

A TYPOLOGY OF FILIPINO PEASANTS IN THE 1980s

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Kasamâ, sacada, mamumugon, gamâ, sanglâ-bili, and the like are all local terms referring to Filipino peasants and their labor arrangements on the land. Is there some way of classifying these various names and institutions? How does one arrive at a definition of the Filipino peasant today?

In this exploratory paper, we shall first discuss two sets of variables and their utility for classifying the peasantry. Then we can sketch out eight types of the Filipino peasant today. We shall end with some observations on development issues affecting Filipino peasants in the 1980s.

Four variables

The first pair of variables relates *farm size* to *farm technology*. Its unit of analysis is the farm as a productive entity. The peasant is thus seen principally in terms of his "man-land" relationship. The focus is on the productivity issue in development.

Stretching across a spectrum, farm size may be small or large, while farm technology may be characterized as "traditional" or "modern."

In Figure 1, the kinds of farms with their expected levels of productivity are found within the four quadrants:

- A - subsistence smallholding (with low productivity)
- B - feudal-type *hacienda* (with medium productivity)

C - plantation in an export crop economy (with high productivity per unit of labor)

D - family-size farm, combining labor-intensive practices of the farming household with modern technology (with high productivity per unit area)

Changes in agricultural parameters may take place along two directions: with capital-intensive technology, from A to B to C; with appropriate technology, from A to D.

The second pair of variables relates *land/labor tenure* and *access to credit and markets*. Its unit of analysis is the peasant as tiller of the soil vis-a-vis landlords, government, and other intermediaries. The peasant is thus viewed primarily in terms of his "man-man" relationships. The focus is on the equity issue in development.

Again ranged along a spectrum, the peasant's tenure on the land may be based primarily on his labor input or on his ownership title to the land. Access to credit and markets as the complementary variable may be approximated as either limited or to a greater degree.

In Figure 2, the various social relations of the peasant can be delineated within each quadrant:

- E - tenant, whether sharecropper or lessee

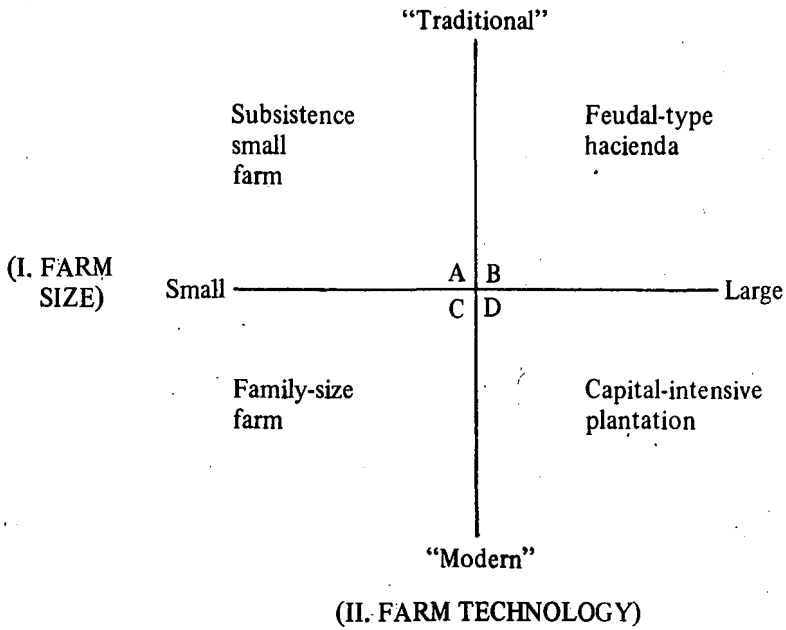


Figure 1. *Farm types by size and technology*

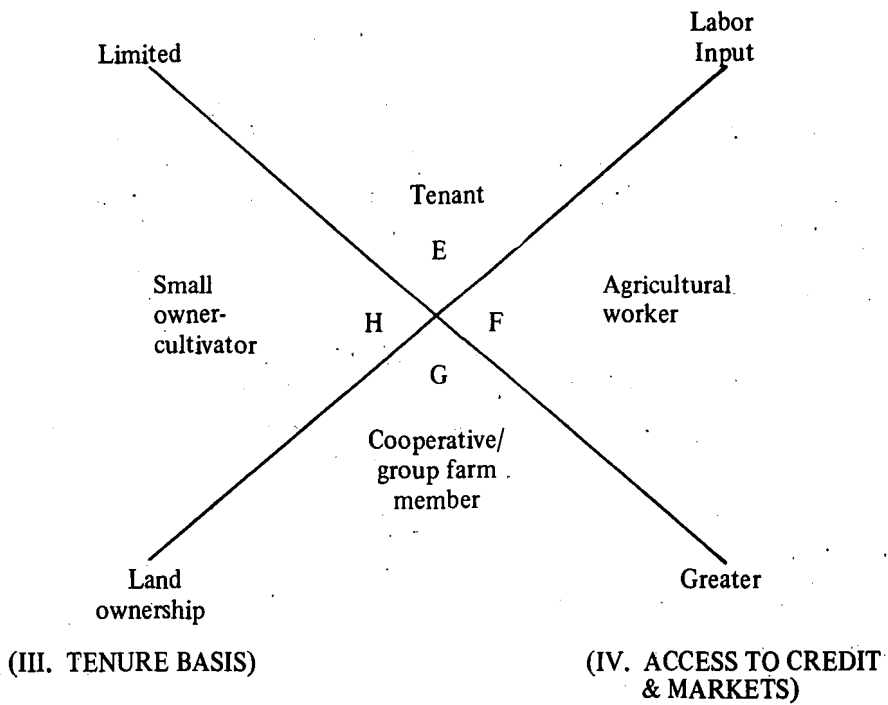


Figure 2. *Farm tiller by tenure and access to credit and markets.*

F – agricultural worker within a hacienda/plantation economy reform, from F to G.

G – member of a cooperative or group farm

H – small owner-cultivator

Upward social mobility may take the form of E to F. Upward mobility, with reform, would occur from E to community-based land

Eight types

Both man-land and man-man relationships constitute key dimensions in characterizing the types of Filipino peasants today. By juxtaposing the two pairs of variables, we can discern eight types. Despite some overlapping, each of these types can be described briefly by way of examples (see Figure 3).

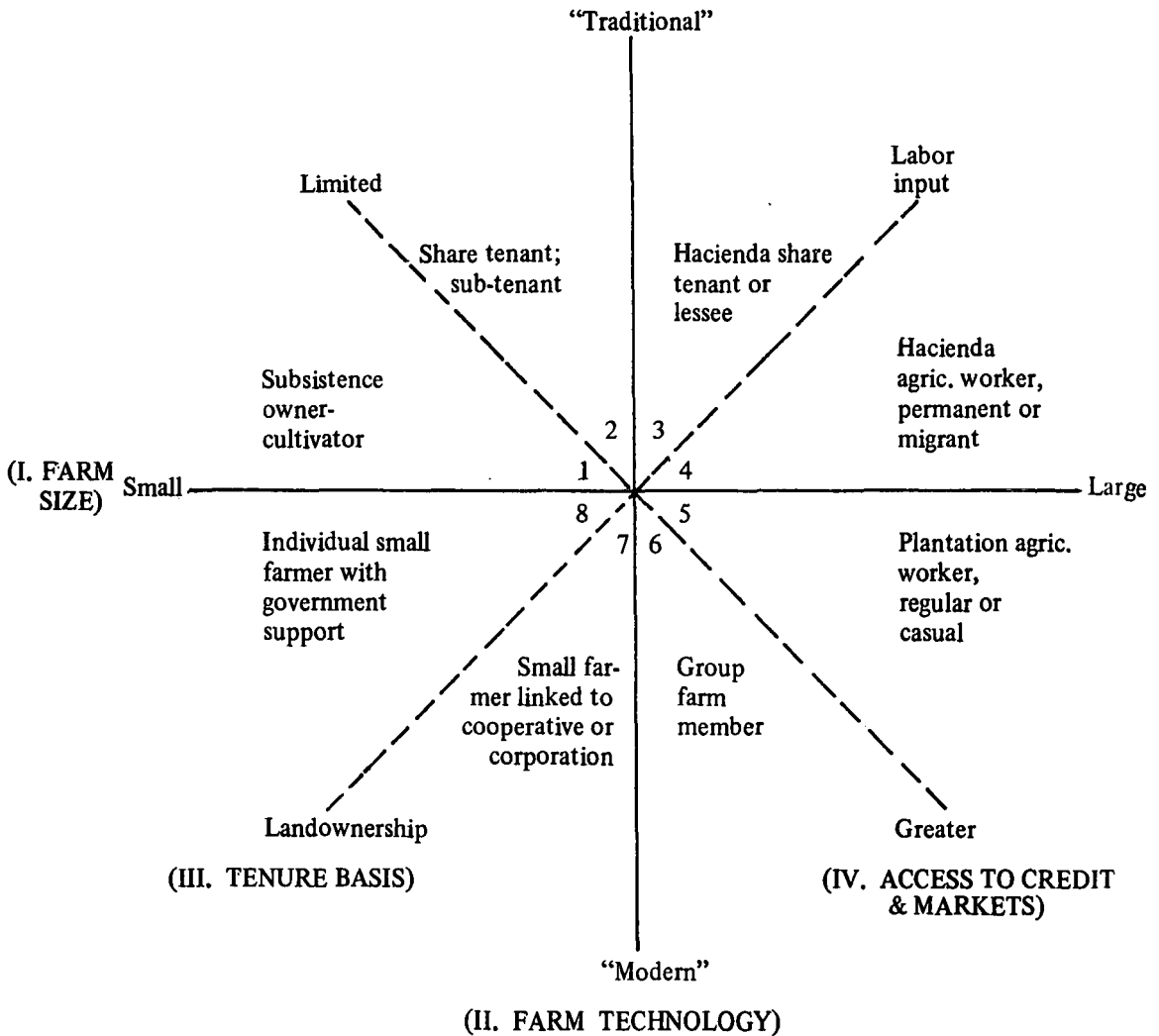


Figure 3. A typology of Filipino peasants in the 1980s.

Type 1 – the subsistence owner-cultivator, commonly found today in upland or rainfed areas; or a small settler in a pioneer area; the peasant in the classical sense, i.e., with his own family farm, independent, and bound to traditional agriculture.

Type 2 – the *kasama* sharecropper under a small landlord; or nowadays a landless worker hiring out his labor to other small farmers at seasonal periods, sometimes in a sub-tenancy arrangement, or through *gamá/sagód* labor arrangements that represent disguised forms of share tenancy involving specified farm tasks such as “free” weeding or transplanting in exchange for an exclusive right to the harvester’s/thresher’s share of the harvest.

Type 3 – the share tenant or lessee (*namumuisan*) within a hacienda setting; patron-client relations are more pronounced with expectations of landlord reciprocity. Several landed estates devoted to rice, coconut, sugarcane, and the like may actually be fragmented for cultivation purposes among many small tenants of this type.

Type 4 – the hacienda agricultural worker, whether permanent or migrant, like the *dumaans* and *sacadas* in Negros and Panay sugar areas; usually under an administrative hierarchy composed of *encargado*, *cabo* and *contratista*. Although capital-intensive in some of the production phases and integrated within an agro-industrial system (like the sugar and coconut industries), haciendas of this type continue to adopt traditional methods of agriculture resulting in inefficient production and the “high costs of cheap labor.”

Type 5 – the agricultural worker, regular or casual, within a plantation economy that is capital-intensive, export-oriented, and oftentimes linked to transnational corporations for capital and marketing requirements; cash crops may be pineapple, banana, coffee, or even rice under Government Order No. 47.

Type 6 – member of a group farm or a land consolidation project where group activities in production, credit, and marketing are stressed. Communal ownership of the land is invoked. Cultural minorities with a tradition of communal landownership may fit in this category once readier access to credit and markets is afforded. Several pilot projects are being tried out in Mindanao and other localities.

Type 7 – small farmer with linkage to a cooperative network or a corporation. Compact farm clusters, *moshav*-type cooperatives, and linkage schemes under G.O. 47 are experiments along this line. One aberration would be for a smallholder to lease out his land to a corporation under onerous conditions which would eventually make him lose control of his basic resource, the land.

Type 8 – individual small farmer receiving some government support in the form of a *Masagana-99* loan, irrigation service, farm-to-market roads, etc.; agrarian reform beneficiaries on rice and corn lands are target groups for this “integrated approach.”

Some development issues

After surveying these types, three issues can be raised in the form of questions.

(1) Can and should a *dual economy* in Philippine agriculture persist? Types 1-3 are often characterized as peasants of a “backward” subsistence economy in contrast to the more “progressive” Types 4 and 5 needed by the country for foreign exchange earnings. On the other hand, with the diminishing of the land frontier, land conflicts have arisen between representatives of the two economies, oftentimes to the detriment of the smallholder.

(2) Types 4-5 highlight the growing significance of *landless agricultural workers* – or the “proletarianization of the peasantry.” Indeed, landless workers (who neither own nor have tenants’ rights to the land) are

becoming increasingly visible not only as Types 4-5, but also in Types 2-3 areas. What are the alternatives towards resolving the problems of landlessness and rural unemployment?

(3) In the light of population pressure and advances in farm technology, what are the realizable models for *agrarian reform* in the decade of the 1980s? Can the individual family-size farm remain as the ultimate paradigm for agrarian reform? Or should agrarian reform models move more flexibly among Types 8, 7 and 6?

In many respects, Types 7 and 6 embody the twin goals of rural development for higher productivity and greater equity — i.e., by combining elements of a modernized farm

technology, security of land tenure, greater access to public services, and, depending on local conditions, small- or large-scale farming units. The likely routes for a dual thrust of agrarian reform would be: counter-clockwise, from Types 2, 1, and 8 to 7; and clockwise, from Types 3, 4 and 5 to 6.

In summary, Types 1-3 are anti-developmental, if public policy and economic rationale are heeded. Types 4-5 continue to dominate the export crop economy, but with adverse implications for the wellbeing and participation of peasant households in their own development. Types 6-8, on the other hand, reflect current thrusts for the development of the Filipino peasant according to his own scale, tenure, technology and social organization.

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