

A Note on Socio-cultural Cooperation Between Republic of Korea and People's Republic of Mongolia*

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I. Preface

The first direct relationship between Korea and Mongol began in 1218 when Koryo and the Mongol empire under Chingis Khaan made their first contact. But the relationship was broken in 1368 by the downfall of the Yüan empire and the rise of the Ming dynasty. In 1921 Mongol government established independent socialist nation through the victory of the people's revolution. After the second world war, on October 15, 1948, Mongolian People's Republic established diplomatic ties with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. However, Mongolian People's Republic had none of such diplomatic relationship with Republic of Korea, nor any other kind of relationship. Meanwhile Mongolian People's Republic participated in the 1988 Seoul Olympics and the event paved the way for the beginning of official diplomatic relationship between the two countries which opened on March 26, 1990.

With the start of this official relationship, both countries are seeking bilateral cooperation in economic and cultural areas with the

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joint effort to promote peace in Asia, thus contributing to the world peace. This note was prepared to present my own personal views for the promotion of socio-cultural cooperation between the two countries.

II. Retrospect: Koryô and the Mongol Empire

1. The Military Regime's Resistance Against the Mongols

The first contact between Koryô and the Mongols resulted from their joint effort to destroy a motley army of Khitan who had fled from Manchuria across the Yalu to escape the Mongols. When Chin came under sustained Mongol attack, the Khitan had taken the opportunity to assert their independence, but following the fall of the Chin capital in 1215, Mongol pressure drove the Khitan into Koryô's northern regions for more than two years, the Khitan made a defensive stand at Kangdong Fortress, east of Pyongyang, but soon were compelled to surrender by the combined Mongol-Koryo siege forces (1219). After this incident the Mongols regarded themselves as Koryo's benefactors and came to collect annual tribute. Their demands were too heavy, however, and on several occasions Koryo refused to accede to them. This was the immediate cause for the beginning of a rift between the two. Subsequently, in 1225, the Mongol envoy Chu-ku-yü was killed enroute back from Koryo, and the Mongols eventually used the incident as a pretext for launching their first invasion of Koryo, in 1231.

The Mongol army led by Sartaq ran into stubborn resistance from Pak So at Kuju(Kusong)but, abandoning his siege there, Sartaq drove toward the capital at Kaesong. When Koryo now sued for peace,

the Mongols left military governors(*daruhaci*) behind in the northwest region of Korea and withdrew their troops. But Ch'oe U who was the military ruler, resolved to resist the Mongols and so moved the capital to Kanghwa Island the next year(1232), an action calculated to exploit the one Mongol weakness, their fear of the sea. At the same time that the ruling class entered Kanghwa, the populace in general was made to take refuge in the mountain fortresses or on islands off the coast. Koryo's decision to resist the Mongols provoked further invasions. To be sure, the Mongol force again withdrew upon the death of their commander, Sartaq, at the hands of the monk Kim Yun-hu in the battle at Ch'oin-song (Yongin), later in 1232, but thereafter Mongol assaults continued as before. In the end, over a thirty year period the Mongols launched a total of six invasions of Koryo.

To one standing on a hill on the mainland opposite, the shoreline of Kanghwa Island lies visible just across the water. Nevertheless, the Mongols could only glare across this narrow strip of sea and call to the Koryo defenders to come out onto the mainland. The Koryo response was that they would come out, if the Mongols first withdrew their forces. To which the Mongols in turn rejoined that they would withdraw, if first the Koreans came back across to the mainland. It was a pointless exchange of verbal taunts, for the real question was the strength of will on the part of the Ch'oe house to continue to resist. So long as their determination to resist could not be broken, it would be well-nigh impossible for the Mongols to capture Kanghwa.

During all these invasions the court on Kanghwa Island continued to live as if it were back in Kaesong in peace time. Government officials continued to collect taxes wherever they could, and the supply

ships regularly plied between the island and the mainland, bringing back all that the court required, regardless of the miseries of the people. Naturally there was a good deal of disaffection among the populace, but the only worry of the court seemed to be that the Mongols might take to the sea and cut off the supply ships.

The main political question at court was, of course, policy toward the mongols. Ch'oe Ui, the fourth of the Ch'oe dictators, held out for continued resistance, as his family had always done. But the King, who had now gathered a considerable number of supporters, had always objected to the removal to Kanghwa and was now ready to face the inevitable. In 1258 Ch'oe Ui was assassinated, bringing sixty years of Ch'oe rule to an end. The King once more assumed personal control of the government, and the way was open for peace negotiations.

In March of 1259 Crown Prince Chon was sent to the Mongol court as a sign of submission. The fortifications on Kanghwa Island were destroyed in accordance with Mongol demands. When King Kojong died in June of that year, Prince Chon returned to assume the throne (posthumous title Wonjong) and was obliged in his turn to send his eldest son to the Mongols. Subsequently it became the practice for Koryo crown princes to reside in Peking as hostages until called to the Kingship.

One of the most effective methods of keeping the Koryo court under Mongol control was the system of royal marriages. Once Mongol domination was established, the Koryo Crown Prince was regularly sent to the Yuan court at Peking, where he lived until the death of the reigning king and where he was obliged to marry a Mongol princess. King Ch'ungnyol thus was given a daughter of the Yüan

emperor Shig Tsu (Kublai Khan) as his queen, and thereafter a succession of Koryo kings had princesses of the Yüan imperial house as their primary consorts, while sons born to these queens would normally succeed to the throne. Thus Koryo became a "son-in-law nation" to Yüan, in a sense an appanage under the Mongol imperial house. During the Mongol period the Koryo kings came to take Mongol names, wear their hair in Mongol style, wear Mongol dress, and use the Mongol language. The royal houses of the two nations had become a single family.

2. Mongol's influences on the Korean culture

The Mongol invasions led indirectly to one of the great achievements of Koryo culture. The carved wooden blocks for printing the Buddhist *Tripitka* which had been kept at Puin-sa were destroyed during the conflict. While the court was at Kanghwa Island, as a work of pious patriotism to secure the Buddha's protection against the Mongols, this immense collection was prepared anew. The work began in 1237 and took sixteen years. When it was finished, the Korean people had given the world one of the great treasures of Buddhist culture—the whole of the basic Buddhist canon permanently preserved and readily reproducible. The 86,600 large wooden printing blocks can still be seen today at Haein-sa, an important temple near the modern city of Taegu.

After the return of the court of Kaesong, Mongol customs and culture had considerable influence on the upper classes. Mongol words entered the language and Mongol dress and hair styles became fashionable. Early marriage, so prominent a feature of Korean society

in later days, became widespread as a means of preventing young girls from being taken off to China as part of the annual tribute.

Most of these young girls became either concubines or slaves of the Yüan Emperor or the Mongol aristocrats. For the most part, their lot was unenviable, but occasionally one was lucky. A case in point is the daughter of one Ki Cha-o, a farmer from Haengju. Shipped off to Peking in one of the annual tribute groups, she was lucky enough to be chosen for the Emperor's court. the Emperor made her his concubine, and liked her so much that eventually she was promoted to the official status of second wife, inferior only to the Empress herself. This meant that her offspring were legitimized, and when the Emperor died it was her son who succeeded to the throne. The simple farmer Ki Cha-o found himself the grandfather of an Emperor and reveled in wealth and idleness for the rest of his days.

If the Mongols had one redeeming virtue, it was their practicality. Though primitive and cruel, they were quick to see the usefulness of any idea or practice they encountered, and had none of the xenophobic distrust of foreign ways which characterized the Chinese. Having little material or intellectual culture of their own, they rapidly absorbed whatever they met with during their conquests. More specifically, many important aspects of Moslem culture reached East Asia after the Mongol conquest of Persia brought them into contact with the Arabs, including astrology, mathematics, medicine, artistic techniques and calendar reform. Korea benefited from these contacts to a modest extent, and Arab traders occasionally came to buy and sell.

Three other innovations appeared in China under the Mongols

which were to have important effects upon Korea as well. These were the cultivation of cotton and the manufacture of cotton cloth, the use of gunpowder, and the neo-Confucian philosophy of Chu Hsi, which had so profound an influence on the Yi dynasty which replaced Koryo at the close of the fourteenth century.

Toward the close of the dynasty, during King Kongmin's reign, an envoy named MunIk-chom returned from China, bringing with him the first cotton seeds ever seen in Korea. He had his father-in-law plant and cultivate them and soon cotton cloth began to be made. Hemp for the common people and silk for the upper classes had been the only textiles hitherto available in Korea, and cotton soon became very popular, since it was superior to hemp in many ways and could be cultivated and manufactured at relatively low cost.

Another technological innovation of the period was gunpowder. It had long been known to the Chinese but was just beginning to be applied to weapons of war. Ch'oe Mu-son made a special visit to China in order to learn how to manufacture it, and in 1377 King U authorized its production under government auspices. Weapons were then developed which played a conspicuous part in repelling the Japanese pirates who were plaguing the nation at that time.

In conclusion, the cultural relationship between Koryo and Mongol in the 13th and 14th centuries was a mutual one. The Mongol influence upon Korean culture were then called 'Mongol Foong' (Mongol fashion) and can still be traced in Korean culture. On the other hand, the Korean influence upon Mongol or Yüan empire were referred to as 'Koryo Yang' (Koryo mode) which can also be found in China at present. Although the political relationship between the two countries in

the 13th and 14th centuries was that of the conquerer and the conquered, its impact upon the cultures of the two countries was mutually beneficial, and in this respect, it can be said that it provides the ground for the good will of the two peoples.

III. Prospect: Toward the mutual benefit and friendship

1. Relations with MPR

The People's Republic of Mongolia became the first Communist country in Asia to open ambassadorial-level diplomatic ties with the ROK on March 26, 1990. The ROK Assistant Foreign Minister Lee Kie-joo and the MPR First Vice Foreign Minister Yondon signed a protocol on the establishment of diplomatic relations, which went into force upon signing. Mongolia is the world's second oldest Communist country, but like its huge northern neighbor and long-term ally, the Soviet Union, it began to embrace democratic reforms.

In signing the protocol, the ROK and the MPR officials shared the view that "the establishment of diplomatic ties would make great contribution to friendship between the two peoples who have close relations in ethnic and cultural terms and would further help peace and stability of Northeast Asia." In Seoul, Assistant Foreign Minister Lee Joung-bin said that the ROK and the MPR would sign agreements on trade, cultural, economic and technical cooperation in an effort to expand bilateral relations in all fields.

The sudden establishment of diplomatic relations between the ROK and the MPR exemplified clearly Mongolia's new foreign policy after reformist leaders came to power. That is, the Fifth Plenary of the

Central Committee of the MPRP in December, 1988 thoroughly analysed the internal and foreign policy of the MPR.

The resolution adopted at that plenary meeting emphasized, in particular, that...it is necessary to further rectify the foreign policy activities of the MPR in consonance with the ideas of restructuring. As a consequence of the above, certain policy changes are being implemented:

- the foreign policy and foreign economic activities of Mongolia are being freed from unnecessary constraints of ideological struggle;
- the country is being orientated towards expanding its involvement in the international division of labour;
- Mongolia will become more actively involved in relations with the other countries of the world, as well as with socialist countries;
- more attention will be paid to Mongolia's own identity as a developing country with closer contacts with the NAM and broader participation in the activities of the 'Group of 77' as a full member.

A shared ideology was the basis for Mongolian-the DPRK friendship for decades. From the capitalist ROK, Mongolia, now, wants trade and investment, according to political experts. Therefore, under existing circumstances, both sides take primary interest in economic cooperation. It is a matter of course that Mongolia wants trade and investment from the ROK, because Asia, like the Pacific region as a whole, is remarkable for its dynamic economic development; along side the economic super-powers such as US, USSR and Japan, many rapidly developing countries and the newly industrialized countries are emerging.

But, pursuing a peace-loving and broadly cooperation-orientated

policy, both the ROK and the MPR bear in mind that they are linked by historical and ethnic ties and cultural traditions. Therefore, peoples of the two countries are deeply interested in interacting in favor of universal security and all-around cooperation.

2. Some Opinions for Socio-cultural Cooperation Between the Two Countries.

I propose to think about the socio-cultural cooperation between the two countries in the following three categories: (1) exchange programs, (2) joint research programs and (3) programs for mass understanding. More detailed explanation for each of these three categories are as follows (table 1).

First, exchange program means the exchange of events in the fields of literature, performing arts, fine arts, sciences, mass media and sports encompassing performances, exhibitions, sports events, radio and TV program exchange, various data and information exchange.

Secondly, joint research program means the researches or studies conducted jointly by the scholars and experts of the two countries in various areas of cultural and academic fields. Studies will be done on key topics of academic and traditional cultural field.

Thirdly, programs for mass understanding means the plans to facilitate better understanding between Korean and Mongolian people so that they could easily understand each other in their respective fields of politics, economy, society and culture. In short, this program will enable the peoples of the two countries to communicate more widely and quickly.

Each of these three categories is elaborated in the following.

Exchange Program

Exchange Program will include exchanges in the field of (1) performing arts, exhibitions and sports events (2) various data and information and (3) scholars and students. However, this program will center around such events as staging performing arts festival, exhibitions and sporting events. First of all, it may be desirable that the exchange of traditional cultural events precedes other events in that the two countries are linked together by historical and ethnic ties and cultural traditions. It will help form an emotional link between the peoples of the two countries. Also, exchange in the fields of films, circus and sports are recommended with priority. In view of the fact that Mongolian circus is a unique national art which incorporated the best of world circus and the artistic element of folk sports and games, I think the Mongolian circus will receive an excellent response from Korean public. In the field of sports, Mongols are traditionally very strong in wrestling, boxing, judo, cycling and shooting, sports exchange in these areas will have a lot to contribute to the development of these sports. In addition to these, exchanges of fine arts exhibitions and modern music performances may be included in cultural exchange program with the same priority. Further exchange will occur gradually in such fields as folklore, literature, architecture, theatre and ballet.

On the other hand, student exchange will be primarily in the various areas of natural sciences, agricultural science, medical science and technology as well as Mongolian and Korean studies. Various data exchange is also recommended as necessary.

Joint Research Program

The priority will be decided as required by each country. First of all, historical and cultural traditions will necessitate joint research projects in traditional literature and art such as folklore, folk music and folk dance as well as in such academic disciplines as historical science (historiography, archeology, ethnography, etc), linguistics and economics. For instance, Korean scholars will think it essential to study old Mongolian language to trace the origin of Korean language and to understand how the Korean language which belongs to the Ural-Altai family of languages has developed or diverged from it. In fact, lots of studies have already been done in this area. Also, in Mongolia, a number of works have been published investigating the inter-relationship between the Mongolian language and a Korean language. In the respect, it is not only necessary but also very desirable for the linguistic scholars of both countries to conduct joint studies in this field. The necessity of joint research based on the ethnic and historical ties and cultural tradition is just as vital in other academic fields as the above mentioned linguistic one. I think joint research in the economic field will be necessary, for economic cooperation between Korea and Mongol will make it a common interest for both countries. Further joint studies in other academic, cultural and artistic fields will follow gradually as required by time and circumstances.

Programs for Mass Understanding

Mass media can play the most important role in making of wide range of people in both countries understand each other quickly. Sports, folk dance or folk music exchange will play the same role, but the impact is not as wide and quick as that of mass media. Among mass media, the impact of Television is the most crucial.

In Korea, virtually every household has TV sets and there is one TV set per every 20 of the population in Mongolia. Therefore, exchange of TV programs that can show respective culture and way of life will be very important. Also, freedom of press coverage must be guaranteed for journalistic activities.

IV. Conclusion

In Korea, there is a saying that "One started, half done." As the saying goes, socio-cultural cooperation between Korea and Mongolia can be said 'well on the half way' because there have been frequent mutual visits by the people engaged in political, economic, cultural, academic and journalistic activities since 1988 Seoul Olympics in which Mongolia participated, and as the two countries already have diplomatic relationship. In the past two years major Korean daily newspapers ran a series of articles introducing Mongolian culture and traditional customs. The same kind of wide coverage on Mongolia was also televised many times by Korean television networks. Now more and more Koreans feel Mongolia closer as a neighboring country and has deeper understanding of her culture. I am certain that the friendship between the two countries will be more consolidated as the time goes by if the two countries continue to have exchange in the areas of interest in culture and academic field without haste. I myself will make good of this opportunity to learn more about Mongolian culture and way of life. Thank you.

Plan for Socio-cultural Cooperation

(Table 1)

(P:Priority)

Area for Cooperation		Exchange Program		Joint Rsearch		Mass Understanding	
Area	sub-area	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
Literature & Arts	Folklore		*	*			*
	Literature		*		*		*
	Fine Arts	*		*		*	
	Architecture		*		*		*
	Theatre		*		*		*
	Folk Music	*		*	*		
	Modern Music	*		*	*		*
	Folk Dances	*		*		*	
	Ballet		*		*		*
	Films	*			*		*
Circus	*			*		*	
Sciences	Natural Sciences	*			*		
	Agricultural Science	*			*		
	Medical Science	*			*		
	Technology		*		*		
	Philosophy				*		
	Economics			*			
	Historical Science			*		*	
	Juridical Science				*		
	Literary Studies				*		
	Art Criticism				*		
	Pedagogics				*		
	Mongolian Studies	*		*			
Korean Studies							
Mass Media	Newspaper		*				*
	Magazine		*				*
	Radio		*				*
	TV		*			*	
Sports		*			*		