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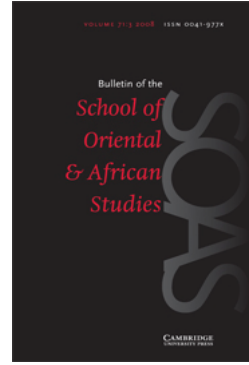
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**Rüdiger Frank James E. Hoare Patrick Köllner
Susan Pares Korea Yearbook 2007: Politics,
Economy and Society, Leiden: Brill, 10 2008. xiii,
305 pp. ISBN 978 90 04 16440 6. €52.50**

Keith Howard

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Clearly, Hildi Kang left no stone unturned in exploring her in-law family's history and has admirably succeeded in explicating to the Western reader the intricacies of the Korean genealogy.

Martina Deuchler

RÜDIGER FRANK, JAMES E. HOARE, PATRICK KÖLLNER and SUSAN PARES (eds):

Korea Yearbook 2007: Politics, Economy and Society.

xiii, 305 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2008. €52.50. ISBN 978 90 04 16440 6.

This is the first in what the publishers hope will be an annual series. *Korea Yearbook* descends from a German-language series, *Korea – Politik, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft*, published annually from 1996 to 2006 by the Institute of Asian Affairs in Hamburg (now part of the GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies), and the sundry volumes of *Korea Briefing* issued between 1991 and 2001 by Westview and M. E. Sharpe and variously edited by Lee Chong-sik, Donald N. Clark, David McCann, Kongdan Oh and Ralph C Hassig. The intention of the editors of *Korea Yearbook* is to produce an annual volume, charting a twelve-month April to March period; hence this is subtitled 'Volume 1'. There is, however, an inevitable lag from the end of the period documented and publication, so while the intended schedule is laudable, I wonder how sustainable it will prove to be, not least since an Internet resource would offer the possibility of more regular updating. Nonetheless, as "Volume 1", this is an impressive start.

The *Korea Briefing* series also began as an annual publication. It fused an annual chronology of events to essays by American academics that surveyed political and cultural issues. After the first four years, the difficulty of keeping to this schedule was recognized, and later volumes covered two or three years each, fusing the more time-sensitive accounts to themes – festivals, reunification, challenges at the turn of the century, and so on. It served the needs of members of the Asia Society in New York (who were early sponsors) and the humanities-heavy Korean studies scene of America and Europe. *Korea Yearbook* offers a comparable chronology, but places more emphasis on political and economic accounts. It is, therefore, presumably targeted towards business and policy makers as much as to the academic market. There are still some essays on cultural and social matters, although the introduction makes plain that, rather as if it is a journal, these are now refereed prior to inclusion. Compared to the 1990s when *Korea Briefing* was underway, contemporary geopolitics make it essential that greater balance be provided between articles on the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Indeed, the DPRK expertise of the editors is considerable: Hoare was British chargé d'affaires and Consul General in Pyongyang prior to his retirement in 2003; Frank is a long-term analyst of DPRK affairs; Hoare and Pares are co-authors of *North Korea in the 21st Century: An Interpretative Guide* (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2005); Köllner, as the editor of the German-language predecessor, has for a decade provided overviews of both states.

The first four contributions, written by three of the editors, provide core accounts for the year (that is, April 2006 – March 2007). Köllner and Frank

explore domestic politics and economic issues in the ROK and DPRK respectively, while Hoare looks at relations between the two Koreas, and between the two Koreas and the international community. Each account is factual and precise, although Frank has to base his conclusions about the DPRK on patchy and unverifiable evidence.

The next four essays are also contemporary. Ronda Hauben looks at the shift to online grassroots journalism in Korea, documenting how, despite print media opposition, the Internet site Ohmynews changed the dynamic of the 2002 presidential election and uncovered fraud in the 2005 human cloning claims by the Seoul National University professor, Hwang Woo-suk. James C. Schopf offers an exemplary and exhaustively documented account of the 2006 Lone Star scandal, which involved the take-over of Korea Exchange Bank. Schopf's conclusion counters the media story: corruption, if it did exist, was "of a fairly mild variety" (p. 108) precisely because the arrival of Korean democracy in the previous two decades made it more difficult to exchange bribes.

Inward foreign direct investment since the 1997 economic crisis is explored by Judith Cherry, taking European investments as her focus. Her account, while perfectly acceptable, offers little micro-analysis and less quantitative data than the excellent account which follows, by Joon-Kyung Kim and Chun H. Lee. This latter compares the Chinese and South Korean economies. Given the journalistic popularity of stating that the Chinese development model is much the same as the Korean model, but will soon overwhelm Korea to leave it as a backwater of no international significance, their conclusion, that China offers myriad opportunities to Korea providing Korean industry retains vitality and flexibility, is both timely and significant.

Another essay allows Hoare to call in a favour from his time as a diplomat in Pyongyang: Robert Carlin, chief of the Northeast Asia Division of the US State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research between 1989 and 2002, takes pot shots at the current US regime, revealing how nonsensical is the view that the DPRK regime is intransigent and does not understand negotiation. If this is essential reading, then so is the bleak tale of DPRK refugees in China, as related by Peter Beck, Gail Kim and the journalist Donald Macintyre. I would challenge their claim that this essay is the first to look comprehensively at the networks through which refugees are moved, and question some of the critical thinking (the paragraph on page 275 about the harsh treatment and long-term imprisonment of those refugees who are returned to the DPRK seems undermined by the very next paragraph, where we hear that up to 40 per cent of those repatriated soon cross the border back into China).

To this point, *Korea Yearbook 2007* is 100 per cent topical; if this standard can be maintained in future volumes, then *Korea Yearbook* will earn its place on many a bookshelf. The remaining pages accommodate four social and cultural essays that essentially match those of the earlier *Korea Briefing* volumes: a close commentary on the 2006 major film flop, *Hanbando*, by Mark Morris; a look at new ancestral shrines expunging the legacy of post-liberation right-wing governments in the ROK by Hyonik Kwon that seems a little too indebted to accounts by the Korean anthropologists Kim Seongnae and Kim Kwangok; a look at the development of apartments and mass housing in urban Korea by Valérie Gelézeau; and a historical discussion of the 16 km Sino-Korean border by Larisa Zabrovskaya.

Keith Howard