Michael Fischer (1986: 91–92) for relating structure to agency and for integrating local cultures with large-scale political and economic systems.

The ethnography of the conglomerate begins in Chapter 3 with a study of the ideological claims of its owner-managers. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with practices of control and surveillance to which the white-collar workers and young managers were subjected. Chapters 6 and 7 attempt to comprehend their own perceptions of tradition, political economy, and other conditions under which they worked, as well as their responses to official ideology, control, and surveillance. A concluding chapter brings in some of the changes that occurred after fieldwork ended and attempts to formulate a general position regarding the theoretical issues identified in the opening paragraphs of this Introduction.

ONE

Representations of Korean Culture

> When we speak of our traditional culture, the first thing mentioned is the ordering of vertical relationships between superiors and subordinates based on Confucian morality and the conservatism of the patriarchal family. . . . From an anthropological perspective, however, one cannot speak so simply.
>
> *Lee Kwang-Kyu (1990: 198)*

THIS CHAPTER attempts to portray some of the cultural understandings and practical knowledge that rural migrants have been bringing to cities and ultimately to the offices of organizations like Taesŏng for the past few decades. Then it looks to the schools, army, and cities to explore the transformations cultivated in these modern social institutions. The chapter tries to identify what cultural understandings shaped perceptions and choices of action regarding control, legitimation, resistance, and conflict management. Concepts of national identity, recreation, and time are also relevant to comprehending what transpired at Taesŏng, but these are more conveniently discussed in later chapters.

The main purpose of this all-too-brief review of precompany culture is to present ethnographic accounts of rural Korea that demonstrate the problematic nature of the popular judgment that large-scale South Korean bureaucratic and commercial organizations are products of reified or inertial values, customs, and social relations. More specifically, examples have been chosen to demonstrate the partiality of company ideology (Chapter 3) and of academic studies that contend the "authoritarianism" and nonparticipative management style of modern Korean enterprises and other bureaucratic institutions manifest Confucianism, habits of subordination, or group-centered practices acquired in "traditional" social settings.

Besides cultural determinism these interpretations also suffer from at least two other major difficulties. First, instances of egalitarianism and resistance to authority abound in the ethnographic literature. Some students of Korean rural society have already begun the task of constructing alternative interpretations (Brandt 1971; Cho Dong-Il 1974; Chun 1984), but those who write about modern, large-scale South Korean organizations are generally unfamiliar with this anthropological literature. Second, even those white-collar workers who were born and raised in rural villages did not arrive at Taesŏng headquarters fresh from the countryside but had extensive experiences in the army, in universities, and in cities.

I have tried, perhaps unsuccessfully, to avoid choosing between established sides of the dispute over the nature of rural society and to demonstrate instead the multivocality of both the rural and urban experiences of Taesŏng employees, pointing to ways in which their precompany encounters were simultaneously conducive and antithetical to the managerial forms of control described in later chapters. I have placed greater emphasis on the counterhegemonic strains in rural life because authoritarian interpretations of these settings still prevail. Only by recognizing both faces of interpersonal experience in villages can one comprehend the debates ongoing in the offices of Taesŏng and the reasons the authoritarian view remains so widely accepted. When turning to modern institutions and urban practices, on the other hand, I do not write against the grain of generally accepted wisdom but attempt to present a more evenhanded account.

Preindustrial Korean Culture

South Korea's rural society offers the most appropriate starting point to search for local cultural influences.[1] Though Seoul has been in existence for about six centuries and a few other Korean cities even longer, the urbanization of the population has been so rapid in recent decades that some familiarity with rural life is still part of the knowledge most employees brought to Taesŏng. In 1955 only about

[1] Tony Michell (1984) has sought to demonstrate continuities between modern Korean bureaucratic behavior and that of the Chosŏn dynasty. I have not pursued this explanation because the transmission of Chosŏn-dynasty practices to more recent years is highly problematic. None of the Taesŏng workers I met mentioned that his father had been a government bureaucrat, and during the colonial period Japanese-controlled administrative agencies replaced those of the Chosŏn dynasty.

one-quarter (24.6 percent) of the population dwelled in cities of over 50 thousand, but that proportion swelled to more than three-quarters (77.8 percent) by 1984 (Moon and Kang 1989: 3). This large-scale migration from rural farming areas to urban centers, and especially to Seoul, was reflected in the backgrounds of the white-collar workers at Taesŏng. All who worked at the conglomerate's headquarters lived within the city limits of the capital or just beyond them, but many managers had spent some years of their youth in small towns and villages and still retained ties to rural relatives there. Several of their conversations also revealed a more intimate knowledge of rural practices than could be obtained from literature, mass media, academic studies, or hearsay (see the discussion of time in Chapter 7). The man who founded the Taesŏng conglomerate a few decades ago had also spent all but two of his first 24 years in a rural village.[2] Thus, infusions of agrarian culture into the chaebŏl by both the bourgeoisie and the new middle class began at its inception and continued up to the time of my fieldwork, though all that while rural culture had been undergoing changes too. Probably because many younger office workers, managers, and principal owners of the conglomerate were still close to their rural origins, I could identify no purely "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), but I found partial constructions of the rural past and major disagreement about how it related to the present.

Fortunately, both South Korean and American researchers have compiled extensive ethnographic records of rural society that many office workers had experienced, to which I can add my own earlier fieldwork in one village. These resources primarily cover the 1960's and 1970's, which overlap but do not entirely cover the youthful years spent in rural areas by those who later became department heads, section chiefs, and nonmanagerial white-collar workers. During my fieldwork at Taesŏng in 1986–87, most department heads had been born in the 1940's, section chiefs in the early 1950's, and the newest recruits about 1960. For the years before 1960, I have drawn inferences about rural life from sources that are indirect and less plentiful: historical scholarship, autobiographies, the memories of older persons, and oral literature. Though my primary concern is with the

[2] This statement is based on the account of his early life included in the Taesŏng company's published history.

period from World War II to the late 1970's, occasional glimpses at earlier years are useful for assessing the directions of change rural Korean society itself was undergoing in the postwar era.

In general these ethnographic and other sources suggest more dramatic changes in the class system than in family life and parental authority, especially after the Korean War and land reform of the early 1950's. South Korean rural sociologists and ethnographers who did fieldwork in the late 1950's and 1960's were personally familiar with earlier decades, and they provide different assessments regarding the rates of change in rural Korea (cf. Lee Man-Gap 1982: 73–77 and Choi Jai-seuk 1975: 121). But fundamental changes in the family system are difficult to identify in their accounts because their descriptions of family life are generally congruent with family studies and autobiographies from earlier decades (Kang Younghill 1931; Kim Tuhŏn 1949; Osgood 1951; Sorensen 1988). More striking changes, however, are depicted in accounts of status and class (Kim Taik-Kyoo 1964: 166; Pak Ki-hyuk 1975: 195–96; Lee Man-Gap 1970: 345–46). Land reform effectively eliminated the economic foundation of the rural elite, who were known as *yangban*, and many symbolic cultural practices soon changed. By the 1960's, for example, people with claims to yangban status began to carry funeral biers, a practice widely regarded formerly as indicative of commoner status (Lee Man-Gap 1960: 90; Janelli and Janelli 1982: 14, 26). And concubines' descendants, formerly restricted to the rear ranks of participants at formal ancestor rites, assumed places in the front rows (Kim Taik-Kyoo 1964: 161–62). Rural villagers in the early 1970's commented on the changes, albeit with some exaggeration, by saying that in modern times anyone with money claimed to be yangban (D. Janelli 1984: 35).[3]

During the past few decades family and kinship have often been contrasted with nonkinship relations in the ethnographic literature (Brandt 1971; Chun 1984; Ch'oe 1988) and by villagers themselves (Janelli and Janelli 1982: 21–22), especially with regard to authority, resistance, and harmony—the very topics to be examined here. Principles of agnatic recruitment were rather rigidly followed in rural Korea (Janelli and Janelli 1982) and, unlike their Japanese counterparts, family and descent group did not readily provide metaphors for nonkinship forms of organization.[4]

[3] Laurel Kendall (1985: 42) reports that in a village north of Seoul elderly men with weaker claims to elite status attributed this social and economic relationship to the past as well, maintaining: "They used to call those who had money *yangban*."

The following account of rural Korean culture is divided according to what are generally considered the three main social institutions of that society: the family, the lineage, and the village. It eclipses social groupings like rotating-credit societies and other voluntary associations. Starting with the smallest unit, the family, and focusing on the father-son dyad, the locus classicus of Confucian authority, it then examines the degree to which that relationship was extended to local lineages, and finally turns to relations between co-villagers.[5]

Fathers and sons. Several academic writers (Shin Yoo Keun 1984: 16–17; Lee Hak Chong 1989b: 133–35; Rhee 1981: 53–54) maintain that a father's control over his family, particularly over his sons, affords a justification or explanation for the firm control a manager exercises over his subordinates (Chapter 4). This is the most frequently encountered theme in the use of tradition to explain managerial practices. Shin Yoo Keun (1984), a professor of business administration, has applied the analogy of the family more fully than any other writer. His interpretation extends the family-company correspondence, maintaining that harmony in the family is the basis for emphasizing harmony in the company, that fathers and sons working for the common welfare of the household is the origin of managers and subordinates working together for the common welfare of the company, and that the importance of relative ages of family members is the foundation for the seniority-based pay and promotion system (*yŏn'gong sŏyŏl*) described in Chapter 4. Shin himself (1984: 10) perceptively acknowledges that he is adopting a cultural determinist (*munhwa kyŏlchŏngnonjŏk*) position in attributing present organizational practices to tradition.

Analogies between family and firm are plausible to Shin and other South Korean writers because they can perceive similarities between paternal and managerial control. A father's domination of his sons

[4] A few fictive kin relationships used kinship ties as metaphors (e.g., *suyang ttal* and shaman's "spirit mothers"), but these were evidently dyadic relationships involving at least one woman. Though there are terms for fictive adoptions between fathers and sons, I have been unable to find any actual instances.

[5] I have not discussed relations between women, or between women and men, which deserve equal attention, primarily because I know too little about women workers at Taesŏng.

became a major theme of Korean ethnography, including my own, well before any anthropological attention turned to South Korea's modern enterprises (Osgood 1951: 48; Brandt 1971; Janelli and Janelli 1982). In Twisŏngdwi where my wife and I conducted fieldwork in the early and late 1970's, for example, we never saw a man argue with his father in public, though we learned of several instances of less visible forms of resistance. So constrained were sons in the presence of their fathers, at least in public, that they usually avoided them (Janelli and Janelli 1982: 45–48). Poignant anecdotes of domination by one's father and the difficulties of openly confronting his control have also been presented in the personal histories of children and the literature of both genders for decades (e.g., Lih 1966: 29; Kendall 1988; Kang Sŏk-kyŏng 1989).

The difficulty with the analogy between managers and fathers is not its truth value but its partiality. It is too abstracted from actual experiences to be generally validated or invalidated. Fathers did indeed exert a good deal of control over their sons, but a father's power was checked by other family members, more so than a manager's control of his subordinates. In other words, the family can also be represented as a collective decision-making unit, and this representation has greater validity than has generally been acknowledged. Though men were formally recognized as family or household head (*hoju*), both Korean and American anthropologists (Kendall 1985; Cho Haejoang 1986; Lee Kwang-Kyu 1990: 197–208) have argued in recent years that the older and generally accepted view devalued the role of women in the management of rural families. As Lee Kwang-Kyu (1990: 204) puts it, "In our nation, the power of the housewife (*chubukwŏnjain puin*) acted to constrain patriarchal authority." Moreover, even without the mediating influence of women in decision making, sons did not always acquiesce to their fathers' demands. (Similarities between a son's resistance to paternal control and the counterstrategies of subalterns at Taesŏng exist, though the forms of such resistance have not been brought into the academic or company discourse on this issue.) An alternative interpretation of the father-son relationship could emphasize the legitimation of parental control through filial piety or through an apparent unity of interests, and it could also accentuate an offspring's resistance through evasion, deception, and the reinterpretation of parental or family interests.

Filial piety was the main ideological device for legitimating paternal authority, but this moral norm cannot be equated with Judeo-

Christian or modern Western notions of obligations to obey parents. Like their Western counterparts, Korean parents occasionally sought to justify their authority in terms of the belief that parental control was in the best interests of offspring too immature to comprehend those interests or how to pursue them. Within the family one set of interests was not easily overridden by another, however, and parental control could not usually be checked by the rights of children. Disputing the custody of a child in terms of the child's best interests or removing a child from parental custody because her rights had been violated was particularly alien to cultural understandings regarding the relationship of parents and their offspring. Instead, parents sought to avoid a confrontation of wills and opposing interests. They were more inclined to warn children of external dangers rather than threaten punishment, for example (Janelli and Janelli 1982: 34–35; cf. DeVos 1986: 351, 365).

To pursue what I take to be a commonly held Western view, difficulty in the parent-child relationship often arises when adolescents perceive their own competence to be equal or even superior to their parents'. A common strategy of many American parents at this turn is to appeal to another set of rights, those pertaining to property. "As long as you're living in my house, you'll have to do as I say" is not an entirely facetious claim. After a son or daughter establishes a separate residence and obtains her own source of income, parental authority is greatly reduced if not terminated. Perhaps not coincidentally, property rights are most often advanced to justify managerial control of subordinates in Western capitalist organizations (Tosi 1984: 40).

Personal and property rights, the interests of children vis-à-vis parents, and an emphasis on obedience are not the most salient themes in South Korean discourses on filial piety. In lieu of rights one finds appeals to reciprocity, in place of opposing interests one notices invocations of mutual benefit, and instead of obeying one hears far more often of repaying parents. These ideas both informed and were informed by other cultural understandings that together enabled the counterstrategies of offspring.

Reciprocity was probably the most recurrent theme in both written and oral discussions of filial piety. Children were popularly viewed as indebted to their parents for the gift of life, for the indulgence and nurturing received in their earliest years, and for the efforts and sacrifices parents took in raising them. Sons especially were said to be forever obligated to repay that debt. Instead of terminating with

adolescence, this obligation could never be satisfied in full as long as parents were alive. It even extended to a parent's afterlife. "An offspring's indebtedness to parents is as limitless as the sky," according to an address to the dead recited at household rites for forebears. The Korean funeral chant sung while a coffin was carried from village to grave site litanized the sacrifices parents made on behalf of offspring and the impossibility of full compensation (Janelli and Janelli 1982: 66–67).

Precisely how this repayment was to be made, however, was mediated by cultural understandings and particular circumstances. In lieu of the Judeo-Christian motif of obedience and subordination to parental will, the more salient Korean themes involved sparing parents distress, assuring their comfort, caring for them in old age, and offering rites for them after death. Filial piety placed in some ways a more onerous responsibility on offspring to take the initiative in ensuring their parents' welfare. Rather than simply to comply with parental demands, a son was expected to exercise some judgment as to whether overt compliance was really best for his parents, an expectation that was perhaps justified by the Confucian classics (Tu 1986: 181) as well as oral literature. Most folktales of heroic filial piety (Choi In-hak 1979: 163–76) dealt with sacrifices offspring made at their own initiative when they recognized or anticipated a parent's need. Truly devoted offspring didn't have to be told what to do.

Conferring property rights also was used to legitimate parental control of offspring. Though property was officially registered in the name of the household head and the state recognized his legal right to dispose of it (Sorensen 1988: 165), villagers represented it as being vested in an entire household rather than an individual.[6] The management of the household's affairs rather than the ownership of property per se was the object of contests between fathers and sons. Successive generations had different opinions about who was better able to manage their common interests, not about whose material gain ought to take precedence, thereby obscuring the long-term opposition of interests between them. When a father had more than one son, he took a smaller share of the property and gave it to the younger son at the time the latter moved out to establish a separate household. The larger portion for the eldest son was justified by his greater obligation

[6] This is but another example of the discrepancies between official state records and local understandings noted in Chapter 4.

to care for parents and perform their ancestor rites as well as by the respective sizes of their households at the time of separation. Property division seemed to have been a relatively harmonious process: only when a father died prematurely and left his sons to divide the property among themselves did opposing interests come to the fore (Janelli and Janelli 1982: 79, 104–6; Sorensen 1988: 167–68). As we shall see in later chapters, the notion of common interests, though often espoused in company ideology, was not grafted easily onto the manager-subordinate relationship.

Cultural understandings of filial piety and the nature of household property also informed judgments about the most advantageous strategies for blunting paternal control. Rather than distress parents by confrontation, open disobedience, or assertion of independent rights, children more often sought quietly to evade parental commands, dissimulate, or advance alternative interpretations of what was most advantageous for both generations. Avoiding parental supervision was often possible because many rural practices physically separated fathers from their sons. Only one of them, usually the son if he was married, attended village meetings (Choi Jai-seuk 1975: 118); sons deliberately avoided their fathers on other occasions in rural Korea (Janelli and Janelli 1982: 48); and a father's surveillance of his son's work on a farm was far less intense than a manager's supervision of subordinates in a modern office (Chapter 5).

Another counterstrategy used by sons was dissembling. Because filial piety emphasized that an offspring's primary obligation was to make parents comfortable and not to cause them distress, disobedience was less reprehensible if it did not cause the parent discomfort (as when the senior generation did not observe the transgression or would not otherwise know of it). Indeed, it could even be praiseworthy if successfully justified as a means to avoid arousing a parent's anxiety. Part of the cultural knowledge that informed responses to paternal commands was the belief that open defiance or confrontation was a far more serious offense than secret disobedience. Though few Korean sons speak of dissembling, it appears to have been part of what Anthony Giddens (1979: 25) calls "practical consciousness," the implicit understanding of how to behave. It has recently been brought to the discursive level by anthropologist Kang Shin-pyo (1987: 98), who observed that a son was justified in deceiving his father to spare him unnecessary worry, "even if that mean[t] lying to the father."

Yet a third counterstrategy sons knew how to employ, particularly

in their later years, was devising their own interpretations of what was best for parents. Because filial piety emphasized acting in parents' best interests rather than absolute obedience, it could often be turned on its head, especially when parents became elderly. A son could justify his own actions by claiming they were taken on behalf of a parent, even over the senior generation's objections. This was aided by yet another cultural understanding: elderly parents were expected to retire gracefully from active life and not intervene too heavily in day-to-day household matters (Janelli and Janelli 1982: 43–47; Sorensen 1988: 165).

Strategies for countering parental control were illustrated in the anecdote one elderly villager told us, without embarrassment, about an open confrontation with his father. My wife and I had initially used this story as an example of the difficulties of caring for elderly parents, but it also illustrates a son's successful contention with paternal authority. Though the villager omitted the year the events occurred, I infer it was in the early 1960's, between the deaths of his parents.

> Because the father seemed very lonely after his wife died, his sons found another woman to provide him with companionship in his old age. Unfortunately the woman turned out to be a schemer with whom their father became helplessly infatuated. She soon began to persuade him to transfer all the property of his household to her name. When he finally consented, our informant moved out of the house and refused to return until his father had rid himself of the woman. The old man eventually yielded, for he knew he could not live without the help of his eldest son. [Janelli and Janelli 1982: 49]

The narrator's reputation seems not to have been seriously impaired by this act of defiance, for he successfully presented it as taken in the best interests of his father and their joint household rather than an attempt to protect his inheritance. Indeed, he once won an award from the township office for his filial piety, the only villager we knew to have received such official recognition.

Though sons could use avoidance, deception, and reinterpretation to accommodate the ideological demands of filial piety, they could not act with impunity. Not every action could be convincingly justified as conforming to moral norms. The success of such strategies depended on persuading others that one's actions were personally disinterested. Some actions toward parents were difficult to justify even by the most lenient interpretations of this moral norm, and villagers frequently criticized offspring for not providing adequate care

to elderly parents. Among two Twisŏngdwi families, for example, middle-aged eldest sons did not follow cultural expectations and lived apart from their parents because, as was openly acknowledged, of their inability to get along.

More flagrant violations of filial piety occurred among families of lower social standing. Filial piety conferred status, as evidenced by the memorial stones commemorating filial sons placed alongside roads and paths for all passersby to see, and status conferred political and economic advantage in rural Korean society. Those communities in which status was less likely to yield material results were not as motivated to keep up appearances. In studying a village whose members could present only the weakest claims to gentry (yangban) status, Griffin Dix (1977: 120) occasionally observed even violent and bloody confrontations between fathers and sons. And from Sŏkp'o, Vincent Brandt (1971: 202, 205–7) reported: "Obvious conflict between sons and parents or between brothers was infrequent but not rare. Out of 108 households, there were possibly ten that could be called aberrant in this sense." All of the cases were found in the Sŏkp'o hamlets occupied by persons of lower status. For those not engaged in status competition at higher levels of the social scale, virtue was its own reward.

The dominating father was not pure fiction in any village, but this image represents a partial version of experience and cultural understandings. During adolescence, when sons were old enough to have compliance demanded of them but still too young to have their alternative interpretations accepted, it was most difficult to escape a father's injunctions. A father's control at that point probably came closest to the absolute authority depicted by Shin Yoo Keun and other writers who emphasize the power of the household head.

Several difficulties arise, however, when this model is extended to company relationships. Indebtedness for earlier benefits, a sense of co-ownership of property, and even the evasion and other resistance mechanisms available to sons did not match the realities of Taesŏng offices in the 1980's. The opposition of interests between managers and subordinates was not easily obscured in a modern corporation (Chapter 7), and avoidance and deception were difficult when surveillance was so thorough (Chapter 5). Subordinates did challenge the practices of superiors on the basis of what would be best for their mutual (i.e., their company's) interests, but only in private, for the system of advancement granted more power to those who had

acquired more experience, and managers were retired before they became elderly (Chapter 4). Even in rural villages, Confucian moralists notwithstanding, a father's control over his son was rarely invoked as a model for other social relationships.

Lineages. As is the case with interpretations based more narrowly on the family, hierarchy and harmony portray only part—and a smaller part at that—of other relations in rural Korea. In this and the following section, I will try to show how these representations are not sufficient for portraying extradomestic groups. My purpose is to demonstrate that nonfamily relations could hardly be impartially described as replicating those found within domestic groups and that the common practices of these extradomestic groups were even more removed from current managerial methods. They give even less evidence of overt domination and suppression of conflict. I offer this interpretation in response to those who maintain that the basis of South Korean managerial domination is to be found not so much within the family's confines but in the generally hierarchical character of society, its emphasis on maintaining harmonious relationships, or its predominantly Confucian nature.

The cultural understandings that informed strategies of control within a lineage provided an even less adequate basis than those of the family for modern managerial practices. A lineage lacked a head who controlled it, deference attenuated rapidly with genealogical distance, and conflict also became increasingly overt as kinship distance increased. These characteristics are not unrelated, and I shall pursue them simultaneously.

Brandt (1971) has argued that lineages in South Korea were largely governed by an understanding of hierarchy and authority, and some practices of lineages support this interpretation. Lineage members acknowledged a hierarchy of status based on generation, age, and genealogical position; and some of the deference shown fathers was also shown other agnates, especially a father's brothers and his first and second cousins. Men normally did not smoke in the presence of their father's brothers, for example.

Yet such deference diminished with kinship distance (Brandt 1971: 137), and the political advantages of lineage elders were rarely evident except in the most formal and kinship-oriented occasions, such as annual lineage meetings, ancestor rites, or when dealing with a lineage's corporate property (Brandt 1971: 103). It was evidently the

status differences between close agnates that led Brandt to characterize kinship relationships as generally hierarchical, but among more distant agnates the criteria by which one man ought to enjoy higher status than another were usually inconsistent, as when an older person belonged to a junior generation. These contradictions provided the basis for contending claims to deference in Twisŏngdwi. One villager, for example, described with some humor his relationship with one of his lineage mates a year older but a generation lower than himself, addressing him as "honorable nephew" (*chok'anim*) in formal contexts. Another villager noted that it was difficult for anyone to accomplish anything in Twisŏngdwi because so many residents were either older brothers (i.e., elder kinsmen) or uncles (i.e., of a higher generation). In the village of Hahoe Iltong, an algorithm for reconciling conflicting age and generation differences appeared to have been advanced. Kim Taik-Kyoo (1964: 146) cites a saying to the effect that an age difference of ten years was the equivalent of one generation. Kim questions its accuracy and provides no examples of its operation, however. And even if the kinsmen in Hahoe Iltong had managed to reconcile age and generation statuses, other competing bases for status claims remained. Descendants of the senior branch claimed higher status by virtue of their genealogical position whereas members of the junior branch claimed it by virtue of their descent from a more famous ancestor (Kim Taik-Kyoo 1964: 168–70).

This indeterminant hierarchy is also evident in ethnographic reports of South Korean lineages that depict their affairs as having been managed by a group of men who advanced claims to authority by varied criteria. Leadership in rural lineages was better described as a gerontocracy than a chain of command (Brandt 1971: 102–4; Janelli and Janelli 1982: 21–22, 128–29), though in some lineages not all the members of the most influential group were actually elders. A lineage usually had a formal "lineage head" (*munjang*), but ethnographic studies report that these kin groups were governed not by one person but by a group of influentials, typically men of advanced age and generation, reputations for learning and virtue, seniority of descent (Choi Jai-seuk 1975: 273–75), and wealth.[7] In addition to that of lineage head, formal positions included secretaries (*sŏgi*), treasurers

[7] One member of the Twisŏngdwi lineage who had accumulated substantial wealth during his own lifetime noted that his opinions regarding community affairs had rarely been sought when he was poor but that he was always consulted after attaining prosperity.

(*ch'ongmu*, *yusa*), and the present incumbent of the most senior line of descent (*chongson*) of the kin group's focal ancestor. There was no single line of authority between them, however, and none could control the lineage singlehandedly.

In Twisŏngdwi, for example, the most influential man of the lineage was about 60 years old and held the formal position of treasurer (*ch'ongmu*), but he owed his influence primarily to his social and rhetorical skills. Several other lineage members were older, of a higher generation, better educated, or wealthier. Indeed, this influential man even took pains to avoid the appearance that he controlled the lineage. Just before one lineage meeting was about to start, he anticipated that one of its members would request a loan of lineage funds and, after pointing out to the other elder kinsmen that the prospective applicant had not repaid the last loan, solicited their consent to deny the man any further credit. Having obtained their approval, the treasurer then asked the other elders to speak up when it came time to refuse the new loan, lest it appear that he was the only one opposed to the request.

Admittedly, a more general age hierarchy in Twisŏngdwi was evident in the formation of two age-based factions, referred to as the "elders" (*noin*) and "young people" (*chŏlmŭn saram*). Frustrated younger lineage members often claimed that lineage elders controlled its affairs. Yet the young people's faction was able to exert considerable influence in managing the lineage. By all accounts it was they who urged that their kin group stop hiring men from a neighboring village to carry its funeral biers during the mid-1960's. The young people's faction had also managed to have their own leader elected village chief in the mid-1970's (in an elective process numerically dominated by the lineage), and they eventually forced the lineage treasurer to concede to the building of an ancestral hall and simplifying the lineage's corporate ancestor rites (Janelli and Janelli 1982: 145–46).

The deference owed senior agnates did not automatically translate into submission or suppression of all conflict. Younger Twisŏngdwi lineage members were deferential toward their senior kinsmen and generally avoided confronting them except at village meetings, but younger men were not without strategies for evading demands of lineage elders.

Toward their senior agnates of collateral descent lines, younger lineage members also used avoidance, deception, and reinterpretation to

resist their elders' control. In 1973 few of the younger men attended the ancestor rites that the lineage organized and the elders dominated. Some had challenged the ancestor rites on the grounds that selling the corporate property that financed them and using the funds for educating promising young lineage members would be a better form of filial piety. And one young man was constantly vying with an elder kinsman about 30 years his senior for influence in lineage and village affairs. One day the elder became infuriated and launched into a loud tirade against the younger agnate, who offered no opposition, protest, or defense but chose to remain out of the elder's sight. On yet another occasion the elder admonished the same young man because he and his companions were disposing of some parts of an animal slaughtered for a village picnic. They were burying the refuse too close to the village well, the older man admonished, and he ordered them to find a place farther away. The young people offered no protest but moved only a few steps to a nearby spot, located behind a building that blocked the elder's line of vision, and buried the refuse there. Later at the picnic, the elders wanted to play musical instruments the village had acquired for a newly formed farmers' band, but the young people hid the instruments. They were eager to have the elders leave so they could enjoy themselves more freely.

Lineages were also different from families in that conflict between members was expressed far more openly. Disputes were less embarrassing than those between family members and were more widely known, as villagers were more willing to discuss as well as display their own involvement in such strife. Although conflict between brothers was considered scandalous, more distant agnatic kinsmen and their families were quite open about their disagreements, far more so than Taesŏng office workers (Chapter 7). While living in Twisŏngdwi, people often told us of their pique at members of households headed by cousins or more distant kin (Janelli and Janelli 1982: 114). Similarly, in Hahoe Iltong, Kim Taik-Kyoo (1964: 168–70) reported open rivalry between the two major lineage segments and conflicts between their respective subsegments.

Villages. Like families and lineages, villages too had both hierarchical and egalitarian practices, and co-villagers tried to maintain harmony and yet often were in open conflict. But whereas kinship relations are sometimes represented in the scholarly literature as more hierarchical than they often were, representations of village rela-

tions perhaps exaggerate their egalitarian qualities. By the 1960's and 1970's at least, political and economic advantage in villages was often hidden or disguised by apparently equitable practices. How long such strategies prevailed among village governance, landlord-tenant relations, and status group differences during earlier decades, however, is difficult to ascertain.

A council of influentials rather than a single individual usually controlled a village. Each had a formal village government, with a village chief (*ijang*) as well as hamlet chiefs (*panjang*) for each of its territorial subdivisions. But ethnographic studies of village government or "leadership" since the 1950's portray an informal (*pigongsik*) government composed of local influentials (*yuji*) variously qualified for membership by property ownership, age, education, knowledge of affairs beyond the village, reputation for moral behavior, claims to elite yangban status, and membership in a dominant lineage (Lee Man-Gap 1960: 184–85; Pak Ki-hyuk 1975: 89–91, 128–30, 155–58; Choi Jai-seuk 1975: 565–73; Dix 1977: 410, 415–16). Membership in this privileged group thus seemed to have been linked closely to land ownership and prestige, or economistic and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1977: 177), respectively, the principal means of economic and political control between households in South Korean villages.[8]

That age was a criterion for positions of influence should not lead us to overemphasize its importance. Many ethnographers have given their attention to age as a basis of public deference in villages, but they have generally concluded that it was of limited practical advantage. When describing gatherings at which an aura of equality and informality prevailed, for example, Brandt notes that "for the most part members of such groups are the same age" (1971: 147), elsewhere adding that the presence of older men in such groups dampened conviviality and informality (1971: 158). But such age differences were even less a basis for power across kinship lines than within them. Chun Kyung-Soo's phrase, "No one argued against him" (1984: 42) nicely captures the deference due an elder at public gatherings, but this did not prevent Chun from recognizing elders' lack of authority

[8] I use the term *economistic capital* to designate what are more commonly recognized as assets by those who portray the pursuit of material interests as a kind of activity largely independent of power relationships and cultural understandings. Symbolic capital, on the other hand, refers to other assets such as social esteem and access to priveleged networks. These other assets are always intangible and often unrecognized but also contribute to the production of material benefits.

in village as well as lineage affairs. As Brandt put it, "Formal respect and authority are not synonymous" (1971: 94). Brandt found that elderly men received less deference in the form of restrained behavior and exercised far less influence at village than at family gatherings (1971: 232). The evidence from other ethnographers also points to age differences earning less formal deference in village than in kin relationships.[9] Ch'oe Kilsŏng (1988: 95), for example, notes that whereas an age difference of even an hour between agnates was significant, a difference of five years between nonkin was often ignored.[10] Age differences of greater than five years, however, did not earn actual power (Chun 1984: 41–44).

In Twisŏngdwi easy familiarity, joking, and exuberant conviviality across larger age gaps could be observed only between young lineage members and unrelated elderly men. It was a reproduction of the unrelated men's lower status or an expression of their lack of economistic as well as symbolic capital. Had these older men been wealthier or relatives, instead of hired laborers and nonkin, they would probably have been shown more of the deference to which their age entitled them. Few persons of these disadvantaged households were outspoken about such matters, but the head of one complained at length to Dawnhee Yim about being addressed as *sŏbang* instead of *ssi* and other perceived humiliations nonkin suffered.

Influence was not acquired through age, or at least not through age alone. As the other criteria for membership among the village-governing group of *yuji* suggests, property ownership and prestige were also important. Here one finds greater hierarchy and domination, but both criteria were undergoing significant changes throughout the twentieth century.

Japanese occupation (1910–45) brought a large increase in land tenancy to rural Korea. According to figures published by the Japanese colonial government, landless tenants increased from 38 to 54 percent of the agricultural population between 1918 and 1932 alone (Grajdanzev 1944: 108). By the end of that fourteen-year period, about another quarter of the agricultural population was composed of part-owners who also tenant-farmed (Grajdanzev 1944: 108–9), paying rents averaging about 40 to 50 percent of yields, and an addi-

[9] See Ch'oe (1988) for a discussion of age differences in kinship versus village relationships.

[10] I would modify that to read "close agnates."

tional small percentage of the population earned their livelihood as hired agricultural laborers. This situation changed dramatically a few years after the end of colonial rule as a result of a land reform that greatly diminished tenant farming (Kim Taik-Kyoo 1964: 204; Janelli and Janelli 1982: 14; Kuznets 1977: 31; Pak Ki-hyuk 1975: 195–96). By setting a maximum of three *chŏngbo* (7.4 acres) on legal land holdings, large-scale landlords were eliminated and the class system significantly altered (Koo Hagen 1987: 171). Though neither tenancy nor hiring full-time agricultural laborers was eliminated entirely (Rutt 1964: 148), pure tenants became much rarer. A sample of villages conducted in 1958 found less than 6 percent of the population were landless tenants, about an equal number were part-tenants who owned less cultivable land than they rented, and 9 percent were part-tenants who owned the majority of the land they cultivated (Lee Man-Gap 1960: 64). The same study also revealed few noncultivating landlords, most tenanted land being owned by families who cultivated at least some of their own holdings. Thus, though tenancy persisted even after land reform, particularly in the villages dominated by elite lineages (Kim Taik-Kyoo 1964: 204), economic differentiation between landlords and tenants and landholding as a basis for domination were significantly reduced.

Ethnographies of the post-Korean War period examined the symbolic as well as the more explicitly economic bases of control in South Korean villages and reported that they too were changing. Though formally abolished in the Kabo reforms of 1894, yangban (gentry) status was still asserted locally in the 1970's by virtue of descent. Some villages evidently had no one who claimed yangban status (Osgood 1951: 44; Kendall 1985: 41–42), but most ethnographers used the term to describe elite social status in rural villages (Lee Man-Gap 1960: 86–89; Brandt 1971), as did their research subjects.

Exactly what this term implied and the extent of social mobility during the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910), much less the colonial and later periods, are points of major contention in Korean studies literature (e.g., Song 1987: 118–259). Yangban were popularly associated with wealth, a leisured life-style, erudition, moral behavior, and office holding in the civil branch of the Chosŏn state—a cluster of attributes linked by a Confucian philosophy that associated education and morality with the right to rule. But unlike gentry status in China, entitlement to yangban status in Korea was also claimed by descent. All legitimate members of a local lineage, rich and poor,

educated and uneducated, were generally ascribed or denied yangban status. The result was a contradiction that invited competing claims. Though some villagers after the Korean War maintained that there were no longer any yangban (Lee Man-Gap 1960: 86) or that anyone with money was one, other villagers throughout the 1970's engaged in debates about which kin groups were or were not yangban or how high their own group's standing was within the category (e.g., *k'ŭn yangban*) (D. Janelli 1984). Status in recent decades was asserted or denied on the basis of multiple and not always consistent criteria: reputation of ancestors, credibility of descent claims, the status of lineages with which marriage alliances were formed, moral reputation, elaborate ancestor worship rituals, and the presence of other symbolic expressions of a yangban life-style (Kim Taik-Kyoo 1964; Brandt 1971: 190, 209; Janelli and Janelli 1982).

Given that yangban legal status and its concomitant privileges—exemption from military service and potential eligibility for government office—had been abolished several decades earlier and were unlikely to be reinstated, other causes evidently prompted the continued assertion of this identity in the 1970's. Successful assertion of such an identity and other marks of high status conferred influence, especially in village affairs but even in wider rural society. In the early 1970's, after most villages obtained electrification, the South Korean state began intervening more actively in the internal matters of villages and thereby undercut the local political advantages of yangban status. Factory employment and urbanization also created new opportunities for those disadvantaged by the traditional class system, and heavy migration depleted hitherto abundant farm labor. But until the major consequences of these developments were felt, villages were granted greater autonomy to regulate their own affairs, and that enabled local elites to monopolize the positions of village chief and dominate *yuji* gatherings. Thus they controlled their villages with less interference from the state and weaker local opposition.

Yet throughout the 1950's, 1960's, and 1970's, the mechanisms of elite control were often indirect, disguised through local village councils or village governments, and effected by such devices as delegitimating those who owned no property or forming voting blocks. Hereditary status, the life-style which it implied, and the Confucian ideology that underlay it were inadequate to ensure acceptance of elite control. By the 1950's, at any rate, more ostensibly coercive styles of control were difficult to find. Instead, ethnographers reported rela-

tively egalitarian interactions in everyday affairs except from villages like Hahoe Iltong, which was numerically dominated by former gentry lineages of exceptionally high status and where differences in wealth were more extreme than elsewhere.

In his study of Sŏkp'o, based on fieldwork undertaken in the mid-1960's, Brandt first articulated the notion of a fundamentally egalitarian practical consciousness that informed nonkin relations there and in many other rural villages.

> What I have called the egalitarian community ethic is informal and has no codified set of principles, although many aspects of it are expressed in proverbs and homely aphorisms. Important values are mutual assistance and cooperation among neighbors, hospitality, generosity, and tolerance in dealing with both kin and nonkin. Resistance to authoritarian leadership outside the family is combined with strong in-group solidarity for the natural community, defined as a society in which everyone knows everyone else, and where people interact more frequently with one another than with outsiders. [1971: 25–26]

Brandt provides vivid examples of how this "egalitarian community ethic" operated and how claims to authority were resisted (1971: 104–5). "The process of decision making is a slow and indirect search for consensus among influential leaders in contrast to the much more authoritarian organization of power within the family and lineage," he concluded (1971: 233).[11] Chun Kyung-Soo (1984) later found evidence of similar understandings regarding nonkin relations in the community he studied.[12] In Twisŏngdwi even the formal courtesies shown lineage elders were largely absent during the annual meeting of village government. There villagers themselves were aware of this difference, contrasting the formal deference expected at kin meetings with the "democracy" of village meetings, where people were freer to express opposing opinions (Janelli and Janelli 1982: 21–22). As both agnates and co-villagers, therefore, Twisŏngdwi lineage mates, especially those beyond the range of second cousin, had alternative modes of interacting. Occasionally, Dawnhee Yim and I could detect

[11] A central argument of Brandt's work is that kinship relations were generally more hierarchical than nonkinship relationships, yet he is careful to note also that authority and hierarchy evident in the family gradually declined with genealogical distance (1971: 103, 137, 140).

[12] Chun Kyung-Soo points to the phrases *kakkaun sai* and *ch'inhan sai*, used, respectively, to designate genealogically close relations with kin and close relations with friends (1984: 119–20). He also portrays greater freedom in the latter.

a bit of negotiation as to which mode of interaction ought to prevail in given circumstances.

Reasons for this apparently egalitarian interaction are not hard to find. Many rural residents had been exposed to leftist ideologies while in Japan or Manchuria during the Japanese colonial period (Cumings 1981: 60–61). Most villages in South Korea were briefly under Communist control during the Korean War (1950–53), and published ethnographies indicate some active cooperation with the Communist government (Brandt 1971: 189; Kim Taik-Kyoo 1964: 169–70; Kendall 1988: 65–66), suggesting that socialist ideas were not without some appeal. All of these experiences seem to have prompted elites to be more circumspect in their dealings with the "lower orders" of their village, adopting more covert means of domination and exploitation. In the early 1980's one elderly villager in Twisŏngdwi lowered his voice almost to a whisper when he told us of hearing stories in his youth of servants from an adjacent village being summoned for corporal punishment. And in the early 1970's, as Dawnhee Yim and I were talking with an elderly woman of the dominant lineage there, discussing class relationships with the residents of adjacent villages who had carried the lineage's funeral bier until about a decade earlier, the woman reached for Dawnhee Yim's arm and signaled for her silence. She later explained that her caution was prompted by her seeing another person coming along our path. Unable to discern the identity of the person, she was concerned that our conversation about class differences might be overheard. Only a few years later did we fully appreciate her caution. The woman's husband had been a wealthy landowner and a target of persecution when the Communists controlled Twisŏngdwi.

Such experiences may well have encouraged the adoption of more covert forms of domination such as communal work teams, to which the poor contributed more labor than the wealthy and received less than its market value in wages. Norms of reciprocity required the disadvantaged to contribute additional labor, again for less than market value, at major social events such as weddings and sixtieth-birthday celebrations in lieu of giving cash or offering return invitations. And considering length of residence as a basis for social standing also muffled the voices of the least advantaged in village debates, for the overwhelming majority of landless persons had moved into the community within the past few decades (Janelli and Janelli 1982: 17–18).

The material consequences of these practices and their furtherance of elite interests were not openly recognized, and thus the sum of their effects was misrecognized.

The industrialization and urbanization of South Korea, which rapidly accelerated during the 1960's and 1970's, also contributed to a leveling of nonkin hierarchy by draining the countryside of much of its surplus labor and providing new economic opportunities to land-poor peasants (Sorensen 1988). When Dawnhee Yim and I returned to Twisŏngdwi in 1978 after a four-year absence, we could not help but notice that its dominant lineage had become ostensibly more egalitarian in its treatment of nonkin (Janelli and Janelli 1982: 18–20). In 1978 its members even carried the bier at the funeral of an unrelated family—a first in the history of the community according to all accounts—and marriages across former status lines (yangban and non-yangban) no longer evoked opposition. Considerable evidence suggests, therefore, that relationships between villagers who were not each other's kin were becoming seemingly more egalitarian throughout the 1950's, 1960's, and 1970's. It is entirely possible that the egalitarian community ethic that Brandt reported from the 1960's had become prevalent only recently.

Though overt control may have declined dramatically after land reform, notions of community egalitarianism can be found in Korean village compacts as early as the sixteenth century (Sakai 1985).[13] The Tonghak rebellion in the late nineteenth century had the elimination of class barriers as one of its themes (S. Shin 1978–79: 31–33; Weems 1964: 10–12; Yi Ki-baik 1984: 287; Lew 1990). Cho Dong-Il has argued forcefully (1974), though on slender evidence from folk songs and lengthy oral ballads (*p'ansori*), that commoners in Chosŏn Korea never regarded as legitimate the domination by elites.

Others have pointed to counterhegemonic themes in Korea's popular culture. Lee Du-Hyun (1974: 118; 1975: 38–39) has noted the mocking of elites in masked dance-dramas, Cho Oh-Kon (1988: 312) has seen the same in puppet plays, and Yim Suk-jay (1974: 62–69) has pointed to humorous trickster tales in which servants outwit their masters. Though the origins of these various forms of folklore are obscure, all of the material can be dated at least as far back as 1940,

[13] For an examination of village compacts in more recent times, see Dieter Eikemeier (1980).

well before the land reform and the birth of most Taesŏng managers. Related cultural practices were kept alive in more recent decades, and field-workers continued to collect them throughout the twentieth century. As late as 1975, for example, Griffin Dix observed a local performance of folk drama in which local elites were made the butt of folk humor:

> In these plays or skits every status was mocked, but the play of the "young men" I observed emphasized the public mockery of elders and high status people.
>
> The [published] accounts of the Mountain Spirit offering in Korean do not pay enough attention to status distinction within villages (something it is difficult to know without extended residence in the village). It is difficult to get much evidence on this subject from them.[14] Even if in many villages the *yangban* may have Confucianized and supported the Mountain Spirit offering, the farmers' band and folk theatre after the offering clearly delighted in embarrassing and making demands on the rich and those of high status. Lee Du-hyŏn, who points out the connections between folk theatre and village-wide rituals, says, "This satire against the *yangbans* is the central act of the mask play."[15] In Yean village [the site of Dix's fieldwork] in 1975, it included dressing up in a *yangban* horsehair hat, carrying an umbrella, and pretending to be a doddering rich old man confused about the way to the market. This kind of public mockery is not tolerated at other times. [Dix 1987: 105]

Nevertheless, as Dix observes elsewhere (1977: 463–65), it is possible that more recent events may have encouraged this mockery. By the 1960's, at any rate, elite domination does not appear to have been a doxic experience for those who were subject to it.[16] Evidently its arbitrariness had some recognition for several decades.

Even in Hahoe Iltong, where large differences in wealth persisted right up until the land reform and where elites had sought to legitimate their domination of nonkin servants and tenants by monopolizing land, claiming yangban ancestry, and demonstrating erudition and other Confucian trappings, the politically and economically dis-

[14] An exception noted by Dix is Kim Taik-Kyoo's study (1964: 241), which related that the yangban of Hahoe did not participate in their village's ceremony for the Mountain Spirit offering.

[15] Here Dix refers to Lee Du-Hyun (1974: 114).

[16] The concept of *doxa* was developed by Edmund Husserl (1962: 273–315) and later brought into anthropological discourse by Pierre Bourdieu (1977: 164–71). A doxic experience is one which is unquestioned because it is believed to be natural or inevitable, its arbitrariness unrecognized. *Doxic* is to be distinguished from *orthodox* or *heterodox*, both of which imply "awareness and recognition of the possibility of different or antagonistic beliefs" (Bourdieu 1977: 164).

advantaged do not seem to have been convinced of this ideology. Hahoe Iltong was also the home of one of Korea's most famous masked dance-dramas that satirized yangban pretensions.

Finally, conflict between nonkin in rural villages was expressed more openly than within lineages. On this point the ethnographic record seems compelling. Based on fieldwork conducted in the mid-1960's, Brandt (1971: 212) wrote: "My impression as a resident was of conviviality and harmony punctuated by occasional violent outbursts, most of which were quickly and permanently settled." Of those outbursts, he observed:

> The frequent use of intense oral aggression as an immediate expression of tension and hostility is a significant factor in village life. . . . There is little restraint once a real quarrel is launched, the principals often continuing to shout at each other until every conceivable grievance and bit of resentment has been dredged up and spewed out. Where serious conflict exists, the process may go on for days; in other cases it will last an hour or two, while work continues uninterrupted [1971: 186].
>
> Anger or disapproval is often expressed at a level of sound and with an apparent intensity of emotion that impresses western observers as the prelude to violence, although violence is rare. [1971: 203]

Other observers (Chun 1984: 48; McCann 1988: 45) have noted similar altercations in rural villages and urban areas as well.

Modern Institutions and Urbanization

New employees arrived at Taesŏng equipped with a cultural knowledge acquired within and without rural communities. Even rural residents had been in local schools, the army, and nearby market towns. Many had left their villages for wage labor or the Japanese military during the colonial period and later returned (Cumings 1981: 28; Janelli and Janelli 1982: 25). More recently, villagers have been increasingly engaged with urban relatives, local officials of the central government, mass media, commercial shops in their communities, and wage labor in factories (Janelli and Janelli 1982: 26–27; Kendall 1985; Sorensen 1988). Taesŏng workers had more such experiences, however, than did those who remained in the countryside. Even among employees who had spent their youth in rural communities, the overwhelming majority had attended urban universities, and most had probably attended urban high schools as well.[17] Many

[17] Few South Korean universities were located outside cities, and nearly all of the universities that office workers acknowledged graduating were urban. We seldom spoke about high schools, however, perhaps at least partly because of my lack of familiarity with South Korea's secondary school system. I infer a high proportion of attendance at urban high schools because promising students from rural Korea are often sent to attend middle or high school in Seoul and because a disproportionately large number of all high-school graduates in Seoul and Pusan have gone on to attend institutions of higher education (McGinn et al. 1980: 159–66). In 1970, for example, the high schools of these two cities provided half of all the male entrants to South Korean colleges and universities (Ministry of Education 1970: 288–89). A study of urban migration in South Korea (Koo and Barringer 1977: 52) found also that those reared in rural settings were likely to receive less education than those reared in urban settings.

others had been born in Seoul, Pusan, or other major urban centers and had never lived in rural villages.

Some authors (Foucault 1978; Giddens 1987; Althusser 1971) suggest that urban experiences transform the cultural knowledgeability of workers regarding domination,[18] legitimation, and conflict by preparing them to acquiesce in and then reproduce domination and to suppress overt conflict in company offices. This interpretation is not entirely adequate in South Korea, however, for extravillage experiences appear to be just as double-edged as those in rural settings. Urban encounters were contradictory in that they prepared men both to assent to and resist company discipline, on the one hand inscribing disciplinary practices of capitalist enterprises and on the other equipping them with knowledge that informed resistance to those very practices.

This discussion of modern and urban institutions attempts to expand the existing discourse on relationships between South Korea's culture and its modern enterprises by recognizing that an urban and institutional culture also now belongs to South Korea. The connections between this other culture and office practices were not mentioned in the company's ideology or pursued in detail by academics focusing on the relationship between indigenous culture and modern companies. But the newer culture was represented in the media, in other academic writings, and in conversations of Taesŏng workers, particularly as they themselves compare company practices to those encountered in the army and, to a much lesser extent, in the schools.

This attempt to bring in extravillage experiences is frankly "experimental" in the sense proposed by Marcus and Fisher (1986: 40–44).

[18] The term *knowledgeability* is taken from the work of Anthony Giddens (1984). It is intended to emphasize that human beings are not primarily unreflecting creatures whose behavior is determined by culture or social structure. Rather, they are active agents who aim at attaining objectives and who possess and apply a substantial knowledge of how to go about their day-to-day interactions.

The ethnographic literature on rural Korea and my own fieldwork there enable me to present different interpretations of authority and harmony, but resources for accomplishing this with urban culture are more difficult to find. The ethnography of schools, the military, and urban life, especially among the middle classes, has yet to be written, and what does exist on this topic does not lend itself easily to an examination of authority and harmony. And though I have spent several years living in Seoul, I have conducted little fieldwork there. This brief experiment therefore pushes at the boundaries of the knowledge I gained haphazardly while studying and teaching at South Korean universities, participating in academic and professional societies, serving as a military advisor to the South Korean army, and living in a residential section of Seoul during extended periods of reading and writing. Rather than ignore this important issue altogether, I have tried to outline the major contours of these experiences and generally explore their potential consequences, giving some indication of significant alterations in cultural knowledge. I have tried to keep in mind three considerations: the contrasts between village and modern institutions, what struck me as the most obvious parallels between the modern institutions and Taesŏng, and the comments of Taesŏng workers themselves.

Schools. School appears to have had a much greater impact on the practices of the company than on those of the village. Unlike villagers, Taesŏng workers often spoke of their teachers and encounters in school. Alumni groups (*tongch'anghoe*) composed of graduates of the same primary, secondary, and tertiary schools are ubiquitous in cities and occasionally found in rural towns (Rutt 1964: 94), but they have not been reported from villages. Twisŏngdwi residents, for example, did not maintain ties with former classmates.

Schools had a greater impact on Taesŏng workers partly because they had far more formal education than rural residents. Men who occupied the officers at Taesŏng headquarters had all graduated four-year colleges or universities, but surveys of educational levels conducted in villages during the late 1950's and early 1960's revealed that about half of the men had less than a primary-school education (Lee Man-Gap 1960: 59–63; Kim Taik-Kyoo 1964: 73). Even in the 1970's, high-school graduates were a small minority in Twisŏngdwi: most middle-aged male villagers had no more than a middle-school education.

The educational system may have contributed to modern managerial practices in at least three ways, all of which took relationships formerly restricted to kin and extended them to nonkin. Students were accustomed to monologic communication, the notion of moral obligation was stretched beyond the family, and an age-ranking system was instituted that accentuated small differences in age between persons not linked by kinship.[19] Such transformations began at the lower levels of the educational system, but college experiences extended these new understandings to adult relationships.

Though monologic communication was also prevalent in primary and secondary education, one section chief pointed out that this form of interaction—"one-way communication" as Taesŏng workers called it—was not unique to superiors and subordinates in the office but had its parallels in college classroom lectures. Little state financial support for higher education (Bae Chong-Keun, personal communication) has been evident in high student-teacher ratios and large lecture classes, providing few opportunities for undergraduate students to express their opinions. Tests, like company entrance exams, emphasized memorization or problem solving rather than ability to analyze heuristically or formulate an original argument.

The educational system, especially the universities, may have also contributed to managerial practices by extending to nonkin the notion of morally obligated repayment, an extension that appears to have been uncommon in rural villages. Specifically, a teacher's control over his or her students was legitimated by moral norms made partly analogous to those obtaining between parents and offspring.[20] Students were often said to be indebted to teachers for the benefits (*ŭnhye*) they bestowed—principally providing advice, imparting knowledge, and developing their students' mental abilities—just as children were indebted to parents. Attempting to take advantage of this new understanding, the state made university teachers responsible for the participation of their own students in antigovernment demonstrations, and individual faculty could sometimes be seen pulling their students from the ranks of campus demonstrators.

[19] All of these suggest Japanese contributions to the genealogy of South Korea's educational system, a topic examined by McGinn et al. (1980: 80–85). Bruce Cumings (1984: 478) has also pointed to the similarity of the school uniforms worn by Korean and Japanese middle- and high-school students until well into the 1980's.

[20] McGinn et al. (1980: 223) have already pointed to attempts to inculcate attitudes of submission—by requiring bowing to the teacher, school uniforms, mass calisthenics, and recitation in unison.

Respect and ethical obligations toward teachers have long been a part of elite Confucian ideology, but direct experience with those notions for most of the population came first through modern schools. Those who attended the older, Confucian-oriented, village schools did not appear to hold teachers in particularly high esteem. A few Twisŏngdwi villagers who had attended these schools remembered how many sacks of grain were paid for tuition, thus portraying the teacher's services as a commodity. And oral literature about these earlier schools often ridicules the instructors. Many folktales describe students outwitting or foiling the schemes of teachers, who are often portrayed as foolish or lecherous (Choi In-hak 1979: 92, 278–79, 287; Yim 1987: 176, 230–31; 1988: 182, 183). On the other hand, I have not yet encountered folklore poking fun at teachers at modern schools or universities, like that commonly found in American universities (Toelken 1968). Taesŏng's white-collar workers spoke of their teachers with high regard and affection. I was struck by a comment offered by a group of Taesŏng workers when I asked them if anyone there ever asked a manager to officiate at a wedding. They said that the common practice was to ask a person of high moral character, such as a minister or a professor, to perform this honor.[21]

I once misinterpreted as indicating a lack of direction the vague response of one job applicant to my question about the reason for having chosen a particular major. A Taesŏng manager who conducted the job interviews with me explained that many students followed the recommendations of their teachers when making such choices. Other Taesŏng workers who discussed this topic often indicated the heavy weight they had given to a teacher's advice. And one manager told me how it was difficult to refuse the requests of former primary- or high-school teachers, who after retirement visited the office selling encyclopedias or asking for loans.

Yet a third practice of the schools that had parallels in the company was a year-of-entry grading system. Those who entered a school in the same year formed an age-set and, in cities at least, maintained personal connections even after graduation. A class-year became a new form of social grouping and a basis for social ties that often lasted far beyond graduation. Members of prior years were called *sŏnbae* and those entering in later years called *hubae*, a practice later

[21] Inviting a higher manager to officiate at a wedding is not unheard of in South Korea (Dawnhee Yim, personal communication), but the practice was evidently not common at Taesŏng.

urged on Taesŏng men for addressing or referring to co-workers. Evidently the terms themselves as well as their application to capitalist organizations were introduced into Korea from Japan, from where they have also been reported (Rohlen 1974: 122). These age grades could provide social resources for a lifetime, as when political factions formed in recent decades around particular classes of the South Korean Military Academy. I have also seen academic societies rotate their presidencies largely in order of seniority, often calculated according to the year of entry into college.

One finds little basis for such fine age grading, however, in rural South Korea. As we have seen, relative age (not year of birth per se) was given more significance among kin than nonkin; but, except between brothers and other close agnates, age was only one of the standards on which status negotiations were based. And as we have also seen, even an age difference of five years was not significant in nonkin relationships.

Despite all of the ways education may have inscribed domination and hierarchical practices onto Taesŏng employees, universities also undermined them. University faculty did not use the rigid ranking system found in Taesŏng offices—although high-school teachers did, as one Taesŏng manager observed. Thus, universities offered students a model for modern Korean institutions that was not so hierarchical. Even more importantly, a university experience exposed students to critical views of the chaebŏl, the political economy, and the international world order. A review of education in South Korea (McGinn et al. 1980: 203) pointed to a "negative association between level of education and support of the present [Park Chung Hee] government." Some of the most outspoken critics of the chaebŏl, moreover, have been academics (Jones and SaKong 1980: 269); and in the few years prior to my fieldwork at Taesŏng, university students had gone far beyond their predecessors and teachers, organizing their own study groups of forbidden Marxist texts (Roberts and Chun 1984). Students have also been at the forefront of antigovernment and anti-American demonstrations. Respect for teachers was weakening in the 1980's when teachers were required by the state to examine and report on the political attitudes of their students as well as to discourage them from participating in public demonstrations. In the mid-1980's, students at one university bowed twice to the faculty, as if they were bowing to the dead, and in November of 1988 students at another captured a few professors and shaved their heads. To represent schools

as an ideological state apparatus (Althusser 1971) is at best a partial account of their implications for capitalist industrialization in South Korea.

Army. Like school attendance, army service seemed to have had a far greater impact on company practices than it did on village life, though Taesŏng workers had no more exposure than villagers to the army. Some Twisŏngdwi residents occasionally spoke of their experiences during military service, but none ever drew parallels between military and village practices. Nor did I ever notice any. Taesŏng workers, by contrast, often drew analogies between the army and the company (Chapter 7), which seemed entirely appropriate in light of my own experiences with both the American and South Korean armies.

Military influence on Taesŏng's organization was not simply the result of habits acquired through a few years of military service. Many South Korean as well as foreign observers have noted the pervasiveness of military practices in modern South Korean society, especially in the state's bureaucracy and in business (Jung 1987: 63; Kearney 1991). The term *kunsa munhwa* (military culture) has been used to designate this phenomenon, and I shall elaborate on it in the remaining chapters. Its main forms were a rigid ranking system and a unified chain of command, but it extended to numerous other practices as well.

In drawing analogies between the military and office life, Taesŏng workers often pointed to the ranking system, which was symbolized in so many ways. Such strict ranking was alien to the village except among close agnates when they participated in rites for the dead, and it was also far less common in modern academic life. Its prevalence in the industrial world may have as much to do with the introduction of Japanese business practices into Korea, especially during the prewar era (Moskowitz 1979), as with direct military influences of the colonial and later years.[22] Outside the companies and the army, senior

[22] The extent to which the South Korean army reproduced Japanese disciplinary techniques and was also transformed by contact with the American military needs further examination. Some managerial concepts and practices developed in the United States Army were adopted by American companies, and these too may have ultimately reached South Korean enterprises through joint ventures or business administration courses in South Korean universities (Lee Hak Chong 1984). Having already become somewhat accustomed to American military and business practices, I was probably more likely to take them for granted and overlook such influences.

persons are generally given the warmest spots in winter, the most comfortable chairs, the "inner" seats at meals, or front-row seats at academic conferences. But yielding more honored seating positions or granting other favors to juniors is not uncommon. Often a series of offers and refusals occurs in both rural (Osgood 1951: 52) and urban contexts. About a decade ago a popular commercial for easy-to-prepare noodles depicted an elder and younger man each asking the other several times to eat first.

Other analogies Taesŏng workers often drew between military and office life centered on the unified chain of command that suppressed even the appearance of either collective decision making or autonomy at lower levels. Unlike the collective decision making evident in lineages, villages, and academic societies, management at chaebŏl was usually described as "top-down," proceeding from the head of the chaebŏl to its lower ranks.[23] I will try to show in subsequent chapters why this description prevailed.

Military service gave Taesŏng workers the knowledge that strict ranking and a unified chain of command were militaristic, and these workers used that knowledge to interpret company experiences. As we shall see in Chapter 7, encounters with military practices provided them with a countermetaphor for interpreting and critiquing superior-subordinate relations in the office. Whereas the company claimed that relations between superiors and subordinates were familylike, younger office workers viewed them as militaristic. Thus, even army experiences could foster both subordination and resistance.

Urban life. The impact of urban life on the cultural knowledgeability of Taesŏng workers was potentially very diffuse, and I shall limit my discussion to some of the major arguments put forward in the academic literature and to comments offered by Taesŏng employees. My goal here is to demonstrate that cities too are both conducive and antithetical to the control practices encountered in Taesŏng offices.

Urban life may well have accustomed individuals to disciplinary surveillance. As Anthony Giddens (1987: 14) has observed, "The concentration of activities within clearly bounded settings greatly en-

[23] The administration of universities, which was closely regulated by the Ministry of Education, also exhibited such centralized decision making. The liberalization that followed the 1987 demonstrations had a significant effect on the management of these institutions, where faculty councils now have a greater voice.

larges the degree to which those activities can be 'watched over' and thus controlled by superordinates." Such experiences accustom urban dwellers to the kind—if not the extent (Giddens 1987: 15)—of control pervasive in modern organizations and thus inscribes them with habits of submission (Foucault 1978: 170–77). These insights have considerable validity for South Korean cities, especially Seoul, where state surveillance has been more pervasive than in rural villages. In the 1970's, for example, villagers ignored the midnight to 4 A.M. curfew then in effect to attend ancestor rites or shamanistic rituals at each other's homes. Seoulites, on the other hand, who could not violate the curfew with such impunity, developed the practice of holding ancestor rites earlier in the evening and concluding their other activities for the day in time to be home before the curfew began. Urban dwellers also related stories of persons who were overheard telling an antigovernment joke in a bar and later arrested, stories that would be hard to place in a rural setting with its absence of bars attended by strangers. Throughout the 1970's and 1980's, many middle-class Seoulites lowered their voices to a whisper when expressing antigovernment sentiments, a practice I never observed among villagers.

Everyday life in cities may have also accustomed their residents to other capitalist notions, particularly regarding time (E. Thompson 1967: 59) and wage labor (Giddens 1981b: 152–53). The first of these I shall examine in Chapter 7, but the latter deserves a brief comment here. Throughout Korea labor has been bought and sold for decades, but whereas farm work for wages (*p'ump'ari*) carried a stigma in rural villages, no such stigma attached to office labor in modern large enterprises. Wage labor in rural Korea was more personalized, members of one household working for those of another, and thus acquired a demeaning character. In Twisŏngdwi, at least, my wife and I detected no such embarrassment attached to working in factories, except perhaps among some men who were reluctant to allow their daughters to spend so much time outside their homes.

Finally, urbanization focuses resources on individuals for ideological purposes (Giddens 1987: 16–17), legitimating state control and inducing acceptance of the particular form of industrialization which it promotes. Movie theaters in Seoul, for example, preceded their featured films with state-produced short newsreels slanted toward recent economic and technological achievements. Television news and newspapers (Chapter 2) were also controlled.[24] Since few villagers

[24] Particularly during the early 1980's, the first few minutes of television news were regularly devoted to the recent activities of the new president, Chun Doo Hwan.

attended movies, most had no electricity until the early 1970's, few had televisions until the late 1970's, and newspapers were not readily available in villages, urban residents had greater exposure to these ideological efforts. Only in more recent years has much of this difference disappeared.

Yet, although urbanization accustomed people to surveillance and wage labor, subjected them to greater ideological indoctrination, and fostered attitudes suitable for working in capitalist enterprises, at least an equal number of countereffects can also be advanced. If urban residents became accustomed to greater surveillance by state authorities, they were also given greater freedom by being released from much of the local community surveillance that obtained in villages. Inculcated with commodified notions of time and labor, they would use these notions to protest their long working hours (Chapter 7). And though they were subjected to more indoctrination than their rural counterparts, they also had greater access to information that challenged it. Though newspapers and other media limited their criticisms of the state and underreported student demonstrations, for example, readers often inferred the criticism implied in political cartoons (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 13, 1991, pp. 54–55), exchanged rumors over a wider network, and had other sources of information. The number of anti-demonstration police, easily identified by their distinctive armor, stationed in downtown areas where students congregated, gauged the official estimate of the possibility of demonstrations on a particular day. Residents and shopkeepers of neighborhoods located within a mile or two of any of Seoul's universities, as well as passersby, learned to judge the extent of each day's demonstrations by the amount of tear gas that wafted over their homes, irritated their noses and eyes, and caused infants to cry.

Urban life presented obstacles to modern managerial practices in yet other ways as well, particularly regarding the complete devotion the owner-managers tried to elicit. Cities facilitated the multiplication of social ties and the maintenance of networks of dyadic relationships rather than the formation of small-scale, closely knit communities composed of multistranded relationships. One even finds institutionalized mechanisms, such as participation in rotating-credit societies and alumni associations, used to maintain such relationships. Thus the conditions of urban life appear to have contributed to the reluctance of many Taesŏng workers to become engrossed in the company at the expense of other social ties.

Lastly, urban life may also have weakened the paternal control

the owners used as a metaphor for legitimating their control over subordinates, as some Taesŏng managers themselves observed. Lee Kwang-Kyu (1984: 197) has noted that long working hours remove fathers from their homes and from taking part in the supervision of their children or the financial management of their households, thus altering father-son relationships. A Taesŏng department head who spent his youth in a rural village pointed to the changing practices of South Korean fathers. Most of his section chiefs regularly took their children on a recreational outing on Sundays, he observed, but he could remember only one such outing with his own father throughout his life. Moreover, urban migration was more commonly undertaken by the young, and thus it removed many adolescent and adult sons from their fathers' immediate control.

In pointing to the multivocal character of village and modern institutional experiences, my goal has not been to demonstrate that culture doesn't matter. It has been to show the inadequacy of cultural determinist perspectives that view modern Korean managerial practices as natural outcomes of ossified cultural ideas and habits that individuals carried with them to the companies. As I shall try to show in subsequent chapters, culture matters a great deal. Understandings derived from precompany experiences comprised major resources and constraints for individuals in the office who sought to impose control or resist it, advance or defend their interests, and reproduce or alter the conditions of their lives. But first I will attempt to demonstrate the equally multivocal character of the political economy and point to the comparable inadequacies of economic determinism.

TWO

Representations of South Korean Political Economy

> The facts are not in serious dispute, even if their explanation and interpretation are among the most controversial issues in the field of comparative political economy today.
> *Johnson (1987: 136)*

In addition to understandings of how to conduct interpersonal relations, Taesŏng workers and managers have also brought to their enterprise knowledge of a national and international political economy, and this other cultural knowledge too informed their perceptions and choices of action in the workplace. This chapter offers an overview of alternative interpretations of South Korea's political economy, its relationship with the international economy or world system, its connections with nationalist movements, and the conspicuous place occupied by the large conglomerates known as chaebŏl. This overview aims at the political and economic conditions with which owners and employees contended and at how the middle classes understood those conditions. Later chapters will attempt to show how their understandings affected what transpired within the offices of Taesŏng during my fieldwork.

Any account of the South Korean political economy, like any account of South Korean culture, is incomplete. Several competing interpretations of it have already been offered, each based on data chosen from a very broad array of alleged facts and theoretical assumptions that cannot be proved or disproved (Gilpin 1987: 26; Kuznets 1988: 125). The political economy has been the subject of a particularly complex, voluminous, and theoretically contentious literature in recent years. Well represented in this corpus of writings are