In Asia, remains of Homo erectus have been found on some areas, however, none have been found in Korea. Since 1933, some 70 Paleolithic sites have been found throughout the Korean peninsula. Early Paleolithic stone implements such as hand axes, sharp-pointed choppers, single-edged choppers, double-edged choppers, and scrapers have been found in Korea.

The last ice ended about 10,000 years ago. Thereafter, the climate warmed to temperatures similar to those we enjoy today. This new period has been referred to as the Neolithic era. Neolithic culture is believed to have begun somewhere around 6,000 BC in Korea. Neolithic man produced earthenware at this time. These Neolithic people, along with those who built the Bronze Age culture that followed, constitute the ancestors of modern-day Koreans.

The steady advent of improved tools and utensils meant that many changes occurred during the Neolithic era in terms of the people's shelter, clothing, and food. People in this time began to cultivate crops such as millet. With the development of agriculture, people began to lead sedentary lives, building houses and living together in groups. The houses of the Neolithic people were created by digging a hole in the ground and building a round or square shaped house that featured a grass-covered roof.

Human history underwent a major change towards the end of the Neolithic period with the invention of bronze, which enabled the creation of weapons and instruments that were incomparably more powerful than those made of stone. In Korea, bronze period began 10th century BC.

With the growth of agriculture, people began to gather in wide plains near rivers and live as tribal units on hillsides.
end, this denouement allowed Old Joseon to move beyond a confederated state and become a more powerful kingdom. Its territory also expanded to the northern part of the Korean peninsula, and to the Liaoxi and Liaodong regions.

The fact that Old Joseon’s society was male-dominated and featured a strong awareness of family values is evidenced by a look at the words to the song called *Gonghuin* about a woman named Yeook who threw herself into a river after her husband, a fisherman, drowned. While this song can be interpreted as showing a wife’s love for her husband, it also hints at the presence of a strict patriarchal system under which a wife was expected to die following her husband’s demise.

Old Joseon was a society which valued human life and private property, supported the *nobi* system, and recognized the right of paterfamilias. In other words, Old Joseon’s society was one in which a male-centered family and private property systems had already been established, and a clear distinction existed between the nobility and the *nobi*.

On the other hand, noblemen entered the bureaucracy and had various official titles. Under the king, one found the chief minister (*sang*), high ministers (*gyeong*), high ranking officials (*daebu*), ministers (*daesin*), generals (*janggun*), and masters (*baksa*).

Buyeo, which was established in the wide plains situated in the upper stream area of the Songhua River, constitutes the second oldest Korean state after Old Joseon. It would appear that while Buyeo was originally established in the Liaoxi region, it subsequently was relocated to Fuyo Prefecture (present-day Nongan Prefecture in Changchun) in Jilin Province along the upper reaches of the Songhua River, where it became known as East Buyeo. Buyeo existed for some 1,000 years before it was fully absorbed by Goguryeo in 494.

While Buyeo ruled over Manchuria, Okjeo and Dongye ruled over the territory that lay east of the great mountain ranges of Baekdu, which cover modern-day South Hamgyeong and Gangwon Provinces, respectively. Okjeo boasted some 5,000 households whereas Dongye was said to consist of as many as 20,000 households. Jin founded sometime around the 4th century BC. Three Hans (*Samhan*) existed in the southern part of Korea.

**Part II. The Three Kingdoms and the Southern and Northern States**

**Chapter 1. The Establishment and Development of the Three Kingdoms**
While Goguryeo started as a wall-town state around 2000 BC, it eventually developed into a confederated state after having fallen under the effective control of the horse-riding Jumong tribe from Eastern Buyeo in 37 BC. Thereafter, it became more centralized with politics being controlled mostly by the Gyerubu, which along with the Sonobu, Jeolnobu, Sunnobu, and Gwannobu constituted the five tribes that made up Goguryeo.

King Gwanggaeto (r. 391–413), who ascended the throne at the young age of 18, rapidly embarked on a wide-ranging campaign to conquer neighboring areas. The great deeds accomplished by this monarch are vividly detailed in the Stele of King Gwanggaeto's Mausoleum which stands in the area where the capital of Goguryeo, Gungnaeseong, was once located.

Baekje has its own founding myth. According to <Samguk sagi>, two of Jumong's sons, Biryu and Onjo travelled south to the land of Mahan with 10 of their followers in 18 BC. While the older brother Biryu settled in the sea-side area of Michuhol, the younger sibling Onjo established Baekje Kingdom at Hanam Wiryeseong (modern-day Seoul) along the southern banks of the Han River.

Baekje exercised significant political and cultural influence over Japan. For instance, the famous chiljido (seven-branched sword) currently housed in the Isonokami Shrine in the city of Tenri in Nara Prefecture was originally given to the King of Wa by King Geunchogo of Baekje in 369.

Silla's founding myth, which is recorded in the <Samguk yusa>, tells the story of six tribes of Saro that existed within the Jinhan.

Silla was finally able to develop into an aristocratic state that rivaled those of Goguryeo and Baekje during the 6th century. Moreover, the introduction of the practice of using oxen to till the fields during the reign of King Jijeung (r. 500–514) made it possible for Silla to enjoy rapid improvements in agricultural productivity.

The 12 statelets that formed the Byeonhan Confederacy situated in the southern reaches of Nakdong River developed a unique Iron Age culture that over time facilitated the emergence of a strong confederated kingdom known as Gaya.

**Chapter 2. The Society and Culture of the Three Kingdoms**

During the Three Kingdoms era, the land and the people were widely
perceived as the property of the monarch. This type of philosophy, which was based on the tenet that only the ruler could possess land and people, was first introduced in the Chinese Classic *Shu Jing* (Classic of History). The reality on the ground however proved to be quite different, as the aristocrats continued to hold sway over the lands and people they had ruled over since the days of the walled-town states.

The great majority of the most powerful aristocratic clans lived in the capital of their respective dynasties. In other words, the ruling class resided in the capital area.

Silla also had a well-established system of aristocratic ranking known as *golpumje*, or bone-rank system. The highest ranking aristocratic clan was that of the Kim royal clan, which was referred to as the *seonggol*.

The Chinese character system was first introduced to Korea during the Iron Age, or more specifically, the latter period of Old Joseon. The introduction of Chinese characters exposed the three kingdoms to the advanced culture of China, a denouement which led to rapid academic and religious progress.

The introduction of writing during the Three Kingdoms era enabled the development of a documentation culture. In this regard, the most important achievements were made where the compilation of the history of the individual dynasties was concerned. More to the point, all three of the dynasties turned to the task of compiling official versions of their respective histories once stable governance structures had been put into place.

The introduction and spread of Classical Chinese enable the three kingdoms to gain access to texts pertaining to advanced schools of thought and religions such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism.

The *Hwarangdo* of Silla was based on indigenous *sinseon* beliefs that were combined with Confucian and Buddhist ethics. In this regard, prominent *hwarang* such as General Kim Yusin and his descendant Kim Am were said to have been masters in the occult art of self-transformation.

The characteristics of the architecture of the three kingdoms are evidenced by the palaces, Buddhist temples, tombs, and fortresses which were erected during this period.

**Chapter 3. Balhae and its Culture**

While the land south of the Daedong River became part of Silla after
the fall of Goguryeo in 668, the territory north of the river, including the Liaodong area, became a part of Tang's Protectorate General to Pacify the East, or Andong duhofu.

Former citizens of Goguryeo and Malgal tribes sought to establish a new kingdom in what is now eastern Manchuria. This drive eventually culminated in 698 with the establishment along Mt. Dongmu of the state of Balhae by Dae Joyeong, the son of Goguryeo refugee Geolgeol Jungsang.

While Balhae came to rule over a territory that extended 2,000 li from north to south and east to west during the reign of Dae Joyeong, it consequently extended its control over northern Manchuria during the reign of his successor King Mu (r. 719–737). The highlight during this period was a brazen naval attack on Tang forces launched in 737 in the Dengzhou area of the Shandong peninsula.

Priding itself on being the successor to the culture of Goguryeo while also importing the customs of Tang, Balhae was able to develop an ancient culture that was one level higher than that of its predecessor. The Jujagam, which taught Confucian and other Chinese classics, was established as the highest institution of learning in the land. In this regard, government officials were selected on the basis of their knowledge of Confucianism.

Balhae made great advances in the fields of astronomy, math, and medicine. In this regard, it exported many medical ingredients such as wild insam, ox bezoar, and musk to other countries.

Perhaps the best insight into the culture of Balhae is provided by the remains of its capital of Sanggyeong unearthed in modern-day Bohai Bay, Ning'an City, Heilonjiang Province, as well as some of the relics which have been discovered in the area. Modeled after the capital of Tang, Chang'an, the entire city was enclosed within an outer rectangular wall. Meanwhile, the royal palace stood in the center of the city, and was itself enclosed within an inner rectangular wall.

Another good indicator of the culture of Balhae is its tombs. The most representative of them were the tombs of Princess Jeonghye (780) discovered in 1949 and Princess Jeonghyo uncovered in the 1980s near Dunhua. Princess Jeonghye's tomb features a stone chamber whose ceiling is shaped in a manner that is akin to those found in Goguryeo tombs.

Chapter 4. The Society and Culture of Late Silla

Silla's unification of the three kingdoms ushered in some important
political, economic, social and cultural changes. In this regard, the people of Silla referred to themselves as the 'unifiers of the three kingdoms.'

The most significant change that occurred during Later Silla was the weakening of the bone-rank system and the strengthening of the centralized bureaucracy. In all likelihood, this change was the result of the massive influx of aristocrats from Goguryeo and Baekje which occurred in the aftermath of the unification of the peninsula. As Confucianism offered a political philosophy that was based on a centralized bureaucratic system of government, increased centralization naturally brought about the further spread of Confucian education.

The unification of the three kingdoms was accomplished not by the traditional seonggol leadership, but rather by rising force that was the jingol and the new Kim clan. However, the strengthening of the royal authority brought about the relative weakening of the power of the jingol. The officials who held Head-Rank Six subsequently became the main force propping up the royal authority.

Traditionally, the Silla aristocracy received numerous economic privileges from the state. First and foremost, individuals who distinguished themselves on the battlefield were granted control over certain areas denoted as stipend villages, or sigeup.

As a rule, government officials were granted the right to collect taxes on certain allotted parcels of land rather than pay. Moreover, they were also entitled to make use of the labor attached to a respective piece of land. This type of system was known as nogeup.

Peasants lived in administrative units made up of approximately 10 households called chon; meanwhile, a village head, or chonju, was appointed for every 3–4 chons.

The period immediately following unification was one marked by the advent of relative peace. In this regard, this two-hundred year lull in foreign entanglements allowed Silla to focus on the development of its agriculture and industry, which in turn ushered in an age of unparalleled prosperity characterized by onset of active commerce and international trade. The highly advanced nature of astronomy in Silla is evidenced by the stone astronomical observatory called Cheomseongdae.

Part III. Goryeo

Chapter 1. The Later Three Kingdoms and the Establishment of Goryeo
Political turmoil and instability occurred from the reign of King Hyegong (c. 765–780) onwards amidst a generalized weakening of the power of the crown and concurrent rise in the clout of the aristocracy.

By the end of the 9th century, Silla had fallen into utter chaos. Repeated crop failures and outbreaks of contagious diseases had devastated the lives of the peasants. The extravagant lifestyles of King Heongang (r. 875–886) and Queen Jinseong (r. 887–897) served to further deplete the royal treasury and reinforce the tendency to exploit the peasants.

Many peasants whose livelihoods were threatened left their land and either placed themselves at the service of the *hojok* or became petty thieves. Over time, these thieves began to unite, a denouement which created forces powerful enough to seriously threaten the authority of the central government.

The first serious rebellion broke out in 889 in Sabeolju (modern-day Sangju). Led by Wonjong and Aeno, this rebellion was soon followed by other peasant uprisings led by Gihwon in Jukju (modern-day Juksan), Yanggil in Wonju, and Gyeonhwon (?–936) in Jeonju.

The two rebels who were eventually able to attract enough intellectuals and strategic thinkers to their side to start building a government of their own were Gyeonhwon and Gungye (?–918).

In 892, Gyeonhwon proclaimed himself king. Around this time, a Confucian scholar from the Head-Rank Six class by the name of Choe Seungu became his main strategist; together they set about building an independent kingdom. They subsequently occupied Jeonju, which became their capital in 900, and named their new kingdom Later Baekje.

Wang Geon was a warrior from the *hojok* class who hailed from Songak, and the direct descendant of a powerful and wealthy merchant who had made a fortune trading with Tang. In other words, much like with Jang Bogo, Wang boasted impressive military and financial wherewithal, an internationalized outlook, and had a fleet of commercial ships at his behest.

Wang Geon was finally able to unify the Later Three Kingdoms in 936.

Chapter 2. Politics and Society of Early Goryeo

Goryeo's governing structure was initially based on that of Taebong and
Silla. However, the government system began to be reformed from the 2nd year of King Seongjong (983). This undertaking, which involved frequent reference to the Tang and Song systems, was completed during the 30th year of King Munjong (1076).

The core of Goryeo's central government structure was based on the three chancelleries and 6 ministries (3-seong 6-bu), of the Tang system.

Goryeo placed a strong emphasis on defense and military organization. This focus was motivated by the fact that not only had Goryeo reunified the Later Three Kingdoms by force, but that such force continued to be a necessary element of the northern expansion policy.

Goryeo's human resources were developed through education, and selected through the civil service examination (gwageo). Intellectuals from the Head-Rank Six class began to be selected to government posts from the reign of King Taejo onwards, and schools were established in Gaegyeong and Seogyeong (Pyeongyang) to encourage learning.

Meanwhile, education was also encouraged in local areas. In 987, specialists in Confucian classics and medicine were sent to the 12 provinces (mok) to instruct the children of local elites.

During the Goryeo era, handcrafts were produced by government bureaus, so (one of the special settlements for those of unfree status that also included hyang and bugok), Buddhist temples, and even common people. The state kept a registry of the numerous craftsmen within the country as part of its efforts to ensure that the items needed by the state were manufactured. The items produced included weapons, utensils, furniture, gold and silver goods, clothes and silk. A limited number of craftsmen were also granted land.

During the early period of the dynasty, the main forces was on domestic commerce. Major cities such as Gaegyeong, Seogyeong, and Donggyeong (modern-day Gyeongju) became home to major markets (sijeon) that featured stores which specialized in such items as books, tea, and medicine. Meanwhile, small-scale markets were opened in the countryside, and local denizens could also purchase goods from mobile peddlers.

Common people were legally free as gongmin, they in reality never possessed an equal opportunity for upward social mobility.

Chapter 3. War with the Khitans and Relations with Song

The foundation of Goryeo in the early 10th century coincided with the
rise of a powerful state in Manchuria. The Khitans, an offshoot of the Mongols, established the Liao dynasty along the upper estuary of the Liao River in 907. Expanding eastward, it eventually destroyed Balhae in 926. The founding of Song dynasty that once again unified Central China in 960 officially brought an end to the chaos of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period; however, it also paved the way for intensive conflicts between Liao and Song for control of Central China.

Chapter 4. The Culture of Early Goryeo

The participation of Confucian scholars from the Head-Rank Six class such as Choe Eonwi (868–944) and Choe Eung (898–932) in the foundation of the Goryeo dynasty naturally resulted in increasing the influence of Confucianism over politics. Based on a political ideology which emphasized centralized bureaucratic rule and the ruler's love for the people, Confucianism emerged as an important alternative to the existing aristocratic society.

Despite the increasing acceptance of Confucianism as the preeminent political ideology, Buddhism, which was regarded as learning based on self-meditation and had represented both a religion and philosophy during the early period of Goryeo, managed to continue to prosper and avoid friction with Confucianism.

Geomancy, which was first propagated by the Buddhist monk Doseon (827–898), is based upon the principle of Yin & Yang and the Five Elements. Viewing land as a living organism, the proponent of geomancy are said to be able to discern whether a location is embedded with a level of gi (force) that is advantageous to one's life.

Taoism, which was first introduced to Korea during the Three Kingdoms era, was also practiced during the Goryeo period. In this regard, the Palgwanhoe was a religious ceremony that involved the worship of the Five Peaks, auspicious mountains, great rivers, Buddha, and the heavens.

Goryeo celadon came in various colors, of which jade color was the best.

Chapter 5. The Crisis within Goryeo Society after the 12th Century

Yi Jagyeom was a scion of the most powerful aristocrat clan in
Gaegyeong the Inju Yi, during the reign of King Injong. Yi Jagyeom’s grandfather, Yi Han, and his father Yi Jayeon, had both held high-ranking office. Supported by the most powerful military man of the day, Cheok Jungyeong, Yi not only seized the reins of the military but rapidly came to exert more influence than the king himself. The *Goryeosa* (History of Goryeo) states that Yi Jagyeom sold offices at will, and that his storage houses were overflowing with meat that he had received as bribes. However, Cheok Jungyeong changed sides and arrested Yi and sent him off to exile in Yeonggwang in 1127.

After quelling Yi Jagyeom’s rebellion, King Injong implemented political reforms that were designed to strengthen the royal power. Launched in 1127, Injong’s reforms were heavily supported by those members of the bureaucratic class whose roots were in Gaegyeong. However, officials such as Baek Suhan and Jeong Jisang, whose political roots were in Seogyeong, as well as the Buddhist monk Myocheong from Pyeongyang were not satisfied with Injong’s reform. These individuals maintained that the capital should be relocated to Seogyeong, Goryeo should proclaim itself an empire on a par with Song and Jin, and that it should use its own reign name. They further asserted that Goryeo should attack and punish the irreverent Jin.

The efforts to relocate the capital to Seogyeong having failed, Myocheong, along with Jo Gwang and others, led an insurrection in Seogyeong in 1135. Injong eventually ordered Kim Busik to suppress the rebel army, a task which took him one year to complete.

In 1170, or some 35 years after Myocheong’s Revolt, Goryeo society found itself in the grips of yet another uprising when military officers rose up in an attempt to grab power. This rebellion on the part of military officers occurred after the unsuccessful attempts by the aristocracy (Yi Jagyeom’s Coup) and local elites (Myocheong’s Revolt) to seize power.

In this regard, all of these rebellions can be perceived as having been caused by the social contradictions that emerged within the civil official-based bureaucratic society during the mid-Goryeo period. Finally, Choe Chungheon grabbed the power and the power was subsequently passed on to his son Choe Yi who tried to establish a more benign rule.

Chapter 6. The Mongol Invasion and the Rise of the Scholar-Bureaucrats

In the early 13th century, a great leader named Genghis Khan united
the Mongol tribes of the North Asian steppe that had long been subjugated to the Khitans and Jin.

In 1225, a Mongol emissary named Chukuyu who had acted in a brazen manner while in Goryeo, was killed near the Amnok river while returning home. The Mongols held Goryeo responsible for his death, and dispatched an army under the command of General Salietai in 1231. After having breached the defenses in Uiju, the mounted Mongols soon reached the outskirts of Gwiju Fortress.

The Mongols would dispatch their troops to Goryeo on 6 occasions over the next 30 years before a permanent peace treaty was established in 1259. However, the Mongols lack of prowess at naval warfare ensured that they never were able to take Gangwha Island.

The individual who was finally able to subjugate Goryeo, Kublai Khan (r. 1260–1294), officially changed the name of his dynasty to Yuan in 1271.

The second son of King Chungsuk, Gongmin was married to a Yuan princess (Noguk Daejang) like all other princes of Goryeo. Although he had ascended the throne with the support of Yuan, he never lost his identity as a Goryeo national. King Gongmin adopted anti-Yuan policies as part of his efforts to restore the independence of Goryeo internationally; meanwhile, domestically, he implemented reform policies which were designed to stabilize the royal authority and public life while suppressing the powerful clans that had long overwhelmed the royal power.

As soon as he ascended the throne, King Gongmin abolished the Mongolian clothing and hair style that all Koreans had been forced to adopt under the Yuan rule. In the 5th year of his reign, he abolished the usage of the Yuan reign year and restored the original system of government that had prevailed in the pre-Munjong period.

The century-long period of Yuan interference in Goryeo's intellectual affairs was a difficult one for Goryeo both from a political and economic standpoint. However, it was also a period in which Goryeo saw important advances and new developments from a cultural standpoint. A new ideology known as Neo-Confucianism was introduced from Yuan, and Goryeo people's general outlook was expanded as much as new scientific knowledge and technology was introduced from Central Asia through Yuan.

Volume II. Joseon Era

Chapter 1. The Establishment of Joseon Dynasty
King U (r. 1374–1388), who ascended the throne after King Gongmin, was said to have been the result of a liaison between King Gongmin and Sin Don's concubine Banya. However, during the ensuing uprising led by Yi Seonggye and his followers that resulted in the dethroning of King U, the insurgents claimed that the latter was not King Gongmin's son, but rather that of Sin Don. Arguing that this meant that the monarch did not have any royal blood, the coup leaders placed King Chang (r. 1388–1389) on the throne. This decision was made based on the fact that although he had had five wives, King Gongmin had not produced any male descendants which could serve as the rightful heir to the throne.

On July 17, 1392, Yi Seonggye finally ascended the throne with the support of fifty meritorious subjects, thereby marking the official foundation of the Joseon dynasty. The new governmental regime was made legal following the obtainment of approval from the *Dopyeonguisasa* (Privy Council). The foundation of Joseon dynasty is regarded as a significant event in the history of politics in that it was achieved with only a minimal use of military power, and the new rulers were able to cement the legitimacy of their rule by courting public support through such means as the reform of the existing system while also obtaining the approval of the Privy Council.

In October 1394, the new dynasty moved its capital from Gaeseong to Hanyang. Teeming with government officials, craftsmen, merchants, and residents, Hanyang boasted a population of some 100,000 people. For their part, Shaman and Buddhist monks were not allowed to reside within the fortress' walls.

Growingly disheartened by the power struggle in which his sons were embroiled, King Taejo voluntarily abdicated the throne a mere seven years after the foundation of Joseon. Taejo's successor, King Jeongjong (r. 1398–1400), in turn abdicated after ruling for only two years. The throne was then assumed by Taejo's fifth son Bangwon, who ruled for 18 years as King Taejong (r. 1400–1418).

Taejong, who had passed the Goryeo civil service examination, had played a key role in the founding of the new dynasty through such means as eliminating opponents of his father including Jeong Mongju.

**Chapter 2. Reform of the Ruling System**

Joseon established its own brand of political norms and institutions right
after the foundation of the dynasty, and managed politics based on these standards. In this regard, Jeong Dojeon (1342–1398) proved to be the pioneer in terms of the establishment of the ruling structure.

Rooted in the notion of the equal allocation of power between the king and ruling elites, Joseon’s political structure was heavily focused on the distribution of power as part of efforts to heighten political justice and transparency, as well as on the actualization of people-oriented politics. To this end, Joseon abolished the *Dopyeonguisasa* (Privy Council), a consensual body during the Goryeo era that had been staffed by ministers of Rank Two or higher. In addition, it also weakened the power of the censors (*daegun*) by limiting their right to approve or veto the appointment of government officials to those involving positions below Rank Five. These reforms had the effect of strengthening the power of the monarch.

In theory, the king had unlimited power. However, in reality, while the king had the right to appoint personnel and to punish treasonous acts, important policies were determined based on discussions with the ruling elites. The king appeared in the Royal Council Hall (*pyeonjeon*) every day to debate and consult with officials from *Uijeongbu* (State Council) and six ministers, as well as with officials from the *Hongmungwan* (Office of Special Advisors), *Saganwon* (Office of the Censor-General), *Saheonbu* (Office of the Inspector-General), *Yemungwan* (Office of Royal Decrees), and *Seungjeongwon* (Royal Secretariat) who acted as royal censors. The process of making decisions through meetings with high ranking officials was called *sangcham*.

In Joseon, social hierarchy system was simplified to two classes: the *yangin* and the *nobi*. Moreover, the number of aristocrats with special privileges, as well as of *nobi*, was also significantly reduced. While the Goryeo period can be said to have been characterized by the freeing of the *bukokmin* class, then the Joseon period can be regarded as having been characterized by the liberation of *nobi*.

The promotion of education was seen as a means to ensure the production of outstanding human resources. In this regard, government officials were selected based on merit. Students of the *hyanggyo* and *buhak*, which were referred to as *yuhak*, were allowed to apply for the *saengwon* or *jinsa* examinations.

Chapter 3. Economic Development during Early Joseon

The period surrounding the formation of Joseon was one that was
accompanied by the suppression of the *waegu* (Japanese pirates), a denouement which in turn greatly facilitated the development of coastal areas. In addition, there was also a marked enhancement of farmers’ desire to increase production. Some of the key factors which helped to foster improvements in agricultural productivity included the increase in the population wrought by advancements in medicine, the government’s application of an aggressive agricultural promotion policy, and the literal class’ growing interest in agricultural technology.

Fertilization methods represent another key component of any effort to heighten agricultural productivity. Some of the means which were used to heighten the fecundity of land included the use of green manure (*nokbi*), human feces, and burnt wood as fertilizers.

During the early Joseon era, private and government-directed handicraft sectors emerged, with the latter being more prevalent. The Joseon government registered all private handicraft producers, as well as those who belonged to the government offices known as so or Buddhist monasteries, on its artisan rosters. These individuals were then assigned to government bureaus in Seoul and the local areas, and tasked with the production of the crafts required by the government. According to the *Gyeongguk daejeon* (National Code), there were some 2,800 artisans working in Seoul. Attached to 30 or so government offices, these men were responsible for the conduct of some 129 different tasks.

Commerce mostly developed in large urban centers. With its population of about 100,000, Seoul emerged as the undisputed center of commerce. The *sijeon* functioned based on a system through which one store was given a monopoly over a particular item in exchange for which they had to pay a tax called the *gongnangse*. In what constitutes a form of corvée labor, these individuals were expected to provide the palace and government offices with the goods they required.

In rural areas, bundle pack or backpack merchants called *bobusang* (peddlers) sold daily wares such as salt, fish, kitchenware, stationary, and books. In general, farmers purchased such goods in exchange for rice and silk. The government circulated a currency made out of paper mulberry (*jeohwa*) and copper (*Joseon tongbo*).

### Chapter 4. Culture of Early Joseon

The foundation of the Joseon dynasty was accompanied by a social
revolution in the form of the replacement of the aristocratic politics of the past with a new brand of politics that revolved around the bureaucracy. This in turn led to the replacement of the Buddhism that had undergirded this aristocratic rule with Neo-Confucianism. This monumental change constituted nothing short of a cultural revolution. In this regard, Jeong Dojeon emerged as the foremost critic of Buddhism.

While Koreans traditionally incorporated China’s advanced culture and made use of Chinese characters, the development of a national awareness and of the minbon (people-based politics) ideology that occurred after the foundation of Joseon served to strengthen the need to create a Korean alphabetical system with which to directly convey the new ruling ideology of the state to the public. A uniquely Korean alphabet (Hunmin jeongeum) was in the end invented during the reign of King Sejong.

Astronomy was regarded as being very important in that it was not only related to agriculture, but also deeply rooted in the belief that political actions were the direct precursor of astronomical and climatic changes.

Medicine, along with the study of translation and interpretation of foreign languages, constituted one of the forms of japhak (miscellaneous learning) which was most actively encouraged by the state.

Early Joseon saw efforts be made to develop military strategies that reflected Joseon’s topography. In addition, numerous books on military history were also compiled during this period.

Weapons were for the most part manufactured at the Gungigam (Government Arsenal). However, local governments also manufactured them. Gunpowder, which had been developed by Choe Museon during the final period of Goryeo, was further improved, thereby vastly increasing the performance and range of canons four to five-fold.

The early Joseon period saw the publication of a compilation of the best poetry and essays from the Three Kingdoms Period to early Joseon. Sijo, a form of poetry which began to become popular amongst the sadaebu class at the end of the Goryeo dynasty, became the poetic medium that embodied the spirit of the new dynasty. Another characteristic of early Joseon literature is the various examples of literary miscellany (japgi) and scribblings (paeseol) which were produced.

Chapter 5. The Growth of the Sarim Faction and its Culture

The bureaucrat society of Joseon in the 16th century was split between
idealists and realists who were engaged in a running battle that resulted in many purges and political crises. Political conflicts emerged between the sarim (local literati), who strongly advocated reform as part of their efforts to establish the type of sage kingship called for under ideal Confucian politics, and the existing meritorious subjects and royal in-laws who, in addition to a desire to maintain their power, promoted the need for worldly policies such as those related to the building of a strong army and economy.

The sarim was made up of literati who came to form their own political faction. The widespread introduction of Neo-Confucianism led to the growing production of literati in local provinces and outlying areas. The first time the sarim appeared on the national political stage was during the reign of King Sejong (r. 1469–1494).

King Seonjo not only appointed many respectable members of the sarim literati, but also actively nurtured them. The king encouraged these scholars to submit their work to him on a monthly basis. It was thus during the reign of Seonjo that great intellectuals and officials emerged, making his reign one of the most celebrated in terms of its intellectual achievements.

However, the rapid increase in the number of literati (sarim) scholars gave rise to growing internal conflicts and cleavages amongst the ranks of such scholars as well. This resulted in the creation of political factions that revolved around a leading scholar whose philosophical and political orientation was shared by other members of the clique.

The first factions were formed in 1575 (8th year of King Seonjo). While the Seoin (Westerner) faction was for the most part made up of literati from areas with stronger political bases such as Seoul, Gyeonggi, Chungcheong, and Jeolla, the Dongin (Easterner) faction consisted of younger literati who followed such scholars as Yi Hwang of Andong, Jo Sik of Jinju and Seo Gyeongdeok of Gaeseong. In terms of their policies, the Seoin faction emphasized a form of governance which was based on the pursuit of national wealth and public security through institutional reforms. For its part, the Dongin faction emphasized self-cultivation and the moral regeneration of literati as part of efforts to heighten the morality of political leaders.

Chapter 6. Japanese and Manchu Invasions

In April of 1592, some 200,000 Japanese forces divided into nine armies
commenced with the invasion of Joseon. Japan’s plan involved the simultaneous use of ground and naval power to overwhelm Joseon. More to the point, while the ground forces were to split up into three units that would push northwards, the navy was to round the South and West coast of Joseon in order to put itself in position to provide continuous supplies to the advancing ground forces. As such, the Japanese navy plundered the coastal area of Gyeongsang Province and continued its advance along the coast of Jeolla Province. At this time, the person in charge of the coast guard for Jeolla Province was Yi Sunsin (1545–1598), an admiral who had already served with distinction in the campaign in the north against the Jurchens.

Led by Yi Sunsin, the Joseon navy began to engage the Japanese in early May. In this regard, it scored its first victory in the Battle of Okpo (present-day Geoje Island). From the end of May to June, Yi joined forces with Jeolla and Gyeongsang Province’s eastern fleets, which were led by Yi Eokgi, to defeat the Japanese in battles in places such as Sacheon, Dangpo, and Danghangpo.

The Japanese navy regrouped and mounted a major attack in late June and early July. However, in what was later designated as one of the 3 biggest victories of the war. Yi Sunsin and his forces successfully destroyed a Japanese armada near Hansan Island. As a result of Yi Sunsin’s stunning victories, Joseon was able to gain complete control of the seas, thereby not only foiling the Japanese strategy of having the navy supply its ground forces through the West Sea (Yellow Sea), but also defending Joseon’s rice basket, the Jeolla region, from the Japanese.

The 7-year war between Japan and Joseon effectively ended with a victory for Joseon. The Japanese had failed to gain any territory and were unable to get Joseon to surrender. However, Joseon was also the party which suffered the most from this conflagration. The whole country was devastated by the war which, along with the famine and disease that ensued, left scores dead. Most land and census registers were destroyed, plunging state finance into paralysis. Some 50 years after the war, the official government register recorded a population of only 1,500,000 and some 500,000 gyeol of land.

Chapter 7. The Restoration of Dynasty in the 17–18th Centuries

Although Injo (r. 1623–1649) had been put on the throne by the Seoin
faction, he tried to maintain a balance between the various groups by also appointing members of the *Namin* (Southerners) faction. By doing so, Injo was able to rein in the factions, thereby steadying the royal authority. The *Seoin* and *Namin* factions not only differed in terms of their ideological roots, but also in terms of their political philosophy.

The *Seoin* faction desired to build a minister-centered government structure, and was also open to the freeing of *nobi* as well as the equal treatment of illegitimate descendants (*seoel*) if such moves would help improve the country's financial structure and strengthen its defense capacity.

On the other hand, the *Namin* faction focused on the stabilization the rural economy. To this end, it emphasized the need to focus on the stability of small and medium-sized landowners and independent farmers and lower taxes. They were less enthusiastic than the *Seoin* faction about mitigating the social status system through such means as eradicating the unequal treatment of *seoel* and freeing the *nobi*.

Desiring to weaken the roots of the factions, Yeongjo ignored the so-called *gongnon* (public opinion) submitted by the rustic literati associated with the private Confucian academies (*seowon*). He also decreased the number of *seowon*. Yeongjo also abolished the system through which the Ministry of Personnel's *nanggwan* (who were officials holding Rank Five or Six) and the *hallim* (court diarists), both of whom regarded themselves as the government's spokesperson on behalf of rustic literati's public opinion, were permitted to recommend their own successors.

Yeongjo's successor, King Jeongjo (r. 1776–1800), was the son of Prince Sado who died under tragic circumstances. Jeongjo continued most of the policies of Yeongjo, including his policy of *Tangpyeong* (Policy of Impartiality) and that of embracing various philosophical and ideological strands, such as the *Gohak* (learning on the Ancient Confucianism) of the *Namin* faction, and the *Bukhak* (Northern Learning) of the *Noron*.

The development of commerce and industry that occurred during late Joseon resulted in fundamental changes being wrought to the traditional social hierarchy structure. The traditional strict separation of the *yangin* (commoner) and *nobi* (bond servant) became increasingly blurred.

**Chapter 8. The Cultural Renaissance of Late Joseon**

Joseon's Neo-Confucianism reached its apogee during the era of Yi
Hwang and Yi Yi in the 16th century. Under this Neo-Confucianism, a highly literate, humanistic civilization was created in Joseon. However, by the time of Hideyoshi Invasions, Joseon's Neo-Confucianism faced a major crisis. By this juncture, Neo-Confucianism had become little more than a tool for passing the civil service examination and for the achievement of political, socioeconomic advancement.

While Neo-Confucianism dominated the intellectual landscape in Seoul, the Silhak School continued to be developed into a viable oppositional philosophy by the members of the Namin faction. Some of the most eminent Silhak scholars include Heo Mok, Yu Hyeongwon, and Yi Ik.

Many of the intellectuals who found themselves victims of the numerous literati purges and incessant factional struggles turned to Taoist cultivation methods and inner alchemy (naedan) as means to cultivate the mind and body.

Another important intellectual trend which surfaced during this era was the growing adhesion to the tenets of the Yangming School first introduced to Joseon during the early 16th century. Most intellectuals of the day accepted the Yangming School as a sort of religion that would aid them in cultivating their minds, rather than as a philosophical school of thought.

Gukhak (National Learning) first emerged during the process of reconstructing the nation's institutions and infrastructure in the aftermath of the Hideyoshi and Manchu Invasions. It was this period that many new history books designed to instill a new consciousness of the nation's history were written and published. The development of this new perception of history was in large part driven by a strident will for reform.

The development of local villages and towns resulted in numerous township topographies and annals (eupji), being compiled from the 16th century onwards. In turn, provincial and national cultural geography books were compiled based on these eupji.

The new cultural trends that emerged during the late Joseon were mimicked by advancements in such artistic fields as painting, architecture, and calligraphy. In terms of painting, Yi Jing (1581–?) shocked the artistic world with the detailed but free and powerful strokes he used in portraits and landscape paintings.

Chapter 9. The Conflict between Seoul and the Regions in the Early 19th Century
The reign of King Jeongjo, a powerful leader who tried to build a state for the common people, was followed by that of young and ineffective kings, a denouement which resulted in the weakening of the royal power. Kings Sunjo (r. 1800–1834), Heonjong (r. 1834–1849), and Cheoljong (r. 1849–1863) all became monarch at a very young age; meanwhile, real power passed into the hands of the great political clans of the Noron faction in Seoul. The subsequent era during which these royal in-law clans held political power has come to be known as the era of sedo jeongchi (in-law politics).

The first monarch of the 19th century, King Sunjo, was an eleven year-old boy at the time he became king. Following his marriage to the daughter of Kim Josun, a prominent member of the Noron Sipa (Expediency) Faction who had also helped King Jeongjo, Sunjo received the full-fledged support of powerful Andong Kim clan that had produced an inordinate number of talented men and numerous prominent state councilors and ministers throughout the 17–18th centuries.

However, sedo (in-law) politics was also engaged in by other prominent clans such as the Namyang Hong, Pungyanh Jo, Yeheung Min, Dongnae Jeong, Gyeongju Kim, Daegu Seo, Yeonam Yi, Pungsan Hong, and Bannam Pak. These clans formed a tightly knit group through marriage. As such, it was a coalition government of Seoul yangban families.

The sedo government failed to bring about social unity. They also failed to embrace the merchants and rich farmers of the countryside, turning them instead into objects of exploitation. Meanwhile, they also sold magistrate positions to the highest bidder. By this time, the traditional order in the countryside based upon the leadership of the local literati had completely collapsed. Instead, the magistrate came to exercise absolute power, employing local petty officials (hyangni and hyangim) to collect taxes.

As there were no alternative sources of power that could counterbalance the local magistrates, and because the local magistrates had themselves bought their positions, a chain of corruption and exploitation whose blunt was always ultimately born by the peasants began to develop. As a result, both the rich and the poor began to suffer from worsening economic conditions. Dissatisfaction with sedo politics began to spread through the country. (Fin)