Joseon (Chosŏn) Korea

November 28, 2013
Review

• Who was Zheng He?

• Who was Wang Yangming?

• What was the relationship between Ming China and Tibet?

• How Confucian was the Ming?
Maps of Joseon Korea


http://www.swaen.com/zoom_map.htm?
zoomifyImagePath=http://www.swaen.com/os/zoom2/30183/
Joseon (Chosŏn) Korea: A Confucian kingdom

- In what ways did the government of Joseon Korea resemble the government of Ming China? (p. 250–51)

- What role did family background play in Chosŏn society?

- Who were the yangban? How did they differ from the ruling class in China?

- Did Korea and Japan have anything in common?
Joseon society (p. 251)

- yangban--an hereditary class of Confucian scholars from whom the bureaucracy was selected according to performance on Confucian civil service exams.

- sons of secondary wives (because of respect for matrilineal background) and sons of remarried widows. (p. 261)

- Jungin (chungin)- technical specialists and clerks (p. 251) The interpreter discussed on p 253 was not a Jungin, however)

- peasants and fisherfolk--the majority of the population

- merchants

- the underclass ——monks, gisaeng (kisaeng) [entertaining women], shamans (mudang-p. 262), baekjeong [those with hereditary lowly jobs]—, including slaves who may have been 30% of the population before 1800 (when government slaves but not private slaves were freed) On slaves, see pp. 257-58
Women in East Asia
Ebrey, pp. 262-62, 264)

- China has been patrilineal and patriarchal for more than two millennia. Korea and Japan started becoming patrilineal and patriarchal less than 800 years ago.

- Korea and Japan ever went as far as China did—they never forced their women to bind their feet. And women in Korea and Japan could write in phonetic scripts, something unavailable to Chinese women.

- In Korea, the rise of Neo-Confucianism to hegemony led to the loss of autonomy for women. In Japan, it was the rise of the samurai to prominence.
Yangban and Gisaeng (Kisaeng)

Did Korea imitate China?

- 1392-1910--over five centuries in which the king, or a close relative, actually ran the government.

- Was it a faithful tributary partner?

- Did it imitate the civil service exam system of China? (p. 250)

- What was the official ideology? (p. 251)

- Were there distinctive features of Korean government and society?
Four Important Early Kings

- Who was Yi Seonggye and how did he become King Taejo? (p. 248)

- How did his son Taejong become king?

- What is King Sejong best known for? (p. 248-49)

- How did Sejo become king? What was his attitude toward Buddhism? (p. 249)
Joseon politics

- A centralized monarchy, like China. However, the king did not have as much latitude in selecting officials as the emperor of China had. That’s because of

  - 1) the lineage requirements for office holders

  - 2) factionalism, which narrowed the range of yangban who could be appointed to important posts

  - 3) Who was Jo Gwangjo? (p. 251)

  - 4) Were Korean kings all powerful? What happened to Yeonsan’gun? (p. 250)
The Palaces of Korea

- http://education.asianart.org/explore-resources/video/royal-palaces-seoul
Everyday life in Joseon

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDxS3bvFTBc
The economy (p. 257)

- Was there much commercial activity in Korea in early Chosŏn?

- minimal trade with other countries, and little use of currency within Korea itself.

- periodic markets, served by peddlers (no major transportation networks of the sort seen in China and Japan.)

- Yangban could not engage in commerce, and merchants could not become yangban

- Limited commercial exchanges with China, Japan, and the Ryūkyūs.
The Korean alphabet (p. 248)

• King Sejong has his scholar-officials invent Han’gŭl to supplement, not replace, Literary Chinese.

• It is a true phonetic script, and is an alphabet, not a syllabary.

• 한글 조선 양반 서울

• 도날드 베이커
Foreign relations

• A faithful tributary partner of China, even after the Manchu replaced the Ming (even though Koreans considered the Manchu to be barbarians). Koreans continued to respect the Ming even after the Ming fell.

• Wary of Japan, because of pirates. Japan invaded in the 1590s.

• The Hideyoshi invasions of Korea in the 1590s triggered Ming intervention on Korea’s behalf because of the tributary ties between Korea and the Ming. The Ming army on land joined forces with the Korean navy at sea under the command of Yi Sunsin (p. 254) to halt the Japanese advance.

• How did Yi Sunsin defeat the Japanese navy? (p. 254)
Religion in Joseon

• shamanism and animism--the indigenous religion of Korea. Quite different from Shinto--some Korean shamans are possessed by spirits of ancestors and great men from the past. Most shamans are women.

• Buddhism --Mahayana Buddhism, just as in China. However, Buddhism was pushed out of the capital into the countryside.

• Neo-Confucianism: provided metaphysical support for Confucian ethics. Adopted from China.

• What was the Korean attitude toward Wang Yangming? (p. 251)
Toegye and Yulgok

• Toegye (Yi Hwang) and Yulgok (Yi I) are two of the greatest philosophers in all Korean history.

• They disagreed over the role of li and Qi (ki), especially in regard to the cultivation of a moral character.

• Toegye believed that the material world was morally dangerous, so we should focus on li in order to avoid being led astray by ki.

• Yulgok believed that you are only moral if you act morally, and you have to act in the world of ki, therefore you should try to act appropriately within ki, not avoid it.
Toegye’s Academy