

New Schools - New Perspectives

Fundamental changes in East Asia and their impact on education

Three individual cases: Samurai, Chinese confucian scholar, “new” Korean woman

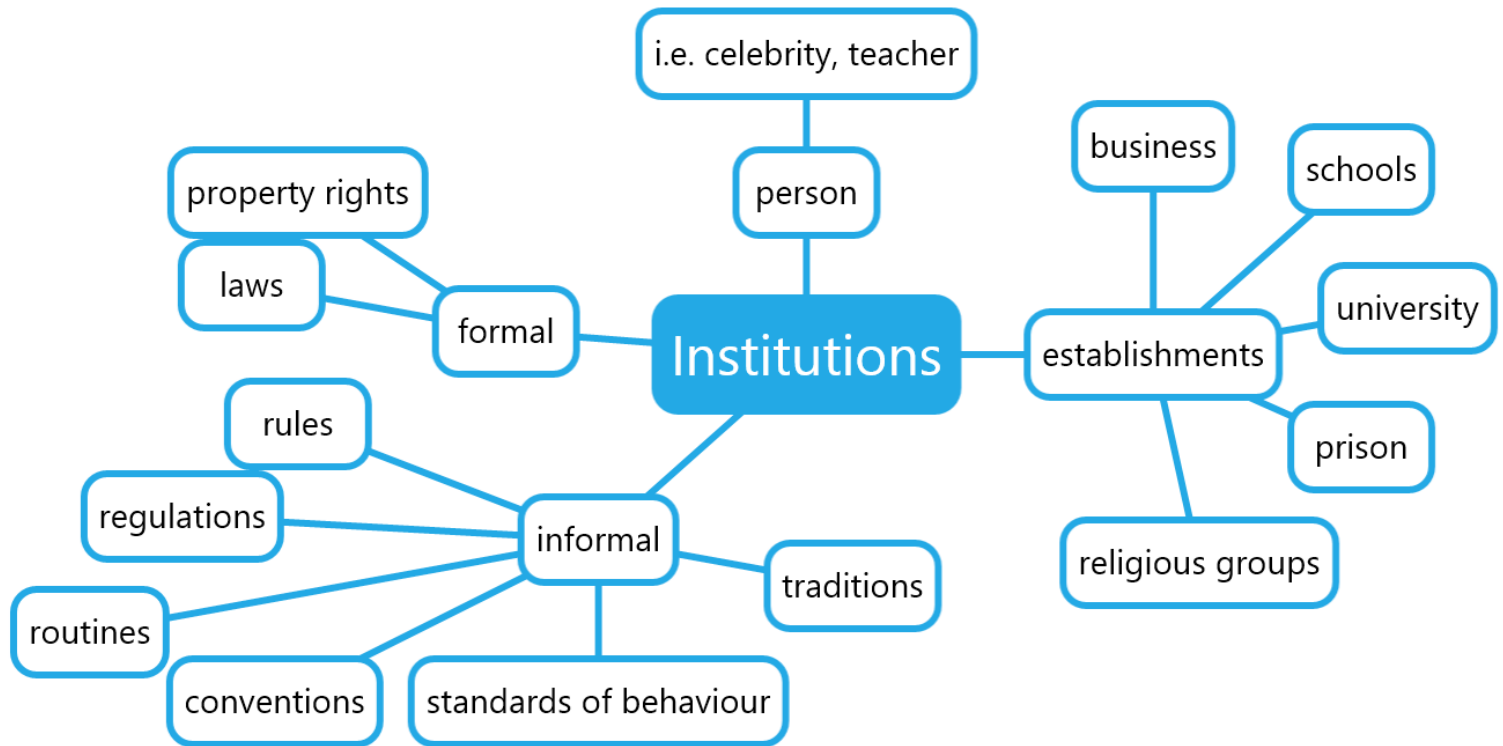


Research Question

How did historical changes impact educational institutions and how did individuals who have already crossed boarders reflect on these changes?

Approach / Realization

We categorized the term “institutions” for our use:



The focus was not only the educational but also the institutional changes in East Asia. By using the chart/mindmap above we wanted to explore what kind of institutions could be affected by changes and how institutional changes could have an impact on our fictitious characters.

Why letters?

Letters are not only the original form of conveying messages and information, but they are also more personal and emotional which can help us to understand better individual perspectives. Because of the emotions involved, a reader remembers facts and details more easily compared to reading neutral texts (i.e. news articles, academic articles etc).

We wrote fictitious letters (3 letters per person; 9 letters in total) from the perspective of a Japanese samurai, a Chinese scholar and a “new” Korean woman.

We made sure to include historical facts and data.

Preparations

After reading sample letters from “Epistolary Korea” (Haboush, 2009) and “Briefe in die chinesische Vergangenheit” (Rosendorfer, 1983) we set down general points like the period in which this individual lived, his origin, upbringing, education and possible key events in his life.

Because we wanted to reflect on institutions through the eyes of our character we all chose individuals who underwent changes in their lives. Not only the reasons those changes happened or the aftermath was interesting to us but also the conflict within a person and his development had to be considered.

We were modeling our fictional characters after real historical figures. While these figures inspired us we took the freedom to allow an element of phantasy. At the same time, this phantasy would never be groundless but be based on real historical conditions.

Our fictional characters

A Japanese samurai during the Meiji Restoration in 1890s.

A Chinese scholar from 19th century to the Chinese Cultural Revolution under Mao Zedong.

A Korean Woman in the 1920s (1920-1921) during the Japanese Occupation.

Common intersection points

- Changes and individual struggles
- Gender Equality
- Learning Revolution
- New Frontiers
- Education utopia
- View of other countries as well as the west
- Access to education

Explanation

We illustrate the core issues by excerpts from our letters on these scrolls:

The different colors represent each author:

brown - Chinese Scholar
green - Japanese Samurai
yellow - Korean Women

The watermark-style characters in the middle of the scrolls (behind the texts) signify the word “letter” in the languages of the three characters: 편지 in Korean, 手紙 in Japanese and 信 in Chinese.

The text in italic below or beside every excerpt are explanations, background information and indications for our sources.

Access to education

Even though societal and institutional changes were going on in the home countries of all three characters those changes had an ambivalent impact on the educational field. At a certain degree the access to education was limited and restricted to the privileged ones. In some instances however, ordinary people were either able to find other educational alternatives or their status didn't matter in terms of achieving education.

Just a few commoners had the luck of education. There were temple schools, who taught young people in reading, writing and arithmetic [...] Ordinary people who weren't able to visit such schools were educated by their parents or some joined together and hired a young teacher.

Only a few commoners had the chance of education before the Meiji Restoration. Also this education was very practically oriented, just reading, writing and math were taught. Higher education was a privilege that only the Samurai class was guaranteed. They were trained in military and literary studies. (see Daikichi, 1985 and Blomberg, 1994)

The traditional way of a career for a doctor on the village or province level is to be a good student and to graduate from primary school as well as junior middle school. [...] At this point it also doesn't matter whether the applicant was the member of a rich family or a poor peasant's son. Unlike in former times, when only sons of wealthy families had the means to pay for an education in medicine and could afford to stay in school so long.

After abolishing the civil service examination system education was opened for everyone. Especially young people who wanted to become doctors had an actual chance by working hard in school. As reading texts was the main method of traditional instruction in medicine, trainees needed high literacy and educational levels. [...] As such, the main obstacles to the wider dissemination of Chinese medicine in the villages were education and literacy levels. [...], barefoot doctors received far higher levels of education than their fellow villagers. [...]" (Fung, 2012; p. 53-54)

The reason for restriction was simply because the Japanese think that we only need basic education which suits our practical nature, which is of course nonsense. Because of our “low developed character” the Japanese government assigned many Korean students to inferior schools. The Japanese government regards Koreans as backward and poor people who don't need higher education.

From the beginning of 1910 to 1919 Koreans experienced a restriction on educational opportunities caused by the Japanese administration due the arguments that “education [of the Korean subjects] is not urgent” and “all that is needed in education of Koreans is practical and vocational training, which is better suited to the level of their development” (Kim, 1985; p. 159). The later justified the Japanese authority to restrict the admission of Korean students in higher education and to differentiate educational programmes between Koreans and Japanese.

That is why, my dear friend, I made a big decision today, [...] I came to the conclusion that I am leaving Japan and go on a big journey. I will travel to Korea or China. [...] But I will go to find out if the western ideas of education also spread there.

[The protagonist decided to leave Japan, because he didn't want to become a bureaucrat or an administrator, after the modernization of Japan. By deciding to visit China, he wanted to learn more about the western educational system and the culture.]

His [my mentor] death in 1907 and the abolishment of the civil service examination system in 1905 were the two main reasons why I chose to leave the sinking ship and search for a place that fitted my needs better than the failing system of the Qing-Dynasty. [...] after 1915 when I graduated from the medical school my professor wanted me to pursue my studies [...]. He therefore contacted friends and acquaintances in Germany and set up for me the opportunity to go there.

The first choice to go abroad was one of will while in order to follow the career of a doctor it was a necessity for the female protagonist to go abroad because instead of becoming a traditional woman; and secondly, by going abroad for purposes of advances study-cause Western medical education. Chai (2013) quoted: “For centuries, traveling overseas was the exclusive domain of men in their pursuit of new knowledge. [...] From the late nineteenth century, a small group of Korean women began to travel overseas for a variety of reasons, but largely for purposes of advanced study. Two of the pioneers were Kim Chindang (a.k.a. Esther Pak), who went to United States in 1895 to study medicine [...], and Yung Chongwon, who went to Japan to study in 1898.”

I have bigger dreams and I want to fly freely like an eagle. Missing this ever last opportunity of coming to Japan for studying would have been very unbearable for me. In your eyes I might never be able to become this ideal woman, but nevertheless I am indeed fortunate that you gave birth to me and bequeathed me with your strong and gracious attitude and sharp-wittedness. Having left you and our little brother broke my heart and I sincerely hope that you both can forgive me. Someday, I hope, you will understand that I have come to Tokyo for a very good reason.

The female protagonist crossed borders in two ways: Firstly, by deciding freely to follow an academic path protagonist to go abroad because instead of becoming a traditional woman; and secondly, by going abroad for purposes of advances study-cause Western medical education. Chai (2013) quoted: “For centuries, traveling overseas was the exclusive domain of men in their pursuit of new knowledge. [...] From the late nineteenth century, a small group of Korean women began to travel overseas for a variety of reasons, but largely for purposes of advanced study. Two of the pioneers were Kim Chindang (a.k.a. Esther Pak), who went to United States in 1895 to study medicine [...], and Yung Chongwon, who went to Japan to study in 1898.”

1901 born in Seoul as a daughter of a Christian family
1902 baptism by a protestant church
1905 beginning of home schooling (focus on bible lessons, Hanja and maths)
1910-1920 Ewha Women's School
1919 experience of national independence movement
1920 overseas studying at Imperial University in Japan (Medical Studies)
1921 engagement to Japanese student

Learning Revolution

By far the biggest change were schools which taught the general public - especially those which didn't charge their students. The second great leap was the adaptation of the subjects to include mathematics, science or Western medicine. But while the adaptation of this worked for China and Japan, it could not provide for the Korean people.

On the one hand there [in Korea] were the Japanese hospitals, [...] then we had the missionary hospitals, mainly led by Christian missionaries from North America and Canada, who treated both the traditional elites as well as the general population, and most even free of charge. But thirdly there was still a great percentage of people relying on traditional Korean medicine.

During the first years after introducing Western medicine to East Asian countries it was very hard for a Chinese or Korean citizens to get educated in it. [...] there were quite a number of foreign missionary medical doctors in Korea, who were providing Western medical education each according to their own need. [...] Meanwhile, Japanese medical doctors, who were educated in Western medicine, were operating hospitals in Pusan, Wonsan, Inchu, and Seoul.” (Kee, 1993)

For instance, there is now a public education system. Somehow it should help to catch up with the West and modernize Japan. They even sent people over to study the education systems in western countries. And now nearly every child can go to school and get education.

“Soon after the West modernized the scholar system in Japan, every child was able to get education, even women, which hadn't been possible before.” (Daikichi, 1985)

[...] there is a lack of opportunity in terms of higher education [in Korea]. Even if there are governmental objectives to expand the opportunity for higher education in Korea at the moment, the process is too slow to meet demand. Therefore I and an increasing number of fellow Korean students sought schooling in Japan.

After the National Independence Movement in 1919 the Japanese Authority sought for reorientation of the educational policy. One countermeasure in order to check the establishment of a private university by Korean nationals was the establishment of a university in Korea. Since the progress of the establishment was too slow Korean students decided to go to Japan for studying, since Japan was comparing to the USA or Europe the cheapest alternative. It is needless to say that only a few of the most affluent ones could afford overseas studying and that ordinary students could not expect assistance from the Japanese government (see Kim, 1985 and Seth, 2002).

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Gender Equality

The opinion on educational equality were generally not unanimous: at the one hand there were the traditionalists/conservatives who regarded women's education sceptically and scrutinized it. At the another hand education regardless of gender, race, status etc. was also perceived as a new hope with a lot of potential for the future.

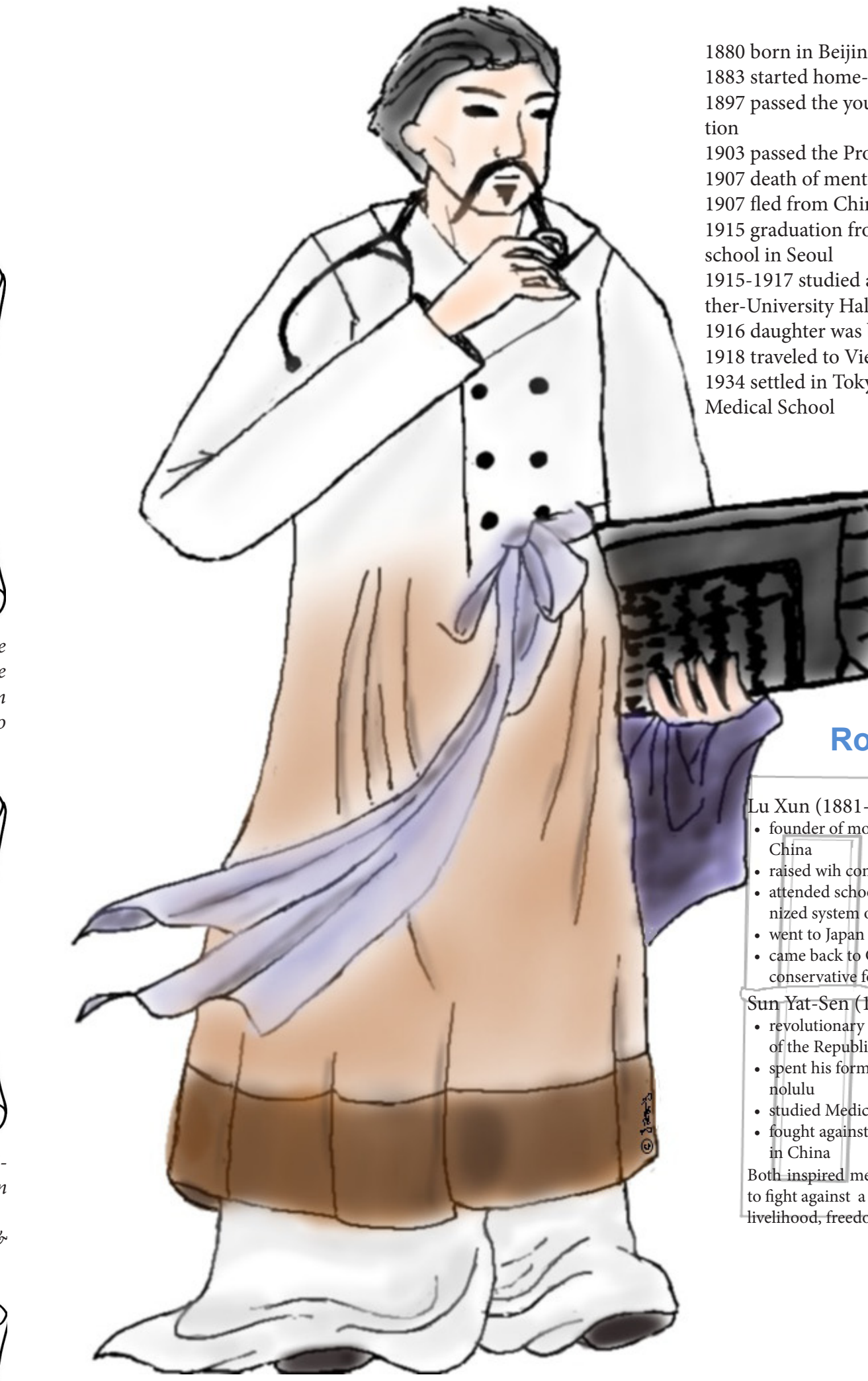
Many oppose to girl's education because they think girls only need education in order to become good mothers and wise housewives. Therefore higher education is needless. Critics would say, “What use is there in providing girls with college education? They will just become arrogant and have no knowledge of housekeeping. Given the opportunity to indulge themselves in some luxury, they will jump at the chance.” (Choi, 2013)

This passage in Jin-Is letter originated from an article on Alice Appenzeller's lecture at the Chungang Church on February 16, 1931. “Appenzeller reflects on how ‘every conceivable accusation and harsh criticism’ against the idea of college education for women has been put forward, feeding the public perception that higher education would produce women who ‘become arrogant and have no knowledge of housekeeping.’” (Choi, 2013; p. 48, 63-65)

I really had my problems with the concept that women were equal to men in all respects. Can you imagine? Women being able to run businesses, operate on patients, going to school and having a higher education! The traditional values of a dutiful wife and good mother all thrown overboard. A higher education takes a great part of a young life. And after graduation, will this woman still be interested in settling down, have children and be a good wife?

“Chinese women experienced severe gender discrimination over five thousand years of civilization. [...] They were excluded from receiving a comparable education to men; Confucian ideology initiated that patriarchal practice.” (Liu & Carpenter, 2005)
This view is reflected by the statement: “Women and crooks are unteachable.” (Lei, Chen & Xiong, 1993)

Education is now available for everyone. [...] Furthermore, private informal education institutions were replaced by public formal schools, there even were schools for girls-only. I guess the biggest change for China was that the door opened for females to an equal educational opportunity, pretty much just like back home in Japan



China was, like Japan, pretty much influenced by the West in this time period. The Chinese traditional education system, which existed for 1300 years was completely modernized. The traditional system had a narrow content and other subjects, like natural sciences, were completely overlooked. (Ming, 1986: p. 255-269.)

Role Models

- Lu Xun (1881-1936)
- founder of modern literature in China
 - raised with Confucian values
 - attended schools with a westernized system of learning
 - went to Japan to study medicine
 - came back to China to fight against conservative forces
- Sun Yat-Sen (1866-1925)
- revolutionary and founding father of the Republic of China
 - spent his formative years in Honolulu
 - studied medicine in Hong Kong
 - fought against the imperial system in China
 - Both inspired because of their career and their will to fight against a set system even at the cost of their own livelihood: freedom and reward.

- 1840 born
1846-1860 bakufu school (private elite school for Samurai)
1868 start of Meiji Restoration
1870 Shogunate lost their power
1872 national system to educate everyone
1875 finally lost all his Samurai Privileges
1886 marries
1890 birth of son
1892 departure to China, first letter
1911 Beijing, second letter
1912 Vienna, son studies at Vienna, third letter, death of his former teacher

rules, regulations, establishments are

I fear that our ethical values will get lost on the way to modernization. The Western idea of education doesn't fit our way of life.

I fight for the educational freedom of women as well as for the academic freedom for my people. Education is the key to national strength!

Role Models

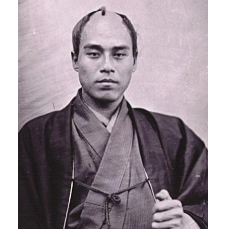


- Hyosok Na (1899-1948)
- a Korean poet, feminist, writer, painter, educator and journalist
 - born in Suwon, Gyeonggi, South Korea
 - first female Korean artist of Western painting
 - became well known as a feminist with her criticism against the marital institutions in the early 20th century



- Father Park (1876-1910)
- a high-ranking Kim loon-clan name
 - “father” was her baptismal name
 - after marriage assumed her husband's surname “Park”
 - first female Korean student who studied in the U.S.
 - graduated from the Women's Medicine University in Baltimore
 - became a doctor in 1900; she returned home afterwards

Role Model



- Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901)
- author, educator and publisher
 - greatly influenced by his lifelong teacher, who was a scholar in Confucianism and Han learning
 - 1860-1862, went abroad with the first Japanese mission to the west
 - founder of Keio University in Tokyo
 - wrote more than 100 books (about parliamentary government, popular education, women's right, and so on)

Stephanie Kappaurer

student of Law and Chinese Studies.
Born 1993 in Vorarlberg.
Inventor of the Chinese Confucian Scholar, Ruan Yuan.

“What interested me most in the beginning was the way Confucian scholars were educated in the Ming and Qing dynasties. It was only during the writing of my letters that I found an interest in the development of medical education in East Asia. I think writing letters is a wonderful approach because you not only have to find data about particular institutions the characters could have come in contact with but also people, places, other historical data and of course the general living conditions in a certain period in time.”

Jenny D. Nguyen

student of Korean Studies.
Born in 1990 in Lower Austria.
Inventor of the character “The new Korean woman” Jin-I, called after a gisaeng Hwang Jin-I of the Choson-Dynasty who was popular for her poetic skills and extraordinary intellect.

“Since the beginning of my studies I have been interested in the role of the Korean women in society and history. Especially during the occupation period in Korea (1910-1945) I wanted to learn more about educational and career opportunities of Korean women and what the struggles between traditions and new opportunities were. During the drafting process of my letter-character I got my inspirations from famous historical female figures in Korea, such as Hwang Jin-I, Shin Saimgdang, Park Esther, Yu Kwansun and courageous female activists who fought for the nation's independence”

Isabella Schwarz

student of Japanese Studies.
Born in 1988 in Lower Austria.
Inventor of the character “the samurai”.

“As long as I can remember I was very impressed by the Japanese culture, history, and people, especially the Samurai, their elite training and their way of life. So I chose to write from the perspective of one. During my research I discovered a lot of fascinating things, which I didn't know. Writing these letters was pretty demanding, but also very interesting and educational.”

History of Education

1860

Time and Origin of our Letters

Introduction of a national system to educate the whole population

1872

Establishment of the Ewha Women's School

Introduction of school system

1886

End of civil service examination system

1894

Peking University is founded

Introduction of school system based on Japanese system

1898

Abolishing of the civil service examination system

1905

Establishment of Kyongsung (Keijo) Imperial University

1926

Discontinuation of teaching the Korean language in schools

1938

First letter, Meiji Restoration, Tokyo

Second letter, 1911, Beijing

Third letter, 1912, Vienna

First letter, 1920, Tokyo

Second and third letter, 1921, Tokyo

First letter, 1934, Tokyo

Second letter, 1940, Tokyo

Third letter, 1965, Tokyo

Beginning of the Meiji Restoration

1868

Downfall of the Shogunate

1870s

Annexation of Choson (Korea) under the Republic of China

1910

End of the last dynasty (Qing) post-quake of the Republic of China

1911-1912

National independence movement

1919

Great Kanto Earthquake, post-quake violence against Koreans

1923

Chinese Civil War

1927-1950

Establishment of the People's Republic of China

1949

Cultural Revolution

1966-1976

Boxer rebellion

1900