Ebrey / Walthall

Modern East Asia from 1600

A Cultural, Social, and Political History

Third Edition

Modern East Asia

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A Cultural, Social, and Political History
Third Edition

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PREFACE

There are many reasons to learn about East Asia. A fifth of the world's population lives there. Every day newspapers carry articles on the rapid transformations of the world economy that make China, Japan, and Korea a growing presence in our lives. Globalization means not only that people are crossing the Pacific in ever-increasing numbers but also that U.S. popular culture is drawing from many sources in East Asia, from Korean martial arts to Japanese anime and Chinese films.

But why approach East Asia through its history rather than, say, its economy or contemporary culture? Many reasons suggest themselves. We cannot gain an adequate understanding of modern phenomena without knowing the stages and processes that led up to them. Moreover, the peoples of East Asia are strongly historically minded. To a much greater extent than in the United States, they know and identify with people and events of a thousand or more years ago. In all three countries, readers still enjoy *The Three Kingdoms,* a novel written in fourteenth-century China about the leaders of three contending states in third-century China. Historical consciousness also underlies the strong sense of separate identities among the people of China, Korea, and Japan. The fact that time and again Korea was able to protect its independence despite the attempts of both China and Japan to conquer it is a central part of Korean identity today. Yet another reason to learn about East Asia's past is its comparative value. As a region that developed nearly independently of the West, East Asia sheds light on the variety of ways human beings have found meaning, formed communities, and governed themselves, expanding our understanding of the human condition.

What makes this East Asian history book distinctive? In it we cover all three countries from a broad range of perspectives, from the earliest signs of human civilization to the present, and we balance the big picture with specific cases. While availing ourselves of the framework provided by politics, we also focus on culture, social issues, and economic change.

WHAT IS NEW IN THE THIRD EDITION

Our first goal in revising this book has been to bring it up to date—to cover the last few years and take account of new scholarship. But we have also put a lot of thought into how we can best serve our audience. Teachers and students who used the first and second editions of this book have told us how much they liked our coverage of social and cultural history, our mini-chapter "Connections," and our boxed features—the Documents, Biographies, Material Culture, and Making Comparisons features. With their encouragement, we continue to scrutinize our choices and in this edition offer several new ones, including new Material Culture features on Japanese portrait statues and matchlocks and China's recent high-speed trains; new biographies of a Korean interpreter, a Japanese radical samurai, and a Chinese geomancer; and new documents from the *Book of Songs* for the Zhou period and "Wild Lilies," for the twentieth century. We also have added an additional Making Comparisons feature on languages.

Two more pervasive changes also deserve mention. On the advice of instructors who have used this book in class, we have added two pedagogical aids. The first is pronunciation glosses aimed to give students the courage to pronounce foreign words in their heads while reading, and out loud in class. These glosses do not aim for linguistic precision; their sole purpose is to help U.S. students approximate the sounds of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean words.

The second addition we have made is to add critical thinking questions at the end of all the documents and biographies. It is our hope that these questions will encourage students to pause and think about what they are reading. Teachers might also consider asking students to prepare answers to them.

The overall conception of this book remains the same as it was from the first edition. The following distinctive characteristics are worth underlining.

COMPARABLE COVERAGE OF KOREA

Part of our original plan for this book was to cover Korea in comparable depth as China and Japan (we ended up giving China about 50 percent of the space, Japan 30 percent, and Korea 20 percent). We know that many teachers have been frustrated in their attempts to cover Korea in their East Asia courses for lack of suitable materials and hope that our efforts prove useful to both them and their students.

A BROAD FOCUS: *CONNECTIONS* CHAPTERS

It is often difficult to keep the larger whole in mind as we tell the separate stories of China, Korea, and Japan. Our solution has been to periodically zoom out to look at the wider region from a global or world-historical perspective. Thus, after every few chapters we have inserted a mini-chapter on developments that link the societies of East Asia both to each other and to the larger global context. We have labeled these mini-chapters "Connections" because they emphasize the many ways each society was connected to outside events and people. For instance, the origins and spread of Buddhism are of great importance to all the societies of East Asia, but much of the story can be told as a common narrative that connects East Asia with the rest of Asia. Similarly, many books write about World War II in East Asia in entirely different ways in their China and Japan chapters. By stepping back and writing about the war from a more global perspective, we help students see the larger picture.

BALANCED CULTURAL, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL HISTORY

This book strives for balanced coverage of the different strands of history. A basic political narrative is essential to give students a firm sense of chronology and to let them think about issues of change. Moreover, there is no denying that the creation of state structures has much to do with how people lived their lives. Even the fact that people think of themselves as "Chinese," "Korean," or "Japanese" is largely a by-product of political history.

We also believe students should gain an understanding of the philosophies and religions of East Asia. Confucianism and Buddhism have both been of great importance throughout the region, but in very diverse ways, as the historical context has continually changed. Other elements of high culture also deserve coverage, such as the arts of poetry and calligraphy.

Yet we did not want to neglect topics in social, cultural, and economic history, where much of our own work has been concentrated. Even if the state is important to understanding how people lived, so were families, villages, and religious sects. We also wanted to bring in the results of scholarship on those who had been marginalized in the traditional histories, from laborers and minorities to women at all social levels.

MAKING COMPARISONS

There are many similarities among the cultures of East Asia, often because of their direct influence on each other and the wide circulation of some core philosophical, religious, and literary texts. Yet differences are at least as significant and interesting. To help students take stock of what they have learned, from time to time we provide a brief, one-page discussion placed between chapters that compares features of the three countries. The topics in the third edition are languages, food cultures, monarchical institutions, women's situations, neo-Confucianism, slavery, and popular religion.

A SPECIFIC FOCUS: BIOGRAPHIES, DOCUMENTS, AND MATERIAL CULTURE

The potential danger of trying to cover so much is a high level of generalization. To keep our readers engaged and bring our story down to earth, we devote three or four pages per chapter to closer looks at specific people, documents, and material objects.

Biographies

Most chapters have a one-page biography, often about someone who would not normally be mentioned

in a history book. We thus highlight a diverse set of individuals, from the most accomplished (such as the eminent Chinese poet Du Fu) to those who are remarkably ordinary people (such as a woman whose job was to mind the neighborhood telephone). Three military men are portrayed; others were physicians, interpreters, entrepreneurs, and founders of religious sects. We also have included some agitators and revolutionaries, and even a winning volleyball coach.

Documents

In our chapters we frequently cite short passages from primary sources, but we believe students also benefit from texts long enough to give them a sense of the genre, the author's point of view, and the circumstances described. A few of those we have included are by famous writers, such as Fukuzawa Yūkichi and Lu Xun. Some are excerpted from well-known pieces of literature, such as the play *The Peony Pavilion* and ancient Japanese poetry collections. Others will be less familiar to teachers and students alike. We selected legal documents, for what they reveal of ordinary people's lives, and religious texts of several sorts to help students see religion and popular beliefs in action. Many authors are utterly serious, complaining bitterly of war or corruption, for instance; others have well-developed senses of humor. All the documents prompt active involvement and critical interpretation because through them students hear the concerns of people of the past.

Material Culture

Texts are not our only sources for reconstructing the past; there is much to be discovered from material remains of many sorts. To give focus to this dimension of history, for each chapter we have selected one element of material culture to describe in some detail. These range from the most mundane—food, drink, clothing, houses, and means of transportation—to objects of art including specific paintings, sculptures, and performing arts. Many of the objects discussed have economic significance—for example, fertilizers and the Grand Canal. Most of the features for the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries bring out ways material culture has changed, along with so much else in modern times—from the food people eat to their ways of amusing themselves to technological advances such as the transistor that continue to have an impact not only in Asia but across the world.

THINKING LIKE A HISTORIAN

The "Documents" and "Material Culture" features challenge students to draw inferences from primary materials much as historians do. Another way we have tried to help students learn to think like historians is to present history as a set of questions more than a set of answers. What historians are able to say about a period or topic depends not only on the sources available but also on the questions asked. To help students see this, we begin each chapter with a brief discussion of some of the questions that motivate contemporary historians to do research on the time period. Few have easy answers; they are not questions students will be able to resolve simply by reading the chapter. Rather they are real questions, interesting enough to motivate historians to sift through recalcitrant evidence in their efforts to find answers. The earliest chapter on Korea, for instance, poses the question of how the three states on the Korean peninsula were able to survive in the face of Chinese power. The chapter on early nineteenth-century Japan points out that historians have studied the period for clues to the causes of the Meiji Restoration, wanting to know the relative weight to assign to foreign pressure and domestic unrest. For the chapter dealing with China under the Nationalists, we point out that the desire to explain the Communist victory in 1949 has motivated historians to ponder why May Fourth Liberalism lost its appeal and whether the economic politics of the Nationalists could have brought prosperity to China if Japan had not invaded. We hope that posing these questions will help readers see the significance of the topics and issues presented in each chapter.

USING THIS TEXT IN CLASS

East Asian history is commonly taught either as a one-term or one-year course. To fit both schedules, this text is available as a single volume and as two divided chronologically. Since those who divide

chronologically might prefer to break at either 1600 or 1800, the period 1600–1800 appears in both the chronologically divided volumes.

INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENT

eInstructor's Resource Manual Prepared by Ethan Segal, Michigan State University. This manual has many features, including learning objectives, chapter outlines, discussion/essay questions, key terms, and activities for the classroom. Available on the instructor's companion website.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For the first edition of this book, the three authors divided the work primarily by country of specialization, with Patricia Ebrey writing the parts on China, Anne Walthall those on Japan, and James Palais those on Korea. The Connections chapters we divided among ourselves chronologically, with Patricia Ebrey taking the early ones (on Prehistory, Buddhism, Cultural Contact Across Eurasia, and the Mongols), Anne Walthall taking the early modern and modern ones (on Europe Enters the Scene, Western Imperialism, and World War II), and James Palais doing the final one on East Asia in the Twenty-First Century. Our original co-author, James Palais, passed away shortly after the first edition was printed in summer 2006. For the second and third editions, Patricia Ebrey revised James Palais's chapters covering up to 1800 and Anne Walthall the remainder.

Many people have contributed to the shaping of this book. The authors have been teaching about the societies of East Asia for three decades, and the ways they approach their subjects owe much to questions from their students, conversations with their colleagues, and the outpouring of scholarship in their fields. As we worked on this text, we received much advice from others, from early suggestions of possible collaborators to critiques of our original proposal and reviews of the drafts of our chapters. The reviewers' reports prompted us to rethink some generalizations, urged us not to weigh the book down with too much detail, and saved us from a number of embarrassing errors. We appreciate the time and attention the following reviewers gave to helping us produce a better book:

James Anderson, University of North Carolina at Greensboro; R. David Arkush, University of Iowa; Charles Armstrong, Columbia University; Richard Bohr, College of Saint Benedict & Saint John; Craig N. Canning, College of William and Mary; Henry Chan, Minnesota State University; Alan Christy, University of California, SC; Sue Fawn Chung, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Parks Coble, University of Nebraska; Anthony DeBlasi, University of Albany; Ronald G. Dimberg, University of Virginia; Franklin M. Doeringer, Lawrence University; Alexis Dudden, Connecticut College; Gordon Dutter, Monroe Community College; Susan Fernsebner, Mary Washington College; Karl Friday, University of Georgia; James Gao, University of Maryland; Karl Gerth, University of South Carolina; Andrew Goble, University of Oregon; John B. Henderson, Louisiana State University; Robert Henry, Grossmont College; Jennifer Holt-Dilley, University of Texas at San Antonio; Jeff Hornibrook, SUNY Plattsburgh; William Johnston, Wesleyan University; Fujiya Kawashima, Bowling Green State University; Sun Joo Kim, Harvard University; Ari Daniel Levine, University of Georgia; Huaiyin Li, University of Missouri-Columbia; Jeff Long, Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania; Andrew McGreevy, Ohio University-Lancaster; Angelene Naw, Judson College; Steve Phillips, Towson University; Jonathan Porter, University of New Mexico; Wesley Sasaki-Uemura, University of Utah; Edward Slack, Eastern Washington University; S. A. Thornton, Arizona State University; Constantine Vaporis, University of Maryland, BC; Lu Yan, University of New Hampshire; Ka-che Yip, University of Maryland, Baltimore County; Theodore Jun Yoo, University of Hawaii at Manoa.

We also are grateful for all the work put into this book by the editorial staff at Wadsworth, Cengage Learning: Brooke Barbier, Elisa Adams, Jamie Bushell, and Katie Coaster.

CONVENTIONS

Throughout this book names are given in East Asian order, with family name preceding personal name. Thus Mao Zedong was from the Mao family, Ashikaga Takauji from the Ashikaga family, and Yi Sŏnggye from the Yi family.

Both Japanese and Korean have phonetic scripts (Japanese a syllabary, Korean an alphabet), though Japanese additionally makes extensive use of Chinese characters. There are standard ways to transcribe these scripts into our alphabet. Here we have used the Hepburn system for transcribing Japanese. For Korean, we have used the revised romanization system of the Ministry of Culture in South Korea.

Chinese does not have a phonetic script. In this book the pinyin system of romanization has been adopted.

The basic vowels, *a, e, i, o,* and *u* in all three languages are pronounced as in Italian, German, and Spanish.

a as in f*a*ther

e as in *e*nd

i as the first *e* in *e*ve (although in Chinese if it comes after an s, ch, or z, it is pronounced as the *e* in *the*)

o as in *o*ld (shorter in length and with less of the *ou* sound of English)

u as in r*u*de (shorter in length than English)

The macron over the *ō* or *ū* in Japanese indicates that the vowel is "long," taking twice as long to say, as though it were doubled. Macrons have been omitted from common place names well known without them, such as Tokyo and Kyoto.

ü in Chinese (used only after *l* or *n*) is like the German *ü*.

The three languages are not so similar when one vowel follows another. In the case of Japanese, each vowel is pronounced as a separate syllable (shōen, is two syllables, shō-en). In Chinese, they create a (one-syllable) diphthong (e.g., *mei,* which is pronounced like may, and *xia*, which sounds like shya). In Korean, two vowels in a row are used to convey a distinct vowel sound; *ae* is like the *a* in *at; eo* is like the *u* in *but; eu* is like the *oo* in *foot*.

Consonants for Japanese and Korean romanization are close enough to English to give readers little difficulty. In the Chinese case, divergence between how an English speaker would guess a pronunciation and how the word is actually pronounced is greater. The most confusing consonants are listed below:

c	*ts* in *ts*ar
z	*dz* in a*dz*e
zh	*j* in *j*ack
q	*ch* in *ch*in
x	*sh*

In the case of Chinese, the romanization system does not convey tones, which are also an important element in pronunciation.

We have offered simple pronunciation guides after many words that might give readers trouble. These do not aim at linguistic accuracy; they are at best approximations, based on common American pronunciations, and are provided so that students will feel more comfortable using the words in class. They can be ignored once the reader has gotten the hang of the romanization system.

For both Chinese and Korean, other ways of romanizing the language are also widely used. Through the last edition of this book we used the McCune-Reischauer system for Korean, which uses apostrophes and diacritical marks. Thus, the dynasty that was romanized as Chosŏn in the last edition is now romanized as Joseon. Comparisons of the two systems of romanization can be found at **http://www.eki.ee/wgrs/rom2_ko.pdf**.

In the case of Chinese, pinyin only became the standard system of romanization in recent decades. Some earlier spellings were based on dialects other than Mandarin (Peking, Canton, Sun Yat-sen). More often the Wade-Giles system of romanization was employed. From context, if nothing else, most readers

have inferred that Mao Zedong is the same person whose name used to be spelled Mao Tse-tung, or that Wang Anshi is the pinyin form of Wang An-shih. Two older spellings have been retained in this book because they are so widely known (Sun Yatsen and Chiang Kaishek). Charts for converting pinyin to Wade-Giles and vice versa are widely available on the Internet, should anyone want verification of their guesses (see, for instance, **http://www.loc.gov/catdir/pinyin/romcover.html**).

Modern East Asia

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

15

Joseon Korea (1392–1800)

Yi Seonggye's Rise to Power

Kings and *Yangban* Confucian Officials

Dynastic Decline and the Japanese Invasion

Material Culture: *Yangban* Children's Board Games

Biography: Interpreter Jeong Myeongsu

Relations with the Manchus

Internal Politics in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Economic Growth and the Decline of Slavery

Documents: Lady Hyegyeong's Memoirs

Cultural Developments

The Family and Women in the Confucian Age

Making Comparisons: Women's Situations

The Joseon Dynasty was founded in 1392 by Yi Seonggye (E SUNG-geh). The next four centuries were marked by extensive Confucianization. Chinese statecraft and the examination system were copied more closely. The hereditary *yangban* (YANG-bahn), who now had to devote themselves to education in order to gain office, could provide a powerful check on the power of kings, but factionalism divided them. Confucianization reached the level of the family; the family head became recognized as the owner of family property, and women's rights to inherit were largely lost. The dynasty survived serious crises, including invasions by the Japanese and the Manchus. Yet, by the eighteenth century, there were increasing signs of economic growth, social change, and new cultural openness.

Historians of the Joseon (JOE-son) period have looked closely at its elite and government. Did the founding of the dynasty bring social change? Why was factionalism so bitter and so bloody? Did the emphasis on Confucian orthodoxy make factionalism worse? Would Joseon have been stronger if its kings had been able to control their *yangban* officials more effectively? Or did the power of the officials—imbued with Confucian ideas—save the country from tyranny? Given the flaws in the government system and the many crises, why did the dynasty last so long? Joseon's international situation has also been a subject of close scrutiny. Did Joseon benefit from the tributary relationship with Ming China? Why was Joseon unable to repel Hideyoshi's invasion? How did Korea respond to its first encounter with Christianity? Scholars today are also asking basic questions about social and economic change. How large was the population? Why did commercialization lag behind China and Japan? Why was so much labor unfree?

YI SEONGGYE'S RISE TO POWER

In the mid-fourteenth century, the Goryeo (GO-riyo) dynasty was revived after the period of Mongol domination. As discussed in Chapter 10, King Gongmin took steps to strengthen royal power; he strengthened the military,

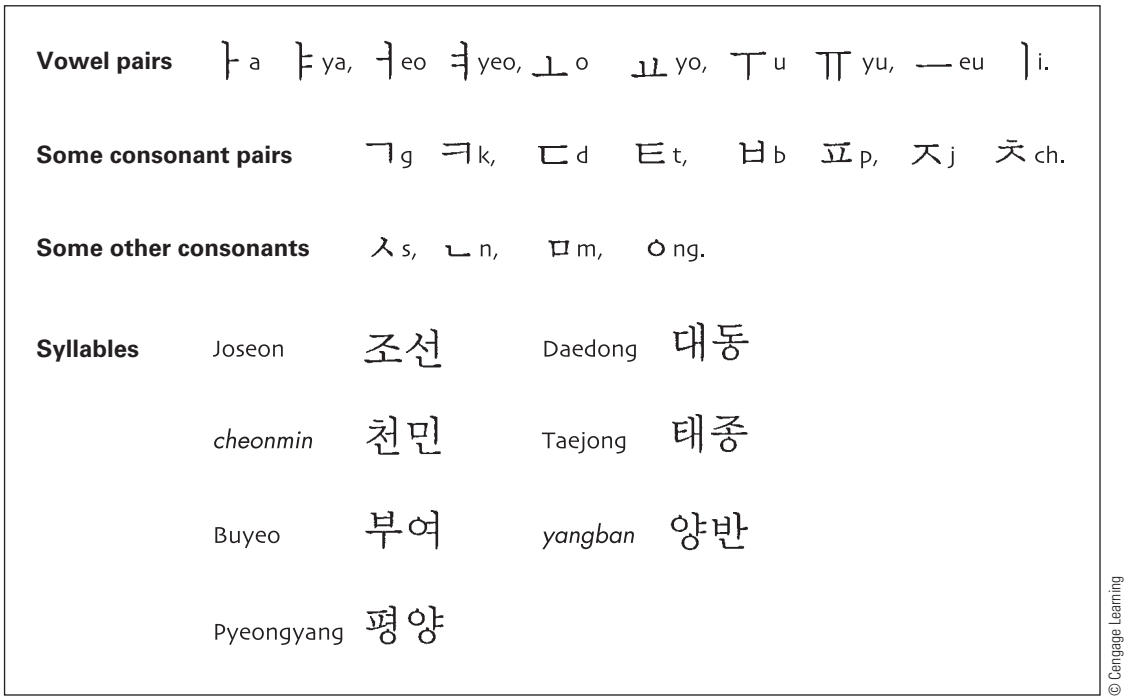

Figure 15.1 **Hangul Chart**

expanded tax revenue, and promoted Confucianism. After he was assassinated, Confucian reformers allied themselves with a powerful general, Yi Seonggye, who became the force behind the throne. Steps were taken to reclaim authority over prebendal grants, cancel tax-free exemptions to favored *yangban*, and carry out a national land survey. In 1389, Yi eliminated his principal rival, paving the way to declare a new dynasty in 1392. For the name of the dynasty, he chose the phrase used in Chinese sources for the ancient Korean state—Joseon. As its first emperor, he is known as Taejo (TAY-joe, r. 1392–1398). In essence a coup from within, this was a relatively bloodless dynastic transition. Most of the great families of Koryeo survived to play leading roles during Joseon.

Among Taejo's successors were three of the most successful kings in Korean history—Taejong (TAY-jong), Sejong (SAY-jong), and Sejo (SAY-joe)—noted for their achievements in culture, science, and military theory. King Taejong twice called up one hundred thousand corvée laborers to build a new capital at Hanyang (HAN-yang) (Seoul), not far from the Koryeo capital. He strengthened the armed forces, confiscated Buddhist temple and monastery property, and created a sound fiscal base for the state. His son, King Sejong (r. 1418–1450), established a record of accomplishment that far outshone any of his successors. He improved both the army and navy, defeated the Wakō pirates on Tsushima Island, and extended Joseon's territory north to the Yalu and Tumen rivers. To secure control of those areas, until then settled by Jurchens and other Manchurian groups, he dispatched thousands of Koreans from the south as colonists. He revised the land registration system to make it more equitable. To encourage adoption of more productive agricultural techniques, he published books on agriculture and sericulture. He reinstituted state-sponsored grain loans to peasants to tide them over the spring planting season and famine periods. His legal reforms prohibited cruel punishments, allowed appeals in death penalty cases, and added penalties for masters who beat their slaves without first obtaining official permission. He tried (unsuccessfully) to introduce coins and paper currency.

One of Sejong's most important achievements was founding the Hall of Worthies (*Jiphyeonjeon* [JIP-hyon-jeon]) in 1420, where scholars collected documents and published books. Sejong put this agency in charge of inventing an alphabet in 1443—the first and only one of its kind in East Asia. Sejong's goal was to spread learning beyond the elite *yangban*, who recognized that its use would break their stranglehold on knowledge and therefore opposed it (see Figure 15.1).

Courtesy Asian Historical Architecture, www.orientalarchitecture.com.

Courtyard of a Sixteenth-Century Confucian Academy. A half century after the death of the teacher Yi Eon-jeok (E UN-juck, 1491–1553) the academy where he had taught was dedicated as a shrine to his memory.

Among the books Sejong sponsoredwere *Episodes from the Life of the Buddha*, eulogies of his ancestors, *The Songs of the Flying Dragons*, and *Illustrated Guide to the Three Moral Relationships*, as well as works on science, medicine, and astronomy. Scientific accomplishments of his reign included sundials, an astronomical chart, a new type of water clock, and a rain gauge invented in 1442 (two centuries before Europe's first). The arts and crafts also flourished during this period (see Color Plate 23).

Despite the great accomplishments of King Sejong, he was unable to bequeath political stability to his heirs. His successor died early, and his twelve-year-old grandson was robbed of his throne by his uncle, King Sejo (r. 1455–1468), an act that sowed the seeds of political discord for the rest of the century.

Sejo was devoted to military strategy and published three treatises on it. He authorized attacks against the Jurchens in 1460 and 1467, established military colonies to support troop units, and established the Five Guards Command in 1466 to function as a supreme national defense council. He adopted the famous Chinese ever-normal granaries to stabilize the price of grain by buying or selling grain on the market and he tried, but failed, to put iron cash into circulation to promote commerce. He also ordered the compilation of a major law code, the *Grand Institutes for Governing the State*.

Sejo antagonized the Confucian officials by patronizing Buddhism and finding ways to circumvent Confucian critics. He neglected the state council, ordered the six ministries to send all their communications directly to him, and abolished the Hall of Worthies. Thus, despite Sejo's accomplishments, his reputation was tarnished, making it easier for Confucian officials to regain their power under subsequent kings.

KINGS AND *YANGBAN* CONFUCIAN OFFICIALS

The early Joseon period saw the culmination of what might have seemed contradictory trends. Kings consolidated their authority through extension of central control. Committed neo-Confucians, as critics of power, circumscribed both the authority of the king and the authority of military men and aristocrats. And *yangban* aristocrats maintained their political and social predominance.

Although for centuries Korean kings had been adopting elements of Chinese statecraft, it was not until the early Joseon period that centralization reached the point where magistrates in all of the three-hundred-odd local districts were appointed by the central government. It was also during this period that the civil service examinations became the main route to high office. As in China, government service became the goal of the elite. The exams were used to select men with literary educations and inclinations to be put in charge of the government apparatus. Birth alone was no longer enough. To advance to high office, passing the examinations became necessary.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of officials in the Joseon Dynasty came from long-established *yangban* families. They were the ones who could best afford education. There was no attempt by any of the early Joseon kings to manumit slaves and challenge the property rights of the *yangban* aristocrats. As competition for government posts increased, the *yangban* found ways to give themselves advantages. They banned the Goryeo practice of allowing *hyangni* (HYANG-ni) (local clerks) to be promoted to the central bureaucracy. They further narrowed the pool of candidates by barring sons of concubines from taking the examinations.

Neo-Confucian scholars inherited Chinese scholars' arguments against Buddhism, such as the claim that the Buddhist emphasis on the individual attainment of enlightenment interfered with the Confucian obligation of filial piety. As a result of their campaigns, many Buddhist monasteries were disbanded and stripped of their land, and eighty thousand of their slaves were converted to government slaves.

Joseon Confucians recognized Ming China as a mature example of a Confucian society, but they did not see Confucian civilization as uniquely Chinese or the Chinese manifestation of it as intrinsically superior. Zealous Korean Confucians aspired to create a more perfect Confucian society, one that adhered more closely to the classics than Ming China did.

Confucian emphasis on filial piety and loyalty to the ruler was useful to the Joseon kings in gaining conformity to their authority. On the other hand, as in China, Confucian scholars viewed themselves as responsible for guiding the ruler toward moral perfection, and they insisted that the ruler should listen to their counsel, even if it tended to hamstring the king's authority and protect their *yangban* class interests.

Did the moral authority of the *yangban* Confucian scholars keep Joseon Korea from becoming a despotism like Ming China? Joseon kings found it difficult to exercise their theoretically absolute power because of the obstruction and remonstrance of the civil officials, almost all of whom came from *yangban* families with longer histories and more prestige than the Yi royal family. One of Sejo's successors, Yeonsangun (YON-san-goon), took a strong stand against the Confucian establishment. He acted in ever more arbitrary fashion against real and supposed threats to his authority, ordering the execution of people for minor offenses. His critics saw themselves as waging a moral crusade against a usurper and his political appointees, but he thought he was defending his rights as an absolute monarch. He carried out a purge of the literati in 1504, canceled the royal lectures because the lecturers were aggressive in criticizing his actions, and neglected the National Academy. He became so paranoid that a cabal of high officials deposed him in 1506.

Map 15.1 **Joseon Dynasty, 1392–1910**