This talk will focus on the cultural, social, and politics transformation that occurred in Korea with the beginning of the Choson (Jeoson) dynasty (1392-1910). This very long-lived political system set the parameters of social and cultural development in Korea that came in conflict with late 19th century Western Imperialism and continue to inform the shape of contemporary Korean social values and aesthetics. I will focus on the reign of perhaps the most famous and influential of the early Choson monarchs, Sejong the Great (1418-1450). This was a period in which neo-Confucian values and social injunctions were made a state Orthodoxy, and also a period of enormous cultural and material change in Korean society.

**General Histories of Korea Old and New**

These volumes provide a general overview of Korean history from its earliest beginnings until the late 20th century.

- Michael Robinson, *Korea’s Twentieth Century Odyssey: A Short History*, University of Hawaii Press (Honolulu, 2007)

**Traditional Korean History (Emphasis on Early Choson Korea, 1392-1450)**

These readings focus on the early establishment of the last great Korean political and social system, the Choson period. There is an emphasis on the transformation of Korean society in the light of a heavily inculcated system of Neo-Confucian values. This in response to the strong Buddhist orientation of the previous system.

The Reign of Sejong the Great: Innovation and Cultural Production

Here is information that highlights the particular cultural and policy innovations of the third Choson monarch Sejong.


Art History of the Choson Period (1392-1910)

This is possibly the best book you can find on Korean art history, although its focus is painting and the Choson period itself.