



## Korea: a History

**A civilization, two countries**



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# Course outline

Korea: an Asian crossroads

1905-1945: a Japanese colony

The Korean War (1950-1953)

The Korean Cold War (1953-2019)

South Korea's "economic miracle"

What democracy for South Korea?

North Korea: the "Hermit gulag"

What is North Korea up to?



Korea: the tradition of the “hermit kingdom”

The “hermit kingdom”: a colonial cliché

A **stereotype** still prevailing today

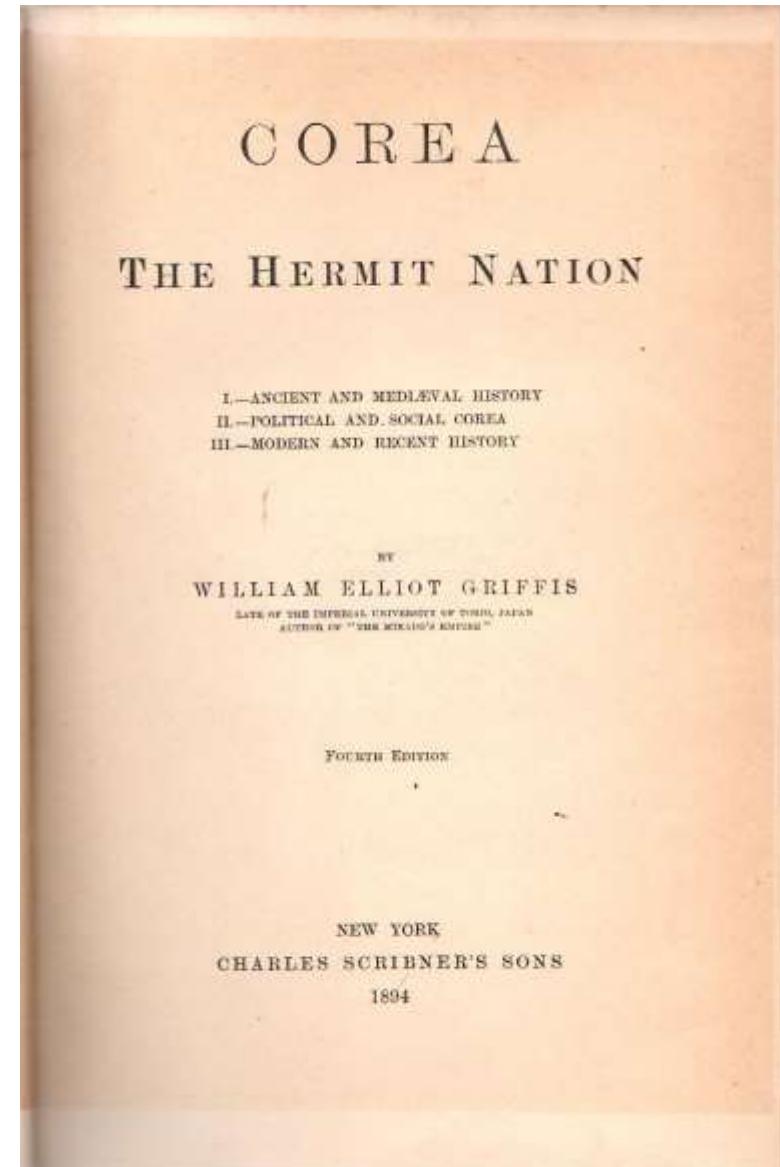
**North Korea:** a “hermit gulag”

**South Korea:** “economic miracle” not possible without the intervention of Japan, the support of the U.S. and the impact of China’s economic growth





**Thesis:** Korea unable to modernize without the help of Japan





**Korea: a growing influence on  
the global stage:**

- 1. The ongoing threat of North  
Korea**
- 2. The economic dynamism of  
South Korea**





**A fascinating history**  
Korea **as important** as China and Japan





## Geography

A crossroads

A bridge between the Asian continent and Japan

**Trade** always favored by Korea's geography

Technical & cultural  
**innovations**





## Rice-growing





## Mulberry trees (to feed silkworms)











**1<sup>st</sup> Millennium BC: first  
organized entities  
recorded in Asia**

**Fortified villages  
Leagues of villages  
City-states**

**The rise of the first  
kingdoms**

## The Three Kingdoms

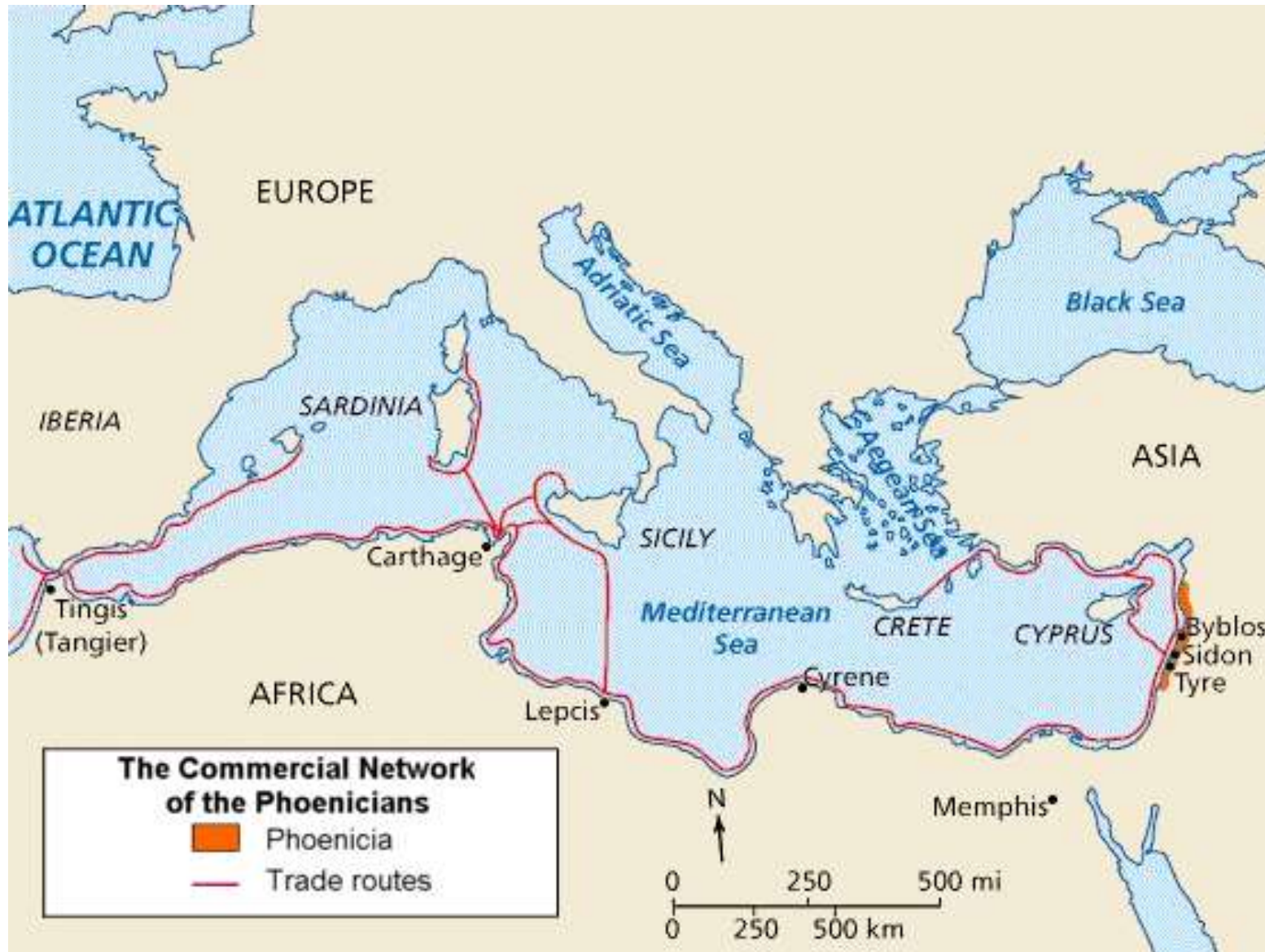


4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries: 4 entities  
(constantly at war with one another)  
shared the Korean peninsula

Buddhism & Chinese characters  
penetrated Korea via the kingdom of  
Koguryo

The Kingdom of Paekche: a  
thalassocracy with multiple trading  
posts in China, Japan and the  
Philippines





A **thalassocracy** (from the Greek *sea power*): states or nations that control a large expanse of sea/naval supremacy

Several centuries of  
permanent warfare

The Kingdom of Silla  
eventually **prevailed** (thanks  
to an alliance with China)

The majority of the peninsula  
unified (668)

The merger of the elites from  
Koguryo and Silla





The business elites of Paekche resettled in their multiple trading posts in Japan

They could have founded there the first Japanese state and introduced Buddhism to Japan




Korea under the  
domination of Silla (3  
centuries): a prosperous  
state

Alliance with China

A powerful class of  
landowners: the development  
of agriculture

The rise of a national  
sentiment





Kyongju: a  
magnificent  
capital







## The decline and fall of Silla

The **Mongol invasions** (the collapse of the Tang dynasty in China)

The rise of a new dynasty (918-1392): **Koryeô** (Korea)

### **The Korean peninsula: the heart of regional trade**

Raw materials (wood and fur from Manchuria; gold and mother-of-pearl from Japan vs. Chinese and Korean manufactured goods)



The high quality **Celadon ware** from Koryô  
sold all the way to the Islamic world



The development of printing (200 years before Guttenberg)





# The Korean peninsula transformed into a Mongol **military base**



Kubilai Khan:  
Japan to be the  
next target





## Kublai Khan's fleet destroyed by typhoons (1274 & 1281)

Typhoons celebrated as  
« *divine winds* » (*Kami-kaze*)





## The rise of the Ming dynasty (1368)





The kingdom of **Chôson** – The capital transferred to **Seoul**(Hanseong)



A new era of prosperity for Korea



General Yi Sŏnggye seizes power (1392)





**King Sejong (the “father” of the Korean nation)**  
**1418-1450**

A **ceasefire** with Japanese pirates

**Alliance with the Ming dynasty**

China's pledge to defend Korea  
Exchanges of gifts

**Development of agriculture** to help feed a  
growing population  
(From 5 to 10 million people)

# Consonants

ㄱ	ㄴ	ㄷ	ㄹ	ㅁ	ㅂ	ㅅ
<b>g</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>d</b>	<b>l/r</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>s</b>
giyeok	nieum	diguett	rieul	mieum	bieup	siot
ㅇ	ㅈ	ㅊ	ㅋ	ㅌ	ㅍ	ㅎ
	<b>j</b>	<b>ch</b>	<b>k</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>h</b>
ieung	jieut	cheiut	kieuuk	tieut	pieup	hieut

The invention of a new alphabet  
(the *han'gûl*) to allow the  
majority to learn to read and  
write

24 letters (simple geometric  
lines)



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세종대왕 1337-1450

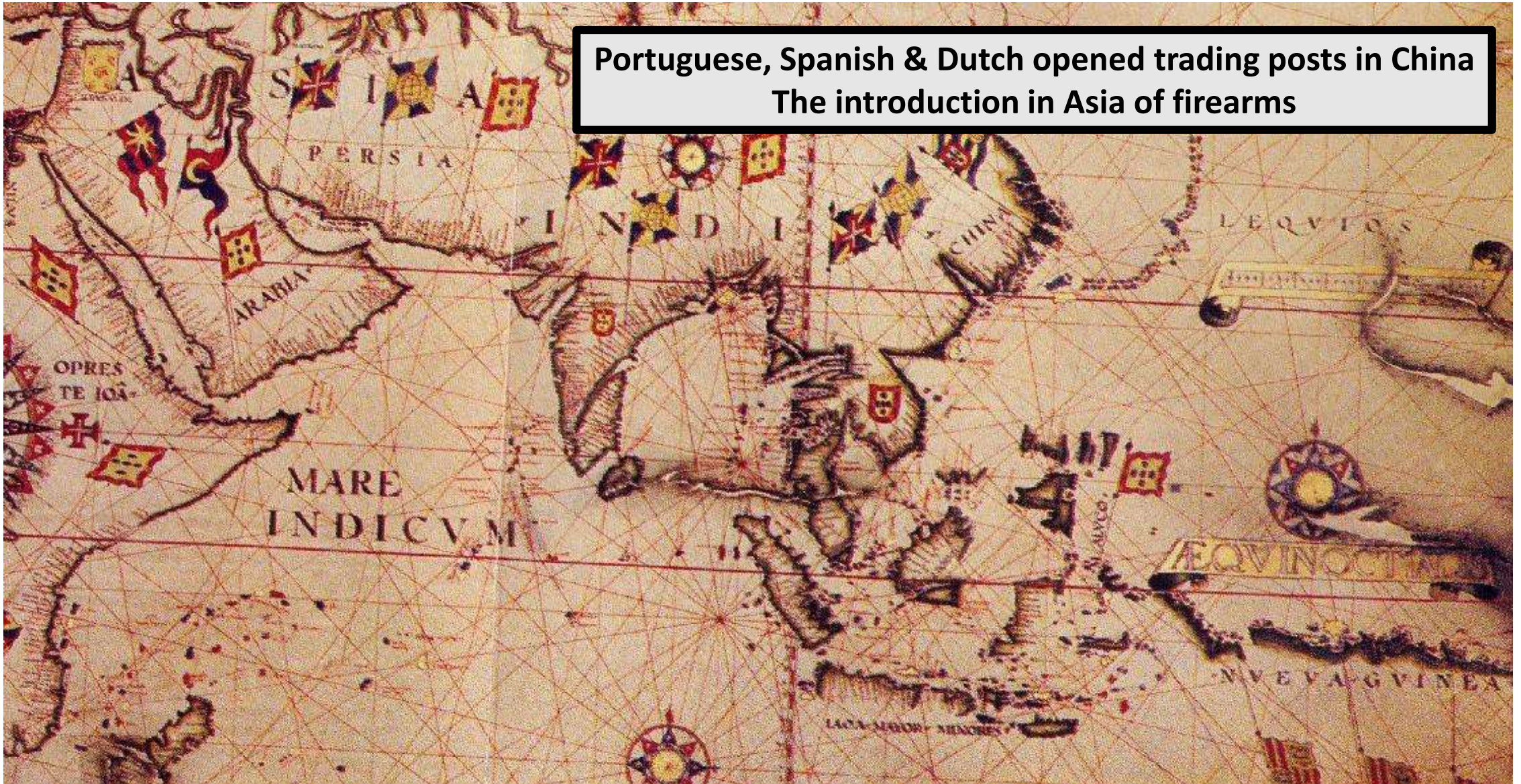
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## Korea's prosperity attracted European missionaries

Portuguese, Spanish & Dutch opened trading posts in China  
The introduction in Asia of firearms





The renewed threat of **Japanese piracy**



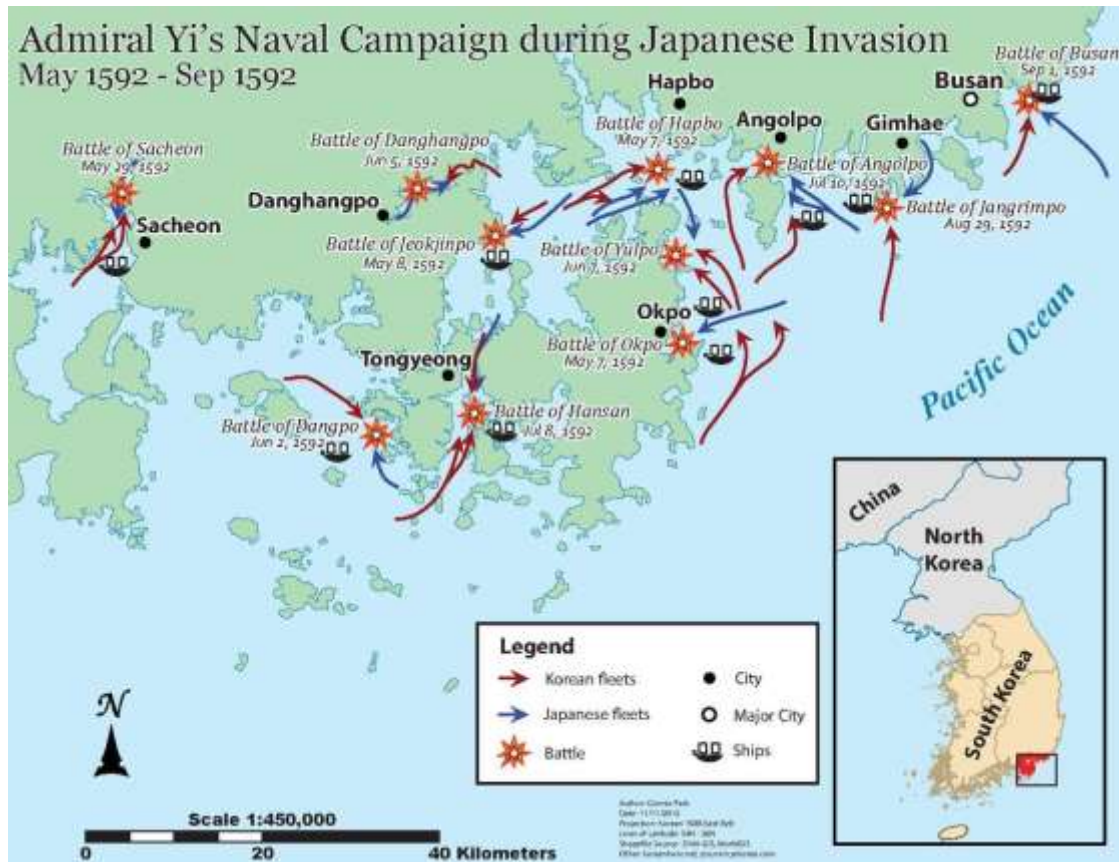


**Toyotomi Hidyoshi** (Japan's second « great unifier »)

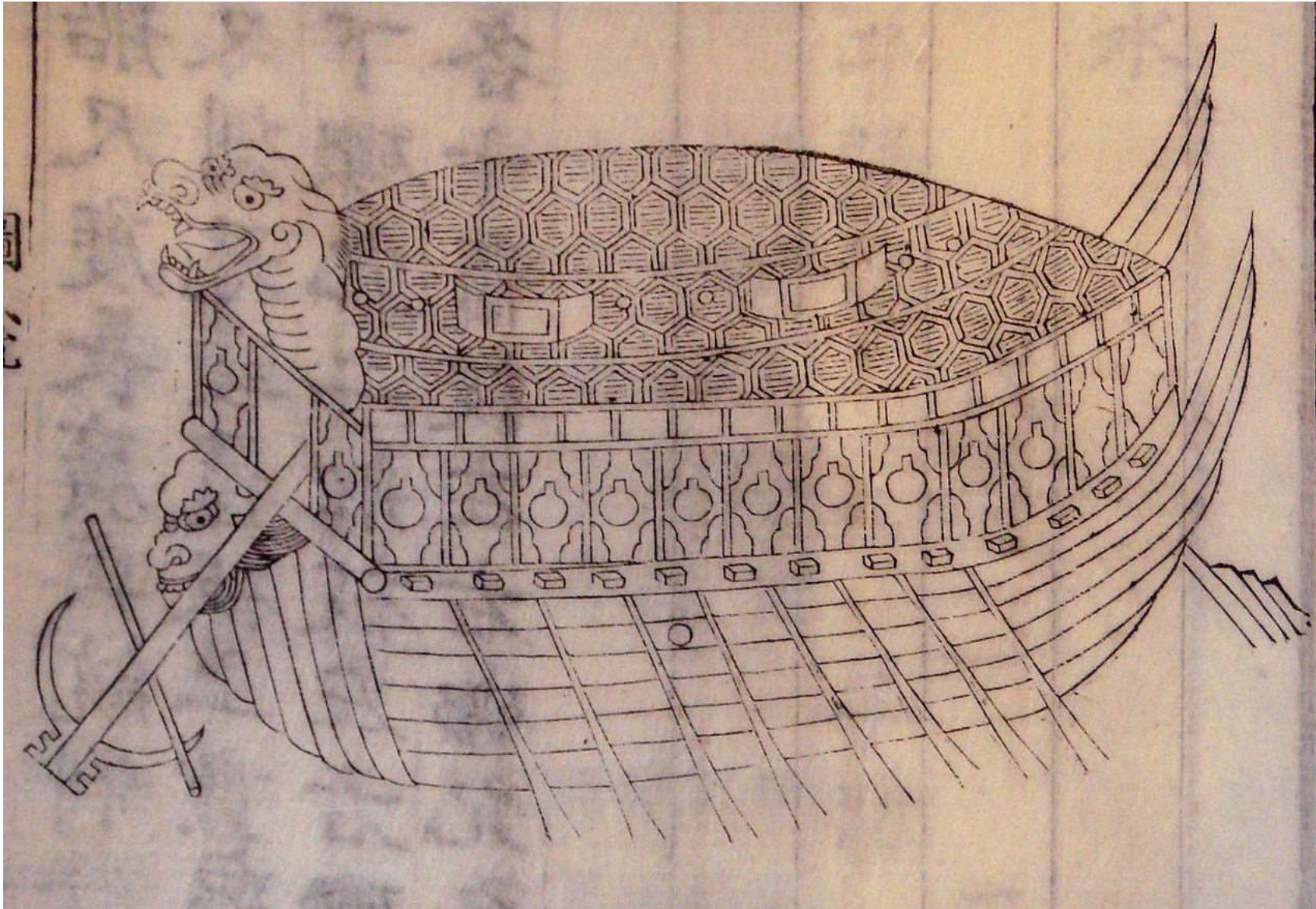
1592: Japanese army & fleet sent  
to occupy Korea  
Initial success



## Naval victories of Korean Admiral Yi Sun-sin







The use of **turtle ships**  
(*geobukseon*)

Roof covered with planks  
and spikes to prevent the  
ship from being boarded

**The intervention of a  
Chinese military  
contingent**





1597: a second Japanese attack prevented thanks to the support of China

Korea's independence preserved but country ruined  
Mass deportation to Japan of engineers & craftsmen

Change of  
dynasty in  
China (the  
Qing dynasty)

Renewed focus on Korea

To maintain its autonomy, Korea must acknowledge **China's supremacy**



Korea's isolationism – The “Hermit Kingdom”  
Foreign influence rejected



## British expansionism in the Far East

High demand for Chinese  
products (silk, porcelain, tea)

=

Chronic trade deficit

**The solution:** British exports  
of Indian **opium** to China to  
generate profits



1839: China bans the sale of opium  
Opium supplies seized

The **First Opium War** (1839-1842)





**The Canton system (1757-1842):** all foreign trade controlled through the port of Canton



## 1842: China forced to negotiate (Treaty of Nanking)



- A \$21 million war indemnity
- 2. The **Canton system abolished** – Five Chinese ports open to foreign trade
- 3. The right for Britain to send consuls to each Treaty port
- 4. Fixed trade tariffs
- 5. Hong Kong ceded to Britain



The expedition of Commodore Perry in  
Japan (1853)





Korea coveted by both  
China & Japan



## 1876: Treaty of Kanghwa – Unequal treaty

3 Korean ports open to Japanese trade







Korea treated as a **protectorate** by China  
Korea's **natural resources** coveted by the Western nations (wood, coal, iron & gold)



## Sino-Japanese war (1894-1895)





1895: **Treaty of Shimonoseki** – Japan gets  
Liandong province & Taiwan

China recognized the independence of Korea  
and renounced any claims to that country







**Japan humiliated**

**Growing Russian influence in  
Manchuria & Korea**

**Triple intervention** (Russia, France & Germany):  
Japan to withdraw its claim on Liaodong Peninsula or face war



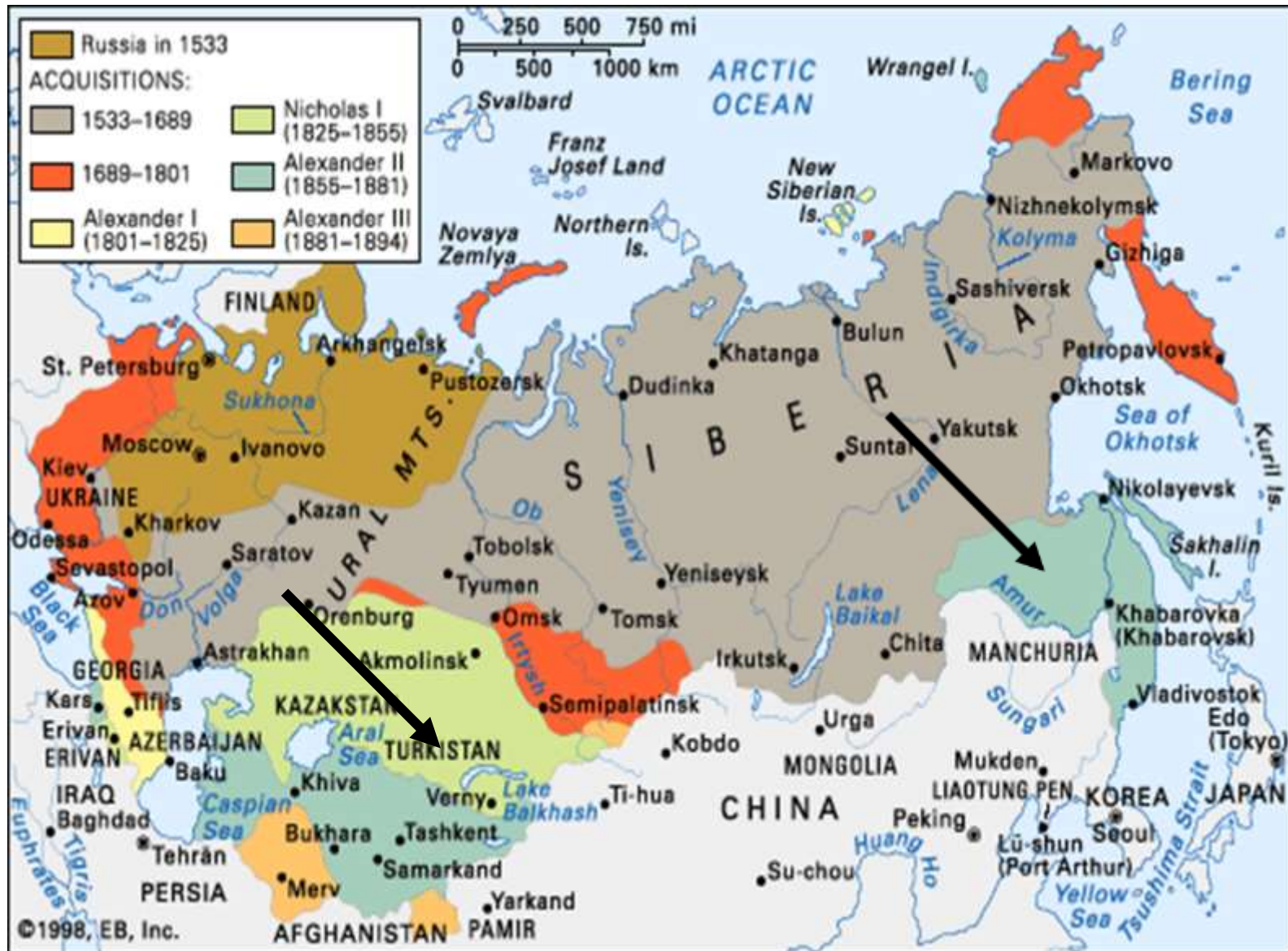






The **Crimean War** (1853-1856)  
Russia blocked in the Balkans





Russia's **new priorities:**  
expansion in the **Caucasus**  
and in **Asia (central Asia &  
Far East)**

**Empire Russe**

Annexion  
russe : 1858

*Fleuve Amour*

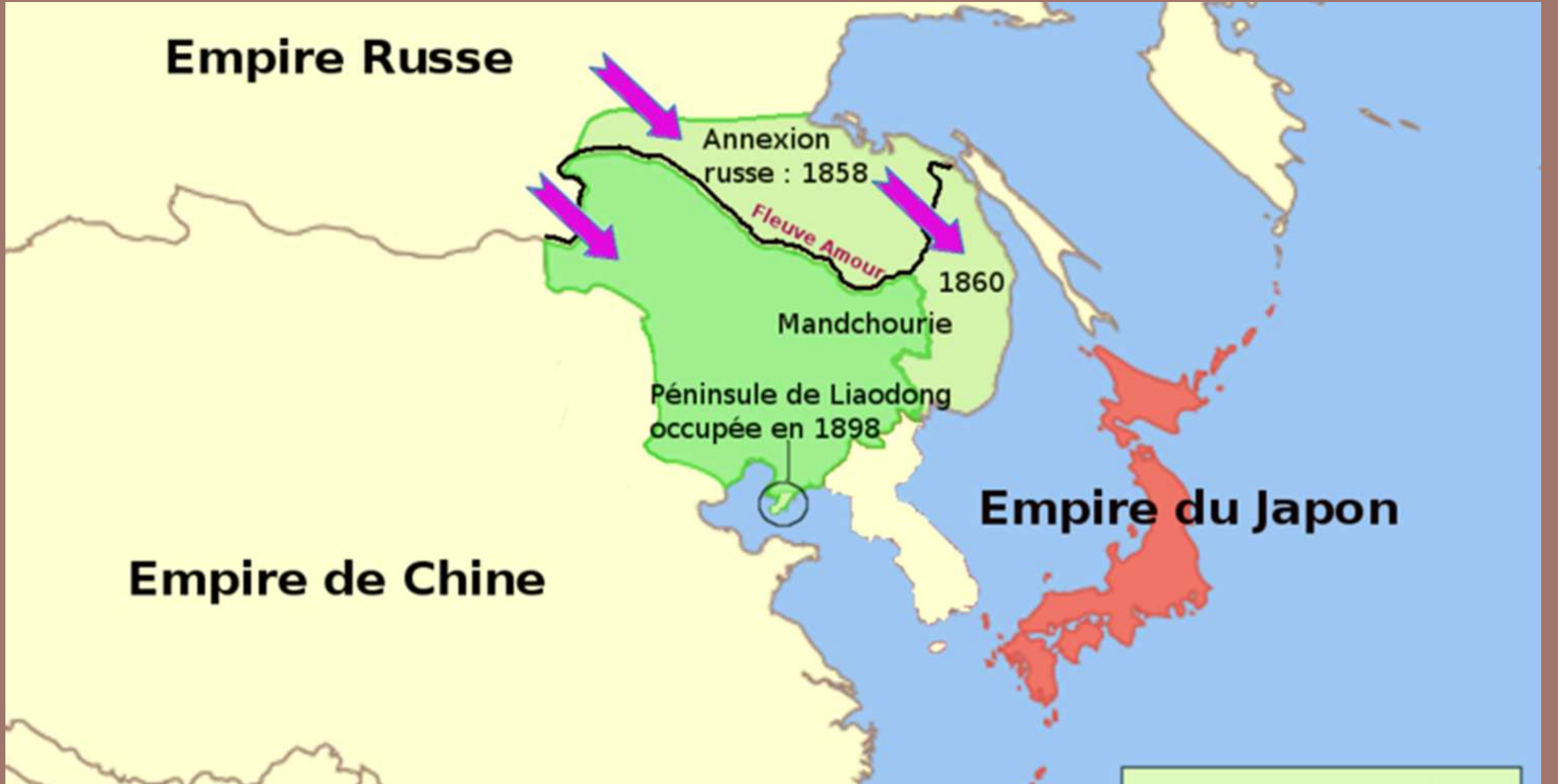
1860

Mandchourie

Péninsule de Liaodong  
occupée en 1898

**Empire de Chine**

**Empire du Japon**





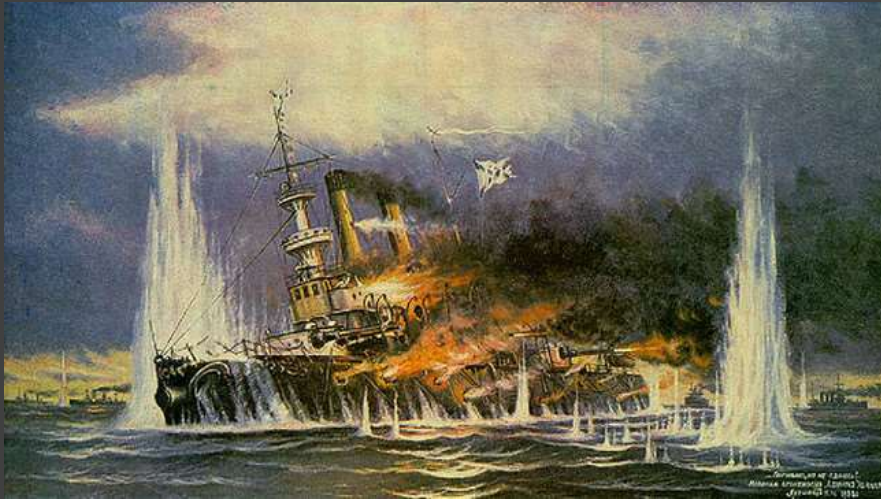


## The Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905)





## The humiliating defeat of Tsushima





Korea transformed into a **Japanese protectorate** (1905)

Korea: a **Japanese colony** (1910)