GEOGRAPHY

There Are Mountains Galore

Korea is a mountainous peninsula about 530 miles long and 135 miles wide in northeastern Asia, projecting directly south from Manchuria. To the east it is separated from Japan by the Sea of Japan, while on the western side the Yellow Sea separates it from the coast of China. The peninsula itself runs in a north and south direction.

Korea is closed in on the northern and eastern sides by rugged mountains and cliffs which extend the length of the peninsula. The mountains rise out of the sea on the eastern coast and present a formidable though magnificently majestic barrier. The mountainous area extends throughout the central area and gradually tapers off into rolling hills and scattered plains in the southwestern portion of the peninsula.

The western and southern coasts have many good harbors, though jutting reefs present many hazards and navigational problems. The tidal difference along the western coast and rapid currents sweeping among the islands make piloting a hazardous occupation. The rivers are shallow, but swift, with many sandbanks and rapids.
The Climate Is Similar to Ours

The climate is similar to that of our New England and central East Atlantic States. Like our Northeastern States, Korea has four distinct seasons occurring at about the same time of the year and in the same manner as our seasons do. Spring and autumn are ideal ones, but the change to the other seasons occurs gradually and pleasantly. The winters of northern Korea are more severe than those of the central and southern sections—Seoul (Sole) in central Korea, occasionally has below-zero weather in January and February. The rainy season occurs regularly during the months of July and August. Typhoons are rare in the peninsula. There are occasional earth-
quakes, although they are not nearly so frequent as in Japan.

A Populous Land

Korea’s entire area—about 85,246 square miles—makes it about the same size as Great Britain. It has a coastline more than 6,000 miles long and its territorial limits include some 3,479 islands, of which only about 200 are inhabited.

The total population is about 30 million. The northern sector, or that above the 38th degree parallel, has an estimated population of over 8 million, while the southern sector contains the remaining population of over 21 million.

Seoul, which is the capital, is located in the west central portion of the peninsula, less than 30 miles south of the 38th parallel; its population is about 1,900,000. The city is located inland on the Han River, which has its outlet into the Yellow Sea.

Both North and South Korea proclaim Seoul the capital, but in the north Pyongyang (Pyung-Yang) is the local capital for the time being. Pyongyang is northwest 105 miles from Seoul and it also, while being inland, has an outlet to the Yellow Sea by means of the Taedong (Ti-Dong) River. Its population is about 286,000.

Other principal cities are Pusan (Poo-Sann) with a population of 470,000 situated on the extreme southeastern tip of the peninsula; Taegu (Tay-Goo), population 310,000, also in the southeastern section of the peninsula;
and Inchon, population 260,000, the port city for the capital, located 22 miles due west of Seoul on the Yellow Sea. The 30-foot tide at this port necessitates the lightering of all cargo and passengers from transports which are required to anchor five miles out in deep water. The port of Inchon has a small enclosed tidal basin which accommodates a few small vessels entering and departing
at high tide only. During Japanese occupation and control, construction of a much larger tidal basin was undertaken, but this project remains uncompleted. When the tide is out, thousands of acres of mud flats are exposed and many small islands along the west coast are marooned until the tide returns.

**Railroads**

The principal cities are interconnected by railroads, most of which run north-south the length of the peninsula. A main trunk line, almost completely double-tracked, forms an artery from Pusan to Manchuria. Built during the Japanese regime, this line made it possible for a person to travel from Tokyo, Japan, by train to Sasebo (Sah-Say-Bo), Kyushu, ferry to Pusan and then travel by railroad to Harbin in Manchuria. From Harbin, the trans-Siberian railway system could carry a traveler to Moscow and Western Europe. An alternative section to the main line between Seoul and Pusan runs through the mountain range east of the main line. Branching to the east of Seoul, another main line crosses the peninsula to Wonsan (Wun-Sahn), an important port on the Sea of Japan and continues along the eastern coast to Hunyung on the northern border of Korea where it connects with a Russian line to Vladivostok. Besides these main lines, there are numerous shorter branch lines connecting the richer agricultural and commercial regions of Korea.
Roads

Except for some reconstruction accomplished during the American occupation and later by the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA), the highway system is not comparable to what we enjoy in the United States. The economy of the country is still tied to slow-moving carts drawn by man and beast. The need for high-speed roads has not been urgent. However, the Koreans are just as susceptible to the use of “gas buggies” as we are and would gladly surrender their primitive vehicles for something faster and better. What automobiles and trucks they do have operate under severe handicaps for

Their “gas buggies” are handicapped by lack of good roads.
lack of hard-surfaced roads, service stations, garages, and the allied engineering and mechanical skill that make up a good highway system. Experience with roads in Korea—as in many other Oriental countries—will increase your appreciation of American highways.

RESOURCES

Minerals Are Diverse

The mineral wealth of Korea consists of gold, silver, zinc, copper, lead, iron, hard coal, and tungsten. The heavy industries are concentrated in the northern zone. Cotton spinning, silk and rayon weaving and knitting, and coal mining have been largely restricted to the southern zone.

The Farms Are Small

Three-fourths of the people are engaged in agriculture. A mountainous, heavily populated country, Korea has limited area for farming and there are no large farms such as are common in the United States. Only two and one-half acres may yield a livelihood for a Korean family of five people, however meager the income may be. The people are poor, and their farming primitive yet remarkably efficient. One-third of Korea’s agricultural lands are rice paddies, terraced into mountain sides or forming great steppes among her fertile valleys.