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The Impact of ‘Kaesŏng Special Zone’
on the Material Heritage of a Historical City¹ -
Heritage as a Multifaceted Interface

*“The present-day city of Kaesŏng, site of the former capital of the Koryŏ kingdom (918-1392), was a city of 6-800,000 people, a city the size of ancient Rome... It was a city of palaces, institutes and temples that surprised contemporary Chinese envoys with its magnificence”!*² Kaesŏng³ is one of the last significant historical cities in Asia which has not yet been touched by the current fever of development. A city which crystallizes the dreams of historians specialized in the Koryŏ period, heritage advocates, tourist developers and, of course, South-Korean natives of the region.

This Kaesŏng city area⁴ recently, and fairly suddenly, became reachable, even “touchable.” The Demilitarized Zone, zone of partition, always has been, at the same time, a zone of contact between the two Koreas.⁵ However, it is recently that the

¹ This study is based both on an historical approach (North and South-Koreans documents) and on field investigations in RPK (from January 2003 to 2008) and ROK

² e.g. Euro-Asian Heritage Development, The Kaesŏng Heritage Project, 12th July 2003

³ Kaesŏng is located to the north of the DMZ that separates the two Koreas, 9km to the west of P’anmunjŏm village and 160km south of the capital of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, DPRK. The site has the rivers Yesong and Imjin to the south/south-west and the Western Sea (or Yellow Sea) to the west. The present-day city of Kaesŏng is built on the site of the former capital of the Koryŏ Kingdom (918-1392). Kaesŏng became the capital in 919 and remained so until 1392, except for the period 1232 to 1270, when the capital was moved to Kanghwa during the Mongol invasion. e.g. Élisabeth Chabanol, “Study of the Archaeological and Historic Sites of Kaesŏng. Status of research into the preservation of the site,” *Royal Asiatic Society, Transactions*, 80, 2005, pp. 35-58

⁴ This Kaesŏng city area is located on the so-called Kaesŏng-Munsan route, through which the North launched its first attack on the South that triggered the Korean War in 1950

⁵ Without speaking of P’anmunjŏm, located at about 9km from Kaesŏng, which has been a zone of direct contacts between the North and the South since the partition, the centre of Kaesŏng city too, as an example, have seen trucks passing by, loaded with South Korean alimentary aid which is carried away to P’yŏngyang

Kaesŏng area, as well as Mount Kŭmgang tourist zone, became the more obvious examples of “material interfaces”⁶ between the two Koreas.

One can imagine that the city of Kaesŏng is petrified since the collapse of the Koryŏ kingdom. But, this city had a “history,” a proto-history and a pre-history⁷ before becoming a capital, and had a life after its repudiation by the Yi dynasty. The present-day city of Kaesŏng is a hodgepodge of “surviving temporalities.”⁸ Because of its recent history, linked to its geopolitical location, these “surviving temporality strata” have not been so much disturbed until now compared to the other ancient capital sites of the Korean peninsula,⁹ at least when we consider the material strata¹⁰.

Since the planning of the establishment of the Kaesŏng Industrial Complex, both North and South Korean authorities started to consider the historical heritage of the city as a support for academic exchanges, and an economic resource, which can be developed. The aim of this paper is to analyse how, in this spatial interface (this in-between space between the two Koreas), “Koreans” can encounter each other on the basis of what they consider their common heritage.¹¹

Why, of all the potential sites for such an industrial project, has Kaesŏng been chosen?

1) The heterogeneous mass of the present-day city of Kaesŏng¹²

The present-day city of Kaesŏng is a precipitate¹³ of discontinuous strata of the past of the city, depending on either the action of the time passing by, or on the

⁶ e.g. *EHESS Center for Korean Studies' North-South Interfaces in the Korean Peninsula workshops, 2006-2007*: “In geography and economics of transportation, an ‘interface’ designates an element of contact between two entities of different nature and, without this element these two entities would not be able to communicate. A spatial interface, a political border marking the limit between two countries, is a social construct, where power relations are of particular importance and come to affect the nearby regions (Guichonnet and Raffestin 1974, Renard 1997, Rumley 1991)

⁷ e.g. The results of the North-South Korean joint archaeological excavations conducted during Summer 2004 on the future Kaesŏng Industrial Complex site

⁸ Or “temporalités survivantes” when Laurent Olivier, in: *Le Sombre Abîme du temps: mémoire et archéologie*, Paris: Couleurs des idées, 2008, speaks of the “present scene, landscape (paysage du présent)”

⁹ Especially Kyŏngju from the 1980s, and more recently Kongju and Puyŏ in the Southern part of the peninsula

¹⁰ I will not consider in this paper immaterial heritage (traditions, folklore)

¹¹ Im Hyo-jai, “Current Archaeology in North Korea and Prospects for Academic Exchange with South Korea”, *Korea Journal*, 1991, 31(1), pp. 10-27. An Pyŏng-u, *Chosun Ilbo*, November 6, 2002

¹² “... the memory of the present, the heterogeneous mass of our present (la mémoire du présent, la masse hétérogène de notre présent)” in: Laurent Olivier, *Le Sombre Abîme du temps : mémoire et archéologie*, Paris : Couleurs des idées, 2008

¹³ In the chemical acception of the term

convenient or political choices made by the people for the city. This process of “patrimonialisation,” may we say “heritagisation”¹⁴ of the site of Kaesŏng is going to be discussed in detail in a publication, currently in progress with colleagues, Yannick Bruneton, Alain Delissen, and Heo Heung-sik.

Firstly, we should not forget that, as the results of the North-South Korean joint excavations conducted in the Industrial Zone in 2004 confirmed, the site occupation was quite long, and goes back in time to the pre-historic period.

Then, if we proceed directly to the Chosŏn period, when the capital is transferred to Hanyang (Sŏul), the process of “heritagisation” of the former capital’s significant architecture starts in spite of the partial restorations made at that time and because of these restorations. Some Confucian intellectuals from Hanyang wrote several travel records on their excursions to Kaesŏng, records which tell us that not much remained from the wooden architecture and that some of the royal burials were not even identified.¹⁵

During the colonial period, heritage and tourism were already linked together at an institutional level,¹⁶ but Kaesŏng, with heritage and tourist resources in mind, was not like Heijo (P’yŏngyang), Hanyang (Sŏul), or Mounts Kŭmgang, one of the major attractions in Korea. And Kaesŏng only became a “*pu*” in 1931 even if it was a huge territory with 120,000 inhabitants, and a “...vibrant and active city. It was not a sleeping beauty.”¹⁷

One could say that that the city was relatively spared by the combatants during the Korean War because of its famous heritage, but several main structures inside and outside of the city were hit. As examples, the original wooden structure of Namdaemun (South Gate) was totally burnt down¹⁸ and the Anhwa monastery, 4 km from Namdaemun, was destroyed by bombs.¹⁹ Finally, after three years of procrastination, at the end of the conflict, the city, which was located south of the partition line since the Liberation, became part of the DPRK’s territory.

2) The symbolic of Kaesŏng

¹⁴ “유적화”, e.g. Heo Heung-sik’s works

¹⁵ e.g. Heo Heung-sik’s works

¹⁶ e.g. Pai Hyung-il’s research

¹⁷ e.g. Alain Delissen, “A Sleeping Beauty. Kaesŏng in the 1920s,” communication, Association for Korean Studies in Europe, Dourdan, April 2007

¹⁸ It was replaced by an “identical” structure in 1954

¹⁹ Anhwa monastery was destroyed at the end of the Koryŏ period, restored in 1931 by the Japanese administration, destroyed once again by bombs during the Korean War, and re-built in 1987 on Kim Il Sung’s order

Hence, due to the events which occurred during the Korean War and the negotiations for the signature of the armistice, the city, for both North and South Koreans, contains a strong political meaning. It is the symbol of the partition of the peninsula.

But, in North Koreans' minds, the historical city is also directly related to the Koryŏ kingdom, and it brings back memories of the glorious past of a unified peninsula.²⁰ In other words, it is one of the links in the long chain of Korean history as it is described in the official rhetoric.²¹ Ironically, for the people from other parts of the DPRK who sojourn there, Kaesŏng is already the South; Kaesŏng people are "different, strange persons, they speak with a drawling accent, and Kaesŏng food does not suit to P'yŏngyang people's stomachs."²² In a sense, Kaesŏng represents already a little bit of "the Other."²³

As for the average South Korean men on the street, even if, recently, numerous TV dramas have praised the Wang dynasty, they do not make a direct connection between the Koryŏ kingdom and the site of its former capital. In contrast, they immediately associate sceneries of the Kyŏngju city for the Silla period,²⁴ and the cities of Kongju²⁵ and Puyŏ for the Paekche period. The history of Koryŏ – and Koguryŏ – is *de facto* very 'theoretic' and 'abstract', since its material "surviving temporalities" are untouchable. Even pictures of the site are not common in the ROK. Furthermore, for those who were born after the war, it was not until recently that the word 'Kaesŏng' had meaning. For them, it is strictly related to the Kaesŏng *kongdan* (Kaesŏng Industrial Complex), as an economic step on the path to reunification. On the other hand, for the South Koreans belonging to the academic world of humanities, Kaesŏng is a city of scholars,²⁶ where the entire first generation of Korean art historians²⁷ has been

²⁰ As they have been taught in their education system, e.g. Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il's written works

²¹ In the 1970s, several discoveries by the Archaeological Institute of the Academy of Social Sciences (DPRK) were said to be proofs of the links between Koguryŏ and Koryŏ. The North Korean historians and archaeologists regard Manwŏltae, Wang Kŏn's Royal Tomb, Kongmin's Royal Tomb and Ryŏngt'ong Monastery as proofs to the fact that the Koryŏ Kingdom was the first state to unify. e.g. Korea Ku Chong-geon, "Uncovering Korea's Past," *The Pyongyang Times*, September, 2002.

²² DPRK Mission July 2007

²³ And with the spin-off of the KIC on the economy of the city, this sentiment seems to increase (DPRK Mission October 2007)

²⁴ Due to the controlled development of the Kyŏngju site by the Pak Chŏng-hŭi's administration in the 1970s, within the framework of its nationalistic emphasis on the Silla period. e.g. "... the ideal of the modern State: ... Write, or make [others to] write under its control, the text of the past, in order to appear as the unique creditor of its [of the past] meaning, and to use it for the present ideology." in: Marc Guillaume, *La politique du patrimoine*, 1980

²⁵ In connection with the sensational discovery of King Muryŏng's Tomb in Kongju in 1971

²⁶ Kuk Sŏng-ha, "Ilje kangjŏngi. Kaesŏng purip pangmulgwan-kwa pangmulgwan saramdŭl," *Minsok pangmulgwan sosik*, 2008, 10

²⁷ Hwang Sun-yŏng, Chin Hong-sŏp, Choe Sun-u, ...

educated by Ko Yu-söp (U Hyön), then director of the Kaesöng County Museum.²⁸ Concisely, for most of the people who ran to be the first ones on the one-day trip to the city (which started operating just one year ago), it was more out of curiosity,²⁹ to see a real North-Korean city, than to discover the site of a former Korean capital. However, this quick visit to the city, visible in part, only in little strokes, helps South Korean tourists to discover part of the peninsula's heritage and to realise how close Kaesöng is to Seoul and how immediate the North Korean issues are.³⁰ But, the natives of the city, who waited so long to have a glance at the landscape of their youth, cannot recognize the place they left 55 years ago. Except for one landmark, Sönggyun'gwan, nothing of their past remains.

3) Kaesöng as a Special Zone

When the project for the establishment of the Kaesöng Industrial Complex (KIC) was first announced, most Koryö period South Korean scholars wondered why, out of all the other potential sites for such a project, Kaesöng was chosen.³¹ Their objection was based on the fact that Kaesöng was the capital of Koryö for over 500 years and, in particular that the proposed project site was in Pongdong-ri, at the southern part of Kaesöng, where numerous vestiges and artifacts were buried.

The public was made aware of the project in 2002. But, in fact, the idea to develop the Kaesöng Industrial Complex dates from 1989, when Chung Ju-yung (Chöng Chu-yöng), founder and honorary chairman of Hyundai Group visited several locations in the DPRK, such as P'yöngyang and Wönsan, to assess potential industrial sites.³² But, because the biggest obstacles to his ambitious plans were the lack of electricity and the high logistical costs, he thought that all the industrial facilities should be installed somewhere close to the DMZ. Haeju, in Hwanghae province, was then the best candidate.³³

Still, it was only after the implementation of the Berlin declaration³⁴ and the historical summit in P'yöngyang³⁵ that the project took shape (August, 2000).

²⁸ Kaesöng purip pangmulgwan

²⁹ Interviews and Korea University unscientific survey conducted in May 2004 for a state-run tourism organization

³⁰ See the numerous newspaper interviews or the blogs of South Koreans coming back from the one-day trip to Kaesöng

³¹ An Pyöng-u, *Chosun Ilbo*, 2002.11.06

³² When General Kim Jong Il met Chung Ju Yung in P'yöngyang (October 30, 1998) he made it clear that he wanted Sinüiju to be the place for the new industrial complex.

³³ Difficult to accept for North Koreans; Haeju is a strategically sensitive port

³⁴ Addressed by Kim Dae-jung, President of the Republic of Korea at the Free University of Berlin (March 9, 2000)

Hyundai's project to build an industrial complex in North Korea was fulfilling the promises of the five economic cooperation projects of President Kim Dae-jung's administration to North Korea, which included: linking roads and railroads between South and North Korea, constructing the KIC,³⁶ and developing Mt. Kūmgang as a tourist attraction, etc.

It is said that Hyundai Asan,³⁷ which initiated the project, argued forcefully that "the KIC without the city of Kaesŏng was meaningless." Hyundai Asan was convinced that the old capital of Koryŏ would be extremely valuable in terms of tourism resources.³⁸ Against this strong argument, the North Korean authorities could not but help to accept to include Kaesŏng intra-muros³⁹ into the project. And, Hyundai Asan finally obtained North Korea's approval for exclusive business rights in constructing and operating the KIC, and developing Kaesŏng city, which was included into the newly designated "Kaesŏng Special Economic Zone."

Also, in August 2000, Hyundai and the North Korean authorities reached an agreement on Kaesŏng's tourism business. They agreed to start Kaesŏng tours by the end of 2000. Manwŏltae,⁴⁰ Sŏnjuk Bridge,⁴¹ Wang Kŏn's Tomb,⁴² and Pag'yŏn's Water Falls (the most symbolic Koryŏ period's landmarks of the city) were the sites selected to be shown to the South Korean tourists. But, these plans were delayed and, in the case of the tourist project, Hyundai Asan had to wait until August 26th, 2005 to start their business.⁴³ That day, 500 South Koreans tourists visited Kaesŏng, on a one-day pilot trip, for the first time since the Korean War ended in 1953.

As previously stated, according to the "Agreement on Construction and Operation of the Industrial Complex," reached between Hyundai and the DPRK, Kaesŏng city was included in the 66,000,000m² Special Zone.⁴⁴ The size of the "great Kaesŏng" is about 1,308,000m² and its population is estimated to be approximately

³⁵ The historic summit between ROK President Kim Dae-jung and North Korean leader Kim Jong Il took place in P'yŏngyang from June 12th to the 14th 2000

³⁶ After several meetings of negotiation, Kaesŏng was offered as an alternative to Haeju by the North Koreans to Hyundai Asan

³⁷ Hyundai's Group inter-Korean cooperative business 'arm'

³⁸ Lim Eun-chul, *Kaesong Industrial Complex: history, pending issues and outlook*, Sol: Haenam, 2007

³⁹ Kaesŏng was surrounded by a wall 23km long, of which some sections remain

⁴⁰ The royal palace's site (Koryŏ period)

⁴¹ Sŏnjukkyŏ (former appellation Sŏnjigyŏ) is the bridge where Chŏng Mong-ju, who remained loyal to the Wang dynasty, was assassinated by the Yi Sŏng-gye faction

⁴² The founder of the Wang dynasty, which ruled the Koryŏ kingdom

⁴³ Kim Rahn, "Tours to North Korea to enjoy boom," *The Korea Times*, December 30, 2005

⁴⁴ The complex will ultimately cover 6,611 hectares (66 million square meters). The industrial portion of the complex will cover 2,644 hectares (26 million square meters) with the surrounding city covering the remaining 3,967 hectares (40 million square meters). The first stage of construction will measure 330 hectares in size

380,000 inhabitants.⁴⁵ After the division, in June 1958, this “great Kaesŏng,” consisting of Kaesŏng downtown, Kaep’ung-gun,⁴⁶ Changp’ung-gun,⁴⁷ and P’anmun-gun,⁴⁸ was designated as a metropolitan city, under the direct control of the central government.⁴⁹ But in 2003, Kaesŏng metropolitan city was divided into one city (Kaesŏng) and two *kun* (districts) - Kaep’ung-gun, Changp’ung-gun - and was included as part of the Northern Hwanghae Province. The population of Kaesŏng city is most likely not more than 100,000.

Heritage preservation? How can the two Koreas encounter?

*“... It is our responsibility to preserve to hand on. It is a double duty; towards our ancestors as towards our children... It is not only Memory which is in danger to be lost, but also Identity...”*⁵⁰

All the heritage politics are based on these principles. In the case of the Korean peninsula, the situation is even more heightened. South Korean collective memory has to “re-appropriate” the site after a 50 years hiatus.

1) What is considered as tangible heritage in Kaesŏng?

August 22nd, 1968, Kim Jong Il, who had been notified of the bad management and preservation of the Kaesŏng’s cultural and historical sites and artifacts, came to the city to investigate the situation.⁵¹ He stressed to the people from the Kaesŏng administration that, following the Great Leader’s words, the struggle against the feudal Confucianism was not related to the preservation of relics and vestiges. And that the country should hand down to the future generations what was kept by its ancestors. During his tour, he checked Sŏnggyun’gwan,⁵² Sŏnjuk Bridge, P’yoch’ung Stele, King Kongmin’s Tomb, Pag’yŏn Water Falls, and the Fortress of Mount Taehŭng.

Years later, in May 1992, it was Kim Il Sung’s turn to go to Kaesŏng⁵³ to visit Wang Kŏn’s Tomb, and Pag’yŏn Water Falls, etc. During his tour of the historical sites,

⁴⁵ DPRK Mission January 2003

⁴⁶ West of Kaesŏng city

⁴⁷ North of Kaesŏng city

⁴⁸ South of Kaesŏng city

⁴⁹ e.g. maps of the city (E. Chabanol’s The Impact of ‘Kaesŏng Special Zone’ on the Material Heritage of a Historical City⁴⁹ - Heritage as a Multifaceted Interface, PPT)

⁵⁰ Marc Guillaume, *La politique du patrimoine*, Paris: Galilee, 1980

⁵¹ Kim Jong Il, "Kaesŏng chigu ryŏksa munhwa yujŏk yumultŭl-ŭl wŏnsang-daero chal pojon kwalli halte taehayŏ: Kaesŏng chigu ryŏksa munhwa yujŏktŭl-ŭl torabo-myŏnseo ilgundŭl-gwa han tamhwa 1968 nyŏn 8 wŏl 22 il", Chosŏn rodongdang ch’ulp’ansa, P’yŏngyang: 2006

⁵² Buildings of the Koryŏ Confucianist academy

⁵³ "Kaesŏng-si yumul yujŏk pojon kwalli saŏp sŏnjŏn," T’ongilbu chŏngbo punsŏksil, 1999

he gave general instructions on the preservation of the historical heritage of the city, and entrusted Kim Jong Il with solving the problem of the management and preservation of the historical relics. One of the severe consequences of Kim Il Sung's strong will to highlight Kaesŏng's heritage was that, the tomb of King Wang Kŏn, founder of the Koryŏ Kingdom, was completely reconstructed after being excavated in 1993.⁵⁴

The DPRK's administration focuses its attention on the symbolic State-selected heritage spots, which are well preserved by "history," and illustrate and strengthen its political discourse. The administration does not consecrate resources in doing research on sites considered of no importance for its purposes. Since the end of the war, no significant archaeological excavations have been conducted inside or around the territory of Kaesŏng except, at already well documented sites.

The North-Korean authorities always valued this strongly connoted tangible heritage, and admitted the lack of resources for its preservation. They also were very much aware of its tourist potential. In 2003, they hoped that, after five years, thanks to the tourism development project of Kaesŏng, numerous South Korean tourists would come to visit the city, since the city belonged to the ROK before the war.⁵⁵ As early as 2000, the DPRK submitted several sites to the Tentative World Heritage List of UNESCO,⁵⁶ including Kaesŏng.⁵⁷ At that time, none of them were inscribed, though, on the World Heritage List.

With the Berlin Declaration and its implementation, the deal changed about the Kaesŏng heritage. The "great Kaesŏng" was divided into roughly three zones: the Industrial Zone in the south, the Living Zone in the north⁵⁸ and the Tourist Zone in the west.⁵⁹ The Tourist Zone included Kaesŏng intra-muros, plus some historical sites located in the north and in the west of the city. In terms of heritage, the administrations in charge of its management have two tasks to tackle: the preservation of the historical sites which overcame the "test of time"⁶⁰ (most of them are concentrated inside the Tourist Zone), and the heritage, which is in imminent danger in the Industrial Zone. In June, 2004, a law, which joins the intra-muros city (approximately the Tourist Zone) and the Industrial Zone within the Kaesŏng Zone (Kaesŏng chigu), was passed. It meant

⁵⁴ The carvings of the 12 guardian gods, which surrounded the base of the tumulus, are now fixed along the walls of an underground corridor, the number of statues has increased, etc.

⁵⁵ DPRK Mission January 2003

⁵⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

⁵⁷ DPRK properties submitted on the Tentative List: Mount Myohang and the Relics in and around the Mountain, Historical Relics in Kaesong, Historical Relics in Pyongyang, Mt. Kumgang and the Historical Relics in and around the Mountain, Caves in Kujang Area and Mt. Chilbo (e.g. UNESCO documents)

⁵⁸ *Saenghwal kuyŏk*

⁵⁹ e.g. Hyundai Asan's maps

⁶⁰ Anthony Saville

that the Kaesŏng Zone fell under the responsibility of the Korea Committee for Promotion of External Economic Cooperation (CPEEC),⁶¹ which also became responsible for the archaeological digs, in conjunction with the central government. The DPRK National Bureau for Cultural Properties Conservation was no longer allowed to intervene in the area without the express agreement of the CPEEC, which still has to be convinced of the necessity of conserving Kaesŏng.⁶²

2) North-South joint archaeological projects⁶³

Concerning the Kaesŏng area heritage, two very different problems have to be taken into account: the heritage in need of development, and the heritage in danger. The 'heritage in need of development' includes most of the tourist sites which require improvement, both in historic presentation and in renovation of facilities, which includes urgent restoration and the removal of some of the blemishes. Of course, further excavations would help to better understand the structure of these sites, even though they are not in immediate danger. On the other hand, the 'heritage in danger' consists of the existing heritage and archaeological remains which are at risk due to the expansion of the KIC and of the tourism from South Korea. This is the field of rescue archaeology.⁶⁴

Professors of Koryŏ history and officials of heritage administrations, from both the North⁶⁵ and the South, are aware of the importance of the vestiges, buried or visible, distributed in and around, Kaesŏng, which never had been researched. But, as these experts could not oppose a North-South economic cooperation project, in light of its significance, they called for a comprehensive survey of the cultural heritage of the Special Zone, and the implementation of subsequent measures to assure the preservation of any Koryŏ artifacts discovered, before the construction started.⁶⁶ At first, the South Korean government at first requested that the experts present tangible evidence of existing heritage and archaeological remains, even if the written materials already proved it, before making a decision. Fortunately, the rescue archaeology intervention, of the zone of the first stage of development for the KIC, was planned.

⁶¹ Chosŏn taehoe kyŏngje hyŏmnyŏk ch'ujin wiwŏn hoe = Min Kyŏng Hyŏp

⁶² DPRK Mission August 2004

⁶³ Not to mention the two Koreas the 12 days joint field research and excavation of a palace site (Anhak-kung) in P'yŏngyang (April 8-19, 2006). The ROK was represented by the Koguryŏ Research Foundation. Neither the 2003 archaeological excavation at the Singye Monastery near Mount Kŭmgang

⁶⁴ DPRK Missions January and August 2003

⁶⁵ DPRK Missions 2003-2008

⁶⁶ DPRK Mission January 2004. An Pyŏng-u, *Chosun Ilbo*, November 6, 2002

At that period, the academic exchanges, even if they represented a very small percentage of all the inter-Korean exchanges, started to blossom. The year 2004 is quite noticeable in that sense; among other things, a North-South joint academic seminar and exhibition for the return of cultural assets “plundered” by Japan, and another one, to celebrate the listing of the Koguryŏ tombs as a World Heritage site, were organized in P’yŏngyang.⁶⁷ The survey and excavation of the KIC belonged to that year’s events.⁶⁸

That is how, from June 24th, 2004 to August 11th, prior to the first stage of development of the KIC, a survey of the zone of the site, and some excavations, co-financed by the Korea Land Corporation, was conducted by a joint team of around 20 South Korean and 40 North Korean archaeologists. It was the first ever conducted inter-Korean joint excavations. The South Korean archaeologists, who were under the Land Museum of Korea’s⁶⁹ control, and the North Korean archaeologists, from the Archaeology Research Institute of the Social Science Academy,⁷⁰ were able to work together for almost two months and confront their respective archaeological technologies, terminologies, ‘habits’ and laws. They had to appreciate the value of their discoveries to comply with the North Korean Cultural Relics Preservation Law (article 13) which could have slowed down or even stopped the rescue process.⁷¹ The discoveries may not seem spectacular, but the remains, which were found, show that the site was occupied from pre-history to the Chosŏn period. An excavation report, which brings together all the results, has been published.⁷² This past spring, the archaeologists began a second excavation campaign, at the west side of the first area, prior to the development of the second stage of the KIC.⁷³

This first encounter in Kaesŏng was followed, after the 17th North-South ministerial-level talks on December 16th, 2005, by a joint statement from the two Koreas, declaring that the two parts would cooperate on preparing the documents and data to

⁶⁷ “At the Joint Academic Seminar titled “the Return of Cultural Assets Plundered by Japan” held in Pyongyang in February 2004, the two Koreas shared their awareness on issues concerning the history of the Korean people,” in: *2005 White Paper on Korean Unification*, SK Ministry of Unification, April 3, 2008

⁶⁸ Without mentioning here the Buddhist monastery Ryŏngt’ong’s reconstruction, results mainly from the non-governmental cooperation and paid by the South Korean Ch’ŏnt’ae order (completion ceremony in the autumn 2005)

⁶⁹ The Land Museum of Korea belongs to the Korea Land Corporation, KIC’s developer with Hyundai Asan Corporation

⁷⁰ The archaeological sites in danger, in particular the ones inside the KIC are under the supervision of the DPRK Social Science Academy. The historical and archaeological sites which are located in Kaesŏng city are under the supervision of the National Bureau for Cultural Properties Conservation

⁷¹ In case of an important discovery, the hierarchy has to be involved in the operations

⁷² *Kaesŏng kong’ŏp chigu 1 tan’gye munhwa yujŏk Nam . Puk kongdong chosa pogosŏ*, [Sŏul?]: Han’guk t’oji kongsa, T’oji pangmulgwan, 2005

⁷³ DPRK mission April 2008

promote the listing of Kaesŏng as a world heritage site. The project was financed by the South Korean government.⁷⁴ Several joint academic meetings and field work sessions took place to prepare the documents for the UNESCO application,⁷⁵ which was submitted by the DPRK (January, 2007). In September 2007, the International Council on Museums and Sites (ICOMOS) undertook evaluation of the site. In Quebec last July, the World Heritage Committee made the decision to defer the inscription to the World Heritage List of the Historical Relics of Kaesŏng. The committee asked the State Party to submit a revised nomination file, reconsidering sites to hold as significant and representative examples of the Koryŏ period.⁷⁶

As part of the joint work on the documents preparation for the registration of Kaesŏng relics, the excavation of Malwŏltae has been decided during inter-Korean ministerial meetings in December 2005 and April 2006.⁷⁷ This Kaesŏng historic area North-South Joint excavation project is directly implemented under the South-North Exchange and Cooperation Act of the ROK Ministry of Unification. The administrations in charge are the People's Reconciliation Committee and National Culture Conservation Directory for the North Korean side, and the North-South Korean Historian Committee and the Cultural Heritage Administration for the Southern part. The excavation team gathers archaeologists from the DPRK National Bureau for Cultural Properties Conservation and from the ROK National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage. Two archaeological campaigns already took place in 2007,⁷⁸ on the west and north-west sides of the highly-symbolic site of the royal palace. However, the area and team were split into northern and southern parts.⁷⁹ As could be expected from the historical texts, and considering a site of such importance and scale – the reason why it was chosen as an inter-Korean cooperation project –, the architectural structures and the artifacts discovered are substantial: terraces, walls, a pond, numerous tiles, ceramics, a previously unknown cylindrical type of celadon, etc.⁸⁰

3) Tourist development project in terms of heritage

⁷⁴ ROK Munhwajae ch'ŏng, September 9, 2006 and October 16, 2006

⁷⁵ Since 2004, ICOMOS Korea, with ROK Cultural Administration funds, is directing research and publications on Kaesŏng heritage to promote the inscription of the site on the UNESCO World Heritage List

⁷⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's documents, September 17, 2008

⁷⁷ e.g. Kim Pog-gŏn, director of the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage, in: No Hyŏng-sŏk, "Kaesŏng Manwŏltae Nam Puk hamkke palgul handa", *The Hankyoreh*, June 22, 2006

⁷⁸ From May 18, 2007 to July 15, 2007, then from mid-September 2007

⁷⁹ For different technical and administrative causes, the excavation encountered some little difficulties

⁸⁰ National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage, *Excavation Research Report on Goryeo Royal palace of Kaesong*, Taejŏn : NRICH, 2008

The Kaesŏng Tourist Zone includes Kaesŏng intra-muros and several sites outside the walls: the Pag'yŏn Water Falls, the Fortress of Mount Taehŭng and Kwan'ŭm Monastery at the North, Wŏn Kŏn's Tomb, and King Kongmin's Tomb at the West/North-West, etc.

Unplanned tourist development, and the future Living Zone,⁸¹ is likely to result in the destruction of archaeological sites, both inside and outside the historic city, as well as of many of the surviving vernacular buildings in the historic core. Increased visitor numbers are likely to degrade even protected monuments if not carefully controlled. Even, if the North Korean cultural authorities think they can control the situation, some inopportune transformations were already made at, as an example, the Kaesŏng Folk Village by new private investors and Kaesŏng People's Committee.⁸² It is particularly important that a management plan for the heritage of Kaesŏng be implemented while there is still time. Since several years, each time the inter-Korean cooperation **peaks up** again, South Korean institutes and architecture offices work hard on tourist planning projects and answer very 'aggressively' to public bidding announcements by the South Korean Tourism Office,⁸³ etc.

Fortunately, the DPRK authorities, helped by the ROK authorities, do their best to get Kaesŏng heritage inscribed on the World Heritage Site List. An important way to secure heritage protection (even if the inscription on the List may have adverse side-effects as well) of a site is through the designation on UNESCO's World Heritage List.⁸⁴ When this succeeded, it should provide a suitable framework for the protection and development of Kaesŏng.

Material and immaterial interfaces as a conclusion

All official documents published by the South Korean administration (ex. Ministry of Unification) since the 2000s, even under this current administration, state that the primary goals of inter-Korean exchanges and contacts are to "create a foundation for unification by building mutual understanding and trust to overcome the

⁸¹ "Hyundai Asan plans to invest a total of US\$400 million over eight years to turn Kaesŏng in a special tourist zone. They plan to build a 27-hole golf course and lodgings facilities for tourists to Kaesŏng during the 2nd phase of development, and a 45-hole golf course, condominiums, theme parks – such as folk village and amusement park – during the 3rd phase." in: Eun-chul, *Kaesong Industrial Complex: history, pending issues and outlook*, Sol: Haenam, 2007

⁸² DPRK Missions: September, 2005 (green cement building), October, 2007 (huge cement door in Korean style)

⁸³ e.g. The public bidding announcement by the Korea Tourism Office due date: January 27, 2005. And see all the publications on the matter by the Korea National Touriste Organization since 2000

⁸⁴ Once a site within a country is included in the World Heritage List, the concerned State has to establish a reporting system on the state conservation of the site

sense of heterogeneity between the two Koreas, which was nurtured by the long national division.” One way to attain this goal is to “enhance the sense of national commonality, by increasing communication and exchanges in various fields, such as history, culture, academics, religion, and sports.”⁸⁵

These joint archaeological projects and academic historic meetings with Kaesŏng heritage as the subject are perfectly self-serving for both Koreas in the framework of unification politics. Overcoming the differences of their political systems, the two parts find common ground in the glorification of their past, as well as in the international recognition of their tangible cultural heritage, and the marketing strategy of the tourist industry, by the means of an inscription in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Furthermore, the subject of their encounter, the Koryŏ period, is relatively neutral. The fundamental divergences of North and South Korean archaeologists and historians lie in the conceptions and chronology of ancient Korea.

Both North and South Korean heritage specialists would like to take advantage of the development of the Kaesŏng area to study the artifacts and vestiges which abound, still not excavated, for the advancement of medieval archaeology.⁸⁶ They wish too, that all of old Kaesŏng area, which is delineated in the Chosŏn annals, would be protected.⁸⁷ But, as the application for UNESCO World Heritage classification shows, the authorities use the Kaesŏng heritage according to their purposes. They choose to highlight the meaningful symbolic sites, as individual entities, not the city in its entirety,⁸⁸ giving priority to the political and economic interests.

However, as a spatial interface *stricto sensu* the Kaesŏng Special Zone plays its role as a zone of contact, where North and South Koreans can encounter. And through the medium of the significance of its heritage and the relics themselves, it can be considered as a symbolic interface.

The function of UNESCO also should be taken in account. It regulates the stance of both North and South Korea in terms of heritage preservation of Kaesŏng, in relation to international standards. Can we not consider it as an indirect symbolic interface?

Such as all inter-Korean projects, the vitality of the Kaesŏng Special Zone ‘multifaceted interface’ depends on the political development of the Peninsula. And, at

⁸⁵ In: “Policy of Mutual Benefits and Common Prosperity: the Lee Myung-bak’s administration North Korea Policy”, Ministry of Unification Library, September 17, 2008

⁸⁶ An Pyŏng-u, *Chosun Ilbo*, November 6, 2002

⁸⁷ DPRK Missiom August 24, 2003

⁸⁸ Except of the already famous royal tombs, many as well important tombs are not listed

the same time, it is a weapon, used by both sides, on the inter-Korean political stage. September 26, 2008, the ROK Foreign Minister, Yu Myung-hwan, declared that “Seoul will not expand inter-Korean economic cooperation if North Korea reneges on its pledge to disable its nuclear facilities.”⁸⁹ The DPRK responded, November 24, 2008, saying that “it would ban South Korean tourists from the ancient city of Kaesŏng and ‘selectivity expel’ South Koreans working in [the] joint industrial complex there starting December 1.”⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Jin Dae-woong, “Inter-Korean Projects Depend on N.K. Attitude,” *Korea Herald*, September 27, 2008. And the South Korean media’s announcements of the day

⁹⁰ Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea threatens to snip ties with South Korea,” *The New York Times*, November 24, 2008. And the South Korean media’s announcements of the day