

Travelogues to China in the Vernacular

-Beijing Experience Records in Two Versions, Korean and Chinese-

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Most of the overseas experiences of intellectuals during the Joseon Dynasty in the 18th and 19th centuries were made by participating in diplomatic missions. At that time, Beijing in the Qing Dynasty was the 'hub' of East Asia, and intellectuals from East Asian countries achieved their "private desire" of traveling abroad through the 'public means' of diplomacy. Going to Beijing in the Qing Dynasty for diplomatic purposes is called 'Yeonhaeng(燕行)'.

The number of people participating in the Yeonhaeng(燕行) was up to 500, because in addition to formal diplomats, informal attendants from various classes participated. On the way to Beijing for diplomacy, countless desires cross as various people participate.

The intellectuals of Joseon dreamed of friendship with the intellectuals of the Qing Dynasty, and the translators and merchants dreamed of economic benefits through commercial activities. There are more records related to performances in the 18th and 19th centuries than expected. Most of the overseas experiences of Beijing were left in Chinese characters, which are common characters in East Asia, but some even left it as 'Hangul(한글).'

The text to be examined through this lecture is the personal record of a Joseon scholar (강호보[姜浩溥], 1690-1778) who experienced Beijing in 1727. He kept a diary of his Beijing experience using Chinese characters. He rewrote his travel diary in Chinese characters after 13 years. The reason was to make it possible for a mother who was not good at reading and writing Chinese characters. The travel record he left in the form of a diary contains how Joseon intellectuals travel abroad. It describes new and unfamiliar foreign landscapes, friendships with foreign intellectuals, the situation in East Asia, interest in world geography, and thoughts on Catholicism in detail.

Through the vivid travel diary of a Joseon scholar, we will be able to experience a trip to pre-modern East Asia by proxy.