The Modern Family in Japan
Its Rise and Fall

by

Chizuko Ueno

Trans Pacific Press
Melbourne
Formation of the Japanese Model of the Modern Family

Invention of ie

The former Japanese family system, the *ie* system, has long been regarded as a feudal relic. However, recent findings in family history research have revealed that *ie* was an invention by the Meiji government and was made as a result of the enactment of the Meiji Civil Code. Strictly exclusive patrilineal stem families were certainly seen in the samurai (warrior) class before the Meiji era, but were not known to the common people. It has been estimated that in the Edo era, samurai represented 3% of the population; together with their family members, they accounted for 10% of the population at most. The remaining 90% of the population had diverse family structures. As Hobsbaum says in *The invention of tradition* (Hobsbaum and Ranger, 1983), *ie* was an invention of the modern age.

Before the Meiji Civil Code adopted an exclusively patrilineal inheritance system, the so-called Civil Code Controversy had continued for almost two decades. This conversely provides evidence that other options for the inheritance rule were available to the Meiji Civil Code.

In 1870 the Meiji government first planned to enact a civil code. In 1871 the government started to formulate a bill, producing a provisional bill for a civil code in 1873. Meanwhile, the government conducted a survey of customary laws governing inheritance and families in different parts of the country. Based on the results of the survey, the first governmental bill was drafted in 1878.

Customary laws in different parts of Japan included matrilineal inheritance and ultimogeniture (inheritance by the last-born child). Matrilineal inheritance, called *ane-katoku* (literally, inheritance by a big sister), was practiced commonly among wealthy farmers and merchants. In a farming or merchant family as a management body, in terms of family strategy it was more reasonable to select (from a wide range of human resources) a decent groom for a daughter rather
than to count on a son who may not necessarily turn out well but in whom the family had no choice. In contrast, exclusively patrilineal inheritance was a custom unique to samurai families (i.e., families who served their master’s family by providing military power). In the samurai class, a family with daughters only had to arrange an adoption in order to obtain a male heir. Farming and merchant families did not necessarily need a male heir. In the process of the formulation of the civil code, however, this matrilineal inheritance was eventually rejected as a barbarous custom of the commonalty.

After the first draft of the civil code was completed, it took ten years before the civil code was enacted in 1890. Following the enactment, the civil code was due for enforcement in three years, during which time the well-known Civil Code Controversy erupted. The Civil Code Controversy developed into a major political issue, in which the jurist Yatsuka Hozumi bitterly criticized the civil code, saying, ‘Up comes the civil code and down go loyalty and filial piety.’ In the end, the government gave up the enforcement of the civil code and worked again on revision of the bill. It was as late as 1898 that the final version of the civil code was finally enforced. The very fact that it took so long for the civil code to come into existence demonstrates that the family system stipulated by the civil code was a political production produced by selecting from many options and after much meandering.

The ie system was a family model formulated to suit a modern nation-state. Conversely, the nation-state was also formulated to suit the family model. In Kazoku kokka-kan no jinruigaku (An anthropology of the pseudo-family state ideology) (Itō, K. 1982), Kanji Itō discusses in detail how the concept of ie was invented by Meiji government officials. In 1890, before the enactment of the Meiji Civil Code, the Kyōiku Chokugo (Imperial Rescript on Education) was promulgated. In the following year, Tetsujirō Inoue, the government's favorite scholar, discussed the relationship between the state and its people in Chokugo engi (The commentary on the Imperial Edict):

A people’s position as subjects is just like children’s position to their parents, which means that a nation is an extended family and that commands and orders given by the monarch of the nation to his subjects are no different from instructions given with mercy by the parents of a family to their children. Therefore, if His Imperial Majesty now addresses the whole nation as ‘you, my subjects,’ all who are His subjects must listen to Him with the same respectful attention and deep gratitude as children pay and feel while listening to their strict father and merciful mother (Inoue, Tetsujirō, 1891: 10–11).

Inoue repeats the same argument in Rinri to kyōiku (Ethics and education), published in 1908.

If the spirit of filial piety towards the head of a family is amplified to the whole nation, it will, not surprisingly, correspond to the loyalty to the Emperor. In this regard, loyalty can be equated with filial piety. This is because the Emperor is in the position of the head of the family of Japanese people, and this is why people should be loyal to the Emperor, just like family members should be filial to the head of their family. Thus, loyalty is the same thing as filial piety. And this is why ‘loyalty and filial piety is one thing’ is a teaching of the national morals that has been passed down since ancient times. A national moral code like ‘loyalty and filial piety is one thing’ would not have occurred unless the society is structured as described above. It is a principal moral code that would inevitably develop in this type of social organization, and without this principal moral code this type of social organization would not be able to continue (Inoue, Tetsujirō, 1908: 474–5).

Itō comments on Inoue’s opinion as follows:

Here the relationship between the Emperor and the people in the national level is understood using an analogy with the relationship between the parents and their children in the family level, where the Emperor and the people are compared to the parents and their children, respectively. Further, as seen in the statement, ‘a nation is an extended family,’ Inoue constructs an image of the nation based on ie (Itō, M., 1982: 8–9).

Itō finds the secret of this ‘pseudo-family state ideology’ in the ‘loyalty and filial piety is one thing’ ideology. The Meiji government adopted Confucianism as the official ideology for the Imperial Rescript on Education. As seen in the words, shishin seika chikoku heitenka (Behave yourself, only then you can manage a household; only then you can govern a nation; and only then you can bring peace to the world), Confucian virtues place the self at the center, with ethics extending in concentric circles from the center. In this philosophy, filial piety towards one’s parents comes before loyalty to the monarch, and there was even a possibility that filial piety and loyalty might conflict with each other from time to time. One
example of this conflict is the ‘blood tax’ riots, which occurred in many parts of the country in opposition to the promulgation of the Military Conscription Ordinance in 1872. Another example is seen in Akiko Yosano’s words, ‘Oh, my brother, how I cry for you, please do not throw away your life,’ in her famous anti-war poem written when the Russo–Japanese War broke out in 1904. Service to the nation and filial devotion towards one’s parents are not always compatible. Therefore, a logical leap was necessary in order to say (as Inoue said) that loyalty and filial piety are the same thing.

Indeed, in the process of the formulation of the Imperial Rescript on Education, a trick of reversing the natural order of the Confucian virtues from kō–chū (filial piety–loyalty) to chū–kō (loyalty–filial piety) was used. Nagazane Motoda, a Confucian scholar who served the Meiji government, published Kyōgaku taisō (General principles of education) in 1879. In this essay, Motoda emphasizes a Confucian teaching that people’s loyalty to the Emperor corresponds to children’s filial piety towards their parents. At that point in time, the virtues were still in the original order, with filial piety being given priority over loyalty. However, in Yōgaku kōyō (The elements of education for the young), published by the same author in 1882, the order of loyalty and filial piety has been reversed. The following year, Japan’s first moral textbook was created based on Motoda’s views. The textbook emphasized that people should ‘serve the monarch just like they serve their parents.’ Confucianism, as adopted by the Meiji government, contained a clearly different interpretation from that which had prevailed until the Edo era.

Tadao Satō, a self-taught film critic, made the same discovery as Itō on his own by observing domestic dramas on the silver screen. In Katei no yomigaeri no tameni – Hōmu dorama ron (For the re-birth of the home: Theorizing soap operas, 1978), Satō (1978) noticed that the patriarch of a family in European films and his counterpart in Japanese films behaved in contrasting ways. If a member of the family had committed a crime and sought shelter in the family, a French or Italian patriarch would refuse to hand the criminal over to the police and would, instead, attempt to privately punish the offender. In contrast, a Japanese patriarch would hand over his offending family member to the police authorities, instead of sheltering him/her, and would even disown or otherwise break off relations with the offender for fear of being involved in the trouble. From this observation, Satō noticed that while there is confrontation between family ethics and social ethics in Europe, a Japanese patriarch behaves as though he is an agent for the external authority. The film critic attempted to solve this mystery by tracing the origin of the family system. In the end, he reached the Imperial Rescript on Education and its drafter, Nagazane Motoda. Satō then found that ‘the ranks of loyalty and filial piety in the list of virtues was reversed between the publication of Yōgaku kōyō in 1882 and the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890’ (Satō, 1978: 50). He concluded that ‘making the two virtues into the single word chū–kō (loyalty–filial piety) to create an impression as if filial piety is a concept inseparable from feudalistic loyalty is itself a creation of the Meiji government’ (Satō, 1978: 262).

Loyalty and filial piety, which are two totally different moral concepts in Confucianism, were forcibly put together and called chū–kō (loyalty–filial piety) to create an impression as if they are two inseparable concepts that are neither too close nor too far from each other. This made us believe that children serving their parents and people sacrificing themselves for the nation are doing the same thing.

Thus, the two concepts, which are totally different or may even be opposite from each other, were connected, and kuni (nation) was called kokka (literally, nation-family), creating an impression that nationalism and familialism work together to confront individualism. I do not know who did this, but I think this person is a genius (Satō, 1978: 176–8).

Satō thus demonstrates that the Meiji government artificially created the ie system so that family ethics would be subject to national ethics. He concludes that if familialism refers to a view that gives priority to family ethics over any other ethics, Japanese family, or ie, does not represent familialism in the European sense of the word.1

Yayoi Aoki confirms a similar process from the viewpoint of women. She demonstrates that Japanese ‘femininity’ is not a product of tradition but was formulated under the influence of Confucianism in the process of modernization (Aoki, 1983, 1986). Books of precepts for women, such as On’na daigaku (Code of conduct for women), were distributed only in literate classes. The concept of chastity or virginity was unknown to the common people. Until the middle of the Meiji era, high divorce rates and remarriage rates were recorded. Such a virtue as ‘a good wife will remain faithful to the memory of her husband’ was unrealistic to ordinary people.
Ie and patriarchy

As described above, there is a strong relationship of interdependence and interference between family and state or, in other words, between the private and public spheres. This is because the separation of the public and private spheres was brought about by modernity, as revealed by findings in family history research. It was modern society that divided the autonomous, communal living sphere into the two interdependent spheres. In addition, the two spheres were programmed to have an asymmetric relationship with each other, resulting in the private sphere becoming invisible as a ‘shadow’ of the public sphere. Therefore, the ie system, which was created in this process, was not in the least a traditional feudal relic. Ie represented family reorganized in the process of modernization or, in other words, the Japanese version of modern family.

However, the view that regards ie as a type of modern family and emphasizes the continuity of prewar and postwar family has been incompatible with the existing view on family. This existing view regards ie as feudal relic and understands that this vestige of feudalism was swept away by the postwar new civil code, which put an end to the history of patriarchy. The view holds that there is a discontinuity between the former and current civil codes, and that the postwar reforms achieved the democratization of family, making patriarchy a relic of the past, together with the ie system. When radical feminism in the 1970s criticized modern family by raking up the concept of patriarchy, most opponents would have expressed bewilderment, as if they had been discussing a ghost from the past, and would have responded that patriarchy no longer existed. However, patriarchy had been redefined and used by feminists as a concept to explain gender domination that was unique to modern family. According to the Encyclopedia of feminism by Lisa Tuttle (1986), ‘patriarchy’ means a social structure in which ‘male shall dominate female; elder male shall dominate younger.’ Both the ‘father’s control’ in an extended family and the ‘husband’s control’ in a conjugal family are varieties of patriarchy. After the war, democratic ‘companionship family’ seemed to have been established under the appearance of the agreement of both sexes. Still, the ‘husband’s control’ continued in postwar families in the private sphere where gender roles result in social or economic inequality behind legal equity.

Therefore, there are dual issues that I would like to point out here: first, ie is another version of the modern family and, second, patriarchal oppression has continued throughout the prewar and postwar periods.

‘Descriptive model’ and ‘normative model’ of family

The factors that have caused resistance to the view that ie is the Japanese version of modern family can be divided broadly into two categories. The first includes ideological factors, while the other includes theoretical ones.

With respect to the first, ideological factors, most historians have regarded ie as a feudal relic without questioning its historical origin. In this sense, these historians seem to have fallen into the trap of the ie ideology. This is because one function of an ideology is to conceal its origin and make people take it for granted. By regarding the ideology existing in their day as a tradition instead of deconstructing it, these historians lent a hand to strengthening the ideology. Actually, there is a grain of truth in regarding ie as a tradition; ie was certainly modeled after a tradition in samurai households. Positivist history, which relies on documentary materials, has limited its research to the history of literate classes. Until popular history and social history brought about the recognition of the diversity of the histories and cultures of illiterate people, historians had given priority to the history of the ruling class over that of the general public. However, we should understand that tradition varies from place to place and class to class, and that throughout the historical process one cultural item that fits with the times has continuously been chosen from the diverse cultural matrix and been redefined as a ‘tradition’ every time there is a change in the historical situation. Therefore, what has survived as a tradition has undergone changes over time. There is nothing like ‘timeless’ tradition. The truth is that the source of a tradition is concealed by the ideology that names something as a tradition.

Another factor in the ideological category is gender bias. When the private sphere was created as an indispensable but invisible twin of the public sphere, the private sphere was meant to be a shelter, or a sanctuary of love and comfort, from the public sphere, which was full of stress from competition and demands for efficiency. As this kind of shelter, the home was regarded as omnipresent beyond time and space, and people were not allowed even to question the reason for its existence. However, the meaning of the private
sphere is totally different between men and women. Even though home may be a shelter for men, it is but one kind of workplace for women who are expected to supply love and comfort there. When feminists made an issue of women’s ‘shadow work’ (Illich, 1981) in the private sphere and violated this ‘sanctuary’ by questioning the historical and ideological construction of family, historians and family sociologists — many of whom were men — were bewildered and showed their anger. This is because they, as men, had a shared interest in keeping this family system, which involved gender domination, the way it was then.

The second type of factors are theoretical. It was thought that one requirement for the modern family, which was modeled after those of Europe, was to be a nuclear family. Japanese ie was considered not to meet this requirement.

In Kindai kazoku to feminizumu (Modern family and feminism) (Ochiai, 1989), the characteristics of the modern family are summarized by Emiko Ochiai into the following eight points:

1. separation of the domestic sphere and the public sphere
2. strong emotional relationship among family members
3. child-centeredness
4. gender division of labor in which men and women are responsible for the public sphere and the domestic sphere, respectively
5. stronger collectivity of family
6. decline of sociality
7. exclusion of non-kin
8. nuclear family.

In ‘Kindai kokka to kazoku moderu (The modern state and the family model)’, Yuiko Nishikawa (1991) points out Ochiai’s inconsistency in her use of ‘nuclear family.’

When the same eight points were listed as the ‘characteristics of the modern family’ in Table 1 of the article, ‘Kindai kazoku to nihon bunka: Nihonteki boshi kankei no tokiguchini (The modern family and Japanese culture: In consideration of the Japanese-style mother-child relationship)’ published in Number 10 of Joseigaku Nenpō (The annual report of the women’s studies), item 8 was put in parentheses and described as ‘Takes the form of a nuclear family.’ This must be because in the case of Japan, in particular, the prewar family cannot be regarded as modern family without putting item 8 in parentheses.

Nishikawa says, ‘When discussing the modern family, I would also like to put item 8 in parentheses’ and adds the following two items:

9. the family is controlled by the husband
10. the family constitutes the basic unit of the modern state.

Nishikawa continues, ‘This way, both the prewar and postwar families of Japan can be regarded as modern family. One characteristic of the Japanese version of the modern family might lie in the point that item 8 must be put in parentheses.’

Putting the ‘nuclear family’ item in parentheses has two theoretical implications. Specifically, putting this item in parentheses emphasizes the continuity of prewar and postwar families and this, as Nishikawa points out, makes it possible to discuss (1) the modern nature of the prewar family and (2) the patriarchal nature of the postwar family at the same time. Nishikawa points out the ‘modern nature of the prewar family’ and the ‘patriarchal nature of the postwar family’ in her items 9 and 10, respectively. This is because the shift to nuclear families involved only the shift to husband’s control from father’s control in the patriarchal system.

Ochiai’s eight items represent a summary of modern family studies, but their source is not clearly specified. It is not clear, either, why there are eight items or whether the eight items are meant to be a complete list. Nor is it clear how many items we will end up with if new items are added to the list, as Nishikawa did. For example, item 1 (separation of the domestic sphere and the public sphere) and item 4 (gender division of labor in which men and women are responsible for the public sphere and the domestic sphere, respectively) nearly overlap each other. Item 2 (strong emotional relationship among family members), item 3 (child-centeredness), item 5 (stronger collectivity of family), item 6 (decline of sociality) and item 7 (exclusion of non-kin) can be summarized into a single item: autonomy and exclusivity of family.

Ochiai’s list relies on findings of European family history studies. According to The making of the modern family by Edward Shorter (1975), a leading British family historian, the modern family has the following three requirements:

1. ‘romantic love’ revolution
2. emotional bonds between mother and child
3. autonomy of the household.

Shorter himself does not list ‘nuclear family’ among the requirements for the modern family. We can only infer that the husband—
wife relationship emphasized by the ‘romantic love revolution’ might result in a conjugal family system and thus in nuclear family households.

The view that the modernization of family is associated with the increase of the nuclear family has already been disproved by the finding of Laslett and his colleague that the nuclear family is universal (Laslett and Wall, 1972). According to this finding, the nuclear family is dominant in all societies, whether in modern or premodern times. It is easy to validate this finding for Japan. According to the data obtained in 1920 from Japan’s first national census, the nuclear family already accounted for 54.0% of all households at that time. The stem family represented only about 31%. According to a recent historical demography study, it is known from religious census registers that even in the Edo era the number of household members was as small as fewer than six people (Tsubouchi, 1992).

If we follow up the census data obtained once every five years from 1920, we find that during a little over half a century between 1920 and 1975 the proportion of nuclear families increased only by 10%, from 54.0% to 64.0%. It is doubtful whether this 10% increase of the nuclear family rate, which occurred during the discontinuity of the interruption of the war and the postwar rapid growth, can appropriately be called the ‘increase of the nuclear family.’

The high nuclear family rate in prewar days can be explained by the prewar family cycle determined by Yasuhiko Yuzawa between 1935 and 1944 in the Suwa district, Nagano Prefecture (Yuzawa, 1987: 19). According to Yuzawa’s findings, in stem family households joined by the wife of the eldest son, the average period before the deaths of the father and the mother was six years and ten years, respectively. Since the average family cycle was twenty-six years, if we assume that all married couples lived with the parents of either spouse, the probability of a given household being a nuclear family at a given time is sixteen years out of twenty-six years, or roughly two-thirds. This is in substantial concordance with statistical data (Seiyama, 1993). In addition, if we take the number of births into account, the average number of children per woman was five to six children during the Meiji era. Assuming that half of these children were boys (i.e. three boys per mother) and that the eldest son took a wife and ran a stem family household, the probability rate of occurrence of the stem family would be one-third. The high proportion of the nuclear family in prewar days can be explained by the shorter average life span and the larger number of children. In this regard, the 10% increase of the stem family in half a century may seem to be a relatively considerable change. On the other hand, in light of the fact that the average life span jumped from the fifty-year range to the eighty-year range and that the number of children per woman decreased to less than two, the fact that the proportion of the nuclear family is still increasing suggests that even the eldest son, who is naturally expected to live with his parents under the stem family ideology, may be increasingly choosing to live separately from his parents.

As far as statistics go, there is in fact no significant gap between prewar and postwar families. The ‘universality of the nuclear family’ that was found, and which was based on historical demography, applies to Japan as well, as far as the size and structure of households are concerned. However, social historians introduced the concept of ‘change of mentality’ to the theories of an historical change. They argue that even if Japanese nuclear family households look similar to their Western counterparts, they cannot be called the modern family unless the mentality of the members is that of members of a modern family.

Let us leave the matter of what the mentality of modern family members is for the time being and look at the behavior of the members of a Japanese nuclear family household. Their behavior indicates that they define their own family as a defective form of stem family in that the family wishes to be, but cannot be, a stem family, or, in other words, that it is a transitional form of stem family in the process of change from a stem family of orientation to a stem family of recreation. Their behavior of purchasing tombs and family Buddhist altars reveals that even the second and third sons, who are required to live separately from their parents upon marriage, behave as the ‘founder of a branch family’ established by them so that they will eventually be able to run a stem family household with their own sons when they grow up. Certainly, it was modernization itself that has allowed the households of these second and third sons to become independent from their parents’ households without counting on inherited assets. However, these younger sons who live in nuclear family households behave more as patriarchs of the branch families they established than as members of the household of their elder brother. For these younger sons, being consigned to their elder brother’s family tomb is a sign of their incompetence in that they have failed to establish a branch family. In this sense, if we focus on ‘mentality,’ we must say again that there is little gap between the prewar and postwar families.
This is because, at the common law level, the practice of demanding waiver of the second and younger children's right of inheritance is still very common, despite the new civil code, which secures equal inheritance among all children instead of primogeniture. In some cases, the responsibility to support the parents is imposed solely on the eldest son, while the other siblings demand equal inheritance of family property among all children, resulting in the eldest son being put at a disadvantage under the transitional circumstances. Under the current circumstances, where more than 60% of parents in their forties who were born after the war say they wish to live with their sons in the future, we must say the change induced by the postwar civil code did not affect people's mentality. As a matter of fact, the explosive tomb boom occurred after the postwar rapid growth. After the large-scale separation of households caused by urbanization, what the heads of nuclear family households sought next were family tombs. These heads explained that they needed family tombs more for the convenience of their children than for themselves, and this provided them with a new, postwar discourse on the 'perpetuity of family.' This indicates the 'descendant worship' proposed by the folklorist Masao Takatori (Takatori and Hashimoto, 1968; Mori, 1987) instead of 'ancestor worship'.

We do not have to trot out the novel term of 'mentality.' In sociology and anthropology, the normative model and the descriptive model have long been distinguished from each other. Under the universal dominance of the nuclear family, where it is difficult to show a specific family model for the society, it is generally thought that if there is a family model normatively intended by people who live in the society, that model can be regarded as the normative model of family for that society even if statistics show that the proportion of families falling under the model is fewer than 30%. In this sense, we are faced with a situation where people who live in stem families in terms of their norms actually run nuclear family households. In this situation, the stem family is an idealized model and people evaluate their actual families based on the distance from the idealized model. This again indicates that family is a concept more normative than descriptive.

**The myth of romantic love**

The norms of the nuclear family include relative priority of sexual dyad over lineage. This is expressed as the rule of household separation, which prohibits a household from containing more than one couple. In other words, it is a conjugal family system where a family is established by marriage. Under today's unquestionable conjugal family system, it seems natural that a family is established by marriage and is dissolved by divorce. However, in the stem family or extended family, which emphasizes lineage, or in the polygamous family, one specific sexual dyad is no more than an element constituting the family. Even if the sexual dyad is dissolved, the family will continue and the vacancy will be filled by another sexual dyad based on the priority of lineage.

Let us now define the 'romantic love revolution' (which is supposed to constitute a turning point from the institutional family to the companionship family by emphasizing conjugal love) — proposed by Shorter technically as the 'priority of the conjugal relationship in a family' — by eliminating the emotional and normative burden. The 'conjugal family system' in this sense has existed in the Japanese *ie* system since its beginning in the sixteenth century. Haruko Wakita points out that the housewife's authority was established at the same time as the establishment of the patriarchal authority, and that the legal wife was always given priority, even in a polygamous situation. The housewife had a high position in the family and often represented the family on behalf of the patriarch. This is a phenomenon incomprehensible from the viewpoint of Chinese or Korean familism, which emphasizes lineage. In Chinese and Korean communities, which are governed by the principle prohibiting marriage between people with the same family name, a wife who joins the family from another family by marriage remains an outsider throughout her life by keeping her family name. In this context, the wife's family name is a sign of her remaining as an outsider and also indicates the notion that the family is simply borrowing her womb.

In contrast, the Japanese practice of regarding a woman who joins the family from another family as a formal member of the family indicates the Gesellschaft-like nature of the Japanese *ie*, which is not always governed by the principle of lineage, as seen in the frequent occurrence of adoption arrangements. This is also symbolized by the Japanese marriage protocol. In the performance of the ceremony of the three-times-three exchange of cups of sake at a wedding, the bride must first exchange cups with the parents of the groom. Only then, cups are exchanged between the groom and the bride, now in the capacity of a quasi-daughter who has joined the family. Another practice that is not uncommon in Japan, but is exceptional in the East Asian Confucian zone, is to allow a widowed woman to take
over the family business. Even today, far more Japanese small and medium businesses are managed by female proprietors than are their foreign counterparts. This does not at all represent Japanese women's participation in the workplace, but is a mere consequence of the ie system in which a widowed wife commonly takes over the control of the family business (Komatsu, 1987). This is evidenced by the fact that female business owners are concentrated in small and medium-sized businesses and are virtually nonexistent in companies with more than 500 employees. However, the Japanese practice of allowing the patriarch's wife, who is an outsider in terms of lineage and who joined the family by marriage, to represent the family (as seen in the widow of a Diet member who runs for election to the office previously held by her husband) draws a line between the Japanese ie and Asian familism and suggests the priority of the conjugal relationship in Japan (if the East Asian principle of lineage, which gives priority to blood relationship, is what 'familism' is, then the Japanese ie system should not be regarded as based on familism).

However, would Shorter say that this conjugal relationship lacks romantic love? It is easy to assume that comradeship will occur between the patriarch and his wife in the ie as a management body. Can't we call them a companionship family? However, there is a historical requirement for this companionship; in studies of modern family, 'companionship' has referred only to emotion that has been reduced to sexual affection, and is felt when the family is viewed purely as a unit of reproduction instead of a unit of production.

By the way, what in the world is romantic love? Shorter defines romantic love as the non-utilitarian choice of spouse. If a daughter marries a poor young man against her parents' will, romantic love is deemed to exist. According to Shorter (1975: 80–83), the wave of extramarital births from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century in England indicates a surge of eroticism among young people. This means that young men and women began to act faithfully to their emotions and sexual instincts instead of for utilitarian motives. This change in the mentality of people is what Shorter calls the 'romantic love revolution.' However, isn't Shorter, a family historian, emphasizing mentality, romanticizing the romance?

A time of historical change is also a time of transition of power between classes. A daughter who rejects her fiancé, chosen by her parents from her own class, and marries a young man from a lower class may be buying futures in that she chooses a man from an emerging class over the other man from a declining class. In fact, young men who appear in romance novels (the word 'romance' itself is a synonym for a narrative) written at that time are from lower classes and are described as 'ambitious,' like Julian Sorel in The Red and the Black (Stendhal, 2002). Using their wisdom and wit, these men gain the love of women of high birth. The high extramarital birth rate was, as Shorter says, a consequence of marriages that failed to be achieved against expectations (i.e. out of negligence on the part of men). There has been controversy among family historians as to the interpretation of the surge of extramarital births in the late nineteenth century. There is a confrontation between two views: one is a victim-oriented historical view, which asserts that the increase of extramarital births was a result of the sexual exploitation of maid's, who were fresh from the country, by their masters or the masters' sons; the other view argues that it resulted from contact between two different cultures in London, where these young women from rural communities, which originally had lenient sexual norms, met hypocritical Victorian morals associated with the sexual double standard. It may be true that urban upper-class men might have taken advantage of country girls, but these girls might have simply acted faithfully to their sexual codes. There must also have been maids, like the one in Pamela (Richardson, 1741), who attempted to climb to an urban upper class by making use of her sexual appeal. It seems that the surge of extramarital births was one social phenomenon representing two different realities, which were brought about by the two social groups who belonged to two different cultures and who acted in accordance with their respective codes.

In times of modernization and with great social mobility, men were able to climb the social ladder by making use of their education, but for women marriage was the only chance in a lifetime to transfer to another class. In taking a chance, isn't it a reasonably utilitarian choice for a woman to choose a poor but promising man?

In The Rape of Clarissa, Terry Eagleton (1982) applies feminist criticism to an eighteen-century romantic novel and discusses how 'romantic love' contributed to the establishment of the modern patriarchy. In the eighteenth-century popular novel Clarissa, written by Samuel Richardson and published in 1748, the main character, Clarissa, is betrayed by a man whom she has chosen against her father's wishes, and she kills herself in disappointment and despair. To Clarissa, 'passionate love' meant escaping her 'father's control' and entrusting herself to her 'husband's control' with no protection.
In order for a daughter under patriarchy to escape her ‘father’s control,’ she needs a huge centrifugal force. Romantic love can be a source of passion that gives her the destructive energy she needs to escape her father’s control, but it also results in her losing her ‘father’s protection.’ Paternal authority and husband’s authority are in competition with each other, and no situation is more favorable for the exercise of the latter than a wife without a line of retreat in the absence of intervention by her father. Modern patriarchy is full of plots to cut women off from their parents in order to enable their husbands to control them in their nuclear families. In this sense, we might as well say that love represents the explosive energy for a woman to voluntarily transfer from her ‘father’s control’ to her ‘husband’s control.’ Women’s internalization of the concept of love was one requirement for the establishment of modern patriarchy.

In France in the twentieth century, Pierre Bourdieu regarded marriage as a family strategy for the maximization of social resources and demonstrated, based on empirical research, that this applies also to times after the ‘romantic love revolution’ (Bourdieu, 1979). The same can be said for Japanese families after the postwar reforms. In the 1960s ‘love marriage’ gained an advantage over ‘feudalistic’ arranged marriage as spouse-selection behavior — although, in fact, ‘arranged marriage’ is nothing but an invention of modernity (Ueno, 1990b). However, an analysis of love marriages in terms of such variables as education, birthplace and parents’ occupations reveals that the ‘rule of homogamy’ applies surprisingly well to love marriage. In terms of the geographical range of marriage, the range of marriage may be smaller for love marriage than arranged marriage (Yuzawa, 1987). While arranged marriage allows interregional marriage through a matchmaker, feelings of love, which may lead to love marriage, often occur as a result of the proximity of residence or workplace. In addition, love between different classes, as typified by love between two people with different levels of education, is surprisingly rare. In fact, married couples whose wives have higher education or are older than their husbands are more often found in cases where the husband enters into an adoption arrangement with his wife’s parents upon marriage. This indicates that even in modern times, love between different classes was exceptional and was often recognized as a serious incident only because it was exceptional.

The tendency for class endogamy is even stronger in love marriage than arranged marriage. It is as though feelings of similarity are the essential precondition for feelings of love. How should we interpret the fact that love marriage, which seems to assume a ‘free market’ system of marriage, results in even stronger class endogamy than an arranged marriage? This means that the criteria for a family strategy in marriage, which used to be judged by the parents on behalf of the bride and groom, have now been internalized and practiced by the bride and groom as individual free choice. While choice by the parents may seem to be compulsion, choice by the bride and groom themselves is regarded as made of their own free will. The result of the choice is substantially the same between arranged and love marriages. This means that love occurring in marriages between co-workers or in a ‘feeling couple’ game is nothing more than a game played by participants who have already been screened as belonging to the same class and who offer substantially the same choice. (A ‘feeling couple’ game is a game in which usually five men and five women sit at a table and ask questions to find out about each other; at the end of the session each person secretly and simultaneously pushes a button embedded in the table to indicate his/her favorite person of the opposite sex, upon which one or more bright lines of light appear on the table connecting one or more couples, if any, who liked each other). To become a free, independent actor in the laissez-faire, free market meant nothing but to internalize the rules of the game. This was exactly the formation of the modern ‘subject,’ or what Foucault describes as subjectification or assujettissement.

The autonomy of *ie*

Of the three requirements of the modern family listed by Shorter, the ‘autonomy of the household’ is a somewhat ambivalent concept. One can argue that *ie* has had autonomy as a management body from its beginning. To begin with, the emergence of *ie* from a community was intended to release households from the premodern control of the community. Conversely, however, this also seems to have resulted in *ie* being isolated from the community and being exposed defenselessly to control by national authorities. The ‘pseudo-family state ideology’ meant the breakdown of intermediate communities that posed obstacles to putting *ie* under direct control by the state.

As described above, Tadao Satō was the first to point out the vulnerability of the Japanese family system, which is not only defenseless against, but also acts as an agent for, public authority. *ie* is thus without the autonomy of households as the jurisdiction of private law (as opposed to public law), which is another reason for not being able to regard *ie* as representing familialism (as opposed
to nationalism). *Ie* invented by the Meiji government as an agent of the imperial system was more an element of nationalism than of familism.

Yasumasa Kojita, having reviewed Volume 4, ‘Kindai (Modern times)’, of *Nihon josei seikatsu-shi* (A history of Japanese women’s lives) (Joseishi Sōgō Kenkyūkai [ed.], 1990), which is a product of recent family history research, makes the following favorable comment in response to the issue posed by Yūko Nishikawa and her colleagues in the volume: ‘[The authors’ view] put an end for the time being to the view that regards *ie*, as in the *ie* society in modern Japan, as a feudal relic and opened the way to the view that *ie* went hand-in-hand with increasing capitalism of Japanese society in all respects’ (Kojita, 1993: 134). However, Kojita expresses a dissatisfaction that the ‘autonomy of *ie*’ is underestimated by the authors. Based on Junichi Murakami’s *Doitsu shiminshō-shi* (A history of German civil law) (Murakami, J., 1985), Kojita sees a ‘possibility that *ie* may function as a fort to maintain the ethical autonomy of citizens against the modern centralized government’ (Kojita, 1993: 135). Kojita criticizes Nishikawa for overlooking the fact that if she and her colleagues assume that the autonomy of ‘intermediate communities’ (which existed in premodern times) against royal power was taken over by the autonomy of patriarchs in the modern nation-state, then in modern society *ie* and the state have an interdependent but tense relationship with each other (Kojita, 1993: 135). Nishikawa refutes this strongly, arguing that if she and her colleagues are to discuss the tense relationship between *ie* and the state, they need to focus on the modern family as the basic unit of the nation-state and to compare it between Germany and Japan, but that ‘a nation state is actually established by depriving those intermediate communities of their autonomy’ (Nishikawa, 1993: 27). Nishikawa further adds:

When starting to suggest that we should not focus only on the negative aspects of *ie* and family, isn’t Mr Kojita’s tone suddenly changing from an excellent historian making an analysis to a member or defender of the domestic sphere? This makes me feel that I have renewed my awareness of the strength of the ideological nature of the word ‘family’ (Nishikawa, 1993: 27).

The autonomy of *ie* works in two directions: one towards the community and the other towards the state. Kojita seems to believe at face value in the ideological view that idealizes *ie* and advocates the absolute superiority of patriarchal authority. As pointed out sharply by Nishikawa, the interests and nostalgia of men who want to protect patriarchal authority seem to lie in Kojita’s belief. Contrary to Kojita’s belief, the modern family’s high vulnerability to control by the national government, after obtaining autonomy from the community, has been demonstrated in Europe, as well, by such works as *La police des familles* by Donzelot (1991). As argued by Nishikawa, modern nation-states have a pseudo-family state-like nature to varying degrees. What Satō saw in European films were idealized patriarchs, or patriarchs belonging to nostalgia.8

Whether the household structure is of the nuclear family or the stem family, the autonomy (i.e. isolation and exclusivity) of family as asserted by Shorter was realized in prewar Japanese family. While Shorter, too, seems to idealize the autonomy of family, women’s studies have demonstrated how arbitrarily paternal and husband’s authority controlled the modern family in the absence of communal regulation (which would have acted as intervention by a third party).9

**Ie as an ideology**

As discussed thus far, Japanese *ie* meets all the requirements of the modern family proposed by Shorter. The fact that Japanese *ie* took the form of stem family instead of nuclear family is not unrelated to the fact that the proto-industrialization of Japan was supported mainly by household industry and, even after the first and second industrial revolutions, relied much on medium, small and tiny family businesses under the dual structure of Japanese industry. Japan’s situation cannot be explained by a simple process in which the progress of industrialization resulted in the breakdown of the old middle classes (farmers and commodity producers) and an increase in the proportion of employees. Unlike a society such as America, where the proportion of employees has exceeded 90%, in Japan the corresponding proportion has remained between 80% and 90%, with a slight increase in the proportion of self-employed people each time a recession occurs. There have always been employees switching to self-employed status. This suggests that *ie* has been taken over by management bodies as their ideology.

In *Senzen ‘ie’ no shisō* (The prewar ideology of *ie*), Masanao Kano (1983) includes a chapter entitled ‘Strengthened ideology and disintegrating realities.’ The *ie* of the samurai class rapidly broke down exactly when the *ie* system, which was modeled after
the family system of the samurai class, was being established by
the national government. Further, under the influence of the harsh
original accumulation of capital and the Matsukata deflation, urban
lower classes were also facing the breakdown of families. While the ie system was being established as an ideology, in reality it was
rapidly disintegrating. However, this was exactly why the ideology
had to be emphasized.

*Bunmei to shite no ie shakai* (The ie society as a civilization),
co-authored by Kumon, Murakami and Satō (1979), has a totally
different ideological background from Kano’s work but shares the
same observation as Kano’s. In this work, the three co-authors
positively evaluate ie as a medium of the promotion of modernization
rather than as a feudalistic system for suppression, creating a new
wave in the studies of Japanese culture. In the process of discussion,
the co-authors understand ie as an organizational principle rather
than as an entity. They argue:

In prewar days, ie had started to head for disintegration and demise.
The development of industrialization promoted the breakdown of
small businesses run by ie-like management and caused an increase
of urban salaried workers. This resulted in reduction in family size
and the more extensive generation of nuclear families, which are
extremely weak as a family system and have lost the ie principles
almost entirely. The provisions of the new Constitution and the new
Civil Code represented institutional confirmation of these realities
(Kumon, Murakami and Satō, 1979: 476).

They go on to discuss this as follows:

after people were no longer able to feel belonging to or identify
themselves with the state or ie, virtually the only satisfactory
relationship that remained available for people to have was with
workplaces such as companies. This resulted in the increasing social
necessity for ie-like companies, with many people turning into
enthusiastic workers or activists who devoted themselves single-
mindedly to their company or union movements in their attempt
to identify themselves with their company and/or in-house union
(Kumon, Murakami and Satō, 1979: 477).

The authors argue that the principles of ie as a management body
survived, against its intentions, in business entities rather than in
the nation-state or families. This is because, first, ie was, from
its beginning, a management body existing beyond the principle
of lineage; and, second, both the nation-state and families lacked
physical foundations for realizing the ie principles compared
to business entities. The ie ideology survived modern times as
managerial familism.

**Conclusion**

It can be demonstrated that ie was, in many ways, a historical, social
construct in the formative period of modernity. In this sense, ie was
nothing but the Japanese version of modern family and established
the modern patriarchy in the form of conjugal family.

If ie is thus neither a tradition nor a feudal relic, it will be difficult
to discuss Japanese identity in terms of the family system. Even
if we assume that there was some prototype of ie in premodern
times, it would have transformed in the course of history. The new
ie adopted by the Meiji government was selected from the diverse
cultural matrix as suitable for the time. Once this ie was selected,
its origin was justified as a tradition and various alternatives that
could have been selected were forgotten. If ie is the Japanese version
of modern family, it is questionable to discuss it in the context
of the cultural peculiarity of Japan. It is true that ie is unique to
modern Japan in time and space, but it is neither particular nor a
non-historical, timeless, cultural tradition.

What we need to make an issue of here is whether or not it
is appropriate at all to discuss Japanese society using family
models. In other words, we need to explore how the social theory
surrounding the overvalued ie was formed, by tracing the process
of model formation. In *Tate shakai no ningen kankei* (Personal
relations in a vertical society), Chie Nakane (1967) regards family
as the basic unit of society and explains the social structures at all
other levels as extending in concentric circles from family as the
basic structure. However, isn’t this kind of assumption possible
only because family was cut off from all other social organizations
and was constructed as an autonomous unit that provided a model in
society? As discussed so far, this autonomy of family was, contrary
to its appearance, established for the very purpose of allowing
control by broader society. There is not only confusion between
the cause and the effects. Nakane and other researchers who bring
up a family model as a principle for explaining the social structure
are simply tracing the structures constructed by modernity, and are
forgetting to question how they were formed in the course of history.
These researchers do not just repeat the social construction of family in their own theoretical construction; by doing so, their theory itself contributes to the reinforcement of the family model.

It is simply a tautology to say that the society constructs a family model and then the family model explains the society and that this is what the pseudo-family state ideology is. We should question modernity itself as the ‘age of family’ in which the family model has gained such dominance. Social scientists are also slaves to the family ideology created by modernity. They serve as ideologues of family by treating family as an explanatory variable instead of an explained variable. It is conversely the history (i.e. social construction) of family that must actually be questioned.

Considered this way, we can solve the mystery of why Freud’s theory was so rampant in the twentieth century. While Freud’s theory was perfect as a theory for explaining the modern family, it was conversely a product of the modern family. The fact that a theory constructed by the modern family can explain the modern family well represents nothing but redundancy. Similarly, the fact that the family model explains the nation-state well represents redundancy because the nation-state was constructed based on the family model.

The family model as an ideology serves only one purpose – to prohibit questioning of the origin of family by regarding its naturalness as inviolable. There was a secret behind the formation of the modern family: the separation of the public and private spheres. The public sphere (i.e. the state) needed to conceal its dependence on the private sphere or, more frankly, its exploitation of families. Constructing family as a sacred, inviolable sanctuary was a plot of the modern patriarchy. In this sense, it is just that the Japanese ichi was no exception. This myth of the modern family continued to survive until this sanctuary was later violated by women’s studies.

Appendix: About the concept of patriarchy

In the tradition of Japanese social science, the concept of patriarchy has been understood in association with Max Weber. In Shakaigaku jiten (A dictionary of sociology) published by Yūhikaku in 1958 (Fukutake et al. [eds.], 1958), ‘patriarchalism’ is defined as ‘a form of family in which the male head of the family governs and controls the family members using his patriarchal authority,’ with ‘families in ancient and medieval times’ being mentioned as an example. The only reference mentioned is Weber’s Kasansei to hokensei (1921–22;
it is also clear that this knowledge has had no influence at all on the field of Japanese sociology. Even the 1988 Kōbundō version and the 1993 Yūhikaku version, which were published in the period of post-feminism, make no mention of feminism. It is as though the twenty years of the history of feminist studies after the 1970s did not exist.

Certainly, the ambiguity of the concept of patriarchy is acknowledged by the Encyclopedia of feminism: ‘The term is frequently used by feminists, who are not always in agreement as to what they mean by it.’ Kaku Sechiyama (1990) points out the confusion surrounding the concept of patriarchy and argues that different terms should have been used to avoid the confusion. *Jendō no shakaigaku* (A sociology of gender) includes an essay by Kōichi Hasegawa entitled ‘Kafuchōsei towa nanika (What is patriarchy?)’ in which Hasegawa proposes that patriarchalism and patriarchy should be distinguished from each other and that the former should be translated as *kafuchōsei* (the conventional Japanese word for patriarchy) and the latter as *fukensei* (system of father’s dominance). Hasegawa states, ‘The term *kafuchōsei* should be used to refer only to the form of male control typically found in ancient Rome, in which the oldest man has absolute and exclusive power and authority over all of the family members’ (Hasegawa, K., 1989). At the same time, Hasegawa does not fail to point out that the concept of patriarchy has been ‘rediscovered’ and used by feminists.

However, it is not a matter of translation of the word as *kafuchōsei* or *fukensei*. Feminists in English-speaking countries have always used the historical term of patriarchy. The word was intentionally chosen from the conventional vocabulary in order to indicate the historical omnipresence of patriarchy. Feminists redefined the term ‘patriarchy’ in order to express the various phenomena that had been called ‘male dominance’ or ‘sexism’ as a comprehensive structure by tracing the origin of these phenomena. Although Hasegawa asserts that the ‘difference between feminists’ usage and the conventional usage of the word’ has caused ‘confusion and misunderstanding,’ such ‘confusion and misunderstanding’ has actually occurred outside feminism. Since the word ‘gender’ has become commonly used, there is no longer anyone who uses this word in the limited sense of the ‘grammatical classification of words into different sexes.’ Similarly, there is no longer anyone who thinks that ‘feminist’ means a ‘gentleman who respects women.’ As seen in these examples, a concept is redefined during its use in the course of history. It is absolutely odd that, twenty years after feminists first redefined and used the term ‘patriarchy,’ absolutely no mention was made of this change in the dictionaries of sociology published in the 1990s, when young sociologists such as Sechiyama and Hasegawa wrote their papers on the concept of patriarchy.

A similar lack of understanding is seen in *Ie to kafuchōsei* (*Ie* and patriarchy), published by Hikaku Kazoku-shi Gakkai (The Society of Comparative Family History) in 1992 (Nagahara *et al.* [eds], 1992). All twelve authors of this work are men, none of whom refer to the achievements of women’s historians, with the exception of Itsue Takamura. Further, no notice at all is paid to the achievements of women’s studies after feminism. Keiji Nagahara, who was one of the editors and wrote the introduction to the work, still emphasizes the ‘hidebound nature’ of patriarchy, saying that patriarchy was a ‘fatalistic inconsistency’ to the capitalistic economic development (Nagahara *et al.* [eds], 1992: 9). Hiroshi Kamata, who asserts that patriarchy was a result of the Meiji government’s policy to intentionally establish it, also adopts the conventional view that the patriarchy represented a ‘structural peculiarity of the Japanese society’ (Kamata, 1992: 27). However, Kazuiko Sumiya points out, in his work ‘‘Kafuchōsei’ on no tenbō (A review of the discourse on ‘patriarchy’),’ that the issue of patriarchy has shifted from the stage at which it was discussed as a feudal relic to a new stage at which the issue is ‘patriarchy in the modern civil society,’ and that the ‘issue of patriarchy seems to have now entered a completely new stage’ (Sumiya, 1992: 298). Nevertheless, as the reasons for his argument, Sumiya points out only that the ‘view proposed by the development stage theory’ (in which Japan and Western countries are contrasted as backward versus advanced) was made less convincing by Japan’s postwar rapid economic growth, and that Western social history research has made it clear that European modernity cannot be discussed without patriarchy. Thus, Sumiya makes no mention of the fact that the history of modern family formation broke new ground as a result of the participation by researchers in women’s history and feminism. On the contrary, Sumiya proposes to discuss patriarchy in a ‘typological’ framework throughout history instead of in stages, based on an understanding of the situation that the evaluation of the ‘feudal relic’ or the ancient regime was completely reversed from criticism to recognition as a valuable traditional legacy of Japanese culture and as a key prerequisite for the rapid progress of Japanese economy’ (Sumiya, 1992: 297). This represents a retreat from feminists’ historical awareness, which made an issue of the ‘patriarchy unique to the modern family.’ Based on an understanding
that 'it was not individuals but nothing other than families that provided the foundation for the modern civil society that was actually established,' Itsuo Emori (1992: 280) proposes a concept of 'patriarchy in civil society' and identifies patriarchal authority in civil laws such as the Landrecht of Prussia and the Napoleonic Civil Code of France. However, in Emori's statement that the 'patriarchal structure of the modern civil family was shaken by wives' return to the labor market as a result of the machine-based, large-scale factory system,' we see an influence of the Engels-style socialist theory of emancipation of women that the complete return of women to the public labor force is a requirement for the emancipation of women. Emori's view reflects none of the findings of women's studies obtained by the 1980s; these findings include that, contrary to the myth that 'working class families were free from sexual discrimination' (Inoue, Kiyoshi, 1948), the modern patriarchy does exist in the working class; and that 'women's return to the public labor force' as a result of patriarchal capitalism did not shake patriarchy but resulted only in the suppression of women in both the private and public spheres, in association with gender segregation in the labor market. Their book, which should represent cutting-edge results of studies on *ie* and patriarchy in the 1990s, ignores the twenty years' achievement of women's studies as if no such thing existed.

4 Modernity for the Family

**The happiness of the home**

Even sexuality and family, which are frequently considered to be closest to nature and instinct, change across time and space. As Japan entered the Meiji era, there was a dramatic shift in the way people viewed spousal relations, marriage, the family, men and women, love, and their bodies. Studying the process through which these views were formed reveals very well that many of these views, which are firmly believed to be part of commonsense today, roughly a hundred years later, are actually a relatively new historical construct.

Modern European history has repeatedly shown, under the influence of social history and women's history, that the domestic sphere is reorganized with wider social change. In fact, the private domestic sphere is itself a product of the modernization process, through which it was formed at the same time that there was a construction of the public sphere. The universal belief that the family is a refuge from the outside world is, of itself, a product of modernity.

We can also trace the establishment of the modern family in Japan. The mad rush to modernize that Japan entered after the Meiji Restoration involved conflict between newly imported ideas and those that were already in circulation, and between those pushing forward Westernization and those opposed to this.

When looking at modernity for the family, we need to first look at how the concept of the home was established. The magazine *Katei zasshi* (The home magazine) published in 1892, as its name implies, was concerned with the home and played an important role in strengthening an ideology that praised home life:

The home is an enchanted land. Flowers blossom, birds sing, there are beautiful skies and long days. A wall makes the boundary between the inside and outside world. Inside, everything is far removed from the rest of the world, like peach flower petals being carried far away by the flowing water...Here is the home of each one of us. Peaceful