



Everlasting Flower: A History of Korea

Keith Pratt

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South Korea a democratic high-tech Asian Tiger and flamboyant host of the 2002 World Cup; North Korea a secretive dictatorship on Bush's notorious axis of evil', with a controversial nuclear program and a poverty-stricken population. These two Koreas seem worlds apart, separated along the 38th parallel by the last active cold war' frontier. But North and South Korea share a common history and culture of which both are deeply proud; the poignant scenes of reunited families when the borders were opened in 2000 show that, even though frustrated, the links between the two populations remain strong. Keith Pratt tells the story of this common heritage from the ancient states of Old Choson and Wiman Choson to the present relics of Cold War politics. He describes the physical and cultural landscape in which this history unfolds, dealing with religious identities and social aspects like food and drink, as well as more controversial issues such as punishment and torture, and the comfort women' of the Japanese occupation. In a series of short picture essays he introduces particular aspects of Korea's past, including the world's oldest observatory and the country's famous turtle boats. "Everlasting Flower: A History of Korea" reveals a country which, although sandwiched between the more familiar worlds of China and Japan, has a distinct and rich cultural identity of its own. With the DPRK's precarious relationship with the outside world brought to increasingly frequent crises in the aftermath of 9/11, the Korean peninsular looks certain to remain a geopolitical hotspot. The importance of understanding this part of the world has never been greater.

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