

TRANSNATIONAL INSTITUTION BUILDING AND TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITIES IN EAST ASIA

www.area-ruhr.de

JIHOON CHUN

QING(清)-CHOSŎN(朝鮮) RELATIONS DURING THE PERIOD 1882-1895 AS SEEN THROUGH THE LENS OF 'PUBLIC LAW OF ALL NATIONS (萬國公法¹)' AND THE COLLAPSE OF INTERPOLITY ORDER OF 'SERVING THE GREAT'

Objective of Research

Having so far been largely described as 'suzerain-vassal'(宗主-藩屬) or 'tributary relations'(朝貢關係, Image 2) within the 'Chinese world order', Qing-Chosŏn bilateral power relations need to be reexamined in view of the eventual eclipse of the ideological order of 'serving the great, caring for the small'(事大字小) in an imperial structure(Image 3) upon a newly imposed Westphalian system in the late nineteenth century. Details of how both dynasties' ruling elites perceived one another struggling to deal with the ambivalence where the hitherto existing regional order and European international system competed, clashed, or fused may fill a significant gap in the current literature.

Methods

This research project, through archival and bibliographic sources, utilizes methodologies of comparative historical analysis, macroconfigurational and partly case-based, to consider causal configurations and compare policy-making processes centered around high officials of the two polities. In sequencing key events during the period, the question of 'under which conditions did the suzerain-dependency relations or the adaptation to the new interstate system, respectively, bolster or weaken either polity' will be addressed. Here a critical question is not whether but when, to whom, and how. Selected keywords pertaining to the two opposing orders will be traced to help search across documents for text analysis.

Hypotheses

By the 1880s, Chosŏn had no proper military force of its own and thus had to rely on the Qing forces for its internal and external security. John King Fairbank observed that the 'non-Chinese' tribesmen came increasingly to constitute the military component of government of the great continental "Empire of East Asia"², which seems to apply as well to Chosŏn-Qing relations. The Qing also took over foreign affairs allegedly on Chosŏn's behalf until 1894.³ The Qing and Chosŏn might together have formed an (unofficial) (federal) empire, particularly for 'mutual security guarantee and combined diplomatic representation.'(Image 5)

Aim

The previous understanding spotlighting either on domination/subordination or on performative and economic aspects might not capture the whole picture or miss other crucial aspects. Chosŏn [(大)朝鮮(國)]-Qing[(大)清(帝)(國)] sharing the same era name[年號] and de-facto delegation of the former's military and foreign affairs functions to the latter indicate more than that. Closely detecting tangible remnants of the millennia-old 'serving the great', this research reinterprets Chosŏn-Qing power relations by linking the traditional order's downfall with the forced introduction of European interstate system to illuminate their symbiosis as penetrated by the imperialist 'divide and conquer' scheme to sever the political ties between them.



Image 1: 萬國公法(1864) (國立中央圖書館(National Library of Korea))



Image 3: 皇清職貢圖(1763) 卷一 朝鮮國夷官 朝鮮國官婦 (國立故宮博物院)
Chosŏn comes first among all other tributaries in this Qing imperial illustrations of tributaries.



Image 5: 通商約章類纂(1886) 大清屬高麗國旗 (Seoul National University Kyujanggak(奎章閣) Institute for Korean Studies) Here Qing ruling elites, including Li Hongzhang (李鴻章), unmistakably denoted '高麗'(朝鮮) as a Qing dependency ('屬').



Image 2: 萬國來朝圖(1761) (北京古宮博物院)
An envoy from Chosŏn is visible in the mid-center of this picture illustrating 'myriad polities(萬國) coming to the Court to pay tributes(來朝).'



Image 4: 大日本大勝利分捕品縱覽之圖(1894) (Sino-Japanese War Prints in the British Library)
Note that a prototype flag of Chosŏn with the yin-yang(陰陽) symbol and the eight trigrams(八卦) in it appears in the mid-center, below the dragon flag, of this picture.

¹ (Image 1) This is the title of W. A. P. Martin's Chinese translation of Henry Wheaton's *Elements of International Law* (1863). Martin visited *Zongli Yamen* (總理衙門) in September 1863 with a first version of his translation of it. Since this visit, there emerged an unprecedented era of clashes between Western and East Asian civilizations – conflicts of two incompatible notions of interpolity order.

² Fairbank, John King. "A Preliminary Framework" in *The Chinese World Order*, ed. John K. Fairbank, Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1968), p. 3.

³ In July 1894 a group of Japanese troops occupied the Chosŏn royal palace(甲午變亂) and soon thereafter the Qing forces clashed with the Japanese over Chosŏn in the so-called 'Sino-Japanese War(1894-1895)(甲午戰役, Image 4).

Subtheme: Transcultural Identities and Institutions: the Universal and the Local