

Three Kingdoms of Korea (18BC - 668 AD)

The Three Kingdoms of Korea is split into two sections: Proto-Three Kingdoms and Later Three Kingdoms.

The kingdoms that eventually emerge at the end of the Proto-Three Kingdoms period are:

Goguryeo - 37 BC - 668 AD

Baekje - 18 BC - 660 AD

Silla - 57 BC - 935 AD

Goguryeo - 37 BC - 668 AD

Goguryeo was the largest and most advanced of the Three Kingdoms, boasting a very powerful military. It had two capitals, including current day Pyongyang.

Controlled much of the north, but is eventually conquered by Silla-Tang forces and split into China and Korea.

Baekje - 18 BC - 660 AD

Baekje took control around current day Seoul. They were a strong maritime force and spread trade and religion from East Asia to Japan as well as the other two kingdoms.

Baekje, like Goguryeo, is eventually absorbed by Silla-Tang forces.

Silla- 57 BC - 935 AD

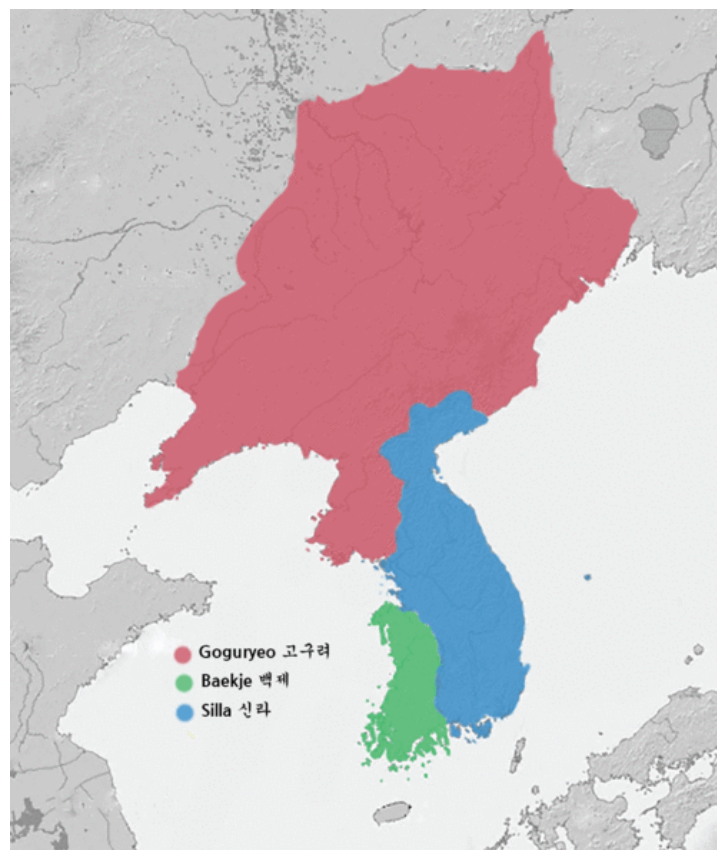
Silla was initially the smallest and weakest of the Three Kingdoms. They are known for their pottery and arts, including Buddhist statues and gold crowns. They also establish the Hwarang, or Flower Knights.

Silla annexed the Gaya confederacy in 562 BC and eventually joins forces with Tang China in the 7th century. With their combined forces, they conquer and take over the other two kingdoms, carving out new boundaries and establishing Korea as a unified country during the Unified Silla era.

Notes

The *Samguk Yusa* and the *Samguk Sagi* are two texts that were printed during Goryeo (918 AD - 1392 AD) that contain stories and accounts from The Three Kingdoms period.

A lot of artifacts from the Three Kingdom period are in modern day North Korea, including several tombs.



Three Kingdoms of Korea



7th C Tang painting - Envoys of Korea: Baekje, Goguryeo, Silla

Goryeo (918 AD-1392 AD)

Local lords rebelled against the social structure during Unified Silla and established the Goryeo dynasty, which is where Korea derived its name.

The capital was where modern day Pyongyang is today.

Goryeo remained a tribute state to China, but retained their own rulers. They are known for the celadon pottery and the Tripitaka Koreana - a Buddhist scripture from the 13th century.



Goryeo celadon vase

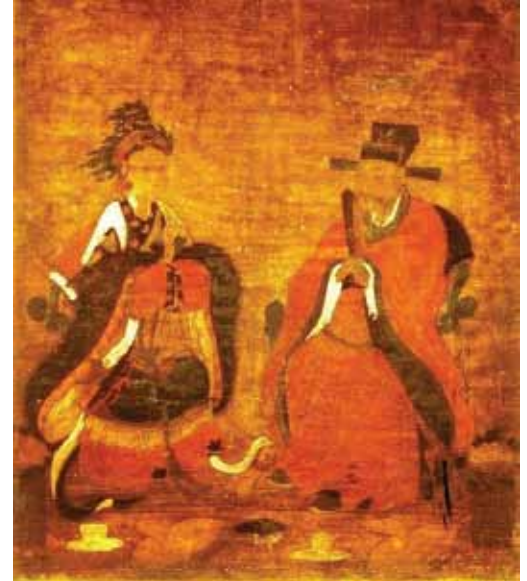


Goryeo

During the 13th century, Goryeo was invaded by the Khitans from the north and eventually, by the Mongols. Goryeo resisted and defended itself from the Mongols. They were never conquered by the Mongols, but could not keep defending itself. The Crown Prince went to the Yuan capital and swore allegiance, and the Mongols accepted. They married a daughter of the Khan to the Crown Prince of Goryeo and the Khan did not directly rule over Goryeo, instead allowing them to govern themselves.

Eventually, the Mongol forces in Goryeo became weak, and when Queen Noguk died of complications from childbirth, King Gongmin became indifferent and ignored politics. He gave the job of ruling to a Buddhist monk and eventually the King is killed.

The throne is usurped in 1392 by a general who then establishes the Joseon Dynasty.



King Gongmin (1330 - 1374) and Queen Noguk, A Mongolian Princess married to a Goryeo King

Notes

The Illustrated Account by Xu Jing (1123) is a book that describes what a Song Dynasty envoy sees when he visits Goryeo for a month. While most of the illustrations were lost, the text survived and is one of the best descriptions of Goryeo currently.

Joseon (1392 AD - 1897 AD)

King Taejo, the first king of the Joseon Dynasty, was born Yi Seong-gye. He established both the Joseon Dynasty and the Yi Dynasty (1392 AD - 1910), putting his family in power.

The historic capital of Joseon is current day Seoul. Confucianism thrived in Joseon and many of the traditions of Korea come from Joseon.

In 1443, King Sejong introduces hangul, the Korean alphabet, to the people. People were not literate because all documents were written in Classical Chinese. With hangul, people were able to learn to read and write quickly and Joseon began to develop its own identity and culture.

However, Joseon became victim to many political struggles, conflicts, and corruption from ruler to ruler. There are many coups and plots amongst princes, consorts, concubines, and politicians.

On top of the internal struggle, Joseon gets invaded by Japan several times. The Imjin War (1592-1598) named for the Imjin River near modern day Seoul, marks the end of Korean history within the timeframe for the SCA.

During the Imjin War, Admiral Yi Sun-sin becomes a war hero. As a naval commander, he commanded the turtle ships with cannons. He was able to claim many victories during the war, but is eventually killed by a bullet in 1598.

Joseon and Ming forces defeat the Japanese, but lose a lot of resources and people. Relations between Joseon and Japan were suspended until 1609.



King Sejong the Great, creator of the Korean alphabet, hangul

Notes

The Joseon Annals is a series of accounts made from each king's reign during the Joseon Dynasty.

There is documented contact between Koreans and Europeans (Portuguese) at the end of the 16th century. (<http://www.medieval-baltic.us/1600contact.html>)

Search Terms

Searching for Korean resources can be difficult if you don't know what to look for or how to read the language.

I've put together a list of terms that you can use to help find images or sources for Korean items. I recommend using naver.com since it's a Korean search engine, but it can be confusing to find sources.

Terms to search:

Clothing

한복 – hanbok – Korean traditional clothing
치마 – chima – skirt
저고리 – jeogori – jacket
버선 – beoseon – traditional socks
바지 – baji – pants
도포 – dopo – men's coat
관복 – gwanbok – court official's attire
흉배 – hyungbae – chest rank patch

Accessories

노리개 – norigae – decorative knots and tassels
매듭 – maedup – decorative knotting technique
비녀 – binyeo – hairpin
갓 – gat – traditional men's hat – wide brim
사모 – samo – winged men's hat
주머니 – jumeoni – pouch
귀주머니 – gwijumeoni – eared pouch
두루주머니 – durujumeoni – rounded/ball shaped pouch
가चे – gache – big hair pieces

Time periods

삼국 – samguk – Three Kingdoms (57 BC – 668 AD)
백제 – Baekje (18 BC – 660 AD)
고구려 – Goguryeo (37 BC – 668 AD)
신라 – Shinra (Silla) – (57 BC – 938 AD)
통일신라 – tongil Shinra (Silla) – Unified Silla – (668 AD – 935 AD)
고려 – Goryeo (918 AD – 1392 AD)
조선 – Joseon – (1392 AD – 1897 AD)

Korean Sources

Here is a list of sources that I've found helpful while doing research on Korea in the SCA. I've included some notes on each one. Books are in English unless otherwise noted.

Accessories

The Spirit of Korean Cultural Roots 2: NORIGAE – Splendor of the Korean Costume – Images and history of Norigae – decorative knots and tassels that ladies wear from their waist. It labels the names of the knots and has lovely sketches of the components. There aren't dates on the pieces, so I assume it's late Joseon.

Knot Another: A step-by-step guide to 50 Korean Maedeup knots and projects – A step by step DIY book on how to do 매듭 – maedeup – decorative knots found in norigae, pouches, and other decorative items.

Art

Art of the Korean Renaissance, 1440-1600 – Mostly paintings and pottery, but has some paintings of palace scenes with people so you can use it to find clothing references.

Clothing

Traditional Korean Costume – Lots of very detailed drawings and images of pieces from the Joseon dynasty with construction notes and history. It's just outside of our period, but it's a fabulous resource. It's hard to find at a decent price since it's published in the UK.

Korean Costume Through the Ages – This book is great because it covers clothing from the Three Kingdoms period all the way through Joseon and includes tomb paintings and dress recreations from them.

Hanbok: Timeless Fashion Tradition – This book is a good overview of the hanbok in the different time periods. It's not super in depth, but it has some nice photos.

A Chinese Traveler in Medieval Korea – A translation of *Illustrated Account of the Xuanhe Embassy to Koryo* by Xu Jing, a Chinese envoy's account of his visit to Koryo in 1123. It has lots of notes on various topics, including clothing, furniture and pottery, the people and social ranks, flags, military, and customs. This version is annotated and has lots of notes. Definitely a great book to flip through to see a slice of Korean history.

한국 전통복식 2천년 *Two Thousand Years of Traditional Korean Costumes* – A Collection of items from the Daegu National Museum and Daegu National Museum Society that includes recreations of outfits from the Three Kingdoms period and pieces from Joseon. The book is in both Korean and English and listed time periods and which museums the pieces are located. It can be hard to find. The link I've included is to a Korean website.

복식 (Traditional Clothes) – A small book with lots of colored photos and dates on items from the Three Kingdoms through Joseon. Includes clothing, accessories, and murals. Korean only and can be hard to find.

Culture

Korea's Pastimes and Customs A Social History – This book has lots of tidbits of information in it from Clan names and how they came about, to traditional games that were played and social ranking and customs. I've found information about the banning of 가채 – gache – braided hair pieces and some other luxury bans in there. It's also got some history of 윷 – yut – game with stick die and gameboard.

Websites

Medieval-Baltic – This is a site of another person who has done tons of wonderful research on Korea in the SCA and has laid out pieces for a 기생- gisaeng outfit. She has great sources and links to museum pieces.

Early Korea Project – Links from the Korea Institute at Harvard to various organizations and resources. Most will be in Korean.