



The Despotic Dynasty: A Family Tree of North Korea's Kim Clan

- <http://time.com/4681304/north-korea-kim-family-album/>

Kim Il Sung



Still revered to as the “Ever-Victorious Generalissimo” and “The Great Sun of Life,” Kim Il Sung is the founder of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and fashioned the national ideology of patriotic self-reliance. Born on April 15, 1912, he grew to prominence as a guerrilla fighter against Japanese occupation, and later with the Soviet army during World War II. He ruled North Korea from 1948 until his death on July 8, 1994. Kim Il Sung remains widely adored, with over 500 statues across the country in his honor. All citizens are required to wear a pin with his image, and keep his portrait in their homes fastidiously clean (on pain of excommunication and banishment.)

Kim Jong Il



Owing to the miasma of his father’s cult of personality, few hard facts are known about the life of Kim Jong Il, who ruled as “dear leader” from July 8, 1994 until Dec 17, 2011. State legend says that he was born at secret military camp on Mount Paektu — the mythical birthplace of the Korean people — on Feb. 16, 1941. However, historians believe he actually came into the world in Soviet Siberia, registered under the name Yuri Irsenovich Kim. An obsessive film buff, he reportedly had a collection of more than 20,000 video tapes. And according to his official biography, his first ever round of golf in 1994 recorded a 38-under par round that included 11 holes in one. In less illustrious times, his gross economic mismanagement contributed to North Korea’s horrific famine of 1994-8, during which between 240,000 and 3,500,000 people died.

Kim Jong Un

- <https://www.biography.com/people/kim-jong-un-21125351>



Kim Jong-un became the supreme leader of North Korea in 2011, succeeding his father Kim Jong-il.

Much of the early life of Kim Jong-un is unknown to Western media. Presumably born in North Korea, Kim is the son of Ko Young-hee, an opera singer, and Kim Jong-il, who was the dictatorial leader of the country for over a decade until his death in 2011. Although Kim Jong-un has implemented some economic and agricultural reforms, human rights violations and brutal suppression of opposition have continued to be reported under his rule. He has also continued the country's

nuclear testing and what is believed to be the development of missile technology despite widespread international disapproval.

Early Life

The birthdate and early childhood of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un is shrouded in mystery. It is known that he is the third and youngest son of Korean military leader Kim Jong-il (also written Jong Il), who, under the Communist Worker's Party, had ruled North Korea since 1994; and the grandson of Kim Il-sung, his father's predecessor.

Kim Jong-un's mother was opera singer Ko Young-hee, who had two other children and is thought to have campaigned for Kim Jong-un to be his father's successor before her death in 2004. Kim Jong-il reportedly took a liking to Kim Jong-un, noting that he saw in the youth a temperament similar to himself. It is also thought that Kim Jong-un may have been educated abroad in Switzerland before attending the Kim Il-sung Military University (named after his grandfather) in the capital of Pyongyang in the mid-2000s.

Kim Jong-il began to prepare Kim Jong-un for succession to leadership in 2010. Upon his father's death in December 2011, Kim Jong-un assumed power. He was believed to be in his late 20s at the time.

Suppression of Opposition

After Kim assumed supreme leadership of North Korea, he reportedly executed or removed many senior officials that he had inherited from his father's regime. Among those purged was his own uncle, Jang Song-thaek (also known as Chang Sŏng-t'aek), who is believed to have played an important role during Kim Kim Jong-il's rule and had been considered one of Kim Jong-un's top advisers.

In December 2013, Jang was reportedly arrested and executed for being a traitor and plotting to overthrow the government. It is also believed that members of Jang's family were executed as part of the purge.

In February 2017, Kim's older half-brother Kim Jong-nam died in Malaysia. Although many details remained unclear, it was believed he was poisoned at Kuala Lumpur airport, and multiple suspects were arrested. Kim Jong-nam had been living in exile for many years, during which time he served as a vocal critic of his half-brother's regime.

Suspected Weapons Testing

Under Kim Jong-un's authority, North Korea has continued what are believed to be weapons-testing programs. Though agreeing in February 2012 to halt nuclear testing and to a cessation on long-range missile launching, in April 2012 the country launched a satellite that failed shortly after takeoff. Then, in December of the same year, the government launched a long-range rocket that put a satellite in orbit. The U.S. government believed that these launches are meant to cover up work and testing on ballistic missile technology.

In February 2013, North Korea held its third underground nuclear test. The act was roundly condemned by the international community, including the United States, Russia, Japan and China. In the face of further sanctions, analysts have stated that Kim's continued focus on armament while calling for U.S. peace talks is a strategy of positioning North Korea as a formidable entity and cementing his standing as a regional leader.

By September 2016, the country reportedly conducted its fifth underground nuclear test, despite a history of sanctions imposed by the U.S. Other countries staunchly denounced the move and called for North Korea's denuclearization, with South Korean president Park Geun-hye particularly concerned about the security implications of the continued weapons testing and Kim's mental state.

In February 2017, North Korea launched what its state media described as a medium long-range ballistic missile, with Kim said to be present at the site to supervise. The test sparked more outrage from the international community and calls for an urgent U.N. Security Council meeting.

Public Persona

In the summer of 2012, it was revealed that Kim had taken a wife, Ri Sol-ju. While the couple's exact wedding date is unknown, one source reported it as 2009. In the months since the marriage was uncovered, the country's first lady has frequently appeared in the media—a striking departure from previous protocols. It has also been speculated that the couple have a child.

Kim Jong-un, part of the cyber-generation, is seen as having a more mediagenic style than his father, with the younger Kim having given a New Year's broadcast, taking in musical performances with his wife and being seen as more engaging with soldiers and workers.

He has also embraced more Western cultural tastes, notably highlighted when former American professional basketball player Dennis Rodman paid North Korea a two-day visit in February 2013. During Rodman's stay, Kim accompanied him to watch a basketball game. Rodman claimed that he wanted to help improve relations between the United States and North Korea.

Relations between the two countries made headlines again in late 2014 with the release of Sony's *The Interview*, a Seth Rogen/James Franco comedy in which a tabloid reporter is recruited to assassinate a fictional Kim. North Korean authorities railed against the film, with the FBI asserting that the country was responsible for a subsequent cyber-attack against Sony Pictures in which a slew of private communication was revealed.

Economic Plight of North Korea

North Korea has been mired in poverty and economic ruin, with a devastating famine and food shortages in the 1990s. The country also reportedly has a concentration camp system with torturous, horrifying conditions for thousands of prisoners.

Kim has vowed to focus on educational, agricultural and economic reforms for the betterment of North Koreans. Nonetheless, South Korea has asserted that human rights violations have continued within the borders of their northern neighbor, with dozens of officials executed by the state under Kim. In July 2016, the administration of President Barack Obama placed sanctions on Kim for human rights abuses, marking the first time the North Korean leader received a personal sanction from the U.S.