

BOOK REVIEWS

Human Decency. By Kong Ji Yǒng. Translated by Bruce and Ju-Chan Fulton. Published by Jimoondang as part of the Portable Library of Korean Literature, Short Fiction no. 24.

Oftentimes, contemporary Korean fiction takes the reader, sometimes by force, down the dark memory lane of modern Korean history. Because so many works of contemporary Korean fiction are highly referential, the reader is often enticed to consider a text's social and political background. While this is not a unique phenomenon to Korea—works of literature from all corners of the world often deal to greater or lesser extents with pressing political and social issues—it seems striking that Korean works of fiction so frequently draw the attention of their readers to the political and social realities being depicted, and do so in a manner that come at the expense of poetic expression. Kong Ji Yǒng's short stories, "Human Decency" and "Dreams," included in the collection *Human Decency* published by Jimoondang, are both highly referential texts. Since her works are so fraught with political and social references, this review will first examine the historical context in which Kong Ji Yǒng writes, and will then examine the stories in greater detail.

In the collection of essays, *Twentieth Century Korean Literature*, it is noted that "an important strand of thought regarding literature in 1980s Korea was that it should interrogate social concerns and articulate communal values... the eighties were, in many ways, an era of causes. In contrast, the nineties has been called an 'era of disillusionment.'" (97) Born in 1963, receiving her higher education in the eighties, and publishing the stories "Human Decency" and "Dreams" in the nineties, Kong Ji Yǒng's works are almost textbook illustrations of the existential crisis and disillusionment experienced in the eighties and nineties. This disillusionment followed on the heels of the collapse of the Eastern European bloc, since "...the Cold War, which had served as the justification for all manners of political

oppression within South Korea for half a century, was effectively over.” (97) The shock brought on by the collapse of the Eastern European bloc is understandable when considering how greatly South Koreans had struggled to achieve freedoms of expression, and labour and human rights. Generally speaking, literature from this period is often marked by sentimentalism, as writers dwelled on the emptiness they felt when their struggle for political and social change had been rendered meaningless. Kong Ji Yŏng, and other writers of her generation, delved into their personal and collective pasts, and wrote nostalgic pieces that questioned their place in the world, and how to make sense of the past and future. Kong publishes the two short stories included in the collection *Human Decency* in the early nineties, and the stories bear witness to this particular point in history.

Kong’s short story “Human Decency” appeared first in 1993. The story is told in first-person narrative by a woman who writes for a women’s magazine, and who is deliberating between two stories for her magazine’s next edition. She is encouraged to run a story about the return of an expatriate woman artist whose success is demonstrated by her fame abroad. Yet she is drawn to the originally scheduled story about a former prisoner who had been incarcerated on political grounds for twenty years, and who now, upon release, lives a life of anonymity. The dilemma itself embodies the struggle of Kong’s generation between dwelling on the past, on memories and on the pain that these memories provoke, and moving on, celebrating freedom, and looking for new role models and new life styles.

In the opening of the story, the narrator has come to interview artist Yi Minja at her home. The artist’s demeanour, her dress, and her home and its surroundings enhance the writer’s opinion of Yi. The reader learns that the artist lives outside of Seoul “when she’s in Korea,” (7), which already implies that she enjoys the freedom to come and go as she pleases. Yi Minja looks “wilfully pure, like a long wildflower blooming in the wind... as if she possessed a magic that protected her from the wind...” (8) She is uninhibited like a wildflower, and is unaffected by the chilly wind blowing that day. This is a woman who has travelled to India and returned with what must seem like an incredible luxury to Koreans at the time: the physical and spiritual space to meditate. Even her puppy meditates. The artist is everything that the narrator, who lives alone and who is facing an existential crisis of her own, is not. The narrator confesses: “I felt a yearning to be free and fearless... [I felt] a curiosity about freedom, wandering, transcendence, the achievement of a dream.” (12) Seeing Yi in her quiet, meditative state draws the narrator to think of Kwŏn Ogyu, the man whose story had been postponed in favour of the woman artist. Thinking of Kwŏn, the narrator recalls “the rented room beside the gate of a shabby Korean-style house at the end of a winding

alley... where Kwŏn Ogyu had lived since his release from prison two years earlier.” (15) But, as the photographer notes, “who cares about a long-term prisoner now that we’ve got a civilian government? Right?” (16) The magazine writer herself doesn’t bother to pick up the manila envelope with her story on the prisoner when the envelope falls on the floor of her office. But then she recalls details from her visit to Kwŏn’s house, a house of concrete heaps and dark shade, and these images are in stark contrast to Yi Minja’s log house visited at the opening of the story. The artist’s house is adorned with her paintings; Kwŏn’s is decorated with photos of friends who had been executed or tortured to death. One space belongs to the future, to beautiful images championed by Sotheby’s; the other is a museum that pays tribute to those with a forgotten past and who have no one to remember them. Yi Minja, the artist, finds freedom in mediation; Kwŏn Ogyu is trapped in his house because he has forgotten how to open doors from the inside. After her interview with the artist, the narrator immediately comes up with a title for her article; after meeting with Kwŏn, the narrator admits that “all I could think of were things that would be difficult to make into a story” (30).

Kong successfully uses physical spaces to reflect the state of mind of her characters. Her characters are juxtaposed in a way that brings out the inner conflict of the narrator. However, Kong’s work suffers because her narrator seems overly conscious of her audience, and keeps talking and divulging ‘too much information’ which does not contribute to the overall flow of the narrative. For example, upon meditating on one particular image of radish shoots, she says: “Why sorry like a radish root? That much I think I can answer,” (13) a flippant tone that drags the reader into the thought process of the narrator in a manner that can perhaps be done more subtly. She provides ‘too much information’ again a few paragraphs later: “Now, before I leave for work I simply have to go around back.... This is why I’m quick to use the metaphor of a radish shoot to describe that unexpected outpouring deep inside me.” (14) She ends her story with a direct appeal to the reader: “tell me!” she cries, “Now that the Eastern bloc is history, are sighs, resignation, and dissipation all that remain in our minds?” This rhetorical question seems to demand the reader’s fervent agreement. Kong insists on ‘feeding’ her readers more and more information, letting her shower of words guide the reader to a correct understanding of her story. After reviewing all the images she had used in the beginning of her story, she goes back to the chatty tone she uses with her imagined audience: “Well, I guess I had better talk one last time about the radish shoot.” (59) Kwŏn’s work might have been better off with less explicit guidance. However, the work is readable, largely thanks to Bruce and Ju-Chan Fulton’s poetic language which bring to life some of the imagery, such as

the “purple lilacs [that] looked like they were cringing” (7) and the “distant, wind-swept hills with their pastel blossoms.” (13)

Following on the heels of “Human Decency” is the short story “Dreams,” published first in 1993. “The stuff of dreams,” (12) claims one of the magazine writers in “Human Decency”; in the first story, dreams are implied in a sarcastic manner, hinting perhaps that some dreams are built on others’ suffering. In “Dreams,” dreams are double sides of a coin: they can be both dreams of hope and possibility, things of the future, but also dreams of the painful past, closer to nightmares. The characters in “Dreams,” like in “Human Decency,” are writers and artists. The first-person narrator is a writer suffering from writer’s block, a woman trying to burst the dam that prevents her from typing words on the screen. She is also a divorcee who, by her own admission, exists on the margins of life, a woman who lives vicariously through the stories her friends tell her and through confessional letters she receives from young women. Much of the story is set in the evening or pre-dawn hours, something which takes away the sunlight and adds to the story’s atmosphere of loneliness and despair.

“Dreams” suffers from the same heavy-handed writing as that of “Human Decency,” only in greater quantities. In this story, the narrator describes a mysterious nightmare she has: in her dream, she is driving without knowing how to drive, and ends up driving on top of a sign. Instead of leaving it up to the reader to make sense of that dream, Kong proceeds to spell out its meaning a few pages later: “As my dream had warned, I was not traveling on the road but getting lost on a sign showing the way to the road. So perhaps the time had come for me to get off the sign and begin to take the road.” (106) The reader is confronted with a great number of political explications: “What I was angry at was not my writing but my life. Maybe my generation was one that revelled in killing and despair. Maybe we did think protest slogans were literature...” (106) “Standing outside the lines of the nineties, I set myself the task of writing about the nightmares of my generation: about how the memories of our time—a time full of killing and despair—were still so vivid that they were controlling our dreams. And about the people of the nineties, who could not leave their nightmares behind even when they awoke.” (107) In the same whiny tone of the letters she receives, the narrator drones on about her generation: “Those ten years had not been easy, especially for those of us who were young. We were now simple—simple and superficial. In ten years’ time, we had become shallow.” (72) This confessional tone hinders the development of any kind of sympathy for her characters; they come across weepy and whiny rather than deeply human or sincerely sympathetic. When the narrator jokes and says “we’re Scoops owls,” one listener, Pak, is

amused while the other, Kim, is puzzled, and suddenly the narrator bursts into tears—a moment which does more to leave the reader perplexed than moved.

“Dreams” experiments with a potentially interesting structure for its narrative—it is divided into six distinct time sections that jump back and jerk forward. Yet ultimately, its sentimental and heavy-handed style, and the writer’s insistence on glossing and interpreting the text on the reader’s behalf, stymies its effectiveness as a short story. To their credit, and despite minor glitches, translators Kim Miza and Suzanne Crowder Han breathe life into the narrative with poetic expressions such as, “His face [was] blurred by nostalgia” (62) and “I could feel my nerves oozing out between the seams.” (63). While both “Human Decency” and “Dreams” are acclaimed pieces of fiction in Korea, and while both stories were lucky to come alive in English through fine translations, one would hope to see more translated Korean fiction that stands on literary merit, and not just as a supplementary tool to learn about political history in Korea.

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Domesticating the Dharma: Buddhist Cults and the Hwaö̃m Synthesis in Silla Korea. By Richard D. McBride, II. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008. xiii, 229 pp. (ISBN 978-0-8248-3087-8, hardcover \$52.00)

In recent years there has been somewhat of a surge in scholarship on Buddhism in Korea. This scholarship has gone a long way towards clarifying many facets of this important religious and intellectual tradition, which has been an integral part of Korean society for centuries. Works such as *Currents and Countercurrents: Korean Influences on the East Asian Buddhist Traditions* have critically reassessed the role of Korean Buddhism in shaping broader East Asian Buddhism and works like *Religions of Korea in Practice* have provided essays on soteriological dimensions of Buddhism in Korea. Yet another blossoming field is that of translation, which has built on seminal translations of Wö̃nhyo, Chinul and Kihwa’s works and is unfolding in the numerous translation projects now taking place. Richard McBride’s *Domesticating the Dharma: Buddhist Cults and the Hwaö̃m Synthesis in Silla Korea* is a further contribution to the growing body of scholarship on early Korean Buddhism. McBride’s work adds to this field of scholarship by exploring the contours of Buddhist practice in Silla, focusing on the worship of particular Buddhist deities, the domestication of Buddhism and its practices in Silla, how the aristocracy and elites adopted elements of Buddhist symbolism for their own

means and, finally, how these practices were eventually absorbed into the rubric of Hwaŏm doctrine and practice from the eighth to tenth centuries.

This book is ambitious for the time period it covers (from Three Kingdoms to the decline of Silla, roughly CE 300-935) and the complex religious practices it attempts to chart—all of which is contained within one hundred and forty five pages of text. In the introduction McBride explains that the book is concerned broadly with “the adoption and adaptation of religious practices by elites and the role, in this process, of imported deities and systems of understanding the cosmos” but more specifically with Buddhist cults in Silla. (p. 1) The thesis of the book is first, that the popularity of these cults among social and religious elites of Silla is the reason why Buddhism was successfully domesticated and, second, that this religious practice reached its apex when it was “codified with the observances of Silla’s Hwaŏm tradition, which provide a compelling vision of the relationship between ritual and reality by incorporating key cultic practices.” (p. 2) McBride’s objective in focusing on religious practice rather than doctrine is to rectify an outdated academic model that focuses on “schools.” (p. 9) He contends that this model neglects to account for how aristocrats and elites used Buddhist ritual, practices and symbolism to provide legitimacy. Instead, McBride seeks to emphasize the role of cults in the domestication of Buddhism and shows the means by which social elites and religious leaders first used Buddhist cults for their own gain before passing them down to the common people. (p. 9) In the course of this inquiry McBride explains that the book touches on themes in the disciplines of history and religion, and that his research questions common scholarly assumptions that regard religion as a two tiered phenomenon, namely one that divides religion along elite/folk or intellectual/popular lines for heuristic reasons. (p. 2) By focusing on Buddhist practice, McBride seeks to critique this two tiered conceptualization of religion.

Domesticating the Dharma comprises five chapters and McBride divides his argument into three sections. In the first section, chapter one, McBride reviews the introduction of Buddhism to the Korean peninsula and explains how the religion became closely tied to the Silla state. The second section of the book, chapters two and three, examines the worship of particular Buddhist deities in their social, institutional and political contexts. The final section, chapters four and five, charts the rise of Hwaŏm and its absorption of preexisting religious practices.

In chapter one McBride recounts the introduction of Buddhism into the Korean peninsula and how Buddhist ritual became tied to the state of Silla. Early contact of Koguryŏ and Paekche with mainland Chinese states meant that Buddhism initially entered the Korean peninsula through these two states from

around the fourth century. Gradually Buddhism gained popularity and monks from Koguryō and Paekche promulgated the new religion throughout the peninsula, with Silla finally recognizing Buddhism in the sixth century. The throne then quickly adopted Buddhism and kings drew on Buddhist imagery, symbolism and cult worship to enhance their prestige and authority. Aristocratic families were also drawn to the power of Buddhist symbols and acted as a counterbalance to royal power. (p. 20) McBride explains that the Hwarang, an aristocratic youth brigade-like institution “mediated between various competing traditions and sources of power in Silla: the royal family and the aristocracy, the regional and capital aristocracies, elites and commoners, the traditions and cultures of Silla and Kaya and the indigenous religious practices of Silla and Kaya.” (p. 21) With the *hwarang* being identified as a manifestation of Maitreya and the king identifying himself as the Cakravartin (Wheel turning) king, a politically complimentary relationship developed where the aristocracy and royalty were both able to draw on Buddhism to “enhance their symbolic resources.”(p. 21) Silla royalty and aristocracy collaborated to assert that Silla had been a land of the Dharma by reconfiguring indigenous sacred sites into Buddhist domains. This project was achieved through disseminating tales, constructing temples and absorbing indigenous religious sites. Another aspect of Silla Buddhism that tied Buddhism closely to the court was state-protection Buddhism. This practice was active in the Chinese mainland and was eagerly adopted by the upper echelons of Silla who held special Buddhist assemblies to protect the court and state.

Chapters two and three examine the cults of Maitreya, the future Buddha, and Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva of compassion and mercy. McBride begins chapter two with an account of the origin of the cult of Maitreya in China where it was promoted by individuals such as Shi Daoan and flourished under the Northern dynasties. Extant inscriptions and images appear to suggest that the cult of Maitreya was in Koguryō and Paekche from around the sixth century onwards and was the “dominant form of religious veneration during the Korean Three Kingdoms period.” (p. 37) In the case of Maitreya worship in Silla, McBride first identifies Maitreya worship with the *hwarang*, then he looks specifically at Kim Yushin and the worship of Maitreya within his *hwarang* group and finally McBride discusses the proliferation of images of Maitreya found around Silla’s capital. The final section of chapter two accounts for the transformation of Maitreya worship at a time when the veneration of Amitābha, Buddha of the Pure Land, was gaining popularity throughout Silla society. McBride notes that around the eighth century there was a widening in the “social composition of people worshipping Maitreya” to include commoners. (p. 44) The case McBride points to is the tale of Nohil Pudük and Taltal Pakpak, two commoners who renounced their secular lives and

respectively took up religious devotions to Maitreya and Amitābha. Another transformation that took place was that the aristocracy did not appear to distinguish different soteriological conclusions of worshipping Maitreya or Amitābha. McBride points to aristocrats commissioning images of both bodhisattva (p. 46) and suggests that not only does this indicate a synthesis of Maitreya worship with Amitābha, but perhaps is emblematic of a wider trend towards incorporating the worship of other bodhisattvas, such as Chijang who ferries dead souls in hell to the Pure Land. (p. 47) McBride provides two accounts of the monks who he thinks contributed to the spread of Maitreya worship to the broader population, namely Chinp'yo, who practiced austere repentance and divination rituals, and Ch'ungdam, who made offerings of tea to Maitreya. (pp. 47–51) In conclusion to chapter two, McBride outlines how worship of Maitreya was eventually subsumed into the Hwaom rubric. In the later Silla period (780–935), ties between the *hwarang* and Maitreya deteriorated, fewer images of Maitreya were commissioned by elites and Ch'oe Ch'iwōn's writings reveal that while Maitreya worship remained part of the religious landscape, it was increasingly overshadowed by new religious trends.

In chapter three McBride examines the introduction and proliferation of Avalokiteśvara (Kor: Kwanūm posal) worship in Silla from the seventh to tenth century. This chapter begins with an account of the emergence in China during the Northern and Southern dynasties period of supplication practices to Avalokiteśvara, where people recited the name of Avalokiteśvara to receive compassion, help or merit. Accounts of Paekche monk Palchōng suggest early connections to key texts, such as the *Avatamsaka* and *Lotus Sūtra*, and practices taking place on the Chinese mainland, but it is not until the late sixth and early seventh century that images of Avalokiteśvara begin to appear in the Korean peninsula. Sculptural evidence points towards Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya being venerated together, but then Avalokiteśvara worship gradually eclipsed Maitreya as Silla unified the peninsula. (p. 66) Worship of Avalokiteśvara in Silla largely appears to have centered on monasteries, and McBride explains that individuals sought Avalokiteśvara's help to obtain the birth of sons, a practice sometimes done on behalf of family members, and to protect elites and royals in their tribute relations with Tang China. Other religious practices associated with Avalokiteśvara were the recitation of the Great Compassion Spell by monks on Mount Odae around the eighth century. McBride speculates that this practice “probably served as a means of protecting Silla from calamities and eradicating the king's bad karma,” (p. 71) while on the other hand followers of Ŭisang “probably chanted this spell in repentance rituals to eliminate the karma of their sins and defilements” so as to be reborn in favorable realms. (pp. 71–72) Weaving together

a number of tales, McBride constructs a picture of monks like Ŭisang and Wŏnhyo reconfiguring the Silla landscape as occupied by Avalokiteśvara and the people of Silla as believing that Avalokiteśvara protected human and material assets. Also during the eighth century, spell sūtras entered the peninsula and added yet another layer to the religious piety of Avalokiteśvara in Silla, while at the same time helping expand the religious constituency to include common people. (pp. 78–79) In the ninth and tenth centuries accounts of the worship of Avalokiteśvara diminish and those that remain tend to show people making supplications for protecting and acquiring worldly desires. By this point of time, the worship of Avalokiteśvara had merged with the worship of Maitreya and Amitābha as Hwaŏm came to the fore.

Chapters four and five look at the rise of Hwaŏm Buddhism in Silla, then explain Hwaŏm's synthesis of Buddhist cults in the final centuries of Silla. McBride begins with an overview of the emergence of Huayan/Hwaŏm tradition in China and explains doctrinal developments and the role of key personalities such as Fazang and Silla monk Ŭisang, who introduced and promoted Hwaŏm teachings in the Korean peninsula in the seventh century. McBride notes that one of the most distinctive features found in Hwaŏm texts in Silla, as opposed to China, is their emphasis on practice rather than philosophy, an example of which is Ŭisang's *Hwaŏm ilsŏng pŏpkye to*. (p. 91) McBride also contends that the prime audience of Hwaŏm during this time was most likely to have been the aristocracy or royalty. Accounting for the interest in Hwaŏm doctrine in Silla, McBride identifies the maturing exegetical tradition promoted by Wŏnhyo, Ŭisang and Ŭisang's disciples and the unified vision promoted in Hwaŏm doctrine. Although the unified Hwaŏm vision appears to conveniently parallel the state's desire for political and social unity, McBride is quick to point out that evidence does not support this supposition. (p. 109) Instead, he explains that Hwaŏm monasteries were constructed on sacred mountains associated with national unification and that the "figurative" relationship between the state and Buddhist church grew closer as rituals were increasingly institutionalized within the Hwaŏm tradition. These rituals themselves were oriented toward strengthening and unifying the state. The unified vision of Hwaŏm also meant that native religious practices and earlier Buddhist practices like the cults outlined in earlier chapters could be easily incorporated and used according to Hwaŏm ideals. For the aristocracy of the government in late Silla, Hwaŏm's ideas and use of preexisting cultic practices supported the propaganda and ideological intentions of the state.

McBride's *Domesticating the Dharma* is indeed a significant contribution to understanding the nature of Buddhism and Buddhist practice during the Silla period. McBride makes full use of extant primary sources and a wide selection of

secondary sources in Korean, Japanese, Chinese and English to construct a compelling argument. Approaching Buddhism of this time from the perspective of practice rather than intellectual ruminations or schools is important because it clarifies an aspect of Buddhism that has been largely overlooked in scholarship to date. Focusing on what people did, how the religion adapted to its environment, who used the religion and how, and then how the religion itself changed are all important facets to explore. McBride's book ambitiously covers all of these issues over a period of roughly six hundred years. Given the technical nature of the topic and the historical period it spans, this book is really suited to researchers interested in Buddhist history and practice in Korea or East Asia. Equally, this book would make a useful supplement to a course on Korean Buddhism where a lecturer could provide students with the necessary technical and historical background so that they may better appreciate the finer points of McBride's contribution.

A number of small problems stand in the way of *Domesticating the Dharma* being a truly outstanding book. These problems do not detract from the usefulness and importance of the contribution, and I think these problems probably stem from this book being adapted from a doctoral thesis to book format. If this is the case, then the responsibility lies not only with the author but also the publisher. These problems are first, I think McBride was a little too ambitious in trying to cover all of these points in one book, especially in less than one hundred and fifty pages. By trying to touch all of these bases and make all of these points, it has made the narrative dense, the detail at times a little too laborious and the importance of the argument becomes a little difficult to catch. To get around this I think McBride should have thought of spreading his research over two books so that he could have allowed himself a little more time and space to guide the reader through this story. This would have also provided more opportunities to contextualize the nature of these Buddhist cults and their developments within the broader socio-political, religious and intellectual environment of Silla.

Second, the book needs some additional editing, and perhaps some rephrasing or re-writing. At certain points sentences tend to run on a little too long. For example, the opening paragraph of the conclusion comprises only two sentences; the first is three and a half lines long, and the second sentence is over ten lines! What is more, the first sentence of the next paragraph begins with, "The problem with this is not that it forces an arbitrary..." (p. 139) After such a long winded sentence the reader is left wondering just what is the 'this' and 'it'. The curse of the ambiguous 'it' unfortunately lurks throughout the chapters. On a stylistic note, the persistent use of fashionably academic terminology does not help the flow of

an already dense narrative. For example, always using 'deploy' and 'deployment' seems unnecessary when simpler and equally effective words are available, such as 'use'. Another peculiarity is in chapter five when the voice of the narrative suddenly shifts to first person pronoun when the majority of the other chapters are in the third person. Maybe, again, this is a matter of academic fashion and personal preference, and I am showing nothing more than my old sense of fashion. The underlying point I wish to make, however, is that when writing on a topic as complicated and difficult as Buddhism, or any other religious and intellectual tradition for that matter, the need to write in clear, lucid prose is essential.

Third, in making his argument, McBride refers to a wide selection of secondary sources in his notes, but there are points in the narrative where the reader is left wondering where McBride's work fits into or differs from other secondary literature. For example, in chapters one, two and three the arguments found in secondary literature are at best included in the endnotes, while in chapters four and five the arguments of scholars such as Kim Sang-hyun, Lee Ki-baik, Rhi Ki-yong and others are included in the narrative, and McBride explains where his interpretation lies in relation to their scholarship. In the case of the first three chapters, however I doubt scholarship is unanimous on the role and nature of these Buddhist practices. Scholars also differ in their opinion of the role and nature of institutions such as the Hwarang, a point that is not clearly addressed. So in these chapters the reader is left wondering what the author's contribution is and how it differs from earlier scholarship to date. On the other hand, in chapters four and five when McBride outlines existing scholarship and explains his own position, the reader can fully appreciate the import of his argument. For this reason I think chapters four and five are the most academically sound of all the chapters and if the same approach had been applied consistently throughout the book, then McBride's contribution to the field would be all the more clearer.

Fourth, considering that a central feature of this study is Buddhist cults, I think some space could be devoted to explaining why the author chose to use the term 'cult'. While it is not uncommon for scholars to refer to the 'cult of Maitreya' when meaning the worship of Maitreya, I think that some clarification is warranted. This is particularly important given the connotations that this term has gained in common English usage, as well as in the field of religious studies. In ordinary usage, cult can mean simply a system of worship, or a group dedicated to a particular type of worship but in following such a definition all forms of religious practice could be considered cults. Cult can also mean a fringe or heterodox form of practice system. Although this definition has its roots in Christian notions of the cult, nowadays the term is often used with this negative

connotation, such as when talking of anti-social religious groups like the Branch Davidians or Aum Shinrikyo. Furthermore, within the field of sociology cults are defined in relation to sects, churches and denominations. Since this study looks particularly at ‘cultic practices,’ I think it is important to explain what is meant by this term and why it is being used rather than terms such as ‘worship’ or ‘practice.’

As stated above, these problems are by no means obstacles to this book making a significant and valuable contribution to our knowledge of Buddhist practices in Silla. In fact, I think this kind of book is important for provoking more scholarship of its kind, for different times, people and traditions. McBride’s *Domesticating the Dharma* highlights the importance of challenging existing scholastic lines of inquiry and integrating issues in Korean religious history with broader issues in scholarship.

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Oral Literature of Korea. Comp. by Seo Daeseok, ed. by Peter H. Lee. Korean Studies Series no. 31. Söul: Jimoondang, 2005. xiv + 385 pp. ISBN 89-88095-88-X. US \$39.11.

In one volume, this book provides the general reader with a comprehensive anthology of various types of Korean oral folklore. Based upon the 1997 folkloric compilation by Seo Daeseok (Sö Taesök) *Kubi munhak* [Oral Literature], the renowned editor Peter H. Lee has selected several typical examples from the areas of myths, legends, folktales, folk song narrative and folk drama to provide a *pot-pourri* of Korean oral literature. While comprehensive, the book is not complete. Not all of the material in *Kubi munhak* has been translated, nor have all of the selected materials been translated in full. Also, in many cases the narrative of the tales has been foreshortened to create a more readable quasi-literary version of the material. The purpose of this book is to provide for the general or non-specialist reader an overview of Korean oral literature, not to give a thorough or complete treatment of the subject.

Including an introduction, the book is divided into nine separate subject areas—foundation myths, legends, folktales, classical archive records, folk songs, shamanistic narrative songs, *p’ansori*, masked dance plays, and puppet play. The introduction, which is a translation of material drawn from Seo Daeseok’s 1994 work *Han’guk munhak kangüi* [Lectures on Korean Literature], provides both an

extensive discussion of the various subjects presented in the book, and provides detailed discussion and commentary on individual narrative entries.

Oral Literature of Korea presents sixty-four different items of folk narrative. The translations in general are readable, and although condensed in places, convey the general meaning, sense and structure of the tales and other narratives. The main problem with this work is the lack of a proper scholastic apparatus which would enable the scholarly reader to go beyond what is actually on the page. Surely one of the purposes of books such as this is to introduce Korean folklore to an audience which knows little about Korea or Korean culture. For the scholar from outside the realm of Korean Studies who wants sound comparative information, works such as this book are indispensable. The lack of a comprehensive scholarly apparatus reduces the scholastic usefulness of this book.

Although the Introduction gives both a general introduction to the various topics and provides more detailed information about individual narratives which actually appear in the text, detailed background information about each item is not given before the translation of an individual text. Reading back and forth between different parts of the book (the Introduction and a narrative entry) makes it difficult to grasp the nuances in the individual narrative. Specifically, each narrative entry should have had more extensive notation to explain terms, concepts, or historical background. Some of the entries have footnotes; many do not. In those entries which have notation, the notation should have been more extensive. With entries which are drawn from recorded sources, particularly historic sources, these sources should have been stated in every case, and at the point at which that source is first introduced in the text of the book, a description of that source should have been provided. Often historic sources are referred to by the translation of their titles rather than by a transliteration—i.e., *Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms* for *Samguk sagi*. Not giving a transliteration makes research more difficult for the comparative researcher who is not specialised in Korean Studies to find relevant source material. Another problem is that even when a source is given, the precise location of the narrative entry within that source is never given. There should have been proper attestation for folklore (tales and song narratives) entries which are clearly drawn from the records of twentieth-century fieldwork. In this case, each entry should have provided information about the recorded source from which it was drawn, the name of the researcher who recorded it, the date when the folktale was recorded, the location of the fieldwork, and the person who narrated the tale (if this is known). The index of this book should have been more comprehensive; in particular, sources which are frequently mentioned in the text, such as the *Samguk sagi*, should have been included.

Oral Literature of Korea provides good translations of a range of Korean oral narratives and is therefore recommended to the general reader and undergraduate students. As mentioned above, the lack of a scholarly apparatus sadly has reduced its usefulness to the scholarly community.

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Korean Spirituality. Don Baker. Dimensions of Asian Spirituality. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008. xvi + 166. ISBN: 978-0-8248-3257-5 (Paperback).

Don Baker's *Korean Spirituality* is the third offering in the new series "Dimensions of Asian Spirituality," edited by Henry Rosemont, Jr. The series is geared toward interested general readers and, in particular, undergraduate students taking courses in religious studies. Hitherto, instructors teaching classes on Korean religions have been limited because there are few books in print that are easily accessible to their students that may be used effectively as required texts. *Korean Spirituality* fills this need very successfully. This book should become a staple of courses on Korean religions for many years to come.

The book is comprised of seven chapters and an appendix. Chapter 1, "Korean Spirituality: A Multiplicity of Approaches to Transcending the Human Condition" (pp. 1–17) is a brilliantly constructed, brief introduction to Korean religion. It makes a persuasive case for seeing similarities in the many religions practiced in contemporary Korea by focusing on the concept of "transcendence." The author's vast experience over a career of living in and studying Korea has enabled him to encapsulate many key issues. I can foresee having students compare and contrast this to his other excellent, but much longer, introduction contained in *Religions of Korea in Practice* (edited by Robert E. Buswell, Jr., Princeton, 2006) as a useful academic exercise. Chapter 2, "Folk Religion and Animism" (pp. 18–29), covers the topic commonly referred to by the problematic term "shamanism." The author does an excellent job of explaining the various types of religious specialists—charismatic shamans, hereditary shamans, and shamanic diviners—that are active in Korea today and the relationship between rituals performed by shamans and those performed traditionally by housewives.

Chapter 3, "China's Three Teachings in Korea" (pp. 30–57) is a very succinct introduction to Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism (in that order) in Korea. With respect to Buddhism, the author hits most of the traditional high points: the

life and views of Wŏnhyo (617–686), Sŏn (Zen), and the worship of Amitābha (the Buddha of the Pure Land in the West) and Bhaiṣajyaguru (Medicine Buddha) and other forms of devotional practice. With respect to Confucianism, explaining the metaphysics of the revamped Confucianism of the Chinese Song period (Cheng-Zhu learning, Daoxue), which was adopted by the Korean literati during the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn periods, is often difficult. The author succeeds in making Neo-Confucian philosophy interesting and understandable for novices because he steers clear of the canned, traditional translation “principle” and, instead, employs more fluid and meaningful, interpretive translations (see pp. 46–50).

The author is most at home writing about Confucianism, Catholicism, and Korea’s New Religions—specific areas where he has published or has conducted his own research in the past. Chapter 4, “Korean Christianity” (pp. 58–77), and Chapter 5, “The New Religions of Korea” (pp. 78–93), stand out as among the most well written chapters in the book. He describes the coming of Catholicism to Korea and the early persecutions with candor and simplicity. His explanation of the glowing success of Protestant Christianity is constructed in such a manner that believing students will probably not be offended by intellectual analysis of their faith. The author does not exhaust all of the possible reasons for the success of Christianity, but he succinctly covers several of the most pressing and interesting issues in Korea’s encounter with Christianity. The chapter on Korea’s new religions focuses primarily on those that had the greatest impact during the twentieth century and which are still quite visible today. The chapter has separate sections on Eastern Learning (The Religion of the Heavenly Way), the Chŭngsan family of religions (Jeung San Do and, primarily, Daesun Jinri-hoe), Won Buddhism, and other new religions (briefly treating Taejonggyo, Dahn World, and the Unification Church).

Chapter 6, “The Spiritual Gaze in Korea” (pp. 94–121), is a well crafted analysis of the vision of the divine (or transcendent) in Korea religions. The author uses examples from living Korean religions to introduce the academic vocabulary used to describe and classify religious traditions: anthropomorphism, anthropocentrism, polytheism, monodevotionalism, anthropomorphic monotheism, anthropocentric monotheism, and so forth. By employing these general terms he illustrates how various traditions can be compared and contrasted and how different traditions influenced each other depending on the historical context. Chapter 7 “The Spiritual Practices of Koreans” (pp. 122–144), introduces the wide assortment of religious practices available to people in Korea by classifying them under three broad headings of anthropocentric spiritual practices, such as meditation and chanting; theocentric religious practices, such as prayer and

shaman rituals; and group-oriented spiritual practices. In the appendix, “Spirituality in North Korea” (pp. 145–151), the author briefly describes the deteriorated state of the traditional religions under the Communist regime and, more important, the way the North Korean government substituted organized religion with a state cult centered on the veneration of Kim Il Sung and the concept of Juche.

I have few quibbles with the presentation of material in the book and, pleasantly, there are few transcription errors. One quibble I feel honor bound to emphasize is the absence of dates for the Three Kingdoms period and the kingdoms of Koguryō, Paekche, and Silla. One transcription irregularity I would point out is the use of *li* to transliterate the Sino-Korean logograph that refers to the “invisible force” that “determines how human beings and everything else in the universe should behave” (pp. 12, 48ff). Although pronounced and transliterated as *li* in Chinese, in Korean it should be romanized as *i* (or potentially *ri*) following the McCune-Reischauer system. The logograph representing material force, the stuff of which all things in the universe are made, is transliterated appropriately as *kei* (C. *qi*) (p. 48).

There are also a few items that need some correction or clarification. First, in his discussion of Buddhism, the author opines that philosophical Buddhists would want to escape from the cycle of rebirth and death and attain *nirvāṇa* (p. 36). Although the author provides a good, basic explanation of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the bodhisattva ideal, and the concept of the bodhisattva path, he neglects to apply it to practicing Buddhist intellectuals. Philosophical Buddhists in Korea, such as the famed Wōnhyo, vowed to become bodhisattvas by arousing the aspiration to enlightenment, to postpone complete and total enlightenment in *nirvāṇa*, and to return to the world in the cycle of rebirth and death in order to ferry all beings to *nirvāṇa*. Wōnhyo composed a song that encourages all people to “Arouse Your Mind and Practice!” alluding to their arousing the aspiration to enlightenment and practicing on the path of the bodhisattva. Second, contrary to the author’s position, the mountain god is not always accompanied by a tiger (p. 100). Depictions of male or female mountain spirits riding or accompanied by deer are also common. The most apropos example is the female mountain god of Cheju’s Mt. Halla who is accompanied by a white deer instead of a tiger. Third, the author suggests that Avalokiteśvara (Kwanseūm Posal), originally a male bodhisattva, is usually considered a female in China and Korea (pp. 38, 107). My experience is that there is greater nuance to the situation. Several stories in the *Samguk yusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms; first compiled by Iryōn about 1285, and further edited and appended later by other figures) depict the bodhisattva of compassion as manifesting in female form; however, in other

stories the bodhisattva retains his original male status. Extant images and icons of the bodhisattva from the Koryŏ and Chosŏn periods are just as often—if not typically—male or androgynous; strongly suggesting that Koreans did not turn the Bodhisattva of Compassion into a purely female deity as he became in late imperial China. These points, however, are all minor and did not detract from what is, for the most part, an excellent and readable introduction to Korean religions.

Korean Spirituality is easy to understand and extremely accessible to the general reader. It is an excellent introduction that, if used in the classroom, alludes to many ideas and concepts and historical background that can be fleshed out in lectures. Because the book, and probably the series, eschews introducing too many native terms and concepts, much room is left for instructors to build upon the many ideas that have been presented with great clarity by the author. Also, I believe that it includes much interesting data and information and several anecdotes that will promote interesting questions and discussion in classrooms. The book also contains an abbreviated but comprehensive section “further reading” (pp. 153–155), which includes references to both print and electronic media sources. This will be of assistance to students preparing to write research papers or do other projects associated with Korean religion and culture. All in all I am grateful to Don Baker for his long labor in bringing this useful resource into publication, and I am certain it will benefit students and scholars for many years to come.

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Korean Cuisine: An Illustrated History. By Michael J. Pettid. London: Reaktion Books, 2008, 223 pp. Appendix, index, numerous b/w and color illustrations ISBN: 978-1-86189-348-2; Price: U.S. \$39.95

If your opinions about Korean food and its international “image” take stances on whether or not it is too spicy, too salty, too pungent, too odor-causing, or just “perfect” then this is the right book to learn the reasons why and how these traits have meaningfully evolved over time. Granted its culinary uniqueness and increasing global availability, comprehensive and structured approaches are needed to make Korean food more attainable to non-Koreans and perhaps even young Koreans themselves. The book under review makes just such an attempt with a formality and content organization that will be useful to instructors,

cultural and culinary historians, serious non-Korean chefs, general readers, and Asian food aficionados.

Pettid's numerous text insertions of citations from Korean historical and thesauric resources will aid food explorers to gain a nuanced access to this cuisine and how it has grown over an astonishing extent of time. In seven chapters we learn about (1) Daily Foods; (2) Ritual and Seasonal Foods; (3) Regional Specialties; (4) Drinks; (5) Foods of the Royal Palace; (6) The Kitchen Space and Utensils; and (7) Food in Contemporary Korea. An appendix section for annotated recipes will satisfy aspiring amateur chefs; one for references will intrigue bilingual researchers; and another one for the bibliography reveals a rich book list for readers with general and special East Asian food culture interests.

Regarding the original spiciness of Korean food, in his historical sketch of Korea the author makes a poignant reference to the pungent provenance of Korea's mythical founder, Tangun (assumedly born in 2333 BC): god *Hwanung* descends to earth and conceives a son (Tangun) with a she-bear, who, before turning into a beautiful woman had to eat a combination of mugwort and garlic for one hundred days (12).

Other highlights include the mentioning of pre- and early historic Chinese food influences, *kimchi's* possible origin from the Paekche kingdom (18 BC–AD 660), the Koryŏ dynasty's (918–1392) achievements in wet-rice cultivation, lasting Mongol influences on peninsular meat-eating habits, Song Chinese influence on improvements in rice-transplantation based on scholarship, and solid social stratification into aristocrats and land-working peasants during the Chosŏn Dynasty (1392–1910). With agricultural efficiency markedly increasing during the mid-dynastic period, farmer's markets gradually came to be held regularly. The colonial period (1910–1945) brought land-loss for farmers and more rice for the Japanese at home and for their imperial war fronts. Japan-induced changes included the introduction of mass-produced alcoholic beverages, processed canned foods, and white bread.

Through the words of writer Cho Sin (1454–1528), in chapter one Pettid portrays the extent of a perfect meal that comes across to readers then and now in the splendor of Korean senses of color, freshness, steam, smell, pungency, and potency of foods prepared with an amazing variety of skill and methods.

Among daily grains and legumes, and all other foods, rice is first. The "supremacy of rice" (p. 33) can be established not only via culinary essence but symbolically much more revelatory via idiomatic expressions and linguistic creations of honorific intensity. For example, when served to elders, rice—usually termed *bap*—becomes *chinji*; or *sura* when served to a king or queen; and *chenme* when offered to ancestors (29).

Basic staples are enhanced with signature-flavor condiments and seasonings among which *jang* (soy-based sauces and pastes) are Korea's most important. *Jang* is made of *meju* (soybean malt) in a long process starting with fermentation triggered by rice straw wrapped around *meju* blocks and resulting in the extraction of salty brine which becomes the aroma basis for *kanjang* (soy sauce), *toenjang* (soybean paste), and *kochujang* (hot chili paste). The intrinsic distinctiveness of the *jang* flavors are powerfully complemented by *cham kireum* (sesame oil), *tul kireum* (perilla oil), garlic, sesame seeds, pepper, salt, and the indispensable sea-broth aromas of several *chotkal* varieties (salt-fermented seafood).

Given a traditional absence of salads in Korea, cooked and raw vegetables figure prominently in their function as *namul* (side dish vegetables, herbs, and wild greens). Most important among them are hundreds of types of *kimchi*. To tell its vital details, the author delves into a meaningful question for the uninitiated: "What is *kimchi*?" Through a process called *kimjang* (stockpiling *kimchi*) up to 150 heads of Chinese cabbage per family were prepared in the fall via mutual household aid (*pumasari*). Among other things, I was surprised to learn the answer to one of my own musings: How was *kimchi* seasoned before the arrival of chili in the early seventeenth century? Well, with garlic, ginger, salt, and Chinese peppercorns (48).

The exceedingly spicy *kimchi tchigae* and *samgyetang* (hot chicken soup), and *kaejankuk* (dog meat with scallions, and chili powder) are abundant with chilis and peppers even in the hot-humid season for the purpose of balancing a person's body temperature (i.e. *iyol chiyol*—treating heat with heat and—*iban chiban*—cold with cold during the winter; p. 88–89). Meat, as well as fish, was very rare in the past but is in high demand today with beef being most craved, followed by pork, chicken, dog, and, on Jeju Island, horse. Fish used to be abundant in and around the peninsula, a favorable circumstance that promoted the development of many seafood dishes and preservation methods to make a catch last via *seau chot* (salting).

Several beef recipes have been honed to Korean tastes since the thirteenth century when, after a long Buddhist-infused emphasis on vegetarianism, invading Mongols introduced new perspectives on meat out of which some of today's popular meat dishes might have emerged, such as *pulgogi* ("cow meat") and *shabu shabu* (very thinly sliced meat strips cooked in broth). Cows were honored as active *saenggu* (servants) in the livelihood of a family and granted a special day off during the spring. If pigs could be afforded they were seen as a fast-growing source of protein, raised on little more than kitchen leftovers or, as on Jeju Island, entirely on human excrements. Such pigs were called *ttong twaechi* and their meat has been considered a delicacy until today.

In closing the protein section with a mention of the sensationalized dog-eating habit of Koreans, Pettid matter-of-factly explains dog dishes as “panacea for overall health” and as a means to align one’s *ki* (vital body energy) to the environment (62). Along similar lines he is aware that his representation of daily foods is pinned to certain social class ideals. There was and is a great deal of variation in the elaborateness of daily foods eaten according to multiple class settings and individual economic means.

Ritual foods (chapter two) are presented in their annual and social class contexts but perhaps more importantly also in their “deep cultural significance and symbolic meanings” (68). Personal rites included childbirth, with ascribed pregnancy food taboos, special birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, and funerals. Communal rites were joined with the agricultural cycle celebrating seasonal rites such as *taeborum* (first full moon), *samjitnal* (third lunar month), *tano* (fifth day of the fifth lunar month), and *chusok* (harvest moon festival). Because of their celebratory quality many foods were used for most festive events. Their purpose has been to facilitate worship, social interaction, negotiate good luck, and avert baneful effects.

The cultural insight that the ritual/food relation affords outlines an important aspect of Korean ways of “harmonious” community building based on reciprocity and mutual cooperation. Many rituals in their relations with food are described in this chapter, but I can render only one for review. Newly weds, for example, were carefully ushered into community responsibilities by a set of marriage rituals that could stretch across several years. Exchanges of foods and kitchen utensils in the process can be seen as symbolizing invocations for good navigation around the complications of procreation, cohesion of two families, and socioeconomic success. Pettid is careful not to make any generalizations on which foods were offered during weddings because of the wide range of social status lines, location, financial means, and historic periods (76).

The third chapter reveals why Korean pride in regional specialty foods has deep cultural roots that show their strength today when global trade is threatening local growth and economic viability. Geography had an influential hand in outcomes of diverse provincial cultures in that certain mountain ranges created isolated pockets, in which local ideas, behaviors, and language evolved into distinct cultures including cuisine. As conscientious eaters we must not forget that to real farmers from these areas, as everywhere in the world, it is now the question how to preserve the uniqueness of local traditional produce and how to establish quality standards that promote acknowledged cultural property rights, development of brand names, and successful fair-share marketing in domestic and global trade arenas.

Regional origins for beverages (chapter four) can also be detected by the special tastes they obtain from their local source—especially water. Its purity determines the quality of drinks here introduced in the categories of alcohol (*su*) and teas (*ja*), including the *anju* foods (special “drinking” side dishes and fruit ingredients associated with them). Besides water, rice is the most important ingredient for Korea’s three most representative alcoholic beverages, i.e. *makkoli* (turbid white rice wine for commoners), *chongju* (clear-strained rice wine for aristocratic class members), and *soju* (rice liquor). The main cultural purpose for *makkoli* in traditional Korea was aiding in the alleviation of hardships endured in the rice paddies. This was a harsher reality than that detectable in the aristocratic realm of Korean teas (*ja*), which is imbued with intricate etiquette and refined culture that emphasize pursuits of human self-cultivation, enlightenment, and medicinal awareness. The most common among the traditional teas is *noju* (green tea) followed by a large variety of medicinal root, fruit, flower-blossom, and herbal teas that feature many diverse curative potencies.

Not many dish descriptions are given in chapter five. There was no need, because on the contrary to commoners’ food, royal cuisine is boundless, deserving an all-embracing tome for itself. Thus a sample of important dishes for the *surasang* (royal meal table) is laid out in a diagram (136). The stimulus of this chapter rather lies in historical information. A sheer complexity of *kungjung umsik* (royal food) in terms of types of dishes, food courses, and ritual decorum was prevalent in daily routine and grand festivities. Legal codes specified, for example, the procurement of rice, the preparation of foods for ancestral rites, and how to prepare tofu, liquor, or rice cakes.

The story behind *tangpyongchae* (“vegetable salad of impartiality”), for example, tells of factionalism that divided royal politics at the time. To maintain political impartiality in the government King Yongjo (1724–1776) assigned government positions equally among the four factions, an act that stabilized his long reign. Through the four colors represented in the dish, it narrates and reminds people how a balance of forces might result in cultural prosperity for the entire community.

A re-imagination of traditional roles of women in royal kitchens has been popularly attained by the recent TV-series *Dae Jang Geum* (Jewel in the Palace; first aired in Korea in 2003). Chapter six, however, clearly reveals to readers the archival difficulties to provide enough factual evidence that warrants a *Dae Jang Geum*-like eclipsed narrative on traditional kitchens as operated by women. A good thing about South Korea’s traditional and modern culture separated probably only by the decades of the 1960s and ‘70s is that stories about the good old tastes emanating from old kitchen utensils were carried over into the modern

period to what the appetite of contemporary Koreans. Thus pots and bowls such as the *sot* (iron kettle), *koptol sot* (stone bowl), and *ttuk paegi* (ceramic bowls) have been reintroduced by popular restaurants to capture the taste of rice cooked in a *sot* or stews served in a *koptol sot*.

The contemporary part of the book (chapter seven) focuses on some of the vast changes that Korean food has undergone during the twentieth century. It is probably the book's most interesting part because those readers who have had their own experiences with Asian food can engage in reflections on the issues discussed. I commend the author for sparing us an inventory of foreign food representations ranging from ubiquitous fast-food franchises to high-end Asian or European restaurants, although a comprehensive study on how they are perceived by Koreans would be interesting. Probably the biggest change regarding traditional versus modern food provision is the shift from growing one's own food to eating out in restaurants and buying food at diverse large-scale market outlets.

The prominent Well-being movement is an outspoken public effort to reduce the intake of unhealthy foods and pay more attention especially to home-grown organic foods, medicinal products, and proven traditional remedies. The author explains and charts traditional experience with the concept of *obaeng* ("Five Phases"—attributes and body parts related to wood, fire, earth, metal, and water; pp. 46–47, 168–169) coupled with *yin* and *yang* ("*umyang*" in Korean) to keep balance in a cosmic stream of organisms (e.g. rice comes from the earth, is cooked in an iron kettle with water on a fire fuelled by wood and the rice eaten by humans). Thus many quality foods carrying the Well-being logo have become an important part of reemphasizing foods and remedies of the past not only for their many curative properties but also for their capacity to create awareness about the values of the traditional food context.

What I like most about the book is its revelation of the importance of the close relationship between Korea's food, history, culture, and language. Only by consciously recognizing this relationship can we speak of a "national cuisine" (Appadurai 1988) to be cherished by the citizens and visitors of a country. In my review the book has no significant shortcomings except that many of the color photos are clearly below professional food-book quality. This is probably not entirely the author's fault as he should have been better advised by an experienced editor.

But overall this is a good publication and it was overdue. It should become a desk and backpack reference for many Koreanists, food scholars, and globetrotting gourmets. It remains to be seen, however, whether or not the book is able to help prepare the route for a culinary *hallyu* ("Korean Wave"). Quite a

few gourmet magazines in the United States and Europe still prove to be squeamish, sniffish, and sometimes snobbish as to fully throw their support behind Korean cuisine. Comments on ubiquitous foodie web and blog sites for restaurant and cookbook reviews reflect a considerable lack of knowledge (and etiquette) as to leave significant online imprints on Korean food.

Korean culinary authenticity is often unknowingly confused with traits or dishes from other Asian countries. Or it is deliberately diluted with references to Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese, or Mongolian food, taste, or preparation similarities. The book will serve well in clarifying such confusions and will help with mitigating the biases. Currently government and corporate interests are hard at work in streamlining Korean foods to disseminate them as “unlabeled” standardized Korean tastes deliberately only among the world’s top ten industrialized countries (cf. “The Korean Food Wave,” a Korea Herald article posted on MySinchew, Sunday, August 17, 2008; see also KF 2003: 6–7). Famous pop and golf stars have agreed to help turn a “tamed” Korean cuisine into a “wave” that could skim the world’s richest countries and thus help boost Korean brand names for export. It is hoped that further research will critically address these and other issues on Korean food and culture.

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North Korea: The Paranoid Peninsula. A Modern History (2nd revised edition). By Paul French. London, NY: Zed Books, 2007. 334 pages.

A globalized and interdependent world is deeply in financial crisis. Responding to the new tough realities, individual states and regional communities adjust their production and consumption mechanisms. Flexibility and common sense help the economic systems survive and recover. Only North Korea—the last “orthodox”

communist state—has no plans for change. Experts predicted North Korea's imminent collapse in the early 1990s but it remains defiant and ignorant to the obvious necessity of modernization. The country remains locked in a self-destructive cycle, where ideology controls the politics and faulty policies kill the economy. Self-imposed isolation and external sanctions keep North Korea poor but stable, providing the regime with unconventional opportunities for survival. Isolated and paranoid, it may well stay around for another century.

Paul French's book *North Korea: The Paranoid Peninsula. A Modern History* (first published in 2005) has seen the second revised edition in 2007. It offers a profound and comprehensive analysis of the DPRK's political and socio-economic peculiarities and examines the phenomenon of this country's obstinate denial of reality. A director of Shanghai-based Access Asia, Mr. French boasts the first-hand knowledge of North Korea that positions him well to judge its business practices and domestic policies. Relying on open-source material and personal observations, the author provides a dispassionate analysis of what is known about the situation in this highly secretive state.

In the first edition of his book, Paul French simply argued that in order to understand the DPRK's behavior and diplomacy, it was necessary to understand the country's misguided economic policies. After the first edition of this text was published, many significant events came into play. Starting from 2005, North Korean companies were effectively cut off from international banking systems and trade. In response, in 2006, the country conducted a nuclear test which changed the balance of power in the region and prompted Washington to resume bilateral talks with Pyongyang. The region and the world have obviously changed, causing this second edition of the book to address many new questions. Why did North Korea see no alternative to going nuclear? Why does it still stubbornly refuse to reform?

As before, *The Paranoid Peninsula* attributes all the evils which continue to beset North Korea (famine, excessive military spending, the crumbling industrial base and infrastructure) to the all-embracing nature of economic planning. Openly talking about mistakes and lost opportunities, the author blames the North Korean leadership for excessive adherence to a command economy: "The DPRK has failed not primarily because it is run by a leadership obsessed with the cult of personality or because it is a one-party state entirely devoid of democracy, though neither of these truisms about North Korea has helped its development, but because it subscribes to the failed concept of the Soviet-inspired socialist command economy that insists on a centrally planned system." Staying impartial, as all business people should, Mr. French formulates the central thesis of his book by saying that "the DPRK is a failed state and therefore liable to become unstable

unless engaged enthusiastically and strategically”.

To explain what brought North Korea to the present state of affairs, the author brings together the political, ideological and international factors. The inherent contradictions of the command economy are seen as the main reasons for the failure to introduce the elements of marketisation and mercantilism in this communist country. Mr. French believes that only by jettisoning the core economic theory, based on the outdated principles of Marxism-Leninism and Maoism, will North Korea overcome the mounting economic problems. However, to reject this economic theory means to admit the failure of *Juche* ideology and the regime created by Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il.

The author undertakes a detailed examination of the philosophical basis of *Juche* (self-sufficiency and independence) ideology, which he calls a “state religion” and the leadership system, which he describes as a “revolutionary dynasty.” Every aspect of public life in the country is dominated by these two omnipresent concepts, which inculcate in the populace the obsession with dogma and personality cult. Issues related to the North Korean economic system, reform, and regime survival are discussed and juxtaposed with Chinese and Soviet models. Of particular interest is the case study of Sinuiju, an experiment which turned into “an unmitigated disaster and revealed the almost total lack of understanding in Pyongyang of economics, fiscal policy, the law of supply and demand, or international business practice.”

The unraveling of the nuclear crisis is also discussed in some detail. But the focus is placed on the economic implication of the stand-off and its ramifications. Without defending the DPRK, the author criticizes the U.S. for the policy failure in its dealings with both Pyongyang and Seoul. He points out that American policy towards the peninsula “has always been one of reaction and not anticipation” and ultimately “fell between two stools.” The belligerence of Washington, in the author’s view, left Pyongyang paranoid and insecure. Interestingly, the rise of the Military-First (Songun) ideology in North Korea Paul French attributes to the growing fears of possible reform and engagement. The Cold War confrontation and national division, concludes the author, continues to affect the economic systems, international relations, social development and national psychologies on the peninsula.

The Paranoid Peninsula does not spare strong language describing the North as “autarkic, sclerotic, schizophrenic, Orwellian, anachronistic, a pariah or suicide state.” Indeed, North Korea is committing a form of suicide by not addressing its protracted industrial and agricultural stagnation and by pursuing a diplomatic policy of belligerence while suffering from famine and other humanitarian crises. There is also a pertinent observation about North Korea’s habit of positing every

issue in a historical context and constantly referring to the past. That makes it appear to be “a country with a past but no future.” The DPRK resembles “a prisoner of its own history” with no escape plan from the “cycle of decline and collapse.”

Despite being pessimistic about the prospects of meaningful changes, the author believes that the notion of reform in the DPRK has not totally disappeared. After the retreat from the “economic measures” of June 2002, the country has managed to boost light industrial production and successfully launched the Kaesong Industrial Zone. The ongoing dialogue with Washington gives Pyongyang some hope that eventually bilateral relations will be normalized. Paul French is particularly critical of Washington’s “double whammy” of cutting off North Korea’s access to cash and to foreign markets. As a result, he argues, the growth and proliferation of Kaesong and Kaesong-like projects has been stymied, and the pro-reform element in Pyongyang, known as the Chrysanthemum Group, has lost influence. The recent closure of Kumgangsan Resort and the threats to shut down the DMZ and Kaesong Industrial Zone is a clear victory for conservatives within the ruling clique.

Nevertheless, this reissue of *The Paranoid Peninsula* leaves the reader with a greater sense of hope and cautious anticipation of changes for the better. In the concluding section of the book, Paul French seems to be siding with the Chinese, not American, view on the problem and makes three major points. First, that North’s economy is in poor shape but is not about to collapse; second, that Kim Jong-il is rational, pragmatic and firmly in political control; and third, that Pyongyang is willing to trade its nuclear weapons for security guarantees and economic assistance. In other words, if the external circumstances are right and the domestic situation is stable, North Korea might be able to change and modernize. Speaking allegorically, the long-term “prisoner” might have a chance to see the light of day after liberating himself from the fears and obsessions associated with the past. The tragedy of the paranoid peninsula is that it is not solely up to the Korean people when and how this dilemma is going to be resolved.

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There a Petal Silently Falls. By Ch'oe Yun, translated by Bruce and Ju-chan Fulton. New York and Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia UP, 2008. 192 pages. (ISBN: 978-0-231-14296-0, paper). US \$24.50.

Ch'oe Yun is arguably one of the most versatile contemporary South Korean writers, both in terms of narrative style and the subject topics that she chooses to write about. Her solid academic background in French literature and critical theory give an edge to her writing that distinguishes her literary style from most of her contemporaries. She is generally regarded as one of the most important contemporary South Korean writers, and for that reason alone the publication of this collection dedicated solely to Ch'oe Yun is a very welcome addition to existing works of Korean literature in English translation.

The choice of works included in this anthology is descriptive of Ch'oe Yun's versatility as a writer. While *There a Petal Silently Falls* (*Chögi sori öpsi hanjöm kkonnip i chigo*, 1988) opens a vivid window onto the traumatic events and the ensuing mental anguish immediately after the 1980 Kwangju massacre, *Whisper Yet* (*Soksagim soksagim*, 1994) is a more introspective take on Korean trauma literature (sometimes also referred to as 'division literature' or 'unification literature'). As opposed to the first two stories which are powerful in their descriptions of human suffering, trauma and separation, *The Thirteen-Scent Flower* (*Yölse kaji irüm üi kkeot byanggi*, 1995) is a more light-hearted and fantastical story about ordinary people who aspire for extraordinary things in a society in which human values are increasingly influenced and driven by consumerism.

The collection opens with the title story, which also was Ch'oe's debut novella. It caused quite a stir when first published in 1988 because it tackled head on the politically sensitive topic of the 1980 Kwangju massacre. The narrative follows the story of a traumatised teenage girl orphaned in the massacre, and her vain efforts to deal with the enormity of the events. However, instead of offering a simple consciousness-raising narrative about an incident that was not then openly talked about, Ch'oe personalises trauma through her narrative. The story is thus intended to engage with the reader by showing the impossibility of ignoring the legacy of the massacre, since the trauma that followed affects all Koreans in way or another. This all-encompassing nature of the legacy of Kwangju is expressed through the various points of view which each offer different perspectives on the effects of the trauma. The first-hand experience is portrayed through the eyes of the girl-protagonist, who has been not only severely traumatised by witnessing the death of her mother in the massacre, but whose suffering is also confounded by those who take advantage of her disoriented state. A construction worker called Chang presents the point of view of those who come into contact with the direct victims

of the tragedy. Initially, the girl-protagonist appears to him simply as a slightly deranged girl with a broken body whom he both abuses and looks after, but after initial repulsion he comes to pity her and loathe his own indifference to the suffering of an innocent human being. The way in which people can easily ignore or even despise the suffering of others, even to the point of further abusing them, is poignantly made in this story. Finally, a group of young men give an account of their efforts to locate the girl out of some sense of duty toward her brother, who has also been killed some time before. Through their narration the reader gains a more distanced, but concerned, point of view on the girl's fate. The group's struggle to understand their own motivations to 'rescue' the girl underlines the need to engage with the trauma, or to fix it somehow, even if there appears to be no possibility of actually doing so.

The girl's intradiegetic dialogues and analepses to her traumatic memories are the most affective sections in the story, as they reveal something of the depth of the trauma that she is trying to come to terms with. Descriptive of the confusion that must have taken hold of the people of Kwangju in the run up to the massacre, the girl's frantic inner dialogues are confusing and disjointed, but are brought onto a vivid focus when she recalls the last moments leading up to her mother's death in the city:

The suffering pulsed with the suppressed memories of myriad faces and a lightning chain of events. Screaming faces. Faces falling to the ground. Menacing, assaulting faces. Bloody faces. Denuded faces. Faces twitching like fish out of water. Faces that disappeared silently. Faces pursued. Glaring faces. Shouting faces and arms waving wildly. Common faces, forever hardened. Smashed faces. Faceless faces.

Profiles moving forward. Faces with beautiful, shining foreheads. Faces that combine dreams and power. Faces falling sideways. Faces falling backward to the ground. Faces smashed again.

A face with unseeing eyes that was about to call her name. (p. 21)

The way in which Ch'oe uses her narrative to not only remind the readers of the extreme violence that was inflicted on defenceless bodies, but also to evoke guilt in all the characters that the girl-protagonist comes in contact with, speaks against any attempt to present Kwangju massacre as a trauma that affects only those who directly experienced the bloodshed. On the contrary, the guilt that drives the girl-protagonist and in some ways infects all the other characters is a recurring thematic element in the story. The presence of a mentally damaged and physically abused body of a girl thus becomes a metaphor of the damage and guilt inflicted on the collective body of all Koreans on that day.

If *Petals* deals with the raw trauma suffered by an individual in the immediate aftermath of a tragic event, *Whisper Yet* alludes to the trauma of division that continues to haunt the collective consciousness of Korean people. The story centres on a female protagonist's memories of her father's orchard caretaker called Ajaebi. When she is only a small girl, Ajaebi, who is a communist activist and an escaped political prisoner, is taken in by the narrator's father and becomes part of her family. The plot develops at a slow pace, and the peaceful background of a present-day orchard where she is having a holiday and reminiscing about her past, offer a deceptively calm setting which hides an underlying current of unspoken and unresolved sorrow. Here Ch'oe alludes to the existence of the 'other' Korean, who in the official rhetoric is portrayed as an enemy of the state, but who is in this story rehumanised as a victim of a shared and unfortunate history. Moreover, while many other Korean trauma narratives touch upon the national division and the impossibility of crossing the thirty-eighth parallel that divides the two Koreas, *Whisper Yet* describes the effects of enduring division within a shared space. As the story unfolds, it is revealed to the reader that Ajaebi's family lives not too far from the orchard where he is hiding, but that they are unable to reunite or even meet because of the grave consequences that such a reunion might have on his family. As the narrator's reflections on her childhood memories of Ajaebi intertwine with the enduring trauma of national division, this trauma of the past is presented as a trauma that continues to haunt the present as well, as it seeps down from one generation to the next. As the narrator tells the story of Ajaebi to her own daughter in the form of a fairytale in whispered, hushed tones, it is implied that one day the daughter will also have to embrace this unresolved sorrow, or what the narrator refers to as 'the energy of tears'.

Contrary to the first two stories, *The Thirteen-Scent Flower* requires much less, if any, previous knowledge of Korean culture or society. The story focuses on the lives of two ordinary people with extraordinary dreams, Bye and Green Hand, and emerges as a humorous narrative which simultaneously offers a scathing critique of the rapid consumerisation of Korean society. Bye is a young truck driver, who in his daydreams is a denizen of the Arctic with telepathic and telekinetic skills, while Green Hands is a suicidal teenage girl with an astonishing ability to enable plants to grow. While their separate lives are described in terms of dull existence in an urban hell, their meeting in most unexpected circumstances blossoms into a relationship that changes both of their lives. As they decide to escape the city and settle in a mountainous countryside village, they begin to grow flowers. Their combined skills soon engender an exquisite flower that they name 'wind chrysanthemum'. An emblem of their love for each other, they cultivate the flower in a variety of thirteen different scents, each with a mysterious power to

affect the mood of those who smell them. While the two main characters never set out to seek commercial success, news of the amazing flower spreads throughout the country and beyond. What follows is a witty and entertaining description of other people's efforts to utilise the flower's commercial value to the extreme. The story also includes some highly amusing sections which critique the often equally value-driven world of the *homo academicus*, as competing botanists slate each other in an effort to publish their research on the unusual flower. It is telling, however, that none of them seem to recognise the inherent value of the flower, as their focus is solely on how they can benefit from its existence. Ch'oe thus questions whether anything of significant beauty and value can survive in the modern world without being marred by greed and ambition.

If one were to pinpoint a common thematic element that would link the stories included in this collection, it would be the traumatic events of modern Korean history and the way they continue to affect contemporary Korean consciousness. Moreover, although these stories are clearly not intended to be read as explicitly feminist texts, there is a strong suggestion that men's material greed, as well as the wars and conflicts they engage in, affect women in some ways even more profoundly than they do those who do the fighting. In Ch'oe's own words, she has 'never been interested in public heroes—male public heroes, that is. The history of Korean literature is full of such heroes; the rest of us tend to be sacrificed to their cause and end up in the shade, so to speak.'¹ Accordingly, in *Petals* the girl-protagonist's father is conspicuous only by his absence, and the brother has died fighting some greater cause that the girl or her mother do not understand but struggle to support nevertheless. To an extent, this is a critique of the way in which a society focused on the exploits of men fails to see how women are affected by the ensuing consequences. As opposed to the critique of destructive (and in some ways, male) energies, women's ability to engender life within and through their bodies is emphasised in *The Thirteen-Scent Flower* through Green Hands' ability to make things grow, and through the frequent references to the maternal in *Whisper Yet*.

Finally, the quality of these translations merits no small mention. As a lecturer in Korean literature I am always grateful for any quality additions to a growing number of translations available in English, and translations from Bruce and Juchan Fulton rarely disappoint. This book is no exception. The literary quality of these translations is excellent, with a distinct absence of the slight awkwardness of

¹ Bill Marx, 'The fantastical visions of Korean writer Ch'oe Yun explore how social traumas shape individual lives,' *PRI'S The World* (June 2008) <<http://www.theworld.org/?q=node/18651>> [accessed September 20, 2008].

expression that you tend to get with some other translators. While at times the richness of the original language does not perhaps come across in the translation, this is in some ways unavoidable given the many lexical complexities pertaining to the Korean language. However, the translators' focus on readability is undoubtedly the greatest strength of these translations, as they do justice to the original, but do so without falling into the trap of trying to convey every slight nuanced expression in the original at the expense of clarity.

The Thirteen-Scent Flower is an excellent introduction to the work of this fascinating writer, who is unapologetic in bringing her readers face-to-face with the problematic history of modern Korea. However, instead of dwelling in the past and so evoking 'the energy of tears' (or *han*), she confronts the trauma in an attempt to dispel its paralysing legacy.

References:

Marx, Bill. 'The fantastical visions of Korean writer Ch'oe Yun explore how social traumas shape individual lives.' *PRIS The World* (June 2008) <<http://www.theworld.org/?q=node/18651>> [accessed September 20, 2008].

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The Making of Modern Korea, Adrian Buzo. Second Edition. New York: Routledge, 2007. xvi + 213 pages. ISBN 978-0-415-4183-8 (paperback).

Compact, accessible narratives of modern Korean history are not in short supply these days. Several leading scholars in Korean studies, including Michael Robinson and Bruce Cumings, have in recent years condensed their knowledge into potent and lively narratives of Korea's turbulent modern course. Adrian Buzo's revised and updated contribution to this genre fortunately emerges as a valuable, highly organized, and ultimately quite useful volume.

One of the book's strengths lies in its author's objective and unemotional treatment of Japan in Chapter One, where the narrative begins in 1910. Buzo does not shunt Korean perspectives to the side *per se*, but he has no nationalistic axe to grind and accordingly takes pains to contextualize Korea's role within Japan's broader aims and colonial empire, often from the perspective of Japanese leaders themselves. The author also takes pains to thread through in subsequent chapters the longer impact of the colonial model, stating that the Government-General of Korea "provided subsequent Korean leaders with a powerful model for

authoritarian rule” (17). He renders clearly the often-confusing profusion of exile movements in the early twentieth-century, and gives due regard also to Koreans in Manchuria. A thoughtful reflection on Japan’s more subtle impact on Korean nationalism and urban culture in the 1920s propels the book into an up-to-date debates about the space between collaboration and resistance, and reveals the complex roots of cosmopolitan culture in the Japanese empire. Buzo may inflame a few readers, however, when he assesses the failures of Korean elites. Unlike their “May Fourth” Chinese counterparts who were busy tearing down Confucianism and imperial tradition, Buzo implies, Korean intellectuals were reluctant to attack their own cultural traditions, under siege as they were by Japan. Korean intellectuals of the 1920s were “localist and particularist,” according to Buzo, and he asserts that Korean tradition beckoned them inward toward a type of clan-based conservatism that was at odds with the outward-oriented reformist spirit needed to find solutions for Korea’s future.

In Chapter Two, the aptly titled “Dark Gulf” of 1931–1945, Buzo plunges into the rapid and discomfiting changes of the wartime years within Korean society. By breaking the Japanese colonial period in two with 1931 as a turning point, the impact of Japanese moves into Manchuria and China is brought into much starker relief. Although Buzo’s text is not a research monograph in any sense, and even his references are often quite dated, he manages in this and subsequent chapters to pull in new arguments and new data. The changes in Japanese economic emphasis on the peninsula are discussed intelligently, as are the cultural policies of assimilation. Again, however, Buzo adds strength and continuity to this volume by noting Japan’s impact on South Korean entrepreneurial postwar culture, noting that future *chaebol* leaders were “increasingly accepted as junior members of the Japanese colonial business world in the 1920s” and developed business further in 1930s Manchuria (36). Later, Buzo further asserts that “the Japanese defense state... acculturated Koreans to the acceptance of strong central government” (43), indicating his grasp of post-colonial continuities. Overall, Buzo navigates the wartime period well, noting its impact on Korean population movements into Manchuria and Japan, and the rapid industrialization that occurred on the peninsula. While he acknowledges that Japanese control was never total, indicating that space remained for private dissent in areas such as diaries, Buzo subtly notes that “socially, Korea in the 1930s was a society undergoing mobilization, not ferment” (41).

Chapters Three and Four deal with the years 1948–1953, years which are each deserving of a monograph in their own right but which Buzo of necessity moves through like a spring wind. The barrage of acronyms which erupt periodically is forgivable, but the author’s complete omission of the American head of the

occupation in the south, General John R. Hodge, is curious indeed. Although readers are referred to the first volume of Bruce Cumings' *Origins* at the end of the chapter, it seems hardly logical to blot out Hodge from a survey of these years, particularly if one's audience includes undergraduate students who gravitate toward gruff characters and personality conflicts rather than opaque committee actions at the United Nations. This is not to say that Buzo fails to sketch a human element into these chapters, quite the opposite. His characterization of Syngman Rhee is solid, and encapsulates the leader's power base quite well (with the exception, again, of General Hodge, his original sponsor). In treating the Korean War, Buzo remains remarkably parsimonious with words, spending a total of seven paragraphs on the inferno-like months from June 1950 to April 1951. However, the goal of this technique becomes rapidly clear, as the author places paramount emphasis on the consequences of the war, not the mechanics of the war itself. Buzo describes cogently how the Korean War ultimately strengthened both northern and southern regimes, effectively setting the stage for the following decades.

Chapter Five, "The Mastery of Despair," is among the longest in the text, covering the years of transition from 1953 to 1971. Here one recalls that Adrian Buzo is best known for his work on North Korea, and the sections of the following chapters dealing with the DPRK are especially well done. While the author's discipline in according equal time for both Koreas is quite remarkable, his fluency with northern developments results in a slight, if forgivable, imbalance of content compared with sections describing South Korea. In some ways the North is easier to write about, almost paradoxically so, in these years: the general lack of primary source material and the organization of the state around the Kim family lends the topic a certain coherence uncluttered by the periodic bouts of upheaval that marked South Korea's political history. Insights into Kim Il Sung's policies and doctrines—such as when *juche* is rendered as a means of refusing to bow to a lack of communist international support for Korean unification—are akin to a steamroom of thought from which readers are then thrown headlong, with no transition, into a cold and sterile bath of discussion of South Korean economic development. However, given the relevant political alignments, the difficulty in fashioning even tenuous prose transitions between the two Koreas clearly has vexed more scholars than just Buzo.

Chapters Six and Seven delve into authoritarian politics in, and contacts between, both Koreas in the years stretching up to 1992. Unsurprisingly, the author of *The Guerilla Dynasty* delivers a first-rate sketch of the slow and foundational rise of Kim Jong Il. Here the book's relentless chronological organization yields a major benefit in a reexamination of the 1980s. Situating

North Korea within its disintegrating matrix of socialist allies and foreign policy, Kim Il Sung's 45-day tour of Soviet and Eastern bloc nations receives a nice overview. Again, however, sections on South Korea seem somewhat less coherent, and students unfamiliar with the impact of interest rates on trade or the interplay of *chaebol* with government officials may have difficulty reading some sections of the text focusing on economic growth. Buzo downplays the transformation thesis of the 1988 Seoul Olympics, discusses North Korea's belligerent response to *Nordpolitik*, and gives a solid explanation of the changing Chinese outlook on establishing relations with the ROK in 1992.

The final chapter (covering the years from 1992–2006) is the beneficiary of several updates that include coverage of the Roh Moo Hyun administration. However, the chapter lacks reference to many of the hot-button issues that would promote discussion in university classrooms. ROK relations with Japan are hardly referenced, abdicating from any comment on recurrent issues ranging from Dokdo Island to history textbooks to *manga* wars to abduction issues to the diplomatic uses of the Korean Wave in Japan. Likewise, controversies with the U.S. (less charitably rendered as the growth of “anti-Americanism”) in South Korea are completely skirted, to the book's detriment. No mention is made of the Iraq War, opposition to U.S. bases in Korea, or the type of ardent opposition to the Bush administration encapsulated in the song “Fucking U.S.A.” As for ongoing North Korean issues, Buzo does discuss the famine of the 1990s, but with disappointing results, mainly via statistical data that lends the issue none of the emotion that makes it so compelling, along with the ongoing dilemma of North Korean refugees in China.

One might quibble further with a few minor aspects of the book. The text is almost completely bereft of direct quotes, making for the type of omniscient voicing that can occasionally become monotonous, lending the flavor of a KCNA broadcast where leaders' speeches are summarized by news anchors but never actually excerpted. The emphasis on accessibility goes to further extremes with the book's single illustration, a ridiculous map that takes up an entire page but gives no topographical data, omits every one of Korea's many islands, does not label any single body of water, and includes only two Korean cities—Seoul and Pyongyang. (The Demilitarized Zone dividing the peninsula appears as a grey squiggle, but even it is not labeled, and the war that produced it also receives no separate map.) Furthermore, one can search in vain for the origins of the cover photograph, where two ostensibly important military officials from the DPRK and ROK shake hands. However, these are minor critiques which, one hopes, can be remedied in subsequent editions. And the easily navigable chronology of major events that appears as a twenty-page coda to the text makes up for these other

faults, and will prove useful for students using the text. On the whole, Adrian Buzo has produced an engaging text whose crystal-clear layout, pacing, and expert content is well worth the read.

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