
Patriarchy in Korean Society: Substance and Appearance of Power

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Introduction

Korea has undergone a rapid transformation from an agrarian society, through industrial modernization, to its current place in the postmodern information age. These changes have created new social problems, which are having a great impact on the daily lives of individuals. As a consequence, the Korean family is reshaping itself.

This study focuses on one of the main characteristics of Korean family culture – patriarchy. It reveals how the patriarchal system is changing, how the power of the patriarch is wielded, and how family relationships are being affected.

Patriarchy is defined as a social structure and system of customs where a male, superior in hierarchy, dominates, oppresses and exploits the female (Walby 1990). In this system the rights and benefits of the family members are subordinate to those of the patriarch.

The female/wife performs her duties as a subordinate producer. She engages in domestic labor under the patriarchal production structure for the benefit of the entire family (especially for the patrilineal stem family). The male/patriarch uses the wife for a variety of duties and obligations with no remuneration in exchange for her contribution to the financial maintenance of the family. Therefore, the husband becomes the exploiting class and the wife a subordinate producer (Delphy 1984).

As many aspects of everyday life were maintained through reciprocity with the agnatic kin in traditional Korean society, agnatic kin relations were emphasized. In order for the patriarch to function as

the representative of his family connecting them to other members of the agnatic line, and to ensure continuation of that line through patrilineal descent, his power had to be absolute. Thus, the patriarch, in his position of absolute power and authority at the apex of the family power structure, controlled all the members of the family. In contrast, the status of the wife who married into the man's family from an external group was relatively low. The same was true of a daughter who as a member destined to leave the group upon marriage could not contribute to the continuation of the patrilineal line. Inequality in status produced inequality in the everyday activities within the family, which traditionally has been continuously reproduced through the male/patriarch-oriented ideology in Korean society.

Many scholars consider dissolution to be one of the distinguishing characteristics of the modern family. Viewed from the outside, the Korean family cannot yet be seen to stand at such a critical junction. However, due to changes in the social environment and efforts within families to explore new relationships, the Korean family is undergoing turmoil. The diverse living conditions and changing social values in recent decades have brought a change in the value and demands put on the family by the individual family members. The result is a rejection of the traditional family structure that pursued the benefit of the family with the patriarch at the apex. In other words, other family members, except the patriarch himself are rejecting the authority of the patriarch and the patriarchal system. This has increased tensions within the family, thus contributing to its disintegration.

From this perspective, a discussion of the patriarch and his position as the leader, representative and controller of the family cooperative, and an analysis of male and female status in the family will be helpful in analyzing the changes and discord the modern Korean family is experiencing.

Method of Study

A discussion of the power structure of the Korean family and the status of each member inevitably must begin with the traditional patriarchal system. The power of the Korean patriarch is atypical in that it operates predominantly but inconspicuously in unofficial daily activities and therefore can be approached through the relationships that constitute everyday life. By analyzing the spatial organization in domestic life, the division of domestic labor, and other factors, this paper assesses the existence and substance of the present patriarchal system, the changes underway in family relationships and the relative status of men and women.

As patriarchal oppression is not limited to wives but also extends to other family members, I have surveyed children as well as wives. Since children are more likely than wives to resist patriarchal power, they are an important part of my analysis.

The study of children was conducted through distribution of a questionnaire on images they have of their fathers and interviews discussing their everyday relationships with their fathers. The questionnaire, collected from a total of 434 individuals, consisted of middle school (male – 42, female – 66), high school (male – 99, female – 123) and university (male – 33, female – 71) students from the Seoul area. Interviews were conducted with 20 of the 434 based on convenience of approach.

For wives, I surveyed 12 middle class women in their 40s and 50s residing in the Seoul area. The surveys were conducted in a descriptive interview

format, so that the subjects could freely share their experiences and perceptions while the interviewer could listen and organize their thoughts onto paper.¹

Changes in Everyday Life and the Status of the Patriarch

Status in Domestic Space

Space is ordered to represent authority, power, and relationships, and the space each individual occupies is determined by his/her status. Among the environments humans create, the space shared by the family members – the home – has the closest connection to their daily lives. The structural layout of the home and where each family member is placed in the home by their age, sex, roles and status are determined by the overall cultural practices of the society. Therefore, changes in this spatial organization signify changes in family culture.

1) The Absence of Space for the Patriarch

Traditionally it was common for married couples to dwell in separate rooms called the *sarangbang* for the husbands and *anbang* for the wives. The *sarangbang* was the space reserved for the patriarch and other male members of the family, and it was where the patriarch dwelled and greeted outside guests. Due to a lack of space, married couples from the lower class were often separated according to sex, with family members of the same sex sharing a single room.

By the 1970s, as family size started to decrease and families consisting only of the married couple and their unmarried children increased, space dedicated to the couple and separate rooms for the children emerged. Generally, surveyed couples used the largest room, or *anbang*, while the son used the room closest to the entrance or where the window was facing the street, and the daughter used the room further inside the home or adjacent to the

kitchen. The positions of the son's and daughter's rooms were based on the notion that a daughter needs to be protected but it does not matter if the son's room is located near the entrance where people come and go.

In private residences, the *anbang* is often open to the entire family. Even for apartment residences that have a living room, the *anbang* is space where family members can freely spend time. Although the *anbang* is dedicated to the couple, the wife, not the patriarch, is generally regarded as being responsible for it. The wife spends more time in the *anbang* than the patriarch and most of the equipment and furniture for her use are located there. For the majority of men who return late from work and spend relatively less time in the home, the *anbang* is merely space for sleeping. According to my survey, there were hardly any cases where private space was reserved in the home for the patriarch.² Together with industrialization and the separation of occupational space from the home, the family space has gradually become female-oriented. As the functions of the *sarangbang* of the past have been taken over by the living room, the space of the patriarch has become a space for the entire family and the space for the patriarch no longer exists. Such loss of space for the patriarch can also be seen as narrowing the patriarch's domain in the home.

2) Changing Status in Semi-fixed Space

"Semi-fixed space" gives each member of the family an area to occupy by placing furniture or the person within a fixed space. When the family congregates in a single area during meal hours or after dinner to watch television, each family member generally sits in the same fixed position. This organization of "personal seats" is determined by the family's power structure, and the acknowledgement by each family member of his/her "personal seat" has cultural significance, reflecting the

changes in the family status and consequently in the socio-cultural concept of the family.

The meal customs in rural areas up to the 1950s took several possible forms. In one arrangement, although the entire family ate in the *anbang*, the men ate at a table from individual rice bowls, while the women ate on the floor from a large scooped wooden bowl called a *hamjibak*. Sometimes the men ate in the *sarangbang* while the women ate in the *anbang* from the communal *hamjibak* or only the men ate in the *anbang* while the women ate the leftovers in the kitchen from the *hamjibak*. In other words, men and women were distinguished through room/kitchen and table/floor oppositions during mealtimes, reflecting the strict hierarchy between men and women.

By the 1970s, the display of position at mealtimes had changed drastically. In rural areas today, although the entire family usually gathers and eats around a large table in the *anbang*, the patriarch and his parents sit nearest the heater while the children and mother sit on the other side. Furthermore, although all family members have individual rice bowls, there is a tendency to make a distinction between positions through the quality or price of the rice bowls.

In urban areas, with increased residence in apartments, spatial structure has changed significantly. "Personal seats" at the dining table no longer represent the authority of each family member but rather corresponds to the functional aspect of each individual's kitchen duties. To elaborate, the wife and daughter who are in charge of the kitchen duties and who provide services sit near the sink and refrigerator, while the husband and son who receive services sit on the opposite side. In general, the patriarch's seat is the most stable, in a sense that it requires the least movements away from the table during the meal, and is closest to the living room; and if a television is placed in the kitchen, his seat is where television viewing is the most convenient.

The tradition of the entire family congregating during mealtime has weakened with the acceptance of the variations between each individual's personal life. Due to the differences in bedtime, rising time, departure for and arrival from work/school limiting the opportunities for the entire family to gather around the dining table, the tradition of the rest of the family members waiting until the patriarch takes his seat at the table before beginning the meal is not often observed.

When the family gathers around the dining table during mealtimes, the placement of the dishes is determined by the value placed on the dishes and the position of the individuals sitting at the table. The meat dishes, valued over vegetable dishes, used to be placed in front of the high-ranking elder or male and were not accessible to the female family members.³ Such rules were strictly adhered to until the 1960s, when economic conditions improved. However, today, conditions have changed so that although the "good dishes" are still placed in front of the elder or male, all family members have comparatively free access to them.

With the dissemination of western culture and the inflow of western cuisine and fast food, there is a divergence of tastes in food between the older generation accustomed to traditional fare, and the younger generation accustomed to the new dishes. The divergence can be seen at the dining table by the different foods favored by the different generations. The younger the wife, the greater the tendency is for the dishes to cater to the tastes of the children. Among the college students surveyed, 28% answered that the dishes were "mostly those that they like" in comparison to the 57% who answered that they were "mostly those that father likes." Among middle school students, 34% responded that the dishes were mostly those that their father liked while 42% responded that the dishes were more adapted to their tastes. These results show that the younger the patriarch or the wife is, the more like-

ly the dishes center around the children's tastes. However, when the patriarch or son is absent from the dining table and only the wife or daughters are dining, the types of dishes that are served are different and most often are leftovers, rather than freshly made ones.

Although the patriarch's authority is still acknowledged in the structuring of semi-fixed space, it is not as strictly adhered to as in traditional society. In general, all the family members enjoy a comparatively equal spatial placement, but in certain areas male-oriented placement standards are still being applied.

Status of the Patriarch in Ancestor Worship

Traditionally women could not participate in *dongje*⁴ or *myoje*.⁵ In accordance with individual family's customs, some women were permitted to participate in *kijesa*,⁶ a rite practiced at home. However, most women were relegated to the duties of preparing the food offerings in the kitchen, while the men prepared everything else from setting up the sacrificial table to carrying out the ceremony. The role of the patriarch, who represented the family, was absolute in the patrilineal ancestor worship ceremonies and through such ceremonies, the patriarch's authority was reaffirmed.

In recent times, when *myoje* is performed, the level of women's participation from preparing and transporting the sacrificial meal to carrying out the ceremony itself is as significant as that of men. This has come about because most of the eldest grandsons and male heirs of the lineage have moved into the city while most ancestral graves are still near the home villages. And since during the ceremonial period the men have to go to their offices, the women are sent instead to carry out the ceremonies with those descendants who have remained in the villages. As the women now participate in such ceremonies from which they were once strictly excluded, the male-domi-

nated aspects of the family domain which recognized and reproduced the patriarch's absolute authority have disappeared.

Shift of Economic Power in the Family and the Weakening of the Patriarch's Status

Economic power in the family is largely divided between the right to manage assets and the right to handle income and expenditure. Housing and agricultural land, the main assets of the family in traditional Korean society, were entirely under the ownership and management of the patriarch. That is to say, the purchase of the house, moving, disposal of assets, etc. were all carried out according to the patriarch's wishes.⁷ In addition, the management of the family's main income was the patriarch's domain.⁸

However, industrialization brought large changes: the home and office were respectively classified as women's and men's spaces with most domestic duties distinguished as women's work and professional duties as men's work. As husbands were seen to be responsible for production and the wives responsible for consumption, the management of income and decisions about expenditures were incorporated into the wife's role. Since the participation of the patriarch in the family's economic activity is now widely perceived as "unmanly," the family's economic power has been securely transferred to the wives.

Advertising for sales of residential property predominantly focuses on how convenient the houses are for the housewife, depicting her in a state of bliss in her new home. This targeting of women shows that when it comes to the decision about purchasing a home, the housewives have a larger role than the patriarchs. We can see this general trend by looking at the 12 housewives interviewed in the survey – 8 of the 12 answered that they had the strongest influence on the decision to purchase and move into their current

home. However, only one woman had the house registered under her name giving her legal proprietary rights, and this was because her husband had once acted as guarantor to someone else's loan and had lost all the family's property. That is to say, though the proprietary rights to the assets are still held by the husbands, management and expenditures are the wives' domain.

The social background of this shift in economic power is the change in the salary payment system. Previously, husbands directly received monthly cash payments and in turn gave a portion to their wives to cover living expenses. With the establishment of on-line banking, the majority of companies deposit salaries directly into the employees' accounts. The account is generally managed by the wife, as is the case for all 10 families living on a husband's salary in my survey. She is further responsible for budgeting the income. The wives give a portion of the living expenses to the husbands as an allowance and though the money has been earned by the husbands themselves, they still have to pick the right time, that is when the wife is in a good mood, to plead for extra money apart from their allowance.

The Impact of the Information Age on Changes in the Patriarch's Status

1) Children Educating Parents

Education was passed on from the old to the young in traditional times but with the advent of information technology, especially the computer, it has become common for the young to teach the old.⁹ The education of the older generation by the younger generation weakens the older generation's authority and is a factor in the insecure status of an older generation that had enjoyed absolute superiority until now.¹⁰ Some older respondents/interviewees showed their insecurity saying, "every time the subject of computers comes up, I feel like an idiot in front of the children" and "when I told my son I had to go and reserve train tickets, he laughed

at me and told me that it is more convenient to do so on the Internet, and I should learn how to do it.

This reversal in the direction of education nevertheless has a positive effect on family life. The education of the older generation by the younger generation works to alleviate one of the negative traits of Korean family culture – the rigid power structure. Several young interviewees described this changing relationship:

After seeing an advertisement where a mother was downloading recipes from the internet to use in making her children's snacks, my mother commented it would be nice if she could do so as well. She wanted to learn how to explore the internet so I taught her and she really enjoyed it. Since then, she often asks for my help and I feel much closer to her.

My father was appreciative when I taught him how to apply for civil documents from the city offices using the Internet. With my help he has broadened his use of the Internet and can now collect all kinds of information for daily needs, make Internet deposits and reserve rail tickets by himself. Although our interests are different, I feel close to my father when using the Internet together.

As the patriarch, my father has always emphasized his authority and tried to control his children. However, after learning how to use the computer from me because of his business needs, our conversation time has increased and he has become more open-minded in understanding and helping his children.

Through these examples, we can see how a parent-child relationship that used to be vertical

under the strict patriarchal-oriented authority structure is changing to an equal relationship of mutual assistance.

The Korean family structure of the past was focused on the transmission of the family's bloodline and patriarch's status through the father-son relationship. This relationship was hierarchical with a clear delineation of superiority and inferiority and a strong emphasis placed on the importance of filial piety. The younger generation, which is adaptable to new information technology, has been given more authority in the power structure and the clear delineation of superiority and inferiority has become blurred to form a more balanced mutual relationship.

2) Change in the Information Channels and the Fall of the Patriarch's Authority

In an information society, the variable that determines social mobility is the ability to gather new information. This can be applied to the family. Traditionally, the channels used to attain information from the external society were the patriarchs and the men of the older generation. With the use of the Internet spreading among the younger generation, the channels that the family utilizes to receive information have changed, bringing with them changes in the power structure. If the family power structure is now determined by the ability of each family member to approach and evaluate information, it is highly probable that the position occupied by the younger generation, with their stronger information gathering abilities, will improve.

The traditional marital relationship was based on the husband's control of the wife, and her subordination to the husband. Such extreme inequality was maintained through the unequal valuation of worth between men as economic producers and women as consumers devoted only to domestic labor, unequal exercise of power giving patriarchal authority only to the male offspring through the

social principles of patrilineal descent, and the unequal social structure where the men monopolized the information from and about the society. With the general use of the Internet, the tradition of patriarchal dominance of information and its channels has been overturned and replaced by a pluralistic form shared by other family members. It is likely that the discrimination based on sex and rank within the Korean family will decrease and the authority of the patriarch will continue to weaken with these sociocultural changes.

Status of the Patriarch as Recognized by His Children

Position of the Patriarch / Father in the Eyes of the Children

In traditional society, the relationship between the father and his children was a vertical one where the father, as the patriarch, strictly managed the education of the children. However, cultural changes have been transforming this relationship. An important factor underlying the change in the father's authority is the separation of the workspace from family space following industrialization. Under a social culture that encouraged the aspiration to succeed and to advance in their careers, the patriarchs concentrated on their professional lives as the sole method of fulfilling their filial obligations and responsibility for earning the family's livelihood. Faced with an excessive workload and burdened by stress in the workplace, the patriarchs became distant from their families and their role in the home decreased.

Another factor weakening the father's authority is the decrease in his property rights, the foundation of the father's authority in traditional society (Demos 1986; Stearn 1991). The economic value of land, the basis for agricultural production, declined with the advent of an industrial society that brought diverse occupations, activation of the market econ-

omy, and the collapse of the traditional village cooperatives due to urbanization and increased social migration. Furthermore, as the income of children who moved to urban areas for work has surpassed that of the patriarch, which is based on agricultural production, children are less likely to submit to the father's authority. We can easily assess such changes by analyzing the survey results of the middle school, high school and college students.¹¹

1) Intimidating and authoritative father

The father is still an authoritative and fear-inspiring figure. Roughly half of the survey respondents regard their father as authoritative, including a higher percentage of college students (56.1%) than middle school students (37.5%). Although the father's authority over the younger generation seems to have decreased, we can interpret from this result that critical views of the father increase as the children become older.

2) Father who insists on his own values

Of the respondents, 22.8% saw their father as an autocratic figure and 37.3% said they were not able to have a conversation with him on equal terms. The children stated that their father must "change his attitude of regarding the children (my brother and I) as his creation" or "ignoring almost all other opinions except his own." Such comments show how dissatisfied the children are with their "self-righteous," "inflexible," and "stubborn" fathers.¹²

3) Interfering and nagging father

As the children become older, the perception that their fathers interfere with their lifestyle decreased (middle school – 40%, high school – 39.3%, college – 24.9%). This shows that as the children mature, their autonomy increased. Similar results were found when the respondents were questioned about the father's nagging.

4) Father who loves his children but cannot show his affection

93.1% saw the father as an unaffectionate figure who loves his children but cannot show that love. They were frustrated that “the family atmosphere was in large part determined by the father’s moods” or that because the father “does not know how to express his affections, he cannot maintain a comfortable relationship with the family.” These respondents could understand their relationships with their fathers, but they did not like them.

5) Alienated father

18.4% in the survey had negative emotions toward their authoritative, interfering and unaffectionate father and 15.1% believed their father was alienated from the rest of the family. The father was more negatively regarded than the mother, as only 11.3% did not like their mother and only 6.3% believed that their mother was alienated from the rest of the family.

The variables that had a stronger effect on the children’s respect toward their father or wanting to be with him were the father’s authoritative attitude and degree of interference rather than his educational level or occupation. However, as the children are increasingly judging their father’s patriarchal attitude in a negative way, other variables are needed to “earn” children’s respect. Hence the emphasis on the father’s financial status. At the same time, the fact that children continuously look for a reason to respect their father shows a glimpse of the children’s desire for a warm father with whom they can maintain an emotional relationship, in contrast with their unwillingness to submit to their father’s one-sided authority.

Existence of the Patriarch/Husband for the Wives¹³

The direct influences of social change that weakened the patriarch’s authority are the increase

in national income, the growth in educational opportunities for women, and the female employment rate. With the increase in national income and the consequent improvement of the family’s financial conditions, rather than focusing solely on managing the family economy to make ends meet, the wife can afford to focus on herself and her social experiences attained through education and employment, enabling her to become more self-aware. Through gaining employment, women have come to adopt a more critical perspective on their life and to question the unequal tradition of bearing sole responsibility for domestic and child-rearing duties. In other words, the fundamental dichotomy between domestic and professional life and the traditional notion of sex-specific roles are being challenged. The wives have become critical of their husbands, the patriarchs.

The organization of the classic industrial society has the distinctive feature of assigning responsibilities that are mutually exclusive, with a strict division between male roles in the public arena and female roles in the private arena. Women are excluded from the men’s responsibility for the family livelihood, while the men are excluded from the women’s domestic and child-rearing duties. Due to this strict division, all household affairs in the domestic arena were imposed on the wives and they had no choice but to become dependent on the men’s economic ability. In contrast, men became uninterested in family affairs and limited their focus to external affairs, solely concentrating on their professional success and judging themselves according to their achievement of it. The patriarch was responsible for the family’s livelihood through his professional activities, and whether or not he was successful in the professional world became the critical standard for determining his masculinity. In the past, though his family may have criticized a patriarch for being unable to carry out his “external affairs” for the family’s livelihood, absolute authori-

ty was assigned to the position of the patriarch itself. Today however, the patriarch is respected according to his personal ability or criticized for his lack thereof. Especially with the emphasis on the value system of capitalism, the patriarch, responsible for the family's livelihood, secures his authority according to the position of his profession and earned income and the wife has gained the right to demand satisfactory accomplishment of the patriarch's economic duties.¹⁴ Therefore, a patriarch who cannot guarantee a sufficient income becomes the object of criticism, is seen as incompetent, and occasionally gets asked for divorce.

Despite far-reaching social changes the dichotomy of sex-based roles in domestic work remains largely unchanged and puts a dual burden on working wives. The following comments illustrate the critical perceptions the wives have of husbands who ignore the housework: "though we are a dual income couple, my husband doesn't help at all in the home. Rather he nags that the house is a mess. I'm trying to make the marriage work but harsh ideas run through my mind and I even think I'd rather live alone;" and "when I return from work, though I'm just as tired as my husband, my husband rests while I have to rush around to get the housework done." Despite the reality of increased female employment, the patriarchal standards defining domestic work and child-rearing as female duties are still strong in Korea and can become a reason for discord between the couple. With more wives obtaining employment and contributing to the family income, they are demanding that the duties they were solely responsible for be equally divided and carried out. Domestic duties were the women's domain and asking for men's assistance was not socially permissible, but with the increase in dual-income couples, the expectations of sharing domestic and child-rearing responsibilities have risen, and husbands who cannot meet such expectations are being criticized.

The traditional division of duties, that defined the male and female roles as mutually exclusive, limits the patriarch's knowledge to "external affairs" and renders him incompetent in the domestic space. It becomes difficult for him to adapt to domestic life. Wives I interviewed claimed: "my husband, who didn't even know how to make a cup of coffee for himself, retired and is staying at home. I just go out because I can no longer stay at home and be at his beck and call;" and "my husband cannot do anything when I'm not around. When I'm unexpectedly late, he waits for me starving. I get angry but he doesn't move a muscle. I get depressed when I think of how I'm tied by the neck to my husband." In these accounts the patriarchs, who are responsible for the family's income, value their professional life over domestic life and do not accept domestic responsibilities, thus becoming alienated from their families. Upon retirement or unemployment, the patriarchs return to their families after having solely concentrated on their professional lives, but there may be no place for them at home.

As the family representative, the patriarch held the power to control the decision-making for all the family members in the past. This traditional ideology allowed the patriarch to regard himself as a "king" who can do "whatever he wants" at home. Some patriarchs act imperiously, using crude language and speaking and yelling in commanding tones to other family members according to the traditional notion that "a man's spirit will die if he does not receive proper treatment at home." Such behavior also prevents the wives from viewing their husbands favorably.

With the responsibility of satisfying the family's emotional needs imposed on the wives, all the family members are emotionally dependent on them. The patriarchs raised under an ideology that emphasized strong male chauvinism cannot emotionally express themselves to other family members. Such psychological isolation has resulted in self-exclusion

by the patriarchs from their families' emotional relationships. Criticizing their husbands as being "a bore," wives in their 40s want to plan and enjoy a "pleasant life with no concern for their husbands."

The more the husbands wield their patriarchal power and dominate their families, the more the wives, who aim to construct their own hidden territory under such patriarchs, ostracize them.¹⁵

Conclusion

In traditional Korea, the family was maintained under a strict power structure with the patriarch at the apex. The family members had no choice but to be dependent on the patriarch, the representative of the family, responsible for the family's livelihood and the flow of information from society. Further, the family structure revolved around the succession of lineage and status through the father-son relationship. Since this relationship, a clearly defined vertical power structure, provided the son with the basis for participating in social activities, the father exercised absolute power over him. With Confucian ideology functioning through ancestor worship to maintain and reproduce the power structures within the family, the legitimating of the patriarch's control and oppression was guaranteed.

However, while undergoing the great social changes of industrialization and the information age within a brief period, the Korean family has faced many transformations in its value system and way of living. Important changes in the global context have included a new consciousness of our individual rights arising from the civil rights movement; the sexual revolution, the spread of the computer, the inflow of diverse information due to developments in information technology; and the rise of postmodern ideas, all of which have overturned the old relationships between the generations and sexes and created new discourses.

Korean society cannot remain unaffected by such global trends.

Power that is not based on common consent has only superficial authority, and is unable to exercise actual authority. Social authority is acknowledged and reproduced by society when social structure and ideology support it. Likewise, the patriarch's authority in the family can be exercised when the family structure and ideology support it. Today, with concerns about the dissolution of the family and even the existence of the family itself being denied, the assertion of individual rights by all the family members is further decreasing the ground on which the patriarch can stand. The family members no longer fully accept the patriarchal structure sanctioned by tradition. In the same vein, the patriarch's actions that were not considered major problems in the past are now regarded as sufficient grounds for divorce, and the patriarchs are being ostracized by their own children.

Conservative discourse defines the family as the basic unit in a natural and stable social order; the family is where the individual's emotional, sexual and material desires are fulfilled and where the responsibilities of rearing and socializing children lie. However, the myth that the family is a shelter for emotional stability is dissolving, and family members themselves are criticizing the oppression and conflict that were hidden in the family power structure. More family members now resist the notion of an individual controlling another individual and hope to construct horizontal relationships to replace the vertical patriarchal power structure.

Power structures are not universally fixed; rather they have always changed and will continue to do so. Yet many patriarchs, continuing to perceive themselves as holding the power of representation and ultimate authority, still try to oppress other family members. This desire to exercise patriarchal authority to which other fam-

ily members have not consented is causing conflict within the family. Though the patriarchs in the past were the holders of vested rights protected by traditional ideology, they are now at a juncture where they must give up these rights.

NOTES

- 1 Although the findings presented in this paper cannot be regarded as definitive, they show some new trends in the Korean patriarchal family system. As I was conducting the surveys and interviews, I realized how much the exercise of patriarchal power was alienating the patriarch from the rest of the family and turning him into a figure of superficial authority. I chose the examples included in this analysis to demonstrate this point.
- 2 In an elementary school in the Kangnam area, a relatively well-off district in Seoul, 48 children were asked to draw their homes. 17 of those children described the *anbang* as "Mom and Dad's room," 22 as "Mom's room" and 9 as *anbang*. The kitchen was seen as space for the mother and the living room as space for the entire family, while only 3 identified a father's space in this study. This reflects the weakened position of the father, the patriarch, in the familial space.
- 3 In the survey, the women in their 70s responded that, during their younger years, the meat dishes regarded as the "good dishes" were placed on the elder's (especially the male elder's) table, and it did not even cross their minds that they could taste any of these dishes as the leftovers were saved for the elder's next meal.
- 4 *Dongje* is a ceremony dedicated to the village guardian deity. The patriarch of each household participates as the family representative, while the women only participate as spectators.
- 5 *Myoje* is a ceremony for worship of ancestors in the preceding 5th generation and beyond. The eldest son, who inherits the headship of the family from the father, and other agnate male members of the lineage go to the ancestral grave plots to carry out this rite.
- 6 *Kijesa* is a ceremony for worship of ancestors up to the preceding 4th generation. It is practiced at home on the anniversary of the ancestors' death dates.
- 7 According to a study of farming families in the 1960s, important documents were in the safekeeping of the husband - the patriarch - in 78% of conjugal families. In stem families, the documents were kept by the husband (67.1%) if he was not senile, but if he was very old, they were kept by the son (18.7%) who would continue the patriarchal line. The purchase and sale of important assets showed similar patterns; the decisive power was held by the husband in 75.5% of conjugal families, while in stem families, the sum of the power held by the husband and the son was 81.7%. These findings show that the traditional system of having the family assets managed by the patriarch was maintained until the 1960s.
- 8 According to a well known study, the division of roles according to sex in economic activity was as follows: purchase and sale of livestock: male - 87.0%, female - 6.5%; purchase of foodstuffs: male - 28.4%, female - 60.6%. It is interesting to note that, unlike today where the wives are responsible for the purchase of food, in the past there were a considerable number of men who were responsible for buying the family's food.
- 9 When asked whether they have assisted other family members in their use of the computer and the internet, 62.3% (154 students) answered that they have done so. Among the 62.3% who answered in the affirmative (multiple answers were possible), 61% answered that they taught their parents, 23.4% answered that

it was an older sibling and 33.1% answered that it was a younger sibling.

- 10 When asked why they believe they have superior ability over their parents, 74% (183 students) answered that it was "their ability to adapt to the information age." The younger generation believe that they are inferior to their parents in terms of financial abilities and life experiences, but that they are superior in terms of their ability to acquire information and that they are in a position to teach the older generation.
- 11 Those surveyed were students from the Seoul (Kangnam - 45.8%, Kangbuk - 40.8%) and Kyonggi (13.4%) areas. The parents were generally highly educated and middle-aged. The composition was as follows: 92.7% of fathers in their 40s-50s with 37.5% having a college education or higher and 39.2% a high school education; and 87.4% of mothers in their 30s-40s with 27.4% having a college education or higher and 52.5% a high school education. Most described themselves as part of the middle class (71.9%) and 83.3% belonged to a nuclear family.
- 12 There were circumstances where the father alone decided on the place and day for the family move and simply notified the rest of the family, and where a father forced his children to eat only the foods that he favored. There were also many cases where the father "decided on and forced the future direction that the children should take according to the father's standards."
- 13 The cases under this subtitle are from the interviews conducted with housewives and the clinical records of the Korean Male Telephone Consultation Services. The subjects of the 4,147 consultations initiated by men in 2000 can be summarized as follows: (1) infidelity by the wife - 885 cases; (2) marital problems (divorce and remarriage) - 800 cases; (3) sexual problems - 620 cases; (4) leaving of the home by the wife and sep-

aration - 582 cases; (5) children and family problems - 371 cases; (6) difference in personality between the couple - 227 cases; (7) physical violence inflicted by the wife - 111 cases; (8) debt and financial hardships brought on by the wife - 109 cases; and (9) problems arising from the wife's alcohol and gambling activities - 76 cases.

- 14 In most cases, wives who are regarded as having brought up the children well, earn solid positions in the family. (An important measurement is the admission of the children into good universities.)
- 15 According to a 40-year-old wife in a dual income family, "the children do not like their father and there are many secrets between me and the children that my husband does not know" because the husband not only interferes and nags in all matters, but also resolves everything the way he pleases.

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