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THE POSITION OF WOMEN WORKERS IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES IN
SOUTH KOREA: A MARXIST-FEMINIST ANALYSIS

A Research Paper presented by

Young-ock Kim

(South Korea)

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for obtaining the Degree of

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Members of the Examining Committee

Dr. G. Lycklama
Ms. R. I. Pittin

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Formulation of the Problem

South Korea has undergone rapid industrialization since the 1960's and more women have entered this sector of the labour market. The rate of female labour participation in the non-farm sector increased from 30.2 percent in 1963 to 37.9 percent in 1983, while the rate of their male counterparts decreased slightly from 74.6 percent to 71.8 percent during the same period [Korea Economic Planning Board, 1984]. However, the increase of female labour force participation does not mean direct improvement of women's position.

Since capital accumulation is a global process, the accumulation process in a given Third World capitalist country is largely determined by the way this economy is integrated into the world capitalist system. An important trend in the current phase of global accumulation is the movement of advanced capital to peripheral economies in pursuit of low-cost production. South Korea, with its export-led, labour-intensive policy has been integrated into the new stage of world wide accumulation at a rapid pace. This industrialization policy relies on cheap and disciplined labour. It is clear that the increased number of women wage labourers has been absorbed mainly into the export manufacturing industries which provide poor remuneration. Their employment pattern has been skewed into a narrow range of industries at the lower bottom of the job structure creating 'female industries' and 'female occupations'.

There is, therefore, a growing tendency of job segregation between men and women. In many cases, having paid work does not mean a better alternative for women. While old and traditional forms of subordination might be weakened, new forms of oppression and surplus extraction emerge. This is a function of the hierarchical sexual division of labour in wage labour.

Women continue to be oppressed and become more victims of the whole process of surplus extraction than ever before.

With the increase in female wage labourers, a number of researches have been done. They have concentrated mainly on job attitude, job satisfaction, and working conditions of women factory workers, or on female employment patterns in general. Although there is no doubt that these studies have revealed some of the problems faced by women and that the studies also give a clue to what conditions of women in the labour market look like, they are rather superficial. Most of them have always been one-dimensional with emphasis only on relation of women workers to the economic system. Job segregation and wage differentials between men and women have been explained only within the labour market. Nor does there seem to be an understanding of the double yoke of women, that is, the coexistence of oppression and exploitation (based on gender and on the economic system). Nor is the patriarchal system which is very strongly reproducing itself through the sexual division of labour enforced by institutions such as the family, schools, and the state given enough attention. The recommendations stipulated to help overcome the problem are not, therefore, related to the sources of the problem but rather at providing temporary solutions.

It is clear that women are crowded in a few occupations and are regarded as secondary workers. Then, it is time to put an emphasis on the root causes of women's inferior position as workers, embodied in job segregation and wage differentials. Such sexual division of labour is not only found in waged work outside the family. In fact, women's position in wage labour is structured by the divisions within the family. Thus, this paper employs the concept of the sexual division of labour and attempts to analyse the female wage labour in South Korea in relation to the labour process and the family. Towards this end, the paper focusses on two main interests. The first area of interest is in the reasons why women have been absorbed into certain occupations, low-wage and supposedly low-skill, during the last two decades. The second area of interest is also related to the concept of the sexual division of labour. Since this paper assumes the sexual division of labour as a social rather than a natural construct, the analysis of control mechanisms of women workers especially in manufacturing industries is of

great importance. This analysis of control mechanisms is the second major interest. It will lead to the evolution of a future strategy.

1.2 Methodology

The position of women workers should be analysed in relation to the economic system and gender. Thus, in the analysis the paper uses the Marxist historical and materialist method as well as the feminist analysis which identifies patriarchy as a historical and social structure.

The paper relies on secondary data from various sources in order to deal with the whole process of producing and reproducing the sexual division of labour in wage work. Annual reports of Korean Economic Planning Board and Ministry of Labour provide information on the general trend in female labour force participation. In order to analyse the position of women workers in manufacturing, the paper relies mainly on the survey of the Federation of Korean Trade Unions [1983] and the survey done by S.Y. Kim et. al. [1985]. Information on control mechanism and workers' resistance is provided by documents and research papers of individuals as well as by reports of individuals' personal experiences.

1.3 Content of the Paper

The main interest of the paper is to analyse the impact of industrialization on female labour. The industrialization policy was adopted in the early 1960's, and the analysis in this paper therefore concentrates mainly on the period between the 1960's and the 1980's. In order to focus on the impact of industrialization, mainly the non-farm sector will be discussed. The industrialization policy relies on labour-intensive, export-oriented strategy, within which light manufacturing industries such as textiles and electronics were to expand. Thus the main subject here is women workers in textiles and electronics manufacturing industries.

Chapter Two is devoted to formulating the theoretical foundation for the analysis of the position of women in relation to wage labour. As a starting point, analysis of the labour process within a Marxist framework will be

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this paper analysis of wage labour, specifically analysis of the labour process in the capitalist mode of production within a Marxist framework, serves as the theoretical basis upon which an analysis of female wage labour in South Korea can be built. It is, however, agreed by many feminists that Marx fails to provide an adequate explanation on the specificity of female labour as well as on why women's subordinate position in wage labour has been sustained. In the second part of the chapter, we will try to make up these gaps by introducing the concept of the sexual division of labour. Emphasis will be placed on how the unequal and hierarchical division of labour among gender lines has been constructed and reproduced in the labour market. The last part of the chapter will be devoted to discussing female labour in South East Asia. South Korea as a dependent capitalist country shares a lot of experiences with other South East Asian countries, not only in terms of similar cultural heritage but also in the sense that female wage labourers have become victims of the whole process of surplus extraction.

2.1 Female Wage Labour and the Labour Process

In asking the question why are women concentrated in unskilled low paying jobs, it would appear that some crucial answers lie in the form of organization of the labour process itself in the course of capital accumulation. Marx's analysis of the labour process reflects well the impact of different mode of production and technological change. Particularly, the notion of deskilling is useful, because it offers some basis for a reassessment of the relationship between sex and skill. Therefore, deskilling of the labour process could be a starting point to understand women's position within the labour force.

According to Marx [1967:339], labour is a process of man [sic] appropriating nature. In order for production to take place, the means of production (such as tools and machinery) and the labourer (who has nothing to sell but

While any worker could be employed in this 'deskilled' job, women and children are preferred.

In so far as machinery dispenses with muscular power, it becomes a means for employing workers of slight muscular strength or whose bodily development is incomplete, but whose links are all the more supple. the labour of women and children was therefore the first thing sought for by capitalists who used machinery. [Marx, 1967: 394].

Here, Marx pre-supposes that all work done by men needs skilled and muscular labour, while those performed by women do not. He disregards the physical strength needed by women to carry on their domestic responsibilities and their task of procreation. This naturalistic assumption, a main defect, is found again in Marx's view of men as breadwinners and will be discussed later in the general criticism of Marxist analysis.

Another problem shown in Marx's argument is that he emphasizes the introduction of machines as main characteristic of modern industry, thus, a tendency of technological determinism. It is not denying that machinery is important. In fact, through technology, the labour process has been transformed rapidly. Machinery, however, is an aid in the process, not a motive force.

In deskilling there are two possible emphases. One (a managerial strategy) is to exert pressure on labour itself and to maximise efficiency of effort through reorganising work methods and extending the division of labour. Skilled work is broken down into a series of simplified routinised processes which can be undertaken by less skilled, and cheap, labour. The second possibility (mechanisation) is to replace human labour by machines. As seen in H. Braverman's [1974;197] description of "management's use of machinery", mechanization itself cannot explain the whole change of the labour process. The importance of managerial aspect is well explained by H. Braverman.

According to H. Braverman [1974], capitalism's capacity to make profits depends on the degree of command it can assert over its workers. Unless capital can directly control the organization of work (the labour process), it cannot dictate how much surplus value is produced. When knowledge and training are required to make a product, the worker who has that knowledge, eg. how things are made or what kind of operations must be performed to make things a certain way, also has power over the speed and quality of work. If, however, that craft knowledge can be transferred from the worker to the technical experts or managers, the worker no longer fully comprehends a process and capitalist control over production is greatly increased. Thus it has become

essential for the capitalist that control over the labour process passes from the hands of the worker into his own. This transition presents itself in history as the progressive alienation from the worker; to the capitalist, it presents itself as the problem of management. [H. Braverman, 1974:58].

In its attempts to assert its control over the labour process, capital has continually reduced the skill component in all forms of labour, making all work increasingly alike, and increasingly dull, dreary and degraded (homogenization). In fact, in the so-called scientific management "the separation of hand and brain is the most decisive single step in the division of labour taken by the capitalist mode of production." [Ibid: 126]. Capital has eroded the material basis for skill distinctions, thereby creating a workforce with a thin layer of skilled men at the top and a mass of unskilled workers at the bottom. At the same time the capitalists can earn the greatest possible profits by keeping down the total wages. In sum, the detailed division of labour enables the capitalist to benefit in two ways: by receiving greater profits and by gaining greater control over labour.

Precisely how deskilling occurs depends on the specific conditions that exist within an industry. Although the use of scientific management and the mechanisation of production are strategies often employed in conjunction with one another, the weight of emphasis will be determined by a certain situation. Especially the use of machinery, as Marx [1967: 515-516] argues,

is governed by how much capital is available or such investment and whether it is adequately compensated by reduced labour costs. Where particularly cheap labour is available, there may be no particular incentive to replace labour with expansive machines.

A. Coyle [1982:11-12] provides useful examples. In the printing industry, labour control of production can only be significantly broken by the introduction of new machinery. In clothing industry, on the other hand, where a characteristically low capital investment contributes to the industry's hand-to-mouth existence, fashion and seasonal changes, unstable market, and narrow profit margins militate against further investment. The clothing industry needs a rapidly adaptable labour process and human labour is more adaptable than machinery. While technical change such as the streamlining of the product has occurred, still the industry relies on squeezing labour. It is still true that if wages can be kept at rock bottom levels, small producers can be very competitive and profitable: thus, the wages are amongst the lowest in the manufacturing sector. No doubt, women are particularly vulnerable to this pressure. On the whole, machinery, unskilled labour, and women workers often go together.

Then, why is women's entry into wage labour preferred during the deskilling process of a capitalist production? It is not because machinery dispenses with muscular power. As long as the motive forces behind deskilling are cheapening the labour power and making possible more control over labour, women are preferred because their cheap labour helps capital to possess a maximum control over labour thereby insuring it a high rate of capital accumulation. Relying on the theory of value, V. Beechey [1978: 184-187] elaborates the advantages accrued to capital by employing female labour. The first advantage resides in reducing the overall value of labour power: working women and children would spread the value of labour power over the whole working-class family and so reduce the value of any one member's labour power. A second might be that women have less training, and therefore the costs of reproducing their labour power are lower than that of skilled. A third is that female labour can be paid wages below the value of labour power because of the assumption that women are subsidiary workers and their husband's wages are responsible for the costs of reproduction. A

fourth advantage concerns the circulation of commodities: the employment of women leads to an increased demand for ready-made articles, and hence speeds up the circulation process of commodities. A final advantage is that the addition of women to the ranks of the workers breaks down male workers' resistance to the despotism of capital and thus benefits the capitalists' need to divide and rule the labour force. For Marx and Engels, capitalism has a revolutionary nature. Capital is interested only in labour power -of whatever sex, race or rank in society- and selects its labour power on the purely quantitative basis of how much it can contribute to profits. How then do 'ghettoes of women's work' in V. Beechey's [1978:188] terminology arise?

In fact, Marxist theory explains how deskilling of the labour process has created the unskilled jobs which women undertake and how it is of benefit to capital. But it tells us nothing about why women predominate in particular areas of such work, why women's wages are so persistently lower than men's and why the blanket categorization of women's work is always that it is of lower skill value than men's work. Simply to analyse the benefits of this type of work for capital is insufficient.

The main reason of Marx's failure to answer these questions is derived from sex-blindness. He starts his analysis from prevailing assumptions. Because of the simple naturalistic assumption that women are physically weak and rather unskilled, the introduction of machines could dispense with muscular strength and could lead to women's employment. By virtue of the existence of the family where men are breadwinners, women are subsidiary workers provided with low wages. There is no further investigation about why women are subordinate to men inside and outside the family and why it is not the other way around.

As a result, Marxist theory itself lacks a theory of the family. In theory exploitation is explicitly described as the expropriation of surplus value. "Expropriation" must be differentiated from voluntary exchange. "Surplus value" must be conceptualised as value produced, but not consumed, by the worker. The distinction between these two aspects of exploitation is particularly crucial to any assessment of the Marxian theory of patriarchy,

as N. Folbre [1982: 318] asserts, "because it explains why Marxists seldom if ever apply the term exploitation to the forms of involuntary inequality which they observe within the family".

The failure to find basic causes for women's subordination leads directly to the failure to develop a strategy for women's emancipation. However, exploitative the more extensive employment of women and children, Marx saw it as a long-run tendency towards universal proletarianization and it would, he argued, create a new economic foundation for a higher form of the family and of the relations between the sexes [Marx, 1967: 489-490]. This point is further developed by Engels as follows:

Since large-scale industry has transferred the woman from the house to the labour markets and the factory and makes her, often enough, the breadwinner of the family, the last remnants of male domination in the proletarian home have lost all foundation. [Engels, 1968: 508].

For both Marx and Engels, the first premise for the emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry. However, far from fulfilling the prophecies of Marx and Engels of destroying sexual division within the family by drawing women indiscriminately into wage labour, the reality is job segregation and further development of the exploitation.

"Pure capitalism" in terms of H. Hartmann [1979:10] has never existed. Capitalism in its historical development encounters individuals who are already sex-stratified. Since women's subordination has predated capitalism and since work -whether waged or unwaged- has always been divided along sexual lines, surely we cannot hope to explain the sex segregation of capitalist waged work solely in terms of the profit imperatives of capitalism itself.

Against 'economism', many feminists began searching for explanations which lay in the realm of family life, sexual relations, and cultural formation of gender differences. The concept of 'patriarchy' and 'the sexual division of

labour' began to be employed. Even the construction and maintenance of the hierarchical sexual division of labour was argued to have its own 'laws of motion' by some feminists such as Hartmann [1979].

Women, however, share experiences with male labourers within the working class and subject to the remorseless cycle of capital accumulation. What is needed is to take the issue of the hierarchical sexual division of labour into the heart of Marxist economic analysis itself. An understanding of 'actual capitalism', therefore, will be based on our examination of the interaction of two separate dynamics -that of patriarchy, and that of the capitalist economic machine. The concept of the sexual division of labour has been employed to link two spheres.

2.2 The Concept of the Sexual Division of Labour

A definition of the sexual division of labour should take account of two factors. One is related to its dynamic process. Dividing roles or tasks according to sex is common to every society. However, at any point in time, of course, the division of tasks and value attached to those tasks varies from society to society. As societies undergo changes, the nature of work changes, and so does the sexual division of labour. As a second factor, in most circumstances, it is clear that the assignation of tasks on the basis of sex has an ideological origin. Any division of labour which has reached a certain level of specialization (taking for instance the separation between manual and mental) cannot be analysed in strictly economic terms: not only productive (and reproductive) tasks are allocated by it, but also political and religious activities. But in the case of the sexual division of labour task allocations are mediated by a particularly powerful ideological operator.

Thus, the sexual division of labour is defined here as "a system of allocation of agents to positions within the labour process on the basis of sex, and a system of exclusion of certain categories of agents from certain positions within social organization on the basis of sex, and lastly a system of reinforcement of the social construction of gender" [K. Young, 1978: 125]. In addition to this definition, we stress also the importance

of the portions of product that are assigned to each sex in the labour market, and correspondingly the distribution of production in the household.

Such sexual divisions therefore neither natural, nor a simple division of tasks which embodies merely complementary roles for men and women. As a matter of fact, it is a social construction and it means a hierarchical division of labour along gender lines by which each gender is invested with socially unequal value and power. The fact that sexual divisions are not natural but create, serves as the basic premise of the paper. As long as a sexual division of labour is created deliberately, it needs a mechanism to be maintained. And at the same time it implies a possibility to be broken by the oppressed.

The divisions are found not only in waged work outside the family, but also within the family and in fact, women's position is structured by a double set of determinations arising from relations between 'economy' and 'culture'; the use of the concept of the sexual division of labour provides a way to look at this relation.

The Sexual Division of Labour in the Patriarchal System

It is assumed that in primitive societies there existed a rather simple division of tasks between partners; this has been transformed into the sexual division of labour in our definition. In spite of the theoretical difficulties raised by attempts to explain the creation of such divisions, there have been some efforts to explain the transformation process.

Human reproduction is frequently used as an explanation, or at least justification, of this division of labour. The association of women with domestic tasks, however, does not explain of itself why such tasks should be consistently undervalued within the process of social production, nor why, by extension, whatever tasks are assigned to women tend to be less highly valued than those undertaken by their male counterparts. This points to the importance of distinguishing different types of productive units in which the spheres of men and women are complementary in an equal terms -and therefore there is no hierarchisation of tasks- and those in which man and woman,

or a few members of each sex, form together a productive unit in a familial form and the roles of the sexes are not longer strictly complementary. The development of the family seemed to be facilitated by the evolution of private property and by the emergence of the state; the two are closely related to each other.

In "The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State" Engels argues [1981: 113-115] that the material base for women's transformation from equal members of the society to subordinate wives lay in the development of valuable productive private property, initially the domestication of large animals. Although he refers to the sexual division of labour between men and women as the first division in the society, he assumes that this division is natural which is not related to women's position in the society:

the division of labour between the sexes is determined by quite other causes than by the position of women in society [Engels, 1981: 113].

This assumption that the sexual division of labour is caused by natural factors is reflected in Marx's analysis that the labour power is based on the concept of man as "the breadwinner" and women as dependent housewives.

On the other hand, V. Muller [1977:8] stresses the emergence of social institutions, such as the state, while analysing the case of the decline of Anglo-Saxon and Welsh tribal society and the formation of the English nation-state, a process which occurred from the eighth to the fifteenth century. Although in the tribal system land inheritance was patrilineal and residence patrilocal, a woman as well as a man upon adulthood received a share of cattle from the gwely (four generation kinship group). Women had their own means of economic subsistence and they were political participants both in their husbands' and in their natal lineages. Tribal customs were, however, undermined by the emergence of the State. The reason is:

"Since the state is interested in the alienation of the tribal resource base -its land and its labour power- it finds it convenient to use the traditional gender division

of labour and resources in tribal society and places them in a hierarchical relationship both internally (husband over wife and children) and externally (lords over peasants and serfs)" [V.Muller, 1977: 13].

The king levied obligations on the males as "heads" of individual households. A woman's work became private for the benefit of her husband, rather than public for the benefit of the kingroup. Simultaneously, women lost their group rights and came under the authority of their husbands.

Whether the sexual division of labour was created, or rather more accurately reinforced by the development of the private property and or by the formation of the state, both arguments highlighted the privatisation of family life as a realm from which the asymmetrical sexual division of labour sprang. Through the privatization of family, women have become socially invisible, hidden behind their husbands who embody the unit vis-a-vis other similar units in the society. On the other hand, men were, as representative persons, given privileged command of women's labour, the product of their labour, and the distribution of products—"the conspicuous consumption" in terms of F. Edholm, O Harris and K. Young [1977:125]. This social relation is expressed in the concept of patriarchy, which is, as H. Hartmann [1976:138] defines it, "a set of social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men, and solidarity among them, which enable them to control women."

Certainly, patriarchy has existed before capitalism. This explains the part played by male workers in maintaining job segregation by sex. Hartmann [1976: 152] describes the effect of centuries of patriarchal relations on the labour market:

Since men's superior position was reinforced by the state, and men acted in the political arena as heads of households and in the households as heads of production units, it seems likely that man would develop more organizational structures beyond their households...Men's organizational knowledge, then, grew out of their position in the family and in the

division of labour.

The relative importance of the area of men's domination has been increased by the capitalist organisation of industry. Prior to the penetration of capital, the basic unit of production was the family which developed an internal division of labour based on sex and age. Though women perform the domestic task as well as other production tasks, the division of labour was rather horizontal with every member contributing and cooperating in the production process. But with the advent of capitalist production where the unit of production moved not only from the household to the factory but also from the family to individual, the division of labour became more marked. The domestic labour process was isolated from the dominant mode of production, and its separation from the means of exchange had the effect of rendering it invisible and "valueless". This stands in sharp contrast to the "distinctness" of the wage. Men followed the production to the factory and earned wages, while women were left at home to ensure the continuous reproduction of the family as a whole.

The Concept of Reproduction

One important question is why domestic labour stands in contrast to the wage, in other words, why both husband and wife cannot be wage workers in equal terms. The answer resides in the concept of reproduction, one particular area of the sexual division of labour which has been so frequently the exclusive preserve of women either because men have represented women and children "outside" or because the work itself has been conceived as natural. The concept of reproduction is multi-dimensional, and thus needs to be distinguished. First of all, it means the reproduction of labour which involves the production of human beings. This includes not only the bearing of children but also their care and socialization, maintenance and training to fit into the existing social structure of society. Apart from this the definition of reproduction is related to social reproduction as "the process by which all the main production relations in society are constantly recreated and perpetuated" [M. Mackintosh, 1984:5]. Thus, for

example, in capitalist societies, reproduction involves not only the production and maintenance of the wage labour force, but also the reproduction of capital itself.

The productive activities which are categorized under reproduction which involve the production of life and working capacity are essential. Women's domestic work is thought to lower the value of labour power by producing use values which contributes to the reproduction of labour power in the home. It is usually assumed that the payment made by capital to labour is premised on the existence of a certain value of domestic labour. In the presence of domestic labour, the wage is lower than it would have been had the standard of living of the working class been solely dependent on purchase commodities. In this way, N. Folbre [1982:319] argues that surplus labour is extracted from the housewife and is ultimately transformed into surplus value, in the vortex of the debate whether housework produces surplus value or not. Women's reproductive work is important not only for the patriarchal family but also is profitable to capital. Thus the reproductive work is to fall to women, whether they are participating in wage work or not.

The Sexual Division of Labour in the Work Place

When capital drew women and children into wage labour and thus, appeared to break down the pre-existing patriarchal division of labour, capitalist production seemed to conflict with the patriarchal domination of women in two respects. One is that men wanted to assure that women would continue to perform the appropriate tasks at home and thus, preserve the family. Another aspect was the fear that women would infiltrate industry, usurp men's jobs as well as achieve economic independence. However, it could not be the case, because it was not the intention of capitalists, from the beginning, to free women completely from domestic work. And because women's employment could be advantageous to men, if it is controlled to remain secondary. Apparently both interests of capital and male workers in maintaining the sexual division of labour, are interlinked and go together rather than conflict with each other. Their interests coincide in certain respects in the issues of the maintenance of the working class family and women's employment as well. I will examine how the employment structure of women has been affected by this "partnership".

a) The Impact of "Long Live the Working Class Family" on Female Employment.

First of all, a shared interest of capital and male workers is found in the issue of preserving the working class family. I will carry on the discussion on the basis of the situation in England. It is because of the rich experience in England with its early industrialization and because a general tendency might be shown at the risk of possible danger of overgeneralization. In the process of industrialization and the establishment of the factory systems, women followed the work into the factories; this caused men's concern about home life and the care of children. Factory work in the 1830's in England, as Engels [1969: 173-174] described, had particularly devastating consequences for women operatives: deformities in the pelvis, anaemia, delayed puberty and dysmenorrhoea were caused by long and intense hours of factory work; pregnancy was dangerous to the health of the mother who had been weakened and deformed by factory labour. When compounded by the general poverty and malnutrition of the women, and the unsanitary conditions of working-class housing, this meant high rates of infant mortality and female mortality in the child bearing ages.

Apart from its adverse effects upon the health of women and children, factory work by women meant that the domestic tasks of cooking, cleaning, sewing, and mending all suffered. The living standards of the working class were reduced even further and Marx [1967:395] states "...economy and judgment in the consumption and preparation of the means of subsistence (became) impossible..."

In order to improve the working-class standard of living and to restore the family, nineteenth-century British workers tried to draw women back home. Thus they waged struggles for protective legislation, in conjunction with a campaign for "a family wage", a rate sufficient to allow a man to support his unemployed wife and dependent children. Also for capitalists, it was important that the working class family should survive because it serves their interests. The reproduction of the labour force is in the interest of all capitalists, but is of no immediate interest to the production unit, i.e. to the individual capitalist. As a result, the interruptions occasioned by pregnancy, childbirth, and infant-care by women workers, are only

viewed as costs to the individual capitalist, who attempts to reduce such costs as much as possible thus to transfer them to the individual family. It explains the phenomenon that capitalists prefer young women, or married women but only in certain years in their life cycles.

Many women were forced to return home. For Marx and Engels who were in favour of protective legislation, the family wage and the working class family, the British protective legislation of the 1840's was a victory for the working class as a whole. Similarly J. Humphries [1980:159] argues that the strategies of protective legislation and the family wage were largely beneficial to women as members of the working class, through increased men's wages and decreased factory work. Thus, according to her, although the long-run effect of the use of sexist ideology was to make economic equality more difficult to gain, its immediate impact was beneficial to most women. However a serious flaw in her theory is that the (hierarchical) relations between men and women within the family are well nigh invisible. Another problem is that her discussion lies in her almost exclusive focus on women with family connections to male wage labour, ignoring women who depend on wage work for their survival such as widows or unmarried women.

It should be pointed out that the relationship between legislative rights and discrimination against women was ambiguous. Women need protection against certain forms of exploitation, but this can lead to their exclusion from whole areas of activity. For example, specifying the conditions under which women may work, or legislating for equal pay may have the effect of their ceasing to be employed at all. In fact, those measures might be introduced for restricting women's sphere in the labour market. In discussing the development of the wage labour force in England and the United States, H. Hartmann [1976] focused on male workers' espousal of sex-specific protective legislation and the family wage through utilization of trade unions for the purpose of exacerbating job segregation between men and women. While unions claimed a family wage for men, they "did not support protective legislation for men, although they continued to do so for women. Protective legislation, rather than organization, was the preferred strategy only for women." [H. Hartmann, 1976:165].

Apparently Humphries mistakenly equates the interests of working-class families with the interests of the working class including working women as a whole, obscuring the fact that not all workers lived in families headed by men, and not all family members were equal.

In sum, women's reproductive role was to be maintained for the interests of both working class family and capitalists. At the same time, the emphasis on a woman's responsibilities being first and foremost in the home puts her at a disadvantage in the labour market, and weakens her right to paid employment. During the process of industrialization protective legislation and the family wage affected women's participation in wage labour. An immediate effect was that many women were forced to return to their families or to be excluded from certain jobs. In the long run, women have come to participate in wage labour intermittently, which has exacerbated women's vulnerable position as workers. Women tend to participate in social production for certain years in their life cycle, such as working until marriage or pregnancy, and working after being free from child bearing and rearing. Also a part-time job has emerged as women's job, since it makes it possible for women to carry out two roles side by side.

b) The Joint Interests of Capital and "Working Class Family" in Women's Employment.

Another issue is that individual working men like individual capitalists have a strong material interest in female employment insofar as the latter benefits from employing cheap and perhaps docile female workers, and the former from the higher family income secured by working wives and daughters since men have control over the products of female labour. But this assumes a precondition: that women should be occupationally segregated and thus should remain in a secondary position in wage labour. The dominant position of men should be maintained.

The introduction of machinery and scientific management made possible the entry of women into a wide range of hitherto male occupations. Male workers viewed the employment of women as a threat to their jobs. Employers would

prefer the cheaper, more docile female labour. There was a resulting tendency to reduce wages because of the lower value of female labour power due to their supposedly lower consumption standards. With regard to skill, capital has succeeded in reducing the need for craft knowledge, and it has eroded the material basis for skill distinctions. Thus all workers are threatened by the obsolescence of skills, or by replacement by other, equally skilled workers who are in plentiful supply. J. Rubbery [1980:257] maintains that "the threat may induce defensive actions on the part of the workers to stratify the labour force, control entry to occupations and maintain skill status long after these skill divisions have become irrelevant."

In fact, male workers played an important part in stratifying the work force through the utilization of trade union associations. Their deliberate effort to maintain their dominant position in the labour market could be understood by examining the reason why men's response was to attempt to exclude women rather than to organize them. If male trade unionists had organized women workers instead of excluding them, and had pressed for improved working conditions for all workers rather than protective legislation for women and children then, there would have been greater participation by women in wage labour and a low incidence of sex-biased, occupational segregation.

Male workers in England in 19th century tried in many ways to keep their dominant position in the wage labour market. Chief among them seemed to be the evolution of the notion of skill. They have fought long and hard against the actual de-skilling of work processes, fought to retain their craft position, or at least their craft labels. And in these struggles, craft has been increasingly identified with masculinity, with the claims of the breadwinner, with the degree of union strength. Skill has been increasingly defined against women-skilled work is work that women do not do. In the terms of A. Phillips and B. Taylor [1980:85], this brought about the "sexualization of skill labels".

Female labour is usually classified as "unskilled". This classification, most of the time, does not have any relationship to the ability or knowledge

needed for a specific job to be performed. A. Phillips and B. Taylor [1980:79] have revealed that

"The classification of women's jobs as unskilled and men's as skilled or semi-skilled frequently bears little relation to the actual amount of training or ability required of them...far from being an objective economic fact, skill is often an ideological category imposed on certain types of work depending on the sex and power of the workers who perform it."

Skill as a political concept plays an important part in the power relations between men and women. It is a sex/gender weapon, as C. Cockburn [1981:116] points out.

Women, when entering the labour market come with "inferior skill" derived from the belief that women are primarily housewives. The domestic tasks they perform are supposed not to need any skill. The training or socialization of children is considered to be an easy and natural process. It is because this training of domestic labour is socially invisible, privatized, that the skill it produces is attributed to nature and the jobs that make use of it are classified as "unskilled" or "semi-skilled".

"The famous nimble fingers of young women are not an inheritance from their mothers in the same way that they may inherit the colour of their skin or eyes, they are the result of the training they have received from their mothers and other female kin since early infancy in the tasks socially appropriate to women's role" [D. Elson & R. Pearson, 1984:149].

Thus, little training and "on the job" learning is required because the women are already trained. As Sharpston [1976:334] records, "it takes six weeks to teach industrial garment making to girls who already know how to sew in Morocco." The fact that women get most of their skill training from their homes and need a short time for extra training places their jobs in

the category of unskilled labour. Meanwhile the general beliefs that women are primarily housewives, and that their domestic responsibilities particularly child care deny women access to most training, ensure their exclusion from areas which need more knowledge and skill, and reduce their ability to join training programmes even if the chance is there.

Jobs which are classified as needing unskilled labour, tend to become skilled when male labour start to occupy it, or remain unskilled when occupied by female labour. Because women enter them already determined as inferior bearers of labour. "Sex and class were inescapably interlocked, both in worker's lives and in workers' thought. This has always been true of women workers", as B. Taylor [1980:201] states.

In addition to the role of male workers, the role of employers should not be underestimated. They act to exacerbate existing divisions among workers in order to further divide them, thus weakening their class unity and reducing their bargaining power.

While women participate in wage labour, and thus provide cheap labour to capitalists and increased income to the working class family, they are excluded from a variety of occupations (especially the best paid ones), and "crowded" into a few low-paid, considered low-skilled jobs which often involve less exercise of authority or control.

The result of the potential existence of a coincidence of interests and therefore political alliance between the capitalist class and working-class men has been the occupational segregation of women in the wage labour force, the lowering of female wages, the perpetuation of sexual inequality in relation to access to the means of subsistence and the reproduction of female subordination in the home.

2.3 Female Wage Labour in Southeast Asia

Since the late 1960's a new strategy for profit maximisation has become available to women in the third world. It is part of the deskilling process. The sector of employment is being created in the less developed countries (LDCs) because competitive conditions within industries as a whole, the militancy of organized labour, social democracy, and inflationary pressures in developed countries, have led to a search for cheaper labour. The most important factor in choosing the location of a so-called world market factory is the availability of a suitable labour force which is cheaper and which can insure a higher rate of capital accumulation. This higher rate is achieved as a result of greater intensity of work without any superior technology. Asian women were seen not only as cheap labour but also as docile, more willing to put up with the tedious and meticulous work typical of export-oriented light manufacturing. South Korea(1) as such a country has drawn international capital. To understand better the situation of Korean women workers, it seems to be relevant to examine the general conditions of female wage labour in the new manufacturing industries, particular to Southeast Asia.

Anatomy of the New International Division of Labour

One of the specific features of capitalist societies is economic expansionism. As J. O'Connor [1975:155] points out, in capitalist societies,

"foreign trade and investment are rightly considered to be the 'engines of growth'. Expansion is necessary to maintain the rhythm of economic activity in the home or metropolitan economy and has an orderly, methodical, permanent character."

While profits from overseas trade and investment are an integral part of national income, and are considered in a matter-of-fact manner, the expense of stabilizing the world capitalist social order consists of the costs of maintaining the comprador ruling classes abroad. It takes the form of

1) It is clearly shown in a Korean Airlines advertisement: "For the cost of manufacturing two shirts in Korea, this is what can be manufactured in Great Britain..." The picture showed one shirt sleeve ("Garment Worker", November, 1975, cited in A.Coyle, 1982:12).

foreign aid. In particular, balance-of-payments assistance through the International Monetary Fund, infrastructure loans by the World Bank and USAID economically strengthen export industries in the Third World and politically harden the rule of local bourgeoisies whose economic interests are based on export production, processing, and trade. In fact, in order to foster the development of capitalism, the state has used the powers which "have to do with taxation, the regulation of foreign trade, public lands, commerce and transportation, the maintenance of armed forces, and the discharge of the functions of public administration" [H. Braverman, 1974:284].

Also the local bourgeoisie and the state in the Third World are eager to receive foreign aid as well as to form partnership arrangements with the international monopolies for political stabilization and economic development. Many Third World countries have incorporated the official trade union organization into the state apparatus and either suspended, or failed to enforce, major provisions of labour legislation. In Southeast Asia, the power of the state is vigorously used to enforce controls on labour as well as to set up free trade zones and to provide tax write-offs to international corporations.

However, joint ventures and partnerships are no more than up-to-date versions of the colonial policy of creating dependent, passive local bourgeoisies. Export markets for satellite manufactured goods are weak because national and regional monopolies operate behind high tariff walls, and, in addition, monopoly controls which the multinational corporations exercise over international distribution systems and marketing outlets place insurmountable barriers to large-scale satellite manufacturing exports. Or the multinational corporations are often "runaway shops" able and willing to relocate production in other backward countries in search of cheap labour.

The existence of the new manufacturing industries in the LDCs per se does not depend on superior technology or natural resources, but on lower wages, more arduous work, fewer fringe benefits and less protection for workers. During the restructuring of the production process, instead of transferring tasks or rearranging them within different departments in the same location,

part of the production line is transported to the third world. "The transfer of the goods across national boundaries, though ostensibly organized through market sales and purchases, may in substance be a transfer between two departments of an integrated production process." [D. Elson and R. Pearson, 1984:20]. And such parts are largely based on old-established technologies: their production processes are standardised, repetitious, call for very little modern knowledge, and are highly labour-intensive. In many cases the reason for the high labour intensity is that the production processes are assembly-type operations which have proved difficult and/or costly to mechanise further. Thus textiles and electronics are among the major primary commodity exports of the undeveloped capitalist economies.

Women Workers and Capital

In the industries which are related to the LDCs, the vast majority of employees are women. A. Robert [1983:28] reports that the percentage of female employment in total employment in manufacturing is reported to amount to more than 80 per cent. The share of female workers in textile and clothing production may be even higher. This trend to "feminisation" poses a general problem. If cheap labour is universally abundant in the LDCs, why is it that firms seek to employ women rather than men?

The reward for the labour is extremely poor, since employment is provided on the basis of low pay. Women, especially young women, are regarded as those who do not support dependents. Even they are frequently considered as members of a family which is headed by men. Their wage could be lower and the lower wage is justified on these assumptions.

It is therefore, more profitable for capital to employ women than men in those jobs. Several studies have indicated that the unit cost of production is lower with female labour "wages in world market factories are often ten times lower than in comparable factories in developed countries while working hours per year are up to 50 per cent higher. The US Tariff Commission found that productivity of workers in foreign establishments assembling or processing products of US origin generally approximates that of workers with the same job classification in the United States of America. but several

studies have reported instances of productivity substantially higher than in the USA." [Elson & Pearson, 1984:21].

Raising and maintaining high productivity with low wages is often through the backing of particularly coercive forms of state power. Several studies on world market factories [N. Heyzer, 1978, J. Cardoso-Khoo, 1978] point out that one important common factor is the absence of virtually any legislation protecting or guaranteeing workers' rights on such matters as health and safety, job security, minimum wages, fringe benefits, and trade union organisation. In Free Trade Zones governments have deliberately put women's employment outside the law.

Women Workers and the Working Class Family

The question on "feminisation" can be answered partly from the perspective of the interests of the working class family. This explanation is particularly useful in the Southeast Asian context which has a strong heritage of the importance of the family. Since the material base of patriarchy is men's control over women's labour power under the ideology of the collective interest of household members, neither married women nor unmarried women appear to be freed from their position of subordination within the family despite their crucial contributions to the family budget. G. Sen [1980:85] mentions "the mother whose private interests are always secondary, the daughter whose aspirations must give way to those of the son". While young women are given low investment in human capital (education, professional experience), they are generally "dutiful daughters" contributing a large proportion of their earnings to help support their parents or younger siblings. In Hong Kong a survey carried out in 1970 of 660 young women factory workers aged between 14 and 21 showed that 40% of them gave all their income to their families, while 88% gave at least half [quoted from D. Elson, 1983:8].

Another Form of Women's Subordination

The conditions of female wage labour in the LDCs are that women's access to wage employment is temporary, unstable, and insecure; financial independence, such as it is, is very short lived; and such employment can not represent the path to a life-profile as income earners. Secondly, there is evidence that familial social controls on women are not relaxed even though they are earning an independent income. The overall effect of women's employment in the capitalist labour force is thus likely to be a transformation rather than a dissolution of women's subordination.

Old forms of subordination operated through the social structures of rural and family life in a rather monolithic way. While old forms have remained strong, the development of social structures of the factory, the trade union, the modern state, and the city has added to the complexities of subordination. Patriarchal interests, despite the diffused form, are well interlinked.

Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the reproduction of the sexual division of labour has some of the same effects as the deskilling process of developed countries. For example, in textile manufacturing in Singapore studies by N. Heyzer [1978], while the majority of female workers are clustered at the bottom of the wage structure, women workers are simple "an interchangeable commodity in the production process"; they are readily dismissed and re-employed according to the ups and downs of world demand; skill means simply "the ability to master the fastest technique of doing definite routine tasks." The case studies of both N. Heyzer and J. Cardoso-Khoo showed that while the vast majority of employees were women, supervisors and management except at the lowest level, were invariably men. It is women who are employed on the main assembly processes as semi-skilled and un-skilled labour, whilst men hold on to an ever-diminishing range of jobs which are accepted as skilled work and men's work.

Myth of "Oriental Submissiveness"

A common explanation for using women is that they have favourable physical or psychological characteristics - manual dexterity, subservience, consequent suitability for monotonous work, and little propensity to organise. However, this view is derived from the ideological misrepresentation of

gender identities and is no more than the myth of a "submissive oriental girl". As Elson and Perason [1984:29] suggest, an explanation must be sought in terms of the social relations of gender, the construction of specifically female and male social positions, and the wider social context.

In fact, far from relying on women's docility the joint interests of international firms and the state employ various strategies to control women workers. As shown in some case studies, personnel policies in the manufacturing plants are carefully designed to play up feminine submissiveness and to divert attention from pay and working conditions by stressing female stereotypes and superficial consumption: women are provided with lessons in fashion and beauty care, companies organise beauty contests and western style dances. At the same time, in the work place, women are forced to wear uniforms and are strictly supervised by male managers, which is a new form of gender subordination of daughters to their fathers. Female sexual vulnerability is exploited for maintaining their inferior position, and reproducing the sexual division of labour itself. It is in this context that the evidence of growing violence against women must be seen.

However, the employment of various mechanisms to control female wage labour, in itself, provides a material basis for a process of struggle for breaking their supposed docility and the sexual division of labour per se. In spite of being faced with extensive use of state power to control labour unions and prevent strikes, women workers have at times publically thrown off their docility and subservience. But the forms that workers' organisations have traditionally taken have been inadequate for women because they have failed to recognise and built into their structure the specificity of gender. According to Elson and Pearson [1984:38], "trade unions have been organised to represent 'the worker', political parties to represent 'the working class'. The failure to take account of gender means that in practice they have tended to represent male workers. Working women have tended to be represented only through their dependence on male workers." It seems to be very much true also in the Third World where frequently official trade union organisations predominate, and the male members of trade unions are often, or in most cases, on the side of the state.

Under these conditions, the more common pattern is that women workers have taken direct action. Tang [1980] reports that women workers' struggles tend to erupt outside the official trade union framework; taking for instance the form of 'wild cat' sit down strikes or walk-outs, rather than being organised around official negotiations.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL VIEW ON THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN KOREA

Throughout this paper the sexual division of labour has been treated as a central concept to analyse the present pattern of female wage labour. The importance of the strong persistence of the patriarchal practices and ideology has been stressed in order to understand the specificity of the subordination of women workers which can not be explained by concentrating on the labour process itself. The present job segregation is an extended form of the existing sexual division of labour within the family in the confines of capitalism. Given that simple division of tasks between men and women has been transformed into the hierarchical sexual division of labour with the growth of the patriarchal social system, and given that the patriarchal ideology has survived the transformation of the mode of production, it is important to examine how the patriarchal society and ideology has been formulated and reproduced. This chapter attempts to view the position of Korean women in a historical perspective, with particular attention on factors which affect women's position, particularly in relation to women's work.

The chapter is divided into three parts in chronological order. The first part is devoted to analysing the situation of women before the colonization of the country. Here the main argument is that in the traditional Korean society family has been established as the site of male authority through the powerful language of Confucian beliefs. The colonization period will be dealt with in the second part. Although this period was not long(36 years from 1910 to 1945), it has enormous implications for women. Emphasis will be laid on the development of wage labour and proletarianization of women with the introduction of the capitalist form of production. In the last part, that is, from Independence until the present time, we will discuss state policies especially the industrialization policy and its impact on female employment patterns.

3.1 Women's Position before Colonization (to 1910)

In ancient times, women seemed to be relatively equal to men in Han Peninsula (later called Korea). Some evidence of a matrilineal system and worship of a mother Goddess (2) could be found. In one ancient Kingdom (Koguryo: 37 B.C. - A.D. 668) which was one of the first three kingdoms in Han Peninsula, there was a myth about the mother Goddess Yuhwa: she, mother of the legendary King Dong-Myeong, was admired as an ancestress and regarded as the Goddess of water, harvest and prosperity; people performed a ritual every October in front of the wooden idol which resembled her image. In another Kingdom (Silla: 57B.C. - A.D. 668) there was some evidence of a matrilineal system. It is said, for example, that a child from the legendary King and Queen took its mother's name, and the maternal line was respected among the populace [Y.G. Kim, 1977:72-73].

Analysing religions might be another way to know women's position in traditional societies. Given the level of the productive forces and knowledge about nature in ancient societies, we can expect supernaturalist existential ideologies about the meaning of life and death and so on to have played an important role in the ordering of human life. Religion, as a central ideological apparatus which denotes a more or less consistent systematic and interrelated set of beliefs to most people [S. Brandes, 1981:216], seems to have structuralized and validated social meanings of institutions including sexuality.

Although Taoism was said to be introduced from China, there already existed in Korea a primitive form of Taoism. Ancient Koreans believed that all manifestations of reality are generated by the dynamic interplay between two polar forces called the Yin and the Yang, which thus should be harmonized. While Yin represented the feminine and Yang the masculine, Yin and Yang were not associated with moral values in this period. As F.Capra [1984:18-19] writes, "what is good is not Yin or Yang but the dynamic balance between the two: what is bad or harmful is imbalance..." As a perfect and harmonious phenomenon nature was admired.

2) It is however, a part of an on-going debate whether the existence of Goddess symbolizes female power or not.

Sexuality itself was seen as part of nature and as source of energy which could be extracted from the harmony of Yin and Yang. Female sexuality was regarded as a very essential to reach this harmony. Under this prevalent cosmology women seemed to enjoy relatively free sexual relations until Confucianism and the hierarchical social structure were built up in Yi Dynasty (1392-1910). Both in Koguryo and in Silla free marriage which was not arranged by parents or families was popular. Sexual liberalism was expressed in the thirteen native songs handed down from Silla. Also in the Koryo period (918-1392), women had latitude in marriage and in divorce. Even some folk songs of Koryo were full of praise of sexual pleasure. Compared to the control of female sexuality later in Yi Dynasty with strengthened patriarchy, it becomes obvious that "sexuality is not a given that has to be controlled, rather it is a historical construct that has historical conditions of existence (in concrete historical, social, economic and ideological situations)" [M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1980 cited in J. Weeks, 1981:10].

When Yi Dynasty succeeded Koryo in 1392, the society was expanding in terms of population and productivity which resulted in intensified class emphasis. The state enforced centralization of administrative power and the appearance of a strong state was to have close relations with the patriarchal family as examined in Chapter Two. These material relations had to be propped up by a corresponding ideology. State interests, class interests and male interests, all were well reflected by Confucianism which was adopted as a state religion.

Confucianism, as a system of norms and values about a hierarchical mode of relations between people, concentrates on the problem of how to establish moral right and harmonious relations. Confucius thought all modes of social human relations were embedded in the family such as relations between father and son, old and young, and men and women. The family was the primary unit of the social system which from the time of Confucius and his disciples was consciously cultivated as the ideal foundation of an orderly state. The emperor himself was enthroned as a father. Basic moral values were absolute loyalty and submission by subjects as well as by wives.

The family name was to be glorified and perpetuated through the male line. The father derived his authority not from the fact of being sire, but rather because he belonged to the lineage of the ancestors. His son revered him because he saw in him a potential ancestor. As J. Kristeva [1977:73-74] observes, people came to consider this symbolic paternal authority as something that distinguishes human from other animals and praised it as a proof of civilization:

Animals know their mother and not their father.

Peasants say mother and father are the same.

But the noblemen in the city honour their fathers.

One popular adage in Korea "father, he gives me birth; mother, she rears me (rearing does not provide any official power)" provides another example. Under this context, women are only instrumental persons who leave their original family and enter the marital family. The three obediences, a rule invented to govern women's correct behaviour is exemplary: throughout her life-cycle a woman was subject to the three authorities of her father and elder brothers when young, of her husband when married and of her sons when widowed. Before marriage, however, they are expected to be as filial as their brothers. There are folk tales idealizing the self-sacrificing daughters.

In order to oppress women, their sexuality should be controlled at the same time. The sexuality of women except concubines and courtesans came to be restricted for only procreational purposes. A mechanism to control; female sexuality was the cult of female chastity; women were socialised and encouraged to commit suicide when they were raped, as the only way to restore the family prestige. During Hideyoshi (Japanese general)'s invasion which occurred in 1592 and lasted for 7 years, the Book of Virtuous Conducts of Yi Dynasty [DongGuk-SamGang-HangSil-Do] recorded 356 cases of exemplary women who committed suicide either before being raped or after. This was an outstanding figure as compared with 67 cases of filial sons and 11 cases of loyal subjects who dutifully served their family and their country. This illustrates the strength of the ideology (socialized in women) to control female sexuality.

The deliberately revised cosmological belief which was incorporated into the teaching of Confucius and his disciples was the most apparent means for ensuring the acquiescence of women in their own subordination. Yin came to be associated with passivity; women are degraded as deficient physically, lacking moral self-control and capacity for rational activity. Hence women can not represent normative humanity, thus women's place is at home. In fact, Confucius views women as thoroughly irrational creatures often as difficult to deal with as servants:

It is not pleasing to have to do with women or people of base condition. If you show them too much affection, they become too excited, and if you keep them at a distance, they are full of resentment [Lynyu, Chap XVII, cited in J. Kristeva, 1977:75].

Women's existence might be only identified by a relational position with a man. The ideal stereotype of womanhood -a woman who is a perfect wife and a mother was just the other side of the same coin. A strict division of labour was one of the main principles of Confucianism.

There became a clear distinction between men's place and women's place even within a house. Men stayed largely in the Sarang Chae (front premise), while the An Chae (inner premise) was the place women of the household could meet and carry on their work. The term "Uri Chip Saram", referring to "our house person" was used when a husband referred to his wife, and it is still popular at present.

Such an unequal division between men and women was highly pronounced with women doing reproductive work as well as productive work, while their contribution was considered as less-valued or valueless. Women were expected to do sewing, spinning, weaving, milling, domestic animal raising, vegetable cultivating and making soy and bean paste, as well as preparing for the performance of Confucian rites. The middle and poor peasant women had to do field work such as weeding, transplanting and manual irrigation. Despite their very high contribution to their family, they were regarded as dependents on their husbands, fathers, and brothers. It is the image that women's

place is at home and that all women's work is less productive which serves to rationalize women's unequal position in the labour market later on.

3.2 Colonization (1910 - 1945)

Korea has geopolitical importance, being located between China, Russia and Japan (and the United States). Therefore, the whole country was drawn into the vortex of a war between superpowers around the end of the 19th Century. At the same time a new culture was introduced, and Catholicism and Protestantism started to be propagated. Women's education was also regarded as important, and slowly women had access to it. Though women's subordinate position was recognized and criticized, the momentum of the women's movement became subsumed under the major issue of National Struggle for Independence.

However, the condition of the majority of women was deteriorating during the colonization period. While most women were urged to maintain their family economies in a frugal way in order to back wars by being called "women under the same emperor", more than 20 thousand between 12 and 40 years old, were compulsorily sent to Manchuria to "service" the Japanese soldiers; few returned home.

Under the harsh Japanese colonial rule, more than half of the agricultural production was shipped to Japan in order to back its industrialization and imperialism. Although agricultural productivity increased substantially, rice consumption per capita declined in Korea and millet was imported from Manchuria to feed Korean peasants [R. Spitz, 1984:61].

Japanese introduction of the primitive form of capitalism which destroyed the traditional production of handicrafts accelerated the pauperization of the peasantry. Many women as well as men migrated from the impoverished rural areas to the towns. They constituted a surplus labour population, while a large number of them were employed with miserable working conditions into factories for producing textiles and rubber goods and so on, mainly as war supplies in the 1920's and 1930's.

The number of female wage workers increased rapidly and constituted one third of the labour force in the 1920's and 1930's. In textile factories female workers constituted 79% of this workforce in 1931 and 81% in 1938 [H.J. Lee 1977:101]. It was surprising that women formed such a high proportion, taking account of traditional attitudes in those days. However, when we look at their wage and working hours, it becomes clear that women were just exploited as submissive and cheap labour. According to professor H.J. Lee [Ibid: 109-117], in the 1920's and 1930's "the wage of Korean adult men was half that of Japanese adult men's the wage of Korean adult women was one quarter and the one of Korean girls was one sixth, while Koreans worked far longer...especially women and girl workers were the extreme cases...82.2% of all female textile labourers were forced to work more than 10 hours a day..." She also recorded sexual harassment of female workers in the work place [Ibid:115-116]. Thus the exploitation of female labour as well as job segregation had begun and had given a precedent for later exploitation.

Authoritarian labour control systems were developed under Japanese colonial rule but persisted afterwards. Farmers driven from their land by a deliberate Japanese policy formed the roots of Korea's first industrial labour force. Almost immediately, Korean workers began to organize themselves against their Japanese employers. In 1919 unions of skilled and unskilled workers were founded [R.Spitz, 1984:73]. In the mid-1920's labour disputes had become a common feature. As a response, the Japanese developed a system of corporatist industrial relations, meant to facilitate "cooperation" between management and the workers. In practice it meant heavy control over labour or even the establishment of "enterprise unions" (work councils) in which the management tried to organize the workers by themselves.

The worst thing about the legacy of colonization might be the oppressive and hierarchical way of ruling. Japanese colonial rule was not only characterised by military and police forms of control, but also by development under strong state auspices. The Japanese colonizers stimulated also an ideology of incorporation, emphasizing the family principle and an ethical filiality: the Japanese emperor was the father of the family.

Although the authoritarian character of social relations existed much earlier with Confucianism, authoritarianism combined with militarism is relatively new in Korean society. Since Confucius preached that knowledge was the key to create an ideal society and that the administration of a country had thus to be led by the wisest men, the warrior, no matter how high the rank was, were frequently disregarded. Apart from the Japanese colonial rule, only in the last twenty years have the military controlled political life.

3.3 Women Workers Post-Independence(1945 -)

With the end of World War II, Korea was given independence, which meant more political chaos. At the same time, Korea was divided into Russian and American spheres of influence. In 1948, after an election which was boycotted by the left, the Republic of Korea was founded in the South. But the first years after independence were characterized by great political instability. Soon the Korean war in 1950 tore apart the whole country, and ended by dividing the North and the South through the 38 degree parallel. The first regime of Seoungman Rhee was ended by massive student protest in 1960; a year later, it was followed by the coup d'etat of the military.

For the new government of Park Chung-hee, economic development seemed to be the only way to legitimize its seizing of power. It has adopted strategies emphasizing industrial expansion and diversification, export promotion, the introduction of advanced-level technologies and the inducement of large-scale capital imports in an attempt to telescope development into as short a time as possible. These strategies have been orchestrated by a strong and interventionist state. This forced industrialization -the state controls and reforms organizations of the civil society in order to pursue its growth model- is legitimized by means of stressing "national unity" in order to protect the sovereignty of the nation under the division situation. Also Confucianist norms and values are used to rationalize the authoritarian state.

Rapid economic growth was expected to come from a drastic change in the pattern of industrialization. A shift from import-substitution to export-oriented industrialization was established. A major characteristic of

Korea's export-oriented industrialization is its labour intensive character. Especially from the second half of the 1960's until 1973, low wages in light consumer goods industries provided these industries with a comparative advantage in the world market.

Around the middle of the 1970's, emphasis was shifted from light industries to capital intensive, heavy and intermediate industries in order to decrease imports and diversify exports. But investments in heavy industry are subject to a longer gestation period. The increase in investment did not immediately produce a commensurate expansion in capacity and a large domestic resource gap emerged, exerting pressure on the balance of payments. In 1980, a new reorganization was undertaken. Priority in investment was given to the production of skilled labour-intensive products such as semi-conductors, electronics and telecommunications equipment in order to compensate for Korea's diminishing comparative advantage in low wage, labour intensive products.

However, most parts of the producing process for "skilled" labour-intensive products do not need higher skill. Since the whole process of production was split into very small parts, the work consisted of assembling and reexporting imported pieces. That policy still relies very much on cheap and disciplined labour.

In sum, the Korean labour force was regarded as the only source of value-added production. It led to the development of a limited group of manufactures which could benefit fully from this advantage, primarily clothing, textiles, electronics, machinery, footwear, chemicals, and leather. Especially the strength of Korean manufacture has had its roots in textiles. Until recently, textiles have constituted one-third of all exports.

Since the Korean export-led industrialization is based on the use of abundant labour, roughly 70 to 75 percent of added employment was absorbed by export industries of textiles, plywoods and electronics [Ogle, 1981:491]. About 80 percent of the employees in these industries are young girls between 16 and 23 years old. Thus, most of the expansion of employment has occurred in the sectors that use female workers. Not only because they are

cheap but also because their competence and discipline are assured by childhood socialization that emphasizes both job-relevant skills, e.g. fine needle work and acquiescence to male authority.

There has been an over-supply of young women both from rural peasant families and urban working class families. The state squeezed the agricultural sector during the 1960's and the 1970's in order to provide cheap food for industrial workers, which permitted wages to be kept low and prevented urban social unrest. The low incomes of the farm households compared with urban households led to dramatic growth in migration of rural inhabitants to the industrial urban centers. According to S. Hong [1983: 192-193], more than 70 percent of the increase in the urban population during the 1960-70 period was due to rural-to-urban migration. There were more female than male migrants. Among rural-to-urban migrants during the periods of 1961-66, 53 percent were women. During 1965-70 and 1970-75, the percentage who were female was 51 and 54 respectively. More than 60 percent of the women who migrated between 1961 and 1975 were 10 to 29 years old.

There has been a large supply of female labour from the urban working class family as well. "According to a Korea Development Institute (KDI) survey, in 1980 the monthly minimum cost of living for a family of five was 270,000 won, while 30% of wage earners received less than 70,000 won, 56.1% less than 200,000 won" [K.C. Lee, 1980:103]. The average worker cannot support a family on a single income. Apart from the discussion on the illusion of the family wage, family members are forced to take any job which is available either for the family budget or for themselves. Young women's need for a job could be relatively easily met by the social demand for their labour. In this way a enormous industrial proletariat of young women was created.

All those industrial policies have been backed by means of a centrally controlled administrative apparatus. On the one hand, a whole range of incentives was developed and implemented by the state to boost exports of manufactured goods and on the other hand, labour is tightly controlled. Among the incentives are exchange rate policies, special tax-policies, credit incentives, access to foreign borrowing, interest policies and the establishment of special production zones [R. Spitz, 1984:27]. The firms

operating in the Free Export Zone (FEZ) in Masan and Changwan receive advantages such as tax free raw materials and components, free repatriation of profits, non-allowance of union in addition to the normal incentives to foreign investors which are 5 year exemptions from corporation tax and personal income tax, a further three years with 50 percent off, and exemptions from assorted custom duties in capital goods and licensing fees [Financial Times VI, 19-8-1983].

State manipulation of industrial labour in general and organized labour in particular has been instrumental in keeping high wages, strikes, collective bargaining procedures and other "inefficiencies" from jeopardizing export competitiveness, foreign exchange earning, and corporate profits whether foreign or domestic. According to F. Clarimonte & J. Cavanagh [1983:181], "while 22 percent of South Korea's 700,000 textile workers are 'unionized', they 'are weak and ineffective'." In the South Korean context, another reason for repressing the labour movement should be mentioned. Unions as autonomous organizations mean not only interference in business, but also a threat to the unilateral sovereignty of management at the industrial level, and government at the political level. Mechanisms for structuring and manipulating industrial workers for state purposes are, therefore, reflected quite clearly in the frequent revisions of the labour laws.

Shortly after a period of union autonomy and free collective bargaining during the 1960's, the state was made the prime actor rather than functioning as third partner. According to the Provisional Law on Labour Unions and Labour Disputes in Foreign Investment Companies of 1969, workers in multinational companies cannot even organize labour unions without permission from the Labour Office. After a national emergency was declared in 1971, a whole battery of new laws, including new labour laws, was decreed (the so-called Kooka Powei Pup). Labour disputes in general were now prohibited.

The most controversial piece of legislation controlling or manipulating industrial labour is the Labour-Management Council Law of 1980, which requires all places of business to establish councils made up of an equal number of representatives from labour and management. The state goal is to "seek peace in industry and make a contribution to the development of the

national economic" through cooperation and understanding between employer and employee [Ministry of Labour, 1981:5]. In reality, however, the councils are intended to supplant the unions where they already exist and inhibit their founding in plants without unions.

The council system fits in nicely with the Confucian notion of proper labour-management relations. Recently, the head of the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry was quoted as saying, "In Korean management, superiors strive to be fair and good to their subordinates while subordinates express loyalty to their superiors regardless of reward...This implies that the ties between management and labour are like the father-son relation in the family, not so-called 'labour contracts'" [Korea Herald, 1983/Jan/13/p.5].

Female workers seem to be far more vulnerable to the control mechanisms over labour. Women tend to organise less, for example, only 18 percent of Korean textile and clothing workers in which women predominated were unionized in 1974 compared with 50 percent in mining and 37 percent in a large group of industries such as chemicals, petroleum, rubber, cement, and glass manufacturing [G. Ogle, 1978:511]. If there are union organizations, they have been subordinate to the state and operated in co-opted way. At the same time, they are male dominated and have not shown much interest in improving work and wage conditions of female labour or other women's issues. Thus, female labour protest is often not only suppressed by the state and/or management, but also by male workers. Women's anger, therefore, has been directed not just against their employers, but also against male trade unionists who are not, they feel, representing their interests.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE WAGE LABOUR SECTOR

This chapter is devoted to examining the sexual division of labour in the labour market and the ensuing conditions of women workers. For that purpose, the chapter is divided into four parts. First we show the trends of job segregation along gender lines during the last two decades. Here the primary question for investigation is how women have tended to be segregated into a relatively narrow range of occupations which they dominate. Their socio-economic background, low-paid income and poor working condition will be discussed. The third question is how such a form of subordination, that is, a hierarchical division of labour in manufacturing has been maintained. The collaboration between the housewife ideology and labour process is shown to be the main force to control female wage labour. However, in spite of control mechanisms, resistance of women workers has not died; this will also be discussed.

Throughout this chapter, data from various sources will be presented. This is inevitable since the paper has dealt with the whole process of producing and reproducing the sexual division of labour in wage work. But in order to avoid possible confusion, some survey data of a sizable sample have been selected. The main sources are the statistics of Korean Economic Planning Board (KEPB) and Ministry of Labour and surveys of the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU).

4.1 The Trend in Female Labour Force Participation

Korean women's labour force participation has increased impressively since the government embarked on export-led industrialization in the early 1960's. In 1965, about 48 percent of women aged 14 years or over were "economically active". This increased to about 57 percent in 1980. Here, 'economically active population', as defined by official labour statistics is those who engage in or look for economic activities which can generate income during the period of survey. It corresponds to the labour force. While the definition includes agricultural or non-agricultural work, wage or non-wage

work, and the unemployed, housewives are excluded from the definition. In other words, women's reproductive and subsistence work are ignored. Apart from those work, even much of women's economic activities such as an irregular earning in urban informal sectors are rarely regarded as a job. Therefore, the analysis based on conventional labour statistics can underrepresent the magnitude of women's total economic activities. In spite of the limitations this paper uses official statistics. Since the statistics are calculated on the ground of the surveys of the whole population, they are useful for grasping the general trends of female employment. Related to this terminology, 'labour force participation rate' is 'economically active population' to the whole population aged 14 years or over.

Since the meaning of labour force participation differs between farm and non-farm sectors, we present in Table 1 the trends in labour force participation of women and men by sectors for the period 1965 to 1980. Female labour force participation rates have increased from 31 to 36 percent in the non-farm sector, and from 41 to 53 percent in the farm sector.

TABLE 1
Labour Force Participation Rate by Sex and Sector, 1965-1980
(Percentages)

Year	N o n - F a r m		F a r m	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1965	76.3	30.9	76.8	41.0
1970	75.1	29.8	75.2	48.2
1975	75.1	31.2	73.8	51.8
1980	74.2	36.1	72.4	53.0

Source: Korea Economic Planning Board (KEPB): Annual Report on
Economically Active Population Survey.

The structural change of the national economy due to the industrialization policy, mainly export-led, is well reflected in the sectorial shift in the composition of the labour force. The increase in the secondary sector

labour force was most dramatic for both sexes. Between 1960 and 1980, the female industrial labour force in the secondary sector quadrupled from 5 to 23 percent, while the share of the tertiary labour force increased 10 to 39 percent. In comparison, the proportion of the labour force in the primary sector decreased by more than half, from 86 to 40 percent (Table 2). Thus, we can identify one discernible impact of Korean industrialization on female labour force participation. It is the absorption of a large number of economically active women into the rapidly expanding industrial sector, predominantly into the export industries. It is also very important to notice in this table that the industrial labour force increase has been greater among females than among males. The number of female workers in this sector increased to 7.4 times (from 160 thousand to 1178 thousand): male workers in the same sector increased 6.3 times (from 303 thousand to 1918 thousand). I will come back to this point later.

TABLE 2
Sectorial Distribution of Labour Force by Sex, 1960-1980
(Percentages)

Sex/year	Sector *			T O T A L
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	
1960: Male	15.8	5.7	18.5	100.0 (5,272,000)
Female	85.6	4.9	9.5	100.0 (3,250,000)
1980: Male	30.9	22.7	46.4	100.0 (8,463,000)
Female	39.1	22.4	38.5	100.0 (5,263,000)

Source: KEPB, Yearbook of Labour Statistics, 1961

Survey of Economically Active Population, 1981

* The primary sector corresponds to agriculture and fishery, while mining and manufacturing belong to the secondary sector. The tertiary sector is related to service and commerce.

A similar trend is seen in occupational distributions for male and female workers in 1965 and in 1980 (Table 3). Female occupation distribution gradually moved away from heavy concentration in farming to industrial, commercial and service occupations. Proportionally, the number of women

employed in farming has decreased over time. On the other hand, production and related occupation rapidly absorbed women and employed one-fifth of all economically active women in 1980. This proletarianization of the labour force has been more rapid for women than for men. In female employment, production is now the largest category next to farming.

TABLE 3
Occupational Distribution of Males and Females, 1965-1980
(Percentages)

Occupational Category	1965		1980	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Professional & adminis.	3.6	1.4	6.4	3.5
Clerical	5.5	1.1	10.1	7.9
Sales	9.9	15.6	13.2	16.5
Service	5.4	8.6	5.4	12.0
Agriculture & related	55.5	63.8	30.9	38.9
Prod. & related*	20.1	9.3	34.1	21.1
T o t a l	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(5,322,000)	(2,884,000)	(8,462,000)	(5,243,000)

Source: KEPB, Annual Report on Economically Active Population Survey, 1966, 1981.

* Production and related occupation includes miners, foremen, forewomen, mechanics and operatives, and construction workers.

The fact that a great number of women are found in agriculture and related occupations needs more careful interpretation. Although more and more rural women -especially married women- are recognised as participating in the agricultural labour force, it is mainly for replacing male workers who have deserted back-breaking farming for city jobs. It explains why between 1965 and 1985, though it decreased percentagewise (due to the relatively fast expansion of other occupations), the number of women workers in the farm sector increased from 1840 thousand to 2110 thousand while that of man decreased from 2954 thousand to 2615 thousand (calculated from Table 3).

While women, particularly married women have become the majority of the increased labour force in rural area, it is no more than the burden of farming which falls disproportionately on women who are left in rural villages. It is well confirmed when their employment status is examined. Data presented in Table 4 demonstrates that about three quarters of married women workers are family-employed (that is, either working on the land which is registered by their husbands' names or working on the family enterprises). A basically similar pattern of employment was found among unmarried women workers. Majority of them(62%) are unpaid family workers, while one quarter of them are wage labourers, mainly agricultural labourers.

TABLE 4

Employment Status of Single and Married Women by Sector, 1975*
(Percentages)

category	U r b a n		R u r a l	
	Single	Ever-married**	Single	Ever-married
Wage-employed***	87.7	22.8	23.8	2.3
Self-employed	2.9	39.6	3.6	19.7
Family-employed	3.7	26.2	62.2	72.7
Casually employed	5.7	11.4	5.5	5.3
T o t a l	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(882,396)	(711,264)	(676,777)	(2,619,561)

Source: KEPB, 1975, Population and Housing Census Report, Vol.2, 3-2.

*The paper analyses the trend in female labour force participation between 1960-1980. Unfortunately, the data of 1980 is not available at the time of writing the paper. Therefore, the data of 1975 is used.

**"Ever-married" category includes 'currently married', 'divorced' and 'widowed'.

*** "Wage-employed" includes those who are classified as 'permanently employed', 'temporarily employed', and 'daily employed'.

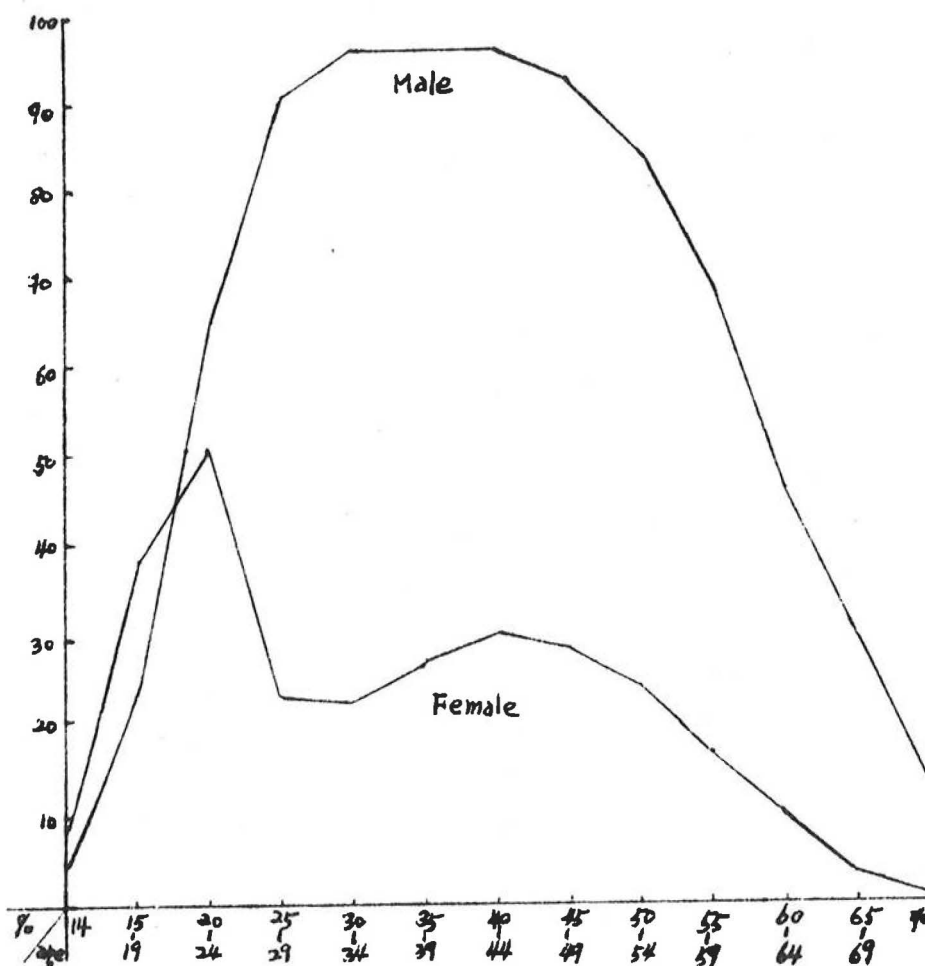
In the non-farm sector, there is a sharp contrast between married and unmarried women in employment status. Again Table 4 reveals that as much as

about 90 percent among young women workers are wage earners in comparison to a few wage workers among married women.

Generally, the participation of married women in the labour force is affected by their reproductive role. But the degree of the effect is varied by social needs. Rural women have been increasingly incorporated into the agricultural labour force, being relatively little affected by their reproductive role. One reason is that rural work is not clearly separated from household work. A more crucial reason seems to be the social necessity that the vacancy caused by male migration should be filled in.

In the urban sector, married and unmarried women show a contrasting distribution of their employment status. Young women show a strong commitment to the labour market (notice that a large percentage of women than men start working early), as seen in Diagram 1. After age 25 their employment is severely restricted up to age 34, clearly reflecting their roles of child bearing and rearing. After that, they start working again. But as shown in Table 4, for them, labour force participation is likely to mean self-employment or family work such as craft work at home, retail and petty trades or assistance to family business, although about one quarter (23%) of them are participating in the labour force as wage workers. Women's participation into wage labour is affected by their reproductive life cycle, as G. Sen [1978] asserts. It should be noted, however, that the life cycle has been reinforced by capitalist interests as well as by those of the working class family. Capital disclaims any responsibility for the social cost of reproduction and child care, while at the same time operating as if such activities are incompatible with waged labour. Therefore, women's reproductive role is used to reinforce women's dispensibility as a work force - individually and collectively.

DIAGRAM 1
 Labour Force Participation in Urban Sector by Sex
 Based on 1980 Population Census



Source: KEPB, 1980, Population and Housing Census

As a consequence, young women have been preferentially absorbed into the wage labour force which has increased during the last two decades of industrialization. Then, it is time to look at the wage labour force itself. In South Korea, available data on wage labour are collected on the basis of the specific definition of the wage labour force. First, the wage labour is divided into two groups, depending on whether the Labour Standard Law is applied or not. The group which is under the application of the Law

is corresponding to workers of all firms employing five or more workers. The data are mainly about this group. Most of agricultural labourers, and workers in sales and service are excluded from the wage labour force in this definition. Workers of small firms employing less than five workers, civil servants, the military and police, and teachers are also excluded. From now on, the wage labour force will be mostly analysed on the basis of this category. Thus, it should be remembered that the wage labourer in this definition does not represent the whole wage labour force.

According to 1983 Survey on Firms Employing Five or More Workers (Ministry of Labour), female wage workers constituted more than one-third (36%, 1,296,836) of the wage labour force (3,642,170). Among female wage labour, 70 percent (909,539) were found in the manufacturing industry. Looking more closely at the concentration of women in manufacturing, about 43 percent of wage labourers in manufacturing were female. But distribution of female workers was heavily skewed toward a few manufacturing industries. More than half (58%) of female manufacturing workers was accounted for by three, i.e., textiles, clothing and electronic goods manufacturing, out of twenty-seven manufacturing industries (Table 5). Data presented in Table 5 also demonstrates that it was textiles, clothing, electronic goods, rubber and footwear where women outnumbered men in the labour force. For example, in clothing almost 80 percent of the work force was composed of women and in textiles women constituted 66 percent of the work force. They are the so-called "female manufacturing industries" and they have been the main driving force of the export-oriented economic growth of the last two decades.

Now a crucial question, what economic rewards do workers employed in export industries receive? Available data indicate that wage levels in export industries are generally lower than wages in other industries. The wage data available in 1976 [KEPB, 1978:11] show the following average monthly wages for each export-oriented industry: about US\$90 in textiles, clothing and leather (US\$75 in clothing alone), US\$104 in electronics, US\$102 in wood products, and US\$90 in rubber. In the same year, the average wage of all non-farm wage earners was about US\$130, and that for all manufacturing workers was US\$108. It seems that the average worker in the export sector,

mainly young women, receives substantially less than an average worker earns in Korean cities and even lower wages than the average wage of whole manufacturing workers. Since centre capitalists are moving their plants overseas in pursuit of cheap labour, it is no surprise that they pay very low wages to these workers.

TABLE 5
Employment in Various Manufacturing Sectors by Sex
(Unit: Number of Persons - Percentages)

S e c t o r	T o t a l	M a l e	F e m a l e
Textiles	373,418 (17.5)	127,645 (10.4)	245,773 (27.0)
Electronic goods	233,653 (10.9)	113,570 (9.3)	120,083 (13.2)
Clothing	203,858 (9.6)	47,575 (3.9)	161,283 (17.7)
Food	124,743 (5.8)	71,457 (5.8)	53,286 (5.9)
Rubber	91,298 (4.3)	43,274 (3.5)	48,024 (5.3)
Footwear	71,619 (3.4)	26,909 (2.2)	44,711 (4.9)
Sub-total	1,099,079 (51.5)	429,833 (35.1)	673,059 (74.0)
Others	1,035,055 (48.5)	794,762 (64.9)	236,480 (26.0)
T O T A L	2,134,134 (100.0)	1,224,595 (100.0)	909,539 (100.0)

Source: Ministry of Labour, 1983. Survey on Firms Employing Five or More Workers. Pages 142-143

Now, it is undoubtedly clear that during the last two decades, many women have been drawn into the labour force and the areas of their participation have been diversified in the sense of moving away from heavy concentration in farming. However, mostly young women have been absorbed into limited areas of industry. No less invariant has been occupation segregation by sex: a large number of women are still crowded into a small number of occupations. There has been little movement of women into male-dominated fields. Rather, sex differences in employment patterns have been increasing rather than diminishing over the years.

The selectiveness in female labour absorption is reflected in the significant and continuously widening gap between men and women in terms of wages. According to Annual Report on Occupational Wage Survey (Ministry of Labour), across all firms employing 10 or more workers (until 1975, firms employing 10 or more workers were surveyed), the average wage of female workers was 45.1 percent of that of male workers in 1972, and the figure dropped to 42.9% by 1980.

A partial answer might be given by examining the economic development policy under the patriarchal ideology. First of all, for the comparative advantage of South Korea in low cost of production in terms of wages, only a certain group of women (mostly young women of rural origin) has been absorbed into the export industries. Secondly, their job is tedious with cheap wages thus, there is little material basis to change the existing job segregation in their employment. In the next part, discussion will be continued on why this group of women has been drawn into wage labour and thereby, why their employment has hardly brought about a change in their traditional position. Answers will be sought from the perspective of working class family and capital.

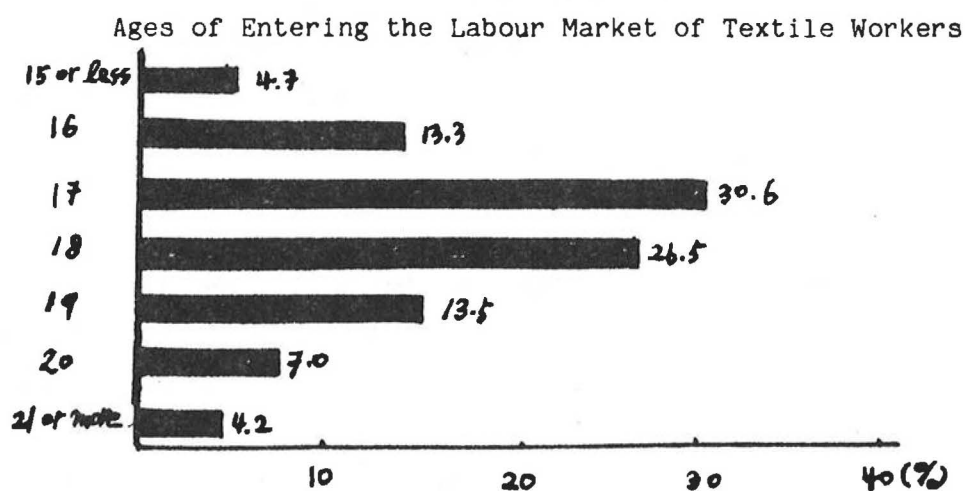
4.2 The Position of Women Workers in Manufacturing

It has been noted that, there are a few manufacturing industries, mainly export-oriented, which have expanded and have absorbed women on the basis of cheap labour during the last two decades. The question is, then, why women have preferentially been employed into those manufacturing industries which provide poor remuneration, and thereby leading to mass proletarianization of women. One of the key answers will be derived from the women's general characteristics. Here two surveys play an important role in providing relevant information on these characteristics. One is the "Report on the Working Conditions of Women Workers in Organisations" done by the Federation of Korean Trade Unions in 1982 [FKTU, 1983]. This investigation gives a general profile of female labourers in terms of working conditions, demographical background, and job attitude through the method of questionnaire. In this survey altogether 9,432 persons were selected across industries. Among them, textile workers, including spinning, textiles, and

clothing, constitute nearly 30 percent (2659 persons) and are thus the largest group. I will examine the data with special reference to textile workers. The first reason is to try to reduce possible confusion caused by mixing up various industries. The second reason is, that its sample size is big enough to be able to reasonably represent the women textile workers. While this survey concentrates on women workers in industrial complexes, the other survey interviews women workers in small-scale manufacturing firms with less than 50 employees. This is "A Study on Labour Conditions of Female Workers with Special Reference to Small-Scale Manufacturing Industries of Garments, Electronics and Electrical Goods" done in 1983 [S.Y. Kim et al., 1985]. In this survey, 272 female workers in garments manufacturing firms, and 252 female workers in electronics and electrical goods manufacturing firms were interviewed. Since labour conditions vary according to the size of industrial firms in terms of their tangible fixed assets per capita, the constitution of their labour force, the examination of data about workers of small-scale firms is important.

First of all, the data of the FKTU reveal that most women workers in the samples are young and unmarried. Nearly all the textile workers (97%) in the FKTU's survey [1983:31-33] were aged 25 or less and only a few women (3%) were married. The youth of workers, at the same time, implies that they have started to work at an early age. About 70 percent of the sample of the FKTU's survey [1983:15-20] started to work as early as sixteen to

DIAGRAM 2



eighteen years old, as shown in Diagram 2. It is important to notice that some girls (5%) entered the labour market even earlier at the age of 15 or less.

The early age of entering the labour market could indicate shorter schooling. About 19 percent were recorded to have primary education while 52 percent were middle-school graduates and 29 percent were high-school graduates or more [FKTU, 1983: 25-27]. In the survey of S.Y.Kim et al.(1985:28-29), nearly 90 percent of workers in garments manufacturing firms had only primary education or middle-school education. In sum, the youth of women workers seems to be a clue to explain women's heavy concentration on manufacturing industries.

In capitalist societies women's work outside the household is viewed as a temporary interlude between schooling and marriage. Female labour takes on the characteristics of short-term economic activity. It is based on the assumption that a woman is a member of a family which is headed by a male breadwinner, and a further assumption is that all household members will benefit equally from his primacy. In Korea the family wage system has developed on this assumption. When Japanese colonizers introduced the capitalist mode of production, a large number of women as well as men from the impoverished rural economy were available as wage labourers. Women were regarded as single migrants who did not have to support the family and their wage was paid on this basis. Men were also paid as single migrants. With the development of wage labour and the increase of male labourers, men's role as a breadwinner was increasingly recognized. The family wage system has been developed at the time of recruitment: man earns a wage which barely meets his own living cost, but his wage is in principle proportional to his age and length of his service in order to meet the living cost of his family. However, the 'family wage' for men has never come true. On the contrary, it is applied in not being applied. On the ground of the family wage for men, the low wage of women is justified. On the other hand the employment of women could forced competition among workers and ease tension between the male worker and capitalist. This is another reason why women's entry into the wage labour is preferred while any worker could be introduced to the deskilling process.

However, we have not yet answered why young women are a preferred source of labour. An answer given to the question has been economic: it explains their employment with reference to its economic advantages to capital. Although it provides a clear basis for understanding this phenomenon, it does not give a complete answer. Young women are not just subject to the economic needs of capital. It is, therefore, necessary to look at what role the wider ideological structures play in the process.

For the interest of capital, i.e., the maximization of profit, young women seem to be a most appropriate group in terms of their low wage and high productivity. Their wage has been already lowered by the concept of the 'family wage' and by the traditional sexual division of labour. But the management has further developed a formula of wage calculation to be applied to young women. The present payment system to which mostly women's work is subject is a combination of the fixed wage for an eight-hour-day and extra pay. And again the fixed wage is composed of basic wage, and bonuses and allowances for welfare or inflation. While the existence of bonus and allowance system lowers the basic wage, they are not often paid under the name of recession. Extra pay includes payments for overtime, night work, and holiday work. According to J. M. Suh [1980:325], extra pay constituted 16.1 percent of the wage of male workers, while it was 21.1 percent of the pay of women in production and related occupations. Where basic rates are kept low, women find that in order to maintain their wages they have to work harder and harder.

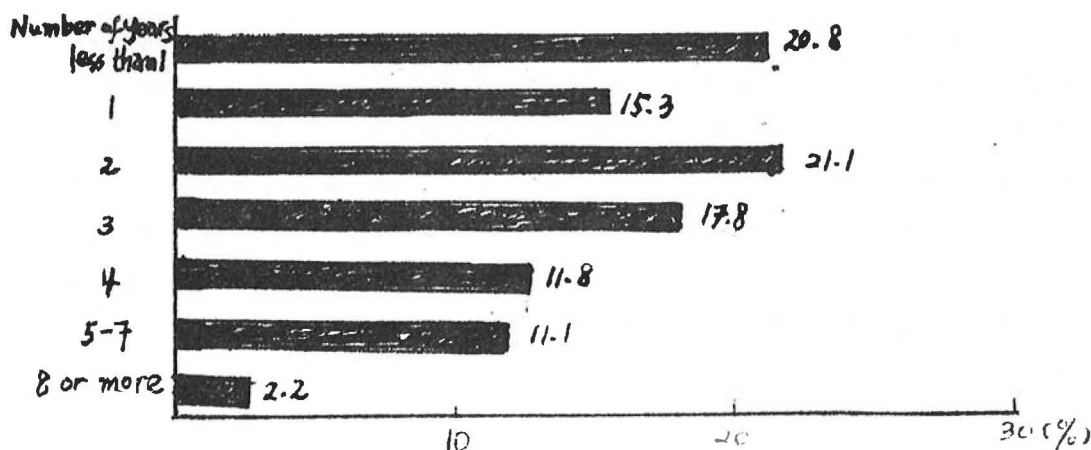
Another advantage of employing young women is high productivity undisturbed by reproductive roles; they are neither mothers nor wives. Since maternity leave is supposed to be provided, married women more specifically, pregnant women and mothers, are troublesome both in terms of productivity and in terms of profit creation.

Moreover, women's work is almost invariably characterized as "unskilled", though women needs training to acquire 'skill'. It was exacerbated by the deskilling process; most of the processes in production became mechanized and each was broken down into operations of simplest form and shortest time. Or women are expected already to have skills, such as sewing through

socialization and to have manual dexterity as an attribute of femininity. Thus their "skill" is not likely to be accrued by a long period of training and employment. Furthermore, the assembling work typical of export-oriented light manufacturing is monotonous and tedious. The management prefers to employ the women who do not have any work experience. After exhausting the labour force by overwork, the management replaces it by fresh and unexploited labour. Accordingly, the employment period of the women is short. The data of FKTU [1983: 29'30] shows that more than one third (36%) of textile workers has been employed in the current firms at the time of the investigation for one year or less, and that about two fifths (39%) have been working for two or three years. Women in long service of five years or more are no more than about 13 percent (Diagram 3).

DIAGRAM 3

Distribution of Employment Period Among Textile Workers



Source : FKTU, 1983, P. 30

Young women meet little resistance from the family at the time of employment. Since they are employed on the basis of short-term activity before their marriage, their participation in wage labour hardly affects the existing family structure. Moreover, their income is crucial to their family budget. Often the family's main source of income is the remittances from their daughters. Even with their low salaries, 55 percent of women workers send money home (although not regularly) and more than 60 percent visit their families one to five times a year [D.H. Kim et al. 1974:28-29].

Two case studies from S. J. Lee [1983:28] exemplify clearly daughters' sacrifice for the family.

Case 1: An 18 year-old unmarried probationary seamstress.

She migrated from a rural area to Seoul, accompanying her parents and siblings. Her father worked as a construction labourer and could not provide the living cost for the family. Regretting his own ignorance, he wished his son to study to a certain level. The girl was asked to sacrifice for her brother. On finishing primary school, she started working in a clothing work place in the Pyoung-Wha Market (Peace Market)...Now she earns 95 thousand won monthly. Keeping 10 thousand for her pocket money, she gives the rest to her mother for the family living.

Case 2: A 25 year-old unmarried seamstress.

She came to Seoul and has lived with her younger sister who came later and is looking for a job after graduating primary school. She sends about 38 percent (60 thousand) of her wages to her family in a remote rural area. It is time for her to marry. But she is going to wait until her brother graduates high school.

Young women keep sending money to the family, abiding more strictly to the ethic of "filial daughter". According to the survey of FKTU [1983:133-134], women workers (34.5%) regarded 'being a filial daughter' as the most important thing in their lives. More than, for example, 'respecting the rights of other people' (28.2%) or "fulfilling their freedom" (15.2%). Another survey on labour conditions for female workers [S.Y. Kim, et al., 1985:29] showed that in giving reasons for employment, 19.7 percent of garments and electronics workers indicated "family livelihood", 38.2 percent "supplementary source of family income", and 4.4 percent, "money for education of brothers". Although some women work for their own material interest (e.g. saving money for marriage), it seems to be clear that one main reason for working is to support the family.

Not always does the interest of capital and of the family coincide in the issue of women's employment. But they succeed in finding a way to meet the needs of each other. A prominent example is found in the issue of night work. From the traditional and paternalistic perspective, women are forbidden to stay to work outside during the night. On the other hand, the machinery need to be operated on a twenty-four hour basis for the maximum profit to be extracted and for rising capital costs to be met. Work is therefore organized on a shift basis, usually on a weekly rotating cycle. This needs a labour force which would be more suitable to work the unsocial hours required, i.e., night shift. Unmarried women get little resistance in working at night, since they are free from the reproductive role and they are thought to have more latitude of individual activity. In addition, some arrangement such as providing dormitories, are made for them.

Although young women are the most appropriate group for both capital and the family, they are in principle under protective legislation. In South Korea, based on a consideration for health and well-being of women workers, the Labour Standard Law was enacted in 1953 in accordance with the recommendations of the ILO. Chapter 5 of the Law is devoted to protective provisions for women and children. The Law specifies prohibition of night work and holiday work for women and juveniles below the age of 18 (clause 56 of the Labour Standard Law); prohibition of overtime of more than 2 hours a day, 6 hours a week and 150 hours a year (clause 57); prohibition of working in mines (clause 58); provisions of one day paid menstruation leave per month, 60 days paid maternity leave, and two times paid breastfeeding leave a day (clauses 59, 60, 61). However, the protective legislation is frequently limited by its inadequate enforcement. Again according to the survey of FKTU [1983:50-55], only a little more than one third (39%) of textile workers were exempted from night work while another one quarter (25%) did it often, and the remaining one third of them (35%) did night work regularly through the shifting system. Many of them are deprived of their vacations in order to meet employers' need for more production. 61.7 percent of them had a day off a week but 10.7 percent had a holiday a month. Menstruation leave was replaced among as many as 75 percent of the textile workers with extra pay for off-days' work. It is also true that the simple existence of paid maternity leave has kept women from continuing the work,

if not backed by preventive provisions. dismissals on the ground of pregnancy or marriage are a prevalent practice of management.

4.3 Mechanisms to Control Women Workers

Employers claim that women are docile, easy to control and co-operative. Nevertheless, they do not seem to have complete confidence in women's supposed docility. They employ various mechanisms in order to control women workers. We will discuss here how control mechanisms have deliberately been developed. Then, we will discuss the ideology that men and women have different spheres. Ideologies, regarded as having a law of motion in their own right, seem to provide a certain framework within which tangible control mechanisms could be taken.

Women in South Korea are also under the housewife ideology which asserts that women's primary responsibilities are those of housewife and mother. Although many women are participating in social production, whether officially recognised or not, they are considered as temporary workers. These male stereotypes about women are held not only by the men but also by the women themselves. And for women workers the housewife ideology seems to be reinforced through the production process. Women rejected the myth that their place is in the home. They are fully aware that the reasons they work are primarily financial, as shown in the earlier discussion about women workers' reasons for employment. Also they recognise that their role is crucial in the production process.

But men's and women's occupations are clearly demarcated in labour processes. In relation to the ideology of the sexual division of labour, there are firm ideas as to what constitutes women's work in the factory -it is the most routine, fiddly and low-grade work. It is important to notice that their work is mostly fragmented and repeating one task in an isolated situation which explains why they often fail to recognise their place within the whole structure or to develop solidarity with other workers. Many Koreans call these young women who are in manufacturing industries "Kong Soonie" (Soonie is a common name amongst countrygirls and Kong is derived from the Sino-Korean character for labour; in other words, "Soonie the

worker"). This term reflects the rural peasant origins of most of these young women as well as the fact that many Koreans look down upon them.

The stereotype that women's place is at home, and the devaluation of factory 'girls' seems to succeed in reducing the development of their consciousness as workers to a certain point. Despite their initial recognition of the importance of the job and their role in the production process, experiencing the labour process and being surrounded by the social atmosphere, women come to treat "unskilled" manual labour as an affirmation of their own worthlessness, and see themselves as better fitted for the mundane task of housework. While a few women develop work consciousness, most women seek refuge in romance and look to a career in marriage. Data of FKTU [1983: 123-124] reveal that as many as about 60 percent of textile workers answered in the negative to a question about the future possibility of their job. Around half of them (46%) replied "don't know" to the question on retirement age, either indicating their lack of interest in long service, or indicating non-existence of official retirement age. In other words, it recognises possible dismissal on the basis of marriage or pregnancy. The study of S.J. Lee [1983:31-32] shows the job attitude of garment workers through participatory observation; most women workers are "sick" of their job such as sewing or sewing assistance and they dream of escaping into the lower rungs of the ladder of white-collar occupations, most desire clerical work, or regard marriage as a life solution.

The ideology that women's place is at home reinforced through the production process, therefore, is the basic mechanism to sustain women's inferior position in wage work. However, ideology is not given but created. In order to concretise the sexual division of labour, the ideology is backed by various mechanisms.

There has been a set of control mechanisms in order to forestall the rise of any sense of independence or unified strength among the women workers. Although they seem to take different forms from each other, the common techniques which are running through the control mechanisms are to exploit the traditionally defined attributes of femininity: passivity, submissiveness, sentimentality, and sexual desirability. Although these mechanisms are

closely interlinked for the purpose of controlling female labourers, they are carrot and stick strategies.

As a typical carrot strategy, management finances and directs extra-curricular activities for workers by giving classes in make-up, flower arrangement, and cooking. Often, it organises public lectures on "being a lovely wife", and "moral rearmament against premarital sex." All of them are done in the name of Lessons for Future Brides and naturally appeal to the "feminine interests" of young women. In this way relations of exploitation on the shop floor are compensated, and the chance is minimized that women will identify themselves as workers. Meanwhile they are hardly provided with education on workers' rights and on related topics either by the management or by unions. The study of S.Y. Kim et al. [1985:50-51] showed that 49 percent of the female workers were totally ignorant of the Labour Standard Law, 25 percent knew that such a law existed, and only 26 percent knew some part of the Law. That is, the majority (74%) either had no knowledge, or were only barely aware, of the basic legal foundation which guarantees them a minimal level of working conditions. In the survey of FKTU [1983:127] just a small number of respondents (5.5%), knew the law in detail as opposed to those who knew a little (58%) and who knew nothing (36%). In short, most women workers were uninformed about the basic legal aspects of their working conditions.

The establishment of dormitories is necessary in order to accommodate workers from other regions. While male migrant workers are hardly provided with accommodation, the majority of women workers is provided with dormitories. According to the survey of FKTU [1983: 31-32], about two thirds (65%) of the sample of textile workers was residing in dormitories. In the other survey [S.Y. Kim et. al., 1985:37-39], 88 percent and 53 percent of the garments manufactures ,and electronics and electrical goods manufacturers respectively had dormitories for the workers. However, these dormitories provided less than a minimum level of convenience for their residents, and the level of facilities is very low; only 1.8% and 9.5% of the garments and electronics and electrical goods manufactures respectively had bathing facilities, while only 18 percent and 58 percent of the dormitories had dining facilities.

The provision of dormitories has a number of implications for women workers. First of all, it is the prevailing notion in Korea that women, especially unmarried women, should be protected and watched. In this context the guardianship of employers is accepted and welcome. When they stay in dormitories, they are regarded as being protected. Companies claim moral custody of young female workers, thereby winning the approval of their parents. Secondly, providing dormitories has an effect in halting the increase of wages by covering housing expenditure. It may sound to be an advantage to women, but an inhuman level of facilities cannot be justified by any reason. Thirdly, it may lower the turnover rate of women. As another important reason, firms are able to force women to do overtime work and night work with less resistance. Lastly, management could monitor closely worker movements within and without the factory by the provision of dormitories.

As a harsh, direct control mechanism (a "stick"), in the production process women are always under the supervision of male managers and foremen. Sexual humiliation given by men is regarded to be the most effective way of controlling women, backed by the supposedly "natural" authority of men. It is a familiar scene; when a woman worker dozes over her work, she is told, "you should have slept during the night instead of anything else which connotes sexual relations." When she appeals her headache or stomach ache, it is immediately associated with menstruation which is still a taboo to be spelled out openly in Korea. In fact, men have played an active role in controlling women workers. Women workers are frequently the victims of violence by male supervisors and male workers. A memoir of a male worker [D.W. Yoo, 1977:189-196, cited in J. Suh, 1980:327-330] describes:

Amid a quarrel about the problem of using a part of a machine, a male mechanic hit a woman worker in the face with an accessory of the machine and it tore her eye. Faced with his brutal deed, the victim or some women who had tried to stop the quarrel could not but cry. Other women helplessly looked on. Such a thing had happened frequently in my work floor where both men and women work together. And women have been always victims of violence.

In a strong tradition of patriarchal ideology, especially Confucianism, women's chastity is an essential virtue. Another way of controlling women workers is to exploit female sexual vulnerability. Rape and sexual harassment are prominent means to intimidate women workers. Particularly such a strategy is employed on women who are active in the labour movement or who raise issues such as low wages, as shown in the following cases (The Women for Equality and Peace, 1985:39-40).

In August, 1985 a newspaper reported that an employer beat and raped a woman worker who asked for payment of an overdue wage.

A woman was dismissed by the company because of her grass-root union activities. When she continued to struggle against the lay-off, the company employed a thug and asked him to rape her. By that the company intended to dismiss her finally and to find out information about her union. The company's plot was brought out when the thug failed due to the woman's persuasion.

Labour relations in South Korea are constructed along the lines of the traditional family structure rather than based on contract. They take a revised form of the family head (male) -family member relations. It is clearly exemplified in one popular slogan "(Employer should) treat workers as family members, (workers should) regard the factory work as your own family work!". This strategy is not only for enforcing high production intensity. A much more important implication seems to reduce any possible resistance of workers. As filial daughters, women workers should be subordinate to the father, the employer. Disputes between family members are an embarrassment to all. In the family also the man-woman relation exists. As an extension of women's subordinate position in the family, women workers are too doubly oppressed not only because they are workers but because they are women who should be subordinated to males.

The mechanism to control women workers is, thus complicated and strengthened by a complex set of interests. An employer is not the sole person to benefit from maintaining the subordinate position of women workers. The advantages are shared by the state and the male workers. The traditional Korean society was rather monolithic in terms of social complexity. Women's

oppression could be explained primarily by one form of institution, i.e., Confucianism. As the country has undergone industrialization, the society has become more complex. Patriarchy itself has been incorporated into various forms such as the modern state and trade unions in addition to the existing family. This "diffused" patriarchy collaborates to maintain women's position in the labour market.

4.4 Resistance of Women Workers

It seems that the industrialization under the custody of tight control during the last two decades, in itself, provides a material basis for a process of struggle breaking through women workers' supposed docility, for the basic right to live. This includes struggles for higher wages, better working conditions, and protest against lay-off, and for the forming and operating of women's own autonomous unions. In other words, industrialization has brought out collective participation of young women into the wage labour force as well as into struggles.

By being drawn into the labour force massively, women may become aware of class and gender exploitation through recognition of the gap between women's crucial role in the production process and their poor remuneration, and though the experience of discriminatory practices in the work places. Ironically enough, the employment of control mechanisms often provides a condition for struggles. The provision of dormitories is a prominent example. Dormitories have the effect of lowering wages, winning the approval of the family and of ensuing moral virtues, and it acts in maximizing productivity, and maintaining a tight control on any labour movement. Since their work is fragmented and workers are isolated from each other, work itself hardly provides young women of rural origin a chance to develop working class solidarity. But staying together in dormitories after their work fills in this gap. Here the solidarity among young women workers can grow. Similar examples can be shown from other control mechanisms. As intensified repression gives rise to struggle, struggle has also intensified.

During the 1970's, there was another factor which gave impetus to their struggles. The growing protectionism of the developed countries and decreasing comparative advantage with the emergence of the new manufacturing industries in other developing countries caused an economic recession. Employers tried to keep their profits high through overdue wages, layoffs, and/or increased workload.

Unions, where they exist, have been subordinate to the state which has the disposition toward stability at any cost as well as a propensity to intervene on behalf of management interests. They operated in co-opted, corrupt, and ill-advised ways. They are highly bureaucratic and male-dominated, and they underplay the special issues of women. Trade unions regard women's issues as personal and private, leaving women to handle them themselves and making them see their needs as failure on their part. Women's anger, therefore has been directed not just against their employers, but also against male trade unionists who were not, they feel, representing their interests.

In response women workers, especially from textiles, wigs, and manufacturing industries (the main export industries) waged their own struggles during the 1970's. Frequently their struggles were expressed in forms such as sit-ins, walk-outs, hunger strikes and all-night strikes. It seemed to be inevitable in the situation of tight labour control of the state and employers as well as the indifference of male-biased trade unions to women workers' demands. Women have been at the forefront of initiating protests against their miserable working conditions. It is clearly exemplified in the struggle of Hae-Tae confectionery women workers for an eight-hour work day.

Hae-Tae confectionery company is composed of 2000 women workers and 700 men. Most workers had worked 12 hours a day by shift-work. The union ignored women workers' demand of "8 hour work" in 1979. When around 600-700 women workers refused to work over-time, male trade unionists and male workers responded with violence, cursing them. "As you don't have any dependents, you can earn your living by 8 hour work". Among the strikers about 70-80 women were forced to sign a statement of resignation. But women who were exempted from

dismissal continued struggles, presenting a petition outside. Many prayer meetings were held in support of the workers. At last, the demand of 8 hour work with the same wage as they had been paid with 12 hour work was accepted in March 1980. After one month, workers in other confectionery companies such as Lotte, Crown, and Dong-Yang were exempted from overtime work thanks to Hae-Tae workers' pioneering struggle.

Through their struggles concerning work-related issues, women workers came to recognise the necessity of their own organisation for representing their interests and for more effective struggles. Women began to build a grass roots trade union movement. But their organization meant a threat to the state, the employers and the official trade unionists. Women workers were frequently coming into violent conflict with them. As shown in the struggles of Dong-Il and Woun-Poong Textile Workers, violence was characteristic of the way the entrepreneurs and the state dealt with women workers.

Dong-Il textiles is composed of 1000 women workers and 300 male workers. A woman had been elected as president of the union. However, many of the men were opposed to a woman president, and in the subsequent election in 1978, company staff and male workers occupied the union office and emptied buckets of excrement into the faces of women workers who came to vote. All this was in an effort to oust the women union president and get a man elected. The following day women workers went on a hunger-strike. But they were responded to by dismissal and their names were distributed to other factories in order to eliminate any possibility of their being employed. The 126 dismissed workers have, with the support of religious organizations, continued to struggle for reinstatement.

The management of Woun-Poong textile factory and the government had resolved to close down the trade union which was regarded as one of the last democratic and

independent unions, once and for all, even at the cost of closing the plant. A gang of men, who were proved to be workers from other factories of the same corporation which owned Woun Poog rushed into the factory. They hit women workers with their fists, shouting "close your damned union before the factory is closed like the Control Data"(3) [M. Karl and C.W. Cheung, 1982:91-91]. To protest against dismissal of five union leaders and the sexual violence on women union officers by company-hired thugs, about 650 workers, mostly women, staged a sit-in in September 1982. The Far Eastern Economic Review [1982, Oct.29] noted that "on the third day, about 250 workers were dragged out of the factory by policemen. Fifty-eight of them were taken to a hospital with injuries incurred during the confrontation. The next day the remaining workers were forced out by tear gas". Despite the huge-strike and support inside and outside the country, the government has destroyed the union with the crack-down at the plant.

Nonetheless, as the cases demonstrate, women workers strongly protested against the repression of their own autonomous unions. It is also important to notice the strong antagonism of male workers to the women workers' labour movement and their collaboration with the management. By doing so, they broke down the workers' united resistance to their exploitation. In this sense, female employment benefits the capitalists' need to divide and rule the labour force.

The evidence shows that women are participating in struggle, and may be able to achieve a great deal through their collective strength. This is surely a basis for futher changes. Furthermore, women's struggle as a gender should not be judged in purely instrumental terms, as achieving this or that improvement in the position of women, but should be judged in terms of the way that the struggle itself develops capacities for self-determination, as D. Elson and R. Pearson [1984:39] assert. As long as there is the development of conscious co-operation and solidarity between women workers on the

3) Before being closed down, the union of Control Data operated relatively independently, being headed by women president. In October 1977, a male manager humiliated a women worker feeling ill, who took a seat which was reserved for men on the basis of sex. That humiliation spreaded over
(cont. on next page).

basis of recognition of their common experience of gender and class subordination, improvements on working conditions, state policy and even male attitudes in the long run could be reversed.

the factory and angered all womenworkes. The union decided to wage a slow-down strike and soon the productivity decreased to half (50%). The company which had been reluctant to take an action finally gave in to workers' demand for punishing the manager.

CHAPTER V

AN ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 An Alternative Strategy

Many studies and reports about the problems of women workers in South Korea end with a list of policy recommendations which various official bodies should implement, acting 'in the interests of women'. Practically these recommendations are hardly taken up. Rather, women workers are being faced with extensive use of state power to control labour unions and to prevent strikes. In this situation, it will not provide women workers with any meaningful changes to suggest 'equal work, equal wage', 'provision of paid maternity leave', and 'improvement of welfare facilities', and to wait for the implementation.

As we discussed in the previous chapter, women workers have already started struggling in a collective way in spite of harsh repression. Collective efforts of women to mount active resistance to their exploitation have led to grass-roots labour movements and have shown rich possibilities for further change. Even in the cases of failure, the effects seem to live long in terms of the feeling of workers' solidarity. Furthermore, any strategy with a feminist perspective cannot be imposed from above. Therefore, taking account of the present situation of South Korea, action around the concept of 'struggle' rather than around the concept of 'policy' seems to be effective to combat the corporations of the state and employers, and official trade unionists.

Now that a beginning has been made, what we need to do is to draw and channel the potentiality into a sustainable way. At the same time we should bring in many more women than have so far been involved. This brings into focus the need for more long-term means of bringing women together, the need for women's organisations which involve working women en masse, and which give them an opportunity for self-activity and initiative.

The women worker's only alternative is self-reliance, that is, uniting themselves to defend their interests through their own organisations. Since they are workers, union-like organisations are likely to be most effective and sustainable. But these unions should not be identified with the existing, official pivot unions. Unions of women workers should be independent and autonomous, of which the executive committee is composed of many women members or through strong women's caucuses within unions. On this basis, the autonomous union organisations could be of help to the development of mass women's movement if they provide a context in which women can have their first experience of struggle within a relatively long-standing, organised movement which can offer them both guidance and some degree of protection.

Women workers themselves have come to know the importance of their own union. It explains why issues related to trade unions have so often sparked their strikes. However, attempts at forming and operating such unions usually meet with resistance from the employers and the state which sometimes resort to harassment and threats. As shown in the cases of Woun-Poong Textiles and Dong-Il Textiles, those in collaboration managed to close down the unions. Therefore, it is crucial for women union to build up coalitions and alliances, possibly cutting across different women's organizations and religious and political affiliations in order to back up their efforts for forming and operating independent unions.

5.1.1. Linkages with Other Social Groups

a) Political Groups, Professional Elite Groups, and Religious Organizations

In general, political and professional elite groups, students, and religious organizations support the workers' right to a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. There is a managerial basis for the support of these groups in the fact that the pay and conditions of employment so often offend the general sense of justice and fairness. In Korea, there is one more material factor in those groups, support for workers' struggles. Against the repressive state political groups, professional elite groups, students and religious organizations, have sought common cause with workers who are

repressed by the harsh control on labour movements. From the beginning, they have been deeply involved with the struggle of workers. Especially during the last decade, student groups and activist church organisations such as the Urban Industrial Missions and the Young Christian Workers played an important role in women's workers' strikes. As pro-union groups they advised workers on their rights under the labour law and on how to deal with official unions. Indirectly, they helped their struggles to be sustained by holding prayer meetings which publicise the issues, and by appealing to public opinion. The linkage with these groups should be maintained and strengthened.

b) Women's Organisations

Compared to the political and religious groups, women's organisations which are defined broadly here to include middle-class women's organisations and consumer groups have paid little attention to women worker's problems, and have failed to develop linkages with women workers. This is presumably because of different class consciousness and interests. However, since it is this group which could back women workers in various issues, particularly gender issues, linkages through which women of different classes fight on issues common to them are of importance. Issues such as rape or sexual harassment might mobilize women outside, thus sparking a general women's movement. A lot of anger and bitterness is evident and there is a widespread feeling that this problem can be solved only by women coming together. In fact, the issue of sexual harassment (both physical and verbal) has given impetus to the mobilisation of women workers' militant strike against the repression of their union. Also in Control Data in 1977 it was the sexual humiliation by a male manager of a woman worker which enraged her female co-workers. Had those incidents been known to women outside the factory, women workers would have been supported and have waged their struggle more strongly. Thus, one of the pressing tasks of women unionists is to build up a close network with other women's organisations.

Women as consumers could exert an enormous influence on the management to meet the demand of workers through organising consumer boycott campaigns. It was well proved in Nam-Yang Nylon strike in 1977. The management could

not but accede to the workers' demands for higher wages and for the reinstatement of eleven dismissed women workers, when it was faced with a boycott by six women's organisations including YWCA and the Korean League of women voters. A more important consideration might be that through the boycott movement solidarity between the women workers inside the factories and women consumers outside could be strengthened.

Femenist autonomous groups could fill in the gap between women workers and women's organisations outside by playing a role of bridging them. The importance of the groups is highlighted on the issue of union activities. They could give support to the consciousness-raising or any other educational activities of unions.

c) Linkages with Other Trade Unions across Plants and Industries

Worker's networks play an important role in promoting communication among workers or trade unions which belong to different plants. These networks can serve two purposes. One is to exchange information on working conditions, wages, and issues of struggles. Also the network can facilitate the organisation of solidarity strikes or other forms of actions.

5.1.2. Extended Union Activities

The most obvious possibility for struggle is around such issues as wages and conditions of work. The struggles will, however, remain seriously deficient from the point of view of women workers if they deal only with economic questions of better terms of employment, and fail to take up other problems which stem from the recomposition of forms of the subordination of women. On the basis of independent unions or at least the sharing of decision-making power, women unionists should extend the struggle to areas which have hardly ever been taken up until now as major activities of the unions. Those areas could include the issues of sexual harassment, consciousness-raising and of health hazards.

a) The Issue of Sexual Harassment

A number of problems have presented themselves as a series of 'personal' or 'individual' difficulties. Sexual harassment is one typical example and has not been seen as appropriate for collective action. Some cases have become known and have brought out women's pent-up anger, but many cases remain secret because 'being sexually harassed' is regarded as a personal failure and humiliation. It is an important issue to be tackled by the trade unions with the help of other women's organisations.

Feminist autonomous groups or the Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) could give a direct hand. The concept of sexual harassment should be defined broadly enough to include verbal humiliation and to include sexual harassment by workers as well as by managers, and organisations such as these should research or document the incidence. On the basis of it, trade unions could further mobilize and conscientise women workers. Here again, cooperation with outside women's organisations seems to be necessary.

b) Educational Activities

In order to continue women worker's struggles and to pursue the long-term goal of changing the sexual division of labour embodied in sex-biased wages, promotion grading, and female jobs, women must deal with deeply ingrained prejudices and practices. This requires a long process of change, but the process can be facilitated through educational activities. Worker's education could be separated into three levels. The first level mainly concentrates on gender consciousness-raising itself to change the stereotyped images about women and women's work. The second level is related to access to knowledge of the rights of women workers. The last level is to obtain varied job training courses and to provide them for women workers.

c) The Issue of Health Hazards

Women workers in manufacturing have suffered a lot from the character of the present production process. Their job is often repetitious, monotonous, yet

detailed work which needs greatest concentration. There are many potential hazards in physical over-exploitation. It is a well-known fact that the electronic industry has caused serious eye damage to women workers who use the microscope extensively. Furthermore, women suffer from working abnormal hours, and lack sleep and rest through frequent night work and shift work as well as from a hazardous environment (e.g., dealing with harmful chemicals, or pollution). The issue of health hazards is a highly political one. As an immediate task, union should initiate the struggle for shorter working hours and no night work, reduced work speed, and a regular exchange system of various tasks. In the long run through the issue of health hazards, unions may lead workers to question their vision of industrial development and to develop a worker-centered alternative. Trade unions should direct their campaigns toward forcing the industry to meet people's needs (as producers and as consumers) rather than pursuing profits. Finally, it helps factory workers to understand the world-wide structures of the forces which shape their lives, and helps prepare them for struggle, not just in the factory where they work, but against the economic system of which it is a part.

5.1.3. Expected Obstacles

a) Reaction from Male Workers, or Other Social Groups

Male antagonism against women unionists' activities already exists. Hence, during the whole process of forming and operating such unions which take up women's issues, male reaction is expected to be one of the major obstacles.

Wage labour as it is, however, offers few options either for men or women. Even the issue of the 'family wage' for men has never been achieved. It is rare for a working man to earn enough to support a wife and children at a decent standard. It is more an illusion than a reality. Male workers should recognise two things. One is that employers instigate them to repress women workers, for capital's own benefits, i.e. dividing and controlling labour. The other thing is that the disparity between male and female workers mirrors economic inequalities across the whole of Korean society. Therefore, what we need is to build up working class solidarity.

No matter how effective and far-reaching the support from religions or other social groups to the work force is, it tends to be limited. From the point of view of women, such support may be particularly double edged. While they are willing to support the worker's right to a 'decent life', they are not so willing to face all the implications of genuine self-determination for women workers. The support offered by religious groups, can be in many ways more radical, but on the other hand, religious values tend so often to encourage the sub-ordination of women as a gender.

b) The Problem of Growing Hierarchy within Unions

In South Korea, women workers' movement for grass-root union organisations has been spontaneous and there have been no professional activists. Union activists who are also women workers have acted on the basis of collective decision making. It was not unusual for women union activists to have to go out of the negotiation room to ask workers their opinions on the proposals of the management. This tradition of collective functioning should be preserved.

However, the experience of other societies shows that there is a tendency of growing hierarchy with the development of union activities. Although the original idea is that the union is 'more a movement than an institution' as A. Torchi [1981:45] asserts, it seems to be inevitable that women workers will have to engage with the institutions. But, even so, we should still keep in mind that 'the end can not justify the means' as far as the women's movement is concerned. Then, the next question is how do we see the trade unions at the level of overall participation of workers? (a problem of representation). In fact, we have not developed enduring and effective channels for acquiring representation. As soon as unions develop, there are laments about the increasing tendency to centralise responsibilities and to concentrate power in hands of a few.

Despite the difficulties and obstacles, we should continue to build up autonomous union organisations. This seems to be the only way to protect women workers from those who have a vested interest in maintaining both the

exploitation of women as workers, and the subordination of women as gender. Otherwise, women's objectification will be continued and women will be continuously deprived of a voice and be spoken for by other people.

Autonomous union organisations and activities should be based on an explicit recognition of gender subordination and should try to develop new forms of association through which women can begin to establish elements of a social identity in their own right. Then we can, through autonomous unions, fight not only for imminent tasks such as improving working conditions, higher wages, but also for changing the whole basis on which women's repression rests and for establishing new codes for a quite different type of society.

5.2 Conclusion

Women, especially young women in South Korea have made significant inroads into the labour force with the industrialization policy since the 1960's. Entering the labour market probably means that old and traditional forms of subordination might be weakened. However, new forms are created. Chief among them is the hierarchical sexual division of labour in the factory when women work for wages with men, women workers tend to be segregated into certain industrial sectors, and into certain occupations within those sectors. Within these jobs, women are typically lower paid, defined as less skilled, low in the hierarchy of authority and have relatively poor conditions of work.

Marxist theory of the labour process provides a basis on which the analysis of Korean female wage labour can be built on. However, the lack of attention to the sexual division of labour and the family limits its use in understanding the position of female wage labourers, particularly it does not explain why the sexual division of labour is sustained in wage labour, thereby why particular groups of human subjects with certain characteristics fill particular places in the labour process.

Apart from Marx and Engels, socialist feminists seem to develop a theory and the concept of the sexual division of labour which examines the women's position in all angles. They showed how patriarchy and capital at both

ideological and material realms are dependent upon one another in oppressing and exploiting women.

By employing the concept of the sexual division of labour, this paper has tried to answer the question why young women have been absorbed in certain industries and occupations which provide poor remuneration. To understand the complexity of women's subordination, also the state policy has been given attention. We may be able to see more clearly how to overcome women's subordination only when we can more clearly understand its source.

Believing that the sexual division of labour is not a natural but a social construct, special emphasis has been given on control mechanisms affecting women wage workers in manufacturing industry and on their efforts to resist. Women workers defined their own experiences of oppression and developed their own framework for struggle against it.

Their efforts did not always bring them material improvement. However, the struggle of women workers is important not only because it may lead to the improvement of their position but also because it has a possibility to imitate Korean women's movements which have been so far very inactive. Moreover, any feminist strategies can not be imposed from above. The paper has thus, evolved a future strategy around the concept of 'struggle'. We have been able to develop a strategy for autonomous women workers' unions as an organizational framework, provision of an organizational framework will enable women workers to sustain their struggle.

Struggles of Korean women workers have just started and will be continued, however long and hard they are. The tasks of studies in future are then, to keep their struggles alive and to develop them to the level of mass movement. The way to reach it is to address women's subordination in its totality, thereby to work out strategies for further struggles.

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