

The Reproduction of Petty Commodity Production among Rice Farmers in the Philippines

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This paper looks into how petty rice farms and their producers are made, unmade and re-made through time. It discusses the reproduction or decomposition of households on a daily as well as generational bases. On the whole, the paper argues that the reproduction or decomposition of petty rice production and its producers is a complex process involving daily and inter-generational negotiations.¹

There are numerous studies in the Philippines which characterize and describe rice farming and rice farmers, but none of them has sought seriously to explain how they are reproduced on a daily and generational bases. Initial observations and existing literature indicate that some petty rice farms

and their producers are reproduced successfully while the great majority of them find difficulty in renewing their farms and themselves. Their vulnerability under certain circumstances points to the importance of understanding the processes through which their farms and themselves are reproduced from one round to another, and from one generation to the next. How exactly are they reproduced? What are the conditions which facilitate the reproduction or decomposition of petty rice production and petty rice producers? Put differently, what are the internal characteristics of this form of production and its producers which ensure their daily and generational reproduction? Furthermore, what are the characteristics of the

Philippine social formation which help the reproduction of petty commodity production among rice farmers? Some of the specific questions to be answered are the following:

1. Who have been the petty commodity producers since the 1950s to the present? Do the present crop of petty commodity producers come from the same households as those of the 1950s? If yes, how did they secure their conditions of production such as land, water, agricultural inputs, credit and labor since the 1950s to the present? How is the production unit transferred from one generation to the next? Is the production unit divided among the members of the household? If the present petty commodity producers do not come from the same households of petty commodity producers as in the 1950s, how did they acquire their means of production?

2. Since petty commodity production is operating within capitalism in which competition is the rule, how successful are petty commodity producers in allocating their labor and capital? Do they always face the possibility of becoming either capitalists, managers or wage laborers? How do they respond to such possibilities?

Such questions can be answered by using the concepts of

reproduction and decomposition. These concepts demonstrate the dynamic aspect of the technical and social bases of production both within and outside the household. As suggested by Friedmann (1978a:554), the reproduction process of a form of production can be understood if its bases of stability are specified. These are the conditions for the recreation of one round of production to another, as reproduction occurs when the act of production results not only in a product, such as rice, but also recreates the original structure of social relations so that the act of production is repeated in the same form (Friedmann, 1978a: 555).

Guided by the above research questions, this paper presents generational life histories of selected farming households collected from one village in the Philippines. In-depth interviews were conducted to elicit from the cases the ease or difficulty of the reproduction process of their farms and themselves.

Theories of Petty Commodity Production (PCP) and Petty Commodity Producers (PCPs)

Petty commodity production (PCP) is a form of production² characterized by the unity of labor and capital in the production unit³. This simply means that the owners of the means of production and

laborers are the same individuals. This combined ownership of the means of production and labor means that antagonistic relations between owners of means of production and laborers as to the disposal of the products of labor are non-existent in the productive organization. The producers of this form of production are called petty commodity producers (PCPs) or what is traditionally known as petty bourgeoisie. They are equivalent to the peasantry in agriculture (Draper, 1978:290).

Though PCPs are distinguishable from capitalists, PCPs are nevertheless allowed to obtain additional labor from the labor market every time their households' labor supply falls short. There is always a tendency among the successful petty bourgeoisie to employ hired help, even though they themselves continue to work longer and harder than their 'hands' (Draper, 1978: 289). Further expansion may turn them into primarily employers of wage laborers, although they continue to manage the business personally. Thus they may become, in effect, small bourgeois (petty capitalists) combining three roles as capitalists, managers and laborers (Draper, 1978:290). These points raised by Draper are important to contextualize the operations of Philippine petty rice producers.

Conditions of Reproduction of PCP and PCPs

In order to understand how PCP is reproduced, it is necessary to determine its conditions of existence. According to Marx (1972:531), the conditions of production must also include those of reproduction. Like the capitalist form of production, PCP exists only under a generalized commodity production (Friedmann, 1978a; 1980; Gibbon and Neocosmos, 1985), or is explicable only under a general theory of capitalism. PCP is also specialized, equally dependent on the price movements of all commodities bought and sold, and equally subject to pressures to achieve levels of productivity determined through the market (Friedmann, 1978a:549). However, though PCP and the capitalist form of production have the same conditions of existence (Friedmann, 1978a; 1980; Gibbon and Neocosmos, 1985), differences in their internal structure have far reaching implications. A capitalist form of production involves two classes, one which owns the means of production and another which labors; the two are related to one another through the wage relation. The capitalist purchases the labor power of others to set the means of production in motion (Friedmann, 1978a:548). PCP involves only one class, which both

owns the means of production and provides labor power to set the former in motion. Relations within PCP is based on kinship (Friedmann, 1978a:548). Because of the differences in their internal structures, PCP has different cost categories from a capitalist form of production. Hence, the bases of their continued existence are different from one another (Friedmann, 1978a:549).

The capitalist form of production is viable and continues to be viable as long as profit (through the extraction of surplus value from the workers) is generated from it. On the other hand, PCP does not need profit to remain in production. Bernstein (1986:19) says the objective of PCPs is simple reproduction. This means that the act of reproduction does not only result in a product, but also recreates the original structure of social relations so that the act of production can be repeated in the same manner (Friedmann, 1978a:555). Its objective is the continued integrity of the production unit as a unit of productive and personal consumption (Friedmann, 1978a:559).

Like the capitalist form of production, PCP is private and individualized in its form, and (relatively) specialized. This private

nature of production makes possible the specialization of productive activity and the consequent necessary interdependence of private producers via exchange.

In essence Friedmann (1978a) says that PCP and its participants can be reproduced only through the "C-M-C" circuit, where C represents commodities, M, money, and all exchanges are equivalents. What is produced in one year is exchanged for money, which in turn is exchanged for commodities used to renew means of production and members of the household. Friedmann's view of the reproduction of PCP is very much akin to Marx' views when he says that:

all circumstances remaining the same, the only mode by which it can reproduce its wealth, and maintain it at one level, is by replacing the means of production—i.e. the instruments of labor, the raw materials, and the auxiliary substances consumed in the course of one year—by an equal quantity of the same kind of articles; these must be separated from the mass of yearly products, and thrown afresh into the process of production (Marx, 1956:566).

Trajectories of PCP and PCPs

What then is the tendency of PCP and PCPs under capitalism? Marxist thought views the existence of PCP as a transitional stage in the development of capitalism. However, it is now recognized that PCP and PCPs show no sign of disintegration. In fact some claim that current trends reinforce, strengthen, or maintain this form of production (Goodman and Redclift, 1981). This is especially true in agriculture.

Friedmann, Gibbon and Neocosmos, and Bernstein provide other insights on the tendency of PCP and PCPs under capitalism. Friedmann maintains that the reproduction of PCP and PCPs is a non-transformative process (Whatmore, 1991:22) and advances that PCP and PCPs do not differentiate under capitalism because of the unity of property and labor into one household (Friedmann, 1978a:559). PCP lacks the structural requirement for a surplus product or profit. Its objective is the continued recreation of the integrity of the household as a unit of productive and personal consumption (Friedmann, 1978a:559). PCPs are interested only in the reproduction of their farms and family labor on a daily and generational basis, and in the reproduction of the relations of production of the PCP enterprise

through the transfer of capital and land between successive generations of the family (Friedmann, 1980; 1986a). Friedmann argues that these features constitute the basis for the flexibility of the enterprise and its competitive advantage over capitalist producers (Friedmann, 1978a; 1980). In contrast, the relations of reproduction of labor and the social relations of production in a capitalist enterprise are commoditized and dependent upon the wages and profits determined in the process of competition and, are therefore, not internally regulated. In Friedmann's view, PCP is viewed as a production unit located in, but insulated from, the imperatives of capitalist expansion (Whatmore, 1991:22). Hence, theory does not allow for transformation or differentiation over time in the external and internal relations of PCP (Whatmore, 1991:22).

Gibbon and Neocosmos (1985:175) offer yet another illuminating explanation of the tendency of PCP and PCPs. They posit the stability of PCP and the instability of PCPs under capitalism. They believe that PCP is always a permanent feature of capitalism. They argue that one of the contradictions between capital and wage-labor in capitalist society is the rise of the productivity of labor as a result of increased exploitation. This tends to occur in all branches

of production, but at an uneven rate as capital abandons some in favor of more profitable ones in constant search for a greater rate of profit. One consequence of this is to reopen once abandoned areas of production to small-scale enterprises. Another consequence is the creation of spaces making possible the realization of surplus-profits for petty-bourgeois enterprises (Gibbon and Neocosmos, 1985: 178).

It must be pointed out that for Gibbon and Neocosmos, it is necessary to differentiate PCP and PCPs as these phenomenal categories have different trajectories and development in capitalism. They argue that the petty commodity form of production is always a permanent feature of social formations where capitalist manufacture predominates but has not yet reached the stage of modern industry. PCP is produced and reproduced during the period of capitalist manufacture (Gibbon and Neocosmos, 1985:174). The specifically capitalist nature of manufacture for Marx, according to Gibbon and Neocosmos (1985:174) should be noted, as this form of the labor process is also founded on the underlying antagonistic relation between capital and wage labor which it presupposes as a condition of its existence. Marx argues explicitly in Part 8 of *Capital* (Vol 1) that PCP is both destroyed

and created during this period. This is because manufacture

always rests on the handicrafts of the town and the domestic industry of the rural districts as its ultimate basis. If it destroys these in one form, in particular branches, at certain points, it calls them up again elsewhere, because it needs them for the preparation of raw materials....It produces therefore a new class of small villagers who, while following the cultivation of the soil as an ancillary calling, find their chief occupation in industrial labor, the products of which they sell to the manufacturers directly, or through the medium of merchants (Gibbon and Neocosmos, 1985:174).

This passage, according to Gibbon and Neocosmos (1985:174) is much more complex than is usually recognized. It is wrong to read that Marx asserts the linear proletarianization of the peasants, at least during the manufacturing period. It is machinery and modern industry which, for Marx, "expropriates radically the enormous majority of the agricultural population" and "conquers for industrial capital the entire home market" (Marx as cited by Gibbon

and Neocosmos, 1985:175). Therefore, according to these authors, it is modern industry--a particular form of capitalist production--which for Marx "annihilates the peasant", not capitalism in general.

In sum, the classic statement of capitalist development itself maintains that certain forms of capitalism actually produce PCP while others destroy it. While there is the exaggerated form of instability in the petty commodity producing enterprise as a result of the combined ownership of means of production and labor, it always arose and is constantly brought into existence by capitalism. This is what Lenin says to this effect:

Capitalism arose and is constantly arising out of small production. A number of 'new middle strata' are inevitably brought into existence again and again by capitalism (appendages to the factory, work at home, small workshops scattered all over the country to meet the requirements of big industries, such as the bicycle and automobile industries, etc.) (Lenin as cited by Gibbon and Neocosmos, 1985:176).

According to Gibbon and Neocosmos (1985:176), there are certain general conclusions which can be derived from the above

arguments. What could be termed a struggle over control over the means of production occurs throughout the historical existence of capitalism between labor and capital, to the benefit of the latter. It is not the case, however, that the process of separation of labor from the immediate process of production takes place at once and for all during a single period of so-called primitive accumulation, or even that it mostly takes place then with some subsequent mopping up of persisting remnants. Rather, there is a constant contradictory struggle in which some direct producers always manage to acquire access to means of reproducing themselves independently, only to be expropriated later, and so on. For the moment, it is sufficient to note that capitalism systematically creates the space for PCP.

On the other hand, according to Gibbon and Neocosmos (1985:177), the PCPs have always the tendency to differentiate into capitalists or wage laborers as a result of the combined ownership of the means of production and labor. They based this position on the *Theories of Surplus Value of Marx* which states that:

The independent peasant or handicraftsman is cut up into two persons. As owner of the means of production he is a capitalist, as laborer he is his own wage laborer. As

capitalist he therefore pays himself his wages and draws his profit on his capital; that is, he exploits himself as wage laborer, and pays himself in the surplus-value, the tribute that labor owes to capital (Marx as cited by Gibbon and Neocosmos, 1985:177).

In the *Theories of Surplus Value* Marx saw the "embourgeoisement" of PCPs as a possible outcome alongside their proletarianization. Thus

the handicraftsman or peasant who produces with his own means of production will either gradually be transformed into a small capitalist who also exploits the labor of others, or he will suffer the loss of his means of production...and be transformed into a wage-laborer. This is the tendency in the form of society in which the capitalist production predominates (Marx as cited by Gibbon and Neocosmos, 1985:177).

Corollary to Gibbon and Neocosmos' (1985:177) position, Bernstein (1994:30) argues the instability of PCPs under capitalism. However Bernstein sees that aside from the inherent instability of PCPs brought about by the unity of labor and capital within the productive unit, PCPs are always facing the

possibility of differentiation because of variations in the following conditions:

1. conditions of access to key resources (land, credit) and to markets, and relations with powerful groups and individuals (landowners, merchants, agrarian and industrial capitalists, state officials);

2. nature (climatic uncertainty, ecological degradation on one hand, the availability of land and labor enhancing technologies on the other);

3. markets (the relative process, or terms of trade, of what they need to buy and what they need to sell to purchase necessities); and,

4. government policies affecting their economic conditions as (1) to (3), and access to public goods such as health care, clean water, and education, which affect the reproduction of labor.

The reproduction therefore of PCP and PCPs is always precarious. Those among them who are already in the brink of failing to reproduce their labor and means of production would be subjected to what Bernstein (1994:31) calls simple *reproduction squeeze*. They would reduce their consumption or reduce the use of some agricultural inputs. Some of them would even pay the

so-called 'starvation rents' (Bernstein, 1977:65), or sell their food crops after harvest in order to meet immediate cash needs. 'Starvation rents' is the payment made by PCPs of higher than average rents to secure a plot of land for minimal reproduction needs. If their production of commodities gives them insufficient income to renew their cycle of production and their household labor, this would lead them to indebtedness. If simple reproduction squeeze is a losing battle, they would become semi-proletarianized or proletarianized.

On the other hand, some PCPs may be able to meet the demands for simple reproduction while others may be able to engage in expanded reproduction: to increase the land and/or other means of production at their disposal beyond the capacity of family labor. They then start to employ the labor of others, and may undergo a transition from better-off PCPs to capitalist farmers (Bernstein, 1994:31).

Bernstein, therefore, sees the reproduction of PCP and PCPs precarious under conditions of generalized commodity economy. He believes that the more production is integrated into commodity economy, the more precarious their reproduction is (Bernstein, 1988:113). In brief, the continual reproduction of PCP and

PCPs is dependent on external and internal factors impinging upon them.

Household Case Histories

The Reproduction of Farms and Households

Following are the family trees of several households which are presented here to illustrate how farms and households and their successors are reproduced.

Households T and M1.4

The women in households T and M1.4 are daughters of Mr and Mrs T. Mr and Mrs T originated from a neighboring province and arrived in the village in the 1930s in search of work. They acquired their right of access to the farm after they converted their sugar cane farm to a rice farm in the late 1930s. They died without transferring formally their right of access to the farm to their two daughters. Consequently, it became the source of disharmony between the two sisters, leading to the decomposition of their farm and of themselves as petty rice producers.

The decomposition of Mr and Mrs T's farm began when they were still alive. They had earlier lost the right to cultivate their farm when they mortgaged this for 700 pesos. This might be the reason why they failed to transfer their farm formally

to their two daughters. After their deaths, their eldest daughter (the woman in household M1.4) redeemed the mortgage after selling her earrings and a necklace. She then pawned the land for 2,000 pesos. She redeemed it again, after which she pawned a portion of the farm for 5,000 pesos. The other portion was left under her household's cultivation. But her hold on this other portion did not last long as she also pawned it for 1,500 pesos to another mortgagor. Later on, she consolidated her mortgage to 17,000 pesos. Aside from enlarging the amount of mortgage, the new mortgagor permitted her household to cultivate it under a sharing arrangement. After some years, she transferred the mortgage to another mortgagor for 50,000 pesos. So, the right of access was transferred again. All those mortgages were unknown to her sister. When the sister (the woman in household T) found out what was happening to their farm, she lodged a complaint with the Department of Agrarian Reform Office. The Department conducted an investigation, after which they transferred the right of access to the woman in household T. What she got, however, was only the formal right of access to the farm but not the farm itself. She could not take possession of the farm as it was mortgaged, and neither was she in a position to redeem it. Hence, like her older sister, she took advantage of

possessing the right of access to the farm by mortgaging it for a bigger amount. She negotiated to increase the loan to 65,000 pesos and got the 15,000 pesos difference. Towards the end of my fieldwork, she was increasing the mortgage to 80,000 pesos. When the older sister came to know about it, she wanted to get one-half of the loan increment. That was about 7,500 pesos. Otherwise, she would block the loan negotiation.

The amount of loan which the younger sister was negotiating was almost equivalent to the prevailing exchange value of right of access to the farm in the village. Based on the present economic situation of households T and M1.4, it seems impossible for them to redeem the mortgage. Both households lack substantial assets except their labor power. They will lose the farm in the future.

Household T is still young. The oldest daughter of this household is only 13 years old and the youngest son is two years old. The husband is lowly educated and works as a farm laborer. The woman works as a *mamamaggpag* during harvest season. Since farm work in the village is available at certain periods of the year only, both the woman and her husband are unemployed most of the time.

The woman in household M1.4 is married to one of the members

of household M who inherited 0.7 hectare from his parents but lost it through time. He is known to be a gambler. Two of the children in Household M1.4 are already married and have their respective households. The household is small with only three members.

The M-related Households

The M households trace their roots to household M.0 which settled in the village sometime in the 1900s. Fourteen households were created out of household M.0, 10 of which remained in the village. Households M1.2, M1.5, M2.2 and M2.7 however, left the village for good. M1.2 and M1.5 were second generation households, while M2.3 and M2.7 were third generation households. Household M.0 was known to have cultivated 4.17 hectares of rice farm. This farm size was considered big since farm work was done using animal and human power and machines were not used at all in farm work. M.0 cultivated the farm by depending on the human power of its household. When the three sons of household M1.1 and a son of household M1.4 were already grown up, they began to help out in farm work.

The reproduction of farms and households in the M-related households was ensured through the division of farms among sons and daughters. Though each son and daughter was not given an

equal share, all of them were given a small piece of land. The sons of households M1.1 and M1.4 who participated in farm work were also given direct inheritance by their grandparents. Their share was deducted from the inheritance of their fathers. The biggest parcel was the 0.9 hectare given to the youngest son, while the smallest parcel was only about 0.1 hectare or 1,000 square meters. Two such parcels were given to households M2.3 and M2.4. The ten households which remain in the village are marginally related to the land. While household M1.1 still retains the right of access to a 0.2 hectare farm, its members are no longer dependent on it for a living. The oldest woman in this household works as a *mamagpag* during harvest season while her daughter joins a rice planting group. She also works in a shoe factory in another town from time to time. This household loses its right of access to the farm temporarily whenever they use it as a guarantee for a substantial loan. The temporary transfer of right of access to the farm to a mortgagee occurs frequently so that most of the time the farm is not under their cultivation.

Like household M1.1 which time and again loses its right of access to the farm, households M1.3 and M1.4 seem to be losing theirs permanently. These households have pawned their right of access

to their farms for a big amount of money. Household M1.3 pawned its right for 50,000 pesos and used the money to finance the overseas employment of the woman in the household. While she is able to send remittances, these are not used to repay their loans. Instead, the household uses these for daily reproduction. The man in M1.3 is also very sickly which makes him unproductive, although he raises one to two heads of swine at a time.

Aside from the woman who works overseas in household M1.3, one other member works as a security guard in the nearby town. He does not earn enough however to substantially contribute to the reproduction of the household. All the other household members are either in high school or elementary school.

Household M1.4 is a small household with a daughter who is not in school. This household temporarily lost its right of access to the farm because the man is a gambler. Since they do not have their own farm to cultivate, the woman and her daughter work as hired farm laborers. The man cultivates the farm of household M1.5 on a share basis. He is paid 15 cavans.

Households 2.1, 2.3 and 2.4 also lose their right of access to the farm from time to time. Of the three, only household 2.1 has members

working in the factories as security or process workers. The other two households are mainly dependent on rice farming for their employment. They work as farm laborers.

Household B

Household B3.1 is an extended, 3-generation household with five members. Mr B3.1, the oldest man in the household, is in his mid 50s. He and his wife have two married sons who are in their 30s. The younger son (Mr B4.2) and his family stay with them. The older son maintains a separate household beside them.

Mr B3.1's grandparents used to farm three hectares. When his mother got married, his grandparents gave her two hectares and retained one hectare for themselves. Mr B3.1 helped to farm his grandparents' one-hectare parcel when they were already old. This parcel was the one handed down later to Mr B3.1 as his inheritance. Mr B3.1 brought this right of access to the farm into his household.

Mr B3.1 has two sisters who are married to non-farming husbands. They do not live in the village. Mr B3.1's parents gave their right of access to the farms only to Mr B3.1's sisters. Each was given a right of access to a one-hectare farm. Mr B3.1 was no longer given a share as he had already been given one

by his grandparents. His sisters hold these rights of access to the farms to this day. Since they do not reside in the village, the operation of their farms is entrusted to Mr B3.1's oldest son.

Household S1.2

Household S1.2 comes from one of the earliest settlers in the village. S.0 used to farm 4.0 hectares. This farm was divided equally between three sons and a daughter. These people are all married and have their respective households. Two of them however, are childless. These two enlarge their farm through mortgage from time to time.

Household J1.4

Like Mr C1.1, the man in household J1.4 arrived in the village in the 1980s with nothing except his labor power. He married the youngest daughter of one of the landowners in the village. Before coming to the village, he was a working student in Metro Manila. He met his wife in Manila where they lived for sometime after their marriage. When life in the city was becoming unbearable for his wife, they decided to return to the village. At first he did not know how to farm. His father-in-law encouraged him to learn rice farming. When his father-in-law went to America to visit his only

son, the farm was left to him. After a year, this was withdrawn from him as his father-in-law returned to the village. Since he had already learned the techniques of rice farming, he began to scout for farms which he could farm under leasehold. Luckily, he found a 1.7 hectare farm.

He claimed to have been gifted with good harvests in this farm. Since his family was still young, and they stayed with his parents-in-law, their living expenses were kept at the minimum. His wife also used to sell chicken, rice, fruits and vegetables in a nearby residential area which helped with their daily food requirements. So at the end of harvest season, he could easily keep a major portion of the proceeds of his crop sale in the bank.

Thus, when a nearby farm was offered for sale, he bought this, but sold it again after making a windfall "profit". He used this money to construct his house. After three years, the farm on which he had a lease was withdrawn from him. He looked for another farm to work on and found another 1.7 hectare farm for lease. Later, 0.7 hectare of the 1.7 hectare farm which he was working was sold to him. He now owns this farm but relinquished his lease on the remaining one hectare plot.

Meanwhile, the property of his father-in-law was subdivided among his children. His wife got 0.5 hectare inheritance. Aside from the inheritance of his wife, the inheritance of his brother- and sister-in-law who are overseas has been put under his management. On top of these farms, he is currently leasing another three-hectare farm, bringing his total farm area to 5.0 hectares.

Household F

Household F is composed of Mr and Mrs F.0, a daughter and her unmarried son, and the daughter's grand daughter. In addition, Mr and Mrs F.0's two grandsons from a son who had passed away also stay in their household.

Mr and Mrs F.0 used to farm 2.8 hectares. Of these, 1.4 hectares were divided between two other sons. Mr F.0 reasoned that it was better to give them a piece of land where they could plant rice for their food rather than have them depend on him. Household F1.3 belonging to another son was not given an inheritance as he no longer resides in the village and has a secure life.

Mr. F intends to give his remaining farm to his only daughter who stays in his household. This farm has to support all the present members once Mr F.0 is gone.

Household A

Mr A.0 in household A was born in the village. Maintaining an extended household, he lives with his youngest daughter and her husband and five children, and with another unmarried daughter. He has two other daughters and a son who are married and have their respective households outside the village. They are engaged in activities other than agriculture.

Until recently, Mr A.0 held a right of access to a 1.7 hectare farm which he obtained through his own efforts in the 1940s. Mr A.0 and his household lost the right of access to one hectare of the farm, however, when he was hospitalized in April 1993 which required his household and other family members to raise a substantial amount of money. They borrowed P75,000 against the one-hectare portion of their farm. This reduced their operational land holding to 0.7 hectare only.

Households D and P

Mr M and Mrs D are siblings in household D. They are 64 and 60 years old, respectively. Mr M stays in household D as he wanted to cultivate his farm personally. His family resides in another province. The siblings used to farm 1.0 and 2.0 hectares respectively, but their farms have been reduced to 0.4 and

0.8 hectares after their landowner sold the property. Both refused to allow their landowner to sell his property unless they were given a corresponding share in the form of land. Mrs P in household P got her property through the same process as Mr M and Mrs D.

Mr M has a son and two daughters. All of them are married and have their own households. His wife stays by herself in their own house. He visits her every other week. Mrs D, on the other hand, has a son and two daughters. Mrs D's household includes the family of one of her married daughters. Mr M and Mrs D's children are working outside the farm.

Mrs P's children, too, are out of rice farming, having found jobs in a nearby research institution. Since their farm is already very small, they left this with their brother-in-law who lives in their mother's household.

Mr M and Mrs D came to the village in the 1930s, following an uncle who worked as a share tenant in a nearby village. They got hold of their present farm and started working on it in 1943. The farm was previously planted with sugar cane but they converted this to rice farms. They worked as share tenants from the beginning. Upon the declaration of

Presidential Decree No 27 in 1972, their tenure was changed into permanent leasehold. Their landowner sold the property in 1992. The landowner wanted to give them cash as payment for their right of access to farm. They insisted that their right of access to farm be given in the form of land, however, as a cash payment would be dissipated easily. So, they were given a share of land under the 60:40 sharing arrangement. Theirs is the first such case in the village.

Household E

Household E has three members. The man is 74 years old while the woman is 60 years old. A grandson aged 16 stays with them. They have a 0.9 farm cultivated by their son and son-in-law. These two workers are paid seven and six cavans of palay, respectively. The wife of Mr E0 maintains a small sari-sari store. Mr and Mrs E0 claim that the store helps them a lot in their daily and farm needs.

This household used to farm two parcels of rice fields owned by two landowners with a combined area of two hectares. When the 1963 agrarian reform law was to be implemented, one of the landowners took back his land from them. Since then, Mr. E0's farm size has remained the same, while his other four brothers were

dispossessed of the farms they were cultivating which were owned by the same landowner.

Despite the advanced age of Mr E.0, he and his wife are not thinking of transferring their right of access to their children.

Household C

Household C also comes from one of the first settlers in the village. Mrs C.0, the matriarch, is a pensioner and owner of a five-hectare rice farm. Her pension comes from the death benefits of her husband who was killed by the Japanese during the Second World War. She has two daughters, C1.1 and C1.2. C1.1's husband (Mr C1.1) manages the communal estate of Mrs C.0. Aside from this role, Mr C1.1 is also a well known leader in the community. He is a town councilor from which he receives a salary.

Mr and Mrs C1.1 got married in the 1950s. Mr C1.1 is a migrant to the village from a nearby province. When he married Mrs C1.1, he had nothing except his labor power. He started to raise his family by working as a laborer in sugar farms in the village. He was later promoted as a security guard in the sugar farm where he worked. After some time, he bought a jeepney and used this to transport young coconuts to another province. In

1957, while engaged in the petty trading of young coconuts, he entered rice farming as a share tenant with one of the landlords in the village. He farmed two hectares as a share tenant until his landlord withdrew the farm from share tenancy in 1963. After withdrawing the farm from share tenancy, the landlord offered it for sale to previous tenants. His mother-in-law bought the farm by borrowing money against her pension from a local bank. After they had paid the loan, they bought another three-hectare farm nearby which was also offered to them for sale.

Mrs C.0 stayed with Mr and Mrs C1.1. Her pension and the income of the farm formed the income of household C. Mr C1.1 acknowledged the big help given to his family by his mother-in-law, without which he and his wife would not be able to support the expenses of their growing family. They have eight children. All of them earned university degrees and have well secured jobs today.

The husband of Mrs C1.2, on the other hand, was not interested in farming. He did not live in the village and worked overseas. Also, it was recognized that Mrs C.0 was able to buy the estate because Mr C1.1 helped her repay her loan and now manages the farm. In return for all of this assistance, his mother-

in-law supported his household. Now that Mrs C.0 is already old, she has subdivided her estate into two but as long as she is alive, she remains the owner and farm proceeds accrue to the household where she stays.

Mr. C1.1's motivation in rice farming evolved through time. When he was still young, he farmed to support his growing family. As he grew older and the farm bigger, his motivations have changed to that of investments. He views farming now more as a business than a way of life.

Household L

Household L is composed of three generations. The man in this household (Mr L1) is the only son of Mrs L0. Mrs L0 is a pensioner and stays in household L. Her husband was killed by the Japanese during the war. Mr and Mrs L1 have four children. Two are university degree holders while the other two are still in school. Mrs L1 is a teacher.

Mr L1 farms five hectares, two hectares of which are owned by the household while the remaining three hectares are mortgaged to them. Mr L1 started rice farming as a lessee. They were able to buy two hectares of farms after borrowing money from the bank. They gave the salary of Mrs L1 and the pension of Mrs L0 as guarantees

to obtain the loan. However, they repaid the loans from the proceeds of the sale of the products of their farm. They used the salary of Mrs L1 and Mrs L0 for their daily household reproduction. Aside from these sources of income, the household also raises swine and ornamental plants. During harvest season, Mrs L1 also engages in petty rice trading.

Mr L1 claims that rice farming is profitable and a good investment. His household encounters no problems in the reproduction of the farm. Labor on the farm is supplied by other households whom they contract.

Discussion of the Cases

The family trees and histories of the 12 households show a remarkable increase in the number of households which originated from them after almost 100 years. The 12 original households have multiplied into 62 households. Of these, only 30 households are involved in rice farming. The other 32 households had left rice farming (Table 1) at the time of the research.

The way farms and their producers were reproduced and the movement of people away from rice farming can be understood only in the context of the growing capitalist social relations in the Philippines. This village was peopled at the beginning of the 20th century and,

Table 1
Number of households created in each generation
and the number of households in each generation
which have access to farms

Households created in each generation

	T	M	B	S	J	F	A	D	P	E	C*	L*	Total
First generation	Gone	Gone	Gone	Gone	Gone	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Second generation	1	5	Gone	4	4	3	3	5	3	3	1	0	31
Third generation	None yet	9	3	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	22
Fourth generation	None yet	None yet	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	1	14	4	4	8	4	4	6	4	4	8	1	62

Households which have access to farms

	T	M	B	S	J	F	A	D	P	E	C	L	Total
First generation	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Second generation	1	5	NA	4	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	16
Third generation	NA	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Fourth generation	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1	9	3	4	4	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	30

at the time it was newly settled, its inhabitants were already greatly affected by capitalist social relations. The conversion of sugar cane farms to rice farms occurred as a result of the collapse of sugar prices in the international market. The earliest settlers started farming in the village as sugar cane laborers. Later on, they became rice peasants. Their descendants became petty rice producers and most of them are enroute to becoming full pledged proletarians in the years to come.

The conversion of sugar cane laborers to rice peasants demanded that farmers reproduce themselves greatly in order to farm a big area. This was because land was abundant but labor power was lacking. The lack of labor power could have been offset by the use of farm machines but farm machines were virtually absent in the village before the 1960s. Farms were prepared for planting through the use of hoe and carabao only. Describing land preparation before the advent of farm machines, Mrs. E.O. says:

"Noong una, ang ginagamit lamang sa pagtutubigan ay patik at kalabaw. Halos dalawang buwan naming pinapatik ang isang ektarya bago iyon matamnan". (We used to prepare land by the use of carabao and hoe. We spent almost two months in

preparing one hectare farm before transplanting).

Since labor was necessary then to farm a big land area, and the labor market was yet in its infant stage of development, households had to meet their labor demands from their own households and in the community through exchange labor arrangements. If labor demand was not met by these labor mobilization techniques, most often, households were forced to relinquish portions of the farms and gave them for free to others who were willing to farm. It is in this context that families wanted to have as many children as possible to farm as big an area as they could. I remember the words of people if a family or household had many children:

"You are well blessed. Your children would give you so much wealth."

Maybe the number of children born during the 1950s and the 1960s did not differ substantially from those born earlier, but due to the advent of "modern" methods of prenatal and child care during the period, the chances of newly born babies surviving to maturity were greater than before. Consequently, population grew tremendously since the 1950s. While the present generation, at that time, were multiplying themselves in great numbers, they were also expanding

their farms. The situation in this village was not different from the rest of the country. The agricultural growth in the Philippines from 1950 to 1959 was due more to the increase in land put under cultivation than to land productivity (David and Barker, 1979: 132). By the time they were about to retire sometime in the 1960s, almost all cultivable land was already under cultivation. There was no other way for the younger generation, who were socialized to become the next rice producers, to acquire land except through the inheritance of farms. This was the context under which the practice of partible inheritance occurred. As a consequence, the land per worker decreased. David and Barker (1979:132) noted the decreasing land per worker from 1959 to 1969.

The practice of partible inheritance among those who started farming before the 1950s in this village resulted in the reproduction of farms and households intergenerationally as shown in Table 1. Farms are reproduced, albeit in smaller parcels, after the previous generation subdivided their property between their children and grandchildren. Of the 28 households which have right of access to farms today and which originated from the 10 families who began farming before the 1950s, 23 obtained their farms through inheritance. The farms of these 23 households have been handed

down once only from the older generation.

Families that practiced partible inheritance differ from each other in terms of who were the heirs and heiresses, the size of inheritance and when this was given. In households M, land was not equally subdivided among the heirs and heiresses, while in households B, S, J and F, land was equally subdivided. The heirs and heiresses were usually sons and daughters. But heirs and heiresses were not limited to the next generation since grandchildren could inherit also. This pattern of inheritance occurred when grandchildren played significant roles in the reproduction of the farms during the later years of the old generation. Households M and B exhibit this inheritance pattern.

The time when an inheritance is passed to the next generation also differs from household to household. Though it was customary to establish the next generation on their own share of the land as they reached an appropriate age (rather than delay the division of inheritance until the death or formal retirement of the old generation), its implementation was dependent on the size of the land holdings, the number of potential heirs and heiresses as well as the desire of the older generation to grant early autonomy to the younger generation. When the number of

potential successors was limited, as in the case of Mr and Mrs B.O, the decision to hand over the inheritance upon the marriage of their only daughter was done quickly. Mr and Mrs B.O gave a bigger two-hectare parcel of their farm to their daughter and kept a smaller one-hectare parcel for themselves. Since their needs were now limited, while their daughter was just beginning her household and would have a bigger one in the future, she was given a bigger parcel to farm.

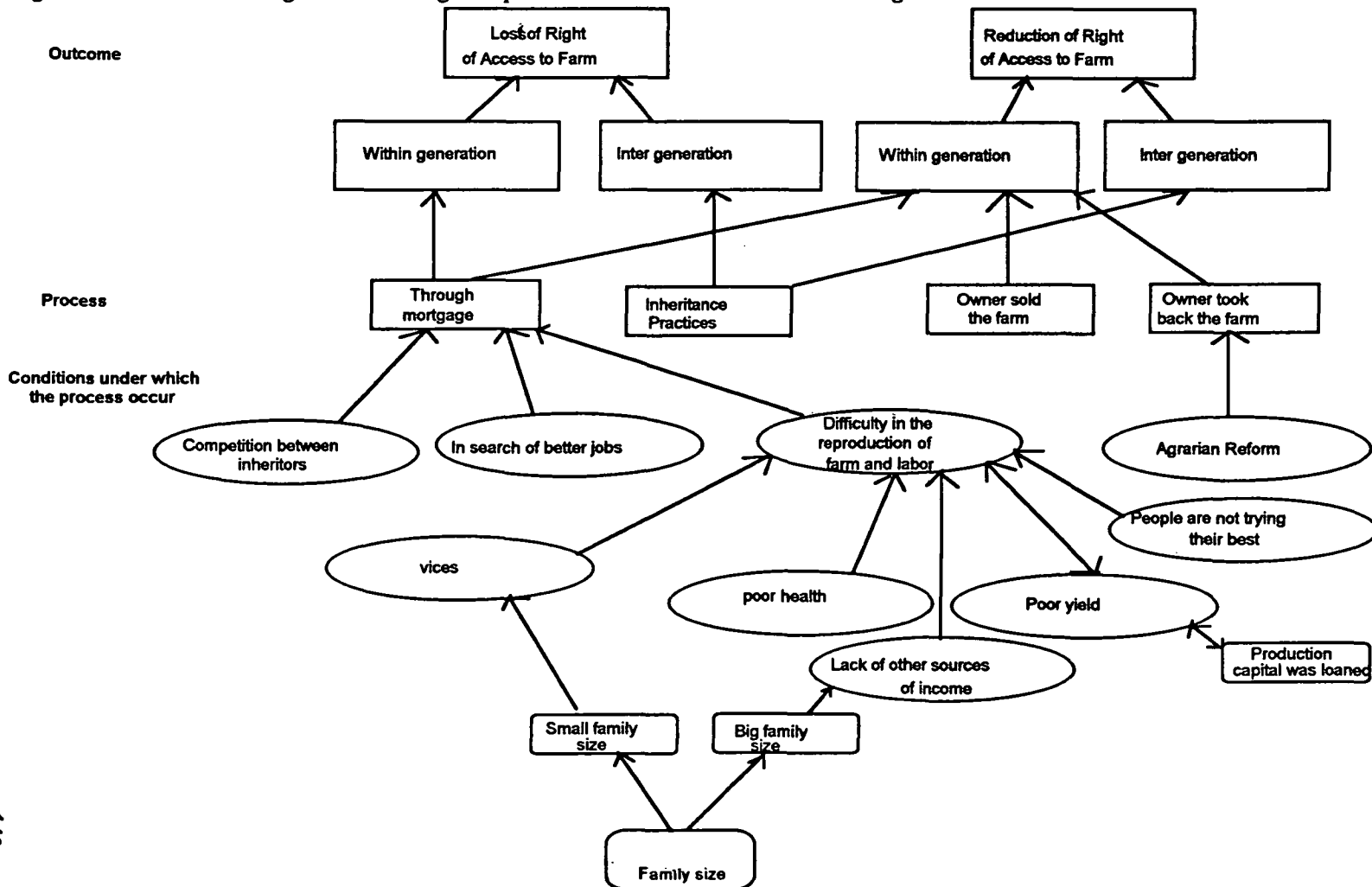
The desire of the older generation to grant early autonomy to the younger generation also facilitates the handing down of inheritance. According to Mr F.O, he gave the inheritance of his two sons while he was still alive so that they could become economically independent. This resulted not only in the economic independence of the younger generation from the older one but this also maintained harmonious relationships across generations.

Binigyan ko na sila ng ganang kanila, para sila ay may sariling pinaghihirapan at hindi na nahingi (I gave their share so that they have land to work on and would not ask from me.)

The practice of partible inheritance need not necessarily have resulted in the multiple

reproduction of farms and households. This may have been avoided if heirs and heiresses decided to operate the farm as a single unit by establishing partnerships. Or in some instances, the shares of other heirs or heiresses could have been bought out by one of them who would remain on the farm. But these alternatives were not practiced by any of the heirs and heiresses in the case studies. All of them opted to operate their own inheritance, thereby leading to the reproduction of very small farms and households which could barely survive on these. The practice of dividing property among heirs and heiresses is prohibited by Philippine agrarian reform law, but this is ignored by the people when it comes to the actual handing down of the estate to the next generation. People in the study village also said they preferred impartible inheritance (Saniano, 1981). They knew that their farms would disintegrate if they divided them between many heirs and heiresses. However, when the time came for them to hand down the estate to the next generation, they did the opposite of their expressed inheritance preference and what is provided in the law. The divergence of inheritance practice from the existing law is reflected in the lack of records, showing the fragmentation of previous farms to smaller parcels, in the Municipal Agrarian Office. For example, no records exist that show the estate of Mr M.O

Figure 1. Schematic diagram showing the process of loss or reduction of right of access to farms.



to have been already subdivided into nine farms operated by nine households. The non-congruence between actual inheritance practices and legal provisions is observed to be happening in other countries too (see Goody et al. 1976 and Blanc and Cornet 1993).

The reasons why inheritance patterns diverge from what is provided by law are often determined by land tenure, customs and economic conditions (Berkner, 1976:72). In the study village, the divergence was more related to the lack of alternative career paths for most of the succeeding generation. While the villagers were aware of the consequences of subdividing their farms among several heirs and heiresses, they also had to confront the lack of employment opportunities in the village. The few that were available did not offer long term security nor enable household descendants to achieve social and political prestige within the village (Saniano, 1981:163). Therefore, the possession of even very small parcels of farm would always ensure descendants of a plot where they could raise their subsistence requirements. The usefulness of having small parcels of land where households can raise their food is eloquently put by one wife in the following way:

Sa amin ay mahalaga ang tubigan kabit pang kain

lamang sapagka't kung wala kang hanapbuhay saan ka kukuhang isasaing? Ngayon kung may palay ka, kabit wala kang pang ulam makakain ka. Kung may palay ka sa bahay para ka naring empleyado, sigurado ang pagkain. (For us, a rice farm is important because if you do not have a job, where would you get your rice to cook? Now if you have a farm, you would eat, even without viand. It's just like you are employed, your rice is assured.)

The above statements give us a picture of the importance of rice farms in the context of limited employment opportunities. While the above statements are not cast in theoretical terms, they nevertheless give an insight of how petty rice producers treat rice production as a means to reproduce their labor power. The comparison of obtaining rice supply from rice farming and being able to live by the sale of labor power indicate their understanding of work for wages itself. In their view, the amount of wages people get for selling their labor power is equivalent only to the amount necessary to reproduce themselves on a daily and a generational basis. This position is in line with Marx (1956: 170-171) who argues that

Labor power exists only as a capacity, or power of the living individual. Its production consequently presupposes his existence. Given the individual, the production of labor power consists in his/her reproduction of himself/herself or his/her maintenance. For his/her maintenance he/she requires a given quantity of the means of subsistence. Therefore the labor-time requisite for the production of labor power reduces itself to that necessary for the production of those means of subsistence; in other words, the value of labor power is the value of the means of subsistence necessary for the maintenance of the laborer....His/her natural wants, such as food, clothing, fuel and housing must be sufficient to maintain him/her in a normal state as a laboring individual.

It must also include the amount necessary for the reproduction of labor power on a generational basis so that labor power will appear in the market continuously,

in the way that every living individual perpetuates himself/herself, by procreation....Hence the sum of

the means of subsistence necessary for the production of labor power must include the means necessary for the laborer's substitute, i.e., his/her children, in order that this race of peculiar commodity-owners may perpetuate its appearance in the market. The exchange-value of labor power must also include the amount necessary to train the laborer to become a special kind (Marx, 1956:172).

If such is the case of wage employment, and if petty rice producers are also able to reproduce themselves daily and generationally by not converting themselves into labor power and instead use themselves⁴ to produce something for their own subsistence, then they think that they are not different at all from those who work for wages. Their position is even more advantageous as they do not have to find their subsistence from the labor market which is unpredictable and unstable. This is well expressed by one of the respondents who said that:

pag ikaw ay walang tubigan, ikaw ay bibiling bigas.... ang mabigat ay pera. (If one does not have a farm, you have to buy rice.... the problem is the money)

The practice of partible inheritance seems to be associated with the formation of nuclear households. This tendency is shown by almost all the households which originated from Mr and Mrs T.0, Mr and Mrs M.0, Mr and Mrs S.0, and Mr and Mrs J.0. Only two extended households came out from this group. These were households M1.2, and B3.1. Household M1.2 became extended as it accommodated the unmarried sister of Mrs M1.2 and the family of one of the sons of Mr and Mrs M1.2. Household B3.1 became extended as Mr B3.1 got sick and could no longer perform farm work.

The case study households, with the exception of that of Mr J1.4, were trained and socialized to become rice producers. Consequently, they had internalized and accepted farming as an element of their own selves so that it was natural for them to become such also. When asked why they engaged in rice farming, their reasons revolved around the following statements: "they were born and grew into it" and "that is the only work I have known ever since". In the vernacular, they say,

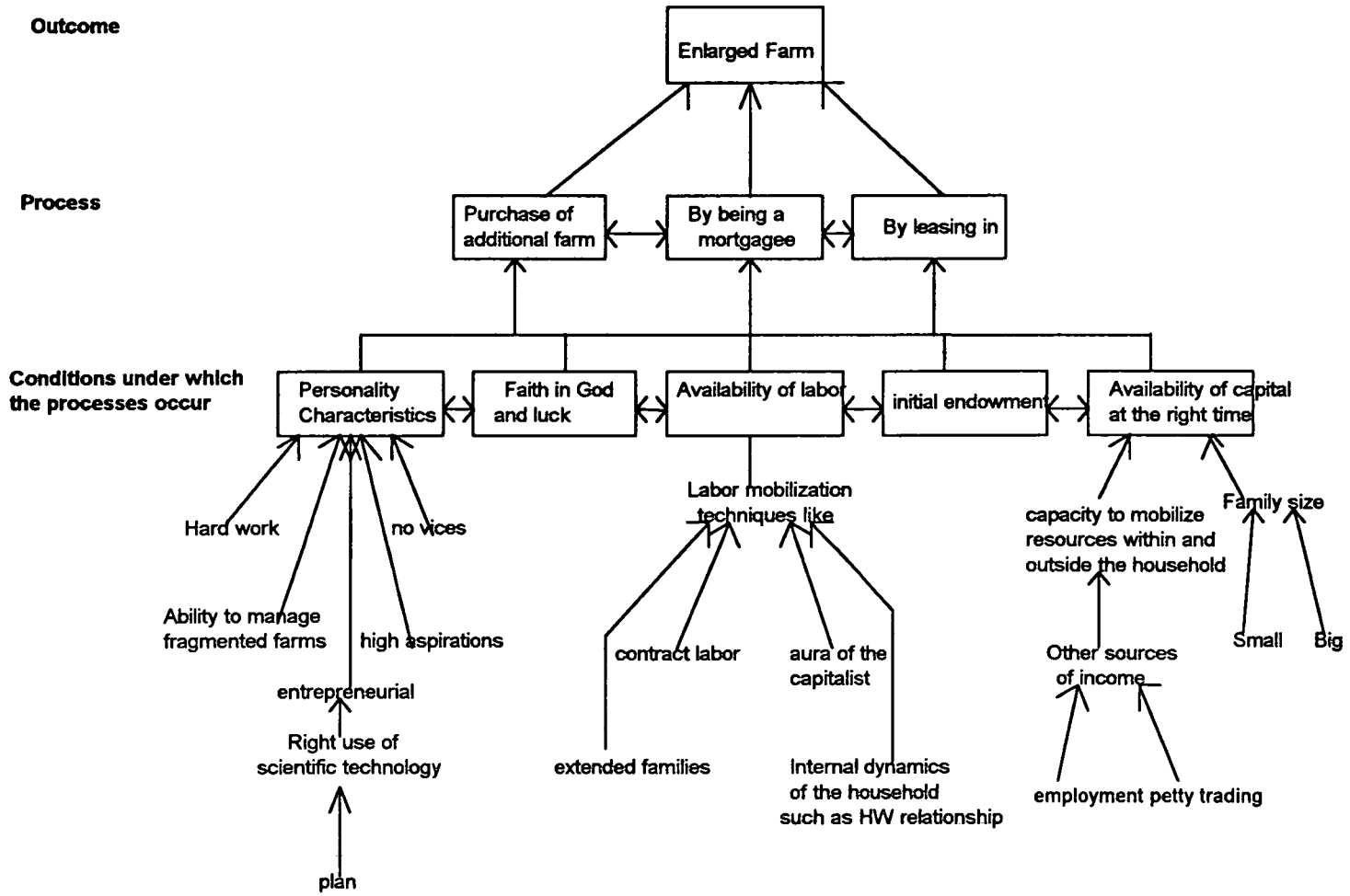
"basta ako ho ay dito na lumaki" (I grew up in this)

"sapul at simula ay iyan ang aking kinamulatan" (That is the only work I know ever since)

"aba, ay sapul ay iyan ang hanapbuhay namin. Ang tata'y ko naman ay magtutubigan na". (That is our occupation ever since. My father is already a farmer).

Most of those who inherit their farms do not show any motivational change towards farming through the years. The only exceptions were households J1.4, S1.1 and S1.2. These three households seem to have changed their motivations in farming as they view farming today more as a business than a way of life. They were successful in the daily reproduction of their farms and had the tendency to expand. These three households differed from each other in some respects but they were outstandingly similar in the way they exerted efforts in their work. In fact, I suspected that these three cases exemplified the limits of expansion of petty commodity production as a result of the unity of labor and capital in the production unit. The problems came about as farms were always fragmented. Households which had a tendency to expand were continuously confronted with the enormous difficulty of managing and supervising many fragmented farms as contiguous farms are not easy to find. The management and supervision of fragmented farms was not difficult if the households had one member who could perform these functions. But this was not the case of these three

Figure 2. The process of farm enlargement.



households. Rather, two of them were childless while the other one had still young children. Among the other households, the difficulty of managing fragmented farms was clearly put by the wife of Mr S.1.2 when I commented to her that they could probably have a much bigger farm in the future.

Hindi rin ho. Iyon din laang kayang trabahuhin. Pag sobra ang laki kagaya ng sa bayaw ko, iyong nasa Puypuy ay isang ektarya, iyong nasa kamalig ay isang ektarya, iyong kay Marita ay isa rin, at iyon pang isa ay halos ganoon ring kalaki. (It couldn't be. We expand only depending on what we could work on. If it's big, like what my brother-in-law had, he had one hectare in Puypuy, one hectare in the kamalig, another one from Marita and another one as big as that of Marita's farm.)

Hirap din ho pagka ganoon. (It's really difficult.)

Aba, daing ho eh, parang lagare ang katawan. (It's too difficult, as one is just like a saw.)

There were seven study households which had not yet handed down their farms to the next generation. Five of these

households started farming before the 1950s and two started farming later. These were households A, D, P, E, F, C and L. Of this group, only F.0 has handed down part of his estate to his two sons. The other six households have yet to do so, although Mrs C.0 has already subdivided her property between her two daughters but this is still run and managed as a single farm by Mr C.1. Almost all of them have a successor. Work on the farm has already been transferred to the younger generation but not the property rights to the land. Households F.0, A.0, D, P, E and C1.0 are of this type. While a son-in-law of Mr A.0 has already succeeded his father-in-law in farm work, the succession is not complete. This is manifested in the way Mr A.0's son-in-law and daughter behave when it comes to the disposal of the farm product. The very nature of petty commodity production dictates that workers or managers of the farm are also the ones to dispose of the products of their labor power. But contrary to expectation, the power to dispose of the product of labor is temporarily withheld from the younger generation by the older generation as long as complete succession has not occurred yet. Consequently, it appears as if members of the young generation are just mere workers or laborers for the older generation. The transitional phase of such households continues as long as the older

generation does not make the formal transfer of their property. Succession is known to be complete only after the older generation has fully retired from actual involvement in the farm and the transfer of the property relating to land has been done (Symes, 1990:282). The contradictory position of the younger generation when it comes to work and the disposal of the product of labor during the transition stage is vividly expressed by the youngest daughter of Mr A.0 when I asked her who made farm decisions. She answered in the following statements:

Ang Tatay ho. Siya pa rin ang tinatanong kung ano ang maganda dahil matagal siyang nagtubigan. Pero pag naririyon na ang palay, hindi kami nagtatanong. Kami laang ang gumagawa. (My father is asked what is the best thing to do on the farm as he farmed for a long time. But when the harvest is over, and the crop is collected from the field, we do not ask him. We are just workers of his farm.)

Why is it that the older generation in these households defer their decision to transfer their property to the younger generation despite their physical disability or advancing age? Voyce et al as cited by Symes (1990:286) offers an interesting perspective on this in

their New South Wales study. They point out that the older generation tends in later years to redefine their goals around the ideal of family solidarity, and therefore are less willing to make potentially divisive decisions. Inaction is the preferred option though unease about the future remains strong. By delaying decisions the older generation may hope to postpone the dispersal of the family and defer the onset of disintegration of relationships within the family. While the above reason may not necessarily be why the older generation in these six households continue to defer succession and inheritance to the younger generation, I must point out that such lack of decision ensures them of extended households with members who will look after their physical and emotional needs and work on the farm. This is important to point out since extended households are often formed when a member of the older generation gets sick. Under such a condition, the reproduction of the household of the older generation and their farm is at stake unless one of the younger generation joins their household. This is the case of Mr A.0 and Mr B2.1.

The need to reproduce the farm becomes even greater during the last few years of the older generation, particularly when they do not have any savings or a retirement pension to rely on. If the

patrimony has already been subdivided and given to the younger generation, it may later be very difficult to expect them to look after the interest of the older generation. This is one reason why some of the older generation defer deciding the subdivision of the property. But on the other hand, the older generation is probably not very keen on subdividing their property because of its small size. This is the case of the property of Mr M, Mrs D and Mrs P and E. They know that if their present property is subdivided among their potential heirs and heiresses, the result would be very, very small parcels. In such a case, the daily reproduction of petty rice production and its households is at stake. The old generation does not want this to happen as rice farming had been their life and blood in the earlier times.

Unlike those households which become petty rice producers as a result of inheritance and succession, seven other founding households were not themselves socialized to become rice peasants. Those who inherited their farms became rice peasants in a seemingly natural way but the latter group entered rice farming consciously by making the decision and learning the skills associated with it. Before becoming rice peasants, Mr. A.O, Mr. M in household D, Mr. P and Mr. E had first tried many other jobs, and they claim they entered rice farming

because of their low educational attainment. Mr C1.1 and Mr L1.1 gave a different reason why they became rice producers. According to them, they were convinced rice farming would help them raise their family. These two persons had shown a remarkable change in their motivations after rice farming had been fully engulfed by capitalist social relations beginning the 1970s. They were more entrepreneurial and view rice farming today as a business. Their farm sizes had increased through the years.

The Potential/Limits of the Reproducibility of Rice Farms

Succession and inheritance have an inherently contradictory effect on the reproduction of petty rice farms and their households. While these two processes have been instrumental in the reproduction process of the farms and households during the recent past, their continued practice can also lead to the decomposition of petty rice farms and petty rice producers. This is especially true where farm reproduction through "fission" is impossible due to limited agricultural land. The practice of partible inheritance fragments the farms into very small units which are not "economically viable" to maintain and reproduce under capitalist social relations. The average farm size of the previous generation was 2.99 hectares (Table 2). If their farms had not been

Table 2. Status of farms of those who have right of access to farms

	Those who inherit	Those who have not handed down yet their farms
Stable farm size	5	1
Lost the farm	5	0
Had reduced farm size	1	4
Losing and recovering the farm from time to time	9	0
Able to enlarge	3	2
Total	23	7

subdivided to the present generation, their sizes would warrant an easy reproduction today. Studies have documented that a three-hectare, fully-irrigated rice field is an economically viable farm size. As a result of partible inheritance, the average farm size has now been reduced to only 0.67 hectare.

The difficulty of reproducing very small petty commodity farms is inherent in capitalist society. While petty rice producers enjoy a certain degree of competitive advantage as a result of the combined ownership of the means of production and labor, they are not insulated from the law of value which Friedmann (1978a) argues is applicable. This is because their capacity to compete is limited by the size of their production unit. While there is always room to expand one's farm under conditions

of generalized circulation of commodities, this possibility is limited if those who are involved in this form of production do not possess substantial assets to convert into capital. The major asset of those who are involved in farming is usually land. But if land is limited, the product derived from this is not even enough to renew the daily and generational reproduction of the farm and its household, so that farm expansion must be derived from another source. If they are not in the position to expand their farms, they will be eventually "bypassed" in a society where the generalized circulation of commodities predominates.

The difficulty of maintaining very small farms under capitalism is shown by the fact that out of the 23 households which got an inheritance, only five of them were able to maintain its size as it was

handed down to them. The remaining heirs and heiresses could not hold on to theirs. Five of them had completely lost their inheritance while nine lost their farms from time to time. Only three successors seem to be succeeding in farming as they have been able to enlarge their farms.

Holding on to the right of access to small farms was problematic not only for those who succeed through inheritance. Even those who did not obtain their farms through inheritance experienced the same difficulty. Of the seven households which have not yet fragmented their farms, four had already lost part of their farms. Only two of them were able to enlarge their property while one had a stable farm size through the years.

The above discussion brings us to a very important issue on the reproducibility of petty rice farms and their households. While it is argued that the resilience of the petty commodity form of production is found in its internal character and in its apparent insulation from the "law of value", there are certain circumstances pointing out that this form of production is not really insulated from the "law of value". This is very evident in the data as most of the cases included in this research are in the process of decomposition. Once the farms of the present petty

rice producers are lost, their reproduction through inheritance and succession is automatically out of question. The cyclical pattern of establishing petty rice farms and its producers is broken, thereby raising the possibility of reproducing them outside of the original rice farming households.

1. Reasons why Petty Rice Producers Lost All or Part of their Farms

The reasons why petty rice producers say they lost all or part of their farms are varied and complex as shown in Figure 1. Two of them lost their farms because of competition between them on how to extract as much benefit as they could from the undivided inheritance. One household exchanged its patrimony for cash in an attempt to find another job. The majority, however, said they found difficulty in reproducing their farms and labor because of vices, poor health of a household member, lack of other sources of income, poor yield of the farm and because of not trying their best. The reproduction of the farm and its household is difficult when the household is big and has no other sources of income. When the household is small but one of its members has a vice, the reproduction of the farm and its household is also difficult.

The difficulty of reproducing

the farm owing to the illness of a family member is a clear indication of the failure of the farm to support the reproduction of its labor power even on a daily basis. It is here that income from other sources is very crucial for the continuing reproduction of the farm and its households. But in most cases, households which are in dire need of income from other sources are also the ones deprived of such opportunity. This difficulty is further compounded when harvests decline to a level insufficient to cover the necessary costs for the next production cycle. It is interesting to note that one of the reasons given why some petty rice producers lost all or part of their farm is because of not trying their best. It seems people think that the successful reproduction of this form of production is more dependent on agency than on structural constraints.

The Effects of Capitalist Social Relations on the Decomposition Process

The above cited reasons of petty rice producers for losing part or their whole farm do not show any consciousness of their being "bypassed" or marginalized in a society where capitalism governs. As the essential character of capitalism is abstract, so is the way it operates. What one can see and observe are only its phenomenal manifestations like the losing of one's farm. Farms

are lost in a very subtle way so that those who are unable to compete are weeded out without any element of compulsion. For example, the reasons for mortgaging one's farm to raise money to seek medical attention or because of lack of other income sources are viewed as shortcomings inherent in the household rather than something which originates from the way society is organized. As a consequence, people accept it as something natural and beyond explanation. They do not understand that their incorporation into capitalist social relations sets the limits of the reproducibility of their farms and households. This lack of understanding may also explain why people gamble. They attempt to find luck somewhere else in order for them to reproduce their farms and households without difficulty.

Those who had already lost their farms were aware that very small farms were very difficult to reproduce. This was very evident in the following statements of Mr M1.3 when I asked him how useful would rice farming be if his household still possessed the farm:

*Magaling ang magtubigan
...magaling halimbawa kung
ang tubigan ay mga dala-
wang ektarya at ikaw ay may
sariling puhunan pero kung
wala din, ...wala din. Kataas-
taasan ay makalibre laang*

iyong pang kain. (Rice farming is good if you farm at least two hectares and have your own capital...if not, it's nothing.... the only advantage probably is you get your rice supply.)

The above text shows that the reproducibility of farms today is not only dependent on size but also on the availability of capital. Rice farming today uses capital to pay for labor for land preparation, transplanting, and snail control, to buy fertilizers and chemicals, and to pay for irrigation fees and land amortizations or land rents. The significance of owning the capital needed for rice production is so paramount that it appears frequently in people's discourses. This is so because lack of capital would make their reproduction process much more difficult as they have to secure capital from the formal and informal credit sources at a high interest rate. Depending upon the source of credit, interest rates can vary from 22 per cent to as high as 100 per cent. People argue that if they borrow their capital, they are just making the creditors live on their own sweat.

2. Reasons for the Enlargement of Farms

While some were "bypassed" by capitalism, others on the other hand were given the chance to compete and enlarge their farms. The

enlargement of farms occurred either by purchase of additional farm land, leasing in and getting farms offered for mortgage or a combination of any of the three processes (Figure 2). It seems that those households which were able to enlarge their farms contain members who exhibited the following personality characteristics: good health, high motivations to succeed as indicated by their industriousness and high aspirations, entrepreneurial behaviour and an avoidance of vices. It must be pointed out that these characteristics do not occur singly in one household but often in combination with each other.

It is interesting to note that one of the conditions for enlarging farms is the availability of labor. But those who are enlarging their farms are the ones who have limited household labor. Households S1.1 and S1.2 have no children at all, the children of household J1.4 are still young, while the sons and daughters of Mr and Mrs C1.1 and household L are all engaged in activities outside of agriculture. Limited household labor is not a hindrance for the enlargement of their farms as households can correct this easily by inviting other able-bodied relatives to stay in their household or by using contract labor. Or sometimes, petty rice producers are able to use their prestige and resources to grant favors to landless households

whose labor they can then mobilize for their farms. This is important to note as it has been hypothesized that this particular process of labor mobilization ensures the continuing reproduction of petty commodity production.

The role of the wife in mobilizing capital or participating in farm work or farm management is also very crucial in expanding the operational land holding of the household. There are certain instances where the wife refuses to participate in any farm activity. In such a case the possibility of expanding a household's operational land holding is limited.

Another important factor which determines whether households would be able to enlarge their farms is the availability of capital at the right time. The availability of capital at the right time is dependent on the ability of the household to pool their resources at a time when a certain farm is offered for sale or mortgage. Again, this is dependent on the involvement of other household members in off-farm activities. As I have illustrated, those who are enlarging their farms are those who have other sources of income.

Conclusion

I have discussed in this essay the intergenerational and daily reproduction of farms and

households, the potential and limits of their reproducibility, the reasons why petty rice producers lost all or part of their farms, and the reasons for the enlargement of farms. The incursion of capitalist social relations is shown as a reason why petty rice producers lost all or part of their farms. On the other hand, the enlargement of farms are due to availability of labor and capital.

I have shown too how capitalist social relations influence the reproduction process of petty rice production and its producers. It may be argued that population growth also adversely affects the reproduction of petty rice productions. But this is predicated upon the existence of capitalist social relations. The need for more manpower to mobilize during the recent past is an attempt of earlier households to correct their labor deficiency which they experienced during the time of farm size expansion. While households are subjected to the same conditions of reproduction, they differentiate through time. Population growth and the incursion of capitalist social relations create contradictory dynamics which lead some to lose their farms, while others gain land. In the end, capitalist social relations gain an upper hand so that people are particularized. No coercion or compulsion is involved in the process, thereby granting the process full legitimacy. This is the reason why capitalism survives well

where there is freedom. The freedom to dispose of one's land or of one's right of access to the farm is also indirectly legitimized by agrarian reform laws which allow farmers to dispose of their rights once they are unable to thrive well on their farm, in the same manner that these allow

others the freedom to expand and enlarge their farms. The power of capitalist social relations to differentiate people is then set in motion, thereby changing the very reproduction process which has been put in place for almost half a century.

Notes

¹This is a timely issue for the rice sector in the Philippines, since conditions obtaining in the country today are very different from those that existed 20 to 30 years ago. It is all the more significant because the present Medium-Term Agricultural Plan of the Philippines is expected to result to the further intensification of commodity relations, leading agricultural producers to become even more integrated into the organization and activity of capitalism.

²Form of production is the smallest unit of productive organization.

³Since petty commodity production (PCP) and simple commodity production (SCP) are often used interchangeably, I make clear that I am not treating them as interchangeable. SCP is a mental construct of a production relation characterized by the following (Scott, 1986):

1. Production of commodities without surplus product;

2. The producers own or possess their means of production;

3. The producers have access to labor outside the capitalist labor market;

4. They have autonomy over their products and services; and

5. They appropriate the fruits of their labor directly.

PCP, therefore, is the variant form of a production relation circumscribed by the SCP (Scott, 1986:96). It is the concrete manifestation of SCP. It is a phenomenal category amenable to observation and experience. It varies depending upon the political, socio-cultural and economic discourses in national and global production relations. It also varies according to its sectoral specificity, whether it is urban or rural based. All these sources of variation affect the internal characteristics of PCP

such as its labor mobilization and control, the division of labor, the generational reproduction, and the systems of property and inheritance (Bernstein, 1986:25).

‘Most petty rice producing households today are no longer the source of labor power for

production but more of a source of capital and management. This point is significant because as petty rice producers come to depend on capital for production, they depend less on their household labor power supply, but use the household as a source of management and capital.

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