

Article

Gifts of Clothing
from the Mongol (Yuan) Empire
to the Goryeo Dynasty:
New Perspectives on the Rituals
and Diplomatic Relationship
of the Two Nations

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Introduction

The emergence of Chinggis Khan in the 13th century and the subsequent establishment of the Mongol empire is widely understood as a force of unparalleled impact in the history of not only Eurasia but the entire world. As innumerable amounts of existing research can attest, the effects of the Mongol empire's expansion and domination rippled widely across many different regions of the world. The state of Goryeo was, of course, no exception. The 13th–14th centuries, the so-called “Mongol domination period” or “Yuan interference period,” are remembered as an era of Korean history during which international relations were of utmost importance. Over the century or so spanning from the inception of the Mongol empire to their withdrawal into Mongolia, Goryeo was subjected to a previously unprecedented level of foreign control and interference.

Due to these circumstances, the ethnocentric Yuan domination of Goryeo has long drawn attention as a research topic; recently this field has yielded some of the most prolific results for Goryeo historians.¹ One chief topic of such studies has focused on the relationship between Goryeo and the Mongol empire—especially the Yuan empire—and this research is ultimately intended as a means of examining how to characterize the “domination” of the Goryeo dynasty by the Yuan empire. In doing so, scholars have primarily investigated how different the framework of Goryeo and Mongol relations may or may not have been from the relationship between Goryeo and other empires in the Chinese territory, specifically examining the exchange of rituals known as “tribute” and “investiture.” On the other hand, an emerging pool of research has served to evince the extent of the so-called “Mongol Impact,” namely the Mongol (Yuan) empire's effects on Goryeo society (Choi 2019; Jung 2019). These studies have discussed how changes were

1 Studies of this era have long generated interest from Japanese scholars as they provide precedence for the issues of identity and heteronomy that are often connected with the Japanese colonial period. Early research has focused on the status of Goryeo as the only occupied state to retain a structure of independence under the Mongol world order and thus placed a somewhat undue emphasis on the immanent “anti-Mongol” and “anti-Yuan” attitudes of the era. Since the 1990s, that resistance-centric perspective has given way to a closer examination of the Yuan-Goryeo relationship and thus a better understanding of the traditional tributary system, with the formerly nationalistic focus being widened to form a more complete picture of the Yuan-Goryeo relationship within the context of East Asia.

set in motion amid various aspects of Goryeo society, such as diplomacy, politics, rituals, and the economy, due to the influence of the Mongol (Yuan) empire.

While accumulated research has shed light on the relationship between Goryeo and the Mongol (Yuan) empire along with its impact on Korean history, questions still remain. Did the Koreans, during the span of one-hundred years under the Mongolian rule, consider the Mongol (Yuan) empire merely as a subject of dominance and resistance? How then did the Goryeo people's perception of and attitude toward the Mongols, initially viewed as "invaders" or "barbarians," shift over the one-hundred-year period? How was the relationship between Goryeo and the Mongol (Yuan) empire compared to Goryeo's relationships with other nations? Which was similar and different?

In that case, the ceremonial clothing gifts presented by the Mongol (Yuan) empire to Goryeo provide crucial clues for addressing the above questions. The redemption of gifts through a compensation system separate from their market value has been a subject of discussion since early classical studies, such as Mauss's "gift economy." As objects given between two parties for a specific purpose, gifts serve not only as a practical function in complementing the economies of both giver and receiver, but the act of giving and receiving gifts also embodies various types of social symbolism. Especially in the context of diplomatic relations between nations, gift-giving is useful in reinforcing new or burgeoning relationships. Various rituals were observed in the processes of premodern East Asian diplomatic relations, including the exchange of formal diplomatic documents and gifts.

However, one more point that should be noted here is that the significance of diplomatic gifts is not only in the act of giving itself but also in the nature of the items exchanged. There has been extensive discourse on the active East-West exchanges of various commodities within the Mongol empire (Allsen 1997; May 2012). Moreover, it has been argued that the unique characteristics of "gifts" within the Mongol empire are evident (Qiu 2019; Seol 2021). In particular, the dynasties of Korea and China exchanged numerous diplomatic gifts under the title of "tributes" 朝貢 and "imperial gifts" 賜與 or "return gifts" 回賜, among which clothing played a particularly crucial role. Clothing, as one of the most fundamental aspects of human civilization, holds significance as a political and social artifact (Perrot

2007). In the interactions between Goryeo and the Mongol (Yuan) empire, clothing was a pivotal item in diplomatic gift exchanges. Therefore the “unprecedentedly close” relationship of the two nations was reflected in the idiosyncrasies of the diplomatic clothing gifts exchanged between them.

In this light, this paper intends to examine the changing dynamics between the two nations through the gifts presented by the Yuan emperor to the Goryeo king during this period, taking gifts of attire as its particular focus. More specifically, this paper seeks to answer the questions of how the Yuan emperor’s clothing gifts to the Goryeo king differed from those of the past and of what the process and implications of Goryeo’s acceptance of the unfamiliar Mongolian clothing were. Ultimately, it aims to illuminate the historical context and significance of the gifts of Mongol imperial attire that influenced Goryeo during the 13th–14th centuries.

Gifts of Clothing in East Asian Societies

Gifts were an essential part of the Sino-centric diplomacy across premodern Northeast Asia. The tributes and reciprocations that were customary to premodern China can also be understood as “diplomatic gifts” in a wider sense. In this social context, the term “tribute” 朝貢 referred to the practice of feudal lords periodically paying formal audience to the court of the emperor in order to offer a tribute of goods and products native to their territories. As with most institutions and customs of the Chinese dynasties throughout history, this practice was based on the principles of *Zhouli* (*Rites of Zhou* 周禮) and *Shangshu* (*Venerated Documents* 尚書). The worldview put forth in these texts was based on the emperor being the center of the world, and it dictated that the leaders of the state’s constituent regions must thus regularly make offerings to the emperor with the products of their land. From this basic premise the Western Zhou dynasty further implemented the practice of requiring feudal lords appointed by the king to affirm their political status through these tributary rituals (Yoon 1988). Furthermore, after receiving these tributes, the emperor would not send his vassals home empty-handed but reward them with royal goods and gifts.

Such rewards very often included gifts of clothing. In Confucian society, apparel was an important means of expressing propriety and

courtesy, and most crucially, it was a key element in maintaining Confucian social order. Being appropriately attired for a given situation was emphasized as an important virtue of great men, and proper clothing was considered a fundamental part of properly conducting rituals and thus necessary for proper governance (Chung 2002, 36–37). Thus, in addition to the above-mentioned texts, other annal-biography style writings such as *Shiji* (*Records of the Grand Historian* 史記) take care to outline specific regulations from “Yufuzhi” (Monography on Garment and Carriage 輿服志) or “Yiweizhi” (Monography on Ritual and Guard 儀衛志) that address the customary attire for everyone ranging from the emperor to the peasantry.

As such, the attire bestowed by the emperor upon his vassals, or from the king to his people, was a customary method of reinforcing the authority of the ruler and establishing relationships between factions of power. This was generally done through the bestowal of official uniforms, and the act of doing so essentially affirmed the superiority of the king, while the differences in uniforms demarcated the hierarchies between similar parties, with the intent of actualizing the Confucian principle of keeping the world in order.

Originally endemic to China, these rituals of investiture and tribute gradually permeated into surrounding societies following the establishment of the Han empire, leading to the customary exchange of gifts to and from the Korean peninsula as well. After the collapse of Gojoseon and the establishment of the Four Commanderies of Han 漢四郡 in its former territory, many of the small states of the Korean peninsula established direct or indirect diplomatic relations with the Han empire. The kings of Goguryeo and other nations received gifts of apparel as a reward for paying in-person tributary visits to the Han emperor. The minor nations of Goguryeo and Han dispatched envoys to the Four Commanderies of Han region or border territories to receive government uniforms and ceremonial attire.² According to the *Samguk sagi* (*Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms* 三國史記), the emperors of Former Yan, Eastern Jin, and Northern Wei also granted ceremonial attire to the kings of Goguryeo in 4th–5th centuries.

As such, it was an act of politically and diplomatically symbolic significance for the emperor of China to gift apparel to the king of the

2. *Sanguozhi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*), gwon 30, “Goguryeo” and “Han”; *Liangshu* (*History of Liang*), gwon 50, “Goguryeo.”

Korean peninsula. As of yet, it cannot be historically confirmed whether or not the uniforms were actually worn in practice, but it is very unlikely that the king of Goguryeo would have worn the uniform of a Chinese vassal. This is likely due to the fact that the relationship between these entities were not maintained as strict top-down or subordinating hierarchies (Lim 2003). The gifts of clothing can be understood as a diplomatic ritual of reciprocally recognizing both the Korean nations' independence or self-sufficiency and the Sino-centric East Asian world order. From the perspective of those receiving these ritual gifts, these customs could continue due to the security of their sovereign status and the utility of these received attires for domestic governance within their own nations.³

The ritual of receiving clothing gifts from the Chinese emperor, which emerged in ancient Korea-China relations, subsequently became regularized within Goryeo itself, where it was normalized as an important diplomatic ritual. The world order of Northeast Asia in the 10th and 12th centuries featured no dominant hegemony, with the Song, Kitan, and Jurchen powers distributed enough to be denoted as “China among Equals” (Rossabi 1983). This can be plainly confirmed through the frequently changing and sometimes simultaneous tributary relationships that Goryeo was engaged in during this period. Immediately after the kingdom of Goryeo was established, it built diplomatic relations with various countries of the Five Dynasties—such as Later Tang, Later Jin, and Later Zhou—exchanging envoys and offering tribute. However, due to the rapidly changing political dynamics of China, no substantial exchanges of goods, including diplomatic gifts such as ceremonial clothing, occurred between the two during this time (Sim 2001, 43–71). After the establishment of the Song dynasty, Goryeo kings received an official investiture from the Song emperor, and it was only then, amid the exchange of numerous diplomatic gifts between the two nations, that the emperor presented apparel as a gift to the Goryeo side. However, even during this period, records such as in *Goryeosa* 高麗史 mention that the emperor of the Song dynasty sent “clothing and belt” 衣帶 or “clothing” 衣 to the king of Goryeo, but these did not specifically refer to

3 For example, after receiving clothing gifts from China, Goguryeo replicated the practice of bestowing uniforms on Silla within Korea, and Silla rulers further gifted clothes to the leaders of surrounding territories as part of a formal exchange of goods (Lee 2002; Lee 2008).

any particular type of clothing or official uniform.

Beginning with the relationship between Goryeo and the Kitan (the Liao dynasty), gifts of ceremonial clothing began to have particular significance in the realm of diplomacy. In 1022, Emperor Chengzong 聖宗 (r. 982–1031) of Liao enthroned Goryeo's king, Hyeonjong 顯宗 (r. 1010–1031), and, as a part of the ceremonial rites, presented the latter with gifts including a carriage and apparel. The Khitan, who had been presenting “clothing” or “official crown and robe” as gifts to King Hyeonjong, King Jeongjong 靖宗 (r. 1034–1046), and King Munjong 文宗 (r. 1046–1083), started sending particular pieces of clothing, referred to as the “ceremonial mortarboard crown with nine strings of nine beads” 九旒冠 and the “ceremonial robe with nine embroidered symbols” 九章服, to the Goryeo kings from 1065 onwards. With this, the act of presenting such gifts during the process of Chinese emperors enthroning the Goryeo kings became ritualized as a diplomatic custom.

The ceremonial clothing given by the Liao dynasty was some of the most culturally meaningful ceremonial attire worn since ancient times, consisting of a headdress adorned with beads and an intricately patterned robe. The number of strings of beads on the headdress and the number of symbols embroidered on the robe indicated the wearer's rank within the ceremonial clothing system. Under this system, the emperor wore twelve strings of beads and twelve symbols on his robe, with the apparel for imperial family members and officials being numbered according to their rank (Y. W. Choi 2015). The headdress received by the Goryeo king featured nine strings of beads in comparison to the emperor's twelve, while the robe's patterns featured nine symbols, excluding the celestial motifs of the sun, moon, and stars, which symbolize the heavens. This rank of clothing was equivalent to what would be bestowed upon a Chinese imperial prince or noble.

As such, the Liao dynasty's process of enthroning Goryeo kings involved presenting them with ceremonial clothing one rank below that of their own ruler, thus affirming the former's superiority comparative to the latter in a visible and tangible manner. These rituals carried over from the Liao to the Jurchen (the Jin dynasty), and in the continuing processes of offering tributes and rewards, the emperor of the ruling party gifting a *nine-symbol robe* as a diplomatic symbol to the king of Goryeo became established as an ongoing tradition (Kim 2020). Approximately one hundred years later in 1368, Zhu

Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (r. 1368–1398) founded the Ming dynasty and informed Goryeo of his ascension, and Goryeo requested a similar gift of ceremonial clothing, citing this historical precedent.

The Different Clothing Cultures of Goryeo and the Mongol (Yuan) Empire

In this light, how are we to interpret the unprecedentedly frequent and extensive exchange of goods, including gifts of apparel, that occurred between the Mongolian imperial family and the Goryeo royal family of the 13th and 14th centuries? In short, the clothing given to the royal families of Goryeo by the Great Khan of Mongol should be understood in a different context than the clothing bestowed in the tributary rituals previously conducted by China.

The Yuan emperor did not present Goryeo's king with the symbolic *nine-symbol robe*, which, in the past, the Chinese emperor had given to the Goryeo king as a marker of his status as a feudal lord. The last time a Goryeo king received the *nine-string mortarboard crown* and *nine-symbol robe* as diplomatic gifts was the year 1212, during the reign of King Gangjong 康宗 (r. 1211–1213). They were presented by the Jin emperor before this practice was discontinued for the duration of Goryeo's diplomatic relationship with the Mongol (Yuan) empire. This may seem counter-intuitive, considering that the Yuan emperor's investiture of the Goryeo king was much more authoritative than other similar appointments in the past. The Goryeo kings' previous appointments by foreign powers were largely formalities. Installation from the emperors of the Song, Liao, and Jin dynasties generally took the form of notifying the emperor when the throne was ascended to by a new king of Goryeo and of receiving diplomatic approval, and even then, a lack of formal installation was never considered a serious problem internally or externally. But the Mongols were different. Only with the explicit approval of the Yuan emperor was it possible to ascend to the throne of Goryeo, and indeed there were cases, such as King Chungseon 忠宣王 (r. 1298; 1308–1313) and King Chunghye 忠惠王 (r. 1330–1332; 1339–1344), where a ruling king of Goryeo was deposed or exiled through the will of the Yuan emperor.

And yet, this does not imply that the Mongol (Yuan) empire had no customs about or knowledge regarding customary uniforms. Indeed, it is evident that the Mongol (Yuan) empire also instituted and practiced a formal system of attire,⁴ but unlike Liao and Jurchen, it did not bestow any symbolic crown or robe upon the Goryeo king. Although several traditional Chinese institutions spread wide under the influences of the Han 漢 origin, we must consider that it was a characteristic of the Mongol empire to conduct most formal rituals according to the Mongolian traditional culture. In these Mongolian customs, apparel like *jisin* 只孫/質孫 (*zhisun* in Chinese) and *boqta* (called *gogo* 姑姑/罍罍 in Korean) held more significant and universal value than official uniforms of the Han origin. Thus, it is only natural that the Great Khan would not give gifts of “ceremonial mortarboard crowns with nine strings of nine beads” and “ceremonial robes with nine embroidered symbols” in the process of installing the kings of Goryeo.

Mongolia’s clothing culture had several elements that were quite divergent from the traditions that Goryeo had previously established or experienced. Having developed unique weaving and dyeing techniques, Goryeo had long commercialized and distributed ramie, hemp, and damask fabrics, with domestic ramie cloth and fine linen in particular being highly regarded in foreign countries and consistently included as goods for royal tribute. The relatively temperate climates of Goryeo help to build a sartorial culture around linen and silk textiles. Meanwhile Mongolians, whose culture was based on their nomadic lifestyle in the Eurasian steppes, typically fashioned clothes using materials such as sheep and camel wools, various leathers, and pressed fabrics such as felt (Huang 2007, 132–33). This provides the context for the fact that the Mongolian envoys who received various textiles from the Goryeo dynasty disregarded the silks and only favored materials such as otter leather, or the fact that Mongolia would require that leather or pelts constitute a large portion of the tributes they demanded from Goryeo, especially during the reign of Chinggis Khan.⁵

Above all, Mongolian hairstyles were alien and unfamiliar to the people of Goryeo. Northern nomadic peoples often practiced traditional head-shaving (*bianfa* 辮髮, *byeonbal* in Korean), and in the case of the Mongols,

4 *Yuanshi* (*History of Yuan* 元史), *gwon* 78, “Yufu 1” (Treatise on Vehicles and Clothing 1).

5 *Goryeosa* (*History of Goryeo*), *gwon* 22, King Gojong, Year 11, (Lunar) Month 11, Day 16.

this consisted of shaving along the parietal bones to the side of the head, leaving the remaining hair long at the front and tightly braided behind the ears in the back—a style called *kegul* 開剃 (*gaeche* in Korean).⁶ This particular hairstyle gave rise to the development of various forms of elaborately decorated headwear in Mongolia. Meanwhile in Goryeo, shaving one's head was generally associated with criminals serving punitive sentences, so there was a considerable stigma against shaved heads. Therefore, shaving one's head was considered shameful in Goryeo society, even if one was not necessarily a convicted criminal. Hence, the people of Goryeo adopted the practice of describing Mongolian hairstyles and recording their names separately from other documentary records. Later, when a prince of Goryeo, who eventually became King Chungnyeol 忠烈王 (r. 1274–1298; 1298–1308), adopted the Mongolian hairstyle, it moved the people of Goryeo to sigh and shed tears.⁷

Given the differences in their cultural backgrounds, it is perhaps only natural that ceremonial clothing gifts like the ones exchanged between Goryeo and the various Chinese dynasties of the past were not shared between Mongolia and Goryeo. Indeed, Mongolia and Goryeo sometimes experienced conflicts due to their lack of understanding of each other's distinct cultural backgrounds. Ceremonial clothing in fact formed a point of conflict in the first formal diplomatic interaction between Mongolia and Goryeo. In the year 1219, the Mongolian envoys who first met the king of Goryeo shocked the king and his vassals by striding directly up to the palace where the king sat, with arrows and quivers still on their backs, and delivering the letter they held directly into his hands.⁸ The Koreans already had an established ritual ceremony of formally receiving envoys, which had been adopted from the Tang dynasty before the inception of the Goryeo dynasty. Thus, envoys from the Kitan and Jurchen who visited Goryeo in the past, had greeted the king in formally appropriate processions, procedures, and attire. But such rituals were unknown to the Mongols (especially before

6 Generally, the Nomadic people had the custom of closely cutting the hair on the crown of the head. However, the traditional hairstyle of the Mongols could be differentiated from that of the Lan, who let the rest of their hair down, or that of the Jurchen, who braided the rest of their hair, as the Mongols braided their hair and rolled it into a bun, which was called a *kegul*. This hairstyle was universal among the Mongolian from Khan to the commoners (Bajar 1994, 62).

7 *Goryeosa jeoryo* (*Essentials of Goryeo History*), *gwon* 19, King Wonjong, Year 13, (Lunar) Month 2.

8 *Goryeosa jeoryo*, *gwon* 15, King Gojong, Year 6, (Lunar) Month 1.

they established an empire and encountered the Han influence), and thus they approached the king according to their own traditions. In Mongolian tradition, removing hats and belts symbolized the forfeiture of one's authority and status to the other party, and as such the act of taking off their uniforms in a formal setting would indicate subjugation, degradation, or penalization (Allsen 1997, 48–50).

The cultural conflicts stemming from the differences between the two countries eventually led to a prolonged war that lasted more than 30 years. Even after the signing of a peace agreement, Goryeo sought to ensure that its native culture, especially its own clothing, would be preserved. King Wonjong 元宗 (r. 1259–1274) of Goryeo firmly demanded a promise from Qubilai Khan (Emperor Shizu 世祖, r. 1260–1294) that the Yuan would not seek to change Goryeo's customs, particularly those concerning apparel. Qubilai agreed.⁹ This clause “Bulgaetopung” (The traditions of Goryeo shall not be changed 不改土風) became one of the cornerstones of the Goryeo-Yuan relations amid the “Instruction of the Emperor Shizu” 世祖舊制 agreement, and it was cited as the basis for protecting Goryeo's political and governmental sovereignty whenever an external threat arose, such as attempts by the Yuan to incorporate Goryeo into its administrative structure or to change Goryeo's legal system (Lee 1996).

The impetus behind Goryeo's strong request to preserve their clothing culture from the Mongolian side can be attributed to a deep-seated sense of unfamiliarity and resistance towards the Mongolian culture. The Mongols enforced Mongolian hairstyles only on the Goryeo prisoners of war during the early stages of the conflict, never formally imposing Mongolian hairstyles or clothing on the Goryeo people. Interestingly, much later, Qubilai Khan found it perplexing to see the Goryeo king and officials, who had adopted Mongolian hairstyles and attire after some time, in spite of his promise to respect Goryeo's clothing culture.¹⁰ Given the absence of Mongol's coercive cultural rule, in the early phases of their diplomatic ties, Goryeo

9 The Mongol empire classified their conquered nations into *il irgen* 屬民 and *bulgha irgen* 逆民 according to the degree of their subjugation: *il irgen* colonies were only required to make political, military, and economic concession and were otherwise free to continue their indigenous religion, legislature, and customs rather than be forced to recognize and adopt the Mongolian culture (Kim 2007, 96–97).

10 *Goryeosa jeoryo, gwon* 20, King Chungnyeol, Year 4, (Lunar) Month 7.

remained vigilant about the potential impact of the Mongolian culture on its society. This caution may have been influenced by a longstanding negative perception of the Mongols as the “most fierce among the barbarians,” akin to the “savage birds and beasts” described by neighboring ethnic groups, a perception reinforced by wartime experiences.

The Recognition and Political Assimilation of Foreign Cultures

Over the course of approximately half a century, the cultural divide between the two countries narrowed through extensive interpersonal and material exchanges on both sides (Lee 2013). Many people and material resources traveled back and forth between Goryeo and Yuan, naturally leading to the gradual introduction and diffusion of various Mongolian clothing styles within Goryeo society. The gifting of clothing from the Great Khan and the reception of such by the Goryeo people is direct evidence of these evolving relationships.

In particular, the human exchange between the two countries, primarily led by the ruling class, created an opportunity for the Mongolian culture to naturally permeate into Goryeo society. After King Chungnyeol married Princess Qutlug Kelmish 忽都魯揭里迷失/齊國大長公主 (1259–1297), the daughter of Qubilai Khan, the king was installed as a royal son-in-law of the imperial family. After King Chungnyeol, the subsequent Goryeo kings continued to marry into the Yuan imperial bloodlines, even if not directly into the core imperial family, so Goryeo naturally came to establish itself as a *son-in-law state* of the empire (Lee 2016). As a large number of Mongolians were inducted into the Goryeo royal family through marriage, it was only natural that their culture would be transplanted as well. For instance, when Princess Budaširi 卜答失里/薊國大長公主 (d. 1316) married King Chungseon, she brought with her about 50 wagons full of Mongolian objects and goods that were thoroughly foreign to Goryeo.¹¹ Furthermore, the aforementioned Princess Qutlug Kelmish performed traditional Mongolian birth rites before

11 *Goryeosa, gwon* 89, “Gyeguk daejanggogju” (Princess Gyeguk).

giving birth to King Chungseon, the first Mongolian-Goryeo biracial prince, and the Goryeo royal family itself performed rituals to pray for the longevity and health of the Yuan emperor and even constructed a Mongolian *ger* outside the palace.¹²

Princess Qutlug Kelmish was presented with a pearl-adorned dress 眞珠衣, a highly exceptional gift at the time. Considering that King Chungnyeol was willing to offer Goryeo women to Mongolian envoys in exchange for the princess's pearl garment, it must have been of significant value.¹³ The Mongol empire actively engaged in trade through pearls, utilizing them for various purposes (Allsen 2019)—including to acquire foreign servant as was the case here. Jacob D'Ancona, who predated Marco Polo as a foreign visitor to China, described the dress, with small pearls embedded into the finest silk fabric called “zittani,” as an extremely luxurious item which would be rare and exceptional anywhere in the world, apparently procured through the major trade ports of the Southern Song region (Choi 2008, 95–96). Thus, history may say simply that King Chungnyeol gave the pearl dress as a gift to Princess Qutlug Kelmish, but it is likely that there were liaisons within the Mongol (Yuan) empire who helped obtain the garment for the princess, possibly in response to a request from the Goryeo royal family.

The ruling class—most notably the king of Goryeo himself—is known to have visited Mongolia and to have partaken in the Mongolian culture. The heir to the throne of Goryeo, along with the sons of various high-ranking Goryeo officials, was required to live in the Yuan capital of Dadu 大都 (present-day Beijing) for a certain period of time as a formal hostage. These hostages served as household guards to the Mongol imperial family. Moreover, the king of Goryeo also periodically visited or stayed within the Mongol (Yuan) empire to attend formal audiences with the emperor. Unlike the previous Goryeo kings, who primarily encountered foreign cultures indirectly through the presence of envoys, the Goryeo kings of this period were able to reap *cultural advantages* of sorts by personally interacting with the Mongolian culture, albeit not necessarily of their own volition. As close associates of the emperor, they were able to engage in cultural activities and enjoy the privileges of the Mongol (Yuan) empire's highest echelons

12 *Goryeosa, gwon* 89, “Geguk daejanggogju” (Princess Jeguk).

13 *Goryeosa jeoryo, gwon* 21, King Chungnyeol, Year 13, (Lunar) Month 3.

and experiences that could be sustained even upon their return to Goryeo. Therefore, starting with the reign of King Chungnyeol, the Mongolian cultural influences such as modified queue hairstyles and Mongolian clothing began to spread throughout the ruling class of Goryeo (Kim 2016).

At this point, the gifts of clothing given by the Mongolian Great Khan to the Goryeo king began to play an important role, yet the apparel bestowed by the Mongolian Great Khan had less in common with traditional Chinese tributary rituals and more to do with Mongolia's indigenous cultural traditions. Upon visiting the Mongol (Yuan) empire's capital Dadu in 1300, King Chungnyeol received a *jisün* from the emperor and was granted the privilege of attending a *jisün* banquet.¹⁴ According to the Goryeo records, *jisün* is described in Chinese as “yanse” 顏色, where all participants dress uniformly in one color. Similarly, *yuanshi* 元史 in Chinese means “dress in one color” 一色服, and *jisün* banquet was the most important and elaborate ceremony wherein every attendee, ranging from the emperor to the musicians, dressed in the same color of clothing.¹⁵ These outfits were embellished with precious jewels, such as pearls and jade, and made of high-quality fabrics including *nasij* (Seol 2016, 139–61). At that time, King Chungnyeol was ranked fourth among the various royal in-laws and was a favorite of the emperor. Receiving a gift of a *jisün* and an invitation to the banquet event was thus an act of political recognition by the Great Khan. By engaging in *jisün* banquets and participating in events such as the *quriltai*, which played a pivotal role in determining the next Great Khan, the Goryeo king could tangibly affirm his standing within the empire. This enabled him to strategically leverage his domestic hegemony.

Occasionally, the gifts sent from the Mongol to the Goryeo dynasty represented the interpersonal closeness of the Yuan and the Goryeo royal families. King Chungseon, the grandson of Qubilai, asked the empress dowager, who remained close to the imperial family, for *boqta* on behalf of his favorite Goryeo-born consorts.¹⁶ This distinctive headdress, known as *boqta*, *boghata*, or *boqtaq*, has various theories regarding its origin, but there is no

14 *Goryeosa jeoryo, gwon* 22, King Chungnyeol, Year 26, (Lunar) Month 6.

15 *Yuanshi, gwon* 78, Monography on Garment and Carriage.

16 *Goryeosa jeoryo, gwon* 23, King Chungnyeol, Year 3, (Lunar) Month 2; *Goryeosa jeoryo, gwon* 23, King Chungnyeol, Year 3, (Lunar) Month 12.

disagreement that it was a women's head ornament worn since ancient times and became widely spread with the expansion of the Mongol empire in the 13th–14th centuries (Kim and Erdenebat 2011). This item was a traditional royal hat worn by Mongolian noblewomen since antiquity, constructed of silk wrapped around long pieces of wood and decorated with gold, pearls, and jewels (Shea 2020, 72–90). The *boqta* (Figure 1) was worn not only by Qubilai's queen, Empress Chabi 察必/昭睿順聖皇后 (1216–1281), but also by empresses throughout the history of the Mongol (Yuan) empire, as can be confirmed by the collection of portraits in the National Palace Museum in Taipei, Taiwan.¹⁷

This headwear, which was completely foreign to Goryeo, was requested by King Chungseon on behalf of his favored concubine, Royal Consort Suk 淑妃 金氏. In formal Mongolian society, the *boqta* continues to hold profound symbolic significance as an obligatory headdress for women, especially in ceremonial and prestigious settings. Embellished with plumes at its apex, it carries ancient shamanistic connotations of venerating the heavens. Yet, it also serves as a marker of social stature and dignity and is sometimes adorned with precious jewels like pearls. Beyond its aesthetic role, the practical considerations of its height and weight constrained movement, rendering it a garment worn primarily by a select elite rather than the general populace. As a result, this artifact constituted a significant symbol of authority among Mongolian women, an authority enacted solely through its ownership or donning.

After a long period of living in Mongolia, King Chungseon would have been well aware of the significance of the *boqta* among Mongolian society, especially among women. Therefore, he specifically requested this headgear to the empress dowager. Before ascending to the Goryeo throne, King Chungseon built close relationships with the brothers Ayurbarwada 愛育黎拔力八達 (later Emperor Renzong 仁宗) and Qaišan 海山 (later Emperor Wuzong 武宗) during the time he was stationed in Mongolia,

17 The *jokduri* 簇頭里, a type of the women's ceremonial hat popular during the later Joseon era, was once considered to have originated from the *boqta*, which was imported from the Mongol (Yuan) empire in 14th century (You 1998, 156–63). However, this opinion has been criticized by recent researchers, who have argued that there is no resemblance between the *jokduri* and the *boqta*, which has a length of at least 60 cm with a tip that resembles a duck's beak (Kim 2004, 236–37).



Figure 1. *Portrait of Yuan Shizu's Empress*, Yuan dynasty, ink and color on silk, 61.5 x 48 cm, National Palace Museum, Taipei
source: <https://digitalarchive.npm.gov.tw/Painting/Content?pid=15495&Dept=P#>

as well as with their mother, Empress Dowager Dagi 答己/昭獻元聖皇后 (1266–1322) (Y. J. Choi 2015). The relationship between King Chungseon and Empress Dowager Dagi was established long before King Chungseon's reinstatement to the throne of Goryeo. As evidenced by the dispatch of envoys to arrange celebratory events upon his accession, their amicable ties were significant enough for King Chungseon to request Empress Dowager Dagi's participation in such events. Subsequently, even after King Chungseon's coronation, he continued to demonstrate his regard for Empress Dowager Dagi by sending her gifts on various occasions, including dried seafood and Buddhist paintings. Their close relationship became further apparent during the reign of Emperor Yingzong 英宗 (r. 1320–1323) when King Chungseon faced political challenges from the Yuan dynasty itself. Empress Dowager Dagi's act of sending incense offerings to the Jiangnan area to protect King Chungseon suggests a shared political alignment within the Yuan court. Considering the intricate network of Mongolian relationships, which were characterized by matrimonial alliances and kinship ties, as well as military and political coalitions, the rapport between King Chungseon, the grandson of Qubilai Khan, and Empress Dowager Dagi, who was Qubilai's granddaughter-in-law, would have been perceived as a natural extension of established Mongolian societal dynamics.

In the same year that King Chungseon received a *boqta* as a gift for Royal Consort Suk, Yuan dispatched another envoy to present a *boqta*

to Royal Consort Sun 順妃 許氏 (1271–1335), another consort of King Chungseon. However, it remains unclear whether this second gift was also at the behest of King Chungseon or it was a gesture initiated by Empress Dowager Dagi. During that period, there were evidently Korean women within the Yuan imperial household. Empress Darmaširi 答里麻失里, the wife of Emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1311–1320), was the daughter of the Goryeo bureaucrat Kim Sim 金深 (1262–1338), and Bayanqutu 伯顏忽篤, the daughter of Royal Consort Sun, also married into the Yuan royal family.¹⁸

Another notable item often deployed in similar context is the Mongolian-style hat ornament known as the *daejeonga* 大頂兒. While the specific circumstances surrounding King Chungseon's reception of this gift and its appearance remain unknown, its existence can be inferred from historical account. This inference stems from reports of a subsequent attempt by King Chungseon's grandson, King Chunghye 忠惠王 (r. 1330–1332; 1339–1344), to utilize this *daejeonga* as a political bribe within the Yuan court, an action he was dissuaded from the objections of his officials.¹⁹ During the reign of Emperor Chengzong 成宗 (r. 1294–1307), records indicate that the Yuan dynasty purchased a single large ruby, weighing 1 *liang* 3 *qian*, from Islamic merchants for 140,000 Zhongtong banknotes 中統鈔. This ruby was then inserted into the top of the Great Khan's hat, becoming a cherished heirloom passed down through generations (Seol 2021, 153–54). Scholars have speculated that the *daejeonga* gifted to King Chungseon from the Yuan court would have been similarly adorned with crystals, pearls, or comparable embellishments, resembling the ornament seen on the hat worn by Emperor Renzong in Figure 2. In Goryeo, such artifacts were held in considerable esteem, passing down through successive kings. Given the adoption of Mongolian-style hairstyles by all subsequent Goryeo kings post-King Chungseon, it is reasonable to suppose that they wore Mongolian-style

18 According to records in Goryeosa, the daughter of Royal Consort Sun was betrothed to Emperor Renzong before he ascended to the throne. However, the name Bayanqutu is not confirmed in the list of empresses and consorts of Emperor Renzong in. Nevertheless, the tomb inscription of Royal Consort Sun, which was written by Yi Je-hyeon 李齊賢 (1288–1367), who had regular interactions with both the Mongol (Yuan) empire and Goryeo, states that her daughter married into the Mongol (Yuan) empire: “Wangsunbiheossi myojimyeong” (The Epitaph for Royal Consort Sun 王順妃許氏墓誌銘) (*Ikjenango, gwon* 7). This strongly suggests a marital relationship with the Yuan imperial family, even if her name is not found in Emperor Renzong's consort list.

19 *Goryeosa, gwon* 36, King Chunghye (restoration), Year 1, (Lunar) Month 5, Day 18.



Figure 2. *Portrait of Yuan Renzong*, Yuan dynasty, ink and color on silk, 59.2 x 47 cm, National Palace Museum, Taipei
source: <https://digitalarchive.npm.gov.tw/Painting/Content?pid=15492&Dept=P#>

hats adorned with precious gems to enhance their appearance.

At this point, it is worth noting that there was no longer any hostile attitude toward the Mongolian culture among the Koreans when it came to the reception of gifts sent from the Yuan court. On both occasions that a *boqta* was presented to King Chungseon's consorts, the receiving consorts wore the *boqta* and hosted banquets, inviting various Goryeo officials to celebrate the occasion. In response, the invited officials offered gifts and congratulated them. The same attitude was applied to the receipt of *daejeonga*. As Korean rulers, including King Chungseon, had grown accustomed to Mongolian hairstyles, they also came to highly value and strive to continue the tradition of wearing *daejeonga*. Hence, it is evident that the ruling class, including King Chungseon's grandson, King Chunghye, recognized the significance of these gifts from the imperial family and often sought to utilize them politically in order to regain or maintain their throne. This demonstrates a clear understanding of the value of gifts received from the Mongol emperors and their strategic political utilization. This attitude toward the ceremonial items received from the Yuan court stands in stark contrast to the earliest stages of interaction, when some members of the Korean royal family lamented the adoption of Mongolian hairstyles by Goryeo citizens or criticized those who wore Mongolian attire, thereby rejecting the Mongolian cultural elements.

Ceremonial Clothing Gifted amid the Public and Private Relationships

The apparel given as gifts to the Goryeo royal family from the Yuan imperial family, particularly by the Great Khan, throughout the 13th and 14th centuries, is clear evidence of the nature of the relationship between the two nations. The previous tradition of gifting clothes was part of the established tributary rites, upholding formalized diplomatic relationships between the king of Goryeo and the emperor. The bestowal of clothing from the Yuan imperial family to the Goryeo royal family, especially by the Great Khan, held a more nuanced significance, representing a form of external amity and association. The presentation of clothing or belts by the Great Khan often served as a symbolic gesture denoting submission or friendly relations. This practice extended beyond the Mongols' dominion, reaching the leaders subdued by the Great Khan, including the Uyighurs, and even extending to the Western emissaries such as William of Rubruck and John of Plano Carpini. The gifts, adorned with jewels like gold and accompanied by fabrics like silk, velvet, and *nasij*, were part of a broader tradition akin to an investiture ceremony. Rather than being distinctly Mongolian, this tradition appeared to be a continuation of practices prevalent in the Central Plains of China and the Steppe region since earlier historical periods (Shea 2020, 27–30).

On the other hand, the ceremonial attire exchanged between Goryeo and Mongolia exhibited different characteristics from the traditional patterns. Previously, and even afterward during the Ming dynasty, the ceremonial attire presented to Korean kings as diplomatic gifts consisted of formalized uniforms such as *ceremonial mortarboard crown with nine strings of nine beads* 九旒冠 and *ceremonial robe with nine embroidered symbols* 九章服. Surprisingly, Mongolia did not adhere to this practice and did not offer such items. Instead, as we have seen, new items like the *jisün* emerged, which could be considered as symbolic of a kind of “official attire” reflecting the Mongolian-style governance structure. Above all, the ceremonial clothing presented by the Mongol emperor to the Goryeo dynasty during this period differed from the past in that they consisted of a variety of items, rather than specific pieces, and their nature extended beyond confirming *political hierarchy*.

A wide range of items, including vests, fabrics, and various accessories, were gifted throughout the two nations' shared history, based on the immediate needs of both countries at the time. The gifts of clothing presented from the Mongolian Great Khan were both symbols of political authority and signs of friendship, and the king of Goryeo was receptive to wearing and displaying those gifts as a means of reinforcing political ties with Mongolia. The act of the Yuan emperor presenting ceremonial clothing to the Goryeo king as a diplomatic gift can be attributed not to the traditional practice of giving *Chinese-style* official attire but rather to what may be termed a *Mongolian-style* ritual. The Mongols exchanged clothing items like robes and belts when forming "anda" or "brotherly relationships," and their exchange signified the establishment of trust and the strengthening of bonds between individuals (Allsen 1997, 47–49). Therefore, for the Yuan emperor, giving the kings of Goryeo the same types of ceremonial clothing as Chinese emperors of the past had done would not have had much, if any, significance.

Gifts from Mongolia embodied various political strategies and needs, reflecting the complex nature of these exchanges during the Mongol empire's ascendancy. Given the empire's extensive demands for resources from the outside world and its receipt of significant tributes and gifts, the distinction between diplomatic gift exchanges and tributary offerings was often blurred. Even for the *quriltai*, a form of gift akin to a participation fee had to be prepared to ensure attendance, with the Great Khan being the primary beneficiary of the political, economic, and ritual advantages derived from the diplomatic gifts presented by foreign envoys there. The Mongolian term "sauya," which is frequently mentioned in *The Secret History of the Mongols*, and known in Chinese as *saohua* 掃花 or *chehua* 撒花, generally denotes a gift, but it can also imply bribery, salutation, or even plundered money and goods, among various other meanings. Hence, diplomatic gifts conveyed by the term "sauya" in Mongolia did not necessarily guarantee full peace and mutual benefit with the recipient (Seol 2021). Therefore, the ceremonial attire gifts bestowed by the Mongol emperors to the Korean kings also possessed a highly complex nature.

In particular, the diversity of apparel gift items reflected not an explicit indication of the Goryeo kings' status under the emperor's authority, but rather a dynamic relationship between the two entities that bordered on public and private—in short, the dynamics between a pair of foreign

monarchs who had also become family. If establishing political hierarchy were the primary concern, then indeed, ceremonial clothing as given in the past would have been the most meaningful gift by which to do so. However, the Mongol emperor's clothing gifts to Goryeo included various items such as vests, assorted accessories, textiles, and more, each of which was given according to the immediate needs of both countries. Furthermore, the emperor was not the only member of the royal family to give such gifts. As an example, the previously discussed *boqta* stands out. In the Mongolian tradition, the bestowal of a *boqta* by a sovereign signified a relative status of superiority among the royal female cohort—akin to the position of a first lady among the consorts—or was categorically classified as part of an investiture ceremony, as evidenced by the cases of the Ergene Khatun of Hulegu Khan and Todai Khatun of Arghun Khan (Broadbridge 2018). Similarly, although King Chungseon's Goryeo-born consorts, Royal Consort Suk and Royal Consort Su, held a lower rank than the Mongol-born queen, the Mogol (Yuan) imperial family may have elevated their honor by bestowing *boqta* upon them (Choi 2024, 192–95). However, when the Yuan court presented *boqta* to King Chungseon's consorts, the significance might not have been equivalent. Instead, it could be construed as a response from the Yuan court to King Chungseon's entreaty or as an expression of benevolence.

On the other hand, a notable feature of these exchanges is that the givers of ceremonial attire gifts to Goryeo were not limited to the emperor alone. At times, the dowager empress, the empress, the emperor's sons, cousins, and other relations presented various gifts to Goryeo royals and officials. Due to the constraints imposed by the available sources, it is not possible to find abundant materials on this subject, but we do know that the Yuan emperor and empress, along with officials from the Central Secretariat 中書省, gifted King Chungnyeol with a variety of brocade fabrics and garments, along with a present of wine. Additionally, not just King Chungnyeol but various courtiers visiting the Yuan court received brocade outerwear with bows and swords. Likewise, when King Chungseon was appointed as the Shenyang King 瀋陽王, he received treasures such as belts made of jade and cloisonné, along with garments made of brocade fabric, from the emperor, empress, and crown prince. These practices demonstrate that the relationship between the two countries was intertwined not only at the state-level of political

diplomacy but also at a deeper, more personal level.

The whole Goryeo society, from the ruling class to the merchants and slaves, was able to encounter and absorb the Mongolian culture, and the spread of Mongolian clothing in Goryeo society in the 13th and 14th centuries played such an important role in fostering ties between the two countries that even the Mongol (Yuan) empire expressed its surprise at the reception. Immediately after the end of the war with the Mongol (Yuan) empire, Goryeo rulers requested that their native culture and customs remain intact, and the Great Khan assented. Yet just twenty years later, Qubilai, the ruler who made that promise, was surprised to see all the Goryeo kings and vassals who came to visit him were wearing the Mongolian clothes and hairstyles. The attendant king at that time, King Chungnyeol, demonstrated the diplomatic effectiveness of willingly adopting the Mongol customs and culture by ultimately achieving his ends in the matter of several sensitive diplomatic issues, including a border dispute and political hostages, and on the basis of that success he was able to strengthen the sense of fellowship between his nation and the Mongol (Yuan) empire (Kim 2016). Conversely, the Great Khan was able to promote political inclusion and camaraderie by gifting clothes to King Chungnyeol. The king's willingness to accept this new form of culture solidified his political connections and affirmed his internal and external political position.

Conclusion

The Great Khan's gifts of apparel to the Goryeo kings had superficial commonalities to such similar gifts from the other Chinese emperors of the past, but the particularities of the items given reveal a fundamental difference. Throughout history, the kings of the Korean peninsula frequently received gifts of formal attire from the emperors of China, and the Goryeo dynasty was no exception. Clothing was used as a means of establishing the formal order in premodern Confucian societies due to the fact that such gifts functioned as symbols to acknowledge the sovereignty of a contemporary while confirming one's own relative superiority.

However, the gifts of apparel that passed from the Mongol (Yuan) empire to Goryeo were presented in a different context than those of the

previous dynasties. While most of the previous gifts consisted of official uniforms, clothing gifted by the Khan did not consist of such rank-determined outfits; instead, garments were presented as individual items appropriate to specific occasions. As such, the gifts of the Mongol (Yuan) empire were not simply meant to designate the Goryeo king's position within Yuan offices and ranks but rather to foster friendship. Moreover, the gifts of apparel from the Khan to the Goryeo king reflected many endemically Mongolian cultural elements. As such, their reception was far from that of a contemptuous resistance to an alien or barbarian culture.

In exploring how the traditional diplomatic formality of gifting clothing broke with the convention during the Mongol (Yuan) empire, this article argues that gifts of Mongolian attire presented by the Great Khan to the Goryeo kings of the 13th–14th centuries reflected the particularities of the relationship between the two nations during that time and that the clothes gifted by the Yuan emperors were, in fact, intended to affirm an amicable relationship with the Goryeo kingdom. Though wholly novel to the people of Goryeo, having witnessed the singular power of the Mongol (Yuan) empire's physical and cultural might in building a global empire, these items would have been received as examples not of “the savage Tatars” of the past but rather of “the culture of civilized state.”

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for ‘Bestowed Attires’ in the Latter Half Period of Goryeo, and the Formation of a Ritual Institution-based Order” (in Korean).

Abstract

Gift-giving was one of the most traditional and customary practices in the diplomatic relations of premodern Northeast Asia, and one of the gifts invariably included during such exchanges was ceremonial clothing. Ceremonial clothing was used as a means of embodying the Confucian concept of “decorum” and therefore an important instrument of political diplomacy. The act of exchanging ceremonial clothing was often a symbolic method of affirming political and diplomatic hierarchies and signaling mutual acknowledgement and recognition. Throughout history, the kings of Goryeo received ceremonial clothing from the emperors of the Song, Liao, and Jin dynasties, with particular significance given to the special official uniform worn under the emperor’s reign. However, after the Mongols established their world empire, the kings of Korea no longer received the sort of ceremonial clothing they did from the former emperors. Mongolia had an entirely different set of customs and culture pertaining to clothing, which was sometimes viewed as barbaric by the people of Goryeo. Although not conventionally ceremonial uniforms, various Mongolian-style clothing items such as hats, clothing accessories, and fabrics were gifted from Mongolia to Goryeo during this time. This diversity in clothing gifts underscores that the relationship between the two nations was mediated not merely by political but also by interpersonal relations based on amity and kinship. Furthermore, the acceptance and active use of Mongolian-style ceremonial clothing gifts by the Koreans reflect the fact that the people of Goryeo recognized the culture of the Mongolian empire as the prevalent culture of their era.

Keywords: Goryeo-Yuan Relations, the Great Khan of Mongol Empire, the Goryeo king, Mongolian clothing, acknowledgment