

Book Review

Myoung Chung Wilson, *Korean Government Publications: An Introductory Guide*. Scarecrow Press (Lanham, MD and Folkestone, UK: 2000. 193 pp.

South Korea today has the eleventh largest economy in the world. Although recent setbacks placed a temporary brake on several decades of surging economic development, these obstacles have now been largely overcome. The Republic of Korea is proving once again that it has one of the most vibrant economies among advanced industrial countries. These gains have been accompanied by corollary advances in medicine, transportation, urban planning and agriculture, to name but a few areas of noteworthy development. In 1987 the country moved away from its authoritarian past and instituted a working democratic system. In short, the pace of change in the economy, in politics and in social life generally has been spectacular. It is entirely appropriate, therefore, that Korean achievements, as documented in a wide range of government publications, should now be made accessible, in English, to scholars, policy makers and the interested public. *Korean Government Publications: An Introductory Guide* is the first comprehensive English-language guide to this wealth of information, much of it published in both Korean and English. It is especially timely because of the recent upsurge in the number of government publications and because the mistrust of documents published under authoritarian regimes has dissipated with the advent of genuine democracy.

The book is primarily a bibliographic guide to the publications of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of the government. The careful annotation of each entry makes the work especially useful as a ready reference tool. Indeed, it is hard to imagine anyone undertaking a study of modern Korean society not utilizing this book as a primary source of information about Korean government publications. Researchers interested in the court system, to take but one example, will find references to the organizational structure of the court system, to the decisions of lower courts and the Supreme Court, to the official gazette of the court system which provides information about the enactment of laws and new appointments, etc. This type of infor-

appointments, etc. This type of information, set forth in a well-organized, comprehensive and highly readable fashion, was acquired by the author through painstaking field work and library research.

The book is not simply a reference work, however. It contains a short history of the relationship between the early development of printing technology in Korea and the development of documents sponsored by the royal court. Korea has a rich history of government publications which, as the author points out, is the basis for current attention to such materials. In this regard she also draws attention to the differences between Korean government documents and those of other countries and explains how these documents reflect the nature of government organization and the internal dynamic of individual organizations. Korean government publications, for instance, are organized more on the lines of European countries than of the United States, reflecting differences in the way that the branches of government are organized.

Unfortunately, the work does not cover journal titles or historical titles, leaving room for further research in these areas. The section on electronic information sources, which admittedly change very rapidly, might well have been expanded. There is, nevertheless, an entire chapter devoted to these sources and a list of major government web sites. For those interested in exploring electronic information sources, the book is an excellent guide for further work.

Given the importance of the material in this study, one can only wonder that such a work was not published previously. Fortunately, this timely and excellent study is an admirable introduction that will set a very high standard for subsequent work to emulate. It is essential for a research library to make it available for the graduate students and researchers in the fields of social and political sciences as well as in the field of humanities and other related areas. Highly recommended for the research library and graduate studies.

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