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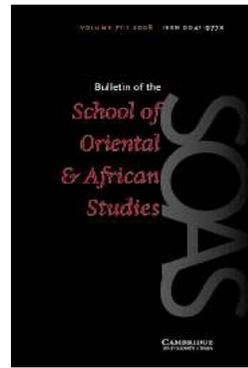
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**Jae Jung Song: *The Korean Language: Structure, Use and Context*. xv, 185 pp. London and New York: Routledge, 2005. £65. ISBN 0 415 32802 0.**

Jaehoon Yeon

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Chosŏn women” (p. 223). More substantial is the chapter on the Confucian–Buddhist debate in the early years of Chosŏn by Charles Miller. It provides competent translations of Chŏng To-jŏn’s *Pulssi chappyŏn* (Array of Critiques of Buddhism) as well as of Kihwa’s *Hyŏnjŏng non* (The Articulation of Orthodoxy). In the fourth chapter of this section Hong-key Yoon translates a variety of texts on the use of geomancy in the past and in present-day South and North Korea. Even though geomancy was and obviously is even today a most conspicuous practice, in particular for siting tombs, it is rather curious to put it into a section on Confucianism.

Despite these reservations, which do not substantially detract from the overall usefulness of the book, Buswell has to be congratulated for having directed and edited such a complex and voluminous work. *Religions of Korea in Practice* is a very welcome anthology that contains many textual gems providing a kaleidoscopic overview of Korea’s extraordinarily rich religious tradition. This work is excellently suited for the classroom and should also be widely consulted by students of comparative religions.

**Martina Deuchler**

JAE JUNG SONG:

*The Korean Language: Structure, Use and Context.*

xv, 185 pp. London and New York: Routledge, 2005. £65. ISBN 0 415 32802 0.

This book is targeted primarily at readers with no background in linguistics, but it provides a valuable linguistic introduction to the Korean language. It is a welcome addition to the existing Korean reference grammars. It will be of benefit not just to Korean scholars specializing in areas other than (Korean) linguistics but also to English-speaking learners of Korean with little knowledge of linguistics. The author has paid special attention to areas of potential difficulty to English-speaking learners. Thus this book is intended to complement language textbooks used for self-study or in the classroom.

Over the last fifteen years we have seen the publication of Korean reference grammars such as Lee (*Korean Grammar*, Oxford, 1992), Martin (*A Reference Grammar of Korean*, Tuttle, 1992), Chang (*Korean*, Amsterdam, 1996), Sohn, (*Korean*, London and New York, 1994; *The Korean Language*, Cambridge, 1999) and Lee and Ramsey (*The Korean Language*, Albany: SUNY Press, 2000). These books differ in approach, framework and scope, reflecting the interests and specialisms of their authors. They cover some topics in more detail than others. The book under review stands out in dealing with topics such as writing systems, discourse matters, and North and South Korean language policy and planning. It also provides readers with very useful information on references and further reading materials (pp. 177–81). In the section on romanization systems (pp. 63–6) the three most popular systems – the McCune Reischauer system, the Yale system and the Revised Romanization system – are compared and the differences effectively explained.

The book is mostly devoted to a description of the structure and use of the language, i.e. sound patterns, vocabulary, word and sentence structure, discourse and writing systems. Chapter 1 also provides an informative account of the geographical, historical and socio-cultural context of the Korean language and its speakers. The author believes that Confucianism is reflected

not only in the way Koreans think and behave but also in the way the Korean language works in terms of both vocabulary and grammar. For example, in chapters 4 and 5 he discusses how social relations based on age and social status are still reflected in vocabulary and grammatical rules in Korean. The author claims that inequality between men and women is reflected by the relationship between husband and wife. Although this is true in most cases, one example he gives is questionable. He said that “Koreans do not speak of men marrying into their wives’ families; women are said to marry into their husbands’ families” (p. 11). However, Koreans do say “*cangka kata*”, which means men marrying into wives’ families. This is a minor case and the inequality in gender is predominantly reflected in the Korean language. In the vocabulary section, the author stresses that words do not occur in isolation and that students can benefit much from learning words in linguistic context as well. For example, although *nayngswu* and *chanmul* both mean “cold water”, there is also a subtle socio-cultural dimension to their use (p. 69). In dealing with sentence structure (chapter 5), the author’s profound knowledge of Korean linguistics can easily be detected. For example, some exceptional cases where the nominative particle *-i* or *-ka* can be used for something other than the subject noun phrase (p. 110), or the locative particle *-eyse* can be used to mark the subject noun phrase when the latter refers to organizations or documents (p. 115), are explained in an uncomplicated manner.

In explaining verb endings such as tense and modality (pp. 118 ff.), the author’s original interpretation also attracts the reader’s attention. Due to space limitations I cannot go into detail, but the author explains that the verb ending *-ess/-ass* is also used “to report a present situation that is the direct result or consequence of a prior action” (p. 119). Another “unusual” or “exotic” verb ending is “*-te*”. This particular verb ending, according to the author, is used to “indicate that the narrated event or situation is something that the speaker, based on previous perception or experience, has first-hand knowledge of” (p. 120). This kind of explanation reflects the author’s original interpretation of recent research in Korean linguistics. An account of the so-called topic/contrast particle *-(n)un* (pp. 145 ff.) is also very informative and useful. The final chapter, devoted to North and South Korean language policy and planning, also provides readers with very useful information about the linguistic divergence between North and South Korea. In this section some of the most prominent differences between Standard South Korean and Standard North Korean are discussed. These range from sound patterns and words to writing, although different words for the same objects or concepts prove to be the most problematic for communication between North and South Koreans. Such differences notwithstanding, both dialects have a common phonological and grammatical structure, and their speakers have no real difficulties in communicating except for a few different usages of vocabulary. The author, therefore, concludes that once North and South Korea are reunited, one standard dialect will eventually be agreed upon by all Koreans, although the decision won’t prove to be easy.

In many respects this book is commendable. It is very well written and provides an important English-language source on the Korean language. It provides condensed and useful explanations of nearly all aspects of Korean without employing too much linguistic jargon.