

CLASSES AND CLASS RELATIONS IN A PHILIPPINE VILLAGE

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Using interviews and observations made in 1978-1979, this article identifies several socio-economic classes, which have become more numerous in recent decade. It then explores why people, specially the poorest two-third, expresses so little anger and solidarity. At least three phenomena help to answer the puzzle. The complexity of the classes themselves, the paradoxical importance of poor people ties to the better off, and explanation for inequities which generally do not implicate the wealthy.

I would phrase the intellectual questions of our time – which are the moral questions of our time – as follows: Why is there hunger amidst plenty, and poverty amidst prosperity? Why the many who are afflicted do not rise up against the few who are privileged, and smite them?

– Immanuel Wallerstein, 1977.

Introduction

For a year my wife and I lived in a village in the Central Plain of the island of Luzon, the Philippines. The region is one of the country's major rice-producing areas. Farmers plant the latest varieties of seed, crop the soil twice a year (since 1974-75), frequently employ tractors to prepare the soil, spread the newest fertilizers, and spray the insecticides made by Shell Oil, Union Carbide, and other familiar companies. During the last ten years the village and vicinity have produced more rice per capita than during any comparable period in recorded history. Yet people are hungry. Many are poor by practically any standard. Some say they have less rice to eat now than they did ten years ago.

Immanuel Wallerstein has phrased well two questions that increasingly troubled me while in the Philippines. This article will address the second: why are not people, especially those in the bottom 60-70 percent of the socioeconomic ladder, more angry about their precarious living conditions and why is there little cohesiveness among them?

Wallerstein's own answer is a macro-analysis of the fluctuating effects of the "modern world system" in which some workers are less adversely afflicted than others and people in

certain areas of the globe benefit at the expense of the majority in other areas.¹ My article, however, is a micro-analysis in what can probably be regarded in Wallerstein's terms as a periphery country.

After briefly describing the setting and my method, the article identifies several socioeconomic classes, which have become more numerous in recent decades. It then explores why people, especially the poorest two-thirds, express so little anger and solidarity. At least three phenomena help to answer the puzzle: the complexity of the classes themselves; the paradoxical importance of poor people's ties to the better off; and explanations for inequities, which generally do not implicate the wealthy.

Background and Approach

Bukiran, located about 150 kilometers northeast of Manila, has a population of 1,400 living in 230 homes.² It is one of 53 villages (*baryo*) in a municipality 25 kilometers northwest of Cabanatuan City (pop. 115,000), capital of Nueva Ecija province. Although not an isolated village, neither is Bukiran in the mainstream of provincial and national traffic, communications, and marketing. It straddles an unpaved road and has no electricity nor

market. Transistor radios and word-of-mouth are people's sources of information about the region, the Philippines, and the world.

A century ago the area around Bukiran was sparsely populated by people who grew rice, vegetables, and fruits on plots painstakingly cleared of trees and grasses. By the 1930s virtually all the land had been claimed, cleared, and farmed by small number of homesteaders and handful of large landowners who had taken on a large number of tenants to share-crop what were now well-developed rain-fed rice fields. These tenants had migrated from other parts of Central Luzon in search of better land and tenancy conditions. Migration to the area had virtually stopped by the 1950s. Partly to accomodate more people and partly as a result of more intense rice cultivation, farm sizes decreased from 3-5 hectares each in the 1920s-1930s to 1-2 hectares today.

My wife and I moved there in June 1978 and left in late May 1979. We lived with a family consisting of a middle-aged couple who farmed 1.5 hectares of rice land and their son and his wife and baby. The son shared a one hectare rice field with a married brother and worked intermittently as a bulldozer operator at distant construction sites.

I came with two broad questions: What have been the political and economic conditions in the vicinity during the last quarter century, and how have people perceived and coped with those conditions?³ From these emerged the specific topic considered here.

Influenced by phenomenology, I combined conversation, observation, and participation in order to acquire an understanding of the history and current conditions of Bukiran and vicinity. Both my wife and I tried to be informal and, whenever possible, personal and close to people learning gradually about their family histories, what they did and why, and how they evaluated theirs and other people's actions. We did not limit ourselves to just those in the Bukiran. We came to know and

frequently sought out other people living in nearby villages, the *poblacion*, Cabanatuan City, and Metro-Manila who are important to the village's political and economic environment.⁴ This was in keeping with my effort to understand the community of Bukiran and its larger regional and national context.

Classes

There are three issues involved when one talks about socioeconomic classes. The first is how are people in society stratified according to such conditions as occupation, income, life style, prestige, and relationship to the means of production. A second is whether people have allegiance to those in their own class and antagonism against those in other classes because of conflicting interests. The third is whether those with a sense of class solidarity can act on behalf of their shared interests and organize against other classes. While allegiance is an indication of potential class-based action, conditions such as repression, leadership, and the political situation generally will determine whether the potential can be realized.

Class-based organization has not been significant in Bukiran and vicinity for many years, partly because class unity has been weak. Explaining the latter is the task of this essay. A first step is to discuss the classes represented in Bukiran's political and economic environment.

In the literature on classes, "consciousness" typically refers to the presence of class allegiance and mobilization. This usage is unfortunate. It quickly leads to identifying only one particular consciousness as "correct" while others are "false" or "negative" when actually they are just different. Furthermore, the usage denies consciousness to the awareness people have of classes in society. I would prefer to say instead that people in Bukiran, for example, are thoroughly *conscious* of classes. Nearly all of those we know readily talk about and act as though society is composed of strata, which they

usually identify according to not one but two criteria: livelihood and standard of living.⁵

Livelihood

When talking about themselves, Bukiran, or society in general, people frequently classify the population according to sources of livelihood. And the variety of occupations even within Bukiran itself is remarkable. An incomplete list includes landholders (including landowners, tenants, and those holding land mortgaged to them), agricultural workers, foragers, vendors, small store owners, big businessmen and women, money and rice lenders, carpenters, and bulldozer operators.⁶ Many individuals do two or more kinds of work. And the household, of which one is a part and which is the most meaningful economic group, typically has two or more important sources of livelihood.

My detailed list of all combinations of occupations for the 178 households for which I have sufficient information numbers over eighty. In order to write about the village, I reduced that number. Guiding me was the importance people attach to wages and land. In an economy characterized by seasonal employment and large unemployment, people understandably valued the security generally represented by land (whether to cultivate it oneself or rent to others) and regular employment. Four broad categories resulted: those with neither farm land nor employment, those with employment, those who farm, and those who do not farm but have land others cultivate.

These categories, however, do not reflect minimally the class distinctions people themselves make. Consequently, I separated landholding from non-landholding households, and then categorized households according to additional ways they earned cash or food, whether they did seasonal work or foraged, and whether they earned from capital invested in something other than land. The resulting eleven classes I then ordered, as best as I could synthesize people's understanding,

according to security of income, from least secure to most secure, within each of landholding and non-landholding categories (See Table 1).

A few households in class 1 have some wages coming in but, in addition to farming, rely heavily on seasonal work (generally in agriculture but sometimes in construction as well) and foraging.⁷ Class 2 households rely nearly exclusively on land they either own or rent. Class 3 households, besides access to land, have fairly regular employment. Class 4 families, besides farming, often have seasonal work, forage, and (in a few cases) employment; but unlike all other cultivators, they also earn from activity that requires capital (*puhunan*) — e.g., operating a small store (*tindahan*), buying-and-selling, transporting passengers and cargo with a motorized tricycle, renting out a hand-tractor, or loaning money or rice.⁸ Class 5 households rely on farming as well as rent from one or more tenants; four of these households also earn from capital investments similar to those in class 4. Households in class 6 own land farmed by tenants and/or hired workers. They also have additional income, especially from investments (e.g., real estate) and own businesses.

Among the non-landholders the two least secure households are in classes 7 and 8, having neither farmland nor employment. Class 7 households live primarily on food and money given by close relatives (usually grown children), occasional work, and (in a couple of cases) some buy-and-sell. Many parents get help from their children, but only those in this class depend heavily on it. Class 8 households depend on seasonal work (especially planting and harvesting) and foraging, supplemented in a few cases by buying-and-selling. Households in class 9 also have neither land nor jobs but have managed to save sufficient capital to engage in buying-and-selling, which they supplement with occasional labor (but do no agricultural work to speak of) and (in a couple of cases)

Table 1. *Classes Represented in Bukiran's Political Economy*
1978-1979
(Sample)

		Standard of Living							Total	Percent
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G		
<i>Sources of Livelihood</i>		Periodically no rice	Have rice, no cash	Meals, mini- mum cash	Meals, cash for extras	Surplus cash, savings	Investments, businesses	Bigger invest- ments, businesses		
Landholding	1. Farming, seasonal work, foraging	1	9	12	3				25	14.1
	2. farming early			4	7	1			12	6.8
	3. Farming, employ- ment			7	7	1			15	8.4
	4. Farming, buy- and-sell			7	10	2			19	10.7
	5. Farming and have tenants			1	3	2			6	3.4
	6. Non-farming landholders, investments, businesses					4	1	5	10	5.6
Non-landholding	7. Family support, seasonal work	1	5	6					12	6.7
	8. Seasonal work, foraging	4	20	7					31	17.4
	9. Buy-and-sell, other			5	3	1			9	5.1
	10. Employment, seasonal work, foraging		10	12	3	1			26	14.6
	11. Employment		2	7	2	2			13	7.3
Total		6	46	68	38	14	1	5	178	100.1
Percent		3.4	25.8	38.2	21.3	7.9	0.6	2.7	99.9	

Notes: Class 1 includes five landowners, twenty tenants; nineteen have 2 hectares or less, six have more than 2 but less than 4 ha.

Class 2 includes four landowners, six tenants, and two who are both owners and tenants; three have about 5 ha. each, the others have 3 ha. or less.

Class 3 includes three owners, nine tenants, and three who are both. One owner has 8 ha., one tenant has 3, all the others have 2 ha. or less.

Class 4 includes four owners, fifteen tenants; one has 5 ha., ten have more than 2 but no more than 4 ha., the remainder have 2 ha. or less.

Class 5 includes three owners and three who are both owners and tenants; one has 14 ha., one has 5.5 ha., four have between 2.5 and 5 ha.

Class 6 includes a household with rented land, one household that owns 5 ha., and four that own 20 ha. or more.

Class 11 includes four professionals, six bulldozer operators, and three others.

loan money or rice. Class 10 families have fairly regular (but usually low paying) employment, augmented by seasonal or other infrequent work and (in most cases) foraging. Class 11 households can rely almost entirely on employment, mostly as construction workers but also bus drivers and government employees (irrigation ditch tenders, teachers, and technicians).

Standards of Living

Besides talking in terms of livelihood, people also describe their own and other people's class in terms of "living standards." The continuum is based on the amount of food and money a family has and to what purpose money is put.

The poorest, class A in Table 1, are those who periodically — typically the month or two before harvest — have no or little rice and therefore eat only gruel (*lugaw*) and must forego meals (*sumasala sa oras*).⁹ They exhaust their loan sources and humiliate themselves to ask for rice from better off relatives and neighbors.

Class B households usually have rice to eat but frequently have no or little money.

Consequently, they have difficulties buying additional food (thus rely heavily on foraging) or basic household items. Typically they have to borrow for these necessities or ask for credit at a neighborhood store. Then when they do earn money, they quickly spend it to buy essentials and pay debts — then borrow once again.

Life for those in classes A and B is a hand-to-mouth existence — *isang kahig, isang tuka* (one scratch, one peck, as a chicken does). These people say they live below what they and others regard as a minimal subsistence standard. For example, one landless worker in his thirties who lives with his wife, five children, and mother, said, "If we're very frugal, 50 pesos a week will do . . . That's the budget we use during harvest when we have something coming in regularly . . . But when we have nothing to budget, well, we just suffer through, making do as best we can . . . earning a few pesos here and there, collecting frogs and snails from the fields, skipping meals, borrowing a peso or two here, another there."

Class C households are generally at the subsistence level. They nearly always have

sufficient rice and can buy limited quantities of vegetables (and occasionally meat or fish) and sometimes can afford other small expenditures and pleasures. If they have no money for necessities, they usually can borrow. For bigger expenses, they must go in debt and, when unable to borrow as much as they need, scrimp on their already marginal budget and, for example, not seek medical attention if sick or not buy fertilizer.

Households in class D eat adequately, meet normal household expenses, and keep their children in school. Without borrowing they have a middle (*sa gitna*) or adequate (*sapat-sapat lang*) standard of living. Some can even save money, hoping to send a child to college, build a sturdier house, or buy the *puwesto* to a rice field.¹⁰ Often they need loans, however, for big expenditures (such as fertilizer, high school and college tuitions, funerals), but barring unforeseen problems (serious illness, poor harvest, loss of job, etc.), they can repay.

Families in classes E-G have much more comfortable living conditions. Class E households have ample food, own relatively well-built and furnished houses, and generally manage to send children to college or save for investments in land, tractors, or small businesses. Class F has only one family; it is similar to those in E but different because it has more money and investments (land, warehouse, rice mill, rice selling, fertilizer vending). The class G households, all located outside of Bukiran (as far away as Manila), are wealthy by nearly any standard: children in prestigious private high schools and colleges, large houses, many hectares of land, real estate, stocks, businesses.

Based on observations and what people said about their living conditions, I assigned each household to a standard of living group. Many people (mostly those in classes A-D) indicated where they belong. Nearly all these "self assignments" jibed with other things they told us and our observations. Half of those in classes F-G, however, I put there despite their

claims to a modest life style. Relative to the criteria that emerged from Bukiran, they are more wealthy than they think.¹¹

Table 1 summarizes the two ways of talking about classes. It indicates that life is hard for many in Bukiran. That 67 percent of the households fall in the A-C range of living standards and these are distributed (albeit unevenly) among all livelihood groups except the non-farming landed summarizes well with what we saw daily: many people continually looking for ways to get money (work, loans, credit) and food. Only about a third are above what many call the subsistence standard.

Some Features of the Classes

Only 14 percent of the households rely on one occupation (farming or a job). The others, from the poorest to the wealthiest, have two or more ways of earning food and money.¹² The poorest do this in order to get by day-to-day, week-to-week. The wealthy, on the other hand, are diversifying their wealth in order to multiply it.

Nearly all households are peasants in a broad sense of the term: "rural cultivators of low economic and political status."¹³ But they do not constitute a socioeconomic class in either livelihood or living standard terms. Less than 10 percent rely principally on cultivating. The others include landholders and non-landholders who, besides planting, plowing, harvesting, or doing other agricultural work, also forage, buy-and-sell, hire out as laborers, raise and sell pigs, or in other ways earn cash and rice.

During the last two or three decades, classes within the peasantry became more numerous. Elderly villagers' remarks point to this. One man, for instance, observed, "You can't just farm any more . . . in order to support your family; you must also have a job." "Before," said one woman, "everyone had a rice field, but now the number of people who farm are so few you can quickly count them." Some statistics are similarly

indicative of changes. Fifty-four percent (38/70) of the male household heads in classes 8-11 who today have no land are sons of parents who *did* have land (nearly always as tenants). The figure is higher — 76 percent (36/45) — for males 35 years and older. While virtually all those with land today come from farming backgrounds, many others who also come from farming households have ended up as adults without land.¹⁴ This change in most cases is not by choice but by necessity. Non-landholders would like to get land but cannot afford it.

Whether living standards, too, have diversified I cannot adequately say. Certainly some households have risen during the last thirty years, but apparently more have remained the same or declined.¹⁵ It is difficult for those in lower groups to improve their living standard but easy for them to drop still further. Rarely, however, does a wealthy family fall to a lower standard. One reason can be illustrated by looking at rice prices.

The price of unhusked rice (*palay*) fluctuates depending on how soon after the harvest one sells. The lowest prices (between 80 and 90 centavos per kilogram in 1978-79) occur at harvest time; the highest prices (1.25 — 1.40 pesos per kilo) come weeks later. But few sellers — be they landholders or harvesters — can wait for the higher prices. Families in classes A and B and many in C sell virtually all their rice (except what they reserve for eating and, if they cultivate, planting) during and shortly after harvest. They get the low prices. Some in C and many in D can wait longer — a couple of weeks or a month — by which time prices rise to maybe 1.10 pesos a kilo. They finally must sell in order to repay loans and get cash to buy, for instance, fertilizer for the next crop. Only those who can afford to stockpile rice — all of whom are in classes E-G — can wait for the best prices. Bukiran's two biggest rice dealers, for example, have milling machines and warehouses. They buy much of the residents'

rice, store it, then later sell to even bigger buyers in neighboring provinces and Metro Manila for 10 to 40 centavos per kilo above what they paid. The gain more than covers the small storage and related costs they encumbered while waiting to sell.

The situation is similar regarding access to loans and land. Those few people with notable financial assets and connections inside a bank or appropriate government office can qualify for long term, low interest bank loans. The majority with no collateral can only borrow for a short term and at high interest (25-50% payable within 4-5 months) from local lenders. Regarding land, two dozen households in the last ten years lost fields they once farmed (usually as tenants) either because large landowners reclaimed them (in most cases in order to farm with machinery and laborers rather than have tenants) or the families, deep in debt after successive harvest failures, sold their *puwesto* or title. Those who got the land were, in the first case, the landowner, and in the second case, others who already had land but wanted more.

These illustrations mean, I think, that the political and economic system favors those who have reserve capital and good contacts and thus more likely can absorb temporary setbacks and take advantage of other people's vulnerabilities.

Perpetuating this system have been national "rural development policies." For example, the government's agrarian reforms and, more recently, efforts to spread high yielding (mainly IRRI) rice varieties have sought, successfully, to increase national production. While agrarian reform has benefitted tenants in some respects, it has also burdened them. Together with liberal bank loans and other incentives, it encouraged the big landowners to replace tenants with machines. Consequently, tenants on 400 hectares in Bukiran and vicinity were removed between 1960 and the early 1970s. Today that land represents farms for 200 households (figuring

2 hectares each). Some affected tenants did find other land to till. Most, however, did not. Several of them and their now grown children are among today's landless.

Tenants now have to pay all farming expenses whereas before land reform the landowners paid half. But because new rice varieties require about 1,500 pesos worth of petro-chemicals, irrigation, seeds, and field preparation, the expenses are enormous for most tenants and small owners. Although average yields during the 1970s increased 20-25 percent and the selling price of rice rose, production costs climbed, too, often faster. And when harvests dropped below the average due to blight and storms, many tenants ended up worse off than they were when planting older varieties.

Were one to elaborate on the above illustrations and examine more carefully what has happened during recent decades in Bukiran and the larger political economy, one could probably argue the proposition that the rich get richer and — perhaps because of this — the poor get poorer.¹⁶ Villagers, however, do not readily see their history this way.

Class Relations

Living in Bukiran for nearly a year required my wife and I to make several difficult adjustments: the food we ate was monotonous (boiled vegetables and rice) and lacked adequate nutrition; we had little privacy; bathing and bathroom facilities were, by our standards, highly inconvenient and unsanitary. The most difficult part for me, however, was being among so many poor people. It was a growing source of frustration, tearing me between guilt for being from a relatively wealthy background and bewilderment that most villagers did not seem to be angry at or blame the more wealthy classes in the vicinity and in Philippine society generally. Because of my familiarity with the literature on peasants, I did not expect either ardent animosity toward the rich or strong unity among the

poor, but I never could internalize this well enough to settle my emotions. In the back of my mind were writings of Mao-Zedong and Amado Guerrero about the "revolutionary spirit" among the poorer villagers of China and the Philippines.¹⁷ I saw little of such a spirit and that troubled me. I also had in mind James Scott's remarks that one must not take at face value just what people say, but must instead "determine to what degree peasants actually accept or reject the social order by reference to their culture."¹⁸ I tried to be attentive to this by examining the meaning of what we heard and saw. Finally, I could not forget that many of the Bukiran residents — at least the older ones — had been supporters of the Huk rebellion, a strong peasant-based movement in the Central Plain.¹⁹ Yet that solidarity apparently had evaporated.

We did find some evidence of anger and even unity. Most people had only unkind words to describe one of the large landed families who had dismissed tenants and mechanized its rice lands. The year before we came, a few individuals had burned the one sugar cane field in the area. The arsonists, who were never caught, were allegedly landless workers, and that the landowner had planted cane instead of rice which previously they had been hired to harvest. Once while we were in Bukiran, several rice transplanters threatened to walk off the job because the small tenant who had hired them had sworn at them. A mutual relative of the tenant and one of the angry planters brought a reconciliation.

There were other signs, too. But the overwhelming evidence indicates little class allegiance and an absence among the poor majority of blaming impoverishment on the better off minority. When signs of class antagonism do appear, they often reflect antagonism between combinations of lower classes rather than between lower and upper classes. A partial explanation includes three related reasons.

Class Complexity

The complexity of classes in Bukiran's political economy inhibits solidarity among those in the same class. Villagers with similar standards of living have difficulties seeing shared interests because their sources of livelihood are often different, and vice versa. Moreover, because of the variety of occupations within many households, even those who share interests with respect to one source of livelihood frequently have conflicting interests resulting from their other sources. Finally, it is hard for those who may want to blame their condition on others to categorize their oppressors. Three illustrations help to elaborate.

One example concerns the 30 bulldozer operators in Bukiran.²⁰ Their working conditions are similar; so are their complaints: low wages, no medical or other benefits, and no pay when breakdowns or rains force

construction to halt. But dividing them are their living standards and additional sources of livelihood (see Table 2). Only six households rely nearly exclusively on bulldozing work; they fall into three different standards of living and work for three different companies. The remaining 24 households have additional sources of income. Those with farmland tend to have better living conditions (classes C and D) than those without (classes B-C). They also complain less about their job because, despite everything, they are grateful that their bosses do not mind if they leave the construction site to attend to their crops. And when they have no construction work, they suffer less than do operators without land. But their need for cash is greater because they have farming expenses. Consequently, they want to pay as little as possible to day laborers hired to tend their fields. Because other dozer operators need such work, the two groups of operators have conflicting interests here, too.

Table 2. *Bulldozer Operator Households, by Additional Livelihood Sources and Standard of Living, Bukiran 1978-1979 (Sample)*

Households with bulldozer operators	Bulldozer operator households without significant additional work		Bulldozer operator households with additional sources of livelihood												
			Farming			Farming, other			Seasonal work, other			Buy-and-sell, other			
30	6		7			6			9			2			
	Living standard group		Living standard group			Living standard group			Living standard group			Living standard group			
	B	C	D	B	C	D	B	C	D	B	C	D	B	C	D
	1	4	1		4	3		4	2	6	3			1	1

Although many agricultural workers and farming households, to take a second example, predominate in the three lowest standard of living classes and have much in common because of their poverty, they also have differences resulting from their sources of livelihood. The farming households have land; the

agricultural workers do not, but they want land and are sometimes envious of those with it. Furthermore, the agriculture workers depend on the farming households for much of their livelihood. Usually relationships are cordial, but from time to time landholders (whether tenants or owners) and workers are at odds

over wages and other conditions.

Events surrounding the harvest in early November 1978 offer an illustration. Following a hurricane that flattened half the ripening crop, landholders frantically tried to have their rice harvested even though it was not fully mature. They wanted to get the rice out of the water and mud before it spoiled. Normally, a harvest season extends over several weeks as the field matures a few at a time. This particular season, however, many fields had to be harvested simultaneously. The demand for harvesters was great. To entice workers to cut and thresh their grain, a few landholders increased the usual rate given to harvesters from 1/8 of the crop to 1/7. As this news spread, other landholders — especially the poorer ones — became disgruntled because not only was their crop damaged but now they must give more to harvesters. Meanwhile, harvesters became particular. Some asked not only 1/7 of the crop but also free meals. And for fields that were especially heavily damaged and thus the yield extremely small, they wanted 1/6 or 1/5 of the crop. Meanwhile, landholders, usually out of earshot of harvesters, were cursing their luck, referring to the harvesters as demons (*mga demonyo*) and shameless (*walang hiya*) for taking advantage of the situation. A few landholding households, whose standards of living put them in classes C and D, became so upset that they recruited outsiders (*dayuhan*) to harvest for a smaller share than the new ratio prevailing for Bukiran harvesters. When the *dayuhan* finished these fields, they were immediately hired by other tenants. The presence of *dayuhan* raised the hackles of some local harvesters, who, at least among themselves, rebuked those landholders who had recruited outsiders.

During this harvest, therefore, the Bukiran area was somewhat divided between landholders and harvesters. Most in both groups were among the vicinity's poorest (classes A-C). Landholders in classes D-G tended not to be included either because they

were fortunate to have had their crops cut prior to the storm, they already had people lined up who were more-or-less obligated to harvest for them at pre-storm conditions due to borrowed money and other ties, or they were the ones who had started paying harvesters more in the first place.

The cleavage, however, was not sharp even between these poorer agricultural workers and landholders. Aside from kinship and neighborhood relationships cutting across the two livelihood classes, several landholding families had mixed interests in the matter. These are the households who, besides having tenant farms, also usually have members who harvest and do other seasonal agricultural work. This supplementary work and their low standard of living put them in common with many landless harvesters. Yet as landholders — among the poorest ones at that and consequently most needy of rice — they understood the landholders' situation as well. Finally, harvesters themselves were divided by the special relationships some had to particular landholders. They were also split between locals and outsiders.

Class complexity also makes it hard to identify oppressive classes. A person might single out particular individuals as having abused or exploited him or her. But the same person does not say that a certain class is oppressive. Nor is there widespread agreement among, say, agricultural workers or poor farming households that particular individuals are exploiters.

Villagers generally did agree during the 1930s and 1940s that landlords were culpable for unjust tenancy conditions and repression. But since the 1960s landlords have had a diminishing role in Bukiran's political economy. Tenancy remains, but under prevailing leasehold arrangements, tenants and landlords do not interact aside from paying and collecting rent.²¹

Inasmuch as most villagers are in debt, one

might anticipate that they would blame creditors for their problems. But they do not. Most creditors are lenders who loan intermittently (depending on whether they have an "extra" hundred or two hundred pesos) or are store (*tindahan*) owners who allow regular customers to charge a limited amount of purchases. The latter typically collect no interest unless the account goes unpaid indefinitely. The former get around 50 percent, a standard interest rate. Both types have class C-D living standards and represent a variety of occupational groups. They loan to people whose occupations are similarly varied and whose standards of living range from classes A through D.

A minority of lenders — eleven in my sample — are in households for which lending rice or cash regularly enhances their income. Seven of these are farming and buy-and-sell families and have class C and D living standards. They lend to people in classes similar to theirs.

Only four lenders live substantially better than do most of their borrowers. Each of these households has several income sources and class E and F standards of living. What prevents them from being seen categorically as oppressive are patron-client ties and villagers' explanations for wealth and poverty.

Patron-Client Relations

Village society includes more than socioeconomic classes. People are also connected and divided by kinship, neighborhoods, friendships, informal (and some formal) associations, religion, and patron-client relations. Many of these cut across one or both class dimensions and thereby obscure those classes.

In addition to family, friends, land and/or steady work, rice, and money, Bukiran residents need other people to turn to for help. Family and friends do assist each other but often inadequately.

Bukiran villagers like to have someone with greater resources to run to (*matatakbuhan*). In the past, a *matatakbuhan* was often one's landlord, who had patron-client relationships with tenants. Since the deterioration of those ties, other patron-client relations have developed around people's needs for money, rice, and work.

A patron-client relationship is an instrumental friendship in which a person of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his or her influence and resources to benefit a person of lower status (client). The client reciprocates by giving support and services to the patron. Each individual regards the relationship as beneficial.²² Patron-client bonds in Bukiran are especially likely to develop between creditor and borrower and between landholder and laborer.

Three of the four previously mentioned money and rice lenders whose socioeconomic status is higher than their borrowers each loan to twenty or more people at any one time. With some borrowers they have no ties beyond the loan itself. With others, however, they have a patron-client relationship intertwining multiple bonds that supplement the contractual tie connecting creditor and borrower. Typically, such relationships have developed over several years.

The lender assures money and or rice when the borrower needs it — a highly valued benefit for people who are frequently short of both. The interest rate charged by the lender is frequently less than that collected from other borrowers. Sometimes on very small loans, the creditor charges these favored borrowers no interest. The creditor also helps the borrower in other ways — e.g., being a wedding or baptismal sponsor (*ninong, ninang*) for a borrower's child, finding work for the borrower or a borrower's child, giving clothing and other small gifts.

In return, besides repaying the debts, the borrower volunteers personal services to the

patron creditor — cooks and serves at parties the creditor hosts, repairs the creditor's house or car, cleans the creditor's yard, among others. Some borrowers have switched to the lender's religion; by increasing the congregation of the patron's church, these clients are supporting their patron. The borrowers also sell their rice to the creditor even though other buyers offer higher prices. Borrowers do these things because they feel morally obligated (*utang na loob*) and in order to strengthen the relationship and ensure a source of loans.

Patron-client relations also grow between some landholders and agricultural workers. Usually the socioeconomic status of patrons here is lower than that of patrons in the first type. But these landholders have higher status than their worker clients. From the relationship landholders get reliable workers, unremunerated personal services, and a certain prestige as a result of having people to call upon when needed. The laborers are assured of work and benefits, usually including loans.

One variety of this type is the relationship between some landholders and harvesters. As the number of landless families increases, competition among households needing harvesting work has heightened. Consequently, people pursue various strategies to secure harvesting rights *prior* to harvest time. A common one is to harvest repeatedly, season after season, the same landholder's fields, thereby establishing a claim to harvest there in the future. In recent years some landless workers have combined this practice with doing other work — e.g., sow seeds, pull seedlings, weed — without pay.²³ In return, in many cases, these workers can ask the landholders to do such favors as give them fruits from trees shading the landholder's house, extend them small-term loans, and sponsor their child's baptism. Among the benefits for the landholder is having harvesters who can be trusted not to steal grain and who can be asked to do small tasks for the landholder's household.

A second variety involves the *katulong* (helper) — a man hired by a landholder for an entire season. The landholder pays the *katulong* an agreed upon number or bags of rice after harvest and, in some cases, also feeds him on those days he works in the field.²⁴ If the contract extends beyond a couple of seasons, the relationship tends to become patron-client. The *katulong* ends up helping the landholding family not only in the fields but around the house and, in one case, even the households of the landholder's two sisters. In return, the worker can borrow money and rice, is given additional food, runs to the landholder's family for emergency help, and sometimes may build his family's house on the landholder's lot.

Not all Bukiran residents in classes A-D of Bukiran's society have patrons. And there are qualitative differences among those patron-client relationships that do exist. The better off lenders, for example, can potentially provide more protection to their clients than the small landholders can give to theirs. All patron-client relations, however, obscure class distinctions. Besides making lower class people dependent on higher class people, patron-client ties divide people of the same class and thereby make class unity more problematic. The *katulong* households, for example, have much in common with other landless households. They not only share the same livelihood but have the same living standard. But when, as part of their work assignment, they oversee planters, weeders, and harvesters in their landholder's field, the *katulong* are separated from fellow landless and impoverished people. They are looking after the landholder's interests because they want to maintain good relations with him or her. Similarly, if the families in classes B-D could cooperate, as a few villagers have suggested, to withhold selling their rice until they can do so together to a single high-bidding buyer, they would all gain. But one reason this has not happened is many feel obliged to deliver their rice to their patron lenders.

Explanations for Inequality

How people in Bukiran explain the continuing inequities is an additional reason for little solidarity and anger among the several lower classes or within one of them. Concentrating here on those people whose living standards fall in classes A-D, I heard three types of explanations: luck, the poor themselves, and the rich.

During discussions concerning such questions as "why are some people rich while most others are poor?" and "how do people improve their economic conditions?", the explanation often heard is "luck and chance" (*suwerte, kapalaran*). That is why, according to a typical reply from a landless couple in their middle thirties, "some people eventually move up (*umasseno*). Those who have good luck progress (*umunlad*) and improve their living situation. Most of us aren't lucky, so we stay poor." A few individuals say luck emanates from God and that one gets what God thinks one deserves. Others refer to the Bible's assurances that the poor are children of God and, therefore, while "we are unlucky on earth, we will be lucky in heaven." Most villagers, however, say *suwerte* and *kapalaran* come not from God but from people and society.

An often cited example is a lady in Bukiran who ten years ago was extremely poor but today is doing relatively well. (She is in class D on the living standard dimension). When her landless husband was taken to prison in 1970 for a crime he allegedly committed elsewhere, she was left with nine small children and literally no money or food. She initially eked out a living by selling wild vegetables that grow in the rice fields and eventually, "through good luck," was given the opportunity by a friend in a market to sell used clothing. This start, coupled with her frugality (to the point some say she is stingy) and hard work, she managed to save and enlarge the stock she now carries daily from market to market. She even has enough money in reserve to loan to others.

From a small tenant farmer comes another illustration of luck. "Just about the time I think I'm going to climb out of poverty, something bad happens." One time it was his son being hit by a car and practically losing his leg. Hospital expenses set back the whole family for years. Another time about seven years ago he had a beautiful onion crop he had grown some distance away from Bukiran during the hot season. His neighbor also had a nice crop. The neighbor harvested four days earlier than he did, took the onions to market, and sold them for 30,000 pesos. "A huge amount of money, more than either of us had seen before. I was ecstatic; I could hardly wait for mine to be ready." Four days later he took his onions to the same market. "I got only 6,000 for the same amount of onions that my neighbor had sold. Why? Luck. My neighbor was lucky; I wasn't. And ever since my neighbor and his family have prospered — they have built a bigger and better house, are sending their kids to college, and so on." What accounts for the luck? "The price for onions dropped suddenly because, I later heard, the government halted overnight the exporting of onions to other countries. So, because many of us all over the province were harvesting onions, there was a glut on the market. How were we to know? It's just a matter of chance."

A second explanation blames the poor themselves. People are poor because they have too many children, runs one explanation. "I'm poor because I had seven children to raise," lamented one elderly man. "Rich people are wise enough to have fewer children," claimed another villager, "but the poor haven't learned this yet. We are beginning to understand this though. Several women in the last few years have had their tubes tied."²⁵

Many villagers, however, do not agree that family size is a factor, noting many wealthy people, too, have large families. Furthermore, they say, children are important in one's old age, especially for the poor. Others defend large families by saying that poor people must

have several children because many children die young. If a married couple had only two or three and all died early, that couple would be lonely and have no one to care for them in their old age. Children also bring joy. As one middle aged lady said, "Rich people are rich in money but poor in contentment and people. They lack friends and family. Without those things, you don't have a good life no matter how much money you have."

Gambling, drinking, women, and foolish spending are additional reasons villagers give for poverty. "Yes, true, rich people do these things, too. But they can afford it. Poor people can't," contended a man whose tenant farms one and a half hectares. A 52-year-old carpenter, for example, blames his deceased father for his situation today. "My life would have been better if my father hadn't thrown away our land," which the father inherited from his parents' 40 hectares of homestead land. "Little by little, while us kids were growing up, my father sold it. He was supporting bad habits, including mistresses. It disgusted my mother so much that, when I was about eleven, she left him." By the late 1940s, "my father had lost all the land and was living with some woman." One of the-laughed-at people in Bukiran today is a 36-year-old man with a wife and four children. He is the son of a tenant farmer who managed to marry a woman whose father had a three or four hectares. She inherited some of that land a few years ago. Yet the family lives poorly, the young man working only odd jobs. He admits having squandered away his wife's inheritance in order to pay gambling debts, but he continues to play cards. Villagers comment it is a shame he is that way, then give examples of other people they have known or heard about who have gone downhill or can never ascend because of "*mga bisyo*" (vices).

Something that approaches being a vice for some is spending hard earned money for "things one really doesn't need but one buys in order to show off" (*magarbo*). Many

parents have troubles restraining their adolescent children who want fashionable clothes. Others point to three or four families who, they say, have descended from poverty to even more poverty because, "they can't hang on to money; as soon as they get it they spend it."

A third explanation for poverty is that a few become wealthy or better off by impoverishing the rest. Sometimes people talk about this at a general level: "the rich get rich by riding on the backs of the poor," and "they become rich by charging high interest rates on loans, taking advantage of us little guys who have to borrow in order to eat or to buy fertilizer." More frequently, people mention this only when referring to particular individuals or families. They claim only some rich become wealthy at the expense of others. An example is a large landowner who came at the turn of the century. "Abelardo stole peasants' land by juggling records in the Bureau of Lands," according to one middle aged villager who learned this from older residents. "His descents have parlayed those hundreds of hectares into additional wealth." But other villagers say Abelardo acquired land as peasants went into debt to him. "When they could not repay what they owed him, he took their land and they became his tenants." Once when a villager was making this kind of argument, another countered by saying, "Abelardo was rich even before he came here; that's why he had money to lend. He became richer because our ancestors were illiterate. They did not understand papers, records, and signatures."

The exchange reflects the ambiguity about causes for the lopsided distribution of wealth. People do not agree. Moreover, any one person frequently holds two or even three explanations simultaneously. Luck or chance is the most prevalent one, but several who make that argument also offer illustrations that fit the remaining two. This, I suggest, is not an inconsistency in their thinking. It indicates that villagers, from experience and

hearsay, have examples that give credibility to all three.

But luck or chance is the explanation people commonly offer, apparently because to them it best explains their experiences. A couple of other considerations also influence little blame being attributed to the wealthy.

First, many in Bukiran aspire to be like the better-off. People of various occupations and living standards say that those who are more comfortable are entitled to that. They, too, want such material possessions (big houses, appliances, clothes, cars) and opportunities (higher education, good jobs). On the other hand, people often look down on those of lower socioeconomic status. Tenant farmers, for instance, talk demeaningly about those who pick through threshed rice stalks to find stray kernels. Landholders with class C and D living standards sometimes make landless workers whom they hire for a day's work practically beg before paying their wages. Given these aspirations to be like the better off and despising to some degree those in similar or worse conditions than theirs, plus their own ambiguous and overlapping class situations, villagers have difficulty condemning universally the rich or finding solidarity with other impoverished people.

Second, villagers distinguish between "good" (*mabait*) and "bad" (*masama*) or "unfriendly" (*masungit and mukha*) rich people. The majority would like to be on favorable terms with the "good" and "friendly" rich. "Good" rich do not look down on poor people (*hindi sila matapobre*). "We should all be treated as human beings," claimed an older landless worker. "We all have the equal rights, whether rich or poor. This is one of the things the Huks fought for. We Huks weren't demanding equality of wealth or income. That's impossible. But we were asking for equal treatment . . . The good rich have learned this." Another characteristic of good rich is they help (*tumutulong*) those in need." "Help" usually means giving rice, even if only

a fraction of a kilogram, to those who, having nothing to eat, come and ask; or giving loans "at reasonable interest rates — like 25 percent" — to those who must borrow. Third, good people who are better off make certain allowances for the poorer people and understand (*maunawaan*) their situation. Such wealthy lenders, for example, "do not descend on the fields the moment we start to harvest to collect what we owe them." They wait for the borrower to return the rice and will extend the loan without additional interest if the borrower cannot pay promptly. They even tolerate a little bit of stealing from their rice fields. "They can afford it," reasoned a poor landless worker. A similar sentiment comes from one of the class E landowners who, with her husband, farms two hectares. This elderly lady, widely liked in the barrio, told us one day early in the harvest that part of one paddy field (*pitak*) had been harvested in the middle of the night. She had a pretty good idea who had "stolen" the rice but would not do anything. She was "leaving it to God to judge. Besides, I know there are many in the barrio who have not been eating well, some not eating at all. I can't really blame them for stealing. My husband and I aren't hard up; we can afford to lose a few sacks of rice."

Reflections

Having reached some understanding for why the impoverished majority do not rise up and smite the better off minority, do we accept the *status quo*? Perhaps villagers have adjusted to their condition. Why should we care? I have heard such sentiments in middle-class and upper-class circles in the Philippines and the United States. Some argue that villagers are satisfied, even happy — poor to be sure but peaceful and content just the same.

I disagree with such reactions. People in Bukiran and other villages in the region are not happy. Life is too hard and they know it. They complain, curse their predicament, and cry. They also laugh and occasionally

experience great joy and forget their worries. Yet even in humor there is sorrow when it is soothing misery.

At the same time, we cannot dismiss the behavior and outlook this paper has discussed with words like "false consciousness" and "villagers do not know their own interests" views expressed in certain quarters of the political left. It is important to see that people's actions and perceptions of reality make sense given the context.

The context has at least three features. First, survival for those at, below, or only slightly above subsistence depends as much, if not more, on being on good terms with at least some people who are better off as it does on ties to family, friends, and neighbors who are in the same boat with them. In Bukiran this is a "fact of life" villagers bear in mind when making decisions and organizing their lives.

Second, the other side of this dependence is that those with greater means are expected to help those with less. Villagers do not regard dependence *per se* as oppressive even though they know it involves inequalities. When help is expected but not given, then people see exploitation and injustice. The extent of claims people might make on those better off depends on the closeness of the relationship and means available to those expected to help. The most extensive involve patron-client and kinship relations. The least include, for instance, the custom that the straw of recently threshed rice should be left for those people who want to collect the remaining scattered kernels. Another is the custom that people may look for edible wild plants, fish, frogs, and so on in anyone's fields.

This is not to say the expectations are perfectly met and norms always adhered to. Members of extended families, for example, sometimes quarrel because one of the better off refuses to help poorer relatives. Similarly, the line between the client doing things for a

patron as part of the reciprocity, on the one hand, and having to be a "bootlicker" or (more accurately) a "cocksucker" (*sipsip buto*), on the other, is sometimes thin. And the fact that several families in Bukiran are periodically without food shows that the right to subsistence, though accepted, is not always practiced.

The third feature of the context is repression. People in Bukiran today, especially those over forty-five years old, recall with pride the Huk movement. That villagers united to resist the Japanese occupation and later fought for improved tenancy conditions and against abusive government and landlord-backed armies constitutes a chapter in their history that they enjoy talking, even bragging, about. Another meaning of that movement, however, is how costly defiance can be. Rare is the Bukiran family who does not have a close relative who was severely wounded, raped, or killed during the Huk rebellion. And fear of "having your head knocked off for sticking your neck out" hampered efforts by some in the 1960s to organize peasants to continue pressuring for improved living conditions.²⁶ The repression is less obvious today, but the memory lingers. So does the threat implied by martial law and other practices of local and national governments. Such an atmosphere causes people to think more than twice about any incinations they might have to express publicly their discontent.

Were conditions less repressive, were there more "breathing room," so to speak, to allow people more freedom, or were the times in great flux, possibly new concepts about justice and different perceptions of their situation could flourish. Or maybe ideas that are now subterranean but potentially contradict the dominant ones could surface. W.F. Wertheim suggests that "in any society, more than one value system is to be found as a determinant of human behavior and judgment Generally, however, . . . one more or less consistent and more or less explicit set of

values ... is dominant and is cherished and protected by those in power The contrary sets of values may function as a kind of counterpoint to the dominant set." This phenomenon of "counterpoint values" is "a source of all emancipation movements and of social evolution."²⁷

One counterpoint value in Bukiran might be the idea that the rich do oppress the poor or the "equal rights" mentioned by a villager quoted earlier as a theme during the unrest of the 1930s-1950s. Such values also surfaced, according to a recent study, in rural Tagalog-speaking areas during the revolution against Spain.²⁸

Repression, however, is but part of the context. If somehow the other two were absent, I doubt it alone could hold society together. Even with it villagers can and do make known their disgust. Examples are the reproaches I witnessed by some landless workers against those who burned straw before foragers could pick it over. The Huk movement itself indicates the lengths to which people will go once outraged. I am sure Bukiran peasants would fight again if, for instance, the Philippine army or constabulary were to move in on them as government soldiers have done recently in other parts of the Philippines.²⁹ Carried too far repression itself can provoke the intimidated to defy and rebel.

Possibly "conscientization" could change the present context and accelerate liberating ideas. In this regard Paulo Freire's argument is intriguing. "Submerged in reality," Freire writes, "the oppressed cannot perceive clearly the 'order' which serves the interests of the oppressors whose image they have internalized."³⁰ Through the intervention of a pedagogy — "which must be forged *with*, not *for*, the oppressed [and which] makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed" — based on dialogue led by revolutionary leaders, peasants can begin to liberate themselves and their oppressors.³¹

But such conscientization must be done with at least the sophistication and selflessness that Freire demands of his "scientific and humanist revolutionary leaders." No sloganizing. No superior attitudes. No thoughts that the peasants are ignorant. Such approaches, I would argue, would be not only insulting to villagers but give no weight to their views of justice and exploitation that, while not the same as the leaders' (or mine), must be understood in their own terms. The correct method for a revolutionary leadership, says Freire, is "not 'libertarian propaganda.' Nor can the leadership merely 'implant' in the oppressed a belief in freedom, thus thinking to win their trust. The correct method lies in dialogue. The conviction of the oppressed that they must fight for their liberation is not a gift bestowed by the revolutionary leadership, but the result of their own conscientization."³² If such intervention is to work at all, it must change the consciousness of the leadership as well as the villagers. Otherwise the dialogue vanishes; a new dominant class merely replaces the old.

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Notes

¹Immanuel Wallerstein, "Rural Economy in Modern Society," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 12 (Spring 1977): 29-40, and *The Modern World System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974). The quotation prefacing my article is on page 27 of "Rural Economy . . ."

²The figures are based on my records and the 1975 census data for the Philippines. Bukiran is a fictitious name used in order to help preserve the anonymity of its residents.

³I picked Bukiran because, based on my casual observation of other rural areas in Central Luzon and on what has been written about the region, I thought it would be a good example of what life has been like for villagers in the region. It had experienced, for instance, the peasant-based Huk rebellion (circa. 1940-1954), "rural development" and "land reform" programs emanating from the central government, and the "green revolution" — all major events in the region since the mid-1940s.

⁴The information for this paper is drawn from what we learned about 162 households in Bukiran distributed throughout the village and 16 families who lived elsewhere but have been important to the politics and economics of the area. These latter include municipal officials, a manager of the municipality's Rural Bank, a construction company owner, and absentee landowners. Except for a couple of discussions, all conversations were in Tagalog.

⁵A third criterion, power, sometimes surfaces. It tends to associate highly with standard of living — the wealthier, the more powerful — although it merits scrutiny that I cannot give it here.

⁶A few explanations regarding landholding are in order. By "tenants" I include leaseholder tenants (*buwisan*), share tenants (*kasama*), and amortizing tenants (*hulugan*). The most in and around Bukiran are leaseholders; only a small number of share tenants (*hulugan*). Most in and around Bukiran to make amortization payments as part of the government's agrarian reform program. Some people have land on a mortgage (*sanglang-hiram*) arrangement and are counted here as tenants. Because they have loaned money to another landholder, they have the right to cultivate that land until the money has been repaid. The loan generally amounts to about 1,500 pesos per hectare. The one who mortgages is usually a tenant of some kind although landowners, too, do this.

⁷"Forage" is my term for one or more activities people in Bukiran and vicinity do to supplement

their diet or income. It includes gleaning the fields (*nagbabarog*, *namumulot*), gathering edible wild plants, catching fish and other waterlife (usually to eat but sometimes, especially if one catches a basketfull, to sell house-to-house), and searching the mud puddles for frogs and other edible critters. In those households where foraging is important for livelihood, the foragers are usually women and children.

⁸"Buy-and-sell," or *negosyo*, is similar to what Sol Tax calls (when analyzing Guatemala) "penny capitalism." [Sol Tax, *Penny Capitalism: A Guatemalan Indian Economy* (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Social Anthropology, publication No. 16, Smithsonian Institution, 1953).] Those who engage in buy-and-sell, almost always women, buy goods (e.g., slippers, clothing) from a market or large store in a nearby town or as far away as Manila, then sell the items door-to-door in the villages or possibly in one or more of the tiny markets in small towns and larger villages. Others buy a large quantity of something like fish sauce (*patis*), fish paste (*bagoong*), or perfume (*pabango*), bring it home, put it into smaller containers, then vend it door-to-door. Some buy-and-sell nearly daily. Others only seasonally — like those who purchase snacks, cigarettes, etc., in a town market then go to the fields and sell to harvesters. I will never forget one sweltering hot afternoon after several of us had been harvesting all day. I would have given anything for something cold to eat or drink. A woman whom we knew suddenly appeared from nowhere. Slung across her shoulder was a large insulated box. She reached in and pulled out a handful of "ice drops" made from coconut milk. She did not need to ask if we wanted to buy. I can still taste the flavored crystals melting in my mouth and cooling my insides.

⁹*Kawit ang palakol* is the expression often used to describe such periods. Literally it means "the ax is poised and about to fall." Just as an ax (or to translate more idiomatically, the *lilik* or harvesting tool) has two edges, this expression has two images: the blade is raised to begin harvesting the rice, or it is poised about to come down and slit your throat. Which will occur, the expression suggests, depends on the coming days and weeks — can one hold out long enough, and will the awaited harvest be bountiful? Such anxious waiting is also communicated in the expression *kawit ang panahon*.

¹⁰*Puwesto* is the right to farm land that someone else owns. Purchasing the *puwesto*, a practice that has evolved since the 1940s, cost in the late 1970s in the Bukiran areas between P1,500 and P2,500 per hectare, depending on quality of land.

¹¹Obviously standard of living is relative. What is

"moderate" to one can be "extremely wealthy" to another, especially if the latter person has practically nothing to his or her name. Those in classes F-G all acknowledge that their standard of living is better than those households A-D. But some in F-G felt that their situation was modest compared to some of the wealthiest families in the country. Those with a much lower standard of living understand this distinction, too. They know other families in the Philippines (but not involved in Bukiran's political economy) are more wealthy than those in class G (who are part of Bukiran's as a result of their landholdings and businesses). By village standards, gradations within this very well-to-do class (*mayamang-mayaman*) are not important.

¹²This observation complements what Akira Takahashi and Hiromitsu Umehara have written. In their two village studies, in Bulacan and Nueva Ecija, respectively, most people with land also have additional occupations. Their studies, however, like others with which I am familiar, emphasize heads of households or major occupations, thereby overlooking still other sources of household income and food. Nor do they discuss as explicitly as I have the different standards of living. Akira Takahashi, *Land and Peasants in Central Luzon* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1969); Hiromitsu Umehara, *A Hacienda Barrio in Central Luzon* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1974).

¹³Henry S. Landsberger, "Peasant Unrest Themes and Variations," in Landsberger (ed.), *Rural Protest: Peasant Movements and Social Change* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973), p. 17. Landsberger's definition is purposefully broad, readily incorporating those, such as agricultural workers, who do not hold land but nevertheless work in the fields.

¹⁴Several reasons probably explain the increased percentage of landless peasants. High among them, based on a preliminary analysis of my information, are population growth, limited land, few alternative opportunities elsewhere, little non-agrarian work in Bukiran and vicinity, and farm mechanization (about which I shall say more later). For a recent discussion of landless villagers in the Philippines generally, see Jean G. Rosenberg and David A. Rosenberg, *Landless Peasants and Rural Poverty in Indonesia and the Philippines* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Rural Development Committee, Cornell University, 1980).

¹⁵I base these remarks on an incomplete analysis of oral histories for most households, age of household head compared to standard of living, and size of a household compared to standard of living. I intend to pursue this investigation.

¹⁶Two provocative theoretical statements of the argument are Michael Lipton, "The Theory of the Optimizing Peasant," *Journal of Development Studies*, 4 (1968): 327-351; and John Weeks, "Uncertainty, Risk, and Wealth and Income Distribution in Peasant Agriculture," *Journal of Development Studies*, 7 (October 1970): 28-36. For recent data on the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries that lend support to the argument, see Asian Development Bank, *Asian Agricultural Survey, 1976: Rural Asia - Challenge and Opportunity* (Manila: Asian Development Bank, 1977); Keith Griffin and Azizur Rahman Khan, "Poverty in the Third World: Ugly Facts and Fancy Models," *World Development*, 6 (March 1978): 295-304; Geoffrey Hainsworth, "Economic Growth and Poverty in Southeast Asia: Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines," *Pacific Affairs*, 52 (Spring 1979): 5-41; Azizur Rahman Khan, "Growth and Inequality in the Rural Philippines," in *Poverty and Landlessness in Rural Asia* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1977), pp. 233-249.

¹⁷See Mao Zedong's "An Analysis of the Various Classes of the Chinese Peasantry and their Attitudes Toward Revolution," in Stuart R. Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-Tung* (New York: Praeger, 1963), pp. 172-177; and Amado Guerrero, *Philippine Society and Revolution* (Manila: Tala Publications, 1971), pp. 234-270, esp. pp. 248-257.

¹⁸James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 238.

¹⁹For an analysis, see my study, *The Huk Rebellion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977, and Quezon City: New Day Press, 1979).

²⁰The origin of this large number of bulldozer operators is a few wealthy families in Cabanatuan and Metro-Manila who have land in Bukiran but in the 1950s and 1960s diversified their business interests to include construction companies. As they won government contracts to build highways and irrigation systems, they bought more machinery and employed more operators. Many so hired have been sons and relatives of their tenants in Bukiran.

²¹Actually, over half of the leasehold tenants I know in Bukiran and vicinity have not paid rent (*buwis*) for two, three, even four years. They reason that until they have to pay amortization to the government, they need give nothing to landowners.

²²For an excellent collection of articles on patron-client relationships in various cultures, see

Steffen W. Schmidt, et al. (eds.), *Friends, Followers, and Factions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

²³Germelino Bautista found in parts of Pampanga and some southern parts of Nueva Ecija the *atorga* practice whereby workers pull seedlings for free in exchange for the right to harvest. [Germelino M. Bautista, *Major Changes in Philippine Rice Agriculture*, (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economics, 1979), pp. 52-57.] I learned from villagers in Cavite that the same thing exists there, but called *kamkam*, although it is not widespread. That Bukiran residents have no particular term for such free labor is additional evidence that this is not yet widespread and not seen by either the landless or the landholders as a precondition for harvest. *Kamkam* and *atorga*, apparently, are required practices and are not an aspect of a patron-client relationship.

²⁴For his work the *katulong* receives 5 to 8 cavans of palay per hectare, and when not working in the landholder's field, he is free to work as a day laborer for others. While some *katulong* labor goes way back in Bukiran's history, up until recently it typically meant the helper of an elderly tenant too old to work the land himself but with no close relative to take over. In the last decade or two, however, *katulong* has more generally come to mean helpers for landowners, not tenants. Seven of the nine landholders in Bukiran in 1978-79 with *katulong* owned their land. The land for four of these seven exceeded 6 hectares each. Whereas in the past they would have found tenants to cultivate all or part of their land, today these landowners prefer to engage *katulong* mainly because they want to avoid laws and other complications regarding tenancy.

²⁵Villagers estimated between 15 and 25 women, most in the thirties, had been sterilized, usually at an inexpensive government-sponsored program in Cabanatuan City.

²⁶The quote comes from a Bukiran resident who was one of the area's peasant leaders.

²⁷W. F. Wertheim, *Evolution and Revolution* (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin, 1974), pp. 108 and 114.

²⁸Reynaldo C. Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1912* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Press, 1979). Relevant to this point but for a different time and place is Christopher Hill's inspiring study of "radicalism during the English revolution:" *The World Turned Upside Down* (New York: Penguin, 1975).

²⁹I have in mind, for example, numerous reports from various sources of increasing rebellion in Samar as a result, at least to a significant extent, of widespread destruction and abuses by the government military. For a recent report, see *Kilusan para sa Katarungan at Kapayapaan*, "A Study of Militarization in Samar," 1979, distributed by the Resource Centre for Philippine Concerns, P.O. Box 2784, Kowloon Central Post Office, Hong Kong.

³⁰Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), p. 48, Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos.

³¹*Ibid.*, 33, *passim*. Emphasis is in the original.

³²*Ibid.*, 53-54.