Study of the Contact between the Peoples of Koguryŏ-Parhae and Inner Asian Countries

NOH, Tae-don*

1. Introduction

Koreans and inhabitants of Inner Asian countries are at present geographically far apart and maintain quite different lifestyles. In ancient times, however, they had direct contact to a significant extent. They developed a close relationship primarily because they lived adjacent to each other.

The vast steppe that cuts across Inner Asia stretches eastward to the Lao-Sung (遼松) plain in the center of Manchuria. The steppe meets the arable and wooded land along the line linking the eastern Liao and lower Sungari rivers. Naturally the habitat of the nomadic peoples extended to this area. This is shown in the remains of the tombs unearthed in Xichagou of Xifeng Prefecture in Laoning Province, which are believed to be left by the peoples of Hsiung-nu (匈奴) or Wuhuán (烏桓). The Xichagou region is close to the basin of the H'unjăng river where Koguryŏ was originated. To the north the Puyô people resided in Zhangchun and Nung-an which intersect with the nomadic region to the west. Under these geographical circumstances the contact between ancient Koreans and the nomadic peoples developed early on.

*Professor of Korean History, Seoul National University


1 Shin Shoudao, “Culture of Hsiung-nu in Ancient Tombs of Xichagou,” Wenwu [Culture and Artifact], 8, 9 (1960)

It is highly probable that Old Chosŏn and Hsiung-nu had contact considering the records that Hsiung-nu shares its eastern border with Yemaek and Chosŏn⁴ and that one of the primary reasons for the invasion by Han China against Wiman Chosŏn was to cut the left shoulder of Hsiung-nu.⁵ In addition, according to historical documents of Korea and China, the contact between Koguryŏ and the nomadic peoples around A.D. 1 led to their armed conflict, and a tribe of Xiênbien was subordinated to Koguryŏ.⁶ The relationship between the people of Koguryŏ/Puyŏ and the nomadic peoples continued, especially after the 4th century, contact between both parties became active with the weakening of Chinese power during peace as well as during war. Koguryŏ embassies reached Mongolia and in the 7th century went as far as to Samarkand in Central Asia.

The relationship between Koguryŏ and Inner Asian countries has been studied using the fragments of documents in Korea and China, and the remains from the Three Kingdom period. Inner Asians and other peoples who were in contact with them also left records, though incomplete, about Koguryŏ and Parhae. This study examines the relationship between ancient Koreans and Inner Asians focusing on these materials.

2. Mug-lig in Pelliot Tibétain 1283

One of the notable documents Inner Asians left on ancient Korea is Pelliot tibétain 1283. This Tibetan document is part of what is called the Dünfuang documents brought by Pelliot, a French Orientalist, to France, and is now kept in the French National Library under the classification number 1283. Pelliot tibétain 1283 has been noted as a valuable source to contain the record on the affairs of North Asia at a time when Uighur was expanding its power.⁷ Its first part writes that it

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3 A specific example of this earlier contact is a group of tombs unearthed around Yushu prefecture, which are contended to be left by the Xiênbien or Puyŏ people. Confer “Report on a Group of Xiênbien Tombs Unearthed in Aohéshen of Yushu Prefecture, Jilin Province,” Wenwu No. 2 (1985). In Jingwen and Pang Zhiguo, “Study of the Tribe Who Left Tombs in Aohéshen of Yushu Prefecture, Jilin Province,” Beiying Wenwu [Northern Culture and Artifact] No. 1 (1986)

4 Hanshi, vol. 94, Hsiung-nu zhuann

5 Hanshi, vol. 73, Weixian zhuann

6 Samguk sagi [History of the Three Kingdoms], vol. 13, Annals of King Yun’s Third Year

"records the royal line in the northern area [damaged letters]. Earlier the king of Hor issued a command to find out how many kings are in the northern area and sent five Hors. The archive held the result of the investigation, which is now transcribed here." It mentions about Korea as follows:

To the east of the country [twelve providences of the Turks under Mozhun kaghan]8 lives a people who is named various ways He by the Tibetans, He-tse (奚) by the Chinese, Dad-pyi by the Drugs ... East of He-tse lies a country which the Drugs called Mug-lig and the Chinese called Ke'u-li. The residents of Ke'u-li, who were under the jurisdiction of Chan-chun-chi, the ruler of Shan-ton region, walk with their chins on the chest, eat human flesh, and kill their aged parents and the old naked. To the east of Ke'u-li is situated a country called Monba Beg-tse whose people do not wear clothes. To its south people live in the water like fish 9

It is controversial when this was recorded, by whom and by what process. According to a relatively accurate interpretation, Hor, a country of non-Tibetans stretching from the corridor of Gansu Province to Tulu-fan, recorded some time after the late 740s information regarding the countries its north. Afterwards when Tufan (土藩) became powerful, annexing Hor and expanding its territory to the north in the late 8th century, it made this document in Tibetan to know about the northern states with Hor’s records, other documents and information.10 It is generally estimated that the document was written between the late 8th and early 9th century.11

From the passage cited above the underlined ② is worthy of attention. It is certain that Ke'u-li refers to Koryō (高麗). In other words, the Drugs12—the Turkish people like the Turks, Uighur—called Koguryō Mug-lig. Koryō was called Mokuli in Central Asia in the 9th century as shown in the record "Koryō Moguli (高麗 敕俱理)” in Pómō-jamnyöng (梵語雜名),13 a book written by the monk from the king-

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Genealogy in Some Northern States’ in the Dünfuang Documents Written in the Old Tibetan Language,” *Dünfuangxue Jikan* 1, #2 (1980)

8 It is specified as Bug-chor in the original. There is a consensus that Bug-chor refers to Mozhun kaghan, the second kaghan of the second Empire of the Turks, who was on the throne from 691 (?) through 716. According to Clauson, the Hors called the Turks Bug-chor even after the death of Mozhun because they first contacted the Turks under his reign [Clauson, p 12 ]

9 This translation is based on the articles listed in the note #7

10 Moliyasu, “Northern Nations”

11 See note #7

12 Wang Yao and Chen Jian called Drug the Turks, but I take Takao’s view

13 Pómō-jamnyöng, Japanese edition of kyoho 17th year (1732)
dom of Kucha and revised by monk Jinwoni.

Interestingly this is the time when Koguryo had fallen well over a hundred years. Which country does Koryo in the Dunhuang documents refer to? This record relies on the information the Hros obtained from the Drugs. Did the Turks mention Koryo as a country to the east based on the memory about the distant past because the former had a close relationship with the latter? It is difficult to accept this view because the location of Koryo is very specific in the documents as east of He-tse. Besides, the situation of the late 8th century recorded in this manuscript, at least the record about the state of countries in the North Asia, is factual. Koryo in the manuscript refers to Parhae (渤海).  

If that is the case, why did the Drugs call Parhae Mug-lig at the time? Clausen suggested that they did in accordance with the Chinese pronunciation of the Malgal (靺鞨)—Mo-ho or Muat-kat. That is, the Drugs regarded Parhae a country of the Malgal people. But even if Malgal was called Mo-ho or Muat-kat following Karglen’s study on the Chinese sounds in T’ang China, this reveals a wide discrepancy in sound from Mug-lig. Besides, Clausen’s view does not correspond with the passage in Pelliot tibétain 1283 that the Chinese then named Mug-lig Ke’u-li, i.e. Koryo. Rather Mug-lig referred to by the Drugs is closer in sound to Bökhi (Mokli), which designates Koguryo, on the Kul Tigin and Bilgakaghan Inscriptions. (This point will be elaborated later.) That is, Mokli, the name with which the Turks referred to Koguryo, was also used to point to Parhae after the fall of Koguryo.

Parhae, immediately after it was founded, sent embassies to the Turks and opened relations. In the beginning of the 8th century the Turks, if briefly, dispatched its regional officer Tushun (吐屯) to Heishu Malgal which was located behind Parhae. It is estimated that there existed a mutual understanding to the considerable extent between the two countries. At the time the Turks was under the rule of Mozhu kaghan. Refugees from Koguryo migrated to Mongolia since 668 and lived in groups in his territory. Komungan, a head of a group among them, called himself Maklizi (幕離支)—the top place office of Koguryo—and became Mozhu kaghan’s son-in-law. It can be inferred from these that the ruling class of the Turks knew

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15 Clausen. “A propos,” pp 19-20

16 Jujiangshu, vol 199, Parhae Malgal zhuan

17 T’angshu, vol 215, Tuchuch zhuan. As for the Koguryo refugees who migrated to the Turks, refer to Noh Tae-don, “Koguryo Yummsa Yon’gu Yodong Tang Naejini mtolgwol Pangmyo’ni Chupdan-
about Koguryŏ quite well. It is possible that the court of Parhae named itself Koryŏ as it did the same towards Japan. This self-designation was correspondent with the perceptions of the Turks about Koguryŏ of which they were aware through their experiences in the past and their contact with refugee emigres like Komungan. Thus they must have continued calling Parhae Mug-lig. This practice may have influenced other peoples of the Turkish origin and been widespread later. Pelliot tibétain 1283 shows that the T'ang Chinese called Parhae Ke'u-li, i.e. Koryŏ. Considering all these, the Dūnfuang documents are another source that shows Parhae had succeeded Koguryŏ.

Another thing that is notable about Parhae in the above passage is “Shan-ton” province Shan-ton is the same word as san-dun in “made an expedition into the san-dun plain to the east” in the Kül Tigin Inscription (S-3, E-17). The name seems to refer to Shändong, the area east of the Táthang Mountains, today’s Hébei area in northern China. It is not known who is Chan-Chun-Chu. Maybe the process of a distortion is involved for this passage, whereby a Hor secret agent obtained information from the Chinese to the extent that Chan-Chun-Chu, local military governor of T'ang China, is in charge of the relationship with Ke’u-li, T’ang’s tributary country. This view is supported by the fact that the Chinese called what the Drugs called Mug-lig Ke’u-li. The mention of cannibalism seems to be no more than the recording of a rumor about an unfamiliar country from afar. The Empire of the Turks already collapsed around the end of the 8th century when the agent from Hor made a record. At the time customs of Parhae were not widely known to the peoples of the Turkish origin in detail.

Monba Beg-tse of the underlined ⑯ is claimed to be Mánzi Baiji (蠻子 白濟). It is doubtful, however, whether the latter could be pronounced as the former. In any case the record which follows Monba Beg-tse appears to be an unspecific description of a distant region.

The Turks called Koguryŏ Mug-lig before Koguryŏ came to an end. The follow-

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20 Wang Yao and Chen Jian, p 17
ing section will examine this matter.

3. Bökli on the Orkhon Turkic Inscriptions

There is an identical record on Bökli (or Bok-eli) in two Old Turkic Inscriptions in Khosho-Tsaidam at the edge of the Orkon river in Outer Mongolia. The inscriptions were built to commemorate Bîłga kaghan, the king of the second empire of the Turks, and his younger brother Kûl Tîgân. While describing the countries which sent the envoy of condolence to the funeral of Bumûn and Istamû, the founders of the Turks, the stelae recorded that “from the front [east] Bökli” came. It is also recorded that after two kaghans died the Turks was in decline and was subordinated to Tabgac (China) kaghan, under whose command the Turks “sent troops as far as to Bökli kaghan where the sun rises in the front.”

Various interpretations have been offered about the word Bökli. Some view it as an adjective meaning “powerful,” while others suggest it be the proper noun referring to the forest or the plain. I take the theories more persuasive that claim the term designates Koguryô. According to a version of these theories, Bökli is the same as Mökli which refers to Maekkuryô (韓句麗) because in the Old Turkish sounds “b” and “m” were interchangeable (Bökli = Mökli = Maekkuryô). Another version sees Bökli as identical with Bok-eli which is the same as Mok-eli, Maek people’s country (高麗) (Bok-eli = Mok-eli = Maek people’s country). As shown in the previous section, Koryô was referred to as “Mug-lig” or “Moguli.” The record on the Orkhon Turkic Inscriptions that chiefs of the Turks went to Bökli kaghan following Tabgac kaghan means the Turks generals joined in the T’ang emperor’s expedition to Koguryô. Judging from this Bökli must refer to Koguryô.

What is problematic in this view is the accuracy of the record on Koguryô

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21 This word on the Orkhon Turkic Inscriptions can be transcribed as both Bökli and Bok-eli. The pronunciation of these two words is not much different because the vowel ‘e’ between ‘k’ and ‘l’ is a weak one. Mori who prefers Bok-eli to Bökli also views the word as referring to Koguryô. He objects to the view of seeing Bökli = Mökli = Maekkuryô, since Maekkuryô is a three-syllable word whereas Bökli is a two syllable word. In order to solve this conflict he suggests Bok-eli = Mok-eli = Maek people’s country. His theory presents a serious problem in identifying the origin of the word Koguryô. But this matter is not dealt with in this paper in detail because it requires a separate study. The present study, following the common practice since W. Radrow, uses the term Bökli.

22 The Orkhon Turkic Inscriptions, IE-4, IIE-5, Ohokawa, pp 41-42

23 Iwasa, “Bökli”

because the inscriptions were made in the late 730's. Some cast doubt on the identity of Bumun and Istami, but generally they are seen as Tuman kaghan and Xidianmil recorded in an official Chinese history. If Koguryo sent embassies they must have been for the funeral of Tuman kaghan who died in 552 because Istami was in charge of the western part of the Turks. The inscriptions list countries which sent their envoys to the funeral. They are the nations which had relations with the Turks at its prime—Koguryo to the east, Persia (Par) and East Rome (Purum) to the west. The Turks was, however, still being formed in 552. Thus it is difficult to see that the envoy of condolence came from all these countries. In other words, a fundamental question could be raised about the truth of the record on the stelae.

Koguryo maintained a close, friendly relationship with Juan-Juan to check Beiwei since the mid-5th century, before the Turks conquered Juan-Juan in the beginning of 552 and became a power in Mongolia. Furthermore, Koguryo played a role as a mediator between Juan-Juan and Sung in South China which pursued a military alliance against Beiwei. The friendly relationship between Koguryo and Juan-Juan was known to neighboring countries. In its royal letter to Beiwei in 472, for example, Paekche wrote that Koguryo "had a close relationship with Juan-Juan to the north." In 479 Koguryo also made an attempt together with Juan-Juan to divide and rule Didouyu (Jedou) tribes, the nomads northeast of Inner Mongolia. The close political relationship between two countries must have led to the increase in the trading of goods and the exchange of human beings, because trading is no other than diplomacy to a nomadic country. A nomadic society does not exist in a complete separation from an agricultural one. Nomads need agricultural produces which they are provided with through trading during peaceful times. At the time, Juan-Juan maintained a hostile relationship with Beiwei with military confrontations throughout most of its existence. Probably Juan-Juan depended for the agricultural supply on the trades with oasis countries to the west and to a certain extent, with Koguryo.

Changes in the power structure in Mongolia must have been known to Koguryo

25 Iwasa, "Bokli.


27 Wetsu, vol. 100, Paekche zhuang

28 Wetsu, vol. 100, Qitan zhuang
because it maintained friendly relations with Juan-Juan. Nomadic countries at the
time were of the nature of confederated tribal states. The collapse of the tribe in the
center immediately affected other tribes under its influence and adjacent states. In
addition, Koguryŏ itself had an influence on Qutan, Dìdōuyì, and other nomadic
tribes east of Inner Mongolia. Thus Koguryŏ must have been sensitive to the
changes in the balance of power in the area.

The Turks came into contact with Koguryŏ and knew about it in the process
whereby it attempted to spread its influence to the east over the Xinganlíng (興安嶺)
and to pursue the defeated party of Juan-Juan. Theophyrauct Simocatta, a historian
of East Rome at the turn of the 7th century, left a record about this. According to
Simocatta, part of the Avar (柔然, 蘆葦) people after their destruction by the Turks
ran away to Tabgac—Beizhái (北齊) in China—where they rebelled, were attacked
and chased by Beizhái to east, to Moukri. He wrote that Moukri “lies near China
(Beizhái). The Moukri people faced danger with a strong will power and trained
themselves everyday to be very high in the fighting spirit.” Moukri here refers to
Koguryŏ though some see it as Moho (勿吉). Simocatta’s record on Moukri is
based on the information transferred by the Turks, and thus shows an aspect of the
Turks perceptions of the Koguryŏ people. It could be estimated that this event
occurred around 554.

In Samguk sagi Koguryŏ is said to have won over the Turks which attacked Shin
Castle and Baikam Castle in Láodóng in September of the 7th year of King
Yangwon, A.D. 551. This record has been noted early on as the only mention about
the relationship with the Turks in Korean historical documents. But it seems diffi-
cult for the Turks to send its forces as far as to the Láodóng plain in 551 because it

29 Noh Tae-don, “Kokuryŏ-ǔ Hansu Yuyŏk Sangsil-e Taehayŏ [Causes for Koguryŏ’s Loss of the
Han River Basin],” Han’gukga Yŏn’gu [Study of Korean History] 13 (1976)
30 E Chavannes, Documents sur Les Tou-kiue [Turcs] Occidentaux (Petersiourg, 1903), pp 246-47
31 Iwasa, “Bokli ”
32 E Chavannes, Documents, p 230, 247, Uchida Gimpā, “Are Juan-Juan and Avar the Same
People?” Studies on the History of North Asia Hstenpe, Juan-Juan and Turk, p.402.
33 East Rome and the Turks exchanged embassies since their contact in the late 560s. The East
Roman Menandro collected materials from envoys from both countries and arranged them into documents. It is estimated that based on these documents Simocatta records that a defeated party of Avar ran away to
Moukri. See H W Haussag, Theophylakts Exkurs über die Skylischen Voker (Byzantion Tom 23, 1953),
pp 292-23 and Natsou Midoh, “Historical Documents on the Contact between East Rome and the Turks
Notes on Menandro Protectoris Fragmenta,” Research into the History of Nomadic Society 22 (1963)
34 Iwasa, “Bokli ”
defeated Juan-Juan in the central part of Inner Mongolia in early 552. Sooner or later its confrontation with Koguryŏ was inevitable as it advanced east towards the Láo river basin. A Chinese historical document records the conflict between the two countries some time before 582: “Koguryŏ and Moho defeated the Turks army led by Săd Iji in the previous years.” 35 Considering this the record in Samguksagi appears to refer to a historical fact some time after 551. 36

All of these things taken into account, it appears that Koguryŏ and the Turks had contact in the early 550s and militarily confronted each other thereafter. Then the record in the Orkhon Turkic Inscriptions in Khosho-Tsaidam that the Koguryŏ embassies took part in the funeral of Bumun kaghan means the two countries came into contact, even if it did not refer to the very event in 552.

The tension and conflict between Koguryŏ and the Turks since the 550s had a direct influence on the affairs of the Korean Peninsula. In 551 the allied forces of Silla and Paekche took advantage of the internal schism within the Koguryŏ aristocracy to attack the Han river basin and seized and divided the region. In January 552 Emperor Wênxuān (文宣帝) of Beizhāi attacked Kūmxī (庫莫奚) and advanced in person to Yingzhōu (營州) in the Láoxi area. Staying there, he put a diplomatic pressure on Koguryŏ to send back 5,000 refugee households who migrated to Koguryŏ in the turbulent era at the end of Běiwèi. Under these circumstances the Turks defeated Juan-Juan in February 552 and substituted Juan-Juan as a dominant power in Mongolia. The rise of a new nomadic state posed another serious threat to the security of Koguryŏ. In response, the Koguryŏ leadership tried to cope with the situation and pursued a compromise within themselves to put an end to their internal dissension. The system of Koguryŏ government settled down on the coalition regime of the aristocracy in which those with private troops elected Taedaero (大對盧), the office of the ruler, every three years since the latter half of the 6th century. The external crisis seems to have functioned as an important factor for restructuring. Besides, Koguryŏ signed a secret treaty with Silla for the truce to stabilize the southern border, so that it could concentrate its force on the defence of the north-eastern boundary against the threat from Beizhāi or the Turks.

Silla, after the conclusion of the treaty with Koguryŏ, surprised Paekche to drive the latter’s forces out of the lower Han region in July 553. In retaliation King Sŏng

35 Sūshā, vol 84, Tuchueh zhuan
36 Yi Yong-hŏm, “Koguryŏ-ui Yosŏ Chinch'ul Kido-wa Tolkwol [Koguryŏ's Attempt to Advance into Láoxi area and the Turks],” Sahak Yon'gu [Study of History] 4 (1959) and Noh, “Causes for Koguryŏ's Loss”
of Paekche attempted a frontal assault on Silla in concert with forces of Kaya and 1,000 Japanese, but was defeated and himself killed in the Kwansan Fortress battle. As a result Silla’s domination was firmly established in the Han river basin and the area west of the Naktong river. Furthermore, Silla expanded its territory in the northeast even to the Hamhŭng plain which was the backyard of Koguryŏ. In 568 King Chinhŭng made a personal tour to inspect the region and set up monument stones in Hwangcho Pass and Maun Pass which were located north of Hamhŭng. In the meantime Koguryŏ was forced to concentrate its attention on the struggle against the Turks. It had no other choice but to observe its treaty with Silla and remain impassive to the conflict between Paekche and Silla and the expansion of the latter.

The clash between Koguryŏ and the Turks not only had a direct influence on the power relation in the Korean Peninsular, but had an effect on Japan by way of Paekche. In other words, the conflict had an impact, direct or indirect, on all the countries in Northeast Asia. From this perspective the brief mention about Bökli in the Orkhon Turkic Inscriptions which stood erect in the Khosho-Tsadgam of Outer Mongolia takes on significance as a valuable historical source. The stelae are a symbol representing the contact between Koguryŏ and the Turks which had a large influence on the development of Korean history in the late 6th century.

4. Koguryŏ People on Mural Paintings in Afrasiab Palace

The hostile relationship between Koguryŏ and the Turks went through a change since the end of the 6th century. The primary cause was the founding and expansion of the Empire Sui and the subsequent development in the international affairs. In response to the new international order Koguryŏ sought an alliance with the Turks, and a large-scale trade was carried out between the two. In 605 Wéiyunqi (韋雲起), a general of Sui, mobilized 20,000 cavalry under the control of the Turks’s Qímín kaghan who was subjected to the force of Sui. He put Qitan off its guard by disguising the Turks troops as a merchant corps which headed for Lūchéng (柳城) to trade with Koguryŏ, and crippled it with a surprise. This episode illustrates the considerable amount of trade between Koguryŏ and the Turks at the time. Qitan could be

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37 *Nihonshogi*, vol 19, Annals of Denno Kijime, January of the 15th year
38 With regard to the relations among three kingdoms since the mid-6th century, see Noh, “Causes for Koguryŏ’s Lost” and “International Relations”
39 *T’angshu*, vol 103, Wéiyunqi zhuan
deceived to take a large-scale troop as a merchant corp. Lüchéng was the center of trades among the nomads and various ethnic groups of Northeast Asia. In 607 there was a dramatic encounter between Koguryo emissary who stayed at Qumín kaghan’s imperial tent and Sui emperor Yangti who visited there without advance notice.

Koguryo’s efforts to form an alliance with the Turks did not bear specific fruit because the Turks was subordinated to the rule of Sui. Rather when the Sui emperor Yangti invaded Koguryo, Chula kaghan and his brothers of the Turks served with the forces of Sui to fight against Koguryo.

Nevertheless, Koguryo continued its strategies to seek alliances with Inner Asian countries to check and resist the unified empires of China. In 645 when the Emperor T’ai Tsung of T’ang invaded Koguryo with the Turks forces led by Ashanamih and others, Yöngeesomun (淵蓋蘇文) sent embassies with a mission to enter an alliance with Xuëyantuó (薛延陀) who temporarily rose to a position of power in Mongolia. In the same year Xuëyantuó attacked Xiazhou of Ordos region. A year after its withdrawal subsequent to the defeat at An-shih Fortress, T’ang launched an offensive against Xuëyantuó to eliminate the potential threat from behind in its future wars with Koguryo.

Koguryo kept pursuing contacts with Inner Asian countries to find means of checking T’ang from various sides. The mural painting in the palace of Afraciab illustrates such attempts.

An excavation was made for three years since 1965 to reveal the relics of Afraciab near Samarkand of Uzbekistan in the former Soviet Union. The two envoys on the mural painting at the remains of the palace have attracted attention. They put on hats with two featherlike ornaments attached and wore swords with a round-edged grip in a scabbard decorated with M-shapes. These two men seem to be ancient Koreans. According to the excavation report, the wall painting was

40 T’angshu, vol 49, Weiyi zhuan
41 Sǔshu, vol 84, Tuchueh zhuans, Jiutángshu, vol 194, Tuchueh zhuans
42 Jiutángshu, vol 185, Tiánrenhui zhuans, Tánghuixiao, vol 96, Xuéyantuo
made at the latest before 712 when the Arabs invaded the palace. The name of the king “Varxuman” was written on the painting in the Soghdian language, who seems to be Fūhūmán (拂呼縷), the governor of Tashkend appointed by T’ang during the period between 650 and 655. Thus the painting appears to be about the foreign missions who visited King Varxuman in the latter half of the 7th century. Then the two ancient Koreans on the painting cannot be envoys from Parhae, which was founded around 698. It is also difficult to see them as the Silla delegation. They must have been a delegation from Koguryŏ who came to the palace by way of what is called the road of the steppe in North Asia rather than by way of T’ang. Koguryŏ’s long experiences of contacts with Juan-Juan, the Turks, and Xuēyantuō may have made it possible for them to take this route.

The appearance of two envoys on the mural vividly shows us the diplomatic endeavors made by the Koguryŏ leadership who sought to form an alliance with Inner Asian countries under an urgent situation of war with T’ang in the latter half of the 7th century. Such efforts came to nothing, and P’yŏngyang Castle fell to the combined assault of Silla and T’ang in 668. Even after 669, however, the contact continued between Koguryŏ refugees and the peoples of Inner Asia region. Their interactions largely took three forms. First, as refugees migrated to Mongolia they formed several groups which were subjected to kaghan of the Turks. Second, some refugees were forced to move to T’ang and live in its periphery. Some of them found their settlements in Longyoudao (隆右道), today’s Gānsū province in China, a strategical key point for westward advance. Koguryŏ refugees who settled in this region gradually became an important element of troops. It is recorded in Đàoťang-Ludian compiled in 734 that Tuanjingbing (團結兵), a sort of regional forces, was organized of the Koguryŏ people in six provinces of this region including Qinzhou (秦州) and Hezhou (河州) General Kosŏngji (高仙芝), who was famous for an expedition into Central Asia, was also a Koguryŏ refugees settled in this region. Finally, there was contact between Parhae and the Turks.

In this process the Inner Asian peoples came to know about and remember...
Koguryŏ. Their memory, even if fragmentary, led to the mentioning of Mug-liug or Moguli in their historical documents and inscriptions

5. Conclusions

Koguryŏ's contact with Inner Asians had a significant political influence on the development of ancient Korean history. Elements of Inner Asian culture are also found in remains and the mural of the tomb of the Three Kingdom period. Besides these visible remnants, the contact with Inner Asians who had their own distinct history and culture seems to have had a considerable impact on the consciousness of ancient Koreans. The experience that the ancient Koreans had with the wider world and diverse peoples contributed to broadening their horizon of perception about the world. That is believed to have somehow helped prevent them from unilaterally focusing their foreign policies on China and moreover deeply recognize their own position and identity in the international community. The independent worldview of the Koguryŏ people is evidenced on various inscriptions in the 5th century.49

The significance of the relationship with a civilization different from the Chinese was noteworthy in understanding Chinese culture which continued to flow into Korea up until the beginning of the modern period. In fact this is the significance that the contact with Inner Asians has had in Korean history. In Unified Silla and Koryŏ periods the contact with Inner Asian culture, if not direct, continued through Arabian merchants by the sea as well as on land.50 It was in the Chosŏn period that the historical stage of Korean advances to the north was completely blocked by China. Considering the above it seems necessary to carry out further in-depth studies on the contact, either direct or indirect, with Inner Asians.51

(Translated by Sangjun Jeong, Professor of English, S N U)


50 Ko Pyŏng-ik, "Han'guk-kwa Sŏnya Kûnse Ijŏn-ŭi Sajŏk Kwan'gye [Korea and Central Asia Historical Relations before the Modern Age]," Haksulwon Che Shoe Kukche Haksul Nonmunchip [Proceedings of the 5th International Symposium by Korean Academy of Arts and Sciences] (1977)

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GLOSSARY

Běiwèi 北魏
Beizhái 北齊
*Dàtáng-Lūdān* 大唐六典
Dúnfuāng 廻煌
Juan-Juan 蠨蜎
Malgal 麾羯
Mozhui kaghan 默緱可汗

Parhæ 勝海
Qitan 契丹
Tuchüeh (The Turks) 突厥
Tūfān 土蕃
Xuēyantuó 薛延陀
Yōngaesomun 渾蓋蘇文
zhuan 傳