

# Local Self-Governance in Korea :

## Retrospect and Prospect

Sae-Wook Chung

Docteur d'Etat en Droit  
 Research Director of  
 Korea Local Administration Institute

⟨Contents⟩

- |   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| I. Introduction                               | IV. Recent Changes and Trends |
| II. Local Self-Government as an Institution   | V. Conclusion                 |
| III. The Environment of Local Self-Governance |                               |

### I. INTRODUCTION

Korea had a brief experience with local self-governance during 1952 and 1961 under Syng-Man Rhee's Administration and Myun Chang's Administration. Even though Local Autonomy Law was enacted on July 4, 1949, the first local election for local council members of cities (shi), towns (eup) and townships (myon) were held in April and May of 1952, three years after this Law had been promulgated. As Korea could not recover social stability at that time caused by Korean War, the City of Seoul, two Provinces (Kyong-gui and Kang-won), some Counties (goon) and townships of Cholla-Bukdo Province were excluded from local elections. The executive organs of these local governments were elected by each local council. Governors of the Provinces and Mayor of Seoul, however, were appointed by Central Government.

In accordance with the Local Autonomy Act amended in 1956, local council members and executive organs of the cities, towns and townships were elected directly by popular votes. Governors and Mayor of Seoul, however, were remained in the hand of Central Government. In 1958, the executive organs of the basic local autonomous bodies were

changed from elective to appointive posts. This amendment was considered as a political intention of the Liberal Party (Jayu-dang) to strengthen central control over local governments.

After the fall of the Liberal Party Government by the student revolution on April 19, 1960, the Democratic Party Government tried to settle down local self-governance system in Korea. The Local Autonomy Act was amended again in a large scale in 1960, by which direct election system was also extended to the Governors of the Provinces and the Mayor of the Special City of Seoul. The third local election was held in 1960.

The military coup d'Etat on May 16, 1961 and the fall of the Democratic Party Government, however, frustrated the rising expectations of the people to take a big step toward democratic self-governance. The military government abolished the local councils and reverted the post of executive organs of local autonomous bodies to an appointive one. The Provisional Act on Local Autonomy was proclaimed on September 1, 1961, which made Special City of Seoul · provinces-cities · counties eligible for self-governance, and excluded towns and townships from the category of local self-governance entity. The Constitution of the Third Republic virtually excluded the possibility of adopting local self-governance system by stipulating in Article 10, the Supplementary Clause of the Constitution that local council shall not be constituted until the national unification is achieved. No one could expect the implementation of local self-government system in the period of the Third Republic and the Fourth Republic (1961-1979).

The Constitution of the Fifth Republic (1980- ), however, shows the possibility of adoption of local self-governance system in Korea by stipulating in Article 10, the Supplementary Clause of the Constitution that local council shall be established gradually by taking into account the degree of fiscal self-sufficiency.<sup>1)</sup> A bill on Local Autonomy Amendment Act was drawn up by Government, and submitted to the National Assembly on October 10, 1986 after the deliberation at the Council of Ministers on October 2, 1986.

This paper will examine the characteristic traits and status quo of Korean local administration from the perspectives of institutional, socio-cultural and economic (fiscal) approaches. Since the level of democratic attitudes and belief system is obviously important variables of local self-governance, and since the financial independence of local autonomous

1) Article 119 of the Constitution provides that legislative organs shall be established for local autonomous entities; the organization and powers of the local councils, the election of the members of the councils, the election of the chief executive officers of local governments, and other matters relating to the organization and administration shall be determined by law in accordance with the principle of local autonomy.

entities is considered as one of the key factors of a functioning local self-governance, special reference will be given to the institutional, socio-economic and cultural perspectives in so far as data and historical evidence are made available.

## II. LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT AS AN INSTITUTION

### 1. Legal System of Local Self-Governance

Chapter 8 of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea provides the basic principles of local self-governance as follow : (1) regulations concerning organization and operations of local autonomous bodies shall be fixed by law; (2) local autonomous bodies shall have the right to manage their properties, affairs and administration and to enact their own by-laws in accordance with the law. The Constitution clearly defines, in recognition of the vital role of local self-government in a democratic state, local self-government system as a part of government structure of Korea. Under the Constitution, local autonomous bodies are endowed with the right of autonomy (institutionally guaranteed right; pouvoir de la garantie institutionnelle). The local autonomous bodies shall establish their respective councils composed of members elected by popular vote, and select their chief executive officers. Thus two principal organs are presumed: the council as their deliberative organ; and the chief executive officer as their executive organ. This form of local government is called as "Mayor-Council Form."

Within the framework of the Constitution, various laws and regulations are effective with regard to local administration. These laws, presidential ordinances and ministerial ordinances can be classified into two categories: (1) those related to the organization and management of local autonomous bodies, (2) those related to their public service and administrative actions. Laws included in the former are Local Autonomy Act (some articles of this Act are not effective),<sup>2)</sup> Provisional Act on Local Self-Governance (By this Act, the local councils were abolished and the number of local autonomous bodies were reduced by excluding eup and myon from the category of autonomous bodies), Special Act on the Administration of the Special City of Seoul (by this act, the legal status of Seoul

---

2) Articles on the establishment of local councils, the election of executive organs, and articles on the legislative power, power of investigation, power of approval, power to deliberate and decide budget bill, and power to elect members of board of education of the local council are repealed.

Metropolitan Government was upgraded, and since then, Seoul Metropolitan Government is directly attached to the Prime Minister), Act on the Administration of Busan City under the Direct Control of the Central Government, Act on the Administration of Daegu City and Incheon City under the Direct Control of the Central Government, Act on the Administration of Gwangju City under the Direct Control of the Government (by these three Acts, four large cities-Busan, Daegu, Incheon and Gwangju-were upgraded, and since then, they are directly attached to the Central Government), Local Finance Act, Local Allocation Tax Act, Local Public Enterprise Act, and Local Taxation Act.

Meanwhile, laws and regulations included in the latter are great in number, because local government conducts, by its nature, administrative actions and public services directly related to the residents' living. In particular, the needs and expectations of the residents are increasing rapidly in terms of quantity and became more complex and diversified recently, and the amount of laws and regulations tends to increase.

Local autonomous entities are authorized to enact bylaws and regulations; bylaws are to be enacted by the decision of each local council, regulations are formulated by each executive organ with regard to the matters within its jurisdiction. Both of them have the nature of law for the autonomous bodies concerned, and neither is superior to the other. Any restriction on the rights and freedoms of the residents, however, should always be stipulated by a bylaw. As local councils are not established yet, and the functions of local council are conducted tentatively by the Governor of the Province to which the Shi and Goon belong, by the Minister of Interior in case of Jickhal-shi (City under the direct control of the central government) and Do (province), or by the Prime Minister in case of the Special City of Seoul, it is meaningless to distinguish bylaw from regulation.

## 2. Local Government Units and Types

Local autonomous entities are in a broad sense classified into two types: ordinary and special local autonomous bodies. Ordinary local autonomous entities are general and univ-

3) In the U. S., variable special local autonomous bodies are organized in the name of special district (School District, Fire District, Water-supply District, etc). In Japan, special wards (23 in Tokyo Metropolitan Government), unions of local public bodies (2,492), property wards (4,641), and local development corporations (16) are organized, as of December 1, 1980.

Ralph C. Chandler and Jack Plano, The Public Administration Dictionary (New York: John Wiley & Sons, (Inc., 1982), pp. 221-222.

Takashi Isakoda, "Present Local Government System and its Problems," in Local Government Review in Japan, No. 8. (Tokyo: The Local Government Research and Data Center, 1980), p. 33.

ersal ones in terms of organization, administrative functions, etc. Meanwhile, The Provisional Act on Local Self-Governance stipulates, as a special local autonomous entity, Unions of local autonomous bodies (art. 2 - 3).<sup>3)</sup> These Unions are slated to be organized to deal with special administrative functions, or for the joint treatment of administrative functions. No union, however, has been formed so far.

Except the areas where Gu (borough or arrondissement)<sup>4)</sup> of the Special City of Seoul and the cities under direct control of the central government (Busan, Daegu, Inchon and Gwangju) exists, ordinary local autonomous bodies are organized into two tiers: at the bottom, the basic autonomous bodies including Shi (cities), and Goon (counties); and at the top, the regional autonomous bodies including Do (9 regular provinces).

Boundaries of the provinces are determined historically from the period of Koryŏ and Choson Dynasties, and thus areas and populations of the provinces vary greatly. As the provinces are representing central government in the area, and conduct the functions as intermediate administrative units, their organizations are virtually similar to those of the central government.

In this sense, it is obvious that the municipalities (Shi and Goon) are more important than Do as local autonomous entities in Korea. In order to be upgraded to the status of Shi, an area must contain a population of 50,000 or more. Meanwhile, cities having a population of one million or more were raised in status from the attachment to the Provincial Governor to the direct attachment to the central government. The Mayors of these cities have the same rank as that of the Provincial Governors, and more privileges are given to these cities in terms of functional distribution, and administrative supervision. In short, their power is greater and broader than that of other cities. Several questions are raised, however, if these mega-cities with a population ranging from one million to ten million are suitable for democratic self-governance. In these cities, residents will hardly be able to participate in policy-making process beyond casting a vote at local election. It is clear that a mere reduction of control and supervision of the central government will not make these large cities a democratic self-governing body. Special institutional arrangements are required to the large cities to make them politically autonomous.

---

4) A Gu is somewhat comparable to a borough in New York City, or an arrondissement in the City of Paris.

New York City Charter, Amended to April 1, 1981 (New York: The Law Department of the City of New York, 1981), pp. 219-222.

La loi n° 82-1169 du 31 déc. 1982 relative à l'organisation administrative de Paris, Marseille, Lyon et des établissements publics de coopération intercommunale.

In rural areas, Goon is considered too large as the basic unit of local government, because the average number of residents of Goon marked approximately 104,000 in 1985. Even though the exclusion of eup and myon gives the appearance of improving administrative efficiency, eup and myon are naturally formed communities with which a sense of belongingness (Heimatsinn) is made, and fit for self-governance. It is controversial, therefore, if the local government units are appropriate or not in terms of size.

### 3. Distribution of Functions

Local Autonomy Act provides that local autonomous bodies shall deal with the local public matters and the matters delegated to the entity by laws and ordinances (Art. 3 ②). As there is no detailed criteria to guide the assignment of functions among the central government, the provinces, and the municipalities, proper share of administrative affairs is not assured yet, and the practical assignment is vague.

First, the distribution of functions between central government and local autonomous bodies is vague. The affairs actually performed by local autonomous entities are divided into those which are properly their own and those which are entrusted to the executive organs by the central government. This distinction, however, is difficult in practice. As there is no clear standard to allocate the functions, most of the own functions which are the raison d'être of local autonomous bodies tend to become the affairs of central government. Some argue that a clear standard should be established on this matter. The Bill on Local Autonomy Amendment Law, however, defines very explicitly the scope of the affairs to be dealt with by local government by illustrating in detail 'the matters of purely local concern' (art. 9). If this Bill is passed, then any enumeration of powers of autonomous bodies shall not be held to limit their autonomous powers.

Second, Local Autonomy Act did not distinguish the functions of the provinces from those of the municipalities. This is the reason why the provincial governments intervene to the affairs of the municipalities (Shi and Goon), and supervise their implementation as a whole. Opinions have been expressed as to the necessity to share clearly the functions between provinces and municipalities. Some support so-called three principles of functional distribution: clarification of administrative responsibilities, efficiency of handling, and priority to the basic units of self-governance. The supporters of this view insist on distributing as many functions as possible to the basic autonomous entities. Recent trends, however, show the efforts toward the concept of proper sharing between them. This is

proved in part by the Bill on Local Autonomy Amendment, which provides the criteria to distribute the functions by types of autonomous bodies.<sup>5)</sup>

There are two kinds of delegated affairs: "functions delegated to the entity" and "functions delegated to the agency." The former is to be dealt with by the autonomous body (local council and executive organ), while the latter, only by the executive organ. Ministries and Agencies of the central government have been reluctant to transfer their functions to autonomous bodies. They showed openly their distrust toward the local bodies, and enacted laws one after another which would merely "delegate their functions to the agencies and not transfer." By this way, ministries and agencies were able to secure the power to direct and supervise the execution of functions entrusted to the autonomous bodies. Some raised several protests to such practices. Some ministries and agencies, however, responded strongly to this critique: they tried to establish their own field agencies in each region to perform these functions. As it was obvious that the execution of diversified functions by the field agencies independent of local autonomous entities would ultimately damage overall coordination of local administration, they have concluded to delegate the functions to the agencies (i. e. executive organs). Therefore, most of the functions performed by the local autonomous bodies are those delegated to the organ, and not to the entity. Thus, local council is not allowed to intervene in them.

#### 4. Relations between the State and Local Autonomous Entities

Under the Constitution, local self-governance system is institutionally guaranteed. Local autonomous bodies, therefore, have the power to enact their own regulations within the

---

5) Special City of Seoul, Cities under the Direct Control of the Central Government, and Provinces shall deal with the following functions:

- (1) Affairs which cover several Shi, Goon, and Jachi-Gu (autonomous borough), and are to be dealt with in a wider area. These include regional development projects, projects for improving industrial bases, and public works such as construction of large-scale facilities related closely to the life of the residents.
- (2) Affairs requiring uniformity in performance in the level of Special City of Seoul, cities under the direct control of the central government, and provinces.
- (3) Affairs related to the liaison and coordination between the state and Shi, Goon, and Jachi-Gu. Special City of Seoul, 4 Cities (Busan, Daegu, Inchon, and Gwangju), and 9 Provinces are expected to provide advice and information, guidance on related matters and coordinate the affairs to be dealt with by the municipalities.
- (4) Affairs inappropriate to be dealt with independently by Shi, Goon, and Jachi-Gu. The affairs which the basic units of self-governance are deemed to handle inappropriately and which are deemed to be more properly performed supplementarily by the intermediate autonomous bodies include e. g. establishment and maintenance of laboratories, large hospitals, etc.

law, the power to organize independently, the power to perform their own administration, and the power to manage their own finance.<sup>6)</sup> In this regard, the intervention and control of the central government must basically be limited to the least extent that such intervention is necessary. Also, the methods of central control shall be non-authoritative such as advice and information, technical and financial assistance, on the basis of vertical division of functions and mutual cooperation.

As mentioned above, however, the functions delegated to the organs (and not to the entities) are carried out by the executive organs as a lower administrative agency of the central government, general directions and supervisions of the Minister concerned must be followed. These controls are characterized by authoritative ones, or control a priori, that occur in the form of monitoring financial matters, inspection and audit, and granting approvals and permissions. Thus, the Ministries and Agencies have strengthened a vertical power structure in their respective jurisdictions.

Demand is increasing today, however, for a thorough review of the swelled administrative structure. This demand has grown in the period of high economic growth in an effort to searching for simpler and more efficient administrative procedure. Demands are also made for the elimination of the long-standing centralization of power and uniform local administration, and for the building of communities based on their local characters by providing local autonomous bodies true autonomous powers.

Another important method generally used by the government ministries and agencies to control local autonomous entities is the system of government subsidies. When a law is enacted to perform a new project, ministries and agencies concerned set up in most cases some form of grants-in-aid. As they think that merely enacting a law does not ensure performance of the project as intended by law, grants-in-aid are regarded as the most effective method to guarantee proper implementation of government policies and to control local autonomous bodies. The system of government subsidies, however, has some problems:

Primo, in order to obtain government subsidies, local governments must go through a complicated application process which incurs considerable expenditure by them.

Secundo, in general central government gives priority to the projects funded by government subsidies regardless of the opinions of the residents. Necessary projects for the residents, therefore, have often been postponed because no government subsidies were

6) Do-Chang Kim, Ilban Haengjungbup Ron (General Administrative Law), Vol. II, 4th Edition (Seoul: Chong-woon-sa, 1985), pp. 127 - 134.



available, while projects which were not so urgent were frequently given high priority because they were assisted by grants-in-aid.

Tertio, as the central government intervenes continually in the use of grants-in-aid, and issues detailed instructions to the recipient, there is no room for creativity, change, or voluntary implementation on the part of local governments. The idea of tax burdens and benefits to the residents does not go further. People tend to demand their rights, while pay no attention to the duties and burdens they must bear.

### III. THE ENVIRONMENT OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNANCE

As the capability and level of local self-governance is influenced by the environment, we will examine briefly socio-cultural, political, and economic factors as the environment of local autonomy in Korea.

#### 1. Socio-cultural Factors

The socio-cultural inheritances of Korea are generally unfavorable to local self-governance. These are Confucianism (and neo-Confucianism), authoritarianism, and lack of citizenship.

Confucianism which emerged as the de facto state religion of the Chosŏn Dynasty offered the avenue for the yangban literati (ruling class) to enter the government services through the examinations (Kwagŏ). The top bureaucrats recruited mainly by Kwagŏ exam. were mostly from well-known family clans or rich local landed gentry. These ruling elites constituted only 1 or 2 % of the total households. They struggled for power over the interpretation of Confucianism rather than for issues on public service. The power struggle among the Confucian literati elites in and out of the government over their claims of orthodoxy ran up even to the deadly quarrels for political power. There was no room for a compromise through negotiation and concession, and could not imagine to respect other's views and interests.

As compromising was deemed undesirable, one who tries to compromise was considered rather as a person unprincipled and unworthy of respect than as a noble man. Under the influence of Confucianism, the belief system such as; "only what I know is reliable and my own interest is justifiable" were generalized. Confucianism, and lack of willingness to

compromise with other people constitute even today one of the factors which hamper the sound democratic self-governance in Korea.

Authoritarianism is one of the most enduring politico-administrative traditions in Korea, which was developed in a gradual process. The kingly authority was supported by a centralized bureaucracy, which made Korean people lack democratic beliefs and attitudes such as liberty and responsibility, civil rights and duties, decentralization and local self-governance. Historically, Korean people were "subjects," rather than citizens, who must obey the orders of administrative organs. In this sense, the traditional political culture of Korea may be defined as a prototype of "subjective political culture"<sup>7)</sup> among the three models of political culture—participant, parochial and subject-built by G. A. Almond and G. B. Powell, Jr. In particular, the traditional Korean class system is characterized by its high degree of rigid bifurcation of the ruling élites and the ruled mass, and autocratic or authoritarian order was executed as an absolute rule. Korean people tended to obey passively government authorities and laws, but seldom to participate in political process.

As Korea has a history of monarchical or colonial rule, Korean people were generally governed by oppressive and exploitative ruling élites. There was no room, therefore, for a cultivation of the sense of citizenship by providing institutional arrangements for political participation of the people and encouraging attitudes to undertake positively the role of citizens.<sup>8)</sup> The history of monarchical rule was indeed long, while the experience of democratic self-governance was short (1952–1961). The latter is largely of recent Western origin. Without cumulative experience on local self-governance, Korea could not create a democratic political culture by germinating a sense of citizenship.

## 2. Political Factors

Historically, Korea was ruled by the kings on the ground of centralized bureaucracy, thus a strong centralized governing apparatus was formed by a topographical characteristics (relatively small area in a peninsula). In the period of Chosŏn Dynasty, central government officials were appointed to all posts of local administrative units for 3-year term.

7) Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr. Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach (Boston: Little Brown, 1966), pp. 23–24. See also Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 3–42.

8) Yong-Hyo Cho, "The Politics of Political Development: Some Issues Central to Local Self-Governance in Korea," Paper presented at the Joint Conference of the Korean Political Science Association and the Association of Korean Political Scientists in North America, August 8–10, 1983, Seoul, Korea.

The provincial governors, however, were nominated by the Government for 1-year term. The local magistrates were prohibited by law from serving in the area of their own ancestral relations to avoid the rise of any revolt or local power menacing the kingly authority.

In a thousand years of Koryŏ and Chosŏn Dynasty, the central monarchical bureaucracy had rarely become fragmented and decentralized. Centralized bureaucracy in Korea is characterized by its rigidity, conservatism, formalism, red tape, and inequality. This politico-administrative factors did not break down even after the democratic government was set up in 1948. As the traditional root is deep, it has not been discontinued yet.

The traditional political behavior pattern may be defined as a top-down rather than bottom-up one, i. e. leader-follower relationship. The leaders, by virtue of their position, tend to perceive their role to command to the followers and expect their deference and submission, while the followers, by the same token, tend to accept their role to be commanded by the leaders. Vertical and unequal relations were prevailing between the rulers and the ruled, i. e., between the élite and the mass public in the line with the principle of confucianism. By the same token, the masses (the ruled) in general have exhibited absolute submission and compliance toward central or local administrative authorities.<sup>9)</sup>

In this political culture, the participation in political process was strictly limited to the élites and tightly controlled by the rulers.

Instead of the citizen participation in a real sense, political mobilization has been employed by a group of loyal followers to suit the interests of the supreme leader. The late Park Chung-Hee, President of the third and fourth Republic, realizing the importance of confining to the limited number of élite groups, tended to reinforce the tendency of centralized bureaucratic control in order to consolidate his personal power. In the light of this situation prevailing in Korea's political culture, the curbing of political élite's tendencies to monopolize the political process should be the first item of business for Korean politics to develop sound local self-governance.

Political participation in the past might be termed 'political mobilization,' or 'mobilized participation.' It is because participation has been used to serve more the interest of the ruling élites than that of the citizens. It means that the pattern of political participation in Korea is not voluntary or autonomous one as we may see in Western democracies. The citizenry has been compelled or forced to play an essentially passive role in politics as 'subject' rather than as 'participant.' The prevailing style of citizen participation in

9) Jae-Suk CHOE, Hangukineui Sahoejŏk Sāngkyŏk (Social Character of the Koreans) (Seoul: Kaemunsa, Co., 1976), pp. 79-128.

political process, therefore, has been habitual obedience with the order and command of authority rather than a willing or voluntary support of authority. Such political culture hampered the sound development of local autonomy in Korea.

The voting behavior of the citizen also is regarded as one of the obstacles in implementing local self-governance in Korea. According to a survey voting behavior of Korean people was proved to be somewhat mobilized one. The result of this study shows that at least 9% of the Korean voters at the general election held in 1973 fell to the category of mobilized voters.<sup>10</sup> These voters are identified in terms of three characteristics: (1) their voting decisions depend mainly on the advice or pressure of another person, (2) they do not know the names of two representatives from their ward, and (3) they feel totally ineffective regarding their role in politics.<sup>11</sup> Without innovation of such voting behavior, it will be difficult to adopt successfully local self-governance system in Korea.

Local self-governance as well as democracy is more than an elected government, but a way of political life based on a set of values that constitutes political culture. Political culture may be defined as "a set of attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about politics current in a nation at a given time."<sup>12</sup> It is risky undertaking to pick out a few value premises as essential for local autonomy and democracy since there are a complex set of attitudes and beliefs underlying a democratic political culture and views as to their importance are divergent. A focus on the citizen's attitudes and beliefs about local autonomy, however, requires a clear conceptualization of what constitutes such attitudes and beliefs. According to the theories of democracy, the followings are essential points of such attitudes.

- attitudes toward political competition;
- attitudes toward the principles of majority rule and minority rights;
- perception of the public on self role in political process.<sup>13</sup>

Political competition is a principal mechanism that permits accountability of the ruling élite to the governed. The extent to that citizens regard competition as essential to their political life and the extent to that they uphold the rules of competition comprise an important dimension of the democratic attitudes. In Korea, however, it was difficult to find

10) cf.) Chong- Lim Kim(ed.), The Political Participation in Korea: Democracy, Mobilization, and Stability (Santa Barbara: Clio Press, 1980).

11) Ibid., p. 125.

12) Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, op. cit., p. 25.

13) On the theories of democracy, see: Robert A. Dahl, A Preface to Democratic Theory (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), pp. 63-89; Ernest S. Griffith, John Plamenaty, and J. Roland Pennock, "Cultural Prerequisites to a Successfully Functioning Democracy," American Political Science Review, Vol. 50(March 1956), pp. 101-137.

out favorable beliefs and attitudes regarding democracy because the people have experienced only a short period of democratic involvement to develop a system of consistent attitudes. As the overall level of democratic attitudes is not high in Korea, it will not be easy to implement a successful local self-governance system.

The goal of local autonomy and democratization can be achieved on the basis of effective operation of the principles of majority rule and minority rights. The people must know the fact that indiscriminate application of majority rule might also bring harmful results because it could give rise to a tyranny by majority. However, the level of consciousness of the two principles underlying democracy and local self-governance was even low. In the situation that these two procedural rules are not widely accepted among the Korean citizens, it will be difficult to expect the active functioning of local council and to make any progress towards local autonomy.

### 3. Economic Factors

The implementation of local autonomy system is contingent upon fiscal self-sufficiency of each local government, which may be conceived as a function of two variables : the capacity to procure sufficient financial resources (revenues from local taxes and from other than taxes) and financial demand for public services and projects. Theoretically, local self-governance will function well, when a complete fiscal self-sufficiency is assured. It is because if the local government is self-sufficient in terms of financial demand and supply, it will make the central government intervention unnecessary. In that event, there is no room for the central government to involve in the process of decision making by means of fiscal assistance to local governments.

In Korea, however, economic and social developments are unbalanced among the regions as a result of the strategic investment politics of the central government to certain areas since 1960s'. The capacity to raise revenues and financial needs, therefore, are vastly divergent among the local autonomous entities. For example, the degree of fiscal self-sufficiency of Seoul City Government marked 97% in 1986, while that of 139 counties (Goon) remained less than 35%. Thus, the fiscal intervention of the central government became inevitable and is even more useful (1) to meet with the fiscal shortage of local governments to maintain civil minimum level and (2) to promote national equilibrium in public services, and (3) to form a balance in economic and social developments.

Fiscal self-sufficiency is not a prerequisite for local self-governance. In the situation,

however, that the degree of fiscal self-sufficiency varies widely depending upon the economic conditions of the local autonomous entities, it will not be easy to implement perfectly local self-governance system in Korea.

#### IV. RECENT CHANGES AND TRENDS

##### 1. The Transformation from a Rural Society to an Urban Society

Many expressions are used to characterize today's Korea: new industrial country, information-oriented society, aging society, the middle-class society, age of internationalization, and age of local communities. All of these are completely new social phenomena that Korea has not experienced in the past. It is certain that Korea is transforming itself into a new society, which can be summarized as the switch from a rural society to an urban society.

For over two thousand years, Korea had been a rural society based on rice-paddy-field farming. Each household was a unit of production as much as it was a residential unit. People were born in a house where their ancestors had lived, were raised there, worked and raised their children there. Their life was thus static, rooted in their land and community. The motive power that transformed the traditional society of Korea was the rapid economic growth which began in 1960s. The result of which was a sudden decline in the number of people engaged in agricultural sector. The waves of urbanization changed greatly the form of local communities. A huge movement of population from rural areas to cities, especially to large cities occurred, which is often referred to as a migration.

In 1950s, approximately 30% of the population lived in urban areas, which in 1986, about 70% of Koreans live in city areas. In the rapid trends of social mobilization, it is difficult for the old and new residents in cities to organize a system for handling their common problems jointly. There is an increasing tendency among these people toward dependence upon administration with regard to any problem that cannot be solved within their own family. As a result, in the cities where the percentage of migration is high, the demands upon local autonomous entities are continuously increasing. This is one of the reasons why Korea is facing an increasing demand for local self-governance.

## 2. Changes in the Public Awareness and Value System

In the years of 1980s, the top priority of the Korean people has shifted from high economic growth and income doubling to an enhancement of the quality of life. Keeping step with this shift, it was not the central government but a nearer-to-public local autonomous entities such as city (Shi) or county (Goon) government which must play an important role in administrative operations and public services in general. By the end of 1970s, a centralized administration might have been effective and even desirable to promote high economic growth. But recently, most of the middle-class citizens tend to turn their attention to live in a well-maintained calm and comfortable living environment. Standardized and uniform policies and public services by the central government, therefore, became less effective and less appropriate to comply with largely local needs. It is now more desirable for each local autonomous entity to prepare its own development project and take its own administrative measures to meet with the variable and specific needs of the residents.

## 3. Increased Awareness of Citizen's Rights

In the late 1970s, the Korean people began to throw away their traditional wisdom and morality of keeping quiet and yielding to administrative authorities and started to speak out. Although some of their claims were rather selfish in nature, citizens began to claim their rights from the nearest autonomous entities. City and county governments were forced to shed the previous attitude of correctly implementing the measures, regulations and directions from the central or provincial governments. They will be forced to shift reliance from these higher levels of governments and to keep a close relations with the local populace in solving various relevant affairs. It seems to be adequate time for the central government to take a step toward the implementation of local self-governance system by allowing the localities to constitute their own councils, to exercise their own policies and to take initiatives in the matters of purely local concern. It means that the extent and type of autonomy which will be granted must be adequate to guarantee a sufficient range of local initiatives in policy and administration.

## 4. Increased Awareness of Political Participation

It will not work if the central government makes all the decisions and appeals to the

public only at the implementation stage. Public participation should be assured from the earliest stage of policy-making, and local governments should be empowered to incorporate the innovative, and ideas of the residents into administrative policies.

Recent tendency shows that the demand for political participation is rapidly increasing. This participatory orientation in Korea stems from the result of the high economic growth and the impact of modernization, rather than that of the conscious and deliberate efforts on the part of the ruling élites to promote democracy. The community notables, as compared with the mass public, are more interested in politics, more participatory in and willing to do something about politics. The urban élite and mass public, as compared with the rural residents, are more participatory in politics. Urbanization and industrialization seem to have affected the political consciousness of Korean people and their willingness to take a more participatory role in politics. The recent tendency toward participatory orientation of the citizens will make local self-governance in Korea more fruitful.

## V. CONCLUSION

In this study of local self-governance in Korea, I have analyzed briefly the short history of local autonomy which began in 1952 and suspended in 1961. For more than twenty years, nobody could expect the implementation of local self-governance in the near future.

Constitution of the Fifth Republic, however, provides for the possibility of adopting local self-governance system on a gradual basis by considering fiscal capacity of local autonomous entities.

This paper has reviewed three issues: the issues of local self-government as an institution, the environments related to local autonomy, and recent changes and trends in Korea.

Regarding the institutional factors, (1) legal system of local self-governance, (2) types and units of local government, (3) distribution of administrative functions among State, Province and City(Shi) · County(Goon), and (4) relations between the State and local autonomous bodies were analyzed.

Regarding the environments surrounding local self-governance in Korea, socio-cultural, political and economic factors were examined. Special emphasis was put on the historical approach.



Concerning the recent changes and trends in Korea, I tried to explain in relation to local autonomy (1) the switch from a rural society to an urban society emerged since the years 1960s, (2) changes in the public awareness, attitudes and belief system, (3) increased awareness of citizens' rights and political participation.

Either local self-governance or democracy is a way of life rather than a way of government, political culture and democratic attitudes are of vital importance for its successful implementation. Thus, the structural and procedural setting of local self-governance will be able to remain so much autonomous only when it is supported by the strength of democratic attitudes and political culture.

Although fiscal capacity is one of the factors necessary for the successful implementation of local autonomy, it is not an absolute condition. Central government must intervene in terms of financial resources when local governments are fiscally not self-sufficient and when fiscal coordination and equity among local autonomous entities are necessary.

It seems to be appropriate for Korea to implement local self-governance as soon as possible. Any future effort toward decentralization, however, must begin with a careful study on the anticipated problems and their solutions.