

French missionaries long ago penetrated into the land and made many converts, who were afterwards severely persecuted. French fleets were sent there in 1866 and later, and a fight took place in which the French were repulsed. In consequence the persecution of the Christians grew more severe. Warships were sent by different nations to try to open trade, but in vain, and finally an American trading vessel was destroyed and its crew massacred.

This affair brought a fleet from the United States to the coast of Corea in 1871, which, being fired on from the shore, attacked and captured five Korean forts. The opening of Corea was finally due to Japan. In 1876 the Japanese did what Commodore Perry had done to themselves twenty-two years before. A fleet was sent which sailed up within sight of Seoul, the capital, and by a display of men and guns forced the government to sign a treaty opening the country to trade through the port of Fusan. In 1880 Chemulpo was also made an open port. Two years afterwards a United States fleet obtained similar concessions, and within a short time most of the countries of Europe were admitted to trade, and the long isolation of the Hermit Kingdom was at an end.

These events were followed by a rivalry between China and Japan, in which the latter country showed itself much the more active and alert. Imposing Japanese consulates were built in Seoul, flourishing settlements were laid out, and energetic steps taken to make Japan the paramount power in Corea. As a result, the Koreans became divided into two factions, a progressive one which favored the Japanese,