



University of  
Zurich<sup>UZH</sup>

Section for East Asian Art

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Book presentation

# Under the Ancestors' Eyes: Kinship, Status, and Locality in Premodern Korea

Martina Deuchler

Professor Emeritus of Korean Studies, SOAS

Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> April 2016, 16:30

Seminar room, Villa Schönberg

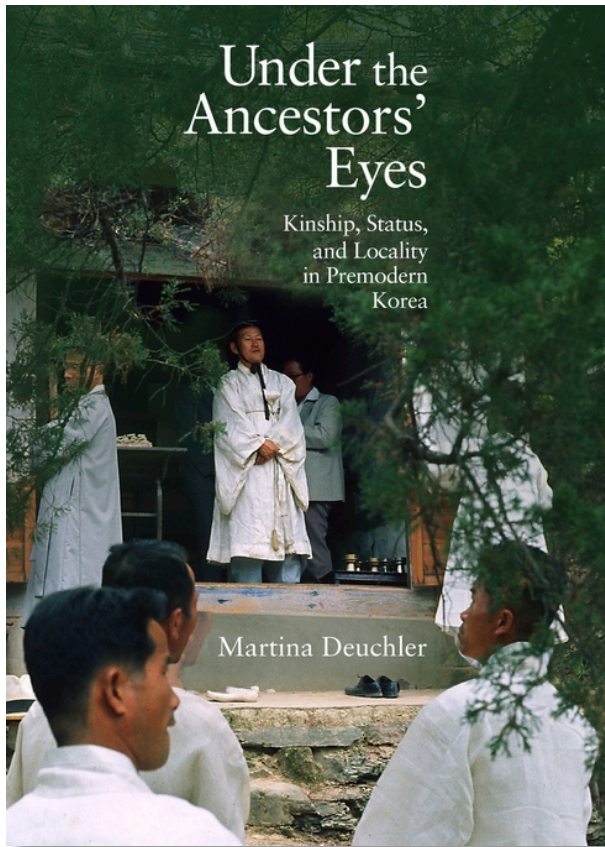
Gablerstrasse 14, 8002 Zurich

The Section for East Asian Art (Institute of Art History, University of Zurich) is honoured to host a book presentation on the occasion of a major achievement in the field of Korean humanities by Professor Emeritus Martina Deuchler (SOAS and UZH). Prof. Deuchler has been a leading figure in the studies of Korean history in the West for a number of decades. Her new book "*Under the Ancestors' Eyes: Kinship, Status, and Locality in Premodern Korea*" (Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2015) is a celebration of years of extensive research that examines various aspects of Korean history from a new angle and contributes to our understanding of premodern Korean society.

Prof. Deuchler has kindly extended her expertise to the emerging field of Korean art history in Switzerland through her long-term cooperation with the Section of East Asian Art at the University of Zurich. She has taught classes on Korean culture at the department and given guest lectures on a number of occasions over the past years. As an invited expert, Prof. Deuchler has supported the survey of Korean objects of art and material culture conducted by the students and faculty.

The book presentation will take place at the Villa Schönberg, and will be followed by a reception. No prior registration is required to attend the presentation. However, please note that seating is limited.

For further details, please visit: [www.khist.uzh.ch/de/ostasien/aktuelles](http://www.khist.uzh.ch/de/ostasien/aktuelles)



Harvard East Asian Monographs 378

**Martina Deuchler "Under the Ancestors' Eyes: Kinship, Status, and Locality in Premodern Korea."**

Publication: November 2015

*Under the Ancestors' Eyes* presents a new approach to Korean social history by focusing on the origin and development of the indigenous descent group. Martina Deuchler maintains that the surprising continuity of the descent-group model gave the ruling elite cohesion and stability and enabled it to retain power from the early Silla (fifth century) to the late nineteenth century. This argument, underpinned by a fresh interpretation of the late-fourteenth-century Koryŏ-Chosŏn transition, illuminates the role of Neo-Confucianism as an ideological and political device through which the elite regained and maintained dominance during the Chosŏn period. Neo-Confucianism as espoused in Korea did not level the social hierarchy but instead tended to sustain the status system. In the late Chosŏn, it also provided ritual models for the lineage-building with which local elites sustained their preeminence vis-à-vis an intrusive state. Though Neo-Confucianism has often been blamed for the rigidity of late Chosŏn society, it was actually the enduring native kinship ideology that preserved the strict social-status system. By utilizing historical and social anthropological methodology and analyzing a wealth of diverse materials, Deuchler highlights Korea's distinctive elevation of the social over the political.

Source: Harvard University Press ([www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674504301](http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674504301))