CONVERGENCE OF THE OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE AND PRESTIGE RANKINGS IN EAST ASIA

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Abstract - I investigate the level of socio-economic development in three East Asian societies by comparatively examining the structures of industry and occupation. Peoples' preference for occupation is also examined to estimate the level of convergence among those societies. By the support of empirical data, it is found that there is a quite huge time gap in the socio-economic developmental stage of the three East Asian societies. While the convergence of the industrial and occupational structures is slow, the convergence in prestige ranking of occupations is relatively fast. This represents that the perceptions and attitudes of Chinese show a rapid converging tendency with more advanced societies, but the speed of structural transformation of China is retarded. The results only partially support convergence hypothesis.

Key Words - Industrial structure, occupational structure, occupational prestige ranking, East Asian societies, convergence theory.

I. INTRODUCTION

The major purpose of this study is to estimate the stage of socio-economic development and the level of convergence among China, Japan, and Korea by comparing their industrial and occupational structures. This article also aims to investigate whether people in the three countries hold similar preference for occupations. The three countries are not only geographically adjacent but also are highly interconnected in economy.

The convergence theorists(Kerr, Dunlop, Myers, and Harbison. 1960) maintained that the shape of societies converged as they experienced similar patterns of industrialization process. Convergence theory argues that industrialization will expand world-widely and every society will become similar and thus converge as a homogeneous system. It holds that changes toward similarity inevitably accompany by industrial development in all societies. Thus,convergence theorists maintain that industrialization unavoidably result in structural transformation and common changes in the social behavior of people. They are supposed to evolve similar patterns of social cognition inside and outside the workplace.

Would this argument applicable to the cases of China, Japan, and Korea? Have the three East-Asian countries experienced same patterns of development in the industrialization process? Do they show similar stage of socio-economic development? In addition, do the people in three societies develop a similar evaluation system of occupational rankings as industrialization gets more and more advanced?

The history of industrialization in three East Asian countries are different. Japan began industrialization in the mid-19th century through Meiji Restoration. Korea started industrialization in early 1960's by the 'First 5 Years' Economic Development Plan' and became 10th largest economy in the world in less than half a century. China's industrialization was the latest although some regions were fairly modernized as early as early 19th century by invasion of western empires. China started to excel industrialization since its 'Reform and Opening Policy' on December of 1978.

Among those three countries, Japan belongs to the advanced capitalist economies and it has been said her socioeconomic development is at least 20~30 years ahead of Korea. Meanwhile Korea is a representative of NIC's and it can be assumed that the stage of Korean industrialization fell in between Japan and China. China has experienced a rapid industrialization and a remarkable economic growth by the so-called 'Chinese Style Socialist Market Economy' policy during the past three decades. China was the 5th largest in the amount of GNP in 2005 and is now became the second largest economic entity in the world. Chinese economic expansion has been accelerated by enjoying large market, enormous labor power with low wages in addition to the hugh amount of foreign direct investments. But the economic development of China has been heavily tilted on the eastern seashore regions, which result in an extreme inequality by region land class.

In this sense, Tu(2002) argued that China in general was not yet reached to the stage of industrial society. Majority people think of China's economic growth as a wonder while feeling it as a threat on the othre hand. But some scholars(Seki, 2002; Chang, 2001) spoke of the dark side of China's future. They focus on the weakness of state-owned corporations and banks, nation-wide corruption, high level of actual unemployment rate, etc. And some(Yang, 1996; Riskin et al. 2002; Unger, 2002) paid attention to the changing social structure in China through the industrialization process, such as rural

decomposition, growing inequality, and conflicts in a new urban life. However, few has studied the transformation of the occupational structure in modern China. The rapid economic growth of China has made changes in the composition of industrial sectors, and finally affected the occupational structure in China.

The different experiences in the process of industrialization and its developmental stage of each society may be linked to the differences in industrial structure among the three countries. And the differences in industrial structure might consequently cause different occupational structures among them. And the differences in occupational structure may have different effect on the way people in those three countries evaluate the prestige of occupations.

However, it is never studied yet whether the people in three countries hold similar or different perspectives to the occupational prestige rankings. In this article, we are basically interested in finding out the features of modern Chinese occupational structure. By comparing it with those of Japan and Korea, we try to positioning the level of socio-economic development of China. In addition, we attempt to examine how differently certain occupations are valued in each country. We try to compare the occupational prestige rankings in China with those of Japan and Korea.

The studies of occupational prestige are to measure the social hierarchy of occupations by assessing "the degree of recognition or the evaluation of the prestige, significance, value of and respect for certain occupations by members of society."(Broom and Selznick, 1973: 174-5). Occupational prestige ratings have been used by social scientists to measure the hierarchy of jobs in industrial societies. Haller and Bills(1979) reported almost similar pattern of occupational prestige rankings among industrialized countries. In this sense, this analysis will help us to understand the tendency of social change in China and the applicability of convergence theory.

II. THEORETICAL DISCUSSIONS

One of the most important theoretical disputes among the sociological studies of occupational prestige is whether the subjective evaluation of people for occupational prestige is becoming similar among the societies through industrialization or the major differences still remain because of specific cultural background of each society(Kim, 1979: 63). This can be said as a dispute between convergence theory by structuralists and heterogeneity theory by culturalists.

According to the convergence hypothesis which is a stream of modernization theory, the expansion of industrialization throughout the world make all countries similar, which result in the convergence of all countries as a homogeneous system(Kerr et al. 1960). Regardless of who lead the industrialization, the convergence theorists argue that, the needs or logic of industrialization itself decide social structure of every society under the same process of industrialization. This results in the process of change in which all become look alike in advanced industrial countries(Kerr et al. 1960). Trieman's(1977) 'structural determinism on prestige' also represented unique occupational prestige rankings in all complex societies.

In this way, convergence hypothesis emphasizes the trend of socio-economic convergence among societies in accordance with economic development. And this developmental perspective assumes that the organizational pattern of every economy is converged by following the given technological environment and market conditions. In this sense, the occupational structures among the compared countries could be similar as far as their levels of economic development are similar. And the similarity in the socio-economic structures of the compared countries would result in similarity in perceptions of people in those countries.

Occupational sociologist Rothman(1987: 213-219) argued that occupational prestige rankings were different among the countries by reflecting local tradition, stage of modernization, and social policy of each countries. A sort of 'cultural lag' phenomena was also involved in his study. In this sense, it is probable that there exist both similarities and differences in occupational prestige rankings among the three East Asian countries.

According to Han's(2004) categorization, the studies on occupational prestige belong to the narrow approach in the field of occupation study. In korea, the studies on occupational prestige are of three streams. First is studies on class or stratification which relate with socioeconomic characteristics of occupations. Kim and Choi(1983) and Hong(1983) are belong to this line. Second is the studies on the effects of education on the achievement of occupational status(Cho, 1985; Kim, 2002). The third is on occupational prestige itself and a few studies belong to this stream(Choi, 1984; Yoon, 1994; Yoo and Kim, 2006).

However, not a single study was accomplished about the comparison of occupational prestige rankings among the three East Asian countries. Numerous empirical studies of occupational prestige in the past have accumulated a great deal of knowledge about the ways in which people evaluate the social standing of various occupations. The general empirical findings point to remarkable stability over time(Nakao and Treas, 1994) and consistency across societies(Trieman, 1977).

Recent studies that compared the prestige hierarchy among East Asian societies also found a high degree of consistency. Between Korea and Japan, the overall relative rankings produced a very strong correlation(0.954). Similarly, comparing China and

Japan, 0.88 was reported between the prestige scales from the two countries(Sonoda, 2005).

III. INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURE IN THREE COUNTRIES

Tables 1~2 show the economic volume and per capita income of the three countries. Table 1 shows that the volume of GDP in China has increased much especially since 2000 while those of Korea and Japan show stagnant increase. This enabled China to be the first in its economic volume among the three countries.

However, because of the huge size of population, the Chinese per capita income ranked the last.

Table 1. Volume of GDP in Three Countries (unit: Million US dollars)

	1960	1980	2000	2010
Korea	3,892	63,834	511,658	986,000
China	61,378	188,242	1,198,480	5,745,000
Japan	44,305	1,055,207	4,649,615	5,390,000

Source: www.worldrank.co.kr

Table 2. Per Capita GDP (unit: US dollars)

	1960	1980	2000	2010
Korea	155	1,679	11,347	20,757
China	92	193	949	4,428
Japan	478	9,171	36,789	42,831

Note: Table 3 shows the composition of economy by three industrial sectors in China, Korea and Japan during the last half a century.

Table 3. The Composition of Industries in Three Countries

		1960		1980		2000		2010	
		GDP %	LP%*	GDP %	LP%	GDP %	LP%	GDP %	LP%
China	Primary	46.3	81.3	30.1	68.7	16.4	50.0	10.1	36.7
	Secondary	25.7	8.6	48.5	18.2	50.2	22.5	46.8	28.7
	Tertiary	28.0	10.1	21.4	13.1	33.4	27.5	43.1	34.6
Korea	Primary	37.0	66.0	16.0	34.0	4.9	10.9	2.6	6.6
	Secondary	20.0	9.0	41.0	22.5	46.3	20.2	30.8	17.0
	Tertiary	43.0	25.0	43.0	43.5	48.8	68.9	66.7	76.4
Japan	Primary	13.0	33.0	4.0	13.0	2.0	5.1	1.4	4.1
	Secondary	45.0	30.0	41.0	39.0	38.0	20.6	24.9	25.0
	Tertiary	42.0	37.0	55.0	48.0	60.0	74.3	73.8	70.9

Source: Reconstructed from Korean Bureau of Statistics Data Base, Statistics Bureau of Japan DB, China Bureau of Statistics DB, Korea Labor Institute Data Base, Yoo(2001)
Note: LP% means the percentage of labor force(power)

KOREA

Korea has experienced rapid economic growth since it launched an industrialization in the early 1960's. The economic development resulted in structural change of industry, which had influence on structural transformation of Korean labor market.

Among the categorized Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary industrial sectors, a rapid decrease of labor force composition in the Primary industrial sector(Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing) is the most astonishing phenomena. The proportion had dropped more than 30% point within mere three decades. It comprised 66% in 1960, but fell lower than 10% level since 2000. As the industrialization resulted in the expansion of manufacturing industries, the proportion of labor force in the Secondary(Manufacturing) industrial sector had increased at a steady rate. It was only 9% in 1960, but reached its apex of 28% in late 1980's and has shown slight decrease since then. Meanwhile the portion of Tertiary(Services) industrial sector has continuously increased with the tendency to accommodate most of the decrease from the Primary sector. The proportion of the labor force in the Tertiary sector passed 50% in 1985 and shows over 75% of composition in recent years.

In regard to the proportion in GDP, the declining pattern in the Primary industry is almost similar to the case of the proportion of labor force. In between 1960 and 1980, as the proportion in labor force cut into half, the GDP proportion also reduced into half. It became one thirds in between 1980 and 2000. In 2010, the contribution of the Primary industry for GDP in Korea was only 2.6%. The proportion of the Secondary industry in GDP had increased till 2000, but declining a little since then like the declining trend in labor force. In 2010, 17.0% of labor force in

the Secondary industry contributed 30.8% in Korean GDP.

Meanwhile, as the proportion of the labor force in the Tertiary industry has increased fast, its contribution to GDP composition also has increased. But the rate of its increase has been shrinking. For example, 43.5% of labor force contributed 43.0% of GDP in 1980, but 68.9% of labor force contributed only 48.8% of GDP in 2000. In 2010, 76.4% of labor force in the Tertiary industry contributed 66.7% of GDP in the same year.

CHINA

The economic growth of China has also affected its industrial structure. However, the trend of change is estimated slower than Korea especially in the Primary industry. According to the distribution of GDP, the portion of the Primary sector had dropped from 46.3% in 1960 to 16.4% in 2000. In 2010, the portion consisted of only 10.1% of the total GDP. By the effect of industrialization and urbanization in China, the portion of the Secondary and Tertiary sector has expanded. In 2010, the portion of the Secondary sector held 46.8% and that of the Tertiary sector composed 43.1% of the total GDP. This pattern of change itself is quite similar to that of Korea. However, in regard to the distribution of labor force, the whole picture is different. Although the proportion of employed labor force in the Primary sector had dropped from 81.3% in 1960 to 50.0% in 2000, it still comprised about half of Chinese labor force. The proportion of labor force employed in the Secondary industry passed 20% in 1985 and now comprises about 29%. The increase in the Tertiary sector resembles that of the Secondary, but the rate of increase is faster than the Secondary since 1980's. Nowadays, it holds over 30% of the total labor force in China

JAPAN

In Japan, the distribution of labor force among the three industries already showed a quite balance in 1960. Since then, the proportion of labor force in the Primary industry has fallen fast and it comprised only 4.1% in 2010. On the other hand, the Japanese labor proportion in the Secondary industry showed higher percentage than Korea and China throughout the industrialization process. It comprised almost 40% in 1980 and still composed 25% in 2010. The proportion of the labor force in the Tertiary passed 50% in early 1980's and soared over 70% around year 2000 but has decreased a little in recent years.

In regard to the composition of GDP, it is impressive to know that the contribution of the Secondary and Tertiary industries has been greater than Korea and China, which reveals more advanced state of the economy. In 2005, the Secondary sector contributed 30% of Japanese GDP and the Tertiary industry comprised 68.6%.

COMPARISON AMONG THE THREE COUNTRIES

The figures in Table 3 tell us that the level of industrialization in China on the whole is comparably low. Even in recent years, almost 40% of the country's labor power is devoted to the Primary industrial sector with very low productivity. For example, 36.7% of labor force contributes only 10.1% of Chinese GDP in 2010. We can estimate that although China has enjoyed a high rate of economic growth during the last 2 decades, the composition of economic sectors represents that China on the whole is not on industrialized stage yet.

By examining the table, we can roughly argue that the figures of GDP proportion in China in 2010 resemble those of Korea in 1980 and of Japan in 1960. And the figures of labor force proportion in China in 2010 seem to fall in between the figures of Korea in 1960 and 1980. But the figures do not match with any period of data available for Japan.

Therefore, as far as the industrial sector distribution is concerned, it can be argued that China is about 30 years behind Korea and about half a century fall short of Japan. Although we keep in mind the fact that there is a time gap in the start of industrialization among three countries, it is hard to find a converging trend yet by comparing labor force composition. Comparing the figures in 2010, it can be said Japan entered post-industrial stage while Korea still is of the features of industrial stage and China is belonged to pre-industrial stage of socioeconomic development.

OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE IN THREE COUNTRIES

The industrialization process is supposed to cause a significant change in the occupational structure. In other words, the industrialization might generate similar occupational structures.
Table 4 and Table 5 show comparisons of one-digit level occupational structure in China and Japan with Korea. Table 4 represents old classification scheme while Table 5 follows new scheme for occupational categorization.

In Korea, the scheme for classification of occupation was amended in 1993 following ILO requested International Standard Classification of Occupation(ISCO-88). Therefore, Korean data in Table 4 represent categorization excerpted from the 4th version of "Korean Standard Classification of Occupations(KSCO)" amended in 1993 following ISCO-88. But China and Japan do not exactly follow that classification scheme. Therefore, it should be

kept in mind that exact comparison is not possible not only because of the different classification scheme but also because the actual job contents might be different in three countries.

Table 4. Occupational Structures: Old Classification Scheme (unit: %)

One-digit level Occupational Categories	1982	1985	1980	1990	1993	1990
	China	Korea	Japan	China	Korea	Japan
0/1 Professionals and Technicians	5.1	5.8	9.2	5.3	8.4	12.3
2 Managerials	1.5	1.5	5.5	1.8	1.8	4.9
3 Clericals	1.3	11.5	21.8	1.7	15.0	22.6
4 Sales	1.8	15.5	12.5	3.0	15.9	14.1
5 Services	2.2	10.8	8.6	2.4	12.3	7.9
6 Agricultural, Forestry, and Fisheries	72.0	24.6	1.0	70.6	14.6	0.8
7/8/9 Manufacturing, Transport and Menial	16.1	30.3	41.4	15.2	32.0	37.4
Total (unit: thousand)	521,510 (100.0)	14,970 (100.0)	39,680 (100.0)	647,240 (100.0)	19,327 (100.0)	48,240 (100.0)

Source: Reconstructed from Chen, 1995; Yoo, 2001; Korean Statistical Bureau DB, Tokyo, 2005

Table 5. Occupational Structures: New Classification Scheme (unit: %)

One-digit level Occupational Categories	2000	2000	2000	2005	2010	2010
	China	Korea	Japan	China	Korea	Japan
1. Legislatives and High Executives	1.7	2.8	3.2	1.7	2.4	2.6
2. Professionals	5.7	6.3				
3. Technicians andSemi-professionals		11.1	13.3	5.7	19.2	15.8
4. Clericals	3.1	12.4	19.9	3.1	15.7	20.5

5. Sales and Services	5.3 3.8	24.2	24.6	9.2	22.5	26.8
6. Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries	64.5	10.5	5.0	64.5	6.0	4.0
7. Mechanics and related	15.9	11.7	33.4	15.8	9.4	30.3
8. Machine Operators and Assemblers		11.0			11.3	
9. Simple Menial Workers		10.1			13.5	
Total(unit: thousand)	668,740 (100.0)	21,989 (100.0)	64,460 (100.0)	668,749 (100.0)	23,829 (100.0)	62,560 (100.0)

Source: Reconstructed from Korean Bureau of Statistics Data Base, Statistics Bureau of Japan DB, China Bureau of Statistics DB, Korea Labor Institute Data Base, and Yoo(2001)
Note:Japanese data are calculated to fit ISCO-88 from ILO "LABORSTA" Database.

The major characteristics found from Table 4 and Table 5 are as follows.
First, the biggest occupational category in Korea in 2010 was 'Services and Sales' which comprised 22.5%. The second largest occupational category was 'Technicians and Semi-professionals' which comprised 19.2% of the total. The percentage of 'Clericals' was 15.7%. Other occupational categories of which the percentage was bigger than 10% were 'Simple Menial Workers' and 'Machine Operators and Assemblers'.

Second, in Korea the proportion of 'Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery workers' has dropped rapidly from 24.6% in 1985 to 6.0% in 2010. In Japan, the percentages are only 4%, but the relative size has been increased recently comparing 1980's and 1990's. On the other hand, in case of China the proportion comprised over 70% till 1990 and it still marked 64.5% in 2005.

Third, in China the proportion of 'Professionals and Technicians(including Semi-professionals)' marked around 6% and it has not been changed much during the last 20 years. In Japan, the proportion has been slightly increased since 1980's but the increase is not so much(from 9.2% in 1980 to 15.8% in 2010). On the other hand, it has been tripled during the same time period in Korea. The proportion was 5.8% in 1985 and 8.4% in 1993. But it was increased to 19.2% in 2010, which is even greater than that of Japan and more than three-times bigger than that of China in the same year.

Fourth, the percentage of 'Clerical workers' in China had increased more than double between 1982(1.3%) and 2005(3.1%). But the proportion is still very low compared with Korea and Japan. In 2005, it was a fifth of Korea in 2010 and only one seventh of Japan in 2010.

Fifth, the percentage of 'Sales and Service workers' in China also had increased more than double between 1982(4.0%) and 2005(9.2%). However, comparing with Korea and Japan, the proportion comprised less than half. The proportion of 'Sales and Service workers' in Korea was greater than Japan till 1990's, but the situation has been reversed since 2000 for Japan to hold higher percentage.

Sixth, during the last 25 years, the percentage changes of blue-collar related occupations were relatively stable in three countries. But the proportion is about 15% level in China while it is over 30% in both Korea and Japan.

By analyzing the above-mentioned patterns of change in occupational structure in three countries, we argue that the occupational structure of China reveals the features of the beginning stage of industrial society, whereas those of Korea and Japan represent the characteristics of advanced industrial society.

The results altogether partially support convergence hypothesis in that the occupational structures in three countries represent their stage of economic development and the patterns of change are converging a little.

But unlike the converging tendency in between Korea and Japan, Chinese occupational structure has not been changed much during the same time period and holds its uniqueness, thus make us unable to accept convergence hypothesis.

OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE RATINGS IN THREE COUNTRIES

Occupations can be arranged by rank of their prestige for which members of the society endow. The occupational prestige means an occupation's ranking

based on peoples' subjective estimation and perception for the occupation's status on the occupational structure. Therefore, occupational prestige represents social evaluation for the relative values of occupations or preference for those. The perception of people towards occupations is broadly influenced by various factors such as the economic structure, cultural background and power relations of the society. Therefore, the occupational prestige is formed by the result of complex interactions among socialization experience of members, social values, and active intention of occupational groups to enhance their own prestige.

Although occupational prestige ratings is based on subjective judgement of the members, there is a considerable consensus for the relative rank of occupations among members of society. The order of rank used to keep quite stability for a long period of time(Rothman, 1987: 215). It is known that there are similarities in the occupational prestige rankings among societies. Convergence theory has been stated by a group of scholars(Inkeles and Rossi, 1956) at the systemic level. They compared occupational prestige in six industrialized countries and found that occupations were ranked in a relatively standard hierarchy despite cultural differences among the nations. Convergence points to the general direction of change if and when industrialization gets under way. The professionals which represent higher level of education occupy generally higher level of prestige rank while 'dirty' works, unskilled work and household services represent lower levels of occupational prestige.

However, since a number of study results challenged the premise of spatial and chronological stability of occupational prestige, studies to configure differences in occupational prestige by country is needed. No significant study has yet been made about how peoples' consciousness towards occupational prestige is different in three East Asian countries.
Table 6 is constructed to represent the occupational prestige scores of three countries from the several preceding studies. The various occupations are listed in the order of the prestige score ranking of 1990's Korean survey.

Table 6. Occupational Prestige Ratings in Korea, China, and Japan

Occupations	Korea			China			Japan		
	1990	2000	2010	1988	1999	2005	1975	1995	2007
judge(law)	93.0	93.5	88.7	-	88.3	87.5	87.3	86.9	-
professor	89.2	88.7	87.0	80.6	90.1	85.1	83.5	84.3	-
army general	82.5	81.7	-	-	-	-	54.2	57.9	-
director of bureau	79.5	77.6	86.5	78.0	85.7	81.1	70.5	77.5	-
chief of department	72.2	74.1	-	74.2	81.3	74.9	60.9	59.7	-
pharmacist	70.1	70.9	77.0	-	-	-	65.4	65.7	64.3
journalist	67.7	70.2	74.8	76.2	81.6	77.3	64.6	52.2	-
middle school teacher	62.5	65.2	72.1	73.3	77.1	79.4	62.9	63.6	54.3
bank teller supervisor	62.5	59.0	57.5	-	79.1	71.2	51.6	52.2	49.8
entertainer	-	59.0	65.1	61.5	80.1	-	58.2	69.0	-
restaurant owner	43.6	51.8	45.6	-	65.7	66.8	48.9	51.3	-
traffic policeman	39.4	49.4	-	66.2	76.2	69.4	-	-	-
self-employed farmer	35.9	46.2	51.8	-	44.7	-	39.9	45.6	-
automobile repairman	-	37.2	-	49.7	-	-	42.6	48.9	-
cook	31.4	-	50.0	56.8	60.6	43.7	40.7	51.6	-
taxi driver	29.2	34.5	30.9	66.4	59.5	53.8	40.6	48.9	-
barber	25.8	33.7	-	40.8	-	36.9	45.0	49.7	-
carpenter	22.9	28.9	-	45.4	-	-	32.6	53.1	-
sewing operator	16.5	23.6	-	36.4	-	-	32.6	42.0	-

miner	14.4	-	-	-	-	37.0	28.1	36.7	-
guardsman	14.0	21.0	27.9	-	-	-	32.4	39.9	-
peddler	11.1	18.2	-	-	-	-	28.1	42.4	-
household worker	9.9	15.8	-	17.1	-	-	31.4	38.1	-
unskilled menial work	8.5	13.4	-	-	34.9	28.2	27.2	39.0	-

In case of Korea, those top ranked occupations in the prestige ratings are law judges, college professors, generals in the army, high ranking government officials, pharmacists, and journalists which are representatives of the professional occupations. The second group is followed by teachers, bank tellers, entertainers, etc. This group represents white-collar jobs and semi-professionals. The third group of occupations are the least prestigious jobs, including blue-collar jobs and service related occupations. The tendency shown in 1990 survey is quite replicated in 2000 and 2010 although the range between the highest and the lowest scored occupations is shortened and the status of the entertainer is upgraded in recent years.

The pattern of prestige rankings is almost consistent with those found in China and Japan although the range in those countries is quite shrink comparing with Korea. These findings suggest quite a convergence of prestige rankings among major occupations across societies. This seems to confirm theories of modernization and societal convergence(Trieman, 1970; Trieman and Yip, 1989). However, within the generally similar patterns of rankings, specific differences are found which reflect not only cultural backgrounds but also different stage of socioeconomic development of each society.

The prominent features we can notice the differences are shown from Table 6. Those are as follows.

First, the prestige ranking of traffic policeman is relatively higher in China than Korea and Japan. This can be understood when we consider that the police is a major institution of power under socialism in China.

Second, in China, the ranking of taxi driver and cook in 1990's were relatively higher than Korea and Japan, which seem to represent the improving income and status of self-employed jobs in China since its reform and open policy led to market-oriented economy.

Third, the reason why the prestige score of army generals in Japan is lower than Korea can be traced from the understanding that the socio-political influence of Japanese Self-Defence Force is smaller than Korean Army.

Fourth, the prestige score of chief of department(Gwa-Jang) in big corporations is especially low in Japan comparing the other two societies. It seems like the mid-level managerial jobs in most advanced society is not such desirable position.

Fifth, it is interesting to know that the prestige score of middle(junior high) school teacher is the highest in China and it is increasing as time passes. This phenomena might represent early industrial stage of Chinese society, but it can be the reflection of hardship in getting a job for college graduates in recent China.

Sixth, Korea shows the most wide range in prestige score distribution among the three countries. The range reached almost 90 points. On the other hand, China shows the narrowest range, which was only 53.4 points in 1999. It can be interpreted that people's experience under socialism have affected their recognition for occupations in China. Although the socioeconomic status of farmer and blue-collar worker has been downgraded under Chinese socialist market economy, the subjective perceptions of Chinese for those occupations seem to be still affectionate. On the other hand, menial works are under-evaluated in Korea reflecting sharp division in job preference affected by Confucian tradition since Chosun dynasty.

In spite of the above differences, there are more important basic similarities among the three countries. First, in all three countries, the professionals are ranked highest in the occupational prestige ranking. On the other hand, most blue-collar jobs, farmer, household works, direct service works hold the bottom of the hierarchy. In all three societies, unskilled menial worker marked the lowest prestige score without exception. The managerial jobs and semi-professionals hold the mid-level on the prestige ranking.

Second, the fluctuation by time period is not great in each society during the last two decades. This finding supports the standpoint which assert a stability of occupational prestige over time. What is more interesting is the fact that Chinese preference for occupation in general is similar to those of Korean and Japanese even in the early times.

DISCUSSIONS

It is found that there is a quite huge time lapse in the socio-economic developmental stage of the three East Asian societies. The industrial and occupational structure of China as a whole represent features of the beginning stage of industrialization although Chinese economy has been flourishing in recent years. We estimate that Japan entered post-industrial stage while Korea still has the features of industrial stage.

While the convergence of the industrial and occupational structure is slow among the three societies, the convergence in prestige rankings of occupations is relatively quite fast. We noticed there

are similarities and differences coexist in occupational prestige among societies. The factors which result in differences are the traditional values and beliefs, history of the society, and the level of industrial development.

However, it is astonishing to know that the occupational prestige rankings among societies are basically similar, although there exist about 20 years' gap in occupational structure between China vs. Korea and more gap between China and Japan. This represents that the perceptions and attitudes of Chinese show a rapid converging tendency with more advanced societies, but the speed of structural transformation of China is not catching up.

Kerr et al.(1960) argued that the convergence of institutions resulted in convergence in values and ideologies. But the findings from the above analysis show the structural discrepancy among societies while represents match in cognitions of people. This result supports convergence hypothesis only partially.

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