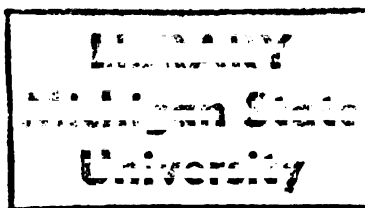




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CHANGING PATRIARCHAL FAMILY HEAD SYSTEM IN CHINA:
IMPACT OF SOCIALIST REVOLUTION ON THE FAMILY SYSTEM

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CHANGING PATRIARCHAL FAMILY HEAD SYSTEM IN CHINA:

IMPACT OF SOCIALIST REVOLUTION ON THE FAMILY SYSTEM

By

Yang Minchuan

A THESIS

Submitted to

Michigan State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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MASTER OF ARTS

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1985

"ABSTRACT"

CHANGING PATRIARCHAL FAMILY HEAD SYSTEM IN CHINA:
IMPACT OF SOCIALIST REVOLUTION ON THE FAMILY SYSTEM

By

Yang Minchuan

This study is concerned with the impact of the Chinese socialist revolution on the Chinese patriarchal family system. In the traditional Chinese family, the patriarchal head had absolute authority in the economic, political, and social lives of family members.

Since 1949, the Chinese government has tried to change the family system by implementing a new Marriage Law, Land Reform, and other policies, and by economic and social structures designed to change the family authority structure. In a communal way of life, other social units were to replace many aspects of the family. The results of these efforts are ambiguous. The authority of the family head has been greatly reduced in some aspects of life, but maintained or even reinforced in others.

The unexpected persistence and resurgence of the patriarchal family system resulted from the failure of commune economy, government policies, political and ideological campaigns of class struggle, and the development of social hierarchy. The economic reforms of the 1980s have brought new trends of family reform.

As industry and commercial production have developed, young people and women in some families have played important roles and have had increased decision-making power in the family. But there is also a trend of strengthening patriarchal control in many families which are now using the family mode of agricultural production under the Responsibility System.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study owes much to the efforts of people other than myself. I am particularly grateful to Professor Bernard Gallin, who directed my study and offered me great assistance. I also want to thank Professor Joseph Spielberg and Professor Harry M. Raulet. Both of them gave me helpful advice and assistance in overcoming some of the difficulties encountered in the study. I appreciate the assistance of all three in helping me to this accomplishment.

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INTRODUCTION

An understanding of the Chinese family system is basic to an understanding of Chinese culture in general. Chinese society is often characterized as a familistic society (Ho 1965: 15) and its people described as "family oriented." The perspective is accurate in that the family system has played a strategic role in Chinese history and the evolution of Chinese civilization. The traditional Chinese family system has received a great deal of attention from anthropologists, but there are few studies that deal with the modern Chinese family system (Parish and Whyte 1978, 1984; Stacey 1983; Johnson 1983), to say nothing of studies that investigate changes in specific features of the Chinese family system during the socialist revolution. There are two primary reasons for this lack. First, Western social scientists have had difficulty carrying on field studies in China. Second, sociology and anthropology have been completely overlooked by the Chinese scholarly community; "family study" did not exist as a scientific field in the past. Thus, the present study should be considered a preliminary description and analysis since the data are still insufficient for the more in-depth analysis that is needed.

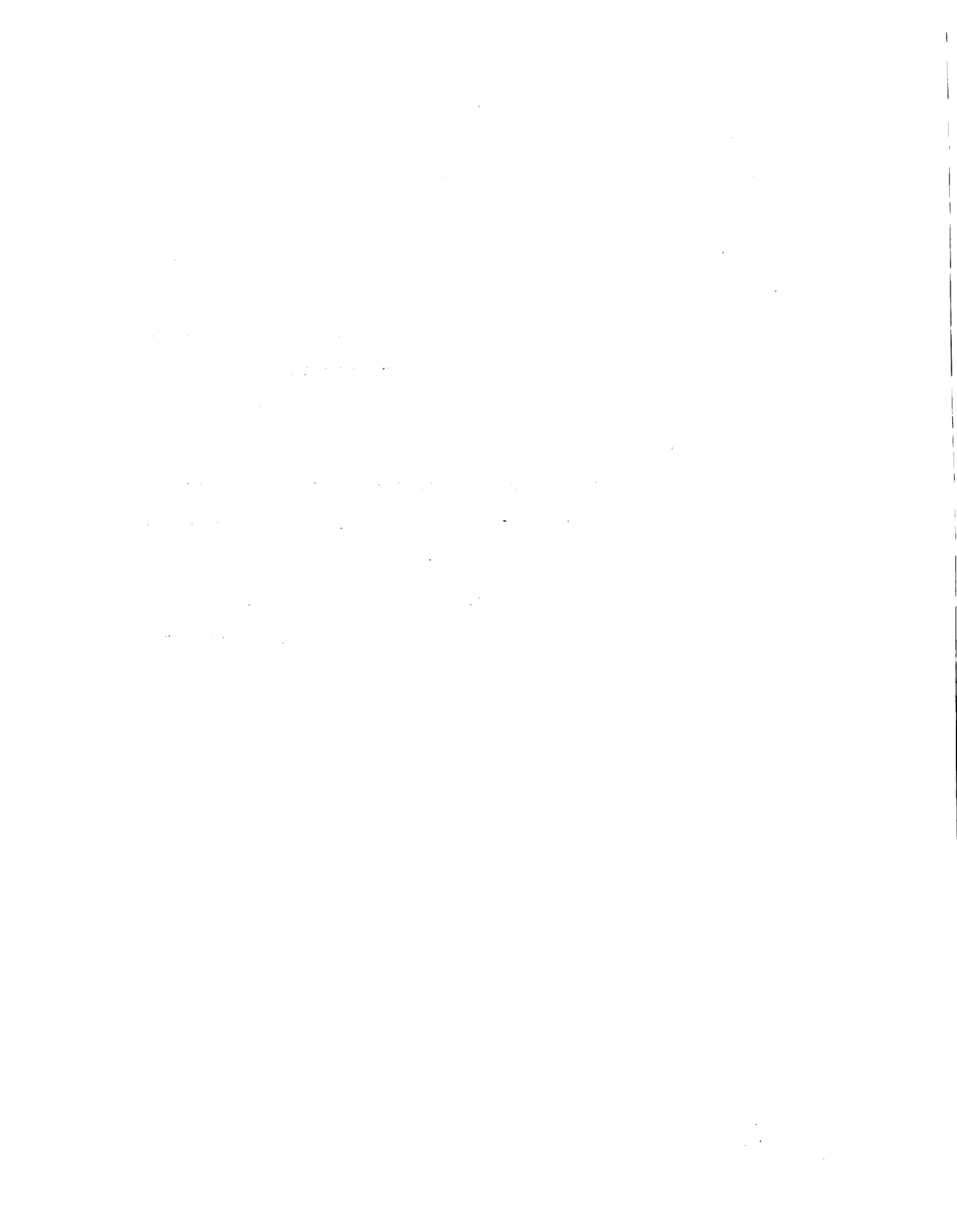
Family reform has been one of the great tasks of the socialist revolution in the People's Republic of China

(PRC). Yet, even without the kind of dramatic ideological change that has taken place in the PRC, family systems are not static. In the face of economic and social change, family systems have changed rapidly all over the world. Goode stresses that industrialization, alone, alters family patterns (1963: 21-27). Caldwell (1982), for example, asserts that, with the development of industry and the educational system, the costs of raising children increase and children are no longer an economic asset. Thus, families may become smaller. Also, as the young earn more from their own wage labor, authority patterns of the family may change. In this process, the extended family pattern of agrarian society gives way to the nuclear family pattern of industrial society.

The Chinese socialist revolution, however, had its own particular impact on family structure. Only a few years after the Communist victory in China, Zhou En-lai, in answering a question about the problem of changing Chinese life in the new society, said, "We will make China over from a family-centered society into a community-centered society" (Hellstrom 1962: 266). The question, then, is: what changes have occurred in the Chinese family system and what means have been used to bring them about? In this paper, I will examine significant changes in the nature of the Chinese family

and discuss the successes and failures of the family revolution during the past decades.

This thesis comprises four chapters. In the first chapter, I will define and describe the patriarchal family system in traditional society--its features and its compatibility with the traditional society. In the second chapter, I will describe the government's intentions, policies, and means in changing the patriarchal family system. In the third chapter, I will discuss aspects of change and persistence in the Chinese patriarchal family system and outline where the socialist approach has failed and where it has succeeded in achieving its goals of family reform. In the fourth and final chapter, I will suggest the effects on the family system of the current Economic Reform.



CHAPTER I
THE PATRIARCHAL FAMILY SYSTEM IN
PRE-SOCIALIST PERIOD

The pre-socialist Chinese family system can be characterized as patriarchal in that the eldest male had absolute authority over the social, economic, and political activities of family members. The father or grandfather determined the social life of family members; marriages, residences, careers, and social behavior were all under his control. In theory, he exercised this authority for the benefit of the household and the patrilineage. Where the needs of the household or patrilineage conflicted with those of the individual, the individual was subordinate. The patriarchal character of the family system was based on and reinforced by a social system in which the family was the basic unit or institution for social control and subsistence. The individual in this system was regarded only as a member of the family and not as an independent unit in the society and state. T'ung-tsu Chu gives a summary of the Chinese patriarchal family system:

The Chinese family was patriarchal. The grandfather was the ruling head and had authority over all the members of the family, including his wife and concubine, his sons and grandsons, their wives and children, his unmarried daughters, his collateral relatives who were junior to him and who shared his domicile, his slaves and servants. His control

of the family economy and his power to make financial decisions strengthened his authority. In addition, since the concept of ancestor worship was central to the perpetuation and solidarity of the family, the authority of the family head, who also was the family priest, was further enhanced. Finally, his authority was recognized and supported by the law (1961: 20).

There are five essential features of this family system that should be discussed. First, the basic feature of the Chinese patriarchal family system in the pre-socialist period was the father's or grandfather's authority in the control of family property. This patriarchal ownership of family assets was the basis of the whole range of patriarchal authority in the family system.

Second, the father or grandfather, as head of the household, was defined as the manager of the family's production, distribution, and consumption. This management had two aspects. On the one hand, the family head was responsible for providing for his dependents through the family mode of production. On the other hand, the family head was also responsible for controlling family production, determining division of labor, and allocating the family's products and property on the basis of the age and gender hierarchies.

Third, the family head was responsible for passing the family's assets to the next generation. In traditional society, family property was a result of the achievements of family forebears. To maintain the

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for transparency and accountability, particularly in financial matters. The text suggests that organizations should implement robust systems to track and report on their operations, ensuring that all data is up-to-date and easily accessible.

2. The second section focuses on the role of leadership in fostering a culture of integrity and ethical behavior. It argues that leaders must set a clear example and communicate the organization's values consistently. By promoting a strong ethical framework, leaders can ensure that all employees understand the expected standards of conduct and are held accountable for their actions.

3. The third part of the document addresses the challenges of managing a diverse workforce. It highlights the need for effective communication and collaboration across different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The text suggests that organizations should invest in training and development programs to enhance cross-cultural understanding and improve team dynamics.

4. The fourth section discusses the importance of innovation and continuous improvement. It notes that in a rapidly changing market, organizations must stay agile and open to new ideas. The text encourages a mindset of experimentation and learning from failure, as well as the implementation of regular feedback loops to drive process improvements.

5. The final part of the document concludes by emphasizing the long-term benefits of a well-managed and ethically sound organization. It states that consistent adherence to high standards of performance and integrity leads to sustained growth, increased employee loyalty, and a positive reputation in the marketplace.

integrity of and to expand the family property, such property was supposed to be inherited along the line of the father-son relationship (Chao 1983: 49). This arrangement was consistent with the traditional pattern of patrilocal residence, which normally required a woman to leave her natal home upon marriage to join her husband's family. This pattern continues to be normal in China to the present day and still helps to maintain family patriarchy and solidarity.

Fourth, in the pre-socialist family system, the family head was entitled to dominate a family member's social life. Individual choice in marriage was not allowed. In arranging a marriage, a family head considered obligations to the family rather than the affection between husband and wife (Chao 1983: 33). Also in matters of education, career choice, and post-marital residences, the continuation and expansion of the family were more important than the wishes of the individual. The family head's guidance was especially decisive for the lives of male heirs. In the classical novel, The Dream of the Red Chamber, for example, the father is portrayed as the austere supervisor of his son's education, urging him to continue to maintain the family's official position (Chao 1983: 41-49). In the traditional system, the family head was responsible for and controlled the social and political activities of family members.

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that this is essential for ensuring transparency and accountability in the organization's operations.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and tools used to collect and analyze data. It highlights the need for consistent and reliable data collection processes to support informed decision-making.

3. The third part of the document focuses on the role of technology in modern data management. It discusses how advanced software solutions can streamline data collection, storage, and analysis, leading to more efficient and accurate results.

4. The fourth part of the document addresses the challenges associated with data management, such as data quality, security, and privacy. It provides strategies to mitigate these risks and ensure that data is handled in a responsible and secure manner.

5. The fifth part of the document concludes by summarizing the key findings and recommendations. It stresses the importance of ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that data management practices remain effective and up-to-date.

Dishonorable behavior was considered to humiliate a person's parents and ancestors; therefore, no family member should take a stand inconsistent with that of the family head.

The last feature of the Chinese patriarchal family system was the father's authority in maintaining the family hierarchy. The family head was charged with holding ancestor worship ceremonies, in which great honor was given to the patrilineal ancestors symbolizing and strengthening family solidarity (Chao 1983: 88). The family head also enforced the family code embedded in Confucian ideology. These included: "Filial Piety," "The Three Cardinal Guidances and Five Constant Virtues," and "The Three Obediences and Four Virtues." The Hsiao Ching (Classic of Filial Piety) says, "Among five punishments inflicted for three thousand articles (crimes), no crime is more grave than that of filial impiety" (Chao 1983: 44).

Generally, filial piety encompasses three elements: the children's obligations to love and support their parents; the children's duty to respect and obey their parents; and the children's charge to regard even their bodies as belonging to their parents (Ebrey 1984: 225). The carrying out of one's mourning duties to the parents and ancestral worship are also demonstrations of filial piety. Confucian ideology specifically outlines

the proper behavior of women. They must obey the father before they are married, the husband after marriage, and the son after the death of the husband.

The patriarchal family-head system did not, of course, exist in isolation; it was reinforced and perpetuated by the social system at large. To a great extent, the patriarchal family structure was molded by its relationships with the traditional economic system and social structure. The Chinese scholar Wen Yi-do (?-1947) has remarked, "The social order of feudal society was a type of familial order with the patriarchal preemptory authority over the others" (Liu 1983: 63-67).

In traditional China, family life and family structure were shaped in particular by the nature of the peasant economy (Stacey 1983: 28). Within the framework of the Chinese peasant economic system, it was necessary for the peasant family to provision itself and produce a surplus in order to maintain family continuity. To achieve this, the family head was granted absolute authority to manage a family's division of labor and other aspects of production and consumption as well as the events of family life such as birth, death, and marriage.

Another social reinforcement of the patriarchal family system was the nature of the state's system of tax collection and redistribution. The family was the tax-paying unit and the basic component in the

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes the need for transparency and accountability in financial reporting.

2. The second part outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze data, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups. It highlights the importance of using a mix of qualitative and quantitative techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

3. The third part presents the findings of the study, which show a significant correlation between the variables being examined. The results suggest that the proposed model is effective in predicting the outcomes of interest.

4. The fourth part discusses the implications of the findings for practice and policy. It suggests that the insights gained from this study can be used to inform decision-making and improve organizational performance.

5. The fifth part concludes the document by summarizing the key points and highlighting the limitations of the study. It also suggests areas for future research and provides a final statement on the overall significance of the work.

redistributive system. Any harm to the family economy would undermine the social economy. To ensure the tax collection from each peasant family, the authority of the patriarchal family head over production was emphasized by the government (Fan 1960: 19).

The compatibility of the patriarchal family-head system with the social structure is no less evident. In the traditional society, the family was the basic unit of social control. The state and customary law gave great authority to the family head. The penalty for unfilial behavior was usually beheading. Filial impiety was categorized as one of the ten unpardonable crimes in the law (Chao 1983: 44). The family head took responsibility for family members' social behavior. Thus, the state relied on the internal discipline of the family to keep individuals law-abiding citizens (Baker 1979: 114).

The traditional government and its bureaucracy used patriarchal clan and family organizations for social control of the peasantry. In addition, obedience to the family ethic of "filial piety" was the one of the criteria for choosing bureaucrats. Bureaucrats who would be loyal to the state were believed to come from sons filial to the family patriarch. Influential members of the patriarchal clan system served in the role of ruler of the local military, in the operation of the local educational system, and even as judges in local conflict, all of which

further buttressed the importance of the patriarchal family system.

The above remarks are, however, generalizations about the patriarchal family system in the traditional society; we cannot ignore the fact that there were differences between the elite and the common people. Paul Chao (1983: 47) states: "Among the gentry, whose property is in the form of large land holdings and other capital ownership, the family-head will be able to assert his parental authority until an advanced age.... In the poor peasant family on the other hand, the son will continue to serve his father, but gradually assuming family authority...the strains in the father-son relationship are more bitter and more enduring among the gentry than among the peasants in the Chinese family." Nevertheless, the gentry class, in its concern over expansion of its family property, accepted the strengthening of the patriarch's power over other individuals. The benefits of such acceptance included the social system's extending the benefits of gentry or official status to the families of such patriarchs so long as the families maintained their unity and integrity.

The picture drawn here is one of a family system that was the building block of the entire traditional socio-cultural system. But these institutions were mutually reinforcing. The traditional society shaped and

supported the family and, in turn, relied on it to support the social system.

Even though the patriarchal family system was deeply embedded in the traditional Chinese social structure, economy, and ideology, it should not be assumed that it went entirely unchallenged before the socialist revolution. Before the May Fourth Movement in 1919, Chinese urban intellectuals, influenced by Western individualism and democratic theory, advocated equality in family relationships and criticized Confucian patriarchal ethics (Lin 1979). In addition, the proportion of women working outside the house and family farm has been increasing since the 1920s. By earning cash incomes, these women obtained a degree of independence. Some of them even began to assert rights to choose their marriage partners and for greater equality in marriage (Andors 1983: 19). Under the Kuomintang (KMT) government's social reforms of the 1930s, women and children were given some legal rights in family life, such as the right to divorce, and ancestor worship was not promoted (Che 1979: 46). But, generally, the authority of the family head was still legally recognized (Valk 1939: 50) and actually practiced in the greater part of China.

CHAPTER II
PATRIARCHAL FAMILY HEAD SYSTEM IN THE
SOCIALIST PERIOD, 1949-1980

The Chinese socialist revolution that began in 1949 has brought great changes in the social and economic systems as well as in the ideological system. Since the family system is neither isolated from nor independent of the larger socio-cultural system, certain aspects of the family system, in particular its patriarchal nature, have changed also. In fact, the traditional Chinese system of patriarchal authority in the family has been a target of those in power. The Communist Party and the government carried on political campaigns to criticize the patriarchal family system and, at the same time, implemented policies directly opposed to it.

Recognizing that the success of the family revolution depended on a social revolution, the government made tremendous efforts to change the family system by changing social and economic structures. The goal of these changes was to replace many of the functions and authority of the family with new socialist institutions. The Chinese social revolution embodied its own means, mechanisms, and approaches to elimination of the traditional family system. To understand the Chinese family system in socialist society, it is necessary to discuss the PRC's

intentions concerning the family system and those mechanisms adopted by the government to change the traditional family system. We will also attempt to delineate the reasons these mechanisms were not always successful in effecting change. Unfortunately, most studies have paid little attention to these mechanisms and to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) intentions about the family in the socialist period. First, we must consider some basic Marxist theoretical considerations and Chinese communist attitudes about the patriarchal family system that influenced and directed the family revolution in China.

SOCIALISM VS. CONFUCIAN PATRIARCHY

From the beginning of their movement in China, the Chinese communists believed that the traditional family patriarchal system would be a great hindrance to the communist revolution. In the 1920s, Mao criticized the traditional patriarchal system in his report about the Hunan peasant movement (Beijing Review 1975: 18). The criticism of the patriarchal family system from the communist point of view primarily considers the political functions of the patriarchal family system in supporting the exploiting classes against socialist revolution. Mao pointed out then that the feudal patriarchal system had four authorities--political, clan, religious, and



masculine--which were four thick ropes binding the Chinese people, particularly the peasants. Political authority was vested in landlords, the backbone of all other systems of authority (Beijing Review 1975: 18). Thus, the political nature of the patriarchal family system was identified with the feudal political system. By "feudal," Mao meant that the people in the society were hierarchically organized on the basis of an ascribed class status and that the elite class had the right to and did control the people subordinate to them. The patriarchal family system was then viewed as a means for the landlord class to exploit and suppress the peasantry (Fan 1960: 19-27). From this point of view, the family revolution had to be carried out as part of the whole social revolution and political class struggle.

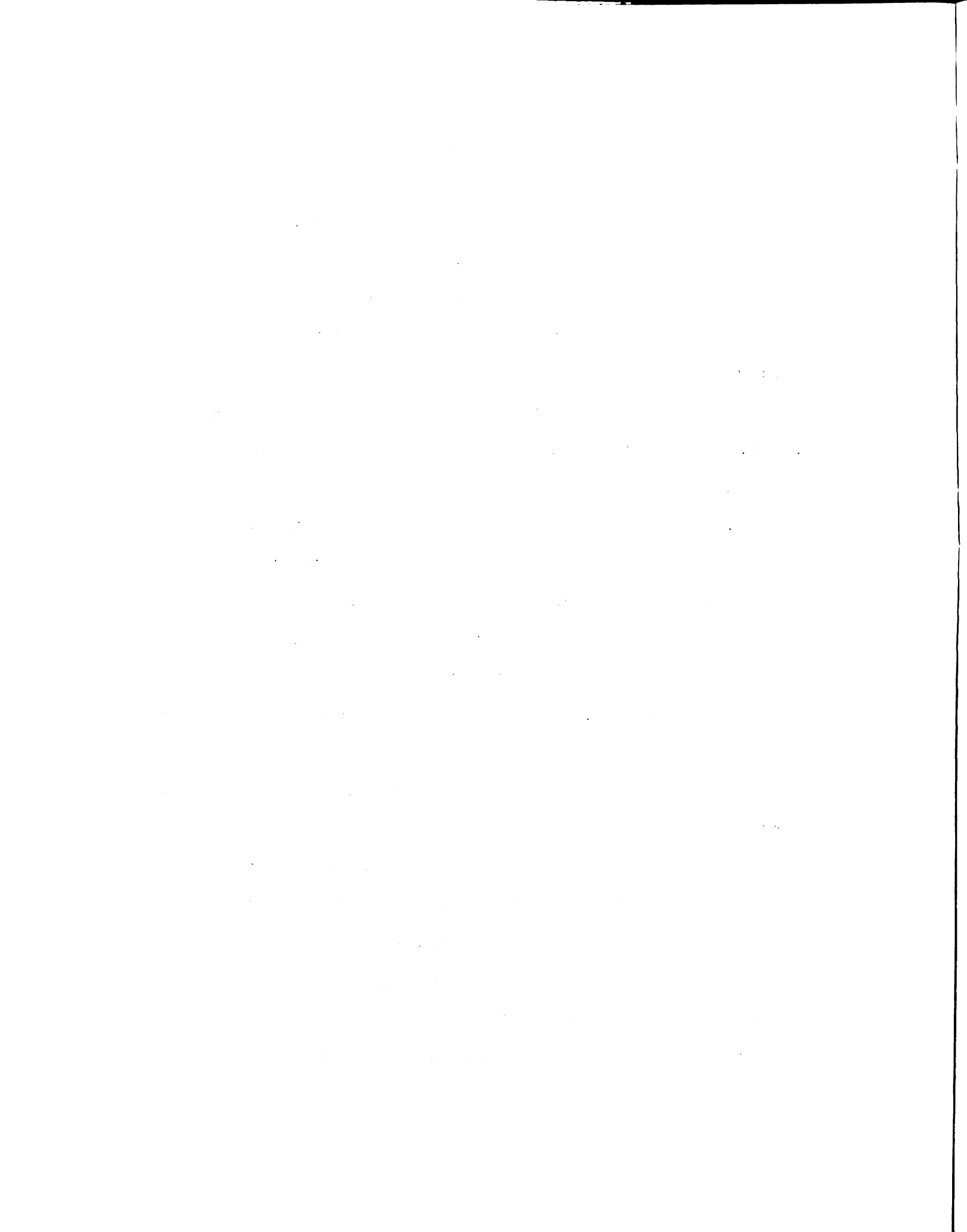
Underlying this political view of the feudal nature of the patriarchal family system was a feudal economic structure which Marxism described as basic to the family structure and family relationships. From Engel's point of view, family organization originated from the process of emerging private economic ownership. In class societies, the family is a unit that is used to bind people and ensure the control of private property (Fan 1960: 19-27).

The Chinese communists also pointed out that the family had different functions and features in different classes. The family of landlord class was acknowledged as

an exploiting unit, and the family of the peasantry class was acknowledged as an exploited unit within the quasi-private peasant economy (Fan 1960: 19-27). For peasants, the family was a means by which the landlord could force the peasant to stay on the land and keep them working for the benefit of the landlord class. The conflict between socialism, which aims at reshaping the economic system into a national or collective economic system, and patriarchal familism is apparent. For economic as well as political reasons, therefore, family patriarchal authority had to be eliminated by depriving the family of the ownership of private property.

In answering a query about the family authority system, the editor of the Worker's Daily replied on January 31, 1959, "The so-called family head system was quite simply the occupying by the family head of the place of mastery in the household, holding the overall authority over the economy of the entire family.... The family head treated his wife and children as his own personal property to dispose of as he wished" (Baker 1979: 199). Thus, in criticizing the feudal political and economic nature of the patriarchal family system, the equality of family members and the independence and emancipation of women and youth from patriarchal control were important issues in the family revolution.

In terms of the political feudal nature of the



patriarchal family system, the concept of "filial piety" in Confucian ideology was seen as especially harmful to social and political struggles. The people were called to give their loyalty to and direct their efforts to benefit the state and the Communist Party rather than the family. A French newspaperman, returning to the West after two years in China, reported the new philosophy of family life in terms of a slogan painted on the wall of an urban commune mess hall (Baker 1979: 186):

The machine is my husband,
The factory is my family,
The fruits of my labor are my children,
The Party is my mother and my father.

The age hierarchy and "filial piety" relationship between the patriarch and women and younger family members were criticized as similar to that of a proprietor and the proletariat (Fan 1960: 19-27). The communists advocated replacing the relationship based on "filial piety" with equal comradeship based on political identification with socialism. In this view, the family in socialist society would be a new type of family observing democratic principles. Father, son, husband, and wife would respect one another and live in harmony. The family head could be male or female, older or younger, but would be the most politically and ideologically advanced person (Fan 1960: 19-27).

Thus, to replace the family relationships based on "filial piety" with socialist comradeship required political or ideological struggle within the family against bourgeois or Confucian thinking. When a young man wrote a letter to the editor of the magazine Chinese Youth asking how to consider his "family feeling" toward his landlord parents, he got the answer that love always has class character and that he should return his gratitude for his upbringing to the laboring people not to his parents who were members of the exploiting class (Che 1979: 63). This "class line distinction", his individual political independence from his family, and his identification with the laboring class were primary requirements. Thus, to eliminate the patriarchal family system, Marxism used the political principle of class struggle within family relationships.

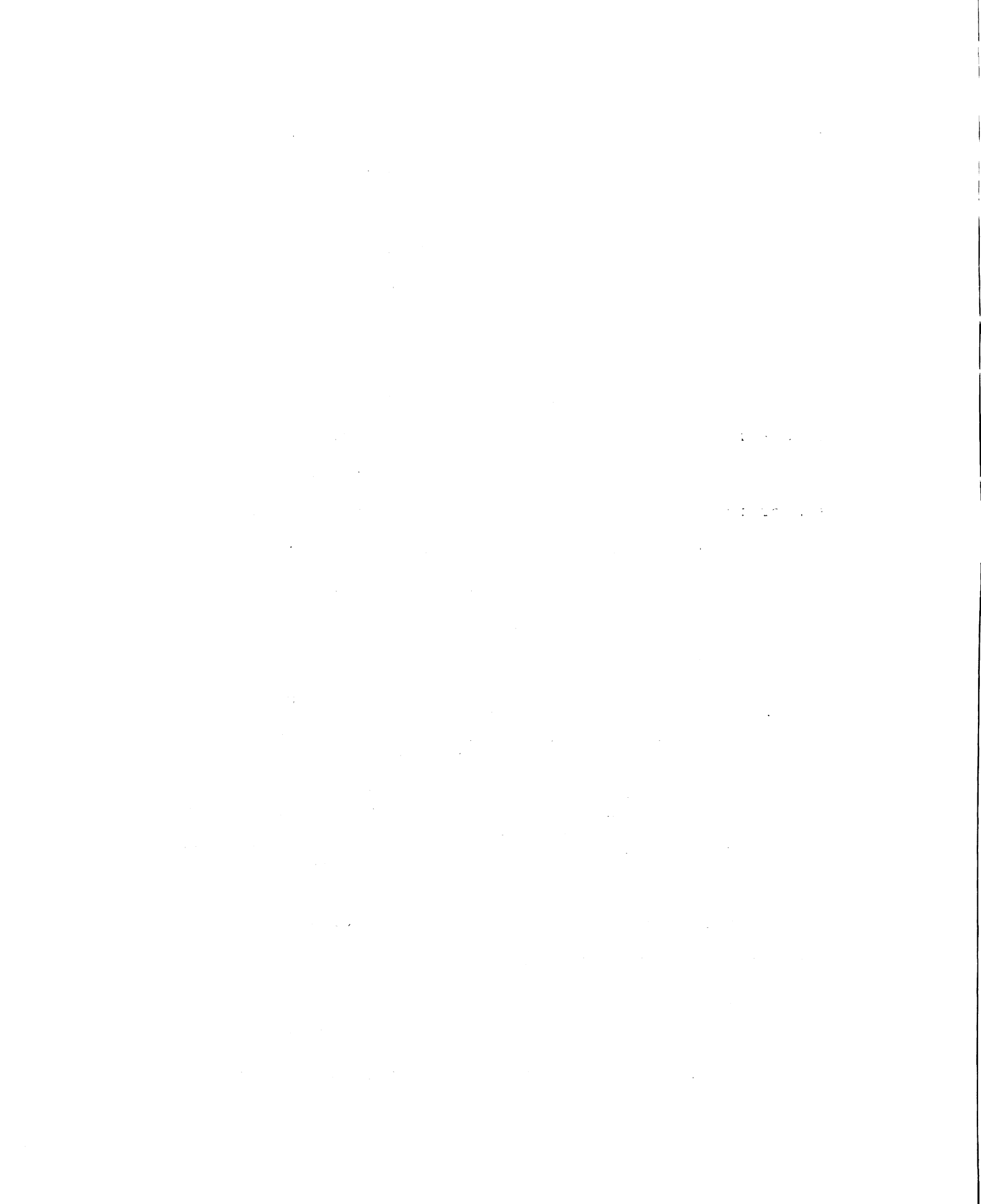
As a part of eliminating the patriarchal family system, Marxism was concerned with raising the status of women. Women were regarded as a political force able to eliminate the last feudal or capitalist force from society (Beijing Review 1975: 17-19). The emancipation of women from the dullest toil of the individual family household was the hallmark of proletarian emancipation. It is taken for granted in Marxism that the main task of women's revolution is to draw women into socially productive labor, to liberate them from domestic slavery, and to free

them from stultifying and humiliating subjugation to the eternal drudgery of the kitchen and the nursery (Davlin 1975: 363).

On the basis of Marxist ideology and its concern with the family system as discussed above, the Chinese Communist Party and the government intended to change family patriarchy through instituting a communal way of life. It would, at the same time, eliminate patriarchal ownership and the family mode of production. The objective was to establish new social institutions supporting the rights of women and youth and for the Party and government themselves to take over many of the family's functions. In 1960, Teng Yin-chao, the leader of the Chinese Women's Federation, in a speech emphasizing Lenin's thought said:

the real emancipation of women and real communism will begin only where and when...the wholesale transformation of the petty domestic economy into large-scale socialist economy begins.... The socialization of household work and organization of Rcollective life can make family life more democratic, harmonious and happy, and enable children to receive better social education and be brought up as new communist-minded men and women. Therefore we should exert efforts to gradually make collective life the principal way of life (1960: 8).

By switching to communal life, the socialist revolution sought to develop a new family system in which the society would arrange the provisioning, education, working arrangements, etc., of the family and its members. The care and support of the aged would also be a



societal obligation. People were to participate in social production and contribute their labor for the benefit of the society not the family. The principle is that the people are served first and then the family (Che 1979: 62).

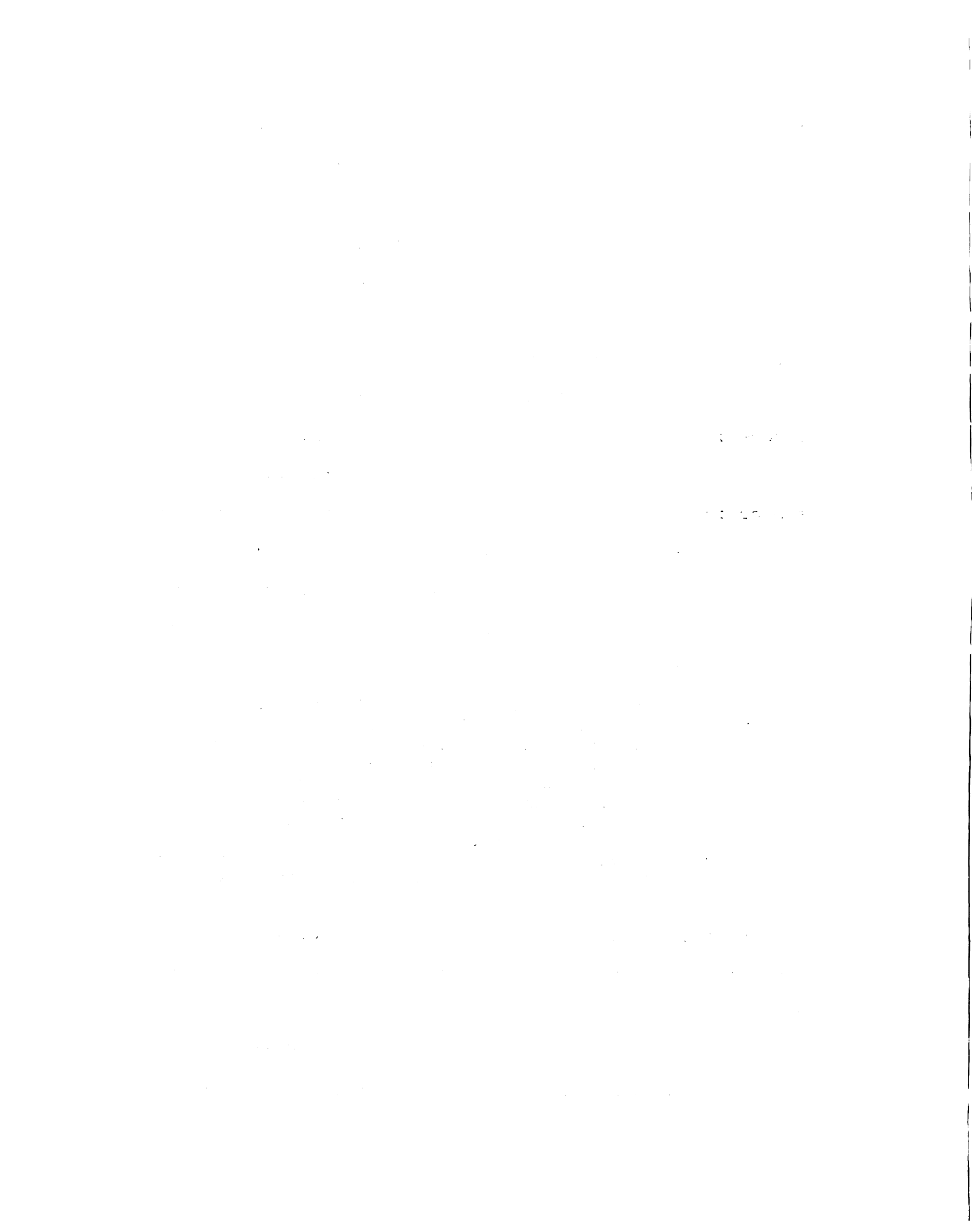
Under such socialist theoretical guidance, the Chinese socialist revolution has been proceeding in the implementation of various policies and social and economic changes that directly or indirectly have altered patriarchal family system.

SOCIALIST MECHANISMS FOR CHANGING FAMILY PATRIARCHY: THE NEW MARRIAGE LAW

The first change in the family revolution of the 1950s was the elimination of the patriarchal authority over individual marriage. The new Marriage Law, promulgated in 1950, intended to abolish parent-arranged marriage and promote freedom in marriage and divorce. The Marriage Law states clearly the general principles in Article I as follows:

Article I. The feudal marriage system--as based on arbitrary and compulsory marriage arrangement, supremacy of man over woman, and in disregard of the interests of the children--is abolished.

The new democratic marriage system, which is based on the free choice of partners, on monogamy, on equal rights for both sexes, and on the proportion of the lawful interests of women and children, is put into effect (from Baker 1979: 183).



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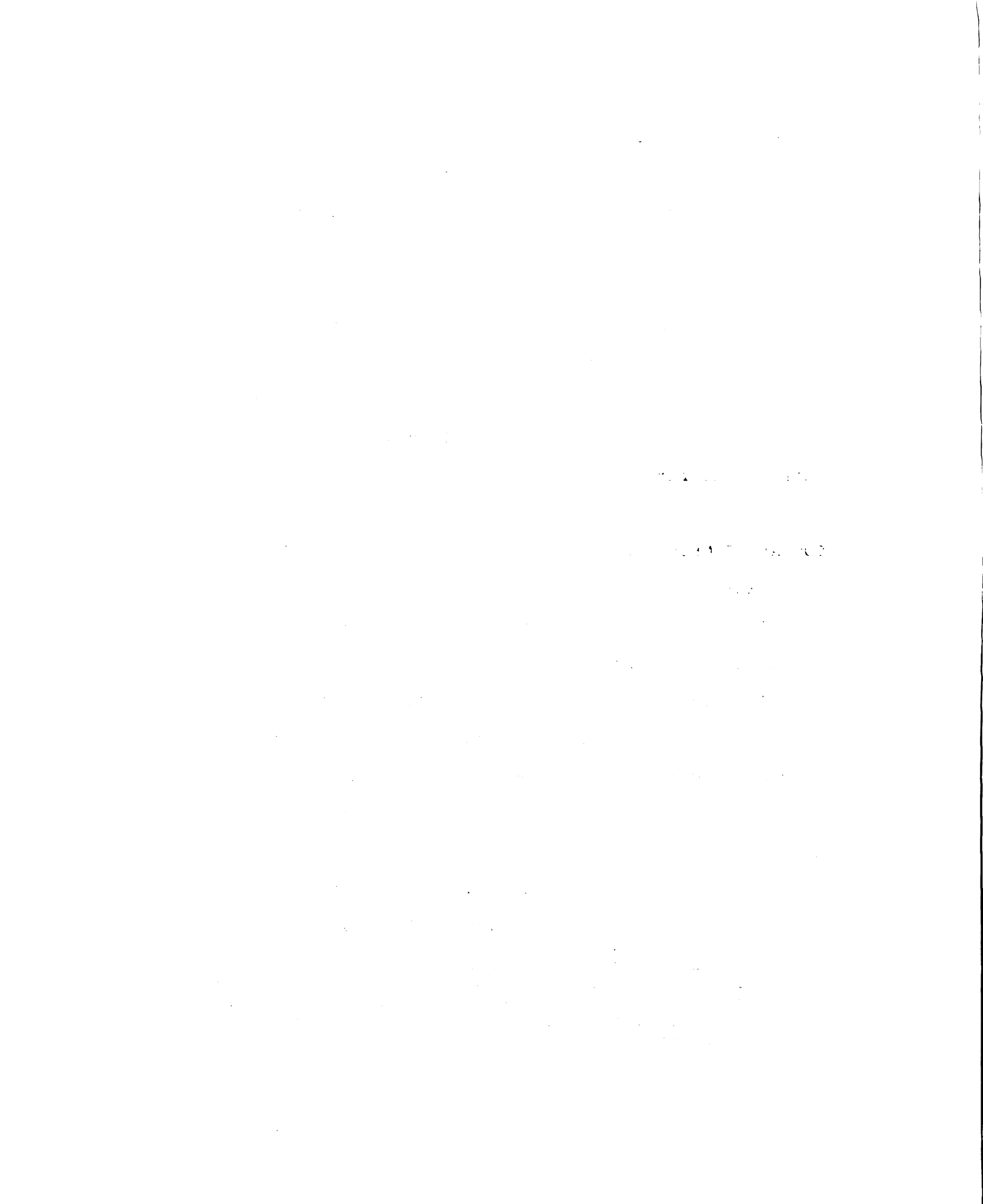
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Several campaigns to implement the Marriage Law took place in the 1950s. But the equal rights and freedom of women and young people in marriage could not be achieved without equal rights in family life. Thus, changes in the economic and social structure, as well as in the family system, became a primary means to achieve a socialist family revolution.

THE CHANGING FAMILY ECONOMIC STRUCTURE IN RURAL AREAS

Before the economic reform of the 1980s, the changes in the economic structure of the family proceeded in three stages in rural areas. These stages were: 1) a shift from patriarchal ownership of family property to that of equal rights in family property by family members; 2) a shift from a private family economic system to a collective commune economic system; 3) a shift of the entire agricultural economy of the commune system toward a modified commune system composed of a combination of agriculture and industry.

The first shift took place immediately after the liberation of the country in 1949. The Communist Party announced the equal rights principle in dealing with the family property. This principle was laid down in the Marriage Law and also in the Land Reform. It said that family property that was acquired by husband and wife belongs to both parties of the marriage; children also had

rights to this family property (Yang 1959: 155). These equal rights over family property were particularly aimed at improving the positions of women and and younger family members. During the Land Reform, a peasant family was allocated joint holding in the name of both husband and wife. Many peasant wives felt, at least psychologically, more independent. The words of a Shannxi peasant wife expressed her pride: "After we get our share (of land) we will be masters of our own fate.... When we quarrelled in the past, my husband always said, 'get out of my house,' now I can give it right back to him, 'get out my house yourself'" (Johnson 1983: 108). C.K. Yang (1959: 143) provides another example of a peasant girl in Lunbung county of Hobei province who was forbidden by her father to marry the man she had chosen. She brought the case to court in 1951 and was granted not only freedom to choose her marriage partner but also her share of the family property.

Indeed, the search for equality in family property rights had long been a part of the communists' plan for family reform. The implementation was hindered, however, by the continuation of the system of patrilocal residence and the family mode of production. In the family mode of production, family holdings have to be exploited as a whole and there is little room for family members to claim jurisdiction over the distribution of their family

property. They must depend on the family head for their economic arrangement--and with patrilocal residence, the family head was, almost by definition, the eldest male.

It is not surprising, then, that the second state of changing the peasant economic structure (i.e., collectivization through the commune system) brought a forceful attack on family patriarchy. Some scholars in Western societies even predicted the end of the continuum of the Chinese family (Ho 1965: 15). In 1958, R.H. Shackford even stated that "abolition of the family is an avowed, primary sociological objective of Red China's new commune system" (Lal 1972: 6).

In fact, however, family life and the family unit have continued to exist. The intention of the commune system, by the Party's own admission, was to change the family so it would no longer be the unit of production (Lal 1972: 17). The removal of the means of production from the family resulted in family members working equally outside the family in commune or in brigade labor. Most of the parental authority, previously based on the economic structure of the family, was taken over by the larger organizations. In the commune system, all adults go out to the field according to the working arrangement determined by the brigade leaders or a committee. Sometimes, what crops the brigade should plant and how to conduct agricultural work were determined by central



planning. In their research on Guang Dong villages, Parish and Whyte (1978: 211-212) found that fathers no longer trained their sons for work on the farm because, in adulthood they would spend most of their working hours in labor groups under the supervision of people other than their fathers. Furthermore, since the father now contributed only his labor to the family economy like any other family member, upon retirement from full-time field labor he usually also turned over control of the family funds to his grown sons.

Without doubt, then, the commune system modified the economic structure of the family by removing the authority of the patriarchal head of the family in production and, to some extent, in distribution. The family head retained his role in controlling production only for the private plot allocated to the individual family.

In the early years of the commune system, however, the commune's economy was still completely agricultural, and each commune was to be self-sufficient in agricultural production. Neither the commune nor the brigade could introduce a salary system. Instead, each family unit was paid annually in the distribution of grain products through the family head. Thus, within the economic structure of the peasant family, the family head still held authority in family consumption.

The third stage in changing the family economic structure began in the early 1970s. The commune's economic structure was changed from agricultural production only to a system combining agriculture with some industry. The factories that were set up within the commune system drew young family members into the factories. They were paid their salaries directly instead of having their earnings go to the family head as was done with the distribution of agricultural earnings. Thus, in families with members working in factories, the family heads further lost control over distribution of resources and consumption patterns. Fei Xiao-tong (1983: 19-21), studying the family structure in the communes in South China in 1979, gave the example of village girls working in a brigade factory. They generally turned over their incomes to the heads of their families, but they themselves also had access to some money. Some, for example, had their hair permed in town at the cost of two yuan. Formerly, it would have been difficult for a country girl to get two yuan from the family head, especially for such frivolity as a hairdo of which he would not approve. This indicates that some country girls had at least some financial decision-making power and that the family heads could not but acknowledge a certain amount of their independence. It should be noted,

however, that the peasant family containing wage laborers was in the minority in the commune system.

THE CHANGING FAMILY SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN RURAL AREAS

It has long been a revolutionary task of the Chinese communists to reform rural social structure. Clan and lineage organizations were the first target of social structural reform. Mao wrote in the beginning of the communist revolution: "The abolition of the clan system, of superstitions and of inequality between men and women will follow as a natural consequence of the victory in political and economic struggles" (Baker 1979: 182). Land Reform cut away lineage power at a stroke by removing its land base. Even long after lineage power had been broken, there were still attacks on the past lineage organization and its relics. In 1963, the magazine Chinese Youth had an article explaining how lineage organization functioned to glorify the landlord class. Lineage genealogies were written to defame the peasant revolts of the lineages and promote feudal loyalty, filial piety, and other feudal virtues in order to preserve feudal order (Baker 1979: 205-206).

Having destroyed the old patrilineages, the commune system, besides its economic functions, developed into a local administrative unit controlling and organizing peasant political and social activities. The



multifunctional commune system aimed at converting individual family life into a communal style of life. The perspective on the family officially expressed in a theoretical article in the Party's press Hongchi (Red Flag) described the working-class family in the traditional society as a "forbidding cage." Socialism, it said, would and should provide a civilized life to the people by substituting a collectivized life for an individual family life (Hu 1958: 24-30). It was believed that many of the family's functions could be taken over by this collective form of life in which all social arrangements were made by larger institutions (Lal 1972: 17).

To realize these goals, a program was developed to establish commune and brigade dining halls, nurseries, kindergartens, homes for respected elders, etc. Commune nurseries and kindergartens were increased fifty-fold and 80% of preschool children were reported to be taken care of. Every brigade set up dining halls to provide free meals for the peasant families. Some advanced communes or brigades even established services for mending or sewing clothes (Goode 1963: 304).

The alteration of family life was so dramatic that suddenly there seemed little room for parental priority in most family domains. Through the social institutions, the government tried to take over all kinds of family

functions. But this new pattern of collective life soon disappeared because the deteriorating commune economy after the Great Leap Forward could not support the new institutions. This deterioration of commune economy overwhelmed many of the achievements of the family revolution, including its anti-patriarchal drive.

Two particularly significant institutions for family reform in the commune system were the Women's Federation and the Youth League, which were concerned with the roles of women and youth in the public and family contexts.

Hinton, in his study of Long Bow village (1966: 158), reported that when the women's organization established and mobilized village women to participate in village political meetings, it created at first a kind of domestic crisis in many families. Family heads, both husbands and fathers-in-law, regarded women as the family's private property; they considered women's activities outside the family as "steps directly to adultery." Some young wives even were beaten up when they got home from the women's association. In one case of a young wife who was beaten by her husband for attending a public meeting, the women's association called a meeting of the women of the whole village to demand the husband's explanation and his apology. Finally, he made a promise never to maltreat his wife again.

With the development of the commune system, the Women's Federation and the Youth League were rapidly established throughout the country. Both took on important administrative functions. The Women's Federation mobilized village women to participate in political activities so that they could be an important political force, organized women to join collective agricultural work, and handled the problems of women's rights in family affairs such as marriage and divorce. In short, the Women's Federation was to modify those elements of traditional social and family structure that opposed women's rights.

A field study by Jan Myrdal (1965: 220-222) in Shannxi province described how the Women's Federation started a women's school in the village to discuss the issues of equality and freedom for women and women's roles in family life, in commune production, and in political activities. It fought for brigade decision-making for women. It also gave help and advice about marriage or other women's problems. The Federation also assisted young women who wanted to marry men of their own choice rather than agree to marriages arranged by their parents. It was taken for granted that the Women's Federation should be concerned with family life. A report written by the Women's Federation of Pin Shang brigade in Shandong province claimed that the cadres and



Women's Federations should be responsible for resolving the problems of marriage and family life. This Women's Federation helped young people marry without the demand of bride price; people adopted a new style of "economical wedding." In addition, the federation took over the parents' role of introducing young people to each other for free and late marriage. Fighting against patriarchal custom, the Women's Federation also helped widows to remarry. It proudly claimed that parental authority in marital decision-making had declined in villages (Pin Shang Brigade 1968: 47).

The Women's Federation and the Youth League were particularly important in carrying out the family educational program against Confucian teachings such as "filial piety," "Three Cardinal Guidances and Five Constant Virtues," and "The Three Obediences and Four Virtues." They organized various kinds of study groups, night schools, and other programs to discuss and criticize the patriarchal ideology. The erosion of the family patriarchal family system was to come through training the Chinese people to be political and nonfamilistic. The regime of family life was seen as a frontline of the political struggle between the proletariat and bourgeoisie classes; family relationships were identified with political relationships. During the Cultural Revolution and post-Cultural Revolution periods, the program called



for replacing the traditional patriarchal family head with the "political family head." The person in the family who best understood Mao's thought was to head the family regardless of that person's standing in the generation-age-sex hierarchy (Baker 1979: 200). Amrit Lal has said:

Hunan Radio reported in December 1968 that in some villages a struggle for seizing power in the family was being carried on. Power was to be snatched away from every head of family who followed old feudal customs and was to be seized by a family member loyal to Chairman Mao. The new head of family was called the Political Family Head... in one peasant family of seven, a 17-year old girl was elected Political Family head (1972: 9).

The government also paid much attention to improving women's political position. In 1955, an investigation in East, Central, and South China showed that 15% of rural cadres were women. In the 1970s, the figure rose to 25%, suggesting that women had broken into political decision-making to some degree (Parish and Whyte 1978: 239).

Another important function of the Women's Federation and the Youth League was to mobilize women and young people to participate in socialist economic production. The government policy stressed Engel's view that "the emancipation of women and their equality with men are impossible and must remain so as long as women are excluded from socially productive work and restricted to housework" (People's Daily 1960: 10). The slogan of



"women holding up half the heaven" was often used to emphasize women's role and capability in economic production. This was a very evident effort by social organizations to attract women into public agricultural work from family work. Various kinds of women's and youth's working teams were organized with such names as "iron girls team," "youth shock worker team," or "women and youth's scientific experiment groups." Reports indicate that 90% or even 100% of rural women's labor was mobilized into collective agricultural work in 1958-1960. An average of 250 work days for women laborers was reported (Johnson 1983: 161).

THE CHANGING FAMILY ECONOMIC STRUCTURE IN URBAN AREAS

The structural changes for urban families were different from those in rural areas. The change in urban economic structure was primarily a process of national socialization of the urban economy by eliminating all private entrepreneurship and, at the same time, the capitalist class. Having taken over capitalist enterprises, the central government gained complete control of the urban economy.

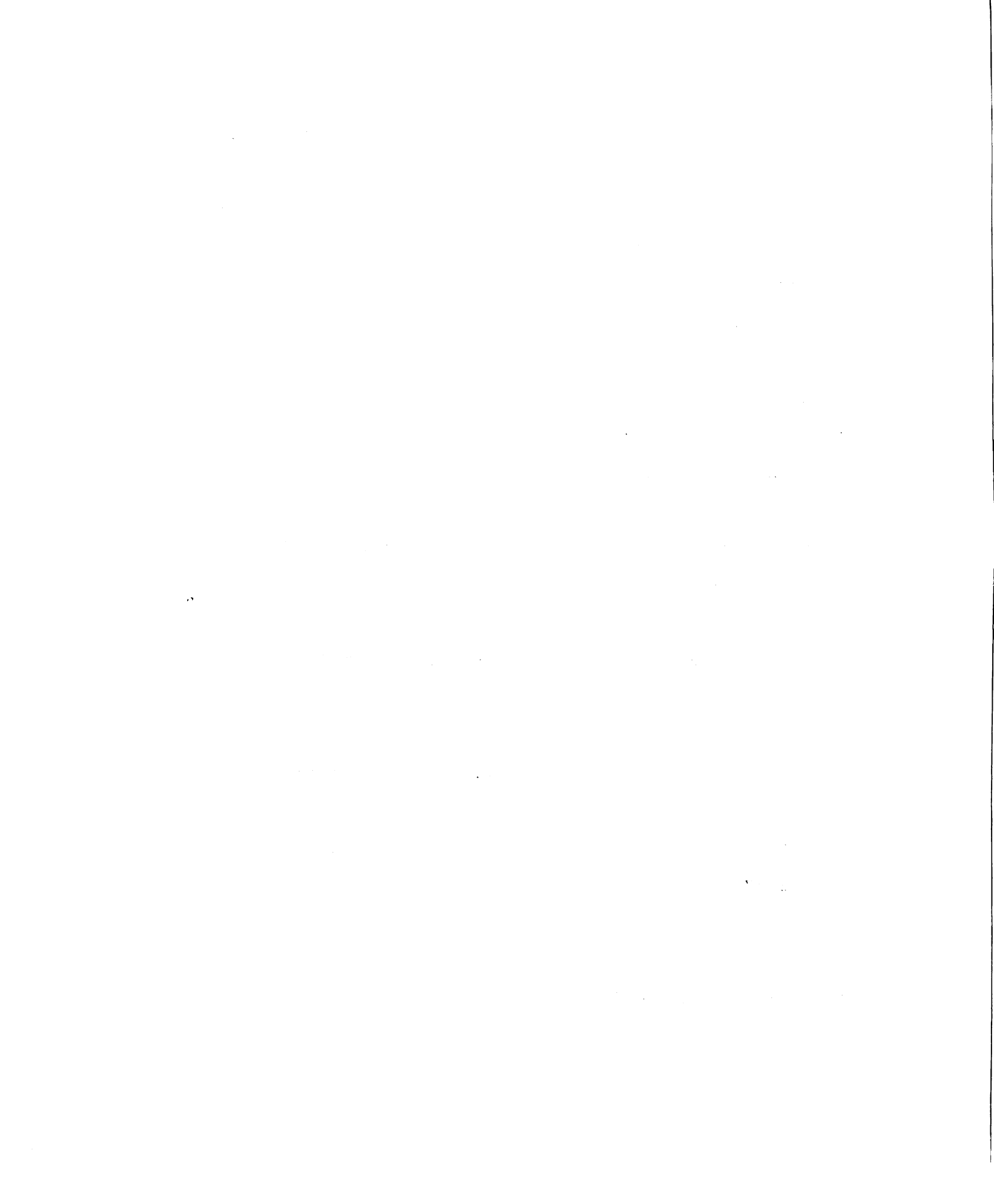
The socialist reform of the urban economic system began in the early 1950s. Capitalists turned in their firms and factories to the state. Small peddlers,

shopkeepers, noodle sellers, repair workers, and barbers were organized into forms of collective enterprise, especially during the Great Leap Forward (Parish and Whyte 1984: 28). After this period, in the 1960s and 1970s, the process of socialization of the urban economy accelerated. First, family enterprises were turned into collective enterprises; those collective enterprises were then gradually turned into state-run enterprises. During the Cultural Revolution, private individual enterprises could no longer be found in large cities (Parish and Whyte 1984: 29-30). Urban families became part of larger labor units instead of individual units of economic production (see Table I).

TABLE I URBAN WORK FORCE IN 3 SECTORS

Year	State	Collective	Family private
1957	69%	21%	10%
1977	79%	21%	0

Source: Parish and Whyte 1984: 29-30.

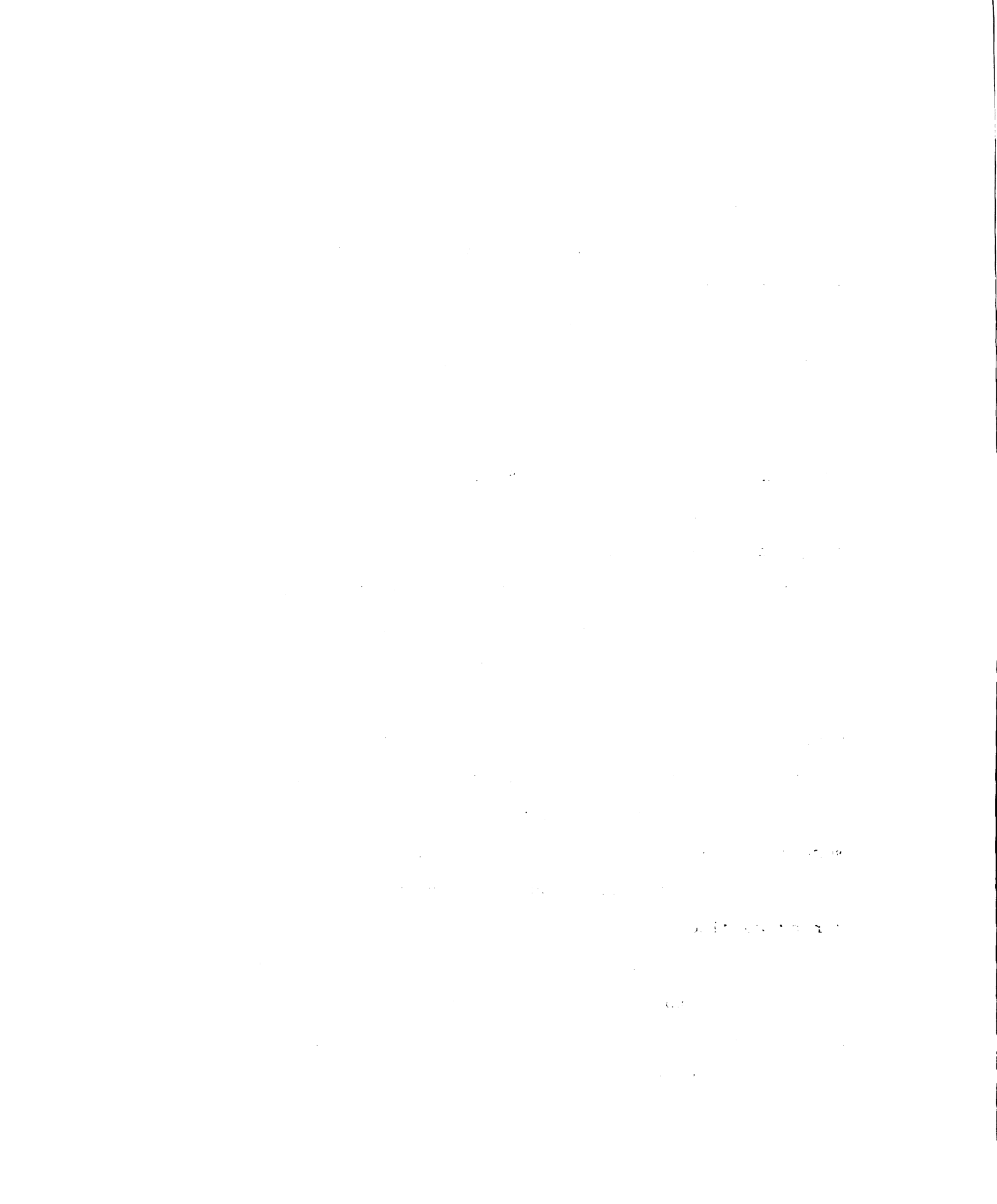


Some sociologists believe that urban industrialization in itself modifies family structure and, in turn, dissolves the family mode of production. Change in the Chinese urban family in the PRC has been different. There, it was brought about not by industrialization alone but by a drastic change in the entire economic structure that removed all production from private hands.

THE CHANGING FAMILY SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN URBAN AREAS

The social structural change in urban areas was even unique in terms of the impact on family patriarchal authority. Two new kinds of organization dominated the lives of individuals and replaced parental control.

One of these organizations was the work unit. A Chinese urban work unit does not simply control the economic lives of laborers. It is also a system of social and political control, as well as a social welfare system. It is supposed to be responsible for its workers' political behavior and political promotions, as well as for its workers' housing, care of their children during working hours, and their education (Parish and Whyte 1984: 25). Sometimes work units penetrate family life as they implement government policies. The Communist Party, the Women's Federation, and the Youth League are integrated with the administration of the working unit.



The second organization was the urban neighborhood organization or residents' committee. Ruth Sidel (1974: 31-35) describes the functions of residents' committees in Beijing. These organizations provided services to reduce the domestic work burdens of women and organized urban women into collective "street factories" or collective service enterprises. More important, residents' committees served as transmitters of government policies and organized political study and even militant groups. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, entire family units attended study sessions organized by neighborhood committees and family study within the home became popular. At such meetings, family members confronted one another; educated, radical youth could usually influence older people (Sidel 1974: 37-38). Another function of neighborhood committees was to solve marital disputes by criticizing "feudal ideology" and establishing a democratic family system (Sidel 1974: 61-63).

All of the policies and programs discussed above illustrate Chinese socialist approaches to family revolution up to 1980 when the new Economic Reform began. Thirty years of consistent governmental efforts turned the society, within which the patriarchal family once was imbedded, into a system of multi-functional institutions intended to modify family life under socialist

guidance. But the socialist goal of eliminating the patriarchal family system and converting individual family life into communal life is far from fulfilled. The real impact of these policies and programs on the patriarchal family system needs further discussion.

CHAPTER III

DISCUSSION: CHANGE AND PERSISTENCE OF PATRIARCHAL FAMILY HEAD SYSTEM

As early as 1960, the Chinese government claimed that the patriarchal family system no longer existed (Teng 1960: 6-9), but it was too optimistic. The assumption that the revolutionary changes in economic and social structure would automatically eliminate the patriarchal family system was too naive. But the real nature of the situation of Chinese family in socialist society still invites argument. Various studies by Westerners (Parish and White 1978, 1984; Freedman 1983-84; Stacey 1983; Johnson 1983) and Chinese reports provide conflicting views of the Chinese family system. Many questions about the maintenance of patriarchy remain. An understanding of the Chinese family system requires further discussion of the facts of several aspects of change and lack of change in the patriarchal authority system. We must examine the implementation of government policies historically and sociologically.

CHANGES IN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PATRIARCHAL SYSTEM

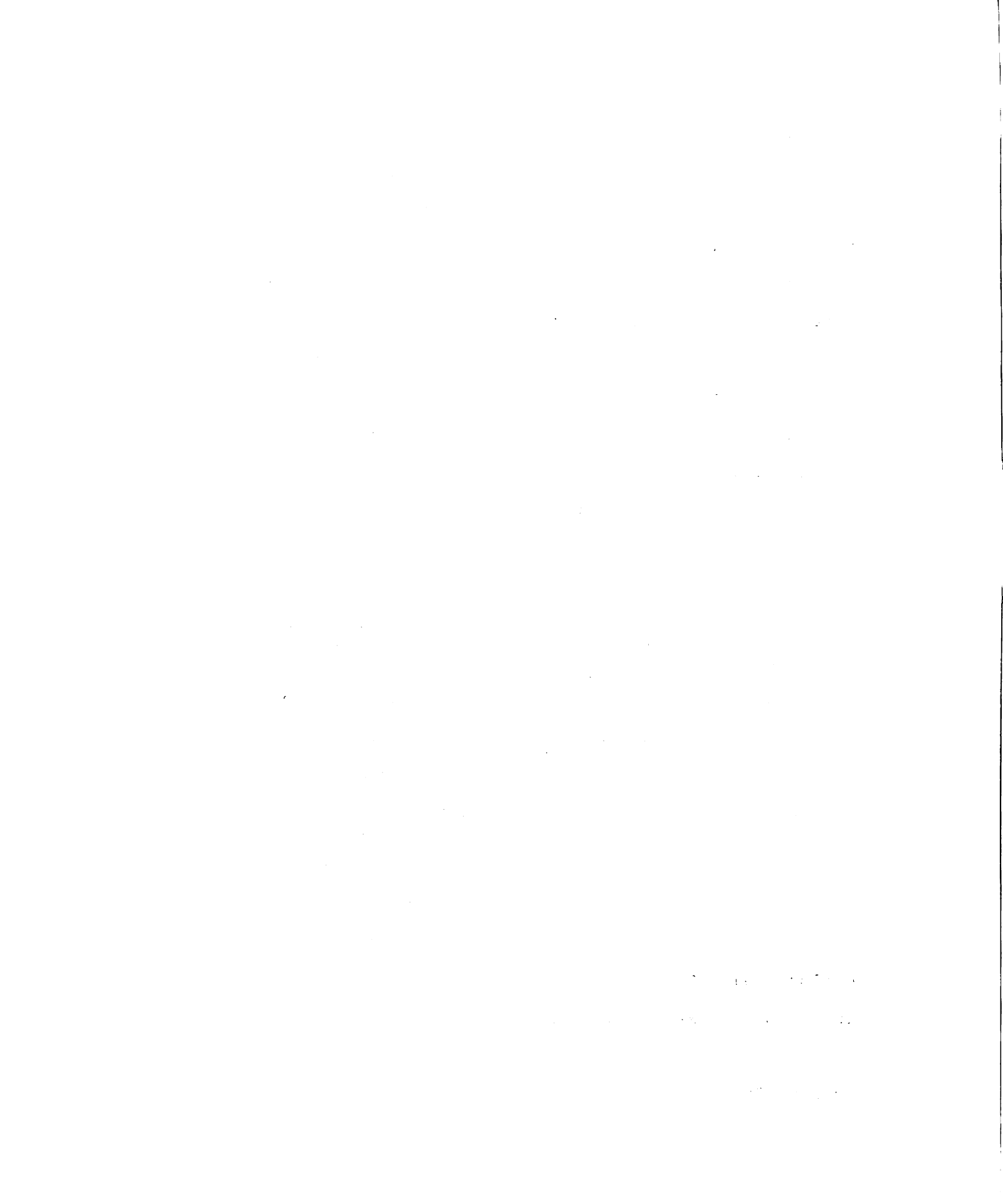
As the government enforcement of policies directed against the patriarchal family system has continued for more than thirty years, it is evident that the attitudes

toward patriarchy among young people and women have changed. Influenced by the political and ideological campaigns stressing the theory of class struggle, one young urban resident defined "filial piety" as "a feudal theory that makes people into slaves.... Filial piety is used by landlords to make their children loyal to them.... Filial piety means that the young must give whatever they have to the old" (Friedmann 1983: 60).

Another popular idea, expressed in Chinese Youth, is that loyalty is due only to Chairman Mao or the Party. A young man's letter answering a question about being encouraged to struggle with one's parents' "backward thinking," stated:

Some youth tend to feel that since their parents have raised them, they cannot disobey their parent's ideas. I, however, realized that although our parents have given birth to us and raised us, it is only through the existence of the Party and Chairman Mao that we have shaken off the feudal yoke and matured. It is only through the instruction of the Party and Chairman Mao that we have grown up in good health.... Only by sticking to principles can children unite with parents to improve the family relationships (Tan 1968: 20-21).

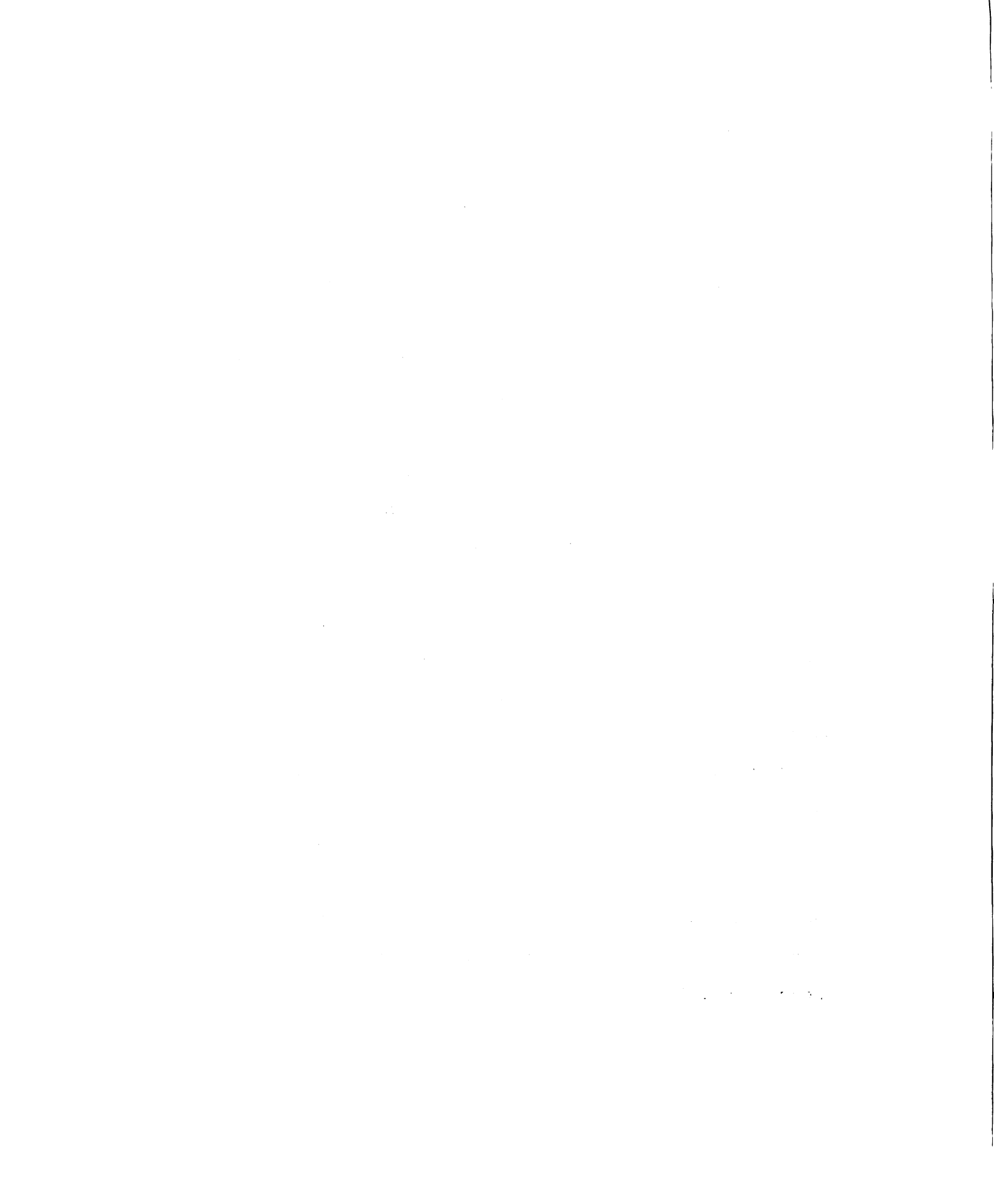
In the past, there were countless examples of sons being deliberately incited against their fathers by the branding of Confucian filial piety as the "source of all evils" (Lal 1972: 14). It was common during the 1960s and 1970s to find Mao's portrait hung over the altar table where the ancestral tablets were once kept. Expressions such as "the Party is my father and my mother" and



"Chairman Mao is dearer than our parents" were prevalent in songs and poems (Baker 1979: 212).

This emphasis on class struggle in family relationships had important influences on young people. When a Red Guard who had taken part in an armed battle was later told that his father, who had happened to be on the other side, had been killed, he commented that his father had deserved his fate (London and London 1970: 48).

This attitude toward parental authority was a result of a socio-political movement in which the political interest was treated as the basis of the family relationships. People from exploited classes encountered a peculiar situation. Ironically, their political and economic fates were predetermined by their fathers' class labels. Based on such an identification system, the society placed them in a lower social and economic status because of their patriarch's class. Over-emphasis on class struggle during the Cultural Revolution produced political splits within some families and generated the breakdown of many families. After the Cultural Revolution, lack of respect and care for parents by the young became a social problem; many cases of parent abuse appeared (Beijing Review 1984: 31).



FAMILY TYPES¹

It is difficult to generalize about family structure in present-day China. It is useful, however, to examine and compare family types. Changes in proportions of the various family types could indicate the degree of patriarchy that still exists among families in modern China. Fei Xiao-tong's recent study (1982: 13) of rural family structure shows changes in proportions of nuclear and extended families in a village of South China. His study shows that both nuclear and extended families are increasing in percentage (see Table II). He also finds that within the category of extended family, 19% of 42 families, the life style of different generations is to have "separate stoves." That is to say, the parents and married children manage consumption separately but live under one roof; this is because of the difficulty married sons encounter in building their own houses. The investigation suggests that young people now want to have more independence in family matters. These extended families are in a transitional period toward family division, yet they are unable to divide completely.

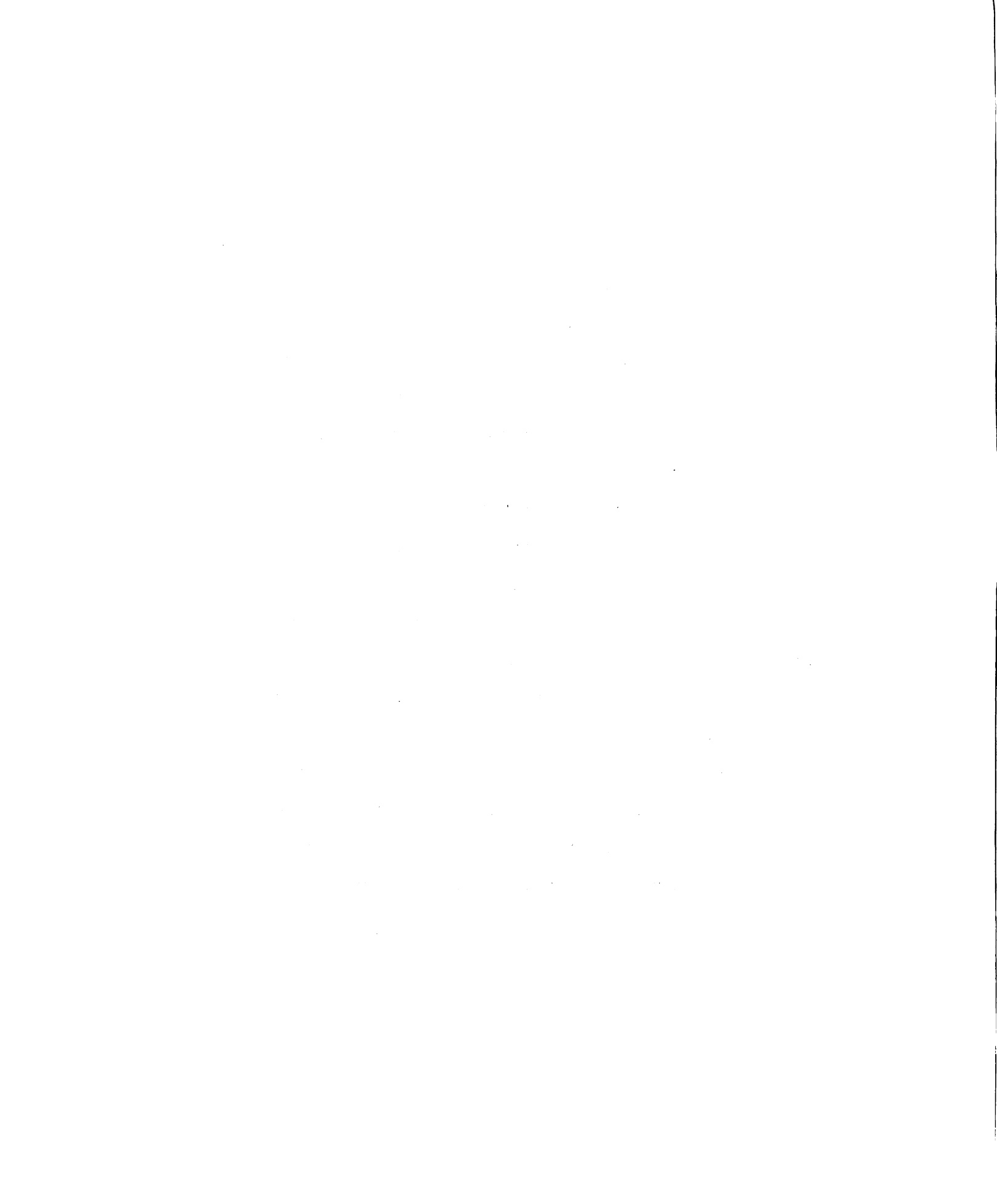


TABLE II RURAL FAMILY STRUCTURE IN SOUTH CHINA

family type	percentage of families	
	1936	1981
uncompleted nuclear family	27.6%	18.1%
nuclear family	23.7%	39 %
nuclear family with dependent members	38.4%	21.6%
extended family	10.3%	21.3%

Source: Fei Xiao-tong 1982: 131.

Urban families generally have more room for individual independence. Young people are likely to occupy their own dwellings after marriage. Table III shows the post-marital residence of urban women in a Tianjin community during different periods.

TABLE III FORMS OF RESIDENCE OF MARRIED WOMEN
IN A TIANJIN NEIGHBORHOOD

Age Cohorts	Born in or before 1926		Born 1927-38		Born 1939-50		Born since 1951	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
live with husband's family	171	64.53	62	38.27	29	23.58	16	26.23
husband lives with wife's family	5	1.89	0	0	7	5.69	3	4.92
couple lives independ- ently	83	31.32	97	59.88	80	65.04	41	47.21
husband & wife live separately	5	1.89	3	1.85	7	5.69	1	1.64
TOTAL	265		162		123		61	

Source: Pan and Pan 1983-1984: 58.

Generally, among urban women of the younger generation, the nuclear family type is increasing. The researcher suggests that a large proportion of young people are employed and, therefore, economically independent. In addition, the young people's education and different cultural values are leading to family heads losing control over them and encouraging them to establish their own households (Pan and Pan 1983-84: 62).

But compared to the Western societies, there are still large numbers of stem and extended families in both rural and urban areas in China. Since 1970, the trend has been towards increasing stem and extended families and decreasing nuclear families. Margery Wolf's study (1985: 184) reports that 53% of urban families in the 1950s were nuclear families; this proportion was down to 46% in the 1960s and to 33% in the late 1970s and early 1980s. At the same time, stem and extended families together increased from about 47% in urban areas in the 1950s to 67% in the 1970s. This implies that the young generation still encounters economic constraints on their independence. In Guang-dong province, for example, it could cost as much as ten years' savings for a young couple to build its own house. Thus, young couples often lived in the male's natal household after marriage. Thus, influence in economic decision-making of the older generation on the younger generation continues (Parish 1975: 619).

Family types only provide some general indications of the family authority structure. For a clearer view, we must probe into family economic and social life.

ARRANGED MARRIAGE AND BRIDEPRICE OR "MARRIAGE BY PURCHASE"²

The issue of choice in marriage partner provides some insight into the authority structure of the family. It seems that the parental arrangement of marriage with



brideprice is still practiced. The practice is considered by the government to be a "feudal relic" or a "feudal heritage." But can this system be attributed only to the influence of "feudal custom"?

Examining the "feudal marriage pattern" across time, Buck (1937: 468-70) in his study in the 1930s indicated that in the North China Plain region, brideprice and dowry were on the average roughly equal (see also Johnson 1983: 210). In Shannxi province in Northern China from the 1960s, on the other hand, brideprice ranged from 300-1000 Chinese yuan³ without dowries being returned (Croll 1981: 45). In Xing county of Shannxi province, more than 6000 arranged marriages took place with reported brideprices ranging from 3000 yuan to 6800 yuan being paid to the brides' families; no dowries were returned (Zhang 1985). This change in the proportion of brideprice and dowry also occurred in Guang-dong province. An informant told Whyte:

In our locality for a wedding the girl's family used to spend much more than the groom's family.... (nowadays) for a male to find a marriage object became a hard problem. And those who had daughters to marry off had their daughters become 'money tree' (1979: 218).

The lack of choice in marriage, which was a major feature of the traditional patriarchal family system and was attacked by the socialist revolution, is still commonly practiced. Margery Wolf (1985: 171) was informed by the people she studied that the parents' decision was primary in choosing wives for their sons. Table IV indicates that in

some places, such as Shannxi province, the parental control of marriage has almost remained the same as that in traditional society. In addition, parental decision-making for the age group 20-29 is stronger than that for age group 30-39, possibly indicating a more conservative trend at present.

TABLE IV "WHO CHOOSES YOUR HUSBAND?"

Age of Respondent in 1981	No. of Respondent	Choser of Husband		
		self	parents	both
20-39				
Fujian	10	30%	70%	0
Jiangsu	19	32%	53%	16%
Shangdong	20	35%	30%	35%
Shannxi	11	0	100%	0
TOTAL	60	27%	55%	17%
30-39				
Fujian	4	50%	50%	0
Jiangsu	16	31%	69%	0
Shangdong	13	38%	23%	38%
Shannxi	15	0	100%	0
TOTAL	48	26%	65%	10%
40-49				
Fujian	5	20%	80%	0
Jiangsu	7	43%	43%	14%
Shangdong	8	38%	50%	13%
Shannxi	9	0	100%	0
TOTAL	29	25%	68%	7%
50-59				
Fujian	5	0	100%	0
Jiangsu	5	20%	80%	0
Shangdong	3	0	100%	0
Shannxi	7	0	100%	0
TOTAL	20	5%	95%	0
60+				
Fujian	6	33%	67%	0
Jiangsu	5	0	100%	0
Shangdong	5	0	100%	0
Shannxi	5	0	100%	0
TOTAL	21	9%	90%	0

Source: Margery Wolf 1985: 171.

It should be noted that brideprice and arranged marriage do not necessarily coincide. In some cases, the parents may approve the daughter's own choice contingent on payment of brideprice. For example, there is a report from Ying Lung village, Guang-dong province, of a peasant who did not want his daughter to marry a village teacher unless the teacher could pay a brideprice of 2500 yuan. The choice of this teacher to be his son-in-law was not completely in his control but depended on his daughter's willingness (Yang 1984).

Several features of this pattern of arranged marriage and marriage with brideprice should be examined. It is often reported that husband and wife do not have a good relationship in such marriages. Such young couples often complain about the bad relations between them and the wife may be beaten by the husband. Two cases of "collateral exchange marriage" (xiong mei huan qin), which is a significant pattern of marriage in rural areas nowadays, may serve as examples. In one case, a girl was traded to her husband's family in return for her brother's marrying her husband's sister. When she resisted the arrangement, her parents were reluctant to trade her. But the other family threatened them and forced her to get married. After she was beaten by her husband, she escaped back to her own family. Her husband traced her and beat her and her father (Xu 1985).

The other case involved three families who traded their daughters among themselves to provide wives for their sons. One of the three girls did not like her arranged husband and often escaped from her husband's family. Her brother, being afraid that his wife could be taken back if the family of his sister's husband sought revenge, beat his sister and killed her in secret (Xia and Guo 1985). Such collateral exchange marriages used to be considered a form of double kinship between families, but they now seem to be seen as financially useful in that one can get a wife for a son without brideprice by exchanging a daughter.

Another feature of arranged marriage with brideprice is that its dominant consideration is economic exchange rather than social reciprocity. In arranging the marriage, the parents seek only to recoup the money they spent in raising their daughter (Myrdal 1965: 225).

Why is the tendency towards patriarchal control in marriage now growing? Parish and Whyte (1978: 187) suggest that the increased brideprice reflects the new value on women because women have worked more and more in communes, earning considerable amounts of work points for their families. This is particularly important since family income now depends overwhelmingly not on land holdings but on the number of laborers the family has and their levels of earnings. This explanation is not

sufficient, however. Some dimensions of family life must be taken into account. The first is the significance of the kinship network, particularly the affinal network, in family life. The importance of affinal networks has been attested to by anthropologists; affines are part of a large network of family relationships serving as a source of help for families (see Gallin 1960 and Baker 1979: 127-130). A family spreads its net of alliances through the marriage-out of daughters and the marriage-in of daughters-in-law with marriage exchanges (i.e., brideprice and dowry) being roughly equal. The new form of arranged marriage with brideprice only may, as Gallin and Gallin (1985) suggest, indicate that the traditional alliances between the two affinal families are not being formed.

In the commune system, the kinship network in general has weakened, and so have affinal relationships. The alteration of the rural economic system produced a breakdown in affinal networks, since their former linkages in the family mode of production was rendered irrelevant. Since the commune economy in large areas was maintained as a self-sufficient agricultural economy and, therefore, was thwarted in developing, the chances of reciprocity between families, especially affinal groups, were very limited. The families involved in marriages would not necessarily be involved in further reciprocity (see Parish and Whyte 1978; Gallin and Gallin 1982, 1985).

The second dimension is the development of the economic process. The aftermath of the Great Leap Forward was catastrophic. The welfare system collapsed in the late 1960s. The collective agricultural economy failed to provide the necessities of peasant family consumption. Thus, peasants had to work more in their private plots. According to Parish and White (1978: 119), private plots generated 10-25% of total peasant income in the 1960s and in the 1970s; occasionally, this figure could be as high as 33%. In this regime of family production on private plots, women and children were considered family labor. During the 1960s, women's work days in brigades dropped from an average 150-250 days to 50-60 days and even fewer (Johnson 1983: 173), suggesting that peasant families had more control in using women's labor for family production and domestic work.

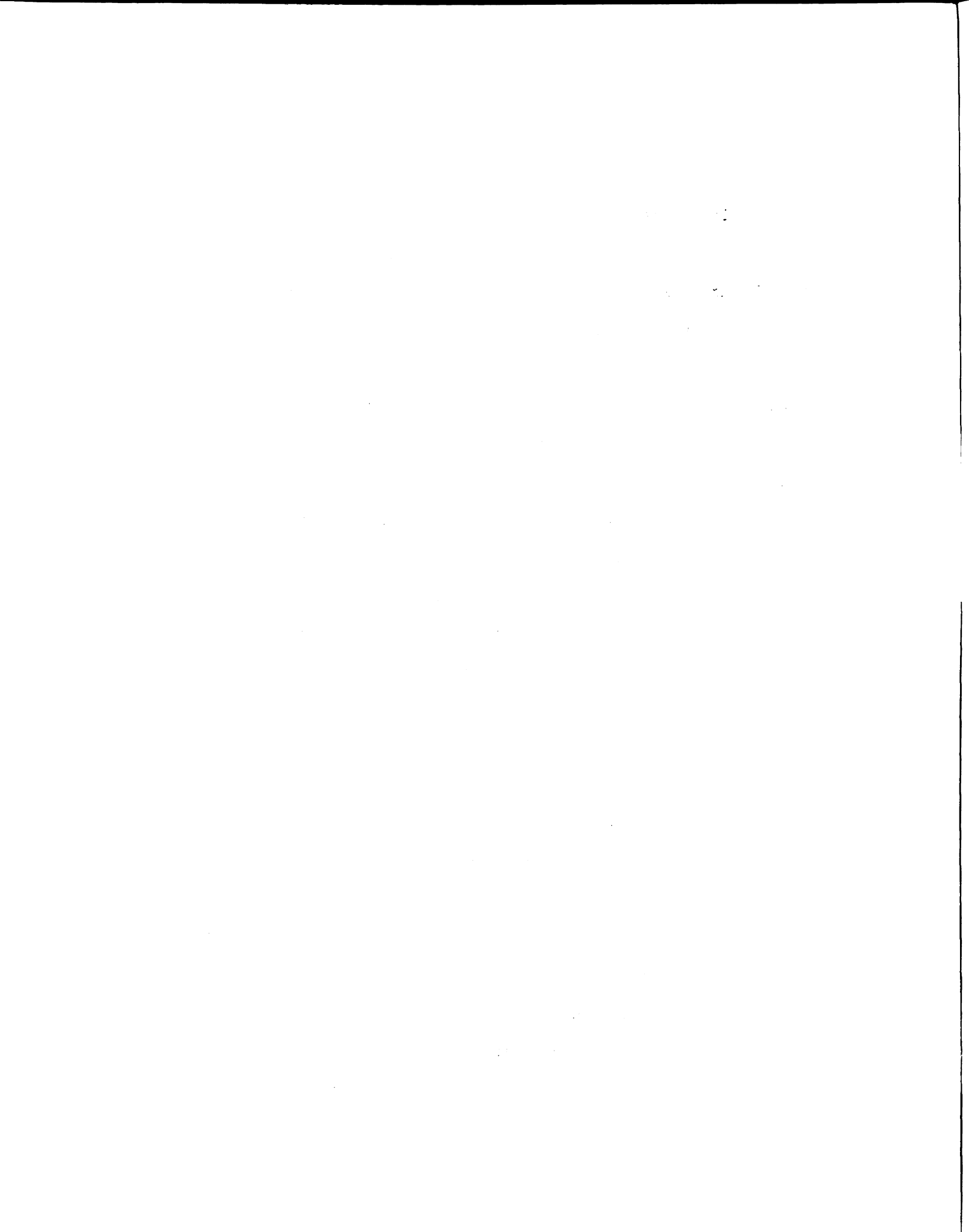
Family production became more and more important in the lives of peasant families as it provided the main or even whole cash income for the family. Women's and children's labor in private, sideline production and their cash earnings became more valuable. Therefore, the arranged marriage with brideprice might reflect the control of women's labor by parents. Brideprice was, therefore, compensation for the bride's family's loss of a daughter's labor.

A third factor relating to increased arranged marriage with brideprice could be the rapidly deteriorating commercial economy in rural areas. From the Great Leap Forward until the late 1970s, the agricultural economy, on the collective level as well as on the individual level, was less and less involved in the market. In the government's agricultural campaign (1965-1976) of "learning from Dai-zhai" and the policy of "grain production as a guiding principle," the selling of products from private plots or the development of sideline production in the commune or in the family was criticized as a "capitalist tail" that should be cut off (Fei 1984: 24). Market activities in rural areas were strongly restricted during the Cultural Revolution. Fei Xiao-tong (1984: 24) points out that, during this period, a peasant who sold even a basket of eggs on the street would be criticized. All goods were purchased and distributed according to administrative divisions, and state-owned commercial enterprises became the only channel of commodity circulation. Croll's (1983: 198) economic study also indicates that during the 1970s many peasants complained that they did not have food supplements and cash income from private plots and handicrafts. They were unable to buy pork though they had coupons entitling them to make purchases. On the other hand, peasants had to buy industrial products--clothes, fertilizer, diesel

oil, etc. Thus, getting cash income became a serious problem for peasant families.

This situation was correlated with the reinforcement of parental marriage arrangement with brideprice. Parents asked large amounts of brideprice as an important way to get cash to acquire goods such as bikes and sewing machines. Arranged marriages joined the "black market" as a kind of economic activity. This situation was further exacerbated by the difficulty parents had in paying brideprice for wives for their sons, thus increasing the necessity to acquire the necessary cash by asking high brideprices for daughters. A son's marriage thus depended on the brideprice the family received for the daughter. This marriage form was not traditional in Chinese peasant culture but arose as a strategy to deal with economic difficulties. In this sense, the large increase in this kind of arranged marriage was not merely a "feudal relic." The traditional influences were not the form itself but the authority patterns that gave the family head control over the lives of his children and grandchildren.

In addition to the failure of the commune economy and government policies, there was another factor that was significant in the resurgence of patriarchal control of family life; this was the influence of the traditional patrilineage. Despite the fact that the rural

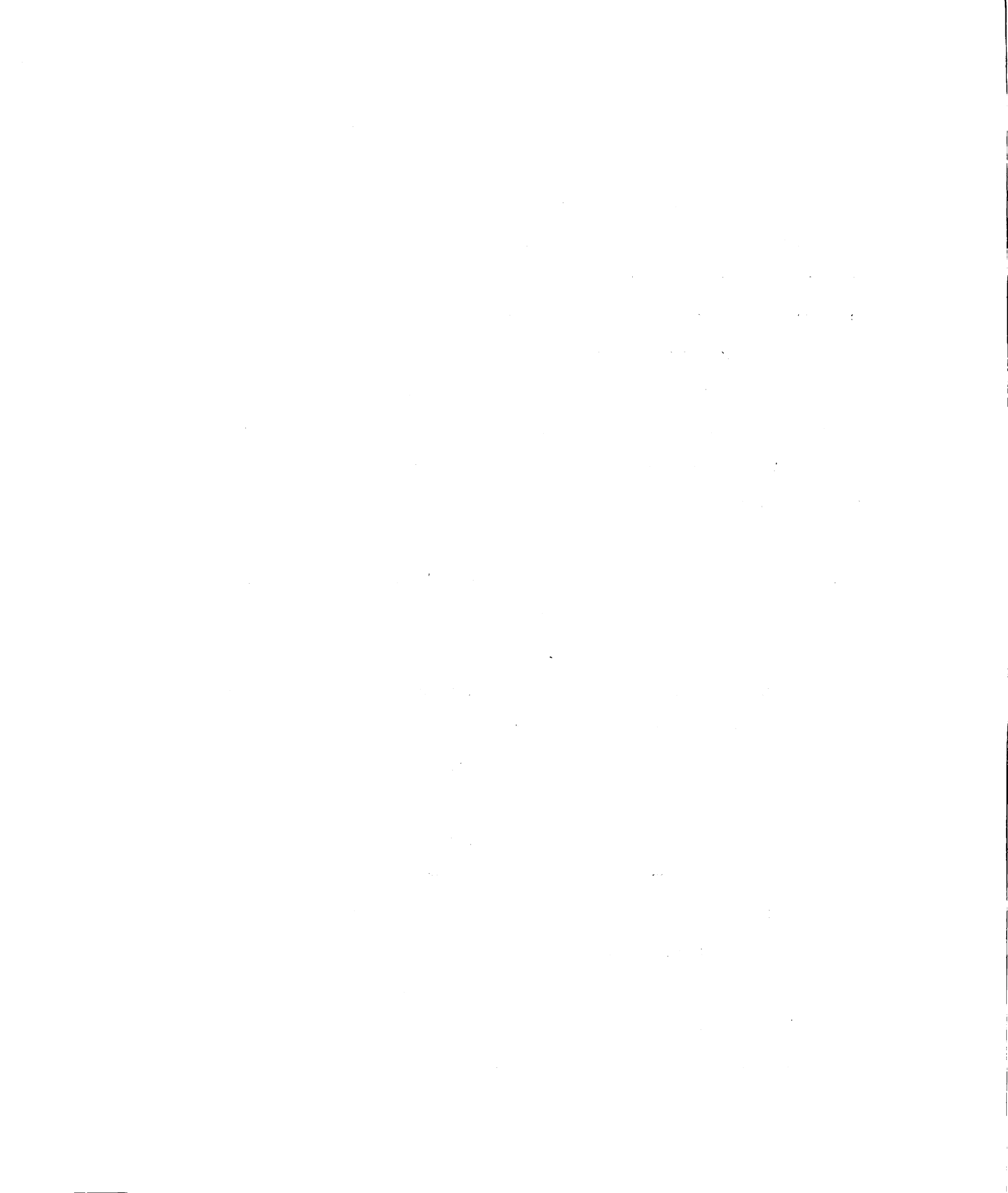


patrilineage "was effectively destroyed, with its land and lineage hall confiscated" (Whyte (1979: 213) and its ceremonies abolished, the lineage could still affect peasant life in places where a brigade or production team coincided with a local lineage. Lineage networks in some places were integrated with local commune or brigade administration. In some cases, therefore, lineage could become involved in such matters as marriage and remarriage. In a case reported in the Chinese newspaper People's Daily, a widow, Li Yu-ting, who had lost her husband in 1982, met another man and was willing to marry him. But her deceased husband's kinsmen, some of them brigade cadres or Party cadres, tried to force her to marry the patrilineal cousin of her deceased husband. In spite of her resistance, the lineage group placed her under supervision. After only 20 days of marriage, Li found a chance to escape from the village and brought suit in court (People's Daily, January 11, 1985). Although this kind of lineage intervention is rare, given resistance of its victims and the government's opposition, such cases do occur often enough to demonstrate the continued influence of rural lineages.

THE PERSISTENCE OF THE PATRIARCHAL FAMILY SYSTEM IN URBAN AREAS

Some new patterns of the patriarchal family system also appear in urban areas. One phenomenon is the great increase of patriarchal authority among some urban officials. The ability of a family head to use his power and social networks to benefit members of his family gives him more leverage to determine and arrange his children's educations, careers, and marriages. Parish and Whyte's study (1984: 20) indicates that families headed by people with high occupational or political status also tended more than others to live in extended families. The solidarity of the family could be maintained because of the ability of high-status males to arrange housing or suitable jobs for at least one grown offspring.

Chinese urban society, which has been in the process of change for the several decades of PRC rule, built up a system in which the individual's education and career are determined by centralized government planning. Officially, the government deprived the family of authority in determining children's social and working lives. Millions of urban youth were sent to settle in the countryside. People who were assigned jobs and working places could hardly change them freely and couples could be separated in different cities (Parish and Whyte 1984: 20). Thus, some cadres arranged good



educations or occupations for their family members through so-called "back door relations." The ability of cadres to make such arrangements was greater than and contrasted sharply with ordinary people's abilities. The situation was first revealed in the public press in 1973, as such incidents became frequent and serious. In January 1974, a story was published about a young man named Chi Min-chung, a son of a high ranking official. The son had gotten into the university by the "back door." He had settled in a village in Jiangxi province after his graduation from the middle school. Later, his father used his influence to get him into the army. Because of their "meritorious record," his revolutionary parents were able to pull strings to get the youth admitted into Nanjing University without any approval from his army comrades. As strong complaints came from the populace against such arrangements "by back door," the young man was shamed by his parents' arrangements and went back to the village (Baker 1979: 121-123).

This development of parental authority over the lives of their children among official families continued from the late 1970s to early 1980s. In the Communist Party's official press Hongchi (Red Flag), a 1982 article entitled "Communist Party Members Must Stick To Principle On Family Issues" appealed to the cadres to set up a new type of family relationship. It stressed that under Marxism the

family should not be established in such a way as to make some family members dependent on others. The article criticized the phenomena in which "some cadres utilized their political power to transfer the other family members from country to city, or to factory. Some cadres played an influential role in promoting their family members, and some even arranged for their children to go abroad" (Zhu 1982: 12-13). The call came for such cadres to recant "feudal paternalistic affection," which was characterized as fu rong oi gui, ze bei zi suen (If a husband gets glory, then the wife is considered noble, and the children enjoy the nobility.).

Why did this patriarchal system, which was enjoyed by the elite class in the traditional society, redevelop among official families? This question invites speculation about the social facts of urban life. A new ranking system has developed as a trend in urban areas. Before the 1980s, class struggle and centralized control of the social activities of urban people generated a situation in which the upward mobility of people was restrained by their class label, family origin, education, and work assignment. Consequently, a new system of hierarchical urban life, based on social status, occupation, and place of work or residence, became the accepted pattern; such a situation reinforces the social control by the bureaucracy. Under this system,

bureaucrats had the best opportunities to gain access to the best educations, job assignments, careers, and housing. Not only did a power fetish develop among officials, it also developed among ordinary people who tried to pursue "back door" networks to contact people in power positions to help arrange their family members' lives (Liang and Shapiro 1983).

The persistence of social hierarchy, with its new system of ranking of classes in urban life, also reinforced parent-arranged marriage. Marriage in urban centers became a form of political strategy for successful urban life. According to Parish and Whyte (1984: 67), in the 1950s and 1960s, young people tended to pick a promising partner with consideration given primarily to their political and professional futures. It was not until the later years of the Cultural Revolution that class origin became very important. Later, added to class origin was the consideration of actual power and status in the society. A recent investigation of marriage in Shanghai reported that:

in the past, some parents did not allow children to marry sons and daughters from families of exploiting classes or from families with a problematic political record. Now just the opposite is the case. Even some cadres do not allow their children to marry sons and daughters from worker and peasant families (Xu 1983-84: 82).

The same investigation described some cases in which parents threatened to commit suicide unless their children

agreed to break up with their mates who came from working class families.

Economic status was another consideration influencing parent-arranged marriages. The problem, however, was not discrepancies in prosperity between the families, as it might have been in traditional Chinese society. For example, one Beijing young man wrote a letter to tell his story to the public. He fell in love with a young woman worker and they developed comparatively deep and rich feelings toward each other. But when her father heard that the young man worked in a collective factory, the father demanded that his daughter break off her relationship with the young man forever. Feeling miserable, the couple finally separated (Liao 1981-82: 50-51). The key point here is that work in a collective factory is looked down upon because of the factory's lower political and economic status and the insecurity of its economy, welfare, and salary system. It is a matter of "iron rice bowl" vs. "earthen rice bowl" (Parish and Whyte 1984: 31-33).

Another consideration in marriage is status difference between rural and urban people. There is a formalized urban-rural distinction and a growing discrepancy of social status between urban residents and peasants (Potter 1983: 465-499). In one case, a young urban woman's marriage plan was strongly opposed by her

parents because she wanted to marry a teacher in an agricultural middle school and was prepared to settle down in the countryside with him. The parents wished their daughter to marry a suitable husband in the city. Therefore, they insisted that their daughter and her rural teacher mate pay them a sum of 3000 yuan to defray the expenses of her upbringing (Croll 1981: 102).

It is worth noting one implication of marriages with brideprice is that parents expect economic support in their old age. If they disapprove of the daughter's choice of a husband, they ask a higher brideprice so they can recoup their investment immediately rather than depending on the future goodwill of a son-in-law of whom they disapprove. One retired woman in Shanghai asked a price of 3600 yuan from the would-be son-in-law. The figure was based on counting up her daughter's age of 25 years at 12 yuan per month (Xu 1983: 82). This money suggests a kind of pay-off relationship between parents and daughter.

THE SIGNIFICANCE AND FAILURE OF SOCIALIST MECHANISMS

As we have noted, the situation of the patriarchal family in the PRC has been ambiguous. The Chinese communists made great steps toward the elimination of the patriarchal family system with the establishment of socialist and economic structures that would undermine it

and with political campaigns against Confucian patriarchal ideology. But in the process of the Chinese socialist revolution, the implementation of economic policies in the Great Leap Forward and later in the commune system brought about a deterioration of the collective economy. The collective economy failed to provide the basis for turning family life into communal life. Furthermore, under the impact of the failure of the collective economy among peasants, patriarchal control was actually strengthened in some respects to better family subsistence and social life. Similarly, in urban areas, political struggle generated a situation that encouraged patriarchal control over the individual's marriage and social life because political strategies could be used to achieve desired goals.

In analyzing the success or failure of socialist family reform in China, we must be cautious. In Western societies, family structure and family size have generally changed as a result of the development of an industrial economy. The independent, free wage labor required by industry was a major force in changing family structure and relationships. In addition, changes in the educational system and technological development also influenced family structure and relationships.

In the socialist society of China, on the other hand, the government intended to change the traditional Chinese

patriarchal family system through a political approach; that is, by mounting political and ideological campaigns, as well as by the new economic and social structures created by the socialist revolution.

In what aspects of family life, then, did the socialist revolution succeed in eliminating patriarchal authority and in what aspects did it not? The political and ideological revolution and social structure changes did have some impact on the patriarchal family system during the period of 1949-1980. The family head could not have much control over the political attitudes, social behaviors, and political participation of family members. In most families, family heads lost much of their control of, and authority over, family members in the arrangement of careers and the manner of social production. Control was further weakened as the government forced the abandonment of some family rituals such as ancestor worship and interfered with other family ceremonies such as weddings and funerals by encouraging the adoption of simple patterns that did not center on patriarchy. In addition, individual social independence was supported by the law and various other institutions.

In other aspects of family life, however, especially in rural areas, the patriarchal family head maintained some power in determining the distribution of family resources and its patterns. The family head also



exercised authority in arranging his children's marriages and residences which, as discussed above, had economic repercussions. In urban areas, the family head had power over family members if his status was such that it could be used to obtain benefits for them. He could then exercise control over their marriages and other social arrangements. What, then, is the significance of the socialist approach for change in the patriarchal family system and why did the socialist family revolution not succeed in some aspects?

First, a particular attribute of traditional Chinese society and social life was its immersion in an entrenched Confucian patriarchal ideology. The strict code regulating family relationships and buttressing the patriarchal family system was the dominant ethic for thousands of years. It is difficult to imagine the development of a new family system with democratic order and equal relationships with regard to gender and generations being realized without changing the old cultural values that center on patriarchy, and this is what the family reform attempted to do.

Political means might also be necessary to achieve a structural change that replaces the lineage organizational support for patriarchal family structure. From the point of view of some historians, the Chinese lineage or clan institution is one foundation for the persistence of the



Chinese feudal system (Liu 1983: 63-67). Supplanting patriarchal family institutions with new political communal institutions is the prerequisite for the family revolution in China.

Finally, we have seen that the socialist revolution's establishment of a new national or collective economy involved turning the people's interest away from the family to the state. It also tried to provide women and younger family members equal rights in the family and in society. The accomplishment of such change requires social institutions organizing them in political public activities.

Several significant questions emerge. First, can the patriarchal family system be changed only through a political approach? In the past, the government believed that only by changing social institutions completely would Chinese socialist society take over all family functions. In practice, the success of the family revolution depended upon the pace of both economic and social development. Other social institutions could take over family functions only if the economic system could support them. The commune system was not sufficiently productive to allow individuals to achieve economic independence. Instead, individuals had to depend on a family economy, including the important family production in private plots. This reinforced patriarchal authority in the family.



Another question that the government has had to consider is how to treat Confucian patriarchal ideology and related traditional customs. The early programs stimulating class struggle put great stress on antagonisms in relationships within the family structure. The parental role in rearing and educating the younger generation was denied. The family revolution turned into family breakdown in some families that were referred to as "political problematic families" (i.e., families that had political and class problems). Despite the family revolution, in those families that were politically well-placed and had good social positions in the new society (referred to as "Red Category families"), individual members became more dependent on the family patriarch's political class labels and social positions. This, of course, was contrary to what the government hoped to achieve in family revolution.

THE CCP'S RECONSIDERATION OF ITS APPROACH TO FAMILY REVOLUTION

In criticizing the Cultural Revolution, which was to be instrumental in carrying out its policy on family revolution, the Chinese communists have been seeking new ways to deal with family reform. The new study of family sociology is seen as an important aspect of a recently revived Chinese sociology. After the over-emphasis on

class struggle was abandoned, the government paid attention to a new definition of parent-child relationships. A Marxist philosopher in 1979 redefined the "true meaning" of filial piety as "the willingness of the young to identify with the needs of the old and to recognize one's obligation to those who sacrificed for one when one was young" (Friedmann 1983: 70). Here the reciprocity between parents and children was emphasized. The government and the people began to consider Chinese cultural and ethical values in building up a new democratic family system. For example, Margery Wolf (1985: 208) found that, compared to the Marriage Law of the 1950s, the Marriage Law of the 1980s is more explicit about the rights of children to the support of their parents (both father and mother) and is equally explicit about the rights of parents and grandparents (both paternal and maternal) to the support of their adult children and grandchildren. The government is aware of the fact that the state cannot possibly provide all welfare support for the very young and for the old and must depend on families to provide this support.

The government has also taken blame for having ignored and misunderstood the importance of family education. In the past, its policies sometimes generated a disrespect for family and a lack of regard for older members of society (Yu 1982: 42-45).

There are still many lessons to be learned from past failures and many problems to be resolved before new, realistic approaches to family reform can be reached. Since family reform is influenced by the path of economic development and social progress, the new patterns for family reform will eventually be found in on-going economic reform and social reform.

CHAPTER IV
NEW TENDENCIES IN FAMILY REFORM

Beginning in the early 1980s, economic reform in Chinese agriculture and, more recently, urban industrial reform have drawn great attention in Chinese studies. The changes in the Chinese economy, social life, and ideology are so dramatic that they are leading to another family reform. It is difficult to predict the impact of the Responsibility System in agriculture on peasant family life. As the family again becomes a unit of production, will it once again lead to the revival of the old patriarchal family system? It is still too early to give a definite answer since the nature of the new changes are not yet completely known, but certainly such changes will not bring a reversion to the old norms and perspectives about the family economy. It is true that the collective mode of production has again given way to a family or household mode of production in most areas. In this, it appears that the family, in an arrangement similar to that of the Land Reform period, manages its own production, distribution, consumption, and market activities. But even if the family has to manage its own economic activities, this is not to say that such management must again be controlled by the family patriarch as in pre-revolutionary days. Several points should be considered.

The first is that, in the development of the family economy under the Responsibility System, the family becomes directly involved in commodity production and in the market. This new family production system increasingly needs the direction of scientific agricultural knowledge and new techniques as well as information about markets. This may mean that decision-making will be in the hands of the most knowledgeable and capable individuals rather than simply being vested in the family patriarch. This will also be true as the peasant economy shifts from an agricultural one to small, family enterprise.

The second point is that young people and women are particularly experienced in family commodity production. Under the Responsibility System, grain production is not the main economic activity. The most prosperous peasant families, the so-called "specialist households," have been building up their prosperity by relying on sideline production or introducing new technology. Thus, family prosperity now relies heavily on areas in which young people and women have particular knowledge and ability. There have been some reports recently about rural peasant family authority being transferred to the younger generation or even to female family members. A story from Tao-fan district, Yin Shan county, Hubei province, describes an event in which an old man held a family

ceremony giving up his authority in economic management to his son because he failed to run the family production well. Since June of 1984, he has let his son manage the production and the youth has made the family prosper (Ma 1985). Another article reports that in Huiaren county, Shannxi province, young educated family members became the managers of the family economy in 22% of 8700 households (Wen Hui, December 23, 1984). There are also many reports of women bringing prosperity to their families by using their abilities in sideline production. In Du Chang county, Jiangxi province, 120 women became managers of family enterprises (People's Daily, March 8, 1984).

This new economic reform is not only producing new family relationships in farming families. One young man made decisions about factory production in the family factory by discussing them with his father. The father took charge of the factory production while the son was in charge of dealing with business outside. When he found his father too conservative, the son persuaded his father to retire from the job and replaced him with another expert (People's Daily, February 16, 1985).

I would suggest that there will be a new stage of family reform occurring in the rural areas. The key issue of this family reform, different from previous family reforms, will be the importance of scientific knowledge and techniques and of commodity production in the family

economy and will lead to the raising of the positions of women and younger people in the family structure. One commentary in People's Daily notes that there is an on-going family revolution against the "patriarchal system." The content of this revolution is that the father who lacks scientific knowledge is giving up authority to the children who are informed and educated (Zhong 1985).

This change is also taking place in urban families. Many women now have opportunities to set up family businesses and they become the managers of the family enterprises (People's Daily, February 14, 1985). The new economic reform and social reform in rural and urban areas have broken the old bureaucratic and hierarchical restrictions. The new system brings in upward mobility and more freedom for individual development. It especially gives young people and women opportunities to challenge the old family structure. In the process of this new development in economic and social life, the society is displaying increasing respect for science, knowledge, and technology. The old notion of power, status, age, and gender hierarchies gradually will cease to dominate social and family life.

There are, however, still many peasant families conducting a self-sufficient peasant economy as state and commune bestow more responsibility and authority in

production and consumption upon the family unit. This may lead to a strengthening of patriarchal control of family affairs. There is still a continuance of arranged marriage and brideprice in some areas. Nevertheless, what might the new trend of changing family structure tell us? One answer might be that, as the new economic development of industry and commercial production penetrate into the rural peasant family economy, women and men and parents and children may achieve more equal status in economic activities and, thus, in other aspects of family life.

Another factor that must be taken into account is that the successful implementation of the policy of the one-child family would bring changes to the family system. If the one-child family becomes a common pattern in China, some new questions will have to be considered. Surely, family type and size, residence after marriage, and the significance of paternal and maternal families will all be affected. All of these issues bear heavily on the nature of patriarchal family headship, the division of labor, and intrafamily dynamics. But, the answers to these and the many other questions about the changing family structure in China's socialist revolution will be possible only with the data derived from more extensive and detailed field research.

NOTES

1. **Family Types in China:**
 - (1) In the incomplete nuclear family, one spouse has died or both parents have died but the children are still unmarried.
 - (2) In the nuclear family, one couple lives with their unmarried children.
 - (3) In the nuclear family with dependent members, the family includes one couple with their unmarried children and other dependent relative(s).
 - (4) In the extended family, parents live with more than one married son and their families or married son's and grandson's families.
 - (5) In the stem family, the unit consists of the parents (or one parent) and one married son or daughter with his/her spouse and unmarried children.

2. "Marriage by purchase" is the term used to indicate a negative appraisal of the new pattern in which brideprice is paid but no dowry is given in return. In the traditional pattern, this was a more or less equal exchange. In this discussion, the more neutral term brideprice is used.

3. One Chinese yuan in the 1970s was equal to approximately U.S. \$.60, and an average worker's salary for a month was about 40 yuan. In the 1980s, one Chinese yuan equals approximately U.S. \$.40, and an average worker's salary for a month is about 60 yuan.

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