

A GLIMPSE INTO THE HISTORY OF THE MONGOLIAN-KOREAN RELATIONS IN THE XX CENTURY

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Though the Mongolian-Korean relations witnessed centuries long history, which were flourishing especially in the XIII and XIV centuries, they became almost extinct, in general terms, until the XX century. But thanks to the tremendous changes, taken place in the both countries, the region and the world, these relations have been expanding to this date.

The peoples of the both countries were extremely happy to see these relations starting to revitalize in the difficult time of the last century.

I think that the Mongolian-Korean relations in the XX century can be divided into three periods:

1. From the beginning of the XX century until the World War II;
2. Relations between the MPR and the DPRK during the Cold War (1945-1990);
3. Democratic years or after 1990, which can be divided into:
 - a) Establishment and development period of the relations between Mongolia and the ROK,
 - b) Active period of the traditional relations between Mongolia and the DPRK.

FIRST PERIOD

The main historic documents, which can define this period, are:

1. Two manuscripts of 50 pages, entitled “History of Han state’s Collapse” and “Tears for State Collapse”, are kept at the State Central Library.¹ The author and the translator of these manuscripts are unknown. “History of Han State’s Collapse” tells about the history of the Japanese colonization in Korea in a detailed manner and how Korean people were suffering by losing their country’s independence. It also describes how Koreans can be freed from the Japanese colonization, as well as the ways to develop and strengthen their homeland. The manuscript also includes complete translations of the treaties of 1904, 1905 and 1910 and other related treaties, which were concluded between Japan and Korea under Japanese pressure, along with their interpretations. It is highly possible, that these manuscripts, representing the history, international relations, and international law of that period, were translated into Mongolian language in order to take lessons and make analyses for not becoming a colony and a protectorate of a foreign country and use them as a reliable source in the foreign policy of the Mongolian Last Emperor Bogd Khaan’s Mongolia for studying the external situations of that time.
2. An interesting document which tells that Korean physician Lee Tae jun was awarded the medallion of “Erdeniin Ochir” and the title of First Grade Tushmel (Dignitary) by Bogd Khaan, is kept at the Central National History Archives². South Korean historian Ban Byonryul has conducted extensive researches on this matter³.
3. Memoirs of Korean independence fighters Kim Kyu shik, Na Yun gun and Yo Un Hyon.⁴ Especially, Yo Un Hyon wrote in detail about Mongolia’s situation in 1921, in his memoir about his travel to Russia through Mongolia. In the chapters “Crossing Mongolian Gobi”, “Khuree” and “Two Fighting Forces” of his memoir, which were printed in the issues 3-7 of the Korean monthly magazine “Jung Ang” in 1936, Yo Un Hyon described the events, he had experienced in Mongolia.

4. Documents, kept at the Mongolian Archives of Ministry of Foreign Relations, which cover the period of 1920-1930. There are 43 such documents, which can be classified according to their contents:
- How did the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia decide the official application of 3000 Korean citizens, living in Russia, for getting Mongolian citizenships,
 - About the Mongolian Government's decision to accord 1000 yanchaan (monetary unit) from the state budget at the request of helping Korean orphaned children and the transfer of this money to the Mongolia Embassy to Russia in order to distribute them to those children,
 - About the Mongolian Government's decision to accord 1500 yanchaan in order to help Korean people, who were suffering from famine,
 - Visa applications, sealed documents, and applications for Mongolian citizenship of Koreans, residing in Mongolia,
 - Official documents related to certain crimes, committed by Koreans and judicial decisions⁵.
5. Written request from some Koreans to Bogd Khaan. A letter, requesting assistance from Bogd Khaan, which was delivered to him by a delegate, sent by the Koreans to Capital city Niislel Khuree, is being kept at the Central National History Archives.⁶ From the letter, one can see that the Koreans who were immigrated to Petrograd city of Russia sent a delegate to Mongolia. The content of the letter is: *"...Addressing the culture of the Honorable State, we were submitted to. Though it was decided to create a special institution for bringing up these orphaned boys, this was hindered by double charges of creating a committee for protecting homeless and hungry people..."* The letter was dated on *"13rd year of Olnoo Urgugdsun, May 22 of Lunar calendar and July 5 of Georgian calendar"*. Thus it was in 1923. Concerning this letter, the Central Committee of the Mongolian People's Party sent a document to the government which stated: *"...30th board meeting of the Mongolian People's Party has*
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decided to find out whether an organization called “Korean Trade Union” exists in Petergrad or not and whether they really have sent a delegate to Mongolia for assistance. If it is true we shall give them 1000 yanchaan.⁷ (through the Mongolian Embassy J.B) At that time, Mongolian newspapers used to publish articles on Korea on a permanent basis⁸.

SECOND PERIOD

One can say that the second period started on October 8, 1948 when the DPRK had expressed officially its desire to the Government of Mongolia to establish diplomatic relations. In response to this proposal, an official statement was published in “Unen” newspaper on October 16, 1948 (No.243/4013). In this statement, it was noted: *“The Government of the MPR congratulates all the Korean people on the establishment of the independent state of Korea and its Government and accepts with great pleasure the proposal of the DPRK’s Government to establish diplomatic relations and economic links between our two countries. We strongly believe that the friendly relations between the MPR and the DPRK will successfully develop for the benefits of our two peoples which highly value the freedom and for that of peoples’ friendship and security in the world.”*

Mongolia was the second country after the Soviet Union to establish diplomatic relations with North Korea. If one considers the fact, that the MPR had established diplomatic relations with Chunchin Government of China on February 13, 1946, which were broken officially on October 6, 1946 and established diplomatic relations with the PRC on October 16, 1946, North Korea is also the second country after the Soviet Union to recognize the MPR.⁹ Thus, the MPR recognized the DPRK as an independent state and established official diplomatic relations on October 15, 1948. On August 11, 1950, the first Ambassador of the MPR to the DPRK J.Sambu presented his letter of credence.

It is not necessary to explain that Mongolia could not establish any relations with South Korea due to the Cold War's bi-polar system of that time. Not long after the establishment of diplomatic relations with North Korea, the Korean War started, which lasted between 1950-1953. Many countries participated in the Korean War directly and indirectly. The superpowers of that time-the USA and the Soviet Union as well as China, an influential regional country directly participated in the war. Fifteen countries such as Great Britain, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Turkey, Belgium, Columbia, France, Ethiopia, Greece, Holland, Philippines, Thailand, Luxemburg and South Africa sent their troops for supporting the UN forces, led by the USA and South Korea, and five other countries such as Denmark, India, Italy, Norway and Sweden rendered medical and pharmaceutical assistance. But for North Korea, so called socialist countries the Soviet Union, mainland China, East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and MPR (Mongolia) rendered assistance. Not only the Soviet Union supplied the Korean People's Army and Chinese volunteers with arms, munitions, transport means, fuel, food, medicines and medical appliances, but also Soviet military advisers worked in the North. During utmost difficult moments of the war, the Soviet air forces, including several fighter divisions combated against the US air forces in proximity of the northern frontiers of China, at the request of the Chinese government. The Soviets prepared to send five divisions in order to attack the US armed forces, if the situation would have been deteriorated¹⁰. The People's Republic of China let a great number of combat infantries as "human wave" under an innocent name of "volunteers". Besides, other so called fraternal socialist countries rendered humanitarian assistance to North Korea¹¹.

During the Korean War, the MPR rendered a considerable amount of material assistance to the DPRK. Archive documents prove that Mongolia started rendering humanitarian assistance called "Gift" to the North Korean people in December 1950, and until 1955, twelve shipments of such assistance were sent, including the assistance for after war reconstruction. In the framework of this assistance, not only a great number of horses, cattle, sheep and goats were sent to North Korea, but also sheepskin coats, great

coats, felt boots, cotton padded shirts and trousers, shoes, sheepskin and woolen cloth gloves and tanned leather, as well as food products, such as meat, butter, oil, sausages, cookies, wheat, rice, flour and spirits, which were loaded in hundreds of wagons.

But the exact amount of the Mongolian assistance to North Korea, has not been calculated yet. Mongolian scholar J.Sukhee wrote that “... *During the years of the Korean war, Mongolia donated to the Korean people around 226.000 head of livestock, 5000 tons of wheat, 7300 tons of meat and food products and 120.000 pieces of diverse clothes. Besides, 30 students studied at Mongolian universities free of charge.*”¹²

Another Mongolian scholar B.Ligden wrote that “...*Between 1951-1953, the Mongolian people sent to the combating Korean people 57.000 head of big and small cattle, 3800 tons of meat and other food products, 50.000 pieces of sheepskin, 30.000 warm clothes, 30.000 pairs of shoes and other things.*”¹³ During the war, Mongolian assistance helped significantly the North Koreans. Mongolian donated horses were named “Mongolian volunteers”. Some horses who made an important contribution to transport canons and other military equipment through valleys, rivers, and mountains where there were a bad road or a marsh, received a title of the “Heroic Horse” and their photos were put on the wall newspaper¹⁴.

The gift collection for the Korean people was well organized in the country. For instance, a special “Regulation on the Collection of Gift Livestock for Korea”, was adopted. It says: “*Collection of sheep and goats:*

1. *Livestock shall be purchased at primary cooperatives of sum.*
2. *The gender composition of sheep and goats shall be 30 per cent male and 70 per cent female and young animals.*
3. *20-25 dams shall have one sire.*

4. *The collected animals shall be healthy and able to reproduce. The livestock collection from Sukhbaatar, Khentii, Dornogovi, Dundgovi and Bulgan Provinces shall take place between August 5-10. The collected livestock shall receive "S" (S means Solongos or Korea) sign on their ears before drive.*
5. *1000-1500 head of livestock shall constitute a herd. Each herd shall have three drivers. But this number may vary according to the herd's size. The driving distance of livestock shall be 10 km a day.*

Collection of horses:

1. *Horses shall be collected according to the state collection standards.*
2. *70 per cent of all horses shall be working horses, 10 per cent mares and 20 per cent foals. In addition, 10 mares shall have one stallion.*
3. *One person from every Sum Gift Commission shall be in charge of his sum's livestock.¹⁵*

Though the Korean War had already finished, Mongolia continued rendering assistance for the reconstruction of North Korea. For instance, the resolution No.20 of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the MPRP, dated on January 25, 1956 says: *"The Politburo of the Central Committee of the MPRP in regard with the assistance work to the DPRK, hereby orders:*

1. *To render assistance of 12.000 small cattle, namely 10.000 sheep and 2000 goats to the DPRK for restoring its economy and culture.*
2. *To grant the required fund from the state for purchasing 12.000 small cattle."*

In October 1956, the Central Committee of the MPRP issued the resolution No.762 on granting certain amount of wheat as a gift¹⁶.

One of the biggest humanitarian activities, carried out by the Mongolian government during the Korean War, was the reception of the Korean children, orphaned by the war, at its cost. Not only the MPR, but also other socialist countries took care of

such children. Mongolia received 197 children in 1952, who were 4-7 years old. They were first educated in a kindergarten and in 1953, the government of Mongolia opened a school dedicated to these children. The kindergarten and the school had about 10 teachers and 80 employees.¹⁷ The two storey yellow winter building of the school was situated near Zaisan tolgoi of southern Ulaanbaatar. And the summer building was in Sharga Morit. The children were taught all the subjects in Mongolian, except Korean language and literature. Russian was also taught as a foreign language. After seven years, these children returned their homeland in May 1959. A special delegation from the DPRK, charged to pick up the children came to Mongolia on that occasion. The travel expenses of the children to Korea were also covered by Mongolia.

The Korean War did not affect Mongolia's reputation on the international stage positively. Because of that, not only the US politics towards Mongolia had unpleasant atmosphere, but also it became a matter of objection from some countries to the Mongolian candidacy to the United Nations.

Jab Naminov-Burhinov, an American scholar with Kalmyk origin reached a conclusion that because the Korean War issue had an important place in the foreign and domestic policy of the USA, this influenced the US policy towards the MPR.¹⁸

During the admission process of the MPR to the United Nations, oppositions were made due to the MPR's assistance to the North Korean communists. Taiwan also made similar statement¹⁹. Besides, Japan too broadcasted that Mongolians were fighting with the North Koreans. For example, the radio of Tokyo informed on May 2, 1951 that:

*“Mongolian cavalries are combating at the North Korean front and this proves that the earlier information that soldiers are being prepared in Mongolia for the Korean front.”*²⁰

After the war, North Korean and Mongolian relations entered into a new era of trade and cooperation. At the invitation of the Mongolian government, a North Korean delegation, headed by the Chairman of the Ministers' Cabinet of the DPRK Kim Il Sung, paid an official visit to Mongolia between July 14-19, 1956. During the visit, an agreement of friendly economic and cultural cooperation was reached. And the Mongolian side supplied the DPRK 12 000 cattle and 5000 tons of wheat as assistance.²¹ A Mongolian delegation, headed by the Chairman of the Ministers' Council of the MPR Yu.Tsedenbal, paid an official visit to the DPRK from October 25 through November 3, 1956.

In 1960, the trade turnover of the two countries increased by 1.9 folds, namely the export by 1.9 folds and the import almost 2 folds, compared with 1957. Our country imported from North Korea mostly consumers' goods such as chemical products, window glass, fruit compotes, rice, knitted wears, china products and toothpastes and exported horse tails, leather, horse leather, entrails and bone-meal.²² Since that time, the trade turnover of the two countries had been steadily increased and since 1967 trade has been made on the basis of a yearly protocol the mutual exchange of goods and payments.

One can say, that the relations between the two countries had been successfully developed until the 1990s, when the Leninist socialism collapsed. For instance, in 1961, a Mongolian-Korean friendship school building with a dormitory and a cultural club was given as a present of North Korea to Altanbulag sum of Tuv aimag. Later, in 1988, some laboratories and cabinets were added and the school building was restored by North Koreans. When the Mongolian government received the ambassadors from the socialist countries in Ulaanbaatar, during the flood catastrophe of 1966, the governments of those countries agreed to grant material and cash assistance worth of several million togrogs, including the DPRK which supplied 3000 tons of cement, 10 000 pieces of small and iron spades and hundreds of pincers, hammers, saws and axes²³. The Mongolian government

donated 1000 tons of wheat to the DPRK during the flood of 1967 and 50 tons of meat and 4000 meters of carpets to the XIII World Youth and Students' Festival of 1989, which took place in the DPRK. Though the countries had agreed to establish synthetic fiber factory based on the widely available raw materials of Mongolia and about 20 students had been trained in Pyongyang, due to some reason, the project ceased to exist. Another projects, aimed at joint exploitation of Tavantolgoi coke coal deposit and establishment of joint iron factory, were not also realized.

THIRD PERIOD

1. Mongolia and North Korea

Political Relations:

In the 1990s, the political relations of the two countries, became inactive and uncertain due to some external as well as internal reasons. But thanks to the official visit of N.Enkhbayar then Prime Minister and now President of Mongolia in December 2003, to the DPRK, the relations started to revitalize. As a result, the North Korean Embassy in Ulaanbaatar opened its door in August 2004.

Furthermore, the President of Mongolia N.Bagabandi paid an official visit to the DPRK in December 2005. The main goal of his visit was to upgrade trade and economic relations and cooperation between the two countries. But as of last year, the trade turnover of our countries even decreased, representing only 40 000 USD. In fact, there are very few items we can import from North Korea and their designs are not very well. Last year, North Korea organized three exhibitions in Mongolia which were quite successful.

Economic Relations:

Negotiations have been made in agricultural cooperation. For instance, last year our Deputy Minister for Agriculture visited Pyongyang officially and concluded an agreement on “*the Agricultural Cooperation in Dornod Province*”. According to the agreement, North Korean agricultural experts will come to work. The North Korean side also expressed that they would support Mongolian investment. Although, the North Korean Deputy Minister of the respective sector visited Mongolia. Extensive talks are being made about opening a Mongolian trade center in North Korea. “Mongolian-Korean Intergovernmental Commission”, established for promoting economic, scientific and technical cooperation, restarted its activities in 2002 and its sixth meeting was held in January 2005.

In the framework of the fight against desertification in Mongolia, our countries have been cooperating effectively in planting acacia trees. Because these trees are resistant to cold and dry weather, a joint research is being conducted to create its new sort which is more suitable in Mongolian condition.

In 1998, Mongolian-North Korean Interparliamentary Group was established and M.P Kh.Badamdandin works as its head. The Speaker of the North Korean Parliament was invited to Mongolia. Besides, some private companies employ North Korean construction workers, architects and textile workers.

Cultural Relations:

Since 1986, Mongolia has participated without interruption in the “*Spring Festival*” of North Korea. In Ulaanbaatar, a North Korean cultural center opened its door. Friendship associations of the two countries conduct regular and successful activities. To this extent, delegations are exchanged on a regular basis. Because the Head of the North Korean-Mongolian Friendship Association is also the Minister for Finance of his country, he extends considerable support in that regard. Furthermore, Mongolia continues to

render humanitarian assistance to North Korea. For instance, Mongolia granted medical assistance worth of more than 10 million togrogs to the victims of Ryoncheng train station explosion in June 2004.²⁴

Pressing issues:

The main problem to the development of trade and economic relations between Mongolia and North Korea, is economic underdevelopment and financial shortages of both sides. On the other hand, Mongolia's political system became comparatively democratic and open, while expanding her relations with international community, whereas North Korea remains stagnant in this regard. That constitutes a big hindrance to our countries' bilateral relations.

2. Mongolia and South Korea

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Mongolia and South Korea in 1990, the partnership between the two countries, has been steadily developing. In May 1999, the South Korean President Kim Dae Jung paid an official visit to Mongolia. During his official visit to the Republic of Korea in February 2001, the Mongolian President Natsagiin Bagabandi formulated the countries relations as "mutually completing cooperation", whereas the President of South Korea Roh Moo-hyun newly formulated these relations during his visit to Mongolia in May 2006, as "good neighborly partnership of friendly cooperation". Today, South Korea is one of the main trade and investment partners of Mongolia, where our 20 000 compatriots work and 400 students study. Today, about 2500 Mongolian students study Korean language and Korean studies at twelve universities. Every year, 23 000 Mongolians travel to South Korea. Between 1991-2005, Mongolia has received 17 millions USD of disinterested

assistance and 58 millions USD of long term loan for 6 major projects from South Korea.

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The present relations of the two countries cover many different sectors such as politics, regional cooperation, economics, communications, culture, education, health and environment. There are many opportunities that Mongolia can cooperate mutually beneficent with South Korea and it is important to use them efficiently.

3. Mongolia and Korean Peninsula

Korean Peninsula is an important transportation, foreign trade, regional peace and security zone for Mongolia. Not only the Concept on Foreign Policy of Mongolia, but also other official documents, as well as ideas expressed by scholars at international conferences all conclude that North East Asia is a region to which Mongolia's development should direct. Mongolia should fully exploit present external conditions, which are favorable than ever before. In this regard, intensive development of relations between Russia and China-our two neighboring countries, as well as positive supports from Japan and the USA towards Mongolia, can be cited. Therefore, the main trend of our foreign policy on the Korean issue might be a concept of settling of this issue by peaceful means. More precisely, big powers shall give to these two countries more chance and condition.

Another important work to be done is to conclude a Tripartite cooperation agreement between two Koreas and Mongolia. This must not be a political agreement, but it should include economic, industrial and employment elements. For instance, we can implement an agricultural project in the eastern or central part of Mongolia which is funded by South Korea and which employs North Korean farmers and experts. The products can be supplied either to Mongolia or North Korea. It is also possible to run joint animal farms in Mongolia and their products can be purchased by the government of South Korea and supplied to North Korea as food assistance. These two kinds of projects can also be implemented as combined.

