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## Invoking the China-Centered Tributary Narrative

The *Shenbao*'s Reproduction of the Historical, Jizi-Related Official  
View of Korea

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### 【Abstract】

This study broadens the scope of scholarly attention to the *Shenbao* by placing the newspaper in the cross-national context

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of China–Korea relations and examining its representation of Korea in the late nineteenth century when Qing China and Chosŏn Korea were bound by the tribute system. It first focuses on the *Shenbao*'s criticism of Confucian Korea and then turns to its Confucianism-derived emphasis on Korea as China's loyal tributary country. Next, it investigates that the newspaper's tributary view of Korea was centered on Jizi and was a reproduction of the historical Chinese view of Korea. Finally, the study analyzes the seemingly discrepant attitudes of the *Shenbao* regarding its criticism of Confucian Korea and its praise of tributary Korea by examining how the Confucian and tributary logics were intertwined with each other and used in the newspaper's defense of China's non-tributary, and thus non-Confucian, Korean policy.

**Key words:** *Shenbao*, Qing, Chosŏn, tributary country, Jizi, Confucianism

## 1. Introduction

In 1920, Lu Xun, one of the greatest writers of modern China who fought against the population's deeply rooted feudalistic mindset, published his Chinese translation of the play written by the Japanese playwright Mushanokoji Saneatsu in the Chinese literary magazine *Xin qingnian* (*New Youth*). In the preface of the translation, he expressed a deep concern about the widespread Sino-centric antagonism towards foreign countries among the

Chinese people. He stated that this attitude was evident in their view of Korea. According to him, they still had an outdated and biased perception of Korea as China's tributary country, even though the Sino-Korean tributary relationship, as well as the tribute system itself, had ended decades ago in the aftermath of China's defeat by Japan in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95. He confessed that this anachronistic Chinese view of Korea terrified him (鲁迅 1920, pp. 65–67).

As indicated by Lu Xun, the perception of Korea as a tributary country of China continued into the early twentieth century. In the 1910s and 1920s, Chinese politicians and intellectuals invoked this seemingly obsolete attitude in their conceptualization of the post-tributary East Asian world order. Most importantly, Sun Yat-sen, a symbol of the anti-Qing revolution and nationalism during the Republican era (1912–1949), grasped pan-Asianism based on the age-old tributary ideas. Sun Yat-sen yearned for a revival of the China-centered tributary world order in East Asia that would place China into a leadership position again, with its neighbors under its tributary umbrella (see 孫逸仙 1973, pp. 2:763–771).

The persistence of the tributary view of Korea in the Republican era reflects its influence on the Chinese imagination of Korea. In fact, this view was widely disseminated in late Qing Chinese society before the Sino-Japanese War period when Chosŏn Korea was Qing China's key tributary country. The *Shenbao* (申報; *Shanghai Newspaper*) played an important role in the spread of this view among the Chinese public. The newspaper's tributary representation of Korea was evident from its early years in the 1870s, when the Sino-Korean

tributary relationship was solid. However, it continued even after the nature of their tributary relationship underwent a fundamental change, as the Qing transformed its long-standing tributary *laissez-faire* policy into an aggressive interventionist policy from the beginning of the 1880s. The *Shenbao*'s persistent representation of Korea in the old-fashioned tributary mode seemed contradictory to its firm support of Western-style nation-building and the modernization of China.

The *Shenbao*, founded in Shanghai in 1872, was the most widely read and influential Chinese-language daily newspaper in the late nineteenth century. As one of the longest-running Chinese newspapers, published for 78 years until 1949, it reported diverse political, diplomatic, and social issues together with its own opinions, and can thus be regarded as an encyclopedia of modern Chinese history (Vinci 2016, p. 119). However, as Natascha Vittinghoff (2002; 2004) points out, the *Shenbao* had not received the attention it deserved in the history of Chinese journalism until recently. The century-long disregard of the *Shenbao*, as well as other treaty-port newspapers, began with Liang Qichao at the turn of the twentieth century. His negative view of them had led the scholarship of Chinese newspapers to be devoted to the twentieth century when Liang Qichao was active in Chinese journalism. Fortunately, recent scholarly works on the *Shenbao* have focused on the late nineteenth century and shed light on its significance as a leading modern newspaper that played an important role in shaping Chinese public opinion and further developing modern journalism in China (see, for example, Wagner 2018; 2020). By placing the *Shenbao* in the cross-national context of

China-Korea relations, this study broadens the scope of scholarly attention and examines the newspaper's view and representation of Korea between its start in 1872 and the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95.

This study first focuses on the *Shenbao*'s criticism of Confucianism in Korea as detrimental to the country's modern nation-building. Next, it turns to the newspaper's emphasis on Korea as China's devoted tribute-paying country bound by Confucian bonds, which was a reproduction of the official Chinese view of Korea for a long time. Subsequently, it searches for logical connections between the seemingly discrepant criticism of Confucian Korea and praise of tributary Korea, as the Sino-Korean tributary relationship was assumed to be based on Confucian principles. It ends with an investigation of how the *Shenbao* tried to use the tributary narrative to defend China's non-tributary pursuit of practical gains from Korea.

## 2. Criticizing Confucian Korea

As evidenced in its inaugural issue of April 30, 1872, one of the *Shenbao*'s primary goals was to enlighten the Chinese people by keeping them abreast of current world affairs (see *Shenbao*, April 30, 1872).<sup>1)</sup> The newspaper's goal of broadening people's intellectual horizon and increasing their knowledge about the

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1) Unless otherwise noted, the citations from the *Shenbao* are from the newspaper's first page.

rapidly changing world was closely linked to the grander goal of nation-building, which was making China rich and powerful. The *Shenbao* firmly advocated the Western path of nation-building that valued commerce and industry, as seen in an 1876 editorial, “On Gaoli’s Situation”:

In this world, there are many poor, but only few rich. This is not only the case of people, but also countries. In the West, England, the United States, and France are rich and powerful. ... In Asia, Gaoli [Chosŏn Korea], Annam [Vietnam], Ryukyu, and so on, are poor and weak. From this, one can note that countries that value commerce and industry can become richer and stronger. ... In countries that value Confucian teaching, its harmful influence leads these countries to become poor and weak. ... Gaoli is very poor and weak. ... What Gaoli values is nothing but Confucian teaching. ... Therefore, Gaoli is continuously becoming poorer and weaker (*Shenbao*, March 29, 1876).

This editorial regards the leading Western powers of England, the United States, and France as China’s nation-building models, and advocates commerce and industry. In contrast, it devalues Confucian teaching as harmful, leading a country to extreme poverty and weakness, as in the case of Qing China’s major tributary countries of Chosŏn Korea, Vietnam, and Ryukyu.

Similar to the above editorial, most of the *Shenbao*’s contents regarding Korea was negative, considering its reverence for Confucian teaching as harmful to the country’s nation-building (see *Shenbao*, February 16, 1876). Even a few editorials that spoke positively of the Korean Confucian tradition described Confucianism in Korea

as losing contemporary relevance. For instance, while praising the advancement of Confucianism-based Korean civilization and the Korean people's reverence for Confucian civility, these positive values were illustrated as virtues of the bygone past and as reminiscent of the glory of Chinese civilization and its influence on Korea in the past, rather than having contemporary relevance. These *Shenbao* pieces emphasized the hierarchical relationship between China and Korea and set forth the idea that Korea should continue to remain loyal to China (see *Shenbao*, March 14, 1874; March 1, 1876; August 18, 1876).

The *Shenbao*'s negative view of the Qing's key tributary countries and their adherence to Confucianism seems contradictory to its relentless emphasis on the importance of the tributary relationship between Qing China and its tributary countries, represented mostly by Chosŏn Korea. Similarly, the *Shenbao* hardly mentioned anything about the closeness between China and Korea based on Confucianism, which is odd given that the newspaper strongly advocated the Sino-Korean tributary tie, which was assumed to be based on Confucian principles.

### 3. Emphasizing Jizi-Related Tributary Korea

Until the Sino-Japanese War period, the *Shenbao* strongly emphasized the Sino-Korean tributary tie and introduced Korea as China's loyal tributary country. It was eager to stress that kingdoms in the Korean peninsula were China's tribute-paying countries and that the current Chosŏn Korea was Qing China's

devoted tributary country. Since its establishment in 1872, the newspaper paid keen attention to East Asia's changing geopolitics. In particular, it featured numerous news articles about Meiji Japan, which was emerging as a new leading power in the region, threatening the Qing's long-term hegemony, especially in the Korean peninsula. From the newspaper's launch to the Sino-Japanese War, the high percentage of news about Japan and Korea is an evidence of its keen attention to the rapid geopolitical change in East Asia. News about Japan accounted for 80 percent of its total international news, of which 26 percent consisted of China's foreign relations with Japan and Korea (郑翔贵 2003, p. 30).

At the time, the *Shenbao* published many editorials and other articles on major incidents in Korea involving China and Japan, like the 1882 Soldiers' Riot, the 1884 anti-Qing palace coup, and the Sino-Japanese War. In covering these incidents, the newspaper highlighted the special, tributary tie between China and Korea. This characteristic was particularly evident in the editorial space. While non-editorial pieces were often based on secondhand information from Western or Japanese language sources, or from other Chinese newspapers, without adding the *Shenbao*'s own opinions,<sup>2)</sup> editorials consisted of the newspaper's own opinions.

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2) The tendency of relying heavily on secondhand information was not limited only to the *Shenbao*, but was prevalent among Chinese-language newspapers in the late nineteenth century. In general, Chinese newspapers were small and underfunded compared to the leading Western and Japanese newspapers, and direct access to the information source was highly limited in China. This situation can be applied to the *Shenbao*'s Korea-related news gathering as well, where the original sources of the news used to be foreign newspapers. Translations from Japanese newspapers prevailed, and Western



Therefore, it is crucial to pay attention to editorials when examining the *Shenbao*'s view, attitude, and positioning on China-related Korean affairs and Korea itself.

A *Shenbao* editorial published in its inaugural year of 1872 succinctly presents the newspaper's conventional tributary representation of Korea, in which Korea was introduced as follows: "Gaoli [Koryŏ in Korean] is, namely, the country of Chaoxian [Chosŏn in Korean]. The country was a fief bestowed on the Yin dynasty's virtuous gentleman, Jizi [箕子; Kija in Korean]" (*Shenbao*, September 7, 1872). This Jizi-related introduction of Korea was a reproduction of the conventional representation of Korea in numerous Chinese historical documents. Although there have been different opinions on whether Jizi was a historical figure, whether he moved eastward from China, or whether he was enfeoffed with the territory, many Chinese documents shared the view that he was a historical figure, fled eastward supposedly to the Korean peninsula area after the fall of the Yin dynasty, and ruled Old Chosŏn approximately in the twelfth-century BCE.

However, these claims remain controversial. In addition, the emphasis on Jizi in Chinese historical records often conflicts with the Korean view that emphasized the importance of Tan'gun instead of Jizi in the history of Old Chosŏn, regarding Tan'gun

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networks provided information that was fast as well as highly valuable and reliable. The rare accounts by Chinese eyewitnesses or even rarer accounts directly based on Korean sources only delivered limited and vague reports, and were often inaccurate. News sources provided by foreigners traveling in Korea and Korean travelers abroad were also usually vague and lacked in-depth information on the exact circumstances of events in Korea (Kim 1999, pp. 55–57).

as the starting point of Korean history as he was the alleged founder of Old Chosŏn, the first Korean kingdom in history. Korean history's emphasis on Tan'gun sets the territory's origin more than a millennium from the Jizi era.<sup>3)</sup>

As indicated in the above 1872 editorial, from its early years the *Shenbao* used to confine Korean history within the Jizi narrative by claiming that Chosŏn Korea was originally a territory granted to Jizi as a fief. In addition, the newspaper conventionally called Korea Gaoli (K: Koryŏ), a dynasty in the Korean peninsula before Chosŏn. The newspaper tended to call Korea Gaoli for decades, although it was aware that many Koreans regarded this as indicative of the *Shenbao*'s disregard for Korea and the current Chosŏn dynasty (see *Shenbao*, April 15, 1893).

Another editorial, published in 1874, on the tumultuous geopolitical change surrounding Korea provides detailed observations of Korean history in relation to China, using the tributary narrative:

Gaoli is the territory of Old Chosŏn. Since Jizi was granted as a fief, it has been China's vassal state of eastern barbarians. It is a small island over the sea.<sup>4)</sup> The territory is not spacious, equivalent only to the size of two or three provinces in China. During the Sui and Tang dynasties, it was quite unrestrained. Even though Emperor Yangdi of Sui and Emperor Taizong of Tang campaigned against it, it was not obedient. However, it gradually weakened and became China's dependency. Our Qing dynasty has risen in Shenyang and is

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3) For the Korean representations of Jizi and Tan'gun, refer to Schmid 2002, pp. 175–180.

4) The editorial's introduction of Korea as an island is incorrect, as Korea is not an island country.

adjacent to Gaoli. Gaoli's king paid tribute to us before other countries did, so our dynasty has treated Gaoli with extra courtesy. Gaoli pays tribute to our capital every year. Compared to Annam and Miandian [Myanmar], it never betrayed us. Compared to Ryukyu and Xianluo [Thailand], it is more loyal to us. ... The number of Gaoli's tribute-paying mission participants last winter exceeded 100. ... Gaoli should revere our dynasty and form a close relationship with its neighbors. Otherwise, it will be in danger (*Shenbao*, March 14, 1874).

This editorial provides a detailed account of Korea's tributary relationship with China. Similar to the above 1872 and many other editorials, it also uses the Jizi narrative and limits the history of Sino-Korean relations from a tributary standpoint. It focuses on Korea's submission to China and emphasizes the former's exceptional loyalty to the latter under the tribute system. In the 1870s, the *Shenbao* was eager to describe Korea as Jizi's territory as well as China's long-standing loyal tributary country. Sometimes the newspaper even tried to include pre-Jizi Korean history into a part of Chinese history, claiming that before the enfeoffment of the territory to Jizi, the territory had been ceded to the legendary Emperor Shun (see, for example, *Shenbao*, December 23, 1878). However, this claim remains unverifiable.

#### 4. Reproducing the Official Chinese View of Korea

In fact, the *Shenbao*'s tributary representation of Korea was largely a reproduction of the official Chinese view of Korea

inherited from China's early dynasties, which was also prevalent in the Qing period. For example, this view was notable in the Qing court's official compilation, *HuangQing zhigong tu* (*Qing Imperial Illustrations of Tributary Peoples*).

*HuangQing zhigong tu*, originally dated 1751, is one of the most important compilations that provide a glimpse of the Qing court's view of the outside world. It was composed of written texts and illustrations on various peoples from frontier areas and foreign countries who paid tributes to the Qing court. In this compilation, the Korea section, out of hundreds of sections, was placed first, demonstrating its importance in the tribute system.<sup>5)</sup> Korea appeared first in many other official compilations published in the pre-Qing and Qing periods.

The Korea section of *HuangQing zhigong tu* begins with a brief introduction to Korea's location, stating that the territory, originally beyond the reach of China, was enfeoffed to Jizi by the Zhou dynasty. Next, the Korean kingdoms' historical submission to China is noted, including Chosŏn's submission to Ming China.

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5) James Hevia (1995, p. 50) explains the exceptional status of Chosŏn Korea in the Qing-centered tribute system as follows: "The embassies of the Korean king, one of the first lords to submit to the Manchus, sometimes participated in rites at Shenyang, the first capital of the Qing, as well as in Peking. Korea also stands out because it sent embassies annually. These unique features help to account for the fact that Korea emerges in Qing court records as the loyal domain par excellence. For example, in the *Comprehensive Rites*, Korea appears first among other domains, and imperial envoys dispatched to the Korean court are always of a higher rank. In a section that deals with dispatching an imperial instruction to the court of a lesser lord, Korea is used as the example of a correct reception. Special reference is also made to Korean emissaries in Audience and Feasting rites."

Finally, it states that when the Qing dynasty started, Emperor Chongde campaigned Chosŏn and the Chosŏn king, Injo, surrendered to him, following which Chosŏn has become a loyal tributary country (*HuangQing zhigong tu*, p. 1:7).

This kind of Jizi-related tributary view of Korea was compiled from ancient times. For example, in *HouHan shu* (*Book of the Later Han*), compiled by Fan Ye in the fifth century and covering the history of the Later Han dynasty, Old Chosŏn was introduced as a territory ruled by Jizi. The compiler of *HouHan shu* stated that Jizi took refuge in Old Chosŏn after the collapse of the Yin dynasty (范曄 1927, pp. 29:115:7–12).

Although Jizi's story is highly controversial, its reproduction continued. *Song shi* (*History of the Song Dynasty*), the official history of the Song dynasty compiled in the fourteenth century, is another record illustrating ancient Korean history. *Song shi* took the history of Korea's subordination to China far back to the past, claiming that the territory of Korea belonged to China even before it came under Jizi's rule during the Zhou dynasty. Its emphasis was on Korea as a tributary country of China. According to its narration, Korea kept paying tribute to China, but at times the country created troubles. Emperor Yangdi of Sui and Emperor Taizong of Tang's campaigns were not successful. However, it later surrendered to the Tang dynasty, and the territory became a part of China. After that, *Song shi* moved to the Koryŏ period and enumerated the occasions of Koryŏ's paying tribute to China (脱脱 1937, pp. 487:1–2).

This kind of China-centered tributary representation of Korea continued into the Qing period as well, as evidenced, for instance, in *Ming shi* (*History of the Ming Dynasty*). As the Qing dynasty's official view of the history of the Ming dynasty, *Ming shi* was compiled through the Kangxi era and the early Qianlong era, not long before the compilation of the aforementioned *HuangQing zhigong tu* in the eighteenth century. Not surprisingly, the first sentence of *Ming shi*'s Korea section is that Chosŏn is a country originally enfeoffed to Jizi (張廷玉 1974, p. 27:320:8279). As such, this biased, outdated, and flawed introduction of Korea was relentlessly produced as the Chinese dynasties' official view of Korea.<sup>6)</sup> The same tributary representation of Korea was also eagerly reproduced at a popular level, as seen in the *Shenbao* in the 1870s.

## 5. Tributary Narrative in the Service of Non-Tributary Needs

As its tributary suzerainty over Korea was threatened by Japan

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6) The Chosŏn court was seriously worried that some official publications of the Qing kept reproducing incorrect information and misrepresenting Chosŏn Korea. Requesting the Qing to correct them was a recurring distress for the Chosŏn court, since the official publications tended not to promptly correct their errors and revise them. Even when the Chosŏn court's request was accepted, it took decades before the revision was actually carried out either in a revised edition of the same publication or in other official publications printed later on (see 조영록 2002, p. 210; 국사편찬위원회 1986, p. 458).

and the Western powers, the Qing made a fundamental transformation in its Korean policy from a long-standing non-interventionist policy, which was based on the tributary principle of harmony between the so-called suzerain and vassal states, into a policy of direct intervention, driven by expansionist and even imperialist motives not to lose its centuries-long hegemony over Korea. The interventionist policy began to be implemented in Korea during incidents like the Soldiers' Riot in 1882 and the anti-Qing coup in 1884, and it lasted until the Sino-Japanese War in 1894-95.

At Chosŏn's request, the Qing sent thousands of troops to Korea to quell the soldiers' riot, which targeted corrupt government officials and Japanese diplomatic and military representatives in Korea. After the riot was over, the Chinese troops stayed in Korea and played a crucial role in suppressing the 1884 palace coup staged by anti-Qing pro-Japanese radical young officials. With the military actions of Chinese troops in 1882 and 1884, China's interventionism in Korea's domestic and foreign affairs strengthened, culminating in the dispatch of Yuan Shikai to Korea as a *de facto* viceroy in 1885. Over a decade before China's defeat by Japan in the Sino-Japanese War, Yuan Shikai tried to control Korea on behalf of China under the guidance of Li Hongzhang and, ultimately, the Qing court.<sup>7)</sup>

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7) The Qing court bestowed on Li Hongzhang, the Superintendent of Trade for the Northern Ports, plenary power in the Qing's Korean policy and began to intervene directly in Korea's domestic and foreign affairs. Until then, there had actually been no designated government office that assumed full charge of producing and executing Korean policy. The Board of Rites, the traditional government organ that had dealt with Korean affairs, was basically fulfilling ceremonial activities regarding

In the 1880s and early 1890s, the *Shenbao* published many editorials and non-editorial pieces to report incidents in Korea in which China and Japan were deeply involved. In the *Shenbao*'s coverage of the incidents, it is noteworthy that although China dropped its tributary non-interventionism and instead executed the non-tributary interventionist policy, the newspaper kept using the age-old tributary narrative and relentlessly portrayed Korea as China's tributary country, just as it did in the 1870s. This characteristic was particularly evident in the editorials.

The *Shenbao*'s detailed reports with editorial opinions on the 1882 Soldiers' Riot, which occurred in late July and lasted for more than a month, appeared from early August. Through a series of editorials over mid-August, it tried to justify Chinese military actions using the Confucian, tributary idea of "familism." That is, if a son causes trouble outside the home and the outsider

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Chosŏn's paying tribute. Even though the newly-launched Zongli yamen, or the Office for the Management of the Business of All Foreign Countries, played a role in Korean affairs, its role was rather improvident and lacked concrete and consistent long-term plans. This was inevitable given that the Zongli yamen was established to deal with Western powers and was preoccupied with troubles with the West, which was of more immediate and graver concern to the Qing. During the few years before the line of Li Hongzhang and Yuan Shikai was in charge of the Qing's Korean policy over the 1880s and early 1890s, the Chinese legation in Japan was active in producing Korean policy in accordance with Li Hongzhang's diplomatic direction. A policy paper written in 1880 by Huang Zunxian, a counselor to He Ruzhang, the first Chinese minister to Japan, represented the early direction of Li Hongzhang's Korean policy. The paper, entitled *Chaoxian celue* (*Strategies for Chosŏn*), was handed over to a top-ranking Korean official visiting Japan and was also presented to the Korean king.



is attacking the son, the father cannot watch idly. Therefore, China could not stay idle, and sent troops to Korea (see, for example, *Shenbao*, August 17, 1882).<sup>8)</sup>

M. Frederick Nelson (1945) characterized this idea of familism in Confucian morality by comparing political relations with personal relations. In China, a ruler was described as a patriarchal figure to his ministers and subjects, and was regarded as a father to them. This personalized relationship was extended to China's foreign relations, making a Chinese sovereign a father to the lesser lord of a foreign state. Ming-Chosŏn and Qing-Chosŏn formed a father-son relationship based on this Confucian analogy. The tribute system, in particular Chosŏn's paying tribute to the Qing, crucially contributed to the maintenance of this relationship.

In familism, China's tributary superiority over Korea is assumed to be based on its Confucian benevolence as the father. According to the principle of the Confucian father-son relationship, a father loosens his control over his son as the son grows up. At the same time, the father can still be concerned with the son's welfare and take actions to protect him during crisis. In addition, although he lives independently, the son is expected to show respect towards his father, which manifests in tributary rituals (see Kim 1999, pp. 29–30).

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8) The outsider means Japan. In the early stage of the riot, the rioters attacked the Japanese legation in Seoul. Here, the *Shenbao* was concerned with Japan's military retaliation, which would dramatically increase Japan's military presence in Korea, and thus supported China's intervention to prevent it.

The father-son relationship between China and Korea continued until the latter part of the nineteenth century. However, the relationship was actually forsaken as the Qing newly adopted the interventionist Korean policy from the beginning of the 1880s. However, the *Shenbao*, as seen in the above Soldiers' Riot case, kept using the Confucian tributary narrative to justify China's military actions in the Korean peninsula. Such actions were driven by non-tributary motives to take advantage of the unrest in Korea as a good opportunity to tighten China's control over Korea, rather than driven by benevolence to help the so-called son in his crisis.

The *Shenbao*'s reliance on tributary logic in its coverage of non-tributary Chinese moves in Korea was also visible on other occasions. For example, China's military involvement in suppressing the 1884 coup in Seoul and the dispatch of Yuan Shikai to Korea in 1885 were interpreted as evidence of China's fatherly benevolence towards Korea.<sup>9)</sup> The newspaper's use of Confucianism-based tributary logic seems quite discrepant with

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9) The *Shenbao* supported China's involvement in the suppression of the 1884 coup as China's obligation to its tributary country and also as a manifestation of fatherly benevolence of taking care of the son. This tributary and familistic justification was followed by the assertion that Korea should remain loyal to China as the former was heavily indebted to the latter. Yuan Shikai's residency in Korea was also described as helping Korea facilitate reform and nation-building so that the country could successfully stand up to Japanese and Russian threats. During those years, the *Shenbao* claimed that Korea was able to survive because China helped and protected it against Japan and Russia by sending troops and installing the *de facto* viceroy (see the *Shenbao*, July 9, 1888; January 7, 1889; November 2, 1890; June 21, 1891; September 27, 1892; October 7, 1893).

its strong criticism of Confucianism in Korea as detrimental to the country's modern nation-building, as clearly seen in the aforementioned editorials.

In reality, however, they were not discrepant with each other, as playing the Confucian father-son card was the best way to logically defend China's non-tributary pursuit of practical gains from Korea in front of other foreign powers like Japan and Russia. More than anything else, China desperately needed Korea to be under its control because the latter was geopolitically significant as a gateway to enter Beijing, the former's capital, as well as the sacred Manchuria, the origin of the Qing dynasty. This geopolitical importance of Korea was also indicated in the aforementioned editorial: "Our Qing dynasty has risen in Shenyang and is adjacent to Gaoli" (*Shenbao*, March 14, 1874). In summary, the Korean peninsula was important as China's northern fence against foreign powers.

## 6. Conclusion

It is noteworthy that the weaker the Sino-Korean tributary tie, the stronger the *Shenbao's* search for tributary logic. To be sure, the welfare of Korea as China's son was not the newspaper's primary concern.<sup>10)</sup> As executed during the 1882 Soldiers' Riot,

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10) In a sense, this explains why the *Shenbao* did not side firmly with Korea, a model tributary country, against Japan in some Korea-Japan tensions. For instance, during the escalating military tension between Korea and Japan in early 1876, the newspaper expressed that it was

the newspaper even bluntly suggested that China should dispatch massive troops to Korea to secure its geopolitical gains against Japanese and Russian ambitions in the Korean peninsula (*Shenbao*, August 18, 1880; September 14, 1880).<sup>11)</sup> This opinion was repeatedly raised until China completely lost its hegemony over Korea in the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War.

Even during the Sino-Japanese War, the *Shenbao* passionately justified China's war against Japan over Korea by resorting to the logic of Confucian fatherly benevolence (*Shenbao*, July 4, 1894).<sup>12)</sup> In addition, it eagerly reported on Korea's paying tribute to China on the occasion of Empress Dowager Cixi's 60th birthday. It praised Korea for sincerely observing its tributary obligations, although the country was suffering from the war. It specifically quoted Chosŏn king Kojong's statement that Chosŏn had been the Qing's tributary country for 300 years and would continue to be close to the Qing (*Shenbao*, September 22, 1894).

As this study has demonstrated, the *Shenbao*'s criticism of Confucian Korea and its praise of tributary Korea were not

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deeply concerned about Korea. However, it did not want either Japan or Korea to win against each other, being afraid that the winner might get stronger and threaten China. What it considered the best solution was that the two countries would peacefully solve the problem and, as a result, maintain the *status quo*: Korea functioning as China's fence as always, and Japan remaining China's aloof neighbor beyond the sea (see *Shenbao*, March 1, 1876).

11) Meanwhile, the remark that Chosŏn was strategically so important that the Qing campaigned and subjugated it in the first place was occasionally seen in the *Shenbao* editorials (see, for example, *Shenbao*, March 1, 1876; August 18, 1880; September 14, 1880; June 24, 1882).

12) Similar tributary expressions were repeated in the *Shenbao* in July and August of the same year.

contradictory, as the tributary narrative was closely connected to Confucianism-derived ideas and was utilized as powerful logic to defend China's non-tributary pursuit of practical gains from Korea. It is interesting to note that the tributary mode of thinking did not fade away, but was instead invoked to serve a non-tributary purpose of the present time.

Meanwhile, the *Shenbao's* attitude can indicate that the reality of the working of the tribute system might be different from the ideal of the Confucian tributary narrative, which is reminiscent of Peter Perdue's (2007, p. 123) description of that kind of narrative as an "imperial constructed mythistory." Similarly, Andre Schmid (2007, p. 128) points out that the actual functioning of the tribute system revealed that it was just one of many political and diplomatic options for the Qing that policymakers adjusted to meet the demands of different times, locations, and peoples, without necessarily being firmly based on tributary ideals. He understands that the ultimate goal of the Qing's institutions and rituals surrounding the tribute system was to achieve and protect the shifting interests of the Qing, and that the tribute system was one of the many tools available for the management and maximization of imperial interests.

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[국문초록]

### 중국중심 조공 내러티브의 소환

『신보』를 통해 재생산된 전통적 조선관

주 현 호

『신보』는 19세기 후반 중국에서 가장 많은 판매 부수와 함께 사회적으로 큰 영향력을 끼친 중국어 일간지로 최근 학계의 주목을 받아오고 있다. 『신보』에 대한 최근 연구는 서구적 근대신문으로서의 『신보』의 특성 및 중국 근대 저널리즘의 형성과 발전에 있어 『신보』가 끼친 영향 등에 초점을 두고 있다. 본 논문은 『신보』에 대한 기존 연구의 범위를 확대해 『신보』를 중한관계라는 초국적 맥락 속에 위치시키며 19세기 말 『신보』의 조선관을 심층 분석하고, 이를 통해 『신보』의 조선관이 중국의 전통적 조선관을 재생산하는 동시에 이를 당시 시대상황에 맞게 변용하고 있음을 밝힌다. 먼저 본 논문은 『신보』가 표출하는 유교 국가로서의 조선에 대한 비판과 청의 조공국으로서의 조선에 대한 긍정을 비교 분석한다. 그 후 『신보』의 조선관에서 기자가 차지하는 높은 비중을 강조하며 『신보』가 기존 중국 역사서의 조선관을 재생산하고 있음을 밝힌다. 끝으로 본 논문은 『신보』에서 보이는 유교 국가로서의 조선 비판과 조공국으로서의 조선 긍정 사이의 간극에 주목하며, 조선에 대한 이와 같은 비판과 긍정이 사실 서로 상반된 입장이 아니었음을 논리적으로 규명한다.

주제어: 『신보』, 청, 조선, 조공국, 기자, 유교