

Fall 2020 Arts of Asia Lecture Series  
Heroes & Villains in Asian Art and Culture  
Sponsored by the *Society for Asian Art*

## **King Sejong the Great Korean Scholar King**

Michael Robinson, Professor Emeritus, Indiana University Bloomington  
October 16, 2020

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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Kyung Moon Hwang, *A History of Korea*, Palgrave/MacMillan (New York, 2010)

Keith Pratt, *Everlasting Flower: A History of Korea*, Reaktion Books, (London, 2006)

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.

John Duncan, *The Origins of the Choson Dynasty*, University of Washington Press, (Seattle, 2000)

JaHyun Kim Haboush, *A Heritage of Kings: One Man's Monarchy in the Confucian World*, Columbia University Press, (New York, 1988) ;

Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea*, Harvard University Press (Cambridge, 1988)

## **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.

Young-key Kim-Renaud, *King Sejong the Great: the Light of 15<sup>th</sup> Century Korea*, International Council of Korean Linguistics and George Washington Univ. (Washington D.C., 1992)

Korean Spirit and Culture Series II, *King Sejong the Great: the Everlasting Light of Korea*, Diamond Sutra Recitation Group (Seoul, Korea)

## **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.

Burglind Jungmann, *Pathways to Korean Culture: Paintings of the Joseon Dynasty 1392-1910*, Reaktion Books (London 20013)