in a neutral manner but tried to protect Joseon.<sup>59</sup> Prince Kung retorted that Bellonet had made a “false accusation against China” and broke off communications with Bellonet. He also circulated the correspondence with Bellonet to all the foreign legations in Qing.<sup>60</sup>

The Zongli Yamen also sent a series of memorials to the emperor expressing the hope that Joseon would settle its conflicts with France and the other great powers amicably. In doing so, it was sending an indirect signal to Joseon that it wished for a peaceful settlement of the situation.<sup>61</sup> By taking a more prominent role in the negotiations with France, the Zongli Yamen strove to maintain consistency within the framework of international law.

On the other hand, the head of the Ministry of Rites, Wan Qingli (萬青藜) conducted a series of secret meetings with Joseon.<sup>62</sup> He met Ryu

<sup>57</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Tongzhi chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 44, 1838.

<sup>58</sup> “Joseon Envoy’s Statement of Gratitude on the Situation of Foreign Ships in the Last Year” (轉奏朝鮮謝恩使覆陳上年洋船情形), in Zhongyang Yanjiu Yun Jindai Shi Yanjiu Suo, *Qing ji zhong ri han guanxi shiliao*, 42.

<sup>59</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Daoguang chao chouban yiwu shimo*, 1906.

<sup>60</sup> Wen Qing et al., *Daoguang chao chouban yiwu shimo*, 1909–1910.

<sup>61</sup> “Memorial from the Office of the Governor-General,” in Zhongyang Yanjiu Yun Jindai Shi Yanjiu Suo, *Qing ji zhong ri han guanxi shiliao*, 48.

<sup>62</sup> On the “subject diplomacy” (人臣外交) between Wan Qingli and Joseon bureaucrats, see Son Seong-uk, “‘Woegyo’ ui gyunyool gwa mosaek,” 531–544.

Hu-jo (柳厚祚), the investiture envoy for imperial audience of Joseon, in Beijing and secretly handed over a short note to give secret information including the movement of the French fleet. He also asked Ryu to make this backstage meeting remain absolutely confidential.<sup>63</sup> According to Wan, Joseon "should never go forward into the fight recklessly, but, instead, while fortifying their defenses, they should negotiate with the French with reason and logic."<sup>64</sup> Even if it was not possible to reason with the French, "Joseon must never come to China for troops" because "not only can China be of no help because of the long distance, but also it does not have the resources to send reinforcements."<sup>65</sup> He advised Ryu to send a request to China to mediate in the conflict. Above all, he stressed that as the French "have such a ferocious temper and arrogant belief in their military power that they will not stop if you do not win them over,"<sup>66</sup> the most important thing for Joseon was to "prepare countermeasures and make no imprudent attempts".<sup>67</sup> Wan went on to advise Joseon to conclude a treaty with France without any prohibition of Christianity. This treaty "should be treated as rules and regulations between Joseon and France and be formally presented in a memorial to the Qing."<sup>68</sup>

Not long after Ryu Hu-jo returned to Joseon, Han Mun-gyu (韓文奎), a Joseon counselor, visited Beijing with a communique from the Joseon government that details the *General Sherman Incident*. After deliv-

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<sup>63</sup> "Short Note sent by Minister Wan," in Han Eungpil, *Eoyang sulok*.

<sup>64</sup> "Short Note sent by Minister Wan," in Han Eungpil, *Eoyang sulok*.

<sup>65</sup> "Short Note sent by Minister Wan," in Han Eungpil, *Eoyang sulok*.

<sup>66</sup> "Short Note sent by Minister Wan," in Han Eungpil, *Eoyang sulok*.

<sup>67</sup> "Short Note sent by Minister Wan," in Han Eungpil, *Eoyang sulok*.

<sup>68</sup> "Short Note sent by Minister Wan," in Han Eungpil, *Eoyang sulok*. This was a somewhat different attitude from that of the Zongli Yamen, which made it clear that it was for Joseon to do its utmost to deal with the matter. Later on, when Joseon did not tell the Qing dynasty about the provisions of the Joseon-Japan Treaty of Amity, it did not rebuke the Joseon government nor quibble over this. It is clear that within the Qing dynasty, the Ministry of Rites took charge of rituals (典禮) and was concerned with the maintenance of "laws, regulations and institutions" (典章制度) between the Tianchao and vassal states. On the other hand, the main task of the Zongli Yamen was to deal with real international political issues.

ering the communique to the Ministry of Rites, Han visited Wan Qingli and delivered a private letter from Lee Heung-min, who had been sent as an envoy to Beijing in the previous year and had formed a friendship with Wan Qingli.<sup>69</sup> In this letter, Lee explained the execution of French missionaries and Christians, the burning of the General Sherman, and strong reasons against missionary work and trade. He then asked Wan Qingli to help Joseon.<sup>70</sup>

Wan noted that Lee's letter could not be concealed so he submitted the original text of the letter to the Grand Council.<sup>71</sup> Five days later, he presented a new memorial that contained an extraordinary proposal. He stated that Lee's letter was one that "could not be sent in an official document". The Joseon government had sent it to him in the form of a private letter.<sup>72</sup> As Lee would be expected to report Wan's reply to the king of Joseon, the Qing should also send a private letter to the Joseon government through Wan Qingli and Lee Heung-min. This letter should "enlighten Joseon in detail about the things that the country should prepare and the things that the country could not dare to ask in clear terms due to suspicion and fear."<sup>73</sup> Wan Qingli then presented a draft of a letter that was both a reply to Lee Heung-min and *de facto* advice addressed to the Joseon government.

In this draft, Wan, while praising Lee's loyalty, was quite frank in

<sup>69</sup> Son Seong-uk, "Shijiu shiji chaoxian fu jing shi chen de 'huangdou jingyan'" (PhD diss., Peking University, 2015), 159.

<sup>70</sup> "Letter Sent by Lee Heung-min of Joseon to Wan Qingli" (朝鮮李興敏致萬青藜函), in Wen Qing et al., *Tongzhi chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 45, 1904.

<sup>71</sup> "Memorial to Grand Councilor Yixin and Others on the Letter by Lee Heung-min of Joseon" (軍機大臣奕訢等奏朝鮮李興敏函摺), in Wen Qing et al., *Tongzhi chao chouban yiwu shimo*, vol. 45, 1903.

<sup>72</sup> "Memorial Presented by the Minister of Rites, Wan Qingli, Reporting on the Copy of the Letter by the Envoy of Joseon, Lee Heung-min" (禮部尚書萬青藜奏報擬複朝鮮使臣李興敏書函摺), in First Historical Archives of China, ed., *Qingdai Zhong Chao guanxi dangan shiliao xu bian* (Beijing: Zhongguo Dangan Chubanshe, 1998), 358–359.

<sup>73</sup> "Memorial Presented by the Minister of Rites, Wan Qingli, Reporting on the Copy of the Letter by the Envoy of Joseon, Lee Heung-min," in First Historical Archives of China, *Qingdai Zhong Chao guanxi dangan shiliao xu bian*, 358–359.

his views on the Qing-Joseon relocation. He acknowledged that he did not know whether the Qing could prevent Western ships from sailing to Joseon, but he stated that the Qing would never issue any document to Western ships allowing them to trade with Joseon.<sup>74</sup> He went on to say:

... do not look down on the opponent; if you win by good luck, do not become arrogant; by wreaking a momentary anger, do not strengthen the fighting spirit of the enemy; in order to take revenge on a nation, do not create a situation where it will make many nations its allies<sup>75</sup>...

Wan felt that it was better to treat the Western powers with hospitality. However, there still remained the problem of what to do in the event that they decided to invade. Wan admitted, "your country must evaluate the situation itself; it is not a thing that I can possibly know".<sup>76</sup>

These arguments were in keeping with the advice Wan had given in his short note to Ryu Hu-jo. He was consistent in advising Joseon not to make war with France but to find a peaceful compromise. It is not known whether Wan's letter was sent to Joseon. Only the draft of this letter exists,<sup>77</sup> and there is no historical material to verify how the Qing handled Wan's proposal or whether Joseon received the letter. Still, Wan's message clearly contained the official views of the Qing that Joseon should try to reach a compromise with the West.

In addition, Wan's advice was consistent with the Qing preoccupation with avoiding any entanglement in the conflict and its policy of *xishiningren* (息事寧人, end conflicts and let people live in peace).<sup>78</sup> This

<sup>74</sup> "A Draft Reply to Lee Heung-min's Letter" (擬復李興敏函), in First Historical Archives of China, *Qingdai Zhong Chao guanxi dangan shiliao xu bian*, 359–360.

<sup>75</sup> "A Draft Reply to Lee Heung-min's Letter," in First Historical Archives of China, *Qingdai Zhong Chao guanxi dangan shiliao xu bian*, 359–360.

<sup>76</sup> "A Draft Reply to Lee Heung-min's letter," in First Historical Archives of China, *Qingdai Zhong Chao guanxi dangan shiliao xu bian*, 359–360.

<sup>77</sup> First Historical Archives of China, *Qingdai Zhong Chao guanxi dangan shiliao xu bian*, 359–360.

<sup>78</sup> Wan Qingli privately supported Joseon's policy of repelling the heterogeneous (*cheoksa*). He revealed this inclination in a communication with a Joseon envoy ("Bugsadamcho," *Yeonhaengnok*

policy was in essence the same as the strategy of keeping Joseon and Ryukyu peaceful that the Qing had adopted in response to previous requests for aid from them. At first, the Qing attempted to use the terms of the treaties it had concluded with the great powers; when this no longer proved effective, the Qing attempted to have Joseon and Ryukyu compromise with the Western powers. These strategies were designed to avoid getting the Qing embroiled in a direct confrontation with the West. Before the 1866 French Expedition to Korea, the Qing tried to dissuade the French from going to Joseon. However, after confirming the killings of the French missionaries, although emphasizing Joseon's autonomy in this matter, they sent the Joseon government a clear signal that they wanted Joseon to compromise rather than wage war against France.

This strategy continued until 1879 when the Qing adopted Ding Richang's (丁日昌) proposal and instructed Li Hongzhang (李鴻章) to suggest to Joseon that it open itself up to trade with the Western powers. Ding argued that the situation in East Asia was such that Joseon could not close its doors and defend itself. For its part, the Qing dynasty could not prevent the Western powers from demanding trade with Joseon. As such, it was better for Joseon to ensure its own security by concluding treaties of friendship with the Western states.<sup>79</sup> He Ruzhang (何如璋) also proposed to Li Hongzhang that Joseon should strengthen its relationships with foreign countries to avoid the situation in which Vietnam found itself.<sup>80</sup> These proposals were in essence a policy of "control of the barbarians through the barbarians" (以夷制夷), or playing off the Western powers against each other. Here, it is possible to see traces of the Daoguang reigns when the Qing had advised Joseon to treat the Western powers

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*jeonjip*, vol. 78). However, in the draft letter, he reveals only that he does not wish Joseon to clash with other states or China to get involved in them. Although the letter took the form of a private letter (私信), this seems due to the secret diplomacy between the two governments. The short note to Ryu Hu-jo can also be understood in this context.

<sup>79</sup> "Memorial of Former Fujian Governor Ding Richang" (前福建巡撫丁日昌奏), in *Yangwu yundong*, vol. 2, 395.

<sup>80</sup> "Li Boxiang's Argument for Trade between Joseon and Other States" (上李伯相論主持朝鮮與各國通商書), in *He Ruzhang, He Ruzhang ji* (Tianjian: Tianjin Renmin Chubanshe, 2010), 109.

amicably if they were unable to deter them. From the Opium Wars until the early 1880s, Qing policy towards Joseon was quite consistent.

## Conclusion

The policy of the Qing towards Joseon in the late 19th century is usually understood as having changed from a non-interventionist or laissez-faire policy before the 1880s to a policy of intervention. This perception stems from previous researches that set the 1860s as the starting point for the change in the foreign policy of the Qing and focused mainly on the archives of the Zongli Yamen as historical source materials. It has been influenced by the argument, put forward by the Zongli Yamen, that because Joseon was a *de facto* autonomous state, the Qing could not intervene in its internal matters.<sup>81</sup> This view has been compounded by the Qing's laissez-faire attitude towards the 1866 French Expedition to Korea and the 1871 United States Expedition to Korea.

This paper marks the starting point for the change in the Qing-Joseon relations as the 1840s. The most essential factor for the shift in the Qing's policy towards Joseon was the diplomatic and military intervention of the Western powers in East Asian international relations. In this context, I contend, to understand how the traditional Qing-Joseon relations had transformed in the new system of international relations in the period, what should not go unnoticed is the changing status of the Qing that strove to preserve its established hegemonic position in East Asia against the Western powers from the Daoguang reigns (1820-1850) onwards. That is to say, the diplomatic capacity of the Qing to react to the intrusion of the Western powers into the regional order of East Asia had great bearing on its policy towards its neighboring states including Joseon. This paper explores one important Qing strategy that acknowledged the autonomous status of Joseon between the 1860s and the 1880s

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<sup>81</sup> "Memorial from the Office of the Governor-General" (總署奏摺), in Zhongyang Yanjiu Yun Jindai Shi Yanjiu Suo, *Qing ji zhong ri han guanxi shiliao*, 30.

while emphasizing the independent status of Joseon under the Heavenly Dynasty-the Qing-in the 1840s. The seemingly contradictory posture as above does display the flexibility of the Qing diplomacy in efforts to couch the traditional relationship between the Qing and Joseon in terms of treaties and international law reset by the Western powers in the 19th century.

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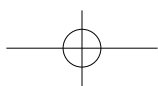
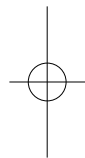
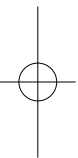
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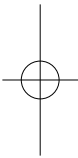
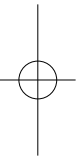
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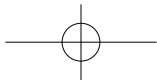
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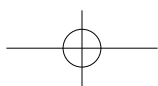
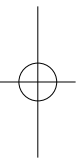
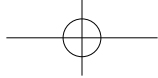
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# The 1886 General Sherman Incident and Britain\*

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## Introduction

This study focuses on the decisive British connection to the *General Sherman*'s voyage to Joseon in 1866. Previous studies have tended to view the *General Sherman* Incident as the beginning of relations between Korea and the United States and as the start of Protestant Church's history in Korea. This understanding has been challenged by Kim Myoung-ho and Shin Hyo-seung<sup>1</sup> through their investigations into the reality behind the incident, but it is still true that studies remain contentious whether it should be viewed as the origin of Korean-American relations,<sup>2</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> Kim Myoung-ho, "General Shermanho sageon Gwa Bak Gyu-Su" [The General Sherman Incident and Park, Gyu-Su], *Daedong Munhwa Yeongu* 44 (2003): 309–343; Shin Hyo-seung, Sinmi Yangyo [The 1871 American Expedition to Korea] (Seoul: Geullurim, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Park Myung-soo, "1860 nyeondaе jungban ui gukjegwangae eseo General Shermanho wa Robert J. Thomas" [The General Sherman Incident and Robert J. Thomas Revisited in the Context of Foreign Relations in the Mid-1860s], *Sahak Yeongu* 140 (2020): 319–368; Park Myung-soo, "Hanmi gwangye ui giwon e daehan jaegochal: General Shermanho sageon ihu ui dongbuga jeongse wa Wachusettho ui naechang" [Revisiting the Origins of Korea-U.S. Relations: The Northeast Asian Situation after the General Sherman Incident and the USS Wachuset Visit], *Sahak*

whether Robert Jermain Thomas' death can be considered as a martyrdom.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, neither Americans nor Protestant missionaries were the decisive influences behind the *General Sherman's* voyage to Joseon. The schooner had been chartered by Meadows & Co., a British trading firm which had loaded textiles, glass and tinware onto it and had enlisted George Hogarth to serve as its supercargo. Also on board was Robert Jermain Thomas, a Welsh Protestant missionary hired temporarily as an interpreter based on his previous experience in Joseon. Therefore, while the *General Sherman* was owned by an American businessman W.B.Preston, it was Meadows & Co. that had chartered it and decided Joseon as its next destination.

Prior to setting sail from Tianjin or Chefoo, Meadows & Co. was required to report the *General Sherman's* departure to the American and British consulates and local customs offices. More specifically, the company or the firm was supposed to turn in a cargo loading list specifying the types, amounts and prices of all items on board. For the *General Sherman's* departure from Tianjin on August 9, 1866, Meadows & Co. declared that Passiett in far east Russia would be the schooner's next destination.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, everyone involved in processing all paperwork for

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*Yeongu* 143 (2021): 125–172.

<sup>3</sup> Hahn Kyu-moo, "Oh Moon-Hwan ui Thomas moksajeon gwa Thomas ui 'sungyo' munje geomto" [Oh Moon-Hwan's Study of the Life of R. J. Thomas and the Issue of his 'Martyrdom'], *Hanguk Gidokgyowa Yeoksa* 45 (2016): 51–88; Park Yong-kyu, "Robert J. Thomas seongyosa, yeoksajeok pyeongga: Thomas, geuneun sungyoja ga aninga?" [A Historical Study of Robert Jermain Thomas: Was He Not A Martyr?], *Sinhak Jinam* 83, No. 3 (2016): 41–139; Ko Hoon, "2000 nyeondae ihu Thomas jugeum nonjaeng e daehan ihae mit jeopjeom mosaek: Yeoksahakja Han Gyu-Mu wa gyohoesahakja Bak Yong-Gyu ui jujang eul jungsimeuro" [Understanding the Debate over R. J. Thomas' Death Since 2000, Seeking the Points of Agreement: Focusing on the Arguments of Historian Kyu-Moo Han and Church Historian Yong-Kyu Park], *Sinhak Nondan* 101 (2020): 7–37.

<sup>4</sup> "The General Sherman was chartered by Mess. Meadows & C. of Tientsin, and left here on 9th August ostensibly for Passiett." Sandford to Seward, U.S. Consulate Beijing, 31 December 1866. In Jules Davids, ed., *American Diplomatic and Public Papers: The United States and China, Series 2, The United States, China, and Imperial Rivalries, 1861-1893*, Vol. 9 (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1979), 52-63; Geundae hanguk oegyomunseo pyeonchan wiwonhoe, *Geundae hanguk oegyomunseo* [Diplomatic Documents of Modern Korea], Vol. 1: The General Sherman Incident, the 1866 French Expedition to Korea (Seoul: Dongbuga Yeoksa Jaedan, 2009).

the *General Sherman*, at the American and British consulates, as well as the local customs office, believed that it was bound for far east Russia.

The schooner's destination was not far east Russia, however. Meadows & Co. had instead decided to sell its cargo in Joseon. And, at the time when the schooner casted off, there were spreading rumors of an imminent attack on Joseon by a French fleet. But why then would Meadows & Co. head to Joseon when it was about to be attacked by the French? To answer this question, it is necessary to determine the context under which the firm's decision was made.

Britain, meanwhile, had plenty of reasons to involve itself in the *General Sherman* Incident for the protection of its citizens and property. It even suggested to the United States that they jointly dispatch fleets to Joseon. Unlike during the Anglo-Satsuma War (1863) and the Shimono-seki Campaign (1863-1864), however, Britain finally chose not to send troops to Joseon alongside the United States. In fact, it also did not even demand any indemnity from Joseon for the deaths of its citizens and the loss that Meadows & Co. had incurred.

In contrast to its responsive approach toward Japan, Britain took a different stance toward the deaths and losses which Meadows & Co. sustained. But what caused the difference here? One clue to the answer could be found in Britain's policy toward Joseon after the signing of the Treaty of Tientsin in 1858. That treaty is generally considered to have broadened the geographical extent of trade in China for European powers, including Britain, to the areas beyond the Yangtze River, open widely to Joseon.

As a critical response to the "conventional wisdom" associating the *General Sherman* Incident with Korean-American relations and Protestant missionary work in Korea, this study seeks to uncover the reason why Meadows & Co. steered the *General Sherman* toward Joseon. It will relocate the *General Sherman* Incident from within the context of the Treaty of Tientsin in East Asia. It will also look into the international circumstances surrounding Joseon at that time and explore why Britain chose not to involve itself in responding to the incident afterward.

## The 1858 Treaty of Tientsin, and Britain's Plan to Open Joseon

Once Britain had decided to join France in bringing the Crimean War to East Asia, Anglo-French naval forces departed Hong Kong and attacked a Russian naval base on the Kamchatka Peninsula in August 1854. It appears that in the same month, Britain began contemplating on the idea of investing government efforts to the opening of Joseon.<sup>5</sup> John Bowring, then governor of Hong Kong, asked the British foreign secretary for “plenipotentiary powers” in order to “establish commercial relations with the Korean people” and thereby keep Russia in check.<sup>6</sup> In other words, Bowring wanted to take the lead in forming a treaty of amity and commerce with Joseon. He even predicted that, in regards to Joseon, “there would be a considerable demand for white cotton goods were their importation allowed” there. This shows that Britain was vaguely open to the prospect of exporting cotton goods to Joseon even though that was sec-

<sup>5</sup> On December 18, 1882, Edward Hertslet, the librarian of the British Foreign Office, drafted a “Memorandum Respecting Corea.” Drafted ahead of the ratification of Britain’s treaty with Joseon concluded in 1882, this memorandum provided a summary of how Britain understood Joseon to that time, and how it formed its policy toward Joseon based on that understanding. The first line, “THE question of establishing political and commercial relations with Corea first arose in 1854,” suggests that the British government had begun to consider establishing diplomatic relations with Joseon from 1854. The memorandum is currently held in the British National Archives under the reference number FO 881/4695. Han Seung-hoon, “19 segi jungban yeongguk ui daejoseon munho gaebang jeongchaek giwon: Yeong reo daerip gwa jo cheong sokbang gwangye reul jungsimeuro” [The Beginning of Britain’s Diplomatic Policies to Open Korea in the Mid-19th Century: With Regard to the Anglo-Russian Confrontation and the Korea-Qing Tributary Relationship], *Inmun Nonchong* 74, No. 2 (2017): 14.

<sup>6</sup> “I hope to induce your Lordship to move Her Majesty to honor me with Plenipotentiary powers, which may enable me, should a favourable opportunity present itself, to establish commercial relations with the Korean people... There is reason to believe that the Russian Government has been long looking with an ambitious and covetous eye upon the Korean territory.” Hertslet, “Memorandum Respecting Corea,” 18 December 1882; *Geundae hanguk oegyomunseo pyeonchan wiwonhoe*, *Geundae hanguk oegyomunseo* [Diplomatic Documents of Modern Korea], Vol. 5: Treaty of Friendship and Commerce between Great Britain and Korea (Seoul: Dongbuga Yeoksa Jaedan, 2012), 670; Han, “19 segi jungban yeongguk ui daejoseon munho gaebang jeongchaek giwon”: 16.

ondary to its main reason for desiring a treaty with the country for the containment of Russia.

What further prompted Britain to consider exchanges with Joseon was the conclusion of the Treaty of Tientsin in 1858. On October 1, 1857, the Shanghai British Chamber of Commerce held a special meeting<sup>7</sup> in which the attendees were executives of major British trading firms including Jardine and Matheson & Co. The main topic of discussion concerned a plan to expand British profits from trade in Shanghai and overcome the stagnation into which British trade had fallen in China since the opening of its ports.<sup>8</sup> The meeting was moreover convened at the request of the British consulate in Shanghai.

On October 2, Thomas Moncreiff, Chair of the Shanghai British Chamber of Commerce, sent a report on the previous day's meeting to the British consulate in Shanghai. This report delivered various suggestions that Chamber members had made for promoting trade through tariffs and other means. Among the suggestions, Joseon was mentioned in a proposal for increasing the number of open ports in China:

In addition to the five ports now open to foreign trade under the existing Treaty, the Chamber would propose the addition of the following: —  
The port of Swatow, on the south-eastern coast of Kwang-tung Province.  
The port of Teng-choo, on the north coast of the Province of Shantung.  
The former of these is already well-known as a valuable market for the export of sugar, and being situated at the mouth of a large river it has great facilities for water-communication with the interior. The latter might prove of service in promoting our trade with the north of China, Leao-tong, and the Corea.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Report on the Tariff and General Relations. British Chamber of Commerce, Shanghai," October 2, 1857. Great Britain Foreign Office, *Further Papers Relating to the Rebellion in China: With an Appendix* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1863).

<sup>8</sup> "Basing its opinion on the returns of trade since the opening of this port, which exhibit no satisfactory progression in the introduction of articles of foreign manufacture, this Chamber considers..."

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

The port of Tengchoo referred to here was Port Dengzhou in Yantai, Shandong Province. British merchants seemed to believe that opening Port Dengzhou could help them increase their profits, as it would provide access to new markets in northern China and beyond, presumably where Joseon was located. And as per their wish, that port was opened the following year through the 1858 Treaty of Tientsin. However, it turned out inadequate to serve as an international port so another harbor was developed in the nearby district of Zhifu. Once the new port opened in May 1861, settlements for Westerners were created in an area between the old and new ports that came to be known among foreigners as Chefoo.

In 1865, a British merchant Morrison headed to the west coast of Joseon, only to have his request for trade rejected by the local government official whom he met there. Although he failed to initiate trade with Joseon, Morrison was able to confirm the reality of smuggling along the country's west coast. He detailed the information that he had managed to gather as follows:

... the smugglers imported into Corea shirtings, drills (a favorite article with the Coreans), camlets, opium, sugar, satin, and tortoise-shell; and exported ginseng, salt, fish, gold, iron and steel, timber, leather, paper, cotton, and rice<sup>10</sup>... resin abounded in the Corea in a crude state, but was not an article of trade, and ... the cotton was very favourably spoken of by the Chinese.

Thomas Wade, then Minister Plenipotentiary and Chief Superintendent of British Trade in China, attached Morrison's memorandum to a report that he submitted to the British Foreign Office in London.<sup>11</sup> In his

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<sup>10</sup> Hertslet, "Memorandum Respecting Corea," 18 December 1882; *Geundae hanguk oegyomunseo pyeonchan wiwonhoe*, *Geundae Hanguk Oegyomunseo*, Vol. 5, 672; Han, "19 segi jungban yeonguk ui daejoseon munho gaebang jeongchaek giwon": 14.

<sup>11</sup> "It had occurred to him that it might be of advantage to British trade to establish commercial relations with Corea." Hertslet, "Memorandum Respecting Corea," 18 December 1882; *Geundae hanguk oegyomunseo pyeonchan wiwonhoe*, *Geundae Hanguk Oegyomunseo*, Vol. 5, 672.

report, Wade suggested that it would “be of advantage to British trade to establish commercial relations with Corea.” This suggestion was not made simply because of the information that Morrison had brought back, but also because of the potential that Chefoo offered for British trade. That is how British Vice-Consul Horatio Nelson Lay described Koreans trading in Chefoo, in his “Report on the Trade of Chefoo for the Year 1865” submitted on February 22, 1866:

The port of New-Chang derived a part of its supplies of cotton goods from Che-foo, as did also the several small ports on the west coast of the gulf. A trade in the same articles was also carried on with the Corea from the port of Che-foo in small junks which were met by the Corean junks at one of the numerous islands on the west coast of that country. Part of the Corean trade went through the neighboring ports of Litau and Shitau, near the Shan-tung promontory; but the merchants of those ports generally brought their cotton goods for sale at Che-foo.<sup>12</sup>

According to Lay, Joseon merchants had been engaging in smuggling operations with Chinese merchants in Chefoo and other areas in that vicinity. Chefoo had commercial relations with Japan, and a large market for trading medicinal herbs and ingredients from northern China.<sup>13</sup> Lay thus expected that Chefoo would evolve into a central port for trade with Russia, Japan and Joseon.<sup>14</sup> In January 1866, A. Macpherson,

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<sup>12</sup> “Report on the Trade of Che-foo for the Year 1865.” Great Britain Foreign Office, *Commercial Reports from Her Majesty’s Consuls in China, Japan, and Siam 1865* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1866), 49.

<sup>13</sup> “Besides these matters which directly interest British commerce, Che-foo has commercial relations with Japan, where there is a large market for the medicinal roots and herbs of the north of China, and whence the supplies of isinglass and earthenware are received in return.” *Commercial Reports from Her Majesty’s Consuls in China, Japan, and Siam 1865*, 53.

<sup>14</sup> “A trade in seaweed and peas is also springing up with the Russian ports to the north of the Corea, and the former article is distributed all over the north of China, from Che-foo. There is every probability of a large increase in this business, and that Che-foo will become the centre of the northern trade with those countries and with the Corea, since the trade has already fallen into this channel. Che-foo possesses, commercially, a most advantageous position.” *Commercial Reports*

the Commissioner of Customs in New-Chang (Yingkou) of Liaoning Province, described the smuggling between merchants from Shandong and Joseon as follows:

About twenty Shan-tung junks laden with foreign cotton piece-goods cruize each year along the western Korean coast. It is estimated that about 8,000 pieces thus cross the Yellow Sea. The traders are always desirous of receiving ginseng in exchange; when, however, the quantities offered of it are insufficient, they accept sea-weed and shell-fish. In these transactions money is unknown; a piece of shirtings will purchase so many sticks of ginseng or so many peculs of sea-weed. The traffic is strictly repressed by the Korean Government, and natives detected in the prosecution of it are punished by death. Cotton of a fine quality is grown in the Corea, but it would appear to be inadequate for the wants of the inhabitants. The quantity of foreign fabrics which they yearly buy greatly exceeds the quantity of native cloth which they yearly sell. The future of the Corea lies in the expansion of the sea-weed trade, in the production of silk, and in the improvement of her gold-mines.<sup>15</sup>

The above description is part of a report that MacPherson submitted to Robert Hart, the Inspector-General of the Qing Maritime Customs Service regarding the economic situation of Newchang and other areas nearby as of 1865. It attests to the smuggling of cotton goods, ginseng and seaweed between merchants from Shandong and Joseon while also suggesting that the seaweed trade and gold mine development were likely to anchor the future growth of Joseon's economy. These observations and estimations indicate that the British diplomats and officials working for the Qing customs office remained conscious of the possibility of trading with Joseon at Chinese ports through the Treaty of Tientsin.

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*from Her Majesty's Consuls in China, Japan, and Siam 1865, 53.*

<sup>15</sup> "Report on the Trade at the Port of Newchwang for the Year 1865." Great Britain Foreign Office, *Reports from the Foreign Commissioners at the Various Ports in China for the Year 1865* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1867), 10-26.

As the next step toward achieving that goal, Wade proposed to the British Foreign Office in November 1865 that a survey of the coast of Joseon to be carried out. Through this survey he was also hoping to make the British more approachable to the people of Joseon, and to accumulate more essential knowledge of the country.<sup>16</sup> Yet he had heard that British warships were denied supplies such as food and water all along the coast of Joseon.<sup>17</sup> Wade therefore asked Prince Gong at Zongli Yamen, the de facto Qing office of foreign affairs, to exercise his influence to make Joseon provide supplies to British warships. He assured Prince Gong that no Europeans would wish to preserve the independence of East Asian states refusing to engage in political and commercial exchanges with them. Wade probably had Joseon in mind when he said this and added that Western powers were constantly looking for excuses to overthrow closed countries:<sup>18</sup>

... the subversion of which by any single Power would probably be followed, as we have seen in Cochin China, by the subjugation or repartition of the offending State. If the Kingdom of Corea understood its own interests, it would at once invite all foreign nations to trade with it.<sup>19</sup>

As an example, Wade mentioned France's invasion of Vietnam. This doesn't seem to have been in anticipation of the 1866 French Campaign against Korea, however. Wade was most likely just sharing the

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<sup>16</sup> "...as a survey of the coast would, in his opinion, be the best means of familiarizing the people with the presence of Englishmen, and of obtaining the preliminary knowledge essential to any further advances..." Hertslet, "Memorandum Respecting Corea," 18 December 1882; *Geundae Hanguk Oegyomunseo*, Vol. 5, 672.

<sup>17</sup> *Geundae Hanguk Oegyomunseo*, Vol. 5, 672.

<sup>18</sup> "There is no European who desires to see Eastern nations preserve their independence that does not deplore their adherence to a system of non-intercourse, commercial or political, which it rests with any Western Power that may find a pretext for resorting to force to subvert..." Hertslet, "Memorandum Respecting Corea," 18 December 1882; *Geundae Hanguk Oegyomunseo*, Vol. 5, 672.

<sup>19</sup> *Geundae Hanguk Oegyomunseo*, Vol. 5, 672-673.

plan for Joseon that Britain had held since the mid-1850s, which was to have all other Western powers participate together in the opening of the ports of Joseon and to divide the trade profits available equally through a treaty similar to those that had been formed with other East Asian countries.<sup>20</sup>

In March 1866, Britain began taking detailed actions to advance into Joseon. By then, France had secured a naval coal depot at the port of Chefoo and Britain had also secured an island near Chefoo to use as a naval storage. The British Admiralty requested the new British Minister to Qing China, Rutherford Alcock to exercise his influence to ensure that a British naval survey ship could safely survey the coasts of Joseon and northwestern China.<sup>21</sup> In this way, the British Navy took its first step to broaden its influence in China further to the west coast of Joseon.

In July 1866, Alcock brought to Prince Gong's attention an incident in October 1865 in which Joseon had refused to supply a British warship with food.<sup>22</sup> To prevent similar incidents from reoccurring, he said that he hoped the Qing government would apply pressure on Joseon. Prince Gong replied, however, that, with a French attack on Joseon imminent, he was unable to send a letter asking the Joseon government to accommodate a British survey ship.

The British legation in Qing China had thus run into an unexpected hurdle when preparing to expand Britain's trade network to Joseon. This situation complicated Britain's plan for surveying the coast of Joseon to ensure the safety of its ships traveling to northern China and beyond, and ultimately forming a treaty with Joseon. These were the circumstances at the time when Meadows & Co., headquartered in Tianjin, had chartered the *General Sherman* and decided to sail to Joseon.

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<sup>20</sup> Han, "19 segi jungban yeongguk ui daejoseon munho gaebang jeongchaek giwon": 17-18.

<sup>21</sup> Hertslet, "Memorandum Respecting Corea," 18 December 1882; *Geundae Hanguk Oegyomunseo*, Vol. 5, 673.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

## Meadows & Co.'s Attempt to Smuggle Weapons to Joseon

In July 1886, the *General Sherman* headed for Joseon's Pyeongan Province. It sailed up from the mouth of the Daedong River until reaching the vicinity of Pyeongyang. The ship's journey from the coast of Joseon to Pyeongyang has already been traced in detail through the aforementioned study by Kim Myoung-ho.<sup>23</sup> This study will instead focus on Meadows & Co., the company that had chartered the *General Sherman*. On September 5, 1866 the *General Sherman* was completely destroyed by fire, with everyone on board dying. News of this incident began to spread in the West one month later, in early October.<sup>24</sup> While the stories contained various inaccuracies, they all confirmed the fact that the *General Sherman* had traveled to Pyeongyang and met with calamity there.

On October 27, 1866 Meadows & Co. sent a letter to Anson Burlingame, the American Minister to Qing China. The purpose of this letter was to explain the process through which the company had chartered the *General Sherman* and to obtain compensation from Joseon for the loss that it had sustained.<sup>25</sup> But on what grounds did Meadows & Co. seek this compensation? It presented the incident from the standpoint of Western civilization, arguing that trade had been a legitimate reason for its journey to Joseon.<sup>26</sup> What Joseon had done to the *General Sherman* and

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<sup>23</sup> Kim, "General Shermanho sageon gwa Bak Gyu-su."

<sup>24</sup> Shin, *Sinmi angyo*, 39-43.

<sup>25</sup> "We, the undersigned British firm, beg leave to bring to your excellency's notice the following circumstances, in order to obtain your excellency's assistance in getting redress." Messrs. Meadows & c., Co. to Mr. Burlingame, Tientsin, 27 October 1866; Geundae hanguk oegyomunseo pyeonchan wiwonhoe, *Geundae Hanguk Oegyomunseo* [Diplomatic Documents of Modern Korea], Vol. 1: The General Sherman Incident, the 1866 French Expedition to Korea (Seoul: Dongbuga Yeoksa Jaedan, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> "As the act of visiting Corea for the purposes of trade was not an act which could, in the eyes of civilized western nations, justify the Korean government in destroying those who committed it, we, the undersigned, have taken the liberty of addressing you for the purpose of bringing the above matters to your excellency's notice, with the request that you will be pleased to beg his excellency Admiral Bell to make inquiries regarding the destruction of the vessel and her people,

its crew was defined as near to barbaric. It seems as though the company was seeking to replicate the guarantees of the Treaty of Nanjing and the Convention of Peking, which obligated the Qing government to compensate British merchants for any losses that they sustained. Meadows & Co. also asked for the British Navy's assistance, through the British consul in Tianjin, James Mongan, appealing to the facts that it was a British firm, and that George Hogarth and Robert Jermain Thomas had been British citizens.<sup>27</sup>

Alcock, however, had already informed the British Foreign Office on October 13, 1866 of details that Meadows & Co. had failed to report. He had revealed that the *General Sherman*, loaded with a British trading company's goods, had declared its destination to be the Russian port nearest to Tianjin, but instead then traveled to the coast of Joseon.<sup>28</sup> He had added that Joseon strictly prohibited its people from engaging in exchanges with foreigners, so that violators could even be sentenced to death. This suggested that the *General Sherman* had not taken a normal route when it decided to sail to Joseon.

On May 10, 1867 Frederick Bruce, a British representative in Washington, met with William H. Seward, the U.S. Secretary of State. A Prussian consul and a French consul were also present at this meeting. It was Seward who brought up the goods that Meadows & Co. had loaded onto the *General Sherman*:

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 and take steps to cause the Korean government to make redress as far as such in the nature of things is practicable." Messrs. Meadows & c., Co. to Mr. Burlingame, Tientsin, 27 October 1866; *Geundae Hanguk Oegyomunseo*, Vol. 1.

<sup>27</sup> "P. S.—We beg to enclose a copy of our letter to H. B. M.'s consul, Mr. Morgan, on the loss of the General Sherman, and requesting the British admiral's assistance in the matter, Mr. Hogarth and Mr. Thomas being both British subjects." Messrs. Meadows & c., Co. to Mr. Burlingame, Tientsin, 27 October 1866; *Geundae Hanguk Oegyomunseo*, Vol. 1.

<sup>28</sup> "In sending home a report of this massacre, Sir R. Alcock said that there was little doubt that this vessel, which nominally cleared from Tien-sin with a cargo for Papiette, and freighted with sundries by an English merchant, was in reality destined for the Korean coast, where it was lost, and that it went there for the purpose of trading in a country where all trade of intercourse with foreigners was strictly prohibited under penalty of death." Hertslet, "Memorandum Respecting Korea," 18 December 1882; *Geundae Hanguk Oegyomunseo*, Vol. 5, 676.

He (= W. H. Seward) said that he was in considerable difficulty with reference to the case of the “*General Sherman*”, the crew of which vessel was murdered by the Coreans, that the vessel not only was trading where she had no right to trade, but was bound on an expedition of a very doubtful character as she was carrying munitions of war with the intention of aiding the Coreans in resisting the attempt of the French to obtain satisfaction for the murder of their missionaries: that the case therefore in its special circumstances was a very bad one, the expedition being of a filibustering character, while the Corean asserted that the Government had nothing to do with the murder of the men which had been the result of their coming into collision with a lawless and bad part of the population...<sup>29</sup>

Based on Seward’s comments as a whole, it seems that Meadows & Co. had illegally transported war supplies via the *General Sherman* – supplies intended for sale to the Joseon government, which had been on the brink of an attack from France. But if the *General Sherman* had indeed then transported munitions to Joseon, had it attempted to secretly sell them during negotiations with the Joseon government? It is difficult to confirm from previous studies whether a deal had been negotiated between Meadows & Co. and Joseon government officials. Various sources do however confirm the fact that the *General Sherman* was heavily armed.<sup>30</sup> It was common at that time for commercial ships to arm themselves for protection against pirates, but the *General Sherman* was more heavily armed than was normal for such a purpose:

The crew fell out of line left and right and relaxed as I was invited down

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<sup>29</sup> Bruce to Stanley, 13 May 1867, Washington, No. 125, FO 5/1106.

<sup>30</sup> “By this time the alarm had spread amongst the natives, they taking her for a pirate, and would not believe the pilot when he told them she was a peaceful trader. (The *General Sherman* was heavily armed.)” Sandford to Mr. Burlingame, United States Consulate, Chefoo, October 30, 1866. Jules Davids, ed., *American Diplomatic and Public Papers: The United States and China, Series 2, The United States, China, and Imperial Rivalries, 1861-1893*, Vol. 9 (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1979), 9-11.

to the hull. That's when I noticed that some were carrying four- or six-barreled guns almost five to six chon [fifteen to eighteen centimeters] long. They said, "These are rifles made for perfect accuracy. When they're being loaded, they make a clear and cool ringing sound that lingers."<sup>31</sup>

The above excerpt is from a report that Yu Cho-hwan, the magistrate of Yonggang, submitted to the governor of Pyeongan Province after having sent one of his officials to survey the *General Sherman*. According to this report, a crewman who spoke a little Korean, most likely Thomas, together with a Meadows & Co. employee, showed off their rifles. The following excerpt from a report by Bak Seung-hwi, the governor of Hwanghae Province, also confirms that the schooner had countless guns on board, and that its crew had boasted the artillery's performance:

Installed on either side of the ship was a cannon with wooden wheels supporting an iron barrel that narrows toward the top. Three shots were fired as a demonstration, which made thunderous sounds that startled everyone nearby. The three rifles they used for night patrols have bayonets nearly one cheok [thirty centimeters] long stuck to their muzzles. There were also countless small portable guns and larger ones kept hung on the wall.<sup>32</sup>

Bak Seung-hwi's report suggests that the *General Sherman* was carrying an amount of weaponry more than necessary to protect itself. Based on these observations, it appears that Meadows & Co. and the *General Sherman* had intended to sell weapons to the Joseon people who were soon to be attacked by the French.

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<sup>31</sup> Pyeongan gamyeong gyerok [Report from the Pyeongan Province Governor], Lunar 9 July (16 August) 1866, *Saryo Gojong Sidaesa* [Sources on King Gojong's Reign], Vol 2. (1866), <https://db.history.go.kr/item/level.do?itemId=sk>

<sup>32</sup> Lunar 15 July (22 August) 1866, *Saryo Gojong Sidaesa*, Vol 2. (1866), <https://db.history.go.kr/item/level.do?itemId=sk>

Yet to the Joseon officials who came aboard, the *General Sherman's* crew did not mention that they had come to sell weapons. They only said that they had come to sell Western fabrics and tableware, and to purchase Korean paper, rice, gold, ginseng and sable skin.<sup>33</sup> And so why didn't they reveal their wish to sell weapons? Considering the risk involved in selling weapons secretly, Meadows & Co. and the *General Sherman* may have been waiting until they met Bak Gyu-su, the highest ranking official in that region, to make a deal. However, the Joseon government not only rejected their request to trade, it also denied them a meeting with Bak. And in response, the crew chose to instead engage in violence against the Joseon people who retaliated by setting the *General Sherman* on fire and killing its entire crew.

But was it natural for Meadows & Co. and the *General Sherman* to have attempted to secretly sell weapons to Joseon? To answer this question, it may be worth looking into a letter that Prince Gong had sent to the American consulate in Qing China on July 9, 1863. This letter was released to the public a few weeks later by George Frederick Seward, the American consul general in Shanghai, in the July 25th edition of *The North-China Herald*:

It is well known that to bring arms and ammunition into this country is against the law, but foreigners of all nations do still continue to smuggle large quantities of them into the interior, and have repeatedly aided the insurgents by supplying them therewith. These proceedings, as every one knows, are in the highest degree injurious, and render it very desirable to carry the laws into effect... If any one be found smuggling arms or ammunition into any port of China, it should be known that I have given strict orders to the officers at each, naval and revenue, to seize whoever brings such articles, and confiscate both ship and cargo, according to the stipulations of the treaty. I therefore now inform your Excellency of these proceedings that you can, without delay forward

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

instructions to the proper officers.<sup>34</sup>

When Prince Gong wrote this letter, the Taiping Rebellion was still ongoing, and Britain and the United States had been aiding the Qing Imperial Army in fighting the Taiping forces. Western merchant's secret sales of weapons to the Taiping forces were thus probably against the East Asian policies of Britain and other Western powers. Moreover, July 1863 was the time when Henry Andres Burgevine, commander of the Ever Victorious Army of British and French troops, had a falling out with Li Hongzhang and surrendered to the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Prince Gong may thus have had Burgevine in mind when writing his letter.

The letter nevertheless confirms that smuggling weapons was illegal in Qing China at that time. It was even stipulated as an unlawful act in the treaties that Qing China had entered into with Western powers, and Western merchants who engaged in weapons smuggling were therefore in violation of those treaties. It is along this line that U.S. Secretary of State William Seward revealed to the British, French, and Prussian consuls that Meadows & Co. and the *General Sherman* had attempted to smuggle weapons into Joseon. Seward also added the following remark, expressing his concern that their attempt had been in support of hostile actions against France:

...that it was very doubtful how far opinion in the United States would look favourably on hostile measures should they be required to avenge the death of these men or the murder of Roman Catholic Missionaries.<sup>35</sup>

Such concern was also expressed in a personal letter that Seward wrote on October 14, 1868 to his nephew George Seward, the American consul general in Shanghai:

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<sup>34</sup> "Notification," The North-China Herald, July 25, 1863.

<sup>35</sup> Bruce to Stanley, 13 May 1867, Washington, No. 125, FO 5/1106.

The subject is at the same time embarrassed by the reported fact that the vessel was employed in violation of the laws of the U.S. and of international law, in supplying the Coreans with contraband articles of commerce to be used in their defense against the naval expedition undertaken by France as a (Christian fe) just visitation provoked by the murder of twelve, unoffending French (writing unclear) in the peninsula.<sup>36</sup>

Under what specific grounds, then, had Seward concluded weapons smuggling to be illegal? According to the Treaty of Tientsin between the United States of America and the Empire of China (June 18, 1858), American citizens were strictly prohibited from smuggling, and anyone who violated this ban was to be at the disposal of the Qing government.<sup>37</sup> Article 3 (November 8, 1858) of the Treaty, Establishing Trade Regulations and Tariffs between the United States and China, defined contraband as “Gunpowder, Shot, Cannon, Fowling-pieces, Rifles, Muskets, Pistols and all other munitions and Implements of war; and Salt.”<sup>38</sup> The same rule was adopted through Articles 47 and 48 of the Treaty of Tientsin between the Queen of Great Britain and the Emperor of China (June 26, 1858).<sup>39</sup> In other words, Secretary Seward pointed out that Meadows & Co. and the *General Sherman* had violated the aforementioned treaties by smuggling weapons during their journey from Tianjin to Chefoo to Joseon.

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<sup>36</sup> Jongwoo Han, *The Metamorphosis of U.S.-Korea Relations: The Korean Question Revisited* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2022), 56. The original letter is kept at the University of Rochester, in Folder 408 (George Frederick Seward to William Henry Seward, 1865-1872) of the William Henry Seward Papers.

<sup>37</sup> Kim Hyun-chul, *Geundae joyak gwa dong asia yeongto chintal gwallyeon jaryo seonjip* [A Collection of Sources Related to Modern Treaties and Concessions in East Asia], Vol. 1 (Seoul: Dongbuga Yeoksa Jaedan, 2021), 433.

<sup>38</sup> “Rule III. Contraband goods. Export Trade is alike prohibited in the following articles: Gunpowder, Shot, Cannon, Fowling-pieces, Rifles, Muskets, Pistols, and all other munitions and Implements of war; and Salt.” William Malloy, *Treaties, Conventions, International Acts, Protocols and Agreements between the United States of America and Other Powers, 1776-1909* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), 230.

<sup>39</sup> Kim, *Geundae joyak gwa dong asia yeongto chintal gwallyeon jaryo seonjip*, 267, 270.

Why then had Meadows & Co. and the *General Sherman* taken such a risk as to attempt to secretly sell weapons in Joseon? One clue to an answer may lie in a report the M. Ardent at the Prussian Consulate in Tianjin submitted to the Prussian Minister Guido von Rehfues to Qing China on October 13, 1866. Ardent informed the Minister that the *General Sherman* had loaded a “significant amount of weapons” when it arrived in Chefoo from Tianjin, and was on its way to Passjet when it was burnt down in Joseon.<sup>40</sup> A few weeks later on October 30, sending a word to the Minister President of Prussia Otto von Bismarck of the French expedition to Joseon, Rehfues added a detailed explanation concerning the cause of the *General Sherman* Incident.<sup>41</sup> He revealed that Joseon had almost no regular troops while lacking in weapons as well. He continued that European merchants were trying to take advantage of these difficult circumstances to sell weapons to Koreans. In other words, European merchants in East Asia had recognized the French expedition as an opportunity to sell weapons to Joseon.

Smuggling weapons was a risky business, however, and why were Western merchants willing to take that risk? To answer this question, it may be worth considering a hearing held in the British bankruptcy court in Tianjin on July 3, 1868. The session was attended by the president of Meadows & Co., who testified to the financial difficulties that his company had been in since 1865:

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<sup>40</sup> “About 2 1/2 months ago the American sailing ship “General Sherman” went from here to Korea on behalf of Messrs. Meadows & Co. after it had apparently declared itself to be heading to Passjet. Carrying various goods, it first docked at Chefoo, where it is said to have captured a significant amount of weapons, and then proceeded to its destination.” The German original can be found in Korea University German Studies Institute, ed., *Dogil woegyo munseo hangukpyeon, 1866-1881* [German Diplomatic Documents Related to Korea, 1866-1881], Vol. 15 (Seoul: Bogosa, 2021), 185.

<sup>41</sup> “Also, the Coreans are said to have almost no regular troops and lack weapons. Unfortunately, some European merchants have already sought out the present complication just to [sic.] sell arms to the Coreans. In these attempts it is said that an American ship, *General Sherman*, which ventured too far into Korea, was burned by the inhabitants and the crew killed.” The German original can be found in *Dogil woegyo munseo hangukpyeon, 1866-1881*, Vol. 15, 190.

I lost money in 1865-1866, and 1867. I attribute my insolvency to losses on speculations in cotton and in coals, and to the venture in the “*General Sherman*.” ... I ventured about 3,000 Tls in the “*General Sherman*”. The goods shipped in her were general merchandise, consisting chiefly of manufactured cottons and woollens and iron, and I also placed some money, I forget how much, in the hands of the supercargo, Mr. Hogarth, to purchase native produce.<sup>42</sup>

This testimony indicates that Meadows & Co. had suffered losses from its investments in cotton and coal since 1865. The attempt to trade with and secretly sell weapons to Joseon had thus been made to realize an instant recovery of these losses at a time when France was about to attack Joseon. In addition to gaining high returns from smuggling weapons, the company seems to have aimed at importing Joseon goods as a means to establish connections for the sake of future trade with Joseon.

## Britain’s Nonintervention in the General Sherman Incident

The *General Sherman* Incident occurred on August 21, 1866, and Britain had plenty of reasons to involve itself in a response. There had been two British nationals on board, the missionary Robert Jermain Thomas and the supercargo George Hogarth. The schooner had been chartered to carry goods for a British company. And considering the precedents in which Britain had used the protection of its people and their property as excuses to invade East Asia, it seemed all the more likely that Britain would intervene here as well.

The country ended up doing the opposite, however, and that raises the question on its motivation. The signs had already been there since May 1867, when American Secretary of State William Seward met with British representative Frederick Bruce and discussed the attempt by

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<sup>42</sup> “H. B. M. BANKRUPTCY COURT,” *The North-China Herald and Market Report*, July 25, 1868.

Meadows & Co. and the *General Sherman* to smuggle weapons into Joseon. The following excerpt from Bruce's report on the meeting shows how he responded to Seward's comments about the incident:

But I thought it as well to say to Mr. Seward that I thought Governments would do well to hesitate before admitting the principle that their citizens in embarking in unauthorized and questionable expeditions, such as that undertaken by the owners of the "*General Sherman*" could calculate, in the event of disaster, on being supported in demand for redress and compensation. I observed to him that experience had proved to us the risk of affording any encouragement to the unscrupulous class of adventurers who abound in foreign settlements in the East, and who were ready to compromise their Governments by their illegal proceedings, and that opinion in England was much opposed to being dragged into hostilities on their behalf.<sup>43</sup>

Bruce thus expressed concerns about unlawful, wrongful acts committed in East Asia by Westerners including Britons. He was critical of Western governments' taking the lead in seeking compensation from East Asian countries for damages incurred by their citizens due to unlawful endeavors. He even brought up public opinion in Britain to clarify that Britain had no intention of covering for its citizens who committed unlawful acts in violation of its treaties with East Asian countries.

Britain had also been critical of the German Ernst Jacob Oppert after he attempted to snatch the body of Prince Namyoon, father of the regent of Joseon Heungseon Daewongun, from his tomb in 1868. That attempt had been orchestrated by Oppert and an American named Frederick Henry Barry Jenkins. But, although Oppert and Jenkins were publicly identified as the offenders, seven Britons had been involved in the incident as well.

In June 1868, Rutherford Alcock, the British Minister to Qing Chi-

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<sup>43</sup> Bruce to Stanley, 13 May 1867, Washington, No. 125, FO 5/1106.

na, pointed out two harmful aspects of the Oppert Incident to Guido von Rehfues, the Prussian Minister to Qing.<sup>44</sup> The first was the fact that the crime committed in Joseon by a ship bearing the Prussian flag had disgraced all European countries. The same applied, he said, to a series of other incidents involving Joseon between 1866 and 1868, and he specifically named the French Expedition to Joseon and the *General Sherman* Incident from 1866 as examples of such hostile and unlawful acts taken against Joseon. The second harmful aspect that Alcock pointed out was the risk that, if punitive measures were not taken against those involved in the Oppert Incident, European shipwreck victims, who washed up on the shores of Joseon thereafter, would be unable to avoid unjust treatment or even death. Alcock further condemned the Oppert Incident by contrasting it with Joseon's humanitarian efforts to repatriate shipwrecked people to China.

While Britain may have been adamant about the illegality of the acts of its citizens, it still endeavored to ensure their survival. In October 1868, Alcock heard a rumor that Thomas and Hogarth were alive.<sup>45</sup> He responded with a letter to the Zongli Yamen, the de facto Qing Ministry of Foreign Affairs, relaying the rumor that the two Britons who had been aboard the *General Sherman* were being detained in Joseon, and asking for help to secure their transport to Beijing. The Zongli Yamen replied that there were no British citizens in Joseon's custody, and that the Qing government had no intention of intervening in the affairs of Joseon, as Joseon was run by an independent government despite its being a tributary of Qing. The reply added that the Joseon government responded with humane measures in cases of shipwrecked foreign sailors. This confirmed Alcock's understanding that Joseon was not indiscriminately hostile toward Westerners.

Meanwhile, British merchants in Chefoo were hoping to engage in

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<sup>44</sup> Hertslet, "Memorandum Respecting Corea," 18 December 1882; *Geundae Hanguk Oegyomunseo*, Vol. 5, 677.

<sup>45</sup> Hertslet, "Memorandum Respecting Corea," 18 December 1882; *Geundae Hanguk Oegyomunseo*, Vol. 5, 676.

trade with Joseon and pioneer new markets. On December 23, 1867 they submitted a petition to Chaloner Alabaster, the British Vice-Consul in that area.<sup>46</sup> Meadows & Co., of the *General Sherman* Incident, was among the companies that signed the petition. The petition asked for revision of the Treaty of Tientsin, specifically Article 9 so that the “Chinese Government should remove all restrictions on trade with Corea by sea or land, and admit Corean produce at moderate duty.”<sup>47</sup> It made no attempt to hide expectations that such a revision would greatly facilitate British trade in Chefoo, a harbor that did not freeze in the winter and would even turn Chefoo into a “central depot for the trade of the north of China and the Corea.”<sup>48</sup> This suggests that Britain was seeking to gradually integrate Joseon into the East Asian treaty-based trade network and to increase its own economic profits without unnecessary conflicts with the country.

In April 1870, however, U.S. Secretary of State Hamilton Fish ordered Frederick Low, the new American Minister to Qing China, to initiate negotiations to establish a treaty with Joseon. Considering Qing China’s relations with Joseon, Fish noted that it would be ideal to have the Qing government mediate these negotiations and this was why a diplomat was being placed instead of a Navy admiral who would more likely try to achieve the objective using his fleet.<sup>49</sup> In March 1871, Low received a reply from the Zongli Yamen informing him that although Joseon was a tributary of Qing China, it was wholly independent in terms of decisions related to its internal affairs including religious or legal matters. This reply made it clear that it was practically impossible for Qing China to serve as a mediator in this regard, and having learned that Jo-

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<sup>46</sup> “Memorial by the Che-foo Residents,” in Great Britain Foreign Office, *Correspondence Respecting the Revision of the Treaty of Tientsin* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1871), 103.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Great Britain Foreign Office, *Correspondence Respecting the Revision of the Treaty of Tientsin*, 105.

<sup>49</sup> Francis Clifford Jones, “Foreign Diplomacy in Korea, 1866-1894” (Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1935), 64.

seon was a de facto independent state, Low decided that dispatching a fleet would be the best way to successfully negotiate with the Joseon government.

Low then turned to Britain for help.<sup>50</sup> Thomas Wade, who had been reappointed to the British consulate in Qing China, was already an acquaintance of Lows from earlier in the United States. Low therefore shared with Wade the results of his negotiations with the Zongli Yamen, as well as his plan to send an American fleet to Joseon. Wade said to Low that Britain would consider joining the United States in sending such a fleet.<sup>51</sup> This suggestion was made without consulting the British Foreign Office. It seems unlikely that Wade made it arbitrarily, however. To some degree, it reflected the policy that British diplomats in East Asia shared; opening Joseon's ports alongside other Western powers and reshaping that country into a space where all of them enjoyed equal concessions, rather than leaving the country under the sole influence of Russia.

Low subsequently notified Wade that he had received no orders from the American State Department to launch a joint expedition to Joseon with Britain. This statement appears to have been made with the Monroe Doctrine in mind. Low must have nevertheless calculated that the American Rear Admiral John Rodgers and the British Vice Admiral Henry Kellett, stationed in East Asia, would be able to reach an agreement on a joint expedition to Joseon. Low must have thought that if the American and British Navy could come to an agreement, the American and British governments would have no problem in approving a joint dispatch of fleets to Joseon.

Rodgers was open to the idea of launching an expedition to Joseon jointly with a British fleet.<sup>52</sup> He must have figured that he would be more likely be able to conduct negotiations peacefully alongside Britain rather than France. A joint operation with Britain even seemed to hold the

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<sup>50</sup> Jones, 69.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Jones, 70.

promise of leading to conclusion of a treaty with Joseon. And even if the expedition were to fail, the cost could be split between the U.S. and Britain. These were all valid reasons making Rodgers open to the idea of a joint expedition to Joseon with Britain.

On February 25, 1871, Wade sent a letter to Vice Admiral Kellett,<sup>53</sup> informing Kellett of America's plan to launch an expedition to Joseon and proposing the participation of at least one British fleet to make it a joint operation. If the British Navy were willing to send a fleet to Joseon, an interpreter would be provided by the British government. Wade also reported to the British Foreign Office the proposal that he had made to Kellett. At about this same time, Harry Parkes, the British Minister to Japan, sent a report to the British Foreign Office concerning the American expedition to Joseon. According to Parkes, the U.S. was planning to send two heavily armed, medium-sized fleets to Joseon, and the expedition's purpose, as well as the amount of force it was willing to use, were similar to those of the Perry Expedition.

The British Foreign Office received the letters from Wade and Parkes at almost the same time in April 1871. And this threw the office into panic, because as far as it could tell, a British fleet in East Asia was already on its way to join the American expedition to Joseon, as per Wade's plan.<sup>54</sup> The British Foreign Secretary Granville Leveson-Gower feared that it was too late to stop the British fleet:

Parkes does not give so entirely a peaceful character to the mission. I would have preferred our flag not being present in a case where collision may ensue. The Coreans would naturally identify us with the United States. But it is too late to do anything.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Jones, 70-71.

<sup>54</sup> Jones, 72.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

Leveson-Gower's fears never materialized. Kellett had refused to join the American fleets in an expedition to Joseon on the grounds that he had yet to receive orders to do so from the British Admiralty.<sup>56</sup> Leveson-Gower and Parkes had expressed concerns about the possibility of Britain being embroiled in a collision, but they must have also been aware that the arrival of British and American fleets in Joseon could likely incite Russia. In the end, Britain chose not to take part in the American Expedition to Joseon in 1871. And it thereafter continued to ignore the *General Sherman* Incident, even when concluding its treaty with Joseon between 1882 and 1883.

## Conclusion

This study has reviewed the role that Britain played in the *General Sherman* Incident. Previous studies have neglected to fully consider the fact that the *General Sherman* had been chartered by the British trading firm Meadows & Co., that the supercargo George Hogarth and the interpreter Robert Jermain Thomas were both British nationals, and that the goods which the *General Sherman* was carrying were the property of Meadows & Co. This study has also tried to draw attention to a fact nearly now forgotten with regard to the *General Sherman* Incident; Meadows & Co. and the *General Sherman* were attempting to smuggle weapons to Joseon at a time when a French attack on Joseon was imminent. Previous studies have overlooked the fact that the *General Sherman* was heavily armed when it arrived in Joseon. At that time, however, its heavy arming has been known by most as indicating that the schooner's crew meant to practice gunboat diplomacy, which seems a valid conclusion given how gunboat diplomacy.

Meanwhile, this study has focused on the process through which Meadows & Co. had declared bankruptcy. The company had begun suffering losses from 1865 and this could have driven it to attempt weapons

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

smuggling as an opportunity to offset its losses. The company's attempt to do so can be understood either as a violation of the unfair treaties which Western powers including Britain had concluded with Qing China, or as an adventurous and speculative action for a spearhead of imperialist powers. When Joseon refused to engage in negotiations and trade with Meadows & Co., the *General Sherman's* crew turned violent and caused Joseon casualties. And so, while Meadows & Co.'s attempt to smuggle weapons appears to have deviated from the Western powers' East Asian policy, its resort to force to try to make Joseon engage in trade seems quite in line with the aggressive nature of imperialist powers.

In a larger sense, this study has examined the *General Sherman* Incident from Britain's perspective. After Chinese ports had been opened through the Treaty of Tientsin, British trade in Qing China had stagnated. British diplomats and merchants had therefore sought ways to expand their market and begun to seriously consider Joseon as the next target. Rather than sending fleets and practicing gunboat diplomacy to achieve this goal, Britain preferred to establish relations with Joseon more gradually. For this reason, Britain was fearful that the French Expedition to Joseon, the *General Sherman* Incident, and the Oppert Incident would have a negative impression of Westerners among the people of Joseon, and that Western shipwreck victims who thereafter happened to wash up on the shores of Joseon might find it difficult to receive aid from the Joseon government.

Despite the limited extant sources related to the *General Sherman* Incident, this study has attempted to analyze the circumstances in which Meadows & Co., Britain and Joseon found themselves at around the time that the incident took place. It has not, however, examined further how Meadows & Co.'s offer to secretly supply weapons was received by Joseon, or what happened to the weapons loaded on the *General Sherman*. Some of the cannons on board are known to have been relocated to a defensive position in Pyeongyang, and hopefully more details on this can be uncovered through future studies.

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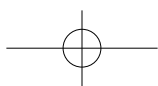
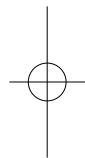
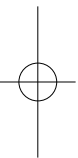
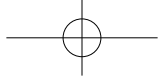
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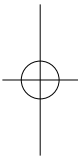
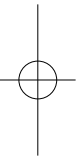




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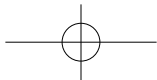
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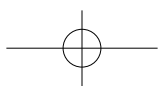
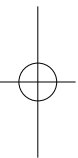
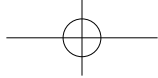
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# Revisiting the Origin of Modern Korea-Japan Relations: the *Unyōkan* Incident (1875) and the Treaty of Kanghwa (1876)

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## Introduction

One of the biggest difficulties faced by historians of modern Korean history, especially those of diplomatic history, lies in the lack of diplomatic records. This may well be a surprise considering the vast amount of governmental documents produced during the period. Yet, most official documents only cover superficial procedures of diplomatic transactions, and provide insufficient materials to comprehensively analyze perceptions, political intentions, and processes involved in policy formation. The study of the *Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Joseon and Japan*, better known as the *Treaty of Kanghwa*, confronts similar difficulties. Concluded on February 27th, 1876, between Sin Heon (申櫛), the high reception officer of Joseon, and Kuroda Kiyotaka (黒田清隆), the minister plenipotentiary of Japan, this treaty has attracted substantial scholarly attention as a pivotal point that initiated modern diplomatic relations between Joseon Korea and Meiji Japan, while also playing a significant role in her modernization.

This study revisits the conclusion of the treaty as well as its contemporary meaning by examining newly discovered historical materials

from both Korea and Japan.<sup>1</sup> *The Treaty of Kanghwa* has generally been regarded as a representative example of an unequal treaty imposed on the Kingdom of Joseon by the Empire of Japan by adopting gunboat diplomacy from the Western powers. Recent studies, particularly those by Korean historians, have challenged the one-sided nature of the treaty. They argue that the treaty deviated from the typical unequal treaty by incorporating the aspirations of the Joseon state, particularly those of King Gojong(高宗).<sup>2</sup> While these new interpretations require further support, they shed light on the complicated nature of the treaty. This includes examining the actual negotiation processes, delving into Japanese motivations behind the treaty, and exploring the implications of its various provisions.

Meanwhile, the outbreak of armed conflicts between Japanese naval forces and Joseon soldiers off Kanghwa Island, which preceded the *Treaty of Kanghwa* by five months, significantly influenced its characterization as an unequal treaty. Known as the *Unyōkan* (雲揚艦) Incident in Korea and the “Ganghwado incident” in Japan, the event is viewed as a deliberate Japanese military provocation against the Joseon state. In Japan, it is perceived either as an accidental skirmish triggered by unprovoked firing from Korean shore batteries towards the Japanese warship *Unyōkan*, or as a selfish decision taken by the ship’s commander, Inoue Yoshika (井上良馨). But the *Unyōkan Incident* offers valuable insights

<sup>1</sup> For example, a classic study on the Treaty of Kanghwa is Kiyoshi Tabohashi’s 『近代日鮮關係の研究(A study on modern Korean-Japanese relations)』(1940). Although this study is highly regarded for its extensive use of primary sources and rigorous “empirical history,” in its description about the Treaty of Ganghwa, mainly relies on Japanese sources such as Kiyotaka Kuroda(黒田清隆)’s 『使鮮日記(Daily records of the envoy to Joseon)』 and 『朝鮮交際始末(A complete account of the negotiations with Joseon)』 by Oku Yohitada(奥義制).

<sup>2</sup> Tsukiashi Tatsuhiko 月脚達彦, “Kindai Chōsen no jōyaku ni okeru ‘byōdō’ to ‘fubyōdō’—Nit-Chō shūkō jōku to Chō-Bei shūkō tsūshō jōyaku o chūshin ni” 近代朝鮮の條約における‘平等’と‘不平等’-日朝修好條規と朝米修好通商條約を中心に [Equality and inequality in the modern Korea’s treaties: Focusing on the Japan-Korea Friendship Treaty and the Korea-America Commercial Treaty], Higashi Ajia kindaiishi 13 (2010); Lee Taejin 이태진 “1876 Ganghwado joyak cui myeongam” 1876 년 강화도조약의 명암 [Bright and dark sides of the Treaty of Kanghwa], Hanguksa simin gangjiwa 36 (Seoul: Ilchogak, 2005).

into the Japanese intentions regarding the *Treaty of Kanghwa* stemming from complex domestic and international circumstances in Japan. Therefore, it is essential to explore the actual events that unfolded during the incident to understand their implications for the subsequent treaty negotiations.

## Two Secret Facts about the Unyōkan Incident

On September 20th, 1875, a small boat from the Japanese warship Unyōkan (245 tonnage) was sent ashore to Kanghwa Island. The small vessel was fired upon by Joseon batteries, leading to an armed skirmish between Joseon soldiers and Japanese crew. The next day, the Unyōkan opened fire in retaliation and silenced the Joseon batteries. On September 22nd, the Unyōkan sailed to Yeongjong Island, south of Kanghwa Island, and its combat soldiers landed, looted and razed the local fortress town, and captured provisions including weapons.

After the Unyōkan returned to Nagasaki on September 28th, the Japanese government publicly released Inoue Yoshika's report on October 8th. According to the report, the Unyōkan was carrying out a ship route surveying mission from the southwestern coast of Joseon to Niu-zhuang (China) (牛莊), on the Gulf of Liaodong. The Unyōkan approached the coast off Kanghwa Island and lowered a small boat to secure some drinking water. Joseon shore batteries fired on the small Japanese vessel, whereupon it signaled for help and the Unyōkan, flying the Japanese flag which had already been reported to Joseon officials in Busan by the Japanese consul there, began to shell the Joseon batteries. The Joseon soldiers continued to fire in violation of the agreement. The Unyōkan approached another set of Joseon batteries at Yeongjong Island to fire on them, and dozens of soldiers were sent ashore on the island. The Japanese attackers killed scores of Joseon soldiers, looted and set fire to the fortress town, and captured large quantities of weapons and gunpowder. The report says that all the battles took place on a single day of September 20th, and that the Unyōkan withdrew and managed to ob-

tain drinking water from another island before it headed home.<sup>3</sup>

This report was a fogery. Indeed, the historical accuracy and coherence of the report have been subsequently scrutinized by historians.<sup>4</sup> However, the initial report, which had been submitted to the Japanese Navy on September 29th, the day after Inoue Yoshika's return to Nagasaki, was discovered at the Defense Research Institute of the Japanese Defense Agency in 2002.<sup>5</sup> The discovery conclusively demonstrated that the claims surrounding the *Unyōkan Incident*, such as the alleged approach of the ship to Kanghwa Island in search of freshwater, the insistence that all engagements with Joseon forces took place on September 20th, as well

<sup>3</sup> *Kōbunroku* 公文錄 [Official records], preserved in the National Archives of Japan (Nihon kokuritsu kōbunshokan 日本國立公文書館); *Dai Nihon gaikō bunsho* 大日本外交文書 [Diplomatic Documents of Japan], vol. 8, document no. 57, “Kōkado jiken no keika ni kanshi hōchi no ken” 江華島事件ノ經過ニ關シ報知ノ件 [Report on the process of the KanghwaIsland incident], Fuzokusho 附屬書 [Attached documents] 1, “Jūgatsu yōka Unyō kanchō Inoue shōsa no Kōkado jiken hōhokusho” 十月八日雲揚艦長井上少佐ノ江華島事件報告書 [Report on the KanghwaIsland incident by Inoue, the captain of the *Unyō* warship on October 8].

<sup>4</sup> For example, Tabohashi Kiyoshi had doubt about the combat capability of the *Unyōkan* that, its being wooden ship with slow speed, it could engage in two rounds of combat at the two fortresses of Choji and Yeongjong on a single day of September 20, fighting against rough tide of the unsurveyed KanghwaStrait (See Tabohashi Kiyoshi, *Kindai Nissen kankei no kenkyū*, 402). Yamabe Kentarō concluded that the warship *Unyōkan* resorted to military action against Korea as a part of Japan's venture to open Korea on the basis of the following facts—It was only the Kanghwabatteries that suffered unilateral damage in the skirmishes; It was a grave aggression against Korea to enter into the KanghwaBay, a crucial point of defense, without prior notice to the country with which Japan had not yet normalized the relationship; After the skirmishes, the *Unyōkan* returned to Nagasaki on September 28, during which time it did not need water supply (See Yamabe Kentarō 山辺健太郎, *Nikkan heigō shōshi* 日韓併合小史 [A short history of the Japanese annexation of Korea], (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1966), 51–52.

<sup>5</sup> Lee Taejin 이태진, “Unyangho sageon eui jinsang—sageon eui gyeongwi wa Ilbon gukgi geyang seol eui jinwi” 雲揚號 事건의 진상-사건 경위와 일본국기 게양설의 진위 [True facts of the *Unyōkan incident*: Process of the incident, and the true or false facts about hoisting the Japanese national flag] in Choe Seungheui gyosu jeongnyeon ginyeom nonmunjip ganhaeng wiwonhoe 崔承熙教授停年紀念論文集刊行委員會, ed., *Joseon eui jeongchi wa sahoe—Choe Seungheui gyosu jeongnyeon ginyeom nonmunjip* 朝鮮의 政治와 社會-崔承熙教授停年紀念 論文集 [Politics and society of Joseon Korea: Collection of papers on the occasion of Professor Choe Seungheui's retirement] (Seoul: Jipmoondang, 2002); Suzuki Jun 鈴木淳, “Unyō kanchō Inoue Yoshika no Meiji hachinen kugatsu nijū kokonoka tsuke Kōkado jiken hōhokusho” 雲揚艦長井上良馨の明治八年九月二十九日付け江華島事件報告書 [Report on the KanghwaIsland incident by Inoue Yoshika, the captain of the *Unyō* warship on the 29th day of the 9th month of Meiji], *Shigaku zasshi* 111–112 (2002).

as the claim that the Unyōkan flew the Japanese flag while being targeted by Joseon batteries, have all been unequivocally fabricated.

Inoue Yoshika, who was later promoted to Admiral of the Japanese Navy, recollected the circumstances at that time at a conference at the Japanese Naval University on May 24th, 1924.

On my sending a telegram to the government upon the return to Nagasaki, all ministers were astonished at it, and called me to Tokyo. The minister of the Ministry of Navy took the trouble of sending me a letter expressing his wish to meet with me secretly at Yokohama before coming to Tokyo, and telling me to keep silence until then. On arriving at Yokohama, I found myself in a very difficult situation.

There was a worrying voice that the ship's (i.e., Unyōkan) maneuvering within three nautical miles from the foreign land, especially in the river (*sic*), constituted a hostile act of violating territorial waters of the foreign country in terms of international law. I responded that I had been aware of the off-limits within three nautical miles from the land, but also aware of the provision that allowed temporary entry to the port when the ship was in need of water, and therefore argued that I had not committed any violation of international law.<sup>6</sup>

The Kanghai Strait, because of its narrow strip of water, had gained a nickname of “salt river” (鹽河). Upon receiving news of the *Unyōkan Incident*, concerns grew within the Japanese government that the three-day intrusion into the foreign country's waterway constituted a significant provocation under international law. It seems that these concerns led to the actual three-day operations of the Unyōkan from September 20th to September 22nd being reduced into one single day event of September. Furthermore, some news media began voicing critical opinions, asserting that regardless of the intentions, the military act of intrud-

<sup>6</sup> Inoue Yoshika 井上良馨, “Inoue gensui danwa yōryō” 井上元帥談話要領 [Outline of the talks by Admiral Inoue] in *Meiji tennō ki* 明治天皇紀 [Records of the Meiji emperorship], vol. 5 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1968).

ing into another country's territorial waters should be condemned.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, a rumor began to spread among the public that the *Unyōkan Incident* had been premeditated by Inoue.<sup>8</sup> In an effort to alleviate negative public opinions and to prevent potential loss of national prestige, the Japanese government seems to have fabricated the report, emphasizing the Joseon's provocative attack against the Japanese flag and their preceived ignorance of international law.

According to *Biography of Prince Yamagata Aritomo* (公爵山県有朋伝), one of the Meiji oligarchs, the commander Inoue Yoshika received a confidential order from the Ministry of Navy in September 1875. The order instructed the Unyōkan to carry out a military operation against Joseon while en route to Niuzhuang under the pretext of surveying the sea route.<sup>9</sup> Inoue himself vehemently objected to the order issued by then Acting Navy Minister Kawamura Sumiyoshi (川村純義), as it originally directed the ship to proceed to Hokkaido.<sup>10</sup> These accounts suggest that ordinary officials within the Meiji government initially approached the idea of military action against Joseon with caution. However, by September 1875, a secret decision was made within the so-called inner circle to endorse Inoue's military plan.

Itō Hirobumi (伊藤博文), who later became the first Prime Minister of Japan and the first Resident General in Korea, left behind an extensive collection of documents related to his official tasks. These documents were subsequently sorted out and published as the *Classified Collection*

<sup>7</sup> “Kōkado jiken o ronzu” 江華島事件を論ず [Discussion on the KanghwaIsland incident] in *Yūbin hōchi shinbun* 郵便報知新聞 [Newspaper via postal service], October 2, 1875.

<sup>8</sup> Sasaki Takayuki 佐々木高行, a member of the Genrōin 元老院 (Senate) had a following passage in his diary in October 1875: “I am certain that this [Ganghwa] incident has been premeditated by our side. I have heard an officer saying that Inoue Yoshika confided to his colleague before leaving for Korea that he should take it a luck if the Koreans would open fire first” (See Sasaki Takayuki 佐々木高行, *Hogohiroi* 保古飛呂比 [A diary of Sasaki Takayuki], vol.6 (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1975), 301.

<sup>9</sup> Tokutomi Sohō 徳富蘇峰, *Kōshaku Yamagata Aritomo den* 公爵山県有朋伝 [Biography of Prince Yamagata Aritomo], vol. 2 (Tokyo: Hara shobō, 2004), 412–413.

<sup>10</sup> Inoue Yoshika, “Inoue gensui danwa yōryō.”

of *Private Documents* (秘書類纂). In 2007, the collection, housed at the Imperial Household Agency, was republished in photographic form by Yumanishobō publishing company as *Itō Hirobumi Papers* (伊藤博文文書). Among the contents of this collection is a memorandum made by Gustave Émile Boissonade, the French legal advisor to the Japanese government, regarding the compensation claim arising from the *Unyōkan incident*. Boissonade's suggestion, which was made on September 11th, nine days prior to the incident, was in response to a request from Itō Hirobumi, who was serving as the Minister of the Ministry of Construction at that time.<sup>11</sup>

The primary focus of Boissonade's suggestion was to propose that if Joseon agreed to maintain their previous friendly relations with Japan, the issue of compensation for the violence arising from the *Unyōkan incident* would be easily resolved. This indicates that policy makers within Japanese Government had deliberated on a strategy of connecting the compensation issue with the conclusion of a modern treaty. This constitutes irrefutable evidence that the inner circle of the Meiji Government, including Ito, were aware of the plan for the *Unyōkan incident* in advance.

## Dilemma of the Meiji Government

Inoue Yoshika later recalled that he had anticipated severe punishment, even capital punishment, but nothing happened to him.<sup>12</sup> This implies

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<sup>11</sup> Hitherto, the Boissonade's suggestion has been known to be made on September 31, thus after the report of the *Unyōkan* incident to the Japanese government. But the date must be an error because there is no September 31 in the month of September. (See Itō Hirobumi monjo kenkyukai 伊藤博文文書研究会, ed, *Itō Hirobumi monjo* 伊藤博文文書 [Itō Hirobumi papers], vol. 1 (Tokyo: Yumanishobō, 2007), 281–285.

<sup>12</sup> Inoue recollected that “I had no qualm at all. I chastised the Koreans for their insult on the flag of the imperial warship, however, my action might well be taken to be excessive, because the government had adopted a policy line of moderation to solve the Korean problem without a bloody clash. Still, our side executed what we believed in, regardless of dismissal from the government or even capital punishment. I was waiting for what would happen next, but there was no news about me at all.” See Inoue Yoshika 井上良馨, “Tsuioku hiwa Kōkado jihen” 追憶秘話 江華島事

that the inner circle had prior knowledge of Inoue's plan, and gave him a covert approval. With this in mind, let us now explore the domestic factors that influenced the shift in policy toward Joseon.

As *Biography of Prince Yamagata Aritomo* shows,<sup>13</sup> the first reason for this can be attributed to the need to address the domestic political dispute surrounding the Cabinet Separation issue. The political system of early Meiji government was a kind of collective leadership system in which imperial councilors (*sangi* 参議) played important roles between the Great Council of State (*Daijō-kan* 太政官 headed by *daijōdaijin* 太政大臣, *udaijin* 右大臣, *sadaijin* 左大臣) and the Ministers (*kyō* 卿). The Cabinet Separation issue emerged as a political reformation program aimed at prohibiting imperial councilors from assuming ministerial positions. However, it held a deeper political meaning as it represented a challenge by the coalition of the conservative faction led by Shimazu Hisamitsu (島津久光) and the radical faction led by Itagaki Taisuke (板垣退助) against the ruling faction comprising Ōkubo Toshimichi (大久保利通), Iwakura Tomomi (岩倉久視), and Itō Hirobumi.

The *Unyōkan Incident* provided a timely opportunity to swiftly resolve the ongoing domestic political feud. Upon receiving news of the incident, Chancellor Sanjō Sanetomi (三條實美) took advantage of the situation and, on October 19th, indefinitely postponed the debate on the Cabinet Separation issue, citing “emergent exigencies.” This decision had a direct impact on Shimazu and Itagaki, who were strong advocates for the separation, leading to their resignation from the government on October 27th. In essence, the Ōkubo and Itō faction effectively leveraged the foreign crisis triggered by the *Unyōkan Incident* to quell political opposition and consolidate their own political power.

Simultaneously, the Japanese government saw an opportunity to leverage on the *Unyōkan Incident* to address longstanding diplomatic ten-

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變 [Memoir of the Kanghwal Island incident] in *Dai Nihon yūbenkai* 大日本雄辯會, Gendai 10-1 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1929), 109-110.

<sup>13</sup> *Kōshaku Yamagata Aritomo den* 公爵山縣有朋伝, 412-413.

sions with Joseon. The Meiji Restoration in 1868 was the underlying cause of this diplomatic trouble. Starting from the establishment of the Kamakura Bakufu in the 12th century, the Japanese Emperor (*Tennō* 天皇) held a symbolic role while the political and economic power resided in the hands of the Shogun (征夷大將軍). However, the Shogun's authority was nominally delegated by the Tennō, and with the Meiji Restoration, the latter relinquished his power back to the former. In other words, the Tennō, who had previously held merely symbolic significance, now emerged as a genuine sovereign both in name and in reality.

In the autumn of 1868, the Japanese government sent a diplomatic letter (書契) to notify the Joseon government of this political transformation. But it contained such characters as “皇” (emperor) and “勅” (imperial edict) to refer to the Japanese Tennō, which had previously been exclusively used for the Chinese emperor. Furthermore, 皇 was positioned at the top of a new line, one character space higher than the characters representing the Joseon state and the initial characters of other lines. This arrangement implied the relative superiority of Japan, now under the rule of the Tennō vis-à-vis the Kingdom of Joseon.

Perplexed by these unprecedented practices of Japan, the Joseon government adamantly refused to accept the document. That was because they apprehended that accepting it would not only imply the recognition of Japan's superior status, contradicting the traditional notion of equality between the two nations (交隣 *Kyorin*), but also potentially lead to complications in their relationship with Qing, which had long been recognized as the superior state (上邦 *sangbang*) of Joseon.

The rejection of diplomatic document, however, sparked a wave of anti-Joseon sentiment among conservative factions in Japan. These groups called for military action against Joseon, accusing them of disrespecting the dignity of the Tennō. Finally in 1873, the Meiji government became divided over the debate regarding the appointment of the senior imperial councilor Saigō Takamori (西郷隆盛) as an envoy to Joseon. It is widely believed that Saigō's intention was to provoke Joseon government, anticipating that if they killed him, then Japan would have a justifiable cause for an expedition to the Korean Peninsula. This event is com-

monly referred to as “political turmoil in the sixth year of the Meiji era,” or the “political turmoil over the Punitive Expedition to Korea (*sei-Kanron*)” in modern Japanese history.

Those who succeeded in thwarting Saigō's scheme, including Okubo, Iwakura, and Itō, did not oppose the idea of an expedition to Joseon itself. However, they deemed it unrealistic at the time. In 1873 they argued that threat from Russia posed a significant problem to Japanese national security, and that dealing with it should take precedence over the Joseon Problem.<sup>14</sup> However, the ratification of the *Treaty of St. Petersburg* on August 22nd, 1875 effectively settled the northern border issue with Russia, and the conservative factions once again strongly demanded a solution to the Joseon problem.

Moreover, disgruntled former samurais who lost their status privileges due to the Meiji Restoration were becoming a discontented, anti-governmental social force. The worst scenario that political leaders in the government feared was the alliance between these anti-government force and proponents of the expedition to Joseon, particularly those who held influence in the military and the police. This provides one explanation as to why the inner circle in the Meiji government may have given secret permission or turned a blind eye to the reckless military operation carried out by Inoue Yoshika.

In reality, the Meiji government neither had the capability nor the will to risk a war with Joseon. However, the domestic pressure to take action in addressing the Joseon issue became increasingly difficult to postpone. This dilemma encapsulated the predicament faced by the nascent Meiji government. In July 1875, Matsukata Masayoshi (松方正義), a high-level official in the Ministry of Finance, wrote the following sentences arguing against the possibility of waging war against Joseon due to the deteriorating financial conditions of the state.

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<sup>14</sup> Ishii Takashi 石井孝, *Meiji shoki Nihon to Higashi Ajia* 明治初年の日本と東アジア [Japan and East Asia in the early Meiji years] (Tokyo: Yūrindō, 1982), 317.

Observing the current situations, the monetary spending and the foreign debts have become excessive. Moreover, the Taiwan incident in the last year and the subsequent conflicts with the Qing entailed a huge amount of military spending. If the conflicts had remained unresolved, coupled with the cabinet decision to issue national bond, the state coffers might well have been depleted. Yet, an army of punishing Joseon is to be raised, even one day's operation will cost tens of thousand cash. Eventually, isn't it the case that the specie reserves of the state treasury would be exhausted and only paper money would be left, leading to a bankrupt finance for the government, and a loss of livelihood means for the dislocated people?

To escape from this predicament, Ōkubo and Itō opted for a diplomatic solution instead of pursuing a military expedition against Joseon. Their plan was to employ gunboat diplomacy to compel the Joseon government into signing an unequal treaty, similar to the tactics employed two decades before by American Naval Commodore Matthew C. Perry at Edo Bay. In this orchestrated performance, the Japanese would take a role of civilizing agents, bring civilization to the “barbarous” Joseon people. It would not only instill a sense of superiority among the Japanese populace, serving as a psychological compensation for the frustration for their feelings of inferiority compared to the West, but also be hailed as a remarkable achievement of the Meiji regime's policy of Europeanization. Additionally, the coercive conclusion of an unequal treaty with Joseon would help quell the staunch opposition from extremists who relentlessly demanded for a military expedition.

Indeed, the primary objective of the Japanese delegation during the negotiations on Kanghwa Island was to create a spectacle by imposing an unequal treaty using the same approach of gunboat diplomacy commonly employed by the European powers. The purpose was not solely to secure favorable terms for Japan, but rather to showcase their capability to assert themselves as a strong and modern nation, aligning with the practices of Western powers. The focus on a symbolic display of power had its effect and established Japan's presence as an emerging force. The report

of Harry S. Parkes, the British minister to Japan, holds great significance in understanding the essence of the situation.

The conclusion I have formed is that Japan has entered into the [Joseon] question deliberately and in conjunction with Russia, the understanding arrived at having been effected at St. Petersburg. With such an alliance Japan hopes that she can insure success either in negotiation or in war ; and that while raising her reputation as a spirited nation and a champion of progress in the East, the Government will succeed in gaining the good opinion of the Samurai, and in diverting attention from troublesome home questions.<sup>15</sup>

## Was the Treaty of Kanghwa a Product of Gunboat Diplomacy?

In February 1876, negotiations on Kanghwa Island commenced with the arrival of several warships. The Japanese delegation seemingly followed the precedent set by Admiral Perry's gunboat diplomacy in 1853 when he arrived in the Gulf of Edo with four warships and successfully signed the Kanagawa Treaty with the Edo *bakufu*. Before sailing to Kanghwa Island, the Japanese fleet, consisting of seven warships, arrived at Busan port and conducted a gunnery exercise to demonstrate their military power. As Minister Plenipotentiary Kuroda Kiyotaka entered the Kanghwa Island Fortress, accompanied by 400 combat soldiers, the Japanese warships performed a ceremonial firing of their guns at sea. At the Yeolmu Hall (閱武堂) conference venue, four gatling-guns were mounted, creating an intimidating atmosphere. These belligerent actions by the Japanese would undoubtedly have caused deep anxiety among the Joseon populace, who still had a fresh memory of the *Unyōkan incident* that had occurred just four months earlier.

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<sup>15</sup> Harry S. Parkes to the Earl of Derby, December 31, 1875. *Yedo* (Park Il-Keun, ed. *Anglo-American Diplomatic Materials Relating to Korean, 1866-1886*, Shinmundang, 1982, pp. 13–20).

Unlike the Americans in Japan 23 years prior, the Japanese did not have the intention of waging a war against Joseon in case the negotiations broke down. Furthermore, the failure of the first delegation sent by the Tennō to achieve its mission was anticipated to fuel the calls for military action. But while the Japanese delegation made explicit threats to the Joseon delegation using their naval and army forces, various conciliatory and deceptive tactics were employed behind the scenes during the actual negotiations.

The detailed accounts of the Japanese negotiation tactics can be found in Sin Heon's *Daily Record of Trip to Kanghwa* (沁行日記).<sup>16</sup> In one notable example, Kuroda's fleet consisted of a total of six ships at Kanghwa Bay, including two warships, a flagship, and three transport ships. The flagship Genbumaru had a tonnage of 400 tons, while the largest warship Nisshinmaru had a tonnage of 1,468 tons. These ships were much smaller in size compared to the American battleship Colorado, which attacked Kanghwa Island in 1871 with a tonnage of 3,480 tons, or Commodore Perry's Susquehanna, which appeared at Edo Bay in 1853 with a tonnage of 2,450 tons.

The Japanese mission deliberately anchored the fleet at Hangsan Island, located south of Kanghwa Island, and utilized small boats to navigate through the strait of Kanghwa. According to British Captain James who was present with the Japanese, the purpose of this maneuver was to maintain a distance from the Joseon people in order to conceal the true strength of the Japanese fleet.<sup>17</sup> Concerned about the size of their forces,

<sup>16</sup> The *Simhaeng ilgi* 沁行日記 is a daily record by Sin Heon 申樞 (penname Widang 威堂), the reception minister of Joseon Korea at the negotiations of the Ganghwa treaty, documenting the whole process of the negotiations. It includes diplomatic communications, reports, and memorials, and so on, and its second volume has long been considered to be lost. But the volume in point has been discovered at the National Library of Korea in 2010, and was translated into modern Korean by this author, and published in the same year. See Kim Jong-hak trans., *Simhaeng ilgi: Joseon i girok han Ganghwado joyak* 沁行日記: 조선이 기록한 강화도조약 [Daily record of trip to Ganghwa: A record of the Ganghwa Treaty by a Joseon Korean] (Seoul: Purunoksa, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> According to James, the fleet consisted of only one corvette and the remaining five light vessels. See Park Il-Keun, ed., *Anglo-American Diplomatic Materials Relating to Korean, 1866-1886*, 45-48; Geundae Hanguk oegyomunseo pyeonchan wiwonhoe 근대한국외교문서편찬위원회, ed.,

minister Kuroda and vice-minister Inoue Kaoru (井上馨) requested a reinforcement of two battalions to their government from Busan.<sup>18</sup> Although they assured the Japanese Fleet Command that no violent acts would occur in Kanghwa Island, their request was turned down. As a result, they had to pretend that the Japanese possessed a formidable force of 4,000 during the negotiations, instead of the actual number of 809.<sup>19</sup>

The paradox of adopting the Western model of gunboat diplomacy while lacking the capability to resort to military action is evident in the official instructions given to Kuroda. He was granted significant discretion in the negotiations with the Joseon delegation, indicating that the Japanese government preferred a peaceful resolution rather than a military confrontation. Initially Daijōdaijin Sanjō Sanetomi instructed Kuroda to include several stipulations in the treaty. These included:

- ① The normalization of diplomacy on the basis of equal national status;
- ② Free trade in treaty ports;
- ③ The opening of Kanghwa Island or a place near Seoul;
- ④ Freedom of navigation in Joseon coastal waters;
- ⑤ The rescue of shipwrecked individuals;
- ⑥ The establishment of consulates.

Indeed, some of the stipulated items might be set aside depending on expediency. In the confidential instructions issued simultaneously, it was specified that only three items must be included:

- Ⓐ Opening of Kanghwa Island in addition to Busan;
- Ⓑ Freedom of navigation in Joseon coastal waters;
- Ⓒ Official apology for the Unyōkan incident.

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*Geundae Hanguk oegyomunseo* 근대한국외교문서 [Diplomatic documents of modern Korea], vol. 5 (Seoul: Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2013), document no. 13.

<sup>18</sup> Itō Hirobumi kankei bunsho kenkyūkai 伊藤博文關係文書研究會, ed., *Itō Hirobumi kankei bunsho* 伊藤博文關係文書 [Papers relating to Itō Hirobumi], vol. 1 (Tokyo: Hanawa shobō, 1973-1981), 144.

<sup>19</sup> *Simhaeng ilgi*, 78–79.

However, according to the December 27th secret instruction, Kurda was granted additional discretion. He was informed that he could decide the timing of the enforcement of items ① and ② based on his judgement.<sup>20</sup> The instruction emphasized the mission's peaceful intent and methods, explicitly directing Kuroda to avoid resorting to military action even if the negotiations were to break down. Instead, he was instructed to retreat to Tsushima Island and await further orders.<sup>21</sup>

The specific evidence regarding the Japanese government preparing a draft of the *Treaty of Kanghwa* in advance has not been found. It is highly possible that the drafting process took place during the journey to Kanghwa Island or shortly before the negotiations.<sup>22</sup> In December 1875, a special messenger named Hirotsu Hironobu (廣津弘信) arrived in Busan, one month ahead of the Kuroda mission. He informed the Joseon officials about the dispatch of the Japanese mission to Kanghwa Island and the accompanying warships and soldiers. Although he explained that the mission aimed to address the issues arising from Joseon's rejection of Japanese diplomatic letters and to determine the responsibility for the Unyōkan incident, he did not mention the intention to conclude a new treaty with Joseon.<sup>23</sup> It was not until the second official meeting held in Kangwha Island that the treaty issue was raised by the Japanese delegation. This was likely because they were concerned that revealing the in-

<sup>20</sup> Oku Yohitada 奥義制, *Chōsen kōsai shimatsu* 朝鮮交際始末 [A complete account of the negotiations with Joseon], vol. 3 (1877).

<sup>21</sup> Tada Koumon 多田好問, ed., *Iwakura kō jikki* 岩倉公實記 [Veritable Records of Prince Iwakura], vol. 2 (Tokyo: Kōgōgūshiki, 1906), 310–312; Nihon gaimushō 日本外務省, ed., *Nihon gaikō nenpyō narabi ni shuyō bunsho* 日本外交年表註主要文書 [Chronical table and major documents of Japanese diplomacy], vol. 1 (Tokyo: Gaimushō), 62–64.

<sup>22</sup> The draft of the 1871 China-Japan Treaty was written by the deputy envoy Yanagihara Sakimitsu. See Fujimura Michio 藤村道生, “*Sei-Kan ronsō ni okeru gaiin to naiin*” 征韓論争における外因と内因 [External and internal factors in the sei-Kan debate] in *Nihon kokusai seiji gakkai* 日本国際政治学会, *Kokusai seiji 37 Nihon gaikōshi no shokmondai III* 国際政治 37 日本外交史の諸問題III [International politics 37: Various issues of Japanese diplomatic history III] (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1968), 7.

<sup>23</sup> “*Senhō riji nusshi bassui ōsetsu sho naiwa sho tori*” 先報理事日誌抜萃應接書内話書取 in *Chōsen kankei kōshō ishū* 朝鮮關係考證彙集 [Historical collection relating to Korea], preserved in the Seoul National University Library.

tention for a new treaty earlier would prolong debates and hinder the swift progress of the negotiations on-site.

Throughout the negotiation process, the Japanese delegates employed a mixed tactic of alternating coercion and coaxing, which created a sense of confusion and perplexity for Sin Heon.

During the brief talk with the Japanese, I repeated that the issues of receiving the Japanese documents and the treaty provisions would be reported quickly [to the court] and the results would be duly delivered to them. Then, Kuroda threatened that “in case the things did not go smoothly, unfortunately, a force of tens of thousand soldiers might well go ashore. [Your country] should take precaution against the measures that might lead to the loss of friendly relations between the two countries.” I felt outraged about such intimidation. Yet, while they tried to settle the issues by coercion on the one hand, they also never cease to utter appeasing words on the other. What an [incomprehensible] habit they had.<sup>24</sup>

The so called unequal treaties that Western imperial powers imposed on East Asian nations in the late nineteenth century generally included the following provisions—the consular jurisdiction, the agreed custom duties, and the unilateral most-favored-nation treatment. Nonetheless, only the extraterritorial jurisdiction was defined in the *Treaty of Kanghwa*. The most-favored-nation clause was dropped at the request of the Joseon delegates, and the issue of custom duties remained indefinite (See Article 1 and Article 9 in Table 1). The deviation from the typical provisions of unequal treaties in the Treaty of Kanghwa has been interpreted as a mistake on the part of Kuroda Kiyotaka, or as a reflection of the treaty’s “imperfect character” as an unequal treaty.

However, such interpretations are flawed in overlooking the context of the Japanese mission and its genuine motivations. From the point of

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<sup>24</sup> *Simhaeng ilgi*, 133.

view of the Japanese government, the significance of concluding the Treaty of Kanghwa lay not as much in securing specific diplomatic and economic advantages as in promoting national prestige by working out an unequal treaty by way of Western-style gunboat diplomacy. The British minister Harry S. Parkes, after interviewing Moriyama Sigeru (森山茂), who had served as an entourage in the negotiations in Kanghwa, made an incisive observation about the attitude of Japanese mission toward the treaty as follows. “Following the rules of Western diplomacy instead of those of the East, they asked, he said, for nothing which they did not intend to obtain. On the other hand, as they did not wish to make difficulties for Joseon, they demanded nothing which she could not easily grant.”<sup>25</sup>

Contrary to the prevailing historical perception of the *Treaty of Kanghwa* as an unequal treaty imposed on Joseon through the use of force, numerous historical materials of Joseon indicate that their demands were considerably accommodated by Japanese. The conventional belief, shared by both Korean and Japanese alike, is that *the Treaty of Kanghwa* served as the a initial step toward the eventual colonization of the former. However, it should be noted that this perception had not been prevalent among Korean politicians and intellectuals prior to the liberation from the Japanese colonial rule in 1945.<sup>26</sup> To provide a comprehensive analysis, Table 1 presents a comparative examination, article by article, of the original treaty draft proposed by the Japanese and the revisions put forth by the Joseon government.

<sup>25</sup> Harry S. Parkes to the Earl of Derby, March 27, 1876. *Yedo* (Park Il-Keun, ed. *Anglo-American Diplomatic Materials Relating to Korean, 1866-1886*, p. 47).

<sup>26</sup> Tsukiashi Tatsuhiko 月脚達彦, “Kindai Chōsen no jōyaku ni okeru ‘byōdō’ to ‘fubyōdō’—Nit-Chō shūkō jōku to Chō-Bei shūkō tsūshō jōyaku o chūshin ni.”

**Table 1. Japanese Draft and Joseon Government's Revisions of the Treaty of Kanghwa**

	<b>Japanese Original Draft</b>	<b>Joseon government's Revisions</b>
Preamble	<p>The Great Government of Japan and the Government of Joseon, being desirous of resuming the amicable relations that of yore existed between them, and of promoting the friendly feelings of both nations on still firmer basis, have for this purpose appointed their Plenipotentiaries, that is to say:</p> <p>The Emperor of Great Japan appointed and sent Kuroda Kiyotaka, High Commissioner Extraordinary to Joseon, Lieutenant-General, Member of the Privy Council, and Minister of the Colonisation Department, and Inouye Kaoru, Associate High Commissioner Extraordinary to Joseon, and Member of the Genroin; and The King of Joseon appointed Sin Hon, P'an- jung-jiu-pu-sa; and In Ja-syng, To-chiong-pu, Pu- chiong-koan:</p> <p>Who, according to the powers received from their respective Governments, have agreed upon and concluded the following Articles.</p>	<p>The booklet we have sent states that in the preamble there is no need to address the designation of sovereign of each country in favor of only the name of state. This matter is greatly objectionable. There is one precedent in the preamble of the China-England Treaty to be emulated, in which only the name of state was written like "Grand Academician such person appointed by the Great Government of the Qing" or "Earl such person appointed by the Great Government of England." Accordingly, what can be a problem in using only the name of state?</p>
Article I	<p>Joseon being an independent state enjoys the same sovereign rights as does Japan.</p> <p>In order to prove the sincerity of the friendship existing between the two nations, their intercourse shall henceforward be carried on in terms of equality and courtesy, each avoiding the giving of offence by arrogance or manifestations of suspicion.</p> <p>In the first instance, all rules and precedents that are apt to obstruct friendly intercourse shall be totally abrogated, and, in their stead, rules, liberal and in general usage fit to secure a firm and perpetual peace, shall be established.</p>	<p>Nothing in particular worth debating.</p>

	Japanese Original Draft	Joseon government's Revisions
Article II	<p>The Government of Japan, at any time after fifteen months from the date of the signature of this Treaty, shall have the right to send an Envoy to the capital of Joseon, where he shall be admitted to confer with the high officials in power on matters of a diplomatic nature. He may either reside permanently at the capital or return to his country on the completion of his mission.</p> <p>The Government of Joseon, in like manner, shall have the right to send an Envoy to Tokio, Japan, where he shall be admitted to confer with the high officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on matters of a diplomatic nature. He may either reside permanently at Tokio or return to his country on the completion of his mission.</p>	<p>It is necessary to exchange the envoys of both countries after the conclusion of a treaty of friendship between them. Yet, it seems contradictory to the courtesy of equality for our envoy to meet with the high officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while for your envoy to meet with the "high officials in power." [On the basis of the principle of mutuality], if your envoy is to meet with our high official, our envoy is to meet with your high official, and if our envoy is to meet with the official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, your envoy is to meet with the official of the Board of Rites. As a rule, the Board of Rites is in charge of neighborly relations [in our country], how can it be different from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of your country.</p> <p>After setting up the office and trade regulations at the port, there will be no need to establish separately an agency for handling affairs. In case of the affair that needs attention, your official and our local official can get together to work out the measure. Why is it that the envoy should stay permanently in Seoul?</p> <p>Moreover, the land being apart and the sea being deep between the two countries, the journey to and from them is perilous. Though exchanging of envoys is of great importance to each state, frequent visits are a matter of great difficulty. Hence, it is advisable to keep an interval of ten or fifteen years in exchanging envoy. All these issues are for the sake of convenience to each country, and should be settled clearly.</p>
Article III	<p>All official communications addressed by the Government to that of Joseon shall be written in the Japanese language, and the Government of Joseon will use the Chinese language.</p>	<p>Admissible.</p>

	Japanese Original Draft	Joseon government's Revisions
Article IV	<p>Cho-riang-hang, in Fusan, Joseon, where an official establishment of Japan is situated, is a place originally opened for commercial intercourse with Japan; and trade shall henceforward be carried on at that place in accordance with the provisions of this Treaty, whereby are abolished all former usages.</p> <p>In addition to the above place, the Government of Joseon agrees to open two ports, as mentioned in Article V of this Treaty, for commercial intercourse with Japanese subjects.</p> <p>In the foregoing places Japanese subjects shall be free to lease land and to erect buildings thereon, and to rent buildings, the property of subjects of Joseon.</p>	<p>Allowing commercial intercourse will naturally lead to setting up official residence. Yet, the official quarters even in other place should have boundaries, which should not be trespassed. In the event of mixed residence with our subjects, troubles are bound to occur, damaging the perpetual harmony and friendship.</p> <p>The travel limits by Joseon ri can be defined taking geographical features into account. Yet, the premise of official residence should not exceed the Choryang residence in size.</p>
Article V	<p>The port belonging to the Yeongheung Magistracy, Hamgyeong Province will be opened in the fifteenth month from the second month of the ninth year of Meiji, corresponding with the date of Joseon, the first moon of the year Piong-ja.</p> <p>On the coast of four provinces, viz., Kiong-kyi, Chiung-chiong, Choll-la, and Kiong-siang, one port suitable for commercial purposes shall be selected, and the time for opening the port shall be in the twentieth month from the second month of the ninth year of Meiji, corresponding with the date of Joseon, the first moon of the year Piong-ja.</p>	<p>Yeongheung as the original site of our state distinguishes itself from other places, in the vicinity of which there is a dynastic ancestor shrine. What makes you insist on this site in spite of other places available? It is out of question to open Hamheung, Anbyeon, and Muncheon because dynastic ancestors' tombs are located there.</p> <p>Needless to say, no port can be opened in Gyeonggi, as well as in Chungcheong and Jeolla Provinces. The search for one port should be confined to the coastal area of Gyeongsang Province.</p>
Article VI	<p>Whenever Japanese vessels, either by stress of weather or by want of fuel and provisions, cannot reach one or the other of the open ports of Joseon, they may enter any port or harbour either to take refuge therein or to get supplies of wood, coal, and other necessities, or to make repairs; the expenses incurred thereby being defrayed by the ship's master. In such events, both the officers and the people of the locality shall display their sympathy by rendering full assistance, and</p>	<p>Permissible.</p>

	Japanese Original Draft	Joseon government's Revisions
	<p>their liberality by supplying the necessities required. If any vessel of either country be at any time wrecked or stranded on the coasts of Japan or of Joseon, the people the vicinity shall immediately use exertion to rescue her crew, and shall inform the local authorities of the disaster, who will either send the wrecked persons to their native country or hand them over to the officer of their country residing at the nearest port.</p>	
Article VII	<p>The coast of Joseon, having hitherto been left unsurveyed, are very dangerous for vessels approaching them; and in order to prepare charts showing the position of islands, rocks, and reefs, as well as the depth of water, whereby all navigators may be enabled safely to pass between the two countries, any Japanese mariner may freely survey said coasts.</p>	Permissible.
Article VIII	<p>There shall be appointed by the Government of Japan an officer to reside at each of the open ports of Joseon, for the protection of Japanese merchants resorting there, provided that such arrangement be deemed necessary. Should any question interesting to both nations arise, the said officer shall confer with the local authorities of Joseon, and settle it.</p>	Permissible.
Article IX	<p>Friendly relations having been established between the two Contracting Parties, their respective subjects may freely carry on their business without any interference from the authorities of either Government, and neither restriction nor prohibition shall be made on trade.</p>	Permissible.
Article X	<p>Should a Japanese subject residing at any of the open ports of Joseon commit any offence against a subject of Joseon, he shall be tried by the Japanese Authorities. Should a subject of Joseon commit any offence against a Japanese subject,</p>	<p>It the event of criminal case of respective subject, the officials in jurisdiction get together to investigate and apply respective law, thereby promoting mutual trust.</p>

	Japanese Original Draft	Joseon government's Revisions
	he shall be tried by the Authorities of Joseon. The offenders shall be punished according to the laws of their respective countries. Justice shall be equitably and impartially administered on both sides.	
Article XI	Friendly relations having been established between the two Contracting Parties, it is necessary to prescribe Trade Regulations for the benefit of the merchants of the respective countries. Such Trade Regulations, together with detailed provisions, to be added to the Articles of the present Treaty, to develop its meaning and facilitate its observance, shall be agreed upon at the capital of Joseon, or at Kanghoa in the country, within six months from the present date, by special Commissioners appointed by the two countries.	Details of some provisions can be clarified and settled in the present negotiations. Is there still a further need to send later the commissioners to discuss such details?
Article XII	The Government of Japan had traditionally granted foreign subjects the right to engage in trade in those Japanese ports open to foreigners including the Joseon people. In the future, in case Joseon should conclude a treaty with a third country that would grant any right not included in the Articles of the present Treaty, Japan would enjoy the same privileges as a most-favored-nation.	As a rule, our country had not had any intercourse with foreign countries except for the Japanese, with whom we had maintained neighborly relations for long. How can there be a possibility for us to conclude treaties with other [Western] countries? This is beyond question—an impossible thought.
Article XIII	The foregoing twelve Articles are binding from the date of the signing hereof, and shall be observed by the two Contracting Parties faithfully and invariably, whereby perpetual friendship shall be secured to the two countries. The present Treaty is executed in duplicate, and copies will be exchanged between the two Contracting Parties.	Also permissible.

The finalized version of the treaty, agreed upon by both the Joseon and Japanese parties, is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Final Text of the Treaty of Kanghwa**

	Final Version of the Treaty of Kanghwa
Preamble	<p>The Great Government of Japan and the Great Government of Joseon, being desirous of resuming the amicable relations that of yore existed between them, and of promoting the friendly feelings of both nations on still firmer basis, have for this purpose appointed their Plenipotentiaries, that is to say:</p> <p>The Great Government of Japan, Kuroda Kiyotaka, High Commissioner Extraordinary to Joseon, Lieutenant-General, Member of the Privy Council, and Minister of the Colonisation Department; and Inouye Kaoru, Associate High Commissioner Extraordinary to Joseon, and Member of the Genroin; and</p> <p>The Great Government of Joseon, Sin Hon, P'an-jung-jiu-pu-sa; and In Ja-syng, To-chiong-pu, Pu-chiong-koan:</p> <p>Who, according to the powers received from their respective Governments, have agreed upon and concluded the following Articles.</p>
Article I	<p>Joseon being an independent state enjoys the same sovereign rights as does Japan.</p> <p>In order to prove the sincerity of the friendship existing between the two nations, their intercourse shall henceforward be carried on in terms of equality and courtesy, each avoiding the giving of offence by arrogance or manifestations of suspicion.</p> <p>In the first instance, all rules and precedents that are apt to obstruct friendly intercourse shall be totally abrogated, and, in their stead, rules, liberal and in general usage fit to secure a firm and perpetual peace, shall be established.</p>
Article II	<p>The Government of Japan, at any time after fifteen months from the date of the signature of this Treaty, shall have the right to send an Envoy to the capital of Joseon, where he shall be admitted to confer with the President of the Board of Ceremonies on matters of a diplomatic nature. He may either reside permanently at the capital or return to his country on the completion of his mission.</p> <p>The Government of Joseon, in like manner, shall have the right to send an Envoy to Tokio, Japan, where he shall be admitted to confer with the Minister for Foreign Affairs on matters of a diplomatic nature. He may either reside permanently at Tokio or return to his country on the completion of his mission.</p>
Article III	<p>All official communications addressed by the Government to that of Joseon shall be written in the Japanese language, and for a period of ten years from the present date they shall be accompanied by a Chinese translation. The Government of Joseon will use the Chinese language.</p>
Article IV	<p>Cho-riang-hang, in Fusan, Joseon, where an official establishment of Japan is situated, is a place originally opened for commercial intercourse with Japan; and trade shall henceforward be carried on at that place in accordance with the provisions of this Treaty, whereby are abolished all former usages, such as the practice of Siei-kion-jion<sup>27</sup> (junks annually sent to Joseon by the late Prince of Tsushima, to exchange a certain quantity of articles).</p>

<sup>27</sup> "Siei-kion-jion" (*Segyeonseon* 歲遣船) referred to annual Japanese ships sent from Tsushima to Busan for trade.

<b>Final Version of the Treaty of Kanghwa</b>	
	<p>In addition to the above place, the Government of Joseon agrees to open two ports, as mentioned in Article V of this Treaty, for commercial intercourse with Japanese subjects.</p> <p>In the foregoing places Japanese subjects shall be free to lease land and to erect buildings thereon, and to rent buildings, the property of subjects of Joseon.</p>
Article V	<p>On the coast of five provinces, viz., Kiong-kyi, Chiung-chiong, Choll-la, Kiong-siang, and Ham-kiong, two ports suitable for commercial purposes shall be selected, and the time for opening these two ports shall be in the twentieth month from the second month of the ninth year of Meiji, corresponding with the date of Joseon, the second moon of the year Piong-ja (February 1876).</p>
Article VI	<p>Whenever Japanese vessels, either by stress of weather or by want of fuel and provisions, cannot reach one or the other of the open ports of Joseon, they may enter any port or harbour either to take refuge therein or to get supplies of wood, coal, and other necessities, or to make repairs; the expenses incurred thereby being defrayed by the ship's master. In such events, both the officers and the people of the locality shall display their sympathy by rendering full assistance, and their liberality by supplying the necessities required. If any vessel of either country be at any time wrecked or stranded on the coasts of Japan or of Joseon, the people the vicinity shall immediately use exertion to rescue her crew, and shall inform the local authorities of the disaster, who will either send the wrecked persons to their native country or hand them over to the officer of their country residing at the nearest port.</p>
Article VII	<p>The coast of Joseon, having hitherto been left unsurveyed, are very dangerous for vessels approaching them; and in order to prepare charts showing the position of islands, rocks, and reefs, as well as the depth of water, whereby all navigators may be enabled safely to pass between the two countries, any Japanese mariner may freely survey said coasts.</p>
Article VIII	<p>There shall be appointed by the Government of Japan an officer to reside at each of the open ports of Joseon, for the protection of Japanese merchants resorting there, provided that such arrangement be deemed necessary. Should any question interesting to both nations arise, the said officer shall confer with the local authorities of Joseon, and settle it.</p>
Article IX	<p>Friendly relations having been established between the two Contracting Parties, their respective subjects may freely carry on their business without any interference from the authorities of either Government, and neither restriction nor prohibition shall be made on trade. In case any fraud be committed or payment of debt be refused by any merchant of either country, the authorities of either one or the other Government shall do their utmost to bring the delinquent to justice and to enforce recovery of the debt. Neither the Japanese nor the Joseon Government shall be held responsible for the payment of such debt.</p>

Final Version of the Treaty of Kanghwa	
Article X	Should a Japanese subject residing at any of the open ports of Joseon commit any offence against a subject of Joseon, he shall be tried by the Japanese Authorities. Should a subject of Joseon commit any offence against a Japanese subject, he shall be tried by the Authorities of Joseon. The offenders shall be punished according to the laws of their respective countries. Justice shall be equitably and impartially administered on both sides.
Article XI	Friendly relations having been established between the two Contracting Parties, it is necessary to prescribe Trade Regulations for the benefit of the merchants of the respective countries. Such Trade Regulations, together with detailed provisions, to be added to the Articles of the present Treaty, to develop its meaning and facilitate its observance, shall be agreed upon at the capital of Joseon, or at Kanghwa in the country, within six months from the present date, by special Commissioners appointed by the two countries.
Article XII	The foregoing eleven Articles are binding from the date of the signing hereof, and shall be observed by the two Contracting Parties faithfully and invariably, whereby perpetual friendship shall be secured to the two countries. The present Treaty is executed in duplicate, and copies will be exchanged between the two Contracting Parties.

As shown in Table 1 and Table 2, the Joseon government did not contest the Japanese draft proposals in Articles 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, and 13. However, in the preamble of the treaty, the titles addressing the sovereigns of the two countries—originally stated as the “*Emperor of Great Japan*” and the “*King of Joseon*” in the Japanese draft—were replaced with the term “*Government of Great Japan*” and the “*Government of Great Joseon*,” respectively, at the insistence of the Joseon government. This decision was made to avoid reopening the issue of hierarchy between the two countries that specifying royal titles could potentially raise. Therefore, both parties agreed to use the term ‘government’ instead of ‘emperor’ and ‘king’ for the treaty-making authority and to include the adjective ‘great’ in the names of both countries, aiming to equalize the national status of both nations.

Regarding Article 2, the Japanese request to send an ambassador as they deemed necessary after the passage of fifteen months was accepted. Additionally, the Joseon negotiators successfully designated the receiv-

ing minister of the envoy from each country as the Minister of the Ministry of Rites in Joseon and the Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan. In Article 5, the Japanese were compelled to abandon their intention to open Yeongheung as a treaty port. Instead, the Joseon negotiators allowed them to search for two ports from the five provinces of Gyeonggi, Chungcheong, Jeolla, Gyeongsang, and Hamgyeong. Furthermore, the Joseon negotiators successfully demanded their Japanese counterparts to remove Article 12, which provided for the most-favored-nation treatment, from the draft. On the other hand, the Japanese rejected the Joseon's demands stated in Articles 4, 10, and 11.

The Joseon government did not strongly object to the inclusion of typically unequal treaty stipulations in Article 7, 8, 9, and 10. However, it is important to emphasize that the government's relatively indifferent attitude should not be considered as a basis for denying that the Treaty was of an unequal nature. In fact, the fundamental problem with the treaty was that the Japanese deliberately designed an ambiguous treaty text, leaving room for arbitrary interpretation. This deliberate ambiguity made it challenging for the Joseon government to ascertain the exact meaning and implications of the treaty.

For instance, let's consider Article 1 of the *Treaty of Kanghwa*, which defines the international status of Joseon. The article was translated into English by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs as "Chosen, being an independent state, enjoys the same sovereign rights as does Japan." In other words, the Japanese interpreted the term "*jaju ji bang*"(自主之邦) as "independent state."<sup>28</sup>

However, the concept of "*jaju*"(自主), as understood in both Joseon Korea and the Qing Dynasty, did not necessarily contradict the traditional tributary relationship between the two states. The Joseon king practiced various political rituals, such as paying tribute to the Qing emperor and receiving investiture from him. These rituals were performed as a way to demonstrate deference and acknowledge the superior status of the Qing

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<sup>28</sup> "朝鮮國自主之邦 保有與日本國 平等之權",

Dynasty. In return, Joseon enjoyed de facto national autonomy in matters concerning its internal administration and foreign affairs. In general, it can be stated that the Qing Dynasty assumed a moral responsibility for Joseon as the superior state (*sangguk* 上國). However, it did not directly control Joseon's foreign affairs or interfere with its internal administration. This distinction sets for example, the concept of “*jaju*”, etc. apart from the Western concept of a protectorate.

In the transitional context of the 19th century, during a time when Western international law was not yet been fully embraced, the concept of “*jaju*” (自主) remained inherently ambivalent. It could be understood as either a “*sokguk*”(屬國), a nominally subservient state that nevertheless enjoyed complete autonomy in its internal and foreign affairs without interference from the superior state, or as an independent sovereign state aligned with the principles of modern international law.

Furthermore, the ambiguity surrounding the concept of “*jaju*” (自主) served to mask the inherent contradictions of the trilateral relationship in East Asia for a considerable period of time. While there existed a nominal hierarchy between Joseon and Qing, both the Qing and Japan, as well as Joseon and Japan, these countries had embarked on modern diplomacy based on the principle of equal sovereignty through the the *Treaty of Peace and Friendship* between Qing and Japan in 1871 and the *Treaty of Kanghwa* in 1876. As a result, the triangular relationship carried inherent contradictions. However, the provision of “*jaju ji bang*”(自主之邦) was sufficiently ambiguous, allowing for different interpretations for Qing, Joseon, and Japan. This ambiguity effectively prevented the issue of Joseon's international status from coming to the forefront. With this, Joseon and Japan were able to bring an end to the nearly eight-year diplomatic break after the Meiji Restoration and begin a new form of modern diplomacy on an equal government-to-government basis. The paradoxical triad between Joseon Korea, Qing China, and Meiji Japan came to an end when Qing, defeated in the *First Sino-Japanese War* (1894-1895), was forced to recognize the full and complete independence and autonomy of Joseon.

## Conclusion

Upon receiving the news of the conclusion of the *Treaty of Kanghwa* on March 1st 1876, Ōkubo Toshimichi sent a congratulatory letter to Itō Hirobumi, stating that “auspicious news from Korea had reached me immediately, which was a fortunate event beyond expectations and worthy of celebrating together with you.”<sup>29</sup> Negotiations on the Kangwha had also been a risky endeavor for them with no guarantee of success.

Kuroda was granted extensive authority to negotiate and sign the treaty, with the only restriction being the avoidance of military force. Among the three objectives that needed to be fulfilled during the negotiations the opening of Kanghwa Island in addition to Busan, freedom of navigation in Korean coastal waters, and an official apology from the Joseon government for the *Unyōkan Incident*, the first two were effectively addressed in Articles 5 and 7 of the Treaty. In Article 5, Kuroda’s decision to choose two ports from the southern provinces of the Korean Peninsula, rather than Kanghwa Island was based on his own judgment that the tides were too high to serve as a suitable port. The third condition was met when Shin Heon delivered the official statement of the Joseon government during the signing of the *Treaty of Kanghwa* on February 27th.<sup>30</sup>

The Japanese government’s limited goals from the beginning, along with the numerous acts of appeasement and covert maneuvers that occurred during the official negotiations, expose the truth behind their claims of opening Korea through gunboat diplomacy, akin to Commodore Perry’s actions in 1853. In reality, Japan had neither the capability nor the will to wage a war. In this sense, the negotiations in Kanghwa Island can be seen as a “diplomatic drama” orchestrated by the Okubo regime, aiming to resolve the diplomatic stalemate with Joseon following

<sup>29</sup> Itō Hirobumi kankei bunsho kenkyūkai 伊藤博文關係文書研究會, ed., *Itō Hirobumi kankei bunsho* 伊藤博文關係文書, vol.3, 239.

<sup>30</sup> *Simhaeng ilgi*, 269–270.

the Meiji Restoration and to alleviate domestic political challenges. The negotiations ultimately resulted in an “incomplete and unequal treaty.” However, this outcome was not attributed to Kuroda's failure or the proactive response of the Joseon side. Instead, it was primarily due to the inherent weaknesses within the Okubo regime.

This study does not argue against the fact that the *Treaty of Kanghwa* was an unequal treaty. However, it highlights that the ‘inequality’ arose from a combination of Joseon’s powerlessness and Japan’s arbitrary post-hoc interpretation. The leadership of Meiji Japan was well aware of the power-political nature of the modern international order. As a diplomatic strategy, they often left treaty language ambiguous when its power was insufficient or the situation was unfavorable. Later, when their power became sufficient, they unilaterally interpreted the treaty’s meaning. If we consider this pattern as a significant aspect of modern Korean-Japanese relations, it is clear that its origins can be traced back to the duplicitous actions taken before and during the signing of the *Treaty of Kanghwa*.

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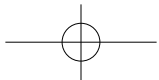
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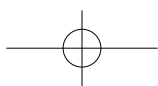
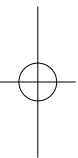
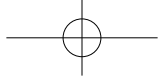
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# The Red Ginseng Trade in the Joseon Dynasty After the Opening of the Ports (1876~1894) : Focusing on Envoy's trade and Royal Trade\*

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## Introduction

Ginseng had been an important export item of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) and a key trade commodity within East Asian countries before the 19th century. Red ginseng was greatly in demand. Foreign countries, establishing diplomatic relations with Joseon after the Opening of the Ports in 1876, paid great attention to the red ginseng trade and the Joseon government raised taxes on red ginseng and monopolized packaged red ginseng (*posam* 包蔘), also called as government-owned red ginseng or red ginseng, for royal expenses. The red ginseng trade, categorized generally into envoy's trade and staterun trade, had been the important financial fulcrum of the Joseon government to the extent the government monopolized *posam* in 1884 and the royal red ginseng became the foremost export item in ginseng trade. There has been a limited number of researches regarding the red ginseng trade during the time, most of which have specifically touched on the ginseng trade of Joseon with the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Joseon ginseng merchants, the red ginseng policy of Joseon, and

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international agreements surrounding the ginseng trade of Joseon.<sup>1</sup> This paper explores the changes in Joseon's policy on red ginseng trade, particularly the envoy's trade and the royal trade after the Opening of the Ports with the premise that the red ginseng trade in this period displayed the vital interaction of the traditional tribute system and the modern treaty system. By comparing the two types of red ginseng trade in terms of price, intermediary sales organizations, and trade procedure, this approach will help capture the mode of the Joseon-Qing relationship and their survival strategies in the newer and aggressively competitive world system of modern time.

## The Joseon's Policy on Red Ginseng Trade after the Opening of the Ports

During the Joseon Dynasty, ginseng was a top trade commodity, used as a medicine for the king and royal family, and presented by envoys to foreign monarchs. In the 18th century, when natural ginseng threatened to be extinct, ginseng was cultivated and steamed in places like Kaesong to make red ginseng. It was later called posam or sampo (蔘包), or ginseng

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<sup>1</sup> Zhang Cun-mu (張存武), *Qinhan Zongfan Maoyi, 1637-1894* (清韓宗藩貿易, 1637-1894), Taiwan (臺灣) Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan (中央研究院), 1978; Zhang Cun-mu (張存武), Translated by Kim Taek-jung, *History of Modern Korea-Qing Trade* (近代韓中貿易史), Seoul: Kyomunsa (教文社), 2001; Lee Chul-sung (이철성), *Research on the history of trade with Qing in the late Joseon Dynasty*, (조선후기 대청무역사 연구) Kookhak Publishing Co, 2018.; Ishikawa Ryota (石川亮太), Translated by Choi Min-kyung, et al., *Modern Asian Markets and the Joseon Dynasty* (근대 아시아 시장과 조선), Seoul: Somyong Publishing, 2020; Sul Heasim (설혜심), *The Global History of Ginseng* (인삼의 세계사), Seoul: Humanist, 2020; Yang, Jeong-Pil, "19th Century's Ginseng Industry run by Kaesung merchants and its characteristics (한말 개성상인의 蔘業 경영과그성격)" *The Review of Joseon History* 94, 2009; Yang, Jeong-Pil, "Economic Fluctuation and Response of Gae-sung Merchants during the Opening of Port Era (개항기 경제 변동과 개성상인의 활동)." *The Yeoksa and Silhak* 55, 2014; Ishikawa Ryota (石川亮太), "The Study on the Red Ginseng Exports to Qing and Chinese Merchants in the 1880s (1880年代の紅蔘對清輸出と華商-裕增祥事件を通じて)," *The Japan Journal of Joseon History* (朝鮮史研究會論文集) 53, 2015; Park, Eun-sook, "Regulations for Red Ginseng Trade and Its Characteristics in Modern International agreements (1876-1894) (근대 국제 협약의 홍삼무역 규정과 그 특성 (1876-1894))," *The Journal for the Studies of Joseon History* 83, 2021; Park, Eun-sook, "Joseon's Red Ginseng Policy After The Opening Ports (개항 후 조선의 포삼정책과 홍삼의 어용화)," *The Journal of Joseon History* 194, 2021.

in packets because ten *geun* of red ginseng were packed into a single bag for the envoy trade. Posam refers to the red ginseng for export which envoys officially take with them. The government collected the posam tax for the envoy's expenses and its own revenue.

After opening its ports in 1876, Joseon overhauled its ginseng policy in accordance with the new standard of international trade. The government enacted the Legislative Regulations Concerning the Tax on Ginseng (包蔘釐正節目) in 1881 and reorganized its ginseng policy to increase tax revenue.<sup>2</sup> The reform policy, spearheaded by King Gojong (r.1864-1907), increased the quota of ginseng from 20,200 *geun* to 25,200 *geun* and created the Silver Tax for Posam (包蔘銀稅). As a result, the government was able to raise more than 600,000 *nyang*<sup>3</sup> in state tax revenue and acquire a large amount of silver coins.

Red ginseng trade regulations were first written down in the 1882 Joseon-U.S. Treaty that prohibited the export of Joseon red ginseng to the United States. The same stipulation was later applied to European countries such as Britain, Germany, and France. On the contrary, the red ginseng export regulations to the Qing and Japan allowed Joseon merchants to bring red ginseng into the Qing and Japanese "territorial boundary" and set the tariff at 15% while stipulating that violators would be investigated and their ginseng would be confiscated. The Qing was the first country to allow Joseon to trade red ginseng in an international agreement. Article Six of the Regulations for Maritime and Overland Trade between Qing and Joseon Merchants (hereafter Regulations for Trade) in August 1882 stipulated that "The red ginseng shall be allowed to be brought into the territory of Qing by Joseon merchants and taxes shall be paid at 15/100 of the price."<sup>4</sup> It imposed a 15% duty on the export of red

<sup>2</sup> The Red Ginseng Amendment Regulations (包蔘釐正節目) (Digital Jangseogak, MF16-301, <http://jsg.aks.ac.kr/>), hereafter, "The Legislative Regulations (節目)".

<sup>3</sup> The yang or nyang (兩) was originally a unit of weight and was traditionally used as a monetary unit in Joseon.

<sup>4</sup> Gojong sillok (高宗實錄, Veritable Records of Gojong), 17 October 1882 (19th year of King Gojong's reign). "第六條 … 至紅蔘一項例准朝鮮商民帶入中國地界應納稅則按價值百抽十五其有中國

ginseng to the Qing by Joseon merchants. In October 1882, the Qing government exempted cargo carried by Joseon envoys from taxation only if traveling by land, so the red ginseng trade through envoys was also exempted.<sup>5</sup> Given that the official red ginseng trade was almost entirely done by envoys, there were virtually no import duties imposed by the Qing on red ginseng from Joseon.

It was not until the “Regulations for the Traffic on Frontier between Fengtian and Joseon”, signed on December 3, 1883, that the import duties of the Qing began to apply to the red ginseng from Joseon. Article Eight of the Regulations for the Traffic on Frontier between Fengtian and Joseon specified that tribute, paid by the Joseon envoys to the Qing, was exempt from taxation but “goods” for profit, including the envoy’s red ginseng trade, were subject to taxation. At that time, the amount of red ginseng which an envoy could carry was limited to 20 *geun* per vice minister and ten *geun* per attendant.<sup>6</sup> Assuming the size of the regular delegation was 30 vice ministers and 200 attendants, the total amount of red ginseng for the envoy’s trade would be 2,600 *geun*; if the envoy traveled twice a year, the total would be 5,200 *geun*.

By 1884, the volume of red ginseng from Joseon was drastically reduced after the Regulations for the Traffic on Frontier between Fengtian and Joseon, and a dramatic change in *posam* policy occurred. In the fall of that year, King Gojong reassigned the red ginseng trade which was previously under the control of the Bureau of Official interpreters (司譯院), to the Department of Royal Treasury (內藏院) and allocated 15,000 *geun* of *posam* to Royal Treasury. This was 74% of the 20,200 *geun* of *posam* in 1884 and 60% of the 25,200 *geun* of *posam* from 1883 to 1886.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, the Joseon government strove to negotiate with

商民將紅蔘私運出朝鮮地界 未經政府特允者查出將貨入官”

<sup>5</sup> *Qingji Zhong Ri Han guanxishiliao* (清季中日韓關係史料) (臺北, 中央研究院 近代史研究所, 1972) vol 3, no.635, October 22, 1882 (8th year of Guangxi’s reign).

<sup>6</sup> Park Eun-sook, “Regulations for Red Ginseng Trade and Its Characteristics in Modern International agreements (1876-1894),” *The Journal for the Studies of Joseon History* 83, 2021a, 209-210.

<sup>7</sup> Kim T’ack-yōng (金澤榮), *Hansagyung* (韓史榮) Vol. 6, 太上皇, 1884; Kim, T’ek-yōg (金澤榮),

the Qing for the previous exemption by resorting to the long-established tradition of the close-knit relationship between Joseon and the Qing. In December 1885, the Qing reduced the tariff on the red ginseng trade from 15% to 10% and eased the restrictions on carrying cargo. Finally, the Qing granted an exemption to the red ginseng trade via land in 1888.

Then, why was Joseon open to the export of red ginseng to Japan but preponderantly partial to the Qing? This practice can be attributed to King Gojong's strategy to maximize the profits from the red ginseng trade. When exporting red ginseng to Japan, they had to pay a 15% tariff both at the Joseon seaport and the Japanese seaport so they had to bear a high tariff burden. Furthermore, the customs revenue from the seaports under the jurisdiction of the foreign general tax collector, if beneficial to the national treasury, could not be incorporated into the royal treasury under King Gojong. On the other hand, the red ginseng trade with the Qing enjoyed the privilege of tax exemption so Joseon was able to overcome the barrier of high tariffs while maintaining its cooperative relations with the Qing, which was indispensable to its own security.

Taken altogether, we can see the characteristic of the red ginseng trade between Joseon and the Qing. The Qing imposition of import duties and exemption on Joseon's red ginseng trade indicates how Joseon and the Qing needed each other in order to reset their long-time historical relationship in the modern world system given by the Western powers. The pronounced preference for the Qing in red ginseng trade was geared toward the maximum profit of the red ginseng trade for the royal treasury and the stronger fortification of the regal power in foreign relations. Accordingly, it can be said that the red ginseng trade of Joseon with the Qing proved to be the most concrete example of the survival strategy of Joseon that actively used the Qing for its security and economic interests during the period of the Opening of the Ports.

## The Red Ginseng Trade by Envoys

Joseon's red ginseng trade had been conducted through envoy's trade since late Joseon and continued into the period of the Opening of the Ports. The envoy's red ginseng trade was mainly conducted through regular envoys.<sup>8</sup> The Joseon government taxed the envoy's red ginseng trade. The government's tax on one *geun* of *posam* was four to six *nyang* during the reigns of King Heonjong (1834-1849) and King Cheoljong (r. 1849-1863), and 14 *nyang* in 1864. The 14 *nyang* per *geun* tax on *posam* lasted until 1881. However, the surtax was added during the reign of King Gojong.<sup>9</sup> In the 1881 Legislative Regulations (節目), "Silver Tax for *posam*" (包蔘銀稅) was added and the tax increased significantly.

The Joseon government levied a new tax on 25,200 *geun* of red ginseng for the trade with the Qing, calculated at four *nyang* and two *jeon* of silver per *geun* (three *nyang* of additional tax and one *nyang* and two *jeon* of original tax), with a total amount of 105,840 *nyang*. Since the 105,840 *nyang* was silver, we need to apply the exchange rate to Joseon coins. The exchange rate fluctuated depending on many variables and the exchange rate between silver and coins, such as *sangpyeong tongbo* (常平通寶) and *yeopjeon* (葉錢), was recorded as 1:7 in 1882 and as 1:13 in 1884.<sup>10</sup> Using the 1:7 exchange rate between silver and coins, the silver four *nyang* and two *jeon*, taxed on one *geun* of red ginseng in 1881, would be 29 *nyang* and four *jeon* in coins, so the silver 25,200 *nyang*,

<sup>8</sup> In 19th-century Beijing, there were many Qing merchant shops near Yuheguan (玉河館) where the Joseon delegation stayed and traded ginseng and other goods imported from Joseon.

<sup>9</sup> Park Eun-sook, "Joseon's Red Ginseng Policy After The Opening Ports," *The Journal of Joseon History* 194, 2021b, 325 and 333.

<sup>10</sup> For silver and coin exchange rates in 1882, see the following resources: "余在朝鮮時以白銀一兩易常平錢七百文左右聞彼國向例銀貴不過八百文錢貴不過六百文百文稱兩一文稱分." Xue Feirong (薛培榕), *Dongfan Jiyao* (東藩紀要) Vol. 9, Qianfa (錢法), 1882; "至於銀子二百兩, 首犯在逃, 實難窮覈, 不得已銀子二百兩代銅錢二千六百兩, 本僉使爲先以懲出之意, 成給印蹟於中國派員". *Ku Han'guk oegyo munsŏ*, Vol. 8, Chung-an Vol. 1, Document No. 193 (Intercalary May 27, 1=884); "支那銀一兩價值韓貨十九兩." Gaksa-deungnok Gyunggidopyon (경기도편) Vol. 3, Gyunggidogakgunsojang (경기도각군소장) 15, 8th year of Guangmu era (1904) 12th month (<http://db.history.go.kr>, June 1, 2021).

taxed on 105,840 *nyang*, would be 748,000 *nyang* in coins. In addition to the newly established “Silver Tax for *posam*,” the tax on *posam* in Legislative Regulations usually included the basic tax totaling 250,000 *nyang* (ten *nyang* per *geun*) and the additional tax totaling 75,000 *nyang* (three *nyang* per *geun*).<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the total tax on 25,200 *geun* of *posam* was 1,065,880 *nyang* and the total tax on one *geun* of the *posam* was 42 *nyang* and four *jeon*.

The following table summarizes the Joseon government's taxation of the envoy's red ginseng trade after the opening of the ports.

**Table 1. Red ginseng trade volume and taxation of envoys after the opening of port**

Date	Red Ginseng Trade Volume by Envoys( <i>geun</i> ) / Total Red Ginseng Trade Volume( <i>geun</i> )	Taxation by the Joseon government (per one <i>geun</i> )	Import Customs Duties in the Qing	Explanatory Note
1864~1879	20,200 / 20,200	original tax 14 <i>nyang</i> + additional tax 5 <i>nyang</i>	none	
1880	22,500 / 22,500	The same as above	none	
Intercalary July 1881~ December 1883	25,200 / 25,200	coin 13 <i>nyang</i> + silver coin 4.2 <i>nyang</i>	none	- Legislative Regulations Concerning the Tax on Ginseng in 1881 - Regulations for Maritime and Overland Trade between Chinese and Joseon Subjects in August, 1882 - Tax exemption for envoy's red ginseng trade in October, 1882

<sup>11</sup> In this case, the tax per *geun* of the original tax and the additional tax is the tax per *geun* for 25,000 *geun*, excluding the 200 *geun* of tax-free *posam* paid to Dangyakjae Gyegongin (唐藥材貢入, Joseon Privileged Merchants Importing Chinese Medicines). For more reference, Park Eun-sook, 2021b, 330.

Date	Red Ginseng Trade Volume by Envoys( <i>geun</i> ) / Total Red Ginseng Trade Volume( <i>geun</i> )	Taxation by the Joseon government (per one <i>geun</i> )	Import Customs Duties in the Qing	Explanatory Note
1884~ December 1885	5,200 / 20,200		15%	- Regulations for the Traffic on Frontier between Fengtian and Joseon in December, 1888 - Royal trade of 15,000 <i>geun posam</i> in August, 1884
December 1885~ November 1888	10,200 / 25,200	coin 16 <i>nyang</i> + silver coin 6 <i>nyang</i>	10%	- Reduced import tariffs from 15 to 10 percent in the Qing - Doubled red ginseng trade volume
November 1888~1894	10,200 / 25,200	The same as above	None	

\* Sources: Legislative Regulations Concerning the Tax on Ginseng, Chonggwan naeshin (總關來申), Qingji Zhong Ri Han guanxishiliao (清季中日韓關係史料), etc.

After the Opening of the Ports, the volume of red ginseng trade by envoys fluctuated between 25,200 *geun* and 5,200 *geun* according to Joseon's financial expansion and changes in the tariff provisions of the treaty between Joseon and the Qing. It was only after the Regulations for the Traffic on Frontier between Fengtian and Joseon in 1883 that the envoy's red ginseng trade changed dramatically. The Qing restricted red ginseng carried by Joseon envoys and imposed tariffs. King Gojong reduced the amount of red ginseng to 20,200 *geun* in the following year with 15,000 *geun* reserved for the royal family as a response to the new tight regulation of the Qing. This measure decreased the envoy's red ginseng trade to 5,200 *geun* in 1884 and Joseon had to pay the Qing's 15% import duty. In December 1885, as the Qing doubled the amount of red ginseng carried by the envoy and lowered the tariff to 10%, King Gojong again increased the amount of the red ginseng for export to 25,200 *geun* in 1886 and the envoy's red ginseng trade increased to 10,200 *geun*. After 1886, it is believed that within the 25,200 *geun* of the red ginseng for ex-

port, the envoy's trade accounted for 10,200 *geun*.<sup>12</sup>

The red ginseng trade by envoy's was not adjusted according to market conditions such as the supply and demand of red ginseng but was determined by Qing's restrictions, the financial needs of the Joseon government, and the will of King Gogong. The intent of the Joseon government to tax the envoy's red ginseng trade was closely connected to the increase of silver coins through a new silver tax for *posam*. At an exchange rate of 1:7 between silver and coins, the 1881 *posam* tax totaled 1,065,880 *nyang* in coin, with a per capita tax of 42 *nyang* and four jeon while at an exchange rate of 1:13 between silver and coins in 1884, the *posam* tax got much higher.

To sum up, after the Regulations for the Traffic on Frontier between Fengtian and Joseon in 1883, the envoy's trade drastically decreased. The government's taxation of envoy's red ginseng trade increased dramatically by collecting silver coins (the Silver Tax for *Posam*) in 1881, as well as original and additional taxes on ginseng before and after the Opening of the Ports, with the result that the revenue from the red ginseng tax exceeded one million coins. After the Opening of the Ports, the Qing import tariffs on the envoy's red ginseng trade repeated the process of exemption and taxation, which captures the interplay between the traditional tributary trade system, predicated upon the amicable relations established between Joseon and the Qing, and the modern tariff system. What we should not discard is the fact that the change in the red ginseng trade of Joseon reflected the practical needs of state security and economic interests, both of which King Gojong believed were vital to the survival of Joseon in the new world system that had undermined the traditional leadership of the Qing in East Asia.

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<sup>12</sup> *Tongsangwhichan* (通商彙纂) Hankookpyeon (韓國篇) vol. 1; *Tongsangwhichan*, Issue 2, appendix, 141. At the end of 1893, a Japanese consulate report stated that exports of red ginseng to Qing were regularly reaching 25,000 *geun*.

## The Royal Red Ginseng Trade

### 1) Aspects of the royal red ginseng trade and King's control

In 1884, out of 20,200 *geun* of *posam*, 15,000 *geun* were allocated to the royal family. The royal red ginseng was called government-owned ginseng, the red ginseng for royal expenses, government-run red ginseng, the king's ginseng, etc. The royal allocation of *posam* and the king's control of the red ginseng trade were highly unusual. The following are specific examples of the royal red ginseng trade which accounted for more than half of all *posam* at the time.

In November 1886, the Joseon government dispatched Choi Seokyoung and Choi Woo-sik to Yingkou, Qing to trade 1,000 *geun* of ginseng for copper. At that time, Joseon requested that the Qing legation issue travel permits and facilitate tax exemptions, and the Qing legation cooperated in issuing the permits.<sup>13</sup> As above, the 1,000 *geun* of red ginseng, part of the official *posam* and possibly government-owned ginseng, were used for the purchase of copper.

In 1887, Joseon requested a duty-free exemption of 15,000 *geun* of red ginseng in exchange for weapons.<sup>14</sup> The Joseon government cited difficulties in purchasing weapons due to a shortage of silver coins and requested that the tariff on red ginseng be waived so that they could trade 15,000 *geun* of red ginseng to purchase the armaments. In addition, the government sent a letter to the maritime customs of Tianjin and Shanghai, asking for their assistance. One Qing merchant, Sun Zhaoji said, "In the 13th year of Guangxi's reign (1887), I bought 15,000 *geun* of the red ginseng for royal expenses through Oh Kyung-yeon, set the value of each *geun* at 15, and made a silver convertible note of 225,000 *nyang*; at the end of September of that year, I gave the silver convertible note and took

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<sup>13</sup> *Ku Han'guk Oegyo Munsŏ*, Chung-an vol. 1, Document No. 556 (1886.11.15), Document No. 557 (1866.11.16).

<sup>14</sup> *Ku Han'guk Oegyo Munsŏ* (舊韓國外交文書) (Former Joseon Empire Diplomatic Documents) [Seoul, Korea University Press, 1965 (日業)/1970 (清案)] Chung-an (清案) Vol. 1, Document No. 575 (1887.3.8).

it.”<sup>15</sup> In 1887, Sun Zhaoji bought 15,000 red ginseng through the five contests and traded it for 225,000 silver coins.

In response to Joseon's request for tax exemption, the prime minister Yuan Shikai issued tax exemption letters and travel permits to the Yingkou and Shanghai maritime customs. In May 1887, after hearing the view of the Fengtian Dongbiandao (奉天東邊道) that Junggang's red ginseng was being used for armaments on the frontier and that an exemption would be inconsistent with the terms of the treaty, the Qing government agreed to grant a one-time exemption to show consideration.<sup>16</sup> However, the Qing notified Joseon that it would halve the duty on the royal red ginseng trade for armaments and comply with the treaty provisions. This meant that they would pay only 5% of the 10% tariff.

In June 1888, an interpreter official Yun Kyu-sub sold 6,000 *geun* of government-owned *posam* at 14 *nyang* of silver per *geun* to the Qing merchant organizations of Hefengju (和豐局) and Guangxihao (廣信號), 3,000 *geun* each. Hefengju had to pay Yun 42,000 silver coins while Guangxihao 47,000 silver coins. Hefengju paid back all of the red ginseng but Guangxihao owed him 17,000 *nyang*, which later led to a lawsuit.<sup>17</sup> In September 1888, Hyun Heung-tack sold 6,000 *geun* of government-owned red ginseng to Sun Zhaoji from the Qing merchant organization Yuzengxianghao (裕增祥號) for 90,000 *nyang*. The price of red ginseng per *geun* seems to be tantamount to 15 silver coins. The silver convertible note (銀票), issued by Yuzengxianghao, was delivered directly to King Gojong. The note was then used to repay a loan from the Qing's Zhaoshangju (招商局).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Zhuhanshiguan Baocundangan* (駐韓使館保存檔案) vol. 24, December, 1891 (光緒17年), “自光緒十三年經吳慶然手買到別福參一萬五千斤每斤作價十五兩合銀二十二萬五千兩開具銀票以當年九月季爲期交票取銀”

<sup>16</sup> *Ku Han'guk Oegyo Munsŏ*, Chung-an vol. 1, Document No. 618 (1887.5.23), Document No. 624 (1887.6.21).

<sup>17</sup> *Ku Han'guk Oegyo Munsŏ*, Chung-an vol. 1, Document No. 1031 (1889.9.9), Document No. 1036 (1889.9.11).

<sup>18</sup> However, Yuzengxianghao was unable to pay the note and defaulted. A tedious lawsuit with Yuzengxianghaofollowed, which lasted until 1893. *Zhuhanshiguan Baocundangan*, vol. 24, 2-4 [Janu-

In February 1891, a Joseon official interpreter, Kim Sung-bok transported 8,500 *geun* of government-owned ginseng in 19 carts from the Jiuliancheng (九連城) of the Qing territory to the Sanhaiguan (山海關), where he was detained by Sanhaiguan officials.<sup>19</sup> Kim's trading route started from Uiju (義州)—the main northwestern border town of Joseon to Jiuliancheng to Sanhaiguan, which overlaps with the traditional passage of the envoy's trade. In the spring of 1892, Hong Chi-sam, sent by the Joseon government, sold 210 *geun* of government ginseng on consignment from Jiuliancheng to the Yingkou merchant organization Yushenglonghao (玉升隆號)<sup>20</sup> but the sale was marred by embezzlement in the middle. This repetition suggests that the official interpreters' sale of government-owned ginseng was made through the existing envoy's routes and connections.

## 2) The Nature of Royal Ginseng Trade

Based on the case of royal ginseng trade, the following table briefly summarizes the main contents. Through this data, we examine the royal red ginseng transaction including changes in volume and price, trading locations and routes, buyers and sellers, and use of payments.

The royal allotment of packed ginseng was 15,000 *geun*, so the official royal ginseng trade was conducted within 15,000 *geun*. From the table above, we can see that the size of the royal ginseng trade was in units of hundreds and thousands of *geun*. The government's one-off payment of 15,000 *geun* of red ginseng in 1887, intent on arms trade, can be seen as an exception to the rule.

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ary 5, 1890 (光緒16年)], 71-79 [August 22, 1890 (光緒16年)]; Ishikawa, 2020, 163-164. Ishikawa Ryota (石川亮太), Translated by Choi Min-kyung, et al., *Modern Asian Markets and the Joseon Dynasty* (근대 아시아 시장과 조선), Seoul: Somyong Publishing, 2020, 163-164.

<sup>19</sup> *Ku Han'guk Oegyo Munsŏ*, Chung-an vol. 2, Document No. 1329 (1891.3.23), Document No. 1331 (1891.3.26).

<sup>20</sup> Zhuhanshiguan Baocundangan (01-41-030-27), Yuan Shi-kai (袁世凱) lawsuit (訴訟) no. 27, 1892 (光緒18年), '朝鮮通事金麟奎在山海關道衙門控追參價卷'

**Table 2. Trade of government-owned red ginseng (1884~1894)**

Date	Trading volume ( <i>geun</i> )	Price (Silver Coin)	Seller	Buyer	Trading Places	Explanatory Note
1887	15,000	15 <i>nyang</i> per <i>geun</i> / 225,000 <i>nyang</i>	Oh Kyungyeon	Sun Zhaoji of Yuzengxianghao (裕增祥號)	-	5% duty / Purchasing arms from the Qing
June 1888	3,000	14 <i>nyang</i> per <i>geun</i> 42,000 <i>nyang</i>	Yoon Kyuseop	Hefengju (和豐局)	Uiju	17,000 <i>nyang</i> unpaid
	3,000	14 <i>nyang</i> per <i>geun</i> 42,000 <i>nyang</i>	Yoon Kyuseop	ZhangYingcheng of the Guangxinhao	Uiju	
	500	10 <i>nyang</i> per <i>geun</i> 5,000 <i>nyang</i>	Yoon Kyuseop	ZhangYingcheng of the Guangxinhao	Uiju	
September 1888	6,000	15 <i>nyang</i> per <i>geun</i> 90,000 <i>nyang</i>	Hyun Heungtaek	Sun Zhaoji of Yuzeng xianghao	Uiju	Repaying Qing's loan
February 1891	8,500		Kim Sungbok		Shanhaiguan	tariff exemption / Jiuliancheng to Shanhaiguan Transportation
Intercalary June, 1892	210	19.86714 <i>nyang</i> per <i>geun</i> 4,170 <i>nyang</i>	Hong Chisam	Shao Luohong of Shunchangrongrhao (順昌榮號)	Jiuliancheng	tariff exemption / consignment sales

The transaction price in the royal red ginseng trade varies depending on the market price and grade quality of red ginseng. The price of red ginseng increased from 14 to 15 *nyang* per *geun* in 1887 and 1888 to 20 *nyang* in 1892, which is similar to the changing trend of the price of red ginseng traded in Niuzhuang (牛莊), the Qing.<sup>21</sup> Overall, red ginseng was traded for 14 to 20 *nyang* per *geun*, equivalent to 210,000 to 300,000

<sup>21</sup> Zhang, 1978, 335-336, Appendix 5.

*nyang* in silver with 15,000 *geun* of ginseng. Using the exchange rate of 1:13 between Qing silver and Joseon coins in 1884, then, this amount corresponds to 2.73-3.9 million coins. The amount of loans that Joseon borrowed from the Qing between 1882 and 1894 reached up to 200,000 and 300,000 *nyang* in silver,<sup>22</sup> indicating how large the trade in red ginseng was at the time. Considering the Joseon government's total annual tax revenue in the early 1880s, which was about one million seok (石) (5 million *nyang* in coins) in rice, we can see the scale of the royal ginseng trade.<sup>23</sup> As the "inexhaustible source of finance," the royal ginseng trade became the best way to secure silver coins.<sup>24</sup> This high profitability and monetization potential of the red ginseng trade did motivate King Gojong to participate directly in ginseng, including *posam*, trade himself.

How much did the Joseon government tax the royal red ginseng trade? It is assumed that the royal trade would have paid the government the ginseng tax according to the 1881 Legislative Regulations. For one *geun* of red ginseng, according to the regulation, the ginseng tax was four *nyang* and two jeon in silver coin and 13 *nyang* in coin. Using the exchange rate of 1:13 between silver and coins in 1884, the ginseng tax for one *geun* of red ginseng is four *nyang* and two jeon in silver (54 *nyang* and six jeon in coins) and 13 *nyang* in coins, which adds up to 67 *nyang* and six jeon per *geun*. The ginseng tax on 15,000 roots of royal ginseng is calculated to be 1,014,000 *nyang*, which is indeed a substantial part of Joseon's finances at the time.

In the end, what was the royal red ginseng trade for? As previously demonstrated, the royal ginseng trade was carried out by King Gojoing who dispatched official interpreters or entourage to carry out the trade. After selling the ginseng, the official interpreters reported the result of

<sup>22</sup> Kim Jung-ki "A study of the Joseon government's adoption of Qing loans (1882-1894)" *Journal of Joseon History Hanguk Saron* 3, 1976, 274.

<sup>23</sup> Kim Jae-ho, "Fiscal Management of the Central Government in Late Joseon Korea," *Review of Economic History* 43, 2007, 35; Yoo Ba-da, "The Meaning and Limitations of Kim Ok-gyun's 1883 Loan Negotiation," *Journal of Joseon modern and contemporary history* 54, 2010, 39-40.

<sup>24</sup> Jang Jiycon, 『韋庵文稿』 권7, 「漫筆」 '入蔘'

the trade to the king. Hyun Heung-taek received a silver convertible note from the Yuzengxianghao (裕增祥號) on the spot and “immediately gave it to the king” and said that he did not take a penny for himself.<sup>25</sup> Hyun's deed was consistent with the account in ‘Hongsamji (紅參志)’, which states, “The king had the official interpreters sell the red ginseng for royal expenses and pay the transaction costs to the government.”<sup>26</sup> This citation suggests that the king was in charge of selecting sellers and overseeing the red ginseng trade. While the red ginseng trade was used to purchase arms from the Qing and to repay loans from the Qing, considerable profit on the sale of the trade seems to have gone to the royal treasury. The imperial finances during the Empire of Korea (1897-1910) were largely at the personal disposal of the emperor - King Gojong - to pay for imperial institutions, renovate royal tombs and palaces, and finance commercial interests.<sup>27</sup> That is why the high monetization potential of red ginseng drove King Gojong to convert 60% of *posam* into the royal ginseng and control the red ginseng trade.

## Conclusion

In this article, I have examined the details of the authorized red ginseng trade in Joseon after the Opening of the Ports. During this period, the authorized red ginseng trade followed two trajectories: The traditional envoy's trade and the newly launched royal ginseng trade. Monopolizing the ginseng trade by 1884, King Gojong was the main architect of the new ginseng policy and the ginseng trade, maximizing ginseng tax revenue and ginseng trade profits.

After the Opening of the Ports, Joseon attempted to change its red ginseng policy to respond to the new trade environment. In 1881, the Legislative Regulations (節目) were enacted for the purpose of increasing

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<sup>25</sup> *Zhuhan shiguan Baocundangan* vol. 24, 13 “共合價銀九萬兩當收該號銀票即呈交國王並未圖分文”

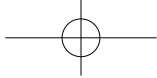
<sup>26</sup> Kim T'aeg-yōng (金澤榮), *Sohodangchip* (韶漢堂集) Vol. 2, ‘Hongsamji (紅參志)’. 1911.

<sup>27</sup> Kim Yun-hee, “The Management and Character of Royal Finance in the Period of Empire of Korea (大韓帝國)” *The Journal of Joseon History* 90, 1995, 109.

the amount of ginseng for export and establishing Silver Tax for *posam*, which more than doubled the revenue. In international agreements signed with countries around the world after 1882, Joseon allowed red ginseng exports to the Qing and Japan under the same conditions but prohibited red ginseng exports to Western countries. However, actual red ginseng trade was limited to overland trade with the Qing to avoid high tariff burdens and maximize trade profits. When the Regulations for the Traffic on Frontier between Fengtian and Joseon in December 1883 restricted the size of the red ginseng trade for Joseon envoys and imposed a 15% tariff, King Gojong allocated 15,000 *geun* out of the 20,200 *geun* of ginseng for export to the royal court and the remaining 5,200 *geun* to the envoys. Since then Joseon's red ginseng trade was conducted on two tracks of envoy's trade and royal trade, both of which were under the control of the king.

After the Opening of the Ports, the Joseon envoy's red ginseng trade amounted to 20,200~25,200 *geun* of *posam*, but it decreased to 5,200 *geun* after 1884 and then increased to 10,200 *geun* after the Qing's restrictions on red ginseng trade were relaxed in December 1885. The Qing import tariffs on the red ginseng trade of the envoys repeated the process of exemption and exemption. And, the royal ginseng trade began in 1884 when 15,000 *geun* of ginseng was allocated to the royal family for export. The king dispatched official interpreters or close aides to conduct the ginseng trade and earned millions of *nyang*. In the royal trade, ginseng was sold for 14 to 20 *nyang* of silver per *geun*, totaling 210,000 to 300,000 *nyang* in silver for all ginseng trades in 1884, or 2.73 to 3.9 million *nyang* in coins at the exchange rate of 1:13. Remarkably, the route of the royal ginseng trade started from Uiju to Jiuliancheng to Shanhaiguan overlaps with the traditional envoy's route, and the official interpreters, charged for the royal trade, utilized the envoy's personal connections and trade routes.

After the Opening of the Ports, Joseon's red ginseng trade was complex in the sense that it had to meet the standard of the new world system outside of East Asia while keeping to employ the advantage of the old Qing-led world system in East Asia. King Gojong actively used



The Red Ginseng Trade in the Joseon Dynasty After the Opening of the Ports (1876~1894):  
Focusing on Envoy's trade and Royal Trade

this uncomfortable balance so as to maximize the profits of the red ginseng trade for the increase of his royal treasury, to use the Qing for its security and economic interests, and to adjust Joseon to the new world system that undermined the traditional leadership of the Qing in East Asia. The red ginseng trade reflected the vigorous search of Joseon for state security and economic stability during the period of the Opening of the Ports.

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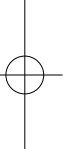
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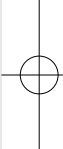
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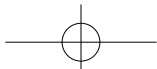
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