

[Lohua Night Market 4]

## **The Undiscovered Surprises—the Korean Street**

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Step out Dingxi MRT station and turn left, you'll find one fine exotic street before reaching Lohua Night Market. Actually, lots of people seem to ignore this street and quickly walk past it; well, they don't know what they miss—the Korean Street.

The Korean Street, actually, as long as you look around, you won't miss it. It is a street right next to Dingxi MRT station and distinct with its uniform store banners and array of Korean commodities. When you walk in that street, you



The Uniform Banners in Korean Street.

will see on top of all the store fronts the signboards of same size and shape but in different colors, covering half of the sky. The other colorful thing you will see is the many clothing stores welcoming you one after another with the typical Korean clothes in multicolor stripes.. To make the place even busier, there are some special price offers are right on the sidewalks in front of each store.

Why are there so many Korean commodities here? Let's take a look at its historical background first. Since the Korean War in 1960's, the mainlanders (mostly from Shang-dong province) in Korea, encouraged by Taiwan's government, started to immigrate here for business or college education. And now most of them use the connections they have in Korea to sell clothes and electric blankets mostly.

But what's the store owners' experience of Korean street, its past and present? By interviewing two stores owners—a Korean grocery store's owner, Mr. Chong, and

a Korean clothes store's owner, Mr. Chu—we got to know about this street's past and present, and discover what people can enjoy in this street.

### Mr. Chong and His Unique Korean Grocery Store

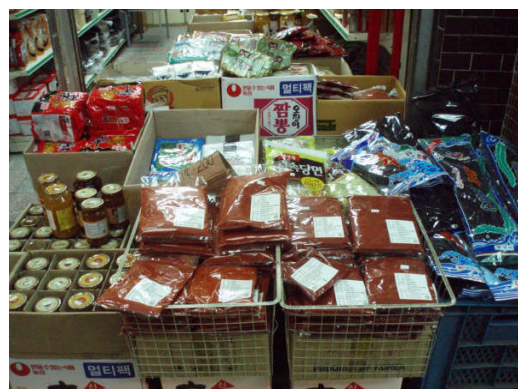


The One and Only Korean Grocery Store!

I dare say there is only one standard Korean grocery store in Korean street, the one that sells only imported Korean products in their integrity. This happens because the majority of the stores there sell clothes and only two or three owners are willing to sell low-profit groceries, and that two or three grocery stores carry Japanese goods or other kinds of non-Korean goods too in order to make more money. We are glad that we can interview this

one and the only Korean grocery store's owner, Mr. Chong, who is Korean Chinese and has run his store for over thirty years.

Mr. Chong's store is located close to the entrance of the Korean Street; it is the very first three or four stores in Korean Street. The other stores are all selling clothes, so you will easily notice Mr. Chong and his lovely grocery store. If you want to find something Korean, the piles and piles of Korean groceries, put at the store's front, will easily attract you. The first few things you find will be popular pomelo tea cans, dry seaweeds, and spice powders. Walking into this Korean grocery store, you will see Mr. Chong at the counter to greet you. He must have been bending himself hard to welcome the customers so often that he is now looking a little bit hunchbacked. Mr. Chong looks



around sixty, thin, short, and nice like a grandpa. Dry skin, deep wrinkles, dark completion: these features of Mr. Chong let you imagine him to be somewhere north, in the cold, and long-exposed to the big sun. Kindly, with a mixture of “foreign” and Mandarin accents, Mr. Chong told us the story of his store.

“I’ve opened this store for over thirty years. When I first started my store, it was the time I just immigrated from Korea to Taiwan,” said Mr. Chong, who was born in Korea to Chinese parents but later chose to settle down the Korean street in Yungho, Taiwan.



Here is the only place in Korean Street where you can buy traditional clothes.

“First I started, it was a clothing store; just like every clothing store you now see in this street.” Mr. Chong recalled himself to be one of the very first storeowners on Korean street, when there were not so many clothes stores like there are now. However, time changed and business was not as good as before, Mr. Chong decided to change his store into a Korean grocery store. Still having family in Korea and keeping connections with Korean factories, Mr. Chong therefore get his goods and products directly from Korea and at a reasonable price range. Nonetheless, running a business is never an easy job to do. Mr. Chong explains, “Most of the stuff in my store only has one or two dollars’ profit; which means that I could only hope to sell a large amount of them just to cover my spending and living.”

Despite the rising popularity of Korean culture, Mr. Chong’s grocery store does not get much benefit from it. Many of his customers are still the housewives who look for something special for their dinner. Although the store provides traditional Korean clothes, having Korean flat chopsticks, and with its many

specialties, Mr. Chong is just hoping to sell the everyday groceries little by little in order to continue his business.

These are what you can also find in Mr. Chong's store:

Ginseng, Korean traditional flat Chopsticks, and Ginseng Chewing Gum.



#### Find Some Treasure in the Korean Grocery Store

"The pamelote tea" is definitely the top one hot choice. You don't have to go to expensive supermarkets at department stores to find one, but you can pick up here. The pamelote tea is good for throat, and it tasted very nice as juice with peels. Also, there are different sugar flavor you can choose from: some add honey while some are sugar free. There are more treasure to be found in Mr. Chong's Korean grocery store—Korean stinky rice cake, ginseng, ginseng chewing gum, tradition clothes, and special flat chopsticks and so on. Spend some time there and you won't be disappointed!



#### A Kind Korean Street Clothes Boss—Mr.

#### Chu

Running a business completely

Mr. Chu was preparing to go home.

different from the grocery store, Mr. Chu is actually one of the clothing store owners in Korean street. After being rejected by quite some shy owners, we had Mr. Chu, who generously accepted our interview. He, too, is a Korean Chinese. "Don't



assume that all the bosses here are Korean or Korean Chinese. In fact, only half of them are Korean or Korean Chinese while the other half are Taiwanese,” Mr. Chu said it in a heroic way. Actually, Mr. Chu does look and sounds like a hero. He is tall and strong in his own way; in fact, for one who is over fifty, with a white-gray hair covering his head, Mr. Chu still looks charming and young. Or maybe that is just an illusion created by his wearing of the light blue jeans and stripe T-shirt.

When we were having our interview, in came a lady who was another storeowner and a good friend of Mr. Chu. The lady talked about having Mr. Chu’s wife accompany her to have some fun. Mr. Chu thus explains, “Owners here are friends. Although the clothes we sell are alike, we don’t compete but try to do well with our own business.” Not surprisingly, we found out later on that Mr. Chu was the chair of the Committee on Korean Street Management.

In the store, and in fact in every other store in Korean street, the clothes are not appealing to young people. “This is because we don’t sell our clothes to young people,” said Mr. Chu. By listening to his explanation, we then understand



that their clothes are mainly be sold to south Taiwan’s merchants. People still wants to pay extra money for Korean clothes, instead of cheap Mainland China made clothes is because of the good fabric and printing quality Korean clothes have.

Later on, we asked Mr. Chu if he wanted to sell young generation’s stuff. He paused and recalled himself, “When I was young, I had ambition. I lent a floor in a department store. Added promoting fee and all the other, I spent six million dollars. I thought I could attract the crowd by commercial, but in vain.” Now, Mr. Chu is someone who just simply wants to have a good business in Korean street.

However, we had fun shopping in Korean street. If you look carefully, you may still find cheap and good-looking clothes for yourself. Or you may not know that one day, these owners in Korean street will start to do business with young people and sell the trendy stuff. Who knows?

## **Promotion for Lohua night market**

Lohua night market is promoted by the government as one of an international sightseeing tour. The sidewalk around the night market is still under construction. However, in around Lohua night market, there is no movable bathroom for visitors to use. The service for movable bathrooms would be a part of promotion in the future development. Therefore, in the present visitors need to go to the nearby stores to use the bathroom.

The parking lots are not far away from the night market. Often people need to pay thirty dollars NT per hour to park their car, but if the visitors wanted to save the money of parking cars, taking the bus or the MRT would be a preferable choice. Although the location of Lohua night market is very convenience, there is still a space for the government to promote. Nowadays, the government tries to promote Lohua night market as an international sightseeing night market. The potential development of Lohua night market is predictable in a long term.

## **Future development**

Of course, the development of the mixed culture of Lohua has successfully enhanced the amount of the visitors, but the government should also think about the hygiene problems like the dirty of the food restaurants, the lack of the rubbish bins and the restrooms in the street market, and the problem of the sewerage; otherwise, it

will destroy the image of the night market in visitors' mind.

In conclusion, with its distinctive features of multicultural mix of the business in the commercial circle, the multinational food culture in the night market, and the influence of the humane art in the area of Lohua, the Lohua commercial circle is bound to thrive on. We hope that it will continue to produce more warm human contacts and stories like those we experienced.