



Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures
Polish Academy of Sciences



ACTA ASIATICA
VARSOVIENSIA
No. 31

Warsaw 2018

Editor-in-Chief
NICOLAS LEVI

Editorial Assistant
IGOR DOBRZENIECKI

English Text Consultant
JO HARPER

Subject Editor
KAROLINA ZIELIŃSKA

Board of Advisory Editors
ABDULRAHMAN AL-SALIMI
MING-HUEI LEE
THUAN NGUYEN QUANG
KENNETH OLENIK
JOLANTA SIERAKOWSKA-DYNDO
BOGDAN SKŁADANEK
HAIPENG ZHANG

*Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia no. 31 was granted a financial support of the
Ministry of Science and Higher Education, grant no. 772/P-DUN/2017.*

© Copyright by Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures,
Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 2018
PL ISSN 0860-6102
eISSN 2449-8653
ISBN 978-83-7452-091-1

ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA is abstracted in
The Central European Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Index Copernicus, ProQuest Database

Contents

ARTICLES

- ROBERT WINSTANLEY-CHESTERS, Fish, Subterfuge and Security in North Korean and Soviet Institutional Interactions in the 1970s 7
- MARIA GRADJAN, Gender Acrobatics: The Questionable Liberalism of Popular Culture and the Emergence of Alternative Masculinity Patterns in Late-modern Japan 26
- ARNAUD DOGLIA, Ōkunoshima and Japan's Chemical Arsenal: 1900-1945 47
- MARIA SOLDATOVA, Visualizing Poetry in Urban Space: The Gwanghwamun Poetry Placard 64
- BYRAPPA RAMACHANDRA, Precursory Study on South Asian Security and Geopolitics 82
- KRZYSZTOF IWANEK, Interests before Ideas. Does Hindu Nationalism influence India's Foreign Policy? 97
- ÁDÁM RÓMA, Sino-Indian Standoff on the Doklam plateau 114
- MICHALEWICZ KATARZYNA, The image of China on the pages of the periodical *Naokoło Świata* 132
- JAKUB ALI FAHRAN, "Century of humiliation" and its influence on modern Chinese politics with special emphasis on China-Japan relations 149

BOOKS REVIEWS

- Kim Myung-ja. *The Korean Diaspora in Postwar Japan - Geopolitics, Identity and Nation-Building*, London: I.B Tauris, 2017, 304 pages. ISBN: 978-1784537678– rev. Nicolas Levi164
- Kim Byung-Yeon. *Unveiling the North Korean economy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, 329 pages. ISBN: 978-1-316-63516-2– rev. Nicolas Levi.....167
- Editorial principles170

PL ISSN 0860–6102
ACTA ASIATICA
VARSOVIENSIA
No. 31, 2018

BOOK REVIEW

Kim Byung-Yeon. Unveiling the North Korean economy, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, 329 pages. ISBN: 978-1-316-63516-2.

The author is Kim Byung-yeon, a professor of economics at the Department of Economics at Seoul National University. He is a recognised distinguished researcher in the humanities and social sciences by the National Research Foundation of the Republic of Korea. He is also a regular columnist on Korean issues in leading South Korean newspapers.

The book *Unveiling the North Korean economy*, by Kim Byung-yeon, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2016 and by Tauris in 2017. Excluding acknowledgements and introduction, conclusion and additional elements, the book consists of a classic structure: three chapters, where the first chapter is an evaluation of the socialist economy, then a presentation of the North Korean economy, and finally the transition process of the North Korean economy, demonstrating how the North Korean leadership survived the collapse of the Soviet Union. The book is also a synthesis and overview of studies of the North Korean economy since 1953 (starting from page 41). It is an example, but not the only one, of a scholarly book focused on North Korean economic studies made available in a foreign language. Interestingly, similar books related to the North Korean economy have been published in communist countries such as the book entitled *Współpraca KRLD z krajami socjalistycznymi* [The cooperation of the DPRK with Socialist countries] (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo

Ekonomiczne, 1975) authored by Stefan Kojło Stefan, and the monograph prepared by Stefan Kojło and Anatol Dikij Polska – KRLD: Gospodarka, współpraca [Poland-DPRK: Economy, cooperation], (Państwowe Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, Warszawa 1975).

The book is equally divided between the three following chapters. The first chapter is an evaluation of the socialist economy (pp. 6-40). Divided into five parts, it discusses the framework of the socialist economy from the point of view of companies and households, explained using theoretical economic models. The second chapter (pp. 41-216) is a kind of economic history of North Korea, underlining its foundations, such as the central planning system, Juseok Funds&Spot Guidance matters. I regret there is no extended information concerning the public distribution system. The third chapter is more contemporary as it deals with the transition of the North Korean economy (pp. 217-300) focusing on the stabilisation of its economy through liberalisation and potential integration with South Korea. As a piece of evidence (p. 92), the author stipulates that 90 per cent of total household expenditures are made in these (informal) markets.

The book deals with several different eras in history, emphasising in English those elements of the North Korean economy which have rarely been discussed by North Korean scholars. For instance, combined North Korean firms, known as Yeonhap Giupso, (p. 123), the new system of foreign trade established in 1991 (p. 124), and the Juseok Fund (pp. 130-31). Some of these elements were discussed in the other best-seller related to the North Korean economy written by Hazel Smith, *Markets and Military Rule*.

There are some points which seems to indicate that the research is somewhat outdated. For example, many research surveys cited by the author (pp. 185) were done six years before the publication of the book. Also data seems to be slightly old taking in account the publication date (2017). Due to this, the conclusion related to the relationship between markets, bribery and regime stability in North Korea may weaken over time (p. 187) as the survey was done in 2009 (Main Bribe-Takers).

On page 164, data related to North Korea's trade are updated to 2014, p. 169, while imports are dated up to 2012. may provide more outdated examples. The author also considers the province Hamgyung (known as Hamgyungdo) as a whole in spite of its division into Hamgyongdo North (Hamgyungpukdo) and Hamgyungdo South (Hamgyungnamdo), for example on page 96. I would like to clearly

indicate that in any case, the contribution of the author to the gathering of data concerning the North Korean economy is fantastic. The author also minimises the results of the North Korean economy in the 1970s, indicating that GDP per capita was higher than that of South Korea. The author argues that growth rates were overestimated in the statistics supplied by North Korean authorities (pp. 80-81).

Concerning bribes and corruption, the author argues that bribery may have a negative, but also a positive, impact. According to Frossman, quoted on page 181, as “good corruption may contribute to the stability of the regime because it adds to the aggregate supply of goods and services, while bad corruption does not”. Finally, the author defends, something I agree with, that “the current situation regarding the informal economy and bribery may be characterised as an equilibrium...Given resource constraints that make it difficult for the dictator to pay his officials appropriate salaries, he implicitly allows officials to receive money from market participants.

Furthermore, the book has also other limitations. I believe the author did not provide enough data concerning the emergence of a new social class in North Korea: the *donjus*. These “money owners” are barely mentioned, only on page 64, as being “private financiers...to be financing the construction of flats”. Probably the focus of the author did not cover this social class, hence its brief reference, despite its key role in the development of the North Korean economy. The author also uses only a few western publications (only one publication, by Marcus Noland, was quoted – p. 319) and there are no Russian sources, in spite of the connections of this country to North Korea. Probably for linguistic reasons, sources in Chinese were also omitted. It may have been valuable to indicate this in the introduction to the monograph.

Nicolas Levi*

* Polish Academy of Sciences. Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures.

