

# The Effects of Strategies for Family Subsistence on Social Unification

- Focusing on the Case of North Korea since 1994 -

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## < Abstract >

Since Chairman Kim Il-Sung died in 1994, domestic and foreign scholars have put forth the crisis theory, which predicted that the system in North Korea would collapse in the near future. Contrary to their expectations, North Korea officially launched Kim Jeong-Il's regime in 1998, and came out of a recession, achieving economic growth of 6.2% in 1999. The present research takes a position that Kim Jeong-Il's regime has entered into 'the phase of recovery', and it will have a new turning point if steered carefully over the period.

Such a potential 'opportunity' of North Korea is analyzed based on the operational method of social unification mechanisms centering on families. Social unification does not mean the control of the society in the political dimension, but a process of regulating tensions and conflicts among social systems in the dimension of a social structure. That is, social unification must be perceived as a process, not a result. The mechanism

of social control is composed of a public mechanism, private mechanism, and social mechanism, which intermediates between the public and private mechanism. The public mechanism corresponds to the party, the ideologies, the mechanism of military forces (the Chosun People's Army, the Social Security Agency, the National Security Guard), social mechanism to social organizations and the welfare system, and private mechanism to the family system.

Since 1994, faced with challenges from home and abroad, the public mechanism of North Korea has maintained or even reinforced itself without radical changes. Particular examples are the adaptation of the theory of the powerful great nation and the crisis ideology, and the reinforcement of the status of the army through army first politics. On the other hand, the social mechanism became too weak to operate normally. The paralysis of the welfare system, which was in charge of distribution, caused the people poverty of food, clothing, shelter, medicine, education, etc. Under such structural conditions, people in North Korea are engaging in secondary industries in the unit of families for subsistence. With regard to the situation, the government directed the relaxation of the regulations of social organizations, and as a result, people spend free time out of relaxed organizational life in secondary economic activities. In this way, the economic function of families has been reinforced. This is the very reason why the determinant factor of social unification in North Korea can be found in families.

Consequently, the mechanism of social unification in North Korea is 'weakened welfare system; relaxed social organizations; reinforced economic function of families.' From the viewpoint of the regime, the weakening of social organizations means the weakening of social control. However, the people, who acquired autonomy from organizations, contribute to the maintenance of the society by earning their living. The defective welfare system is complemented by another system, namely the family system, and social organizations provide the condition under which families can play such a complementary role. In this way, tensions among systems are regulated, and the mechanism of social unification is restructured.

In the future, as the people's economy recovers on the ground of the open-door policy, the society in North Korea will possibly complement the welfare system, and restrict the secondary economy, while maintaining or consolidating the public mechanism. However, it will take

a long time, thus the current system is expected to continue for a while.

## ⅴ°. Introduction

### ⅴ°.1. Problem Definition and Objectives

After Chairman Kim Il-Sung died in 1994, North Korea went through the 4 years' rule of the departed. During that period, the people in North Korea suffered the most serious difficulty in food and economy in their history. Though the government promoted the spiritual unification of the people through the crisis ideology, and limited door opening for international trading for during the 4 years, it could not achieve enough to overcome the economic depression. At that item, scholars at home and aboard attempted to read the situation of North Korea in a position of 'the crisis theory.' Such previous research tended to analyze the North Korean system naturally from the aspect of 'the crisis management system' or 'the theory of North Korea's collapse'.

Despite such a negative situation and prospects, North Korea officially launched the stable Kim Jeong-Il's regime in September 1998. Moreover, it achieved economic growth of 6.2% in 1999, ending a 9 year economic recession. The index indicated that the system of North Korea was more enduring than expected, and had entered into 'the phase of recovery.' This suggests that North Korea is attaining stable internal unification beyond coping with crises.

Now it is necessary to analyze North Korea in the position that it has gotten out of the crises, and is faced with 'opportunities' for solidifying or even reforming the system. In other words, it is time to answer to the questions 'How does North Korea last?', 'Where does North Korea go?' Here is raised the necessity of identifying the basic principles of the social system operation and social unification. That is, here is raised the necessity of clarifying in what mechanism, and with what kind of power the North Korean society has overcome the code 'crisis' and is maintaining itself.

The discussion will go on assuming that the regime of North Korea has surmounted the crises in the middle of the 1990s, and is turning into the restructuring process and the phase of recovery in a degree. This means that, although it has not solved economic and social problems, except the political stability represented by the official launching of Kim Jeong-Il's

regime, North Korea is operating the mechanism of internal unification of its society. This is to say that North Korea is coping with challenges from inside and outside through restructuring the unification mechanism. However, this does not mean that the North Korean system has been fully stabilized, but that it is trying to create a new opportunity for conversion to a new system reacting to the challenges.

Accordingly, the present research was carried out under two objectives, as follows. The first objective is to examine the operation method of the mechanism of social unification in North Korea in the social and private dimension. The second objective is to examine the role of the family system, the private mechanism of social unification, in the social unification of North Korea. Based on this research, the possibility of changing the social unification mechanisms will be prospected.

## Ⅱ.2. Research Methodologies and Contents

To achieve these objectives, the present research carried out both a literature review and surveys. Performed surveys were preliminary surveys for problem definition, and case studies through in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews were carried out twice with refugees from North Korea, who were residing in South Korea, using unstructured questionnaires. The first in-depth interview was held with 20 interviewees for about a month from March 4 1999 to April 7 1999, and the second one was done with 12 interviewees from May 3 2002 to June 8 2002. The interviewees were selected based on previous job or organization, age, gender, native place, family type, time to escape from North Korea, etc. Information collected from the interviews were used as basic materials for detecting the latest changes in North Korea that were not confirmed by reviewing literature related to North Korea.

The subjects and scope of the research are the operational patterns of social unification mechanisms in North Korea from the upheaval of the communist country bloc in 1989 to the present in 2002. The focus is set to the social mechanism and private mechanism among social unification mechanisms. Discussion on the social mechanism is developed centering on social organizations and the welfare system, and discussion on the private mechanism centering on the family system. This is an attempt at overcoming the limitations of previous studies to analyze the private domain in the middle range. In other words, most of the existing studies were focused on structural and macroscopic analyses, and so, could not carry out microscopic analyses on the private domain in the middle range.

The present research is expected to integrate macroscopic and microscopic approaches by adopting an investigation method focused on the social mechanism and the private mechanism to overcome the limitations of previous studies.

The analysis period is largely divided into two terms before and after 1994. The first term is from 1989 when the upheaval of the communist country bloc started to 1993, and the second term is from 1994 to the present in 2002. Changes in the operation patterns of social unification mechanisms that were detected before and after 1994 were analyzed. Of course, it was 1995 that the economic indexes of North Korea declined rapidly, but 1994 was taken as the base year because it was when Chairman Kim Il-Sung died, and changes in the political system and economic difficulties began.

Except the introductions and conclusions, this thesis is composed of 4 chapters. The next chapter suggests the meaning of social unification in North Korea, and relations between social unification mechanisms. As well as the meaning of social unification, the relations between the public mechanisms, the social mechanism, and the private mechanism are analyzed in this chapter.

In Chapter 3, the state and restructuring process of social organizations, which are a part of the social mechanism of social unification, are analyzed centering on those around 1994. For this analysis, 3 organizations were selected as major analysis subjects because they were representative in terms of age, job and gender, respectively, which were the most basic elements that constitute organizations. They are 'the Kim Il-Sung Socialist Youth's League' (referred as 'the Youth's League' hereafter) for young people aged between 14 and 30, 'the Chosun Workers' General League' (referred as 'the Workers' League' hereafter) for laborers, and 'the Chosun Democratic Women's League' (referred as 'the Women's League'), the only organization for women.

Chapter 4 presents the current state and restructuring process of the welfare system as a social mechanism of social unification. When an economic system is composed of a manufacturing system and distribution mechanism, a specific implementation of the distribution mechanism is just the welfare system. Within the welfare system, food distribution system, education system and healthcare system are the objects of analysis. The food distribution system is the foundation of the North Korean distribution system, and the education system and the healthcare

system are the representative types of 'state socialistic benefits' that North Korea boasts of.

In Chapter 5, the current state and changes of the family system as the private mechanism of social unification are examined. The venue where the social mechanism is condensed, namely, the conclusive unit of social unification mechanisms is a family. Individuals live their daily life within the families. North Korean families are examined in terms of family ideology, family functions, family structure and family relationships, which are the constitutional elements of a family.

Finally, in conclusions, the contents of the research are summarized, and the future direction of the change in unification mechanisms in the North Korean society is predicted.

## Ⅴ. North Korean Society and the Meaning of Social Unification

### Ⅴ.1. Understanding Social Unification in North Korea

The social unification mechanism maintaining the system of North Korea is composed of the public mechanism, the social mechanism and the private mechanism. The public mechanism includes the mechanisms of the party, the ideology, and the military force. The social mechanism plays an intermediating role between the public mechanism and the private mechanism. It includes the welfare system that is directly related with the people's life, and various social organizations subsidiary to the party, at least one of which each individual over 14 belongs to. The private mechanism is the family system, which is the basic unit of the society, and the ground for people's life.

The North Korean society before 1994 kept the balance of social unification because the public mechanism, the social mechanism and the private mechanism worked normally to some degree. The public mechanism such as the sole domination of the *Rodong* (Labor) Party, the internalization of the *Juche* ideology, the military control by the mechanism of military force worked normally. In the social mechanism were variances among the elements. The welfare system already took the form of abnormal distribution, while social organizations were functioning properly. Especially, food distribution in the welfare system was so unstable that there had been occasionally news of interruption in

food distribution since as early as the late 1980s. As for the private mechanism, the economic function of families was emphasized as the family system, reinforced the responsibility of family members for subsistence by the Family Act of 1990. This changed family system in North Korea had a positive effect on social unification.

When examining the relationship between centripetal force and centrifugal force imposed on social unification in North Korea during this period, it is found that centripetal force acted stronger than centrifugal force. In other words, social organizations and the private mechanism worked as centripetal force, and the welfare system worked as centrifugal force. This suggests that centripetal force, which had a positive effect on social unification, acted stronger than centrifugal force, which had a negative effect.

However, the relationships among social unification mechanisms was completely altered after 1994, and resultantly, social unification underwent a significant change. Faced with such a challenge, the public mechanism was sustained or reinforced. Particular examples of this were the adaptation of ideology such as the theory of the powerful great nation and the crisis ideology, and the reinforcement of the status of the army through army first politics. The social mechanism experienced a completely weakened process. The welfare system, which had walked down the road to degradation, reached a serious paralysis. Social organizations also went through the relaxation of organizational regulations. On the contrary, the family system, the private mechanism, strengthened its economic function, and improved the ability of family members to subsist. Accordingly, social unification mechanisms underwent the process of restructuring and alteration during this period.

The relationship between centripetal force and centrifugal force in the social control of North Korea during this period was remarkable in that centrifugal force was significantly intensified compared to the former period. The mechanisms acting as centrifugal force were the welfare system, social organizations, etc., and those acting as centripetal force were the public mechanism and the family system.

The concept of 'social unification' set as a key analysis concept in this study was extended from the traditional concept. That is, social unification conceptualized in this research does not mean only the unification in its positive meaning of solidified cohesion. It recognizes not only the social unification in the viewpoint of the function theory, but also

that in the viewpoint of the confliction theory. The concept of social unification containing the concepts of 'balance' and 'order' in the function theory, and the concepts of 'conflict' and 'change' in the confliction theory is used.

The viewpoint of the function theory regards a society as an organic body, and the relationships among the constituent elements as interdependent cooperative ones. When the elements constituting a society complete their functions and the organic society operates in 'balance', the society is recognized as 'normal'. The very state is that the normal social unification has been fulfilled.)

On the other hand, the viewpoint of the confliction theory regards a society as a ground where different classes struggle for social resources, and the relationships among the society members as mutual conflict and tension. The theory assumes that the discords and conflicts among society members is the basic nature of a society, and a temporary phenomenon. In addition, it assumes that social changes are caused by such conflicts.)

By combining the viewpoints of the function theory and the confliction theory, L. A. Coser), a socialist, attempted to explain how conflicts contribute to social unification or social maintenance. He introduced the concept of 'the function of conflicts', and suggested that conflicts might play a functional role in unifying a society. He asserted that, though conflicts in a society bring about confrontation and enmity among the constituent elements of the society, they, at the same time, work as a factor of reunifying the social system and eventually resolve the imbalance of the social system, and restore the social order.

## Ⅳ.2. Current State of the Social Unification Mechanisms of North Korea

### Ⅳ.2.1. Public Mechanism

The public mechanism, containing the mechanisms of the ideology, the party and the military force, is as follows. First, Kim Jeong-Il's regime is trying to solidify the ideology through expanding the Populist line, reinforcing the crisis ideology, emphasizing the theory of the powerful great nation, etc. The Populist line was expanded further, being faced with challenges in the mid 1990s, while the class line and the Populist line were in balance. If the class line is an exclusive strategy, the

Populist line is an inclusive strategy, which may be a natural consequence of the situation that the government cannot run the welfare system properly. The Populist line is established under the banner of realizing 'the benevolent politics' and 'the all-inclusive politics'. Along with the Populist line, North Korea accomplishes the adaptation of the Juche ideology through promoting 'the crisis ideology'. The crisis ideology is linked to 'the theory of the powerful great nation, which advocates the establishment of a powerful great nation by overcoming confronting difficulties in the same attitude as that in a laborous march.) The theory of the powerful great country is a logic that North Korea will be a powerful great country if it becomes an economic superpower on the basis of its political, ideological, and military power. The theory functions as an internal unification mechanism of the people in North Korea.

Second, the Chosun Rodong Party holds a control under Kim Jeong-Il's regime by attaining rule over all mechanisms including the public mechanisms, the social mechanism, and the private mechanism. The Chosun Rodong Party's system of supervision, surveillance, and control is composed of the Central Committee of the party as its top level leaders, elementary committees representing *do* (metropolitan cities), *gun* (cities and districts), and *ri* (*dong*), and party cells.) Especially, the Chosun Rodong Party realizes control over the people through control over social organizations. In other words, social organizations, at least one of which each of all North Koreans belongs to, are under the direct control of the party, and the managers of social organizations are already party members.

Third, under Kim Jeong-Il's regime, the mechanism of military force, which is composed of the army, the police and intelligence agencies, is reinforced further. Especially, the Chosun People's Army takes an important position in the mechanism. As 'the General Secretary Kim Jeong-Il' assumed the office of the Chairman of the Defense Committee in the course of power reshuffling at the committee's 1st Meeting of the 10th Session on September 5 1998, the army first policy for realizing a powerful great country was reinforced, and the status of the Defense Committee was also raised. When 'the phenomenon of ideological relaxation' was pervaded among the people in North Korea in the mid 1990s, Chairman Kim Jeong-Il put forth 'the army first ideology', and insisted that 'the army is the people, the state and the party.' In North Korea, the Chosun People's Army is the military force of the Chosun Rodong Party's political revolution, and a means for Chairman Kim

Jeong-Il to strengthen his regime. Besides, the Social Security Bureau as a police organization, and the National Security Guard Agency as an intelligence agency are in good shape.

## 2.2. Social Mechanism

The social mechanism is composed of social organizations and the welfare system. First, representative social organizations in North Korea are the Youth's League, the Workers' League and the Women's League, and other laborers' organizations including 'the Chosun Farming Laborers' League.' These organizations, as intermediating institutions between the party and the people, play the role of social unification by executing the systematization of people and ideology promotion works. Social organizations in North Korea enable the realization of control networks through systematizing the entire society, the politicization of the society through ideology education, and implementation of the social mobilization mechanism through mobilizing labor force.)

Since 1994, the operation methods of the Youth's League, the Workers' League and the Women's League have gone through many changes. The strictness of organizational rules appeared to be in the order of 'the Youth's League > the Workers' League > the Women's League' both before and after 1994. The degree of relaxation of the Youth's League sensed by the people was higher than the actual degree of relaxation of the league. 'As noted by phrase, 'the party is the live coal, the Youth's League is the flame, and the Workers' League is the smoke', the role and standing of the Youths' League was superior to those of the Workers' League. As for the Workers' League, because its units were companies or factories, the degree of relaxation was affected by the operational condition of each company or factory. The degree of organizational relaxation of the Women's League, whose members were housewives, appeared higher than any other organizations.

Second, the welfare system of North Korea is divided into the first distribution, payments of living costs, and the second distribution, 'state-socialistic benefits.' State-socialistic benefits are composed of the security of food, clothing and shelter, the security of education and healthcare, social insurance, etc.) The state-socialistic benefit by which North Korea means is a concept more comprehensive than the most comprehensive concept of social welfare adopted in capitalistic countries.

The welfare system in North Korea is, on the one hand, a strong control mechanism over the people, and, on the other hand, the mechanism realizing the socialistic ideal that the state takes complete responsibility of the people's life. The two mechanisms are interrelated with each other. Especially focusing on the welfare system as a control mechanism, it is discussed as follows. North Korea is a society where the state monopolizes all production means, and the production and distribution mechanisms operate according to centralized plans. Thus, all necessities for people's living are controlled by the government, and so those who are isolated from the distribution system cannot survive. This implies that the distribution system itself works as a strong social control mechanism.

North Korea has been proud of the superiority of its system represented by the welfare system such as free education and healthcare systems. It insists that various additional benefits given to the people amount to their official wages. Such welfare benefits have been considered positively even by North Koreans who regard them as 'the superiority of socialism.'

Thus the weakening of the welfare system since 1994 has an effect as far-reaching as the previous positive evaluation. The break of the food distribution system caused the increase of secondary economic activities by individual families for subsistence, and consequent organizational relaxation.

### ¥±.2.3. Private Mechanism

The patterns of changes in each constituent element of the family system before and after 1994 are as follows. First, from the aspect of family ideology, the socialistic feature emphasizing the equality among family members weakens, and the patriartic feature of families augments. Second, from the aspect of family function, families' household reproduction function weakens, and their labor force reproduction function augments. Especially, the augmentation of the labor force reproduction function is directly connected to family subsistence through secondary economic activities of individual families. Third, there are leads that the family structure is being disintegrated, and family relationships move toward equality between men and women. When all these changes in family structure are put together, the private mechanism represented by the family system has been reinforced further since the mid 1990s.

### 3. Relationships between Social Unification Mechanisms

Faced with challenges in the mid 1990s, social unification mechanisms underwent the maintenance or reinforcement of the public mechanism, the substantial weakening of the social mechanism, and the activation and restructuring of the private mechanism. Especially, the weakening of the social mechanism is the most remarkable phenomenon, and the weakened role is taken over partially by the public mechanism and the private mechanism.

However, the public mechanism can explain only 'Why didn't the people resist the North Korean regime?' In other words, North Korea attained social unification by developing forms of people's voluntary and involuntary conformation through the party rule, the internalization of ideology, military control, etc. The role of the social mechanism, which is taken over by the public mechanism due to the relaxation of social organizations, is mainly to prevent people from breaking away from social regulations.

On the other hand, the private mechanism can answer the question 'What do the people eat to live?' Especially, the private mechanism takes over the abnormally operating parts of the welfare system due to the degradation of the distribution mechanism. They are the subsistence and secondary economic activities of individual families. By filling the vacuum in social unification that took place as the weakening of the welfare system and the relaxation of social organizations, North Korean families play the role of a prop in the North Korean society.

The relationship between the social mechanism and the private mechanism is 'weakening of the welfare system; relaxation of the regulations of social organizations; reinforcement of the function of the family system.' This suggests that restructuring changes in infrastructure, i.e. the emerging of the role of the private mechanism complementing the relaxation of the social mechanism, is going on.

When analyzing changes in a socialistic country, it is necessary to distinguish changes in the system itself from those inside the system. According to L. A. Coser, accumulated changes in subsystems within a system bring about changes in the system. In addition, he says that when a specific social system loses its function of self-regulating conflicts, and

so is unable to resolve accumulated conflicts, the existing system collapses and a new system emerges. Moreover, he suggests that changes in subsystems do not occur simultaneously, but a limited change in a certain area affects other areas, and eventually develops into a great change across the entire social system. That is, a change of a social system itself is a phenomenon, taking place over a long period.

Based on the argument, changes in the socialist country bloc and in North Korean society are interpreted as follows. Historically, the former Soviet Union and socialist countries in Eastern Europe experienced the change of systems, namely, the fall of socialism, as they were unable to resolve the basic causes of conflicts within the systems in the course of internal systematic transformation.

In case of North Korea, though it has been going through internal systematic transformation since 1994, it can be considered to experience a procedure of regulating conflicts within the system rather than a procedure of change of the system itself. This denotes the change and restructuring process of social unification mechanisms.

## ¥². Relationships between Changes in Social Organizations and Social Unification

Social organizations in North Korea are mediators connecting the party to the people.) Combining public domains with private domains, which are the fields of people's life, social organizations function as a social mechanism for social unification. Specifically, social organizations play the role of combining the people with the party through educating political ideology and labor force mobilization.) Social organizations, like a network, surround and systematize people in North Korea. In the present section, the processes of changes in social organizations during the period of Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jeong-Il are compared to analyze the patterns of social unification by the operation of the social organization mechanism. The organizational system in social organizations under Kim Jeong-Il's regime is little different from that under Kim Il-Sung's regime. On the other hand, the operation of social organization has changed. Changes in the operation denote the relaxation of North Korean's organization life and regulations in such as ideology guidance and unified life. This section examines how the changes in social organizations under Kim Jeong-Il's regime interacted with other social mechanisms and restructured the organizations over time.

## ¥².1. Socialist Labor Youth's League

### ¥².1.1. State During the Period of Kim Il-Sung

The North Korean principle of social organizations is to comprehend the whole people in North Korea by organizing them based on age, gender and job. Organizations have vertical structures so that instructions from the heads of the organizations are delivered to the lower parts of them. Such an organizational structure is seen commonly in the totalitarian systems of socialistic countries including North Korea.)

The Youth's League targets all young non-party members aged from 14 to 30. The Youth's League in 1998 had the largest membership of around 5 million. Moreover, different from other social organizations, the Youth's League has an important function of raising the members of the Rodong Party. Consequently, the organizational regulations are strict and the duties and roles in organizational life given to the members are more intensive than those of other institutions. The organizational system of the Youth's League has the Youth's League General Assembly as its supreme supervisory institution, and elementary groups as its basic organizations.) Basic organizations are established in every school, army unit and workplace that has more than 3 league members.)

The duties of the Youth's League are largely ideology education and labor force mobilization. First, with regard to ideology education, the Youth's League, as a rear guard of the party, was required to keep ideological purity and to lead the maintenance of socialism. Case 1) below shows the state of ideology education by the Youth's League.

Case 1) 30, Male, Escaped in 1997, Railroad worker

Ideological education is carried out through learning and unified living. The materials are the works of Il Sung and Kim Jeong-Il, the memoirs of anti-Japanese partisans, and Kim Il-Sung's party policy studies. There is learning once a week, and weekly unified living every Saturday. In addition to weekly unified living, there are large scale unified living every month, quarter and year in the presence of high officials from the headquarters. Then almost all members participate. Because absentees from unified living are criticized, it is hardly possible to skip it. If one has to absent himself from it, he must inform them.

Second, with regard to labor force mobilization, the Youth's League was required to mobilize laborers not only for breaking economic difficulties but also under the title of 'the completion of ideology education through labor.' This suggests that the members of the league are selected as storming parties or vans that are thrown into various labor productions, or construction fields.

#### 2.1.2. Changes under Kim Jeong-Il's Regime

One of the organizational changes in the Youth's League under Kim Jeong-Il's regime is its name. At the Central Conference in Celebration of the 50th Year of the Socialist Labor Youth's League on January 16 1996, the name of the organization was changed to 'Kim Il-Sung Socialist Youth's League.' The most important task for the general meetings of the Youth's League, held since 1995, was to search for a strategy for ideology education promoting young generations' loyalty to Kim Jeong-Il.)

The intention to reinforce ideology education was to shut off the possibility that the youth class might be affected by changes outside the country such as the collapse of other socialist countries, or the opening and reformation of China. In reality, on the transformations of the socialist countries in Eastern Europe, the youth class initiated the system reformation movements or formed new organizations, defying the top executives of existing organizations.) Cutting of the influx of information from outside, the leading party of North Korea is emphasizing the role of the Youth's League for ideology education. The reinforcement of ideology education is a phenomenon unique to the Youth's League, distinguished from the Workers' League or Women's League. This indicates that North Korea recognizes the importance of the Youth's League more so than other organizations.

Despite the stress of North Korea, the state of the Youth's League has changed substantially since 1994. After the breakdown of the socialist country block, and the Pyeongyang Festival in 1989, the ideological 'slackness' of the North Korean youth was detected, though not serious. The regulations of the Youth's League were relaxed further under Kim Jeong-Il's regime. The following interview of Case 1) shows the normative slackness of the Youth's League well.

Case 1) 30, Male, Escaped in 1997, Railroad worker

The number of absentees from weekly learning classes and unified living increased. As a reward for overlooking the absence, they often offered cigarettes, wines, etc. The officials of elementary organizations also allowed tacitly the absence of those who traveled other provinces to find food, or who fell sick out of starvation.

The increase of a floating population for securing food, and an influx of information from the outside brought about the weakening of the organizational life of the youth class. In the national dimension as well, those who secede from organizational life not for a political reason but for living were rarely punished during grave food crises.

## ¥2.2. Chosun Workers' General League

### ¥2.2.1. State During the Period of Kim Il-Sung

The Workers' League of North Korea have as its members all laborers and office workers aged over 31, except the members of the Rodong Party. The membership of the Workers' League was about 1.6 million in 1998.)

The Workers' League is divided into 9;10 independent organizations according to industry and job. The basic organizations of the Workers' League are elementary institutions. Elementary institutions are organized when there are over 5 league members. The basic unit of the local Workers' League is a factory or a company. The elementary institutions become the ground where the education of political ideology for the members of the Workers' League is directly carried out.

Like that of the Youth's League, the main goal of the activities of the Workers' League is to educate political ideology, and to promote the consciousness of labor for enhancing productivity, so that the laborers are transformed into communists. For this purpose, each member of the Workers' League has learning activities 2 hours a day, a Wednesday lecture every Wednesday, and unified living every Saturday. The learning contents are the Juche ideology, Instructions of Il Sung and Kim Jeong-Il, the revolution history, party policy study, etc.) The operation of the Workers' League had been stable until 1994. It is confirmed in the following Case 4).

Case 4) 57, Male, Escaped in 1997, Party secretary of a food factory

As I think, ideology education and unified living were carried out in due form. Because each unit of the Workers' League had to submit all materials related to weekly unified living to the corresponding party organization, it could not do activities superficially. Self-criticism and mutual criticism were compulsory. If there was no mutual criticism, the chairman of the elementary institution criticized for that.

## ¥2.2.2. Changes under Kim Jeong-Il's Regime

The state of the Workers' League has changed since 1994. It is natural for the Workers' League, which is organized in the unit of company and factory, to shrink when the operation rate of factories and companies is less than 30%.

However, the method the people have chosen in the situation where they cannot receive distributions and wages for their work is not a faithful organizational life but private economic activities, namely, secondary economic activities. For this reason, except in some partially operating large-sized companies and factories, people's organizational life such as ideology education or weekly unified living cannot be in a normal state.

This implies that the rate of people's participation in organizational activities has gone down significantly compared to that during the period of Kim Il-Sung. According to the testimony in Case 4), the rate of participation in organizations began to decrease from 1994 as the food difficulty got worse, and in 1996, the rate reached as low as a half of the previous highest level. The party also instructed each elementary institution not to punish those who do not attend organizational life in order to find food.

## ¥2.3. Chosun Democratic Women's League

### ¥2.3.1. State During the Period of Kim Il-Sung

The members of the Women's League are housewives aged over 30 who do not belong to any other organizations. The membership is around 200,000. The Women's League also has a vertical structure composed of a central organization and local ones. The central organization is the Central Committee of the Women's League, the highest organization, and the basic organizations are elementary institution committees that guide elementary institutions.)

According to Case 6), in a elementary institution, the members of the Women's League have two hours of study of party politics on Monday, two hours of regular study on Tuesday, a lecture on Wednesday, and weekly unified living of the members on Saturday. The members learn almost the same contents as those of other organizations, but are required to participate in 'the movement of imitating the Ladies Ban Seok Kang and Jeong Sook Kim.') Such an exemplary image of a woman is depicted as a daughter-in-law devoted to her mother-in-law, a wife supporting her revolutionist husband, a mother bringing up her children to be revolutionists, and an independent agent who completes her revolutionary duties.

Besides such ideology education, the leaguers must complete their share of duties, namely, tasks assigned to each individual or elementary institution. It is said that their workload is heavier than those who work in companies or collective farms. This phenomenon is well demonstrated in Case 6).

Case 6) 44, Female, Escaped in 1998, Housewife

Where I lived, the leaguers' duties were to support production bases such as to aid factories and companies, to pick up ore and coal, and so on. To support the railway business, the members of the Women's League arrange stones between the rails, weed the lawn at the side of railways, and grow flowers along railways. And their struggle to support farm villages and the army is exceptional. They have to prepare rice seedbeds, weed and harvest, and produce fertile soil in winter. To support the army, they have to send washing stuffs on the anniversary of the foundation of the army, and supply a pig every year. There are duties assigned to each household, and to each organization. When the duties have been completed, they must be confirmed. Some women think that it will be better to go to work and get normal food distribution than to work so hard only to get 300g of food.

Considering that the Women's League has unemployed women as its members, people tend to underestimate its duties and roles. In reality, however, it is no exaggeration to say that it assumes the full charge of businesses in the rear. The greatness of the league's social role is evidenced by the large number of duties performed by the leaguers. The Women's League discharged all its duties of ideology education, and assigned tasks during the period of Kim Il-Sung.

### ¥2.3.2. Changes under Kim Jeong-Il's Regime

Since 1994, the Women's League has been undergoing more substantial relaxation of the organizational regulations than any other social organizations. According to the following Case 9), the organizational regulations have been further slackened since housewives began to have secondary economic activities for subsistence after food distribution stopped, though the slackness varies according to areas.

Case 9) 57, Female, Escaped in 1998, Housewife

It was really terrible in 1996, and the next year. Uncountable number of people starved to death. What is the use of studying or unifying when people are starving without food. The chairwoman of the league's elementary institution is aware of the situation. If one does not appear for a long time, the chairwoman visits her but has nothing to say, seeing the reality. She lets it go if one says she cannot do organizational activities, because she has to find food.

Not to mention ideology education, unified living is not carried out properly. Thus, the chairwoman of the elementary institution looks for the leaguers and persuades them to participate, but most of them do not want to. People's strategy for overcoming the extremely serious food difficulty is to engage in secondary economic activities. These activities require people to spend a certain length of time. But demand for organizational life fetters them. Because mainly female members of a family engage in secondary economic activities, the organizational regulations of the Women's League inevitably weakens. Like the Workers' League, the organizational regulations of the Women's League reached its most relaxed form in 1996.

### ¥2.4. Implications of the Restructuring of Social Organizations in Social Unification

Turning to the 1990s, changes in social organizations are represented as the weakening of organizational regulations. There are largely two types of causes of the weakening. One is direct causes such as economic and food difficulties, and the other is indirect causes, which are moderate policies of the party and the state in managing social organizations. The party and the state did not apply strict rules to leaguers' secession from the organizations in the situation that they could not cope with the economic crisis. Moreover, they did not urge people to participate in

organizational activities. They managed and controlled organizations flexibly rather than enforcing organization regulations. Therefore, the people could manage their living 'barely' by engaging in secondary economic activities with limiting allowed autonomy. Because they were given autonomy within the scope of maintaining organizations, the people were able to cope with poverty flexibly.

As the North Korean economy passed the bottom in 1999 and began to attain a positive growth rate, the government appears to have rearranged social organizations. However, it does not have enough resources to restore the intensity of all the regulations of social organizations to their original level.

Accordingly, North Korea is rearranging each social organization to a different degree. The changes and restructuring of social organizations should not be recognized simply as people's response to the economic difficulty. North Korean leaders define the priority and speed of recovery of each social organization according to its influence on social unification. For example, because the Youth's League is most influential in maintaining the system, the government will strengthen first the regulations of the league over all other organizations. The regulations of the Workers' League will be tightened up in accordance with the condition of economic recovery. The Women's League, though its regulations are in the most relaxed state, is not expected to be able to strengthen its regulations in the short term.

At present, the process of restructuring social organizations in North Korea reflects the will of the leaders, who are intent to realize social unification by utilization of the limited resources as efficiently as possible. Currently North Korea does not have sufficient resources available for social unification. For this reason, the government is still relying on ideology projects, the traditional method of social unification. However, because of the regulations of social organizations slackened, due to the food and economic difficulties in 1990s, political ideology education for the people does not function properly. Such a phenomenon will have a negative effect on the social unification of North Korea, a socialist country, for the long run.

Considering the current economic difficulty of North Korea, it should not be neglected that, though the change in social organizations may be only the second best measure in terms of the subsistence of North Koreans, it

has positive aspects. If the people were not given such a degree of autonomy, their complaints might be expressed in an organized way.

The examination of the current state of social organizations in North Korea reveals the nature and meaning of social unification in North Korea. The present social unification in North Korea is definitely different from the past, known as 'a highly controlled society' or 'a uniformed society'. The slackness of social organization may be a crisis in the viewpoint of the regime, but is a minimum ground for subsistence in the viewpoint of the people.

## Ⅳ<sup>3</sup>. Relationship between Changes in the Welfare System and Social Unification

The welfare system in North Korea means that the state guarantees the people's living, and its operation is closely related to the country's economic situation. The North Korean economy, which had long been depressed since the 1970s, got even worse due to the breakdown of the socialist country bloc. This section examines the operation pattern of the welfare system in North Korea during the period from the transformation of the socialist countries to the death of the Chairman Kim Il-Sung. The weakening of the welfare system began during the period of Kim Il-Sung, and was accelerated after his death in 1994. In this section, how the welfare system, which was responsible for the people's living, changed, how it was restructured, and what is the meaning of these processes to the social unification of North Korea are analyzed.

### Ⅳ<sup>3</sup>.1. Food Distribution System

#### Ⅳ<sup>3</sup>.1.1. State During the Period of Kim Il-Sung

North Korea employs 'the Public Distribution System (PDS)' that qualifies all people, except farm workers on collective farms, to buy a prescribed amount of food at a low price set by the government.) It is known that PDS is applied to about 78% of the entire population of North Korea.) The amount of food and the ratio of rice to minor grains vary depending on job, productive ability, age and place of residence.

Shortage of food has long been a structural problem in North Korea. Especially, the collapse of socialist countries in 1989 aggravated the agricultural productivity of North Korea, and resultantly, food shortages reached a serious level. Food distribution was continually reduced with the excuse of saving for wars or frugality. During this period, the actual food distribution was about 540g a day for a general worker. Through an interview (Case 3) and Case 12), it is found that the contents of distribution, and the time when distribution stopped vary according to areas.

Case 3) 38, Female, Escaped in 2000, Teacher

I heard that in some areas distribution had stopped even before 1994. But food distribution continued until 1994, though it was not rice.

Case 12) 42, Female, Escaped in 1998, The Goksan Farm, Yangjeong Workplace

In Hamgyeongbuk-do, where I lived, food distribution stopped from 1993. We could barely survive the first year. We sold belongings to buy grains, and from March, ate grass. Grass, if you have too much, causes edema. Because we could not find grains, even in the neighboring province (Hwanghae-do), we began to cross the border into China to get food.

As testified above, food distribution in North Korea was irregular, and was reduced during this period. Disruption of food distribution had been occasionally reported since the late 1980s, but it seemed to prevail in Hamgyeongbuk-do and Hamgyeongnam-do in 1993. The phenomenon was caused by the geographical conditions of the two provinces. In conclusion, food distribution system started in the late 1980s, and operated abnormally in the early 1990s.

### 3.1.2. Changes under Kim Jeong-Il's Regime

The floods in 1995 and 1996 aggravated the food difficulty in North Korea, and the food distribution system got more abnormal. According to the investigation by WFP and FAO, food distribution was 200g in July-September 1996, but reduced to 100g in 1997.) The rate of food distribution went down as low as 30%.

Though, compared to other areas, people in Pyongyang were favored with relatively regular food distribution, they also suffered a rapid

reduction after May 1995. ) Many other areas successively came under the influence of food shortage from 1995, and the disruption of food distribution spread over the whole country in 1996 and 1997. Especially, Hamgyeongbuk-do, Hamgyeongnam-do, Yanggang-do and Gangwon-do were the first provinces where food distribution stopped, because they were mountainous regions with poor road networks.)

As the food distribution system was paralyzed, the national vacuum began to be filled with secondary economic activities privately carried out by individual families. After Kim Il-Sung's death, the abnormal operation of the food distribution system became more extensive than the previous period, and reached a grave level.

## ¥3.2. Education System

### ¥3.2.1. State During the Period of Kim Il-Sung

In North Korea, students receive compulsory education in kindergarten for 1 year, in primary school for 4 years, and in secondary school for 6 years, so a total of 11 years in general.) In its 'Socialistic Education These', North Korea declares the principle of free education by specifying that the state will provide fees, textbooks, stationery, accommodation, clothing, etc., for free.)

However, free compulsory education was not executed properly from the late 1980s. Officially, students did not pay school fees, but had to pay for textbooks, stationery and boarding. In addition, North Korea mobilized teachers and students for 'mobilization projects for earning foreign currency'.) According to Case 3), the quality of stationery was lowered during this period.

Case 3) 38, Female, Escaped in 2000, Teacher

The paper quality of textbooks had been not so bad until the 1980s, but it got worse thereafter. They said that paper had been made of wood imported from the Soviet Union, but since it was disintegrated wood was not available.

As shown in this case, the meaning of free compulsory education faded away, and educational conditions became poorer from the late 1980s in North Korea.

### ¥3.2.2. Changes under Kim Jeong-Il's Regime

As the economic condition was aggravated, the compulsory and free education intended by the North Korean education system began to shake from the root. Because, first of all, school age children did not go to school, normal school classes could not be held. It was reported that the percentage of attendance of kindergarteners was less than 60%, and those of primary and secondary schools around 40%. The following Case 3) also confirms that a large number of students were absent from school.

Case 3) 38, Female, Escaped in 2000, Teacher

The food situation was worse in 1996 and 1997. So students who could not have a meal became so feeble that they could not come to school. As many as a fourth of students did not attend classes, because they had to sell goods.

The educational condition, which began to get worse since before Kim Jeong-Il's regime, was aggravated even more seriously during this period. All school supplies such as desks, chairs, notebooks and pens were insufficient, and their quality was quite poor. In provinces, 10 students shared a textbook, but students in Pyeongyang were educated under better conditions. This shows that the education system is applied differently, according to areas.

As the state became unable to pay school fees and stationery expenses, parents had to take them over. This suggests that the vacuum of the state's role in education is being filled by individuals or families.

The aggravation of educational environments brought in two conflicting results. One is that most students are unable to get school education any more because of the increased burden to earn a living. The other is that children in families that accumulated wealth through secondary economic activities, or using positions, can study in prestigious schools or have special education such as foreign language lessons. In this way, the bipolarization phenomenon is appearing in education.

Despite these problems, the education system maintains its structure, and operates relatively well compared to other welfare systems.

### ¥3.3. Healthcare System

### ¶3.3.1. State During the Period of Kim Il-Sung

In the healthcare system, North Korea aimed for the general free treatment system guaranteed by the state, the physician district system, and the preventive medical policy. It was reported that the number of general and special hospitals was 2,373, and the number of clinics and first-aid stations was 5,600 in 1990). The number of physicians and pharmacists per 10,000 people was 27.0, which was higher than the 22.2 of South Korea.)

Because medical assistants were also counted as medical human resources in North Korea) it is hard to say based on the data that the healthcare system in North Korea was operating normally. North Korea uses medical assistants for medical practices because it emphasizes primary healthcare centering on preventive medicine.

Already in this period, problems in the healthcare system, such as the shortage of medical supplies, discriminative use of medical facilities among classes, physicians' bribery, began to emerge in North Korea.

### ¶3.3.2. Changes under Kim Jeong-Il's Regime

Free treatments symbolizing the healthcare system of North Korea lost its meaning as a result of the deepened economic difficulty. The operation rate of pharmaceutical factories decreased since 1995, and resultantly, medicine production decreased by over 60%, and even primary medicines such as antibiotics and ointments were scarce.) Even if people were treated at a clinic, they had to buy necessary medicines by themselves, due to the lack of medicines. Because medicines in marketplaces were very expensive, medical expenses were heavy burdens for ordinary people. In the situation when the state was unable to solve the people's medical problems, the people had to take responsibility for their health privately by buying medicines in marketplaces, or searching for herbs. Furthermore, as only hospitals exclusively for high officials kept good medicines ready, discrimination in terms of healthcare benefits went further. Medical problems in North Korea may be inferred from the following Case 7).

Case 7) 64, Male, Escaped in 2000, Doctor

Free treatments sound good, but what's the use when there is no medicine after the collapse of Eastern Europe? Physicians seldom come

to hospital, and medical examinations are just for form's sake. Because clinics don't have medicines, people think it is better to collect herbs or pay money to buy medicines. I heard that hospitals such as the Central Hospital, Namsan Hospital and Bonghwa Clinic were nice because they had medicines.

In addition, North Korea promoted medical policies emphasizing preventive healthcare projects, but it did not do vaccinations regularly since 1995. As a result, it is known that from 1996 there were epidemics such as paratyphoid, cholera, etc., which had not been found before.)

From 1994, the healthcare system of North Korea lost the merit of free treatments as medicines were not supplied properly due to the economic difficulty, and the selective application of medical benefits deepened the existing medical discrimination.

### ¥<sup>3</sup>.4. Meaning of the Welfare System Restructuring to Social Unification

The major factors of changes in the welfare system of North Korea since 1994 were the economic and food difficulties. As an implementation of distribution mechanism responsible for the people's livings, the welfare system is related with the issue of how to distribute products resulting from economic activities. That is, the welfare system functions as a distribution mechanism in an economic system. The paralysis of the production mechanism directly causes the degradation of the distribution mechanism.

Since 1994, the welfare system in North Korea showed various changing patterns according to areas. Through the changes, the welfare system in North Korea underwent a restructuring process. The food distribution system had worked normally before 1994, but after that, it underwent the most serious paralysis among welfare systems because of the food difficulty. The education system had worked well to some extent before 1994, but was gradually breaking down. Nevertheless, it is the education system among several welfare systems that is operating, though faintly, until now. The healthcare system was paralyzed further starting from 1994. Though it does not work as well as the education system, it is not paralyzed as greatly as the food distribution system. It can be said that the operation is in good condition in order of 'the education system;æthe healthcare system;æthe food distribution system.' Especially, the food

distribution system, which is directly linked with the people's subsistence, is the most severely paralyzed. Its influence on the people also appears serious compared to other areas.

After all, the operation of the welfare system has been substantially paralyzed or weakened. Most areas except the food distribution system are still working to some degree. This state may be understood as a restructuring process.

The welfare system is a mechanism that guarantees the subsistence and life of each individual, and functions as a material base of social unification. The paralysis or weakening of the welfare system is a negative factor for social unification in North Korea.

Because, in North Korea, the state is in full control of the material base necessary for people's life, people isolated from the welfare system cannot survive. Moreover, the welfare system is justified as a symbol of the superiority of the North Korean system. This suggests that the welfare system is a powerful mechanism for controlling the society ideologically and materially. Accordingly, the paralysis of the welfare system since the early 1990s implies that one of the important pillars supporting social unification has been damaged.

## Ⅴ'. Relationship between Changes in the Family System and Social Unification

In this section, the operational method of the family system, which is the private mechanism of social unification in North Korea, is examined. The family ideology in North Korea is characterized by the socialistic nature based on equality, and the patriarchal nature based on distinction. Family functions are composed of the household reproduction function, and the labor force reproduction function. Family structures are classified by marriage and divorce, which are the causes of organizing and disorganizing families, and family relations are divided into the relationship of husband and wife, and that of relatives. The adaptation strategies and role transformations of North Korean families during the hardships in the mid 1990s are analyzed.

### Ⅴ'.1. Family Ideology

### ¥.1.1. State During the Period of Kim Il-Sung

In North Korea, a family is a basic unit called 'a cell' constituting the society. Under the socialist regime, families play an essential role as an adjusting mechanism in adjusting people's lives and activities.) The socialistic and patriarchic natures of the family ideology can be summarized as follows.) First, the socialistic nature of the family ideology is to aim at an equal and revolutionary family. North Korea emphasized revolutionaries rather than equality between family members such as husband-wife and parents-children. Its view was that 'the revolution of the whole society' comes from 'the revolution of each family.' In addition, there was raised 'the theory of a grand socialist family' that the North Korean society could be transformed into a family through revolutionizing the society.

'Revolutionizing of families' is closely related to 'revolutionizing of women.' North Korea held the view that the main bodies in revolutionizing families are women, and the revolutionizing of a family is possible when the woman becomes a positive model, so that she is a good influence over her children and husband. In this way, there are connecting links in 'Revolutionizing women ;æ Revolutionizing families ;æ Revolutionizing society.'

Second, the patriarchal nature of the family ideology denotes families. The sub-concepts of families are 'family-centeredness' that a family is given preference over individual members of the family, 'fixedness of sexual roles' that men and women have fixed roles, 'husband-wife relationship' that the husband rules and the wife obeys, 'father-son relationship' that sons are preferred to daughters, and the father-son relationship is considered more important than the husband-wife relationship, 'bonds among relatives' that relatives are tied strongly to one another, and so on.

North Korea established the Family Act in October 1990, and stipulated the status and roles of families. The fact that North Korea legislated the Family Act, the first in the world, in a country where the government was established only 40 years ago, shows how much it demands from and is concerned with families, the private domain. In other words, real conditions such as the economic recession accelerated since the late 1980s, the aggravation of the welfare system, and the state's demand that families should be responsible for their own subsistence led to the establishment of the Act.

Specifically, in the Family Act, the duties of family support take place in two directions, which are family members' responsibility for support to one another, and the execution of the guardian system. That is, one obliged to support family members who are spouse (Article 19), parents or sons and daughters (Article 28), grandparents or grandsons and granddaughters (Article 35, 37), or siblings (Article 36, 27) who do not have the ability to work or support themselves. This shows that the scope of family members for one to be obliged to support is being extended. This suggests that the country has retreated from the socialistic principle that the state takes responsibility for the lives of the people and families, and has entered into the patriarchal principle that the family takes responsibility for the lives of the family members.

#### ₩.1.2. Changes under Kim Jeong-II's Regime

As the economy was aggravated in the mid 1990s, the socialistic nature was weakened, and the patriarchal nature was strengthened further. Especially, a family's obligation to support its members took a greater role. The duty of family support was being transferred 'from the state to families (and particularly to women).'

In this context, the 2nd Mothers' Conference in September 1998 is notable. The conference, held some 40 years since the 1st one in November 1961, emphasized women's productivity, and active laboring activities, and individual families' cultural activities, and supports to the army.

### ₩.2. Family Functions

#### ₩.2.1. State During the Period of Kim Il-Sung

The household reproduction function of North Korean families implies giving birth to children, rearing, and educating them. In North Korea, household reproduction, which supplies society members, was the women's duty. Especially, North Korea specified that mothers were primarily responsible for raising and educating children. Besides that, women's role was emphasized in revolutionizing families, female laborers with 3 or more children were paid 8 hours' wages for 6 hours' working (Article 16 of the Labor Act). ) Regardless, whether it was enforced or not, the provision itself suggests that women's roles were defined by mothers' roles.

Families' labor force reproduction function included housework such as cooking, cleaning and laundering, as well as obtaining living necessities such as food and clothing. In North Korea, housework and necessity acquisition were not shared between men and women, but done all by women. Thus women were in charge of housework in addition to social work. They had to endure double burdens.

#### ¥.2.2. Changes under Kim Jeong-Il's Regime

Under the challenges, and the economic and food difficulties in the mid 1990s, families in North Korea were faced with poverty. The vacuum of the welfare system had to be filled by families. Faced with the structural pressure of poverty, each individual family obtained food and a living using its own strategies. From 1994, North Korean families took 3 types of strategic measures to secure the reproductive duties of the families by themselves.

The first was the 'subsistence strategy' through maximizing income and minimizing expenditure. This was to compensate living costs that could not be covered by socialistic economic activities in work places assigned by the state in the situation where the rate of wage payment was less than 30%. Specifically, subsistence strategy maximized income through secondary economic activities, and minimized expenditure through simple reproduction activities. Secondary economic activities meant doing side jobs, trading, etc. In general, they were raising animals such as rabbits or chickens or growing vegetables on patches, and selling them in marketplaces. Secondary economic activities were so common in North Korea that 80% of the people had experienced trading. They were mainly carried out by individual families. Because, among family members, mainly women engaged in secondary economic activities, their contribution to family economy increased.)

The second is 'family structure transformation strategy' through family movement, and family disintegration. When families could not find an effective method to cope with crises, they moved to rural areas to find food, or escaped to a third country such as China and Russia, or as a last measure, they disintegrated themselves.

The third is 'social network utilization strategy' through activating private and public networks. This could be adopted together with the subsistence strategy or the family structure transformation strategy. Social networks were composed of private networks including relatives, neighbors,

friends, etc. and public networks including work places, social organizations, the party and the state. Since 1994, physical supports and mental bonds increased between parents and children, and between friends. Supports from work places or the government became in name only. Public networks were utilized in the way that people gave bribes to officials and got rewards for that when they could not work, or get into a social organization for secondary economic activities. This means the activation of informal relationships in public networks.

The most common strategy among those mentioned above was engaging in secondary economic activities, particularly trading, to earn a living, as a part of the subsistence strategy. After all, despite the economic difficulty, North Korean families were able to build a ground for reproduction, though weak, through the process of responding to family poverty with family strategies.

By exercising family strategies, North Korean families were able to obtain food and a living. When this is summarized in connection to the family functions discussed earlier, compared to the previous period, the household reproduction function was weakened, but the labor force

reproduction function was strengthened. As for household reproduction function first, faced with family poverty problems, families suffered a decrease in the ability to give birth to children and rear them, because they did not have anything extra for living, except for subsistence. In addition, unmarried women, as key players in secondary economic activities, delayed marriage for their families. With regard to these phenomena, the following Case 5) is suggested as an example.

Case 5) 33, Female, Escaped in 1996, Housewife

Since the food difficulty, North Korean women tend not to marry, or not to give birth to children even if they married. It was because they had to work hard to support their husbands and children that pregnancy was something to be celebrated no more. Instead it only caused worry about the life of the baby to be born. Nevertheless, if pregnant, they gave birth to babies, having no other choice.

Next, the time for women to spend on housework was minimized as their secondary economic activities increased, but the role of supporting their families was maximized. In other words, North Korean families obtain a living and food through economic activities by individual families. It is

women who search rural areas for food for half a month to one or two months. Unlike before, they have to spend a lot of time to find the necessities of life. This is another duty transferred to women in a socialist country suffering from a chronic shortage of supplies.

### ⅴ.3. Family Structure Family Relations

#### ⅴ.3.1. State During the Period of Kim Il-Sung

80% of families in North Korea are nuclear families with a couple and two or three children, and 20% of them are extended families composed of 3 generations. The average number of family members is 5 (4.77).

Marriage is the cause of the family organization. North Korea recommended most of all 'comrade love' based on the revolutionary idea as the criterion in selecting a spouse. From the late 1980s, practical criteria such as job, academic qualifications, and lineage began to be considered. Especially, service workers, technicians and foreign currency earners (those engaging in business with foreign countries) were preferred. The age limits for marriage were 18 for men and 17 for women (Article 9 of the Family Act), but in reality men generally married at 30 or 31 and women at 28 or 29 as the government encouraged marriage after participating in 'socialistic revolution activities'

Divorce is the cause of family disorganization. North Korea acknowledges legally decided divorces (Article 20 of the Family Act). The reasons for divorces are political ones such as a spouse's being 'an anti-party or anti-revolution element', a spouse's impurity, health problem, etc. Because the suicide rate of women who could not divorce went high in the late 1980s, the government relaxed the regulations on divorces.

Family relations focused on the relationship between husband-wife and relatives are as follows. The relationship between husband and wife can be measured by the 'decision-making right' and 'role dividing right.' In North Korea, the husband decides important matters such as children's schooling, marriage, etc., and the wife executes those businesses. Accordingly, they maintain a patriarchal relationship, where the husband is dominant.) As for the husbands' exemption from housework, the following Case 8) gives a lead.

Case 8) 45, Female, Escaped in 2001, Painter

Housework is generally for the wife. All the husband does is wood collection and repairing the house. Even wood collection is often done by the wife. Even if the husband comes home earlier than the wife, he never cooks rice.

Relations between relatives are highly limited because of the restriction of movement. Therefore, only relatives within short distances, and particularly those on the men's side are tied mentally to one another.

### ¶.3.2. Changes under Kim Jeong-Il's Regime

Family structure has suffered a change toward disorganization since the mid 1990s. There are tendencies to avoid marriage, or to divorce more frequently. Furthermore, sending children to relatives in rural areas and escaping from the country for subsistence has accelerated the disintegration of families.

The relationship between husband and wife in North Korea is changing as women contribute more to the family economy. Women's status was improved and men's authority was weakened. It is noticeable that, though husbands are dominant in the relationship, wives rise to high standing compared to the past, and couples moved to a relationship of equality. Husbands' participation in housework began to increase. These are evidence for change in the relationship between husband and wife.

On the contrary, the relationship between relatives, centering on the relationship between parents and children was activated. As public networks such as the state and work places became unavailable, families in North Korea expanded relationships with relatives through private networks. Different from those based on the husband's relatives in the past, relationships were expanded to the wife's relatives. Because the wife's relatives are tied mentally and physically, relationships between relatives began to involve both sides. It is common for relatively rich relatives to support their poor relatives.

## ¶.4. Meaning of Family System Restructuring to Social Unification

As described above, the primary cause of changes in the family system in North Korea is the paralysis of the distribution system, namely, the welfare system resulting from economic and food difficulties. Where the rate of wage payment dropped as low as 30% and distributions of all

necessities including food stopped, the people exercised their own survival strategies. Now when families in North Korea play an important role ideologically or as a unit of distribution, it is inevitable that each family has to adapt itself to the difficulties through secondary economic activities. A secondary cause is the relaxation of social organizations.

Since 1994, the family system experienced various changes, and was restructured under Kim Jeong-Il's regime. In terms of influence on the social unification of North Korea, the most important are the economic functions of families, family structure and relationships, and family ideology, in that order.

It is now unknown how long families' economic functions centering on secondary economic activities will be reinforced, and the equal relationship between husband and wife will go. However, North Korea will be in the present restructuring process until the economy enters into a stable phase. The process of family restructuring plays the role of filtering people's complaints against the government. This means that it is families that play a positive role in the social unification of North Korea. The changes and restructuring of the family system is a central driving force leading social unification.

## ¶. Conclusions

After the death of Kim Il-Sung, the public mechanism of social unification was maintained or even more reinforced than that in the previous period, while the social mechanism weakened as far as its normal operation was doubtful. The weakening of the social mechanism is directly followed by the reinforcement of the private mechanism. In this process, the balance of social unification is promoted through adjustments among the mechanisms.

The adjustment process among social unification mechanisms is as follows. The shock from the rapid reduction of the welfare system was absorbed to some degree by the secondary economic activities of families. In addition, adapting to the conditions of the paralyzed welfare system, social organizations relaxed the organizational regulations, and so contributed positively to families' economic activities. However, the extent of the aggravation of the welfare system is larger than that of the compensation to the family system. From the analysis, the following three implications can be derived.

First, the discrepancy between the extent of the aggravation of the welfare system and that of the compensation of the family system implies the amount of pain suffered by the people. It amounts to the a reduction in social resources.

Second, despite the aggravation of the welfare system, changes in North Korean society can be viewed as indications of recovery. The relaxation of social organizations functions negatively in terms of social control, it may work as a positive factor that transforms the centralized society into a decentralized one.

Third, the reinforcement of the family system, the private mechanism, implies the expansion of the people's autonomy, and consequently, the increase of their endurance in social unification.

The following is a summary of the above discussion, focused on the current state and restructuring of the social unification mechanism in North Korea. The indicators that has been interpreted as crises, say, the relaxation of social organizations, the reinforcement of family roles through the increase of secondary economic activities, are those that must be interpreted as the restructuring process of social unification. In other words, under the paralyzed welfare system caused by the weakened national distribution system, firstly, if the regulations of social organizations became stricter instead of more lenient, and if the people were required to live intensive organizational lives or punished severely, and secondly, if the people, fettered by the net of social organizations, could not get food or engage in side-jobs, North Korean society might not have been able to attain the unification as it is now. That is, the social unification was possible through the relaxation of traditional organizational regulations, and the allowance of private economic activities by individual families. As for matters beyond the control of the government, the government expanded internal autonomy and let them be solved privately and socially as long as the existence of the socialist regime was not threatened. It can be said that the national conditions and the people's demands interacted with each other, and produced selective positive results. Among social unification mechanisms, the private mechanism, namely the family system, played a central role in inducing the unification of North Korean society.

The operation method of the social unification mechanism in North Korea is predicted as follows. Where Kim Jeong-Il's regime was officially launched, it is unlikely that the public mechanism of social unification

weakens or collapses rapidly. North Korea will maintain and strengthen the public mechanism, overcoming the economic difficulty through improving their relationship with South Korea and the U. S. government.

On the other hand, it is highly possible that the social mechanism and the private mechanism will go through changes. The possibility is even higher as, since 1999, economic indexes have forecasted the recovery of the North Korean economy. That is, if North Korea fosters a condition under which it can attain a certain level of welfare system by operating the distribution system properly, the two mechanisms will return to the original states. On one hand, the regulations of social organizations will be tightened, and on the other hand, secondary economic activities by families will be restricted. Consequently, the welfare system and social organization are in a propitious relationship to each other, and the welfare system and the private economy of families are in an adverse relationship with each other. Specifically, the weakening of the welfare system is followed by the relaxation of social organizations, and the activation of secondary economic activities, but conversely, the reinforcement of the welfare system will be followed by the reinforcement of social organizations and the restriction of the private economy.

Despite the possibility of changes in the social mechanism and private mechanism, it will take a long time for the distribution system to operate normally. Until that time, the social mechanism and the private mechanism will maintain their current operation patterns.

Though North Korea has overcome the crises faced in the mid 1990s, and entered into the phase of recovery through the process of the restructuring of social unification mechanisms, this does not mean that it has already embraced the opportunity.

North Korea may come across new opportunities in the course of tackling problems with political decentralization, economic opening, social democratization, etc. Whether North Korea can convert the current state into opportunities will be determined by two factors above all. One is the influence of the military authorities, and the other is the extent of improvement of the relationships with South Korea and the U. S. The interrelationship between the two factors will determine the speed and contents of the reformation and the opening of North Korea.

In the middle between the extreme ends of the two factors are various factors such as the consolidating power of Kim Jeong-Il's regime, the activation of the economy, the improvement of the relations with South Korea and Japan, etc. How these factors appear on the spectrum will be determined to what degree the system reformation is minimized, and the effect of economic opening is maximized.

The present research contains the following limitations, which are caused by the methodologies and subjects. The research utilized case studies through in-depth interviews with escaped North Koreans living in South Korea. The error of generalization may happen in that, based on the interviews with a few escaped North Koreans, the operation methods of unification mechanisms related to specific organizations and areas, to which they had belonged, were investigated and were applied to all organizations and areas in North Korea. Besides the problem caused by the particularity of the research subjects, the research has a limitation in quantifying data because it did not carry out statistical analysis based on surveys.

Despite these limitations, the research is considered meaningful in that it raised the analysis level from the existing structural analysis up to the middle-range level, and private level by interpreting the operational principles of the North Korean system from the code of social unification, and materialized the existing abstract discussion into a discussion on realistic daily lives.

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