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TREND AND PROSPECT OF RURAL SOCIAL CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

The major purposes of this study are ① to explain the major factors of social change, ② to investigate the trend of social change, and ③ to suggest the prospect of the social change, in rural Korea. The sociological theory of social change can be classified into four major perspectives: functional, Marxian, interactionist, and human ecological perspective. Based on the investigation of the previous studies and sociological perspectives of social change, the major factors of social change in rural Korea were divided into five: industrialization, urbanization, the change of social values and consciousness, informatization, and globalization. The trend and prospect of social change in rural Korea was investigated in terms of four parts: population, family, economic activity, and community structure.

I. Introduction

Social change is the fundamental alteration in the patterns of culture, structure, and social behavior over time. That is, it is "a process by which society becomes something different while remaining in some respects the same" (Vander Zanden 1990, 355). The scope and speed of social change in Korea have been

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extremely fast and broad. Rural Korea has no exceptions.

The problem of social change in Korea has been studied by many social scientists. Yet, most previous studies focused exclusively on urban areas and national patterns. As a result, the social change in rural Korea has been the direct focus of relatively a small number of studies by social scientists (Choi 1988; Kwon 1992; Lee 1984; Min 1994; 1992; Oh et al. 1998; Park 1994).

Most previous studies of the social change in rural Korea have various limitations. The vast majority of previous studies used structural functionalism or modernization theory as a theoretical model. And most of previous studies tended to over-emphasize individual variables, so theses studies did not adequately address structural aspects of social change. As a result, their studies were very static and conservative.

Major factors of social change in rural Korea, which most previous studies focused on, were industrialization, urbanization, and the change of social values and consciousness. Important factors of social change in rural Korea which have become more important since the 1990's are informatization and globalization. Most previous studies, however, were lacking in the consideration of informatization and globalization.

The major purposes of this study are as follows: 1) to explain the major factors of social change; 2) to investigate the trend of social change; 3) to suggest the prospect of the social change, in rural Korea.

II. Sociological Explanation of Social Change

We can divide sociological theories of social change into four major perspectives, functional perspective, Marxian perspective, interactionist perspective, and human ecological perspective (Alexander 1987; Charon 1989; Coser 1971; Craib 1985; Giddens 1993; Gilbert 1982; Hawley 1986; Hong 1988; Kinloch 1977; Ritzer 1988; Rogers et al. 1988; Turner 1978; Wallace and Wolf 1980).

The functional perspective emphasizes that parts of society are interrelated and each part has a function. The functional perspective accounts for social change as the process by which alteration occur in the structure and function of society. Parsons (1951) expressed his ideas on the four functional imperatives of all action systems (adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency). The functional perspective focuses on mal-integration as the key dynamic of both short-term and long-term social change. Merton (1968) argued that functionalists should focus dysfunctions as well as positive functions.

In analyzing short-term social change, functionalists view its source as mal-integration within culture and social structures, or between cultural beliefs and values on the one hand and social relations and structures on the other.

In analyzing long-term social change, functionalists employ an evolutionary model. In using the model, they tend to focus on 1) the forces generating structural differentiation in society; 2) the changes in values and beliefs as societies become more structurally differentiated and complex. Functionalists argue that once differentiation of structure is initiated, integrative problems immediately begin to arise.

The Marxian Perspective emphasizes that history is a series of inevitable conflicts between classes. Marxists argue that the struggle between capital and labor over the rate of surplus value is the basis of class conflict in capitalist society. According to the Marxian perspective, the stratification of capitalists and workers are neither necessary nor justifiable. Marxists argue that the irrationality of capitalism (insecurity, poverty, waste, etc.) will be eliminated through rational planning of the use of productive resources.

The Marxian perspective emphasizes sources of strain within society (usually between social classes and based on ownership and control of the means of production). Marxists focus on inequality in the distribution of valuable resources as a major source of social change. That is, they argue that inequality is an inherent source of strain in social systems.

The Marxian perspective argues that the history of any society is a series of stages in which conflict is followed by a period of reorganization of social relations, structures, and cultural symbols. Social change is viewed by Marxists as involving a redistribution of power. Marxists employ a dialectical and cyclical model in analyzing both short-term and long-term changes. That is, the Marxian perspective emphasizes revolutionary social change.

The interactionist perspective emphasizes the subjective meanings or interpretation of the social world by human actors. Interactionists view the human as maker, doer, actor, and self-directing (Blumer 1969; Charon 1989). This perspective focus on interaction rather than on social structure or personality. Interaction means actors taking each other into account, communicating and interpreting each other as they go along. Also, it focuses on definition, the present, and the human as an active rather than passive participant in the world.

According to the interactionist perspective, the human's perspectives are learned, altered, transformed, and replaced in interaction. Interactionists argue that a society is individuals in interaction, communicating, developing a common, shared perspective. That is, interactionists focus on interaction, the present, and our active nature. Interactionists examine social structure primarily as a reality that is defined, negotiated, altered in interaction. From an interactionist perspective, all social life is a process of change because individuals adjust and readjust to each other. Therefore, interactionists focus on the everyday practices of people as they adjust to each other (Charon 1989).

The human ecological perspective focuses on adaptation, growth, evolution. The principal components of human ecological analysis are ecosystem, population, and environment. The major contents of human ecological perspective are three propositions: ① adaptation proceeds through the formation of interdependence among the members of a population; ② system development continues, ceteris paribus, to the maximum size and complexity afforded by technology for transportation and communication

possessed by the population; and (3) system development is resumed with the acquisition of new information that increases the capacity for the movement of materials, people, and messages and continues until the enlarged capacity is fully utilized (Hawley 1986; Hong 1988).

According to human ecologists, social change occurs as a shift in the number and kinds of functions or as a rearrangement of functions in different combinations. That is, social change occurs when new functions are added and rearrangements among functions follow. They argue that an ecosystem change originates from external influences and proceeds through syntheses of external inputs with internal properties.

In this study, an eclectic approach finding major factors of social change in rural Korea from these four perspectives were used. We know that industrialization is emphasized in the functional perspective and the change of social values and consciousness is emphasized in the functional perspective and the interactionist perspective. Urbanization is emphasized in the functional perspective and the human ecological perspective. Also, we know that informatization (as a part of technology) is emphasized in the functional perspective and the human ecological perspective. Globalization is emphasized in the conflict perspective.

III. Major Factors of Social Change in Rural Korea

There are numerous possible factors that can cause social change in rural Korea. Based on the investigation of the previous studies and sociological perspectives of social change, we can divide the major factors of social change in rural Korea into five: industrialization, urbanization, the change of social values and consciousness, informatization, and globalization.

In the 20th century, the major factors that caused social change in rural Korea were industrialization, urbanization, and the change of social values and consciousness. Industrialization refers to a change from human to nonhuman sources of energy and rise of a factory system of work organization. Urbanization refers to the movement of people from rural areas into cities where the new factories tend to be located. The change of social values and consciousness refers to the process that traditional values and consciousness (e.g. familism, collectivism) are replaced with democratic ones (e.g. egalitarianism, rationalism).

The major factors that have powerful influence on the social change of rural Korea since the 1990's are informatization and globalization. These factors will have more powerful influence on the social change of rural Korea in the 21st century.

The informatization refers to the process that information and knowledge carry out major roles in every social field. That is, the rapid advances in information technology (IT) turned the global economy into a "knowledge-based economy" where information and knowledge are the prime sources of value-added. The informatization will be accelerated by the rapid development ofinformation technology. The recent development transportation and telecommunication permits human beings to transcend the limit of time and space which seemed to be the fatal limit to human life. This will change the life style of rural community fundamentally.

In Korea, the development of transportation and telecommunication which will be realized in the early 21st century are the launching of express railroad, the construction of super high speed national information network, the diffusion of electronic commerce, the increase of electronic home, the development of farming robot, the increase of plant factory, the advent of digital satellite broadcasting, and so on.

Globalization is a historical process by which world society becomes more interdependent. That is, the globalization refers to the process that the scope of everyday life is extended from national spheres to global ones. Also, it refers to both the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole (Robertson 1992). Globalization has become a powerful concept in understanding contemporary social change. For example, the Uruguay Round (UR) meeting and the

agricultural negotiation of World Trade Organization (WTO) have given powerful examples of globalization to us.

IV. Data and Methods of Analysis

Data were obtained mainly from "Agricultural Census," "Annual Report on the Farm Household Economy Survey," "Annual Report on the Agricultural Situation in 2000," and other statistical reports and documents from the relevant governmental ministries and research institutes. Some previous studies and my field observation experience on the social change of rural Korea were used as additional data.

Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentage were used to organize and summarize the data on social change.

V. The Trend and Prospect of Social Change in Rural Korea

The trend and prospect of social change in rural Korea can be investigated in terms of four parts: population structure, family structure, economic activity structure, and community structure.

1. Population Structure

The change in rural population structure can be explained in terms of the number of population, population composition, and population movement.

Rural population refers to the people who reside in rural areas. The rural population is composed of farm population and non-farm population. In 1960, the proportion of rural population to numbers of total (national) population was 72.0%. The proportion has decreased continuously. As a result, in 1995, the proportion was 21.5% (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 1996). The rural population has decreased most rapidly in mountain areas which were at a disadvantage in various living conditions such as opportunities for off-farm jobs and educational facilities (Oh et al. 1995). As presented in Table 1, the

proportion of farm population in the numbers of total population has decreased from 58.3% in 1960 to 9.0% in 1999 (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 1999).

In the composition of rural population, the proportion of the younger has decreased continuously, but the proportion of the older has increased rapidly. The proportion of the rural elderly (ages 65 and over) in total rural population has increased continuously from 4.2% in 1960 to 11.9% in 1995 (Park et al. 1996). The proportion of the elderly (ages 65 and over) in total farm population has increased continuously from 4.7% in 1960 to 16.1% in 1995. In case of elderly farmers who are 60 years old and more, the proportion has increased from 7.9% in 1970 to 30.5% in 1998. That is, the aging speed of farm population has been very fast. Aging of farm operators has been more serious. The proportion of the elderly (ages 60 and over) in total farm operators has increased rapidly from 15.2% in 1970 to 51.0% in 1999 (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2000).

In the movement of rural population, the rural-to-urban migration has selectively proceeded centering around the younger (Lee 1999). As a result, most rural communities have difficulties in maintaining a proper number of households. The urban-to-rural

TABLE 1 Farm Population Change

Unit: 1,000, %

Year	Total Population	Farm Population	Proportion (%)		
1960	24,989	14,559	58.3		
1965	28,705	15,812	55.1		
1970	32,241	14,422	44.7		
1975	35,281	13,244	37.5		
1980	38,124	10,827	28.4		
1985	40,806	8,521	20.9		
1990	42,869	6,661	15.5		
1995	45,093	4,851	10.9		
1999	46,858	4,210	9.0		

Source: MAF (1995 and 2000).

migration has mainly proceeded with the object of living in the suburban rural areas. As a result, the jobs of residents' in suburban rural areas have become more diverse.

The number of household returning to farming increased from 371 in 1990 to 6,409 in 1998. That is, the numbers reached the top in 1998 because of the impact of national economic crisis. Recently, Korean economic condition is getting better. As a result, the size of returning to farming is decreasing. The number of household returning to farming in 1999 were 4,118. During the 1990's, the total number of household returning to farming were 17,713. The returning to farming has selectively proceeded centering around the younger. That is, 81% of the urban-to-rural return migration households were the young in their forties or less (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2000).

Based on these trends, we can suggest the prospect of the rural population change in the 21st century as follows:

First, the decreasing trend of rural population will be slowed down because of the impacts of the influx urban-to-rural return migrants, the preference of country life, the development of transportation and communication, and others. But, the decreasing trend of rural population in mountain areas may continue unless some special counter-measures are provided nationwide.

Second, the proportion of agriculture in a traditional sense in the national economy will be decreased, but the proportion of agriculture as the 6th industry (including the primary, secondary, and tertiary industries) may be increased continuously. That is, in the 21st century, Korean agriculture will be developed as a high value-added complex industry in which ultramodern technologies, capitals, and information are concentrated. As a result, the GDP proportion of agriculture and its related industries in the national economy may be about 16% in 2010 (Korea Rural Economic Institute 1999).

Third, considering the composition of current rural population, the aging speed will be accelerated from now to 2010 or 2020. Now, older farmers are a dominant group in the agricultural population. They have to participate in farming because most of them have no farm successors and no provision for their old ages. Unless special welfare policies are provided for older farmers, the aging of agricultural population may be continued

2. Family Structure

The change of rural family structure can be explained in terms of the type of family and the function of family.

In the type of family, as presented in Table 2, the rural family is showing the trend toward the nuclear family and miniaturization. As a result, one-person or one-generation households are increasing rapidly. According to the data of National Statistical Office (1999), the proportion of one generation family in rural family have increased from 5.0% in 1970 to 23.8% in 1995. And many rural bachelors can not find their spouses in rural areas because of the disproportion of sex ratio (National Statistical Office 1996).

We can list the major functions of rural family as follows: production, consumption, socialization, affection, companionship, sexual regulation, succession of traditional culture, protection and care of family members, and others. The family has been more specialized but has fewer functions than in the past. In particular, the functions which have been weakened greatly are production, socialization, succession of traditional culture, and protection and

TABLE 2. The Type of Rural Family

						Unit: %
Type of Family	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Nuclear Family	67.6	67.6	70.3	72.5	71.3	75.9
Directly Extended Family	23.1	15.4	15.9	15.6	15.5	13.3
Other Types	9.3	17.0	13.8	11.9	13.2	10.8

Source: National Statistical Office (1999).

care of family members. The authority and power of the head of a family has become weaker than before. But, the rights and roles of rural women has extended (Oh et al. 1998). And most farm women are participating in the process of agricultural production. The share of farm women in farming has increased continuously. The share of farm men (including rural non-farm men) in housework, however, is still small (Park 1996).

Based on these change trends, we can suggest the change prospect of rural family structure in the 21st century as follows:

First, the trend toward the nuclear family and miniaturization of the rural family will be continued. That is, this trend may be generalized because of the rapid increase of the elderly households and the change of life styles and values. Therefore, the proportion of one-person or one-generation households in total rural family may be increased continuously.

Second, the power relationship between husband and wife will be changed into more democratic one. And the welfare of rural women may appear as a major social issue because of the increase of their social participation. The protection and care of family members will be provided by state and other organizations more and more. And productive welfare policies will become more important because of accelerating aging trend.

Third, the family relationship such as the interaction between parents and children will be changed greatly because of the extension of telecommunication facilities such as screen telephone. But, the information alienation of rural elderly and rural poor may be deepened because they have many limitations in information technologies and foreign languages.

3. Economic Activity Structure

The change of rural economic activity structure can be explained in terms of industrial structure, economic activities in farm sector and economic activities in non-farm sector.

In the industrial structure, the proportion of non-farm population in rural population is increasing greatly because many rural residents have found their non-farm jobs. The proportion of non-farm population in rural population has increased from 9.2% in 1960 to 49.5% in 1995. That is, about one half of rural population are non-farm population. In case of the secondary and rural 'areas, tertiary industries in dominant industries manufactures. wholesales, retails, restaurants, and Manufactures are mainly developed in the suburban rural areas. The under-development of the secondary and tertiary industries in mountain areas are due to disadvantageous geographical conditions, the weakness of industrial structure, and others. The share of full-time farm households had decreased, from 90.7% in 1965 to 63.6% in 1999 (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2000). This trend may be caused partly by continued industrialization and urbanization, and increased commercialization of farming.

In the economic activities of farm sector, the proportion of simple rice-based farmers has decreased, but the proportion of the farmers who are cultivating lucrative crops (such as fruit and vegetables) and livestock are increasing continuously. The small-sized farming structure has remained virtually unchanged since the 1960's. In 1970, the average size of national farms was 0.9 ha. There was a marginal increase in average farm size to 1.0 ha in 1980. The average farm size has a little bit increased to 1.34 ha in 1999. In 1999, 63.3% of total farms had less than 1ha, 24.1% had between 1 ha and 2 ha, 11.1% had more than 2 ha. Few farms have more than 3 ha. But, the proportion of the farms which have more than 3 ha is increasing continuously. That is, the proportion has increased from 1.5% in 1970 to 4.6% in 1999 (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2000).

In the economic activities of non-farm sector, the number of person employed in non-farm sector is increasing rapidly in most rural areas except mountain areas. It may be caused partly by the increase of employment opportunity in non-farm sector, transportation improvement, agricultural mechanization, and so on. The type of the economic activities in non-farm sector can be classified into the self-employed and the employed. The self-employed economic activities are not increasing, but the employed economic activities are increasing greatly. In general,

the younger are more frequently participating in non-farm economic activities than the elderly.

Based on these change trends, we can suggest the change prospect of rural economic activity structure in the 21st century as follows:

First, the proportion of non-farm population in rural population will increase continuously. The reasons of this may be the increase of employment opportunity, the increase of retired farmers, the preference of country life, the increased return to farming, the extension of home stay working, and others.

Second, the proportion of part-time farm households in total farm households will be increased. The employed economic activities of rural population may be concentrated on physical labors and service works because of the aging of rural population.

Third, the trend of commercialization and enlargement of farm size will be accelerated by the impacts of the next WTO agricultural negotiation. In case of rice-farming, the large-sized farmers who have more than 10 ha will increase greatly because of the impact of the farm enlargement policy for international competitiveness.

Fourth, unless various productive welfare measures such as direct payment, assistance for silver agriculture, and social insurance are introduced in the mountain areas, the idle and abandoned agricultural land will be increased continuously.

environmental will agriculture extended nationwide and the consumers' confidence in our agricultural products will be improved greatly. The ultramodern and high technology farming using bio-technology, computer, robot, advanced knowledge, and so on will be extended continuously. Also, the electronic commerce of agricultural products will be activated because of the spread of computer, the construction of telecommunication infrastructure in rural areas, and others.

4. Community Structure

Social structure is the way the units of a group or a society

relate to one another (Popenoe 1986). That is, social structure the interweaving of people's interactions relationships in recurrent and stable patterns. The change of rural community structure can be explained in terms of social group. communication network, and leadership structure. This analysis is mainly based on the data of "A Study on the Long-Term Socio-Economic Changes in Korean Rural Communities" (Joung et al. 1995; Oh et al. 1998).

The change trend of rural social groups can be explained as follows:

First, the number of rural social groups have decreased remarkably. The decrease of rural social groups was concentrated in interest groups. Kinship groups and regional groups maintained external patterns. But the mutual aid function of these groups was gradually declining.

Second, the spatial distribution of group members has extended to adjacent villages, townships, counties, provinces, and so on. This was caused by the lack of new group members in a village, the extension of public education, the development of transportation and telecommunication, and so on.

Third, the function of rural social groups has extended from single one to multi-dimensional and complex ones. This may be a kind of survival strategies to adapt to their rapidly changing environments. The most popular extension patterns are "mourning plus matrimonial," "mourning plus fraternity." "mourning plus matrimonial plus fraternity."

Fourth, most non-spontaneous social groups have become only nominal. In fact, most non-spontaneous social groups in rural villages were made or unified for food production increase and the government's political control. The national organizations of most non-spontaneous social groups were enlarged excessively, but the lowest levels of the organizations have been almost dormant. It may be caused by the lack of autonomy.

Fifth, the specialized interest groups such as production interest group and circulation interest group have emerged. The agricultural corporation for rice farming is a good example of them. The specialized interest groups have been organized beyond the boundary of a village because of the lack of members.

Based on these change trends, we can suggest the change prospect of rural community structure in the 21st century as follows:

kinship groups and regional groups will developed diversely. The mutual aid function such as financial cooperation may be rather declined. But, the socio-cultural function of such as friendship will become more important.

Second, the trend which the spatial distribution of group members is extended to adjacent villages, townships, counties, provinces, and the state will be continued. The spatial distribution of social groups will be extended naturally as the socio-economic activity areas of rural residents are extended due to the extension of public education, the development of transportation and communication, the spread of computes, and others.

Third, the tendancy of social groups' adapting as multidimensional and complex ones will be continued. This may be a major strategy to induce group members' voluntary participation. If a social group provides members with various important functions, we can expect more active participation of group members.

Fourth, most non-spontaneous social groups will be weakened. But, the elderly related social groups will be increased and activated because of the aging of rural population. The village hall of most rural communities will be managed centering on the elderly social groups. The financial assistance of the government on the elderly related social groups will greatly contribute to the development of the groups.

Fifth, the specialized interest groups such as agricultural corporation will be increased continuously. These groups will be organized in the levels of adjacent villages, township, county, and others because of the lack of group members. The existing groups which were organized at the level of each village may be often united into a new one.

The communication networks in rural communities have

been centered around peer groups and past/current official community leaders. In the decision making on community affairs, the democratic method which the opinion of total residents was respected have increased gradually. This trend will be continued in the 21st century.

In the leadership structure of rural communities, official community leaders such as village headman and the leaders of New Community Movement are becoming more important than traditional community leaders such as clan head, influential persons. The trend will be developed more in the 21st century.

VI. Conclusions

As previously explained, the prospect of rural social change in the 21st century is not bright. But, if we prepare for the anticipated problems, we will be able to make the 21st century as our's. For the sake of this, we have to endeavor for national recognition and consent on the roles of agriculture and rural society.

Traditional roles of agriculture and rural society have been "food production and supply," "supply of labour to other industries." Major roles of agriculture and rural society which are expected in the 21st century are "stable supply of safe food-grains," "preservation of natural environment," "maintenance of rural community," "balanced development of the nation," "succession of traditional culture," "space for pastoral life," "place for sightseeing and rest" (Park and Kim 1999). Therefore, we have to prepare agricultural and rural policies to meet the demand of new roles of agriculture and rural society.

The 21st century is a knowledge-based information society. The rise of knowledge-based information society may widen the gap between the poor and the rich, because of the unequal access to computers and internet, and so on. We have to encounter the issue of the digital divide, the gap between the information haves and have-nots. We have to endeavor to close the digital divide for a sound information society. We have to

endeavor to improve the level of rural residents' information. So, the information education for rural residents (including farmers) should be strengthened. Also, the information infrastructure in agricultural and rural sectors should be expanded greatly.

The new WTO system will accelerate the speed of transformation of Korean agriculture and rural society into more open competitive market system. The most important thing which Korea has to adjust to the effects of the new WTO system may be to adopt and implement the most suitable policies or countermeasures for relieving their negative effects.

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