

Ancient history/pre-history:

Peoples speaking languages that were ancestors of modern Korea came from North Asia in prehistoric times. Originally they made their living by hunting and collecting wild animals and plants. Many already lived in small villages and made pottery. About 5500 years ago, groups of the food collecting people began to cultivate millet, then various kinds of beans including soy. As early as 2700 b.c., rice began to appear in the southern parts of Korea. It was the first of many things borrowed from the developing civilization of neighboring China. By 1500 bronze making techniques were imported from China followed by iron about 1000 years later. Developed agriculture and good metal tools produced more food and farmer populations grew steadily. By about 400 b.c. Korean farmers migrated across the Sea of Japan (called the Eastern Sea by Koreans) to southern Japan. This was the beginning of farming villages in Japan and much of the modern Japanese population is descended from these immigrants. The Japanese and Korean people are really close cousins.

Several rich Korean kingdoms grew up in the first two millennia a.d. Shilla (668-935) occupied what is now South Korea. Its kings established Buddhism as the official state religion, but Confucian scholars and ideas also entered Korea. Near the southeastern city of Kyongju stand huge artificial mounds. They are the burial places for the members of the Shilla royal dynasty and they are loaded with gold and gems, especially jade.

The Korean Peninsula was inhabited from the Lower Paleolithic about 400,000-500,000 years ago. Archeological evidence indicates that the presence of modern humans in northeast Asia dates to 39,000 years ago. The earliest known Korean pottery dates to around 8000 BC, and the Neolithic period began before 6000 BC, followed by the Bronze Age around 800 BC, and the Iron Age begins around 400 BC. Korea is considered to be one of the oldest countries in the world.

In the legend, the Gojoseon (Old Joseon) kingdom was founded in northern Korea and Manchuria by 2333 BC. The Gija Joseon was founded in 12th century BC, whose existence became a controversy today. The Jin state forms in southern Korea in the 3rd century BC. Gojoseon was invaded by Han dynasty in the 2nd century BC which resulted in the fall of Gojoseon later led to successor warring states, Proto-Three Kingdoms period spans the later Iron Age. Since 1st century, Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla grew to control the peninsula and Manchuria as the Three Kingdoms (57 BC – 668 AD) until the unification by Silla in 676. In 698, Dae Jo-yeong established Kingdom of Balhae, which led to the North South States Period (698–926).

In the late 9th century, Silla was divided into the Later Three Kingdoms (892–936), which ended with the unification of the Goryeo Dynasty. During the Goryeo period, laws were codified, a civil service system was introduced, and Buddhism flourished.

In 1392, General Yi Seong-gye established the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910) after a coup. King Sejong the Great (1418–1450) implemented numerous administrative, social, and economic reforms, established royal authority in the early years of the dynasty, and promulgated Hangul, the Korean alphabet.

In 18th century, Korea was faced with internal strife, power struggles, international pressure, and rebellions at home, and the Joseon Dynasty declined rapidly in the late 19th century. In 1897, Korean Empire (1897–1910) succeeded Joseon Dynasty. However, Imperial Japan forced the Korean Empire to sign the Eulsa Treaty and in 1910 annexed the Korean Empire.

Korean resistance was manifested in the widespread nonviolent March 1st Movement of 1919 during the occupation. Thereafter the greater resistance movements, coordinated by the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea in exile, were largely active in neighboring Manchuria, China and Siberia.

After the liberation in 1945, the partition of Korea created the modern two states of North and South Korea. In 1948, new governments were established; the nominally Capitalist South Korea ("Republic of Korea") and

Communist North Korea ("Democratic People's Republic of Korea") divided at the 38th parallel. The unresolved tensions of the division surfaced in the Korean War of 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea.

Prehistory

- **400th to 500th millennium BC:** Beginning of the Paleolithic period.
- **8th millennium BC:** Beginning of the Mesolithic Jeulmun pottery period.
- **35th century BC:** Appearance of Pit-Comb Ware culture, beginning of the Middle Jeulmun pottery period.
- **15th century BC:** Beginning of the Mumun pottery period.
- **900 BC~800 BC:** Beginning of the Bronze Age.
- **800 BC:** Beginning of the Liaoning bronze dagger culture.
- **400 BC:** Beginning of the Iron Age.
- **300 BC:** Establishment of Jin in southern Korean peninsula.

Proto-Three Kingdoms

- **238 BC:** Establishment of Buyeo.
- **200 BC:** Establishment of Samhan confederacies.
- **195 BC:** Establishment of Wiman Joseon.
- **108 BC:** Han Dynasty destroys Wiman Joseon, establishing four commanderies in northern Korean Peninsula.