

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### *The Peasant in the Modern World*

In many developing nations of the world most people are rural dwellers who partake but little of the benefits of increasing productivity such nations strive for. They are, however, greatly affected by the impact of change. What effect does the process of change or, very roughly, modernization have on the peasants in nations that are dedicated to industrialization? Do they see themselves as condemned to the backwaters of the new national experience that these nations are entering upon? If they do, is this a demoralizing perception, and does it interfere with the modernizing efforts in the countryside? For many less developed nations the experience of nationhood, the attainment of independence itself, is recent so that, suddenly plunged into the swift currents of a modern national experience, the peasants find themselves beset by a multitude of changes, buffeted by assiduous criticisms of their time-honored way of life, and besieged by innumerable attempts to alter their customs and beliefs. While the center for the proselytization of change is the city, most saliently the capital city, urban decisions constantly impinge on the countryside which must bend with the desires of urban reformers, adopt new world views in accord with the advanced opinions of urbanites, or resist with stubborn and sometimes effective peasant inertia.

These tensions, occasionally erupting into violent conflict, are occurring throughout the less developed world, in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia. Some countries, such as the highly industrialized nations of Europe, have already survived the conquest of the countryside by the cities, and not without considerable violence as the history of those countries reveals. Sir Thomas More, observing the effects on the countryside of measures adopted there by a developing England, commented acridly that those were times indeed when "sheep ate men." Languedoc became a rural haven of reaction against the nationalizing propensities of the French revolution. The Soviet Union has not yet emerged from the terrible days of Stalin's destruction of the kulaks for the sake of rapid industrialization not only of the urban environment but of agriculture as well. The United States, which has never had a widespread segment of its population that could be called a true peasantry, has avoided some of the trauma of modernizing the countryside and attained a high degree of industrialization and economic development without encountering stubborn peasant resistance. For this reason, the United States can hardly serve as a model of development for most of the world, and its politicians are sometimes hard put to comprehend the obstinate problems that beset political leaders elsewhere. But the experience of other modern nations might be more germane to the travails of peasant societies. Japan was also a "typical" peasant society when it began its efforts to modernize, but even that nation did not experience the complications of a world permeated by busy media. Yet it





should be noted that development in Japan did not occur without ample unrest and occasional rebellion in the countryside, conditions that have been well documented and analyzed.<sup>1</sup>

While the 1940s and 1950s were generally devoted to developing urban centers and manufactures, symbols often more illusory than real of rapid advance and prestige, the rural segment of the population, ranging from 60 to 90 percent of the citizenry, was both neglected and exhorted to sacrifice for the good of the cities. In their efforts to display modernization at the greatest possible speed in a world in which they were being left rapidly behind by nations already far along in the process of industrialization, leaders in the less developed nations frequently advocated a lopsided form of development--that is, when they were successful in breaking through centuries of inertia, governmental corruption and inefficiency, and the economic drain of historical colonialism--placing all their emphasis on the urban sector and ignoring and exploiting the rural sector. To the peasant, who has his own views of the proper state of society, the urban elites of the newly independent polities must have greatly resembled a new style of colonial exploitation, sometimes more vigorous and effective than that of the former colonial rulers who occasionally could be barred from penetrating the "bamboo walls."

With the advent of the 1970s, however, some nations hitherto self-sufficient in foodstuffs found that the rural sector was not maintaining sufficient productivity to keep abreast of populations increasing in some extreme cases, like the Philippines, at an annual rate of 3.5 percent. Capital that might better have been spent in other forms of modernization was now drained from more productive uses to pay for imported foods. The brief effervescence of optimism associated with the Green Revolution in the late 1960s gradually dissipated as the problems of the rural sector were more fully and realistically appraised. Lasting gains in agricultural productivity seemed further in the future than originally anticipated. While the Green Revolution is still a viable reality, naive optimism has been replaced by a greater sense of realism. In addition, there is some realization that while fruits might still be gathered from the countryside, greater efforts and more resources must be invested there as well.

Among the presently developing nations, an interesting case study is that of Korea<sup>2</sup> which, following the conflict that disrupted development throughout the peninsula, has made impressive strides toward a more modern economy. As it entered the 1970s, Korea seemed to have reached the verge of that economic condition that some economists refer to as the "take-off," a stage in the course of modernization at which a nation seems capable of sustaining relatively independently the steady growth of its economy. Thus Korea is further along than a great many countries striving toward development in spite of its many present problems and the uncertainties of its economic and political future. In fact, by 1973 only somewhat less than half of its population worked in the rural sector, a division of national labor that marked Italy roughly during the mid-1940s. Korea, like Italy three decades earlier, could be expected to become an increasingly urban society, with a declining labor force working the land as manufactures came to dominate the gross national product. But in the early 1970s the peasants still formed a significant proportion of the population, and rural problems still exercised the minds of administrators bent on the goal of economic development. New programs were in the process of implementation with the intention of increasing the morale of the peasant, his well being and,



consequently, his output. Thus the period covered by the analysis in this book was particularly critical for the peasant and the nation, holding some promise of improved living conditions for the peasant, presumably in return for increased agricultural output.

The transition from a predominantly rural society to a contemporary urban society marked by increasing industrialization was a significant new experience for Korea which hitherto had been economically indistinguishable from its rural-based neighbors in Asia. The peasant had always been the ubiquitous and exploited "average" inhabitant of the peninsula, perhaps from time to time faring slightly better than other peasant populations throughout the world, but generally faring much worse. Mongol, Manchu and Japanese invaders devastated the Korean countryside. By the nineteenth century an increasingly reactionary traditional regime pressed its demands more and more oppressively on the peasants, sometimes to the point of driving many from their lands into the precarious existence of slash-and-burn agriculture. Viewing the rural landscape even in the 1970s, the cursory visitor could be plunged backward into history. Certainly the straw-thatched roofs and the paddy fields of many villages seemed to be not much different from what they must have been centuries ago, although now and then a cement factory on the industrialized outskirts of an urban conglomeration like Taegu loomed into view to disturb the tranquil timelessness of the countryside. Such a juxtaposition of the modern against the backdrop of the ancient is aesthetically disconcerting; it must be somewhat disconcerting to the economic reformer as well.

Yet the timelessness of the countryside, although probably a restful experience for the visitor from a frenetic urban environment, is to some degree spurious, for innovations have occurred from time to time in the countryside, albeit at a much slower rate than in the societies of the industrial revolution. The terraced slopes of many hills must have been introduced by some villagers in a past age. More fundamentally, the development of rice culture and the characteristic crops of Korea were once innovations, and some intrepid innovators may have accepted significant risks.

#### *A Brief History of the Korean Peasant*

The origins of the contemporary crops of the Korean fields have been lost in the shadows of mythology, their introduction attributed to a supernatural national father figure, Tan-Gun. Some archeological research tentatively suggests that rice culture was introduced by the sixth century B.C., but certainly by the second century A.D. rice was a flourishing crop on the Korean peninsula.<sup>3</sup> It can be conjectured that the benefit to those who grew the new crops was likely to be shortlived, as the increased ability to feed a population was drained through tax systems into developing towns and cities where the apex of society--the courts, retainers, and armies--was supported by agricultural wealth. The basic strength of these agricultural kingdoms, their foundation, certainly rested in the countryside, for the countryside could survive without the court and, barring invasion, could have enjoyed a higher quality of life without it, while the court was dependent on the produce of the farms. Thus the fall of a highly developed civilization at Angkor Wat did not seem to radically affect the surrounding peasants. New hierarchies might be built on the peasant's shoulders and then crumble or evolve, but the peasant would survive to form the support



for yet another court, another regime. Although denied adequate rewards, the peasant and his importance did not go unrecognized. Confucius had awarded him a position in the social hierarchy below the mandarin, to be sure, but above the artisan, the merchant, and the soldier. While this was probably small compensation during times of famine and heavy taxation following invasions or threats of invasion, it may have contained some real ideological effects mitigating the economic realities during periods of better times. To this extent the peasant of East Asia was better off socially than the despised serf of medieval Europe. At least he was not a "villain."

The peasant's conditions fluctuated throughout most of Korean history. During the Three Kingdoms when the formerly independent local units, the *si-jok* and *pu-jok*, had disappeared, the land was farmed by independent small peasants many of whom, however, were eventually driven from the lands through taxes, corvée and military service. The displaced peasants would voluntarily, or sometimes under threat, place themselves in the service of the powerful.<sup>4</sup> But times changed on the peninsula, and peasant fortunes waxed or waned with dynastic fortunes. Descendants of the slaves of Silla became the common people of the eleventh century, whose new and improved status as peasants was the result of their service in the dynastic war that produced Koryŏ. Now they were allotted land, seed, and oxen. But the weight of restrictions inevitably grew. Rules to hold peasants to the land were instituted; costume, housing, and marriage were minutely regulated; and peasants were prohibited from buying or selling land. They were unable to move from their registered residences.<sup>5</sup> Nobles in the kingdom of Koryŏ received private agricultural estates (*chŏn-jang*, *nong-jang*, or *changwŏn*) which provided them the income to live in the capital, the only locus for social amenities for the nobility.<sup>6</sup> These estates had undermined the revenue supporting Koryŏ and thus enabled Yi Sŏng-gye to depose the king and implement reforms which deprived the old elite of their land holdings.<sup>7</sup> Thus in 1391, a year before Yi himself assumed the throne but while he already controlled the government, the new land reforms were instituted. Peasants were allowed to retain the land that they already held, but no new lands were distributed. The new classified field law, the *Kwa-jŏn-pŏp*, somewhat improved conditions, for it gave tenants a guaranteed status in society. But in fact most of the arable land was in the hands of the government, so that peasants gained little from this reform. Indeed, during the height of the Yi dynasty, under Sejong, Sejo, and Sŏngjong, the agricultural estates were cultivated mainly by slaves, not by tenants, while tax and other onerous burdens were heavy.<sup>8</sup> In any case, while the peasants were now tenants, unwritten traditions afforded some protection for their right to cultivate.

The reign of the ruler canonized as Sejong (r. 1418-1450) was one of the brilliant periods of Korea's social and intellectual development such as the invention of the modern Korean alphabet. It was also a period of interest in agricultural innovation, some of which possibly improved the peasant's lot. Compilations of books on agriculture were produced, such as Chŏng Cho's *Nongsajipsŏl* (The Art of Farming) that may have stimulated the use of fertilizers, thereby allowing fields to be cultivated year after year rather than having to be left fallow for a season. This practice, of course, increased agricultural output. An irrigation project was carried out in Kimje district in Chŏlla province, and waterwheels were introduced but never as widely used as in China.<sup>9</sup>

The Hideyoshi invasions toward the end of the sixteenth century were vastly destructive to the countryside, devastating fields and displacing or killing



many peasants, but the war did have the advantage of destroying the land records so that peasant entrepreneurs were later able to amass larger land holdings. Yet the peasant's burdens remained generally unrelieved. The practice of taxing households for grain, services, and innumerable other items placed most of the burden on the peasants, while the landlords generally escaped paying the tribute tax. The *Taedong-bŏp*, or Law of Great Equity, was intended to distribute the burden more equably by levying a tax on land only in the form of grain and cloth payments. This law was first applied in Kyŏnggi province in 1608, but the government was glacially slow in extending these benefits elsewhere in the countryside.<sup>10</sup> Kim Yuk, governor of Ch'ŭngch'ŏng province, spent a lifetime in instituting this law throughout Korea. He levied taxes on land amounting to a *p'il* (roll) of cloth and two *tu* of grain on each *kyŏl* of land, thereby freeing the peasant from the accretions of miscellaneous taxes and the tribute tax. Kim was not to witness the success of his effort, as evidenced by an ex-censor's memorial to the throne a year before Kim Yuk's death in 1658:

A farmer's agricultural production per year does not exceed ten *kok* of grain; [with] these ten *kok*, he [has to] meet his military tax as well as his corvée tax. Even if he has infant sons, all of them are enlisted as military [-aged] adults; therefore, he also has to meet their duties.

Then what is left for eating and clothing?

It was not until 1708 that the *Taedong-bŏp* was instituted in all but two provinces.

Kim Yuk's lifelong efforts on behalf of the Korean peasant served to increase government revenues, for landlords were now taxed, as well as to alleviate peasant poverty. But the peasant's condition improved only slightly, and in the course of the nineteenth century his standard of living probably declined. The Old Regime of Korea, like that of Ch'ing China, had seen its apogee and seemed to degenerate steadily throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries despite the sturdy efforts of a few modernizers and would-be reformers. Chŏng Yag-yong (1762-1836), for instance, advocated communal ownership of land, with peasant communities integrated into an hierarchical political structure. Less radical reforms, based on fairer taxation, were recommended by other nineteenth-century memorializers of the throne such as Yi Kyu-gyŏng, Hŏ Pu, and Kim Yun-sik.<sup>11</sup> There is evidence that King Kojong himself was not unfeeling toward the peasants, for he had been thoroughly imbued with the principles of kingship, including frugality on the part of the monarch, concern for the welfare of the peasants, and the maintenance of status distinctions in society, all good Confucian lessons delivered twice a day in the Royal Lectures. In 1862 conditions pushed peasants into a rebellion which spread from Kyŏngsang to Chŏlla and then to Ch'ŭngch'ŏng provinces. The reputed cause of this rebellion, known as the Hong Kyŏng-nae Rebellion, was taxes, and Palais points out that the peasants directed their ire against venal officials, but they remained very traditional in their demands for change.<sup>12</sup> A veritable exodus of peasants from their villages helped to reduce the number of peasant households from 302,844 prior to the rebellion to some 192,867 following the upheaval. This decrease continued a trend that seemed to have started shortly after 1800. The total population is said to have decreased from 7,561,403 in 1807 to 6,755,280 in 1837.<sup>13</sup> Considering the difficulties of gathering census figures in modern nations, it is unlikely that the figures of nineteenth-century Korea were accurate, but the record of a population decline seems plausible.

Despite this rebellion and a similarly abortive uprising in 1871, little was



done to alleviate the peasant's plight. In 1883 a model farm was established outside Seoul with foreign seeds and breeding cattle, but no rural reforms were forthcoming, a fact that Heydrich correctly attributed to a demoralized and corrupt bureaucracy.<sup>14</sup> The dire conditions in the countryside were manifest even to the casual observer of Korea. Bonar noted that "any signs of wealth entail squeezing by the officials and the people consequently spend all they earn on themselves in the way of clothing and food."<sup>15</sup> Benjamin Weems provides an illustration of one corrupt official:

Three specific acts of this *kunsu* (county chief magistrate) of Kobu County during 1893 were (1) taking advantage of the collapse of a river bridge to impress several hundred thousand people as slave laborers; (2) imposing on the farmers a water tax amounting to about 20 percent of the rice crop and appropriating the receipts himself; and (3) levying forced contributions of rice upon tenant farmers under the pretense of charity for poor Buddhist monks and with the force of authority of the central government.<sup>16</sup>

All land was owned by the monarchy which assigned it to government officials who, in turn, leased it to tenant peasants. As a result, the peasants had to pay taxes in kind both to the landlords and to the government. Because the *yangban* amassed lands that were not registered, government revenues declined, while the burden of support fell more and more heavily on the tenant peasants.

This oppressive system of exploitation was the major reason for the Tonghak Rebellion which broke out in 1894 and almost swept the Old Regime away. It bore some resemblance to several other rural revolts in Asia and elsewhere. Like the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion, which scourged China from 1850 to 1864, it originated in the insufferable rural conditions and it unified its adherents through a doctrine synthesizing new ideas from the West and traditional themes. The vacillation of the Tonghak forces, which enabled the Korean government to put them down by the end of 1894, reminds one of similar vacillation outside Mexico City of the peasant forces of Father Hidalgo who suffered the same consequences.

Some reformers looked with favor on neighboring Japan where modernization was gathering speed following the Meiji Restoration and development was based to a large degree on using increased farm output to support the new industries in the cities. The growing strength of Japan, coinciding with the declining fortunes of the reactionary Yi dynasty, created the condition for growing Japanese influence in Korea, an influence that supplanted the former role of China in Korea.<sup>17</sup> Korea became a Japanese protectorate in 1905 and a colony in 1910. Thus Korea fell under the control of the most economically progressive nation of Asia, a fate that foretold mixed blessings, for the Japanese were intent, insofar as possible, on modernizing Korean agriculture for the benefit of the mother country. The rule of the *yangban*, a rule that was harsh during some periods of the Yi dynasty, was now replaced by the rationalized bureaucracy of the Japanese. Some modernization occurred; Japan introduced innovative agricultural practices<sup>18</sup> and, in return, learned the utility of animal power from the Koreans, with the result that the demand for cattle steadily increased in Japan.<sup>19</sup> Yet conditions in the Korean countryside probably continued to deteriorate.

Intent on increasing the productivity of Korean agriculture to feed its own people, Japan did institute improvements, some of these in farming techniques, but each improvement caused a decline in the fortunes of the Korean peasants, rather like the eerie results of the three wishes in W. W. Jacobs classic tale



*The Monkey's Paw.* By the Irrigation Association Order of 1917 irrigation *kyes* were formed, and the money advanced to these *kyes* by the colonial government had to be paid by the tenant peasants and the landlords from the profits anticipated through increased productivity. Membership fees remained unchanged, but the price of rice fell precipitously, so that many members could no longer pay the fees.<sup>20</sup> In the 1930s roads were constructed, a much needed improvement in the countryside, for it made markets more accessible to the peasants, but the roads were built on land confiscated from the peasants who sought but received no compensation.<sup>21</sup> By 1929 there were at least twenty-four industrial schools specializing in agriculture, and the famed College of Agriculture at Suwon was training rural leaders. There was also a single missionary agricultural training institute at the Union Christian College in P'yongyang.<sup>22</sup> Such efforts should have enabled peasants to increase productivity, and this seemed indeed to have been the case. Lee showed that ordinary rice gradually increased from 17.3 to 20 bushels per acre,<sup>23</sup> and Brunner noted increased yields and other evidences of added resources in rural Korea.<sup>24</sup> From 1910 to 1925 a 42.0 percent increase in the production of rice and a 67.8 percent increase in cereals were recorded, although some of this increase was the result of a 17.2 percent increase in the land farmed to rice and a 45.3 percent increase in cereal lands.<sup>25</sup> Lee also found that in the early 1930s some thirty million bushels of rice had been exported to Japan but, as he pointed out, this traffic did not benefit the Korean peasant. A classic colonial trade pattern, in which Korean agricultural products were exchanged for Japanese manufactured goods, created adverse conditions that "will eventually drain all the wealth in any form from the Korean peasants and farmers."<sup>26</sup> In fact, as specified by Japanese government publications, the Land Amelioration Project, which was formed in 1927, was intended to increase the productivity of the Korean farms for the manifest purpose of producing more rice for Japan.

An increasing amount of land was also passing from Korean into Japanese hands, as the avowed purpose of the Oriental Development Company was to displace Korean peasants by Japanese immigrants. This policy was far from successful--Brunner mentions that in the first seventeen years of Japanese occupation of Korea, only some 10,000 Japanese farm families were actually settled there--but the fact remains that land ownership changed from Korean to Japanese hands. While the agricultural and residential lands actually registered under Japanese ownership amounted to only some 6 percent, this was misleading since the lands belonging to Japanese corporations under Korean charter were classified as Korean-owned. According to knowledgeable assessments given by Brunner, the land actually owned by the Japanese amounted to some 12 to 20 percent throughout Korea, with much of this located in the more fertile South. In one county, an investigation suggested that 120,000 Koreans owned only some 32 percent of the assessed property valuation, while 68 percent was owned by Japanese. Lee also suggested, without providing figures, that the number of large Japanese landlords "is far greater than that of Koreans."<sup>27</sup> This change probably did not make much difference to the peasant tenant, for in some areas where he made any distinction between Korean or Japanese landlords, he sometimes preferred the Japanese. The latter still demanded high rents, but it was not so necessary to ply them with those additional gifts which Korean landlords expected periodically.

Tenancy increased during the Japanese colonial period, for this was a useful mechanism for shipping more rice from Korea to Japan. Tenants paid as much as 50 percent, possibly as much as 60 percent of their crop each year; worse, these



crops had to be delivered to the landlord even if he lived in the city. Tenants were also responsible for providing all the labor, usually all seeds and fertilizers, taxes and irrigation charges, which brought their actual net share down to about 20 percent of the crop.<sup>28</sup> Some 73 percent of the tenants lacked a written contract, and of those who possessed one, most were without the assurance of a fixed term. The tenant had little protection, and sanctions could easily be applied to stifle any possible protest. In connection with the Kwanghwa-do Treaty of 1876 between Korea and Japan, a land survey had been conducted that showed only 1.8 percent of the peasants being landowners, of whom many were absentee landlords who held over half the cultivable lands. Landownership improved during the first five years of the Japanese colonial regime when of the total farm households of 2,554,000 some 21.8 percent were landowners, another 38.8 percent were landed-tenant peasants, and 39.4 percent were full tenants. But by 1938 the percentage of landowners declined to 19 percent, with 55.7 percent being full tenants.<sup>29</sup> Brunner called attention to the important fact of population increase of 48 percent (or 54 percent if measured by households) from 1910 to 1925, which had the effect of reducing the size of the holdings. Large landlords held over 49 acres, while medium landlords held from 12.25 to 49 acres. The large owner-peasants might have had over 7.35 acres, while a middle peasant would farm from 2.45 to 7.35 acres. Small landlords were those whose holdings were about 2.45 acres, and the small peasants' holdings were from less than an acre to 2.45 acres. The number of households with these holdings is shown by Lee from statistics of the Social Section of the Home Bureau of the Government-General in 1925 as follows:

Large landlords	6,866	households
Medium landlords	22,944	"
Small landlords	39,455	"
Smallest landlords	52,670	"
Large owner-cultivators	94,453	"
Medium owner-cultivators	179,016	"
Small owner-cultivators	172,390	"
Smallest owner-cultivators	107,817	"

The part owners included the remainder of households, with distributions similar to those of the owner-cultivators. By far the greatest percentage of households were, of course, tenants, and the statistics laconically provide a figure of 162,209 impoverished households.<sup>30</sup>

The tax rate on land in 1922, omitting provincial and township rates, was 1.7 percent of the total assessed rural land value and 0.95 percent on urban land.<sup>31</sup> While this evaluation may not seem high, it has to be compared to the income of the Korean peasant, which from 1925 to 1930 was about 1/5 yen per person per day, a figure that was about six American cents.<sup>32</sup> As in many other agricultural countries, a modern system of taxation was imposed on a traditional rural farming system to collect its pennies from the peasants. The peasants' task, for which they were so poorly compensated, must have been arduous, for Brunner quoted a survey conducted in Korea by John H. Reisner, the dean of the College of Agriculture and Forestry of Nanking University, as follows:

The per-capita population per square mile of total area is approximately 205 persons, and the per-capita per square mile of cultivated land is approximately 1,125. These estimates are based on government



data and include total population. If 80 percent of the population are farmers, then the density of the farm population would alone be approximately 900 persons per square mile. The soil must provide a living for not only this dense farming population, but for an additional 225 persons who must get their living out of the farmers. Of course, . . . . a mounting national debt pays for the time being for many of the modern developments and improvements, but the bald fact remains that the carrying capacity of the soil is most heavily loaded, and, as far as one can see from the conditions of the peasants, grossly overloaded. The rapidly increasing population only aggravates the situation and makes a solution of the problem more pressing and complex.<sup>33</sup>

Thus the basic question for the peasant under the conditions of Japanese occupation and the economic difficulties that beset the world was whether he could make a living from the land at all. Brunner provided some statistical assessment of this which concluded that in most cases he was probably not making a living, the aggregate conclusions being as follows: "Of the owner-cultivators, 30 percent made a profit, while 70 percent broke about even, showing a profit or loss of 10 yen or less. Of the part-tenants, 95.9 percent closed the year with a deficit. Of the full tenants, 96.9 percent failed to make ends meet."<sup>34</sup> Many village families were therefore chronically dependent on charity. How did rural families survive when their income so inadequately covered their expenses? Through credit. Small amounts of money, somewhere from 60 to 300 yen, were the typical debts of many farm families, borrowed at interest rates of anywhere from 12 to 48 percent interest annually. At 36 percent interest, peasants were unable to extricate themselves from any debts of 100 yen or more, for these often exceeded their annual income. Interest rates tended to decline under the Japanese, but debts that might have been carried year after year for the interest during the Yi dynasty were more frequently foreclosed. Likewise, cooperatives or thrift *kyes*, sometimes formed in the villages, would lend at a lower rate of interest but only on security that the peasant could not provide. Brunner gave an assessment of the *average* income and expenditures of sixty villagers in the 1920s:

Expenditures (in yen)		Receipts (Rice, sale of mats, etc.)	
Food	120		
Clothing	30		
Interest	30		
Fuel	25		
Taxes	15		
Seed, fertilizer, etc.	10		
Church	8		
Repairs, education, travel	30		
Total	268	209	Deficit 59 yen

These villagers were church members and hence in no way a representative sample, yet Brunner suggested that they were not particularly badly off.

Thus through his taxes the peasant paid for the Japanese program of reforestation, for the development of roads and ports, for some of the irrigation work, and for subsidies to peasants and to village associations, while he benefited minimally or not at all. The problem of surviving through the spring was tough,



as attested to by frequent newspaper articles. For instance, *Dong-A Ilbo*, March 24, 1932, described conditions in the countryside as follows:

The impoverished peasants are looking ahead to the seeding season, to start on their beggars' march! Where will the floating exodus go? Spring has come, every living thing is beginning to start a new life. Yet the villagers of the peninsula are gloomy and melancholy. News reports from all parts of the country are filled with stories of the death and life struggles of peasant farmers. In spite of the sowing season ahead, numberless impoverished peasants are drifting away from their villages. Northern Korea is experiencing the greatest hardship the peasants have ever encountered. The conditions are no other than a living hell. The peasants in Bookchung county had not enough to maintain even their bare lives since the early autumn months. They have been depending on grass roots and tree bark for their sustenance, but even such stuffs have now been exhausted. There is no other way for them than to go out and beg. The number of those leaving the county has already been more than three thousand. The rest of the inhabitants, over ten thousand, must go away to seek a living somewhere else. Those remaining are surviving only by eating millet bran and legume pods. They live because they cannot die. They are soon to start out, a roaming army, for the maintenance of a bare existence.<sup>35</sup>

Floods and droughts forced innumerable peasants from the countryside into other occupations or into the cities, where they eked out meager existences, and others migrated to Japan as workers or into Manchuria or Siberia where conditions were sometimes better. That the conditions reported in the papers were not exaggerated was attested to by Governor-General Ugaki Issei, who also mentioned that throughout the spring peasants were driven in search of roots and bark in their effort to survive until the next harvest.<sup>36</sup> McCune reported that those peasants under the cruel sway of the annual spring hunger, when the diet might consist of bark, roots, and edible weeds, probably consumed about thirty-eight calories daily.<sup>37</sup>

To provide impetus to the modernization of agriculture, the Japanese conducted a land survey in 1939 which revealed that 68 percent of the paddy fields were cultivated by full-time tenants, 52 percent of the farm families were full-time tenants, and 25.2 percent were part-time tenants. The tenancy rate was somewhat higher in the South than in the North. The consumption of Indian millet increased in the 1930s, a sign of a declining standard of living for most Koreans. McCune showed that a farm family's average amount of land was 3.6 acres, higher than the average acreage for farm families in Japan, but the Koreans lacked subsidiary incomes. Moreover, this average was skewed by larger holdings--some 63 percent of the Korean peasants farmed less than 2.4 acres, half less than 1.2 acres.<sup>38</sup>

Emerging from the ineffective rule of the tottering Yi dynasty into the modern era in which fertilizers, improved roads, and extended irrigation systems were possible, the peasants were nevertheless provided an ill lesson in the benefits of modernization. The great majority of villagers could not have been much motivated to improve their planting techniques or to purchase the necessary fertilizers because any effort on their part rarely led to an increase in their well-being. Yet in spite of all the factors operating against the countryside, there seems to have been a general increase in agricultural productivity under the Japanese, and the use of fertilizer became almost universal.<sup>39</sup>



What the peasant thought of all this and what his attitudes might have been during this strenuous era of economic struggles has not been recorded. Perhaps it appeared to the average peasant as more of the same fate that had been his lot whether the country was ruled by Mongols, Japanese or a Korean dynasty. With this bleak background of historical experience, the Korean peasant entered a new era of national independence after World War II, perhaps bolstered by a new feeling that the post-war world might hold in store more opportunities for his own and his family's development than had past centuries. Unfortunately, new troubles lay ahead, first the division along the thirty-eighth parallel and then the calamitous Korean war.

### *The Recent History of the Korean Peasant*

Although peasant experiences in no other country can be identical to that in Korea, there seem to be enough common attributes among peasants to form some general propositions regarding their attitudes. These attributes commonly found are summed up by Rogers as follows:<sup>40</sup>

1. Mutual distrust
2. Lack of innovativeness
3. Fatalism
4. Low aspirational levels
5. Lack of deferred gratification
6. Limited time perspective
7. Familism
8. Dependency on authority
9. Localiteness (parochialism)
10. Lack of empathy

This list is reproduced not to illustrate what the Korean peasant is like, for that assessment depends on the survey data to be reported, but to indicate the general nature of the structured outlook that seems to characterize some contemporary peasant cultures. Naturally, disagreement is possible with some of these attributes; the notion of innovativeness is in part a function of the time perspective, for over a period of a thousand years, many innovations have appeared in the countryside. It is a modern attitude to see innovation as a matter of months or a few years. But in light of the historical background briefly recounted on the preceding pages, one might suspect peasant attributes and attitudes in Korea to closely resemble the depressing list provided by Rogers. As Erasmus points out in a reply to an essay by Huitzer, such attributes must not be regarded as a kind of "peasant character," but simply as an underdog syndrome with many cross-cultural similarities.<sup>41</sup> It was in consideration of a context such as this that Whitney Young of the Urban League in the United States drew the parallel, striking to some, between the outlook within an American urban ghetto and that in many rural developing countries. Huitzer puts the issue very well when he says that "the existing resistance among the peasants can be interpreted as a resistance to minor changes within a social system from which they have no expectations for essential betterment."<sup>42</sup> It was with such a legacy that the Korean peasant entered into the second half of the twentieth century.

I would now like to emphasize a point that will be repeated later, for it is important that in the study of human attitudes and behavior, the characteristics



of the individual must always be considered within the context of the society. This point has been stated very well not only in recent sociological controversies concerning the relationship of attitudes and behavior, but by John Dewey:

Thus Mill says in his discussion of the logic of the moral and social sciences, "The laws of the phenomena of society are, and can be, nothing but the laws of the actions and passions of human beings united together in the social state. Men, however, in a state of society are still men; their actions and passions are obedient to the laws of *individual* human nature." (J. S. Mill, *Logic*, Book VI, Ch. 7, Sec. 1) Obviously what is ignored in such a statement is that "the actions and passions" of individual men are in the concrete what they are, their beliefs and purposes included, because of the social medium in which they live; that they are influenced throughout by contemporary and transmitted culture, whether in conformity or protest.<sup>43</sup>

Dewey's statement can only be affirmed, and in the analyses that follow, much of which will be concerned with individual peasant attitudes, the context in which these attitudes exist and are engendered must always be borne in mind. It is true that the peasant is often characterized by a low level of aspiration, but where this is not simply the result of parasitical infection, from which much of the rural Korean population suffers, or other physical ailments, it is most easily attributed to the rational critique carried out by the peasant concerning the whole social environment in which he lives. Even more emphatically than other analysts Joel Migdal makes the point of the social context in which peasant attitudes are formed: "Even peasants in freeholding villages were part of the larger society, and they sharply felt the pressures other classes generated. Their inward-orientation can be understood, in great part, as an adaptive response to their relationship with these socially and spatially removed classes which controlled the state, and to the insecurities of outside market participation."<sup>44</sup>

We will now turn to the conditions of the peasant in South Korea, with only a few brief allusions to rural changes in the North. While it was still a traditional rural society, the geography of the South was not particularly suited to support the size of population that presently inhabits the country, for only some 20 percent of the total land area is arable. A few lush valleys, fully cultivated, are broken frequently by hilly or mountainous areas. Often cultivation continues in terraces up the sides of the more gentle slopes, and occasionally steeper hillsides will show eroded terraces that once were farmed but are now, perhaps temporarily, abandoned.<sup>45</sup> Thus, with its geographical and climatic limitations, Korea entered the mid-1940s as a chiefly rural society: in 1920 some 85.5 percent of its population had lived in rural areas, a figure that decreased only slightly to some 79.5 percent of the total population by 1955.<sup>46</sup> North Korea at the end of World War II accounted for only 33 percent of Korea's food production, so that the South gained some advantage in its rural sector. The partition left the North with about one-third of the rice paddy land and about two-thirds of the dry field farming area.<sup>47</sup> Overall, it could be said that North and South Korea had insufficient agricultural resources to feed their population,<sup>48</sup> although this assessment must be a relative one because, as has been shown, exports had been enforced under Japanese colonial rule at the price of leaving the population at the starvation level.

The improvement of agricultural productivity in the context of the



developmental aims of both the North and the South, was therefore imperative, and rural problems were solved quite differently in the two sections, the South adopting, by and large, a system of small, independent landowner agriculture, the North, a full-scale system of collectivization.

Although the American military government moved to reduce rents to a maximum of one-third of the annual crop in Korea, the new Korean Interim Legislative Assembly, mostly representing landlords, was reluctant to reform rural society. Dr. Arthur C. Bunce, a professor of agricultural economics at Iowa State College, was the author of a land reform program offered by the U.S. Department of State Economic Mission to Korea in March 1948. The plan called for compulsory sale of privately-owned land at a standard price of three times the value of the annual crop, less any encumbrances on the property. Peasants could purchase this land in accordance with priorities that had to do with the ability of families to work the land. Peasant purchasers paid a mortgage to the National Land Reform Administration. The former owners were compensated by negotiable bonds issued by the Farm Loan Bank which they liquidated in fifteen annual installments. Inflation was buffered by tying the value of the bonds to one-fifth of the annual crop yield. Some former landlords, of course, also purchased land up to the maximum allowable and attempted, not always successfully, to farm themselves. A peasant's life takes practice before one becomes inured to it. Buyers of former Japanese holdings were limited to two *chŏngbo* (4.9 acres), and by mid-1948 85 percent of the 1,400,000 plots of land formerly held by the Japanese had been redistributed.

The National Assembly continued to stall on redistributing Korean-held lands, and Cho Pong-am was dismissed from his position as Minister of Agriculture when he attempted to speed action on a land reform that would have greatly favored the peasants. Ultimately a more conservative bill passed the assembly, but its abrogation brought about a conflictive special session and a new bill, promulgated on June 22, 1949, provided for purchase of all land not farmed by the owner and a redistribution of holdings to three *chŏngbo*, whether cultivated by the owner or not. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry was put in charge of administering the law, and land committees were established at various government levels. Now former landlords were to receive 150 percent of the average annual production of the farmland, and the peasants were to pay 125 percent of the same base, allowing them to purchase the land in ten annual installments of 12.5 percent of the land's produce. Yet by the end of the year redistribution had moved slowly, and it was the Korean conflict which broke out in the following year that hastened redistribution. In effect, this thorough reform continues to prevail and sets the conditions of the countryside, making rural Korea a sphere of small, independent peasant farmers. Overall, the bad old days of the Yi dynasty and the colonial period were effectively replaced once and for all, and the centuries-old tradition of landlord domination was rooted out in the course of a decade.<sup>49</sup>

After the land reform and the ravages of the war that swept over the peninsula in the early 1950s, agricultural productivity generally improved. Rice production increased from the pre-World War II high of three million tons in 1937 to about 4.1 million metric tons in 1967 on slightly less land.<sup>50</sup> The annual growth rate for farming (omitting fishing and forestry) from 1959 to 1969 was 3.8 percent, a quite respectable showing for a developing economy. The total contribution to the GNP fell to 28.4 percent because of relatively greater



growth in the nonfarm economy, but it was still a respectable contribution.<sup>51</sup> The United Nations suggested that this relative decline of the agricultural share in the GNP obscured the more fundamental fact that agricultural output had in absolute terms increased by over 75 percent.<sup>52</sup> Much of this increase might be attributed to larger inputs into the agricultural sector and particularly to the increased supplies of fertilizer by the government through the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation.<sup>53</sup>

In spite of this performance by the agricultural sector, the peasants did not reap the benefits to which they may have felt themselves entitled. There was a deterioration in their terms of trade, partly because the increased productivity of agriculture did not keep pace with that of other economic sectors. It was also apparent that productivity did not keep pace with the increase in population which forced Korea to spend about 30 percent of its trade export revenues on importing food. The United States provided agricultural commodities to help meet food shortages, but this worked to the peasants' disadvantage by a reduced demand for Korean agricultural products.<sup>54</sup>

The capital invested in agriculture can be roughly determined by the average farm household's assets which in the 1970s were about 915,000 won. Figuring some 2.5 million farm households, this represented some US \$5 billion.<sup>55</sup> On the basis of this capital investment, however, the peasants generally just managed to maintain themselves above the subsistence level. While the average annual income of a farm household doubled between 1962 and 1968, it reached only some US \$753 in 1968 of which about half was in cash and about one-fifth came from activities other than farming. This may seem a reasonable income for a developing nation, but after deducting the costs to the peasant in seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, wages, irrigation charges, interest payments, and taxes, he was left with something closer to US \$100. Furthermore, this meager income was for an entire household which averaged about six persons.<sup>56</sup> In 1972, just before this survey, rural household income was 83 percent of urban income but without taking into account the larger size of a rural household. Efforts were made to eliminate this gap by 1981. In fact, by 1974 the ratio of rural household income to urban household income was 104.7, but the ratio of income for a rural worker to an urban counterpart was only 46.<sup>57</sup> These figures do not, of course, discount expenses.

The relative poverty of the peasant was partly the result of governmental choice. The agricultural share of the national income fell from 40 percent in 1963 to 26 percent in 1969, although the latter figure might have been affected by the bad crops of 1968, and this decline outpaced the slight decrease in agricultural employment.<sup>58</sup> This share of the national income fell further to about 20 percent by 1974.<sup>59</sup> Also contributing to the peasant's relative poverty was the advantage held by the industrial over the agricultural sector. While the supply of agricultural goods remained relatively inelastic (notwithstanding the gradual increase in productivity noted earlier) and the demand for food remained price inelastic, any increase in agricultural production worked to the peasants' immediate disadvantage. But since the supply of and the demand for manufactured products was elastic, producers had greater control over their supply and demand and could adjust production rates and prices of goods for their benefit.<sup>60</sup> It should also be pointed out that the nature of Korean agriculture, namely a large number of small landholders, approached the condition of a perfect market in which no one peasant could significantly affect the supply.



In any case, the peasant did not operate in a free market, for the prices of rice and foodstuffs were controlled by the government which favored the cities over the countryside. This was generally the government's policy throughout the 1960s, although the military government was cognizant of the need to improve the peasants' lot. It provided agricultural credit at low interest and increased the available amount thirty times over the pre-1961 average. It also offered to relieve the peasants from perennial debt by taking over their high-interest loans outstanding to private lenders.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, one of the slogans of the new government had been "Agriculture First." But this did not mean that the countryside was to be favored over the city. Citing the need for safeguarding the full effect of currency devaluation, the president in 1964 discontinued subsidies and liberal credit policies and sought to emphasize the development of new lands, technological improvement, and market efficiency. The new emphasis did engender growth in the industrial sector, but it also had the effect in the elections of reducing the president's rural support.<sup>62</sup> This certainly proved that in assessing political candidates, Korean peasants chose quite rationally in terms of their economic and social interests.<sup>63</sup>

Control over the price of rice was in the hands of the government which sought throughout the 1960s to keep the price relatively low for the benefit of urban workers. In some ways governmental actions were beneficial to the peasant. The institution of a buffer stock operation, which was applied to several commodities, most notably rice, tended to stabilize the price of rice and to increase demand slightly. The government purchased rice during the large harvests, stored it, and released it to supplement market stocks when demand pushed the price up later in the year.<sup>64</sup> While the price was controlled to the advantage of the cities, the government did increase the rice purchase price from 1965 through 1970 as follows:

1965	6.2 percent increase
1966	5.0   "   "
1967	8.6   "   "
1968	17.0   "   "
1969	22.6   "   "
1970	35.9   "   "

(*Economic Survey*, 1971, p. 16)

This policy of higher prices for rice led to a purchase price in 1970 of US \$280 per ton which was twice the C.I.F. (cost, insurance, and freight included) price of imports! Support prices for rice continued to increase about 9 percent a year through the year of the survey, although the increase was more modest in 1973.<sup>65</sup> The government was still supporting peasant incomes in 1976 when it raised the purchase price of rice 19 percent.<sup>66</sup> A negative effect of this policy was to keep some 100,000 hectares of land under cultivation in rice that might have been better suited to other crops.<sup>67</sup> Farm income in 1970 was about 60 percent (in real terms) higher than in the preceding year. Most of this increase was a result of the price of rice, for about half of the peasants' income (in 1970 as well as in 1870) was accounted for by rice sales.<sup>68</sup> From 1970 a determined effort was made to stimulate agricultural production by maintaining more favorable prices for the peasant. Among the reasons for this were the continuing efforts to make Korea self-sufficient in foodstuffs, efforts dating back at least to the Nathan Plan of the 1950s.<sup>69</sup> The government claimed that agricultural products were the "key parameter in maintaining price stability,



due to their dominant role in the economy." *The Economic Survey 1971* also provided an idea of the substantial emphasis given agriculture by the Korean government. In 1970 the primary sector received 46 billion won in loans and investments, albeit a 6.1 percent decrease over the preceding year. Most of this went to the agricultural sector, with 13.6 billion won for improving agricultural production, 7.9 billion won for raising agricultural productivity, 3.4 billion won for agricultural price stabilization, 1.8 billion won for flood control, 2 billion won for workers' self-help projects, and 1.6 billion won for extension and experiment services.<sup>70</sup> In 1976 the government allotted 156.5 billion won in loans and investments to agriculture and forestry, 8.2 percent above the amount in the previous year. Twenty-six billion won in loans provided peasants with new farm implements, such as powered tillers and threshers.<sup>71</sup>

This represented a change in government policy to one favoring agriculture and a reemphasis on making Korea an agriculturally self-sufficient society within a decade. Connected with this program was a new movement initiated from above, the Saemaul Undong (New Village Movement), which was in its first years when the survey reported in this book was conducted. This was, of course, not the first effort to improve the peasant's standard of living. The Japanese had been quite interested in increasing the productivity of the agricultural sector, although they were little interested in the standard of living of the Korean peasant. A Community Development Program was begun in 1958, but it was not effective and was terminated in favor of "direct support for agricultural production."<sup>72</sup> During the exciting years of democratic ferment, 1960-1961, there was a National Construction Service which was a labor intensive reconstruction program for the countryside. Yet despite a good deal of initial enthusiasm, the program was not successful and faded out.<sup>73</sup>

In North Korea the solution of agricultural problems took the Communist road toward collectivization, a road pursued rapidly and completely after collectivization was decided upon in 1953: the percentage of private peasants shrank from 66.4 in 1953 to 16.6 in 1956 until it was completely eliminated on December 1, 1959.<sup>74</sup> It is quite possible, as was the case in other Communist nations, that the collectivization program was not fully supported by all members of the regime, and Paige suggests that it might have caused conflicts leading to the elimination of the opposition to some of Kim's policies in the years 1953 to 1955.<sup>75</sup> Collectivization had certainly generated ample friction between the Soviet Union and its East European allies, and agricultural policy was the chief immediate reason for Marshal Tito's defection from the Soviet bloc. Kim's pronouncement on agriculture was quite orthodox: "The final solution of the peasant and agrarian questions is possible only when the distinctions between town and country and the class distinctions between the working class and the peasantry are obliterated."<sup>76</sup>

In any case, the failure of several previous community self-help programs did not raise the peasant's hopes when he was presented with yet another program in the form of the Saemaul movement. The movement accepted the existing organization of the countryside and by no means looked to any radical alterations there. Rather than collectivization or a move toward larger farms, the program intended to rely on the small peasant. There is a good deal of evidence that the small peasant is potentially more efficient than a large peasant.<sup>77</sup> There is also some indication that by spreading small amounts of capital thinly over the whole agricultural population rather than concentrating expensive



machinery on a few farms, agricultural productivity will increase most rapidly.<sup>78</sup> In fact, agricultural improvement is a most complex problem that can ill afford to concentrate solely on the increase of farm productivity, for there is also the need to link the countryside to the "agroindustries" that provide improved seeds, fertilizers, tools and machines, feed grains and pesticides, and to the consumer industries. There is also a need to initiate small industries in the smaller cities and market towns, allowing farm families to supplement their incomes. Thus the Saemaul movement was coupled to many other economic and social efforts presented in South Korea's Third Five-Year Plan. Since the new program was to be largely one of self-help, it could be viewed as a response to the criticism by the United Nations that "reliance placed on local autonomy to rehabilitate the presumed dynamism of the rural society did not take into account the fact that stagnation of rural communities could be due as much to their dependence on a paternalistic government and on bureaucracy as to their apathy and isolation from the external world."<sup>79</sup>

The Third Five-Year Plan coupled the improvement of the countryside, which stressed village initiative, to a general approach to the economic problems of agriculture: agricultural production was to be aided through seed improvement, the increased use of pesticide and fertilizer, the expansion of irrigation facilities, farmland rearrangement (for many peasants held more than one parcel of land, and some of the parcels were far from one another), and the promotion of farming mechanization. Some emphasis was also to be placed on the growing of cash crops, such as tobacco, ginseng, and silkworms, raised by some one-fifth of Korean farm households.<sup>80</sup> All of these policies were to supplement the continuing "optimum agricultural price policy," which began in the 1970s,<sup>81</sup> and were to attain a projected growth rate in the agricultural sector of 4.5 percent during the plan period, with rice having top priority. This was not, in fact, an unrealistic goal, for it has been shown that even under less favorable conditions the agricultural sector had experienced a sizable increase in productivity. The technological aspects of these agricultural improvements were lodged in the Office of Rural Development.

There were several ways of increasing the rural standard of living, e.g., through decreasing production costs, decreasing the number of peasants on the land, or increasing the price for agricultural products, but some of these solutions to the farm problem were not feasible. In particular, so many people migrated to the cities in the mid-1970s that the cities were unable to employ them, while the rural areas suffered from the loss of labor and the inevitable transfer of rural wealth.<sup>82</sup> It was hoped that increasing the rural standard of living would reduce some of this strain on urban facilities. Meanwhile a significant milestone was passed in the 1970s. During the late 1960s the farm population had tended to stabilize at about 16 million. Then, while the economically active population in the farm sector expanded 7.0 percent, the economically active population in the farm sector began to shrink. It declined 2.3 percent in 1970 when it represented 51.0 percent of the total economically active population. Shortly thereafter the proportion of the population engaged in farming fell below one-half. The Third Five-Year Plan looked forward to reducing this percentage even further.<sup>83</sup>

Since the Saemaul movement takes us up to the time of our survey, it is useful to note some of the particulars of this program through the year in which the survey was conducted. The launching of the program was suggested by President



Park Chung Hee in a speech to a provincial governors' conference on April 22, 1970, when he requested them to "prepare new rural development programs which will be attractive enough to win the interest and enthusiasm of our farmers and fishermen, so that they may learn the wisdom to help themselves and cooperate with each other to create self-supporting communities for themselves." This emphasis on agriculture came to be spelled out in the Third Five-Year Plan, and the government promised to provide more support to the countryside than it had in the past. Early discussion of the impending Third Five-Year Plan spoke of two trillion won (about US \$1 billion) to be spent for various rural development programs during the Five-Year Plan, and for 1972 300 billion won was to be set aside for the effort. The ideological crux of the program was to advance national solidarity by eliminating the social and cultural imbalances between urban and rural communities. Since part of the movement was unabashedly ideological, the "spiritual revolution" aspect of the Saemaul movement was to be conveyed through the Ministry of Education which would introduce pertinent materials through all schools. Among the slogans to be promulgated were self-help, self-reliance and cooperation. Some 9,000 schools were initially selected throughout the country to extend the message of the Saemaul movement and to cooperate with a designated village in their vicinity. Saemaul schools in the summer of 1972 were to be composed of "60 percent enlightenment, 20 percent case study, and 20 percent agricultural skills." The winter schools, however, were to place 60 percent of their emphasis on techniques and skills. Silkworm culture and the new rice, IR 667, were to be encouraged.<sup>84</sup> Each class featured a 45-minute lecture followed by a 20-minute film. Among the rallies that were organized was that of the Federation of Future Farmers of Korea (agricultural high school students), held in May, 1972 at Suwon where many pledged to devote themselves to practical farming upon their graduation. About half of the booklet published for use in the peasants' winter schools, which furnished the opportunity for this survey, was devoted to practical advice on farming and improvement of techniques and half to "spiritual" or ideological messages.

In addition, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs devoted a portion of the program to stressing the values of austerity, simplicity and fraternity. While it is debatable whether the rural inhabitants needed to be reminded of the lessons of austerity, there was some latitude for the operation of this concept in the form of decreasing expenditures for wedding ceremonies and funeral services, which had tended to produce a competitive atmosphere and to drain the villages financially. After the survey had been taken, these festive expenditures were simply banned by the government in the spring of 1973, thus making official the voluntary effort to encourage "no bouquet, no entertainment, and no mourning dress." The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs was also concerned with the birth control program which, to judge by the results of this survey and the national census statistics on the birth rate, had considerable success. The generation of news and media coverage was the task of the Ministry of Culture and Information.

While these ministries tended to emphasize the ideological content of the movement, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry was more directly concerned with increasing productivity and consequently village income. Among the major projects outlined for the movement were the following:

1. Increase in production: 8,275 metric tons of various grains, 3,341 metric tons of profitable farm products, 28 metric tons of cocoons, 1,157 metric tons



of fishery products, 43,500 metric tons of vegetable compost, 47,000 head of oxen and cows, 12 million cultivated fresh water fish.

2. Elimination of insect damage: 1,227 hectares.
3. Reclamation of arable land: 26,000 hectares.
4. Cultivation of low hills: 600 hectares.
5. Afforestation of "Unification Hills": 12,533 hectares.
6. Afforestation of fruit bearing trees: 7,595 hectares.
7. Repair of rivers and ponds: 4,023 hectares.
8. Methane gas systems: 10,000 units.

The collective village projects recommended by the ministry included:

1. "Unification" rice: 11,885 places.
2. Cultivation of barley: 375 places.
3. Cultivation of soybean: 109 places.
4. Model villages to be mechanized: 17.
5. Training for farming equipment and tools: 16,000 persons.
6. Raising of oxen and cows: 31,000 head.
7. Fish farming: 12 million fish.
8. Methane gas systems: 6,500 places.

About half the nation's 34,668 villages were selected by the Ministry of Home Affairs to undertake improvement projects in 1972. The rest were not included because they had failed to meet accomplishment standards in the experimental stage of the Saemaul movement, which lasted from October 1970 through May 1971. However, 4,517 of the omitted villages joined the movement voluntarily, raising the total of Saemaul villages to 21,117 with 1,980,000 households. While there is doubt that all these villages joined without pressure, most of them probably did. At the same time, there were reports of coercion, and Hahm reported that "at least, so far as a basic village is concerned, analytically and for practical purposes alike, we cannot deny the existence of the compulsory character of the Saemaul Movement. At the early stages of the New Community Movement, it is a well-known fact that instructions of the government were often enforced on the spot and lower-echelon servants were at a loss to explain the excessive force used by the government."<sup>85</sup>

The Home Ministry had some US \$27 million in order to help villages accomplish various tasks with additional money and labor. These projects included construction of farming roads, expansion of village lanes, replacement of straw roofs with tiles or slate, provision of potable water supplies, communal wells, repair of river banks, repair of sewage systems, opening communal laundries, methane gas systems, communal bathhouses, building of "New Community Plazas," planting "New Community Trees" and building collective villages which could benefit through mechanization.

The villages that had been selected to participate in the program organized Saemaul committees to conduct the projects selected for their villages. These were to be guided by coordination committees formed at higher levels, such as the *myŏn*, town, city, county and province. Such committees were composed of local government chiefs, school and police superintendents, chiefs of farm and fishery cooperatives, doctors, local judges, rural representatives, and volunteers. They were to provide the general plans for regional development and to extend administrative, technical and financial assistance to participating villages. At the top of the organizational hierarchy was the General Coordination Committee, headed by the Minister of Home Affairs and included the vice ministers



of the Economic Planning Board, Home Affairs, Education, Agriculture and Forestry, Commerce and Industry, Construction, Health and Social Affairs, Communications, and Culture and Information, the assistant to the Minister without Portfolio in Charge of Economic Affairs and the chief of the Rural Development Office. This was the controlling organization for the movement. By the end of the experimental period in May 1971, the government had provided 4.1 billion won, or about one third of the total funds necessary to construct some 362,970 projects throughout the nation. The villages themselves furnished the work, labor and purchase of material necessary to complete the projects, or about 8.1 million won of materials and services.

To buttress the movement with a cadre, some 16,000 leaders were graduated from Saemaul schools in all provinces. Following a three-day orientation, each leader returned to his assigned village. Advanced training for the program was to be provided at a Saemaul training center at the Agricultural Cooperative College in Seoul. Persons who attended these schools were "intellectuals, successful farm producers, clergymen, ex-school teachers or government officials, village chiefs, and farm cooperative chiefs."<sup>86</sup>

Villages were divided into groups in accordance with their accomplishments during the movement. Group A included communities with competent leaders and a demonstration of willingness to carry out their projects. Specifically, they were those villages that had completed more than 70 percent of the projects they undertook, such as modernizing roofs, expanding village lanes, repairing sewage systems, and reforestation work. Group B villages were those with potential in the form of sound financial backing but without much evidence of enthusiasm. Group C villages lacked both finances and enthusiasm.

This was the essence of the Saemaul program when the government first formulated it. While it originated at the apex of the government hierarchy, rarely a providential sign, and attempted to generate enthusiasm at the local level, there was some evidence that it occasionally accomplished this purpose.<sup>87</sup> Villages, including one I studied following the national survey, did make perceptible efforts to improve their conditions, and these accomplishments were evident throughout the countryside in the form of dikes along the rivers, bridges, sewage improvements, improvements on village roads, and some afforestation. In other cases there was evidence of resistance to the program. There was evidence that the government pressure to exceed goals, which marked the initiation of the movement, compelled peasants to adopt certain projects rather than allowing them to make their own choice. Hahm suggests that "up until now, the Rural Community Guidance projects have been characterized by their tendency to implement non-relative [relevant?] educational programs without predetermining farm desire and direction of learning spirit."<sup>88</sup> Moreover, there was some bias in the improvement generated geographically; for instance, tiled roofs were certainly more numerous along the major highway between Seoul and Pusan than back in the hinterlands, an example of obvious governmental efforts to display improvements in places where they would be conspicuous. Through 1973, however, when the national survey was taken, this was the major rural event throughout Korea, and it probably colored the responses of Korean peasants, raising hopes in some, and perhaps providing another example of official enthusiasm and little returns to the peasant in others. In the short run, at any rate, there was some evidence that the Korean government was indeed committed to a program of genuine improvement of the countryside, provided that it did not have to drain its resources in



order to bring this result about.<sup>89</sup>

At the time of the survey reported here there were 18,500 so-called basic villages (or self-preparatory villages), some 14,500 assistance villages (or self-aid villages), and some 2,100 self-sufficient villages (or self-reliant villages), categorizing thereby all the villages in Korea, from the least to the most developed. The basic villages were to be aided by improving their environment by opening farming roads and providing improved irrigation. Self-aid villages were to work on the expansion of roads, tile roofs, reforestation, and the improvement of river systems, for which wages would be paid. The projects of the self-reliant villages included improved irrigation, methane gas facilities, the introduction of manufacturing of simple commodities, electrification, and sanitary water supplies. Unlike North Korea, which had a head start in electrification thanks to Japanese initiative during the colonial period, and furnished electricity to the South until the borders were sealed, the South still had a long way to go in providing electricity to its villages in the 1970s when as many as 79 percent of them were still not electrified.<sup>90</sup> To stimulate the self-reliant villages further, the Home Affairs Ministry planned to provide them with interest-free 200,000 won loans on a three-year repayment basis. This money was to go to the village development committees and to be used in accordance with village needs.<sup>91</sup>

The *Korea Herald* of April 17, 1973 reported that by March 1973 56 percent of the 223,941 projects of the Saemaul movement were completed. The government's motives in the Saemaul program were many and complex. There was definitely an intent to narrow the gap between city and countryside and to extend more benefits to the villages than during the great emphasis on industry in the 1960s. Presumably this would stimulate productivity in the countryside and alleviate the chronic food deficit that the South had suffered. In addition, there was also the desire to create a stronger sense of national unity and to generate support for the government of President Park Chung Hee. The need for this was sorely felt during and after the declaration of martial law and the formulation of a new constitution in the fall of 1972. Moreover, there must have been an idea of competition with the North which had its own agricultural problems and was conducting its own efforts to resolve them. During the 1960s Kim Il Sung had declared that "the entire peasantry should be urged to display voluntary enthusiasm and devotion in labor, and to take part more earnestly in communal labor in the interests of the collective and of society."<sup>92</sup> Kim had proposed the Chŏllima work-team movement in an effort to increase the productivity of his collective farms. Naturally, leaders in the South were well-informed of the efforts of the People's Republic. As in the South, the flow of guidance and directions was hierarchic; party and government directives were introduced to the farm villages through the medium of the county, the lowest party and administrative unit, "which directly guides the farm villages."<sup>93</sup>

Some coercive measures were probably conducive to improvement in rural areas in connection with the Saemaul program, for instance, a new law requiring medical students after graduation to serve for one year in Saemaul rural areas under the supervision of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. However, the general tenor of the program through 1973 tended to emphasize the achievement of established goals, thus making the results more important than the process.<sup>94</sup> Since the program's success would eventually come to be measured by how much peasants evinced voluntary motives of "self-help" and perceived their conditions as



improving, the status of the program through 1973 was still moot, a conclusion that will be supported by certain of the data reported in Chapter 3. While Saemaul symbols were given wide publicity in Korea from the initiation of the program in 1970, symbols have a way of turning sour if unassociated with real perceived gains.

One problem in developing initiative and self-motivation is the gradual induction of citizens into participating in the decisions that affect their lives. No nation has adequately solved this crucial problem, and the most difficult transition of all is that from a history of authoritarian rule to one of increasing democratization. This problem certainly affected the Korean peasant in 1972-1973, and there was evidence that the government's choices were toward more rather than less authoritarianism. The announcement of a new constitution in 1972 was the most significant political event talked about throughout Korea.

The move toward increasing authoritarianism is evident in a review of provisions of the new constitution. A major aspect of these October Revitalizing Reforms, as they were referred to in the Korean press, was an extensive constitutional revision. The former constitution stressed the separation of power between the National Assembly and the President of the Republic. The new Yushin constitution, however, vested predominant power with the President who, according to Article 53, had the power to "take emergency measures which temporarily suspend the freedom and rights of the people prescribed in this Constitution, and to enforce emergency measures with regard to the powers of the Executive and the Judiciary." These measures were not made subject to judicial review. Article 59 provided the President with the power to dissolve the National Assembly, elections to follow within thirty to sixty days. The election of the President by secret ballot and without debate was made the prerogative of a National Conference for Reunification, themselves elected through direct and popular election. In addition, the Conference was to elect one-third of the National Assembly. The rationale for these measures was given as the necessity for unity in the face of the potential complexities of the reunification talks, which were still showing progress in 1972. Such national unity, according to defenders of the constitutional changes, was unlikely to result from a democracy based on a Western tradition which was seen as unsuited to the history, the traditions, and the international pressures experienced by Korea. Thus the Yushin constitution was hailed by its supporters as defining a "Korean democracy" and a "nationalistic democracy."

Chapter II of the new constitution, "Rights and Duties of Citizens," enumerated rights consonant with the prescriptions of John Locke and other Western democratic political thinkers but, as in all constitutions, the reservation was made, "except as provided by law."<sup>95</sup> Some laws restricted these rights considerably, particularly because martial law was in effect during the tense months that followed the promulgation of the constitution. Prison sentences of three years were the sanction against certain comments critical of the new order.

These events were perceptible in the countryside in the form of suspicion and reticence on the part of some peasants. The purposes of a stranger visiting the villages were subject to some nervous speculation. It was obvious that 1972 and 1973 were times of uncertainty. The direction that democratic processes had seemed to be taking earlier had received a sharp change and, some would aver, a



setback. Critical allusions to the changes were sometimes loudly applauded at the formal political meetings during the election campaigns for the National Assembly in 1973. It would thus probably be accurate politically to place more emphasis on the uncertainty of the period than on the high rate of over 90 percent of voter approval of the Yushin constitution. Moreover, insofar as the Saemaul movement was perceived as related to the constitutional reforms, some of the uncertainty about the new political order may have affected the movement's impact.<sup>96</sup>