

Tai Sung An

North Korea in Transition, From Dictatorship to Dynasty

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Several years ago readers of major newspapers in Western Europe and the United States gazed bemusedly at full-page advertisements extolling, on behalf of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the virtues of Kim Il-song's »chuch'e« principle. The level of receptiveness in the West to these messages was adequately indicated by a French commentator who noted at the time that »la République démocratique populaire de Corée paraît plus lointaine que ne l'enseigne la géographie«.

Professor An, who teaches political science in the United States, while making no effort to conceal his distaste for the Kim régime, affords us a closer look at the origins and development of North Korea's »supreme leader«. Parallels emerge in particular with China's Mao Zedong whose stature was, though differently, also decisively shaped by experience of the Second World War against Japan and who, against a backdrop of Russian-dominated orthodox communism, formulated what became »Mao-Zedong Thought« as an autochthonous ideology – »chuch'e« in North Korea – which blended elements of mainstream communism with the aspiration to national specificity expressed mainly through the stress on »self-reliance«. Professor An traces in detail the biographical stages of Kim Il-song's career, the factional politics and personality cult, and the grooming of Kim's son Chong-il as heir to the »savior of humanity«. Also summarised are the advances in North Korea's economy since the peninsular war of 1950–53 and the uncertain future of a society facing increasing pressures to depart from autarkic strategies and to accommodate managerial and technical élites which grew in the process of modernisation.

While the presentation is frequently anecdotal and occasionally not above cruder invective (the elder Kim as »the North Korean chieftain«, eg p 86, et passim), the account helps to place North Korea in the wider context of Confucian-inspired polities variously confronting the age of modern industry and commerce.

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Die Militarisierung des Pazifik

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»Man sieht heute nur noch einen blauen Punkt im Ozean, wo eigentlich eine Insel war; aber da gibt es keine Insel mehr. Einige der Inseln, welche die Atomwaffentests überlebt haben, sind für 24. 000 Jahre für menschliches Leben gesperrt (. . .). Die Menschen auf den