

ASIA 317:

The Emergence of Korean Civilization

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Over the course of the next 3 months, we are going to trace the emergence of a distinctive civilization on the Korean peninsula in Northeast Asia, beginning in prehistory and going up to 1600. Our working assumption is that Korea did not simply pop into existence fully formed 5,000 (or 4341) years ago but slowly emerged out of a unique mixture of ingredients that appeared on the Korean peninsula over time.

There are two separate questions that will guide our exploration of early Korean history. First of all, we will try to discover how far back in history we can trace a Korean state. Second, we will ask how far back in time we can identify a culture in and around the Korean peninsula that has more in common with Korean culture as it evolved later than it does with Chinese and other non-Korean cultures as they have evolved over the centuries. In other words, we are going to separate the search for the roots of Korean culture from the search for the earliest Korean nation (in the political sense).

Once we have identified a distinctive culture in and around the Korean peninsula, and have identified the earliest Korean nation, we will then see how Korea managed to maintain its cultural and political autonomy over the centuries despite the presence of powerful, and at times aggressive, neighbours very close by.

Class Requirements:

In this class you will learn the basic facts of pre-modern Korean history and be able to distinctive the various stages the Korean peninsula and its inhabitants went through as a distinctive Korean civilization emerged. You will also improve your ability to think historically. Thinking historically means thinking in terms of change, remembering that societies do not stay the same. For example, you will learn in this class to avoid the mistake of committing an anachronism of thinking that the way Koreans today conceive of what it means to be a Korean is the way Koreans have always defined themselves. Finally, you will enhance your ability to engage in critical thinking. You will learn to pay more attention to the grounds of assertions about history, asking yourself whether such assertions are supported by reliable documentary or archaeological evidence, or whether conclusions about the past drawn from documentary or archaeological data are logical and plausible conclusions from that data.

Your final grade in this class will be determined by how well you do on the mid-term exam (20%), the final exam (35%), class participation (10%), and the term paper (35%) (Your class participation mark will include your participation in the class discussions of the additional articles you will be asked to read.)

The grading scale is as follows:

1. Letter	%	Letter	%
A+	90-100	C+	64-67
A	85-89	C	60-63
A-	80-84	C-	55-59
B+	76-79	D	50-54
B	72-75	F (fail)	0-49
B-	68-71		

A grade of 80-100 percent is given to exceptional work.

A grade of 68-79 percent is given to competent work.

A grade of 50-67 percent is given to adequate work.

A failing grade, 0-49, is given to inadequate work.

This class will be both a lecture class and a discussion class. Your professor will lecture to give you the basic background information you need to understand the changes on the Korean peninsula over the centuries, and to let you know about which historiographical issues are debated by historians of Korea. However, a lot of class time will be spent on discussion, both discussion of the documents in *Sources of Korean Tradition* and discussion of the various articles you will find listed under each topic on the lecture schedule page.

Term Paper: You will be expected to write a term paper for this class, due the last day of class. For your term paper, you should choose from one of the topics below. In writing your term paper, in addition to reading additional material available from the library, you will also have to draw on the documents in *Sources of Korean Tradition* (by documents, I don't mean the introductory remarks before each document. I mean the actual translated documents themselves.)

The term paper should be 10-15 double-spaced pages long. It is due the last week of class--let's say Nov. 30, though you can turn it in earlier if you have too many term papers due that day.

UBC has requested that I include the following formal wording in the syllabus for ASIA 101:

Academic Integrity: Students who submit written work or deliver oral work that is not their own (or which they have submitted for another course) are committing academic misconduct. Students are responsible for documenting their work properly and therefore should ask me for advice if they are not sure they are meeting the guidelines before submitting work. Any work submitted may be tested for authenticity and originality. Students who submit work found to be plagiarized or who are found cheating on examinations are subject to disciplinary action. A common punishment for plagiarism or cheating is suspension from the university, often for a year.

We will be using TurnItIn.com to ensure that your work is your own.

Here are some topics you can write on (these are all questions which will be discussed in class):

- 1) What evidence is there that Old Chosŏn was a Korean state? What about Puyŏ?
- 2) What evidence is that the wars among Koguryŏ, Paekche, and Silla should be called “civil wars”?
- 3) How was Silla able to defeat both Paekche and Koguryŏ? What were the consequences of Silla rather than Paekche or Koguryŏ winning?
- 4) Can you defend the proposition that Silla after 668 should be called “Unified Silla?” If you can, then can you claim that Parhae was also a Korean state?
- 5) Why did Korea’s brief period of military rule during its medieval period end in less than a century, unlike Japan, which began several centuries of military rule at about that same time?
- 6) Should Koryŏ have tried to seize territory in Manchuria?
- 7) What is a good thing or a bad thing that Korea adopted Neo-Confucianism as its official ideology in the 15th century? If you say it was a bad thing, what were the alternatives?
- 8) In what ways was Chosŏn Korea different from Koryŏ Korea? Why did those differences come about?
- 9) How did the status of women change from the Koryŏ dynasty to the Chosŏn dynasty?
- 10) What sort of religious change did Korea go through in the transition from the Koryŏ dynasty to the Chosŏn dynasty? What was the impact of that change on society and politics?

You may write on a different topic if you check with me first.

Your term paper should be 10 to 15 pages long, double-spaced. Be sure to provide bibliographical information as well as page numbers for all sources that you use (except for my lectures). If you borrow the exact phrasing of a source, put that phrasing in quotation marks. If you paraphrase or borrow ideas from a source, footnote where you got that idea.

If you plagiarize, in other words, if you use the words or ideas of someone else without proper attribution, you will receive a 0 for that assignment.

Plagiarism is not the only problem to watch out for. I will also be looking for evidence that you have learned how to evaluate sources. Even if you cite a source properly, if it is not a legitimate source for a class such as this, you will lose points. Be especially careful when using the internet.

This paper is not supposed to be a test of how well you can surf the internet. I do not want you using the typical type of sites available on the web. For example, you may not use “Wikipedia.” (There are a lot of mistakes in its treatment of Korean history). Nor may you use a particularly

poor piece of scholarship that is available on the web: You may not use Wontack Hong's *Paekche of Korea and the Origin of Yamato Japan*. It is worse than worthless. It is misleading and it is an example of the wrong way to do history.

There are a few websites that may prove useful. I will accept material from the following websites as long as you check with me first.

The UBC library has a useful guide to places you can go for information about Korean in both Korean and English.

Korean Studies Resources Guide

There are also quite a few electronic versions of academic articles available through the UBC library (especially through JSTOR, Project Muse, and Academic Premier). For those who read Korean, even though you have to write your paper in English, you can use Korean-language academic sources. There are quite a few journals and data bases available through the UBC Library's subscription to E-Korean Studies. However, any Korean-language material you use from such sources must be translated into English.

One particularly useful journal is *Korea Journal*:

<http://www.ekoreajournal.net/> (also available in the library in the print version)

You might also want to look at the following journals available through our library.

Korean Studies

International Journal of Korean Studies

Journal of Korean Studies

Acta Koreana

[Acta Korean on-line](#)

Review of Korean Studies

I will not accept citations from any encyclopedias, either print or on-line. You must dig deeper than an encyclopedia when you do research for your term paper. One good guide to academically respectable resources is found at:

<http://www.hawaii.edu/korea/biblio/BiblioOpen.html>

For early Korean history, we are fortunate that the Early Korea History project at Harvard University has produced a number of works in English that help us to see how Koreans scholars today understand the formation of a distinctive Korean civilization. You are encouraged to use those publications, which are in our library, if you are writing on Korea before the Koryŏ dynasty.

Those publications include:

Early Korea, Volume I: *Reconsidering Early Korean History Through Archaeology*

The Han Commandaries in Early Korean History

Early Korea, Volume II: *The Samhan Period in Early Korean History*

Early Korea, Volume II: *The Rediscovery of Kaya in History and Archaeology*

State and Society in Middle and Late Silla

New Perspectives on Early Korean Art: From Silla to Koryŏ.

In addition, some of the basic sources for the first Korean kingdoms have now been translated into English. You should take advantage of those translations when writing your term papers. Those translations are:

Jonathan Best, trans. *A History of the Early Korean Kingdom of Paekche*

Edward Shultz and H.W. Kang, trans. *The Koguryo Annals of the Samguk Sagi*

Edward Shultz and H.W. Kang, trans. *The Silla Annals of the Samguk Sagi*

You may also find this text useful: John Duncan, trans. *A New History of Parhae.*

Whichever sources you decide to use, be sure to let me know what they are **before** you start writing your paper so I can tell you whether they are trustworthy or not. The term paper is due the last day of class, Nov. 30 At least two weeks before that, by Nov.16, I want you to tell me in writing or via email what topic you have chosen and what sources you will use to write that paper.