

Re-constructing Memory of the Conflict between Ming and Qing:

Role of Chosŏn Interpreters in 18th Century

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1.

After the Qing invasion of Chosŏn in 1636, Chosŏn formally severed the relationship with the Ming Empire and accept Qing's status as the center of the imperial Chinese tributary system. The invasion had influenced the Chosŏn intellectuals to re-construct their identity and their belongingness to China due to the collapse of Ming Empire. Although they were forced to accept the Qing Empire's order, they have utilized different kinds of discourses, objects or political actions to remember the status of Ming and attempted to consider themselves as the remaining members of Ming Empire. However, those intellectuals were still appointed as the mission members for visiting China, especially participating diplomatic ritual activities in Beijing. The experience of traveling to China allowed them to visit some of the monuments or locations which were related to Ming history or the Ming-Qing war, such as Ningyuan 寧遠, Shanhai Gate 山海關 and Jinzhou 錦州. Those intellectuals have attempted to consolidate or organize the discourse or memory of those locations which can help them to maintain or reinforce the glory of Ming Empire. When people met some particular locations or objects, those sites can help some of the particular communities to reinforce the imagination or collective understanding for a particular issue. This concept was popularized by French Historian Pierre Nora and he called it "Les Lieux de Mémoire" (Sites of Memory). Pierre Nora has utilized this concept to rewrite the French history and particularly he found that only if the imagination of a particular community was placed into one particular site, the site of memory can be constructed. That means if we want to adopt the concept of *Site of Memory* in the East Asian studies or Korean studies, we may need to find out what is the community we are going to concern and what is the site we are trying to discuss.

In the period of Ming-Qing transition, we can also find that Northeast China was the important example of *Site of Memory* for Chinese, Manchurians and also Koreans. Especially, Chosŏn intellectuals had no other ways to learn the Ming history or story of Ming-Qing war except visiting Northeast Asia during the mission to Beijing. However,

they were lack of information for helping to construct the memory for Ming-Qing transition. They have visited the location but they cannot automatically learn the story without any support and assistance. How can the Chosŏn intellectuals' memory for Ming-Qing war can be completely formed during their visiting in Northeast Asia?

This paper will try to study the significance of the role of Chosŏn interpreters during their mission to Beijing and China. Some of the *Yŏnhaengsa* member have mentioned in their *Yŏnhaengnok* that they have relied on some of the interpreters to collect various information which is related to history, society or politics of Ming-Qing China. Although this kind of topic for discussing the role of Chosŏn interpreters was widely discussed in the academia, it will attempt to argue that the interpreters were not only the messenger of information, but also the cultural agent of the memory of the past, especially the memory of the Ming-Qing war and Ming-Qing transition. As for better underst this, the examples of Yi Chung-son's *Yŏnhaengnok* during 18th centuries will be discussed for explaining how the mission interpreter Kim Kyŏng-mun influencing Yi's understanding on the story or the related matters and re-constructing the other Chosŏn intellectuals' memory on the Ming-Qing war.

2.

Ming-Qing War was ended in 1644 and it has re-constructed the international order in East Asia. Ming Dynasty was collapsed and Manchurians became the new ruler of the imperial empire. Even though Chosŏn court and their intellectuals have assumed that Manchurians were barbarians and they were impossible to replace the status of Ming imperial empire, the realpolitik has forced Chosŏn court to fulfill the tributary requirements to Qing dynasty and send the ritual mission to Beijing regularly. Between the contradiction of realpolitik and ideological imagination, some of the Chosŏn intellectual mission members in the late 17th century and early 18th century still felt very miserable for the downfall of the Ming Dynasty and the falling of Chinese civilization. Therefore, they were also trying to search the reality of the war and imagined the glory of Ming Dynasty during their missions. Some monuments in Northeast China were gradually becoming the key sites and battlefields for the Ming-Qing war and these intellectuals have tried to place some of their imagination or expectation in these sites. However, they have a lack of information or historical records after the war was ended more than several decades.

Although those intellectuals cannot change the history, they can rewrite the collective memory of the Chosŏn people for understanding the war. Most of the intellectuals and interpreters did not experience the war but the interpreters had the chance to seek some of the people's opinion as well as records for grasping the serval

knowledge which was related to the war. The interpreters had their own views on the war and their views and collected information will be transferred to intellectuals. Those intellectuals' writing for the war were clearly to be understood that was contributed by interpreters' message.

Why the roles of interpreters became important in Qing-Chosŏn interaction? Since the Ming dynasty has been collapsed in 17th century, many of Chosŏn mission members refused to communicate with any Qing officials or representatives even though they were asked to participate in the mission and traveling to Beijing. Therefore, intellectuals needed to ask for some lower ranking mission members to handle the mission matters as well as many of the regular activities and negotiations to Qing government. Interpreters can settle these matters. They were trained to speak Chinese as well as they were asked to learn some diplomatic knowledge by the office of rituals. Pak Chi-ja and Pak Chi-won have both realized that many of scholars in Chosŏn have assumed that "China" was a shame. Although they were appointed for being the mission members, all the documents, communicating works and mission matters were given to the interpreters. 清興以來，國朝士大夫，以中國為恥，雖黽俛奉使，而一切事情，文書，言語之去來，悉委之於譯。

Although some of the scholars have criticized the interpreters' misbehaviors, such as 貪污 or 走私, they can still rely on the interpreters because the interpreters' assistance was the only way for them to grasp the knowledge and information from China side. In 1722, the deputy envoy of the Yŏnhaeng mission Yi Chŏng-sin was interested in various aspects of the Qing society. Therefore, he has attempted to a lot of questions to different interpreters in the mission. According to his records, we can find that most of his knowledge and information of Chinese society was actually learnt from the interpreters, especially Kim Kyŏng-mun. Kim was not only introducing some basic facts for the Chinese society and culture, but also trying to explain some of the questions the envoy's concern. Interpreters had more chances for visiting to China and they had their own inter-personal networks for grasping various knowledge or collecting some important information.

During the early 18th century, the scholars from Chosŏn were still concerning the reality of Ming Dynasty's collapse. Some of them were trying to find the answers during their mission. While some mission members were reaching some of the monuments in Northeast China, they were eager to know the details whether they were the key for Ming's downfall or not. Ningyuan was one of the most important battlefields for the Ming-Qing War and the Ming army finally marked the first victorious in the eight-year-long battle with Later Jinn(Qing). In this case, battle of Ningyuan can represent the glory of Ming

Empire and effort of Ming army in the history of Ming-Qing war. Therefore, the Chosŏn intellectuals were remarkably interested in the stories of Ningyuan to search the memory of Ming's glory and they were finding the answer during the mission

3.

Interpreters of Chosŏn mission were becoming their keys to answer their questions and concerns. It was because they have collected much related information or myths and that can be the reliable source for Yi and other intellectuals to match the whole picture of the stories of battle of Ningyuan. While Yi has arrived Ningyuan, he heard a story related to Hong Taiji 皇太極. So, he asked Kim Kyŏng-mun for the details of the story. Kim replied Yi in very details for the story of Hong Taiji during the Ningyuan battle. Kim's reply,

"I heard a Chinese myth and story. During the period of Qing Taizong, Yuan Chonghuan was the commander at Ningyuan for blocking the attack by Later Jin. Although Qing Taizong has attempted to break through Ningyuan, he was still defeated by Yuan's army. Therefore, Hong Taiji frequently consulted his counselors for strategy on a terrace outside Ningyuan where can look down the location of Ningyuan. Finally, Qing Taizong tried to fire the wall by the cannons and aimed to destroy one side of the city walls. Qing Taiju stepped on the terrace again after the day of shelling and decided to command the army for attacking the Ming's army. He suddenly found that the wall was 're-built' as new without any damage. Qing Taiju was shocked and spited the blood on the terrace. He thought that Yuan was so amazing and determined to force the enemy to retreat. When Qing Taizong asked the army for shelling the war, the soldiers told Yuan Chonghuan about the situation of the shelling. Yuan just replied him, 'I have already known that. You are so annoying.' Everyone in Yuan's army was so nervous but Yuan just asked a soldier to do something and then ending the meeting. Yuan actually tried to ask the subordinate to paint the shape of wall in a large fabric for covering the damaged sides. Meanwhile, the subordinates can have enough time for repair the wall. Few days later, the wall was completely restored. After Qing Taizong has known the truth, he lamented that my strategies and skills cannot be compared with Yuan. When Yuan was still staying in Ningyuan, Qing army was frightened for attacking the Yuan's army. After Yuan was killed and Zu Dashou replaced Yuan's position, Ningyuan fall into Qing's hands. That's why this terrace was called as 'Spitting Blood Terrace.'¹

¹ 曾聞中國人傳說，清太宗時，袁崇煥鎮守寧遠，以遏進關之路。太宗攻之數年，不能拔，常與謀士坐台上，俯瞰城中，而講究必破之策。一曰別作大砲，打壞城之一面，議以明朝督精

In this detail explanation, Kim told the source and reason of the terrace was named as Spitting Blood Terrace. Ningyuan was the first battlefield marked the victorious of Ming's army and it became the important location for the intellectuals' imagination for Ming history. Yi Chǒng-sin has never experienced the war but he attempted to look for the details of the story which can fit or replenish their imagination for the Ming Empire. According to Kim's record, Yuan was a very smart and intelligent commander in Ming army and he was the only one who can stop the invasion by Qing Taizong. Although that may not be the exact picture of the reality, Kim's explanation was the only way Yi can learn about the conflict story after few decades. We cannot identify and investigate the source of Kim's reply but we can understand that Kim's explanation for spitting blood terrace helped Yi to grasp some knowledge of the war, especially some of the positive and glorious memory of the Ming history.

Pierre Nora believed that the interaction between the community and sites can form some of the particular cultural imagination and this can help to re-write the history. The particular community was influenced by the sites, monuments or items and they can associate with some of the related idea, thought or academic background to imagine some of the unique views for the site. This kind of view can only be achieved or constructed by the integration between the community's imagination and their experience in the site. But how can they grasp the information and knowledge of the site? In the case of Yi Chǒng-sin, we can find that the interpreters' role was the key for helping Yi's constructing his own memory for Ming-Qing conflict. Although Yi did not reply Kim, we can see he still recorded the Kim's explanation in his travel records. That can prove that Yi did not negate Kim's interpretation and also accept the story become part of his own memory for the traveling in Ningyuan. After 100 years later, another Chosŏn intellectual Kim Kyŏng-sŏn 金景善 has recorded the exact version of the story. It may help us to know the information from interpreters was still circulated in different intellectuals' memory.

4.

Apart from spitting blood terrace, an archway in Ningyuan also attracted Yi Chǒng-sin's attention. The archway was built by Zu Dashou and Zu Dale who were the successors of Yuan Chonghuan for defending Ningyuan. But Zu Dashou was isolated because Songshan and Jinzhou were both captured after Yuan Chonghuan was death. Zu

銳，長駟以入。復來登臺，方欲麾兵而進，望見新堞完然，崇墉屹屹，其毀者已完於一夜之間。太宗大驚曰：『何其神也。』魄褫心死，嘔血數升，仍即退軍。當其放砲毀城之日，守者奔告崇煥，崇煥方對客圍碁，點頭而徐答曰：『已知之矣，慎勿煩言。』而驚懼眾心，招從事一人，附耳語數句，從事唯唯而退。作大布帳鞆畫輓築之形，以蔽其毀處，潛自其內修築，不日而城完。太宗追聞之，歎曰：『是謀非吾所能及也。』崇煥在時，不敢復侵。未幾，崇煥殺死，祖大壽代之而城遂陷，垓之名嘔血以此云。

Dashou was asked to surrender and finally he was permitted to serve the Qing army. After his surrendering to Qing, Zu became a typical “traitor” in the discourse of Chinese history. Before Zu surrendered to Qing, Zu was the successful commander for defending Ningyuan and that’s why Ming Emperor Chongzhen gave an archway for his contribution in Ningyuan. This was recorded by 俞拓基 and Yu criticized Zu Dashou’s decision of surrender. He said, “Zu’s family was benefited from the Ming Emperor but they were so arrogant and willingly surrendered to the barbarians. Our country's heartache. Our country's heartache.” (祖家父子兄弟受恩，自大如此，而大壽兄弟甘心降虜倒戈，本朝痛矣，本朝痛矣。)

However, Yi heard another version of the story of Zu’s archway from Kim Kyöng-mun. Kim told Yi that the archway was built by Zu Dashou himself by his salary as the commander of Ningyuan. Zu Dashou was also criticized by Kim that Zu did not plan for the strategy for defending Ningyuan. Kim believed that the downfall of Ming Empire was caused by Zu Dashou and Zu should be charged.

After Yi has listened to Kim Kyöng-mun, Yi was influenced by Kim’s interpretation and commented Zu Dashou and his archway from a pro-Ming perspective. He said,

“Although Zu Dashou was already died, the archway was still existed. People can point the archway and curse him. He originally expected for showing off but now leave a stink forever.” (窃以爲大壽雖死，而牌樓尚在，人得而指點而唾罵之。其所願誇耀而流芳者，適足以遺臭而聲罪也云。)

We know that the version Yi learnt and Kim shared may not be the facts for archway and Zu Dashou’s history. But Yi actually did not care about that. He was more interested in identifying scapegoats for the fall of Ming army and Zu was becoming one of them. This archway in Ningyuan helped the Chosŏn intellectuals can share and circulate the common memory for the Ming-Qing conflict as well as the downfall of Ming Dynasty which was not similar in the Chinese community in Qing or Manchurians. It was because this was the unique experience for those mission members who was appointed in Yonhaengsa.

100 years later, Kim Kyöng-sŏn has also recorded the Zu’s archway and he had the similar observation for Zu’s archway. It is obviously seen that the story was maintained to circulate in the community of Chosŏn intellectuals and they shared the similar memory decades by decades. Of course Kim Kyöng-mun may not be the first one to know the story, but Kim was the first one to let the intellectuals to record the story and we can find that many of these information collected by interpreters will be transmitted to be the shared cultural memory of the Chosŏn mission members. This was shared and

5.

This is the example for trying to explain the relationship between Chosŏn intellectuals and their imagination for the Ming-Qing conflict by visiting the sites which related to Ming-Qing conflict. But the imagination or the memory was not just influenced by their observation and also affected by the role of interpreters.

The interpreters had abundant experience for traveling in China and skills of speaking Chinese. They can collect the information more than the envoys can. And also most of the envoys during the Qing dynasty resisted to talk to Chinese. That's why they needed to rely on the interpreters when they wanted to know the details of the sites or some of the monuments. Examples of Ningyuan and Zu's archway will be the beginning of the studies of memory in Ming-Qing conflict as well as Sino-Korean relations. We find that a lot of monuments of the war can help the intellectuals forming some of the idea and thought. However, they were a lack of awareness and knowledge for the war so they were difficult to imagine the story to shape the whole picture of memory. In the example of Yi's *Yŏnhaengnok*, we can see that his knowledge and comment of the war was obviously seen that influenced by Kim Kyŏng-mun's interpretation. Kim's knowledge has not been recorded in any personal writings and books until Yi recorded his interpretation as part of his *Yŏnhaengnok*. Therefore, it may explain how a Chosŏn intellectual has accepted the interpreter's interpretation to construct or re-construct the memory. This kind of memory was also recorded so other intellectuals can circulate the similar memory in this particularly community. All in all, the idea of Pierre Nora can be adopted to re-understand the story of Ming-Qing war from the perspective of intellectuals, especially the role of interpreters in the *Yŏnhaengsa* mission.