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HYUK-RAE KIM. *State-centric to Contested Social Governance in Korea: Shifting Power*. London & New York: Routledge, 2013. xxii, 202 pp.

The world has changed remarkably in the last few decades this includes the way how countries are governed. In particular, various kinds of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have come to work together with the conventional states. This phenomenon of NGOs sharing power with the state has also been prominent in Korea. Written by a well-known sociologist specialising in civil society, this book demonstrates Korea's change from the traditional state-centric society to a more contested governance system. Showing the diverse forms of NGOs' involvement in governance especially after the 1980s, it predicts that the civil society will "match and balance" the roles of the state and market (p.51). After discussing the general issues of civil society, governance, and NGOs, the book explores various types of NGOs that have been involved in important issues such as political reform, NGOs as policy entrepreneurs, governance of migration, transnational networks of NGOs for North Korean refugees, and environmental governance (Chapters 5,6,7 and 8).

Throughout the book, the author positively evaluates the roles of NGOs in various areas, and particularly in political reform in Korea. He exemplifies the CAGE (Citizens Alliance for General Elections, established in 2000), which intended to root out corrupt political practices and regionalism and to restore the political sovereignty of the citizens of Korea. He laments the failure of the movement, which was due to the "anachronistic law" (that illegalised their activities) and strong regionalism of the country men (p.84, 87). Observers of Korean politics would agree with the author and wish that more genuine democracy will prevail in Korea.

The book also explores how NGOs in Korea have come to play the role of "policy entrepreneurs" by providing the public good, which has been normally the realm of the state. This was due to the inefficiency of the state in dealing with the "diverse preference of the population", and the need for "small operations with long-term concerns"(p.98). While valuing the active roles of the NGOs, the author also points out problems of the Korean NGOs: lack of internal democracy and the hegemonic competition among themselves (p. 72). "Excessive politicisation" of the NGOs, would "lead to a rising level of contestation and the paralysis of social and political action", he warns (p.91).

It was in the realms of the human rights of the migrants in Korea that NGOs have contributed remarkably in the last two decades. While mentioning the activities of several NGOs regarding migrants' rights, the author also emphasises how the foreign workers' themselves have successfully fought for their rights. North Korean refugee issues are handled better by NGOs than by the government or the international organisations due to the intergovernmental distrusts, and it requires NGOs and INGOs to form transnational networks (p.140).

One of the important values of the book lies in its dealing with the development of civil society in Korean history. Arguing the different historical contexts that East Asian civil societies have grown, he emphasises the influences of Confucianism and authoritarian traditions of Korea. The *yangban* literati class that administered local affairs independently from the state was the basis civil society in Korea (even though it was restrained during the colonial period that did not allow any autonomy) (p.100). The duty of “correct ruling of the state” shared by the class, however, is still alive in the Independence Club activities in the end of the 19th century, in the *minjung* movement of the 1980s, and then in the rapid growth of NGOs afterward. This explanation makes a good sense, and correct or not, it is a valuable academic endeavour especially when our understanding of this has been limited.

It is a well-written book with well-structured chapters and well-supported examples and logic. There are some repetitions but almost no typo or error. Anyone interested in civil society, Korean politics or even the issues of migrants or the question of North Korean refugees, would find this book very helpful.

Two important questions that could have been discussed in the book are: the independence of the NGOs in Korea; and the strength of the Korean state in its relationship with the NGOs. First of all, as the author acknowledges, many of the NGOs in Korea have been relying on government and corporates for their financial income. This raises the question of the genuine “independence” of the civil society in Korea. In addition, does not the state in Korea look weak in terms of its authority and law-enforcing capacity even when its legitimacy should have increased greatly since the democratisation in the end of the 1980s? Why is still such weakness of the state in its relationship with other social forces? The book does not deal with the questions and maybe they would make excellent chapters in another book?

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