

THE RENAISSANCE REVISITED: FROM A SILK ROAD PERSPECTIVE

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The Renaissance is generally said to be the rebirth of the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome, and was centered around Italy from the 14th to the 16th century. This includes the temporal peculiarity of the Renaissance as a sudden phenomenon after the Medieval Ages, and the spatial peculiarity of what happened only in Europe. However, if we remove the European-centered bias here, the horizon for interpreting the Renaissance becomes much wider. There have been claims that similar cultural phenomena resembling the Renaissance existed in other civilizations at the same time. This paper seeks to investigate two possibilities. The first is the possibility of a spatial expansion of the Renaissance. This suggests that the Renaissance was created by long-term exchanges with the Eastern, Middle and Western Hemispheres.¹ The second is the possibility of a simultaneity of the Renaissance

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¹ This is a term suggested by President Synn Ilhi of Keimyung University in the keynote speech of the Arts and Humanities Conference of the Silk Road in 2015. This term can be used to link the entire Middle East and Central Asian region, including the Near East and West Asia. Including Southeast Asia, the civilization sphere centered on Korea and China can be bound to the Eastern Hemisphere. It

in the 14th and 16th centuries. This suggests that it was a global phenomenon that occurred in different civilizations. The Renaissance, therefore, was a crystallization of a complex of civilizations created by the crossing of various cultures along the Silk Road, and should be referred to as the ‘Global Renaissance’ instead of the ‘Western Renaissance.’

Key words: Global Renaissance, Silk Road, Hemisphere, Ming, Joseon

INTRODUCTION

The Renaissance is said to be the rebirth of the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations with Italy as the center. It is doubtful, however, whether the same conclusion can be reached if one moves beyond the prejudice inherent in a Eurocentric historical interpretation of the Renaissance. From Andalusia to the Italian Peninsula, from Western Asia to Central Asia, and from China to the Korean Peninsula, the Silk Road is not a homogenous civilization. Rather, it is a complex of civilizations created by the intersection of various cultures. The development of history is only possible when there is an object to communicate with. This historical interpretation of mutual relations or exchanges is a critical alternative to segmental Eurocentrism. The Renaissance that took place from the 14th to the 16th centuries cannot be explained by the natural creativity of the Italians alone. It was a hybrid cultural phenomenon that was achieved through exchange and contact between a variety of civilizations throughout ancient and medieval times. The most prominent of these civilizations were located along the historical Silk Road.

The path to the Renaissance began with the rise of the Mongol Empire at the core of Eurasia. At the end of the 13th century, the Yam system, which was a communication network that allowed information to travel from 200 to 300 miles per day, was largely activated with the expansion of the Mongol Empire (Kim 2016). It became

transforms the composition of the existing dichotomous phase into a triangular form, thereby achieving equilibrium and stability. By linking these three huge hemispheres with the Silk Road, the civilization of mankind is not created separately, but is the result of exchange and coexistence. However, it is a human geographical term that includes not only spatial language but also temporal meaning. For example, Andalusia in the Iberian Peninsula belongs to Europe, but according to the medieval civilization framework, it is not the Western Hemisphere, but the Middle Hemisphere. Therefore, if necessary, existing terms such as Europe and Central Asia will be left as they are.

the driving force of the development of unprecedented long-distance trade and connected with the sea route linking the Black and the Mediterranean seas. Long-distance travelers who journeyed from east to west and in the opposite direction began to appear. Delegations of local monarchs and royal families from all over the Mongol Empire flocked to Khanbaliq or Dadu, the capital of the Yuan dynasty.

Through the participation of Byzantine and Italian merchants who had a friendly relationship with the Hulegu Ulus, the commercial network around the Mongol Empire expanded to the Mediterranean and North Africa. Religious people traveled there frequently. Through this process, the Eastern Hemisphere became known in the West, and the Western Hemisphere became known in the East. Marco Polo's *The Travels of Marco Polo* (1298) was the first book about the East written by a person from the West.

The road vitalized by the Yam system provided an opportunity for mutual benefit that was consistently maintained between East and West. Kublai Khan accepted Christian missionaries in Beijing, allowing his people to learn the spiritual world of the West. Likewise, his people were able to transmit advanced science and technology such as printing, the compass, and firearms to the West. These three inventions were instrumental in bringing about the end of the Middle Ages in the West and provided the spark for the Renaissance. Printing made it easier to spread knowledge to the common people and broke the monopoly of knowledge that the priests had enjoyed for centuries. The compass enabled systematic ocean voyages and transformed the navigational system, which had previously relied on quadrants and chronometers. It resulted in the Age of Exploration, which began in the 15th century. Firearms raised the war system, which started with spears and bows, from a manual to a mechanical dimension.

It was with this momentum of exchange that the Renaissance was made possible. In the end, the fact that the Italian Renaissance came into being in the 14th century can be attributed to the largescale economic exchange and development facilitated by the Mongol Empire. After the Mongol Empire, the Eastern and Middle Hemispheres that had been hidden until then were exposed by the appearance of the Timurid, Ming, and Joseon dynasties. It is necessary to look at how their civilizations were formed, and how they maintained a relationship of exchange with the West through the Silk Road. This will show how local values evolved into global values through mutual relationships. Through examining cultural developments in the Eastern and Middle Hemispheres and how these developments spread into the West, this paper will portray these regions as active partners in global cultural development and the interconnectedness of the premodern world.

THE TIMURID EMPIRE OF THE MIDDLE HEMISPHERE

The Timurids were the last great dynasty to emerge from the Central Asian steppe. The name Timur is not familiar to us compared to the name Genghis Khan. Born in 1336, Timur succeeded in unifying the nomadic tribes of Central Asia in 1369, and he devoted nearly 40 years to conquering the land of Eurasia until his death in 1405. Timur's conquests originated from an ambition to recreate the glory of Genghis Khan. In 1398, Timur had already planned an expedition in the direction of India despite being almost 60. At that time, the Islamic Sultan dynasty ruled India as the influx of Turkic Muslims increased. After crossing the Indus River, Timur captured Delhi. Timur's next opponent was the Ottoman Empire. Sultan Bayezid I of the Ottoman Empire ruled the Balkans and was on the verge of the conquest of Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. Timur defeated the Ottoman Empire and captured Bayezid I in 1402,² thus emerging from the western Anatolian peninsula as a newly rising Islamic power.

Timur returned to Samarkand in 1404, but he did not stay for long. His life-long goal was to rekindle the glory of the old Yuan dynasty built by the Mongols by conquering the Ming dynasty in the east. The Yuan dynasty had been pushed to the northern grasslands by the Ming dynasty at that time. However, during the expedition, he suddenly got sick and died at Otrar in what is now Kazakhstan in 1405. His conquest of the world was not handed down to his descendants but was completed in his own time. His descendants just sat back and benefited from the circumstances established by Timur.

Cultural trends initiated under the Mongols reached their highest development only in the fragmented post-Mongol period. The Timurids and their contemporaries followed the same pattern of kingship as the Mongols, combining military activity with artistic patronage to such great effect that the fifteenth century came to be known as the era of the Timurid renaissance, a match in glory (if not in transformative power) for the Italian Quattrocento. In the 14th and 15th century, the Middle Hemisphere had its best days in many respects. By bringing craftsmen from different conquered lands to the capital Samarkand, Timur initiated one of the most brilliant

² With this story as a motif, Christopher Marlowe wrote the play *Tamburlaine the Great* in 1587; F. Handel composed the opera *Tamerlano* (*Tamerlane*, HWV 18) in 1724; Antonio Vivaldi composed the opera *Bajazet* in 1735.

periods in Islamic art. The art and architecture of the Timurids provided inspiration to lands stretching from Anatolia to India. Though Timur's vast empire was relatively short-lived, his descendants continued to rule over Transoxiana as leading patrons of Islamic art. Their spectacular cultural activities were centered around Samarkand (Uzbekistan) and Herat (Afghanistan). Through Timurid patronage, they became prominent cultural centers of the Middle Hemisphere.

Samarkand had been practically destroyed by Genghis Khan in 1220, and Timur devoted himself especially to the reconstruction of the ruins which are called today Afrasiab Hill. The Timurids were also prodigious builders – religious institutions and foundations such as mosques, madrasas, khanqahs (convents), and Sufi shrines were the main beneficiaries of their building programs (Golombek and Wilber, 1988). Trademarks of the Timurid style were monumental scale, multiple minarets, polychromic tilework, and large bulbous double domes. However, the most important achievement was the large-scale construction conducted in Samarkand and Shahrisabz (historically known as Kesh or Kish). Along with their immediate successors, Timurid cultural traditions were also partly carried on by the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires.

Not only architecture but also other cultural activities were actively carried out. In particular, the field of manuscript production was highly reputed because there was no printing in the Middle Hemisphere at the time. Many calligraphers, miniaturists, and bookbinding craftsman gathered in one place to engage in the creation of copies, and set up the Herat Copy Workshop. The paintings produced around Herat, Samarkand, Shiraz and Tabriz were all miniatures. Notably, Kamaledin Behzad (ca. 1450-1535), who was known as the best painter in the Muslim world, left behind sophisticated works. It is said that Behzad continued to play the role of the director of the royal court of the Safavid era after the Timurid era collapsed. Persian miniature painting originated from traditional Islamic manuscript illustration blended with Chinese painting styles imported during Mongol times, and emerged from the Mongols' manuscript workshops in the form of illustrations to Firdausi's *Shah-name*. The more typical style of miniature painting, however, developed in the context of the revival of the twelfth-century love stories and the new outpouring of romantic poetry under the Timurids (Grabar and Blair 1980).

Unlike Italian Renaissance art, which used the human body as a metaphor and vehicle for everything it wanted to say about the universe, miniature painting focused on the depiction of human emotion as its primary metaphor and vehicle. The colors and gestures, the relationships and situations portrayed, the architecture and natural

life in the background, all constituted pointers to emotional truths about the human condition. While Timurid artists were aware of perspective and capable of acute observation, they rejected perspective realism in favor of a more abstract style that distanced the viewer from physical reality to focus on its emotional and spiritual aspects (Hillenbrand 1992).

Although this period has not been famed for its scientific accomplishments, the study of previously ignored scientific manuscripts is causing a reappraisal of that conclusion. Timurid scholars made decisive advances in mathematics. Samarkand had a working observatory where one of the Timurid princes, Ulugh Beg, added to the stock of astronomical observatory, and astronomical observations were carried out day and night using the latest instruments. Based on these observations, an accurate astronomical chart called the Ulugh Beg Astronomical Chart was created. This chart had numerical values for the positions of the stars, and was not only widely used in the Muslim world but also translated into Latin and used in Europe.

While literature was based mainly on Iranian tradition in the Timurid Empire, Alisher Navoi (1441-1501) left behind excellent works in Turkish such as *Khamsa* (Erkinov 1998). After that, Turkish was recognized and widely used in the Muslim world as one of the three literary languages, the others being Arabic and Persian. Navoi set up a salon where poets, artists and scholars gathered at his home and even carried out literary criticism. It was a great honor for writers of the time to participate in it because of its high reputation. The tradition of salon culture in the West in the 18th century began in the Middle Hemisphere in the 15th century. Babur, who lived at the same time as Navoi, claimed that there were no more generous sponsors supporting artists and scholars than Navoi. Moreover, he was a promoter and patron of scholarship and arts and letters (Hoberman 1985).

In 1492, after the fall of the Timurid Empire, Muhammad Bābur (1483-1530), a direct descendant of Timur, emerged as the new ruler in the Fergana of Transoxania, but he was also driven out by the Uzbeks and retreated into present day Afghanistan. He occupied Kabul in 1503 and Delhi in 1526 after invading northern India. Finally, he unified northern India, and became the first emperor of the Mughal Empire to rule over India. Indeed, at this time in Herat, many architects, artists, writers and musicians were competing for perfection in architecture, miniature painting, calligraphy, literature and music, creating brilliant masterpieces of Islamic culture.

Consequently, it is inappropriate to dismiss the flowering of culture under the Timurids as not a Renaissance. The Timurids, though far from Europe, were not isolated, and their cultural developments had consequences far from their place of ori-

gin. A circulation of artists, manuscripts, and ideas took place among political centers both inside and outside the Islamic world. Timurid contacts with fifteenth-century Italy stimulated the creation of a literature of history and description introducing Europeans to the ideas and governing systems of the Middle and Eastern Hemispheres. Commercial exchanges took place as well, as a result of alliances between Timurids and Italians (Brummett 1994).

JOSEON AND MING DYNASTIES IN THE EASTERN HEMISPHERE

Inappropriately, the Renaissance of Joseon is generally considered the era of King Yeongjo (r. 1724~1776) and King Jeongjo (r. 1776~1800) during the Joseon dynasty.³ This is a period at least one or two hundred years after what would have been termed the Renaissance age. The value Jeongjo placed on art and culture was reflected in Joseon society, which saw a cultural golden age during his reign. In the arts, the Real Landscape Painting movement, which attempted to get away from an imitation of Chinese landscaping and to paint the true nature and landscape of Korea, appeared. After the fall of Ming (1644), “Koreans became increasingly conscious about their own cultural identity, and came to investigate ... their own historical and cultural heritage.” (Yi 2015). This coincided with the beginning of the development of the School of Practical Learning in Qing China which Korean scholars avidly absorbed and assimilated into their own cultural environment. In music and literature, as a result of the emergence of a middle and merchant class, many works satirizing noblemen were written (Lee 2009).

However, from the standpoint of world history, it is still uncomfortable to compare this period of cultural prosperity in Joseon with the Western Renaissance as there is a time interval of at least two hundred years between the two. Moreover, it refutes the claim that the Eastern Hemisphere, including Korea, was merely a beneficiary of the Renaissance of the Western Hemisphere, and was an underdeveloped civilization that just followed the advanced civilization of the Western Hemisphere. From this point of view, the era of 17th or 18th century Joseon is more related to the modern-

³ There are many book titles combining the keywords Joseon and renaissance, such as *The Renaissance in Joseon: Jungin* (Heo 2008); *The Renaissance in Joseon: Yeongjojeongjo Era*. (Narakyojae Team 2012); *The Renaissance in Joseon: The History of Joseon Revealed by Art* (Ha 2013). They consistently define the 17th and 18th centuries as the renaissance of Joseon.

ization era, and the original conception of the Renaissance had nothing to do with modernization. As Darling (2007, 55) states, the Renaissance's "function as an agent of modernization was a later construct derived from the Enlightenment sense of the growth of knowledge as the motor of history."

The Renaissance in the West began in the 14th century. In the East, the 14th century corresponded to the late Goryeo and early Joseon dynasties in Korea, and the early and middle Ming dynasty in China. The Ming dynasty was founded in 1368, soon after Goryeo collapsed, and the Joseon dynasty was founded in 1392. Both Korea and China pursued cultural movements focused on national centralism.

The Joseon Dynasty was founded by Yi Sŏnggye, who then took the name King Taejo (r. 1392-1398). Taejo named the new kingdom after Gojoseon, the legendary first state established on the Korean Peninsula. Gojoseon, originally named Joseon, was an ancient Korean kingdom. The addition of Go, meaning "ancient," distinguishes it from the later Joseon kingdom (1392-1897). Taejo laid the foundations of the Joseon Renaissance that would prosper under his grandson Sejong.

In 1395 in Joseon, *Cheonsang Yeolcha Bunya Jido*, a celestial planisphere carved on an obsidian stone slab, was created as a model astronomical chart with drawings of the constellations. This was a new concept of the universe by Joseon, and provided the legitimacy for the change of dynasty and for represent Joseon itself (Namgung 2017). Seven years later, in the second year of King Taejong (1402), the *Honil Gangni Yeokdae Gukdo Jido*, a map of integrated lands and regions of historical countries and capitals, was made, often abbreviated as *Gangnido* (Robinson 2007). It is believed that the first map to depict the existence of the Western Hemisphere and the African continent was the *Great Universal Geographic Map*, produced by Matteo Ricci in 1602. However, *Gangnido* was produced more than 200 years earlier in 1402. This map shows Africa and the Western Hemisphere, while China is located at the center, and the Korean peninsula is disproportionately large to the east. It is noteworthy that the map contains the new world view of Joseon and was produced before the 16th century, which is referred to as the geographical Age of Discovery.

The map shows us that the Joseon dynasty was actively involved in the flow of the global Renaissance. The evidence that this map was the product of exchanges between the Eastern, Middle, and Western Hemispheres also appears in place names written in Chinese characters. They came from a variety of languages, including Persian and Mongolian, as well as Greek, Latin, and Catalan. The geographical knowledge of shorelines and place names in Arabia, Europe, and Africa could have been obtained in 1267 through the earth globe which Jamal al-Din brought to Beijing (Oh

2016).

King Sejong (1397-1450) of the Joseon dynasty can be compared with Ulugh Beg (1394-1449) of the Timurid Empire of Central Asia. In 1420, King Sejong established *Jiphyeonjeon* and made it an academic research institution. It helped create Hangeul, the native script of Korea, and contributed significantly to the development of culture by producing various books. In the same year, Ulugh Beg founded the Madrasa and encouraged his people's learning. At that time, more than 100 students were studying and living there. Madrasa was the best educational institution of the time in Central Asia. Sejong was a very eminent scholar, just like Ulugh Beg, who lectured on mathematics and philosophy. Just as Ulugh Beg built the great Observatory in Samarkand between 1424 and 1429, Sejong renamed *Seowungwan* (Astronomical and Meteorological Observatory) *Gwansanggam* (Office of Astronomy and Natural Phenomena) in 1425 and had the scholars work on astronomy, geography, the calendar, meteorological observation, and clepsydra. He also invented many scientific instruments and left various writings (Ledyard 1990). Thus, the representative figures of the Eastern and Middle Hemispheres of the 14th and 16th century, which correspond to the Western Renaissance period, were Sejong and Ulugh Beg. They contributed to the construction of a global renaissance in different spaces as contemporary figures, having similar dates of birth and death. Just as in the Middle and Western Hemispheres, it is not surprising that science and technology in this era was exchanged and influenced each other in the Middle and Eastern Hemispheres. The development of science and technology in this age was therefore a global event.

China was in the time of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Hongwu, the founding emperor of the Ming dynasty, drove the Yuan Empire of Genghis Khan to the Mongolian plateau and reestablished the legitimacy of Chinese civilization. His successor Emperor Yongle (r. 1402-1424) was able to rule the nation under more stable conditions. He appointed Zheng He (1371-1435) as an admiral and dispatched a large expedition fleet to the Indian Ocean. The navigations of Zheng He occurred over a period of 28 years, lasting from 1405 until the seventh navigation of 1433. Zheng He passed India and reached the Middle East, visiting 37 nations. It was about 80-90 years earlier than 1498, when Vasco da Gama (1469-1524) arrived in the Indian Ocean. The gigantic treasure ships of the Ming reached Southeast Asia, Hormuz in Persia, Aden in Arabia, Mogadishu in Somalia and Mombasa in Kenya. It is surprising how China had enough human resources, materials and technologies to build so many ships and mobilized 30,000 crews every year to navigate the seas (Wei 2014).

Zheng He had Muslim ancestors, and Muslims were the leaders of maritime

trade between East and West along the Silk Road. Therefore, we can predict that Zheng He already had extensive knowledge of ships and navigation. Furthermore, he probably had astronomical knowledge, which was well-developed in the Middle Hemisphere. The expedition of Zheng He opened the southern sea route known as the 'Silk Voyage' or 'Ceramics Road.' Looking back at the trails of Zheng He, we can realize that China or the East was not simply a bystander in the building process of the Renaissance. It is not a farfetched interpretation that the East contributed as much as the West, but a confirmation of the fact that the progress of Western and Eastern civilizations was made through exchange and relationships, not as two different entities (Hing 2010).

In order to make a global Renaissance more convincing, it is necessary to analyze the universalities of the global context beyond simple comparison. The Renaissance in terms of the West was a period that gave birth to new human-oriented cultures. Similarly in the Joseon dynasty, the classical epoch was a period during which the existence of Gojoseon, the first state of Korea established in 2333 B.C., was recognized. This image overlapped with that of the ancient Chinese utopia of the emperors Yao and Shun and the Zhou dynasty. The name Joseon signaled the revival of Gojoseon. Moreover, Joseon tried to find its ruling model in the Zhou dynasty, which directly showed the political ideology of the new gentry that demolished Goryeo and led to the foundation of the Joseon dynasty. They prepared the framework for the realization of an ideal Confucian society, just like the West with the revitalization of the ancient Greek and Roman classics. In this way, the foundation of the Joseon dynasty can be said to be the re-establishment of the tradition of Gojoseon. It was a reform movement intended to reproduce the ideals of the Zhou dynasty in Joseon. It is surprising that the landscape of the beginning period of Joseon is so similar to that of the Western Renaissance.

CONCLUSION

The Middle Hemisphere had contact with both the East and West. Whereas the West encountered the Middle Hemisphere through the Crusades, the Eastern Hemisphere came in contact with it through Mongolia. At that time, the Middle Hemisphere, represented by the Mongols and Ottoman Turks, divided the world into east and west. The two gigantic empires exchanged their cultures and had a great influence on surrounding areas. Just as the legacy of Islam enlightened the Western Renaissance,

the academic achievements of the Yuan dynasty became the driving force in the creation of the new culture of the Ming and Joseon dynasties. The Eastern, Middle, and Western Hemispheres created a Renaissance of their own based on the legacies of the great empires.

An interesting fact is that the West inherited a scientific legacy from Islam which they regarded as heresy, while ideologically trying to return to the classics of ancient Greece and Rome. Ming and Joseon in the East also advocated recovery of Chinese culture in their own way, but they also inherited a significant part of the legacy from Mongolia, which they despised as barbarian. The history of exchange is not about self-expansion through inbreeding. In reality, it is a process of finding new values through conflict and competition with other cultures.

Now, we understand that the East ranging from Mongolia to Yuan and Ming to Joseon formed a large unit of civilization based on exchange. The advancement of science and astronomy played a crucial role in creating the Renaissance civilization. Scholars from Iran and Islam, such as Jamal ad-Din (Liu & Jackson 1992), resided in Dadu, the capital of Great Yuan. Similarly, there were many Chinese scholars in Tabriz, the capital of the Hulegu Ulus. Through cooperation with Jamal al-Din, the famed Chinese astronomer, mathematician, and hydrologist Guo Shoujing (1231-1316) devised a new, more accurate calendar. In addition, Abu'd Shukr from Andalusia stayed in China for a long time (1265-67, 1270-73, and 1283-86) and studied the Chinese calendar system. In this way, Persian and Islamic civilizations started to flow into Yuan through Il-Khanate. Likewise, the calendar system, arithmetic system, institutions, medicine and arts of Yuan were spread to the West through Arabs and Muslims, including the people of Il-Khanate.

Exchanges in agriculture and medicine also occurred. Agricultural books compiled by the Hulegu Ulus reflected the broad scope and concreteness of agricultural books from China. In particular, these books devoted significant space to describing the characteristics and breeding of Chinese and Indian crops. New breeds from Iran were tested by a group of Chinese people who lived in Iran. The records show that there were many Chinese doctors among the Hulegu Ulus. Among various aspects of Chinese medicine, pulse reading was especially popular in Iran. In Great Yuan, Muslim pharmaceutical bureaus were created in Dadu and Shangdu in 1292 to manage Islamic medicine. The *Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb (The Canon of Medicine)* of Ibn Sina (980-1037) is thought to have been translated into Chinese in 1273 (Lane 2006).

Frequent human exchanges among the Eastern, Middle, and Western Hemispheres also affected food cultures. There were many Chinese chefs in Iran, and many

Muslim chefs went to China. Of course, they influenced local food cultures. Rice dishes and rice wine were introduced to Iran by the East. The spread of distilled liquor during the time of the Mongol Empire also occurred on a global scale. Recent studies have attempted to demonstrate that the Mongols in this period developed a simple portable distiller by developing the distillation technology of China and supplied the distiller to different places around the world (Park 2016). Soju is a representative example that became very popular on the Korean Peninsula in the late Goryeo dynasty. The method of making soju was probably spread by the Mongols, the conquerors of Goryeo.

The most global cultural phenomenon of the Renaissance is probably the appearance of blue and white porcelain. It was developed in China during the Yuan dynasty in the early 14th century. This development was due to the combination of Chinese high-heat baking techniques creating the conditions for the appearance of metallurgy and Islamic decorations (Finlay 2010). Blue and white porcelain brought forth tremendous changes in the dietary life and sanitation of the Western society. Tea gained popularity in the East and coffee was introduced from the Middle Hemisphere. From the New World, chocolate beverages were introduced. The beverage consumption of women in the royal court and upper class increased rapidly (Glanville & Young 2002). These three types of beverage had to be boiled for drinking. Blue and white porcelain did not get hot easily because of high heat resistance. The glaze did not melt, crack or split from hot beverages.

However, the actual reason people craved expensive Chinese pottery was that it was a cultural material that symbolized 'mystical and exotic China,' 'the Orient' or 'the East,' not because of practical use. It was a romance of the West in the Renaissance period to decorate their houses with and display Chinese pottery. It was an excellent way to satisfy their desire for exotic Eastern cultures. This is closely related to the appearance of 'Chinoiserie,' the preference of so-called upper-class society for Chinese motifs and techniques, and matches the trend of the Renaissance that showed off social status through cultural consumption and possession. By changing the view of history from comparison to exchange, we can verify the value shared by 'human civilization' instead of discussing the merits and demerits of one civilization to another.

With the appearance of the Mongol Empire, the Eurasian continent was united and the history of the different ethnicities within the continent developed in a completely new direction. In other words, the world of Eurasia found a new path after being reorganized in the gigantic blast furnace called the Mongol Empire. In this sense, the rise and fall of the Mongol Empire was a significant turning point in world

history. This transition period perfectly overlapped with the 14th century Renaissance of the West.

The Renaissance was a common cultural phenomenon of humankind that appeared between the 14th and 16th centuries through the Silk Road. The Renaissance was conceived from the revitalization of the classics, but it was indeed a movement of reform instead of a return to the past. The Renaissance united cultures by assimilating the past and multiculturalism before creating modern elements to welcome the new era. The Renaissance was a global phenomenon, and it turned out to be a global achievement. This is the reason why we should refer to the 14th and 15th centuries as the ‘Global Renaissance’ instead of the ‘Western Renaissance.’

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