

The Experiences of Visiting Catholic Churches in Beijing and the Recognition of Western Learning Reflected in the Journals of Travel to Beijing¹

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This article aims to understand the contact made between Joseon envoys and Western missionaries through the Catholic churches in Beijing and their perceptions of one another. There are a total of nineteen journals from the 18th century that contain essays related to the Catholic churches. *Iram yeon-gi* (一菴燕記) by Lee Gi-ji (李器之) and *Eulbyeong yeonhaengnok* by Hong Dae-yong (洪大容) contain the most detailed descriptions of Western culture.

The envoys were most interested in astronomy, the calendar system, and Western paintings. Their interest in astronomy and the calendar system reflected an urgent need for a thorough understanding of the Western calendar system. The implementation of *siheonyeok* (時憲曆) was reformed on the basis of the Western calendar system. Western paintings were a kind of culture shock to the envoys visiting the Catholic churches. Since most of the envoys were deeply impressed by the vivid and lifelike appearance of the portrait of Jesus Christ, which was always displayed on the north wall opposite the church entrance, they recorded their impressions. They were interested in the Western style of painting that showed contrast by using perspective and shade and its accurate portrayal of figures and objects.

Western missionaries expressed interest in the Joseon territory because they wanted to build churches in Joseon like those in China and to preach Western culture and religion. Although the missionaries tried to spread Catholicism as well as Western culture, most Joseon envoys took a reluctant or

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even negative attitude toward Western religion while admitting the superiority of Western devices. It seems that most Joseon envoys perceived the West from the viewpoint of what is called *dongdo seogi* (Eastern morality and Western instruments).

The perceptions of the Joseon envoys and the Western missionaries made during the 18th century through their indirect contact at the Catholic churches were relatively open compared to the 19th century. In 19th century Joseon, the relationship between Joseon and the West worsened because those who held power over the king persecuted Catholics and the influence of Western imperialism became apparent.

Keywords: *yeonhaengnok*, Catholic churches, a relative military officer, astronomy and the calendar system, Western paintings, Western learning

Introduction

Joseon was the last of the East Asian countries to make contact with the West. While China and Japan had direct contact with Western civilization during the 18th century, Joseon's direct contact with the West did not occur until the 19th century. However, Joseon had direct contact with China in the 18th century and seized the opportunity to make contact with the West.

The main point of contact with Western civilization was through the Catholic churches in Beijing. There were four churches where European missionaries resided and they were the center for the spread of Western scientific civilization and religion. In the 18th century, Joseon encountered Western civilization very actively and purely at these Catholic churches.² The records about contact with

2. The phrase, "... very actively and purely" indicates the characteristic of the contact with Western civilization during the 18th century in contrast to the 17th and 19th centuries. During the 17th century, Joseon had an antagonistic relationship with Qing with rumors of imminent attack by both sides. Joseon pursued the conquest of the northern areas while Qing was suffering from various rebellions among which the Revolt of the Three Feudatories (三藩) was typical. Accordingly, exchanges between the two countries were restricted and contact with Western civilization was also scarce and superficial. During the 19th century, a powerful government was established and took an antagonistic view toward Western learning with the 1801 Persecution of Catholics in Joseon as the start and prohibiting future visits to the Catholic churches in Beijing. There were

Western civilization and having a positive perception of it appear more frequently in records from the 18th century than during any other century.

During the reign of Emperor Kangxi of Qing (1662-1722), the Catholic churches in Beijing became popular places for envoys visiting Beijing and this trend peaked during the reigns of Emperor Yongzheng (1723-1735) and Emperor Qianlong (1736-1795).

During the reign of Emperor Shen Zong (神宗) of the Ming dynasty, Matteo Ricci (利瑪竇, 1552-1610) arrived in China and contact with Westerners began.... Within the city the Emperor had four Catholic churches (四堂: the East, West, South, and North Catholic churches) built and the missionaries lived there, calling it *Cheonsangdae* (天象臺). As a result, Western learning began to flourish and those who knew astronomy came to describe their technology.... Since the reign of Emperor Kangxi (康熙), when the Joseon envoys traveling to Beijing came to a Catholic church, they asked to see it. Westerners were delighted to meet them, showed them the peculiar paintings of God (神像) and strange instruments, and sometimes presented Western-made objects to them. Therefore, the envoys wanted to receive presents and liked to see strange sights, making it a rule to visit the churches every year.... Yu Song Yeong (劉松齡) and Po Wu Gwan (鮑友官) stayed at the South Catholic church and were mathematics experts. The South Catholic church was furnished more wonderfully than any other church and the Joseon envoys frequented it. (“*Yupo mundap* (劉鮑問答),” *Damheon yeongi*)

The Joseon envoys traveling to Beijing were warmly received by the Western missionaries. Through them they were able to see Western paintings and instruments and were sometimes given queer Western objects. Since they were warmly welcomed and could see unusual things, these visits to the Catholic churches became an established custom. The South Catholic church was located nearest to Yuheguan (玉河館), the envoys’ lodgings making it convenient to visit. In 1760 (the 36th year of King Yeongjo), Lee Sang-bong (李商鳳) who traveled to

various invasions into Joseon by Western powers in the second half of the 19th century because the Western powers forcefully requested the opening of a port. The Joseon encounters with Western civilization in the 19th century can be characterized as negative.

Beijing as a *jaje gungwan* (relative military officer) described Western music, a telescope, the paintings of the Catholic churches, and a Western map as wonderful things to see.³

In the journals of travel to Beijing, there are only a few dialogues between envoys, high-ranking literary men of Joseon and Jesuit missionaries, advanced European intellectuals at the Catholic churches in Beijing. These journals are not official reports but the private records of intellectuals. They contain vivid descriptions of the shock and wonder caused by contact with a heterogeneous civilization and the conflict to cope with it. The journals of travel to Beijing clearly reveal the responses and feelings of the Western intellectuals as well as their level of interest and understanding. In order to understand the perception of the Joseon intellectuals toward Western civilization during the 18th century, it is necessary to study the journal entries on the Catholic churches in Beijing. This paper will therefore review these records and related entries from the journals of travel to Beijing in the 18th century and provide an interpretation of the contact with Western learning.

The Experiences of the Joseon Envoys who Visited the Catholic Churches in Beijing

1. The South Catholic Church and *jaje gungwan*

The journals written by the Joseon envoys have been systematically collected and it is believed that most of them have been found and arranged.⁴ There are about 100 different journals of travel to Beijing from the 18th century and there are nineteen journals that contain articles relating to the Beijing Catholic churches. Approximately one-fifth of the journals, shown in the following table, con-

3. Dated January 8, 1761 in “*Wangnaechongnok* (往來總錄),” *Bugwonnok* (北轅錄) Vol. 4. “The most interesting things to see are the foggy forest of *gyemun* (薊門), Western music, a telescope, the Catholic church and the palace of Wonmyeongwon (圓明園).”

4. There are about 500 journals of travel to Beijing that have been found up to now and printed in *Yeonhaengnogyeonjip* (A Complete Collection of the Journals of Travel to Beijing). This anthology is edited by Lim Gi-jung and published by Dongguk University Press in 2001. Recently, the Institute for Korean Literature and Dongguk University found omitted data and published a bibliographical introduction (see Institute for Korean Literature, Dongguk University, 2003).

Table 1 Catholic Churches Mentioned in *yeonhaengnok* of the 18th Century⁵

Date of Departure	Journal Title	Author	Position	Catholic Church Visited	Remarks
Nov. 1711	<i>Yeonhaeng ilgi</i>	Min Jin-won	Deputy Envoy	No mention of visiting	
Nov. 1712	<i>Nogajae yeonhaeng ilgi</i>	Kim Chang-eop	<i>jaje gungwan</i>	South Church	Mentioned the portrait of Jesus Christ, astronomical instrument & alarm clock.
Dec. 1712	<i>Yeonhaengnok</i>	Choi Duk-jung	Military Attendant	No mention of visiting	
July 1720	<i>Yeonhaeng jabji</i>	Lee Yi-myeong	Senior Envoy	South Church	Three envoys visited & discussed astronomy & calendar.
July 1720	<i>Iram yeon-gi</i>	Lee Gi-ji	<i>jaje gungwan</i>	South, East & North churches	Wrote <i>Seoyang hwagi</i> & <i>Honui-gi</i> .
Nov. 1720	<i>Gyeongja yeonhaeng jabji</i>	Lee Eui-hyeon	Senior Envoy	Passed in front of the South Church	Regretted not visiting the church.
Oct. 1727	<i>Sangbongnok</i>	Kang Ho-bo	Deputy Envoy	South Church	Mentioned the portrait of Jesus Christ & the alarm clock.
July 1732	<i>Imja yeonhaeng jabji</i>	Lee Eui-hyeon	Senior Envoy	South Church	Three envoys visited.
July 1732	<i>Yeonhaeng ilnok</i>	Han Deok-hu	Recorder	No mention of visiting	
Nov. 1755	<i>Yeonhaeng ilnok</i>	Anonymous	Military Attendant (?)	South Church	Met Yu Song-yeong.
Nov. 1760	<i>Bugwonnok</i>	Lee Sang-bong	<i>jaje gungwan</i>	East church	Mentioned the statue of Jesus Christ & the theory of Catholicism.
Nov. 1765	<i>Simhyeon yeongi Eulbyeong yeonhaengnok</i>	Hong Dae-yong	<i>jaje gungwan</i>	South & East churches	Met Yu Song-yeong & Po Wu-gwan.

5. *Yeonhaengnok* containing records of the Catholic churches from 1649 to 1876 are in Won Jae-yeon's book (2003). The table contains those journals from the 18th century plus supplementary ones that had been omitted in Won Jae-yeon's book. The supplementary ones are marked with an asterisk.

Table 1 (Continued)

Date of Departure	Journal Title	Author	Position	Catholic Church Visited	Remarks
Nov. 1773	<i>Yeonhaengnok</i> *	Eom Suk	Deputy Envoy	South Church	
June 1780	<i>Yeolha ilgi</i>	Park Ji-won	<i>jaje gungwan</i>	South Church	Wrote <i>Buggyeong-cheonjudanggi</i> & <i>Yanghwa</i> .
Oct. 1787	<i>Yeonhaengnok</i>	Yu Eon-ho	Senior Envoy	Did not visit	Deputy envoy and recorder visited a church.
May 1790	<i>Yeonhaeng giyu</i>	Seo Ho-su	Deputy Envoy	Did not visit	Regretted not visiting.
Nov. 1791	<i>Yeonhaengnok</i>	Kim Jeong-jung	Military Attendant (?)	Passed in front of the South Church	
Oct. 1798	<i>Muoyeon haengnok</i>	Seo Yu-mun	Recorder	Did not visit	Recorded Chihyeong's visit to a church

tain entries about the Catholic churches in Beijing.

There were four senior envoys, four deputy envoys, two recorders, five *jaje gungwan*, two military attendants and two men presumed to be military officers who recorded their visits to the Catholic churches while traveling in Beijing. The five *jaje gungwan* outnumber the others and, moreover, it is probable that the two military officers listed were *jaje gungwan*. The *jaje gungwan* seem to have a greater interest in Western learning and the preciseness of their recordings proves this interest. First of all, it is noteworthy that the so-called journals of travel to Beijing representing the 18th century such as *Nogajae yeonhaeng ilgi* by Kim Chang-eop, *Damheon ilgi* by Hong Dae-yong and *Yeolha ilgi* by Park Ji-won are the records of *jaje gungwan* (Kim Gyeong-seon 1976a).⁶ Lee Gi-ji and Lee Sang-bong are also *jaje gungwan* and their journals *Iram yeongi* and *Bugwonnok* described the Catholic churches in Beijing more precisely than other journals.

The three top officials (三使), a senior envoy, a deputy envoy and a recorder were given the privilege of selecting one or two attendants under the title of *jaje*

6. Most of the envoys traveling to Beijing left records of their travel. The three most well-known are Kim Chang-eop, Hong Dae-yong and Park Ji-won.

gungwan' from their relatives. The *jaje gungwan*'s military uniforms gave them the status of military officers who privately escorted and attended the envoys but most of them were actually literary scholars. Their travels to Beijing assumed the character of a kind of excursion to widen their knowledge of the world (Kim Tae-jun 1982). *Jaje gungwan* were relatively free compared to the envoys and were full of intellectual curiosity as literary scholars. Accordingly, it is natural that their journal entries on the Catholic churches were done very precisely. It can be presumed that the reason the Joseon government had the *jaje gungwan* and top intellectuals at the time travel freely to Beijing was their political intention to secretly discover the strong and weak points of Qing and prepare against the Qing.

All of the *jaje gungwan* visited the South Catholic church except for Lee Sang-bong who only visited the East Catholic church. The South Catholic church, situated near the lodgings of the Joseon envoys, had wonderful furniture and presented a grand appearance. While most of the envoys visited only the South Catholic Church, Lee Gi-ji visited the South, East and West Catholic churches and Hong Dae-yong the South and East Catholic churches. This proves that these two men were greatly interested in Western learning. Hong Dae-yong, a realist scholar of the Northern Learning Group (北學派), has long attracted attention and his advanced scientific thought and interest in Western learning have been precisely explained through contemporary research. In the case of Lee Gi-ji, his journal *Iram yeongi* was found recently, revealing that he had a deep interest and understanding of Western learning (Shin Ik-Cheol 2005). In their journals, Lee Gi-ji and Hong Dae-yong had a keen interest in the Catholic churches in Beijing and they left many interesting records. In particular, the journal of Lee Gi-ji is more precise.

Envoys tended to pay most attention to the following three aspects of Western learning, namely astronomy, the calendar system and Western paintings.⁷ The Joseon envoys were most interested in the armillary sphere, the compass, the telescope, the portrait of Jesus Christ, albums of Western paintings, and maps. Besides, what interested the envoys about Western civilization was the variety of modern Western materials such as alarm clocks, organs, fountain

7. Anonymous. An article dated January 21, 1756. *Yeonhaengilnok* (Daily Records of Travel to Beijing). "They are expert in a calendar system and excellent in paintings. Half of the officials at the Imperial Observatory of Qing, China are Westerners and those excellent in painting are on night duty and are engaged in painting."

pens, matches, inhaling cigars, cigarettes, *heubdogseok* (吸毒石: hard medicinal herb which absorbed poison), *gogwa* (苦果: medicinal herb), wine, sponge cakes, and an automatic doll mechanism. The following sections will take an in-depth look at astronomy, the calendar system, and paintings that the envoys were interested in.

2. Astronomy and the Calendar System

In the East, the traditional idea of *jaeiron* (災異論) means that unusual astronomical phenomena are closely related to the ruler's political successes and failures. Accordingly, astronomical observations were regarded as an important duty of the ruler and a realistic demand on the correct forecast of climate in agricultural society also worked as a material element. It is said that Joseon first encountered the Western calendar system in 1631 (the 9th year of King Injo) when Jeong Du-won (鄭斗源, 1581-?) went to Beijing as an envoy and obtained *cheonmunyak* (天文略) and *chiryek yeongi* (治曆緣起) from the missionary Johannes Roderique (Lee Ik *Seongho saseol*). In 1648 (the 26th year of King Injo), since there was a difference between *joseonyeok* (朝鮮曆, the calendar of Joseon) and *siheonyeok* (時憲曆, the current standard calendar of Qing) in establishing a leap month, there was an increased interest in the Western calendar system. The Office of Astronomy of Joseon (觀象監) that had reviewed the appropriateness of the current standard calendar of Qing became convinced of the correctness of the Western calendar system in 1653 (the 4th year of King Hyojong) and suggested the use of it. Thereafter the government admitted and used this system for the first time (Roh Dae-hwan 1997). However, the current standard calendar of Qing at the time was imported directly from Qing. Afterward, Joseon learned the principle of the current standard calendar at the Imperial Observatory (欽天監) of Qing during every travel to Beijing and imported a Western almanac. In 1708 (the 34th year of King Sukjong), Joseon understood the current standard calendar of Qing rather correctly and came to calculate and produce its own almanac. However, this was also incomplete because the calculation of solar and lunar eclipses (日月蝕) and the astronomical calculation based on the five planetary movements (五星算法) weren't correctly reflected. Therefore, the Joseon dynasty continued to learn more about the Western calendar system, and it was one of the important missions of the envoys traveling to Beijing (Jeong Seong-hi 2005).

Due to this situation, Joseon's interest in Western learning concentrated

mostly on the field of astronomy and the calendar system. Many records can be found in the journals of travel to Beijing in the 18th century about this subject. The envoys were interested in astronomical observation instruments such as armillary sphere (渾天儀) and telescopes (千里鏡) and discussed with missionaries the differences between the East and West's calendar system.

Kim Chang-eop. *Nogajae yeonhaeng ilgi*. February 15, 1713: "Visited the Imperial Observatory (欽天監) of Qing and saw several instruments including an armillary sphere, whose use couldn't be fully understood."

Lee Gi-ji. *Iram yeongi*. Traveled to Beijing in 1720: On October 24, the senior envoy wanted to buy an almanac but they said the government kept the books from being exported. On October 26, Lee Gi-ji visited the South Catholic church and discussed the difference of astronomy and the calendar system between the East and the West with the missionaries I. Kögler (蘇霖), J. Saurez (戴進賢) and Zhang An Duo (張安多). Concerning solar and lunar eclipses, Lee Gi-ji asked whether solar and lunar eclipses were related to the morality of a ruler based on the Eastern traditional idea, *jaeigwan* (災異觀). I. Kögler answered extraordinary phenomena such as solar and lunar eclipses are not related to human business but occur according to the principle of astronomical movements. On October 30, Lee Gi-ji visited the East Catholic church and heard Seo Mu Seung (徐懋昇)⁸ explain a Western armillary sphere. On November 22, when leaving Beijing, an armillary sphere made of paper was presented to Lee Gi-ji by Seo Mu Seung. Lee Gi-ji admired the precise system of Western armillary sphere by writing *Honuigi* (渾儀記).

Hong Dae-yong. *Eulbyeong yeonhaengnok*. January 9, 1766: Hong Dae-yong visited the South Catholic church, saw an armillary sphere and asked the missionary August von Hallerstein (劉松齡) why he couldn't see the sunspot when watching the sun through a telescope. Hallerstein said, "You don't know the principle. There are many black spots in the sun and the form of the sun is round. Revolving day and night, it moves like a wheel. Seen at the right or left side, if there are spots on this side, there are no spots on that side. If there are a

8. It is presumed that Seo Mu Seung was an error of the Portuguese missionary, Seo Mu Deok (徐懋德, Andres Pereira 1690-1783) in writing. He reached China in 1716, was an expert in astronomy and wrote *Cheonjiryek sanggoseong* (天地曆象考成). In 1741, an official of the Office of Astronomy, Ahn Guk-bin (安國賓) together with interpreters Byeon Jung-hwa (卞重和) and Kim Jae-hyeon (金在鉉) learned astronomical mathematics from I. Kögler and Andrea Pereira and obtained various books including *Ilwol gyesigpyo* (日月交食表).

few spots on this side, there are often many spots on that side.” The official in charge of astronomy Lee Deok-seong, whose mission was to learn Western astronomy and the calendar system, betrayed his dissatisfaction because Western missionaries didn’t teach him the system.

Park Ji-won (朴趾源). *Yeolha ilgi* (熱河日記). Traveled to Beijing in 1780: While watching astronomical observation instruments at the observatory and remembering the discussion about astronomy between Hong Dae-yong and Jeong Cheol-jo (鄭喆祚), Park Ji-won said he didn’t know about their system and use.

The 18th century envoys interest in astronomy and a calendar system was centered on the armillary sphere. While most of the envoys can’t figure out the principles of astronomy and the calendar system for lack of special knowledge, Lee Gi-ji and Hong Dae-yong are able to have conversations with the missionaries about these things.

Lee Gi-ji discusses astronomy and the calendar system with Catholic missionaries, closely observes a Western armillary sphere (渾天儀) and realizes that there are considerable errors in the traditional interpretation of Eastern astronomy and its calendar system. Therefore, after observing a Western armillary sphere, Lee Gi-ji says the theory that the heaven and the earth are round (天圓地圓說) is doubtlessly a plain truth and indicates the defect in the astronomical and cosmic view of So Ong (邵雍) which was considered an absolute theory in the Eastern calendar system (Shin Ik-Cheol 2005). Thus, Lee Gi-ji discusses how Western astronomy explains the idea that unusual astronomical phenomena are related to the ruler’s reign and the principles of the sexagenary cycle in response to twelve directions based on east, west, north and south and twenty-eight su that refer to twenty-eight constellations in Asian astronomy. Lee Gi-ji objectively accepts the superiority of the Western astronomical view and has a keen interest in its principles. Presumably Seo Mu Seung presented a Western armillary sphere to Lee Gi-ji because he was moved by Lee Gi-ji’s serious interest in the Western calendar system and his open-mindedness.

Hong Dae-yong was a realist scholar who had been making astronomical observations at *Nongsugak* (籠水閣), a so-called private observatory at his house, with an armillary sphere and an alarm clock. The armillary sphere of *Nongsugak* was constructed in three years with the help of the scientists Na Gyeong-jeok (羅景積) and Jeong Cheol-jo. As he was keenly interested in astronomy, Hong Dae-yong must have been deeply impressed when observing the sun directly through a telescope at the Catholic church. His excitement can

be felt when he asks why he can't see the sunspots while looking at the sun through a telescope. Hallerstein who answered Hong Dae-yong's questions was head of the Imperial Astronomy Bureau of Qing and his knowledge of astronomy must have been the highest level at the time. The discussion between the two concerning the sunspots was the contents of discourse of top East Asian astronomers at the time.

3. Portrait of Jesus Christ and Western Paintings

What caught the eyes of most of the envoys visiting the Catholic churches in Beijing was a portrait of Jesus Christ. They first faced this peculiar portrait in Catholic churches where it would hang on the north wall. Most of the envoys described their shock and surprise at the heterogeneous style of painting that contrasted with Eastern paintings.

Lee Gi-ji. *Iram yeongi*. September 22; September 27; October 10; October 22; October 24, 1720: Lee Gi-ji viewed the portrait of Jesus Christ, the painting of Jesus Christ's birth and Jesus Christ on the cross and borrowed and read five books of Western paintings. A missionary presented seven Western pictures to him. "The pictures of animals, worms and fish seem to be alive. Ten kinds of even smaller insects such as butterflies and bees are painted on the wall, whose shapes and colors are drawn very realistically. Their mouths, eyes, hair and eyebrows are drawn so realistically that one can tell what kind of worms or animals they are at a glance without knowing their names. When opening a book, it looks so much like a worm or a fish moves or flies out that one may grasp it with both hands."

Lee Gyeon-myeong. *Hanpojae sahaeng ilgi*. January 29, 1722: "A Westerner sent me lots of books of drawings and paintings. They are the pictures of palaces and figures of various Western countries, most of which I can't understand."

Kang Ho-bu. *Sangbongnok*. December 29, 1727: Kang Ho-bu visited the South Catholic church and saw the portrait of the Lord. "As the portrait is beautiful, brilliant and vivid, it looks like a living man. The delicacy of the art of painting is indescribable. That is why the world calls Western paintings the works of God (神品). From my viewpoint, the man in the picture assumes a weird air. So do the beasts and birds. It is skillfulness itself. The picture looks so dreamy, mysterious and delightful that I can't know the reason. Really, it can be called the skillfulness of a devil."

Lee Ui-hyeon. *Imja yeonhaeng jabji*. Traveled to Beijing in 1732: Lee Ui-hyeon visited the South Catholic church and saw the portrait of the Lord. “Having drawn the Heaven, it is so high that it can touch the stars in the sky. There are so many devils (陰鬼) on the walls not to speak of the sun, the moon and the heavenly bodies that it looks like the hall for the dead (十王殿) in a Buddhist temple.”

Lee Sang-bong. *Bugwonnok*. January 8, 1761: Lee Sang-bong visited the East Catholic church and saw the portrait of the Lord. “There are many girlish appearances in the picture. Among them, a girl lets her hair down with her forearm naked. This is the Lord. Seen a few steps away, it doesn’t look like a picture. Touched by the hand and confirmed there is nothing on it, it proves itself a picture. Someone said ‘as it was drawn by yin and yang and represents vividly the object of artistic endeavor, it looks like moving alive seen far away.’”

Hong Dae-yong. *Damheon yeongi*. January 9, 1766. *Eulbyeong yeonhaengnok*. January 24, 1766: Hong Dae-yong visited the South Catholic church and saw both the portrait of the Lord and the portraits of missionaries on either wall. “There are ten portraits each on the east and west walls wearing long-sleeved robes with their hair let down. It may be a Western clothing custom. Over each portrait, there is a name written. They are all conspicuous Westerners who admire Catholicism. I don’t know anyone except Matteo Ricci and Tang Yak Mang.”

Seo Yu-mun. *Muo yeonhaengnok*. January 11, 1799: Seo Yu-mun visited the South Catholic church and saw the portraits of the Lord and missionaries painted on either wall. “In the middle over the north wall, there is a girlish portrait with two strands of hair let down on the right and left sides and open eyes looking up at the sky. It is an attitude of indefinite thinking and doubting. The body and clothes look like they are floating high in the air and standing in a cavernous enclosure. Seen a few steps away, it looks like a figurine but, seen near, it is a picture of an about thirty-year-old girl whose complexion is yellow and upper eyelids are very blue because her eyes are turned upwards. It is wearing long-sleeved clothes whose needlework of pleats and gussets is obvious and lively. It is a very strange style of painting. In front, there is an incense burner emitting an endless sweet smell and under the western wall of the portrait there is a big chair with a cushion of a dragon on it. It looks very gorgeous. Who can sit on it? Maybe, it is a seat for an emperor but not for a commoner.

There is a portrait of a woman with her child in her arms. The child looks surprised with its eyes wide open and the woman is worrying about the child.

An old man is afraid of something and prays with his hands folded. It seems that the woman is taking care of the sick child. Above the woman, there is a white dove sending out something white to her with its wings wide open. In the sky, there are clouds on every side and innumerable children who are pushing their heads through the clouds and are likely to fall imminently. The old man seems to take them in his hand toward the heaven. Seen a few steps away, it doesn't look like a picture. It is a strange and fascinating scene. Staying long, I feel bad."

Most of the envoys visiting the Catholic churches expressed their impressions of the portrait of the Lord. They were greatly surprised at the strange style of the painting. Park Ji-won says, "...are incomprehensible from the ordinary mind and indescribable in any language or letters" explains well the shock when he first saw the Western pictures. What the literary men were surprised at was, above all, the truthfulness to life of describing figures and things. Most of them commonly indicate this point. There are episodes where some of the envoys, surprisingly, mistake a dog drawn on the inner wall of the South Catholic church for a real dog.

In *Eulbyeong yeonhaengnok*, Hong Dae-yong said, "I entered through a big gate and there is another gate westward leading to the inside. At the east side, there is a neat wall of bricks with a door half open while the houses outside the door appear indistinctly. I asked Sepal about that. He laughed and said that it was not a real door but a picture on the wall in order to show the skillfulness to onlookers. I approached the wall doubtfully and found that it was not real but painted on the wall. This was enough for me to imagine the skillfulness of Western painting."

Most of the distinguished men paid attention to the conspicuous styles of Western painting: perspective and contrast excellent in light and darkness. Seeing the picture of a castle town and its dwellings, Lee Gi-ji thinks highly of the realistic description of far and near shapes by means of the method of an overhead view (俯瞰法). Lee Gi-ji recognized clearly the merit of Western paintings by means of perspective. Hong Dae-yong has a deep understanding about the perspective of Western paintings. In *Yupo mundap* (劉鮑問答), Hong Dae-yong said, "They are expert in perspective and use original pure colors in drawing the appearance and shade of stream and valley, the light and dimness of smoke and cloud and the vacant space of the far sky. It is said, 'The delicacy of Western paintings is caused by the excellence of ingenious thinking and proportional allotment coming from mathematics.'" Hong Dae-yong indicates that this perspective derived from advanced Western mathematical technology.

Understanding that the stereography contrasting light and darkness appropriately together with perspective is the merit of Western style of painting, Lee Sang-bong said, “As it was drawn by yin and yang and vividly represents the object of artistic endeavor, it looks like moving alive seen far away,” and Park Ji-won said, “They look like breathing and moving alive and show their lightness and darkness spontaneously while the distribution of yin and yang are properly coordinated.”

On the other hand, it seems that heterogeneous and strange Western styles of painting were considered negative by some visitors. According to Kang Ho-bu, the man in the picture assumes a weird air, and so do the beasts and birds. Lee Ui-hyeon says it looks like the hall of the dead in a Buddhist temple. Strange to say, it has no spirit of dark and brightly lighted. The men had different feelings about the Western paintings which used different materials than when they saw Oriental paintings. While Oriental paintings that are drawn with brush and ink on silk and take advantage of blank space give us a feeling of serenity and tidiness, Western oil paintings that are drawn on canvas in oil colors and are expressed colorfully without blank space make us feel strong and rough. There are some examples of a negative perception of the meaning of the picture. Looking at the men and women crying over the death of Jesus Christ, Hong Dae-yong said, “I felt disgusting and couldn’t bear looking at it.” Lee Ui-hyeon said, “It drew so many devils on the walls not to speak of the sun, the moon and the heavenly bodies that it looks like the hall of the dead in a Buddhist temple.” He was dissatisfied with the atmosphere like a temple house with many devils drawn on the wall.

Judging from the above records on Western paintings, most of the Joseon envoys traveling to Beijing positively perceived Western paintings in spite of some negative perceptions. In *Seongho saseol*, Lee Ik said, “Most of the envoys traveling to Beijing recently bought Western paintings and had them hung on the wall.” There was a tendency for the envoys to buy and like Western paintings and for missionaries to present Western paintings to the envoys. Seven Western paintings were presented to Lee Gi-ji, fifteen to Lee Ui-hyeon and two atlases to Lee Geon-myeong. Western paintings and atlases were a good method for Catholic missionaries to inform the Joseon envoys about Western civilization and customs. There could be no good method to inform unknown people of their world clearly but pictures because the envoys of Joseon also looked at the strange styles of painting with curiosity.

The Perception of Western Missionaries of the Joseon Envoys

Up to now, this paper has focused on astronomy, the calendar system, and Western paintings. This section will review other contact between the Joseon envoys and the missionaries and estimate their standard of perception toward the other party.

In the first half of the 18th century, Western missionaries in Beijing were very interested in Joseon and wanted to build Catholic churches and spread their religion in Joseon. Western missionaries provided a warm reception to the Joseon envoys and asked them about the topography of Joseon and the distance from Beijing to Joseon. Serving wine and sponge cake to Lee Gi-ji who visited the South Catholic church on December 10, 1720, Western missionaries asked him about the capital city and its distance, showing a map closely resembling the topography of Joseon. On December 28, Lee Gi-ji visited the West Catholic church and talked with the four missionaries Bai Pu (白普), Lei Xiao Si (雷孝思), Tang Shang Xian (湯尙賢) and Yin Hong Xu (殷弘緒). They talked about the dogma of Catholicism that all people in the world are born as brothers and sisters by the Lord. Bai Pu talked about his experience climbing Mt. Baekdu with Mu Ke Deng (穆克登) and seeing the territory of Joseon and asked Lee Gi-ji about the distance by sea from Deng Zhou (登州) and Lai Zhou (萊州) to Joseon. Tang Shang Xian talked to the interpreter Jeong Tae-hyeon about his hope of constructing a Catholic church in Joseon. Jeong Tae-hyeon said that he needed governmental permission to build a church. Yin Hong Xu presented *Cheonju sirui* (True Principles of Catholicism) to Lee Gi-ji (Lee Gi-ji *Iram yeongi*). The fact that Bai Pu and Mu Ke Deng climbed Mt. Baekdu indicates that the Mt. Baekdu Stele for Marking the Border (白頭山定界碑) was erected in 1712 (the 38th year of King Sukjong) and the border was fixed between Joseon and Qing. This record tells that Western missionaries were included in the group of Qing when erecting the stele. Judging from the existing records of travel to Beijing, Lee Gi-ji was the most open-minded of the envoys traveling to Beijing during the 18th century. Western missionaries expressed clearly their hope of spreading Catholicism in Joseon through Lee Gi-ji. This confirms that in the first half of the 18th century Western missionaries were searching for the possibility of coming to Joseon and preaching Catholicism in Joseon.

In 1732, the missionary Fei Yin (費隱) sent the senior envoy Lee Ui-hyeon *Samsannonhakki* (三山論學記) and *Jujegunjeung* (主制群證) four sheets of colored paper, ten sheets of white paper, fifteen big or small pictures, one *heub-*

dogseok and six *gogwa*. Lee Ui-hyeon said that the two books were about Western magic and explained the effectiveness of *heubdogseok* and *gogwa* in detail.⁹ *Samsannonhaggi* was a Catholic catechism written by the Italian Jesuit missionary Giulio Aleni (艾儒略, 1582-1649) in Chinese characters and *Jujegunjeung* was another Catholic catechism written by Joannes Adam Shall von Bell (湯若望, 1591-1661) that explained Catholicism in comparison with the universe and the structure of the human body and was accepted as a medical book by the intellectuals of Joseon. Lee Ui-hyeon didn't give particulars about these books on Catholicism and medicine but paid attention to only the modern instruments of civilization, *heubdogseok* and *gogwa* to a considerable degree.

There are various perceptions of the envoys toward Catholicism. Lee Ui-hyeon had a negative perception of Catholicism saying, "Catholicism focuses on serving the Heaven and is contrary to the morality of Confucianism, rejecting Ch'an and Buddhism and cherishing itself only."¹⁰ Meanwhile, Lee Yi-myeong who was a senior envoy in 1720 said to J. Saurez and I. Kögler in his letter that Catholicism is not different from Confucianism in respecting the Supreme Being (God) and finding a clue to sex while the doxy of Jesus Christ's birth is similar to that of Buddha and the doxy of hell the law of cause and effect of Buddhism ("A Letter Sent to Westerners J. Saurez and I. Kögler—與西洋人蘇霖戴進賢", *Sojaejip*—疎齋集 Vol. 10). Lee Yi-myeong tolerated Catholicism. Lee Sang-bong who traveled to Beijing as a *jaje gungwan* in 1760 said, "The Lord of Heaven is the so-called creator and is similar to a spirit in Confucianism. Westerners don't respect Confucianism, Buddhism and Taosim but respect only the Lord of Heaven, thanking Him for breathing even a breath. Therefore, they respect the Lord as an emperor and love and depend on the Lord as parents" (Lee Sang-bong *Bugwonnok*—北轅錄). It seems that Lee Sang-bong didn't reveal his likes and dislikes but wanted to describe the facts and evaluate them objectively. Hong Dae-yong who was a *jaje gungwan* in 1765 said, "The outline of Catholicism is to respect the Heaven like Buddhism respects Buddha, encouraging people to hold morning and evening services, doing good and invoking a blessing. It is not worth mentioning because it differs from the morality of Chinese saints and is the church of barbarians (An Article of January 7, 1766.

9. "Imja yeonhaeng jabji (壬子燕行雜識)," *Dogogjip* (陶谷集) Vol. 30.

10. Translation <陶谷集> fascicle 30, Translation 「壬子燕行雜識」, "天主堂主胡費姓人, 送三山論學記, 主制羣徵各一册, 彩紙四張, 白色紙十張, 大小畫十五幅, 吸毒石一箇, 苦果六箇."

Eulbyeong yeonhaengnok). Hong Dae-yong viewed Catholicism as a barbarous dogma similar to Buddhism and perceives it negatively. Judging from the above, the Joseon envoys traveling to Beijing during the 18th century understood the Lord of Heaven roughly as the Supreme Being of Confucianism and regarded the theory of heaven and hell as the law of cause and effect in Buddhism. Each writer possessed their own perception of Catholicism whether it was negative, positive, or indifferent.

In the second half of the 18th century Western missionaries treated envoys unkindly whereas they gave them a warm reception in the first half of the 18th century. Lee Deok-seong went to the Catholic church as an official of the Office of Astronomy with Hong Dae-yong to learn about the Western calendar system and became indignant coming out of the church because missionaries didn't explain the system favorably and treated them unkindly, whereas they "treated us with good food and presented a lot of gifts of Western make a few years ago (Hong Dae-Yong *Eulbyeong yeonhaengnok*). Eom Su (嚴壽) who went to Beijing as a deputy envoy in 1773 came back home and reported his mission to the king. He answered King Yeongjo's question about whether he had met the missionary Hallerstein. "The senior envoy, deputy envoy and recorder went to the Catholic church together. Hallerstein was angry with a lot of attendants and didn't meet us. We just saw the hall the Lord of Heaven was enshrined" (Eom Su *Yeonhaengnok*). By the end of the 18th century, the government kept the envoys from visiting the Catholic churches in Beijing after the Jinsan Incident,¹¹ the first religious persecution of Catholics of the Joseon dynasty in 1791. After the Jinsan Incident, the envoys purposely didn't visit the Catholic churches and missionaries were aware of this fact. This can be confirmed in *Muo yeonhaengnok* written by Seo Yu-mun who traveled to Beijing in 1798. He said, "When we arrived at the church, the church-keeper said, 'Why are you here if your government keeps the envoys from visiting the church?'"

11. The Jinsan Incident began when the learned men Yun Ji-chung (尹持忠) and his brother-in-law Gwon Sang-yeon (權尙然) from Jinsangun (珍山郡), Jeollado burned the ancestral tablet of Yun Ji-chung's mother on her death-day and made sacrifices according to the Catholic sacrificial rites. The government had the magistrate Shin Sa-won (申史源) arrest, try and execute the two learned men on a charge of a breach of social morality and their belief in the no-parents-no-king thought (無父無君).

Conclusion

This paper reviewed the contact between Western missionaries and Joseon envoys focusing on the Catholic churches in Beijing and their perception of each other. Nineteen journals contain records on the Catholic churches among about 100 journals from the 18th century. Most of the Joseon envoys mainly visited the South Catholic church. The journals of *jaje gungwan* contained the most detailed records about the Catholic churches.

The Joseon envoys were most interested in Western learning's astronomy, calendar system and Western paintings. The interest in astronomy and the calendar system reflected the then realistic demand for correctly understanding the current standard calendar of Qing together with the enforcement of the calendar made according to the principles of the Western calendar system. Lee Gi-ji and Hong Dae-yong were the most interested in astronomy and the calendar system. They discussed astronomy and the calendar system with Western missionaries and accepted Western superiority.

It seems that Western paintings were a culture shock to those who visited the Catholic churches for the first time. The vivid and lifelike portrait of the Lord hung on the north wall opposite the entrance gave a great shock to all the envoys and most of them left records of this experience. They were surprised at the Western style of painting because of the truthfulness of life describing figures and things and regarded the contrast between perspective and light and shade as one of the major characteristics of the Western style of painting. In spite of some having a negative perception toward the meaning of Western paintings, most of the Joseon envoys perceived Western paintings positively. Western missionaries often presented these paintings to the envoys together with books of Western learning. It seems that the presentation must have been an appropriate method to inform unknown Orientals of Western civilization.

Western missionaries wanted to construct a Catholic church in Joseon and spread Western civilization and Catholicism. The Western missionary Bai Pu was included among a party of Qing when erecting the Mt. Baegdu Stele of Marking the Border. His participation in this expedition might have been due to his interest in the Joseon territory. While Western missionaries wanted to introduce Western civilization and preach Catholicism, most of the Joseon envoys recognized the superiority of modern instruments of civilization of the West but had a negative or reserved attitude toward Catholicism. They perceived the West from the viewpoint of Eastern morality while trying to maintain an open mind

towards Western instruments and the strangeness of the West.

The mutual recognition between Joseon and the West in the 18th century was gained indirectly by focusing on the Catholic churches in Beijing in a rather open and pure form. The mutual recognition between Joseon and the West appeared clearer in the 18th century than that in the 19th century. At the turn of the 19th century in Joseon, the persecution of Catholics occurred together with the establishment of a regime where kinsmen wielded authority over the king. The Western powers assumed an imperialistic stance and the relationship between Joseon and the West developed into distorted features in contrast to the 18th century.

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