1. Foreword

The Government of the Joseon period never failed to document the household register every three years, although this required tremendous amounts of manpower and material resources. The government declared at every opportunity available that it would completely record even single person and household. Furthermore, the government promulgated the ordinance that omitted persons and omitted households would be sternly punished. In spite of this, however, many households remained unregistered, no matter what period it might have been. Moreover, instances of punishment for families omitted from the household register are not easy to find. Because of such facts the ordinance stipulating the registration of every single mouth and household may require a new interpretation.

In many instances the ordinance of the late Joseon period mandating a complete registration of all households was perceived as only an empty ideal. In the background of this was the assessment that omission from household registration itself amounted to an omitted mouth or household. However, by scrutinizing the household policy of the late Joseon period it appears that the omission of a not a small number of population from household registration was legitimate. To put it another way, in the household register were registered only those households deemed necessary by the government. In other words, it was not that all those households missing from the household register were omitted households and mouths. Instead, it seemed that those parts that could not fill the quotas required by the government were termed omitted mouths and households.

Thus, the characteristic of household policy in the late Joseon period was that only the population deemed necessary by the government was entered in the household register. Those persons who were...
entered in the household register were understood to be male adults and female adults, that is, adults who were the sources of tax levies and collection. The households in the family register were spatial households represented by house fences but were units for tax levies. In other words, the household register during the late Joseon period performed the role of a basic ledger for collecting tax levies.¹ Thus, the household register of the late Joseon period and the contemporary population register are different in character. In spite of this, not a few studies exist that appear directly to link the contents of the household register in the Joseon period with the realities during that period. Such a trend is strong especially in studies dealing with the problems of the family and of social status.² In order to overcome the limits of existing research results, it becomes necessary first to explicate the principles for formulating the household register. That is to say, before we restructure the image of the society during the late Joseon period with the use of the household register, we must first correct the inadequacy of the household register in terms of the history of population. We feel that the method we seek can be found through analyzing from various angles the aspects of the population that were entered into the household register.

2. The Policy for the Population Investigation in the Late Joseon Period

During the late Joseon period the central government assigned to each county and each prefecture the numbers of households and mouths to be entered into the household register. Such orders were transmitted to each county and prefecture. Local counties and prefectures in turn compiled the household register in accordance with the instructions from the central government. In this manner the household register during the late Joseon period omitted a considerable segment of the population. The household register compiled by Danseong Prefecture in Gyeongsang Province in the late Joseon period specifically demonstrates such facts.

The household register compiled by Danseong Prefecture in Gyeongsang Province shows that a considerable number of people who did not reside in Danseong Prefectures were registered. These persons were not included in the list of persons the central government instructed be registered. Until the mid-18th Century the number of persons the central government instructed be entered in the household register and the numbers of persons who were actually entered in the household register were generally similar. Beginning in the late 18th Century the discrepancy between the two categories gradually grew larger. Such an aspect was further intensified as the late 19th Century progressed. It becomes apparent that after the beginning of the 19th Century local governments did not fully follow the instructions from the

1 Kim Kuen Tae, 2001 *The Realities of Investigating Population in the Late Years of Chosun and Its Character*, DAE DONG MUN HWA YON GU, 39; Kim Keun Tae, 2001 *Organization of a family and its administration in the latter days of Kingdom Chosun*, DAE DONG MUN HWA YON GU, 40
2 For a Review of Past Researches Utilizing the Household Register See: Roh Young Koo, 2001 *Studies on the Census Registers from the Later Periods of the Chosun Dynasty and Current Status of the Digitalization Process of Those Data*, DAE DONG MUN Hwa YON GU, 39