Urban Primacy in The World-System: A Critical View

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Ⅰ. INTROOUCTION

This paper purports to analyze the recent studies on the urban hierarchy of the world-system theory and to critique some limitatins of its arguments. Specifically, the major concern is on the relationship between the phenomenon of urban primacy of the city-systems and the world capitalist economy.

Until now, urbanization processes including the pattern of city size distribution have been mainly interpreted as if they were isolated in time and explicabale only in terms of processes and structures of rather narrow scope, usually confining to the boundaries of nations or regions within nations(Weber, 1967; Vapnarsky, 1969; Hawley, 1981).

With a recent emergence of world-system theory, however, the increasing attention has been paid to the urbanization process as a part of the larger world economy. The main tenet of this

theory is that the aspects of urbanization processes cannot be understood apart from the world-economy, since the urbaninizing processes reflect, to a considerable extent, the mode of their integration into the world-economy(Firebaugh, 1985; Chase-Dunn, 1983).

Though there have not yet been made enough theoretical studies to interpret the patterns of urbanization process in the light of world-system theory, generally speaking, there are two major streams in the study of urbanization process within this theory. One is the level of urbanization as indicated by a proportion of the population living in urban areas(cities). which has long been understood as an important correlate of economic and social development.[1] The other, that is a main concern in this paper, is the phenomenon of urban primacy.

As well known, urban primacy refers to the status that the largest city is much larger than any others in the hierarchial ordering of cities generally in terms of population size(Timberlake, 1985:E 1-shakhs, 1972). Since Jefferson(1939) introduced the concept of the primate city, many scholars have noticed the relationship between city-size distributions and the aspects of socio-economic transformation. In conjunction with the study of underdevelopment in the periphery or semi-periphery of the world-economy, they have also shown a great deal of attention to urban systems in which the largest city is disportionately large i.e., primate (Castells, 1977; Elkin, 1979; Frisbie, 1980).

Urban primacy is distinguishable from the normal distribution of city-size, which is called the rank-size rule or log-normal distribution. Whereas a rank-size or log-normal distribution of city siz e is regraded as an optimal urban hierarchy for economic development, urban primacy is regarded to constitute an impediment to economic development (Walters, 1985). This urban primacy is one of the key concepts by which we can grasp the relationship between urbanization and economic development as understood within the world system theory.

Ⅱ. PERSPECTIVES ON URBAN PRIMACY

Roughly speaking, there are two different perspective on urban primacy. One is urban ecological perspective, and the other is the Marxist perspective, which can be further classified into class theory, dependency theory and world system theory.

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1) This has often been criticized for failing to acknowledge the phenomenon of overurbanization, the growth of urban population not accompanied by a compatible economic growth(Timberlake, 1985).

1. Urban Ecological Perspective

In general, urban ecologists posit the existence of a territoral division of labor, dominated by large urban centers, and based on interdependence and exchange among functionally differentiated areas. I.e., urban systems are defined in terms of both functional differentiation and interdependence(Frisbie, 1980). The territorial division of labor with the development of transportation technology is considered as the motor to integrate across urban centers within regions. The urban ecologists have been influenced by the works of geographers such as Christaller, Losch and Grass. Although this ecological perspective has been continuously refined by the urban geographers such as Berry, Bourne and Simmons, and Friedmann and Alonso(Timberlake, 1985), it still remains unsatisfactory in that it lacks comprehensive considerations on the interdependence dimensions of the territorial division of labor(Frisbie, 1980).

2. Perspective in Marxist Tradition

The major alternative to the traditional ecological perspective comes from the Marxist tradition: class theory, dependency theory and world system theory. While they are generally in common to put much more emphasis on the macro-level patterns of urbanization than the ecological perspective, they have differences among them, as will be indicated below.

(1) Class Theory

Following orthodox Marxist tradition, class theory intends to explicate the patterns of urbanization especially in terms of class struggle. According to Smith(1985). urban primacy cannot be adequately explained through the universalizing force but rather through the type of regional class relations and the convergence of interest among regional ruling classes vis-a-vis their mode of control over labor. What is good in this view is that it does not neglect the conflictual aspects of urbanization processes, which the ecological perspective usually does. Like the ecological perspective, however, this theory suffers problem in that it tends to consider the primary context in which urbanization occurs to be nations or economic regions, and to regard the factors internal to a particular nation or an economic region as concrete and the factors external to them as abstract(Chase-Dunn, 1983).

(2) Dependency Theory

Dependency theory considers the core-peripheral hierarchical division of labor as the fundamental cause of urban primacy. In this respect, dependency theory is not far different from world-system theory. However, it is different in that dependency theory puts a main focus upon the urban primacy of peripheral nations as compared to world system theory whose concern extends to the whole range of the world-system. In dependency theory, there are three prominent explanations on the urban primacy of the peripheral nations:colonialism, export dependency and rural collapse, and these three are considered as the main causes of the urban primacy in the peripheral nations(Smith, 1985). As a whole, dependency theory posits that the economic penetration of peripheral nations by rich core nations through such means as trade, aid or investment distorts the development pattern of the peripheral nations(Frank, 1966), and as a result there occurs overurbanization and urban primacy much earlier than one would expect from the Western experience.

(3) World-System Theory

World system theory deals with the pattern of urbanization in terms of the system as a whole. In fact, world system theory is tremendously indebted to dependency theory in that they both focus attention on nations and cities as part of the larger world economy. They are not identical, however. Whereas dependency theory applies mainly to the post-colonial peripheral nations, world system theory focuses upon the whole level of world economy as well as the whole period since capitalism emerged as the dominant mode of production in Europe in the sixteenth century up to today. World system theory also differs from class theory in that the latter does not take the importance of the world economy structure as much seriously as the former does(Timberlake, 1985).

In this light, the virtue of world-system theory lies in the fact that it provides a relational perspective on urbanization in spatial terms(Smith, 1985). To cite Chase-Dunn(1983), "All of these approaches(mainly dependency theory) are great improvements on the urbanization studies which completely exclude the international context from consideration, but they still fail to specify adequately the structures and processes which constitute the larger world economy. Hence, we must undertake research which studies relations among cities within the world system itself…. Focusing on the world city system is both an end in itself and a means to a more complete understanding of national and regional city systems." In short, world system theory considers, on the world scale, the division of labor and the production and exchange as the determinats of urban primacy in the world society(Friedman and Wolf, 1982:Chase-Dunn, 1985).

Ⅲ. URBAN PRIMACY IN THE WORLD CITY SYSTEM

1. Division of Labor and Urban Primacy

The present capitalist world-system is characterized by the process of unequal development that generates and reproduces a hierarchial world division of labor(Wallerstein, 1974), and according to world system theory, the initial forces to affect the pattern of city-size distribution is the division of labor. Two essential features characterize the world division of labor. The first is the predominant type of production: the high technology, capital-intensive production in the core and the labor-intensive production in the periphery. The second is wage level: higher wages in the core than in the periphery. That is, as labor costs escalate in the core, production is transferred to the semi-periphery or periphery.

The nations under this world division of labor exhibit both vertical(inter-level) and horizontal (within-level) production and exchange among the core, semi-periphery and periphery. The instruments of the production and exchange between nations are urban areas or cities(Gibbs, 1962). The more increases the amount of commodity exchange, the larger will be the cities since the increment of the amount of commodity exchange requires additional population, facilities, capital and functions such as financing, transportation and communications(Friedman and Wolff, 1982). As such, it is held that all primate cities are formed through the production and exchange and the world division of labor.

Here, it must be noted that producution and exchange are unequal one. According to Kentor(1985), what characterizes vertical and internal hierarchy is a net flow of surplus capital from the periphery to the core and semi-periphery, and from the semi-periphery to the core. Moving upward in the world system, the amount of production and exchange increases, and the peripheral nations exchange with the core and semi-periphery but not among themselves. Finally, the difference in the amount of exchange among nations differentiates the size of the cities which are the instruments of production and exchange(Chase-Dunn, 1983, 1985). This constitutes a world city hierarchy.

As urban ecologists ignore the consideration of the world division of labor, however, world system theorists tend to neglect the consideration of the territorial division of labor. This is an important point because the world division of labor may explain the world-city hierarchy but might not adequately explain the distribution of territorial city. Hence, both the world and territorial division of labor should be considered as main impetuses for the formation of the urban hierarchy because

the production and exchange between nations do not occur only between large world cities but rather it affects, and is affected by the production and exchange within territorial city system.

Finally, it is not too much to say that technological advances in transportation and communication are essential for the production and exchange, and ultimately for the formation of large cities. Without technological advance, large primate cities cannot be formed and the problem of urban primacy may not occur.

2. World Cities and the World City System

The large primate cities, which are the media of the production and exchange between nations, are called world cities(Chase-Dunn, 1983 ; Friedman and Wolff, 1982). The role of primate world cities extends far beyond their national boundaries. Though both the core and the peripheral nations have primate world cities, their roles in the world economy are quite different. Whereas the core cities function as the control centers of the world economy as a whole including political, military and economic functions, the peripheral cities work as the conduits which transmit surplus value to the core and domination to the periphery(Chase-Dunn, 1983:Walters, 1985).

Like this, the core and peripheral cities perform different functions in the world economy as to the different production roles within the world division of labor, but these are connected with each other in a variety of complex ways. This network of the world cities is called the world-city system.

It must be noted that territorial-city systems which are the distributions of cities within smaller regions(usually nations), coexist with the network of the world-city system. These subsystems of world cities or urban hierarchies can be understood, in part, in the context of the role that their primate city plays in the world city system(Walters, 1985). World cities lie at the junction between the world-city system and the subsystems of cities i.e., territorial-city systems.

In order to determine the degree of primacy of the city systems, it is crucial to identify which cities are "in" and which are "out" at a particular time. This is the problem of the boundaries of the city systems: both world cities and territorial cities. The external boundary is related to the former and the internal boundary is related to the latter.

As Chase-Dunn(1985) argues, the external boundary problem may be simplified because nearly all areas of the world have been incorporated into the world city system. However, we cannot gainsay that the contemporary socialist states still remain outside the capitalist world economy. Therefore, it is not so simpleas it appears to be.

Though the internal boundary does not coincide with the national borders(Walters, 1985), in general, national political boundaries are the most effective barriers to exchange between cities, and

therefore, the most meaningful device for determining the boundaries of the subsystems of cities. This is very important for understanding the city hierarchy in the territorial city syste ms. Hence, it is reasonable to consider a nation as a basic unit of subsystem of world city hierarchy.

3. Primacy in the City Systems

As pointed out above, the initial impetus for urbanization is the division of labor, and the city size is positively related to the level of production and exchange in the hierarchy of division of labor. I.e., the division of labor determines the size of the world cities and ultimately affects the city size dimension in the world city systems:(1) the subsystems of cities(the territorial city systems) and (2) the system of world cities

(1) Primacy in the territorial city systems

In the subsystem level(territorial city system level), it is not easy to estimate the degree of primacy of the city systems because there are many other territorial cities which are not in direct relation to the world cities outside their territories. I. e., knowing the size of the world primate city does not tell the degree of primacy in the territorial city systems.

There have been observations that the pattern of city-size distribution is related to specific stages of development(Lloyd, 1963:Hoselitz, 1969). According to Jefferson's law of the primate city(1939), the largest city in the city system of the less developed nations is too large relative to the socond and the third largest cities, in comparison with the city systems of the more developed nations.

Against this, Mehta(1962) argues that primacy may be a function of small area and population size. However, this argument seems to be improper. From Table-I, we can find that such nations as Belgium, Switzerland and Netherlands which are high in population density, do not show high urban primacy. Instead, the degree of urban primacy is better associated with level of development (this will be discussed later). Chase-Dunn(1985) also states that there is a negative correlation between the size of area and the primacy of city-size distribution and that very small nations are more likely to have primate cities than the large ones. This contention is also inadequate. If his argument is true, the large nations such as USSR, Canada, US, Brazil must show flat city-size distributions, and small nations such as Israel, Gambia, Sudan and Liberia must have a primate city hierarchy. As shown in Table-I, however, we cannot find a positive relationship between the size of area and primacy. Hence, we may conclude that neit her area nor population is a major determin ant of city-size distribution.

Based on the abovementioned discussion, we can say that the size of population or area are not

〔Table－Ⅰ〕 Area, Population Density, Level of Development and the Degree of Primacy for 74 nations

Nation	Area (sq. mi.)	Population Density	Development Rank	Primacy Rank
United Kingdom	58		1	50
Germany(F.R.)	95	155	2	51
Belgium	11	323	3	60
Untied States	3,615	25	4	57
France	211	99	5	59
Switzerland	16	157	6	74
Canada	3,852	2	7	46
Germany(D.R.)	42	155	8	56
Netherlands	13	349	9	69
Sweden	174	18	10	38
Australia	2,968	2	11	65
Czechoslovakia	49	120	12	71
Italy	116	190	13	68
New Zealand	104	12	14	67
Japan	143	316	15	27
Norway	125	13	16	52
Poland	121	115	17	34
Finland	130	14	18	58
U.S.S.R.	8,649	88	19	30
South Africa	471	25	20	53
Hungary	36	115	21	42
Argentina	1,072	10	22	37
Spain	195	74	23	47
Mexic	762	112	24	41
Venezuela	352	16	25	44
Yugoslavia	99	88	26	55
Chile	292	15	27	35
Portugal	35	108	28	17
Uruguay	72	17	29	21
Cuba	44	85	30	29
Israel	8	190	31	43
Romania	92	95	32	49
Brazil	3,280	14	33	31
Lebanon	4	258	34	7
Egypt(U.A.R.)	387	43	35	28

Greece	51	74	36	10
Turkey	301	59	37	40
India	1,262	208	38	62
Morocco	172	47	39	22
Peru	496	114	40	14
Costa Rica	19	45	41	16
Ceylon	25	228	42	1
El Salvador	8	235	43	9
Phillippines	116	165	44	23
Iraq	168	31	45	48
Panama	29	25	46	13
China	3,691	105	47	75
Tunisia	63	40	48	2
Guatemala	42	69	49	4
Ghana	92	51	50	8
Ecuador	109	30	51	39
South Korea	38	393	52	33
Tanzania	363	20	53	26
Kenya	225	29	54	20
Congo(D.R.)	905	5	55	5
Bolivia	424	5	56	3
Pakistan	365	105	57	54
Dominican Republic	19	112	58	18
Indonesia	576	79	59	36
Nicaragua	50	22	60	15
Honduras	43	34	61	24
Nigeria	357	86	62	70
Burma	262	53	63	32
Thailand	198	94	64	12
Malagasy	226	15	65	6
Sudan	967	8	66	61
Paraguay	157	8	67	11
Jordan	38	34	68	25
Angola	481	6	69	19
Liberia	43	18	71	64
Gambia	4	55	72	73
Ethiopia	472	26	73	63
Libya	679	18	74	72
Afghanistan	250	25	75	66

* Source : El sharks(1972) : Population desity data are added by the author.

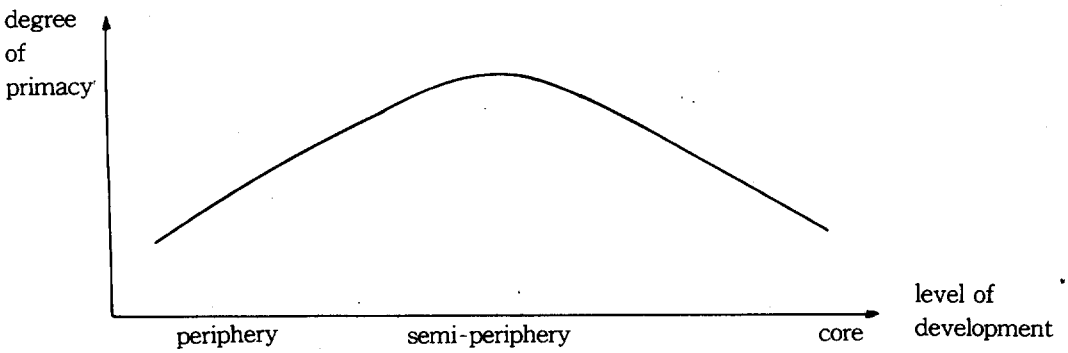
appropriate factors to explain the phenomenon of urban primacy. First, we can find from table－ I that large population does not necessarily converge in the largest city if a nation achieved a balanced development throughout its territory, and instead that the level of development better explains the phenomenon of urban primacy. This necessitates that population size be reinterpreted in terms of development.

Furthermore, size of area should be also reinterpreted in terms of technology advances in transportation and communication, because technology will affect the inhabitable area and thus the distribution of cities. Then, the advance of technology is closely related to the level of development. Likewise, size of area should also be reinterpreted in terms of development, since the level of development(which includes the technological advances in transportation and communication) affects the size of inhabitable area and thus the distribution of cities. In sum, the degree of urban primacy seems to be clesely related to the level of development in the world economy. Fig-1 shows thatthe changes in the degree of primacy in the subsystems of cities.

In this regard, Fig-1 shows that there is a significant association between the degree of primacy of cities and their socio-economic development. However, the function is not unilinear but curvilinear, and the degree of primacy may be the highest during the stage of transition: the semi-peripheral level(El-Shakhs, 1972). The reason is as follows.

In the capitalist world economy, the higher the level of development, the more the amount of production and exchange will be. As a result, the largest city or cities will grow much larger, and consequently the city-size distribution will be more primate. However, there is a limit to the city growth not only because an economy of scale will affect it, but also because other cities may develop and share the part of the function of the largest city. In many core nations, moreover, nearly

[Fig- I] Evolution of primacy



*from El-shakhs(1972)

all areas are urbanized and relatively balanced in development. Hence, the degree of primacy of the core may be low in comparison with that of the semi-periphery.

Here, a problem arises relating to the socialist nations which reside outside the capitalist world economy. To explain this, it is helpful to introduce the concept of "closure" defined as "the proportion of all existing interactions beginning or terminating within a particular system which are also completed within the same system"(Vapnarsky, 1969). Closure is a quotient which varies between 1 and 0. Closures is 1 if no interaction occurs between the system and the external world, and closure is 0 if all interactions are completed outside it. As advanced by Vapnarsky, the higher the degree of closure, the lower will be the degree of primacy cities. Since the degree of closure is high in socialist nations, the primacy of cities in them may be low in comparison with other capitalist nations. This view is supported from Table- I. We can find that the primacy ranks of most socialist nations are relatively low(China, 75;Czechoslovakis, 71;East Germany, 56;Yugoslavia, 55;Romania, 49 respectively, among 74 nations). Hence, we may expect that, as the degree of exchange between socialist nations and capitalist nations increases, the degree of primacy in socialist nations will increase.

(2) Primacy in the world-city system

. Chase-Dunn(1985) argues that the hierarchy of world cities is always less hierarchical than the log-normal distribution. Furthermore, he states that the hierarchy of the world city system is more decentralized than the hierarchy of territorial city systems within most nations.

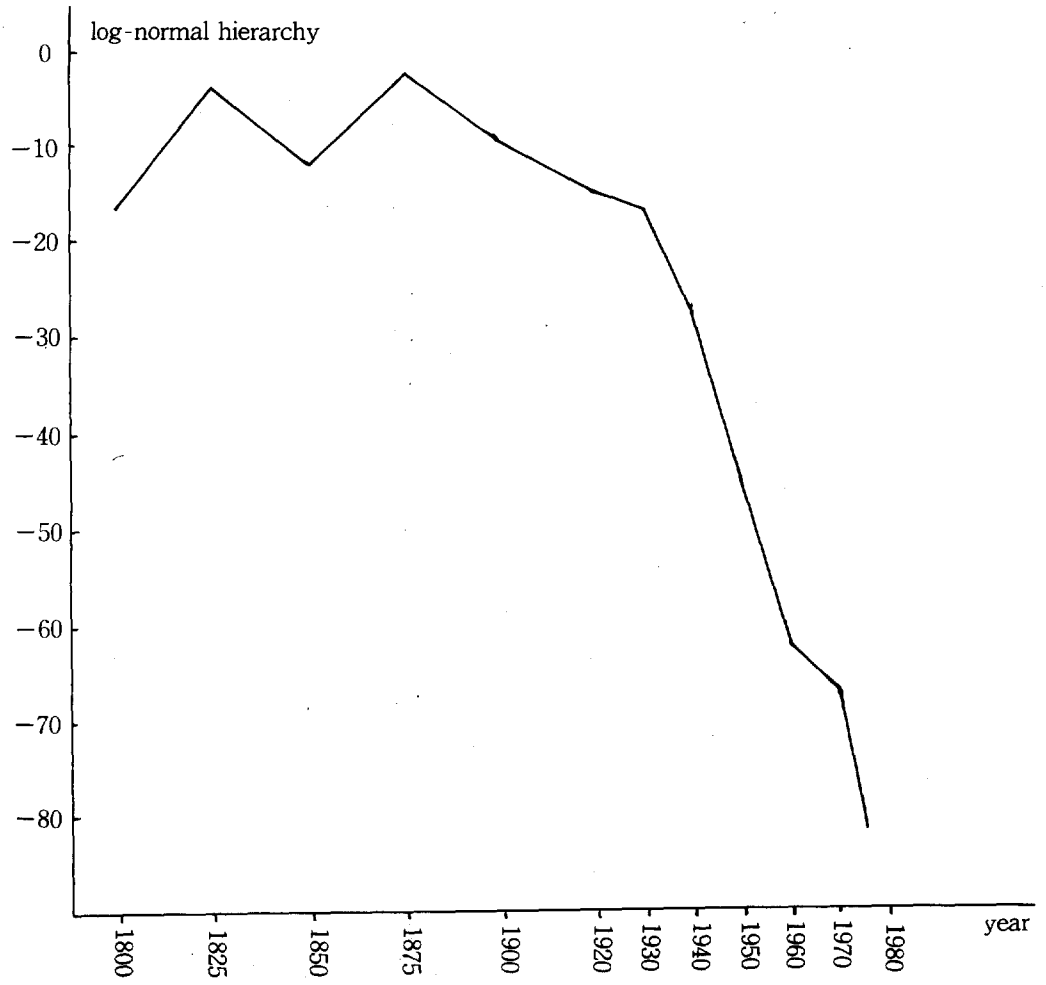
In this regard, it must be indicated that this rather flat distribution of world cities can be an evidence which might endanger the fundamental proposition of world system theory that the world economy is a spatially well integrated system, since as Rozman(1976) contends an unintegrated and immature spatial economy will exhibit a relatively unhierarchial size distribution.

As Chase-Dunn shows through an analysis of the 10 largest cities of the capitalist world-system, however, the flat distribution may not be primarily due to a lack of the integration of the world economy, but rather the cycle of core competition in the multi-centric polity(Chase-Dunn, 1983, 1985). As stated before, national boundaries act as barriers to exchange in the world economy. The closure or openess of national systems viaries and thus it may be expected that national closure increases during periods of overall economic stagnation as producers try to use political leverage to protect their own markets. During the periods of world economic expansion, in contrast, national systems become more open and world exchange flows more freely following competitive markets prices. This cycle of openess and closure corresponds to the changes in the structure of the world

system. Periods of openess and economic expansion correspond to the periods in which a shingle hegemonic power remains dominant in productive advantage. Periods of closure and stagnation follow when other core powers become economically more competitive and eventually challenge the single hegemony(Chase-Dunn, 1985). This is the cycle of core competition.

If core competition is the main determinant of variations in the world city-size distribution, the distribution must fluctuate with the cycle of core competition. Chase-Dunn(1985) provides the longitudial variation of the 10 largest world cities like Fig-Ⅱ, and argues that the recent declines of the primacy in the world-city hierarchy since 1875 derived from the core competition.

[Fig-Ⅱ] The change of the world-city size hierarchy



*from Chase-Dunn(1985)

However, this explanation has some limitations. First, as he admitted, the recent decrease in the degree of primacy may be mainly due to the increasing presence of semi-peripheral cities in the list of the world's largest cities. In fact, among the 10 largest cities in 1975, 5 cities are of the semi-periphery or the periphery(Mexico city, Shanghai, Saô Paulo and Buenos Aires).

Second, this view disregards the domestic factor i.e., the territorial division of labor. A city may grow to a world city mainly due to territorial production and exchange. Hence, the distribution of the world cities cannot be adequately explained only in terms of the core copetition.

Third, if, as he argues, the declines after 1875 are mainly due to the core competition, the core competition should have been increased after that period. However, as we can see in Table-Ⅱ, the dominance of the United States has rather been increased since that time, and other nations' competitive powers have been relatively decreased. Accordingly, the core competition is not sufficient to explain the continuous decreasing trend after 1875.

Furthermore, the periods of economic stagnation should have been sustained since 1875 because, as stated before, he argues that there is a positive relationship between high core competition and economic stagnation. However, Fig-Ⅱ and Fig-Ⅲ tell us that economic cycle has fluctuated over time whereas the degree of primacy in the distribution of the world cities has continuously diminished.

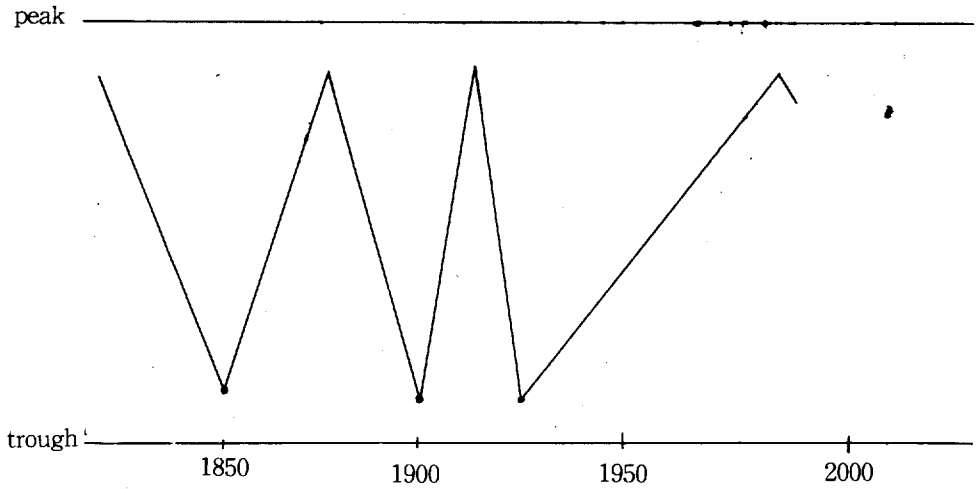
Therefore, it can be said that the core competition is not an exclusive determinant of the hierarchical distribution of world-cities, and thus there may be other determinants beside core compet-

[Table－Ⅱ] Output per Capita(calculated at 1955 US relative prices as a proportion of the United States)

Year	1870	1890	1900	1910	1913	1920	1929	1930	1938	1950	1955	1960
U.S.A	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
U.K.	102	97	91	75	72	75	68	75	86	63	63	67
Canada	100	85	82	85	85	76	75	79	71	76	76	74
Norway	78	－	57	53	52	61	58	69	77	56	56	64
Sweden	58	51	55	58	61	491	53	62	70	60	60	67
Denmark	72	67	68	67	70	642	64	74	75	60	60	65
Netherlands	－	－	80	68	66	69	70	76	67	48	48	59
Switzerland	－	70	－	－	59	603	69	75	73	54	54	67
Belgium	96	－	－	－	80	－	76	83	75	57	57	61
Germany	83	76	75	73	67	514	53	57	75	43	43	69
France	101	89	88	－	74	60	77	84	68	53	53	64
Italy	78	51	44	42	43	44	41	43	47	30	30	43

* Source : Bousquet(1980)

[Fig-Ⅲ] World economic cycle(from Thompson, 1983)



ition.

An alternative exlplanation on the flat distribution of world city system can be made by introducing the concept of "closure" again. As stated before, the higher the degree of closure, the lower will be the degree of primacy. Since the world system has no systems to interact, its closure is higher than any other regional or territorial systems. Hence, this may result in the flat distribution of the world cities.

Finally, Chase-Dunn chose the world cities by the criteria of population size under the assumption that population size of as world city reflects its functional centrality. However, As he admitted, howevr population size may not be a good measure of centrality in the world-economy(Cohen, 1981). As Walters(1985) argues, although it is often assumed that the largest city in an urban system is the dominant city in terms of the performance of economic activity or central place functions, there is not necessarily a direct relationship between city sizes and functional complexity.[2)]

Ⅳ. CONCLUSION

So far, we have discussed the arguments, advanced in world system theory, on the phenomenon

2) In this regard, Smith(1985) suggests that a population primacy should be distinguished from an infrastructural primacy.

of urban primacy in the city-systems(both the city system and the territorial city systems). World system theorists have tried to understand the urbanization process specific to the capitalist mode of production and exchange, and we have seen that urban primacy depends on, to a considerable extent, the division of labor in the world economy. However, we find that the phenomenon of urban primacy cannot be explained only in terms of the world-system theoretical view. Many exogenous variables also influence the relative growth rates of cities, and the concentrations of population are due to many factors not directly related to the economic and political relations among cities(Smith, 1985).

In my view, when we consider the problem of urbanization process, not only economic variables bnt also non-economic variables such as national history, culture, national planning and geopolitical situation must be taken into account for better explanations. Furthermore, it must be noted that the higher world-city system is closely related to the territorial city-system through the world cities. Therefore, when we study the urbanization process, both systems must be considered simultaneously.

Also, world-system theory on urbanization neglects the effects of positive human activities. Under the world system theory, the distribution of urban hierarchy is a function of the world economy. I. e., the world economy is an independent variable and the distribution of city-hierarchy is a dependent variable. However, men can change actively the pattern of distribution of cities. For instnace, the distribution of city hierarchy can be altered by regional planning or population distribution policies etc. This aspect must be emphasized even more in cases of socialist nations, since they are relatively outside of the capitalist world economy and emphasize plannings over all national affairs.

Another problem, as discussed before, lies in the measurement of city-size. Let alone the assumption that the population size of a city reflects to some degree its functional centrality, the measurement of city size in terms of population has a significant problem. Since the boundary of a city depends on the national administrative section, the measurement of a city by administrative section may also be an arbitrary one. In the twentieth century, moreover, as Chase-Dunn(1985) pointed out, many core nations have reached a situation in which almost entire population are urban, and urban areas have been interconnected so closely that the definitions of cities are extremely problematic.

In spite of the limitations that I have pointed out in this paper, however, there are a number of analytic merits in world system theory, Especially, it is a distinguishable contribution made by world system theory that it enlarges the scope of analysis of the urbanization process in comparison with other perspectives such as the ecological perspective that fails to go beyond the boundary of nations or regions. As such, world system theory still remains persuasive.

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〈國文抄錄〉

世界體制論에서의 都市首位性에 대한 理論的 考察

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본 논문은 세계체제론에서 보는 都市首位性(urban primacy)에 관한 이론을 실증적인 근거에 기초하여 비판하는 한편 설명력의 개선을 위하여 추가적으로 고려해야 할 몇가지 논점을 제시하고자 한 것이다.

都市首位性이란 최대규모의 도시가 여타 도시에 비하여 비대한 정도를 가리키는 개념으로서 이에 대한 이론적 설명으로는 대체적으로 보아 도시생태학적설명과, 계급이론, 종속이론 및 세계체제이론을 포괄하는 맑시스트적 설명이 있어왔다. 양자간의 구별은 前者가 도시간의 기능적 분화와 상호의존관계에 기초하여 都市首位性을 설명하려는 반면, 後者는 분업 및 생산·교환관계에 기초하여 이를 설명한다는데서 찾을 수 있다.

이 중에서도 세계체제이론은 분석의 수준을 국가나 지역에 국한하지 않고 전 세계경제체제로 까지 확대함으로써 보다 일반화수준이 높은 설명을 기하고 있다는데서 주목할 만하다. 그럼에도 불구하고 세계체제이론에서의 都市首位性에 대한 설명은 여러가지 점에서 한계점을 노정하고 있다. 이와 관련, 본 논문은 설명력의 제고를 위한 몇가지 추가적 고려사항을 제시하였다. 구체적으로는 첫째, 생산·교환과 같은 경제적요인 외에도 역사·문화, 지정학적 입장, 국가계획과 같은 비경제적요인에 대한 추가적 고려가 있어야 한다.(특히 인위적인 계획, 정책의 도시수위성에 대한 영향은 무시되어서는 아니 될 것이다.) 둘째, 세계도시체제는 세계도시(world cities)를 통하여국내도시체제와 밀접히 관련되어 있으므로 양자에 대한 균형적 고려가 있어야 한다. 셋째, 도시수위성의 측정에 있어서 복합적 요소의 고려를 통한 보다 타당도가 높은 지표화의 노력이 있어야 한다 등이다.