

Qing–Korean Relations from the Perspective of Beijing and Tianjin (1902–1905): The Qing Dynasty’s Attitude toward Japan’s Seizure of the Korean Empire’s Diplomatic Rights

北京と天津から見た清韓関係（1902～1905 年）

—日本による大韓帝国外交権接收に対する清朝の態度—

Mayuko Mori (Tokyo Woman’s Christian University)¹

ABSTRACT

The Qing Dynasty’s perception of Japan’s appropriation of Korean diplomatic rights between 1902 and 1905 shifted significantly. After the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki, the Qing Dynasty did not consistently deny Korea’s equal standing. This study examines Qing–Korean relations from the perspectives of Tianjin and Beijing, showing that the Qing Dynasty initially attempted to treat Korea as an equal, independent nation; however, Korea’s inability to host Emperor Gojong’s 40th enthronement celebrations shifted the Qing Dynasty’s attitude to one of contempt. Through an analysis of historical documents, diplomatic correspondence, and official records from the period, this study reveals that the Qing Dynasty had consented to Japan’s takeover of Korea’s diplomatic rights before the Second Japan–Korea Convention in 1905, as evident in their acceptance of Japanese control of Korean consular functions in Tianjin and Beijing. Thus, the Qing Dynasty’s view of Korea evolved from attempted equal treatment to acceptance of Japan’s control, which explains why Korea could not secure China’s support against Japanese aggression after 1905. The findings illuminate the diplomatic dynamics in East Asia during this critical period.

Introduction

In 1895, Japan’s triumph in the First Sino–Japanese War resulted in Korea becoming an entirely independent state, thereby terminating its tributary relationship with the Qing Dynasty and the traditional Chinese order in East Asia. By 1897, the Kingdom of Korea had transformed into the Empire of Korea, leading to the coexistence of four empires in East Asia—the Empire of Korea, the Qing

¹ This work was supported by JFE 21st Century Foundation.

Dynasty, Japan, and Russia. With the onset of the Russo–Japanese War in 1904, Japan secured the Taft–Katsura Agreement in July 1905 and the Second Anglo–Japanese Alliance in August, obtaining the consent of the great powers to establish the Korean Empire as a protectorate. Following Japan’s victory over Russia, the Treaty of Portsmouth was signed in September 1905, wherein Russia conceded to Japan’s protection and control of the Korean Empire, culminating in a series of agreements with the great powers.

Upon completing its rapprochement with the great powers in November 1905, Japan coerced the Korean Empire into the Second Japan–Korea Convention, stripping it of diplomatic rights and rendering it a protectorate of Japan. Despite Gojong’s attempts to annul the treaty at The Hague by dispatching a special envoy to the international community, the Korean Empire was annexed by Japan in 1910.

During this period, the Japanese government engaged solely with the Western great powers as intermediaries. How did the Qing Dynasty, which previously maintained a tributary relationship as the suzerain state of the Kingdom of Korea, perceive Japan’s appropriation of the Korean Empire’s diplomatic rights? The Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895), which concluded the First Sino–Japanese War, merely abolished Korea’s tribute to the Qing Dynasty based on the Chinese order and affirmed Korea’s status as an independent sovereign state under Western international law. In essence, the Treaty of Shimonoseki merely acknowledged Korea as a modern independent state, rather than establishing Japan’s protectorate over Korea.

Previous research has indicated that the Qing Dynasty did not perceive Korea as a former “vassal state” even after the Treaty of Shimonoseki². Eun Jeong-Tae observed that it was only following the Second Japan–Korea Convention in 1905 that the Qing Dynasty acknowledged the complete dissolution of the suzerain–tributary relationship³. While this paper concurs with Eun Jeong-Tae’s assertion, it primarily contends that, subsequent to the Treaty of Shimonoseki, the Qing Dynasty did not consistently deny that the Korean Empire was on equal standing with the Qing Dynasty. This was evident even after the 1899 Qing–Korean Commercial Treaty, which established a relationship of equality⁴, until Japan assumed its protectorate

² A representative study is Takashi Okamoto (岡本隆司), 『中国の誕生—東アジアの近代外交と国家形成』 Nagoya University Press, 2017, Chapter 10.

³ 殷丁泰 「을사조약 이후 청국정부의 한국인식」 『역사와 현실』 66, 2007, p.104.

⁴ Regarding the mutual recognition between the Qing and the Korean Empire in the process of concluding the Qing–Korean Commercial Treaty, 殷丁泰 「1899 韓・

status in 1905. By examining Qing–Korean relations from the perspective of Tianjin and Beijing between 1902 and 1905, this paper newly reveals that the Qing Dynasty endeavored to treat the Korean Empire as an independent nation on equal terms, as demonstrated by Park Jae-Soon (朴齊純)’s diplomatic appointment and the 40-year celebrations of Gojong’s Enthronement. However, when the Korean Empire was unable to conduct the 40th anniversary celebrations (御極 40 年稱慶禮式), the Qing Dynasty’s attitude shifted to one of contempt.

This study also reveals that, against the backdrop of the Qing Dynasty’s growing disdain for Korea in 1903, the Qing Dynasty acquiesced to the Japanese government’s seizure of the Korean Empire’s diplomatic sovereignty in Tianjin in July 1904. In essence, the second argument of this paper is that the Qing Dynasty had consented to the Japanese government’s de facto takeover of the Korean Empire’s diplomatic rights a year prior to the Second Japan–Korea Convention, which resulted in Japan assuming control over the Korean Empire’s diplomatic rights. Consequently, the Qing Dynasty interpreted the Second Japan–Korea Convention of 1905 as the loss of sovereignty of the Korean Empire.

This understanding of the Qing Dynasty’s relationship with Korea elucidates why the Korean Empire was unable to secure China’s cooperation, with which it had the longest history of bilateral relations, to resist Japanese aggression after 1905.

1. Minister Plenipotentiary Park Jaesoon as Foreign Minister

The Qing–Korean Commercial Treaty of 1899 served to normalize relations between the Qing Dynasty and Korea, which had been disrupted by the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Following the Treaty of Shimonoseki, King Gojong sought to establish a treaty on equal terms with the Qing Dynasty and communicated this intention to the Qing authorities. However, the Agwan Pacheon incident (俄館播遷), which involved Gojong’s internal exile to the Russian legation for a year starting in February 1896, complicated matters. Tang Shaoyi (唐紹儀), the Chinese Consul-General in Korea, contended that Korea could not be considered an independent nation while its Emperor resided in the Russian legation, arguing that Korea lacked the right to independence and, consequently, could not send an envoy to negotiate a treaty under public law. Tang Shaoyi interpreted the term “autonomy” in the Treaty

清通商條約 締結 大韓帝國」『역사학보』 186, 2005, and 정동연 「19 세기 말 韓淸修好와 상호인식」『中国近現代史研究』 91, 2021.

of Shimonoseki as merely the cessation of the tribute collection system, opposing the notion of mutual equality through the treaty conclusion⁵.

Upon returning to the royal palace from the Russian Legation, Gojong ascended the throne as Emperor and proclaimed the establishment of the Korean Empire. Although this positioned him as an Emperor on par with the Qing Emperor, Tang Shaoyi persisted in his stance, asserting that he had never acknowledged equality between the Qing Dynasty and Korea, even after the Sino-Japanese War⁶. Nevertheless, the major powers that recognized Gojong's accession as Emperor in Seoul all concluded treaties with the Korean Empire and stationed third-class ministers in Seoul. Further, in Beijing, Japan, Russia, and the United Kingdom Ministers advised the Chinese Emperor's office to conclude the Qing-Korean Treaty⁷. Ultimately, following an imperial decree by Emperor Guangxu (光緒帝) in August 1898, the Qing-Korean Commercial Treaty was signed in September 1899, fulfilling the aspirations of the Korean Empire. However, even after the treaty's conclusion, the Qing Dynasty continued to regard Korea as a former "vassal state"⁸.

However, on March 14, 1902, Park Jaesoon was appointed as an envoy to the Qing Dynasty and as a minister extraordinary and plenipotentiary⁹. Subsequently, on October 31, he presented Gojong's sovereign letter to the Qing Emperor for the first time¹⁰, marking a shift in the Qing Dynasty's perception of Korea. Emperor Gojong expressed satisfaction at the establishment of a legation in Beijing, as previously, diplomatic missions were restricted to Tianjin under Chinese directives¹¹.

Upon Park Jaesoon's arrival in Beijing, he was granted an audience with the Emperor, facilitated by Prince Qing (慶親王), the Prime Minister of Foreign Affairs. This audience followed the same ceremonial protocol as that of other foreign envoys, without any distinct treatment as a representative of a "former vassal state."

⁵ 徐英姬 『근대 한국의 탄생 대한제국』 사회평론아카데미, 2025, p. 221.

⁶ Takashi Okamoto, *supra note*, 『中国の誕生』, p. 303.

⁷ Takashi Okamoto, *supra note*, 『中国の誕生』, pp. 304–305.

⁸ 徐英姬, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

⁹ 『承政院日記』 高宗 39 年 2 月 5 日。

¹⁰ 『韓国外交文書』 Guangxu Era 28 (1902), Inquiry from Prince Qing to Park Jaesoon, the Korean Diplomatic Papers are in the collection of the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, Seoul National University, 327.5102-H193h. According to the '觀見呈遞' attached to the same inquiry, only the bowing ceremony was required instead of kowtowing (叩頭) .

¹¹ 「上曰、公使館在於何門外也。齊純曰、在正陽門內矣。(中略) 上曰、陛見則國書或親受乎。齊純曰、我韓今為對等國、則似或親受矣」 『承政院日記』 高宗 39 年 8 月 20 日。

Further, Prince Qing provided Park Jaesoon with the regulation for hiring the Chinese people in foreign legation (“辦理各國使館服役華人章程”)¹² and extended an invitation to the party (“瞻玩盛景”) at the Summer Palace (頤和園)¹³, an event attended by all foreign envoys, where he was accorded the same treatment as other foreign envoys stationed in Beijing.

However, Park Jaesoon’s recognition by the Qing authorities and other nations as the inaugural “foreign” minister stationed in Beijing, rather than as an envoy adhering to the traditional Chinese hierarchical order, may be attributed in part to his personal attributes. Serving as the first Commissioner for Commercial Affairs¹⁴ in Tianjin from 1883 to 1886, he was instrumental in the establishment of the Office of Commissioner for Commercial Affairs. His familiarity with practices rooted in the Chinese order, fluency in the Chinese language, and adept administrative skills likely contributed to his distinguished status¹⁵.

2. Loss of National Honor Due to Postponement of the 40-Year Celebration of Enthronement

On March 19, 1902, five days after the appointment of Park Jaesoon as the first resident minister in Beijing, preparations commenced for the commemoration of the

¹² 『韓国外交文書』 Guangxu Era 29 (1903) January 17, Inquiry from Prince Qing to Park Jaesoon.

¹³ 『韓国外交文書』 Guangxu Era 29 (1903) March 24, Imperial Edict of the Empress Dowager, Imperial Edict of the Emperor.

¹⁴ With regard to 駐津大員・駐津督理通商事務 the author discusses its activities from its founding to its abolition with the Sino–Japanese War (Mayuko Mori (森万佑子), 『朝鮮外交の近代—宗属関係から大韓帝国へ』, 2017, Chapters 1, 2, and 5. 모리마유코 「駐津督理通商事務의 활동을 통해서 본 事大와 交隣의 교착—『舊韓國政府外交文書綴』 第三冊～第五冊의 分析」 『한국사학보』 79, 2020 年. Mayuko Mori, 「天津からみる朝鮮の「交隣」—事大における敵礼の模索」, Ed. Takashi Okamoto (岡本隆司), 『交隣と東アジア—近世から近代へ』, Nagoya University Press, 2021. Mayuko Mori, 「天津からみる朝鮮の「交隣」—事大における敵礼の模索」, The Journal of Oriental Research, 82-4, 2024. Mayuko Mori, 「金玉均暗殺事件をめぐる中朝日英関係—中華秩序の崩壊の始まり」, Ed. Fumitaka Kurosawa (黒沢文貴), 『日本外交の近代史—秩序への順応と相剋 2』 Tokyo University Press, 2024. 모리마유코 「1894 年 조선 정부의 청나라 군대 파병 요청에 이르게 된 정책 결정 과정 재고」 『동북아역사논총』 86, 2024 年).

¹⁵ “『清季中日韓關係史料』(清季中日韓關係史料)”, 3867, October 3, 1902, Letter from Minister Xu Tai Shen, newly appointed to Korea.

40th anniversary of Gojong's enthronement¹⁶. The celebration was scheduled for October 18 (corresponding to September 17 on the lunar calendar), with formal invitations extended on July 11 to various nations, requesting the dispatch of Ambassador to the event¹⁷.

Xu Tai Shen (許台身), the Chinese Minister Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in Seoul, engaged in consultations with the envoys of major powers stationed in Seoul, expressing concern regarding the response to Korea's request. For instance, on August 4, Xu Tai Shen communicated to the Emperor's office that Japan and Russia were in opposition to each other. Although he remained uncertain about the intentions of the Korean Imperial Government, he expressed his intention to select an appropriate envoy, because of its geographical proximity to Korea, could not be equated with Western countries and should not be treated similarly¹⁸.

Further, on August 22, Xu Tai Shen sent the letter to Tsungli Yamen (總理各國事務衙門), Chinese Office of Foreign Affairs, and he addressed the Chinese Office that foreign envoys discussed the matter of a sovereign letter for the enthronement celebration at the meeting in Seoul. He noted because Korean Imperial Government's desire to accept an ambassador for the ceremony, given the close friendship between China and the Korean Empire, it would be advantageous to dispatch a special envoy for the occasion. Additionally, considering the shared border between China and Korea, which facilitated increasing exchanges between merchants and citizens and numerous negotiations, he expressed the personal view that it would be beneficial if the "King of Korea (韓王)" maintained reverence and adhered to "old thoughts (旧思)." He further suggested that demonstrating the Chinese Imperial Court's "conciliatory will (懷柔之意)" would be advantageous¹⁹.

Xu Tai Shen refrained from addressing Gojong as the Emperor of Korea, opting instead to refer to him as the King. Further, the decision for China to be the sole nation dispatching an envoy for the enthronement celebration, while other countries exhibited hesitation, was intended to demonstrate a strong bilateral friendship and evoke sentiments of conciliation (懷柔) reminiscent of earlier times. By employing

¹⁶ 『承政院日記』高宗 39 年 2 月 10 日。

¹⁷ 『駐韓日本公使館記録』(Vo.18), 「韓帝御極 40 年称慶礼式祝賀大使特派要請」, July 11, 1902, Extraordinary Minister of State for External Affairs and Minister of the Imperial Household Affairs Yu Gi-Hwan to Minister Gonsuke Hayashi.

¹⁸ 『清季中日韓關係史料』, 3843, July 1, 1902, Letter from Minister Xu Tai Shen, Envoy to Korea.

¹⁹ 『清季中日韓關係史料』, 3846, July 19, 1902, Letter from Minister Xu Tai Shen, Envoy to Korea.

the term conciliation (懷柔), previously used in reference to “外夷” or “藩屬,”²⁰ Xu Tai Shen acknowledged the Korean Empire as an independent entity, yet simultaneously hinted at its recognition as a “vassal state” within the existing Chinese hierarchical order.

In November 1902, the Qing Dynasty resolved to send a sovereign letter of congratulations for the celebration ceremony, aligning with the actions of other nations²¹. As communicated by Prince Qing to Park Jaesoon, Korean envoy to the Qing Dynasty in Beijing, on March 18, 1903, the Qing Emperor’s sovereign letter was presented and dispatched to Xu Tai Shen²². However, the outbreak of smallpox in the Korean Empire necessitated the postponement of the enthronement celebration to April 30, 1903.

Additionally, when Prince Ying of the Korean Empire contracted smallpox around April 1903²³, the ceremony was further delayed. From this juncture, Xu Tai Shen’s commentary on the Korean Empire became increasingly critical. On May 10, he remarked on the low-level of Korean Empire politics, noting that other countries were subjecting them to criticism and ridicule²⁴. Moreover, the inconsistency in the decrees of the Korean Empire, which led to repeated postponements the ceremony, was harshly criticized as indicative of a lack of a coherent governmental system²⁵. Xu Tai Shen expressed astonishment at the Korean Imperial Government’s inability to conduct the ceremony despite the receipt of the Qing Emperor’s sovereign letter.

Initially, unlike other countries’ tepid response to the anniversary celebrations²⁶, Xu Tai Shen viewed the event positively, with the intention of dispatching a special envoy to strengthen Sino–Korean relations. Had the Korean Empire successfully hosted the ceremony, Xu Tai Shen’s perception of the Korean Empire might have improved; however, the cancellation of the ceremony resulted in the opposite outcome.

²⁰ Takashi Okamoto, *supra note*, 『中国の誕生』, p. 307.

²¹ “『清季中日韓關係史料』”, 3872, October 27, 1902, Letter from Minister Xu Tai Shen, Envoy to Korea.

²² 『韓國外交文書』, Guangxu Era 29 (1903), February 24, Inquiry from Prince Qing to Park Jaesoon.

²³ 『承政院日記』高宗 40 年 3 月 13 日。

²⁴ “『清季中日韓關係史料』”, 3923, April 14, 1903, Letter from Minister Xu Tai Shen, Envoy to Korea.

²⁵ “『清季中日韓關係史料』”, 3925, April 14, 1903, Letter from Minister Xu Tai Shen, Envoy to Korea.

²⁶ 『駐韓日本公使館記録』「本年ノ稱慶式舉行ニ關スル各國代表者ノ意見報告ノ件」, January 12, 1903, from Hagiwara to Minister Komura.

3. Japanese Seizure of Diplomatic Rights of the Korean Empire Under the Qing Dynasty

On May 24, 1904, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Komura (小村寿太郎) planned the Japanese Consul General in Tianjin, Ijūin Hikokichi (伊集院彦吉), become as Honorary Consul of the Korean Empire to safeguard Korean interests²⁷. Thus, Komura instructed Minister Hayashi (林権助) in Korea to ascertain the intentions of the Korean Imperial Government. Minister Hayashi responded that, although he was “inquiring into the intention of the Korean Imperial Government,” serving as Honorary Consul of Korea would not be benefit for Japanese foreign policies, but would solely aim to protect Korean interests in the Tianjin region, potentially causing numerous challenges for the Japanese Consul in executing his duties²⁸. Further, he indicated that the Korean legation in Beijing would soon be dismantled and concurred with the proposal of Uchida (内田康哉), Japanese Minister in Beijing, to request that the Japanese envoy be granted Korean diplomatic rights in the Qing Dynasty²⁹.

In essence, in May 1904, merely three months after the onset of the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs was deliberating on the policy of Japan assuming the diplomatic rights of the Korean Empire in the Qing Dynasty. Although the intentions of Gojong and the Korean Imperial Government on this matter remain unclear, on May 28, Minister Hayashi was instructed to negotiate with the Korean Imperial Government, asserting, “We believe it is highly appropriate for the Korean Imperial Government to request our consul to protect Korean interests in the Tianjin region”³⁰. The Japanese government unilaterally resolved that the Consul General of Japan would assume the consular functions of the Korean Empire in Qing Tianjin, a role previously fulfilled by the Korean Consul to Tianjin.

In the first place, what was the function of the Korean Consular in Tianjin at that time?

²⁷ 『日本外交文書』 (1904, Vol. 1), 480, May 24, Minister of Foreign Affairs Komura to Minister Hayashi in Korea (telegram).

²⁸ 『日本外交文書』, 1904, Vol. 1, 481, May 26, Minister Hayashi to Minister of Foreign Affairs Komura (telegram).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ 『日本外交文書』, 1904, Vol. 1, 482, May 28, Minister of Foreign Affairs Komura to Minister Hayashi in Korea (telegram).

On April 24, 1903, the Japanese settlement in Tianjin underwent expansion, resulting in the relocation of Korean Consulate in Tianjin to within the Japanese concession. Consequently, in May, discussions were held between Uchida, the Japanese Minister to the Qing Dynasty, and Park Jaesoon, the Korean Imperial Minister in the Qing Dynasty, regarding the management of the former site of Korean Consulate in Tianjin. The previous Korean Consul to Tianjin, where the Office of Commissioner for Commercial Affairs was situated, was originally a building that served as monks' quarters between Tianjin City (天津城) and Zizhulin (柴竹林). This structure was renovated in 1884, as proposed by Zhou Fu (周馥)³¹.

Until Sino-Japanese war, the Office of the Commissioner for Commercial Affairs functioned in order to maintain traditional Sino-Korean special relationship, was subsequently destroyed by the Japanese army during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900³². On April 21, 1902, Japanese merchant Yoichi Kuwada (桑田與一) leased a portion of the former Tianjin legation site, followed by Kiichiro Kaetsu (嘉悦喜一郎), who also leased a part of the site on September 15. By July 1903, Chinese nationals, including 姚鳳鳴, were residing on a part of the site, and another Chinese national, 嚴玉勝, had also constructed a new house there³³.

On April 30 and May 21, 1903, Minister Uchida proposed the construction of a new consulate for the Korean Empire on a larger site in a strategically advantageous location along the riverbank. This proposal was intended as compensation for the loss of the Office of Commissioner for Commercial Affairs in Tianjin³⁴. However, following consultations with Ijūin, the Consul General of Japan in Tianjin, Park

³¹ 『天津談草』、壬午七月十四日、北洋衙門談草—周玉山同在座, p. 92. 『天津談草』 is in the collection of the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, Seoul National University, 奎古 4206-17.

³² 『駐清來去案』、「日使函」, May 21, 1903, Letter from Japanese Envoy to the Qing Dynasty Kosai Uchida to Park Jaesoon, 064. 『駐清來去案』 is in the collection of the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, , Seoul National University, 奎 18063-v.1-2.

³³ 『天津駐在韓國公館借租合同』, 0002 and 0005. 『天津駐在韓國公館借租合同』 is in the collection of the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, Seoul National University, 奎 26550. 『駐清來去案』、「日本駐津總領事復函」, July 13, 1903; Letter from Japanese Envoy to the Qing Dynasty Kosai Uchida to Park Jaesoon, 057-058.

³⁴ 『駐清來去案』、「日使復函」, April 30, 1903, 065. Ibid., Letter from Japanese Envoy to the Qing Dynasty Kosai Uchida to Park Jaesoon. 「日使函」, May 21, 1903, From Japanese Envoy to the Qing Dynasty Kosai Uchida to Park Jaesoon, 064.

Jaesoon informed the Japanese government on June 25 that the land in Tianjin is already unnecessary and he reconsider the sale³⁵. The reason why he changed idea would be connected to Korean Imperial's acquisition of land for a new legation within the Russian concession in Tianjin in the same year.

In a report to Uijeongbu (議政府) dated August 6, 1903, Park Jaesoon indicated that the financial requirement for purchasing land in the Russian concession in Tianjin for this legation (10,479 ryo [兩] 8 sen [錢] in silver) exceeded the cost of the previous legation building paid by Japan (5709 ryo [兩] 7 sen [錢]) by over 5000 ryo (兩), and he requested that the amount of 5,000 ryo (兩) be provided³⁶. The Korean Imperial government completed the purchase of the land in the Russian concession in Tianjin on March 28, 1903, for 10,479 ryo (兩) and 8 sen (錢) in silver. It is plausible that the former site of the Office of the Commissioner for Commercial Affairs in Tianjin was sold to allocate funds for new land acquisition in Tianjin³⁷. Consequently, in July 1903, the Office of Commissioner for Commercial Affairs in Tianjin, which could be regarded as a symbol of traditional Sino-Korean special relations under the Chinese order, ceased to exist both in name and in reality.

Consequently, the functions of the Office of the Commissioner for Commercial Affairs in Tianjin were terminated, and the Japanese government commenced assuming the consular responsibilities of the Korean Empire in Tianjin after May 1904. By July 10, the Korean Imperial Government reportedly consented to the Japanese Consul General in Tianjin also serving as the Korean Consul, thereby safeguarding the rights of Koreans, and issued an apology. On July 19, Min Youngchol (閔泳喆), the special envoy and plenipotentiary minister appointed on January 25, 1904, to succeed Park Jaesoon, consulted with Consul General Ijūin and informed the Qing government of this development³⁸.

Subsequently, on July 26, 1904, the Consul General of Japan assumed the consular functions of the Korean Empire in Tianjin³⁹. Minister Min Youngchol

³⁵ 『駐清来去案』, 「函日本駐津総領事」, June 25, 1903, From Park Jaesoon to the Japanese Consul General, 059.

³⁶ 『駐清来去案』, Report 15, August 6, 1903, Letter from Park Jaesoon to Lee Do-jae, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs at Uijeongbu, 072.

³⁷ 『駐清来去案』 「大俄国欽命駐箭天津領事府領事官来為給契據事」, No date, No address, 046.

³⁸ 『駐韓日本公使館記録』 (Vol. 22), 「在天津帝国総領事をして天津地方に於ける韓国の利益を保護せしむる件」, Appendix, July 31, 1904, From Japanese Envoy to the Qing Dynasty Kosai Uchida to Foreign Minister Jutaro Komura.

³⁹ 『駐韓日本公使館記録』 Vol. 22, 「在天津帝国総領事をして天津地方に於ける韓国の利益を保護せしむる件」, Appendix Annex 丁, July 26, 1904, Letter from Kosai

dispatched a letter to Prince Qing, notifying him that the Korean Imperial Government and the Japanese Government had agreed that the Japanese Consul General in Tianjin would protect the interests of Korean merchants in Tianjin for a certain period⁴⁰. On July 29, the Qing Dynasty's Ministry of Foreign Affairs accepted this arrangement without objection⁴¹.

Japan's advantageous position in the Russo-Japanese War, which commenced in February 1904, facilitated the rapid assumption of Korean consular responsibilities in Tianjin within merely two months of the Japanese government's policy proposal. This transition occurred without significant resistance from either the Korean Empire or the Qing Dynasty. Notably, the Qing Dynasty had already sanctioned Japan's protection of Korean interests in Tianjin by July 1904, a full year prior to the conclusion of the Second Japan-Korea Agreement.

Subsequently, in an effort to reduce expenses, the Japanese government swiftly assumed control of overseas diplomatic missions, which it regarded as Gojong's "vanity project (虚栄政策)" and "deadweight (無用之長物)"⁴². In November 1904, contravening the Imperial Declaration on the Abolition of the Korean-Russian Treaty (dated May 18, 1904), Minister Min Youngchol communicated the demise of the Crown Princess of the Korean Empire to the Russian Minister to the Qing Dynasty. This action precipitated an order for his return to China on November 25, leading to the suspension of the Korean legation's functions in Beijing⁴³.

The aforementioned events clearly indicate that the Qing Dynasty had already acquiesced to Japan's appropriation of the Korean Empire's diplomatic rights in the Qing Dynasty by November 1904, over a year before the Second Japan-Korea

Uchida, Minister Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Min Youngchol, Minister Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Korea.

⁴⁰ 『駐韓日本公使館記録』 Vol. 22, 「在天津帝国総領事をして天津地方に於ける韓国の利益を保護せしむる件」, Appendix Annex 乙, Inquiry from Minister Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Korea, Min Youngchol, to 欽命全權大臣便宜行事軍機大臣総理外務部事務和碩慶親王宛照会.

⁴¹ 『駐韓日本公使館記録』, 「在天津帝国総領事をして天津地方に於ける韓国の利益を保護せしむる件」, Appendix Annex 己, June 16, From Wu Ting-Fang, Qu Hongji, and 那桐聯芳 of the Foreign Affairs Department, to Kosai Uchida.

⁴² 『日本外交文書』, 1904, Vol. 1, 483, June 9, Minister Hayashi to Minister of Foreign Affairs Komura.

⁴³ 『日本外交文書』, 1904, Vol. 1, 485, August 11, From Envoy to the Qing Dynasty Uchida to Minister of Foreign Affairs Komura (telegram), and 489, November 27, From Envoy to the Qing Dynasty Uchida to Minister of Foreign Affairs Komura (telegram).

Agreement, which formally transferred the diplomatic rights of the Korean Empire.

Conclusion

In September 1905, the Treaty of Portsmouth facilitated Japan's acquisition of Russian consent to oversee the Korean Empire, marking the culmination of Japan's efforts to secure approval from major powers. This development compelled the Korean Empire to sign the Second Japan–Korea Convention in November, thereby depriving its diplomatic rights and becoming a protectorate. Notably, the Qing Dynasty, although not classified among the great powers, had seemingly acquiesced to Japan's appropriation of the Korean Empire's diplomatic rights a year prior to the Second Japan–Korea . This acquiescence appears to stem from the Qing Dynasty's disillusionment with the Korean Empire's independence, particularly following the unsuccessful commemoration of the 40th anniversary of Emperor Gojong's enthronement.

In this context, it is pertinent to highlight that, upon the conclusion of the Second Japan–Korea Convention, which primarily entailed the transfer of diplomatic rights, the Qing Minister to Japan remarked, “The domestic and diplomatic affairs of Korea were returned to Japan in equal measure; Japan already possessed Korea, and only the empty title of the Korean Emperor remained”⁴⁴. For the Qing Dynasty, Japan's seizure of the Korean Empire's diplomatic rights as early as November 1904 rendered the 1905 Second Japan–Korea Agreement tantamount to a de facto forfeiture of the Korean Empire's diplomatic and domestic affairs.

⁴⁴ “『清季中日韓關係史料』”, 4248, November 10, 1905, Letter from Minister 楊 Resident in Japan.