

The Western Learning Shown in the Records of Envoys Traveling to Beijing in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century—Focusing on Visits to the Russian Diplomatic Office

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This paper reviews the Western learning the Joseon envoys encountered in Beijing on the basis of their travel records from the first half of the nineteenth century. Contact with Western civilization decreased in the nineteenth century, and the limited contact was caused by the difficult political situation at home and abroad. First, the suppression against Catholicism was severe and the West was considered the supporting force of Catholicism. Second, Western ships frequently anchored off Joseon, arousing a sense of crisis. Third, the declining Qing dynasty prohibited Western religion, which caused many trade conflicts with the West.

With such conditions, the only place Joseon envoys could make contact with Western civilization in the first half of the nineteenth century was at the Russian Diplomatic Office in Beijing. This is in contrast with the major route of contact, the Catholic Church, in the eighteenth century. The envoys had a keen interest in the portrait of Jesus Christ on the cross, Russian mirrors, and the camera at the Russian Diplomatic Office. Most of the envoys recorded their shock at the portrait of Jesus Christ on the cross, and Russian mirrors that had been imported to Joseon at that time also attracted interest. In 1863, the Joseon envoys had their pictures taken for the first time at the Russian Diplomatic Office. Lee Hang-eok left a precise record on the process of taking and printing pictures, which was typical merchandise of Western imperialism in the nineteenth century.

Keywords: Western learning, Russian Diplomatic Office, Catholic Church, portrait of Jesus Christ on the cross, Russian mirror, pictures

1. Preface

Joseon contact with Western civilization prior to the opening of her ports was largely made by envoys traveling to Beijing. The comings and goings of Joseon envoys to China reached a total of 579 times (Lim 2002) and there exists numerous records of these travels to Beijing. It was not until the seventeenth century that contact with the West appeared in earnest in the records of envoys traveling to Beijing and contact was most active in the eighteenth century. During the eighteenth century, the Qing dynasty suppressed various inland rebellions, regained political stability, enjoyed its highest stage of prosperity, and tried to make peace with Joseon. Also, Joseon escaped the conquests of the northern areas during the reign of King Hyojong and tried to improve relations with Qing. On the basis of such a political situation, the diplomatic envoys of both countries visited each other, and the religion and civilization of the West could spread rather freely from Qing to Joseon.

In the eighteenth century, the Catholic Church in Beijing was one of the celebrated localities where Joseon envoys went sightseeing, and they were surprised at items from Western civilization such as the armillary sphere, the compass, the telescope, the portraits of the Lord of Heaven, picture albums, maps, the alarm clock, and the organ. These envoys had a keen interest in the astronomical calendar and Western paintings (Shin 2006).

Since Joseon accepted the current standard calendar of Qing, which had been made since the seventeenth century according to the principle of the Western calendar, they were interested in the astronomical calendar. Because there was a difference between the current standard calendar of Qing and the conventional calendar of Joseon in establishing a leap month, the Joseon government made an incessant effort to learn the precise principle of the Western calendar (Seong-hi Jeong 2005). To confirm the real state of astronomical observation instruments such as the armillary sphere, compass, and telescope and to understand the principle became important duties of the Joseon envoys. Interest in Western paintings was aroused by the portrait of the Lord of Heaven hanging on the north wall in the Catholic Church. The vivid and lifelike portrait aroused a very fresh feeling because of the completely different style of painting, and most travel records from the eighteenth century never failed to describe the astonishment. The interest in the realistic style of Western paintings led to an interest in various Western photographic albums and some envoys asked Western missionaries to draw their portraits.

But there was a sudden change in the relationship between Joseon and the West at the turn of the nineteenth century. In Joseon, King Jeongjo (1752-1800), who was relatively tolerant of Western civilization, died and a new government was established. The government pursued a policy against Western learning, with *Sinyu saok* (Persecution of 1801) as the beginning. The West forced Joseon to open her ports and invited various invasions beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century. Thus, the travel records during the nineteenth century describing contact with the West were less than those during the eighteenth century. Because of the lack of materials and the negative recognition for the crippled political situation in the nineteenth century, there hasn't been any research up to now on contact with Western learning in the first half of the nineteenth century. However, as the foreign relations and recognition for the West prior to opening the ports in the first half of the nineteenth century are important elements of modern times, it is necessary to examine these aspects closely.¹

From this point of view, this paper will review the travel records of Joseon envoys to Beijing in the first half of the nineteenth century, focusing on their contact with Western civilization. While the major route in the eighteenth century was the Catholic Church in Beijing, it was a forbidden place in the nineteenth century. Therefore, there are no records on visits to the Catholic Church in travel records from the nineteenth century. Instead, since the sporadic contact with Western civilization happened at the Russian Diplomatic Office, this paper will review this contact with Western learning² that the Joseon envoys recorded. Since the contact with the West increased after the middle of the nineteenth century when the Joseon dynasty opened her ports, the meaning of envoys visiting Beijing coming indirectly into contact with Western civilization through Qing weakened to a considerable degree. Therefore, this paper will limit itself to travel records from the first half of the nineteenth century. But first, this paper will review in general terms the political situation at home and abroad and the real circumstances of traveling to Beijing at that time.

1. Recently, some research on this topic has been done. See Hye-jung Jeong (2005), Shin (2007), and Cho (2007).

2. In this paper, Western learning is used to signify both the religion and scientific technology of the West. When dividing the two, this paper will use the term 'Western religion' for religion and 'Western technical civilization' for scientific technology. This distinction was borrowed from Roh (1997).

2. Political Situation at Home and Abroad and the Real Circumstances of Traveling to Beijing during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

Contact by Joseon envoys with Western civilization slackened in the nineteenth century compared to the eighteenth century. Since the Jinsan Incident, the first persecution of Catholics in Joseon in May 1791, visits by envoys to the Catholic Church became taboo. It can be called a symbolic incident, changing a flexible attitude into a strong one, that King Jeongjo ordered books about the West at Hongmun-gwan (Office of Special Advisers) be burned in November 1791. Meanwhile, there occurred the Incident of Hwang Sa-yeong's Silk Letter (a secret letter sent to the bishop of Beijing in 1801 informing him about the persecution of Catholics in Joseon), which revealed the plan that, during *Sinyu saok* in 1801, some Catholic believers tried to pressure the government of Joseon to allow the spread of Catholicism with the help of warships and military aid from the West. For this reason the negative recognition of Western learning that had emerged with the incident at Jinsan increased to a considerable degree, leading to envoy visits to the Catholic Church becoming officially prohibited.³ Following *Sinyu saok*, there occurred *Gihae bakhae* (Persecution of 1839) in the fifth year of King Heonjong's reign, which severely oppressed Catholics.⁴

At the turn of the nineteenth century when Catholicism, refusing patriarchal authority and Confucian rituals, rapidly spread its religious influence, the Joseon dynasty came to take it as a challenge to the whole of Confucian society and an imminent threat against the ruling system. The Western religion was considered not a simple heresy like Buddhism but an alarming ideology dangerous enough to subvert the government, and the West was the force behind it. Thus

3. This can be confirmed in *Buyeonilgi* (Diary of an Envoy to Beijing). According to Kim Rosang's entry dated June 25, 1828, "There are Western residents beside the road below the east inner castle of Seonmun and also the Catholic Church. Seen from the outside, the style of the house is very delicate and double the size of Okhagwan. It is said that there are many things to see. By the way, it is said that, since *Sinyu saok*, no envoys of Joseon have been seen entering the house."

4. According to Lee Gyu-gyeong's *Oju yeonmun jangjeon san-go*, it was confirmed through an alleged confession by an accused that the Catholic Church in Beijing was deeply engaged in paying for the spread of Catholicism in Joseon and dispatching reverends. Through the visits of the envoys to the Catholic Church, Catholic believers of Joseon maintained contact with the Church.

Catholicism was severely oppressed in the nineteenth century because of the monopolization of political power by a part of Noron (Old Doctrine Faction) and because of the policy of seclusion during the regency of Daewongun.

Also, special attention should be paid to the frequent appearance of Western ships on the shores of Joseon. During the nineteenth century, many Western countries advanced to East Asia without cessation and tried to compel East Asian countries to open their ports. The harder the Joseon dynasty oppressed Catholicism and struggled for seclusion, the more interested the West became. The anchored ships wanted to trade with Joseon as well as secure a supply of food and potable water and protest against the martyrdom of their reverends. More often than not, the Joseon dynasty suffered from these disturbances and, at times, the provincial officials concerned were dismissed from their office.

The anchoring of Western ships on the shores of Joseon in the first half of the nineteenth century was recorded in *Joseon wangjo sillok* (Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty) and *Oju yeonmun jangjeon san-go* (Random Expatiations of Oju) five times. British ships anchored on the shores of Chungcheong Province twice, once in 1816 and once in 1832 and, in particular, the British ship that anchored at Godaedo, Heungju in 1832 asked for trade officially.⁵ The government of Joseon thought highly of Great Britain's asking for trade and sent an envoy to inform Qing of the incident and treatment of the government. For this reason, it seems that the then envoys of Joseon traveling to Beijing grasped the real circumstances of Great Britain among the many Western countries. For instance, Seo Yu-so who visited Beijing as a winter solstice envoy in charge of records in 1822 introduced Great Britain in his travel record as follows.

Great Britain is located farther than any other Western country and is 100,000 *li* from China by sea. British people are all very quick and fierce and like to loot. Its neighboring countries are afraid of Great Britain. Its

5. In 1816, a British ship anchored at the port of Maryangjin, Biinhyeon, Chungcheong Province and looted livestock. In 1832, a British merchant ship belonging to the East India Company anchored and asked for trade at Godaedo, Heungju, Chungcheong Province. An official note informing Qing of the treatment of this incident was sent. The governor of Heungju was dismissed. In 1840, a Western ship anchored at Jeju and looted cattle and horses. The governor of Jeju was dismissed. In 1845, a Western ship anchored at Jeju. In 1846, a French ship anchored at Oyeondo, Heungju sent a note of protest over the martyrdom of three French reverends, Imbert, Chastan and Maubant, who had been prosecuted during *Gihae bakhae* (Persecution of 1839).

product, an aromatic tree, is hard and its grain is straight. It is used to build houses and ships. As it is durable and unspoiled, it is called 'an unspoiled tree.' As the land is huge and has a large population, it is the strongest country outside the West. Also, British people are good at swimming and can swim as good as a duck.⁶

The travel records of Seo Yu-so totaled sixteen volumes. They didn't simply record the travel schedule but recorded precisely the Chinese system, mountains, rivers, and the origin of the names of places. In volume 14, he described a total of 168 foreign countries. It is interesting that Seo Yu-so introduced Great Britain as 'the strongest country outside the West' and distinguished it from other Western countries. The recognition that Great Britain was a separate country independent of other Western countries followed the example of the Board of Rites of Qing. Quite a few intellectuals had the same recognition at that time (Roh 1997).

Besides Great Britain, Seo Yu-so called many of the Western countries 'Large Western Countries' and 'Small Western Countries.' In particular, he described precisely the Mediterranean countries: "They were excellent in the astronomical calendar and pitch-pipes, worshipped the Lord of Heaven, and looked like another world abundant in produce and with established ethics like benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom." He explained that the reason the Mediterranean countries excelled in the astronomical calendar, arithmetic, and music was that the civilization of ancient China had been transmitted to those countries and they had succeeded.⁷ This tells us that Seo Yu-so saw the West from the viewpoint that the origin of Western developed civilization derived from China (Roh 1999).

Because of the frequent appearance of British ships and the trade conflict between Great Britain and Qing along with the then common idea to distinguish

6. *Yeonhaengnok*, Vol. 14 "An Extra to the Travel Records to Beijing: Chapter Foreign Countries." "英吉國，在西洋絕遠處，居中國，海路十萬里。其人皆輕悍，喜剽竊，隣國皆畏之。土產栴木，性堅理直，爲室屋舟楫，能耐久不朽，亦名不朽木。地廣人衆，爲西洋外最強國。居人又善泗，入水如鳧鴈。"

7. *Yeohaengnok*, Vol. 14 "An Extra to the Traveling Records to Beijing: Chapter Foreign Countries." "登氏之來也，以蒼頡之書·穎首之算·容成之曆·伶倫之律呂至。於是乃教其民，以天文·星曆·推算之法，及樂律之事。西洋曆法，最精於天下者，以獨傳穎首始初之法，而他國則，雖有其法，頗爲後人所剽竊，寢失其本旨也。"

Great Britain from the West, the Joseon envoys had a special interest in Great Britain. Kim Gyeong-seon traveling to Beijing as an envoy in 1832 left “Yeong-giligukpyoseongi” (A Record of a Drifting Ship on Great Britain) in his travel records.

Lastly, one reason for the decline of the Qing dynasty was the number of riots compared with the golden ages of Emperor Kangxi (1661-1722), Emperor Yongcheng, and Emperor Qianlong in the eighteenth century. Qing suffered an enormous loss from trade with the West at the turn of the nineteenth century and prohibited the spread of Catholicism.⁸ The accumulated social contradiction caused by the import of opium was serious and led to the Opium War in 1840.⁹ Also, such internal affairs of Qing must have restricted the Joseon envoys contact with Western civilization.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the negative recognition of Western learning spread for many reasons. It is presumed that in such circumstances, the envoys traveling to Beijing avoided contact with Western learning. Since many crimes were blamed on the Western religion and the West was seen as being behind these crimes, it was in the best interest of the envoys to limit their contact with Western civilization. Thus, travel records from the first half of the nineteenth century rarely contain records on contact with Western learning. The records that do mention contact with Western learning at that time are mostly contained in the records from visits to the Russian Diplomatic Office.

8. “What is curious, crafty, delicate and extravagant, dazzles people and makes riches lost come from the Western ships. The silver money flowing into the West is not less than one million *ryang* and never returns... It is said that Qing is full of troubles because of the heretical religion sunk into civilians, prohibited it harshly recently, destroyed all the Catholic churches, and banished Westerners from the land. It will be expected to eradicate the foundation of the heretical religion.” This comes from a report by Lee Jeong-ri, who visited Beijing as an envoy, and was contained in *Joseon wangjo sillok* (Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty), dated March 25, 1840 (sixth year of King Hyeonjong’s reign).

9. Kim Gyeong-seon, who traveled to Beijing as an envoy in 1822, recorded in his travel records a quote from *Dangbo* (an official note sent by a delegate in Beijing to his home province) that the government of Qing prohibited the smoking of opium since there were many Chinese soldiers smoking it (Hye-jung Jeong 2005:165).

3. Aspects of the Envoys Visiting the Russian Diplomatic Office and Contact with Western Learning

There exist about sixty records of envoys visiting Beijing in the nineteenth century, among which about forty were records from before the enthronement of King Gojong in 1864.¹⁰ This paper focuses on the travel records of envoys that had traveled to Beijing until the reign of King Cheoljong, or those before 1863.

The first treaty between Qing and Russia, who had first approached the East at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was the 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk, which regulated the freedom of trade between Chinese and Russian peoples. Since the Treaty of Nerchinsk, the commercial corps of Russia conducted their trade in Beijing. A group of two hundred Russian merchants visited Beijing by land every third year and stayed and traded for eighty days. Their residence was Hoedonggwan where the Joseon envoys also used to stay. During their stay, the supervision of the Board of Military Affairs of Qing was very strict and trade conflicts between Qing and Russia continued without cessation. Therefore, the Treaty of Kyakhta was made in 1727, the fifth year of Emperor Yongzheng's reign. Article Five of this treaty regulated that only Russians should reside at Hoedonggwan. Consequently, Russians doing missionary work and studying in Beijing stayed in the south quarters of Hoedonggwan and enjoyed a privilege of religion and education. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Russia changed Hoedonggwan into the Russian Diplomatic Office and used it as a way to contact Qing.¹¹

The reason Joseon envoys traveling to Beijing frequently visited the Russian Diplomatic Office was that Russia was viewed differently than the other Western countries¹² and it was the only place to have contact with Western civilization because of the prohibition of visiting Catholic churches. At the same time, it is presumed that there was another reason the Russian Diplomatic Office

10. This is the number that was searched in the travel records contained in *Yeonhaengnokjeonjip* (The Complete Works of Travel Records to Beijing), edited by Gi-jung Lim and published by Dongguk University Press in 2001.

11. Information about the establishment and management of the Russian Diplomatic Office in Beijing comes from Hye-jung Jeong (2005).

12. In *Yeonwonjikji* (December 26, 1823), Kim Gyeong-seon described that Russians were a variant of Mongolia as they were called barbarians with a big nose. In *Yeonhaengilgi* (January 23, 1863), Lee Hang-eok described that "As Russia is situated to the west of the ocean, Western countries are its neighbors. It is the largest country in the world and the people and customs are almost the same as those of the West." Thus, the Joseon envoys regarded Russia as a variant of Mongolia or

was located near Okhagwan, the residence of Joseon envoys. Among the records of the Joseon envoys traveling to Beijing until 1863, there are five records about visiting the Russian Diplomatic Office: *Yeonwonjikji* by Kim Gyeong-seon, traveling to Beijing in 1822; *Buyeonilgi* by Kim Ro-sang, April 1828; *Simjeongo* by Park Sa-ho, October 1828; *Yuheonsoknok* by Kang Si-yeong, 1829; and *Yeonhaengilgi* by Lee Hang-eok, 1862.¹³

Kim Gyeong-seon wrote on December 22, 1832: “Western technology is prohibited in Qing and our country, and contact is not allowed. It is said that Western technology has so many harmful evils that people don’t want to see it or set foot on it. However, I think it will do no harm to look at the technique of painting and various subtle instruments for reference.” He thought it harmless to have contact with various instruments used in Western paintings and modern civilization, but thought it was taboo to accept Western religion and technology on a full scale. Most of the Joseon envoys traveling to Beijing during the nineteenth century believed the same.

The envoys were interested in the portrait of Jesus Christ on the cross and the modern instruments like the alarm clock, the organ, mirrors, and the camera. Records appear in *Yeonwonjikji*, *Simjeongo*, *Buyeonilgi* and *Yuheonsoknok*, but not in *Yeonhaengilgi*, on visits to the Catholic Church inside the Russian Diplomatic Office. However, in *Yuheonsoknok*, Kang Si-yeong didn’t leave any detailed record, saying that there was a hall with an image of a god but he didn’t enter. Kang Si-yeong, who joined in the travel to Beijing as an official recorder, said in “Mungyeonbyeoldan” (An Attached Document on What was Heard and Seen during His Visit to Beijing), which was submitted to the government after his return from Beijing: “The Emperor admires civil administration, objects to heresy severely, and was greatly indignant to the Catholics. After putting down the revolt of Tianli Jiao in 1813,¹⁴ heresy was severely prohibited by the law.”¹⁵ As shown in the content, it is presumed that Kang Si-yeong followed the policy

a neighboring country of the West. They recognized that Russia was a totally different country from Western countries though it had customs which were similar to those of the West.

13. This information came from *Yeonhaengnokjeonjip* (The Complete Works of Travel Records to Beijing). It is interesting that four of the five records were from the 1820s. There is the possibility that materials from other time periods exist.
14. This was a rebellion of farmers that the believers of Tianli Jiao, a sect of the White Lotus religion, provoked in 1813, with Lee Mun-seong and Lim Cheong as its leaders. It was put down after three months.
15. “一皇帝敦尙文治，深排異端，如天主教之類，尤爲痛懲。盖自癸酉年間，掃蕩天理教匪之後，設法嚴禁。”

prohibiting Catholicism faithfully and didn't have a look at the Catholic Church.

Inside the Russian Diplomatic Office, there was a large garden and a Catholic church in the southern part of the garden. Kim Gyeong-seon described the visage of the church in an entry dated December 26, 1832: "There is a tall building without a crossbeam in the south of the garden. The drafting of the building is so strange that every side looks alike, whether seen from the front or the side. The bottom is large, the top pointed, and bricks are laid to the eaves. On the top of the building, there stands a mark decorated with gold the length of which is two or more *jang* soaring to the sky...In general, as Russia is situated near the West and worships the religion, it is said that Russia imitates the Western system and enshrines the statue of the Lord of Heaven."

The shocking aspect to the envoys who visited this Catholic church was the portrait of Jesus Christ hanging and bleeding on the cross. In *Buyeonilgi*, Kim Ro-sang described the portrait of Jesus Christ on the cross as follows.

When opening the curtain and entering inside, there is a dead man hanging on the opposite wall. Generally, on the wall, there is a cross-shaped wood panel on which a man is nailed at the head, legs and arms. It looks like the punishment of tearing a person tied to a cart limb from limb, and the skin of the man is white. His skin, flesh, nails, and hair look alive and I can't tell whether the naked body is real or not. Red blood pours out and drips down from the nailed parts from head to foot. As if he were dead a few moments ago and did not get cold, I felt too dizzy to look at it straight. (June 25, 1828)

After describing the portrait of Jesus Christ on the cross precisely, he was too surprised for the first time in his life and too dizzy to look at the portrait straight. Looking at the portrait of a man nailed to a cross and bleeding, the envoys wondered why it was enshrined and worshipped as an image of a god. When Kim Ro-sang asked this question, the guide answered that it was Jesus Christ who was punished with death.¹⁶ After hearing this, Kim Ro-sang came to understand

16. Meanwhile, Park Sa-ho who traveled to Beijing as an envoy six months later than Kim Ro-sang also asked the reason for the portrait of Jesus Christ on the cross. He received a totally different answer: it might be a Russian prince murdered in China or of the murdered Matteo Ricci. Park Sa-ho wondered which answer was right (*Simjeongo* January 3, 1829).

why the believers of the Western religion at home were not afraid of punishment. Though Catholicism was strictly prohibited and its believers, when found, were sentenced to death in Joseon, it was a mystery why Catholics didn't renounce their religion even in their last moments. The then gentry didn't know the answer and only presumed it had some connection with the doctrine of Catholicism.¹⁷ The envoys of Joseon looked at the portraits of the Russian emperor and empress on the wall together with that of Jesus Christ on the cross with interest. Also, they were surprised at the technique used in the paintings, which made the objects appear vivid and delicate.

The envoys also had contact with such instruments as the alarm clock, the organ, and mirrors at the Russian Diplomatic Office. The alarm clock and the organ were the two objects that the envoys from the eighteenth century had the most interest in, leaving records about them. In records of Joseon envoys from the eighteenth century, such as Kim Chang-eop's *Nogajaeyeonhaengilgi*, Lee Gi-ji's *Iramyeonggi*, Hong Dae-yong's *Yeongi* and Park Ji-won's *Yeolhailgi*, there are details of these encounters. The envoys from the nineteenth century had seen the records of their predecessors and few were full of admiration though they were curious about the alarm clock and the organ. Thus, their records on them were rather simple and short.

However, the mirror was an instrument the envoys from the eighteenth century hadn't seen at the Catholic Church. Most of the envoys that visited the Russian Diplomatic Office were curious about them. For example, Kang Si-yeong said in *Yuheonsoknok*: "Even the big mirror is not larger than a plate at most. But the width of the so-called Russian mirror is a few *chon* [3.03cm]. It can be made thinner if cut with a small saw. It is excellent in quality, very bright, and well-known to the world."¹⁸ A mirror thick and bright in quality was called a Russian mirror. The Russian mirror had been imported and used in Joseon at that time. An entry from *Buyeonilgi* dated June 25, 1828, states: "*Arasa* [Russia]

17. For example, Kang Jae-eung, who led an active life during the mid-nineteenth century, wrote in *Sangbongnok*: "Since the period of King Sunjo, Catholicism became popular and was believed by the gentry and even foolish civilians irrespective of sexuality. It cannot be understood how Catholicism induced people to be brave in their last moments, not repenting their belief at all." Refer to Shin (2006) for further information.

18. From *Yuheonsoknok* dated January 3, 1830. "有面鏡, 大不過楮子, 而其厚爲數寸, 所謂俄羅斯鏡也。以小鋸鋸之, 亦可爲薄, 而品最明瑩, 馳名天下矣."

is pronounced *eorasi* in Chinese and *eorisoe* in our language proving that the mirror made of glass must be a misinformed form of a very thick glass produced in *Arasa* [Russia].”

Meanwhile, on January 29, 1863, the three envoys of Lee Hang-eok, Park Myeong-hong, and Oh Sang-jun visited the Russian Diplomatic Office and had their pictures taken, a first for Koreans. The process is contained in Lee Hang-eok's *Yeonhaengilgi*. It is very significant because it was the first record on photography, an instrument representing the modern scientific technology of Western imperialism. Choe In-jin (2000) discussed the significance of this incident. Choe mistook Lee Hang-eok's *Yeonhaengilgi* for the work of Lee Ui-ik, the chief envoy at that time; but this paper would like to correct the error.¹⁹

On December 21, 1862, when the winter solstice embassy with Lee Ui-ik as the chief started for Beijing, it is assumed that Lee Hang-eok joined in the embassy as a young military officer.²⁰ Lee Hang-eok was keenly interested in Western civilization as shown by the fact that he tried to visit the Catholic church inside Seonmumun after he arrived in Beijing. As previously stated, Qing and Joseon prohibited the spread of the Western religion and visiting the Catholic Church was also prohibited. While no other envoy recorded visiting the church, Lee Hang-eok left a record even though he couldn't enter. On January 5, 1863, he tried to see the Catholic church, and since he couldn't enter, he recorded the appearance of the building. “It was a tall building that was soaring to the sky with a cross on top, was brilliant with red and golden lights, and was surrounded by walls with gorgeous pictures painted on them.”²¹ On January 23, he

19. There are three copies of Lee Hang-eok's *Yeonhaengilgi* and one volume is possessed by the National Library of Korea. The title on the cover page is '*Yeonhaengchorok*' (An Abstract of Traveling to Beijing), but the beginning of the contents is '*Yeonhaengilgi*.' There are daily records without a day's omission. Therefore, it is appropriate to take '*Yeonhaengilgi*' as the title. In an entry from the first day of travel to Beijing (October 21, 1862), the chief envoy Lee Ui-ik and the presumed writer Lee Hang-eok spent the night at different places. In an entry dated December 30, he spent New Year's Eve talking with his chief. Thus, *Yeonhaengilgi* is considered the work of Lee Hang-eok, and Choe Gang-hyeon also viewed Lee Hang-eok as the writer in the bibliographical introduction.

20. Refer to Kim (1982) and Shin (2006). Lee Hang-eok and the chief envoy Lee Ui-ik came from the Gwangju Lee family and Lee Hang-eok was an uncle of Lee Ui-ik. Refer to the bibliographical introduction of Choe Gang-hyeon. Since they talked to each other on New Year's Eve and were close, such an assumption is possible.

21. 往觀天主堂. 堂在宣武門之內, 縹緲一樓, 出于半空, 上設橫木十字形, 塗金流丹, 畫牆紋壁, 恍惚壯麗. 禁不得入, 在外踮望而已.

went to a store that sold Western commodities and bought some Western cloth for his daughter's marriage. The silk he bought was 32 *cheok* (30.3cm) of *gagyeju*, 16 *cheok* of *hongjuchu*, and 1 *cheok* and 5 *chon* (3.03cm) of *wolbaek-gapsa*.²²

Lee Hang-eok visited the Russian Diplomatic Office on January 28 together with Park Myeong-hong and Oh Sang-jun. Park Myeong-hong traveled to Beijing as an official in charge of provisions and Oh Sang-jun was an attendant like Lee Hang-eok.²³ At the Russian Diplomatic Office, they heard about a man who could copy from a portrait of a human figure and looked at the portrait on the wall. The portrait was a decent figure dressed properly, which means a picture. Lee Hang-eok marveled at the portrait and said: "He looks alive. How can it be a figure in a picture?"²⁴ Lee Hang-eok who had no knowledge of photography described the picture as a copy or the copying of the real figure. It proves that he understood photography as a concept of the portrait (Choe 2000). They wanted their pictures taken at once but the photographer told them to come back the next day between 8:30 and 11:00 in the morning.

The next day, the three men returned to the Russian Diplomatic Office and had their pictures taken in order of age. Lee Hang-eok compared the camera stand to a 'saddle,' expressed the lens of the camera as 'glass,' and precisely described the process of taking and printing pictures. When another envoy was having his picture taken, he uncovered the wrapper of the camera stand and looked into it to know about the principle of the camera. Considering that his behavior disregarded the dignity of the aristocratic class, Lee Hang-eok had a keen interest in Western civilization.

When I was about to have my picture taken, I couldn't move and look into the camera. When Park Myeong-hong and Oh Myeong-jun were about to have their pictures taken and the photographer went inside for a

22. Lee Hang-eok recorded the price of clothes. "往正陽門外洋貨肆，買各色可桂紬三十二尺七寸，銀六兩九錢六分，紅紬襪十六尺，銀五兩五錢，月白甲紗十一尺五寸，銀三兩五錢，都合銀爲十五兩九錢六分，有女當婚，故買此也。"

23. On the last page of *Yeonhaengilgi*, Lee Hang-eok recorded the names and the status of fifteen important and intimate attendants including the three major officials of the chief envoy, the deputy, and the recorder. This paper referred to this information.

24. 館中有一人，善摹人像，毫髮不差。館中炕壁上，有人列坐，衣冠鮮明，氣像端儼，就而視之，卽畫像掛壁者也。的知生人，豈意畫人？

while, I uncovered the wrapper of the camera, bent my head and looked into it. Park Myeong-hong who sat in front was standing upside down on the lens of the camera and so was everything. How strange and what a magic it is! When chanting a spell, is it the magic turning the world into an incarnation?²⁵

The state of mind of Lee Hang-eok, who was surprised at the inverted image on the lens, is vividly described. He marveled at the inverted image of Park Myeong-hong on the lens as if it were magic. He even wondered impertinently whether the murmurs of the photographer were the magic of incarnation. Though the murmurs of the photographer were to correctly count the exposure (Choe 2000), the voices were assumed to mutter charm words to the gentry of Joseon.

When he looked at the picture Park Myeong-won brought from the Russian Diplomatic Office on February 3, three days after they had their pictures taken, Lee Hang-eok was a little disappointed. It was a black and white picture on a sheet of Russian paper and the color of the face was not clear. However, the shape of the face was real and he preserved this in a box.²⁶ Meanwhile, Lee Hang-eok stopped having an interest in pictures, saying: “This is too curious a technology of a foreign country to learn.” In fact, he confessed that it was impossible to accept the foreign technology of photography immediately under the political circumstances of Joseon’s seclusion.

The photograph was a product of modern scientific technology and a typical medium and piece of merchandise showing the superiority of Western imperialism. While photography was introduced to China and Japan during the 1840s, it was allegedly not until the opening of ports that Joseon had contact with it on a full scale (Ju 2003). Lee Hang-eok’s record on the photograph shows the reaction of a learned Joseon man who had contact with and an interest in the so-called typical merchandise of modern times for the first time.

25. 方其寫吾之眞，坐而不動，故不得揣觀，及其朴·吳之寫，乘其人還入還中之時，舉卓子前頭之覆襟，俯首視之，則坐彼之朴，倒立于卓頭波瀾之面，全體貌樣，酷相背矣。異哉！此何術法，口呪之說，似是幻身之法歟？

26. During his stay in Beijing, the British doctor William Rochhart came into possession of the picture considered the first one taken of Koreans. His descendants donated the picture to SOAS in London and it has recently been made available to the public.

4. Conclusion

During the second half of the Joseon dynasty, contact with Western learning through the envoys traveling to Beijing began in the seventeenth century, was most active in the eighteenth century, and decreased during the nineteenth century. There have been many studies on Joseon contact with Western learning during the eighteenth century but not so many studies about the nineteenth century have been developed. But this paper aimed to review travel records from the first half of the nineteenth century.

In the nineteenth century rather than the eighteenth century, contact by the Joseon envoys with Western civilization was forced to shrink because of the rigid political circumstances at home and abroad. First, the suppression of Catholicism was severe during the nineteenth century and the West was considered the force behind Catholicism. Second, Western ships frequently anchored on the shores of Joseon, arousing a sense of crisis toward the West. Third, Qing was on the decline and prohibited Western religion, which caused frequent trade conflicts between Qing and the West.

Under such rigid circumstances, the Russian Diplomatic Office in Beijing was the only place where Joseon envoys could have contact with Western civilization. In contrast, the major contact route during the eighteenth century was the Catholic Church in Beijing. The Joseon envoys were most interested in the portrait of Jesus Christ on the cross, Russian mirrors, and the camera. Most recorded their shock at the miserable portrait of Jesus Christ on the cross. They were also interested in Russian mirrors which had already been imported to Joseon by that time. In 1863, three envoys had their pictures taken, and Lee Hang-eok left a precise record on the process of taking and printing pictures.

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