

## Brief Summary of Korean History

### Basic Overview:

- 8000 BC: earliest known Korean pottery
- 2333 BC: Gochoson (Old Choson)
- 3rd Century BC: Old Choson dynasty divides into many states
- 1st Century BC: Three Kingdoms (Koguryo, Silla, and Paekche) founded
- 676 AD: Silla unifies whole country under 'Unified Silla'
- 926 AD: Koryo dynasty takes over
- 1392 AD: Choson Dynasty established
- 1910 AD: Japan annexes Korea
- 1945 AD: Japanese defeated in World War II
- 1948: Korea divided into North and South

### Detailed Overview:

- **8000 BC: earliest known Korean pottery**

Evidence of Mesolithic Pit-Comb Ware culture or Yungimun Pottery is found throughout the peninsula. Agricultural societies and the earliest forms of social-political complexity emerged in the Mumun Pottery Period (c. 1500-300 BC).

- **2333 BC: Gochoson (Old Choson)**

Gochoson was the first Korean kingdom. According to medieval-era records, Gochoson was founded in by the legendary ruler Tangun (sometimes spelled Dangun), on the principle of 'Hongik Ingan' - 'to live for the benefit of all mankind'.

- **3rd Century BC: Old Choson dynasty divides into many states**

As the power of the Gochoson rulers declined, many smaller states sprang from its former territory, such as Puyo, Okjo, and Tongye.

- **1st Century BC: Three Kingdoms (Koguryo, Silla, and Paekche) founded**

**Koguryo** was founded in 37 BC by Chumong. It was the first Korean kingdom to adopt Buddhism. It reached its zenith in the fifth century. expanding into Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, and also the present-day Seoul area.

Koguryo defeated massive Chinese invasions in 598 - 614, and continued to repel the Chinese Tang dynasty. It was conquered by an allied Silla-Tang forces in 668.

**Paekche's** first king was Onjo, who began his reign in 18 BC. The kingdom expanded its territory and became a significant political and military power.

Paekche played a fundamental role in transmitting cultural developments, such as writing, Buddhism, iron-making, advanced pottery, and ceremonial burial into ancient Japan. Paekche was defeated by a coalition of Silla and Tang Dynasty forces in 660.

According to legend, the kingdom of **Silla** began with the unification of six chiefdoms in 57 BC. It later emerged as a sea power responsible for destroying Japanese pirates. Silla artifacts, including gold metalwork, are unique in the Korean peninsula for their exquisite and detailed craftsmanship.

- **676 AD: Silla unifies whole country under 'Unified Silla'**

China attempted to establish a permanent presence in Korea but was driven out. China then invaded Silla

in 674 but was defeated in the north. By 676, the unification of Korea was complete.

Unified Silla was a time when Korean arts flourished dramatically and Buddhism became a significant part of Silla culture. Buddhist monasteries such as Bulguksa are examples of advanced Korean architecture and Buddhist influence. State-sponsored art and architecture from this period includes Hwangnyongsa Temple, Bunhwangsa Temple, and Seokguram Grotto, a World Heritage Site.

- **926 AD: Koryo dynasty takes over**

"Koryo" is a short form of "Koguryo" and the source of the country's English language name "Korea." During this period laws were codified, and a civil service system was introduced. Buddhism flourished, and spread throughout the peninsula. The development of a celadon industry flourished in 12th and 13th century. The publication of the *Tripitaka Koreana* on 80,000 wooden blocks and the invention of the world's first movable-metal-type printing press in the 13th century attest to Koryo's cultural achievements. In 1231 the Mongols began campaigns against Korea and after 25 years of struggle, the Korean royal family relented by signing a treaty. For the following 80 years Koryo survived, but became a vassal of the Mongol-ruled Yuan Dynasty in China.

- **1392 AD: Choson Dynasty established**

Choson Dynasty was established by the general Yi Seong-gye in a largely bloodless coup. The capital was moved to Seoul. Confucianism replaced Buddhism as the national religion.

Choson was a time of great advances in science and culture. King Sejong the Great (1418-1450) invented and promulgated Hangul, the Korean alphabet.

Several major invasion forces (Japan in the 16th century, Manchuria in 17th century) were repelled, and nearly 200 years of peace followed. The economy was stable, but the royal court became lax, and the burden of heavy taxes became great.

- **1910 AD: Japan annexes Korea**

The rapidly modernizing Japan had been trying to force Korea to open its ports since the last 19th century, and gradually increased its influence, first renaming Korea, the 'Korean Empire', then making it a protectorate, and finally annexing it altogether.

European-styled transport and communication networks were established across the nation. The Japanese removed the Choson hierarchy, and destroyed part of the Korean Palace. Various uprisings were suppressed. After the outbreak of World War II, Japan attempted to exterminate Korea as a nation. Korean culture was made illegal and the language was banned.

- **1945 AD: Japanese defeated in World War II**

After Japan's defeat, Korea was divided into two occupation zones, with the United States administering the southern half of the peninsula and the Soviet Union taking over the area north of the 38th parallel. The division was meant to be temporary, and the intention was to return a unified Korea back to its people.

- **1948: Korea divided into North and South**

The politics of the Cold War resulted in the 1948 establishment of two separate nations with diametrically opposed political, economic, and social systems. On June 25, 1950, by its resolution 82[29] the Security Council of the United Nations recognised the Republic of Korea (South Korea) as the sole legal government of Korea. In same month the Korean War broke out when North Korea breached the 38th parallel line to invade the South, ending any immediate hope of a peaceful reunification.

- **1953 - present: South Korea develops while the North declines**

North Korea was left under communist rule after the armistice of 1953, and to this day remains a poor and troubled nation. Thanks to economic reforms begun in the 1960s, South Korea is now one of the top ten global exporters, and at the forefront of the IT, electronics, shipping, and steel industries. It has been host to the 1988 Seoul Olympics, the 2002 Soccer World Cup, and is to host the G20 summit in November 2010.