

POSTSCRIPT ONE

Above is what Cai “Source of Fragrance” [Cai Tinglan] wrote: One part is called “Record of Peril on the High Seas,” which narrates the misfortunes of the ship and the people on it and how they traveled at night and barely survived; the next part is “Travelogue of the Fiery Wasteland,” which narrates Cai’s journey from danger to safety and the experiences on his trip back; the final part is “Vietnam Chronicle,” which takes up [Vietnamese] institutions, clothes and goods, and customs in order to show that the extent of [our] country’s enlightening influence has no limit.

Previously, rumor had it that Mr. Cai would never return from this trip. I visited Mr. Liu Cibai [Liu Hong’ao, 1778–1849], and he told me, “Mr. Cai is cultivated in morality and is good at writing.¹ He is full of ambition, talent, and knowledge. He has not been able to fulfill his aspiration with officialdom, and on top of it all, now he has run into this predicament. This cannot be the will of heaven!” Later, the less news we got, the more people talked. I reflected that there were many cases from antiquity to the present in which talented and outstanding people, ranging from Lingjun [Qu Yuan] to Wang Zian [Wang Bo] and Li Gongfen [Li Bai] were not tolerated by creation and were submerged beneath the waves.² Therefore, I did not think it would necessarily not be the case.

Now, as Mr. Liu predicted, Mr. Cai has returned! After visiting his parent, he then came to visit my residence. I asked for a summary. Since spoken words could not fully describe it, after several days, he copied what he had written and brought it to me. I increasingly believed that Cai benefited from this situation, in which he encountered difficulties, but the gods did not forsake him. He is nothing like those boasters or

profiteers. It is [thus] proper that even while struggling in a barbaric country, every place he went was like a homecoming.

As for his “Vietnam Chronicle,” it all came from what he saw, heard, and checked in historical documents. Unlike local annals or records of exotic places, everything in his record is based on evidence and is trustworthy.³ His eagerness to learn was not interrupted by the predicaments among the barbarians. I know that since that time, his morality has become more solid and writing more outstanding. If one day he takes a position in the court, he would certainly be able to stand independently, equalizing disasters and happiness and unifying life and death. It is not by accident that heaven drove him to danger and made him travel ten thousand *li* on water and land! Since Mr. Bai wrote a preface to the book, I thus attached a few words to return to Mr. Cai.

Magistrate of Taiwan Prefecture and friend, Xiong Yiben

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