

12. See, for example, Linda Lewis, Laying Claim to the Memory of May: A Look Back at the 1980 Kwangju Uprising (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), and Henry Scott-Stokes and Lee Jai Eui, eds., The Kwangju Uprising: Eyewitness Press Accounts of Korea’s Tianamen (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2000).

Betwixt and Between: Korea as a Bridge Between China and Japan
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I am a cultural anthropologist with a focus on Japan studies. Teaching at a liberal arts college, however, I find that I have been transformed from a Japan specialist into an East Asia generalist. And, as with anyone who has ever taught an Introduction to East Asia course, I struggle with the problem of how to introduce material about, and establish the importance of, Korea.

I have tried teaching all three counties at one time in a single chronological development, but it didn’t work well. Students could not keep straight which country we were talking about. I have also tried teaching China, then Korea, and finally Japan, tracing the dominant flow of influence from west to east. This format was adequate. However, the most satisfactory format for me has been one of presenting the two contrasting poles, China and Japan, then discussing Korea as the middle ground, both literally and figuratively.

Any familiarity with East Asian history provides plenty of examples of Korea as conduit between China and Japan, or simply as being caught in the middle. Admittedly, most of the flow is from the Middle Kingdom. Some religious-philosophical ideas, such as Confucianism and Daoism, begin in China. Others, such as Buddhism, first enter China then pass through Korea to Japan. It is relatively easy to give an extensive introduction to the ideas (and impact) of Confucius, Mencius, and Ju Xi when dealing with China, then contrast the late and local development of Confucianism when dealing with Japan, and end the semester with a discussion of Confucian hypertrophy in Choson Korea. Similarly, it works well to discuss perspectives and policy on modernization when first presenting China’s reaction to colonialism, later contrasting Japan’s commitment to transformation, and inevitably discussing their impact in the Hermit Kingdom.

Likewise, the history of war and conquest offers plenty of examples where Korea is caught up because of its fate as being geographically the “Poland of the East.” Territories of earliest Korea were subject to either Chinese military attack or simply the recurrent flow of Sinicized populations, while other areas turn to Japan for support or flee to Japan. Most dramatic of all are the Mongol attempts to invade Japan, balanced by Hideyoshi’s failed conquests of China, where, in both cases, the Koreans are the greatest losers.

I have tried a number of readings to balance Korea in the teaching of introductory East Asia. The following titles have proved to be most successful for me.

BASIC TEXT

Fairbank et al. is, frankly, a bit dry. The works of Conrad Shirokauer are much more readable and filled with memorable anecdotes. However, East Asia is comprehensive in general and, more importantly for this discussion, has material on Korea in particular, which Shirokauer does not.

TRADITIONAL SOCIETY: COMPARISONS (China, Japan, Korea)


These three books create a delightful set and lend themselves to lots of comparisons. All three are autobiographies, which makes them not only more personal and therefore more attractive for students, but also opens the door for discussions about objectivity, the Rashomon Effect, and outright self-serving text. All three books date from the late “traditional” period: Qing China, Tokugawa Japan, Choson Korea. Most of the people in these books are elite (literati, samurai, courtiers and consorts) but their lives do not match the perfection that we expect from studying Confucian principles. Instead, they fall madly in love or simply fall mad; they are often dissolute and failures, rebelling against the expectations of their class or clinging to them desperately.

MODERNIZING SOCIETY: COMPARISONS (China, Japan, Korea)


These three books work well together when focusing on modernization and contemporary East Asia. In all three books the focus is on family dynamics in changing times. *Daughter of Han* is about an extremely poor Chinese woman and her family during the colonial period, from the late empire through the Japanese invasion (1860s-1930s). *Haruko’s World* tells about a village family moving from farming to participation in Japan’s (post-) industrial economy and politics (1970s-1990s). While the first two books are intimate portraits of the lives of specific families, Lett’s book is a more abstract presentation of middle class families reconfiguring certain “traditional” Confucian values to create status in Korea’s burgeoning consumer society (1990s).

**FAMILY AS “HOOK”**

It may be evident from my recommended texts that I find family to be a particularly interesting institution in its own right and useful as an educational focus because of the way it connects with the rest of society. I would like to suggest, therefore, analysis of family (descent, marriage and domestic organization) as a way of involving Korea in a comparison with China and Japan. The traditional Chinese family is known as the *jia* (“jyah”), the Japanese is the *ie* (“ee-ch”) and the Korean is the *chip* (“chip”). The model for analysis of these traditional domestic patterns that I am suggesting is called “The Five Patris” and builds on ideas of Linda Lewis. The five “patris” are patriarchy, patrilineality, patronymy, patrilocality, and patrimony, and serve as a mnemonic device for identifying points of comparison and understanding the dynamics of traditional Chinese, Japanese and Korean families. 

**Patriarchy** refers to the gender allocation of power. Patriarchal families, or societies, allocate more power to men than women, making women generally subordinate to men. The alternatives to patriarchy would be matriarchy and egalitarian society. (While there have been egalitarian societies, there is anthropological debate over whether there has ever been a matriarchy.) Even in patriarchal societies, which value men more highly and subordinate women, all women may have power in particular spheres and some individual women succeed in being powerful in their own lives. **Patrilineality** refers to what descent group one belongs to, specifically father’s “kin” in this case. There are several alternative descent patterns, including matrilineality, which is membership in mother’s kin group. The importance of being recognized as a member of father’s kin group and not mother’s, or the reverse, is difficult for Americans to understand because we don’t do it. Our descent system is bilateral and recognizes parentage on both sides equally, although our practice of patronymy reflects a history of patriarchy and patrilineality. **Patronymy** refers to whether persons in the family have a name designating membership in the father’s descent group. **Patrilocality** (also called virilocality) is a term for post-marital residence pattern, which, in this case, means that the couple live with, or near, the husband’s family. While Americans generally expect that a couple will set up an independent household (called neolocality), most people in the world expect that either the bride or the groom will join their spouse’s multigenerational family. **Matrilocality** (also called uxorilocality), or living in the wife’s natal residence, is just one of many alternatives. Finally, **patrimony** is the estate that is inherited from one’s ancestors and is used here to raise the issue of who inherits. (Obviously, matrimony is not an antonym or alternative action.)

**Jia: The Traditional Chinese Family**

After a general introduction to Northeast Asia, I always start with China. China is the most powerful influence in the region, and many of the most important concepts in East Asia start in China. Central to any discussion of East Asia is Confucianism, and it is useful to see the *jia* as Confucianism manifest in domestic organization. Certainly the *jia* is patriarchal. Following the Five Relationships, husband predominates over wife. Or, more generally, the ideal woman should follow the Three Obediences: be obedient to her father when she is young, to her husband in middle age, and to her son in old age. Until the day he dies, the eldest male is, at least in theory, the source of all authority. The *jia* is imbedded in a strongly patrilineal kinship system. Children are born into their father’s lineage, and they take their father’s family name (patronymy). A wife keeps her natal patronym, a fact that may be taken as indicative of her permanent marginality in her husband’s patrilineage. Children are extremely important in the Chinese family and sons are in particular. Of course, Confucius said that the most unfilial act is not having progeny, and sons are necessary to perform lineage ancestors rituals. Sons also become the next generation of lineage members. Daughters, on the other hand, will leave the lineage upon marriage and become the responsibility of their husbands’ lineages. Daughters will leave their natal lineage not only figuratively, but also literally. The Chinese post-marital residence pattern is patrilocality. This means that sons stay in their natal household and bring in wives to join them, while daughters leave upon marriage and move to their husband’s house. Patrilocality, even more than Confucian values, goes a long way toward explaining the lower status and inferior treatment given to daughters in Chinese history. Sons stay with mother and father, working together to build the family economy and taking care of their parents in old age; daughters leave. Grooms remain in a familiar and supportive natal family where they know the rules of proper behavior; brides go off alone as strangers in a new environment. If family resources are limited, why would anyone invest any more than necessary in a daughter? One would be handing over resources to another family. The fact that daughters leave also makes sense of how Chinese allocate the patrimony. Only sons inherit. To give inheritance to daughters would be like giving it away. The far more interesting aspect of Chinese inheritance, however, is that it is
partible. Every son who is married (i.e., an adult) has a rightful claim to a portion of the family patrimony and may, at any time, demand partition of the family holding so that he may receive his share. At partition, each son receives an equal share of the family value, except the first son who receives a double portion with which he is expected to support his aging parents. The tension between patri locality and partible inheritance has a profound impact on Chinese families and Chinese society. Sons growing up together, working together with their parents, sharing a roof and a stove, may develop an efficient and diversified family economy. Financially it is usually very beneficial to keep the family together, no matter what other interpersonal problems exist. Not surprisingly, a multigenerational household with as many married couples and their children, known as the "joint family," is the Chinese ideal. When partition takes place, and all resources are divided, it may well be that the allocations are not large enough to support the newly splintered segments. It was in recognition of this impact that partible inheritance was instituted in the Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.) to undermine the power of feudal families. The consequence of this inheritance pattern is that there has been great social mobility through two millenia of Chinese history, with poor families growing rich, powerful and large under the guidance of a wise or demanding patriarch, only to have the family enterprise collapse back to poverty again in a few generations because of partition.

Ie: The Traditional Japanese Family

Japanese society and family organization are patriarchal. Although Confucianism has a long influence on Japan, its impact was slow to develop until the Tokugawa Period (1603-1868). The status of Japanese women can better be understood as a long decline that accompanies the end of civil society (Heian Period 857-1185) and the rise of feudal, military society, a process in which Confucianism may be less a cause of subordination than a rationalization. What is striking about male authority in the ie is that, unlike its Chinese counterpart, the head of the ie is not the eldest male. Rather, the eldest male goes into retirement around age sixty and leadership is passed on to (ideally) the first born son, who is then in vigorous middle age. The former head of the ie and his wife move to a smaller room or to an outbuilding. Although the new head probably makes decision in consultation with other family members, he is the voice of the family and he is granted final authority. To better understand the kinship dynamic, one should start with the issue of patrimony. The most important difference between the ie and the Chinese jia is that the Japanese patrimony is nonpartible. In a perfect Japanese world, there is at least one son and he inherits everything. That first son will stay in his natal house with his parents, eventually taking over headship (male primogeniture). When he marries his wife will join him (patrilocality), but all of his siblings must leave the house when they marry. The bride of the household head is removed from the register of her natal family and placed on the register of her husband's house. Both she and her children take her husband's family name (patronymy). Unlike the Chinese pattern where multiple married couples in each generation is possible and desirable, the Japanese ie pattern permits only one married couple, and their unmarried children, in any given generation. This configuration is known as the "stem family." But, what if there are no sons? Unlike the Chinese who are under strong ideological pressure to produce their own sons or, if they must, adopt the maximally close male relative, the Japanese are relatively relaxed about adopting sons ... but as adults. If there are daughters, but no sons, a family will have a daughter marry (to a noninheriting man) and then adopt that son-in-law. A married-in son-in-law moves into his wife's household (matrilocality), changes his name to her's, and eventually succeed to headship of the ie but, in these circumstances, his patriarchal authority may be challenged or overridden by his wife or father-in-law. (A pattern of ready adoption makes sense in the context of Tokugawa history. The population of Japan remained stable at about 35 million people for most of that period. If parents are only replacing themselves, then the average couple has only two children, and one family in four has no sons.) Although superficially patrilineal, the Japanese family is more concerned with successful continuation of the ie than with the niceties of consanguinity. What really counts is shared residence and participation in the ie enterprise. Even unrelated people, permanently living in the house, are listed on the ie registry along with consanguines. This primacy given to location, or "frame," over kinship in the ie has led many to classify Japan as not patrilineal but as a "house society."

Chipo: The Traditional Korean Family

The chipo of the Choson Period (1392-1910) is the model for the "traditional" Korean family. Having identified important differences between the Chinese and the Japanese traditional families, we will see that the chipo contains elements of each. The chipo is unquestionably patriarchal and, as in China, the eldest male is formally the source of household authority until his death. The Korean descent reckoning is patrilineal and became more important during the Choson Period, not simply because of Korean hyper-Confucianism, but also because carefully proven father-son ties were necessary to justify claims of elite yangban status. Being able to claim yangban descent was prestigious (and still is) but, more significantly, it was absolutely necessary for entry into powerful and rewarding government service. Not surprisingly, children take the name of their father's patrilineage, and wives keep their natal patronym. While the three "patris" addressed so far are very Chinese, the other two seem (almost) Japanese. Inheritance of wealth and succession to chipo headship passes to the first son (male primogeniture). His wife joins him in his natal family (patrilocality), just his sisters leave to join new families when they wed. However, the eldest son is responsible for making sure that his brothers are financially set and provided with reasonable domestic circumstances. Therefore, when younger brothers wed, they stay in the natal household and bring in their wives (patrilocality) for a number of years while arrangements are made. If all goes well, the non-head couples eventually move out to houses of
their own (neolocal post-marital residence).

In conclusion allow me to acknowledge that Korea is less well known to most people, including most East Asia specialists, but it should be included as an integral part of the regional dynamic. One way to make the most of Korean material is to present the land as the middle ground between China and Japan, the space across which ideas and armies pass. Korea also can be dealt with as a synthesis in the Northeast Asian dialectic, where contrasting elements of China and Japan meet and influence indigenous culture. One useful tool in such an analysis is the “Five Patris” model of traditional family organization. Using this model not only highlights the dynamics of the Korean family, and underscores the socio-cultural differences between often conflated China, Japan, and Korea, but it also naturally leads to a review of previously analyzed material each time it is applied.

N.B. I wish to underscore and clarify the significance of the word “traditional.” The family patterns identified by using the five patris are (hegemonic) ideal patterns from the past. Regional and individual circumstances often make a difference. Class differences may exist. And the family patterns may vary over time. The Chinese family pattern (jia) predominates for all Chinese classes for two millenia, but the Japanese (ie) and Korean (chip) family patterns identified here were primarily elite patterns (samurai and yangban, respectively) that were fully articulated in the last pre-modern periods (Tokugawa and Choson periods). The ideal patterns of the past are being radically altered by economic and political circumstances today; for an example, one need only consider the impact of the one child policy in China. I will refer to these family patterns in the present tense and ideologically they continue to be influential, but their predominance is of the past.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PATRIARCHY</th>
<th>CHINA</th>
<th>JAPAN</th>
<th>KOREA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES, Oldest man is head until death</td>
<td>YES, middle-aged man is head until oldest retires</td>
<td>YES, Oldest man is head until death</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PATRILINEALITY</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES, Superficially, but really &quot;house&quot; org. with extensive adult adoption</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PATRONYMY for children for wives</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES, but wife's patronym for adopted husbands and children</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PATRILocality</td>
<td>YES, all sons stay; daughters marry out</td>
<td>YES, for first son but non-first sons must marry matrilocal; if only daughters, adopted son-in-law marries in</td>
<td>YES, for first son; non-first sons begin patri-neo or later move neolocally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PATRIMONY</td>
<td>partible, 2 parts to first son, equal parts to other sons</td>
<td>nonpartible, everything to the first son or first daughter if no son</td>
<td>quasi-partible, first son inherits all but must set up younger brothers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>