

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION: THE AMBIGUOUS LEGACY

Before generalizing from the conclusions reached in the course of our analysis, it would be well to dispose of the hypotheses presented in Chapter 2. There were twenty-three of these specifically enumerated, although not all of the propositions subsequently presented and analyzed were included.

- (1) Age was not related to either innovativeness or cooperativeness.
- (2) Education was not correlated with innovativeness nor cooperativeness but was present on factors related to leadership qualities.
- (3) Religion bore no relationship to innovativeness nor cooperativeness.
- (4) Military service was not associated with personal innovativeness and only slightly associated with cooperativeness.
- (5) Contact with urban environments was not associated with personal innovativeness nor with cooperativeness. The village result, however, had a small relationship with innovativeness, and a lack of such contact seemed to mark the backward village.
- (6) The amount of land farmed was associated with yield and, to a small degree, with innovativeness. Commercial crops were also associated with the size of dryland holdings. Fragmentation was not important, although fewer parcels did relate to the increased use of farm machinery.
- (7) Health did not relate to innovativeness nor to cooperativeness.
- (8) Contact with the media did not relate in any important way with innovativeness nor cooperativeness.
- (9) In the national survey, memberships, meetings, and official positions did not generally relate to innovativeness nor to cooperativeness, although these, along with media contact, were related to leadership factors. In the village survey, however, the progressive village showed more organizational activity than the backward village. Most disappointing was the lack of relationship of 4-H membership with any important attribute or attitude.
- (10) Influence and the desire for more influence did not make individuals more likely to cooperate.
- (11) A positive attitude toward farming was not itself of major importance. However, the closely related decision to send sons to agricultural high school seemed critical, certainly to cooperativeness but in many ways to innovativeness as well.
- (12-20) Attitudinal hypotheses fared poorly in the analysis of the national data. The village analysis, however, indicated some evidence that personal efficacy and village and personal morale distinguished the progressive from the backward village. Authoritarianism and conservatism may have slightly inhibited innovativeness. On the whole, propensity to change, trust, alienation, and future orientation were not strikingly related to cooperativeness and innovativeness. There was important evidence in the village data, however, that optimism about the future was much higher in the progressive village.

(21) Peasants in the progressive village seemed to have a more positive attitude toward government, in the sense of effectiveness, although they also had a subject orientation. Otherwise, these attitudes were only slightly related to cooperativeness and innovativeness.

(22) Debt did not figure importantly in the national data but emerged as an important distinction in the two villages, with the progressive one reporting less debt.

(23) Clan villages had no effect on innovativeness nor cooperativeness.

Finally, the Saemaul movement seemed to have little or no direct effect. It did, however, figure in a relationship with the decision to send sons to agricultural high schools, which in turn was an important attitude.

That age and education were not important factors in the modernization of Korea is indeed an unanticipated result. The relationship of attitudes to innovativeness and cooperativeness was generally disappointing in the national sample but received more striking verification in the village study. Perhaps peasants do not tend to interrelate their attitudes and behaviors, except in special circumstances to which the two-village study supplied a clue. It is also possible that the relationships of attitudes to the various kinds of innovation are so complex that each innovation might merit its own separate study. Thus the causal relationships of attributes and attitudes to concomitant innovations might be different for each innovation.

The study also disproved the assumption that some behaviors, such as birth control and religion, might be crucial in the sense that once such change is accepted, other innovative behavior would be more readily adopted. Peasants seemed to think and act in segregated categories, and mental bridges were not always apparent. We might thus conclude that changes in one category of behavior did not easily affect other categories of behavior. This compartmentalization of behavior was possibly a defensive mechanism developed over the long centuries of peasant history. The peasant is a person with few resources, likely to encounter innumerable obstacles to any consistent pattern of behavior that he adopts, so that success in one behavioral area does not easily suggest to him the possibility of change and ensuing success in another behavioral area. How a peasant would behave if he were to be consistently rewarded for his efforts cannot be fully answered here, but the progressive village provided a good hint as to what might happen in such an event.

While the formal and logical constructions of modernization theory had mixed results, there were some encouraging notes in the Korean rural scene. Neither the national sample nor the village study provided general evidence that at this important time in Korean history, the period approaching the take-off toward an industrial society, the peasant occupied a demoralized backwater within the historical flow of events. The results showed that some peasants were capable of optimism, cooperativeness, and innovativeness, and that village competitions seemed to have stimulated their concern with village conditions. The latter point should be of some interest to those involved in community development. Many peasants were more closely in touch with national politics than had been anticipated. In fact, as the village study showed, inhabitants of the progressive village were well attuned to the media and rather optimistic about the peasant's future in Korea. There seemed to be no lack of personal efficacy among the peasants; as shown in Chapter 3, a large majority of them generally felt as able as others in the population.

At the same time, self-esteem was generally low. It was apparently not the result of any other discernible characteristic. A number of separate analyses were made of several other attributes; e.g., men were compared with women, and both seemed to have equally low self-esteem. Nor did self-esteem seem to be strongly associated with education, debt, age, or personal efficacy. It must be concluded that its lack was a general attribute of the peasant *as peasant*, because he was probably not comparing himself to other peasants within his village, but to all other Koreans who were not peasants. In this comparison he found himself at the lower end of the scale of social prestige. Moreover, as the almost unanimous response to the relevant question strikingly demonstrated, the peasant knew that his low prestige was based, at least in part, on the objectively lower quality of rural life.

This ambiguity in our results points to a major lesson to be learned from this study. Like most questionnaire surveys, our study was largely focused on the individual. This level of analysis is evidently not fully sufficient for transitional and rapidly modernizing societies such as Korea. In such societies, every effort should be exerted to tie the individual aspects of attitude and behavior to more general institutional structures and relationships at the provincial and national levels. Illustrative of the type of question that might accomplish this connection between the individual and his structural environment is the question asked in our village survey as to whether officials provide services as a favor or as a duty. Mattei Dogan and others have shown that a sufficiently extensive questionnaire can do the job of supplying situational and structural variables which, in turn, could bridge the kind of gaps among attitudes and behavior so frequently noted in our study.¹ It is also true, however, that such an extended questionnaire technique is adaptable only to a democratic polity in which expressions of political discontent carry no punishment. Even if the questionnaire were circulated and the usual anonymity honored, a major problem in the present Korean polity would be the acquiescence to certain sensitive items.

In the remainder of this chapter I would like to say a few words about the implications that some of the results of this study have for the peasant's future in Korea. The proper starting point for this speculative excursion lies with the peasants' rising hopes and expectations, as repeatedly demonstrated in this study. In 1973 village morale was generally high and attitudes toward farming generally positive. The crucial test of social commitment, however, seemed to be whether or not the peasants would want their sons to attend an agricultural school. Those who did were among those who in several other ways espoused innovation, village morale, and cooperativeness. If there was any single factor that contributed to the optimistic and modernistic outlook of these peasants, it was this particular attitude. Thus Chapter 4 was a veritable vindication of hypotheses of community cooperation and innovativeness, all of them correlated in some way with the decision to send sons to agricultural schools. This decision was evidently more crucial than a positive attitude toward farming alone. It also, incidentally, pointed to the need for more research on its causes and ramifications.

Hopes were probably greatest among those peasants who were the most innovative and who had contributed to the progress of their villages. Judging from the national results, in which attitudes played a very minimal role in causal relationships with cooperativeness and innovation, such relationships might not develop as easily through individual efforts as in the context of a community enterprise. As they improve, whole communities may well raise further the hopes

and expectations of their inhabitants. In 1973, such concatenations of progressiveness and expectations for the future were probably present here and there, scattered like islands across the countryside. These islands of optimism may well expand, but they might also disappear from the face of Korea because, as the factor results have revealed, there are other, negative tendencies present in rural Korea. The outcome of the contest between these two tendencies will rest to some degree in the hands of the planners of the Saemaul movement which will not easily be forgotten by peasants who have once again decided to opt for a better life through their own efforts.

It will probably require a number of years of continuity, consistent planning and, above all, rewards in the form of higher prices for farm products and an increased ability for the peasant to enjoy some fruits of his labors before the Saemaul movement can begin to generate enthusiasm and become a direct causal factor in innovation and cooperativeness. At the time of our study there was not yet any direct evidence tying the movement to progressive attitudes, but the factor analysis and the results in Chapter 3 seemed to show that there is ample opportunity for it to catch on and, ultimately, to transform the countryside. There were already obvious physical improvements, many of which could be attributed to the Saemaul movement, and the Korean peasant's living standard has continued to improve.

But the peasant will also increasingly feel a need for participation in public decisions that affect him, as was already noted in the national survey. The media contacts of peasants in Nae-il, their interest and knowledge of national events, showed that the peasant, much more than in the past, had become a member of the nation as well as of his own village. This extension of his sphere of interest is both affected by and affects his heightened expectations for the future. Thus, wherever attitudes can be translated into behaviors that provide material and psychological rewards, there is likely to develop some increased connection between attitudes and behaviors. Since our study showed this connection to be tenuous at best in 1973, the structures and institutions of society had probably not yet provided such rewards in a systematic way, but there is a possibility that with the kind of continuity and consistency noted earlier, the Saemaul movement could eventually effect such a connection. A key requirement for success, however, is that the political system becomes increasingly participatory. The Saemaul movement at the time of its initiation was patently authoritarian and if it does not fundamentally change, the peasant's attitudes and behaviors toward the political system will tend to remain inchoate.

Aristotle held that the constitution of a state must fit the history and traditions of a people, and Rousseau and many other political philosophers have accepted this notion for centuries. But it is also appropriate to posit desirable changes and goals for a polity changing from one constitutional form to another and its people developing new skills, new strengths and new purposes. Samuel Huntington has delineated with clarity and insight the tremendous difficulty of accomplishing this transition, and it might be well to quote one of his apt passages that seems to fit closely recent Korean political experience:

The distinctive social aspect of radical praetorianism is the divorce of the city from the countryside: politics is combat among middle-class urban groups, no one of which has reason to promote social consensus or political order. The social precondition for the establishment of stability is the appearance in politics of the social forces dominant in the countryside. The intelligentsia has the brains; the military have the

guns; but the peasants have the numbers, and the votes. Political stability requires a coalition between at least two of these social forces. Given the hostility which usually develops between the two most politically articulate elements of the middle class, a coalition of brains and guns against numbers is rare indeed. If it does come into existence, as in Turkey during the Ataturk period, it provides only a temporary and fragile stability; eventually it is overwhelmed by the entry of the rural masses into politics. A coalition between the intelligentsia and the peasants, in contrast, usually involves revolution: the destruction of the existing system as a prerequisite to the creation of a new, more stable one. The third route to stable government is by the coalescence of guns and numbers against brains. It is this possibility which offers the military in a radical praetorian society the opportunity to move their society from praetorianism to civic order.²

The problem of the Korean government, therefore, is to accept new social forces and new personnel without sacrificing institutional integrity.³ It should also be noted in passing that the revolutionary coalition of middle-class intellectuals with the peasantry has often resulted in the elevation of the power demands of a segment of the middle class at the expense of the natural desires of the peasant.

The Saemaul movement, if successful, will inevitably increase the Korean peasant's expectations of political influence. But as I see it, the Yushin constitution does not seem likely to meet the new demands growing out of a successful Saemaul movement. The nature of this movement and the personal qualities that it intends to engender are contradicted by the logical effects of the constitutional changes of 1972. This may well be another reason why in 1973 the Saemaul movement had not yet interrelated itself with progressive attitudes and behaviors. Self-direction and voluntary motivation toward self-help may not develop easily in an unfavorable political climate.

If genuine political initiative were to remain closed to increasingly progressive and nationally oriented peasants, intense dissatisfaction is likely to develop in direct proportion to the degree of success of the Saemaul movement. Insofar as the movement and the constitutional reforms of 1972 accomplish their manifest but contradictory objectives, a situation of potential turmoil might be a predictable outcome. Huntington posits as a necessity for political change in countries such as Korea the broadening of political participation which, as he clearly shows, need not be in the form of Western-style democracy. While recognizing that the road to an increasingly participatory political system is a rough one--and Korea has had little or no experience with such a system through its long history--I also believe that a variant of political democracy in the Western sense would seem the appropriate ultimate goal of the personal autonomy that modernization and progressiveness produce.

Much remains, therefore, for the future to determine. Our study of the Korean peasant has sketched the situation as of 1973. The peasant's hopes and accomplishments have been delineated and, to some degree, fitted into a context of hypotheses about modernization and innovation. It is important, however, that the reader be left with the idea that these industrious peasants, rarely favored by history, are capable of great accomplishment, largely through their own industry and with some small aid from the government and the urban elite. Above all, they deserve a future that provides more material abundance and the opportunity

to enrich their cultural existence. In spite of centuries of experience with oppression and insincerity, many peasants are willing to try again. It is depressing to conjecture what might happen if their expectations for a more rewarding future were to be disappointed again.