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**Non-Western Marxist Traditions in Northeast Asia**

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### Abstract

Of the many origins and traditions of Marxism around the world, some are distinctly non-Western. For example, Maoism, certain schools of Japanese Marxism, and Stalinism have evolved differently from Western anti-neoliberalism. Among them, Japanese Marxists developed various original forms of Marxism, and the most important traditions were Koza-ha and Ronoha schools that originated from the pre-war period. This paper first discusses its influence on South Korean two debates on Korean capitalism, and then, discusses Chinese Marxism which has three special traditions. Some of them resonated with other forms of Asian Marxism. This resonance may have been formed by the essentially similar socio-political situation created by the backwardness of their countries.

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## Non-Western Marxist Traditions in Northeast Asia

Hiroshi ONISHI

### Summary

Of the many origins and traditions of Marxism around the world, some are distinctly non-Western. For example, Maoism, certain schools of Japanese Marxism, and Stalinism<sup>1</sup> have evolved differently from Western anti-neoliberalism. Among them, Japanese Marxists developed various original forms of Marxism, and the most important traditions were Koza-ha and Ronoha schools that originated from the pre-war period. This paper first discusses its influence on South Korean two debates on Korean capitalism, and then, discusses Chinese Marxism which has three special traditions. Some of them resonated with other forms of Asian Marxism. This resonance may have been formed by the essentially similar socio-political situation created by the backwardness of their countries.

### Key Words

Korean Capitalism debates, Social Formation debates, Koza-ha school, Maoism, Two-stage Revolution Theory

Of the many origins and traditions of Marxism around the world, some are distinctly non-Western. For example, Maoism, certain schools of Japanese Marxism, and Stalinism<sup>2</sup> have evolved differently from Western anti-neoliberalism. Although Stalinism is not considered Asian Marxism, it differs from the Western tradition, especially in highly advanced capitalist countries. To this effect, it can be referred to as a class of non-Western Marxism, and at least in China, it coexists with Maoism and Western-oriented leftism. Japanese Marxists developed various original forms of Marxism, some of which resonated with other forms of Asian Marxism. This resonance may have been formed by the essentially similar socio-political situation created by the backwardness of their countries. In this paper, I will discuss the originalities of and external influences on Asian Marxism, especially in Northeast Asia.

### I. South Korean Marxism and Leftism after the Democratization Movement

Because Marxists around the world have independent interests in global reformation, their selection of theoretical approaches are also based on practical usefulness. For example, Vietnamese Marxists needed a theory that had practical implications for the anti-imperialist struggle during the war, whereas Indian Marxists needed one to overcome the religious conflicts between Muslims and Hindus. This was a very natural evolution, and explains the changes in the theoretical landscape of South Korean leftism.

For many years, South Korea functioned under a dictatorial rule, where before 1987, Marxist documents were prohibited from being published under the National Security Act. Because they were prohibited, many young students were eager to read these Marxist documents and reference them as a theoretical base for their political movements. However, there was a wide array of Marxist or leftist documents to choose from. At first, the South Korean leftists selected FrankóAminø

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<sup>1</sup> Although Stalin declared his standpoint as MarxismóLeninism, Japanese Marxist orthodoxy identified Leninism as different from Stalinism. One of the reasons for this identification is Leninø desire to include non-state economic sectors under the *new economic policy* after *wartime communism*.

<sup>2</sup> Although Stalin declared his standpoint as MarxismóLeninism, Japanese Marxist orthodoxy identified Leninism as different from Stalinism. One of the reasons for this identification is Leninø desire to include non-state economic sectors under the *new economic policy* after *wartime communism*.

dependency theory in their fight against the world capitalist system. At the time, they asserted that capitalism was incorporated in the periphery of underdeveloped states in South Korea, a situation similar to Latin American countries, and therefore, its government exerted authoritarian rule over the people. Using this framework, they explained the reality of the high dependency on US imperialism and formulated the *peripheral capitalism theory*. However, another group strongly inclined toward traditional Marxism claimed that a dependency theory of this nature could not express the development of Korean capitalism and analyze the class relation within South Korea. They believed that state monopoly capitalism prevailed in South Korea and that capitalism had expanded beyond the expectations of the peripheral capitalism theory. This new standpoint gave birth to a new theory, the *state monopoly capitalism theory*. These two theories sparked much controversy, called the *Korean capitalism debates*. However, just before the controversy, a Japanese professor Kajimura, Hideki published a book (Kajimura, 1977) in Japan that deeply analyzed Korean capitalism and according to Yun (2000), at least one theoretician of the peripheral capitalism theory copied the theory directly from the book. This was also considered a form of Asian theoretical interaction. However, after democratization by President No Tae-woo in 1987, the situation changed. Prior to this democratization, Korean leftists could not openly reference Marxist or socialist documents. This led to the framing of a dependency theory by former theoreticians such as Chong Songjin which is different from Marxist orthodoxy. However, after democratization, the abovementioned groups reviewed their own theories, particularly their analyses of class relations in South Korea, and introduced a new perspective within the traditional theories of peripheral capitalism and state monopoly capitalism that defined South Korea as a colonial semi-feudalist (capitalist) and neocolonial state monopoly capitalist economy. The former was named the national liberation (NL) group and the latter the people's democracy (PD) group, who fervently fought against each other caused the next big controversy in the late 1980s, the *social formation debates*.

These two theories are of particular interest from the viewpoint of Asian theoretical interactions. The former focuses on national liberation and is regarded to be a struggle with North Korea, giving national reunification priority. This school of thought suggested that North Korea was already liberated from the imperialists and therefore, its extension to the South would liberate the entire peninsula. Here, it is noteworthy that the framework is similar to Mao Zedong's revolutionary base theory, which highlighted the building of regional bases and expanding them to liberate the whole country. Kim Il-sung's intention at the Korean War was similar to that of Zedong's theory in that he wanted to liberate South Korean peasants from semi-feudalism and gain their support in the North Korean army; however, his intention was not realized.

The latter's theory at the social formation debates was strongly influenced by external Marxist ideologies. Although it also conceded that postwar US policy placed South Korea in a neocolonial position, it made a strong point regarding the already developed monopoly capital. Thus, their theory can be regarded as a revolutionary strategy against both imperialist and monopolistic capitalism<sup>3</sup> which is identical to the Japanese *Koza-ha* theory after the war<sup>4</sup>.

The Japanese *Koza-ha* theory was established circa 1930 and became the Japanese Marxist orthodoxy in analyzing Japan's social structure before World War II. It maintained that the prewar Japanese society was based on absolutism, which represented two social classes—monopoly capital and semi-feudal landowners—and therefore, called for an anti-semi-feudalist and anti-monopoly

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<sup>3</sup> It was common knowledge that the former was regarded as anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist revolution (see Yun 2000, p.19).

<sup>4</sup> See Lee (2005) and Yun (2000). Paper one, *Controversy on Formation of Society*, provides an overview but does not mention the influences of Maoism and the *Koza-ha* theory. However, this does not mean there were no influences from China and Japan, even though foreign influences were not welcome in Korea, both socially and politically. Even if there were influences, it is important to know that similar conditions create similar ideologies, which is the Marxian way of understanding ideologies. Simply put, although Asian Marxism had similar characteristics, its influences were not.

revolution. After the fundamental social change that occurred in 1945, the school identified two new ruling classes in Japan, monopoly capitalism and US imperialism, and thus, called for an anti-imperialist and anti-monopolistic revolution, which is considered the postwar *Koza-ha* theory. Given that the social structure of Japan and South Korea were similar, the characteristics of the *Koza-ha* theory and PD theory in South Korea were identical. In summary, similar materialistic bases produce similar theories. Both in pre- and postwar Japan, the Japanese Communist Party has been guided by the *Koza-ha* theory, and thus, it is called the Marxist orthodoxy in Japan.

Crucial to understanding the influence of the Japanese *Koza-ha* theory and the dramatically contrasting *Rono-ha* theory<sup>5</sup> on this controversy is Shin Giwook's (2002) explanation of the social formation debate:

At the social formation debates, The intellectual discourse reminiscent of the *Koza-ha-Rono-ha* debates among Japanese Marxists in the 1920s and 1930s and the 1930s debates on Chinese capitalism. Like their counterparts in Japan and China, Korean Marxists and dissident intellectuals believed a proper specification of the nature of Korean economic and political development was necessary to guide their movements ( pp.360-361).

Although Korea does not admit to being influenced by the outside world, this explanation is exceptionally honest. It also mentions that the accurate theorization of society is needed for a progressive movement<sup>6</sup> and discusses the influences of the Chinese Marxist controversy. All of these points are of much importance to this paper.

In relation to these events, I narrate the personal experiences of two of my South Korean friends, who studied the *Koza-ha* theory in the 1980s at Keio University, the center of the *Koza-ha* faction, and participated in the anti-dictatorship movement in South Korea in the late 1980s. They believed that with *Koza-ha*, South Korea would be able to overthrow the dictatorship of monopoly capitalism and US imperialism; in fact, led by this belief, the people of South Korea achieved democracy. Fortunately, it was before the collapse of the Eastern Europe and Soviet Union.

However, the strengthened South Korean leftists were soon affected by the collapse of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and thus, needed to build or seek a defensive theory. This held true for Marxists and leftists around the world. In 1992, I published a book in Japan titled '*Socialism as Pre-capitalism and Socialism as Post-capitalism*', which was somewhat a bestseller in the field of Marxism. We must understand that the Korean people are divided into two countries, of which one is called a 'socialist' country. Such socialist problems are of great importance to South Korean Marxists and leftists. One of South Korean friends quoted in the book requested that I publish my book in South Korea. He translated the entire book into the Korean language and in 1999, my book was published there<sup>7</sup>.

However, over the years, the practical interests of South Korea have changed. The primary issue is no longer the anti-dictatorship movement, and the US military presence has been reduced. The more recent social problems are, for example, the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the end of the 'Miracle on the Han River.' Therefore, their interests have shifted to the crisis, declining profit rates and share of labor income, and surplus value. All of these issues have been addressed by Marxist mathematicians, such as Rieu (2007, 2008), Kang and Rieu (2009), and Rieu, Lee, and Ahn (2014).

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<sup>5</sup> In the prewar period, Japanese Marxists created another school called Rono-ha, which became the basic framework for Japanese socialism. It believed that the Japanese society was ruled by monopoly capitalism, and therefore, sought a socialist revolution.

<sup>6</sup> In other words, a revolutionary theory should have its own deep understanding of the concerned objective society. This characteristic is clearly expressed by Benjamin Schwartz (1954) in the context of the Chinese revolution: 'Theory here does not mean simply a well-thought out political strategy. It means nothing more nor less than a thorough sociological analysis of the society in which the revolution is to take place' (p.144). Shin (2002) pointed out a similar necessity with respect to revolution theories.

<sup>7</sup> The book was also translated and published in Russia in 1994 and China in 2002.

In addition, the Okishio theorem has also been discussed by many researchers<sup>8</sup> not only in the context of its Japanese or Asian origin but also in relation to the law of declining profit rates.

As an open economy, South Korea had strong interests in its international economic relations with the United States and the others as well as in understanding export-oriented growth strategies<sup>9</sup>. Its mainstream economists believed that exports were the only possible strategy to foster growth in South Korea; however, leftist or Marxist economists were against it and called for a wage-oriented growth strategy.

This struggle is closely related to that between South Korea's strong export industries and other weak ones. In reality, South Korea's export industries have achieved significant success owing to the export-oriented growth strategy, whereas its weak industries, such as agriculture and fishing, are deteriorating. In other words, the success of export industries has been realized by victimizing the weak ones. The choice of growth strategy has been widely discussed in academia that focuses on the struggle between export industries and the others.

Thus, many South Korean leftist scholars are now engaging in research on growth patterns of the Korean economy based on French regulation theory and US SSA theory<sup>10</sup>. This competitive situation regarding the choice of strategy is the same in Japan, and encourages many academic exchanges between Japan and South Korea in this field.

Therefore, even though I am a Marxist economist, I appreciate their theoretical advantage in comparing these growth patterns. In my understanding, this advantage emanates from the minor difference between monopoly capitalism and export industries. Undoubtedly, a majority of export industries are occupied by monopoly capitalism, and to this effect, the Marxist framework is appropriate and effective. However, understanding the difference between monopoly capitalism and export industries is also crucial because of occasional, but severe, capitalist conflicts. For example, certain IT and commercial companies have formed a new pressure group in Japan, the Japan Association of New Economy, that expresses interests contrary to the old economy, which is characterized by export industries—this difference is key.

This difference between the two groups has become very large in the exchange rate policy under the globalized economy. Regarding the floating system of exchange rates, after the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, fluctuations in exchange rates greatly affected national economies not only in the real amount of international trade but also nominal change and internal inflations. For example, Japan's present quantitative easing policy, led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, caused a 20 percent rise in the prices of import goods by devaluing the yen in 2013. Therefore, Japanese consumers are being forced to pay a tax on behalf of foreign countries. However, the question is "Why is the prime minister against consumer interest?" The answer lies in export industries substantially profiting from this currency devaluation. For export industries, when a currency value falls by 20 percent, the same amount of exports and dollar inflow as before earns them a 20 percent increase in sale, which means, for example, a 100 percent rise in profits. In fact, by principle of *Abenomics*, Toyota has achieved a 100 percent rise in profits, whereas its actual increase in exports is marginal<sup>11</sup>.

Nevertheless, there are several more important differences, not between export industries and consumers, but between export and import industries, such as retail, fishing, and agriculture, whose major costs comprise the importing of goods. A part of monopoly capitalism is being damaged by the present policy; that is, states no longer represent the interests of all monopoly capitalists. Thus, to start a revolution and divide the enemy, it is crucial to know such differences. In this sense, the new trend in South Korean studies on growth patterns should be appreciated.

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<sup>8</sup> A prominent representative researcher in the field is Rieu, Dongmin.

<sup>9</sup> However, one of the growth strategies widely criticized by South Korean leftists was a finance-led one. For example, see Kim (2010).

<sup>10</sup> This new trend is critically examined in Lee (2005).

<sup>11</sup> Onishi (2014) criticizes *Abenomics* from this viewpoint.

## II. Asian Two-Stage Revolution Theories to Divide the Enemy

To understand individual societies, it is important to know who the ruler is and who is being ruled—this was the fundamental viewpoint of Chairman Mao. In the first two lines of the first volume of his seven volumes of collected works, he stated “Who is the enemy and who is the friend is the fundamental problem of the revolutions.” With this thought, he divided landowners into big and small landowners, capitalists into big and small ones, and the national party into the patriot wing and betrayers<sup>12</sup>. In addition to the abovementioned revolutionary theory, this class theory was a strategy to maximize the friends and minimize the enemies, and in fact, led to the victory of the communist party in China; this Chinese strategy was even declared in Mao’s (1940) book, titled *On New Democracy*. This draft was written soon after the nationalist and the communist parties established their second alliance, which was symbolic of the victory against Japan’s invasion of China and the maintenance and expansion of communist power after the victory.

Chairman Mao identified two basic enemies, big landowners and Japanese imperialism, and stated that the coming revolution should be an anti-feudalist and anti-imperialist one. Mao said that that revolution should be led by the proletariat, but would not be a socialist revolution. The socialist revolution would and should take place in the far future.

This is the well-known two-stage revolution theory formulated by Lenin. Lenin supported the anti-absolutist revolution in the spring of 1917, and then joined the socialist revolution in late 1917. Nevertheless, the point remains that there was backwardness in the social structure, and the two-stage revolution strategy was applied particularly to backward countries including Japan.

On the other hand, the Japanese communists established their own two-stage strategy of revolution that was based on the *Koza-ha* theory or the then Japanese Marxist orthodoxy<sup>13</sup>. This theoretical determination is elucidated in the following words by Noro Eitaro (1935), a prominent theoretician on the *Koza-ha* faction and a top leader in the Japanese Communist Party:

“When I read *Thesis on Japan* (that is, *1927 Thesis*) by the executive committee of the Comintern, I know that my analysis is consistent with that of the Comintern in general and has no serious mistakes (to cause strategic conflicts) in the details” (p.4)

Here, the *Thesis on Japan* written by Comintern was a Japanese Communist Party program. This is because at the time, the Party was merely a branch of Comintern and it was mandated that the programs of each country’s communist party be written by Comintern. At this point, it is important that we know that the two-stage revolution strategy was established under the influence of Russia’s experience of an actual two-stage revolution. Also noteworthy is that this thesis was written by reading Japanese Marxists’ theoretical achievements, but the most important achievement was the *History of the Development of Japanese Capitalism*, written by Noro just before the thesis. After writing the book, from 1932 to 1933, he edited seven volumes of his book *Symposium on the History of the Development of the Japanese Capitalism* with the help of his fellow theoreticians. The book was published by Iwanami Shoten, the most authoritative publisher in Japan. This is regarded as one of the biggest achievements of the *Koza-ha* faction in the prewar period, which also influenced the content of the Japanese Communist Party’s next program, written in 1932 by Comintern. It was called the *1932 Thesis* and its content was also based on the two-stage revolution theory<sup>14</sup>. The *1932*

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<sup>12</sup> However, during the Cultural Revolution, he turned to divide the people into “capitalist roaders” and cultural revolutionists.

<sup>13</sup> The first section in Sugiyama (2002) is a brief introduction to the *Koza-ha* faction’s theoretical framework, printed in the English language.

<sup>14</sup> Between the two works, a group in Comintern and Japanese Communist Party attempted to set a different

*Thesis* placed much importance on the anti-imperialist struggle and described the nature of the emperor system. However, these new points were also explained by analyses conducted by the Japanese domestic system, ruled by the two ruling classes mentioned above.

The most important characteristic of Japan's two-stage theory of revolution was its class analysis: which classes were ruling and which classes were ruled. In this case, the Japanese society was defined by the absolutism of two ruling classes, monopoly capitalists and semi-feudal landowners. Here, even if the existence of monopoly capitalists is proof that capitalism was well-developed, that of semi-feudal landowners evidenced backwardness. On the other hand, China's backwardness was demonstrated by the rule of not only feudalists but also imperialists. Both countries were plagued by such backwardness and ruled by the two ruling classes. Thus, Marxism in both China and Japan has similar characteristics, which is connected to Nosaka Sanzo's stay in Yan'an during 1940-1946. Nosaka succeeded Noro after his demise in 1932 and became the then Japanese representative of Comintern. After his return to Japan in 1946, he became one of the top leaders of the Japanese Communist Party.

Nosaka was a key person in international interactions. He graduated from Keio University and was junior to Noro. Nosaka was strongly influenced by the *Koza-ha* theory<sup>15</sup>. The strength of Nosaka's personal connection with Mao remains unclear. However, when Nosaka moved to Yan'an from Moscow in 1940, he spent much of his time with Zhou Enlai during his journey<sup>16</sup>, and at the time, Zhou, Enlai was a strong supporter of Mao<sup>17</sup>. Araki (1993) provides two additional facts that show Mao's theoretical influence on Nosaka. First is that Nosaka's six years in Yan'an coincided with the period when Mao strongly took to theoretical leadership and just short of Mao's campaign of the two-stage revolution theory. Second, soon after Nosaka's return to Japan in 1946, Mao's *On New Democracy* was listed as an academic book for communist party members in Japan<sup>18</sup>.

However, leave no room for misinterpretation of my point that the same characteristics in China and Japan have produced the same type of revolutionary theory. It does not necessarily indicate that there was a clear influence. Even if there was no influence, similar social characteristics brought about similar revolution theories, and as mentioned, these two countries had similar social characteristics of backwardness.

To further understand these points, it is important to explore the influence of Palmiro Togliatti's democratic revolution theory on Nosaka. This influence has been evidenced and identified in Araki (1993)<sup>19</sup> and Nosaka's (1989) autobiography. Although Togliatti was not an Asian, it is of significance that his theory differed from that of the core of Comintern. According to Yamazaki (1975), Togliatti's united front theory was different from that of Dimitrov. For example, while Dimitrov's main report on the seventh congress of Comintern in 1935 asserted that building a new democratic republic was not a revolution in itself but simply a process, Togliatti stated that united fronts' anti-fascist democratic movements were inevitably developed to take over power and create an internal successor to socialist revolution. While Dimitrov's united front was defined at the political level with a weak analysis of class structure, Togliatti's assertions on such united fronts were based on in-depth analyses of class structures. In 1935, Dimitrov was elected the secretary general, while Togliatti was his junior partner as a member of secretary.

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program, called the *Thesis of Politics (draft)*, which declared the next revolution as a socialist one. However, a Japanese representative of Comintern deemed the draft as unofficial and rejected it.

<sup>15</sup> When a US delegation visited Yan'an in 1944, Nosaka discussed with them his three-stage theory of revolution. However, the first and second stages were in fact two phases of the democratic revolution (see Araki 1993, pp.107-108).

<sup>16</sup> This fact was revealed in Nosaka (1989).

<sup>17</sup> Not only Zhou, Enlai but also other Chinese communist leaders were well-acquainted Nosaka and trusted him. Nosaka's house in Yan'an was next to General Zhu, De in the headquarter of the military base (see Stein 1945).

<sup>18</sup> Wada (1996) provides evidence to support this influence. For example, his lectures for captured Japanese soldiers in Yan'an were strongly influenced by Mao's style and thought process.

<sup>19</sup> See Araki (1993, pp.70-71).



In my view, the most important difference between them was that Dimitrov regarded fascism as a phenomenon occurring at the most developed stage of capitalism, which is represented by the power of financial capital, while Togliatti stated that the Spanish task of the united front was not to defeat the capitalist system but its entire eco-political system, including the (semi-)feudalistic land system. Therefore, it was often a question whether a united front was needed in advanced countries or less developed countries. Because Nosaka was interested in the revolution against backward capitalism, he chose Togliatti.

Even if Nosaka was influenced by Western Marxism, he subjectively chose Togliatti because he and his party performed a much deeper analysis of the Japanese society. It is possible that the same conditions applied in the case of Mao Zedong since the Chinese revolution in 1949 was declared as a democratic revolution.

The two-stage revolution theory, however, was criticized from being diversionary from the socialist revolution and skewed toward Stalin's national particularism, thus neglecting other countries' interest against capitalists. Today, almost all Japanese Marxists believe that a socialist revolution was unrealistic and at most, one could have expected a democratic revolution.

Furthermore, as mentioned, the Japanese Communist Party and Japanese Marxist orthodoxy continue to assert that the Japanese people have two enemies, monopoly capitalism and US imperialism. Therefore, the present task of the people should be an anti-monopoly and anti-imperialist revolution at the first stage. Many Japanese Marxists believe that a socialist revolution is far more realistic and relevant to our everyday struggles, such as the anti-TPP<sup>20</sup>, anti-US base, anti-nuke-plant<sup>21</sup>, and anti-mass-taxation struggle. All of these can be understood as an anti-monopoly and anti-imperialist struggle.

In conclusion, I make the following two comments as a supporter of this type of two-stage revolution theory in Japan. First is based on the small difference between actual rulers and monopoly capitalism under Abenomics. Japan's state power mainly represents the interest of the major parts of monopoly capitals, which sometimes differ from those of minor parts of monopoly capitals. However, sometimes, the state power's interests differ from those of monopoly capitalism and US imperialism. Marxists have recognized this as the problem of the superstructure's relative autonomy, which has intensified under the Abe administration because it wants to justify Japan's invasion of Asia before 1945 and its current preparation for another war against China. These phenomena have created conflicts with the US government and the export industries whose major customer is China<sup>22</sup>.

My second draws on socialism. For long, leftists have lost sight of the larger socialist revolution, especially after the collapse of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and because daily struggles against rulers do not require them to question the fundamental social system. As mentioned, the crucial difference between socialists and social democrats is the ultimate aim or the final decision on whether we must proceed toward socialism. In fact, many Japanese Marxists have lost their confidence in this matter and have become pure and simple leftists.

However, mentions of socialism alone do not make one a Marxist. Our task is to imagine a more realistic socialist revolution. As in my earlier research on understanding the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Socialism, I continue to propose a much realistic style of socialism. In my understanding, a market

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<sup>20</sup> TPP stands for the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement led by the United States.

<sup>21</sup> This struggle became particularly renowned after the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in 2011. The Japanese people recognized that the Tokyo Electric Power Company is a product of state monopoly and shares common interests and personal relationships with the state.

<sup>22</sup> In all honesty, in questioning the present Japanese government's motives underlying such a dangerous war, which is independent of the interests of monopoly capitalism and the United States, we must mention the people's nationalism against China. With support of its people and their sheer enthusiasm, the government can gain independence from the ruling classes, a situation very similar to Japan's absolutism before 1945. The prewar Koza-ha theory postulated that the powers of the two ruling classes were overridden by the superior powers of the Japanese emperor. This problem is closely related to that of the people's nationalism and populism (see Onishi 2014). Thus, we must rediscover the distinct characteristics of the prewar Koza-ha theory.

system with a small government and shareholding companies can be called a socialist order if state monopoly is broken down and national independence is secured, and more importantly, if society has changed its priority from capital accumulation to enriching human lives. After the Industrial Revolution, we prioritized capital accumulation because of its role in economic development, and therefore, all sociopolitical institutions and ideologies served this purpose. This is capitalism. If we pass this stage, we can progress to the next stage, which should be socialism<sup>23</sup>. If we must discuss revolution, we must do so in the context and with an understanding of socialism<sup>24</sup>.

### III Three Types of Present-day Chinese Leftism

We now turn to present-day China, a country with an ideological disruption between the left and right. Although the official term for China's socialist market economy is "market socialism" or "socialism with Chinese characteristics," many social scientists including a certain number of Chinese economists believe that the economy has capitalist features. Therefore, neoclassical economics has already occupied mainstream economics, placing Marxist and leftist ideologies under pressure.

Of course, this situation differs from, and is better than, that in capitalist countries. For example, current human development economics lectures are being delivered in universities under the leadership of Marxian economists. I explain this new trend in the following section. Even today, Chinese Marxian or leftist economics are a strong influence and have broad scopes of application. According to Chinese leftist political scientist Yang Fan (2013)<sup>25</sup>, there are three types of leftism as follows: Stalinism (old left), Maoism (Cultural Revolution), and the Western-oriented new left.

According to Yang, Stalinism is an ideology adopted by bureaucrats, a major ruling social class in so-called socialist countries. Nevertheless, with deregulation and privatization, their interests are being threatened and they are gradually losing power. However, different stages in history need different social systems, or more precisely, governments of different sizes. This is historical materialism. To this effect, Stalinism identified the period in which a big government was needed. In my understanding, the size of government inevitably shrinks and so does their power. However, in the case of rapid deregulation and privatization process, this ideology is important to resist conservatism. A majority of present-day Chinese Marxists belong to this wing. They believe that the present deregulation and privatization process occurs faster than what was historically anticipated; if so, they must play a crucial role in adjusting the process.

On the other hand, Maoism has goals that are contrary to those of Stalinism because of its tendency to attack the bureaucracy<sup>26</sup>. In fact, in the 1960s and 70s, many anti-Stalinist students supported Maoism in university campuses in Japan with anti-bureaucracy intentions. This was the reason why Maoism created a god of Chairman Mao. Under the rule of Chairman Mao, China wanted to overthrow the social classes between the people and their rulers; in fact, during the early phases of the Cultural Revolution, the sizes of the governments, both central and local, decreased. Thus, Maoism, which is the same as neoliberalism, sought small governments. Of course, there were those who disagreed, such as professor Yang, Fan, who claimed that a bureaucracy was necessary and that discarding it was unrealistic. However, the optimum size of a government varies by stage,

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<sup>23</sup> Onishi (2011) presents a basic understanding of capitalism and socialism.

<sup>24</sup> Another problem is imagining "socialist agriculture." That is, should small individual farmers be thrown away at this stage of socialism? Some Japanese Marxist economists believe that such small farmers will be forever on its special technological particularity, for example, diminishing returns to scale (see Nakamura 1977).

<sup>25</sup> Yang Fan is an internationally acclaimed political scientist at the Chinese University of Politics and Law and has engaged in many intensive academic exchanges with Japanese Marxists.

<sup>26</sup> Maoism has another definition that contains different characteristics—that is, the strategy to settle revolutionary bases in rural areas and besiege cities. This strategy was adopted by Nepali Maoists, Latin American communist guerrillas, and Kim Il-sung.

and if the bureaucracy created problems such as corruption, restricting their free hand is very important. Thus, China made Bo, Xilai the former secretary of Chongqing, and many people supported him. In this sense, now Maoism still has a historical role as well.

The recent Chinese leftist traditions have very different intentions. Because it originated from Western ideologies, it does support Stalinism since it is a form of liberal democracy. For example, the Chinese philosopher Zhongshang Li differentiated Western Marxism from Soviet Marxism and the communist principles of Leninists (Li 2011)<sup>27</sup>. In addition, it cannot support Maoism because Western Marxism is a supporter of big governments. The most important characteristic of Western leftism is its resistance to neoliberalism. Yang (2012) also declared his standpoint on the tradition given that he is a social democrat<sup>28</sup>, which means that social democrats also belong to this stream of thought and in fighting for those oppressed in advanced countries by deregulation and privatization. Today, this is the fundamental contradiction between the ruling and ruled classes in advanced countries.

However, leftists were not always against small government. Before 1945, the Japanese people suffered under an absolute monarchy; therefore, anarchism significantly influenced Japanese leftism. Germany and Russia faced a similar situation before 1945 and 1917. In the early stage of capitalism, leftists were against statist because of the state dictatorship, while in the latter stage, leftists turned against small governments because the new ruling system followed the principles of market fundamentalism. The present-day influence of this tradition on Chinese Marxism shows that China's society has already adopted the characteristics of a usual type of capitalism.

Under these conditions, Chinese Marxists have been actively promoting global exchanges with other Marxists and leftists around the world<sup>29</sup>, possibly because they want to keep up with the globalization of mainstream economics, even though they are fairly against this idea. China's mainstream economists believe that economics should also be globalized like the economy and non-internationalized economics should be excluded from universities. Therefore, Chinese Marxists and leftists have been trying to gain international recognition and find counterparts, and have successfully done so in advanced countries, including Japan and South Korea. This process requires large-scale funding to, for example, bring in famous foreign professors, send young Marxist students to other countries, and translate several foreign books.

Another important element in these academic activities is the slogan, "Against the foreign power," which implicitly mean to be against US hegemony. As a rapidly growing power, China has begun to oppose US pressure, and therefore, this slogan has been accepted by its government and people. This slogan also appears in Yang (2012a, b) and is being repeatedly used by Xi, Jinping. Therefore, even when the above-mentioned third tradition imports Western leftism, they do not make it clear that their pistions are imported<sup>30</sup>. While Chinese Marxists are against mainstream economics in foreign countries, they import foreign leftist ideologies. In this way, the structure of the academic struggle in advanced countries has been wholly imported into China. This is because the present social structure and resulting social struggle have become the same with those in advanced countries.

In view of these international exchanges, the Institute of Marxism at the Chinese Academy of Social Science initiated two activities: the establishment of the World Association for Political

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<sup>27</sup> Li also defined Western Marxism as "non-materialistic Marxism." However, because materialism is the core focus of Marxism, it cannot be regard as its inherent feature. This is a standpoint that clearly differs between leftists and Marxists.

<sup>28</sup> Yang is also a member of a non-communist democratic party.

<sup>29</sup> These international exchanges are also being conducted among political parties. An example is the series of talks between China's and Japan's communist parties. The Chinese Communist Party is engaged in theoretical exchanges not only with the Japanese Communist Party but also other global communist and leftist parties.

<sup>30</sup> Although a similar phenomenon is seen in Yang (2012a), Yang (2012c) criticizes Chinese theoreticians who simply import foreign thoughts.

Economy<sup>31</sup> and the publication of the journal *International Critical Thought* since 2011. The Institute of Marxism at the Chinese Academy of Social Science is the center of Marxism in China, and these two initiatives can be said to represent all the activities of Chinese Marxists. However, it is noteworthy that they also used three types of connections prior to these activities, that is, those with international communist parties; young Chinese Marxist economists, who graduated from or learned in Western universities; and Japanese Marxist economists (an international exchange strongly advocated by Chinese Marxists), whose situation was similar to those in China. Among these, the second represented the influence from Western leftists.

However, as discussed, traditions of Chinese Marxists also resonated with those of Japanese Marxism, such as *Koza-ha*'s two-stage revolution theory. Thus, it is important to explore theoretical interactions between Marxists from Asia and those from outside of Asia.

#### IV. Marxism with Chinese Characteristics that Differ from Western Marxism

The key message of this paper is that ideologies are determined by materialistic reality. As discussed, irrespective of a country being invaded or independent or an economy being underdeveloped or developed, the definition of revolution, and thus, applied theories, differs on the basis of actual reality. Materialism is observed not only at a national level but also at the class or personal level. For example, ruling and opposing parties have a different materialistic base for politics. A majority of the ruling communist parties are based in Asia, and Asian Marxism has been influenced by materialism. The Chinese and Vietnamese communist parties have very similar policies, even if they do not share a good relationship. However, this characteristic explains why Chinese Marxists are not welcome by Marxists living and fighting in capitalist countries.

Therefore, Japanese and Chinese Marxists tend to have different objectives. Japanese Marxists oppose government intervention, for example, in ideologies, as do other Marxists in capitalist countries. By contrast, Chinese Marxists look to control ideologies with the help of the government. Japanese Marxists focus on redistribution, whereas Chinese Marxists prioritize economic growth.

These differences have also led to ideological struggles among Japanese Marxists, particularly regarding the understanding of the present Chinese social system. What Western countries refer to "state capitalism," China calls the "Beijing Consensus," which is widely criticized by Western and Japanese Marxists. However, criticisms are only the viewpoints of protesters, who do not concern themselves with how national economies are managed.

"Class society" can be defined as what is good for some may not always be good enough for all. For an entire economy to be successful, it is important that some others are made to endure adverse conditions or make sacrifices. For example, in a capitalist society, without exploitation—private or public—there is no capital accumulation and therefore, no economic growth. In a feudalistic craft system, without craftsmen's personal dependency on their masters, there is no way to improve the scale and skill of craftsmen and thus, no development in the sector. In the field of transportation, because of technological developments in the rail or airways, small-scale entrepreneurs lose their business opportunities to more active and established ones. In general, without loss there is no progress, and in particular, without a hazard by someone, there is no progress in class society<sup>32</sup>. These conditions are merely inevitable in class society, and thus, some act as promoters, while some others as protesters. In China, Marxists who belong to the ruling party act as promoters, which is the basic reason underlying the introduction of the Beijing Consensus.

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<sup>31</sup> The influences of the association and its members have spread worldwide, including Latin America, India, Russia, and Africa. The association has been organizing forums every year in May. I hope that more of such Asian initiatives are undertaken in the future.

<sup>32</sup> In such difficult situations, some want to help those at a loss, whereas some others choose to neglect such social hazards. The former type belongs to the "left" and the latter to the "right."

However, state capitalism or the Beijing Consensus has certain advantages from the Western viewpoint— one of them is the political system. In China, citizens cannot elect national-level senators and the president directly. They can elect prefecture- and village-level representatives. However, the direct election system can cause unnecessary political conflicts. For example, imagine a country that has two groups with competing interests. If these two groups nominate a presidential candidates and one of them wins, the winner will implement policies that are favorable to his group, creating irreconcilable conflicts. We have already seen such conflicts in Iraq and Ukraine, and introducing such direct elections in ethnic minority areas in China will have unimaginable repercussions<sup>33</sup>. Thus, it is important for us to understand that the Western type of democracy is not omnipotent.

In such a situation, a consensus among the groups is more important than a competition of votes. Of course, in a typical situation of capitalism, where people struggle under the dictatorship of a small number of rulers, the Western democracy is a useful tool for the majority to overthrow the rule of a minority. For example, Shiahns and Sunnis in Iraq, Ukrainians and Russians in Ukraine, and Han Chinese and Uygurians in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region must coexist without a rule in either's favor. In China, such kind of power balancing is institutionalized as the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

Although this system was launched as a united front during the new democratic revolution in 1949, it originated from the Soviet system, which comprises a representative of workers, farmers, soldiers, intellectuals, and others against their old national rulers. However, it was an alliance not of all social classes, but of selected ones. Among these selected social classes, there was no discrimination and the number of representatives from each social class did not matter. The conference was a platform to negotiate different interests among each social class, for example, farmers and workers. While farmers wanted a higher price for agricultural products, workers did not. In addition, it also served negotiations religious and ethnic interests. To an extent, this system is better than the Western type of democracy<sup>34</sup>; however, the point remains that this Chinese system originated from the Soviet Union, which is not Western<sup>35</sup>.

We must remember that China is a communist country led by Marxism, a major factor that distinguishes it from Western countries. However, as I mentioned in the previous section, the present social structure in China has changed and is now similar to that in the Western countries. For example, they share social struggles between neoliberalism and anti-neoliberalism. Thus, the present-day Chinese should be regarded as a capitalist economy under the leadership of a communist party.<sup>36</sup>

More precisely, before 1978, China had a state capitalist system<sup>37</sup> and since 1978, it has a market capitalist economy, even though in the political sense, it has been able to gain recognition as a socialist country. Of course, this understanding differs from that of Chinese authorities, and Chinese Marxists cannot politically oppose the authorities. The problems of capitalism and socialism should be discussed by Marxists, not neoclassical economists. Thus, Chinese Marxists are assigned this task<sup>38</sup> and continuously discuss socialism, sometimes even with Japanese Marxists. For example, the Japanese and Chinese communist parties have engaged in several discussions on the matter<sup>39</sup>. An

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<sup>33</sup> Onishi (2012) discusses some key characteristics of the Chinese political system from this viewpoint.

<sup>34</sup> The Western political thought fundamentally resembles the idea of deliberative democracy. In other words, it is a form of republicanism.

<sup>35</sup> My comprehensive understanding of the Beijing Consensus is presented in Onishi (2011).

<sup>36</sup> This is the essence of Onishi (1992).

<sup>37</sup> According to Yang (2012), the age of 'primitive accumulation' for the Chinese industrialization has been already accomplished in the period of planning economy (p.2).

<sup>38</sup> These are the existing values followed by Marxists. Thus, even though Chinese Marxists cannot influence overall policy-making processes, they are far more critical and powerful in matters of socialism and capitalism, or any other issue in the Marxian textbook. However, at the same time, some of them simply support or justify definitions by Chinese rulers. This situation is entirely the same with mainstream economists in Japan.

<sup>39</sup> The Japanese Communist Party has also engaged in a series of discussions with the Vietnamese Communist

example of academic exchanges is the continuous series of joint conferences between the Nanjing Normal University-led Marxist group and Japan Society for Socialism Theory. The main topics of these conferences have been the definition of socialism and ways it can be reformed.

An important reason underpinning these topics of discussion is that many Chinese Marxists are aware that Chinese socialism should be reformed. However, a reformation could reduce the gap between socialism and ordinary capitalism. In fact, the history of China's socialism is defined with the official definition and redefinition of socialism:

- **Before 1978:** planning economy, public ownership, and communist leadership in politics
- **After 1978:** public ownership and communist leadership in politics
- **After the ownership reformation:** public ownership with over 51 percent stockholdings in leading companies by the public sector, and communist leadership in politics
- **After the further ownership reformation:** public ownership with the top stakeholders of leading companies in the public sectors, and communist leadership in politics

This means a much weaker political definition, for example, public land ownership and communist leadership. I believe that many Chinese Marxists know of this possibility and therefore, need a strong theoretical base to justify the new definition. However, a basic misconception is that Marxists must always establish a socialist society. As I mentioned, the Asian two-stage revolution theory justifies the continuation of the capitalist society under a given condition, and if so, the next question should be what is this condition. According to the Marxian theory, the criterion should address whether the present system can increase productivity, and undoubtedly, present-day Chinese capitalism continues to satisfy this criterion. Thus, as long as Chinese capitalism increases productivity, it should be maintained. This should be the primary task of the communist party, and in this sense, there can be capitalism under the leadership of communist parties. In other words, Chinese capitalism under the leadership of the communist party can be justified by the fundamental Marxist theory.

In addition, there are several theoretical exchanges between Chinese and Japanese Marxists on the core problem, which are characteristic of Marxism<sup>40</sup>.

Without Asia, we cannot imagine a future for Marxism<sup>41</sup>.

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Party.

<sup>40</sup> In addition to the mentioned core problems, academic exchanges between the Chinese and the Japanese Marxists address many other issues and are probably one of the longest continuous exchanges between the Institute for Fundamental Political Economy in Japan and a different group at the Nanjing Normal University in China. Also, there have been numerous theoretical China-Japan academic exchanges among, for example, the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau of Central Committee of Communist Party of China, the members of Marx-Engels Researchers' Association of Japan, and the methodological Marxists who focus on the methodology of *Capital*. The former exchange addressed topics such as market mechanisms, the Asian economy, and market socialism, while the latter exchange translated one of the greatest books on Japanese Marxism—*Methodology of Capital*—into Chinese. The original book was written by Mita (1963), and the Chinese version was published twice in 2007 and 2012.

<sup>41</sup> To the effect of Asian Marxism, the North Korean situation is noteworthy. North Korea's official Juche idea (*Juche* means subjectivity) recognized its origin in Marxism; however, Marxists are against subjectivism, and thus deemed it a non-Marxist ideology. This led to the former establishing an independent international association named "Institute of Juche Idea," who no longer want to be even remotely linked with international Marxist networks, such as the World Association for Political Economy.

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