

Interviewer: This is March 21, U.S. time, March 22, South Korea time, and the following interview is about South Korean food and culture. The interviewer is me, Shiyun Xia, and the interviewee is Ms. Jaeri. First, I would like to ask you to give a little bit of background information about yourself and your basic experience, such as where and when you were born, your family situation, and where you live now, etc.

Interviewee: I was born in 1987, in Busan, South Korea, and currently I am living in Shanghai.

Interviewer: Can you talk a little bit more about you came to China?

Interviewee: I watched a Chinese TV series in middle school and became curious about learning Chinese, so I learned it and came here [to Shanghai].

Interviewer: I think dramas are a great opportunity for cultural exchange. Many South Korean dramas are also very popular in China.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, let's move on to the food part of this interview. Food is a very important source of cultural exchange and that's one of the reasons why I chose it as an important topic for this interview. Can you tell me about some of the Chinese food that you've tried in South Korea, if any?

Interviewee: I see that recently a lot of young people in South Korea like *Maratang* (Sichuan hot pot) because the taste is pungent and spicy. It's a kind of taste that we don't have in South Korean food, so I think young people may like to taste that flavor.

Interviewer: Yes, it's true that *Maratang* (Sichuan hot pot) is becoming a Chinese specialty. Have you tried this food again since you came to China?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Is there any difference between the taste of *Maratang* (Sichuan hot pot) in China and in South Korea?

Interviewee: I still think it tastes better in China because it's more expensive to eat *Maratang* (Sichuan hot pot) in South Korea. *Maratang* (Sichuan hot pot) in China is cheaper and it's a food that we have access to easily. It's expensive in South Korea, but still, *Maratang* (Sichuan hot pot) is more delicious in China.

Interviewer: Price is definitely an important aspect of food. Besides the price, is there any difference in the taste of *Maratang* (Sichuan hot pot) that you tried in different regions?

Interviewee: I don't think the difference is that deep. I think the food or vegetables inside *Maratang* (Sichuan hot pot) may taste differently. Since the place of origin is not the same, the taste is also not

the same, so there may be those differences.

Interviewer: This is indeed the case. In addition to authentic Chinese food like spicy hotpot, I also learned that there are many Koreanized Chinese foods in South Korea, such as *Jjajangmyeon* (Bean sauce noodles), can you introduce me to these foods?

Interviewee: Introduction... There are *Jjajangmyeon* (Bean sauce noodles) and *Jjamppong* (spicy seafood noodle soup), you know? Spicy noodles and spicy soup with a lot of seafood in it, and also *Tangsuyuk* (sweet and sour battered meat); these dishes are very popular in Chinese restaurants in South Korea. These dishes have the same names as their original Chinese dishes but with completely different practices, so I see them as completely different dishes.

Interviewer: Yes, I've also heard that these dishes were originally brought to South Korea from China, but later in history they have evolved into a Koreanized version. They taste a lot different from the original, so strictly speaking they are not completely authentic Chinese dishes.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: I think I've heard that there's some controversy in South Korea about the South Korean spelling of *Jjajangmyeon* (Bean sauce noodles), do you know anything about that?

Interviewee: What do you mean by controversy?

Interviewer: According to the research that I have done, it's like, there seems to be a change in the pronunciation rules in South Korean...

Interviewee: I understand. In the past, the standard pronunciation was *Jajjangmyeon*, but many people pronounced it as *Jia...Jjajangmyeon* and latter both pronunciations are regarded as standard.

Interviewer: That's an interesting thing!

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: We just talked about some Chinese food in South Korea, but also South Korean food is very popular in China, have you tried any of them?

Interviewee: I see that the common South Korean foods in China are fried rice cakes and South Korean BBQ restaurants. Yes, besides South Korean food streets where South Koreans do not live, these kinds of South Korean flavor restaurants can also be seen in regular districts where Chinese live in. I think some of these restaurants even cook better than South Korean restaurants.

Interviewer: So, you like trying these foods often?

Interviewee: My family and I try these dishes all the time.

Interviewer: That sounds nice! I remember I used to order South Korean fried chicken when I was in China.

Interviewee: Yes, fried chicken too, of course.

Interviewer: I think these South Korean foods are pretty popular in China.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Besides these South Korean foods that are relatively authentic, are there any other South Korean food that has been Sinicized in China?

Interviewee: I think South Korean dishes are somehow... I think in China there are no South Korean dishes that are completely authentic because I think when dishes go into a different culture, we have to take into account the tastes of people in this culture, so these foods are not that authentic. Also, it's the same case as what I have just told you; when Jjajangmyeon came to South Korea from China, it was Koreanized in different ways.

Interviewer: I understand that. Yes, people in different regions certainly have preferences for different tastes, and as you said earlier, there are some raw materials that may not be so easily available in a certain region. Therefore, in the process of cultural transmission, food will more or less be localized.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Another topic that I would like to explore is the impact of food on our self-identity, as food is not just something that we eat to satisfy our survival needs. So, when you have South Korean food in a foreign country, how does this affect your self-identity as a South Korean?

Interviewee: I ate South Korean food in China, and I got used to it. I can eat spicy food, and I can eat those dishes... And then I'm South Korean, and when I eat it, I remember my parents who made those dishes or my siblings who ate that food with me, and then my friends, and so on.

Interviewer: I myself also have the same feelings. Like now, in the United States, Chinese foods are not common. If the dining hall [at Colby College] makes them one day, or if our friends get together and cook Chinese dishes, or if we go to a Chinese restaurant together, it would actually influence my self-identity as a Chinese person, so I think what you said is very reasonable. So, you just mentioned in your answer that you dine with your family, can you tell me more about how food preparation and meals are done in your family of origin?

Interviewee: South Korea is surrounded by the sea on three sides, so there is a lot of seafood. I lived in Busan, near the sea, and therefore our family would include seafood in every meal and also *kimchi* in every meal. People often think that *kimchi* is only made of cabbage, but in South Korea, *kimchi*

can be made from many different kinds of vegetables. For example, small onions, radish, pepper, and sesame leaves or something, and... How to translate *kimchi* soaked in water... It can only be translated this way. Our main food is rice. White rice is added with millet beans and red beans... These are the thing people will put together for dinner. For people who like drinking soap, chili sauce, seafood, soaked water, or the bones would be put together in the soup as a combination. And that's it.

Interviewer: Yes, I've learned about *kimchi* as a traditional South Korean food in class before, and I also learned a lot about its impact on South Korean culture as a whole and its importance to South Koreans.

Interviewee: Ah, yes.

Interviewer: We've just talked about how you prepare food and eat in your South Korean family of origin, so I'd like to ask you a little bit more about how you prepare food in your natal family versus how you prepare food in the new family that you and your husband have formed now.

Interviewee: When my in-laws lived with us, we often ate Chinese food. When my in-laws went back home, we would prepare South Korean food because I can only cook South Korean food. Also, my in-laws... No, my husband also likes South Korean food, so I would prepare South Korean food. Chinese food is different from South Korean food. In China, we go to the market every day to buy food and cook the food we buy on the same day. South Korean foods such as *kimchi*, they are more often put in a storage room. This is the way we eat.

Interviewer: You talked about a difference in the food culture between the two countries.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Which way would you prefer to eat or prepare your food?

Interviewee: Preference. You mean which way do I like, right?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: There are advantages to both. If you buy the food on the same day that you cook it, it will be fresh and tasty. Sometimes if you don't have time to eat or you're lazy about preparing or whatever, you can use the storage room. Making the dishes will also be more convenient. Both ways of preparing food have advantages and disadvantages.

Interviewer: Yes, and this can indeed reflect the advantages and disadvantages of a different culture. So, does the preparation of food and meals also reflect your role in your family?

Interviewee: You mean differences?

Interviewer: You don't have to talk about the different points, you can talk about what you think in general.

Interviewee: Is it the difference between the two countries?

Interviewer: I mean, does the process of preparing food and meals also reflect the role that you play in your family?

Interviewee: Here's the thing: After I came to China, I both liked and felt strange about the fact that men would also come into the kitchen to cook and prepare food. In South Korea, men don't come into the kitchen to cook. But recently, I heard that young men in South Korea would help their wives to cook, like washing the dishes or something. Also another difference is that during dinner time, we would drink together with family members—drink beer or something. We would drink a little. We would also drink with family members during not special days. This is different from the culture in South Korea. In South Korea, we would not drink when having meals with family. We only drink when guests come. Therefore, this is different.

Interviewer: This point is really interesting. I heard that South Korea has deep beer culture, and this kind of dining can reflect part of the culture. So, besides eating and cooking South Korean food, are there any other specific practices that you would do to maintain your identity as a South Korean?

Interviewee: One thing is that I would communicate with people in South Korea while I lived abroad. So, how can I say... I can help support the policies of South Korea or those things I am concerned about in South Korea. For example, the South Korean presidential election and those things.

Interviewer: So, you still pay attention to South Korean affairs even when you are living abroad?

Interviewee: That's true.

Interviewer: I think everyone who does not live in their home country thinks about this more or less.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: The next question I want to ask is what is your favorite thing about China from your point of view?

Interviewee: The vegetables, fruits, and meat are cheaper here. Cheaper than in South Korea, so I can save money. I can buy things made in China cheaper, as these things made in China are more expensive after they are exported to South Korea. This is a point that I like about China. Another point I like is that Chinese people are friendly to children. For example, people will understand when children start to cry in public places. In South Korea, people are kind of indifferent. If children cry, they are like "What do these mothers do? They let their children cry and it's too noisy." This is the case.

Interviewer: There is a really interesting point! As a Chinese, I have never recognized this difference. I'm glad to hear about this from you.

Interviewee: Probably there are also differences between married and unmarried. This might be also possible.

Interviewer: Do you think that the overall price level in China is lower than that in South Korea, or it is just the price of necessities such as vegetables and fruits?

Interviewee: Yes, necessities are cheaper in China than that in South Korea, but I think the prices of food in restaurants are about the same.

Interviewer: That makes sense. Next, I want to ask you what you think is the most difficult thing about living in China.

Interviewee: I would say that the most difficult part is the period of the pandemic, like the last year when Shanghai was locked down. I think that was the worst, the hardest part.

Interviewer: Yes, I believe we all felt the same way.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: As a foreigner, how tolerant do you think the whole culture and society of China is?

Interviewee: I think Chinese society used to be pretty accepting regarding foreign cultures, like watching South Korean dramas and listening to foreign songs. But in the past two years it has become more domestically oriented, I think. Right? There is more propaganda about Chinese culture and fewer opportunities to accept foreign cultures.

Interviewer: Yes, I also have this feeling. China has started moving towards a more independent development and its connection with the outside world has decreased. However, if nationalism becomes too extreme, it will have a negative impact. Therefore, I think we all need to be more tolerant of our culture and our lives. This brings me to the next topic that I want to discuss, which is the China-South Korean relationship. We have just talked a lot about the cultural exchange between China and South Korea in terms of food and entertainment culture. Also, as East Asian countries, economic cooperation between China and South Korea is inevitable. As a South Korean who has lived in China, what are your own opinions on the relationship between China and South Korea?

Interviewee: That's too difficult...

Interviewer: It's okay. You can just answer based on your individual experience.

Interviewee: Just as you have already said, South Korea and China influence each other

economically. South Korea changes president every five years, and every time the president is changed there will be a change in the government's attitude towards China. As a South Korean living in China, the attitude of the South Korean government towards China affects my life. I think the international relationship is the product of each country pursuing their own interests. Therefore, if South Korea makes a choice that is beneficial to South Korea, I will respect and support my government.

Interviewer: Yes, I definitely agree with what you just said. You mentioned that the relationship between China and South Korea and the attitudes of the government would also affect your own life in China. Can you expand a little bit on that?

Interviewee: I still remember when there was tension between South Korea and China caused by the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Aerial Defense) issue¹. I was also living and studying in China at that time. During that period, Chinese people had a very bad impression of South Korea. When my friends and I were communicating with each other in South Korea, people would stare at us. Yes, at that time it was very scary, yes. But there was no such experience afterward. Now people are like, "Oh, are you South Korean?" Like this.

Interviewer: Yes, there was once a rather stressful period.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Some impolite people might have caused harm to you.

Interviewee: But I can understand that there are these kinds of people in every country.

Interviewer: I hope that we can all be more tolerant of each other and make correct decisions.

Interviewee: Yes, when I lived in China, some Chinese people would say, "What do international relations have to do with ordinary people like us?" There are still many Chinese who are friendly to us.

Interviewer: That's true. Sometimes we have to separate ourselves from international relations. For example, the relationship between China and the U.S. is also not very optimistic, but as an international student in the U.S., I can still say that many locals treat me friendly. We have just learned about your own view of the relationship between China and South Korea. Now, if you consider the opinion of South Korean citizens as a whole, what do you think the attitude of South Korean citizens is towards China nowadays?

Interviewee: I see recent media interviews of South Korean people. Some of them do not have a

¹ The THAAD issue: The THAAD issue refers to the controversy over the deployment of the U.S. "THAAD" anti-missile system in South Korea. In 2016, the South Korean government agreed to deploy the THAAD anti-missile system on its territory. However, this agreement sparked opposition from China. China believed that the radar of the SAD system could monitor military activities in China and thus threaten China's national security. As a result, during that period of time, the relationship between South Korea, the U.S., and China was very intensive.

good impression of China, yes. I think the media might be a cause of this kind of negative impression, the kind of media that reports on China more negatively. Watching only this kind of media might influence what people think.

Interviewer: Yes, I think the media sometimes exaggerates or distorts facts. Since local people do not have enough access to truthful information, the media generates negative opinions through its influence.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: We are near the end of this Zoom meeting, and I would like to start a new one. Would you people come back in a moment?

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: Thank you!