Local People's Congresses in China

Young Nam Cho addresses two key questions in this comprehensive study of local people's congresses at both provincial and county levels. First, what kinds of roles did Chinese local legislatures actually perform in local politics, and to what degree? Second, how have Chinese local legislatures become political forces, and what kinds of development strategies have they employed, along with the Chinese Communist Party and local governments?

Dismissing the outdated conclusion that Chinese local legislatures are nothing but “rubber stamps,” Cho’s in-depth research in the Shanghai, Guangdong, and Tianjin areas proves that they have strengthened lawmaking and supervisory roles and thereby have become important political forces in local politics. Moreover, these legislatures have employed very sophisticated development strategies targeting different objectives: gaining the support of the party, cooperating with governments, and aggressively engaging courts.

Young Nam Cho is an associate professor of the Graduate School of International Studies at Seoul National University. He was a visiting Fellow of the Center for Contemporary Chinese Studies at Peking University (1997–98), visiting scholar in the Department of Political Science at Nankai University in Tianjin (2001–02), and visiting scholar at Harvard-Yenching Institute (2006–07). His research focuses on the Chinese legislative system, rule of law, state-society relations, and elite politics. He has published three books in Korean and has written articles for China Quarterly, Asian Survey, Issues & Studies, Asian Perspective, Development and Society, and Korean Journal of Defense Analysis. Dr. Cho graduated from the Department of East Asian History at Seoul National University in 1989. He received an M.A. and Ph.D. in political science from Seoul National University in 1996 and 1999, respectively.
For my wife and son, Seongsook and Daegeon
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For more than a decade, I have devoted myself to investigating the Chinese legislative system. My interest in the topic began in 1996, when as a doctoral candidate I selected the Chinese national legislature (i.e., National People’s Congress/NPC) for my dissertation theme. The NPC was then emerging as a new force in the Chinese political system; hence, analyzing the legislative development was of paramount importance in understanding China’s political reform and democratic prospects. Based on my doctoral thesis, I published a book on the NPC in 2000 entitled *China’s Political Reform and the National People’s Congress*. Unfortunately, most China scholars were unaware of the existence of the book, as it was published in Korean! Nevertheless, I have continued my study of Chinese legislatures with the purpose of finishing a more complete work on the legislative system. This time my research focuses on local people’s congresses in three coastal regions closely associated with China’s rapid economic growth: Shanghai, Tianjin, and Guangdong. This book is the culmination of my decade-long research on the Chinese legislative system.

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