Buddhism - the basics!
Consists of belief in the Three Jewels 'Sambo' (三寶 삼보)

- The historic Buddha jewel (佛寶 불보, 부처님) Buddha Śākyamuni, Prince Gautama Siddhārtha, said to have achieved enlightenment in 528BC and died in 483BC.
- The dharma (law) jewel (法寶 법보) consists of the Four Noble Truths:
  I. Life is accompanied by all forms of suffering - even pleasurable experiences are delusions which lead to suffering because of their transience.
  II. The cause of human suffering is ignorance.
  III. The only way to rise above all suffering is to reach nirvana - to achieve salvation, one has to remove the fuel of all desires.
  IV. To attain Nirvana one must follow the Eightfold Path (八正道 팔정도).
- The sangha jewel (僧寶 승보) - the community of monks.

Two main traditions emerged around 340BCE

Theravāda ("doctrines of the elders")
- Also known as Hinayāna "Lesser Vehicle Buddhism" (小乘佛敎 소승불교)
- Today practiced predominantly in Sri Lanka and across South-east Asia.
- Supposed to adhere more closely to the original teachings of the Buddha as contained in the Pali Canon (c.29BC).

Mahāyāna Buddhism Greater Vehicle/way (大乘佛教 대승불교)
- Practiced across East Asia (China, Korea and Japan), Tibet and Mongolia.
- The name suggests that the road to becoming a Buddha is open to a greater number of people employing various methods.
- Scripture mainly written in Sanskrit and translated into Chinese.
- Mahāyāna Buddhism developed into more of a populist religion and so the Buddha is worshipped more as a god and has an associated pantheon of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as well as a Buddhist hell and form of heaven (净土 정토 Pure Land where one hoped to be reborn).
- There are more than 80,000 Buddhist scriptures, far greater than any other religion, and the majority are found in Mahāyāna Buddhism: the first known sutras were written during the first 1st century BCE.

Characteristics of Korean Buddhism

Pre-20th century Korean Buddhism is often described as "state protecting Buddhism" (國佛 教 호국불교 hoguk-bulgyo).

This is evidenced in history from:

- The hwarang tradition of Silla.
- The first of Wang Geon’s Ten Injunctions (943).

“The success of every great undertaking of our state depends upon the favor and protection of Buddha. Therefore, the temples of both the Meditation and Doctrinal schools should be built and monks should be sent out to those temples to minister to Buddha. Later on, if villainous courtiers attain power and come to be influenced by the entreaties of bonzes, the temples of various schools will quarrel and struggle among themselves for gain. This ought to be prevented.” Sourcebook

- The carving of the Tripitakas (see below) in the belief their power would save the nation at when being invaded by the Khitan and Mongols.
- And the celebrated “righteous armies” (義兵 의병), local militias which included armies of monks (僧兵 승병) who rose up to resist against the Japanese invasions (1592-98).

- Developed a strong indigenous tradition as two of its most famous monks, Wonhyo (617-686) and Jinul (1158-1210), remained in Korea throughout their lives.
- The Korean Buddhist tradition maintained an eclectic approach and has been successful in harmonizing the various schools and sects that existed in China.

Celebrated for providing a unifying ideology, both politically (for Silla and Goryeo) and for bringing together various modes of practice, particularly the doctrinal and meditative schools.

Silla period

Wonhyo (617-686)

- Never left Korea but made his own study of the sutras and wrote extensively having an influence, in turn, both on Chinese and Japanese Buddhism.
- Gained enlightenment when he was on his way to Tang China together with Uisang: taking refuge in a cave during a storm, he drank water from what he thought was a cup but in the morning discovered it to be a human skull, whereupon he gained enlightenment and gave up on his journey to China.
- One of his commentaries was elevated to the status of non (論 논 Sanskrit śāstra 'explication'), implying he was considered to be a bodhisattva. However, he chose not to found his own school and so remained less popular than his contemporary Uisang.

- Sought to popularize Buddhism amongst common people by composing songs and teaching them Pure Land Buddhism.
- Had an affair with a Silla princess: this resulted in a son called Seol Chong (薛聰 b.655) who became a famous Confucian scholar traditionally attributed with the invention of the idu (吏讀) script.
Uisang (義湘 의상 625-702)

- Travelled to Tang China where he studied (c.650~70) and on his return founded the Flower Garland School (華嚴宗 화엄종) in Korea which has been the most influential of the doctrinal schools and survived as an independent sect until the 15th century.
- Uisang originally returned to Silla after hearing a rumour that the Tang emperor was planning to attack Silla, to warn the Silla king.
- He had many followers and the Flower Garland School became popular with the Silla aristocracy.
- Uisang emphasized practice and monastic life over metaphysics as the way to enlightenment.

- Uisang is credited with drawing the Diagram Seal of the Dharmadhātu 'dharma realm' (華嚴일승법계도 c.668), a thirty line poem, each line made up of seven characters to a total of 210 characters with 54 turns around the diagram beginning with the dharma (法) and ending with the Buddha (佛).
  - The diagram illustrates the tenets of the Flower Garland School which is that principle (or noumenon) (理) and phenomenon (事) are two aspects of the same dharma realm (法界 dharma realm).
  - Very similar concepts later appeared in Neo-Confucian philosophy.

"Because every phenomenon is a manifestation of principle, one is the many and the many are the one. This all inclusive system has everything leading to one point, the Buddha, and sees everything in the universe as a representation of the same supreme mind... At the time of unification [of the Three Kingdoms under Silla], therefore, when Silla had to assimilate the aristocracy and loyalists of Goguryeo and Baekje, Flower Garland metaphysics provided a unifying ideology that embraced subjugated states and peoples as well as a religious sanction for the centralized administration proceeding from the royal authority." from Source of Korean Tradition

Artistic achievement: Seokguram grotto (石窟庵 석굴암)

- One of the most famous Buddhist monuments in Korea, dates to the Unified Silla period.
- Located nearby Bulguk-sa temple (佛國寺 불국사 built 751-774) in Gyeongju, the capital of Silla. Construction lasted between 742-774.
- The grotto is not a natural cave but is built from granite stones. The main Buddhist statue is around 3.5 meters tall sitting on a lotus pedestal about 1.35 meters. Around the Buddha on the walls are three bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara, Manjuśrī and Samantabhadra), ten disciples (of the Buddha), and two Hindu gods (Brahma and Indra). Above them are ten statues of bodhisattvas, saints, and the faithful. The corridor is guarded by various deities including the Four Heavenly Kings (who are believed to each watch over one of the cardinal directions). Altogether there are about forty statues.
- Considered to be one of the finest examples of Buddhist stone carving in East Asia.

Varied Buddhist traditions of Unified Silla

- During the Unified Silla period, there emerged two main traditions of Buddhism, the doctrinal Five Schools and meditative Seon, as well as esoteric practice and Pure Land Buddhism.
Pure Land Buddhism (淨土敎 정토교 Jeongto-gyo)
- A form of popular religion seeking salvation through invocation of Amitābha Buddha (阿彌陀佛 아미타불).
"...its appeal lay in its promise of salvation to all people regardless of class, wealth, sex, or age. Viewing this world as a sea of sorrow, it sought rebirth in the future." (Lee 1997:102)
- The aim is to be reborn into Amitābha’s Western Paradise (西方淨土 Western Pure Land) where, as well as being a nice place, it is considered easier to achieve enlightenment.
- Being reborn in the Western Paradise is achieved through the repetition of Amitābha’s name, in Korean using the phrase, Namu Amitabul (南無阿彌陀佛 나무아미타불).

Esoteric Buddhism (密敎 밀교 milgyo)
- Buddhist traditions thought to impart magical powers.
- Includes the Maitreya Buddha (彌勒佛 미륵불) cult of the hwarang.
- Involves the use of mandala sacred diagrams (曼茶羅 만다라) and reciting mantra, sacred syllables.
- Introduced by monks who travelled to India.
  "When a shaman in modern times is called by the spirits to be their intermediary with this world, the shaman encounters the spirit in a dream or in a state of ecstasy. While the shaman is in this trance, the spirit will teach an esoteric formula for the shaman to use in curing disease, or will make a gift of some object. This type of experience is precisely the kind of experience which these esoteric monks had of a Buddhist divinity..."

The growth of esoteric Buddhism in Silla is an example of a religious syncretism where the primal religious tradition adopts the form of a foreign religion because of its outward similarity to concepts and practices of the primal religion. In so doing, such a syncretic religion may ignore or be unaware of the content of the foreign religion." (Grayson 2002:64-5)

Doctrinal Buddhism: the Five Schools (五敎 오교 O’gyo)
- The exact naming of the schools differs according to modern sources.
- Four of these five schools were present in China, but those schools which were most prominent in Tang were not necessarily the most prominent in Silla. (Grayson 2002:59)
- Doctrinal schools required high levels of education and so were popular with the literati and aristocracy.

_Hwa’eom-jong_ 華嚴宗 화엄종 Flower Garland School
- Indigenous to China.
- Emphasized study of the _Avatamsaka-sūtra_ (華嚴經 Hwa’eom-gyeong - Flower Garland Sutra).
- The most influential school within Korean doctrinal tradition.

_Yul-jong_ 律宗 율종 Disciplinary School

_Haedong-jong_ 海東宗 해동종 Korean School (海東 lit. ‘east of the sea’ referred to the Korean

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2) Sources of Korean Tradition, Volume One.
• Indigenous to Korea and associated with the more eclectic teachings of Wonhyo (元曉 617-686) who himself did not establish an official sect like Uisang did.
• Was not named ‘Haedong-jong’ until c.13th century.
• Associated with the Beopseong-jong (法性宗 School of Dharma Nature)

Beopsang-jong  法相宗 법상종 Dharma Aspect School
• Introduced to Silla by disciples of Korean monk Wonchuk (圆測 613-696) who himself did not return to his homeland.

"Like the Hwa‘eom School, the Beopsang School emphasizes a doctrine of the mind. In its view, all phenomena in the universe are the creation of our consciousness, and thus ultimately illusory. Unlike the Hwa‘eom School, this sect did not believe that all sentient beings had the Buddha nature." (Grayson 2002:61-2)

Yeolban-jong  涅槃宗 열반종 Nirvāṇa School
• Introduced by Goguryeo monk Bodeok (普徳 fl.650) who studied in Tang China and then resettled in Baekje.
• As a sect the Nirvāṇa sect was numerically small but influential in its teachings.

Meditative Seon (禪 선 Chinese: Chan, Japanese: Zen)
"The term Seon is the Korean pronunciation of the Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit word dhyāna [禪那], which is equatable with the samādhi ['concentration/meditation']. In the Seon school, however, the word carries a different connotation... it is a comprehensive term for both samādhi and prajñā ['wisdom'], and Seon practice is intended to lead to the rediscovery of the original enlightened source of all sentient beings: the Buddha-nature, or mind-ground. The awakening to this source is called prajñā: the cultivation of this awakening is called samādhi... Seon training involves the entire range of Buddhist spiritual endeavor from the beginning stages of morality to the highest stages of wisdom." (Buswell 1992:64)  

• By the end of the Silla period, Seon Buddhism was organized as nine monastic orders known as the Nine Mountains (九山禪門 구산선문) referring to the mountain locations of their temples.

"This practice reflected the Seon emphasis on removing oneself from the centre of social activity, on retreating from society. Each of these schools, although indigenous and based on the teaching and practice of a Silla monk, was rooted in the teaching of various popular masters of late Tang times. The importance of these schools lies not in their individual establishments but in the fact that from this time on Seon Buddhism became the orthodox form of monastic Buddhism in Korea." (Grayson 2002:70)

Jinul (知訥 지눌 1158-1210)
• Regarded in tradition as having successfully resolved the differences between doctrinal and meditative Buddhism and unified them into a single method of practice which has come to define Korean Buddhism.
• Considered the founder of the Jogye Order (曹溪宗 조계종) which remains today the representative Korean Buddhist organization.

Jinul was himself a Seon monk but never travelled to China and so relied on his reading of the full canon of sutras (i.e. the object of doctrinal Buddhism) for spiritual guidance.

- He was the son of an official at the (Confucian) Gukhak (國學) national university. His father vowed that if his son survived a childhood illness he would be given to the Buddhist church. Thus aged 7, Jinul entered a Buddhist monastery in Gaegyeong (the Goryeo capital) and later passed the Seon examinations in 1182 (there were Buddhist ‘monk examinations’僧科 established at the same time as the Confucian examination system in 958).

- In the same year, concerned with the corruption of the Buddhist church, Jinul agreed with several friends to form a religious community (結社 경사) which, after a delay, they achieved in 1190 and was called Jeonghye-sa (定慧社 Seonam [concentration] and Prajñā [wisdom] Community). This community established itself at Songgwang-sa temple (松廣寺 송광사) which has since become known as one of the Three Jewel Temples (三寶寺刹 삼보사찰 see below).

His core idea was encapsulated in the formula:  
\[ \text{jeong-hye-ssang-su 定慧雙修 정혜쌍수} \]

"cultivation of jeong and hye as a [complementary] pair"  

\[ \text{jeong (定) samādhi = seonjeong (禪定) referring to seon meditation.} \]

\[ \text{hye (慧) prajñā = jihye (智慧) ‘wisdom’ referring to knowledge obtained through doctrinal study.} \]

"His reading [of the Flower Garland Sutra] suggested to him that the words of the Buddha were what matured into the doctrinal teachings of Buddhism, while the mind of the Buddha was what evolved into Meditation. Just as the words of the Buddha reflected what was in his mind, so too the doctrinal teachings of Buddhism reflected the mystical knowledge engendered through meditation. Hence Jinul discovered a basis for synthesizing the Flower Garland and Meditation schools into a comprehensive system of Buddhist thought and practice, one that would inspire all future generations of Korean Buddhists...

... Jinul sought to prove that the variant accounts of the absolute in both Doctrinal and Meditation records can all be traced to a single concept: the true mind (眞心 진심). The true mind for Jinul meant Buddhahood itself... In order to gain access to absolute truth, and thus enlightenment, Buddhist practitioners need only recognize the enlightenment inherent in their own minds. " (Sources 1997:229)

Jinul taught the concept of:  

sudden awakening followed by gradual cultivation:  
\[ \text{don-o-jeom-su 頓悟漸修 돈오점수.} \]

"Jinul demands that practice begin with a sudden awakening, which reveals to the student that he is innately enlightened. This initial awakening occurs through tracing the light emanating from the fountainhead of his mind back to its enlightened source. But simply because the student understands that he is a buddha does not mean that he will be able to act like one, any more than a clever infant will be able to act like an intelligent adult." (Sources 1997:229–30)

"...although a new born infant possesses all its sense faculties and is endowed
physically with all the organs and capacities of an adult, it takes years to reach its full adult potential. With Buddhist practice it is just the same: through sudden awakening, one is endowed with the same understanding and ability to help others as are all the Buddhas. It requires much supplementary training before that potential becomes fact in the everyday world, however.” (Buswell 1992:58)

"Gradual cultivation ensures that awakening is kept dynamic. Through cultivation, awakening is applied in ordinary life, protecting the student from indifference to the sufferings of others and the compulsion to seek quietude and isolation which often characterizes ascetic hermits.” (Buswell 1992:60)

Jinul also developed the practice of hwadu 'critical phrase' (話頭) meditation, known as ganhwa-seon 'observing hwadu Seon' (看話禪).

- The hwadu is the climax of a Seon conundrum/story (公案 公案 gong’an), for example:
  Student: Does a dog have Buddha nature? [The expected answer is 'yes']
  Master Chao-chou: No!

  The hwadu here is the master’s answer "No!"

  "The introspective focus created through single-minded consideration of the meaning of this statement eventually leads the student to the source of thought - that non dual state before discrimination arises in the mind, which is considered to be identical in all beings. Through this experience, the student knows what Chao-chou’s state of mind was like just prior to making his famous statement and he is thus able to grasp intuitively why it was that Chao-chou would say "no". The student becomes as if he himself were Chao-chou, for he has tapped that same source of thought from which Chao-chou’s own answer arose... there is no need any longer to try to explain why Chao-chou said "no"; rather he simply knows it intuitively for himself [or herself!]” (Buswell 1992:152)

- The aim of ganhwa-seon is not to explain the Seon riddle, but through meditating on the essence of a contradiction for long enough one can be jolted into enlightenment.
- Korean Seon monks meditate on one hwadu throughout their training until attaining enlightenment which may take up to twenty years, or even never!

Triptaka Koreana 高麗八萬大藏經板 고려팔만대장경판

- A tripitaka is the complete collection of Buddhist scripture.
- The first Korean Tripitaka (初雕大藏經 初조대장경) was carved during the 1011 Khitan invasion but it was subsequently destroyed during the Mongol invasions (1231-58).
- The second Korean Tripitaka was carved on Ganghwa-do island between 1236-51 where the court took refuge during the Mongol invasions, and survives today, housed in Haein-sa temple.
- Carved on 81,258 wooden boards totalling some 52,382,960 Chinese characters with no known errors! (Each board is around 4cm thick, carved on both sides: if stack together they would be 3.2km tall).

7
Buddhism by the end of the Goryeo period..
...the Buddhist church was viewed as bloated and corrupt.

- A victim of its own success, centuries of aristocratic and royal patronage had enabled monasteries to accumulate great wealth, large numbers of slaves and tax exempt land crippling the finances and will of the state.
- Neo-Confucian metaphysics, introduced c.1289, competed with the spiritual ideology of Buddhism.
- From the outset of the Joseon dynasty, Buddhism was increasingly oppressed and replaced by Neo-Confucian ideals and its own dogma.

Buddhism during the Joseon period

- Buddhism was officially oppressed and lost all political influence.
  - From its very beginning the Joseon dynasty was controlled by Neo-Confucian ideologues who virulently disdained Buddhist practice.
  - Some kings and many scholars did, however, maintain Buddhism as a personal faith.
  - The lower classes all remained fundamentally Buddhist mixed with nativist belief in musok 巫俗 shamanism.

- In particular King Sejong developed a personal interest in Buddhism.
  - He established a Buddhist shrine inside the palace grounds (upsetting the Confucian officials).
  - Wrote Buddhist inspired poetry and sponsored Buddhist writings.
  - Had Buddhist scripture transcribed into the newly created hangul script.

- Buddhism remained popular with women (as did shamanism), including within the royal families; and it remained popular with common people below the yangban class.

- During the 17th century, with the intensification of Neo-Confucian ideology, Buddhism came under further pressure.
  - In 1659 an edict forbidding novices from becoming monks was issued: anyone found to have become a monk after the proclamation of the edict was to be arrested and returned to secular life.
  - In 1660 two small Buddhist academies were destroyed. Monks and nuns were banned from entering the capital. A similar edict was reissued in 1749 suggesting it hadn’t been so strictly enforced.

- King Jeongjo (正祖 r.1776-1800) became the first king to outwardly demonstrate support of Buddhism since Sejong the Great (世宗 r.1418-50).
Three Jewel Temples 三寶寺刹 삼보사찰
• Each temple represents one of the Three Jewels of Buddhism.

Tongdo-sa temple (通度寺 통도사)
• Represents the historical Buddha.
• Located in South Gyeongsang-do province.
• Claims to have relics of the Buddha’s actual remains (真身舍利 진신사리) enshrined there: brought back to Silla from a visit to Tang China by monk Jajang (慈藏 자장) in 643, he is said to have distributed them in five different temples in Korea.

Haein-sa temple (海印寺 해인사)
• Represent the dharma, as recorded in the sutras.
• Since 1398 it has housed the surviving Tripitaka Koreana.

Songgwang-sa temple (松廣寺 송광사)
• Represents the sangha community of monks and is famous for meditative training.
• Established by Jinul.
• During the Goryeo dynasty it produced 16 monks who became "national preceptor" (國師 국사) the highest position a monk could achieve (alongside "royal preceptor" 王師 왕사).
Buddhism today

Two times of the year in particular that Korean Buddhists visit temples include **Buddha's birthday** and the **high school final exams**.

Buddha's Birthday (釋迦誕辰日 석가탄신일) + lantern festival
- Referred to colloquially as *Bucheo-nim osin nal* (부처님 오신 날 "The day Buddha came").
- Celebrated on the 8th day of the 4th lunar month (2013 was 17 May; 2014 will be 6 May).
- Includes the *lantern festival* (燃燈會 연등회) at all temples.

College Scholastic Ability Test (大學修學能力試驗 대학수학능력시험)
- Colloquially referred to as the *Suneung-siheom* (스능시험).
- Held in late November.
- Korean mothers pray at temples for their child's success in the exam.

If you visit a temple, you may see the...

**The Four Temple Instruments** 寺中四物 사중사물

**Peomjong** temple bell (梵鐘 법종)
- Peom (梵) means 'Sanskrit' (梵語) and is used to denote Buddhist related things.
- The bell is used to call monks to prayer and mark the times of day.

**Mog'eo** wooden fish (木魚 목어)
- Carved wooden carp fish with hollow belly.
- Fish don't seem to close their eyes or sleep, so it is said to symbolize the diligence of Buddhist practitioners.
- Often carved with a dragons head (龍頭魚身 용두어신).

**Unpan** cloud plate (雲版)
- Metal plate made from bronze or iron cast in the shape of a cloud.
- Originally hung by the kitchen and rung to mark dinnertime.
- Clouds symbolize water and so were to block the hot fires coming from the kitchen.
- Striking the cloud was meant to help redeem the lost souls of birds flying in the empty sky: a metaphor for the lost souls of humans wandering on earth.
- Now more often used with the other instruments for morning and evening prayers.

**Beopgo** dharma drum (法鼓)
- Temple drum used in ceremonies.
- Drum that conveys the dharma.
- Skin made from cow hide.

Examples of the instruments' sounds and usage can be viewed here:

https://youtu.be/alWLJ08RAaE

Unpan 14:22
Mog’eo 15:10
Beopgo 15:49
Beomjong 18:15