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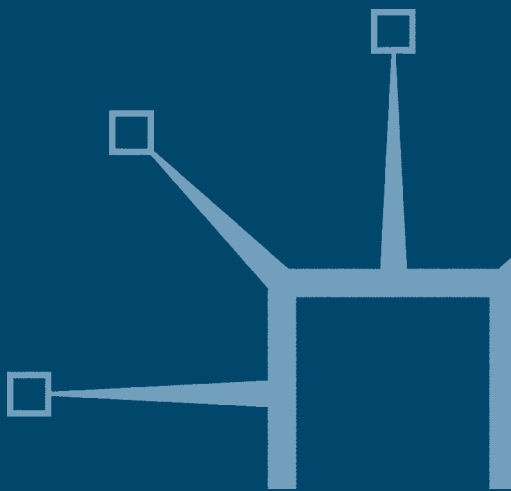
Rural Women and Triple Exploitation in Korean Development

Dong-Sook Shin Gills



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Dong-Sook Shin Gills
Senior Lecturer in Sociology
School of Social and International Studies
University of Sunderland

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DONG-SOOK SHIN GILLS

List of Abbreviations

EOI	Export Oriented Industrialisation
EPB	Economic Planning Board
FETZ	Free Export Trading Zones
FKTU	Federation of Korean Trade Unions
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KACF	Korean Agricultural Cooperative Federation
KCIA	Korea Central Intelligence Agency
KDI	Korea Development Institute
KMT	Kuo Min Tang
MNCs	Multinational Corporations
NICs	Newly Industrialising Countries
NIDL	New International Division of Labour
NTC	Non-Trade Concerns
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Note on Romanisation of Korean Words

Romanisation of Korean words and names is based on the guidelines published by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea (Notification 84–1). Korean names are presented as they are used in Korea with surname coming before given names. However, well known names and phrases are used in a conventional manner: for example, *chaebol*.

Note on Korean Monetary Values

From time to time, monetary values given in Korean won are converted into US dollars by the author to provide reference value. In all cases, the exchange rate used corresponds to that of the time referred to in the text.

Introduction

The answer you get has a lot to do with the question you ask. Almost all of the development theory literature on the political economy of East Asia asks only one central question: what explains the spectacular record of sustained high rates of economic growth and the successful upgrading of the national industrial structure? Any critique of this literature must begin with the relative poverty of this central question.

The preoccupation with the question of explaining economic success – defined as high growth – sets certain parameters on research. It precludes many other important questions. Among these are numerous social, political, environmental and gender issues. These issues will emerge on research agendas only when the focus of the question being asked has fundamentally changed. The poverty of this research agenda, in social science terms, is reflected in the economism of much of the existing literature on the political economy of East Asia. This economism is a direct result of the narrow focus on 'how do they do it?' That is, it concentrates on how to engineer economic policy *per se* without due regard to other social forces or political processes. Social forces are regarded only as an object of the process of economic development and not as a subject that may determine the direction of economic development.

The majority of the literature in the mainstream implicitly accepts the premises of techno-rationality and the positivism of economic science. The very subject of research therefore makes it possible for those authors to take the insulated view of political elites as a given. The most prominent example is the way labour is treated in this literature – that is, simply as a factor of production and growth, or as the inevitable object of repression.

The dependency perspective, on the other hand, asks the question 'why can't they do it?' This particular research agenda has a tendency to restrict itself to the search for structuralist explanations of the obstacles to economic growth. The level of analysis is often pitched above the concrete and practical questions that are most relevant to social forces. For example, Frank (1967) can be criticised for being too general, while Evans (1984, 1987) concentrates on elite coalitions with little to say about the position of

labour, peasants, women and other social forces in the processes of development.

If the framework of analysis is shifted to address the concerns of the subjects of development – that is, social forces themselves – then alternative questions are required. Among these are:

- Is the process of development good?
- If it is, then why?
- Who benefits from development?
- What is the cost of development in social, environmental and political terms?
- Who pays these costs, and in what way?
- Are there better alternatives?

'Development' is too often taken to be synonymous with high national growth, regardless of the social, political and environmental costs, which have all been very high in the East Asian cases (Bello and Rosenfeld, 1993). The high cost paid for development in East Asia in these terms is related to the fact that these development experiences were presided over by an all-powerful state and technocracy. In other words, this development model wouldn't have been possible without authoritarian regimes, since the costs were too heavy to be willingly borne by the people.

The way in which most theories of development treat the agricultural sector in particular, except for a few critical approaches, leaves a large gap. In many cases, the agricultural sector is completely ignored because of the preoccupation with manufacturing industry and export orientation. In other cases, if they consider agriculture at all, they treat it as an unrelated, separate sector, and essentially 'independent' of the industrialisation process. Obviously a linkage between agriculture and industry is recognised, nevertheless, there is a failure to grasp the direct causal relationship between industrial development and agricultural underdevelopment. Agriculture is regarded merely as a lagging sector which should catch up (Ban, H.S., Moon, P.Y. and Perkins, D., 1982; Sung, J.K., 1994; Byun, S. 1985; Moon, P.Y. and Lim, J.H., 1985; Korea Development Institute, 1982).

This type of approach, which sees agriculture as a separate self-contained economy, leads to a particular way of interpreting the social problems and issues raised within the agricultural sector and rural community. The social issues of agricultural development –

including poverty, inequality and gender – are perceived as being a set of problems unrelated to industrial growth. This approach is clearly a form of dualism. Such dualism is merely a description of the visible phenomena of uneven development. However, dualism cannot provide any satisfactory analytical explanation of the causes of agricultural underdevelopment, and its subsequent social impact. This is why, from a dualist perspective, the logical prescription for the alleged 'retardedness' of agriculture cannot be other than simply 'catching up'.

The remedy for this type of dualistic analyses must come through some form of structuralist diagnosis. Structural analyses, such as dependency theory and, to a lesser extent, world-system theory, incorporate agricultural underdevelopment in the periphery as part of the core–periphery relationship in the process of world capital accumulation. There are a few Korean scholars who have taken a structuralist framework in analyses of Korean agriculture. These writers have analysed Korean agriculture in the context of the national industrialisation process (Park, J.D., 1994, Park, H.C., 1988; Hwang, Y.S., 1988; Chang, S.H., 1991, Lim, S.H., 1991; Chang, K.S., 1995; Sung, J.K., 1995; Yoon, B.S., 1995). They do talk about unequal exchange between the rural and urban sectors of the national economy, the control of monopoly capital over agriculture, and subsequent social issues raised. Nevertheless, the deep structural links and the mechanisms of exchange between agriculture and industry are not treated as an integral part of industrialisation. The underdevelopment of agriculture is interpreted as being due to relative deprivation. The emphasis is on the fact that most national resources go to sectors of the economy other than agriculture, rather than on the direct causal relationship between agricultural deprivation and the model of industrialisation itself.

Another important silence in the literature in every camp of development theory, regardless of theoretical perspective, concerns the role of women in the agricultural sector. Neither the role of women in agriculture nor the social impact of the underdevelopment of agriculture upon women are sufficiently analysed, if at all. Furthermore, as a result of this gender silence in general, the very important contribution of women in the workforce is unacknowledged. This is even more so in the case of women in agriculture than it is for women in the industrial and urban informal sectors. Indeed, there is very little literature on women in the agricultural sector in Korea. Even among what little exists, even less is an analysis

of the lives of rural women in the context of the overall political economy of Korea. What is necessary is an analysis that:

(1) takes full account of the agricultural economy
(2) places the agricultural economy in the context of national development as an integral part of industrialisation
(3) has an explicitly gendered approach
(4) focuses directly on rural women as a subject in the development process and
(5) analyses the social impact on rural women of development processes.

This book is written as an attempt to build such a framework.

Part I
Agriculture in the Korean Development Model

The main focus of Part I is on the analysis of the 'underdevelopment of agriculture' in Korea. I take the position that the development process in Korea created a hierarchical configuration among different sectors of the economy in which agriculture is subordinated. The position of a national political economy within the world economic system has a very significant influence over the sectoral configuration in the domestic economy. The political economy of South Korea, especially its sectoral configuration, has been established in direct correspondence to changes in the global economy, within which subsistence agricultural production became subservient to export-oriented manufacturing industry. Social relations, including gender relations, are conditioned by this economic configuration.

The overarching unit of analysis here is the world economic system, which shapes the character and structure of the regional political economy – for example, the Northeast Asian regional political economy. The national social formation is conditioned by the context of the regional political economy and the world economic system. In other words, the ways in which the individual state is inserted into the world economic system has significant influence on the range of development policy choice and therefore upon social relations at the national level. Thus, in this book, the economic development of Korea is not regarded as being structurally independent of the world economic system, but rather as being a 'dependent' part of the development process of the global political economy. This includes the distinctive regional political economy geared to export to world markets, and formed under the auspices of American and Japanese capitalist leadership.

In relation to its role in the international division of labour, Korea accepted a labour-intensive manufacturing export strategy. This development strategy, combined with the presence of a strong

developmental state, brought about the underdevelopment of agriculture. The underdevelopment of Korean agriculture is therefore the result of the way in which the Korean economy was integrated into the world economic system combined with the actual policies that the Korean state has followed with regard to agriculture. The authoritarian government chose an agricultural policy designed to intensify the exploitation of the rural economy in Korea in favour of an overzealous preoccupation with industrial exports. Thus, any surplus generated in the agricultural sector has been systematically drained to capitalise and subsidise export industry in the process of national capital accumulation. In the Korean economic development model the agricultural sector is directly exploited to subsidise the cost of the reproduction of industrial wage labour not only for 'primitive' or initial capital formation, but on a *permanent* basis. In addition, agricultural labour value – and particularly female labour power – has been exploited as a source of revenue for provision of the basic infrastructural requirements of agriculture itself.

Throughout Part I, I attempt to demonstrate how the underdevelopment of Korean agriculture is structurally conditioned by national policy in the context of the regional and the world economic system. I argue that the agricultural sector in Korea is not simply an *un*developed sector or merely 'lagging behind' as an appendix of national economic development. On the contrary, the Korean agricultural sector has been continuously and deliberately manipulated by the state in order to subsidise the industrial sector, even after the initial stage of capital formation. The mechanisms of exploitation of agriculture are various, including the liberalisation of agricultural imports, limited mechanisation and the commercialisation of agricultural production without sufficient capitalisation. The fundamental framework of this exploitation is the persistence of small-scale subsistence farming whereby a non-capitalist mode of production in agriculture is articulated with the dominant industrial capitalist mode of production in the national economy. The underdevelopment of the agricultural sector is expressed in increasing farm household debt and deepening of relative poverty in rural areas.

1 Primitive Capital Accumulation and Agriculture

THE STATE AND EXPORT-ORIENTED INDUSTRIALISATION

By the end of the 1950s, especially after US economic assistance was drastically cut and replaced by loans, the vulnerability of South Korean national capital was exposed. National capital in this period already had characteristics of monopoly capital in terms of its status in the market, in supply of raw materials, control of finance, and so on. However, it was different from current Korean *chabol* capital because of its mercantile characteristics (Byun, H.Y., 1985, p. 215; Chung, Y.H., 1981, p. 148).

Primitive capital accumulation in Korea in the 1950s was based on large amounts of US aid, particularly via the manipulated re-circulation of consumer goods. Korea produced virtually no exports and cannot accurately be said to have been pursuing an import substitution policy during this period either. The situation was characterised by a general absence of national economic planning or strategy, except for the overwhelming reliance on US aid. This aid was channelled into the domestic economy via the Rhee regime and the ruling liberal party, who concentrated on maximising profits from domestic resale of aid commodities. Such privileges were monopolised by a select business elite, the forerunner of the later *chaebol*.

This accumulation process was lacking in the creation of surplus value through production, since it concentrated on extracting a profit from the mercantile recirculation of consumer goods. It was commercial profit rather than industrial profit, merchant capital rather than industrial capital. The reduction of US aid in the late 1950s resulted in a serious economic crisis in Korea. This situation precipitated the foundation of the 19 April 1960 student revolution, and the 16 May 1961 military *coup d'état*.

After the *coup d'état* led by Major General Park Jung Hee in

1961, the military junta recognised the need for economic recovery as a means of its own legitimisation. Given the national division of Korea, no South Korean regime could afford to risk long-term political instability. Having seized power by extra-constitutional means, and being perceived as a government too closely associated with foreign interests (those of the US and Japan), the Park regime had little alternative other than economic growth as a strategy to win popular consent.

The conditions of the national economy at the beginning of the 1960s were defined by the fact that South Korea not only suffered from scarcity of domestic capital but also from lack of raw materials and natural resources, without any available technology. The only advantageous condition for the South Korean economy was that it possessed a considerable amount of surplus labour. Under these circumstances, the Korean military government set the direction of economic development toward export promotion, as suggested by the United States and Japan (Gills, 1993; Woo, J.I., 1991; Haggard, 1990).

In order to promote exports, Korea set itself up as a simple assembly line to produce products that needed very little capital and technological infrastructure, utilising unskilled labour. In addition, in order to accommodate the needs of export promotion, the products had to be ones which were in demand in the first world. These export production commodities were comprised primarily of consumer goods such as textiles, garments, light apparel and other light industrial goods. One of the key factors that the Korean government had to consider was the question of how it could 'squeeze' into the world market. How could it gain international competitiveness?

It was clear that competitiveness in the export market could not be achieved via the quality of products, technological or design innovation or marketing expertise. The only source Korea had was price competitiveness, which was attainable by taking advantage of the large potential surplus labour which existed in rural areas. In order to sustain price competitiveness in the world export market, *low wages* have been the essential prerequisite factor utilised in the process of export-manufacturing industrialisation. This was indeed South Korea's first step to join the new international division of labour (Frobel, F., Kreye, J. and O. Heinrichs, 1980).

Once export-based industrialisation was adopted as the principal strategy of the national economic development of Korea in the First Five Year Economic Development Plan (1962–6), agriculture

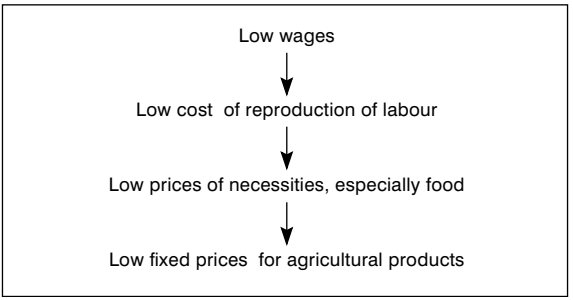

Figure 1.1 Relationship between agricultural price and the wage system

became completely subservient to industry. The government's economic agenda always placed the priority on industry and policies concerned with agriculture were frequently meant to be an expedient to serve industry's interests. For instance, the primary concern of the military government was to maintain a low-wage structure in order to suppress the inflation rate, which was considered to be an essential condition of success in the export business. The low-wage-based export-oriented industrialisation created the sequence within the domestic economy shown in Figure 1.1. This formula necessitated the government imposing a low-price policy for agricultural food products. In particular, the price of rice – which is the main staple grain product and the basis of most agricultural production – was totally manipulated and controlled by the government.

The process of making agriculture subservient to industry involves several other aspects in addition to the low agricultural price policy, though it has been one of the most eminent aspects. The mechanism of the process of the degradation of agriculture includes the unequal exchange between agricultural products and industrial products and the disintegration of the agricultural labour structure, mainly through rural-to-urban migration. Each process of agricultural transformation that occurred during industrialisation is structurally interrelated and interactive with other processes, which collectively altered the agricultural economy.

THE NATURE OF SUBSISTENCE FARMING IN KOREA

The very structure of agricultural production, and the general nature of the farming economy in Korea, turned out to be very convenient and beneficial for the government in its effort to manipulate the agricultural sector. At the same time, it goes a long way to explaining why Korean agriculture underwent changes in the particular way it did with the particular responses to the newly emerging situation. The particular structure of production and the characteristics of the pre-industrial farming economy formed the basis of any more flexible reaction to adjust to the industrialisation process. For instance, the continuous production of the staple grain, rice, at a market price consistently below the cost of production, first appears to be economically illogical. Why didn't the farmers respond in other ways than simply to keep producing rice which did not repay them even for their own labour? The explanation for this phenomenon lies in the nature of Korean farming and its basic structure.

After national liberation from Japanese colonialism (1945), the Korean government was forced to implement a land reform (1950) under pressure from the USA. A land reform was necessary to prevent a revolutionary uprising by the peasantry, who had been ruthlessly exploited under the Japanese colonial regime, which had sustained and protected the existing tenancy system. However, the land reform carried out by the South Korean government was very different from that of North Korea. It was carried out with compensation for the landlords, whereas in the North land was expropriated without compensation and redistributed free to the poor and landless. In the South, the right to purchase the land they had been farming was given to the tenants – that is, land to the tiller – and the cost had to be borne by the tenants themselves. The annual payment for the land purchased was calculated in proportion to the crops for a 15-year payment period. This fact conditioned most of the peasants to limit the scale of farm land they could or desired to acquire. The proportion of tenant land which was redistributed by the land reform therefore was less than half (only 42 per cent) of total tenant land as of 1945. In this way, the land reform created a large number of landed farmers, but typically with small-scale land holdings scarcely allowing for subsistence production.

The nature of subsistence production prohibits the mechanisms of the capitalist market from fully operating. Even if subsistence

Table 1.1 Cost of production of rice and government purchase price, 1976–86 (unit: won per 80 kg)

Year	*Purchase price (A)*	*Cost of production*[a] *(B)*	*Loss (A) – (B)*
1976	23 200	27 154	–3 954
1979	36 600	54 900	–18 300
1981	52 160	69 311	–17 151
1984	57 650	77 889	–20 239
1986	64 160	77 327	–13 167

Note:
[a] The cost of production includes seed and seedling, fertiliser, pesticides, other materials, irrigation cost, electric power and fuels, cost of agricultural implements, buildings, animals, land service, capital service and labour.

Sources: Korea Catholic Farmers' Association, *Ssal Saengsanbi Chosa* (annual data).

farmers cannot earn rent from their land or profit from their capital, nevertheless, as long as their labour pays for their own human reproduction cost, they continue production. As a result, regardless of the reduction of the price of the agricultural product, the supply produced for the market is not reduced. Subsistence producers are forced to produce more if the price falls, contrary to usual capitalist production, thus the power to push the price up above the cost of production is further weakened. This essentially explains why, despite the government's low-rice-price policy, the farmers continued to produce large quantities of rice below its cost of production (Table 1.1).

Even in 1996, the large majority of farm households (85.6 per cent of total farm households) owned less than 2.0 ha of farming land (Table 1.2). Until the early 1990s, a farm household required a minimum size of land holding of 1.5 ha in order to meet total household expenses through agricultural income alone. The figure, however, had changed to 3.0 ha by 1996. These facts suggest that the majority of farm households are not earning sufficient income even to reproduce themselves. The majority of Korean farmers are petty, small-scale subsistence farmers who continue to produce primarily to sustain their own subsistence, but whose income from agricultural production does not meet the full costs of their subsistence.

Table 1.2 Ratio of agricultural income to total household expenses, by size of land holding, 1965–96, per cent

Land size (ha)	*< 0.5*	*0.5–1.0*	*1.0–1.5*	*1.5–2.0*	*> 2.0*	*3.0–5.0*[a]	*Average*
1965	58.6	83.4	96.8	103.3	112.5	–	89.0
1970	54.3	93.9	103.6	119.3	112.4	–	93.3
1975	71.3	107.8	124.0	138.4	149.3	–	116.1
1977	50.1	95.5	120.8	134.0	149.0	–	106.1
1979	45.1	84.3	104.8	115.9	126.3	–	92.1
1981	41.9	84.7	105.7	114.8	130.7	–	92.5
1984	45.1	68.5	93.3	105.2	124.2	–	86.6
1988	33.9	61.3	88.2	104.5	118.3	–	81.4
1992	27.3	55.0	82.9	94.1	116.5	–	73.2
1996	27.3	45.1	68.4	79.8	90.4	102.9	63.6

Note:
[a] A new classification in 1996.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Nong-ga Kyŏngje Chosa Kyŏlgwa Pogo* (annual data).

The particular structure of the Korean economic system enabled the government to maintain such a non-capitalist agricultural production system and to impose it with excessive severity on the rural economy. The structure of the Korean economic system is largely defined by the manner in which it is integrated into the world economic system, and the domestic structure of the Korean economy has been shaped by the essentially dependent nature of the economic development process. It is important to add that it is only possible to exploit the domestic population to the maximum potential level if the economic circuit of capitalism extends beyond the domestic economic system.

The fundamental tendency of capitalism is to maximise profit whenever possible by exploiting labour. On the other hand, there is a mechanism to control the maximum limit of this exploitation in the non-dependent capitalist economies. This mechanism lies within the relationship between production and distribution in the capitalist economy. If the circuit of the expansion of capital, productivity, the quality of labour and reproduction is completed within a single society, then this circuit itself forms a mechanism to prevent extreme exploitation and thus absolute poverty of the working majority.

In the South Korean case, like other cases of dependent capital-

ist development, the expansion of capital is separated from this circuit and it occurs mostly outside of the society. The direct producers are therefore not necessarily required to be consumers of their own production. In this situation, it is possible to set the maximum level of exploitation much higher and the standard of living in the reproduction of labour is reduced to its minimum possible level.

The same rules have dictated the course of the Korean agricultural economy. If the prices of agricultural products were not severely regulated by the government, but were determined by the laws of the capitalist market, they would be set at the level of the cost of production. The cost of production includes expenditure arising from fixed capital, variable capital, *plus* the profit. The profit in this context would be ordinary profit for the producer which enables the producer to accumulate capital. Capital accumulation then provides the base to reproduce on an expanded scale, which would combine increases in productivity and in ordinary profits. This circuit of capital accumulation is the most important aspect of the logic of development of capitalism.

If agriculture was developed within the circuit of capital accumulation, then agricultural products would be required to be sold in the free market at the price of production. The price of production would include cost of production (land, materials, machinery, wage and other costs) and ordinary profit in the same way that the price of industrial goods are determined. Only then would the economic basis for the agricultural sector to develop in balance with the industrial sector be provided.

However, in reality the Korean government manipulated the price-setting mechanisms in favour of industry. Maximum price levels were set, providing monopoly profits for industrial commodities, while agricultural products suffered from repressed price levels which were deficient even to realise an ordinary profit. The market price of farming products was below the cost of production, which excludes even an ordinary profit. This means that capital accumulation in agriculture has not been possible and therefore expanded reproduction could not happen either.

Theoretically, it is not possible to sustain the price of agricultural products below the level of the cost of production in the capitalist market. This is because the capitalist market functions to maintain the balance between supply and demand of both labour and production. If the price of agricultural products falls below

the cost of production, then the producers – that is, farmers – would move into different crops, or into a different sector, in which their wage income is better guaranteed. This would then, in turn, reduce the supply of agricultural production which would push the price up above the previous level, and eventually meet the price of production at which profit is added to the cost of production.

In practice, however, the free mobilisation of labour between agriculture and other economic sectors cannot easily be achieved. Farmers with an average land holding of 1.31 hectare (Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook*, 1996) do not have many resources to raise capital to convert their farms, nor do they possess any special skills outside the agricultural sector. The average amount of capital which the majority of the farmers possess – usually in the form of the land which they till – is too small for them to utilise in any other form of business in other economic sectors.

At the same time, the condition of the existence of a large surplus labour pool with a high unemployment rate makes it difficult for unskilled farmers and other members of the household to find adequate jobs outside the agricultural sector. Most of all, the low-wage structure in the Korean economy does not guarantee a farmer who leaves the agricultural sector a wage income higher than the level of agricultural income. Thus, farmers are left with little choice but to keep on producing even more quantities of agricultural produce in order to sustain their livelihood, and again this makes the overall market conditions worse for themselves.

The other alternative way to avoid the fall of grain prices, especially of rice, would be diversification. In fact, diversification of crops was encouraged by government policy throughout the 1980s. The wide scale of transition to produce different crops requires tight institutional organisation and planning, because the changing supply patterns and distribution of farming production need to be coordinated. Yet, the government ignored the imbalance in supply and demand, and neglected the chance to facilitate the emergence of a reliable marketing system for agricultural products. Eventually, this government unwillingness and low preference for the agricultural sector led the policy of diversification of crops into disastrous price fluctuations.

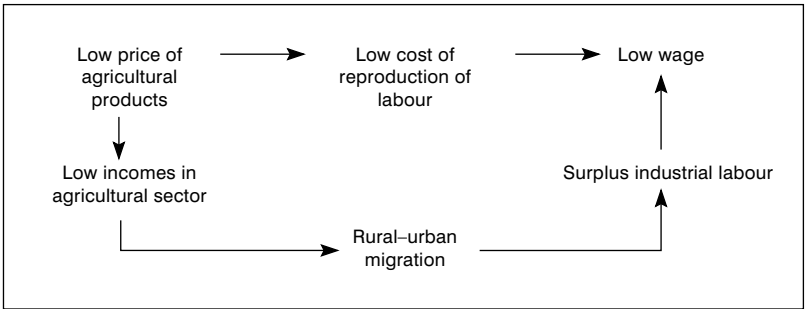

Figure 1.2 Low-rice-price policy and the labour market

Source: Suh, I.W., (1987), p. 162, quoted from *Sahoe Paljŏn Yŏn-guhoe* (1988), p. 84.

DEGRADATION OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL–URBAN MIGRATION

The low-price policy for agricultural products had a dual impact in the labour market. One was the direct effect on low industrial wages, as discussed above. The other was the effect on fragmentation of the peasantry (*Sahoe Paljŏn Yŏn-guhoe*, 1988). This fragmentation created yet more surplus labour, which indirectly affected the low wage structure. Figure 1.2 summarises this relationship.

For many in the petty, subsistence farm households it became even harder to reproduce themselves as a result of the low-price policy for agricultural products. This in turn, created a great exodus of the rural population into urban areas in search of employment in the newly expanding industrial sector. Needless to say, the rural–urban exodus did not just occur all of a sudden; there had been a large amount of potential surplus labour in the rural areas who had previously stayed on in the countryside not because of the lack of push factors, which had been cumulating for decades, but because of the lack of pull factors from the urban areas.

Similarly, the mass outflow of the rural population, especially the extraction of farm labourers, did not result from agricultural productivity increases, as according to evolutionary assumptions. On the contrary, the outmigration from the countryside was a result of the stagnation of agricultural productivity, rather than its

Table 1.3 Type of migration, by size of land, 1960–75 (unit: per cent)

Land size (ha)	*< 0.5*	*0.5–1.0*	*1.0–2.0*	*> 2.0*	*Total*
Whole household (%)	67.2 (55.8)	68.8 (33.3)	43.0 (10.9)	–	68.2 (100)
Individual member(s) (%)	32.8 (27.8)	31.2 (32.3)	57.0 (31.2)	100.0 (8.7)	31.8 (100)
Total (%)	100 (46.9)	100 (33.0)	100 (17.4)	100 (2.7)	100 (100)

Source: Bae, J. H. (1977), p. 60; reproduced from *Sahoe Paljŏn Yŏn-guhoe* (1988), p. 123.

improvement. This pattern of stagnation and migration was caused by the continuation of small-scale subsistence production and the agricultural low-price policy, in conjunction with urban industrial expansion. In accordance with the onset of state-led capital formation and industrialisation in the 1960s, the demand for unskilled labour as a pull factor interacted with the cumulated existing push factors in the countryside to produce an overflow of low-wage surplus labour.

It was the poorest households who migrated first, and generally as a family. The majority of household migration during this period occurred in the lowest strata of the farm households – that is, pure tenants and/or peasants who owned less than 0.5 ha of farming land. Secondly, among the farm households which owned more than 0.5 ha of farm land, certain individual members of the household migrated to lighten the family's burden of reproduction, rather than the entire household relocating to the city (Table 1.3).

During the 15 years between 1960 and 1975, the proportion of farm households in the middle strata, with land holdings of 0.5 ha – 2.0 ha, steadily increased. In contrast, those strata in the lowest and highest categories – that is, below 0.5 ha and above 2.0 ha of land holding, constantly decreased (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries annual data). It is possible to interpret this as evidence that the middle strata has steadily been enlarged, therefore making rural stratification more equalised. However, this interpretation could be superficial, as discussed below.

What actually happened is that since the negative parity between the price of farming products and the cost of living for farm households has been constantly widened during the last few decades, each farm household has been under constant pressure to increase

the absolute amount of farming production. Accordingly, the minimum scale of farming in terms of the size of the land holding required for subsistence production increased from around 1.0 ha in 1965 to a minimum 1.5 ha in 1970, and again to 3.0 ha by 1996 (Table 1.2). Under these circumstances, small-scale subsistence farm households were barely able to reproduce themselves. They were either forced to expand the scale of their farming, in order to produce more, or to relinquish farming production altogether. This pattern is the result of the fact that the productivity of agriculture had been stagnating, while the prices of agricultural products were constantly under strong downward pressure. The desperate effort by farm households to make ends meet, particularly through expanding the scale of farming, is clearly expressed in the trend in tenancy during the same period (Table 1.4).

The exceptional decrease in tenancy rate during the 1970s was caused by the policy of a high rice price implemented by the government aiming to achieve national self-sufficiency in food during the Fourth Economic Planning Period. The high-rice-price policy was implemented through the *Yijung Kokka Chŏngch'aek* (dual grain-price policy). Through this dual grain price programme, the government subsidised farm households by purchasing rice directly from the farmers at a higher price than the official market price. However, ever since the government abandoned the high-rice-price policy, most farm households found themselves reverting to the previous adverse economic situation.

The general increase in tenancy since the launch of the First Five Year Economic Development Plan entails considerable differences in the rate of increase among the rural household strata, by size of land holdings. In the low–middle strata, the tenancy rate increased more than 50 per cent – from 19.7 per cent to 28.9 per cent – between 1965 and 1985 (Table 1.5). However, the rate of increase in tenancy is much higher among the larger-scale farm households with more than 2.0 ha. By 1992, half of the farmland cultivated by those households was leased land. The average tenancy rate more than doubled, approaching the level prior to the land reform. This means that expansion of farming scale has been obtained by taking on additional tenancy, rather than land ownership.

The proportion of tenant land held by the lower-strata households in 1965 was much greater than for those in the higher strata (Table 1.5). During the two decades between 1965 and 1985 this tendency toward smaller land holdings and higher proportion of

Table 1.4 Percentage of tenant land and tenancy rate, 1945–92, per cent

			Tenant[a]			
	Tenant land	*Landed farmer*	*A*	*B*	*C*	*D*
1945	63.4	13.8		34.6	48.9	86.2
1949	40.1	36.2		40.0	20.6	63.8
1957[b]	4.5	88.1		7.7	4.2	11.9
1960	11.9	73.6	14.2	5.4	6.7	26.4
1964	15.1	71.6	14.8	8.4	5.2	28.4
1970	17.2	66.5	16.2	7.9	9.4	33.5
1973	16.4	70.5	12.0	8.8	8.7	29.5
1975	13.8	72.2	13.4	6.6	7.8	27.8
1977	16.5	63.9	20.1	9.4	6.6	36.1
1981	22.3	53.6	27.7	14.1	4.6	46.4
1983	26.8	40.2		56.9	2.9	59.8
1985	30.5	35.3		62.6	2.1	64.7
1990	37.4	–		–	–	–
1992	37.2	–		–	–	–

Notes:
[a] Tenant.
A Semi-tenant with higher proportion of own land.
B Semi-tenant with higher proportion of tenant land.
C Pure tenant.
D Total figure of tenants includes brand-tillers and long-term agricultural labourers.
[b] Figures for 1957 reflect the land reform (1949–52).

Sources: *Sahoe Paljŏn Yŏn-guhoe* (1988), p. 132; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Annual Report on the Farm Household Economy Survey* (1992), p. 50.

Table 1.5 Proportion of tenant land, by size of land holding, 1965–92, per cent

Land (ha)	*1965*	*1970*	*1975*	*1977*	*1980*	*1985*	*1992*
< 0.5	17.8	12.4	14.6	18.7	15.5	23.5	27.5
0.5–1.0	19.7	16.2	15.5	22.1	20.8	28.9	27.3
1.0–1.5	16.2	20.0	15.2	19.0	24.0	32.3	33.7
1.5–2.0	13.4	16.1	13.8	16.0	23.5	30.7	34.8
> 2.0	13.8	20.2	18.6	13.7	17.2	30.9	49.0
Average	16.4	17.6	13.7	18.2	21.3	30.5	37.2

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Annual Report on the Farm Household Economy Survey*.

tenancy was reversed. By 1992, the larger land holding households tended to have a greater proportion of tenant land than those in the lower strata. At the same time, the rate of increase in the proportion of tenant land is different among households in different land holding strata. It appears that while the middle–upper strata of farm households took up more tenancy than others during this period, the households in the lower strata seem to have been much more reluctant to do so.

This trend means that the size of existing farming land mattered for deciding on expansion of farming scale through taking on tenancy: those households in the lowest stratum required proportionally much greater expansion in order to sustain their farming activities. Meanwhile, in parallel to the high level of demand for tenant land, the rent demanded became very high. For this reason it was not economically viable for many of the farm households within the lowest stratum to rent farming land in a significant proportion to their own land holdings. As a consequence, a large number of the households in the lowest strata which had less than 0.5 ha of farming land holdings became unable to support themselves by family farming.

Eventually, they had no alternative but to find different ways to make a living outside of the agricultural sector. This explains the proportional decrease in tenancy rate and slower increase in proportion of tenant land for the lower strata, especially below 0.5 ha, as well as the absolute decrease in the proportion of pure tenancy. This change in tenancy in the period of industrialisation is congruent with the fact that nearly 90 per cent of the rural household migration to urban areas came from this stratum (Table 1.3):

> A number of sociological surveys in villages confirm general statistics indicating that migration is greatest from households with very small land holdings, tenant farm households with small holdings, agricultural labourers' households and non-farm rural households. (Sayer, J., 1981)

While the government was able to completely control relative household incomes by controlling farm product prices, thus indirectly encouraging rural–urban migration, it also directly confiscated farming land for industrial purposes. The government shared power for compulsory purchase of farm land with large-scale industrial firms, and the compulsory purchase of farm land by government and big business resulted in a significant number of rural to urban migrants (Sayer, J., 1981) Farmers who were forced to sell their farming land seldom

received adequate compensation for its conversion to industrial use, the price received for such compulsory purchase was normally not enough to allow them to relocate their farms to comparable locations.

The government and big business not only acquired farm land for the purpose of industrial promotion by forcing farmers out of their land, they also made substantial profit through such real-estate activities. In 1977, about 600 hectares of the Ban Wol Industrial Complex near Seoul was prepared for a greenfield site through compulsory purchase of farm land. The compensation price paid by the government was between 2 and 9 million won/ha, which was only a fraction of the true market value of the land, 60.5 million won/ha. One year later, in 1978, however, the South Korean government was selling the factory sites in this same industrial complex at a price of 90.8 million won/ha., well in excess of an extraordinary 900 per cent profit margin (Sayer, J., 1981).

A vast number of rural–urban migrants who were forced out of their land in this way poured into the already overcrowded urban squatter quarters. Most of the subsistence farm household members were thrown into the cash-based urban economy in which almost every member of the household had to find work in order to survive. In this way, the rural poor were transformed into the urban poor, forming a large pool of reserve army of labour. The following is a direct account of the appalling conditions encountered by farmers who were forced into the cities, given by a woman street vendor. She was arrested for breaking a Seoul Road Traffic Law with her street vendor activity:

> 'I said to the judge, "Why? Why am I standing here? I never dreamed to be caught by the police and stood in front of the chief of police like a criminal. I stole nothing, killed nobody. All I have done is to try to live. But today I was caught with 12 fellow settlers.
>
> Early in the morning I left my children alone as usual, and went to *Yong-san* market to buy 7000-won worth of apples. Everyday I hope not to be seen by the police. We small sellers always have to be ready to run away. Once we are caught we'll either be imprisoned for a week or else have to pay a 10 000 won fine. Sometimes the police take our pictures and then come to get us later, showing us a picture of our dirty faces.
>
> Law? What is law? I was kicked out of my home by the law. I didn't sell my land. I feel it was stolen from me, only legally. We had 1200 pyung of rice field. It was very fertile soil. When we

had our own land there was nothing so much to worry about. We couldn't eat or dress well like the rich people in Seoul, but it didn't matter so much to us. Then we had to sell our land to the government because they planned to build an industrial complex in our town. Most of us believed that the government would pay enough for the land. Nobody dreamed that they could make farmers into beggars so easily.

With the money that was paid we couldn't even buy 120 pyung of that kind of fertile land. At that time I was almost crazy. I wanted to destroy everything. But for my children I had to live. With that money we came to Seoul. Many other farmers who lost their land came too. Seoul was a very strange place to us. Everything needed money. Without money we couldn't even live for a day. We had no place to stay. House prices were too high. We finally got a room in a slum area for one million Won. I found that most of the other slum dwellers came from the countryside. Their stories were more miserable than ours. Sometimes I feel that we are all in the same situation, but the terrible living conditions always make us fight with each other. Somebody told me that last summer one person was killed because of a fight over water.

The chief of police makes you choose between paying 10 000 won or going to prison for a week. 10 000 won! To make 10 000 won I have to shiver in the cold street from early in the morning till eleven at night for ten days. But anyway, I can't go to prison for a whole week when I have a sick husband and little children at home. I decided to borrow the money even though the interest is too high.

I looked at my fellow sellers. They were standing like criminals. I can't understand what makes our life so difficult. Is it my fault? Was it wrong to leave the farm? Was it wrong to come to Seoul? Was it wrong to sell apples in the street in order to live? Is it wrong to try to live?"' (Anonymous woman quoted in Kim, P., 1980, p. 5, cited in J. Sayer, 1981)

Although various government statistics showed a consistent decline in the level of unemployment in the industrial cities, there were a considerable number of migrants who were unemployed or underemployed. (Kim, D.H., 1978) The South Korean government statistics contain serious underestimates of unemployment and underemployment levels, affected by the official statisticians' desire to show continuously improving results (Sayer, J., 1981).

In spite of the fact that a large proportion of rural outmigration after the 1960s was absorbed by labour-intensive manufacturing industry, large-scale migration of job seekers concentrated in the urban areas formed a very large pool of unemployed, underemployed, or those at the bottom of the tertiary sector, and in particular in the informal sector. According to one calculation, 2.5–3.5 million persons of this marginalised labour force were in Seoul in 1977 (Sayer, J., 1981). One study of the informal sector in South Korea indicates that among the total economically active urban population in 1980, more than half (53.7 per cent) occupied the urban informal sector (Cho, H., 1985, pp. 398–410).

The continuous large stream of rural–urban migration aggravated the already depressed labour market and unemployment levels with a vast influx of unskilled labour supply in the urban area. It also affected those who were lucky enough to find more permanent work in the manufacturing and service sectors. The ongoing increase in supply of labour perpetuated the environment in which workers suffered from long working hours, bad working conditions and above all very low wages. A very large proportion of the Korean labour force was still earning below the minimum wage during the decades of rapid industrialisation. Monthly average wages for industrial workers in 1978 were calculated by the Office of Labour Affairs at the level of 106 205 won, which was only about half of the minimum cost of living for a family of five, which was less than the average family size (Sayer, J., 1981).

The increased industrial labour supply, via transfer of rural labour into urban industrial sectors, positively accommodated the government's intention to industrialise through labour-intensive export manufacturing. The government had almost complete control over all the major factors contributing to the large scale of rural–urban migration, including the low agricultural price policy and the low industrial wage systems. The foundation of primitive capital accumulation, which accelerated national economic growth, was established through these policies. Nevertheless, economic development policies and strategies never reflected a serious concern either for this group of the population or for those who it left behind in the repressed agricultural economy.

2 Economic Crisis and the Stagnation of Agriculture

HEAVY AND CHEMICAL INDUSTRIALISATION AND THE PRICE STABILISATION POLICY

Initially based on rapid economic growth fuelled by exports, the development strategy of South Korea eventually shifted more toward *deepening of the industrial structure*. The Third Five Year Economic Development Plan (1972–6) put more focus on strengthening the industrial production base, especially by promoting heavy and chemical industry. The heavy and chemical industrialisation development policies of the 1970s as well as the agricultural policy, emphasised national economic 'self-reliance'. To some extent, these new nationalist and self-reliant policies undermined Korean competitiveness on the world market. Whereas the 1960s were characterised by strict adherence to the Ricardian laws of comparative advantage, and stressed Korea's price competitiveness via low wages, the 1970s stressed investment in new industries in which South Korea did not necessarily possess comparative advantage, such as chemicals, heavy machinery, engineering, shipbuilding and construction.

The shift toward heavy and chemical industry was also designed to relieve the serious structural problems brought about by the previous phase of manufacturing-export promotion. Promotion of exports based on low wages revealed its limitations through an accompanying increase in imports as international stagflation became more prominent. The government, especially the Economic Planning Board, realised that the development of the domestic market was essential to overcome the limitations imposed by heavy dependency on the world market. As an integral part of the policy of self-reliance, the dual-grain price policy was implemented. The government purchased main grains, especially rice, from farmers at a higher price than the market price.

In some respects, the new economic policy aimed to deepen the industrial production structure and to overcome the international economic crisis instigated by the first oil shock. During the Third Five Year Economic Development Plan period (1972–6), the

proportion of heavy and chemical industrial production increased from 43.9 to 55.2 per cent, while the average annual economic growth rate was maintained at 10.4 per cent.

However, by the late 1970s the South Korean economic and political model was in a serious crisis. The structural dependency of heavy and chemical industrialisation was brought to the surface as the world economic recession worsened. In 1980, a negative growth rate of 5.2 per cent was recorded for the first time since the national economic development planning was launched in 1962. The extremely bad harvest, and uncertainty in the domestic political situation, added yet more difficulties to a Korean economy already severely affected by the world economic recession. The large scale of investment required for heavy and chemical industry, which aimed at achieving international competitiveness, precipitated a colossal amount of foreign debt, accompanied by domestic inflation. The result of the industrial policy that had focused on extensive investment in the heavy and chemical industry was that by the end of 1984 the total foreign debt of the Republic of Korea amounted to $43.1 billion, making it one of the most heavily indebted countries in the Third World.

At the same time, in the process of continuous export promotion, internal monopoly capital had grown out of all proportion. By 1982, 16 per cent of GNP was attributable to a mere thirty *chaebol*. The *chaebol*, large holding companies that resemble the pre-war Japanese conglomerates (except for the absence of direct ties to allied banks), emerged in the 1960s by benefiting from special government favours offered to successful exporting industries (Jones and SaKong, 1984). These special benefits included preferential finance, special tax concessions for export industry, government loan guarantees, financial bail-outs, and other direct and indirect incentives and subsidies.

As the world recession deepened from the mid-1970s onward, protectionism intensified in the core countries, and Korea experienced difficulties in structural adjustment. By the end of the decade, South Korea's economy was suffering from growing inflation and unemployment, industrial unrest on a wide scale, and increasing difficulties with debt servicing. The *Komika chŏngch'aek* (high-rice-price policy) and the *Yijung kokka chŏngch'aek* (dual-grain price policy) which were pursued in line with the self-reliance policy also contributed to rising inflation. The second OPEC oil shock in 1978 intensified the economic problems associated with the heavy and

chemical industrialisation strategy and the Park regime's difficulties in maintaining its political power reached the point of open crisis. In October 1979, President Park was assassinated by the head of the KCIA. Through a new military *coup d'état*, General Chun Doo Hwan seized power and the new regime put much effort into restructuring the South Korean economy.

The Chun government endeavoured to consolidate Korea's integration into the international division of labour through taking a position as a competitive supplier of manufactures in the world market. The government pursued a lean strategy of restructuring industry. It aimed to eliminate overcapacity in certain sectors, especially heavy and chemical industry, and to reduce the level of debt leverage of the *chaebol*, many of which were 'bust' in real terms. The ensuing bankruptcies, forced takeovers, sell-outs and corporate mergers were an expression of this drastic approach to regaining international competitiveness and financial solvency.

New capital-intensive industries, such as electronics, automobiles, ship building, iron and steel and petro-chemicals, were targeted for exhaustive promotion, albeit that labour-intensive industries, especially textiles and apparel, continued to be the major part of export by value. In this regard, it was not just a simple return to the same low-wage-based industrial strategy of the 1960s and 1970s. The government placed a priority on internal price stabilisation. The new restructuring process inherited certain characteristics from the previous industrialisation process in the sense that the new industries were selected and vigorously fostered at the expense of other sectors, especially of agriculture. It also shared the same feature of dependency in which the selection of certain industries and preferences are heavily influenced by external conditions.

By the early 1980s, Korea became virtually the most import/export dependent economy in the world, and this great trade dependence was exacerbating the inflation problem. In order to address its continuing trade deficit and counteract inflation, a high priority was placed upon internal price stabilisation. The government froze the purchase price of rice in 1983. The main intention of this measure was to keep the cost of living down, which would therefore lead to eventual control of the wage–price spiral. In addition, the low rice price would facilitate the process of agricultural restructuring by excluding farm households which could not persevere under the new conditions.

Actually, this represented a return to the traditional policy of

subsidising industry at the expense of agriculture. The immediate and direct result of these measures was a further decrease in income for farmers and wage labourers in real terms. The short-lived diversion of Korean economic development strategy toward a self-reliant, heavy and chemical industry-based industrialisation in the late 1970s took a U-turn, the lower cost of labour once more became the government's primary concern in restructuring and readjustment of the Korean economy.

LIBERALISATION OF AGRICULTURAL IMPORTS

The 1980s' low wage system was accompanied by liberalisation of the import of agricultural products, mainly staple grains. With an average annual 10 per cent GNP growth during the 1970s, the real wage level in Korea began to increase toward the end of the decade. The inflation rate also started to rise, while the trade deficit recorded its highest level ever in 1978. The domestic and international economic situation appeared to be very unfavourable for the Korean economy. By the end of the 1980s the industrial wage level had become higher in Korea than in other rival countries, such as Taiwan, Singapore, or even that of Japan, and the USA (Park, K.S., 1990, pp. 15–16). Attributing the ultimate source of economic crisis to rising industrial wages and inflation, the government actively pursued a price stabilisation policy by importing large quantities of cheap foreign agricultural products. By the end of 1988 the rate of liberalisation of agricultural products had reached 71.9 per cent, increasing to 84.9 per cent in 1991, and increasing again to 91.3 per cent in 1994 (Park, K.S., 1990, p. 3; Sung, J.K., 1995, p. 441). Import of agricultural, livestock products, forestry, and fishery products in 1996 amounted to $12 billion, which is nearly five times greater than the figure in 1985.

The logic behind the Korean government's decision to liberalise agricultural imports was the following (for the argument on this position, see KDI Research Report, 1982, 82–09):

(1) as the national income increases the pattern of food consumption changes and the internal food supply is not sufficient to meet the changing demand in food consumption
(2) high food prices lead to inflation, therefore destablising the domestic economy

(3) most of the prices of home-produced agricultural products, including rice, were much higher than the international price
(4) the agricultural sector had been overprotected by the government, and exposure to international competition would be beneficial to the agricultural production system.

It is interesting to note that Japan continued to protect its domestic agricultural sector through heavy subsidisation, whereas Korea continued to foster the disintegration of the agricultural sector via various mechanisms including liberalisation of agricultural imports. Political differences between Japan and Korea may explain this discrepancy. Japanese politicians could ill afford to alienate farmers due to the 'pork-barrel system' of patronage and the weight of rural constituencies in the national electorate, whereas the Korean government was not so directly politically accountable to rural voters, who often engaged in 'mobilised voting' rather than independent representation of their interests. A similar trend can be found in the case of Taiwan, where the KMT dictatorship was able to use other methods, for instance a proactive rural location policy for a disbursement of industrial sites, without seriously compromising its industrial policy in favour of the rural population.

Under strong pressure from the USA in particular to open its markets, agriculture was a preferable soft option for the South Korean government, as opposed to opening key industrial and service sectors. Agriculture was politically sacrificed in order to appease foreign trade partners. If we consider the effects of this policy on Korean agriculture, it is even more clear that the policy of liberalisation of agricultural imports was not made by taking any account of its impact on the domestic agricultural sector. The government's foremost interest was to stabilise the domestic economy even at the expense of agriculture and to meet the requirements of revitalising competitiveness and market access in international trade. The new policy of liberalisation of agricultural imports enabled Korea to import cheaper agricultural products from the world market. The cost of production of agriculture in Korea was much higher in comparison to those of fully capitalised and mechanised large-scale agriculture in the world market, because of the small-scale, labour-intensive farming production system typical in Korea.

What Korea has long lacked is a long-term policy to protect and promote agriculture. Such a policy would enable the farmers to overcome the prolonged stagnation of the agricultural economy and

increase productivity to meet the new expanding demand for food products. This would establish a new cycle of high agricultural productivity and capital accumulation in the agricultural sector, as well as preventing the continuous decline of domestic food supply rates, thus maintaining self-sufficiency. A more progressive developmental production and consumption cycle in agriculture could have been achieved by subsidising the declining agricultural sector. Instead, the government adopted a policy to expand the variety and quantity of imported food stuffs as a quick and low-cost solution to inflation.

Another function of the liberalisation of agricultural imports, in terms of the needs of Korean industrial export companies, was relief from pressure by external trade partners concerning the opening of the Korean market (Bello, W., 1994). This allowed the Korean government to claim that its trade liberalisation ratio was improving in response to, for instance, the Statement on Positive Adjustment Policies adopted by the OECD in 1982, and the Baker Plan initiated in Seoul at the IMF/IBRD Annual Meeting in 1985. Such demands were made by the core countries in an effort to suspend the strong protectionist tendency developed during the 1970s and to restore GATT principles which had been extensively ignored: Korea, by 1989, recorded a positive trade balance and thus could no longer apply GATT/WTO clause 18 B which enables a country with a trade deficit to regulate its import. (Kwon, Y.K., 1990, p. 83)

The plans for import of agricultural products have not been well organised or systematic. In fact the decisions on importing food stuffs went against the grain of proposals made by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. In 1984, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries insisted on importing bananas from countries which imported Korean apples and pears. The government, however, decided to import 7000 tons of bananas from the Philippines, because of government's intention to establish a better diplomatic relationship with the Philippines, and to protect Korean export of polyester there (Chang, S.H., 1985, p. 330). This clearly indicates that the government did not hesitate to sacrifice domestic agriculture in the interests of promoting industrial exports.

The culmination of the aggravation to agriculture caused by the government's preference for export industry is illustrated by the way in which the profit from the banana imports was utilised. The profit amounted to 9 billion won and it was entirely spent on the fund to support small and medium industries, thus the agricultural

sector gained no benefit at all from the profit made from agricultural import (Chang, S.H., 1985, p. 330). The evidence suggests that the government's seemingly arbitrary policy on agricultural imports was inspired by considerations of political expediency rather than the economic trade balance itself. The ad hoc decisions of the government on items and quantities of imported agricultural products was fundamentally associated with the interests of *chaebol* as well as international capital.

The USA particularly benefited through the Korean liberalisation policy on agricultural imports. The expansion of agricultural imports by Korea enabled the US government to reduce expenditures on its purchase of agricultural surplus, and the dependency of Korean agricultural imports on US produce became exorbitant. In 1988, of the agricultural items imported from the USA, more than a quarter (22 items out of 83) were 100 per cent supplied by the USA, and for another 70 items more than half of the total imported quantities were supplied by the USA. South Korea had emerged as the second largest US agricultural market in the world by the end of the 1980s, second only to Japan (Kwon, Y.K., 1990; USDA, 1989).

Toward the end of the 1980s, 29 different US agricultural agents were in South Korea in order to promote sales of their agricultural products, including from a number of major US multinationals. Most of the agricultural suppliers for Korea's imports consist of multinational agri-business companies and Korean *chaebol* which act as their agents. In 1987, a handful of *chaebol* including Sunkyong, Hyundai, Lucky Goldstar, Hyo-sung, Ssang-yong and Daewoo accounted for nearly half (40 per cent) of the total agricultural imports in value. On the other hand, just five multinational corporations (Continental, Cargill, Louis Drapers, Bungi and Andre) accounted for over one-quarter (28 per cent), with a few large Japanese conglomerates taking up another 28 per cent of the market (Kwon, Y.K., 1990, pp. 68–9).

These multinationals import mainly grains, which account for over half of the total agricultural imports. Most of the grain imported by the multinational companies is used as raw material for food processing, chemicals, animal feed and other processing or manufacturing industries. A large proportion of *chaebol* are involved either in one or more of the manufacturing industries which use agricultural products as a raw material, or in the agricultural import business.

Thus, the government policy of liberalising agricultural imports, based ostensibly on the rationale of lower cost in the international market, brings results which accrue mainly to the benefit of a few giant companies. The liberalisation policy mainly reduced the cost of production for related industrial companies by allowing imports of 'cheaper' agricultural products, while damaging domestic agricultural production. Likewise, the presumed benefits to the consumers from lower market prices of food and subsequent downward pressure on inflation were not obtained. Food processing industries set up by *chaebol* rely not only on agricultural imports as raw material, but in addition the technology and marketing expertise (for example, brand name recognition) is dominated by foreign multinationals. The final products of the processed food industry are indeed very 'westernised' goods such as breakfast cereals and processed dairy products. The new 'western-style' food products have been intensely promoted via very large advertising budgets by the *chaebol* for domestic market sales. Consequently, the consumer price of these industrially processed foods is extremely high compared to home-produced agricultural products: the putative benefit gained from the lower cost of imported agricultural products hardly ever reaches the ordinary consumer.

The benefits of importing cheaper agricultural products are all reaped by the large businesses involved in either the import business or processing industries. This is reflected by the fact that in terms of the proportion in total turnover, food processing and sales is one of the most important business items for many *chaebol* groups. In the case of Samsung, the largest Korean *chaebol* in terms of annual turnover in 1989, food-processing was its third largest business item categorised by division of industry (Kwon, Y.K., 1990, p. 72).

Another example of this ill-considered government policy is the import of beef during 1985–6. The excessive import of beef caused a crash in the price of domestic beef which shattered the economy of all cattle-raising farm households. Just a few years previously, in the early 1980s, the same government had encouraged farmers to accept government loans to purchase imported cattle, mainly young calves, to promote livestock production. Before the farmers who had taken the loans for the cattle had completed repayment, the price of full-grown cows fell below the purchase price of a calf only a few years before. Apart from their labour costs, it was not possible for these farmers even to retrieve the cost of feed. The feed had been mainly supplied on credit by the *ch'uk-hyŏp* (coop-

Table 2.1 Trend of self-supply of main grains, 1965–96, per cent

Year	*Total*	*Rice*	*Barley*	*Wheat*	*Corn*	*Soy bean*	*Potato*	*Other*
1965	94.1	–	106.0	27.0	36.1	100.0	–	–
1970	80.4	93.1	115.1	15.9	82.9	92.3	122.7	96.9
1976	74.1	100.5	102.6	4.6	21.8	95.1	126.9	103.3
1980	56.0	95.1	62.2	4.8	27.1	64.3	111.2	98.9
1984	48.7	97.5	130.1	0.8	13.7	59.8	111.1	113.6
1988	39.3	97.9	100.9	0.1	9.6	53.0	113.6	90.4
1991	37.6	102.3	74.3	0.02	2.2	19.4	95.9	16.6
1996[a]	26.7	89.9	73.5	0.38	0.8	9.9	99.6	3.4

Notes:
[a] Preliminary.
– = not available.

Sources: National Agricultural Cooperative Federation, *Yearbook*; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook.*

erative for livestock producers): the farmers found themselves heavily in debt without any prospect of finding a means to repay their loans. Some desperate farmers committed suicide in fear of being swamped by debt (*Han-guk Ilbo*, 9 April 1986).

In the short term, the effect of price fluctuations for home-produced agricultural products was the destabilisation of a large number of farm households. In the long term, some policy analysts regard the agricultural liberalisation policy as one which wilfully abandoned Korean agriculture altogether, rather than merely an ill-considered agricultural policy resulting from benign neglect of the sector (Hwang, S.C., 1988, p. 361; *Sahoe Paljŏn Yŏn-guhoe*, 1988, p. 100).

It has been proven from past experiences that once the foundation of agricultural production collapses it is very difficult to rebuild it in a short time. For example, after the Korean War, the importation of large quantities of raw cotton from the USA brought about the complete obliteration of South Korea's once ample domestic cotton production. Although it used to be one of the most important crops in Korean farming before the war, at present cotton farming is virtually non-existent. Very similar trends can be traced in main crops including wheat, soy bean and corn production (Table 2.1).

The trend toward decreasing self-supply rates in the main grains imported clearly demonstrates that liberalisation of the import of agricultural products further reduces the possibility of self-sufficiency of food supply by destroying the existing production base in the

Table 2.2 Trend of agricultural imports and self-supply rate, 1970–96 (unit: $ million)

Year	*1970*	*1975*	*1980*	*1985*	*1993*	*1996*
Agricultural import	1 984	7 274	22 293	31 136	83 800	129 715
Food and livestock	342	1 030	3 164	2 511	7 812	12 021
Food grain	202	703	1 261	1 157	1 754	2 748
% of total import	17.2	14.1	14.2	8.1	9.3	9.3
Self-supply rate (%)	80.4	73.0	56.0	48.7	–	26.7

Sources: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook*; National Agricultural Cooperative Federation, *Yearbook*.

long term. Table 2.2 illustrates the reduction in home production in response to the import of food stuffs. It is clear that the expanded supply of agricultural products through increased imports was concurrent with decreased home production. Thus, the liberalisation policy demands more careful examination of the implications of the policy and its impact on domestic agriculture.

DIVERSIFICATION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Whereas the agricultural import liberalisation policy primarily benefited urban industries, especially the large conglomerate businesses and multinational companies, its major impact on domestic agricultural production precipitated a large-scale diversion of farming production. Potential productive capacities were required to be redirected into new crops in which the price would not be affected by importation of agricultural products. Before the liberalisation, staple food crops had been the major items of domestic production. However, since staple food crops constituted the largest part of imports, the domestic producers were compelled to divert into production of commercial crops such as peppers, radishes, cabbages, garlic, onions and fruits.

The continuous decrease of the production of food crops in proportion to other crops since the implementation of liberalisation of agricultural imports (1978) delineates this shift. For example, the production of food crops in 1976 formed 54.9 per cent of production but it dropped to 41.1 per cent in 1992 (Ministry of Agriculture, *Statistical Yearbook*, annual data). At the same time, the

Table 2.3 Fluctuation of the price of agricultural products, June 1983–July 1985 (unit: won)

Price	*Cabbage*	*Radish*	*Pepper*	*Garlic*	*Onion*	*Orange*	*Beef*
Lowest (a)	155	167	970	3 568	239	825	6 316
Highest (b)	462	435	3 800	9 733	12 000	8 085	14 232
(b)/(a) (%)	300	260	320	273	5 021	980	225

Source: National Agricultural Cooperative Federation, *Monthly Review* (September 1985).

self-sufficiency rate of food crops showed a dramatic decrease from 73 per cent to 26.7 per cent between 1976 and 1996. Livestock products, and production of vegetables, fruits, and cash crops, however, showed proportional increases.

The trend to a changing variety of crops was intensified by *Pokhop yŏngnong chŏngch'aek* (the policy of diversification of agriculture). The government encouraged Korean farmers to concentrate on growing one or two commercial crops in non-staple vegetables, fruits and cattle production. The traditional growing pattern had been that major food grains were accompanied by many varieties of other non-food crops, designated mostly for consumption by the farmers themselves. For the successful outcome of the policy and effective promotion of the commercialisation of agricultural production, centralised planning should have been the most essential requirement. A well-planned and organised implementation of the policy should have enabled the farmers to avoid overproduction of certain crops. Yet, the government implemented the policy without sufficient organisational support or guidance which would provide the farmers with collective information on supply and marketing of crops.

In the absence of coordinated control over the rate of supply of farm production, the policy of diversification resulted in excessive supply brought about by a sudden increase of commercial crop production. In effect, government policy encouraged everyone to plant the same limited range of new cash crops. Diversification of farming crops thus exposed the farmers to extremely unstable price fluctuations in the agricultural market. Table 2.3 shows the ludicrous scale of price fluctuation in the agricultural market during two years 1983–5.

At the same time, the sudden concentration in the production of commercial crops made the home producers become much more

Table 2.4 Losses of Korean farmers, by agricultural imports, 1984–6 (unit: 100 million won)

Imported produce	*Loss of farmers*	*Profits to other*
Banana (1984 harvest, the Philippines)	32 430	Government: 13 000
Beef cattle	200 000	Government: 6 000
Garlic, pepper, and onion	Unestimated	Government: 200
Red beans (20 000 tons)	Unestimated	Profit to *Ssang-ryong chaebol*: 114 Government: 60
Banana (1986 harvest, Taiwan)	Unestimated	Government: 80
Tobacco	1 000	USA: 4 500

Source: *Kidokkyo Nongminhoe, Nong min Shinmun* (May 1986), reproduced from *Sahoe Paljŏn Yŏn-guhoe* (1988), p. 102.

vulnerable to the effects of agricultural imports whenever they had to compete with imported crops in the domestic market. Since the non-food crops contain higher risks in terms of storage and marketing they are more susceptible to price fluctuation. With existing deficiencies in the agricultural marketing system, and in the absence of centralised control mechanisms over agricultural supply, agricultural imports exacerbated the problem (Table 2.4).

Since neither the items nor the quantities of agricultural imports were decided by consideration of the situation of domestic agricultural production and marketing, the 1980s witnessed a series of serious agricultural crises of price fluctuation, beginning with the 1979 'pig price crisis'. This was followed by a series of extremely disastrous agricultural market fluctuations which hurt both the producers and direct consumers. For instance, the 'garlic price crisis' in 1980, the 'onion price crisis' and 'pepper price crisis' in 1983, the 'calf price crisis' in 1984, and the 'beef cattle price crisis' in 1985–6, and another 'pepper price crisis' in 1988 are only a few of the major upheavals caused by tremendous fluctuation of the price of home produced food. Table 2.4 illustrates the losses of Korean farmers due to imported agricultural products, as claimed by the Christian Farmers' Association.

In short, the already tenuous balance of supply and demand in the agricultural market was aggravated by the changing patterns of supply of agricultural items caused by the diversification policy. In

this situation, the agricultural market became totally vulnerable to agricultural imports, and collapsed every time imported produce flooded the market with an abrupt increase of supply. It is clear that the agricultural price crises have been the combined result brought about by liberalisation of agricultural imports and disorganised implementation of diversification and commercialisation policies.

3 Unequal Exchange between Agriculture and Industry

GREEN REVOLUTION AND COMMERCIALISATION

As discussed in Chapter 1, the vast majority of Korean farmers are small-scale family producers whose purpose of production is to sustain their own subsistence, rather than to pursue profits. The structure and the characteristics of subsistence production of Korean farming have not been transformed into a fully capitalist production system. The scale of individual farming is too small to benefit from modern agro-technology to ensure for capital accumulation. Agricultural production in Korea has been isolated outside the cycle of capital investment, pursuit of maximum profits, and capital accumulation. Accordingly, the economic logic of agricultural production has remained in the domain of the non-capitalist production system. Nevertheless, subsistence farming production has been forcibly articulated into the capitalist system in a particular way which is specific to the fact that subsistence production is a non-capitalist production system. The industrialisation process altered the patterns of farming production and consumption of farm households into a more market-centred economy. The commodity market became one of the most eminent mechanisms through which agriculture is exploited by industry.

From the late 1960s the attempt to increase agricultural productivity initiated the 'green revolution'. The procedure of the green revolution involved a rapid increase in the use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and farming machinery. The demand for industrial merchandise by farm households in the commodity market was further increased via promotion of diversification and commercialisation of agricultural crops after the 1980s. As commercialisation of agricultural products progressed, more goods and materials for agricultural production needed to be purchased from the commodity market. This necessitated extra demand for cash for farming management. In 1965, only about half (58 per cent) of total agri-

cultural production cost was in cash forms, but this had increased to 74 per cent in 1980 (Chang, S.H., 1985, p. 323). The increased demand for cash accelerated the trend toward commercialisation of agricultural production which fed back into the farm household economy, creating a yet higher demand for cash.

Until the commercialisation of agriculture was precipitated in the 1980s, most agricultural products were produced for the purpose of self-consumption. Only less than one-third of total agricultural products were sold in the market for cash in 1965. Even until 1975, less than half of the total farm household income was in cash form. The proportion of cash income of farm households drastically increased after the late 1970s as the government implemented the policy of agricultural commercialisation. The trend toward a cash-oriented economy is more prominent in the lower strata of farm households. For instance, for the lowest strata of farm households cash income accounted for only 22.6 per cent of the total household income in 1965, but this had risen to 84.2 per cent by 1981 (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Nong-ga Kyŏngje Chosa Kyŏlgwa Pogo*, 1966, 1982).

The increase in proportion of cash income for farm households is also associated with alteration of the farm households' consumption pattern. In parallel with the increasing proportion of cash income, the proportion of consumer goods purchased in the market by farm households also increased. Compared to only 39 per cent of cash demand in the sphere of consumption of farm household's formerly, the proportion of cash demand reached 64 per cent in 1982 (Chang, S.H., 1985, p. 323).

Although the farmers now produce commercial crops and purchase their necessities in the commodity market, the character of agricultural production remains that of subsistence production. Regardless of what the farmers produce – whether they plant staple grains for their own consumption or cash crops for sale in the market, the logic and rationale of their production activities remain simply subsistence and not the pursuit of profit and capital accumulation. Meanwhile, and in spite of this, the farm household economy becomes less independent and more absorbed into the market/cash economy.

As the agricultural economy was converted further into a cash economy, the involvement of farmers in the commodity market grew. The expanded exchange between the two sectors (agricultural and industrial) in the commodity market bound farmers to unequal terms of trade; they became more and more subjected to the market

through the need to purchase industrial goods. The industrial commodities used in agricultural production are mostly manufactured by monopoly capital (mostly by *chaebol*) and marketed at very high prices. The prices of these industrial commodities have been set at monopolistic prices above the level of a free market price to yield monopolistic profits rather than an ordinary profit set by the market mechanism.

In contrast to the industrial commodities purchased by farmers, the valorisation process of agricultural products in the Korean market has been distorted in the opposite direction. Government intervention via agricultural price controls prevented farmers from receiving true prices for their produce, as theoretically set by a free market formula. The prices of most farm products are repressed at the minimum possible price, below the cost of production, while monopoly controlled industrial commodities are sold in the domestic market at the maximum price level. In this manner, the farmers have been positioned in a very adverse situation of unequal exchange, within the domestic economy.

Corresponding to the unequal exchange between agriculture and industry, the cost of agricultural production has risen very rapidly. The average of the total expenditure for agricultural production increased from 587 000 won in 1980 to 2 814 000 won in 1990 and it further rose to 6 447 000 in 1996. These figures represent a tripling of the farming expenditure during a period of five years in the early 1980s and more than a doubling between 1991 and 1996. There was thus a nearly 30 per cent average annual increase in the early 1980s; and although the rate of increase slowed down it still remained relatively high at 16 per cent for the years 1991–6.

The rate of increase among the itemised categories of agricultural expenditure in Table 3.1 shows that the proportional increase in expenditure on materials and animals accounts for most of the total increase. This includes seed and seedlings, fertiliser, agricultural chemicals, agricultural machinery, fuel and light, animals and purchased feed. Wages, irrigation and other expenditures have, in fact, decreased proportionally, and the proportion of rent has increased only slightly, even showing a decreasing trend in the 1990s. The rapid increase in agricultural expenditures is thus mainly to be attributed to increased use of agricultural chemicals, the expansion of machinery use and purchased feed, especially in relation to imported feed.

The rising cost of production should not necessarily mean econ-

Table 3.1 Agricultural management expenditures, 1965–95 (average per household) (unit: 1 000 won/per cent)

Year	*Material and animals*		*Wages*		*Rent*		*Irrigation and others*		*Total*	
	won	*(%)*	*won*	*(%)*	*won*	*(%)*	*won*	*(%)*	*won*	*(%)*
1965	154	46	93	9	37	11	46	14	330	100
1970	141	42	87	26	55	16	54	16	337	100
1975	231	49	100	21	80	17	64	14	475	100
1980	308	53	107	18	106	18	66	11	587	100
1985	1048	59	206	12	360	20	163	9	1777	100
1990	1600	57	282	10	694	25	238	8	2814	100
1995	3591	65	441	8	1070	19	440	8	5542	100

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook* (annual data).

omic adversity if it is relative to expansion of scale of production and increasing productivity. On the other hand, even if the rising cost of agricultural production is not accompanied by substantial productivity improvement or expansion of farming scale, so long as the parity between the levels of the market price of agricultural production and of the industrial production purchased by the farming population is maintained at a balanced level, that is 100, then it would simply mean an inflationary effect.

The ratio of the price index for purchased goods and price index for sales of agricultural products for farm households has been worsening since the mid-1970s. This means that the prices paid by farm households for industrial commodities have increased more rapidly compared to the prices of agricultural products received by farm households for their agricultural produce (Tables 3.2–3.4). Moreover, the price indices of farm household items other than agricultural inputs, including wages in rural areas, have also been increasing faster than the consumer price index for all South Korean cities and the Seoul Consumer Price Index (Economic Planning Board, June 1990).

Even though the exchange conditions for agricultural produce appear to be improving since 1985, it should be noted that the year 1985 was the year during which one of the worst agricultural price crises occurred. It was the year when farm households suffered greatly from the beef price crisis following the import of beef cattle

Table 3.2 Price index of agriculture and industry and parity ratio, 1967–85 (1980 = 100)

Year	*Price index paid by farmers* (A)	*Price index received by farmers (B)*	*Parity ratio* (B)/(A)
1967	10.3	9.3	90.3
1970	15.6	14.7	94.2
1976	46.3	48.7	105.2
1980	100	100	100
1983	156.2	140.3	89.8
1985	146.4	138.2	94.4

Table 3.3 Price index of agriculture and industry and parity ratio, 1985–90 (1985 = 100)

Year	*Price index paid by farmers* (A)	*Price index received by farmers (B)*	*Parity ratio (B)/(A)*
1985	100	100	100
1986	99.4	97.8	98.4
1987	101.1	102.6	101.5
1988	109.1	115.5	105.9
1989	119.4	120.6	101.0
1990	130.0	137.3	105.7

in 1984 (see p. 30). The small improvement shown in Table 3.3 is due only to the fact that the price received by farmers in the base year (1985) was extremely low and thus the terms of exchange for farm produce were worse than ever for farm producers. The improvements made in comparison to the conditions of 1985 should not be interpreted other than as a mere suspension of further deterioration of exchange conditions for agricultural production.

In reality, the conditions of exchange via the market between agricultural production and industrial goods have become less and less favourable to farm households since the industrialisation process began in Korea in the early 1960s. The agricultural population has been profoundly disadvantaged by the system of unequal exchange between agriculture and industry. This unequal exchange is an effec-

Table 3.4 Price index of agriculture and industry and parity ratio, 1985–94 (1990 = 100)

Year	*Price index paid by farmers* (A)	*Price index received by farmers (B)*	*Parity ratio* (B)/(A)
1985	77.3	74.1	95.8
1988	84.3	85.3	101.1
1990	100	100	100
1992	119.6	114.6	95.8
1994	125.2	124.3	99.2

Sources: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook* (annual data), National Agricultural Co-operative Federation, *Yearbook* (1989); National Agricultural Cooperative Federation, *Monthly Review* (July 1990).

tive mechanism through which the agricultural sector has subsidised industry. It reveals the structural relationship between agriculture and industry within the Korean economy. The unequal exchange system between the two sectors is a direct reflection of the Korean economy as structured by a development model which places overwhelming preference on certain export industries. While high domestic prices of industrial manufactured goods are unregulated and even protected by the government – for example, by import regulation – the agricultural sector does not receive equal protection. On the contrary, the government is sacrificing the agricultural sector as its shield to protect urban industry against international pressure for trade liberalisation.

The various economic policies pursued by the Korean government for promotion of certain industries and certain enterprises have been conditioned by externally dictated circumstances. One crucial criterion of these conditions is to meet the interests of the centre economies, especially of Japan and the United States. In this sense, the completely debilitated farm household economy, via unequal exchange, reflects the structure of the Korean economy's unequal exchange relationship with the centre of the world economy. Korean agriculture has been the *periphery of the periphery* when considered on this world scale.

PROMOTION OF CHEMICAL INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE

The dependence on chemical fertilisers in Korean agriculture has in fact constantly increased ever since the Japanese first introduced them during the colonial/occupation period. However, the consumption of chemical fertilisers increased more drastically as industrialisation accelerated in the 1960s. The government persisted with *Nong-ŏp saeng-san chŭng-jin chŏngch'aek* (the policy for promotion of agricultural production) which was the foundation for the low-price policy. The attempts to increase production magnified the amount of chemical fertiliser consumption in Korean farming, especially for rice farming. Simultaneously – and, indeed, as a result – the organic content of the soil has declined, making soil less and less fertile. The organic content of soil at the beginning of the 1920s was around 4.4 per cent, it decreased to 2.4 per cent in 1980 and had dropped again to 1.8 per cent by the mid-1980s.

Green revolution seed strain also required greater chemical inputs. *T'ong-ilssal* (Unification rice) was introduced by the government as a major part of its effort to pursue the policy of rice self-sufficiency during the Third Five Year Plan. This new strain of rice was developed as a high-yield variety by the Office of Rural Development with the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines, supported by the USA. The experimental plots for the *T'ong-ilssal* demonstrated a very high yield of 50 per cent more than the traditional rice variety, and *T'ong-ilssal* variety was forcefully promoted by government agents throughout the country during the 1970s.

However, *T'ong-ilssal* cultivation was fraught with difficulties. The new rice presented more problems in transplanting, and milled badly. It also proved to be more vulnerable to disease and bad weather and thus required large quantities of chemical fertilisers and pesticides in order to yield more than the old varieties. Moreover, the taste of the rice was not appreciated by the Korean palate and the price of *T'ong-ilssal* fell lower than any other variety on the market. This meant that although the cost of production increased due to the high cost of chemicals, since the price remained at a lower level the higher yield did not bring any income benefit to the producers. Worse still, even the rice straw of *T'ong-ilssal* turned out to be useless compared to that of traditional varieties of rice which had been used in many ways such as cattle feed, mat weaving, and

Table 3.5 Consumption of chemical fertiliser and utilised land size, 1975–96 (unit: 1 000 ton/1 000 ha)

Year	*Fertiliser*	*Annual changes*	*Utilised land*	*Annual changes*
1975	860		3144	
1982	1251	46% increase	2697	14% decrease
1985	1618	29% increase	2592	4% decrease
1987	1930	19% increase	2598	0.2% increase
1989	2054	6% increase	2485	4.3% decrease
1990	2365	15% increase	2409	3% decrease
1992	1960	17% decrease	2261	6% decrease
1994	2081	6% increase	2205	3% decrease
1996	1984	5% decrease	2142	3% decrease

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook* (annual data).

most importantly as organic fertiliser (Sayer, J., 1981). Nevertheless, the government forced its own way, in a very similar manner to the *Saemaul Undong* (new village movement) projects. There have been numerous accounts of physical force being used in the course of promotion of new varieties of rice. It is a common story that low-level government officials actually went into the paddy fields to pull out already planted young rice in order to compel farmers to cultivate the new strains.

After the clear failure of *T'ong-ilssal*, a series of new strains of high-yield rice were forced upon Korean farmers by the government. These new strains included such varieties as *Nopung*, and *Yushin*, which is named after President Park's much hated constitution which reinforced the military dictatorship. According to an independent survey by the Korean Catholic Farmers' Association, promotion of *Nopung* rice was a totally disastrous policy for farmers which resulted in around a 50 per cent average loss of annual income to each affected household (Sayer, J., 1981). Meanwhile, all these new varieties of rice forcefully mandated by the government required ever-more increasing inputs of agricultural chemicals (Table 3.5).

By 1990, the consumption of chemical fertilisers had nearly tripled since 1975, amounting to 2.3 million tons. Although the total consumption of chemical fertilisers began to slow down during the period of 1992–7, this should not be interpreted as a significant

Table 3.6 Consumption of chemical fertiliser per ha, 1975–96 (unit: kg)

Year	*Total*	*Nitrogen*	*Phosphorus*	*Potash*
1975	282	153	76	53
1980	299	162	71	66
1985	311	159	72	80
1988	373	185	87	101
1990	458	234	106	118
1995	434	215	102	118
1996	424	213	97	118

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook* (annual data).

reduction in consumption of chemical fertilisers. The total planted area has been significantly decreasing and when this fact is considered, the fertiliser consumption per unit of planted area has not been much reduced. The extensive increase in domestic consumption of chemical fertiliser can also be seen in the trend of application of chemical fertiliser per unit of land (Table 3.6).

The drastic increase in consumption of chemical fertiliser in spite of continuous decrease of farming land is profoundly related to government industrial policy. The promotion of the chemical fertiliser industry has been one of the main policies of the government since the Third Economic Development Plan in 1972. By 1977, South Korea had seven fertiliser plants with a combined capacity of 2.8 million tons per year. In order to promote the chemical industry the government itself offered to take part in contracts with the companies, most of which involved joint ventures with foreign multinationals. The chemical fertiliser plants were constructed with the intention of widening the dimension of Korean exports in the international market through heavy and chemical industry, so the production capacity of the chemical fertiliser plants was set by the ambition to profit from exporting a large part of production.

The government took up the responsibility for the purchase of surplus stock and it also guaranteed a certain amount of profit to a certain proportion of total capital investment (Table 3.7). For instance, the Youngnam plant guaranteed the Swift Agricultural Chemicals Corporation and the Getty Oil Company, both of the USA, a minimum of $2.6 million in profit per year for 15 years; and the Jinhae plant guaranteed Gulf and International Minerals

Table 3.7 Conditions for investment in joint ventures in chemical fertilisers, 1968–85

Plant	*Youngnam*	*Jinhae*	*Namhae*
Contracted period of sales	1st: 1970–82 2nd: 1977–85	1968–82	1st: 1978–85 2nd: 1981–87
Rate of operation (%)	82	90	1st: 92.5 2nd: 100
Government's liability for stock (% of total production capacity)	1st: 100 2nd: 80	120	1st: 61 2nd: 33
Guaranteed profit (% of total capital investment)	20	20	15.6 of the initial fixed capital
Investment rate[a] (%)	KG: 50 Getty Oil: 25 SAC: 25	KG: 50 GUO: 25 IMC: 25	KFC: 75 ACC: 25

Notes:
[a] KG : Korean government.
SAC : Swift Agricultural Chemicals Corp. (USA).
GUO: Gulf Oil Corp. (USA).
IMC : International Mineral and Chemical Corp. (USA).
KFC : Korea Fertiliser Corp. (Connected with Mitsui, Japan).
ACC : Agrico Chemical Co. (USA).

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; reproduced from Lee (1985), p. 347.

a minimum of $2 million a year for the same 15-year period. Both plants also reaped a large sum of profits through guaranteed sales to the monopolised domestic market operated by the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation (Sayer, J., 1981).

According to the Korean government, the US partners in the Youngnam and Jinhae plants recovered 250 per cent of their equity investment through the profit guarantee formulas. By early 1976, Getty Oil and Swift Agricultural Chemicals had already remitted $26 million back to the USA in profits, respectively, and Gulf Oil and International Mineral had remitted $20 million each. (Sayer, J., 1981) In the case of the Namhae plant, the government agreed to undertake 25 per cent of the share from the Agrico Chemical Company for $90 million US dollars in 1990.

The chemical fertiliser plants depended not only on the capital and technology of foreign multinationals but their raw materials also completely depended on imports. For instance, while petroleum,

the raw material for nitrogen fertilisers, is 100 per cent imported, almost all phosphates were imported from Florida, and the majority of the potash came from Canada (Sayer, J., 1981). After the first OPEC oil shock, the cost of imported raw materials for chemical fertilisers, including naphthalene, sulphur and others increased. The increased cost of production made the export of chemical fertiliser difficult for South Korea; the government, which was responsible for the stock of chemical fertiliser, began to export it at dumping prices which brought a trade deficit of 700 billion won in 1983 (Chang, S.H., 1985, p. 331).

Under these circumstances, the government tried to find the solution internally to relieve the continuing pressure raised by overproduction of chemical fertiliser. As a first step, it abandoned the rice–fertiliser exchange program in 1977. During the period of *Ssalja-gŭp-hwa chŏng-ch'aek* (the policy of rice self-sufficiency), the farmers were allowed to purchase chemical fertilisers on credit during growing seasons and to pay the bill with rice after the harvest. This was to promote the new varieties of rice strains which required more chemical fertilisers. The government also set up a very aggressive policy to promote domestic consumption of chemical fertiliser accompanied by detailed public information on application of fertiliser. In 1976, *Hwahak piryo kongkŭp ch'ujin chŏngch'aek* (the chemical fertiliser supply promotion policy) was set up and sales targets were given to every local government with incentives granted for achieving them.

Worst of all, the government removed all subsidies from fertiliser sales in 1975 and as a result the cost rose by about 69 per cent (National Agricultural Cooperative Federation, *Monthly Review*, July 1979, Statistical Annex, p. 4). The domestic price of fertilisers climbed rapidly, in spite of the claim made by the government that it was losing money on its fertiliser purchase and resale operations. Domestic consumers were made to purchase urea, for instance, at prices which were between 32.5 per cent and 96.4 per cent over and above the government purchase prices. The domestic prices of fertilisers were between 140–250 per cent higher than the export prices (Table 3.8).

It is clear that the Korean government exploited the agricultural sector by transferring the deficit of the chemical fertiliser industry to agriculture. As the industry was heavily dependent on foreign sources of capital, technology and raw materials, domestic consumers (farmers, not industrialists) had to pay for the cost of the promo-

Table 3.8 Export price and domestic price of urea fertiliser, 1979–82 (unit: won/25kg)

Year	*Government purchase price*	*Export price (A)*	*Domestic price (B)*	*(B)/(A) (%)*
1979	2307	1455	3056	250
1980	4454	3411	5510	161
1981	6833	4462	6230	140
1982	–	3182	6500	204

Note: – = not available.

Sources: 1979–81: Economic Planning Board; reproduced from Chang, S.H. (1985), p. 331; 1982: Lee, W.J. (1985), p. 347.

tion of the chemical industry. The case of the Korean chemical fertiliser industry represents a classic example of a *dependent development* which is tied into the siphoning mechanisms of a centre-periphery relationship. It appears that the dependent economy functions not only as a source of surplus value siphoned out to the centre but also serves as a buffer which absorbs economic shocks from the centre in case of economic recession. In this manner, the Korean farmers became the ultimate victims to pay the cost of dependent economic development and were forced to prop up Korean industry as well as protect the losses of foreign multinationals during the world economic recession.

The case of pesticides is very similar to that of fertilisers in the sense that pesticides have been another channel which entrapped farmers in the vicious circle of unequal exchange mechanisms between the low price of agricultural products and the high price of industrial products. Pesticides are produced solely by depending on imported materials. Korea spent over $143 million on the import of raw materials for pesticides in 1986, which had increased to over $274 million by 1992, and to $332 million in 1996 (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook*, annual data) The farmers in Korea have been subjected to monopolistic prices of pesticides in the same way as for chemical fertilisers.

The consumption of pesticides in Korea has grown more than any other farm input over the last three decades. It has increased six times over 10 years, reaching 150 000 tons in 1980. The domestic

market for pesticides was around $200 million in 1981, and it quadrupled, reaching $770 million in 1996 (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook*). If the 25 per cent deduction in utilised land during the same period is taken into consideration, the rate of increase of pesticides per unit of land is indeed alarmingly high.

During the First Five Year Economic Development Plan (1962–6), the government began a programme to increase the supply of pesticides. Alongside the promotion of new strains of rice varieties in the 1970s and followed by the policy of *Ssal-jagŭp-hwa chŏng-ch'aek* (rice self-sufficiency) the use of pesticides grew significantly. Application of pesticides is closely associated with use of chemical fertilisers: the extremely inefficient exploitation of soil by using chemical fertilisers and excessive application of chemicals which acidify the soil makes the crops more vulnerable to various diseases, thus, requiring more use of pesticides.

The increase of chemical input creates a vicious circle of further increase. In order to compensate the rising cost of production generated by increased use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, the farmers were then compelled to produce even more by using more and more chemical materials. In the case of paddy-field rice farming, the average number of applications of chemical pesticides was less than once a year until the 1960s. This increased to 3.3 times a year in 1969, and to 5.2 times in 1973, which became more than 10 times a year by the end of the 1980s. In terms of the amount of money spent on agricultural chemicals, the average amount of expenditure per household was 140 000 won in 1987 and it had increased nearly threefold by 1996, reaching 380 000 won. This was about one-tenth of the total expenditure for material and animals, and is the second highest single item along with chemical fertiliser, next to expenditure for farming machinery.

According to government statistics, Korean farmers applied an average of 12 kg of pesticides and insecticides per ha of paddy field in 1988 which was actually a decrease from the 14 kg per ha in 1987 (National Agricultural Cooperative Federation, *Yearbook*, 1989, p. 47). This figure illustrates the fact that Korean farmers use nearly 10 times the amount of agricultural chemicals used in Japan (1.3 kg per ha) and seven times more than Germany (1.7 kg per ha) (Sayer, J., 1981). It is about 24 times more than the amount of agricultural chemicals applied to the same unit of land in Canada, which uses an average 0.5 kg per ha.

Many unpleasant incidents, whereby farmers were harassed by local government officials who pressured them into using more pesticides, were common experiences. Overenthusiastic officials from the Agricultural Cooperative and the Office of Rural Development were competing with each other in sales records of pesticides, they often delivered unwanted pesticides and later demanded payment through the cooperative. (Sayer, J., 1981) Moreover, the prices of pesticides charged for the official sales were even higher than from other commercial sources.

Although the rate of increase of pesticide consumption has slightly slowed down since 1988, the component ratio of pesticides in agricultural management expenditure has been increasing. Agricultural management expenditure includes seed and seedlings, fertiliser, machinery, animals, purchased feed, sericulture and all other agricultural material. The average component ratio of pesticide was 10.5 per cent in 1983, which increased to 11.3 per cent in 1987, and climbed to 12.1 per cent in 1991. This level has been more or less maintained with a little fluctuation, being at 9.3 per cent in 1996. In general, during the last three decades about one-tenth of the total agricultural management expenditure was being spent solely on pesticides.

While the government showed great diligence in promoting the application of pesticides, safety measures for handling hazardous chemicals were never sufficiently endorsed. In addition to excessive use, with lack of correct information and guidance, many harmful chemicals were misused, and neither the farmers who applied the chemicals nor the plants and soils being safely protected. A government survey revealed that parathion designed for fruit trees was being used on vegetables and dried fish, and an insecticide designed for ground application was being sprayed from aircraft, with the result that the natural enemies of the particular pest were being killed instead of the parasite itself (*Korea Herald*, 8 June 1978).

Besides the pressure of the increasing cost of production through the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, the health conditions of the farmers were seriously threatened. According to a report by the National Health Research Institute, 82 per cent of the total population of Korean farmers were poisoned by pesticides and 30.8 per cent of these peasants were in a state which required treatment and recuperation (Chang, S.H., 1985, p. 332). The immediate effects of the misuse of pesticides range from serious heavy metal contamination (such as high rates of mercury content in soil, and

even in rice), to many human diseases caused by excessive use of agricultural chemicals. The long-term effects of the misuse of pesticides will also be visited on the next generation of the population, and thus the indirect cost of industrialisation will be carried by future generations.

MECHANISATION OF AGRICULTURE AND UNEQUAL EXCHANGE

During the period of the Fourth Economic Development Plan (1977–81), the government passed legislation to effectuate the mechanisation of agriculture. The policy of agricultural mechanisation was associated with the overall national economic strategy of a *chaju kyŏngje* (self-reliant economy). This period was also that during which the drain of agricultural labour was more severe than ever before and the shortage of farming labour was therefore felt very acutely (see the section on rural–urban migration in Chapter 1).

The government concentrated on the diffusion of labour-substituting heavy machinery such as planting machines and tractors. The special fund set up by the government for promotion of mechanisation amounted to 467 billion won during 1977–82 (Chang, S.H., 1985, p. 332). Government loans for the purchase of farm machinery during this period increased more than eight times (15.6 billion won in 1975 to 127.3 billion won in 1982). Over 70 per cent of the total amount of money spent for the purchase of machinery was provided by government loans.

Facing the acute problems of the shortage of farming labour and relatively high wages for (seasonal) contract wage labour in the agricultural sector, the government policy of mechanisation was at first rather well responded to by farmers. The characteristic of Korean farming, which relies very heavily on weather conditions, also necessitated the mechanisation process. The pressures of completing certain types of work within the limited period of time according to the agricultural season are very intense; if there are not enough farm hands to finish the work in time then the whole year's farming is in vain. Given the general scarcity of farming labour, such devices as planting and harvesting machines which would ensure job completion were particularly appealing to farmers.

The reasons for purchase of farm machinery were, however, not due to the expansion of farming scale nor to the structural change

of agricultural production. Sudden dissemination of farm machinery in the 1980s did not mean the transition from small scale subsistence farming to a larger scale of commercial farming. It was mainly due to a combination of three factors:

- First, the government forcefully implemented the policy of mechanisation in an extremely authoritative 'top-down' manner.
- Secondly, increasing pressure to produce more in compensation for the low-price system of agricultural products forced farm households to expand their size of farming land. Expansion in the scale of farming land, albeit it still remained within the subsistence production system, made mechanisation of agriculture more viable than before.
- Finally, farm households felt the acute necessity to substitute agricultural labour drained by rural–urban migration. The main reason for purchasing the farming machinery for most farm households was to relieve themselves of the crucial problem arising from the shortage of farm labour during planting and harvesting seasons, and the great majority of farm households which purchased heavy farming machinery were therefore, not in a condition to maximise the use of the machinery.

Even though the scale of land holding had been increasing, it was still not large enough for maximisation of machinery use, and the cost of maintenance was very high, thus rendering the purchase of farm machinery cost-ineffective. Most of the farmers did not have the ability or knowledge to maintain and repair the machines at minimum cost, and frequent breakdown of low-quality machinery supplied by a few monopolistic companies also added to the overall cost. A large proportion of newly purchased machinery was so underutilised that it could not make a positive contribution to the economy of farm households. The rate of utilisation of machines was extremely low – in most cases, except for combines, each machine was used on less than one-quarter of the standard areas of land for which the machine was designed (Table 3.9). The implication is that the farming machinery increased production costs rather than rationalising farming production and thereby improving economic conditions. The farming machinery was not introduced and disseminated through a 'natural' demand required by an expanding scale of farming and the need for a more efficient farming method.

The introduction of agricultural machinery to a small-scale subsistence farm household meant that farmers became even more tied

Table 3.9 Utilisation of farm machinery, 1983

	No. of days			*Area of land (ha)*			*Total no. of machinery*
	Standard	*Actual*	*Rate (%)*	*Standard*	*Actual*	*Rate (%)*	
Cultivator	274	89.3	32.6	49.0	8.9	18.2	489 296
Tractor	/	77.2	/	120.0	26.0	21.7	7 469
Rice transplanter	18	9.0	50.0	21.6	6.6	30.6	24 818
Binder	30	8.0	26.7	15.5	3.9	24.9	19 816
Combine	36	22.0	84.6	19.0	14.2	75.8	5 689

Note: / = data not available.

Source: National Agricultural Cooperative Federation (1983), reproduced from Chang, S.H. (1985), p. 332.

to the unequal exchange mechanism. The price of *kyŏng-un-ki* (a power tiller), which is the most widespread agricultural machine in use in South Korea, was 1.3 million won in 1981. A standard condition of purchasing this machine was that 74 per cent of the cost was met by a government loan and the rest of the balance had to be borne by the purchaser. The typical terms of government loans were seven years of repayment period at a 15 per cent annual interest rate (Lee, W.J., 1985, pp. 334–5). Taking account of the fact that the average life of this particular machine is seven years, the annual cost of machine for a farm household can be calculated as in Table 3.10.

The annual fixed capital expenditure amounts to 137 429 won. This is the cost of the loan only, without counting the 338 000 won which the individual had to come up with at first. In addition to this, the interest for the first year adds up to 144 300 won making a total of 281 729 won. For the second year the total expenditure arising from purchase of the machine would be a minimum 261 115 won, which decreases a little each year. By the time the loan is paid up, however, the machine is no longer in use but the total sum of the cost would be over 1.5 million won. Thus the annual average cost of purchase of the machine alone comes to nearly 220 000 won over the seven-year life of the machine, without counting any running and maintenance cost (Lee, W.J., 1985; National Agricultural Cooperative Federation, 1983; *Han-guk Nongch'on Munje Yŏn-guwon*, 1981).

Table 3.10 Typical cost of the loan for purchase of a power tiller (unit: won)

Year	*Capital*	*Interest*	*Total*
1st	137 429	144 300	281 729
2nd	137 429	123 686	261 115
3rd	137 429	103 072	240 501
4th	137 429	82 457	219 886
5th	137 429	61 843	199 272
6th	137 429	41 229	178 658
7th	137 426	20 614	158 040
Total	962 000	577 200	1 539 200

Source: Lee, W.J., (1985), pp. 334–5.

The purchase of farming machinery (even a power tiller) by the majority of Korean farm households makes very little economic sense in terms of 'capitalist rationality'. This is clear if the annual average cost of a tiller (paid in cash) is compared to the annual average cash surplus for a farm household. The average cash surplus for farm households was only 268 100 won in 1981, matching almost exactly the annual cost of a tiller. In the case of heavier farm machinery, such as tractors, the economic viability becomes even worse. The cost of a tractor was five times greater than a power tiller, while the utilisation rate of a tractor was only 21 per cent in 1981. Most farm households, except the very few in the highest strata, therefore appeared not to have the 'real' ability to purchase such machinery (Lee, W.J., 1985, pp. 334–5).

According to Lee, W.J. (1985), even with the government figures for the average annual cash surplus, it is clear that the farm households with over 2.0 ha of land holdings were the only ones which possessed the ability to make the annual payment for the purchase of a power tiller without much strain. The proportion of farm households on this scale was only 5.3 per cent of the total farm households in South Korea, totalling 101 450 in 1981. Surprisingly, the total number of households holding a power tiller in 1982 was 422 006, which is more than four times greater than the number of households with more than 2.0 ha of land holdings. In other words, over three-quarters of the power tiller were purchased by farm households which did not have the 'real' ability to buy the machine without incurring major strain. This 'economically' strange phenomenon illustrates the nature of subsistence production, and especially

agricultural production in which the mobility of capital (land) is limited. Farmers buy machinery not in order to increase productivity but to enable them to continue production. The tendency to continue production even if surplus value is not realised is an eminent characteristic of the subsistence economy.

Capital-intensive production does not make economic sense for a subsistence farm household. By definition, the small-scale subsistence farm household must depend on its own labour input. If they lose their opportunities to create surplus value with their own labour input, then subsistence production becomes unsustainable. The investment in farming machinery, therefore, does not conform to the formula that the increase in the organic composition of capital leads to creation of higher surplus value and thus a higher level of profit. In this respect, despite a higher productivity of machinery compared to human labour, high-cost but underutilised farming machinery cannot be congenial to the 'improvement' of the Korean agricultural economy.

Nevertheless, the government continued its policy of agricultural mechanisation and agricultural machinery holdings were extensively increased. The special government fund for promotion of agricultural mechanisation increased from 86.9 billion won in 1980 to 131.8 billion by 1985, and it more than doubled again to 282.2 billion won in 1988. Over two-thirds (70 per cent) of the fund was used for loans for the purchase of machinery, and the proportion of loans to the purchase price increased over time. The interest rate for machinery purchase loans was also reduced to 8 per cent in accordance with the increase in the size of the fund.

Since the late 1980s, after lighter farming machinery with higher efficiency for small-scale farming had proliferated throughout the country, the government began to focus on distribution of heavier farming equipment such as tractors, rice transplanters, binders and combines. Since the rate of diffusion of this heavy machinery had been much lower than for the lighter and smaller-scale farming machinery, such as power tillers, the government raised the limit of the loans for the heavier machinery in order to promote them. In the case of tractors, the government loan was up to 80 per cent of the purchase price of each machine, and for rice transplanters, binders and combines it was up to 90 per cent of the purchase price (National Agricultural Cooperative Federation, *Yearbook*, 1989).

As a result, the increased rate of the use of heavier farming machinery went up higher than ever after the mid-1980s. The number

Table 3.11 Trend of the major agricultural machinery holdings, 1975–96 (in units)

Year	*Farm tractor*	*Rice transplanter*	*Binder*	*Combine*
1975	564	16	–	56
1980	2 644	11 061	13 652	1 211
1985	12 389	42 138	25 538	11 667
1988	24 616	92 067	44 668	25 226
1992	64 159	185 172	63 103	61 240
1994	88 706	229 534	66 404	70 203
1996	113 287	271 051	67 914	73 831

Note: – = not available.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook* (annual data).

of these heavier type of machines doubled in the three years between 1985 and 1988, and had doubled again by 1992 compared to 1988. The number was about half a million in 1996, showing an over 40 per cent further increase since 1992 (Table 3.11). The annual rates of increase for supply of tractors was recorded as 69.6 per cent, for rice transplanters 30.6 per cent and for binders 28.3 per cent (National Agricultural Cooperative Federation, *Yearbook*, 1989, pp. 48–9). These figures contrast with the trend in lighter machinery such as power tillers, which showed a decrease in supply rate of 5.7 per cent in 1989. This probably means that the demand for certain light types of machinery had already passed its maximum level. The drastic increase of heavy agricultural machinery is a notable trend since the scale of farming in terms of household size of farming land had not significantly increased.

Although farm machinery became more accessible because of the generous amount of government loans even for those farm households which did not have much cash surplus for a down payment, the purchase of machinery via loans meant a higher overall cost of capital expenditure. The continuous increase in expenditure on farming machinery in proportion to total agricultural expenditure clearly reflects this trend (Table 3.12).

The price of major farm machinery increased at a 15 per cent annual rate between 1977 and 1983. The agricultural machinery was supplied by very few companies, such as Daedong Machinery,

Table 3.12 Proportion of farming machinery expenditure to total agricultural management expenditure, 1976–95 (average per household)

Year	*Total*	*Machinery*	*Annual increase[a] (%)*		*Component ratio*
	(won)	*(won)*	*(T)*	*(M)*	*(%)*
1976	245	11	–	–	4.5
1980	587	43	18.5	33.1	7.4
1985	1778	158	12.8	14.2	8.9
1988	2314	236	17.6	19.8	10.2
1992	3422	456	11.8	18.8	13.4
1995	5543	807	10.3	10.2	14.6

Note: – = not applicable.
[a]Annual increase : (T) Total; (M) Machinery.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook* (annual data).

Kuk-je Chong-hap Machinery and Tong-yang Mulsan (Chang, S.H., 1985 p. 331), although various parts are still imported, mostly from Japan. The government deregulated the price of agricultural machinery in 1988, while continuing its forceful promotion of machinery sales; the price soared immediately after the price deregulation. The price of both power tillers and of rice transplanters went up 11 per cent, and even the price of already expensive heavy machinery such as tractors, binders, and combines, increased at a 5–6 per cent rate.

Alongside agricultural machinery, the prices of other agricultural materials supplied by industry have also been continuously increasing at a higher rate than that of agricultural produce. The price of farming plastic, which is very widely used in Korea, went up by 11.9 per cent and farming frame materials increased by 25.2 per cent in 1989 alone. In contrast to the high price rise in agricultural machinery supplied by only a few companies, inclining towards monopolistic prices, the price of agricultural produce barely increased above the rate of inflation.

From 1987 to 1996, the proportion of rice field to the total planted area of food crops increased from 71 to 78 per cent. In contrast, proportion of income from the sale of rice fell from 58 to 49 per cent. Rice has always been the single most important source of agricultural income for the majority of farm households. Yet, the

Table 3.13 Purchasing price of government grains, 1983–96 (unit: 1000 won/per cent annual increase)

Year	*Rice*		*Red bean*		*Soybean*		*Corn*		*Barley*	
	won	*(%)*	*won*	*(%)*	*won*	*(%)*	*won*	*(%)*	*won*	*(%)*
1983	27.2		–		44.8		15.0		20.3	
1984	28.0	3	–		46.1	3	15.5	3	20.7	2
1986	31.2	6	–		–		–		23.5	7
1988	30.5	16	63.7	5	44.1	10	14.9	14	18.1	10
1990	35.9	5	63.7	0	49.6	0	16.5	0	21.9	9
1992	43.5	6	63.7	0	54.6	4	18.2	4	25.7	7
1994	45.6	0	63.7	0	54.6	0	18.2	0	28.4	5
1996	47.5	4	63.7	0	57.3	5	19.1	5	28.4	0

Notes: – = not available

[a] The unit from 1987 has been changed from 54 kg to 40 kg in the case of rice, and 60 kg to 40 kg for the other grains.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook* (annual data).

price of rice has increased at much lower rates compared to industrial commodities, such as agricultural chemicals, fertilisers and farming machinery. Since 1989, the government purchasing price of rice has been held almost constant with an average annual increase of less than 3 per cent (Table 3.13).

The price development of other major grains is even worse than for rice, the overall average annual increase rate being only around 1 per cent during the last decade (Table 3.13). The only exception was the case of barley; however, the government purchase price of barley was 20 per cent less than the cost of production in 1983. Even according to the government's own survey, the cost of production for barley was 42 100 won per 76.5 kg bag, but the government purchase price was only 33 780 won in 1983, thus making a loss of 8320 won (25 per cent) for the farmers (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 1984).

The National Agricultural Cooperative Federation tried to pressurise the government to raise the purchase price in order to compensate for the cumulative loss to barley-producing farm households (The National Agricultural Cooperative Federation, *Monthly Review*, October, 1989, p. 14). Even at a rate of 5–10 per cent, the

price increase for barley since 1983 only represents a process of catching up with the minimum cost of production. The government purchase price of barley showed a gradual increase until 1994 but it has been frozen at the 1994 price level since then. Using government data, the cost of production of barley comes out as 710 won per kg, which matches exactly the government purchase price of 710 won per kg.

The price of a tractor (8 414 000 won in 1988) was equivalent to 12 763 kg of rice. The average production of rice per ha of land is around 6200 kg. Since the average size of land holding per household is 1.1 ha, the average rice production capacity of a household would be 6820 kg. According to this calculation, even if a household used all of its annual rice production to buy a tractor it would cover only 54 per cent of the purchase price. Considering that a large majority of farm households depend heavily on loans (with interest), the relative cost of machinery purchase to the household income is remarkably high.

In addition to high sales prices of farming machinery relative to the prices of agricultural products, the price of parts for the machines is out of all proportion. The poor quality of the machinery required constant repairs but the after-sale service has been very poor. Unlike other machinery, agricultural machinery tends to be in use at the same time in the whole country. Accordingly, the demand for repair and parts tends to concentrate within a very short period of time. If the after-sale services are insufficient to meet the sudden flow of demand then farmers are exposed to the risk of missing the crucial window for farming work. The agricultural machinery industry has been taking advantage of this situation by charging absurd prices for spare parts without developing an adequate after-sales service network.

The government is, meanwhile, loaning up to 80 per cent to the suppliers – that is, the Agricultural Cooperative Federation and the machinery supplying agents – to assist them to acquire parts in stock and to establish after-sale service centres. The government fund is thus used more for the benefit of the farming machinery manufacturers and their supply agencies, than to assist farmers by relieving their financial burden for maintaining farming machinery.

In a normal free market situation, if the supply and demand was maintained at the same level, the rise in cost of production in absolute terms would increase the market price of the product, thus transferring the raised cost to consumers. In this sense, the

relative level of cost of production to profit should not increase. Sustenance of the relative cost of production means that increases in the absolute cost of production do not bring a reduction of profit margins – as long as the increased part of the cost of production is transferred to the price increase, profit margins will not be affected.

However, under the distorted market system, agricultural mechanisation resulted in increase of not only the absolute cost but also the relative cost of agricultural production. With a tight agricultural price policy and other various agricultural policies constantly setting downward pressure on market prices of agricultural produce, the absolute increase in cost of agricultural production has not been adequately compensated by price increases. Instead, much of the increased portion of the agricultural production cost has reduced profit margins for farmers. The overall process of agricultural mechanisation has therefore functioned as another channel of unequal exchange, along with industrial production of farming materials such as fertilisers, agricultural chemicals, fuel and electricity.

4 Globalisation and Rural Poverty

LIBERALISATION AND RESTRUCTURING OF AGRICULTURE

Since the Fifth Five Year Economic Development Plan (1982–6), the principal economic policy of Korea has been the restructuring of industry and technology development. The industrial restructuring process started with the classification of industry into three categories: 'high prospect latest industry', 'growing industry' and 'declining industry':

- The highest priority is given to the industries categorised as 'high prospect latest industry'. This includes semiconductors, bio-engineering, robots, optical communication and the aerospace industry.
- The second category of 'growing industry' comprises automobiles, electrical, electronics and the chemical industry. These industries are encouraged and supported for taking up further advanced technology development in order to achieve higher value added.
- The typical industries included in the category of declining industries are mostly light manufacturing industry such as, textiles, garments, shoes, toys, etc. These are industries which involve a lower level of technology and intensive labour input. Most of the industries in this category have maintained their competitiveness through cheap labour cost in the past. By the late 1980s, these industries began to lose their competitiveness in the world market and the government encouraged them to relocate overseas where they can obtain better competitiveness. Many of the industries in this category have relocated in other countries, especially into South East Asia, where a lower cost of labour is available. If relocation of an industry is not possible then government policy is to urge it to convert into a different industry.

Agriculture has been categorised as one of the most eminent declining 'industries' with deteriorating competitiveness. 'Competitiveness' in this context implies international competitiveness in terms

of cost of production in the same way as for other industries. The (neo-)Ricardian theory of comparative advantage has influenced government policy-makers to regard Korean agriculture as an obstacle to national economic growth. The idea that Korean farming is too retarded to be competitive in the international market and thus needs a drastic restructuring began to be more widely debated after the Uruguay Round which began in 1986. It has been argued that *globalisation* processes, especially economic globalisation, is unequivocal, and that international competitiveness must be considered in the context of national comparative advantage.

This argument contains two important issues. The first issue concerns the neo-liberal ideology of globalisation, which presupposes the process of globalisation as predetermined or inevitable. It furthermore assumes the process to be purely economic – that is, it remains outside the realm of politics. For example, it insists that the liberalisation of agricultural imports is forced by a global economic system which is beyond government control. If one accepts that it is entirely economic, then one would assume that the process is solely governed and controlled by the economic logic of the world market. This suggests that decisions on agricultural import liberalisation are politically neutral.

However, not only were the eight years of GATT negotiation processes among the member states during the Uruguay Round very much political, but each member state's decisions reflect its own domestic political configuration. For instance, the Korean government's decision to yield in the agricultural sector in exchange for the protection of manufacturing industry contrasted to those of some core countries, notably the USA and France, which gave high priority to the protection of agriculture. Trade liberalisation of agriculture in the South Korean case implies subordination of agriculture to manufacturing and involves a conflict of interest between urban and rural and also between peasants and industrial capital. Any explanation of agricultural import liberalisation as merely an economic process determined by market forces is grossly misleading. In addition, the even redistribution of gains and losses by GATT and WTO negotiations among different groups is certainly an issue that should be discussed and implemented in the domestic political arena. Trade liberalisation as a part of globalisation processes certainly involves *political* as well as economic processes.

The second problem derives from application of the theory of comparative advantage to agricultural production. The theory of

comparative advantage presupposes complete 'mobility of capital and labour' among industries. However, agricultural production is intrinsically different from manufacturing industry in many ways. One of the most important differences is that agricultural production is mainly based on land. Even if one includes land in the wider concept of capital, mobility of capital is not applicable to land; agricultural land exhibits immobility or at least very limited mobility since a higher level of capital and time scale is required to transform a green field into an industrial site. It becomes even more unrealistic if the land is used as the means of subsistence. On this ground alone, to measure international competitiveness by comparison of agricultural production cost only is pointless.

Farming production is mostly governed by conditions that are naturally given. In addition to climate, the correlation between land and farming population is an important determinant of the agricultural production system. The size of arable land and topology *vis-à-vis* the size of population influences the production strategy and the application of technology. Within the framework of the small-scale subsistence family farming system in Korea, productivity cannot be focused on the rule of economy of scale. It relies more on family labour rather than capital, and therefore adopts intensive farming methods in which land productivity is much higher than labour or capital productivity, compared to extensive farming methods by which higher labour and capital productivity is achieved.

Korean agriculture, though its productivity per acre is very high, bears the characteristics of a mode of production completely different from large-scale commercial agri-business. The cost of production for rice per unit of land in Korea is only half of the cost in Japan while at the same time it is three times higher than in California. On the other hand, the proportion of the cost of land service to the total cost of production in Korea is 53.3 per cent, compared to 17.9 per cent in Japan and 30.1 per cent in the USA. In terms of absolute cost of land service, it is more than five times higher than the USA and 1.3 times higher than Japan (Sung, J.K., 1995, p. 195). This figure illustrates that 'an item of agricultural product [for example, rice] produced in different countries are not necessarily the same commodity' sharing the same composition of labour and capital. (Sung, J.K., 1995, p. 194) It is therefore erroneous to measure international competitiveness by direct comparison of the costs of agricultural production in absolute terms.

It might cost less to import cheaper food in the short term than

to support domestic agriculture which bears a higher cost of production. Nevertheless, an agricultural policy based on mere comparison of cost of production risks overlooking latent consequences which may not be explicit at present. Without a consideration of other elements (non-trade concerns), especially the position of agriculture in the long term in the wider context of the national economy, involves the risk of setting agricultural policy from too short-sighted a view. The aggregate effects of the agricultural policy on the national economy over a long period of time must be addressed, agricultural planning should account for the long-term significance of a diminishing agricultural production base, relations to environment, national food security, implications of extending trade dependency through agricultural imports, and – most of all – social problems arising from dislocation of the farming population (Park, J.D., 1994; Chang, S.H., 1995; Yoon, B.S., 1995; Kim, S.H., 1995; Sung, J.K., 1995).

Following *Nong-ŏh-ch'on paljŏn chonghap dae-ch'aek* (the comprehensive plan for development of farming and fishing villages) in April 1989, several agricultural policies emerged

- *Nong-ŏh ch'on kujo kaesŏn dae-ch'aek* (the restructuring plan for farming and fishing villages) in 1991
- *Shin-nong-jŏng dae-ch'aek* (the plan for new agricultural policy) in 1993
- *Sae-ro-un nong-jŏng dae-ch'aek* (the new plan for agricultural policy)
- *Nong-ŏh ch'on paljŏn dae-ch'aek* (the plan for development of farming and fishing villages)
- *Nong-jong kae-hyŏk ch'u-jin pang-hyang* (agricultural policy reformation)
- *WTO ch'ul-pum-e dae bi han u-ri-ŭi chŏng-ch'aek dae-ŭng* (the new measurement plan for agriculture under WTO) in 1994.

The recent plan, *WTO ch'ul-pum-e dae bi han u-ri-ŭi chŏng-ch'aek dae-ŭng*, allocates a larger amount of budget resources, contains more detailed and specific investment details, and emphasises measurements for development of rural infrastructure and welfare system. However, the principal framework of the plan remains the same as the previous ones – for example, ten core initiatives are devised for *kyŏng-jaeng-ryŏk kang-hwa* (strengthening of competitiveness). In spite of the numerous number of 'new' plans the main goal remains to reorganise the farming structure and to eradicate 'high cost'

domestic agricultural production in terms of international market price. This indicates that the government regards agriculture merely as another industry which needs to compete in the international market.

Since agricultural production, unlike other manufacturing industry, cannot be relocated abroad in order to gain more competitiveness, the government opted to reduce the dimension of agriculture in the national economy. The restructuring process began with freezing the government purchase price of rice in 1983. This measure was designed to eliminate all small-scale farm households which could not maintain their economy in the absence of any government support, even at the existing minimum level of support. The main framework of the agricultural restructuring policy and other subsequent plans is to increase 'international competitiveness' of agricultural production. It involves expansion of farming scale, promotion of agri-business, commercialisation and mechanisation. It also promotes a 'concentration' process in which the present system of a large number of small-scale family farming units shifts into a small number of larger-scale cash-crop farming units. In short, it aims at the transformation of non-capitalist subsistence farming into capitalist commercial farming. Those small-scale farm households incapable of changing are expected to leave the agricultural sector and convert themselves into a different sector. By sifting out the small-scale subsistence farm households, small units of farming land are expected to be consolidated by larger-scale commercial farms, including both corporate and large-scale private ownership (Kwon, K.S., 1995; Lee, Y.K., 1994; Park, J.D., 1990).

According to the government plan (*nong-ŏh-ch'on paljŏn chong ch'aek*), the scale of the average commercialised mono-cultural farm is targeted at 2.7 ha of land area. In the USA, more than 50 per cent of the farm households cultivate over 100 hectares and the national average size is over 140 times (14 000 per cent) bigger than that of Korea. The average farm size in Canada, the UK and France is 302 ha, 70 ha, and 29 ha, respectively. Given this fact, the prospects of gaining international competitiveness by such an insignificant increase in Korean farm size is almost inconceivable.

Considering that only 7.9 per cent of total farm households had land holdings between 2.0 and 3.0 ha and only 4.8 per cent held farm land larger than 3.0 ha in 1996, the expansion of the farming scale actually means an extensive uprooting of the whole farming community. Without solid relocation policies for this 'excess' popu-

lation or a meaningful rural development policy to compensate for local loss of employment in agriculture, the inevitable consequence will be considerable disarray and disillusion. Among these will be a new set of urban problems when existing communities are forced to absorb the displaced rural population. Reorganising the entire farming land in this way requires concrete measures to deal with a large number of farming population released from the agricultural sector. The government plans to establish industrial zones in rural villages in order to absorb the former agricultural labour which becomes available through the restructuring process. As an integral part of the restructuring policy, *Nongch'on kong-ŏp hwa chŏng-ch'aek* (the rural industrialisation policy) is designed for an expansion of employment opportunities for the rural population. The plan is based on the 1984 legislation for development and promotion of rural income sources (*Nong-ŏh ch'on so-dŭk-won gae-bal ch'ok-jin pŏp*). It is a measure to facilitate the transfer of the farming population from the lower strata into non-agricultural occupations. According to the plan, some 350 industrial zones in rural areas were to be set up creating 1 million jobs for the rural population by 1993.

However, the plans involve several problems (Suh, J.H., 1991; Kang, K.Y. and Kim, K.T., 1995). First of all, these industrial zones are designed to incorporate mainly small and medium-size businesses. So far, the dominant type of companies located in the rural industrial zones are small labour-intensive and mostly sub-contracting types of industries which are not connected to the local economy. The industries in the rural industrial zones do not involve local capital, raw materials available in the area, or the local market (Park, J.D., 1994, pp. 108–9; Kang, K.Y. and Kim, K.T., 1995, p. 389). If industries are set up in the rural industrial development zones only for exploitation of cheap land and unskilled labour, then no meaningful rural industrialisation should be expected, and there would be little capital investment or technology transfer from urban to rural. But, most importantly, if the production is separated from the market (i.e. rural communities are excluded from the market of the products that are produced by the local population), then the possibilities for a better wage system or increase in high-quality employment are almost nil. The laws of motion connecting capital accumulation, the market and labour that applied to an earlier period of Korean development *vis-à-vis* core countries will operate in the same way (see Chapter 1). The characteristics of the industries

enlisted in the rural industrial zones are therefore unlikely to provide the necessary boost for the local economy by creating any 'ripple effects'.

Secondly, the employment rate and the level of wages paid to local employees in the rural industrial zones are too low to enable the typical rural household to depend on it as their sole income source. Local employees comprise between 50 and 65 per cent of the employment in the rural industrial zones. (Kang, K.Y. and Kim, K.T., 1995; Suh, J.H., 1991; Hwang, Y.S., 1988). One of the reasons for this is the general scarcity of rural labour, especially the young and skilled. Industries tend to prefer younger workers, while the vast majority of the rural population is made up of people in the older age groups. The labour force required by industries setting up in the rural areas does not correspond to the type of labour available. The majority of rural labour from farm households is therefore employed in lower-grade odd jobs which do not pay enough to make a living. In this situation, most employees in the rural industrial zones are forced to continue to carry on subsistence farming activities. Thus, as long as the present problems of the labour market in the rural industrial zones persist, achieving the goal to reduce the farming population and a controlled restructuring will not be possible (Park, J.D., 1990, p. 146; Lee, Y.K., 1994, p. 97; Sung, J.K., 1995, p. 429).

As mentioned earlier, the rural industrialisation plan runs parallel with *Nong-oe so-dŭk-won gae-bal* (the policy of development of non-agricultural income sources for rural villages). Some interpret this policy as meaning that the government is indirectly admitting that Korean agriculture cannot be economically viable (Park, J.D., 1990, pp. 145–7). The targeted proportion of non-agricultural income is set to be 70 per cent of the total household income by the year 2000; with this target, the government is admitting that even if the transition to larger-scale commercialised farming is achieved, agricultural income alone will not be sufficient to raise the standard of living of the farming population.

Although the present employment of the farming population in the rural industrial zones is very low, the government is targeting 1 million of the rural population to be absorbed within the new rural industrial zones. Even if the target is attained, the question of the quality of employment remains. Unless the plan also focuses on the quality of jobs and upgrading of local labour, the mere number of jobs would not be sufficient to transform small subsistence farmers

into non-agricultural workers. Moreover, a very old population and a large pool of female labour are the dominant features of the present agricultural labour force, which in the Korean social context presents obstacles in technology transfer and job training. The positive effects of the rural industrialisation plan on the agricultural restructuring will therefore be limited.

While inciting the small farm households to leave the agricultural sector, the government began to deregulate agricultural land holding. The new legislation on agricultural land (*Nong-ji-pŏp)* passed in 1994 came in effect from January 1996. The main features of the law are designed to widen the opportunity to hold farm-land for non-farmers and agriculture-related industries and to increase the unit sizes of land holdings and farms. The new agricultural land law is to facilitate the process of capitalisation and commercialisation of agriculture; the elimination of small farmers and the transition from subsistence production to capitalist production in agriculture is the main goal.

A special fund was set up to promote the process of farming land expansion. The *Nong-ŏh ch'on chin-hŭng kong-sa* (Rural Development Company) supports the reorganisation of farming land and the commercialisation process, with an annual budget of 200 billion won since 1987. The company manages the fund and purchases farming land from farm households withdrawing from the agricultural sector and from off-farm land owners. It then sells the land acquired to the larger farms converting into commercial farming. The fund is available as a loan to the farm households intending to expand their farms. The expenditure of the company increased to 330 billion won in 1992, but the amount of land purchased dramatically decreased from 13 126 ha in 1988 to 6000 ha in 1992 (Chang, S.H., 1995, p. 202). This is owing to the rapid increase in the prices of agricultural land since the government's deregulation which made it easy to convert agricultural land. Both resident and absentee landlords are reluctant to sell, especially to the Rural Development Company, and prefer to hold on to their land by renting it out. This partly explains why tenancy has been continuously increasing.

An increase in tenancy is also a result of the *Nong-ji im-dae-ch'a kwal-ri-pŏp* (Agricultural Rent Management Act), by which tenancy has been fully legalised. The intention was to enable small-scale farm households to withdraw from the agricultural sector without surrendering their land. The new agricultural land law in 1996 is an amended version of the previous *Nong-ji-bŏp* (1994). The tendency

of deregulation is apparent in the sense that previously included regulations on rent or tenancy rights were obliterated. In practice, the rights of the tenant are now less protected, leaving them in a more vulnerable and insecure position.

It appears that the government changed its initial plan to divert the small farmers into non-agricultural sectors and to promote large scale specialised commercial farming through the lease system. The Rural Development Company has been allocated a budget to pay the rent in advance on a long-term basis to small-scale landlords. In exchange, the company assumes the management rights over the farm land and thereby encourages the farm households in the upper strata to take up tenancy to expand their scale of farming. Concurrently, over the last 10 years the tenancy rate has significantly increased to a level even higher than that of the pre-1949 land reform period. The proportion of tenant farm households increased from around a quarter to over two-thirds of the total farm households. Absentee landlordism has also been increasing; the proportion of farmland let by absentee landlords increased from 16 per cent in 1983 to 26 per cent in 1993 (Chang, S.H., 1995, p. 191).

The framework of agricultural policy, with its various agricultural legislation, programmes, and initiatives, has been geared to restructuring of agricultural production based on reorganisation of farming land and reduction of farming population. Concentration of farming land, even with an increase of tenancy, has been encouraged. The ceiling on land holding established in the post-war land reform programme is being removed, allowing the possibility of the re-emergence of a large-scale land-owning class. Of course, the restoration of the feudal system of land holding of the pre-land reform period, in which a few individual landlords held a large proportion of the land, is very unlikely. Instead, a few large agri-businesses would replace the state as the new dominant power controlling the agricultural sector in Korea.

However, the results of the programme to date draw a slightly different picture than the government planned. Despite the fact that there has been a steady increase in the number of farm households in the upper strata, along with an increase in the average size of farming land, there is very little sign of improvement in the agricultural economy. The expansion of production scale for the majority of farm households cannot be interpreted as a transition to capitalist commercial farming. In general, except in a very few cases, it reflects the continuous upward movement of the minimum

scale of production required to maintain the reproduction of a farm household (Table 4.1).

The present agricultural policy, which pursues restructuring based on a neo-liberal argument of globalisation, does not appear to be successful. For those who are targeted for conversion into the non-agricultural sector, quality employment opportunities are rare and alternative means to maintain the household economy very limited. For those who try to transform their production system into market-oriented capitalist farming, agricultural production has not yet proved to be profitable enough to overcome the other social and cultural disadvantages of the rural villages. In addition, the extreme scarcity of the next generation of farmers is a serious problem. Under these circumstances, subsistence farming activities are very likely to persist in a large number of households. The future of Korean agriculture looks likely to be that in which a large number of farmers become more alienated from the formal agricultural sector while agri-business takes control over the agricultural economy.

GROWING RURAL–URBAN DISPARITY

As the rural economic situation deteriorated, the relative poverty in rural farm households worsened. The ratio of agricultural income to household living expenses decreased from 96.9 per cent in 1962 to 63.6 per cent in 1996. Since the government abandoned the high-rice-price policy in the late 1970s, only the highest strata of farm households (less than 20 per cent of total farm households) have been able to meet all their living expenses with agricultural income. In the case of the lower strata of farm households (land size of 0.5–1.0 ha) which constitutes one-third of total farm households, average agricultural income amounted to less than half of household expenditure. The figures in Table 4.1 indicate that capital accumulation and expansion of agricultural production has been inconceivable for almost all farm households.

The widening gap between the incomes of the urban working-class households and farm households expresses an increase in relative poverty of farm households. The farm household's income, inclusive of both agricultural income and non-agricultural income, has usually been less than that of rural working-class households. This is the case even if the government accounting of farm household income is used. However, government statistical figures have been

Table 4.1 Sufficiency[a] of living expenses, 1962–96 (per cent)

Household size (ha)	*1962*	*1966*	*1971*	*1975*	*1979*	*1983*	*1987*	*1991*	*1996*
< 0.5	66.0	59.0	54.3	73.8	45.1	44.8	30.2	29.8	27.3
0.5–1.0	90.0	88.6	88.3	107.8	84.3	69.4	58.9	54.5	45.1
1.0–1.5	105.8	100.6	103.6	124.0	104.8	90.2	82.4	82.3	68.4
1.5–2.0	106.2	102.4	119.3	138.4	115.9	94.9	95.0	96.8	79.8
> 2.0	120.8	121.5	112.4	149.5	126.3	110.7	113.9	115.8	90.4
Total	96.9	92.3	93.4	116.0	92.1	82.2	77.2	74.7	63.6

Sufficiency[a] = Agricultural income ÷ Living expenses × 100.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Report on the Farm Household Economy Survey* (annual data).

Table 4.2 Farm household income and living expenses index, 1967–90 (urban working-class household = 100)

Year	*Income*		*Living Expenses*	
	Household	*per capita*	*Household*	*per capita*
1967	90.7	81.0	35.8	31.9
1971	110.7	100.3	42.7	38.7
1975	123.4	112.8	68.1	62.7
1979	76.8	68.5	90.7	80.9
1983	77.6	67.5	132.7	115.4
1987	74.1	69.2	99.3	92.7
1989	72.1	69.6	92.3	89.1
1990	71.1	71.1	94.2	94.2

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Economic Planning Board; reproduced from Park, J.D. (1994), p. 75.

much criticised as being biased, usually in order to conceal the adverse economy of farm households. Low-income households with less than 0.1 ha of land holdings, for example, which represent about 5 per cent of all rural households, are excluded (Table 4.2).

The only exception of farm household income catching up with that of the urban waged household was during the 1970s when the high-rice-price policy was carried out. Since the mitigation of the high-rice-price policy, the disparity of household income between rural and urban families has been continuously increasing. Throughout the 1980s, the income of farm households relative to urban working-class households has been continuously reduced. To make matters worse, farm household expenditure in the 1990s has been steadily

Table 4.3 Farm household income and living expenditure, by size of farming land, 1990 (urban working-class household = 100)

Size of land (ha)	*Income*	*Living expenses*
< 0.5	51.6	74.8
0.5 ha–1.0	61.0	90.6
1.0 ha–1.5	72.8	96.3
1.5 ha–2.0	81.8	104.7
> 2.0	100.7	121.1
Average	71.1	95.4

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Economic Planning Board; reproduced from Park (1994), p. 76.

increasing to almost the same level as that of urban working-class households. In other words, farm household income has not increased in balance with a rapid increase in living expenses (Table 4.2).

The difference in the level of household income between farm households and urban working-class households is more severe for those farm households in the lower strata (Table 4.3). For instance, the real income of a farm household with less than 0.5 ha of farming land was only about half of the urban working-class households' income. Even a farm household in the second highest strata (1.5–2.0 ha) generates 20 per cent less than the urban working-class household's income. Only farm households in the highest strata maintain a level of income which matches the average income of urban working class households (Park, J.D., 1994, p. 76).

The wage level in Korea has been notoriously low throughout the three decades of industrialisation. Even after the period of labour unrest in the late 1980s and with some drastic wage increases, the level of industrial wages had barely caught up with increased living expenses. In 1986, nearly half of all industrial workers received wages less than half of officially estimated minimum living expenses in 1986 (Ministry of Labour, *Statistical Year Book*, 1987). According to the Federation of Korean Trade Unions, the average income sufficiency rate for urban working-class households had been fluctuating between 40 and 70 per cent during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1984, the income sufficiency rate was 43 per cent – that is, regular wages met less than half of household living expenses. Members of working-class households needed to find other means to support themselves – for example, by extending their working hours, and/or by engaging in activities in the informal sector.

Comparing the farm household economy to the urban household economy indicates the growing *relative* poverty in rural Korea. In reality, however, the economic state of the farm household is experiencing even *absolute* poverty. According to a survey carried out by Hong Ju Kim (Kim, H.J., 1995), a startling figure of over one-third (34.4 per cent) of the farm households were suffering from absolute poverty. In this study, the number of households in absolute poverty was measured by accounting those with incomes below the 'minimum cost of subsistence' estimated by the Korea Institute of Population and Health. This can be detected even from the aggregate national data collected by the government. Some 345 000 farm households were estimated to be situated below the absolute poverty line in 1990 (Kim, H.J., 1995, pp. 234–5). This represents one-fifth (19.5 per cent) of the total 1.77 million farm households in South Korea.

Nevertheless, very often the poverty in rural areas is regarded, especially by the government, as a result of 'overconsumption' by rural households. In a press conference, for example, a former Chief Economic Secretary to the President said:

> It is worrying that farm household debt is ever increasing. It is difficult to manage in agriculture, nonetheless, it is *caused by overconsumption*. They spend too much on children's *education*, and *leisure* activities such as sightseeing. In short, their debts are increasing not because of debt for agriculture and other business expenses, but rather, due to *debt for living expenses*. (Cho, S.W., 1992, p. 147, translation and emphasis mine)

This type of argument denies the real causes, or even the existence, of rural poverty, however implicitly it does so. What it overlooks, or even denies, is the existence of serious structural problems and policy issues within the agricultural sector, while pointing to 'poor management' of economic affairs by 'irrational and ignorant' farmers. The accusation of overconsumption requires close scrutiny, since if the claim were true, farmers would be irresponsible, but if it is untrue, it is surely a case of 'blaming the victim'.

The government categorises items consisting of farm household living expenses by: food, housing, clothing and footwear, education, recreation and miscellaneous expenses. The last three items – education, recreation and miscellaneous – appeared in particular to be the possible sources of 'overconsumption'. First of all, it is true that spending on children's education has been identified as

proportionally one of the largest expenses of the farm household economy in Korea, where school fees are charged to every student except at primary-level state schools (Cho, S.W., 1992, pp. 147–51; Lee, K.U. and C.H., Chun, 1985, pp. 343–4; Lee, Y.J., 1993, p. 263). Spending on education accounts for more than 10 per cent of total household expenses. However, this does not mean a farm household spends more money in absolute terms than any other type of household, it certainly does not mean that farmer's children have more money spent on their education than any other children. In this regard, 'overconsumption' on education by farm households could only be interpreted as arguing that they should not educate their children since it strains the household economy too much. The real irony of the issue is precisely that this 'overspent' portion of the education cost among the farm households is an important hidden channel of *subsidisation of industry by agriculture*. Not many of the future generation of labour educated through the sacrifice of farm households are returning to the agricultural sector. Farmers are paying for the reproduction of quality labour for urban industry.

A similar logic runs through the argument of 'overconsumption' in other miscellaneous expenses such as health and medical expenses, transportation and communication, entertainment and ceremonies. Among them, medical and health spending accounts for 6.5 per cent of total household expenses. Next to educational expenses, this is a very large item in proportion to total household income. However, one cannot dispute its absolute necessity, even for those farm households accused of overspending. Few households can realistically manage medical expenses as a planned budget item.

In addition, the propensity to an increase in average consumption among farm households is simply because it is more expensive for the rural population to obtain industrial goods and other services. This is due to rural–urban structural cleavages. The concentration of infrastructure, industrial production and other services in the urban areas make consumption cheaper there. It is much more expensive for the rural population to obtain the same level of medical service: the cost of hospitalisation for a week, for example, would incur extra transportation and accommodation costs for family members.

The argument of overspending/overconsumption appears to be based only on the *ability* to afford rather than the *necessity*. In a nutshell, it is a 'classist' argument: certain things in life are prohibited

to certain people, depending on their class. The rural population should have just as much right as any other segment of Korean society to spend on education, health, or other items.

In any situation of rapid economic growth there is a tendency for rising expectations to affect social behaviour. The new consumer society is continuously encouraged by advertising messages to consume ever-more goods and services. The substantial increase in living expenses of farm households relative to urban working-class households reflects this tendency. Farm households' living expenses were only one-third (32 per cent) of urban working-class households' living expenses in 1967, but this had increased to 94 per cent in 1990 (Table 4.2).

The income and living expenses' disparity problem exacerbates the problem of rising expectations in the rural community. While the expectations of the rural population come close to those of the urban working class, the level of income of rural households falls far short of urban income. Because the expectations of rural households cannot be met from current income, the debt situation in rural areas becomes exacerbated. From this point of view, the above argument also contradicts official insistence that the standard of living in agricultural villages has been improved or that rural people now enjoy more of life's amenities.

The decrease in agricultural surplus for farm households during the last two decades in fact indicates the deepening of rural poverty. Agricultural surplus is calculated by subtracting the farmer's own wages from agricultural net income. Agricultural income consists of two types of remuneration: one attributable to land, labour, and capital, the other management remuneration (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook*, 1992, p. 13). There are two ways to estimate agricultural surplus. One way is to calculate labour input by a household's members at the level of agricultural wages. When this method is used, the average rate of agricultural surplus per household comes to 56 per cent in 1972 and 43 per cent in 1991 (Park, J.D., 1994, p. 71). This means that agricultural surplus had reduced in absolute terms over the last two decades.

When the *national average wage*, instead of the agricultural wage, is applied in order to enumerate the labour of a household's member, the surplus rate falls to 25 per cent in 1991 from 39 per cent in 1972 (Park, J.D., 1994, p. 71). The figures indicate the extension of the gap between agricultural wages and national average wages, as well as an absolute decrease in the agricultural surplus rate (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Agricultural surplus, 1972–91 (unit: 1000 won)

Year	*Net income*[a]	*Surplus I*[b]	*Surplus II*[c]	*Rate I*[d] *(%)*	*Rate II*[e] *(%)*
1972	380	260	179	56.3	38.7
1976	988	704	588	56.4	47.1
1979	1675	936	697	41.1	30.6
1982	3294	2083	1651	54.9	43.5
1985	4176	2508	1632	38.6	25.2
1988	5582	3709	2085	43.1	24.2
1991	7795	5219	2954	43.5	24.6

Notes:
[a] Net Income = Agr. Gross Income − Agr. Expenditure.
[b] Surplus I = Net income − Household labour (evaluated at agricultural wage level).
[c] Surplus II = Net income − Household labour (evaluated at national average wage level)
[d] Surplus rate I = (Surplus I ÷ Agr.capital) × 100).
[e] Surplus rate II = (Surplus II ÷ Agr.capital) × 100).

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Report on the Farm Household Economy Survey*; reproduced from Park, J.D. (1994), p. 71.

The relative poverty which prevails in the agricultural sector can be traced to the macroeconomic level. According to the Economic Planning Board, the proportion of GDP attributable to agriculture, forestry and fishery in 1990 was 9.1 per cent, compared to the proportion of total population employed in the sector, which accounted for 18.3 per cent of total employment (Economic Planning Board, *Principal Economic Indexes*). The GDP share per employed individual in the agricultural sector, therefore was barely half the national average (Table 4.5).

On the other hand, the agricultural sector lacks capital investment. Capital formation by economic activities in the agricultural sector was estimated to be 1389 billion won in 1986 (The Bank of Korea, *Economic Statistics Yearbook*, 1988, p. 293). This accounts for only a small fraction (7 per cent) of national gross capital formation for that year. That figure sharply contrasts to manufacturing industry, which accounted for nearly one-third (30 per cent) of national gross capital formation. The disparity in the scale of investment between the two sectors becomes more marked if the figures for capital formation are examined in conjunction with the share of GDP and

Table 4.5 Proportion of employment, GDP and capital formation, 1986

	Agriculture (%)	*Manufacture (%)*
Employment (*A*)	18.3	24.6
GDP (*B*)	9.1	29.1
Capital formation (*C*)	7.0	29.8
GDP share per capita (*B*)/(*A*)	0.49	1.18
CF[a] share per capita (*C*)/(*A*)	0.38	1.21

Note:
[a] CF = Capital formation.

Source: The Bank of Korea, *Economic Statistics Yearbook* (1988, 1992).

employed population in each sector. In the same year, the proportion of employed persons in manufacturing composed 24.6 per cent of total employment, while its share of GDP amounted to 29.1 per cent (Table 4.5) In short, the agricultural sector has suffered from the disabling affects of a low level of capital investment, and smaller share of domestic production relative to the number of persons employed.

Besides the lack of both private and public investment in agriculture, another important aspect of the deteriorating rural economy is the efflux of capital from rural to urban areas (Park, J.D., 1994; Sung, J.K., 1995; Kim, H.J., 1995) This diminishes the potential capital investment/reinvestment in the agricultural sector. The outflow of funds from the agricultural sector to others further depresses the agricultural economy. The deficiency of rural finance is exacerbated by, for example, rent paid to absentee urban landlords, educational expenses and interest payments remitted to the non-agricultural sectors.

The expansion of tenancy, encouraged by the government restructuring policy, further contributes to financial outflow from agriculture and the continuous increase in tenancy entails a rise of absentee landlordism. The proportion of the number of absentee landlords increased from 45 per cent in 1973 (Korea Catholic Farmers' Association, 1975) to 63.1 per cent in 1990 (Kim, S.H., 1992, p. 16). In terms of acreage of rented land, the proportion of absentee landlords is even higher: 65.1 per cent of total tenant land was owned by absentee landlords in 1990, an increase from 60.2 per cent in 1983 (Kim, S.H., 1992, p. 16).

A large majority of the absentee landowners are engaged in business in urban economic sectors. About half of all the absentee landowners are commercial, industrial or civil servants (Park, J.D., 1994, p. 198). In this regard, the rent paid to absentee landlords employed in other industrial economic sectors is very likely to be utilised in non-agricultural sectors of the economy. In fact, about half of the rent was paid out to urban households in 1992, amounting to 487 billion won. (Chang, W.S., 1994, p. 152). This is equivalent to nearly a third (27 per cent) of the total value of agricultural products of that year.

Deterioration in agriculture forms a cycle within which capital investment bears high risk and thus prevents capital accumulation, which therefore undermines the agricultural economy even further. The security of agricultural investment is perceived to be very small, even by farmers themselves. Any capital available for expansion of agricultural production, little as it is, is likely to be channelled outside of the agricultural sector – buying a fixed asset in an urban area, for example, is a very popular form of investment by farmers in Korea (Lee, Y.J., 1993, p. 245).

The World Bank maintains that agriculture in the Korean economy has been successful and it is the result of heavy investment in rural areas (World Bank, 1993, pp. 32–7). This claim appears to be an overstatement based on a narrow definition of public investment. The IBRD supports its claim by the fact that there is 'a more even balance between rural and urban public investment in sanitation and water facilities in Korea than other developing countries' (World Bank, 1993, p. 33). In addition, its definition of 'the success of agriculture' is founded upon 'growth in both agricultural output and agricultural productivity', in absolute terms at aggregate level. However, this analysis does not take into account other important factors – such as proportion of population and growth rate compared to other sectors – which should surely affect their interpretations.

'"Efficient" and "selective" government intervention' has been agreed by many analysts of development as one of the most important factors explaining the successful industrialisation of Korea. The other side of this state intervention is that it discriminated against agriculture in allocation of resources in favour of urban industry, thus further magnifying rural–urban economic disparity. While the Korean state has been very active in economic intervention, the neo-classical argument that 'typically, as an economy develops, agriculture's share of the economy declines' (World Bank,

1993, p. 32) is not persuasive in terms of explaining the deterioration of Korean agriculture.

FARM HOUSEHOLD DEBT

Throughout the last few decades of national economic development, various economic policies designed to promote rapid industrialisation had adverse effects on Korean agriculture. As discussed in previous chapters, the economic dynamics of Korea's development model demoted the agricultural sector, since it was forced to subsidise industry in various ways. Since 1962, the Korean economy expanded at an annual average growth rate of 9 per cent. In contrast, the average growth rate of the agricultural sector has been around 3 per cent with frequent negative growth rates. The downward trend is well expressed in figures which show that while agriculture accounted for 37.6 per cent of GNP in 1965 it accounted for only 9.1 per cent of GNP in 1990. This figure was 6.4 per cent in 1996, at 1990 constant prices. The economically active population in the agricultural sector accounted for nearly one-fifth of total national employment in 1990 but had decreased to only 11 per cent in 1996.

The perpetual process of degradation of the agricultural sector, which culminates in rural poverty, is expressed through heavy rural household indebtedness. Over the decade (1987–96), the average farm household debt increased more than nine times, while the average farm household income increased only five times. According to government statistics, the average debt per farm household was around 12 million won (approx. $15 000) at the end of 1996. The amount of debt has increased at a spectacular annual average rate of over 30 per cent since 1980, and this rapid increase of farm household debt coincides with the period of the policies of diversification of agriculture and liberalisation of agricultural imports (Table 4.6).

The official figures for rural household debt are collected annually at the end of the calendar year. However, the farming cycle begins in the spring and most of the farm household debt is taken out at the beginning of the farming season. Since most farm households make debt payments after the harvest in the autumn, their debt accounts at that time are probably the lowest figure of the calendar year. Therefore actual average farm household debt will be much higher than the government's statistical figures reveal.

Table 4.6 The trend of farm household debt, 1980–96 (unit: 1 000 won)

	1980	*1983*	*1984*	*1988*	*1990*	*1992*	*1994*	*1996*
Average debt	339	1 285	1 784	3 131	4 734	5 683	7 885	11 733
Annual increase (%)	96	58	39	9	21	10	15	28

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook* (annual data).

Even if the government's statistics are used in assessing farm household debt, the burden of debt for farm households relative to the scale of the household economy is phenomenal. This becomes more apparent when household debt is compared to the other indices of the farm household economy, such as agricultural income, household assets, and circular assets. The average farm household debt amounted to 11.7 million won in 1996, and this accounts for more than half of the average farm household income of 23 million won. The figure sharply contrasts to that of 1970, when the average amount of farm household debt was only 6.2 per cent of annual average income. Similarly, the percentage of average farm household debt to its total household assets has been steadily increasing: The average ratio of debt to assets for farm households was 1.7 per cent in 1970, which peaked in 1985 at 7.1 per cent, and has remained around 6–7 per cent since 1991 (Table 4.7).

As the condition of the agricultural economy deteriorated and thus undermined the farm household economy through very low income, farm households were forced to take out more and more debt in order to make ends meet. By the end of the 1980s, the economic condition of farm households declined to such an extent that average farm household debt amounted to half of annual income. It is wholly inappropriate to explain the large increase of farm household debt during the last two decades by assigning it to increases in household living expenses, especially to such items as education and health: there are no empirical grounds on which to believe that farm households disproportionately increased expenditures on education and health.

The fundamental reason for the cumulative increase of farm household debt should be traced to the economic structure of subsistence farm households. Subsistence farming only achieves

Table 4.7 Ratio of farm household debt to household income, assets, and circular assets, 1964–96 (unit: per cent)

Ratio to: *Year*	*Gross Income*	*Assets*	*Circular Asset*	*Surplus*
1964	6.3	2.1	–	–
1970	6.2	1.6	38.3	–
1980	12.6	2.5	54.5	84
1985	35.3	7.1	114.9	210
1988	38.5	7.0	91.9	160
1990	42.9	6.0	72.6	191
1992	39.2	4.9	56.7	138
1994	38.7	5.5	50.7	122
1996	55.4	6.9	55.4	228

Note: – = not available.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Report on the Farm Household Economy Survey (*annual data*)*; *Statistical Yearbook* (annual data).

reproduction at the same scale, as opposed to capital accumulation which creates reproduction on an expanded scale. The economic balance of subsistence farming is very precarious and especially vulnerable in the distorted capitalist market in Korea. While the prices of their agricultural production were set at the lowest possible level by the government-controlled mechanisms rather than in a market structure, prices of industrial products, in particular agricultural materials were set in a very protective situation, protected from both domestic and international competition. Meanwhile, the integration of the farm household economy with the industrial economy intensified. Agricultural production became heavily dependent upon industrial inputs such as chemical fertiliser and pesticides, which must be purchased with cash. This in turn puts farmers under pressure to increasingly engage in the market economy in the pursuit of cash (as opposed to reliance on barter and payment in kind, for example). In this situation, the cycle of subsistence production and reproduction easily loses its delicate balance.

The continuous increase in farm household debt reflects the breakdown in the economic cycle of subsistence farming. In particular, the government contributed to breaking the economic cycle of subsistence farming, but only in a negative way. It encouraged building up farm household debts via various targeted loans, such as for land improvement, for farming machinery, for cattle feed, agricul-

tural chemicals, etc. The problem is not necessarily the loans themselves, but in the false economic rationale for them. The rate of return from new 'investment' via loans within the framework of subsistence farming is not large enough to compensate for interest payments. These loans for agricultural production cannot be paid off by the surplus created with them, thus they became simply a further strain on the farm household economy.

The Agricultural Cooperative Bank accounts for more than three-quarters of all loans taken up by farm households. Compared to nearly half (49 per cent) of the total farm household debt from private loan sources in 1980, only 15.3 per cent was attributable to private loans in 1987. This indicates a trend toward more utilisation of the public financial loan system by the farming population. This is mainly due to the government's effort to substitute public for private loans. In particular, the farm household debt relief programme in 1987 provided farm households with an opportunity to convert their private loans to public loans. The farm household debt relief policy certainly did provide relief from the pressure of exorbitant private loans with high interest rates, to which a large number of farm households had been subjected. However, the relief via public loans provided through the reduction of high interest rates of private loans was greatly offset by the short repayment period. According to a study on farm household debt carried out in 1988, more than half of the total farm household debt (54.5 per cent) was estimated to be short-term loans with less than a one year repayment period (Hwang, S.C., 1988, pp. 443–4). Even with government funds available for agriculture, more than half the money was released in the form of very short-term loans. Since the farming cycle is relatively long – usually more than six months – the short term of the loans creates a low turnover rate of capital for farm households. With a low rate of capital turnover, it is difficult to utilise capital to the maximum, and thus the maximum theoretical profitability of the loan capital is reduced.

Furthermore, most of the public loans available to farm households are usually tied to a specific agricultural policy, such as loans for farming machinery purchase, or loans for expansion of farming land, etc. Such government loans are supplied, impartially, up to the aggregate amount of loans actually demanded by farm households. The general loans for farm households from public sources are very limited, not only in terms of the repayment period, but also in terms of the size of the loan. In this regard, it is assumed

that the actual proportion of private loans is still higher than the official figures (Hwang, S.C., 1988, p. 438).

The government claims that the debt repayment ability of farm households has improved (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook*, 1993, p. 35). This claim is based on the ratio of debt to circular assets (Table 4.7). 'Circular assets' include both cash and quasi-cash, such as savings, deposits, bonds, stocks, etc. which can be converted into cash. The debt repayment ability, assessed by the debt ratio to farm household assets, began to improve in the beginning of the 1990s but more recently the trend seems to have been reversed.

The government's claim of having improved the debt situation does not accurately reflect the real situation of the farm household economy. Since the figures for circular assets and debts are aggregated and averaged, they do not show the uneven distribution of circular assets and debts among different strata of farm households. This set of figures does not show the real repayment ability of individual indebted households: it would be better to use disaggregated statistical data collected from individual households in assessing the debt repayment ability, rather than using aggregate statistics.

In addition, assessment of debt repayment ability should be carried out by evaluating household income in terms of its *economic capacity to facilitate repayment of debt* without straining the household's ordinary transactions. In other words, the focus should be on the degree of difficulty in making payment of loan(s) at the given level of income, expenditure and thus household surplus. The assumption that a household can pay off its entire debt by utilising all possible circular assets at one point is not realistic. Other indices such as economic surplus/deficit of farm households should be used to analyse debt repayment ability rather than a single index of circular assets. Contrary to the government's claim, the farm households' ability to pay debts as measured by the ratio of debt to household surplus has not been improving, but getting worse (see Table 4.7).

According to a study based on sample survey data, more than one-third of total farm households (35.3 per cent) are expected to experience an increase in debt, given that the household surplus is not increasing. Only about one-tenth (11.8 per cent) of farm households appeared to have the ability to repay their debt in the short term, with a proportionally larger surplus than their existing debts. Those farm households which share a household surplus greater than the amount of debt have a positive prospect of eventually

being able to repay their debts in the long term, but the households with such repayment ability (in the longer term) account for less than one-third (30.8 per cent) of total farm households (Chung, K. S., 1991, pp. 129–30). Therefore, the trend toward improvement in the abilities of farm households to repay debt seems at best a doubtful claim. Moreover, new debt taken out for the purpose of repayment of existing debt increased alarmingly by one-and-a-half times (158 per cent) in 1996. This hardly supports the claim of debt reduction. The reality is that almost all indebted farm households are likely to struggle in repaying their debt during the foreseeable future. Heavy indebtedness therefore remains a central indicator of the persisting problems of rural degradation and poverty in South Korea.

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Part II

Patriarchal Relations and Modes of Production: Towards an Analytical Framework

Part II consists of an attempt to construct a synthetic conceptual model combining the structural economic analysis presented in Part I with gender analysis. These two strands of analysis are still too often considered separately by academic disciplines. Throughout the following chapters, however, it will be argued that 'gender relations', and 'relations of production' are interconnected themes. The national social formation is largely conditioned by the regional and international political economy, but it is essential that we understand how social relations, in particular gender relations, respond to this larger economic structure.

In this model, special attention is given to interaction between the relations of production and relations of reproduction, thus adumbrating the main characteristics of women's labour. This allows us to incorporate the insights of social anthropology, in particular the articulation of capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production, into our analysis of women in agriculture. In this manner, the conceptual framework provides a holistic structural analysis, but one which at the same time enables us to identify the spatial, temporal and social specificity of women's work. Within this analytical framework, I argue that rural women in Korea have been subjected to '*triple exploitation*' in the process of national industrialisation, combining elements of national dependent development, the underdevelopment of the agricultural sector and the patriarchal relations of Korean society. This amounts to a gendering of international political economy and national political economy.

5 Patriarchal Relations and Sexual Division of Labour

THE CONCEPT OF 'PATRIARCHAL RELATIONS'

The analysis of women's subordination, has up to now been broadly based on two contending streams of thought. Marxist feminists have emphasised class relations within capitalism specifically as being the root of gender inequality, especially that of subordination of women's labour. They regard gender/sex asymmetry as being derivative of capitalist class relations. On the other hand, those who use the concept of patriarchy, especially radical feminists, as a transhistorical category, reject class analysis as being insufficient to explain gender relations. For them, patriarchy is an independent set of social relations from class relations.

Neither of these two positions offers a satisfactory analytical framework which can be used to study the experience of women's labour in Korean agriculture. They do not actually encompass the complexity and variation of concrete social formations, especially considering the structure of the modern world economy which entails intricate networks of intersocietal relationships. Neither the class relations nor the patriarchy approach sufficiently explain the divergent social constructions of gender inequality in different societies; what is needed is an analytical apparatus which explains the dynamics of gender inequality in the context of political, social, economic and cultural diversity.

Patriarchy, in general, implies an independent social arrangement of domination of the female sex which transcends other political and economic systems. The word, 'patriarchy' 'reflects the sheer prevalence of male dominated institutions across a wide range of social structures and mode of production' (Middleton, C., 1988, p. 42). It has been defined by many feminist writers as an autonomous system independent from other social relations (Firestone, S., 1974; Rubin, G., 1976, Millet, K., 1969; Redstockings, 1970; Hartmann, H., 1979). Patriarchy is exclusive of capitalism since women's subordination to men cannot be explained by the analytical framework of capitalism alone (Mitchell, J., 1975; Harrison, J., 1973; Delphy, C., 1977; Hartmann, H. 1979).

The concept of universal patriarchy assents to the autonomous existence of patriarchy while denying its own intrinsic dynamics of operation. The assertion that patriarchy is a social relation which transcends the boundary of modes of production, and which is not essentially affected by social forces in historical modes of production, is a flawed discourse, even within the terms of its own logic. Patriarchy is certainly a historical manifestation. Analytical isolation of patriarchy from its historical conditions, thus ignoring divergent configurations of a multitude of social relations, results in ahistorical analysis. The concept of patriarchy therefore falls short of its claim to be a social relation and, thus, to talk of patriarchy in an unqualified fashion is to reify the concept. In addition, the emphasis on autonomy of patriarchy, and its analytical separation from capitalism, presents limits in accounting for the complex interrelationship between gender and class inequality. Given the fact that patriarchy is not discerned as a natural phenomenon, the fundamental questions become that of why and how such a social invention came to exist and be maintained.

Marxist feminists, on the other hand, emphasise class relations within capitalism specifically as being the root of gender inequality. For these writers, gender/sexual asymmetry is derivative of capitalist class relations. Because of the nature of capital (which must expand through the appropriation of the surplus value created by labour) capital continuously searches for the maximum control of labour and wages. Therefore, 'capital has seized upon pre-existing division between men and women, and has incorporated that division within its own workforce to its own advantage' (Mackintosh, M., 1981, p. 8). The process of adopting patriarchy in the capitalist mode of production is parallel to incorporation of other pre-existing social differentiation – for example, by race, migration, and age – into the subsequent hierarchical structure of capitalist production. In this regard, women's subordinate position in the capitalist mode of production is recounted as a pre-determined outcome of the process of capital accumulation.

The theory of capitalist patriarchy (Eisenstein, Z., 1979; McDonagh, R. and Harrison, R., 1978) attempts to explain sexual hierarchy within the capitalist mode of production. The main focus of the theory has been on two paradigms of analysis. One is the structural domination of women by men and the other is class domination as the fundamental social relation. Capitalist patriarchy contains a similar logical contradiction to that of the radical feminists within its

definition of patriarchy. Patriarchy is described as a social relation and yet it transcends the mode of production. This does not take into account the material conditions in which women's subordination is grounded; it ignores the specificity of gender relations in the context of diverse social structures and the specific organisation of material life contained within various modes of production.

To redress this problem, it is suggested that patriarchy changes according to the mode of production and adopts different forms. Capital has incorporated and utilised the pre-existing sexual division of labour in order to maximise the creation and appropriation of surplus value, and in the process, created 'new *forms*' of the sexual division of labour, and 'new *forms* of subordination of women embodied in that sexual division of labour' (Mackintosh, M., 1981, p. 9, emphases mine). However, *the form itself is part of the nature of the relationship*. The form of slave labour exploitation is different from that of wage labour exploitation. It cannot be denied that it is the form that defines the nature of these two different sets of social relations, and that they should be analysed separately according to the different social interfaces which connect them to their own material conditions.

Sylvia Walby carries her argument beyond the existing analyses of capitalist patriarchy, in insisting that patriarchy is a mode of production (Walby, S., 1986, pp. 50–4). She emphasises the interactive relation between patriarchy and the capitalist mode of production, and regards gender inequality as the outcome of the interaction between the two modes of production. But Walby's 'patriarchal mode of production' argument is flawed insofar as it denies the historical dynamics of development. Although she asserts the 'dynamic' articulation of the patriarchal mode of production with other modes of production, the patriarchal mode of production appears to be one which does not evolve, but stands still. It requires to be exempted from the general laws of development of a mode of production. Thus the dualist concept of patriarchy is maintained within which patriarchy changes its *forms* but not its *essence* (Middleton, C., 1988, p. 42).

The concept of patriarchy is useful and perhaps even necessary to describe unequal gender relationships. However, overgeneralisation of patriarchy in the analytical framework presents the danger of reductionism. If it is extricated from the historical dynamics of social formation, the complex relationships between different sets of social relations become mere incidental phenomena. Furthermore, the patriarchal organisation of labour cannot be understood if it is

separated from the matrix of other structural social relations (Middleton, C., 1988, pp. 44–5). It is in this respect that the concept of patriarchy in both radical and Marxist traditions reveals its intrinsic limitation as an analytical tool.

The alternative I suggest here is to utilise the concept of *patriarchal relations*. Patriarchal relations are not just a product of class relations, whether capitalist or non-capitalist, nor independent from modes of production. Rather, patriarchal relations are defined as social relations which change, or are transformed from one social formation to another according to the unfolding logic of *dominant social relations*. The dominant social relations come from the material sphere in which the prevailing structures of production evolve according to time and space. For instance, in the feudal European society, master–serf social relations were dominant in the rural economy, while in *Choson* Korea, landlord–tenant relations were dominant. Likewise, in modern core capitalist societies, capital–wage labour relations are dominant.

The interaction between the different sets of social relations does not necessarily exhibit uniformity in terms of its effect upon women, since they are formulated and organised through the particular historical configuration of each social formation. For example, as Redclift rightly pointed out:

> What it means to subsist in different socio-economic environments produces very different outcomes for women . . . thus the sexual and domestic division of labour do show an element of cross-cultural consistency but they also show important historical and cultural variations which need to be taken into account in the development of general theoretical explanation. (Redclift, N., 1988, p. 445)

Understanding women's subordinate positions therefore requires an analytical framework which not only addresses the structural variations among societies but includes the analysis of other social forces which formulate women's roles and positions within a particular social structure. Patriarchal relations are directly related to other social relations, in particular modes of production, in determining their forms and shape. Indeed, patriarchal relations are a form of social relations, as are modes of production.

To operationalise the concept of patriarchal relations, the suggested method is as follows. First, patriarchal relations themselves develop in interaction with other social relations. Secondly, in the

process of transition from one social formation to another, some elements of patriarchal relations will be retained and redeployed, perhaps even reinforced, but often via different modes of production and nested within a different ensemble of social relations. Furthermore, some elements of previous patriarchal relations will be either partially or entirely negated. The reason for this selective redeployment or negation of previous form(s) of patriarchal relations is dependent on their functional capacity in relation to the new mode(s) of production. That is, elements of pre-existing patriarchal relations which are functionally compatible with newly dominant social relations may be retained, however the ways in which these are redeployed are often very different. Likewise, elements from pre-existing patriarchal relations that are not functionally compatible with the most dominant social relations are negated, as they are not instrumental to any material objective.

The fundamental basis for the appearance of patriarchal relations varies according to the conditions whereby the social formation develops. It would be not only too ambitious, but wrong to try to pin-point one *single* determinant of patriarchy which transcends temporal and spatial boundaries. Although it may appear that gender inequality or sexual division of labour is a universal phenomenon throughout different societies, the wide historical and cultural variations foster divergence in social transformations, and thus present different patterns and implications of gender relations within different societies. Stressing the historical variations, Middleton states that 'such variations cannot be overlooked in any general history of the sexual division of wage labour, or in any attempt to construct a pan-historical theory of patriarchy' (Middleton, C., 1988, p. 23).

The following sections review historical variations in development of patriarchal relations in *Yi* dynasty *Chosŏn* and Japanese-controlled colonial Korea. The specific elements of patriarchal relations in each society and the way in which they were functional to the dominant social relations are examined. This is an attempt to analyse the socioeconomic matrix of gender inequality, especially that of the subordination of women's labour in a wider context of social formation and transformation processes.

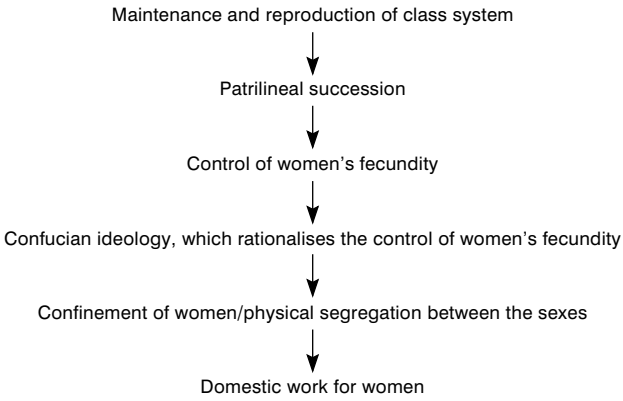

Figure 5.1 Patriarchal relations in *Chosŏn* Korea

PATRIARCHAL RELATIONS IN PRE-CAPITALIST CHOSŎN KOREA

Chosŏn society (1392–1910) was founded upon and maintained by the ideology of universal order of inherent hierarchy. The Confucian ideology of hierarchy and the superior–inferior order among different social groups came into existence as a quasi-religious philosophical tendency in its original form. It was, however, transformed into religious social norms and values and functioned ideologically as a mechanism through which the hierarchical class system was strengthened. Gender relations in *Chosŏn* were integral to all other social relations – and, in particular, to class relations. Women's subordination to men and the inferior value attached to their labour, as an expression of the patriarchal relations in *Chosŏn* came about in the upkeep of the class system. Six elements are involved in formulation of patriarchal relations in *Chosŏn* society. Figure 5.1 illustrates the dynamics between class relations, ideology, and patriarchal relations, including sexual division of labour.

Contrary to the Marxian 'non-valuable domestic work' argument, it should be noted that when women's principal social role becomes to bear and raise *genetically* legitimate heirs, it spontaneously prompts women's physical confinement in order to control their sexuality and fecundity. Physical confinement of women within the household and emphasis on their biological reproductive roles assigns them strictly to domestic tasks. Domestic tasks are thereby defined as

the *natural* vocation of women, related to human reproduction. Therefore women's domestic work requires neither to be recognised as labour of social value nor to be redeemed by payment.

In *Chosŏn*, the *Yangban* (upper-class) women were physically confined within the family compound. The intent of seclusion of women is evident in the design and structure of the Korean houses of the elite of that period. A *Yangban* house was divided into two main sections, demarcated by a middle wall built within the compound. The outer part (*pakkat-ch'ae*, or *sarang-ch'ae*) was for men and was also used as a reception area. The inner part *(ahn-ch'ae)* was occupied by the female members of the household. The women spent most of their time in the inner part of the house managing household affairs. The married couples stayed separate most of the time, although they lived within the same house. The practice of segregation between sexes was particularly strict among the upper class, in contrast to women belonging to the common (*Sang-min)* or lower class (*Ch'on-min*) who had less restrictive rules to follow. However, this physical sexual segregation eventually became a normal practice across all classes. Eventually, as neo-Confucian values became generalised throughout Korean society, even poor families of the lower class had separate quarters for men and women, with a smaller number of rooms in the house. The extreme case of this physical segregation would be a house of just two rooms with a single dividing mud-wall by which men and women were separated (Kim, Y.C., 1976, pp. 85–8).

The sexual segregation and physical confinement of women contains a dual function. One was direct control of women's sexuality and fecundity by eliminating the opportunities for women to have any contact with other men. The second was that the physical confinement functioned favourably in the ideological discipline of the women's docility. Throughout human history, various methods of discipline have been used, depending on the object and the nature of the discipline, ranging from 'appropriation' of bodies as slavery, 'service' established in the form of the individual will of the master, his 'caprice', to 'asceticism' (Foucault, M., 1979, p. 137). Foucault argues that discipline is an art of rank, and the most complete discipline is to produce a docile body. The notion of 'docility', according to Foucault, means that the person 'may be subjected, used, transformed and improved' (Foucault, M., 1979, p. 136). The discipline which aims to obtain docility 'increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in

political terms of obedience)' (Foucault, M., 1979, p. 138). The prerequisite for discipline of docility is physical and spatial separation through enclosure and partitioning. The unit separated by space does not represent mere space, but it represents *rank*. Sexual segregation and women's confinement therefore reinforced the establishment of the implicit rank between the sexes by creating docile women.

The ideology of neo-Confucianism served very effectively, both providing a ground for rationalisation of women's confinement and facilitating the procedure. The ideology constituted a congenial doctrine to idealise women's 'virtuous' roles related to the functions of bearing male heirs and rearing them accordingly. It contributed to formulate an identity of femininity with docility, dependence, and obedience through emphasis on the ideals of 'the good mother' and 'the good wife'. These were lucid reflections of the main doctrine of Confucianism, which emphasises the 'harmonious paths' among the people who occupy different hierarchical ranks and positions; indeed, the harmonious paths demand docility, dependence and obedience.

It is clear that the architectural arrangement of the Korean house originally designed for physical segregation of women from men also represents the sexual division of labour which coincided with the spatial concept of the boundaries between 'inside' (*ahn*) and 'outside' (*pak*). The wife was referred to as 'inside person' (*ahnae*) while women's work was called 'inside work' (*ahnnil*), mostly performed inside the women's quarter. An interesting fact is that, by contrast to the idea that a man doing women's work was derogatory, if a woman was forced to carry out what was regarded to be a man's responsibility (for example, ploughing the field, chopping wood), she would be regarded as praiseworthy. However, it should be only because she was forced to do so in order to sustain the family, and not because she merely desired to do so. If a woman's other conditions were considered to be 'normal' – that is, she had an able male family member, and if she still wanted or tried to perform 'outside work' (*Pakkat-nil*, men's work), then she would be condemned.

Since neo-Confucian academic training was a necessary condition to qualify for state office, the male members of the *Yangban* class devoted themselves exclusively to study. The members of the *Yangban* class were in practice exempted from the usual service obligations to the state, whether *corvée* labour or military duty. The *Yangban* were not to be interested in working in agriculture, manu-

facture, or commerce, for these were but the lower occupation of farmers, artisans and merchants, beneath the dignity of ruling-class males. Within the adamant structure of the division of labour, it became an unthinkable idea that a man would venture into the kitchen, to do the laundry, or even to physically take care of his own children; it would be a very degrading and shameful matter if a man, for whatever reasons, did woman's work.

The characteristics of *Yangban* society produced and maintained a hierarchical order among the different categories of labour, with scholarly (essentially non-manual) work, occupying the pinnacle of the pyramid. The value attached to education bestowed social supremacy upon a man with higher education. In conjunction with the social norms which prevented women from being educated at a level equal to men, the high value attached to education in turn reinforced the inferior position of women's tasks compared to men's work in the society.

The root of the inferior value attached to women's work in comparison to that of men's work is an important issue, since it is thought that women's subordinate position in contemporary Korean society stems from it. It is argued that 'to understand the sexual division of labour is crucial to any attempt to understand, and to change, the social position of women as a whole' (Mackintosh, M., 1981, p. 3). In his preface to the first edition of *The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1972), Engels asserts his recognition of the reproduction of labour as a determining factor in history alongside the production of the means of subsistence. Nevertheless, Engels contradicts this premise in the main text of the book by presenting production relations (rather than reproduction) as the principal factor which conditions the development of society and of social institutions. It is along this line of argument (social production relations determine all power relations) that Engels, and subsequent Marxist writers, explained woman's subordination as the result of their assignment to 'unproductive' roles. Thus, women's low social status is 'surrounded by sham homage and estranged from all real work' (Engels, F., 1972, p. 61). The problem involved in this productionist approach is, as Stolcke pointed out, that it fails 'to ask the fundamental questions of why woman is ideally confined to the home or why domestic labour, as opposed to so-called productive labour, is viewed as inferior' (Stolcke, V., 1981, p. 160). By not addressing this question the argument intrinsically resigns the interpretation to biological determinism.

Most Marxist feminist polemics accommodate Engels' interpretation of women's subordination as the result of their alienation from 'real work'. They attribute perpetuation of women's inferior status in the public domain to their performance of domestic work. Since, according to this approach, domestic work not only burdens women as a primary obstacle to participation in productive labour, but also contains no value as productive labour, it degrades women to a subordinate position in the production hierarchy. This formulation is an outcome of the obsession with production relations which, in turn, narrows their focus to social production in the public sphere. It is in this position that Lenin stated, 'Most of this housework is highly *unproductive*, most arduous, and it is performed by women' (Stolcke, V., 1981, p. 162, emphasis mine).

The case of patriarchal relations in *Chosŏn* Korea presents a proposition in opposition to the argument which advocates that sexual division of labour forms the foundation of women's subordination. If one takes account of the historical development of patriarchal relations in *Chosŏn* Korea as part of the process of class formation, then it becomes clear that women's *subordination provided the ground for degradation of their work, and not vice versa.* The process of institutionalisation of women's confinement and segregation solidified women's overall roles into a category of the domestic (private) sphere. The lower value attached to women's domestic work became the material counterpart of the ideology of *Nam-jon-yŏ-bi*: 'men are honoured, women are abased'. Women's domestic work came to be perceived as an undifficult and trivial vocation which inferior and dependent women could and should perform. Domestic work therefore could not gain any social value thereafter precisely because it was *performed by persons of inferior status*. It is social reproduction – i.e. the perpetuation of class relations and domination, mediated directly by the institutions of marriage, the family and inheritance – 'which requires [and thus determines] both women's primary assignment to domestic labour and the undervaluations of this function' (Stolcke, V., 1981, p. 34).

Adoption of the neo-Confucian ideology and its application to women's roles and position as dominant social norms were part of the class reproduction process. The hypothesis that women are subordinate because the functions they perform are subordinate then appears to be erroneous. A similar claim would, for example, be that slaves occupy low social status because of the degrading tasks allocated to them. Moreover, slaves carried out the tasks which

appertained to the category of 'social production'. Slaves' social status did not result from the prior social value placed on the category of work slaves performed, but rather work performed by slaves probably (subsequently) acquired a lower value. In short, the status of the work is attached to the status of the *social position of the performer of the work*. Confined docile women were in a subordinated status and therefore the work performed by 'abased' women (for 'honoured' men) came to be assigned a low status.

The inferior social value of women's work was an expression of their inferior social position. Women were not, at least during the pre-capitalist *Chosŏn* period, necessarily subordinate because domestic work was originally subordinate, rather domestic work became subordinate because women became subordinate. In earlier *Shilla* society (37 BC–918 AD), for example, women in Korea carried out almost identical domestic tasks as *Chosŏn* women, but *Shilla* women enjoyed greater legal rights, expressed in the inheritance law, property rights and social freedom. Therefore, the claim that the sexual division of labour determines social status is deemed to be incompatible with the manifestation of women's social position in pre-industrial, pre-capitalist Korean society. Explanation of women's subordination by the ascribed value of their labour confuses the cause and effect of patriarchal relations.

At this point in the argument, it should be stressed that the important issue is not the debate on the origin of women's subordination – that is, patriarchy, *per se* – but the historical particularity of the patriarchal relations in different social formations. The relationship between the sexual division of labour and women's social position in the pre-capitalist *Chosŏn* society and its implications should not be identified with those in modern industrial capitalist Korean society. A social system is not a static system, it shifts its disposition in response to the changing dynamic composition of social forces.

In spite of the somewhat dogmatic materialism in the theoretical postulates of Marvin Harris, his methodological concepts of categorical components of a social system are useful to the analysis of social change. According to Harris, a social system comprises four categorical components: the etic infrastructure; structure; superstructure; and the mental emic superstructure (Harris, M., 1979, pp. 51–4). *Infrastructure* reflects mode of production and reproduction – that is, the technology and the practices related to subsistence production and reproduction. This includes the technology of

subsistence, ecosystems, demography and so on. *Structure* delineates the organisation of political economy of the society, such as family structure, division of labour, political organisation, class and education. Finally, *superstructure* is referred to as the mental components of a social system which are expressed by, for instance, art, music, literature, rituals, and games. Each set of these etic components corresponds with a parallel set of mental emic components and these can be designated together as the emic superstructure. Mental emic superstructure means 'the conscious and unconscious cognitive goals, categories, rules, plans, values, philosophies, and beliefs about behaviour' of the members of society (Harris, M., 1979, p. 54).

However, contrary to Harris' claim (cultural materialism) that 'etic infrastructure determines the nature of structure and superstructure' (Harris, M., 1979, p. 73), the directions of influence between dynamic forces concealed within each structure are not strictly separable. Moreover, throughout human history many structural changes have been propelled by either external or internal military force, rather than by gradual 'evolutionary' processes. Change by force occurs primarily in structural changes which are not necessarily accompanied by immediate and automatic changes in other categories of the social system. On the other hand, history is continuous in temporal terms, and dynamic in its context. The four components of a social system are interconnected with each other and a change in any one eventually leads to a change in the others, thus representing the dialectic nature of history. Social changes take place through gradual processes of reciprocal interaction among the social forces at every level of the social system. In this process, each element of social forces bears either positive or negative effects for others. The dialectic nature of the social formation may explain why certain elements of social forces are carried over through social transition while some other elements are not.

TRANSITION TO NEW PATRIARCHAL RELATIONS: FROM CHOSŎN TO MODERN CAPITALIST KOREA

Colonial Capitalism in Korea

The patriarchal relations of *Chosŏn* society contain distinctive characteristics of that historical period. These patriarchal relations were the outcome of the historical process: a new class system constructed

and maintained *Chosŏn* society. Women's status in *Chosŏn* society should be understood within the context of the class system of that particular social formation, and not outside the historical social boundary, such as a presumed universal patriarchy. The gender relations in the subsequent Korean societies require cross-inspection with social relations present within each distinctive social formation in Korea's history.

If one repudiates the theory of patriarchy as a transhistorical category, an immediate requirement would be to provide an alternative explanation for the continuity of women's subordination from *Chosŏn* society to that of modern capitalist Korea. Women's subordinate position in colonial Korean society was not a mere or perfect continuation of the gender relations of *Chosŏn* society. An unequal sexual division of labour and women's inferior social position in colonial Korean society are manifestations of different patriarchal relations, which however, contain certain elements of previous patriarchal relations carried over through a dialectic transition while some other elements are negated.

The class system of *Chosŏn* society almost entirely disintegrated during the period of transition from the traditional pre-industrial society to modern society via colonisation by Japan. (Cummings, 1981). Korean society after independence in 1945 cannot possibly be identified as the same or even a similar social formation to the previous *Chosŏn* society. First of all, the pre-capitalist state collapsed along with the dynasty, the monarchy and loss of sovereignty. Secondly, the *Yangban* were expropriated by the Japanese, leaving only a rump landowning class. Thirdly, the Japanese abolished all previous class distinctions and introduced capitalist agriculture, thus creating a new rural class structure.

The primitive accumulation of capital was not an indigenous process taking place within the domestic economy of Korea. Rather, the Korean economy was forcefully integrated into the Japanese capitalist economy. Japan, however, was an 'imperial power without capital' (Halliday, 1975, pp. xxi–v), therefore Japanese colonialisation was not the *result* of capitalist development, as was the case with Western imperialism, but was the *source* of primitive capital accumulation (Bergesen and Schoenberg, 1980, pp. 268–9).

The transition of the Korean economy to a capitalist economy diverged from the typical course of capitalist development. The characteristics of capitalism were much distorted, and were specific to the Korean economy as a Japanese colony. Although introduction

of capitalist industrialisation initiated proletarianisation in Korea, the process of proletarianisation was nevertheless associated with a semi-feudal land owning system which the imperial Japanese preserved to some extent, through the prevalence of share cropping as opposed to wage labour, and through preservation of traditional master–underling social relations (Shin, Y.H., 1977, pp. 25–30). Given the dominance of mercantile capital accumulation within the colonial Korean economy, the proletarianisation process could not be comprehensive and mainly created semi-proletarians on a wide scale.

One of the important aspects of the proletarianisation process in colonial Korea is the Japanese emigration policy, oriented toward the redistribution of the Japanese population, particularly to disperse the unemployed from Japan into Korea. Unemployed labourers and street vagabonds were strongly encouraged to emigrate to Korea by the Japanese government (Lee, H.J., 1978, p. 34). Between 1910 and 1928, the Japanese government recruited 4000 farm households (20 000 persons) and arranged their settlement on selected fertile lands in Korean rural villages (Lee, H.J., 1978, p. 34) Eventually, these Japanese immigrant farmers became large landlords through the process of a large-scale decomposition of the traditional agricultural production system.

Between 1925 and 1940, over one and a half million Koreans were pushed out of the agricultural sector. Almost half (46 per cent) of those who left their farming villages migrated into the urban areas and became non-agricultural labourers, mostly as day labourers (Kim, Y.M., 1971, pp. 90–1). The Korean peasants who were expelled from the agricultural sector obtained the new status of urban semi-proletarians and functioned as a large pool of reserve labour, mainly for the Japanese industries established in Korea. In 1911, 73.4 per cent of industrial factories in Korea were Japanese-owned and the Japanese firms greatly exceeded Korean-owned firms in terms of their operational scale and number of employees. (Kim, Y.M., 1971).

Capitalist industrialisation and the semi-proletarianisation process under the colonial government affected the way in which women's social roles and their labour patterns were transformed. In contrast to *Chosŏn* society, women's economic activities were extended into the sphere of public production. According to the *Chosŏn Government General Statistical Yearbook*, the proportion of female labour in total labour force participation in 1913 was 32.5 per cent, and this increased to 40.2 per cent, 42.0 per cent, and 40.6 per

cent in 1920, 1930, and 1938, respectively. The participation of female labour in the industrial manufacturing sector recorded nearly 40 per cent in 1934, conforming to the general trend of extension of female labour participation outside of domestic production activities.

Development of New Patriarchal Relations

Even in the pre-capitalist production system, in particular *Chosŏn* society, a large proportion of women in the lower classes participated in many economic activities outside the sphere of reproduction, mainly in agriculture (Cho, U., 1988, p. 199). However, women's production activities in *Chosŏn* society were limited within a self-contained domestic subsistence economy, whereby women's tasks were not clearly distinguished from reproductive tasks. Korean women's labour participation in the capitalist economy during the Japanese colonial period thus has very different implications from that of their economic activities in the pre-capitalist production system. The sudden expansion of female labour participation in colonial capitalist industry was an outcome of systematic dismantling of the traditional subsistence production system by Japanese capital. In the textile industry, for example, Korea, as a Japanese colony, was fully utilised by Japanese textile firms as a market for finished cotton materials, while every Korean farm household was forced to produce raw cotton (Lee, H.J., 1985, p. 163). Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Japanese inward investment was encouraged in the textile industry and supported by the colonial government. The government regulated the production and distribution of raw cotton in favour of Japanese capital investment in the textile industry; by the mid-1930s Japanese textile companies were established on a large scale in Korea and the process of dismantling the pre-capitalist domestic textile industry was completed (Cho, U., 1988, p. 202).

Textiles as a domestic handicraft, along with other domestic manufacturing activities, had been an important, integral part of the production system in the pre-capitalist Korean economy. The penetration of Japanese capital into colonial Korea created a decomposition of the traditional economic system based on domestic subsistence production; the colonial government was determined to destroy domestic handicraft manufacture in order to boost capitalist industrialisation.

The process of transformation from the pre-capitalist production system to the colonial capitalist system was mostly precipitated by

coercive measures. In the case of the textile industry, all domestic weaving of any nature was absolutely prohibited, and most of the domestic weaving equipment in private households was confiscated and burned by the government (Kim, Y.H., 1982, p. 77). Eventually, the traditional 'private' domestic production (household production) activities were transferred into the domain of the public capitalist production system.

The pattern of the transfer of female labour participation into the public sphere reveals elements carried over from previous gender relations. The pre-capitalist domestic textile weaving process had been exclusively controlled by women. During the colonial period, women were concentrated in the textile, rubber and food industry, with the largest concentration in the textile industry, where 80 per cent of total employment was by female workers. The female labour participation pattern under Japanese colonial capitalism depicts the creation of a new industrial sexual division of labour within which the element of *sexual exclusivity* in the division of labour from the previous gender system was incorporated, while the element of sexual segregation by which women were confined within the domestic/private sector was negated.

The hierarchy in the labour market under colonial capitalism in Korea entails both a racial and a sexual configuration. The Korean employees were severely discriminated against by the Japanese although Koreans constituted a large proportion of the labour market, over 95 per cent. Japanese labourers received wages twice as high as Koreans, regardless of their sex. In 1933, the wage for Japanese male workers was 1.93 Won compared to 0.92 won for Koreans, while Japanese female workers received 1.00 won compared to 0.5 won for Koreans (Lee, H.J., 1978, pp. 36–7).

Within this colonial labour market hierarchy, the racial discrimination expressed in the wage scale surpassed the sexual discrimination, while the sexual hierarchy was present within each racial category. The Korean female workers occupied the lowest strata of the labour hierarchy, receiving only a quarter of a Japanese male's wage and half of a Japanese female's wage. Throughout the process of establishing a new colonial social formation of Korean society, Korean women were discriminated against by both sex and race.

Certain elements of traditional patriarchal neo-Confucian ideology of patriarchy were deliberately reinforced by the colonial government. For example, the neo-Confucian ideology of 'inferior women' was translated into the family laws promulgated in 1912. The new

family law greatly increased the rights of the head of household as a strict primogenitary system was codified within the family laws. The legal rights of the head of household were extensive, which endowed that person with 'nearly unlimited' power over the other members of the household (*Han-guk Yŏsŏng Yŏn-guhoe*, 1992, p. 52). Within the legal system based on primogeniture, a woman could as a rule not become a head of household. The only exception that could be made was in the case of a household without any male successor. Even if a woman succeeded to the head of the household she was allowed to keep the status only until a male successor was found – for example, via adoption of a son.

Likewise, women's subordinate position *vis-à-vis* husbands did not improve under the colonial government. On the contrary, their subordination was even more inexorably secured through legal recognition of the husband's superiority. The legal status of married women was defined as being only a dependent 'wife' (*Pu-in*) and not as an independent person. Married women were required by law to obtain the 'permission' (not consent) of their husbands for their public activities, for example, for employment (*Han-guk Yŏsŏng Yŏn-guhoe*, 1992, pp. 54–5). Any legal arrangement by a wife would be nullified if it was not 'permitted' by the husband (Lee, T.Y., 1972). In legal practice, a 'wife' was, in fact, categorised as a person without legal capacity, along with those persons under-aged, mentally retarded or the mentally disordered.

In terms of property rights, while men possessed legal rights to manage, use and even take profits from a wife's property, a woman required her husband's consent even in the disposal of her own property. Furthermore, the law of succession established by the colonial government revoked the previous rights of inheritance for women (Lee, S.U., 1989). Women had been included as legal inheritors during the *Chosŏn* period, albeit that their rights were greatly limited compared to male inheritors. The modern law of succession under the colonial government, however, precluded female members of the household from any right to inheritance.

Given the supremacy of laws in the public sphere, the codification of sexual hierarchy in the family law even further reinforced women's subordinate social and economic position. The legal assertion of a husband's superiority over the wife can be regarded as an augmentation of the 'mental emic superstructure' (Harris, M., 1979) of the *Chosŏn* period. On the other hand, the potential positive effects of the changes in the nature of the 'etic structure' (for example,

increased participation of women in public production) upon the mental emic superstructure (in this case, ideology of 'inferior' women), were therefore impeded by an external force (Japanese imperialism).

In historical hindsight, the transition from the pre-capitalist *Chosŏn* society to capitalist modernity in Korea could have been very different. The progressive social forces and impulses of the late *Chosŏn* period, such as the *Tonghak* movement, the spread of modern education and the importation of the ideology of social equality and republicanism, had significant potential to improve the social status of women. The increased participation of women in the public sphere could have provided a platform for a women's emancipation movement, as was the case in the West. However, any progressive social movement or social change, especially an improvement of women' rights, would impinge upon the interest of Japanese colonial capital in Korea in its exploitation of female labour. The colonial government deliberately prevented this possibility by stamping out the new shoots of emancipation. Japan's colonial laws profoundly deepened the subordination of women, which set back the cause of women's emancipation in Korea by many decades.

Patriarchal relations in Korea during the colonial period can not be thus identified as the same patriarchal relations that existed in *Chosŏn* society. The patriarchal relations in *Chosŏn* society were constituted upon the concern of the elites to secure the class/caste system. The pillar of the patriarchal relations was the ideology of obedient, inferior women and it entailed confinement of women within the domestic sphere of society. In *Chosŏn* society, the kinship ties were very strong and the household structure was based on the larger group of kinship relations. The patriarchal relations were mainly associated with the hierarchical division between the two jurisdictions: 'inside' and 'outside'. Patriarchal relations in colonial Korea, on the other hand, were largely defined by the specific form of colonial capital accumulation. The sexual exclusivity in the public sphere which existed in *Chosŏn* society was significantly weakened via incorporation of women into the capitalist production system. The ideology of the inferior value of women's work developed during the *Chosŏn* period, however, was redeployed in the public sphere during the colonial period via legislation of new family laws. Women's subordinate position in the public sphere under Japanese imperialism was established upon that ideology.

In contrast to the negation of sexual segregation between the

public and the domestic spheres of production, sexual exclusivity *within* the domestic sphere was carried over from the previous era. At the same time, the power structure within the domestic sphere changed as traditional kinship ties weakened and married couples came to be the centre of a nuclear family as an economic unit. The patriarchal relations within the domestic sphere in the colonial period became more individualised as husband vs. wife, compared to the relations between 'outside' and 'inside', and women's independent command within the domestic sphere was much reduced.

The unique historical conjuncture in which Korea was colonised by the Japanese imperial power very much determined the way in which the Korean economic system underwent transformation from a pre-capitalist to a colonial capitalist mode of production. The transition to capitalist modernity in Korea took place under the auspices of Japanese imperial power, rather than via any 'natural' social and economic evolution. The particular set of social relations under colonial capitalism accounts to a significant extent for the manner in which patriarchal relations were redeployed during the transition from pre-capitalist to modern Korea.

6 Women in the Contemporary World Economic System

PATRIARCHAL RELATIONS AND THE WORLD SYSTEM

The structure of the world economic system – that is, its intersocietal relations – determines a great deal of what goes on in the (seemingly independent) national social formations. The development of the capitalist world economy, in which regions and individual states are inserted, shapes and defines not only national economic structures, but also the patriarchal relations prevailing in them.

Patriarchal relations (which are social relations) interact with other social relations, such as class relations, and are transformed as social formations are restructured. I argue that even if the residual elements of previous patriarchal relations are found in a society, they do not necessarily convey the same patriarchal relations in a new social formation (see Chapter 5). Likewise, essentially similar patriarchal relations that exist in different societies may not necessarily be expressed in exactly the same manner. Rather they may be expressed in different ways, according to the structural composition of the society and to the particular historical epoch. In other words, patriarchal relations are constructed and deployed in various ways in accordance with the conditioning of material life in particular social formations; patriarchal relations are *historically* and *culturally specific*, while also being dynamic, rather than historically general and static.

Just like other forms of social relations (including economic ones), patriarchal relations are conditioned by the interaction of social relations at national, regional and international level. The dynamic relationship between societies within the world system, particularly within the contemporary capitalist world economic system, significantly affects patriarchal relations. Many writers have found that the characteristics of women's labour in the periphery and their participation in the development process are deeply affected by the way in which a peripheral society is integrated into the world economy (Mies, M., 1986; Miranda, G., 1977; Saffiotti, H., 1977; Schmink, M., 1977; Grossman, R., 1979). Any particular pattern of female

labour experience in any contemporary society is partly the result of the articulations of patriarchal relations within that individual society with the world economic system. That is, the 'peculiarity' of the process by which patriarchal relations interact with the capitalist mode of accumulation, and the non-uniformity of that process within each society (under different national conditions) must be explained in the context of the whole world economic system.

On the other hand, while the world economic system is taken to be the overarching unit of analysis, any broad categorisation of 'women' as a single undifferentiated analytical group should be firmly rejected. This is because, first, within the world economic system a material hierarchy among women in the core and periphery clearly exists. Secondly, within each nation state, the division between urban and rural sectors and class distinctions among women are also apparent. In some cases, these sectoral and class divisions among women are further compounded by ethnic or 'racial' cleavages. The social, economic, and political position of women in society, and their particular labour experience may therefore be completely different according to their specific social condition. In this sense, a core–periphery analysis is useful in differentiating the effects of capitalist development on women in different social formations, and provides a starting point for an analysis of specificities within the national social formation.

CORE–PERIPHERY HIERARCHY AMONG WOMEN

The process of capitalist development in the core countries increased the participation of women in the sphere of public production. This same development gave an impetus to feminists in the core countries to take action for gender equality. Capitalist development in the core has been accompanied by the processes of incorporation of peripheral countries into the world system. This incorporation of the periphery has established different modalities of women's roles and women's status in the core and in the periphery; the form of women's subordination in the production process is determined by the 'mode of exploitation' within the intersocietal system as well as by the internal structure of society.

The development of the welfare state and expansion of trade unions which accompanied the post-war Fordist era were partly the product of the spectacular economic growth and accumulation

of wealth in the core economies. Until the 1970s, the economic growth and the accumulation of wealth in the core was accounted for, perhaps in large part, by the access to very cheap raw materials supplied by the peripheral countries. In the 'old' international division of labour, exploitation of cheap resources was the main mechanism of the exploitation of the periphery by the core. After the restructuring of the world economy which came into full force in the 1970s and early 1980s, egalitarianism, the welfare state and worker's rights still remain dominant social norms within the core countries, albeit that there have been signs of deterioration during the last two decades. The higher standard of living, improvement of the working environment, legislation of workers' rights, universal education, better provisions in health care and so on, have definitely improved the conditions of women's lives in many ways in the core countries.

The process of restructuring of the world economy involved readjustment and changes of the mechanisms of surplus transfer from the periphery to the core. In the new international division of labour, labour in the peripheral countries has been more directly mobilised and exploited by the core. This is in addition to their former role as suppliers of cheap primary commodities. In addition, direct transfers of capital, for example due to debt service or capital flight, are also included in the new *mode of exploitation* of the periphery by the core. The mechanisms of the structural relations between the core and the periphery, through which women in the two different zones are affected in very different manners, can be illustrated in the theory of the New International Division of Labour (NIDL). The NIDL thesis (Frobel, F., Kreye, J. and Heinrichs, O., 1980) revealed that female labour patterns directly correspond to changes beyond the immediate boundaries of the domestic labour market. It also showed that the effects of the changes on women were expressed in a different manner between the core and peripheral countries.

Within the NIDL framework, the 'lower' parts of the assembly-line-style manufacturing processes have been transferred to selected NICs. New patterns of female labour participation in these countries stem from the restructuring and reorganisation of the world capitalist economic system. In the process of core capital's search for a cheaper labour force during the restructuring period, women in the periphery were increasingly, and more directly incorporated into the global capitalist production system (Elson, D. and Pearson, R., 1981, p. 147). The 'lower' parts of production are characterised

by low-grade jobs in terms of technology level, creation of value-added, level of labour skill and are usually dirty and more dangerous both for the workers and the environment. Female labourers in the peripheral countries typically work longer hours and are paid only fractional wages of female workers in core countries (Gee, E.H., 1985, p. 42).

For the working class in the core, especially for women, the NIDL had effects which are rather contrasted with those in the periphery. Rising unemployment in the core has been partly due to loss of labour-intensive manufacturing industries. Such labour-intensive factories producing garments, textiles, and electronics, for example, had mainly employed women; and women are more affected by unemployment than men (Mies, M., 1986, p. 114; Safa, H., 1986, p. 64). The diversion in female labour patterns between the core and peripheral countries denotes the fact that the particular way in which the sexual division of labour is organised in each individual society depends on the predominant mode of accumulation.

Nevertheless, the process of Western capitalist development has enabled women in the core countries to be compensated by women in the peripheral countries. The benefits core women gained, however far from being at a satisfactory level, have always ultimately been subsidised, both directly and indirectly, by the surplus created in the periphery. Before the global economic crises in the 1970s, the subsidisation of the core by the periphery was mainly orchestrated via unequal exchange of products. This unequal exchange enabled the cost of living in the core to be kept lower relative to the wage level in the core, thus, the women in the core benefited from a higher standard of living relative to the women in the periphery.

In the more recent mode(s) of exploitation of the periphery, a large proportion of female labour in the Third World countries is incorporated into the production of consumer goods destined for the core markets. Because of an extremely low wage level of female labour in the periphery, these consumer goods, including luxury goods, are sold as mass consumer goods in the core. As Mies notes, women in the core play a major role as the consumers of the goods produced in the periphery (Mies, M., 1986, p. 114). In this regard, the core–periphery hierarchy extends to *the relations between women within the world economic system*. At the global level, as well as the societal level, there are class relations between women which should not be ignored.

To sum up, as a consequence of capital accumulation in the core

via various mechanisms of exploitation of the periphery, women in the core capitalist societies enjoy more overall privileges compared to the vast majority of the working women in the peripheral countries. Therefore, while one can possibly recognise 'universal patriarchy' as a general description of similar social experiences by women across different national social formations, it is always necessary to differentiate the effects of capitalist development upon women according to their position in the world system as a whole and the specific patriarchal relations in each social formation. This realisation forms a preface to concrete analysis of the position of rural Korean women in the world economic system which follows in Chapter 7.

MARGINALISATION OF WOMEN'S LABOUR IN THE PERIPHERY

The intensification of subordination of women's labour and their inferior status within the labour force hierarchy are identified throughout the literature concerning female labour in peripheral societies (Beneria, L. and Feldman, S., 1992; Beneria, L. and Sen, G., 1981; Boserup, E., 1989; Elson, D. and Pearson, R., 1981; Mosse, J., 1993; Palmer, G., 1991; Papart, J., 1990; Psacharopoulos, L. and Tzannatos, Z., 1992; Salzar, G., 1980; Shami, S. *et al.*, 1993; Vickers, J., 1991; Ward, C., 1984). In the peripheral countries, the ways in which patriarchal relations are redeployed in the mode of production and accumulation is largely an outcome of the position of the periphery within the world economic structure.

Foremost among the commonalities of patriarchal relations in the periphery is the fact that women are either *alienated* from or *marginalised* in the capitalist industrial development process. The marginalisation of women's labour in the periphery is expressed in the tendency for women to be concentrated in certain economic sectors and in the lower wage bands, compared to more evenly dispersed male labour. Likewise, when adjustment of the labour force occurs, female labour patterns reveal more radical shifts than male labour, in accordance with industrial development phases. Female labour has proven to be more vulnerable to the dislocating forces of constant change in economic structure during the industrialisation process; the tendency is not towards the true process of proletarianisation, but rather alienation and marginalisation of women.

The variation in female labour patterns among different peripheral societies does not constitute a contradiction to the above argument; the range of economic sectors in which women are concentrated simply reflects disparity among the peripheral economic structures. The different types of economic structure in the periphery, on the other hand, are a manifestation of the many different ways through which peripheral economies are integrated into the world economy. The different modalities of change and the variation in the female labour patterns among different peripheral countries are directly related to the way in which the domestic economy is integrated into the world economy. Female labour patterns similarly express the differences in national development strategy, domestic production structure – such as methods of production, type of commodities produced (especially export commodities) – and the way in which patriarchal relations are deployed.

Comparison between peripheral countries reveals the causes of variation in the effects of production on women. For example, the Brazilian female labour force has been increasingly concentrated in the tertiary sector, while the Korean pattern of female labour participation has been developing toward more even distribution across sectors. Within the agricultural sector, the very high rate of female labour participation in Korea contrasts sharply to the relatively low rate of female participation in Latin America. The difference in female labour patterns can be explained by the different industrial strategies that those respective states adopted; each industrialisation model is largely determined by the position of the economy within the world system and the way it corresponds with other economies.

In the case of Brazil, there are two main reasons for the sudden increase in the female participation in the secondary sector (and later in the tertiary sector) which accompanied a drastic decrease in the primary sector after the 1950s. The first is capitalisation of agriculture. The agricultural production systems in most Latin American countries are now characterised by capitalisation and commercialisation in pursuit of efficient export cash crop production and profit maximisation, mainly conducted by large multinational companies and large-scale land owners. Large-scale mechanisation and commercialisation of agriculture resulted in reduction in labour participation in general, but female labour has been much more affected than male (Table 6.1).

The female labour expelled from capitalised agricultural production was then absorbed by an expanding textile industry (Miranda, G., 1977).

Table 6.1 Female labour participation in Brazil, by sector, 1940–70

Year	*Male/Female*	*Primary (%)*	*Secondary (%)*	*Tertiary (%)*
1940	Male	70	10	20
	Female	47	11	43
1950	Male	65	13	22
	Female	30	16	54
1970	Male	51	20	29
	Female	20	10	70

Source: Table reproduced from Gee (1985), p. 23.

Weaving had been traditionally regarded as 'women's work' and this patriarchal social attitude was redeployed into the textile industry during the initial period of more labour-intensive production processes. Intense capitalisation of agricultural production on the one side, and (still) labour-intensive textile industry on the other, taken together with indigenous patriarchal social attitudes, explains the sudden influx of women into the secondary sector in Brazil in the 1950s and the early 1960s. During the 1960s and 1970s industrial strategy in Brazil changed direction toward more capital-intensive industrialisation within the framework of an import-substitution development model. The female labour participation rate in the manufacturing sector decreased, in contrast to an increased male participation rate. Furthermore, the concentration of female labour in the Brazilian service sector since the 1970s reflects the large proportion of women who are pushed out from more capital-intensive industries into the 'personal services' sector.

Most Brazilian women have increasingly been engaged in a few occupational groups in the service sector, exclusive of higher-wage professional occupations. Female labour tends to be clustered in the lower-wage occupations in the tertiary sector – housemaid, cleaner, waitress and so on. According to Schmink (1977), 80 per cent of Brazilian women worked in jobs that belong to the lowest wage band.

The drastic shifts in the pattern of female labour participation closely followed the new phases of the industrialisation strategy in Brazil. This trend, in which the phases of domestic capitalist industrialisation affect female more than male labour, is found to be consistent with other national economies in Latin America (Schmink, M., 1977; Chinchilla, N., 1977; Salzar, G., 1980). The empirical

findings suggest that when an industry becomes capital-intensive, women are more likely than men to be alienated and marginalised by the process.

The marginalisation of women is also explicit within a specific economic sector. This can be clearly detected in subsistence production in the agricultural as well as the urban informal sector. Throughout the Third World, a large proportion of women are engaged in a variety of informal agricultural production activities – subsistence producer, casual agricultural labourer, coolies and/or petty trader of home-processed agricultural produce (Bukh, J., 1979; Deere, C., 1979; Deere, C. and Leon de Leal, M., 1981; Lazreg, M., 1990; Longhurst, K., 1986; Mies, M., 1984, 1986; Mitra, M., 1984; Radcliffe, S., 1986; Von Werlhof, C., 1983).

The agricultural production systems in most Latin American countries and some African countries went through capitalisation and commercialisation processes in pursuit of export cash-crop production and profit-maximisation, mainly carried out by large multinational companies (Arizpe, L. and Aranda, J., 1988). Marginalisation of women in the process of commercialisation of agriculture in some parts of Africa is very similar to that of Latin America, where a large number of women are engaged in subsistence farming as well as in informal activities within the agricultural sector.

Within such a dual agricultural system, fully capitalised agricultural production coexists with marginalised subsistence activities which are not explicitly, but are nevertheless actually tightly linked to the capitalist market system. For example, peasant women hired by capital as coolies in the state of Andhra Pradesh in south India do not hold a status of free wage labourer in a real capitalist sense (Mies, M., 1986, pp. 128–9). Within this type of agricultural production system, the men are transferred to the more mechanised and commercialised agri-business sector (formal agricultural production), while women are pushed out of their traditional domain in farming activities and forced into now marginalised subsistence farming activities.

In Africa, as in Latin American countries, the introduction of capitalisation of agriculture, commercial agri-business and corporate farming changed the production system and its labour pattern. The traditional female-dominant agricultural production system was transformed into a male-dominant capitalist production system (Boserup, E., 1970; Bukh, J., 1979; Momsen, J., 1991; Muntemba, S., 1988). Male labour has been pulled into export crop production

through the mechanisms of the labour market and the wage system in capitalised agriculture as well as in urban industry. Meanwhile, in the absence of employment opportunities for women in other formal sectors, commercialisation of the agricultural production system pushed women more and more into marginalised subsistence production activities. As a consequence, many African women have lost their former role and status in the sphere of agricultural production and become a secondary tier in agriculture (Afonja, S., 1986; Berry, S., 1975; Blumberg, R., 1992; Mies, M., 1986).

These activities of women in both the rural and urban non-formal sector can be easily disguised by aggregate statistical data. For instance, a survey of the Andean region found the female participation rate in agricultural work seven times higher than the official government figures (Deere, C., 1979). Additionally, aggregated statistics conceal a large discrepancy among the regions. In the case of Mexico, for instance, the average rate of female labour participation in agriculture in the 1980s was around 6.5 per cent. However, this figure does not reveal that the proportion of female labour in agri-culture is much higher in some states – for example, in Campeche, where the rate increases to over 25 per cent, which Vickers attributes to 'the increase in women's unwaged work on family farms' (Vickers, J., 1991, p. 86).

Such statistical distortion is a result of the official categorisation of economic activities, which regards labour input outside the capitalist mode of production as 'non-economic'. The market tends to be the key factor in the definition of active labour, in the sense that only production and labour exchanged in the market is defined as 'economic'. The underlying definition of the national product essentially includes only goods and services exchanged in the market (Beneria, L., 1982, p. 122). Most national statistics of labour force participation are aggregated within the framework based on this definition of economic activities. According to the Korean government, for example, the definition of 'the employed' comprises all persons who worked at least one hour or more 'for pay or profit', or who worked 18 hours or more as unpaid family workers during the reference week, but contributing 'to raise income' for family business. If this definition is accepted, women engaged in cooking, washing, and rearing children, etc. are counted in the category of 'Not Economically Active Population'. In the same way, when agricultural products produced by women in subsistence activity are consumed as family meals, women's work is not evaluated as 'econ-

Table 6.2 Female labour participation in Korea, by sector, 1960–95 (unit: per cent)

Year	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Tertiary*
1960	85	5	10
1966	61	13	26
1970	60	15	25
1980	46	22	32
1988	23	29	48
1991	19	27	54
1995	15	22	63

Sources: Ministry of Labour, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics* (annual data); Korea Economic Planning Board, *Korea Statistical Yearbook* (1960); *Census Report* (1966).

omic' since it is not valorised in the market. When the agricultural economy contains a dual structure, women's labour input in marginalised subsistence farming is not counted as 'economic activity', no matter how many hours she labours to produce food for family meals.

EXPERIENCE OF KOREAN WOMEN

Compared to Latin America or Africa, the Korean case presents a quite different pattern of change. Since the First Five Year Economic Development Plan was formulated in 1962, there has been a very radical increase in female labour participation in secondary industry during, a trend continuous until the 1990s (Table 6.2). In general, the increase in female labour in manufacturing industries coincides with the development strategy focused on export manufacturing industry for the first three decades of industrialisation in South Korea.

The Korean female labour pattern sharply contrasts to that of Latin America, in the sense that the increase of female labour in manufacturing as well as in the service sector occurred in parallel with a very high rate of female labour participation within the formal agricultural sector. Contrary to the Latin American case, the ratio of female to male labour in the agricultural sector has, in fact, constantly increased during the last three decades (Table 6.3). The source of this peculiarity is found in the characteristics of agriculture within the Korean economy, which greatly differs from some other

Table 6.3 Labour participation in agriculture, by sex, 1965–95 (unit: per cent)

Year	*Male*	*Female*
1965	73	27
1966	66	34
1970	58	42
1980	55	45
1988	53	47
1992	54	46
1995	51	49

Sources: Korea Economic Planning Board, *Annual Report on the Economically Active Population Survey*; Ministry of Labour, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics*.

peripheral countries such as those in Latin America or in Africa discussed above.

The recognition that the fundamental nature of Korean agriculture is subsistence farming enables us to understand the difference in women's labour participation in agriculture between the Korean and other cases of peripheral agricultural systems. Paradoxically, however, it also reveals the startling resemblance in the nature of women's labour in the periphery – the diversity in female labour patterns among peripheral societies is merely the by-product of the common position of female labour, which directly corresponds to the marginalised economic sectors. The nature and characteristics of commercial farming in Korea should be distinguished from genuine commercialised agricultural production which involves profit-seeking and capital accumulation. A survey completed in 1982 supposedly showed that over 77.3 per cent of the sample households in Korean farming villages represented 'commercial farming' (Choi, Y.B., Park, S.J., and Oh, N.W., 1983, p. 81). The authors defined the commercial farming household as a household which 'sells more than half of its production on the market.'

This definition of commercial farming, however, needs to be examined further. The so-called 'cash-crop farming' in the Korean farm households is intrinsically different from that of a large plantation system of cash-crop production, for example. It is not, in most cases, based on purposeful calculation of cost-benefit analysis in search of profit-maximisation. No 'rational' economic decisions based on an investment–return calculation (with many possible options) are made in the choice of types and amount of crops to

plant. The sale of cash crops in the domestic market is not for valorisation and realisation of surplus value, which in turn can be reinvested as expanded capital. The Korean farmer's activities in growing and selling of 'cash' crops are an integral part of their subsistence farming activities. The purpose of production and sale of cash crops is to subsist and reproduce, not to accumulate and expand production.

The deepening of capitalisation and commercialisation in the urban industrial sector has penetrated into the sphere of consumption in the Korean rural economy. This compelled the rural population to participate ever more in commodified market relations in parallel to their increasing need for cash. In other words, cash crops are not commodities produced for profit in a capitalist sense but are only the mediums which bridge the gap between the sphere of subsistence production and the sphere of commercialised consumption in which most Korean farm households are now trapped.

The traditional small-scale farming structure, with its strong subsistence-production nature, has remained the main basis of the agricultural production system in Korea. For the large majority of the Korean farm households the purpose of cultivation and growing crops has not been transferred into profit-seeking production through market exchange. The Korean agricultural sector as a whole has maintained a non-capitalist mode of production, and does not therefore contain a dual structure within it, as was the case in Latin America and a large part of Africa.

The concentration of capital in the industrial sector and the persistence of subsistence farming marginalised the agricultural sector as a whole, and rural women are pushed into apparently formal, but subordinate agricultural production. In Korea's case the division between so-called 'commercial farming' and subsistence farming is very blurred, which enables female labour in the agricultural sector to be accounted for by the official and formal statistics. However, because of the nature of subsistence farming, women's participation in the agricultural sector is a mere extension of their role as 'family food-provider'.

The incongruity of female labour patterns among various countries, therefore, should not be mistaken as diversity in the essential nature of female labour among the peripheral economies. Changes in women's labour patterns in different national economies of peripheral countries are quite the same in their essential nature: women's labour tends to be *skewed toward more marginalised sectors as the*

process of capitalisation and commodification deepens. Women are placed into either the second tier of subsistence farming activities marginalised by capitalised formal agriculture (as in Latin America or Africa), or the entire agricultural sector itself becomes marginalised by capitalisation of industrial sectors (as in Korea). In other words, within the diversity in female labour patterns in the peripheral countries, marginalisation of female labour within the capital accumulation process emerges as a principal propensity.

7 The Triple Exploitation of Rural Women in Korea

THE MODEL OF TRIPLE EXPLOITATION

The labour experience of rural Korean women contains elements that are very distinctive, in regard both to other sectors in the Korean national economy and women's labour in core economies. I argue that rural women in Korea are subject to a special model of 'triple exploitation'. This model of triple exploitation differs from the 'double exploitation' model in a number of respects. In the double exploitation model, female labour is essentially wage labour in the capitalist mode of production. Women are exploited both by capital and by men (usually husbands). They are exploited in the sphere of production as workers, but at the same time they are exploited via the sexual division of labour within the household. This double exploitation model is mainly designed to capture the conditions of urban working women, and is not adequate for understanding the condition of rural women in Korea, or women in much of the global periphery. Many, if not most, rural women in Third World countries are still engaged in family subsistence farming, but within national economies dominated by capitalist relations of production, as in the case of South Korea. A special model is needed to understand the labour experience of these rural women of the Third World.

The word 'triple' expresses the more intensive nature of exploitation compared to 'double' exploitation of women. However, the concept of 'triple exploitation' is not based on the heuristic double exploitation, model, nor is it simply a modified version arrived at by adding an extra 'layer' of exploitation. Rather, it is a new analytical concept devised to explain the situation of rural women in the Korean agricultural sector, as distinct from the capitalist industrial sector. The triple exploitation model encompasses the specific elements which are particular to exploitation of rural Korean women. (figure 7.1) The particular conditions that subject rural Korean women to triple exploitation involve

(1) *underdevelopment* of agriculture and distortion of the agricultural labour structure

(2) the *articulation of modes of production* and the maintenance of a non-capitalist subsistence farming production
(3) *patriarchal relations* which discriminate against rural women both in the sphere of production and reproduction
(4) *state exploitation* of rural women's labour which makes them subsidise social capital formation but via non-capitalist production.

The Korean economy, as a peripheral economy ascending in the world economic system, has been characterised by its export-oriented industrialisation and the extensive role of the state. The policies that specifically derived from the Korean economic development model resulted in the underdevelopment of Korean agriculture (Chapter 2–4). The triple exploitation model brings together the elements of exploitation of rural women in the context of agriculture as an underdeveloping sector of the national economy.

The incorporation of women's labour into the agricultural labour force was conditioned by the specificities of small-scale family subsistence agriculture in the national social formation. Korean agricultural production is a non-capitalist mode of production, but nevertheless fully articulated with the dominant capitalist mode of production of the national economy. A non-capitalist mode, in articulation with the capitalist mode of production, subsidises the capitalist mode of production via 'super-exploitation'. Rural Korean women's labour in non-capitalist agricultural production is exploited through the articulation of modes of production, thus more intensively than labour in a capitalist mode of production (see Chapter 3, for the detailed discussion on the articulation of agriculture with capitalist industry in Korea).

In terms of agricultural production, Korean rural female labour is exploited via the articulation of modes of production; although it is not directly exploited via capital–wage relations, it is nevertheless subjected to indirect but more intensive exploitation by industrial capital. Capitalist wages are normally supposed to cover at least the minimum reproduction cost of labour. However, when subsistence production is articulated with capitalist production, super-exploitation of rural labour becomes possible: labour is not remunerated at even the minimum cost of reproduction:

> In underdeveloped areas, capitalism is again applied in its crudest form to realise anew what Marx called primitive accumulation, i.e. the transfer of wealth from the precapitalist to the capitalist sector. (Meillassoux, C., 1978, p. 168)

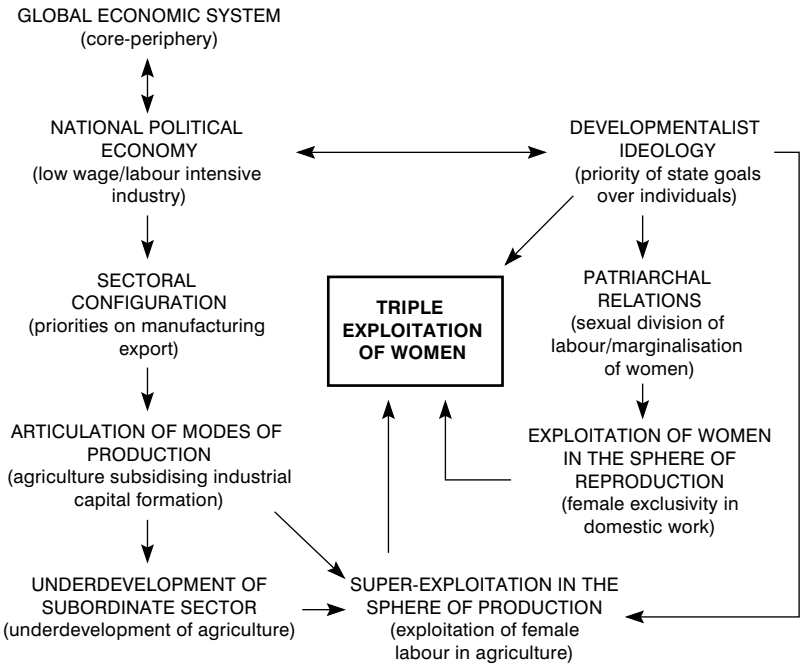

Figure 7.1 Conceptual model of triple exploitation

Another element that characterises the triple exploitation model is the specific patriarchal relations of rural Korean society. Exploitation of rural Korean women occurs via the unequal sexual division of labour, whereby patriarchal relations affect the labour pattern of women in the sphere of both production and reproduction. In subsistence agricultural production, female labour, though incorporated into the public sphere of production, is not remunerated, since this labour is regarded as merely an extension of household reproduction. Quite specific cultural patterns emerge, drawing upon selective redeployment of residual patriarchal relations derived from 'traditional' society (See Chapter 5). The demarcation between 'public' agricultural production work and 'private' household work is extremely blurred, unlike the case of urban wage labour and urban household work. Agricultural labour by women is socially regarded as merely an extension of their household roles. These household roles are defined through prevailing patriarchal relations and by the principle of sexual exclusivity, and caused by the nature of subsistence agriculture and the traditional role of women as providers of family meals.

THE UNDERDEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MIGRATION

The underdevelopment of Korean agriculture involves a special demographic structure in the rural areas. The particular migration pattern is one of the indicators of the effects of industrialisation in the Korean economic development model. Its principal characteristic – the large stream of selective rural–urban migration – is an important mechanism through which rural women were incorporated into the agricultural labour force. The nature of the problems that farming village women have to encounter is not simply to be attributed to the 'natural' market-determined development process, as liberal and modernisation theorists would have us believe. On the contrary, the deterioration of agriculture and the mutation of the agricultural labour structure were largely caused by the South Korean government's industrial policies. The subsequent changes in the farming system all had very significant effects on rural women's lives: the effects of global economic restructuring and the reorganisation of the core economies had ramifications that reached every woman in the rural villages in Korea. Changes in Korean rural villages and the consequent effects on village women are thus deeply connected to the world capitalist economic system through the mechanisms of the international division of labour and the 'world market'.

The experiences of Korean rural women during the last three decades have primarily been conditioned by the process of the underdevelopment of Korean agriculture. The underdevelopment of the Korean agricultural sector is the product of the extremely asymmetric relationship between agricultural and industrial sectors in the Korean national economy. The underdevelopment of Korean agriculture has actually been an integral part of national industrialisation and has been an intrinsic factor of Korean economic development since the early 1960s. Common characteristics of peripheral development and patriarchal relations found in the periphery of the international system underlay the principal changes that Korean rural women experienced during this historical process.

As previously discussed, the military government (established in 1961) consciously opted out of agro-exports in favour of a labour-intensive manufacturing export strategy. The commitment of the Korean government to industrialisation thereafter has been reflected in various economic policies and programmes, including price policy,

public investment strategy and export promotion. The implementation of these economic policies created and also endorsed 'uneven development' within the national economy. The industry-oriented policies of Korea's government reinforced the subordination of the rural to the urban economy, whereby surplus created in the former was siphoned into the latter through various direct and indirect mechanisms (see Part I of this book, in particular, Chapters 2 and 3). However, these industrial policies of the Korean government were not the outcome of decisions which were made completely independently, immune from external forces. The explanation for the explosive expansion of labour-intensive manufacturing industry for export during this period was not a 'coincidental' economic policy invented by the government; rather, it was a small part of the larger restructuring process that the East Asian region and world economic system experienced.

The Korean government's economic policies were formulated and carried out in response to changes in the core economies at that particular historical conjuncture. That development strategy and its concomitant industrial policy has been directed, and even determined, by the dependent position of the Korean economy *vis-à-vis* the dominant core economies within the world economic system. Furthermore, to a significant extent, Korea had its industrialisation policies formulated for it by external actors in order to serve larger regional and global interests (Cummings, 1989; Gills, 1993; Woo, J., 1991). The essentially dependent nature of the Korean economy, despite its much publicised 'success story', has constituted the principal framework of hierarchical configuration within which we must interpret the domestic economic structure. Within this hierarchical structure, the agricultural sector (and therefore the rural community) performed the role of 'satellite' *vis-à-vis* the industrial/urban 'metropolis'. There have been 'chain-like' connections linking the remote rural villages in the periphery to the world metropolis in the core, through which the economic surplus flows 'upward' (Frank, A., 1967). It is such a process that accounts for the underdevelopment of Korean agriculture, as surplus generated in this sector is not re-invested in agriculture, but drained away to promote capital accumulation elsewhere, domestically and internationally. In short, the rural family sector in South Korea is the *periphery of the periphery*. Within this hierarchy, rural women are subordinated at the lowest link in the chain.

One of the main mechanisms through which rural women are

integrated into the industrialisation process is via age–sex selective rural–urban migration. In parallel to the export-led industrialisation process, the rural population in Korea has undergone drastic change in its size and structure during the past three decades. In terms of size, the rural population has decreased not only in absolute numbers, but also relative to the total population. Beginning as the majority, the proportion of rural to total national population was almost 80 per cent in 1960, but became a minority of less than 25 per cent by 1990, and then a mere 10 per cent by the mid-1990s. This reversal of the proportional composition of rural to urban population was caused mainly by the large stream of rural–urban migration during this period, rather than by any other factor, such as the geographical expansion of urban centres or alterations in administrative districts.

In regard to the population structure, rural–urban migration in South Korea has been very age- and sex-selective. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, a large-scale young female exodus was the primary feature. The stream of young single female migrants was then followed by a large stream of young able-bodied people under the age of 44, of both sexes, draining out from rural villages into urban areas, especially into Seoul. The obverse of this process is that of the ageing of the rural population. Until 1965 less than 15 per cent of the rural population was over 50 years old. This group of the older population (over 50 years old) in the rural areas has increased to 24 per cent in 1983, 33 per cent in 1988, and a remarkable 66 per cent in 1996 (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook of Agriculture*).

The impetus to this particular form of rural–urban migration can be found in both 'push' and 'pull' factors. The main pull factor has been the extensive scale of absorption of labour in the manufacturing industries. The rapid expansion of labour-intensive manufacturing industries, with the full support of the government's export industrialisation policy, drew a considerable number of young unmarried rural women into urban industrial zones during the 1960s and the 1970s. Concurrently, the government's policy on grain (especially rice) prices functioned as a push factor. The low-grain-price policy was indirectly connected to the low-wage policy in the industrial sector, yet it accelerated the process of degeneration of the agricultural economy and enlarged the gulf between urban and rural living standards. The worsening economic conditions in the rural area combined with growing aspirations for a more exciting urban

life among the rural youth should be taken into account as being among the most significant push factors.

The characteristics of women in the urban industrial workforce can be briefly summarised as follows: young, unmarried, very limited education and skills, and migrants from rural villages. According to government statistics in the 1970s, about two-thirds of total working women in urban industry were from rural villages and small provincial towns (Ministry of Labour, 1974). In 1980, 91.5 per cent of female workers in the *Kumi* Industrial Park, which was the largest industrial complex in Korea, were from rural provinces, while 81 per cent of female workers in the electronics industry and 79.6 per cent in the textile industry had rural origins (Korean Women's League of Voters, 1980, p. 25). More than three-quarters of female wage labourers in urban industries in 1980 were under 24 years old (Ministry of Labour, 1980).

These figures also explain, though only partially, the subsequent stream of young male migration from rural to urban areas. The newly coined term, 'bride famine' expresses the excessive imbalance of sex ratio in younger age groups in the rural areas (*Kyung-hyang News*, 2 June 1984; *Seoul Daily News*, 11 July 1986). The rejection of farming family life by unmarried young women resulted in difficulties for unmarried rural men in finding a bride. This situation added more motivation to young males to leave the agricultural sector and to migrate into urban areas.

INTEGRATION OF WOMEN'S LABOUR INTO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

The continuous outflow of rural migrants into the urban centres since the 1960s resulted in an asymmetric rural population structure with great imbalances among sex and age groups. The distortion of the rural population structure caused by this particular pattern of migration was expressed in a severely unbalanced composition of age groups and sex ratios. The agricultural communities throughout the country were confronted with a significant shortage of agricultural labour, and given the fact that the nature of farming in Korea has been primarily subsistence production, female members of farm households who were left behind in the countryside had no choice other than to perform agricultural labour tasks.

Until the late 1950s, the sphere of life of rural women was very

limited to that within domestic activities (Koh, W.K., 1962). Women were neither 'allowed' nor 'prepared' to go out into the fields with men, especially for those women who regarded themselves as *Yangban* (see Chapter 5). However, in reality, it has been pointed out that most rural women, except the minority of women in very wealthy households, have always put their labour into certain types of farming work, especially in the kitchen vegetable gardens within the compound of their houses (Choi, J.S., 1975). Nevertheless, women had hardly ever worked as agricultural wage labourers, except for rare participation in communal labour exchange during the peak agricultural seasons (Lee, H.J. and Kim, J.S., 1977).

By the mid-1970s, the 'traditional' role of women as at most supplemental labour in farming had been radically transformed. Women in the agricultural sector emerged as the main labour pool making up for the deficiency of farming labour caused by the outflow of rural population to the cities and industrial zones. Rural women became more and more involved in a wider range of farming tasks, and they began to participate in certain types of work which hitherto had been strictly reserved as men's work – rice planting, threshing and especially agricultural wage work (Lee, H.J. and Kim, J.S., 1977). As more and more women become involved in what had been previously men's work in the farming fields, the range of women's work also expanded. Let us be clear that the increase in female labour participation in agriculture was not caused by a change of agricultural production system, nor by changes in the existing patriarchal relations. Female labour input into agricultural production by this particular group of older women left behind in the villages was caused by the need to *fill the scarcity gap* in agricultural labour supply.

The consequence of this material transition was an alteration of the ideology of the sexual division of labour in relation to *Pakkatnil* (outside work). The ideology associated with the previous sexual division of labour changed by the necessities of the changing national economic structure, as well as by the necessities of the individual household economy. Women ploughing, planting the rice in the wet paddy field or going out to work as paid labourers in others' fields was no longer perceived as being taboo or extraordinary. On the contrary, it became 'normal' and expected. The state facilitated this process of ideological adjustment, with the assistance of the mass-media. The government advocated and emphasised women's equal ability and the significance of their contribution to national devel-

opment, along with promotion of patriotism. From the point of view of developmentalism, or of developmentalist ideology, the state is concerned only with how women can be useful for achieving rapid economic development. The following quotes are typical examples of the principal attitudes of government officials and mainstream social scientists in Korea, during the 1970s and the 1980s:

> Indeed the cooperation and participation of women in the implementation of village development projects was of essential importance for their success. Moreover it is interesting to note that the influence and contribution of women has increased as the *Saemaul Undong* (the new village movement) has become more extensive and effective . . . What are the lessons which can be learned from the Korean experience in the people's participation in rural development? . . . Government should take positive measures in order to mobilise [the] energies and support of the urban social elite; and encourage extensive participation of women in rural change programs and promote their role in rural modernisation. (Hwang, I.J., 1981, p. 106)

In this way, rural women have been 'rediscovered' and 'recognised' as a useful labour source in the process of economic development in Korea. However, the extension of female labour into the public sphere of production took place in the context of filling the labour gap in subsistence farming. Furthermore, the fact that agriculture was not the leading edge of national economic development, but rather an underdeveloping marginalised sector, is an important factor to take into account in assessing the incorporation of female labour and the changing nature of gender relations in agricultural villages in South Korea.

The underdevelopment of Korean agriculture, and the restructuration of labour in this sector, created a unique configuration of gender relations within the rural community. The changes in women's labour participation patterns, the types of women's work undertaken, and the share of work loads in the public sphere of production, did not eradicate the subordination of women within the sexual division of labour. In short, this was not a move toward greater equality but rather toward *deepened exploitation*. For example, women are still excluded from the benefits of modern technology: the most labour-intensive parts of farming are allocated to women while male labour is more substituted for by machinery. The *Kojiban* is an example which clearly illustrates this point. *Kojiban* means an 'upland

team' which goes to work in the upland fields with high slopes, which therefore prohibits the access of machinery. The members of *Kojiban* are almost always made up of women (Kim, J.S., 1988, pp. 517–8). Furthermore, most rural women are also alienated from the means of production, especially land, and do not have much control in the decision-making process. Therefore, the mobilisation of rural women as agricultural labour did not raise their status, but merely created a *new set of patriarchal relations* in which women were subjected to new forms of exploitation within the public sphere of production.

ARTICULATION OF MODES OF PRODUCTION AND PATRIARCHAL RELATIONS

Rural Women's Labour and Subsistence Farming

A national economic formation is one that is organically synthesised, encompassing every aspect of economic activities. Any 'pre-' or 'non-'capitalist mode of production which exists in a national economy should not be regarded as an economic system isolated and independent from the dominant production system. The dominant mode of production in Korea is the capitalist mode of production which 'governs the basic relations of the society at large' (Meillassoux, C., 1975, p. 98). On the other hand, Korean agricultural production has not evolved as a fully capitalist mode of production and contains strong non-capitalist characteristics such as subsistence production. Nonetheless, agricultural production is fully integrated into the national capitalist production system as an organic component.

The same logic applies to the relationship between domestic reproduction and the public sphere of production. A unit of the economy, or certain types of economic activities – for example, subsistence agriculture – often appear to be unrelated to the core of the economic system. Social relations in the sphere of subsistence farming production are certainly non-capitalist, yet agricultural production is closely linked to the capitalist production system. This argument is clearly distinguishable from the dualist argument whereby two different modes of production independently coexist, varying in degrees of capitalisation at one period of time. The dual economy theory conceals the exploitative relations between the two different modes of production by denying the tight relationship between them.

The labour theory of value and the analysis of wages (in orthodox Marxist terms) is based on the perfect, fully evolved capitalist production model, within which the capitalist mode of production is exclusive, and market exchange is in full operation. Wages (or the wage-bill) in a nearly exclusively capitalist mode of production – for instance, in a core economy – include the indirect costs of labour. The costs of reproduction of the next generation of labour as well as the direct cost of the reproduction of labour of the present generation are remunerated in wages. The development of welfare states, and various social organisations related to social security and public welfare in the core countries, reflects the inclusion of the indirect cost of labour within the capitalist socio-economic structure. The Korean economic structure does not fit this abstract model of the capitalist mode of production. The capitalist economic system is not exclusive of other non-capitalist modes of production and the forms of exchange are not solely confined within the market exchange mechanism. The social cost of labour does not necessarily require its systematic structural inclusion within the sphere of the capitalist mode of production. In this type of economy, only the direct cost of labour is included in the wage system of the capitalist mode of production, and the indirect cost of labour is ascribed to the sphere of the non-capitalist mode of production (Meillassoux, C., 1975).

In the case of Korean agricultural production, when agricultural goods produced in a non-capitalist mode of production are exchanged in the capitalist market, *the hidden value of non-capitalist labour activities are valorised and realised in disguised forms*. This thereby creates and maintains the super-exploitation in the non-capitalist economic sphere. The value of the agricultural goods is created from two layers of non-capitalist labour. One is the value directly created by subsistence farming labour in producing the agricultural goods, a larger part of which consists of rural female labour. The other is the hidden value indirectly created within the sphere of reproduction – that is, domestic labour. When both parts of this non-capitalist labour are considered, women's labour accounts for the largest portion.

The Domestic Sphere of Reproduction

Domestic labour within a household not only reproduces labour through biological procreation but also involves (labour) reproduction

of household members. The sexual exclusivity which allocated reproductive tasks to women within the household has been the basis for the new patriarchal relations formulated during the industrialisation of South Korea. The pre-existing sexual exclusivity within the domain of reproduction (carried over from the previous social formation) maintained its rigidity in ascribing women to most of the domestic reproductive tasks. Thus, the hidden value in agricultural products are attributable mainly to women's labour in the domestic sphere.

In general, the sexual division of labour roughly corresponds to the division between the public sphere of production and the private sphere of reproduction. However, the exact demarcation line of sexual division of labour on the basis of production vs. reproduction varies among societies and classes. In the case of the 'professional housewife' in the core economies, or the *Yangban* class in the *Chosŏn* society, the dividing line of sexual division of labour coincides with the boundary of the public sphere of production and private sphere of reproduction (Figure 7.2a). However, within a social formation based on a subsistence production structure, for example, peasant households in *Chosŏn*, the sexual division of labour contains a contingent zone between the public and private sphere in which the division between the sexes is not clearly distinguished (Figure 7.2b).

For working-class women in a capitalist mode of production, the female domain of labour is extended into the public sphere of production. The extension of female labour into public production, however, is limited to the 'female', usually marginalised, sectors. Moreover, the extension of female labour into the public sphere of production is *not* accompanied by the extension of male labour into the domestic sphere of reproduction (Figure 7.2c).

In contemporary Korean rural society, sexual exclusivity in the public sphere of production has been inadvertently modified by extensive participation of female labour in agricultural production. It is important to note, however, that in the subsistence farming structure the incorporation of female labour into agricultural production was instigated as an extension of female activities in the sphere of *reproduction*. This is so because the extension of female labour in production was ultimately to produce family meals and women's role in food production is directly linked with their reproductive roles.

The extension of female labour into agricultural production was

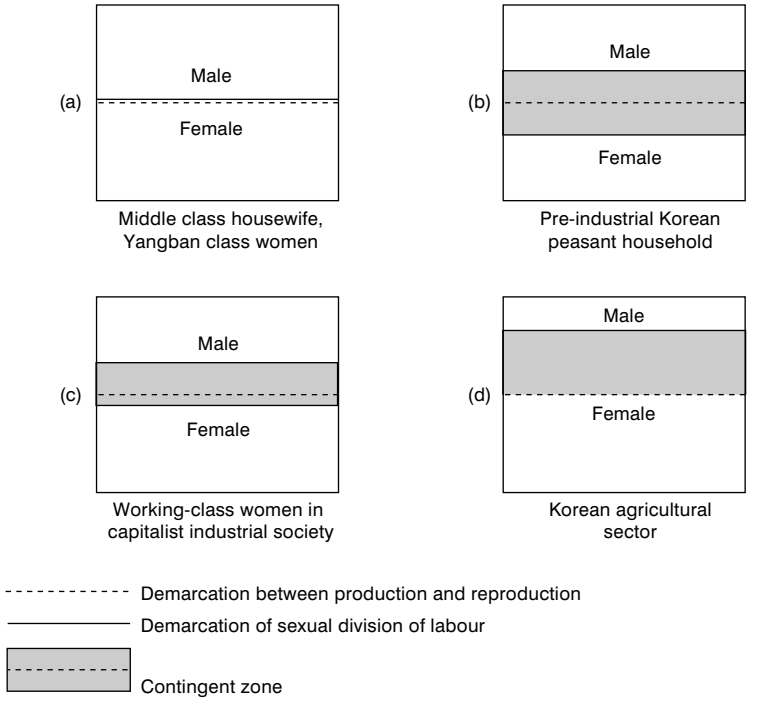

Figure 7.2 Demarcation of the sexual division of labour

not compensated by male labour extension into reproduction activities. An essential characteristic of the new patriarchal relations is that while the sexual exclusivity in the sphere of production has abated, the sexual division of labour in the sphere of reproduction remains very strictly set by the norms of the pre-existing sexual exclusivity (Figure 7.2d).

The state selectively deployed aspects of the old value system. For example, the ideology of *hyŏn mo yang ch'ŏ* ('wise mother and good wife') which prevailed in *Chosŏn* was reinforced by the state during three decades of economic development. From the onset of national economic development in the early 1960s, the Korean government actively advocated this ideology through its campaign of 'Revival of traditional good morals and manners'. The emphasis was on the neo-Confucian value of hierarchical order within society. The idea of women's primary position as being wife and mother

was intentionally reconfirmed by the government. The 'Exemplary mother award' by the government is a good example of this ideological campaign: the norms promoted for such a model mother and wife were the 'virtues of self-sacrifice and deference'.

The emphasis on women's position *vis-à-vis* men as wife and mother implies that the role of women is secondary. The wife's status is only tributary to that of the husband, who enjoys a much higher social status. Riveting women's position to that of 'Wise mother and good wife' (Smith, R., 1983), or 'The professional housewife' (Vogel, S., 1979), is in concord with the legitimation of the inferior status of women in the capitalist labour market (Seccombe, W., 1974). As Mies (1986) pointed out, 'housewifization' has been the basis of capitalist accumulation via lower female wages; in addition, it encourages and allows alienation of women from other socio–political activities by confining women mainly within the territory of the private household, ruled by men.

The ideology of *hyŏn mo yang ch'ŏ*, on the other hand, reconciles the patent contradiction between the interruption of sexual exclusivity in the sphere of production and the persistence of sexual exclusivity in the sphere of reproduction, through reinforcement of the sexual exclusivity in domestic reproduction. The ideology of wise mother and good wife would prevent a woman from 'abandoning' her responsibility for caring for other household members. Therefore, as is mostly the case, although women carry out the same amount of work in the fields as men (or even more than men), they are still expected, both by men and women themselves, to perform all domestic household work allocated within the framework of the new patriarchal relations.

Women in farm households now work virtually as much as men in terms of formal farming working hours. According to one survey, women carried out farming work for 11 hours and 28 minutes per day during the peak season while men worked an average 11 hours and 55 minutes per day (*Han-guk Yŏsŏng Kaebalwon*, 1987, p. 43). Likewise, women's share of farming work was little less than that of men even during the slack season. On the other hand, the number of hours men spend in 'helping out' their wives was between 34 minutes and 52 minutes per day (*Han-guk Yŏsŏng Kaebalwon*, 1987, p. 84). Thus, the condition of women routinely working over 14 hours a day is conceded via the ideology of the 'wise mother and good wife'. In this regard, the rigidity of sexual exclusivity in the sphere of reproduction (in particular, as an 'emic' superstructure:

see Chapter 5) not only provided the basis for marginalisation of women in the sphere of production, but imposed a heavier burden on them in carrying out tasks within the sphere of reproduction simultaneously with their production activities in the public sphere.

EXPLOITATION OF RURAL WOMEN'S LABOUR BY THE STATE

Exploitation of rural Korean women involves another aspect which is specific to this particular group of women. While Korean rural women who have entered the agricultural production workforce are subject to exploitation in both the sphere of production and reproduction, they are further exposed to specific exploitation by the state. Korean rural women engaged in subsistence agricultural production are not only vulnerable to super-exploitation by capital, but are subjected to special exploitation. Korean rural women are the ultimate base of the entire pyramid of value transfers and capital accumulation in the Korean national social formation. Like sisters of Atlas, they carry the weight of the nation on their backs. As rural women, they are compelled to compensate for a severe labour shortage in an underdeveloping sector, while receiving no compensation for all the other reproductive work they are expected to perform. Moreover, they are exposed to further exploitation through being mobilised to create resources to fund rural development projects which should be funded from the national budget. They are therefore a source of value transferred both to the industrial sector and to the national accounts.

An illustration of the type of special exploitation that Korean rural women experience is the so-called 'rural development projects'. These rural development projects have been initiated by government associated organisations and are primarily intended for the extra mobilisation of female labour. The government imposed various 'development projects' on rural women nation-wide which were ostensibly 'volunteer' but in fact coerced (for further discussion of government coercion methods and rural social structure see Korean Catholic Farmers' Association, 1990).

The dominant mode of production is maintained and reproduced through the hierarchical organisation of different modes of production. The capitalist system utilises and exploits the functions of social security which the self-sufficient subsistence farming economy

embodies. Women in subsistence farming households are in a special category. Through careful manipulation of their gender-defined roles, their labour has been used to subsidise rural infrastructural development, and thus indirectly subsidise urban development, by allowing the government to deflect funds to other purposes. Korean rural women have thus been subjected to an extra category of work besides their labour share in agricultural production and domestic reproduction. When the strict definitions of production and reproduction activities, corresponding to the concept of public and private sphere, are applied, these extra activities do not come under either of the two categories. Nevertheless, these activities are economic, and generate value which is appropriated elsewhere. One of these rural women's projects, not genuinely voluntary, was 'The rice savings project':

> The rice savings project was a program which was organised and successfully implemented by the Saemaul Women's Association in every village. The idea of the project was for each housewife to save a scoop of rice at every meal before cooking. This rice was converted into cash and deposited collectively into credit unions or agricultural cooperatives. The savings projects became a source of operational funds for the Saemaul Women's Association. (Hwang, I.J., 1981, p. 108)

Where did that scoop of rice come from? Women cook the meal and serve it to all the family members according to a normative rule – the order of serving the individual rice bowl exactly coincides with the hierarchical order among the individual household members. The head of the household (the husband in the modern nuclear family) comes first, followed by the eldest son; next comes the younger sons by the order of their age, and the daughters follow after the sons, finally the wife (the mother) comes last. The scoop of rice in question would probably not affect the dinner bowls of the father or the sons, who are regarded as more important and precious than the daughters. It was most likely the wife's dinner portion (and perhaps the daughters' in some cases) that was sacrificed for that scoop of rice.

Another example of rural women's activities in this category is the 'village co-op store' project:

> Village co-op stores tended to become active through co-operation made by the members. They [the women] purchase daily commodities from cities at wholesale price and sell them at a small

> profit to the village people, thereby earning an average income ranging from 5000 won to 40 000 won. There were 24 891 community stores as of 1979 all over the nation. (Hwang, I.J., 1981, p. 108)

This 'success story' of the village co-op stores project conceals that they were utilised as a mechanism of even deeper penetration of the cash economy into the rural villages. Women's participation in the rural village co-op stores' activities is closely associated with commercialisation of their consumption patterns. The more direct and effective introduction of consumer goods, produced in the urban industrial sector was achieved via a better organised and more systematic channel, that is, 'village co-op stores'; the idea and the life style of the relatively self-sufficient, independent, rural household economy yielded its position to the powerful tide of a modern mass consumption cash/market economy. It is certain that the widespread village stores, in nearly a quarter of a million villages, made a large contribution to introducing and accelerating the process through which rural women became more and more dependent on cash-based commodities for their everyday consumption.

The 'village kitchen' was yet another project which contributed to extend the role of women further without redressing their status. According to the government, it was introduced

> in order to save on cooking time especially during the busy farming season. This was done by collectively serving the village members. It also provided village women with opportunities to learn about how to improve cooking methods from a nutritional point of view. (Hwang, I.J., 1981, p. 108)

In regard to the 'extension' of the rural women's role via the 'village kitchen' project, the concept is restricted mainly to the extended amount of women's work. It did not involve a positive extension of their role, at least not in the sense of breaking down traditional role expectations for women and thus promoting women's status as a group in the power relationship *vis-à-vis* men within the communities. This village kitchen project was, along with many other similar projects in the movement, successful only from the point of view of mobilisation of women's labour, and more efficient utilisation of their labour without fair compensation – except, perhaps for widening their experience of cooking from 'a nutritional point of view'. At the same time it reinforced the traditional ideology of

exclusivity of women in the kitchen and their role as meal providers. They even had to take a further step to fund the equipping of the communal kitchens by engaging themselves in demeaning activities such as scraping the bottom of rubbish bins in search of empty bottles, cans, and recyclable materials:

> Collection of waste and used goods such as empty bottles, papers, furniture and so forth was initiated for fund raising purposes . . . The Samaul Women's Associations have undertaken interesting development projects with the funds raised through the above projects. These include purchase of communal kitchen utensils, sponsoring of parties for elders in their villages, donation of funds for building piped water systems, and community public baths, sponsoring group tours to large cities and purchasing of community properties. (Hwang, I.J., 1981, p. 109.)

The usage of funds which were raised by rural village women, either by sacrificing their portion of dinner, or by doing extra work without due remuneration, deserves more scrupulous examination and interpretation. These activities by village women are tightly connected to the national capitalist accumulation process in Korea. Village women's activities – be it working in the village kitchen, or collecting empty bottles – are non-profit-seeking, and thus they appear as independent activities, unrelated to capital accumulation. They certainly do not involve capital–labour relations. They are nonetheless, very 'economic' and 'productive' activities, since they create economic resources. It would be appropriate to define these women's activities as productive economic activities performed within the non-capitalist mode of production. Except for its 'voluntary' ideological mystique, these examples of state mobilisation of women's labour resemble the category of '*corvée*' in economic history terminology.

The nature of exploitation of rural women's labour via the extra-economic activities described above becomes clearer when examining the usage of the funds. The funds raised by rural women's non-capitalist economic activities such as collection of waste and used goods, saving a scoop of rice, collecting empty bottles and so on, were used for 'interesting development projects'. These interesting development projects ranged from the purchase of communal kitchen utensils, through to the sponsoring of parties for elders, to building piped water systems and community public baths – all, in fact, should have been administered through the resources of the national budget.

Instead, the government levied directly on to rural women the costs of social capital required for development. This levy was collected through 'voluntary development work', one of the channels through which these women's labour has been exploited to subsidise the budget of the government, over and above their fair share.

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Part III
Rural Women's Labour in Korea

Part III is concerned with the application of the conceptual framework constructed in Part I and Part II. While the previous two parts of this book were mainly theoretical and macro-level analyses, the following chapters will focus on the details of rural women's labour experience via a micro-level approach. The analysis in this part will draw upon empirical data collected by survey in farming villages in South Korea in the early 1990s, with special attention to the following questions:

(1) How do rural women experience labour, in both the sphere of production and the sphere of reproduction?
(2) Has the work load for women changed? If so, what is the implication of the change in terms of patriarchal relations?
(3) In what ways are these changes related to the political economy of Korean agriculture?
(4) How do these women fare in terms of political, economic and social power in relation to their share of labour?

The chapters in Part III largely consist of the analysis of the production system of the sample villages, the analysis of farm household economy, as well as the analysis of the labour patterns and the status of rural women. The types of indicators used for this analysis include: hours of work; type of work performed; hours of sleep/leisure; scale of farming; income; debt; economic assets control; decision-making power. In addition, demographic factors are considered, at the level of both the local community and of individual households.

The survey was carried out in 11 sample villages located in *Kyŏng-gi-do*, a province located south-east of Seoul. The travel time to Seoul from these villages would be two–three hours by local bus. The average distance of these villages from their town centre is approximately 20–30 minutes by local bus. Within *Kyŏng-gi* province, there are a number of county offices. Eight sample villages belong to *Yang-p'yŏng* county and three of them are in *Yŏju* county. The details of the sample villages are given in Table 8.1.

As the first condition for selecting the sample villages, the definition of an 'ordinary farming village' by the Ministry of Home Affairs was applied. The definition is:

> General/Ordinary agricultural villages are those situated in the areas which are not adjacent to a city, a motor way, DMZ area, or in the mountains. They are those located in a semi-mountainous/semi-plain area. (Ministry of Home Affairs, 1982, pp. 21–6)

The second category used in examining the averageness/representativeness of the sample villages was population structure. The population structure of each village selected in the sample was examined in order to ensure that they did not present a severe deviation from the national average population structure of the rural area. This test was carried out by computer data analyses, with the kind assistance of the National Bureau of Statistics, Economic Planning Board, Republic of Korea. The patterns of the agricultural production activities of the villages were also considered, so as to eliminate the possibility of selecting villages which are heavily specialised in certain agricultural activities, such as a high concentration of orchards, or so-called 'commercial crops', including ginseng, tobacco, luxury vegetables and so on.

All the households except the non-agricultural households in the sample villages were included as the target sample. The total number of households in the sample was 511. Among them, 60 households were non-farming households (11 per cent), thus the target number of households for the survey included 452 farming households. The final number of households surveyed was 353 (78 per cent of the target sample size). Each household was visited by a surveyor and the wife of the head of the household was primarily the target respondent. However, in a broad sense, *chu-in ah-ju-mŏ-ni* (the woman of the household) was targeted as the respondent, including any who were divorced, widowed or separated. A daughter-in-law of the household was interviewed in the cases when either the *chu-in ah-ju-mŏ-ni* was absent, or too old to be interviewed. There were 17 cases of single-female households.

Table 8.1 Sample villages: name and number of households

County	*Name of village*	*Number of households*
Yang-p'yŏng	*Shin-hwa 1 ri*	33
	Shin-hwa 2 ri	21
	Byung-san 1-ri	30
	Byung-san 2-ri	25
	Byung-san 3-ri	34
	Byung-san 4-ri	19
	Song-hak-ri	25
	Kyo-pyung-ri	17
Yŏju	*Ok-hyon 1-ri*	68
	Ok-hyon 2-ri	25
	Ok-hyon 3-ri	48
Total		345

8 Socioeconomic Structure of Farming Villages

POPULATION STRUCTURE

The total population in the sample villages was 1317 persons; the male population was 625, accounting for 47 per cent of the total and the female population was 692, accounting for 53 per cent of the total (Table 8.2). There were more females than males in the population sample, with an overall sex ratio of 90.3. (that is, 90.3 males for every 100 females). According to the national population census, the sex ratio of the Korean population in 1990 was 100.7, and the deviation of the sex ratio in the sample villages becomes much more severe in certain age groups. In fact, the sex ratio in almost all age groups in the sample does not concord with the national figure, except for the 25–29 and 40–44 age groups. The deviation of sex ratio tends to decrease among the older age groups – that is, older than 50.

The 20–24 age group shows the most severe deviation in sex ratio. The sex ratio of this age group is 183.3 (183.3 males for every 100 females), compared to the national figure of 106.1. To put it a different way, if the sample sex ratio had corresponded with the national sex ratio, the number of females in this age group should have been 58 instead of 18. The number of females in the 20–24 age group represents only 31 per cent of the sex composition of the females in this age group for the national population.

In the 20–44 age group, the proportion of males is much larger than that of the national population, while the proportion of females is much greater than the national figure for those over age 45. In the 10–19 age group, the proportion of males is significantly smaller compared to the national population structure. This is probably due to the fact that more boys than girls are sent to urban areas for schooling

Finally, a very deviant sex ratio appeared in the 0–4 age group. There were 150 boys per 100 girls in the sample villages. The national sex ratio for this age group was 108.0 in 1989, and the natural sex ratio is 100.5. The severe deviation of the sample sex ratio of this

Table 8.2 Population of the sample villages, by age and sex

Age	*Total*	*%*	*Male*	*%*	*Female*	*%*	*Sex Ratio*
0–4	45	3.4	27	4.3	18	2.6	150.0
5–9	99	7.5	51	8.1	48	6.9	106.3
10–14	148	11.2	62	9.9	86	12.4	72.1
15–19	154	11.7	66	10.6	88	12.7	75.0
20–24	53	3.9	33	5.3	18	2.6	183.3
25–29	40	3.0	20	3.2	20	2.9	100.0
30–34	80	6.1	43	6.9	37	5.4	116.2
35–39	80	1.6	43	6.9	37	5.4	116.2
40–44	47	3.6	24	4.8	23	3.3	104.6
45–49	77	5.9	33	5.3	44	6.3	75.0
50–54	115	8.7	53	8.5	62	9.0	85.5
55–59	125	9.5	60	9.6	65	9.4	92.3
60–64	73	5.5	30	4.8	43	6.2	69.8
65–69	66	5.0	27	4.3	39	5.6	69.2
over 70	117	8.9	53	8.5	64	9.3	82.8
Total	1317	100	625	100	692	100	90.3

group of children is probably caused by artificial selection of sex of children by parents through abortion of female foetuses. The period under consideration in the data also coincides with the time when the medical technology which enables the detection of an unborn child's sex began to be widely used in Korea. This deviation is a consequence of the strong ideology of son preference (*nam-ah sŏn-ho)*, a residual element of previous patriarchal relations which is particularly strong in rural families.

The population structure of the sample by age and sex is compared to that of the national population in Table 8.3. For the population older than age 20 but younger than age 44, a much smaller proportional composition was found compared to the national composition for this age group. The population of this 20–44 age group is extremely small in proportion to the national population of the same age group. It accounted for only 22.8 per cent, and this is only about half of the population of this age group (40 per cent) in the national population.

In contrast, a large proportion of the sample population is heavily concentrated in older age groups, especially in the age groups older than 45 years. The population aged over 60 accounted for 19.6 per cent of the sample, while the same age group in the national popu-

Table 8.3 Sample vs. national population, by age and sex (per cent)

	Total		*Male*		*Female*	
Age	*sample*	*national*[a]	*sample*	*national*[a]	*sample*	*national*[a]
0–4	3.4	9.2	4.3	9.5	2.6	8.8
5–9	7.5	9.7	8.1	10.0	6.9	9.4
10–14	11.2	11.1	9.9	11.4	12.4	10.7
15–19	11.7	10.7	10.6	11.0	12.7	10.3
20–24	3.9	10.5	5.3	10.8	2.6	10.2
25–29	3.0	10.1	3.2	10.0	2.9	10.1
30–34	6.1	7.7	6.9	7.9	5.4	7.6
35–39	6.1	6.4	6.9	6.5	5.4	6.2
40–44	3.6	5.4	3.8	5.5	3.3	5.3
45–49	5.9	5.2	5.3	5.2	6.4	5.2
50–54	8.7	4.2	8.5	4.0	9.0	4.4
55–59	9.5	3.1	9.6	2.8	9.4	3.5
60–64	5.5	2.5	4.8	2.2	6.2	2.8
65–69	5.0	1.8	4.3	1.5	5.6	2.1
Over 70	8.9	2.5	8.5	1.7	9.3	3.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note:
[a] National figure: *Korea Statistical Year Book*, 1992.

lation represents only 6.8 per cent of the total population. In other words, the proportion of population over age 60 in the sample villages was three times greater than the national proportion. This means the rural population is very aged, especially given the disproportionate absence of the younger population under age 44. The structure of the sample population therefore exhibits a great deviation from the national population structure in its extreme bias toward an older population, aged over 60. This is also true of the deficiency in the prime working-age group, in terms of physical labour capacity, that is, 20–44.

The stark difference in the population composition by age and sex between the overall national population and the population of the sample villages becomes more clear in the following population pyramids. While the national population is delineated in a smooth triangular pyramid, with the larger population in younger groups for both sexes, the sample village population pyramid forms almost a diametrically opposite shape, with an extremely small youth base, a bloated middle category and oversized elderly section. In addition, the sex ratio in this bizarre shape is far out of line with that of the national population.

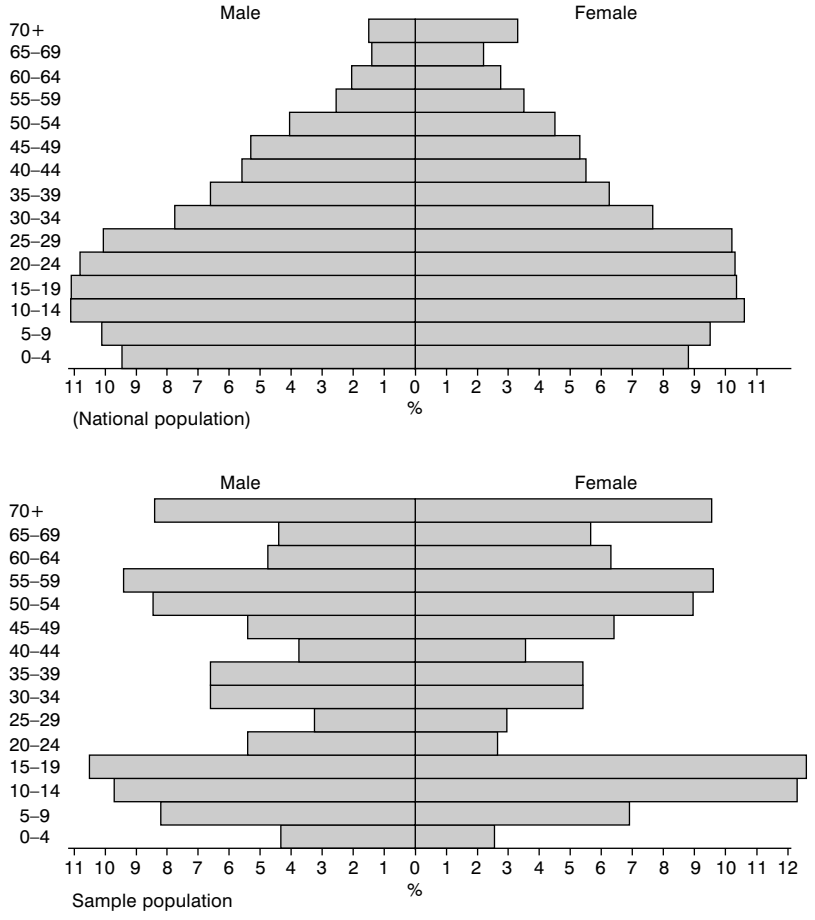

Figure 8.1 Population pyramids

HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE

In parallel with the decrease of younger population in the rural areas, the national average farm population per household has also shown a constant and gradual decrease over the last three decades. In 1960, there were 6.20 persons per rural household, which reduced to 5.03 in 1979, and to 3.48 in 1992 (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook*). The overall decrease in the rural population is due both to the reduction in the number

of households and the reduction in the number of people per household. However, when the figures for both categories are compared, the rural population decrease is caused more by individual outmigration than by decrease in the number of households.

In terms of household structure, the number of households which coincide with a family unit accounted for 93.5 per cent of total households in Korea in 1987 (*Han-guk In-gu Pogŏn Yŏn-guwon*, 1987, pp. 46–8). The 'family' in this context is the unit which is composed of members with a consanguineous relationship, with a married couple at its centre. The overwhelming majority of households in Korea (78 per cent in rural, and 87 per cent in urban areas) are nuclear families, composed of either one or two generations. Three-generation households are more common in rural than in urban–areas about one-fifth (22 per cent) of the rural households are composed of three generations, compared to 13.1 per cent among the urban households. As the unit of household corresponds with the unit of the family, the head of the family is usually the head of the household (*Han-guk In-gu Pogŏn Yŏn-guwon*, 1987, p. 48).

The overall trend in the size of households in Korea is that two-member households and three–four-member households are notably increasing, while households with a larger number of members, especially those with more than seven members, are rapidly decreasing (*Han-guk In-gu Pogŏn Yŏn-guwon*, 1987, p. 46). The differences in the mean sizes of household between urban and rural households has narrowed, the average number of household members was 4.6 persons in urban areas and 4.9 persons in rural households in 1987. Since 1988, the mean size of the household has been the same in urban and rural households.

Details of the sizes of the household in this survey are shown in Table 8.4. About two-thirds of all the sample households had fewer than five members and the average household had 3.83 persons (total population 1322 ÷ number of households 345 = 3.83). The figures in Table 8.4 appeared to be representative of the national average, and the average sample number per household exactly coincides with the national average number of farm-household members, 3.83 persons. The sample villages in this survey appear to be typical rural villages in Korea in terms of the population structure.

In addition, the national population and housing census showed that non-consanguineous households have increased since the 1960s. While the proportion of this type of household was only 2.3 per

Table 8.4 Size of households in sample

No. of members in household	*No. of households*	*(%)*
1	18	5.2
2	97	28.2
3	57	16.5
4	47	13.6
5	48	13.9
6	48	13.9
>7	30	8.7
Total	345	100.0

cent in 1960, this increased to 8.6 per cent in 1985 (National Bureau of Statistics, *Population and Housing Census*). Most of these households were single-member households, which accounted for 7 per cent of the total households in Korea, thus accounting for more than 80 per cent of non-consanguineous households (Kim, I.H. and Choi, B.H., 1988). More than 85 per cent of these households were in urban areas, and 95 per cent of these household members belonged to age groups under 29 (*Han-guk In-gu Pogŏn Yŏn-guwon*, 1987, pp. 54–5).

In accordance with this trend, the proportion of male heads of households showed a slight decrease, from 88 per cent in 1966 to 84 per cent in 1985 (*Han-guk In-gu Pogŏn Yŏn-guwon*, 1987, p. 48). The increase in female heads of the household is mostly attributable to the increase in single-female households, especially those unmarried or divorced. More than 80 per cent of female heads of households are unmarried, widowed or separated. On the other hand, only 1.3 per cent of all the single-member households are rural households. The sex ratio of the single-member households in rural areas is 92.3. Virtually all (99 per cent) of the females in the single-member households in farming villages are under 25 years old. This conforms with the fact that the typical household in Korea is structured upon a married couple and their children. It also means that it is very rare to have a female head of household in rural Korea.

SIZE OF FARMING LAND

The size of farming land defines the scale of agricultural production. The size of land holdings is one of the very important factors which contribute to the class formation of the farming community. The national average size of cultivated land per farm household has remained more or less constant around 1.0 ha. In 1981 the average area of farm land per household was 1.07 ha, which increased to 1.2 ha in 1989 and to 1.26 ha in 1992. More than three-quarters (83.1 per cent) of all farm households cultivated farming land no bigger than 1.5 ha in 1989, although the figure slightly decreased to 79 per cent in 1992. Only 1.7 per cent of farm households cultivated land over 3.0 ha in 1989, with a small increase to 2.4 per cent in 1992 (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries).

In general, a farm household with less than 0.5 ha of farming land is defined as 'semi-proletarian' and those with land size larger than 0.5 ha but smaller than 1.5 ha are defined as a 'small-scale farm household' (Kim, J.S., 1988, p. 491). According to national statistics, nearly a third of the farm households (30 per cent) in 1992 (28.8 per cent in 1989) fell into the category of semi-proletarian households, and nearly 80 per cent of all farm households lay in the category of small-scale farming, including the semi-proletarian households.

In the sample villages, 23.8 per cent of households have less than 0.5 ha of farming land (including tenant land), and 73.9 per cent fall into the category of small-scale farming with farm land smaller than 1.5 ha. This is slightly lower than the national figure of 79 per cent. On the other hand, the households with farm land in excess of 2.0 ha accounted for 13.3 per cent of the households in the sample compared to the national figure of 10.7 per cent. The national figures in Table 8.5 are from the 1992 data according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

AGRICULTURAL LABOUR

One of the characteristics of very small-scale farming is the high concentration of family labour input in agricultural production, with a minimum input of hired labour or machinery. More than a quarter of the sample households do not hire any machinery, and the figure rises to 66 per cent if those who hire less than 300 000 won

Table 8.5 Farm households, by size of cultivated land

Size of farm land (*ha*)	*Sample villages* *No. (%)*	*National average* (%)
None	4 (1.2)	1.4
< 0.5	78 (22.6)	28.6
0.5 ha–1.0	95 (27.5)	30.2
1.0 ha–1.5	78 (12.8)	18.8
1.5 ha–2.0	44 (22.6)	10.3
> 2.0	46 (13.3)	10.7
Total	345 (100.0)	100.0

Table 8.6 Machinery hire, by size of farm land: I (unit: no. of household/per cent)

Machine hired (1 000 won) Landsize (ha)	*None*	*less than 100*	*100–200*	*200–300*	*300–500*	*500–1000*	*over 1000*
< 0.5	42 (12.3)	14 (4.1)	3 (3.8)	6 (1.8)			
0.5–1.0	19 (5.6)	20 (5.9)	16 (4.7)	18 (5.3)	20 (5.9)	2 (0.6)	
1.0–1.5	14 (4.1)	7 (2.1)	8 (2.3)	11 (3.2)	19 (5.6)	15 (4.4)	3 (0.9)
1.5–2.0	6 (1.8)	2 (0.6)	5 (1.5)	4 (1.2)	12 (3.5)	12 (3.5)	3 (0.9)
> 2.0	6 (1.8)	2 (0.6)	4 (1.2)	6 (1.8)	9 (2.6)	9 (2.6)	9 (2.6)
Total	87 (25.8)	45 (13.2)	46 (13.5)	45 (13.2)	60 (13.2)	38 (17.6)	15 (4.4)

(equivalent to $375) worth of farming machines per year are included (Table 8.6). The cost of hiring machinery – for example a rice-transplanter, which is one of the most common machines to be hired – was approximately 100 000 won per day at the time of the survey.

The overall observation of the figures presented in Tables 8.6 and 8.7, indicates that the smaller the size of farming land for a household, the more human labour input is required per unit of land. In other words, a household with a smaller size of farming land is more likely to use labour-intensive farming methods since the efficiency of using most of the farming machinery tends to decrease as the size of land decreases. The relationship between the amount of machinery hired and the size of farming land shows a

Table 8.7 Machinery hire, by size of farm land: II

Hired amount (1 000 won) (ha)	*None or less than 100 (%)*	*100–500 (%)*	*More than 500 (%)*
<0.5	74.7	25.3	
0.5 ha–1.0	43.8	56.8	2.1
1.0 ha–1.5	27.3	49.4	23.3
1.5 ha–2.0	18.2	47.7	34.1
>2.0	17.8	42.2	40.0

Table 8.8 Amount of hired labour per year, by households

No. of days	*None*	*1–3*	*4–7*	*7–15*	*15–30*	*30*	*Permanent*
No. of households	131	71	36	36	30	40	1
(%)	38.0	20.6	10.4	10.4	8.7	11.6	0.3
Cumulative (%)	38.0	58.6	69.0	79.4	88.1	99.7	100.0

positive correlation – that is, a smaller amount of machinery is hired by households with a smaller amount of farm land, and households with a larger size of land hire more farming machinery. The exception is the case of households with more than 2.0 ha of farming land. A relatively higher proportion of households in this group appeared to hire very little or no machinery, explained by the fact that these households are more likely to have their own machinery.

The characteristics of labour input for small-scale farm households can be qualified by examining the amount of hired labour used by the households. More than one-third of the households hire absolutely no wage labour, and only 20 per cent of the households hire more than two weeks' wage labour per annum (Table 8.8). This means that small-scale farm households with less than 1.5 ha of farming land, which constitute the majority of the sample households (74 per cent), rely more heavily upon human labour than machinery, and most of the human labour input is sourced by each household's own family members, with very little use of hired labour.

Table 8.9 Scale of tenancy

Size of tenant land (ha)	*No. of households*	*(%)*
None	206	59.7
< 0.5	73	21.2
0.5 ha–1.0	43	12.5
1.0 ha–1.5	11	3.2
1.5 ha–2.0	8	2.3
> 2.0	4	1.2
Total	345	100.0

TENANCY

Farm households can be categorised into four types in terms of the patterns of their land holdings:

(1) *independent freehold farmers* who own their entire farming land
(2) *smallholder-tenants* who own some of their farming land but rent some land which is smaller in size than their own land
(3) *tenant–smallholders* whose farming land is substantially rented but also hold some land which is smaller than the rented land
(4) *tenants* who own no land but farm rented land.

In the survey, 60 per cent of the total sample households are recorded as freehold farms, and 40 per cent of the households hold tenantships. With reference to the definition of 'small scale farm household' by the size of the farm land mentioned previously, these 'independent' households require some qualification. With the exception of only 22 households (11 per cent), which farm an amount of land larger than 2.0 ha, all of the independent farms hold less than 1.5 ha of land. Considering the proportion of the smallholding households (89 per cent), it is more appropriate to refer to the first category of independent farm households as smallholders/petty farm households. The figures in Tables 8.9 and 8.10 confirm that the farm households in category (1) are, in fact, small-scale subsistence farm households, very unlike independent farms typical in the core economic system.

Among all the tenant households with rented land (139 households), 83 per cent of them rented less than 1.0 ha of farming land. Two-thirds (67 per cent) of the tenant households farm less than 1.5 ha land with less than 0.5 ha of rented land (Table 8.9).

Table 8.10 Tenancy, by category and land size

Tenancy category[a] *(ha)*	*A*		*B*		*C*		*D*	*Total*	
	No.	*(%)*	*No.*	*(%)*	*No.*	*(%)*		*No.*	*(%)*
< 0.5	62	80	8	10	8	10	none	78	100
0.5–1.0	48	50	28	30	19	20	none	95	100
1.0–1.5	45	58	18	23	15	19	none	78	100
1.5–2.0	25	57	10	23	9	20	none	44	100
> 0.5	22	48	13	28	11	24	none	46	100
Total	202	59	77	23	62	18	none	34	100

Note:
[a] A Independent freehold
B Smallholder-tenants
C Tenant–small holders
D Tenants.

Interestingly, there is no pure tenantship whereby a household entirely farms on rented land (Table 8.10).

The overall structure of the tenantship in the sample villages is, therefore, limited in terms of both the scale of the tenant land and the proportion of tenant farms. Nevertheless, it should be noted that nearly 70 per cent of all tenant households are those which have no more than 1.5 ha of farming land. In other words, a very heavy concentration of tenancy exists in the group of small-scale farming households with less than 1.5 ha of land.

The analysis of landlord's households and their renting pattern reveals that landlordship is not very common in the sample villages. In particular, a large-scale landlord is extremely rare. In this survey, only one-tenth (37 households) of the households own land which they currently rent out to tenants. Among all the *landlord* households, 70 per cent of them rent out less than 1.0 ha of farming lands; there are only three households which own and rent out farming land larger than 2.0 ha; and, these three households account for less than 1 per cent of the total sample. Out of these three households only one rents out all of their land, thus falling into the category of pure landlord with a quite substantial size of land. All these three households comprise elderly family members: the age of the wife of one household was between 60 and 64, and for the other two households, they were both over 70 years old. These findings indicate that in the typical rural village in Korea, large-scale capitalist landlordship still did not exist in the early 1990s.

Table 8.11 Annual household income

*Level of income (1 000 won) (equivalent $)**	*No.*	(%)
< 3 000 ($3 750)	74	22.0
3 000 – < 5 000 ($6 250)	104	30.9
5 000 – < 8 000 ($10 000)	84	24.9
8 000 – < 10 000 ($12 500)	36	10.7
> 10 000 ($12 500)	39	11.5
Total number of households	337	100.0

Note:
* Exchange rate as at the time of survey.

INCOME

The prevalence of small-scale subsistence farming households in the rural villages is substantiated in the analysis of household income. More than half of the farm households earn less than $6250, a year while almost a quarter of the households have an annual income of less than the equivalent of $3750 (Table 8.11). In the year of the survey, GNP *per capita* in Korea reached $4994 (Bank of Korea). Excluding the 39 households in the highest income group, a very liberal calculation of annual income *per capita* from the figures in Table 8.11 comes out to $1971, calculated as:

($3750 × 74) + ($6250 × 104) + ($10 000 × 84) + ($12 500 × 36) = $ 2 217 500
$2 217 500 ÷ 296 (number of households) = $7492
$7492 ÷ 3.8 (average number of household members) = $1971

Excluding the top 10 per cent, the sample households show a much lower average annual household income ($7492) than the Ministry of Agriculture figure for the national average for rural household income ($10 162). With an average 3.8 family members per household, *per capita* income of the sample villages is less than $2000. This is only 39.5 per cent of the national GNP *per capita*. The figure of farm household income *per capita* given by the Ministry of Agriculture in the year of the survey was $3655, lower than the national average, but 80 per cent higher than that of the sample villages. The discrepancy between the two figures of the sample and the official national average is partially due to the exclusion of

Table 8.12 Comparison of income between rural farm household and urban working class household, 1984–92 (1 000 won)

Year	*Farm household (A)*	*Urban (B)*	*A/B*
1984	5 549	5 555	99.9
1985	5 736	6 040	95.0
1986	5 995	6 735	89.0
1987	6 535	7 796	83.8
1988	8 130	9 190	88.5
1992	14 505	16 273	89.1

Sources: National Agricultural Cooperative Federation, *Yearbook* (1989), p. 94; *Korean Economic Planning Board* (1993).

the 39 households which have annual income of more than 10 million won. However, it is more likely that the difference is in large part due to higher income in the relatively small southern part of Korea where intensive commercialisation and specialisation of agriculture is practised, and there is more lenient estimation of rural household income in the official statistics. (For criticisms of the official estimate of farm household income, see Sung, J.K., 1995, pp. 434–9.)

A strong discrimination against the agricultural sector for the sake of promoting export industries has been consistent throughout the various phases of the South Korean industrialisation process. In spite of using a higher figure for national average income for farm households, the economic gap between the urban and the rural area has constantly worsened (Table 8.12). Since the mean size of household was slightly larger for farm households than for urban working-class households until 1989, the gap between the rural and the urban households would be even greater in terms of the average income *per capita*. Compared to the income of the urban households, the average annual income of 90 per cent of the sample village households was 5 993 000 won: a mere half (53 per cent) of the average urban household income.

A very strong relationship is found between the level of farm household income and the size of its farming land. The intuitive hypothesis would expect to find a strong positive correlation between the size of household farming land and the level of income. This is true in the sense that in a higher income group a higher proportion of households have larger sizes of farm land. In the lowest income group, 95 per cent of the households have farm land

Table 8.13 Size of household farming land (ha) and income (unit: no. of houses)

Income (million won) / *Land (ha)*	*< 3*		*3–5*		*5–8*		*8–10*		*Over 10*	
	No.	*(%)*	*No.*	*(%)*	*No.*	*(%)*	*No.*	*(%)*	*No.*	*(%)*
None	2	3			1	1			1	2
< 0.5	40	54	16	15	6	7	7	19	7	18
0.5–1.0	28	38	34	33	16	19	6	17	8	21
1.0–1.5	3	4	38	37	26	31	5	14	5	13
1.5–2.0	1	1	11	11	22	26	5	14	3	8
> 2.0	–		5	4	13	16	13	36	15	38
Total	74	100	104	100	84	100	36	100	39	100

smaller than 1.0 ha per household. About half of those in the second-lowest income group cultivate land size less than 1.0 ha. In the middle-income group, 73 per cent of the households farm land larger than 1.0 ha and 42 per cent of these households have land larger than 1.5 ha per household. The percentage of the households which have farm land larger than 1.5 ha goes up to 56 per cent in the highest income group (Table 8.13).

An interesting observation is that the number of households with smaller farm land (less than 1.0 ha) proportionally increases for the two highest income groups. This can be interpreted as reflecting that these particular higher-income households (with relatively small farm land) are deriving extra income from non-agricultural sources. This becomes more plausible when the ratio of agricultural income to total household income is taken into account. On the whole, 249 households (72 per cent of the total sample) rely on agriculture as the main source of income, and only 43 households (12 per cent) have non-agricultural income as their main income source. Among these 43 households, 40 per cent occupy the higher-income group with more than 8 million won per annum. Conversely, nearly three-quarters of the households in the two lowest income groups are totally dependent on agriculture as their sole source of household income (Table 8.14).

The analysis of these data leads to a conclusion that households which either entirely or heavily rely on agricultural sources of income tend to have a lower level of income in the rural economic structure, whereas a larger proportion of the households in the highest-income group tend to rely least on agricultural sources of

Table 8.14 Proportion of agricultural income to total household income (unit: no. of household)

Income (1 000 won)	*Proportion of agricultural income to total household income*									
	All		*2/3*		*1/2*		*1/3*		*< 1/3*	
	No.	*(%)*	*No*	*(%)*	*No.*	*(%)*	*No.*	*(%)*	*No.*	*(%)*
< 3 000	51	71	6	8	6	8	2	3	7	10
3–5 000	78	75	3	3	7	7	5	5	11	10
5–8 000	56	67	10	12	7	8	4	5	7	8
8–10 000	15	41	8	22	4	11	1	3	8	23
> 10 000	21	54	1	3	1	3	7	19	9	23

income. This indicates that agricultural production does not pay well in spite of the intensive labour input.

Tenancy is another factor considered in relation to the level of household income. Among the households in the lower-income group, 44 per cent hold tenant status, while only 25 per cent of the households in the highest-income group have any form of tenantship. In general, a composite relationship which involves the factors discussed above – including size of farming land, tenancy, level of income and level of dependency on agricultural income – appears to reflect the economic structure of the farming villages. The dominant characteristic apparent in this agricultural economy is that a low-income household farms a very small amount of land, and tends to depend more on agricultural income, with a higher probability of tenancy.

DEBTS

Almost three-quarters of the sample households are in debt. More than one-third of the indebted households have debts exceeding half of the average annual household income (Table 8.15). The proportion of indebted households does not necessarily decrease in the higher-income groups. A startling 71 per cent of the households in the two highest-income groups were in debt. In fact, the lowest-income group appeared to have more debt-free households than the higher-income groups. The proportion of households without any debt was 44 per cent in the low-income group, compared to 24 per cent and 29 per cent in the middle- and high-income groups

Table 8.15 Proportion of indebted households, by level of income (unit: no. of household)

	Level of annual income							
	Low[a]	*(%)*	*Middle*[b]	*(%)*	*High*[c]	*(%)*	*Total*	*(%)*
Household without debt	32	44	41	24	19	29	92	30
Indebted household	40	56	129	76	45	71	214	70
Total	72	100	170	100	64	100	306	100

Notes:
[a] Low: < 3 million won.
[b] Middle: 3–8 million won.
[c] High: > 8 million won.

Table 8.16 Amount of debt

Amount of debt (1 000 won)	*Number of households*	*(%)*
None	94	27.5
< 500	19	5.6
500–1 500	85	24.9
1 500–3 000	67	19.6
3 000–5 000	49	14.3
> 5 000	28	8.2
Total	342	100.0

respectively (Table 8.15). An ostensible explanation is that in addition to the minimum level of household budget, many of the households in this group do not have much access to loan sources, because they have very little collateral, and thus retain low creditworthiness (Table 8.16).

Of all indebted households, 40 per cent have debts exceeding a half of each household's annual income, and 16 per cent of them have a debt larger than their total annual income. Among the low- and middle-income group households the proportion of household debt to annual income tends to increase as the level of income increases. The middle-income group, which constitutes nearly two-thirds of the sample households, is most heavily indebted in terms of percentage of indebted households and the size of the debts in proportion to their income (Table 8.17).

Among the total 242 indebted households, 203 households (82 per cent) designated farming expenditure as the first reason for

Table 8.17 Proportion of debt to annual income, by income level (unit: no. of household)

	Level of Income[a]							
Debt size	*Low*	*(%)*	*Middle*	*(%)*	*High*	*(%)*	*Total*	*(%)*
< 1/2 of income	30	73.2	76	52.0	39	70.9	145	60
> 1/2 of income	6	14.6	36	24.7	16	29.1	58	24
> total income	5	12.2	34	23.3			39	16
Total	41	100.0	146	100.0	55	100.0	242	100.0

Note:
[a] See Table 8.15.

Table 8.18 Usage of household debt

Usage of debt[a]	*A*	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*
No. of households	203	88	62	51	40	36	20	13
(%)	84	37	26	21	17	15	8	5

Note:
[a] Use of debt
A Farming expenditure.
B Living expenses.
C Education.
D Farm machinery purchase.
E Payment of other debt(s)/interest.
F Family rituals.
G Medical expenses.
H Others.

their indebtedness. In most cases the expense of farming is used as the official reason for getting credit from public sources of finance. However, in reality a substantial number of households use the loans for other purposes than farming expenses. More than one-third of the households (37 per cent) used the loans to cover their living expenses, and about a quarter spent the loans for their children's education. It is not uncommon for a household to go into greater debt in order to cover the interest, or to pay off its previous debt(s). 17 per cent of indebted households took out a new loan(s) for these purposes (Table 8.18).

Two-thirds of the those households which used most of their loans for their daily living expenses (such as food, clothing, fuel, and other miscellaneous bills) belong to the low-income group. The negative correlation between the level of household income and

Table 8.19 Indebted household with reason *B* and *E*[a] by income level (unit: no. of household)

	Income level[b]			
Debt usage	*Low*	*Middle*	*High*	*Total*
Living expenses	52	22	14	86
(%)	58.1	25.6	16.3	100
Debt/interest payments	22	13	5	40
(%)	55	32.5	12.5	100

Notes:
[a] See Table 8.18.
[b] See Table 8.15.

taking loans for daily living expenses is expected. However, even among the high-income group, 16.3 per cent of the households having debts belong to this category and this certainly indicates the severe economic situation for farm households in general. The same trend exists for those 40 households which borrowed more money in order to make payments on older debt, or to keep up with the interest payments. A higher proportion of the households which took up loans for other debt payment purposes belong to the lower-income group which earn less than the average income of the total sample households: in other words, the households with the lowest income are hit hardest by the debt trap (Table 8.19).

The summation of the above findings reflects that the overall structure of the rural economy is based on a large majority (three-quarters) of small subsistence farming households with very small farm land holdings. While these households are greatly dependent on agricultural sources of income their earnings are not more than the national average, revealing economic vulnerability amid a substantial burden of debt.

MIGRATION AND RURAL POPULATION

Among the total 345 sample households, less than one-fifth (64 households; 18 per cent) had no member who migrated out of the village. The total number of migrants from the villages during the period amounted to 1055 persons, very close to the present total population of the villages (1322). The average number of migrants per household is 3.75 persons, which closely matches the average

number of persons per household (3.8 persons). In other words, nearly half of the natural population of these villages have migrated out of their villages during the last few decades.

The destination of the outmigrants from the sample villages was heavily skewed toward urban areas. A large majority (83 per cent) of the migrants left their villages and went to urban areas. Only 17 per cent of the outmigrants moved to other rural areas. The rural–urban migration has consistently been the mainstream of immigration in the urban areas. For example, in 1975, rural–urban migration accounted for 67.1 per cent of the net migration in the urban area, 70 per cent in 1986, 77.3 per cent in 1987 and 75 per cent in 1988 (National Bureau of Statistics, *Annual Report on the Internal Migration Statistics*, 1989, p. 14). The largest proportion of the life-time migrants has been found within the area of the capital city and its neighbouring cities, while the smallest proportion was observed within the rural area.

One of the most prominent characteristics of the stream of outmigration from the sample villages is its severe age selectiveness. Table 8.20 shows the proportion of migrants in each age category to the total migrants, and the ratio to the existing population of the same age category is shown in column (4). When the group of all migrants is independently examined, the proportion of migrants in each age group decreases continuously as the age groups become older – that is, there are a greater number of migrants in any younger age group compared to an older age group. As the age group moves towards older ages, the rate of reduction in the number of migrants becomes more drastic. The overwhelming majority (over 94 per cent) of all the outmigrants are under the age of 49, and about half (41.7 per cent) of them are younger than 29. However, it should be noted that the age group of under 29 is a cluster of six five-year age groups.

About half (47.4 per cent) of the total migrants belong to three five-year age groups older than age 29 but younger than 45 – that is the 30–44 age group. In order to clarify the difference in age categories, the number of migrants in each age group is compared to the number of the present population of the corresponding age group. The figures in column (3) Table 8.20 are the migration ratio in each five-year age cohort of the sample villages. This reveals extreme disparity among the age groups. The most intensive migration has occurred in the population cohort 30–44. For the population cohort of age 30–34, more than three-quarters of the

Table 8.20 Migrants, by five-year age groups

Age group	*Number of migrants*	*(%)*	*Ratio to village population*
Under 29	439	41.7	0.83
30–34	257	24.4	3.21
35–39	178	16.9	2.23
40–44	64	6.1	1.36
45–49	53	5.0	0.70
50–54	28	2.7	0.24
55–59	15	1.4	0.12
60–64	11	1.1	0.15
65–69	3	0.3	0.45
Over 70	4	0.4	0.32
Total	1052	100.0	0.80

natural population had moved out of the villages, and for the cohort of age 35–39, more than two-thirds of the population are counted as outmigrants. For the cohort of age 40–44, the number of migrants consists of more than a half of the population in this cohort group. In summary, *almost half of the total outmigrants from these villages belongs to the age cohort 30–44*, regardless of the timing of the individual migration – the largest proportion of people who left these villages are in the age group which retains the most prime labour capacity.

The sex composition of the migrants from the sample villages shows little deviation from the national pattern. The number of female migrants (535), and male (520), represents the sex ratio of 97.2. This figure loosely corresponds to the sex ratio of the national population (100.2). However, the present population of the sample villages contains an extreme deviation in sex ratio among different age groups, as discussed above. Therefore, it should be expected that the sex ratio of the migrants for each age group would show significant differences in the degree of deviation.

The national survey found that among the migrants within the 14–24 age category, female migrants are predominant, while a greater proportion of the migrants aged 25–44 years were accounted for by male migrants (Bureau of Statistics, *The Korean National Migration Survey*, 1983, p. 102). The difference in sex ratio among age groups seems to be closely related to the reasons for outmigration. A characteristic of migrants uncovered in the national migration survey was that among 'life-time migrants', there were more female

Table 8.21 Migrants, by occupational group

	Number of migrants	*(%)*[a]	*(%)*[b]
Economically inactive	471		45
Agriculture	31	5.5	3
Industrial production	223	39.4	21.5
Clerical in urban industry	175	30.9	17.0
Sales	85	15.0	8
Service	46	8.1	4
Administration/managerial	6	1.1	0.6
Total	1037		100

Notes:
[a] % of economically active migrants.
[b] % of total migrants.

than male migrants. Although economic reasons have been identified as the main factor accounting for most rural–urban migration, the main reasons for migration differ among the different sex and age groups.

In the 15–24 age group, there are more female than male migrants, and more female migrants moved for economic reasons (47 per cent) compared to male migrants (38 per cent). Educational reasons (attending schools or other educational institutes in urban areas) accounted for 35 per cent of the male migrants in this group, compared to only 13 per cent for females. On the other hand, for the 25–44 age group, while the sex ratio increases (that is, there are more male migrants than female) economic reasons explain 75 per cent of male migrants in comparison to a mere 12 per cent for the female migrants in this age category.

The occupations of the outmigrants from the sample villages are summarised in Table 8.21. A total of 45 per cent of the migrants were either children, students, housewives or unemployed. The outmigrants who were employed as wage labourers, excluding managerial occupations in the industrial sector (which includes jobs such as industrial manufacturing production, transportation, metal processing, construction and so on), compose the largest group. The second largest group of migrants were in the occupational category of non-managerial clerical jobs. The migrants in these two occupational groups constituted 39 per cent of the total outmigrants from the sample villages. When the economically inactive migrants (that is, children under 14 years old, housewives, students, those who

Table 8.22 Average number of migrants, by number of farm working persons

No. of persons working in the farm	*No. of household*		*Average no. of migrants (persons)*
	No.	*(%)*	
1 member working	57	16.7	3.1
2 members working	219	64.0	3.2
3 members working	49	14.3	2.6
4 members working	17	5.0	1.9
Total	342	100.0	3.1

were serving the compulsory military service and unemployed) were excluded, then over 70 per cent of all economically active migrants were working in the industrial sector in urban areas. This implies that most of the potential agricultural labour moved from the villages has been absorbed by the urban industrial sector.

MIGRATION AND AGRICULTURAL LABOUR: SURPLUS LABOUR DRAIN?

The survey data reveals a very clear correlation between the number of migrants and the number of family members per household working as farm labour. The average number of migrants per household decreases significantly as the number of family farm workers increases. Conversely, the average number of migrants per household increases as the average number of family members working on the household farm decreases. For those households with less than two members of the family working on the household's farm, the average number of migrants per household equals 3.15 persons; for the households with three family members working on the household farm, the average number of migrants is 2.55; for those with more than four farming members the number of migrants decreases again to 1.9 persons (Table 8.22).

At the aggregate level, out of 342 sample households, 81 per cent of the households have less than two people working on the household's own farm. Only 5 per cent of the households have more than four family members available as household farm labour. 41 per cent of the households with more than four members who work on their own farms have not had any family member who migrated,

compared to only 17.4 per cent among the households which have less than two family members working on the household farm.

While it is difficult to prove that the number of household members working in the field is determined by migration, the liberal argument that the rural–urban migration has been always a relocation of the *surplus* labour in the rural areas could be erroneous. It has been argued that the rural–urban migration was the process through which optimal labour allocation in the rural sector was achieved, thus the migrants of rural origin were the surplus labour which could not have been fully absorbed in the rural areas. This may have been true at the very beginning of the industrialisation process, until the point when the supply of rural labour was balanced with demand – that is, after the initial surplus rural labour had been drained away into the new industrial sector. It is plausible to regard the large stream of rural–urban migration by unmarried young females in the 1960s and 1970s as such a drain of rural surplus labour. Young female labour has never been the main labour force in agricultural labour and their role was more or less limited to certain domestic tasks.

Nonetheless, the extreme deviation in rural population structure, especially the configuration of age groups both for males and females which is almost a reversal of the national population structure, suggests that a drain of surplus labour alone from the agricultural sector is very unlikely to be the case at present. In addition, since the structure of farming production remained almost the same – for example, no changes in the scale of farming, and limited increase in utilisation of farming machinery – it is clear that rural–urban migration was not caused by fundamental changes in the agricultural production system itself.

The relatively slight rate of decrease in labour input per ha supports this contention. Thus, it is possible, and perhaps logical, to assume that the loss of potential agricultural labour (family members) by farm households would indeed affect the amount of labour input *per capita* in the agricultural sector, forcing the *per capita* labour contribution to increase. This is a different matter, however, from a supposed optimal labour efficiency pattern.

During the 10-year period between 1983 and 1992, the rate of machinery use notably increased. Yet the rate of decrease in the amount of family labour input during the same period does not correspond to the rate of increase in use of machine power. On the other hand, all the other sources of labour such as exchange

Table 8.23 Farm household labour hours, average per household (unit: converted hours)

	1983[a]		*1988*		*1992*	
Motor power	79	100	146	186.0	139.0	177.0
Family labour	1579	100	1456	94.7	1168.0	73.6
Hired labour	254	100	245	96.5	164.0	64.6
Exchange labour	172	100	145	84.3	78.0	45.3
Animal power	36	100	20	55.4	7.61	21.1
Total	2120	100	2012	94.9	1556.61	73.4

Note:
[a] Index year.

Sources: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook* (1987, 1993).

labour, hired labour and animal power have been drastically decreased. The trends in the amount of usage of different sources of farm labour thus reveal that the increase in motor power input has been a substitute for other sources of labour rather than for family labour (Table 8.23).

The reduction in the overall amount of family labour required for typical farm households has not been reduced regardless of an immense drain of potential labour force from these villages. Since the amount of family labour is directly related to the size of farming land and the scale of farming in Korea, the inherent limitations on labour capacity of each farm household would limit the scope to expand the scale of farming. The expansion of the scale of farming, in turn, contains the possibility of changing the production system. In other words, labour capacity limits expansion and thus constrains the change of production system.

The relevant data from the survey confirms this proposition. Nearly 90 per cent of the one-member farming households work on a land size smaller than 1.0 ha. In contrast, about half of the households which have three or four working members have farm lands larger than 1.5 ha. Since the size of farming land and the level of household income are closely related, the income level is linked to the number of household members working in the farm. The large majority of the households (72 per cent) with only one person working in the family farm fall into the two lowest-income categories, while 64 per cent of the households with two family members engaged in

Table 8.24 Income level, by number of family members in the farm

Income (1000 won) / *Persons*	*< 3000 (%)*	*3000–5000 (%)*	*5000–8000 (%)*	*8000–10000 (%)*	*> 10000 (%)*	*Total (%)*
1	45	27	5	11	12	100
2	21	34	30	7	8	100
3	6	22	20	25	27	100
4		31	37	13	19	100

household farming occupy the second and the third rank of income level. The same trend can be recognised among the rest of the households with more family members working on the farms (Table 8.24).

A household with more members of the family engaged in farm work has a higher possibility to earn a higher income than a household with less family labour available for household farming. However, it is difficult to set a decisive combination of the size of farming land and the number of household members engaged in farming in terms of the optimal level of income *per capita*. One of the reasons for this is that there are non-economic factors that distort the 'real' level of farm household income in Korea. Agricultural price distortion by the government, and irrational agricultural market fluctuation in the absence of a coordinated system of production and distribution distort agricultural income in real terms relative to other sectors.

Although it can be argued that the small farm households have fewer incentives to prevent members migrating, an important question is why small farm households would not just expand their farming scale in order to maximise their productivity with the available labour, rather than allowing household member(s) to migrate to the urban sector. The very limited economic incentives for farming in terms of remuneration of labour is likely to be one of the main reasons for the rural population to opt for outmigration. From this perspective, the problem is not simply a surplus of rural labour, but rather the limited opportunities for profitable expansion in agriculture and the limited income prospects.

The changes in labour patterns and labour share among the family members within individual households (brought about by outmigration of the family members) needs to be closely examined as an important aspect of labour drain from agricultural villages. As discussed above,

the overall family labour input was not reduced in spite of the substantial rural labour drain. The loss of family labour through migration was not replaced by any other source than the labour of those left behind. Indubitably, therefore, the amount of labour share for each individual member of a farm household who stayed in the villages required to be increased. However, the increased demand for labour on the individual household members has not necessarily been redistributed evenly among the different groups of the farming population. The effects of changes in the agricultural sector have been multifarious, not only in terms of class stratification but also in terms of gender. On these grounds, the following chapter examines the shifts in the agricultural labour structure and the changes in women's labour pattern, as well as the magnitude of their labour, in both the sphere of agricultural production and the sphere of household reproduction.

9 The Extension of Rural Women's Labour

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOUR MARKET

The shortage of agricultural labour is reflected in the extensive scale of the net loss in rural population, especially of the younger and physically more able age groups (see Chapter 8). This scarcity of labour has also been expressed in significant increases in the general level of agricultural wages. Almost all the respondents in the sample villages commented that their problem was not only the increasing scarcity of labour, but also that wages were too high for them to afford to hire farm labour to make up for this scarcity. The trend toward increasing family labour input in proportion to other types of human labour input, such as exchange labour or temporary hired labour, further substantiates this view (Table 8.23).

The problem is double-edged. First of all, in reality, the large majority of rural households still maintain their household economy mainly on the basis of small-scale subsistence farming. By definition, family labour is imperative in subsistence farming; the economy of subsistence farming could not be sustained if external (that is, outside the household) wage labour was to become involved. Nevertheless, the extremely high degree of outmigration instigated a serious shortage of farming labour, acutely felt within each farming household unit. On the other hand, while agricultural wages have been continuously increased (to a level at which the average small scale farm household cannot even consider short-term hire of farm labour) the majority of rural households do not have much surplus labour to spare outside of their own farming needs. Therefore, the labour situation in the agricultural sector is such that, although *nominal* wages have reached a relatively high level, there has been neither much supply of nor much demand for wage labour for a long period of time. This situation is indeed very paradoxical in terms of the logic of the market economy, in which the volumes of supply and demand fluctuate according to the market price.

This 'ironic' situation of the rural labour market exhibits the peculiarity of agriculture as non-capitalist subsistence production.

Most farm households are neither in the position to hire labour in order to make profits, nor to be hired as wage labourers. The prolonged shortage of agricultural labour in spite of high wages is predicated on the Korean economic structure, which is predominantly conditioned by the particular model of development pursued. The export-oriented manufacturing industrialisation entailed not only uneven development between the industrial and the agricultural sectors, and between the urban and rural areas, but further compelled the agricultural sector to *subsidise the industrialisation process*. The agricultural sector has not merely been 'lagging behind', but has been explicitly used to buttress the industrialisation process by subsidising urban industry. The economic development model in Korea imposed a transmutation in the agricultural sector in order to accommodate the process of industrialisation, while at the same time the basic structure of subsistence production has been maintained. As a result, subsistence farming has been disrupted in such a manner that it became impossible for farming alone to provide sufficient subsistence and to reproduce itself.

There are various mechanisms by which the market economy is transmitted to the agricultural sector and thereby integrates agriculture into the capitalist market economy. The agricultural transmutation includes many obvious changes (such as changes in labour structure via migration), but most of all, importation of capitalist production methods and technology (capitalist forces of production) into the family subsistence economy (non-capitalist production relations). The greater part of agricultural production has seen forceful intervention by valorisation via the market economy, and has been compelled to align with the capitalist industrial economy. Amid all this, the inexorable pressure of the cash economy has probably been the most effective agent in the integration of the agricultural sector into the capitalist industrial economic system.

Under the prevailing framework of the small scale of farming, and in the absence of large-scale commercial farming, plantations, or agri-business, the nature of subsistence farming has been preserved. However, since the rationale of subsistence farming can never truly be compatible with the principles of capitalist production, the 'logic' of subsistence production remained outside of the logic of the capitalist market economy. This is why small-scale subsistence farm households kept on producing although agricultural production did not make any 'economic sense' when a capitalist logic of production is applied.

The explanation for the prolonged shortage of agricultural labour in spite of the high level of wages is to be found in the persistence of subsistence production itself. Despite the high wage level for agricultural labour, farmers do not act according to standard textbook economic logic, as long as they remain subsistence farmers, they do not convert themselves into free wage labour. In addition, the demand for such labour is largely seasonal and there are no 'landlords' or large-scale commercial farms to absorb any large quantity of such labour. In this sense, the 'illogical' labour market situation in Korean agriculture is only a symptom of deeper structural problems which are integral to the whole process of industrialisation and articulation of modes of production.

Under these circumstances, one of the most prominent responses to the shortage of farm labour is the extension of the employment of female labour. Rural female labour has been essential in filling the shortage of agricultural labour, thus playing a key role in sustaining the impoverished rural economy. On this premise, the survey data has been analysed in order to address three questions:

(1) Why has it been women who took up the role of filling the 'gap'?
(2) To what extent has rural female labour been employed?
(3) How has the extension of female labour in the sphere of production affected the women themselves?

The analyses which follow also focus on the extent to which women have or have not benefited from their increased incorporation into the formal sphere of production.

AGE STRUCTURE AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF WOMEN

A prominent characteristic of the women in the survey is that the great majority of them are either in the middle-aged or elderly age groups. The age structure of the respondents corresponds to that of the population of the sample villages. Two-thirds of the respondents are between ages 45 and 69, while only one-eighth (12 per cent) of the women are under the age of 35 (Table 9.1). Obviously, this age structure is demographically skewed to a marked concentration of older women in the rural community.

In addition, the level of formal education among these village

Table 9.1 Age structure of respondents

Age group	*No.*	*(%)*
Under 29	13	3.8
30–34	30	8.8
35–39	34	9.9
40–44	22	6.4
45–49	43	12.6
50–54	60	17.5
55–59	59	17.3
60–64	36	10.2
65–69	28	8.2
Over 70	20	5.3
Total	345	100.0

Table 9.2 Level of education

Years of schooling	*No.*	*(%)*
None	132	38.3
< 6	149	43.2
6–9	45	13.0
> 9	19	5.5
Total	345	100.0

women is surprisingly low. The large majority of the women (82 per cent) have less than six years of education, with more than one-third of them having no schooling at all. Only 19 women out of 345 have more than nine years of schooling (that is, a middle-school-level education) (Table 9.2). However, the level of education of these rural women is not at all a normal reflection of the average national level of female education in Korea, but rather reflects the deviant age structure of the rural female population. In other words, since it is mostly the younger generation of women who have a higher level of education, the significantly small presence of younger women in the villages leaves the group with a much lower level of education than the national average.

GENDER AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE RURAL AREA

In spite of the fact that most of the village women share relatively old age and low levels of education, the analysis of employment

Table 9.3 Occupation of wife and husband

	Male (Husband)		*Female (Wife)*	
Occupation	*No.*	*(%)*	*No.*	*(%)*
Not economically active/unemployed	21	6.4	8	2.3
Agricultural	273	83.2	310	90.0
Sales	3	0.9	6	1.7
Industrial production	12	3.7	16	4.6
Service	3	0.9	5	1.4
Clerical	10	3.1		
Others	6	1.8		
Total	328	100.0	345	100.0

and occupation for the respondents and their husbands reveals further curious findings. The first surprising finding in the labour practice is that more women than men identified their occupation as being farmers. Some 90 per cent of the total female respondents answered that they are farmers, compared to only 83 per cent of males (Table 9.3).

Secondly, the labour participation rate and employment rate of rural female labour is extraordinarily high. The proportion of economically *inactive* population (this category includes both 'unemployed' and 'not economically active' categories) among the group of husbands in the sample villages is nearly three times higher than for the female respondents. Only eight women among 345 (2.3 per cent) respondents are economically inactive in the rural villages, while 6.4 per cent of the group of males (21 men) are economically inactive. The figures confirms the claim made by their wives that rural men are on average much more prone to 'idleness' than rural women. The high employment rate among the respondents is also reflected in all occupational categories. Female respondents show a higher percentage of employment than their husbands in every category of occupation, except for the category of clerical/non-manual jobs.

Finally, one of the important findings is the extreme rareness of the urban stereotype, or Western-style housewife in the rural villages. The category of the 'not economically active' refers to the population which is neither employed nor unemployed. It includes all persons who are not working but not seeking employment, for example, full-time housewives or retired persons. Even if all 2.3 per cent of 'inactive' female labour in the sample villages was

regarded as the 'economically not active', *less than 3 women in every 100 married women are full-time housewives*.

The economic participation rate of female labour in the sample villages was 97.7 per cent, higher than that for males. This is an interesting and striking contrast to the national trends of economic activities of Korea's population, especially in urban areas. The rate of female participation in economic activities for non-farm households in 1992 was 44.4 per cent, conspicuously lower than the 75.2 cent male participation rate (Korean Women's Development Institute, 1997). Furthermore, the labour participation rate of older women aged over 55 in the sample villages was much higher than the general pattern of decrease in the ratio of economically active females in older age groups in both the national and the urban population. In 1992, the national figure of economic activity rate (inclusive of unemployed) was 63 per cent for women age between 25 and 54, and 15 per cent for women aged over 55 (Korean Women's Development Institute, 1997).

One plausible explanation for this significant disparity between the urban and the rural population could be that within the rural area there are not many job opportunities for men, since labour demand in the non-agricultural sector is very limited compared to the urban labour market. In addition, the male preference for formal sector employment and reluctance to take jobs in the informal sector, especially the types of jobs available in the informal sector of the rural economy, is likely to have some effect on the pattern of (non-)employment. However, these factors on their own do not provide a sufficient explanation for the higher ratio of female participation and the very high female employment rate in the sample villages.

According to findings from this survey, in particular the in-depth interviews, the higher rate of female labour participation and female employment is an expression of the different attitudes of women toward securing family income, and a reflection of the stronger commitment by women to uphold their household economies. Generally speaking, rural women, as wives and mothers, have a stronger determination to provide the necessities for their families than men do. They are more willing to participate in various economic activities, including taking jobs in the informal sector. In further illustration of this point, a large number of respondents said they do 'anything' and 'everything' they can in order to provide for the needs of their family members and sustain their household economies.

Overall, rural women appear to be more dedicated to the support of their family members, and with stronger conviction than men. For example, there was the incidence of suicides in rural villages during the 1980s, which became an important socioeconomic issue in Korea. During the 1980s numerous suicides by male farmers were recorded officially as cases motivated by economic hardship in rural households. When the price of cattle plummeted dramatically in 1987, for instance, a significant number of suicides among male farmers, mostly heads of household, were reported as being caused by the drastic decrease in agricultural income. There were also quite a few cases of suicides by single male farmers who despaired over the negative prospects of finding a wife willing to share a farming life. In contrast, there was no single incident of female suicide in the rural area which was recorded as being motivated by economic despair. This indicates that despite hardship, women cope with the stresses differently than men, and do not 'abandon' the family. This example provides supporting evidence for the argument that rural women have a stronger will to confront economic problems than men. The following conversation with a woman interviewed during the survey supports this proposition.

The Interviewer *A*
The Respondent *B*

A You said you do most of the household farming work, while you have a full-time job (seven days a week) as a housemaid. What does your husband do for a living?
B Well, he is trying to do his own business.
A What kind of business is it?
B He wants to have a deer farm . . . tells people that he owns a farm.
A How big is his farm?
B The farm? (with a laugh) Just a pair of deer and 3 fawns.
A Still it must require a lot of work? Does he spend many hours on the farm everyday?
B Confound it! No.
A Then what does your husband do when he is not working on his farm? Perhaps he helps around the house a little?
B He never stays home. He is out most of the day.
B Nowadays [in summer] they [men] gather in the shade under the village tree, . . . damn the tree . . ., gambling cards, drinking.

In winter, it's worse. They tend to gamble and drink more, all day and night.

A Why don't they find work to do? Surely there is too much work for you to do. You said you work from dawn till midnight. It seems that you do almost everything around the house including serving meals for him.

B If I don't leave the table set with food all prepared for his lunch before I leave the house in the morning, he would either skip lunch or spend money to buy it.

B On the other hand, I feel sorry for my husband. He is not a lazy man . . . Since there is not much hope to get better from the field [from farming], he thinks he would just waste his sweat for nothing if he works in the family farm. And there are very few jobs for men like my husband who does not know any other work but farming. They [men] don't have much to do, nowadays. In old days, there used to be a lot of things to do for men, even in winter time. After the harvest men used to have plenty of jobs to do, such as straw-sack weaving, and attending cattle.

The woman interviewed was 48 years old, with a husband and three children. She was very proud to point out that her oldest son was a college student in Seoul. The other two children were both school girls. Her family has 1.2 ha of paddy field and 0.4 ha of dry field (vegetable plot). She was working as a housemaid seven days a week, from 9.30 in the morning to 5.00 in the afternoon, for a wealthy family at a town 40 minutes away by local bus. She was the main breadwinner of the family, with very little help from her husband. She was very determined to make sure that her son would graduate from college. She used to work only in the family farm with her husband until her son went to college two years ago. She had worked in several restaurant kitchens, and presently she works full-time as a housemaid to earn enough money for her son's college education. However, she claims that she does the same share of work in the household, including family farm work, as before, even after she began to go to work for wages.

The above situation is not at all a rare or exceptional case. In addition to undertaking their own household farming work, more than one-third of the women (36 per cent) were doing paid farming work (that is, working as hired agricultural labour) and 15.7 per cent of the women were working as wage labourers outside the agricultural sector. This makes up over one-half (51.7 per cent) of

Table 9.4 Women's income in the household economy

	No.	*(%)*	*% of total*
Helps very much	58	31.9	18.3
Helps a little	75	41.2	23.7
Some, but not much	41	22.5	12.9
Don't know	8	4.4	2.5
Total	182	100.0	57.4

all respondents. Roughly, for one out of five of the households, the additional income earned by the women outside household farming is indispensable. The woman's income provides a significant source in maintaining the household economy for another quarter of the total village households (Table 9.4).

The insights gained through the in-depth interviews and the survey data are testimony that rural women, at least the women in the survey, definitely endeavour by all possible means to provide sustenance for the family without sparing their own labour. The ever increasing pressure of the need for cash, not only for agricultural production but also for everyday consumption, with added needs for children's education driven by a desperate desire to help children escape from an unrewarding farmer's life, mean that women are making frantic efforts to overcome the poverty-stricken farm household economy.

The common tendency of these rural women to endeavour by any means to maintain the home economy seems to emanate from their traditional role as 'meal provider' of the family, and from the prominent female role in child-rearing. Since it is the women as mothers who *materialise* the physical needs of family members – to cook meals and provide clothing – they experience the household financial situation in the most direct way. Not having an adequate income, or not bringing in enough money, may have a different symbolic significance, whereas not having any food to serve for dinner is a very real and direct experience for any mother. The maternal role of women therefore produces a special sense of female responsibility. This attitude of responsibility may explain the willingness of women to make whatever sacrifice is necessary in order to provide for their family. This also helps to explain why the extension of female labour instead of male labour is resorted to. In this sense, the element of sexual exclusivity in the traditional patriarchal relations provided a rationale for the *new* patriarchal relations in which

Table 9.5 Labour force participation rate, 1970–95 (per cent)

	Farm household		*Non-farm household*	
Year	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
1970	75.2	48.2	75.1	29.8
1974	75.3	53.4	74.3	31.4
1978	74.5	54.0	75.3	35.6
1982	73.4	55.8	75.7	38.4
1988	73.8	58.3	72.6	42.0
1992	77.4	64.5	75.2	44.4
1995	78.4	66.3	76.3	46.0

Sources: National Bureau of Statistics, *Annual Report on the Economically Active Population Survey* (1989, 1996); *Labour Statistics Yearbook* (1975, 1981).

rural women are subjected to the role of filling the labour gap. A part of the *old* patriarchal relations in the form of values and attitudes concerning women's roles as family meal provider has been carried over and added to the new form of patriarchal relations in modern Korea.

WOMEN AS AGRICULTURAL LABOUR

The participation of female labour in agricultural production has been constantly increasing over the last three decades, in parallel with an overall decrease in the agricultural labour force. In 1966, only one-third (34.7 per cent) of rural women were working in the sphere of production. This increased to 55.3 per cent in 1974 (*Labour Statistics Yearbook*, annual data). In 1995, about two-thirds (66.3 per cent) of rural women older than age 15 were recorded as economically active by the government. This is remarkably high compared to the non-farm household female labour participation rate of 46 per cent. The difference in participation rate between the sexes within the farm household population is much narrower than the gap between the sexes in non-farm households (Table 9.5). This finding confirms that rural farming women's participation in the sphere of production is much higher in relative terms than non-farm households.

The tremendous extension of women's labour as a family labour source in farming is therefore incontrovertible. In 1996, the total

average hours of female labour input per farm household was 627.2 hours, which was 91 per cent of the total male labour hours of 688.49. In 1988, the labour hours for women in farm households was 85.8 per cent of the total male labour figure. Moreover, female labour input in exchange labour (that is, working in turn with other households) comprised nearly twice as many hours as male labour: in total, female labour furnished 45 per cent of family labour input in 1996. Overall, the increase in the proportion of female labour input in agriculture has been continuous, exceeding 48 per cent in 1996 (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *Statistical Yearbook*, 1997, p. 164).

There are two vital questions which are compounded in rural female labour involvement in agricultural production: (1) the way in which the labour of rural women has been incorporated; (2) the character of the final outcome of the process of the extension of female labour. The preceding analyses of the background and the overall situation of rural women's involvement in agricultural production supports the contention that the extensive engagement of female labour in the sector has very little association with any genuine advancement for the women themselves. Women's labour has been absorbed into agricultural production as a response to the precarious situation in the rural economy instigated by the rapid industrialisation process and not at all as a means of women's advancement in the gender hierarchy. The most deficient aspect of the extension of female labour in agricultural production is that they have yet again been forced to assume subservient roles.

Nearly all the women (95 per cent) interviewed said that they had worked in the household farm during the previous year to that of the survey, and 80 per cent of all the respondents did a substantial amount of farming work (Table 9.6). The claim that a 'substantial' amount of work was done by women as family farming labour is corroborated by the fact that a significant proportion of the respondents work as the main labour source in the household farm. About a quarter of all women respondents (23.4 per cent) answered that they are the single main household farm labourer, and 38.3 per cent of the women were sharing the farm work equally with other member(s) of the family. Thus nearly two-thirds (61.7 per cent) of all the women interviewed were the main labour source of the household farming unit (Table 9.7).

In relation to women's age, the principal pattern is that a much higher proportion of women in older age groups tend to work as

Table 9.6 Farming work done by women

	No.	*(%)*
Very little	31	9.0
Peak seasons only	40	11.6
Frequently	43	12.5
Constantly	230	66.9
Total	344	100.0

Table 9.7 Main person(s) working in the household farm, by age group

Age group	*Under 40*		*40–59*		*Over 60*		*Total*	
	No.	*(%)*	*No.*	*(%)*	*No.*	*(%)*	*No.*	*(%)*
Self (respondent)	11	14	39	21	30	37	80	24
Self and husband	17	22	77	42	20	25	114	33
Self and other(s)	6	8	5	3	4	5	15	4
Husband	36	37	52	28	21	26	109	32
Other member(s)	7	9	11	6	6	7	24	7
Total	77	100	184	100	81	100	342	100

the main farm labour source than those in the younger age groups. In more than half of the households with a respondent younger than age 40, the family farming work was done by other member(s) of the family, especially by the respondent's husband. By contrast, 70 per cent of households with respondents who are older than age 40 had women as the main labour source. The proportion of women who do most of the farming work alone concurrently increases as the age group becomes older. Among 80 women who claimed themselves to be the sole family farming labour source, 38 per cent of them were aged over 60 years old (Table 9.7). This partly reflects the positive correlation between age and female widowhood.

There is a variation in the proportion of women as the main family labour source among the different income groups. Nearly half of the women in the lowest-income group were recorded as the sole main labour source in the farm, while the middle-income group showed a higher proportion of either husband or husband and wife sharing an equal amount of work rather than the wife working alone as a main worker. In the highest income group, the percentage of women *not* participating in household farming as a

Table 9.8 Women as the main farm labour source, by income group

Income (1000 won)	*< 3000*		*3000–8000*		*8000–10000*		*> 10000*	
	No.	*(%)*	*No.*	*(%)*	*No.*	*(%)*	*No.*	*(%)*
Self	34	47.2	27	14.4	10	27.8	7	17.9
Self and husband	16	22.2	72	38.5	11	30.6	14	35.9
Self and other(s)	1	1.4	8	4.3	3	8.3	3	7.7
Husband	19	26.4	67	35.8	9	25.0	11	28.2
Other(s)	2	2.8	13	7.0	3	8.3	4	10.3
Total	72	100.0	187	100.0	36	100.0	39	100.0

Table 9.9 Women as agricultural wage labourers

	Yes	*No*	*Total*
Level of income (1000 won)	*No. (%)*	*No. (%)*	*No. (%)*
< 5 000	75 (42.2)	103 (57.8)	178 (100)
5 000–10 000	39 (32.8)	80 (67.2)	119 (100)
> than 10 000	7 (18.0)	39 (82.0)	46 (100)
Total	121 (35.3)	222 (64.7)	343 (100)

main worker is the highest. Compared to 29.2 per cent of women in the lowest-income group who are not working as the main family labour source, a much higher proportion of women in the highest-income group (38.5 per cent) are not participating in household farming as a main labour source (Table 9.8).

Given that the women in all income groups have a similar amount of domestic work (see Chapter 10), women in the lower-income group do more work than the women in the financially better-off farm households, by carrying out more farming work in addition to their work in the sphere of reproduction. In other words, the poorer the woman, the harder she works.

Women's role in farming as an important source of labour is not limited to the provision of female labour within their own household's farming. More than one-third of all women (35.3 per cent) have experiences of being a wage labourer in agriculture (Table 9.9), and this figure represents a considerable amount of the total farming work borne by women, especially when it is taken into account that almost all women devote their labour to their own household farming.

Table 9.10 Types of farming work performed by women

Type of work	*No.*	*(%)*
Ploughing (paddy field)	38	12.1
Ploughing (dry field)	130	41.7
Preparation of seed bed	86	27.6
Sowing	252	80.8
Planting[a]	259	83.0
Weeding[a]	270	78.3
Spraying of pesticide[a]	219	70.2
Fertilising	224	71.8
Harvesting	258	82.7
Threshing	162	52.1

Note:
[a] Most difficult type of work.

The same tendency observed in the composition of women in different income levels working as a main source of family labour is present in the composition of women working as farm wage labourers. Women in the lower-income-level households undertake more agricultural wage work than women in the higher-income groups. However, the difference in the proportion of women wage workers among the income groups is more notable than the variation found in the proportion of women as the main family labour source. While nearly half of all women in the two lowest-income groups perform wage work in the agricultural sector, only 18 per cent of women in the highest income group ever work as a farm labourer (Table 9.9).

More than half of the women who work as hired farm hands (55.4 per cent) are those from households with less than 1.5 ha of farming land, and with less than 5 million won annual household income. Only 5.8 per cent of the female farm wage labourers belong to the highest-income group, with an annual income exceeding 10 million won. The great majority of women in the lower-income households are doing extra work for wages, while simultaneously carrying out the main load of their own household's farming work.

A very clear sexual division of labour exists in handling of farming machinery (Table 9.10). All farming machinery is usually controlled by men, and it is rather rare to see a woman operating a machine in the fields. The reasons and rationales for the alienation of women from farming machinery provided by the women themselves are very illuminating. One late night, during the sur-

vey, I had an opportunity to join a group of village women sitting on a mat in the village square chatting and trying to escape from the unbearable heat. When I raised the question of why women are isolated from the use of the farming machinery, a very lively discussion was developed among the women. Various reasons were suggested by the women including: 'Machinery is the men's tool'; 'Men are better [cleverer] with machines than women'; and 'My husband would have a fit if I drove a machine.' However, at the end they all agreed that these reasons would not be any major problem if the women themselves actually wanted to operate the machinery. They were also very confident about their ability to handle the machinery. The 'real' reason was, the women discreetly stated, that 'if we [the women] learn how to operate the machinery then we will wind up doing all the work in the field, and men will not do their little share of work they are doing now.' Therefore, in a sense, the 'alienation' of women from the modern part of farming work is at least partially an intentional situation in which women 'volunteer' to be exempted under the prevailing gender role circumstances.

Though it might sound ironic to hear women saying that they do not want to be associated with machinery, the harsh reality reveals the underlying logic of these women. Their labour has been exploited to the physical limit, with a heavy concentration in the most labour-intensive and thus most strenuous tasks. Women perceive the situation as one in which their involvement in operation of farming machinery will not lessen their work load, but on the contrary will burden them more.

More than two-thirds of women (68 per cent) agree that the most difficult and strenuous types of farm work are: weeding, planting rice and spraying pesticides, among all other types of farming work. Table 9.10 shows the number and proportion of women performing each category of work. It reveals that women are heavily involved in undertaking the three most difficult types of work in the field. The data recount that there is no clear sexual division of labour in so far as manual farming labour is concerned, and that women fully participate in all types of farming work which require manual labour input.

The work that women do least, such as preparation of seed bed, ploughing and threshing, are the jobs mostly carried out by farming machines. The types of work which rely heavily on women's labour, such as re-planting, sowing and harvesting, are ones which

require much more intensive manual labour. Female labour practice in intensive manual farming work is most eminent in *kojiban* (Upland Group), which refers to the group of labourers who work on farm lands which are not suitable for the application of farming machinery – either at a high altitude or on a severe slope. Almost all workers in *kojiban* are women, and most of the manual work required to supplement machine work still depends on female labour, while most of the farm machinery is operated by men.

WOMEN'S LABOUR EXPERIENCES IN THE NON-AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Of all the respondents, 16 per cent were engaged in paid wage work in the non-agricultural sector. The most common type of work these women took on is in the service sector, such as a kitchen maid in a restaurant, or a housemaid. The other types of work the women undertake outside the agricultural sector as wage labourers vary, and yet almost all of them are very labour-intensive and low-status jobs. Some women said they worked as manual labourers in construction sites, carrying bricks or other building materials. Others went to work in local factories as temporary workers: they work only when the factories require more workers to meet an unexpectedly increased or time-pressed production schedule. Quite a few women said that there are many who are prepared to do occasional wage work, including hired labour for weddings, funerals and any other odd jobs available.

Since only 9 per cent of the respondents do very little of their own household's farming work (Table 9.6), it is reasonable to surmise that most of the women who go to work for wages are carrying out their own farming work simultaneously. Thus, most of these women work a certain number of hours a day while they also do their own household farming and also most of the household's domestic chores. The obvious explanation for how women manage this heavy work load is that they do not do much else but literally work all day, from morning to night. Indeed, when these women were asked the same question during the interviews concerning how they managed to accomplish the long list of jobs and chores, they all answered that they do the work for their own household (both field and domestic work) before and after they go out to 'work'.

The finding that more than half of the women (51.7 per cent)

Table 9.11 Types of women's work in the sphere of production

Types of work	*No.*	*(%)*
Own household farming	326	94.5
Wage labour/farming	124	36.0
Wage labour/non-farming	54	15.7
Exchange labour	134	38.8
Village labour (government)	216	62.6
Side-business work	29	8.4

pursue wage work (Table 9.11) offers concrete information for assessing village women's activities in the sphere of production. Considering that 80 per cent of the women bear a substantial amount of household farming work (Table 9.6), and that over half of the women are also employed in wage earning work outside household farming, it is clear that at least half of the women respondents are working double jobs in the sphere of production alone.

The extension of the working day – the classic Marxist formula of increased absolute surplus value – means less physical rest, and this situation of extremely long working hours for women is reflected in their average number of hours of sleep. During the peak seasons, especially in planting and harvesting periods, two-thirds of women sleep less than six hours a night, while only 11.8 per cent of women get more than eight hours' sleep. The average number of hours of sleep during peak seasons was six hours. Even during the non-peak seasons, 29 per cent of women still sleep less than six hours, 36 per cent of them sleep seven hours, and only the other third of all the women manage to sleep more than seven hours. The average number of hours of sleep during the non-peak seasons is seven hours.

In terms of general health, all of the seven women interviewed in depth said they were 'always tired'. All of them had more than one physical symptom that constantly distressed them. Symptoms such as back pain and aches in the joints are the most common, which were perceived by the women to be the consequences of the physical strain they experience from the work they carry out. All of the seven women expressed their strong desire for physical rest. One woman said, 'I could be easily sick any time. I am sure if a lucky [fortunate] one was in my shoes, she would be the weak one to be taken care of by others.' Many said that they cannot 'afford to be ill'. By being 'ill', they mean not being able to work, although

most of them are already ill in a way. Another woman told her story, that she 'finally' had to go to a hospital. She went to the hospital only after a long period during which she had tried to 'ignore' the pains caused by haemorrhoids. Because it had been untreated for so long while she was continuously squatting down working in the field, especially weeding, the problem had developed to a stage where a surgical operation was required. The pain after the operation was very severe and she was advised to rest in bed for a minimum period of a week. However, she had to get back to work in the family farming field after only two days, since it was harvest season. Therefore she took strong pain killers and went to work. After the harvest, she had to return to the hospital because her surgical wound had not healed properly. As the interviewer expressed sympathy, she said: 'It is no big deal. It is not just me. Other women in the village are all in the same situation. We are the ones who were born under a unlucky star to be peasants. For us, being sick in bed is a luxury we cannot afford.'

This analysis of the situation of these women in the sphere of production seems to indicate that women are struggling very hard to make ends meet, extending their labour to the maximum physical limit. There is no evidence which suggests that full participation of women's labour in the agricultural sector or even the expansion of production activities of the rural women outside subsistence farming has widened the prospects for a higher standard of living. Rather, the women are working a lot more and harder than before in order to prevent a decline in their living standard.

SEXUAL EXCLUSIVITY IN DOMESTIC WORK

The traditional assignment of women to the role of housekeeping has not been changed in either expectation or practice. The 'sexual exclusivity' established in domestic household work (refer to Chapter 5) indeed proved to be a very rigid element in the sexual division of labour in the 'modern' rural society. In spite of the fact that the vast majority of rural women have been fully involved in 'real work' in the sphere of production, thus unbinding women from 'being surrounded by sham homage' and from 'unproductive' roles (Engels, 1972, p. 61), the sphere of reproduction, as yet, firmly persists as the unsurpassed domain of women's labour.

All the respondents in the survey, except six women, carry out

Table 9.12 Amount of household work borne by respondents

Amount of household work	*No. of respondents*	*(%)*
Very little	6	1.7
A little (some)	22	6.4
Very much	46	13.3
All	271	78.6
Total	345	100.0

virtually all domestic chores, regardless of the total amount of the work. In any event, whether it is the respondents or some other member of the household, it is always (with one exceptional case mentioned below) the woman who is unremittingly obliged to provide the labour required in the sphere of reproduction. Altogether, 22 women (6.4 per cent) do 'some' of the household work and 13.3 per cent of the women do 'very much' of the work, but the great majority, 271 women (78.6 per cent), do 'all' of the household work single-handedly (Table 9.12). All 28 women who do not carry out much of the household work are the ones who have younger female household members to carry out most of the household work, with the exception of only one woman in the survey. This one woman was very ill and she did not have any other member of the household living with her except her husband. In all the other households in which the women are not doing very much of the household work, there are usually daughter-in-laws living with the respondents.

The findings on the amount of household work carried out by husbands ratifies the persistent sexual exclusivity in non-biological processes of labour reproduction. Only one man out of 297 does 'very much' of the household work. This is the same case mentioned above (the two-member household with the very ill wife). 217 men (73.1 per cent) do 'none' of the household work, while only 22 men (7.4 per cent) do even 'a little' (Table 9.13).

On average, each woman spends 4.46 hours on household work per day. There is a little variation between the different age groups in the average number of hours spent on household work, and the younger age group of women tend to spend more time (Table 9.14). It has been established in Chapter 8 that women in the older age groups tend to extend their labour more into the sphere of production than the younger age groups of women. The labour of women in the younger age groups is in more demand in the sphere of

Table 9.13 Amount of household work performed by husbands

Amount of household work	*No. of respondents*	*(%)*
None	217	73.1
Very little	57	19.2
A little (some)	22	7.4
Very much	1	0.3
Total	297	100.0

Table 9.14 Average time spent for household work, by age group

Age group	*No. of respondents*	*Mean (hours)*
Under 29	13	6.31
30–34	30	5.43
35–39	34	4.47
40–44	22	4.31
45–49	43	4.16
50–59	59	4.22
60–64	35	5.11
65–69	28	3.89
Over 70	20	4.10
Total	343	4.46

reproduction, since they are more likely to have younger children. A larger number of family members requires a greater amount (time) of labour input in domestic work compared to a household with fewer dependants.

In general, about two-thirds of the women spend between 3 and 6 hours a day, and the rest of the women spend between 6 to 8 hours a day for household work (Table 9.15). Certainly the number of hours of domestic work would reflect the amount of the work load to some extent. However, the difference in the number of hours spent by individuals does not necessarily indicate an equitable balance between the hours and work load that each woman bears. The intensity of the labour input by the women in their household work should be considered, even if the number of hours does not appear to be great.

Most of the women interviewed who go to work for wages said that they begin their day with work in their own farm field, usually

Table 9.15 Number of hours spent in household work by women

Time spent per day	*No. of respondents*	*(%)*
< 3 hours	43	12.7
3 – < 6 hours	221	65.0
6 – < 9 hours	70	20.6
> than 9 hours	6	1.7
Total	340	100.0

at dawn, and then they come home to cook breakfast and prepare lunch before they go out to work. Many of them said they 'hustle about like a crazy woman in the mornings'; 'every single morning I get all flustered to get things done before I go to work'; 'I usually miss my breakfast in the midst of all the morning rush'. They get up earlier than any other member of the house and 'work' around the house before they set out to 'work'. Most of the women who have their own farm go out at dawn and do work in the field until they come home and cook breakfast for the family. Many of them also do 'urgent' laundry (usually by hand) in the morning. The women rush home to cook dinner and tidy up the 'mess' left in the morning. They spend a few more hours at night usually for washing clothes and doing some other chores before they finally go to bed. The intensity of these women's labour input during the few hours in the mornings and in the evenings at home is undoubtedly tremendous. It should be recognised that these women are carrying out the 'full load' of household work in a shorter duration of time, therefore with much more stress and strain.

For the women who do not 'go out to work', the division of domestic work and field work is not always clearly marked. They move back and forth between their homes and farming fields, which are usually nearby. Since both farming and household work do not require any official working hours, the time arrangement for both types of work can be flexible, and yet this very nature of the work tends to incite more continuous and elongated labouring on the part of the women who carry out the jobs. To the question of the amount of time spent for household work, most of the women replied that they use whatever time is available to do the household work since there is always 'plenty of work to be done for the family'. The majority of the respondents fully involved in the sphere of production still endow much more of their labour to the sphere of

reproduction than any other members of a household, thus accounting for almost all household work.

In addition, the reality of the present working conditions for women, in terms of reaping the benefits of various modern household labour-saving devices, has clearly not been adequate enough to compensate for the extra work taken on by the women. Most of household washing is still done by hand, which is commented upon by many women as being the most difficult household work. None of the village houses had either a central heating system or a system of hot running water. The laundry (by hand) is a job which no man (or woman) expects any male member of the family to undertake. Even in the winter time, the women in the villages wash the clothes by hand in icy cold water. Although quite a few households have washing machines, it is also noted that they are not frequently used, perhaps except for spin dry. One of the main reasons given by the women is that they found the performance of Korean washing machines unsatisfactory: laundry does not come out clean and is worn too fast by machine wash. In addition, the women said the cost of electricity used to operate a washing machine was prohibitively expensive. Similar arguments apply to other household equipment, including refrigerators, which are usually used only a few months a year, essentially to reduce the cost of electricity.

The most outstanding improvement in working conditions for women appears to come from new types of cooking fuel, along with cold tap water inside a house. One very detectable labour-saving practice in the rural household has been brought about by changes of heating and cooking methods. There are very few households which presently use a traditional method of heating and/or cooking. Compared to the traditional solid fuels, such as wood, pressed coal, or straw, propane or butane gas is now more widely used for cooking in the rural households. Most of the women recognised the use of gas for cooking as one of the greatest labour- and time-saving advancements. In addition, improved heating systems have been found to be much less strenuous and more time-saving, in spite of the fact that most women still spend a substantial amount of their time and labour in tending to the heating system during the winter, most commonly, in taking out the ash and topping up with new *yŏn-t'an* (pressed coal).

Yet, an important question remains to be asked: how has the time and labour of the rural women saved by adaptation of modern technology and introduction of cash economy in the sphere of re-

Table 9.16 Changes in the overall work load of women

Work load	*No. of respondents*	*(%)*
Increased	189	54.8
The same	47	13.6
Decreased	106	30.7
Don't know	3	0.9
Total	345	100.0

production been utilised and how has it benefited them? All the findings in this chapter indicate that no matter how much women's work is aided by 'modern' technology, and whatever women's labour and time might be being saved from the sphere of reproduction, most rural women have not profited by it at all. The 'saved' portion of their time and effort appears to have been continuously converted into the women's ever-expanding economic roles and performances in the sphere of production.

This argument is strongly supported by the fact that even among the 119 women who spend less time for household work than the average, only less than one out of three find that their overall work load has been consequently decreased. The figures in Table 9.16 reveal that more than two-thirds (68.4 per cent) of all the village women are working no less than before. On the contrary, more than half (54.8 per cent) of the women carry out an even greater amount of work than before.

The reference point of 'before' is the time right after each individual respondent became married. Thus, the amount of work compared to 'before' would be based on the subjective references of the time, depending on the duration of marriage for each individual woman. The duration of marriage runs between five years and over 60 years. There are 23 women who have been married less than 10 years; 69 women with 10–19 years of marriage; 70 women with 20–29 years; 97 women with 30–39 years of marriage; 58 women with 40–49 years; and 33 women with 50–59 years of marriage (Table 9.17).

The answers to the question of changes in the amount of work load for women would therefore be ones which were compared to different points of time in the past, any time between 5 and 60 years ago. Therefore, the various time references used by the respondents enable the data to reflect the most prevailing general trend throughout the past few decades.

Table 9.17 Marriage duration

Duration of marriage	*No. of women*
< 10 years	23
10–19 years	69
20–29 years	70
30–39 years	97
40–49 years	58
50–59 years	28
Total	345

Table 9.18 Reasons for increased work load

Reasons	*No.*	*(%)*	*% of total*
Decrease in family labour	31	16.5	10.5
Lack of labour availability in general	16	8.5	5.4
Participation in 'outside' work	53	28.2	18.2
Increasing needs for cash	32	17.0	10.9
Increased number of family members to support	24	12.8	8.1
Increase of farming land	9	4.8	3.1
Combination of two of the above	23	12.2	7.8
Total	188	100.0	64.0

The reasons given by the respondents for the increased work load for women are summarised in Table 9.18, and can be categorised into three main types. First, the most common reason was that they are 'pulled out' to outside work. A total of 28.2 per cent of the women said that they work more because they are taking jobs which used to belong to men. Examples of the answers given are such as, 'we work more than before, because we [women] are now doing everything that needs to be done both inside and outside the house'; 'There is no work that women don't do nowadays. Women are no longer kept inside the house.'; 'I have to do the farming work which I did not do before'; 'I am doing more work than before, because I do wage work, and field work which women had not been doing'.

The second most common reason for increased work load for the village women reflects the impact of scarcity of rural labour:

51 women (27 per cent) out of the total of 188 women found the reason for their increased work load in the shortage of labour in their villages, and 31 women (16.5 per cent) pointed to the decreased amount of labour within the household as the primary reason for the increase of their work load. The rest of the answers include difficulty in hiring labour and other reasons related to the labour deficiency.

The third common reason given was increasing need for cash. A total of 17 per cent of the women said that they were compelled to make more cash. The reason they work more is to obtain cash income, as the rural economy becomes articulated into the dominant capitalist market economy. While the logic and structure of production remained in the domain of 'non-capitalist' subsistence production, the consumption patterns for both farming production and household reproduction have been integrated by the capitalist market system. This aspect of articulation of modes of production is particularly important for women since they play an important role as domestic consumers in rural households. The following are some examples of what women said about their reasons for working more than before: 'Everything needs cash, we can not survive without cash'; 'Things changed, we used to live without depending on cash so much, it is not possible nowadays, everybody needs and wants cash'; 'We [the family] can live on our land, but the children put their hands out every morning for money; I have to give them bus fees; they need to buy things for school, preparation for lessons costs a lot; I desperately need to work outside for extra cash, if not, we cannot send the children to school'.

Among the 104 women who felt that their overall work load had decreased, only 29 women (less than one-third) said that their work load has been reduced due to the use of modern equipment (machinery) and/or other labour-saving devices. Since it includes reduction of work in farming by usage of farming machinery and agricultural chemicals, the effects of such equipment on reduction of household work should be even less. In terms of the proportion to all the respondents, only a very small fraction of the women (8.4 per cent) acknowledged the direct benefit of 'modernisation' for their labour condition (Table 9.19). When this figure is compared to the number of women (23 women/6.7 per cent) who answered that they worked less than before owing to the increase in family labour source, the benefits of modern labour-saving equipment do not appear to be too great. Reduction in women's work

Table 9.19 Reasons for reduced work load

Reasons	*No.*	*(%)*	*% of total*
Use of modern equipment	29	28	8.4
Increase in family labour	23	22	6.7
Decrease in farming land	14	14	3.8
Ageing and/or health problems	38	37	10.7
Total	104	100	30.2

load by machine is not much greater than reduction by *other women's labour*, since most of the cases of reduction by increase in family labour are of households with the respondents in the older age groups who acquired daughter-in-laws who took over the responsibility of housekeeping. In this way, one woman's labour is merely replaced by that of another.

Remarkably, the dominant reason given for reduction in overall work load is ageing and health problems. Among the 104 women (30 per cent of the total) who feel that their overall work is lighter than before, 38 women (37 per cent) attribute this to their ageing and health problems. The proportion of women who work less due to their old age or ill health is 11 per cent of the total number of the respondents. This figure corresponds with the age structure of the respondents in which 13.5 per cent are age 65 and over (Table 9.1). In addition, there are a further 14 women (14 per cent) who recognised the decrease in their farming land as the reason for the reduction in their overall work load. Some of these women are, in a sense, pointing to the same reason as old age or ill health, since the main reason for the reduction of the household farming land is due to their decreased labour ability through old age or chronic illness.

The above analyses recount a sombre story of rural women today. Most of these village women have to labour more than ever in spite of the 'great economic achievement' and 'remarkable accomplishment of industrialisation' of the nation. Neither the rise in national standard of living expressed by GNP *per capita*, nor the ever-increasing signs of modernisation reflected by the quantities of available modern goods and services, appears to have been helping these village women to expand their share of leisure or to improve their quality of life.

On the contrary, the Korean rural women are released from continual and extremely laborious work only when they are either

too old or too ill to perform it, or if they become one of the few 'lucky' ones who can find younger women (daughter-in-laws) who will stay in the village and inherit their burdens. This holds true unless one can afford either to reduce the scale of farming or to stop being a peasant woman altogether! The above analysis confirms that rural women have held up more than half the sky since the process of industrialisation began in Korea. They have been the main labour power which sustained Korean farming production by filling the agricultural labour gap and at the same time extending their labour to the maximum in the sphere of reproduction, including education of the next generation of labour. They have constituted the real and yet concealed foundation of the successful economic development of Korea. They have been the forgotten workers.

10 Rural Women and Power Relations

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STATUS OF WOMEN

The breakdown of the traditional sexual division of labour and consequent expansion of women's labour into the public sphere of production did not release women from their previous roles within the household, but rather overburdened rural women with increased responsibilities. These women are not materially compensated by a better living standard, more leisure, improved health, or even less physical constraint, in exchange for their expanded labour contribution.

On this ground the final question addressed in this chapter is: are rural women non-materially compensated for their increased labour contribution through improvement of their social status and decision-making power? In order to answer this vital question, the position of rural women within various power structures, in both the public and the private domain, are examined. The position of Korean rural women in the public domain includes both socio–political and economic aspects of status, while their position in the private domain concerns the power relations within the household, especially *vis-à-vis* men.

The occupational status of 'farmer' (*nongbu*) in South Korean society has been deteriorating in general, as the significance of the agricultural sector in the national economy has decreased. Women in agriculture, on the other hand, carry a social status even less favorable than *nongbu*. Literally, *nongbu* means 'farm-*man*', which excludes women by definition. Women are usually referred to as *nongch'on yŏsŏng* (farming village women), or *nong-ga chubu* (a farm housewife). Semantically, women are not perceived as 'workers' as men are, but rather are primarily recognised as ones who 'live' in farming villages. This represents the general perception of the society: women's labour input in farming is ignored or disregarded. Their 'being' as women is more emphasised than their 'function' as workers, in spite of the fact that female labour in Korean agriculture is as significant as male labour. In this sense, some argue that the 'farm housewife' should be called *yŏsŏng nong min* (female

farmer) in order to recognise them as an important element of the agricultural workforce (Kim, J.S., 1994, p. 267). (In this case, *yŏsŏng* means female and *nongmin* is an overall designator for the farming population.)

Representation of '*nongch'on yŏsŏng*' (rural women) in the mass-media is largely dominated by negative images – simple-minded, unattractive, ignorant, vulgar, loud, idiosyncratic, or a combination of some of the above. At best, rural women are depicted as a warm-hearted, but subservient, daughter or wife of a farmer who accepts her unfortunate circumstances as given by fate. The characters in a popular television soap drama, '*Chŏnwon-il-gi*' (the country diary) fit both these descriptions, the representation of rural women, varying from the degraded modern 'bumpkin' to the 'virtuous' woman of conservative *Yi* dynasty tradition. It lacks any representation of challenge or struggle.

Rural women are indeed a rarely recognised *minority group* within Korean society. Very little attention has been given to the agricultural sector as a whole and the particular group of rural women has been almost completely discounted by society. Issues related to rural women are almost never a subject of public discussion or included in any social or political agenda, nor are there many academic studies on this particular group which address rural women's problems from their own perspective. The role of leadership in any social organisation, except 'women-only' organisations, and representation of a household in the public decision-making process still firmly remains a male jurisdiction. The level of education of rural women is far below the national average, although the situation improves for the younger generation of women. However, fewer and fewer of the younger women wish to live in the rural area, and the remaining women in the rural villages are left with very little opportunity to interact with more educated younger rural women who share the same conditions of life. In this situation, there is little scope for indigenous leadership within the group to give voice in the political arena.

With or without female leadership, there are very few organisations which can articulate the voice of the rural women in the political domain even within a local political arena, not to mention any meaningful political representation at national level. Their political power is weaker than any other group of women working in other sectors of urban industry, since rural farming women are normally alienated from political organisations such as labour unions

or even cooperatives. There is no officially recognised political organisation representing the rural women, nor a government office which is specially designated for women in the agricultural sector. The political exclusion of female agricultural labour is thus virtually total, in a state long characterised by the political exclusion of labour in general (Gills, B.K., 1993).

Only a very few and rather limited rural women's organisations have begun to form, mainly after 'democratisation post-1987'. Until then, rural women were organised for only sporadic and temporary movements mainly to support farmers' movements led by men. The most eminent and largest such organisation was *Chŏn-guk Yŏsŏng Nongmin Wiwonhoe* (National Committee of Women Farmers) established in 1989. One of the main aims of this committee was to build an autonomous organisation of women farmers. However, the political power of rural women represented by such women's organisation was still extremely limited, basically having not developed beyond conferring responsibility on women within the organisation itself (*Yŏsŏng Nongmin*, 1990, Spring, pp. 4–10). Nevertheless, *Chŏn-guk Yŏsŏng Nongmin Wiwonhoe* expanded its organisational activities and its influence, participating in various social movements including 'anti-liberalisation of agricultural import', 'reformation of taxes', 'rejection of the Uruguay Round', and many other organised protests. In March 1992, *Chŏn-guk Yŏsŏng Nongmin Wiwonhoe* consolidated with other smaller rural women's organisations and renamed itself *Chŏnguk Yŏsŏng Nongminhoe Ch'ong Yŏn-hap*. In organisational scope, it probably became the most influential organisation of its kind.

In recent movements by organisations of rural women, more positive aspects have emerged. In particular, the effort to emphasise women as 'producers', rather than as mere housewives of farm households is seen as an important advancement towards more effective organisational activities (Kim, J.S., 1994, p. 283). Nevertheless, the women's organisations have generally not yet been fully successful in engaging rural women in debates on socioeconomic conditions and their political rights, or in tackling the roots of the fundamental problems of rural women (Kang, J.S., 1994, p. 375).

Rural women are typically alienated from activities in the public domain, including dealing with public establishments such as banks, the Agricultural Cooperative Federations (*Nong-hyŏp*), governmental offices, or representation in community meetings (Sohn, D.S. and Lee, M.K., 1987, p. 200). The exclusion of women from public af-

fairs is often systematic, and ingrained in institutionalised practice. Most women are dissociated from membership in the Agricultural Cooperative Federation (ACF), an indispensable organisation for farmers in Korea. It is perhaps one of the most influential institutions, especially given that it functions as the principal bank in the agricultural sector. However, membership in ACF is given to the head of a household, and only single membership is offered to each farm household (Kim, J.S., 1994, p. 276). The present family law gives a preferential right to sons, especially the eldest son, to be a head of household, a daughter's claim to be head of a household comes after the sons', and the wife's comes even after the daughters' (Moon, S.J., 1996, p. 374; Lee, E.Y., 1994, p. 208). Therefore, under the present law and legal practice, women are systematically excluded from access to the membership of ACF.

The alienation of women in terms of legal protection is also found in employment practices in the rural area. Legal stipulation for terms and conditions of employment is almost nil, since most rural women's employment is practised in an 'informal' manner. One of the reasons for the widespread practice of informal employment of women is perhaps linked to the negative perception of a woman's role as 'worker'. Women are employed as 'informal workers', rather than fully 'official' and 'formal' ones; women do not therefore constitute a 'serious' workforce. Their labour is not taken as 'serious' enough to require legal stipulation of an employment contract. In this situation, rural women employed in the private sector, especially in family-run business or domestic hire, are often subjected to extra work without due payment, or forced to perform other types of work which they had not agreed to undertake. One woman who was hired as a domestic maid often found herself in the situation whereby she was requested not only to work longer hours, but to work in the field as a farm hand, a type of work she was not contractually required to perform.

The poor legal status of rural women is also reflected in their property ownership. Most women in the villages do not have personal economic assets, or personal access to financial resources. Only an extremely small fraction of women have some degree of economic independence exercised through legal ownership. There are only 20 women in the sample villages who own a house under their own name, while husbands possess the legal property rights for the house in 260 households. Only 4 among 292 married women with husbands legally own the family house, a figure equivalent to

only 12 women in every 1000 households of married couples, barely over 1 per cent.

The legal practices common in the West, whereby women usually possess at least partial rights over family assets, especially in the case of widows, do not apply in the rural villages in Korea. Although the figure for widows who own houses is slightly higher than for those who own farming land, less than one-third of all widows have legal ownership rights over their own houses. Among the 48 cases of widows in the survey, including the cases of the households in which legal rights for houses had not been transacted and were still registered under the deceased husband's name, only 14 widows (29 per cent) legally own their houses. Even when the cases with uncompleted legal transactions after the death of the head of household are excluded, the figure does not change much. Some 60 per cent of the widows still live in houses owned by other members of the family, usually their sons. None of the daughters of the households inherited any fixed assets from their father.

Women's property rights are even more minuscule in terms of ownership of farm land. While more women than men regard themselves as farmers and work in the family farm at least as much as men (if not more), less than 5 out of every 100 women own the farm land that they till. In the survey there are only 9 women who own all of their farm land, constituting a mere 2.6 per cent of the total village women. In addition to these exceptional cases of 9 women with ownership of all their farming land, there are 3 women who own half of the land, and 7 more women who own farming land, though less than half of the total family acreage. These 19 women who own farming land either wholly or partially make up only 4.9 per cent of all the women in the villages. Among the 19 land owning women, 7 are widowed, constituting 36.8 per cent of the group of women with ownership of farming land. However, even within the group of widows, the proportion of women with legal rights over their farming land is still extremely small. There are 48 widowed respondents, and 7 widows who have property rights over farming land, making up only 14.6 per cent of all widowed women in the village. The proportion of land ownership among married women is even smaller; only 7 out of 292 married women have legal ownership of the farming land, a mere 2.4 per cent of the total number of married women.

In summary, the overwhelming majority of married women do not have any property rights over farm land since their husbands

own all of it. Even after they become widowed, women still do not have much chance to own the family farm, which in most cases they worked on throughout their lives. The new inheritance law amended in 1990 gives daughters equal rights to sons, and expanded the rights of surviving spouses, but is applicable to only a half of the estate. It eliminated the traditionalist primogeniture element in the old law, thus recognising equal rights between the eldest son and the other children of the family. However, in reality, patriarchal norms and practices in property rights and inheritance still prevail in rural society, and women, as both wives and daughters, are discriminated against, especially in relation to the eldest son. Thus, notwithstanding the new role of female labour in the rural economy, women do not yet have much control over the family assets, especially over the farm land.

Ownership of personal assets has significant implications for women's status, as normally such ownership would warrant access to financial credit. However, rural women have very limited access to financial institutions. Although more than half of the village women undertake paid work throughout the year, less than one-third of the women have their own bank account, and only 12 per cent of the sample women have memberships in *kye*, which is a very popular form of privately organised savings groups. The proportion of women who have their own bank account does not vary among different groups of women categorised by the amount of wage work they carry out. The extension of women's economic activities in the labour market outside household farming seems to have had no tangible effects on the extension of women's independent economic power. Of course, one of the most significant reasons for women not having their own bank account is that most households do not have much capacity for savings: income generated by women is very likely spent immediately rather than saved.

Nevertheless, the analysis of the data appears to suggest that possession of her own bank account does reflect the power relations between the woman and other members of the family. Among the group of women with their own bank account, household income is managed by the husband in a smaller proportion of the households, compared to the group of households with women without their own bank account. Among 102 households in which women hold their own bank account, the income is controlled and managed by the husbands in less than one-third of the households (29 per cent). This figure rises to 38 per cent among the group of

households in which women do not have their own bank account. The same tendency exists in private savings club membership. Nearly two-thirds of women (64.1 per cent) who have membership in a *kye* have decision-making power over household income, compared to only 54.5 per cent of the women without *kye* membership. This indicates that women who have control and exercise management power over the household economy are more likely to have access to financial resource(s). When women's access to financial resources is compared to that of men in general, the inferior economic status of women is still obvious.

DECISION-MAKING POWER STRUCTURE WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD

Korean rural women not only have little social or political power within the public domain of the society, they also possess very little financial resources and are legally alienated from the land they till. If rural women in the agricultural sector occupy socially, politically and economically inferior and subordinate positions in public, what is their position within the private sphere? A former Korean ambassador to Britain once stated, in his response to an argument on subordination of Korean women:

> You might be able to argue that Korean women are discriminated against in public, however, it is always the woman who has ultimate power within the household. (Yorkshire and Northumbria Korean Studies (YANKS) Conference, Sheffield, 1988)

He further supported his argument with two exemplary pieces of evidence: (1) his grandmother always had the keys to the storage rooms of the house and (2) in his own household, his wife has all the consumption power.

While the validity of the theory that if a woman controls household consumption (through holding storage keys and going shopping) then she must hold 'ultimate power within a household' (even if she takes an inferior position in the public sphere) appears to be feeble, one can accept that the role of controlling the expenses of the household budget could imply, to a certain extent, possession of partial decision-making power within the household. However, the ambassador's deduction that every woman controls the con-

Table 10.1 Level of income contribution and decision-making power (per cent)

Person in charge of income management	*Women's income contribution level*				
	Very much	*A little*	*Not much*	*None*	*Total*
Always husband	1.8	13.5	7.3	12.6	9.8
Mostly husband	31.6	24.3	19.5	30.4	27.3
Always myself	7.0	12.2	17.1	6.7	9.5
Mostly myself	29.8	21.6	26.8	21.5	23.8
Together	22.8	17.6	22.0	20.0	21.0
Others	7.0	10.8	7.3	8.9	8.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

sumption aspects of the household economy proved to be wrong in the case of rural women in the sample villages.

Village women, at least those in the sample villages, do not share equal power with men even in decision-making related to household consumption. In only one-third of the households do wives exercise principal power over dispensing household income. Although the figures in Table 10.1 seemed to present a rather more even distribution of responsibility for income management, in terms of balance between the groups of husbands and wives, they still represent an unequal power structure within the household unit in which one dominates the other. The more equal sharing of decision-making power between man and woman applies to only one in every five households (20 per cent) in which husband and wife jointly make decisions and control the household economy together (Table 10.1).

Table 10.1 shows that women's own additional income does affect, though not very significantly, the management power structure within the rural household. A woman's position in the management of the household budget seems to be stronger within the group of households in which women have their own income. Household income and expenses are managed and controlled mainly by husbands in 41.5 per cent of the households in which the female respondents do not have their own income source. This figure falls to 32.8 per cent among the group of households with women with their own income.

However, it is interesting to observe that the degree of women's income contribution – in other words, the importance of woman's income to the household economy – does not seem to be related

Table 10.2 Control of women's own income (per cent)

Amount of paid work Person in control of women's income	*Constant*	*Frequent*	*Occasional*	*Little*	*Total*
Always husband		12.5	10.0	9.5	9.5
Mostly husband	33.3	17.5	21.4	29.1	26.5
Always myself	2.8	15.0	17.1	10.6	11.7
Mostly myself	30.6	20.0	28.6	21.2	23.7
Jointly	25.0	25.0	18.6	19.0	20.3
Other(s)	8.3	10.0	4.3	9.5	8.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

to the decision-making power structure over household income management. The proportion of women controlling household income does not positively correspond to the level of women's income contribution (Table 10.1). In fact, a smaller proportion of women with the highest degree of income contribution have control over their household economy than other women with lower degrees of income contribution. The subordinate position of women with very limited decision-making power in the household economy is reflected rather clearly by the fact that nearly half (44 per cent) of all women who bring income from outside household farming do not possess decision-making power even for dispensing their own income (Table 10.2). The proportion of women who are completely alienated from the decision-making process regarding their own income is substantially high. Some 17.8 per cent of the women do not participate at all in decision-making for disposition of the income they bring to the household. Either their husbands or other member(s) of the family control the income created by these women. Although one out of every five women has total control over their own income, the proportion of these women becomes extremely small (2.8 per cent) in the group of women who constantly carry out paid work.

This means that if the women's own income is substantially important to the overall household economy, then the management of women's income is taken over by the person who has overall decision-making power. On the other hand, if women's own income is not significant enough to the total household economy and the money is more likely to be spent as an additional supplement

Table 10.3 Decision-making, by issue (per cent)

Issues	*Main person in decision-making*			
	Husband	*Wife*	*Jointly*	*Other(s)*
Education	14.3	14.3	48.4	2.5
Spending agricultural sales income	28.7	13.7	42.2	9.1
Aid to relative/friend	35.3	11.2	45.0	6.6
Purchase of household item	25.0	18.1	42.2	5.3
Taking a loan/debt	45.2	6.5	29.0	7.5
Property transaction	41.7	5.0	30.2	7.2
Farm machinery	45.8	4.0	25.5	7.2
Hire of farming labour	47.4	10.3	23.4	8.1
Selection of crops	48.3	8.4	31.2	8.7
Sale of farm products	41.4	10.0	32.1	8.4

'pin money', then women are more likely to be 'allowed' to dispose of their own income.

This tendency implies that women fare worse in the decision-making process in terms of the *quality* of power. Even if the proportion of women who participate in the household decision-making process is comparable to men, the overall roles of women within the household decision-making process are evidently quite distinguishable from men. The unequal distribution of decision-making power between married couples is very apparent when different categories of household management issues are compared. A clear sexual division in decision-making is expressed by the nature of issues of which each sex holds more responsibility. The general tendency is that the male holds greater decision-making power over most major and critical household management issues, while less than one-third of the women are at best partially able to participate. Women tend to participate more in decision-making processes involving particular issues directly related to stereotypical roles of women in household keeping and child-rearing. A higher proportion of women are involved in such issues as child education, purchasing household items and giving aid or presents to relatives and friends. A significant proportion of rural women – more than two-thirds – are alienated from decision-making processes involving more fundamental household management issues such as taking out loans (debts), property management, selection of crops, sale of farming products and so on (Table 10.3).

Table 10.3 shows that women's participation in the decision-making process on the dispensing of the income created by sale of farm products is relatively higher than any other major household management issue, excluding the above-mentioned issues directly related to 'typical' women's roles. More than half of the women (55.9 per cent) participate in the decision-making process on farm-product sales' income. This figure is much higher than that for any other category of household management issues, except for the categories of education and aid (presents) to relatives and friends. The reason for this exceptionally higher participation of women in this particular issue is most likely that it is usually women who perform sales of small quantities of farming products in local markets. In most of the village households, women plant and care for a relatively small amount of dry-field crops (*pat-nong-sa*) for the purpose of sales in the market place for cash. The direct involvement of women in local sales of farming products probably endows women with more access to the decision-making process regarding the cash income of the products' sale. However, the major income source crops – in particular, rice – are usually sold through a government purchase programme via ACF and usually dealt with by male members of the household.

In general, the most common practice among the sample village households appears to be that the overall household budget and major financial issues are still largely controlled by male members of the household (usually the head of the household) and most of the women participate only in matters concerned with child education (mothering) and less critical issues, such as purchasing household items and giving presents to relatives and friends. More than half the total number of women in the sample villages are completely excluded from decision-making processes critical to farming production, such as selection of crops and sales of farm products, and also from issues concerning household economic management, such as property transactions and household budgets including the management of loan/debt.

This analysis of the survey data suggests that the expansion of women's labour within the sphere of social production has not substantially, if at all, altered the undemocratic and patriarchal decision-making power structure within the farm household. Given the facts of the unequal distribution of decision-making power between husband and wife and the alienation of women from the main

decision-making process, it may be concluded that rural women do not share an equal status with men. The inferior status of rural women does not correspond to their increased labour contribution in production, in addition to their roles in the sphere of reproduction.

Conclusion

In the early hours of a cold grey morning in November 1997 I was travelling on a train from a typical farming village into the great city of Seoul. After over four decades of rapid industrial development, much has changed for most people in South Korea, but some things seemingly never change. I saw that, as ever, the peasant woman still departs her home at dawn carrying a great heavy bundle of agricultural produce on her head. She scrambles into the cheapest dirty train to find a seat to rest her tired body and catch up on lost sleep. Her face is the same prematurely old and weatherbeaten one as was her mother's forty years before. In her half-sleep on the noisy train she prays that she can sell her vegetables at a better price than last time. At the end of a weary day hawking her goods in the market-places of Seoul she will come home with a hope that her daughter will not have the same life as she has lived.

I began this book with the observation that the answer you get depends on the question you ask. This book asks the question why so little has changed for the better in the life of rural women in a country where everything seems to be changing at a remarkable pace. To answer this question, I have examined the conditions and mechanisms of the *triple exploitation* of peasant women. The experience of rural women in modern South Korea has to be understood through the combined effects of the patriarchal relations of the family and social system, the underdevelopment of the agricultural sector and the dependent nature of national industrial development. Rural women in South Korea have been exploited more intensely than either men in the agricultural sector or women in the industrial sector, though this is scarcely acknowledged. I have argued that this intense exploitation is due to the specific ways in which rural female labour is incorporated into the spheres of production and reproduction, and a consequence of the articulation of subsistence agriculture with capitalist industrialisation in the national economy.

I have attempted to explain this articulation. The articulation of small-scale family subsistence farming with the capitalist industrial economy enables the super-exploitation of the agricultural sector, and of women within it. This kind of super-exploitation is possible

only when a non-capitalist mode of production, such as subsistence agriculture, is incorporated into the capitalist economic system. The main framework of this prolonged phenomenon of super-exploitation is the maintenance of subsistence farming. Since the rationale of subsistence production remains outside of the capitalist logic of the national economy, subsistence farm households continue to produce even when the returns are below the cost of production. Despite its super-exploited relationship with capitalist industry, the subsistence production system perseveres as long as labour reproduction is possible.

The findings of the village survey examined in this book show that the dominant characteristics of the farm household economy can be summarised as consisting of small-scale farming with very low income (less than half the national GNP *per capita*) and substantial household debt. The worsening situation of the farm household economy during the last four decades of Korean industrialisation is the result of the perpetual role of agriculture as subsidiser of the industrial sector. The deteriorating economic conditions of the rural household relative to urban working-class households reflects the underdevelopment of agriculture in South Korea, against the background of continuous national economic growth.

In the South Korean development model, the state played the most crucial role in facilitating the subordinate articulation of agricultural production with industrial capitalist production. The way in which the Korean economy was integrated into the world economic system, in particular, the labour-intensive export-oriented industrialisation policy, has much to do with the state's policy of favouring industry over agriculture. While the state fostered rapid capital formation in industry, it deliberately ignored the need for capital investment in agriculture.

This is possible when the *circuit of capitalism* (see Chapter 1) is not completed within the boundary of the national economy. The EOI model of development does not require Fordist consumption and distribution patterns whereby labour is the consumer of its own production. This model requires a low-wage system rather than mass consumption based upon a high wage system and social welfare. To sustain the low-wage system, agricultural production was required to subsidise the cost of industrial production and reproduction of industrial labour. In short, the state's obsession with manufacturing export brought about the underdevelopment of South Korean agriculture. The insertion of rural women's labour into

agricultural production is directly conditioned by these characteristics of the national economic structure, and the position of subsistence agriculture within it.

The expansion of rural women's labour into agricultural production was a consequence of massive rural–urban migration. In the absence of capitalisation or large-scale mechanisation of agricultural production, the demand for agricultural labour remained more or less constant. Age and gender-selective migration created a peculiar labour structure in the agricultural sector, which deprived it of a labour pool of young men and women. In this situation, the persistence of small-scale subsistence farming necessitated the incorporation of the remaining rural women into agricultural production as the primary manual labour force. In order to fill the labour shortage in agriculture, women left behind in the countryside became more directly and intensively involved in farming production.

However, this substantial extension of rural women's labour into the sphere of agricultural production did not alter the norms of sexual exclusivity within the domestic sphere of reproduction. Patriarchal relations, as social relations, interact with other social relations, and are transformed as social formations are restructured. The idea of universal patriarchy as a transhistorical and static set of gender relations does not explain changes and specificities in different times and spaces. Patriarchal relations are constructed and deployed in various ways in accordance with the conditioning of material life in particular social formations. The dialectic nature of the social formation explains why certain elements of patriarchal relations are carried over through socio–economic transition while some other elements are not. There is a historical process of the 'negation' of some patriarchal relations and 'selection' and 'redeployment' of others according to the character of material production. (see Chapter 5)

Patriarchal relations are affected by the South Korean economic development model, changing the patterns and nature of rural women's labour. As was the case in the transition of *Chosŏn* society to capitalist modernity via Japanese imperialism, the patriarchal relations over the last three decades were mainly defined by the specific national development model. The ideology of sexual exclusivity in the public sphere of production has weakened, thus enabling the incorporation of women's labour into agricultural production.

However, sexual exclusivity in the domestic sphere remained, and was redeployed, through which the triple exploitation of rural women

was possible. Women continued to be left to shoulder all the burdens of household work, yet due to the extension of women's work in the sphere of production, a shorter duration of time was allocated to performing the same amount of household work, and thus household work became more stressful and strenuous.

Given that the temporal and spatial division between household (domestic) work and farming (production) work is unclear in the case of women, female labour in subsistence agricultural production is considered to be 'non-economic'. Even amongst the rural women themselves, they understand their work in farm production as a necessary extension of their maternal role as one who must feed the family. In other words, women's labour in agricultural production is socially regarded as being an aspect of unremunerated domestic work, rather than waged occupational work. The valorisation of rural women's labour is based on the categorisation of women as 'mother and wife', rather than 'worker' or 'primary wage earner'. Subsistence farming is in effect a part of a domestic economy, of which the main object of production is reproduction. Therefore, when the sexual division of labour is altered, the threshold between 'inside' and 'outside' disappears for women but not for men, who do not cross to the 'inside'. The result is the economic marginalisation of women's farming labour, mediated through the patriarchal gender relations of the family and society.

The marginalisation of these women's labour is manifested in the persistent inferior status of women in the sample villages. They are economically, politically and even culturally disadvantaged *vis-à-vis* men. The village survey reveals that rural women's property rights are minuscule, even over the land they till throughout their lives. They have very little access to financial credit despite their often substantial contribution to family income. The decision-making power structure within the household does not often give the woman much influence, even over her own income. In the political arena, the voice of rural women has not been well articulated. The political power of rural Korean women is weaker than that of any other group of women, whether working in other sectors such as urban industry, or compared to that of urban housewives. Village women are still largely alienated from political organisations such as labour unions, political parties or even cooperatives, though this situation is slowly changing.

Evidence from the survey concerning the labour experience of village women strongly supports the triple exploitation thesis. The

survey reveals that most village women carry out a substantial amount of their own household's farming work, most often as the principal labourer. No less than half also work an additional job outside their own household in the sphere of production. More than one-third of the women constantly work as a wage labourer in the agricultural sector, while one in six are engaged in paid work in non-agricultural sectors. The extension of the working day for rural women is reflected in the very small number of hours they have left available for sleeping and leisure. During the peak seasons (spring and autumn) most of them get less than six hours for sleep and leisure activities combined. Even during the non-peak seasons, sleep and leisure total no more than seven hours per day. Even worse, for most of these women, being ill in bed is a 'luxury' they cannot afford. It is clear that they are extending their labour to the maximum physical limits.

The main conclusion of this study is that the rural women of Korea have borne perhaps the heaviest burden of national economic development and thus of South Korea's ascent in the world economic system. The social and human cost of rapid industrialisation is far too often neglected, when economic 'success' is defined as high and consistent rates of industrial growth. The issue of intense exploitation of rural women is thus overshadowed by the emphasis placed on economic success. Despite their fundamental contributions to national development, the rural women of South Korea have been too long forgotten, both in theory and in practice. These 'forgotten workers', like the Atlas of Greek mythology, hold the weight of national development aloft on their weary shoulders, though this crucial task is taken for granted and forgotten by all the world.

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