

Transnational Solidarity in Feminism: *The Transfer and Appropriation of German Feminism in South Korea*

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Abstract

The new progressive women's movement in South Korea, which began after 1987, has attained huge success in a relatively short period of time. One key to this success is transnational solidarity between South Korean and German feminists. The transfer of German feminism to South Korea was facilitated through two channels: a theoretical introduction via print media, and the support of German development assistance. The criticism of Anglo-American feminism and the acceptance of feminism in German socialism, although sometimes unpolished, paved the way for the rise of a new women's movement. In addition, financial support given by the German Evangelical Center for Development Assistance, which focused on gender parity, contributed to the successful development of the new women's movement. This study explores transnational solidarity between South Korean and German feminists, which offer a noticeable model for collaboration between feminist movements in First and Third World countries.

Keywords: transnational solidarity, Korean women's movement, German feminism, transfer, appropriation, ODA, feminist theory

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Introduction

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the transnational feminist movement was at the center of many large-scale United Nations women's conferences.¹ Since the UN's World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975, when the UN proclaimed World Women's Year, mega conferences on women's issues have been held every five to ten years, leading up to the World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995 (Wichterich 2009, 13–14, 19). While this process activated the discussion and cooperation among women across nations, it also strengthened the transnational women's movement network.

The era of the transnational women's movement, however, was also an era of increased tension, as the differences among women became more visible. Even as early as the UN Mexico Conference, various women's organizations engaged in heated debates on their views, directions, and priorities. Despite conflicts and disputes, women in the World Conference on Women in Beijing were realizing the value of the transnational women's movement through a long process of getting to know each other, discovering common values, and recognizing differences (Wichterich 2009, 15–16). What then was the nature of the relationship between feminists in the first world and the women's movement in the Third World for the previous 40 years, during which the second wave of the feminist movement in Europe and the United States expanded? Is it possible to achieve real cooperation and solidarity between women in advanced countries and women in the Third World? Recognizing these issues, this paper aims to examine the complex exchange, influence, and appropriation based on the relationship

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1. This paper analyzes the process of appropriating feminism through crossing national boundaries, based on transnational history. The tendency to interpret the term "transnational" as transcending a nation or a country, however, does not apply to transnational history. Rather, transnational history posits that historical phenomena are both national and transnational, working across the boundaries of a country. Also, considering that cultural inflow from outside is not a unilateral transfer or influence but an interaction or a process of ownership by those who accept it, this paper stresses transfer, selective choice, and appropriation (Chung 2008, 194–209; Osterhammel 2001, 466, 473–477).

between the feminist activities in South Korea and Germany by studying the introduction of German feminist theories and their adoption and appropriation by the South Korean progressive women's movement² through two paths: 1) discovering and analyzing feminist theories introduced by print media; and 2) identifying the transfer and adoption of German content through the development assistance. In particular, this paper focuses on the period from 1987 to the first half of the 2000s, the starting point of the new women's movement in South Korea,³ and at the same time, the period in which German development assistance to the women's movement was most active.

Indeed, the Korean women's movement of this period cannot be identified solely by the relationship between movements in South Korea and Germany. In the ideology and practice of Korean feminists, the influence of the United States, which has dominated the intellectual and social climate of the divided country since 1945, should first be recognized. At the same time, stimuli from international women's movements emerging from UN cannot be ignored.

However, besides the special empathy between South Korea and West Germany, who shared the identity of being divided countries, German feminist theories and culture formed an axis of competitive feminist theories in South Korean society, offering a key drive for the development of a progressive women's movement. This paper will shed light on transnational cooperation in women's movements and the interactions of feminists between First and Third World countries, using the German-South Korea experience as a case study.

2. I use here the term "women's movement" instead of "feminist movement" because Korea's new women's movement has preferred it.

3. Feminists in Europe and the United States use the term "new women's movement" after the 1968 Revolution, to separate themselves from previous women's movements. In a similar context, the progressive women's movement centered on the KWAU (Korea Women's Association United) in South Korea after 1987 could be so named because it separated itself from previous women's movements (Cho 1994, 330-334; Chung 2006, 1-42; Lee 1994, 335-358).

The Transfer of German Feminism through Print Media

During the period when South Korean society started taking a keen interest in women's studies, key literature on feminism, rooted in liberal and radical feminism, was translated into Korean, including *The Second Sex* (*Je 2-ui seong*) by Simone de Beauvoir in 1973, *Sexual Politics* (*Seong-ui jeong-chihak*) by Kate Millett in 1977, and *The Feminine Mystique* (*Yeoseong-ui sinbi*) by Betty Friedan in 1978. These translations, with the exception of *The Second Sex*, show that women's liberation theories from the Anglo-American world were becoming influential.

Amid the intellectual stimuli brought about by the second wave (later to be called "new women's movement") that occurred in Europe and the United States, the women's studies course that Ewha Womans University, the largest women's university in South Korea, began offering in 1976, made a significant contribution to activating discussions focused on Anglo-American feminist theories. In 1982 Ewha Womans University initiated the women's studies program in its graduate school, followed by the founding of the Korean Association of Women's Studies, leading to full-scale development of women's studies (Lee 1989, 279; Kang 2003, 28). The creation of the women's studies program allowed the first-generation feminists in South Korea to study feminism systematically.

However, the discourse on feminism that developed out of the women's studies program at Ewha Womans University did not focus solely on the framework of Anglo-American feminist theories. Lee Hyo Jae, who played a decisive role in the creation of the Women's Studies Program, pointed out:

The Women's Studies program in Ewha Womans University was born in the same year the UN proclaimed World Women's Year for the first time. It may be considered a unilateral adoption of foreign women's movements or a simple adoption of advanced Western women's studies. The 1970s in South Korea, however, was a time in which, along with the need for women, the social foundation on which the seeds of such need could spring up indeed sprang up, thanks to the women's move-

ment (Lee 1994, 280).⁴

Similarly, in the retrospective of Lee's work by her students, "the role of Lee in defining the perspective of the women's movement was tremendous," and "there were differences between the feminism first introduced by the women's studies program at Ewha Womans University and the Third World feminism introduced by Lee" (Kang 2003, 64). Thus the women's studies program did more than introduce or follow the theories of Europe and the United States (Kang 2003, 66).

During the oppressive rule of President Chun Doo-hwan's government since 1980, the student movement and other social movements needed to be more intense or more determined to survive, and their ideals became rigid. Accordingly, the Korean women's movement also became politically more radical.

Since the second half of the 1980s, increasingly more publications reported on the Korean women's movement and its direction as well as the struggle of Third World women, rather than merely translating European and American feminist theories. As for theoretical publications, those based on more radical socialist views were translated. In 1982, considering the censorship at that time, *Women and Socialism* (*Yeoseong-gwa sahoe-juui*) by August Bebel was translated with a less explicit title, *Women and Society* (*Yeoseong-gwa sahoe*), followed by the translation of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* by Friedrich Engels in 1985 under the name of *The Origin of the Family* (*Gajok-ui giwon*), which was the most widely read among young women, and used in debates. In 1987, *The Collected Writings of Clara Zetkin* (*Keullara Jeteukin seonjip*) was published [Foner 1987; Women's History Association (WHA) 1988, 364]. In addition, *Women, the Last Colony* (*Yeoseong, choehu-ui singminji*), a collection of essays by women's development sociologists active in the German feminist movement, was published in 1987 (Wehrhof et al. 1987). The writings of Engels, Bebel, and Zetkin were translated and published not because of

4. Lee also pointed out that women's movements should be recognized in tandem with national issues because women were more oppressed in the history of national suffering from the era of colonialism to the division of the country.

the effort made by the publishers but due to young activists such as Cho Kyung Sook and her colleagues who, advocating the progressive women's movement since the mid-1980s, wanted to clarify the direction and ideal of the women's movement. Based on Engel's theory, they thought that the form of the family evolved according to developmental stages of human history, and the period in which the patriarchal family emerged corresponds to the advent of private property and the state (Shim 1985, 207–208).

With the help of Marxist literature on women's issues, the passionate debate surrounding the origin of women's oppression—that is, the debate on matriarchy—was started by some women who resorted to underground activities such as publications of banned books and leaflets, demonstrations, and strikes. Furthermore, these women engaged in “theoretical debate on the direction of the women's movement,” resulting in heated discussions on the correlation between “women's oppression and change in productivity” (Shim 1985, 200–229). Similarly, the translation of Zetkin's writings was also wholeheartedly accepted by young activists in that they would “help us determine Marxism's attitude towards women's issues in our circumstances, where liberal feminism and socialist feminism methodologies are prevalent” (WHA 1988, 364–365). The “mook”⁵ entitled *Yeoseong* (Women), published by a group of young female activists, paved the way for the distribution of German socialist texts on the women's question. The mook became the source for young female intellectuals who advocated a progressive women's movement, and were supported by the progressive publishing company Changjak-kwa Bipyong.

From the overview of publications on women, we can conclude that on the one hand, the topology of feminist discourse was occupied by liberal or radical feminist theory books supported by researchers of women's studies and artists; on the other hand, young activists and college students created another group for progressive feminist discourse and communi-

5. “Mook” (magazine + book) is the name given to a non-regular type of magazine that sought to avoid various obstacles in the publishing process at a time when government censorship was prevalent.

cated closely with the Korean social movement. Serving as a basis for the practical movement since the mid-1980s, the theoretical premises of socialism considerably influenced the progressive women's movement, and gaps between young progressive female activists and scholars of women's studies affected Korean feminism for some time.

In comparison, the content of *Women, the Last Colony* was somewhat distant from the theoretical direction of the progressive women's movement outlined previously. Written by female sociologists at Bielefeld University, including Claudia Von Wehrhof, the book strove to expose the subsistence economy of producing consumer goods by Third World women as a consequence of capitalist production. They stressed the structural similarity that existed between housewife labor in industrialized countries and women's work in Third World countries. They also criticized development and growth-centered policies as well as male-centered academic analyses, and attempted to overcome European preferences inherent in existing development policies and development assistance. The introduction in the mook, *Yeoseong*, however, seemed to have distanced itself from the content of *Women, the Last Colony* by pointing out that,

The analytical method of comparing free wage labor and housewife labor. . . fails to show the internal contradiction and dynamics of capitalism as well as the aspect of women as housewives who carry out a social struggle as wage laborers, and the process in which their consciousness changes (WHA 1988, 364–365).

In fact, *Women, the Last Colony* was not well known and did not have a significant influence on Korean women activists. At the same time, many publications on the Third World women's movement were read in South Korea [Kim Ji Hae 1987b; Women's Society for Equal Friends (WSEF) 1987].⁶ At that time, feminists in Germany had a strong interest in extending development assistance to the Third World, together with effort to

6. While the exact period cannot be specified, it appears to be that the progressive women's movement identified with Third World feminism until the 2000s.

solve women's issues in South America and Africa, particularly. The reaction of Korean female activists to the book by Claudia Von Wehrhof shows that the adoption of feminist theory occurs differently in each country over a period of time.

However, the progressive women's movement, committed to socialist classics, was not free from philosophical confusion caused by the collapse of the socialist states. In the 1990s, a women's movement based on a socialist view about women's liberation was replaced by an era of more diverse issues. The tendency for publishers in 1995, however, was to focus less on philosophical books that shed light on the ideology of the women's movement and more on various subfields, such as sexuality, environment, philosophy, language, and psychology. At around the same time, sexuality and sex-related discourse and recognition of differences among women emerged as key issues [Korea Women's Studies Association (KWSA) 1996, 227; 1998, 310]. The progressive Korean women's movement also started to experience new changes.

Furthermore, the experiences that East German women went through around this time had a profound impact on the progressive Korean women's movement during the historic German Reunification. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of Eastern socialist states had a considerable effect on the intellectual circle in South Korea. With the country divided after the Korean War, conservatives often used West Germany—the Miracle on the Rhine—as a useful propaganda tool for anti-communist education. The fall of the Berlin Wall thus contributed to strengthening the country's conservatism, which made the conservative circle desire Korea's reunification by absorption. On the other hand, the democratic movement raised a unified voice in objecting to such a means of reunification on the peninsula (Chung 2010, 222–223, 238–239).

German Reunification, however, affected women's movement in a different way. Although considered a successful process overall, the new Korean women's movement focused on a twofold structure in reunified Germany. In particular, the women in East Germany occupied the bottom stratum of the “internal colony,” becoming a “loser” (in German, *verlierer*), who had lost the opportunity to work and were merely objects of social

services. Accordingly, various studies and translations that introduced the conditions of women in East and West Germany and how these changed after reunification were carried out by young South Korean women scholars who tackled the conflict and discontent between the feminists in East and West Germany (Chung 1994, 241; 2002, 257–258; Rosenberg 1992, 121–142; Merkel 1993). In this context, Korean feminists became critical of the West German feminists' prejudice against East German women (Chung 2003, 335–337).

The study on changes in the everyday lives of women in East and West Germany brought about by reunification became a strong stimulus for the progressive Korean women's movement that recognized reunification was directly related to the fate of women. Women were then able to notice that they had not been involved in the country's reunification policies or movement, thus helping the progressive Korean women's movement become more deeply involved in issues of reunification, leading to Korean Women's Association United's (KWAU, *Hanguk yeoseong danche yeonhap*) adoption of reunification as one of its central agendas.⁷

We can infer that Korean feminists who considered themselves progressive selectively adopted some German feminist theories and appropriated them according to their needs. Such theoretical appropriation is closely related to the initial development of the progressive Korean women's movement, which will be discussed in the following section.

German Development Assistance and Feminism in South Korea

The Beginning of Development Assistance and its Continuation

After liberation from the Japanese in 1945, the government suppressed the leftist women's movement and the authorities themselves conducted activities of conservative women's organizations until the 1970s. These conser-

7. Yun Ok Kim (Director of Women's Peace Institute), interview by author, Seoul, September 14, 2003.

vative groups were characterized as “government-patronized; focused on education, and volunteering activities; and strongly aligned with the government’s ideal” (Lee 1994, 335–337).

At this time, a new movement gradually emerged from a women’s meeting in 1974 through the Keuriseuchan akademi (CA, Christian Academy), which was supported by the Evangelical Center for Development Assistance (EZE, Evangelische Zentralstelle für Entwicklungshilfe).⁸ The group redefined the women’s movement as a “humanity movement that transcends the improvement of women’s status,” and proclaimed that “our movement is one of cultural reform and human liberation” (Lee 1994, 337). This group attempted to offer women’s education that targeted mid-level leader groups consisting of housewives, women in churches and rural areas, and union staff.

Notably, the education of women by the CA led to various activities by the women who took the class (Lee 1994, 335–337; Kang 2003, 25). No direct or indirect contact or exchange occurred between those who studied women’s education and German feminist groups. Rather, the main projects were determined through staff meetings between the CA and EZE. Consequently, the women’s groups at the CA shed light on women’s issues in the Korean social movement, which was lacked an apparent concern for the oppression of women.

During the 1970s, the Family Law Revision Movement restarted, and amidst soaring sex tourism by the Japanese in 1973, the Anti-Sex-Tourism Movement, led by Korean Christian women, emerged. New action for labor rights of women also began. In 1974 and 1975 the YWCA initiated a program to abolish customs in Korean companies that forced female clerks to sign an agreement where they were to resign if they married. This activity had some positive results leading to further interests in women’s labor rights (Lee 1989, 249–258, 262–263; Chung 2006, 12–17).

8. EZE and the Catholic Center for Development Assistance were founded in 1962 to support developing countries by way of non-official routes. These two organizations had a strong orientation toward assisting impoverished people and emphasized autonomy of the beneficiaries. The German government supported about a third of their budget (Lachmann 2010, 186).

Significantly, the women's movement in the 1970s focused mainly on establishing wage increases for female laborers and on improving labor conditions in free-trade zones. The industrialization forced by Park's military government was the initial process of capital accumulation through foreign direct investment, and the low incomes of young female laborers who worked in the electronic, clothing, and textile industries formed the basis for Korea's initial industrialization.⁹ Under oppressive conditions, strikes and street campaigns by female workers continued from the 1970s to the first half of the 1980s. The strike of YH Trading Company's female workers at the oppositional party's headquarters in August 1979 led to a nationwide strike, which in the end resulted in massive political upheaval (Lee 1989, 264–271; Chung 2006, 18; Lee 2001). The collective action by female workers provided the foundation for the rebirth of the labor movement, which had been taboo under a strict anti-communist policy in South Korea. At the same time, female workers' activities became a stimulus for the foundation of a progressive women's movement.

After the mid-1980s, when the number of female workers' strikes began to decrease, a new women's movement started to emerge. As political democracy began to take shape after the June Democratic Movement in 1987, social and student movements that advocated revolution started to weaken, and civil movements became active. In particular, new civil movements began to focus on everyday life or culture rather than on political issues. In such circumstances, women who were at the forefront of democratic or student movements grouped together to become an autonomous women's movement, resulting in the founding of the KWAU on February 21, 1987. The KWAU became an umbrella organization of 21 women's organizations based on the objectives of the new women's move-

9. By 1978, the number of female laborers in companies with ten or more workers reached 1.09 million. To protect foreign enterprises in free-trade zones mainly with capital from the U.S. and Japan, labor unions were prohibited, and the wage of a female laborer was set at ₩500 (at the time, the exchange rate was ₩480 to US\$1), which was 1/12 that of the wage of a female laborer in the United States [Yeongdeungpo Urban Industry Mission (Yeongdeungpo saneopseongyohoe), 1975, Annual Report sent to the donor organizations in foreign countries, 1].

ment. Since then, the KWAU was recognized as the core of the Korean women's movement.¹⁰ From that time, the women's movement, striving to change the society from the viewpoint of feminism and democracy, has objected to being subordinated to governmental or other social movements.

Despite the weakening of progressive social movements along with the collapse of existing socialist countries and the development of neoliberal globalization, the new women's movement remained successful for the next twenty years. It enjoyed a number of successes in protecting women's rights through abolishing the patriarchal family system; the movement to expel sexual violence, domestic violence, and other types of violence against women; and the enactment of a law prohibiting prostitution. Also, it saw positive results for gender mainstreaming and for consolidating women's political power. Moreover, in 1998, when President Kim Dae-jung assumed office, the Ministry of Gender Equality and the Women's Policy Manager System were newly founded. As a result, South Korea was selected as the exemplary country that had realized the Action Plan proposed by the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (Chung 2006, 26–37). Such outcomes are considered the result of consistent lobbying and political pressure exerted by the progressive women's movement focused on the KWAU (Chung 2006, 21).

It is worth noting the decisive role of financial support given by the EZE for activities of progressive women's organizations at a time when the Korean women's movement attained significant success. In June 1983, WSEF and the Korea Women's Hotline were established, and in April and December 1984, the Women's Division of the Youth Association for Democratic Movement (Mincheongnyeon yeoseongbu), and Alternative Culture were established. Significantly, the WSEF was considered "the first autonomous women's movement group that had the ideal of women's

10. Nicola Anne Jones, who observed the Korean women's movement for two years, regarded the KWAU "as the single most proactive actor struggling for greater gender equality" in Korea and insisted that "it has become widely respected as a legitimate political player by civil society groups, political society, and state officials alike" (Jones 2006, 52).

emancipation since the division of Korea” (Kang 2003, 57). Considering its activities and the role that it played until dissolution, it can be regarded as a forerunner of the KWAU (Kang 2003, 57–58). Already in the founding period of the WSEF, the EZE started to provide financial support to this organization. The support provided by EZE was important, enabling the women’s movement to build the “House for Women’s Peace” (Yeo-seong pyeonghwa-ui jip) in Jangchung-dong while it was having difficulty finding a place due to soaring rental costs in Seoul in the late 1980s.

Moreover, the EZE also played a crucial role in the birth of legitimate progressive women’s organizations in Korea. Karl Schönberg, who was in charge of the EZE projects in South Korea between 1981 and 1990, said that while the financial support provided by the EZE was based on the premise that organizations provided financial support were legitimate, the Korean women’s movement at the time was divided into grassroots organizations. Thus, he suggested that a legitimate umbrella organization might be in need. Although it was difficult for civil movement groups to form such an organization amidst the political suppression at that time, it became possible for them to do so due to support from the EZE.¹¹ The financial support from German Christian organizations protected the progressive Korean women’s organization from being branded as pro-communist by the authoritarian government. Similarly, Samuel Lee, who was mediating the EZE project at the time, said that in a meeting with key women’s movement leaders, Schönberg proposed the creation of an organization, and that the WSEF, which was created after that meeting, could receive financial assistance.¹² Following its initiation, the main members of the WSEF formed Women’s Link and received financial support from the EZE. Women’s desire to protect women’s rights and liberation was high and together with committed activists played a decisive role in establishing Women’s Link. However, support from Germany instigated the

11. Karl Schönberg (Project Manager of EZE), interview by author, Cologne, Germany, February 22, 2010.

12. Samuel Lee said that Lee Mi Kyoung, Cho Hyoung, and Kim Kyoung Ae, among others, participated in the first meeting held in 1983 (Lee, interview by author, Seoul, October 24, 2011).

activities of these organizations in terms of their legal standing.¹³

So the question is how much did the EZE actually fund, and what organizations did the EZE mainly support? It is difficult to provide accurate statistics regarding this matter.¹⁴ According to interview transcripts and records provided by Schönberg, EZE's target organizations for the provision of financial support were the WSEF, KWAU, Korea Women's Hotline, Korean Center for Women's Studies at Ewha Womans University, Korea Legal Aid Center for Family Relations, Women's Committee at the Presbyterian Church (Gidokgyo jangrohoe yeoseong wiwonhoe), and YWCA in Gwangju and Seoul. Later, the Korean Woman Workers' Association and the Local Day Care Centers' Association (Jiyeok tagaso yeonhaphoe) also received financial support from the EZE. Overall, 35–40 percent of the total funding given to South Korea was for women's projects.¹⁵ Such figures show that the weight of women's projects in the EZE's development aid policy toward South Korea was very high. Also, in the case of the KWAU, which played a pivotal role in the development of the Korean women's movement since the late 1980s, 90 percent of its annual budget in 1993 came from the EZE, showing that the role of the EZE in the development of the Korean women's movement was considerable.¹⁶

The reason for the EZE's provision of financial support to the women's movement was that South Korean society was markedly patriarchal. Due to the patriarchal family system, such as the house-headship system (*hojuje*), a woman's legal standing in the household was low. Women were not well represented, not only in the public sector but also in civil society and churches. Furthermore, Korean women workers were suffering the most from the country's rapid economic growth. In the process of export-

13. Myung Hee Han (former co-representative of KWAU), interview by author, Seoul, July 26, 2012.

14. As the EZE discards project-related documents every seven years, it was difficult to determine the overall size and amount of the funding. Karl Schönberg, interview by author, Cologne, Germany, February 22, 2010.

15. Karl Schönberg, e-mail message to author, March 21, 2010.

16. See the Special Collection of Documents by KWAU: EZE Funding Application Documents (1990-1993).

oriented industrialization in Korea, primarily young female workers were mobilized to factory labor with low wages and long hours.

According to Schönberg, managers of development assistance policies in West Germany saw some marked differences in Korean female activists compared to women in other countries. While Korean women activists were still weak and not as self-confident as women in Europe or in the Philippines, the Korean women's movement had something peculiar: while women's liberation was a key issue in Europe and Southeast Asia, Korean women at the beginning of the new women's movement were focusing more on political democracy (Cho 1994, 333–334). Thus, Schönberg's initial impression of Korean women activists was that their view on women's liberation was more conservative. After exchanging ideas and debating with Korean women activists, however, he realized that such perspectives and strategies were related more to the country being under military dictatorship.

Nonetheless, the EZE suggested that Korean women activists apply for funding. Surprisingly, the women's initial reaction was negative. Thus, their attitude was somewhat different from that of other Third World country beneficiaries. Korean women activists saw development assistance as part of advanced countries' imperialist strategies, and receiving funding from Germany was understood in such light. Several meetings were held to persuade them, and in the process, some in the EZE came to question the wisdom of giving financial support to those who did not want it.¹⁷ Accordingly, the EZE showed an earnest intention to extend its assistance period only for the women's movement in South Korea and finally succeeded in persuading women activists. Nevertheless, women activists accepted the assistance reluctantly.¹⁸

Subsequently, the EZE's development assistance towards South Korea in the second half of the 1980s was undergoing a fundamental change in terms of assistance priority. The EZE decided to stop its funding for large-

17. Karl Schönberg, interview by author, Cologne, Germany, February 22, 2010.

18. Kang Chong-Sook (Activist of German women's movement and reviewer of EZE project), interview by author, Seoul, November 3, 2010.

scale organizations (e.g., Christian-affiliated colleges or hospitals) that it had been supporting until then and to henceforth target smaller projects, particularly grassroots organizations. In this process the EZE staff felt an urgent need to have Korean women maintain legitimate women's organizations and establish a network of these organizations. Already, the Ministry for Economic Cooperation (in German, Ministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit) in Germany decided to stop its development assistance to South Korea in 1990–1991.¹⁹ The Korean women's movement continued to receive funding, however, until 2002. The KWAU received four cycles of funding every three years, which amounted to about ₩80–100 million (DM180 thousand–200 thousand) per year.²⁰ This funding was significant considering the level of prices at that time and helped women's organizations, which were experiencing more financial difficulty than other organizations, become self-reliant. In particular, in contrast to the South Korean government's projects, the funding by Germany also covered labor fees of staff, which became a strong drive for the activities of women's organizations.²¹

The Result and Meaning of Cooperation

This paper has discussed the EZE's financial support to the progressive women's movement in Korea. An important question must be raised at this point: can the discussion be extended further, by examining the transfer and appropriation of German feminism and development aid policy to South Korea's new women's movement? It is possible to answer this question through two approaches: (1) the aim of West Germany's development assistance policy to women was to infuse German principles and practical

19. Kang Chong-Sook, interview by author, Seoul, November 3, 2010; Karl Schönberg, interview by author, Cologne, Germany, February 22, 2010; In Soon Nam (former standing representative of KWAU and Congresswoman of New Politics Alliance for Democracy), interview by author, Seoul, October 21, 2011.

20. Due to West Germany's earlier intention to stop the assistance, it was originally decided to give the funding in three cycles every three years. Due to the EZE's reconsideration, however, it was extended for another three years.

21. In Soon Nam, interview by author, Seoul, October 21, 2011.

tactics into South Korea; and (2) the decision regarding the successful projects was made through communication and discussion between German and Korean feminists.

In terms of the first approach, the EZE's development assistance policy toward the Korean women's movement was not only the result of German feminist's internal discussions but was generally within the paradigm of West Germany's development assistance policy in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1972, a document published by West Germany's Government Information Agency announced 14 principles regarding development assistance policies, and the ninth principle stressed that "development assistance should not force Germany's value system onto the developing countries," and that the beneficiary country can protect itself if the donor country's professional advice endangers its unique characteristics (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung 1972, 15). Furthermore, this document recommends that West Germany's development assistance organizations accommodate the development plan or realistic necessities of the beneficiary country (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung 1972, 15). In a similar context, the document on priority of the doctrine, announced in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the EZE, requested that development assistance be offered regardless of race, sex, or belief. In addition, it was recommended that development assistance be offered so that the community of beneficiary countries would develop into self-reliant organizations, and in relation to the proposed plan, that the EZE general assembly gains an in-depth understanding of each project by holding discussions with its local partner organizations therein (EZE 1984, 4–6; Deutscher et al. 1998, 19–20).

As a consequence, the position of West Germany's development assistance was based on a critical observation of prior ODA policies. The foremost and crucial criticism is the low sustainability of development assistance—that is, once the financial support ends, the project did not continue. Second, the objective of development assistance is "development," which means industrialization and growth. Under such concepts, lifestyles not oriented toward capitalist development are under-evaluated. Third, development assistance policies consider previously colonized countries from a

neo-colonialist paradigm to which the first world adheres.

Accordingly, in cooperative work between German feminists and the development assistance agency, a gender perspective was combined with an alternative development aid policy. By then, consideration of development assistance for women was no longer taboo in the IMF or UNFPA, but policy makers were still considering it a final resource to help families become satisfied with basic survival or as a means to solve nettlesome population issues (Märke 1988, 169–170). The German feminists, however, adopted a feminist politicization of development projects. In other words, they saw that development assistance should be for and by women and should focus on strengthening feminist politics that strive to overthrow the existing patriarchal value system and structure (Märke 1988, 169–170).

Until the 1990s, development assistance assimilated women to the world economy through credit loans, business education, and economic ties. By this process, however, it was impossible for women to continue surviving their basic lives, and the subsistence economy contributed by women was not considered as production. The objective of German feminists was to link development assistance participated in by women to a new alternative development strategy for restructuring the need-value economy (Märke 1988, 156–171). For an example of such need-oriented value, an agricultural town in a poor country should search for new production and participation methods that overcome export-oriented and environment-damaging growing methods. Also, this new attempt should respect the unique culture of women in developing countries, and the contribution of women in a subsistence economy should be reevaluated. In fact, research conducted by West German female scholars in the 1980s showed that such development assistance projects for African and Latin American women had better outcomes in terms of family survival.

Nevertheless, the argument for alternative development has real limitations in a country such as South Korea where industrialization has already progressed to a considerable level and would be more fitting in other less-developed countries. When various Korean women's organizations called for financial aid, however, the EZE started to fund economic projects that focus on women's economic self-reliance as a special project

beginning in December 1992. By supporting one mill project, two side dish production projects, and one sewing company project, the EZE hoped to achieve two goals—the financial independence of women’s organizations and income generation for poor women—through the construction of a cooperative production community. The EZE also wanted to transfer professional knowledge of and methods for cooperative production projects and promote exchange between international women’s movements by hosting international workshops on projects for economic independence. The Korean women’s economic self-reliance project suggested by the EZE was similar to that of women’s projects in African countries that pursued alternative economies, but it did not attain much success in South Korea. The failure of such projects in Korea illustrates that more detailed scrutiny of a beneficiary country is necessary.

Crucially, German development assistance to the new Korean women’s movement was not approached through a beneficiary-donor relationship but through mutual discussions, emphasizing democracy in the process. First, the EZE cooperated with German feminists to discuss the direction of the Third World women’s development project and plan projects accordingly. It was proposed that problems of past development assistance based on “development and growth,” which had integrated women into the world capitalist system, should be overcome.²² German feminists then visited South Korea to hear proposals made by Korean women’s organizations and discuss and determine the projects to be funded. Furthermore, after converting their funding projects to small-scale projects, they encouraged South Korea, the beneficiary country, to form a small project committee to review and determine the projects to be funded.²³ In the process, the EZE dispatched two feminist scholars to South Korea, who conducted an assessment of the projects along with Korean women activists; the results of this assessment were then published under the title “*Wenn die Hennen krähen*” *Frauenbewegung in Korea* (“When the hens sing” Women’s Movement in Korea) in 1992. Furthermore, the contents of

22. Kang Chong-Sook, interview by author, Seoul, November 3, 2010.

23. Karl Schönberg, interview by author, Cologne, Germany, February 22, 2010.

key projects that the EZE could support were not requested by the German partner but were determined by Korean women's organizations.²⁴ In general, the key topics for support were projects for abolishing violence against women, a wide range of women's education programs to promote leadership, and support for female workers.

An important question is on how German feminist theories and practices were adopted and appropriated by the progressive Korean women's movement. German project managers argued that the EZE did not intervene in the decision-making process in the project (such as proposing content). How, then, did the progressive Korean women's movement, which depended on the funding, respond? In an interview, three activists who worked as executive officers in member organizations within the KWAU that received funding from the agency said the "EZE supported us without any intervention or condition, which was a big boost to the development of the women's movement."²⁵ In relation to project planning Kang, the feminist researcher whom Germany dispatched to South Korea, also stated that financial support by West Germany did not damage the autonomy of the Korean women's movement. Nonetheless, she carefully added that the beneficiary could feel some pressure from the donor regarding the policy content because the renewal of the project was based on the assessment of the project report sent to the EZE every year.²⁶ However, if the beneficiaries felt that they were given autonomy, transnational solidarity between German and Korean feminists would have resulted in considerably positive outcomes. Consequently, the Korean women's movement led by the KWAU appears to have appropriated German development politics and feminism in its own way.

From the view of German feminists, Korean women activists were trapped into traditional and modern women's issues and worked toward a

24. Uhn-Hee Ji (former standing representative of KWAU and former minister of Gender Equality), interview by author, Seoul, December 30, 2011.

25. Myung Hee Han, interview by author, Seoul, July 26, 2012; In Soon Nam, interview by author, Seoul, October 21, 2011; Uhn-Hee Ji, interview by author, Seoul, December 30, 2011.

26. Kang Chong-Sook, interview by author, Seoul, November 3, 2010.

unique and independent path: particularly, in South Korea, which was an emerging industrial economy, women created a new and unique movement model different from Germany. In contrast to many other beneficiary countries where women who received foreign funding enjoyed relatively high material benefits, women activists in the KWAWU have been generally poor. Their use of the funds they received was highly transparent. Also a unique feature of the Korean case was that on the one hand, democratic and progressive women's movements had a close relationship; and on the other, progressive women activists and feminist scholars from liberal or radical feminism co-existed uncomfortably.

Lastly, the two German feminists who assessed the projects supported by the EZE indicated that the progressive Korean women's movement helped German feminists to reconsider their own view on women's liberation. They pointed out that in a process of women's liberation, progressive Korean women activists showed alternatives to "the relationship between the individual and the community" by integrating family issues deeply into the women's liberation movement, which might have been different from German feminists.²⁷ They also emphasized the centrality of women's labor and material issues in women's liberation. Furthermore, German feminists said that it was touching to witness their self-sacrifice and mutual assistance, as well as the concept of moral economy in their everyday life.

Closing Remarks

The progressive Korean women's movement directly imported the classics of socialist theory on the woman's question from Germany in the mid-1980s on which it conducted intense debates on ideals and took them into

27. From the view of German feminists, Korean women activists had a more community-oriented mentality, struggled harder for the reform of the patriarchal family system and were more deeply dedicated to the survival of their families.

practice. When the new women's movement and radical feminism were at their peak in the United States, and Europe, Korean women activists passionately read the 120-year-old socialist classics. In my view, the adoption of German Marxist theory on women can be understood as the "historical asynchronicity" of modernization. After perestroika, however, the progressive Korean women's movement broke away from socialism and tended to adopt feminism from the United States and Europe more flexibly.

The progressive Korean women's movement exchanged ideas with German feminism not only in terms of theory but also through the process of a development assistance project. Amidst the suppression of authorities, the new Korean women's movement enjoyed remarkable outcomes based on Germany's financial support. This achievement proves that the cooperative strategy between Germany's development assistance agency, German feminists, and the progressive Korean women's movement led by the KWAU attained success.

On the other hand, in Germany loud criticisms were expressed on the failure of development assistance, and relations between donor and beneficiary countries were mostly one-way rather than mutual (Lachmann 2010, v-vi). The fruitful cooperation between the EZE and the progressive Korean women's movement would prove to be an exceptional case. Its success comes initially from the long-standing and deep trust between the EZE, German and South Korean feminists. Secondly, besides the dedication of South Korean women activists, South Korean economic development and the democratization of society allowed for better conditions (Jones 2006, 158; Nuschler 2004, 219-221). Lastly the development assistance policy of the German church, which had a strong orientation to support the poorest people and emphasize the autonomy of projects in beneficiary countries, played an important role by being different from development aid provided by government (Lachmann 2010, 186-187).

According to the theory of transnational history, the transfer of cultural and social factors is reciprocal rather than merely the influence of a so-called developed culture on "developing" one. The German Agency of Development Assistance recreated, in its own way, a relationship with the third-world women's movement and developed it into a successful strategy

where development politics and feminism were integrated. Meanwhile, the progressive Korean women's movement attempted to appropriate German feminist theory and practice, while observing an identity as a Third World women's movement stimulated by tasks resulting from its unique context as well as by the UN's World Conferences on Women (WSEF 2003, 64, 66).

Although the Korean women's movement started from an identity of third-world feminism, the movement saw its identity weakening due to the country's dual success of economic growth and democratic movement in the last 20 years. In this regard, it cannot be considered a general case that explains solidarity between First and Third World feminism. That Korean feminism, which was greatly influenced by the United States, however, established another foundation of theory and practice through German ideas, is certainly an intriguing case. Hopefully, transnational solidarity between Korean and German feminists will be used as a reasonable case for other countries that still depend on the influence of and financial support from the First world.

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