

SITIO CAIMITUHAN: A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

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The social structure of Sitio Caimituhan, General Trias, is described. There are three main poverty groups (tenants, migrant workers, and landless laborers), each of which has its own particular characteristics and problems. As such, the initiation of successful development programs in the sitio will require different strategies for each group.

Introduction

This paper is the output of a three-month study which was undertaken as an initial phase of the "Stimulation of the Emergence of Participatory Acquisition Groups" project of the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR), Silang, Cavite. Sitio Caimituhan is one of the project sites and was selected as being representative of a rural poverty setting. The chief method of data gathering used was participant observation, which employs an unobtrusive approach to interviewing. The emphasis was on quality and insight rather than upon quantity of respondents. As such, there was no definite number of respondents, but it was ensured that all sectors of the community were represented.

General Information on the Sitio

Sitio Caimituhan is located in the southwestern portion of barrio Pasong Kawayan II in General Trias, Cavite. It can be reached by a two-kilometer macadamized road. It was named after the *caimito* (star apple) trees which were planted some 30 years ago and still stand to this day. Caimituhan's total land area is 212 hectares, 77 of which are irrigated rice-land. Of the remaining 135 hectares, forty-four are planted to corn and forty-one to sugar cane, while forty-five hectares are presently serving as grazing land and five hectares are idle, with some mango trees. None of these lands devoted to crops other than rice have been irrigated.

Not a single family residing in Caimituhan owns a piece of land. The largest landowner (with land amounting to 93 hectares) is Aling Aring Mojica, the widow of a former mayor of

General Trias. Dr. Porto, a medical doctor, who also resides in General Trias, owns 30 hectares. The remaining eighty-nine hectares are owned by twenty-three different persons, including one hectare of Caimituhan proper which is owned by a certain Aling Tinay Javier.

All the older heads of families are migrants to the sitio. About half of these came from the adjacent sitio, Bagong Kalsada. Most of the others came from other barrios of General Trias. Several are from Bicol. The first few families moved to Caimituhan in 1951. Since then the number of households has increased due mainly to marriages among children of the original migrants, almost all of whom decided to reside in the area.

Population and Housing

Caimituhan proper is composed of 52 families. It has a population of 248 persons. An additional 16 families constitute the group of workers from Bicol. Nine of these households are single-member families. All together there are 97 Bicolanos. Since these are not permanent residents of the area, they are not included in the study's demographic analysis, although their working and living conditions will be discussed.

The population of Caimituhan is very young. Over half of the residents belong to the 1-15 years-old age bracket. As shown in Figure 1, the number of people decreases substantially after age thirty.

The average level of educational attainment for those aged 14 years and above is three years. Most of the children drop out after Grade 6 or even before finishing the primary level. The primary school is located in the

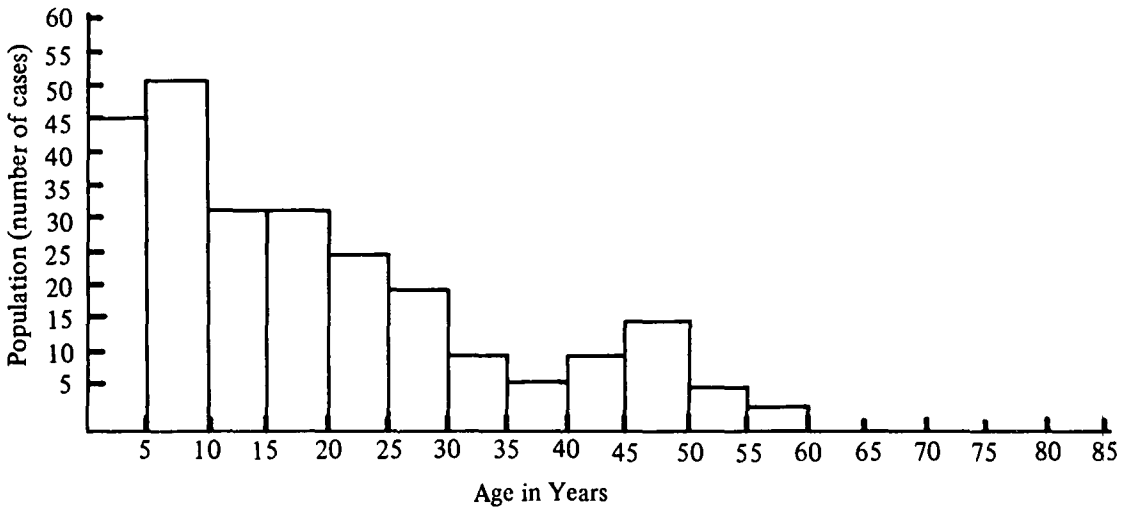


Figure 1. *Distribution of the Population by Age Group*

barrio proper which is two kilometers away from Caimituhan. There is no secondary school in the barrio. Those who choose to go to high school have to go to the town of General Trias, which is about four kilometers away from the sitio. The cost of daily transportation for one child is ₱1.30, which is beyond the means of many of the residents. A contributing factor to the high drop-out rate lies in the general expectation that children, even at an early age, have to help in farm work.

The people of Caimituhan live mostly by farming. Families without access to land work as laborers on the farms of others throughout the cropping cycle. Only three household members have permanent, regular employment outside of the sitio. Nine others are working in Saudi Arabia, but only after going deeply into debt during the period when their applications were being processed.

The houses in Caimituhan vary in size and construction materials. Generally, tenants have bigger houses and tend to use permanent building materials such as wood for the walls and galvanized iron for the roof. The landless agricultural laborers, except for those who have been to Saudi Arabia, use lighter housing materials such as cogon, nipa, and bamboo. However, there has been a slow shift away

from using cogon for roofing, even among the landless. Galvanized iron has been found to last longer and, hence, appears to be cheaper.

Almost all of the houses have only one bedroom, which is elevated from the ground. The whole family sleeps together in this room. The living room, dining room and kitchen are located in the lower part of the house, which generally has a dirt floor.

The people of Caimituhan lease their homelots from Aling Tinay Javier, paying with cavans of palay. Rental charges are based upon the size of the homelot. For example, Aling Tinay charges one cavan of palay per year for a 100 square meter homelot. Overall, the people pay about 50 cavans per year for their homelots.

Barrio Resources and Institutions

The sitio has two artesian wells and three sari-sari stores. The owners of these stores secure their commodities from the town of General Trias and carry them all the way to the sitio. Store owners cannot avoid selling on credit, with many customers taking up to a year to repay their debts. As a result, items in the sari-sari stores are marked up by 50 percent of the original price, or more.

There are no recreation facilities. Some residents engage in gambling to pass away time. This is most commonly found among the landless agricultural laborers. The tenants, for their part, are too busy on their farms to find the time for recreation.

There are no transportation facilities in the sitio since the roads are inaccessible, especially during the rainy season. Tricycles reach the adjacent sitio, Bagong Kalsada, but never go through Caimituhan. Passengers have to walk the rest of the way to the sitio.

There used to be one councilman in the sitio but he lost his seat during the election in 1982. However, he is still recognized as the leader of the community.

Analysis

The people of Caimituhan may be classified into three major categories: tenants, migrant workers, and the landless.

The Tenant Class

There are twenty-one tenants in Caimituhan. Three of these cultivate from 1.5 to 2 hectares of land; 10 cultivate from 1 to 1.4 hectares; and 8 cultivate less than a hectare. They generally share the same experience but to varying degrees. Some tenants pay rent for their farm lots once a year and some pay twice, depending on their individual arrangements with their landowner. To picture the life of a tenant more vividly, the following case study of one of Caimituhan's tenants is presented:

Mang Dencio has been a tenant of Dona Esmeralda for 15 years. He cultivates one hectare of land planted to rice. Every harvest season, which is twice a year, he gives 10 sacks of palay to Dona Esmeralda for the lease of the farm. Mang Dencio shoulders all the expenses for the farm, such as fertilizer, rental of a hand tractor, pesticides, and labor.

It is not easy for Mang Dencio to secure these necessities for his farm since he could not pay for them by himself. However, there is one person who is most willing to lend him fertilizer and capital. This is Aling Me-

nang, the owner of the *kiskisan* or the mill. The general arrangement is that, for every sack of fertilizer which is borrowed during planting season, two and one-half cavans of palay will be returned right after the harvest. The people refer to this as the *talinduha* system. One sack of fertilizer is equivalent to ₱125.00, while the cost of one cavan of palay is ₱70.00. Therefore, the tenant is actually returning ₱175.00, which means a 40 percent interest rate for a loan which is to be repaid within four months. Aling Menang also has the first option to thresh Mang Dencio's palay, as agreed upon during his application for a loan.

Other expenses incurred by Mang Dencio include his rental for three days, of a hand tractor at ₱200.00 per day, pesticides, and labor. A summary of his expenses and resulting net income is presented in Table 1. As shown in this table, Mang Dencio and his family earn less than ₱3,000 per year from their farm, with even this estimate being generous, insofar as it assumes that the tenant can get a fair market price for his palay. In actuality, this is rarely the case. Rather, the usual pattern is that, when it is time for harvest, the *mamimili*, or middleman, comes with his jeepney and buys Mang Dencio's palay at a much lower price than the standard of ₱70.00 found in the market. At times, this goes down to ₱40.00 per cavan.

Mang Dencio has no control over the price of palay and yet is forced to sell in order to repay his loan and to feed his family. He cannot sell his crops to other outlets which give higher prices since he has no access to transportation facilities. Eventually, he sells his palay at the price dictated by the middleman. The *mamimili* then either sells the palay at Biñan, Laguna for ₱70.00 per cavan or stocks this at the *kiskisan* until the price of palay goes up. His profits are further augmented during planting season, when the stock of palay for household consumption will have been depleted. At this time, Mang Dencio goes to Aling Menang and buys rice for ₱3.50 per kilo. Since one cavan of rice is 50 kilos, this means that the

selling price at this time comes to ₱170 per cavan. One cavan of rice is also equivalent to two sacks of palay which were bought from him at ₱40-60 per sack.

If we draw a diagram, such as the one shown in Figure 2, to illustrate how the informal

credit system works, we can see several arrows pointing to the *kiskisan* as the source of credit in Caimituhan. It appears that the owner of the *kiskisan* has indirect control over the tenant throughout the production and marketing cycle. Her influence is much stronger than that of the landowner.

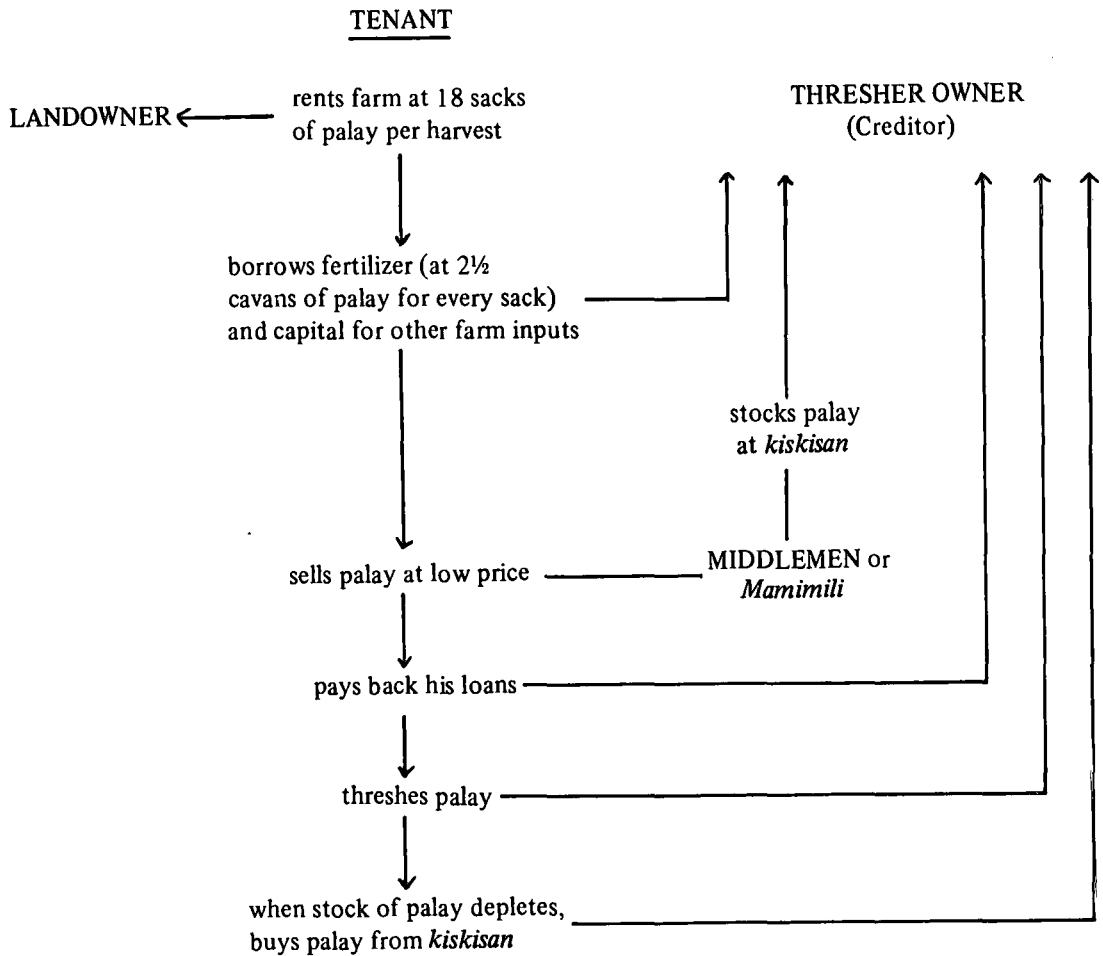


Figure 2. The Informal Credit System in Caimituhan

TABLE 1. *Income Statement of Mang Dencio for One Cropping Season*
(1 ha. of land)

I.	GROSS INCOME		70 cavans of palay
II.	EXPENSES		
	A. In terms of sacks of palay		
	1. Fertilizer = 3 sacks (2½ sacks of palay for every sack of fertilizer)		7.5 sacks
	2. Labor for harvest = (10% of total harvest) ^a		7.0
	3. Threshing = (10% of threshed palay) ^b = (Gross income – Labor for harvest) x .10 = 63 x .10		6.3
	4. Rental of land = 10 sacks (fixed)		10.0
			<u>30.8 sacks of palay</u>
	B. In terms of money		
	1. Seeds = (for 1 ha.)	₱220.00	
	2. Rental of hand tractor (₱200/day for 3 days)	600.00	
	3. Pesticides = Machete = ₱82.00 Azodrin = 85.00 2-4D = 38.00	205.00	
	4. Irrigation	155.00	
	5. Labor for transplanting	200.00	
		<u>₱1,380.00</u>	
III.	NET INCOME		
	A. Gross income in terms of sacks of palay – expenses in terms of palay: 70 sacks – 30.8 sacks		39.2 sacks
	B. Net income after deducting expenses in terms of palay – expenses in terms of money (39.2 sacks of palay at ₱70.00 per sack = ₱2,744.00)		
	₱2,744.00 – ₱1,380.00	₱1,364.00	

^aThe harvesters get one-tenth of the total palay harvested and divide this equally among themselves; this is what is termed *hunon*.

^bThe owner of the thresher gets one-tenth of the palay as rental for the use of his thresher.

On the other hand, the owner of the mill gives generous loans to the farmer tenants, from whom she also collects during the harvest season. Thus, she controls the number of creditors coming to her by giving the loan in kind, that is, in fertilizer. Eventually, this limits her creditors to farmers.

Does the farmer realize all of this? Maybe he does, maybe he does not.

A long established system of reciprocity has developed between the farmer and the owner of the *kiskisan*. Where does the farmer go when his child is sick? Where does he go when he needs money to process his papers for Saudi Arabia? The mill-owner has become a "godfather" to the farmers. To break this relationship without offering alternatives to meet the needs of the farmer would be to his detriment.

This hypothesis was proven in the last barangay elections when the people of Caimituhan supported the incumbent Barangay Captain who was also the owner of one *kiskisan*. This shows how strong a relationship has been established between these two roles in the community.

Initially, to relieve the farmer from this disadvantaged position, he must (1) be provided with loans at minimal interest rate for fertilizers; and (2) he must have access to a market that will give higher prices. Furthermore, these institutional supports must be available on a sustained basis. Otherwise, separation from the middlemen and the owner of the mill could be detrimental to the farmer.

Coping Mechanisms of Tenants

Since the farm has other needs besides fertilizer, Mang Dencio must also look elsewhere for financial assistance.

When a farmer is deeply in need of money, he borrows an amount of about ₱3,000.00 from a "Batangueño" (financier). To secure this emergency loan, the farmer will usually mortgage his land for two to three years to the Batangueño. However, he still continues working on his land as a *kasama* (share-cropper). This means that he

and the Batangueño share all the expenses on the farm and then divide the harvest equally between themselves. Usually, the Batangueño asks for an extension after the term is finished.

This arrangement seems to indicate that tenants have difficulty coping with the leasehold system, which was originally intended to free the farmers from their bondage to the landowner. While this may be true, the tenant now faces a different problem; namely, that of acquiring capital. He thus gets caught up in another unfavorable relationship, in this case with the financier or Batangueño. The situation is analogous to a fungus which is removed from a tree which is its source of sustenance. In order to survive, the farmer has to cling to something for support, and for him these are the informal creditors.

The tenant is not yet ready to take complete charge of his farm, since he cannot maintain it without the support of the landowner to pay his farming expenses. Mortgaging his farm to a Batangueño will enable him to go back to his old and more familiar relationship, within the *kasama* system, where he does not have to worry about the expenses.

The Migrant Workers

Another important figure in the community of Caimituhan is the migrant worker. He is usually a non-Caviteño, most likely from the Bicol region. He is seldom called by his name, but simply "Bicol."

One such laborer is Ramon. He came to Caimituhan in 1981 to work for Doña Esmeralda who has a 44-hectare commercial corn plantation. Ramon was recruited by one of the overseers of Doña Esmeralda who goes to Bicol whenever labor is needed on the farm. Ramon is paid ₱16.00 a day. He works under strict supervision and with strictly observed working hours; that is, from 7:00 in the morning to 12:00 noon, and from 1:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon. He is not allowed to take a moment's rest during all this time, not

even to straighten his back when it is aching. Overseers are always standing by to direct the work and to see to it that the workers do not waste any time in unnecessary movements. The migrant workers, of course, do not have any control over the land they till, nor do they get a share of what they produce.

Ramon's only expense in Caimituhan is his food. He sends the rest of his pay to his family in Bicol. Whenever he is in need of money, he asks for his salary in advance. This is perhaps the reason why he usually finds himself working to repay his debts. After work, he sings or plays cards with his fellow Bicolanos to relax. The migrants stay in common sleeping quarters provided by the landowner. This building also serves as a storage place for Doña Esmeralda's corn. Like his fellow Bicolanos, Ramon is never asked to participate in any community affair. The migrant has the lowest social status in the community and is regarded with disdain by the people.

Ramon claims that wages are much lower in Bicol than those which he receives from Doña Esmeralda. Moreover, he was interested to work in places other than Bicol, simply out of a spirit of adventure.

While they do not have to worry about the rent of their farm, farm inputs, and loans, the Bicolanos do not have control over their working activities on the farm. Their movements at work are directed and controlled by the farm supervisors. This system seems to have a psychological effect on their personalities. They are usually quiet and subdued and they lack self-esteem. They seldom associate with other groups in the community, limiting their interactions to their fellow Bicolanos. Contributing to this state is the attitude of the native Caimituhanos toward them. As noted above, the migrant workers are accorded a very low status in the community for taking the kind of job that no one else would accept.

The Landless

Another group in the community which does not have access to land is the landless

families. These people have no permanent source of income. However, unlike the migrant workers who will accept any work available in the community, members of this group are discriminating in their choice of farm tasks. They are always on the lookout for other job opportunities and even seek jobs outside the community. Thus, it is from this group that most of the "Saudi-goers" come.

In many cases, the landless are hired as agricultural laborers on the farm. During planting season, they are paid ₱14.00 a day with food, or ₱16.00 a day without food. During harvest, they get "hunos" or a tenth of the palay harvested. When labor is not needed in the field (especially during the months of March, April and May) the landless workers tend to be idle.

How did members of this group become landless in the first place? The following examples typify the answers given to this question.

Imo is a landless household head. He has a family of seven. Presently, he works as a fisherman in Salinas, Cavite. His parents used to lease a farm but, when they got too old to work, they gave the farm to Imo's older brother.

Mang Ano is 76 years old. He feels too old to work on the farm, so he gave his land to his children. Now, he relies on the support of his children for food and other necessities.

Sonny is from Batangas. He came to Caimituhan as a farm laborer, married and settled down in the place. Presently, he helps his father-in-law tend his farm.

Ostoy's parents had been landless even before they migrated to Caimituhan. They lived by working on other people's farms as hired laborers. Ostoy was brought up this way. Now that he is married and has a family of his own, he lives the same way as his parents did.

Usually, the landless families stay close to their relatives for support. They share their resources, even their daily meals. Their decisions are much influenced by the elders in their clan. To an outsider it seems that this

group maintains solidarity by upholding a common view when it is confronted with critical issues.

This group of people is also very cautious in trying out innovations. They loathe to take a risk on a particular project, for example, unless it has already been successfully carried out by others. One such instance was the initiation of a piggery project. Nobody from the landless group joined. The reason given was that they would first observe to see if the project was going to work or not, before joining.

Within sitio Caimituhan, the landless workers fall into three main categories. The first of these is composed of landless agricultural laborers, numbering nineteen in all. There are also nine cases of men who formerly worked as agricultural laborers but who have been able to find temporary work in the Middle East. Finally, there are three nonagricultural workers (a fisherman, a ditchtender and a policeman) who still live in the community. In all, there are 31 members of this social category, as compared to twenty-one families headed by tenants and twenty-five migrant workers from Bicol!

There are two sectors which are not covered in the above categories. These are women and youth. These sectors come from tenant and landless farm families. In Caimituhan, only three married women are not engaged in farm activities. These are the owners of three sari-sari stores. The youth sector has the characteristics of the landless group except that they sometimes have to leave the farm to attend to other activities like their schooling. Overall, there are 45 youths (single persons aged 25 or below) engaged in farm work.

Other Coping Mechanisms

There are at least two other common practices which are used by the tenants and the landless to meet their basic needs for survival. The first of these is again related to the prevailing credit system. The rate of interest being observed in Caimituhan is 20 per cent per annum. Oftentimes, one finds that the

amount paid in interest has grown bigger than the amount borrowed. Unpaid interest is lumped with the capital and bears new interest. To avoid this trap, members borrow from a second creditor in order to repay the first loan. Before the interest can grow bigger from this second loan, he again borrows from a third creditor. This system is referred to by the community as "*pagpapabata ng utang*."

A second strategy might well be termed as "imitating the oppressors." When asked what kind of business venture they would like to set up, many of Caimituhan's residents identified *mamimili ng palay* (buying of palay) as their aspiration in this regard. This approach is commonly adopted by members who have a lot of capital. The *mamimili*, or middleman, buys the farmers' palay right after harvest when the price of palay is low. He then stocks this at the *kiskisan* until the price goes up, that is, just before the next harvest. The arrangement is that the *kiskisan* will mill the middleman's palay.

This business venture is somewhat exploitative in nature, which the people do not realize. Concerned with making money for themselves, they tend to imitate the practice of their oppressors instead of fighting against it. From their point of view, however, they feel that they cannot do anything about this relationship and that they have a better chance for survival if they adapt to the prevailing system. While this may seem to signify resignation and an escape from reality to an outside person, it may in fact be only a rational response to an otherwise difficult situation.

It may be seen from these figures that the tenants are generally older and have spent fewer years in school than have the landless. Previous studies have shown that landlessness is a second-generation problem of rural tenancy systems. In time, the land available for the community will be unable to generate employment for the growing number of people, thus forcing a shift from land-based to non-land based employment. This is likely to happen in Caimituhan, which is in the immediate vicinity of the urbanizing town proper of General Trias.

Table 2. *Summary Profile of Tenants, Migrants and Landless Workers*

	<i>Tenants</i>	<i>Migrants</i>	<i>Landless</i>
Population of household heads	21	16 with families, 9 without	31
Median age of household heads	45	not determined	30
Average no. of years of schooling	1.8	not determined	2.5
Decision-making power	makes major agricultural decisions, e.g., type of crops to be produced.	none	none
Major problems	Credit	Low wages, mechanical work	No permanent source of income

Summary

A summary profile of the three groups analyzed in this paper is presented above.

The migrants are a relatively young population. Most are not more than 25 years of age. Their status in Caimituhan depends on their arrangement with the landowner.

The migrants seem to be the most united of the three groups. This was proven at one time when they threatened to leave if nothing was done about the maltreatment of one of their co-workers by an overseer. (Overseers are very strict about working hours and the movements of the laborers.) This persuaded the farm manager to dismiss the overseer in question. The migrants are also united by their common work as well as by the fact that they are not socially accepted by other groups. As such, there are more chances of working with them as a group than with any other segment of the community.

The landless are also united, but this is limited to their own clan. They seek support from those of their relatives who have access to land. This means that they have to follow whatever decisions concerning the family are made by their landed relations.

The initiation of development programs for the people of Caimituhan will entail different strategies for each group. They all occupy disadvantaged positions in the community in relation to those persons who own the means of production such as the landowner, the "mamimili" and the owner of the mill.

An insight of this preliminary analysis is that the differences between sectors in the community necessitates working with these different groups separately. To attempt to unite them at this point in time would not be advisable, unless a common denominator can be identified and established.²

Notes

¹It should be noted that the number of migrant workers fluctuates from season to season, depending on the amount of land available.

²As one output of the Participatory Acquisition project, a *komiks*-like brochure describing the findings of this study has been prepared for general distribution and awareness building. The brochure is entitled *Kamotehan: Pag-aaral ng Isang Pamayanan* and is available upon request from the authors.