

SOAS Centre of Korean Studies

# Korean Buddhists Arts of the Koryŏ and Chosŏn Kingdoms **19 May** **PROGRAMME**



10am	Introduction by <b>Sascha Priewe</b> (British Museum) and <b>Charlotte Horlyck</b> (SOAS)
10:30-11:30	<b>Youngsook Pak</b> (Fellow of Korean Studies, SOAS) Leading to Paradise –Amitabha paintings in the second half of the Koryŏ dynasty
11:30-11:45	Tea/Coffee Break
11:45-12:45	<b>Jeong Eun-woo</b> (Dong-A University, Pusan) Foreign Exchanges and its Influence on Korean Buddhist Sculpture -The Buddhist Sculptures of Koryŏ and China
12:45-13:45	Lunch
13:45-14:45	<b>Choe Gyeong-won</b> (Kansas University) Marginalized yet Devoted: Buddhist Paintings Commissioned by Nuns of the Early Chosŏn Palace Cloisters
15:00-17:00	Object Viewing Session at the British Museum ~ <i>Note that participants will be divided into three groups</i>

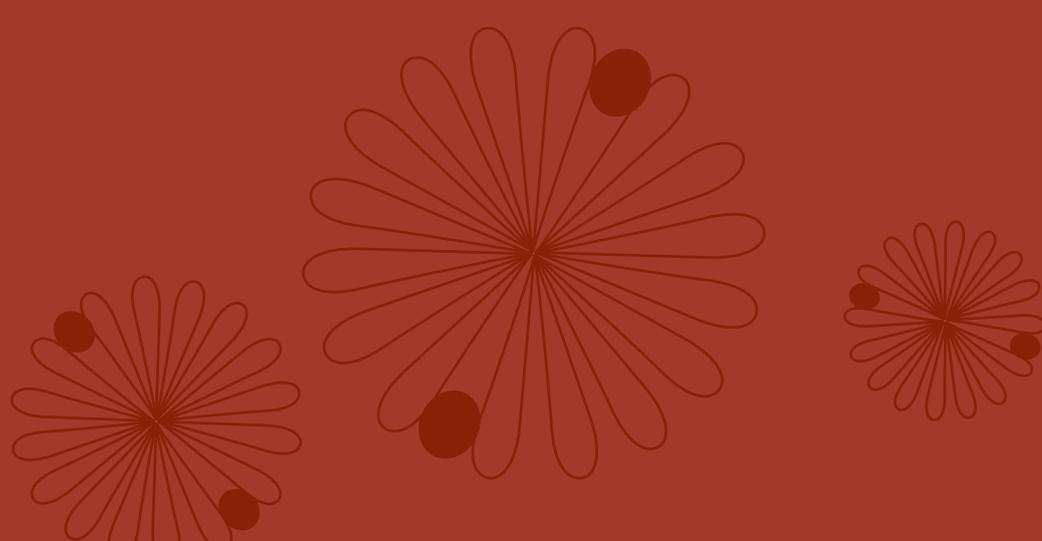
Buddhism was introduced to the Korean peninsula in the 4th century AD, and over the next century it played a significant role in the development of arts and culture. When it comes to studies on Buddhist arts, much research has been carried out on Buddhist sculpture of the Three Kingdoms (trad. 57BC-AD668) and Unified Silla (AD 668-935) periods. It is, however, not until more recently that in-depth studies on later Buddhist paintings and sculptures have been undertaken.

This workshop offers a unique and rare opportunity to learn about Korean Buddhist arts from the Koryŏ (AD 918-1392) and Chosŏn (AD 1392-1910) kingdoms. Recent research on this area will be presented by leading scholars in the field of Korean Buddhist arts: Youngsook Pak will discuss paradise paintings of the Koryŏ kingdom, followed by Jeong Eun-woo who will examine Koryŏ Buddhist sculptures. The last talk by Choe Gyeong-won will explore Buddhist paintings of the Chosŏn period.

The workshop will culminate with a viewing session of selected Korean Buddhist artworks in the British Museum led by the speakers and British Museum curators Sascha Priewe and Oh Seiyon.

**19 May 2011**  
**Room G3**

SOAS, University of London  
Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square,  
London WC1H 0XG



# ABSTRACTS



**Gyeongwon Choe** (Kansas University)

## **Marginalized yet Devoted: Buddhist Paintings Commissioned by Nuns of the Early Joseon Palace Cloisters**

This lecture examines the three extant Buddhist paintings commissioned by Buddhist nuns in the palace cloisters of the sixteenth-century Joseon dynasty. The examination of the theme, iconography, and composition of each painting is incorporated to interpret their religious significance from the perspective of the social status of their patrons. The nun-patrons are identified either as widowed royal concubines or officially ordained practitioners from non-royal families. The royal concubines were removed from their residences and the position of influence in the inner quarters to live with fellow concubines in a common royal residence-turned-cloister on the outskirts of the palace, after their royal husbands died. These women certainly experienced a multifaceted marginality at the center of the patriarchal Confucian polity in the religion, gender, family, and marriage systems. Interpreting the theme of each painting as a prayer for “salvation from punishment,” “salvation to paradise,” and “the salvation of a specific individual,” this lecture presents the paintings as a visualization of the salvational aspirations of Buddhist women of the sixteenth-century Joseon court.

**Youngsook Pak** (Research Fellow, Centre of Korean Studies SOAS)

## **Leading to Paradise –Amitabha paintings in the second half of the Koryŏ dynasty**

Buddhism in the Koryŏ period (918-1392) provided spiritual guidance for rulers and commoners alike. Numerous accounts in historical records facilitate our understanding how heavily the court relied upon Buddhism. Koryŏ kings visited temples so frequently that almost the entire Koryŏ History appears to be records of Buddhist rituals and prayers. The patronage of temple buildings and the production of implements for private and public rituals (images, censers, vessels for food offerings) dominate the records and the remaining Koryŏ Buddhist artifacts testify to their accuracy. Especially the very icons of worship, the sculptural and painted images were installed in all religious environments and were produced for every occasion. The unfortunate historical circumstances of the Koryŏ dynasty, often invaded by her powerful neighbors, caused the destruction of almost all Buddhist art of the first half of the Koryŏ dynasty. The remaining Buddhist icons are mainly from the 13th and 14th century. Images of Buddha Amitabha characterize the Buddhist belief of the later Koryŏ period, directed above all towards personal salvation. The lecture will show this aspect with specific examples of Buddhist icons.

**Eunwoo Jeong** (Department of Archaeology and Art History, Dong-A University)

## **Foreign Exchanges and its Influence on Korean Buddhist Sculpture - The Buddhist Sculptures of Goryeo and China**

The Buddhist sculptures belonging to the Goryeo period (918-1392) can be summarized as having few distinctive features. Firstly it inherited the traditional style from the Unified Silla period. Then it accepted new styles in Buddhist art that came into Goryeo through foreign exchanges. Despite such influences Goryeo also had its own original aesthetics. These facts can be understood as the diversity of Goryeo art and it is strongly related to the introduction of new styles from Chinese dynasties. While the Goryeo dynasty lasted over 500 years, China experienced frequent changes in their dynasties: Five Dynasties (五代), Liao (遼) and Song (宋), Jin (金) and Southern Song (南宋), Yuan (元), and Ming (明). Whenever a new dynasty appeared in China, Goryeo formed relationships with them. It was especially close with the Song, Liao and Yuan dynasties, and accepted various Buddhist art from those countries. From the point of Buddhist sculpture, statues were depicted wearing new attires with new postures, along with new ritual ceremonies as enshrinement of relics and votive objects stored inside Buddhist statues (覆臍物) and this remained popular until the introduction of the Joseon Dynasty.

This talk will explore how such relations influenced the production and formation of Buddhist sculpture during the Goryeo dynasty. Discussions of the new ritual ceremonies that emerged during the Goryeo period will also be included, focusing in particular on the enshrinement of relics inside Buddhist statues.