

Household Formation Behaviors in Japan and Korea

Toru SUZUKI

It is known that while men leave parental home later than women in Western developed countries, men leave home earlier than women in Japan. This pattern is caused by the strong tendency of Japanese men to leave home before marriage that overcomes the difference in age at first marriage. This paper inspects the census results of the Republic of Korea and Japan to find if such a pattern exists in Korea. The proportion of "child or grandchild of household head" in Korean men aged 20-24 is smaller than Japanese men due to the military service. This fact suggests that Korean men leave home earlier than Korean women, and that the sex difference is even larger than in Japan. It is also shown that the marriage postponement is more drastic in Korea than in Japan. Thus, the delay in home-leaving should also be more drastic in Korea. Although the propensity to live alone among young women in Korea is lower than in Japan, it is thought to be higher than in Southern Europe.

The drastic change of Korean family is not limited to home-leaving and marriage but also found in fertility decline. Such disastrous family changes could be attributed to the Confucian family pattern that is very different from Europe and Japan. While the traditional Japanese family pattern was somewhat similar to Europe, the Confucian family pattern was more patriarchic and authoritarian. It is supposed that the more distant the family pattern is from European pattern, the more drastic family changes tend to be. If Northern-Western Europe is the most typical case of feudal family system, Southern Europe and Japan were the cases of feudal family influenced by patriarchic and authoritarian pattern of Roman family, Islamic family or Confucian family. While the family was the basic model for all social organization in Confucian society, the Japanese family had its model in master-servant relation. On the other hand, the Yi dynasty of Korea enforced Confucianism on Korean people and Korean society became more Confucianistic than China immediately before the modernization. Such a difference in the family pattern at the beginning of modernization has caused the difference in family changes in Japan and Korea.