An Alternative Conception of Philippine Class Structure: A Critique of Orthodox Understanding

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The weakness of the dominant analysis of Philippine class structure is partially a result of the lack of the concept of contradictory class locations. The incorporation of contradictory class locations and a more rigorous definition of the basic classes constitute the immediately discernible differences of this alternative class analysis from Guerrero's and Sison's. Its advantage over the Guerrero/Sison class analysis lies in its sensitivity to the complexity of the class structure in peripheral capitalist formations like the Philippines. Partly as a function of this, it is better able to track the trajectories of the different classes and groups in the Philippine formation.

Since Marx and Engels' declaration that the history of all societies is a history of class struggle, the efficacy of class analysis as a tool in social research has been questioned. Mainstream social science challenges its scientific status offering "non-ideological" concepts such as elite theory or patron-client analysis in its place. However, it is not only mainstream social science that rejects class analysis. In the face of the recent post-structuralist onslaught on Marxism, some "Marxist" have also chosen to abandon class analysis as a mode of analysis.¹ Ideological considerations aside, mainstream and avant-garde rejection of class analysis is based on misunderstandings of the concept. What is criticized and rejected is an orthodox and reductionist version of class analysis which a sophisticated Marxism also rejects.

Patrons, Clients and Classes

The patron-client approach to the study of agricultural societies is a current example. Early proponents of this approach present it as an alternative to class analysis, which they claim is unworkable in societies like the Philippines.²

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James C. Scott defines the patron-client relationship as:

... an exchange relationship between roles — (which) may be defined as a special case of dyadic (two person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services to the patron.³

Scott stresses that patron-client is a relation between unequals that is face to face with diffused flexibility.⁴ Patrons are almost always big landlords who provide money for services and goods. These monies are usually loans during bad harvest, gifts for wedding and baptisms, contributions to fiestas and wakes. In a few cases, small landlords act as patrons. Tenant farmers are typically clients. They till the land and provide their patrons a variety of services. These range from housework to voting for their patron's candidates for political offices.

Proponents of this approach argue that it is a relationship wherein "affiliating with a patron is neither a purely coerced decision nor is it a result of unrestricted choice."⁵ But given that, Scott also acknowledges that a rejection by a potential client is "remote, given the patron's control over vital services such as protection, land and employment," it is hardly clear that it is not wholly coerced.⁶ The strength of the tie that binds the patron and his client is such that its deterioration is said to have caused the first major threat to the Philippine Republic. In *The Huk Rebellion: A Study* of *Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. Benedict Kerkvliet claims that the major reason Filipino peasants rebelled is that "the ties which previously ... bound together the rich and the poor broke."⁷ Peasants desired to return to the *status quo ante* which "provided valuable protection and insurance."

Kerkvliet also subscribes to the proposition that patron-client ties are not based on coercion. He expounds:

First, force was not the normal means to maintain traditional ties between landlords and villagers. Landlords need peasants who were loyal, not peasants who were simply forced to stay... Second, their landlord's paternalism was precisely one vital means for peasants to keep their heads above water.

To stress that force is not the primary base of the relation between patron and client is misleading. In stressing consent, proponent of this view conceal the structural constraints peasants face when dealing with landowners. As Scott admits, peasants are hardly in a position to refuse any relationship with the landlord. Hunger is enough to "convince" peasants that the landlord deserves their loyalty. Kerkvliet himself recognizes that without patronage, tenants will be hard pressed to make both ends meet. Does this condition not constitute "force?" Should tenants be dragged at gunpoint and surpervised with a whip when working the landlord's land before force is said to apply?⁸

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Another objectionable feature of the patron-client approach is its implied view on the ignorance of historical actors. Historian Milagros Guerrero, for example, argues that "...(in) the heartland of the (1896) revolution - where to an extent there was a real mass movement, the ordinary folk fought the Spaniards (and later the Americans) because of the ties that bound them to their *ilustrado-cacique* patrons."⁹ Kerkvliet seems to concur in insisting that peasants rebelled because they wish to regain the patron-client ties that existed during the "good old days."

John Shumacher points out that M. Guerrero's own documentation of the abuses of the upper class over the lower classes and the violent reactions of the latter against them shows the inadequacy of the patron-client approach in explaining the revolution.¹⁰ He takes issue with those who underestimate the peasantry and their aspirations:

... it was the Spanish friars — as the Americans would do later — who insisted that the whole revolutionary and resistance movement was the work of a handful of elite leaders who did not represent the people ... (The) case is that the ordinary Filipino peasant stood behind the Revolution, even when it was exploited by those in power for personal gain.¹¹

Instead of perplexed historical actors, peasants who participated in these wars of independence were knowledgeable of the cause and cognizant of the consequences of their actions.

This approach is used not only in the study of Philippine Political history. The "standard source on competitive politics," Carl Lande's Leader, Factions, and Parties: The Structure of Philippine Politics, argues:

The nature of the non-political patron-client relationship which typically exists between landowners and tenants in the rural Philippines is highly relevant to any analysis of the political system not only because landownership is so often combined with political leadership but also because this reciprocal aid relationship between superordinate and subordinate, a social pattern that long antedates the - c introduction of national elections in the Philippines, has been taken over almost intact into the political system.¹⁹

The loyalties born out of patron-client ties are purportedly so strong that they not only elect candidates but also prevent peasant organization along class lines. Lande believes that the relationship between politicians who are able to funnel public funds to benefit their followers is virtually identical to the patron-client relationship of tenants and landlords.

Wilhelm Wolters, by contrast, contests the idea that Philippine politics is best understood through political clientelism. He contends that:

Although the characteristics of patron-client relationships might well be discerned in many of the ties which bind higher level politicians to lower level ones, or local politicians to a handful of immediate supporters, in general the relationships between the politicians and the electorate were short-term, impersonal, instrumental and based on a specific transaction (if any). These relationships, if they may be called relationships at all, endured for a few weeks or months at most, and consequently were of a completely different nature than the multifaceted, dyadic relationships that linked landlords and tenants in the good old days.¹³

Wolters wishes to limit the use of patron-client ties to denote a specific relationship between landlord and tenants. Moreover, he contends that not all relationships between landlords and tenants are patron-client relationships. For Wolters, the latter is "based on durability and continuity, elements that are apparently not always present in the relationship between landlord and tenant."¹⁴ Using his limited definition, he argues that by the 1960's the number of tenants with a patronage relationship with their landlords had been greatly reduced.

Eugene Genovese observes a relationship identical to patron-client coexisting with slavery in the antebellum southern United States.¹⁵ He called this relationship paternalism. Genovese's discussion of paternalism is important as it provides meaningful insights and explanations for varieties of clientelist relationships. According to Genovese, paternalism construes the involuntary labor of the slave as legitimate return to the master for protection and direction. The master acts as the direct provider and protector to the slave and his family, as well as the community. Genovese argues that while paternalism was accepted by both masters and slaves, each class had a radically different interpretation of it. What landlords or slaveowners see as protection is oppression for the tenants or slaves. Paternalism, Genovese continues, is a product of the owners' need to discipline the slaves and to morally justify exploitation. It "afford(s) a fragile bridge across the intolerable contradictions inherent in a society based on racism, slavery and class exploitation that had to depend in the willing reproduction and productivity of its victims."¹⁶ It seeks to hide appropriation of labor-power by another. Nevertheless, "brutality lies inherent in this acceptance of patronage and dependence, no matter how organic the paternalistic order."¹⁷

Genovese's discussion of paternalism suggests that clientelist relations are better understood if class analysis is used. It also shows how class and clientelist relations can be both used to provide a more informed understanding of social and political processes.

Indeed, the complete rejection of class analysis, which is the hallmark of the patron-client approach in its heyday is rectified in the recent literature

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on political clientelism. It is now widely recognized that ties with the patron are not the only force that constrains and defines action, and that clientelism, ethnicity and other structures cooperate with the class factor in constraining outcomes. The new position is expressed succinctly by Rene Lemerchand: "The important issue ... is not whether class or ethnicity are more `relevant' than clientelism but how they interact with their changing environment."¹⁸

However, this rapproachement is not without limits. Lemerchand rejects the idea that relegates patron-client ties to an epiphenomenon of class, calling those who espouse this view "impenitent Marxists."¹⁹ For Lemerchand, patron-client has the same status as class in its explanatory ability. It is another "independent variable."

The recognition of class analysis is but one of the changes in the way the patron-client approach is currently used. It is now also recognized that "patrimonial" clientelism is not the only form that patronage takes. According to its advocates, it also takes the form of "repressive" clientelism. Repressive clientelism, or the erosion of traditional patron legitimacy and the increasing use of force to secure client compliance, is seen as a result of capitalist penetration of agriculture.

The use of patron-client relations is also extended beyond the basic patron-client dyad to include machine politics and relations between nations as well.

Unfortunately, these "compromises" and "extensions" undermine the usefulness of the concept. In the hands of its advocates, the patron-client approach has been transformed into a concept that tries to explain everything. For the patron-client approach to retain its usefulness, it is important to recover its most powerful feature: a way of looking at and understanding a particular social relationship between certain landlords and tenants. In recovering the concept, a historical understanding of the relationship must be added to its theoretical elucidation. To be historical means to understand the conditions that made its emergence possible or necessary. It will be argued that a historical understanding of patron-client ties entails the viable incorporation of class analysis.

Wolters endorses the hypothesis that patronage is offered by landlords only when they are dealing with tenants from a position of weakness.²⁰ Peasants must be induced to stay, otherwise the land remains fallow and unprofitable. When labor is plentiful, landlords have no reason to extend patronage to their tenants. His view suggest that the patron-client relationship is a *product of class struggle*. The "favorable" features of patronclient ties are compromises that landlords had to offer to potential (and actual) tenants in labor-scarce conditions.

Clientelism is best understood as a class-based means of control and exploitation. Class analysis is the foundation that makes patron-client ties intelligible. It can explain why dispensing patronage is a monopoly of certain groups and not others. It can explain under what conditions landlords extend patronage to tenants. Furthermore, it defines the limits for client compliance.

Patron-client and Marxist class analyses are not necessarily contradictory or mutually exclusive approaches. Without the objectionable features of the patron-client approach, the use of one without the other makes for an incomplete account of social process. The Philippines is certainly not an exception.

The Primacy of Class

The claim made by proponents of the patron-client approach that class alone does not determine social change is also at the heart of the poststructuralist rejection of class. Felix Guatarri writes that history's subject is "constituted by and remains a prisoner of repetitive structures, signifying chains wound back around themselves."²¹ E.P. Thompson eloquently describes the present dilemma posed by avant-garde social science:

In the old days vulgar Political Economy saw men's economic behavior as being *lawed*..., but allowed to the autonomous individual an area of freedom, in his intellectual, aesthetic or moral choices. Today structuralisms engross this area from every side: we are *structured* by social relations, *spoken* by pregiven linguistic structures, *thought* by ideologies, *dreamed* by myths, *gendered* by patriarchal sexual norms, *bonded* by affective obligations, *cultured* by mentalities, and *acted* by history's script.²²

Historical actors are not only class members, but also nations, genders - and a host of other interpellations.

Claims ascribed to class analysis by its mainstream and avant-garde critics are misinterpretations. Class analysis recognizes that human beings are products of many determinations, even as they themselves transform and reproduce these determinations. Only in its most vulgar form does class analysis argue that it alone is sufficient to explain social change.

Class is privileged over other determinations because:

(the) interlocking of capital and wage-labor in a relation of dependence and interest conflict is the *chief basis of the dialectic of control* in the productive order of the capitalist economy.²⁹

As a result, "under capitalism, class is an immediate and in some sense a directly *experienced* historical reality"²⁴ In capitalism, capital is both "a mechanism of social organization and mobilization."²⁵ The rhythm of productive and social life takes a definite form, with the former determining the latter. Social life and economic production under capitalism is radically different from non-capitalist social formations. Take the question of time, for instance. In non-capitalist societies the working day is set by sunrise and sunset. The rhythm of economic life follows the seasons. Giddens suggests that among the feudal lords, "calendars often provided precise calculations of the passing days, weeks and years; but precision in time calculation within the course of day to day activity was neither known nor desired."²⁶ Under capitalism, time is divided in terms of seconds, minutes and hours. The workers as well as the capitalist are governed by the clock. The working day is measured in minutes and hours, the rhythm of economic activity is governed by the machine.

The organization of production and the mode of surplus extraction under capitalism is likewise radically different from non-capitalist modes. In feudalism, as in other non-capitalist modes, the surplus extracted takes the form of goods and services which are given up to the lords. The lords appropriate surplus as a matter of right and it is secured by apparati other than the economic. In capitalism, because workers are separated from the means of production and the surplus extracted takes the form of surplus which is realizable only in the market, "the extraction of surplus becomes part of the very process of production."²⁷ Thus, exploitation, is experienced by the workers in the workplace every working day.

The concept of exploitation, the appropriation by certain class of the surplus labor (or value) produced by others is important to the theory of class because it provides the key which unlocks the structural basis for the irreconcilable conflict between classes in the mode of production. It also indicates where control over the production process and social life lie.

The condition of "free" wage labor, the specific feature of capitalist exploitation, explains how class is an experienced reality and provides the key to understanding control in capitalism. Thus, it is important to define classes as "groupings of social agents defined principally but not exclusively by their place in the production process, i.e., in the economic sphere."²⁸

Nicos Poulantzas contends that the production and reproduction of social classes involves two features: (1) the structural determination of classes, based on their place in the production process and (2) the distribution and reproduction of agents in these structures.²⁹ The relationship between these two "moments" is unequal — the distribution of agents to structure is subordinate to the first.

The structural determination of classes is the "objective" way by which classes are defined. Class membership is not primarily a function of agency but of forces or conditions beyond the control of the agent(s). In the production process there are "places" that agents occupy which determine their class. These places exist independent of anyone's will. Whether one likes it or not, the place one occupies in the production process has important consequences in his/her class determination. The second proposition contends that agents "occupy" the places in the production process. It is incorrect to see classes only as "positions" in the social process of production. Classes are also "relations," if contradictory, between groups. The basis for this contradictory relation is the distinction between owners of the means of production and the actual producers.

Wright defines the relationship between class as position and relation:

It is incorrect to see classes as positions which exist independently and only then enter into relations with other classes; but it is also incorrect to see those relations themselves as in any sense existing prior to the classes which they determine. Classes are positions within relations; the analysis of the positions and relations must occur simultaneously.³⁰

Another important feature of class analysis is the perspective that class is a product of historical conditions as much as it is of agency. Classes made themselves as much as they were made. Even Nicos Poulantza's contention that the economic is the primary determinant of class entails the argument of class determination by agents. He explains that the "dominant role of the relations of production over the productive forces and the labor process is what gives rise to the constitutive role of political and ideological relations in the structural determination of class.³¹

Adam Prezeworski endorses Poulantzas' view.³² He argues that classes are effects of struggles, and these struggles are not determined by relations of productions alone. Positions within the relations of production:

... are objective only to the extent to which they validate or invalidate the practices of class formation, to the extent to which they make the particular projects historically realizable or not... Hence, positions within social relations constitute limits upon the success of political practice, but within these historically concrete limits the formation of classes-in-struggle is determined by struggles that have class formation as their effect.³³

But the effect of Poulantza's and Prezeworski's position is the displacement of the role of the economics in class determination. In avoiding economism, by providing space for political and ideological spheres in class determination, they undercut the basis for a privileged class over other relations.

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E.P. Thompson provides another way of thinking through the problem of classes determining themselves.³⁴ He submits that consciousness is important in determining class. For Thompson, "class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), felt and articulated the identity of their interest as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs."³⁵

G.A. Cohen and Perry Anderson dispute the importance of class consciousness.³⁶ Cohen argues that it is the objective place in the production process alone that defines class position. For it alone "protect(s) the substantive character of the Marxian thesis that class position strongly conditions consciousness, culture and politics."³⁷Anderson, on the other hand, challenges Thompson's claim on empirical grounds. He contends that there is no historical evidence that suggests that class consciousness played a crucial role in the class formation outside the English experience.

It is evident that in resorting to consciousness to avoid economism E.P. Thompson commits the same mistake that Poulantzas and Prezerworski made — undercutting the primacy of the economic determination, and consequently the basis for privileging it over other determinations.

In delineating the role of the economic, political and ideological in class formation, it is useful to think of the economic sphere setting the limits to the political and ideological practices. Political and ideological power, while not completely reducible to economic power, cannot be exercised independent of it. The relationship between the economic, political and ideological is not merely historically contingent.

This approach alone retains the primacy of the economic in the constitution of class without lapsing into economism. An important consideration in class analysis is the effect of development and articulation of modes of production in a historically specific social formation. This is important because the existence of classes and their specific characters are determined by the social formation.

The existence of classes other than the fundamental classes in a social formation is a result of the articulation of different modes of production. The abstract classes of the modes of production are not neatly reproduced in the social formation. Not only are the fundamental classes — bourgeoisie, proletariat, petty bourgeoisie, landlord and tenants — present, "contradictory class locations" exist.

According to Wright, contradictory class location "represents positions

which are torn between the basic contradictory class relations of capitalist society."³⁸ Contradictory class locations are not midpoints in a scale but rather "locations within class locations," with interests that are "internally incompatible combinations of the interests of differing classes."³⁹

Wright's account of contradictory class location is developed in his analysis of the United States. He cites small employers, managers and supervisors, and semi-autonomous wage earners as instances of this phenomenon.

The utility of Wright's model, however, is fully realized when used in peripheral capitalist social formations. The complex articulation of the capitalist and non-capitalist modes in the periphery, requires such a concept. Indeed, only when this concept is used that a satisfactory class analysis of Third World formations will be available.

The weakness of the dominant analysis of Philippine class structure is partially a result of the lack of the concept of contradictory class location. But its more serious limitation is a result of the idea that the Philippine social formation is "semi-feudal and semi-colonial."

Orthodox Conceptions of Philippine Class Structure

It is inevitable that any discussion of Philippine classes must seriously confront Guerrero's analysis, not only because it is the only extended class analysis to date but also because it has significant implication on Philippine politics. (See Figure 1.)



Figure 1. Class Structure in the Philippines by A. Guerrero

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Guerrero suggests that a pyramid graphically represents Philippine class structure.⁴⁰ At the tip are the landlords and the big bourgeoisie. Immediately below is the national bourgeoisie, then the petty bourgeoisie. The next rung is occupied by the proletariat and then by the peasantry.

Classes are further subdivided into strata. Guerrero uses the following to distinguish classes: ownership of the means of production, the distribution of what is produced, the position in the process of production and political standpoint.⁴¹

Landlords are those who "own vast tract of lands, do not engage in labor and exploit the peasant masses principally through the exaction of land rent."⁴² Included in this class are those who "assist the landlords in collecting rent or managing landed estates and who are better off than the average middle peasant on the basis of their share in feudal exploitation."⁴³ For "tactical purposes," the landlord class is divided into big, medium and small strata. The criterion for this division is the size of their landholdings.

The big landlords are one of the main enemies of the revolution. These landlords are the close allies of imperialism and are the "most powerful in the national center of the reactionary government."⁴⁴ Big landlords are in the production of agricultural export crops. They are "either wholly or partially engaged in capitalist farming".⁴⁵

Guerrero confuses landlords with landowners. In his paradigm the juridical relation of land ownership, and not the relations of production, becomes the prime criterion in defining the landlord class. In so doing, he lumps those in capitalist agriculture with those who simply produce for the capitalist market, regardless of the relations of production.

The bourgeoisie is divided by Guerrero into three strata: The comprador big bourgeoisie, the middle or national bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie.⁴⁶

The comprador bourgeoisie acts as imperialism's major trading partner and financial agent. They are engaged in the export of raw materials and the import of finished products.

The middle or national bourgeoisie "is the middle stratum between comprador big bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie."⁴⁷ They "represent capitalist relations of production in the country," and are interested in local, capital led, industrialization. This class stratum is "oppressed to a great extent by imperialism which has its own direct investment (in the Philippines) in a big and strategic way". ⁴⁸ This stratum is also linked with imperialism in var-

ious ways, i.e, credits, patents, license agreements and the like. But Guerrero only sows confusion when he identifies the national bourgeoisie as the "middle bourgeoisie". Classes are not determined by "strata" but by production relations. The national bourgeoisie is a distinct class fraction by virtue of its place in the production process and not because it occupies a middle position between the different fractions of the bourgeois class.

Guerrero argues that the "petty bourgeoisie is the lowest and most sizable stratum of the local bourgeoisie".⁴⁹ The petty bourgeoisie is characterized by "relative economic self-sufficiency accruing either from the ownership of a small amount of productive means of possession of some special training or skills."⁵⁰ This class stratum is further subdivided into upper, middle and lower levels "distinguishable on the general basis of income."⁵¹

Including the petty bourgeoisie within the bourgeois class is a serious error. The petty bourgeoisie is not part of the capitalist mode of production but of simple commodity production. The petty-bourgeois is neither capitalist nor worker because he is capitalist and worker at the same time. On the other hand, the bourgeoisie controls the instruments of production, labor of other, and investments and resource allocation. Thus, while the bourgeoisie exploit others, the petty bourgeois does not. There are instances in Guerrero's discussion of the petty bourgeoisie when income becomes an important determinant of class. If class analysis is not social stratification, classes and their functions are certainly not determined by income. To lapse into class determination by income only contributes to the misunderstanding of class.

The peasantry, according to Guerrero, "is distinguished from all other classes by the fact that all its members cultivate the land."⁵² The peasantry is divided into the rich, middle and poor peasants. The use of hired labor and size of landholdings accounts for the division. The poor peasants own no land and are "often obliged to sell their labor power."⁵³ The middle peasants are more or less self-sufficient by virtue of their work on their own land. The rich peasants own and till their own land and have surplus land that they let to the poor peasants. Guerrero refers to the rich peasants as the "rural bourgeoisie" and the middle peasants as the "rural petty bourgeoisie."

It is not only his discussion of the different strata of the peasantry that is confusing. His definition of each stratum is also confused. According to Guerrero, middle-peasants are those who:

... own land that more or less allows them to be self- sufficient. Otherwise they only own part of the land and rent the remainder or they do not own the land at all and rent all of it. But in any case, they rely mainly on their own labor to earn an income that allows them to be self-sufficient.⁶⁴

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This stratum actually includes three groups with potentially distinct interests: Those who own the land they till, those who are part landowners and those who rent all the lands they till.

Adding to the already confusing division of the peasantry into different strata and the definition of these strata, Guerrero also argues that the middle peasant strata have three levels: the upper, middle and lower. The basis for distinction is the degree of self-sufficiency based on landholdings and harvest. Those in the upper level have a little more than sufficient income, those in the lower level are always threatened with bankruptcy.

The basis for unity of Guerrero's peasants is unclear. "Workers of the land" may be a useful description of a group but hardly a defining characteristic of a class. Class categories are not based on where agents work but by the social relations of production. This is an elementary point he seems to miss in his discussion. Guerrero's discussion of the peasantry provides further evidence that in his work other criteria supplant relations of production in defining classes.

The proletariat are the industrial and farm workers who are "wage earners and own no means of production."⁵⁵ This class is a victim of "the most brutal oppression and exploitation."⁵⁶ This definition can be improved by adding that the proletariat are those who have no control over authority relations, the instrument of production, and the investment process in the production process.

The semi-proletariat is a class category for Guerrero. They are those who:

suffer from dispossession, irregularity and insufficiency of income and insecurity. There are those who have only simple implements ... carry their lives as peddlers and small stall keepers ... those who have nothing at all but their labor power to sell"

As defined, this is a curious class category. This seems to be the place where everybody not included in previous categories is grouped. The only unifying characteristic of this "class" is that they "are not concentrated in comparison with the poor and semi-owner peasants."⁵⁸ Yet, like the proletariat, "they have nothing at all but their labor power to sell."⁵⁹

Concentration is an odd criterion for class differentiation. If it means physical concentration regardless of whether or not there is interaction in the production process, it cannot be used as a basis for class distinction.

This is tantamount to arguing that the place of work and not the kind of work defines class.

The lumpen proletariat are "the dregs of Philippine society."⁶⁰ Due to "forced idleness", elements within this class "resort to anti-social acts to make a living."⁶¹

That society's dregs exist is not in question. However, to consider them as a class is highly questionable. By Guerrero's own admission, nonparticipation in the economy is characteristic of this group. What then is the basis for this group to be a class?

Guerrero's contention that "it is impossible for any person in the Philippines today to claim (that) he does not belong to any class or to any stratum within a class," is difficult to defend.⁶² If classes are determined primarily by one's place in the economic sphere, how can those outside of this sphere be part of a class?

Guerrero's class analysis confuses the relational and gradational theories of class. Throughout his discussion of Philippine class structure, he slides from the relational theory to the gradational, and vice versa. In the gradational view, "class division is conceived as a division into groups differentiated according to the degree in which: they possess the characteristics which constitute the criterion of division, as for instance income level." ⁶³ In the relational approach, classes are defined " by their structured social relationship to other classes".⁶⁴ From these definitions it is clear that a Marxist class analysis is relational and not gradational.

While Guerrero explicitly sets out to do a relational theory of class, in practice he smuggles elements of the gradational theory into his definitions. This is most evident in his discussion of class strata where income almost always becomes the defining criterion.

Jose Maria Sison builds on Guerrero's class analysis.⁶⁵ Unfortunately it is the weaknesses of the latter's theory that Sison builds on. This is understandable because the basic premise, that Philippine society is semifeudal and semi-colonial, is unchanged. According to Sison, the comprador bourgeoisie is the "principal trading and financial agent of the US and other transnational corporations".⁶⁶ This class represents semi-feudal forces in the country because it appropriates surplus through mercantile negotiations. "Through import-export transactions and lending operations, the comprador big bourgeoisie amasses wealth in the form of commercial profit and interest, and draws to itself the highest concentration of capital from the surplus

product of the country".⁶⁷ Many comprador are also big landlords; the latter is the initial source of their wealth. They also own some of the Philippines' largest and most profitable manufacturing enterprises.

The national bourgeoisie extracts surplus value from its workers. As its full development is hindered by foreign capital, this class is seen by Sison as a potential ally in the proletarian revolution.⁶⁸

Sison includes a new twist in the definition of this class stratum by identifying the "middle entrepreneur" as the core of the national bourgeoisie. Sison repeats the mistake in *Philippine Society and Revolution*. when he includes the petty bourgeoisie in the bourgeois class. Indeed, the worst features of the old definition are carried into the new one. According to Sison:

Sison's glosses on the landlord class adds another stratum to it. There are now "old-style" and "new-style" landlords. The old-style landlords collect rent from their tenants while the new style landlords hire farm workers. It is unclear how this new class division affects the old division.

The landlord class is now characterized as those:

(who own) vast tracts of land and collect rent from the great mass of tenants on assigned plots. To further enlarge the surplus product it extracts, it uses other methods of exploitation, such as hiring of farm workers, usury, merchant operations, renting out of farm equipment and draft animals and the like which may be called semifeudal forms of exploitation.⁷⁰

Another class Sison discussed is the rich peasantry. This stratum not only fails to advance the course of capitalist development, but also replaces the old landlord families in certain instances.

The new style landlords and the rich peasantry or the rural bourgeoisie are seen by Sison as semifeudal elements in the countryside. He argues that their development is still "circumscribed by feudal relations in the rural area."⁷¹ In *Philippine Society and Revolution*, Guerrero defined the farm workers as the rural proletariat. Sison takes a different approach in his work. He argues that there are three categories of farm workers. These are:

¹⁾ those who are still poor peasants and lower middle peasants owning or tenanting small plots, who own some simple farm implements but who sell part of their labor power as seasonal farm workers;

2) those who have been dispossessed of both land and implements and who fully, or in the main, sell their labor power; and

3) those who are in transition to full unemployment and the worst form of pauperization and who may subsequently migrate to urban areas to do odd jobs.²⁰

Again it is hard to see why he includes those who own instruments of production in the same category with those who do not. Other questions this new definition inspires are: Are farm workers still part of the proletariat? Or are they now part of the peasantry? Are the farm workers members of two classes or just one?

It is difficult to envision how this typology is reconcilable with Guerrero's class analysis in Philippine Society and Revolution. Sison's discussion of the proletariat dovetails neatly to the productive/non-productive worker debate among Marxists in the developed capitalist social formation. For Sison:

Only in a broad or loose sense can we speak of a large working class by lumping together all wage earners, like the industrial, service and farm workers. In the analysis of the mode of production, we should distinguish the modern industrial proletariat from the rest of the wage-earners if we are to correctly measure the extent of capitalist development.ⁿ

Sison is not alone in arguing for a restricted definition of the proletariat. The critics of this position are likewise numerous. The issue, the nature and size of the proletariat, has important theoretical and political repercussions. Sison did not explicitly explain why he excludes service and farm workers from the working class. The substantive reasons for rejecting the move to limit the proletariat to industrial workers will be explored in the forthcoming discussion of an alternative Philippine class structure.

To sum up the preceeding discussion: Guerrero's and Sison's class analyses are fraught with difficulties. They are confused and confusing.

An Alternative Conception of Philippine Class Structure

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The fundamental classes in the Philippine social formation are the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the petty bourgeoisie, the landlords and the tenants. The contradictory class locations are between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie and the landlords, the petty bourgeoisie and the tenants, the landlords and the tenants, the tenants and the proletariat, and the landlords and the bourgeoisie. Figure 2 is a graphic representation of this class structure.





CONCEPTS OF PHILIPPINE CLASS STRUCTURE

The proletariat and the bourgeoisie are the fundamental classes in the Philippine's capitalist mode of production. Wright discusses the differences that distinguish these classes:

Capitalists control the authority structure as a whole, decide how the physical means of production are to be used, and control the accumulation process. Workers, in contrast, are excluded from control over authority relations, the physical means of production, and the investment process.⁴

The locale where the capitalist invest is immaterial to the definition of the class. Thus Guerrero's (and Sison's) "big landlords" by this definition are members of the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie is composed of different fractions – potential social forces that emerge from the different "moments" in the reproduction of capital. This class is divisible to different fractions on the basis of the different forms capital takes in the circulation and production process commodity capital, money capital, etc.

Poulantzas defines fractions as "those social ensembles which are capable of becoming autonomous fraction, according to the criterion of pertinent effects."⁷⁵ Pertinent effects are new elements introduced by class(es) in the political and ideological structures, elements that will not be there if not for this class or fraction's intervention. Autonomous fractions are those class fractions that are potential social forces.

While all these fractions have an interest in protecting private property and the right to appropriate surplus value from workers, they are not unanimous on how best this should be done. Each fraction is also interested in ensuring that its interests are well protected even if it is to the detriment of other fractions or classes. "Free wage workers," whether they work in the fields or factories, are the proletariat. Contra Sison, membership in this class is not restricted to industrial workers or productive workers alone.

Poulantzas argues that only "productive" workers are members of the proletariat. He argues that for Marx, "productive labor" is an important component of the definition of the working class. He adds:

the real subsumption of the labour process by capital, i.e., its extended reproduction (as distinguished from its formal subsumption), contains within it and directly links up with, the general definition of productive labour, for it is nothing other than the form that this latter assumes in the capitalist reproduction of labour.⁷⁰

The distinction between productive and non-productive labor is important to Poulantzas as it determines the economic boundary between the working class and the (new) petty bourgeoisie. Poulantzas defines productive labor as "labor that produces surplus value while directly reproducing the material elements that serve as the substratum of the relation of exploitation: labor that is directly involved in material production by producing use-values that increase material wealth."⁷⁷

It is difficult to sustain the distinction between productive and nonproductive because in certain instances a worker is doing both productive and unproductive work. Wright cites a grocery store clerk as an example.⁷⁸ The clerk is engaged in productive labor when s/he stocks the shelves with goods but is doing unproductive labor when s/he is at the cash register.

The argument that unproductive workers exploit the productive workers because their wages come out of the surplus value that only the latter produce is also spurious. Mandel argues that wages and salaries of unproductive workers "are not drawn from *currently produced surplus-value*, (therefore) their payment in no way reduces the currently paid wages of productive workers."⁷⁹

Furthermore, for the argument to hold that unproductive workers exploit the productive workers, it must be proved that the elimination of this sector leads to higher wages for the productive workers and not to higher profits for the capitalists. The reduction of the number of unproductive workers in general will have no positive effect upon the productive workers. Indeed the opposite may be true. A negative effect on the workers is more likely since "unproductive" workers are engaged in undertakings that represent socialized form of wages, e.g., nurses in public health centers or road builders.

Finally, it has yet to be demonstrated how the objective interests of "productive" workers diverge from "unproductive" ones over the issue of overthrowing capitalist production relations or the institution of socialism.

The petty bourgeoisie is the basic class in simple commodity production. As argued previously, simple commodity production is not properly of the capitalist mode. It is:

commodity production without wage labor and capitalist profit. The concept of this mode supposes private property, a social division of labor, and production for sale by individual producers (and their families) who own the means of production. In this mode the conditions of production are secured through the econcinic forms of private property in land ... and the production of commodities and their sale.[∞]

Small employers who hire a few wage workers are included in this class, as long as the surplus produced by these hired workers does not exceed that produced by the petty producers and their families.

The owner-cultivator of farms in the countryside, the small shopkeeper, as well as those engaged in the so-called cottage industries in the cities are all part of this class. There is a tendency to include in this class category those who have "special training and skills". This view is misleading because "it is not skill per se that defines the class location but rather the actual production relations associated with that skill or credential."⁸¹

The landlord and the tenant are the basic classes in the non-capitalist mode of production in the Philippine social formation. The landlords are those who collect rent from tenants by virtue of their ownership of part of the means of production, the land. Unlike capitalist agriculture, the workers of the land are not wage-workers. The tenants also own part of the means of production (usually the plow and the carabao), control the process of production and pay rent for the use of land. The particular social relationship that ensues from this production relationship is described as patron-client.

The use of the term tenant and not peasant is important. The concept "peasant" is vague and designates a variety of groups. Sidney Mintz argues:

No serious attempt to describe or define a peasantry anywhere is likely to be ideally effective without recognition that the very devices that may ensure the viability of the peasant sector as a totality also reveals its limitation in terms of the trajectories of particular groups within that sector.²⁰

Dale Johnson criticizes the category contradictory class location. He contends that in proposing it " ... Wright, in effect, postulates a classless strata^{[n]83} It is a misreading of Wright to argue that those in contradictory class locations are in effect classless. Wright merely claims that agents in these categories cannot be considered as members of the fundamental classes. Not because they do not have any class interest but that they have contradictory interests. These contradictory interests are a result of the contradictory locations in the modes of production that they "fall in." The petty bourgeois/landowners defend the interests of the petty bourgeoisie and landowners. To have contradictory interest is not the same as having none.

Studies on the effects of capitalist penetration on agriculture show the existence of groups who "occupy" two or more occupational categories. The Institute of Philippine Culture's study of landless rural workers reports that "dependence on farm employment characterized rural workers." ⁸⁴ Wolters notes the following combination of jobs in a Central Luzon barrio: large-holding tenant + commercial market gardeners; small landowners + tricycle driver + usurer; small landowner + usurer; large-holding tenants + Kapitan del Barrio (village head); etc.⁸⁵ While these studies discuss occupational

CONCEPTS OF PHILIPPINE CLASS STRUCTURE

categories, insofar as occupational categories reflect positions in the production relations, they indicate the existence of contradictory class relations.

The existence of groups not neatly reproduced in the basic classes is undeniable. Unless one wishes them away, it is important to incorporate these groups in any discussion of classes. Wright provides a most creative and illuminative way to examine these groups and explain their tendencies.

Contradictory Class Locations

Contradictory Class Locations Within a Mode of Production. Contradictory location within the capitalist mode lies (1) between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; in the non-capitalist mode it is located (2) between the landlords and the tenants.

Contradictory location between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are those who have control over physical means of production and labor but not over investment decisions. Included in this class category are managers whose positions allow them control over production but not in what is to be produced. The highest rung of the managerial strata, those who also have investments in their corporations, are not members of this contradictory class category.

What J. Rosenberg and D. Rosenberg describe as "strong tenants" in Landless Peasants and Rural Poverty, are those in the contradictory class location between the landlords and the tenants. Rosenberg and Rosenberg describe this group's origin and its role in the production process:

Many of these strong tenants did not take advantage of leasehold and rent reductions of tenancy reform when other tenants demanded them. The strong tenant remained loyal to the landlord, and thereby kept their shareholding arrangement and their source of credit, which the new lessees lost. They were rewarded with irrigation water at favorable rates, the use of the landlord's tractors and priority with the threshing machine at harvest. The strong tenants were able to become important credit sources for the lessees, whose debts to them accumulated. Eventually many lessees were forced to sell their tenancy rights to their creditors, the strong tenant.⁵⁶

Their position is different from the tenants because of their privileged access to capital, a position which then, translate into an economic gain.

Contradictory Class Locations Between Modes of Production. Contradictory locations between the capitalist mode and simple commodity production are situated between (a) the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, and

(b) the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie; and when they are between simple commodity production and the non-capitalist mode they are (c) the petty bourgeoisie and the landlord, and (d) the petty bourgeoisie and the tenants; and between the capitalist mode and the non- capitalist mode is (e) the tenant and the proletariat contradictory location.

An important defining feature of the contradictory class location between the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie is the amount of surplus they appropriate from the direct producers. Whereas the petty bourgeoisie appropriates no surplus and the capitalist appropriates enough to ensure reproduction and expansion, members of this contradictory class location appropriate little surplus. Their firms are not as big as those of the smallest capitalist nor as small as the biggest petty bourgeois producer.

Members of the contradictory class location between the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie have immediate control over conditions of work and the immediate labor process but are still wage-workers. Wright discusses this group:

In their immediate work environment, they maintain the work process of the independent artisan while still being employed by capital as wage laborers. They control how they do their work, and have at least some control over what they produce.⁴⁷

Those in research and development section of large corporations are generally in this contradictory class location.

The contradictory class location between petty bourgeoisie and landlords are composed of landowners who are not totally dependent on rent and are also "professionals." They are usually "white collar workers who have inherited land or those that buy land as hedge against inflation. The size of their landholdings vary from seven to twenty-four hectares. Rosenberg and Rosenberg estimates that this contradictory class comprise 13.6% of all rice and corn landowners, owning 26.5% of all rice and corn lands and are landlords to 32.4% of all rice and corn tenants.⁸⁸

Wolters observes several categories of rural entrepreneurs active in commercial union cultivation in the Central Luzon barrio he was studying. Of particular interest for this discussion are those who plant rice during the rainy season as tenants and commercial vegetables during the dry season as "independent" farmers. Wolters describes this group and the conditions that make them possible:

A few landlords allow some of their rice land to be borrowed or rented during the dry season by their *kasamas*, who grow onions, cabbage, tomatoes or petsay

(chinese cabbage) at their expense. Since few *kasamas* have access to sufficient credit, only a handful are able to do this, and then only in a very small scale.⁵⁰

This constitutes the contradictory class location between the petty bourgeoisie and the tenants.

Contradictory class locations between the proletariat and the tenants are reproduced by capitalist wages and peasant production. They are usually called semi-proletariat. According to Cynthia Banzon-Bautista:

Semi-proletarian reproduction is a contradictory form in that objectively, the interests of peasant-workers do not necessarily coincide with the interest of the proletariat. On the other hand, they are not completely dispossessed, and thus, may have at their disposal adaptive mechanisms for survival.^{∞}

The incorporation of contradictory class locations and a more rigorous definition of the basic classes are the immediate discernible difference of this class analysis from Guerrero's and Sison's. Its advantage over the Guerrero/Sison class analysis is that it is more sensitive to the complexity of the class structure in peripheral capitalist formations like the Philippines. Partly as a function of this it is better able to track the trajectories of the different classes and groups in the Philippine formation.

By Way of Conclusion

Undoubtedly more empirical research has to be done to approximate the size of the various class and contradictory class locations. This theoretical critique of orthodoxy, drawing on contemporary debate on class, is merely the first step in reconceptualizing Philippine class structure. The urgency of the matter cannot be overemphasized, further delay in understanding Philippine class structure would cost us dearly.

Endnotes

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¹⁴E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Book, 1966).

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