

Chapter 6

Japanese Diplomacy and the Sino-Korean Suzerain-Vassal Relationship before and after the First Sino-Japanese War

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Introduction

At the end of the 19th century, whenever describing *gaikō* 外交 (foreign relations/diplomacy) in East Asia, one excellent topic to begin with was the so-called “Eastern Question”. For example, just before the First Sino-Japanese War, Gustave Émile Boissonade de Fontarabie, a legal advisor to the Japanese government, tried to explain the relationship between the Qing and Korea by comparing it with the relationship that existed between Egypt and Turkey. For instance, just after the war broke out, Inoue Kaoru 井上馨, Japanese minister plenipotentiary to Korea, tried to explain Japan’s intervention in reforming Korean domestic politics by likening it to what Britain had done in Egypt. Furthermore, after the war, Japanese Foreign Minister Mutsu Munemitsu 陸奥宗光 tried to make sense of the intervention by Russia, Germany, and France in 1895 (the so-called *Sangoku kanshō* 三国干涉, or Triple Intervention) by quoting the 1878 Treaty of San Stefano.¹ Therefore, when examining the historical development of the concept of “suzerainty” (*sōshuken/zongzhuquan* 宗主權) in East and West Asia, the way in which Japan encountered the concept in relation to East Asia at the end of the 19th century should constitute an important topic of discussion.

The aim of this chapter is to analyze Japan’s diplomacy before and after the First Sino-Japanese War within the context of changes in the suzerain-vassal relationship between the Qing Dynasty and the Chosŏn 朝鮮 Dynasty. By virtue of analysis, this chapter shows that Japan was concerned not only with the international position of Korea, but also with the international position of the Qing, especially the Qing Dynasty’s claims to suzerainty over Korea, before and after the war. This chapter also shows the establishment of the Korean Empire (Tae-Han cheguk 大韓帝國) in 1897 was an even more epoch-making event than the Treaty of Shimonoseki (Shimonoseki Jōyaku 下関条約/Ma-

¹ Boissonade’s Memorandum, 9 August 1882 [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 15, p. 171]; Letter addressed to Itō Hirobumi 伊藤博文 from Inoue Kaoru, 13 December 1894 [Itō Hirobumi kankei monjo kenkyūkai 1973–81: vol. 1, pp. 271–2; Mutsu 1983: 369].

guan Tiaoyue 馬關條約) signed on 17 April 1895, in putting an end to Korea's suzerain-vassal relationship with the Qing before the War.²

The First Sino-Japanese War changed East Asian international relations in the late 19th century. To examine the mechanism of international transformation, the change of "treaties" cannot be ignored. In the case of the First Sino-Japanese War, the war made ineffective some bilateral "treaties" with the Qing, which had not been linked to the Western Powers before the war. The changed bilateral "treaties" with the Qing were mainly the Regulations for Maritime and Overland Trade between Chinese and Korean Subjects (Zhong-Chao Shangmin Shuiliu Maoyi Zhangcheng/Chunjo Sangmin Suryuk Muyök Changjōng 中朝商民水陸貿易章程, signed on 3 October 1882) and the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Amity (Nis-Shin Shükō Jōki 日清修好条規, signed on 13 September 1871). The Regulations between the Qing and Korea had been invalidated before the outbreak of the War and succeeded by the post-war Treaty of Commerce between the Qing and Korea (Qing-Han Tongshang Tiaoyue/Ch'ing-Han Tongsang Choyak 清韓通商條約), signed on 11 September 1899.³ Besides Sino-Japanese and Sino-Western Powers relations, the transformation of Sino-Korean relations was one of the consequences of the Sino-Japanese War.⁴

However, conventional researchers of Japanese history have been pursuing the cause of the First Sino-Japanese War rather than the change in international relationships caused by the war. Recent researchers of Japanese history have shifted their focus to two political trends surrounding Japanese foreign policy before the war. The proposal of Sino-Japanese joint reforms of the Korean internal administration supported by Itō Hirobumi is considered as a policy of cooperation with the Qing, and the issue of Korean independence supported by Mutsu Munemitsu is considered as a hard-line policy. Researchers discussed which trend was going to dominate in the settlement of the Korean Question as if the Japanese government were faced with the dilemma of choosing between the two policy trends.⁵ It is now necessary to examine the Japanese foreign policy by taking into consideration the context of changes in the suzerain-vassal relationship between the Qing and Korea.

Moreover, unlike the researchers of Japanese history, those of Chinese and Korean

² Due to the necessity to keep footnotes to a minimum in the volume, the more inquisitive reader is asked to refer to [Koketsu 2016: part 1] for more detailed references and commentary.

³ Regarding the transformation of Sino-Japanese relations and Western Powers by the Treaty of Shimonoseki, see [Koketsu 2016: parts 2 and 3].

⁴ For an overview of the research regarding the transformation of Sino-Korean relations, see [Harada 1997].

⁵ [Takahashi 1995: part 2; Ōsawa 1997]. For a review of recent trends in the study of Sino-Japanese relations by Japanese historians, see [Ōtani 2012].

history have been dealing with Sino-Korean relations before and after the Sino-Japanese War.⁶ They have focused on the establishment of the Korean Empire as a significant milestone in the revision of the Qing's attitude towards Korea.⁷ The problem is that the Japanese foreign policy regarding the "Korean Question" after the declaration of war was being dealt with in the context of pre-Russo-Japanese War and pre-Korean annexation history.⁸ These research directions mean that the manner in which Japan was involved in the process of the revival of Sino-Korean relations after the dissolution of the Qing suzerainty is unclear.

With such problems in mind, this chapter deals with the period leading up to the establishment of the Korean Empire in the analysis of Japanese diplomacy with the context of Sino-Korean relations after the war. This chapter presents the expressions of the "suzerainty" that were used in the contemporary historical sources as well. Because, in contrast to the 20th century, "suzerainty" in English was not necessarily translated to the word *sōshuken* in Japanese at the end of the 19th century. Reviewing Japanese linguistic expression in the historical sources would also help to elucidate the origin of the word *sōshuken* in Japan and its subsequent development.⁹

1. Japanese Foreign Policy and East Asia Prior to the Sino-Japanese War

1. 1. Japanese Policy Changes in the Light of Treaties Signed between the Chosŏn Dynasty and the Western Powers

Japan's key issue in the negotiation with the Qing before the declaration of war was the Qing Dynasty's suzerain position over the Chosŏn Dynasty. Japan's proposal of a joint

⁶ Regarding the Qing Dynasty's policy towards Korea before the war, see [Okamoto 2004]; and on Korean foreign policy, see [Cui 2002; Sakai 2016; I 2016; Mori 2017].

⁷ See, for example, [Obara 1995; Yan 2011; Okamoto 2017: chap. 10; Mori 2017].

⁸ See, for example, [Moriyama 1987; Chiba 2008: part 2, chap. 1; Wada 2009–10: vol. 1, chap. 3].

⁹ The memoirs of Mutsu Munemitsu, entitled *Kenkenroku* 蹇蹇録, were first printed by the Foreign Ministry in 1896, but were kept classified until their publication in 1929. While the English translated version [Mutsu 1982] has been published, this chapter has chosen to use the original English manuscripts in vols. 20 and 21 of "Mutsu Munemitsu kankei monjo" 陸奥宗光関係文書 (MMKM). These English manuscripts need to be investigated further, since their author(s) and provenance are still unclear; however, because they are included in MMKM along with the other drafts of *Kenkenroku*, and their English expressions correspond almost exactly to those used in telegrams of the Foreign Ministry records, they are valuable as the example of the usage of English expressions by Japanese diplomats at the end of the 19th century. For details on the origins of *Kenkenroku*, see [Nakatsuka 1992].

Sino-Japanese reform of the Korean internal administration did not dispute with the Qing whether the Korea's international status was a national independence or dependence. This proposal is considered to have originally derived from a written opinion by Inoue Kowashi 井上毅 in September [Ōsawa 1997: 28–9], entitled “Chōsen seiryaku iken'an” 朝鮮政略意見案.¹⁰ This section summarizes the international background of his idea since 1882, and explains Japan's position of trying to prevent any discussion of Korea's international status in the presence of Qing China.

The year 1882, which witnessed the occurrence of the Imo Mutiny (Jingo Gunran/Imo Kunran 壬午軍亂) at the Chosŏn Dynasty capital of Hansŏng 漢城 (Seoul), received the most attention from the Japanese historical perspective. However, from the expansion of East Asian perspective, the year was significant in consideration of the treaties surrounding Korea. Under the guidance of prominent diplomat Li Hongzhang 李鴻章, a number of international treaties of amity and commerce between Korea and Western Powers were signed. In addition, the Regulations for Maritime and Overland Trade between Chinese and Korean Subjects was signed, and the Japan-Korea Treaty of Amity (Nic-Chō Shūkō Jōki 日朝修好条規/Cho-II Suho Chogyu 朝日修好條規, signed on 26 February 1876) was revised to endow Japan with a unilateral most-favored nation status.¹¹ The events of this year held special significance in demonstrating the coexistence of foreign relations based on international law alongside tributary relations involving suzerain-vassal relationships.

Japan's East Asian policy was changed by the event of 1882, particularly, by the increase in the number of international members surrounding Korea. To begin with, it became possible for Japan to determine the international status of Korea as an independent state using Western Powers. After the Imo Mutiny, Foreign Minister Inoue Kaoru not only lent his support to the Korean national enlightenment movement (Kaehwap'a 開化派), but also urged Britain and the United States, which had shown reluctance to ratify already-signed treaties of amity and commerce with Korea, to recognize the latter as an independent sovereign state.¹² Until that time, Japan had interpreted *jishu* 自主 in Article 1 of the Japan-Korea Treaty of Amity [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 9, p. 115] as *dokuritsu* 獨立 in Japanese, expressed as “independent” in the English translation. Therefore,

¹⁰ Inoue Kowashi, “Chōsen seiryaku iken'an” (Draft of opinion regarding Korean political strategy), 17 September 1882. In [Inoue Kowashi denki hensan iinkai 1966–: Shiryōhen 史料編 (Source Materials), vol. 1, pp. 312–13]. The related research has developed along the lines of “Ideas concerning the permanent neutrality of Korea” and “The idea of Korean neutrality”. For a detailed account of this research, see [Okamoto 2017: chap. 7].

¹¹ [Kasuya 1992: 231–40]. On the issue of most-favored nation status, see [Sakai 2016: part 3].

¹² See [Hirose 1974: 144–6; Takahashi 1995: 50–1; Ch'oe 1997: 39–44, 77–86]. After the ratification of the US-Korean Treaty on 19 May 1883, Britain, Germany Italy, and Russia followed suit.

Japan considered that the concluding treaties between Korea and the Western Powers would lead many countries to treat Korea as an independent state.

Secondly, it became possible for Japan to deny the monopoly of the Qing suzerain status over Korea using Western Powers multilaterally. This idea is evident in the above-mentioned Inoue Kowashi's written opinion regarding the Korean Question after the Imo Mutiny. Although his opinion was not acted upon by the Japanese government at that time, Inoue has described that joint protection of Korea by Japan, the Qing, the US, Britain, and Germany would prevent the Qing from interfering exclusively in Korea's domestic affairs. The appearance of his opinion shows that the Chosŏn Dynasty's signing of treaties with the Western Powers attracted much attention within Japan.

However, the Qing took advantage of Korea's establishment of international relationships with Western Powers to reorganize her relationship with Korea simultaneously. In October 1882, the Qing concluded the Regulations for Maritime and Overland Trade between Chinese and Korean Subjects, which governed the Sino-Korean suzerain-vassal relations before the First Sino-Japanese War. In the Preamble to the Regulations, it was clearly stated that Korea was a "tributary kingdom" (*shubang/sokpang* 属邦)¹³ of the Qing Dynasty, and in Article 1 the King of Korea was accorded the same status as Li Hongzhang. In addition, the Qing prevented the Treaty Powers from enjoying equal privileges, in order to ensure the Qing's advantage in matters of trade.¹⁴ After the signing of the 1882 Regulations, the Qing set up foreign customs stations and mine developments in Korea, while providing the Korean government with loans.¹⁵

These attempts signified the progression of the Qing's exclusive intervention in Korea, which Inoue Kowashi had tried to prevent with his written opinion in September 1882. Regarding the "Regulations", Japanese Minister to the Qing Enomoto Takeaki 榎本武揚 has reported to Foreign Minister Inoue Kaoru as follows: "Moreover it places Li on the same footing with the King of Corea. This convention, no doubt, is intended on the part of China to ascertain her suzerainty" [original in English].¹⁶

¹³ The Regulations were drawn up in Chinese only, while an English version was translated from the official copy held at the Chinese Legation in Korea by the Statistical Department of the Inspectorate General of Customs [Statistical Department of the Inspectorate General of Customs 1917: 847; Gaimushō Jōyakukyoku 1930–36: vol. 3, p. 311].

¹⁴ [Cui 2013]. However, there was a discrepancy between the provisions as written in the document and the way they were applied in practice. See [Ishikawa R. 2016: 26; Sakai 2016: part 3].

¹⁵ See, for example, [Akizuki 1985; Hamashita 1999: 71–2; Okamoto 2004: 67–9, 126–32]. The conclusion of the Zhongjiang 中江 Regulation on Foreign Trade governing the border people of Fengtian 奉天 and Korea in 1883 and the Huining 會寧 Regulations on Commerce governing merchants of Jilin and Korea in 1884 recognized the right of the Qing merchants to trade within Korean borders.

¹⁶ Copy of the telegram from Envoy to China Enomoto to Foreign Minister Inoue, 8 December

The impact of the Qing's reorganization of international circumstances around Korea was experienced in the process of dealing with the aftermath of the Kapsin Coup (Kapsin Chōbyōng 甲申政變), which occurred on 4 December 1884. Japan conducted the negotiation with Korea separately from the Qing to ensure Korea's independent status and concluded the Treaty of Seoul (Kanjō Jōyaku/Hansōng Choyak 漢城條約) on 9 January 1885. On the other hand, Japan also negotiated directly with Li Hongzhang in Tianjin. In the negotiation with the Qing, Japan focused its attention on the Qing's suzerainty over Korea and attempted to establish an equal position in the matter.

In the fifth round of negotiations between the Chinese Specific Plenipotentiary Li Hongzhang and Japan's Special Ambassador to the Qing Itō Hirobumi, Li Hongzhang pointed out the differences in the positions taken by Japan and the Qing over Korea. He also insisted on the Qing's own obligations to dispatch troops to Korea to protect the Korean King in case of a rebellion and demanded that the right to send troops to Korea should be stipulated in the convention with Japan [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 18, pp. 277, 280, 288]. This demand was reported to the Japanese government with the words, “This proves to keep up China's suzerainty [*jōkoku no kenri* 上国ノ権理] over Corea” [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 18, pp. 290, 307]. Of course, Itō Hirobumi refused to acquiesce to Li's demand. As a result, the Li-Itō Convention (Tenshin Jōyaku/Tianjin Tiaoyue 天津條約, signed in Japanese and Chinese, 18 April 1885) potentially implied the Qing's suzerainty. The Li-Itō Convention stipulated that both countries were obliged prior notification to the other side in the event of either country sending troops to Korea and to immediately withdraw them as soon as the incident in question was resolved [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 18, p. 309].

For the Qing, in military matters, the Li-Itō Convention invalidated to some degree the Qing's exclusive right as suzerain power, because this convention apparently granted equal powers to Japan and the Qing for sending troops on the face of a document.¹⁷ For Japan, the interpretation of Article 1 of the Japan-Korea Treaty of Amity became an issue. After the conclusion of the Li-Itō Convention, Foreign Minister Inoue Kaoru was asked by the foreign ministers to Japan if it now meant that henceforth neither Japan nor the Qing would recognize Korea's independence [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 18, p. 324]. There was an obvious inconsistency between Article 1 of the Treaty of Amity, which declared Korea's international status as “independent”, and what was agreed to in the Li-Itō Convention. The Li-Itō Convention put aside not only the question of the Qing's exclusive right to protect Korea, but also Japan's relationship with Korea based

1882, “Raiō dentetsu” 来往電綴 (Collection of telegrams sent and received), no. 29, Copies of the Meiji 15 Telegrams, Gaimushō Gaikō Shiryōkan 外務省外交史料館 (Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, hereafter DAMFAJ) .

¹⁷ [Mutsu 1983: 35; FO405/35, no. 118, Mr. O'Connor to Earl Granville, 26 May 1885].

on the Treaty of Amity.

1. 2. Developments after the Conclusion of the Li-Itō Convention

At the end of the conclusion of the Li-Itō Convention, the movements of Korean King Kojong 高宗 provided Japan with an opportunity to try to initiate actions to affect the Qing's position over Korea. King Kojong appeared willing to try and reach an agreement with Russia regarding the protection of Korea.¹⁸ Furthermore, a new factor was injected into the politics in East Asia. Britain occupied the Korean island of Kōmundo 巨文島.¹⁹ Given this situation, Japanese Foreign Minister Inoue presented eight propositions to the Qing to stop Kojong's secret maneuvering.²⁰

The importance of Inoue's propositions lies in Japan's attempts to deny the Qing's exclusive suzerain status over Korea. For example, Article 3 stipulated that choosing someone to whom Korean King would entrust domestic affairs would require Li Hongzhang's acceptance, after consultation with Inoue. Furthermore, Article 7 made the selection of the successor to Chen Shutang 陳樹棠, Qing High Commissioner of Trade (zongban shangwu weiyuan 總辦商務委員), conditional on a directive issued by Li and a pre-appointment interview with Inoue in Japan. In other words, any policy planned by Li required Inoue's agreement. In response, Li, who considered himself to be of the same status as Korean King Kojong, refused to accept Inoue's proposals on the grounds that acceptance would degrade his position. Moreover, he later carried out the contents of Inoue's eight propositions on Li's own initiative and replaced the foreign advisors in the Korean government.²¹

The Qing not only intervened in Korean affairs, but also attempted to strengthen the position over Korea as a suzerain by utilizing the Powers' policy in East Asia. Li

¹⁸ "Inoue Gaimukyō ate Kondō Rinji Dairi Kōshi kimitsushin" 井上外務卿あて近藤臨時代理公使機密信 (Confidential letter to Foreign Minister Inoue from Chargé d'Affaires ad Interim Kondō), 26 June 1885. In [Itō Hirobumi kankei monjo kenkyūkai 1973–81: vol. 4, pp. 474–5].

¹⁹ The occupation by three battleships to check Russian expansion in response to the Panjdeh Incident in Afghanistan lasted from 15 April 1885 till 27 February 1887.

²⁰ Originally presented by Inoue to Qing Envoy to Japan Xu Chengzu 徐承祖 on 5 June 1885, later revised and presented by Envoy to the Qing Enomoto Takeaki to Li Hongzhang (Nakajima Yū 中島雄, "Nis-Shin kōsaishi teiyō" 日清交際史提要 (Overview of Sino-Japanese diplomatic history), 1908). In [Gaimushō 1947–: Meiji nenkan tsuiho 明治年間追補 1, pp. 359–60]. The revised version is covered in "Enomoto Chūshin Kōshi ate Inoue Gaimukyō denpō-utsushi" 榎本駐清公使あて井上外務卿電報写 (Copy of telegraph to Envoy to China Enomoto from Foreign Minister Inoue), 30 June 1885 [Gaimushō 1947–: Meiji nenkan tsuiho 1, pp. 380–1]. "Raiō dentetsu" no. 36, Copies of Meiji 18 Telegrams (DAMFAJ).

²¹ See [Okamoto 2004: 248–55].

Hongzhang issued a protest to the British government over the occupation of Kōmundo in Korea based on “Chinese Suzerainty”.²² In 1887, he forced Britain to withdraw from Kōmundo by citing an oral agreement with Russia that Russia had promised never to occupy Korean land [Sasaki 1980: 41]. He dealt with Korean questions by bilateral negotiations with Britain and Russia. After the Sino-Japanese War, Mutsu Munemitsu summarized the situations in his memoir in English, “Great Britain and Russia, altogether ignoring the existence of Korea, negotiated with China only, which they regarded as the responsible negotiator in the matter” [MMKM, vol. 20, p. 148; Mutsu 1983: 132]. The suzerain-vassal relationship between the Qing and Korea was not recognized in treaties concluded under international law, however, the relationship retained international validity in practice. The actual positions taken by Japan and the Qing over Korea differed from the constitution, which was defined under the Li-Itō Convention in 1885.

However, the strengthening of the Qing’s suzerainty by no means continued one-sidedly. The Korean government resisted the Qing’s attempts in various ways. For example, the Korean Envoy to the United States, Pak Chōng-yang 朴定陽, presented his credentials to the President without meeting with the Qing envoy in 1888, and the Korean government tried to refuse to receive the Qing’s representative at the funeral of Queen Sinjōng (Cho Taebi 趙大妃 / Sinjōng Wanghu 神貞王后) in 1890.²³

Similar Korean resistance could be seen in the negotiation of an indemnity for the Grain Export Stoppage issue (Bōkokurei 防穀令) in 1893. Japan negotiated directly with Korea as an independent state, while at the same time seeking assistance from the Qing and requesting Li Hongzhang to mediate the negotiations between Japan and Korea. However, Li found it difficult to exert any real influence on the Korean government [Ōsawa 1993: 10; Takahashi 1995: 245–52; I 2016: chap. 6].

Moreover, after the incident was settled with Li’s help at Itō’s behest, Ōtori Keisuke 大鳥圭介, Japanese Minister Plenipotentiary to the Qing, was concurrently appointed as a Minister Plenipotentiary in Korea by the Japanese government.²⁴ Thus, Japan turned a blind eye to the question of Korea’s international status.

As stated above, after Korea’s conclusion of treaties with the Western Powers and the reorganization of its suzerain-vassal relations with the Qing, Japan avoided any argument regarding Korea’s position in the negotiations with the Qing. Instead, Japan took a position focusing on the manner in which the Qing was involving itself in that interna-

²² “Inoue Gaimukyō ate Enomoto Chūshin Kōshi denpō-utsushi” 井上外務卿あて榎本駐清公使電報写 (Copy of telegram addressed to Foreign Minister Inoue from Envoy to China Enomoto), 8 July 1885. In “Raiō dentetsu”, no. 35, Copies of the Meiji 18 Telegrams (DAMFAJ).

²³ See, for example, [Okudaira 1935: 174–5; Kasuya 1992; Okamoto 2004: chap. 6; Takahashi 1995: 242–3; Tsukiashi 2009: 149–50].

²⁴ See [Ōsawa 2013: 3].

tional position. Then in 1894, Japan took the initiative in proposing to the Qing a joint Sino-Japanese political reform project with military support and brought up the question of Korean independence just before the declaration of war.

2. Japan's Denial of the Monopoly of "Suzerainty" by Korean Domestic Political Reform Proposals

2. 1. Japan's "First Note of Estrangement" to Li Hongzhang

This section describes the Japanese negotiation process with different parties of the Qing Dynasty. Owing to the dispute regarding the Qing's position over Korea, the naval battle in the waters of Pungdo 豊島 Island occurred on 25 July 1894.

In the beginning of 1894, Japanese Prime Minister Itō determined to propose Korean domestic political reforms to Li Hongzhang, who had been known to be concerned about the "Korean Question".²⁵ The suggestion by Japanese Envoy to Korea Ōtori Keisuke and the Second Secretary to the Korean Legation Sugimura Fukashi 杉村濬, who believed that Korea's unstable situation would make a joint Sino-Japanese reform project possible, paved the way for Itō's determination. However, military action was added to the Korean Question by the Qing's implementation of suzerainty. Li sent Qing troops in June to suppress the Kabo Peasant Revolution (Kabo Nonmin Chōnjeng 甲午農民戰爭) at the request of Korean King Kojong. Japan then sent its own troops in accordance with the provision of the Convention of Chemulpo (Saimotsuho Jōyaku/Ch'emulpo Choyak 濟物浦條約, 30 August 1882), which allowed the deployment of troops for the purpose of defending the legation and Japanese residents in Korea.²⁶ This was the reason why the destinations of the two forces were different. The Qing troops were deployed to Asan 牙山 on the south coast of Seoul, and the Japanese troops were deployed to locations such as Seoul and Inchōn.²⁷

At the Cabinet Meeting of 15 June, Foreign Minister Mutsu Munemitsu determined a new policy direction upon an order from Prime Minister Itō who had held private talks with Wang Fengzao 汪鳳藻, the Qing Envoy to Japan. It was decided that

²⁵ See, for example, [Ōsawa 1992: 145–51; Takahashi 1995: 252–7, 330].

²⁶ See, for example, [Tabohashi 1940: vol. 2, p. 63; Tabohashi 1951: 108; Saitō 2003: 52–5].

²⁷ "Ōtori Chūchō Kōshi ate Mutsu Gaishō shokan" 大鳥駐朝公使あて陸奥外相書翰 (Letter addressed to Envoy to Korea Ōtori from Foreign Minister Mutsu), 11 June 1894 [MMKM, vol. 28, 75–11]; "Mutsu Munemitsu ate Itō Hirobumi shokan" 陸奥宗光あて伊藤博文書翰 (Letter addressed to Mutsu Munemitsu from Itō Hirobumi), 15 June 1894 [MMKM, vol. 3, 10–63; Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-2, pp. 170–1].

Japan would submit to the Qing a proposal for Korean political reforms concerning fiscal administration and the central and local bureaucracies, and if the proposal was refused by the Qing, Japan would implement the reforms alone while their troops were in Korea.²⁸ When Inoue Kaoru submitted “eight propositions” in 1885, both the Qing and Japanese troops had been stationed in the Korean Peninsula and his proposal was rejected by Li Hongzhang. After the withdrawal of the troops’ deployment, the Qing reinforced its position by implementing reforms in Korea on its own. This time around, if Japan’s policy direction were carried out, Japan and the Qing would change positions relative to one another.

Itō and Mutsu had already expected that the Qing would refuse to cooperate in a joint reform project. From the viewpoint of “her so-called suzerainty” (*zokuhōron* 属邦論 in Japanese) [MMKM, vol. 20, 66-8, p. 49; Mutsu 1983: 55], the Qing could not recognize diplomatic equality with a third party to intervene in Korean affairs. This was the same major factor behind the failure of Inoue’s eight propositions in 1885. Mutsu writes in his memoir in English, “It was most likely that the Chinese Government would reject our proposal.”²⁹

As they had expected, the Qing did not recognize any interventions by Japan. After Mutsu had been put in charge of the negotiations by Itō, he communicated the Cabinet decision to Envoy Wang Fengzao. Wang received the Qing’s reply from Li Hongzhang in Tianjin to the effect that while internal reform was an important issue, it should be left up to the Korean government to implement. As to troop withdrawal, the Qing insisted in its reply that Japan was bound to obey the Li-Itō Convention in 1885 [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-2, pp. 208–12, 234–5]. There were differences of opinion between Japan and the Qing regarding the implementation methods of Korean internal reform.

Upon hearing Wang’s reply, Mutsu immediately told him that Japan had no intention to withdraw the troops from Korea before the implementation of reforms and broke off the negotiations. Mutsu called these actions in his memoirs the “first note of estrangement to the Chinese Government” (*Daiichiji zekkōsho* 第一次絶交書) [MMKM, vol. 20, 66-8, p. 52; Mutsu 1983: 57; Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-2, pp. 235–7].

²⁸ [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-2, p. 207]. For an analysis of cooperation between Itō and Mutsu over negotiations with the Qing government, see [Koketsu 2016: part 1, chap. 2-1].

²⁹ [MMKM, vol. 20, 66-8, p. 42; Mutsu 1983: 50]. On Itō’s view on the situation, see “Mutsu Munemitsu ate Itō Hirobumi shokan” 陸奥宗光あて伊藤博文書翰 (Letter addressed to Mutsu Munemitsu from Itō Hirobumi), 15 June 1894 [MMKM, vol. 3, 10-64].

2. 2. Declaration of the “Second Note of Estrangement” to the Zongli Yamen

Mutsu’s “first note of estrangement to the Chinese Government” did not directly result in the opening of hostilities.³⁰ Li Hongzhang in Tianjin chose to follow the advice of the Zongli Yamen 總理衙門 in Beijing not to increase the Qing troops in Korea, and he activated Britain and Russia’s diplomacy towards Japan [Mutsu 1983: 102].

Britain urged Japan to negotiate directly with the Qing in the hope of preventing intervention by third parties (Russia, in particular). The British Chargé d’Affaires ad Interim to Japan told Foreign Minister Mutsu that the Qing was willing to accept Japan’s proposal, as long as “the question of suzerainty” (zokuhō mondai 属邦問題) was not raised.³¹ British Foreign Minister John Wodehouse, the 1st Earl of Kimberley, also advised Japanese Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary Aoki Shūzō 青木周藏, that Japan should avoid any dispute over the “nominal claim of China to suzerainty” (Shinkoku no shuken ni kansuru meigijō no yōkyū 清国ノ主権ニ関スル名議上ノ要求).³² Meanwhile, in contrast to Britain’s support of direct Sino-Japanese talks, Russia urged Japan to withdraw the troops simultaneously with those of the Qing at the request of Li Hongzhang and the Korean government [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-2, pp. 274–7, 284–5].

However, Mutsu and Itō had paid attention to the different movements of Beijing and Tianjin in response to the actions of Britain and Russia, because the talks regarding the Korean Question between the British Chargé d’Affaires Sir Nicholas R. O’Conor with the Zongli Yamen in Beijing and Russian Envoy Arthur P. Cassini with Li Hongzhang in Tianjin were conducted independently of one another.³³ Accordingly, after the discussion with Itō, Mutsu decided to choose the Zongli Yamen as a formal negotiator. He informed the British Chargé d’Affaires ad Interim to Japan about Japan’s intention to reopen negotiations with the Qing, and then replied to the Russian Minister to Japan that

³⁰ For an analysis of the process by which Japan diverted the negotiations from Li Hongzhang, see [Koketsu 2016: part 1, chap. 2-2].

³¹ “Aoki Shūzō Chūei Kōshi ate Mutsu Gaishō denpō” 青木周藏駐英公使あて陸奥外相電報 (Telegram addressed to Aoki Shūzō, Envoy to Britain, from Foreign Minister Mutsu Munemitsu), 1 July 1894. In “Tōgakutō Henran no sai Kankoku hogo ni kansuru Nis-Shin kōshō kankei ikken” 東学党変乱ノ際韓国保護ニ関スル日清交渉関係一件 (Concerning Sino-Japanese negotiations on the protection of Korea in the midst of the Tonghak Rebellion), vol. 1 [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-2, p. 286].

³² “Mutsu Gaishō ate Aoki Chūei Kōshi denpō” 陸奥外相あて青木駐英公使電報 (Telegram addressed to Foreign Minister Mutsu from Envoy to Britain Aoki), 3 July 1894 [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-2, p. 290].

³³ “Itō Hirobumi ate Mutsu Munemitsu shokan” 伊藤博文あて陸奥宗光書翰 (Letter addressed to Itō Hirobumi from Mutsu Munemitsu), 30 June 1894 [Itō Hirobumi kankei monjo kenkyūkai 1973–81: vol. 7, pp. 294–5; Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-2, pp. 279–80].

the Japanese government did not intend to withdraw their troops as requested.³⁴

Upon the reopening of negotiations, Mutsu submitted a proposal to the Zongli Yamen denying the Qing's monopolistic position as "suzerain", by involving the Treaty Powers in Korea. On 3 July 1894, he informed the British Chargé d'Affaires ad Interim to Japan about the prerequisite conditions for negotiation of domestic reforms in Korea, which included one that stated, "Japan must enjoy in Corea equal rights and privileges with China in all matters political as well as commercial."³⁵ This condition implied that Japan implicitly demanded the special rights which were stipulated in the Regulations for Maritime and Overland Trade between Chinese and Korean Subjects in October 1882 equally granted to the Japanese. In other words, Japan's claims to special rights meant that the other Treaty Powers in Korea would also enjoy the same rights owing to the unilateral most-favored nation treatment. Moreover, Japan tried to establish an equal position in political affairs as well as commercial. Though Britain's recommendation had been to avoid the "question of suzerainty", Japan proposed conditions for negotiations that the Qing would find difficult to accept.

Likewise, the Qing had no intentions to continue negotiations through the Zongli Yamen in Beijing on the basis of Japan's conditions. On 9 July, ministers at the Zongli Yamen wrote to Chargé d'Affaires Komura Jutarō 小村寿太郎, insisting that the "Chinese Government would not enter into negotiation until Japan to withdraw her troops from Corea because [the] Tientsin [=Tianjin] Convention [=the Li-Itō Convention in 1885] required immediate withdrawal of troops on the suppression of disturbance" [Gaimushō 1947-: vol. 27-2, p. 246].

Then on 12 July, in accordance with a Cabinet resolution, Mutsu issued through Komura in Beijing a "second note of estrangement" (Dainiji zekkōsho 第二次絶交書) to the Zongli Yamen [MMKM, vol. 20, 66-8, p. 83; Mutsu 1983: 90; Gaimushō 1947-: vol. 27-2, pp. 248-9]. At the same time, he instructed Ōtori in Seoul to demand that the Korean government implement the domestic reforms [Gaimushō 1947-: vol. 27-1, pp. 596-7].

³⁴ "Mutsu Munemitsu ate Itō Hirobumi shokan" 陸奥宗光あて伊藤博文書翰 (Letter addressed to Mutsu Munemitsu from Itō Hirobumi), 30 June 1894 [MMKM, vol. 3, 10-71; Gaimushō 1947-: vol. 27-2, pp. 286, 288-9].

³⁵ "Aoki Chūei Kōshi ate Mutsu Gaishō denpō" 青木駐英公使あて陸奥外相電報 (Telegram addressed to Envoy to Britain Aoki from Foreign Minister Mutsu), 3 July 1894. In "Tōgakutō Henran no sai Kankoku hogo ni kansuru Nis-Shin kōshō kankei ikken", vol. 2 [Gaimushō 1947-: vol. 27-2, p. 290].

2. 3. *Japan's Ultimatum and Britain*

Mutsu's "second note of estrangement" led to a change in the course of Sino-Japanese negotiations, which had failed to reach an agreement. The note infuriated the Ministers of the Zongli Yamen and led them to send more troops to Korea [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-2, pp. 262–3; Tabohashi 1940: vol. 2, p. 615]. Though they had insisted on the withdrawal of Japanese troops before the beginning of negotiations, they changed their attitude towards Japan. Thus, the risk of a military clash was suddenly heightened.

At that time, both the Military Headquarters (Junjichū 軍機處) and the Zongli Yamen in Beijing still had expectation for the success of Li Hongzhang's mediation in Tianjin while maintaining the system of the Qing Dynasty, even if they made concessions to Japan [Tabohashi 1940: vol. 2, p. 585]. Chargé d'affaires O'Connor noticed this situation and attempted to contact both Beijing and Tianjin via messenger. Finally, he obtained recognition by Li Hongzhang of the new conditions for negotiation, whereby Li revised Japan's four conditions in the beginning of July.³⁶

In the morning of 19 July, the British Chargé d'Affaires ad Interim to Japan handed over a memorandum to Mutsu stating the conditions for negotiations accepted by Li Hongzhang as those of the "Chinese Government". Important points in the memorandum are as follows: 1) "Chinese Government is only able to advise and not to force the King of Korea to adopt the reforms proposed to him"; 2) "Japan and China [are] to have equal rights commercially in Korea[, and the word "politically" to be left out"; and 3) "the "question of suzerainty" should be left out of the negotiation agenda" [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-2, pp. 260–1].

Mutsu refused to accept these new conditions and added new revisions, which he knew the Qing could never accept. The main revisions were that "Both governments must pledge themselves to make the King of Korea to [sic] adopt the reforms proposed by all means", and the "word 'politically' to remain in connection with rights to be equally enjoyed in Korea."³⁷ For the ministers at the Zongli Yamen in Beijing, Mutsu's revisions were nothing but a hidden attack on Chinese "suzerainty".³⁸

Although Britain continued to mediate between Japan and the Qing, Japan continued to focus on the Qing's suzerain position over Korea as a point of debate. On 26 July, the British Chargé d'Affaires ad Interim to Japan handed over a memorandum reporting

³⁶ FO405/60, no. 114 and no. 369, Mr. O'Connor to the Earl of Kimberley, 18 July 1894 [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-2, pp. 262–3].

³⁷ "Ei Dairi Kōshi he kōfu" 英代理公使へ交付 (Exchange with the British Chargé d'Affaires), 19 July 1894. In "Tōgakutō Henran no sai Kankoku hogo ni kansuru Nis-Shin kōshō kankei iken", vol. 2 [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-2, pp. 261–2].

³⁸ FO405/60, no. 408, Mr. O'Connor to the Earl of Kimberley, 24 July 1894.

the Chinese government's intention to continue talks by revising the phrase "equality of political and commercial rights with China" to read "equality of political and commercial rights with other Powers" [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-2, pp. 319–20]. Mutsu orally refused to accept this suggestion on the grounds that Japan already enjoyed such equality in both political and commercial affairs by holding a unilateral most-favored-nation status under the Japan-Korea Treaty of Amity [Tabohashi 1940: vol. 2, pp. 526–7]. Japan insisted on its claim to rights and privileges equal to those enjoyed by the Qing, not the Western Powers. Subsequently, Japan launched a naval attack on ships carrying Qing reinforcements to Korea in the waters off the island of Pungdo.

As stated above, it is clear that the main point of contention between Japan and the Qing was the character of the Qing's position over Korea within the context of relations between Qing and Korea. Japan tried to deny the monopoly of the suzerain status by inviting the Qing's cooperation in reforming the internal affairs of Korea. Japan's raising of the question of the Qing's "suzerain power" led to the Battle of Pungdo.

3. Japan's Denial of the Sino-Korean Suzerain-Vassal Relationship by Raising the Question of Korean Independence

Meanwhile in Korea, Japan launched its proposed domestic reform on its own initiative without the Qing's cooperation and took steps to abrogate Sino-Korean suzerain-vassal relationship by raising the "question of Korean independence". This section follows the sequence of events that led to the Battle of Sŏnghwan 成歡 owing to a dispute over the international status of Korea.

Prior to the declaration of war, Japan's attitude towards negotiations about the Sino-Korean suzerain-vassal relationship had two directions. Foreign Minister Mutsu and Envoy Ōtori in Seoul, unlike Prime Minister Itō who preferred to deny the monopoly of the suzerain status by inviting the Qing's cooperation in the reforming of Korea, desired to dispute Korea's international status. For example, shortly after the dispatch of Japanese troops, Mutsu temporarily insisted to both Wang Fengzao and the Zongli Yamen in Beijing that the "Japanese Government ha[d] never recognized Corea as a tributary state of China", by citing the phrase "tributary state" contained in the Qing's notification of sending troops (the Li-Itō Convention in 1885 stipulated the "mutual notification" (*hangewn zhizhao* 行文知照) between Japan and the Qing in the case of dispatching troops to Korea).³⁹ Moreover, after the "first note of estrangement", Ōtori proposed to Mutsu in 18 June 1894 that if Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 refused to withdraw the

³⁹ "Komura Chūshin Rinji Dairi Kōshi ate Mutsu Gaishō denpō" 小村駐清臨時代理公使あて

troops prior to the withdrawal of Japanese troops, Japan might consider his refusal as endeavors on the part of the Qing to support her suzerainty over Korea and as a denial of Japan's efforts in maintaining the independence of Korea.⁴⁰ His opinion can be understood as a dichotomy between the Japan-Korea Treaty of Amity and the Sino-Korean suzerain-vassal relationship.

However, the Japanese government did not adopt the Mutsu-Ōtori's direction of asserting Korea's independence. They decided to present the domestic reforms in the negotiation with Korea, regardless of whether the Korean government accepted them or not [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-1, pp. 577–8, 584–5]. As well as the negotiations with the Qing, Japan was challenging the Qing's status over Korea within the context of the Sino-Korean suzerain-vassal relationship. Therefore, Ōtori could not obtain a satisfactory answer from the Korean government about the domestic reforms [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-1, pp. 604–5].

To obtain the Korean government's consent for the domestic reforms, Ōtori decided to try to remove the Sino-Korean suzerain-vassal relationship by raising the question of Korean independence. After the announcement of the “second note of estrangement” to the Zongli Yamen, on 20 July, Ōtori demanded that the Korean government notify the Chinese government the abrogation of three regulations. The regulations concerned maritime and overland trade (the above-mentioned Zhong-Chao Shangmin Shuiliu Maoyi Zhangcheng, October 1882) as well as commerce on the frontier between Liaodong and Korea (Zhongjiang Tongshang Zhangcheng/Chunggang T'ongsang Changjōng 中江通商章程, signed on 16 March 1883) and commerce between Jilin and Korea (Jilin Tongshang Zhangcheng/Killim T'ongsang Changjōng 吉林通商章程, 1884). He insisted that these regulations infringed upon Article 1 of the Japan-Korea Treaty of Amity [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-1, p. 629]. This means that he demanded that Korea make a choice between the *jishu/chachu* 自主 and “tributary kingdom” (*shubang/sokpang* 屬邦), which existed together until that time.

In response, the Korean Board of Foreign Affairs (T'ongri Amun 統理衙門) issued a reply reviewed by Tang Shaoyi 唐紹儀, Qing Deputy Chief Trade Negotiator (Daili Jiaoshe Tongshang Shiyi 代理交涉通商事宜). However, Ōtori expressed dissatisfaction with the response, which resulted in the occupation of the Royal Palace by

陸奧外相電報 (Telegram addressed to Chargé d'Affaires ad Interim to China Komura from Foreign Minister Mutsu), 11 June 1894. In “Tōgakutō Henran no sai Kankoku hogo ni kansuru Nis-Shin kōshō kankei ikken”, vol. 1 [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-2, pp. 169, 183].

⁴⁰ “Mutsu Gaishō ate Ōtori Chūchō Kōshi denpō” 陸奧外相あて大島駐朝公使電報 (Telegram addressed to Foreign Minister Mutsu from Envoy to Korea Ōtori), 18 June 1894 [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-2, p. 218]. The Japanese translation of this correspondence is contained in Sugimura Fukashi, “Meiji 27, 8 nen zaikan kushin roku” 明治廿七八年在韓苦心録 (A record of setbacks suffered in Korea during 1894–95) [Ichikawa 1979–81: vol. 10, p. 282].

Japanese troops in Seoul and the subsequent formation of the Taewŏngun 大院君 Government on 23 July. In the process, the Korean Board of Foreign Affairs inquired of Tang about the nullification of the three sets of regulations pertaining to Sino-Korean trade [Tabohashi 1940: vol. 2, pp. 434–53]. This occupation was followed by the departure of the forces under Ōshima Yoshimasa's 大島義昌 command from Seoul on 25 July, upon being informed of the dispatch of reinforcements by the Qing. The Ōshima force laid siege to and occupied Sŏnghwan on 29 July and then Asan the day after [Saitō 2003: 69].

The Battle of Pungdo had resulted from the dispute over the Qing suzerainty arising out of negotiations regarding Korean domestic reforms, and the Battle of Sŏnghwan from the dispute concerning Korea's international status, which arose out of differences over the question of national independence. That being said, despite different negotiation routes and points of contention, both battles occurred against the backdrop of the Sino-Korean suzerain-vassal relationship. Finally, Japan decided to declare war after the *Kowshing* Incident (Kōshōgō Jiken 高陞号事件), which had occurred in the Battle of Pungdo [Tabohashi 1940: vol. 2, pp. 520–3; Hiyama 1997a: 60–4; 1997b: 63–6].

The consequences of the outbreak of Sino-Japanese war extended to the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Amity (1871) and the Li-Itō Convention (1885), which had formed the basis of the Sino-Japanese relation so far. With the accompanying abrogation of the three regulations that had formed the basis of the Sino-Korean suzerain-vassal relationship, all the bilateral “treaties” negotiated by Li Hongzhang throughout East Asia disappeared at a stroke.

4. Changes in East Asia by the Formation of the Korean Empire

4. 1. *The Task of Ending the Qing Suzerainty over Korea*

In the aftermath of the war, Japan and Korea had to re-establish diplomatic relations with the Qing. In the case of Japan, the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki and the following Treaty of Commerce and Navigation (Nis-Shin Tsūshō Kōkai Jōyaku/Ri-Qing Tongshang Hanghai Tiaoyue 日清通商航海条約, signed in Japanese, Chinese, and English on 21 July 1896) became the basis of new relations. Korea concluded the Sino-Korean Treaty of Commerce in 1899, after the establishment of the Korean Empire in 1897. This section follows Japan's concerns over the re-establishment of the Sino-Korean diplomatic relationship and the Qing's new position over Korea after the declaration of war.

After the declaration of the war, Inoue Kaoru, the author of the above-mentioned eight propositions of 1885, carried out the Kabo Reforms (Kabo Kehyōk 甲午改革) of 1894–96 in Korea.

The Reforms included the task of ending the Sino-Korean suzerain-vassal rela-

tionship, for example, removing all traces of vassalage from the diplomatic ceremonies in the Korean government, prohibiting the use of Qing Dynasty-era names in diplomatic documents, and establishing I Sōnggye's 李成桂 founding of the Chosŏn Dynasty in 1392 as the base year of the new Kaeguk Kinyōn 開國紀年, making 1894 Kaeguk 503. Efforts were also made to ensure that Korea could contract loans with Japan in place of the Qing. However, the whole Reform project was abandoned when Korean King Kojong sought sanctuary in the Russian Legation in February 1896 (Agwan P'ach'ōn 俄館播遷). King Kojong approached Russia in his attempts to check Japanese intervention just as he had checked the Qing's intervention in the late 1880s.⁴¹

Of course, Article 1 of the Shimonoseki Treaty could also not be ignored as the provision that referred to the relationship between the Qing and Korea. It states that, "China recognizes definitively the full and complete independence and autonomy of Korea" [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 28-2, p. 373]. This article is famous for specifying the independence of Korea, but Japan had been concerned about the Qing's position over Korea while it was making the draft of the Shimonoseki Treaty during wartime.

In October 1894, Japan received a proposition from Britain to make overtures of peace with the Qing. Britain's peace conditions were "the independence of Korea to be guaranteed by the Powers"⁴²; in other words, the conditions did not press the Qing for Korean independence and the abrogation of the suzerain-vassal relationship. Before the outbreak of the war, Britain maintained the Qing's traditional central position in the protection of her own political and commercial interests in East Asia.⁴³

In contrast to the British peace proposition, Mutsu drafted two proposals: Proposal A suggesting that the Qing would confirm Korean independence; and Proposal B handing over this task to the Powers [MMKM, vol. 20, 66-8, pp. 257–8; Mutsu 1983: 207]. Proposal A would determine the position of the Qing over Korea for Japan. Power Henry Le Poer Trench, British Envoy to Japan, reported to the Foreign Office about the discussion with Mutsu as follows: "As regards Korea, his Excellency observed that it would be only necessary to guarantee its independence as against China. Japan required nothing more from the Powers."⁴⁴ Japan attached importance to specifying the Qing's attitude towards Korea's independence. On the other hand, Proposal B exerted no actual influence on the Qing's position over Korea, for the subject was "the great powers". This

⁴¹ See, for example, [Kasuya 1992: 244–6; Kasuya 1999: 184–6; Tsukiashi 1999: 87–8; Tsukiashi 2009: chap. 4].

⁴² "Itō Shushō ate Mutsu Gaishō denpō" 伊藤首相あて陸奥外相電報 (Telegram addressed to Prime Minister Itō from Foreign Minister Mutsu), 8 October 1894 [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 27-2, p. 474].

⁴³ FO405/60, no. 422, Mr. O'Connor to the Earl of Kimberley, 27 July 1894.

⁴⁴ FO405/62, no. 266, Mr. Trench to the Earl of Kimberley, 11 October 1894.

was more or less the same as the British peace proposition. In the end, Japan refused to accept the British proposal and then drafted Article 1 of the Shimonoseki Treaty with the Qing as its subject.⁴⁵

Further, Japan adhered to make the subject solely the Qing Dynasty. At the Shimonoseki peace conference in April 1895, Li Hongzhang proposed that “China and Japan recognize definitely the full and complete independence and autonomy...” as a revision of Article 1. However, Japan refused to accept [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 28-2, pp. 349–57]. Consequently, Article 1 of the Shimonoseki Treaty stipulated as follows:

China recognizes definitively the full and complete independence and autonomy [dokuritsu jishu no kuni 独立自主ノ国] of Korea, and in consequence, the payment of tribute and the performance of ceremonies and formalities by Korea to China in derogation of such independence and autonomy, shall wholly cease for the future [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 28-2, p. 373].

Thus, Japan attached importance to extract a promise from the Qing to recognize the international status of Korea as an independent state.

Also, it is important that Japan dealt with the “Korean Question” only with Russia after the war. Even though having considered two alternatives about Korea’s independence, namely, 1) deciding matters on its own; and 2) involving all the World Powers [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 29, p. 745], Japan narrowed down the negotiation window and chose Russia as a counterpart after the assassination of Chosŏn Queen Min 閔妃. This meant excluding the other Powers and the Qing from the “Korean Question”. Especially, Japan’s choice of negotiator had a significant meaning for Britain, as it had attempted to let the Qing join in the discussion of the “Korean Question”. In conversation with Japanese Envoy Katō Takaaki 加藤高明, Robert Arthur Talbot Gascoyne-Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury and the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, suggested that, “The practical protection accorded to it by the rival interests of its three neighbours, Russia, China, and Japan, would for the present insure its independence.”⁴⁶ However, Japan refused to recognize the Qing as a partner in the diplomatic negotiations on the “Korean Question” after the war.

Japan’s policy of selecting Russia as a sole counterpart in its negotiation over the Korean Question became more and more distinct in the subsequent course of events as Korean King Kojong sought asylum in the Russian Legation in February 1896. On 1 May of that year, Ernest Satow, British Envoy to Japan, intimated that the events in Ko-

⁴⁵ On the drafting of the peace treaty, see [Tabohashi 1951: part 2, chap. 3; Nakatsuka 1968: chap. 5; Horiguchi 1985a; Horiguchi 1985b].

⁴⁶ FO405/65, no. 22, the Marquess of Salisbury to Sir E. Satow, 25 October 1895.

rea might lead to Russia declaring it a protectorate, and it was also possible that Korean King Kojong might declare himself “a vassal of China”. He asked Mutsu, “Would Japan be disposed to agree to a declaration of neutrality of Corea or a guarantee of Independence of that Country by the Powers[?]”, but received no positive reply.⁴⁷ Britain continued to hold the opinion regarding Korea’s international status that the major parties of interest—the Qing, Japan, and Russia—should take the initiative in discussing Korean matters with other countries,⁴⁸ but Japan and Russia went on to reach bilateral agreements regarding the maintenance of the military *status quo* in Korea (the Komura-Waerber Memorandum, signed in English on 14 May 1896) and their respective privileges in Korea (the Yamagata-Lobanov Agreement, signed in French on 9 June 1896) [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 29, pp. 789–92, 815–18]. These circumstances gave Ernest Satow the impression that Japan intended to deal with the “Korean Question” only in deliberations with Russia since as early as the fall of 1895, that is, after the assassination of Queen Min.⁴⁹

On the other hand, the Qing remained reluctant to accept an international status on equal terms with Korea even after the war. Although the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895 provided for the Qing’s recognition of Korea’s independence between Japan and the Qing (Article 1), it did not provide how to form new diplomatic relations between Qing and Korea in the aftermath of the war. However, the Qing’s diplomatic attitude changed from the idea of tributary, whereby vassal countries should be cared for by the Qing Dynasty, to the criteria of international law in expressing its superiority over Korea. In one example, the Qing appointed not a minister, but a consul-general following the example of Britain and Germany in Korea. In November 1896, the Qing appointed Tang Shaoyi as consul-general in Korea, who had been put in charge of Korean policy together with Yuan Shikai before the war, and prepared for a new trade agreement between the two countries.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 29, p. 582]; FO405/71, no.34, Sir E. Satow to the Marquess of Salisbury, 3 May 1896.

⁴⁸ FO405/71, no. 47, the Marquess of Salisbury to Sir E. Satow, 13 May 1896; “Yamagata Aritomo ate Katō Takaaki shokan” 山県有朋あて加藤高明書翰 (Letter addressed to Yamagata Aritomo from Katō Takaaki), 6 June 1896 [Shōyū kurabu Yamagata Aritomo kankei monjo hensan iinkai 2004–07: vol. 2, p. 6].

⁴⁹ FO405/73, no. 52, Sir E. Satow to the Marquess of Salisbury, 18 February 1897.

⁵⁰ Regarding the normalization of relations between the two countries from that time on, see above note 7.

4. 2. *Japan's Attitude towards the Enthronement of King Kojong as the Emperor of Korea*

Each country's diplomatic attitude towards Korea was changed much more dramatically by the establishment of the Korean Empire in November 1897 than by Japanese efforts to promote internal political reforms of Korea since the Treaty of Shimonoseki. This section describes how the formation of the Korean Empire marked a turning point for Korea's international status in East Asia, from the viewpoint of Japan.

After the return to the Royal Palace from the Russian Legation, King Kojong demonstrated the dignity of an emperor ruling over an independent state both within and without the nation. He first declared that the new era name of Kwangmu 光武 was to begin in August 1897, then went on to rename Chosŏn as 'Taehan' and finally conducted an enthronement ceremony and a state funeral for Queen Min as Empress Myŏngsŏng (明成皇后), which had been delayed since the assassination in 1895. These acts meant that the Korean Empire autonomously carried out the Kabo Reforms for independence from the Qing by herself. Both the enthronement ceremony and the proclamation of the new country name were similar to the Chinese imperial tradition. Thus, three Empires, the Qing, Japan, and Korea coexisted in East Asia.⁵¹

Whether other countries recognized the Korean Emperor or not, Japan took the initiative in acknowledging the title of "kōtei" 皇帝 (emperor) at the time of the state funeral of Empress Myŏngsŏng. While making preparations to attend the imperial funeral, the Japanese government began to use the honorific Japanese title of "Daikankoku Daikōtei Heika" 大韓国大皇帝陛下 (His Majesty Emperor of Korea) and "kōgō" 皇后 (empress) in the credence for the appointment of Katō Masuo 加藤増雄 as special envoy on 8 November.⁵² After that, Russia's attitude towards Korea became an opportunity for Japan to use the English title "emperor". Russia used the title "His Majesty the Emperor of Korea" in her response to the Korean Emperor's congratulatory telegram on the occasion of the announcement of the date for naming the Russian Emperor on 18 December.⁵³ Britain at first awaited the response of other countries, but she followed suit

⁵¹ Regarding King Kojong's enthronement, see [Kasuya 1992; Okumura 1995; Tsukiashi 1999; Tsukiashi 2009: chap. 4; Mori 2017].

⁵² From that time onwards until Japan's annexation of Korea, such nomenclature was used in official state documents exchanged between the two countries [Ishikawa H. 1999: 53; Yamaguchi 1994].

⁵³ "Nishi Tokujirō Gaishō ate Katō Masuo Benri Kōshi kimitsu-shin" 西徳二郎外相あて加藤増雄弁理公使機密信 (Confidential letter addressed to Foreign Minister Nishi Tokujirō from Minister Resident Katō Masuo), 12 January 1898 (Kakkoku genshu oyobi kōzoku keishō zakken 各国元首及皇族敬称雑件 (Various cases of honorific titles for foreign heads of state and imperial family members)), vol. 2; FO405/80, Enclosure in no. 40, Consul-General Jordan to Sir C.

when the United States joined Russia and Japan in using the title “emperor”.⁵⁴

The appointment of the British Minister in March 1898 was one example of the changes in the Powers’ attitude towards Korea following the establishment of the Korean Empire. Originally, Britain had appointed a consulate-general who had been under the direction of the British Minister in Beijing. Given these circumstances, Japan asked the British government and King Kojong to open an independent legation,⁵⁵ but the plan was not implemented before the establishment of the Korean Empire. Also, the change in Russia’s attitude towards the Korean Empire was clearly seen in Article 1 of the Ni-shi-Rosen Agreement of 25 April 1898. Article 1 specified that “The Imperial Governments of Japan and Russia definitively recognize the sovereignty and entire independence of Korea” [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 31-1, pp. 183–4]. This was different from the precedent wherein Russia had refused to stipulate “the independence of Korea” when Japan had attempted to insert the same language in the Yamagata-Lobanov Agreement of 1896 previously [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 29, p. 812; vol. 31-1, pp. 130–1]. In this manner, the international society, including Western Powers, gradually gave their “official approval” to Korea’s international status as an independent empire.

Finally, the Qing recognized Korean independence officially and concluded the 1899 Sino-Korean Treaty of Commerce.

Japan’s diplomacy regarding the Korean Question after the Treaty of Shimonoseki is often studied as the sequence of events responsible for the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904. However, it can be interpreted as an effort to end the Qing’s suzerainty over Korea if we consider East Asian international relations in the late 19th century. Japan still had a duty to keep the Qing at a distance from the Korean Question through agreements with Russia after the Treaty of Shimonoseki. From the viewpoint of Japan, the attitude of the Qing and Western Powers towards Korea clearly changed after the establishment of the Korean Empire, whose establishment was a significant turning point for formation of new Sino-Korean relations.

Conclusion

Japan’s proposal for a joint Sino-Japanese project for Korean internal reforms and Korean independence had the same purpose: to destroy the Sino-Korean suzerain-vassal relationship. The issue of the former was the question about the Qing’s position over Korea,

MacDonald, 26 December 1897.

⁵⁴ FO405/73, no. 176, Foreign Office to Mr. Consul-General Jordan, 30 December 1897. FO405/80, no. 79, Mr. Jordan to Foreign Office, 25 February 1898.

⁵⁵ FO405/73, no. 52, Sir E. Satow to the Marquess of Salisbury, 18 February 1897.

and that of the latter was the question about Korean position. Japan had to continue to suppress the movement of the rebirth of Sino-Korean vassalage relation through agreements with Russia after the Treaty of Shimonoseki.

After 1882, Korea's conclusion of international treaties with Western Powers changed Japan's foreign policy towards East Asia. The increase of the international members surrounding Korea enabled Japan to determine the international positions of Korea or the Qing using the Western Powers as a medium. However, the Qing gradually reinforced its relationship with Korea and its suzerain position with the Foreign Powers' connivance. In such a situation, Japan determined her own position by the conclusion of the Li-Itō Convention in 1885 and eight propositions for the denial of the monopoly of the Qing's suzerainty over Korea and avoided arguments about Korea's position in the negotiations with the Qing.

When the Qing exercised the suzerainty to protect Korea as a tributary by the dispatch of troops in 1894, Japan was not forced to choose a diplomatic measure from between the proposal of Sino-Japanese joint reform for Korean internal administration and the issue of Korean independence. Both diplomatic measures were not seen as opposite ideas—anti-war (Korean domestic reforms) and pro-war (Korean independence)—within Japan's political leadership. As this chapter shows, both measures coexisted for a common purpose, namely, to end the Sino-Korean suzerain-vassal relationship. Japan's efforts to dissolve Sino-Korean suzerain-vassal relations continued even after the war. She had to wait for the foundation of the Korean Empire in 1897 when it brought about changes in the policy of the Powers and the Qing to approve Korean independence officially.

Additionally, regarding suzerainty in East Asia, Japan established a new suzerain power in the 20th century. The Taft-Katsura Agreement (signed in English on 27 July 1905) with the United States after the Russo-Japanese War eventually admitted Japan's suzerainty over Korea.⁵⁶ The second Anglo-Japanese Alliance (signed in English, on 12 August) and the Treaty of Portsmouth with Russia (signed in Japanese and French, on 5 September) consented to Japan's "protection" of Korea.⁵⁷ At that time, Japanese jurists pursued the meaning of *hogoken* 保護権 (i.e. "right to protect") and discussed the differences and relations with the concept of suzerainty itself.⁵⁸ The concept of *sōshuken* in

⁵⁶ The original memorandum was lost due to fire. See [Nagata 1992: 97–144].

⁵⁷ That being said, there still existed various interpretations at that time over how relations of "protection" were to be set up and actually operate. See [Asano 2013].

⁵⁸ See Ariga Nagao 有賀長雄, "Hogokokuron wo arawashitaru riyū" 保護国論を著したる理由 (The reason for writing *Discourse on Protectorates*), 1906, which appears at the end of Chapter 3 of the present volume.

Japan might have been confirmed during the period of the Japanese “protection” of Korea.