tan and Sumatra. Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, the Japanese made efforts to improve relations with the nations of South and Southeast Asia. Goodwill visits, exchanges of cultural activities, and economic loans formed the basis of Japanese activities in these areas.

Japan in the 1990s

In the 1960s, former Prime Minister Sato spoke for many Japanese when he announced that Japan wished to have an influence in world affairs equal to its economic power. In the 1990s, the Japanese are fully aware of their power and just as aware of their responsibilities. The Japanese have been developing foreign policy that is more independent of the United States. They are trying to improve relations with all their neighbors. Japan’s great trade has had an important impact (effect) on countries all over the world. The Japanese realize they must set limits on export trade or lose the friendship of the United States and the countries of Western Europe. They are making attempts to limit exports by turning their attention to improving life at home. The policies of democratic Japan today stand in sharp contrast to those of the Japanese Empire of the 1930s and 1940s.

Whether the key to the Japanese future lies in a traditional spirit of teamwork or in the attempt to set up individual creativity is difficult to predict. However, it is an almost universally accepted idea that whatever future challenges may face Japan, the Japanese will adapt to them. At the same time they will remain distinct, even unique among the world’s peoples.

In his book *The Japanese Mind*, Robert Christopher gives an excellent summation of the Japanese future: “Were I obliged to lay a bet as to which of the world’s major societies is most likely to be still functioning in the year 2050 in a form recognizable to its present inhabitants, Japan would be my choice. The Japanese in short, have an uncommon talent for survival.”*

Korea—Land and Climate

Koreans call their country a whale’s back that has been damaged in battles between prawns (shrimp). Korea’s location had made it a highway for invaders from Manchuria and the Chinese mainland. In the late 19th century and into the 20th century, Japan thought of Korea as its stepping stone for control of East Asia. Korea’s location and its historical results have given a sense of a common identity and unity to the Korean people.

Korea’s location has also made it a link between cultures—especially between the Chinese and Japanese cultures. The Koreans have adapted aspects of both Chinese and Japanese culture.

Location and Topography

Korea is called “The Land of the Morning Calm.” It is a peninsula nation that extends off the east coast of Asia between China and Japan. To its east is the Sea of Japan. To its west and south is the East China Sea and the Yellow Sea.

Korea’s northern border with China and the former Soviet Union is the Yalu River and the Paektu-San ("Whitehead Mountain"). The Korean Peninsula is one of the most mountainous areas in the world. Only one-fifth of the land is suitable for farming. The coastline is long but regular and as a result there are few good harbors.

Climate

The climate of Korea is greatly influenced by the sea that surrounds it on three sides. Monsoon winds blow from the southeast in the summer, bringing hot and wet weather. In the winter, the monsoon winds blow from the north and bring cold, dry air from the Asian mainland. The lowland areas of South Korea are less affected by these cold winds.

Although the peninsula is small, there are great differences in the climate of Korea. Highland and lowland temperature and rainfall differ. Since North Korea is attached directly to the Asian mainland, it is influenced by the nearby continental climate regions. In the area bordering China and the former Soviet Union, short, cool summers and bitterly cold winters occur. In the south, the sea a moderating affect. Warm summers and moderate winters are the rule. Rainfall is plentiful on the entire peninsula. The extreme south has a sub-tropical climate.

Korea’s People

South Korea is a densely populated country (1,120 people per square mile) with more than 43 million people. About 25 percent live in and around the capital city of Seoul (70 percent of the people live in cities). North Korea has about half the population of the South (23 million) and is much less densely populated (485 people per square mile—65 percent live in cities).

Historians and archaeologists believe that the first people to settle in Korea came from Central Asia about 8,000 years ago. Because of its location near China and Japan, invading armies swept through Korea many times. The invaders settled down and intermarried with the local peoples. As a result, a homogeneous (one type) group was formed (99.9 percent of the people are Korean).

The Korean people were united into one culture group hundreds of years ago. A sign of this was the development of a spoken and written language. Up to the middle of the 15th century, the Koreans used Chinese characters for their writing. In 1443, King Sejong ordered scholars to create a new set of letters or characters with which to write Korean. The result was the current system called Hangul. In the Hangul alphabet there are ten vowels and fourteen consonants. The oral language is made of words and ideas from the Chinese, Japanese, Mongolian, and Turkish languages.

Religion

As in Japan, Koreans have accepted and adapted more than one religion into their way of life. Early Koreans believed in nature-spirits. Daoism (Taoism) came from China. Daoists try to simplify their lives and live in harmony with the natural world. Consequently,
adapting Daoism to nature-spirit worship was not difficult. Although few Koreans today would call themselves Daoists, Daoism has been very important in the development of Korean culture.

Buddhism, which came to Korea in the 4th century A.D., became the most common religion of the Korean people. As in other things, Koreans adapted Buddhist teachings to fit their existing culture.

Another example of cultural diffusion is Confucianism, which came to Korea from China. This philosophy was of great value to the Korean rulers because it influenced people to respect and obey those in authority. Confucian principles were used to set up a system of education and government administration.

In the 18th century, Christian missionaries came to Korea. At first they were feared and killed by the government. Although the practice of Christianity was outlawed for 100 years, a small Christian community grew. Toward the end of the 19th century, Christian missionaries were allowed to build schools and hospitals in Korea. Many South Korean independence leaders were graduates of these missionary schools.

Today South Korea practices complete freedom of religion. In North Korea, the Communist government discourages people from holding any religious beliefs.

### History of Korea

Archaeologists have found evidence that people lived in the southwestern part of the Korean peninsula about 30,000 years ago. About 5,000 years ago, tribes began to migrate into the peninsula from North China and Manchuria. Stone artifacts of pottery, spears, and arrowheads of flint have been found. Evidence of the use of stone plows and sickles have also been found and it is possible these people lived in an agricultural society.

According to legend, Korean history began in 2333 B.C. with the establishment of the ancient state of Chosón. It was located along the Taedong River, near present-day Pyongyang in North Korea. The founder of the state was called Tan’gun. Another legend, found in Chinese texts, says that a refugee Chinese noble, Chi-Tzu (Kija to Koreans), led a group of followers from China when the Shang Dynasty fell in 1028 B.C. Kija’s descendents ruled Chosón for the next 800 years until 194 B.C. In that year General Wiman, either a Chinese or a Korean in the service of the Chinese emperor, seized control of the kingdom in northwestern Korea. This event marks the beginning of Korea’s recorded history. Rice farming was the main economic activity (it was introduced in the 8th century B.C.).

### Chinese Influence

In the 2nd century B.C., the Han dynasty of China conquered the northern half of the Korean peninsula including the Wiman Kingdom of Chosón. The Chinese set up four territories. Korean tribes won back three of the territories over the next 35 years. The remaining fourth territory called Lolong (Nangyang in Korean) remained under Chinese control. Lolong covered the northwestern part of the peninsula near the Chinese border. Through contact with Lolong, the Koreans were able to adapt many Chinese arts and sciences and much of the Chinese system of government. This Chinese contact also led to the introduction of an iron culture and the Chinese ideographic writing system to the Koreans.
Divided Territory

In the 2nd century A.D., the Kingdom of Koguryō, the first real Korean state, was set up in the central Yalu River area. By the 4th century, Koguryō gained complete control of the Lelang territories.

Meanwhile, the tribes who lived in the southern half of the peninsula had united into three federations called The Three Han. Soon two kingdoms arose out of the three federations. Paekche in the southwestern area (250 A.D.) and Silla in the southeastern area (350 A.D.). The territory of the third Han, which lay in the center of the peninsula, fell to the Koguryō in the 5th century.

The Silla

In the wars that resulted, called The Struggle of the Three Kingdoms, Silla conquered the other two kingdoms, and by the middle of the 7th century took control of the entire peninsula.

For the next 200 years (668–892) the Silla monarchs ruled with absolute authority. They continued the process of borrowing and adopting Chinese culture. Silla sailors and traders carried most of the maritime (sea) trade in East Asia. Buddhism came to the Korean Peninsula as a result of this trade.

Koryŏ Dynasty

However, a series of disputes among members of the ruling family greatly weakened the Silla. In the early part of the 10th century a warlord, named Wang Kon, took control of the government. He set up a new dynasty and renamed the country, Koryŏ, with its capital in the port city of Kaesong. The name Korea comes from Koryŏ.

The Koryŏ dynasty lasted for over 400 years. It was a period of constant warfare and of economic problems. Late in the 14th century, General Yi Song-gye seized power and set up the Yi or Chosŏn dynasty, which lasted until 1910.

Yi Dynasty

Under the Yi dynasty, Seoul was made the capital. Confucian ideas brought by General Yi from China were introduced. During the Yi dynasty the Korean Hangul alphabet was written. The most productive literary period of Korean history occurred under the Yi dynasty. Scholars of this period wrote encyclopedias, histories, and stories in Hangul. Many schools were set up to teach and carry on the ideas of Confucius.

The Yi monarchs ruled with absolute power. They limited trade because they felt that Confucianism, which was followed by the rulers, said it was an evil. Rival factions in the ruling class constantly fought for power and greatly weakened the government.

In the late 16th century, the Japanese invaded the peninsula and captured Seoul. Only the arrival of a Chinese army and brilliant naval victories of Admiral Yi Sun-Sin saved Chosŏn from complete defeat (Yi Sun-Sin was the inventor of the "turtle boat" which was the first iron clad ship). As a result, Korea remained independent but in reality it was under the control of the Chinese as a sphere of influence. In the years that followed, many efforts were made to escape this control. The Chosŏn (Yi) dynasty tried to escape control by closing Korea to all foreign contacts, causing Westerners to call Korea "The Hermit Nation."
The Japanese in Control

In the 19th century, drought and famine further weakened the Yi dynasty. Peasant rebellions were common. In the last quarter of the century, the Japanese forced Korea to open its gates to trade. When Japan defeated China in 1895 in the Sino-Japanese War, Japan took control of Korea. Over the next 15 years, Korean independence was completely destroyed, and in 1910 Korea was annexed by Japan.

Japanese policy in Korea was based on the needs of the Japanese Empire. Although Japan pushed the economic development of Korea, the Korean people benefitted little from this economic growth. More serious was Japanese cultural policy. The Japanese refused to learn the Korean language. Laws were passed that made Japanese the language of instruction in schools. Newspapers had to be published in Japanese. Japanese policy went so far as to prohibit the use of the Korean language throughout the country.

Korea Seeks Independence

These actions led to the growth of a nationalist movement. Its aim was to gain Korean self-rule. In 1919, a combination of patriotic groups led a nationalist movement called the “Samil Movement” (“Samil” means March 1st). Masses (estimated at over 1 million) of unarmed demonstrators appealed to the conscience of the world to help them gain independence. The Japanese army brutally put down the Samil rebellion. About 7,000 of the Samils were killed and over 20,000 were put in prisons. For the next 26 years, Korean nationalists worked for independence in China, Hawaii, Washington D.C., and in the wild, mountainous areas near the Korean-Manchurian border.

In the 1943 Cairo Conference, the United States, Great Britain, and China proclaimed that, “in due course Korea shall become free and independent.” The dream of independence seemed to be fulfilled when the Japanese were defeated and driven from Korea in August 1945.

A Divided Korea

Between 1910 and 1945, the Korean Peninsula was part of the Japanese Empire. In 1945 at the end of World War II, the Soviet Union occupied the northern section of Korea and the United States occupied southern Korea. The dividing line was the 38th parallel of latitude.

The Soviets and the Americans set up governments in each of its zones. A United Nations commission was sent to supervise elections for a government that would rule the entire Korean Peninsula. However, the Soviets would not allow the U.N. commission into their zone. In 1948, elections were held in the south. This resulted in the creation of the Republic of Korea, known as South Korea. At the same time, the Soviets set up the Democratic People’s Republic, known as North Korea.

The Korean War

The Cold War that developed after World War II between the United States and the Soviet Union kept Korea divided. In June 1950, thousands of Soviet-trained North Korean
soldiers equipped with Soviet-made weapons crossed the 38th parallel and invaded South Korea. A United Nations force made up of troops from the United States and 16 other nations were sent to South Korea to help push the invaders back.

After initial setbacks, the U.N. troops pushed the North Koreans back to the Yalu River, the boundary between North Korea and China. The Chinese warned the United Nations not to invade North Korea, but this warning was ignored. Just before Thanksgiving in 1950, 300,000 Chinese soldiers poured out of mountain hiding places and crossed the Yalu River. The U.N. troops were caught completely by surprise. This surprise attack drove the U.N. forces out of North Korea before the end of December.

The United Nations retreat ended roughly along the 38th parallel, where for over two years, the two armies fought to a standoff. In July of 1953, a truce was signed in the Korean village of Ponmunjom. The agreement left Korea divided. The truce and the division have lasted to this day.

Korea’s Economy

Throughout Korea’s long history, farming has been the main economic activity of the Korean people. When Japan annexed (added to) Korea to the Japanese Empire in 1910, the Japanese took the best farmland for themselves. Many Koreans were forced to move to the cities in order to survive.

Industry began to develop more rapidly in the north than in the south. The main reason for this was the rich natural resources found in the north. Coal, copper, iron, lead, tungsten, and zinc are among the rich mineral deposits found here.

Agriculture

When the Japanese were defeated and driven from Korea, agriculture remained the most important economic activity of the Koreans. In North Korea, on small patches of arable land, farmers grow wheat, barley, soybeans, and millet. The climate and topography of South Korea make farming easier. As you read, the weather is milder and rainfall is more plentiful. Rice is the major crop and in good years it is exported. Barley, millet, soybeans, and sweet potatoes are also grown.

Some Korean farms raise silkworms. These silkworms produce the silk for the very important silk textile industry.

The most important natural resource of Korea is the abundance of water. The sea around the peninsula is rich in fish, shellfish, and seaweed. These foods make up an important part of the Korean people’s diet. The rivers that flow rapidly down from the mountains create hydroelectric power. Development of hydroelectric power plants have advanced rapidly in the north. The smaller and slower moving rivers of the south provide irrigation and a means of transportation.

The Growth of Industry

At the time of the division, in 1948, South Korea was economically weak and the best industries were in the north. South Korea depended entirely on an agriculture system that
could not support its large population. However, this situation changed greatly. American financial aid and a dictatorial government policy aimed at promoting industrial growth created what seemed to be a miracle. Industries that never existed before were set up, and existing industries were expanded (shipbuilding, steel plants, chemicals, fertilizer, cement making, and glassmaking).

The textile industry was greatly expanded. The latest technology was imported and used to produce wool, silk, rayon, and knitted textile goods. Diesel and petroleum refineries were built. Since the early 1980s, South Korea has become a world class producer of computer technology, automobiles, and television, audio, and electronic equipment.

**Korean Industry Today**

Today South Korea is regarded as one of the more important industrial powers of the Pacific Rim. This rapid industrialization did not come about without great cost. Japanese rule over Korea disrupted Korean culture by weakening the rural tradition of strong family ties. Moreover, the strong military dictatorship never really allowed for the development of democratic traditions.

In an effort to compete economically with Japan and the United States, the South Korean government encouraged a few families to dominate Korean economic development—the Chaebols. Workers were not treated fairly; wages were low and working condition were not always safe. As a result, large and violent labor strikes took place. Often Koreans demanding greater political freedom joined in these demonstrations. The army and the police used strong measures to control the demonstrations. Many Koreans died or were injured in these demonstrations.

These periodic disturbances have greatly damaged the reputation of the South Korean government. Economic progress also has been slowed. In the early 1990s, it could be truthfully said the economic miracle of Korea had not benefited the majority of South Koreans as much as it should have.

However, a new era in South Korea may be dawning. Elections for president took place in December 1992. This was the first election without army generals running for president. (In the past, it has been said that the army would decide elections by rolling tanks into the street.) By all reports, this election was the fairest South Korea has ever held. There was none of the violence of the 1987 presidential campaign. The president, Roh Tae Woo, a former army general, declared the current government neutral. He moved quickly to assure a fair election by cracking down on suspected violence and abuse of the election law.

The three candidates for president were:

- Kim Young Sam, once a dissident, who opposed the government and as a result spent many years under house arrest.
- Kim Dae Jung, South Korea's most famous dissident.
- Chung Ju Young, the billionaire founder of Hyundai. (He might be called the Ross Perot of South Korea.)

All three promised to give more of the benefits of South Korea's economic miracle to the people through economic reform. Mr. Kim Young Sam was elected president in a close election held on December 18, 1992.
The Two Korean Situations in the 1990s

North Korea

For 40 years, North Korea relied on its two giant neighbors, the former Soviet Union and China for political, economic, and military assistance. In 1992, Russia's policy toward Korea changed. It recognized South Korea, stopped supplying arms to the North, and demanded hard currency (gold, American dollars, British pounds sterling) for its oil shipments. In August 1992, against the wishes of North Korea, China also agreed to establish diplomatic relations with Seoul (South Korea).

Isolation is certainly not a new experience for North Korea. The few television sets in North Korea are built so that they cannot pick up telecasts from the South. Radios receive only one North Korean channel that is controlled by the government. Short-wave receivers are illegal for average citizens. The Pyongyang (North Korean) government has forced thousands of young people who were studying in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union to come home. The government was afraid that they might learn new ideas.

North Korea is ruled by its founding dictator, Kim II Sung, who is now 80 and in poor health. The “Great Leader,” Kim II Sung’s title, has named his son, “The Dear Leader,” as his successor. However, this is not a popular choice among other members of the government and a struggle for power over the succession may already have begun.

Some fear the possibility of political turmoil or civil war following the death of Kim II Sung. This is especially disturbing because of North Korea’s secret program to develop an atomic bomb. No one knows how close Korea is to having a bomb since Kim has not allowed inspectors access to his facilities or air space.

South Korea’s Current Reaction to Possible Unification

Following the death of Kim II Sung, moves to unify North and South Korea would become more possible. German unification presents a powerful example for South Korea. The South Koreans have calculated that based on the size of their economy, it would be ten times more expensive for them to unite with North Korea than it was for West Germany to absorb East Germany.

As a result, the South Koreans hope that communism will die in North Korea and that unification between North and South can be spread over ten or even 20 years. Officials of the South Korean government are hoping that their new friends in Beijing can persuade North Korea to adopt the Chinese model of economic reform and an open door policy toward the rest of the world.