Korea Journal, vol. 56, no. 2 (summer 2016): 134-162.

Rodrigues the Gift-Giver: *A Korean Envoy's Portrayal of His Encounter with a Jesuit in 1631*

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Abstract

This paper addresses an extremely favorable portrayal by an envoy of Joseon Korea, Jeong Du-won, of the Portuguese Jesuit João Rodrigues, whom Jeong met in the course of his tributary mission to Ming China in 1630–1631. In his subsequent report to the Joseon king, Jeong portrayed Rodrigues as a benign gift-giver, while portraying himself as a passive recipient of Western gifts. Jeong's characterization of the Jesuit and his gifts has provided modern historians with an important case to illustrate their Eurocentric account of Western Learning in Korea, an account in which the Koreans played simply the passive role of recipient of European culture. While questioning this Eurocentric account, I shall situate Jeong's portrayal of the Jesuit in its political contexts—Jeong's China mission and the bureaucratic politics of the Joseon dynasty. The image of Rodrigues as the benign gift-giver was created by Jeong, the Joseon envoy who served as the transmitter of higher culture from China to Korea. In his self-serving rhetorical efforts to legitimize the "barbarian" informant from the West, he managed to legitimize his own achievements within the China mission.

Keywords: Jeong Du-won, João Rodrigues, Western Learning, tributary mission, Jesuits in China, cultural encounter

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* An earlier draft of this article was presented at the "International Conference on the History of Mathematical Sciences: Portugal and East Asia V—Visual and Textual Representations in Exchanges between Europe and East Asia," held at National Tsing-Hua University, Taiwan, November 7–9, 2014.

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Introduction

When the European Jesuits established their missionary foothold in late Ming society, their presence in China came to be known in Joseon 朝鮮 (1392–1910) Korea as well. The news was transmitted, at a very slow pace, via sporadic contacts between the Jesuits and the Korean visitors to the Ming metropolis, Beijing. Only a few cases of contact in the late Ming 明 period (1368–1644), with a fairly dependable extent of documentation, are known to us. This paper examines one of those well-known episodes, namely the encounter between Jeong Du-won 鄭斗源 (1581–?) and the Portuguese Jesuit, João Rodrigues (1561–1633).

The basic outline of the episode, recorded in Korean documents, is as follows. In their journey to China, from 1630 to 1631, an envoy from Joseon, Jeong Du-won, and his interpreter, Yi Yeong-hu 李榮後, met Rodrigues in Dengzhou 登州, a prefecture off the coast of Shandong 山東 Province. This unexpected meeting was conducted in a cordial atmosphere, as evidenced by the number of precious gifts that the Jesuit presented to the Koreans. As listed in Jeong's report to the king of Joseon, the Jesuit's gifts included books on Western astronomy and geography, scientific instruments, and a piece of a small firearm. King Injo 仁祖 (r. 1623–1649) greatly appreciated these gifts, particularly the Western firearm. However, the king's subsequent attempt to elevate Jeong's official rank faced stiff resistance from Joseon court officials, who negated the practical value of these Western gifts.

It is perhaps this fierce court debate that initially attracted the curiosity of the Joseon literati regarding this otherwise mundane travel episode. Several related documents, written by Jeong and his interpreter, were frequently circulated among literati and were often included, in an abridged form, in historical works and encyclopedias compiled by the court or individual scholars.[1] For example, Yi Ik 李瀷 (1681–1763), a prominent reform-

1. *Gukjo bogam* 國朝寶鑑 (Precious Mirror for Succeeding Reigns), an official history compiled by the Joseon dynasty, contains a brief account of Jeong Du-won's episode (*Gukjo bogam*, vol. 35). A reliable version of Jeong's report to the king was recorded in Jo Gyeong-nam's 趙慶南 (1570–1641) *Sokjamnok* 續雜錄 (Sequel to the *Miscellaneous Writings during the War*)

minded scholar and a pioneer of Seohak 西學 (Western Learning) in the mid-eighteenth century, included an article titled "Yuk Yak-han 陸若漢" (On Rodrigues), in his famous encyclopedia, *Seongho saseol* 星湖僿說 (Miscellaneous Discussions of Seongho Yi Ik). After briefly introducing Jeong's episode, Yi added that "[the Jesuit's] gifts were all [too valuable] to be dispensed with. [However,] I have been able to look at only a few books [among them] . . . while others are now all lost" (I. Yi 1977–1984, 2:16). Yi's disappointment at the loss of the Jesuit's gifts was a good indication of the Joseon literati's growing interest in Western Learning, which accorded to Jeong's episode historic significance as one of the incipient moments of Western Learning in Joseon.

Largely inheriting the late Joseon literati's view of Jeong's episode as an early case of Western Learning, twentieth-century historians have added to Jeong's episode what might be called a Eurocentric twist. Modern historical accounts of the episode, with few exceptions, portray Jeong as a pioneer of Western Learning and Silhak 實學 (Practical Learning), allegedly the two prominent reformist trends of the late Joseon period that paved Korea's way to modernity (Yamaguchi 1967; W. Yi 1986; Kang 1990). Some historians further dramatize the episode by highlighting what they see as Jeong's failure to introduce Western Learning to Korea. The court officials' conservatism, we are told, prevented Rodrigues' gifts from realizing their potential to help bring about cultural change in Confucian Joseon society. Yi Ik's rather casual disappointment at the loss of Rodrigues' gifts is regarded as an indication of his pioneering pursuit of Western modernity.[2] Indeed, twentieth-century historiography has nearly refashioned Jeong's episode as a parable—a typical story of Korea's (failed) attempts at modernization.

The teleological reading of Jeong's *failure*, however, should not be viewed as a pure fabrication by modern historians. Their Eurocentric account is, in a curious way, a continuation of Jeong Du-won's own represen-

(Jo 1964, 4:59a–60b). The letters exchanged between Rodrigues and Yi Yeong-hu were preserved in An Jeong-bok's 安鼎福 (1721–1791) collection of miscellaneous writings, titled *Japdong sani* 雜同散異.

2. Kang, for example, provides a typically modernist interpretation of Jeong's episode and Yi Ik's writing concerning it (1990, 49–57, 97–107).

tation of the encounter. It was Jeong himself who first portrayed his encounter with Rodrigues as a unidirectional flow of gifts, from Jesuit to Korean. Rodrigues was described primarily as a benign gift-giver, while Jeong assumed the role of the passive recipient. In addition, Jeong made a strenuous effort to highlight not only the practical value of the Western gifts but also the intellectual capacity of the Western gift-giver. If there is no good reason to assume anachronistically that he anticipated the modern myth of the European civilizing mission, how can we explain the apparent *Eurocentrism* in Jeong's own account of the episode?

In addressing that question, this paper first examines the historical contexts surrounding Jeong's encounter with Rodrigues: the larger political and diplomatic environment that informed the journeys of Jeong and Rodrigues, Jeong's official career in the Joseon government as someone specialized in diplomacy, and, finally, Jeong's mission to Ming China in 1630–1631. Previous scholars have not felt it necessary to situate this episode within its larger political and diplomatic contexts, perhaps because the episode, as it was presented by Jeong himself, fits perfectly with their modernist scheme. However, if Jeong's encounter with Rodrigues was an unexpected by-product of his diplomatic mission to Ming China, Jeong's own description should be viewed as having been fundamentally formed by the social and political factors surrounding Jeong's tributary travel—a journey made in the chaotic period preceding the Ming-Qing dynastic change in China.[3] This paper argues that Jeong Du-won's *Eurocentric* representation of his encounter with Rodrigues was an outcome of his rhetorical efforts to legitimize a strange European and his gifts in the eyes of a potentially skeptical audience at the Joseon court. Jeong's effort to create a favorable image of the Westerner should not be viewed as a simple expression of his open-mindedness to a foreign culture. It was a self-serving political strategy by which to highlight *his own* achievement in his mission to China.

3. The important role of Sino-Korean relations in shaping the cultural contacts between Korea and the European West can be applicable to numerous other instances in the late Joseon period. See, for example, J. Lim (2010).

Historical Circumstances

At first sight, there was nothing inevitable about Jeong Du-won's meeting with Rodrigues. It was an unexpected contact between two travelers, each on their respective journeys to Ming China for different purposes. The coincidental intersection of the two trajectories in Dengzhou between 1630 and 1631 could not have occurred without a timely overlapping of several political, military, and diplomatic factors. Those factors in turn were conditioned by the dramatically changing power balance between the Ming, the Jurchens (after 1635 called the Manchus), and Joseon Korea in the chaotic decades preceding the Ming-Qing dynastic change of 1644.

One of the crucial factors leading to the meeting of the two travelers was the Ming court's strategic concern with the imminent threat from the Later Jin (Hou Jin 後金, to be renamed the Qing 淸 in 1636)—the rising Jurchen state in the northeastern part of China. Jeong Du-won and Rodrigues had traveled to Beijing as representatives of the Ming's two foreign allies joined in opposition to the Jurchens—the Joseon dynasty and the Portuguese colony at Macao, respectively. Rodrigues' travel was occasioned by the Ming's request to Macao to send soldiers and cannon, to be put to use in the defense against the Jurchens. Jeong, on the other hand, had gone to China as an envoy of Joseon's formal tributary embassy. His specified mission was to convey to Emperor Chongzhen 崇禎 (r. 1628–1644) the Joseon king's condolences for the Ming's recent sufferings, which had been brought about by a large-scale Jurchen raid into a region within the Great Wall in the preceding year.

The Jurchen incursion of 1629 was their first successful penetration of the region within the Great Wall, thus threatening the security of even the Ming's imperial capital of Beijing. Ten years previously, in 1619, Nurhaci, the founder of the Later Jin, had delivered an allied Ming-Joseon force a devastating defeat at the Battle of Sarhu. Soon, Nurhaci had placed most of the Liaodong region under his control. Greatly alarmed at the territorial ambition and military power of the "barbarian Jurchens," the Ming dynasty launched serious efforts to counter their advance. The Ming victory in 1626 at Ningyuan 寧遠, in which Yuan Chonghuan 袁崇煥 (1584–1630) suc-

cessfully defended the city from Nurhaci's attack, had enabled the Ming to regain control over a portion of the Liaoxi 遼西 region. However, the Ming's military ascendancy over the Jurchens did not last long. Hongtaiji, the Jurchens' second ruler, invaded the Ming in 1629 and successfully manipulated the Ming court into executing the Jurchens' archenemy, Yuan Chonghuan (Li 2002).

It was this ever-intensifying conflict between the Ming and Jurchens that occasioned the travel of Rodrigues and Jeong Du-won to Ming China. The Portuguese involvement in the Ming war against the Jurchens is well documented by previous research (Cooper 1974; Huang 2001). As is well known, the Western cannons imported from Macao played an important role in the Ming effort to counter the Jurchen advance. After the loss of Liaodong in the early 1620s, a group of Ming officials, particularly Xu Guangqi 徐光啓 (1562–1633) and other literati with strong Jesuit connections, ardently pleaded with the emperor to import the Western cannon and artillerymen from Macao, whereby to fortify the defense of the capital and other strategic points along the northern frontier. This scheme of using the Macao Portuguese and their cannon was fully implemented only after 1628, when the power of Western cannon had been proved at the Battle of Ningyuan in 1626, and after the enthronement of the new Chongzhen emperor in 1628 had enabled Xu Guangqi and his group to gain power at the Ming court.

In spite of the imminent threat posed by the Dutch, the Portuguese community at Macao decided to assist the Ming dynasty, hoping that their contribution would help to consolidate their own relationship with the Ming government. Rodrigues, a Jesuit who had been staying in Macao since 1612 following his expulsion from Japan, played an important role in negotiations between the Portuguese and the Ming. Upon the Ming court's request, Rodrigues departed for Beijing early in 1629 with several Portuguese gunners led by Gonçalvo Teixeira Correa, and entered Beijing early the next year, just after the Jurchens had plundered the area around the city. Soon, he returned to Macao on a mission to organize a Portuguese expedition of much larger scale to help the Ming. On October 31, 1630, Rodrigues began another long journey to Beijing, now with a larger group

of Macao soldiers. However, on their way to Beijing, the opinion of the Ming court turned against the idea of inviting these "barbarian" troops to Beijing, and the Portuguese expedition had thus to halt its journey and return to Macao. Rodrigues himself, not returning to Macao, continued his journey north, and eventually joined the military camp in Dengzhou. In this strategically important location, a Christian convert named Sun Yuanhua 孫元化 (1589–1632), who had recently been appointed the Grand Coordinator of Deng-Lai (Deng-Lai *xunfu* 登萊巡撫), was making efforts to train soldiers and build up armaments, an effort in which Rodrigues' fellow Portuguese had been taking part. It was here that Rodrigues would soon meet a Joseon embassy led by Jeong Du-won (Cooper 1974, 334–353; Huang 2001, 236–250).[4]

As was the case with Rodrigues, Jeong Du-won's travel to China was occasioned by Joseon's decade-long involvement in the military conflict between the Ming and Jurchens. However, Joseon's role as Ming's important ally stemmed from its status as a tributary state of the Ming, and had a much longer historical precedent than did that of Portuguese Macao.

Since the establishment of the Ming and Joseon dynasties in the second half of the fourteenth century, the two states had developed an intimate relationship according to the so-called tributary protocols. Reflecting a highly moralistic vision of a Confucian world order, the tributary system specified that Joseon kings would assume a status subordinate to the Ming emperor, as the feudal lords had done relative to the king of Zhou 周 in Chinese antiquity (Fairbank 1968, 3–14). Normally maintained by the ritualized exchanges of embassies, the relationship between Ming and Joseon was further strengthened in the late sixteenth century, when the Ming dynasty sent a rescue force to assist Korea, which was then suffering under Japanese invasions (1592–1598). Since then, the Ming dynasty's alleged "grace of rebuilding its endangered tributary state" (再造之恩) had become a popular phrase for the Joseon elites to describe the especially favorable relationship

4. "Deng-Lai *xunfu*" had under its jurisdiction the Dengzhou 登州 and Laizhou 萊州 prefectures. This position was established in 1621, as a measure by which the Ming dynasty sought to strengthen the coastal defense against the Jurchens. See Zhao (2006, 69–73).

between the two states (Kye 2006, 329–339; Han 2007, 195–208).

Within a couple of decades, however, the rise of the Jurchen state put the Ming dynasty in an opposite position; Ming now requested Joseon to reciprocate its former grace, for instance by sending troops to assist its military campaign against the Jurchens in 1619, a request that the Joseon court and its highly moralistic scholar-officials could scarcely resist. A more realistic approach to the Ming dynasty's request was also at hand, as seen from the lukewarm attitude that the king of Joseon, Gwanghaegun 光海君 (r. 1608–1623), showed toward the Ming cause, while at the same time making efforts to avoid irritating the increasingly powerful Jurchens.

King Gwanghaegun's policy, which violated the Confucian code of loyalty to China's Son of Heaven, was utterly unpopular among the scholar-officials of the Joseon court. This finally provided one of the important pretexts for the literati coup in 1623, in which a group of officials dethroned the allegedly "immoral" king. Naturally, King Injo's new court adopted a firmly pro-Ming stance. Notwithstanding its highly moralistic appeal, King Injo's new policy put Joseon in a more dangerous position than before, precariously involved in the conflict between two great powers, the Ming and the Jurchens. Before long, Joseon would suffer from the first Jurchen invasion of 1627 (Han 2009).

It was in the context of King Injo's pro-Ming policy that Jeong Du-won built his official career. He passed the civil service examination (*mungwa* 文科) in 1616, and in King Gwanghaegun's reign became prefect of Yongcheon in Pyeongan-do province, a strategically important province directly bordering Manchuria.[5] The literati coup of 1623 perhaps gave Jeong, who had thus far been a minor figure in officialdom, an opportunity to enhance his visibility in court politics. On the day of the coup, Jeong reportedly mobilized 500 soldiers in support of the coup.[6] Due perhaps to this contribution, Jeong was given a more important official role under King Injo's new regime: while retaining his position as a local prefect (now of Seongcheon

5. *Joseon wangjo sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄 (*Annals of the Joseon Dynasty*) (hereafter cited as *JWS*), the 16th day of the 4th lunar month, 14th year of King Gwanghaegun's reign (1622).
6. *JWS*, the 20th day of the 3rd lunar month, 1st year of King Injo's reign (1623).

prefecture), in 1623 he also took charge of military provisioning (*gwanhyangsa* 管餉使) in Pyeongan-do province.[7] By 1625 and 1626, Jeong was serving as a reception official (*jeopbansa* 接伴使), whose responsibility was to greet the Ming imperial embassy.[8] However, Jeong's assignments were not simply to deal with general matters of military provisioning or greeting imperial embassies. The Joseon court gave him a very specific mission: to deal with the Ming military force led by Mao Wenlong 毛文龍 (1576–1629), who was then stationed at Gado 椵島 (later renamed Pidao 皮島 by Mao), an island off the west coast of Pyeongan-do province. Judging from the official posts Jeong held in the mid-1620s, we can surmise that he had by then established himself as an import ant government official, specialized in military and diplomatic relations with the Ming.

Mao Wenlong, once the Regional Military Commissioner of Liaodong (Liaodong *dusi* 遼東都司), established himself in Gado in 1622, after the fall of Liaodong to the Jurchens.[9] Appreciating the strategic positioning of Mao's force at Gado, the Ming court appointed him the Left Commissioner-in-Chief (*zuodudu* 左都督), expecting him to reclaim Liaodong from the Jurchens. Isolated on a Korean island, with no direct overland route connecting him to the Ming mainland, Mao had to seek Joseon's help, in order to sustain his force and the Chinese refugees who settled on the island after the loss of Liaodong. Besides his pro-Ming political cause, King Injo had a more personal reason for satisfying Mao's expectations; having good connections with Wei Chongxian 魏忠賢 (1568–1627), the powerful eunuch then at the Ming court, Mao played an important role in King Injo's efforts to obtain from the Ming court an official endorsement of his apparent usurpation by

7. *JWS*, the 24th day of the 4th lunar month, 1st year of King Injo's reign (1623).
8. For example, see *JWS*, the 12th day of the 12th lunar month, 3rd year of King Injo's reign (1625); the 26th day of the 3rd lunar month, 4th year of King Injo's reign (1626).
9. After Nurhaci's occupation of Liaodong in 1621, Mao was able to gain a small victory over the Jurchens at Zhenjiang on the Yalu River. However, the subsequent Jurchen counterattack forced Mao to retreat further into the northwestern hinterland of Joseon. He finally took shelter on Gado in the 11th lunar month of 1621. *JWS*, the 26th day of the 7th lunar month, 13th year of King Gwanghaegun's reign (1621); the 11th day of the 11th lunar month, 13th year of King Gwanghaegun's reign (1621); and the 11th day of the 11 lunar month, 14th year of King Gwanghaegun's reign (1622).

the coup of 1623 (Han 2009, 46–70, 97–102).

The king's pro-Ming cause and his political debt to Mao Wenlong determined Jeong's official role in the mid-1620s. Jeong had to deal with Mao's often unreasonable requests to supply military provisions to his Chinese colony, while at the same time mediating the complicated tension between Mao and the Joseon court. At any rate, Jeong seems to have established a good relationship with Mao, as seen from the latter's request that King Injo elevate Jeong's official rank, praising his ability and sincerity in carrying out his official duties.[10]

Jeong Du-won's Mission and Itinerary

In 1628, Jeong Du-won was appointed magistrate of Miryang, a county in southern Joseon, and therefore was exempted from the demanding task of managing relations with the Ming force at Gado.[11] However, he was soon summoned back to his former specialty in 1630, when King Injo appointed him the senior envoy of the special embassy for conveying his condolences (*jinwisa* 陳慰使) to Emperor Chongzhen.[12]

Jeong perhaps felt that much had changed in the world of diplomacy during the two years of his absence. Mao Wenlong, Jeong's old diplomatic partner, had been executed by Yuan Chonghuan because of his alleged corruption and dereliction of duty. Mao's execution reflected the drastic reconfiguration of power in the Ming court after the enthronement of Emperor Chongzhen and the subsequent collapse of Wei Chongxian 魏忠賢, Mao's powerful patron. Since then, Yuan Chonghuan, instead of Mao, had taken the initiative in diplomatic affairs with Joseon. Yet, by the time of Jeong's departure for the Ming in the early autumn of 1630, the Joseon court came to learn that Yuan had also been imprisoned, under a charge of

10. *JWS*, the 10th day of the 6th lunar month, 3rd year of King Injo's reign (1625).
11. *Seungjeongwon ilgi* 承政院日記 (Diaries of the Royal Secretariat) (hereafter cited as *SI*), the 3rd day of the 2nd lunar month, 6th year of King Injo's reign (1628).
12. *JWS*, the 21st day of the 3rd lunar month, 8th year of King Injo's reign (1630).

collusion with the Jurchens.[13] Ironically, it was the fall of Yuan that fortuitously paved the way for Jeong Du-won's encounter with Rodrigues in Dengzhou.

During the 1620s, the itinerary of the Joseon embassies to Beijing underwent a series of fluctuations, depending upon the military tension between the Ming and Jurchens, on the one hand, and Ming's shifting policies toward Joseon, on the other. The first big change occurred in 1620, when the Jurchen occupation of Liaodong blocked the overland route to Beijing via Liaodong, which the Koreans had trodden for almost two centuries. The Joseon embassy of 1620, which had taken the Liaodong route to Beijing, had to return to Joseon via a sea route, along the coast of the Yellow Sea, only to experience a shipwreck, which none of the envoys survived. As illustrated by this disaster, a voyage through the Yellow Sea was extremely dangerous. For the 16-year period from 1620 through 1636, Joseon sent 40 embassies via the sea route, and seven of these are known to have suffered shipwrecks.[14]

The sea route that Joseon embassies had been taking since 1621 began at the Seonsapo port in Pyeongan-do province.[15] The embassy fleet then travelled westward along the coast of the Liaodong Peninsula. After passing the tip of the peninsula, the fleet would cross the Yellow Sea and finally land at Dengzhou, on the coast of the Shandong Peninsula. From there, the embassies would take an overland path to Beijing.

However, in the spring of 1629, Yuan Chonghuan, who was then stationed in Ningyuan, had made an important change in the Joseon embassies' route. He had decided not to allow the Koreans to pass through Dengzhou, forcing them instead to pass through Ningyuan.[16] According to the new route Yuan had imposed upon the Joseon embassies, the Korean fleet,

13. *JWS*, the 18th day of the 7th lunar month, 8th year of King Injo 8's reign (1630).
14. See the table in E. Jeong (2012, 100–101). The number of shipwrecks is, in fact, five. The difference is due to the fact there were cases in which more than one embassy was sent, and thus they travelled to Beijing together.
15. After the Jurchen invasion of Korea in 1627, the Joseon government changed the port of departure to the Seokdasan in southern Pyeongan-do province (E. Jeong 2012, 102).
16. *JWS*, the 21st day of the 4th intercalary lunar month, 7th year of King Injo's reign (1629).

instead of crossing the Yellow Sea, had to continue sailing along the coast of the Liaodong Peninsula and then land at Juehua 覺華 Island, off the coast near Ningyuan. The Joseon court understood that Yuan's decision reflected the ever-intensifying tension between Yuan and Mao Wenlong. The Koreans believed that Yuan, then worrying about the possibility of Mao's revolt, attempted to block the sea route from Gado Island to Dengzhou, a strategic location from which to enter the Ming hinterland.[17] Yuan also wanted to put Joseon under his direct control, by requiring every Joseon envoy to visit him.[18] The new route, imposed by Yuan, made the voyage of the Korean mission much more dangerous, because the sea route passing Juehua Island was much longer and more perilous than the previous Dengzhou path. The first Joseon embassy fleet to take this new route, in the winter of 1629–1630, wrecked near Juehua Island, and the senior envoy and his interpreters lost their lives.[19]

The Joseon court, wishing to reopen the original Dengzhou route, therefore welcomed Yuan Chonghuan's imprisonment as an opportunity to make a pertinent petition to the Ming government. In fact, one of the main assignments of Jeong's mission in 1630 was to present to the imperial court a petition asking that the Dengzhou route be reopened.[20] Interestingly, on its way to Beijing, the embassy led by Jeong arbitrarily took the Dengzhou route rather than the Juehua Island route, without prior permission from the Ming government. Jeong departed Seoul in the 7th lunar month, and arrived safely at Dengzhou, in the 9th lunar month.[21]

17. *JWS*, the 27th day of the 2nd lunar month, 7th year of King Injo's reign (1629).
18. *JWS*, the 28th day of the 7th lunar month, 7th year of King Injo's reign (1629). See also Sayeogwon ([1882] 2006, 157).
19. E. Jeong (2012, 102–105); *JWS*, the 6th day of the 2nd lunar month, 8th year of King Injo's reign (1630).
20. *JWS*, the 2nd day of the 7th lunar month, 8th year of King Injo's reign (1630).
21. On Jeong's departure, see *JWS*, the 17th day of the 7th lunar month, 8th year of King Injo's reign (1630). Further, *JWS*, the 20th day of the 2nd lunar month, 9th year of King Injo's reign 9 (1631), records Jeong's report from Dengzhou, in which he makes notice of his departure from there to Beijing, on the 2nd day of the 10th lunar month, of the preceding year. From this, we can surmise that Jeong had arrived at Dengzhou in the 9th lunar month.

Korea's petition for the reopening of the Dengzhou route was, in the end, not accepted by the Ming court, and the future Korean embassies had once again to take the same dangerous Juehua Island path, until the last Korean mission to the Ming in 1636 (E. Jeong 2012, 104). For this reason, Jeong's mission remained the only case of one that had taken the Dengzhou route since 1629. This highly coincidental overlap of events enabled Jeong's encounter with Rodrigues to take place in Dengzhou during the former's mission.

The Encounter and Its Representations

Before examining the encounter more closely, I will briefly introduce the documents relative to the encounter produced by both sides. At first glance, we find a great disparity in the number of documents concerning the meeting produced by the two sides. Rodrigues left only a brief remark about the encounter, in a letter sent to the Jesuit general and written in Macao several months before his death in 1633.[22] Much better documentation was produced by the Korean group: two pieces by Jeong and one by his interpreter Yi Yeong-hu. The list is as follows:

1. Jeong's official report to the Joseon king, titled "Seoyangguk gibyeol janggye 西洋國奇別狀啓" (Memorial Concerning Matters of the Western Countries).[23]
2. Jeong's pictorial travelogue describing his mission, *Jocheon gi jido* 朝天記地圖 (Cartographic Record of a Mission to the Celestial Court).[24] Notably, Jeong does not mention Rodrigues in this travelogue at all, although he gives brief descriptions of several Chinese officials in Dengzhou, including Sun Yuanhua.

22. Kang (1990, 54) gives a Korean translation of the remark. Cooper (1974, 348) also cites it.
23. S. An (2009) provides a reliable version of Jeong's report, based upon a copy included in Jo (1964, 4:59a–60b).
24. This travelogue was recently discovered in the Jongyeonggak Archives of Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul. See H. Lim (2005). A facsimile edition was then published. See D. Jeong (2008).

3. Letters exchanged between Rodrigues and Yi Yeong-hu, in which they discussed issues concerning Western astronomy and world geography.[25]

Interestingly, none of these documents, whether produced by Rodrigues or the Koreans, provides a detailed description of their meeting. Both parties confirmed their meeting, but did not mention, for example, the exact date(s) of the encounter(s), how many times they met, or on what occasions.

Exactly when, then, did their meeting take place? From various circumstances, we can surmise that the meeting was on Jeong's return trip to Seoul from Beijing, in the 5th lunar month of 1631.[26] When the Joseon embassy arrived at Dengzhou in 1630 on its way to Beijing, Rodrigues was in Macao and about to begin his long journey to Beijing, along with hundreds of Macao soldiers (Cooper 1974, 345; Tan 2013, 183). This might explain the otherwise difficult absence of any mention of Rodrigues in the entry of Dengzhou, in Jeong's pictorial travelogue. It is due, I suppose, to the fact that Jeong described in his travelogue only for the outbound journey from Korea to Beijing. He did not meet Rodrigues on his way to Beijing, so simply did not mention him.

If Rodrigues and Jeong showed little interest in giving a detailed account of their meeting, what was their focus, then? In his letter written in 1633, Rodrigues mentions only that he met Korean envoys in Dengzhou and established a friendship with them. He then enumerates the gifts he had given to the king of Korea, via the envoys. These included books on Christianity and European sciences (the titles unspecified) and Matteo Ricci's world map (Kang 1990, 54; Cooper 1974, 348). Although Jeong left a much longer report of his encounter with Rodrigues, he was no better at

25. These letters were preserved in J. An (n.d.).

26. Jeong's itinerary from Beijing to Dengzhou can be partially reconstructed from the Appendix of Jeong's travelogue, which contains a series of official documents, produced in the course of Jeong's negotiations with the Ming government on the reopening of the Dengzhou route. According to this, Jeong departed Beijing on the 15th day of the 4th lunar month of the 4th year of Emperor Chongzhen's reign (1631), arriving at Dengzhou on the 4th day of the 5th lunar month. They seem to have departed Dengzhou after the 27th day of the 5th lunar month. See D. Jeong (2008, 196, 198).

describing the details of the meeting. In his report to the king, he remarks only that "one day, Rodrigues (K.: Yak-han; Ch.: Ruohan 若漢) came to see Your subject."[27] Most of his report is devoted instead to information about Rodrigues and the practical value of the gifts he received from the Jesuit.

Thus, interestingly, the two parties were in accord on one point. They both highlighted only one aspect of their meeting: the gift-giving. More important, the gift-giving, as recorded by the two, was one-sided, from Rodrigues to Jeong. As we know from the common practices of Korean envoys in China, it is unlikely that Jeong did not reciprocate Rodrigues' gifts with his own offerings.[28] Whatever the case, however, what is important here is that both the two sides seemed to take for granted the broken reciprocity of their meeting in their literary representations of it. The two simply portrayed Rodrigues as the gift-giver and Jeong as the recipient, without providing any literary device that might explain this stark asymmetry of the exchange.[29]

This common emphasis on the unidirectional flow of gifts was further

27. Jeong Du-won, "Seoyangguk gibyeol janggye," in S. An (2009, 246–247). Jeong's report thus described the encounter as one only between him and the Jesuit. However, we can surmise that Sun, who was in charge of Dengzhou and had a close relationship with the Jesuit, might have played an important role between the two. The letters exchanged between Yi Yeong-hu and Rodrigues also suggests that the Korean interpreter was not a secondary figure in this encounter. Generally, interpreters in Joseon embassies played a major part in the cultural and commercial exchanges between Joseon and China. See J. Lim (2016).

28. For an analysis of the gift exchange between the Jesuits and the Joseon envoys in 1720, see J. Lim (2010). Korea's tributary mission to China consisted of a series of gift exchanges. In addition to the formal gift exchange between Chinese emperor and Korean king, gift-giving was also an important means by which the Korean embassy might accomplish various practical goals, including at least establishing a good relationship with important figures in Chinese officialdom. Korean embassies thus brought a considerable amount of items to be bestowed as gifts to whomever they met during their mission in China. The *Tongmungwan ji* 通文館志 (Records of the Office of Interpretation) provides a set of detailed lists of gifts to be presented to an emperor, other imperial family members, or government officials (Sayeogwon [1882] 2006, 98–107, 130–142, 188–197).

29. As seen in many accounts of cultural encounters in the early modern period, the reciprocity broken in real gift exchanges tended to be restored in literary representations of them by a variety of means, for example, by alluding to the prospect of future repayment of the gifts. See Pratt (2008, 67–83).

amplified in the famous letters exchanged between Rodrigues and Jeong's interpreter, Yi Yeong-hu. In his letter to the Jesuit, Yi presented himself as a humble-minded pupil, who aspired to learn the Jesuit's advanced knowledge about heaven and earth. He then presented Rodrigues a long list of questions concerning Western astronomy and geography. Rodrigues, in his turn, was happy to play the expected role of master, correcting the Korean pupil's misconception, particularly his locating China wrongly at the center of the world, by teaching him about the true shape of the world (J. An, n.d.).

Obviously, there is little possibility that the two parties made an explicit agreement with each other, whereby to divide the role of each part as such, in their respective reports. Previous historians have taken it for granted, however, as if this apparent violation of reciprocity was a rule rather than an exception in the early modern cultural exchange between Korea and the West. The Jesuits are viewed primarily as benign gift-givers, whose valuable gifts, their science in particular, the Koreans should receive and then implement for the benefit of their country. However, if there were no reason for Rodrigues and the Koreans to share any cultural assumptions that anticipated the modern ideology of the European "civilizing mission," why, then, did the two show congruity in accounts of their gift exchange and their roles therein?

As for Rodrigues, we can easily surmise that his position as a Christian missionary led him to emphasize his role as gift-giver in regard to the Korean heathens. Having in mind the prospect of a future Christian mission in Korea, Rodrigues might have viewed the encounter as an opportunity to establish a good connection with elite Joseon officials, the possible candidates for future Christian converts, or at least, patrons of Western Learning. His gifts, including books on Christianity and the sciences, would provoke among the Koreans an interest in European religion and advanced learning. Therefore, Rodrigues' portrayal of himself as the gift-giver implicitly anticipated the future repayment from the Korean side through their conversion to Christianity.

Similarly, Jeong's characterization of himself as the gift-receiver might also be understood against the backdrop of his position as an envoy to China, or more broadly, his long official career as a diplomatic staffer, spe-

cialized in affairs with Ming China. Since Jeong's description was made in his official report to the court, we might assume that he had a particular reason for emphasizing to the king and court officials the significance of the gifts he had acquired from Rodrigues.

Generally, Korean envoys to China were expected to perform a variety of informal functions, besides the formal assignment of delivering tribute to the imperial court. Since the formal assignments were mostly of a mere ritual importance, the informal functions of the embassies were often practically more important. For example, gathering information about political and military matters in China was of utmost concern to the Joseon court. Reflecting on Korea's age-old position as an importer of China's advanced culture, Korean embassies were the main conduit for transmitting China's literati learning, fine arts, and technology to Korea. The Joseon court encouraged those activities, by giving high rewards to those envoys who obtained good results in information gathering and cultural transmission. The envoys, expecting high rewards from the court, tended to exaggerate the value of what they had brought from China, and therefore, the evaluation of the quality of information or cultural items brought by envoys often became issues of fierce court debates.[30]

Jeong Du-won's case illustrates this general pattern very well. As was custom, Jeong presented to the king what he had brought from China, perhaps with high expectations of being well appreciated by the king and the court. Nor was there anything unusual in the subsequent disagreement between the king and court officials concerning the practical value of Rodrigues' gifts. Seen in light of this common practice at the Joseon court, Jeong's portrayal of himself as the gift-receiver in his report to the king was quite understandable, and simply reflected his personal interest as an envoy to China, who had to highlight his achievements in the business of infor-

30. Court officials' suspicions of the value of envoys' achievements frequently found expression in court records. A series of early eighteenth-century entries in the *Bibyeonsa deungnok* 備邊司謄錄 (Records of the Border Defense Command) shows a long and complicated process for the official evaluation of envoy achievements. See *Bibyeonsa deungnok*, the 12th day of the 2nd lunar month, 38th year of King Sukjong's reign (1712); the 13th day of the 4th lunar month, 39th year of King Sukjong's reign (1713).

mation gathering and cultural importation.

The uniqueness of Jeong's case, though, lies in the fact that he had acquired things from a strange Westerner, not from Chinese literati officials, as had been usual in other China missions. This was an important difference, which fundamentally altered Jeong's rhetorical strategy in representing to the court his contact with Rodrigues and the gifts tendered by the Westerner. Since Jeong was keenly aware of the gifts' dubious origin from the so-called "barbarian West," he might not have naively expected the favorable reception of the gifts by the court. In other words, the Western gifts needed cultural legitimation; the Western gift-giver, too, had to be regarded as reliable and as culturally refined as the Chinese literati. Jeong's report, the "Memorial Concerning Matters of the Western Countries," could thus be read as his rhetorical effort to culturally legitimize Rodrigues and his gifts.

Jeong's memorial consists of two parts. The second part is a list of the Jesuit's gifts, while the first is an introduction to the gift list, in which Jeong seeks to create a favorable image of the Westerner and to demonstrate the practical utility of the gifts.

First, Jeong lists a total of 11 gifts from Rodrigues, adding to each item a short explanation. The following is a full translation of the gift list. The 11 gifts, as listed in Jeong's report, can be divided into three categories: (1) books and documents, (2) astronomical and geographical maps, and (3) useful artifacts.[31]

(1) Books and documents

1. *Zhili yuanqi* 治曆緣起 [Origin of the Calendar Governance], one volume. In this book, the Minister of Rites [of the Ming dynasty], Xu Guang[qi] proposed to reform the calendrical system (*lifa* 曆法) by adopting West[ern astronomy] as the official method.
2. *Tianwen lüe* 天問略 [Outlines of Astronomy], one volume. A book of astronomy by a man from a Western country, Li Madou [Matteo Ricci, 1552–1610]. [Lu] Ruohan [Rodrigues] is [Li] Madou's colleague.[32]

31. I used the text and its Korean translation as presented in S. An (2009, 252–253).
32. This book was authored by Manuel Dias, Jr. (1574–1659), not Matteo Ricci.

3. *Yuanjing shuo* 遠鏡說 [Explanations of the Telescope], one volume. [This book] is devoted solely to discussions about telescopes.
4. *Zhifang waiji* 職方外紀 [Areas Outside the Concern of the Imperial Geographer], one volume. [This book] is devoted solely to discussions about the customs (*fengsu* 風俗) of the Western countries.
5. *Xiyang gongxian shenwei dachong shu* 西洋貢獻神威大銃疏 [Memorial by the Westerner for Presenting Powerful Cannon],[33] one volume. Memorial presented by [Lu] Ruohan concerning the "red barbarian cannon" (*hongyipao* 紅夷砲).

(2) Maps

6. *Tianwen tu nanbei ji* 天文圖南北極 [Astronomical Map of the Northern and Southern Hemispheres], two scrolls.
7. *Tianwen guangshu* 天文廣數,[34] two scrolls.
8. *Wanli quantu* 萬里全圖 [Complete Map of Ten Thousand *Li*], five scrolls.[35]

(3) Instruments

9. Telescope (*qianlijing* 千里鏡), one piece, by which to observe the heavenly patterns (*tianwen* 天文) and watch even the minute things in the enemy camp. It would cost, I was told, about 300 or 400 taels.
10. Sundial (*riguiguan* 日晷觀), one piece, by which to set the times and directions.
11. Gun (*niaochong* 鳥銃), one. This does not use a match (*huosheng* 火繩), but uses only a flint (*huoshi* 火石), by which firing is generated spontaneously; gunpowder case (*huoyaotong* 火藥筒), two pieces. Neither do these use a match. During the time in which a *niaochong* of our coun-

33. S. An (2009) suggests that this document was "Gongchong xiaozhong shu 貢銃效忠疏" (Memorial for Presenting Cannon in Order to Show Fidelity [to the Emperor]), which was presented by Rodrigues and Teixeira to Emperor Chongzhen in 1630. In this, the two Portuguese presented an account of their "tributary" travel for presenting the cannon to the Ming as well as the proper usage of the cannon. See Han and Wu (2006, 28–30).
34. We still do not know what this was.
35. Based upon Rodrigues' remark in the letter to his superior, written in Macao, S. An (2009) suggests that this world map was Ricci's *Kunyu wanguo quantu* 坤輿萬國全圖 (Complete Map of 10,000 Countries)

> try discharges twice, this kind can do so four or five times; this is as fast as a ghost (*sin* 神).

To these 11 gifts from Rodrigues, Jeong adds a piece of a mechanical clock (*zimingzhong* 自鳴鐘). About the clock, he only notes, "Your subject has brought it [from the mission]." He thus seems to have acquired this apparently Western device from a different source during his mission to China.

This is indeed an impressive set of gifts, demonstrating Rodrigues' determination to establish a favorable image of himself and the West in the minds of the Koreans. However, Jeong's gift list shows an interesting omission. Although, as stated above, Rodrigues in his letter mentioned books on Christianity as well as those relating to science and technology, Jeong's list consisted only of the latter, secular portion of Rodrigues' gifts. If there were no particular reason for Rodrigues to make a false report about his gifts, certainly Jeong was responsible for the difference between the two lists. Jeong seems to have intentionally omitted the Christian texts from the list. As a Confucian scholar-official, Jeong might have shared with his fellow literati skepticism, if not hostility, toward Christian teachings. More important, however, the Christian texts were never the sort of item for an envoy to China to present to the court as a significant achievement of his mission. If presented to the court, the Christian books would seriously undermine Jeong's own political interests, not to mention his social reputation, by inviting a hostile reaction from court officials.[36]

If the omission of the Christian texts from the list constituted what might be called the negative aspect of Jeong's rhetorical strategy, Jeong in the first part of his memorial made more explicit efforts to create a favorable image of Rodrigues and to demonstrate the practical value of the Jesuit's gifts.[37]

First of all, Jeong portrayed Rodrigues, in all aspects of the latter's

36. In Korea, a serious suppression of Christianity would begin only in the last decade of the eighteenth century. However, this does not mean that Christianity had been welcome in earlier periods. Confucian elites mostly viewed Christianity as obviously a heterodox teaching. See Kang (1990).
37. The following discussion is based upon Jeong's report in S. An (2009, 242–252).

personality and career, as an extraordinary man. According to Jeong, Rodrigues was then 97 years old, had a fine and charismatic appearance, and looked almost like a "Daoist immortal" (神仙中人). He was an extraordinary traveler who arrived in Guangdong after a long and dangerous journey from the West, a place ninety thousand *li* from China. Moreover, he was versed in the science of astronomy, for which reason the Celestial Court considered him literally an "extraordinary man" (神異之人). Jeong seems not merely to fabricate this image of the Jesuit, but to mobilize various resources; the mention of Rodrigues' journey and his prominent role in the Ming court were perhaps based upon Rodrigues' own self-propaganda. Jeong may also have heard rumors, then widely spread among the Chinese, concerning the Jesuit's alleged extraordinary age and magical powers (Cooper 1974, 342). Jeong Du-won's personal preference for a Daoist ideal and practice might also have played some role in casting Rodrigues' character in the Daoist imagery of immortals (H. Lim 2005, 21–23).

However, this image of Rodrigues as simply an extraordinary man would not have sufficed to culturally legitimize the Jesuit or his culture. Given the strong Neo-Confucian bent of the Joseon court officials, the extraordinariness of the Westerner might also be viewed as a disturbing sign of heterodoxy. This was perhaps the consideration behind Jeong's strenuous effort to emphasize Rodrigues' loyalty to the Ming, and the latter's special recognition of the Jesuit's service. According to Jeong, Rodrigues presented to the Ming emperor the so-called "red barbarian cannon" (*hongyipao*) out of his sincere wish to help the Ming in its fight against the Jurchens. The emperor highly appreciated Rodrigues' gift, Jeong continues, and finally appointed him an "official in charge of religious teaching" (*zhangjiao* 掌教), expecting his contribution in reclaiming Liaodong from the Jurchens. Sun Yuanhua, who was in charge of Dengzhou, also respected the Jesuit as a "venerable advisor" (*binsa* 賓師). Jeong Du-won's message here is clear: the fact that Rodrigues was appointed an "official of the Celestial Court" (天朝之官) firmly legitimized Rodrigues' sociocultural identity. He was not merely a barbarian or some suspicious Daoist adept. Moreover, he had dedicated himself to the Ming's noble cause against the Jurchen barbarians, and this implied that the Jesuit was also a potential ally of Joseon in the common

struggle against the same barbarian enemy. In Jeong's emphasis of the high recognition of Rodrigues' service by the Ming emperor and Chinese officials like Sun Yuanhua, he implicitly urged the king and the court officials to emulate the Ming's open-minded policy by appreciating the Western gifts, and by extension, his own significant role in bringing them to Korea.

After constructing a favorable image of Rodrigues, Jeong demonstrates the practical values of the Jesuit's gifts, item by item. He tries to show how each item would serve the urgent needs of the Joseon government. Jeong suggests two fields of statecraft in particular that might benefit from the Jesuit's gifts: astronomy and military technology.

First, Jeong suggests that the Jesuit's astronomical knowledge be used in the ongoing project of the Gwansanggam 觀象監 (Royal Astronomy Bureau) to correct the errors in the positions of meridian stars (*jungseong* 中星).[38] According to him, this was the reason why he had allowed his interpreter, Yi Yeong-hu, to learn from Rodrigues the techniques of astronomy. By his support for the Jesuit's competence in astronomy, Jeong underlined the Ming court's recognition of this art. In reforming calendrical methods, Jeong reports, the Ming government relied heavily on Rodrigues' professional advices. Despite Jeong's confident voice in the memorial, however, there is no evidence to show that the astronomical method, having allegedly been learned from Rodrigues, was later implemented by Joseon court astronomers. It is highly probable that Jeong exaggerated Rodrigues' capacity as an astronomer. In fact, none of the three persons—Jeong, Rodrigues, and Yi—could be considered specialists in calendrical astronomy, as can be seen in the highly amateurish content of the letters exchanged between Rodrigues and Yi.

Given the imminent Jurchen threat, particularly after their first invasion of Joseon in 1627, Jeong's emphasis is naturally more on the items relating to military technology. The most tangible of these might be the piece of a flintlock gun. Jeong emphasizes the efficiency of this type of weapon by compar-

38. The meridian star project began in 1629, and was still being carried out when Jeong returned from his China mission. See *JWS*, the 23rd day of the 4th lunar month, 7th year of King Injo's reign (1629); the 27th day of the 12th lunar month, 9th year of King Injo's reign (1631). For a brief account of this project, see Kim (2016, 8–9).

ing it with the old-style matchlock guns that Korea then used. However, Jeong, not content to present the king with just a small gun, suggests a more ambitious project: learning from Rodrigues how to make the so-called "red barbarian cannon," a powerful firearm that had proven its power in the Ming's recent victories over the Jurchens. Jeong tries to persuade the king that he could accomplish such a mission, because he had established a good connection with Rodrigues, the benign Westerner who had been, and should still be, willing to help them. However, this proposal, too, would go nowhere. In a sense, Jeong's proposal was naïve, considering that the Ming at that time protected the cannon-making technique as state secret.

There was one more item relating to military technology that Jeong brought home from his mission: several *liang* of saltpeter, an essential ingredient in gunpowder. This was not a gift from Rodrigues, and so was not included in the gift list. Jeong emphasizes the value of this small amount of saltpeter and suggests that, by studying this sample and obtaining more information from the Chinese artisans at Gado, the Korean artisans might learn the advanced Chinese method of making saltpeter. This proposal addressed the acute concern of the Joseon government, which had for centuries suffered from a chronic shortage of saltpeter (Huh 2002). Unlike the other gifts from Rodrigues, the saltpeter sample brought by Jeong bore fruit in a few years. Seen from an entry in 1633 of the *Annals of the Joseon Dynasty*, a military officer of Gyeongsang-do province reported on the recent success in producing saltpeter by using the method Jeong had learned from his mission.[39]

Whatever the practical results of the Jesuit's gifts turned out to be, Jeong's rhetorical effort to legitimize the Jesuit and his gifts achieved instant success; the king appreciated the gifts, particularly the flintlock gun, and ordered Jeong be promoted one rank.[40] However, in the eyes of many court

39. *JWS*, the 8th day of the 10th lunar month, 11th year of King Injo's reign (1633).

40. *SI*, the 12th day of the 7th lunar month, 9th year of King Injo's reign (1631). *SI*, the 2nd day of the 8th lunar month, 9th year of King Injo's reign (1631) shows that Jeong was in a position of Deputy Commander (*buhogun* 副護軍, junior fourth rank). This means that the king ordered to elevate Jeong to a position of ministerial rank (*dangsanggwan* 堂上官, senior third rank or above).

officials, Jeong's report was full of exaggerations. In his opposition to the king's decision to promote Jeong's official rank, a censor (*ganwon* 諫院) denounced the value of the Western gifts as follows: "The things presented [by Jeong] are deceitful and strange (*gyoi* 巧異), and many of them useless." The censor admitted only the value of the flintlock gun, which nevertheless, he argued, could not be viewed as such an important achievement as to justify the official promotion.[41] Although being more or less ideologically charged as seen from the phrase "deceitful and strange," the official's accusation against the Jesuit's gifts and Jeong's way of representing them was not without grounds.

Epilogue

How then did the court debate concerning Jeong's promotion conclude? On this issue, the two official chronicles, the *Annals of the Joseon Dynasty* and the *Diaries of the Royal Secretariat*, suggest conflicting pictures. The *Annals* leaves only a brief remark, "the king accepted [the censor's request]," which means that the king withdrew his order of promotion.[42] However, the *Diaries*, which contains more detailed information concerning the issue, suggests a very different story. In spite of the censor's persistent resistance to the king's will, for over half a month King Injo did not change his mind, and finally allowed Jeong a favorable audience with him, early in the eighth lunar month.[43] Since the *Diaries* has no further entries that can illuminate the subsequent development of the issue, it is possible that the king in the end withdrew his decision sometime after his meeting with Jeong, as recorded in the *Annals*. However, whatever the outcome, Jeong was never

41. *SI*, the 13th day of the 7th lunar month, 9th year of King Injo's reign (1631). The censor's opposition to Jeong's promotion might have been motivated by his factional interest. However, there are no substantial clues, including even the censor's name, from which to examine the political motivation behind the censor's criticism.
42. *JWS*, the 12th day of the 7th lunar month, 9th year of King Injo's reign (1631).
43. See the entries of *SI*, from the 12th day of the 7th lunar month through 3rd day of the 8th lunar month.

a victim of court politics. Two months later, again according to the *Diaries*, Jeong was appointed Vice Minister of Punishments (*hyeongjo champan* 刑曹參判), a much higher position (junior second rank) than the king had originally intended to confer upon him.[44] The entries of the *Diaries* therefore suggest a very different ending: quite contrary to the remark in the *Annals*, Jeong's presentation of Rodrigues' gifts to the king had brought him a remarkable advancement in his official career at the Joseon court.

However, by the time Yi Ik penned his "On Rodrigues," a century afterwards, the memory of Jeong's official success had been completely lost. All the political circumstances surrounding Jeong's China mission and his encounter with Rodrigues had also become irrelevant, and thus seemed invisible to the literati readers of the already fragmented records of Jeong's episode. What had survived during the intervening century was the image of Rodrigues as a benign gift-giver from the West, an image Jeong had carefully crafted, in his self-serving rhetorical efforts to highlight his own achievements in his mission to China. At the same time, as indicated by Yi Ik's disappointment at the loss of Rodrigues' gifts, Jeong's effort to bring them to Joseon was increasingly viewed as a failure—an early, abortive attempt to introduce Western Learning into Korea. The wider availability of the *Gukjo bogam* (Precious Mirror for Succeeding Reigns), which recapitulates the account in the *Annals*, might have contributed to the rise of this failure narrative. It was to this eighteenth-century reformulation of Jeong's episode that twentieth-century historians have added their own twist, refashioning it to be an ominous early sign of Korea's eventual failure in modernization.

This paper provides an alternative picture to this highly allegorized rendering of Jeong's episode. It does so by resituating Jeong's report within the specific historical contexts surrounding his China mission. When writing his report on Rodrigues, Jeong simply had no reason to refashion himself as a pioneering figure of Western modernity in Joseon. Jeong only wanted to persuade the Joseon court of the practical benefits of the Western gifts, and in doing so, to promote his own standing within the government bureaucracy.

44. *SI*, the 8th day of the 10th lunar month, 9th year of King Injo's reign (1631).

My contextual reading of Jeong's episode provides a corrective to an existing Eurocentric and teleological narrative in the historiography of Joseon's foreign encounters, which has become tightly locked into Jeong's episode, during the past several centuries. The image of a benign Western gift-giver, of which Rodrigues was an early archetype, became a recurring theme in later Korean history, as can be seen in the generally modest self-positioning of the Joseon elites vis-à-vis what they viewed as the Western gift-giver. If Eurocentrism does not suffice to explain the appearance and then spread in the late Joseon period of the imagery of one-sided gift-exchange, it might have much deeper cultural origins. It perhaps stems from Korean elites' enduring perception of their marginality, which set them on continuous voyages to the sources of higher culture, regardless of whether that source was in China or the West. The peculiarity of Jeong's case lies in the fact that while travelling to China he came across another, new source of valuable gifts, one from the West. To him, however, the West was still not a legitimate source of high culture in its own standing; it required cultural legitimation, by establishing its conformity to the culture of Middle Kingdom. The age of full-scale Westernization was yet to come.

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