

# Toward an Alternative Approach to the Study of Community Solidarity in Rural Korea: An Anthropological View

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## 1. Introduction

In Korea, during the decade of 1980s, probably there has been no other social science term that could match *kongdongch'e* (community or *Gemeinschaft*),<sup>1</sup> in its popularity and application. One could not only find such terms as labor *kongdongch'e*, academic *kongdongch'e*, or cultural *kongdongch'e* easily in newspapers and magazines, but also hear church-goers referring themselves as religious *kongdongch'e*. Also, along with the increasing popularity of the term *kongdongch'e*, there have been attempts to reassess the notion of village community or community solidarity by the sociologists and anthropologists of Korea

Yet unfortunately, interpretations of community solidarity by native Korean scholars tend to be tinged with the emotional commitment that cooperative practices found in the villages as representations of community solidarity are valuable

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1 Among the students of Korean society, there has been a mild disagreement over the proper use and translation of the term *kongdongch'e*, mostly depending on their disciplines. That is, while majority of Korean historians and economic historians, concerned with the reconstruction of earlier society, have emphasized the economic side of such grouping (relations of production) and used the concept of *Gemeinschaft* or *Gemeinde* developed by Marx and Weber for *kongdongch'e* (Ch'oe C-S 1975 87-103), most rural sociologists, primarily concerned with precapitalist state, have emphasized social (human relationship) as well as economic side and used the concept of community developed by MacIver (Yi M-G 1980). In this study, community will be used for the translation of *kongdongch'e*

traditions of the Korean people, and ought to be utilized for the betterment of the Korean people's future. Also, their studies are usually confined to the general explanation of community solidarity in rural Korea, lacking reference to the particular socioeconomic context of a particular village

The purpose of this essay is to reassess the interpretations of community solidarity in rural Korea under the influence of the national industrialization which began in the 1960s, and suggest an alternative view which emphasizes the specific socioeconomic context of the village. I will adopt Han Sang-bok's (1983: 76) definition of community solidarity, which is "a collective consciousness of people gathered into one identical social group".

Yet as Han Sang-bok (1980, 1983) suggests, social groups are of various kinds, and community solidarity in Korea can be found in kinship groups, local groups, and other groups and associations united by shared values and customs. However, since this study is aiming at the assessment of solidarity of community as local group, the notion of community solidarity will be confined to the collective consciousness of people living within a village.

Of course, community as a local group may indicate different realities at various levels. For example, in Korea, there exist communities ranging from villages through subcounties, counties, provinces, and regions to the whole national state (Han S-B 1980, 1983, Im H-S 1986). But collective consciousness of the local groups beyond the village may be termed as diffuse "we feeling" seldom manifesting any intermingling of interests of their components. Moreover, since village has been argued as the most universal and continuous form of human settlement (Reining 1980) having the qualities of completeness, inclusiveness, and cohesiveness (Arensberg 1961), the notion of local community in this study will be confined to the village.

## II. Studies of Community Solidarity in Korea

Although there are excellent studies of Korean society by the non-native scholars, few have paid as much attention to the issue of community solidarity as Korean students of rural society. In anthropology too, except for Brandt's book *A Korean Village between Farm and Sea* (1971) where he described two contrasting ideologies—hierarchical patrilineal kinship ideology and egalitarian community ideology—complementing each other behind the operation of village, and Goldberg's article "Spirits in Place. The Concept of Kohyang and the Korean Social Order" (1979) where he pointed out that the study of traditional village community

by Korean scholars represents an idealization of corporate community, practically no one has taken the issue of community solidarity seriously.<sup>2</sup> This is probably due to the fact that non-native scholars do not have the same emotional attachment toward the value-loaded issue of community solidarity.

When Korean students of rural society have inquired into community solidarity, their major attention has been given to the effect of the national industrialization that began in 1960s.<sup>3</sup> This was because of the popular notions that socioeconomic change occurring in rural Korea since the beginning of the national industrialization boom must have changed the traditional moral attitude of rural residents, and that the rational mode of thought in an industrialized society is not compatible with the traditional mode of thought in an agrarian community. This notion is well exemplified in the work of Yi Kwang-gyu.

According to Yi Kwang-gyu (1990), agrarian society is characterized by absolute obedience to nature and it has developed a congenial mode of thought in order to use mutual help to overcome various kinds of difficulties threatening subsistence. On the other hand, Yi Kwang-gyu continues, human relations in the industrialized society are based on contract and have developed a rational mode of thought aiming at the maximization of profit.

Students of Korean society have found that Korea is not an exceptional case, and said that Korean villages in general have been affected by the socioeconomic change resulting from the national industrialization since 1960s, and their

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2 Recent anthropological studies (books) of Korean society written in English by the non-native scholars include *Ancestor Worship and Korean Society* by Janelli and Janelli (1982), *Shamans, Housewives, and Other Restless Spirits: Women in Korean Ritual Life* by Kendall (1985), *Religion and Rituals in Korean Society* edited by Kendall and Dix (1987), and *Over the Mountains are Mountains: Korean Peasant Households and Their Adaptations to Rapid Industrialization* by Sorensen (1988). Even from this short list, one can see non-native anthropologists' interest is oriented toward folk religion.

3 The colonial period under Japanese rule (1910-1945) was also discussed as a factor that might have affected community solidarity. But students of Korean society (Han S-B 1980, 1983, Yi M-G 1980) generally agree that traditional cooperative practices of the villages have not changed dramatically in spite of such colonial policies as the national land survey, reorganization of rural administration, and forced exportation of Korean grains. It is because most natural villages that had been integrated into bigger administrative villages according to the colonial policy, could maintain a certain degree of autonomy and independence (Han S-B 1980, Yi M-G 1980), and more importantly, I think, farming technology didn't change much during the colonial period. Only in the case of *ture* (a kind of traditional communal farming practice), Shin Yong-ha (1984, 1987) reports modification in its practice. Still he maintains that it was the dominant form of rice cultivation in central and southern Korea during the colonial period.

community solidarity has been either weakened or modified to conform to the so-called modernization of rural Korea (Han S-B 1980, 1983, 1990, Cho H 1981, Cho O-L 1984, Im H-S 1986, Yi K-K 1990, Yi M-G 1980, and Yi M-G and Brandt 1981).<sup>4</sup> Of course, their assessment comes mostly from the comparison of various kinds of traditional cooperative practices such as communal farming, labor exchange, and rotating credit societies, found in Korean villages, past and present.

Peasants of Korea<sup>5</sup> seem to have the same line of speculation concerning their attitude change. When I first entered the village of Ch'aenggi, located about sixty Kilometers west of Taegu,<sup>6</sup> and asked about the current state of the village, the villagers' response was not that positive. The villagers gave me such comments as "the village is less congenial than it used to be" or "all the villagers have become so smart (and egoistic) thanks to the modern education that we can hardly cooperate these days". Also, while living in Ch'aenggi, I found that the villagers have discussed whether they should continue to hold the annual village ritual, which has been considered as the ultimate symbol of community solidarity by the students of Korean society. In a word, the villagers' perception of the present village could be summarized as the waning of solidarity necessary for the proper working of the

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4 Modification of community solidarity can be said to be related with New Community Movement (Saemaül Undong) started in early 1970s. New Community Movement is a government directed campaign to modernize rural area and to increase the income of peasant households through self-help among the villagers. The unit of this campaign is the village, and the Korean government has appointed one New Community Leader (*Saemaül Chidoja*) in each and every village of Korea (who is usually younger than the traditional leaders of the village) to implement the government's directives. And through the New Community Movement, the Korean Government has promoted various projects ranging from constructing water supply facilities and rearranging roads within the village to establishing small off-season handicraft facilities. Several students of rural society (Han S-B 1980, Yi M-G 1980, Yi M-G and Brandt 1981) mentioned the New Community Movement in relation to community solidarity, and their general comment was that New Community Movement has progressed smoothly in the villages with strong traditional community solidarity.

5 I will adopt Sorensen's idea of peasants for peasants of Korea in this study. That is, Korean peasants are distinguished from both "primitive agriculturalists" whose sole aim is meeting subsistence needs and "farmers" who aim at "selling their products for cash to purchase their means of subsistence" (Sorensen 1981: 83). But the distinction of Korean peasants from farmers "does not mean they sell none of their products on the market, nor that they are not interested in profit, but only that their agricultural products are grown first for consumption at home with only the surplus entering the marketing system" (Sorensen 1981: 83).

6 Ch'aenggi, the site of my fieldwork, is a village located in the southwestern corner of North Kyöngsang Province.

village.

Both emic perception of waning solidarity by the villagers and the etic analysis of it by the students of Korean society are based on the comparison between their image of traditional days and the current state of rural Korea. They presume that traditional villages were harmonious and corporate in nature, with a strong sense of community solidarity. And so, even before attempts were made to reassess community solidarity in the 1980s, some Korean rural sociologists (Yang H-S 1967: 122-129, Ch'oe C-S 1975: 82-103) already adopted terms like "*ch'ollak kongdongch'e* (village community)" or "*nongch'on kongdongch'e* (rural community)", and used to give such examples as practice of communal farming and labor exchange, village rituals, and societies of mutual-help, to symbolize the corporate nature of traditional Korean villages.

The concept of *ch'ollak kongdongch'e* perceived by the students of Korean society generally corresponds to the idea of rural/homogeneous/primitive/traditional type of societal group developed by the nineteenth century scholars such as Tönnies (1887) and Durkheim (1893), and refined by Redfield (1956) and Wolf (1957). That is, they view traditional Korean village as a closed, autonomous, and corporate unit which consists of homogeneous elements having strong community solidarity.

The model image of village community has been derived from the traditional commoner villages in the Chosŏn period where the villagers had communal property including communal land cultivated cooperatively. According to Han Sang-bok (1983), every village maintained some sort of communal property since the Chosŏn period, and communal village fields in particular consisted of the land reclaimed or purchased by the village and the land of the deceased who had no descendants. The communal property of a village including the communal land, Han Sang-bok continues, has been the focus of community solidarity in traditional Korean villages, because the yield from such communal land was used to pay the expense of offerings at the village ritual. And it has survived the Japanese colonial rule which prohibited communal property rights, by disguising communal property as private ownership.

Han Sang-bok also argues that the villagers' cooperative efforts in obtaining livelihood in addition to the communal property, have intensified the notion of solidarity, and through the communal rituals and belief system the idea of community solidarity has received religious affirmation. And so, Korean students of rural society have cited various cooperative practices of the village and ritual life to highlight the cooperative and corporate nature of Korean rural villages.

The reason why traditional villages had strong community solidarity is believed

to be because of the special circumstances of rice cultivation that required an intensive input of labor during the peak farming seasons (Han S-B 1980). And this solidarity could be reinforced because of the low mobility of the rural population, and the consequent sustenance of face-to-face interaction among the village members (Han S-B 1980, 1983)

The principles working behind this solidarity are believed to stem from two major contrasting ideologies: patrilineal kinship ideology based on the hierarchical human relationships among village members, and egalitarian community ideology based on horizontal human relationships (Brandt 1971), of which the former is conspicuous in a lineage village and the latter in a multi-surname village. Thus in some cases, when the villages are occupied and dominated by single lineages, the community solidarity of a village (as a local group) may overlap with the community solidarity of a localized kinship group. But as far as the village business is concerned, the egalitarian community ideology has been thought to be the prime mover (Brandt 1971, Han S-B 1980, 1983) <sup>7</sup>

But with the start of industrialization, rural Korea has experienced tremendous socioeconomic change. The national industrialization triggered large-scale urban migration of peasants, which has resulted in the occasional shortage of labor during peak farming seasons. Also, with the development of transportation and communication, market economy based on the monetary system has been fully introduced into the villages, which in turn accelerated the cultivation of commercial crops (Chang Y-S 1989). And, students of Korean society as well as the rural residents like the villagers of Ch'aenggi suspect that all these changing circumstances have made Korean peasants more calculating, and consequently they are responsible for the diminishing traditional cooperative practices based on the spirit of mutual help.

Several questions arise concerning the explanation of waning community solidarity by Korean students of rural society. The first one is about the harmonious

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7 Patrilineal kinship ideology and egalitarian community ideology have been thought to be two principles working behind the operation of village in Korea. Although Han Sang-bok and Brandt commented that community ideology is considered first by the villagers as far as village business is concerned, Korean scholars found that in the villages having lineage(s), cooperation among villagers is generally not as easy as in the villages without lineage(s) because of the clash of two ideologies (Yi M-G 1980, Cho O-L 1984), which should be scrutinized. I don't have any definite information to support or criticize each view. However, my speculation is that it depends on the rigidity of lineage(s) in the village and kinds of cooperative practices needed in farming as well as daily life. For this, see Janelli and Janelli (1982: 20-21), who described the dominant lineage's effort to become democratic in village affairs.

and corporate state of traditional days, since there are plenty of reports of cleavage among the villagers. In his pioneer anthropological study of a Korean village, Brandt (1971: 20-29) reported the cleavage between the descendants of former gentry and those of former commoners. Kim T'aek-kyu (1964) reported a chronic animosity between two segments of the nationally-famous Ryu lineage, in addition to the cleavage between descendants of former gentry and former commoners. Janelli and Janelli (1982: 20-21) discussed the dominance of native gentry descendants, who comprise a minority of the village population, over non-native villagers. Yi Kwang-gyu (1988-9) even described the conflict between the hamlets in a village consisting of descendants of former commoners.

Of course, one may take a eufunctional approach toward conflict and competition, as in Yi Kwang-gyu's (1988-9) assertion that conflict is essential for the maintenance of harmony in a village. Still, cleavage among the villagers is deviant from the cultural norm that all the villagers should be harmonious, and it definitely represents a clash of interests between the concerned parties.

Second, students of Korean rural society have equated the interest of village with the interests of individual households, and they have not seriously thought about the dynamics of community solidarity. That is, they have regarded traditional cooperative practices (representations of community solidarity) as something communal that is beneficial to the "whole" village and never as something born out of the process of interaction among individual households.

Third, while students of Korean rural society were enthusiastic about comparing corporate traditional times with the less-corporate present by enumerating various attributes of community solidarity, they failed to recognize the difference in socioeconomic and environmental circumstances of each village, past and present. As a result, although some of them (Yi M-G and Brandt 1981, Han S-B 1980, Cho O-L 1984) noticed variation in community solidarity (according to the kinds and frequency of cooperative practices), they were unable to explain the variation.

In order to solve the second and third problem, I think, cooperative practices of each village as representations of community solidarity should be scrutinized with reference to the specific socioeconomic and environmental context of each village. If socioeconomic context of each village is fully taken into consideration, one can hardly say village A is more solidary than village B only because of additional cooperative practices. Conversely, I suggest, cooperative practices should be understood as maximization mechanisms of given resources by the peasants under the given circumstances, and one need not romanticize community solidarity as cherished tradition or the essence of the Korean people.

With the above questions in mind, I will review the theories on peasant community and community solidarity in the next section.

### III. Theories of Peasant Community and Community Solidarity

The conceptualization of community as one of two polar ideal societal types first emerged in the nineteenth century (Miner 1968). According to Miner, the poles of such a pair are characterized by the opposite extremes of type-defining variables such as the importance of kinship or the extent of division of labor in a society. Thus on one pole lies rural/primitive/traditional/homogeneous community, and urban/civilized/modern/heterogeneous society lies on the other. And in reality, Miner claimed, all the societal types can be placed on a point in the community-society continuum.

Tönnies was the first one to make an explicit distinction between such ideal types in his book *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887). His theory and typology rest on his view of human volition; natural will and rational will. *Gemeinschaft* results from likeness and shared life-experience. Natural will predominates in the *Gemeinschaft* relationships, which can be best illustrated by the links between family members. On the other hand, the predominance of rational will characterizes *Gesellschaft*. And in such a society, rational will operates in terms of the logic of the market place.

Tönnies assumed that a period of *Gesellschaft* historically follows a period of *Gemeinschaft*. The *Gemeinschaft* period begins with social relations based on family life and domestic economy. Later, with the development of agriculture and rural village life, there is a shift to cooperative patterns based on locality. The *Gesellschaft* period opens with the growth of city life based on trade and contractual relationships. And industrialization and rational manipulation of capital and labor are accompanied by the growth of the state life.

Durkheim (1893) was more concerned with the underlying principle of social cohesion of certain societal groups than with the typology. Noting that while in a traditional society, social changes occur gradually and slowly and social integration and homogeneity predominate, social changes are rapid and produce specialization and heterogeneity in modern societies, Durkheim wondered what is the underlying principle that brings about the cohesion of each societal group. Durkheim termed this principle as social solidarity. And in his book *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), he wanted to prove that the division of labor in modern society could integrate individuals in spite of their heterogeneity, and that "the function of the



division of labor is social; that is integration" (Nisbet 1965: 34).

According to Durkheim, there are two types of social solidarity; mechanical and organic. Mechanical solidarity is social cohesion based on likeness or social homogeneity and morality, which has existed throughout most of the history of human society. Organic solidarity is born out of the division of labor in modern society, based on the interdependence of specialized and symbiotic parts (Miner 1968: 176, Nisbet 1965: 34-35). Unable to observe social solidarity directly, Durkheim took variation in types of legal system as symbol, or reflection of types of solidarity. They are "repressive" criminal law of traditional societies to sanction the violation of collective consciousness, and the predominance of "restitutive" civil law in modern societies to deal with the relationships between special parties. Moreover using the legal indices, Durkheim tried to demonstrate "that as one basis of solidarity develops the other regresses" and that "The evolution of society can therefore be seen in terms of the passage from the mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity" (Miner 1968. 176). If we follow the Durkheimian argument, it can be said that mechanisms that regulate traditional community solidarity become weak and feeble as a societal group becomes modern and heterogeneous.

Recognizing some commonality between "primitive" peoples and peasants in their self-sufficiency, nonliteracy, and the local, traditional, and sacred orientation of their lives, Redfield (1947) suggested the concept of "the folk society" as a contrasting term to the urban society. He argued that "such a society is small, isolated, nonliterate, and homogeneous, with a strong sense of group solidarity" (1947. 293). Later in his book *The Little Community* (1956), Redfield conceptualized the community as an ecological system and social structure having the qualities of distinctiveness in the boundary, smallness, homogeneity, and all-providing self-sufficiency, and maintained that the folk society has existed as "little tradition".

Redfield's idea of community suggests the completeness and cohesiveness of a community. But later on, sociologists and anthropologists have added the quality of inclusiveness to the idea of community. That is, they have taken the community not merely as a distinctive "whole" within a society but as a sample or a basic organizational unit of a society, because the community reflects the whole society or a culture, and it also serves as a locus or local embodiment of a wider or general social phenomena (Arensberg 1961). Thus to Arensberg (1961) the community can become a testing ground for plans or change, amelioration, or development.

This line of analysis of traditional precapitalist peasant community is well summarized by Wolf (1957). From the data drawn from Mesoamerica and central

Java, he found three distinctive similarities in the peasant communities of both regions. They are *maintenance of communal rights over land*, *pressure on members to redistribute surpluses to relieve the burden of poverty of other members of the community*, and *exclusiveness toward the outer world*. And he came to generalize that traditional peasant communities are “closed corporate communities”.

His generalization was later challenged by Skinner (1971) who implicitly argued that “closed” or “open” should be decided in reference to the socioeconomic context of each society. According to Skinner, in traditional China, with its centralized bureaucracy and hierarchical market system, peasant communities were not closed all the time. That is, all the villages of China were connected to the outer world through a hierarchical market system and bureaucracy, which in turn provided opportunities for peasants to climb up the ladder of success. And Skinner added that when the society was peaceful, peasants took full advantage of the above mentioned market and bureaucratic system for upward social mobility.<sup>8</sup>

In spite of Skinner’s argument, Wolf’s closed corporate peasant communities became the basic assumption among the anthropologists working on the small-scale societies. They generally assumed that the opening of traditional communities to the outer world (capitalist system) results in the breakdown of corporate communities. And so, much later in 1980, scholars like Reining (1980) still pointed out that the world-wide modernization since around 1965 have threatened the viability of villages. For her, this modernization process includes the urbanization and depopulation of the villages, and the commercialization of resources in rural area along with the introduction of market economy.

Scott’s study on Southeast Asian peasant society (1976) presents a more sophisticated version of corporate and autonomous peasant village based on strong solidarity, even though he also failed to recognize that the collective interests of a group do not necessarily coincide with the individual interests. But unlike his predecessors who were mainly concerned with the characterization of different polar societal types, Scott tried to rationalize his view of peasant society by revealing that the so-called moral economy of the peasants exists in order to overcome the endangered subsistence resulting from the unforeseen misfortunes under the precapitalist mode of production.

According to Scott, most peasant villages in Southeast Asia (in some sense, in the

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8 For the case of Korea, see Sorensen (1981). Sorensen also denies that peasant communities in traditional Korea were closed because of hierarchical market system, but he speculates that market system in traditional Korea was no more important than closure

world) shared a common situation. That is, although Asian peasant villages normally produced almost all of what was needed for their subsistence, they were constrained by “the vagaries of weather and the claims of outsiders” (Scott 1976: 4). Thus peasant cultivators in Vietnam lived near the margin of subsistence, and rather than trying to maximize their well being which contains uncertain elements, they tried to avoid the risks that would threaten their subsistence. Scott called this the “safety-first” principle of subsistence ethics (1976: 5), firmly embedded in the norm of reciprocity and the right to subsistence that are genuine moral components of universal peasant culture. He went on to argue that reciprocity serves as a central moral formula for interpersonal conduct, and the right to subsistence, in effect, defines the minimal needs that must be met for members of community within the context of reciprocity (Scott 1976: 167).

According to the “safety-first” principle, Scott claimed, peasants prefer subsistence crops over cash crops because of the uncertainties involved in a market economy. And the surpluses of relatively well-off villagers are to be redistributed through such channels as kinship relationship or patron-client relationship to relieve the poor village members whose subsistence is sometimes threatened by bad crops. Scott also claimed that although peasants in Southeast Asia might resort to help from outside the village such as the state, as a counter-claim of security for what was taken from them, usually the assistance from outside the village was unreliable in terms of timeliness or usefulness (Scott 1976: 28). And peasants in general tried to solve various subsistence-related problems with what they had around them within the village. From this explanation appears Scott’s notion of closed, corporate and autonomous peasant village based on the strong community solidarity. And he believed that the peasant village had established and maintained its own precapitalist or non-capitalist economic order within itself.

Thus Scott, like his predecessors, believed that the introduction of capitalist economy in the form of market system along with the colonization must have been harmful to the peasant subsistence in that it involved the exploitation of rural population on one hand, and that it threatened the existing economic order of the peasant village on the other. So, when the village could not assume the role of a corporation resulting from the destruction of the existing economic order within the village, peasants resorted to collective action—rebellion.

So far various ideas on community and community solidarity have been reviewed. Conventionally, the village community, which has been the major unit of anthropological analysis, has been regarded as a closed and corporate unit based on the strong solidarity. Especially among peasant villages, this strong solidarity has

been believed to be born out of the necessity to cope with various subsistence-related problems. But, it has been reported that community solidarity has been weakened along with the introduction of capitalist system as a result of either colonization in pre-War period or world-wide industrialization and urbanization since 1960s. And the studies of community solidarity by Korean students of rural society, discussed in the previous section, generally conform to the conventional anthropological theories of peasant community or community solidarity.

What is missing in the conventional conception of the village community or the community solidarity by anthropologists and Korean scholars alike, is the dynamic elements in the analysis. That is, they usually derived their model from the traditional village community in the past, and tried to romanticize its corporateness by enumerating attributes that a corporate village community ought to have. Also, they have assumed that the interest of village coincides with that of each individual under the noble name of corporation, and ignored the reference to the specific socioeconomic context of each village, past and present, even when mentioning that the world-wide socioeconomic change have brought about change in the traditional villages.

In the following section, Popkin's alternative explanation of the Southeast Asian peasantry (1979) from the vantage point of individual households and the problem of socioeconomic context will be discussed to supplement the static view of the peasant community.

#### **IV. Conclusion: Toward an Alternative Approach to the Study of Community Solidarity**

Popkin (1979) challenged Scott's basic assumption that peasant villages are corporate units bound together by moral norms to ensure the minimal (subsistence) security of all the village members. He wondered what makes peasants continue to grow crops or "what incentives are there [for peasants] to work harder and have a better year" (Popkin 1979: 17), when the village assumes the role of corporation based on strong solidarity to provide the subsistence minimum for all the village members through redistribution.

Although Popkin didn't explicitly deny the idea of village corporation, he claimed that peasant villages are characterized as much by the conflicts from seeking individual interests as by cooperation based on morality (1979: 22-23), and so, the idea of village corporation is viable only when the village corporation is

made to serve the interests of individual households.

Thus for him, moral economists' generalizations about peasant villages must be merely a romantic idea since the collective interest of a group should not be confused with the aggregate of individual interests. By the same token, Popkin thought that the collective action taken by peasants such as rebellion should be regarded as a concomitant of aggregated self-interest rather than of moral commitments (Keyes 1983: 762)

Popkin's idea of the peasantry derived from the image of "a universalized economic man who acts within varying sets of constraints" (Keyes 1983: 756). Popkin emphasized the rational, decision-making ability of peasants and claimed that peasants do make "long-term as well as short term investments ... [and] risky as well as secure investments", and they "plan and invest throughout both the crop cycle and the life cycle" (Popkin 1979: 18-19). Thus for him, the Southeast Asian peasants' preference of subsistence crops over commercial crops should be understood as an adjustment of peasants to acquire optimal results rather than as a "safety-first" device to secure the minimum subsistence of the village.

By the same token, it is no wonder that Popkin rejected Scott's idea of peasants' adversity to the market economy. He believed that "the expansion of markets is frequently of particular benefit to poorer peasants" since it offers "new opportunities", and that "it is larger lords and patrons who prevent market involvement by peasants in order to protect their own control of the economy" (Popkin 1979: 33).

When comparing Popkin's and Scott's arguments on the intrusion of capitalist mode of production into peasant communities, Popkin's line of thinking—that is, a certain change in the socioeconomic circumstances might be beneficial or harmful to the peasants, and it must be decided case by case—is more inclusive, or at least provides a more flexible theoretical background to analyze community solidarity of each village. Another advantage of using the concepts of individual choice and decision making which constitutes the core of Popkin's argument from the individual vantage point, is that it enables us to discuss how and why groups of individuals decide to adopt some sets of norms while rejecting others (Popkin 1979: 18). According to this perspective, certain ideal norms of certain groups of people become problematic, which should be supplemented by the analysis of the socioeconomic contexts where such groups lie and their change through time.

According to Keyes (1983: 754) the study of social action should be dialectical, in order to avoid both positivist reductionism and subjectism or historical particularism. That is, in order to arrive at an adequate understanding of social

action, “not only the objective conditions that constrain social action, but also the historically situated “social space” within which such action actually occurs” (Keyes 1983: 754) should be considered for analysis. By social space, Keyes meant the cluster of internal and external relations that ensure the cohesion and reproduction of the community, and by constraint he meant the limitations on possible mode of action that people find to be inherent in the world in which they act. He went on to argue that “although such limitations are experienced by individuals, constraints are always rooted in conditions—environmental, social, cultural—external to the individual” (Keyes 1983. 755). Thus for Keyes (1983. 755-756), both Scott’s and Popkin’s theories on agrarian societies must be partial ones and should supplement each other, because although some action is the consequence of calculated intent on the part of individuals to maintain or improve their lot and that of their families, such calculation takes place within a social space structured with reference to moral premises that are meaningful to these individuals.

Keyes tried to reach a synthesis concerning social behavior of peasant by integrating the views on peasantry from both the individual and the group (village community) vantage points. In doing so, he assumed two elements affecting the social action of peasantry. They are social space where social action actually occurs and the constraints on such social action. What seems to be somewhat misleading in the argument of Keyes is his vague conceptualization of environmental, social, and cultural conditions as constraints on social action on the one hand and social space as internal and external relations ensuring the cohesion of the community on the other. Even though Keyes (1983: 755-756) claimed that constraints are for affecting social action (thus providing the basis of individual calculation) and social space is the field or arena where social action occurs (thus providing the moral frame of reference for individuals), “social” conditions sounds synonymous to “social space” under the broad category of social context or social circumstances, or “social” conditions could constitute the base of “social space”, since the formation or modification of social action of human can be affected by the environment where such action actually occurs. Moreover, individual calculation for certain social action is as much dependent on the perception of social space by the individuals as on the environmental, social, cultural conditions for such action.

For this reason, Harrell’s dichotomization of culture and context as elements affecting human behavior seems more plausible. According to Harrell (1982: 8-15), human behavior is dependent not only by what they have been taught to do—their social structure, an aspect of culture, but by the socioeconomic context where such behavior occurs. By social structure Harrell meant “a set of shared principles for

structuring social behavior”, and by socioeconomic context he meant “the sum total of exogenous, given factors to which people with certain cultural rules have to adapt their social behavior.” (Harrell 1982. 9) And the total context includes both the physical side—natural environment, technology, and population, and the social side—the larger system, and it sets the limits on behavior. The idea of context was adopted by the students of Chinese social structure to overcome the inability to explain certain social institutions contradicting the cultural rules such as uxorial marriage or the veneration of maternal kin in the patrilineal society. And one advantage of adopting context in addition to culture as a device to interpret human behavior is that it can avoid deterministic views such as historical particularism (cultural determinism) and material or environmental determinism, both of which have a long tradition in the history of anthropology.

When supplemented by the idea of “dynamic” and “rational” peasants instead of a mere aggregate of moral beings, and the socioeconomic context, the concept of community or community solidarity can no longer be a static one. At a certain time in the past, one might argue, a Korean village had such and such cooperative practices and so it was solidary, and now it is not solidary because the village does not have such practices. But community solidarity did not exist in its own sake, rather it existed only when the individual households of the village thought they might be better off because of such corporate intravillage institutions.

Even moral economists seem to agree that such moral arrangement to share the risk of endangered subsistence is beneficial not only to the village but to the individual households when commenting that moral arrangements are “not so much a product of altruism as of necessity” (Scott 1976. 6) And I believe that’s why certain features of community solidarity have faded away or modified with time, when other features have remained to provide the peasants with mechanisms necessary for the maintenance of their livelihood. In this sense, community solidarity in one village is no stronger than in another village, and community solidarity should be understood as a maximization mechanism of peasants in a given situation.

Thus what is important in studying community solidarity is to adopt an alternative processural and situational approach to trace how peasants have utilized certain features of community solidarity to adapt to the specific socioeconomic circumstances, and how certain features have become useless with the change in the socioeconomic context, rather than an approach devoted to the characterization of the village and the enumeration of features of community solidarity. And the suggested alternative approach has the ability to overcome the limitations of Korean

students' interpretation of community solidarity such as their inability to explain the variance in the strength of community solidarity, or deviant behaviors of the villagers in a corporate community.

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## GLOSSARY

Ch'aengi	창기	nongch'on	農村
ch'ollak	村落	Saemaül Undong	새마을 運動
kohyang	故鄉	Taegu	大邱
kongdongch'e	共同體	ture	두레