

# South Korea in Ceará

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The migratory process of a group of foreigners in another country is not just about more people in that new environment, but about the dynamism between the change and adaptation to a new culture, language and relationships, which in the short term can impact the local society, but that over time these relationships between different groups end up becoming closer (SOARES, 2020).

This movement between people of other nationalities is mainly due to partnerships between companies and universities, which encourage the individual to exchange one country for another in search of professional or academic improvement, so that later he can return to his country and apply his knowledge acquired for the benefit of their nation (TEIXEIRA, 2018).

South Korea has always had friendly relations with Brazil, unlike what happened with other countries with which it had a conflict of commercial interests (RODRIGUES, 2020). The reason for this binational partnership is mainly due to the fact that South Korea is one of Brazil's largest trading partners on the Asian continent. Moreover, the economic relevance of Brazil in Latin America is undisputed (BESERRA, 2021; COSTA, 2010).

In recent years, international relations between South Korea and Brazil have intensified due to the growth of Korean exports to Brazil (KIM, 2020) and the large amount of Korean capital investments in Brazilian territory, especially in the State of Ceará, due to the presence of Pecém Steel Company – CSP (BOMTEMPO; BARBOSA, 2020).

Given the above, the research emerged from the following question: What are the implications of the migratory flow from South Korea in the State of Ceará, especially in the city of São Gonçalo do Amarante and Caucaia?

In this sense, this work has the general objective of analyzing the sociocultural impact that the “boom” of Korean migration in São Gonçalo do Amarante and Caucaia in the State of Ceará brought to the region. In addition, the present research contemplates two specific objectives, they are: a) to investigate the socioeconomic effects caused by the increasing rate of Korean immigrants in the state of Ceará; b) – identify the cultural and behavioral changes in Ceará society due to the insertion of new residents from South Korea in the municipalities.

This research is justified by presenting the social, cultural and economic impacts caused by the inclusion of the Korean population in Ceará territory, bringing with it a new culture, language and lifestyle for the local population.

This article is divided into 5 sections. The first refers to the present introduction, which contextualizes the mentioned research. Section 2 deals with international relations between Brazil and South Korea. Section 3 highlights the history of Korean migration to the State of Ceará. In section 4 it is possible to understand how the South Korean country's culture and customs influenced the state of Ceará. Finally, section 5 brings the conclusions obtained through the accomplishment of the present work together with its academic contributions.

## 2 THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN BRAZIL AND SOUTH KOREA

South Korea has demonstrated to the world how strategies linked to politics and economy can change an underdeveloped country with poverty and precariousness indices in a developed country and a reference in its education and technology (HADDAD; MENDONÇA; CONSTÂNCIO, 2021). Due to its success internationally, the country has manifested strong influences expanding its trends worldwide (MAZUR; MEIMARIDIS; RIOS, 2021).

As a country with the 10th largest economy in the world, South Korea has had considerable growth in terms of its per capita income, with rates that in recent years of 2.5% (BRASIL, 2021). With trade opening of 63.9% in 2016, 7th largest exporter and 6th largest importer in the world, South Korea is considered one of the largest investors in relation to foreign direct investment, and is portrayed as an important trading partner of Brazil, having potential opportunities for Brazilian exports and imports according to the National Confederation of Industry - CNI (2018).

Beginning their relations in 1959, South Korea and Brazil established relations in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres and, in 2022, completing 63 years of mutual cooperation, the intellectual exchange in the health sector intensified due to the scenario of COVID-19 (KI-MO, 2021).

In addition, relations between South Korea and Brazil have been defined in recent decades, by the application of financial resources originating from Korean multinationals who see in Brazil an investment opportunity that would result in bilateral benefits, especially in the electronics, steel and automobile sectors and oil (MELO, 2018).

Despite the high bureaucracy of the Latin American country, corresponding to obstacles in trade relations between the two nations in 2020, the two countries made commercial transactions equivalent to U\$8.3 billion in 2020, characterized by 47% of products from the manufacturing industry exported from Brazil to South Korea, 31% from the extractive industry and 21% from agriculture, livestock and fisheries (BRASIL, 2021; KIM, 2015).

Table 01 below depicts the main Korean companies that invest in Brazil, highlighting Pecem Steel Company, being the largest Korean investment in Brazil,

a partnership between the Brazilian company Vale S.A. which owns 50% of the steel industry and the Korean companies DongkukSteel with 30% and the Pohang Iron and Steel Company with 20% of tenure retention (ZIEMATH; AGUIAR, 2017).

**Table 01:** Korean companies investing in Brazil

SECTOR	COMPANY
Automobile	Hyundai
	KIA
Electronic	Samsung
	LG Electronics
Chemicals	CJ
Industry	Hyosung
Machinery	Doosan Infracore
Steel industry	Pecém Steel Company

Source: (ZIEMATH; AGUIAR, 2017)

Meanwhile, Brazilian companies that invest in Korea still show low representation, with the main offices of Vale, Latam Airlines Group, BRF, Goal Intelligent Airlines, Ambev, Odebrecht and H.Stern (ZIEMATH; AGUIAR, 2017).

Regarding the exchange of people, due to the Korean influence in Brazil through k-pop (music), dramas (series and movies), k-food (food), clothing, languages and culture, South Korea, in recent years, received many immigrants in their country in order to experience this new lifestyle (GRANGEIRO, 2022). Consequently, schools and universities have had to adapt to the growing number of foreign students, both in increasing the offer of academic courses conducted in the English language and in the possibility of offering a Korean course before entering the school or university environment (BRASIL, 2012).

### 3 KOREAN MIGRATION TO CEARÁ

In Latin America, Brazil assumes a leading role in the number of immigrants received in the country and, since the 21st century, Ceará enters the list of states with the highest number of international immigrants, especially more recently and massively those from African countries, China and South Korea (BOMTEMPO, 2019).

Pecem Steel Company- CSP, the project with the largest investment between the two countries, was the first integrated steel company in the Northeast, with an estimated production of 3 million tons of steel slabs per year (TELES; AMORA, 2013). This enterprise is located between the municipalities of

Caucaia and São Gonçalo do Amarante - Ceará, according to Figure 01, which has an area of 13,337 hectares, 53.25% of this area belonging to Caucaia and 46.75% to São Gonçalo do Amarante, data provided by Companhia Siderúrgica do Pecém (2022).

**Figure 01:** Geographic location of CSP



Source 1: Google Maps (2022)

For its construction, the steel mill required a large amount of skilled labor, since it is an extensive and complex work. In its first year of construction, in 2012, 1,200 workers were needed and, as the work progressed, a greater number of employees was demanded, reaching 16,000 employees in 2015 (TELES; AMORA, 2015).

The high immigration rates of South Koreans in Ceará were mainly due to the beginning of operations of the CSP, from 2016, in which this migratory process was instigated for work reasons, since the majority who migrated to Brazil did so part of the team that would work in the steel industry or who were the family of these workers (CRUZ, 2018; SOUSA; TELES, 2019).

#### 4 THE KOREAN INFLUENCE IN THE STATE OF CEARÁ

With the remarkable insertion of Koreans in the northeast region of the country, more specifically in the State of Ceará, an acculturation was naturally generated both by the host culture and the original culture (TASHIMA, 2018).

Among all the differences where they both had to adapt, the greatest difficulty and that which demanded more effort and dedication, especially for immigrants, in this process of “Brazilianization” was in the process of communication, that is, in learning the Portuguese language in order to meet their needs (BLACKMAN; ARENA; BRABO, 2020).

Understanding that the Portuguese language is equivalent to the same difficulty of learning any other foreign language, especially when there is no practice of the language (MELO; GUIMARÃES; COSTA, 2021), many establishments have adopted the option of having their ads in both Portuguese and Korean to attract these immigrants to their establishments (BOMTEMPO; BARBOSA, 2020; CAVALCANTE, 2019; MESQUITA, 2014; MOURA, 2015; SOUSA; TELES, 2019).

In this way, real estate companies took the opportunity to stand out from their competitors, publishing posters in Korean and spreading them at strategic points, especially in Caucaia and São Gonçalo do Amarante, where Koreans are more concentrated due to the proximity to the steel mill, such as can be seen in Table 02.

**Table 02:** Real estate companies advertising their ventures in Korean



Source: Adapted from Mesquita (2014), Moura (2015) and Sousa; Teles (2019)

Based on the same principle, it became easier to locate merchants and restaurants in the two analyzed municipalities that have been adopting the practice of disseminating their trade in Korean language in order to reach immigrants from South Korea, as shown in Table 03.

**Table 03:** Advertisement for restaurants and merchants in Korean



Source: Adapted from Bomtempo; Barbosa (2020), Cavalcante (2019), Mesquita (2014) and Sousa; Teles (2019)

Another notable effect of the increase of South Korean immigrants in the State of Ceará, is demonstrated through the increase of commercial enterprises legally registered in the Commercial Board of the State of Ceará - JUCEC, verified that only in the year 2012, when the construction of the CSP began, at least 7 establishments were opened with owners of Korean nationality, observed through Table 04 (BOMTEMPO; BARBOSA, 2020).

**Table 04:** South Korean enterprises in Ceará since 2012

COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS	OPENING YEAR	CITY
RESTAURANTE CHO SUN OK LTDA ME	2012	FORTALEZA
M S KIM TRANSPORTADORA ME	2012	SÃO GONÇALO DO AMARANTE
KCC ENGENHARIA E CONSTRUTORA LTDA	2012	CAUCAIA
FIRSTWARE AGENCIAMENTO DE HOTEIS LTDA	2012	CAUCAIA
SOO KUK LEE	2012	CAUCAIA
KCC ENGENHARIA E CONSULTORIA LTDA	2012	CAUCAIA
CHUPRO CONSULTORIA EMPRESARIAL E ADMIN. LTDA	2012	SÃO GONÇALO DO AMARANTE
HS INDÚSTRIA E COMÉRCIO LTDA	N/C	FORTALEZA
PAPARAZZI COMÉRCIO DE CONFECÇÕES LTDA ME	N/C	FORTALEZA

Source: JUCEC (Commercial Board of the State of Ceará). Prepared by BOMTEMPO; BARBOSA (2020)

It is noted that among the 9 commercial establishments opened in 2012, according to JUCEC, founded by Koreans in the State of Ceará, 6 of them are located in the same municipalities where CSP is located, that is, municipalities of Caucaia and São Gonçalo do Amarante.

## 5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Migrating in search of better living conditions, thousands of people move from their home country for this purpose, especially if they come from countries at war, economic crisis, victims of political or religious persecution, wanting a refuge to continue their lives in a more dignified and humane way.

Korean immigrants, although they do not fit into a society that needs permanent refuge, often move to other countries in search of academic specialization or for greater job opportunities due to the quality of labor they have.

In the State of Ceará, the intense migration of Korean citizens has been noticeable, especially in the city of São Gonçalo do Amarante and Caucaia, municipalities that include the Pecém Steel Company, the main attraction due to the steel mill. These included Koreans who already worked in one of the two Korean shareholders responsible for CSP and who were indicated due to their technical level to come work in Brazil.

In addition to the workers themselves, families also migrated as they saw the opportunity to open a small business in the municipality, contributing to increase the family's income and promote their culture and customs to the Brazilian population.

In view of this, and in order to make the lives of Koreans more accessible, many establishments advertise their products and services through publication in Korean, making it increasingly common to find an advertisement in the municipalities under analysis.

Therefore, through this research it can be concluded that not only the lives of Korean immigrants were affected with their coming to Brazil, but also the local society had to adapt in order to maintain a friendly relationship, enduring the Brazilian's fame as "warm people", receptive and charismatic.

In addition, with the entry of the Korean people in Ceará, there were influences of this new culture not only in the social and cultural sphere, but also impacted the economic sector of the region, creating new local enterprises that would satisfy new customers.

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## ABSTRACT

The displacement of people nationally or internationally is part of the history of humanity characterizing some societies. In Brazil, the migration of foreigners is present in the main capitals of the country, including and more recently in the State of Ceará, being intensified from 2012 with the mega construction of Pecém Steel Company, which demanded specialized labor coming from the country Korean. Knowing this, the present research aims to identify the impacts and influences caused by the arrival of these immigrants in socioeconomic and cultural effects for the local population. Through research with a theoretical and empirically validated approach, it was found that the city of São Gonçalo do Amarante and Caucaia evolved in economic aspects due to the increase in entrepreneurship in the region and the investment of Koreans employed here. In social and cultural aspects, the two nationalities had to adapt, including the existence of local businesses advertising their services in both Portuguese and Korean in order to serve both audiences.

**Keywords:** Ceará; CSP; Influence; Migration South Korea.

## RESUMO

O deslocamento de pessoas, de forma nacional ou internacional, faz parte da história da humanidade caracterizando algumas sociedades. No Brasil, a migração de estrangeiros está presente nas principais capitais do país, inclusive e mais recente no Estado do Ceará, sendo intensificada a partir de 2012 com a mega construção da Companhia Siderúrgica do Pecém, o qual demandou mão de obra especializada vindo do país coreano. Sabendo-se disso, a presente pesquisa tem como objetivo indicar quais os impactos e influências ocasionados pela chegada desses imigrantes em termos de efeitos socioeconômicos e culturais para a população local. Através da pesquisa com enfoque teórico e empiricamente validado, constatou-se que os municípios de São Gonçalo do Amarante e Caucaia evoluíram em aspectos econômicos devido ao aumento de empreendimento na região e pelo investimento que coreanos ali fizeram. Em aspectos sociais e culturais, as duas nacionalidades tiveram que adaptar-se, inclusive existindo comércios locais divulgando seus serviços tanto em português como em coreano a fim de atender ambos os públicos.

**Palavras-chave:** Ceará; Coréia do Sul; CSP; Influência; Migração.