KR

HISTORY COURSE

Korean History

Korean history from prehistory to the present, with every date, figure and claim traced to its source.

11 Chapters

Philip Osztromok

Generated with Claude

KOREAN HISTORY

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Korean History

Course 1 · Chapter 1 · Why Korean History? Scope, Sources & Names

This course follows the Korean peninsula from the earliest evidence to the present. Before the first kingdom comes four practical questions: what the course covers, how the story is divided into periods, how anyone knows it, and what to call things. Getting those four right makes every later chapter easier to read.

> **How this chapter was checked**
>
> The facts come from five Wikipedia articles: History of Korea, Names of Korea, Romanization of Korean, Veritable Records of the Joseon dynasty and Gwanggaeto Stele, plus Geography of Korea for the map facts. Where I read only part of an article, I say which part. The Joseon-records article and the stele article were summarised by a tool, so exact wording may differ from the page. My own material is marked "mine" and is unverified. I read no sites from North Korea.

Scope: What the Course Covers

Up to the division of 1945 to 1948 the course follows the whole peninsula, because Goguryeo, Baekje, Silla, Goryeo and Joseon were not "northern" or "southern" states. After the division it follows mainly South Korea. Chapter 9 gives the division and North Korea one short chapter drawn from open sources and no more. The course tells the story in order. It does not repeat the detail already in *Korean Political History I* and *Korean Political History II*, and it gives literature, drama, cookery and the alphabet to their own courses (for example *Korean Literature* and *Korean Alphabet 1*).

The Land

The Geography of Korea article gives an area of 223,179 km² including islands (220,847 km² for the peninsula alone), compared in the article with the United Kingdom (244,100 km²). It gives the peninsula as "approximately" 1,000 km north to south and 300 km east to west, with a coastline of 8,460 km and 3,960 nearby islands. "Mountains cover 70 percent of Korea", the highest peak being Mount Paektu at 2,744 m. The Yalu (Amnok) and Tumen rivers form the

northern border; the Yellow Sea lies to the west, the East China Sea and Korea Strait to the south, and the Sea of Japan (East Sea) to the east. Most large rivers flow west, with the Nakdong an exception flowing south. Why it matters: a peninsula next to China, with Japan across a strait, was always in contact with both. That is my framing, not a quotation from the article.

The Periods

The infobox and lead of the History of Korea article give these divisions. I read the lead and the prehistory and ancient sections; the Goryeo and Joseon sections were cut off, so the dates for those come from the infobox only.

Period	Dates (article)	Course chapter
Palaeolithic	700,000 to 8000 BC (infobox); "began roughly half a million years ago" (lead)	2
Neolithic	8000 to 1500 BC	2
Bronze Age	1500 to 300 BC	2
Gojoseon	2333 to 108 BC	2
Three Kingdoms	57 BC to 668 AD	3
Northern and Southern States	698 to 926	4
Later Three Kingdoms	892 to 936	4
Goryeo	918 to 1392	5
Joseon	1392 to 1897	6 and 7
Korean Empire	1897 to 1910	7
Japanese rule	1910 to 1945	8

Hedged by the article

The 2333 BC start for Gojoseon comes from a founding story, which the article calls "mythic" and says has no supporting evidence. The article also says "No fossil proven to be Homo erectus has been found" on the peninsula, though one candidate has been reported. The earliest known Korean pottery is dated "around 8000 BC". Treat early dates as claims, not facts.

How We Know

- **Archaeology.** For prehistory the article leans on settlements, bronze objects and tombs. For Gojoseon it cites the *Guanzi*, a Chinese text, as containing the "first written historical record on Gojoseon".
- **Later chronicles.** The *Samguk yusa* is the main source for the Gojoseon founding story. The History of Korea article dates it to 1281. Earlier chapters of *Korean Literature* gave "around 1280" and 1285 from other articles, so the date is a disagreement between sources, not settled here. The *Samguk sagi* is a mid-twelfth-century history (1145 or 1146, depending on the article, per *Korean Literature 2*).
- **Inscriptions.** The Gwanggaeto Stele was erected in 414 by Jangsu for his father, Gwanggaeto the Great of Goguryeo, near the tomb at Ji'an, Jilin Province, China. The article gives its height as about 6.39 m and says the inscription is "written exclusively in Classical Chinese". Disputes about its reading are in the next box.
- **Court records.** The Veritable Records (*sillok*) of the Joseon dynasty are, per the article, "thought to be the longest continual documentation of a single dynasty in the world". The lead gives 1392 to 1865 and 1,893 volumes; the article's own list runs on to the reign that ended in 1910, so the end date is inconsistent within the page. Historians kept daily records and could not be overruled; copies were stored in several places; the 1592 to 1598 Japanese invasions destroyed all but the Jeonju copy. The records of the last two kings are treated separately as controversial because of Japanese interference. The article says the records are in UNESCO's Memory of the World registry but gives no year.

A stele that two countries read differently

The article reports that most Japanese scholars (notably Masatomo Suga) read the 391 passage as saying the Wa crossed the sea and subjugated Baekje and Silla. Chŏng In-bo (1955) read the subjects differently, and the article says many Korean scholars reject the Japanese reading, citing missing characters and absent punctuation. Lee Jin-hui (1972)

claimed the Japanese army altered the stele; Wang Jianqun and Xu Jianxin found no evidence of intentional fabrication. The article's character counts also differ (1,802 versus 1,775). This course shows each claim with its owner and does not choose.

The Names of Korea

- **Joseon.** The name of Gojoseon, "Old Joseon", used to distinguish it from the later dynasty; the name was revived in 1392 by the new dynasty.
- **Goryeo.** A shortened form of Goguryeo, first used in the fifth century. The Goryeo dynasty regarded itself as Goguryeo's successor. The Names of Korea article calls the English "Korea" an exonym derived from Goryeo. Marco Polo's "Cauli" came from Chinese Gāolí. The modern spelling "Korea" first appears in late seventeenth-century writing by Hendrick Hamel, and "Corea" remained in use in the US and UK until the early Japanese occupation.
- **Samhan.** "Three Han": southern confederacies at first, then the Three Kingdoms from the seventh century, and by Goryeo a common name for all Korea.
- **Daehan Jeguk (1897).** The Korean Empire. Under Japanese rule the name reverted to Joseon (Chōsen). The Provisional Government used Daehanminguk, which South Korea adopted in 1948.
- **Today.** South Korea uses *Hanguk* for itself or Korea as a whole. North Korea uses *Chosŏn*. The article adds that from January 2024 North Korea began calling South Korea *Hanguk* and *Daehanminguk*, citing Daily NK, which is one source and a news site I did not check.

Spelling Korean Names in English

The Romanization of Korean article names McCune–Reischauer (1939; adopted by South Korea in 1948, modified in 1984) and Revised Romanization, announced on 7 July 2000 as South Korea's official system. It describes Yale as the standard for linguists but is inconsistent about when it began (1942, 1950s or 1968). Names appear in several forms for these reasons, according to the article: mismatches between spelling and pronunciation (Silla is written 신라 but pronounced sil-la), the shortage of vowel letters in the Latin alphabet, early Western and Japanese-era conventions, and personal choice. The surname 이 (李) is "variously romanized as Lee, Yi, I, or Rhee". The article does not mention Park or Bak; I know from general knowledge that 박 is Bak in Revised Romanization and Pak in McCune–Reischauer, and that Park is a common personal spelling. That last point is mine and unverified here.

This course uses Revised Romanization for places, dynasties and people (Goryeo, Joseon, Gwanggaeto), and gives the other common spelling in brackets when a source uses it. Where a person's own spelling is well known (Syngman Rhee, for example), I use that and say so.

What the Sources Left Open

- The date of the *Samguk yusa* (1280, 1281 or 1285 across three articles).
- The end date and volume count of the Joseon Veritable Records within one article, and the year of the UNESCO listing.
- When the Yale system began (1942, 1950s or 1968).
- Who should be credited for the 391 inscription passage, and what it says.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Using the periods table, say which period each of these falls in: the Gwanggaeto Stele (414), the founding of Joseon (1392), the March First period (1919). Then name which of the table's dates the article hedges.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Pick two of the four kinds of source (archaeology, later chronicles, inscriptions, court records). For each, say what it can tell a historian, one reason to be careful with it, and one example from this chapter.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Explain in three sentences why "Korea", "Goryeo" and "Goguryeo" are linked, and why you might see one king's name spelled several ways. Mark which sentence is from a source and which is your own reading.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Scope:** whole peninsula to 1945, then mainly South Korea; one factual chapter on the division and the North
- **Periods:** Gojoseon, Three Kingdoms, Northern and Southern States, Goryeo (918 to 1392), Joseon (1392 to 1897), Korean Empire, Japanese rule (1910 to 1945)
- **Sources:** archaeology, *Samguk sagi*, *Samguk yusa*, the Gwanggaeto Stele, the Veritable Records
- **Names:** Joseon, Goryeo, Samhan, Daehan; "Korea" derives from Goryeo
- **Spelling:** Revised Romanization (2000) here; older sources use McCune–Reischauer
- **Habits:** treat early dates as claims; show disagreements with their owners; mark your own reading

Next: Korean History 2 starts with prehistory and Gojoseon, and with how the Dangun story has been used.

Korean History

Course 1 · Chapter 2 · Before the Kingdoms: Prehistory and Gojoseon

Korean history opens with two kinds of evidence that do not agree on much. Archaeology gives pottery, farming, bronze and tombs, with careful dates. Chronicles give a state called Gojoseon and a founder, Dangun, with a precise date that no excavation supports. This chapter keeps the two apart.

> **How this chapter was checked**
>
> The facts come from the Wikipedia articles Gojoseon, Dangun and Mumun pottery period, read through a summarising tool, so exact wording may differ from the pages. I read the Gojoseon article up to its late references (the last 9,222 characters were not read); the other two articles were read in full. Dates for the periods come from History of Korea, as in Korean History 1. Where an article contradicts itself I say so. My own material is marked "mine" and is unverified. I read no sites from North Korea.

Prehistory: What the Ground Shows

History of Korea (as read for Korean History 1) says the Palaeolithic "began roughly half a million years ago" in its lead, but also that "No fossil proven to be Homo erectus has been found" on the peninsula, though one candidate has been reported. The earliest known Korean pottery is dated "around 8000 BC".

Period	Dates (Mumun article)	What the article says
Jeulmun	c. 8000 to 1500 BC	"hunting, gathering, and small-scale cultivation of plants"
Early Mumun	c. 1500 to 850 BC	rice appears beside earlier millet farming; megalithic burials begin
Middle Mumun	c. 850 to 550 BC	plain pottery dominates "especially 850–550 BC"; wet-field features suggest paddy rice in the south

Period	Dates (Mumun article)	What the article says
Late Mumun	550 to 300 BC	bronze objects become the most valued prestige goods "from about 300 BC"; iron tools increase after 300 BC

The article adds that rice "was not the dominant crop" in the Early and Middle Mumun, when millets, barley, wheat and legumes were also grown. Late Middle Mumun megalithic burials on the southern coast held bronze daggers, jade and red-burnished vessels. It says the Bronze Age label "may be misleading".

> **Two dates for the first bronze**
>
> The Mumun article's lead says local bronze production is not proven until "approximately the 13th century BCE". Its Middle Mumun section says bronze production "probably began" in southern Korea around 700 to 550 BC. The article does not reconcile them. I have not found which refers to which region; it is a question for a source on Korean archaeology.

Gojoseon: The Record

The Gojoseon article calls it "the first kingdom on the Korean Peninsula", with *Go* ("old") added to tell it apart from the Joseon of 1392. The same article carries a [citation needed] tag on its claim that Gojoseon "possessed the most advanced culture in the Korean Peninsula at the time", and quotes Byington: "it is entirely unclear as to whether it was a state-level polity". The two statements sit in one article, and I leave them side by side.

- **Written references.** The *Guanzi* records trade with the state of Qi (the article gives no date for the text). The *Shanhaijing* places it "to the north of the Bohai Bay". The *Zhanguoce*, *Shanhaijing* and *Shiji* treat Joseon as a region until the *Shiji* calls it a country "from 195 BCE onwards".
- **Archaeology.** The article says Korean Bronze Age culture "derives from the Liaoning and Manchuria" but has "unique typology and styles", and that "mandolin-shaped daggers" suggest "the existence of Old Chosŏn dominions". That reading is the article's, and the Mumun article's caution about bronze applies to it.

- **Location.** Traditionally northern Korea. Since the 1980s and 1990s, the article says, South Korean scholarship has extended it into Manchuria, and research "has historically been strongly influenced by Japanese colonial legacies and modern Korean nationalism".

Gija, Wiman and the Han Conquest

- **Gija (Kija).** Said to have arrived in 1122 BCE after the Shang fell. The article says the earliest surviving Chinese record is the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* and the first Korean text is Kim Pusik's *Samguk sagi* (1145), which called the account uncertain. Many modern scholars deny Gija's historical existence.
- **Wiman (Wi Man).** A military officer of Yan origin who, the article says, usurped King Jun in 194 BCE and ruled from Wanggeom-seong.
- **Fall.** Wiman's grandson King Ugeo refused passage to Jin ambassadors and killed a Han envoy. Emperor Wu of Han attacked by land and sea; the forces coordinated poorly, but Wanggeom fell in 108 BCE and the Han set up the Four Commanderies in the western part of the former territory.
- **After.** The article says Old Joseon disintegrated by the first century BCE, and names Buyeo, Okjeo, Dongye and Goguryeo and Baekje (which arose from Buyeo) among its successors. Goguryeo destroyed the last commandery, Nakrang, in 313 CE.

> **The article disagrees with itself**
>
> The Wiman section says he fled the Han in 195 BCE; the wars section says King Jun appointed him to guard the frontier in 195 BCE and that he rebelled in 194 BCE. The lead says Wanggeom was the capital "from at least the 2nd century BCE", while the state-formation section says the capital moved to Pyongyang around 300 BCE. The Jin are dated to the fourth to second century BCE in the timeline and "by the 3rd century BCE" in the lead. I give each as the article states it and do not pick one. The article also carries a tag saying its neutrality "is disputed" (January 2023).

Dangun: The Story

As the Dangun article tells it, Hwanung, son of the Lord of Heaven Hwanin, came down to Taebaeksan with 3,000 followers and founded Sinsi. A tiger and a bear asked to become human; Hwanung gave them garlic and mugwort and told them to stay out of the sun for 100 days. The

tiger gave up, the bear became the woman Ungnyeo, and she and Hwanung had a son, Dangun Wanggeom. He built the walled city of Asadal near Pyongyang (the article says its location is disputed) and named the kingdom Joseon.

- **Earliest source.** The *Samguk yusa* (thirteenth century; the Gojoseon article gives 1281). It claims to cite the lost *Gogi* and China's *Book of Wei*, but the Dangun article says the surviving *Book of Wei* contains no Dangun records. Similar versions appear in the *Jewang ungi* and the early Joseon *Sejong sillok*. Korean Literature 2 covers these works as literature.
- **The date.** The *Tongguk tonggam* (1485) is the basis of the usual 2333 BC, tied to the fortieth year of Emperor Yao. The article notes that other sources give different regnal years for the start of Dangun's rule (the 50th, 1st and 25th years of Yao). It does not say who calculated 2333 BC.
- **Afterlife of the date.** The Dangi calendar, counting years from 2333 BC, was in official use in South Korea until 1961. 3 October is Gaecheonjeol, South Korea's National Foundation Day, a public holiday. North Korea dates the founding to the early thirtieth century BC; the article says that after a supposed tomb was excavated in 1994 it claimed Dangun was a real person.
- **Politics.** The article says Dangun is central to nationalism and was important to the independence movement under Japanese rule, and that Shin Chaeho elevated him. South Korean scholars treat Dangun Wanggeom as a high-priest-like head of Gojoseon society (the article's wording).

> **Another date, in the same article**
>
> The Dangun article dates his return to heaven to 15 March 4380 BC, about 2,000 years before the 2333 BC founding. That claim carries a [citation needed] tag, and the article's "Historical perception" section is tagged as lacking citations. I mention it only to show how far the story's numbers stretch.

What to Take from This

My own reading, unverified: the safest statement is the narrowest one. Archaeology shows farming, bronze working and burial customs from c. 1500 BC. Chinese texts mention a place called Joseon; the strongest dated events are Wiman's coup (194 BCE) and the fall of Wanggeom (108 BCE), and even those have internal conflicts. The Dangun story is a foundation

story with a long life, important for how Koreans have told their own history, but the article says there is no supporting evidence for it.

What the Sources Left Open

- Whether Gojoseon was a state, and where it was (Byington's remark; the north-Korea-versus-Manchuria disagreement).
- Whether Gija existed at all.
- When bronze working began (13th century BCE or c. 700 to 550 BC).
- Wiman's dates, Wanggeom's date as capital, and who calculated 2333 BC.
- How to date the Guanzi, which the article does not.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

From the Jeulmun and Mumun table, state in two sentences how life changed between 8000 and 300 BC on the peninsula, and name one point where the article hedges.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Make a short timeline from Gija (1122 BCE) to Nakrang (313 CE) using only dates in this chapter, and mark each one as a story, a claim, or a dated event the article states.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

The 2333 BC date has been used in a calendar, a holiday and two states' histories. Write four sentences on its career, marking which come from the Dangun article and which are your own reading.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Jeulmun:** c. 8000 to 1500 BC; **Mumun:** c. 1500 to 300 BC (early, middle, late)
- **Bronze:** 13th century BCE (lead) or c. 700 to 550 BC (body), unreconciled
- **Gojoseon:** "first kingdom" per the article; statehood unclear per Byington
- **Gija:** 1122 BCE, widely doubted; **Wiman:** 194 BCE; **fall of Wanggeom:** 108 BCE; **Nakrang destroyed:** 313 CE
- **Dangun:** first in the *Samguk yusa*; 2333 BC from the *Tongguk tonggam* (1485); Dangi calendar until 1961; Gaecheonjeol on 3 October
- **Habits:** separate dated events from stories; show where an article contradicts itself

Next: Korean History 3 follows Goguryeo, Baekje, Silla and Gaya, the Three Kingdoms that grew out of this world.

Korean History

Course 1 · Chapter 3 · The Three Kingdoms and Gaya

After the fall of Wanggeom (Korean History 2), the peninsula and parts of Manchuria were dominated for about seven centuries by three kingdoms, with a confederacy of small states, Gaya, between them. They fought each other, traded, and borrowed from China; one of them, Silla, ended the period by uniting most of the peninsula. This chapter follows the four, the war that helped break a Chinese dynasty, the arrival of Buddhism, and a rank system that governed who a person could be.

> **How this chapter was checked**
>
> The facts come from four Wikipedia articles: Three Kingdoms of Korea, Gaya confederacy, Goguryeo–Sui War and Bone-rank system, all read through a summarising tool, so exact wording may differ from the pages. The tool reported that it read the Three Kingdoms, Gaya and Sui-war texts in full and the bone-rank text in full; where it said a detail was "from general knowledge" I have left it out unless I say so. My own material is marked "mine" and is unverified. I read no sites from North Korea.

The Four at a Glance

State	Dates (infobox)	Notes from the articles
Goguryeo	37 BC to 668 AD	The article's first Chinese mention is 75 BCE; it expanded into Manchuria and destroyed Lelang (Nakrang) in 313; Gwanggaeto and Jangsu mark its peak in the fifth century
Baekje (Paekche)	18 BC to 660 AD	"founded as a member of the Mahan confederacy"; defeated by Gwanggaeto, moved its capital south; conquered in 660
Silla	57 BC to 935 AD	The article gives 57 BC as Silla's traditional founding, "citing Korean records"; allied with Tang China and then fought it for hegemony
Gaya (Kaya)	42 to 562	A confederacy in the Nakdong valley, "never unified"; often not counted among the Three Kingdoms

What the dates leave open

The article's body gives a founding date only for Silla; the Goguryeo and Baekje dates appear in the infobox without explanation. The period is "traditionally dated from 57 BC to 668 AD", but the article does not say why it ends at 668 (Goguryeo's fall) rather than 660 (Baekje's), and Silla's own end date (935) falls well after. The article also says the *Samguk sagi* records Silla as the earliest founded, "but other evidence suggests Silla was the last to centralize". I give the traditional dates as traditional.

Gaya

The Gaya article gives the traditional period as AD 42 to 532 in the lead and 42 to 562 in the infobox. Geumgwan Gaya, centred on modern Gimhae, was conquered in 532; Daegaya, centred on modern Goryeong, was the last independent polity and fell in 562. The Nakdong mouth had fertile plains, sea access and "rich iron deposits", and Gaya exported iron ore, iron armour and weapons to Baekje and to the Kingdom of Wa (Japan). Under pressure from Goguryeo the confederacy broke up between 391 and 412, though the last polities survived to 562.

- **Legend.** The thirteenth-century *Samguk yusa* says six eggs came down from heaven in AD 42; six boys hatched, and Suro became king of Geumgwan Gaya while the other five founded the remaining Gayas.
- **Fall.** Silla destroyed Takgitan Gaya in 529 and took half of Taksun Gaya's territory. Baekje-led conferences in 541 and 544 failed to hold the alliance together, and Silla conquered Daegaya in 562 as punishment for aiding Baekje.
- **A Silla link.** The article says the Silla figure Kim Yu-sin descended from King Guhae of Geumgwan Gaya.

A claim with owners: the "Mimana" outpost

The article says that in the twentieth century Japanese publicists, citing the *Nihon Shoki*, argued that Gaya (which they called Mimana) was a Japanese military outpost, and that "Japanese imperialists, nationalists and the press" advocated this to justify colonial rule. It says "there is no evidence to support this." It cites the historians Kenneth B. Lee and John Whitney Hall as rejecting the outpost theory, and a joint 2010 study sponsored by Japan and South Korea that agreed Kaya "had never been militarily colonized by ancient Japan". The article also has some internal date conflicts: it gives the formation of Gaya as the late

third century, the third and fourth centuries, and the second and third centuries in different places. I note them and do not resolve them.

War With the Sui

The Goguryeo–Sui War article gives the wars as 598 and 612 to 614 (with a joint pre-emptive invasion in 597 as background). The Sui, which had reunified China, sent very large armies against Goguryeo.

- **612.** Goguryeo pulled back behind the Liao River, and the fortress of Yodong held out; by June, no fortress had fallen. The Sui then turned to a Pyongyang campaign with a contingent "allegedly" of 305,000 and a navy of "some 120,000".
- **Salsu.** Ŭlchi Mundŏk (Eulji Mundeok) is credited with luring the Sui army deep into Goguryeo with feigned retreats and attacking at the Salsu River, "thought to be" the Chongchon. The article says only 2,700 of the 305,000 returned.
- **613 and 614.** The 613 invasion ended early when Yang Xuangan rebelled. In 614 Yeongyang offered peace and returned a captive, and Emperor Yang withdrew; the Goguryeo king never swore allegiance.
- **Effect.** The article calls the wars "one of the pivotal factors in the collapse of the dynasty"; widespread revolts followed, and the Duke of Tang proclaimed a new dynasty in 618.

The numbers are shaky

The infobox gives nominal Sui figures of 1,133,800 combat troops plus about 2,000,000 support troops in 612, from the *Book of Sui* and the *Samguk sagi*; a modern estimate by David A. Graff is 670,000. The 305,000 and 2,700 figures refer to the Pyongyang force and are not comparable with those. The article says strength and losses "may have been exaggerated by Tang dynasty historians", gives Goguryeo's losses as "Unknown", and shows "allegedly" in one place and the figure as plain fact in another. It also carries a "needs more citations" banner. Treat every figure as an account, not a count.

Buddhism

The Three Kingdoms article gives these dates: Goguryeo adopted Buddhism as a state religion in 372; Baekje received it from Goguryeo in 384 and made it a state religion in 552; Silla made it a

state religion in 528. The article is inconsistent on when it first reached Korea (the third century in one section, the fourth in another). It says Buddhism came "from India via Tibet and China"; I have not relied on the route, because the article gives no source for the Tibetan step. The kingdoms are the subject of later chapters on Buddhist art; here the point is that state adoption in the three kingdoms came in the fourth to sixth centuries according to the article.

Silla's Bone-Rank System

The Bone-rank system article describes a hereditary ladder that governed official status, marriage, the colour of garments and the largest dwelling or carriage a person could have. It gives no figures for the dwelling or carriage limits.

- **Sacred bone (*seonggol*).** The *Samguk sagi* places the rulers from Hyeokgeose to Jindeok here. The article says no record states what separated it from true bone, and that it was abolished under Muyeol.
- **True bone (*jingol*).** Could hold any post up to full minister and office rank up to *ibolchan*, the highest. After the sacred-bone rank ended, only true-bone holders could become king; the article says true-bone rule lasted 281 years, until Silla fell.
- **Head ranks.** Only 6, 5 and 4 are "attested", 6 being the highest; head 6 could reach office rank *achan* (sixth of 17 levels), head 5 *daenaema* (tenth) and head 4 *daesa* (twelfth).
- **Origin.** Lee Ki-baik (1984) thought it was probably adopted as administrative law from China, promulgated by King Beopheung in 520, and that it formalised existing bloodline segregation; McBride says it emerged in the sixth century as Silla absorbed neighbouring peoples. The article says the origins of the lower head ranks are "obscure and still debated".
- **End.** The article says Goryeo abolished the system entirely after Silla fell, and that its rigidity helped weaken Silla, though other factors mattered.

What to Take from This

My own reading, unverified: three things in these accounts recur in later chapters: neighbours in China and Japan shaping every kingdom's choices, a religion adopted by rulers before it is adopted by the many, and a rank system that decides who may do what. The sources do not draw those lines; I do.

What the Sources Left Open

- Why the Three Kingdoms period ends in 668 and not 660.
- The Goguryeo and Baekje founding dates (given only in the infobox).
- Gaya's start (three different centuries) and end (532 or 562).
- All of the Sui-war figures.
- When Buddhism first reached Korea (third or fourth century).
- The origin of the lower head ranks and how the sacred-bone rank differed from true bone.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Using the table, list the four states by end date, earliest first. Then say which end date is not explained in the article and why Gaya's two end dates (532 and 562) are not a contradiction.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Describe the 612 campaign in four sentences using only figures the chapter gives, and mark each figure as plain, "allegedly", "thought to be", or "nominal".

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Choose two ranks from the bone-rank system and explain, for each, what it allowed and what it did not. Then give one reason a historian would hesitate to describe the system as fixed from the start.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Goguryeo:** 37 BC to 668 AD (infobox); destroyed Lelang in 313; peak under Gwanggaeto and Jangsu
- **Baekje:** 18 BC to 660 AD; **Silla:** 57 BC (traditional) to 935 AD; **Gaya:** 42 to 562 (lead: 532)
- **Sui wars:** 598, 612 to 614; Salsu (Ŭlchi Mundŏk); the Sui fell and the Tang was proclaimed in 618
- **Buddhism:** Goguryeo 372, Baekje 384 (state 552), Silla 528 (state religion)
- **Bone rank:** sacred bone, true bone, head ranks 6, 5, 4; a possible start under King Beopheung in 520 (Lee Ki-baik)
- **Habits:** traditional dates are traditional; every war figure is an account; show a claim with its owner

Next: Korean History 4 follows the Silla–Tang alliance, unification, Balhae and the decline of Silla.

Korean History

Course 1 · Chapter 4 · Unified Silla and Balhae

In 668 Goguryeo fell to a Silla–Tang alliance. Within two years the allies were at war, and when it ended Silla held the peninsula south of the Taedong River while a new state, Balhae, rose in the north. This chapter follows the war, the Silla that came out of it, Balhae and the argument over whose history it is, and the rebellions that ended Silla in 935.

> **How this chapter was checked**
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> The facts come from four Wikipedia articles: Unified Silla, Balhae (the article is titled Parhae), Silla–Tang War and Later Three Kingdoms, all read through a summarising tool, so exact wording may differ from the pages. The tool read Unified Silla, Silla–Tang War and Later Three Kingdoms in full. For Balhae it read only the first 100,000 of about 219,650 characters, through the Goryeo subsection; I did not see the Culture, Society, Government, Military, Language, Economy or Controversies sections. Details the tool said came from general knowledge are left out or marked unverified. My own material is marked "mine". I read no sites from North Korea.

The Silla–Tang War

The article dates the war to 670 to 676 in the infobox and lead (a cited work in the article says Silla fought Tang "from 668 to 676"). After the two allies conquered Baekje and Goguryeo, the Tang placed the former kingdoms under its own administration. The article says Silla wanted the Tang out and itself protected from Tang control, and that Silla was angered because Emperor Taizong had promised Baekje and the lands south of Pyongyang in return for its help, but Gaozong "reneged". Revolts in former Goguryeo territory helped Silla, and loyalists of both fallen kingdoms joined its army.

Date	Event (as the article states it)
668	Conquest of Goguryeo, which "marked the end of the Three Kingdoms period"
669	First Goguryeo revolt
671	Silla drove Tang forces out of most of former Baekje

Date	Event (as the article states it)
Feb 675	Tang defeated Silla at Chiljung Fortress; the king sent an apologetic tribute mission and Gaozong withdrew troops to face Tibet
Sep 675	The *Samguk sagi* reports a Silla victory over Li Jinxing's 200,000 at Maeso, with 30,080 war horses captured
Nov 676	Silla won the naval battle of Gibeolpo (details unknown beyond the generals' names)

Contested or inconsistent in the article

The infobox says "Silla victory"; the lead says the conflict "ended in a truce". The Maeso account is heavily hedged: Kim Byeong-Hee reads it as Tang forces already retreating with no major battle, calls the 200,000 figure symbolic (the fortress could not have held 30,080 horses), and the *Zizhi Tongjian* suggests Tang held Maeso and omits a Silla win. The Cheonseong siege date is printed as September "765", almost certainly a typo for 675; its figures (1,400 Tang dead, 1,000 horses and 40 warships captured) are given without caveats though from the same contested sources. The article's own citation says Chinese histories claim Tang victories in 674 and 675 while Korean accounts report Chinese defeats. The Tang seat is "Liaoyang" in one section and "Liaodong" in another, and one general is Xue Rengui in the text and Liu Rengui in a citation. I report these as the article gives them.

The Settlement

- **Border.** Silla held the territory south of the Taedong River; Tang kept former Goguryeo land north of it. The article describes the line as running "from the mouth of the Taedong River in the west to the East Korea Bay".
- **Tang administration.** The Protectorate General to Pacify the East, based in Pyongyang, was set up for the former Goguryeo, with 9 commanderies, 42 prefectures and 100 counties. It was later moved to Liaodong (or Liaoyang), which the article calls "effectively the end of Tang designs on Sillan territory".
- **Relations.** Silla and Tang cut ties until the early eighth century, and Tang formally recognised Silla's sovereignty south of the Taedong in 736.

The Unified Silla article's summary of the unification names King Munmu as ordering the 660 attacks on Baekje, with Kim Yu-sin defeating Gyebaek. I have not checked the reign dates and cannot say whether the 660 attribution is exact; a source on the Silla kings would settle it.

Unified Silla

The Unified Silla article gives 668 to 935 ("lasted for 267 years"). The infobox splits it as "United Silla 668–892" and "Unified Silla (Later Silla) 892–935", while the body treats it as one period.

- **Capital.** Gyeongju (Seorabeol), which the article calls "the fourth-largest city in the world at the time".
- **Rule.** A small "bone clan" ruled a large population; officials were chosen by bone rank (Korean History 3) rather than examination, so the National Confucian University had little appeal for the nobility.
- **Art and religion.** The article calls it a golden age and cites Hwangnyongsa, Seokguram and the Emille Bell. Bulguksa was built in the mid-eighth century; the article gives no date for Seokguram. A woodblock-printed sutra is dated to 751 CE. Buddhism was the state religion.
- **Trade.** Silla dominated East Asian seas and trade in the eighth and ninth centuries, "most notably during the time of Chang Pogo" (the article's spelling). Cheonghaejin is not mentioned in the article.
- **A term in dispute.** North Korean historians reject "Unified Silla" and use "Late Silla", because in their view Goryeo first unified the Korean people. The article presents it as a contested framing.

Balhae

The infobox gives 698 to 926. The article says Tae Choyŏng (Da Zuorong) founded it in 698 and was first called King of Zhen (Jin) until 713, when the name became Parhae (Balhae); the Tang granted the ruler the title "Prince of Commandery of Bohai" in 713 (or 714) and formally recognised a kingdom in 762. It also notes that the *New Book of Tang* and *Old Book of Tang* disagree on who fled with a companion named Kŏlsa Piu, and that Tae Choyŏng and Tae Chungsang may be the same person; it leaves this unresolved.

> **Whose history is Balhae?**

The article presents competing claims, and I show each with its owner. **Korean scholars** (North and South) usually treat Balhae as a Korean state; they read the *Old Book of Tang*'s term *biezhong* ("separate kind") as "a branch of the Goguryeo people", point to a 727 or 728 Balhae envoy saying it had "recovered the lost land of Goguryeo", and note that Japanese records called it a "state of Go[gu]ryeo". **Chinese and Japanese researchers** read *biezhong* as "distinct from Goguryeo"; Chinese scholars say the Mohe formed the majority and treat it as a provincial power with autonomy. **Russian scholars** are divided: some place it in Manchurian history and some say it was neither Korean nor Chinese. The *Samguk sagi*'s author Kim Pusik did not consider Balhae Korean. The article quotes Kim and Min Kyounghyoun on Chinese and Korean historians "alternatively regard[ing]" it as one or the other, "based on intrinsically subjective positions". I do not choose.

- **Population mix.** Sloane: the royalty and upper class were Goguryeo and the majority Mohe. Korean scholars: a Goguryeo ruling class and a Malgal (Mohe) population; a minority hold that it was entirely Goguryeo descendants. Estimates: about 500,000 (the *Old Book*, 100,000 households); 1.5 to 4 million (Crossley, as the article gives modern estimates).
- **Foreign relations.** 732: a Balhae naval force attacked Dengzhou. 733: a joint Tang–Silla attack failed after a blizzard, with half of a 100,000-strong army said to have died. 734: Silla attacked without success. 735: Tang allowed Silla troops in the Paegang region. 911: Silla allied with Balhae against the Khitans; 925: Silla allied with the Khitans instead.
- **Fall.** Abaoji's Khitan forces captured Buyeo and besieged the capital Shangjing, and the king surrendered. The infobox dates the fall to 14 January 926; the body dates the Buyeo siege to 14 February, six days before the capital was besieged, which would put the fall in late February. The article says Balhae's independence ended in 929 and it was absorbed into the Liao in 936.
- **Refugees.** The crown prince Tae Kwanghyŏn and many elites fled to Goryeo. Estimates: 120,600 (Park Jong-gi), 100,000 to 200,000 (Korean historians generally), no more than 100,000 (Crossley). The article puts 120,600 at "approximately 6.3%" of Goryeo's roughly 2 million, which works out nearer 6.0%.
- **Naming.** The article lists Balhae among the "Northern and Southern States" of Korea and says "modern Korean scholars usually consider Parhae a Korean state" on that basis. It adds that Jee, Kim and Jun argue that the choice of transliteration "inevitably entails a degree of modern political projection".

The Slide Into the Later Three Kingdoms

The Unified Silla article says rebel groups and factions in the newly conquered territories made the state unstable, leading to the Later Three Kingdoms in the late ninth century, but it describes no specific rebellions. The Later Three Kingdoms article says its dates "are loosely defined and differ across academic sources": 889 (the first major rebellions), 892 (Kyŏn Hwŏn captures Gwangju and founds Later Baekje at Jeonju) or 900 (Later Baekje proclaimed a kingdom) for the start, and 935 (Gyeongsun, the last Silla king, surrenders to Goryeo) or 936 (Goryeo conquers Later Baekje) for the end. Its sidebar gives Taebong (Later Goguryeo) as 901 to 918 and Goryeo as 918 to 1392, but the article describes no event for either, so Gungye and Wang Geon belong to Korean History 5. The article's sidebar also lists Jeongan (938 to 986) inside a period that ends in 936, spells Later Baekje two ways, and says most of the article was copied from worldhistory.org, so I rely on it only for those dates.

What to Take from This

My own reading, unverified: the same geographic fact decides much of this chapter. The Taedong line left Silla with the south and its capital in the southeast, and left the north to a state that both Koreans and Chinese now claim. The article shows the claims, not a resolution.

What the Sources Left Open

- Who won the Silla–Tang War: "Silla victory" or "a truce", and what happened at Maeso.
- Which king ordered the 660 attack on Baekje.
- Balhae's ethnic and political identity, its population, and its fall date.
- Whether Balhae's people were Goguryeo, Mohe, or a mixture, and what share of each.
- The date of Seokguram, and the specific rebellions that ended Silla.
- The start and end of the Later Three Kingdoms (889, 892 or 900; 935 or 936).

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Using the Silla–Tang table, write a four-line account of the war from 668 to 676. Mark which dates the article treats as firm and which it hedges or contradicts.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

State the Korean, Chinese and Russian positions on Balhae in one sentence each, naming the evidence each side uses, and then say what "Late Silla" versus "Unified Silla" tells you about whose history is being told.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Find four places where this chapter's articles contradict themselves (dates, figures or labels). For each, say how you would try to settle it and what you would not conclude without a further source.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Silla–Tang War:** 670 to 676; Tang left south of the Taedong; recognised Silla in 736
- **Unified Silla:** 668 to 935; capital Gyeongju; golden age of Buddhist art; bone-rank rule
- **Balhae:** 698 to 926; Tae Choyŏng; Tang recognition 762; fell to the Khitans; refugees to Goryeo
- **Balhae claims:** Korean (Goguryeo successor), Chinese (Mohe majority, provincial), Russian (divided)
- **Later Three Kingdoms:** loosely 889 or 892 to 935 or 936
- **Habits:** a "victory" and a "truce" can be the same war; every fall date and head-count is an account

Next: Korean History 5 follows Wang Geon and Goryeo, from 918 to the Mongol period.

Korean History

Course 1 · Chapter 5 · Goryeo

Goryeo (918 to 1392) lasted nearly as long as Silla and gave the world its English name for Korea (Korean History 1). It ran an examination system, patronised Buddhism on a huge scale, made the celadon that is still its best-known product, fought the Khitans and Mongols, and spent about eighty years as a Mongol vassal. This chapter follows those threads and the coup that ended it.

How this chapter was checked

The facts come from five Wikipedia articles: Goryeo, Taejo of Goryeo, Mongol invasions of Korea, Tripitaka Koreana and Goryeo celadon, all read through a summarising tool, so exact wording may differ from the pages. The tool read the Taejo, Mongol-invasions (apart from its last 3,019 characters) and celadon articles in full. For Goryeo it read the first 100,000 of about 243,588 characters, through the early Mongol period, and did not see the Gongmin reform details, the "Last reform" and "Fall" sections, or the Government, Society and Culture sections (headings only). For the Tripitaka Koreana it read the first 100,000 of about 121,197 characters. Details the tool said came from general knowledge are left out or marked unverified. My own material is marked "mine". I read no sites from North Korea.

Founding and Unification

- **Wang Geon.** The Taejo article says he was born in 877 (a [citation needed] tag) at Songak (modern Kaesong) into a maritime merchant family of Goguryeo descent, and calls the claim that his grandfather was a Tang emperor's son "hagiographical". He served Gungye of Taebong and became prime minister in 913.
- **918.** On 24 to 25 July 918 four Taebong generals installed him as king; he renamed the state Goryeo and moved the capital to Gaegyeong (Kaesong) the next year. The Goryeo article says the generals chose him after the "erratic" Gungye was deposed.
- **Unification.** After a defeat at Gongsan in 927, Silla's last king Gyeongsun gave up the throne to him in 935. Later Baekje was conquered in 936 with an army of 87,500, which the Goryeo article calls a "true national unification".

- **Balhae refugees.** After the Khitans overran Balhae in 926 (Korean History 4), Wang Geon welcomed its refugees and treated them as relatives; he was hostile to the Khitans, and in 942 exiled Liao envoys and starved their camels. He died on 4 July 943, aged 66.

The article gives the Ten Injunctions only one sentence and does not state their contents, so I do not describe them. The Taejo article also has gaps of its own: the sons list shows "Wang Uk" twice, and one sentence about Kyŏn Hwŏn being "treated like Taejo's father" does not square with the father's given dates (850 to 897).

Government and the Examination

The Goryeo article says the civil service examination (*gwageo*) was introduced in 958 under Gwangjong, on the advice of Shuang Ji, and based on the Tang imperial examination; it lasted until 1894. The article's infobox gives a population of "N/A" and then 3,000,000 to 5,000,000. Compare Silla, where Korean History 3 and 4 showed bone rank deciding office: the examination is the article's route for talent outside hereditary rank, though I read nothing about how many people actually passed.

Buddhism, Printing and Celadon

- **Buddhism.** The state religion, with 70 temples in the capital in the eleventh century (Goryeo article).
- **The Tripitaka Koreana.** The Tripitaka article calls it "the oldest intact version of the Chinese Buddhist canon". An earlier set was carved from 1011 to 1087 and destroyed by fire in the Mongol invasions in 1232 (the Mongol-invasions article says only that the first set was destroyed, with no date). The surviving set was begun in 1237 and "completed in 12 years". The Goryeo article says it was recreated from 1236 and took about 15 years. The lead gives 81,352 blocks, though the same paragraph says 81,258 pages, and the Goryeo article gives 81,258 blocks at Haeinsa and "some 81,000" elsewhere. The article says King Gojong ordered it "to implore divine assistance" against the Mongols, that it was moved to Haeinsa in 1398, and that it was inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World register in 2007. Haeinsa's World Heritage listing year is not given in the body of the article, only a 1995 reference; I do not state it as established.
- **Printing.** The Goryeo article says metal movable type was developed in the early thirteenth century, "200 years before" Gutenberg. That is the article's claim; I have not

checked it.

- **Celadon.** The celadon article says Goryeo potters had a native style by the twelfth century, with an eleventh-century spread of kilns and a twelfth-century peak when the glaze "exquisitely reflected the jade color, called *bisaek*". *Sanggam* inlay, carved patterns filled with white or purple clay, is called unique to Goryeo celadon; the article says it started in the eleventh century and reached a second zenith later. Gangjin is the main kiln area named. The article says quality declined after the Mongol invasion and that Gangjin and Buan kilns closed in the late fourteenth century, ending the celadon age; buncheong followed.

Hedges in the celadon article

The article dates the Mongol invasion to 1220, which conflicts with the 1231 start in the Mongol-invasions article. Its "world best" claim for twelfth-century celadon is cited only to a National Museum of Korea source with no quotation, and it says the reason for the cloud-and-crane designs is "not clear". A glaze figure (0.5% manganese oxide) is given with no Chinese comparison. The Song influence is stated without much support.

The Khitan Wars

The Goryeo article describes: a Khitan (Liao) invasion in 993, ending in a truce and nominal tribute to Liao; a 1010 invasion with a claimed 400,000 troops, which ended with Goryeo's counterattack and the Liao retreat; and a 1018 invasion by Xiao Paiya with 100,000 troops, against a Goryeo army under Kang Kam-ch'an reportedly 208,000, with a Goryeo win at Kusong. The 1022 peace formalised vassalage. The Cheolli Jangseong wall was built from 1033 to 1044. Every troop figure here is the article's or its sources' claim, and the article places the Kusong victory within the 1018 campaign. It does not mention a 1019 battle or Gwiju.

Military Rule and the Mongols

- **1170.** Chŏng Chung-bu, Yi Ŭi-bang and Yi Ko staged a coup and military rule began. The Ch'oe family ruled from 1197 "for 61 years" through Ch'oe Ch'unghŏn, Ch'oe U, Ch'oe Hang and Ch'oe Ŭi; Kim Chun assassinated Ch'oe Ŭi in March 1258. The infobox dates the military dictatorship to 1170 to 1270, while the text ends Ch'oe rule in 1258 and the last military ruler, Im Yu-mu, is dated to 1270.

- **Invasions.** The Mongol-invasions article gives the span as 1231 to 1259 "intermittently" and lists nine invasions (the first from August 1231 to January 1232, the last 1258 to 1259), while a cited scholar, Breuker, is quoted as describing "six massively destructive invasions" and "forty years of intermittent warfare". In spring 1232 Choe U moved the capital to Ganghwa Island, which the article says was "heavily defended" and never taken; the evacuation policy had provincial people take refuge in mountain citadels or coastal islands.
- **Cost.** The article gives an "estimated 206,800 captives" in the 1254 to 1255 invasion and says starvation was "rampant". Chungju's inhabitants were reportedly massacred after a 70-day siege (no figure). The Hwangnyongsa tower and the first Tripitaka were destroyed. A claim that "no wooden structures remained" is tagged [citation needed].
- **Peace.** In spring 1259 Goryeo agreed to send the crown prince (later Wonjong) to the Mongol court and to return the capital to Gaegyeong, which happened "many years later". The Goryeo article gives Ganghwa as a temporary capital from 1232 to 1270 and calls Goryeo a Yuan "client state" after 1270, with kings marrying Mongol princesses; the Mongol-invasions article puts vassalage at "approximately 80 years". The infobox lists a "Mongol victory", yet the article also says the Mongols never conquered Goryeo.
- **Resistance.** The Sambyeolcho rebellion (1270 to 1273) was formed by former military officials who resisted from islands off the southern coast.
- **Yuan ties.** Empress Gi was a Goryeo-born Yuan empress; Gongmin (reigned 1351 to 1374) purged her family in 1356. I did not read his reforms.

The Fall

The Goryeo article's lead says a proposed attack on the Ming led to a coup by General Yi Seong-gye (Yi Sŏnggye) that ended the dynasty; the infobox dates the abdication of the last king, Gongyang, to 12 July 1392, and Joseon followed. The "Fall" section was cut off, so I give only these two statements. The founding of Joseon is in Korean History 6.

What to Take from This

My own reading, unverified: Goryeo's story has two long outside pressures, the Khitans and then the Mongols, and in both the sources give the invaders' numbers as claims and the Goryeo response as a choice (a wall, an island capital, a printed canon). The articles do not make that comparison; I do.

What the Sources Left Open

- The contents of the Ten Injunctions, which the Taejo article does not give.
- The number and dates of the Mongol invasions (nine or six; 1231 to 1259 or to 1270).
- The dates and length of carving of the second Tripitaka (1236 or 1237; 12 or about 15 years) and the block count (81,352, 81,258 or "some 81,000").
- Gongmin's reforms and the exact course of the 1392 coup, because the sections were cut off.
- Whether the "200 years before Gutenberg" claim for metal type is sound.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Make a timeline of Goryeo from 918 to 1392 using only dates in this chapter. Mark each as firm, hedged, or contradicted within the articles.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Compare the Khitan wars with the Mongol invasions in four sentences: how Goryeo responded, how each ended, and which figures the articles hedge. Mark which sentences are from the sources and which are your own reading.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

The Tripitaka Koreana appears in three of this chapter's articles with different numbers. List the differences and say what you would check before quoting a single figure.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Founding:** Wang Geon, 918; Silla yields 935; Later Baekje falls 936; capital Gaegyeong (Kaesong)
- **Examination:** introduced 958 under Gwangjong, lasted until 1894 (Goryeo article)
- **Khitan wars:** 993, 1010, 1018; peace and vassalage 1022; Cheolli Jangseong 1033 to 1044
- **Military rule:** 1170 coup; Ch'oe family from 1197; Ch'oe Ŭi killed March 1258
- **Mongols:** 1231 to 1259 (nine invasions, or six per Breuker); Ganghwa from 1232; peace 1259; Sambyeolcho 1270 to 1273
- **Culture:** Tripitaka Koreana (Haeinsa; UNESCO Memory of the World 2007); celadon with sanggam inlay
- **Fall:** Yi Seong-gye's coup; Gongyang abdicates 12 July 1392

Next: Korean History 6 follows the founding of Joseon, Neo-Confucianism, Hanyang, Sejong and the literati purges, to 1592.

Korean History

Course 1 · Chapter 6 · Early Joseon: Founding to 1592

Joseon lasted 505 years, the longest of the dynasties in this course. Its first two centuries set the pattern: a general who turned his army back in 1388 and founded a dynasty four years later, a new capital, a Neo-Confucian ideology, kings who built institutions, a ruling class of yangban, and a series of purges that killed scholars for their writing. This chapter follows that period up to the eve of the Japanese invasion of 1592.

How this chapter was checked

The facts come from five Wikipedia articles: Joseon, Taejo of Joseon, Sejong the Great, Yangban and Literati purges, all read through a summarising tool, so exact wording may differ from the pages. The tool read Taejo, Yangban and Literati purges in full. For Joseon it read the first 100,000 of about 298,626 characters (through the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki), and the Government, Society and Culture sections appear only as headings. For Sejong it read the first 100,000 of about 218,685 characters, up to "Other religions", and did not see the foreign policy, Hangul, later life and legacy sections. Details the tool said came from general knowledge are left out or marked unverified. My own material is marked "mine". I read no sites from North Korea.

Founding: Yi Seong-gye

- **Origin.** The Taejo article says Yi Seong-gye was born on 4 November 1335 in Ssangseong Prefecture under Yuan rule; his family "defected to Goryeo" in 1356. His military career began in 1360, with Red Turban and Japanese-pirate campaigns afterwards.
- **1388.** When a Ming envoy demanded territory, Choe Yeong pushed for an invasion of Liaodong and Yi was chosen to lead it. At Wihwa Island he turned back, the Wihwado Retreat, then marched on the capital and forced King U from the throne. The article says he had U and U's young successor put to death and installed Wang Yo (Gongyang). Korean History 5 gave the Goryeo article's version of the end of the dynasty.
- **1392 and 1393.** He forced Gongyang to abdicate, exiled him to Wonju (where the article says he was secretly executed) and enthroned himself on 13 August 1392, according to the Taejo article; the Joseon article gives 5 August 1392 and a change of name to Joseon on 28

March 1393. The Joseon article says the name was chosen as "a tribute to the ancient Korean state of Gojoseon" (Korean History 2).

- **Capital.** Both articles give Hanseong (modern Seoul) as the new capital, in 1394 per the infobox and the Taejo article, though the Joseon lead says 1393. The Sejong article, which I read, says he was born in "Hanyang". The articles do not use the two names consistently, and I do not know why the site was chosen; the Taejo article does not say.
- **Continuity.** The Taejo article says "No new institutions were created, and no massive purges occurred during his reign". The Joseon article describes Taejong's reign differently (below).

Dates the two articles do not agree on

Enthronement: 13 August 1392 (Taejo) against 5 August 1392 (Joseon). Move of the capital: 1393 (Joseon lead) against 1394 (the infobox and Taejo). Length of Goryeo's rule: "nearly 500-year-old", "474 years" and "475 years" in different places. The Taejo article also says recent studies contradict the story of the Hamhung emissaries being executed, saying they died in regional revolts. I give each as stated.

The Princes' Strife and Taejong

The Taejo article says Crown Prince Yi Bang-seok was named in 1392. Yi Bang-won (later Taejong) had contributed most to Taejo's rise but feared Jeong Do-jeon, who, per the article, planned to kill him and his brothers. In 1398 Yi Bang-won struck first, killing Jeong Do-jeon, his followers and two half-brothers (the "First Strife of Princes"). Taejo abdicated on 22 October 1398 in favour of Yi Bang-gwa (Jeongjong); in 1400 Jeongjong named Yi Bang-won heir and abdicated, and he became Taejong that year. Taejo died on 27 June 1408. The article does not describe a second strife; the tool noted that historians often use that term but the page does not. The article's claim that Jeong Do-jeon persuaded Taejo to choose his favourite son carries a [citation needed] tag.

The Joseon article says Jeong Do-jeon shaped the new kingdom's "ideological, institutional, and legal foundations" and wanted Joseon to be "a kingdom led by ministers appointed by the king", the core of his conflict with Yi Bang-won, who wanted an absolute monarchy. Neo-Confucianism was installed as the state ideology and Buddhism was discouraged. Taejong (r. 1400 to 1418) abolished the private armies of the elite, expanded the national military and

reformed land taxation (national income "increased twofold", per the article); the article calls him "a controversial figure" and says he killed in-laws, including his wife's four brothers.

Sejong the Great

The Sejong article gives his birth as 15 May 1397, his reign as 18 September 1418 to 8 April 1450, and says Taejong kept veto power and military control as king emeritus until his death on the tenth day of the fifth month of 1422. It does not name the Jiphyeonjeon in the portion read, but says the Hall of Worthies was re-established in 1420 as a think tank for governance and the education of the king and crown prince.

Year	Item (Sejong article)
1419	Expedition against Tsushima, described in the lead as successful
1424	Joseon Tongbo coin, which did not replace barter
1429	*Nongsa jikseol* (agriculture treatise, the article's spelling *Nongsa chiksŏl*) completed
1430	Public survey of over 170,000 people on a new tax; debate lasted 17 years and the system was completed in 1444, cutting the land tax from 10% to 5% of the harvest
1433	*Hyangyakchipsŏngbang* compiled (56 volumes, over 10,000 treatments); Kim Jongseo's campaign pushed the border north (Joseon article)
1434	Water clock designed by Jang Yeong-sil; over 200,000 copper type cast
1441 to 1442	Rain gauge invented and distributed; the article notes Europe's equivalent came in 1639
1443	Treaty of Gyehae allowed fifty ships a year (Joseon article); the Joseon article also dates Hangul's creation to 1443 and its promulgation to 9 October 1446
1444	*Chiljeongsan* calendar devised
1445 or 1447	365-volume medical compendium completed (the article gives both years)

The script itself is the subject of *Korean Literature 3*; I did not read the Hangul section of the Sejong article. Criticism and hedges: the article says Sejong's Buddhist faith put him at odds with

Confucian officials; in 1439 a petition signed by 648 students accused him of supporting Buddhism and he assured them he "had never worshipped the Buddha". Historian James Palais argued he was not a despot and Ledyard praised his "evenness of judgment"; both are interpretations. The lead adds that North Korean texts praise his cultural and scientific work but stress heavier taxes and rigid class stratification. The article says historians argue income did not fall after the tax cut because of land taken from Buddhist temples and higher productivity.

The Yangban and the Social Order

The Yangban article calls them "the ruling class during the Joseon period", "highly educated aristocrats" who served mainly as administrators. The word means "two branches", the civil (*munban*) and martial (*muban*) officials; legally it meant high-ranking officials, but in practice it came to cover almost all their descendants. The infobox lists four tiers: yangban, *jungin* (spelled *chungin* in the article, middle), *sangmin* (common people) and *cheonmin* (the lowborn, including *nobi*, *baekjeong*, *mudang*, *gisaeng* and *namsadang*).

- **Privileges.** They were "often exempt from laws including those relating to taxes". The article gives no formal list of duties; it mentions a theoretical rule that a family with no official for several generations could lose its status (never enforced; the article says three generations in one place and four in another).
- **Examinations.** In theory anyone except *nobi*, *baekjeong* and the children of concubines could sit the *gwageo*; in practice cost and years of study largely shut out non-yangban. The article calls the system a "semi-hereditary meritocracy".
- **Numbers.** The article gives no figure for the yangban's share of the population or for *nobi*, and I add none.
- **Tension in the article.** It describes the upper classes living off the "slave labor of the lower classes, particularly the sangmin", while also describing *sangmin* as bound to the land "as indentured servants".
- **Decline.** It links decline to the sale of offices, factional strife and the Andong Kim clan's dominance; legal status was abolished in 1894. The article ties this to the "Gwangmu Reform", which the tool thought looked like an error (it said the 1894 reform belongs to the Gabo Reform); I do not rely on the reform's name.

The Four Literati Purges

The Literati purges article (*sahwa*, "scholars' calamity") sets the Sarim, newer Neo-Confucian scholars strong in the Three Offices, against the Hungu, officials rewarded for founding Joseon who held State Council and Six Ministries posts. It says the Sarim lost all four confrontations but gained moral influence.

Purge	Year and king	What the article says
Muo	1498, Yeonsangun	Triggered by Yi Kukdon's grudge against Kim Ilson, who had included Kim Jong-jik's writing criticising Sejo's usurpation in the *Veritable Records*. Kim Ilson and two others were sentenced to death by *lingchi*, three were beheaded, Kim Jong-jik's remains were posthumously beheaded, and at least 18 were exiled
Gapja	1504, Yeonsangun	After Yeonsangun learned his mother, Deposed Queen Yun, had been poisoned in 1482: at least 36 officials were poisoned, eight dead officials were mutilated, and 239 were executed, exiled or dismissed. He was deposed in 1506 and Jungjong took the throne
Gimyo	1519, Jungjong	Cho Gwang-jo's reforms (local self-government, land reform, vernacular Confucian texts, less slavery, appointments regardless of class) were turned against him by Hungu officials. He was sentenced to poison; 225 officials were affected in total and most reforms were rescinded
Eulsa	1545, Myeongjong under Queen Munjeong	Yun Wonhyeong accused Yun Im and supporters of plotting to install a different prince; Yun Im, the prince and nine supporters were executed, and over five years the purges caused more than 100 deaths

The article gives the honey-and-leaves story for 1519 (Nam Gon writing a message in honey so caterpillars ate through the leaves). The tool noted that its citation dates (1535, 1568, 1520) do not line up with the events, so I give it only as the article's account. The article says many Sarim withdrew to the countryside and founded *seowon* academies, and that by Seonjo's reign they had regained control of the central government. It also carries June 2024 tags for neutrality, tone and citations, notes that the Sarim compiled most surviving records including the *Veritable Records* (Korean History 1), and does not reconcile its own framings: the introduction's Sarim-against-Hungu story, the 1545 section's in-law power struggle and a "Modern reinterpretation" section saying the ideological divide may be exaggerated.

The Eve of 1592

The Joseon article gives a population of about 3,300,000 in 1519 (infobox). It says factions split into Sarim, Easterners and Westerners, later Noron and Soron, "a cycle of revenge with each change of regime". The 1589 Jeong Yeo-rip affair led to the killing or exile of about 1,000 Easterners. It says factional division and poor assessment of Japanese strength left the kingdom unprepared. The History section carries a [citation needed] tag, so the early narrative is less reliably sourced than the rest.

What to Take from This

My own reading, unverified: the sources show the same pattern at each level, a ruling group that writes the records, defines legitimacy and is then punished or protected by whoever holds the throne. The Veritable Records (Korean History 1), the Sarim's role in compiling them, and the purges triggered by what went into them are one thread. The articles do not say this directly.

What the Sources Left Open

- The enthronement date (5 or 13 August 1392) and the capital's move (1393 or 1394).
- Why Hanseong was chosen as the site.
- The yangban's share of the population and the nobi proportion, which the article does not give.
- Whether the purges were mainly ideological (Sarim against Hungu), a clash of in-law families, or both.
- Hangul's dates (1443 and 1446 in the Joseon article, not checked in the Sejong portion read).
- Whether the honey-leaf story is reliable.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Make a timeline from Yi Seong-gye's birth (1335) to the 1589 affair using only dates in this chapter. Mark each as firm, hedged, or contradicted between the Taejo and Joseon

articles.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Choose one of Sejong's projects from the table and explain in three sentences what it was, who benefited, and what the article does not tell you. Mark your own reading.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Pick two of the four purges and compare them: trigger, victims, outcome. Then name two reasons the article's own account of the purges should be read with caution.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Founding:** Yi Seong-gye, Wihwado 1388, enthroned August 1392, name Joseon 1393, capital Hanseong 1394
- **Kings:** Taejo (to 1398), Taejong (1400 to 1418), Sejong (1418 to 1450)
- **Classes:** yangban, jungin, sangmin, cheonmin; yangban status legally abolished 1894
- **Purges:** 1498 (Muo), 1504 (Gapja), 1519 (Gimyo), 1545 (Eulsa); Sarim against Hungu
- **Before 1592:** factions, the 1589 affair (about 1,000 Easterners killed or exiled), population about 3,300,000 in 1519
- **Habits:** check which article gives which date; the winners wrote the records

Next: Korean History 7 follows the Imjin War, the Manchu invasions, late-Joseon society, the opening of the ports and the end of the dynasty.

Korean History

Course 1 · Chapter 7 · War, Reform and the End of Joseon (1592 to 1910)

Between 1592 and 1910 Joseon was invaded by Japan, invaded twice by the Manchus, forced open by Japan in 1876, shaken by a peasant revolution, renamed an empire and then annexed. This chapter covers that long stretch in outline. The two centuries between 1637 and 1864 get only a short reading, and I say where it is thin.

How this chapter was checked

The facts come from eleven Wikipedia articles: Japanese invasions of Korea (1592–1598), Yi Sun-sin, Qing invasion of Joseon, Japan–Korea Treaty of 1876, Donghak Peasant Revolution, Korean Empire, Japan–Korea Annexation Treaty and, for the late-Joseon section, Joseon (its Manchu-invasion to 1864 text), Yeongjo of Joseon, Jeongjo of Joseon, Sunjo of Joseon and Silhak, all read through a summarising tool, so exact wording may differ from the pages. The tool read the Qing invasion, 1876 treaty, annexation-treaty, Yeongjo, Jeongjo, Sunjo and Silhak articles in full (Silhak's body and references; Sunjo's family section is tagged as unsourced). Pages I tried for the Uniform Land Tax Law, sedo politics, the Andong Kim clan and Hong Gyeong-nae's rebellion returned errors, so those topics are not covered. It read only part of the others: the first 100,000 of about 277,482 characters of the invasions article (through the start of the Battle of Chungju, so the fall of Hanseong, Ming intervention, naval war and aftermath were not read); the first 100,000 of about 124,527 characters of Yi Sun-sin; the first 100,000 of about 170,413 of Donghak (to the start of the "Pyongan and Hamgyong" section, so its "Fall", "Legacy" and "Controversies" sections were not read); and the first 100,000 of about 162,473 of Korean Empire. Details the tool said came from general knowledge are left out or marked unverified. My own material is marked "mine". I read no sites from North Korea.

The Imjin War, 1592 to 1598

The invasions article gives 23 May 1592 to 16 December 1598, with a first invasion in 1592, a truce in 1596 and a second invasion in 1597 (the "Chŏngyu War"), and lists the result as "Joseon and Ming victory", with territorial change "status quo ante bellum". It gives several motives for Hideyoshi: legitimising his rule, reducing dependence on the imperial family, fulfilling Oda Nobunaga's plans and keeping a newly unified Japan united against an outside enemy. The lead

says the invasions were launched "to conquer Korea", while the Background says the plan was ultimately to invade China; the two are not identical. It says Ming reinforcements and Joseon naval disruption of Japanese supply forced withdrawal from the northern provinces, and that civilian militias fought guerrilla campaigns.

	Forces (article)	Losses (article)
Joseon	84,500+ to 192,000 including sailors and insurgents; 300 ships; about 170,000 mobilised	1,000,000+ civilian and military dead (including 260,000+ troops killed or wounded); 50,000 to 60,000 captives; 157 ships
Ming	48,000 (1592 to 1593); 75,000 to 80,000 (1597 to 1598); 166,700 total	30,000+ killed
Japan	158,800 (first invasion); 141,900 (second); about 300,000 overall	100,000+ killed, captured or missing; 450 ships (flagged as possibly from an unreliable source)

The figures disagree

Japan's total is about 300,000 in the infobox, 320,000 in the text and 250,000 (rounded) in the order-of-battle table, where the first-phase figure is also 183,800 to 258,800 against 158,800 in the text. The Ming totals (48,000 plus 75,000 to 80,000) come to less than the stated 166,700, and the article does not explain the gap. The first phase is 1592 to 1593 in a heading, 1592 to 1594 in the campaign box and ended in 1596 in the lead. The Joseon death toll has no breakdown. I give these as the article states them. Where it describes destruction, it says Konishi's forces destroyed Daegu and that the Japanese took no prisoners at Dadaejin and Dongnae, where about 3,000 were killed.

Yi Sun-sin

The Yi Sun-sin article gives his life as 28 April 1545 to 16 December 1598. He passed the military examination in 1576 (after breaking a leg in the cavalry section and re-entering), took command of the Left Jeolla Naval District at Yeosu on 13 March 1591 and was appointed Naval Commander of the Three Provinces in 1593. The article says he "designed and built" the turtle ships, giving a length of 65 feet and a spiked, planked deck against boarding.

- **Victories as given.** Okpo (June 1592): 91 ships after joining Won Gyun, with 11 Japanese ships destroyed at Jeokjinpo and no Korean ship lost. Hansan Island (August 1592): about 70 Korean ships against 82 Japanese, with Japan losing 59 (47 destroyed, 12 captured). Myeongnyang (October 1597): 13 ships against about 333 Japanese (133 warships and at least 200 support ships), with about 31 destroyed or damaged and "around ten casualties" for Joseon.
- **Hedges.** The article says he fought "at least 23" battles and won all of them, but a cited Korean source disputes that count. It gives his birthplace two ways (Euljiro-dong in the infobox, Geoncheon-dong in the body), says he was spared execution once in one section and "twice" in another, and does not explain how the fleet rose from 13 ships after Chilcheonryang to 82 *panokseon* at Noryang. Several sections, including honours, are tagged for missing citations.
- **Dismissal.** The article says he refused a court-ordered ambush, citing sunken rocks and distrust of the message; rivals had him replaced by Won Gyun, arrested, taken to Seoul and tortured. Jeong Tak helped secure a reprieve; he was demoted to common soldier under Gwon Yul. Won Gyun's fleet was destroyed at Chilcheonryang on 28 August 1597, and Yi was reinstated.
- **Noryang.** He died on 16 December 1598, struck near the left armpit by a stray arquebus bullet. The article quotes him as saying: "The war is at its height – wear my armor and beat my war drums. Do not announce my death."
- **Legacy.** The article lists posthumous titles including Chungmugong, the 100-won coin, a 2019 Gallup Korea poll giving him 14% as the top figure, his war diary *Nanjung ilgi* on UNESCO's Memory of the World list, and the 2014 film *The Admiral: Roaring Currents*, reported as the most-watched film in South Korean history. It says Tōgō Heihachirō and other Japanese figures praised him.

The Manchu Invasions

The Qing invasion article says a Later Jin invasion in 1627 preceded the war (no month given). The main invasion ran from 9 December 1636 to 30 January 1637, and Hanseong's garrisons were defeated on 14 December. Joseon was ambivalent toward the Qing: the Later Jin accused it of harbouring fugitives and feeding Ming armies grain, and Joseon did not recognise Hong Taiji's new dynasty.

- **Siege.** King Injo took refuge at Namhansanseong with about 13,800 people and short provisions, besieged by Hong Taiji's main division of about 70,000. Dorgon occupied

Ganghwa Island on 27 January 1637, and Injo surrendered the next day (28 January is my inference).

- **Terms.** Injo gave up his Ming seals and three pro-war officers and performed the kowtow ritual (three kneels, nine bows) at Samjeondo. The seven terms, paraphrased: drop Ming naming and seals; send two royal princes as hostages and adopt the Qing calendar; receive Qing envoys with Ming-style ritual; supply troops; build no new fortresses; refuse Qing defectors; pay annual tribute.
- **Hostages.** The article never names Crown Prince Sohyeon; it says "the crown prince of Joseon and his younger brother were taken as hostages", the younger brother later becoming Hyojong, who spent seven years in Mukden.
- **Effects.** Joseon became a Qing tributary and cut ties with the Ming. The article says many Korean women were kidnapped and raped, that families often rejected them and that the government refused divorce requests; in 1648 Joseon was forced to provide royal princesses as concubines to Dorgon. A Manchu-language interpreter corps was trained from 1639 to 1894. The article claims the invasion had a deeper psychological impact on Korea than the Japanese invasions, citing Lee (2017).
- **Figures.** Qing strength 100,000 (infobox); Joseon 80,000 to 90,000 (tagged [citation needed] and not reconciled with the 13,800, 15,000 and 5,000 in the text); casualties "Unknown".

Late Joseon, 1637 to 1864: A Short Reading

This section is short because my sources were thin. The Joseon article's late-period text (read through to Gojong's accession) covers the kings and a few themes; the pages I tried for the Uniform Land Tax Law (*Daedongbeop*), "sedo politics", the Andong Kim clan and Hong Gyeong-nae's rebellion returned errors, so those topics rest on one-line mentions at most. It should not be read as a full account of the period.

- **After the invasions.** The Joseon article says Hyojong (r. 1649 to 1659) "tried to form an army to keep his enemies away and conquer the Qing for revenge, but could never act on his designs". It describes the "Little China ideology, known as *sojunghwa*", adopted after the Qing overthrew the Ming, and says the court kept using Ming reign periods long after submitting to the Qing. Hendrick Hamel left Korea in 1666 "after more than thirteen years of captivity" (the person behind the spelling "Korea" in Korean History 1). The Kyŏngsin and Eulbyeong famines "may have killed 23–33%" of the population, with "hundreds of thousands" of deaths possible; the portion read gives no years for them.

- **Yeongjo (r. 1724 to 1776).** The Yeongjo article gives 11 October 1724 to 22 April 1776. It describes the *Tangpyeong* policy as one of reconciling factions, with "a strict numerical balance of officials from opposing factions in key government offices", and gives no start date. It says he "reduced the military service tax by half", with the shortfall to be covered by taxes on fisheries, salt and vessels and an added land tax. In 1762 he ordered Crown Prince Sado "into a wooden rice chest on a hot July day"; Sado was declared dead on the eighth day, and the article notes that a nineteenth-century rumour of a court plot is contradicted by Lady Hyegyeong's memoirs and the *Annals*. His mother, Concubine Suk, is described as "low-born". The article's claim that he was "the first king to take action against" Catholic activity has no citation. His accession followed the 1721 Shinim literati purge, and the article says many historians now believe food poisoning caused his predecessor Gyeongjong's death, which the Soron had blamed on him.
- **Jeongjo (r. 1776 to 1800).** The Jeongjo article gives 22 April 1776 to 18 August 1800 (the coronation is dated 10 March 1776 in the body and 27 April in the infobox). He founded Kyujanggak as a royal library, and the Joseon article says he opened some government posts to people previously barred by status. He moved the court to Suwon near his father's grave and built Hwaseong Fortress to guard it; the article gives no construction dates. The 1791 *Sinhae Tonggong* law let anyone sell goods at market, ending a right reserved to capital merchant groups, but the article sources this to a page it tags as possibly unreliable. Opponents called him "Son of a prisoner" or "Son of a madman". He died "suddenly under uncertain circumstances".
- **Silhak.** The Silhak article describes "practical learning" as a late-Joseon reform movement responding to Neo-Confucianism's "increasingly metaphysical nature" between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries, led by scholars mostly from excluded factions. Figures it names: Yu Hyeong-won (1622 to 1673, "sometimes considered" first generation, proposing a public land system), Yi Ik (1681 to 1764), Pak Chiwon (Park Ji-won, 1737 to 1805), Pak Chega (Park Je-ga, 1750 to 1815) and Chŏng Yagyong (Jeong Yak-yong, "Dasan", 1762 to 1836). It lists land reform, science, technology exchange and human equality among their arguments. It says nothing on commerce by name, barely covers Western learning and Catholicism, and gives no scholarly debate over the term. The Joseon article names Kim Yuk (1570 to 1658) as a Silhak leader but calls him chief minister of King Hyeonjong, whose reign the article does not date; the tool noted that this does not fit his dates.
- **Sunjo and in-law rule (r. 1800 to 1834).** The Sunjo article gives 18 August 1800 to 13 December 1834 and says he came to the throne at 10. It names Queen Dowager Yesun as regent from 1800 to 1804, whereas the Joseon article says the Noron gained power under

Queen Dowager Jeongsun; I do not know whether these are the same person and show both. In 1802 he married a daughter of Kim Jo-sun, a leader of the Andong Kim clan, who the Joseon article says came to dominate the court, adding "These kings had no monarchic authority" and that the period "spanned 60 years". It names no start and end dates and does not name Heonjong or Cheoljong. Sunjo's article says "Despite Sunjo's efforts to reform politics, the fundamental principles of governing deteriorated". Crown Prince Hyomyeong acted as regent from 1827 to 1830 and died on 25 June 1830, with no cause given.

- **Unrest and persecution.** The Joseon article mentions "ceaseless rebellions in various parts of the country" without naming Hong Gyeong-nae's. The Sunjo article dates a rebellion by Hong Gyeong-nae to 1812 (not 1811) and links wider unrest to disordered state examinations and government corruption, and I read no more. The Joseon article says the Noron regency "initiated a persecution of Catholics" in 1801, and that the Daewongun was "the instrument of the persecution of native and foreign Catholics" leading to the unsuccessful French campaign of 1866. It dates the Donghak insurgency of 1862 to 1864 under Choe Je-u, executed in 1864. It does not mention Jinju, the Uniform Land Tax Law or the 1839 persecution.
- **Gojong.** The Joseon article says Queen Sinjeong "selected Gojong" and that he "took the throne" in 1863, while its infobox gives 1864 to 1897.

Where this section is thin or in conflict

The regent in 1800 is Jeongsun in one article and Yesun in another. Gojong's accession is 1863 in the text and 1864 in the infobox. Jeongjo's coronation is 10 March or 27 April 1776. Kim Yuk's dates do not fit Hyeonjong's reign as the tool recalled it. Hong Gyeong-nae's rebellion is dated 1812 in the one article that mentions it. None of the Daedongbeop, sedo politics, the Pungyang Jo clan, the Jinju uprising of 1862 or the 1839 persecution is supported here, and I add nothing from memory. The tool's own suggestions about the cloth-tax reform of 1750, the Hwaseong construction years and the Daedongbeop's origin are general knowledge and are left out.

Opening the Ports: 1876

- **Background.** Cheoljong died in January 1864 and Gojong became king at age 12, with his father the Daewongun ruling in his name and pursuing isolation. The *General Sherman*

affair (1866) and the 1871 US expedition failed to open Korea; Japan's 1869 letter was rejected because it implied Japanese superiority.

- **Ganghwa incident.** On 20 September 1875 the Japanese gunboat *Un'yō* surveyed the coast; a shore party landed on Ganghwa Island and fighting followed. The article says 35 Korean soldiers died.
- **The treaty.** Signed 26 February 1876 by Kuroda Kiyotaka and Shin Heon, with "gunboat diplomacy". Article 1 declared Korea "an independent state enjoying the same sovereign rights as does Japan"; Article 4 ended Tsushima's intermediary role; Article 5 opened Pusan and provided for surveys to select two more ports; Article 7 let Japanese mariners survey Korean coastal waters; Article 10 granted extraterritoriality to Japanese nationals.
- **Characterisation.** The article calls it "unequal" and "the first of many unequal treaties", saying it made Korea vulnerable. That is the article's assessment. It names Pusan only in the treaty section and says in the Aftermath that three ports opened, Busan, Incheon and Wonsan, without explaining how the other two were chosen.

The Donghak Revolution, 1894 to 1895

The article describes Donghak as a religion founded by Choe Je-u, a syncretic mix of monotheism, shamanism and folk belief that promoted equality; the government banned it and executed him (1864 in one place, 1863 in another). The immediate cause of the revolt was the conduct of the magistrate Jo Byeong-gap at Gobu. About a thousand rebels gathered there on 10 January 1894 (11 January in the infobox), led by Jeon Bong-jun, and took Jeonju Fortress. The Treaty of Jeonju (7 May 1894) ended the fighting; Hong Gye-hun accepted twelve rebel demands, including punishing corrupt officials, freeing slaves and lowering taxes.

- **Foreign troops.** In late April 1894 the government asked China and Japan for help. The lead says 2,700 Qing soldiers; the body says 1,500 Qing troops and 6,000 Japanese landed at Incheon on 3 May. The article says this led to the First Sino-Japanese War, which ended Chinese influence in Korea.
- **Ugeumchi.** The second revolt met defeat at Ugeumchi (8 to 10 November 1894), where Japanese firepower was decisive. Jeon dissolved the army on 28 November, and an attack at Jonggok on 18 December 1894 killed most of the remaining Northern rebels.
- **Figures.** The infobox gives 6,000 Korean soldiers killed, about 200 Japanese killed and "tens to hundreds of thousands" killed from both rebel groups; strength ranges are very wide (15,000 to 300,000 southern rebels), and the Ugeumchi army is variously 25,000 to 200,000.

- **Not read.** The Gabo Reforms are only linked in the article, and I read none; the "Fall", "Legacy" and "Controversies" sections were cut off.

The Korean Empire, 1897 to 1910

- **Proclamation.** Gojong was crowned at Hwangudan in October 1897 and named the state Daehan. The article says officials urged an empire to strengthen the country and keep independence after the First Sino-Japanese War, and that the 1899 constitution gave the emperor full authority. Its claim that the Qing opposed the empire most explicitly is tagged [citation needed].
- **Gwangmu Reform.** The article's section on it is empty. The only figures I have are its table: tax revenue rising from about 4.56 million won (1895) to about 14.96 million won (1905).
- **1904 and 1905.** On 22 August 1904 the First Japan–Korea Convention allowed a Japanese garrison. The Taft–Katsura memorandum (17 July 1905) was, the article says, "not actually a secret pact". The Eulsa Treaty was signed on 17 November 1905; of the eight ministers present, the article says three opposed it, and Itō Hirobumi became Resident-General on 1 February 1906. The article reports that Gojong sought "to manifest the invalidity" of the treaty and that Koreans resisted, some by suicide; it does not state Japan's position.
- **1907.** Gojong sent emissaries to the Hague (infobox: 15 June 1907) to repudiate the Eulsa Treaty; they were "not accorded recognition". Gojong abdicated on 19 July 1907 and was succeeded by Sunjong. The article links the abdication to the emissary affair and protests but does not use the word "forced". The army was disbanded on 1 August 1907 (31 July in another section); Major Park Seung-hwan's suicide sparked a revolt and the battle at Namdaemun Gate.

Annexation, 1910

The annexation treaty was signed on 22 August 1910 and proclaimed on 29 August 1910, which the article says "officially start[ed]" Japanese rule. The signatories were Yi Wan-yong (spelled Ye Wanyong, Yi Wan-yong and Lee Wan-yong in the same article), Prime Minister of the Korean Empire, and Count Terauchi Masatake, Resident-General. The article says the 1905 treaty made Korea a protectorate and the 1907 treaty removed its administration of internal affairs.

The validity dispute, with owners

The article says the Provisional Government and the South Korean government held the treaty void at signing and that Japan contested this (both points tagged [citation needed]). The 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations confirmed that agreements concluded "on or before August 22, 1910, are already null and void"; the article presents this as a compromise and does not say how it fits with "void at signing". Gojong later called it a *neugyak* ("forced treaty"), undated. At a 2001 Harvard conference Kan Kimura reported that Western scholars rejected the Korean claim of illegality; Anthony Carty said it is "difficult to find an international law sufficient to determine the legality/illegality of a particular treaty". The article's claim that Emperor Sunjong "refused to sign the treaty as required under Korean law" is tagged [citation needed], while the infobox caption says Sunjong "signed and sealed" a general power of attorney to Yi Wan-yong; the article does not say whether these are different documents. In 2010 75 South Korean lawmakers asked the Japanese prime minister to nullify the treaty, and about 1,000 intellectuals said it "was never valid in the first place". I show each claim and do not choose.

What to Take from This

My own reading, unverified: three of the chapter's turning points share a feature, a document whose legal force is argued about afterwards, the 1876 treaty's "independent state" clause, the 1905 treaty without Gojong's consent and the 1910 treaty's signatures. The sources give the argument; the pattern is mine.

What the Sources Left Open

- Every Imjin War figure: forces, losses, the first phase's end, and whether Hideyoshi's aim was Korea or China.
- How many battles Yi Sun-sin fought, and how his fleet recovered from 13 ships.
- The Joseon and Qing strengths in 1636 to 1637, and Sohyeon's name.
- Most of 1637 to 1864: the Uniform Land Tax Law, sedo politics, Heonjong and Cheoljong, the Jinju uprising, and the Gabo and Gwangmu Reforms.
- Whether the 1905 and 1910 treaties were valid, and what Sunjong signed.
- Choe Je-u's execution year (1863 or 1864) and the Qing troop count in 1894.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Make a timeline from 1592 to 1910 with ten dated items from this chapter. Mark each as firm, hedged or contradicted within its article.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Compare how the Imjin War and the Manchu invasion ended: terms, who was hurt, and what the article leaves out. Then say which article's figures you would trust least, and why.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Set out, as claims with owners, the argument over whether the 1910 annexation treaty was valid. Say what the 1965 wording does and does not settle, and mark your own reading.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Imjin War:** 23 May 1592 to 16 December 1598; Yi Sun-sin (1545 to 1598), Myeongnyang 1597, died at Noryang
- **Manchu invasions:** 1627; 9 December 1636 to 30 January 1637; surrender at Samjeondo; tributary status
- **1876:** Treaty of Ganghwa, 26 February; Korea "an independent state"; extraterritoriality
- **Donghak:** January to December 1894; Treaty of Jeonju 7 May; Ugeumchi 8 to 10 November

- **Korean Empire:** October 1897 to August 1910; Eulsa Treaty 17 November 1905; Gojong abdicates 19 July 1907
- **Annexation:** signed 22 August 1910, proclaimed 29 August; validity disputed
- **Late Joseon:** Yeongjo (1724 to 1776), Jeongjo (1776 to 1800), Sunjo (1800 to 1834); Tangpyeong, Silhak, Andong Kim dominance; 1637 to 1864 only briefly read

Next: Korean History 8 follows Japanese rule from 1910 to liberation in 1945.

Korean History

Course 1 · Chapter 8 · Colonial Rule, 1910 to 1945

For 35 years Korea was a Japanese colony. This chapter follows the Government-General, the land and economy as the sources describe them, the name policy of 1939 to 1940, the March First Movement of 1919, the exile government, armed and individual resistance, and liberation in 1945. It is an outline built from partly read articles, and the gaps are large; I list them at the end.

How this chapter was checked

The facts come from six Wikipedia articles: Korea under Japanese rule, March First Movement, Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea, Sōshi-kaimei, Korean independence movement and Liberation Day (Korea), all read through a summarising tool, so exact wording may differ from the pages. The tool read Sōshi-kaimei and Liberation Day in full. It read the first 100,000 of about 306,180 characters of Korea under Japanese rule (the lead, terminology, background, the annexation section and the start of "Early years and expansion", so the sections on World War II, the independence movement, policies and legacy were headings only); the first 100,000 of about 242,679 of March First (so the diaspora rebuttals, Japanese policy changes, international reactions, legacy and commemorations were not read); the first 100,000 of about 124,115 of the Provisional Government article; and the first 100,000 of about 112,733 of the independence movement article. A page I tried on Korean forced labour in the Second World War returned an error, so that topic is not covered beyond one line. Details the tool said came from general knowledge are left out or marked unverified. My own material is marked "mine". I read no sites from North Korea.

The Government-General

The article does not divide the period the way many textbooks do. Its own headings are "Military Police Reign Era (1910–19)", in which police "had the authority to rule the entire country", "Early years and expansion (1910–1941)" and "World War II". The common split into military rule, "cultural policy" and wartime assimilation is the tool's general knowledge and I do not rely on it. The March First article's lead says the movement "contributed to limited 'cultural rule' freedoms", but I did not read the section that explains this.

- **Rulers.** The infobox lists Terauchi Masatake as the first Governor-General (1910 to 1916) and Abe Nobuyuki as the last (1944 to 1945), based in Keijō (Seoul).
- **Annexation date.** The body says Japan "effectively annexed" Korea on 22 August 1910, with the treaty effective that day and published a week later; the infobox gives 29 August. The article does not explain the gap. The validity dispute is in Korean History 7.
- **Surrender.** The same article gives the surrender of Japan as 2 September 1945 and the disestablishment of the Government-General as 8 September 1945.

Land, Money and Settlers

The article says Terauchi's Land Survey Bureau set ownership by written proof, which "denied ownership to many who had only verbal cultivator-rights" (the claim that these were mostly high-class owners is tagged [citation needed]). It gives Japanese-controlled arable land as "an estimated 7 to 8%" by 1910, then 36.8%, 39.8% and 52.7% in 1916, 1920 and 1932. It also says that "By 1920, 90 percent of Korean land had proper ownership of Koreans"; the article does not say how this fits with 39.8% Japanese-controlled land in the same year, and the two may use different bases. Tenants paid "over half their crop in rent", and heavy taxes "in some cases exceeding 50%" are attributed to unnamed "scholars".

- **Settlers.** "Somewhere below the figure of 500,000" Japanese by 1908; about 561,000 in 1934 (under 3% of a population "of over 21 million"); about 651,000 in 1939, with over 981,000 Koreans living in Japan that year.
- **A dispute without names.** The article reports that "Korea's economy grew under Japan", but that "scholars argue" the infrastructure was built to extract resources, not to benefit Koreans, and describes Japanese and South Korean views of the legacy only as "a significant range of opinions". It names no scholars, so I cannot attribute either side.
- **Language and mobilisation.** The lead says Japan, under the pretext of *Nissen dōsoron*, began Japanisation and eventually "functionally banning the use of Korean names" and the Korean language "altogether"; that from 1939 it "mobilized around 5.4 million Koreans", many forcefully; and that many women and girls were forced into sexual slavery as "comfort women". These are lead sentences; I read no figures or sections that explain them, so the chapter cannot add detail.

The Name Policy, 1939 to 1940

The Sōshi-kaimei article describes two ordinances under Governor-General Minami Jirō: Ordinance No. 19 (1939) on creating a family name (*shi*), and Ordinance No. 20 (1940) allowing a change of given name (*kaimei*), the latter with a fee. A new *shi* was added while the clan name (*sei*) stayed in the register, so a Korean had three names; wives took their husband's *shi*, unlike the traditional practice of keeping their *sei*. Individually chosen *shi* could be notified only between 11 February and 10 August 1940; those who did not had one assigned by law from the household head's *sei*. The policy reversed Order No. 124 (11 November 1911), which barred names that might be mistaken for native Japanese.

- **The "voluntary" framing.** Notification began on a voluntary basis in February 1940, but at the April meeting of prefectural governors officials urged "special consideration", with registration of all households targeted for 20 July. The article reports that statements opposing the policy were censored, and that reported consequences for refusers included dismissal, salary cuts, school suspension or expulsion, refused medical treatment and exclusion from welfare, which it calls typical.
- **Rates.** Households notifying a *shi*: 3.9% in April 1940, rising to 80.3% by 10 August; Koreans in Korea who changed their given name: 9.6%; Koreans in mainland Japan who created a *shi* by individual selection: 14.2%.

> **What the 80.3% does not show**
>
> The 80.3% counts households that notified, but those who did not were assigned a *shi* by law, and the article does not say how many of the 80.3% chose their own. The three percentages measure different things and are not directly comparable. On how voluntary it was, the article says most accounts hold that official compulsion and harassment existed but disagree on whether it came from low-level officials, regional governments or the colonial government's intent, while others argue that Koreans seeking to avoid discrimination chose Japanese-style names themselves. The article does not resolve this, and neither do I. Its timeline table is flagged as uncited.

The March First Movement

Gojong died on 21 January 1919; Japan said natural causes and Koreans widely suspected poisoning, which the article says affected the movement's timing. It also cites Wilson's Fourteen Points and says scholars debate whether Wilson's advocacy covered Japan, and that Korean representatives were refused permission to attend the Paris Peace Conference. Thirty-three

signers signed the Declaration of Independence from 25 to 27 February, and about 21,000 copies were printed. On 1 March 29 of the 33 gathered at Taehwagwan, were reported by the restaurant owner An Sun-hwan and were arrested by about 80 military police; 4,000 to 5,000 people gathered at Tapgol Park. Protests spread to all 13 provinces by 19 March and reached Jeju on 21 March, and all but seven of 218 administrative districts hosted protests.

Source	Protests	Participants	Deaths	Arrests
Lead (general range)	~1,500 to 1,800	~0.8 to 2 million	798 to 7,509	46,948
NIKH database, 2019 (1 March to 31 May)	1,798	823,702 to 1,065,172	798 to 1,170	–
Park Eun-sik, 1920 (Korean)	1,542	2,023,098	7,509 (injuries 15,961)	46,948
Japanese police report	1,214	~1.1 million	–	–

Contested figures, with owners

The article says the statistics are "uncertain, and are a subject of controversy". Japanese officials said 553 people were killed and over 12,000 arrested from 1 March to 11 April, with eight police and military killed and 158 wounded. The database is intentionally conservative, according to the article; it says Japanese records were politically altered and that Kwon Tae-eok thought Japan had incentives to understate and found Park's estimate plausible. The tool added that, when it summed Park's rows, the arrests did not total the stated 46,948 (it found about 37,306) and other totals were also off by small amounts. I did not check these sums against the original table, so treat them as a prompt to check. The article carries a September 2025 maintenance banner saying the section needs updating.

- **Response.** The article says Japan was surprised by the scale and rushed in police, military police, firemen and railway guards, and reports shootings and bayonet charges on unarmed protesters. At Jeamni on 15 April, it says 20 to 30 civilians were lured into a church, shot, and the church burned. It also reports the Suwon and Anseong raids (276 homes burned, 29 killed, about 2,000 arrested) and the Sucheon-ri massacre on 6 April,

and describes Japanese suppression of reporting and a disinformation campaign (denying the protests, calling them Bolshevik uprisings and claiming Koreans needed Japanese rule).
- **Effects.** From the lead only: the movement did not bring prompt liberation but "invigorated the Korean independence movement" and led to the Provisional Government; it damaged Japan's image. The lead also says it inspired China's May Fourth Movement and India's satyagraha protests. I did not read the sections that explain these.

The Provisional Government

The Provisional Government article gives its founding as 11 April 1919 in Shanghai: the Provisional Assembly first met on 10 April and set up the government the next day, and it merged with the Vladivostok and Seoul bodies on 11 September 1919. The infobox lists Shanghai (1919 to 1932), then Hangzhou, Jiaxing, Nanjing, Changsha, Guangzhou, Qijiang and Chongqing (1940 to 1945). Syngman Rhee was first president from 11 September 1919 until his impeachment on 21 March 1925; Park Eun-sik followed; Kim Gu (Kim Ku in the article) led from 1940 to August 1945 as chairman of the State Council.

- **Recognition.** The article says no country formally recognised it, then says it "gained formal recognition" from Sun Yat-sen's Guangzhou government in 1921 and cites "diplomatic approvals" from Poland, the USSR, the US and the UK; a French ambassador gave only "unofficial approval" in April 1945.
- **War declaration.** The article gives 9 December 1941 against "the Axis powers, Japan and Germany"; I did not verify it.
- **Constitution.** The 1987 constitution recognises that the Republic of Korea "succeeds the legal traditions" of the Provisional Government, and the article cites Brian Reynolds Myers as calling this "revisionism". It does not discuss the 1948 constitution in the portion read.

The article contradicts itself in places: the Transition section says Rhee was "succeeded by Kim Ku" while its officeholder lists show Park Eun-sik in 1925; the lead dates Japan's surrender to 15 August 1945 and the World War II section to 2 September 1945; the first session had "Twenty-nine" activists in one place and "30" in another; and the infobox dates the Cairo declaration to 27 November 1943, which the tool noted differs from the usual 1 December (unverified). Several claims carry "unreliable source?" or "better source needed" tags.

Resistance Inside and Outside Korea

- **Before 1919.** The article gives the Independence Club (April 1896) as an earlier effort, and says the movement officially began in 1919 and ended with the surrender in 1945. Ahn Jung-geun assassinated Itō Hirobumi at Harbin on 26 October 1909 (Korea under Japanese rule article).
- **Armed struggle.** From 1919 and the 1920s, independence army units crossed the border. Hong Beom-do's unit ambushed the Japanese at Fengwudong in June 1920; at Qingshanli the forces of Kim Jwa-jin and Hong "reportedly killed about 1,500 Japanese soldiers". The article puts Japan's retaliation, the Gando massacre, at "between 5,000 and tens of thousands" of civilians, and says about 20,000 righteous-army volunteers died, citing Lew (2000); its two sections give the righteous-army dates as 1905 to 1912 and 1907 to 1918.
- **Individual attacks.** Kim Sang-ok (1923, Namdaemun police station); Lee Bong-chang (1932, a grenade thrown at Emperor Hirohito's carriage that missed); Yun Bong-gil (1932, a bomb in Shanghai that killed several high-ranking officials). The article says Lee was a member of the Korean Patriotic Organization and Yun came from the same group; it does not say Kim Gu led it.
- **Strikes.** The article gives 159,061 wage disputes and 1,018 tenant disputes involving 68,686 farmers from 1911 to 1937.
- **Left and right.** A left-wing Korean National Front Federation formed in Wuhan in 1937, with a Korean Volunteer Corps commanded by the Chinese Military Affairs Commission; the Provisional Government was aligned with Chiang Kai-shek's government, and Kim Gu accepted the Three Principles of the People in return for financial aid. The article says South Korea was criticised in 2011 for not recognising socialist independence fighters, who anti-communist policies excluded from the official merit registry.
- **Not covered.** The June 10 (1926) and Gwangju (1929) student movements are only listed by name and year, so I add nothing on them. The Korean Liberation Army is mentioned only generally in the portion read.

Liberation

The Liberation Day article dates the announcement that Japan would surrender to 15 August 1945; it says the United States commemorates the day in September, when the Japanese formally signed, but gives no date for the signing. On 15 August 1945, it says, Lyuh Woon-hyung and a representative of the Governor-General agreed on releasing prisoners and transferring administration to Korean authorities. The US and Soviet Union agreed a three-year trusteeship; US troops landed in mid-September and occupied the south, declaring the provisional government invalid, and Japanese troops had left the south by 6 November 1945. The South

calls the day *Gwangbokjeol*, using "restoration" rather than "independence" to stress that Korea "had been independent for millennia", and the article notes it coincides with the anniversary of the establishment of the South Korean government in 1948. Of the North's use I have only a line: the article says weddings are typical on the holiday and that military parades were held in jubilee years.

The article carries some doubtful claims: that 1910 was the first foreign control "in history", which is stated without qualification; that the day is "the only political holiday that is celebrated in both Koreas", resting on sources that include a dead link; and a garbled sentence about a provisional government on 1 September. I do not rely on them. What happened next, the division, is Korean History 9.

What to Take from This

My own reading, unverified: the sources describe the period mostly through figures that have owners, the Land Survey percentages, the 80.3%, the 1919 deaths and arrests, and almost none of them agree with one another. That is the most reliable thing to take from the chapter. The pattern is mine; the articles say only that some figures are uncertain.

What the Sources Left Open

- The annexation date (22 or 29 August 1910).
- How 39.8% Japanese-controlled land and 90% Korean ownership in 1920 fit together.
- Which scholars hold the "extraction" and "growth" views.
- How voluntary the name changes were, and who intended what.
- The 1919 totals: participants, deaths, arrests.
- The Provisional Government's recognition status and its leaders' order.
- Education and language policy in detail, the wartime mobilisation figures, forced labour, "comfort women", and the June 10 and Gwangju movements: not read.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Make a timeline from 1909 to 1945 with ten dated items from this chapter. Mark each as firm, hedged or contradicted within its article.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Using the March First table, explain in four sentences why a historian cannot give one figure for deaths or participants, and say which source you would trust least and why. Mark your own reading.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

The name policy was called "voluntary". Set out the evidence for and against that description from the chapter, say what the 80.3% figure does and does not show, and name one further source you would want.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Government-General:** Terauchi (1910 to 1916) to Abe (1944 to 1945); Military Police Reign Era 1910 to 1919
- **Names:** Ordinance No. 19 (1939), No. 20 (1940); notification window 11 February to 10 August 1940; 80.3% of households notified
- **March First:** 1 March 1919; 33 signers; 13 provinces by 19 March; deaths 798 to 7,509 depending on source
- **Provisional Government:** 11 April 1919, Shanghai; Rhee, Park Eun-sik, Kim Gu; Chongqing 1940 to 1945
- **Resistance:** Fengwudong and Qingshanli (1920), Gando massacre, Lee Bong-chang and Yun Bong-gil (1932)
- **Liberation:** 15 August 1945 announcement; surrender 2 September; Gwangbokjeol

- **Gaps:** forced labour, comfort women, education and language policy, 1929 Gwangju

Next: Korean History 9 follows the division, the Korean War and, in one factual note, North Korea.

Korean History

Course 1 · Chapter 9 · Liberation, Division and the Korean War

Liberation in August 1945 lasted a few weeks before the peninsula was split into two occupation zones. By 1948 there were two states, each claiming to be the only legitimate government of all Korea, and in 1950 one invaded the other. This chapter follows that sequence from the sources I could read, and gives North Korea one short factual note. As in the rest of this course, it has large gaps, which I list at the end.

How this chapter was checked

The facts come from six Wikipedia articles: Division of Korea, United States Army Military Government in Korea, Jeju uprising, History of North Korea, Korean War and Korean Armistice Agreement, all read through a summarising tool, so exact wording may differ from the pages. The tool read the Jeju uprising article in full. For Division of Korea (about 223,875 characters), Military Government in Korea (about 152,963), History of North Korea (about 157,954; only 1945 to 1960 used), Korean War (about 312,630) and Armistice Agreement (about 165,632) it read only the first 100,000 characters. For the Korean War that reached only the lead, infobox and background up to the eve of the invasion, so the narrative of the war, the casualty sections and the aftermath were headings, and what I give about them comes from the lead and infobox. Details the tool said came from general knowledge are left out or marked unverified. My own material is marked "mine". I used no North Korean sites, and the one point where the North Korea article relies on a North Korean source is marked.

Dividing the Peninsula, 1945

- **The line.** The Division of Korea article says that on 10 August 1945 two young US officers, Dean Rusk and Charles Bonesteel, chose the 38th parallel from a *National Geographic* map, consulting no Korea experts; the line put Seoul in the American zone and was accepted by the Soviet Union, written into General Order No. 1 (approved 17 August 1945). It gives 16 million Koreans in the American zone and 9 million in the Soviet zone. It quotes Rusk as saying he "almost surely" would have chosen differently had he known Korean history. The Allies had agreed at Cairo, Tehran and Yalta that Korea should be independent after an international trusteeship, and Stalin wanted it short.

- **North.** Soviet forces entered on 10 August and reached Pyongyang on 24 August, working with local People's Committees. Cho Man-sik led the Pyongyang committee and opposed trusteeship on 4 January 1946, after which he was put under house arrest (History of North Korea). A Provisional People's Committee was formed in February 1946 and land reform followed in March; Soviet forces withdrew on 10 December 1948.
- **South.** MacArthur's Proclamation No. 1 was issued on 7 September 1945 and Hodge landed at Incheon on 8 September, beginning the US Army Military Government in Korea. The division article describes the occupation as chaotic and run with little guidance from Washington.

The Military Government in the South

The Military Government article gives 9 September 1945 to 15 August 1948 in the lead (US troops from 8 September in the infobox). Hodge commanded; the governors listed are Arnold, Lerch, Dean and Helmick, with Ahn Chai-hong as a civil governor appointed by the US. It says the Military Government outlawed the People's Republic of Korea in the South soon after arriving, and did not recognise Provisional Government members, who entered as private citizens.

- **Japanese officials.** Hodge first announced on 9 September that the colonial government would stay intact; after an outcry he replaced the governor-general with an American and removed Japanese bureau chiefs, but hired former Japanese bureaucrats as advisers.
- **Rice.** The article says removing controls on rice production, prices and distribution led to profiteering, hoarding and hunger despite a 60% rise in crop yield the year before, and that rice rose "from 9.4 Yen to 2,800 yen" per bushel. It rests these economic claims partly on a 1983 undergraduate honours paper, a weak source.
- **Unrest.** Strikes were banned on 8 December 1945 and people's committees outlawed on 12 December. A general strike began among Busan railway workers in September 1946; on 1 October police fired on a Daegu protest and killed a worker, and demonstrations became the "Autumn Uprising", with martial law and troops firing into crowds, killing an unknown number.
- **Claims with owners.** The article cites Kornel Chang (2020) for the argument that the occupation managed decolonisation in ways that limited liberation, and cites Bruce Cumings and Martin Hart-Landsberg for the Hodge quote that Korea "was an enemy of the United States". A 1947 State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee assessment is quoted

as saying the US had mostly held its own and improvised day to day. Several claims, including the 1949 US withdrawal, carry [citation needed].

Trusteeship, the UN and Two States

- **Moscow, December 1945.** The Allies agreed a trusteeship of up to five years, which the division article calls the "only agreed-upon framework" for a unified state. Reaction split: an anti-trusteeship movement in the South demanded immediate independence, while the Korean Communist Party supported it. The US–Soviet Joint Commission met in 1946 and 1947 and failed. The article says the Soviets proposed Lyuh Woon-hyung as leader of a unified Korea in 1946 and the US rejected it; Lyuh was assassinated on 19 July 1947.
- **UN.** The US took the matter to the UN in September 1947; a resolution of 14 November called for free elections and created UNTCOK, and the USSR boycotted the vote. The UN then decided on elections in the south only, over the objection of the commission chairman K. P. S. Menon. The 10 May 1948 election took place "amid widespread violence and intimidation", with a boycott by Rhee's opponents. On 12 December 1948 the General Assembly called the Republic of Korea the "only lawful government in Korea"; the article adds that no UNTCOK member considered the election to have produced a legitimate national parliament, and the Australian representative said he was "far from satisfied".
- **The two states.** The Republic of Korea was declared on 15 August 1948 with Syngman Rhee as president, and US forces began withdrawing. For the North, the division article says the People's Assembly approved the constitution on 10 July, elections were held on 25 August and Kim Il Sung became prime minister on 9 September 1948; the North Korea article says the People's Assembly voted on 10 July to implement the constitution, "establishing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea", and gives no 9 September.
- **Claims.** The article says "each government claimed sovereignty over the whole Korean peninsula", and that Rhee argued the North's attack had "obliterated the boundary".

Inconsistent in the division article

The lead dates the division to 2 September 1945, while the body sets up the zones in August (17 August, General Order No. 1) and a Seoul surrender ceremony on 9 September. The lead says the Republic of Korea's founding "promptly followed" the DPRK's, but the dates it gives (15 August and 9 September 1948) are the other way round. Its lead also calls the Korean Empire "by the early 18th century" a nation, though the

empire is dated 1897 to 1910. Some references carry anomalous retrieval dates. I give each statement as the article makes it.

The Jeju Uprising

The article dates it from 3 April 1948 to 13 May 1949 in the infobox. A leftist South Korean Workers' Party (WPSK)-led insurgency attacked police and right-wing targets; some sources say a military police fire on a commemoration set it off, others that it was planned, and the article does not resolve this. Causes it names: police firing on a crowd on 1 March 1947 that killed six (a State Department analyst first reported one); opposition to the separate May 1948 election, which the WPSK saw as making partition permanent; and the far-right Northwest Youth League, which Bruce Cumings is cited as saying held more authority than the police. Some South Korean liberal scholars and victims' families dispute that the Jeju People's Committee followed WPSK direction.

- **Suppression.** Martial law was declared on 17 November 1948 and an "eradication campaign" began in March 1949. The article reports atrocities by both sides, ROK forces and right-wing groups especially brutal toward civilians, and says the campaign killed 2,345 guerrillas and 1,668 civilians.
- **Figures, with owners.** The infobox gives 1,091 security and militia deaths and 14,373 civilians (86% by security forces, 14% by insurgents), about 30,000 including combatants, and says other estimates reach 80,000. The lead gives 14,000 to 30,000 (Chalmers Johnson). A footnote cites a governor's report of 60,000, and the final section says some estimates reach 100,000. The Korean War article gives 30,000 violent deaths including 14,373 civilians, but its attribution of 2,000 deaths to rebels and 12,000 to ROK forces adds to 14,000, not 14,373.
- **Official findings.** The article says a 2003 National Committee chaired by Prime Minister Goh Kun called it a genocide and found shared responsibility of the US military government and the Korean military, and that President Roh Moo-hyun apologised on 31 October 2003, saying "wrongful decisions of the government" caused casualties. In 2019 the police and defence ministry apologised at the 71st anniversary. The article gives two dates for the 2000 special act (26 December 1999 and 12 January 2000).
- **Disputed.** Cumings says the US bears responsibility; Heo Ho-jun claims US liaison aircraft helped locate and kill villagers; Kim Dae-jung called it "a communist rebellion" while also

saying innocent people died under false accusations; a 1949 US investigation under Colonel Casteel called the strike "communist inspired".

A Short Factual Note on North Korea, 1945 to 1960

This is a brief note, from the History of North Korea article's 1945 to 1960 text, which says most of its account rests on scholarly works (Cumings, Buzo, Robinson, Lone and McCormack). Kim Il Sung arrived at Wonsan on 19 September 1945 with 66 other Korean Red Army officers and was introduced to the public on 14 October "as a guerrilla hero". The North Korean Communist Party formed on 18 December 1945, merged into the Workers' Party of North Korea in August 1946, and in 1949 merged with its southern counterpart to form the Workers' Party of Korea, with Kim as chairman. The Korean People's Army was built with Soviet advisers and equipment. Kim consolidated power against the Yan'an faction, the Soviet Koreans and Pak Hon-yong's group; Pak was dismissed in 1953 and executed after a show trial in 1955. After Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in February 1956, critics were purged in the August Faction Incident, and by 1960, the article says, 70% of the 1956 Central Committee were no longer in politics. It says Juche "began to displace" Marxism–Leninism and gives the 1954 to 1955 famine as killing about 800,000, with officials having exaggerated harvests.

The article marks its own cautions: Kim's guerrilla role and a National Reunification Prize rest on the North Korean state news agency, KCNA, and so reflect the official line; claims of coercive rule, "at least 300 suicides" and 30,000 prisoners are the allegations of Li Sangjo, an ambassador of the Yan'an faction; and some analyses are hedged ("by some accounts", "by some analysis"). I add nothing beyond this note.

The Korean War, 1950 to 1953

From the lead and infobox only: North Korea invaded South Korea on 25 June 1950 (the Korean War article names Operation Pokpung). The article says Stalin approved the invasion on condition that Mao would send reinforcements if needed. Seoul fell on 28 June; by early August the ROK and its allies held only the Pusan Perimeter. UN forces landed at Incheon on 15 September, retook Seoul and in October invaded the North and took Pyongyang. Chinese forces crossed the Yalu on 19 October (the battle table gives 25 October), UN forces retreated from the North in December, Communist forces retook Seoul in January 1951, and UN forces regained

ground to roughly the 38th parallel. Armistice talks began in July 1951 and dragged on during a war of attrition marked by heavy UN bombing of the North.

	Figures (Korean War article, infobox and lead)
UN side	"~210,000 dead and missing" (infobox); ROK 137,899 dead, 24,495 missing; US 36,515 dead or missing; other UN 3,730 dead and 379 missing
Communist side	"~600,000 to 630,000 dead and missing"; North Korea 294,151 to 316,579 dead and 91,206 missing; China 183,108 to 197,653 dead and 25,621 missing or captured; USSR 299 dead
Civilians	1.6 to 3 million (infobox); 1.5 to 3 million (lead)
Totals	South Korea 990,968 casualties; North Korea "est. 1,550,000"; the lead says "around one million military deaths"
Forces	21 countries under the UN Command, the US providing "around 90%" of personnel (no source in the text read); Chinese peak 1,450,000, total 2,970,000; Soviet peak 26,000

The numbers do not add up

The infobox's components for the UN side add to roughly 203,000, not 210,000; its UN peak of 968,302 exceeds the listed ROK and US peaks combined (about 929,765); and the lead's "around one million military deaths" does not match the infobox's roughly 800,000 to 840,000 dead and missing. Whether the casualty totals include wounded is not stated. The lead lists "alleged war crimes", including the Bodo League massacre of alleged communists in South Korea, a massacre at Seoul National University Hospital by North Korea, and UN Command carpet bombing, and the article does not say who makes the allegations; it also says North Korea became one of the most heavily bombed countries in history. On Mao's role, sources named in the article disagree: Barnouin and Yu say Mao agreed, partly for Soviet aid; Weathersby, citing Soviet documents, says Kim secured Mao's support; Chen Jian says Mao never seriously challenged Kim's plans; Zhao Suisheng says Mao initially did not approve and asked Stalin for verification. The war's names differ: "6·25 War" in the South, "Fatherland Liberation War" in the North, and "War to Resist America and Assist Korea" in China.

The Armistice

- **Signed.** On 27 July 1953, at 10:00, taking effect at 22:00 local time the same day. The article lists Lt. Gen. William K. Harrison Jr. and Gen. Mark W. Clark for the UN Command, Nam Il for the Korean People's Army and Peng Dehuai for the Chinese People's Volunteer Army, but its Background says Nam Il and Harrison signed and does not say whether Clark or Peng did, and a photo caption says Kim Il Sung "signs the agreement". South Korea did not sign; the article attributes this to Rhee's refusal to accept that he had failed to unify Korea by force.
- **Terms.** A "complete cessation of hostilities and of all acts of armed force in Korea"; the Military Demarcation Line and the Demilitarized Zone, following the Kansas Line where the two sides actually faced each other, 2.5 miles (4.0 km) wide (the article gives no length); a Military Armistice Commission; a Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission with teams from Czechoslovakia, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland; and repatriation of prisoners "who insist on repatriation" under a commission chaired by the Indian General K. S. Thimayya. Over 22,000 KPA or PVA soldiers refused repatriation, along with 327 South Koreans, 21 Americans and 1 Briton on the UN side.
- **Status.** A purely military document and a ceasefire, not a peace treaty; no peace treaty has been signed. The Korean War infobox says a net 3,900 km^2 moved from North to South, the North gaining Kaesong and the South gaining Sokcho.
- **Later.** In March 2013 North Korea said it was scrapping its non-aggression pacts with South Korea, closing the border and cutting the direct phone line; a UN spokesman said the armistice could not be dissolved unilaterally. The article's claim that the DMZ is "the most heavily defended national border in the world as of 2018" is flagged [update] and [citation needed].
- **Inconsistencies.** The article calls Dulles Secretary of State in the lead and "Secretary of Defense" in a later section, and says China "signed a peace treaty" with South Korea in 1992 where its citation concerns establishing relations.

What to Take from This

My own reading, unverified: the three stages in this chapter, a line drawn quickly, two elections where one side did not vote, and a war ended by an armistice, each left the same question open, which government speaks for all Korea. The sources show the claims; they do not say the pattern, and I do.

What the Sources Left Open

- Which date counts as the start of the division (2 September, 17 August or earlier), and the DPRK's founding date (10 July or 9 September 1948).
- Who started the Jeju uprising, and how many died (14,373 civilians, 30,000, 60,000, 80,000 or 100,000).
- Every Korean War casualty total, the Chinese entry date, and the armistice signatories.
- The war's narrative sections, civilian massacres in detail, refugees and the aftermath: not read.
- North Korea after 1960, which the course leaves out.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Make a timeline from 10 August 1945 to 27 July 1953 using only dates in this chapter. Mark each as firm, hedged or contradicted within its article.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Set out the Jeju uprising's death toll as claims with owners, and say why no single figure is safe. Then name one thing the article says about responsibility that its sources dispute.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Explain in four sentences what the 1953 armistice did and did not do, using the chapter's figures. Mark which sentences come from the article and which are your own reading.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Division:** 38th parallel chosen 10 August 1945; General Order No. 1, 17 August; Soviets in Pyongyang 24 August; Hodge at Incheon 8 September
- **Moscow, December 1945:** trusteeship of up to five years; Joint Commission fails 1946 and 1947
- **1948:** election 10 May; ROK 15 August; DPRK constitution 10 July, Kim Il Sung prime minister 9 September; UN recognition 12 December
- **Jeju:** 3 April 1948; martial law 17 November 1948; deaths 14,373 civilians to 100,000 depending on source; apology 31 October 2003
- **Korean War:** 25 June 1950 to 27 July 1953; Incheon 15 September 1950; Chinese entry October 1950
- **Armistice:** 27 July 1953; DMZ 4 km wide; South Korea did not sign; no peace treaty

Next: Korean History 10 follows the Republic from the First Republic to the present: dictatorship, industrialisation and democratisation.

Korean History

Course 1 · Chapter 10 · Dictatorship, Growth and Democracy (1953 to Today)

After the armistice, South Korea went from a war-wrecked state through a student revolution, a coup, a military-led economic boom, a massacre at Gwangju, a democratic transition in 1987, a financial crisis in 1997, and two presidential impeachments. This chapter follows those turning points from the sources I could read. It leaves out most of the governments between them, and I say which.

How this chapter was checked

The facts come from seven Wikipedia articles: April Revolution, Park Chung Hee, Economic history of South Korea, Gwangju Uprising, June Democratic Struggle, Impeachment of Park Geun-hye and 2024 South Korean martial law, all read through a summarising tool, so exact wording may differ from the pages. The tool read April Revolution, June Democratic Struggle and the Park Geun-hye impeachment article in full. It read only the first 100,000 characters of the others: Park Chung Hee (about 293,021 characters; the economic policy, domestic, final-years, death and legacy sections were not read), Economic history of South Korea (about 208,542; the five-year plans and chaebol sections are not in what I read), Gwangju Uprising (about 154,112) and the martial-law article (about 277,410; the Constitutional Court decision and the 2025 election come from its lead and infobox). A page I tried for the 1997 crisis in South Korea returned an error, so that crisis rests on the economic history article. Details the tool said came from general knowledge are left out or marked unverified. My own material is marked "mine". The newest events here are the least settled; some of them rest on articles carrying "too long" or protection notices.

The April Revolution, 1960

The April Revolution article says Lee Ki-poong won the 15 March 1960 vice-presidential vote with 8,225,000 votes against Chang Myon's 1,850,000, which made fraud "clear to the public", with hundreds of pre-marked ballots reported stuffed into boxes. Protests in Masan met police gunfire on 15 March; the student Kim Ju-yeol (spelled Kim Ju-yul in the article) disappeared, and his body was found in Masan harbour on 11 April, with protesters saying his skull "had actually been split by a 20 centimeter-long tear-gas grenade" though authorities said he drowned. On 19 April ("Bloody Tuesday") over 100,000 students marched to the Blue House; police fired,

killing "approximately 180", and martial law was proclaimed. Rhee resigned on 26 April and went into exile, reaching Hawaii on 29 May; he died there on 19 July 1965. The Second Republic is dated from 15 June 1960 in the infobox, with real power in Prime Minister Chang Myon and Yun Bo-seon elected president on 13 August 1960.

> **The article contradicts itself**
>
> Deaths: 186 "during the two weeks of protest" (lead), "approximately 180" on 19 April alone (body), "~100 casualties" (infobox, citing a general human-rights essay). Martial law is proclaimed by the Rhee government on 19 April in the body but credited to Song Yo-chan in the infobox. The president is Yun Posun, Yun Bo-seon and Yun Po-sun in different places. A 2010 award goes to 23 participants in the body and "has increased to 35" in a reference headline. The Masan section needs citations, and the claim that Rhee tried to blame communist agents for the Masan protests has no source. I give each as stated. I read nothing on Rhee's earlier rule.

Park Chung-hee, 1961 to 1979

The Park article says Park formed the Military Revolutionary Committee and led a coup on 16 May 1961, "largely welcomed" by an exhausted public though "condemned in certain quarters"; the Korean Central Intelligence Agency was created on 19 June 1961 with powers of arrest and detention. He won the 1963 election by "just over 156,000 votes", a 1.5-point margin over Yun Po-sun, and was re-elected in 1967. The infobox gives his presidency from 24 March 1962 while the body says 17 December 1963; the first appears to count the acting presidency, but the article does not say.

- **Japan, 1965.** The normalisation treaty was signed on 22 June 1965; the article says documents released in 2005 show Seoul took the whole $300,000,000 grant, though it had negotiated $360,000,000 for 1.03 million conscripted Koreans.
- **Vietnam.** About 320,000 Korean troops were sent, which the article calls a commitment "second only to that of the United States"; it reports accusations of massacres and brutality and large American payments to Seoul. Its sentence about not defeating the Viet Cong "even though South Korea was quite successful" is self-contradictory as written.
- **Repression and security.** The article covers the 1968 Blue House raid (stopped "just 800 metres" away), the 1968 Unit 684 plot, the 1974 shooting in which the First Lady, Yuk

Young-soo, was killed, and the 1972 self-coup. I read only the lead's summary of the Yushin system.

- **Death.** The lead says Park was killed by "his close friend Kim Jae-gyu", then KCIA director, after the Busan–Masan Uprising, and that "Whether the assassination was spontaneous or premeditated remains unclear to this day."
- **Assessments, with owners.** The lead says his legacy "remains a bitter subject". Supporters credit him with growth; critics object to authoritarianism and the priority given to growth over "civil liberties" and "human rights". A Gallup Korea poll of October 2021 rated him among the most highly rated presidents for legacy, especially among conservatives and the elderly. Carter Eckert calls the approach a "developmental dictatorship" shaped by Japanese militarism, "the enormous elephant in the room" in scholarship.

The five-year plans and the Saemaul Movement were not in the text I read.

The Economy

The economic history article says land reform redistributed most agricultural land by 1951, and that the Korean War destroyed most production facilities; it gives no 1953 GDP figure. Under Park, the strategy relied on "labor-intensive manufactured exports", attributed to a weak resource base, low savings and a small home market; textiles reached 41% of exports by 1965, and the 1965 Japan treaty brought loans and compensation. From 1973 the government used the National Investment Fund and the Korea Development Bank to invest in six strategic industries: steel, non-ferrous metals, shipbuilding, industrial machinery, electronics and petrochemicals. The article dates the heavy and chemical drive to the "late 1960s" in one place, "beginning in 1973" in another and the "mid-1970s" in a third. It says some future chaebol founders had corruptly appropriated US aid, which Park later used to win the cooperation of wealthy businesses, and that South Korea joined the WTO in 1995 and the OECD in 1996, with liberalisation leading firms and banks to issue large short-term dollar debt for long-term projects.

> **The 1997 crisis**
>
> The won began depreciating in August 1997; by December the IMF had approved a US$21 billion loan, part of a US$58.4 billion bailout plan; by January 1998 a third of merchant banks had been shut down and the economy entered recession; Daewoo was dismantled in 1999; South Korea repaid the IMF in 2001. Growth was 5.4% in the first quarter of 1999,

9.08% in 2000 and 5.8% in 2002, and 4 to 5% from 2003; the article says President Kim Dae-jung declared the currency crisis over in December 1999. It gives "10.5%" yearly growth for 1999 without specifying a period, and says the crisis is called the "IMF crisis" in South Korea (unchecked). I read no account of its causes beyond the short-term-debt line above.

Chun Doo-hwan and Gwangju, 1979 to 1980

The Gwangju article says Chun took military control in the coup of 12 December 1979, after Park's assassination in October, and on 17 May 1980 forced the Cabinet to extend martial law to the whole country, closing universities, banning political activity, curtailing the press and arresting opposition figures including Kim Dae-jung. On 18 May students at Chonnam National University protested the closure; paratroopers confronted them and the clashes spread. The article names Kim Gyeong-cheol, a deaf bystander, as the first known fatality. Troops fired on crowds on 20 and 21 May; protesters raided armouries and police stations; troops withdrew to the outskirts and sealed the city on 22 to 25 May; at 4:00 a.m. on 27 May "Operation Sangmu-Chungjeong" moved in and defeated the militias within 90 minutes. The treatment of these events in fiction is in *Korean Literature 8*.

- **Deaths, with owners.** "There is no universally accepted death toll." The lead says the government claimed 165 killed and scholarship estimates 600 to 2,300; the Casualties section gives 1,000 to 2,000, and about 2,300 deaths above historical averages, with 1,800 to 3,500 wounded. The early Martial Law Command figures were 144 civilians, 22 soldiers and 4 police killed, and disputing them was grounds for arrest for "spreading false rumors". The May 18 Family Association says at least 165 died plus 76 missing presumed dead. The article attributes the 165 figure to the government in the lead but to the Family Association in the section, a conflict it does not resolve.
- **The army.** The article describes indiscriminate clubbing and bayonet attacks, says helicopters were used to fire on civilians (revealed in 2018), and that a 2018 defence ministry apology acknowledged sexual violence by soldiers.
- **The US role.** Ambassador Gleysteen's letter says the US authorised the 20th Division's deployment; the US denied this; and July 2021 declassified documents show he was told of the crackdown a day in advance. The article presents these without resolving them.
- **Afterwards.** In 1988 a National Assembly hearing renamed the events the "Gwangju Uprising"; in 1996 and 1997 Chun was sentenced to death, commuted to life, and all

convicted were pardoned on 22 December 1997; 18 May became a memorial day in 1997; documents were listed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register on 25 May 2011. Revisions to the May 18 Special Act in December 2020 penalised false claims about the uprising, and the lead says denial of the massacre is commonly espoused by conservative and far-right groups.

The article's infobox and text disagree on the forces (about 3,000 paratroopers and 23,000 blockade troops against "roughly 3,000 paratroopers and 18,000 police officers"). I read nothing on Chun's presidency itself.

The June Democratic Struggle, 1987

- **Triggers.** Park Jong-chul was detained on 13 January 1987 and died on 14 January during interrogation, with a cover-up later exposed. On 13 April Chun suspended the parliamentary committee on constitutional revision until after the Seoul Olympics, which the article calls a major source of unrest. Lee Han-yeol was hit in the skull by a tear-gas grenade on 9 June and died on 5 July; about 1.6 million attended his funeral on 9 July.
- **June.** On 10 June, Roh Tae-woo's nomination as successor was scheduled, and police arrested 3,831 people; students held a sit-in at Myeongdong Cathedral until 15 June. A rally on 18 June against tear gas drew about 1.5 million; on 19 June Chun ordered troops mobilised but rescinded the order within hours, "fearing a repeat of Gwangju" (the article's explanation); on 26 June the Great National March of Peace drew over 1 million, with more than 3,469 arrests.
- **29 June.** Roh promised to amend the constitution and release political prisoners including Kim Dae-jung, and the article says Chun approved it two days later. The bill passed on 12 October and was approved by 94.4% in a referendum on 28 October, taking effect on 25 February 1988, with direct presidential elections, stronger civil rights and more power for the National Assembly.
- **Election.** On 16 December 1987 Roh won 36.6% (the lead says 36%) on 89.2% turnout; Kim Young-sam got 28% and Kim Dae-jung 27%, because the opposition failed to unite.
- **Gaps in the article.** The single five-year term does not appear in the text; the tool's note that it is correct comes from general knowledge, and I leave it out. The "protection of the constitution" label for the 13 April announcement is also not in the article. The article's Flight 858 route and death count are internally inconsistent, and I use neither.

Impeachments, 2016 to 2017 and 2024 to 2025

The Park Geun-hye article says her aide Choi Soon-sil, who held no official post, used her access to solicit money from conglomerates for two foundations; Park apologised on 25 October 2016, and Choi was arrested on 31 October. Protests began on 26 October (the article gives no crowd figures) and Park's approval fell to 4%. The National Assembly passed the impeachment motion 234 to 56 on 9 December 2016, Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn became acting president, and on 10 March 2017 the Constitutional Court ruled 8 to 0 to uphold it. Moon Jae-in won the election, moved up to 9 May 2017. Park was sentenced to 24 years on 6 April 2018 and pardoned by Moon in December 2021, returning home in March 2022. The article's vote tally is inconsistent (the infobox has 2 abstentions and 1 not voting, the body three abstentions), its election-deadline account does not reconcile, and its 25-year sentence is cited to sources that do not plausibly support an April 2018 sentence.

The martial-law article says that at 22:27 KST on 3 December 2024 President Yoon Suk Yeol declared martial law in a televised address, which the article calls a self-coup attempt, accusing the opposition Democratic Party of "anti-state activities" and a "legislative dictatorship" (Yoon's claims, as the article reports them). The decree suspended political activities including National Assembly sessions and put the media under martial-law command. At 01:02 on 4 December, 190 legislators present passed a motion to lift martial law unanimously, despite attempts by the Special Warfare Command to prevent the vote; Yoon announced the lifting at 04:26 and the cabinet approved it at 04:30. The Assembly impeached Yoon on 14 December 2024, Prime Minister Han Duck-soo became acting president and was himself impeached on 27 December (the Constitutional Court overturned that impeachment on 24 March 2025), and the Constitutional Court unanimously upheld Yoon's impeachment on 4 April (the sentence gives no year; the infobox range, 4 December 2024 to 4 April 2025, suggests 2025). A snap election on 3 June 2025 elected Lee Jae Myung.

Claims with owners, and recent material

Yoon justified the declaration as an "act of governance" against anti-state forces; the article says it is "more widely believed" that it was driven by disputes with the Assembly and scandals involving Yoon and his wife, Kim Keon Hee. Yoon alleged vulnerabilities in the election commission's network and election fraud; the commission called this "baseless", and the article says the National Intelligence Service reported on 19 December that there was no evidence of rigging. Representative Choo Mi-ae and others made claims about Defence Minister Kim Yong-hyun's views, which the article presents as claims. The

lead also says Yoon was sentenced to life in prison on 19 February 2026, with no source in the portion read, and I cannot verify it. The article carries "too long" and semi-protection notices, so it may change. Treat everything after 2024 as provisional.

What to Take from This

My own reading, unverified: the turning points in this chapter have something in common, a moment when the army, the police or the president was told to act against crowds or the assembly, and a different answer followed in each (fire on 19 April 1960 and 18 May 1980; the troops recalled on 19 June 1987; the vote to lift martial law on 4 December 2024). The sources report each; they do not draw the comparison.

What the Sources Left Open

- April 1960 deaths (about 100, about 180 or 186), and who proclaimed martial law.
- Whether Park's assassination was spontaneous or planned.
- The heavy industry drive's start date (late 1960s, 1973 or mid-1970s), the five-year plans and the chaebol.
- The Gwangju toll (no universally accepted figure) and the US role.
- The causes of the 1997 crisis beyond short-term debt, and the roles of Chun's, Roh's, Kim Young-sam's and Kim Dae-jung's governments: not read.
- Most of the 2024 to 2026 story: the article's later sections were cut off.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Make a timeline from 15 March 1960 to 9 May 2017 with twelve dated items from this chapter. Mark each as firm, hedged or contradicted within its article.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Set out, as claims with owners, the different assessments of Park Chung-hee and the different Gwangju death tolls. Say why neither can be reduced to one number or one verdict, and mark your own reading.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Compare the 1987 transition with the 2016 to 2017 and 2024 to 2025 impeachments: who acted, what was decided, and what the article leaves out. Mark which sentences are from the sources.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **1960:** election fraud 15 March; Bloody Tuesday 19 April; Rhee resigns 26 April
- **Park:** coup 16 May 1961; Japan treaty 22 June 1965; about 320,000 troops to Vietnam; assassinated 1979 by Kim Jae-gyu
- **Economy:** textiles 41% of exports by 1965; six strategic industries from 1973; OECD 1996; IMF loan of US$21 billion in December 1997
- **Chun and Gwangju:** coup 12 December 1979; martial law extended 17 May 1980; uprising 18 to 27 May 1980; no universally accepted death toll
- **1987:** Park Jong-chul 14 January; 29 June declaration; referendum 28 October (94.4%); election 16 December
- **Impeachments:** Park Geun-hye 9 December 2016 (234 to 56), Court 10 March 2017 (8 to 0); Yoon martial law 3 December 2024, impeached 14 December, upheld 4 April

Next: Korean History 11 is the capstone: the recurring themes across the whole course and how to check any account of Korean history.

Korean History

Course 1 · Chapter 11 · Capstone: Reading Korean History as a Whole

Ten chapters, from a pottery period to two impeachments. This chapter adds no new facts. It follows five threads that kept coming back, collects every figure the course found disputed, and gives a short checklist for reading any account of Korean history. The threads are a way of reading and not a claim from any source.

> **How this chapter was checked**
>
> Every fact below comes from the earlier chapters of this course, which took them from the Wikipedia articles named there, mostly read in part and through a summarising tool. I read no new sources for this chapter. The grouping into threads and the sentences marked as my reading are mine and unverified. Where an earlier chapter noted that its source hedged, was tagged or contradicted another article, that caution comes with the fact.

Thread One: Neighbours

Every period in the course has a neighbour in it. China appears as the Han that took Wanggeom in 108 BCE (Korean History 2), the Sui whose armies Goguryeo defeated (Korean History 3), the Tang that was Silla's ally and then its enemy (Korean History 4), the Ming and then the Qing, to whom Joseon became a tributary in 1637 (Korean History 7). The steppe appears as the Khitans and Mongols, the second of whom made Goryeo a client state for about eighty years (Korean History 5). Japan appears in the Gaya "Mimana" claim, the Imjin War, the 1876 treaty, the protectorate treaties and the colony (Korean History 3, 7 and 8). In 1945 the neighbours were the United States and the Soviet Union, who chose the 38th parallel on 10 August (Korean History 9). My reading, unverified: in most periods the sources describe Korean states responding to a neighbour's move, and they differ over how much choice each response had.

Thread Two: Records and Who Wrote Them

The course leaned on records with owners. The *Samguk sagi* and *Samguk yusa* are the main sources for early states, and their dates disagree across articles (Korean History 1 and 2). The

Gwanggaeto Stele is a Goguryeo memorial in Classical Chinese, read differently by Japanese and Korean scholars (Korean History 1). The Joseon Veritable Records were kept by historians with legal protection, but the Sarim compiled most surviving records and so shaped the story of the purges (Korean History 1 and 6). Japanese records of 1919 were, the article says, politically altered (Korean History 8). The script that ended the need for Chinese characters, Hangul, dates from the 1440s (Korean History 6); its literary side is in *Korean Literature 3*. My reading, unverified: wherever there is a record, ask who kept it and what they gained.

Thread Three: Class and Legitimacy

Two kinds of ranking run through the course. One ranks people: Silla's bone rank (sacred bone, true bone, head ranks), the yangban and the lowborn in Joseon, and the examination that was supposed to open office to talent (958 to 1894, per Korean History 5, with the caveat of cost in Korean History 6). The other ranks states and claims to rule: Dangun's 2333 BC date, used by two Koreas (Korean History 2); "Unified Silla" against "Late Silla" (Korean History 4); Balhae claimed by Korean, Chinese and Russian scholars (Korean History 4); the Korean Empire's constitution giving the emperor full authority (Korean History 7); and the 1948 states, each claiming all Korea (Korean History 9). The validity of the 1905 and 1910 treaties is the same question in another form: who had the right to speak for the state (Korean History 7). My reading, unverified: legitimacy, not only power, is what was fought over.

Thread Four: Violence and Memory

Armies and police turn on civilians in every century the course reached: Chungju after a 70-day siege (Korean History 5), the Imjin War's reported million Joseon deaths (Korean History 7), the Manchu invasion's kidnapped women (Korean History 7), Jeamni and Suwon in 1919 (Korean History 8), Jeju in 1948 to 1949 and the Korean War's civilians (Korean History 9), and Gwangju in 1980 (Korean History 10). Each was later argued over: apologies and commissions (Jeju, 2003; Gwangju, 2018 and 2020), special acts and pardons (Gwangju, 1997), and bans on denial. The literature that remembers them is in *Korean Literature 7 and 8*. My reading, unverified: in every case the sources give the toll as a range with owners, and the ranges are wider the more the state controlled the count.

Thread Five: Names, Dates and Spellings

Names mark politics. Joseon was revived in 1392 as a tribute to Gojoseon, the name reverted to Joseon under Japanese rule, and the North and South use different words for Korea (Korean History 1). The spelling of a surname can be Yi, Lee or Rhee (Korean History 1), and the Annexation Treaty's signatory is Ye Wanyong, Yi Wan-yong and Lee Wan-yong in one article (Korean History 7). Dates of the same event differ by article: Joseon's enthronement (5 or 13 August 1392), the Annexation (22 or 29 August 1910) and the DPRK (10 July or 9 September 1948).

Every Disputed Figure in the Course

Chapter	What is disputed	The range or the split
Korean History 1	Date of the *Samguk yusa*	1280, 1281 or 1285 across three articles
Korean History 2	First bronze; Wiman's dates; Dangun's return to heaven	13th century BCE or c. 700 to 550 BC; 195 or 194 BCE; 4380 BC (citation needed)
Korean History 3	Sui-war forces; Gaya's end	305,000 ("allegedly"), 670,000 or 1,133,800; 532 or 562
Korean History 4	Result of the Silla–Tang War; Balhae's fall	"victory" or "truce"; 14 January or late February 926
Korean History 5	Mongol invasions; Tripitaka blocks	nine or six invasions; 81,352, 81,258 or "some 81,000"
Korean History 6	Enthronement; capital move	5 or 13 August 1392; 1393 or 1394
Korean History 7	Imjin War totals; Manchu strengths	Japan 250,000, 300,000 or 320,000; Joseon 80,000 to 90,000 (citation needed)
Korean History 8	March First deaths and arrests	deaths 798 to 7,509; arrests 46,948 and Japanese 12,000+
Korean History 9	Jeju deaths; Korean War deaths	14,373 civilians to 100,000; "around one million" military against 800,000 to 840,000

Chapter	What is disputed	The range or the split
Korean History 10	April 1960 deaths; Gwangju deaths	about 100, about 180 or 186; 165 to 2,300

A Checklist for Any Account of Korean History

1. **Who kept the record?** A court, a rival faction, an occupying government, a victims' association, a scholar working decades later.
2. **Is this a date, a claim or a story?** 2333 BC and "the first kingdom" are claims; 26 February 1876 is a date.
3. **Which figure, and whose?** Quote the owner with the number, and a range when owners disagree.
4. **Which name?** Check the spelling system and whether the name itself carries a claim (Late Silla, Joseon, Hanguk).
5. **What was not read?** Say which part of the source you saw; a partial read is a partial answer.
6. **What is your own reading?** Mark it.

What This Course Left Out

Large parts of the story are missing or thin. Late Joseon's economy and society beyond one short reading (the Uniform Land Tax Law, sedo politics, Heonjong and Cheoljong, the Jinju uprising and the Gabo and Gwangmu Reforms: Korean History 7); forced labour, "comfort women", education and language policy under colonial rule (Korean History 8); the narrative of the Korean War and its aftermath (Korean History 9); the governments of Chun, Roh, Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung (Korean History 10); North Korea after 1960; science, religion, women, demography and everyday life throughout. Several tool summaries were partial, and the course reflects that. For politics in depth, see *Korean Political History I* and *Korean Political History II*; for what Korean writers made of these events, *Korean Literature*.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Choose one thread and trace it through four chapters, with dates and names. Mark which sentences are from the sources and which are your own reading.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Choose three rows from the disputed-figures table and, for each, say who owns each figure, why they might differ, and what one further source you would want.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Apply the six-point checklist to one statement from this course of your choice, and say which of the six points the statement fails, if any.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Neighbours:** Han, Sui, Tang, Khitans, Mongols, Ming and Qing, Japan, the US and Soviet Union
- **Records:** *Samguk sagi* and *yusa*, the Gwanggaeto Stele, the Veritable Records, colonial police reports
- **Class and legitimacy:** bone rank, yangban, Dangun, Late Silla, Balhae, the 1910 treaty, two states in 1948
- **Violence and memory:** Chungju, the Imjin War, Jeamni, Jeju, the Korean War, Gwangju
- **Method:** who kept the record; date, claim or story; whose figure; which name; what was not read; mark your own reading

Where next: the course has a Timeline and Map appendix still to come. After that, see *Korean Political History I* and *II*, *Korean Literature*, and the other Korea courses.