

## Hallyu in Mongolia: Its Meaning and Socio-Political Implications

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### ABSTRACT:

Hallyu, or the Korean Wave, began in the early 20th century in South Korea with a small presence. However, Hallyu gradually spread rapidly to East Asian nations such as Japan and China. As of 2021, Hallyu has become a distinctive Korean popular culture that people around the world embrace. Mongolia is no exception to this trend. Although there are various types of Hallyu in Mongolia, this study will focus on K-drama, K-movie, K-pop, and K-food to highlight their characteristics and influence. This study will argue that Hallyu has a spirit unique to South Korea that will be accepted by people of all ethnicities beyond simple entertainment interests. This spirit transcends the language and culture of each country and is the creative fusion force that everyone can share. In conclusion, this study will show that Hallyu in Mongolia can be used as an important source for social and political innovation as well as the popularity of Korean culture.

**Keywords:** Hallyu (Korean wave), K-drama, K-movie, K-food, Mongolia, South Korea

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Since South Korea and Mongolia officially established diplomatic ties in 1990, exchanges between the two countries have grown rapidly (Kim, 2021, et al). More than 100,000 Mongolians

returned home from studying or living in South Korea. Preferences for South Korean culture are surprisingly widespread in Mongolian society. A western journalist writes about Hallyu in Mongolia:

Mongolia fell from Hallyu, just as many other countries did. While I was walking down the streets of Ulaanbaatar for the first time as a foreigner, I expected to see many mainly Mongolian places. I was surprised by what I actually found. Korean restaurants, Korean coffee shops, Korean grocery stores, Korean cosmetic shops, beauty and hair salons and karaoke bars everywhere, Korean music blaring at me from inside stores and cars, and Korean products occupying main parts of the aisles in Mongolian supermarkets. It is conspicuous that Korean places are outnumbering those of other countries by a large margin (Bub, 2018).

Badamjav Munkhbayr, a graduate of Mongolian University of Science and Technology praises the Korean Wave to a tremendous extent:

After the Soviet Union collapsed . . . South Korea was Mongolia's first and nearest destination to immigrate or seek a better life. In the early 2000s there were about 30,000 Mongolians in South Korea. These people used to send their families Korean goods constantly, which spread out all over Mongolia instantly . . . Then TVs used to broadcast Korean Dramas such as *Dae Janggum*, *Wives Temptation*, *Pink Lipstick*, *Jummong* etc. almost all day . . . The new generations are very crazy about Korean culture. Literally some kids are growing up while learning Korean before Mongolian . . . Even taxi drivers are speaking Korean in these days. When we think of going to abroad, South Korea comes to our mind first . . . UB's image is literally an exact copy of Seoul or South Korean style. Korean stores, restaurants and brand advertisements are all over the city. . . Basically Mongolians have mostly positive views about S/Korea and actually really appreciate them . . . Some elders say "Koreans are feeding us"

(2020).

Based on the above testimonies, Hallyu confirms that almost all entire Korean culture is spreading in Mongolian society. What has made Mongolians accept Hallyu enthusiastically? The general interest in Korean pop culture, the entertainment to relieve tension, and the benefits of getting the latest information may be the reasons why Mongolians like Hallyu. On top of this, the openness of nomads may be an important factor in easily accepting Hallyu. Sun-A Lee defines this openness of Mongolians: "Considering the openness of Mongolian nomadic culture to other cultures traditionally held, acceptance of Korean culture that transcends nationality may be a natural phenomenon" (2018). Lee's argument is quite persuasive. However, there is a limit to being able to explain why Hallyu is highly accepted beyond any particular culture as a global phenomenon in such nations as the United States, Europe, India, Thailand, and Malaysia. Dal-yong Jin explains that Korean pop culture is growing because the vitality of Hallyu is integrated into technical soft power and cultural diplomacy (2020). While we accept the scholarly arguments of Lee and Jin to a large extent, we would like to discuss that the spirit of Hallyu, which is both spiritual and social, attracts people from around the world. To support our discussion, it may be useful to apply the historical theory of Yale University Professor Odd Westad.

In his recent book, *Empire and Righteous Nation*, Westad claims that Korea has remained an independent nation for thousands of years with China, a powerful neighbor, but has never been incorporated into China (2021). The first reason for this is Korean nationalism. Koreans already had a concept of nation in the 16th century while Europe did not have it until the 19th century. Here, a nation was not a region divided by simple borders. Instead, it was a very special community with unified national roots and a common memory of past history. This community pursued good and valued righteousness. Although Korea had been

somewhat connected to China's Ming and Qing Dynasties, it was still an independent nation separated from China. Therefore, Ming or Qing China was respected as a great nation, but Korea was also respected as an independent nation, eliminating unnecessary interference from China. The second reason is the political ideology of Korean cohesion. For Westad, this ideology as a powerful spirit came from Korean-styled 'righteousness.' Although the word 'righteousness' originated from China's Confucianism, especially Neo-Confucianism, its actual practice has been most thoroughly applied in Korea among East Asian countries. Since at least the 14th century, Korea has accepted the Neo-Confucian world view which emphasizes that "merely abstract knowledge is useless unless conjoined with ethical self reflection and cultivation that eventuate in proper moral behavior and social praxis" (Berthrong, 2021). According to Westad, the 'righteousness' of this philosophy has been kept as a political ideology by generation after generation. This ideology or 'spirit' has been employed in unison whenever national crises have come. In short, Westad's historical theory has affirmed that the cohesive identity of Koreans has created a powerful political ideology that embraces righteous life based on mutual respect and harmony between neighbors. If this initiative of righteousness is denied or exploited, it must be resisted and restored to its original state. The desire to personally and socially embody social justice has become a concrete tradition of Koreans. We will investigate how Westad's theory appears in Hallyu. In addition, certain parts of his theory may be revised. We will argue that Hallyu in Mongolia should not be understood as a mere entertainment attraction. This is because the true nature of Hallyu cannot be known without understanding the inner and spiritual elements within Hallyu. This study cannot cover the entirety Hallyu, so it will highlight its characteristics and influence only in K-drama, K-movie, K-pop, and K-food. Finally, this study will

discuss the possibility of Hallyu's important contribution to Mongolian society.

### **K-drama**

Many TV stations in Mongolia air Korean dramas, movies, and entertainment programs. As of June 2017, it was reported that Korean dramas were the top six out of the ten programs with the highest ratings on Mongolian TV channels. Russian dramas were seventh, Mongolian programs were at eighth, and Korean movies were at ninth and tenth (Kofice, 2017). Korean dramas such as 'Goblin,' 'The Age of Night,' 'The Stairway to Heaven,' 'First Love,' 'Rose and Bean Sprouts,' 'Heo Jun,' and 'Dae Janggum' have been selected as the highest-rated dramas in Mongolian broadcasts. There are a total of 48 broadcasters in Mongolia. Mongolian state broadcasting stations exclude the airing of Korean dramas. However, 32 other broadcasting stations continue to air Korean dramas. The most preferred genres of Hallyu dramas among Mongolians are history, family, and romantic dramas. Among viewership satisfaction, the actors' cool behavioral expressions rate the highest. Interesting entertainment, the variety of forms, and the freshness of the drama contents are also satisfactory (Enkjaral, 2018).

'Sandglass' was the first TV drama to feature 'The 18 May Gwangju Democratic Movement' in Mongolia, directly depicting the suppression of martial law forces and the story of Gwangju citizens at the time. The drama deals with the two main characters: Taesoo and Woosuk. Taesoo accidentally goes to Gwangju to meet a junior and becomes a civilian militia member and is swept up in the situation. Woosuk is selected for the martial law army during his military service, and regardless of his intentions, he joins the riot suppression unit. Through the two, this drama accuses the Korean military of unjust cruelty at the time. Woosuk later becomes a prosecutor who often contemplates his past activities with guilt. This drama criticizes humans who are not

involved in real history and demands that they all check what kind of life they live. If their lives are not right, the key message is to change it. A righteous life is not about saying words or looking behind them, but participating in life and living as the protagonist of history. This drama is in line with the spirit of Professor Westad's 'Korean righteousness.'

After 'Sandglass,' dramas such as 'Heo Jun' and 'Dae Janggum' were broadcast in Mongolia. In the drama 'Heo Jun,' Dr. Heo Jun's teacher Dr. Eui-tae Yoo teaches the purpose and meaning of medical doctor's life. A doctor is not a man who seeks money, honor, or power. The doctor's duty is to take care of the sick. It is the first and second and third duties. Whether the world recognizes the doctor or not, his duty is to serve life, which is more noble than any other thing. Also, being a doctor is not the only way to cure diseases. A doctor becomes truly the doctor when he loves the sick with all his heart. Jang Geum, the main character of 'Dae Janggeum,' suffers from all kinds of jealousy and conspiracies against her. She is always dragged around as a 'sinner' because of her friends' betrayals. However, she does not give up on her life due to this adversity and lives a solid life as a disciplined young lady. In the end, Jang Geum succeeds as an outstanding person who masters culinary and oriental medicine, enriching many people around her.

Both dramas show people living at the bottom of society proudly standing with strong vitality like weeds. The weeds are the most scorned and mocked grasses, being trampled and burned. However, the weeds that have received such lowly treatment without any fault do not die or disappear, but are constantly revived on the ground. Their vitality is truly marvelous. Heo Jun and Jang Geum, like these weeds, also lead a difficult life under contempt and condemnation. Yet, they boldly challenge all the forces of evil perpetrated in the unchangeable class society. Their challenges proceed in two ways: perseverance and forgiveness, not retaliation. In

the end, they proclaim the triumph of a just life that constantly flows in Korean 'righteous' history.

As we have seen, the spirit of 'Korean righteousness' comes from mutual respect and harmony. In Korea's long history, there were times when mutual respect and harmony were challenged. The invasion of the surrounding powers was the main cause. In the 13th century, Korea was invaded by Mongolia. However, the Koreans resisted for more than 30 years without surrendering. Korea ended the war with Mongolia when Qubilai Khan (1215-94) established the Yuan dynasty in China, guaranteeing Korea an independent nation. In the 16th century, Japan with the order of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-98) invaded Korea (Palais, 1991). The country was in jeopardy and was on the verge of collapse. Ming China sent troops to help Korea. However, it was not Ming China's military but Korean 'righteous army' changed the war with remarkable dedication and struggle. The 'righteous' soldiers were not armed with professional training; they were farmers, merchants, Confucian scholars, Buddhist monks, and slaves who rose up and joined the government forces to fight against the Japanese. Buddhist Monks Seosan (1520-1604) and Samyong (1544-1610) were spiritual masters of the greatest learning and character of Korean Buddhism (Lee, 1967). There was no way they did not know what Buddhism calls 'mercy' is about. Nevertheless, they carried swords and spears with their disciples. Seosan was a 73-year-old monk at the time, but organized a group of about 5,000 monks to lead many battles against the Japanese invaders. Once again, Japan ruled Korea from 1910 to 1945 by way of aggression. During this period, Korean Christians refused to worship the Japanese emperor as a god. They led a nationwide Korean independence movement by peacefully resisting the impersonal Japanese imperial rule (Yu, 2011; Jeong, 2019).

Professor Westad believes that the root spirit of 'Korean righteousness' was formed by influence from Neo-Confucianism. This view is not wrong,

but is not entirely correct. It should be remembered that the Koreans have a very old national myth called 'Hong-ik-in-gan,' which calls forth to benefit all people of the world evenly. This myth tells us that since ancient times, Koreans have had the concept of a community that helps each other and lives in peace. In her lecture regarding "What are Koreans like?" at Harvard University, Min Jin Lee, an outstanding Korean-American novelist, metaphorically explains that the spirit of Koreans appears best when they wave their hands and dance (2020). Even poorly educated Korean grandmothers gracefully wave their arms to express their intentions and feelings without saying a word. The Koreans with such an excellent sense of rhythm show what is called 'Han' which is related to collective suffering. Koreans recognize this 'Han' as 'Nunchi' and resolve it with 'Jeong.' 'Nunchi' is a kind of intuitive Korean intelligence, which is the ability to recognize the inner intentions underlying Koreans. 'Jeong,' literally meaning a feeling of awakening, fills Koreans with love and passion for their social attachments experienced throughout Korea's long history. The dancing Korean identity as Min Jin Lee suggests and the 'righteousness' of the Korean people as Westad argues are ideologically linked. These ideas encourage Koreans to pursue higher-level education and give them the power to actively solve problems when they encounter them. In this regard, however, Westad should add the diverse Korean spiritual elements such as the Korean national myth, the Korean 'Han' associated with 'Nunchi' and 'Jeong,' Buddhism, Christianity and others, not limited to Neo-Confucianism, when explaining his theory, the formation of 'Korean righteousness.' Also, we understand that the Korean identity and the concept of the Korean 'town-state' as a 'nation' arose much earlier than the times he argued. Already in the Old Joseon era (ca. 3,000 BC-108 BC), the Koreans as people of independent 'town-state' experienced militant conflicts with the Chinese (Talmage, 1947).

There is one good piece of evidence that adds persuasion to our argument. A Hallyu fan named Wong, a renowned Malaysian journalist, thought similarly to us. She refers to her motivation to love Hallyu in "A Love Letter to South Korea" (2020). At first, she was fascinated by Korean culture, lifestyle and customs through wonderful Korean dramas, movies, and reality shows. However, the bigger attraction than this was realizing the brave history of Koreans. Korea has been under the influence of strong nations such as China for centuries. In fact, Korea suffered as a Japanese colony in the first half of the 20th century. In the Korean War (1950-53), the entire country was turned into ruins. Nevertheless, this Korea has shown the vitality of resurrection like the phoenix. It seems that the spirit of the phoenix can be regarded as the Korean Wave. This spirit was sublimated into 'the 1980 Gwangju Democratization Movement.' The sublimation process was explicitly shown in the Korean movie 'Taxi Driver.' This unique, rich and complex spiritual culture has made Koreans one of the most advanced IT nations in the world over the past 30 years. Among them, Samsung has grown into a global company. She also does not say Koreans and Hallyu are perfect. Korea has socioeconomic problems including gender discrimination and class privileges. Some Korean politicians are corrupt and unfair. Despite all these problems she confesses that she loves Korea and Hallyu. This is because Koreans and Hallyu do not damage the amazing achievements they have made so far. Hallyu has the dignity and value of human beings who enjoy peace and prosperity according to the spirit of mutual respect among the international community.

### **K-movie**

We will investigate only one 'Parasite,' which is currently receiving the most attention in several K-movies. Baljmaa T. wrote in *MONTAME* internet edition in Mongolia on 21 October, 2019, "Parasite' wins Ulaanbaatar Film Festival Award

'Falcon'." He continued:

Ulaanbaatar City Mayor's Office, Arts and Culture Department of the Capital City and Arts Council of Mongolia jointly organized the 11th edition of Ulaanbaatar International Film Festival . . . . The Film Festival screened 15 international award winning films from around the world from October 14 to 20. Among them, audience award 'Falcon' went to South Korean film 'Parasite' directed by film director and script writer Bong Joon-ho.

'Parasite,' which was highly praised in Mongolia, made a huge wave in the United States the following year. On 9 February, 'Parasite' won the Best Picture Award at the 2020 Academy Awards. The film also won the awards for Best Director, Best Original Screenplay and Best International Feature Film. What is it about the success of this film that has caught the attention of Mongolia as well as the world? The answer may come in many forms, but we intend to focus on the message that director Bong seems to emphasize through this film. The film is a local one dealing with South Korean issues, but has an international theme that transcends Korean nationality. The film exposes recent Korean society, highlighting two families. One family is upper class living in a large mansion in the highlands, and the other is lower class living in a lowland subterranean. The upper class family is a family of four consisting of a global IT company CEO named Park, his wife, and his daughter and son (Dasong). The lower class family is also a family of four, consisting of father (Ki-taek), his wife, his son (Ki-woo), who was aspiring to a prestigious university, and the daughter (Ki-jeong), an aspiring art professional. These two families expose the problems that Korean society face in the personal, social and more broadly national level.

First is the national aspect. The movie shows the low-lying subterranean where Ki-taek lives in a semi-basement. From the beginning, the semi-basement is one of the most important elements of

this film and is a metaphor with deep meanings. In 'Parasite,' the existence of the semi-basement can be interpreted as a social structural evil that the Korean government neglects. The semi-basement is not the first floor, nor is it a complete basement. This is a place that gives a desire for vertical movement to go up to the first floor and to hang out with people who live well. In addition, it is a place that provides anxiety and fear of what happens if they fall into the basement that exists further down than the semi-basement. It is a dark space that symbolizes instability and disharmony. It was not originally a residential space where people live. This is the place to be used as a warehouse for storing items and tools. In the semi-basement, bright sunlight and fresh air cannot penetrate enough. In short, it is the very place of despair. Who would want to live in an unsanitary and gloomy environment? No one. Those who live in this place are poor and perhaps incompetent lower-class people who cannot find a proper home. Living in such a place allows people to have an inferiority complex compared to those who live well, and human self-esteem is also low. However, until recently, there have been people living in semi-basements in the metropolitan area centered on Seoul. Seoul is the center of Korea's politics, economy, society and culture. So the best and most talented people are concentrated in Seoul. Thus, there is a Korean proverb saying, "If you have children, send them to Seoul." This means that if they are in the province, they have fewer opportunities to succeed in society. It is like saying that life will be solved only by meeting people who have the power of politics and economy. As men and women, young and old, flock to this area for success, there is a lack of residential space, and the government has a duty to create measures to solve this problem. Those who can own their own homes in the Seoul metropolitan area are only a few privileged people who have homes given to them by their parents or who buy their own homes with the support of their parents. Currently, housing prices in the Seoul

area are extremely high so that newlyweds can only buy their own homes when they save their entire life. The government is making various efforts, including heavy taxation on those who own several houses, but no clear solution has been determined yet. Living in a semi-basement has become a kind of necessary evil for ordinary people without homes or students studying in the Seoul area. The South Korean government has allowed such necessary evil. That is the law of deregulation of the basement floor when building a house. Article 119 of the current Building Act stipulates that the area of the basement floor is excluded from the area opened when calculating the floor area ratio. Now, building owners can make profits by increasing the underground floor for construction. The landlord could accumulate more wealth by taking advantage of the tenant's health. Since this law is a form of social structural evil, 'Parasite' secretly charges viewers to abolish it as soon as possible and create a just housing environment.

The second structural evil of the semi-basement is the mechanism of the stairs. In order for the lower-class families living here to get along with the upper-class family, they must escape from the semi-basement. In order to escape, they must go up the stairs. If they want to go up to the first floor from there, they have to look up carefully again and again. In order to meet the rich in the highlands, the common people in the semi-basement of the lowlands have to do a 'humble gesture' every moment to get to the ground. The form of structural evil that separates the lower and upper layers also includes the insensitivity of society. When Park's young son (Dasong) complains that his family smells strange, Ki-jeong protests: "This is the smell of semi-basement." 'Parasite' diagnoses the complaints of the child as the expression of social structural evil, because the child and his parents set this scent as a fixed boundary where the rich and the poor can never get along.

Messages pointing out individual 'sins' or

mistakes are found quite implicitly. It is seen in the fact that Gi-taek's son, Gi-woo, got to be a student at a prestigious university through fake documents, and that his daughter, Gi-jeong, is hired as an art teacher by appearing to be an elite student in the U.S. Should we not let the lower class, who live a difficult and painful life, engage in this kind of false behavior while struggling to survive? We can hear the movie's answer to the question: "no," as this behavior runs counter to the 'righteous' life of Korea's traditional culture. In addition, the issue of urination on the road is treated as a social issue. In the evening, Gi-taek's family often sees drunkards who urinate on the street, wandering around their semi-basement. In fact, few people do this in urban areas in Korea. However, some people can sometimes do this while walking home drunk. Still, is it not a metaphor or a symbol that 'Parasite' definitely addresses this issue? There is a Korean saying, "Be faithful to small things so that you can do big things." It seems that Korean society is concerned about the reduction of human moral responsibility in the process of mechanizing more diverse tasks with internet-based information communication, technology and management innovation. 'Parasite' opposes the flow of small moral mistakes among those who are having difficulty breathing in the wave of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This level of insensitivity and irresponsibility is implicitly demanding the audience to take 'righteous' action, Korea's traditional virtue.

In summary, 'Parasite' has tacitly revealed social problems in Korea. Individual's immoral thoughts and actions have sometimes caused discord and destruction. Members of a group called the family unite with each other and make many unreasonable and painful mistakes. There are no appearance of a social institution to oversee and cleanse these bad behaviors. In a way, the experience of incongruity between individuals and society flows profoundly through this film. However, this film does not publicly call attention to individual faults and social structural evils.

This is the difference between this film and past ones. The various personal and social absurdities that the characters act on are not handled in such a way that military superiors would scold or instruct their subordinates. Instead, 'Parasite' treats these issues as symbols or metaphors, and demands deeper reflection. Instead of crying out loud and saying, "Repent, or you will go to hell," this film treats the absurdities of current Korean capitalist society with laughter, humor and wit. However, the viewers laugh and discover that it cannot be over. This is because they find the aftertaste of meditating over the movie's metaphor that follows the laughter. The best thing about this film is the belief that director Bong will understand and act on the main message of the film by raising the viewers' awareness. He seems to believe that viewers will not leave this metaphor playfully, but will become as a righteous and honest transforming force in their home, society, and nation. His message is so sharp that it pierces the audience's lungs. The highly prudent and meticulous 'Parasite' process hides the power that is transcended and universally transmitted to everyone living in the 21st century, regardless of whether they are upper class or lower class, or follow any political ideology.

### **K-pop**

The popularity of K-pop in Mongolia is on the rise. "Is K-pop popular in Mongolia?" Turuu Do answered:

Yes, it is pretty popular, especially among young women. . . Some of them literally waited for months to see new K-pop MVs and fell in love with some singers, not surprisingly. They liked BTS, EXO more than they do to M-pop bands. Contrary to the fact that we have those passionate fans, some Mongolian men would look down on K-pop male singers because of their feminine look and flower boy personality (2019).

Another person said:

Mongolia is close to South Korea. K-pop is popular in Mongolia . . . K-pop influence began around 2000. HOT, SES, Baby vox was popular. Just like other countries it is popular among teen and young women. BTS and Blackpink is popular. . . But lots of Mongolians (especially old males) think male K-pop stars are too feminine, skinny. It is because muscular aggressive bad boy type men is ideal men in Mongolian nomadic warrior culture (Narmandakh, 2019).

Currently, more than 10,000 fan clubs have formed in the K-pop community in Mongolia, and they have active gatherings through SNS. However, as both of the above point out, there is also a negative view of K-pop. They complain that the masculine image of Mongolian tradition does not appear passionately in Korean boy-pop-stars. These complaints are mainly among the older Mongolian men, and the negative views will change if they are more exposed to such performance, like those of 'the Bangtan Boys' (BTS) and understand the contents. BTS has shown infinite affection for their supporters, the Army. BTS' songs and dances are messages of comfort, encouragement, and love. Min-ju Gu analyzed the lyrics of 134 songs by BTS and determined that "the temperature of their language varies when they accuse an unreasonable society without hesitation and when they comfort [people] who live in it" (2020). They comfort young people who are stressed from going to school and getting jobs, saying, "It's not enough, but it's beautiful, so don't worry too much." 'No More Dream' is sung to adults who are suffering from stereotyped dreams, saying that it is okay not to have a dream. BTS' song, 'Love Myself' is for people with low self-esteem. The 'Bapsae,' a social music, distinguishes between a popular 'gold spoon' and a bad 'dirt spoon.' BTS members say that they are artists in principle and not politicians participating in politics, but they will breathe with their fans



who throw social and political messages. A BTS member, RM, stated: “We are not political figures . . . but everything is political eventually. Even a pebble can be political” (Rosseinsky, 2020). This implies that BTS will not stand as a bystander in the political society. On 7 October, 2020, RM gave his impressions at the Van Fleet Award Ceremony: “Korea Society’s 2020 Gala is especially meaningful as this year marks the Korean War’s 70th anniversary. We will always remember the history of pain that our two nations shared together and the sacrifices of the countless men and women” (BTS, 2020). It is thought to have shown an aspect of the ‘righteousness’ of Koreans who have established themselves in the inner world of RM. For him, the Korean War in 1950-53 was not the South Korean invasion of North Korea, but rather the North Korean invasion of South Korea. In order to prevent this war, the United States, the main unit of the UN military forces at the time, fought the war with South Korea and made noble sacrifices. Currently, BTS has donated \$1 million to the “Black Livers Matter” movement in the US. They said: “We stand against racial discrimination. We condemn violence. You, I and we all stand together” (IMBC, 2020). In such a mature appearance of BTS, Hong-guk Kim has expressed that the BTS members are not weak entertainers, but leaders with excellent leadership that all politicians may learn (2021). Obviously, BTS members are artists with great dance and musicality that many people like. However, we must not forget that the world is so excited about them because their lives and ideas are fused with their art and appear with great power. This power is basically derived from Korean spiritual culture, which also has a positive space to embrace other cultures, making their art activities universal.

#### K-food

There are about 100 Korean restaurants in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (Chung, 2016). Korean food is enthusiastically welcomed not only in

local small and medium-sized cities, but also throughout Mongolia. The traditional Mongolian diet is usually a simple meal consisting of lamb, sheep milk, salt and flour. These diets have been the cause of various vascular diseases, stomach cancer, and short lifespan. Mongolians, who have learned that the Korean diet is beneficial to their health, now quite often visit Korean restaurants. In fact, a French research team reported that kimchi, a fermented Korean food, has an antiviral function, reducing the number of deaths from COVID-19 in Korea (Bousquet, 2020). Among the dozens of Korean foods offered by Korean restaurants in Mongolia and the world, eleven food items are most famous: “Bibimbab, Kimchijjigae (spicy Kimchi stew), Seolleongtang (Korean ox bone soup), Bulgogi (Korean beef barbecue), Galbitang (short rib soup), Mandu (Korean dumplings), Jabchae (Stir-fried Korean noodles), Bossam (Korean pork belly), Samgaetang (Korean stuffed chicken soup with ginseng), Baechu kimchi (Korean spicy pickled cabbage), and Dongchimi (Korean white radish)” (Childress, 2020).

Bibimbab and Kimchijjigae are relatively cheap and healthy meals. Take Bibimbab for example. Bibimbab must go through a very important process to be made. First, some rice is put in a large round bowl. Then the rice is mixed well with kimchi, onion, carrot, zucchini, red pepper paste, soy sauce, salt, sesame oil, and vinegar. After that, the mixed materials are added to properly cooked pork, beef, and half-cooked egg fries. There is a lesson from Bibimbab. It is an exquisite combination of fermented and non-fermented materials. Of course, each material has its own characteristics. The nutrients are different, and the size, color, and smell of the shape are different. If these various ingredients are left to their own characteristics and are not mixed, one Bibimbab is not born. Bibimbab pursues unity within diversity. Various elements of each ingredient voluntarily renounce their own unique characters for a single identical purpose: a stylish and tasteful Bibimbab. The unique characteristics

of each material are broken down to make a bowl of rice made by the whole. Bibimbab is a reminder of the importance of community. Interestingly, BTS said at a meeting that their art world is the same as the principle of Korean traditional Bibimbab (Cha, 2020). The seven members of BTS have different tastes, colors, and personalities. Like the various ingredients of Bibimbab, they sometimes look in different directions. However, in order to create a new art culture, all of them are to take the same boat and go on a single path. They are ready to deal with conflicts between cultures and eventually open the horizon of convergence in the space of Korean tradition. The reason why they are successful is that they value the unity of the whole rather than their special individuality.

In Korean food, not only Bibimbab, but all meals include individual specificity and communal generality. Kimchi is a good example. Kimchi is the food that Koreans love three meals a day throughout the year. Traditional kimchi is usually born through kimjang, an essential process to make kimchi. The process of kimjang begins by selecting good cabbage and cutting it into two to four equal parts, depending on the size. Next, the cabbages are to be pickled. A handful of good salt for each cabbage is used for sprinkling. The pickling process takes about twelve hours and will soften the hard cabbage leaves. The person preparing the kimjang will wash the pickled cabbage while changing water for about three hours, and drain the salt. After that, the person place the prepared seasoning on the cabbage and rub it evenly. Ingredients for seasoning are red pepper powder, salted shrimp, salted anchovies, minced garlic, ginger, plum liquid, onion, kelp, radish, fresh green onions, pears, glutinous rice grass, yellowtail head, anchovy, and pork meat. If one keeps this finished cabbage kimchi in the freezer, one can enjoy it all year round. Kimchi is one of the best health foods recognized by nutritionists around the world because it ferments well.

The fun of eating at a Korean restaurant does not end with simply eating healthy food. Of course, we can relax and enjoy food in our own way without being aware of the people around us. However, when we go to a restaurant, we usually go with several people. At this time, we focus on the people we are with rather than the food itself. The meal is just a medium, and during that time, conversations and intimacy build up. With one meal we get closer. When Koreans meet someone they know, the first greeting is “Did you eat?” and when they break up, the greeting is “When will I buy rice once for you?” For Koreans, food is eating and communicating with others. The meaning of these two is both personal and social. Meals play a key role in the restoration of homes and peaceful harmony of social communities.

## IMPLICATIONS OF HALLYU

### Socio-political implications

The core spirit of Hallyu is the realization of peaceful coexistence and ‘righteous’ social justice. Dreaming of such a society will be the same for a Mongolian. However, factors that hinder this society have occurred in recent years. China's exclusive nationalism is hurting Korea and Mongolia. China has undermined the historical identity of Koreans by claiming that the old Goguryeo area, which Koreans regard as one of the their ancestors' founding places, is the original Chinese territory. China is attempting a policy of annihilating the Mongolian language and culture in Inner Mongolia. Korea and Mongolia need to be in solidarity and wisely cope with these Chinese policies. If Korea along with democratic countries around world help Mongolia, Mongolia's political position will rise. Mongolia has diplomatic relations with North Korea, therefore, it is a healthy partner who can mediate between South Korea and North Korea and contribute to the unification of the South-North Korea. The fundamental spirit of Hallyu is a peaceful and righteous life. As BTS's healthy political view clearly shows, the 'righteous' spirit

of Hallyu can serve as a supporting force in Mongolia.

### **Economic Implications**

Economically, Hallyu is mutually beneficial to the Korea-Mongolia relationship. South Korea is among the world's top ten economic powers, and is at the forefront of bringing about the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In the past, China, Rome and Persia dominated the Eurasian Silk Road cultural economy. However, in the future, a new trade route leading to Korea-Mongolia-Russia-Europe-Canada-U.S. attracts attention. Russia is also active in this initiative. Korea and Mongolia could make good use of this precious opportunity through mutual cooperation. Korea can develop into a marine powerhouse on three sides of the sea. In fact, the best shipyard that makes the world's most important ships is in Geoje Island, a marine park in South Korea. Therefore, Mongolia's Great Plains and South Korea's Marine Parks provide resources to become a tourism powerhouse under the cooperation of the two nations. Korea has a population of over 50 million in a small chunk of land. On the contrary, Mongolia has seven times the amount of land on the Korean peninsula, but its population exceeds only three million. Furthermore, while South Korea lacks resources, Mongolia is the world's eighth largest resource powerhouse. South Korea is full of economic power and skilled talent, but Mongolia is vulnerable in this field. Under such circumstances, it is very clear that the two nations will benefit from each other if they establish and implement complementary economic policies.

### **Environmental Implications**

Due to climate warming and low rainfall, Mongolian grasslands are devastated, and 80 percent of Mongolia's land is undergoing desertification. This problem has a great influence on the survival problem of Mongolia, but it is also a serious environmental problem for Korea. About 50 percent of the yellow sand that blows into

Korea comes from the Mongolian wilderness. Fortunately, the Mongolian government planned to create a 3,700km green belt linking the east and west of Mongolia to prevent desertification in 1995. In order to help Mongolia, the Korea-Mongolia Green Belt Project was launched in March 2007 with the support of the Korea Forest Service (Kim, 2016). In the future, Mongolia and Korea should cooperate with each other to drastically reduce the traditional Mongolian nomadic industry, which is a direct cause of the devastation of the wilderness, and replace it with agriculture or something else.

### **Negative implications**

Hallyu in Mongolia has issues to be wary of. For example, there is the possibility of becoming an organized mob by imitating soldiers who mercilessly suppresses citizens who resist the government in some of the K-dramas. This result is something that the K-dramas do not intend at all, but it is a conclusion that viewers can make through mistaken judgment. K-food also pose these risks. The advantage of K-food is to make Bibimbab or other foods through fusion of all food ingredients, or to make various side dishes to share healthy food with each other. In this food sharing community, deep fellowship between family members or loving friendship among friends are formed. Nevertheless, there is a possibility that fast food such as ramen will be recognized as everyday K-food.

### **CONCLUSION**

We have looked at the types and characteristics of Hallyu in Mongolia. We have also explained the general reasons why Hallyu is welcomed in Mongolia: the openness of Mongolian tradition, the development of social networks, and the overall entertainment of Korean popular culture. However, we have argued that these reasons are not the only sources of Hallyu as Professor Westad's historical theory has proven. Like him, we affirm that Hallyu is based on the spirit of

Korean 'righteousness,' which is uniquely Korean and at the same time cosmic so that people of all nations can appreciate it. However, we suggest that his theory be modified due to the fact that the 'righteous' Korean spirit has been formulated not only through Neo-Confucianism but also through other spiritual sources such as the traditional Korean myth, the 'Han' feelings, Buddhism, Christianity and others. Hallyu is expected to continue in Mongolia as well as in the whole world. The true spirit of Hallyu does not blindly boast about Korean history or culture. In almost all Korean dramas, the spirit of Hallyu calls for correction and reform, revealing mistakes and corruption in Korean society. In films such as 'Parasite,' the need for current Korean society to be reformed is quite clearly exposed as the upper elites and lower citizens are not fully reconciled. The spirit of Korean food also pursues the coexistence and peace of humankind. Therefore it should be borne in mind that the distributors and the audiences of Hallyu are to be encouraged to keep this fundamental spirit of Hallyu continually.

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