

# Reform Proposals and Korean Cultural Identity

September 23, 2014

# Review

- Did you learn anything surprising in the last lecture about Korea's relations with its neighbours?
- What was the most significant thing you learned in the last lecture?
- Were you surprised to learn that Christianity emerged before there were missionaries in Korea?

# Catholic Persecution

- What did Hwang Sayōng do to try to stop the persecution? (Sources, pp. 135-137)
- Can you understand why he was not among the 124 who were raised to Blessed status by Pope Francis in August? (Yun Chich'ung and Chōng Yakchong were declared Blessed.)
- What arguments did Chōng Hasang used in defense of his Catholic faith? (Sources, pp. 138-140) (Chōng Hasang has already been declared a saint by the Catholic Church.)

# The impact of Catholicism

- Monotheism: a radically new concept in Korea
- separation of church and state: another radically new concept
- This was an early step toward religious freedom, which in turn is an early step toward democracy.

# Major persecutions

- 1801--hundreds killed. Tasan is exiled. Hwang Sayöng asks for French help
- 1839--another major persecution. Chöng Hasang and 3 French priests are killed
- 1868-69 thousands of Catholics are killed, including 9 French priests.

# The Chosŏn economy

- a land-based economy. Private land owned by yangban and commoners (peasants, not farmers)
- government-controlled commerce in the capital.
- peddlers and periodic markets in the countryside.
- A little foreign trade with China and Japan.

# Barriers to economic development

- The standard explanation for the low level of commercial activity in Chosŏn Korea is the Confucian disdain for merchants. But that is too simplistic.
- Korea lacked geography favourable to commerce:
- It didn't have the agricultural diversity that would have stimulate internal trading.
- It also lacked the waterways that would have provided inexpensive transportation for goods.
- Also, the population grew to the full extent traditional agricultural technology could feed, leaving no surplus.

# The “Practical Learning School”--sirhak

- ◆ The School of Institutional Reform: Yu Hyöngwön, Yi Ik, Chöng Yagyong (Tasan)
- ◆ The School of Northern Learning: Pak Chega, Pak Chiwön, Hong Taeyong
- ◆ The Korean Studies School: An Chöngbok, Yi Tükkong, Yi Chunghwang, Kim Hongdo, Chöng Sön

# Socio-economic problems

- Population Increase (for a while)  
1681 nationwide population of 6,218,34  
1693      7,045,115  
1717      6,839,771  
1732      7,273,446  
1756      7,318,359  
1799      7,412,686

- Growth Rates:

1678-1693	+1,172,898	+1.2%
1699-1717	+1,065,032	+0.94%
1720-1732	+474,349	+0.56%
1735-1747	+360,519	+0.42%
1765-1777	+263,883	+0.38%
1780-1792	+210,109	+ 0.20%

# Social and economic change

- decline in slavery
- average size of farms declines, use of wet fields grows
- fixed-fee rentals replaces sharecropping
- no. of “yangban” grows
- use of cash, and no. of periodic markets, increases
- increase in commercial crops
- Does this mean a shift toward capitalism? No. There are no signs of “sprouts of capitalism.” (What is capitalism?)

# Defining Capitalism

- capitalism is more than just commercial activity. It is a specific form of economic organization in which
- a) the link between ownership of the means of production, and the use of those means to produce is severed.
- b) the link between production of goods and ownership of the goods produced is severed.
- Also, capitalism requires institutions that facilitate the accumulation and investment of capital.
- Korea had none of those identifying characteristics of capitalism to any significant degree.

# Changes in tax laws

- Three kinds of taxes: land taxes, military taxes, and tribute taxes. (Plus the corvée tax, also known as the labour tax)
- The tribute replacement tax (2nd half of the 17th century) transformed the traditional tribute tax, stimulating more commercial activity .
- In 1750 the equal service law equalized the military tax burden, even extending it to some sons of yangban fathers.
- Also, the matrilineal inheritance of slave status was finally settled in the 18th century, slowing the growth of the slave population and giving male slaves a way to gain freedom for their children.

# Chapter 22: Reform Proposals

- The School of Institutional Reform-- a focus on land distribution.
- What was the well-field system?
- What was Yu Hyŏngwŏn's solution to land distribution inequality?
- Did Yi Ik and Tasan agree with him?
- Tasan later put forward a less radical proposal for addressing the land problem.

# Commerce and Technology

- What did Korean Confucians think about encouraging the use of cash (instead of bolts of cloth and bags of rice)?
- Was Yi Ik in favour of the latest advances in agricultural technology? What was his reason?
- Did Pak Chega share Yi Ik's distaste for innovation and commerce?
- What was Tasan's attitude toward technology?

# Discovering Korea

- A new turn toward greater interest in things Korean:
- Painters: Chŏng Sŏn, Kim Hongdo, and Shin Yunbok.
- Korean-language poetry: Sijo
- Fiction with a Korean setting: Hong Kildong chŏn
- New forms of Korean entertainment: P'ansori and mask dance-drama
- And a new interest in Korean history.

# A sijo of drink

- Yesterday I was dead drunk  
and today it's wine again.

Was I sober the day before yesterday?  
The day before that I cannot recall.

Tomorrow I have asked a friend to West Lake;  
Shall I be sober, perhaps?

# A Sijo of love

- *I will break the back of this long,  
midwinter night,  
Folding it double, cold beneath my  
spring quilt,  
  
That I may draw out the night,  
should my love return.*