

Lesson 2 The Global Reach of Korea,

Today and Yesterday

Reading 1

Discovering the Cosmopolitan Kingdom of Silla

Host: Hello, listeners. Welcome to K-HistoryPod.

Today, we are going to explore Silla, an ancient Korean kingdom. Professor Kim, an expert on Silla history, is with us today. Thank you for being with us, Dr. Kim.

Dr. Kim: Thanks for having me. I am happy to be here.

Host: Let's begin by discussing what makes Silla significant in Korean history.

Dr. Kim: Silla lasted for nearly 1,000 years, from 57 BCE to 935 CE. Silla is unique because it opened a new era of Korean history as a unified kingdom. The Unified Silla Kingdom developed a political and social system that could govern a large territory while maintaining social order. It also made outstanding achievements in technology, culture, and art. Silla culture is particularly famous for its enduring beauty, which can still be observed in numerous historical sites and cultural treasures found in Gyeongju, Silla's capital. For this reason, historical sites in Gyeongju were listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 2000.

Host: I see. I remember you comparing Silla to Ancient Rome. What over to you made you do so?

Dr. Kim: Like Silla, Ancient Rome had a long history, from its start as a city-state in 753 BCE to the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in 476 CE. At its peak, the Roman Empire governed a vast area and had influence far beyond its borders. Despite the differences in geographical location and territorial size, Ancient Rome and Silla resemble each other in certain aspects. They both started small, expanded their territories gradually, and built flourishing civilizations. They also actively interacted with different cultures: Rome with the Greek and Etruscan cultures; Silla with the Chinese and Japanese cultures.

Host: That's an interesting comparison! Did Silla also interact with remote regions beyond East Asia?

Dr. Kim: Yes, it did. It's easy to think that Silla was an isolated society because it was located at the eastern end of the Asian continent. Historical records, however, indicate that Silla was quite a cosmopolitan society. For example, Samguksagi provides detailed accounts of commodities sold by Middle Eastern merchants and used widely in Silla.

There are also old documents about the Silk Road that mention Silla. These documents describe Silla as the eastern center of this vast trade network that spanned thousands of miles. Such evidence suggests that Silla cultivated connections with the wider world, far beyond East Asia.

Host: That is fascinating. Are there any artifacts that suggest the scope of Silla's trade and exchange with other nations? Dr. Kim: Certainly. We can find many such artifacts in Gyeongju. The stone guards standing at the Tomb of King Wonseong are a good example. These guards have features similar to those of people of Central Asian ethnicity. They have deeply set eyes and a high nose, and they wear a headband that resembles those worn by Central Asians during that time. The artifacts found within the ancient royal tombs in Gyeongju also provide important clues that hint at the extent of Silla's ties with nations abroad. For instance, a dagger and its case found in Gyerim-ro Tomb 14 are believed to have their roots in the Black Sea area. Also, a phoenix-shaped glass vessel dug out of the Great Tomb of Hwangnam has been identified as being Roman in origin, judging from its form and production method.

All these artifacts were probably transferred to Gyeongju along the land or sea routes of the Silk Road.

Host: Wow, it is surprising that ancient objects made at one end of Eurasia appeared at its remote end!

What do you think made Silla so actively interact with the world beyond its borders?

Dr. Kim: Silla's political stability and economic growth may have contributed to its interaction with other cultures. However, I think the openness of Silla society is the key to understanding why Silla engaged in overseas trade and cultural exchange. With its doors wide open, Silla could build and cultivate foreign relations, embrace diverse ideas and cultures, and develop its own unique cultural identity.

Host: What an impressive society! Thanks, Dr. Kim, for sharing your insights with us today, and thanks to all our listeners. Join us again next time!

Reading 2

The Korean Wave Takes the English Dictionary by Storm

During the 2010 World Cup, Koreans cheered on their national team by shouting "Fighting, Korea!" At the time, some Koreans criticized the use of the word fighting as it was considered Konglish, a style of English used by Koreans. Konglish words were borrowed from English but were not officially recognized as part of the English language. The word fighting, used by Koreans during the World Cup, may not have been treated as a proper English word at the time. However, as we fast-forward to 2021, the word fighting has been included in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). The addition of fighting to the OED can be regarded as a remarkable achievement for the Korean language and culture. It is remarkable because it demonstrates how the influence of the Korean language is spreading to English-speaking countries.

The inclusion of numerous Korean words in the 2021 version of the OED further demonstrates the increasing impact of Korean culture on English-speaking countries. After the initial inclusion of the word gimchi in 1976, only 20 more Korean words were added over the following 45 years. However, in 2021, 26 new entries were added, marking a sudden increase in the number of Korean words making their way into the OED. This significant increase can be directly linked to the growing global popularity of Korean culture, known as Hallyu, particularly K-pop, K-dramas, and K-food. Additionally, it should be noted that the rise of global streaming services has made global access to Korean content easier than ever. The OED anticipates that more Korean words will be added in the future as Korean culture continues to flourish and expand.

Among the new entries, there were names of Korean dishes, such as gimbap, galbi, and samgyeopsal, all of which frequently appear in Korean dramas. Additionally, there were words that showed how English-speaking audiences had become familiar with unique Korean social relations, including eonni, nuna, and oppa. These words have also been adapted to express fans' affection for Korean stars, reflecting the profound influence of Korean entertainment on English-speaking fans. Moreover, the OED also included many words commonly used in the daily lives of Koreans and within the context of Korean culture, such as fighting, daebak, and trot.

The inclusion of these Korean words in the OED proves that lexical innovation in English is no longer confined to English-speaking countries. Non-native English-speaking countries can contribute to the evolution of the English language as well. The OED's inclusion of Korean words highlights the increasing impact of Korean culture on the world. This accomplishment of Korean language and culture reminds us of the words of Kim Gu, a leader of the Korean independence movement. He said, "The only thing that I desire in infinite quantity is the power of a noble culture." The inclusion of Korean words in the OED indeed shows the power of Korean culture.