

## BOOK REVIEW

*Modernization Among Peasants: The Impact of Communication* by Everett M. Rogers in association with Lynne Svenning, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1969, 429 pp.

The dominant role of economists in the formulation of the agricultural development plans of the developing nations has been questioned by many sociologists and social psychologists. One of the major shortcomings of such development plans, according to Rogers and Svenning, is that economists usually pay less attention to the factors that bring about the modernization of the peasants' attitudes and behavior. The authors think that modernization is essentially a communication process in which new ideas are brought into a social system from external sources. Since the individual peasant is the unit of analysis in this study, modernization among peasants is therefore "the process by which individuals change from a traditional way of life to a more complex, technologically advanced, and rapidly changing style of life."

As the method of analysis, the so-called middle-range theory is used, and the inter-relationship of nine key concepts or variables (empathy, mass media exposure, cosmopolitanism, literacy, achievement motivation, fatalism, innovativeness, political knowledge, and aspiration) are examined by means of multivariate and factor analysis.

The following are a few of the questions that the reviewer would like to raise concerning the general approach to the problem and the findings of this study.

First, the middle-range analysis in this study does not seem to provide an effective tool for analysis. The reviewer shares the authors' view that the middle-range approach certainly has many advantages as a means to overcome the shortcomings inherent in both "grand theory" and "raw empiricism." But this is so only if and when the user of this theory has profound knowledge and insight about the area concerned. For example, this study deals with 225 peasants living in different villages of Columbia. Is it possible to examine the peasants' attitudes and behavior without considering the social organization, norms, and values of the villages, the district, and the country in which they live? In this connection, this study is almost silent on the socio-economic and cultural factors that lie behind various responses of the interviewed peasants. This argument does not deny the usefulness of the middle-range theory, but raises serious questions concerning its application. To put it more empirically, the same middle-range approach may bring about substantially different answers when it is used by an area-specialist to analyze the problem and when it is used by a non-area-specialist who specializes in one discipline for the purpose of testing its empirical and theoretical validity in certain areas.

Second, there are certain difficulties in dealing with the data and the method of evaluation. Correlation analysis simply shows the technical relationship between two variables in terms of their variation and does not indicate the causal relationship between the two, as the authors are fully aware. However, arguments often go beyond this limitation.

Another problem here is the low correlation coefficient and coefficient of (multiple) determination. The low, zero-order correlation coefficient among variables means that it is possible to evade the most troublesome multicollineality problem in the multivariate

analysis. It is highly doubtful to assume the independency of the variables, especially when they are behavioral ones. In this respect, the questionnaire and the scale used in this study should be presented in the text. It is highly probable that serious changes may be required in a considerable number of the findings of the multivariate analysis if the scale is improved so as to reflect the realities.

Third, the explanatory variables are oversimplified and, in addition, economic variables are almost ruled out, as the authors admit. Moreover, the explanation is too mechanical to provide useful insight concerning the causal relationship among the selected variables. For example, functional literacy, mass media exposure, and cosmopolitanism are positively correlated with empathy. If an increase in empathy is desired, some measure should be taken to increase the above-mentioned variables. In order to increase mass media exposure, level of literacy, cosmopolitanism, and social status should be raised. Cosmopolitanism is positively related to social status and farm size in this study. The correlation between mass media exposure and empathy decreases considerably if the social status variable is mathematically removed. Ultimately, there are only two factors to increase empathy: literacy and social status. Mechanical interpretation leads to this kind of answer, which the authors would disagree with; but no other interpretation seems to be possible with this kind of study.

Fourth, as far as the cross-cultural comparison is concerned, outcomes of the analysis of one area should be compared with those of other areas, together with the socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of the areas concerned, as pointed out earlier. In fact, the cross-cultural comparison of the factors that produce various responses is much more important than the comparison of the results of the analysis.

Fifth, the cultural-bound ideas and methodology of social scientists from more developed countries are rightly criticized by the authors. However, ironically enough, it must be pointed out that the authors' ideas of modernization, methodology, and interpretation of the findings are highly culture-bound ones, and they are commonly accepted in the more developed countries.

(Shigemochi Hirashima)