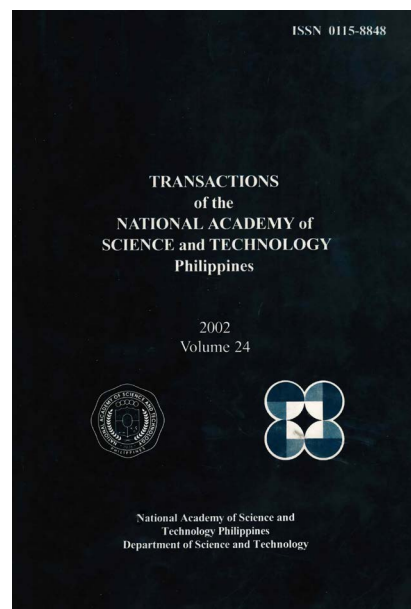


Transactions NAST PHL, is the official journal of the National Academy of Science and Technology Philippines. It has traditionally published papers presented during the Academy's Annual Scientific Meeting since 1979 to promote science-based policy discussions of and recommendations on timely and relevant national issues as part of its functions as a national science academy. Starting in 2021, this journal has been open to contributions from the global scientific community in all fields of science and technology.



Peasant Types and Development Issues in Mindanao

Antonio J. Ledesma, S.J.

Bishop Prelate of Ipil
Bishop Residence, Ipil, 7001 Zamboanga Del Sur

Citation

Ledesma AJ SJ. 2002. Peasant types and development issues in Mindanao. Transactions NAST PHL 24(2): 171-178. doi.org/10.57043/transnastphl.2002.5090

Copyright

© 2002 Ledesma AJ

PEASANT TYPES AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES IN MINDANAO

ANTONIO J. LEDESMA, S.J.

Bishop Prelate of Ipil

Bishop Residence, Ipil, 7001 Zamboanga Del Sur

ABSTRACT

In this exploratory paper, two sets of variables and their utility for classifying the peasantry were discussed. Eight types of the Filipino peasant were then described. Observations on development issues affecting Filipino peasants at the outset of the new century were presented and discussed.

Keywords: peasant types, development, farm, agricultural technology

INTRODUCTION

Without discounting the traditional ways of farming of the indigenous peoples of Mindanao in the earlier centuries, we can estimate that the island's heightened agricultural development is probably only a little over a hundred years old. It coincides with the last phase of Spanish colonial rule in the nineteenth century when mission outposts dot the coastal fringes of Mindanao and inter-island trading of farm commodities develops. It receives new impetus with the coming of the American colonial period at the turn of the twentieth century and the beginnings of large-scale mechanized plantations in several areas.

It is further heightened with the influx of small-farmer settlers from Luzon and the Visayas during the Commonwealth period. Subsequently, in the next two decades after the Second World War, more settler families, including former Huk rebels, come in droves at almost the same pace that virgin forests are feverishly felled and logs exported abroad. By the seventies and eighties, Mindanao's physiognomy has been fairly set – with many areas reaching a saturation level of settlers, with valleys and mountain ranges virtually logged over, and with sedentary farming finally established. In the meantime, flash points in ethnic conflicts between Christian and Muslim communities, at times involving the lumad tribes too, become more pronounced.

Within the span of the past century, the population of Mindanao has increased about fifteen-fold, while its landscape has been transformed from a mass of impenetrable forests to a more variegated patchwork of lowland and upland farms laced by ageless river systems and connected by a more recent road network that links barangays to town centers and the towns to the larger cities.

By the turn of the new millennium, we can thus ask ourselves several questions. What has happened to Mindanao's rural areas? Where and who are the rural poor? How is development taking place? What are the challenges ahead for our government and many other stakeholders?

It has been said that Mindanao's agricultural development and rural problems are simply a replication of what happened earlier in Luzon and the Visayan islands. Yet, there are also dissimilarities – notably, Mindanao's location below the typhoon belt, making it more suitable for capital-intensive agriculture and an export-oriented economy. On the other hand, Mindanao's heterogeneous tri-people context, particularly in its southwestern half, highlights intractable conflicts over land rights and ancestral domain claims.

It is in this light that we shall examine first a typology of Filipino peasants, with particular reference to Mindanao. Then we can look at some development alternatives and the challenges looming ahead at the beginning of the 21st century.

FOUR DEVELOPMENT VARIABLES

Kasama, saop, sacada, mamumugon, sagod, etc. are all local terms referring to Filipino peasants and their labor arrangements on the land. Is there some way of classifying these various names and institutions? How does one arrive at a definition of the Filipino peasant?

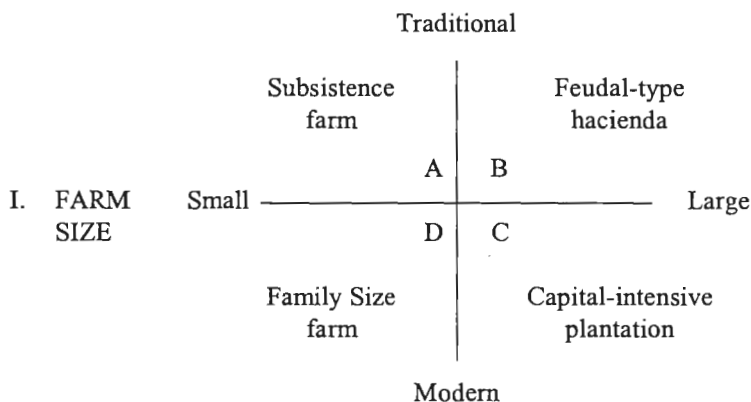
In this exploratory paper, we shall first discuss two sets of variables and their utility for classifying the peasantry. Then we can sketch out eight types of the Filipino peasant today. We shall end with some observations on development issues affecting Filipino peasants at the outset of the new century.

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

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

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

- A – subsistence smallholding (with low productivity)
- B – feudal type *hacienda* (with medium productivity)
- C – plantation in an export crop economy (with high productivity per unit of labor)



II. AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY

Unit of analysis : farm
 Relationship : man-land (technological)
 issue : productivity/profitability

Figure 1. Farm types by farm size and agricultural technology.

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

Changes in agricultural parameters may take place along two directions: without appropriate technology, from farm A to B to C; with technological innovation, from farm A to D.

The second pair of variables relates *land tenure* and *access to support services* such as credit and marketing. Its unit of analysis is the peasant as the tiller of the soil vis-à-vis landlords, government, and other intermediaries. The peasant is thus viewed primarily in terms of his “man-man” social relationships. The focus is on the equity issue in development.

Again ranged along a spectrum, the peasant’s tenure on the land may be based primarily on his labor input or on his ownership title to the land. Access to public services as the complementary variable may be approximated as either limited or adequate.

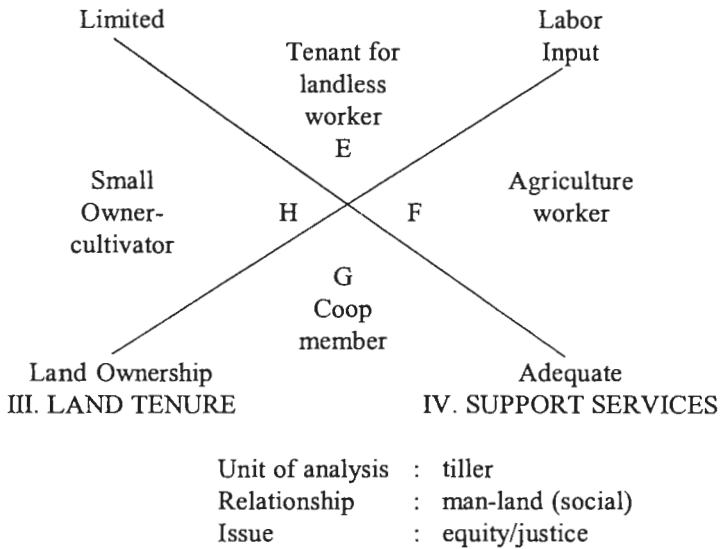


Figure 2. Farm tillers by land tenure and access to public services.

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

- E – tenant, whether sharecropper or lessee; or a landless worker
- F – agricultural worker within an hacienda or plantation economy.
- G – member of a cooperative or group farm
- H – small owner-cultivator

Downward social mobility may take the path from tiller H to E to F. Upward mobility, with redistributive land reform, would occur from tiller E to H; with collective land reform, from tiller F to G.

Eight Peasant Types

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

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

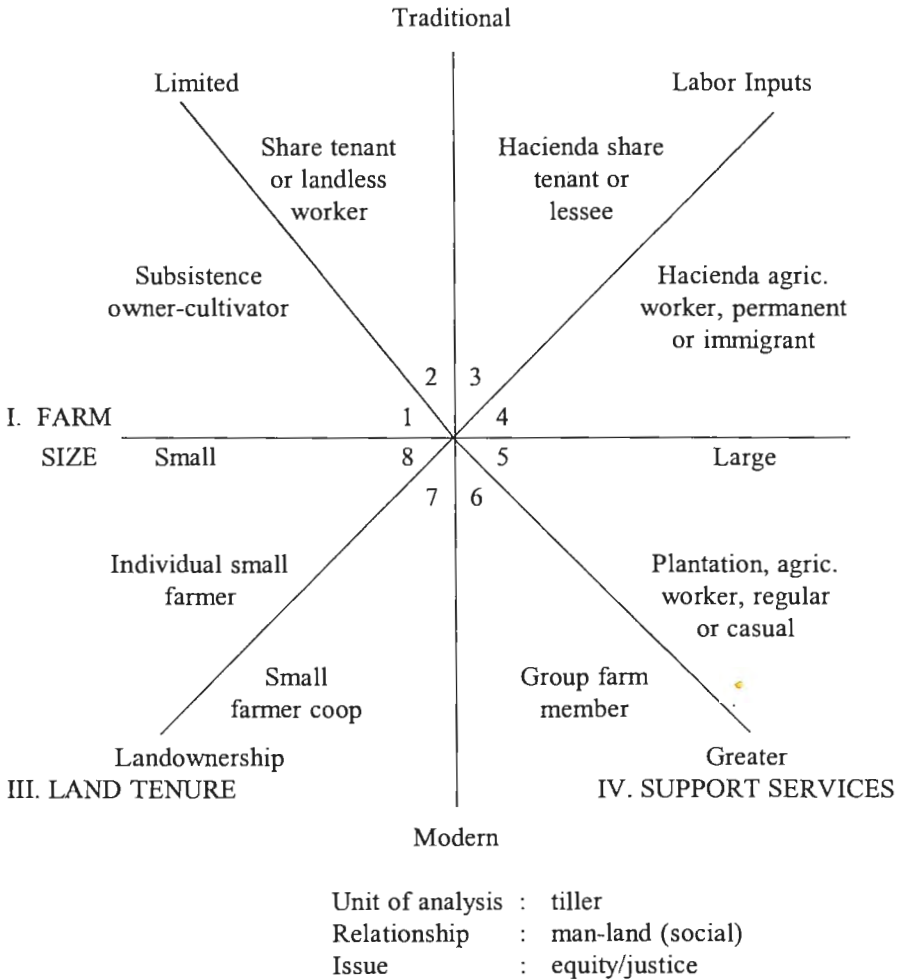


Figure 3. Typology of Filipino peasants

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

Type 3 – the share tenant or lessee (*namumuisan*) within a hacienda setting. Patron-client relations are more pronounced with expectations of landlord reciprocity. Several landed estates devoted to rice, coconut, sugarcane, etc. may

actually be fragmented for cultivation purposes among many small tenants of this type.

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

Type 5 – the agricultural worker, regular or casual, within a plantation economy that is capital-intensive, export-oriented, and oftentimes linked to transnational corporations for capital and marketing requirements. Cash crops may be pineapple, banana, coffee, palm oil, or even rice. Many of these are grown in Mindanao.

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

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

Type 8 – the individual small farmer receiving some government support in the form of a crop loan, irrigation service, farm-to-market roads, etc. Agrarian reform beneficiaries on rice and corn lands are target groups for this “integrated approach” of the government. Without a farmers’ organization or cooperative, however, these services are limited or may even be curtailed.

Some Development Issues

After surveying these eight peasant types, it is helpful to keep in mind that these types are not exhaustive. Neither are they static. For instance, a peasant household may be forced by circumstances to take a path of increasing pauperization – e.g., from type 1 to type 2 to type 3 or even to type 4. On the other hand, through public policy and with adequate support from government or non-government agencies, a peasant family may move upward in the mix of development variables – e.g., from type 2 to type 7, or from type 4 to type 6. Three issues can thus be raised in the form of questions.

(1) Can and should a dual economy in Philippine agriculture persist? Types 1-3 are often characterized as a “backward” subsistence economy in contrast to the more “progressive” types 4 and 5 needed by the country for foreign exchange

earnings. On the other hand, with the exhaustion of the land frontier, land conflicts have arisen between representatives of the two economies, oftentimes to the detriment of the smallholder.

(2) Types 4-5 highlight the growing significance of landless agricultural workers – or the “proletarianization of the peasantry.” Indeed, landless workers (who neither own nor have tenants’ rights to the land) are becoming increasingly visible not only under types 4-5, but also in types 2-3 areas. What are the alternatives towards resolving the problems of landlessness and rural unemployment?

(3) In the light of population pressure and advances in farm technology, what are the realizable models for agrarian reform in the first decade of this century? Can the individual family-size farm remain as the long-range paradigm for agrarian reform? Or can agrarian reform models move more flexibly among types 8,7 and 6?

In many respects, types 7 and 6 embody the twin goals of rural development for higher productivity and greater equity – i.e., by combining elements of a modernized agricultural technology, security of land tenure, greater access to public services, and, depending on local conditions, small- or large-scale farming units. The likely route for a dual thrust of agrarian reform would be: counter clockwise, following a redistributive model, from types 2 and 1 to types 8 and 7; and clockwise, following a collective model, from types 3, 4 and 5 to type 6.

To summarize, types 1-3 are arrangements of the past, if public policy and economic rationale are heeded. Types 4-5 continue to dominate the export crop economy, but with serious implications for the well-being and participation of peasant households in their own development. Types 6-8, on the other hand, could reflect current thrusts for the development of the Filipino peasant in Mindanao, according to his own scale, tenure, technology, and support structure.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

- Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development. 1993. *Sowing the Seeds for Our Future*, Report of the Second Asian Development Forum, “Sustainable Agriculture Towards Food Security and Enhanced Quality of Life,” Cagayan de Oro. ANGOC, Quezon City.
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 1981. *The Peasants’ Charter: The Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development*. FAO, Rome.
- Gaspar, K.C.Ss.R. 2000. *The Lumad’s Struggle in the Face of Globalization*. Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao, Inc., Davao City.
- IFAD, ANGOC and IIRR. 2001. *Enhancing Ownership and Sustainability: A Resource Book on Participation*. International Fund for Agricultural Development, Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, and International Institute of Rural Reconstruction. Philippines and India.
- International Fund for Agricultural Development. 2001. *Rural Poverty Report 2001: The Challenge of Ending Rural Poverty*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

- Ledesma A. 1982. Landless Workers and Rice Farmers: Peasant Subclasses under Agrarian Reform in Two Philippine Villages. International Rice Research Institute, Los Baños, Laguna.
- Masipag. 2000. Genetic Engineering & Genetically Modified Organisms in Agriculture. Masipag, Los Baños, Laguna.
- Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. 1997. Towards a Better Distribution of Land: The Challenge of Agrarian Reform. Vatican Press, Vatican City.
- Shanin T.. (ed.). 1971. Peasants and Peasant Societies. Penguin Books. Baltimore.
- Tri-People Consortium for Peace, Progress and Development of Mindanao (TRICOM). 1998. Defending the Land: Lumad and Moro People's Struggle for Ancestral Domain in Mindanao. TRICOM, SNV, ICCO, and AFRIM, n.p.