

GORYEOYANG AND MONGOLPUNG IN THE 13TH–14TH CENTURIES*

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The present paper gives an overview of cultural exchanges between Goryeo and Yuan China in the 13th and 14th centuries when Goryeo was under the rule of the Yuan Dynasty. The article discusses the historical background of the cultural trends dubbed *Goryeoyang* (高麗樣) and *Mongolpung* (蒙古風) which had a great deal of influence on both peoples in many spheres of life, from everyday life to politics. By taking into account a wide variety of examples including fashion, food, lifestyle as well as the linguistic dimension, many similar customs and traditions can be identified between the two nations.

Key words: Goryeo, Yuan, Korean–Mongolian relations, traditional culture, Goryeoyang, Mongolpung, kongnyö.

1. Introduction

The 13th and 14th centuries were a historical period when the Mongols strode on the world stage, constructing a huge empire that encompassed almost the entire area of Eurasia. Facing this historic global force, Goryeo (918–1392) could not help but be drawn into bloody wars. Goryeo fought fiercely for over thirty years in the early 13th century to resist the powerful Mongolian army, and no other country succeeded in resisting Mongolian invasion for such a long time. As a result of this resistance, Goryeo could greatly mitigate the terms of peace dictated by Mongolia, and because of Goryeo's tenacious resistance, Khubilai (later known as King Sejo of Yuan) was directly involved in the peace negotiations that recognised Goryeo as a powerful nation. These negotiations ensured, in accordance with Khubilai's promise, that Goryeo would not

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be forced to change its traditional customs, or *topung* (土風)¹, therefore Goryeo was able to preserve its independent culture. The basis of Goryeo's independent national system was rooted in the so-called *sejoguje*.² Goryeo was allowed to retain its statehood and royal family as they were. Given that the Mongolian Empire incorporated all conquered regions into its territory, this was quite an epoch-making concession (Lee, G. S. 2010). The cultural exchanges between the two countries during this time generally progressed in two directions. One can be described as the diffusion of the upper class culture, represented by Empress Qi (Mong. *Öljei Qutuγ*),³ who was the last empress of Yuan, from the status of a *kongnyō* (貢女)⁴ and King Chungseon⁵ of Goryeo, while the other can be said to be the diffusion of the civilian culture through the *kongnyōs* and eunuchs of Goryeo. Even the *kongnyōs* and eunuchs who were taken to Yuan played a role in diffusing the customs of Goryeo in Yuan through civilian culture. In particular, they affected Yuan by maintaining the Goryeo lifestyle in terms of dress, food, and customs. Meanwhile, Mongolpung was in fashion among Goryeo's aristocratic class as a result of intermarriage with Yuan's royal family.

As indicated by the fact that the modern country name of Korea comes from Goryeo, it is easy to see that Goryeo actively accepted diverse cultures through trade with foreign countries and strived to overcome this national crisis in the midst of aggression by foreign powers through the implementation of utilitarian diplomacy and open attitudes. The high level of Goryeo's culture did not decline, even after its subjugation to Yuan. Instead, the people of Goryeo established a unique cultural product, called *Goryeoyang* in Yuan. Recently, due to increases in personal and physical exchanges between Korea and Mongolia, there has been growing interest in some aspects of the culture shared by the modern countries of Korea and Mongolia. Seeking to make a diachronic analysis, an examination is carried out about the aspects of *Go-*

¹ Topung refers to the unique customs or practices of a region. It can be described as the set of special characteristics which arise from the geography, geology, culture and climate of a particular place. The majority of Korean words used in this study follow the McCune – Reischauer system. However, widely accepted proper nouns follow the Basic Principles of Romanization of the National Institute of the Korean Language.

² After Goryeo and the Mongolian Empire concluded a peace treaty in 1259, Yuan agreed that it would not demand Goryeo to change its *topungs*. This guaranteed the continued existence of not only Goryeo's *topung*, but also the state of Goryeo. The principle of 世祖舊制 *sejoguje*, which allowed Goryeo to sustain a national system and independent government procedures, can be considered the basic framework that stipulated the relationship between Yuan and Goryeo (Committee of Historical Criticism 2009, p. 222).

³ She became a court lady of Yuan in 1333 to gain the favour of Emperor Shundi. Soon after becoming empress, she removed opposition forces and exercised great power. Her installation as the first empress, in 1365, went against all previous precedents (Lee, J. M. 2011, pp. 197–200).

⁴ This refers to Goryeo women taken to Yuan as tributes. Under the Mongols' domination (during which about half a million women and children were taken by the Mongolian army), Goryeo was forced to round up young women and send them as *kongnyō* (literally 'tribute women') to the Mongols of the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) for over eighty years.

⁵ King Chungseon (r. 1308–1313) was born to King Chungnyeol (r. 1274–1278, 1299–1308) and a daughter of Khubilai; he was the first king of alien blood in the history of Korea (Kim, K. H. et al. 2007, p. 211; Lee, G. H. 2008, pp. 267–270).

ryeoyang expressed through the lives of Goryeo people who settled and became established in Yuan China, including Empress Qi, who went on to ascend to a position of supreme power, and the *Mongolpung* diffusion that was in vogue in the upper class and centred on Goryeo's royal family. In addition, tracing the roots of Goryeoyang is also interesting as it allows us to locate the historic origin of *hallyu*⁶ that has recently been blowing strongly in East Asia and prove that Korea did not act as a passive acceptor of culture in the face of hardships caused by foreign powers. This study also examines how the two countries established their cultural identities and how they carried out cultural exchange with each other.

2. The Origin of *Goryeoyang*: Empress Qi and the *Kongnyōs*

The diffusion of *Goryeoyang* was affected by the active personal exchange between the two countries, a process that began at the end of the 13th century and extended through the latter half of the 14th. In particular, many Goryeo people who lived in Yuan during this period had been forced to move there against their will; most of these people were *kongnyōs*, eunuchs, or prisoners of war.

One of the forms of tribute that Mongolia forced upon its subordinate countries was the inhuman methods of forced emigration and Goryeo proved to be no exception. The *kongnyōs* were beautiful women who were recruited in Goryeo and taken en masse to Yuan. For approximately eighty years, from the time of King Chungnyeol through the reign of King Gongmin (r. 1351–1374), Goryeo recruited young women who were considered beautiful and sent them to Yuan. The number of women sent reached approximately 2000 (Kim, S. W. 1999, p. 150). Although most *kongnyōs* lived exhausting lives marked by hard labour and sexual abuse, some became concubines to Yuan's noblemen or their wives (Kim, C. H. 2006, p. 64). Some were fortunate enough to marry into the imperial family and one even became an empress: Empress Qi. The Goryeo women sent to Yuan were not only beautiful but they were excellent servants as well. Therefore, they were admired wherever they went, and, after the ascension of Empress Qi, many court maids were recruited from among the Goryeo women. These *kongnyōs* introduced the Goryeo lifestyle, including modes of dress and cuisine, to Yuan and planted the seeds for what would become the *Goryeoyang*. Many cultural artifacts from Goryeo were supplied to Yuan's upper class once Empress Qi came to power. In *Gōng Zhōng Shǐ* (History of the Royal Court), Zhāng Xù, a poet of the late Yuan period, rhapsodised about the wind of Goryeo that was blowing quite strongly in the royal court of Yuan. He wrote, "Women in the royal court are contestingly trying to see a Goryeo woman's clothes at night" (Kim, S. N. 2004, p. 66).

After being installed as the second empress of Emperor *Toγon Temür* (Shundi), Empress Qi brought Goryeo modes of dress into vogue at the Yuan royal court. For instance, whereas the women's clothes in the early Yuan period were not divided into

⁶ *Hallyu* literally means 'the Korean wave'. This term was coined by Chinese journalists' references to the export of South Korea's popular culture in the late 1990s.

tops and bottoms, the division of dresses into skirts and tops started to appear in later years as clothing designs became influenced by Goryeo's styles.

The centre of cultural exchanges with Goryeo was not exclusive to the royal court but also occurred in the temples. People from all levels of society gathered in the Buddhist temples to form Goryeo's social groups in Yuan, and many Buddhist monks from Goryeo conducted ceremonies in Goryeo's vernacular (Park, K. J. 2010, p. 52). Markets were also opened in the precincts of the temples to give both Goryeo and Yuan natives' opportunities to obtain commodities from their countries.

3. *Goryeoyang* Female Clothes

At the end of the Yuan period, many of the Yuan court maids were Goryeo women, and Goryeo clothing was a common feature at court. The *Goryeoyang* style of clothes at this time is evident in court dresses with a *bangryōng* (方領 'a wide, square collar') in the form of a *banbi* (半臂 'clothes with either no sleeves, or short sleeves that were worn on the top of upper clothes') which passed beneath the waist. In general, *Goryeoyang banbis* were relatively short and characterised by short upper clothes whereas *Mongolpung banbis* were narrow and long. *Goryeoyang* dresses looked simple and beautiful because they featured textiles with strong colour contrasts between the backgrounds and patterns for *bangryōngs*, *banbis* and a skirt without any *po* (袍 'one-piece outer clothing like gown').

4. *Goryeoyang* Makeup

Records regarding makeup during the Goryeo Dynasty are set forth in *Koryōdogyōng* (高麗圖經 'Goryeo Landscape'), by Wú Jí (徐棘).⁷ They indicate that Goryeo people did not like applying perfumed hairoil, drew thin and beautiful eyebrows like willow leaves, and wore silk incense pouches. On the other hand, Yuan women seemed to have commonly applied thick, red makeup (Park, O.–Park, K. M. 2009, pp. 801). This was a style of makeup widely shared among the northern horseback riding races, including the Goguryeo⁸ people. By the 13th and 14th centuries, this look was utilised only for special ceremonies. However, mild colours, made by spreading lighter coloured rouges and powders were preferred over dark and red colour pigments and it seems likely that they were influenced by the makeup methods of the Goryeo women who enjoyed light makeup and white powder. This minimal use of makeup was prevalent among Goryeo women because they did not want to be recruited as *kongnyōs*. Paradoxically, the light makeup methods that resulted from negative attitudes toward makeup became the source for the beginning of the *Goryeoyang* style of makeup.

⁷ Wú Jí (1091–1153) was an envoy from Sung who came to Goryeo in 1123. He recorded a detailed description of Goryeo's lifestyle.

⁸ Goguryeo (37 BC–AD 668) was an ancient Korean kingdom situated in the present-day northern and central parts of the Korean Peninsula.



Figure 1. *Goryeoyang* dressing with a *bangryōng*, *banbi* and a full-flowing skirt
(From historical research and illustration by Choi 2007, p. 183)

5. *Goryeoyang* Food

According to Levi-Strauss's statement, there has been no time when food was not cooked, just as there have been no societies that existed without language (Gumerman IV 1997, p. 108; Maeng–Huh 2002, p. 89). By analysing various subdivided arts of cooking, such as those that produce raw foods, boiled foods, baked foods and steamed foods, the culture and nature of a country can be examined. In other words, foods are representations that show the structure of the relevant society and are a core keyword via which the history, culture, and life of a country become melted together completely (Lee, J. 2012, p. 214). In this context, if the current Korean table setting of boiled rice and side dishes is assumed to have begun to take shape during the Goryeo Dy-

nasty, it is not too much to say that, despite the ups and downs of the times, the Goryeo Dynasty was a prime food culture and a critical time for the establishment of Korean cultural identity (Hwang 2011, p. 21).

Examples of Korean foods include soups, stews, *kimchi* and *ssam*.⁹ All vegetables with large leaves were eaten after making *ssams*. Among them, lettuce *ssams* were considered the best. They were eaten by putting boiled rice on lettuce leaves, adding steamed soybean paste or stir-fried red pepper soy paste and *bulgogi*, and wrapping it up in a leaf. The *kongnyōs* soothed their despair over their country's ruination by planting lettuce in the palace gardens. It is said that the Yuan people who tried lettuce fell in love with the taste and frequently ate it. Lettuce was called *Goryeossam* and was widespread and much enjoyed by Yuan's upper class. According to *Tianlushiyu* (天祿識餘),¹⁰ in China, the quality of lettuce from Goryeo was very high. Therefore, lettuce seeds brought by envoys from Goryeo could be obtained only by paying 1000 pieces of gold; lettuce came to be called *chōngūmchae*, a vegetable that can be eaten only after giving 1000 pieces of gold (Shim 2004, pp. 173–174). The lettuces that were introduced to Yuan became representative of *Goryeoyang* because not only did they taste good, but they were also claimed to have the ability “to strengthen the muscles and the bones” (Jeong, J. C. et al. 2008, p. 83). In addition, Goryeo foods such as *ōgaeng* ‘fish soup’, *songja* ‘pinenut’, and ginseng liquor came into vogue around this time.

Along with the development of agriculture, grain production increased and the trend towards Buddha worship was heightened in Goryeo. For this reason, meat-based diets fell out of favour. One result of this trend was that confections¹¹ became more popular. At the end of the 13th century, as trade with foreign countries, including Yuan, became more frequent, Goryeo dumplings and Goryeobyōngs (高麗餅)¹² spread to new realms. These names are still used in Mongolia (Lee, G. B. 2003, p. 206).

6. The Beginning of *Mongolpung*

The marriage forged between Goryeo and Yuan over approximately eighty years, ranging from the era of King Chungnyeol to the era of King Gongmin, were quite exceptional for both countries. They were made possible because of the complicated political situations that existed in the two countries at the time and from which each nation gained political capital by contacting the other. Specifically, Goryeo's royal family wished to remove the military officials' power and achieve a restoration of their imperial regime, while the Yuan imperial family wanted to prevent an alliance between Southern Song and Goryeo. The Yuan wanted to make Goryeo the spearhead

⁹ *Ssam* ‘wrapping various foods with vegetable leaves’ is a unique part of Korean cuisine (Jeong, H. O. 2002, p. 14).

¹⁰ The history written by Gao Shiqi who lived during the Qing Dynasty.

¹¹ At this time, a precious confection made of a mixture of grains, honey and oil became popular.

¹² The oil and honey pastry.

for their conquest of Japan and firmly place it under their control. The coexistence of these interests allowed each country to further its goals.

A total of seven women from the Yuan Imperial family married the kings of Goryeo including King Gongmin as the last one. They exercised power that went beyond the power of the king and governed the country on behalf of their sons, who later rose to the throne. The women from Yuan who became Goryeo's queens implicitly reflected the political topography of Yuan and its subordinate country, Goryeo (Lee, H. S. 2006, p. 153). In respect of culture, too, the women from the Yuan imperial family had great influence over the *Mongolpung* styles, centring on the upper classes and some of the *Mongolpung* spread to the general public, exerting even more influence on Goryeo's customs.

7. *Mongolpung* Fashion and Hairstyles

Mongolians of different times and tribes sported different clothing colours and hairstyles passed down by their ancestors to the Yuan Empire. For instance, the hairstyle of Mongolian males in the 13th–14th centuries was the *byōnbal* 'Mongolian pigtail', made by shaving the top of the head centring on the crown, while the front of the hair remaining around the head hung toward the forehead and the rest of the hair was fashioned into two braids (Kim, K. S. 2005, pp. 113–114). According to *Koryōsa* (the Book of Goryeo History), after concluding a peace treaty with Mongolia, King Chungnyeol styled his own hair into a *byōnbal* as soon as he ascended to the throne to promote Yuan's customs, and then promulgated an ordinance to compel all other men to adopt the *byōnbal* as well.

Mongolian women's hairstyles were different, depending on whether a woman was married or unmarried. In general, unmarried women divided their hair into two bundles for braiding on either side of the head. The bundled hair was then rolled and fixed behind each ear, or tied behind the ears.¹³

Queens wore a Mongolian-style hat called a *gogo* (姑姑).¹⁴ At this time, Mongolian brides used the *yōnjigonji* makeup method, in which red circles were drawn on both cheeks and the forehead as a symbol of youth. This style was first used during the Goryeo Dynasty, and is still used in traditional wedding ceremonies, together with *wonsam*¹⁵ and *daenggi*.¹⁶ The *jangdo* 'small knife' that women carried in their bosom also originated from Mongolia (Kim, M. S. 2004, pp. 102–103; Shin 2005, p. 130).

¹³ *Byōnbal* and Yuan clothing styles were handed down for approximately 78 years, until King Gongmin prohibited *Mongolpung* customs as part of an anti-Yuan policy in 1352 (Park, Y. G. 2004, p. 480).

¹⁴ *Gogos* were originally Mongolian women's hats for going out, but became wedding hats when they appeared in Goryeo.

¹⁵ It is a female ceremonial topcoat in Korean traditional clothing, usually worn by high-ranking court ladies.

¹⁶ It is a traditional ribbon made of cloth to tie and to decorate braided hair.

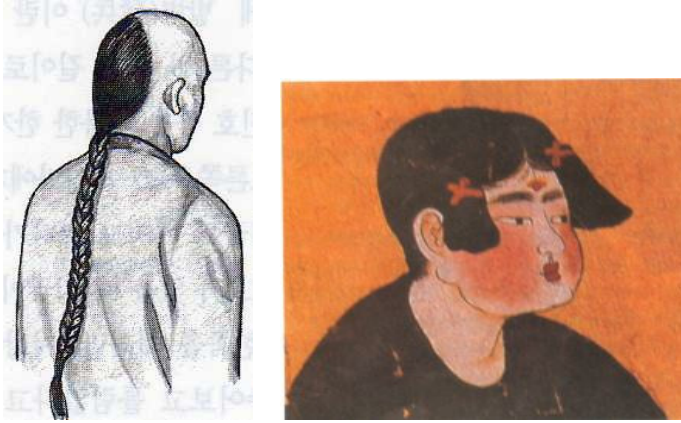


Figure 2. Left: *Byōnbal* (Son 2004, p. 190). Right: A court lady's hair style in the 13th and 14th centuries in Goryeo (Son 2004, p. 192)



Figure 3. Left: A traditionally dressed bride. She is wearing a *wonsam*, bridal wear, has tied her hair with a *daenggi*, a traditional ribbon; and is wearing a *jokturi*, a headpiece and *yŏnjis* (the red circles on the cheeks) (Newsen, 7 March, 2012). Right: *Jangdo* (kept in the Gwang-Yang Jangdo Museum in Jeonnam Province)



Figure 4. *Indu* (Geumo Folk Museum)

Mongolpung female attire is closely related to weddings and has its origins in the clothing of Yuan princesses who came as queens to the Goryeo Dynasty. An unusual relic that is housed at the Ulaanbaatar National Museum, called *ilüür* and *indüü* in Mongolian, is similar to *indu* ‘an iron’ in Korean. According to the local tradition it is said that this *indu* was handed down from Empress Qi (Jeong, J. M. 2003, pp. 224–225).

8. *Mongolpung* Food

Some *Mongolpung* elements remain in modern food culture. *Soju*, which is said to be one of the native liquors, is not actually native, but an imported drink that came in through Mongolia. When the Mongolian army came to the Korean Peninsula for a military expedition to Japan, it began to brew the liquor in places where the Mongolian advance bases were located, such as Gaesöng, a city in North Hwanghae Province, southern North Korea and Andong, a city located at the southern part of Korea. In addition, *soju* was propagated in Ganghwa-do, an island in the estuary of the Han River, on the west coast of Korea, and other locales where fierce fighting against the Mongolians occurred. It is a fact that this famous distilled liquor is made in all the places where the Mongolian army was stationed, including Jeju where the Mongolian army’s logistics base was located. Distilled liquor was called *arag* in Arabic, and the name was changed to *arxi* [亞刺吉] in the Modern Mongolian language, *arki* in the Manchu language, and *araczu* in the Goryeo Dynasty.

Goryeo was a Buddhist country, so Goryeo’s people mostly avoided meaty foods. In Mongolian, *mantuu* (*mandu* in Korean) is ‘steamed bread (without meat)’; the dumplings filled with meat called *buij* (Chinese *baozi*) appeared only after the Mongolians arrived in Goryeo. There is a theory indicating that *söllöngtang*, ‘a stock soup made of bone and stew meat’ and which is still eaten frequently, originated in *šölü* from Mongolia, which is similar to boiled mutton with thickeners, such as hulled and ground chickpeas from the Middle East, and rice (Buell–Anderson–Perry 2000, pp. 278–279; Buell 2006, pp. 171–203).

9. Mongolian Language

Many Mongol terms entered the Korean language during this time (Kim, Y. 1999, pp. 111–115). Because of the high status of the Yuan Empire, which had conquered the world, having command of the Mongolian language was not an unusual qualification for the upper classes. Therefore, the king or officials naturally used Mongolian-style names. Mongolian terms were found in government organisations, such as *mal* (Mong. *мал* ‘livestock’), *oreum* (Mong. *уул* ‘mountain’) and *bareunjok* (Mong. *баруунзүг*, ‘right side’). Furthermore, some vestiges of the Mongolian language can be found in Korean words (Kim, Y. I. 2008, pp. 155–158).

10. Polygamy

Polygamy is alluring in many areas of the world because it associates an emperor with the common man in a mimetic relationship – the emperor is an archetype of presentable masculinity for society, and average men fancy themselves to be little emperors (Ko 1998, p. 37). Along with this psychological factor, and due to the continuing conquest wars, the number of males was insufficient during the 13th and 14th centuries. Accordingly, polygamy was permitted, and those who could afford it, took many wives. Rather than sexual exploitation or debauchery, this adoption of polygamy can be considered a system rooted in concern for the welfare and safety of the country's women and children (Kim, Y. G. 2005, p. 322). Furthermore, the practice allowed for the creation of “patterns of alliances that crosscut the apparently concrete set of patrilineal relationships within a conical clan” (Barfield 1991, p.164).

Although monogamy was legally enforced in the early years of the Goryeo Dynasty, by the time of the late Goryeo Dynasty, polygamy was in vogue among the aristocratic class because of the influence of Yuan's practices (Korean History Research Association 2005, p. 252).

11. Conclusion

Korea and the Mongolian Empire exchanged many diverse aspects of their cultures during the approximately eighty years when Mongolia dominated Goryeo, and many similar customs and traditions can be identified.

Beginning with the reign of King Chungnyeol, many generations of Goryeo's kings lived in Yuan, where they served as Crown Princes and married Yuan princesses and oversaw both physical exchanges as well as political, social and cultural exchanges between the two countries. Although Yuan had a great effect on Goryeo, Goryeo continued to boast of a high culture that also had a significant effect on Yuan. In general, the lifestyles of the Goryeo princes who stayed in Yuan featured many Goryeo women who went to Yuan as *kongnyōs*. Goryeo people held government positions in Yuan, and tributes were sent from Goryeo to serve as the medium for cultural exchange. Based on a foundation of a long history and close relationships forged by marriage, both Korea and Mongolia today frequently use the term “Northeast Asian cultural community” to describe themselves. Nevertheless, the two states went for nearly six hundred years without any essential contacts. The historical traditions and cultural exchange between the two countries were restored only in 1991, with the establishment of modern diplomatic relations.

Collecting, examining and studying the literature relating to Goryeo and Yuan have shown that there was a time in the past when cultural exchange between the Mongols and Koreans was active. The academic systematisation of results related to these efforts has also increased in recent years. Further research will hopefully contribute to a better understanding of the details of cultural exchanges between the two cultures.

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