Lecture 6
Late Joseon and 19th Century

The Silhak scholars (實學 실학 "Practical Learning")

- 'Silhak' is a modern designation and may not necessarily be useful as it is so broad.
- Emerged in the 18th century as a reaction to factionalism actively criticizing the dogmatism of Neo-Confucian metaphysics.
- Silhak scholars concerned themselves with practical matters and empirical investigation but had little political influence so their ideas were rarely put into practice.
- Their spiritual ancestor is Yulgok Yi I (1536-84) who emphasized the importance of 'material force' (氣 gi) and took interest in practical affairs.
- They still regarded themselves as orthodox Confucians but took a critical view of their contemporary society - they wanted to reform society but did not want revolution.
- Many of the Silhak scholars knew one another, or at least read one another's works, but they were not in any sense a political faction.

The two best known Silhak scholars today are:

Seongho Yi Ik (星湖 李瀷 성호 이익 1681-1763)

"Widely versed in many areas of learning, from the physical sciences such as astronomy and geography to legal matters, Yi Ik was very concerned about the reform of agriculture and rural life. He advocated among other matters the abolition of slavery, the citizen's identification tag (號牌 ho'pae), the gwageo civil-service examination, and all practices which led to the creation of class barriers. He strongly advocated scientific research and study as a means of improving the rural economy. Yi Ik also urged the abolition of money and of the practice of money-lending, which he felt led to usury, and which in turn created misery in the lives of the people. Like his predecessors, Yi Ik did not envisage the development of a commercial economy, but instead abhorred the possibility of its emergence. All of the scholars of the Silhak-pa who followed these lines of thought envisaged the continuation of an essentially agrarian economy."

(Dasan Jeong Yak-yong (多山 丁若鏞 다산 정약용 1762-1836)

- Was sent into political exile for 17 years, 1801-18.
- Wrote on nearly every topic from new agricultural inventions to history and philosophy.
- Dasan is particularly popular in South Korea today.

The Northern Learning scholars (北學派 복학파 Bukhak-pa)

- Are treated as a subgroup of the Silhak scholars.
- "Northern" refers to China, and they all travelled to Beijing, usually accompanying official envoys.
- Hong Dae-yong (洪大容 홍대용 1731-83) in particular actually learnt colloquial Chinese in order to be able to speak directly with contemporary Chinese scholars. Normally Joseon scholar-officials could only communicate with the Chinese through writing in literary Chinese.
- Several were secondary sons.

They were all well educated and talented at writing literary Chinese.
They were an absolute minority – essentially a group of friends – with little to no political influence.
One of the best known Northern learning scholar is Bak Jiwon (朴趾源 작지원 1737-1805) who wrote a famous account of his travels through Manchuria, the Yeolha-ilgi (熱河日記 열하일기 The Jehol Diary).
Bak Je-ga (朴齊家 박제가 1750-1815) was author of Bukhak-ui (北學議 Discussions of Northern Learning, 1778) from which the group take their name; the work describes Qing China and negatively contrasts the backward social circumstances in Joseon, advocating for the development of trade and commerce.
• Bak’s student was Chusa Kim Jonghui (see below).
• Yi Deok-mu (李德懋 이독무 1741-1793) compiled, Cheongnyeongguk-ji (蜻蛉國志 청녕국지) a detailed description of contemporary Japan based on first-hand accounts of two friends who had visited Japan on envoy missions.
• Another member was poet-historian Yu Deukgong (柳得恭 Yu Deukgong 1749-1807), author of Balhae-go (渤海考 "Study of Balhae") and Nostalgic Reflections (二十一都懷古詩 이십일도회고 시).
• Both Yi and Yu also took much interest in local Joseon customs, writing travel accounts and descriptions of daily culture.

Later Joseon dynasty painters

Chusa Kim Jeonghui (秋史 金正嬉 추사 김정희 1786-1856)
• Renowned both for his expressionist abstract painting as well as calligraphy.
• Born into a high yangban family, in 1810 he visited China with his father where his talents were recognized and he befriended Chinese scholars with whom he maintained contact and shared an interest in Buddhism.
• Was a student of Bak Je-ga, and is regarded as a Northern Learning scholar.
• In 1840, his father was executed and Chusa was exiled to Jeju-do island for 8 years. In 1851 he was exiled for another year to the far northeastern province of Hamgyeong-do.
• Maintained interest in Buddhism and appreciation of tea.
• His two most representative paintings are Sehan-do (歲寒圖 세한도 "winter scene") and Bujangnan-do (不作蘭圖 불작란도 "not depicted orchid" also called 不二禪蘭圖 불이선란도 "non-dualistic orchid").
• His style of calligraphy is named as Chusa-chae (추사체 "Chusa style").
• Conducted extensive research on inscriptions.

Owon Jang Seung-eop (吾園 張承業 오원 장승엽 1843-97)
http://blog.daum.net/dream6838/11353
• A renowned late Joseon dynasty painter.
• Was given an official position at court.
• His life is dramatized in Im Kwon-taek’s film Chihwaseon (취화선 chwi-hwa-seon 2002).

2) http://koreanology.wordpress.com/2012/09/10/biographical-notes-on-yu-deuk-gong-%E6%9F%B3%E5%9B%9E%E9%9E%A2%E6%81%AD-1748-1807/
19th Century

1800-64 Dominance of Royal In-laws

- The three sovereigns during this period were all boy kings and so the throne came to be controlled by the powerful clans of queens to whom they were married.
- This is termed 'influence politics' (勢道政治 세도정치)

  King Sunjo (純祖 순조 b.1790 r.1800-34)
  - Became king aged 10 and was married into the Andong Kim clan (安東金氏 안동김씨).
  - His grandmother ruled as Queen Regent.

  King Heonjong (憲宗 현종 b.1827 r.1834-49)
  - Grandson of Sunjo.
  - Became king aged 7 and was married into the Pungyang Jo clan (豐壤趙氏 풍양 조씨).

  King Cheoljong (哲宗 철종 b.1831 r.1849-63)
  - A distant relative of Ling Yeongjo, he was adopted into the family line but came from a background of poverty and was illiterate.
  - Became king aged 19 but government was controlled by the Andong Kims.

- This period is usually described as witnessing widespread corruption of governance at all levels, with official positions and yangban status being bought and sold - all exasperating the exploitation of farmers who suffered multiple taxes.
- This led to regular popular rebellions (see below).

However, for an alternative take:

"Yet this {negative} portrayal of sedo {in-law} politics relies on the perceived illegitimacy of female rule, which scholar-officials defined as illegitimate because it sidelined them. Rather than remain isolated in the capital, the government under the queen clan was actively engaged in the countryside, identifying and addressing the immediate reasons for peasant rebellion. In the aftermath of the 1809 drought and famine in Jeolla Province, the central and local governments established an elaborate system to alleviate hardship by providing rations and massive tax relief to the hardest-hit populations, drawing local contributions from wealthier commoners or yangban. Following an investigation of the 1812 Hong Gyeongnae rebellion, the government ascertained that local corruption, excessive taxation, and poverty had stimulated the uprising; hence, Seoul took steps to alleviate peasant suffering by providing relief grain, reducing other taxes, and attempting to satisfy disgruntled scholars in the region by holding a special provincial examination as a means of access to office. Similarly, following the large-scale 1862 uprising in Jinju, Gyeongsang Province, the government responded by relieving the magistrate and other local officials who were resented by rural elites, dispatching a mediator to punish rebels, and attempting to devise a more acceptable tax plan." (Kallander 2013:37)3)

Catholicism

- Referred to in Korean as Cheonju-gyo (천주교, "teaching of the lord of heaven")
- The first Korean converts to Catholicism were prisoners captured by the Japanese in 1596 and taken back to Nagasaki but they did not have any influence on the peninsula.
- A 1686 edict to arrest foreigners illegally in the country may well have been targeting early missionaries entering from China (but it is not known for sure).
- The first sustained interest in Catholicism came from practical learning scholars associated with Seongho Yi Ik (星湖 李冕 1681-1763).

1784 Yi Seunghun (李承薰 이승훈 1754-1801) returned from Beijing as the first baptized Korean.
1791 Two cousins were arrested and executed for not performing Confucian ancestral rites and burning their family’s ancestral tablets.
1795 A Chinese Catholic priest smuggled himself into Korea.
- By 1800 it is claimed there were some 10,000 Catholic converts.

Persecutions:
1801 Korean Catholic Hwang Sayeong (황사영 黃嗣永 1775-1801) was caught trying to carry a letter to the French bishop in Beijing asking for Western navy and soldiers to be sent to Korea to protect Korean Catholics. This led to the first large persecution of Christians known as the Sinyu persecution (辛酉迫害 신유박해) in which around 300 were executed.

Subsequent persecutions occurred in 1815, 1827, 1839 (己亥 丙寅 기해 - during which three French missionaries and around 140 converts were killed), 1846, and culminated in the five year persecution of 1866-71 (己亥 丙寅 병인박해 Byeong’in-bakhae) during which 9 French and around 8,000 Koreans were executed.

The Daewongun, King/Emperor Gojong and Queen Min

Heungseon Daewongun regency (r.1863-1874)
- Gojong (高宗 고종 1852-1919) was adopted into the royal line and made king in 1863 at the age of 12.
- As a result, his father, Yi Ha-eung (李昰應 이하응 1820-98), became regent ruling on behalf of his son and took the title Heungseon Daewongun (興宣大院君 홍선대원군).

- The Daewongun attempted internal reforms whilst strictly maintaining Joseon’s closed status as a nation, being unwilling to deal with Western barbarians.
  - In 1871 he closed some 650 Confucian sowon (書院) academies, leaving just 47 in operation.
    - The sowon had been the regional power bases of the political factions.
    - Introduced taxation for the yangban.

- He also spent a lot of money on the reconstruction of Gyeongbok-gung palace (景福宮 경복궁) which had been in ruins since the Hideyoshi invasions.
Daewongun was a fan and sponsor of pansori!

He hated his son’s wife Queen Min and regarded her pro-Chinese Min clan as a threat.

In 1882 he attempted a palace coup d’état, but Queen Min escaped and he was arrested by Chinese troops and taken back to Beijing where he stayed until 1885.

The Japanese briefly reinstated the Daewongun to support the Gab’o Reforms of 1894 (see below), but he was only interested in revenge against the Min clan and so they removed him from power.

**King Gojong** (고종 1852-1919; total reign 1863-1907)

- Joseon’s last active monarch.
- Regarded as a weak king, but actually tried quite hard to pass reforms in a very difficult and dangerous situation with every move strongly opposed by the Confucian officials headed by his father.
- He was caught in the middle of a power struggle between the Daewongun and Queen Min; and between the Russians, Chinese and Japanese.

**Queen Min** (민씨 1851-1895)

- Also referred to as Empress Myeongseong (명성왕후) although she died before the declaration of the Daehan empire.
- Became Gojong’s queen in 1866.
- Came from a powerful, pro-Chinese clan and generally worked for their interests against her rival the Daewongun.
- Said by those who met her – including accounts by Western women – to be incredibly able and intelligent.
- Her strong will represented a threat to Japanese ambitions (to control Gojong) and so she was ultimately murdered by them.

- Queen Min’s nephew was Min Yeong-ik (閔泳翊 1860-1914), who was one of the first Koreans to visit the United States in 1883, and who strove for modernizing reforms.

**Japan**

1869 An envoy to Korea from Tsushima island was turned away by Busan officials for using the term "emperor" for the Japanese monarch. Japanese considered invading Korea.

1873 Another Japanese envoy was turned away again for wearing Western suits.

In the same year the Japanese held a debate over whether to invade Korea (征韓論 정한론 Jap. seikanron "[shall we] invade Korea debate").

1875 Japan dispatched an envoy to ask for negotiations on a treaty of friendship (通交交涉 통교 교섭 tonggyo-gyoseop) but were refused. Consequently Japan dispatched a warship, the Unyō-ho (雲揚號 운요호), to conduct a survey of Korean waters near Busan during which it also held live firing exercises.

**Unyō-ho Incident** (雲揚號事件 운요호사건)

Subsequently, in September, the ship was sent to Ganghwa-do island, provoking Korean guards to fire at it (as there had previously been incidents with the French
and Americans). The Unyō-ho returned fire and then Japanese troops landed on the island and further engaged with the Koreans before withdrawing.

1876 **Ganghwa Treaty** (江華島條約 강화도조약)

Feb Japan sent two warships and three other ships carrying around 4,000 soldiers, 400 of which landed on Ganghwa-do demanding apology for the Unyō-ho Incident and a treaty of friendship.
- This time the Korean court capitulated and thereupon the 12 Article Ganghwa Treaty was signed.
- This was Korea’s first unequal treaty signed with a foreign power.
  Terms included:
  - Defining Korea as an independent country equal to Japan - this was in order to remove it from Chinese suzerainty.
  - Within 20 months Korea was to open Busan and two other ports of Japan’s deciding to international trade: this led to Wonsan (east coast of modern North Korea) and Incheon (directly west of Seoul, adjacent to Ganghwa-do) being chosen.
  - The open ports were treated as concessions (租界 조계) where Japanese were free from Korean law, enacting the principle of extraterritoriality (治外法權 치외법권).

1884 Failed coup d’état (甲申政변 갑신정변 "Gapsin coup")
- In December of 1884, Korean progressives of the Enlightenment Party (開化당 개화당), who were against the pro-Chinese (Queen) Min clan, attempted to take control of government with the strong tacit support of Japanese ambassador Takezoe Shinichirō.
- The leaders of the coup were **Kim Okgyun** (1851-94), **Seo Jaepil** (Philip Jaisohn 1864-1951), Bak Yeonghyo (future member of Yi Wanyong’s 1910 cabinet, 1861-1939) and Seo Gwangbeom (1859-97).

The decision was taken in the first days of October. It was an urgent decision: the reformers felt personally threatened by the Min and hoped that the Sino-French conflict over Annam [Vietnam] might divert Chinese attention from Korea and give them an opportunity for unimpeded action in Seoul. (Deuchler 1977:206)

- Dec 4 - During a dinner celebrating the opening of the new Post Office, the conspirators started a fire in nearby buildings. In the confusion, Min Yeong-ik (Kim Okgyun’s rival, 1860-1914), head of the Min clan and Queen Min’s nephew, was stabbed and wounded. At least seven other Korean officials were murdered at different locations during the same night.
- Kim Okgyun, Bak Yeonghyo and Seo Gwangbeom then spread a rumour that Chinese soldiers were rebelling and rushed to Changdeok-gung palace to inform King Gojong and Queen Min, and persuade them to move to the smaller Gyeong’u-gung palace for safety. Bak then carried a note supposedly written by Gojong to the Japanese legation asking Takezoe for help. Takezoe sent 200 hundred Japanese guards to Gyeong’u-gung.
- The following day King Gojong was forced to announce a new, reform orientated government. Korean reformers issued a 14 point social reform program as well as demanded the return of

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the Daewongun from Beijing.

- The day after, however, around 1,500 Chinese troops intervened led by general Yuan Shikai (袁世凱, 원세개 1859-1916), restoring Gojong to Changdeok-gung palace.

- Koreans on the streets then rioted attacking Japanese and burning down the Japanese legation.
- Kim Okgyun, escaped to Japan. Other conspirators who stayed with Gojong were executed.

- Korea demanded an apology from Japan and extradition of Kim Okgyun, but Japan refused and instead made its own demands for indemnity of property loss, and sent more troops itself.
- Kim Okgyun was later assassinated, in 1894, in Shanghai: his remains were taken back to Korea, chopped up and put on public display.

Deuchler in *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys* p211

The coup d’etat of 1884 was a failure. The reform government lasted only two days. Its impact on the domestic scene was slight: its international repercussions were disastrous. The basic cause of the events of 1884 was a clash between the Min and the enlightenment party over the principles and priorities of Korea’s modernization program. The reformers failed to seize power for at least two reasons: they were outside the decision-making level of government politics and could not reach the apex of power by traditional means, and they were unable to raise enough money to finance their modernization projects. The reformers had contact with the king, who was sympathetic with their cause, but as a part of the traditional political establishment dominated by the Min, he could not help them. (Deuchler 1977:211)

**Western Incursions**

- In 1832 and 1845 the British East India Company tried sending ships to Korea but they were turned away on the grounds that it contravened Korean law to engage in foreign commerce.
  - Chinese imperial commissioner in Hong Kong explained to the British that Korea cannot be opened to trade by China, as it is not a part of China but nor can Korea open itself to trade, since it is not independent!5)

**Byeong’in-yangyo (丙寅洋擾 병인양요 "Western strife of the Byeong’in year")**

- In 1866 the French sent a small military expedition which occupied Ganchhwa-do island demanding the return of two French missionaries who in fact had already escaped back to China.
- The Korean government sent around 20,000 men and the French withdrew after six weeks.

**General Sherman incident**

- In the same year, an American ship, the General Sherman, ignored warnings and sailed up the Dae-dong-gang river to P'yongyang where it was destroyed by local forces with almost everyone on board killed.
- As a result of the French and American incursions Korea sent a message to Japan warning them of the Western threat!
- Korea also developed a false sense of strength against the barbarian West, believing these small skirmishes represented significant victories.

5) Korea’s Place in the Sun p88
Ernst Oppert

- In 1868, German Ernst Oppert (1832-1902) who had already been refused the right to trade with Korea, attempted to dig up the bones of the Daewongun’s father, King Gojong’s grandfather, to use as ransom.
  - He failed, but this of course only reinforced the Koreans’ view of Westerners as barbarians.

American military expedition (辛未洋擾 신미양요)

- In June 1871 the American Asiatic Squadron sent a flotilla of ships including two warships, four steamers and twenty boats carrying a landing force of around 650 men, 105 of whom were marines.6)
- The Americans were ostensibly demanding an apology for the General Sherman Incident and the opening of trade.
- They attacked and captured Ganghwa-do island. Koreans fought to the last man, led by General Eo Jaeyeon (魚在淵 어재연 1823-71).
- Following fruitless negotiations the Americans withdrew.

On 20 May 1882 America became the first Western nation to conclude a treaty with Joseon, negotiated between Chinese diplomat Li Hongzhang (李鴻章 리홍장 1823-1901) and Commodore Shufeldt in Tianjin (China).

- The process included the design and introduction of a new national flag, the Taegukgi (太極旗 태극기 "flag of the great absolute [aka yin-yang sign]"), still used today as the flag of South Korea.
- Treaties with subsequently made with Britain, Ireland and Germany in 1883, with Russia in 1884 and France in 1886.
  - These unequal treaties were concluded with other countries in order to balance the growing influence of Russia and Japan. They granted extraterritorial rights, consular representation and port concessions.

“Concerned that Japan’s actions loosened the grip of Chinese political influence, the Qing government persuaded Korea to negotiate treaties with Western countries in the hope that these countries’ influence would counterbalance the expansion of Japanese power on the peninsula...”

After 1885, the practice of Western religion was no longer punishable, and when local officials in the countryside continued to enforce the anti-Catholic edict, the central government repealed the judgments. Another treaty concession in 1886 allowed foreign missionaries freedom of worship throughout Korea, and in 1887 the anti-Catholic ban was lifted under French pressure. Both measures contributed to the weakening of state control over religious expression. Western missionaries, many of whom were America Protestants who practiced in the capital and the treaty ports, began entering the country after 1882. By 1890, the French had built Korea’s first Cathedral in Seoul over the protests of the sadaebu {yangban officials}, the ruling elite of Seoul.” (Kallander 2013:92)

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6) Korea’s Place in the Sun p97:
http://cafe.naver.com/piru0114.cafe?iframe_url=/ArticleRead.nhn%3FArticleid=1011
Peasant uprisings (民亂 민란)

- Were often led by fallen yangban: those who were educated but no longer had any official position and were forced to live in poverty.

- One of the largest early rebellions was the 1811 Hong Gyeongnae rebellion (洪景來亂 홍경래란) in North Pyeong'an province, led by disgruntled yangban Hong Gyeongnae (1771-1812).
  - The counties involved were mostly on the trade route with China.
  - The uprising only targeted local magistrates and only the magistrate in the first village was killed.
  - The intent was to gain control of the administration rather than punish the magistrates: there was little fighting as often local clerks had expelled the magistrates before the rebels arrival.
  - It was unable to expand south as it met with stronger government resistance.

Wandering poet "Rainhat" Kim 김삿갓

- The vagabond poet Kim Byeong-yeon (金炳淵 1807-63), known as "Rainhat Kim" (김삿갓 Kim Satgat) was the grandson of a local official (Kim Iksun).
- During the Hong Gyeongnae rebellion, Kim Iksun was captured by the rebels but released. Later he bought the decapitated head of one of the rebel leaders and then claimed this as his own achievement. After the facts became known, he was executed and this family had to leave the region.
- Kim Byeongnyeon was raised without knowledge of who his grandfather had been: at age 20 when taking the civil service examination he was asked to write a poem criticizing Kim Iksun.
- Upon learning the truth from his mother, he consequently gave up his yangban ambitions and spent his life as a wandering poet: much of his Chinese poetry survives and it is filled with satire of the elite, and social criticism.

1862 witnessed a widespread uprising across the three southern provinces of Chungcheong, Jeolla and Gyeongsang, including Jeju-do island, known as the Jinju uprising.

- The violence was directed both against clerks and magistrates (only 15 clerks actually killed).
- Both landowners and peasants participated together as taxes were levied on villages as a whole rather than individuals.
- The revolts tended to only last a few days in each area before calming down.

Popular uprisings culminated with the Donghak uprising of 1894-5 (see below).

Donghak (東學 동학 "Eastern Learning")

- The name was in opposition to Catholicism which was referred to as seohak "Western learning" (西學 서학).
- Although the movement was ostensibly anti-foreign, it in fact mixed elements from various traditions (Buddhism, Daoism, shamanism, Confucianism) including Christianity.
- Donghak was founded by Choe Je-u (崔濟愚 최제우 1824-64), a yangban who had failed the civil service examination: he had a vision in which he received a magic, 21 character cryptic message written on a slip of paper with which he claimed diseases could be cured.
- Choe Je-u was executed for spreading heretical ideas, but his religious cult continued to
grow based on the writings he left.

- These writings included both texts in Chinese aimed at the *yangban* class, and songs written in vernacular Korean.
- They were compiled by Je-u’s successor, Choe Sihyeong (崔時亨 1827-1898) who was later also executed.

“Tonghak developed and evolved in the climate of heavy state emphasis on orthodoxy, heightened in response to campaigns of religious suppression in China and to Catholic and foreign threats against Korean sovereignty. Elites, particularly in the capital, identified with a Neo-Confucianism centered on the Sinic world, but this doctrine no longer resonated with the realities of rural life. Despite official insistence upon Neo-Confucian monopoly and strong elite Confucian stances, some *yangban* and rural elites identified with alternative doctrines, such as Buddhism and Catholicism, as other groups found consolation in shamanism and folk beliefs or empowerment in Catholic or Tonghak promises of salvation. Without clear boundaries, people combined and borrowed practices, creating a climate of religious pluralism. Choe Cheu similarly brought together home instruction, Neo-Confucian ethics, Daoist elixirs, Buddhist practices, and Christian monotheism to create a new rural doctrine dedicated to family values, healing, and the revival of social cohesion. Within a year, this amalgam had attracted a small but dedicated number of close followers who were drawn to his teaching for various reasons.” (Kallander 2013:149)

- In 1905, Donghak was renamed as Cheondo-gyo (천도교 “teaching of the way of heaven”)
  - In 1907 both Choe Cheu and Choe Sihyeong were posthumously pardoned by Emperor Gojong.

“The royal proclamation served as a critical source of legitimacy for the newly emerging religious communities based on Tonghak. One of Gojong’s last acts before abdication, it facilitated the rise of various Tonghak reinterpretations over the subsequent years as the state faced tightening Japanese imperialism.” (Kallander 2013:147)

- In the 20th century Cheondo-gyo maintained a patriotic Korean character resisting the Japanese occupation.
- It would later be "recognized" as one of the few political parties in North Korea briefly before the Korean War (1950-53). It survives in South Korea but with dwindling numbers.

1876-77 Drought causing poor harvests.
1888-89 Drought causing poor harvests.
1892 Donghak demonstrations become frequent.
1893 Four Donghak leaders come to Seoul and knelt for three days outside the palace gate in order to petition King Gojong who eventually sent a remonstrative message telling them to go home, which they did.

“In the 1890s, the government was losing its ability to control public perceptions of religious heterodoxy as growing numbers of people experimented with religious practices. Tonghak benefitted from this relative laxity, as did Korean Christians... With growing numbers of foreign missionaries and Korean Catholics in the 1880s, all of whom were ostensibly protected by Western powers, the government could not control the expansion of...”
a segment of society that many conservatives still regarded as illegal. Later Tonghak leaders may have been competing with the Catholics and (Protestant) Christians for followers, especially after 1885, when the number of foreign missionaries in Korea increased, though Tonghak appeared more concerned with consolidating its community at this point.” (Kallander 2013:111)

Donghak Rebellion (甲午農民戰爭 갑오농민전쟁) 1894-95

- Causes included the growing discontent of educated class below ‘landed elite’ not being able to find jobs.
- Donghak provided religious fervor and organization to the rebellion.
- Japanese merchants entering the south added to the usual farmers’ grievances of tax and exploitation.
- Rice exports to Japan led to an increase in the local price of rice.
- The rebellion ultimately led to the Sino-Japanese War.

The Donghak uprising was touched off at the beginning of 1894, by the corrupt behaviour (over taxation, blackmail) of a new district magistrate in Gobu (close to modern Jeong’eup city) Jeolla-do province (southwest Korea).

- Peasants there were led by a village teacher Jeon Bongjun (全琫準 1854-95) who was nicknamed “General Mung Bean” (緑豆將軍 녹두장군) due to his short stature.

- Peasants demanded fairer taxation and an end to rice exports to Japan. At first the authorities agreed whereupon the rebels became emboldened and issued 12 demands calling for complete social reform and emancipation. Gojong then sent 800 soldiers from the capital but half of them deserted.

May  Donghak rebels occupied the regional capital of Jeonju. At King Gojong’s request Chinese general Li Hongzhang dispatched a Chinese flotilla to Incheon and, in accordance with their treaty, informed the Japanese who sent warships of their own.

June  Both China and Japan continued sending troops. Gojong asked for them to leave and China proposed a mutual withdrawal.

July 23  Japanese occupied the royal palace and forced King Gojong to restore the Daewongun, to power who, despite being anti-Japanese, probably only agreed because of his rivalry with Queen Min. Pro-Chinese Queen Min was "expelled" and Chinese advisor/general Yuan Shikai (袁世凱) was forced to escape in disguise.

July 25  Japan attacked and sank Chinese ships off the west coast of Korea igniting the Sino-Japanese War (1 August 1894 – 17 April 1895).

- Fighting occurred around the Liaodong peninsula and northern Korea.
- Japan emerged the victor, ending Chinese influence in Korean affairs and enabling the Gab’o Reforms.

1894-5 Gab’o Reforms (甲午改革 가보개혁)

- The reforms were signed under Japanese duress following defeat of China.
- The reforms consisted of 208 separate laws signed by King Gojong.
Including:

- Abandonment of the Chinese calendar: replaced by a Korea calendar starting from the first year of the Joseon dynasty, 1392.
- Abolishing the yangban, slave and "lowborn" classes.
- Abolishing the practice of punishing the families of criminals.
- Abolishing child betrothal for marriage (making the minimum age for women 15 and men 20).
- Widows were free to remarry.
- Reform of the civil service examination, such that it would no longer only test ability in Classical Chinese.
- Encouraged retired officials to engage in business.
- Tax and monetary reform.

Japanese ascendancy

Inoue Kaoru replaced Otori Keisuke as Japanese minister in Korea. Inoue sent the Daewongun into retirement for the last time and brought back two participants of the 1884 Gapsin coup, Bak Yeong-hyo and Seo Gwangbeom from Japan and had them installed in high positions.

Quote from Isabella Bishop’s *Korea and Her Neighbours* (1897)

“So the "old order" was daily changing under the pressure of the Japanese advisers, and on the whole changing most decidedly for the better, though, owing to the number of reforms decreed and in contemplation, everything was in a tentative and chaotic state. Korea was "swithering" between China and Japan, afraid to go in heartily for the reforms initiated by Japan lest China should regain position and be "down" upon her, and afraid to oppose them actively lest Japan should be permanently successful." (p265)

Gojong’s 14 Article Oath (洪範十四條 舆犯십사조)

- Taken by the king at the Alter of Heaven (maybe referring to the Jongmyo 宗廟 종묘 royal shrine) and recorded by Isabella Bird Bishop in *Korea and Her Neighbours*.
- Considered Korea’s first modern constitution.
  - Included:
    - Re-emphasizing Korea’s independence from China.
    - Forbidding the participation of royal in-laws or relatives in state affairs.
    - Eradicating corruption from the palace and government.
    - Removing discrimination against class backgrounds.

Treaty of Shimonoseki (下關條約 하관조약)

- Signed 18 April 1895, ending the Sino-Japanese War with Japan the victor.
- Article 1 had *China recognize the full "independence" of Joseon* and the end of its former suzerain relationship.
Murder of Queen Min

- On 8 October 1895, Gojong’s wife, Queen Min together with her ladies-in-waiting were murdered in the palace by Japanese (and possibly Korean) assassins.
- The incident was witnessed by American and Russian advisors and an account appears also in Isabella Bird Bishop’s *Korea and Her Neighbours*.

Topknot decree (斷髮令 단발령 "cutting hair command")

Dec 30 A new decree was forced through by reformers for all Korean men to cut their topknots (sangtu 상투), caused mass outcry and the country’s administration to grind to a halt as people became afraid to travel to the capital where their topknot would be cut and afraid to travel back home if it already had been.

from Isabella Bishop’s *Korea and Her Neighbours* p364

“The rural districts were convulsed. Officials even of the highest rank found themselves on the horns of a dilemma. If they cut their hair, they were driven from their lucrative posts by an infuriated populace, and in several instances lost their lives, while if they retained the Top Knot they were dismissed by the Cabinet. In one province, on the arrival from Seoul of a newly-appointed mandarin with cropped hair, he was met by a great concourse of people ready for the worst, who informed him that they had hitherto been ruled by a Korean man, and would not endure a "Monk Magistrate," on which he prudently retired to the capital.”

Gojong’s flight to the Russian legation

- On 11 February, 1896, around 120 Russian sailors entered the palace and helped King Gojong to escape with his son dressed as women and secretly carried out in women’s sedan chairs.
- Gojong was escorted to the Russian legation where he would remain for a full year, this period is known as *A’gwan-pacheon* (俄館播遷 "refuge [in the] Russian legation").
- Japan did not yet dare to challenge Russia militarily so Gojong was safe.
- Gojong maintained possession of the royal seals and so could still wield authority; early on he fired his pro-Japanese cabinet.
- It was during his time at the Russian legation that Gojong supposedly became the first Korean to taste coffee and took a great liking to it.

The Independence Club (獨立協會 독립협회 Dongnip-hyeop’hoe)

- Was formed in 1896 by patriotic Korean progressives who wanted genuine independence.
- Members included Seo Jaelpil (involved in the 1884 coup and had subsequently fled to US), Yun Chiho (studied in Japan, Shanghai and America, founded YMCA, and became a future Japanese collaborator 1865-1945), Yi Wan-yong (future national traitor!! 1858-1926) and Yi Seungman (Syngman Rhee 1875-1965 - later studied in US and then became the first president of South Korea).

Progressive activities of the Independence Club:

Erected the Independence Gate (獨立門 독립문 Dongnip-mun, 1897) originally on the site of an old gate, Yeong’eun-mun (迎恩門 영은문) used to welcome Chinese envoys and
symbolizing Joseon’s suzerainty, but now standing in Seodaemun park. Ironically the sign on the gate was written by Yi Wan-yong.

Published the Dongnip-sinmun "Independent newspaper" (독립신문).
- Established by Seo Jaepil.
- The first newspaper to be written purely in hangul script without any Chinese characters; contributed to the development of hangul orthography; introduced the innovation of writing words with spaces in between.
- Included an English language section.
- Took an anti-Russian stance, as Russia was the dominant foreign power hosting King Gojong.
- Continued until 1899 when it was closed down by the government.

- Representing public opinion, the Independence Club lobbied for King Gojong to leave the Russian legation, which he finally did in February 1897.

The Korean Empire (大韓帝國 대한제국 Daehan-jeguk) 1897-1910
- In October, the same year 1897, King Gojong declared Joseon an empire and himself emperor.
- This status would last until the Japanese annexation of 1910.
- The Independence Club was increasingly regarded as a threat to Gojong’s power and foreign influence, such that it was forcibly disbanded in 1898.