

**The State of Democratic  
Consolidation in Korea:  
Decentralisation and Participation in  
Local Politics 1988-1998**

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## Abstract

This thesis explores the democratisation process in Korea by dividing it into three stages, paying special attention to the local level and the involvement of women. The transition phase lasts from the liberalisation of an authoritarian regime to the introduction of a democratic constitution, 1985 to 1988 in the case of Korea. During the next phase, consolidation, democratic institutions have to be established and democracy has to be accepted by the elite and the population alike. The last stage of democratisation is either a mature democracy or a failure.

In order to assess the progress of democratic consolidation in Korea political participation at local level and decentralisation were studied. Mainly due to the prevailing strong influence of traditional political culture consolidation has made only slow progress in the last ten years. The distribution of power from the central to local government has been gradual. Local councils have been introduced but their influence on the executive is limited and they have yet to develop fully their potential to influence policies. Local assembly members are mostly highly educated, have a high family income and have been involved in civic groups for a longer time period. Citizens have been slow to use the new opportunities for participation. They have yet to adopt fully democratic attitudes that include active participation. Besides this attitudinal obstacle there remain problems for further increases in participants in the form of structural, financial and educational deficiencies. This affects in particular the involvement of women in politics who are hardly represented at all. Unless citizens take a more positive approach to participation in civil and political society the democratisation process in Korea will take a very long period of time.



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## Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Abstract .....  | i         |
| Acknowledgements .....                                      | ii        |
| Contents .....  | iii       |
| List of Tables and Figures .....                            | vi        |
| List of Abbreviations .....                                 | viii      |
| Glossary .....  | ix        |
| Important Historical Dates .....                            | x         |
| <br>  |           |
| <b>Introduction .....</b>                                   | <b>1</b>  |
| <br>  |           |
| <b>Chapter 1: The Process of Democratisation .....</b>      | <b>10</b> |
| <b>I. Democracy .....</b>                                   | <b>12</b> |
| i. Defining Democracy .....                                 | 12        |
| ii. Civil Society .....                                     | 14        |
| <b>II. Democratisation .....</b>                            | <b>18</b> |
| i. Defining Democratisation .....                           | 18        |
| ii. Transition .....  | 21        |
| iii. Consolidation .....                                    | 24        |
| iv. Final Stages of Democratisation .....                   | 30        |
| <b>III. Elements of Democratisation .....</b>               | <b>32</b> |
| i. Political Participation .....                            | 32        |
| ii. Decentralisation .....                                  | 36        |
| <br>  |           |
| <b>Chapter 2: The Cultural and Historical Context .....</b> | <b>39</b> |
| <b>I. Political Culture .....</b>                           | <b>41</b> |
| i. Defining Political Culture .....                         | 41        |
| ii. Confucianism .....                                      | 45        |
| <b>II. Historical Overview .....</b>                        | <b>56</b> |
| i. Early History .....                                      | 56        |
| ii. 19th Century .....                                      | 57        |
| iii. Japanese Occupation .....                              | 59        |
| iv. March First Independence Movement .....                 | 60        |
| v. Liberation in 1945 .....                                 | 62        |
| vi. Republic of Korea: Experiments with Democracy .....     | 63        |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <b>Chapter 3: Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Korea since 1985</b> ..... | 76  |
| <b>I. Democratic Transition: 1985-1988</b> .....                                    | 78  |
| <b>II. Democratic Consolidation in the Sixth Republic</b> .....                     | 86  |
| i. The Presidencies of Roh Tae-woo and Kim Young-sam .....                          | 86  |
| ii. Institutional Consolidation .....   | 88  |
| iii. Representational Consolidation .....   | 98  |
| iv. Behavioural Consolidation .....   | 106 |
| v. Attitudinal Consolidation .....  | 112 |
| <br>  |     |
| <b>Chapter 4: Decentralisation in Korea: Developments in Local Government</b> ..... | 121 |
| <b>I. The Relevance of Decentralisation for Democratic Consolidation</b> .          | 123 |
| <b>II. History and Structure of Local Government</b> .....                          | 128 |
| i. History of Local Government .....  | 128 |
| ii. Structure of Local Administration .....   | 133 |
| iii. Local Assemblies .....   | 145 |
| <b>III. Interaction between Different Levels of Government</b> .....                | 150 |
| i. Central Administration and Subnational Administration .....                      | 150 |
| ii. Interaction between Subnational Administrations .....                           | 158 |
| <b>IV. Interaction between Local Administration and Citizens</b> .....              | 162 |
| i. The Opening of the Administration .....  | 162 |
| ii. New Channels of Participation .....   | 165 |
| <b>V. Interaction between Administration and Politicians</b> .....                  | 169 |
| i. The Head of the Executive .....  | 169 |
| ii. Councils and Administration .....   | 171 |
| <br>  |     |
| <b>Chapter 5: Political Participation at Local Level in Korea</b> .....             | 175 |
| <b>I. Theoretical Assumptions</b> .....   | 177 |
| i. The Relevance of Participation for Democratic Consolidation .....                | 177 |
| ii. Types of Participants .....   | 179 |
| <b>II. Participation in Local Politics</b> .....                                    | 185 |
| i. Voting .....   | 186 |
| ii. Protest .....   | 189 |
| iii. Profile of Councillors .....   | 191 |
| iv. Community Activity .....  | 193 |
| v. Party and Campaign Work .....  | 196 |
| vi. Work as Councillor .....  | 201 |

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| <b>III. Obstacles to Participation</b> ..... | 208     |
| i. Cultural .....                            | 209     |
| ii. Structural .....                         | 214     |
| iii. Educational.....                        | 218     |
| iv. Financial .....                          | 220     |
| v. Steps to Overcome these Obstacles .....   | 222     |
| <br><b>Conclusions</b> .....                 | <br>226 |
| <br>Appendix .....                           | <br>239 |
| Bibliography .....                           | 249     |
| Korean Bibliography .....                    | 284     |



## List of Tables and Figures

### Tables:

|      |   |     |
|------|---|-----|
| 4.1: | Percentage of National and Local Officials .....            | 139 |
| 5.1: | Types of Political Culture .....                            | 180 |
| 5.2: | Party Guidelines for the Involvement of Women in 1997 ..... | 217 |

### Figures:

|       |   |     |
|-------|---|-----|
| 1.1:  | Model of Democratisation in Three Steps .....                                 | 20  |
| 1.2:  | Model of Transition to Democracy .....  | 23  |
| 1.3:  | Multi-Level Model of Consolidation .....                                      | 26  |
| 1.4:  | Forms of Political Participation .....  | 34  |
| 2.1:  | Concentric Circles of Self-Identity .....                                     | 53  |
| 3.1:  | Trust in National Assembly .....  | 92  |
| 3.2:  | Decision-Making Process in a Korean Party .....                               | 101 |
| 3.3:  | Trust in Political Parties .....  | 102 |
| 4.1:  | Structure of Local Government in Korea .....                                  | 134 |
| 4.2:  | Increase in the Number of Civil Servants .....                                | 136 |
| 4.3:  | Typical Structure of a Higher Level Administration: Kyonggi Province .....    | 137 |
| 4.4:  | Typical Structure of a City Administration: Suwon-City .....                  | 137 |
| 4.5:  | Typical Structure of a Ward Administration (in Suwon-City) .....              | 138 |
| 4.6:  | Regional Background of the Highest Officials in the National Government ..... | 141 |
| 4.7:  | Increase in Female Government Officials .....                                 | 142 |
| 4.8:  | Kyonggi Provincial Assembly .....   | 148 |
| 4.9:  | Kangnam District Council .....  | 148 |
| 4.10: | Flow Chart of Policy Development and Co-ordination .....                      | 154 |
| 4.11: | Extent of Financial Self-Sufficiency .....                                    | 156 |
| 4.12: | Size of Local Finance in 1995 .....   | 157 |
| 5.1:  | Voter Turn-out in Elections Since 1988 .....                                  | 186 |
| 5.2:  | Political Agreement among Married Councillors .....                           | 188 |
| 5.3:  | Religious Affiliation .....   | 192 |
| 5.4:  | Special Interest among Councillors .....                                      | 193 |
| 5.5:  | Councillors' Membership in Civil Groups in 1998 .....                         | 194 |
| 5.6:  | Start of Political Activity .....   | 195 |
| 5.7:  | Motivation for Political Activity .....                                       | 196 |
| 5.8:  | Sources of Stimuli for Councillors in 1998 .....                              | 197 |
| 5.9:  | Length of Party Membership .....  | 200 |
| 5.10: | Consulted Groups in the Policy-Making Process .....                           | 203 |
| 5.11: | Female Councillors at Higher Level Assemblies in 1998 .....                   | 205 |
| 5.12: | Female Councillors at Lower Level Assemblies in 1998 .....                    | 205 |



**5.13:** Support for Female Participation ..... 210  
**5.14:** "Female Politicians are as Able as Male Politicians" ..... 212  
**5.15:** Source of Political Education ..... 219  
**5.16:** First Source of Financial Support in Campaign ..... 221  
**5.17:** Capability to Increase Female Participation ..... 222

**List of Abbreviations:**

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| CCEJ   | Citizen's Coalition for Economic Justice                        |
| CKWP   | Center for Korean Women and Politics                            |
| CMLG   | Committee on the Management of Local Government (UK)            |
| CSU    | Christlich-soziale Union (Germany)                              |
| DJP    | Democratic Justice Party (1981-1990)                            |
| DLP    | Democratic Liberal Party (1990-1995)                            |
| DMZ    | De-militarised Zone   |
| EPB    | Economic Planning Board   |
| FKTU   | Federation of Korean Trade Unions                               |
| GEO    | Gender Equality Office  |
| GNP    | Grand National Party (1997-present)                             |
| IKES   | Institute for Korean Election Studies                           |
| IMF    | International Monetary Fund                                     |
| KCIA   | Korean Central Intelligence Agency                              |
| KCTU   | Korean Confederation of Trade Unions                            |
| KCWP   | Kyonggido Center for Women's Development                        |
| KFI    | Korean Federation of Industries                                 |
| KFSB   | Korean Federation of Small Businesses                           |
| KIWP   | Korean Institute for Women and Politics                         |
| KLAFIR | Korean Local Authorities Foundation for International Relations |
| KLWV   | Korean League of Women Voters                                   |
| KPS    | Korean Press Service  |
| KWDI   | Korean Women's Development Institute                            |
| KWNC   | Korean Women's National Caucus                                  |
| LATI   | Local Administration Training Institute                         |
| LDP    | Liberal Democratic Party (Japan)                                |
| MHA    | Ministry of Home Affairs  |
| MoE    | Ministry of Environment   |
| MPA    | Ministry for Political Affairs II                               |
| NCNP   | National Congress for New Politics                              |
| NGO    | Non-governmental Organisation                                   |
| NIMBY  | 'Not in my Backyard'  |
| NIS    | National Intelligence Service                                   |
| NKDP   | New Korean Democratic Party (1985-1987)                         |
| NKP    | New Korea Party (1995-1997)                                     |
| NPP    | New People's Party (1997-1998)                                  |
| NSO    | National Statistical Office of the Republic of Korea            |
| PKP    | People's Korea Party (1981-1985)                                |
| PPD    | Party for Peace and Democracy (1987-1991)                       |
| SMG    | Seoul Metropolitan Government                                   |
| ULD    | United Liberal Democrats (1995- present)                        |
| UNP    | United National Party (1992-1993)                               |
| WPO    | Women's Policy Office (Kyonggi-do)                              |

## Glossary

|                     |        |   |
|---------------------|--------|---|
| ajon                | 이전     | minor clerk                                       |
| chibang chach'i     | 지방자치   | local government                                  |
| Ch'ondogyo          | 천도교    | 'Religion of the Heavenly Way'                    |
| chaebol             | 재벌     | conglomerate (read 'zaibatsu'<br>in Japanese)     |
| chusok              | 추석     | Korean Thanksgiving (mid-<br>Autumn Festival)     |
| daekwon             | 대권     | ultimate governing power                          |
| -do                 | -도     | suffix for province                               |
| -dong               | -동     | suffix for urban neighbourhood                    |
| haengjong chachi'bu | 행정 자치부 | Ministry of Administration and<br>Self-Government |
| hanguk-o            | 한국어    | Korean language                                   |
| hangul              | 한글     | Korean script                                     |
| Hanahoe             | 하나회    | 'One-Mind-Society'                                |
| Han minjok          | 한민족    | Korean nation/race                                |
| Honam               | 호남     | Honam-region, south-west                          |
| kye                 | 계      | private loan club                                 |
| -ku (gu)            | -구     | suffix for ward (district)                        |
| -kun (gun)          | -군     | suffix for county                                 |
| kwangyok-si         | 광역시    | municipality                                      |
| minjung sahoe       | 민중사회   | 'popular society', working class                  |
| -myon               | -면     | suffix for township                               |
| naemu-bu            | 내무부    | Ministry of Internal Affairs                      |
| -ri                 | -리     | suffix for rural neighbourhood                    |
| Saemaul Undong      | 새마을운동  | New Village Movement                              |
| -si                 | -시     | suffix for city                                   |
| simin sahoe         | 시민사회   | bourgeoisie                                       |
| solnal              | 설날     | lunar New Year                                    |
| Tonghak             | 동학     | 'Eastern Learning'                                |
| -up                 | -읍     | suffix for town                                   |
| uri mal             | 우리말    | our language: Korean                              |
| uri nara            | 우리나라   | our country: Korea                                |
| Yangban             | 양반     | aristocracy                                       |
| Yongnam             | 영남     | Yongnam-region, southeast                         |
| Yusin               | 유신     | revitalisation                                    |



## Important Historical Dates:

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| 2333 BC                   | mystical founding of Korea   |
| 18 BC-611 AD              | <i>Paekche</i> -kingdom  |
| 37 BC-668 AD              | <i>Kygoryo</i> -kingdom  |
| 57 BC-668 AD              | <i>Silla</i> -kingdom  |
| 668-935                   | <i>Unified Silla</i> -kingdom  |
| 698-926                   | <i>Parhae</i> in northern Korea  |
| 936-1392                  | <i>Koryo</i> -dynasty  |
| 1392-1910                 | <i>Choson</i> or <i>Yi</i> -dynasty  |
| 1592-1598                 | <i>Hideyoshi</i> -Invasion from Japan  |
| 1627-1636                 | <i>Manchu</i> -Invasion  |
| 1876                      | treaty of Kanghwa, opening of Korea  |
| 1894                      | <i>Tonghak</i> -movement, subsequent uprising  |
| 1894-1895                 | Sino-Japanese War; Independence Club reforms   |
| 1904-1905                 | Russo-Japanese War   |
| 1905                      | Treaty of Protectorate with Japan  |
| 1910                      | Annexation of Korea by Japan   |
| 1910-1945                 | Japanese colony  |
| 1 March 1919              | <i>March First Independence Movement</i>   |
| 15 Aug. 1945              | Japanese surrender; Liberation   |
| 1945-1948                 | Military Governments   |
| 15 Aug. 1948              | establishment of the Republic of Korea   |
| 9 Sep. 1948               | establishment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea                                     |
| 17 June 1950- 23 May 1953 | Korean War   |
| 26 Apr. 1960              | Syngman Rhee resigns after discredited election, end of First Republic                         |
| August 1960- 16 May 1961  | Second Republic: Chang Myon prime minister   |
| 16 May 1961               | military putsch led by Park Chung-hee and Kim Jong-pil   |
| 15 Oct. 1963              | Park wins presidential elections; Third Republic   |
| Aug. 1971                 | <i>Saemaul Undong</i> started  |
| 27 Dec. 1972              | 7th Constitutional Amendment passed by referendum: <i>Yusin</i> -constitution, Fourth Republic |
| 26 Oct. 1979              | assassination of Park Chung-hee  |
| 12 Dec. 1979              | 'coup-like' mutiny of Chun Doo-hwan, sparks nation-wide protest                                |
| 16 May 1980               | second stage of coup   |
| 18 May -27 May 1980       | Kwangju-uprising   |
| 27 Oct. 1980              | 8th Constitutional Amendment: Fifth Republic   |
| 25 Feb. 1981              | Chun elected President   |
| early 1985                | liberalisation started   |
| 12 Feb. 1985              | 12th general elections: opposition victorious  |
| May 1986                  | dialogue between ruling party and opposition on constitutional reform starts                   |
| 13 Apr. 1987              | Chun announces that talks on constitutional amendment will be postponed until after Olympics   |
| 26 June 1987              | major rallies in Seoul and 36 other cities, between 200,000 and 1.4 million participants       |

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 29 June 1987  | democratisation declaration of presidential candidate Roh Tae-woo  |
| 29 Oct. 1987  | new constitution promulgated   |
| 16 Dec. 1987  | 13th presidential elections: Roh Tae-woo: 37%, Kim Young-sam: 28%, Kim Dae-jung: 27%, Kim Jong-pil: 8.1%                                   |
| 25 Feb. 1988  | Roh sworn in; Sixth Republic   |
| 6 Apr. 1988   | new 'Local Autonomy Law' promulgated   |
| Sep. 1988     | Seoul Olympic Games  |
| 26 March 1991 | elections for councils at lower level  |
| 20 June 1991  | elections for councils at higher level   |
| 17 Dec. 1992  | presidential elections, Kim Young-sam wins, Kim Dae-jung pledges to leave politics, other candidates include Hyundai-founder Chung Ju-yung |
| 27 June 1995  | full-fledged local elections of governors, mayors, heads of executives and councillors   |
| Summer 1995   | Kim DJ returns from self-imposed retirement  |
| 3 Dec. 1997   | Korea asks IMF for credit, economic crisis   |
| 21 Dec. 1997  | presidential elections, Kim Dae-jung elected by a margin of 1.6%   |
| 4 June 1998   | local elections  |



## Introduction

*'The 21st century will be an age of participatory politics. The opportunity for all people to take part in all areas of national administration must be guaranteed to the greatest extent.'*

Korean President Kim Dae-jung (1998a: 151)

The twentieth century has wrought many changes on the Korean peninsula: the country lost her independence, became a Japanese colony, was occupied and divided after liberation from the Japanese and endured a fratricidal war that resulted in a Stalinist regime in the North and several consecutive authoritarian regimes in the South. In 1988, after two decades of rapid economic development, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) joined the growing group of democratising countries with the establishment of the Sixth Republic.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the twentieth century, Korea faced foreign encroachment in the form of (Japanese) imperialism and western learning, science and religion. By the end of the twentieth century, Korea has a highly developed economy and is in the process of adapting her political system to a model of western democracy. At first impression, Korea is a thoroughly modernised country, but closer scrutiny soon reveals that many traditional values have survived the developments of the twentieth century. The legacy of Confucianism is often contradictory to the demands of a capitalist economy and a democratic political system. This divergence is creating problems in the process of democratisation, as this thesis attempts to demonstrate.

Korea is not alone in her endeavour to adapt western values to her traditions. Democracy, first introduced to the modern world in Anglo-Saxon countries in the 19th century, has been spreading in waves around the world (Huntington, 1991). By the 1950s, democracy was introduced to countries with different cultural backgrounds in Asia and Africa. This increased the interest in the prerequisites of democracy (Almond, Verba, 1963; Dahl, 1971).<sup>2</sup> The political development in a country is not only influenced by structural and functional characteristics but also by cultural aspects (Almond, Verba,

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<sup>1</sup> The Republic of Korea will hereafter be referred to as South Korea or Korea unless a distinction with North Korea, the *Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea*, is necessary.

<sup>2</sup> Developments in political science theory will be described in Chapter One in more detail.

1963: 34). A democratic structure can be described as the 'hardware' but its functioning is influenced by the 'software' that is determined by cultural traits (Kim BK, 1997: 34). The teachings of Confucianism left a strong impression on Korean society. The main feature is a stress on a rigid hierarchical system that leaves little room for horizontal relationships. Diversity and compromise are held in low regard. In the political arena this resulted in factionalism, bureaucratisation and uniformity of beliefs and attitudes, factors contrary to the development of democracy.

Following the collapse of democratic regimes all over the world in the 1970s and 1980s, the focus of political science shifted from the prerequisites of democracy to the democratisation process (Di Palma, 1990; Huntington, 1991).<sup>3</sup> During the 1990s, this process has been further differentiated and divided into several stages. These stages range from liberalisation and transition through consolidation to the emergence of a democratic system (Mainwaring, 1992; Shin DC, 1994). For each level, several models have been forwarded by political scientists, as Chapter One will explain in more detail (Huntington, 1991; Karl, 1990; Merkel, 1996; Share, 1987). The different models weight the time sequence of events, elite behaviour and the strength of the actors in various ways. In the context of this case study of Korea, the model of transition suggested by Huntington has been found useful. By concentrating on the role of the leadership in the transition stage Huntington presents three modes of transition. In a 'transformation' the ruling group takes the initiative while in a 'replacement' the opposition overthrows the ruling regime. In the case of a 'transplacement' government and opposition take joint action since neither group is powerful enough to act alone.

The transition process in Korea has been well documented in the literature (Shin, Zoh, Chey, 1994; Steinberg, 1995). From 1985 onwards, opposition groups such as labour and students staged large-scale pro-democracy demonstrations. The ruling regime had to yield to pressure for more democracy when the middle-class and white-collar workers also joined these demonstrations in 1987. Once a dialogue was established between the government and opposition forces, represented by well-known dissidents, the demonstrations subsided and citizens mostly returned to their former position as passive by-standers. The transition was thus led by the regime and opposition politicians,

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<sup>3</sup> The *Journal of Democracy* began publication in 1989, *Democratization* in 1994.



the political elite. No real change of actors took place.<sup>4</sup> This is essentially consistent with Huntington's model of 'transition through transplacement'.

Studies on the consolidation of democracy in Korea remain few in numbers. These analyses mainly focused on elite behaviour (Higley, 1997; Park CW, 1997), the economy (Mo JR, Moon CI, 1998; Moran, 1996), students (Kim DJ, 1993) or labour (Gills, 1993). In order to fully assess the consolidation of democracy, however, a broader approach is needed. Democracy has to consolidate in different dimensions, on a behavioural, attitudinal and constitutional level (Linz, Stepan, 1996b: 15). All these factors can be surveyed in one model as presented by Merkel (1996). In his 'multi-level model of consolidation' both structural and cultural aspects are addressed, permitting a deeper analysis of democratic consolidation. It also entails the possibility for consolidation at different levels to occur at varying times. The first level relates to the consolidation of democratic institutions. The introduction of a new constitution and the establishment of democratic structures are usually part of the transition process. On the representational level, political parties and interest groups have to be created in order to represent various opinions and beliefs. These groups should rely on a broad base of support among the population. The elite has to accept and support the new system for a democracy to consolidate on the behavioural level. Finally, for consolidation on the attitudinal level, broad support of the political system and participation in civil and political society has to prevail among the population. Kim Dae-jung in his speech on Liberation Day of 1998, quoted at the beginning of this Introduction, sets the criteria for an examination of the consolidation process: participatory politics in all areas.

A political system has to democratise at all levels of government, both national and local (Sørensen, 1998: 21). This thesis will turn away from national politics to highlight local-level politics. Local government as a new feature of Korean democracy has been implemented in the 1990s, replacing the old, highly centralised structure. The topic of decentralisation shows the interdependence of structural and cultural factors in Korea: although the country's constitution has provided for local government since 1948, it is essentially blocked by centuries-old centralised rule. More than thirty years ago, Gregory Henderson used the image of a 'vortex' to describe Korean politics (1968). He perceived

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<sup>4</sup> The main actors of the transition in 1987 were each elected president in the following years.

homogeneity and centralisation as key elements of Korean society. All power is centralised and the active elements of society are drawn to the centre by extreme centripetal dynamics. In order to provide for more diversity and pluralism, Henderson suggested the decentralisation of power by creating different centres of economic, political and cultural power as solution of Korea's predicament. This makes decentralisation an interesting subject through which to examine the progress of the consolidation of democracy.

Given the novelty of decentralisation to Korean politics, to date only a few publications have investigated it, especially outside Korea (Park HB, 1994; Ro CH, 1993). The research for this thesis is therefore mostly based on primary sources such as publications by the concerned institutions (e.g. the *Ministry of Home Affairs*; MHA, 1997), an internship with a provincial administration and the results of a postal survey among local councillors. In this thesis, the term 'local government' is complementing 'national government' and includes both regional, higher-level administrations and administrations at the lower level. When writing in English, Korean authors often use local autonomy, local government and (local) self-government interchangeably for the Korean *chibang chach'i*. Throughout the thesis, 'local administration' is the part of the local government concerned with the executive while 'local government' also includes the elected councils. Korea is still too far away from reaching local self-government to justify the use of this term.

Decentralisation will be investigated from two angles. Firstly, the distribution of power from the central government to lower levels will be examined. Secondly, the new possibilities of citizen participation will be scrutinised. As part of the decentralisation process, local government has opened new forums of interaction with the population. The administration has become more accessible and open for involvement of the population. Local councils have been introduced to increase the opportunities for political activities. The experiences of local councillors as collected in the survey shed some light on citizen participation in the local decision-making process.

Participation is another important variable to examine the democratisation process. One of the characteristics of a democratic system is a vibrant civil society allowing large parts of the population to be included in the political process. The definition of political participation has been extended over the last thirty years to accommodate changes in political behaviour (in the western world; Kaase, Marsh, 1979; Milbrath, Goel, 1977; Norris, 1991; Verba, Nie, 1972). A broad definition includes all actions used by citizens to



influence or support politics and government and will be used in this thesis. It incorporates acts such as voting, activities in civic groups, campaigning and demonstrations.

Under the previous Korean authoritarian regimes, participation was limited to voting and mobilised activities for the regime and (illegal) protests against it (Kim CL, 1980a). Demonstrations were mostly staged by students and workers and often turned violent. Although broad support of anti-government protest was vital in the initial stages of the transition process, most citizens have remained passive and the level of participation after the establishment of the Sixth Republic in 1988 has remained low. This thesis seeks to explore some possible causes for this development.

While looking at participation at the local level, the activities of women will be highlighted. This focus is prompted partly by personal experiences of the gender inequality in Korea. Moreover, since women were traditionally confined to the private sphere, an increase of politically active women is an indication of the progress of democratisation. Furthermore, women generally tend to be overlooked in the literature concerning democratisation (Chinchilla, 1993; Jaquette, 1994; Waylen, 1994). The position of women in Korean society has been well corroborated and little has changed over the last century (Chung SW, 1986; Gelb, Palley, 1994; Kang, Lenz, 1992; Mattielli, 1977). Studies on women in politics, however, are few and concentrate on the national level (Soh, 1993; Sohn BS, 1994). Women at the lower levels of government have received little attention in non-Korean publications but are the subject of study by several institutes in Korea.<sup>5</sup>

The experiences of female councillors exemplify the background of politicians at local level and also the obstacles to participation possible activists face. These obstacles are both on a personal and on a structural level. A strong financial background is one of the most important factors for selection as candidate by a party and consequently winning the election. Councillors are therefore often from an (upper-) middle-class background with a high income and high educational level, especially among women. Political parties are underdeveloped and little more than a power-base for one politician, giving little support for local level politics. Candidates are recruited from outside instead of deriving from the rank and file of a party. The reverence of age makes it difficult for new,

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<sup>5</sup> Beside the government-run *Korean Women's Development Institute* (KWDI), there are four other institutes in Seoul, each set-up by an established female politician (the personalised nature is reminiscent of political parties). Publications include Kim WH (1996; 1997); Sohn BS (1995; 1998).



younger faces to emerge. The perseverance of 'old-style' politicians in turn leads to more apathy in the population. Support for democracy by Koreans has been described as 'a mile wide but only a few inches deep' (Shin DC, 1998: 13). While democratic procedures have been established they are filled with values from a different political culture. These findings lead to the conclusion that democracy has been consolidated on the institutional level but at the three other levels, the consolidation process is still on-going.

## Methodology

The process of democratisation was evolving during the research period of this thesis and is still so, influencing the methodological approach. Research into the literature began in Autumn 1995 in Newcastle and continued until the completion of the thesis in 1999. Daily events were observed with the help of journals, friends in Korea and, most importantly, the various sources on the internet such as newspapers, journals and the ever-increasing number of research institutes. Newly published literature had to be incorporated.<sup>6</sup> During the second research stage in Korea (March 1997 to June 1998), further literature research was conducted, especially in Korean-language sources. Furthermore, a six-month internship with the provincial government of Kyonggi (and a shorter stay at both a city and a county administration) gave valuable insight into the workings of Korean bureaucracy and the administrative structure of the country. Volunteer work with an institute promoting women in politics helped to identify the concerns of women in politics.

The centre-piece of the fieldwork is a postal survey conducted among female local councillors and a smaller male control group (a translation can be found in the appendix). The response rate was relatively low at thirty-two per cent but consistent with other polls.<sup>7</sup> Given the small numbers of respondents the results of the survey cannot be

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<sup>6</sup> The first major publication about local autonomy in English, for instance, was only published in August 1999 (Moon CS, 1999). By 1998, the national government and all local administrations had established homepages on the internet.

<sup>7</sup> Sohn BS in Spring 1998 reached twenty-five per cent (1998: 3). *Gallup Korea* in a survey conducted in the form of personal interviews achieved a response rate of forty-five per cent (seven per cent of those interviews were 'not completed because of the respondent's impatience, for which Koreans are notorious' [Shin, Rose, 1998: 47]). Similar surveys among local councillors in England reached thirty-six per cent, in Massachusetts, USA, forty per cent (McGrew, Bristow, 1983: 70; Schwartz, 1969: 556)

generalised but provide an insight into the experiences of local councillors. The data generated by the survey was evaluated in Newcastle with the help of SPSS 6, a software frequently utilised in the social sciences. The survey consisted mainly of multiple choice questions to reduce the amount of time councillors had to spend on the replies. Open-ended questions were coded in a contextual method: different categories were created after reading the replies. Only part of the data generated can be used in this thesis.

The quantitative data was substantiated and qualified by the results of other studies (Chu et al., 1993; Helgesen, 1998; Shin, Rose, 1997a; 1998; Sohn BS, 1995; 1998). Informal, semi-structured interviews with councillors (fifteen), academics (seven) and others concerned with local politics (twenty-two) provided further information. These interviews were often ad-hoc and therefore not recorded.<sup>8</sup> Participant observation of council sessions, election meetings and so on was only of limited success since the behaviour changed in my presence (a western woman does not 'blend into the background'). Research in a field where few western women have operated before both opened and closed doors. On the negative side were misconceptions of the researcher as a 'militant feminist', chauvinist (expecting everything to be like the West) and being unable to understand 'the unique Korean culture' (this often also from Koreans living abroad). Some of the positive effects were curiosity and appreciation of a foreigner to study Korean politics at local level.

### Structure

Using all these different sources, this thesis aims at presenting the process of democratic consolidation, focusing on the two variables of decentralisation and political participation. In more detail, the dissertation is divided into five chapters and a conclusion. **Chapter One** will deal with the theoretical framework of democracy and democratisation. In this context, the general concerns regarding the transition process will be presented in detail. Several models have been suggested (Karl, 1990; Mainwaring, 1992; Share, 1987) but

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<sup>8</sup> The most bizarre setting was a lady's restroom where I was introduced to one female director of an institute. Interviews with men were often arranged in a more formal setting such as their offices, or in a public place so they could show off their international guest (or occasionally in the hope of a more 'private encounter', a problem I very much underestimated before starting the research).



the focus will be on Huntington's 'four-stage model of transition' (1991). Furthermore, a model of the consolidation of democracy will be introduced, the 'multi-level model' of Merkel (1996). Using this model, two variables, political participation and decentralisation will be introduced for the evaluation of the situation in Korea.

Before these models are applied to the Korean case, however, **Chapter Two** will present the historical and political context of Korean democratisation. The political culture has a strong influence on the events in Korea and the direction and pace of the democratisation process. Without presenting the cultural traits of Korea, Confucianism in particular, the democratisation process and the hurdles that have to be overcome cannot be fully comprehended. Studies conducted by Korean political scientists often present Korean history in great detail (e.g. Yang SC, 1994a). This thesis will also present some historical background but will focus on democracy, decentralisation and the position of women, the main topics of this thesis.

**Chapter Three** will show the political developments in Korea from 1985 onwards, seeking to apply the theoretical insights of the models presented by Huntington for the transition stage and by Merkel for the consolidation process. The events of the transition process influence the following stage, therefore it needs to be presented in more detail. During the Korean transition the elite did not change and the leading figures of the fight for democracy are still politically active in the late 1990s (Higley, 1997; Mo JR, Moon CI, 1999). Another reason for the focus on the transition is the influence of national events on local level politics.

**Chapter Four** will look at local governments and their development in recent years. The structure of the administration and the newly established councils will be briefly outlined. The centralisation of power at the hands of the *Ministry of Home Affairs* will be presented to explain the problems of the devolvement of power to lower levels of government. The interaction between different levels of government and between the administration and citizens will also be displayed. In the last part the interaction between the executive in the form of the governor or mayor and the councils will be introduced.

In **Chapter Five** political participation at the local level will be studied to assess the changes brought forward through the democratisation process. For this reason, several types of participants, as suggested by Almond and Verba (1963), will be applied to show the deficiencies of Korean citizens in terms of participatory rates. The obstacles facing Koreans willing to become politically active will be demonstrated by the presenta-

tion of the experiences and opinions of the surveyed local councillors. The presence of obstacles to a higher rate of participation has been established in four areas. The political culture leaves little room for the development of a civil society, limiting the opportunities of activists. Political structures are still too centralised to allow meaningful local autonomy. Furthermore, financial and educational restraints limit the number of potential activists. The last part of the chapter will briefly present some steps undertaken to overcome these barriers. Women have to overcome further constraints in the form of cultural disapproval of female activism outside the home.

### **Transcription**

For the transcription of Korean names and places, the system introduced by McCune-Reischauer without diacritics is used, unless a different transcription has already been established (e.g. Syngman Rhee, Seoul). Apart from Syngman Rhee, Korean personal names follow the oriental tradition of putting the family name first, followed by the given name (e.g. Kim Dae-jung). English names for Korean institutions have been used in their established spelling (e.g. Ewha Womans University). To avoid confusion about too many Kims, Parks and Lees, Korean authors are presented with the initials of the given name (e.g. Kim WH, 1996). Korean-American authors, however, are presented in the English fashion with a comma. Names are quoted according to the original source, sometimes leading to two different spellings for the same person or place (e.g. Kim Sunhyuk and Kim Sun-hyuk, Hwasong and HwaSung). Korean sources are cited in the same way as western sources but are listed following the Roman alphabet in both Korean and English in a separate bibliography. Exchange rates of Korean won are applicable at the given date since the Korean currency underwent a massive devaluation during the research period. All translations are the author's.

## **Chapter One: The Process of Democratisation**

In this chapter, the theoretical background relevant to the thesis will be established. Firstly, the term 'democracy', the final aim of the democratisation process, will be explored. The idea of democracy preceded the notion of democratisation by many centuries. A concept as old as democracy has seen many changes in meaning over the years. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to present the development of democracy with its different interpretations, so only a short overview and an applicable definition will be put forward. Scholars of democratisation such as Larry Diamond and Samuel Huntington use a concept limited to the political arena, excluding social and economical aspects. Democratisation is defined and promoted by the existence of democratic regimes, when other countries try to imitate and promote democratic conditions to their own system.

Over the last two hundred years, democracy has spread in waves around the globe (Huntington, 1991). A zenith in the number of democracies was regularly followed by a reverse wave, when the numbers declined again. Currently, we are experiencing the third wave of democratisation which reached its climax in the early 1990s.

The process of democratisation has been divided into three stages (Merkel, 1996). The first stage is the transition, the fall of the old regime and the establishment of a new regime. Models of transition usually concentrate on the actions of elite groups in this stage (Huntington, 1991; Karl, 1990; Share, 1987). The second or consolidation phase is when democratic practices become institutionalised and democratic rules widely accepted. The third stage is a full-fledged and mature democratic system or failure.

The consolidation process is crucial for the future of democracy since many countries have encountered or are experiencing problems in this phase. It will therefore be the main focus of this thesis where a detailed model of consolidation will be presented. Wolfgang Merkel's 'multi-level model', allows the assessment of the progress of consolidation by looking at four levels of consolidation separately (Merkel, 1996). These four levels deal with structural problems such as institutions and parties and in addition problems influenced by culture such as behaviour and attitudes. Assessing these four



dimensions, an evaluation can be made regarding the consolidation process, whether it is deepening, stalled or prolonged.

In order to examine the democratisation process in Korea in more detail, some meaningful variables have to be chosen. This thesis is analysing decentralisation and political participation. Korea before the begin of the democratisation process was characterised by a hierarchical, centralised system of government. Opportunities for political participation apart from voting were few. The increase and broadening of political participation and its effects on civil and political society will thus show how far citizens have accepted the democratic system has become among the citizens.

The other variable analysed in this thesis deals with the consolidation of democratic structures. During the democratisation process some efforts to distribute power away from the centre have been made with local administrations given more autonomy. The position of head of the local administration (governor, mayor, county-head) became subject to elections and thus accountable to the population. In addition, local assemblies were established, giving the population a greater opportunity to influence decisions. The implementation of local autonomy opened a whole new field for political activities and experiencing democracy, an incentive for the population to increase their participation. Here, the two variables, decentralisation and political participation, are interconnecting and allow to assess the process of democratic consolidation.

## I. Democracy

### i. Defining Democracy

The concept of democracy is over two thousand years old and can be traced back to classical Greek philosophers. Literally, democracy means 'the rule of the people' but there is no simple definition of democracy. It remains an ideal and a standard that has never been fulfilled in any country. Over the centuries the definition has changed considerably, especially after more countries had direct experiences with democratic government. Democracy not only is the subject of scholarly interest but also has been defined by 'the people challenging government in the streets and fields and by the power holders writing new laws and constitutional documents' (Markoff, 1996: xvi).

The history of modern democracy begins with the age of *Enlightenment* in the 18th century. The principles of the French Revolution of 1789 were *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité*. In short, *liberté* implies the freedom of choice for all citizens, *égalité* the political equality of the whole population and *fraternité* solidarity and social justice. The concept of *fraternité* led to the emergence of social democracy in Europe while in America individual choice had more importance. The shape of mature democracy varies in different countries, the USA, for example, is democratic and capitalist while Sweden can be described as a social-democracy. Over time, the definition of democracy proliferated and adjectives were added to describe a specific model. By the mid-1990s, Collier and Levitsky had detected a large number of sub-types of democracy and deplored the 'conceptual stretching' of the term (1997: 430-431).<sup>1</sup>

The theoretical discussion of the term will have to end here since in the analysis of democratisation a more practical definition of democracy needs to be used. Most scholars therefore describe what a democratic system should include. In the literature concerning democratisation, Robert Dahl's definition of democracy (or *polyarchy* as he calls it to distinguish his model from the democratic ideal) is most often used as a refer-

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<sup>1</sup> See Sørensen (1998); Parry, Moran (1994) for a more detailed discussion about the contestation of the concept of democracy.

ence (Dahl, 1971). Dahl's eight conditions for democracy cover three main dimensions: competition, participation and civil and political liberties (Sørensen, 1998: 12).<sup>2</sup>

**Competition** among individuals and organised groups for all positions of government power has to be secured. Juan Linz' definition of democracy falls under this dimension. He calls a country democratic

*'when it allows the free formulation of political preferences, through the use of basic freedoms of association, information, and communication, for the purpose of free competition between leaders to validate at regular intervals by nonviolent means their claim to rule'* (Linz, 1975: 182-183).

The next dimension of democracy is **political participation**, there should be provisions for regular and fair elections where no major (adult) group is excluded. This implies that all major participants respect the constitution and the rule of the law. Vertical accountability of the rulers by the subjects has to be vouchsafed for through elections. In addition, horizontal accountability of office holders has to be guaranteed through 'checks and balances' by an independent judiciary and the parliament.

In the last dimension **civil and political liberties** are covered: freedom of expression, freedom of press and the freedom to join organisations to ensure political competition and participation. A democratic regime should provide

*'a level of civil and political liberties - freedom of thought and expression, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and demonstration, freedom to form and join organisations, freedom from terror and unjustified imprisonment - secured through political equality under a rule of law, sufficient to ensure that citizens (acting individually and through various associations) can develop and advocate their views and interests and contest policies and offices vigorously and autonomously'* (Diamond, Linz, Lipset, 1995: 6-7).

Within this definition the procedural aspect of democracy is often stressed. The institutionalisation of civil liberties and democratic beliefs and attitudes is secondary. The *Freedom House* survey - a cross-country study regarding the 'status of freedom in a country' - distinguishes between political and civil liberties. The survey shows several democratising countries where the political freedom is ranked higher than civil liberties (Freedom

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<sup>2</sup> Dahl's eight criteria are: freedom to form and join organisations; freedom of expression; right to vote; eligibility for public office; right of political leaders to compete for support and votes; alternative sources of information; free and fair elections; institutions for making government policies dependent on votes and other expressions of preference (Dahl, 1971: 3).



House, 1999). Fred Zakaria has similar criteria for a distinction between liberal and illiberal democracies. Illiberal democracies allow elections and a limited amount of political activity but otherwise civil liberties are curtailed (Zakaria, 1997: 27). Questions regarding the role of civil society in the democratisation process will be addressed shortly.

Dahl's procedural definition is also criticised for its limitation to political aspects. Looking at the experiences in Eastern Europe, a notion of social and economic democracy is forwarded by Claus Offe (1994). His caveat is that in Eastern Europe 'the liberal-democratic regimes can only count on stabilisation, if democracy and capitalism are accompanied simultaneously by an extensive institutionalisation of social welfare' (ibid.: 93). This perception of democracy goes beyond Dahl's minimalist approach. The latter is nevertheless used by most studies of democratisation, most likely for pragmatic reasons. Comparative studies are very difficult using a broad definition of democracy. This study will also use a limited definition of democracy concerning social and economic issues. Behavioural aspects of the elites and the population in form of civil society will, however, be included.

## ii. Civil Society

Democracy requires an active citizenship willing to take part in social and political activities, individually and organised into groups and associations. This is also referred to as 'civil society'.<sup>3</sup> The concept of civil society as opposing the state was first introduced by G.W.F. Hegel in the early 19th century (Hegel, 1854). Hegel saw civil society as an extension of the family leading to the creation of a nation (ibid.: §181). Since then, the concept of civil society underwent several changes in usage (Alexander, 1998). Karl Marx 'decomposed the Hegelian civil society ... and reduced civil society virtually to the economic sphere' (Pelczynski, 1984: 2). Civil society has therefore been considered only as a historical category and thus synonymous with bourgeois society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*). Economic aspects have been stressed (Shils, 1991).<sup>4</sup> It is thus limited to a

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<sup>3</sup> The idea of civil society is discussed in depth in both sociology and political science. Melucci (1988: 246) and Barry (1991: 6) offer an overview of the discussion in the former and Shils (1991) in the latter field.

<sup>4</sup> This is also how the term is normally used in Korea. The idea of 'civil society' reached Korea via a Japanese translation (using Chinese characters). *Simin sahoe* means the *bourgeoisie* in



'particular historical period and a unique sequence of events' (Kim SH, 1996: 82). The applicability on events outside the historical context is negated. The role of civil movements in the democratisation process in Latin America and in Eastern Europe generated renewed interest in the concept in the late 1980s and led to a broader definition. If interpreted as an analytical category, civil society need not be identical with bourgeois society. The concept can therefore be applied to societies outside the specific historic context where the term 'civil society' was first used.

Civil society has been defined as an intermediate layer between state and family, between public and private life (Hegel, 1854: §182). It introduces a new level of interaction for the population outside the influence of the state. Within civil society, manifold individuals, movements and civic organisations from all classes attempt to constitute themselves in order to express themselves and advance their interests. These groups and movements include religious groups, neighbourhood associations, trade unions and entrepreneurial groups. Since the introduction of the term in the 19th century, the arena has been dominated by class-antagonism. In recent years, however, the number of groups advancing post-materialistic issues such as ecology and feminism increased world-wide. An active civil society uses the rights granted by the state for the realisation of their own goals, thereby practising and scrutinising these given rights. Associations in turn are able to mobilise citizens on behalf of public causes. The inclusion of all kinds of voluntary associations free from government influence is an important factor in democracy and contributes to the consolidation process and a flourishing democracy (Merkel, 1996; Rodan, 1996; Haggard, Kaufman, 1997).

One characteristic of civil society is its autonomy from the state. While the state (ideally) does not interfere in their activities, civil groups on the other hand vie to influence the state but not to take it over (Steinberg, 1997: 148). **Civil society** therefore needs to be distinguished from **political society** (Linz, Stepan, 1996a: 8). Within political society, groups contest the right to control and monitor public power and the state. Political parties and interest groups fall in this category. Although these are voluntary organisations of people sharing a common concern, they are founded with the intention

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the Marxist sense while *minjung sahoe* is the 'popular society', the working class (see also Steinberg, 1997: 163). The term is hardly ever used in a non-Marxist terminology making a broad discourse in Korea difficult.

of forming a government and thus becoming involved with the state. Civil and political society are nevertheless interdependent. Some civil movements such as anti-nuclear groups or the peace-movement are inclined to change the situation in a certain area without becoming part of the government.<sup>5</sup>

Linz and Stepan stress the distinctiveness of civil and political society as well as their complementarity (1996a: 8). In order to consolidate, a democratic system needs both categories. Under an authoritarian regime, the opposition is often weak or forbidden and civil society becomes the home of democratic resistance.<sup>6</sup> With a transition to a democratic regime, civil society can be demobilised when political groups are able to function legally. A strong civil society can hinder the development of a potent political society and thus endanger the consolidation of democracy. It has been cautioned that 'civil society is not coterminous with democracy' (Roniger, 1998: 70). The practices of political society - such as compromise within politics, intermediation between state and civil society and institutionalisation of parties - are often rejected by (former opposition) civil groups, yet necessary for a consolidated democracy (Linz, Stepan, 1996a: 10). 'Consolidation requires that habituation to the norms and procedures of democratic *conflict* regulation [can] be developed' (ibid., emphasis in original).

Political competition lies at the heart of the democratic process (Dahl, 1971: 6). Although democracy means the rule of the majority, there also has to be some sort of minority protection. A democratic government derives its power from its supporters as well as its dissenters (Rustow, 1970: 363). Democracy needs conflict and disagreement as much as it needs consensus. Seymour M. Lipset stressed this fact, stating that

*'a stable democracy requires the manifestation of conflict or cleavage so that there will be struggle over ruling positions, challenges to parties in power, and shifts of parties in office; but without consensus ... there can be no democracy'* (Lipset, 1983: 1).

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<sup>5</sup> The German *Green Party (Die Grünen)* is a very good example for this interdependence. Going back to the protest movements of the late 1960s, the party slowly began to participate in the administration, first at local level, then at higher levels, culminating in the participation in a federal coalition government in 1998. The party is still divided in two wings, a fundamental and a pragmatic bloc. The pragmatists are willing to rule within the system to achieve their goals while the fundamentalists complain about the loss of 'basic-democratic' and 'anti-establishment' policies after entering conventional politics.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Chile under General Pinochet (1973-1988) where civil society movements were controlled by leaders of political parties (Linz, Stepan, 1996a: 9).

While often the positive influence of a vibrant civil society is stressed, it has to be remembered that civil society can also bring down a regime 'when strong civil associations challenge government institutions to meet particular needs, aspirations and conceptions of the common good' (Foley, Edwards, 1996: 46). The Weimar Republic of Germany in the late 1920s for example was obstructed by a lively civil society in form of anti-democratic societies and parties (Berman, 1997; Wasser, 1988: 252).

The importance of civil society should nevertheless not be underestimated and the concept needs to be included in a definition of democracy. Beside civil society, competition, participation and civil and political liberties have already been described as the main principles of democracy. Once regimes following these principles were established in western (Anglo-Saxon) countries, they began to influence other countries. Here, in turn, attempts were made to attain these standards through the process of democratisation. This will be the topic of the next section.



## II. Democratisation

### i. Defining Democratisation

The above mentioned principles of democracy were developed in western (European) societies. They spread in 'waves of democratisation' around the globe (Huntington, 1991). The first wave included Anglo-Saxon countries and some smaller northern European states and lasted from 1828 for about one hundred years.<sup>7</sup> A short zenith was reached in the aftermath of the First World War, when Germany became an (ill-fated) democracy and the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian Empires split into several states that initially turned to democracy.

The second, short wave of democratisation lasted from the end of the Second World War in 1945 to the early 1960s. It included the newly independent states emerging in the de-colonisation process and also cases where allied occupation imposed democratic institutions (as in West Germany and Japan). The third wave of democratisation began with the 'carnation revolution' in Portugal in 1974 and spread to Spain and Central and Latin America. By the mid-1980s, it had extended to Asia, to countries such as the Philippines and South Korea. With the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union around 1990, the democratisation wave lapped back to European shores when democratisation processes were started in most Eastern European countries.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, political theory was mainly concerned about the conditions and prerequisites considered necessary for the emergence of a stable democracy (Lipset, 1959; Almond, Verba, 1963; Dahl, 1971). After the Second World War, democracy was introduced to countries with a non-western cultural background (such as India) leading to a reassessment of the prerequisites for a democracy. In the 1970s, the failure of second-wave-democracies became a main topic (the seminal work is *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* by Linz and Stepan [1978]). The reversal of some countries back to authoritarian regimes and unstable democracies (especially in Latin

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<sup>7</sup> The criteria for a country to be called 'democratic' were obviously different in the 19th century. The year 1828 was chosen as a starting point because in the 1828-presidential elections in the United States 'well over 50 percent of the proportion of white males' actually were allowed to vote and did so (Huntington, 1991: 16).

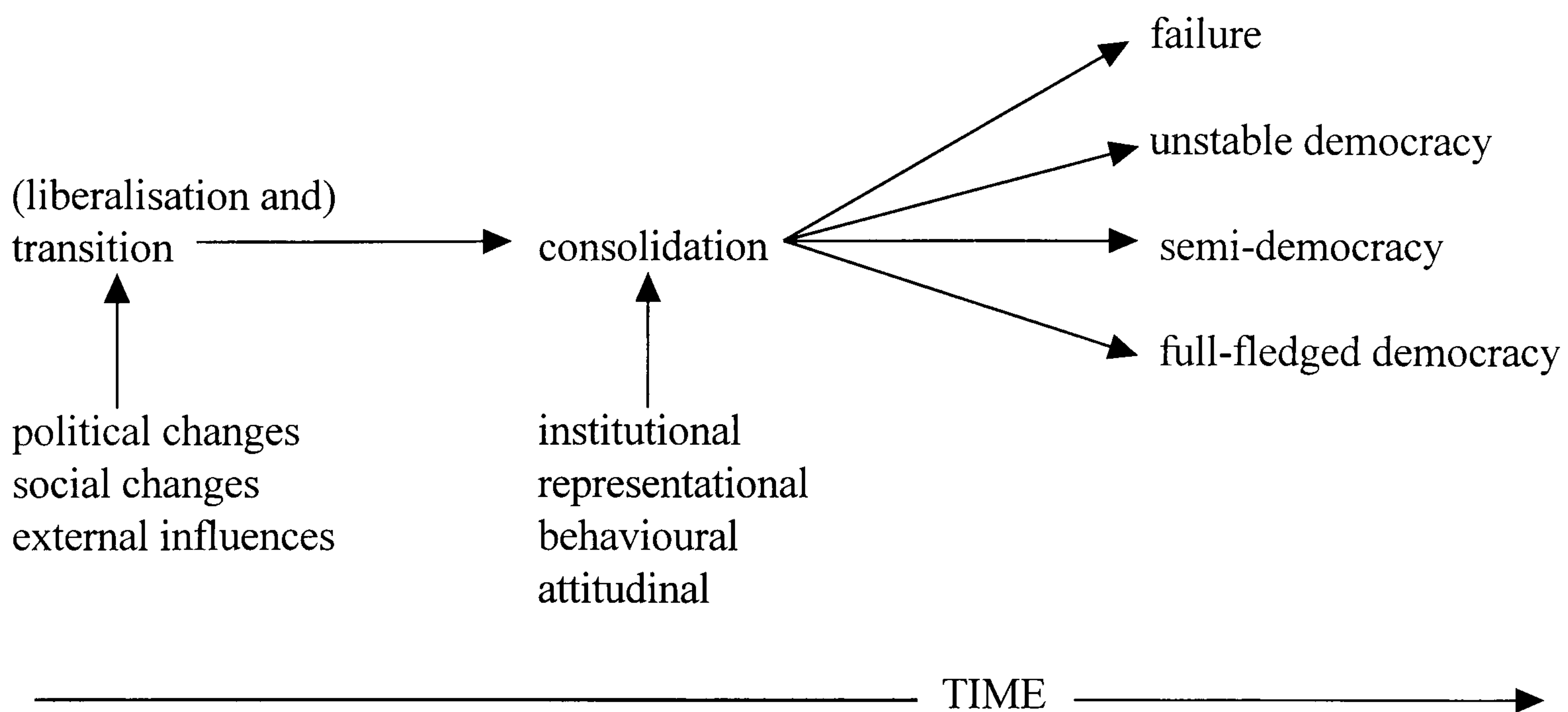


America) led to a shift of interest from the requirements for democracy to the democratisation process itself. With the 1980s, scholarly interest turned to the dynamics of democratic transition, the first stage of democratisation. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* by O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead is one of the most influential titles of the 1980s in that area (1986). This was followed by more analyses of the democratisation process (such as Di Palma, 1990; Huntington, 1991; Mainwaring, O'Donnell, Valenzuela, 1992). In the 1990s, it became apparent that consolidating and sustaining a democracy is a task as difficult as establishing a democratic system. Thus, attention turned to the consolidation process (Diamond, Linz, Lipset, 1995; Merkel, 1996).<sup>8</sup> With the stalling of the consolidation process and the reversal of the process in some countries, political scientists became more cautious and in the late 1990s, literature about *Democracy's Victory and Crisis* (to quote one title) prevailed (Hadenius, 1997; Burnell, 1998).

Democratisation is considered to be a complex historic process, consisting of several, often overlapping stages (Shin DC, 1994: 11; **Figure 1.1**). Following the logical order, the first stage of democratisation is the **transition** phase, i.e. the end of an authoritarian regime and establishment of a democratic administration. This stage is often preceded by a phase of liberalisation where the ruling regime eases control and allows some opposition activities. The transition stage is followed by a phase of **consolidation** of a democratic regime. The final stage of democratisation is a **mature democracy**, resulting in the effective functioning of that regime, a failed democracy or a stalled, prolonged process (Mainwaring, O'Donnell, Valenzuela, 1992: 1; Merkel, 1996). The division between transition and consolidation initially goes back to Rustow but only recently has this distinction gained more attention (1970: 338).

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<sup>8</sup> Gunther, Puhle, Diamandouros (1995) and Chung JM (1996) give a good overview of the consolidation debate.

**Figure 1.1:** Model of Democratisation in Three Steps:

There are three sets of factors facilitating democratisation, as presented in the model above. The first set concerns political changes within the country, the second social changes. The last group of factors consists of external influences (Huntington, 1991: 34-40). The most prominent domestic feature is the decline in the legitimacy of authoritarian rule, often simply due to the failure to solve economic and other problems (as in some Eastern European countries). Other authoritarian regimes lose legitimacy due to economic success that causes a shift away from simple material pursuits (e.g. Chile, Korea). The strengthening of civil society through industrialisation and urbanisation also accounts for the increase in the number of democratising countries (Shin DC, 1994: 23).

External factors also influence democratisation. The end of the Cold War with the ensuing demise of the Soviet Union was one factor encouraging democratisation. International organisations such as the *United Nations*, and some countries, like the USA, pushed for more democracy. The support of the *European Community* for the newly established governments in Spain, Portugal and Greece in the 1970s and 1980s played an important part in the course of events there.

Consolidation has to be achieved on different levels. On the institutional level the constitution, the division of powers and fair elections have to be consolidated. On a representational level parties and political interest groups need firm foundations. Those two levels are structural factors while the next two levels are influenced by cultural factors. On a behavioural level informal powerful actors like the military have to show a commitment to democracy. Finally, on the attitudinal level the population has to support

democracy broadly (see also Merkel, 1996 and 'Consolidation' later in this chapter). Kim Byung-Kook refers to the structures as 'hardware' and to attitudes and behaviour as 'software' (1997: 43). It is far easier to change the hardware than the software.

Results of the democratisation process can be a mature democracy or a complete failure and reversal. Currently, the cases of the 'third wave', however, are often just surviving as unstable or semi-democracies. The variations in outcome show that democratisation is not a linear process and can be reversed or stalled (Karl, Schmitter, 1991: 269). The complexity of the democratisation process makes it necessary to consider a time-frame since it can last several years, even a generation or more (Parry, Moran, 1994: 11). In Germany, for example, in 1953, only fifty per cent of the population thought that democracy was the best form of government for their country. By 1972, over ninety per cent did (Baker, Dalton, Hildebrandt, 1981: 26).

This thesis will study the democratisation process in Korea in some detail. Before looking at the progress and outcome of democratisation in this country, the theoretical implications of the transition and consolidation stages will be analysed in more detail.

## ii. Transition

The period between the end of an authoritarian regime and the establishment of a democratic regime is referred to as 'transition'. The duration and the course of this process depend on the main actors and also on the social and economic conditions in the respective country. The mode of transition is an important determinant of the consolidation of democracy, its form and stability (Schmitter, 1995: 563). According to these circumstances, several types and modes of transition have been established in the literature.<sup>9</sup> As with all models, the conditions are presumed to be ideal. Most countries fall somewhere in-between the categories.

The transition process is often preceded by a period of liberalisation where the government permits more open political competition, either influenced by external influences or by political and social changes. Liberalisation can create its own

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<sup>9</sup> Haggard and Kaufman give a good overview of the discussion (1997: 264).



momentum as, for instance, events in the Soviet Union show. Mikhail Gorbachev's reform of the Soviet Union ended in the demise of the state in 1991.

A main focus has been put on elites as key actors in the transition process. This goes back to Dankward Rustow (1970: 335; Haggard, Kaufman, 1997: 265). Elites have been defined as 'persons who are able, by virtue of their strategic positions in powerful organizations, to affect national political outcomes regularly and substantially' (Burton, Gunther, Higley, 1992: 8). Elites, however, do not stand aloof from the rest of society, they are anchored in mass attitudes, social basis and structural forces and act within the limitations given by this situation (Case, 1996: 440-441).

Generalising mainly from the experiences in Latin America and the Iberian peninsula, Donald Share comes up with four modes of transition, determined by elite consent and the time sequence of the transition (1987). For Share, the most common type of transition is a 'transition through rapture', where a revolution, a coup or the collapse of the regime lead to a new regime. The opposite mode of transition is a slow 'incremental democratisation', a gradual process with consent of the leaders. England in the 18th and 19th century is an example for this mode but in modern times this course is almost impossible to follow since people who are better informed by mass communication, demand faster changes.

Terry Lynn Karl also finds four modes of transition, defined by the strategy of actors and their strength in regard to each other (1990). One problem with this model is that during the transition process masses and elites are rarely clearly defined, especially when the masses are organised on a spontaneous basis. Elites are in a better position to direct the process of transition. This is expressed in the fact that in three of her four modes of transitions, elites have some say (Karl, 1990: 8).

A third model focusing on the influence of the elites on the democratisation process is the transition model of Samuel Huntington (1991). The aforementioned models by Share and Karl only examined cases of democratisation in Spain and Latin America while Huntington draws his samples from all over the world. He concentrates solely on the role of the leadership of the transition process and comes up with three modes of transition: by **transformation**, by **replacement** and by **transplacement** (Figure 1.2).

In the process of **transformation** the elites in power take the lead in bringing about democracy. The leaders have the power to move their countries toward democracy if they desire, since the opposition is (initially) in a weaker position (Huntington,

1991: 125). **Replacement** occurs when the opposition takes the lead and the authoritarian regime collapses or is overthrown. Here, the action comes from the opposition forces while the ruling group is opposed to any change. Replacements are often followed by another phase of struggle when the new rulers struggle among themselves over the new system of government (ibid.: 142).

**Figure 1.2:** Model of Transition to Democracy:

|                   |                                  |                |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>actors:</b>    | <b>leadership in transition:</b> |                |
|                   | one group                        | joint action   |
|                   | <b>government</b>                | transplacement |
| <b>opposition</b> |                                  |                |
|                   | transformation                   |                |
|                   | replacement                      |                |

Source: Huntington, 1991: 114.

**Transplacement** is described as the joint action of government and opposition groups with interaction between these two groups as an important criterion. The main characteristic of a **transplacement** is that the dominant groups in both government and opposition have to realise that they are not strong enough to decide the future political system on their own. Initially, the government considers that it is powerful enough to begin moving towards liberalisation. This, however, leads to the opposition demanding more. Their demonstrations and protest are countered by the government fearing it may lose power, leading in turn to more opposition activities. The cycle of protest and repression with no clear victory for either side can continue for some time. In this situation, it is uncertain how far each side would go: a brutal crack-down of the opposition may be a possibility as well as increased opposition activities leading to the downfall of the government. In this situation of uncertainty and equally balanced power, the government and the opposition realise that they both lose more through confrontation than through compromise and

thus start negotiations. These talks eventually result in elections and the establishment of a new government (ibid.: 152-153).<sup>10</sup>

The case study of this thesis, Korea, fits in the category of transition through **transplacement**. The model will be applied to the events in Korea in and around 1987 in the following chapter. At this point, this thesis will now turn to the consolidation process.

### iii. Consolidation

With the installation of a new government through free and fair elections, the period of democratic transition ends and the consolidation phase begins (Huntington, 1991: 35; Munck, 1994: 362). It has to be noted that consolidation is a much longer and more complex process with the end of the consolidation process far more difficult to define. It is difficult to identify 'the point in the democratisation process at which one can refer to the new system as a democracy' (Resler, Kanet, 1993: 25).

In the literature, a wide variance of definitions of consolidation can therefore be found. Gunther et al. regard a regime consolidated when all the politically relevant groups regard the central political institutions as the only legitimate area of competition for political power, referring mainly to political institutions and elite behaviour (1995: 7). Linz sees a democracy consolidated when no one challenges the legitimacy of the process of gaining power. In addition, there must also be a general acceptance by the major political actors and the public at large that a return to the old regime is undesirable and the democratic regime will last well into the future (Linz, 1990: 158; Linz, Stepan, 1996a: 6). Linz thus includes the pattern of behaviour in the general public and the political culture, in addition to structural consolidation. For Huntington, a system is consolidated when the government has changed to the opposition twice and the results of democratic procedures are accepted by all main actors when they acknowledge their own defeat (1991: 266). His 'two-turn-over test' makes it very difficult to find consolidated democracies. The United States had to wait over sixty years for a transfer of power and another

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<sup>10</sup> Another political scientist, Scott Mainwaring, arrived at a similar description of the transitional process. His labels for the three stages are different: 'transaction' stands for Huntington's **transformation**, 'breakdown' or 'collapse' for **replacement** and 'extrication' for **transplacement** (Mainwaring, 1992: 323).



twenty for the second, while Japan had the first change of power in government after four decades and still has not had a second turn-over (O'Donnell, 1996: 43).

For the purpose of this thesis, Huntington's maximalist definition will not be utilised but a model based on several levels of consolidation. Linz and Stepan defined democratic consolidation by combining behavioural, attitudinal, and constitutional dimensions (Linz, Stepan, 1996b: 15).

On the behavioural dimension, a democracy is consolidated when no significant group wants to overthrow the newly established government. The regime is therefore 'no longer dominated by the problem of how to avoid democratic break-down' (ibid.). Regarding attitudes, democratic patterns of behaviour should have become part of the consciousness of the population in order to call the regime consolidated. The majority of the population should be convinced that democratic procedures and institutions are the most appropriate way to govern (ibid.: 16). On the structural dimension, a democracy is consolidated when political conflict is resolved according to established rules and norms and no major players are outside the democratically controlled area. Old repressive institutions and laws need to be de-constructed and replaced by new organisations. The continuity of institutions such as the bureaucracy, agencies for 'National Security' and other networks limit the development of democracy.<sup>11</sup> In centralised systems, the decentralisation of decision-making is another procedure to ensure the consolidation of democracy.

Using this differentiation Wolfgang Merkel introduces a 'multi-level model' (*Mehrebenenmodell*, **Figure 1.3**) in order to be able to draw conclusions about the degree of regime consolidation.<sup>12</sup> The model attempts to explain the stabilisation of the system through the respective interdependencies between political institutions (structures), elite behaviour (actors) and the population's attitudinal patterns (Merkel, 1996: 38). In this model, the consolidation process begins at the same time for all levels but permits various points of completion.

The level of institutional consolidation includes the consolidation of the constitution and political institutions such as the legislative, executive, judiciary and the election

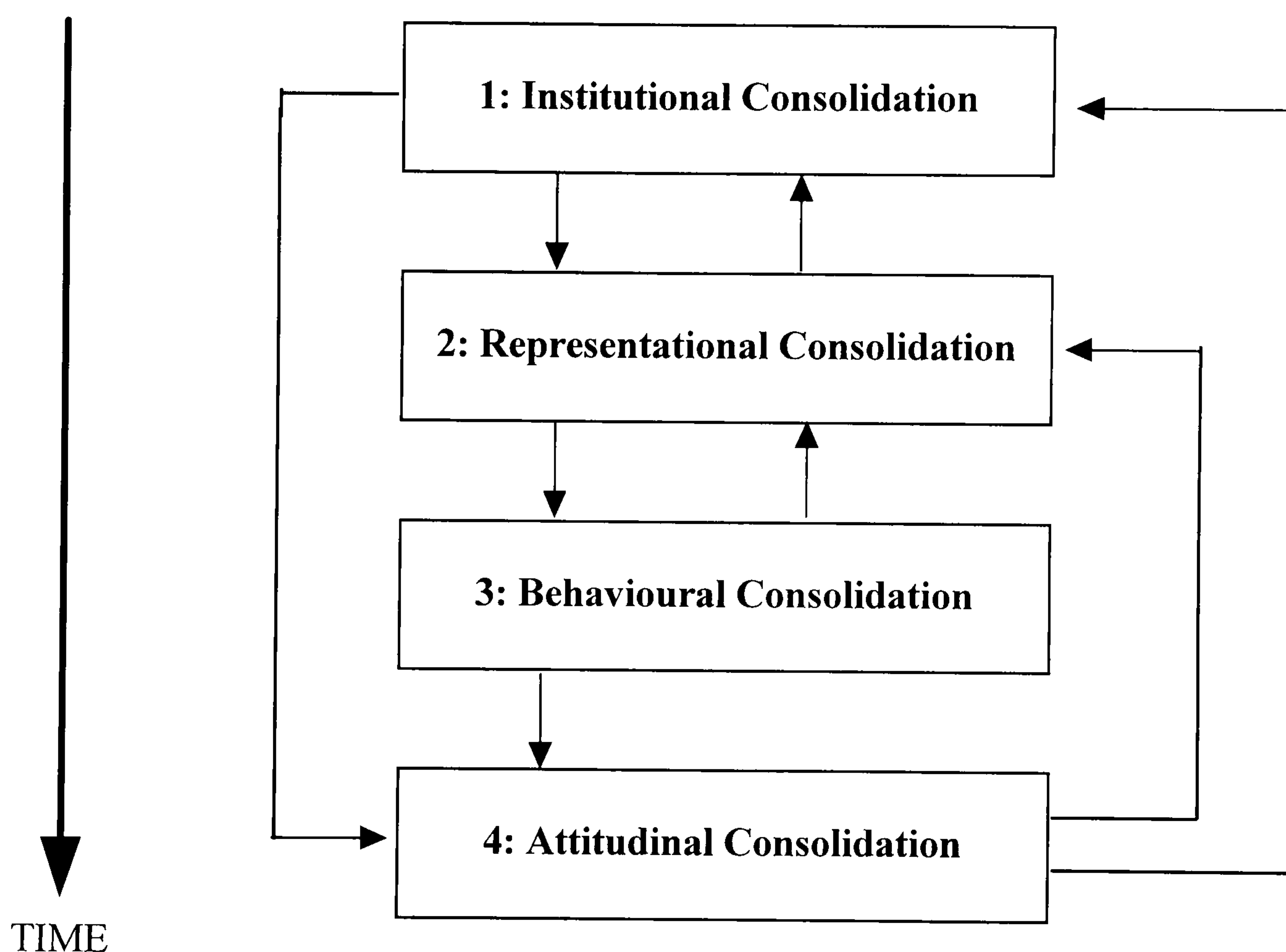
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<sup>11</sup> In former East Germany for example, 'old boy-networks' made large financial gains during the 'Abwicklung' when formerly state-owned assets were redistributed.

<sup>12</sup> This thesis refers to his publications in German, for an English version see Merkel (1998).

system. The second level is representational consolidation of political parties and interest groups, the political society. The third level, behavioural consolidation, is concerned with the elites as the military, landowners and businessmen. These powerful groups must relinquish the idea of changing the system outside of democratic institutions during this phase. The fourth level refers to the consolidation of democracy among the population as expressed in democratic belief and support for the new system.

**Figure 1.3:** (simplified) Multi-Level Model of Consolidation:



Source: Merkel, 1996: 38.

The four stages do not necessarily have to consolidate in this order. In most cases, the constitution is fixed during the transition phase and the development of the other stages follows. Once the political arena is structured by the constitution and the establishment of political institutions, these rules influence the second stage, the formation of political parties and interest groups. Those two stages and their configuration in turn influence the behavioural consolidation. Ideally, they reduce the incentives for the elites to resort to non-democratic means to achieve their interests. All this will influence the consolidation

of a civil society which in turn also influences the steps before. Only when all four levels are consolidated can a democracy be considered fully matured (Merkel, 1996: 39).

This model has two advantages in explaining the consolidation (or failure) of democratisation. Firstly, the inclusion of levels two and four moves away from purely structural explanations. The inclusion of cultural aspects is beneficial when looking at the democratisation process in countries outside the western hemisphere, such as African and Asian countries. Huntington and Karl, for example, do not mention factors that shape actors' preferences in their models of transition although elites and their actions are based in a particular social environment (Huntington, 1991; Karl, 1990). Secondly, this model allows for consolidation on different levels to happen at different phases, explaining prolonged consolidation. Again, this notion refers to Rustow's article dating back to 1970, where he stated that 'the genesis of democracy need not be temporally uniform: different factors may become crucial during successive phases' (1970: 346).

In the multi-level model, the institutional consolidation is concerned with the constitution and the establishment of political institutions. These are usually the outcome of the transition process. During this process, elite interests often play an important role. The question of the most appropriate system of government - presidential system versus a parliamentary system - and election system - plurality system versus proportional representation - is often plagued by the calculations of the negotiation partners of how they will gain the most, disregarding the existing social and institutional environment.<sup>13</sup>

Representational consolidation comprises two groups: political parties and interest groups. These two are intermediaries between society and decision-making bodies. The establishment of political parties is influenced by the electoral system established in the constitution. A proportional system supports smaller, but numerous parties while a plurality system favours the survival of fewer, larger parties (Linz, 1994: 34). Political parties should be able to develop sound bases of support among the population without severe restriction.

In addition to political parties, functional interests are represented by interest groups such as trade unions and industrial associations. Thus, an additional channel of

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<sup>13</sup> As happened in Korea, see Brady, Mo (1992); Kihl YW (1988b).



communication between society and government can be opened.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, a consensus about the conditions and the rules and code of political conduct must be shared. No group should be arbitrarily excluded or prevented from mobilising to express discontent. Linz' definition of consolidation incorporates only this level of behavioural consolidation:

*'none of the major political actors, parties, or organized interests, forces, or institutions consider that there is any alternative to democratic processes to gain power, and that no political institution or group has a claim to veto the actions of democratically elected decision makers ... To put it simply, democracy must be seen as the "only game in town"' (Linz, 1990: 158).*

Introducing these two levels of institutional and representational consolidation does not mean that a democracy is automatically consolidated. As Edward Friedman points out that the 'struggles to democratize society follow on the democratization of the state' (1994: 31). The rules have to be accepted by the elites and the masses alike, consolidated on the behavioural and attitudinal level.

For behavioural consolidation the elites of a country have to support and adhere to democratic rules. A return to the former regime must be unattractive to them. The actors, strategies and conditions that facilitate the transition process do not necessarily overlap with those that make democratic consolidation likely. In countries formerly ruled by the military, the position of the army during and after the democratisation process is highly relevant. Their return to the barracks should be permanent and unconditional and the armed forces be put under civilian command.<sup>15</sup> If the military remains politicised military coups are more likely. Turkey, for example, has seen renewed military coups in the last five decades, as did Argentina and Brazil.

Behavioural consolidation furthermore requires an administration that is committed to democratic rules. The position of the bureaucracy caused a problem in countries like Chile and Korea, where a significant number of former members of the armed forces were placed in the civilian administration. In countries like Brazil, the lack of commitment

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<sup>14</sup> Continental European theorists tend to include interest groups which are often omitted in Anglo-Saxon models. See Croissant, Merkel, Sandschneider (1998).

<sup>15</sup> A negative example is Chile where the outgoing President General Pinochet put military autonomy in the constitution and remained a powerful player in the background as leader of the armed forces.

to the constitution and laws of the administration leaves the state unable to protect the rights of its citizens against a small but influential part of the population.

Finally, there is the attitudinal consolidation of democracy and its core institutions among the general population. A democracy depends on citizens' growing and widespread support. An active civil society is one indicator for the acceptance of the current system. It is within the civil society that the population can develop democratic rules and attitudes such as tolerance, the respect for opposing points of view and a willingness to compromise.

The institutionalisation and habituation to a new set of rules in the political game indicate the success of consolidation. Together with the introduction of new rules, new values and new actors will appear. In this process the number of political and social actors should increase. Democratisation needs the 'reciprocal process of building democratic institutions and involving citizens in the functioning of democracy' (Resler, Kanet, 1993: 31). Greater involvement in politics will in turn lead to more pluralism, since

*'the greater the opportunities for expressing, organising and presenting political preferences, the greater the number and variety of preferences and interests that are likely to be represented in policy making'* (Dahl, 1971: 26).

In the euphoria of the transition stage, the potential of democracy tends to be overestimated. In the words of Huntington, 'democracies become consolidated when people learn that democracy is a solution to the problem of tyranny, but not necessarily to anything else' (1991: 263). The simultaneous introduction of democracy and market-economy in Eastern Europe, for example, has been problematic. Economic distress can have profound influence on the consolidation process. This reconvenes Offe's notion of social and economic democracy. Studying the transition process in Eastern Europe, Offe stresses the need for social security (Offe, 1994; Merkel, 1996: 34-35). The fall of the old Communist regimes was linked to their poor economic performance but under the newly established regimes the economic situation did not improve instantly. This led to a nostalgic feeling about the old regime and a revival of (now 'reformed') Communist parties. Social differences such as the extremely unfair distribution of wealth in many Latin American countries and the Philippines is one of the main obstacles for consolidation there. Politics remains an area for the few who can spare the time and money required for participation.



These examples show that the democratisation process can be obstructed and is by no means linear. There is an increase in the number of cases where parts of the democratisation process have been fulfilled while other parts have not, the so-called unstable or semi-democracies (Case, 1996).<sup>16</sup>

#### iv. Final Stages of Democratisation

The consolidation process can lead to several results. The most desirable outcome for supporters of democracy is a mature democracy (Spain in the 'third wave of democratisation' is an example). At the other end of the scale is a complete failure when a country reverts to authoritarian or military rule (such as Ukraine in the 'third wave'). In most cases, however, a promising start was made by introducing elections and other formal institutions but then signs of stagnation appeared. These cases can be termed unstable or semi-democracies. As examples below show, this situation can survive for a prolonged period of time and is not 'a mere way station on the way to further democracy' (Case, 1996: 464). A semi-democracy has been defined as 'one that manages to hold (more or less) inclusive, clean, and competitive elections but fails to uphold the political and civil freedoms essential for liberal democracy' (Schedler, 1998: 93). Hague et al. find that 'it is a stable method of governing poor and unequal societies' (1998: 28). Philippe Schmitter summed up the dilemma as follows:

*'Democracy in its most generic sense persists after the demise of autocracy, but never gets into a specific, reliable, and generally accepted set of rules. These countries are "doomed" to remain democratic almost by default. No serious alternative to democracy seems available'* (Schmitter, 1994: 60).

Another political scientist, Fareed Zakaria, finds a rise in illiberal democracies showing no sign of becoming liberal.<sup>17</sup> This is in line with the division of the already-mentioned *Freedom House-Review of Freedom* where a distinction is made between civil and political liberties. Over half of the countries lying 'between confirmed dictatorship and consoli-

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<sup>16</sup> Here, most 'democracies with adjectives' can be found (Collier, Levitsky, 1997). For reasons of simplicity and space as few labels as possible will be used in this thesis.

<sup>17</sup> For Zakaria, liberal implies 'a political system marked not only by free and fair elections, but also by the law, a separation of powers and the protection of basic liberties of speech, assembly, religion and property' (1997: 23).



dated democracy' achieve higher grades on the political side than they do on the civil liberty side (Zakaria, 1997: 23).

Argentina has been suggested as one case where the regime is struggling to prevent a relapse to authoritarianism (not always successfully) and move forwards to a consolidated system (Schmitter, 1994: 61). Another often quoted case is Singapore where regular elections are held but the opposition has no real chance of winning (Case, 1996). The current regime shows little inclination of extending democracy.

### **III. Elements of Democratisation**

In order to apply Merkel's multi-level model of consolidation on a Korean case study, the following two variables were chosen: political participation and decentralisation. The latter touches the structural level of institutional consolidation by looking at the relations between different levels of government and also the distribution of power. Political participation is concerned with the cultural level of behavioural and attitudinal consolidation. Robert Dahl stresses the important role of competition and political participation for democracy (1971: 4). He sees the latter as a way to achieve the inclusiveness of the population in the political process. It is therefore a helpful variable to assess the progress of democratic consolidation. The theoretical implications of these two variables will be analysed next.

#### **i. Political Participation**

Participation can be described as citizens' activities to take part in society. Social participation involves interaction with others in the widest sense. Large parts of the population also participate in the economy by producing goods or offering services. Lastly, political participation entails actions of private citizens intending to influence decisions or the composition of government. Political participation therefore is an essential element of political society. Under exceptional circumstances such as the ban or restriction of political society, political participation might move to civil society (see Footnote 6).

Political participation is influenced by several factors, such as education, gender, occupation, income and age (Kim CL, 1980b: 2). The higher the level of education, the more likely are participatory activities. A higher level of education often also implies an occupation held in higher regard with a higher income. Higher levels of education usually enhance the skills necessary for participation and lead to the acquisition of other resources facilitating participation, such as knowledge, verbal skills, money and social status. With rising education and income, more people become socially mobile and members of the middle class. This in turn is considered to encourage participation (Deutsch, 1961: 497-98; Hsiao, Koo, 1997: 312). Lower rates of participation among

women thus have been explained by lower levels of education. Younger people are more active and more likely to use non-conventional methods of participation (Kaase, 1995: 524).<sup>18</sup>

The literature offers many different definitions of the term 'political participation'. In a restricted scope it has been defined as

*'those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take'* (Verba, Nie, 1972: 2).

This explanation omits ceremonial and mobilised acts of participation, like mandatory voting. Non-conventional activities such as demonstrations are also excluded. This omission became obvious with the growing number of demonstrations and civil unrest in the western world in the late 1960s. A broader definition of participation established in the early 1970s includes therefore

*'any voluntary action, successful or unsuccessful, organized or unorganized, episodic or continuous, employing legitimate or illegitimate methods intended to influence the choice of public policies, the administration of public affairs, or the choice of political leaders at any level of government, local or national'* (Weiner, 1971: 164).

This definition, however, assumes voluntary participation and abandons mobilised actions that can be found frequently under authoritarian regimes (like Korea during the Fourth Republic [1972-1979]). Hence, an even broader definition is needed, as suggested by Milbrath and Goel:

*'Political participation may be defined as those actions of private citizens by which they seek to influence or to support government and politics'* (Milbrath, Goel, 1977: 2).

The inclusion of non-conventional activities in the definition of political participation was also a reaction to critique from feminist scholars. Since the late 1960s, they demanded a change in paradigms to extend the scope of 'politics' and to include female activities.<sup>19</sup> Traditional political science was criticised for reducing 'conventionally female concerns to marginal status' (Ackelsberg, Diamond, 1983: 505). The demand to include a 'wider

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<sup>18</sup> This is a very rough simplification. For more detailed information, see, for example, Kaase (1995); Kaase, Marsh (1979); Milbrath, Goel (1977); Verba, Nie (1972).

<sup>19</sup> See Norris for an overview of this debate (1991).



range of political awareness and activities, especially more ad-hoc and unstructured community association, voluntary organization and pressure groups where women are heavily committed' increased the awareness of the female half of the population (Norris, 1991: 56). When the political attitudes and activities of women were taken in consideration, a 'sex-based lack of identification with conventional politics' was found (Kaase, Marsh, 1979: 184). Furthermore, 'women generally declare a readiness to be mobilized in political protest activity while shunning the grey-suited male-dominated world of "politics"' (ibid.).

In the early 1980s, Kim Chong Lim combined the different definitions mentioned above and presented the following model (**Figure 1.4**).

**Figure 1.4:** Forms of Political Participation:

|             | Conventional   | Unconventional  |
|-------------|--|---|
| Voluntary   | <p><b>Type I:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• voting</li> <li>• discussing politics</li> <li>• joining political groups</li> <li>• campaign activities</li> </ul> | <p><b>Type II:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• illegitimate demonstrations</li> <li>• violent behaviours</li> <li>• revolutionary uprisings</li> </ul> |
| Involuntary | <p><b>Type III:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mandatory voting</li> <li>• mobilised activity</li> <li>• arranged rallies</li> </ul>                             | <p><b>Type IV:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fringe and peripheral elements in political mobs and destructive crowds</li> </ul>                      |

Source: Kim CL, 1980b: 5.

Kim distinguishes between voluntary and involuntary, conventional and unconventional participation. The narrow perception of political participation by Verba and Nie only covers Type I-activities such as voting and campaigning. Weiner's broader concept includes Type I and II but no involuntary actions. In addition to conventional political activity, (illegal) demonstrations and even revolutionary movements are embraced.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Kim uses the term 'illegitimate' to describe illegal demonstrations.



Finally, Milbrath and Goel's definition encompasses all four categories of participation. In a democratic system involuntary activities should prevail (although there are exceptions: in Australia and Greece, for example, voting is mandatory). Communist systems exhibited Type III-participation with mandatory elections (with "99.9 per cent voter turnout"), orchestrated rallies and mandatory participation in political groups. Type IV-activities such as political mobs are rare and usually found in revolutionary or unstable systems (the riots directed against Chinese businesses in Indonesia in 1998 are an example).

Kim's model thus combines activities found in democratic systems with those activities found in countries that are in the transition or consolidation stage. The expansion of the definition of political participation to include unconventional activities was brought about by developments in established democracies, such as the rise of demonstrations and civic movements. Involuntary participation was frequently found under authoritarian regimes. Unconventional activities played an important part in the transition process but for a democracy to consolidate an increase in conventional activities is necessary. With the institutionalisation of democracy the level of illegal and violent behaviour should decline and conventional activities should become more regular. Continuing demonstrations and violent behaviour can pose a threat to the consolidation process (e.g. Korea 1960-1961).

In the context of democratic consolidation, Type I-participation needs some more investigation. The voluntary participants can then be divided in two sets: the conventionally active and the passive-subject type.<sup>21</sup> The most common activity is vote in elections. The next categories in this group show increasing involvement: discussing politics, joining political groups and even campaign activities. They might also engage in wide range of activities including legal protest. The passive-subject type's activities are often confined to voting, by and large they are inclined to leave governing to officials. While participation in elections shows the quantitative aspect of participation, active participation is an expression of qualitative aspects. Another group of the population, naturally not included in the above classification are the inactive, people who reject politics or are indifferent and do not participate at all.

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<sup>21</sup>Almond and Verba created a classification of participatory types which will be presented in the context of Korea in Chapter Five (1963: 19-26).

In recapitulation, political participation can be described as the interaction between political authorities and citizens. The importance of participation for democracy lies in the enhancement of the legitimacy of democracy among citizens by directly experiencing it. It gives them the opportunity to exert some influence on the activities and decisions made in the socio-political arena. Participation can therefore be seen as a specific and therefore subjective way of describing the general, objective term 'democratisation'. Both aim at the extension of democratic structures in the society (Vilmar, 1986: 339). Another way of extending democratic structures is the decentralisation of power at subnational level.

## ii. Decentralisation

Most studies of democratisation focus on the national level. A system is not fully democratised, however, if there is no possibility of participation on the local level and all powers are concentrated in the central government. Georg Sørensen points out that (in theory) 'democracy at the level of national government in a country means that democracy also prevails at the local level' (1998: 21). This is supported by Dilys Hill who regards local democracy as part of national democracy and thus inseparable (1974: 24).

Practice, however, shows that democracy at the national level does not necessarily mean that democracy will be brought to all localities (Sørensen, 1998: 21). India, for example, holds relatively free elections at national level on a regular basis but at local level election outcomes are often influenced by local elites thus perpetuating traditional pattern of status and leadership (ibid.: 22).

In a much debated article published in 1953, Georges Langrod denied any interdependence between democracy and local government, since democracy is concerned with the nation-state, equality and uniformity and thus 'moves inevitably and by its very essence towards centralization' (Langrod, 1953: 28). Local government in contrast is parochial and concerned with local differences and separatism in his opinion. Since the publication of the article the notion of the centralising nature of democracy has been refuted by many scholars and the interdependence of democracy on all levels of government has been stressed (Hill, 1974: 24; Panter-Brick, 1953; Sharpe, 1970: 168).



In the discussion of decentralisation three concepts have to be differentiated: economical, administrative and political decentralisation. Economical decentralisation means a move from government intervention in the economy to the rule of market mechanisms. On the administrative level, the power of decision making is shifted from the central government to lower levels so that local authorities are actually able to engage in effective decision-making. This means not just the mere existence of local government as a provider of services but 'the direct control of local affairs by local bodies independent of the central government' (Kim IP, Chung ES, 1993: 272). Local autonomy can thus be described as a vertical division of power. Closer contact between government officials and local population allows both to obtain better information with which to formulate more realistic and effective plans for government projects and programmes. On the other hand, decentralisation can exist in the absence of local democracy when local institutions are not accountable to the citizenry through elections (CMLG, 1967: 68; Fesler, 1965: 545; Langrod, 1953: 25).

Political decentralisation has gained most interest in the literature. Local democratisation is symbolised by the opening of subnational governments to electoral competition and the introduction of a further level of elections to the system of a country. The notion of local autonomy as 'school of democracy' can be traced back to John Stuart Mill (1910). Mill saw in local self-government extra opportunities for political participation, both in electing and being elected to local office, for people who otherwise would have few chances to act politically (ibid.: 348). Local autonomy is also considered an important condition for the deepening of democracy and the development of civil society among scholars of democratisation (for example Diamond, 1994: 8). This, however, lacks evidence in established democracies like the USA and Britain where the voter turn-out in local elections is low (standing between thirty and forty per cent).

Another problem, especially for democratising countries, is the imbalance between the development of the bureaucracy and the development of political institutions which inhibits general political development (Riggs, 1974: 337). In the process of decentralisation, the central government has strong influence on the development of local autonomy. As Wolman observes,

*'a country which provides its subnational units with general competence powers permitting it to take actions not explicitly prohibited or assigned elsewhere (home rule) is, ipso facto, more decentralized than a country*

*which permits its subnational units to engage only in activities explicitly authorized by the national government (ultra vires)' (Wolman, 1990: 39).*

Subnational governments can serve as a power countervailing central authority. This depends on the degree of independence from the higher authority and legal arrangements that allow subnational units to check the national government.<sup>22</sup>

A further obstacle in the decentralisation process are financial arrangements. In order to guarantee some degree of autonomy subnational governments need some income of their own. Financial dependence on the central government hinders the development of local autonomy.

These caveats must be scrutinised when decentralisation in a country is analysed. The obstacles notwithstanding, decentralisation as part of democratisation must be accredited with positive effects. Dunleavy and O'Leary sum up these positive effects: local government

*'is important as a counterweight to the centre and fulfils a vital educational role. Voters, groups and politicians learn the arts of mutual adjustment within the locality in handling tractable issues, thereby facilitating the emergence of the same processes in the centre. Local government is more participatory, accessible and responsive than central government. Inasmuch as it has some financial and law-making autonomy, local government can satisfy more of the voters more of the time' (Dunleavy, O'Leary, 1987: 58).*

The increase of participatory opportunity through decentralisation makes it a useful variable to study democratic consolidation, especially in a country like Korea, traditionally highly centralised with few opportunities for participation.

Now that the theoretical background for the thesis has been clarified and models of transition and consolidation have been introduced, these models can be applied to the process of democratisation in Korea since the mid-1980s. Before doing so, however, the cultural and historical background of these events in Korea must be illuminated.

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<sup>22</sup> The German *Länder* are able to check the federal government in the *Bundesrat* while English local authorities have no influence on the central government.



## Chapter Two: The Cultural and Historical Context

The first chapter of this thesis looked at the theoretical background for the different stages comprising the democratisation process. Before the theoretical framework can be applied to Korea, the situation in this country needs to be examined. Korean political culture and its experiences with democracy have a strong influence on the progress of its democratisation.

The first part will analyse the political culture of Korea. 'Political culture' is a shorthand expression for a 'mind set' prevailing in a social and political group. It originates in the life-experiences of individuals and in the historical development of the political system. When the Republic of Korea was established in 1948, the constitution was modelled on that of the United States of America. In contrast to many other newly independent states, Korea had a long history as a homogeneous, unified country within stable geographic borders. The last royal dynasty, the *Choson*-dynasty, had ruled the country for over five hundred years establishing a firm centralised rule with strong Confucian influence and accompanying heavy emphasis on hierarchy, implicit in the Confucian doctrine (Robinson, 1991). Several features of Korea's political culture stem from this hierarchy such as familism, regionalism, factionalism, bureaucratism, and the inferior position of women. Thus, the introduction of a western-style constitution, with different structural and institutional traditions, created severe problems for the development of a democratic system in Korea.

The second part of this chapter deals with the historical context of democracy in Korea. The focus will be on political participation and local government, since a detailed analysis of the long history of Korea is beyond the scope of this study. Korea's experiences with democracy have always been overshadowed by external factors, first by Japanese encroachment and occupation and then by the division of the country into two different regimes. The continuing military confrontation at the de-militarised zone (DMZ) along the 38th parallel meant that security considerations became the major concern for both states, overshadowing any plans for economic and democratic development. Since the establishment in 1948, the Republic of Korea was mostly under authoritarian, central-



ised rule with very limited legal political participation and little local autonomy. The Second Republic (1960-61) was an exception but this experiment in democracy was overthrown by a military coup after a mere ten months of existence. For the following three decades, the country was ruled by two military regimes pursuing a rigorous but successful (at least, until the 1990s) economic development programme.

Industrialisation, urbanisation and the spread of education led to a more pluralist society. By the mid-1980s, the demand for greater democracy became so outspoken and wide-spread among the Korean population that the military regime of Chun Doo-hwan had little choice but to liberalise the system, leading, in turn, to further democratisation. This process will in turn be analysed in Chapter Three. First however, the next section explores the phenomenon of political culture.

# I. Political Culture

## i. Defining Political Culture

The last few years have seen an increase in studies about 'culture' in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology. Part of this discussion is now entering the fields of political science and history.<sup>1</sup> Culture can be described as the inertial values, customs and social relations of a group. It is not static but a dynamic process. The political culture, the way politics is performed and understood in a given country, is intertwined with the general culture. Not only is political culture influenced by the culture in general but changes in the political culture can lead to changes in the overall culture. The introduction of a democratic system, for example, will change the cultural structure in general by implying fairness.

In political science, the use of political culture as a concept is controversial and the usage of the term has changed over time. In the 1950s and 1960s, the prerequisites for democracy were studied intensively, the most famous and influential study being Almond and Verba's *Civic Culture* (1963). This analysis introduced British civic culture as a paradigm for a democratic society. This approach was later challenged by dependency theorists, Marxists and also by the rational choice school.

The emergence of democratic countries outside Europe and North America (such as India) raised doubts about the supremacy of British civic culture assumed by Almond and Verba. Dependency theorists see political culture only as an implicit background variable and fail to give 'systematic attention to how the changes in values, norms, and beliefs stimulate, reflect, and advance the transition' (Diamond, 1993: 4). Marxists understand political culture to be a part of the superstructure of society. Cultural norms and values are determined by the economic and social base in society. According to Marxist theory, the bias towards western values is shown by embedding political culture in the 'world economic system'. The rational choice school perceives political

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<sup>1</sup> See Dirks, Eley, Ortner (1994) for an overview of the debate in sociology and anthropology; Diamond (1993) in political science.

actors as short-run-interest maximisers and cultural factors are therefore criticised as non-rational.

This critique notwithstanding, political culture has some relevance in the process of democratisation, especially in the case of Korea. A broad definition of political culture will be used for the context of this thesis. The purpose is not to determine what 'a democratic culture' has to be like but to point out the factors in the political culture of a country that make the introduction of democracy problematic. In this sense, Diamond defined political culture as

*'a people's predominant beliefs, attitudes, values, ideals, sentiments, and evaluations about the political system of its country, and the role of the self in that system'* (Diamond, 1993: 7-8).

Furthermore, political culture provides knowledge about operating norms of the political system and guidelines for effective political behaviour (Elkins, Simeon, 1979: 128; McLean, 1996: 380). The beliefs, attitudes and values of a person originate in the socialisation of the individual. This applies as much to members of the elite as to ordinary citizens. Primary socialisation in the family, and secondary socialisation in school, peer groups and at the work place has a strong influence on one's perspectives. Geir Helgesen in his study of Korean political culture stresses the importance of moral education in Korean schools where students are still taught along traditional lines and Confucian values (1998: 143-190). Some of the effects of socialisation have an influence that may last longer than their direct causes. A good example for the endurance of socialisation effects is the strong anti-Japanese feeling in the Korean population. It is still persisting among Koreans of all ages even though Korea was liberated from the Japanese more than fifty years ago and the number of people who actually experienced the harsh colonial rule is diminishing (*Korea Times*, 11 August, 1994; own observation).

In order to understand the political system of a country, the cultural framework needs to be illuminated. In Asia, the concept of power and authority needs to be noted. Lucian Pye points out that

*'throughout Asia today the drama of politics is being played out by leaders and followers whose rules are largely prescribed by culturally determined concepts about the nature of power'* (Pye, 1985: vii).

In Asia, Pye finds power resting on the moral virtues of a leader and paternalistic authority, quite different from the European legalistic approach (ibid.).



It is also important to acknowledge that political culture is by no means static. Tradition and new concepts can exist simultaneously within one society and they have mutual implications. Cognitive, attitudinal and evaluative dimensions of political culture can change in response to regime performance, historical experience, and political socialisation. On the other hand, however, political culture can also influence regime performance and political socialisation.

In order to explain the continuity of traditional values and features, the Japanese scholar Maruyama Masao made a distinction between 'content' and 'container' (Bellah, 1971: 383). 'Container' describes the style in which social institutions are organised (hierarchical or egalitarian for example). The 'content' is the substance of cultural norms and values (democratic or authoritarian for instance). In the beginning the 'content' shapes the form, but once it is fixed, the 'container' moulds the 'content'.

In Korea, the 'content'- the Confucian ethos as way of ruling - has been replaced by a democratic system of government in 1948. The 'container', including political culture, however, is still as traditional as before and has great influence on the 'content'. This allows the co-existence of democratic form and authoritarian behaviour in Korean politics. In addition, tradition itself can be invented in the process. A constructed tradition may be 'established to serve the needs of the elite layers of society holding political power' (Helgesen, Li, 1996: 99). This re-invention of tradition, however, is not limited to the ruling class. Among Korean university students in the 1980s, the traditional farmers' dance and shamanistic rituals - nearly eradicated in the country-side - became an expression of dissent (Kim KO, 1994).<sup>2</sup> The increase of mobility, education and the spread of mass media especially in the second half of this century have intensified the interaction between 'content' and 'container', making both more flexible.

Another school of thought ignores the flexibility of political culture and detects an 'Asian-style democracy'. This is justified with the cultural differences between the western liberal concept of democracy on one side and Asian culture on the other (Hood, 1998; Huntington, 1996). The former Singaporean leader Lee Kuan Yew supports the idea of economic development with restricted political liberalisation. Malaysian Premier

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<sup>2</sup> By the late 1990s, groups performing 'farmers' dance' have become part of the revival of traditional culture. It is performed by various groups such as housewives (wearing high heels) in modern neighbourhoods (for instance the satellite city of Pundang) and old farmers at a Buddhist Festival (the latter had clearly acquired this skill recently; own observation).

Mahathir is his most ardent supporter claiming that 'Asian values are universal values. European values are European values' (*Economist*, 9 March, 1996: 81). According to Lee, people in the East rely on the family while Western people count on the government. Under a democratic regime, people will move away from the family as centre of life and a well-ordered society will thus fall prey to moral breakdown. Lee's examples for the negative effects of democracy are the prevalence of guns, drugs, violent crime, broken families and so on in democratic countries (meaning the USA). 'It is my business to tell people not to foist their system indiscriminately on societies in which it will not work' (Lee in Zakaria, 1994: 110). This belief is supported by other Asian politicians such as Mahathir and some western scholars. Samuel Huntington cautions that

*'a political culture that values highly hierarchical relationship and extreme deference to authority presumably is less fertile ground for democracy than one that does not'* (Huntington, 1984: 209).

Clark Neher finds the following characteristics in Asian-style democracy (1994). Clientelism comes out of a strong patron-client relationship, distorting equality among citizens. Problems are solved through personal intervention rather than by institutions (personalism). Authority is revered allowing a government to be set up by a dominant party. Furthermore, the division of power can be abused by the executive. A strong state means that civil society is subdued under the control of state. These characteristics named by Neher, however, can be found all over the world, across all regions and cultures. It is not culture per se that damages democracy but the actions of ruling elites.

This perspective of Asia's distinctive culture contradicting democratic values has also been criticised within Asia. Kim Dae-jung, then dissident and now president, countered that 'Asia has a rich heritage of democracy-orientated philosophies and tradition' (1994: 191). He also feels 'compelled to ask whether democracy has been given a chance in places like Singapore' (*ibid.*). The rulers claiming 'Asian values' use the concept as a vehicle for their own support, linking mass prosperity with authoritarian rule posing a danger for themselves when the economy fails (Neher, 1994: 959).<sup>3</sup>

Discarding the theory of Asian distinctiveness, this thesis will examine the introduction of democracy to Korean culture, regarding political culture as a factor that might

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<sup>3</sup> For example, in Indonesia where authoritarian ruler Suharto was forced to step down amid economic turmoil in 1998.



influence and hinder the process but not render it impossible. The process of transition in Korea has been influenced by the political interest and the cultural dispositions of individuals and groups that initiate, design and operate democratic institutions. The current political situation, events and the developments in Korea are difficult to understand without some knowledge of the history and the political culture of the country. The social structure and cultural norms, although changing fast, have not changed sufficiently to replace old and familiar ones, so the cultural norms have to be examined.

Several of the characteristics of Korean political culture can be traced back to the strong tradition of Confucianism and to the social aggregates and the dynamics of the political system of the last centuries.

### **i. Confucianism**

The term 'Confucianism' is obviously ambiguous. It may refer to the historical teachings of Confucius or, as in this thesis, the political and social traditions developed during the centuries following the Confucian canon and its interpretations (Ching, 1977: 7).<sup>4</sup> In varying degrees, these rules played an important part in the economic and political development of East Asian countries (China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam). Confucianism can thus be seen as a philosophical ideology, a set of social and ethical norms. An idealised past rather than a golden future depicts its goals and norms. Confucianism is characterised by the 'five principles of hierarchy', regarding the relations between ruler and subject, older and younger, father and son, man and woman and between friends. Only friends could be on a level of equality. The influence of the hierarchical order infiltrated the whole society, including the language. In Korean (as in Japanese), the status and age of the persons involved in an exchange determines the use of words and verb-forms, such as honorific endings.

The application of Confucianism on Korean society is responsible for features of Korea's political culture. Confucianism also has been made an excuse for elements of Korean society that are actually genuinely Korean, such as a centralised bureaucracy

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<sup>4</sup> Good general references for Confucianism are Fairbank, Reischauer (1989); Rozman (1991).

and factional politics (Robinson, 1991: 214). Tu Wei-ming calls the Confucian heritage in Korean society

*'a double-edged sword: it has contributed to family consciousness, educational excellence, social harmony, and political stability. Yet, it has also perpetuated authoritarian, factional, gerontocratic, and male-orientated ideas and practices'* (Tu, 1996: 188).

## Familism

Lucian Pye detects a strong group orientation all over Asia where the group (clan) is more important than the individual (Pye, 1985: 27). China, Japan and Korea all show this collectivism and orientation towards the group (Kondo, 1990; Pye, 1985: 194). It finds its expression even in the language: 'Korea' is always referred to as *uri nara*, meaning 'our country', the 'Korean language' as *uri mal*, 'our language'.<sup>5</sup> In Korea, the concept of unity is strengthened by the fact that the country enjoyed stable geographic borders for over 1200 years. Political unity is tied to cultural unity. This feeling of a 'national family' is one of the reasons for the constant demands for immediate reunification of North and South (Helgesen, 1998: 48).

The core of the Confucian system was the family and, implicit within that, the obedience of son to father. The father is regarded as the head of the family,

*'supposed to be an aloof, lonely authority figure, able to cope single-handedly with all his problems and demanding total adherence to his wishes'* (Pye, 1985: 67).

The family, not the individual was the centre of traditional society. Between family and country was very little space for other relationships, but over time, school and regional ties gained importance. State and society constituted an inseparable moral and ethical unity. Subjects were to consider themselves dutiful children, serving their ruler with filial piety. Rebelliousness to political authority was thus equal to rebelliousness to the father (Henderson, 1968: 25). Subjects were responsible to the ruler but this was in no way a reciprocal arrangement and the general population had no rights. Authority prevailed

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<sup>5</sup> For foreigners, 'Korean' is *hanguk-o*, not only a different word, but also one of foreign derivation. *Uri mal* is of Korean origin, while *hanguk-o* is of Chinese origin and can be written in Chinese characters.



over liberty. Since the state and the society merged, there was no room for autonomous social and political institutions (civil and political society). Furthermore, the

*'anthropocentric familism hindered the formation of class identities by denying the conflictive nature of human existence, and encouraging a sense of common blood, school and regional bonds between the individuals of different class backgrounds'* (Kim BK, 1997: 19).

Political parties based on class thus had little incentive to form.

In North Korea, familism allowed the establishment of the first hereditary Stalinist regime in the world, when 'the Great Leader' Kim Il-sung was succeeded by his son Kim Jong-il after his death in 1994.<sup>6</sup>

Confucianism also took the role that the church would play in a western state. Buddhism, the major religion at the beginning of the *Choson*-dynasty was overpowered in the fifteenth century, so that there was no state-church rivalry. The bureaucracy became the highest career and the centripetal forces of the state increased (Henderson, 1968: 25). Through the bureaucracy the will of the king was executed. The omnipotence of the bureaucracy made it vulnerable to corruption, a 'disease' still marring Korea.

In a country regarded as one 'national family', the ruler took the role of the ideal father and benevolent leader. The king ruled by virtue, not by laws. The Confucian system was the rule of man over the rule of law (Yoon DK, 1990: 20). 'Power was personalized and legitimacy linked to private behaviour' (Pye, 1985: 23). Thus, in traditional Korea, the monarch was held responsible for mishaps and catastrophes because he was considered to have lost his virtue. In the same fashion, the modern-day president is held responsible for the well-being of the country.<sup>7</sup> Every action is judged by moral standards, measured as good or bad (Helgesen, 1998: 179). Politicians express their (perceived) role as moral leaders by taking extreme measures such as hunger strikes to exert pressure on the government.<sup>8</sup> When these Confucian values are applied to a democratic

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<sup>6</sup> Yang offers a comprehensive study of the regime in North Korea (Yang SC, 1994a).

<sup>7</sup> President Kim Young-sam at the end of his tenure apologised: 'If there were mistakes and inadequacies, they were the result of oversight and a lack of virtue on my part' (*Korea Times*, 21 February, 1998). In the aftermath of the collapses of bridges, buildings, big companies and so on, Kim Young-sam apologised publicly three times in four years, although in some cases such as the collapse of a department store, he had no direct influence on events (Oh, 1999: 220).

<sup>8</sup> For example: Kim Young-sam in 1983 (Nam HC, 1993: 127), Kim Dae-jung in 1990 (Kihl YW, 1991: 67), Chun Doo-hwan in 1995 (Koh BC, 1996: 56), Lee Ki-taek, a former leader of the GNP (*Korea Times*, 21 September, 1998).

system, the result is passiveness instead of civic participation and citizens' reliance on moral guidance by governing elites. Participation is rejected 'because it disrupts order, harmony, and effective rule' (Shin, Chey, Kim, 1989: 222).

The hierarchical organisation implies the concentration of ultimate power in the hands of one leader, the king, or nowadays, the president. In Korean, this phenomenon is called *daekwon*, literally meaning 'great governing power' (Lee MW, 1995: 38).<sup>9</sup> The aim of political activity is to secure the ultimate power in the state, to decide about the fate of the country and its citizens. Lee Manwoo concluded that

*'the dynamics of Korean politics can be summoned up in one sentence: they are about acquiring daekwon, maintaining daekwon and challenging daekwon'* (Lee MW, 1995: 38).

Due to this feeling, most Koreans therefore favour a presidential system over a government controlled by parliament.<sup>10</sup> The concentration of power in one or a few persons, however, is contradictory to the western concept of 'checks and balances'. In present-day Korea, decisions are still very often delegated to the highest level; 'in Korea it is normally assumed that the state *should* intervene' (Steinberg, 1998: 83; emphasis in original). An extreme example is a 1981-law concerning housing where eighty per cent of the articles delegate authority to the President (Yoon DK, 1990: 56).<sup>11</sup>

This pattern of centralised power was perpetuated in the drive for economic development since the 1960s. Instead of promoting upward growth through entrepreneurship the government concentrated on a few, large conglomerates, known as the *Chaebol*. Some effects of this will be discussed later.

The king, as the ruler, was looking for 'the right way' for the country (Kim BK, 1995: 381). This also implies that there can only be one virtuous way and compromise is therefore impossible (Hahm CB, 1997: 73). The Korean concept of the country's homogeneity reinforces the notion of unity. Within Korea's borders there has never been a

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<sup>9</sup> Yang refers to this phenomenon as 'ultimate power cultism' (Yang SC, 1995: 24).

<sup>10</sup> In 1991, over seventy per cent of Koreans favoured a presidential system (*Jung-Ang Daily News*, 1992: 28).

<sup>11</sup> The call for an 'industrial design promotion committee headed by the nation's President' in order to promote industrial design within Korean companies is a further example (*Korea Times*, 26 May, 1998a).



significant minority, neither religious nor racial. The term '*han minjok*' means both 'Korean nation' and 'Korean race' with no clear differentiation between the two ideas. The very homogeneous society stresses unity and uniformity resulting in strict majority rule. Due to the perception of missing minorities 'less need existed for safe-guarding rights; and the development of liberal attitudes lacked stimulus' (Henderson, 1968: 19). Consequently, compromise is not seen as a sign of rationality and good will but as 'giving in' and a sign of weakness. Politics is performed as a zero-sum game where winning is more important than keeping the game going (Han SJ, 1989a: 285; Snyder, 1999: 416). There is no tradition of debate or deliberation in politics so political activity is likely to be disruptive and controversial.

The lack of pluralism leads to ideological rigidity and polarisation where no distinction between political opposition and political enemy is made. Given the political situation of the peninsula any opposition is quickly and easily branded as 'pro-Communist', 'pro-North Korean' and 'subversive' and thus subject to persecution under the National Security Law.<sup>12</sup> Tolerance and minority protection are an alien concept for Koreans, imported from the West.

Although Korea is considered to be a homogeneous society many discrepancies can be found in modern Korea. They are in 'almost every aspect of society - between city and country, between classes, in terms of social structure and perceptions, and between generations' (Lim HS, 1998: 9). In addition, there is the conflict between labour and management and between the different regions (Kim CL, 1988: 53). The aspect of regionalism will be addressed later in this chapter.

## **Bureaucratism**

The rise of bureaucratism is another result of the introduction of Confucianism to Korea. With the rise of the Confucian doctrine the only access to power in the *Choson*-dynasty was through the bureaucracy, centred around the court in the capital, Seoul. The bu-

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<sup>12</sup> In the late 1990s, some of the world's longest serving political prisoners were released after more than forty years in prison for support of North Korea (*Amnesty International*, 1999; Steinberg, 1996: 190; *Korea Times*, 22 February, 1999). Although Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung both demanded the abolition of the National Security Law when in opposition, they changed their mind once elected (Kim Dae-jung shows no signs of changing the law in late 1999).

reucracy consisted of civilian and military officials, the latter held in low regard. Although the dynasty originally came to power by a military coup the military administration was considered inferior to other branches of the bureaucracy. The civil service was ordered by rank, the highest being 'rank one', the lowest 'rank nine' (as it still is today).

Following the Chinese example there were entry exams for the civil bureaucracy. The exams were based on the Confucian classics that needed to be studied intensively and learnt by rote, demanding years of devoted learning and scholarship. Only members of the aristocracy, the *Yangban*, were able to undertake this task. Commoners were thus effectively excluded from access to power. In modern Korea, civil service exams have replaced the exams of the *Choson*-dynasty, still demanding intensive studies (students often take a year off for preparation). The modern education system stresses the passing on of information and memorising of texts and data (as did the old), thereby inhibiting individual originality.<sup>13</sup>

Good education is considered vital to raise status, so a large number of parents spare no effort to give their children the best education possible.<sup>14</sup> Today the degree of educational achievement still has an important influence on social status, irrespective of original social background (Lett, 1998: 159). In the late 1980s, a study confirmed that 'over 93 per cent of Korean parents expect their children to enter colleges or universities' (Kwak BS, 1991: 45). In the 1960s and 1970s, the Academies of the Armed Forces provided an opportunity for young, impoverished males to get (free) education, introducing a certain measure of social mobility in Korea's modern society. With the end of military governments this option lost its attraction (Steinberg, 1995: 381). After gaining equal access to education women also profit from the (Confucian) enthusiasm for education, expressed in ever rising numbers of female high school and college graduates. This does not translate into an increase in the female workforce in higher positions though. A common sentiment among Koreans is that 'Korean men get a good education in order to

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<sup>13</sup> The different systems of learning were clear in language education: Some material for studying German specifically said: 'in your own words - do not copy from the original text'. This did not stop my language exchange partner from doing so. In Korea, our Korean teachers always corrected us when western students gave 'a creative reply' using own words instead of echoing the text.

<sup>14</sup> In 1997, a family spent on average 444,000 Won (about US\$ 555 at the time) monthly on a child's education (*Korea Times*, 1 December, 1997).



get a good job, while Korean women get a good education to get a good husband' (Lett, 1998: 162; own observation).

### **Inferior Position of Women**

While the emphasis on education is a positive influence of Confucianism on Korean culture, the effects for the position of women in society were rather different. Under the Confucian canon, the position of women was largely defined in relation to male members of their family. It was incumbent on women to accord to the wishes and needs of others: their fathers when young, their husbands when married and their sons when widowed. Since a son also owed respect to his parents, the status of a woman increased with age. Women were denied any opportunity to participate in activities outside the home, unless compelled by economic necessity. Men were allowed to participate in activities outside the house while the inner space of the home was perceived as the right (and only) place for women. Only *Yangban*-families could afford to seclude their women completely from the age of six onwards. Lower class women often had to work outside to support the family (Hulbert, 1969: 366). The secluded, aristocratic woman, however, was the ideal strived for in Korean society. As Denise Lett writes:

*"the yangban worldview was so pervasive in Korea during the Choson dynasty that the society as a whole is characterized as having been "yangban" (Lett, 1998: 17).*

The patriarchal system and concubinage made the position of a woman in the family difficult. The role of women was limited to the management of the large extended family and producing a male heir so that the family line might continue unbroken. A husband could divorce his wife while a woman had no such rights.<sup>15</sup> A woman was never fully accepted as a member of her husband's family (a bride kept her family-name after marrying) and she was perceived as a potentially threatening outsider who had to be controlled by moral teaching. Most high-class women were able to read the Korean script *hangul* and had read 'The Three Principles of Conduct', a text book dealing with the proper treatment of parents, the rearing of a family and housekeeping (Hulbert, 1969:

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<sup>15</sup> The seven reasons for divorce were: disobedience to her parents-in-law, barrenness, adultery, jealousy, incurable disease, loquacity or gossiping and theft.

361-362). Very few women were taught Chinese characters, essential for further education. Women adhering to the principles of loyalty, chastity and faithfulness, often stipulating self-sacrifice, were presented as a model of the ideal woman (Deuchler, 1977b: 38). Confucian scholars were diligent to ensure that women were conforming to the ideal of an obedient daughter, wife and mother (being far less concerned about male behaviour). 'Veritable Records' were compiled to record acts by filial sons and daughters such as a daughter shielding 'her father with her own body to protect him from an attacking thief' (Chang YS, 1982: 29). Although only the wealthy could afford to strictly obey the rules, commoners were encouraged to observe the moral principles.<sup>16</sup>

There are two other features of Korean political culture, regionalism and factionalism, that are not a direct result of Confucian teachings but nevertheless important factors for the development of Korean politics.

## Regionalism

Embedded in Korean tradition is a strong notion of regionalism, highlighting that the concept of homogeneity is a social construct rather than reality. A Korean is formed by and responsible to mainly their blood relations (the family). In modern times with smaller, nuclear families, school and regional ties are becoming more important (Kim KO, 1998). Park Chung-hee's coup in 1961 was supported by the Eighth Class of the Military Academy, Chun Doo-hwan's in 1979-1980 by the Eleventh Class. The recent election results show how important the regional background of a candidate is for winning. Kim Byung-Kook refers to this relationship as concentric circles of self-identity (**Figure 2.1**).

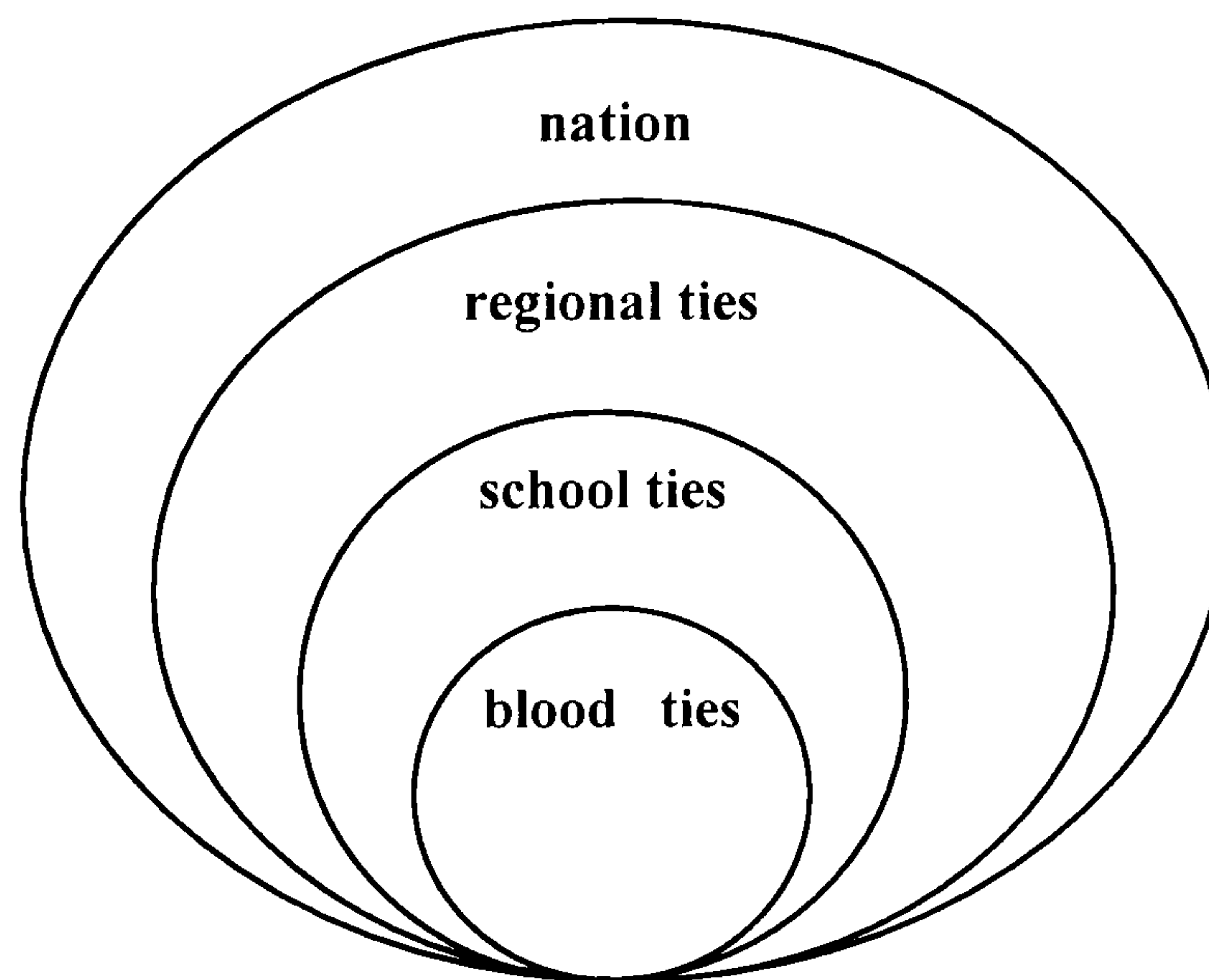
First and foremost, individuals identify themselves as a member of a family. On the next level, school ties play an important role. With greater mobility and rural-urban migration in the last fifty years, regional ties gained importance. The all encompassing sense of identity is that of belonging to the nation, 'being a Korean', defined by race, language and culture.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Commoners tried to abide to the code (Hulbert, 1969: 366). For practical reasons, however, the rules were often bent (Hahm PC, 1967: 118).

<sup>17</sup> The intertwining between the three creates dilemmas for Koreans outside the country who are still perceived to be Korean although they themselves might think otherwise. This problem becomes more apparent with the growing number of emigrants and second and third generation



**Figure 2.1:** Concentric Circles of Self-Identity:

Source: Kim Byung-Kook, 1997: 16.

This feeling of a 'national family' notwithstanding, there are old animosities against people from Cholla-do in the south-west of Korea.<sup>18</sup> The antagonism can be traced back as far as the era of the *Three Kingdoms* (57 BC to 668 AD) when the *Paekche*-kingdom arose in Cholla-do while the *Silla*-kingdom developed in south-eastern Kyongsang province. The resentment against people from Cholla has penetrated deeply into society (Lee NY, 1998: 630).<sup>19</sup> The grave effects of regionalism on politics, however, are a relatively new phenomenon in Korea, increasing since 1987 (Cho KS, 1998: 138).

The last four presidents, Park Chung-hee, Chun Doo-hwan, Roh Tae-woo and Kim Young-sam, all originated from Kyongsang province. Under the Park Chung-hee-regime, the antagonism was intensified through preferential treatment in the allocation of resources and personnel (Dong WM, 1995: 6). Top positions in government and ad-

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Koreans and adoptees who speak no Korean and consider themselves Americans, Canadians or other nationals.

<sup>18</sup> The south-western provinces of Cholla are also known as the *Honam*-region, the Kyongsang provinces in the south-east as *Yongnam*. Both are divided into a northern and southern part.

<sup>19</sup> In today's Korean television-dramas, for instance, the gangsters or 'bad guys' usually have a Cholla-accent. In the early 1990s, one of my friends had to wait for four years before her parents allowed her to marry a man from Cholla-do. Only when she was past the 'proper wedding age' (27) her parents gave up their resistance; see also Helgesen, 1998: 201.

ministration were preferably given to people from the south-east.<sup>20</sup> Large industrial complexes were created along a Seoul-Pusan axis, mainly in Kyongsang-do, the home of most *Chaebol*-founders (Yu EY, 1990: 33).<sup>21</sup> When the industrialisation phase was in full swing in the 1970s, the number of industrial workers in Cholla-do actually declined. In 1993, Cholla-do's share of the Korean GNP was only eleven per cent while Kyongsang-do constituted nearly thirty per cent. The uneven development led to the migration of people from Cholla to the industrial centres, mainly Seoul. While both regions had a similar-sized population in 1945, Cholla-do's population shrank to less than half of that of Kyongsang-do by the early 1990s (Yang SC, 1994b: 14).

Cholla province is renowned as a stronghold of the opposition, a trend intensified with the emergence of the 'regional son and hero' Kim Dae-jung in the early 1970s. These animosities were further increased by the harsh repression of the Kwangju-uprising by the Chun-regime in May 1980. Officially, there were about two hundred casualties while opposition groups claim around two thousand (Eckert et al., 1990: 375; Clark, 1988).

In the 1980s and 1990s, ideological differences between competing parties were minimal. Furthermore, with the introduction of democratic form of government, the 'common enemy' in the form of the authoritarian government as a uniting element for the opposition disappeared. Some politicians therefore played the regional card, deepening the animosities between the provinces.<sup>22</sup> The rapid urbanisation of Korea did not change the strong feeling of regional belonging. Voting by the inhabitants of the greater Seoul area, for instance, continues to reflect their regional origins (*Pundang Daily Newspaper*, 22 April, 1998). This shows that many Koreans 'still cling to traditional biases of regional based ties while neglecting to build a new civil society based on the public good and universal values' (Lim HS, 1998: 88).

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<sup>20</sup> In the last thirty years, their share was roughly forty per cent of the top administrative elite (Yang SC, 1994b: 15).

<sup>21</sup> Projects often showed personal preferences, the Seoul-Pusan highway, for example, runs through the respective home towns of Park and his wife (Clifford, 1994: 115).

<sup>22</sup> For a more detailed study of this phenomenon see Bae, Cotton (1993).



## Factionalism

Another factor of Korean political culture associated with the centralisation of power and personalism is factionalism. During the *Choson*-dynasty, the literati-officials at the court fought for power, prestige and economic privilege. In the homogeneous Korean society real issues were absent and artificial cleavages needed to be found. The initial grounds for an argument were often relatively trivial and minor, such as the different interpretation of Confucian ideals, but the fighting could go on for generations.<sup>23</sup> Factional fighting also marred the Korean Government-In-Exile during the Japanese occupation and continued in the Republic of Korea (Henderson, 1968: 86). Workers and students were united in the fight against the authoritarian regimes in the 1970s and 1980s but were also marred by factionalism that weakened their efficiency (Kim SK, 1997: 146).

Political parties in modern Korea are characterised by a short life-span and low numbers of followers in the population. Personalistic parties are founded mainly as a basis for a politician's ambition, based on personal and parochial loyalties. This is opposed by what can be termed 'anti-parties', meaning those parties founded as a vehicle of opposition against one particular politician (and his party). Usually these types of parties are not institutionalised and lack an agenda.<sup>24</sup> This in turn leads to low party identification by the population. Only one in three Koreans identified with a political party in 1995 (Shin DC, 1995: 33). Personalistic parties therefore have a negative influence on mass participation (Kim BK, 1995: 393).

This brief overview can only present the major elements of Korean political culture and the background for some lasting attitudes and behaviour. Their influence on the process of democratisation will be shown later. The democratisation process, however, is also influenced by historical events. The structure of government with its high degree of centralisation and the low rate of participation needs to be put in a historical context. The next part will therefore look at Korea's experiences with democracy during her long history.

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<sup>23</sup> Wagner (1974) has done a detailed study of the factional fighting in the early *Choson*-dynasty.

<sup>24</sup> One of many examples is the 'Unification National Party' (UNP, 1992-1993). The party was founded by tycoon-turned-politician Chung Ju-yung to support his bid for presidency in 1992. Following his defeat the party soon dissolved (Yang GH, 1995; Kang WT, 1998).

## II. Historical Overview

### i. Early History

The recorded history of Korea goes back to the era of the *Three Kingdoms* (about 57 BC to 668 AD), but the last dynasty, the *Choson* or *Yi*-dynasty, left the strongest impact on today's Korea. Under its predecessor, the *Koryo*-dynasty (918-1392), the main religion was Buddhism, coming from India via China. Buddhist temples had land holdings that were tax-exempt and were very influential as local and educational centres. During this dynasty, Korea was at the height of cultural developments, as illustrated by the high quality of china (*Celadon*) and the invention of book printing with moveable blocks over a century before their invention in Europe.

The *Choson*-dynasty came to existence through a military coup but military power soon declined. Korea fell victim to foreign invasions, from Japan (1592-1598) and central Asia (1636). Following these attacks, Korea secluded itself from all contact with the outside world until the late 19th century (with the exception of regular missions to Beijing and Tsushima).

At the time of the establishment of the new dynasty in 1392, its rulers adopted Neo-Confucianism as state-doctrine and also the administrative code of Ming-China (1368-1644). Confucian philosophy had already reached Korea much earlier and was long established as a framework for administration.<sup>25</sup> Neo-Confucianism was formulated in the twelfth century in China but Korea was very rigid in its implementation (de Bary, 1988: 60). The strict observation of the Neo-Confucian doctrine led to cultural stagnation and later to the decline of the country. Buddhism was radically suppressed and temples closed down, leading to cultural impoverishment of the country-side as Buddhist ceremonies had involved the whole population, including women. In contrast, Confucian philosophy and the government demanded elitist, limited participation of the few who could afford education, thus excluding a large part of the population.

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<sup>25</sup> A 'National Confucian Academy' was already established in 372 AD in *Koguryo*, one of the *Three Kingdoms*.



In the course of Korean history, the position of women in society gradually deteriorated. Under the *Silla*-dynasty (57 BC to 935 AD) several queens ruled the country. In the succeeding *Koryo*-dynasty, women became regents due to their position as mother of future kings. Women shared the right of inheritance with their male siblings. It was customary for a man to move into his wife's house and live with his parents-in-law (Deuchler, 1992: 66; Chang YS, 1982: 27). This custom was changed under the *Choson*-dynasty and the rigid separation of the sexes with a public sphere for men and a private sphere for women was implemented.

*Choson*-dynasty Korea was ruled by a land-based aristocracy centred around the court in the capital Seoul. The district magistrates were appointed by the central government and rotated every three to four years. In order to avoid the rise of local power, district magistrates were not allowed to serve in the area of their home. This prevented the development of a feudal system comparable to Japan or medieval Europe. The centralised bureaucratic structure (called 'vortex' by Henderson in 1968) maintained the social and economic power of *Yangban* but it could not be sustained when threatened from the outside in the late 19th century.

## ii. 19th Century

After a long period of seclusion, Korea, then known as the 'Hermit Kingdom', was opened by a treaty with the Japanese in 1876. Treaties with Western powers followed in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>26</sup> When Korea entered world politics, it did so not as an actor but rather as a pawn of major powers. This had a profound effect on Korean independence. Western countries were hoping for trade opportunities but soon lost interest finding that the little trade Korea had to offer was already in the hands of Chinese and Japanese. Britain was interested in preventing an advance of Russia to the eastern shores of Asia (a danger more perceived than substantiated; cf. Hoare, 1997). Otherwise, Korea only played a minor part in western considerations.

Although Christian missionaries had entered Korea since the 1850s, western ideas spread in the country only after the opening in 1876, mainly through Japanese

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<sup>26</sup> Deuchler (1977a) gives a good overview of this period.

translations. Protestant missionaries established schools and hospitals, open to all Koreans, not just the privileged. The first school for girls, later to develop into Ewha-University, was founded in 1886.<sup>27</sup>

Reacting to western imperialism and following the example of the western powers which forced Japan out of voluntary seclusion some twenty years before, Japan advanced on Korea. The Japanese encroachment on Korea heightened existing Korean enmity towards their neighbours, dating back to the Hideyoshi-invasion and ensuing destruction of the late sixteenth century. Japan's incentives for the opening of Korea changed with time and political realities (see Conroy, 1983). In the first years, there were considerations regarding security and national pride. Korea was perceived as 'the dagger thrust at the heart of Japan', her weakness towards encroachment as a threat to Japan's security (Peattie, 1984: 15). Around the turn of the century, political and administrative control became more important, leading eventually to economic mobilisation, especially after the expansion of the Japanese military into China in the 1930s.

Few members of the Korean elite realised that the country's independence was threatened by imperialism. Even fewer understood that Korea needed reforms in order to withstand foreign encroachment. The scant reform efforts undertaken fell victim to the factional fighting at the Korean court. The different factions regarded foreign influence as just another factor in their power-game. Loyalty to the faction proved stronger than loyalty to their country.

The late 19th century saw several peasant rebellions provoked by increasing taxation, foreign (Japanese) influence and bad harvests. They culminated in the *Tonghak*-rebellion.<sup>28</sup> The *Tonghak* ('Eastern Learning') started as a religious sect, blending eastern and western influences (like the Chinese *Taiping*). The main demands were for the abolition of slavery, punishment of corrupt officials, a cancellation of debts and the distribution of land for cultivation by owner-farmers. Their programme also included the emancipation of women and the imprisonment of those who collaborated with the Japanese.

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<sup>27</sup> Ewha Womans University (their spelling) in Seoul is currently the largest women's university in the world.

<sup>28</sup> For more information about the *Tonghak* and their programme refer to Weems (1964).



Although it was a peasant rebellion most of the leaders were politically disenfranchised and impoverished *Yangban*. In an ironic twist the *Tonghak's* fight against foreign influence gave the Japanese a pretext to further increase their advance into Korea. With the *Tonghak*-uprising as an excuse, both China and Japan sent more troops to Korea in 1894 and fighting soon erupted. Following the defeat of the Chinese troops in 1895, Japan gained yet more influence on the Korean peninsula.

### iii. Japanese Occupation

After defeating China in 1895 and Russia in 1905, Japan had won the fight for hegemony over the Korean peninsula. Korea became a Japanese protectorate in 1905 and was annexed in 1910. Japan had several reasons for the annexation and a set of goals for Korea, as mentioned before. An independent Korea was perceived to be a threat to Japanese and Far Eastern security. Furthermore, with growing economic capability in Japan, Korea was seen as a source of food for Japan's expanding population and as a market for Japanese goods. The ultimate goal in the later part of the occupation was the integration of Korea into Japan proper and the assimilation of the population (Henderson, 1968: 94; Duus, 1984).

The influx of Western ideas into Korea was limited to the Christian missionaries, mainly engaged in education. In addition, a very small number of Korean students were allowed to study at universities in Japan. There they were exposed to radical ideas including socialism. In Korea, the Japanese introduced a broadened (but limited) educational system that clearly discriminated against Koreans but nevertheless exposed the younger generation to new ideas (Eckert et al., 1990: 264).

During the entire period of occupation neither Koreans nor Japanese living in Korea were represented in the *Imperial Diet* in Tokyo (Chen, 1984: 269).<sup>29</sup> Korea was ruled by a governor-general who was directly responsible to the emperor, technically only until 1919 but de-facto until 1945.<sup>30</sup> The traditional agrarian society was preserved

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<sup>29</sup> Plans for general representation through elections in 1946 as part of the assimilation policy became obsolete with the Japanese surrender in 1945 (Eckert et al., 1990: 317).

<sup>30</sup> This was guaranteed by the high profile of the governor-generals: there were four ex- or future Prime Ministers, four ex-Ministers of War, one former Minister of the Navy and two Field Marshals (Kim HK, 1973: 44).

but a modern administration and economic system replaced the political structure of the *Choson*-dynasty. The Japanese colonial rule reinforced the tendency towards hierarchy and centralisation. The bureaucracy expanded rapidly from 10,000 officials in 1910 to over 87,000 in 1937 (Eckert et al., 1990: 257). In 1920, the Japanese introduced a local administrative system and advisory bodies were established throughout the country. These advisory bodies were popularly elected but the requirements for voting rights were so specific that the vast majority of Koreans was unable to fulfil them. Only through the bureaucracy could Koreans have some influence on policies in Korea, and even there, the chances were remote. Most of the higher clerical jobs went to Japanese.

#### iv. March First Independence Movement

The Japanese rule was not accepted without resistance. There was some armed resistance in the early years, easily suppressed by the Japanese. The most important expression of resistance was the *March First Independence Movement*. On 1 March, 1919, a 'Declaration of Independence' was read out in Seoul expressing the deep resentment of the Korean people towards Japanese rule. It quickly spread and led to country-wide non-violent demonstrations. The declaration marked the first time Koreans were united behind one idea: their nation and its independence.

Three facts are worth noting. Firstly, the declaration had been formulated by radical Korean students in Japan who were influenced by the doctrine of self-determination that was proclaimed by the American President Woodrow Wilson at the *Versailles Peace Conference* in 1919 (Eckert et al., 1990: 277; Kim, 1975: 265). Secondly, the declaration was signed by leaders of all important religious groups. Besides Christians, members of the indigenous *Ch'ondogyo* church that had grown out of the *Tonghak*-movement played an important role. Finally, a number of (young) women were involved in the demonstrations, a result of missionary education.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> For a study of the colonial period and the *March First Independence Movement* see Kim (1975) and Oh (1975). Of the 471 women arrested between March and December 1919, 309 were Christians (about sixty-five per cent). Many of the female activists of the First Republic took part in the demonstrations of 1919 (Oh, 1975: 135).



The Japanese suppression of the demonstrations was brutal and complete but following international criticism their oppression of the country eased for a while.<sup>32</sup> In the aftermath of the *March First Independence Movement*, most of the national leaders went into exile in China, Manchuria, the Soviet Union or the United States. In Shanghai, the 'Provisional Government-In-Exile' was established but soon fell victim to factional and ideological fighting. Modern-day presidents Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung nevertheless both claim to have inherited the legacy of the 1919 movement and to follow the spirit of the provisional government (*Korea Herald*, 3 February, 1998).

Following the Russian revolution of 1917, many nationalists were drawn to socialist and Communist ideas as a solution to the political and economical suppression of the masses. The leftist groups were supported by the Soviet Union and based in the Soviet Far East or in Manchuria where large Korean communities existed. The conservative and propertied nationalists and many Korean Christians, however, did not accept such radical programmes for social change. Their sole aim was the creation of a Korean state, they had no other political programme. Although most of the anti-Japanese leaders went into exile, part of the elite stayed in Korea and consented or collaborated with the Japanese (Eckert et al., 1990: 320).

The Japanese branded any opposition as 'Communist', therefore the Korean population equalled Communism with the anti-Japanese struggle. The sacrifices of leftist independence fighters, far more than their ideas, left a great impact on the Korean people. In order to contain nationalist and Communist groups, the Japanese tried to mobilise the population by sponsoring patriotic (centred on Japan) and anti-Communist groups (Cumings, 1981: 74).

The Japanese occupation had a lasting impact on Korean society that the nationalist conservative leaders were not aware of at the time.<sup>33</sup> The colonial power estab-

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<sup>32</sup> There were about 7,600 fatalities, over 45,000 wounded and nearly 50,000 arrests in the year following the 'Declaration' (Oh, 1975: 134).

<sup>33</sup> The number of Koreans in non-agricultural occupations increased by 250 per cent between 1911 and 1942. Nearly twenty per cent of the population lived in cities over 20,000 people by 1940. Roughly forty per cent of the children between seven and fourteen were receiving some kind of (mainly primary) education in 1942 (Dong WM, 1973: 169). The number of industrial workers increased from 46,000 in 1922 to 550,000 in 1944. In addition, there were about 183,000 mining workers in 1944. Altogether, over 2.5 million workers were drafted for labour in Korea, and over 720,000 were (forcefully) recruited to work in Japan. Others went to work in Manchuria and North China, either with the armed forces or in other capacities, including about 200,000 'comfort women' (Henderson, 1968: 96).

lished an efficient bureaucracy and, especially in the later years, started industrialisation in Korea. As part of the 'Greater Asian Co-Prosperity Zone' with Japan as centre, Korea became exposed to a larger market. The rapid urbanisation of the 1920s and 1930s expanded mobility (voluntarily and forced), and the increasing number of industrial workers in Korea, Japan and Manchuria led to the disintegration of the traditional social system. While working in mines and industry or serving in the Japanese army these Koreans gained a different view of their former life as tenants and small farmers and were sometimes introduced to socialist ideas. The forty years of Japanese rule thus engendered socio-economic, political and ideological cleavages that made national unity problematic.

### **v. Liberation in 1945**

The Japanese surrender of August 1945 opened a Pandora's Box of often uncontrollable activities in Korea.<sup>34</sup> These activities were mostly spontaneous and uncoordinated. Local people's committees were established in many Korean communities, often replacing Japanese authorities in peace-keeping responsibilities. A 'Preparatory Committee for Korean Independence' was established immediately after the Japanese surrendered and the 'People's Republic of Korea' was proclaimed in Seoul. The cabinet included distinguished nationalists of all political persuasions.

The United States was in complete ignorance about conditions in Korea and had no immediate plan of action (Ahn, Kil, Kim, 1988: 4). The United States Army came as an occupation force to a country perceived as unable to rule herself for the present while the Koreans perceived the Americans as liberators (Lowe, 1986: 15). The division of the country along the 38th parallel and the idea of an international trusteeship collided with the complete and immediate independence anticipated by the Koreans.

In the North, the Soviet Union took over and helped the Korean Communist Party to become the central organ of control. From late 1945 onwards, Kim Il-sung controlled both the Party and the northern half of the country until his death in 1994. In the South, in contrast, a chaotic situation prevailed. Leftist groups encouraged strikes by factory work-

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<sup>34</sup> Bruce Cumings in his comprehensive work about the origins of the Korean War gives a detailed description of the situation after liberation (Cumings, 1981 & 1990).



ers and farmers. Farmers who had been mobilised to work in Japanese factories or drafted to the army returned home to their villages where they used to till rented land, with an increased consciousness concerning the unjust land-distribution. The peasants wanted to overthrow an oppressive agricultural system that forced them to turn over more than half of their crops to the owner of the land. In addition, landowners were branded as Japanese collaborators by the peasants.

In order to control the country the American Military Government relied on educated, land-owning conservatives and suppressed left-wing groups. Disagreements about the election procedure for a national parliament and the suppression of leftist activities furthered the split between the North and the South and eventually led to the establishment of two different regimes.

## **vi. The Republic of Korea: Experiments with Democracy**

The constitution of the Republic of Korea of 1948 was more or less modelled on the constitution of the United States, but since its promulgation the country has seen six republics and nine distinct constitutional amendments. This shows the low respect for the constitution and the lack of institutionalisation of democracy in Korea.

### **The First Republic**

The First Republic of Korea was established in August 1948. The American Military Government favoured Syngman Rhee as President, an American-educated leading figure of the independence movement. Rhee's struggle for modernisation dated back to the late 19th century when he was arrested for involvement with the failed reform-movement of 1894-95. While his attitudes were modern in the late 19th century, they were hopelessly outdated in 1945. Rhee had spent most of his life in exile in Hawaii where he had little contact with other Koreans. His political behaviour was that of a *Choson*-dynasty monarch taking the view that the country was ruled by superior men and not by law. In the First Republic, institutions of democratic governance existed in the constitution but functioned ineffectively. Rhee - and the conservative elite supporting him - were not inclined to respect the constitution and the sudden expansion of mass participation.

Political parties were thus no more than a support group for a politician. Worth mentioning in the context of the First Republic is the 'Korea Women's National Party' founded in 1945 by a well-known independence fighter, Yim Yong-sin (1899-1977). Ms Yim, Minister of Commerce and Industry in Syngman Rhee's first cabinet and envoy to the United Nations in the late 1940s (due to her education in the United States and a close relationship with Rhee) was also a member of the National Assembly and stood for vice-presidency in 1952 and 1960 (Soh, 1993: 66). The party was disbanded with all other parties in 1961.

Syngman Rhee's presidency was overshadowed by the Korean War (1950-1953). Most of Korea was in ruins after the war. In the South, dependency on American aid was high. Furthermore, more than 1.2 million refugees from the North had to be accommodated. These fugitives tended to settle in the cities, thus increasing the urban population. The refugees were usually those who had to lose most under the regime of Kim Il-sung: landlords, intellectuals and Christians. Their ideological outlook therefore usually was conservative and anti-Communist, supporting Syngman Rhee's government.

Land reform was implemented in two stages in 1949 and 1952. The power of the landed gentry, the last hold of the *Yangban*, was thus destroyed. President Rhee's ignorance and indifference to economic matters left the country in chaos after the war. The economic stagnation and the blatant election rigging of the presidential elections in 1960 sparked large-scale student demonstrations. Following an attempt to suppress the protest leaving two hundred students dead, large-scale demonstrations commenced and Rhee was eventually forced to step down and go into exile.

## The Second Republic

In the months following the ousting of Syngman Rhee there was unprecedented political freedom. Under an interim government the constitution was amended to provide for a parliamentary government. New elections in July 1960 swept the opposition to power.<sup>35</sup> The Second Republic had to face many difficulties, including economic distress and

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<sup>35</sup> See Han SJ (1974) for a detailed analysis of the Second Republic and its downfall.



social unrest.<sup>36</sup> There was political fighting between two factions of the ruling Democratic Party and Premier Chang Myon was susceptible to pressure from others (the average tenure of cabinet ministers was two months). The turmoil and lack of law and order created a feeling of political anarchy in a population accustomed to strong leaders (Lee JR, 1992: 212; MacDonald, 1988: 54). Students educated under the more liberal system introduced after liberation were far more idealistic in comparison to their elders. They even started discussions about reunification with the North.

The turbulent street demonstrations continued until the following spring when, on May 16, 1961, a group of military officers under the leadership of General Park Chung-hee and Colonel Kim Jong-pil staged a coup and ousted Premier Chang Myon and his government. The coup-leaders accused 'the civilian leadership of being corrupt' and incapable of defending the country from threats from within the country and the outside (Han SJ, 1989a: 273). The military perceived the continuing student activism and demonstrations as a risk to the country's stability. In addition, the three consecutive Ministers of Defence in the Chang Myon-government had no military experience (Han SJ, 1974: 11). Considering the outside threat in the form of North Korea, at that time militarily and economically more advanced, the coup leaders saw enough justification for their actions (Amsden, 1989: 40). Although the coup was unconstitutional, it was generally accepted by the people,

*'not with enthusiasm, but with something like relief. Restoration of strong control, after the confusion of the experiment in parliamentary democracy, was a return to Korean political normalcy'* (MacDonald, 1988: 54).

### **The Third and Fourth Republic**

After the first successful military coup in Korean history since 1392, the country was ruled by generals for the next twenty-seven years. In 1963, Park won the presidential elections as a civilian. He surrounded himself with his classmates from the Eighth Class of the Military Academy. Park's only chance to legitimise his rule was through economic success. He crafted the 'Korean miracle', annual growth rates of about ten per cent

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<sup>36</sup> There was 'an average of 7.3 demonstrations *per day* during the Second Republic, with an average of 3,876 individuals demonstrating in the streets of Seoul each day' (Kim, 1975: 209, emphasis in original).

through state-directed development (based in part on the development strategies used by the Japanese in Manchuria in the 1930s; Clifford, 1994: 53). Park established the 'Economic Planning Board' (EPB) to plan and supervise economic development, and created the 'Korean Central Intelligence Agency' (KCIA) to control dissent in the country. Park Chung-hee discouraged Confucian rituals such as excessive wedding ceremonies but used the Confucian notion of treating the nation as one family (Kim CL, Pai ST, 1981: 113; Kim KO, 1996a: 218).

Although Park initially had promised to fight corruption it was rampant under his rule. The regime was not only financially but also politically corrupt. Administrative positions were given to those favouring Park, especially to those with a military background or from Park's home province of Kyongsang. Although the opposition faced a common enemy in the form of the authoritarian regime, it was in chronic disunity and thus ineffective.

In the early 1970s, Park tightened his regime further. With the new, so-called *Yusin* ('revitalisation') Constitution, the Fourth Republic (1972-1979) was established and Park effectively became president for life.<sup>37</sup> He had sweeping powers to rule by decree and used them aggressively to control political activity. His rule was characterised by a negative control of all anti-government activities rather than a positive control of the population (Han SJ, 1989a: 272). The catch-all National Security Law made it unlawful to criticise the government or the president. Mobilised participation in large outdoor campaigns was - apart from voting - the only participatory activity allowed. Support of the government was strongest in rural areas, among women, the older generation and the lower educated (Kim CL, 1980c: 131). The opposition was based in the cities and in Cholla-do.

Resistance against the regime was mainly confined to students and workers and became increasingly radical (the *Minjung*-movement). Christian churches were some of the few institutions outside the reach and surveillance of state and therefore developed into centres of resistance. Protestant groups like the 'Urban Industrial Mission' in Pusan and the 'Young Catholic Workers' tackled problems of the workers (Kim SK, 1997: 101). The Catholic *Myongdong*-Cathedral in the heart of Seoul became a centre for demon-

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<sup>37</sup> Sohn HK (1989) provides a detailed study of the Fourth Republic and dissidence against the regime.



strations. In early 1980s, radical students provided with Marxist theory went to factories to organise labour. This radicalisation meant loss of influence for liberal labour rights groups like the 'Urban Industrial Mission' (Cumings, 1997: 391).<sup>38</sup>

In October 1979, President Park was assassinated by the head of the KCIA. This was followed by a period of relative political freedom, the so-called 'Seoul Spring', giving hopes for democratisation. Behind the scenes, however, a group of military officers under the leadership of General Chun Doo-hwan was preparing to overthrow the interim government. In two stages, in December 1979 and May 1980, they seized control. In the south-western city of Kwangju, the capital of Cholla-namdo and the home of leading dissident Kim Dae-jung, huge demonstrations were staged in May 1980 and eventually brutally suppressed by special forces of the Korean Army. The massacre among the demonstrators officially cost two hundred lives but the opposition claims that there were about two thousand fatalities (Eckert et al., 1990: 375; Clark, 1988). The brutal operation 'within weeks earned Chun a reputation as an oppressor which it took the late president Park Chung Hee more than 10 years to acquire' (Richardson, 1980: 10). Kim Dae-jung was put on trial for instigating the uprising (although in police custody at the time) and sentenced to death. Only intervention by the USA and other countries saved Kim's life. The events in Kwangju overshadowed Chun's tenure which (seemingly) came to a conclusion in August 1996 when Chun was sentenced to death, a sentence later reduced to life imprisonment. In December 1997, however, he was pardoned by President Kim Young-sam with the support of President-elect Kim Dae-jung and even attended the inauguration of Kim in February 1998.

### **The Fifth Republic: Socio-economic Changes**

In deference to international and domestic opinion General Chun introduced a new constitution<sup>39</sup>. Furthermore, he pledged to step down after the end of his seven-year-tenure and to ensure a peaceful transfer of power. Chun lifted the strict curfew law

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<sup>38</sup> One example is the 'Catholic Women's Center' in Masan Free Trade Zone where 'Communist ideology and labor law' was taught in 1986 (Kim SK, 1997: xii).

<sup>39</sup> In October 1980, the new constitution was approved in a referendum with an attendance rate of 95.5 per cent. The new constitution was endorsed by 91.6 per cent.

(midnight to 4 am) implemented since the Korean War and restrictions on overseas travel were eased. When the end of his tenure approached Chun was reluctant to keep his promise but under public pressure he eventually gave way to democratic elections, as will be described in the next chapter in more detail.

At this point, the major actors in the transition and consolidation process in the 1980s and 1990s need to be introduced. Chun Doo-hwan chose Roh Tae-woo as his successor. Roh was a class mate of Chun in the Eleventh Class of the Military Academy and a main actor in the coup of 1979-1980. Moreover, Roh hailed from the same region as Chun, northern Kyongsang-do. Their opponents were 'the three Kims', Kim Dae-jung, Kim Jong-pil and Kim Young-sam (the 1980s and 1990s are often called 'the era of the three Kims').

Kim Young-sam has been active in politics since 1954 when he was first elected to the National Assembly. By the late 1960s, he had emerged as the leader of the opposition, only contested by Kim Dae-jung. Kim Young-sam was very popular in his native Kyongsang province and with middle and upper middle class, white-collar workers and intellectuals. He had the image of a 'middle-of-the-roader' (Nam HC, 1993).

Kim Dae-jung is the most famous among Korea's dissidents. Politically active since the early 1950s, he was Park Chung-hee's challenger in the presidential elections of 1971 (after beating Kim Young-sam in the nomination race of the opposition party). Defeated by a narrow margin, Kim was harassed by the Park-regime, abducted by the KCIA from Tokyo and nearly killed in 1973 (Clifford, 1994: 87). In 1980, his life was in danger again after being sentenced to death by Chun Doo-hwan for instigating the Kwangju-uprising but following international pressure he was acquitted. Kim Dae-jung's power base was in south-western Cholla province. Since he was considered to be more radical and populist, he was largely supported by the lower-income sector and blue collar workers (Okonogi, 1993: 14).

Kim Jong-pil is the third-most prominent politician of the 1980s and 1990s in Korea. He began his career in the armed forces and was a co-conspirator in the 1961 coup of his uncle-by-marriage, Park Chung-hee. He became Prime Minister and later head of the KCIA but in the 1970s fell out with Park.<sup>40</sup> By 1980, he had established

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<sup>40</sup> The surveillance and suppression of dissident politicians such as his future political partners (and opponents) Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung was part of the KCIA's responsibility.



himself as one of the opposition leaders with a solid power base in his home provinces of Ch'ungch'ong (in central Korea) and among supporters of the late Park Chung-hee (*Korea Times*, 14 July, 1999). All three Kims competed in the 1987 presidential elections, and Kim Young-sam beat Kim Dae-jung in 1992. In 1997, Kim Jong-pil and Kim Dae-jung were still in the race for presidency and won by joining forces. Kim Young-sam contemplated a political come-back in Summer 1999.

### **Socio-economic Changes in the Fifth Republic**

The Fifth Republic not only saw the beginning of the transition process but also huge changes in the social and economic conditions of Korea. In the 1980s, the results of economic development could be felt by most of the population. Korea had become an urban nation with many people leaving the dire economic situation in the country-side for the growing cities. In response, the *Saemaul Undong* ('New Village Movement') was initiated in the 1970s to raise the living standard in the provinces. By the mid-1980s, the failure to stop urban migration and the decline of rural Korea became apparent. Student activism and dissent became more outspoken, radical and violent in the 1980s and early 1990s and then eased. The situation of women in general improved. The following will explore these processes in some detail.

### **Urbanisation**

In the 1980s, the social transformation that had taken place in Korea was showing impact on the political arena. Park and Chun had justified their authoritarian rule with the need for national security and economic development but in the 1980s these justifications faded. The weakness of the North Korean economy became apparent while South Korea rapidly closed the gap to industrialised countries. The standard of living had risen considerably from the ruins of the Korean War.

The Republic of Korea has changed from an agrarian society to a highly industrialised and urbanised country within less than a century. Industrialisation was started by the Japanese but really took off under Park Chung-hee's regime in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>41</sup> The phenomenal rise in production was achieved at the expense of the work-

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<sup>41</sup> For an overview of Korea's economic development see Amsden (1989); Song BN (1990).

ers. The overall income and standard of living nevertheless increased greatly for the whole population. The economic development led to social pluralism which in turn caused more political awareness and in the long run political pluralism. Since the late 1970s, a greater part of the population expressed more concern about the deficit of democracy in Korea and pressured the government for changes. Traditionally, students and workers were the hotbed of opposition but gradually in the 1980s, new pressure groups such as environmental groups developed (Dalton, Cotton, 1996: 273). Another expression of the dissatisfaction with the conditions in Korea was the number of emigrants. Between 1985 and 1987, 35,000 Koreans left annually for the USA, the main destination for emigration (Cumings, 1997: 442).

Since the Korean War, Korean cities had become industrial and educational centres, attracting especially the younger generation. Urbanisation led to a decrease in the size of the family since there is not enough space for families consisting of several generations in small urban flats. The nuclear family with a decreasing number of children has become the rule. Despite these changes, however, a strong feeling for the family still persists (Chu et al., 1993: 69). On occasions such the holidays of New Year (*Solnal*) and Thanksgiving (*Chusok*) many Koreans return to their place of origin to meet with the rest of the family and perform ancestor worship. The nuclearisation of the family has implications for the social security system: traditionally, parents relied on the eldest son and his family to live with them and support them in old age.<sup>42</sup> With children living in small flats, often in cities far away from their parents, a social security system is needed to take over those responsibilities.

With growing urban migration, the countryside fell into decline. In the early 1970s, the *Saemaul Undong* was therefore initiated and continued well into the 1980s.

### ***Saemaul Undong* - The New Village Movement**

In the early 1970s, the gap between the agricultural and the industrial sector had become very wide and in order to improve living conditions in the rural areas the *Saemaul Undong* was initiated (cf. Park CH, 1979). The movement was centrally directed from

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<sup>42</sup> In 1975, over seventy-eight per cent of the over sixty-year olds were living with their oldest son, by 1996, only twenty per cent did so. Fifty-three per cent of the elderly were living on their own (Kweon SI, 1998: 187-188).



Seoul with intensive administrative and propaganda efforts at both local and national level. The *Saemaul*-projects emphasised communal work and co-operation and introduced the mobilisation of labour and funds as well as the voluntary (sometimes forced) participation of the village population in rural development. The rural population contributed nearly seventy-two per cent of the investment during the 1970s while government investments accounted only for twenty-eight per cent (Whang IJ, 1981: 33).

Village members were included in the process of decision making, planning and implementation of projects although under coercion from the *Saemaul*-leaders (ibid.: 94; Jacobs, 1985: 109). These leaders were associated with the county office and an administrative unit was added to each township office for planning and guiding *Saemaul*-projects. Women were organised in '*Saemaul* Women's Associations' that integrated already existing groups. Here again, membership was not voluntarily, all women between eighteen and sixty living in rural villages were obliged to be members (Whang IJ, 1981: 105).

Due to preferential treatment of advanced villages, they were often competing against each other instead of co-operating (ibid.: 53). The most visible result of *Saemaul Undong* was the disappearance of the thatched roofs, changing the Korean landscape forever. Rural infrastructure and the living conditions improved and by 1975, rural household income reached almost the same level as urban household income (Song BN, 1990: 170). Rural migration to urban centres, however, did not cease and since the 1980s, the income gap is rising again.<sup>43</sup>

The movement actually outlived Park's tenure but later rhetoric became more important than actual accomplishments. In the 1980s, the movement fell victim to corruption when it was under the leadership of President Chun's younger brother, Chun Kyung-hwan (known as 'Baby Chun'; Han SJ, 1989b: 31). President Kim Dae-jung is trying to revitalise the movement as the core of his envisaged 'Second Nation-Building Movement' proclaimed in August 1998. So far, apart from declarations of intent, nothing has materialised and Kim Dae-jung has been criticised for using a movement originating in the authoritarian era (*Korea Times*, 27 November, 1998).

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<sup>43</sup> There are methodological questions about a comparison of the data published by the NSO regarding rural and urban income. Within these limitations, the monthly net income of a farming household in 1996 was less than half of the urban income (NSO, 1997c: 3-12; *Korea Herald*, 6 March, 1998).

The mobilisation of the rural population ceased during the 1980s with the demise of the *Saemaul Undong*. Interestingly, the mobilisation of opposition forces on university campuses has met a similar fate.

### **Student Activism**

In traditional Korea it was considered virtuous to oppose a bad government (An BJ, 1998: 38). Private Confucian academies were often centres of dissidence. Even nowadays students, especially those at university, are the centre of opposition to the government and proud of this tradition of anti-government activism (Clifford, 1994: 153). High school students spent most of their time preparing for the entry exam to a (preferably prestigious) university. These exams still take the form of multiple-choice questions, so that high school students spend most of their time learning data by rote. 'Questioning, debating, observation, or experimentation are hardly experienced in the classroom' (Kwak BY, 1991: 51; own observation).

In Korea, it is the name of the university a student attended that is important, not the degree or grade. Therefore, once the hurdle of the entry exam is taken, life at university is far less demanding than high school. Many students, after years of memorising data, for the first time encounter some freedom of thought at university. Students are exposed to new material and outlooks and also engage in protest activities, often influenced by peer pressure. Upon entering university, student groups of each department organise so-called 'membership training' ('MT') and 'orientation' for new students (the English terms are used in Korean). These usually involve playing games to get to know each other and a lot of singing and drinking, combined with an overnight stay. In the 1970s and 1980s, these sessions 'had a political agenda and were often used as a means for organizing student activism' (Lett, 1998: 187). After graduation, however, most students adapt swiftly to the existing system and become part of the establishment they were fighting.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> An example is a radical student working in Masan Free Trade Zone to organise female workers in the mid-1980s: by 1994, she lived with her husband, child and mother-in-law and worked as clerk in a neighbourhood office (Kim SK, 1997: xix).



In the 1980s, following the bloody crackdown of the Kwangju-uprising, student activism became more radical and violent.<sup>45</sup> Students went out to the country-side and to factories to organise farmers and workers (Yun SY, 1997: 18; Abelmann, 1996). Despite these efforts, there remained a huge gap between students and the rest of the population. In 1986, a large number of student groups engaged in many demonstrations in order to overthrow the Chun-regime. It was only after they were joined by members of the middle-class that they succeeded. The alliance of students and middle class, however, fell apart soon after the overthrow of the Chun-regime in 1987 (which will be examined later). The main reason for the breakdown of this coalition lies in the failure of the student groups to connect with other important groups fighting for democracy, such as politicians and human rights activists (Billet, 1992: 23).

In the 1990s, the student organisations have become radicalised and thus lost the support of the general population (see, for example, *Korea Herald*, 22 August, 1996). The students demanded a radical change in the distribution of wealth and the system of government, influenced by neo-Marxist and dependency theory. Alleged and real contact with North Korea further increased the alienation of the radical students.<sup>46</sup> In the late 1990s, political activity in university campuses has waned although the hard core activists still exist.<sup>47</sup> Lett points out that by the early 1990s, 'MTs [meetings of university departments] were used less for political purposes than as a means of meeting and socializing with members of the opposite sex' (Lett, 1998: 187). Students have become more individualistic and seem to be more concerned about relationships, job opportunities and travelling abroad than politics (*Korea Times*, 23 December, 1997; own observation).

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<sup>45</sup> Some students went as far as committing suicide to express their protest against the regime (Park BC, 1994).

<sup>46</sup> There is a lot of speculation about the connection between students and North Korea. Some Koreans hold the cynical view that some student leaders are actually working for the South Korean government to legitimise the oppression of opposition while others see the students as a tool of the North to destabilise the government in Seoul (Helgesen, 1998: 62).

<sup>47</sup> Own observation: when I first came to Korea University in Spring 1994, it was fairly normal to see riot police stationed outside the university campus (one of the hotbeds of student activism) and to get caught in clouds of tear gas. This became increasingly rare in the following years.

It is not only among students that such a dramatic change in attitudes can be found - the outlook of the population, as a whole, changed. The next section will look at the effects of these changes on the position of women.

### The Position of Women

The position of women also improved over the last fifty years. Women are now enjoying better access to education and economic activities. Nearly fifty per cent are economically active but often in small businesses or as family workers. Only about forty per cent of economically active women are paid employees (NSO, 1997a: 50; Cho Hyung, 1987: 92; Kong MH, 1997: 4). The textile industry, Korea's leading industry in the 1960s and 1970s, relied on young, poorly educated women from the countryside as a cheap labour-force (Kim SK, 1997; Spencer, 1988). By the 1990s, more women were working in clerical jobs and the service industry. While the situation in education and employment has changed for women their position in the family and society remained remarkably stable. Women are still expected to fit the stereotype of wife and mother.

Although many women join the workforce, the chances for promotion are small. Most women work in low secretarial positions in both private companies and the government (the 'three C-jobs': getting coffee, copies, cigarettes).<sup>48</sup> The question of equal pay for the same work remains a thorny issue. A survey in the late 1980s found that over one third of Korean men does not support this notion (but 85 per cent of women do; Chu et al., 1993: 119). Sexual harassment by male colleagues seems to be wide-spread (personal communication, experience; *Korea Herald*, 20 August, 1998; Lett: 1998: 64). Women are still expected to stop working after marriage and to stay home until the children have reached secondary school at least (Kim SK, 1996: 557; Lett, 1998: 63). Kim Seung-Kyung found that female labour activists in Masan Free Trade Zone defined themselves as mothers and wives and mostly gave up activities once they started a family (1997).

Since women spend more time in education and often start work after leaving school they tend to get married later and have fewer children. Modern conveniences in

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<sup>48</sup> While working in the headquarters of a *Chaebol* in Seoul for two months, I encountered only one woman not wearing the uniform of secretaries or receptionists and hence employed in a higher position, an overseas-Korean from Canada. Apart from the women working in the canteen and as cleaners, all the other female employees were young and thus not yet married.



the household and easier shopping facilities have decreased the amount of time women have to spend on homemaking.<sup>49</sup> For middle-class women, once the children are in secondary school they are left with spare time and little chance of re-entering the labour force at a level that reflects their level of education (Kim SK, 1996: 559). Religious activities or volunteer work in a civic group can offer an outlet for these women (a largely untapped source in Korea). Another 'occupation', especially of some upper middle-class women, is to 'contribute to maintaining the family status by spending their [husbands'] earnings on items of status such as better models of cars, brand-name clothes, and imported furniture' (Kim MH, 1993: 74). Working-class women often have no choice but to seek employment to increase the family income (Cho OL, 1987: 74; Kim SK, 1996: 556). In the economic crisis of 1997 women were often the first to lose their jobs and the situation of many Korean families worsened (*Korea Herald*, 1 December, 1998).

In civil and political society, very few women are active. Generally, when they do get involved, issues such as sanitation, ecology and safety for children are considered a natural expansion of traditional female roles of house-keeping and taking care of the family.

This overview of Korea's political culture and the changes in society over the last few years will aid in understanding the process of democratisation in Korea and the obstacles along the way. So far, Korean culture has been strong enough to form the container - democracy in its very limited form as it existed since 1948 in Korea. The content - Korean culture - has changed and is increasingly doing so. The events of the last ten years leading up to and during democratisation confirm this, as will be seen in the next chapter.

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<sup>49</sup> 'Housework' is still listed as the main obstruction to female employment by more than half of the population, followed by 'social prejudice' (NSO, 1997b: 176).

## **Chapter Three: Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Korea since 1985**

The last chapter described the historical background of democratisation in Korea up to the mid-1980s. The changes within Korean society already outlined in Chapter Two increased the demand for more democratic freedoms in Korea and political development had to catch up with advancements in the social area. The government could no longer ignore those demands and began to lift restrictions on the political activities of the opposition shortly before the National Assembly elections in 1985. With this liberalisation initiative President Chun Doo-hwan had set in motion the democratisation process. The events in Korea follow those described by Samuel Huntington as 'transition through transplacement' and this model will be applied later in this chapter (Huntington, 1991). With the peaceful turnover of power following the presidential elections of 1987, the transition stage was completed and the next stage in the process of democratisation, the consolidation phase began.

The government of Roh Tae-woo (1988-1993) was still influenced by his past association with Chun Doo-hwan but marks a phase of familiarisation with the principles of democracy for Korea. Kim Young-sam (1993-1998), the first civilian president in more than thirty years, was voted into power by a population holding high expectations of political and economic growth. The President could not live up to these hopes and his term ended in corruption scandals and economic turmoil. The government of Kim Dae-jung (1998-present) was elected against a background of economic difficulties that were at least partially a result of the ineptitude of the previous administrations.

The last ten years of democratic rule (1988-present) will be analysed using the framework of the 'multi-level model of consolidation' by Merkel (1996). Democratic institutions have been established but still lack habituation. Representational organs such as parties and interest groups are anchored in traditional attitudes and ways of acting and struggle to adapt democratic patterns, posing a threat to the consolidation of democracy. The broadening of participation to include all parts of the population is rendered more difficult by the persistence of political parties based on the personality of their leader.



Since the establishment of the Sixth Republic, the society has developed much faster than the political arena. The major political actors are still rooted in the authoritarian era while many young people have only vague memories of that time. The generation gap has become a major problem. Repelled by the actions of politicians many young people have become apathetic and cynical about politics and political participation (Im DG, 1996: 207; Park CM, 1997: 11). This encompasses the behaviour and the attitudinal consolidation which will be investigated in more detail.

This chapter is arranged chronologically with the transition process in Korea being explored in the next section. This will be followed by a detailed look at the different levels of consolidation before the next chapter turns to the local level of government in Korea.

## I. Democratic Transition: 1985-1988

As has been explained previously, the political legitimacy of the Chun Doo-hwan-regime was very weak with the legacy of the military coup of 1980 and the ensuing Kwangju-uprising overshadowing his rule. Furthermore, Chun was bound by his promise to step down at the end of his seven-year-term and prepare the way for a peaceful transfer of power.

The socio-economic development of the country increased the number of Koreans interested in more than economic achievements. With growing urbanisation, rising levels of education and greater availability of information, more Koreans began to question the authoritarian rule. The growing middle-class started to join the opposition, mainly consisting of students and labour, in the demand for more democracy.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to internal pressures, external factors had some influence on the situation in Korea. Seoul was to stage the Olympic Games of 1988, hoping to display to the world their new economic power (following the example of the Tokyo-games of 1964). The government and the opposition were aware that political instability would have had a negative impact on this image. The overthrow of the Marcos-regime in the Philippines by popular protest in 1986 sent a warning to an autocratic government with a defiant populace. The events in the Philippines also exposed a change in the attitude of the United States toward non-democratic regimes and send a signal to Seoul that the regime could not count on American support for prolonged military rule.

These external and internal developments increased the pressure on the government for liberalisation. In early 1985 the regime granted more political rights to opposition politicians. Once the liberalisation was started, the ruling regime could not stop the process of democratisation without major disturbance, as the following shows.

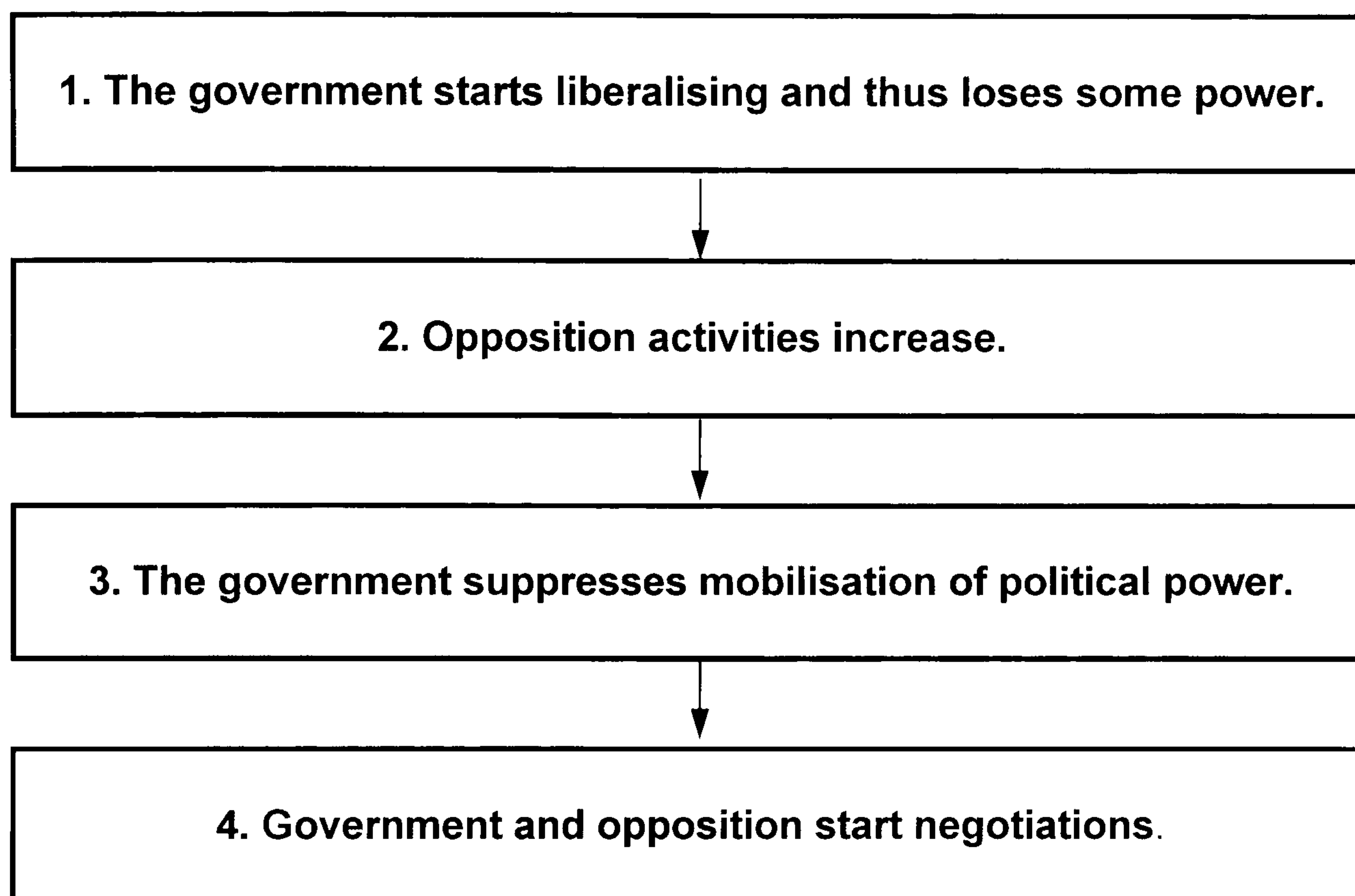
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<sup>1</sup> Detailed studies of the events in Korea in the 1980s can be found in Cotton (1993); Kim IJ, Kihl YW (1988).



### **i. The Application of Huntington's Four-Stage Model**

The democratisation process in Korea conforms with Samuel Huntington's model of *transition through transplacement*, as presented in Chapter One (1991: 152-153). Therefore, a closer look at Huntington's model is necessary. It consists of four stages:



In order to start this process, some parts of the existing government at least, have to realise the necessity of a change in the system. This usually divides the ruling party in two groups, the standpatters - unwilling to change - and the reformers. The latter start the first stage of democratisation when they perceive that the balance of power is in their favour. Liberalisation by the government leads to more activities and further demands by the opposition (stage 2). The government, in fear of losing power, reacts by suppressing opposition activities (stage 3). This cycle of protest and repression can repeat itself for a prolonged period of time with no victory for either side. The opposition is not strong enough to overthrow the government but too strong to be suppressed. Realising this stand-off situation, the parties involved try to reach a compromise and start negotiations (stage 4). The main characteristic of this process is that the dominant groups in both government and opposition have to realise that they are not strong enough to decide on

the future political system on their own. The next section will show how the transition process in Korea followed the lines of this model.

**Stage 1:**

**The government starts liberalising and thus loses some power.**

Ever since he was elected by an electoral college in February 1981, Chun Doo-hwan promised to serve a single seven-year term of office and to carry out a peaceful transfer of power in 1988.<sup>2</sup> Up until late 1984, most political activity was prohibited. A few weeks before the National Assembly elections in March 1985, however, Chun liberalised the system and dissidents, such as Kim Young-sam, were allowed to become politically active again. Subsequently, a new opposition party was formed, the 'New Korean Democratic Party' (NKDP). Although the NKDP was established only a month before the election, it won nearly one third of the votes (and forty-three per cent in Seoul). The new party, together with another established opposition party, the 'People's Korea Party' (PKP), won more than one third of the seats in the National Assembly, thereby denying the ruling party, the 'Democratic Justice Party' (DJP), the two-third majority necessary for passing laws. The NKDP established itself as the main opposition force in the country after merging with the smaller PKP soon after the elections. The opposition used its victory to demand a change in the constitution to allow direct popular elections of the next president.

Chun Doo-hwan, facing shallow support for his government and party, preferred an indirect presidential election for his successor. In Spring 1986, however, following protest by opposition forces he agreed to a dialogue about a revision of the constitution and direct presidential elections. The talks between the NKDP and the ruling party were soon deadlocked. In Autumn 1986, the DJP proposed a parliamentary cabinet system while the opposition insisted on a presidential system with popular and direct elections. The opposition was sure of a victory in a presidential style election while the ruling party preferred a parliamentarian system favouring smaller parties which would provide it with a greater chance to stay in power (Kihl YW, 1988b: 82).

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<sup>2</sup> Clifford (1994) is a good source for the Chun years, especially for his economic policies; Kihl YW (1988a) for the events from 1985-1987.



In April 1987, one opposition group indicated their willingness to compromise, but another group, led by Kim Dae-jung and Kim Young-sam, decided to leave the NKDP and form a new party. President Chun took advantage of the disarray in the opposition and announced that since no agreement had been reached on constitutional reform, the reform process would have to be shelved and his successor would be selected under the existing electoral college system. Chun's chosen successor was Roh Tae-woo, another general, close friend of Chun and co-conspirator of the 1980-coup. Under the existing system he was guaranteed to win the election.

The opposition became frustrated over its inability to initiate a debate regarding the new constitution and decided to boycott the National Assembly in order to rely on extra-parliamentary pressure.

**Stage 2:**  
**Opposition activities increase.**

and

**Stage 3:**  
**The government suppresses mobilisation of political power.**

These two stages are interrelated and tend to form a vicious circle. Following Chun's announcement of no constitutional changes regarding the presidential elections, demonstrations were launched all over Korea. The forerunners were, as usual, university students but this time they were joined by church groups, professors and parts of the middle class. The growing intellectual class was unhappy with authoritarian rule and took a critical position regarding the government. The death of a university student in police custody and the unsuccessful cover-up of the incident by the police in early 1987 particularly dismayed the middle class.

The government responded to the demonstrations with huge contingents of riot police and teargas.<sup>3</sup> There was a stand-off between massed protesters and battalions of police. The opposition had to realise that it was not strong enough to overthrow a government that previously had shown its willingness to brutally break down demonstrations

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<sup>3</sup> In June 1988, the police fired 351,000 canisters of tear gas. Half of the nation's police force was mobilised to counter demonstrations (Clifford, 1994: 264).



(the worst example being the high number of casualties in Kwangju in May 1980). The government, on the other hand, could not hope for absolute victory since this time the demonstrations were not limited to one city or one group of the population.

Moreover, the international climate had changed in the mid-1980s. In the preceding year the Philippines' dictator Ferdinand Marcos had been overthrown by the 'people's power'. The forthcoming Asian Games in 1986 and the Olympic Games in 1988, both to be held in Seoul, drew the attention of the international community to the country. The United States made it clear that a non-violent settlement was favoured (Kim HN, 1988: 228).

The government had a choice between two responses: martial law or negotiations. Facing this situation the Korean government was divided in two groups: the stand-patters or hard-liners under Chun Doo-hwan and the reformers led by Roh Tae-woo. The hard-liners were considering declaring martial law (Lee CJ, 1988: 13). Roh's faction of the ruling party felt that the country could no longer be ruled effectively without major democratic reforms. They perceived that some move towards democratisation was needed to continue economic development and guarantee competitiveness, and also the stabilisation of socio-economic system in Korea. To overcome opposition in the ruling party against his plans for negotiations, Roh threatened to resign as presidential candidate if his demands were not accepted by Chun and other hard-liners. This would have led to a severe loss of face for them and the reformist wing in the ruling party eventually won the upper hand. On 29 June, 1987, Roh announced that he was prepared to accept major demands of the opposition, thus beginning negotiations, stage 4 in Huntington's model.<sup>4</sup>

Some scholars, like Hsiao and Koo, refute the idea of a split elite and stress the importance of the demonstrations and the pressure from the populace (Hsiao, Koo, 1997: 316). While these demands were important to start negotiations the population lost its influence once the (elite) politicians took over. Kim Sunhyuk (amongst other Korean scholars), on the other hand, claims that the 'main impetus came from the authoritarian

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<sup>4</sup> There is another interpretation of the events in June 1987 (Park SJ, 1998: 53). Chun claimed later that he himself devised the 'June 29-declaration', not Roh (Kim SW, 1992). Chun's wife supports this viewpoint (*Korea Herald*, 19 December, 1996).



regime's overconfidence about its legitimacy and stability' and not the population or opposition groups (Kim SH, 1997: 1135).

**Stage 4:**

**Government and opposition start negotiations.**

On June 29, 1987, after two weeks of countless demonstrations, Roh Tae-woo made a surprising statement supporting liberalisation (Cheng TJ, Kim EM, 1994: 137). His declaration included a call for direct, fair presidential elections, rehabilitation of 'political criminals' (including leading dissident Kim Dae-jung), the restoration of the freedom of press, the relaxation of restrictive labour controls and respect for the autonomy of local governments and universities. This announcement caught the opposition, never expecting such an offer, off-guard. Talks about constitutional reform were resumed. In October 1987, the new constitution creating the Sixth Republic was approved in a referendum by a large majority of the population. It stipulated direct presidential elections, single-seat constituencies and the creation of a new Constitutional Court. Moreover, the president no longer had the right to dissolve the National Assembly. In order to remove members of the cabinet a no-confidence vote in the Assembly is necessary. The 1988 constitution provides no vice-presidency and thus turns politics into a zero-sum game with the elected president as the overall winner. A compromise between the opposition parties making one leader president and the other vice-president has been rendered impossible.

Roh's declaration was by no means an admission of defeat. He gave in to the main demands of the broader population thus isolating the more radical groups (mainly students and workers). The opposition was not only facing an authoritarian regime but also weakened by its own division between two leading dissidents, Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung who both had ambitions for the presidency. It soon became apparent that the two opposition leaders were not able to agree on a single candidate for the presidential elections. Each thought it was his moral right to run for the opposition and in the end, both stood as candidate. Due to this split (by then retired General) Roh Tae-woo won the presidential election of December 1987, albeit with less than thirty-seven per cent of the votes. Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung together secured over fifty per cent of the votes. Their egotism and inability to compromise robbed the opposition forces of victory.

Roh's inauguration was the first peaceful transfer of power in the forty-year history of the Republic of Korea. Democracy had been formally achieved but through Roh's victory the old elite stayed in power and no real change took place, a fact often stressed by critical observers (Cumings, 1989; Gills, 1993). One third of his cabinet members had also served under the previous regime (Kihl YW, Kim IJ, 1988: 245). Korea is thus an example of 'successful crafting of democracy by elite' (Luckham, 1996: 215).

Since no replacement of the elite had taken place this process has to be referred to as *transplacement* and this led to a flawed Korean democratisation and prolonging of the consolidation process. Labour and students were excluded again and the coalition between middle and working class failed (Mo JR, 1996: 297). Apart from joint demonstrations, there was little co-ordination between the different groups and there were no efforts to build an organisational foundation. Opposition politicians were carried by popular support but sought little contact with the middle class, labour or students (Dong WM, 1988: 184). The opposition groups were more effective in opposing the government than coalescing and uniting, a legacy of long authoritarian rule. Thus, once the Chun-regime was overthrown the weak coalition between radicals, middle class and politicians broke up.

In the second half of 1987 and in 1988, despite the change in political climate, political turmoil continued, with numerous huge strikes and demonstrations, mainly staged by workers demanding higher wages. The middle class once again distanced itself from the working class and showed no further sympathy (Janelli, 1993: 201). In fact it became 'increasingly conservative and somewhat hostile to the aggressive labor movement in the 1990s' (Koo, 1993: 159). The workers, on the other hand, were 'much more interested in the practical solution of labor rights and immediate rice-and-soy sauce economic issues' (Dong WM, 1988: 179). Strikes regarding wage increases were frequent in 1988 and 1989, and average wage increases of more than twenty per cent were achieved in 1987 and 1988 (in 1992, wages still rose by over seventeen per cent, Eckert et al., 1990: 385; Lee HY, 1993: 39).

During the transition stage, the system of government (presidential or cabinet) took the centre-stage of the discussion and other topics such as local autonomy, played only a minor role. A new Local Autonomy Act providing for the election of local assemblies was passed in May 1989 but it was only in Spring 1991 that (partial) local elections



actually took place. One major argument against elections at local level was the high costs of election campaigns (Bedeski, 1994: 49; Lee JR, 1992: 218).

The election of Roh Tae-woo marks the end of the transition process. With the new, Sixth Republic the consolidation process had begun. The next section will examine this process, analysing the presidencies of Roh Tae-woo and Kim Young-sam. Furthermore, the consolidation of democracy on the different levels will be explored.

## II. Democratic Consolidation in the Sixth Republic

### i. The Presidencies of Roh Tae-woo and Kim Young-sam

Since the introduction of the new constitution in 1988, the Sixth Republic has seen three presidents. The first two were hailed as the new vanguard of democracy only to be later dismissed. The presidential elections of 1987 were praised because they marked the first peaceful transfer of power in Korea since the establishment of the Republic in 1948. The elections were undermined by the fact that President Roh Tae-woo was elected by less than thirty-seven per cent while the two other main candidates combined gained over fifty per cent. This pattern persisted in the next elections: the victorious candidate won with roughly forty per cent of the votes over a fragmented opposition.

Roh Tae-woo's term was overshadowed by his military past and close connections with the former regime. His main achievements were the successful staging of the Olympic Games in September 1988 and the establishment of diplomatic relations with most Communist countries as part of the so-called *Nordpolitik* (Kim HJ, 1993). Although he started his tenure with an anti-corruption campaign his government was deeply corrupt. In 1994, Roh himself admitted collecting about 500 billion won (US\$ 650 million) from businessmen as 'contributions' while in office (Koh BC, 1996: 54).<sup>5</sup>

The Kim Young-sam-administration was praised for being the first government under a civilian after over thirty years of ex-generals as presidents. Kim Young-sam was elected as candidate of the 'Democratic Liberal Party' (DLP), a party created by a merger of three parties in 1990.<sup>6</sup> The ruling party and two opposition parties (led by Kim Young-sam and Kim Jong-pil) came together to create one big party, modelled on the Japanese 'Liberal Democratic Party' (LDP). Through inner-party manoeuvring Kim Young-sam gained enough support to be selected as presidential candidate. This allowed Roh's

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<sup>5</sup> Roh also admitted that he still had one third of these 'contributions' in his personal coffers in 1994. Parts of this money was spend in the 1992-elections: Kim Dae-jung admitted later that he received 2 billion won (about US\$ 2.6 million) from Roh as a 'greeting' and 'consolation' (Koh BC, 1996: 55). Kim Young-sam keeps silent on the matter apart from the insistence that he personally never took any money.

<sup>6</sup> See Park Jin (1990) for more details about the party merger.



party to continue to stay in power even after the end of his tenure. The different factions within the DLP soon fell apart and various politicians left the party. By 1995, Kim Young-sam was in complete control of the party.

While Kim Young-sam was supported by ninety-three per cent of the population at the beginning of his term, his popularity plummeted to thirteen per cent in late 1997, the end of his tenure (*Economist*, 15 February, 1997: 71). His presidency was overshadowed by catastrophes, scandals and mishaps. The flaws of hasty construction and lack of control by the relevant officials (often bribed not to check too closely) came to light when several buildings and bridges collapsed, killing hundreds of people. The intimate connection between industry and government became obvious with the failure of major companies like the *Hanbo Steel* and *KIA Automobiles*. The president's son was heavily involved in corruption and subsequently prosecuted for his illegal actions. At the end of Kim Young-sam's term in 1997, the Asian economic crisis reached Korea with the government reacting too late and inadequately, thus increasing the difficulties (Snyder, 1999: 410-415).<sup>7</sup>

Like his predecessor, Kim Young-sam began his term with an anti-corruption drive. It soon ran out of steam, leaving cynics to believe that it was mainly started to eliminate political opponents - both in the opposition party and in the Roh and Kim Jong-pil factions of his own party (Shim JH, 1993; Paik YC, 1994: 747). On the positive side, the introduction of the 'real-name finance-system' forced the registration of bank accounts previously handled under false names bringing large sums from the black market into the legal economy. Illegally amassed gains were detected and corruption could be discovered more easily. Furthermore, Kim Young-sam reduced the influence of the military on politics by abolishing an influential group of high-ranking officers associated in the so-called *Hanahoe*, as will be explained in more detail later. Overall however, Kim Young-sam's tenure saw more failures than successes. To use his own words, Kim learnt during his tenure that 'reform was more difficult than revolution' (Kim in *Korea Times*, 21 February, 1998).

In December 1997, amidst economic turmoil, Kim Dae-jung, another leading dissident, was elected President. He succeeded by forming a coalition with the party of

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<sup>7</sup> For a background of the 'IMF-crisis', as Koreans call the economic crisis, see Mo JR, Moon CI (1998); Smith (1998) or <http://www.stern.nyu.edu/~nrobini/asia/AsiaHomepage.html>.

Kim Jong-pil ('United Liberal Democrats', ULD). Kim Jong-pil has some experience with party manoeuvres. In 1990, he formed the DLP together with Roh Tae-woo and Kim Young-sam but left this party in 1995, creating a new party (the ULD). Subsequently, he formed the coalition with Kim Dae-jung for the presidential elections in 1997. This marriage of convenience between the two erstwhile foes is a clear example of Lee Manwoo's concept of *daekwon* or 'ultimate power cult' (Lee MW, 1995: 38; see Chapter Two). The two politicians agreed on Kim Dae-jung to become president and Kim Jong-pil prime minister. Furthermore, the governmental system was going to be changed after two years to a parliamentarian system giving the prime minister more power. This change is still under discussion and nothing has so far been decided. The debate about the change to the governmental system is one of the main topics of the Kim Dae-jung-government with the economic crisis and steps to overcome it being the main priority.

With these developments in mind, the rest of the chapter will examine the consolidation process in Korea in the last decade in more detail. The multi-level model of consolidation by Merkel (as presented in Chapter One) will be used as framework. The first step is the consolidation of democratic institutions, such as the constitution and the division of power. These are usually established during the transition process and first to be consolidated. The second level comprises representational consolidation, i.e. the political society. Here, political parties and interest groups are the centre of attention. On a behavioural level, democracy has to be endorsed by elite actors, such as politicians, the military and the media. Lastly, attitudinal consolidation comprises democratic beliefs among the population and a vibrant civil society. These levels of consolidation are interdependent and consolidate at different times, as the Korean example will elucidate.

## ii. Institutional Consolidation

The consolidation of democratic institutions embraces the following areas: the constitution, executive, legislative and the judiciary. In the context of the consolidation of democracy in Korea, the election system and local autonomy are two other fields that require attention. These organisations and processes have to develop stabilised patterns of behaviour and interaction. Each will be scrutinised in further detail now.



## Constitution

The current constitution of the Republic of Korea is a 'wholly amended' version of the original dating back to 1948 (Preamble of the Constitution, Yang SC, 1994a: 933). The constitution has so far been amended nine times, being somewhat of a pawn in the quest for more power by the executive. Apart from the changes made for the Second Republic (regarding the introduction of a cabinet system and the punishment of officials of the previous regime), the amendments concerned the power of the president, the method of election and the length of his term (Lim SH, 1998: 528). Each amendment allowed the current regime to prolong and intensify its grip on power. The 1987 revision therefore, was the first time the constitution was changed to promote more democratic procedures.

The current constitution of 1988 was a result of bargaining among the government and opposition leaders. Two types of government systems had been under discussion before the amendment: a parliamentarian and a presidential system.<sup>8</sup> The ruling party supported a parliamentarian (or cabinet) system, allowing for coalition governments and favouring several smaller parties. The ruling party reasoned that they would probably not be able to gain an overall majority in the next election but would have the chance to rule as part of a coalition (Brady, Mo, 1992; Kihl YW, 1988b: 82). The opposition saw a good chance of winning with a large majority and thus favoured a presidential system and few big parties. In the end, a presidential system was adopted and ironically the opposition lost due to their failure to unite behind one candidate. The defeated Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung each were elected president in the following years.<sup>9</sup>

The issue of a government system, however, flamed up again in the 1997 campaign. The winning coalition of Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong-pil promised to change the constitution in favour of a cabinet system. Politicians are again contemplating with yet another change of the constitution in order to gain more power for themselves. The behaviour of politicians will be examined later but at this point it has to be stated that their actions pose a threat to institutional consolidation.

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<sup>8</sup> The advantages and disadvantages of these systems are discussed, for example, in Linz (1994) and Duverger (1964).

<sup>9</sup> Before the 1997 elections, the notion that 'it was now Kim Dae-jung's turn to win in his fourth and final attempt' could be heard in many conversations.

## Executive

The Korean presidential system puts most executive power into the hands of the president. The attitudes of the president are therefore highly influential on the performance of the executive - to the degree that the president **is** the executive (as was the king in the old system of the *Choson*-dynasty).

The president is selected by popular elections, held separately and at different times from the elections for the National Assembly so, at times, the president may have to govern against an opposition majority (cohabitation). The president appoints a prime minister who in turn appoints a cabinet. Both prime minister and cabinet need to be confirmed by the National Assembly.

The power of the administration has been used to the advantage of the ruling party even under democratic governments, as the following three examples show. In 1992, one opposition party, the 'Unification National Party' (UNP) and its founder Chung Ju-yung, were investigated for alleged tax evasion, as implicitly ordered by the presidential office (Lee HY, 1993: 36; Steinberg, 1995: 391). After the mayor of Seoul and the governor of Kyonggi-do declared their intention to run in the presidential election of 1997, these two areas were audited very thoroughly (personal communication with the audit-section of Kyonggi-do administration; *Korea Times*, 23 September, 1997). As late as 1998, the National Assembly was routinely wiretapped by the *National Intelligence Service* (NIS, formerly KCIA, *Korea Times*, 3 January, 1999).

This emphasises that in order to consolidate democracy in Korea, the executive has to acknowledge the limits of its power, especially in regard to the legislative.

## Legislative

The National Assembly still has to come to a full understanding of its role as a forum for discussion (Park CW, 1999: 80). The present situation has been described as an imbalance between an 'imperial' presidency and a 'peripheral' legislature, contradicting the democratic system of checks and balances (Lim SH, 1998: 531). Currently the opposition uses the Assembly as an arena for confrontation while the ruling party apparently considers its main role as passing governmental legislation. A majority of legislation is proposed by the executive and then rubber-stamped by the parliament. Laws proposed



by congressmen are far less frequent and have a smaller chance of passing.<sup>10</sup> Often, 'legislative proposals are only perfunctorily debated, and infrequently amended in the plenary session' (Kim KW, Park CW, 1991: 79).<sup>11</sup>

The assembly members primarily see themselves as members of a party supporting one politician, not as representatives of their constituents' interests. Changes of party affiliation are frequent and considered 'normal practice for a ruling party to build up a parliamentary majority for the sake of political stability' (Lee Hong-koo, leader of the ruling party in 1996, *Korea Herald*, 31 May, 1996). The electorate agrees with the notion that the executive should have a majority in the legislative. Asked if a government will be unable to achieve great things if it is often restrained by an assembly, forty-nine per cent of Koreans agreed somewhat and twelve per cent agreed strongly (Shin, Rose, 1997a: 19).

Party affiliations in the Fifteenth National Assembly (1996-2000) have been changing constantly. Following the election in April 1996, the ruling party of Kim Young-sam recruited enough assembly members from other parties and independents to gain a majority. With the change in government in February 1998, a reverse movement began, with representatives joining the party of Kim Dae-jung. Little attention has been paid to voters' preferences. Voting in the National Assembly is strictly along party lines, making it important for the ruling party to have a majority to pass laws. Kim and Park describe proceedings in the parliament as follows:

*'The minority resorts to various obstructionist tactics such as blockading the Assembly Hall, walking out of a meeting, and waging sit-ins or hunger strikes. Rather than modifying or withdrawing from its initial positions, the majority irregularly passes its proposal by using extraordinary confrontational tactics - taking snapvotes, calling a massive number of security guards in the Assembly Hall, and mustering majority legislators only in a prearranged meeting room'* (Kim KW, Park CW, 1991: 80).

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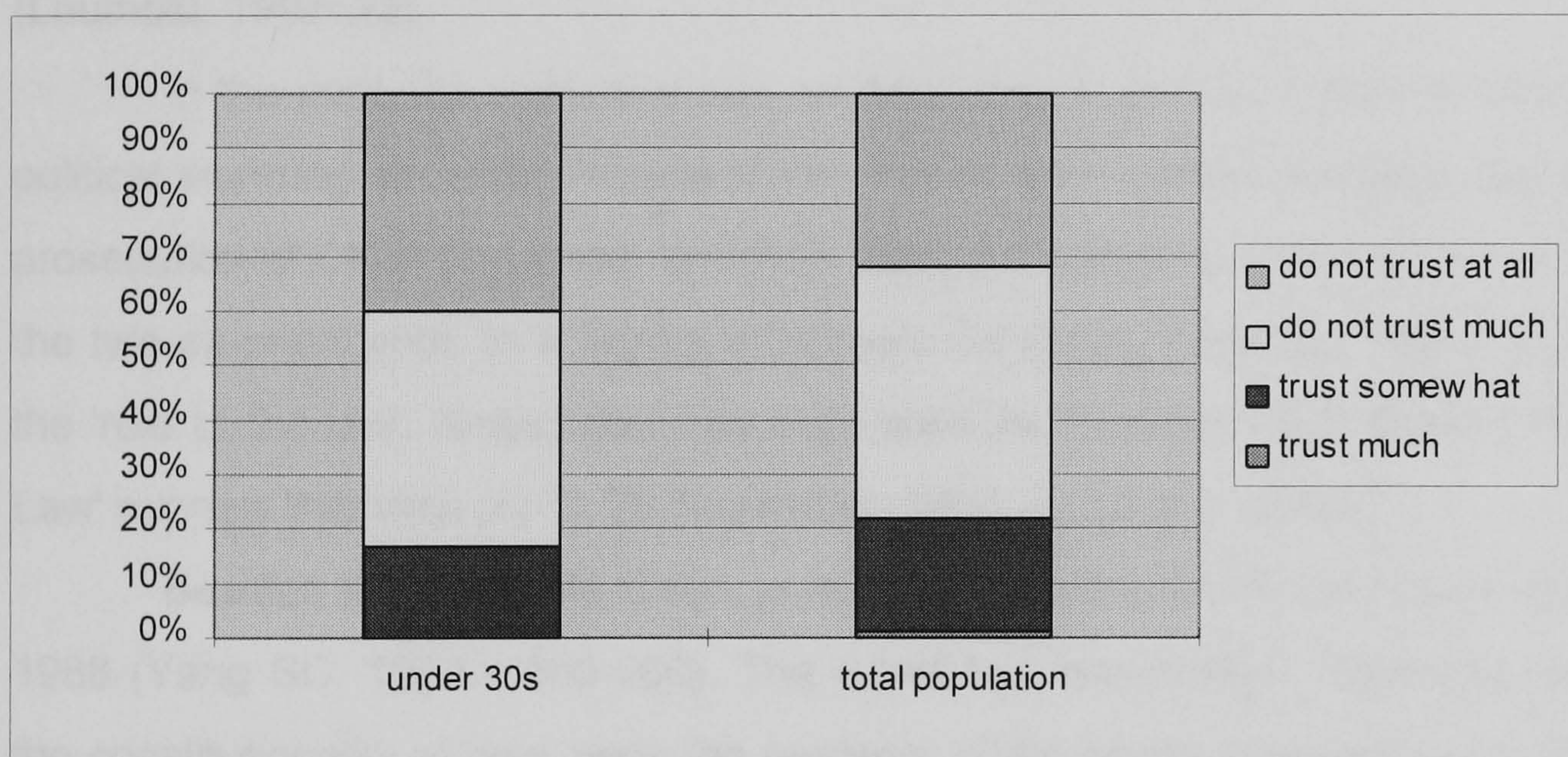
<sup>10</sup> In the Fourteenth National Assembly (1992-1996), there were nearly twice as many bills introduced by the executive branch than by legislators and the number of bills passed makes this bias even more obvious: ninety-two per cent of executive-introduced bills were passed while only thirty-seven per cent of legislator-introduced bills did (Lim SH, 1998: 532-533).

<sup>11</sup> The entire budget for 1987, for example, was passed in two minutes and thirty seconds without participation and knowledge of opposition party members (Yang SC, 1994a: 466).



Kim and Park were portraying events in the National Assembly in the 1980s but the same non-democratic behaviour can be found in the 1990s under Presidents Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung. In December 1996, Kim Young-sam pushed through new legislations in a session at 6 am that had been announced only the night before (*Korea Herald*, 27 December, 1996). Under Kim Dae-jung-administration, bills were passed without a debate or vote while the opposition was absent in January 1999. The laws were simply declared passed by the speaker of the parliament (Shim JH, 1999; *Chosun Ilbo*, 6 January, 1999). This shows that the National Assembly does not check the executive effectively.

**Figure 3.1:** Trust in National Assembly:



Source: Shin, Rose, 1997a: 35.

With these proceedings in the parliament it is hardly surprising that public support for the legislative is low. Only one fifth of Koreans were satisfied with the performance of the National Assembly and their local representative in 1996 (Shin, van der Slik, 1997: 49). Thirty-two per cent of Koreans had no trust at all in the National Assembly, and a further forty-six per cent did not show much trust (Shin, Rose, 1997a: 35; **Figure 3.1**). Among the under-thirty-year olds, eighty-six per cent did not express trust in the legislative (*ibid.*). The aforementioned incidents and the assessment of the population show that democratic procedures regarding the legislature are not yet consolidated.



## Judiciary

Under the previous authoritarian regimes, power was concentrated in the hands of the president while the legislative and the judiciary were subdued to his influence. A democratic system calls for the separation of power and a system of 'checks and balances' between the three powers. The Korean constitution provides for the establishment of a Supreme Court and a separate Constitutional Court. The right of appointment for most high ranking judges lies with the president, limiting the independence of the judiciary. The Chief Justice is appointed by the president to a single six-year term with the consent of the National Assembly. The justices of the Supreme Court are appointed by the president on the recommendation of the Chief Justice. Due to this procedure (and previous experiences) the prosecution is considered to be biased towards the government (Leuthold, 1997: 22).

In the past, the executive has not hesitated to introduce laws to strengthen their political standing. In 1995, President Kim Young-sam crafted a special law to allow the prosecution of Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo, following public pressure for indicting the two ex-presidents. In a legacy of Korea's Confucian past, the 'rule of man' revoked the 'rule of the law'. Newspaper headings such as 'President Kim **Orders** New May 18 Law' express this view (*KPS*, 25 November, 1995; emphasis added).

Besides the Supreme Court, a separate Constitutional Court was established in 1988 (Yang SC, 1994a: 959-960). The Court has adjudication regarding the following: the constitutionality of laws upon the requests of the courts, impeachment, dissolution of political parties and jurisdictional disputes between state organs, between state organs and local governments and between various local governments. The Constitutional Court consists of nine judges. Three of those are proposed by the National Assembly, three more by Chief of Justice and the last three by the president, all appointed by the president for renewable six-year-terms.

So far, the Court has had minor impact and showed little tendency to become engaged in political disputes, as the following incident illustrates. In March 1998, Kim Jong-pil was appointed prime minister by Kim Dae-jung but the main opposition party, the 'Grand National Party' (GNP), used its majority in the National Assembly to deny him approval as required under the constitution (*Korea Herald*, 4 March, 1998). The new cabinet, headed by Kim Jong-pil, was proposed by the out-going prime minister. Kim

Jong-pil remained 'acting Prime Minister' until August 1998 but still performed all the regular tasks of a prime minister. When the GNP brought the case to the Constitutional Court, it was ruled that 'the opposition GNP has no legal right to take issue with the matter as only concerned parties are entitled to do it. The suit should have been filed by the National Assembly not by individual lawmakers', showing that the Court had no inclination to solve the impasse (*Korea Times*, 14 July, 1998a).

### **Election System**

A very important part of the legislation is the election regime (Duverger, 1964: 217). The type of election system influences the size and number of political parties and the chances of candidates to be elected. In a world-wide comparison, plurality systems have on average two parties, majority systems 2.8 and proportional representation systems display an average of 3.6 political parties (Blais, Massicotte, 1996: 71). Proportional representation also reduces the influence of regionalism while a single-member majority system strengthens regional-based parties.

The history of parliamentary elections in Korea shows some experimentation with different election systems. The assemblies of the First Republic were elected under a single-member plurality system. This was continued for the lower chamber of the Second Republic and for three quarters of the seats under the Third Republic. The upper house in the Second Republic was elected under a system of multi-member districts. In the Third Republic under Park Chung-hee, a system of proportional representation was introduced favouring the ruling party. In the Fourth Republic, the president appointed one third of the parliamentarians with the rest was elected under a system of two-member districts. This system was continued in the Fifth Republic but the proportional representatives were nominated by parties. The Sixth Republic provides for single-member districts and proportional representation for a varying number of legislators, depending on the number of votes (Kang CW, 1992).

Since the election of Kim Dae-jung in late 1997, the election system is again under debate. In order to reduce the number of assembly members, the re-zoning of districts (to accommodate the ever-increasing levels of urbanisation) and the reduction of seats allocated under the proportional system are under discussion. The latest proposal (as of Autumn 1999) by the ruling party, however, suggests that up to half of the mem-



bers be selected under proportional lists (with the voters having two votes as in Germany: one for a candidate, one for a party). It is argued that this will reduce the influence of regionalism (*Korea Times*, 23 February, 1999). On the other hand, this will also increase the power of those selecting the candidates for the list, in practice the party leader. In the past, high positions on the list were often connected with huge donations to the party.<sup>12</sup> Another criterion for the allocation of a place on a proportional list was the position of a person in society. Parties approach personalities in order to enhance the party profile.<sup>13</sup> Park Chung-hee directly appointed members of the National Assembly. Koreans have therefore become used to consider directly elected legislators superior to those selected by a proportional list (Soh, 1993: 133; in my own survey more than half of the respondents agreed with that statement). This will create problems of credibility when an enlarged number of proportional seats will be introduced.

International comparative studies found that the electoral system is 'the most important variable effecting women's share of legislative seats' (Matland, Studler, 1996: 708). A proportional list system favours female representation while a system with single-member-districts and a simple plurality system has a negative influence.<sup>14</sup> In order to reach a high number of female representatives, proportional lists are the most successful system, as examples in Scandinavia show (Norris, 1993: 314). A reduction of those seats in the Korean National Assembly (as has been suggested) will, at least in the short run, lead to even fewer women in parliament.

Competition between parties is possible within the restrictions of the National Security Law thereby essentially excluding left-wing groups and left-leaning politicians. Until early 1998, labour was also prevented from proposing candidates since unions

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<sup>12</sup> In 1988-National Assembly elections, successful candidates for ruling party were required to spend more than US\$ 1 million each (Cotton, Kim, 1992: 365). In the 1992 elections, the sum was even higher: 'it was estimated that a person seeking a "safe" national constituency nomination typically donated up to 4 billion won (about US\$ 5 million)' (Park BS, 1995: 185).

<sup>13</sup> The director of a leading institute promoting women in politics for example was approached by two parties prior to the 1996 elections but declined both offers (personal communication).

<sup>14</sup> In Germany, where half the members of the *Bundestag* are directly elected and the other half under a proportional list system, most female representatives enter parliament by means of the party lists (Matland, Studler, 1996: 708). The United Kingdom is an example for the other extreme.

were not allowed to be politically active. The foundation of a new party for workers is planned for the elections in 2000 (*Korea Times*, 19 October, 1999).

The election law has been changed several times since the inauguration of the Sixth Republic. Limits on campaign spending have been introduced to reduce the costs and thus the temptation of corruption. The campaign and election procedures have come under close observation by the government and civil groups to guarantee cleaner and fairer elections. The constitution provides for a *Central Election Management Committee*, to be organised by the government. Some fifty civil groups co-operated to form the *Citizens Coalition for Fair Elections* to monitor elections. Although scandals surfaced after every election, they have become rarer and transgressors were prosecuted. Following the 1996 elections for the National Assembly, more than nine hundred people (including 192 candidates) were questioned regarding irregularities and twenty elected politicians were prosecuted (Leuthold, 1997: 21). Several eventually lost their seats. The prosecution, however, took up to three years so that some constituencies were represented by an inappropriate councillor for most of the term (*Korea Times*, 12 March, 1999a).

### **Local Autonomy**

Similar to the election system, local government structure also suffers from a lack of consolidation. The constitution provides two short articles regarding local autonomy, merely stating that local governments should exist and have a council (Yang SC, 1994a: 962). The details 'shall be determined by law', leaving the details open to further political bargaining.

Local autonomy has a chequered history, as will be shown in Chapter Four in more detail. Under the rule of Syngman Rhee, local autonomy became a pawn in his dispute with the opposition. Following the 1961 coup, local government was effectively abolished. Although the constitution still provided for local governments, a supplementary rule postponed their formation 'until the unification of the fatherland has been achieved' (Hinton, 1983: 175). The constitution of the Fifth Republic again provided for local governments but a supplementary clause stated that they 'shall be established on a phased basis taking into account the degree of financial self-reliance attained by local governments' (*ibid.*: 203). The re-introduction of local autonomy was demanded by the



opposition under both regimes to counterbalance the power of the central government (Bedeski, 1994: 49).

Local governments were only re-introduced in the early 1990s and are not yet consolidated. Among the Korean population, the support for regional and local assemblies is high with seventy-nine and seventy-three per cent of people in favour of regional and local councils respectively (Shin, van der Slik, 1997: 45). The whole system of four-tier local administration with four tiers is under scrutiny and may or may not be changed (Kim KW, 1995: 44). Due to the economic crisis of late 1997, voices calling for a postponement of the local elections slated for June 1998 could be heard arguing they would be too expensive (*Korea Times*, 20 January, 1998). In the end, the rule of law prevailed and the elections were held as planned in June 1998 (with only two changes of the date). With the introduction of the new election law in April 1998, the number of councillors was reduced by one third to provide for more efficiency (*Korea Herald*, 25 April, 1998). The reduction in the number of seats within weeks of the upcoming local elections upset the plans of some candidates who had planned on running but suddenly faced far greater competition for nominations and seats (especially for female candidates; personal communication).

Local governments are still very much dependent on the central government for financial support. This will be explained in more detail in the next chapter. Some officials feel that this support is still linked with favouritism. Since the inauguration of the Kim Dae-jung-government the south-eastern part feels discriminated against as much as Cholla-people have in the past (*Korea Times*, 21 January, 1999). Politicians in the south-east changed their party affiliation to that of the ruling party, expecting preferential treatment (*Korea Times*, 28 July, 1998).

Democratic institutions should be consolidated two ways: horizontally and vertically (Rüb, 1996: 62-64). On the horizontal level, a system of 'checks and balances' and a strict division of powers should exist. Vertically, a system is consolidated when 'all important political, social and economic decisions are made within democratic institutions' (ibid.: 62). Within this framework, Korea's institutions cannot yet be called consolidated. Horizontally, too much power is concentrated in the hands of the executive. Corruption among politicians and the bureaucracy still blemishes the system. New institutions like the Constitutional Court and a parliament as a forum for meaningful discussion and independent political standing, still need to be habituated. On the vertical level, the

age of the institutions is one indicator of the consolidation of democracy. The longer they exist, the more consolidated they are (Huntington, 1968a: 13). Furthermore, frequent and regular changes of the positions of power also indicate consolidation (ibid.: 14). In addition, all groups have to accept democratic institutions.

Nonetheless, the consolidation of democratic institutions in Korea such as the constitution, the executive, the legislative and the judiciary has progressed in the last ten years, albeit within the structure of the surviving authoritarian and traditional political culture. A return to an authoritarian-style regime however, seems to be improbable although the division of powers and the election system are still the object of reform intentions (but under democratic procedures).

Before turning to the attitudinal consolidation and the acceptance of democracy among citizens, this thesis will examine the next level in Merkel's model, the consolidation of democracy on a representational level.

### **iii. Representational Consolidation**

The institutional consolidation of democracy influences the progress of the other levels of democratic consolidation: it forms the framework for political parties and interest groups, the arena of political activity. The actions on this level also influence the consolidation of democratic institutions by establishing and supporting these democratic institutions and practices. In addition, institutional consolidation is influenced by general attitudes among the citizens such as the prevailing political culture. Democratic institutions also reflect on political culture and attitudes. An example for this interdependence is the demand of women for changes in the (discriminatory) family law in line with the constitutional guarantee of equality of sexes (Kim EL, 1992: 29).

On the level of representational democratisation, two institutions have to be consolidated: political parties and interest groups. These two are an intermediate level between society and decision-making bodies. The electoral system established in the constitution decides on the organisation of either several smaller parties in a proportional system or fewer larger parties in a plurality system of elections (Linz, 1994: 34; Duverger, 1964). In the transition stage, already existing parties can influence this process



as the Korean example shows. Here, most parties have in one form or another already existed before the democratic transition and thus influenced the transition process and the crafting of the new constitution. This phenomenon is explained by the peculiar character of Korean parties as power bases for one personality without any particular agenda, as will be explained later. Other important organisations that need to be consolidated on a behavioural level are interest groups such as trade unions and industrial associations. These will be addressed in the second part of this section.

### **Political Parties**

Political Parties are an important component of a participatory democracy. S.M. Lipset characterised political parties as 'part of the very definition of a modern democracy' (1994: 12). Other political scientists support the notion that political parties are 'a crucial agent of democratic consolidation' since they are 'aggregating the conflicting interests of the masses and assuring the accountability of political leaders' (Shin DC, 1995: 22). Parties can be described as mediating institutions between the citizenry and the state. They are the link between individual and state and channel the political will of the people.

Political parties represent the interests of one particular group of the population but in order to function properly they need a broad base. This implicitly assumes cleavages within a society as a basis for different parties. With regard to the development of Western parties, it has been established that they were built around several conflict lines: ethnic or language antagonisms, religious differences, those of farmers against industrialists, and of the bourgeoisie versus labour (class issues; Schultze, 1995: 504).

In Korea, however, political parties were divided along the lines of power: there was one ruling party and its antithesis, the opposition. With Confucianism as the prevailing ethic practice in Korea there was little incentive to form parties with a religious basis. Late industrialisation and state-led economic development left no space for parties based on the rural-urban conflict. The suppression of labour and ideological rigidity also excluded left-wing parties, leaving only regional cleavages as political issues (Kim BK, 1997: 19). Given this lack of differences between the parties it can be said that 'a political market is not available to Korean voters' (Chung JM, 1996: 141).

The restriction of opposition activities under authoritarian rule additionally strengthened the personalised structure of the opposition parties centring around leading

dissidents. The same applies for the government party centred around the personality of the ruler (Rhee's 'Liberal Party', Park's 'Democratic Republican Party' and Chun's 'Democratic Justice Party'). Parties in Korea serve only as power bases for certain politicians, typically the founder, and rise and fall with their leader.<sup>15</sup> The whole structure is 'inherently fluid' (Park CW, 1990: 13).

For Korean politicians, 'the party is a personalized instrument in the contest for political power' (ibid.: 5; *Korea Times*, 25 April, 1996). The personalised parties of Korea fit into the pattern of *daekwon*, the concept of 'ultimate power'. The Korean political scientist (and currently National Assembly member) Yang Sung Chul describes this phenomenon as 'politics of reverse order' where 'the party boss almost single-handedly creates (or dissolves) a political party at will' (Yang SC, 1994a: 487). In 'politics of democratic order', in contrast, political parties are organised to find candidates to run for office for a legislative body playing the key role in a representative democracy (ibid.: 486).

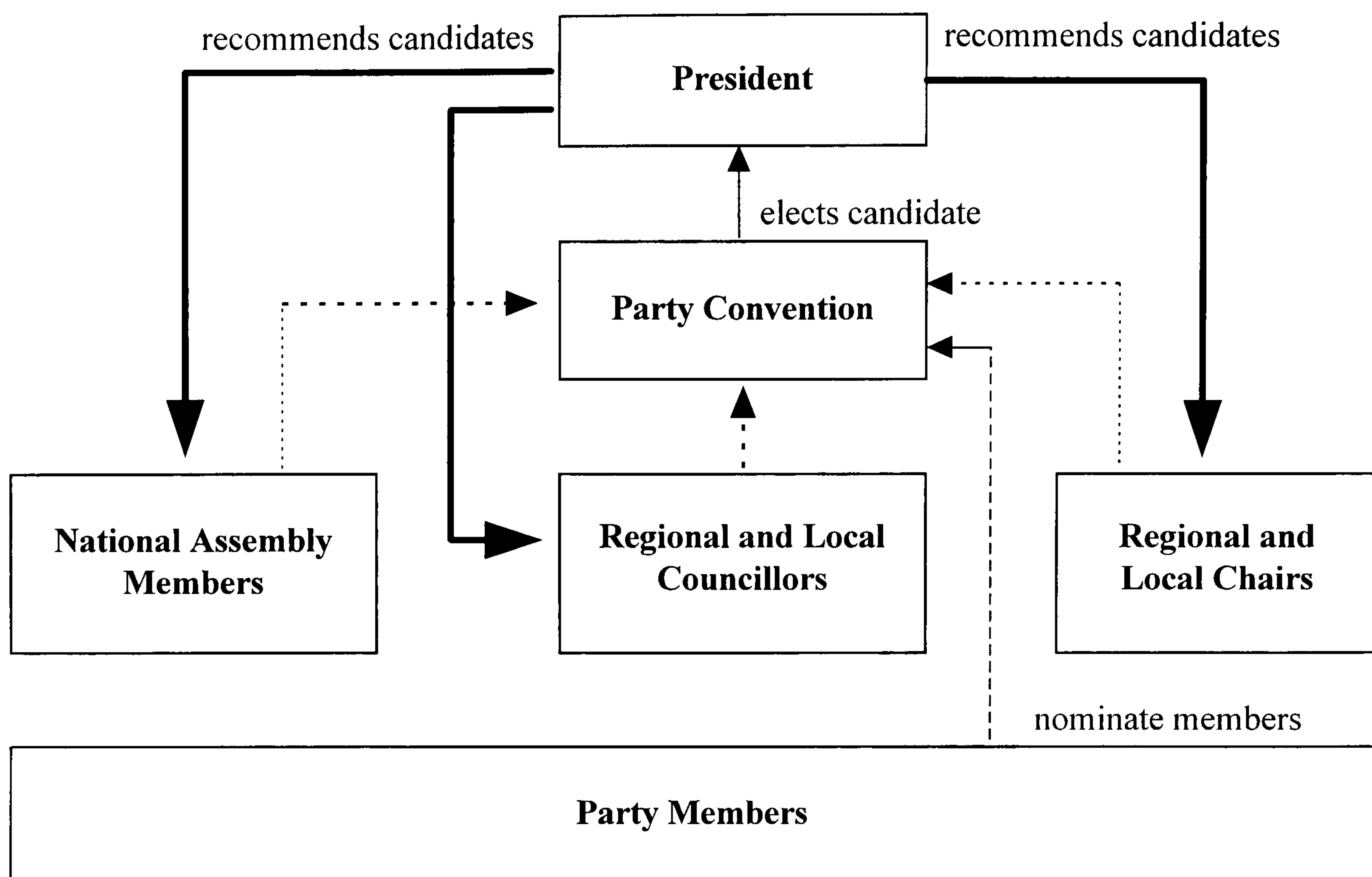
When compared with western models, Korean parties resemble most the caucus-parties of the United States in the first half of the 20th century as described by E.E. Schattschneider (1977) and M. Duverger (1964). This type of party is characterised by a narrowly recruited, small membership where the 'party is concerned only with political questions; doctrine and ideological problems play a very small part in its life and membership is generally based upon interest or habit' (ibid.: 1). The activities are directed entirely towards elections and the 'nomination process thus has become the crucial process of the party ... he who can make the nominations is the owner of the party' (Schattschneider, 1977: 64). In the case of Korea, the perception of an 'imperial party presidency' where the party president is the absolute ruler deciding on most of the nominations (Kim TS, 1997: 129).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For example Kim Young-sam who in his political career of more than forty years was member of ten different parties (Yang SC, 1994a: 489).

<sup>16</sup> This is expressed in the following passage in *Kim Young-sam's Life Story*, referring to the selection of a candidate prior to the elections for the National Assembly in 1985 within the opposition party: 'the election of the candidate recommended by him was a matter of life and death for Chairman Kim Young-sam' (Nam HC, 1993: 155).



**Figure 3.2:** Decision-Making Process in a Korean Party:

**Figure 3.2** shows the flow of decisions within a Korean party. Most decisions are made on the top with little influence from the lower bastions. The party president appoints party secretaries and advisors (*Korea Times*, 12 March, 1999b). Furthermore, the president recommends candidates for elections and heads of district chapters and these recommendations are rarely disputed by the local party basis (Kim KS, 1997: 40).<sup>17</sup> Party activists have only a slight chance to be selected. In 1996, the ruling 'New Korea Party' (NKP) allocated five per cent of the candidacies to party activists, the main opposition party (NCNP) seventeen per cent. Party activists were chosen in larger proportions in regions where other parties were strong (*ibid.*: 38). In the late 1990s, the parties tried to show more intra-party democracy and introduced direct elections of the presidential candidate by a party convention (DP, 1997; Oh, 1999: 216).<sup>18</sup> It is composed of all party

<sup>17</sup> A rare exception was the selection of a Kwangju-citizen over two former ministers as mayoral candidate prior to the elections in 1998 (*Korea Times*, 27 April, 1998).

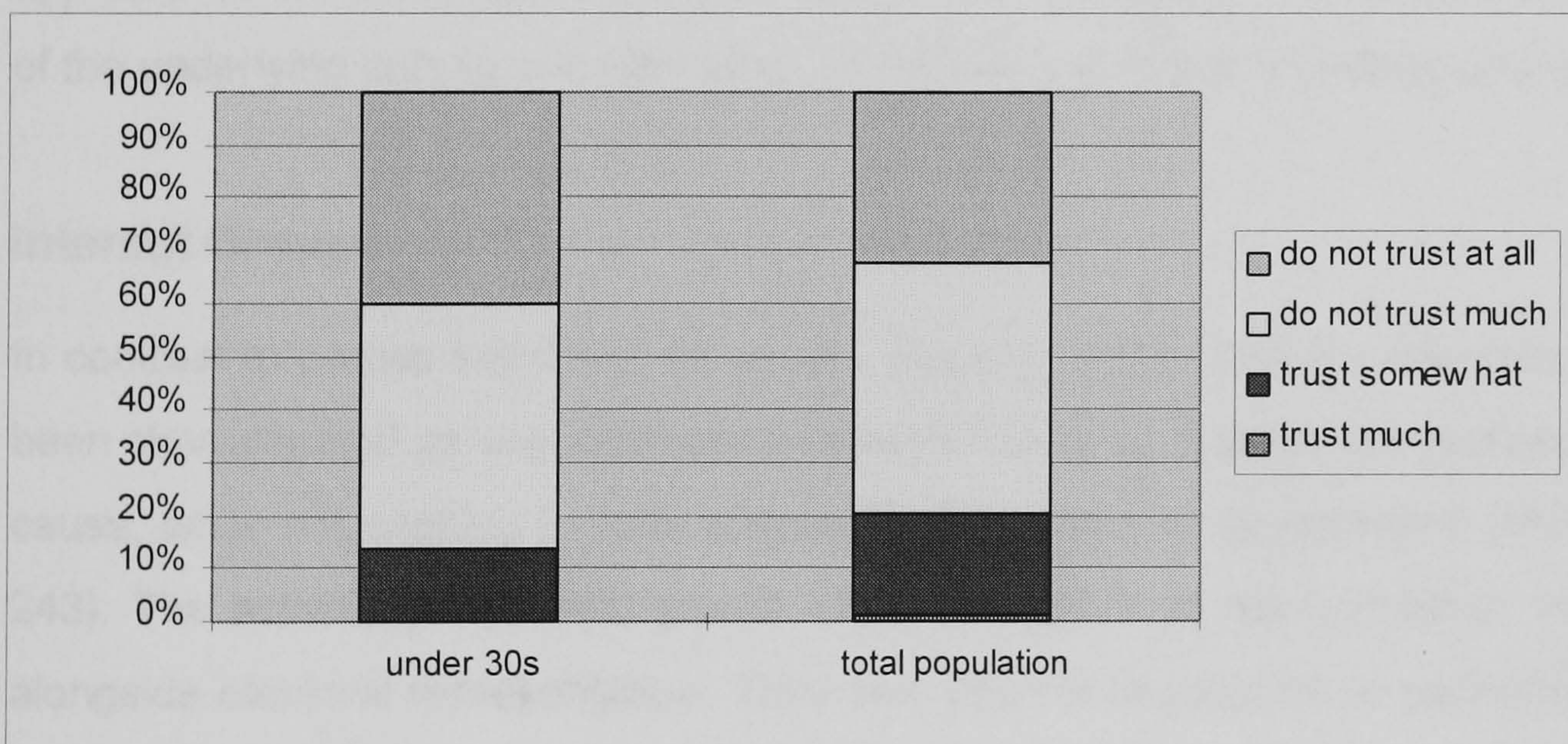
<sup>18</sup> In the case of the ruling GNP, this was eased by Kim Young-sam's complete loss of credibility and influence within his own party. The loss of personal influence resulted in eight competitors (*Korea Herald*, 12 June, 1997).



representatives in the elected councils, the regional and local chairs and selected representatives of the party chapters. Most of the participants at the convention have been hand-picked by the party president, as seen above (*Korea Times*, 20 May, 1997).

Since the power of political parties is concentrated in the centre, parties are weakly organised at the regional and local level. The emphasis is on national politics. One party programme actually states that the party 'provides its members with the opportunity to participate in **national** administration' (NKP, 1996: 29; emphasis added). The actions of politicians can be described as 'deficient representation'. Politicians tend to lose contact with the voters and show little respect for the party under whose banner they were elected (Pai ST, 1992). A large part of the electorate therefore thinks that 'people's opinions are not well represented' in the political system (Park CM, 1997: 9).<sup>19</sup> This inadequacy of parties to perform the tasks of representative democracy discourages citizens from identifying with them (Shin DC, 1995: 25). Trust in parties is therefore low, especially among the young people, as **Figure 3.3** shows.

**Figure 3.3:** Trust in Political Parties:



Source: Shin, Rose, 1997a: 35.

In the 1992 presidential elections, the party affiliation of the candidate was of lesser importance than their personality: for forty-seven per cent of the voters, the 'candidate's

<sup>19</sup> This study is based only on 'working adults', 'students and homemakers are not represented' (Park CM, 1997: 6).



capacity' was most decisive, while 'party affiliation' counted for only fifteen per cent (IKES, 1992: 8). Regarding the interests parties were representing, sixty-nine per cent of Koreans claimed that political parties 'tended to serve the interests of party leaders rather than those of the citizenry' (Shin DC, 1995: 37). Furthermore, nearly three quarters of Koreans thought in the early 1990s that parties did not differ from each other (ibid.). Looking at the proceedings in the National Assembly as described above, this evaluation seems to be rather accurate.

As has been shown before, parties in the Sixth Republic lack continuity as well as a programme leading in turn to low party identification by the population. In order to produce a stable democracy however, political parties need to be based within the population and have close connections to the electorate. Korean parties are based more on the traditional configuration of power than on behavioural patterns of western democracies. The 'party bossism', the concentration of power in the hands of very few people within the party, shows how little political parties in Korea have so far been democratised (Croissant, 1997b: 261). This has to be seen as a major obstacle to democratisation.

The case of political parties in Korea shows clearly the importance of a cultural approach to an understanding of the consolidation process. Korean parties are a result of the underlying culture and not readily comparable with those in other countries.

### **Interest Groups**

In contrast to parties searching for power, interest groups look for influence. They have been characterised as 'organizations seeking to advance a particular sectional interest or cause, while not seeking to form a government or part of government' (McLean, 1996: 243). The activities of interest groups create a system of representation for a minority alongside electoral representation. They also open a channel of co-ordination and communication between the state and social and economic associations (Croissant et al., 1998: 338). Trade unions and employers organisations play an important role in northern European societies. Other, often smaller and more specialised interest groups, seek to advance their interests by lobbying politicians. Due to the previous authoritarian regimes, however, these groups are underdeveloped in Korea.

Until the mid-1980s, Korea was characterised by a state corporatist system (Unger, Chan, 1995: 35). In this model the state recognises only one organisation as the

sole legitimate representative of unions, business and farmers' associations. It is an unequal partnership, often formed in order to help implement state policy on the government's behalf.<sup>20</sup> In Korea, this connection was mainly used to keep labour under tight control. Labour organisations outside this framework were forbidden. Unions were formed within each company, further undermining organisational strength. Union membership in the mid-1980s was therefore at a very low level (Bedeski, 1994: 115). In the months following June 1987, the number of unions expanded rapidly (from 2,725 in June 1987 to 6,142 in December 1988; Schubert, Thompsen, 1997: 255). Within the next ten years, union membership increased by more than sixty per cent (*Korea Herald*, 10 November, 1997).

The fragmentation into company unions, as dictated by the labour law, makes the nation-wide organisation of the movement more difficult. Besides the existing government-friendly *Federation of Korean Trade Unions* (FKTU), a second, more radical group, the *Korean Confederation of Trade Unions* (KCTU), was formed in late 1995. This association of progressive unions was reluctantly legalised in early 1997. The fragmentation into two main groups with different degrees of radicalisation weakens the labour movement and its influence on politics.<sup>21</sup>

Like labour groups, business organisations show a lack of organisational unity. Small and medium enterprises share little interest with the big companies. They often feel exploited and their representational group (*Korean Federation of Small Businesses*, KFSB) has far less influence than its larger counterpart, the *Chaebol*-organisation *Korean Federation of Industries* (KFI; Choi YH, Lee YH, 1995: 56).

Under the regimes of Park and Chun, the KFI had a close relationship with the government and was an essential part in the success of the Korean economy (Clifford, 1994). The influence of the *Chaebol* on the economy has been growing steadily. In 1974,

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<sup>20</sup> Corporatism has been defined by P. Schmitter as 'a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically orientated and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and support' (Schmitter, 1979: 13).

<sup>21</sup> Unions remain male-dominated. Even in companies with a majority of female workers, men are leading the union, sometimes supported by unmarried women. Married women who mostly work out of necessity and thus reluctant to take industrial action are regarded with suspicion although they are the weakest position within the system (Kim SK, 1996; 1997).



the top-ten *Chaebol* produced fifteen per cent of GNP, while in the first half of 1997, their share had risen to more than fifty-seven per cent (Croissant, 1998a: 50). The *Chaebol* needed the support of the government in order to gain access to capital while the government was dependent on financial 'donations' from the big companies (Rhee JC, 1994: 222). The collapse of one of the top-ten *Chaebol*, *Kukje*, in 1985 demonstrated the power of the state over business (Choi YH, Lee YH, 1995: 42).<sup>22</sup>

With growing internationalisation and globalisation of markets, the *Chaebol* have become less dependent on the Korean state for finance and thus gained some leverage. Since the early 1990s efforts for economic deregulation were initiated but the Korean government still remained 'one of the most notorious interventionists' (ibid.: 59). The economic crisis of 1997 brought an end to the close relationship. Reform efforts as proposed by the government were rejected or implemented slowly. The chairman of the KFI, *Daewoo* boss Kim Woo-choong openly defied the president's suggestions for restructuring in 1998 and later failed to solve his company's problems (Beck, 1998: 1034).

Neither unions or business organisations played a role in the negotiation stage of the transition process. Furthermore, the Roh and Kim Young-sam-governments have been reluctant to grant them complete independence from state control. Following the democratic transition, workers demanded their share in the economic development with often violent strikes.<sup>23</sup> This gained Korean workers a reputation of militancy in Korea as much as abroad. Union representatives were not allowed to stand for political office while *Chaebol* owner Chung Ju-yung used his power and money to run for presidency in 1992. This imbalance between business and labour in terms of political representation threatens the consolidation of democracy (Schubert, Thompsen, 1997: 269).

The consolidation of democracy on the representational level is intertwined with the consolidation of democratic institutions. The form of parties and interest groups is determined by democratic consolidation on the behavioural and attitudinal levels. Since on these last two levels, consolidation has not progressed as much as on the institutional level, parties and interest groups are also lagging behind and have not yet consolidated

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<sup>22</sup> The Chun-regime stopped banks from providing further funds for the company, resulting in the collapse of *Kukje*. See Clifford (1994); Choi YH, Lee YH (1995).

<sup>23</sup> In 1989, only an amphibious assault on the *Hyundai*-shipyard in Ulsan by 10,000 government troops put an end to a 109 day sit-down strike (Clifford, 1994: 275). The strike is said to have cost the company 454.5 billion won (US\$ 700 million; Billet, 1990: 307).

(Croissant, 1997a: 19). In Korea the behaviour of elites, such as politicians, has a much larger influence on the formation of parties and interest groups than in many other countries. Thus, we will now turn to the consolidation of democratic behaviour of elites.

#### iv. Behavioural Consolidation

The last two sections have examined the consolidation of democratic structures and institutions in Korea. As has been shown, cultural aspects play an important role in the consolidation process, so in the next two sections, the behaviour and attitudes of Koreans regarding democracy are analysed. Almond and Verba in their study of *Civic Culture* remind us that

*'the development of a stable and effective democratic government depends upon more than the structures of government and politics: it depends upon the orientations that people have to the political process - upon the political culture. Unless the political culture is able to support a democratic system, the chances for the success of that system are slim'* (Almond, Verba, 1963: 498).

The lack of a change in elites during the transition process and in the Sixth Republic compromises the consolidation process. The main actors, having come to political age under the previous authoritarian regimes, now have to embrace democratic values and outlooks and accept democratic procedures. The return to the former regime should be unattractive to all groups (following Linz' definition that democracy is regarded as being the 'only game in town'). Only when the politically relevant actors accept democratic institutions and habits as the best system, despite its flaws and imperfections, is a system consolidated (Linz, 1978: 18).

This section will look at the political elites in Korea, i.e. politicians, the military, the bureaucracy and the students as the main activists in the transition process. In addition, the media will gain some attention in order to assess the freedom of expression and of the press. This will then be followed by an analysis of the democratic beliefs and attitudes of the Korean population in the next section.



## Politicians

It has already been shown that the transition process was dominated by the elite. The same politicians have dominated the Sixth Republic so far. These perennial political actors (especially the 'three Kims') matured under authoritarian regimes and their attitudes and political style are still influenced by these experiences. The rigid party structure and the absolute power of the leader, making the rise of new faces within those parties very difficult, have already been explained. The leading politicians are inclined far less to democratise party organisations and the policy making process than they are to change the overall political system. In order to gain the continued support of the mass citizenry however, party leaders must transform their authoritarian leadership into a democratic one (Shin DC, 1995: 49).

Ideologically most politicians are conservative with very little variation. Kim Dae-jung's reputation as left-leaning is based more on the allegations of his opponents than his outlook as his model of 'mass-participatory economy' based on a market-economy and his actions as president demonstrate (Kim DJ, 1985: 5-9).

The electorate is highly distrustful of politicians from both the government and opposition, with reason as the high number of corruption cases show. More than half of all Koreans believe that their representatives in the National Assembly are doing 'somewhat poorly' or 'very poorly' (Shin, van der Slik, 1997: 48). 'Politicians' corruption' was named as the major obstacle to democratisation by more than forty per cent of Koreans in 1990 (Yang SC, 1994a: 508). The same study found that politicians are considered the most corrupt group or profession in Korea by a large margin (seventy per cent, businessmen had the next highest result with eleven per cent; *ibid.*). Only twenty-two per cent showed some trust in the National Assembly in 1997 (Shin, Rose, 1997a: 35; **Figure 3.1**). Established politicians are nevertheless supported and elected by the citizens. Candidates convicted of corruption and those with frequent changes in party affiliation still have chances of winning. Lim Chang-yuel, for example, the prime minister who had to ask for the (humiliating) IMF-bailout in late 1997, was elected governor of Kyonggi-do eight months later on an opposition party ticket.

The behaviour of politicians and the restrictions of political society together with the citizens' cynicism regarding politicians pose a severe threat to the consolidation process (Shin DC, 1995: 51). New actors are needed urgently but are unlikely to emerge

within this system. As long as the electorate is not changing its behaviour and supports candidates without regard to their policy standing and behaviour the political party system will not be changed (Lee CH, 1997: 179).

### **Military**

After more than thirty years of military rule, the role of the armed forces in the democratisation process was closely scrutinised. The election of a former general in 1987 was a positive sign for the military to retreat to the barracks. Furthermore, Roh Tae-woo granted the military more autonomy in appointing officers in September 1988 (Cheng TJ, Kim EM, 1994: 142). Kim Young-sam, the first civilian president in more than thirty years, started a purge of prominent officers when he came to office in 1993. By replacing high-ranking officers Kim disbanded the power of a secret military association, the so-called *Hanahoe* ('One Mind-Society'). This was an organisation of officers mainly hailing from the Taegu and Kyongsang-areas supporting Chun and Roh and advancing in rank due to this connection (Moran, 1998a: 7). The 'Military Security Command', an internal security service, was downsized and deprived of its role of political surveillance of the population (Paik YC, 1994: 737).

So far, the military has shown no inclination to influence politics (ibid.: 746). The important position of the armed forces within Korean society is guaranteed by the threat of infiltration and outright invasion from the North and the deteriorating situation there. Civilian presidents can therefore not ignore the armed forces and defence budgets remain high (over eighteen per cent of the total budget in 1998; *Chosun Ilbo*, 25 November, 1998). The military budgets have become more transparent and detailed for legislative review in recent years (*Chosun Ilbo*, 2 December, 1999). The population shows high levels of trust in the military. Two thirds of all Koreans have at least some trust in the armed forces, the highest rate among all institutions of the state (Shin, Rose, 1997a: 34). Most Koreans have direct contact with the military either by being drafted or having male family members who have served in the armed forces.

### **Bureaucracy**

While the influence of the military on Korean politics has been reduced, the case of the bureaucracy is more problematic. The structure of the bureaucracy goes back to the



*Choson*-dynasty and is characterised by an authoritarian tendency. This was re-enforced during the Japanese colonial rule. The bureaucracy is still mostly outside the control of the legislative (Croissant, 1997b: 256). For more than thirty years, the citizens had very little influence on the decision-making process. Since most of the civil service has not changed following the transition, the old authoritarian ways are still applied. Corruption is rampant as the high number of cases surfacing proves (see, for example, *Korea Herald*, 29 October, 1998).

The introduction of local autonomy and elections for governors and mayors increased the accountability of the civil service. This will be studied in more detail in the next chapter.

### Students

In the initial stages of the transition, students were at the centre of the demonstrations for more democracy, as has been explained in the last chapter. Student representatives were, however, not included in the negotiation process during the transition stage. The future form of government was decided by the political elites of the country without their involvement. Since the democratic transition, the radicalism of the students of the 1980s has been replaced by far more individualistic behaviour combined with a feeling of disillusion and alienation. Voting rates are the lowest among students in the 1990s, an expression of apathy and cynicism among the younger generation (Im DG, 1996: 207). Studies found that higher education usually means less support for democracy (Shin, van der Slik, 1997: 52). Student demonstrations have become rare but can still erupt violently.<sup>24</sup> Among the radical students, support for North Korea and its ideology is still high.

For the consolidation of democracy, the apathy and cynicism among the young population is a bad sign. The old-style politicians are disillusioning and alienating future generations of citizens. More than half of the under thirty-year-olds think they have little influence on the government and one in ten thinks that they have no influence at all (Shin, Rose, 1997a: 15).

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example, the occupation of the campus of *Yonsei*-University by the radical *Hanchongnyong*-group in August 1996 (*Korea Herald*, 21 August, 1996).

### Media and the Freedom of the Press

Journalists can play an important role in the consolidation process. The responsible use of the media to promote democracy and act within a democratic context is indispensable.<sup>25</sup> Previous experiences in Korea illustrate this. In 1960,

*'press freedom was abused so vastly that fake reporters committed corruptions and the press irresponsibly attacked the government ... the press gave fatal damages to the Second Republic of Korea'* (Choi WY, 1997: 372).

In the Sixth Republic, the freedom of the press is guaranteed in the constitution within the framework of the National Security Law. The media, however, are showing some degree of self-restraint that has increased since 1987 (Han SJ, 1997: 88). They have become increasingly conservative in their outlook (ibid.: 87). Direct government interference has been reduced but journalists often reproduce government statements without checking the facts (Shim JH, 1998). During election campaigns, main foci are analyses of candidate's and parties' chances of success, with far less interest in election pledges and policies (Kim HK, 1997: 142).

When asked 'today we have freedom of speech in Korea', only twenty-seven per cent of Koreans agreed (Helgesen, 1998: 87). Due to the anti-Communist mood in the country, anything remotely leftist is not published. The owners of the media, mostly from the *Chaebol*, have a strong influence on contents, so reports critical of the big companies have problems finding a publisher. 'Stories that will please the owners' will help the author's career (Shim JH, 1998). Since most papers are highly dependent on advertisements they try to placate potential customers interfering with their fairness. Objectivity is often compromised for 'fairness' (or in favour of nationalistic feelings).<sup>26</sup>

Koreans show considerable trust in what they read and hear in the media. In the early 1990s, one in four had confidence in the media and half showed neither stronger nor weaker trust (*Jung-Ang Daily News*, 1992: 40). In the early stages of the IMF-crisis, the media reacted with a wave of nationalism and mass campaigns (such as 'buy

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<sup>25</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville in 1840 already pointed out the importance of newspapers (Tocqueville, 1976, Vol. II: 111-114).

<sup>26</sup> Avar (1998) is a study of the objectivity of the Korean press, especially towards foreigners; Kim KD describes incidents of press-partiality during the 1988-Olympics (1993: 173).



national'-campaigns and collecting gold in order to rescue and refill the nation's foreign exchange reserve) but giving very little background information regarding the origins and causes of the crisis (own observation; cf. Chan, 1999).

The number of regional newspapers has increased in the 1990s, as did local television and radio stations. Smaller, local papers have more financial problems than national papers. Local papers have been accused of fanning regionalism in order to appeal to readers (*Korea Times*, 15 January, 1999; 5 February, 1999). Two of the three main television-stations are owned by the government. The opposition complains that the government gets more coverage in the media than the opposition. President Kim Dae-jung used his position to introduce 'direct democracy' in the form of televised 'town-hall meetings' where a selected group of journalists asks him (prepared) questions in front of a selected audience.

Television has become an important factor to the degree that 'television is the campaign' (Hague et al., 1998: 74). Television-debates between the main contenders have emerged as the main campaign activities. This has been praised since it reduced the number of outdoor rallies (where attendants were often paid) and thus the campaign costs. Smaller candidates however, lose out: in the 1997 presidential campaign the debate included the three main contenders but not four other candidates. Often, the presentation became pure entertainment, for example, when the wives of the candidates were questioned in their bedrooms about their courtship before marriage (Shim JH, 1997; own observation).

Television debates for elections other than presidential are problematic since the candidates' constituencies are much smaller. Before the local elections in June 1998, the main candidates for a gubernatorial position had televised debates but did not gain wide attention (partly due to the broadcasting time of 11 am). For the parties, debates on television reduce the need for local canvassing, thus lessening further direct contact with the party members and voters.

Since the beginning of the Sixth Republic, the media have not yet found an independent position within Korean society, free from direct and indirect influence from the government and big business. Furthermore, they have to live up to the high expectations of the citizens and inform in a free and unconstrained way. As with the other elite groups this is hindered by cultural and structural constraints.

The Korean political scientist Han Sungjoo detects a discrepancy in the development of output and input institutions in Korea (Han SJ, 1989a: 278). While output institutions like the bureaucracy and the military are overdeveloped, input institutions such as political parties and civic groups are underdeveloped. The civil service is changing slowly to show more accountability but corruption is still rampant, as it is among politicians. A positive aspect of developments in the last ten years is that the military has shown no inclination to return to politics. Due to the threat from the North it remains a powerful actor in the background. Politicians regard politics as a means to gain personal power and show little connection to their constituents. The media has yet to find a balance between independence from the government, advertising customers and their owners. The withdrawal of the former champions of democratisation, students and labour, from politics to pursue more individualistic goals increases the imbalance between input and output institutions. New civil groups are still struggling to find their role in society. These findings show that on the behavioural level the democratic consolidation in Korea still shows serious deficiencies.

### **v. Attitudinal Consolidation**

Chapter One has already pointed out that elite attitudes are resting within those of the general population, though not necessarily in line with it. Korean politicians are far more conservative and corrupt than the average citizen would prefer but nevertheless they are elected. The resulting high levels of apathy and cynicism among citizens has already been described (Park CM, 1997: 11).

#### **Democratic Beliefs**

The democratisation of the society follows on from the democratisation of the state (Friedman, 1994: 31). This process, as studies of democracies of the 'second wave' such as Germany have shown, can take a much longer time (Baker et al., 1981: 26). The evolution of a new democratic political culture, the emergence of new social and political groups, and the formation of new habits are necessary (Diamond, 1996: 33). Only when the central values and positions of democracy are supported by a large majority of the citizens can a political system be called consolidated (Merkel, 1996: 39).



Recent surveys among Koreans regarding democratic values, like the *Korea Barometer Survey*, find contradictory results (Shin, Rose, 1997a; 1998). There is wide support for the values of democracy in principle (86%) but only one third of Koreans embrace all the necessary institutions and processes required of a democratic regime (Shin DC, 1998: 11). Although as many as nine out of ten Koreans are in favour of a multi-party system, only thirty-eight per cent are in favour of a system with free competition between several parties (Shin DC, 1995: 30-31).

This paradoxical situation regarding the support for democracy can be explained by the ambivalent character of contemporary Korean society. The continuity of the old social system still appears in the values and structures of group life (Bellah, 1971: 385). Koreans try to find a balance between imported values, such as democracy, and their own time-honoured cultural heritage (Chu et al., 1993: 275). This allows for both democratic and authoritarian values to co-exist at the same time (Shin DC, 1998: 8). Chu et al. in their study of the values of Koreans (and Chinese) found that a large majority of Koreans supported traditional values that contradict democratic principles.

The ideas of liberty and freedom expressed in liberal democracy collide with the notion of submission to authority that is supported by eighty per cent of Koreans (Chu et al., 1993: 222). Even more Koreans (87.5%) adhered to the notion of 'tolerance, propriety and deference', describing the tolerance of injustice, the respect for hierarchical order, and the submission to different or opposing views (ibid.: 221). The feeling that 'harmony is precious' was shared by nearly all Koreans (97.3%; ibid.: 220). This contradicts the democratic notion of plurality and diversity. Koreans, however, believe that too many competing groups and opinions would undermine social harmony and order (more than half agree, and fifteen per cent agree strongly; Shin, Rose, 1997a: 20).

The rule of law has not been accepted fully by many Koreans. Traditionally, the law was used as an instrument of ruling and controlling the people. It was never regarded as beneficial and protective (Hahm PC, 1967: 165). The disregard of the law is obvious when looking at the traffic situation in the streets of Korea but also explains the high rate of corruption. Over half of the Korean population thought in 1991 that 'those who follow rules and principles in society lose more' and even more did not consider law an 'effective means to resolve social problems' (*Jung-Ang Daily News*, 1992: 22-24). In times of crisis, many Koreans think that the president should not be confined by 'the bounds of law in pursuing public policy' (seventy-one per cent agree with this notion;

Shin, Rose, 1998: 21). This shows both the high appraisal of the leader and the low regard for law among Koreans.

These paradoxes regarding the attitudes and perspectives towards democracy can be explained by the socialisation process in Korea. Political socialisation has been defined as 'the process which by political cultures are formed, maintained, and changed' (Almond, Powell, 1978: 79). In Korea, Confucian values are passed on within the family and later taught in school. Primary and middle schools teach 'moral education' from Year 3 to Year 10 for two hours a week (Moon YL, 1991: 41). In these classes proper behaviour and morals are covered, following Confucian teachings (Helgesen, 1998). Values like filial piety, hierarchy and subordination to authority are incorporated in these classes. It has already been mentioned that the rigid exam system endorses the cramming of data and disapproves of individuality and free thinking, attitudes fostering liberal democracy. The education system is still under the influence of traditional thinkers implying that schools 'should teach their students how to determine right from wrong in all matters' (An BJ, 1998: 37). The Confucian notion of the 'right way' creates a black-and-white worldview that makes compromise nearly impossible. The idea of political competition and compromise however, is at the heart of the democratic process (Dahl, 1971: 6).

In a society where the community is favoured and individualism denigrated, individual action is discouraged. This has limiting effects on the development of civil society and democracy as a whole.

### **Civil Society**

It has been argued that a society comprised of a wide variety of active 'secondary associations' provides the basis for the diversity of interests and opinions that makes a democracy sustainable (Hirst, 1997: 116). Over eighty per cent of Koreans are member in at least one civic association, more than half in at least two (Shin DC, 1995: 42). Within this group, however, fifty-six per cent are member of a fraternity (mainly alumni groups) and forty-seven per cent of a religious group (ibid.). Fraternity groups are a feature of the traditional political culture. Both groups have little influence on and interest in the development of democracy.

As with the development of political parties, Korea's traditional culture plays an important part in the development of civil groups. The backbone of Korean culture is the



family and its hierarchical order. School and regional ties also play an important role. In sociology, a 'tie' has been described as a

*'combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie'* (Granovetter, 1973: 1378).

Strong ties reduce the need for networks outside close circles. They also generate local cohesion and overall fragmentation of the country, as the example of regionalism in Korea shows. Weak ties, not primarily based on family relationships, connect individuals with the community and other smaller groups and thus have shown a more positive influence on civil society. Korean society is 'made up of strong but closed social networks' - the family - which weakens the formation of civil society (Gibson, 1998: 6).

In his seminal study of Korea called *The Politics of the Vortex*, Gregory Henderson asserts that Korea's long-sustained unity and homogeneity produced a mass society that is responsible for a high degree of centralisation and a weak civil society (1968). Henderson defines a 'mass society' as

*'a society lacking in the formation of strong institutions or voluntary associations between village and throne; a society that knows little of castle town, feudal lord and court, semi-independent merchant societies, city-states, guilds, or classes cohesive enough to be centers of independent stance and action in the polity'* (1968: 4).

The use of 'mass society' by Henderson in the Korean context has been criticised.<sup>27</sup> The theory of mass society is a model of modern societies in the western world where industrialisation produces mass conditions such as undefined organisation, no permanent loyalty, few unifying values and social isolation.<sup>28</sup> It takes an elitist approach which is biased against the masses. The theory of mass society has been criticised as 'an essentially antidemocratic argument' since the masses are seen as a threat to democratic stability given their susceptibility to manipulation by elites and totalitarianism (Cumings, 1974: 66-67).

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<sup>27</sup> Especially by Cumings (1974) and Kihl YW (1984: 109). Popular in the 1950s and 1960s, the concept is rarely used in today's political discourse, mainly due to its poor definition (McLean, 1996: 315).

<sup>28</sup> On the political theory of mass society see Kornhauser (1959).

There are some differences in the use of the concept of mass society between Henderson and other theorists. While the analysts of an industrial mass society examined psychological attributes of human beings, Henderson stresses the political aspect. In addition, Henderson detects a mass society not only in modern Korea but also during the *Choson*-dynasty and the Japanese occupation, overstretching his model.<sup>29</sup>

According to Henderson, the result of the Korean mass society is 'a pattern of extreme centripetal dynamics' where everything had to be played out at the centre of highest authority. This leads to a 'vortex' in Korea where a

*'vertiginous updraft tends to suck all components from each other before they cohere on lower levels and tends to propel them in atomized form toward the power apex'* (Henderson, 1968: 5).

As a result 'intermediary groupings find it difficult to achieve aggregation' which is necessary for the development of a vivid civil society (ibid.). The developments of Korean movements in the 1980s and 1990s illustrate this.

Under the military regimes, a change in the political system was the main demand of social movements. Once this was achieved in 1987, the number of civil movements has increased rapidly (Han SJ, 1997: 92; Kim YR, 1999; Lee SH, 1993: 359). The major actors are no longer students and workers but Koreans with post-materialistic goals such as environmentalists, consumers and women (Lee SJ, 1996: 2).<sup>30</sup> The focus of politics shifted back from civil society to political society. Politicians and political parties took over the political arena while the progressive movements demanding radical change in the political and economic system active in the 1980s lost their driving force. The new civil groups are working within the more democratic framework of the Sixth Republic but the structure of their membership remains problematic: they consist mainly of members of the urban elite (middle class, university educated), representing only a part of the population (Lee SH, 1993: 364). Participants are often interested in movements in terms

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<sup>29</sup> Cumings shows contradictions in Henderson's argument such as the existence/non-existence of classes in Korea (1974: 73).

<sup>30</sup> Out of some 3,200 non-governmental organisations in 1997, fifty-six per cent were founded since 1987, including ninety-one per cent of the environmental and eighty-two of the human rights groups (Han SJ, 1997: 92).



of an 'idea', not in terms of their direct material interest (Lee SJ, 1996: 5).<sup>31</sup> Often, these groups have 'more generals than foot-soldiers' due to the reluctance of many Koreans to join a group (Soh YA, 1999: 99). Ties with local groups remain weak and non-constant and labour and radicals are mostly excluded.

Christian congregations are an interesting case of social ties in Korea and also of the indigenisation of a foreign concept by Koreans. About thirty per cent of Koreans claim to be Christians but there is a very low level of hierarchy and organisation on a level higher than the immediate group or parish (see also Kim KO, 1998: 31-32).<sup>32</sup> The religious gatherings also have a strong social component. People with similar regional or economic background gather every Sunday for prayer and worship. The number of PhDs in the congregation can be a point of attracting new patrons (Kim KO, 1993: 15). Believers try to convince their friends and neighbours to come to church with them (and also the odd foreigner they meet). Korean Christian groups can therefore be described as 'a cultural movement to build on a religious community based upon existing social relationships' (ibid.: 16). Bible study groups and excursions for intensive prayers have become social occasions, and the ties with one's group are not severed when one member moves to a different place.<sup>33</sup> Although being of Christian faith, many Koreans continue to perform ancestor rituals, the backbone of Confucianism (albeit in a slightly changed form with prayers being offered; Moon OP, 1998: 152; Helgesen, 1998: 103).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> In the early 1990s for example, nearly two hundred groups of different backgrounds united in their opposition against the opening of the Korean rice market to foreign imports (Croissant, 1998b: 17).

<sup>32</sup> In this context it is interesting that abortion is no issue in Korea. Aborting a (female) foetus is common: according to 'official surveys' forty-four per cent of women between fifteen and forty-nine have experienced at least one abortion (abortion is illegal with few exemptions such as pregnancies among adolescents and as a result of rape; *Korea Herald*, 18 December, 1998). Son-preference leads to one of the most unbalanced gender ratios in the world (127 boys are born for 100 girls, a 'natural' ratio is 103-106 boys to 100 girls; Luyken, 1998).

<sup>33</sup> A study about churches in southern Seoul showed that less one third of their members were living in the local area around the church (Kim KO, 1993: 10). My host family drove for ninety minutes each way twice a week to attend church in a suburb of Seoul where they used to live. Another friend went to three services every Sunday: in the morning with her parents at a local church, then she met with her friends at a different place, and in the evening attended a service with a minister she knew from her time at university. Abroad, a national flavour is added: "As a Korean, you should come to a Korean church" in the words of a Korean pastor in northern England (personal communication).

<sup>34</sup> When Christianity was first introduced to Korea in the 18th and early 19th century by Catholic missionaries, converted Koreans were expected to destroy the tablets of their ancestors.

In the early 1990s, over eighty per cent of Koreans were 'proud of ancestor worship' (Chu et al., 1993: 218). This shows the lingering influence of Confucianism values underlying Korean culture and its complementarity with other religions.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Christian groups were at the centre of (peaceful) opposition against the military regime because they were outside the reach of government control. The role of churches in the opposition has ceased since 1987. Christians have turned inward to their own problems. The number of Christians among politicians and other activists however, is higher than among the general population (Kim Dae-jung and Kim Young-sam both are Christians as are many politicians at the local level; see Chapter Five).

The attitudinal consolidation of democracy in Korea still shows several severe shortcomings. The prevailing influence of Confucianism that is perpetuated through the socialisation process at home and in school often contradicts democratic values. The stress of family and hierarchy minimises individuality and personal initiative. This, in turn, leads to low rates of political participation as will be seen later.

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The Korean government saw this as a direct threat against the dynasty and therefore persecuted Christians (Eckert et al., 1990: 170).



## Summary

This chapter analysed the transition and the consolidation process in Korea since 1985. While the transition ran relatively smoothly the consolidation stage is taking more time and faces more obstacles. In the last decade, the culture and attitudes of Koreans have not changed as fast as the political system.

Democratic institutions have been established and work within the framework of the traditional culture. This implies that power is vested in the position of the president, threatening equal relations between executive, legislative and judiciary. The election system is still under discussion, influenced by power games between individual actors. Local autonomy has yet to be filled with meaning since its re-introduction in the Sixth Republic. This will be studied in the next chapter.

The political arena is still dominated by politicians of the old school. Political parties have not consolidated as organs of interest representation of one group, currently they serve only as a power base for one politician. The government shows a high degree of reluctance to grant more independence to interest groups. The economic crisis of 1997 brought some progress in this area but the system is still limiting the representation of labour.

The low trust in politicians and political parties among the electorate has already been shown. Legislative and bureaucracy are marred by high levels of corruption, leaving citizens with a low feeling of efficacy. More than half of Koreans thought ordinary people had only little or no influence on the government (Shin, Rose, 1997a: 15). The under-thirties were more pessimistic than the over-sixties, fifty-one per cent of the former thought they had little influence, while fifty-four per cent of the latter felt they had some influence. Civil society has been slow to develop, again due to cultural restraints. The main actors of the transition process - labour, students and Christians - have retreated from politics and left a vacuum that has yet to be filled by civic groups.

During the Kim Young-sam-government, levels of 'desire for democratic change' have been stable while 'satisfaction with democracy' and belief in the 'suitability of democracy' have actually declined (Shin DC, 1998: 20). This has to be connected with the reduced levels of popularity of the president (from over ninety per cent to thirteen).

The number of Koreans satisfied with the way democracy works is roughly similar to the percentage of those who are not very satisfied (Shin, Rose, 1997a: 22). In the eyes of many Koreans, even more than ten years after the transition democracy still seems to be a distant goal. Nine out of ten Koreans thought that the political system should be made more democratic (Rose, Shin, Munro, 1999: 164). In 1998, under the influence of the economic down-turn, two-thirds thought that economic development was more important than democratisation. The political process was supported by only eight per cent and a quarter found economy and democracy equally important (Shin, Rose, 1998: 35). Looking at these findings, the Korean political scientist Shin Doh Chull concludes 'that Korean support for democracy is a mile wide but only a few inches deep' (Shin DC, 1998: 13).

Given this data, an inquiry into political activities will be interesting, so Chapter Five will turn to politicians at the local level. Before this, though, the next chapter will look at the structural changes in the democratisation process, and here in particular at the local autonomy system.



## **Chapter Four: Decentralisation in Korea: Developments in Local Government**

Decentralisation is a good example of the interdependence of structural and cultural factors in the analysis of democratisation. Local autonomy was introduced to the Republic of Korea in the first constitution of 1948. In reality, however, the centuries-old tradition of centralised rule blocked decentralisation and the distribution of power to lower levels. After some disappointing experiences with local autonomy in the 1950s, there was a thirty-year-hiatus in the promotion of local autonomy. The military regimes of Park and Chun were again characterised by centralised rule with very little influence from the local level.

The last chapters have shown that the process of democratisation in Korea was mainly initiated from the top after initial pressure from the masses. During the transition stage the population was largely excluded but in order to consolidate democracy, the people as a whole have to be included. As Kihl Young Whan aptly points out,

*'the challenge of democratic reform in Post-Confucian Korea is to turn the direction of the reform around, the reform led not only from "above" but also from "below"'* (Kihl YW, 1995: 460).

Local autonomy was one of the main demands both before and during the transition to democracy but its implementation has been slow. Local autonomy with the election of assemblies and the chiefs of the executives has only been fully achieved since 1995, seven years after the implementation of the 1988 Local Autonomy Act. There has been constant talk in political circles about changes in the system, such as decreasing the number of councillors and the number of tiers in the administrative structure, depending on the overall political and economical situation (*Korea Times*, 23 February, 1995; *Korea Herald*, 28 June, 1996; 9 July, 1998). Korean politicians have always stressed the importance of local autonomy for democracy but the realisation of this goal has been slow. In his inauguration speech ten years after the promulgation of the Local Autonomy Act, Kim Dae-jung still felt the need to promise that 'a large portion of the power and functions that were concentrated in the central government will be transferred to private and local autonomous organizations' (Kim DJ, 1998b).

The population is less enthusiastic about local autonomy as the (relative) low turn-out in local elections shows (only sixty-eight per cent in 1995, fifty-one per cent in 1998).<sup>1</sup> Here, a difference in perception can be found: politicians are interested in political decentralisation, such as the election of local councils and the heads of the executive. The population on the other side is interested in changes in the administrative side of decentralisation, i.e. the power of the bureaucracy (Im SB, 1996: 41).

This chapter will look at both aspects, beginning with the administration and later turning to assemblies. A four-month internship with the administrations of Kyonggi province, Suwon city and Hwasong county provided the author with first-hand experience of local administration. The chapter will begin with a review of the relevance of decentralisation for the consolidation of democracy in the Korean context. Next, the history and structure of Korean administration and assemblies will be presented. The bureaucracy and their attitudes regarding local autonomy will also be advanced followed by an examination of the relationships between the different levels of administration. The most important aspect in this context is the relationship between the central government and lower levels of bureaucracy since, in this area, the largest changes have to be anticipated during the process of decentralisation. Connections between provincial and lower-level administrations and intermunicipal and provincial co-operation and competition are also mentioned. This will be followed by an analysis of the interaction between local administration and the population. Finally, the interaction between the executive and legislative at the provincial and local level is analysed. As we will see the introduction of local autonomy amounted to a replication of the (flawed) structure of national government: there is a popular elected council (comparable to the National Assembly) but the bureaucracy is headed by an elected governor or mayor who is not responsible to the council (like the president; Jee BM, 1993: 333).

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<sup>1</sup> The local elections in England in May 1999 had a turn-out of less than thirty per cent.



## I. The Relevance of Decentralisation for Democratic Consolidation

Before turning to the details of local autonomy in Korea, the relevance of the concept of decentralisation will be recapitulated and applied to the case of Korea. Decentralisation stimulates all four levels of the consolidation of democracy. With decentralisation, democracy is introduced to the grass-roots level. On the attitudinal level, a greater sense of involvement develops among a population enabled to influence local affairs. Local councils increase people's involvement in local politics. The heads of local governments become accountable to the electorate, thus developing an interest in ensuring that the bureaucracy will be more accessible and accommodating to the public. This, in combination with the increase in the number of elected councillors, supports behavioural consolidation (section V in this chapter). In addition, the bureaucracy, accustomed to centralised hierarchical rule, now has to work within the framework of democratic control through the councils and the elected head of the administration (section IV). This ideally leads to an increase in the commitment of officials to democracy, another element of behavioural consolidation (Albrow, 1970: 117). On the representational level, the rise in the number of people becoming involved through parties and interest groups can be observed (sections IV and V). Elections result in greater accountability of the administration, including the bureaucracy, leading to democratic consolidation on the institutional level.

Korea has already been described as a highly centralised administrative system with hierarchical control. The bureaucracy has been characterised as the 'key link between the leadership and the public' and thus 'far more important than political parties or the National Assembly' (Kim PS, 1993: 229). Decentralisation, ideally, will bring more democratic functions to the lower administrative levels, providing greater transparency and accountability of the administration. In addition, the chances of participation in the decision-making process will increase for a large part of the population. This will have the above mentioned positive effects on the consolidation of democracy, analysed in detail later.

Decentralisation is supported by Henderson as a means for the development of democracy in Korea (1968). In Henderson's hypothesis, the mass society he detected in

Korea creates a 'vortex of power'. This vortex is characterised by 'extreme centripetal dynamics' with all decisions made at the centre of highest authority (as described in the previous chapter). Henderson suggests 'cohesion through decentralization' as a solution to disperse the vortex (ibid.: 368). In his view, decentralisation in Korea will gradually remove the pressure from the vortex and lead to a pluralist society. Thirty years after the publication of his theory and ten years after the introduction of the Local Autonomy Act, it has become clear that this will be a very gradual process indeed, as will be shown in this chapter.

### **Positive and Negative Aspects of Decentralisation**

Chapter One has already demonstrated that three concepts of decentralisation have to be distinguished: economic, political and administrative decentralisation. In the context of democratic consolidation, the last two are of greater interest than economic decentralisation which will be disregarded here.

Political decentralisation has gained most attention in the literature and among Korean politicians. The opening of subnational governments to electoral competition and the introduction of a further level of elections to the Korean system symbolises local democratisation (Jung YD, 1987: 535). J.S. Mill's notion of local autonomy as a 'school of democracy' can be found in the statements of Korean politicians (*Korea Herald*, 16 June, 1996). As President Roh Tae-woo said in 1991:

*'self-government and self-regulation by residents of local communities are not only the basis for democracy but also encourage public participation, the driving force behind democratic development'* (Ahn, MacManus, Palley, 1995: 1).

The next president, Kim Young-sam, praised local autonomy as 'grassroots democracy' (*Korea Times*, 28 June, 1995a). Kim Dae-jung in his inauguration-speech in 1998 also called for more local autonomy and changes within the *Ministry of Home Affairs* (Kim DJ, 1998b; see also *Korea Herald*, 21 March, 1998).

In some political systems, such as that found in Germany, subnational governments have the authority to act as a check on the powers of the central government and can overthrow decisions of the central (federal) government. The Korean system does not include this provision so that the local and provincial governments cannot serve as a



means of 'checks and balances' to the central government. Political decentralisation has been implemented with considerable restrictions and the existing uneven balance of power favouring the executive has not been changed by the introduction of councils at lower levels. Local assemblies can however, control and check the provincial and local administration. While there has been a lot of talk about political decentralisation the actual effects have been limited. Most of the changes since the implementation of local autonomy have been at the administrative level.

Administrative decentralisation has also been referred to as the deconcentration of power denoting that the capacity of decision-making is shifted from the central government to lower levels (Jung YD, 1987: 526). This will increase government efficiency through a cut in red tape and the use of local expertise (Wolman, 1990: 32). Furthermore, the participation of citizens is encouraged. Closer contact between government officials and local population allows both sides to obtain better information to formulate more realistic and efficient plans for government projects and programmes (Rondinelli, Cheema, 1983: 15). The co-ordination between local governments and agencies of central and local government will become more effective. These measures will lead to a higher degree of satisfaction among the population. The effects of the decentralising efforts in Korea will be described in more depth later in this chapter.

While often the positive effects of decentralisation on democracy are stressed it has to be remembered that decentralisation can be practised in the absence of local democracy. In this case, the local administration is not accountable to the citizenry through elections but to the central government (Fesler, 1965: 545; Langrod, 1953: 25). Some scholars, such as Fesler, warn therefore of 'illusionary decentralisation' where 'formal powers or administrative arrangements [are] purportedly decentralist but politically controlled or influenced by the center' (Fesler, 1965: 555).

Events following the local elections in 1998 exposed signs of this phenomenon in Korea. Within four weeks of the elections, more than fifteen per cent of elected mayors and heads of executive had changed their party affiliation to that of the ruling party (*Korea Times*, 28 July, 1998).<sup>2</sup> The central government used its levers to control the lower levels of government, contradicting its own insistence on autonomy (ibid.). Resis-

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<sup>2</sup> One politician explained: 'I thought this would be the best for the people who voted for me' (*Korea Times*, 28 July, 1998).

tance against local autonomy comes from the political side, i.e. the national government, and also from the central administration used in this control. The financial situation is an important issue in this context and will be examined later in more detail. Furthermore, local authorities face a shortage of manpower since the central administration attracts the most talented and best-educated public servants (Henderson's "vortex").

Decentralisation has also been contested on grounds that local government is parochial and accommodates local differences and separatism. Democracy on the other hand, is thought to be concerned with the nation-state, equality and uniformity and thus 'moves inevitably and by its very essence towards centralization', contesting the notion of decentralisation (Langrod, 1953: 28). This argument was popular in the 1950s and 1960s, when central government and centralised planning were praised as 'promoting "modernization"' and 'accelerating social and political change' by international agencies such as the *World Bank* (Rondinelli, Cheema, 1983: 10; Conyers, 1983). Korea under Park Chung-hee also followed this path of development, supported by the already existing centralised structure. For some critics it seemed that with the introduction of local autonomy regionalism increased in Korea.<sup>3</sup> A distinction has to be made between promoting the interests of one region in order to attract economic interests and cultivate cultural identity on one hand and the use of regional feelings for political ends on the other. The latter began to show its force in the 1980s, before the introduction of local autonomy (Cho KS, 1998: 138).

Another negative side of decentralisation is a possible increase in corruption, especially in places like Korea where corruption has already been thriving (Park HB, 1994: 193; Moran, 1998b). The (lack of) competence of local politicians and officials can also limit the positive effects of the process. Working for a local administration has little prestigious value for Koreans and is therefore shunned. Highly qualified applicants enter the central administrative service in Seoul. At the local level, power can be more concentrated in the hands of a few and thus more elitist (Griffin, 1981: 225). While Griffin was referring mainly to newly independent states in the 1960s and 1970s, in some parts of rural Korea during the 1980s local elites were composed of men with a *Yangban*-family

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<sup>3</sup> In May 1996, nearly twenty per cent of Koreans saw an increase in the 'emergence of conflict within and between regions' (Im SB, 1996: 41). See also Lee Hyung (1995) and Lee DG (1995: 42).



background, regardless of how much the rest of the country had changed (Kim KO, 1996b: 139).

Having established the relevance of decentralisation for the consolidation of democracy in Korea and the merits and demerits of local autonomy, this thesis now turns to local government in Korea.

## II. History and Structure of Local Government

In order to understand the current centralised structure of local government, a brief revision of the history of local government is necessary. Korean administration is influenced by two different traditions. The centuries-old Confucian pattern of administration was mixed with a western-rational approach by the Japanese colonial rulers. The effect of the bureaucracy on economic development has been widely studied but the administration, its structure and organisation has found little attention in the literature (Woo-Cummings, 1995: 142).<sup>4</sup> This chapter will therefore present the history and structure of provincial and local administration and the respective assemblies.

### i. History of Local Government

As part of the historical overview in Chapter Two, the governmental system of Korea under the *Choson*-dynasty has already been portrayed. The country was administered by magistrates who were sent from the capital to local outposts. Since these administrators stayed only for a short period of time in order to prevent the development of local power bases, there was a high fluctuation of bureaucrats in the provinces. The district magistrates relied heavily on locally recruited clerks, the so-called *ajon*. This position could be inherited but did not come with an income from the state treasury. The *ajon* therefore had to gain their income through fee collection, bribes and extortion. They were 'part of the system of institutionalized corruption' (Palais, 1975: 13).

In the closing years of the *Choson*-dynasty, the system was characterised by a high level of taxation implemented by the central government in Seoul. These taxes were increased by the rampant corruption and extortion of local authorities, increasing their own wealth. In the late 1890s, a western traveller described the peasants in Korea as having 'neither rights nor privileges, except that of being the ultimate sponge' (Bishop,

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<sup>4</sup> For economic development see, for example, Amsden (1989); Cho YJ (1997). There are a few publications in Korean about the bureaucracy in general, most notably the *Korean Journal of Public Administration*.



1970: 329). The enormous burden on peasants led to unrest and uprisings in the country-side (the largest being the *Tonghak*-rebellion of 1894).

Following the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910, the administration was modernised. Japan herself in the late 19th century had introduced an administrative system based on western models, in particular that of Prussia (Steiner, 1965: 35). This mode of administration was imported into Korea. The existing division into provinces and districts was maintained as was the hierarchical structure of the bureaucracy but the latter was expanded rapidly.<sup>5</sup> The Japanese rulers modernised and expanded the administration of Korea, but only for the purposes of the colonial masters with little interest in the Korean population. Police and tax affairs were under the control of the provincial governors. The local officials were appointed by the governor-general or, in the case of the lower echelons, by the respective provincial governor. While local administration in traditional Korea has been relatively independent it now came under the rule of the central administration (Eckert et al., 1990: 258). Since all local officials were thus also members of the central civil service, the Japanese penetration was far-reaching and covered the whole country.

In 1920, in the aftermath of the *March First Independence Movement*, the Japanese government-general introduced a new local administrative system providing the establishment of advisory bodies nationally. These assemblies, however, had no capability to check the bureaucracy serving only as advisory organs to the governors (Kim HK, 1973: 44). In April 1933, these provincial councils became self-governing bodies. One month later, general elections for those councils were held throughout the country. The voting regulations excluded the vast majority of the Korean population: voters had to be at least twenty-five years of age, male, resident in the province for at least one year, of independent means and paying a stated minimum in local taxes. Only two-thirds of council members were elected, the rest were appointed, mostly from resident Japanese. In towns and townships the tax requirements were reduced. Still, very few Koreans were eligible to vote.

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<sup>5</sup> In 1910, the Government-General of Korea had about 10,000 officials, while there were more than 87,000 in 1937. The majority of those bureaucrats were Japanese, especially in the higher positions (Eckert et al., 1990: 257). The increase in military and civilian police from 6,200 in 1910 to over 60,000 in 1941 is even more impressive (ibid.: 259).

After liberation in 1945, the American Military Government relied on the nearly forty thousand Koreans who were qualified as government officials for administration of the southern part of the peninsula (Woo-Cumings, 1995: 148). Most of the bureaucrats continued to work in their positions after the establishment of the Republic of Korea in 1948 (Reeve, 1963: 39). The use of Japanese administrative methods was maintained. At the time of the establishment of the First Republic in 1948, Korea could look back at a 'legacy of a long tradition of effective bureaucracy, in the *ancien regime* and during colonial rule' but only limited experience with elected councils (Woo-Cumings, 1995: 144).

During the First Republic, local autonomy was overshadowed by the struggle for power between President Syngman Rhee and his opponents. The initial Local Autonomy Act of 1949 was passed over the president's objections (Reeve, 1963: 39). Rhee intended to use local governments as an extension of his personal power and bargained for the right of appointing the heads of the local executive (Henderson, 1988: 27; Pae SM, 1986: 124). The outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 delayed elections for city and provincial councils until Spring 1952. Since the war was still continuing, the areas along the front line were exempt from the election. The city of Seoul and the provinces of Kyonggi and Kangwon, bordering on the 38th parallel, elected local councils only in August 1956.

The Local Autonomy Act of 1949 provided for the appointment of local heads of administration by the President but granted the elected councils the right to dismiss them through a non-confidence vote (Yoo JH, 1990: 345). In early 1956, prior to the next scheduled local elections, the law was changed by the President. In order to weaken the power of the opposition in the National Assembly, Syngman Rhee introduced the direct election of administrative heads. At the same time, the councils lost their right to remove the head of administration through a vote of non-confidence. The term for a council was shortened to three years and the number of councillors and council meetings was reduced. Two years later, in 1958, the Local Autonomy Act was changed again. This time, Syngman Rhee wanted to quell local councils where a number of opposition politicians were active (*ibid.*). Direct elections of administrative heads were replaced by presidential appointments.

Following the overthrow of Rhee in 1960, the Second Republic introduced direct elections for all local heads, down to the lowest level of urban and rural neighbourhoods.



Elections were held in December 1960 but within months the whole system was abolished in the aftermath of the military coup of May 1961. As mentioned before, during the Park Chung-hee-regime local autonomy was postponed 'until the reunification of the fatherland was achieved' (Hinton, 1983: 175). Following the abolition of elected councils, the *Ministry of Home Affairs* performed the function of the upper-level councils and the chief-executives of higher-level governments were acting in lieu of the lower-level councils. There was no popular participation in the choice of local officials or in the formulation of the policies they implemented.

For economic development a centralised structure was deemed necessary. Park was following the then prevailing development theory where central administration was considered essential for a balanced and effective national development and 'modernisation' (Rondinelli, Cheema, 1983: 11; Myrdal, 1968). In the Korean case, this meant that all decisions were made centrally in Seoul while lower levels simply carried out government directives. Some efforts to decentralise power geographically were made when some government offices were transferred to Kwach'on in the suburbs of Seoul in the 1980s and to the Taejon government-complex in 1998.<sup>6</sup>

The lower level bureaucracy was in charge of the administration of policies and programmes initiated by the central government. The mission of the local administration was to maintain order and to mobilise the population for military service, the payment of taxes and voting (for the right candidates). The population had very little say and was usually merely informed about government policies at neighbourhood meetings.<sup>7</sup>

Given the lack of experience with local government, support among the population was low. A study of the *Ministry of Home Affairs* found that in the early 1960s only eleven per cent of the population was interested in local autonomy while more than half did not care about local self-governments (Pae SM, 1988: 118). With growing levels of education, the demand for more democracy, including local representation, also rose. Since local councils and decentralisation were seen as a means to break the absolute

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<sup>6</sup> So far, only minor divisions such as the *National Statistical Office* and the *Office of Customs Administration* have been moved to Taejon. Both complexes are, however, not very popular with the bureaucrats who spend most of their time commuting between Seoul and the outposts (*Korea Herald*, 27 July, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> 'Each household is required to attend monthly neighbourhood meetings to receive government direction and discuss local affairs' (Kim DJ, 1994: 190). See also Yoon JP, 1997: 94.

position of power of the government, the call for local autonomy was included in the demands of the opposition during the Park and Chun regimes. In the early 1980s, talks about the introduction of more independence at least at the provincial level ended without results (ibid.: 120-130). By the mid-1980s, support for the re-instatement of local autonomy stood at well over eighty per cent (Yoo JH, 1990: 355; Ahn, Kil, Kim, 1988: 153). In several surveys, Koreans embraced councils at the gubernatorial level. Support for councils at lower levels was found to be much less, standing at just over thirty per cent and with more than half actually opposing assemblies at lower levels (Ahn et al., 1988: 155).

Following the introduction of the Sixth Republic, a new Local Autonomy Act was promulgated in 1988. The debate about local elections continued, since the high costs of campaigns and a further increase in regionalism were feared (Bedeski, 1994: 49; *Korea Herald*, 16 June, 1996). In Spring 1991, local and regional councils were elected. Elections for the heads of the administration were scheduled for 1992 but postponed until 1995.<sup>8</sup> In June that year, provincial and local councils, governors, mayors and the heads of wards and counties were elected. The first term of full-fledged local government lasted for only three years until June 1998. From then on, a four-year term is scheduled, so that local elections will be within a two-year interval to National Assembly elections.

When local autonomy was re-introduced in 1991, it provided for the establishment of councils at two levels, a higher for provinces and municipalities, and a lower for cities, wards and counties (see **Figure 4.1**). At the same time, the post of governor and mayor at higher level and mayor and head of county or ward also became subject to direct elections and thus accountable to the population. Party endorsement is allowed only in elections at the higher level, while at the lower level, non-partisan elections are held. This, however, does not assume the absence of party identification of candidates. The local administration was given a higher degree of freedom in its organisation but many restrictions remain. This will be looked at in more detail later in the chapter.

In the Local Autonomy Act, the dual structure of the central government was reproduced: a strong executive is facing a weak legislative (Jee BM, 1992: 333). The

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<sup>8</sup> It was feared that three elections (for the National Assembly, the presidency and for local executives) in one year would lead to economic overheating, given the high costs of campaigning (Lee JR, 1992: 218; Lee HY: 1993: 33).



local assemblies only have limited powers, often restricted by central government rules. The head of the local administration is directly elected and thus accountable to the people. The problems arising from this arrangement will be analysed in the final section of this chapter.

## ii. Structure of Local Administration

### Geographical Division

The Republic of Korea comprises nine provinces (*do*), six municipalities (*kwangyok-si*) and the special city of Seoul (**Figure 4.1**). The nine provinces are divided in cities (*si*), and counties (*kun*). A city is not only distinguished by the number of inhabitants (over 50,000) but also by the percentage of urban industries (more than sixty per cent). These cities are separated in wards (*ku*), and rural counties (*kun*), when they exceed a population of 500,000. Counties are mainly rural areas, although the distinction becomes more blurred with growing industrialisation. Counties are organised into towns (*up*) and townships (*myon*).

A municipality is established when a city exceeds one million inhabitants. Municipalities comprise of wards (*ku*) and a few counties (*kun*). At the lowest level, wards are made up of urban neighbourhoods (*dong*) and towns and townships of urban (*dong*) and rural neighbourhoods (*ri*). In rural regions, there is a four-tiered structure of government while in urban areas the organisation comprises three tiers.

This geographical division can be traced back to the *Choson*-dynasty and persisted during colonial rule, American occupation and the establishment of the Republic of Korea.<sup>9</sup> With increasing urbanisation, the number of municipalities also expanded. Since July 1997, there are six municipalities with more than one million inhabitants (Pusan, Inch'on, Kwangju, Taegu, Taejon, Ulsan) and the special city of Seoul. The capital with about eleven million citizens, a quarter of the population, is under direct control of the prime minister. The other cities and provinces are under the management of the *Ministry of Home Affairs*.

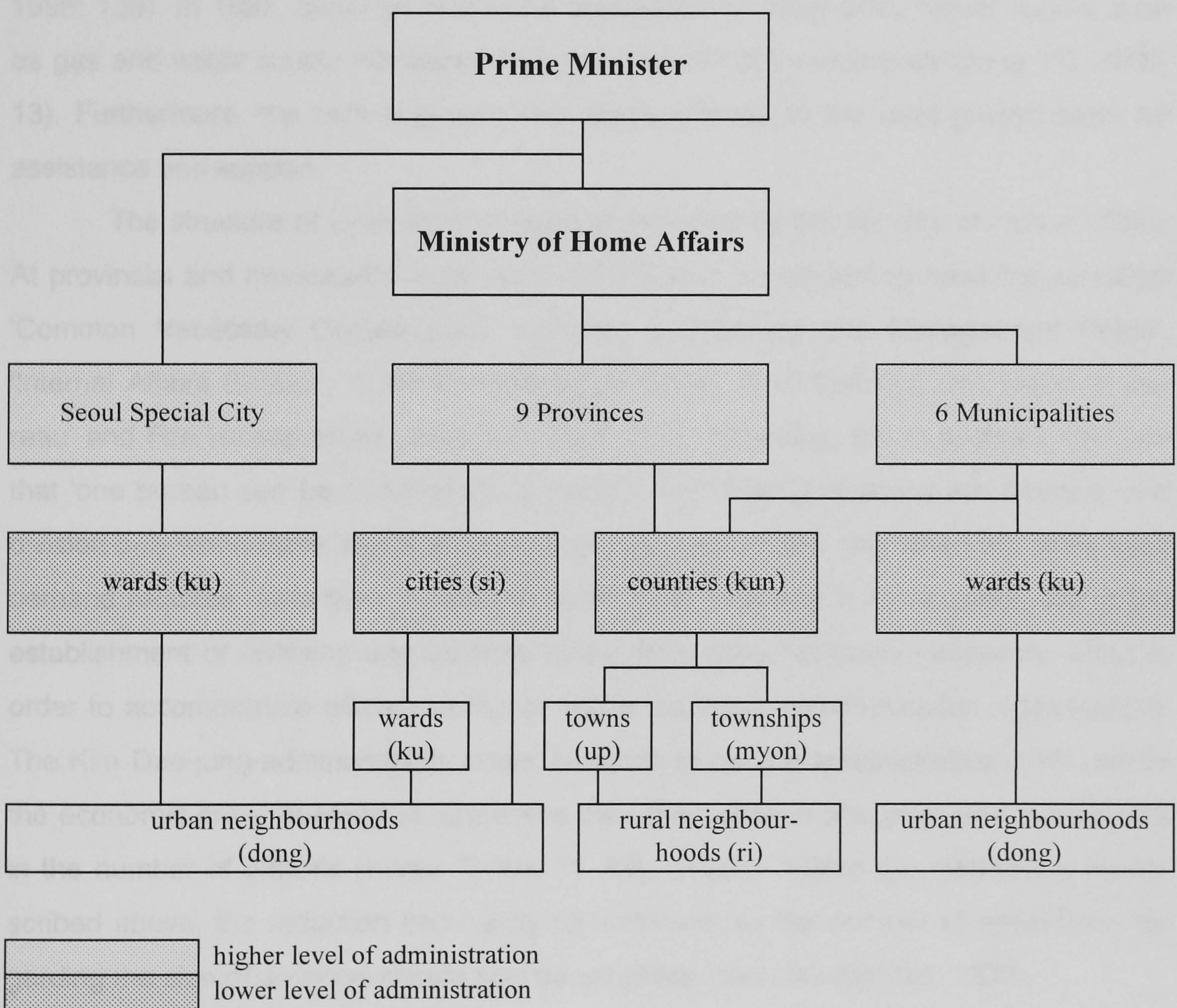
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<sup>9</sup> For the administrative structure of traditional Korea see Yang SC, 1994a: 22-26.



Currently, there are twenty-five wards in Seoul, forty-four wards and five counties in the six municipalities, and seventy-four cities and eighty-six counties in the provinces (as of May 1999 in the different provincial and municipal homepages). These numbers have changed frequently in recent years to accommodate the rising degree of urbanisation. Rural areas are generally less populated than urban areas but sizes vary considerably.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 4.1:** The Structure of Local Government in Korea:



<sup>10</sup> Songnam city's population stands at over 900,000 inhabitants while the smallest city, Taebaek in Kangwon province only has a population of 60,000. The largest county, Hwasong in Kyonggi province, counts 160,000 while Ullong county (a small island in the East Sea (Sea of Japan) being part of Kyongsang-bukdo) only has about ten thousand inhabitants (LATI, 1997: 6).



## Administrative Structure

Following the inauguration of Kim Dae-jung as president in February 1998, the *Ministry of Home Affairs* was reorganised and renamed the *Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs*.<sup>11</sup> Main divisions include the 'Office for Public Information', the 'Office for Audit and Inspection', 'Headquarters of Civil Defence and Disaster Management' and the 'Local Administration Management Division'.<sup>12</sup> Police and Fire Fighting are national responsibilities. In addition, the central government is overseeing many other routine administrative tasks such as the administration of the port of Pusan (Lee GY, 1998: 139). In 1997, quasi-governmental organisations under government control such as gas and water supply numbered 552 and had 384,000 employees (Jung YD, 1999: 13). Furthermore, the central government sends officials to the local governments for assistance and support.

The structure of local administration is regulated by the *Ministry of Home Affairs*. At provincial and municipality level, each organisation is required to have the so-called 'Common Necessary Organizations' including a 'Planning and Management Office', 'Internal Affairs Bureau', 'Audit and Inspection Office', 'Civil Defence and Hazards Bureau' and Fire Headquarters (Jung YD, 1996: 152). Moreover, the regulations stipulate that 'one bureau can be established only when more than 3 divisions are needed, one division only when more than 3 sections exist, and one section only when the office work demand requires more than 3 persons' (ibid.: 153). This rule in some cases led to the establishment of divisions and sections where they were not really necessary, often in order to accommodate officials at higher levels (personal communication, observation). The Kim Dae-jung-administration, under pressure to reduce administrative costs due to the economic crisis, is trying to streamline the administration and proposed radical cuts in the number of officials (*Korea Times*, 14 July, 1998b). Within the restrictions as described above, the reduction can hardly be achieved, so the number of regulations regarding the size of divisions should also be simplified (see also Kim BS, 1999).

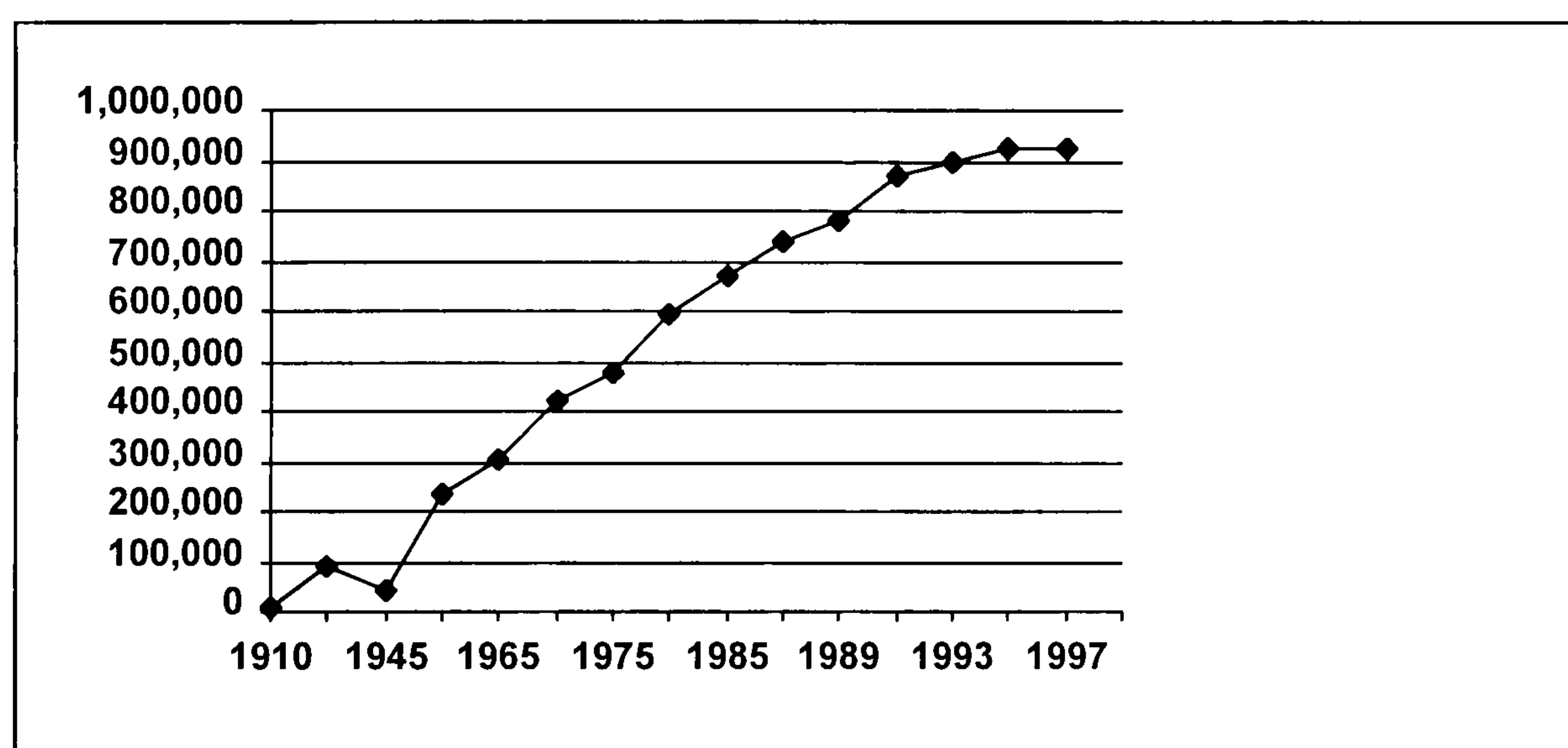
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<sup>11</sup> The previous name was *Naemu-bu*, literally *Ministry of Internal Affairs*, but with the inauguration of Kim Dae-jung, it has been restructured to *Haengjong chach'i-bu*, literally meaning *Ministry of Administration and Local Government*. In this thesis, the shorter *Ministry of Home Affairs* will be used.

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed structure see <http://www.mogaha.go.kr/htm/01/02.htm>.

The number of Korean civil servants at all levels has increased dramatically over the last century (Figure 4.2). The Kim Dae-jung-administration is poised to reduce the number of employees during its term. It is planned to lower the number by thirty per cent by 2002 (*Korea Times*, 14 July, 1998b; *Chosun Ilbo*, 23 March, 1999). A decrease in the central government bureaucracy is also planned but the full implementation of the cuts remains doubtful (*Korea Herald*, 7 May, 1999).

**Figure 4.2:** Increase in the Number of Civil Servants:



Since 1948 only Republic of Korea.

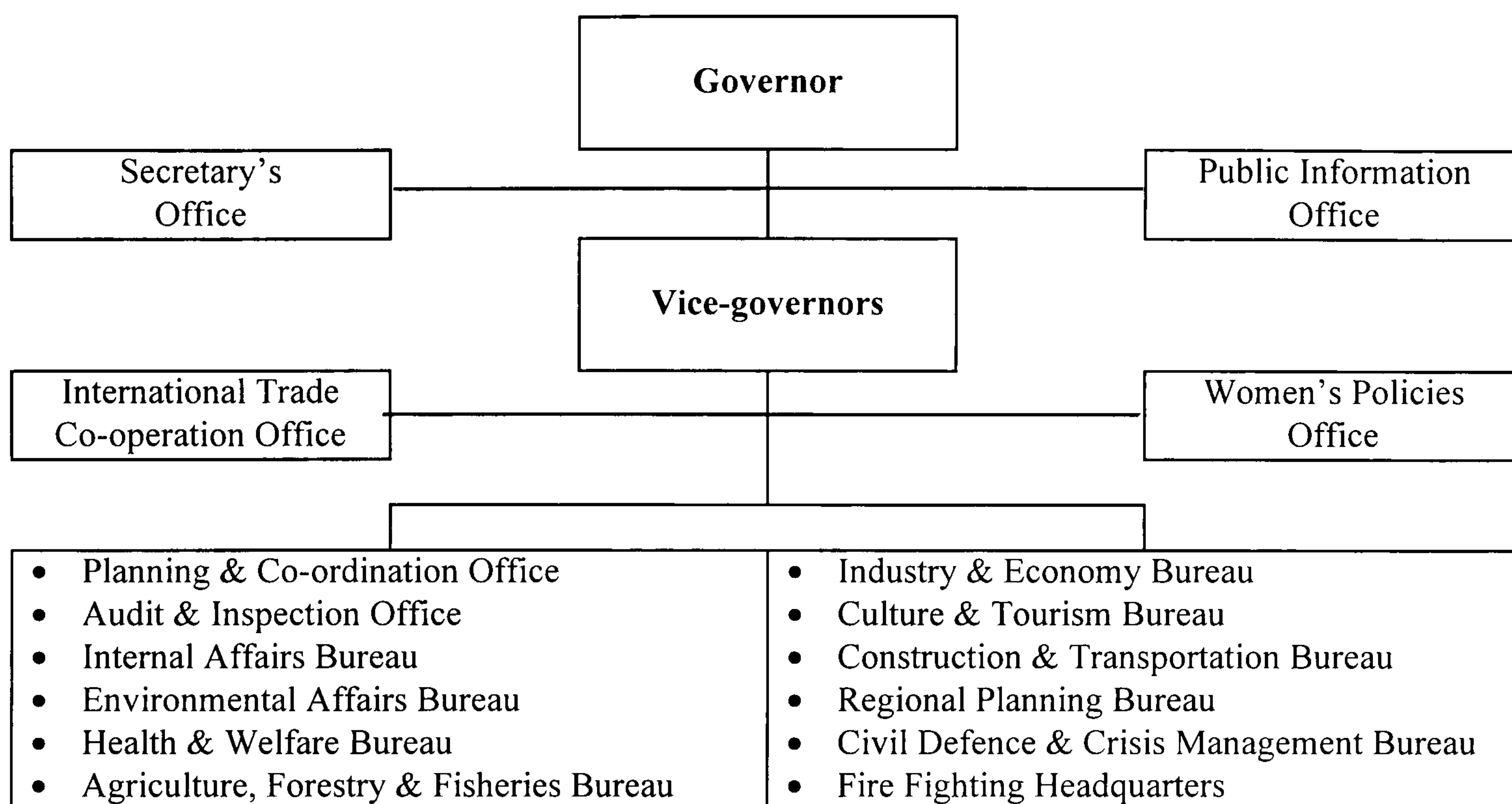
Sources: NSO, 1997b: 470; Eckert et al., 1990: 257; Woo-Cumings, 1995: 159.

At the time of my fieldwork in 1997, the different administrations I visited were fairly representative for the structure of a local administration (Figures 4.3 - 4.5).<sup>13</sup> In Kyonggi-do, the International Trade Co-operation Office and the Women's Policies Office are special offices. The former plays an important role in provincial policy while the latter, only established in 1996, is still a small division.

<sup>13</sup> All higher level administrations and many at lower level now have homepages on the internet and most include a chart of the organisational structure. For a detailed chart of a municipality in English refer to <http://metro.ulsan.kr/english/index>, 'administration: present condition of administrative organization'. For municipalities see <http://www.metro.seoul.kr> or the name of one of the other cities, for provinces <http://provin.kyonggi.kr>. More and more lower level administrations can be found under the following URL-pattern: <http://city.pyongtaek.kyonggi.kr>, <http://gun.yongpyong.kyonggi.kr> or <http://gu.kangnam.seoul.kr> (name of city or county and name of the province or name of ward and city).

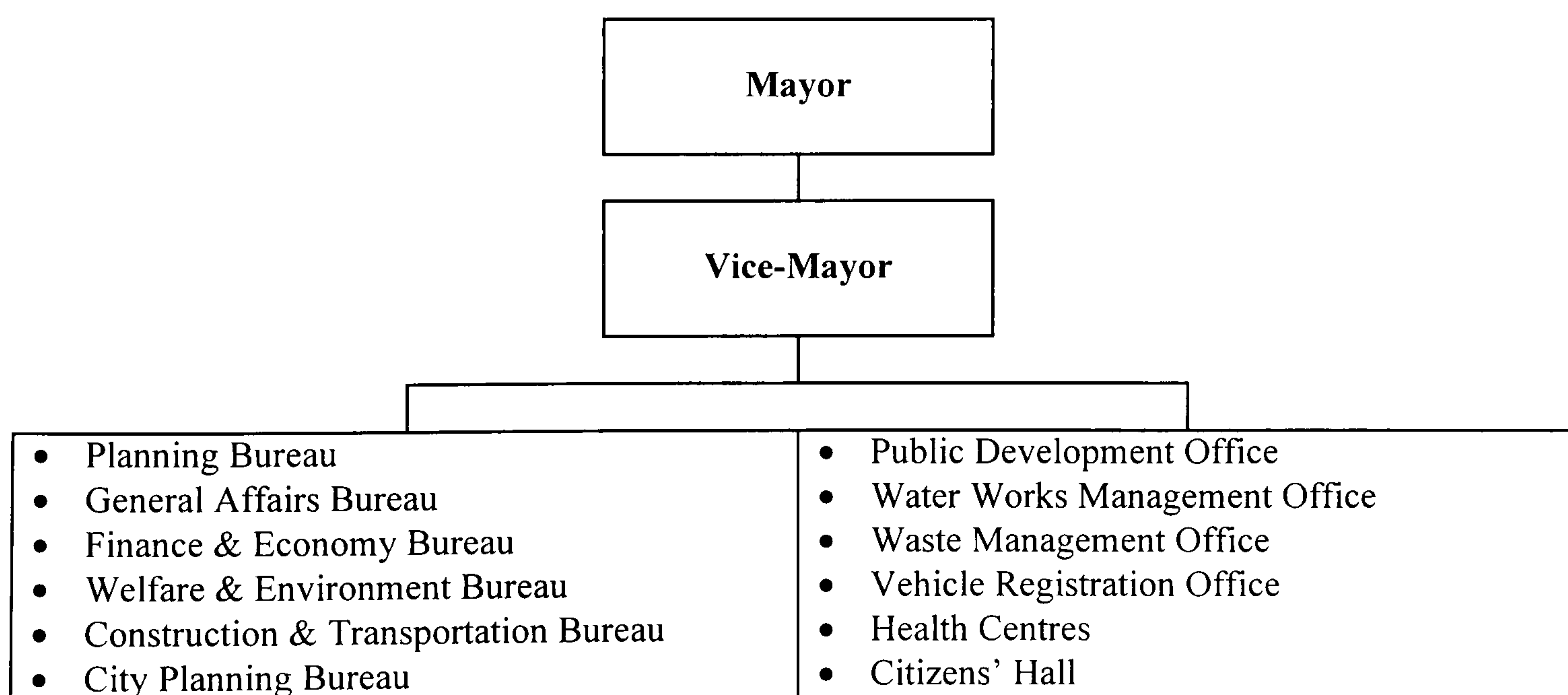


**Figure 4.3:** Typical Structure of a Higher-Level Administration: Kyonggi-Province:

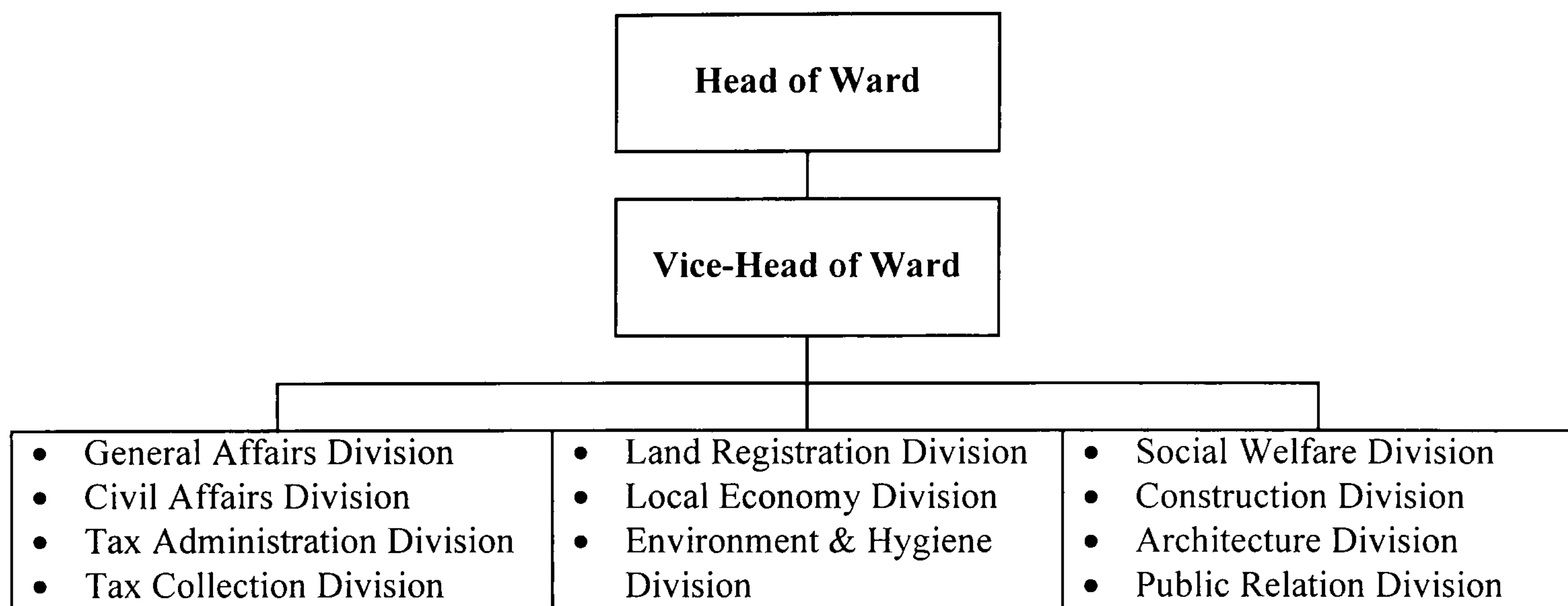


Source: Kyonggi-do, 1997a: 8.

**Figure 4.4:** Typical Structure of a City Administration: Suwon-City:



Source: Suwon-City, 1996: 34.

**Figure 4.5:** Typical Structure of a Ward-Administration (in Suwon-City):

Source: Suwon-City, 1996: 35.

Urban and rural neighbourhood offices are the basic administrative units performing tasks such as the registration of citizens (including recording fingerprints and samples of personal stamps), matters regarding military service and the registration of cars. Eighty per cent of the neighbourhood office work-load is taken up by these tasks. At this level citizens' contact with the administration is most frequent.

Wards, cities and counties handle the administrative matters for their area. This includes budgeting, the collection of taxes and land registration. The welfare of the residents is another important task, embracing public health, garbage collection, sewage control, civil defence and disaster management, particularly flood control. Social services are dealt with at this level but the system is still underdeveloped compared with other countries and takes up little of the work-load.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, ward, city and council administrations engage in the promotion of the local economy (development of industrial sites, assistance for small and medium enterprises, consumer protection etc.) and regional development (stressing economic growth). Other responsibilities include environmental programmes, basic urban planning, education, sports facilities, tourism, culture including the protection of cultural relics and fire protection. In addition, ward, city and council administrations usually provide services such as citizens' halls, public libraries

<sup>14</sup> There are 4,400 Koreans per public employee in the field of social welfare, compared with 68 in France, 216 in Japan and 284 in Singapore (Kim BS, 1999: 64).



and women's halls. Sewage treatment and public health centres are commonly under the direction of public corporations run by the respective administration. County offices are also responsible for the implementation of *Saemaul Undong* programmes (the 'New Village Movement' as mentioned in Chapter Two).

Provinces and municipalities are responsible for the administration of the province or city and affairs that could affect more than two lower-level governments. There is an emphasis on the development of the regional economy and infrastructure. The administrations are eager to establish international relationships, in particular following the economic crisis of 1997/8 in order to attract foreign investment (*Korea Times*, 26 November, 1998). Provinces and cities are also responsible for the construction of main roads and the division of the area in different zones for specific uses.

The division of labour is reflected in the number of officials at the different administrative levels. The lowest levels, wards, cities and counties, have the highest number of employees. In Seoul, there are about 18,000 city employees and twice as many working at ward-offices (SMG, 1998). In Kyonggi-do, six thousand officials work for the provincial government and more than thirty thousand for cities and counties (Kyonggi-do, 1997a: 8).

**Table 4.1:** Percentage of National and Local Officials (1980, and Korea, 1998):

|             | national in % | local in % |
|-------------|---------------|------------|
| Britain     | 14            | 39         |
| France      | 45            | 23         |
| Germany     | 13            | 41         |
| USA         | 22            | 70         |
| Korea       | 75            | 25         |
| Korea: 1998 | 62            | 38         |

Sources: Rose, 1985: 25; Kim KH, 1996: 310; Moon CS, 1999: 38.<sup>15</sup>

In comparison with other countries, however, the Korean civil service is still small. While there were ten civil servants per one thousand citizens in the 1960s, the number rose to

<sup>15</sup> The missing percentages for western countries are 'trading enterprises' and 'others'. In France, the percentage of national employees is higher because teachers are employed by the state. The underdeveloped welfare system of Korea - handled by the lower levels - is also worth noting.

twenty by the 1990s (NSO, 1997b: 470). The corresponding numbers for the USA and the UK are sixty-three and for Japan thirty-five (Chon SI, 1992: 722). In relation to the local authorities, the central government is overdeveloped, even more obvious in an international comparison (**Table 4.1**).

The Korean civil service can be divided in two categories: the national and the local administration. Recruitment for the two services is separate but follows the same principle. Entry-exams are held for the seventh and fifth rank. The exams for the fifth rank at the central government are the continuation of the traditional state exams of the *Choson*-dynasty and carry the highest prestige. Candidates often prepare for one year for this exam. Until the 1980s, the central government service exams for the different services were very popular.<sup>16</sup> The exams were especially attractive for those with a rural background since success provided a position of reputation and power (Ro CH, 1993: 138). This trend has changed in the last years and positions in private enterprises are more prized. Graduates from prestigious universities and those based in Seoul apply for work at *Chaebol* while students of 'lesser' universities can be found in the government administration (own observation; Ro CH, 1993: 138). This tendency is even stronger at provincial and local administrations, resulting in less qualified manpower.

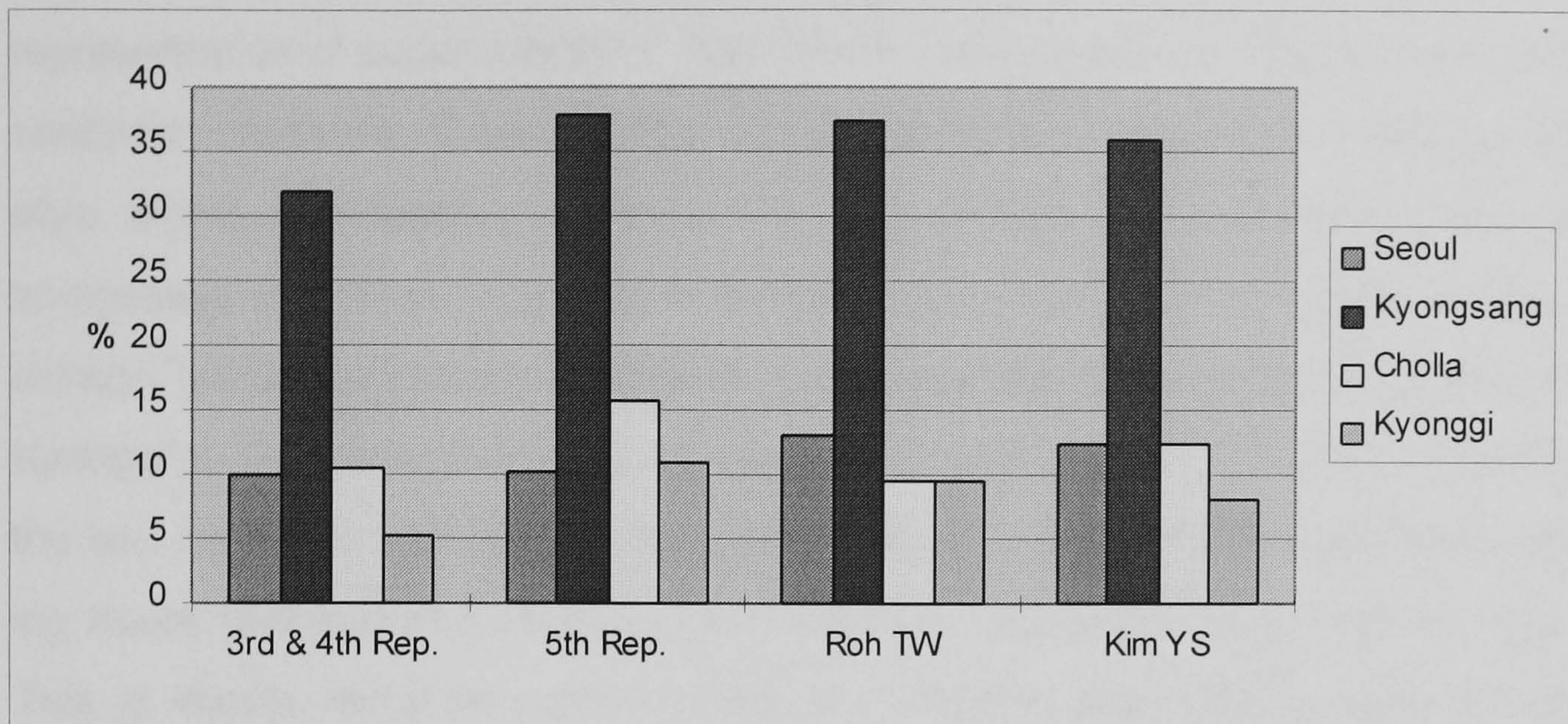
The national administration shows a lack of social representativeness as the social composition of the bureaucracy should reflect the society of which they are part (Nachmias, Rosenbloom, 1978: 124). The exclusion of certain groups can mirror and reinforce cleavages, increasing the feeling of alienation from the government and the political system and endangering the consolidation of democracy. In Korea, officials from the Kyongsang provinces are over-represented in the central government while those born in Cholla are still under-represented in higher service (Kim PS, 1993: 228; **Figure 4.6**). The officials' home provinces often received preferential treatment, further increasing the imbalance in the development of the regions. The Kim Dae-jung-administration aims to change this imbalance but is now accused of favouritism and regionalism from its opponents and people living in the south-eastern part of Korea (*Korea Herald*, 31 March, 1998).

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<sup>16</sup> In 1986, for example, there were 108 aspirants per place in the Foreign Service Exam but only 39 in 1991 (Kim HG, 1992: 733).



**Figure 4.6:** Regional Background of the Highest Officials in the National Government:



Source: Hwang JS, 1997: 108.

Women are also under-represented at all levels of the administration. Very few women sit for the higher exam and thus enter higher ranks (rank five and higher). In 1991, 2.7 per cent of all officials in rank five or higher were women, while at the lower level they numbered twenty-two per cent (GEO, n.d.).<sup>17</sup> The *Ministry for Political Affairs II*, under Kim Young-sam and the current *Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs* have pushed for higher rates of women entering the civil service through the introduction of quotas. In 1999, twenty per cent of public service positions were reserved for women, a quota supposed to rise to thirty per cent by the year 2000 (*Chosun Ilbo*, 14 April, 1999).

The Korean civil service has career positions with a specific rank-system as well as non-career posts, such as educational administrators and advisors. It is in this latter area that many of the female officials are employed, often in positions regarded as 'female' by the established gender construction, such as health, women's affairs and welfare. Nearly half of the female civil servants work in the educational sector, mainly as primary school teachers (MPA, 1996: 147). Although the number of female employees has risen considerably in the last years, most gains have been made at the lowest ranks. At rank nine, nearly half of the civil servants were female in 1999 (GEO, n.d.). At local

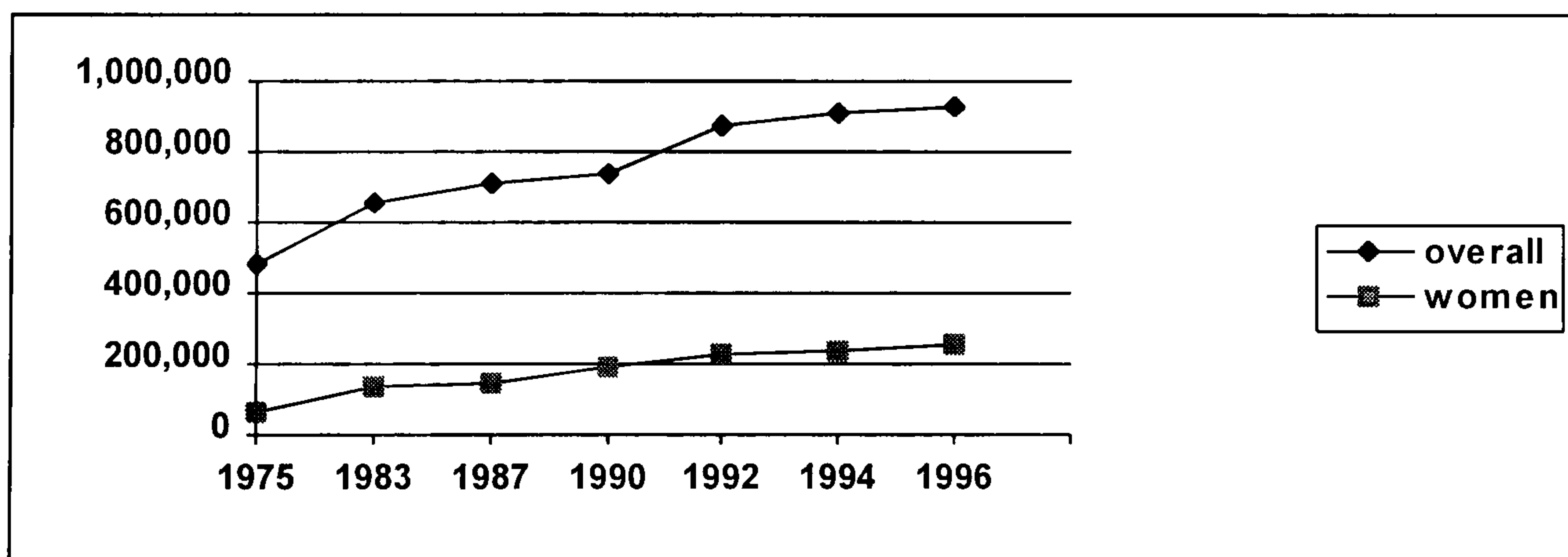
<sup>17</sup> One (male) informant claimed that 'women think the entry exam for the provincial government is too hard'.



government levels, more than seventy per cent of the women employed were in rank eight and nine-positions (Kim SU, Yoon DK, 1996: 9).

A higher proportion of female civil servants in all departments will lead to a better representation of social interests. This includes fields such as education and housing and sanitation problems. Moreover, the higher presence of women can change the working style of the administration. Through the socialisation process women tend to be less competitive and more co-operative, preferring discussion to hierarchical orders. The only division consisting mostly of women in the administration of Kyonggi Province is the *Kyonggido Center for Women's Development*. Here, discussion and co-operation among the civil servants, men and women, were frequent. The *Center* also observed the working hours and overtime work, a daily feature in many divisions, was far less frequent. This is mainly because women, from the director downwards, have to look after a household but men also appreciated having more time for their families.

**Figure 4.7:** Increase in Female Government Officials:



Source: NSO, 1997b: 470; Kim SU, Yoon DK, 1996: 8.

### Attitudes among Civil Servants

In his influential work on *Economy and Society* Max Weber described three types of authority (*Herrschaft*; Weber, 1947: 124).<sup>18</sup> Authority can be legitimised on rational,

<sup>18</sup> On the problems of translating this term see Parsons, 1964: 152, Footnote 83. Albrow (1970) is a good discussion of the reception of Weber's concept of bureaucracy.



traditional or charismatic grounds. Legal authority is 'resting on a belief in the "legality" of pattern of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under those rules to issue commands' (Parsons, 1964: 328). Traditional authority is 'resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them' (ibid.). Charismatic authority is 'resting on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative pattern or order revealed or ordained by him' (ibid.).

Following the rational model of authority, bureaucracy has been defined as a rational and efficient organisation, consisting 'of salaried officials who conduct the detailed business of government, advising and applying policy decision' (Hague et al., 1998: 219). Bureaucrats are supposed to apply consistently clear rules to individual cases (Weber, 1947: 662). This rationality implies calculability and minimises uncertainty since all become formally equal before the law, values implicit in the concept of democracy (Marshall, 1994: 35-36). The Confucian values of Korea point to Weber's 'traditional authority'-type. Authority is given by the 'mandate of heaven' to a leader ruling by virtue (see Chapter Two). Korean civil servants have 'served to support the national leader and high level bureaucrats', and officials 'are highly loyal to their superiors and compliant with their wishes' (Jun JS, Yoon JP, 1996: 111). Due to their socialisation, officials are accustomed to obeying their superiors' orders and to being discouraged from critically examining them. In the Korean civil service the two concepts of rational and traditional authority collide with implications for decentralisation and the democratisation process.

In the 1970s, a study found that a large number of bureaucrats believed that the public is served best by officials 'doing their routine well' (Heper et al., 1980: 147). Less than one in ten thought that 'seeking to identify public needs and reflecting them in government action' would serve the public best (ibid.). This attitude lingers on today. One study of the late 1980s points out that the bureaucracy is still perceived by many members 'more as a means of climbing the ladder of power and prestige than furthering public service' (Ro CH, 1993: 138). One of the aims of local autonomy is, however, to make local administration more accessible and responsive to the public.

The consistent application of rules also produced the negative image of 'bureaucracy as organized inefficiency' (Albrow, 1970: 89). A sign of over-administration is the high number of regulations. In a drive to reduce the number of unnecessary restrictions in 1998, the *Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fishery* managed to erase 422 regulations

out of a total of 778 (54.2%; *Chosun Ilbo*, 8 November, 1998). Regulations initiated by the central government also limit the autonomy of local authorities. The high number of regulations opens the door for corruption, so widespread in Korea.<sup>19</sup> Each new president begins his term with a pledge to 'root out corruption' but scandals are still frequent (*Korea Herald*, 26 May, 1998). Although there is always outrage about those incidents, feelings concerning corruption and bribery among Koreans are ambivalent (*Korea Herald*, 26 November, 1998). One survey found that within the previous year one third of the surveyed citizens and public officials had bribed civil servants, in the form of money, presents and entertainment (*Korea Times*, 30 August, 1998).

### Head of Local Executive

The local administration is headed by an elected chief-executive. Their term of office is also four years. Their maximum tenure is limited to three terms and they have to be resident in their constituency for more than ninety days. Prior to the introduction of local autonomy, the heads of the administration were appointed and moved around the country often, as bureaucrats had done during the *Choson*-dynasty. Continuity of policy was guaranteed by centralised orders. With more local autonomy, chief executives have to consider the length of their tenure and their chances of re-election. Critics fear the short-term orientation of elected officials (Pae SM, 1986: 127; *Korea Times*, 27 February, 1998).

The powers of the chiefs of the administration include the control of local administrative affairs, the management of personnel matters, the promulgation of by-laws and the formulation and execution of the budget. Furthermore, they conduct 'national affairs delegated by the central government' such as disaster control and road construction (KLAFIR, 1997: 15).

The positions of governors and mayors of municipalities so far have been filled with politicians who usually also had a background in the civil service. The two main candidates for the mayorship of Seoul in 1998 for instance, both had previous experi-

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<sup>19</sup> Two Korean scholars explain: 'These practices may be a natural tendency for Koreans who strongly believe that if you receive something from someone, then you have to return something to that someone' (Hahm SD, Kim KW, 1999: 490).



ence as mayor of the capital city. Koh Kun had also served as Prime Minister and Choe Byung-yul as Minister of Labour (*Korea Times*, 4 May, 1998). At the lower level many successful candidates had been former mayors or at least had some experience in public administration. The only female mayor (of Kwangmyon city from 1995-1998) was the first woman to pass the civil service entry exam in 1974 and a former appointed mayor of the same city. Two of the three candidates for the mayorship of Songnam had previous experience as mayor in the same city plus several others in different parts of Korea (*Pundang Daily News*, 3 June, 1998).

The vice-executive is appointed by the central government. In the case of Seoul there are three, two in provinces and municipalities and just one at the lower level. At the higher level, their assignments are divided in administrative and political affairs. The former will be a member of the general service, i.e. a career bureaucrat, dealing with the day-to-day management of the administration. The vice-governor or vice-mayor for political affairs is 'in special service' (LATI, 1997: 8). This means they can be appointed specifically for this position and are usually a political ally of their superior. Kyonggi province provides a good example of this: in autumn 1997, Governor Rhee In-je decided to run for president and resigned. The vice-governor for political affairs then also left the provincial government, joining Rhee's election team. The vice-governor for administrative affairs became acting governor for the last months before the elections in June 1998.

The chief-executive and their administration are accountable to the local assemblies and to the population once every four years at election time.

### **iii. Local Assemblies**

The previous sections have already established that the Korean experience with local autonomy has been very limited and their brief encounter with it the 1950s left little impression. At the time of the re-establishment of local councils in the late 1980s, the structure of the National Assembly was copied. A dual arrangement was formulated with a strong mayor and a weak assembly. The structure of regional government in Korea shows the flaws of central system: the administrative heads (governors and mayors) are accountable directly to the electorate and the questions of councillors. The assembly has no right of removal. The work of the councils is far less publicly noticed.

The size of a council depends on the population in the area. Urban councils are therefore bigger than rural assemblies. In 1995, upper level councils had on average fifty-eight members. The average city council had seventeen members and in counties, the number stood typically at eleven members. Districts had on average twenty-nine councillors (KLAFIR, 1995: 13). The majority of councillors is elected directly in single-member constituencies. At the higher level, additional councillors are selected in accordance to the number of votes parties gained in the elections. Proportional lists provide about one in ten councillors, depending on the size of the assembly. Shortly before the elections in 1998, the number of councillors was reduced by one third (*Korea Herald*, 25 April, 1998). Some cutback was achieved by the merging of small constituencies and the number of proportional seats was cut to roughly ten per cent in order to achieve a decrease in numbers.

The Local Autonomy Act of 1988 allows party endorsement only at the higher level of government. Heads and councillors of smaller cities, counties and wards are campaigning without a party banner. Their campaigns are nevertheless supported by parties financially, with manpower and moral support, such as important party figures visiting constituencies. The short CVs presenting candidates in election leaflets do not include party membership but nearly always mention former positions that might include party positions. Another way of showing party preferences are photos with an important person in one party. While party affiliation is omitted, the place of birth of the candidate is reported, thereby allowing voters to make choices along regional biases (see, for example, *Pundang Daily News*, 3 June, 1998; *Pundang Suji Times*, 25 May, 1998).

Campaigning at gubernatorial level is running along party lines, often dominated by national politics. The higher level campaigns usually command all the attention of the media. The mayorship of Seoul is particularly important since this position represents one quarter of the population. In 1995, 'provincial residents paid more attention to the outcome of the Seoul mayor's race than to the elections in their own districts' (Im SB, 1996: 39). Since Korean parties are regionally based and practically guaranteed to win in their area of support, parties often do not undergo the trouble of nominating a candidate in an area where there is no chance of winning. In 1998, the main opposition party, the GNP, did not propose candidates for the position of mayors in Taejon and Kwangju and governors of the Cholla provinces. Few candidates were running on the opposition ticket at the lower level in these areas (*Korea Herald*, 22 May, 1998).



Councils have fixed periods for regular and extraordinary sessions. Municipal and provincial councils meet every year from mid-November for forty days. Extraordinary sessions are possible but not for more than eighty days a year and for no longer than fifteen days per session. City councils have regular sessions beginning around the same time, lasting no longer than thirty-five days. Special sessions can last no longer than fifteen days and must not exceed forty-five days altogether. The same applies for ward and county council meetings.

The councils are subdivided into committees, the number depending on the size of the assembly. Councils with less than thirteen members do not split up into committees. Normally, each councillor is a member of one or two committees. Some assemblies, like Taejon Municipal Council or Suwon City Council, change the committee composition during the term. While this was introduced to allow the councillors to obtain detailed information on different issues, it also increased the work-load for councillors who had to gain a broad knowledge of the issues at hand.

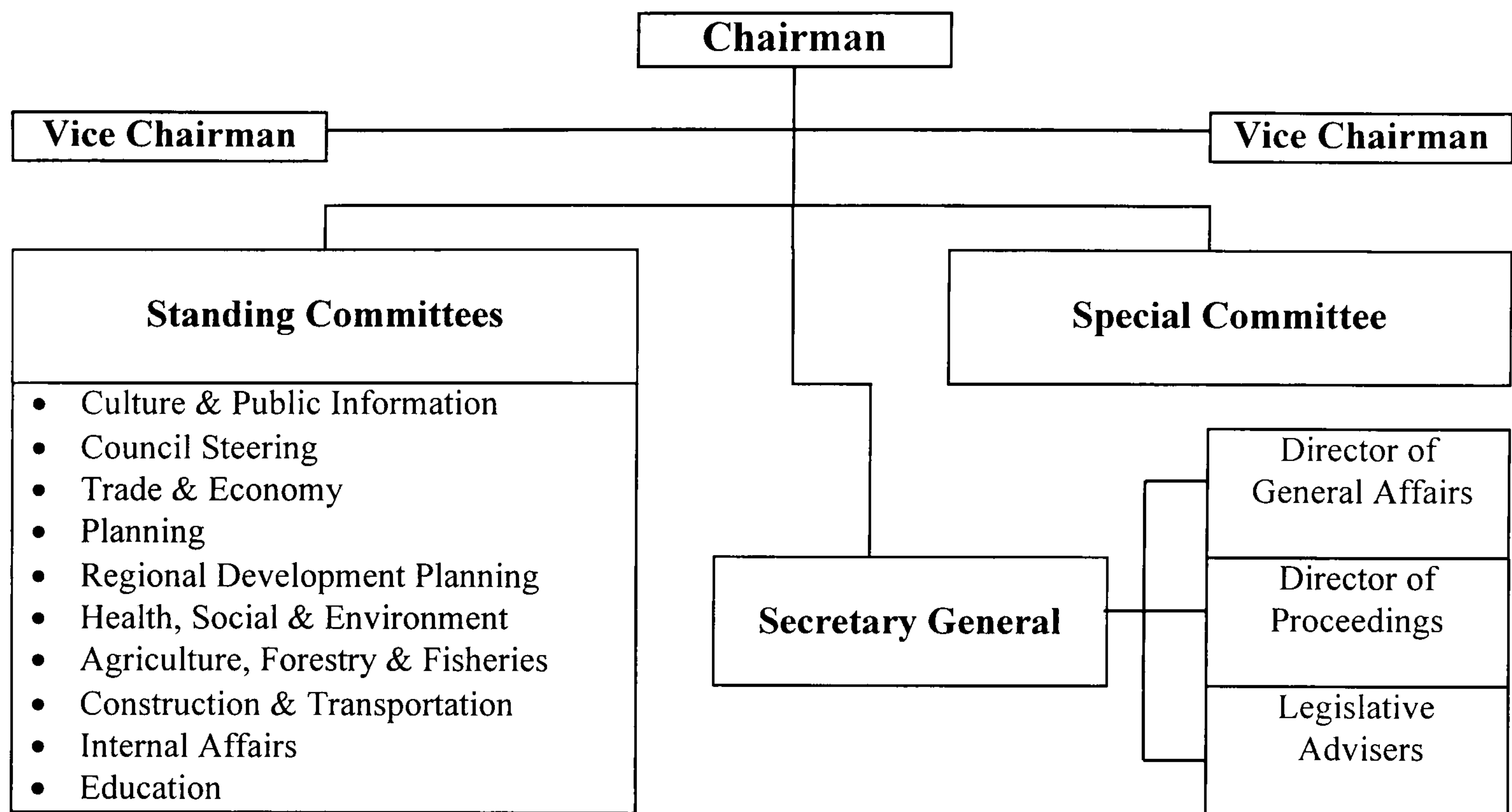
There is no financial remuneration for council members but expenses such as travel to conferences are reimbursed (KLAFIR, 1995: 14). Councillors therefore must have an income sufficient to support them during session time and a profession that allows them to be absent for longer periods. This virtually excludes some parts of the population such as workers and farmers. Nearly half of the candidates of the 1995 local elections were self-employed (Sohn BS, 1995: 8). In the (very limited) sample of my survey, the monthly family income stood at 3.2 million won (US\$ 3,765), one third higher than the average family income of 2.2 million won (US\$ 2,588; *Korea Herald*, 6 March, 1998).<sup>20</sup>

**Figures 4.8 and 4.9** show the structure of councils and committees at the different levels. At the lower level, the location plays an important role for the committee structure of rural or urban, industrial or coastal areas.

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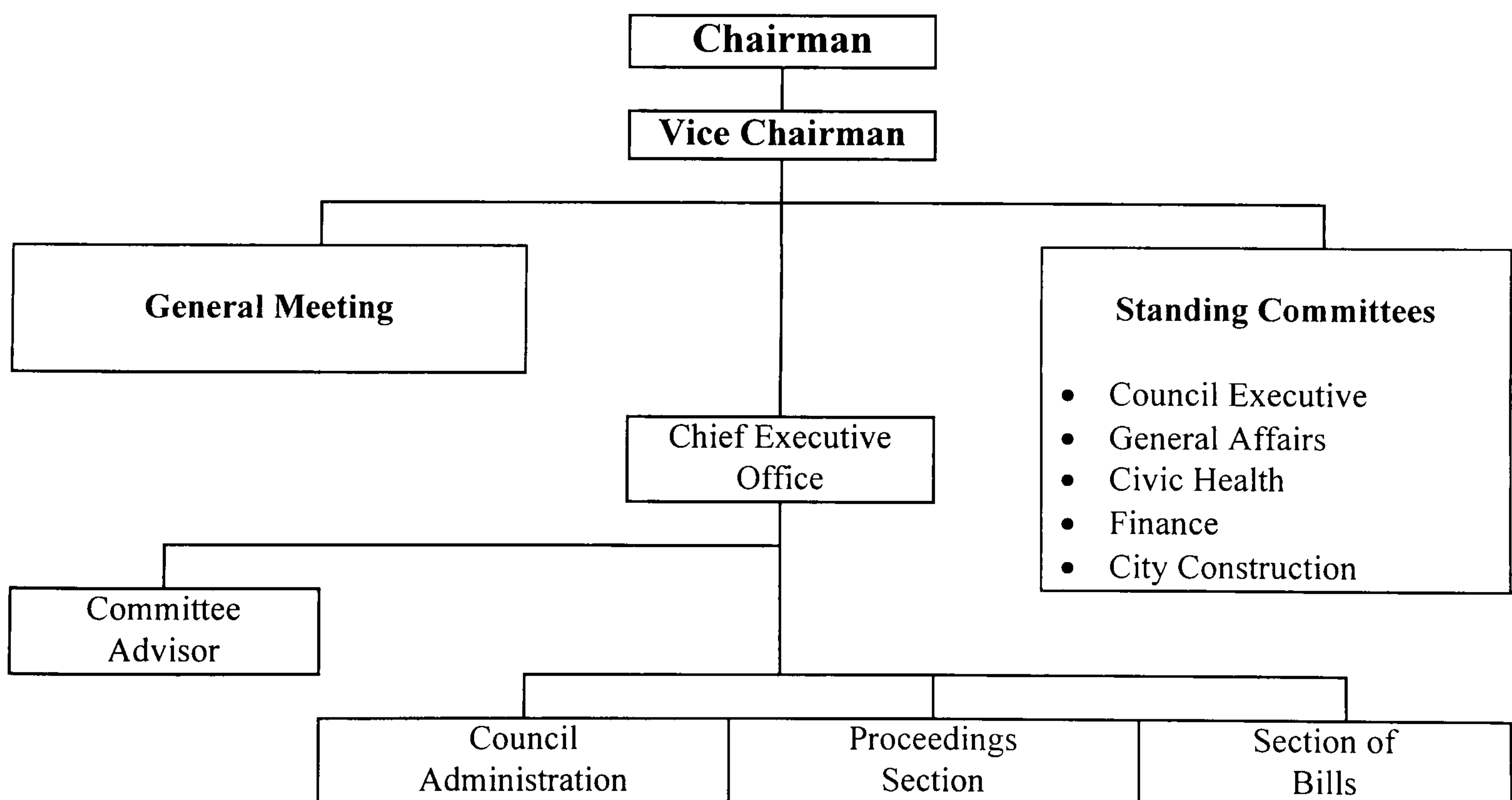
<sup>20</sup> Although my data was collected in early 1998 after the exchange rate fell drastically, for this data I still use a rate of about 850 won for 1 US\$ since it refers to the years before. Data regarding income has to be treated with caution. The annual income is supplemented by 'bonuses' paid at New Year and Autumn-Festivals, often amounting to one or two monthly salaries. Private saving clubs (*kye*) and income from real estate are also not included in official statistics.

**Figure 4.8:** Kyonggi Provincial Assembly:



Source: Kyonggi-do, 1997a: 9.

**Figure 4.9:** Kangnam District Council (Seoul):



Source: Kangnam District Council, 1997: 11 (1995-1998: vice chairwoman).



The work of the councillors will be presented in Chapter Five. The rest of this chapter is concerned with the administration at local and provincial level and the relations with the central government, between different levels of government and with the councils.

### III. Interaction between Different Levels of Government

This section will look at the dynamics of government, the interaction between different levels of administration. The biggest problem for the decentralisation process in Korea is the strong position of the central government has possessed in the past. The introduction of local autonomy not only implied the transfer of power of decision-making from the central administration to lower levels but also the introduction of elected councils. Officials at lower level administrations have to re-orientate themselves to these two influences on their work. Furthermore, the position of the head of the administration has become subject to election, demanding greater responsiveness to the citizens' needs. The changes in the administration give some indication of the consolidation of democratic institutions.

#### i. Central Administration and Subnational Administration

In the process of decentralisation, the relationship between the central government - the apex of government organisation - and the lower level administrations naturally takes the centre-stage. In the case of Korea, the central government tended to see decentralisation primarily as a mechanism to increase the effectiveness of administration. The central government's use of local organs merely as its administrative outlets implies the devolution of power. Local autonomy can be described as the management of local affairs by local government (Kim IJ, Chung ES, 1993: 272).

Without the political will to support the transfer of power to the lower level, the central government was slow in implementing measures to this end (Jee BM, 1993: 332; *Korea Herald*, 16 June, 1996). The position of local governments needs to be strengthened through legislation, the Local Autonomy Act and other relevant ordinances. Furthermore, the executive has to be ready to delegate the power of decision-making to lower level administrations. This implies a break from long tradition and a change from controlling local government to supporting it.

The discrepancy in the number of officials at central and lower levels has already been shown in **Table 4.1**. The number of chores divided between the two



groups shows a similar distribution. In 1994, three quarters of the work-load was dealt with directly by the central government (Lee DG, 1995: 43). Another eight per cent of assignments, such as disaster prevention, were delegated to the lower level authorities (down from twelve per cent in 1992). 'Local autonomous office works' accounted for eighteen per cent (ibid.).

Local autonomy also has to be supported by politicians at the national level. In the past, the administration has been used to the advantage of the ruling party, especially during elections. Projects and financial support were allocated to regions favourable to the government, leading to the unbalanced development of the country (Pae SM, 1986: 147; Jun SK, 1997). The (notion of) preferential treatment along party lines is still widespread, as the changes in party affiliation in the aftermath of the 1998 local elections show. This suggests that although the president is always stressing regional harmony, some members of his staff seem to think otherwise. This sheds some light on their mind-set and the restrictions on behavioural consolidation.

Regionalism and favouritism along regional lines is one of the biggest dilemmas the Kim Dae-jung-administration is facing. On one hand, it is the first in the history of the Republic hailing from the south-western region and there is a certain expectation from this area that the region will now receive preferential treatment (*Korea Herald*, 31 March, 1998). On the other hand, the government is trying to achieve 'regional reconciliation' by recruiting support from south-eastern people (*Korea Herald*, 13 January, 1999; *Korea Times*, 24 May, 1999). Since regionalism is too vast a topic to be explored in this chapter the administrative side of decentralisation will be analysed now.

Given the resistance the decentralisation process is facing, progress has been slow and observers are seeing few signs for optimism.<sup>21</sup> It has been pointed out that so far 'the division of roles among national, metropolitan, provincial, town and county governments remains ambiguous' (Lee GY, 1998: 138). In order to substantiate this claim, two aspects of decentralisation will be presented. They are the regulations of the central government regarding local autonomy and the financial situation of local governments.

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<sup>21</sup> For example Cho Chang-hyun, director of the *Center for Local Autonomy* at Hanyang University (*Korea Herald*, 16 June, 1996); then-mayor of Seoul, Cho Soon, and scholars from other universities (*Korea Herald*, 30 June, 1996).

## Regulations

This chapter has already presented some of the regulations prescribed by the central government. The size of the administration in general and the number of divisions, bureaux and centres are determined through regulations. New departments have to be approved by the *Ministry of Home Affairs* (Jung YD, 1996: 153). The regulations include limits for the number of sub-divisions (no more than fifteen for Seoul, twelve for Kyonggi-do etc.; *ibid.*).

The central government also retained influence on personnel decisions. The *Ministry of Home Affairs* still appoints the administrative vice-governor and vice-mayor and also the vice-heads of the executive at the lower level. All officials from second to fifth rank are appointed and paid by the *Ministry* in Seoul. This means for example that in the case of Seoul eleven out of seventeen director generals are appointed by the central government and not the local authority (*ibid.*: 154). The number of employees is also fixed and can only be raised within certain limits (*ibid.*). Measures to reduce the number of officials are prescribed by the central government since 1998, giving each department a target to be met (thirty per cent in the case of local governments; *Korea Times*, 14 July, 1998b).

The deficiencies in qualifications among the staff at lower levels of administration have been noted before. The change from an agency of the central government to an independent governing body in the process of decentralisation needs to be supported by more active manpower development programmes to improve the expertise and qualities of the local civil servants (Jung YD, 1996: 157). An increasing number of specialists needs to be recruited for a successful transfer of power to lower levels of government. The issue of cultural properties is one example of this problem. The 'cultural localisation policy' (bringing cultural properties under the control of local governments) was vehemently opposed on the grounds of a lack in expertise and engagement among local governments 'whose prime goal is to achieve short-term-based, tangible outcomes for re-election' (*Korea Times*, 27 February, 1998). This attitude totally ignores the efforts of many administrations to develop the local cultural



infrastructure in the form of museums, cultural festivals, tourist attractions and others.<sup>22</sup>

The central government maintained policy-making power on many civil regulations such as licensing, approving development projects and taxation (Jung YD, 1996: 159). In order to secure regional uniformity, the rights of local authorities are limited by the central government (LATI, 1997: 4). In this spirit of uniformity, in November, 1992 the *Ministry of Home Affairs* ordered that all offices had to switch to newer model of computers within four weeks. In order to comply in such a short time, local governments had to pay more than market prices. It is estimated that US\$ 3 million was overspent this way (Jee BM, 1993: 332).<sup>23</sup>

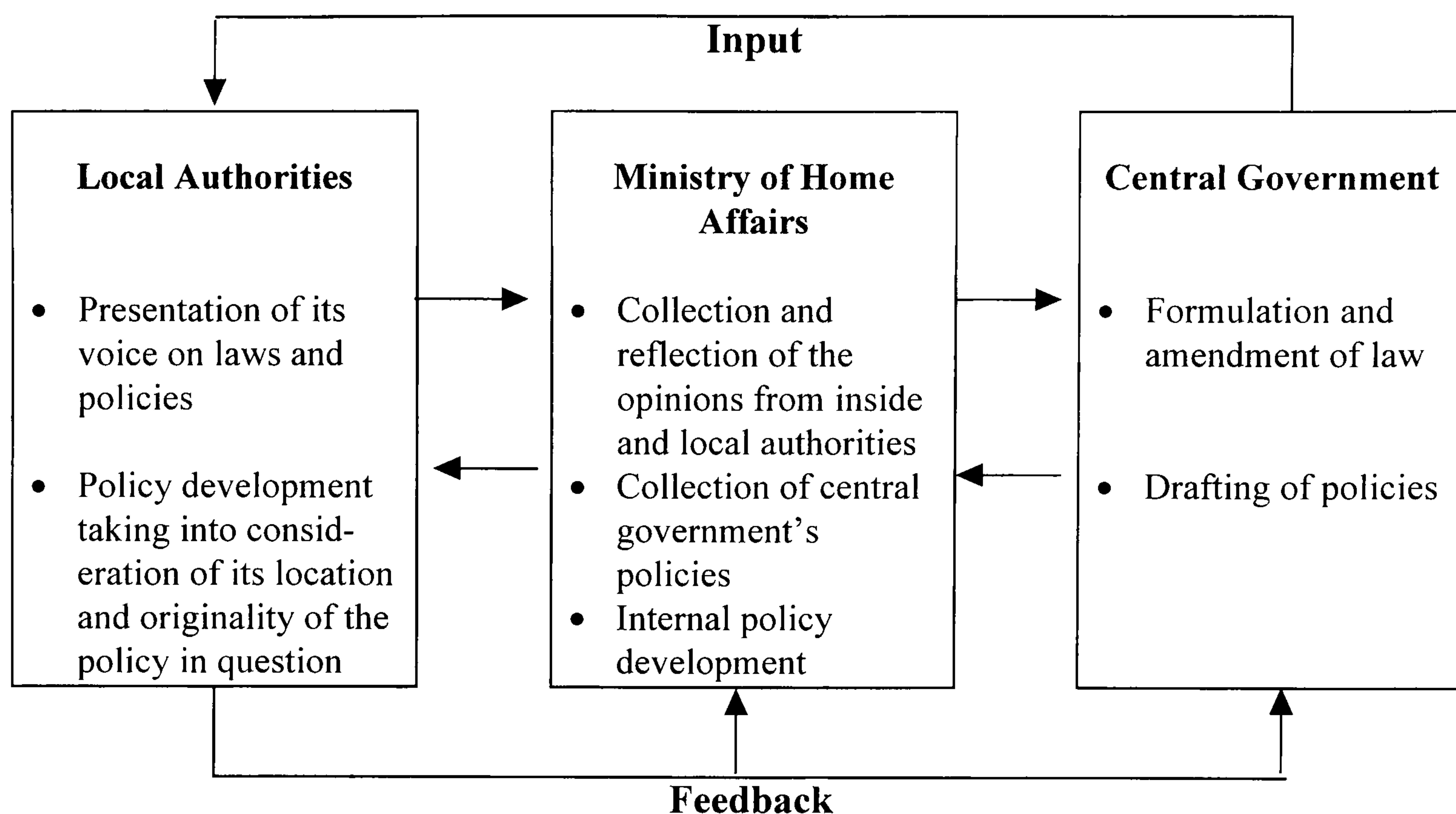
The *Ministry of Home Affairs* in one of its own publications has a tell-tale 'flow chart of policy development and co-ordination' (**Figure 4.10**). The input comes from the central government and flows to the local authorities. The *Ministry of Home Affairs* works as a moderator between the two authorities, collects viewpoints and develops 'internal policies'. Local authorities have a chance to voice their opinions on laws and policies and develop policies in consideration of the local situation but the decisions are not made at the local level.

Rondinelli and Cheema point out how local government can lead to a more flexible, innovative and creative administration by providing the respective units the chance to test innovations and new programmes (1983: 16). Local autonomy allows diverse solutions for problems arising due to specific local circumstances, such as in small island communities. The risk of implementing unsuccessful programmes in the whole country is reduced while in the case of success programmes can be duplicated in other localities. The Korean central government with its over-emphasis on control so far obstructs this opportunity.

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<sup>22</sup> The promotion of the 'Eight Finest Views in HwaSung', for example, is not an idea of the central administration (HwaSung County, 1997). See Kim HK (1997) for newly initiated festivals.

<sup>23</sup> The distribution of computers in the offices I visited was scarce and according to rank. Most division heads (fourth rank) had a computer on their desk but rarely used it. In 1997, computers were still mainly used by secretaries for word processing. In the offices of the *Chaebol* I worked for, computers were found on nearly every desk.

**Figure 4.10:** Flow Chart of Policy Development and Co-ordination:

Source: MHA, 1997: 16.

Another problem is the overlap in authority and legislation. The Local Autonomy Act prescribes that local government regulation should be within the scope of the ordinances of the state (Kim HR, 1993: 348). The case of urban planning shows the magnitude of the restrictions on the power of local authorities. The central government (mainly the *Ministry of Construction and Transportation*) makes a decision on the general zoning and the development of new cities, such as Pundang and Ilsan in Kyonggi-do. The latter is executed by a state-run agency, the 'Korea Land Development Corporation'. Other ministries and government agencies, such as the *Ministry of Environment*, also promulgate ordinances relevant to the development of the country so that there are abundant regulations from the central administration (Lee SB, 1985: 209). The provincial or municipal government is responsible for urban planning and the zoning of the area (industrial, residential, green-belt zones etc.). The basic units of city and county can decide the details of the process, such as bicycle paths and architectural details (Regional Planning Office, 1997). Since the Urban Planning Act was promulgated before the introduction of local autonomy, it initially excluded the involvement of local councils (Kim HR, 1993: 350). The Act has now been amended to ac-



commodate the existence of the councils demonstrating the need for national laws to be changed according to the new situation at local levels.

### **Budgetary Arrangements**

Besides regulations the central government uses the allocation of funds as a tool of control. Ideally, each administrative unit should be financially self-sufficient to ensure independence and autonomy from the higher level of administration. In order to guarantee some degree of autonomy subnational governments need sufficient income to be able to operate without central government interference. Budgetary arrangements are a prime example for the aforementioned 'illusory decentralisation' (Fesler, 1965: 555). Financial dependence on the central government hinders the development of local autonomy. Therefore, the reallocation of authority has to proceed with the redistribution of financial resources or the provision of grants and subsidies from the central government has to be free from restrictions to their usage.

In Korea, local revenue is created by different sources (Kim JW, 1996). First of all there are local taxes on fifteen items and non-tax revenue such as fees and charges. Local taxes are divided in provincial taxes (such as registration tax, licence tax and public facilities tax) and city-county taxes (automobile tax, tobacco tax, butchery tax etc.; see KLA FIR, 1995: 27).<sup>24</sup> Further income is created through local loans and bonds. In addition, there is dependent revenue in form of grants, local transfers, national subsidies and lastly the local allocation tax (LATI, 1997: 14). Among the local governments there is suspicion that the central government is partial in the allocation of funds due to regionalism among central administrators. Administrative and political control are not clearly divided yet in the eyes of many as the previously stated example of mayors changing party affiliation shows.

Although national income has been redistributed financial self-sufficiency for smaller units remains extremely difficult. Local tax income has increased by more than 800 per cent from 1985 to 1995 it is nevertheless still insufficient for many parts of the country (the GNP rose only by 429 per cent in this period; MHA, 1997: 20). There are

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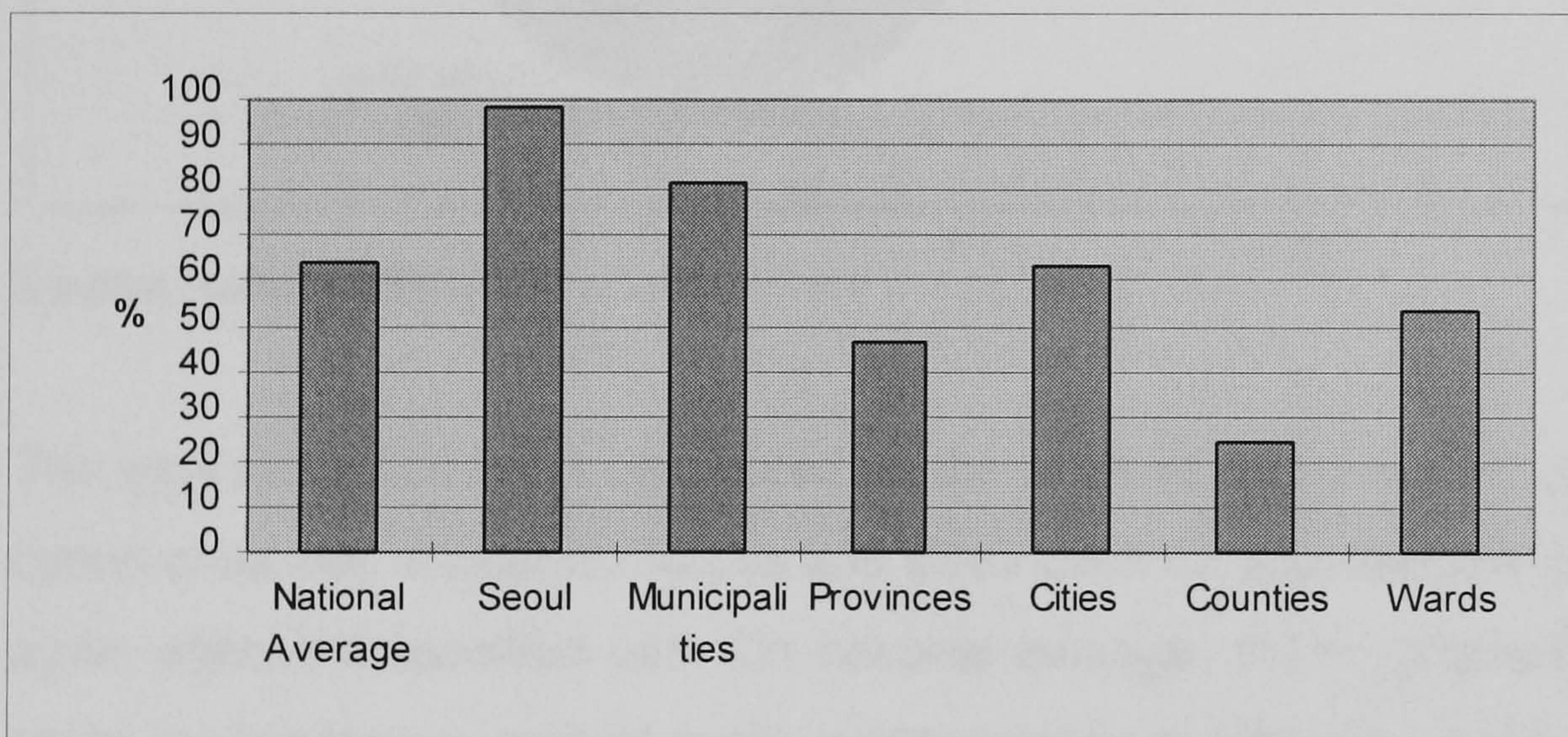
<sup>24</sup> For a detailed description of the taxes see Moon CS, 1997: 244-264.



different levels of financial self-sufficiency throughout Korea. The capital Seoul reaches near-complete financial independence (98.1%) while others in less advanced regions have severe problems (the Cholla provinces create less than thirty per cent of the needed income). Generally, the financial situation in rural areas is worst. More than half of counties do not raise enough revenue to meet payroll requirements of local civil servants (Kim DK, 1995: 50).

In Kyonggi province, cities create on average three quarters of their income. Kwach'on city reaches more than ninety-five per cent of self-sufficiency while Dong-duch'on - bordering the DMZ with many military installations - reaches only thirty-six per cent. Counties in Kyonggi-do on average gain forty per cent of their revenue, with the areas close to the DMZ facing the biggest problems (Yonchon-county creates less than twenty per cent of its income through taxes and fees; Kyonggi-do, 1997b: 37).

**Figure 4.11:** Extent of Financial Self-Sufficiency (December 1994):



Source: KLA FIR, 1995: 28.

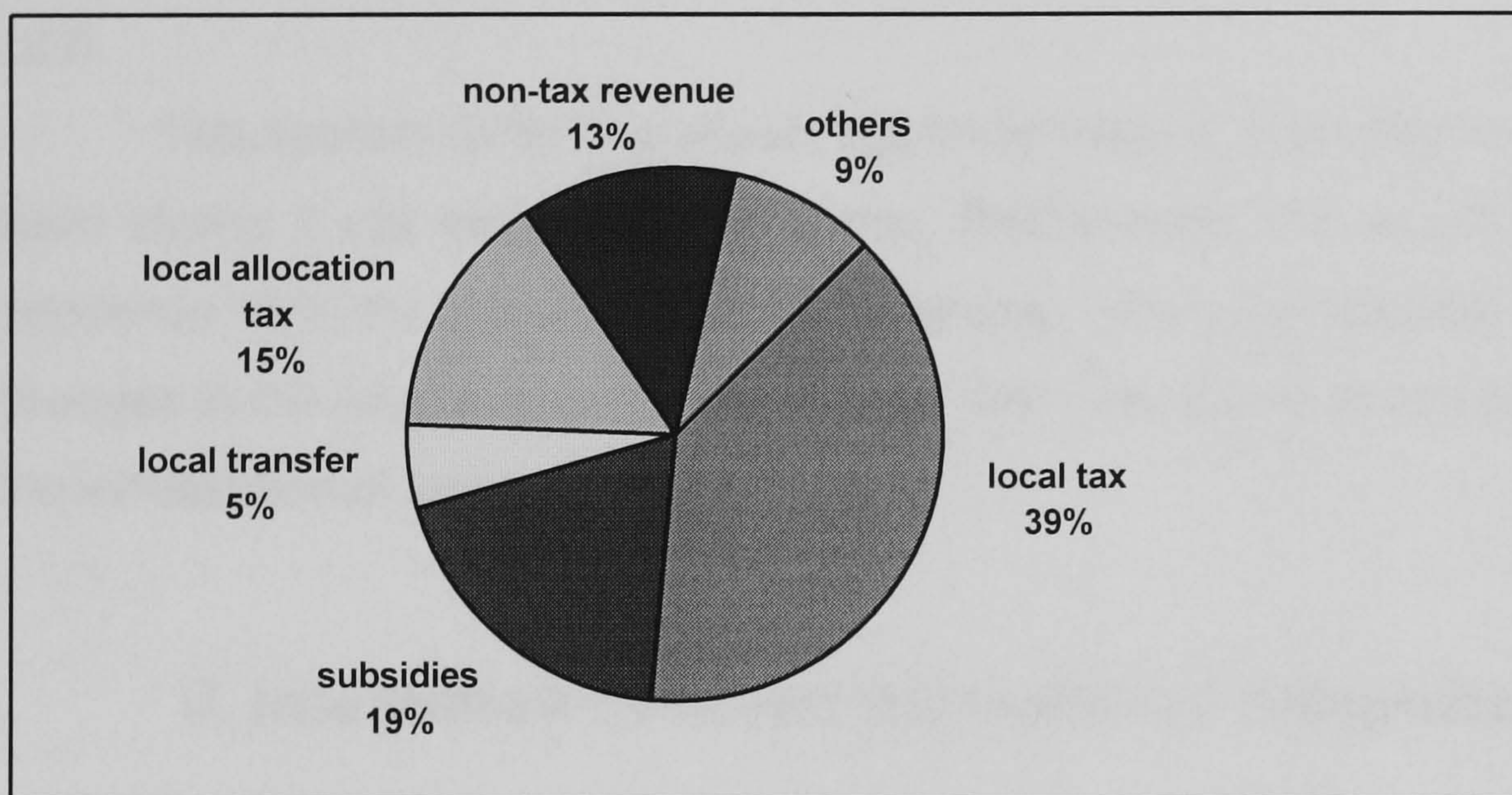
The taxes allocated to local governments, state subsidies and local bonds make up the difference in funding local budgets. In 1995, local taxes made up only thirty-nine per cent of local public finance while subsidies and local transfers account for twenty-four per cent (MHA, 1997: 20). Local allocation tax and non-tax revenue respectively contribute fifteen and thirteen per cent.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> For details of distribution see Moon CS, 1999: 210-214.



Non-tax revenue is created by the collection of fees and charges for services such as water supply and sewage collection. Rates are set by the local administration and approved by the local assembly within the range set by the 'Price Stabilisation and Fair Trade Act' (Moon CS, 1999: 244). For a revision of fees the consent of the *Ministry of Finance and Economy* is required (Kim KH, 1996: 315).<sup>26</sup>

**Figure 4.12:** Size of Local Finance in 1995:



Source: MHA, 1997: 20.

The local allocation tax is distributed on the basis of financial shortage without specification of its use. Richer provinces and cities pass on adjusted grants to poorer areas, again without a specified use. On national average, these unspecified resources account for twenty per cent of public income, while roughly one quarter is tied to specified projects (MHA, 1997: 20). National subsidies are tied to specific local projects. The distribution, however, tends to increase local disparities: richer areas manage to obtain more subsidies than poorer localities (Kim JW, 1996: 165). The central administration also transfers the revenue from the telephone and the liquor tax and half of the land-

<sup>26</sup> A proposed rise of the bus fares in Seoul was quickly criticised by the vice-prime minister for creating inflationary pressure and consequently the increase was reduced (to be followed quickly by another rise; *Korea Herald*, 18 June, 1996).



speculation tax to local governments for road maintenance and development projects of rural areas (LATI, 1997: 15).<sup>27</sup>

Borrowing is strictly monitored by the *Ministry of Home Affairs* and strongly discouraged (i.e. applications are rarely authorised). Bonds are another source of income, mainly for higher level units. Kyonggi province raised 900 billion won through public funds in 1998 and will use most of that sum to support small and medium enterprises (*Korea Times*, 17 May, 1999). The city of Seoul issued international bonds in New York in July 1993 to finance the extension of the subway-system (Kim KH, 1996: 323).

This section so far has shown that while rhetoric regarding decentralisation has been strong it still lacks follow-up action. Regionalism and a lack of financial independence limit the degree of local autonomy. The next section will examine the changes in the relationship between higher and lower levels of administration following the introduction of local autonomy.

## ii. Interaction between Subnational Administrations

The relationship among local governments is considered to be equal and independent. The Local Autonomy Act grants local governments the right to make ordinances and to conduct affairs directly related to the daily lives of their residents. The governments at the lowest level are, however, bound by the regulations of both the higher level government and the state (Kim HR, 1993: 348). Upper-level governments are empowered to perform advisory and supervisory functions, if necessary (LATI, 1997: 4).

In addition, higher level governments have a supportive role providing technical, and sometimes financial, support and also co-ordinate projects and policies within their area. In 1997, Kyonggi-do established a 'Policy Co-ordination Office' where the plans of all departments and bureaux of the provincial administration and those of cities and counties are collected and co-ordinated. The department is primarily concerned about traffic, housing and economic development of the province. For this

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<sup>27</sup> When looking at the tax system in Korea, it has to be pointed out that it is not adequate (Palley, 1992: 794). Tax evasion is very common, especially among the self-employed and farmers (personal communication).



office, highly qualified experts were hired in a special campaign ('the brains of Kyonggi provincial government' as they proudly referred to themselves).

Since the introduction of local autonomy problems between governments have increased. Local authorities compete against each other in order to promote their region, mainly economically. The construction of polluting industries or other unpopular projects is vehemently opposed while clean projects are welcome (*Korea Herald*, 11 August, 1998). The so-called NIMBY phenomenon ("Not In My BackYard") is widespread in Korea. Administrations at all levels search to improve their economy, often leading to conflict with other issues such as the preservation of the environment. The development of new industrial sites in the Taegu-area, for example, is threatening the water-quality of the Naktong-river, the main source of drinking water for Pusan and southern Kyongsang province (*Korea Herald*, 5 September, 1996).

In the capital region (Seoul, Inch'on, Kyonggi-do) the situation is more serious. The water quality of the Han River feeding the Paldang reservoir - the main water supply for twenty million people - has been deteriorating drastically in the last few years. Intensified agriculture and the development of tourist sites have had a very negative influence on the water quality. County governments neighbouring the reservoir try to improve the economic situation in their district, sometimes ignoring the restrictions of the provincial government (*Korea Herald*, 30 July, 1998). The governments of Seoul and Kyonggi-do were arguing about the distribution of costs for improving the quality of drinking water. Given the importance of the reservoir, the *Ministry of Environment* took over, proposing new legislation to limit development and construction on the shores of the reservoir (MoE, 1999). A hearing about the legislation was to be held in Seoul, not in the vicinity of the reservoir. This meeting was disrupted by protesting land and restaurant owners from the area, supported by a few local mayors (*Korea Herald*, 28 August, 1998). The officials from the *Ministry* realised that a more participatory approach was needed. Their publication claims that

*'by holding many public hearings, discussions, etc. throughout the upstream regions, the Government brought many people to understand that the proposed measures contained not just restrictions but also sufficient support measures for them and that the views of both upstream and downstream citizens had been carefully considered in the formulation of the special measures'* (MoE, 1999).

Further funds will be transferred for the construction of sewage treatment facilities.

These incidents show that local autonomy can be detrimental to public interest, as Langrod has warned (1953: 28). Besides administration by the central government as in the case of Paldang reservoir, co-operation of local authorities can solve this problem. The Local Autonomy Act provides for the creation of 'administrative councils for regional co-ordination'. Since 1993, five regional administrative councils have been established for the regions and forty-nine for basic administrations (Jung YD, 1996: 164). Membership is voluntary but the *Ministry of Home Affairs* 'can recommend an affiliation, which is actually an induction into the constitution of the association' (Kim HR, 1993: 355). The effect of the groups has been limited. Meetings are infrequent and used by participants 'merely as a means of propaganda to show off that they are doing their best for the benefits of the electorates' (Jung YD, 1996: 165). In case of a failure to agree on a solution for a problem, it is passed on to the next higher level (i.e. provincial, municipal or central government). Another short-coming of these councils lies in the fact that membership is restricted to executives of local governments, thus excluding councillors. A fully democratised system should include both groups.

Countries with a longer history of local government are familiar with institutions such as the 'Local Government Management Board' in England or the 'Städtetag' in Germany. These organisations are essential for local governments to articulate and represent their interests and obtain more power from the central government. On a nation-wide level, organisations for governmental co-operation are underdeveloped in Korea. Considering the recent introduction of local autonomy, organisations for co-operation have not played an important role yet. The process is also hindered by the limited ability of co-operation between mayors and governors with different party affiliations (Jung YD, 1996: 171). There has been talk of creating such national groups in Korea (Jee BM, 1993: 333, 340; Kim HR, 1993: 357). A *Conference of the Chairmen of the Local Councils* has been organised in 1991 and a *National Mayors' Conference of Korea* a few years later (Kim HR, 1993: 358; Seong KR, 1998: 125). There are, however, no signs that progress past the initial meetings has taken place.

Besides national collaboration, international co-operation is gaining more influence in the era of globalisation. Many provinces and cities are engaged in international exchanges. The main issues are economic but this channel is also used for the exchange of ideas on administration and, more practically, officials. This allows better understanding of the respective culture and new and different methods of administra-



tion can be studied. In 1997, two Chinese officials working for Kyonggi province and a colleague from Japan was expected. The planned visit of a Korean representative to the Northeast of England had to be postponed due to the financial crisis. Kangwon province also initiated an exchange of officials with the administration in their partner regions in China and Japan.

In response to the increase in international contacts, the *Ministry of Home Affairs* established the *Korean Local Authorities Foundation for International Relations* (KLAFIR) in 1994 for promoting international exchanges and sisterhood relationships. KLAFIR was organised to support these efforts and assist with documents and translations. In addition, it operates three overseas offices in Tokyo, New York and Paris. The funding of the foundation, however, is provided by local authorities in the form of 'contributions'. Nearly half of the staff are from local authorities on a rotating basis while others are employed by the *Ministry of Home Affairs* (personal communication; KLAFIR, 1997: 15).

The case of KLAFIR again exposes how the *Ministry of Home Affairs* interferes with the affairs of lower administrations. Despite being financed by local governments the *Ministry* has the final say in decisions. The different levels of government are far from being equal partners. Although local autonomy has been introduced the preceding top-down approach is continuing to characterise the relationship between the different levels of government. This shows that although democratic institutions have been provided for, behaviour and attitudes among the main actors prevail their consolidation.

The next section will examine changes in participatory opportunities by looking at the interaction between local governments and the population.

## IV. Interaction between Local Administration and Citizens

In this section, the interaction between the local administration and the population will be addressed. This involves two levels of democratic consolidation, the attitudinal and the representational level. First and foremost, attitudinal consolidation is influenced by the contacts between citizens and bureaucrats, given that the administration is often the first contact between population and government. Efficiency, openness and equality increase the positive impression of the democratic system. Many scholars stress the importance of democratic beliefs among the bureaucracy to the degree that 'commitment of the official to democratic values is a more important safeguard for democracy than any formal system of control' (Albrow, 1970: 117). Initiatives to make local administration more accessible have been made by the bureaucracy and have been positively received by the population. New means of participation, such as public hearings, have also been introduced where interest groups become involved. This will have some influence on the representational level of democratic consolidation.

### i. The Opening of the Administration

Traditionally, Korean bureaucracy has been associated with a strict adherence to rules and little responsiveness to the needs of citizens. Local administrations simply implemented national government regulations. With the introduction of democracy and local autonomy, the role of officials has changed from pure execution to that of policy-making (Albrow, 1970: 111). Local governments now need to be responsive to the citizens and responsible to them. Thus, new concepts associated with democracy such as systems of exchanges and procedures of negotiation, mediation of interests and compromise need to be introduced.<sup>28</sup> Local administration is no longer responsible to

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<sup>28</sup> This includes fair and uniform treatment. Nearly half of the population (42%) did not expect fair treatment at a municipality office in 1997 (Shin, Rose, 1997b: 23).



the central administration alone but also to the citizens, directly by daily contact and indirectly by local councillors and the elected heads of the executive.

With the delegation of power from the central administration to the lower levels, these agencies can pay more attention to local problems in their decisions. Officials thus have to show more interest in the special needs of their district. Closer contact between government officials and local population allows 'both to obtain better information with which to formulate more realistic and effective plans for government projects and programs' (Rondinelli, Cheema, 1983: 15).

The inclusion of the population in the decision process through public hearings etc. prolongs the procedure. Officials also complain that it is often detrimental and obstructive, especially in the case of 'NIMBY'-sensitive projects, such as waste disposal facilities. The inclusion of citizens in the decision-making process can, however, help to reduce resistance and overcome stalemates. The construction of a home for the handicapped in Seoul is an example: residents of several wards in Seoul petitioned against the construction in their neighbourhood (on grounds that the increased traffic arising from the transport of the disabled would reduce the value of their homes). It was only after the head of one ward had taken the petitioners to a similar institution that their resistance was overcome and the home could be constructed (*Korea Times*, 3 December, 1997).

The local governments have taken steps to become more accessible under the instruction of the head of the executive (who - presumably - wants to be re-elected) and also on their own initiative. Improvements include the so-called 'one-stop service' where several connected transactions can be done at once (Hahm SD, Kim KW, 1999: 483). For example, to obtain a licence for opening a restaurant several time consuming visits to various departments used to be necessary. Under the new, simplified system, the administration will deal with the different steps internally, requiring fewer visits by the applicant. Since most local governments constructed new office buildings they often include one central room where all frequent enquiries and general administrative tasks, such as the issuing of licences, are handled. Other offices introduced areas for little children to play and libraries for the population to access official publications (own observation).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Other projects include tourist promotions such as the already mentioned 'Eight Finest Views in HwaSung'. My personal favourite was the 'first-class toilet campaign of Suwon City' (a

The main objective of most local governments is the economic development of the respective district, even more so in the aftermath of the economic crisis of 1997 (Im SB, 1996: 42). Each province and municipality, especially those in peripheral areas, tries to attract foreign investment and industrial facilities by travelling to other countries with delegations of businessmen and by joining foreign commercial organisations such as the *European Union Chamber of Commerce* based in Seoul (*Korea Times*, 26 November, 1998; 1 February, 1999).

Developments over the last few years support the application of the theoretical assumption that 'local government is more participatory, accessible and responsive than central government' to Korea (Dunleavy, O'Leary, 1987: 58). The population also expected greater accessibility and responsiveness and therefore greeted the introduction of local autonomy enthusiastically. 'Self-government is really injecting vigour into our local officialdom', said one bureaucrat about his colleagues (*Korea Herald*, 30 June, 1996). Changes mentioned in reviews include easier accessibility of local government leaders and a change in attitude of public servants (*Korea Herald*, 2 June, 1998; 8 June, 1998). Citizens of Kwangmyong, a smaller city in Kyonggi-do, gave the mayor very high approval rates on the friendliness of the officials, education policy and culture and arts policy. In the economic area, few improvements were seen by the population (*Kyonggi Weekly Newspaper*, 15 September, 1997). The main area of change, however, was the surge in public demands all over Korea (Im SB, 1996: 41).

These expectations of the citizens were, however, not always met. In a survey conducted in 1996, nearly all of the interviewed local leaders thought that local services had improved greatly since the introduction of local autonomy a year before. Seventy per cent of experts agreed with them, but only forty per cent of local residents. More than half of the residents saw little or no change (ibid.). The continuation of corrupt practices has also tarnished the efforts of local governments.

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much needed improvement). The winners were published, including photos, in the free paper published by the city-government (e.g. *Evergreen Suwon*, 13 August, 1997).



## ii. New Channels of Participation

In order to satisfy the needs and desires of the population, new channels of information have to be opened. For the formulation and interpretation of policy officials are expected to make use of the best sources of information and maintain contact with all levels of the public (Albrow, 1970: 112). Information has to come from two sources: from the administration regarding projects and plans and from the citizens regarding their expectations and suggestions.

Korean local governments are increasing the amount of information available to the population. Most administrations have established homepages on the internet or are in the process of doing so. Even with increasing computerisation this will reach only a limited number of citizens (and those reached are often in their twenties and thirties who are rather indifferent to politics; Lee SJ, 1999: 2). Television is more widely accessible but no government has set up their own programmes yet. Kyonggi-do has experimented with a cable-TV station but has not started broadcasting on a permanent basis. Most local authorities are active in the more traditional field of printed media. Free weekly papers published by local authorities are distributed at strategic locations such as libraries and public halls (e.g. *Kyonggi Weekly Newspaper*, *Evergreen Suwon*). Smaller rural districts may not be able to afford this service.

The authorities also publish information about specific services and problems that can be collected from the relevant office such as the *Kyonggi Province-Global Newsletter*. Kyonggi-do also published a 'Whitebook', containing important information regarding the province (1997c). It was sold for a reasonable price of 13,000 won (US\$ 16) at the provincial government building but the sheer volume (1130 pages) is rather off-putting. While the weekly newspapers are published in *Hangul* only, information leaflets are often written using *Hanja* (Chinese characters) as are most internal information papers. Many Koreans have problems reading *Hanja* fluently and are thus limited in gaining this information.<sup>30</sup> There is a regulation prohibiting the use of *Hanja*

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<sup>30</sup> The secretaries who have to type all these documents are often insecure about *Hanja* usage, too. The use of the Chinese characters further increases their workload: in order to type a word in *Hanja* it has to be entered in *Hangul* first, so that draft documents contain both versions anyway.

in official publications but it is not always applied (*Korea Herald*, 12 October, 1998; *Chosun Ilbo*, 10 November, 1998).

Apart from official newspapers there are also private publications. Since the liberation of press regulations in the late 1980s, many new newspapers have been established, especially outside Seoul. In 1998, there were thirty-one publications outside the municipalities (*Korea Times*, 5 February, 1999). They mainly rely on subscriptions since they can hardly ever be found on sale in newsagents (own observation; communication with local journalist). In addition, there are countless free weekly publications distributed around residential areas, mainly for advertising. Both types of papers fill their pages with reports regarding the affairs of local administration. The provincial administration of Kyonggi had a special press room with cubicles for about a dozen reporters.<sup>31</sup>

Introducing democracy at the local level, however, involves more than merely increasing the amount of information produced by the authorities. There must be a provision for the consultation and participation of citizens which can be achieved in several ways. In addition to the already established monthly neighbourhood meetings, there are public hearings, demonstrations, committees, petitions and referenda (Yoon JP, 1997: 94). Moreover, there is the indirect influence through contact with councillors.

The monthly neighbourhood meetings typically serve to circulate government policy. The flow of information is one-sided but the meetings can also be used as a means of collecting views and demands of local residents. These meetings have the yet untapped potential of serving as a discussion forum for day-to-day problems, such as garbage collection and sewage treatment.

In order to invite comments from the general public, elected heads have introduced 'open hours' for citizens to drop in and talk about their problems (Suwon City, 1997: 22). They also travel around their district for direct contact with the population. Seoul City, in 1998, installed several telephone booths with direct contact to City Hall (*Korea Herald*, 28 October, 1998). This includes one line directly connected with the office of the mayor who promised to spend some time every day to answer the calls.

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<sup>31</sup> Similar arrangements can be found in Japan. The distribution of material by the respective authorities often leads to favourable or biased reports in the media (Jee BM, 1997: 21).



Internet homepages usually have an offer for communication but the lack of feedback from the administration to public requests has been criticised (Lee SJ, 1999).

Public hearings can be initiated by either local authorities or councillors to present projects and receive feedback. This is usually done at council committee meetings where a limited number of citizens is allowed to attend without the right to intervene. There is an exchange between officials, councillors and invited specialists. Civil groups, such as environmental organisations, use this forum to present their opinion and influence public policy. Public hearings can also take the form of a public forum outside the committees, where free interaction with the audience is allowed. Participation in both events is relatively low, since the hearings are poorly advertised and often late in the decision-making process when great changes are not really feasible (Yoon JP, 1997: 96).

Committees independent of the council can be established to collect public opinion and serve as advisory bodies. Members include officials, council members, experts and local leaders. The 'average citizen' is rarely included so that these committees are not representative. Kyonggi Province established a 'Globalisation Steering Committee' consisting of the above mentioned member-groups plus some businessmen and heads of trading organisations (Oh YH, 1995: 253). Seoul City created a 'Green Seoul Movement' where councillors and representatives of religious groups, academia, press and a few residents discuss ecological issues (*Newsworld*, December 1995).

Petitions are a direct way of influencing government policy. They can be directed to the local council or the administration. The Local Autonomy Act allows citizens to file petitions concerning the following issues: damage relief, disposition or punishment of a corrupt official, operation of public facilities and correction or abolition of ordinances (Kangnam District Council, 1997: 16). These petitions usually involve private interests, mainly to stop projects attracting NIMBY-style protests.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Shortly after the introduction of local autonomy, nine out of ten public projects on Cheju-do, for example, had been halted due to local objections (*Munhwa Ilbo*, 2 February, 1996). This sort of participation is unpopular among bureaucrats. In a limited survey among central-government bureaucrats thirty-six per cent objected to active participation of the population (Park CM, 1999: 177).

In order to allow more participation the Local Autonomy Act provides for referenda to decide on the abolition or merge of local self-governing bodies and decisions having a strong impact on citizens. In 1995, the county of Kanghwa held a referendum deciding whether or not to disassociate from Kyonggi Province and join the municipality of Inch'on. The population favoured the move to the municipality. The second condition in the Local Autonomy Act, restricting the use of referenda for consequential decisions, is interpreted rather freely by some administrations. Kangnam district in Seoul, for example, had a referendum concerning the construction of anti-noise walls (Yoon JP, 1997: 99). The overuse of referenda can lead to fatigue among the population and limit the usefulness of these measures.

This section presented the direct interaction between administration and citizens. Local governments have taken steps to increase their openness and the information available to the population. Measures to increase participation have been introduced but need to be institutionalised and accepted by the population as their inclusion is part of the democratisation process. By experiencing the effects of their participation citizens feel more integrated and favourably disposed towards to democracy, leading to attitudinal consolidation. The inclusion of interest groups in the decision-making process has a positive effect on representational consolidation.

So far, this chapter has presented direct means of influencing public policy. The next section will look at indirect influence through local councillors.



## V. Interaction between Administration and Politicians

In this section, the behavioural aspect of democratic consolidation will be analysed by illuminating the interaction between the administration - the executive - and politicians. The latter come in two positions, as head of the executive and as councillors. Local councils have been re-introduced in 1991 after a hiatus of more than thirty years. They present a new mechanism to control the work of the executive. Plans and programmes now have to be within the range of council ordinances and condoned by the council. Furthermore, the head of the executive is elected and therefore accountable to the population. This makes the head of the administration more concerned about the short-term results of their policies and instructions. This section will first look at the interaction between the administration and their head to illuminate the change in perspective. The last part of this chapter describes the relationship between councils and the administration.

### i. The Head of the Executive

Before the introduction of elected heads there was a frequent change in the position holders. Seoul City, for example, had thirty mayors in fifty years. With a term of four years there is greater consistency allowing the head to leave their mark on the administration. On the other hand, the fixed tenure can lead to a short-term outlook. The previous sections have already shown that the work of the administration is still very much restricted by central government regulations. The head of the local government therefore has yet to gain a position of real influence. The lower level administration is even more restricted in its manoeuvrability by financial restraints.

In the last two elections, many of the candidates, especially at the lower level, had previous experience in the administration (as illustrated above). There are two reasons for this development. Firstly, popular civil servants ran for office on their own initiative. Secondly, well-liked civil servants were approached by parties to stand for office on their ticket (*Korea Herald*, 24 April, 1998). Others were elected as independ-

ents and later joined a party since it is still advantageous to be a party member, particularly of the ruling party (*Korea Times*, 28 July, 1998).

At the higher level elections, regionalism and party politics were the main factors in the elections. The strong regionalist tendency among Korean voters means that candidates will be elected disregarding their qualifications or those of their opponents. The last two elections were also seen as an assessment of the national government with little relevance to provincial or municipal issues (*Korea Times*, 28 June, 1995b; *Korea Herald*, 21 May, 1998). The experience of many elected heads in public administration is advantageous for Korea. Many other democratising countries have to cope with an imbalance between the development of the bureaucracy and the development of political institutions inhibiting general political development (Riggs, 1974: 337). The bureaucracy can 'project greater political power on its own, resist more successfully the politician's attempts to assert effective control' (ibid.).<sup>33</sup> Bureaucratic knowledge not only means expert knowledge regarding public administration but also an understanding of the routines and procedures allowing the stalling or obstruction of unwelcome decisions by elected officials. So far, there have been few signs of this attitude in Korea.<sup>34</sup>

Politicians at the higher level are tempted to use their position as a spring board for a career in national politics. There is the temptation and opportunity of mingling official and private positions.<sup>35</sup> The mayor of Seoul, Cho Soon, and the governor of Kyonggi Province, Rhee In-je, both left their position prematurely to compete in the presidential elections of 1997. Their positions remained vacant for nearly one year until the next elections. This decision also directly affected the administration they were

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<sup>33</sup> The television-series 'Yes, Minister' was based on this imbalance but the plot was not pure fiction. Weber cites the Russian Czar who could do little against the wishes of his bureaucracy (1947: 672). A finance minister in Weimar-Germany met a similar fate in 1923 when 'his' civil servants decided to run the ministry without him (Page, 1992: 1).

<sup>34</sup> Prior to the introduction of elected heads, there were frequent changes in this position, as mentioned earlier. Mid- and high-level officials often took the power of decision-making in their hands. They were also known to prolong or stall the process until the head had changed again if the person was unfavourable to it (Kim SE, 1997: 9).

<sup>35</sup> Rhee In-je, in his capacity as potential candidate for presidency, went on a private trip to China accompanied by some of the staff of the *International Relations Office* (*Korea Times*, 22 August, 1997 for trip; personal communication for 'company').



heading. Both units had to undergo a special audit by the central government although officially it was denied that it was politically motivated (*Korea Times*, 23 September, 1997).

## ii. Councils and Administration

At this point, the interaction between bureaucrats and councillors will be examined. The councillors themselves and their connection with the population are the topics of the following chapter.

Councillors have three ways of contacting the administration. Firstly, they can approach the respective division directly to get information or file a request. Secondly, there are general council meetings, including sessions for questioning the head of the executive. Thirdly, councillors have contact with the administration in committee meetings where the details of plans prepared by the bureaucracy will be presented. This is the most frequent contact.

In their work in committees, councillors ideally work with the views and interests of their constituents in mind (and their own re-election) often leading to pork-barrelling as the administration pushes for positive developments in their constituency. Local citizens also approach councillors, sometimes involving bribery (*Korea Herald*, 14 January, 1998). More often, however, citizens tend to solicit the local representative in the National Assembly. Many candidates for national office run their campaigns on local issues although they have no direct influence on those decisions (*Korea Herald*, 16 June, 1996).

Council committee meetings usually consist of an exchange between representatives of the relevant administrative section and councillors. In order to participate in these meetings, registration as 'speaker in the committee' made some time in advance is needed. Interest groups increasingly use these meetings to make their voice heard (Kim SE, 1997: 13). For spontaneous groups it is difficult to organise a registration in advance. Citizens are allowed to attend but not to participate, showing the still prevailing top-down approach.

The determination of the annual budget is a typical example of the interaction between council and administration. The budget division creates a plan that is presented

to the relevant committee of the council (usually the Finance Committee). In the case of small councils at the lower level without committees, it is presented to the general meeting. Following this preliminary examination, a special committee scrutinises the budget in detail. In case a change is required by the special committee, the head of the executive will prepare a modified budget. In Pusan, for instance, between 1991 and 1995 nearly two thirds of the budget proposals were amended (Kim SE, 1997: 10). The councillors, however, cannot increase the amount of expenditure for certain details of the budget without approval of the head. The budget is then sent to the general council meeting for approval to confirm its legality. A copy eventually forwarded to the *Ministry of Home Affairs* (Kangnam District Council, 1997: 14; Kyonggi-do, 1997b: 13).

Apart from work in committees, other tasks of the councillors include the issuing of by-laws (ordinances) as long as they do not interfere with national laws. By-laws can be proposed by government officials and by councillors. Most are initiated by the administration, similar to the ratio of bills in the National Assembly (see Chapter Three; Kim SE, 1997: 11). With the growing experience of the local councillors the number initiated by them can be expected to rise.

Councils are also granted the right of inspection and investigation. They can conduct field inspections and demand the submission of documents and direct statements from bureaucrats and the head of the executive regarding administrative matters. They cannot, however, remove the head of the executive. Local councils have no control over centrally administered projects and regulations. Rural development projects under the *Saemaul Undong*, for example, are outside their control. The green-belt regulations around Seoul, decreed by the central government, limit development, mainly in the form of construction works, severely in some places.<sup>36</sup>

After three years as member in a local assembly, the respondents in my survey were cautious about the increase of participation in local administration. More than half maintained it was the same as ten years ago, in spite of the introduction of local councils and elected heads of administration. Only fifteen per cent saw an increase in participatory opportunities. Councillors are also careful in their assessment of relations with the

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<sup>36</sup> More than ninety-eight per cent of the area of Hanam city on the border of Seoul has been designated as green-belt zone to be used only for agriculture and forestry. The city is deploring the restrictions but can hardly ignore them (although there are cases where restrictions were violated; *Korea Herald*, 6 February, 1998).



relevant bureaucrats: one third think they are 'good', one third 'normal', and another third 'not too good' (Sohn BS, 1998: 35).

## Summary

Local councils are the least powerful element of local autonomy. Their power to formulate ordinances is limited by national laws. The council has the power to limit the actions of the head of the executive but no right to dismiss them. It is the head of the administration who takes the main initiative to create new policies and programmes. The local councils nevertheless play an important role in the democratisation process.

Administrative issues have come under democratic control, albeit in a restricted form. The distribution of power to lower levels has been slow and many laws and regulations have not been as yet changed to include local councils in the decision-making process. Surveyed councillors were careful in their opinion regarding the increase of participation in local administration. The introduction of local councils and elected heads notwithstanding, more than half saw no increase in participatory opportunities while only fifteen per cent had a positive impression. On the institutional level, local democracy therefore is not consolidated.

Since the administration is a main element in the decentralisation process it took the centre-stage in this chapter. Bureaucrats at lower levels, in general, appreciated increased autonomy although it also enlarged their work-load and responsibilities. Officials of the central government are more reluctant to share their power, partly due to (real and perceived) inadequacies of lower level officials. Greater involvement of the citizens is often seen as an extra burden. This shows that the behavioural consolidation of democracy has progressed but still has far to go.

Local governments, traditionally hierarchically structured and orientated toward the central government, have been granted more rights and duties but are still under control from above. Their freedom of manoeuvring is rather restricted by regulations and financial problems. An open and accessible administration is crucial for the wide acceptance of democracy among the population. The citizens have high expectations of local autonomy that cannot always be fulfilled. Regionalism and parochialism have characterised the first years of autonomy, as had to be expected in the light of Korea's traditional orien-

tation toward family and region. This egoism is often cited as the negative side of democracy by critics (such as Lee Kuan Yew, Chapter Two). Only when it is overcome will democracy have been consolidated on the attitudinal level.

Representational consolidation has received little treatment in this chapter. Interest groups attempt to influence decisions but local level activities are only a small part of their activities. Political parties are active in connection with and through local councillors. Both groups have not yet taken full advantage of the opportunities for further participation provided by decentralisation. Without the impetus from the local areas, however, the central administration is unlikely to concede more of its power.



## **Chapter Five: Political Participation at Local Level in Korea**

This chapter will examine political participation at the local level in Korea. Besides aggregation of different opinions, competition for office and civil and political liberties, political participation is one of the main dimensions of democracy (Dahl, 1971: 3). Citizens and elite alike need to become accustomed to democratic rules and have to accept them without reservation. Chapter One already introduced several definitions of political participation. In this chapter a broad definition as presented by Milbrath and Goel (1977) will be used to analyse the situation in Korea and the changes since the beginning of democratisation process in 1987. 'Political participation' in this chapter therefore encompasses all actions aiming at influencing the government, including voting, joining political groups and ad-hoc associations formed with a specific goal, demonstrations and even mobilised activity.

The first part of the chapter will present different types of participants in political life as proposed by Almond and Verba in their study of *Civic Culture* (1963). They connect the political culture of a country with different types of participants. When this typology is applied to Korea, it reveals that political culture and political structure are inconsistent, resulting in a low rate of participation and, more generally, in a prolonged process of democratic consolidation. Under the authoritarian regimes, Korea fell into the category of a subject type of participation where a passive population concentrating on governmental output was predominating. Although a democratic political structure was introduced in 1987, a majority of Koreans still expresses a passive attitude towards politics. This phenomenon is described as a subject-parochial culture in Almond and Verba's model.

After these theoretical considerations this chapter will analyse the actions and motives of those Koreans who are engaged in politics. The focus will be on local politics, a field of meaningful political activities that has been introduced only in the 1990s. At this level public interest is connected to their direct private interest and new activists are likely to be motivated to participate (Almond, Verba, 1963: 164; Elkin, 1999: 395). Following an assessment of voting activities before and after the transition in 1987, protest activities will be presented. Furthermore, community activities in civic movements will be intro-

duced, followed by party and campaign work. This leads to the activities and experiences of councillors in local assemblies. For this analysis, data from generally available sources will be combined with the results of my own survey conducted among local councillors in early 1998. This survey targeted female councillors with a control group of male representatives.

The number of female politicians is very small in relation to their share of the population. After presenting the experiences of female councillors in local assemblies the next section will turn to the reasons for the low rate of participation. Obstacles remain in the political culture, the structure of politics and parties, the method of campaign financing and political education. Each will be dealt with in some detail. Steps to overcome these obstacles are only slowly implemented as the last part of the chapter will very briefly demonstrate.



## I. Theoretical Concepts

### i. The Relevance of Participation for Democratic Consolidation

In order to call a political system a democracy, it takes more than an elected government. Dahl's definition of a *polyarchy*, so often referred to in the literature about democratisation, includes public contestation and participation, i.e. competition for office and citizens influencing policy making (Dahl, 1971: 1-9). Following this definition, the active participation of citizens in social and political affairs, in both civil and political society is required. Political participation therefore is an indicator for the progress of attitudinal consolidation of democracy. The more citizens are involved at all levels of government the better the chances of democratic consolidation. Effective democracy is more likely to flourish 'where norms of participation, perceived ability to participate, and actual participation are high' (Almond, Verba, 1963: 178). Civil and political groups thus contribute to the stability of a democratic system (Putnam, 1993: 89).

Participation also influences representational consolidation. Political parties and interest groups are the main institutions of participation and have to accept democracy as 'the only game in town' (Linz, 1990: 158). Existing institutions have to embrace democratic procedures in the same way as newly established groups. This also influences the behavioural level of consolidation, which is concerned with the actions and behaviour of the elite. These (formerly) privileged groups have to accept an extension of political activity to other parts of the population. Moreover, power held by the elite will be shared by wider circles of citizens, including activists from all parts of the population (ideally representing the whole population).

Chapter One has already introduced different definitions of political participation. For the purpose of this thesis a broad definition has been chosen, as presented by Milbrath and Goel. It encompasses 'those actions of private citizens by which they seek to influence or to support government and politics' (Milbrath, Goel, 1977: 2). Following the model of Kim Chong Lim, Chapter One further divided participation into different types, voluntary and involuntary, conventional and unconventional (1980b: 5). This includes

voting and campaign activities, joining political and civil groups as well as engaging in protest. Involuntary activities, such as arranged rallies, are also covered.

This chapter will mainly focus on conventional voluntary actions, such as voting and joining political groups. Voluntary unconventional participation involves illegal demonstrations and violent behaviour. In the case of Korea, these actions were employed in the protest against the authoritarian regime in the 1980s, still within memory of most participants. Occasionally, citizens and political activists, such as students, still resort to sometimes violent demonstrations, actions that are outside the democratic framework.

In a consolidated democracy, involuntary participation should be ruled out by the very definition of participation as voluntary. Involuntary conventional activities include mobilised activity and arranged rallies. The first few years of the Sixth Republic still saw these incidents occurring in Korea (Chung SW, 1991: 184; Kim KJ, 1992: 263; Park BS, 1995: 170). New election laws have been introduced to restrict campaign activities and spending. Elections in the 1990s have become much cleaner and fairer, not the least due to civil election observers (e.g. the *Citizens Coalition for Fair Elections*). Involuntary unconventional actions, the last group in Kim's model of participation, mainly occur under revolutionary conditions when social order breaks down. Given the smooth transition from authoritarian rule in Korea, the country was spared major uprisings.

Outside this model are the non-active parts of the population. There are two main reasons for abstention from political activity. The first is the non-acceptance of the political system as a whole (a sentiment that was e.g. widespread in Germany in the 1920s; Almond, Verba, 1963: 25; Sontheimer, 1988: 455). The second is a feeling of apathy and disinterest. Both notions pose a threat to the development of democratic structures (Linz, Stepan, 1996b: 16). A political system that is supported only by a minority is losing its legitimacy. Under the authoritarian regime in Korea, the number of non-activists was very high but since the establishment of the Sixth Republic the number of participants is, albeit slowly and unevenly, increasing.



## ii. Types of Participation

Since participation has been established as an important part of democracy, attempts have been made to determine traits conducive to participation and also to categorise different types of participants. This leads back to the discussion of political culture and its influence on politics.

Chapter Two has already described in some length the traditional pattern of government in Korea where the number of political activists was very low and restricted to the *Yangban* and the royal family. The Japanese occupation also discouraged participation, although during this period some future politicians became involved in covert anti-Japanese activities. After the establishment of the Republic of Korea in 1948, opportunities for broad political participation were rare and mostly restricted to voting. Political apathy was widespread (Kim CL, Pai ST, 1981: 9). In the 1970s and 1980s, political activities were directed against the state. At this stage, workers, farmers and students were at the centre of activities. These opposition groups were associated with the *Minjung*-movement (Abelmann, 1996; Wells, 1995).<sup>1</sup>

Once the democratisation process was started in 1987, however, these movements lost their momentum and new, post-modern organisations, such as ecological groups, appeared on the scene (Abelmann 1996: 227; Kim SH, 1996; Lee SH, 1993: 359). The opposition movement against the authoritarian regime did not enlist new politicians in large numbers. After the establishment of the Sixth Republic, the political arena came under the control of established politicians from the old elite (e.g. Kim Dae-jung and Kim Young-sam). *Minjung*-groups disappeared and many activists left politics and returned to their work and families (Kim SK, 1997). The vast majority of the population left political problems to their leaders to solve instead of using newly opened channels of participation (Shin MS, 1999: 208).

The reasons for this phenomenon can be found in the political culture of Korea. While a democratic system has been introduced, political attitudes are developing much slower. In democratising Korea, the political culture is not congruent with the structure of

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<sup>1</sup> This movement consisted of workers, farmers and students with different agendas. It is only in retrospect that 1980s activism is formed into a homogeneous group, the *Minjung*-movement (Abelmann, 1996: 227).



the political system (Steinberg, 1998: 81). This will be elaborated using the typology of political cultures that has been introduced by Almond and Verba in their study of *Civic Culture* (1963). Chapter Two has already discussed the concept of political culture in detail. Almond and Verba for their purpose characterise political culture as

*'the frequency of different kinds of cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientations toward the political system in general, its input and output aspects, and the self as political actor'* (ibid.: 17).

Using this definition, they distinguish between three different types of political cultures: parochial, subject and participant political culture (ibid.: 17-20; **Table 5.1**). A parochial orientation implies a 'comparative absence of expectations of change initiated by the political system' (ibid.: 18). Citizens are only indistinctly aware of the existence of a central government. Tribal societies are an example for this type of political culture but with the improvement of infrastructure and mass communications, parochial orientations have become rare. The direct opposite of this orientation is a participant political culture. Here, citizens show an explicit orientation 'to the system as a whole and to both the political and administrative structures and processes: in other words, to both the input and output aspects of the political system' (ibid.: 19). Citizens contribute to the system and are affected by it. The smaller the gap between the political culture and the political system the more stable is a democracy (cf. Easton, 1965).

**Table 5.1:** Types of Political Culture:

|             | System as General Object | Input Objects | Output Objects | Self as Active Participant |
|-------------|--------------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Parochial   | 0                        | 0             | 0              | 0                          |
| Subject     | 1                        | 0             | 1              | 0                          |
| Participant | 1                        | 1             | 1              | 1                          |

Source: Almond, Verba, 1963: 17.

Parochial and participant types of political culture are at the extreme ends of a scale while the last category is located somewhere between the above types. A subject political culture is characterised by 'a high frequency of orientations toward a differentiated political system and toward the output aspects of the system, but orientations toward



specifically input objects, and toward the self as an active participant, approach zero' (ibid.). The relationship between citizens and government is essentially passive. The political orientation of Koreans until the 1980s falls under this category. Koreans in this era did not expect and experience any possibility to play a role in policy decisions (Jee BM, 1993: 327; Kim CL, 1980a; Kim CL, Pai ST, 1981). Participation was limited to voting for a largely powerless National Assembly and mobilised actions, such as rallies (Kim CL, Kihl YW, Pai ST, 1980: 52).<sup>2</sup>

These three types of political culture are not exclusive and do not replace each other. Almond and Verba also caution that in reality there is no linear development from a parochial to a subject to a participant orientation (1963: 19). Political cultures are not homogeneous but may also contain elements of other orientations. Parochials, for instance, can exist in a participatory culture, as examples of modern cities and 'backward' rural areas in many developing countries show. Furthermore, political culture itself is not static but in constant flux. Political structures and political culture can change at different times so that they may be incongruent. Ideally, a parochial culture would be congruent with a traditional political structure, a subject culture with a centralised authoritarian structure and a participant culture with a democratic political structure. The political culture of a country in turn also influences the structure, as Chapter Two has already explained (using Maruyama Masao's distinction of "content" and "container"; Bellah, 1971: 383). Economic development, urbanisation, rising levels of education and international contacts influence the political culture of a country as the Korean example shows.

In order to accommodate changes in both political culture and structure, Almond and Verba introduce three more types, the 'systematically mixed political cultures' (1963: 23). These are the parochial-subject culture, the subject-participant culture and the parochial-participant culture.

In a parochial-subject culture, a substantial majority has developed an allegiance toward a more complex political system with specialised central government structures while others remain orientated to tribal or local authority. Most western nations run through this stage in their early stages of nation building (ibid.). A parochial-participant

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<sup>2</sup> Findings of studies around the world find that with growing level of education the likelihood of participation also rises (for a long list of literature see Milbrath, Goel, 1977: 98). Korea in the 1970s and 1980s was a deviant case where the voting rate decreased with higher education and a higher degree of urbanisation among voters (Kim CL, 1995: 3).

culture could be found in many newly independent states in the 1950s and 1960s. The political system introduced by a colonial power demanded a participant structure while large parts of the country still harboured a parochial culture. Specialised output and input orientations were missing, there was neither a bureaucracy resting upon loyal subjects nor an infrastructure arising from responsible and competent citizens (ibid.: 26).

In a mixed subject-participant culture, some parts of the population have acquired specialised input orientations and an activist set of self-orientations, i.e. they became engaged in politics. A substantial part of the population, however, continues to be orientated toward an authoritarian government structure and has a relatively passive set of self-orientations (ibid.: 25). The latter also challenge the legitimacy of those with a participant orientation. This contradiction leads to structural instability of the political system (as in Italy and Germany in the early twentieth century). Almond and Verba point out that the participant-orientated parts of the population remain democratic aspirants due to a lack of experience (ibid.). Moreover, they can be alienated from the political system by the ineffectiveness of democratic infrastructure and the governmental system.

This is an appropriate description of the situation in Korea in the late 1980s and 1990s. Democratic and authoritarian values co-exist at the same time (Shin DC, 1998: 8).<sup>3</sup> Koreans expect a democratic government, clearly expressed in the surge of demands following the introduction of local autonomy (Chapter Four). At the same time they show little effort to take part in politics or actively support democratic institutions. The development of democratic beliefs is further limited by deficiencies of democratic institutions, such as parties based on personalities. Many Koreans feel that ordinary people have little or no influence on the government (Shin, Rose, 1997a: 15). The hierarchical structure of Korean society in general and politics in particular collides with a democratic political structure. Support for democracy is 'a mile wide but only inches deep' (Shin DC, 1998: 13). This incongruity restricts the consolidation of democracy in Korea.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Even after a decade of the democratic experiment, most Koreans are neither strongly committed to the fundamentals of democratic rule nor fully disengaged from the authoritarian habits of formulating and implementing policies' (Shin DC, 1998: 30). Other studies coming to similar conclusion include the *Korea Barometer* (Shin, Rose, 1997a; 1998); IKES (1992); *Jung-Ang Daily News* (1992).



A lively civil society is often seen as an indicator for democratic development (Dahl, 1971: 1-9; Hirst, 1997: 116). Activists in voluntary groups are more likely to participate in politics, develop political competence and exhibit civic virtues (Almond, Verba, 1963: 318; Rosenblum, 1999: 69).<sup>4</sup> In civic groups, individuals learn to express their needs and interests and articulate their concerns. Chapter Three already showed that a majority of Koreans belong to civic groups but often in those with little interest in politics, such as alumni or religious groups (Shin DC, 1995: 42). More likely to be politically active are, however, members of a civil or political organisation (Almond, Verba, 1963: 318).

Due to the prevailing strong ties among family, school and region Korea is characterised by a weak civil society (see also Lee SJ, 1995a: 8). The idea of working together for own goals in a civil group is opposed by the Confucian ideal of the sacrifice of the individual for the community. In the early 1990s, over ninety per cent of Koreans were 'proud of discretion for self-preservation' which was characterised as not becoming 'unnecessarily involved in matters that are someone else's concern' (Chu et al., 1993: 222). Many Koreans still believe that problems need to be solved by moral cultivation of the governing elite (Kim BK, 1995: 381).

With this attitude prevailing, low numbers of participants in both civil and political society have to be expected. The numbers are increasing since the 1980s, with a rapid expansion of civil movements since 1987 (Lee SH, 1993: 359; Han SJ, 1997: 92).<sup>5</sup> These groups, however, mainly represent the educated urban middle class and are centred in and around Seoul.<sup>6</sup> Their activities will be covered in the section regarding community activities. The transition process in 1987 failed to open the political process to larger parts of the population. This is not to say that interest in politics is always evenly

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<sup>4</sup> Putnam in his study of Italy finds that quality of government and economic performance are influenced by the degree of civic community such as voting behaviour including patronage-based voting, newspaper reading and the number of non-state organisations (Putnam, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Of the sixty-nine civil movement groups existing in 1993, fifteen (22%) have been founded before 1984, seven (10%) in the run-up to 1987, twenty-five (36%) from 1987 to 1990, and twenty-two (32%) in the following years (Kim SH, 1996: 142).

<sup>6</sup> The *Citizen's Coalition for Economic Justice* (CCEJ), for instance, is one of the biggest civil movements in Korea. It was founded in 1989 by some five hundred individuals. Sixty-three per cent of the founders were college graduates or post-graduates while blue-collar workers made up less than two per cent. Four out of five were residents in the greater Seoul-area (Lee SH, 1993: 264).

distributed among citizens but the exclusion of substantial sections is a serious flaw in the democratic structure. While civil society activities are increasing within some groups of the Korean population, labour and more radical movements have receded since 1987 (Kim SH, 1996: 132). They are hardly represented in both civil and political society. The National Security Law prohibits the endorsement of leftist ideas and until 1998, labour groups were prohibited from supporting individual candidates in elections. Therefore, members of the *Minjung*-movement play a limited role in current politics and hardly feature among local councillors.

Women are active in civic movements but the leadership is predominantly male (apart from women's groups) and few are interested in politics. A greater number of women involved in politics will presumably alter the political style. Korean women are through their socialisation process orientated towards compromise and co-operation, contrasting with the confrontational approach characterising current Korean politics. A higher number of female representatives will also increase the number of legislations regarding women's issues. Although women do not embrace women's issues by default, they are more likely to support the relevant bills. Studies in other parts of the world have shown that more women make substantial policy differences (Sinkkora, Haario-Mannila, 1981: 212; Jones, 1998: 3; Swers, 1998: 444). The perspective of a female politician can also be different from that of a male colleague: a man looking at the economy may be concerned with unemployment while a woman cares about part-time work and child-care facilities (Lovenduski, 1997: 200-201). There is a widespread misconception that women politicians will be better or more moral than men (Phillips, 1995: 75). In Korea, a succession of female ministers in the Kim Dae-jung-administration has shown that women are as susceptible to bribery and scandals as men (see for instance *Korea Herald*, 25 June, 1999). Female cabinet ministers usually have been chosen for their status in society and not for their qualifications, tarnishing the image of female politicians. This problem will be presented later in this chapter but first participatory activities in Korean politics will be examined.



## II. Participation in Korean Local Politics

This section will examine participation in Korean politics, in particular at the lower levels of government. As mentioned before, local politics are a new field of political activity opened with democratisation so this became the focal point of the research. The presentation of the data will loosely follow the different modes of participation suggested by Milbrath and Goel (1977: 12-14).

The first sections of this chapter will examine participatory activities, such as voting and protest. Milbrath and Goel refer to participants in these actions as 'spectators', describing those who are minimally involved in politics (ibid.: 11). Then the focus will be on those citizens who have taken their activities one step further and have entered politics, the 'gladiators' (ibid.). In Korea, the most visible representatives of this group are the contestants in local elections, whether successful or not. A survey among all of the nearly 5,000 councillors and heads of the executive was well beyond the scope of this study, so the research concentrated on female councillors, a group already studied by Korean institutes over the last few years. Data for this group was collected conducting a postal survey among councillors at local and regional level, all of the (123) female councillors and a control group of about sixty male councillors in early 1998. These findings are supplemented with the results of other surveys conducted by the *Center for Korean Women and Politics* (CKWP) and other organisations regarding local councillors and the general population (CKWP, 1991; Sohn BS, 1995; 1998). Moreover, a few interviews were held with politicians and scholars engaged in the study of women in politics.

One of the aims of the survey was to test the hypothesis that an increase in the number of participants indicates a progress in democratic consolidation. It has been suggested in the literature that access to politics is easier for new participants at local level, especially for women (Kaase, 1995: 525; Elkin, 1999: 395). This assumption has not (yet?) proven correct for Korean women for reasons explained later in this chapter. The survey covers only a very small portion of Korean women that is by no means representative for the situation of women in Korean society and politics. It shows, however, the activities of councillors, both male and female, and the problems and obstacles they face.

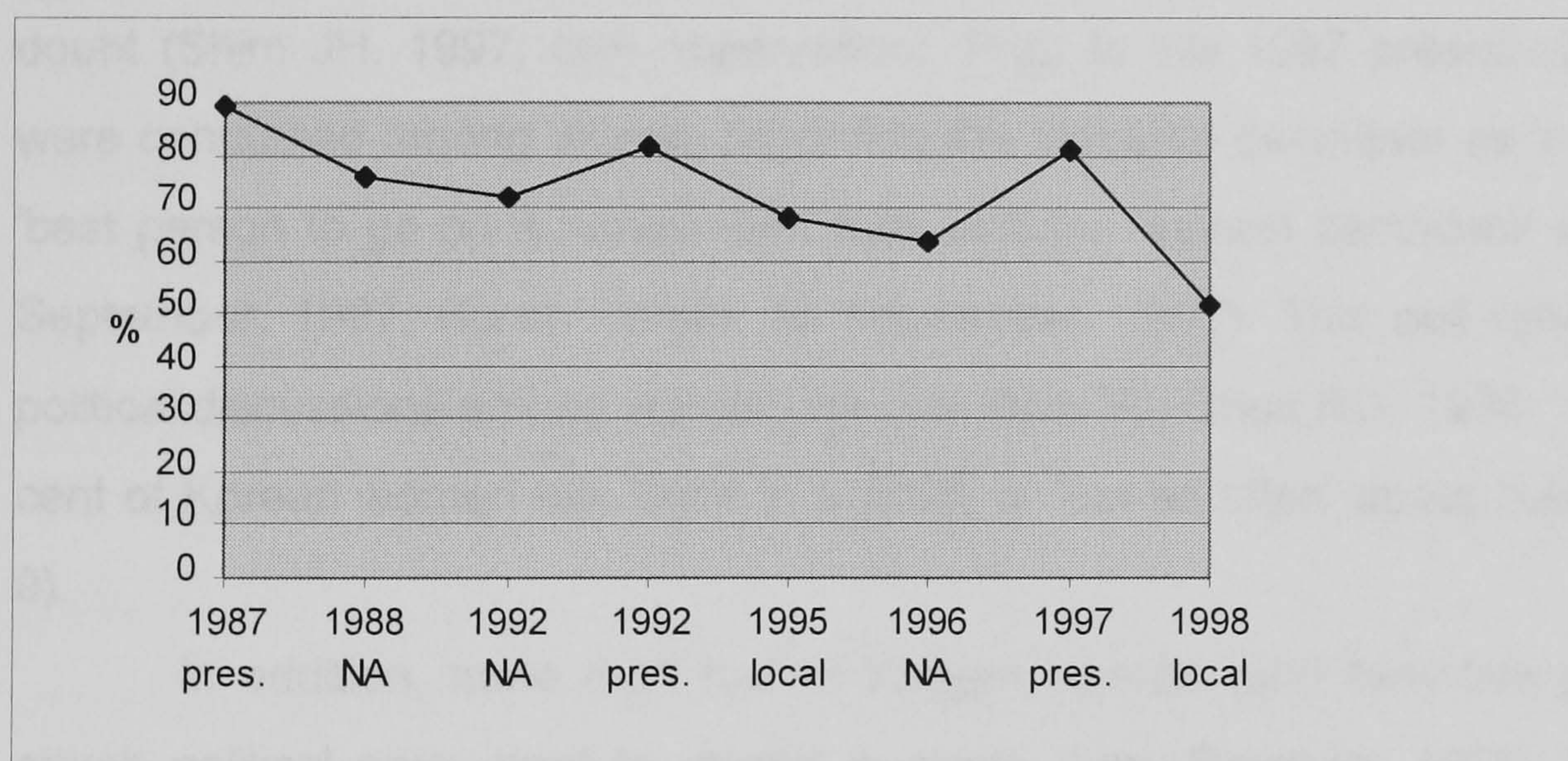


### i. Voting

Voting in elections is an individual act that demands little effort and time and far less information and motivation than most other political activities. Participation in elections is a sign of the acceptance of the democratic system.<sup>7</sup> Regular elections are a means to ensure the responsiveness of the governing elite to public opinion (Milbrath, Goel, 1977: 146). This, of course, implies that candidates are running on a programme and intend to keep election promises, an assumption that does not mirror reality in Korea as Chapter Three already showed (Shin DC, 1995: 37).

Since the introduction of democracy in 1988, voter turn-out has been dropping from the very high levels of the late 1980s (**Figure 5.1**).

**Figure 5.1:** Voter Turn-out in Elections since 1988:



pres. = presidential elections, NA = National Assembly elections, local = local elections.

Abstentions from elections are a threat to the stability of the democratic system. People may abstain from voting due to a feeling of inefficacy of the political system (Milbrath, Goel, 1977: 69). Others may see the election result as forgone: "why bother to go voting in an area where one party is certain to win, such as Kim Dae-jung's party in Cholla-do,

<sup>7</sup> An article in the political journal *Foreign Affairs* carried a caricature of Russian Communists demonstrating with one comrade asking the leader: 'Y'know I just had a horrible thought - if we **win** does it mean democracy works?' (Carothers, 1997: 95).



Labour in the Northeast of England, the conservative CSU in rural Bavaria?". Other reasons are apathy, indifference and disillusion with all established political parties among the voters.

In Korea, the number of abstentions is high among younger people, especially among women. In the 1996-National Assembly elections, only one quarter of eligible women in their twenties cast their votes (Kim WH, 1997: 8). This high non-voting rate is mostly explained with disillusion and cynicism (Ahn BY, 1999: 50; Chyung DC, 1997: 112; *Korea Herald*, 5 June, 1998a).<sup>8</sup>

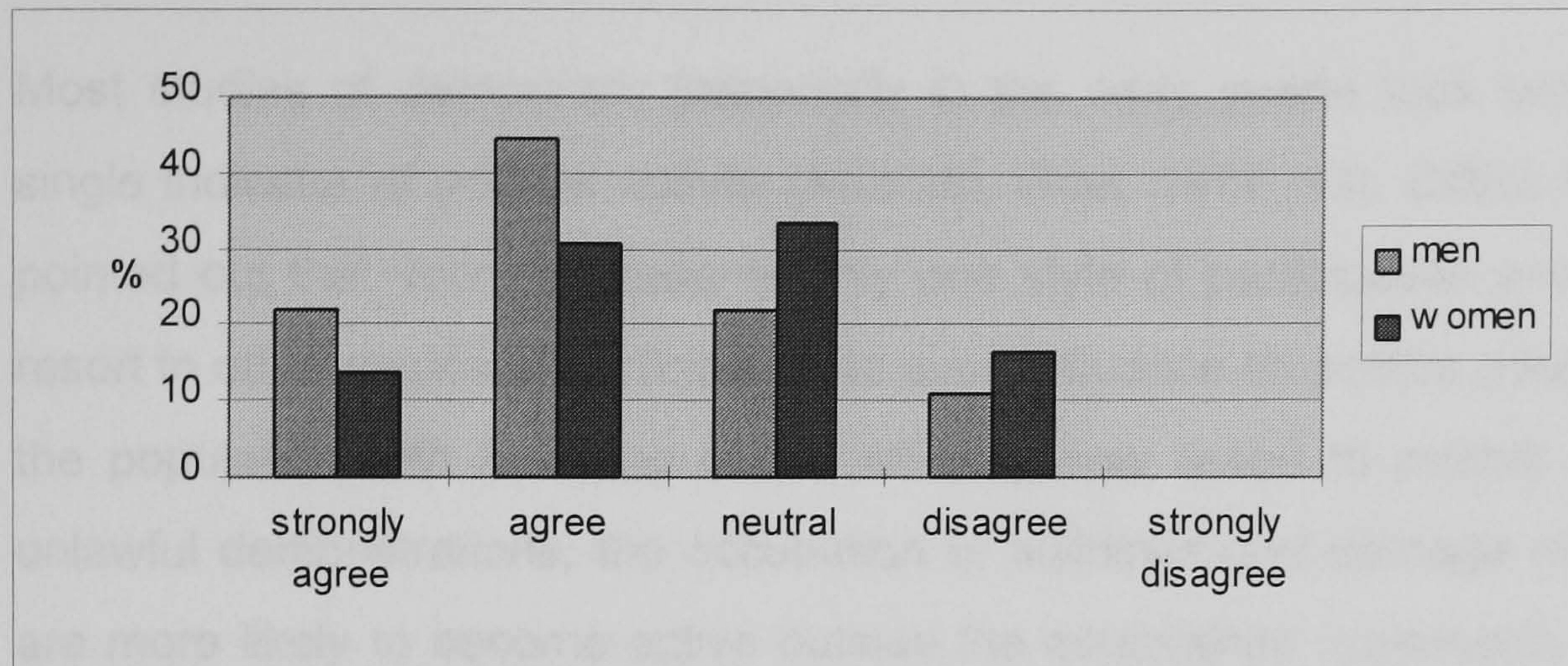
Furthermore, a large number of voters had not made a decision on their vote until very shortly before the elections (30-40%; Shin MS, 1999: 208). In this context, it is worth noting that for more than a quarter of Koreans the family was the most influential factor in the voting-decision (IKES, 1992: 9). Nearly forty per cent cited 'television' as the most important consideration. With the growing number of debates among candidates on television this number has increased, although the quality of these broadcasts remains in doubt (Shim JH, 1997; own observation). Prior to the 1997 presidential election, polls were conducted among women regarding the favourite candidate as 'husband material', 'best person to go on a honeymoon with' and the 'sexiest candidate' (*Korea Times*, 26 September, 1997; *Korea Herald*, 26 September, 1997). This poll reflects the fact that political discussions among women are rare (Kim YL, Chun KO, 1996: 125). Seventy per cent of Korean women talk 'once in a while' or 'not so often' about politics (IKES, 1992: 9).

In addition, more than half of Korean women (and forty-five per cent of men) attach political agreement to marital success (Lee, Rinehart, 1995: 70). This attitude does not support independent political views and activities among women. In my survey among political activists, political debates were frequent (**Figure 5.2**). Councillors also supported the idea of political agreement within a successful marriage: two thirds of men and forty-four per cent of women agree or strongly agree with this statement. Only eleven per cent of men and seventeen per cent of women support the idea of different political views within a marriage.

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<sup>8</sup> In July 1999, only twenty-three per cent of the voters went to the ballots in by-elections for a local council seat.



**Figure 5.2:** Political Agreement among Married Councillors:

The political agreement among married couples can explain the infrequency of political debates among couples. Only five per cent of the male councillors had debates with their wives while nearly forty per cent of women talked to their husbands. A generation gap can be observed among women: the probability of debates declines with age. This indicates a change from traditional behavioural patterns. Female councillors have political debates mainly with their colleagues (44%) and their husbands (39.5%).<sup>9</sup> Male councillors overwhelmingly had discussions with 'friends' (72%). These findings show that traditional values still influence even simple forms of political participation, such as political discussions.

The 1990s also saw the introduction of more direct procedures of participation like referenda and television-debates. The latter are favoured by Kim Dae-jung as 'direct democracy' and twice a year he answers questions of selected journalists and citizens in front of a selected audience (*Korea Times*, 17 February, 1999). These debates, referenda and petitions are providing citizens with direct access to decision-making bodies. This is a threat to the position of representatives and party officials undermining their power (Wilson, 1999: 257). Since the stage for political participation has been expanded in the last ten years with these measures, more political education of the population is needed to introduce the wider range of conventional participation.

<sup>9</sup> Since more than half of the female councillors gave their profession as 'politician' or 'work in a civil group' this means they mainly have discussions with people who are also politically active.



## ii. Protest

Most studies of democracy (especially in the early years) took voter turn-out as the single indicator of political activity (Milbrath, Goel, 1977: 13). Critics have subsequently pointed out that voting represents only one style of participation and that citizens may resort to other modes of participation to exert influence on politics (Norris, 1991). Parts of the population with a feeling of low efficacy may resort to protest activities including unlawful demonstrations, the occupation of buildings and damage of property. Women are more likely to become active outside the established institutions (ibid.: 60; Randall, 1987: 58-64).

In Korea protest activities, such as often violent rallies, demonstrations and sit-ins, have been used to express discontent with the authoritarian regimes. The large demonstrations in 1987 were a turning point in the transition process (Dong WM, 1993; Chapter Two). My survey therefore asked the councillors about their experiences in demonstrations. Nearly fifty per cent of the councillors had never participated in a demonstration, twenty per cent 'once or twice' or 'sometimes' respectively and only ten per cent 'often'. Fourteen per cent had demonstrated after their election in 1995. Only one councillor specifically mentioned the year 1987 while the others leave the time of their experiences in demonstrations unclear.

Since then, the number of demonstrations and the level of violence have declined. Most likely to go to engage in (violent) protest are groups that feel excluded from the political process, such as labour and students. These rallies are usually organised by national groups and held in Seoul. Two examples are the violent demonstrations of students in August 1996 and of labour on May 1, 1998 (*Korea Herald*, 21 August, 1996; 14 May, 1998).

At the local level, protest movements have become more frequent. They are used by local resistance movements to express their dislike of administrative decisions concerning issues as diverse as the construction of nuclear power plants and the location of subway-station exits (Lee SJ, 1995b; Lee, Fitzgerald, 1997).<sup>10</sup> In the early 1990s,

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<sup>10</sup> Resistance against further construction at Yonggwang Nuclear Power Plant was high among locals. The main issue was an expected rise in the sea temperature by 0.5°C threatening fish stocks (*Munhwa Ilbo*, 2 February, 1996). The subway-construction in Seoul also led to problems. Local residents blocked traffic outside Korea-University several times in 1998 - in the same area where normally students would be facing the police. They demanded an exit from the planned

half of the Korean population thought organised protest the most effective method to influence government decisions while only seventeen per cent favoured political parties (Park CM, 1999: 163). Women are more likely to participate in spontaneous movements. A long-term involvement in formal, institutionalised organisations implies taking on responsibilities and dedicating time and effort to the organisation that many women due to family responsibilities cannot spare (Jelin, 1990: 186; Norris, 1991: 56).

Protest activities by local people can help to get national attention to increase the chances of success, especially when staged in Seoul or spectacular enough to get the attention of the national media.<sup>11</sup> Local protesters need the help of national groups to succeed in their efforts but are unlikely to become involved in other projects. This can be explained with a different membership structure. Local movements are composed of members of all social strata in the concerned area while national groups, such as environmental organisations, are often formed by urban, middle-class, university-educated members (Lee SH, 1993: 264).<sup>12</sup>

This pattern of protest transferred to national level by national groups is another expression of Korean centralisation. There are several reasons for this. Even in the age of local governments, most of the power of decision-making is still vested in the central government (as Chapter Four has shown). National Assembly members often run campaigns addressing local issues, such as road improvement, although it is outside their realm of responsibility (*Korea Herald*, 16 June, 1996). In addition, local people often lack the knowledge of the proper procedure to express their dissatisfaction, like using public hearings and petitions.

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subway station at a certain location (i.e. right in front of their shops). Construction was under the way for more than one year, so it was actually far too late for a change in the plans.

<sup>11</sup> Protest against a planned dam in the Yongwol-area was started by local residents fearing the loss of their homes (*Korea Herald*, 28 July, 1998). Following a demonstration in Seoul, national groups such as the *Citizens' Council for Economic Justice* and the *Korean Federation for Environmental Movement* joined the protest. The latter also managed to call the project to the attention of international groups such as the *World Wide Fund For Nature* (WWF; see the respective homepages: <http://www.kfem.or.kr> and <http://passport.panda.org>).

<sup>12</sup> A similar development can be observed in Taiwan (Weller, Hsiao, 1998).



### iii. Profile of Councillors

The last two sections examined the Korean population as a whole but for the more intense political activity the results of my postal survey will be used. Before turning at the political activities and experiences a short profile of the councillors is presented.

Women active in Korean politics show consistent characteristics. The female candidates in the National Assembly elections of 1996 were middle-aged, part of the middle to upper class, with both high income and education (Kim WH, 1997: 11-12). The same can be said about female councillors at the lower levels of the parliamentary system. The average female councillor is in her fifties, married with (adult) children, has attended university and enjoys a family income above the national average (survey; Sohn BS, 1995: 7-17).<sup>13</sup> Male candidates in the 1995 election also usually were in their 50s, self-employed, had a high level of education and a monthly income somewhat higher than the average (ibid.). These results coincide with other studies of political participation conducted in different parts of the world (Milbrath, Goel, 1977: 92-98). Individuals with a higher educational level, of higher class and higher income are more likely to participate.

The level of education is very high among the surveyed councillors. Nearly sixty per cent of the female councillors have graduated from university or graduate school with another twelve per cent attending but not finishing university.<sup>14</sup> In the 1996 National Assembly election, two thirds of the female candidates had graduated from university (Kim WH, 1997: 12). The average monthly family income of the female councillors stood at 3,210,000 won (US\$ 3,765), while nationally the average urban family income was only 2.28 million won in 1996 (about US\$ 2,588 at that time; *Korea Herald*, 6 March, 1998).

In contemporary Korea, Christians play an important role in political life, beginning with the respective president (Kim Young-sam is Presbyterian, Kim Dae-jung Catholic). Among the pioneer generation of Korean women in politics in the twentieth

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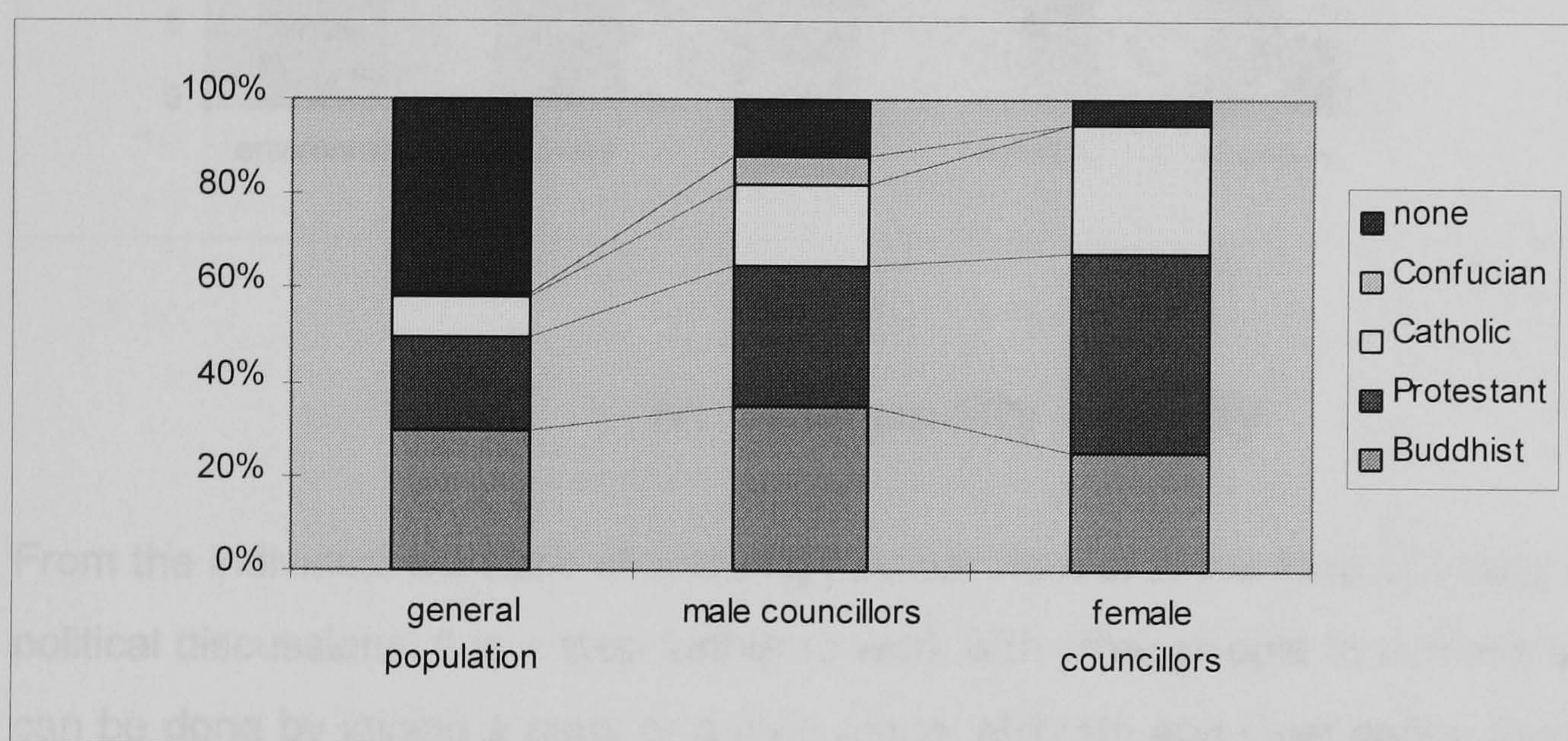
<sup>13</sup> In regional assemblies, the elected councillors tend to be younger (in their forties) while nearly half of the appointed councillors are in their sixties.

<sup>14</sup> In my survey, more than half of the male councillors also have university or post-graduate education, a rather high number considering that most of the male respondents live in rural Hwasong-kun or Suwon.



century, Christian women were also the leading force (Soh, 1993: 51). In this sample, over forty-two per cent of the female councillors are Protestant and more than a quarter Catholic. The largest part of the male councillors is Buddhist (35.3%), followed by Protestants (nearly 30%). These numbers are much higher than those for the general population, where nearly half claim to have no religion.

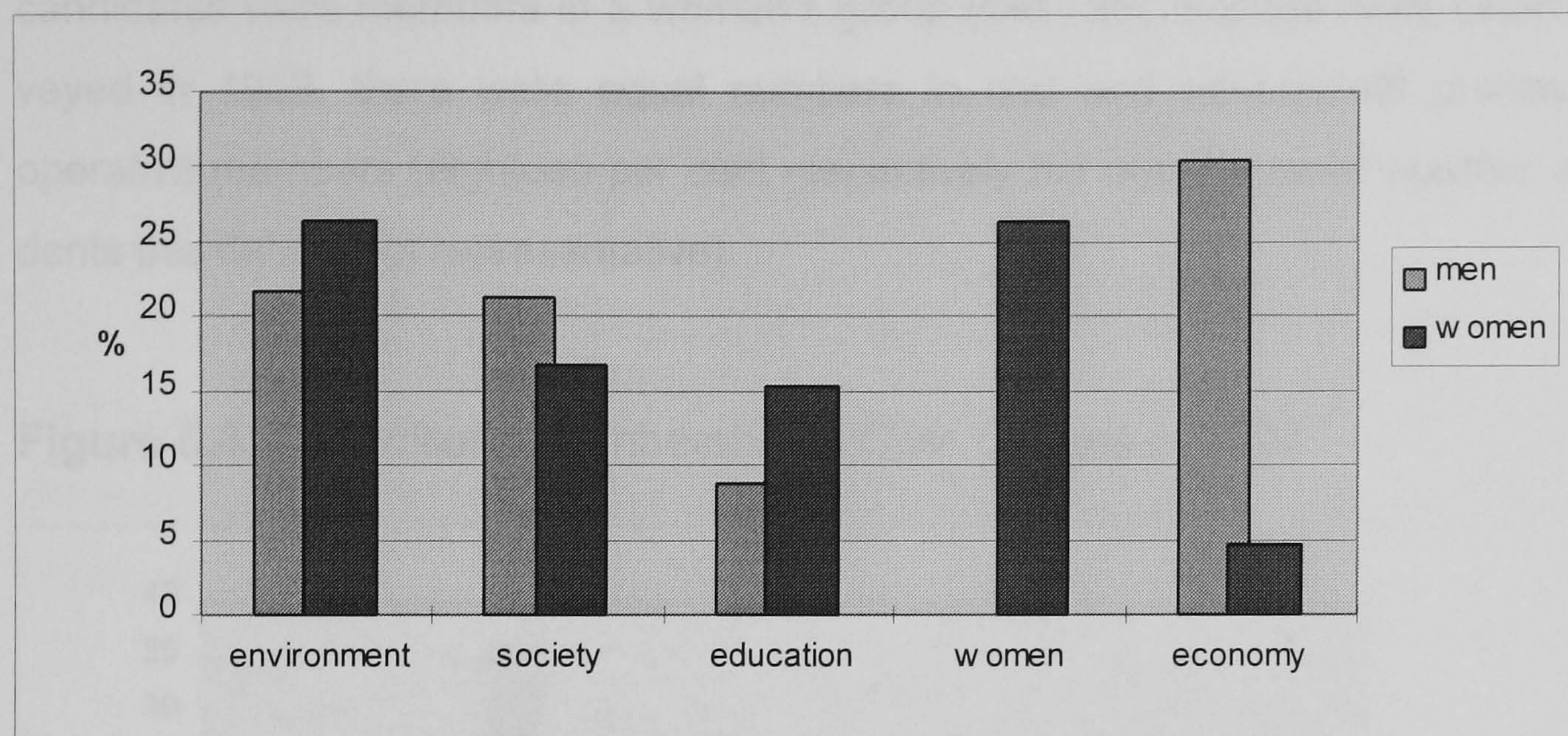
**Figure 5.3:** Religious Affiliation:



Source: Survey; Shin, Rose, 1998: 44 .

In the field of special interests, there are some differences between male and female councillors. Women named 'environment' and 'women's problems', followed by 'society' and 'education' (**Figure 5.4**). The male councillors' main concern was 'economy', followed by 'society' and 'environment'. The special interests have not changed much since 1995, despite the economic crisis beginning in late 1997. Three years before, women also had the 'environment' high on their priority list. This was followed by 'problems in society' (there was no specific category for 'women's issues' in this survey). Men named 'problems in society' first, followed by 'political problems' (Sohn BS, 1995: 76). These results show that women, at least those politically active, are more likely to be interested in local than national affairs, supporting the hypothesis that women 'more frequently feel locally competent than nationally competent' (Almond, Verba, 1963: 395; Kaase, 1995: 525). It also shows the significant change in politics should female participation increase.



**Figure 5.4:** Special Interests among Councillors:

#### iv. Community Activity

From the individual activities of showing political interest in the form of voting and having political discussions, it is a step further to work with other people to achieve a goal. This can be done by joining a party or a civic group. Milbrath and Goel define those activities as 'party and campaign work' and 'community activities' (1977: 14). First, community activities will be presented. Studies have shown that activists in civic groups are more likely to be politically active, too (Almond, Verba, 1963: 318; Putnam, 1993: 87; Rosenblum, 1999: 69).

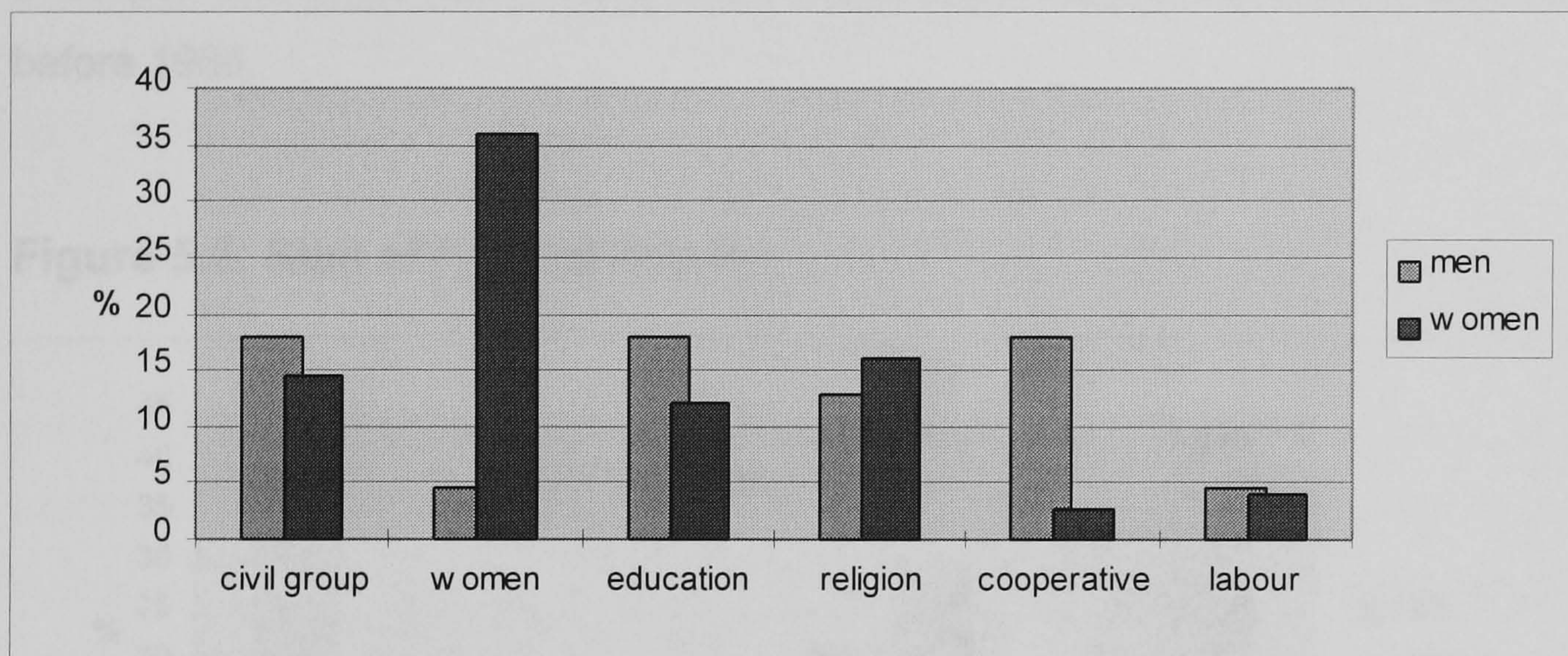
The councillors at local level in Korea support this hypothesis. Nearly all local councillors in 1998 were a member in at least one civic group (96%). Eighty-six per cent of all the candidates in the 1991 election and eighty-four per cent in 1995 were participating in a civic group (Sohn BS, 1995: 19).<sup>15</sup> The distribution of membership in civic groups is in accord with the middle class-background of most of the councillors. Over one third of the female councillors are members of a women's group. Around fifteen per cent are member in a religious organisation, a civil group and an educational association respec-

<sup>15</sup> In this thesis, 'civic' and 'civil' groups are two different categories: 'civil groups' indicate those groups within civic groups that are not covered by the other sub-categories such as women or educational groups. Interestingly, the questionnaire of the *Korean Center for Women in Politics* includes 'political party' in the category of civic groups, so that the number of civic group members stood at ninety-four per cent in 1995 (Sohn BS, 1995: 19).



tively (multiple replies included). In the 1995 election, over sixty per cent of the female candidates were members in a women's group (ibid.: 20). For the male councillors surveyed in 1998, there were equal numbers in civil and educational groups and cooperative members (eighteen per cent respectively but due the small number of respondents this data is not representative).

**Figure 5.5:** Councillors' Membership in Civic Groups in 1998:



On average, the respondents of the survey are members in two civic groups. For the majority of the assembly members, this is in addition to membership in a political party (in early 1998, about eighty per cent were a member of a party). Political participation of the councillors thus is high in quantitative terms. Participation in qualitative terms also reaches a high level. When asked about their degree of activities, more than eighty per cent of female councillors stated they do 'more than average'. Only forty-four per cent of the male councillors replied similarly.

More than half of the councillors have been active in a civil group before 1987. This shows the long-standing concern of councillors for social affairs. Out of the currently over 3,200 NGOs existing in Korea more than half have been founded since 1987 (Han SJ, 1997: 92).<sup>16</sup> Compared with the general population, the degree of activity the councillors showed is exceptional: over eighty per cent of Koreans have never participated in

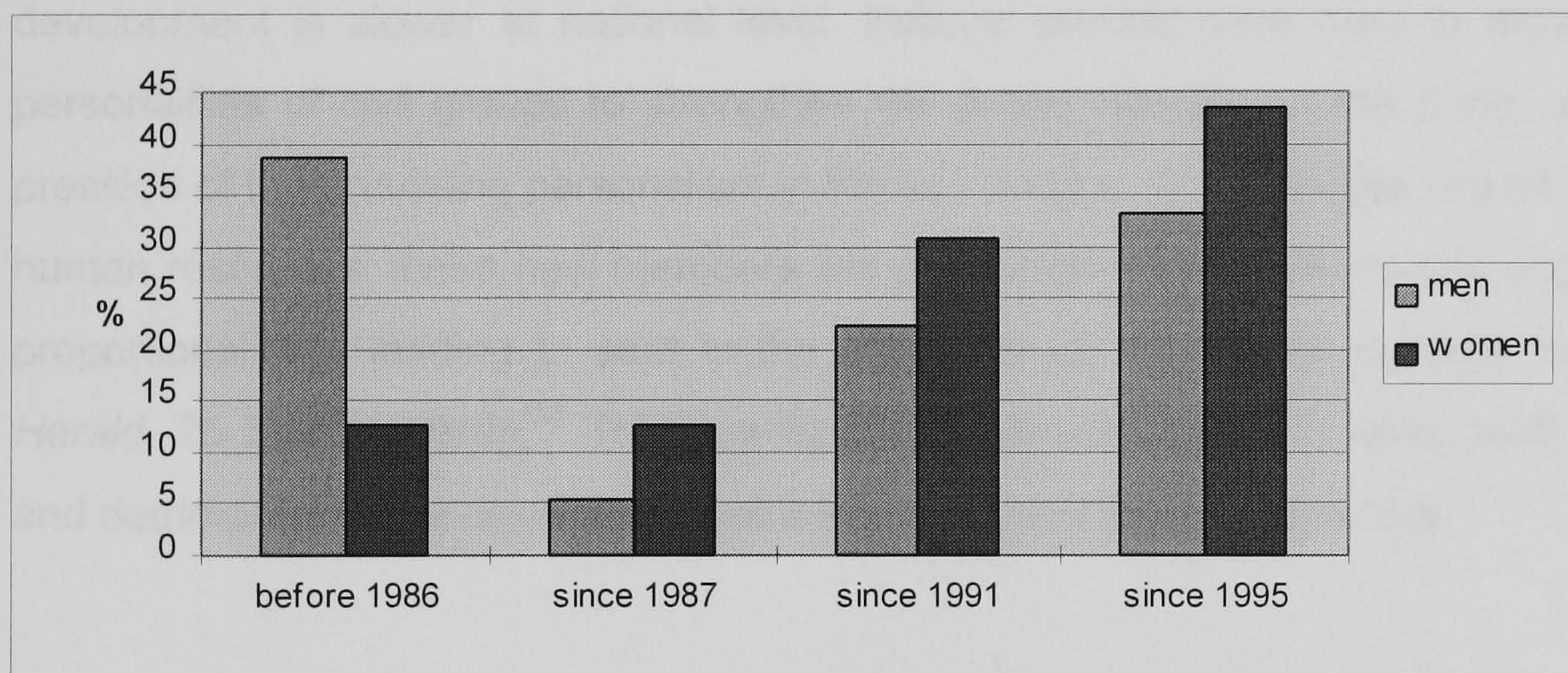
<sup>16</sup> Only half of the councillors agree that civic movements have increased since 1988. Thirty-eight per cent thought their activities are about the same while ten per cent thought they had declined.



voluntary services (NSO, 1997b: 467). The theory of connection of activity in civil affairs and political participation is sustained by these findings (Putnam, 1993; Rosenblum, 1999).

The female councillors of 1998 also supported the theory that women are more likely to become active in local politics (Almond, Verba, 1963: 395; Kaase, 1995: 525). Only roughly thirteen per cent have been politically active before 1986 while thirty per cent have been active since 1991 (when elected councils were introduced) and forty-three per cent since 1995. Male respondents were likely to have been politically active before 1986.

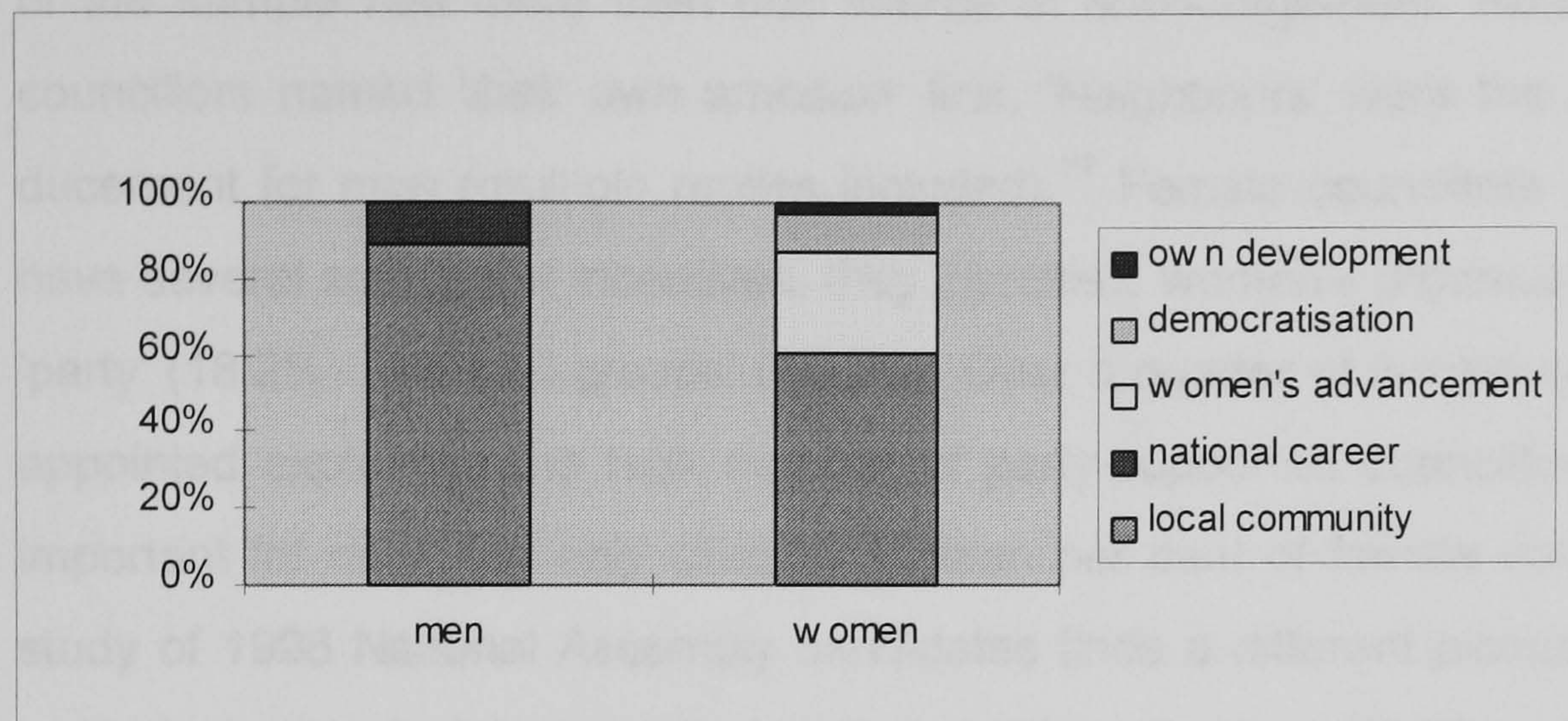
**Figure 5.6: Start of Political Activity:**



Most councillors became active on local issues. The overwhelming majority of men were motivated by the 'development of their local community' (Figure 5.7). About eleven per cent of the male councillors regarded their tenure as local councillor as a stepping stone for a national career.<sup>17</sup> Sixty per cent of the female councillors have become active in order to 'develop their community'. One quarter of women named 'women's advancement' as motivation and one in ten 'democratisation'. The 'development of the community' can take many, frequently contradictory meanings, as economic and ecological issues are often incompatible.

<sup>17</sup> In the 1996 National Assembly elections, thirty-nine incumbent and former local council members entered the campaign (Kim KS, 1997: 37).



**Figure 5.7: Motivation for Political Activity:**

While there has been a cross-over of activists in civil groups to politics at local level, the development is slower at national level. Political parties have tried to attract famous personalities of civil groups to strengthen the public standing of the party, another expression of the prevailing personalism in Korean politics. When parties recruit 'competent human resources' these new members are given high-level positions and places on the proportional lists leading to seat in the assembly at national or regional level (*Korea Herald*, 25 March, 1999).<sup>18</sup> This is a frustrating development for other party members and detrimental to the development of a stable basis of party supporters.

### v. Party and Campaign Work

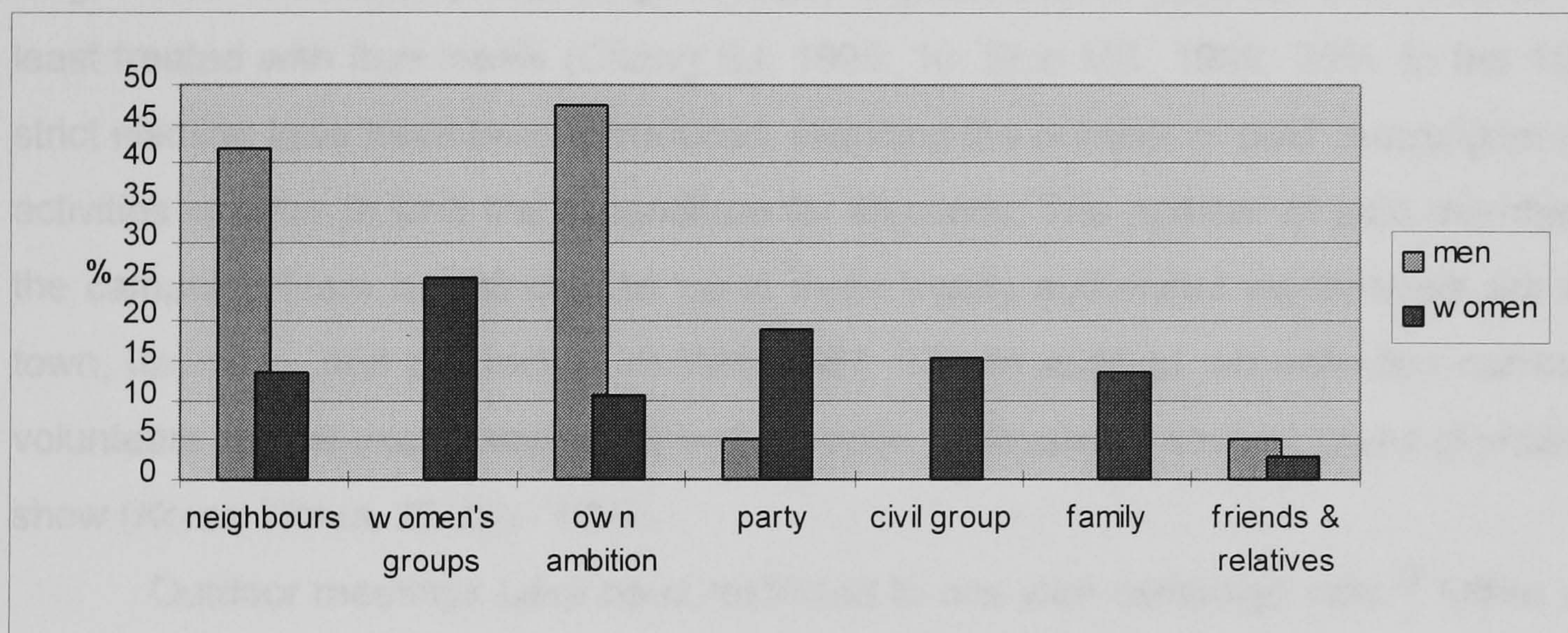
As has just been shown, the boundary between social and political participation is fluid and work for a civil group may lead to an invitation to become a councillor on a party's proportional list or a candidate in direct elections. In their choice of nominees for the proportional list, parties look for high-profile candidates to enhance the party profile, at both national and local level. The eleven appointed councillors in this survey were either involved with civic groups or political parties at the time of their nomination.

<sup>18</sup> The female director of an institute involved in the study of women in politics has already been mentioned: she was approached by two parties prior to the National Assembly elections in 1996 but eventually declined both offers. She felt she could do more for women in her position as head of a research institute than as a representative in the National Assembly (personal communication). For more information about the recruitment of candidates see Kim KS (1997).



Elected councillors had different sources of stimuli for political action. Nearly half of the sample had more than one source of encouragement. About half of the male councillors named 'their own ambition' first. 'Neighbours' were the other source of inducement for men (multiple replies included).<sup>19</sup> Female councillors were more likely to have several sources of incentives, they identified 'women's organisations' (25.8%), then 'party' (18.2%) and 'civil groups' (15.2%). Over a quarter of female councillors has been appointed explaining the high number of party-supported councillors. 'Neighbours', so important for men, are only cited by thirteen per cent of female councillors. Kim in his study of 1996 National Assembly candidates finds a different picture: nearly eighty per cent made the decision to stand in the elections 'by herself' (Kim WH, 1997: 13). The women in the latter survey were younger so generational differences might explain this.

**Figure 5.8:** Sources of Stimuli for Councillors in 1998:



The next section will examine the work of the councillors in more detail. The following will introduce other political activities of the councillors. These include campaigning for other candidates, joining a party and participating in party activities outside election time (Milbrath, Goel, 1977: 13). Several studies show that only a small number of citizens will participate in these activities (ibid.). It has also been established that individuals who

<sup>19</sup> The overall majority of the male sample lived in the rural areas of Hwasong county and Suwon for more than thirty years allowing to build up a network of personal support.



strongly identify with a political party are more likely to participate actively in the political process (ibid.: 54).

In Korea, however, parties are all within a limited political spectre and based on personalities, leaving little room for party identification among voters. Parties are created as power-bases for their leaders with little regard for regular members (Park BS, 1995: 186). For economic reasons, local branches are the first to be closed when a reduction in party expenditure is needed (*Korea Herald*, 14 May, 1997; 25 December, 1997). Party fees are raised in accordance with the position in the party.<sup>20</sup> National politicians mostly disregard the interests of local branches and candidates for seats are often parachuted in.<sup>21</sup> Election campaigns, especially at the higher level, are often characterised by national issues (*Korea Herald*, 5 June, 1998b; *Munhwa Ilbo*, 28 January, 1998). In these circumstances, campaigning also becomes a personalised matter, related to the candidate. Campaigners are therefore chosen for personal reasons, often relatives and neighbours. Traditionally, campaign workers expected to be paid for their efforts, or at least treated with free meals (Chang SJ, 1995: 10; Shin MS, 1999: 206). In the 1990s, strict election laws have been introduced, reducing the number of paid campaigners and activities in order to limit the expenditure for elections. The number of paid members of the campaign team is restricted to 'up to three legally authorized electioneers per each town, township, and precinct' (Kim WH, 1997: 23). In addition, an unlimited number of volunteers can be used, leaving the system open to abuse, as several cases of violations show (*Korea Times*, 29 July, 1999).

Outdoor meetings have been restricted to one joint campaign rally.<sup>22</sup> Other campaign activities include banners, cars with loud-speakers driving around neighbourhoods, endless outings of candidates 'to meet the people' and groups of helpers holding up the

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<sup>20</sup> In 1996, a regular member of the *New Korea Party* (NKP, the then-ruling party) was expected to advance at least 1000 won monthly (US\$ 1.20). A local or regional councilor had to submit a minimum of 50,000 won, a National Assembly member 150,000 won and a governor and municipal mayor 300,000 won (about US\$ 62.50, 187.50, 375; NKP, 1996: 443-444).

<sup>21</sup> In a rare exception, members of the ruling party in Kwangju preferred a long-time citizen of Kwangju over two former ministers as mayoral candidate in 1998 (*Korea Times*, 27 April, 1998).

<sup>22</sup> In the 1998 local election campaign interest in those public gatherings was very low. Most of the attendants were either part of the team and/or family members, affiliated with the candidate or brought in to their support. Two female candidates I observed each brought along a group of elderly women from a social project they supported.



candidates' poster outside subway-stations and bowing to passers-by (own observation; Chang SJ, 1995: 15; *Korea Herald*, 1 June, 1998). Given the volunteer character of most campaign activities, women make up the larger part of the campaign team. In 1995, more than half of the male and three quarters of the female contestants had a team mainly consisting of women (Sohn BS, 1995: 46). Neighbours were the most likely choice (for sixty-eight per cent of the male and forty-two per cent of the female councillors).

Interviewees often used staff working for them in another position for their campaign, too. One councillor outside Seoul headed a kindergarten and used her office there also as her 'political headquarters'. There was no clear distinction between those members of staff who were working for the kindergarten and those in a political role. Similarly, another councillor used her office at a charity for the elderly as political base. More than eighty per cent of the male councillors have had previous experiences in campaigning for others while only half of the women had. This again is a sign for the recent nature of women's entry to politics.

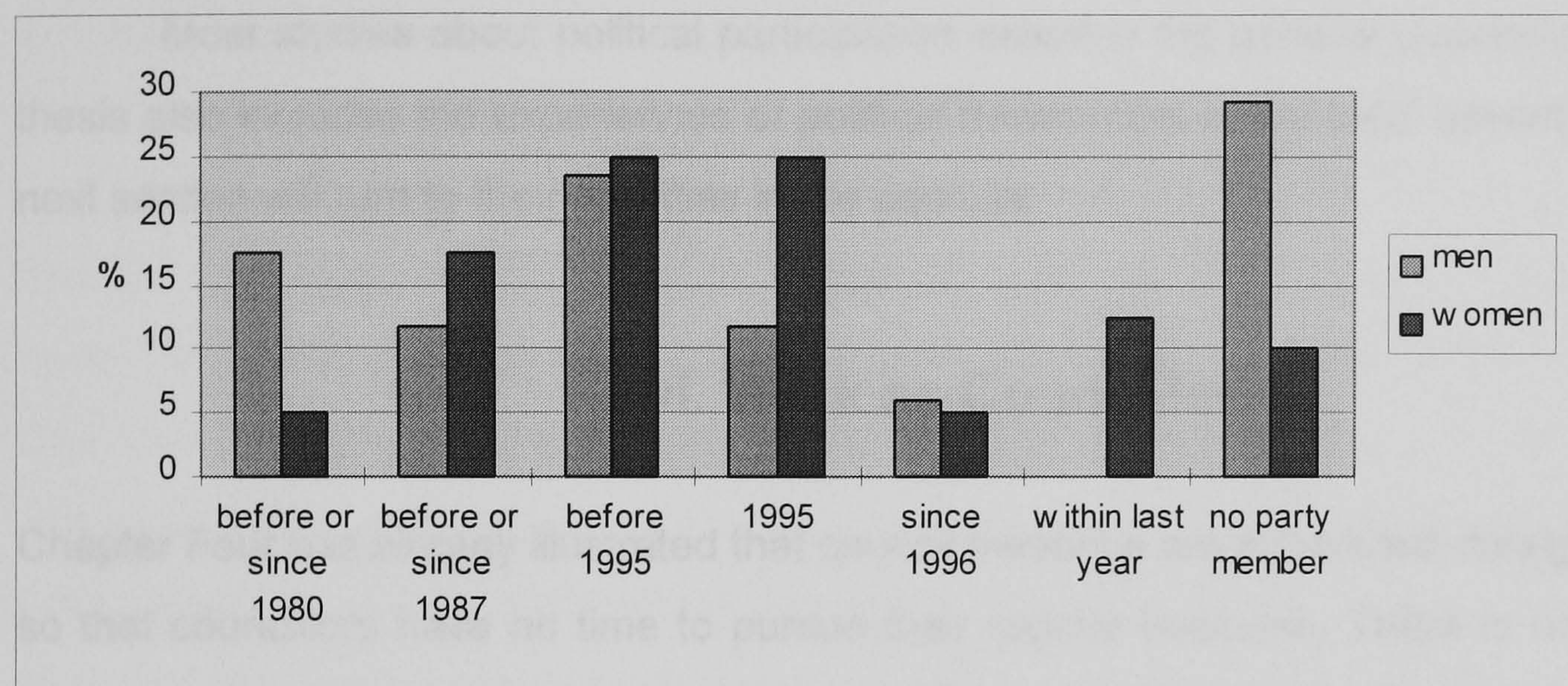
For their study, Milbrath and Goel mostly used data collected in the late 1960s in the United States. There, people were more likely to join a political party than to actively work for a party or candidate (1977: 18). In Korea, however, more people have worked for a party than are actually members (Shin DC, 1995: 34). The peculiarities of Korean parties, such as personalism and their short life-span explain this. Party membership is low (five per cent in 1995) and only one third of all Koreans feels close to a political party (ibid.: 33).

The male councillors in this sample tend to be a member in a political party longer than their female colleagues (**Figure 5.9**). Nearly a quarter became a member in the early 1990s and one quarter even before 1987. Of the female councillors, one quarter joined a party member before 1995 and twenty-two per cent were members even before 1991. A further quarter joined a party in 1995 and seventeen per cent only became a party member within the last year, well into their term as councillor. By law, members of the lower councils run without official party endorsement. As has been explained earlier, there are still ways of expressing a candidate's political preferences.



Voters tend to overlook party affiliation, basing their decision on the 'candidates' capacity' and their 'election promises' (IKES, 1992: 8-9).<sup>23</sup>

**Figure 5.9:** Length of Party Membership:



Changes in party affiliation are frequent among Korean politicians. A prominent example is the governor of Kyonggi-do who was prime minister under Kim Young-sam and only a few months after his resignation was running under the party-banner of Kim Dae-jung (in July 1999, he was convicted on corruption charges; *Korea Times*, 18 October, 1999). The mayor of Songnam city in Kyonggi province was elected as an independent in 1995, then joined the ruling party (the NKP). When the next elections came up in 1998, he left his party and joined the NCNP (by then in power in Seoul). When he was not selected as their candidate he run unsuccessfully as an independent candidate (in late 1998 he was arrested on corruption charges for his actions as mayor; *Pundang Daily Newspaper*, 22 April, 1998; 27 May, 1998; *Korea Herald*, 29 October, 1998).

Korean parties are still a male bastion although women make up a large proportion of party members. In 1996, the GNP's 'Party Affairs Committee' (the top echelon)

<sup>23</sup> In 1992, voters made their decision for the following reasons: 'candidates capacity': forty-seven per cent, 'election promises': thirty-one per cent, 'party': fifteen per cent (IKES, 1992: 8-9). One example is a female National Assembly-member from Kyongju: her party selected a male candidate, although she had been head of the district chapter for two years. She decided to run as an independent and won the constituency. Later, however, she joined the (ruling) party again to 'help her work for her constituency' (*Korea Herald*, 7 June, 1996).



was overwhelmingly male (93.9%) although half of the party members were female. In local district chambers two chairwomen could be found nation-wide (0.8%).<sup>24</sup> Women face huge obstacles within parties. Steps to overcome these with the help of quotas will be presented later, as will be the topic of political education (or rather the lack) by parties.

Most studies about political participation examine the general population but this thesis also includes the experiences of political newcomers in the local assemblies. The next section will turn to their activities in the councils.

## vi. Work as Councillor

Chapter Four has already illustrated that council meetings are scheduled during day-time so that councillors have no time to pursue their regular business. There is no financial compensation, making it difficult for those on low income to participate. Meetings, especially committee sessions, recurrently continue in the evenings in an informal setting, e.g. restaurants. This takes up more of the private time of councillors and women are virtually excluded by cultural constraints, as will be shown later.

Council meetings take the normal format of speeches, presentation of new legislation and question time. The last chapter already indicated that councils took their opportunity to change proposed legislation in numerous cases. Councillors see themselves as arbitrator between citizens and the administration. Female councillors claimed that they used their political skills to secure a favourable decision in thirty-seven per cent of the cases. Compromises were reached in thirty per cent and only in twelve per cent the council adjusted to the proposal of the administration (Sohn BS, 1998: 32).

Several short-comings of the assemblies have been recognised. At the higher level, councils sometimes became a battle-ground for party rivalries (*Munhwa Ilbo*, 2 February, 1996). Councillors also complain that the central government and the head of the executive meddle too much in the business of the council (Sohn BS, 1998: 35). In the short time of existence the councils and the administration of all levels have not found a balance of sharing power and responsibilities.

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<sup>24</sup> Data from personal communication with KWDI, January 1998.



Like representatives in the National Assembly, councillors at the lower levels also tried to gain from their position. Pork-barrelling for projects in their constituency, corruption and the misuse of their office for personal purposes have all been recorded. Some incumbent councils used up the funds for 1998 during their tenure in the first half of the year, leaving empty coffers for the incoming council (*Korea Herald*, 14 January, 1998). Travelling abroad for educational purposes has been a popular activity for councillors (Cho, Ziemek, 1993: 368).<sup>25</sup>

Councillors usually have no offices in the council building, so they have to make their own arrangements.<sup>26</sup> At the lower level, the office is likely to be at the councillor's home. Appointed councillors tend to have their office at another organisation (62.5%). One female (appointed) representative had an office with the local chapter of her party. She spent most of her time, however, in the office of a charity she also run. During campaign times, most candidates made use of an office, mostly by renting. In 1998, only three per cent did not have a campaign office (*Korea Times*, 26 May, 1998).

### Interaction with Electorate

Most councillors had their office in close proximity of their home, making contact with the electorate easy. In addition, a majority of the representatives lived in the same area for a long time (seventy-eight per cent of the men for over thirty years and three quarters of the women for more than ten years). The councillors met their voters frequently, 'more than once a week' to 'daily' (44% and 18.5%). This proximity to the voter also shows in the method of gathering public opinion. Nearly half of the female councillors favoured talking to people directly. Next came discussions with civil groups with twenty-four per cent. Other methods included contact with the administration and various studies and surveys (Sohn BS, 1998: 27).

In order to develop a concrete policy thirty-seven per cent of the female councillors spoke directly with local people (ibid.: 34; **Figure 5.10**). For concrete policies, councillors then turned to bureaucrats and specialists, including those in their own party,

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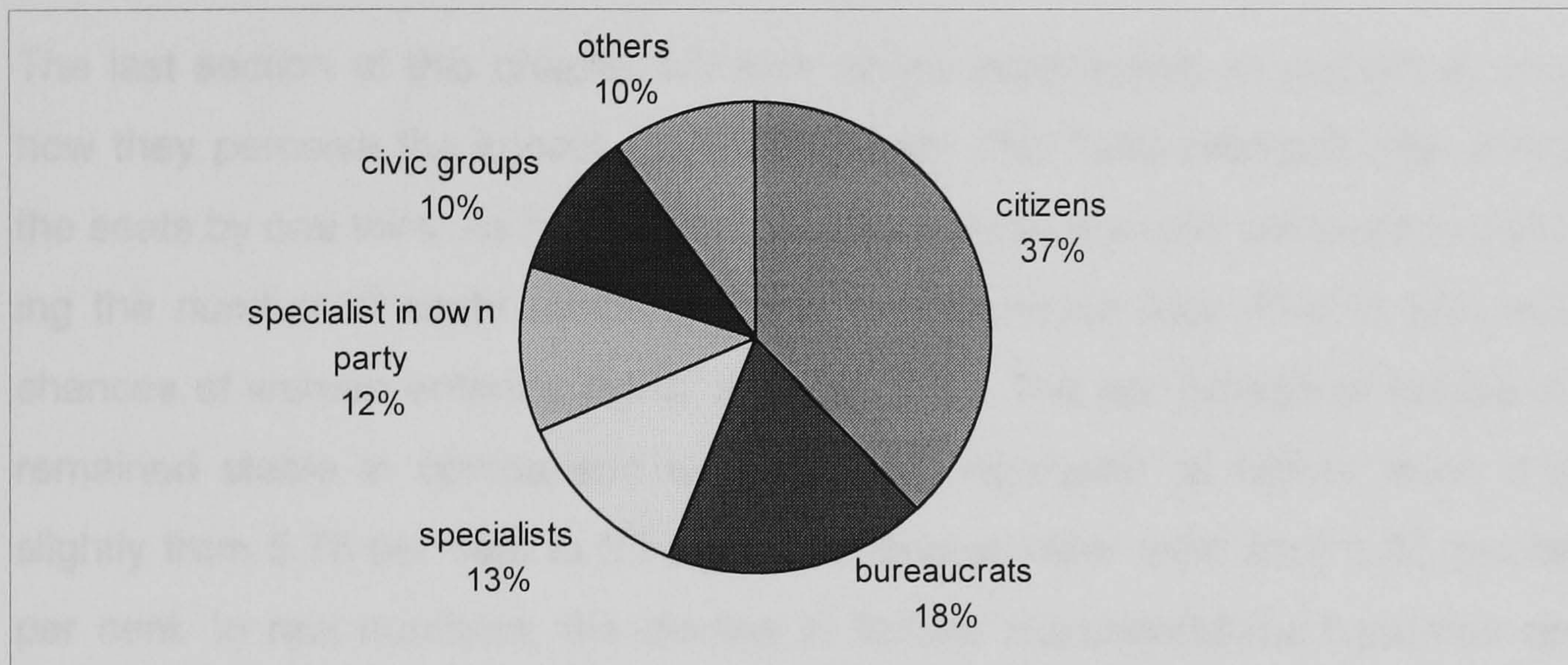
<sup>25</sup> According to one official from the *Ministry of Home Affairs*, female councillors were especially keen on travelling.

<sup>26</sup> In the case of my survey, attempts to contact councillors through council offices failed.



showing their interest in expert advice. Civic groups were consulted in only ten per cent of the cases. Councillors considered themselves successful in changing proposals of the administration in their favour (ibid.: 31).

**Figure 5.10:** Consulted Groups in the Policy-Making Process:



Source: Sohn BS, 1998: 34.

There is some variance in the amount of time councillors spend on politics a week. Twenty per cent spend between eleven and twenty hours a week on politics, and sixteen per cent up to forty hours. One third spend even more time than that. On the other hand, sixteen per cent said six to ten hours a week and another sixteen per cent only up to five.<sup>27</sup>

Councillors also attend weddings and funerals in their constituency. At both occasions, they can leave envelopes with money as a contribution, thereby indirectly bribing voters.<sup>28</sup> A special capacity for (customarily male) councillors is the officiating of weddings. Prominent representatives can spend considerable amounts of time on week-

<sup>27</sup> The low number of five hours per week might be a misunderstanding, meaning the time they spend on politics per day.

<sup>28</sup> Envelopes with money are the traditional wedding present. 'Most lawmakers spend some five to ten million won on average each month on donations at those events.' (*Korea Herald*, 2 April, 1998). The new election law of 1998 restricts the number of weddings and funerals attended and also limits donations to 15,000 won (*Chosun Ilbo*, 31 August, 1998).



ends at wedding receptions.<sup>29</sup> In the early 1990s, National Assembly-members spent twenty to thirty per cent of their income on ceremonial occasions for constituents (Park CW, 1994: 182).

### Gender Differences

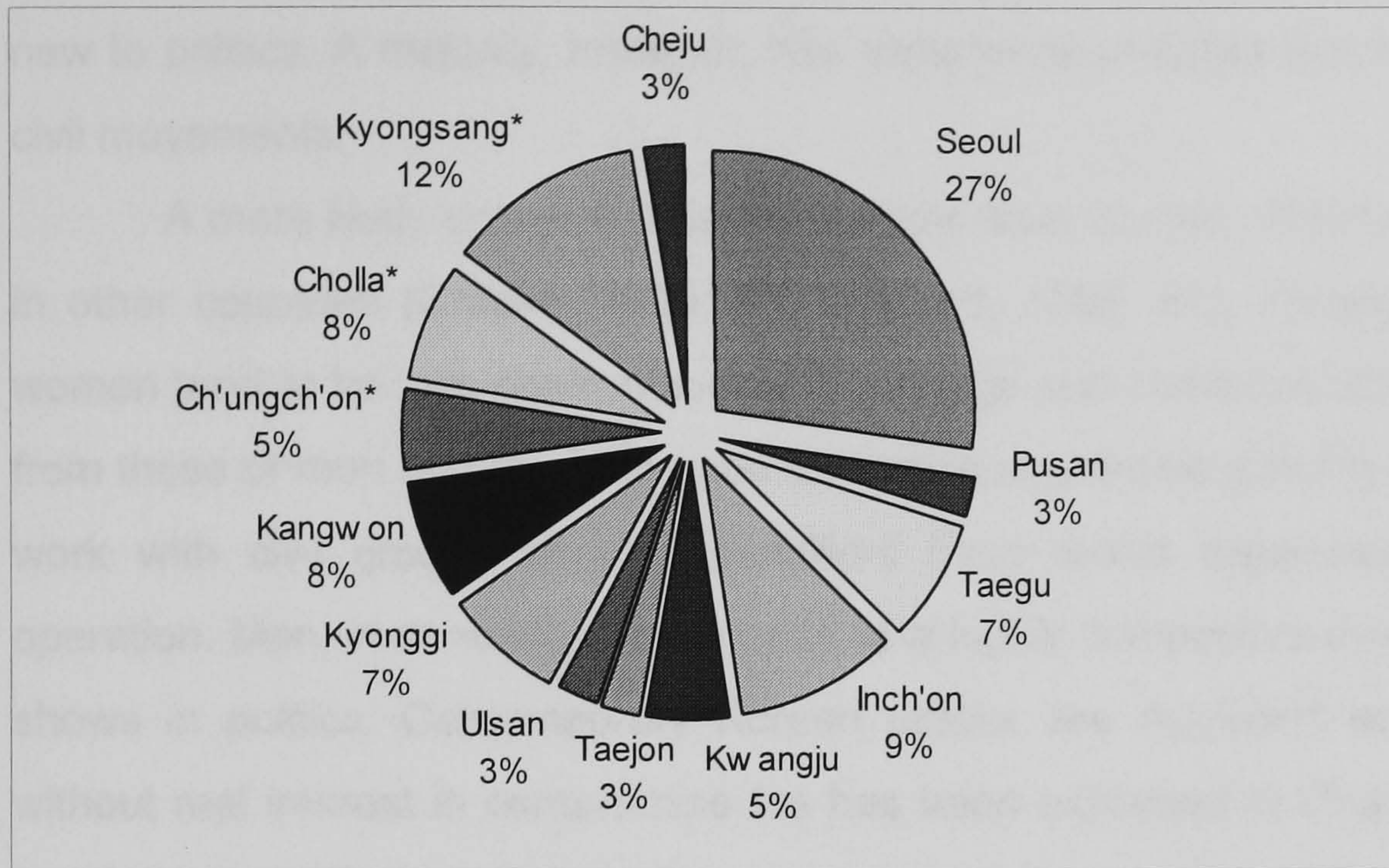
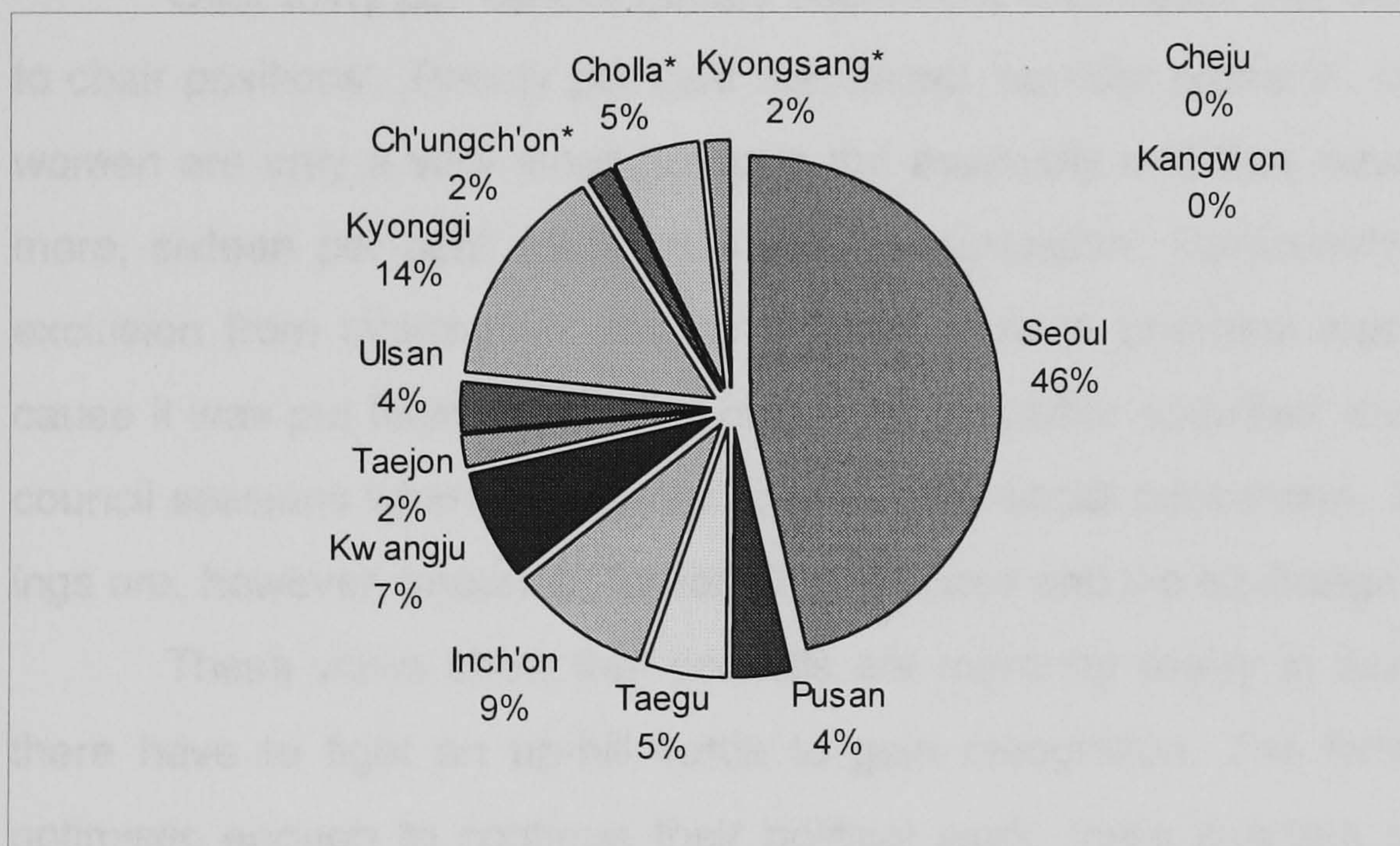
The last section of this chapter will look at the experiences of women in councils and how they perceive the impact they have made. The 1998 elections saw a reduction of the seats by one third. As has been explained before, this was achieved in part by reducing the number of seats allocated through proportional lists. This in turn reduced the chances of women entering higher level councils. The percentage of female councillors remained stable in comparison with the 1995 elections: at higher level, it increased slightly from 5.76 per cent to 5.94 per cent and at lower level from 1.56 per cent to 1.6 per cent. In real numbers, the decline in female representatives becomes obvious: at higher level there are only forty-one instead of fifty-six representatives, and in lower levels fifty-six, down from seventy-one previously. Generally, women are more likely to be in urban councils, as **Figures 5.11** and **5.12** show. More than one quarter of female councillors has been elected to Seoul Metropolitan Council and nearly ten per cent to Inch'on Council. At lower level, female councillors are concentrated in Seoul (46.6%) and Kyonggi Province (14.3%).

Councils with more than thirteen members are divided into different standing committees. The next question aimed at determining whether women would be in 'soft' committees, such as education and health, while male councillors would be in 'hard' committees, e.g. finance (Karl, 1995: 62). This hypothesis was not supported by the survey results. Both men and women were members in various committees, regardless to sex with no relevance to profession or education. This is, of course, connected to the small number of women councillors overall.

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<sup>29</sup> One quarter of the (male) councillors had officiated more than one hundred weddings. The head of Mapu-ward in Seoul (and former National Assemblyman) by 1995 had attended more than 14,000 weddings in some forty years (*Korea Times*, 29 June, 1995). For more information about wedding rituals and their evolution see Kendall (1996).



**Figure 5.11:** Female Councillors at Higher Level Assemblies in 1998 :**Figure 5.12:** Female Councillors at Lower Level Assemblies in 1998:

\* northern and southern provinces combined.

Source: Sohn BS, 1998: 5.

In the assemblies, the attendance rate of women was very high, a quarter of all female councillors in Seoul attended every meeting. Over eighty-five per cent attended more than ninety per cent of the meetings (Sohn BS, 1998: 17). At the same time, they did not actively participate. In more than seventy per cent of the cases, they never spoke up.



Only 2.4 per cent took the initiative more than five times in a meeting (ibid.: 18). One explanation for the passiveness is the lack of experience since these women are mostly new to politics. A majority, however, has experience in public exposure through work in civil movements.

A more likely explanation is the political style of men. This has also been noticed in other countries (Craske, 1999: 68; Hedlund, 1988: 97). Through their socialisation women tend to be less confrontational. Language and communication skills are different from those of men and more directed towards compromise (Chung SW, 1986).<sup>30</sup> In their work with civil groups female councillors have learnt organisational skills and co-operation. Men, in contrast, are exposed to a highly competitive environment which also shows in politics. Contemporary Korean politics are regarded as a 'zero-sum-game' without real interest in compromise (as has been explained in Chapter Two). In council sessions, men tend to concentrate on general issues and party conflicts concerning national politics. Women complain about negative treatment and male chauvinism like not accepting proposals by women (nearly three quarters have experienced this).

Over thirty per cent of female councillors elaborated that women are 'not elected to chair positions'. Twenty per cent mentioned 'number problem', stressing the fact that women are only a very small group in the assembly and thus have little clout. Furthermore, sixteen per cent named 'outright discrimination'. Particularly referred to was the exclusion from information and an incident when a proposal was rejected simply because it was put forward by a woman. One councillor specified 'drinking meetings' after council sessions when women are excluded by social convention. These informal meetings are, however, important for forming alliances and the exchange of information.<sup>31</sup>

These views show that councils are mirroring reality in Korean society: women there have to fight an up-hill battle to gain recognition. The female councillors were optimistic enough to continue their political work: three quarters decided to run again

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<sup>30</sup> A typical school motto for boys is: 'On to victory, having set forth with ambition', and for girls: 'Be tolerant, be patient, be helpful and be sacrificial' (Chung SW, 1986: 180). In 1999, most male teenagers wanted to become 'computer experts' or 'athletes' while girls preferred 'designer' or 'teacher' (*Korea Herald*, 16 July, 1999).

<sup>31</sup> Drinking excessively is an important way of bonding for Korean men (see also Yi, 1998). But 'a virtuous woman does not spend time drinking when her family is waiting for dinner at home' as one male councillor stated in an interview (for similar experiences in the National Assembly see Darcy, Song, 1986; Soh, 1993: 98).



(survey; Sohn BS, 1998: 10). In the elections of 1998, sixty-six per cent were re-elected to higher councils and fifty-nine per cent to lower councils.

The economic, social and political changes of the last decades in Korea notwithstanding, formidable obstacles to participation in general, and in particular for women remain. The current Korean political structure is not congruent with the political culture. Koreans expect the government to provide democratic procedures but in their attitudes towards political participation, they remain in a traditional, parochial mind-set. The constitution of the Sixth Republic has given the right to participate to large parts of the population but people mostly remain passive and prefer protest activities to organised party activities in order to influence a government decision. Without participating, however, citizens cannot obtain political power and influence. So far, mainly urban, middle or upper-class men are involved in politics. Female participants, the focus of this thesis, exhibit similar characteristics to their male colleagues in terms of education, wealth and experience in civic groups. This new group of participants has little difference to the already established political elite, showing the limits of the political process. The restrictions of an elite-group among women being able to become politically active with the large majority passive in the face of cultural hurdles restricts the consolidation of democracy. The obstacles to political participation have to be removed to ensure the future of Korean democracy as the next section will elaborate.



### III. Obstacles to Political Participation

The subject-parochial political culture in Korea still creates formidable obstacles to an increase in political participation and thus to the consolidation of democracy. These obstacles can be categorised as cultural, structural, financial and educational (Chong SY, 1998: 7-11). Cultural aspects are the main focus in this section since they are central to the other three problem areas. In order to enlarge the circle of participants, a change in the culture to a new, more open mind-set is required among the population, elite and citizens alike. In the case of Korea, not only the political culture but cultural traditions, such as the exclusion of women from public life, need to undergo a change. Steps to promote this transformation will be presented later.

The election system promotes candidates supported by parties but also those having their own financial backing. Single-seat constituencies turn elections into a zero-sum game with no rewards for runners-up. Due to their personalism and orientation on national politics, Korean parties in themselves can be regarded as an obstacle to the democratisation of the political process. Since the late 1990s, the existing parties have nevertheless introduced quotas for women in order to increase female representation.

Social obstacles remain in two areas, finances and education. The lack of political education, especially regarding democratic procedures and political activity is a severe problem. In this context, some projects for the political education of women in Korea will be presented. Lastly, the high costs of political activities both in time and monetary contributions also inhibit an increase in participation. Legal restrictions on campaign spending have reduced this problem but the low level of remuneration poses problems for the low-income brackets of the population. Better support from parties for their representatives is also needed.

The roots of financial, educational and structural problems lie in the political culture and this will be turned to first. These factors influence the participation of men and women alike but the main focus will be on the problems women face while other problematic areas, such as the inclusion of labour, will only be shortly mentioned.



### i. Cultural Obstacles

"Women should stay at home."  
Male councillor in survey (No. 1)

The general cultural traits presented in Chapter Two prohibit the inclusion of the nearly half of the population, Korean women, in the political process. A cultural change is required to integrate women. The Confucian values of Korean society still decree the division of a public sphere for men and a private sphere for women. Socialisation and education are perpetuating this model (Chung SW, 1986). Women striving to enter politics therefore face massive hurdles.

The first problem is very basic, entering the public sphere. As the quotation at the beginning of this section shows, many Koreans still think a woman's place is at home. This notion is perpetuated through the socialisation process. A child learns order and social norms first and most frequently from their parents. Then school and the work place take over this role. At all levels, women are expected to be feminine and docile, subordinate and humble. By their mid-twenties women are expected to leave the public sphere to marry and have children.<sup>32</sup> Women who decided not to conform to this rule have to endure constant and increasing pressure to get married from family, friends and society in general.<sup>33</sup> Apart from household chores and child-rearing women are engaged in 'work of kinship', acting as care-providers for their family, the elderly and sick (Kondo, 1990: 281).<sup>34</sup> Many women, especially among the middle-class, handle family finances, thus holding some power over their husband (Kim MH, 1993: 76). Since the 1960s,

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<sup>32</sup> 'Where is the purpose of your life if you don't have children?', I was probed in many conversations with Koreans. In 1985, ninety-five per cent of women were married by the age of thirty, ninety-eight per cent by the age of forty (Lee MJ, 1996: 89).

<sup>33</sup> Older, unmarried sisters for instance are excluded from their younger siblings' weddings. Arranged dates become frequent in the late twenties and weddings only a few weeks after the first meeting are not unusual (see also Kendall, 1996).

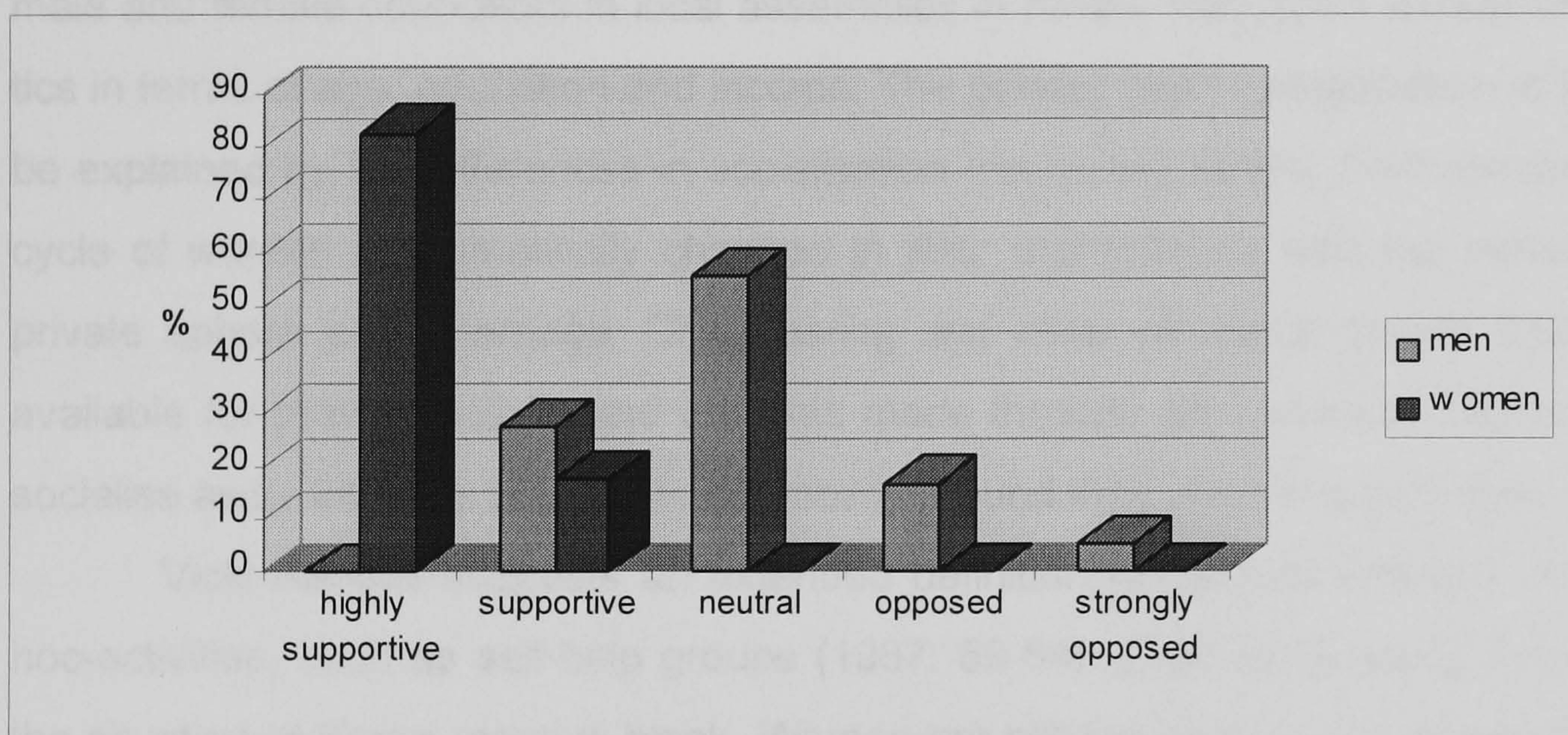
<sup>34</sup> The government has done little to develop a social security system and relied on filial piety - mostly in the form of the unpaid labour of women - instead. Care in hospitals, for example, is so unsatisfactory that relatives have to bring food and stay with the patient overnight.



women have entered the public sphere in large numbers by becoming economically active but are discriminated in terms of pay, promotion and job security.<sup>35</sup>

Since the home is often considered to be the right place for women they are perceived to be inferior and 'not feminine' when entering the political arena. Women breaking the existing gender stereotypes are treated with suspicion, a common complaint in all conversations with female councillors. In 1988, male candidates for the National Assembly used slogans like 'Men of Anyang, where is your pride?' to discredit their female competitor (*Korea Herald*, 29 July, 1999).<sup>36</sup>

**Figure 5.13:** Support for Female Participation:



Among the male councillors surveyed, twenty-two per cent showed opposition to the idea of women in politics (**Figure 5.13**). More than half expressed neither support nor opposition for female participation. Only twenty-two per cent encouraged the idea of

<sup>35</sup> Most women work before marriage but women are expected to retire following their marriage (secretaries at the National Assembly were forced to retire at twenty-five until the early 1990s; Joo JH, 1996). Entering the job market in later years is very difficult and women mostly work in inferior positions, making it undesirable for many (especially higher educated) women to re-enter the workforce.

<sup>36</sup> Comments among male employees of a provincial council about one female councillor included: "She is not feminine." and "She is very ambitious.", using a derogatory tone and expression to show their disapproval. The councillor in question had not concealed her ambition to run for a mayorship (eventually she was not nominated by her party).



women in politics. Among the female councillors, eight-two per cent are 'highly supportive' of women's participation in politics with the rest being 'supportive'. Support among the female population in general is high, too. In the early 1990s, three quarters championed the idea of women in politics (Kim YL, Chun KO, 1996: 126).

While women generally advocate the idea of active participation there are few who actually join a civic or political group. This result is consistent with many studies made in (mostly western) countries during the 1950s and 1960s (Milbrath, Goel, 1977: 116). In the following years these studies and the way they were conducted have been criticised for their limited definition of participation from a male perspective (leading to the expansion of the participation model; see Chapter One). Another caveat was that gender gaps have been overemphasised.<sup>37</sup> This argument is supported by a comparison of male and female councillors in local assemblies in Korea: they show similar characteristics in terms of age, education and income. The gender gap in participation in Korea can be explained by the differences in socialisation mentioned above. Furthermore, the life-cycle of women is dramatically changed in their mid-twenties with the retreat into the private sphere after marriage. Child-rearing and other domestic chores limit the time available for political activity and contacts made through work are lost. Women tend to socialise away from the political world, mostly around their children's activities.

Vicki Randall suggests an extended definition of political activities including ad hoc-activities, such as self-help groups (1987: 58-64). Even when using this definition, the situation in Korea remains bleak. Women are still too passive in claiming their rights and have a low political consciousness (Chang SJ, 1995: 10; Kong MH, 1997: 10). Few women are willing to run as candidates as male politicians sometimes complain (*Korea Herald*, 20 April, 1998; *Korea Times*, 12 April, 1999). Both private and governmental women's organisations are trying to raise women's consciousness of political affairs. In their work, however, these organisations mostly concentrate on practical solutions for women's problems. The staff of the *Kyonggido Center for Women's Development* had heated debates about the situation of women in Korea (the team consisted mostly of recent graduates of Ewha University's *Women Studies Center*) but in practise they were organising vocational programmes for working class women to help them enhance their chances on the labour market (as hairdressers, beauticians and cooks). The *Center for*

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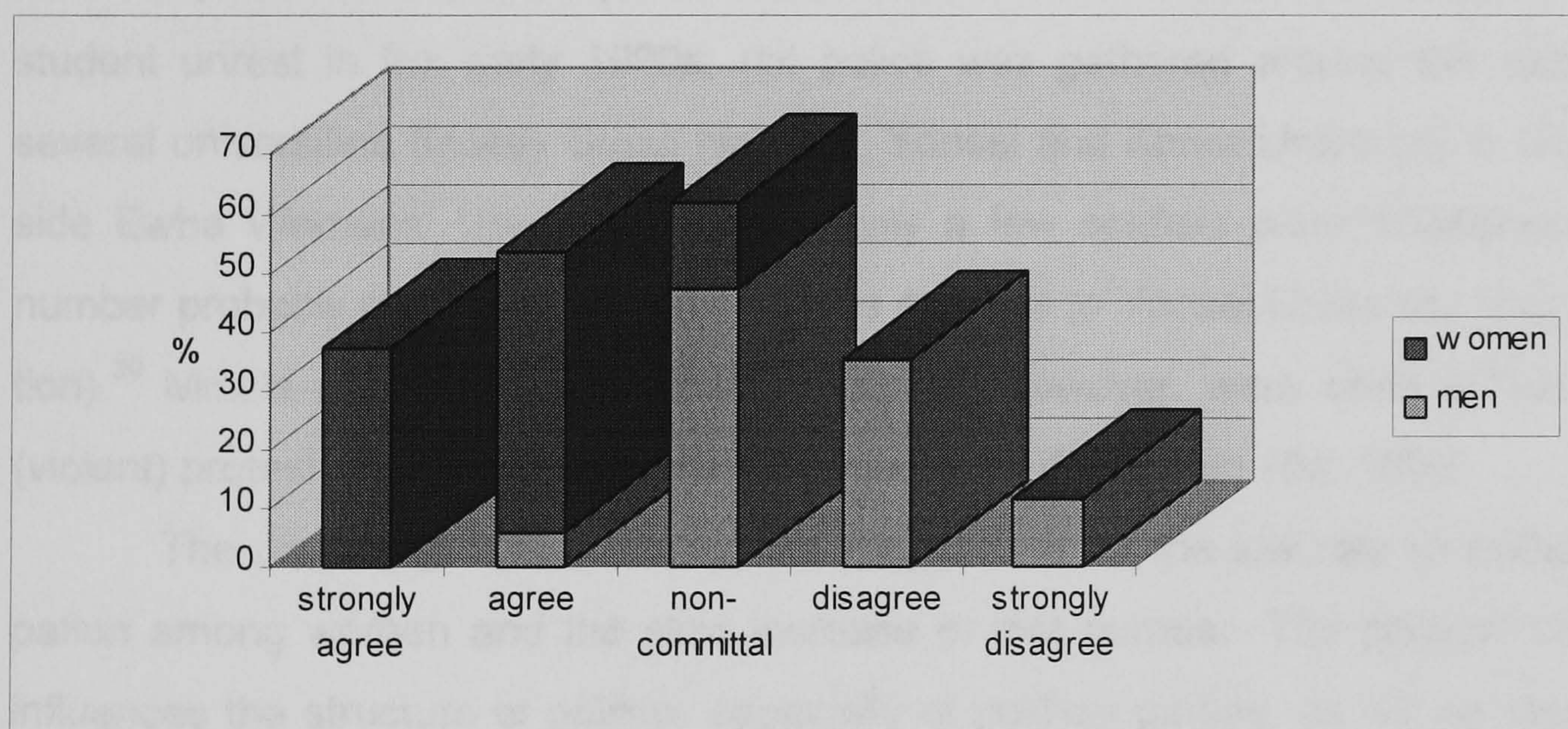
<sup>37</sup> See Norris (1991) for the debate about the different approaches to studies of participation.



*Korean Women and Politics* had workshops on political participation prior to elections but more frequently classes on computer literacy (own observations).

There is also a lack in positive role models in Korea. With so few women in prominent positions in society there is hardly a pool of eligible candidates for political office. Candidates are often recruited on merit gained in public life or at work, an experience women who stayed at home with their family could not gain. Moreover, the few women who are in public office as cabinet ministers, for example, are often involved in bribery or corruption scandals similar to their male colleagues.<sup>38</sup> Male critics use this as a case to contest the abilities of women in politics in general (*Korea Herald*, 21 January, 1998). Among the male councillors in my survey, nearly half disagreed with the idea that their female colleagues are as able as they are (**Figure 5.14**). A similar share gave a 'non-committal' reply and only one person thought that women are as able as men. The overwhelming majority of female councillors (85%) considered themselves as able as their male colleagues.

**Figure 5.14:** "Female Politicians are as Able as Male Politicians":



Since male councillors considered women not competent enough, none would vote for a female candidate in presidential elections even if she were equally qualified. Only one

<sup>38</sup> The *Ministry of Health and Welfare* has been dubbed the 'grave of women leaders' for the frequent changes in the position of minister (*Korea Herald*, 15 July, 1998). For a typical case see *Korea Herald*, 25 June, 1999.



councillor would vote for a female candidate in National Assembly elections (6%). At local level, female candidates would get some support from some younger male councillors (12.5%). The group of female councillors was split regarding a female presidential candidate. Fifty-seven per cent said they would vote for a female candidate while forty-three per cent would not. An overwhelming majority (94%) would vote for a woman as National Assembly candidate, and even more (97%) for a candidate in local elections.

While politically active women show high support for female candidates, women generally are less likely to vote for candidates of the same sex, showing a gap between their support for female participation and actual voting behaviour. In the 1990s, it was the elderly, less educated, labourers and housewives who were more supportive of female candidate (Kim YL, Chun KO, 1996: 127). Younger, wealthier and higher educated women were more likely to support the idea of participation and in very limited numbers became active (Wade, Seo, 1996: 44). On the other hand, the majority of this group is more likely to vote for male candidates, a paradox prohibiting an increase in the number of politically active women.

The same paradox surfaces when looking at protest activities. Female students have not played an important part in the student movement (with few exceptions). During student unrest in the early 1990s, riot police was gathered around the campuses of several universities (mostly Seoul National, Yonsei and Korea University in Seoul). Outside Ewha Womans' University, usually only a few soldiers were positioned, a token number probably due to the proximity of the campus to Yonsei University (own observation).<sup>39</sup> Middle-aged farming or working women, however, were often at the centre of (violent) protest and demonstrations (Abelmann, 1996: 64; Kim HM, 1996)

The prevailing cultural norms are responsible for the low rate of political participation among women and the slow increase in that number. The political culture also influences the structure of politics, especially of political parties, as will be shown in the next section. Chapter Two has already dealt with the perseverance of political culture. This is also exemplified by the situation of women in North Korea. Although the system is ideologically very different the situation of women is not. The Confucian policy for women

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<sup>39</sup> In Summer 1997, a group of female students from Korea University went to shout slogans at the riot police wearing high heels, full make-up and fashionable little backpacks, leaving little impression on the riot police (own observation).



is perpetuated there, too (Park KA, 1992). The ideal woman is personified in both Kim Il-sung's mother and wife, who both were raised under the old order. A few women are in the high echelons of party and state but the number is by no means representative. Women, however, make up one fifth of the legislative (IPU, 1998). North Korean women are fully engaged work but still do most of the housework and also join political meetings. They carry the triple burden of employment, state and family (Youn MY, 1997: 241).

## ii. Structural Obstacles

"Women should not blame men for their under-representation in politics."  
President Kim Dae-jung (*Korea Times*, 12 April, 1999)

The organisation of Korean politics poses two main obstacles to an increase in (female) participation, the election method and the party system. Following the democratic transition in 1987, the number of female representatives in the National Assembly actually decreased. The number of seats allocated through proportional lists was reduced. Women were no longer appointed to positions, such as the head of the executive.<sup>40</sup> With the increased role of assemblies, party competition for seats has become harder. Winning a constituency becomes the most important aim for a party and a candidate considered to have the best chance of winning is selected, often at the expense of women. A multi-member constituency system provides for lower thresholds for women when seeking nominations as examples in other countries have shown (Matland, Studler, 1996: 709; Norris, 1996: 199).

As explained in Chapter Three, the Korean election system is in flux and is not settled yet. Within six weeks before the last local elections, the election law was changed and the number of seats available through proportional lists was reduced. This had direct influence on the number of female councillors who - as has been shown earlier - were often appointed. The discussion about a change to a multiple-seat system continues (see, for example, *Korea Times*, 8 March, 1999).

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<sup>40</sup> A similar development occurred in Chile: there were more (appointed) female municipal heads under Pinochet-regime than there have been elected under the new administration (Craske, 1999: 62).



In Korea, very few women are elected directly in a constituency. In a head-to-head competition with a male candidate, women are usually the losers. Most female councillors therefore entered assemblies through proportional lists. Chapter Three also mentioned the ambiguous feeling Koreans have about appointed councillors. This notion is also expressed by the surveyed councillors. When asked about the equality between directly elected councillors and those appointed on lists, more than half of the male and a quarter of the female councillors considered the latter to be inferior. Thirty-four per cent of women, however, agreed or strongly agreed with the notion of equality. Among the councillors who entered the assembly through the proportional list, however, seventy-two per cent had a positive impression of appointed councillors.

The existing political parties themselves are the other main structural obstacle to an increase in participation. The following characteristics of political parties have been established as conducive to women's representation: high level of institutionalisation, localised level of candidate selection, leftist and post-materialistic orientation, high level of women at party offices and formal rules to increase women's representation (Caul, 1999: 94). Korean parties show deficiencies in all aspects. Political parties in themselves are hardly democratic (Pai ST, 1992: 320). Without an ideological base parties are hardly any more than a support group for one politician and thus muster little long-standing support. Trust in parties is low among the population (Shin, Rose, 1997a: 35). The pattern is repeated at the local level where party chapters are centred around one person, usually the representative for the National Assembly. Once the holder of this position leaves, the new head has to build up the party chapter from scratch. The establishment for a new party initiated by Kim Dae-jung in Autumn 1999 is a typical case of the founding of a party: one leader is inviting other important personalities from different walks of life to create a new party intending to appeal to most parts of the population. The party so far lacks a programme and ideology and also any basis at grassroots-level (*Korea Herald*, 30 August, 1999).

The party leaders have realised that women make up half of their potential voters and show a strong commitment towards women in their campaign pledges (Kim SY, 1997). Most notably are promises of quotas in parties and public office that invariably are not kept.<sup>41</sup> Quotas are regarded as a pure gesture with no intend to guarantee fair repre-

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<sup>41</sup> Kim Dae-jung in his presidential campaign promised a thirty per cent-share of women in his cabinet. He started out with eighteen per cent and by Summer 1999 was down to six per cent



sentation.<sup>42</sup> Parties usually establish a women's office, thereby marginalising women's affairs since there is little interaction with other groups in the party (cf. Randall, 1987: 149-150). Women's offices, however, tend to be most effective when they are accompanying women's activities in the main decision-making body (Lovenduski, 1993: 9).

In order to find out how political rhetoric affects the representatives the survey asked about their party's support of men and women. One third of both male and female GNP-members thought that their party is supporting men and women equally. Fifty-five per cent of men and twenty-two per cent of women were neither supporting nor opposing this notion. Nearly half of the female GNP-members, however, thought that their party did not treat them equally. Replies for the other parties were too few to allow a meaningful comparison but the NCNP fared slightly better in the judgement of its female members.

The most successful method of increasing the number of female representatives is a set quota for women (Squires, 1996). In Korea, this is a voluntary concession by parties. The demand for a quota in parties is a long-standing issue among women's organisations (Kim JS, 1995; Kim SU, Kim MS, 1993; Paek YO, 1997). In 1993, several women's groups came together and demanded the introduction of a quota system by law (Kim WH, 1996: 58-60). Taiwan is an example for this development: by law, at least twenty per cent of the seats in local councils have to be filled with women. This means that when one party fails to nominate a female candidate, the seat will automatically go to another party. Parties hence are inclined to nominate women and consequently give them a chance to gain political experience (Clark, Clark, 1997: 15; Chou et al., 1990: 194). The number of female representatives constantly has been higher than the required percentage.<sup>43</sup> The usefulness of a quota system is contested on grounds that women with lesser qualification will become involved and tarnish the image of female politicians, as several examples of female ministers in Korea have shown.

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(i.e. one minister). In addition, the *Ministry of Political Affairs II* concerned with women's affairs was abolished. Kim stresses, however, that 'close next to me, there is a person who always pays keen attention to women's issues', referring to his wife (*Korea Herald*, 21 January, 1998).

<sup>42</sup> For a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of quotas see Squires (1996).

<sup>43</sup> In the 1990s, other countries, such as Argentina, Belgium and Brazil, have introduced quotas for female parliamentarians by law. In Italy, a similar legislation was declared unconstitutional (Jones, 1998: 5).



Among the surveyed councillors, a clear gender difference is visible regarding the necessity of a quota. Nearly three quarters of male councillors think it is unnecessary while over ninety per cent of women think a quota is indispensable. Those in support of a quota gave an 'increase in numbers of female politicians' as a reason for their choice. Those opposing a quota mentioned 'women should not be in politics' as one reason.

The three main parties introduced quotas prior to the presidential elections in 1997, as **Table 5.2** shows.

**Table 5.2:** Party Guidelines for the Involvement of Women in 1997:

|   | NKP      | NCNP | NPP |
|---|----------|------|-----|
| Contested seats for National Assembly   |          |      | 15% |
| Proportional list for National Assembly | over 30% | 30%  | 30% |
| Contested seats for local elections     |          |      | 5%  |
| Proportional list for local elections   | 50%      | 30%  | 30% |
| Party executive                         | 30%      | 30%  | 30% |

Source: Kim SY, 1997: 19.

The 'New Korea Party' (NKP) was renamed to 'Grand National Party' (GNP) soon after the elections. The 'New People's Party' (NPP) did not exist long enough to be tested on its promises. According to the survey respondents, quotas are only implemented in big cities, such as Seoul, Kwangju and Pusan. It is noteworthy that the respondents sometimes do not agree if a party has a quota for women or not. For Seoul, members of both major parties confirm the existence of a quota in eighty per cent of the cases, but one in five disagrees. Three women actually state that although there is a quota it is not applied. This is supported by the difference in the promises made during the presidential election campaign and reality. If there is a quota in the party, it is applied at national level in only forty-two per cent of the cases. The respondents also give different types of quotas if they are applied at all (with twenty per cent being the most frequent). In this matter, local chapters seem to take some liberties, a rare exception in otherwise strongly centralised parties.



### iii. Educational Obstacles

"I love you all. That's why I'm running!"

Campaign speech of a female candidate (*Korea Herald*, 9 April, 1996)

Education is one of the most thoroughly researched factors explaining political participation. People with a higher education tend to participate at a higher level (Milbrath, Goel, 1977: 98). This is also true in the case of female politicians in Korea but many more women with a similar level of education remain passive. The socialisation process of women in Korea stresses the values of the private sphere and omits the acquisition of values and tendencies related to politics, such as public speaking (Kim YL, Chun KO, 1996: 122). Although the candidate quoted above is an exception in her complete lack of political programme, other women lament 'insufficient experience in both electioneering and politics' (Kim WH, 1997: 30). Campaigning for others allows to gain more experience but since campaign teams are mostly based on friends and family, this is of limited use for women. The experience gained through council work seems to be the most beneficial: sixty per cent of the female councillors were re-elected in 1998 (thirty-three out of fifty-six, including one previously appointed councillor), and two councillors were re-appointed.

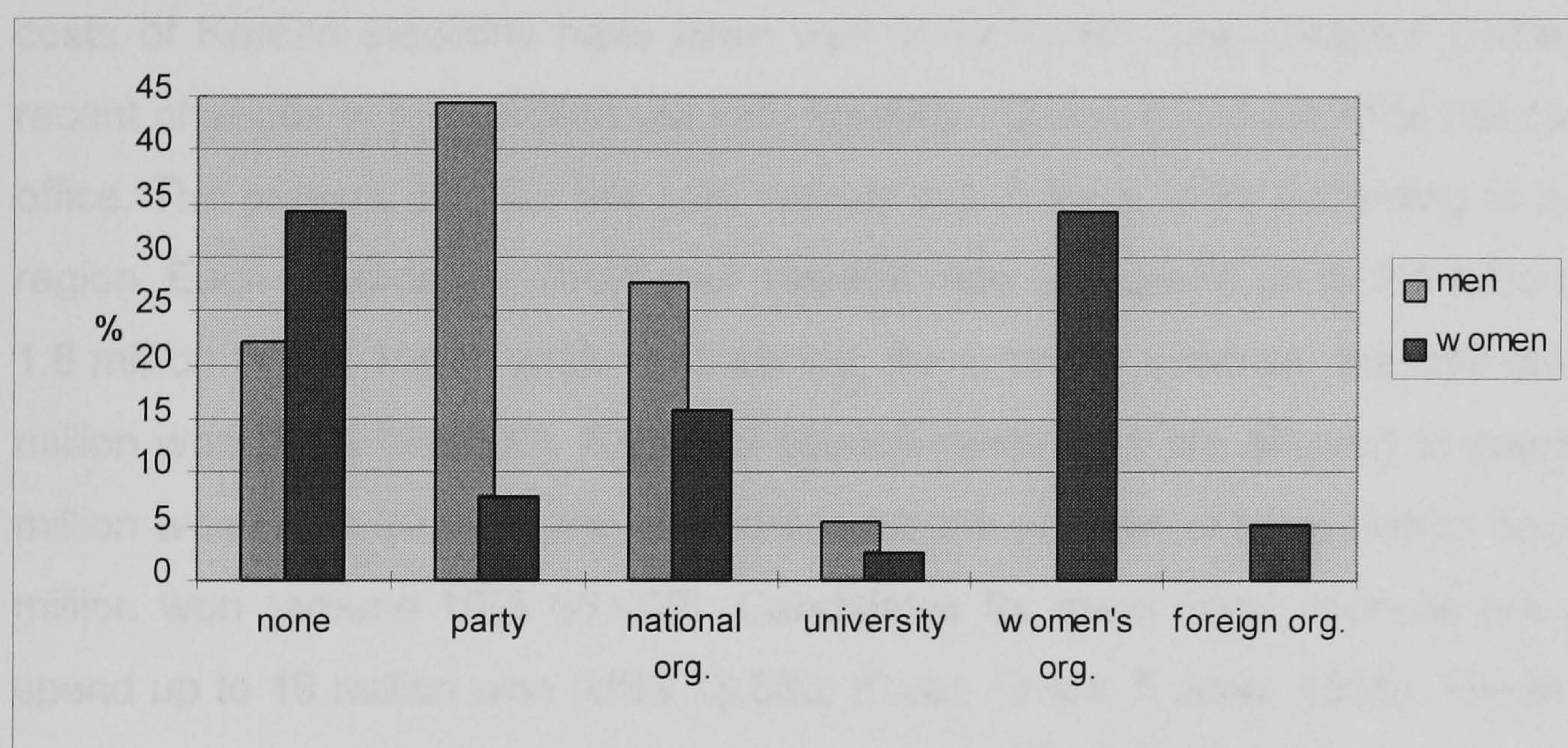
Political education in various forms, such as lectures, seminars and trips, is offered by different organisations including parties, civic groups and international organisations. Among the surveyed councillors, men had undergone some sort of programme in higher numbers than women. More than half of the male councillors attended some relevant event 'twice or more' while twenty-two per cent never received any political education. This number is higher for women: over a third never participated in educational events. Less than fifty per cent attended 'twice or more'.

The gender difference becomes even more evident when looking at the sources of political education (**Figure 5.15**). Men were most likely to be initiated by a party (fifty-seven per cent of those who received education, multiple replies included). Only twelve per cent of women named parties. This difference cannot be explained with the length of party membership: three quarters of men and more than half of the women have been party members for several years. For female councillors, women's organisations play an important role (52%). National organisations, such as the *Institute for Local Autonomy* in



Seoul, also offer training programmes where over one third of the male councillors and twenty-six per cent of the women participated. These national institutions trained more men than women: one third of the male sample attended a venue at this institution while only one fifth of the women did. Foreign organisations like the foundations of German political parties work mostly through an affiliation with Korean institutes but also organise direct programmes, such as educational trips (here namely the *Friedrich-Naumann-Foundation*).

**Figure 5.15:** Source of Political Education:



The educational programme usually consisted of a seminar of two or more days (two-day-seminar: 34%, longer: 31%). Lectures and one-day-seminars favour local participants, in case of national organisations and women's groups this often means Seoul and the capital region. Longer seminars allow people from all over the country to attend but also demand flexibility to be away from work and family for several days. Seminars of women's organisations in 1997 and 1998 always took place during the week, thus limiting the number of women able to attend.

Most participants were approached by the organisers of the educational event, with only one councillor using her own initiative. This informal way of allocating political education is another example of the personalised style of politics in Korea. It also ensures that the political elite (in the form of parties and political organisations) perpetuates itself. Members of outside groups like trade unions or student groups are highly unlikely



to be invited. These educational programmes need to be expanded and opened to a larger part of the population to be effective in increasing the number of participants.

#### iv. Financial Obstacles

“Although qualifications are important, strong financial power is necessary to win elections (one of the reasons for women losing to male candidates).”  
Female councillor in survey (No. 52)

Lastly, financing political activity is an obstacle for many potential participants. The high costs of Korean elections have been well documented (see Chapter Three). Until the recent changes in the election law only wealthy citizens could afford to run for a political office. The present election law sets various expenditure limits according to position and region. Each candidate in the Seoul mayoral race can spend up to 2.5 billion won (US\$ 1.8 million in mid-1998), while in Cheju-do, the smallest province, the limit stands at 229 million won (US\$ 163,000). Regional council candidates are allowed to spend up to 29 million won (US\$ 20,700) and candidates for the position of local district head up to 88 million won (around US\$ 63,000). Candidates for lower level councils are allowed to spend up to 19 million won (US\$ 13,500; *Korea Times*, 5 June, 1998). These limits give some impression of the amounts necessary for an election campaign.

In order to register as a candidate for an election at local, regional or national level, a deposit of 10 million won is required (US\$ 8,500 in 1999; Moon CS, 1999: 134). This deposit is paid back when a candidate reaches a certain amount of votes.<sup>44</sup> It has already been pointed out that a majority of councillors relied on their own finances and friends' backing for their campaign. Political parties supported only about fifteen per cent of the councillors financially (as first and second source; **Figure 5.16**). In the survey among candidates in the 1995 election, the findings were very similar. For more than half of the candidates their 'own or family money' was the main source of finance. For twelve per cent 'friends' provided the main financial support, and for more than half they were the second source of financial help. Again, political parties as one of the three main

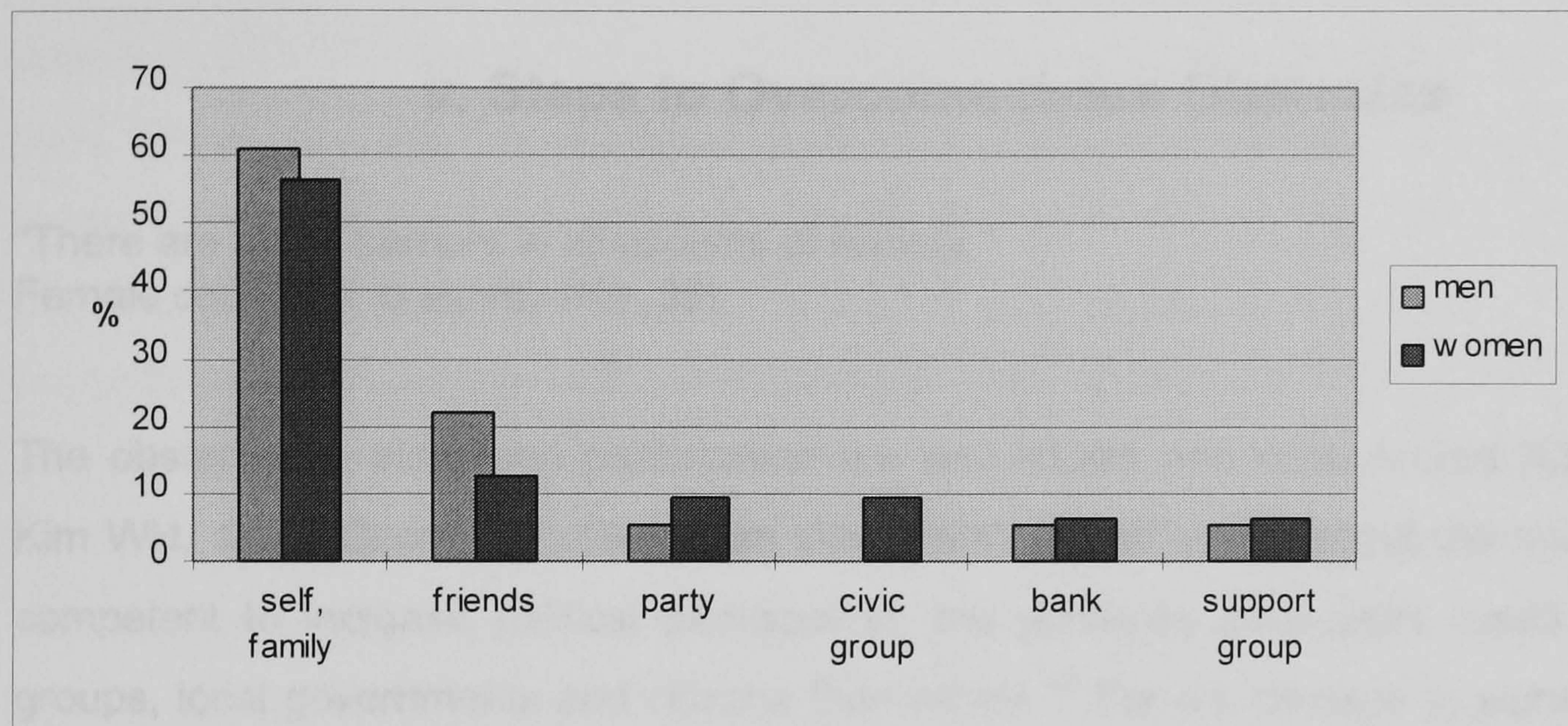
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<sup>44</sup> In 1998, a failed candidate committed suicide facing bankruptcy when his deposit was not repaid (*Korea Herald*, 4 April, 1998).



sources of financial backing account for a very low number, 5.4 per cent for men and 6.7 per cent for women (Song BS, 1995: 49).

**Figure 5.16:** First Source of Financial Support in Campaign:



Since the financial resources of the candidates and their families are such an important source of campaign finance, their monthly family income was compared. Even for those candidates with a low income, private assets were still the main source of finance. The next most important group are 'friends' with sixteen per cent, again with no connection to family income. The lower income bracket also cited 'support groups' and 'bank'.

In order to increase the number of participants another method of financing needs to be introduced and the role of parties expanded. Given their personalistic character parties usually have a weak financial basis (*Korea Herald*, 25 October, 1997). The party in power attracts most of the political donations. In the first half of 1999, the ruling coalition received eighty-seven per cent of all donations (*Korea Times*, 6 August, 1999). Most contributions are given by the *Chaebol*, while the support for political parties and candidates by labour groups was outlawed until 1998. Since the establishment of the Sixth Republic, the *Central Election Management Committee* is distributing financial support among political parties according to the number of seats in the National Assembly.<sup>45</sup> In early 1999, donations were three times higher than the support by the national

<sup>45</sup> Support from the government for political parties has been increasing steadily: in 1988, Kim Dae-jung's party (then called 'Party for Peace and Democracy', PPD) received two per cent of its income from the *Committee*, in 1990, it was already thirty-one per cent (Park CW, 1994: 179).



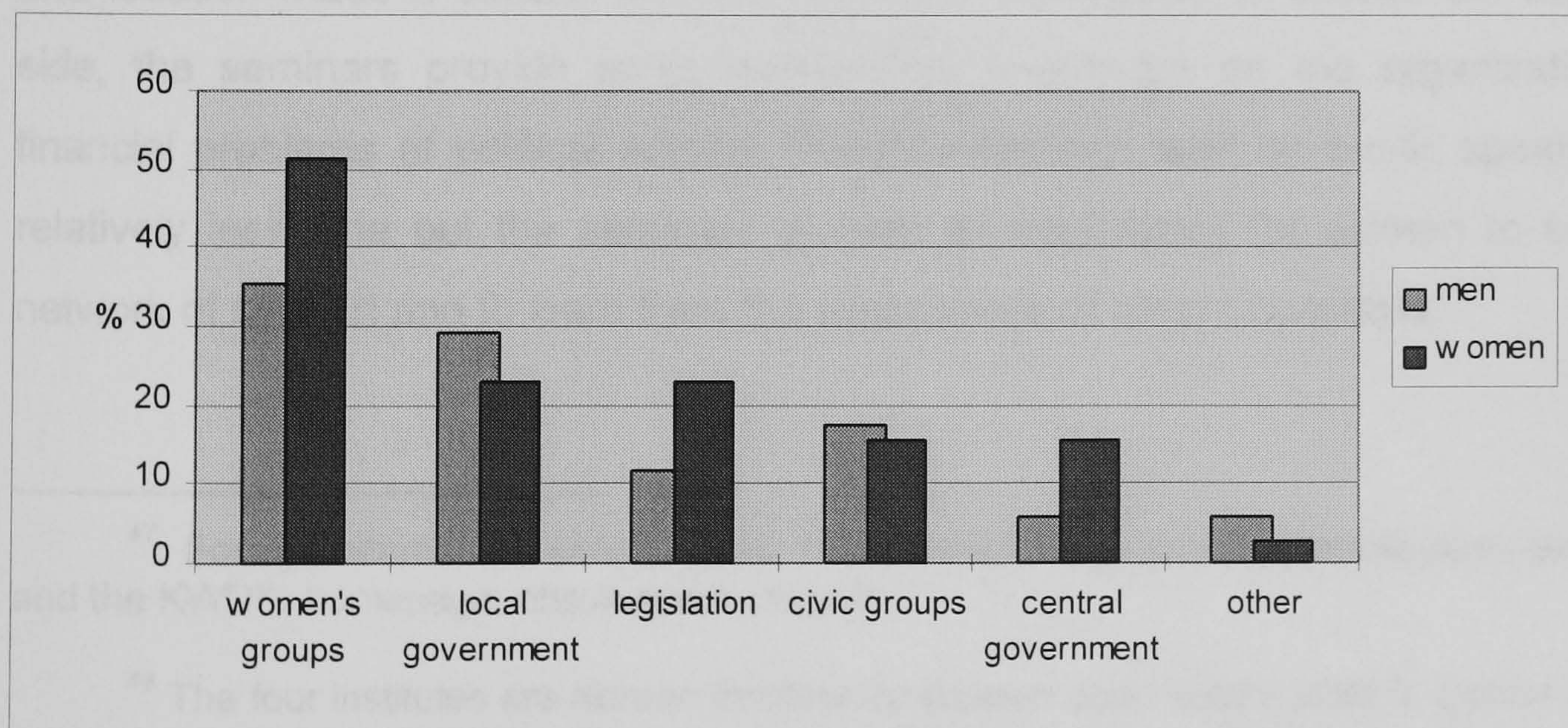
government (ibid.). Parties spent little of their income directly on election campaigning. Sixty per cent of their expenditure is spent on rent and salaries. A further ten per cent were used for 'propaganda' and eighteen per cent for 'organisational maintenance' (the term is not explained; Park CW, 1994: 179).

### v. Steps to Overcome these Obstacles

"There are many barriers in all aspects of society."  
Female councillor in survey (No. 35)

The obstacles to increased participation are well known and documented (Chang SJ, Kim WH, 1995; Chong SY, 1998; Kim WH, 1996). When asked about the main actors competent to increase political participation, the surveyed councillors opted for civic groups, local governments and citizens themselves.<sup>46</sup> For an increase in women's participation, women's organisations are recommended mostly (by more than half of the women and thirty-five per cent of the men; **Figure 5.17**). Women also favour local governments and legislation (twenty-three per cent each). The male councillors consider the local governments and civic groups most capable to increase female participation.

**Figure 5.17:** Capability to Increase Female Participation:



<sup>46</sup> Civic groups: 34.3%, local government: 26.9%, citizens: 22.4% (multiple replies included).



Since women's organisations and local governments are seen as the two most important groups for a change in attitudes, their activities will be presented briefly. There are several state-run and private organisations concerned with the advancement of women. On the national level, the *Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs* and the *Korean Women Development Institute* (KWDI) are most active.<sup>47</sup> Regional women's offices have been founded, following the promulgation of the Women's Development Act in 1996. The state and local governments are required 'to endeavour to support the expansion of women's participation in the political process through various measures' (MPA, n.d.). These institutions study the situation of women in general, covering a wide area from reproduction, literacy and domestic violence to political participation. In Seoul, there are also four private institutes working for an increase of women in politics, each founded by an outstanding personality (reminding of the personalised structure of parties).<sup>48</sup> These institutes concentrate on the encouragement of qualified women to enter politics and the training of women leaders and election campaign volunteers. Furthermore, they provide counselling on election strategies and participate in the *Citizens Campaign for Clean Elections*.

Most of the seminars take place in close proximity of elections and a regular pattern of regular work-shops has not been established yet (due to financial and organisational restraints). Participants are often approached by the organisers so that the representativeness of the seminars is limited.<sup>49</sup> It has already been pointed out that time and location made it difficult for some potential candidates to attend. On the positive side, the seminars provide some background knowledge on the organisational and financial problems of political activity. Practical training, such as public speaking, take relatively less time but the seminars provide an opportunity for women to build up a network of support and to learn from the experiences of other councillors.

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<sup>47</sup> For governmental policies see <http://www.kois.go.kr/library/publication/-women.html> and the KWDI's homepage: <http://www.kwdi.re.kr>.

<sup>48</sup> The four institutes are *Korean Institute for Women and Politics* (KIWP), *Center for Korean Women and Politics* (CKWP), *Korean League of Women Voters* (KLWV) and *Korean Women's National Caucus* (KWNC).

<sup>49</sup> The following is based on a seminar of the *Korean Institute for Women and Politics* I attended in February 1998 and other materials (KIWP, 1991; 1994; KWDI, 1995; KWNC, 1998).



Local governments mostly have created Women's Offices in the last few years. Kyonggi-do's *Women's Policy Office* is working for far-reaching goals, such as the policy development for the improvement of women's life and the promotion of women's social participation, the development of women's potential power, the support of women's voluntary organisations and research of women's problems and needs (WPO, 1996: 4). Their operations include Health Centres, a Women's Hall with vocational and recreational programmes and the already mentioned *Kyonggido Center for Women's Development* (KCWD) with mostly vocational programmes (and a planned expansion into political education; KCWD, 1996). Local governments have to address a huge variety of problems of women at different levels and the political empowerment of women is on a lower place on the list of priorities.



## Summary

This chapter examined political participation at local level in Korea, focusing on the involvement of women. The prevailing political culture is incongruent with the democratic constitution of the Sixth Republic in 1988. Koreans cherish great expectations to be met by the government but show little inclination to become involved in politics themselves. This delays the attitudinal consolidation of democracy. Since the transition process in the mid-1980s was led by the elite, this same elite was able to hold on to their power. The late 1990s still see the same political actors at national level as the early 1980s (mainly the 'Three Kims'). The transition process did not bring a new group of activists to politics, showing deficiencies in behavioural and representation consolidation. At local level, participants are mainly part of one societal group: male, middle-class, highly educated and wealthy. Female activists fall in the same category but they are far fewer in number. There are substantial cultural obstacles to women to overcome before a fairer distribution of participants and councillors will be reached.

In the last years, institutional changes have been made to create a more favourable environment for political participation. A new Election Law limits campaign spending and offenders are prosecuted. A Women's Development Act requires governmental organisations to enhance the position of women. Parties promise to introduce quotas to enlarge women's influence on politics. Public and private institutions have been established to increase political awareness and abilities. All these measures are thwarted by Korean culture. Traditional values hinder the implementation of proposals coherent with the democratic structure of the constitution. In order to consolidate democracy in Korea, a change in people's attitudes and behaviours on a personal as well as public level is necessary.



## Conclusions

This thesis set out to explore the state of democratic consolidation in Korea in the last decade of the twentieth century. Following the traumatic experiences of the first half of the century Korea underwent rapid economic development in the second half. From the ruins of the Korean War the Republic of Korea rose to become the eleventh biggest economy and exporting country in the world as one of the newly industrialising countries (*Chosun Ilbo*, 30 July, 1998). In the mid-1980s, Korea also joined the class of newly democratising countries. Bowing to popular pressure President Chun liberalised his regime to allow more activities of the opposition. This in turn initiated the democratisation process. The transition period was characterised by negotiations of government and opposition forces, stimulated by extensive and sometimes violent demonstrations of large parts of the population. A new constitution was introduced in 1987 and the following president was elected democratically. The winner Roh Tae-woo, however, was connected with the previous regime. The subsequent elections of 1992 were won by the first civilian in over thirty years, Kim Young-sam. With the election of Kim Dae-jung in 1997, power changed to the hands of an opposition politician, praised as the 'maturation of Korea's democracy' (*Dong-A Ilbo*, 25 February, 1998).

Throughout this thesis, Robert Dahl's *polyarchy* has been used as the basic definition of a democratic system (1971: 3). A *polyarchy* should embrace eight criteria that now will be presented with a short presentation of the situation in Korea.

- **Freedom to form and join organisations.** Koreans are free to form organisations within the limits of the National Security Law. This legislation bans any contact with North Korea and its ideology. In the past, it has been interpreted rather freely to restrict any expression of dissent. The law has not yet been revoked under democratically elected presidents.
- **Freedom of expression.** This is guaranteed within limits of the National Security Law. Publications (perceived to be) in favour of communist or socialist ideas are usually forbidden. Furthermore, the press is using some degree of self-restraint, favouring big business and the government party.
- **Right to vote.** No major adult group is excluded from the right to vote.



## Conclusions

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- **Right of political leaders to compete for support and votes.** This right is also curtailed by the National Security Law that excludes leftist ideas. In previous years, election campaigns were characterised by high expenditure and corruption. In order to overcome this problem campaign spending and duration have been restricted but the effects remain to be seen.
- **Alternative sources of information.** Information about North Korea in the media is still censored (although a cable station may be allowed to broadcast North Korean programmes in the future). The South Korean authorities have tried to limit access to North Korean internet sites. The number of cases where the authorities try to suppress unfavourable articles is declining.
- **Eligibility for public office.** Some groups like union activists have been excluded and the already mentioned National Security Law restricts the eligibility of left-wing activists. For cultural reasons, women face enormous problems.
- **Free and fair elections.** Stricter laws and their enforcement have reduced the number of corruption cases and elections are therefore generally considered free and equal.
- **Institutions for making government policies dependent on votes and other expressions of preference.** This last point strikes the topic of civil society, a vital ingredient for a democracy. In Korea, it is still underdeveloped, and therefore no real choice is given.

The reasons for the slow development of civil society can be found in Korea's political culture. The application of a political system to a different culture is problematic. The underlying culture of one country is a 'container' of values that will influence the political system, the 'content'. Democratic procedures in one country will therefore be different from the procedures in another country. In order to be called a democracy, however, basic values have to be adhered to in this system. Dahl's list names these basic requirements but there are countries all over the world where some areas of democracy are still developing or the development has stalled. This led to an increase in the number of 'democracies with adjectives' in the literature (Collier, Levitsky, 1997).

The consolidation of democracy in Korea also means that a political system - democracy - is adopted by a different culture. The organisation of social and political institutions has changed little while the political system ('content') now is democratic. The



## Conclusions

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population generally supports democratic institutions such as free elections, the division of power and the freedom of expression. Traditional political culture, however, has a strong influence on the attitudes and behaviour of all actors. The 'time honoured cultural heritage' of Confucian teachings, still perpetuated in the moral education in schools, stresses the hierarchical structure of society (Chu et al., 1993: 275). Relationships on an equal level are rare. When confronted with an oppressive regime the Confucian ideal of self-sacrifice is fostered. The notion of co-operation with others to change an unfavourable situation is rarely cultivated. Among Koreans, 'a proper sense of responsibility is still underdeveloped' and a 'notion of universal civility' is lacking (Chung BM, 1999: 30). The number of activists remains low. Support for diversity, a basic ingredient of liberal democracy is still largely absent in the population. This attitude restricts the development of a vivid civil society, a critical component of a democratic system (Merkel, 1996; Haggard, Kaufman, 1997).

The stress of moral values in Confucianism creates a black-and-white picture of the world where compromise is nearly impossible (Hahm CB, 1997: 73). In political field compromise is also unlikely because politics is regarded as a zero-sum game with a clear winner and an evident loser (Han SJ, 1989a: 285; Snyder, 1999: 416). Looking back on a long history as a unified nation, there is a strong notion of homogeneity and uniformity of beliefs among Koreans. Ideological parties are lacking a basis and competition is seen as adverse to 'national harmony'. This notion of national harmony sustained by many Koreans is contradicted by regional favouritism. This issue, real and perceived, replaces ideological differences as criteria for the distinction of political parties in the 1990s.

During the last decade, a generational gap has become visible between the younger generation and the rest of the population (Auh SY, 1999: 244). This also influences the political arena. The established politicians are mostly over fifty years old. New actors in their forties have entered the political arena but given the preference for elders in Korean society they have only limited chances of rising through the rank to influential positions. Civic movements are often initiated by younger citizens in their thirties and forties, along post-materialistic lines such as environmental movements. University students in the 1980s were fighting for democracy and unification. Students in the 1990s have retreated to private life and are far more concerned with personal issues such as employment and entertainment (Lett, 1998). Political activism is rare among those who



## Conclusions

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have come to age under the more democratic governments of Roh and Kim Young-sam in times of economic affluence. Their ideas are influenced by a more international outlook introduced through television, music and through direct contact to the outside by travelling to different countries. Traditional values such as personalism and formalism, however, are still strong among the younger generation (Auh SY, 1999: 243). Their engagement in political and civil society is limited, resembling the situation in many established democracies.

The Korean transition process was characterised by co-operation between government and opposition (Huntington's 'transplacement') and did not result in a distinct change of actors and political behaviour. Contemporary politics are characterised by a paradoxical situation where democratic and authoritarian values co-exist. Citizens champion democratic procedures in principle but show little incentive to put them into practice (Chung BM, 1999: 30). Their support for democracy is 'a mile wide but only inches deep' (Shin DC, 1998: 13). This is significant for the progress of attitudinal consolidation of democracy.

The underlying political culture influences both the population in general and also the elite. The transition process did not bring new groups into political society. Established opposition politicians took over once the negotiations with the regime started, and labour and students, the main force behind the demonstrations, were excluded again. Only a small number of protest activists have entered politics. Many members of the political and administrative elite still adhere to traditional values that are working to their advantage (Mo JR, Moon CI, 1999: 164). Politicians in their sixties and seventies have matured under authoritarian regimes and still use the discourse of their time as dissidents.<sup>1</sup> The last ten years have shown that little change can be expected from those leaders who are perpetuating the old system of corruption, regionalism and *daekwon*, the 'ultimate power cult' (Lee MW, 1995: 38).<sup>2</sup> Politicians often resort to evoking regional-

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<sup>1</sup> In order to overcome the economic crisis of 1997-1998 Kim Dae-jung relied mostly on his presidential power with little involvement of the National Assembly (Mo JR, Moon CI, 1999: 163). Kim Dae-jung has been criticised from various sides, e.g. Kim Young-sam in late 1999 called Kim's governmental style 'reminiscent of fascist and Communist regimes' (*Korea Herald*, 11 November, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> A possible change in the constituency system in 1999, for example, is discussed only in terms of the maximisation of votes in the next general elections with little regard for wider implications such as overcoming regionalism.



## Conclusions

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ist sentiments to increase their political clout. Advantages for one part of the country are considered to be more important than the overall national development. The established politicians are an obstacle to the behavioural consolidation of democracy in Korea. Many Koreans still uphold a traditional world-view expecting to be ruled by the moral virtue of their leader. Korean politicians, however, do not live up to this ideal. As a result cynicism and apathy are wide-spread among the population. These feelings pose a threat to democracy when the dislike of actors is transferred to the system as a whole (Linz, Stepan, 1996b: 16).

Since the behaviour and attitudes of many politicians and the elite have not yet become adherent to democratic values democracy has not consolidated on a representational level. Political parties mirror the lack of respect of democratic rules. They can be characterised as personalistic with a non-democratic structure. In their current form political parties are an obstacle to consolidation (Shin DC, 1995: 5). The lack of a programme leads to low party identification among the population (ibid.: 25). Changes in party affiliation are frequent among politicians, showing the low respect for political parties among politicians themselves. Their behaviour is creating an unstable political environment (Hwang AR, 1998). Interest groups are developed unevenly in Korea. Labour groups have been suppressed for a long time, leading them into militancy while (big) businesses have been supported by the government. The relationship between state, business and labour has to undergo further changes. First steps were taken in the form of a 'Trilateral Commission' to cope with the effects of the economic crisis in 1998.

The last paragraphs have shown the influences of culture on the attitudinal, behavioural and representational level of democratic consolidation. The institutional level is also influenced by a country's culture. Democratic institutions are part of the political system, the 'content'. The way they are interpreted and applied, however, is interdependent with the 'container', the political culture. The Republic of Korea was established with a democratic constitution in 1948 but even after nine amendments, the system exhibits short-comings. Too much power is vested in the executive, the person of the president. The legislative has not found a role beyond rubber-stamping or blocking government legislation. The opposition often seeks attention by actions outside the parliament. The judiciary has to develop its own independent role yet.

The general picture as drawn above shows that democracy in Korea is still in the consolidation phase. The case of decentralisation illustrates the imperfections of the



## Conclusions

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democratic consolidation. In the early 1990s, elected councils were introduced at local level and the position of the head of the executive became subject to elections. With this move, democracy was also introduced to local level politics, increasing the scope of democratisation. At this level democracy is as important as at the national level and local government tends to be more participatory and accessible (Sørensen, 1998: 21; Dunleavy, O'Leary, 1987: 58). So far, the process of democratisation in Korea has been led from the top. The introduction of local autonomy ideally brings democracy to the local level, to the grass-roots and creates more opportunities for political participation. The process of decentralisation in Korea takes place in two different areas, on a political level with the creation of councils and on an administrative level with increased opportunities of autonomous decision-making in lower level administrations.

Historically, Korean administration has been highly centralised and even minor decisions were made at the centre in Seoul. Citizens were treated as subjects and their active participation was considered to be disruptive to 'order, harmony and effective rule' (Shin, Chey, Kim, 1989: 222). Citizens on the other hand relied on the moral cultivation by their leaders and took little active control. This behaviour continued to prevail among the administration during first forty years of the Republic of Korea although local government was formally provided for since 1948. Paternalistic values were more influential than the legislative practices of democracy. This attitude prevails among many bureaucrats until today, especially in the higher echelon situated in Seoul (Park CM, 1999: 177).

Following the introduction of local autonomy in the early 1990s, citizens have high expectations towards the administration and demand better services and higher accessibility to local administrations (Im SB, 1996: 41). These expectations often remain unfulfilled since the local authorities have only limited powers and face financial and administrative obstacles. The multi-tiered structure of the administration has remained intact, resulting in numerous ordinances and lengthy procedures. National legislation is changed slowly to accommodate more autonomous decisions at lower levels. The central government has been slow in distributing decision-making powers to lower levels, often citing the (perceived) inadequacy of local officials as reason. The educational problem could be overcome with facilitating more training for local level bureaucrats and the distribution of central administrators to the lower levels. The central administration still adheres to a traditional view of administration by decree, showing the lack of democratic beliefs among significant segments of this group (Park CM, 1999).



The financial dependence of many smaller units on central government allocations remains another obstacle to more autonomy at local level. While some areas are nearly independent from government subsidies others can hardly meet the payroll-obligations for their employees. These areas remain susceptible to pressure from the central government (not) to pursue certain projects.

On a positive side, employees of local level administrations mostly appreciated the increased autonomy although it implied greater responsibilities and an increased workload. The elected heads of the administration (mayor, governor and district head) have become accountable to the population and thus intend to improve the overall environment of their region and services of the administration. Local authorities set out to develop the respective region, mostly the economic and recreational sectors. Projects perceived as negative and unpopular (such as waste disposal sites) were opposed and as a result competition between the regions has become more intense. A suitable setting for discussion and possible conciliation among the regions and localities such as a 'National Mayors' Conference' has yet to be developed. In order to adapt the administration to a democratic system the relevant laws have to be adapted to a more decentralised structure and the bureaucracy has to increase its accountability and openness. These two processes need the support of the political society.

Politicians are, however, more concerned with the local councils than with the details of the distribution of power from the centre. The role of the local assemblies poses a significant problem. In Korea, the unbalanced structure of the national government was duplicated at local level: a weak legislative has few opportunities of influencing a strong executive. The head of the executive, especially at gubernatorial level, has a high profile and initiates many projects while the councillors remain mostly anonymous. A majority of projects and ordinances are proposed by the executive. The councils have yet to develop their role as a forum for discussion. In the first two terms, councils at the higher level were often used as an extension of national politics and debates on local issues remained few. Citizens were more likely to approach the administration directly instead of their local representative. Local assemblies therefore remain the weakest part in the democratic structure.

In a long-term perspective, local politics can serve as a spring-board to national politics for new politicians. Currently, national actors use local elections to enhance their



## Conclusions

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profile and eventually return to national politics.<sup>3</sup> Political parties lack local offices to build up a pool of suitable candidates and often rely on 'imported' candidates. This reduces the chances for local candidates to gain political experience. Here, the undemocratic structure of Korean parties hinders an increase in political participation. Gregory Henderson envisaged decentralisation as a means to overcome Korea's centralised structures and suggested the distribution of power to local centres in order to nurture local politicians to diversify national politics. At these regional centres politicians could evolve and later use the 'qualifications obtained in local position and local performance' in national government (Henderson, 1968: 372). This would lead to a period of increased regionalism but eventually allow more diversity and pluralism in politics. The introduction of local autonomy in Korea has increased regional competitiveness but mostly among parties at national level and new regional centres have yet to develop. It remains to be seen if local politics develop their own profile or remain under the influence of national politics.

The development of local politics is dependent on citizen participation. Local autonomy provides more opportunities for citizens to influence governmental decisions (Almond, Verba, 1963: 164; Elkin, 1999: 395). During the first decade of local autonomy citizens have been reluctant to make use of this mechanism. The number of political activists remains low. Most Koreans still show a passive outlook towards politics. They have high expectations from governmental output organisations but provide little input themselves. This points to a lack of democratic consolidation on three levels in the theoretical framework. On the attitudinal level, the population still abides to traditional values and holds a passive outlook concerning participation. On the representational level of consolidation political parties are not yet applying democratic procedures to local politics. On the behavioural level, the elite in administration and politics is unwilling to share power.

Among the participatory activities voting is carried out most frequently. The voter turn-out is declining slowly from the very high levels of the late 1980s. Citizens are disillusioned by the behaviour members of the political elite, who are often disregarding the will of the population and simply pursue their own interests. Since party identification is low many voters remain undecided until the election day. Voting decisions are often

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<sup>3</sup> For example, former prime minister Cho Soon who was elected mayor of Seoul in 1995 and later used this position as a springboard for the presidential race of 1997.



## Conclusions

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made under the influence of television and family members, showing a need for further political education among the population. Under the authoritarian regimes the opposition often resorted to protest activities such as demonstrations to achieve political aims. Protest movements remain an important instrument of influencing administrative decisions at local level. Participation in local protests, however, only rarely has generated an increase in political participation.

Local politics are still characterised by the precedence of one segment of the population. Local councillors are overwhelmingly middle-aged, part of the middle to upper class, with a high income and high level of education. A substantial number also had previous experiences in civic movements. Governors and mayors of the metropolitan areas mostly had previous experience at national level politics and/or the central administration. Similarly, mayors of smaller units often had credentials as administrators. The selection system of political parties, the main threshold to office, explains the predominance of 'old' established faces. Instead of selecting their own members for elective positions parties recruit non-party members with high chances of winning. New participants find it difficult to stand as candidate in elections. Only in the late 1990s, 'leftist' candidates and those with union support were allowed to stand for office.

The support of a party, however, is secondary during the election campaign. While parties provide some organisational assistance most candidates rely on a personal network for assistance with personnel and finances. This virtually excludes the lower-income bracket of the population. Council meetings are scheduled during day-time with little financial compensation. In order to increase the participatory opportunities of citizens some support from political parties or the government is necessary to make political activity less dependent on the personal income of the actors.

Furthermore, more political education is essential for an expansion in participatory rates. Local politicians often lack knowledge in political procedures, public speaking and campaign issues. There are several institutions besides political parties who provide some instruction but a regular pattern has not yet developed. Participants are mostly approached by the organisers, perpetuating the elite and limiting the number of novices. The location, mostly in Seoul, and the length of the seminars, often several days, limit the number of participants from other areas. A further increase in these programmes and an extension of the number of participants, especially women, is indispensable for further political development.



The overall position of women in Korean society has changed over the last fifty years: the educational level has risen and a large number has become economically active. The environmental and social consciousness among citizens has increased. This suggests a simultaneous expansion of political and social participation to change societal and political deficiencies that, however, has not yet transpired. Only very few women have become active in civic movements or politics. Those female local councillors mostly entered the political arena for local reasons, as the results of studies in other countries suggested (Almond, Verba, 1963: 395; Kaase, 1995: 525). The characteristics of these councillors are comparable to their male colleagues in terms of age, education and family income. Their experiences expressed in the survey gave little encouragement to other women: the majority felt sexually discriminated both within and outside the assembly. Many of their male colleagues obviously still hold traditional beliefs regarding the position of women. Women were excluded from important meetings outside the framework of regular council sessions. The political style in councils is confrontational while women tend to be more conciliatory. A change in political proceedings is required to democratise the work of assemblies.

The introduction of more autonomy also allowed the introduction of other ways to participate in the determination of local policies. Referenda have been held on various issues and public hearings and council meetings have been introduced. These means have yet to be institutionalised. Public hearings are held infrequently and often too late in the decision-making process. Moreover, they are badly advertised and held in remote locations. Active participation in the committee-meetings of the assemblies is sanctioned only after prior registration as speaker. This demands a long-term outlook that many ad-hoc participants and movements do not possess. The interaction between administration and citizens can be improved by a more accommodating demeanour of the administration and a more active attitude of the population for democracy to work properly. Local autonomy therefore is another mechanism to increase participation and support the attitudinal consolidation of democracy (Diamond, 1994: 8).



## Prospects for Democracy in Korea

The process of democratic consolidation has reached a crucial stage in Korea: democratic institutions have been established but have yet to be filled with meaning. The dilemma has already been pointed out thirty years ago by Samuel Huntington and remains valid at the end of the twentieth century: 'the crucial question is: Can Korea adapt to pluralism?' (1968b: viii). Democracy has been introduced from above, by elite groups. Now, democratic values need to penetrate the consciousness of the population and grow from the grassroots. The experiences of the first decade of democratic rule in Korea point to a slow but non-reversible development of democracy. The traditional political culture is still so influential that a generational change seems to be necessary before the political society will apply democratic rules and acquire a democratic mind-set. The younger generation, however, is disillusioned by the behaviour of politicians and shows little interest in political activity.

The economic crisis brought some changes in the structure of the Republic of Korea and was helpful in breaking up the state-business connection. It remains to be seen how sustainable and far-reaching the reforms have been. The crisis and its management also showed some shortcomings - it was overcome with presidential decrees with little involvement of the National Assembly (Mo JR, Moon CI, 1999). The presidential election campaign in December 1997, when the extent of Korea's economic problems became clear, centred around regional issues, the age of candidates and the military service of their sons, not the management of the economic crisis (Lee JB, 1997; own observation).

The development of a vivid civil society is a crucial step towards the consolidation of democracy (Putnam, 1993: 89). The number of civic groups has increased dramatically in the last ten years. Activists in civic groups and voluntary organisations are generally more likely to become politically active (Rosenblum, 1999). The findings of the survey among councillors supported this assumption. Koreans also stress the role of civic groups for the increase of political participation among the population. The development of civic groups in Korea is only in part similar to that of established democracies where citizens with particular demands began to organise themselves outside parties and the established public institutions in the 1970s (Kaase, Marsh, 1979: 40-41).



## Conclusions

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Civil movements, however, are also influenced by the political culture and show some exceptional features. These groups develop along two distinct lines that only occasionally meet. Local groups are formed in response to a particular problem, often with a high participation of women. Once the issue is solved these groups dissipate and the experiences of activists are lost. Local protest is more likely to be successful if the interest of a national group is attracted. National civic movements are usually situated in Seoul and attract urban, highly educated participants who are often more concerned with an 'idea' (e.g. environmentalism) than practical solutions. Their organisational style manifests the Korean tendency of centralisation. Their detachment from the basis of citizens is a major flaw in the formation of civil society.

The prevalence of the intellectual elite in civic movements is reminiscent of the moral leadership of the educated elite in the *Choson*-dynasty. There have been efforts to describe Confucian scholars in this era as progressive and proponents of civil society (Cho Hein, 1997). Likewise, some political scientists try to promote a 'Confucian civil society' (see Callahan (1998) for a discussion). They claim that the family is a metaphor for society in modern Korea and that there is no real desire for a western-style civil society. The recent nostalgia for Park Chung-hee supports this argument.<sup>4</sup>

The cultural change towards a more pluralistic society is progressing slowly, even among the younger generation. The traditional values continue to be perpetuated by the family and the educational system. There will be little change in the position of women as long as women themselves continue to raise their children along traditional values. While supporting the idea of female participation few younger women would actually vote for a female candidate (Wade, Seo, 1996: 44). As Kong points out, the 'improvement in women's roles depends on women themselves' (Kong MH, 1997: 12). So far, there are few signs for a rapid change and female politicians will remain an exception for a long time.<sup>5</sup> The experiences of women in politics are not encouraging for a larger influx. The political class is lacking the will and commitment to increase the number of women in

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<sup>4</sup> A homepage in memory of Park Chung-hee has been established at <http://www.516.co.kr>. For the resurgence of Park-nostalgia see also Rivé (1999).

<sup>5</sup> In the early 1990s, classes on workers' rights in Masan Free Trade Zone often had to be cancelled due to lack of participants but classes with topics such as Make-up or Bridal Preparation classes were popular (Kim SK, 1997: 223). Outside Ewha Womans University, one small bookstore can be found and uncountable clothes shops and beauticians.



## Conclusions

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politics that often helps to rise the number (e.g. in Britain in 1997; Lovenduski, 1997). Quotas to increase the number of women are promised but their implementation has been suspended.

Finally, the political situation in South Korea remains uncertain with North Korea as neighbour. The Kim Jong-il regime is volatile and unpredictable, militarily strong but economically weak. The Kim Dae-jung-administration seeks to stabilise the regime and engage in some form of dialogue. Any other scenario is a threat to the status quo in South Korea (Cotton, 1999). A military conflict would result in massive destruction of the whole peninsula. A slow disintegration of the North Korean state or a sudden mass movement south by North Koreans would also destabilise the South. The economic and political costs of unification are unpredictable (Noland, Robinson, Lu, 1998). South Korea wearily observes the German experience of reunifying two states with fewer political and economic differences. The economic development of the northern part of the country will be costly for the South. In national politics unification issues would replace much needed changes in the political system such as the restructuring of the economy. Local politics would be reduced to a very minor role. Internationally, a unified and militarily stronger Korea (and the nationalist mood almost certain to upsurge) will require a re-assessment of security arrangements in Northeast Asia.

A decentralised structure would help to make a transition to one unified system easier. The inclusion of the local population at least in some part of the decision-making process will (ideally) smoothen the integration of the (northern) population into the new system. The South Korean political system, however, has not consolidated enough to be transplanted to the northern part of the peninsula. The extension of South Korea's regional party structure to the whole country would have negative effects on the development of the nation. The east-west divide would be replaced by a north-south divide of far greater dimensions. Furthermore, the North Korean system currently does not provide space for a civil society. It will be difficult to find political participants without a connection to the old regime in the case of reunification. The German example has shown that a large influx of politicians from 'the other side' is not supportive to the acceptance of the new system by the population and will lead to indifference. From the point of democratic consolidation in South Korea, the stabilisation of the status quo and a slow approach to reunification are more beneficial.







## Questionnaire

(own translation)

Dear Councillor,

my name is Heike Hermanns and I am a PhD-candidate at the Politics Department of Newcastle University in Britain studying 'Local Autonomy and Political Participation'. I have come to Korea to investigate the 'Progress of Democratisation in the 6<sup>th</sup> Republic'. Currently, I am a visiting fellow at the *Academy of Korean Studies* with the financial support of the *Korea Foundation*.

I would be very grateful if you could reply to the enclosed questionnaire honestly and without restrictions. This questionnaire is without any identification to guarantee your anonymity. Please reply to all questions. If there is not enough space for your reply please use a separate sheet to continue. I would be thankful if you could return the questionnaire in the enclosed and addressed envelope by 23 February, 1998.

Thank you very much.







**12. What is your religion?**

- ① Buddhist                      ② Confucian                      ③ Catholic                      ④ Protestant  
 ⑤ none                              ⑥ other

**13. How often do you read the political pages in a newspaper?**

- ① nearly every day      ② 3-4 times a week      ③ about once a week      ④ never

**14. How often do you watch political news on TV?**

- ① nearly every day      ② 3-4 times a week      ③ about once a week      ④ never

**15. How often do you have political debates?**

- ① nearly every day                      ② sometimes                      ③ hardly ever

**15-1. If you have debates, who with?**

- ① spouse                      ② colleagues                      ③ friends                      ④ parents  
 ⑤ siblings                      ⑥ neighbours                      ⑦ fellow councillors

**16. Are you a member of a political party?**

- ① GNP                      ② NCNP                      ③ UDP                      ④ NPP  
 ⑤ independent                      ⑥ other

**17. When did you join a political party?**

- ① before or in 1980      ② before or in 1987                      ③ before 1995                      ④ 1995  
 ⑤ since 1996                      ⑥ in the last year

**18. Are you a member of a civil group?****18-1. if yes, which group?**

- ① party                                      ② civic group                                      ③ women's organisation  
 ④ religious group                      ⑤ labour organisation                      ⑥ co-operative  
 ⑦ organisation of industry, commerce                      ⑧ family organisation  
 ⑨ educational organisation                      ⑩ other

**18-2. if yes, since when are you active?**

- ① one year or less                      ② 1-3 years  
 ③ since 1995 or before                      ④ since 1987 or before

**18-3. if yes, how active are you?**

- ① more than average                      ② about average                      ③ very little



**19. Since when are you politically active?**

- ① since 1986 or before      ② since 1987      ③ since 1991      ④ since 1995

**20. Have you participated in demonstrations?**

- ① never      ② once or twice      ③ sometimes      ④ often

**20-1. if you demonstrated, when?**

- ① before election      ② after election      ③ before and after  
 ④ 1987      ⑤ as a student      ⑥ 1960

**21. Have you ever campaigned for another candidate?**

- ① no      ② before being elected      ③ after being elected  
 ④ before and after being elected

**22. Have you become active concerning a local problem?**

- ① no      ② before being elected      ③ after being elected  
 ④ before and after being elected

**23. Have you contacted some part of the local administration concerning a local problem?**

- ① no      ② before being elected      ③ after being elected  
 ④ before and after being elected

**24. Have you contacted a member of the National Assembly concerning a local problem?**

- ① no      ② before being elected      ③ after being elected  
 ④ before and after being elected

**25. Have you contacted local important people concerning a local problem?**

- ① no      ② before being elected      ③ after being elected  
 ④ before and after being elected

**26. What are your reasons for being politically active?**

- ① to serve local community      ② personal development  
 ③ to advance to national politics      ④ to promote gender equality  
 ⑤ change of profession      ⑥ improvement of farmers' situation  
 ⑦ advancement of democracy



**27. Have you been a candidate in elections before 1995?**

- ① National Assembly                      ② 1991 local elections                      ③ no  
 ④ neighbourhood representative      ⑤ women's organisation's chair  
 ⑥ alumni-association

**27-1. Were you successful?****28. You are currently a councillor in a**

- ① provincial                      ② metropolitan city                      ③ city                      ④ county  
 ⑤ ward                      council.

**29. How did you become councillor?**

- ① elected                      ② appointed through proportional list

**30. Which committee(s) did you participate in?****31. How do you evaluate the work of the council?**

- ① very good                      ② good                      ③ average                      ④ bad                      ⑤ very bad

**32. Will you run again in 1998?**

- ① yes                      ② no                      ③ not decided yet

**32-1. if not, why not?**

- ① for age reasons                      ② lack of finance                      ③ lack of ability  
 ④ fear of loosing                      ⑤ disappointment with political system  
 ⑥ family opposition                      ⑦ health reasons                      ⑧ other

**33. If you are running again in 1998, which office will you run for?**

- ① councillor                      ② no reply                      ③ ward head  
 ④ mayor                      ⑤ chair of committee                      ⑥ head of council

**34. When did (will) you decide to run again?**

- ① 2 days before                      ② a week before                      ③ one month before  
 ④ three months before                      ⑤ one year before                      ⑥ 2-3 years before

**35. How many hours a week do you spend on work related to your position as councillor?**



**36. How often do you meet your constituents?**

- ① once a week                      ② more than once a week                      ③ once in two weeks  
 ④ once a month                      ⑤ hardly ever meet them                      ⑥ other  
 ⑦ very often                      ⑧ every day

**37. How many weddings have you officiated?****38. What are your areas of special interest?**

- ① economy                      ② politics                      ③ education                      ④ environment  
 ⑤ society                      ⑥ women                      ⑦ culture                      ⑧ other

**39. What are your sources of support?**

- ① party                      ② civic group                      ③ family  
 ④ friends                      ⑤ neighbours                      ⑥ other

**40. What are your reasons for running for office?**

- ① to serve local community                      ② to promote gender equality  
 ③ to advance to national politics                      ④ personal development  
 ⑤ change of profession                      ⑥ improvement of farmers' situation  
 ⑦ advancement of democracy

**41. Who induced you to run?**

- ① own ambition                      ② family                      ③ friends                      ④ party  
 ⑤ neighbours                      ⑥ civil group                      ⑦ women's organisation

**42. What was your family's reaction to your decision to run?**

- ① very supportive                      ② supportive                      ③ opposed                      ④ very opposed

**43. Did you receive special political education?**

- ① yes, once                      ② yes, twice or more                      ③ no  
 ④ received invitation but did not attend                      ⑤ after being elected

**43-1. if yes, by which organisation?**

- ① party                      ② national organisation                      ③ university  
 ④ women's organisation                      ⑤ Institute for Local Autonomy  
 ⑥ Foreign organisation                      ⑦ Naumann-Foundation

**43-2. if yes, what sort of education?**

- ① lecture                      ② one-day-seminar                      ③ two-day-seminar  
 ④ seminar for three or more days                      ⑤ international travel











**59. Do you think that democracy in Korea has progressed in the last ten years?**

- ① strongly agree                      ② agree                      ③ neutral                      ④ disagree  
⑤ strongly disagree                      ⑥ don't know

**60. Do you think that corruption in the local administration has decreased in the last ten years?**

- ① strongly agree                      ② agree                      ③ neutral                      ④ disagree  
⑤ strongly disagree                      ⑥ don't know

**61. Do you think that civil movements have been activated in the last ten years?**

- ① strongly agree                      ② agree                      ③ neutral                      ④ disagree  
⑤ strongly disagree                      ⑥ don't know

**62. Do you think that more possibilities for citizens to participate in local administration have been developed in the last ten years?**

- ① strongly agree                      ② agree                      ③ neutral                      ④ disagree  
⑤ strongly disagree                      ⑥ don't know

**63. Do you think that the position of women in society has improved in the last ten years?**

- ① strongly agree                      ② agree                      ③ neutral                      ④ disagree  
⑤ strongly disagree                      ⑥ don't know

**64. Do you think that the number of female politicians has increased in the last ten years?**

- ① strongly agree                      ② agree                      ③ neutral                      ④ disagree  
⑤ strongly disagree                      ⑥ don't know

**65. If the candidates were equally qualified would you vote for a female candidate:**

- in a presidential election?  
in a National Assembly election?  
in local elections?



**The last questions are for female councillors only:**

**66. Did you have positive experiences in the elections because you are a woman?**

**66-1. if yes, how?**

**67. Did you have negative experiences in the elections because you are a woman?**

**67-1. if yes, how?**

**68. Did you have positive experiences in the council because you are a woman?**

**68-1. if yes, how?**

**69. Did you have negative experiences in the council because you are a woman?**

**69-1. if yes, how?**

**70. Do you think you set a positive example for other women?**

**71. Do you have any advice for other women?**

Thank you very much for your kindness and patience.



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