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Records of the  
Department of State  
Relating to  
Internal Affairs of Korea  
(Chosen), 1910-1929



NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE  
GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON: 1971

**RICHARD NIXON**  
*President of the United States*

**ROBERT L. KUNZIG**  
*Administrator of General Services*

**JAMES B. RHOADS**  
*Archivist of the United States*

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General Records of the Department of State

Record Group 59

in the National Archives

RECORDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
RELATING TO INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF  
KOREA (CHOSEN), 1910-1929

On the nine rolls of this microfilm publication are reproduced the records from the decimal file of the Department of State, 1910-29, that relate to internal affairs of Korea. The records, consisting of bound volumes and unbound documents, are mostly instructions to and despatches from diplomatic and consular officials; the despatches are often accompanied by enclosures. Also included in these records are notes between the Department of State and foreign diplomatic representatives in the United States, memorandums prepared by officials of the Department, and correspondence with officials of other Government departments and with private firms and persons. The Lists of Documents or "purport sheets" reproduced on roll 1 give brief abstracts of the documents reproduced in this microfilm publication and serve as a finding aid to the documents themselves. The arrangement of the entries on these lists generally corresponds to the arrangement of the documents in the file.

From 1910 to 1963 the Department of State used a decimal system for its central files, assembling and arranging individual documents according to subject and assigning file numbers. The decimal file consists of nine primary classes numbered 0 through 8, each covering a broad subject area. The records reproduced in this microfilm publication are in Class 8, Internal Affairs of States. The country number assigned to Korea is 95; thus the documents bear the file number 895 and relate to internal affairs of Korea. A decimal point is used after the first three digits, followed by a number that represents a specific subtopic. This number, in turn, may be followed by a slant mark (/). In such cases the numbers after the slant mark were assigned to individual documents as they were accumulated on a specific subject. For example, a decimal file number taken from a document reproduced in this publication is 895.52/20. The number 52 signifies that the subtopic is land, and the number after the slant mark indicates the number of documents on this subtopic.

The documents under one subject classification are generally in chronological order, coinciding with the document number assigned (which follows the slant mark). There are instances, however, when a document file number was not assigned until a date considerably later than the one on which the document was received.

Cross-reference sheets referring to related records under other subject classifications in the decimal file have been reproduced as they occur, and appropriate cross-reference notations appear in the Lists of Documents. Other cross-reference

notations are to documents in the "numerical file," a system used for the central files of the Department of State for the period 1906-10. The checkmarks that appear by most entries in the left-hand column of the Lists of Documents indicate that the papers are in the file; entries without marks, it is believed, refer to documents that were not among the records when they were received from the Department of State.

Some of the documents that have been checked in the Lists of Documents do not appear in this microfilm publication. The file contains security-classified documents and communications received from and classified by foreign governments and Federal agencies, in addition to those classified by the Department of State. Documents that have not been declassified are not available as part of this publication. The National Archives and Records Service does not have authority to make reproductions of such documents available to searchers.

The largest group of records reproduced in this microfilm publication concerns political affairs of Korea. Korea was annexed to Japan by treaty on August 29, 1910. The name Korea usually will be used, although Chosen was the name applied during the years of Japanese rule. Some of the political subjects discussed are defects in governmental administration; fortification of Chinhai Bay; official supervision of missionary activities; the treaty of annexation of Korea by Japan; Japanese courts and the Korean judicial system, 1910; changes in land laws; transfer of criminal proceedings against U.S. citizens to Seoul, 1911; cessation of British jurisdiction in Korea, 1911; speeches by the Governor General of Korea to the Provincial Governors, 1911-13; U.S. recognition of Japanese jurisdiction in Korea; publication of results of the administration of Korea since annexation, 1914; activities of Korean residents of Hawaii, 1915; an interview with the Secretary of the Japanese Embassy concerning Korean residents of Honolulu, San Francisco, and other American cities, 1916; unrest in northern Korea, 1919; burial service for the late Emperor; the Korean national movement; a letter from Syngman Rhee on the independence movement in Seoul, 1919; anti-Japanese demonstrations, disturbances in Harbin, and ill treatment of Koreans by Japanese soldiers; Korean Declaration of Independence, March 1, 1919; retaliatory acts by Japanese soldiers; disturbances in Pyongyang; bombing attempt on lives of Governor General Saito and his wife; flight of Prince Yi Kang from Seoul and his subsequent arrest, 1919; reports, resolutions, and protests, of U.S. church organizations; press statement of Baron Saito, Governor General of Korea, reviewing results of his administration during the year 1920; second election of members of the various municipal and village advisory councils held in Seoul and elsewhere, 1923; reports on political, sociological, and economic conditions in Korea, 1924; report on the socio-economic situation in rural Korea by Dr. Edmund de S. Brunner, 1927-28.

The records reproduced in this microfilm publication are part of the records in the National Archives designated as General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59.

In the same record group in the National Archives are several series of records containing additional material on relations between Korea and the United States. There are copies of instructions from the Department of State to U.S. Ministers to Korea, 1883-1905 (roll 109 of M77); despatches from U.S. Ministers to Korea to the Department, 1883-1905 (M134); notes to the Korean Legation in the United States from the Department, 1888-1906 (roll 68 of M99); and notes from the Korean Legation in the United States to the Department, 1883-1906 (M166).

There are also microfilm publications available on despatches from U.S. consular officials at Seoul, 1886-1906 (M167). Complementary to the despatches are instructions to consuls.

The method of arranging the diplomatic and consular series cited above was discontinued in 1906, when the Department of State adopted the practice of filing incoming and outgoing correspondence, memorandums, and other documents by subject in a single numerical series. Information on documents relating to Korea for the 1906-10 period may be found through the use of card indexes and lists of documents in the National Archives.

Additional documents are in the remaining classes of the Department of State decimal file as follows:

- Class 0. General. Miscellaneous.
- Class 1. Administration, Government of the United States.
- Class 2. Extradition.
- Class 3. Protection of Interests.
- Class 4. Claims.
- Class 5. International Congresses and Conferences.  
Multi-lateral Treaties. League of Nations.
- Class 6. Commerce. Customs Administration. Commercial Relations, Treaties and Conventions.  
Commercial and Trade Agreements.
- Class 7. Political Relations. Bilateral Treaties.

In Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84, are records originally kept at U.S. diplomatic and consular posts. Among these are records of the U.S. Legation in Korea, 1884-1905 and of consular posts in that country.

The records reproduced in this microfilm publication were prepared for filming by Ralph E. Huss, who wrote these introductory remarks and provided the other editorial material.



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