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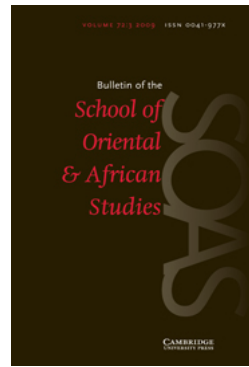
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**Rüdiger Frank, James E. Hoare, Patrick Köllner and Susan Pares (eds): *Korea Yearbook 2008: Politics, Economy and Society*. xii, 275 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2009. €55.00/\$88.00. ISBN 978 90 04 16979 1.**

Keith Howard

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restaurants, serving food not unlike that promoted during the revolutionary years, and which according to Swislocki provide “an arena for shoring up a sense of cultural continuity in a period of rapid change” (p. 226), a kind of “restorative nostalgia” that was once provided for by speciality food items. It would have been interesting to learn more about the role of local food products in contemporary culinary imaginaries, however, not least as Shanghai becomes (re-)embedded in increasingly far-reaching food networks.

Drawing on a wide range of sources, including gazetteers, guidebooks, cookbooks, novels and interviews with members of Shanghai’s catering trade, Swislocki has produced a book of extraordinary richness which sets new standards for the study of Chinese foodways. His demonstration of the centrality of regional food culture and nostalgic culinary discourses to Chinese cultural life and his many original insights, for example concerning the relationship between revolutionary socialism and culinary traditions, will stimulate debates in fields such as Chinese studies, anthropology, urban history and food studies.

**Jakob A. Klein**

RÜDIGER FRANK, JAMES E. HOARE, PATRICK KÖLLNER and SUSAN PARES (eds): *Korea Yearbook 2008: Politics, Economy and Society*. xii, 275 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2009. €55.00/\$88.00. ISBN 978 90 04 16979 1. doi:10.1017/S0041977X09990267

This is the second in what Brill intends to be an annual account. The approach adopted, and the editors who have put the volume together, remain the same as for *Korea Yearbook 2007*. The price is slightly up, and the page count marginally down, but the volume again divides into two parts, the first political and economic in orientation, and the second more various, offering overviews of films, higher education reform and inter-Korean relations. This year, the second part has less on culture and more on policy. The expertise of the scholars contributing is high, and the authors of the first part are three of the four editors, respectively, leading Korea watchers based in Hamburg, Vienna and London. There is slightly more variation in terms of quality as well as expertise in the second part, where contributors include a PhD student, a post-doctoral fellow, and a diplomat. This is as it must be, for the first part constitutes a fixed diet for the series, while the second is likely to be something of a moveable feast, with subjects that change from year to year.

Clearly, to sustain the effort required to produce an annual volume of this size is considerable, and will never prove easy. Indeed, earlier attempts, notably *Korea Briefing*, published from 1991 to 2001 by Westview and M. E. Sharpe, initially on an annual basis then less frequently, floundered under the pressure. I suspect its primary downfall occurred because it tried to balance the constants of political and economic overviews with the ever-changing cultural considerations, when its editors came from one or the other camp. *Korea Yearbook*’s immediate precursor, the German-language *Korea – Politik, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft*, published annually from 1996 to 2006 by the Institute of Asian Affairs in Hamburg, resolved the issue by tending to concentrate on the political and economic. With *Korea Yearbook*, however, the balance sought is helped by the felicitous choice of editors, combining a political scientist (Köllner) with a political economist (Frank), a former diplomat with academic credentials as a historian (Hoare) and a long-term writer and editor on East Asian affairs (Pares). Between them, the four cover all bases.

The political and economic considerations maintain the pattern established in last year's *Korea Yearbook*. A chronology of events, split into sections on South Korea, North Korea, and inter-Korean relations, opens the volume. This is followed by a core set of chapters: two offer detailed explorations of politics and economy in, first, South Korea, then North Korea; next comes an account of inter-Korean relations, then an account of foreign relations. In these, this reader's enthusiasm is at times tested, but the reliability of the accounts is not in question, and the *Yearbook's* real value, and the reason it will stay on library shelves for many years to come, is precisely these opening 72 pages, since, put together over a number of years, they build into a detailed historical account. Hence, a few years hence, when I want to discover what happened on 14 August 2007 in North Korea, this is the volume I am likely to return to – except that the volume lacks the all-important tool for the information, namely, an index, which will surely prove crucial. Actually, this begs a question: at some point, surely, the political and economic considerations will move on-line, not least to allow regular updating and cross-referencing. And, one further difficulty of printing *Korea Yearbook* as a book emerges when one considers contemporaneity, since the events discussed are already in the past: the 2008 volume, published at the beginning of 2009, actually explores the events of 2007.

This review, though, will appear after the political and economic events *Korea Yearbook 2008* describes have drifted even further from the present, and so later contributions in the volume are of vital importance if the volume is to continue to sell in years to come. It is of note that many of the contributions to the second part actually discuss matters pertinent to 2008. For example, 2008 was the year of presidential elections, and Youngmi Kim provides a useful retrospective, exploring the failure of the administration under Roh Moo-Hyun, president from 2003–2008. She identifies recurrent tendencies stretching back several decades for the political landscape to experience “fissions” and “fusions”, and isolates reasons why Roh's attempts to reform politics and pursue a raft of initiatives that would have assured his legacy were unsuccessful. In contrast, John Swenson-Wright looks at recently released government documents, but takes us back in history, giving an account of the normalization of relations between South Korea and Japan in the 1960s. He shows how that relationship was derailed in the 1970s, when the Korean ruling group abducted an opposition politician (Kim Dae Jung, who would become president 20 years later) in Japan, and when a Korean resident in Japan tried to assassinate the then South Korean president. However, much of the distrust, and much of the rhetoric remains the same today – particularly over the ownership of the island Tokto/Takeshima. Again, highly pertinent today, the pendulum of South Korean policy towards engagement with its northern neighbour is examined by Alon Levkowitz. This is timely, since the incoming South Korean president in 2008, Lee Myung-bak, effectively turned the clock back ten years or so, abandoning the “Sunshine Policy” of the previous two administrations.

Three contributions explore additional political and economic issues. C. Kenneth Quinones looks at the agreed framework between the USA and North Korea, negotiated in the 1990s and recently returning to view with the visits of American senators and congressmen to Pyongyang and with negotiations over the return of the remains of American soldiers listed as missing in action during the Korean War. Told from on the ground, the story has a bitter-sweet end when the North Korean side demands compensation for the actions of those whose remains are to be returned. Economic reform in North Korea, as a way to project forward the likely future of the North Korean state, provides the content of Patrick McEachern's contribution. McEachern argues that, although many compare Chinese reform with North Korea, North Korea has, under the leadership of Kim

Jong Il – whose health and disappearance from view during 2008 made it fashionable to ask what would happen next – maintained control and therefore allowed only marginal, less salient, measures to be implemented. The third chapter, written by Kyung Tae Lee and Hyung-Gon Jeong, two Korean members of the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy, considers the trends and prospects of inter-Korean economic co-operation. This is problematic, precisely because so much altered with the 2008 change of South Korean government that its authors failed to foresee. Essentially, the authors situate themselves somewhere between the former (Roh) and current (Lee) governments in Seoul, arguing for the resolution of the nuclear issue at the ongoing Six Party talks, but for private economic initiatives to replace government initiatives, and for co-operation between the Koreas to replace support by the South for the North. Retrospection is a glorious thing, but Lee and Jeong's five requirements for progressing economic co-operation, and the view given of the prospects for co-operation, need a hasty rethink.

There are two additional chapters. Peter Mayer looks at higher education reform in South Korea, an important concern within the country given today's declining demographic of university students, but equally a discussion that has a history stretching back to discussions in the 1960s on the need to train a highly educated workforce to provide the backbone of Korea's development. Finally, Mark Morris explores two South Korean films from 2007, *The Old Garden/Oraedoen chŏngwŏn* and *May 18/Hwaryŏhan hyuga*. Both films explore the democratic uprising of May 1980 in Kwangju, and its brutal repression by the military. Morris notes that they are cinematic representations rather than documentary tellings (what else need they be, if we subscribe to Franco Muretti's view of Hollywood?), even though they chart a historical event that has left a lasting legacy amongst the population. Indeed, he notes they were less successful at the box office than a monster movie about an imaginary world made real through special effects. The legacy of Kwangju, he notes, had been explored in an earlier film, *Petal/Kkonip*, and by print publications issued when the government was less keen to allow the raw wounds of its oppression to surface, and although not discussed here, hints of that legacy remain in the Korean (but not the English) film titles. One might argue that the author should reflect on shifting Korean consciousness – not least because so many film directors and film critics were part of the student-led movement calling for democracy during the 1980s – but that is not Morris's focus. Rather, he gives us a fine-grained account of the two films, showing just how far Korean cinema has come in the last decade, and concluding that monsters and spectacles are more likely to produce box office success in the next few years than – sadly to many of us – historical and social reflections.

**Keith Howard**

MIKE KIM:

*Escaping North Korea: Defiance and Hope in the World's Most Repressive Country.*

xvi, 239 pp. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008. £15.99.

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The borderlands between academia and popular writing are dangerous places, yet remain essential for the dissemination of information. Vague and opaque though