

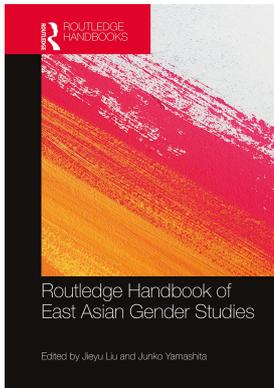
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South Korean women's movement

Between modernisation and globalisation

Hyunback Chung

Introduction

Internationally, South Korea (henceforth Korea) is regarded as a country that has undergone unique historical development. It has a strong ethnic identity with its long history as a single nation. It is a third world country in the sense that experienced colonial rule and the Korean War, but in a short period of time, it succeeded in the dual revolution, the industrial revolution and the democratic revolution, and entered the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The colonial experience, division military dictatorship based on rigid anti-communism, democratisation and rapid growth-oriented economic development have greatly defined women's lives. Modern history of Korea was turbulent, and social contradictions still exist everywhere. This is evident in the unbalanced slow progress in the status of women compared to the successful economic growth and democratic development.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, women's collective movements have appeared in Korea's turbulent history. The women's movement was heavily influenced by dynamic contemporary history, but at the same time tried to resist violent pressure of reality. Through this process, the women's movement in Korea has achieved great successes. However, there still remain difficulties such as a number of women's issues, gender wage gap and low female employment rate, which cannot be achieved without reforming the social structure.

In this paper, I will first introduce the past history and successful activities of the Korean women's movement. In particular, I will analyse the activities and strategies of the New Women's Movement which has been more active since the late 1980s. Second, I will analyse what was the driving force of the Korean women's movement. Third, I will discuss new challenges faced by the Korean women's movement in the era of globalisation. I hope that the activities and strategies of the Korean women's movement will teach many lessons to the development of women's movements in other countries.

Korean women's movement in international comparison: similarities and difference

From the turn of enlightenment at the end of nineteenth century to the liberation of 1945, the women's movement in Korea did not deviate much from the type of women's movement that took place in a non-Western state under its domination or the threat of imperialism. At the end of the nineteenth century, in the struggle for power amongst the Western powers, society of Chosun dynasty embraced the new western culture for the task of modernisation, and many Koreans wanted to build up a modern nation state through western civilisation and technique. Women were the object of enlightenment in the process of modern development, and at the same time, the subject of enlightenment during those times. In addition, for constructing an independent nation state, women, together with men, had to resist the threat of imperialism and colonialism in the first place (Chung et al. 2016: 167–168).

The liberation from Japanese Imperialists' rule in 1945 unfortunately led to the division of the nation and the ensuing Korean War. In this particular historical experience, Korean women were victims of the division and the special situation brought about by the division of system and ideological confrontation has given unique characteristics to the women's movement in Korea. Under the dictatorship and divided system, the women's movement was divided into two camps of the conservative and the progressive by ideological line due to excessive politicisation. And this cast a long shadow over women's movement in Korea. Of course, women's movements in other countries also showed a split between conservative women's movements, liberal feminism and socialist feminist movements. However, what stands out in Korean women's movement is that the confrontation between these camps is much prominent and the conflicts and antagonisms surrounding them are more intense. As a result, the conservative women's movement has been unable to escape the half-tempered government-patronised character, even though it has included some of the liberal feminism. In contrast, the progressive women's movement has been destroyed under the most severe repression until the 1970s, and a New Women's Movement has grown from the women's labour movement in the 1970s and the subsequent democratisation movement. Here, the foundation of New Women's Movement was the social conditions that succeeded in dual revolution through industrialisation and democratisation.

Another characteristic of the Korean women's movement, notable from an international perspective, is its active part and outstanding achievements since the late 1980s. May 1968 events in the West and the subsequent wave of the second feminist movement provided a big stimulus for Korean women. In 1987, when democracy was settled in Korea through democratisation movement, woman activists who devoted themselves to the democratisation movement and the student movement paid attention to the issue of women's human rights and invested in the women's movement. On the strength of dedication and effective strategy along with democratisation of society, Korea's policy for women was the most successful in achieving the action plan in the ten years since the 1995 Beijing Women's Convention (KWAU 2017: 9). The role of the Korean women's movement in this process was to be an example of the women's movement in other countries, especially the Third World Women's Movement.

Women's movement in the formative period (1945–1986)

Women and their lives in premodern Korea

Korea has long been a historically homogeneous country for 5,000 years on the edge of East Asia. Iron culture began on the Korean peninsula and North East China around the fourth-century B.C., and by the fourth and sixth centuries, division of labour to professional

skills and income disparity appeared. The proportion of men in agriculture, livestock farming and fishery increased. As the concentration of authority centred on the king and vertical power hierarchy were established, women gradually excluded from the public sphere (Women's History Research Center of Korea Women's Studies Institute, 1999: 49–51).

However, it can be inferred that status was more important than gender in the power structure at that time, and that both paternal and maternal lines influenced in the structure altogether. It can be seen that the structure in which the paternal system, the maternal system and the matrilocality influence concurrently continued through Goryeo dynasty (918–1392) to Chosun dynasty (1392–1910). During the Goryeo period, the matrilocality residence appeared to be the general form of marriage, the property was inherited equally between men and women, and women and men carried out the ancestral rituals, in turn. The union of marriage was also weak, and expressions of affection between men and women were relatively free (Korea Women's Studies Institute 2005: 64–66).

However, during the Chosun dynasty, especially after the seventeenth century, the paternal family system had settled, and many changes had occurred in the lives of women. First of all, married couples resided with the husband's parents immediately after the marriage instead of the wife's. The ancestral rituals were brought in charge of the legitimate and the eldest son, and only those were able to inherit the property. This change, which greatly changed the life of women, was caused by the Chosun dynasty embracing Chinese Neo-Confucianism and clan rules, its method of practice. The rule of clan is primogeniture succession and religious ceremony-based thereon. As the family relation is based on the moral principle of Confucianism, clan rules lie at the root of Confucian morality practice. Since then, women in Chosun had sought to secure their roles and authority in the existing ancestral family system. It was intended to receive social recognition through the way of strengthening her role as a mother-in-law or as a mother, or after being widowed, to be praised as a virtuous woman by supporting her parents and children (Korea Women's Studies Institute 2005: 67–73).

Women activities in the enlightenment period

In the late nineteenth century, the Chosun embraced the new western cultures through the enlightenment period under the struggle and pressure of the imperialist powers, and had a task of constructing a modern nation state. It can be argued that the very first collective movement of women began in this period. In order to accommodate western cultures and build a powerful modern nation, women's modern education was in urgent need, so gentry's wife in Seoul, locked in traditional norms, came forward and practised the women's education movement. Beyond the year of 1900, with the support of the national bourgeoisie, the number of private girls' schools had increased to 96. Women also participated in military campaigns to save the nation threatened by imperialist aggression, or actively in the national debt redemption movement to repay the debt owed to Japan (Chung et al. 2016: 169–176).

Women's movement in the colonial period

As Japan annexed Chosun in 1910, women underwent colonial modernisation in a way different from that of men, resulting in a great change in women's lives. Japanese imperialism used Chosun as the outpost for ruling East Asia, so the colonial rule of 36 years was severe and systematic on the other. Korean resistance to colonialism was fierce, and even in the forced use of Japanese language; Koreans were able to maintain their own culture and language exemplary than any other colonies.

When Chosun was colonised by the Japanese Empire, the figure of good wife and wise mother, which was based on the Japanese motherhood, emerged as a new family ideology, and transformed the patriarchal family system from the Japanese system which was introduced to Korea. This could be regarded as the establishment of a patriarchal family system in response to the Japanese colonial rule. Along with the spread of female education and the modernisation policy of Japanese imperialism, female employees appeared in the service sector, such as working women, office girls, bus managers, telephone operators, clerks and women workers also in the business of textile, reeling and rubber industries. In the late 1930s, women workers who suffered from poor working conditions staged a strike, and there had been women farmers' movement and the *haenyeo* (women divers) struggle in Jeju Island. Even "New Women" appeared criticising patriarchal family system and seeking free love and free marriage; yet, the women's movement focused more on the right to live campaign and the national liberation movement than on patriarchal criticism under the harsh reality of colonialism (Chung et al. 2016: 177–217).

Ideological conflicts, economic growth under military dictatorship and women's movement

With the surrender of Japan in 1945, Chosun was liberated, but the division of nation came to the crossroads of power struggles between the great powers. After three years of US military occupation, on 15 August 1948, South Korea established a separate government. But politics was in troubled waters of intense confrontations between the left and the right. However, the three years of the Korean War that broke out in 1950 was an international proxy war between the capitalist and communist camps, resulting in massive casualties and devastation. The newly established government after the Korean War was unstable, and the April Student Revolution, which resisted this incompetent and corrupt government, succeeded in 1960, but the realisation of democracy was frustrated by the military coup of 1961. Park Chung Hee, who took control of the regime, emphasised "economic development" and "national security" for political legitimacy and solidified the dictatorship system. He combined nationalism, growth-centricism and Confucian familism, effectively achieving national mobilisation and labour control for industrialisation, and rapid economic growth was achieved in only two to three decades (Seo 2007: 177–217).

Under dictatorship that lasted for more than 40 years, women emerged as subject and object of modernisation. While the conservative women's organisations that formed the mainstream of women's group activities typified by Korean National Council of Women (KNCW), founded in 1959, and Korean Women's Association, founded in 1964, actively cooperated with anti-communist policies of government, they did not have any critical voice about dictatorship. They were allotted to mobilise women in the project of national modernisation through family planning, Saemaul Movement (known as New Community Movement) or life reform movement. They helped a small portion of well-known women advance into the political arena and played a role of quasi-political group to support the governing ruling party in the elections.¹ Until the 1980s, there had been small-scale female activities concerning women's rights. Since the 1970s, there has been a movement to reform the family law around conservative women's groups or YWCA. In the 1970s, the progressive group of evangelical churchwomen actively engaged in human rights campaigns to help imprisoned political prisoners and campaigns against sex tourism of Japanese men. Moreover, by opening a lecture on Women's Studies at Ewha Women's University in 1977, the theory of Western women's studies was introduced in Korea (Chang, 1999: 312; Chung 2007: 167–168).

The democratisation movement against military dictatorship began to take place in 1972, when the long-term power of the Park Chung Hee regime began to take off. Students and workers played a key role and women's participation in the democratisation movement increased. It was the mothers who played a decisive role in the formation of family gatherings especially for the arrests, contributing most to reveal the violation of human rights for the prisoner of conscience, especially torture-obviated.²

The women worker movement, which began with protesting low wages and inhumane working conditions, was as important as the movement of students. The women worker movement organised a labour union under the harsh conditions prohibiting union activities in foreign-invested enterprises, and improved gender discrimination in industrial sites as well as raising wages and improving working conditions (Chung 1998: 44–47). The democratic union movement in the 1970s and 1980s centred around female labourer's workplaces, and played a role in reviving the labour movement, which had almost disappeared under the harsh oppression of dictatorial government since the division of a nation. Even though the struggle of female workers has not brought feminist consciousness clear, it has formed a new model of the Third World women's labour movement.³ However, in the late 1980s, the rapid decrease in the numbers of female workers weakened the women's labour movement relatively, as multinational capital began to move to Southeast Asia from the activation of union movement and increase in wages, and the centre of Korean industry shifted to heavy industry. From the 1970s to the mid-1980s, women focused more on the struggle for the survival of the common women (women workers, women farmers, poor women) and democratisation rather than against sexism (Chung et al. 2016: 273).

Differentiation and development of women's movement

In June 1987, 1 million citizens participated in the nationwide anti-government protests were able to drive out the military dictatorship and accomplished a longing political democracy. This historical watershed provided an important point of change for the direction of the women's movement. As democratisation progressed, militant and revolutionary slogans disappeared and social revolutionary movements, particularly student movement which led the democratisation movement, were markedly weakened, whereas the new civil movements were gradually invigorated. Aside from the lean-to-one-side social movements of political struggle, it began to show a wide interest in ecological crisis, seeking citizens' rights, peace movement and quality of life (Chung 2007: 174). In addition, the organisations of civic and interest groups were spurred. This social atmosphere also played an important role in the success of the women's movement. The women who had a priority overturn of the military dictatorship meanwhile started to actively form women's organisations by paying attention to the poor reality of the women. Thus, the "New Women's Movement" was born (Chung 2007: 180).

The women's movement since 1987 can be divided into three categories: (1) a conservative women's movement organised from the top-down, or a women's organisation based on professional associations; (2) a progressive women's movement represented by Korea Women's Association United (KWAWU); (3) a group of women seeking feminine identity, namely a cultural movement of young women led by small groups of feminist researchers, artists and female college students. If the first and second types function centered on umbrella organisations of women activities, the third type is based primarily on small group or coterie (Chung 2007: 174). Particularly, the second and third types were a movement to announce the new turning point of the Korean women's movement.

Conservative women's movement

Most of the women's groups, before 1987, had generally labelled the first type of organisation as "government-patronized". They had been organised by state power or a small number of women notables; therefore, they seemed to top-down organisations dependent on financial resources of government. But if we analyse those members not from the leader but below, we can find interesting results. The members of this group were a great many women from a high school graduate and the lower middle class. Those people were responsible for social welfare services that the state should bear through volunteering in the community, as service in orphanages and hospitals, helping the elderly and a child breadwinner, and recovery of flood damage.⁴ What should be aroused here is the "scale". In the case of Gyeonggi Province, members are 26% of the 151 million female population aged 30–60.⁵ The representative group is the Women's Association of New Community (Saemaul Women's Association). In comparison, the members of the KWAU, a coalition of the Progressive Women's Movement, acted very actively, but only 2,200 at that time. Most of its members were mostly college graduates and most were armed with feminist consciousness.⁶ As a result, the two umbrella organisations, KNCW and KWAU, played a major role in the successful development of the women's movement over the last three decades. Despite the criticism that it is a big organisation and too centralised, the two organisations played a role in gathering the strength of the women and raising the negotiation power to government (Jones 2003: 111 & 134–135). Members of organised women groups from the top are generally less feminist and less autonomous.⁷

Most of these organisations act under the guidance of the central unit. These women's service activities are important in our society where social welfare services are weak. The characteristics of the Third World modernisation, which is often seen guided from the top, are shown here; the mobilisation of women is a big part of women organisation.

Moreover, the first type of women group includes various professional organisations such as "Korean Nurses Association" and "Medical Women Association". These are important potentials for developing feminist awareness and practice. However, these women's occupation associations are more like interest groups, and make no progress in the differentiation of the political lines inside, resulting in a positive attitude towards governing political powers.

If the aforementioned groups stayed in the nature of a volunteer organisation with a lack of women's consciousness in the area or subunit, the central unit occasionally did various activities showing the position of liberal feminism: resumption of the movement for a revision of the family law from 1981, the establishment of a task force for women's issues, increased participation of women in politics and promise of improved treatment of working women. In particular, KNCW had adhered partly to the correction of the discrimination in employment, wage and promotion of women (KNCW 1989: 226–227).

In addition, KNCW has engaged in mass media monitoring projects and involved in consumer and environmental issues since 1984. One of the important activities in KNCW since the 1960s had been international exchanges. The council consistently participated in the UN Women's Conference and attempted to evaluate its own activities and the government policies based on their platform. Even in 1986, Sook Ja Hong was elected as the president of Global Women's Council. Despite its original conservatism, the Council's attempt to handle WID strategy and the advancement of the status of women in close proximity to liberal feminism was driven by the influence of the International Women's Congress, including the United Nations (KNCW 1989: 234–235).

Despite the feminist activities described earlier, the reason why the political characteristics of the Council including various organisations are evaluated as conservative or

government-patronised is because they operated a considerable number of programmes related to anti-communist propaganda policies. After the democratic government came into being in 1987, the activities related to the reunification of Korea have changed considerably into acknowledging the reality of North and South Korea and gradually shifting towards reconciliation for peaceful coexistence.⁸ On the whole, however, it seems incompatible to associate the first type of women's organisations with the dictatorial government, while advocating the positions and activities of liberal feminism in relation to women's issues. This discrepancy shows the reality that the liberalism of feminist inevitably be distorted in the past undemocratic state of divided Korea.

If the conservative groups such as KNCW swing between the flow of the international women's rights movement and the governmental activities in the central unit, the subunits of this organisation are still supporting social welfare projects such as the women unemployment relief, the support activities for the low-income unemployed family, and are doing enlightenment activities, such as education for female consumer information, making sound marriage and sound funeral culture.⁹ Here, we can confirm that women are actively undertaking the task of modernisation project of the country along with the feminism depending on state.

Development of the New Women's Movement

The enactment and amendment of laws on women's human right

The second type, progressive "New Women's Movement", was formed in February 1987, when 21 women's organisations formed the united front and initiated KWAU.¹⁰ In this paper, I would like to use the term "New Women's Movement" for the women's movement since the late 1980s, because the women's movement has refused to be subordinate to the government or other social movements and has claimed the gender equality society by breaking down patriarchy.¹¹ In other words, the organisations proclaimed "autonomy" and declared that they would change society from the feminist perspective. Sharing the longtime slogan of the Third World women's movement of "The social problem should be solved, the women's problem can also be solved", they took the place concentrating on the uniqueness of the women's movement. While the majority of women's movements in the West declare themselves as "apart" movement, Korea's "progressive women's movement" stands for "together and apart" since the end of the 1980s. And it promoted social reform movement in solidarity with the civil, social movement.

Despite the fact that progressive social movements have been weakening with the collapse of state socialism and the rise of neoliberalism since 1987, the "New Women's Movement" centring on KWAU took the path of successful development.¹² First, it was possible to distance itself from the progressive social movements that are undergoing ideological confusion due to the pursuit of relative autonomy of the women's movement. Second, it did well embracing the specific demands and challenges of the women and was able to react quickly to weakened social movements and changes of condition of its movement. Third, since the 1990s, the Korean society has been increasingly interested in the issue of women, favouring the environment, sex and culture rather than metadiscourses of nation, class and democratisation (Chung 2007: 180).

Regarding the activities, the important contribution made by the "New Women's Movement" is the enactment and amendment of laws on women: Equal Employment Act 1988, Infant Care Act 1991, Special Act on Sexual Violence 1993, Act on the Prevention of Domestic

Violence 1996 and Gender Discrimination Prevention and Relief Act 2000. In particular, it was a great achievement that the women's movement reflected the demands of the member organisations in the legislative campaign, mobilising professional manpower like professors, lobbying and media campaign with submission of petitions (KWAU 2001: 87–94).

The most significant achievements of the “New Women's Movement” in the last 30 years are abolition of patriarchal family system, campaign of violence against women and sexual harassment, and the enactment of Prostitution Prevention Act. In March 2004, the Prostitution Prevention Act passed the National Assembly, and the punishment for buyers of sex trafficking became possible. That way, the Korean women's movement has been playing an active role in the international society's debate on prostitution discourse, as it has been one of the few countries which asserts bans of sexual traffic and human traffic in the international community. As the patriarchal family system, which was the biggest task of the women's movement for half a century, was abolished on 2 March 2005, the shackles that regulated the Korean family were freed. Women finally eliminated the semi-feudal and patriarchal family system through the “people coalition for abolition of patriarchal family system” with participation not only from liberal women but also conservative women's movement groups.

However, improvements in these laws and institutions do not always lead to raise the status of women in the Korean society. In reality, there is a gap between law/system and reality, and gender discrimination still appears in the blind spot of the law, so the women's movement will continue to fight for the actualisation of the protection of women's rights.

The unification and peace movement

‘New Women's Movement’ actively promoted the unification movement and the peace movement. Since war and division brought increasing the violence upon women along with the spread of military culture, there was no choice but to find peace and unification to become an important task of the women's movement. With women in the church, KWAU first tried to establish a dialogue through inter-Korean exchanges. With the help of Japanese women, the inter-Korean women's conference in Pyongyang in September 1992 was the first private exchange between North and South Korea through the Demilitarised Zone (Shim and Kim 2005: 108–111).

From the inter-Korean summit in 2000 to policy for reconciliation and peace in 2007, it was possible to interact with North Korea's Democratic Women's Federation through non-governmental exchange network, named June 15 Joint Declaration Practice National Joint Committee, and North and South Korean women jointly announced a declaration or held a forum to settle the peace on the Korean peninsula (Shim and Kim 2005: 68–70 & 111–124). What is noteworthy here is that various women's organisations participated regardless of the difference on ideology, and had the opportunity to ease ideological conflicts among South Korean women's organisations. Moreover, “New Women's Movement” together with women's religious organisations actively went campaigning in the way of unification education, unification trip and helping North Korea women (Shim and Kim 2005: 75–78).

Another achievement of the “New Women's Movement” is the spread of peace movement. Already in the process of democratisation in 1987, women actively developed anti-tear gas campaigns, and since 1991, Korea Church Women United and KWAU initiated a reduction in defence spending and disarmament campaigns. However, because of the social atmosphere overflowing with anti-communism at that time, women solely raised these issues. This was just meant symbolic but did not disseminate to mass movement (Chung 2000: 194–198).

The full-fledged Women's Peace Movement was launched in March 1997 with the founding of the organisation called Women Making Peace. Through this organisation, anti-war movement against Iraq and Afghanistan, anti-troop dispatch campaign, disarmament movement, peace culture movement, peace education and peace study were actively carried out and various international coalition activities were carried out with peace organisation from overseas.¹³ The women's peace movement tried to show an alternative path to the unification movement that is male-centred and deeply nationalistic. In other words, it emphasised the importance of the process through the slogan of "unification through peace" than "peace through reunification" with focusing on peace rather than unification (Chung 2004: 305–307).

'New Women's Movement' caused a great international sensation of raising the issue of military sexual slavery.¹⁴ Since January 1992, the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan has begun a rally in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul every Wednesday, and held more than 1,360 rallies up to 30 December 2018. On the basis of these lively activities, the New Women's Movement has also been successful in filing the petition to the UN Commission on Human Rights, establishing a shelter for victims, and supporting the payment of living expenses to female victims from the Korean government. In addition, the international coalition has been strengthened, and joint projects have been widely progressed in cooperation with victims of the Philippines, Taiwan and North Korea. Even though the Korean women's movement contributed to raising the issue of infringement on women's human rights in the war internationally, the movement of the international women's movement against sexual violence also helped strengthen the position of our movement in the international community at the same time (Shim 2000: 161; Chung 2003: 163). Currently, the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan is also assisting victims of sexual violence in African conflict zones like as Rwanda and Congo.

Politics of participation

Gender mainstreaming and women's political empowerment have resulted in increased entry of women to the executive branch and legislature. Since the establishment of the modern government in 1945, the percentage of congresswomen has always remained under 5%. In order to increase the percentage of female legislator in the parliament and local councils, the women's movement has taken the "politics of participation" strategy. To this end, it has focused on improving the system that enables women to take part in political participation, and also carried out the campaign to discover, recommend, educate and support the female candidates. In particular, in August 2003, 321 women's organisations including KWAU, KNCW, Korea Women's Political Solidarity and Korean League of Women Voters organised "the Women's Solidarity for the 17th general election" and developed institutional improvement movement and voter campaign. As a result, the number of members of the National Assembly increased from 273 seats to 299 seats. The seats of proportional representation increased by 10 seats to 56 seats, and then the revised bill of the laws pertaining to politics by which 50% of the seats were allocated to woman was passed. As the number of female members increased to 39, the percentage of female members increased to 13% for the first time in Korean history, rising to 17% in 2018.¹⁵ Also, the "Network of Women on Clear Politics" in October 2003 improved transparency and democracy by involving the nomination processes, and staged a movement which worked in a positive way of selecting women candidates who are suitably qualified in gender equality consciousness, professionalism and

morality (Nam2004: 160). It not merely seeks the political participation of women but the change of existing political culture.¹⁶

In Korea, policy on women and women's movement is still centred in the capital area. This corresponds to the type of development of non-Western countries that have become overly bloated in the centre of rapid development. The issue of "localization of the women's movement" has been raised in the decentralisation and vitalisation of local autonomy. This was mainly due to the criticism that the regional participation was restricted, since women's movement had concentrated on the political struggle of providing institutional and legal system for gender equality alongside gender mainstreaming strategy.¹⁷ In response to this criticism, KWAU reinforced the local women's movement as its main activity in 2006. To this end, KWAU is establishing a regional women's movement centre to strengthen the policy and organisational power of regional women's movement, and launching promotion plans to support grassroots women organisations. In near future, the revitalisation of the local women's movement will be a prime measure to judge the popularisation of the women's movement (KWAU 2000: 2–3; KWAU 2005: 250–251).

With the introduction of the Gender-Mainstreaming strategy around the Beijing World Conference on Women in 1995, the women's movement has responded more aggressively to political empowerment.¹⁸ By demands of women, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Women's Policy Officers' System in the six ministries was set up by the Kim Dae Jung government in 1998, and then introduced gender impact assessment on policies and gender segregation statistics in the Roh Moo Hyun administration. As mentioned earlier, the Prostitution Prevention Act and the abolition of the patriarchal family system passed in the National Assembly, and the progressive women's movement has almost solved the long-standing problems in terms of sex discrimination at least in terms of law and institution. Yet, there still remains the task to bridge the gap between the law/system and the actual reality for the Korean women's movement.

Currents tasks for women's movement

As the twenty-first century begins and neoliberal globalisation accelerates, Korean women face great challenges. Since the 1997 economic crisis, the phenomenon of "feminization of poverty" has appeared from every quarter along with social polarisation and economic inequality. This leads to the instability of women's jobs and the increase of nonregular employees. By the 1980s, Korea's economic structure shifted from light industries of textiles and food to heavy chemical industries of machinery, automobiles and chemical industries and electronics industry. In addition, as tertiary industries of finance, insurance and distribution expanded, female office workers increased significantly. Furthermore, as the entertainment sector gets abnormally huge, many women have been working in these sectors. Since the 1990s, rapid informationisation on the global level has also accelerated the transition to a service economy, which has attracted the female labour force. As a result, since 1998, the economic activity rate amongst women has risen again, but the structure of the female labour has been reorganised, so that the women have gone to nonregular jobs such as temporary, part-time service and homework. However, an increase in quantity does not necessarily lead to an improvement in the quality of employment. Because the temporary female labour force and the instability of employment have become more severe. The poor public welfare systems have also increased reproduction costs of health and childcare that women have to pay.

Now, the key task of the "New Women's Movement" is to achieve equal labour rights and economic empowerment for women. The first decade of New Women's Movement focused

on supporting women labour struggles, informing women's labour issues and establishing just labour policies for women. In the 2000s, however, it has been concentrated on widening women's participation in the labour market, providing good quality of jobs, securing labour rights and having economic independence. However, old-established issues on prohibition and prevention of sexual harassment, paid maternity leave, parental leave and protection of nonregular workers are still pivotal (KWAU 2017: 4).

The problem of low fertility and ageing is also emerging as a new challenge for the women's movement. Korea's fertility rate in 2018 is 0.9, the lowest in the world. In order to cope with such a challenge, structural reform of the whole society became inevitable as well as the problem of women (KWAU 2006: 99–119). Therefore, the women's movement is demanding a comprehensive social policy in order to resolve social polarisation and overcome the feminisation of poverty. And the women's movement is at the same time looking for a “new picture” as well as “intervention” for these tasks.¹⁹ The women's movement is trying not only to achieve gender equality but also to lead the alternative economy or alternative society through solidarity with the civil society movement (Chung 2003: 107–108).

Identity politics and young feminist

The third type of Korean women's movement is various small groups or cultural movements seeking women's identity. One of the initiatives of this movement was the “Another Culture” which was founded in 1984 as another women's movement organised by a group of intellectuals who were influenced by the second wave of feminist movement and women's studies while they were studying in the West since the 1970s. Feminists in the cultural sector and scholars in universities mainly led this movement, which aimed to overcome the patriarchy, uniformity and authoritarian culture of Korean society through the small group movement and publication culture movement, and to create an alternative feminist culture. While spreading discourse of feminism, it contributed to the fostering of young feminists (Another Culture 1984). In the Third World Women's Movement, “identity politics” is not a big part. The agenda of social reform is still an important concern of feminism. However, in the case of Korea, discussions about “politics of difference”, which emphasise “politics of sexual identity” or “difference” within feminism, are actively being influenced by the wide female intellectuals, the many students studying abroad and feminism studies of developed countries. Especially, the fact that the college entrance rate of women was high and many lectures on women's studies were opened in many universities contributed to spreading the identity politics.²⁰ Likewise, the increase of numbers of women researchers was a stimulus, and cultural events and publications, which were recently activated through cultural guerrillas and “independent artists” played an important role in promoting feminism. The exemplary are Project of Culture and Arts for Women, Korean Women Institute's *Women and Society*, *Feminist Journal If* and the Institute for Women's Culture Theory and the other.

Although women's studies researchers, cultural activists or young feminists are not many in number, but the media coverage of them has a massive ripple effect that cannot be ignored. Here, the “softening” of mass media, such as the expansion of the media section and the composition of various lifestyle sections in 1990, made an important contribution. At the same time, postmodern feminism, radical democracy and independent cultural movements have led to criticism of the institutionalisation of the women's movement, and the various voices surrounding women's issues have been trying to acquire citizenship (Kang 2004: 407–429). In this process, the “New Women's Movement” is also spurring efforts to spread the feminist

movement through organising various feminist small groups and through the cyber world (KWAU 2017: 15).

Young feminists have emerged since the mid-1990s and are prominent in the 2000s. They were sometimes extreme and radical, but they also received a sociable welcome by throwing a fresh shock (Kwon Kim et al. 2017: 15–19). From PC communication to Internet age, webzine, Internet women's community activity and feminist Internet media have developed. In 2000, "sister community" has reached 520,000 members (Kwon Kim et al. 2017: 130). Since 2000, however, large-scale of capital inflows have led women to becoming content on the website or consumers. Women-only sites exclusively led by women have fallen due to lack of capital, and instead companies have searched for outlets through adult Internet broadcasting and illegal pornography circulation. Through this, pornography and revenge porn began to sweep online.

However, since 2007, Internet ethics have started to change dramatically, and some communities have emerged where women are more than men. The Internet feminist organisation lacked organisational power or had hard time of communicating with the existing women's movement, but rather anonymity and culture of playing are characteristics. In Korea, however, since Twitter began around the year 2006, women can also have media that enable participation and create collective intelligence. Now, Twitter is at the centre of the feminist issue, and through it women have found a weak link that can easily crack a solid patriarchy. Women are able to do collective actions that can exert influence on issues through SNS (Kwon Kim et al. 2017: 71&87).

The "Me Too" movement, which began in 2017 when it uncovered the sexual misconduct of the Hollywood influential figure Harvey Weinstein in the United States, led to an unprecedented size and intensity in Korea. The public prosecutor disclosed her experience of sexual harassment by a high-level former prosecutor on 29 January 2018, which spread quickly to denounce for his sexual harassment and to file a lawsuit against Hee-Jeong Ahn, former provincial governor and prominent Democratic Party's presidential candidate for next election. With the exposure of two prominent and critically acclaimed public figures in the area of theatre and literature, the Me Too movement led the entire Korean society into shock and controversy. More than 340 women's organisations, labour unions and NGOs have launched "Citizen's Action with Me too movement", and it has broadly campaigned "With you".

It is the HyeHwa Station protest on 19 May 2018 that the Me Too movement reached its peak. In Korea, where SNS is widely used, the damage caused by a hidden camera or revenge porno is serious, and an industry that commercialised these illegal photographs and made huge profits was spreading rapidly. There was a big protest criticising illegal shooting and lop-sided investigation. 300,000 women participated in the protests held a total of five times (estimated by the organisers). This protest of 300,000 girls and young women on the streets can be regarded as the biggest event in the history of Korea, which demonstrates the first huge achievement of the women's movement, where SNS played a major role. Especially, Young Feminist appeared as a new subject of its movement.

The government has set up a national policy agenda for the eradication of sexual harassment and sexual violence. It has organised a 12-ministerial committee for the eradication of sexual harassment, and set up an executive body with nine ministries, and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family has taken responsibility to coordinate. The government is actively seeking ways to prevent sexually abused and sexual harassment through strict punishment and to strengthen protection measures and support for victims including the secondary damage. The collective action of young women has remained a major historical event in the history of Korean women's movement since it informed the seriousness of violence against women and led the government's active response.

New challenges and tasks

Following the change of government to democratic government on 10 May 2017, the expectation for the new government's women-friendly policies is great, but the reality of the women's movement is not so smooth. According to the GGI (gender gap index) report by the World Economic Forum in 2016, Korea ranked 116th amongst the 144 surveyed countries.²¹ This is due to the high gender wage gap and low female representation. In the general election in 2016, 17% of the women were elected as members of the National Assembly, and only 2.7% of women were executives in large corporations. According to statistics in 2016, women earned 64% of male wages, making the gender wage gap the largest amongst OECD countries.

As the employment instability and the burden of housing expenses of the young generation increase, the life of single household of youth in growth becomes weary than other times. The proportion of traditional modern nuclear family (father-mother-children) has fallen to less than half of the whole family. At the same time, due to the non-family-friendly social environment, parenting and family care remain burdensome for individuals, and these burdens are mainly transferred to women. Patriarchal culture continues to create a myth of beauty, and consumer capitalism is expanding commercial profits to the body of women. The beauty industry, such as diet, makeup and cosmetic surgery, is highly developing, and Korean women must cope with psychological, economic and physical burdens of appearance management. Appearance management for Korean women is a prerequisite for intense job competition (DongA Ilbo, 2004. 4. 29; Korea Women's Studies Institute 2005: 135–140). In the midst of a severe job hunting and economic polarisation, desperate young men have been exploiting the abuse of women through online. This has spread off-line and violences targeting women have increased (Wi 2016: 111–133). The extreme misogyny by young men is a special phenomenon in Korea. We right now need to analyse this and look for some solutions.

Since the late 1990s, many laws and systems have been created for the realisation of gender equality in Korean society. Despite these developments, why is the reality of women still poor? The distinction between law/system and reality is still rooted in patriarchal awareness and culture of Korean society. So what vision and strategy should the Korean women's movement have? In order to realise a gender equality society, a more change in awareness must be continuously pursued. To do this, comprehensive gender equality education and democratic civic education should be concurrently carried out. The feminist give pressure for effective gender equality education in the area of public education and in many fields of civic education.

In addition, the women's movement demands more fundamental structural reforms based on social consensus. Specifically, it calls for economic democratisation and the realisation of democracy in everyday life. In this regard, the women's movement has been advancing the discourse of "caring democracy" one step further from emphasising the publicity enhancement of the caring service (KWAU 2017: 497–498). Specifically, it is argued that women should legitimately enjoy the social rights they should receive as citizens: this implies that the state should be responsible for caring services and these should be implemented by both women and men. This can be linked to a holistic approach through the two tracks of gender equality and the alternative economic democracy.

Young feminists who lead feminist issues with collective action through online and demonstrations along with the Me Too movement could exercise political influence, which was bringing out large social reforms. If they can cooperate with other feminists across generations, the gender equality society desired by the women's movement will be realised sooner.

Notes

- 1 As an umbrella organization representing these women, Korean National Council of Women (KNCW) can be cited. According to the survey on Gyeonggi Province and Daejeon City, they had one-quarter of adult women as members (Chung 2006: 14, 22, 38).
- 2 The prisoner of conscience was used as a term referring to those who were arrested for political, ideological freedom and democratization, or for protesting the harsh conditions of workers.
- 3 This is because Korea is a good example of the women worker's movement in the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and India since the 1980s (Chung 1998, 43–60, 2007, 171–172).
- 4 See Activities Assessment 1999 of KNCW.
- 5 Of course, this is not an exception for Gyeonggi Province alone. In the case of Daejeon, 18.8% of the female population aged 18 or older participated in this group (Huh 1997: 38; Chung et al. 1998).
- 6 Over the past two decades, KWAU has produced a first female Prime Minister, four ministers and 17 lawmakers from its members, which can be seen as influential (KWAU 2017: 407–408).
- 7 Women groups that have been organized from above are showing signs of change. Still, the psychological and practical dependence on the work of the central unit or the psychological and practical dependence on the tube is still present, but there is also a sign of change in the consciousness of the participating women. In their survey of women's consciousness, 80.8% of the respondents said that they had experience of unfair treatment because they were women. 65.1% of women did not accept the legitimacy of separating public/private sectors. However, the major problem is that the majority of women feel discrimination as skin, but they are relatively less active about concrete group actions to improve it (Chung et al. 1998, 115–119 and 138–144).
- 8 However, at the lower level, for example, the rigid anti-communism ideology still appears in the mid-1990s at the KNCW. It is in 2000 that it escapes the rigidity of its anti-communist allegations (KNCW, *Women*, Oct. 1985, 10; June 1985; April 1993, 35; July 1989, 24–32 and September, 41; August 1991, 38).
- 9 This is without a doubt revealed, for example, in the magazine *Women* (December 1999, 35–41).
- 10 The use of the term “progressive” here can be controversial in many ways. So what criteria should be used to distinguish between conservativeness and progress. Here, the term “progress” means not seeking to maintain the status quo, but seeking an alternative system in terms of politics, economy and culture, and is not limited to “progress” in sexuality mentioned in feminism.
- 11 In the concept definition of women's movement, Kang Namsik set as a core criterion a feminist perspective rather than a movement in which women participate. From this standpoint, it may be controversial whether women's activities before the late 1980s can be defined as ‘women's movements’. However, in this chapter, women's activities prior to the New Women's Movement were considered as women's movement. This is because even though there were strong in the top-down organization, but there were various efforts to improve the status of women within them (Kang 2004: 407).
- 12 The KWAU was composed of 6 branches and 27 member organizations. In terms of size, a total of 102 women's groups are active and the number of full-time workers is estimated to be 300–350 to cover the entire branch of the organization. Over the past few years, the group has been trying to find a way to localize by overcoming the limitations of the Korean social movement and the civil movement, that is, excessive centralism (Nam 1999: 9).
- 13 ‘Conflict resolution and tolerance education’, which was conducted by the Women Making Peace and National Assembly for Autonomy, Peace, Unification, was the first new attempt in Korea. Recently, it is growing as an educational programme for conflict resolution of the sustainable development committee by government, which can be regarded as meaningful fruits of the women's movement (Chung et al. 2002: 101). Regarding the international solidarity of women's peace groups, see Shim and Kim 2005: 202–263.
- 14 In the 1994 Rwandan Civil War and the Bosnian War of 1995, Serb raids against Muslim women took place. The impact of this incident heightened international interest in the Japanese military slavery movement.
- 15 Through this, the proportion of women's legislators was ranked 101 in the 16th National Assembly, but now it is the 62th in the world statistics (Nam 2004: 160).
- 16 For example, the women's movement actively participated in the amendment of the political party law and the election law to liquidate corruption politics (KWAU 2001: 177–179; Nam 2004: 164).
- 17 In particular, Seung-woo Heo claims that the local grassroots women's organization has been preoccupied by the coalition of the dictatorship-conservative women's movement. Through this

process, the regional women's movement was still within the influence of WID (Women In Development Strategy), whereas the movement at the centre has overturned it. This created the gap to enter the GEM (gender mainstreaming) stage (Heo 2006: 114–115).

- 18 Gender mainstreaming is “to consider equality between men and women in all sectors of government and social organizations, as well as in specifically restricted areas of women”. While the past development strategy of women was towing women into the modernization projects, gender mainstreaming is a policy characteristic for realizing equality between men and women in cooperation with either national policies, or the nation and women's organizations (Heo 2006: 111).
- 19 KWAU suggests ‘a welfare society that guarantees the human life of the smallest, an environmentally friendly eco-society that enables coexistence between nature and human beings, a gender equality society in which both men and women are guaranteed political, social and economic rights, and a participatory democracy that guarantees the rights and participation of all citizens’ (Chee 2000: 10–15).
- 20 According to a joint survey by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family and the National Statistical Office (NSO), university entrance rate of women is 74.6% in 2015, which is higher than that of men (67.6%), but employment rate is significantly lower (55.7%) than that of men (75.7%).
- 21 However, Korea is ranked 10th amongst 188 countries in the Gender Inequality Index released by UNDP. This is because Korea showed good performance in maternal mortality rate, juvenile fertility rate and population with the educated above the average. Through this, we can estimate the contradictory situation of Korean women.

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