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JOURNAL OF CHINESE HUMANITIES 9 (2023) 370–386



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Preliminary Views on *Yanxinglu* Studies

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Received 7 June 2023 | Accepted 12 July 2023 |

Published online 29 January 2024

Abstract

“*Yanxinglu* studies” is a field of study dedicated to the research of *Yanxinglu* (Kor: Yŏnhaengnok), the travel records of Korean diplomatic envoys to China during the Koryŏ and Chosŏn periods. *Yanxinglu* should be distinguished from travel records of a more general nature and can be further classified as follows: *Yanxinglu* writings in a broad or a narrow sense; and *Yanxinglu* writings with a single or multiple titles. This article investigates a number of pertinent questions such as the concept of *Yanxinglu* itself, the titles of individual travel accounts, the creation and periodization of *Yanxinglu* writings, the collection and compilation of primary sources and their translation, the creation of databases, and the search for suitable research methods. This analysis shows that it is time to establish “*Yanxinglu* studies” as an independent field of study in China and to create a scholarly society to guide and coordinate future research efforts.

Keywords

Yanxinglu – Yŏnhaengnok studies – envoys to Beijing – compilation of documents and research – research methods

From the 1930s onwards, Korean, Chinese, and Japanese scholars almost simultaneously began to compile and study *Yanxinglu* 燕行錄 (Kor: Yŏnhaengnok) writings, the travel accounts of diplomatic envoys to China during the Korean

Koryŏ (918–1392) and Chosŏn (1392–1910) periods. In the twenty-first century, research greatly advanced following the publication of *Yŏnhaengnokchŏnjip* 燕行錄全集, a compilation of *Yanxinglu* writings in one hundred volumes by Professor Im Ki-jung 林基中 of Dongguk University.¹

In mainland China, academic interest in the topic has gradually increased over the past ten years. Chinese scholars now constitute a major force in *Yanxinglu* research, both in terms of efforts to compile primary sources, as well as the overall number of publications on the subject. One example is the *Hanguo hanwen yanxing wenxian xuanbian* 韓國漢文燕行文獻選編, a collection of thirty-three *Yanxinglu* works in thirty volumes, jointly edited by the National Institute for Advanced Humanistic Studies at Fudan University and the Academy of East Asian Studies at Sungkyunkwan University in Korea, published in 2011.² Between 2010 and 2016, Guangxi Normal University Press published *Yanxinglu quanbian* 燕行錄全編, edited by Hong Huawen 弘華文, in four parts and forty-six volumes.³ The collection comprises more than seven hundred *Yanxinglu* accounts by over five hundred authors and contains seven hundred years of Sino-Korean exchange between the thirteenth and the early twentieth centuries.

A series of publications of outstanding academic value has since emerged, including Qiu Ruizhong's 邱瑞中 *Yanxinglu yanjiu* 燕行錄研究, Ge Zhaoguang's 葛兆光 edited volume *Cong zhoubian kan Zhongguo* 從周邊看中國 and his monograph *Xiangxiang yiyu: du Lichao Chaoxian hanwen yanxing wenxian zhaji* 想像異域：讀李朝朝鮮漢文燕行文獻劄記, Zhang Bowei's 張伯偉 *Zuo wei fangfa de Han wenhuaquan* 作為方法的漢文化圈, Chen Shangsheng's 陳尚勝 *Rujia wenming yu Zhong-Chao chuantong guanxi* 儒家文明與中朝傳統關係, Xu Dongri's 徐東日 *Chaoxian shichen yanzhong de Zhongguo xingxiang* 朝鮮使臣眼中的中國形象, Qi Yongxiang's 漆永祥 *Yanxinglu qianzhong jieti* 燕行錄千種解題, Wang Yuanzhou's 王元周 *Xiao Zhonghua yishi de shanbian: jindai Zhong-Han guanxi de sixiangshi yanjiu* 小中華意識的嬗變：近代中韓關係的思想史研究, and Sun Weiguo's 孫衛國 *Daming qihao yu xiao Zhonghua yishi: Chaoxian wangchao zunzhou siming wenti yanjiu* 大明旗號與小中華意識：朝鮮王朝尊周思明問題研究 as well as his *Cong "zunming" dao*

1 Im Ki-jung 林基中, *Yŏnhaengnok chŏnjip* 燕行錄全集 (Seoul: Tongguk taehakkyo ch'ulp'anbu, 2001).

2 Fudan daxue wenshi yanjiuyuan 復旦大學文史研究院 and Hanguo Chengjunguan daxue dongya xueshuyuan 韓國成均館大學東亞學術院, ed., *Hanguo hanwen yanxing wenxian xuanbian* 韓國漢文燕行文獻選編 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2011).

3 Hong Huawen 弘華文, ed., *Yanxinglu quanbian* 燕行錄全編 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2010).

“fengqing”: *Chaoxian wangchao dui Qing yishi zhi shanbian* (1627–1910) 從“尊明”到“奉清”：朝鮮王朝對清意識之嬗變 (1627–1910).⁴ Given the current state of research, we can cautiously but optimistically conclude: the necessary conditions are fulfilled, and it is both urgent and imperative to establish “*Yanxinglu* studies” as a new and independent field of study.

1 Names, Concepts, and Research on *Yanxinglu* Studies

1.1 Names and Concepts

Yanxinglu writings originated in great numbers in the Koryŏ and Chosŏn eras of Korea over a time period roughly contemporaneous with the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1616–1911) dynasties in China. A small number of travel accounts was also written during China’s Jin (1115–1234) and Yuan (1271–1368) dynasties. Travel accounts of diplomatic missions from Korea were mostly called *Chaotianlu* 朝天錄 (Kor: Choch’ŏnnok) during the Ming dynasty and *Yanxinglu* during the Qing. The term *Yanxinglu* has since become a general term to refer to this genre of writing.

Taiwanese Professor Chang Tsun-wu 張存武, on the other hand, employs the term *Huaxinglu* 華行錄 for all types of *Yanxinglu* writings. In recent years, Professor Zhang Bowei 張伯偉 has suggested the travel records should instead collectively be named *Zhongguo xingji* 中國行紀. Zhang argues that “the shift from the term *chaotian* 朝天 to the term *yanxing* 燕行 not only refers to a geographic location but is clearly political in nature and expresses a cultural viewpoint. For the purpose of academic research, a term with strong political

4 Qiu Ruizhong 邱瑞中, *Yanxinglu yanjiu* 燕行錄研究 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2010); Fudan daxue wenshi yanjiuyuan 復旦大學文史研究院, ed., *Cong zhoubian kan Zhongguo* 從周邊看中國 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009); Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光, *Xiangxiang yiyu: du Lichao Chaoxian hanwen yanxing wenxian zhaji* 想像異域：讀李朝朝鮮漢文燕行文獻劄記 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2007); Chen Shangsheng 陳尚勝, *Rujia wenming yu Zhong-Chao chuantong guanxi* 儒家文明與中朝傳統關係 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2015); Xu Dongri 徐東日, *Chaoxian shichen yanzhong de Zhongguo xingxiang* 朝鮮使臣眼中的中國形象 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2010); Qi Yongxiang 漆永祥, *Yanxinglu qianzhong jieti* 燕行錄千種解題 (Beijing: Beijing Daxue chubanshe, 2021); Wang Yuanzhou 王元周, *Xiao Zhonghua yishi de shanbian: jindai Zhong-Han guanxi de sixiangshi yanjiu* 小中華意識的嬗變：近代中韓關係的思想史研究 (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2013); Sun Weiguo 孫衛國, *Daming qihao yu xiao Zhonghua yishi: Chaoxian wangchao zunzhou siming wenti yanjiu* 大明旗號與小中華意識：朝鮮王朝尊周思明問題研究 (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2021); Sun Weiguo 孫衛國, *Cong “zunming” dao “fengqing”*: *Chaoxian wangchao dui Qing yishi zhi shanbian* (1627–1910) 從“尊明”到“奉清”：朝鮮王朝對清意識之嬗變 (1627–1910) (Taipei: Taiwan daxue chuban zhongxin, 2019).

overtones, be it *chaotian* or *yanxing*, is unsuitable.”⁵ Professor Zhang further points out:

I suggest *Zhongguo xingji* as a general name for this type of writing for the following reasons: first, it is a comparatively neutral and objective term that is suitable for use in academic discourse; second, and more importantly, it reflects the fact that the earliest versions of these types of writing were often named *xingji*; and third, *xingji* has also been used in modern academic research to refer to existing pieces of *Yanxinglu* writing.⁶

While the viewpoint expressed above is undoubtably reasonable, this author believes that to replace the name *Yanxinglu* with the name *Zhongguo xingji* does not adequately address all aspects of the problem in question. This is because the name *Yanxinglu* has been applied under different circumstances and to several categories of travel records in the past. First, the term *Yanxinglu* can refer to travel records about China that were authored by official diplomatic envoys from Korea, but the term *Yanxinglu* can also refer to travel records about China of a more general nature. Second, the term was used to refer to existing travel records without original titles or with titles considered unsuitable by modern researchers. Third, the term has frequently been used as a stand-alone title for individual pieces of travel writing.

How should we then understand the word *Yanxinglu*? And how should we decide which pieces of writing to include in this category? The second question will need to be clarified first. In the article “*Yanxinglu quanji kao wu*” 《燕行錄全集》考誤, I previously suggested that *Yanxinglu* writing can be categorized as *Yanxinglu* in either a broad or a narrow sense:

I presume that if we understand the term *Yanxinglu* in a broad sense, any book written by an author from Chosŏn Korea who journeyed to China can be called *Yanxinglu*. If we understand the term in a narrow sense, however, only books authored by official envoys or members of a diplomatic mission to China on behalf of a Chosŏn king can be called *Yanxinglu*. Let us now consider the documents included in the *Yanxinglu quanji*. If we use the narrow definition of *Yanxinglu* as a principle for

5 Zhang Bowei 張伯偉, “Mingcheng, wenxian, fangfa – guanyu ‘Yanxinglu’ yanjiu zhong cunzai de wenti” 名稱·文獻·方法—關於“燕行錄”研究中存在的問題, in “*Yanxinglu’ yanjiu lunji*” 燕行錄研究論集, ed. Zhang Bowei 張伯偉 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2016), 8.

6 Ibid., 8.

selection, none of the accounts written by authors who did not belong to an official diplomatic mission should be called *Yanxinglu*. Or else, any poem dealing with China, as can be found in Ch'oe Ch'i-wŏn's 崔致遠 *Kyewŏn p'ilgyŏngjip* 桂苑筆耕集 and similar works, would also need to be classified as *Yanxinglu*. This would lead to indiscriminate and excessive use of the term.⁷

What are the reasons for introducing a broad and a narrow definition? Let us first consider the meaning of the three Chinese characters in the word *Yanxinglu*. Translated directly, *Yanxinglu* can be rendered as "Records of Travels to Beijing." Translated more freely, it could also be understood to mean "Records of Travels to China." Neither of these translations or interpretations is completely accurate, however, since they are obscured by the literal meaning of the Chinese characters.

Upon comparison of *Yanxinglu* with similar writings by Chinese scholar officials, it becomes obvious that the most objective and neutral terms for this genre would be *Fengshilu* 奉使錄 (lit. "records of dispatched officials") or *Shixinglu* 使行錄 (lit. "travel records of officials"). If we follow the example of the name *Yanxinglu* – a term that refers to writing by Korean envoys from a time period of almost seven hundred years – and choose a single name to refer to all writings by Chinese envoys, then the terms *Fengshilu* or *Shichaoxianlu* 使朝鮮錄 might be appropriate.⁸ The *Yanxinglu* by Korean envoys are similar in nature to the accounts by Chinese diplomats and there are no marked differences in the meaning of their titles either. We can therefore conclude that the character *xing* 行 in *Yanxinglu* carries the same meaning as the character *shi* 使 in *Fengshilu*, namely, to go on a diplomatic mission. This shows that the term *Yanxinglu* refers to the written records of diplomatic missions to Beijing only and does not extend to travel records in general. The *Tongmun hwigo pop'yŏn* 同文匯考補編 that was compiled during the late Chosŏn period also lists the names of envoys and officials who were dispatched to Qing China under the heading *Shixinglu*.⁹ This further supports the author's point of view.

7 Qi Yongxiang 漆永祥, "Yanxinglu quanji kao wu" 《燕行錄全集》考誤, in *Zhongguo xue luncong* 中國學論叢, ed. Korea University Chinese Studies Institute (Seoul: Koryŏ daehak-kyo chungguk'ak yŏn'guso, 2008), 24: 234–235.

8 Various items mentioned above have been included in: Yin Mengxia 殷夢霞 and Yu Hao 于浩, eds., *Shichaoxianlu* 使朝鮮錄 (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2003). This book uses the general term "*Shichaoxianlu*" for all documents included.

9 Sŭngmunwŏn 承文院, ed., *Tongmun hwigo pop'yŏn* 同文匯考補編, in vol. 2 of *Tongmun hwigo* 同文匯考, ed. Kuksa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe 國史編纂委員會 (Seoul: Hanjin inswae gongsa, 1978), 2: 1700.

This author therefore holds that the definition of *Yanxinglu* covers the travel records of official envoys to China during the Koryŏ and Chosŏn periods, but does not include travel accounts of a more general nature. For a book to be considered part of the *Yanxinglu* category, the following two conditions need to be satisfied: first, the author must have been an official envoy, a member of a diplomatic mission on behalf of the king, or an official on a special mission; second, the author must have travelled to China or to the Chinese side of the border region between the two countries. If we were to add an alternative condition, it could be as follows: if the author has not travelled to China himself, his writing must still deal with the travel records of official Chosŏn envoys. Otherwise, the account cannot be considered part of the *Yanxinglu* category.

The titles of *Yanxinglu* writings were mostly created in one of the following four manners. First, the title was chosen by the author at the time of writing. Examples include Hong Yang-ho's 洪良浩 *Yŏnun gihaeng* 燕雲紀行, Sin Wi's 申緯 *Jucheong haenggwon* 奏請行卷, or Yi Cho-wŏn's 李肇源 *Hwangnyang eumgwon* 黃梁吟卷. Second, the *Yanxinglu* account was included in a collection of the author's writing and named according to the corresponding chapter in the edited work. The title might have been chosen by the author himself or by the editor of the collection. Examples include Yi Annul's 李安訥 *Chochŏnnok* 朝天錄, Yi Kyŏngsŏk's 李景奭 *Sŏch'ullok* 西出錄, and Sin Chŏng's 申晟 *Yŏnhaengnok* 燕行錄. Third, the title was selected by Professor Im Ki-jung when he compiled the *Yŏnhaengnokchŏnjip*. Examples include Kim Chungchŏng's 金中淸 *Chochŏnshi* 朝天詩, Chŏng T'aehwa's 鄭太和, *Yangp'a joch'ŏn illok* 陽坡朝天日錄, and Hong Myŏngha's 洪命夏 *Kyesa yŏnhaengnok* 癸巳燕行錄. Fourth, the title was chosen by this author for writing that was not included in the *Yŏnhaengnokchŏnjip* or *Yŏnhaengnok sokchip* 燕行錄續集, such as Yi Saek's 李穡 *Sahaengnok* 使行錄, Sin Sukchu's 申叔舟 *Yodong munullok* 遼東問韻錄, or Yu Hong's 俞泓 *Chochŏnshi* 朝天詩.

Given the current state of research, this author suggests that it is appropriate to use the name *Yanxinglu*, for four reasons. First, the more than one thousand extant travel records include *Yanxinglu* in the broad as well as the narrow sense and can be separated into writings that have consistently carried a single title and writings that have carried different titles over time. Despite the categories overlapping, they still retain a number of unique characteristics. Whether the title was chosen by the original author or by an editor, the term *Yanxinglu* was the most frequently used term. If we wish to respect the original titles, it seems ill advised to alter the names of books or chapters at this point. Second, if we trace the travel records back to their origins, it becomes clear that the majority of them carried the term *xingji* 行紀 in their titles. The number of travel records that used the term *jixing* 紀行, however, was also considerable. From

the Song (960–1279) and Yuan dynasties onwards, titles such as *Xingchenglu* 行程錄, *Fengshilu*, and *Shiyanlu* 使燕錄 slowly became more common. It follows that to replace the term *Yanxinglu* with the term *xingji*, as Professor Zhang has suggested, neither reflects the original titles of the travel records nor the alternative titles used in modern research adequately. Third, in comparison to titles such as *Chaotianlu*, *Guanguanglu* 觀光錄, *Yinbinglu* 飲冰錄, *Hanrenlu* 含忍錄, or *Kanyanglu* 看羊錄, the name *Yanxinglu* is both neutral and objective. Fourth, the term *Yanxinglu* is clearly political in nature, a characteristic that distinguishes it from alternatives such as *xingji* or *jixing*. This author suggests that researchers should address this point openly. Some of the inherent characteristics of the original names will be lost if researchers decide to employ an entirely apolitical terminology. This author contends that such a decision will only lead to more difficulties in the future.

1.2 Research Objects

As discussed above, *Yanxinglu* are travel records by Korean diplomatic envoys to China during the Koryŏ and Chosŏn periods. They were written over a time period of almost seven hundred years that covers the late Koryŏ kingdom in the early thirteenth century and almost the entire Chosŏn period. *Yanxinglu* writings can take almost any literary form such as poems, diaries, travel notes, reading notes, songs, petitions, official communications, reports to the emperor, secret reports, personal accounts, notes on travel routes, or maps. They cover topics that include politics, the economy, military matters, literature, history, culture, education, Chinese opera, travel, religion, cultural relics, architecture, paintings, geography, traffic, folk customs, clothing, and diet. The rich and varied nature of *Yanxinglu* makes them an important source for research on the history of communication between China and Korea as well as the history of the whole of Northeast Asia.

Yanxinglu studies, put plainly, are research on *Yanxinglu* writings and related questions. Scholars in this new field of study should pay close attention to the following research topics: the question of naming and titles of *Yanxinglu*, research theory and methods, periodization of writing and origin of *Yanxinglu*, the collection of source materials and translation, literary form and content, the value and authenticity of historical documents, the relationship between *Yanxinglu* and non-*Yanxinglu* documents such as *Huanghuaji* 皇華集 or *Piaohailu* 漂海錄, individual envoys and diplomatic missions, the creation of databases for *Yanxinglu* writings, and the history of Northeast Asia.

The earliest *Yanxinglu* writings still available today are poems by Chin Hwa 陳華 who was dispatched to the Jin dynasty (1115–1234) during the second year

(1215) of the reign of Emperor Kojong 高宗 (r. 1213–1259) of Koryŏ, which was the third year of the Zhenyou 貞祐 era (1213–1217) of Emperor Xuanzong 宣宗 (r. 1213–1224) of the Jin dynasty. Only two poems remain that were included in Chin Hwa's *Maeho yugo* 梅湖遺稿. This author has included the poems under the title *Sagŭmnok* 使金錄 in his collection of *Yanxinglu*. The latest *Yanxinglu* writing that has been preserved is the *Kabo yŏnhaengnok* 甲午燕行錄 by Kim Dongho 金東浩, a member of a diplomatic mission dispatched to convey congratulations and express gratitude to the Qing court in the sixth month of the thirty-first year (1894) of Emperor Kojong 高宗 (r. 1864–1907) of Chosŏn (the twentieth year of the Guangxu 光緒 era, 1894). Altogether one thousand and forty *Yanxinglu* have survived, written by seven hundred and forty-one envoys over a period of almost seven hundred years.¹⁰ The long and uninterrupted history, the number of authors, and numerous forms of writing make *Yanxinglu* a unique and special phenomenon in the history of books.

2 Creation and Periodization of *Yanxinglu* Writings

Research by this author suggests that, based on the time they were created and compiled, we can roughly attribute the more than one thousand *Yanxinglu* writings to one of the following six stages: the initial stage, the stage of development, the stage of formation, the stage of maturity, the golden age, and the stage of decline. These six stages will be discussed in the following sections.

2.1 *The Initial Stage*

The initial stage lasted from the second year of the reign of Emperor Kojong of Koryŏ to the third year of the reign of Emperor Kongyang 恭讓王 (r. 1388–1392) of Koryŏ, in other words, from 1215 to 1391. During that time, Koryŏ continued to experience political turbulence, and the relations with China's Yuan and Ming dynasties were unstable and at times deteriorating. Diplomatic envoys were occupied with official matters and only a small number of *Yanxinglu* have survived from this period. Most of the fourteen *Yanxinglu* accounts that remain were initially included in collected works by notable Koryŏ authors. None was published individually. The *Yanxinglu* consisted mostly of poems, such as Chin Hwa's *Sagŭmnok*, Kim Ku's 金堦 *Pukchŏngnok* 北征錄, Yi Gok's 李穀 (1298–1351) *Pongsarok* 奉使錄, Chŏng Mongchu's 鄭夢周 (1337–1392) *Punamshi*

10 Qi Yongxiang, *Yanxinglu qianzhong jieti*, 1: 1–3; 2: 1389–92; “Fanli” 凡例, 1: 1.

赴南詩, Jeong Do-jeon's 鄭道傳 (1342–1398) *Pongsarok* 奉使錄, Kwŏn Kŭn's 權近 *Pongsarok* 奉使錄, and Cho Chun's 趙浚 (1346–1405) *Chochŏnshi* 朝天詩.

2.2 *The Stage of Development*

The second period ranged from the first year of the reign of Emperor T'aejo 太祖 (r. 1392–1398) of Chosŏn to the twenty-second year of the reign of Emperor Myŏngjong 明宗 (r. 1545–1567) of Chosŏn (i.e., the twenty-fifth year of the Emperor Taizu 太祖 of the Ming dynasty until the first year of the Emperor Longqing 隆慶 of the Ming dynasty, which corresponds to the years 1392–1567). The relations between Chosŏn Korea and Ming China slowly stabilized, and with the countries and peoples at peace and regular interactions between both sides, there was a constant stream of diplomatic missions to China. In addition to poems, several of the main forms of writing found in *Yanxinglu* of later generations, such as diaries and reading notes, began to appear. Today, forty-three *Yanxinglu* accounts remain from this period. Representative works include I Chŏm's 李詹 (1345–1405) *Kwan'gwangnok* 觀光錄, Chang Chach'un's 張子忠 (dates unknown) *P'ansŏ gong joch'ŏn ilgi* 判書公朝天日記, Ŏ Sekyŏm's 魚世謙 (1430–1500) *Kimyo joch'ŏnshi* 己卯朝天詩, Yi Haeng's 李荇 (1478–1534) *Chochŏnnok* 朝天錄, Kim An'guk's 金安國 (dates unknown) *Yŏnhaengnok* 燕行錄, So Se-yang's 蘇世讓 (1486–1562) *Pugyŏng ilgi* 赴京日記, and Yu Chungyŏng's 柳中郢 (1515–1573) *Yŏn'gyŏnghaengnok* 燕京行錄.

2.3 *The Stage of Formation*

The third stage lasted from the first year of the reign of Emperor Sŏnjo 宣祖 (r. 1567–1608) of Chosŏn to the fourteenth year of the reign of King Kwanghae 光海君 (r. 1608–1623) of Chosŏn (i.e., the second year of the reign of Emperor Longqing of the Ming dynasty to the second year of the reign of Emperor Tianqi 天啟 of the Ming dynasty, which corresponds to the years 1568–1622). This period was largely characterized by the “Imjin Japanese Disturbance” (*Imjin waeran* 壬辰倭亂) and doubts about the legitimacy of King Kwanghae's reign. The Chosŏn envoys to Ming China found themselves entrusted with extremely urgent matters and were continuously in haste during their official journeys. During the later years of this period, the land route to Beijing via the Liaodong 遼東 peninsula was blocked due to the rise of the Manchus in the Northeast. Consequently, travel routes by sea were reopened and the number of *Yanxinglu* writings increased markedly. From this time period, a total of one hundred and twenty-nine travel records remain. The writings became more substantial in length and more varied in content and form. Representative works include Hŏ Bong's 許筠 (1551–1588) *Hagok sŏnsaeng joch'ŏn'gi* 荷谷先生朝天記, Cho Hŏn's 趙憲 *Choch'ŏn ilgi* 朝天日記, Pae Samik's 裴三益 *Choch'ŏnnok* 朝天錄, Hwang

Yŏ-il's 黃汝一 *Ŭnsa illok* 銀槎日錄, Hŏ Kyun's 許筠 (1569–1618) *Ŭlbyŏng joch'ŏnnok* 乙丙朝天錄, Yi Chŏngku-gu's 李廷龜 *Kyŏngshin joch'ŏnnok* 庚申朝天錄, and O Yunkyŏm's 吳允謙 *Haech'a joch'ŏn ilgi* 海槎朝天日記.

2.4 *The Stage of Maturity*

The fourth time period lasted from the first year of the reign of Emperor Injo 仁祖 (r. 1623–1649) of Chosŏn to the fourth year of the reign of Emperor Kyŏngjong 景宗 (r. 1720–1724) of Chosŏn (i.e. the third year of the reign of Emperor Tianqi of the Ming dynasty to the second year of the reign of Emperor Yongzheng 雍正 of the Qing dynasty, which corresponds to the years 1623–1724). This stage spans a time period from the late Ming to the early Qing dynasty. Following the fall of the Ming and the rise of the Qing, the kingdom of Chosŏn was compelled to declare itself a vassal state and pay tribute to the Qing dynasty. During this period, Korean envoys authored an increasing number of travel records about their journeys to Shenyang and Beijing. The three hundred and five *Yanxinglu* works of this period were written in a variety of styles that slowly began to show features that eventually became characteristic for that genre. Typical works such as Kim Ch'angŏp's 金昌業 *Nogajae yŏnhaeng ilgi* 老稼齋燕行日記 mark the beginning of a stage of maturity in the history of *Yanxinglu* writing. Other works from this period include Yi Min-seong's 李民成 *Choch'ŏnnok* 朝天錄, Hong Ik-han's 洪翼漢 *Hwap'ŏ sŏnsaeng joch'ŏn hanghaenok* 花浦先生朝天航海錄, Yi Heul's 李愔 *Sŏlchŏng sŏnsaeng joch'ŏn ilgi* 雪汀先生朝天日記, Kang Paeknyŏn's 姜栢年 *Yŏngyŏngnok* 燕京錄, Kim Sŏkchu's 金錫胄 *Toch'orok* 搗椒錄, Yu Myŏngch'ŏn's 柳命天 *Yŏnhaeng byŏlgok* 燕行別曲, and Lee Gi-ji's 李器之 *Iram yŏn'gi* 一庵燕記.

2.5 *The Golden Age of Yanxinglu*

The golden age of *Yanxinglu* writing extended from the first year of the reign of Emperor Yŏngjo 英祖 (r. 1724–1776) of Chosŏn to the twenty-fourth year of the reign of Emperor Chŏngjo 正祖 (r. 1776–1800) of Chosŏn (i.e., the third year of the reign of Emperor Yongzheng of the Qing dynasty to the fifth year of the reign of Emperor Jiaqing 嘉慶 of the Qing dynasty, which corresponds to the years 1725–1800). During this period, the Qing dynasty reached a peak – the 'High Qing' era – while the Chosŏn kingdom experienced a period of relative stability. Authors such as Pak Chiwŏn 朴趾源 (1737–1805), Pak Cheka 朴齊家 (1750–1815), Hong Yang-ho 洪良浩 (1724–1802), Sŏ Hosu 徐浩修 (1736–1799), and Cho Susam 趙秀三 helped usher in the golden age of *Yanxinglu* writing. This stage saw the creation of altogether two hundred and thirty-five *Yangxinglu* pieces. Representative works include Kang Hopak's 姜浩博 *Sangbongnok* 桑蓬錄, Yi Sangbong's 李商鳳 *Pugwŏnnok* 北轅錄, Pak Chiwŏn's *Yŏrha ilgi* 熱河

日記, Sŏ Hosu's *Yŏnun gihaeng* 燕雲紀行, Cho Susam's *Yŏnhaenggijŏng* 燕行紀程, and Sŏ Hosu's *Yŏrha giyu* 熱河紀遊.

2.6 *The Stage of Decline*

The final stage lasted from the first year of the reign of Emperor Sunjo 純祖 (r. 1800–1834) of Chosŏn to the thirty-first year of the reign of Emperor Kojong of Chosŏn (i.e. the sixth year of the reign of Emperor Jiaqing of the Qing dynasty to the twentieth year of the reign of Emperor Guangxu of the Qing dynasty, which corresponds to the years 1801–1894). At this point, both the Qing dynasty and the kingdom of Chosŏn were moving towards their decline and, with the help of gunboat diplomacy by the west, China was forced to open its doors to international trade. Following China's defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), Korean independence was lost after by annexation by Japan, and diplomatic missions to China eventually ceased. The number of *Yanxinglu* writings nevertheless reached an all-time high with a total of three hundred and forty-eight pieces. In terms of style, content, and quality, however, the *Yanxinglu* works from this period no longer compared to the writing of earlier generations and slowly entered into a period of decline. Representative works include Pak Sa-ho's 朴思浩 *Yŏngye gijŏng* 燕薊紀程, Kim Kyŏngsŏn's 金景善 *Yŏnwŏnjikchi* 燕輶直指, Hong Sun-hak's 洪純學 *Yŏnhaengga* 燕行歌, Kim Yun-sik's 金允植 *Ch'ŏnjin damch'o* 天津談草, Ŏ Yunchung's 魚允中 *Sŏjŏngnok* 西征錄, and Yi Sŭngo's 李承五 *Yŏnsa illok* 燕槎日錄.

2.7 *Study and Research*

In a similar manner, the study and research on *Yanxinglu* can be roughly divided into the following three periods: an initial period in the 1930s; a period of development between the 1960s and the 1990s; and a period of rapid growth over the past twenty years.

3 *The Question of Research Methods*

As discussed above, the more than one thousand extant *Yanxinglu* accounts are valuable primary sources for research on the diplomatic history between ancient Korea and China. Parts of these sources, however, are inauthentic and unreliable, which make them risky to use. In order to distinguish the authentic from the inauthentic sources, scholars need to possess a proper attitude and employ suitable research methods. At the risk of sounding trite, this author

will raise a number of suggestions researchers may use to tackle these issues successfully.

3.1 *Document Authenticity – Methods and Importance*

When faced with documents that originated a thousand years ago, it is a basic academic task for any historian to ascertain their authenticity. In *Yanxinglu* research, this question merits special attention since the more than one thousand travel records contain both authentic as well as inauthentic documents. In addition, there is a phenomenon that further complicates this task: *Yanxinglu* authors often copied freely from other authors and earlier travel accounts or reproduced passages from other well-known historical sources in their writing. The major edited collections of *Yanxinglu* available today often fail to provide information about the origins and different versions of individual pieces of writing, making it difficult for researchers to carry out their own investigations. Additional problems with modern edited collections include the following: documents were mistakenly included, included more than once, or accidentally omitted. In an attempt to create large and complete collections, editors often included an excessive number of documents. Carelessness during the editing process sometimes caused additional problems such as textual errors. If researchers indiscriminately treat all *Yanxinglu* accounts as authentic historical documents, they will easily confuse facts with fiction and reach conclusions incompatible with historical realities. For future *Yanxinglu* research, this author would like to offer the following suggestions: scholars should strive to edit smaller collections of *Yanxinglu*-related documents of narrowly defined categories instead of additional large-scale collections of *Yanxinglu* writing. Researchers should also strengthen the search for and collection of scattered *Yanxinglu* accounts that have not been included in the *Yanxinglu quanji*, the *Yanxinglu xuji*, or similar collections. More attention should be given to the translation of *Yanxinglu* documents into modern Korean and Chinese as well as the creation of relevant data banks and indexes.

3.2 *The Origin and Development of Travel Accounts*

The number of monographs and articles on *Yanxinglu* continues to increase, but many researchers tend to concentrate on case studies about a particular envoy, a particular piece of *Yanxinglu* writing, or a particular question. Once they find a certain viewpoint or mode of understanding expressed in a document, they often erroneously assume that this phenomenon originated with the author or piece of writing under investigation. However, a similar point of

view or mode of understanding might well have already been expressed by earlier generations of envoys. Similar opinions or behaviors might even have been displayed by several different persons. If researchers encounter these kinds of circumstances, they need to trace the matter to its source and clarify who first expressed the words and opinions in question. They further need to ascertain whether the authors merely copied the passages in question, whether they added their own observations and opinions, or even misread or misunderstood the earlier texts. The travel records often contain repetitive passages and authors frequently copied from each other. Poems that were praising the group of scenic mountains called “*shisan shan*” 十三山, for example, were copied time and time again and exist in many different versions. Let us now assume a scholar were to randomly choose just one of these versions of the same poem in order to analyze and evaluate it, concluding that the author’s decision to link “*shisan shan*” to the “*wushan shier feng*” 巫山十二峰 and to pair it with the expression “*shisan ri*” 十三日 was both intriguing and original. This would represent a failure to investigate the matter further and to realize that earlier writers have long made this comparison, and all conclusions would be rendered meaningless and unhelpful.¹¹

3.3 *The Temporal and Spatial Dimensions of Travel Accounts*

Yanxinglu writings cover almost seven hundred years of history and touch on connections between China, Korea, and Japan, as well as other countries and regions. It is therefore imperative that scholars cross-reference and compare sources across both time and space. *Yanxinglu* research has become unusually popular at the moment and new publications continue to appear in large numbers. However, there are few actual breakthrough results. This is due to the fact that researchers mostly work on isolated case studies, at times failing to gain a wide perspective in their research. Contenting themselves with discussing individual envoys or events, they often ignore the causes and effects of the problems and phenomena under investigation.

This selective and limited research that remains blind to the bigger picture not only fails to produce any valuable conclusions, but it also actively leads to more fragmentation and other deleterious effects. As Professor Zhang Bowei 張伯偉 has aptly stated, we create new problems while trying to solve existing ones. Professor Zhang has argued that:

11 Qi Yongxiang 漆永祥, “‘Yanxinglu xue’ chuyi” “燕行錄學” 芻議, *Dongjiang xuekan* 東疆學刊, no. 3 (2019): 1–15.

The travel notes in the records from various countries – be it by Korean envoys to China and Japan, Japanese Buddhist monks on their pilgrimages, or Vietnamese envoys to China – are all presented in a novel and vivid manner. They successfully encourage the reader to engage with a variety of historical scenes, but they also carry the danger of misleading researchers into attaching too much importance to insignificant episodes. It is therefore essential that researchers use the concept of the “Chinese cultural sphere” 漢文化圈 in order to gain a more panoramic view. Within this framework, research on any one particular issue will immediately give rise to a multitude of related questions. This is the type of comprehensive research that we need.¹²

Researchers will therefore need to apply concepts and methods that guarantee the depth and breadth of their work. For any matter under investigation, they need to clarify its origins and development as well as its functions and effects. Even a researcher who only investigates a *Yanxinglu* account that was published individually will still need to do a comprehensive investigation of *Yanxinglu* accounts in edited collections and refer to additional historical documents of that time. Only if we scrutinize and mutually verify different sources can we eventually reach objective and reliable conclusions.

3.4 *Foreign Perspectives and National Observations*

Chinese historical research has always been accused of resembling a feudal monarch – self-centered and with a tendency for exceptionalism. Chinese scholars have also been criticized for their failure to consult historical documents from or show deference to the feelings of neighboring regions. Even if concepts such as “East Asia” or “Northeast Asia” are employed, China is still considered to be at the center. Over the past one hundred years, however, scholars have felt compelled to employ research methods that view China from the perspective of the West, such as “Western-centrism” or the theory of “Western Superiority,” that stifled their academic efforts. Textual records in fields such as the history of Chinese thought, the history of science, or the history of the Ming and Qing dynasties have already been used exhaustively. Travel records by Korean or Vietnamese envoys to China, on the other hand, have furnished these fields with a large body of previously unexamined historical documents and infused scholars with new hope and perspective. *Yanxinglu* works are a veritable treasure trove that can greatly benefit researchers. There is a tendency, however, to exaggerate the value and importance of these documents.

12 Zhang Bowei, “Mingcheng, wenxian, fangfa,” 25.

As this article has already shown, a substantial part of this vast and haphazard body of documents is unreliable and at times even inauthentic, plagiarized, or erroneous. If these documents are used in an indiscriminate manner, the entire field of research will be built on an unstable foundation that may collapse at any moment.

In recent years, scholars have increasingly studied Chinese society during the Ming and Qing dynasties from a “foreign perspective.” This, however, has also created huge difficulties with the selection of historical documents and the question of how to guarantee their authenticity and reliability. An even bigger concern is the fact that these records were often tinted by ideology. What foreign envoys recorded was frequently in stark contrast to reality, especially for envoys who travelled to Beijing after the beginning of the Qing dynasty. On the surface, they kowtowed in the imperial palace with enthusiasm, but in private they mourned the fall of the Ming dynasty. They freely slandered everyone from the emperor to the common people and portrayed the Qing court as a barbarian place, devoid of high culture, and in political decline with a debauched emperor and corrupt officials. The Chosŏn monarch also hoped for the fall of the Qing dynasty. We therefore cannot expect these pieces of travel writing to describe and record actual historical facts in an objective manner. If scholars assume that the travel records faithfully depict historical realities, they will inevitably be misled in their research.

Foreign envoys experienced the world through tinted glasses and were far from objective in recording their personal impressions and experiences. Researchers therefore need to carefully analyze the historical facts before they can rely on this type of historical documents with confidence. If we place indiscriminate and undue trust in travel records by Korean, Japanese, or Vietnamese envoys and fail to make adequate use of historical documents from China, we will only end up moving from one extreme to another. Eventually, we will cause historical research to deviate from its course and mistakenly steer it into a world of fiction. This conclusion is, in the author’s opinion, in no way alarmist. Chinese records of the successive dynasties are extensive and should continue to be at the center of historical research. Otherwise, the system will be deprived of its foundation and loose stability. Adequate research methods require scholars to combine national documents with sources that provide a foreign perspective, to compare the past and the present, to investigate questions in depth and breath, and to foreground our own national perspective.

Translated by Anja Bihler

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