

Ancestor Rites and Capitalist Industrialization in a South Korean Village

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Abstract

The Mass media in contemporary South Korea has frequently pointed to an allegedly rising individualism or pursuit of self-interest, often attributing this development to capitalist industrialization. More recently, however, other social theorists have argued that such views are the result of nostalgic idealizations of former rural ways of life.

This article looks at transformations of ancestor rites and kinship ties over the past 25 years among residents of a formerly rural agricultural village that underwent rapid industrialization. A comparison of the authors' observations and experiences in the early 1970s with those of the 1990s, challenges the conventional view of rising individualism and self-interest in contemporary South Korea. Rather than a change in fundamental values, the appearance of rising individualism or self-interest is perhaps due to newer associations not morally sanctioned by Confucian or older cultural norms and the relative weakness of newer capitalist legitimating ideologies in contemporary South Korea.

Keywords: capitalism, ancestor rites, industrialization, social transformation, individualism, kinship

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South Korea's recent transformation from an agricultural to an industrial and capitalistic way of life is often thought to have brought about increasing individualism (*gaeinjuui*). A 1998 editorial in the *JoongAng Ilbo*, for example, cited individualism as one of the principal causes of the breakdown of the Korean family, a breakdown allegedly evident in a number of recent crimes that had been perpetrated by one family member upon another.¹ In that same year, another newspaper, the *Kyunghyang Daily News*, invited students to write an essay on the rising individualism as a form of practice for college-entrance examinations, including among the statements for discussion: "while experiencing modernization, especially when industrialization was in full-scale progress after the 1960s, an individualistic value system spread extensively throughout Korean society."²

According to a news report that appeared in the *JoongAng Ilbo* a year earlier, the adoption of merit-based pay system to replace corporate remuneration systems based on age and years-of-service was also attributable to rising individualism. The report went on to say: "The value system in the workplace has already made a U-turn from warm heartedness to individualism, and room for relaxation (*yeoyu*) has shrunk while a sense of competitiveness has become stronger throughout the entire society."³

The assumption that rising individualism accompanies capitalist industrialization can be found in the writings of Karl Marx, Max Weber, Ferdinand Tönnies, and Emile Durkheim, each of whom sought to comprehend the consequences of Europe's industrial transformations more than a century ago. Few in South Korea, however, opine that individualism has progressed to the same degree or brought about the same kinds of consequences that they perceive in capitalist nations of the West. Many social scientists, moreover, allege that the recent florescence of civil society in South Korea

1. "Haeche doeneun gajeong dasi sseuja," *JoongAng Ilbo*, 14 September 1998.

2. "(Gyoyuk) #203. Nonsul munje," *Kyunghyang Daily News*, 10 July 1998.

3. "Saellorimaen 'bulgyeonggi' altteuljakjeon mujang," *JoongAng Ilbo*, 1 April 1997.

exhibits a sense of community not altogether dissimilar from that which characterized Korea's rural past. While not completely denying the existence of individualism, many also find the continuation of a collectivist orientation that was evident in villages, albeit the groups of significance today are often different from those of the past.⁴

Affirmations of rising individualism in South Korea implicate a meaning that is not entirely consonant with that found in the European academic legacy concerning industrialization. Though conventionally translated as "individualism," *gaeinjuui*, the term most often used in the media and academic discourse, carries a greater degree of moral opprobrium than does its English gloss, for the Korean term connotes selfishness and egotistical behavior. Thus, while many residents of the United States might regard individualism as a source of pride—witness the phrase "rugged individualism"—residents of South Korea rarely consider the rise of *gaeinjuui* a laudable development. Instead, *gaeinjuui* implies a dissolution of morally sanctioned local communities, extended kin groups, and families, as well as the demise of norms of reciprocity and mutual obligation that were supposed to govern most interpersonal relations in the past.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the supposed rise of individualism in a rural South Korean community through an examination of ancestor worship (*josang sungbae*) among a local lineage whose members' lives have been deeply affected by capitalist industrialization and commodification. Ancestor worship seems to offer a useful window on significant social and cultural transformations that have occurred in South Korea in recent decades. Ancestry and kin-group membership have often been regarded as important components of an individual's identity in Korean society, and many have considered filial piety and kinship solidarity important Korean values.

Our main reason for focusing on ancestor worship, however, is methodological. Experiences and observations during our several periods of fieldwork in the community over the past few decades pro-

4. See, for example, Oh Kap-Hwan and Lee Hae-Young (1980), Chang Yunshik (1991), Kim Kyong-Dong (1993, 153), and Kim Seon-eop (1997).

vide a basis for assessing changes during the intervening years. Combining our 1970s research on rituals for ancestors (Janelli and Janelli 1982) with subsequent restudies in the 1990s offers the possibility of attempting some focused comparisons. Despite the village's rapid commercialization and industrialization during the intervening years—indeed, partly on account of it—the overwhelming majority of the lineage families whom we came to know in the early 1970s were still represented there in the early 1990s.

The use of ancestor worship as a gauge of social and cultural change can be approached from different theoretical perspectives. Social anthropologists influenced by Durkheim have long regarded ancestor rites and other rituals as manifestations and reaffirmations of existing social relationships. Following this line of reasoning, earlier studies of ancestor worship have stressed the ways in which rites for ancestors reflect obligations to parents, earlier forebears, other family members, and extra-domestic agnatic kin. More recent anthropological work, however, looks to rituals not only as effects of existing social arrangements but also as causes of social change, showing how individuals or groups employ rituals deliberately to accomplish desired social objectives. Ruby Watson's analysis of grave rites in the Hong Kong New Territories, for example, demonstrated how ancestor rites gave participants opportunities for making new claims about entitlement to prestige and political influence (Watson 1988, 210-214, 218-226). In other words, ancestor rites can also be a means of altering social relationships, sometimes deliberately. This newer perspective does not require a rejection of the Durkheimian or Confucian understandings of rituals as devices for reaffirming social ties, but it does imply a greater appreciation of the importance of choice in the cultivation of social relationships. It also allows for the recognition that adherence to moral values sometimes camouflages the pursuit of self-interest, a theme explored in the writings of Pierre Bourdieu (1977). In the present paper, we attempt to view ancestor rites both as indices of kinship solidarity and as devices for accomplishing desired social ends. While participation in a given rite may demonstrate locally sanctioned social sentiments and values, such participation may

also be viewed as an indication of a preference for cultivating certain social relationships or as an assertion of a particular identity.

Our analysis of experiences and observations in the village, to which we have given the pseudonym "Naea-ri," does not support the view that individualism has gained at the expense of collectivism or that behavior has become more self-interested than that of the past. While we found that individuals were choosing to make different symbolic statements about identities and the groups to which they belonged, we obtained no persuasive evidence that their more recent choices were more motivated by the pursuit of self-interest than those made in the past. Instead, as we hope to show, a particular choice can be self-interested while simultaneously promoting the welfare of a larger collectivity. This duality of such interpretative possibilities leads us ultimately to question the productivity of viewing individualism and collectivism as opposing social orientations.

The Changing Village

Our initial and most recent research in Naea-ri have now spanned a total of 27 years. From 1973 to 1974, and again in 1978, we spent a total of approximately 18 months in the village. Our research during these periods focused on popular religious practices relating to the ancestors of one local kin group and the relationships between these practices and rural Korean social organization (Janelli and Janelli 1982). In the fall of 1993 and in the spring of 1999, two decades after our earlier visits, we returned to the village to conduct further fieldwork over several months, living a few days a week in the village and spending the remainder of our time in Seoul. During the intervening years South Korea underwent enormous social transformation, and Naea-ri, located not far from Seoul, could not avoid being affected, probably more so than most other rural communities. One purpose of our restudies was to examine changes in the Naea-ri lineage's ancestor rites and attempt to understand how they articulated with whatever social changes had occurred in the village.

Naea-ri resembled many other South Korean farming villages when we first took up residence in 1973. Surrounded by agricultural fields and woodlands were clusters of wattle-and-daub houses, most of them roofed with thatch. Just a few were roofed with corrugated metal or other materials, mainly at the impetus of the New Community Movement. The steel frame of the first factory in the vicinity of the village had been erected, but the structure was not completed and the factory did not begin operation until after we had left the following year. Neither the roads to the village nor its internal lanes were paved, and the only commercial enterprises were a cigarette concession and a rice mill.

By 1993, Naea-ri looked more like a suburb of Seoul than a rural village. About two dozen factories surrounded the village on all but its southern side and nearly all of the roads and lanes had been paved. Only one of the factories was owned by a large conglomerate, the others being owned and operated by small-scale capitalist entrepreneurs. In addition to the factories, a number of commercial and service enterprises have appeared in the village. Four grocery shops, a restaurant, a barbershop, a video rental store, a dry cleaners, and a stationary store have opened, though the rice mill has closed. More than ten Western-style houses with various modern conveniences dotted the dwelling area, and about twenty other residential units in two apartment buildings had been built. Two five-story apartment buildings containing a total of 170 dwelling units were constructed in a neighboring village located only a few hundred yards away, just across a small patch of rice paddies and dry fields located on the southern side of Naea-ri. By the spring of 1999, few wattle-and-daub houses were left in the village, even more commercial establishments had been added, and two large-scale apartment buildings had been built within its boundaries.

As these changes in appearance indicated, Naea-ri had been economically transformed from an agricultural to a capitalist community not just through industrialization but the rise of commercial capitalism as well. In 1973, nearly all of the residents had depended primarily on farming for their livelihood. Twenty years later, several fami-

lies still cultivated small plots of land on which they produced vegetables for their own consumption or to give to their children residing in cities, but only four or five families earned most of their income from farming. Instead, villagers were engaged in a wide variety of diverse economic activities. Some villagers obtained income from housing that they owned—ranging from single rooms to an entire apartment buildings—and rented out to others. One villager rented out the former site of the rice mill to a packing company. One widow opened a billiards parlor in an adjacent village. Several other villagers found employment in nearby factories, both within and near the village, obtained their livelihood from construction work, or were engaged in or employed by various commercial enterprises located within a few kilometers of the village. By 1999, trucks with loudspeakers were plying the village, selling eggs, green onions, radishes, and a variety of other products that villagers formerly produced for themselves.

Related changes could be seen in the composition of the village's residents. In 1973, 33 of the village's 56 families comprised a local lineage of Seongju Kang (a pseudonym), a nationwide patrilineal descent group that claims several hundred thousand members. Seven more village families were headed by "sons-in-law," men of other kin groups who had married daughters of the lineage and settled in Naea-ri during the preceding few decades. Most of the remaining sixteen families, which belonged to a variety of different kin groups, had moved to the village recently to sell their labor to families of the Seongju Kang. Nearly all were unrelated by kinship to the local lineage. By virtue of their poverty, small number, employment status, recency of arrival, and lack of political connections, members of these unrelated families occupied a politically and economically disadvantaged position compared with that of lineage members. Dominated numerically and politically by one kin group, Naea-ri comprised what Korean anthropologists and rural sociologists usually called a "single-surname village" (*dongseong burak*) or a "lineage village" (*jongjok maeul, dongjok burak, ssijok burak*).

Table 1. *Naea-ri Residents in 1973 and 1993*

Year	Seongju Kang	Sons-in-law	Unrelated
1973	33	7	16
1993	28	10	142

In 1993, by contrast, about 180 families lived in the village, and the number of Seongju Kang families had shrunk from 33 to 28 (see Table 1). A few more families of daughters and sons-in-law had been added, but nearly all of the other new residents had moved to the village in order to obtain employment in the nearby factories or commercial enterprises and were unrelated by kinship to the principal lineage. These unrelated families rarely worked for lineage members. Comprising the overwhelming majority of residents with sources of income independent of the local Seongju Kang, the unrelated families had ostensibly far more equal relationships with lineage members than in the past. Political and economic disparities among individual families of the lineage appeared to be just as great as those between lineage and non-lineage members.

When queried in the spring of 1999 about their own perceptions of changes that had occurred in the village, many male residents of the village volunteered that individualism had risen, though they used a vocabulary somewhat different from that of the South Korean dailies. Several spoke of the rise of self-centeredness (*jagi jungsim*) and hard-heartedness (*gakbakhada*) among residents as the major change that had occurred in their community over the past few decades. Women, by contrast, offered this view noticeably less often than men, pointing instead to the relative ease of the present compared with the extreme poverty and hunger they had experienced in the past.

Though any other changes in the village could be enumerated, we will now focus on how the above changes articulated with changing representations of identity and the cultivation of social ties evident in practices of ancestor worship. We begin with accounts of

how ritual activities have changed during the past twenty years in the three major forms of ancestor rites found in the village: lineage rituals (*sije*), holiday rituals (*charye*), and deathday rites (*gijesa*).

Naea-ri's Lineage Rituals

According to the accounts of Naea-ri lineage members, Kang Bo was their first ancestor to settle in their present locality, south of Suwon, probably at the beginning of the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910). Several of Kang Bo's descendants now comprise five local lineages, each centered in a different village in the region (see Figure 1).

Collectively, the five kin groups comprise a supra-village organization analogous to what Maurice Freedman termed a "higher-order lineage" in China (1966, 20-21). Throughout the 1970s, male representatives from each of the five local lineages gathered annually in front of the grave of Kang Bo and his wife on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month (about mid-October) to offer them an ancestor rite, known as a *sije*.

Attending this *sije* at that time involved considerable expense and effort by the delegation that represented the Naea-ri lineage. Since Kang Bo's grave was located at a mountain site that was far beyond walking distance from their village, they had to arrange for a taxi to transport them to the grave and return them to the village later in the day. In 1993, on the other hand, far more convenient means of transportation were available: many of those attending the rite drove their own automobiles. Yet no delegation from either Naea-ri, Bokjeonggol, or Ansil was present. At the business meeting held after the ritual was completed, members of the Woldam and Jugok lineages discussed possible means for encouraging participation and collecting contributions that the missing kin groups had pledged but not yet paid.

Kang Bal, a grandson of Kang Bo and the first ancestor to settle in Naea-ri, is shared by both the Naea-ri and Bokjeonggol lineages (see Figure 1). The latter kin group hived off from Naea-ri gradually

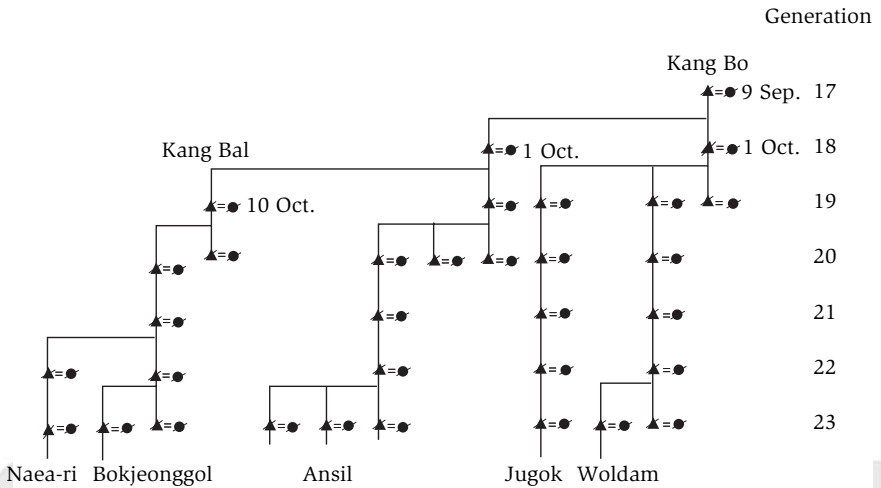


Figure 1. Branches Formed by the Descendants of Kang Bo and the Dates of *Sije* Commemoration for Their Respective Ancestors

during the past few hundred years. Kang Bal and his wife, and their agnatic descendants and their wives who were at least four or five generations above the present lineage members, each received lineage-sponsored *sije* from the kin group in Naea-ri once a year.

Twenty years ago, men of the Naea-ri lineage offered separate *sije* in front of more than thirty different grave sites of these ancestors, beginning on the tenth day of the tenth lunar month and finishing four days later. For each ancestor or pair of ancestors interred at a grave site, the lineage had acquired a plot of cultivable property and assigned it to a cultivator who, in return for the right to use the land, was responsible for providing and preparing the ritual food offerings presented in the *sije* of those ancestors.⁵ After preparing the

5. If a husband and wife happened to be buried in different grave locations, two separate *sije*, each financed by a different plot of land, were offered.

food offerings, the cultivator also loaded them on his carrying rack (*jige*) and carried them to the ancestors' grave, located in the nearby mountains, where the Naea-ri lineage members solemnly performed the rite.

After the 1973 *sije* were completed, several Naea-ri lineage members, mostly younger men in their thirties and forties, voiced the opinion that income from the lineage's corporately owned property ought to be used not only to finance *sije* but also for more practical purposes, such as providing scholarships for the ancestors' descendants (i.e., their own children). The Bokjeonggol lineage had built a lineage hall in the preceding year and began commemorating there all of their ancestors in one grand rite, thereby saving considerable time and expense. Such changes were encouraged by a ritual simplification campaign then being promoted by the South Korean government.

Most of the elders firmly opposed this proposal, maintaining that the rites should be performed before each of the graves, just as they had always been. Nearly a decade later, however, many of the opposing elders had died or been removed from positions of effective lineage leadership, and the opinion of the next generation prevailed. The lineage sold a small portion of its land, built a common shrine for its ancestors at the northeastern edge of the village, and began offering *sije* there in 1982. Lest their ancestor's grave locations be forgotten or become confused, the lineage paid for and erected tombstones to mark each of the sites. Later, individual families and clusters of close, agnatically related families also improved the graves by erecting low retaining walls that would hold the earth mound on top of a grave, putting up large stone candles next to burial sites, or placing stone offering-tables at individual graves.

After the new shrine was completed, the lineage used it to commemorate all of the ancestors who formerly received grave rites. Several successive generations of ancestors were commemorated in less than a few hours and at greatly reduced cost. In 1993, one set of ritual food offerings presented to all the ancestors, was prepared by about ten lineage members and their wives who voluntarily under-

took this chore, but neither the quantity of the food nor the care given to its arrangement matched that of 20 years earlier.

The ritual procedures had also been simplified. Whereas setting up a new offering table and canopy had been required for each of the grave rites, only one food-offering table was set up in the shrine, and rites for each pair of ancestors were offered in quick succession, starting with those of Kang Bal and his wife, the lineage's 19th-generation ancestors. Whereas each of the *sije* in the 1970s had required three cups of wine presented by three different lineage members, the reading of a formal address to the commemorated ancestors, and a ritual sharing of the food offerings by the participants after the rite, twenty years later three cups of wine were offered only to Kang Bal and his wife. The other ancestors each received only one cup of wine. A formal address was still read for each pair of ancestors, but the sharing of the food offerings occurred only once, at the conclusion of all the rites. Instead of moving from grave to grave and setting up a new offering table, the only effort required to prepare a rite for another set of ancestors in the shrine was to remove from the offering table a paper tablet designating the ancestors just commemorated and replace it with one on which the identities of the next pair of ancestors had been written.

Though the ritual procedures had been simplified, the number of ancestors commemorated with *sije* had increased by about two dozen over the years. These were generally ancestors about four or five generations above the present lineage members, nearly all of whom had formerly been commemorated by domestic rites. For some, transference to lineage commemoration could be explained by demographic changes: deaths during the past twenty years had eliminated all their descendants within four generations. Others, however, were transferred to lineage commemoration because the lineage leadership eased the rules by which entitlement to lineage commemoration was judged. As we have shown earlier (1982, 114-116), the four-generation rule had long been fraught with ambiguities that permitted some flexibility in its application to specific cases, but the number of generations that were to have elapsed before qualification for lineage com-

memoration was said to have been reduced to three. The use of a more liberal standard had apparently been encouraged by the new form of *sije*: adding ancestors for commemoration in the shrine required little additional time and no additional food offerings or other costs, except a few cupfuls of wine.

Only a few pairs of ancestors who received rites in 1973 were not commemorated in 1993. One pair no longer received a *sije* because ownership of the plot of land that had formerly financed their rite had recently come into dispute. Another pair, who had been formerly commemorated with holiday rites by a collateral line (the husband's brother's great-great-grandson's family), had no descendants of their own. A third pair was omitted because all of their descendants had migrated from the village decades earlier and none had attended the annual *sije* for a few years. A descendant of theirs who did ultimately arrive for the rites in 1993 came after their ritual was to have been performed. On the other hand, one pair of ancestors who had received no commemoration in 1973 was added by 1993. The dispute regarding the ownership of the plot of land financing their rite which twenty years earlier, was now subsequently resolved.

The total number of participants at the annual *sije* could be said to have decreased, but not by much. In the 1970s, the rites on the first two days, performed for the more genealogically remote ancestors buried at sites farthest from the village, drew only about a dozen participants, including two representatives from Bokjeonggol. The rites on the third and fourth days, however, offered for less remote ancestors whose graves were located closer to the village, drew most of the elders and young men of the Naea-ri lineage. In 1993, only about ten of the men who lived in Naea-ri and another four or five descendants who lived elsewhere, including one representative from Bokjeonggol, joined in the rites at the shrine.

More noticeable than a reduction in the number of participants was a change in the social composition of the ritual-performing group. Whereas in 1973 the majority of participants were elders, even fewer men under the age of 40 were present in 1993. In addition, the proportion of participants who could be counted among

the more active and influential men of the village had decreased significantly. The majority of the descendants of Kang Bal and his wife, especially their more socially prominent descendants, had chosen to engage in other activities rather than demonstrate their identity as Naea-ri lineage members or cultivate ties with their lineage mates.

All these events indicate a decline in identification with both local village and higher-order lineages, but other evidence suggests a rising identification with more inclusive kin groups. During the 1970s, the Naea-ri had little contact with the Seongju Kang beyond their local area, except to provide information for periodic updates of the larger kin group's genealogy. Over the past two decades, on the other hand, the Naea-ri lineage sponsored three bus tours to Seongju, where several of its members, including wives and daughters of the lineage, paid their respects with simple food offerings at the grave of the first Seongju Kang, bowed at the shrine where his tablet is kept, and took in some of the noted tourist spots in the vicinity. These new activities are by no means unique to the Naea-ri lineage: Kim Kwang-Ok (Kim Gwang-eok) (1992) has reported similar developments among other lineages. At the 1993 ritual for Kang Bo, a few representatives from the national kin group attended.

In addition to a higher level of identification and involvement with the national-level kin group to which they belong, a number of Naea-ri lineage members were instrumental in the formation of a regional association of the Seongju Kang. This group does not organize or sponsor formal ancestor rites, but it does implicate choices for new identities and the pursuit of economic advantages made possible by capitalism. We will attempt to assess its significance below.

Holiday Rites

At rites for ancestors within four generations offered on New Year's Day and on Chuseok (Harvest Festival Day), the most obvious changes that occurred during the past few decades has been a nar-

rowing of the genealogical range of participants and the inclusion of women as participants. Each of the holiday rites offered in the 1970s was jointly performed by the men of an entire *dangnae* (a lineage segment composed of patrilineal kin within the range of third cousin).⁶ The men of a whole *dangnae* gathered at each of their respective homes and offered rites for all the ancestors commemorated there. All of the men participated in all of the rites for all of the ancestors of their *dangnae* who were generationally senior, or of the same generation but older, regardless of descent. At that time, the Naea-ri lineage was composed of six *dangnae*. By 1993, only one of the former *dangnae* still existed, the others having been dissolved into smaller ritual performing segments.

Participation at the holiday rites (see Figure 2) collectively offered by the *dangnae* to which Kang Geun-ho belonged provide an example of how that kin-group segment disintegrated. In 1973, the persons designated by the letters H, J, and K (and their unmarried sons), together with M and N, first gathered at the house of L (M lived in Seoul, but returned to his mother's house in Naea-ri on holidays). Together they commemorated A and his wife, B and his wife, D, and F. At the rite for L and his wife, which was offered next, H, J, and K did not participate because they belonged to a generation senior to that of the commemorated ancestors. Then all the men of the *dangnae* went to the house of H and offered rites for C and his wife and E and his wife. At the next rite offered at H's house, for I and his wife, H himself did not participate because he was older than I. Finally, all the men of the *dangnae* went to the house of N and offered there a rite for G and offered there a rite for G.

For the rites performed by the current members of this erstwhile segment of the lineage on Chuseok in 1993, the participants and the commemorated ancestors are shown in Figure 3. A comparison of Figures 2 and 3 reveals several demographic changes in the composition of this genealogical branch of the lineage during the past twenty

6. Naea-ri villagers did not use the term *dangnae* but designated these groups of agnatic kin with such relative terms as *pa* (branch) or *uri jiban* (our group of kin).

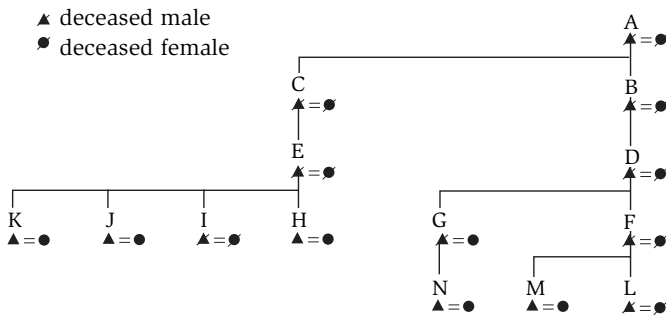


Figure 2. Holiday Rites of Kang Geun-ho's Lineage Segment, 1974.

years. After D's widow passed away, only L's elderly mother was left at L's house, and rather than live alone there she moved to Seoul to live with her son M. The house was sold to a factory that later demolished the structure. H and his wife had passed away, his three sons had all married, and his two older sons had moved to Seoul, leaving their youngest brother and his wife living in their parents' former house. K had also died, and his widow and their two sons had moved to nearby cities. As a result, the only members of this lineage segment still living in Naea-ri were J, Q, and N.

The geographical dispersal of the members of this *dangnae* is far from atypical. As capitalist industrialization and the proliferation of commercial enterprises nearby and elsewhere in South Korea has made it possible for many of the lineage members to leave the village and pursue employment in cities, members of the same *dangnae* less often live in the same community. In the 1970s, for example, 18 families were headed by men whose brothers and their families also lived in Naea-ri; by 1993, the number of such families had dwindled to eight.

Demographic changes alone cannot account for all the alterations in ritual participation, however. In 1993, M reportedly offered holiday rites in Seoul for B and his wife, D and his wife, F, and L and his

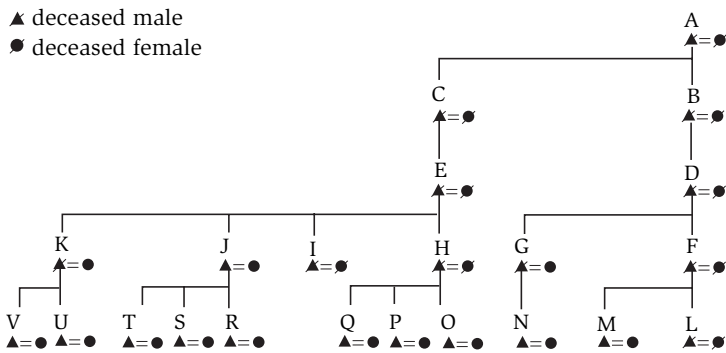


Figure 3. Holiday Rites of Kang Geun-ho's Lineage Segment, 1993.

wife. The commemoration of A and his wife was taken care of by an annual *sije* offered in the lineage's shrine. At N's house, N and his son offered a rite for G only. Rites for C and his wife, E and his wife, and H and his wife were offered at O's house in Seoul, where P and Q went to participate. U offered a rite for K at his house outside the village, where R, S, T, and V went to participate. After the rites had been completed, nearly all of these people went to Kang's cemeteries in Naea-ri to visit their respective, recent ancestors' graves. In 1993, O, P, Q, R, S, U, and V came for the visit but M did not. (T was unable to join them because he was on a business trip in Japan).

The changes that had occurred during the intervening two decades were striking. Admittedly, the social spheres of the members of this branch of the lineage have become quite distant as a result of many of them moving from Naea-ri. But the fragmentation of this former *dangnae* as a collective ritual-participating unit was not due only to emigration from the village. The branch's sense of collective identity, or at least the number of occasions at which individuals chose to represent themselves as members of this group and cultivate ties with each other, had also declined. Individuals were no longer designated as belonging to particular branches in the 1990s, moreover, the branches themselves were no longer mentioned in casual conversa-

tions (e.g., “Kang so-and-so’s branch”).

The reasons for the fragmentation of the *dangnae* appear to be rooted also in changes accompanying the rise of capitalism in South Korea. Twenty years ago, the families of N, H, J, and K were all engaged in wet-rice agriculture and needed each other’s assistance, not only for annual rice transplantation and harvesting but also for a variety of other contingencies. For example, we were told that when H was ill for an extended period, his younger brother J cultivated H’s fields along with his own. In 1993, however, only J was still engaged in farming. Though they still lived in Naea-ri, N ran his own business and Q was employed by a local service company. Given the diversity of their economic pursuits, erstwhile *dangnae* members no longer find themselves in situations that enable them to make much use of each other’s help. In sum, far less is to be gained today than in the past by cultivating ties with one’s closest agnatic kin.⁷

Another significant change that could be seen was the increasing participation of women at some of the holiday rites. At rites held on the lunar New Year holiday in 1973, a few pre-adolescent daughters bowed along with the men at the rites performed in one house of the lineage, but their participation seemed marginal at best. None was ever given an important ritual role. In the 1990s, however, one widow of a deceased lineage member not only traveled to the village to have her husband’s rite performed in his natal home but also brought her three unmarried but grown daughters, the eldest of whom assumed the role of wine offerer for her father. A door had been opened to women carrying out major ritual roles. Not coincidentally, the most recent edition of the Seongju Kang’s published genealogy shows the names of daughters as well as sons, with all offspring listed in birth order, regardless of gender. Ease of transporta-

7. In 1978, one lineage family had opened a store that competed with another operated by the wives’ society of the village. Complaining that most of their kin, including the members of their own *dangnae*, gave most of their business to the other enterprise, this family and that headed by the husband’s elder brother offered their ancestor rites independently.

tion had facilitated married-out daughter's maintaining ties with their natal families, and we frequently saw out-married women returning to Naea-ri for visits and in-married women leaving the village to visit their natal kin. Women have also become more active in the care of their natal parents. Perhaps recent changes in inheritance laws, which granted daughters and sons equal shares in their parents' property, encouraged as well as reflect this tendency.

Deathday Rites

In the 1970s, the genealogical span of participants at deathday rites was usually narrower than at holiday rites. Typically, male first cousins and perhaps second cousins who lived in the village participated in the deathday rites held at each other's homes for ancestors of recent generations, regardless of whether or not they were personally descended from the commemorated ancestor.⁸ Using the kin segment represented in Figure 2 as an example, H, J, and K participated at G's deathday rite, just as N participated in ancestor rites held at H's house. (By birth, the brothers H, J, and K are first cousins of N's father; their own father had been a son of B who was adopted by C.) However, N told us in 1993 that at G's deathday rite, J and Q no longer participate, even though they live in Naea-ri. Instead, N's married sisters were participating in the ritual. (The sisters did not live in Naea-ri but traveled there for the occasion.)

The dissolution of the groups of close agnatic kin as collective ritual-performing units at deathday rites has become widespread, albeit not universal. Some married brothers and first cousins, together with their wives, were participating in rites in the 1990s, while other villagers volunteered the generalization that people no longer attend rites in each other's houses. To take a case from another

8. Villagers often said that all male kin within eight or ten *chon* ought to participate in deathday rites at each other's homes, but actual participation was usually drawn from a narrower group.

branch of the lineage, Kim Ung-jun said that since his eldest brother's son, who represents the seniormost descent line of his segment, was living in Seoul, rites for his parents and paternal grandparents were offered there. He did not attend, he explained, because his nephew's wife (and the nephew himself) were Christians who did not offer deathday rites. Instead, they just memorialized the ancestors. It made him very sad, he added, that his parents didn't receive deathday rites, adding: "When we were young, our mother made offerings to the supernaturals every fifteen days without fail in order that we would grow up well. It makes me very sad to think that she cannot receive ancestor rites." His eldest brother's widow had confided to us twenty years earlier that she was worried about the future of the rites for her husband and his ancestors because her eldest daughter-in-law was a Christian. In 1993, however, the same widow told us that she had come to prefer the Christian style of rituals performed by the daughter-in-law because it did not limit ritual participation to men.⁹ By 1999, many households in Naea-ri extended ritual participation to the daughters of the deceased. A few extended participation to their sons-in-law as well.

Changes in Ancestor Worship and Social Identities

Perhaps the most obvious reason for many of the changes in the ancestor rites has been the transformation of the significance of the family and extended kin group ties with which the rites are closely connected. The setting for these changes has been the rapid capitalist industrialization and emergence of capitalist retail and service enterprises that presented villagers with myriad new economic opportunities, new choices for creating identities, and new alternatives for establishing social ties. But do these changes represent a rise of individualism?

9. The daughter-in-law's ability to transform the rites from a Confucian to Christian format was probably strengthened by her residing outside the village.

It would be naive to view ancestor rites in the past simply as disinterested expressions of filial piety or agnatic solidarity. Demonstrations of filial piety had practical consequences for a person's—and by extension his or her kin group's—reputation. In the 1970s, the Naea-ri lineage erected a monument testifying to the filial deeds of one of its ancestors. Like many other lineages, they placed the monument alongside the main road to their village, where it was plainly visible to all who passed. Lineage rituals (*sije*) in particular produced the added benefit of publicly demonstrating genealogical relationships to remote ancestors who had enjoyed *yangban* status. And since that status was still thought to be hereditary in the local society of the 1970s, even though the formal legal privileges of *yangban* status were abolished nearly a century earlier, Naea-ri lineage members too were locally acknowledged as having relatively high status. Ancestry was an important consideration in evaluating a kin group's prestige and influence, moreover, members of an entire lineage had a common stake in the reputation of their kin group and periodically reasserting its social standing. Demonstrating descent from ancestors of *yangban* status as well as filial piety were important functions of lineage rituals. When someone in 1973 had proposed eliminating the ritual for Kang Bo and his wife, one of his kinsmen retorted that the lineages descended from these ancestors would all suffer a loss of prestige if the rite were discontinued.

Participation at the lineage ritual for Kang Bo and his wife was particularly useful for maintaining or reproducing membership in a social network that linked the Naea-ri lineage to more prestigious ancestors. Since none of the Naea-ri lineage's own ancestors ever attained greater fame or a higher government position than Kang Bo, it was advantageous for them to maintain their membership in the cluster of local lineages descended from him and his wife rather than assert their own autonomy (Janelli and Janelli 1978, 283).

Though no direct material benefits derived from claiming *yangban* ancestors even twenty years ago, such ancestry conferred political influence, and that political influence in turn advantaged lineage members in the competition for material resources. It also bestowed

advantages in the choice of marriage partners. In other words, *yangban* ancestry conferred what Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 177; 1990, 22, 111-112) has termed “symbolic capital”: honor, reputation, and prestige that can be tacitly employed in the pursuit of political and material advantages. In the 1970s, the symbolic capital derived from kin group membership appears to have been far greater than it was in the 1990s. As Kang Geon-ho said with obvious pride during the 1970s, “Naea-ri Kang was a name known in Sinjin County,” and “nobody looked down on us.” Within their local region, the Naea-ri Kang descent group’s symbolic capital was also evident in their marriage alliances with other local lineages of equal standing, and such connections enabled them to wield more influence in local affairs. At that time the local government’s ability to exercise surveillance and directly intervene in village affairs was more limited and thus village autonomy, though never complete, was greater than in the 1990s. An example of lineage members’ lingering concern about the prestige of their kin group could be seen twenty years earlier, when young men and women of the lineage had begun to be more active in selecting their spouses. One young man had decided to marry the niece of an unrelated household in Naea-ri, the head of which worked as a daily farm laborer (*pumpari*). Some lineage elders voiced their displeasure at the match that they were no longer powerful enough to block. They correctly perceived, however, that the old status system had not entirely disappeared. By the 1990s, however, the symbolic capital derived from descent had apparently evaporated almost entirely in this newly industrialized and commercialized community. Indeed, villagers appeared to have almost dropped the word *yangban* from their vocabulary.¹⁰

As many lineage members are no longer engaged in farming, they became involved in a variety of new social networks that gave

10. The elderly men of Naea-ri had even formed a voluntary association with their age mates in two neighboring villages, though men from these other villages had formerly been hired to carry the biers at funerals of Naea-ri lineage members. The Naea-ri lineage began carrying their own funeral biers only in the mid 1960s.

them opportunities for a range of social alliances and identities not predicated on either ancestry or village residence, and these other relationships have become increasingly important for political and economic advancement. When Kang Heun-gho's family celebrated their son's first birthday, for example, the family opted to use the occasion to strengthen relationships with his coworkers rather than kin: they invited only his closest relatives (the families of Kang Heung-ho's siblings) but extended invitations to his coworkers at the factory where he was employed. In the past, all of his agnatic relatives within the range of about second cousin could have expected an invitation.

By 1999, we found that several of the most active villagers had joined various friendship societies and primary-school or high-school alumni associations, most of which extended their memberships beyond the confines of the village. Several families belonged to seven or eight of these new groups, and since each usually met once a month on a weekend, their Saturdays and Sundays were fully occupied with attending weddings, 60th-birthday celebrations, and friendship society meetings. Some of these societies were aimed at attaining new forms of symbolic capital. One villager pointed out that one to which she and her husband belonged was composed of the *yuji* (influential persons) in the area. One wealthy lineage member, whose son ultimately went on to graduate school in the United States, became a member of the Rotary Club in South Korea and thereby obtained a scholarship for his offspring. Other groups were more explicitly oriented toward economic gain, such as the one joined by a villager who derived most of his income from growing fruit. This group, composed of growers of the same kind of fruit in the surrounding area, was interested in promoting a brand name for their product by setting quality standards, advertising, and making contacts with wholesalers.

Even ancestry has been pressed into service for devising new pragmatic networks. In the 1990s, the more influential men of the Naea-ri Kang lineage, together with their wives, were actively participating in a newly formed kinship association that extended far

beyond Naea-ri and its immediate vicinity. The Seongju Kang Cheongsong Kinship Association, headquartered in a nearby city, was open to all Seongju Kang who lived in the area, regardless of their respective descent lines. Its ostensible purpose was to provide occasions for agnates to meet, offer scholarships to promising students of their descent group, train youngsters how to be responsible kin group members, organize group trips to noted ancestors' graves, and other charitable and educational activities. The members of this kinship association group came primarily from a variety of mostly old-middle-class occupations, for which a wide range of personal contacts is particularly beneficial. One ran his own hospital, another owned and operated a taxi, and a third was a commercial photographer. The current head of the organization was a member of the South Korean National Assembly who used the new kinship association as a means of garnering votes. An initiation fee, annual dues, activity fees, and other expenses made it difficult for working-class people to join this organization. The five men from Naea-ri who were members of this new voluntary kinship association were not only entrepreneurs but also among the wealthiest and most influential persons in the village in 1993. Not coincidentally, announcements of contributions to this new organization revealed that the Naea-ri Kang comprised the most wealthy (or generous) segment of the group. We were also told that the kinship association was contemplating an organized visit to the ancestral hall constructed in Naea-ri in the early 1980s, regarding it as a site of cultural significance. None of the five Naea-ri members who attended this meeting had participated in the ancestor rite for Kang Bo and his spouse that year, and only two of them were present at the lineage rites offered by the Naea-ri lineage for its own ancestors: one man whose position as lineage treasurer almost required his attendance and another who was more than 70 years old. The other three who did not attend the lineage rites had chosen to create and reproduce alternative identities and establish different social networks, moving from those composed exclusively of Kang Bo's descendants to a more open and voluntary association of Seongju Kang.

Another factor that has prompted many Naea-ri villagers to be less inclined toward identifying with their village-based descent group has been the rise of social and economic disparities between their respective households. Skyrocketing land prices in the area surrounding Naea-ri and a wider variety of economic opportunities and risks associated with capitalism have produced substantial class and wealth differences between lineage members. Of course wealth differences between lineage members existed twenty years earlier, about two decades after South Korea's land reform, but all the lineage's families were ascribed to the same status group as a result of their descent from the same ancestors and all shared a common lifestyle. More recently, however, major differences between the lives of various lineage members have begun to appear, particularly between those who have taken advantage of the rise in land prices by selling their land and their relatives who retained most of their holdings. These large differences in wealth have in turn brought about major status and class differences. For example, in 1973 the two households of H and N, both of whom had belonged to the *dangnae* shown in Figure 2, were differentiated primarily by the amount of farmland that each owned and cultivated. Twenty years later, one of those households was headed by a H's son, a propertyless wage laborer, while the head of the other did no physical labor and apparently lived off his investments, had provided college educations for his sons, owned one of the most expensive models of Korean-made automobiles, and otherwise enjoyed a mode of living not very different from that of the urban middle classes. Similarly, some lineage members still lived in the wattle-and-daub houses that all had occupied twenty years earlier whereas many others lived in newly built "western-style" houses with central heating, flush toilets, and modern kitchens. Those who still operated in a social network limited primarily to kin and neighbors tended to identify more with their local kin group and participate more often in ancestor rites than those who enjoyed a variety of social ties extending beyond kinship and the local community. Lineage members who had largely shared the same way of life in the past came to have differentiated social and econom-

ic relations, disparate lifestyles, and more non-mutual interests. One poorer lineage member, for instance, complained to us that one of his wealthy kinsmen (the son of a first cousin) had evidently not wanted his participation at the latter's 60th-birthday celebration, for the kinsman had not personally extended an invitation when the two of them met just before the event. The reason, he surmised, was that his cousin's son looked down on him as a result of his poverty. Twenty years earlier, a 60th-birthday celebration was an open and public affair for the entire village, and residents participated without specific invitations. But does membership and active participation in the Seongju Kang Cheongsong Kinship Association, the Rotary Club, or society of influentials (*yuji*), or a fruit-growers association necessarily evince more "individualism" than active participation in lineage affairs?

The disappearance of the *dangnae*, formerly evident in the participation at holiday and deathday rites, has been accelerated also by changes in occupation and work methods induced by industrialization. The sharp reduction in the number of houses still engaged in wet-rice production has obviated much of the mutual help and cooperation that members of the same *dangnae* often provided to each other, especially at transplanting and harvest times. In the 1990s, the common agricultural work team was not a gendered group of closest neighbors and kin but a wife and her husband. In addition, agricultural techniques have changed: the mechanization of farming has further reduced the need for much of the cooperation that existed between close kin in the past. The wealthier farm households, which have been able to afford the investment required for more labor-efficient farm machinery, now offer the use of their equipment, and perhaps its operation as well, to their kin for a fee. Though the exchange of daily labor (*pumasi*) has not entirely disappeared, the majority of lineage members, employed in diverse factories, service enterprises, and commercial shops, have far fewer occasions to make use of each other's labor.

Participation in rites for the ancestors of one's natal household gives little evidence of decline during the past twenty years. Dispersal

of family members has made participation more difficult for some, but the difficulty posed by living in different locations has been reduced by the availability of easier means of transportation. And the indications of increasing participation by adult women in rites for their husband's and own natal kin suggest a vast potential for increasing participation at ancestor rites in the future. Paradoxically, greater geographical dispersion can sometimes encourage greater participation by women. The woman who offered Christian deathday rites with her husband and elderly mother-in-law in Seoul was not subject to the control of her husband's father's two younger brothers who live in Naea-ri. If the young couple had remained in Naea-ri, on the other hand, pressure from these uncles and other relatives would have made it more difficult for the wife to avoid preparing the food offerings necessary for Confucian-style ancestor rites, which are still not open to women in several households. Twenty years earlier a Christian woman who lived in Naea-ri had proclaimed that she would not prepare the food offerings for Confucian-style ancestor rites commemorating her husband's parents and earlier ancestors, but she quietly yielded to pressure from her husband's father's younger brothers. They pointed that it was her family's obligation to offer the rites since her husband, as the eldest son of their eldest brother, had received the largest share of their family's inheritance. Even in 1999, women did not participate in ancestor rites among that *dangnae*.¹¹

Conclusion

We are unable to find compelling evidence of a rise in individualism in Naea-ri. Though the genealogical span of participants at most of the ancestor rites has narrowed, easier transportation and the increasing participation of women in several *dangnae* seems to com-

11. For discussions of ancestor rites performed by Christians, see Yu (1991) and Cho (1990).

pensate for the absence of more genealogically distant kin. And though lineage rites are drawing somewhat fewer participants and appear to have been simplified, one can also point to the building of the shrine, complete with a house for a shrine keeper, occasional visits to the distant grave of the first Seongju Kang, and the placement of tombstones and other stone accouterments at ancestors' graves as evidence of increased activity for the benefit of ancestors.

Though we detect the pursuit of self-interest in decisions regarding whether or not to participate in ancestor rites, there seems little reason to argue that such decisions are any more self-interested now than in the past. Participation in ancestor rites has long been motivated by both material and ideal considerations; and the pursuit of one's own interests is not necessarily antithetical to pursuing those of a group to which one belongs. As Alex Callinicos has observed (1988, 156, 205), individuals form groups that constitute collective actors for the pursuit of mutual interests. What appears to have shifted is the range of alliances available to individuals for the pursuit of their own interests. In other words, it is possible to see the changes that we have attempted to portray not as a decline of cooperation and mutual help *per se* but as an adaptation of such practices to a changing capitalist economy, with its attendant occupational structure, constructions of gender roles, and range of opportunities for social and economic differentiation.

If lineage members have primarily shifted rather than lost social ties and collective identities, whence the popular perception, particularly among men, of the rise in *gaeinjuui*? In the spring of 1999 we found a sizable and active group of women, nearly all of whom had originally married into the village decades earlier, engaged almost daily in various collective activities, such as morning hikes, preparation of food for major ritual occasions in each other's families, visits to shamans, operating a pancake (*hotteok*) house that served more as a winter-time meeting place than a profit-making enterprise, and attending various group (*hoe*) meetings. Their husbands, by contrast, spent far less time in each other's company. Evidently, men more than women not only experienced the loss of mutual help from their

kin and village coresidents and but also felt that loss more keenly than the newly gained mutual help and assistance involving persons outside the village.

Perhaps the men's perception of a rise in individualism also originated in the notion that some social ties are more hallowed than others. The cultivation of new social arrangements and proclamation of new identities may not be any more self-interested than those of the past, but they may well give that impression because the self-interested character of past social arrangements was often obscured by ideological legitimations. The new social ties, more openly oriented toward practical objectives, have not been sanctified—or “enchanted” in Bourdieu's (1977) sense of the term—in the way that Confucianism consecrated agnatically oriented extended families and lineages, often culting the material and political advantages that membership in such groups conferred and the devaluation of women's kinship ties implicit in the older practices.¹²

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GLOSSARY

<i>charye</i>	茶禮	<i>josang sungbae</i>	祖上 崇拜
Chuseok	秋夕	Naea-ri	
<i>dangnae</i>	堂內	<i>pa</i>	派
<i>dongjok burak</i>	同族 部落	<i>pumasi</i>	
<i>dongseong burak</i>	同姓 部落	<i>pumpari</i>	
<i>gaeinjuui</i>	個人主義	Seongju	星州
<i>gakbakhada</i>	刻薄	<i>sije</i>	時祭
<i>gijesa</i>	忌祭祀	<i>ssijok burak</i>	氏族 部落
<i>hoe</i>	會	<i>yangban</i>	兩班
<i>hotteok</i>		<i>yeoyu</i>	餘裕
<i>jige</i>		<i>yuji</i>	有志
<i>jongjok maeul</i>	宗族		

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