

## MISSION ATLAS PROJECT

### **ASIA**

Korea, South

#### ***Basic Facts***

##### ***Name***

Republic of Korea

##### **Population:**

48,324,000 (July 2002 EST.)

Age Structure

*0-14 years:* 21.4% (male 5, 488,808; female 4, 875, 379)

*15-64 years:* 71% (male 17,404,645; female 16,894,361)

*65 years and over:* 7.6% (male 1,434,873; female 2,225,943)  
(2002 EST.)

Sex ratio

*at birth:* 1.1 male(s)/female

*under 15 years:* 1.12 male(s)/female

*15-64 years:* 1.03 male(s)/female

*65 years and over:* 0.66 male(s)/female

*total population:* 1.01 male(s)/female (2003 EST.)

Population growth rate: 0.85% (2002 EST.)

Birth rate: 14.55 births/1,000 population (2002 EST.)

Death rate: 6.02 deaths/1,000 population (2002 EST.)

##### ***Ethnic Groups***

homogenous except for 20,000 Chinese

##### ***Religion***

Christian 49%, Buddhist 47%, Confucianist 3%, and other 1% (other includes Shamanist, Chondogyo (Religion of the Heavenly Way) and others)

(Sources: <http://www.nationmaster.com/country/ks;>

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ks.html>)

##### ***Language***

Korean is the main language spoken. Further there is Korean sign language and English is widely taught in schools.

The fact that all Koreans speak and write the same language has been a crucial factor in their strong national identity. There are several different dialects, but they are similar enough that speakers from different regions have little trouble understanding each other. The Korean language belongs to the Ural-Altaic group, which also includes Turkish, Hungarian, Finnish, Mongolian and Japanese.

The written alphabet, *Han-geul*, was developed by a group of scholars at the behest of King Sejong the Great (r. 1418 - 1450). *Han-geul* consists of 10 vowels and 14 consonants, which can be combined to form numerous syllabic groupings. It is easy to learn, a key factor in the high literacy rate of Koreans.

Korean is a syllabic language. Each syllable is represented by a starting consonant followed by a vowel. The syllable can be closed by a final consonant. For those syllables that start with a vowel, Korean has a silent consonant that holds that space in the syllable. Because of this, some Koreans find languages like Hebrew easier to learn than English.

An example of the language barrier for Koreans learning alphabetic languages (and for foreigners learning Korean) could be found in the Korean dictionary pronunciation of the English word "large". In a Korean dictionary, this word would be phonetically spelled out as "*Lah-gee*".

Koreans speaking a foreign language can lead to a difficulty for westerners. For people from an alphabetic language, it is difficult to hear their language when their language is pronounced using a syllabary. Westerners need to learn how to listen to the syllables and then hear their language.

There are no statistics available for the number of people in Korea that are hearing impaired. Korean Sign Language is related to Japanese and Taiwanese sign languages, and it has been used since 1889. Signed interpretation is required in courts, and it is used at important public events. There are sign language classes for hearing people. There is a manual system for spelling. There have been elementary schools for deaf children using sign language since 1908.

(Sources: <http://www.koreanculture.org/people.html> and [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_country.asp?name=Korea%2C+South](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=Korea%2C+South))

## ***Society***

Korea is a mono racial country and strongly exclusive of other races, especially of Asians. They have a strong cultural identity as one ethnic family speaking one language. Korean society retains a strong Confucian character, reflected in its emphasis on devotion to family, hierarchical authority, and vertical relationships. Confucianism is based on Five Relationships that prescribe behavior between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, old and young, and between friends (for more information of these relationships see <http://www.globaled.org/chinaproject/confucian.html>). When a person is outside of these relationships, they do not effectively exist. However, once one falls into these relationships, there is incredible devotion. For things deemed worthy--family, friends, company, causes--Koreans will give their utmost. They work hard and enjoy life and entertainment with the same fervor.

There are many art forms in Korean Culture. Their traditional music is similar to Japan and China, with an emphasis on strings. *Chongak* and *minsogak* are the two main forms of music. The former is statelier while the latter is more folksy. They also have several folk dances. There are *mugo* (drum dances where participants wear drums around their necks), *talchum* (mask dances), *seungmu* (monk dances), and *salpuri* (spirit cleansing dances). In addition there is traditional painting with calligraphic elements. Most of the traditional sculpture is Buddhist and takes the form of statues or pagodas.

The Korean national costume is called *hanbok*. It is still worn during national holidays and festive occasions. They are brightly colored and hide the body shape. The clothes of the ruling class were much more ornate and expensive than those of the lower classes. The different dynasties had different styles.

Food is important to the Koreans. The most important food is *Kimchi*. It is fermented. The Koreans have developed a variety of recipes for *kimchi* with various ingredients. The most famous *kimchi* is very spicy. Rice cakes are another important part of Korean food. They are often shared with neighbors or friends in times of happiness or sorrow. Rice cakes are a part of several Korean customs and traditions.

Patterns and symbols are seen everywhere in Korea, most notably in the *Taegeuk* in the national flag. They wanted to teach the hidden meaning of nature to their children and created these beautiful and diverse signs.

(Sources: <http://www.koreanculture.org/>, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/north-east-asia/south-korea/culture.htm>, and <http://www.lifeinkorea.com/Culture/spotlight.cfm>)

### **Government**

Korea has a democratic republic with 9 provinces and 7 major cities. The provinces and cities offer government services similar to county and cities in the United States. The capital of South Korea is Seoul.

Although Korea has always been a republic, it has been under effective military dictatorship or undemocratic government for much of the time. The democratic government that is in place now just began in the late 1980's (see the recent history for more information on this).

Elections for the President are held every five years and the President is only allowed to serve for one term. Elections for the National Assembly, or parliament, are held every four years. Grassroots politics and organized labor is strong. Large demonstrations, sometimes violent, on controversial issues are not unheard of.

There are five political parties currently in Korea. They are the Democratic People's Party or DPP, the Grand National Party or GNP, the Millennium Democratic Party or MDP, the People's Party for Reform or PPR, and the United Liberal Democrats or ULD.

Sources: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ks.html>, [http://abcasiapacific.com/koreas/identity/south\\_korea\\_2.htm](http://abcasiapacific.com/koreas/identity/south_korea_2.htm)

### **Economy**

As one of the four tigers of East Asia (Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore), Korea has enjoyed a prolonged period of economic growth and prosperity. This period has brought the economic output of South Korea up to that of the lesser economies of Europe. They have achieved an incredible record of growth and integration into the high-tech modern world economy.

Three decades ago the GDP per capita was comparable with levels in the poorer countries of Africa and Asia. Today Korea's GDP per capita is roughly 20 times North Korea's and equal to the lesser economies of the European Union. This success through the late 1980s was achieved by a system of close government/business ties, including directed credit, import restrictions, sponsorship of specific industries, and a strong labor effort. The

government promoted the import of raw materials and technology at the expense of consumer goods and encouraged savings and investment over consumption. The close ties between government and a few large conglomerates have resulted in favorable treatment from the government in return for tailoring their growth and production targets to meet government objectives. This is known as the *chaebol* system and has resulted in widespread corruption and is a major issue in contemporary politics. The four main *chaebols* are Samsung, Lucky Goldstar (LG), SK, and Hyundai Motors. The Asian financial crisis of 1997-99 exposed longstanding weaknesses in South Korea's development model, including high debt/equity ratios, massive foreign borrowing, and an undisciplined financial sector. Growth plunged by 6.6% in 1998, and then strongly recovered to 10.8% in 1999 and 9.2% in 2000. Growth fell back to 3.3% in 2001 because of the slowing global economy, falling exports, and the perception that much-needed corporate and financial reforms have stalled. Led by industry and construction, growth in 2002 was an impressive 5.8%, despite anemic global growth.

Sources: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ks.html>,

[http://abcasiapacific.com/Koreas/identity/south\\_korea\\_2.htm](http://abcasiapacific.com/Koreas/identity/south_korea_2.htm)

### ***Literacy***

South Korea has a 98.1 % (2003 est.) literacy rate. It is 99.3% among males and 97% among females. That is with the literacy rate defined as people age 15 and over can read and write.

A key factor in the high literacy rate is that their written alphabet, Han-geul, is easy to learn. It consists of 10 vowels and 14 consonants, which can be combined to form numerous syllabic groupings.

Source: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ks.html#People>

### ***Land***

The area of South Korea is 98,480 sq/km divided between land (98,190 sq/km), and water (290 sq/km). This is slightly larger than Indiana. South Korea is located in Eastern Asia. It is the southern half of the Korean peninsula, bordering the Sea of Japan to the east and the Yellow Sea to the west. South Korea has 2413 km of coastline. Their only land border is shared with North Korea along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and is 238 Km long. The lowest elevation in the country is in the Sea of Japan, at 0m. And the highest point is Hall-san at 1,950 m.

The climate is temperate, with rainfall heavier in summer than winter. The terrain is mostly hills and mountains. There are wide coastal plains in west and south. They have coal, tungsten, graphite, molybdenum, lead, hydropower potential as natural resources.

Source: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ks.html#Ge>

### ***History***

#### **Early History**

South Korea is a very young country. Even though documented history begins in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and legends go back even further, the country and structure that is now in place has only been in use since Aug 15, 1948. Throughout most of their history the people of what is now South Korea have been fighting off invaders or paying tributes for

protection. Korea has been invaded at least 900 times in the 2,000 years of recorded history. There is a story of invasion and influence by the bullies surrounding them. There is the story of a people who have incredible pride for sustaining themselves and their culture through it all.

Koreans are descendants of the *Tungusic* tribal people. Korean folklore dates their birth around 2333 BC by the god-king *Tangun*, the offspring of a bear-woman and the son of the king of the heavens (for the full story see <http://www.clickasia.co.kr/about/m1.htm>). Documented history begins in the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC when a Chinese scholar, *Ki-Tze*, founded a colony at *Pongyang*. By AD 313 there were three kingdoms on the peninsula:

- the *Koguryo* kingdom in the north near the *Yalu River*,
- the *Paekche* kingdom in the southwest,
- and the *Silla* kingdom in the southeast.

Each of these kingdoms was advanced for their time and had compiled a written history during the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries. Also, Buddhism came to the Korean peninsula at this time.

#### **Kingdom Rule of Korea**

In AD 668 the kingdom of *Silla* conquered *Koguryo* and *Paekche*, unifying the peninsula. This resulting kingdom is referred to as the unified *Silla Kingdom* and lasted from 668 to 935. During this time, Buddhism became dominant and the arts flourished, resulting in palaces, pagodas, and pleasure gardens. Also, Confucianism was introduced from China at this time.

In 935, *Wang Kon* overthrew *Silla* and established the *Koryo Dynasty*. *Koryo* is an abbreviated form of *Koguryo* and is the source for the current name, "Korea". *Koryo* rule lasted from 935 to 1392. During this time literature was cultivated. Buddhism remained the state religion, but Confucianism controlled the pattern of government. 30 years of sporadic war began in 1231, when the Mongols invaded from China. Finally, *Koryo* kings accepted Mongol rule resulting in period of *Koryo* and Mongol rule. The Mongols used Koreans to attack Japan.

While the *Ming dynasty* was overtaking the Mongols in China, there was a revolt and disorder in Korea. This resulted in new leadership for Korea. *General Yi Song-gye* assumed the throne, adopting the name *Choson* for Korea. He moved the capital from *Kaesong* (the capital since 918) to *Seoul*. The *Yi dynasty* lasted from 1392 - 1910. During this time Korea was actually independent, but acknowledged China as their "big brother" within the "tribute" system. Also, Confucianism was established as the state religion at this time. During the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, the Korean phonetic alphabet, *Han'gul*, and printing with moveable type were developed.

But by 1500, factionalism divided the kingdom and the rulers were not prepared to defend their kingdom from their neighbors. Japan, under *Hideyoshi Toyotomi*, invaded Korea in 1592 and 1597. Then Korea was invaded by the *Manchus* in 1636 and became a vassal state and was under the control of the *Manchu dynasty* in China. There was a short-lived intellectual and cultural revival led by two kings, *Yongjo* and *Chongjo*, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The following decade was the bitterest of the *Yi dynasty*. Frustrated from the continual attacks and attempting to save the floundering dynasty, *Yi Ha-leng* began domestic reforms and adopted an isolationist policy. Only China was able to influence them. This behavior gave them the nickname "the hermit kingdom". They remained isolated from all contact other than China until 1876, when Japan forced the *Kanghwa treaty* with

them. Then, in 1880, there were trade agreements with the US and countries in Europe. Japan control tightened in the early 1900's, as their troops moved through the peninsula to attack Manchuria in the Russo-Japanese War. The troops were never withdrawn and Japan declared a virtual protectorate over Korea in 1905 and formally annexed them in 1910.

### **Japanese Rule**

Japanese rule lasted from 1910-1945 and was harsh and exploitative. There was strict rule from Tokyo and an effort to abolish the Korean language and culture. There were sporadic attempts to overthrow the Japanese but they were unsuccessful.

Following the surrender of the Japanese in World War II, Korea was arbitrarily divided into two zones with the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel as the dividing line. The US troops were given the area south of the line and the Russian troops were given the area to the north. Relations between the US and Russia worsened. Soon trade between these two zones ceased, resulting in economic hardship. And finally in 1948, two separate regimes were formally established. The *Democratic Peoples Republic* was formed to the north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. It was communist and had *Kim Il Sung* as their first leader. And south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel was The *Republic of Korea* with *Syngman Rhee* as their first leader.

### **Recent History**

South Korea's recent history is characterized by change. There has been much political unrest and demonstrations resulting in a plethora of constitutional and leadership changes. Further, there have been times of banned political activity and martial law. Any reading of the modern history is difficult to follow because of new political parties and merging political parties.

The Republic of Korea began on August 15, 1948 with *Syngman Rhee* as their leader. By mid-1949 Soviet and American troops left the area with two rival leaders and governments eager to reunify the peninsula under their own rule. In June 1950 North Korea launched a surprise attack against South Korea and the Korean War began. The South Korean army had retreated almost to the tip of the peninsula when the US came to help. At the request of the UN Security Council, the US led an international effort beginning with a surprise attack at *Inchon* and quickly pushed their way back up and beyond the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. As troops neared the *Yalu River*, the "Chinese People's Volunteers" joined in the war. Negotiations began spring of 1951 but there were still hostilities until 1953. A line has been drawn at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel that serves as the boundary between the two countries. (They never signed a peace agreement so theoretically they are still at war.)

As Syngman Rhee's rule became more and more authoritarian there was a chain of increasingly violent student demonstrations, known as the "April Revolution" that led to his dismissal. So, Premier *Chang Myron* took over control of the republic in 1960 and adopted a parliamentary system. However, after only ten months, *General Park Chung Hee* led a successful military coup.

Park ruled by martial law and established the Korean Central Intelligence Agency for detecting and suppressing political enemies. Further, he dissolved the National Assembly and ruled through the Supreme Council for National Reconstruction. In October of 1963, Park transitioned from military rule to civilian rule by establishing the Democratic Republican Party and was elected as President. Park continued to gain more power as president and his party, DRP, was gaining more power in the National Assembly.

Finally, in 1972 there were student riots over decisions to send troops to Vietnam and to accept the ROK-Japan Normalization Treaty that led to martial law. A new constitution was ratified by November 1972. This new constitution increased the powers of the president politically and economically. Also at this time there was the first agreement for establishment of joint machinery to work towards unification.

Park was elected as president for a six year term. Under Park's leadership the economy was expanding rapidly, but his regime was becoming increasingly repressive. He was reelected in 1978 for another six year term but was assassinated shortly thereafter on October 26, 1979 in what might have been a coup attempt. Park's constitutional successor, *Choi Kyu-Hah* imposed martial law and promised a new constitution and presidential elections.

Before *Choi Kyu-Hah* could make good on his promise, *Major General Chun Doo Hwan* led a coup and took control of the government in December of 1979. Student demonstrations began to spread and in mid-May the government again declared martial law, prohibited demonstrations, and arrested politicians. Over 200 civilians were killed in a demonstration in the city of *Kwangju*, now known as the "Kwangju massacre." By September 1980 there was another new constitution and a new president, *Chun Doo Hwan*. All existing parties were dissolved and political activity was banned until 3 months before the election. In the election in 1981, *Chun Doo Hwan* was elected in a contest that included eight parties. Hwan's party, the Democratic Justice Party also secured the majority in the National Assembly.

Elections were held again in 1987. This was the first election where the people got to elect their President by direct vote, as opposed to indirect vote. 89% of the eligible voters came to the polls and elected *Roh Tae* with 37% of the vote. The two major opposition candidates, *Kim Young Sam* and *Kim Dae Jung*, split 55% of the vote. There were two other minor candidates who split the rest. *Roh Tae Woo's* party, the Democratic Justice party, won 34% of the vote and therefore 125 seats in the National Assembly. *Kim Young Sam's* party, Reunification Democratic Party, won 59 seats. *Kim Dae Jung's* party, Peace and Democracy Party, acquired 70 seats. Also, the Democratic Republican party gained 35 seats and 10 seats went to independents. So there was not a controlling vote in the National Assembly forcing the President and the national assembly to cooperate. Amid all the political mess, Seoul was able to host the 1988 Olympic Games. *Kim Young Sam* was elected as President six years later. He was elected December 19, 1992 and inaugurated in February 1993. He was the first president in 30 years to be a civilian. He immediately began his term with a broad anti-corruption campaign, the removal of many of the high ranking military, and granting amnesty to 41,000 prisoners. It was during his term that difficulties with North Korea were elevated. North Korean troops entered *Panmunjom*, violating the 1954 armistice, on three consecutive days in April of 1996. Then just five months later a submarine was grounded off the east coast of South Korea that appeared to have North Korean spies. North Korea apologized for their actions in February of 1997. Also, in 1996, former presidents *Roh Tae Woo* and *Chun Doo Hwan* were tried and found guilty of treason and mutiny for their 1980 coup attempt and the Kwangju massacre.

*Kim Dae Jung* was elected to the presidency Dec 18, 1997. During his term, he increased domestic economic instability and the economic crises in Asia resulted in a severe



decline in the currency. But by mid-2000 *Kim Dae Jung* had the economy going well again.

The republic of Korea has officially been in existence since August 15, 1948. The last 50 years of South Korea's history have been full of change. They are a young republic but forming a good foundation. The people are interested in the leadership of the country and take advantage by demonstrating and voting. Though they are young, they are proud and are emerging as a strong leader in Asia.

Sources:

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<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0859140.html>

[http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destination/north\\_east\\_asia/south\\_korea/history.html](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destination/north_east_asia/south_korea/history.html)

[http://www.worldrover.com/history/south\\_korea\\_history.html](http://www.worldrover.com/history/south_korea_history.html)

### ***Christian History***

Korea's Christian history is a little different than most in that it began by Koreans going out to seek this truth as opposed to missionaries bringing it to them. Around 1770, a Korean envoy to China brought back Matteo Ricci's *Tianzhu* (the True Doctrine of the Lord of Heaven). The *Shilhak* scholars studied this literature in an attempt to understand Western civilization. In 1783 the *Shilhak* scholars asked *Yi Sang-hun*, the son of an ambassador to China, to visit the Catholic missionaries in China and learn all he could of this western religion. *Yi Sang-hun* returned in 1784 with books and articles on Christian doctrine. The *Shilhak* began to discuss these new ideas with friends and neighbors. As a result of their study, they abandoned all "pagan" rites, preached Catholicism openly, instructed with the Catechisms, and baptized. Thus, the *Shilhak* scholars laid the foundation for the Catholic Church in Korea.

Although some sought out Christianity, it was not accepted by all. The Koreans practiced *chesa*, a ritual of ancestor worship. But, the Catholics considered ancestor worship an act of idolatry and thus prohibited by God. This caused many Koreans to avoid Catholicism and provoked persecution. In spite of the government persecution, the Catholic Church in Korea grew from 4,000 members in 1795 to 10,000 members by 1801.

Catholicism in the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century experienced a series of persecutions with occasional breaks in between because of Kings who were tolerant. *King Chongjo* had been tolerant of Christianity. But when he died in 1800, *King Sunjo* was a minor so his mother ruled as Queen Regent. She issued an edict ordering adherents of the "evil learning" to be treated as being guilty of high treason. The result was the *Shinyu persecution* of 1801 with at least 300 Catholic martyrs, more than 1,000 arrests. The result was that the church went underground.

The *Ulhae persecution* of 1815 targeted Catholic refugees who had fled from the *Shinyu* persecution. These refugees lived in the mountains. Their success at a time of general famine and poverty aroused jealousy and a motive for attack. Hundreds of Catholics were massacred.

Next was the *Chonghae persecution* of 1827. This like the *Ulhae* persecution was mainly confined to one area. In spite of the persecution, the church continued and even sent three young men to Macao to study theology. Two of these men, *Kim Tae-gon* and *Ch'oe Yang-op* became the first native priests.



The persecution continued in *Kilhae* in 1839. The expansion of Catholicism was restrained because of concern with and suspicion of foreigners. Over 200 Catholic Christians died from this persecution.

The last and most severe persecution against the Catholics is known as the *Great Persecution* and lasted from 1866-1871. During this time there were numerous confrontations between Korea and the Western powers. Christianity became identified with the West and missionaries perceived as government agents of foreign powers. The persecution of 1866 alone resulted in over 8,000 martyrs, almost half of the adherents at that time.

Following these persecutions, the first Protestants began to arrive in Korea. The first foreign protestant to reach Korea arrived in 1883. He was *Nagasaka*, a Japanese Christian from the national Bible Society of Scotland in Tokyo. He distributed Bibles in Chinese and Japanese and portions of the Gospel in Korean.

Shortly after that American missionaries arrived. Dr. Horace Allen, appointed by the Presbyterian Church, arrived in 1884. In the same year, the Methodists sent Dr. and Mrs. W.B. Scranton, his mother Mrs. Mary Scranton, and the Rev. and Mrs. Henry Appenzellar.

Shortly after Dr. Horace Allan arrived, *Prince Min* was near death from injuries sustained during the *Kapshin Chongbyon* (Coup d'Etat of 1884). Dr Allan cared for him for 3 months and saved his life. This gave the court confidence in Western medicine and trust in the Americans.

Over the next decade more and more missionaries entered Korea. But in 1888, the Catholic Church decided to build a Cathedral on a site close to both the royal palaces and the shrine built in dedication to the royal ancestors, *Chongmyo*. The King requested that they build the cathedral elsewhere. They refused which led to a decree in May of 1888 that prohibited the propagation of Catholicism.

Although that decree was directed against the Catholic Church, it impacted the Protestant community as well. Because of the fear and hostility towards the foreigners and their teaching, direct evangelization was not possible. So, medical and educational work preceded evangelism. In addition to their medical and educational work, the protestant missionaries adopted the *Nevius method*. This method, named after Dr John L. Nevius, emphasized self-support, self-propagation, self-government, and independence of the church. This stressed the need for local people to carry on the evangelical work and placed the Protestants in stark contrast to the Catholics, who relied on leadership in Rome. Evangelical work based on the Nevius-principles led to several sweeping church growth movements. Roy Shearer likened these movements to the spread of *Wildfire*. The beginning of the twentieth century was a time of increasing Japanese dominance. Missionary work in education and medicine continued and the Protestants saw a period of impressive growth. By 1910, missionaries had founded 800 schools accommodating 41,000 students. These numbers are twice that of the Korean government schools at the time.

The Great Revival of 1907 and the "Million Movement" of 1909-1921 had a profound impact on the propagation of Christianity and offered an outlet for the expression of Korean nationalism. These revival movements set the tone for later evangelical movements.

Japan occupied Korea from 1910-1945. Controlling Korea was a key to their plan to conquer all of China. Thus, began the Japanese oppression of Korea. They tried to annihilate Korean culture and replace it with Japanese culture. Likewise, their policy towards Christianity was one of oppression and hostility.

In 1911, 124 Koreans were arrested because they were suspected of involvement in an independence movement. Most of them were acquitted. Since 98 of the 124 were Christians there was an association between Christianity and Korean nationalism. Then in 1919, nearly half of those who signed the Declaration of Independence were Christians. This makes even more of a statement when you recognize that Christians comprised only about 1.3 % of the population. As a leading organization of the demonstration, churches were burned down, hundreds of Christians died in the demonstration, and thousands were imprisoned and tortured. The brutal suppression of this demonstration and the prominence of Christians among those persecuted produced another strong link between Christianity and Korean nationalism.

One of the ways to annihilate Korean culture was to replace it with Japanese culture. The Japanese practiced Shintoism, in which they worshipped their emperor as the divine descendant of *Amaterasu*. Japan tried to impose this religion on all its people, even Koreans. They instituted Shinto shrines in every town and required that schools participate in Shinto shrine ceremonies. At first, missionaries refused to allow teachers and students at Christian schools to participate in the Shinto shrine ceremonies. However, a few prominent missionaries were kicked out. As a result, the Methodists, followed by the Presbyterians, complied with the government order. The participation in Shinto Shrine ceremonies by the two largest protestant groups in Korea squelched any resistance against the Shinto Shrine worship.

In addition, to forcing all people to worship Shinto shrines, the Japanese tried to undermine the strength of Christianity by restructuring the church, removing foreign missionaries, and considering foreign missionaries spies. Almost ninety percent of missionaries left Korea by 1940. And those missionaries that remained were harassed mercilessly. The missionaries that remained were imprisoned at the outbreak of the war when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 8, 1941. They were released as exchange civilians in April, 1942.

The surrender of Japan split the country into two opposing sides and led to the Korean War. This three year war led to persecutions that were worst than those of the Catholics in the nineteenth century. The communists in the north saw Christians as anti-communist and American sympathizers. As a result, tens of thousands of Christians were imprisoned and systematically killed.

However, after the war “Christian countries” gave money for rebuilding and mission related Christian relief agencies helped. This gave Christianity a good name. Many became aware of the church through its charitable work and then took an interest in the doctrine and were converted.

By 1969, Korean churches were sending out missionaries. In the 1970’s the Bible was translated. The New Testament was complete in 1971 and the Old Testament was complete in 1977. Also, the increased emphasis on evangelism by means of mass communication strengthened the church in Korea.

The programs of industrial chaplaincy and army chaplaincy were highly effective as well. Industrial chaplaincy was an important area of evangelical work because of the increase

in the industrial labor force. Also, since military service was mandatory for men in South Korea, the military chaplaincy was very strategic as well. A survey of 1955 showed that fifteen per cent of the total army population was Christian. That was an increase of ten percent over four years.

Christianity in South Korea has continued to grow. Since the early 1960s, when South Korea's Christians scarcely topped the one million mark, the number of Christians, particularly Protestants, has increased faster than in any other country, doubling every decade. By 1994, there were over 35,000 churches and 50,000 pastors, making the South Korean Church one of the most vital and dynamic in the world. Today, one third of Korea's 45 million people are Christian. Further, Korea is home to the largest protestant church in the world, the Central Full Gospel (Pentecostal) Church in Seoul. Also, the churches and related institutions are mainly independent of missionary influence and are developing their own theology and sending out missionaries.

Christianity in Korea began with the initiative of Koreans. It has endured several persecutions and continues to grow. It will be interesting to see what the next 200 years hold for Christians in Korea.

Sources: <http://www.kimsoft.com/1997/xhist.htm> ,  
[http://hcs.harvard.edu/~yisei/backissues/spring\\_99/religion1.html](http://hcs.harvard.edu/~yisei/backissues/spring_99/religion1.html) ,  
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Shearer, *Wildfire*.

### ***People Groups***

Korea is basically homogenous. There is no sizeable minority, but there are tiny groups of Japanese, Americans, Han Chinese, Eurasian, French, and Russian. The Japanese are just over 1% of the population, but each of these other groups makes up less than 1% of the population. Christian groups should seek to understand the social groupings of Korean people—younger and older, rural and urban, professional and craft related workers, and etc.

Source: <http://www.joshuaproject.net/countries.php>

### ***Religion***

Korea does not have single dominant religion. Historically, Koreans lived under the influences of Buddhism, Taoism or Confucianism, Shamanism, and Chondogyo (Religion of the heavenly way). Shamanism, an animistic form of polytheism, is the most ancient and traditional belief system of the South Korean people. In modern times, the Christian faith has made strong inroads into the country, bringing forth yet another important factor that may change the spiritual landscape of the people. Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the Constitution in Korea.

The rapid pace of industrialization which occurred within a couple of decades compared to a couple of centuries in the West, has brought about considerable anxiety and alienation while disrupting the peace of mind of Koreans, encouraging their pursuit of solace in religious activities. As a result, the population of religious believers has expanded markedly with religious institutions emerging as influential social organizations.

Approximately 49% of the population adheres to Christianity (that is 8,800,000 Protestants and 3,000,000 Catholics). Further, 47% adhere to Buddhism, 3% adhere to Confucianism, and the other 1% adheres to Shamanism, *Chondyogo*, and others. This high percentage of Christians is unusual in Asia since only 2% of Asia as a whole identifies with Christianity.

Although no official figures for the number of adherents are available, there are also several minority religions, such as the *Elijah Evangelical Church*, the *Jesus Morning Star Church*, and the *All People's Holiness Church*. Muslims, members of the Unification Church, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah's Witnesses also are present.

Buddhism has approximately 38 orders. The Catholic Church has 15 dioceses. There are 83 Protestant denominations, including the Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, and Presbyterian denominations, the Anglican Church, and the Korean Gospel Church Assembly.

There are 17 Protestant and 6 Catholic missionary groups operating in the country. The Protestant groups include: Christians in Action, Korea; the Church of the Nazarene, Korea Mission; the Overseas Mission Fellowship; and World Opportunities International, Korea Branch. The Catholic missionary groups include the Missionaries of Guadeloupe, the Prado Sisters, and the Little Brothers of Jesus.

Sources: *Worldmark Encyclopedia, Vol 4, 294*,  
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ks.html> ,  
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2001/5586.htm>

### ***Indigenous Religious Groups***

#### ***Chundo-Gyo and Tonghak***

*Chundo-gyo* is a religion indigenous to Korea. *Chundo-gyo* ('*chun*' = Heaven, '*do*' = path or ways, '*gyo*' = religion or '*ism*' = Heavenly Way) is often mistaken for *Chunju-gyo* ('*chun*' = Heaven, '*ju*' = master referring to Christ - Master in Heaven, i.e., the Catholic Church). With the revival of Korean nationalism, this Korean religion is becoming more and more popular in North and South Korea. *Chundoism* arose from the *Tonghak* revolution that began in 1812 in *Choson*.

*Choe Che-U* (1824-1864) formulated the ideology of *Tonghak* (Eastern Learning) in the 1860's to help ease the lot of the farmers suffering from abject poverty and unrest, as well as to restore political and social stability. His ideas rapidly gained acceptance among the peasantry. *Choe* set his *Tonghak* themes to music so that illiterate farmers could understand and accept them more readily.

In 1905, Korean nationalists founded *Chundo-gyo* based on the themes of *Tong-hak*. The nationalists wanted to stem, by peaceful means, the tide of pro-Japanese sentiments sweeping across Korea.

Source: <http://www.kimsoft.com/KOREA/chundo.htm>

#### ***Shamanism***

Female shamans (*mudang*) hold *kut*, or services, in order to gain good fortune for clients, cure illnesses by exorcising evil spirits, or propitiate local or village gods. Such services are also held to guide the spirit of a deceased person to heaven. Often a woman will become a shaman very reluctantly--after experiencing a severe physical or mental illness

that indicates "possession" by a spirit. Such possession allegedly can be cured only through performance of a *kut*.

Many scholars regard Korean shamanism as less a religion than a "medicine" in which the spirits are manipulated in order to achieve human ends. There is no notion of salvation or moral and spiritual perfection, at least for the ordinary believers in spirits.

Source: <http://mtpc->

[www.army.mil/ports/837th/837th%20HomePages/country/religion.htm](http://www.army.mil/ports/837th/837th%20HomePages/country/religion.htm)

### **Confucianism**

Confucianism is a moral and religious system from China started by *Kongfuzi*. This Chinese sage, more commonly known as Confucius, created sayings known as the Analects and other ancient commentaries that taught how to treat other people.

Confucianism had a revival under the Tang Dynasty of China (618-907). The Song Dynasty (960-1279) developed a modified version of Confucianism, based on beliefs of Zen Buddhism during the Ming Dynasty. Under the *Pinyin* system (1368-1644) meditation became a part of Confucianism. With the overthrow of the monarchy in 1911-12, Confucianism declined. In 1910 Japan formally annexed Korea. While under Japanese colonial rule until 1945, all of Korea's religions were suppressed.

Source: <http://www.media.granite.k12.ut.us/Curriculum/korea/confucian.htm>

### **Christianity**

#### **General Numbers**

Of the 46,800,000 Koreans, 34.00% are called Christian with some 18.00% evangelical. Among the 12,000 Eurasian, 80.00%, follow some type of Christianity. Over 4,640 French nationals live in Korea and 87.01% call themselves Christian. Among the 24,000 Han Chinese, who speak Mandarin Chinese, 7.00% are Christians with some 0.19% evangelical. 928,060 Japanese live in Korea and as many as 3.00% are Christians. Among the 1,700 Russians, 40.01% are Christian while among the 63,572 US Americans 78.00% claim to be Christian. It must be remembered that these figures include all types of Christian groups including Catholics and marginal churches.

#### **Christian Churches**

Korea Assembly of God has 1,178 churches with 513,953 members.

Korean Baptist Convention has 2,245 churches with 270,000 members.

Korea Evangelical has 2,041 churches with 400,000 members.

Korean Methodist Church has 5,052 churches with 1,377,117 members.

<http://www.kmcweb.or.kr/eng/index.htm>

Church of the Nazarene has 210 churches with 40,000 members.

Church of God (Cleveland) Church has 117 churches with 20,601 members.

Episcopal Church has 88 churches with 15,000 members.

Full Gospel Int'l Gen Meeting Church has 95 churches with 30,000 members.

Gospel Baptist Convention has 155 churches with 37,500 members.

Jesus Korean Holiness has 953 churches with 193,373 members.

Jesus Assembly of God has 270 churches with 120,836 members.

Jesus Korean Methodist Church has 330 churches with 26,224 members.

Korean Evangelical Church has 35 churches 4,505 members.

Korean Evangelical Holiness Church (KEHC) is the third largest protestant denomination after the Methodists and the Presbyterians. KEHC began as the Gospel Mission Hall in 1907. By 1911, the KEHC under the Oriental Missionary Society (OMS) had opened the

Seoul Bible Institute. This later became Seoul Theological Seminary.  
The KEHC has 1,900 local churches with over 700,000 adherents and also has churches in Japan and Europe.

Anglican Church of Korea. <http://members.aol.com/keirkcir/keir/kochdn.htm>

Presbyterian Churches of Korea: [http://www.pck.or.kr/EngPage/eng\\_index.html](http://www.pck.or.kr/EngPage/eng_index.html)

Presbyterian (HapDong) have 6,494 churches with 918,306 members.

Presbyterian (HapDong JeongTong) has 1,695 churches with 183,482 members.

Presbyterian (HapDong BoSu) have 3,172 churches with 630,000 members.

Presbyterian (HoHun) Church has 976 churches with 145,000 members.

Presbyterian (Kijang) has 1,448 churches with 141,750 members.

Presbyterian (KoShin) has 1,416 churches with 176,832 members.

Presbyterian (TongHap) have 6,270 churches with 1,103,983 members.

Presbyterian (Yejang) has 425 churches with 185,000 members.

Presbyterian (Yejang Hap Bo) Church has 293 churches with 109,700 members.

Seventh-Day Adventist Church has 628 churches with 147,080 members.

### ***Non-Christian Church Type Organizations***

Roman Catholic Church

Catholic Church has 980 congregations with 2,125,665 members

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon Church) has 150 churches with 47,170 members.

Jehovah's Witness Church has 1,502 churches with 87,179 members.

Unification Church

The Unification Church (AKA Moonies) calls itself the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity. Moonies have 407 churches with 132,132 members.

A world-wide phenomenon, the Unification Church, has grown during the same period that the Christian Church has grown exponentially in Korea. The basic "theology" of this group is: God has planned for a perfect family to have perfect children. The original family was Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve did not wait until they had reached perfection and God had blessed the union. Jesus the Messiah was supposed to wait and marry to have the perfected family. Jesus by His death failed to complete the perfect family. Now Moon and his followers are to complete what Jesus failed.

Some evidences of sinful behavior within Moon's marital arrangements have surfaced in recent years.

<http://www.unification.org/>; <http://www.geocities.com/craigmaxim/m-2a.html>

### ***Missiological Implications***

1. Evangelical Christians should join in the vast desire and plan to take the gospel back to the northern part of the peninsula. North Korea was the location of some of the most sweeping experiences of church growth (likened to wildfire) in earlier times. All evangelical Christians should join in the prayer, the preparation, and the effort to take Christ back to North Korea.
2. Evangelical Christians should help the Korean churches capture the concept and implement the effort toward servant leadership. Leadership is normally authoritarian

and this element introduces formality and legalism into Korean church life. The high social status of pastors makes biblical servant leadership difficult.

3. Evangelical Christians should strive to help Korean Christians and churches to emphasize true spirituality in Christian living. Koreans widely believe that success and prosperity are indications of God's blessing. They have taken pride in statistical growth, impressive organization, and vast buildings. Christians and pastors are tempted to seek "success" more than to lift up the Cross. Pray that growing materialism in South Korea would not dampen the spiritual energies of Christians. Basic teaching in Christian living is widely needed.
4. Evangelical Christians should learn from and seek to aid Korean Christians and churches in the matter of prayer. The Koreans have much to teach other believers concerning prayer.
5. Evangelical Christians should seek to join with Korean Christians and churches in the tremendous worldwide expansion and missionary endeavors. God seems to be working through Koreans in these years.
6. Evangelical Christians should support the Korean churches as they seek to provide leadership training and missionary training. Many Koreans find cultural adaptation difficult due to their mono-cultural nation and a unique language type. Pray for many more workers to help in this training. Many congregations in rural areas have little Christian leadership.
7. Evangelical Christians should share with Korean Christians and churches the methods of Christian discipleship. Many New Christians bring ideals and attitudes from Buddhist and Confucian backgrounds and stand in need of discipleship and clear teaching on the Christian life.
8. Evangelical Christians should pray for the unity of the Korean Churches. The Christian movement in Korea has experienced a history of divisions in denominations because of the ecumenism issue, doctrine, regionalism, and personality clashes among leaders.
9. Evangelical Christians should aid Korean Christians in providing Christian churches for the multiplied Korean communities around the world. Business and enterprise are scattering Koreans and the need for Korean churches continues to expand.
10. Evangelical Christians should help the Korean churches look to evangelizing the many non-Korean peoples who are living in Korea and the Koreans who follow other religions. Over 40,000 Muslims live mostly in Seoul. Over 250,000 illegal immigrants also work under difficult conditions in South Korea.

Source: <http://www.omf.org.uk/content.asp?id=8513&cachefixer=>

## Resources

Korean church resources in English:

[http://www.jesuskorea.org/jk\\_home.html](http://www.jesuskorea.org/jk_home.html)

<http://www.kamr.org/kc/>

<http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~kevinlee/churches.html>

<http://kc-cu.org/kchurches.htm>



<http://www.kimsoft.com/kr-chur.htm>

<http://cyberkorean.com/church/canada/indexF.htm>

[http://www.otnt.com/\\_aspcode/church\\_usa.asp](http://www.otnt.com/_aspcode/church_usa.asp)

Korean Seminaries

<http://www.pcts.ac.kr/English/index.html>

Methodist church was controlled by the Japanese during WWII: <http://www.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/diskus/grayson.html>