1.- HISTORICAL SKETCH OF URBANIZATION

According to Korea’s first modern census, conducted in 1925, 4.4% of the population lived in cities with a population of 20,000 or more. At that time the total number of cities was 12, including five cities located in what is now North Korean territory. Sixty years later, there are 50 cities with a population of 50,000 or more in South Korea alone, and the proportion of the urban population has grown to 65.4%. When taking into account urban areas with 20,000 people or more, the proportion rises to about 75%. In sum, Korean society has been completely transformed in the past sixty years from a traditional rural society to a modern urban society (see Table 1).

Historically, Korea’s urbanization has progressed in three stages. The first urban development took place during the Japanese colonial period of 1910-1945. After years of stagnation, the urban population grew gradually from about 3% to 13% in the 35 years of colonialism. The nature of urban growth in this period was almost exclusively shaped by the colonial policies of Japan in exploiting Korean agriculture and economy. This initial takeoff was marked by a massive influx of Japanese after the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910. At that point, the Korean urban population began to increase in the midst of a large rural exodus of destitute Korean farmers to Japan and Manchuria, which was a result of a deliberate agricultural policy of the colonial regime. After 1930, in the latter part of the colonial period, urban growth was greatly facilitated by the industrialization policy of Korea as a base of war supplies. (For these colonial policies, see Kim,
The second stage of urbanization took place between 1945-1960. This period witnessed the liberation of Korea from Japanese rule, the Korean War, and the division of the country into South and North Korea, which was marked by extreme political turmoil, social unrest, and economic difficulty. Such political change created various unexpected movements of population on the Korean peninsula. The liberation caused a sudden surge in population in cities throughout the country. Immediately following the liberation, a huge repatriation of Koreans from Japan and Manchuria took place, and most of the repatriated settled down in an urban area near their original home village. The Korean War and the division of the country created large flows of refugees moving from North to South Korea, which again contributed substantially to South Korea's urban population growth. (See Kwon, T.H., 1977: 176-180; ESCAP, 1980: 14-17). In this period, the proportion of the urban population in South Korea grew from 13% to 28%, and the number of cities from 15 to 27.

Since 1960, Korea has experienced a rapid societal transformation. Together with economic growth and social development, urbanization constitutes one of the major features of the transformation. Unlike the previous stages, external political factors have rarely played a role in the urbanization process since 1960. Urbanization has been shaped entirely by various internal conditions. The most important component of the urban population growth has been the 'urbanward migration' of rural villages, as illustrated in Table 2. However, great diversities have been observed in that urbanization process. In the 1960s, an increasing population pressure coupled with a deteriorating rural economy was the most important reason for a massive flight of the population from villages to cities, particularly to Seoul. In the 1970s, industrialization began to play a major role in urbanization. Between 1970-1975, an absolute decline in Korea's rural population took place for the first time in the twentieth century, and the proportion of the urban population passed the 50% mark in the mid-1970s. Currently, Korean society is urban dominant, but urban areas continue to attract the rural population.