

Capital in Korea

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Capital as a tool of anti-imperialist struggle

Marxism was first imported to Korea during the early 1920s when the country was a Japanese colony. Radical Korean intellectuals played the key role in the importation, translation and dissemination of Marxist literatures to colonial Korea. They also tried to use them as a tool of national liberation struggles against Japanese imperialism.³ The first work by Marx to be published in Korean was “Introduction to Critique of Political Economy” (1859) which appeared in the first issues of the Korean journal *Asǒng* [My Voice] in 1921. Yun Cha-yǒng (1894-?), a radical student activist, translated it from a Japanese version. About ten further works by Marx, including the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*⁴ and *Wage Labor and Capital*,⁵ were translated and published in Korean, mostly from Japanese editions, during the Japanese colonial period. Initially, the Japanese colonial authorities reluctantly allowed the circulation of socialist literature in Korea, under pressure from the growing national liberation movement after Russia’s October Revolution in 1917 and the March First Independence Movement in 1919.⁶ Indeed, the Communist Party of Korea [*Chosǒn Kongsandang*] was founded as early as 1925. However, the colonial authorities began to severely repress socialist movements and Marxist literature when they switched to the notorious policy of “Elimination of Chosǒn Nation” after the start of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937.⁷

Although no volume of *Capital* was published in Korean during the colonial period, some Korean socialist scholars and activists were able to read *Capital* in Japanese editions. They organized several groups to study *Capital*, such as the Association for Economic Research [*Kyǒngje Yǒn’guhoe*] in 1926, and the Institute for Research on Social Conditions in Chosǒn [*Chosǒn sahoe sajǒng yǒn’guso*] in 1930. Korean radicals were frequently arrested and persecuted by the Japanese colonial authorities for engaging in national liberation movements or socialist activities. Despite the severe repression of Korean socialist movements and thought, some radical Korean scholars tried to apply *Capital* to the study of the economic history of

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³ For details on the translation and dissemination of Marx’s works during the colonial period, refer to Chang Sibok, “The Reception and Translation of *Das Kapital* in Korea”, *Marxism* 21 13, no.1 (Spring 2016).

⁴ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Kongsandang sǒnǒn* [Manifesto of the Communist Party], trans. Chosǒn Kongsandang [*Communist Party of Korea*] (Seoul: Chosǒn Kongsandang, 1921).

⁵ Karl Marx, *Imgǔm nodong kwa chabon* [Wage Labor and Capital], trans. Minjungsa Editorial Collective (Seoul: Minjungsa, 1923).

⁶ The March First Independence Movement of 1919 was a nationwide movement for independence from Japanese colonial rule. Religious leaders fixed the date of the action as March 1st and read the Declaration of Independence [Tongnip sǒnǒnsǒ] in Taehwagwan, a restaurant in Seoul. After students started to protest, citizens in Seoul as well as people in other regions joined them. The movement quickly spreads throughout the country. Many protesters were arrested by the Japanese police and soldiers. The movement demonstrated the Korean people’s firm desire to achieve independence and the barbarity of Japanese colonial rule.

⁷ From 1940 the Japanese colonial authorities not only ordered Koreans to use only Japanese in schools and government offices in Korea but also forced the so-called *Changssi kaemyǒng* order under which Koreans had change their names to the Japanese style in order to eliminate Korean culture and assimilate them as “loyal, good Japanese people”.

Korea as well as the colonial situation. Among them, the works of Paek Nam-un (1894-1979) and Pak Mun-gyu (1906-1971) were significant.⁸ However, Marx's *Capital* was not accessible to ordinary Korean people during the Japanese colonial period, simply because it was not translated and published in Korean at that time.

Translation of *Capital* during the Liberation Period, 1945-1948

As soon as Korea was liberated from Japanese rule in August 1945, socialist publications exploded in Seoul and Pyongyang. Hundreds of socialist books, journals, and newspapers came pouring forth, including the works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Lenin (1870 – 1924), Joseph Stalin (1878 – 1953), and Mao Zedong (1893 – 1976). Some of Marx's works, which were translated and published during the colonial period, such as the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*⁹ and *Wage Labor and Capital*¹⁰, were republished during the 1945-48 period. The number of Marx and Engels's texts translated and published in this period was estimated to be 22.¹¹ This was the "First Spring of Marxism" in South Korea.¹²

Capital Volume I and Volume II, translated by Ch'oe Yŏng-ch'ŏl (?-?), Chŏn Sŏk-tam (1916-?), and Hŏ Tong (?-?), were published through Seoul Publishing during 1947 and 1948.¹³ The translators asserted that the translation was based on the German edition, the so-called "Adoratski edition",¹⁴ although reference was also made to the Japanese editions during the translation, especially Motoyuki Takabatake (1886-1928)'s translation, published by Kaizosha in 1927-28, and Fumio Hasebe (1897-1979)'s translation, published by Nihon hyronsha in 1937-48.¹⁵ Besides the main text of *Capital*, Ch'oe Yŏng-ch'ŏl et al's translation included other texts, such as Marx's "Marginal Notes on Adolph Wagner's *Lehrbuch der politischen Ökonomie* (Second Edition), Volume I, 1879", and Lenin's "On the So-called Market Question", as appendices in order to help readers understand the method of Marx's *Capital* and its application to the analysis of contemporary society.

Ch'oe Yŏng-ch'ŏl et al's translations were published by Seoul Publishing in four and two installments for Volume I and Volume II, respectively. About 20,000 copies of Volume I were estimated to have been printed and sold. However, Ch'oe et al's translation failed to include Volume III, as the translators fled to North Korea when the separate anti-Communist government of Syngman Rhee (1875-1965) was established in the southern part of the Korean peninsula in August 1948. Despite its incompleteness, Ch'oe et al's translation was significant in

⁸ Paek Nam-un, *Chosŏn sahoe kyŏngjesa* [The Socio-economic History of Korea] (Tokyo: Kaizosha, 1933); Pak Mun-gyu, "The Japanese Land Survey as a Starting Point of the Differentiation of Agrarian Society in Chosŏn," *Chosŏn sahoe kyŏngjesa yŏn'gu* [Studies in the Socio-economic History of Korea] (1933).

⁹ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Kongsandang Sŏnŏn* [Manifesto of the Communist Party], trans. Nodong Chŏnsŏn Editorial Collective (Seoul: Nodong Chŏnsŏnsa, 1945).

¹⁰ Karl Marx, *Imgŭm nodong kwa chabon* [Wage Labor and Capital], trans. Chŏn Won-bae (Seoul: Taesŏng Publishing, 1946).

¹¹ Jong-rin Park, "The Translations of Marxist Texts and the 'Chosun Association of the Publishers of Left Books' after the Liberation," *Journal of History and Culture* 61, (2017): 219.

¹² Seongjin Jeong, "Marx in South Korea," *Socialism and Democracy* 24, no. 3 (2010).

¹³ Among the three co-translators, Chŏn Sŏk-tam was a famous Marxist economic historian. All of them fled to North Korea prior to the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. Ch'oe Yŏng-ch'ŏl translated and published Marx's *Theories of Surplus Value* in Pyongyang in 1966.

¹⁴ The so-called "Adoratski edition" was the German edition of *Capital*, published by Marx-Engels-Lenin-Institute in Moscow during 1932-1934.

¹⁵ According to the "Translators's Notes" to *Capital*. Volume I, the translations "followed Humio Hasebe's Japanese translation, as it was an almost perfect word by word translation".

that it was the first full Korean translation of *Capital*, excluding Volume III.

Prior to the establishment of the anti-communist government of Syngman Rhee in 1948, *Capital* was taught at major colleges in South Korea. For example, Ch'oe Ho-jin (1914-2010) taught *Capital* at Seoul National University, while Yun Haeng-chung (1904-?) published his lecture notes on *Capital* as a book, *Iron kyŏngjehak* [Theoretical Economics], in 1947. However, the "First Spring of Marxism" was brutally repressed by the anti-communist Syngman Rhee regime in South Korea after 1948. Almost all leftist scholars and revolutionaries, including translators of *Capital*, fled to North Korea before the Korean War, and most of those who remained were physically eliminated by the right-wing forces during the war.

The First Complete Korean Translation in North Korea

After the Korean War armistice in 1953, Pyongyang replaced Seoul as the center of Marxist scholarship in Korea. Kim Il-Sung (1912-1994), the founder and long-time dictator of the North Korean regime, espoused Stalinist Marxism-Leninism as the ruling ideology of the North Korean regime when he took power in 1946 and sustained it as late as mid-1960s, when he substituted it for his *Juche Idea*, or Kim Il-Sungism. Unlike his successors, Kim Jung-Il and Kim Jung-Eun, Kim Il-Sung seems to have absorbed Marxist works when he was young,¹⁶ and promoted the translation and publication of Marxist works as well as Marxist research and education at least during early days of his rule. Those scholars who had fled from Seoul to Pyongyang therefore played crucial roles in this project of Kim Il-Sung and the publication of the complete Korean edition of *Capital* during the years 1955-59 was its main accomplishment.

The North Korean edition of Marx's *Capital* was authentically the first full Korean translation, predating the full Korean translation in South Korea by more than 30 years. Volume I of the North Korean edition was translated by Pak Gŭk-ch'ae (1904-?) and Yi Sŏk-sim (?-?), and published in 1955 by Workers' Party of Korea Publishing [*Chosŏn Rodongdang ch'ulp'ansa*]. Pak Gŭk-ch'ae, one of the translators, had already been a prominent Marxist economist in colonial Korea before he fled to North Korea. Volume II and III were published by the same publisher in 1957 and 1959 respectively, under the editorship of Ch'oe Yŏng-ch'ŏl, the same scholar who translated and published Volume I and II during 1947-1948 in South Korea.

After the completion of the Korean edition of all three volumes of *Capital* during 1955-1959, Volume I was republished with some corrections to the translation as Volume 23 of *Marx-Engels Chŏnjip* [Marx-Engels Collected Works] in 1964 by Workers' Party of Korea Publishing. The North Korean regime attempted to publish the *Marx-Engels Chŏnjip* during 1961-65, based on the Russian second edition of *Karl Marx Frederick Engels Polnoye Sobraniye Sochineniy* [Marx-Engels Collected Works], published by the Institute of Marxism and Leninism of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union during 1955-1966.¹⁷ However, the publication of the North Korean edition of the *Marx-Engels Chŏnjip* was discontinued after 14 volumes were published.

¹⁶ Kim Il-Sung asserted that he read Marx's *Capital* with other Marxist works, like the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, *Wage Labor and Capital*, *State and Revolution* etc, while at middle school in Jilin, China. Kim also argued that he always read Marx's works from the standpoint of the anti-imperialist national liberation struggles of the Korean people. Kim Il-Sung, *With the Century* (Korean Friendship Association, 2013).

¹⁷ The available information indicates that following volumes of the *Marx-Engels Chŏnjip* were published in North Korea: Volume 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 18, 19, 20, 23(1), and 23(2). All of these were published by Workers' Party of Korea Publishing, after they had completed the publication of all volumes of the *Collected Works* of Lenin in Korean in 1954.

The translation and publication of Marx's works was phased out after the mid-1960s in North Korea with the rise of *Juche Idea*, a hybrid of nationalism, Stalinism, and the cult of personality. After the *Juche Idea*, or Kim Il-Sungism, rose to the status of the official ruling ideology, the North Korean regime ceased translating and publishing Marx's work. Nowadays, it is very difficult for ordinary North Korean citizens to access Marxist literature, including Marx's *Capital*, in North Korea.

Meanwhile, not only socialist politics but also the academic study of Marx was severely repressed in South Korea after the Korean War, under the anti-communist dictatorships of Syngman Rhee (1948-60), Park Chung Hee (1961-79), and Chun Doo Hwan (1980-7). Even simply carrying Marx's books could be punished by up to seven years in prison, if it was seen to be connected with some sort of anti-government or socialist activities. Despite the severe repression of radical thought and activities by the anti-communist regimes after the end of the Korean War, research on Marxism was permitted, though rarely, if it was purely academic or of some use for anti-communist education. For example, *Shin Donga*, the representative monthly liberal journal, featured an issue in 1967 to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the publication of *Capital*, Volume I. Progressive scholars who wanted to study Marxism in this period had to make a detour through apparently academic or dissident topics, such as "dependency theory", the Frankfurt School, the "young Marx", or the Dobb-Sweezy debates on the transition to capitalism. Among a few works on *Capital* published during this period, Lim Won-Taek's (1922-2006) *Che-I Chabonron* [The Second Capital] was notable,¹⁸ as it tried to synthesize the Marxian labor theory of value and the neoclassical marginal utility theory of value.

Reappearance of *Capital* after the Great Democratic Struggle in 1987

The "Second Spring of Marxism"¹⁹ came in South Korea after the Kwangju People's Uprising of 1980 and the Great Democratic Struggle of 1987.²⁰ The Kwangju People's Uprising was a democratic movement against the new military *coup* led by Chun Doo hwan after the killing of former dictator, Park Chung Hee in 1979. Although the uprising was brutally suppressed by Chun Doo-hwan, it was pivotal in re-igniting the South Korean people's struggle for democracy, culminating in the Great Democratic Struggle of 1987, which succeeded in ending the military dictatorship. Unlike the period of the 1960s-70s, when liberals and college students played the key role in the movements for democratization against the military dictatorship, the *minjung* [people], e.g., workers, peasants and poor people, played a major role in the anti-systemic movements after 1980. The fundamental transformation of the subjective and objective conditions of popular movements, reflecting the rapid development of South Korean capitalism and its contradictions since the 1960s, was behind the "Second Spring of Marxism" during the period 1987-1991.

In the late 1980s socialist ideas and organizations returned to South Korea after a break of almost 40 years. It is notable that the Anti-Communist Law could not prevent the sudden explosion in the publication of socialist literature in this period. Among the socialist publications that poured forth in South Korea during this period, the translation and publication of all three volumes of Marx's *Capital* was the most significant. The pioneer was the publisher, Iron kwa silch'on [Theory and Practice], which consecutively published all three volumes of

¹⁸ Lim Won-taek, *The Second Capital* (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1979).

¹⁹ If the "First Spring of Marxism" in South Korea was 1945-48, the "second" one was 1987-91. For a periodization of the development of Marxism in South Korea, refer to Jeong, "Marx in South Korea".

²⁰ The dictator, Chun Doo-hwan sent elite paratroopers from the ROK special forces to Kwangju to contain the unrest and nearly 200 people - the great majority of them civilians - were killed in the rebellion.

Capital between 1987 and 1990, translated by Kim Young-min (the anonym of the translators collective) and Gang Shin-joon (1954-...). While Gang argued that the Iron kwa silch'ŏn translation was based on the German original, some participants in the translation admitted that they translated from a Japanese edition and that the German text was used only for reference. In any case, the Iron kwa silch'ŏn edition was the first complete South Korean edition of all three volumes of *Capital*. Indeed, the date of translation of the last installment of the Iron kwa silch'ŏn edition of *Capital*, that is, the third installment of Volume III, was printed on July 30, 1990, which was about four months ahead of Bibong edition of *Capital* translated by Kim Soohaeng (1945-2015).

The publication of the Iron kwa silch'ŏn edition of *Capital* meant the *de facto* legalization of socialist publications in South Korea for the first time since the establishment of the anti-communist regime in 1948. The government's arrest and acquittal of Kim Tae-gyŏng (1955-2014), president of Iron kwa silch'ŏn, in 1987 was the turning point.²¹ The Iron kwa silch'ŏn edition of *Capital* was the result of a collective translation by a dozen translators, though the name of the translators was printed as a pseudonym, Kim Yŏngmin for Volume I, and Gang Shin-joon for Volumes II and III. In that period, many socialist publications were published under pseudonyms in order to avoid or jeopardize the police investigations. The Iron kwa silch'ŏn edition of *Capital* was significant in that young radical scholars and student activists collectively participated in the translation.²² People from the so-called "Undonggwŏn" (sphere of radical activists) background, including young radical students and progressive publishers, were the main actors in the translation and publication of socialist literature during the "Second Spring of Marxism". About 20 years later, the Iron kwa silch'ŏn edition of *Capital* was republished with thorough revisions by Gang Shin-joon through a new publisher, Gill, between 2008 and 2010. In the Gill edition, indeed, in his "Translator's Note" Gang argued that he had substantially revised the translation from the Iron kwa silch'ŏn (1989-1990). Gang also argued that the translation of the Gill edition was based on the German text, Karl Marx, *Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie. Marx Engels Werke. Band 23, 24, 25* (Berlin: Dietz, 1979).

Almost simultaneously with the Iron kwa silch'ŏn edition, Kim Soohaeng's translation was published through Bibong Publishing during the period 1989-90. Kim Soohaeng's translation of *Capital* was originally planned by Pak Ki-bong (1947 - ...), president of Bibong Publishing, as a part of the company's "Classics of Economics Series," preceded by Ricardo's *Principles*, Keynes's *General Theory*, etc. The source of Kim's translation was the English edition translated by Ben Fowkes and David Fernbach.²³ Kim also admitted that he frequently referred to the Japanese and the North Korean editions. Compared with the Iron kwa silch'ŏn edition, Kim's translation turned out to be more successful in its reception, as was evidenced by the number of

²¹ Kim Tae-gyŏng was jailed on September 1, 1987 for publishing a translation of *Capital*, Volume I in 1987, under South Korea's anticommunist National Security Law. However, he was released on September 12, 1987 after mounting pressure from civil society.

²² For example, Choi Young-mi, a famous poet in South Korea, recently related that she also participated in the translation of *Capital*, as a member of an "underground" translation team of a radical student organization, called the "CA (Constituent Assembly)" [*Chehŏn ūihoe*] group, in 1986. According to Choi, their translation was published as *Capital* Volume I by Iron kwa silch'ŏn in 1987. For more discussion, refer to Rieu Dong-Min (1965-...), "The Korean Translation of *Das Kapital*: Its Interior Landscape," *Marxism* 21 13, no.1 (Spring 2016) and Chang, "Acceptance and Translation".

²³ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume I, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, 1976); Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume II, trans. David Fernbach (London: Penguin Books, 1978); Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume III, trans. David Fernbach (London: Penguin Books, 1981).

copies sold. Presumably, this was because at the time Kim was teaching Marxian economics at Seoul National University, the top university in South Korea.²⁴ However, it was also due to Kim's continuous efforts to improve the quality of the translation. Indeed, Kim's translation of the *Capital*, Volume I was revised three times in 1991, 2001, and 2005, while his translations of Volume II and Volume III were revised twice in 2004 and 2015. Indeed, Kim's final project prior to his sudden death in 2015 was to complete the proofreading of the third revised translation of all the volumes of *Capital*. Kim's translation was also significant in that it marked the transition from movement motivated translation to academic translation by a professional Marxist economist. However, it was unfortunate that Kim stuck to the Penguin English edition throughout his repeated re-translation, and concentrated on the popularization of *Capital*, often "Koreanizing" the Sino-Korean words that had been used in earlier translations to pure Korean words, rather than executing judicious philological compilation using the German original text. For these reasons, between the two competing translations of Kim and Gang, the latter deserves the credit for his more scholastic and scientific translation, as it was based on German original text, despite its translator's introduction, which was problematic for its social-democratic politics.²⁵

Besides the editions of Iron kwa silch'ŏn and Bibong, another Korean edition of *Capital* was published through Paekŭi Publisher in South Korea during 1989-1990. However, the latter was simply a reprint of the North Korean edition, which had been published by Workers' Party of Korea Publishing during the period 1955-1959. In order to take the lion's share of the market for Korean editions of *Capital* in South Korea by publishing it as early as possible, Paekŭi simply photocopied the existing North Korean edition and sold that. Indeed, several publishers competed to be the early bird in the publication of the South Korean edition of *Capital* in 1989-90, calculating that it could be profitable in the changed spirit of time.

Besides *Capital*, about 70 Korean translations of various works by Marx and Engels were published during the period 1987-1991.²⁶ Among them were *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*,²⁷ *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*,²⁸ *The German Ideology*,²⁹ *Critique of Political Economy*,³⁰ *Poverty of Philosophy*,³¹ *Wage Labor and Capital*,³² *Manifesto of the Communist*

²⁴ Besides the translation of *Capital*, Soohaeng Kim played a key role in the formation of Marxist economics scholarship in South Korea from the late 1980s onward through his training of dozens of bright Marxist economists, when he held the position of economics professor at Seoul National University.

²⁵ Indeed, the two translations were divided from the outset on how to translate the title of *Capital*, e.g. *Das Kapital* and on how to transliterate the author's surname, Marx. While Gang chose the title *Chabon*, literally "Capital", as its Korean translation and "MaRX" as the transliteration of Marx, Kim followed the Japanese translation, *Chabonron*, literally, "On Capital" and the more Japanese transliteration of the author's name: "MaRuKuSu". For a debate regarding the comparative merits of the two translations, refer to Gimm Gong-hoe, "Some Issues on the Nature of *Das Kapital* and Its Translation," *Marxism* 21 7, no.4 (Winter 2010); Gang Shin-joon, "The Translation of Marx's *Das Kapital* into Korean and Its Meaning on Korean Marxist Political Economy: A Response to Gimm's Review," *Marxism* 21 8, no.1 (Spring 2011).

²⁶ Chung Moon-gil, *Hanguk Marxhak ūi Chip'yŏng* [Contours of Marxology in Korea] (Seoul: Munhak kwa chisŏngsa, 2004).

²⁷ Karl Marx, *Hegel pŏpch'ŏlhak pip'an sŏron* [Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right], trans. Hong Young-doo (Seoul: Ahchim, 1988).

²⁸ Karl Marx, *GyeongJeHak CheolHak SuGo* [Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts], trans. Kim Tae-kyŏng (Seoul: Iron kwa silch'ŏn, 1987).

²⁹ Karl Marx, *Dogil Ideology* [German Ideology], trans. Kim Dae-wong (Seoul: Dureh, 1989). This was actually a partial translation of the *German Ideology*, covering only "I. Feuerbach", "II. Saint Bruno" and "True Socialism I". The complete Korean edition of *German Ideology* has not yet been published.

³⁰ Karl Marx, *JeongChiGyeongJeHak BiPanEul WeHaYeo* [Critique of Political Economy], trans. Ho-Gyun Kim (Seoul: JoongWonMoonHwa, 1988).

Party,³³ *Grundrisse*,³⁴ *Theories of Surplus Value*,³⁵ *Civil War in France*,³⁶ and *Selected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*.³⁷ However, the quality of the some translations of the works of Marx, published during the “Second Spring of Marxism”, was not good. It was common that the real name of the translator or the original text used for the translation was not declared. Many translations of Marx’s works were not based on the German originals, but were in fact re-translations from English or Japanese editions or reproductions of earlier North Korean editions. South Korea was more than 30 years behind North Korea, not only in the publication of *Capital* but also other works of Marx. For example, *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, *The German Ideology*, and *Wage Labor and Capital* had already been translated and published in 1957 in North Korea.³⁸

During the “Second Spring of Marxism”, a few colleges, such as Seoul National University, Hanshin University, Korea University, and Gyeongsang National University began to offer courses on *Capital*, usually under the title of “Political Economy”. Also, many young scholars rushed to study Marxism in this period.³⁹ In addition, many introductory texts on *Capital* were published in this period. Although most of them were translations either of the “orthodox” Marxist economics textbooks, which followed the official line of the ruling Communist parties in the Soviet Union, East Germany, and China, etc., or of textbooks authored by Japanese Marxist economists, like Kozo Uno or Ryozo Tomizuka, a few Korean radical economists wrote and published their own textbooks on *Capital*. Among them, Kim Soohaeng’s *Chŏngch’i kyŏngjehak wŏllon* [Principles in Political Economy]⁴⁰ and Chung Un-young’s (1944-2005) *Nodong kach’i iron yŏn’gu* [Studies in Labor Theory of Value] were significant in that they went beyond the stereotyped format of Soviet economics textbooks, and tried to incorporate

³¹ Karl Marx, *CheolHakEui BinGon* [Poverty of Philosophy], trans. Min-Cheol Gang and Jin-Young Kim (Seoul: AhChim, 1988).

³² Karl Marx, *ImGeumNoDongGwa Jabon* [Wage Labor and Capital], trans. Sang-Woo Nam (Seoul:BaekSanSeoDang, 1989).

³³ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *GongSanDang SeonEon* [Manifesto of the Communist Party], trans. Jae-Ki Kim (Seoul: GeoRum, 1988).

³⁴ Karl Marx, *JeongChiGyeongJeHak BiPan YoGang* [Grundrisse], trans. Ho-Gyun Kim (Seoul: BaikEui, 2000).

³⁵ Karl Marx, *IngYeoGaChi HakSeolSa* [Theories of Surplus Value], trans. Editors (Seoul: BaikEui, 1989). This was the reproduction of the North Korean edition, e.g. Karl Marx, *IngYeoGaChi HakSeolSa* [Theories of Surplus Value], trans. Young-Cheol Choi (Pyongyang: Worker’s Party of Korea Publisher, 1966).

³⁶ Karl Marx, *FranceEhSeoEui GyeGeubTuJaeng* [Civil War in France], trans. Gyo-Jin Heo (Seoul: SoNaMu, 1987).

³⁷ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Karl Marx Friedrich Engels JeoJakSeonJib* [Selected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels], comp. Se-Kyun Kim (Seoul: ParkJongChull Publisher, 1991-97). This was the complete Korean edition of *Ausgewahlte Werke in sechs Banden* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1970-72).

³⁸ Karl Marx, *Hegel BebCheolHak BiPan SeoRon* [Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right], (Pyongyang: Workers’ Party of Korea Publisher, 1957); Karl Marx, *DokIl Ideology* [German Ideology], (Pyongyang: Workers’ Party of Korea Publisher, 1957); Karl Marx, *ImGeumRoDongGwa Jabon* [Wage Labor and Capital], (Pyongyang: Workers’ Party of Korea Publisher, 1957).

³⁹ For example, almost 80 students, that is, more than half of total enrolled graduate students of the Economics Department at Seoul National University, chose heterodox economics, including Marxian economics, as their topic for their MA thesis in 1990. Rieu, “Korean Translation of *Das Kapital*,” 21.

⁴⁰ Kim Soohaeng’s *Chŏngch’i kyŏngjehak wŏllon* was a well-written Marxist economics textbook, widely read among progressive students and activists at the time. This book was especially refreshing in that it reflected contemporary Western Marxist research, while consciously distancing itself from the dogmatic Stalinist textbooks that were popular then.

recent developments in Western Marxism.

The eclipse of *Capital* after the collapse of USSR

It was unfortunate that the “Second Spring of Marxism” of the late 1980s in South Korea was so short-lived, as it ended with the demise of the USSR in 1991. After the fall of the Stalinist regimes, the influence of *Capital* plummeted in South Korea. Indeed, during the 1990s, there was a wholesale retreat from socialist politics and conversion to reformism, postmodernism or even “New Right” politics among many South Korean radicals who had previously identified themselves with “orthodox” Marxism. However, the unexpected explosion of the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 was a moment of awakening for South Korean progressives to the forgotten contradictions of capitalism, emphasized by Marx’s *Capital*. With deepening social polarization and inequality under the neoliberal assault on working people after the 1997 crisis, it did not take long for Marx’s *Capital* to regain its diminished influence.

Publication of textbooks on Marx’s *Capital* by Korean political economists continued after 2000. Among them, Gang Shin-joon’s *Chabonron ūi segye* [World of Das Kapital], Chae Man-su’s (1949-...) *Nodongja rūl wihan kyoyang kyōngjehak* [Introduction to Economics for Workers], Lim Seung-soo’s *Wōngsungi to ihaehanūn chabonron* [Das Kapital for Monkeys], Yoon So-young’s (1954-...) *Marx ūi chabon* [Marx’s Capital], Lee Chai-on’s (1951-...) *Marx chōngch’i kyōngjehak ūi saeroun palgyōn* [New Discovery of Marxian Political Economy], Kim Soohaeng’s *Chabonron kongbu* [Studies in Capital], Park Seung-Ho’s (1958-...) *Chabonron hamkke ilgi* [Reading Capital Together] were important.⁴¹

Now, more than 20 colleges provide courses on *Capital*, under the title of “Marxian Economics” or “Political Economy”. Gyeongsang National University’s postgraduate program on Marxism was especially notable, for the students were required to take courses on Marx’s *Capital*, titled “*Das Kapital I*” and “*Das Kapital II*”. Besides colleges, some non-government organizations have also been providing courses on *Capital* for a general audience since 2000. Among them, courses opened by the Workers’ Institute of Social Science, Saewoom, Kwach’ōn Laboratory, and Workers’ Solidarity were influential. In addition, some popular speakers, such as Kim Soohaeng, Lim Seung-soo, Gang Shin-Joon, Park Chan-Shik (1963-...), Park Seungho, Kang Seong-yoon (1971-...), gave public or internet lectures on *Capital*.

Among various disciplines of Marxist scholarship based on *Capital*, economics has been traditionally strong in South Korea. South Korean Marxist economists have tackled contemporary microeconomic and macroeconomic issues such as the agrarian question, labor issues, economic dependency, monopoly capital, the chaebols, etc. Their association, the Korean Association for Political Economy [*Hanguk sahoe kyōngje hakhoe*], has provided the main forum for discussions on *Capital* in South Korea. Marxian value theory in *Capital*, especially the “transformation problem” in Volume III, has been the favorite field of research for South Korean scholars.⁴² South Korean Marxist economists also tried to apply Marxian value theory to explain

⁴¹ Gang Shin-joon, *Chabonron ūi segye* (Seoul: Pulbit, 2001); Chae Man-su, *Nodongja rūl wihan kyoyang kyōngjehak* (Seoul: Workers Institute of Social Science, 2003); Lim Seung-soo, *Wōngsungi to ihaehanūn chabonron* (Seoul: Sidae ūi Chang 2011); Yoon So-young, *Marx ūi Chabon* (Seoul: Gong-gam, 2009); Lee Chai-on, *Marx chōngch’i kyōngjehak ūi saeroun palgyōn* (Chonnam: Chonnam National University Press, 2008); and Park Seung-ho, *Chabonron hamkke ilgi* (Seoul: Hanul, 2016).

⁴² For a recent Korean contribution to the debates on “transformation problem”, refer to Kim Changkeun, “Freeman and Kliman’s Formal Logic versus Marx’s Causal Logic,” *Marxism* 2114, no.1 (Spring 2017).

the dynamics of the Korean economy and the information technology revolution.⁴³

Renewed Interest in *Capital* after the 2008 Global Economic Crisis

Since the colonial period in the early part of the 20th century, the vicissitudes of the translation and reception of Marx's *Capital* in Korea have been closely related with the Korean people's struggles against imperialist oppression, military dictatorship and capitalist exploitation. Indeed, Marx's *Capital* had already provided a powerful theoretical weapon for the national liberation movement against Japanese imperialism before it played central roles in each "Spring of Marxism", first, during 1945-1948, and second, during 1987-1991. The translation and dissemination of Marx's *Capital* have been led by the radical activists rather than scholars, and have always been an essential part of popular anti-systemic movements in Korea. As a result, it was inevitable that Marx's *Capital* has been received politically or tendentiously and in liaison with Marxism and Leninism, etc in Korea. Indeed, Marx's *Capital* has usually been read through the "orthodox" Communist party-line in Korea, as is shown in the predominantly "logico-historicist" or "stageist" way of reading among South Korean Marxists. However, one of the pitfalls of the "political" reading of Marx's *Capital* was the underdevelopment of the philological and scientific study of *Capital* in Korea. Regardless of some differences in the quality of translation among various Korean editions, they were generally very poor, compared with the state-of-art philological groundings of the Japanese edition. It is still beyond the capabilities of South Korean scholars to publish the complete Korean edition of *Marx Engels Collected Works* or, the new translation of *Capital*, drawing upon the new resources of MEGA². While South Korean Marxism might be strong in its application and politics, its basics, including Marxology, have been disappointingly underdeveloped.⁴⁴

After the global economic crisis of 2008, the attractiveness of Marx's *Capital* increased again, as many people came to see how the ever-deepening economic crisis, poverty, and inequality were the consequences of the contradictions of capitalism, as depicted in *Capital*. Indeed, Marxist scholarship and politics, which had retreated since the collapse of the USSR began to revive. Although, the Anti-Communist Law, renamed as the National Security Law, is still effective and used to repress even academic studies of Marx's *Capital* if they are related to anti-capitalist politics,⁴⁵ *Capital* was chosen as the number one most influential book since 1948 by leading intellectuals in South Korea, according to a survey conducted in 2008 by *Kyosu Shinmun* [Professor Times], a prestigious newspaper for academics.

However, there is still a long way for Marx's *Capital* to go before it emerges from its hitherto marginalized state in South Korea, which was more due to the general retreat of anti-capitalist movements than to political repression. Marx's *Capital* will not become a counter-

⁴³ Jeong Seongjin, *Marx wa Hanguk Kyōngje* [Marx and the Korean Economy], (Seoul: Chaekkalp'i, 2005); Jeon Heesang, "The Value and Price of Information Commodities: An Assessment of the South Korean Controversy," *Research in Political Economy* 27 (2011).

⁴⁴ In these conditions, Chung Moon-gil's (1941-2016) meticulous philological works on the historiography of MECW seems to be exceptional. For example, refer to Chung Moon-gil, *Nibelung üi pomul* [Nibelung's Treasure] (Seoul: Munhak kwa chisōngsa, 2008).

⁴⁵ The Law states that "those who create, import, duplicate, possess, transport, disseminate, sell, or acquire documents, arts or other publications", in order to "praise, encourage, disseminate or cooperate with anti-state groups, members or those under their control, being aware that such acts will endanger the national security and the democratic freedom" will be punished with up to seven years in prison. As late as 2016, Lee Jin-young, who has provided digital versions of Marxist works, including *Capital*, was arrested for violating this Law.

hegemonic idea in the near future without the revival of progressive social movements, especially workers' movements, which have been seriously weakened under the neoliberal assaults of the conservative governments of Lee Myung-bak (1941-...) and Park Geun-hye (1952-...). Hopefully, the recent explosion of the South Korean peoples' candlelight movement against corruption and abuse of power by Park Geun-hye, culminating in her imprisonment, could be the signal of the coming of the "Third Spring of Marxism".

Finally, it should be noted that this chapter concentrated disproportionately on the translation and dissemination of Marx's *Capital* in South Korea, while North Korea could only be dealt with marginally because of the extreme difficulty of accessing relevant materials in North Korea. A more balanced story of the translation and dissemination of Marx's *Capital* in Korea, including the interaction between the North and the South, will have to wait until the long hoped for "glasnost" in North Korea.

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The Capital of Korea has been in many locations during the history of the Korean peninsula. Today there are two Koreas, each with its own capital city: Seoul is the capital of the Republic of Korea (ROK), also known as South Korea. Pyongyang is the capital of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), also known as North Korea. Since the end of World War II, there have been two countries or divided Korea: If reunification were to take place someday, alternate prospects for the capital city Korea has had a number of capitals. Korea is a peninsula in East Asia, currently the peninsula is divided into two countries: North Korea's capital is Pyongyang, and South Korea's capital is Seoul. Gojoseon: Unknown. Wanggeom (modern Pyongyang) – Second capital (post 400 BCE). Jolbon – first capital of Goguryeo. Gungnae City – second capital of Goguryeo. Pyongyang – third capital of Goguryeo. Wiryeseong (modern Seoul) – first capital of Baekje. Ungjin (modern Gongju) – second capital of Baekje. Seoul, city and capital of South Korea (the Republic of Korea). It is located on the Han River (Han-gang) in the northwestern part of the country, with the city centre some 37 miles (60 km) inland from the Yellow Sea (west). Seoul is the cultural, economic, and political centre of South Korea. Professor of Geography, Seoul National University, South Korea; former South Korean ambassador to China; South Korean Minister of Unification. See Article History.