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**Land Reform in East and Southeast Asia:  
A Comparative Approach\***

ANTONIO J. LEDESMA, S.J.

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF LAND REFORM: GOVERNMENT, CADRES, PEASANTS

For the most part, implementation of land reform programs has become the crux of the problem today in many Asian countries. Simply to have land reform in their legislation has become almost fashionable, but the question of implementation remains a critical issue.<sup>1</sup> In general, there have been three groups of actors who have been charged with the implementation of land reform programs on the Asian stage: government agencies, political cadres, and peasant groups. Although their functions may oftentimes overlap, the roles of these three implementing groups have been quite distinct.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES (TAIWAN AND THE PHILIPPINES)

Because land reform is a public policy, government agencies have ordinarily been entrusted with its administration. Nonetheless, there is ample variety in the administrative structures of each government set-up. Malaysia for instance has achieved notable recognition for "one of the most successful programs of rural infrastructure construction and land development to be found in Southeast Asia" — the work of its Ministry of Rural Development in land development, irrigation, road-building, schools, and adult education. Much of the work has been accomplished directly by the Federal Land Development Authority (FLDA), which has

\*This is the second half of a two-part article on land reform by Fr. Ledesma. The first half was printed in last quarter's issue of *Philippine Studies*.

1. Joint FAO/ECAFE/ILO, *Report: Seminar on Land Reform Implementation in Asia and the Far East*, Manila, July 1969 (Rome: FAO, 1969); FAO, *Report: World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development* (Rome, 12-20 July, 1979).

concentrated on the opening of new lands.<sup>2</sup>

With less notice, Thailand has had its own Land Development Department which oversees the research work on land problems and the beginnings of colonization schemes in the Northeast and other parts of the country.<sup>3</sup> In both Thailand and Malaysia, however, land reform proper in the sense of land redistribution has not been attempted. In other Asian countries, the beginnings of land reform activities are oftentimes entrusted to a Ministry or Department of Agriculture. As the implementation stage is reached, a separate office or department is created. In the Philippines, an entire Ministry of Agrarian Reform has been established since 1971, taking over the previous functions of the Land Authority. South Vietnam too had its Directorate General of Land Affairs under the Ministry of Land Reform, Agriculture and Fishery Development to supervise the implementation of the LTTT program.

Perhaps the most interesting and successful of these government bodies is Taiwan's Sino-American Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction (JCRR) which was instrumental in backstopping the implementation of the land reform program on the island. The JCRR has been described by one of its original five commissioners as "a bilateral organization operating on a semi-autonomous basis, . . . the first of its kind to prove the feasibility and effectiveness of binational technical cooperation."<sup>4</sup> Essentially, the JCRR was able to channel American financial and technical aid for Taiwan's land reform program on a more technological level without being confronted with political considerations at every turn from either the American or the Chinese side. In addition to the work of the

2. Gayl Ness, *Bureaucracy and Rural Development in Malaysia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) and "Models of Rural Development Administration: The Malayan Ministry for Rural Development," *SEADAG Papers* (New York: Asia Society, 1967).

Degani, however, questions the overall utility of the FLDA because of its heavy toll on limited resources. See also Hill's reply to Degani. Amina Degani, "The Land Development Authority: An Economic Necessity?," *Malayan Economic Review* 9 (1964): 75-82; and R.D. Hill, "Comments on the 'Land Development Authority: An Economic Necessity?,'" *ibid.* 10 (1965): 116-19.

3. Chaiyong Churchart, "Principles and Practices of Land Planning and Development in Thailand," *Bangkok Bank Monthly Review* 12 (1971): 209-27.

4. T.H. Shen, *The Sino-American Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell, 1970); Anthony Koo, *Land Reform in Taiwan*, Spring Review Country Paper (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Agency for International Development, 1970); and Werner Klatt, "An Asian Success Story: Peaceful Agricultural Revolution in Taiwan," *Issues and Studies* 8 (1972): 50-53.

JCRR, Taiwan also had a functional blending of governmental centralization with delegation of responsibility to the local levels which ensured the step-by-step implementation of the land reform program.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, like Japan, its former colonial master, Taiwan had available cadastral records, a classification of land according to twenty-six grades, and a farmer population that had already been accustomed to technological innovations with the steady introduction of new crop varieties.

In contrast to Taiwan's experience, Philippine government efforts to implement land reform have been plagued by problems of bureaucracy, not to mention the constraints imposed by ambivalent political objectives discussed earlier. Some of the recurrent problems that have been pointed out by middle-level officers themselves of the Ministry of Agrarian Reform (MAR) are: overlapping of government agencies, inadequate funding, low salaries for fieldworkers and lack of training, little research and evaluation, and delays in court proceedings.<sup>6</sup> Even in the pilot province of Nueva Ecija, the concept of an integrated development program where all government and other supporting agencies are coordinated under a single head has had only limited success.<sup>7</sup>

"The idea behind the integrated approach to agrarian reform was good," remark Rocamora and Panganiban. "In practice, however, it provided a government whose commitment to land reform was lagging an excuse to delay its implementation."<sup>8</sup> At present, land reform activities have indeed been centralized under the Ministry of Agrarian Reform. However, other reform-related activities have been entrusted to other departments — the *Samahang Nayon* Barrio Association program under the Bureau of Cooperatives of the Ministry of Local Government and Community

5. Shih-ko Shen, "Administration of the Land Reform Program in Taiwan," in *Land Reform in Developing Countries*, ed. James R. Brown and Sein Lin (Taipei: University of Hartford, 1967), pp. 380-432.

6. Lilia Panganiban, "Land Reform Administrative Procedures in the Philippines: A Critical Analysis" (Madison: Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin, 1972); Severino Madronio, "Agrarian Reform in the Philippines in Recent Decade (1963-1973)" (M.S. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1974); and Basilio de los Reyes, "Can Land Reform Succeed?," *Philippine Sociological Review* 20 (1972): 79-100.

7. William Rusch, "Final Report of an Evaluation of the Integrated Development Program for Nueva Ecija, Philippines" (McLean, Va.: American Technical Assistance Corporation, 1975); and de los Reyes, "Can Land Reform Succeed?"

8. Joel Rocamora and Corazon Panganiban, *Rural Development Strategies: The Philippine Case* (Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University, 1975), p. 108.

Development (MLGCD), and the *Masagana-99* rice-production program under the Ministry of Agriculture. The outcome at times has been inter-ministry rivalry – e.g., the MAR being eager to distribute certificates of land transfer to as many tenants as possible while the MLGCD has stressed training and membership of tenants in barrio associations before they can be eligible for these certificates. In effect, therefore, three ministries of government are engaged in various aspects of the broadened concept of *agrarian* reform – all together extending to small farmers a promised package of equity, productivity, and the cooperative spirit.

POLITICAL CADRES (THE VIETNAMESE AND CHINESE EXPERIENCE)

Generally, land reform programs that have been designed from the top down have relied on government bureaucracies for their execution. On the other hand, land reform programs that have been based more on peasant aspirations – i.e., from the bottom up – have been carried through by political cadres. Perhaps the most striking and recent contrast between the two approaches has been exemplified by the conflicting strategies for rural development adopted by the warring sides in Vietnam.<sup>9</sup>

Several studies have pointed out the marked contrast between the Government of South Vietnam (GVN) and the Viet Cong/National Liberation Front (VC/NLF) in their approaches to the land problem – e.g., the effective VC ceiling of 5 hectares compared to the GVN's retention limit of 100 hectares (later reduced to 15 has. in the LTTT program); the VC's flexibility versus the GVN's slowness in distributing government-held land;<sup>10</sup> the GVN's preference for legalistic solutions along with the American preference for technological ones vis-a-vis the VC's direct impact on institutional change;<sup>11</sup> in short, the classic theme of David versus Goliath, with a lumbering bureaucracy pitted against the more agile political cadres of the NLF. Referring to the NLF's indoctrinational approach among peasants, Pike observes that

9. "Vietnam: Politics, Land Reform and Development in the Countryside," Special Issue of *Asian Survey* 10 (1970).

10. William Bredo, "Agrarian Reform in Vietnam: Vietcong and Government of Vietnam Strategies in Conflict," *Asian Survey* 10 (1970): 738-50.

11. John Montgomery, "Land Reform as a Means to Political Development in Vietnam," *Orbis* 12 (1968): 19-38.

“cadres were instructed to turn every issue into land terms.”<sup>12</sup> Similarly, in examining “the economics of insurgency,” Sansom points out the fatal flaw of U.S. policy regarding the land question: “The Americans offered the peasant a constitution; the Viet Cong offered him his land and with it the right to survive.”<sup>13</sup>

In the literature on land reform in Communist countries, the role of political cadres has been stressed instead of any particular government agency. To be sure, stricter supervision by the party and a central government is evident, resulting in the swiftness of reform implementation, but also in occasional sudden shifts in agrarian policies that have taken place in China and North Vietnam.<sup>14</sup> An exceptional report that gives us an inside view of the role of political cadres in China, even prior to the formalized Agrarian Reform Law of 1950, is Hinton’s day-by-day description of the transformation of Long Bow village during the process of land reform in Northern China.<sup>15</sup>

Some of the notable characteristics of the cadres were: (1) they were volunteer workers, oftentimes only high school or college students; (2) many were also of peasant stock, local cadres, who helped in the execution of the reform either in their own villages or in another county (*hsien*); (3) they were all *political* cadres — i.e., highly politicized about the aims of the agrarian revolution they were participating in; (4) they were highly motivated to suffer deprivations with the peasants and to live, eat, and work with the peasants; and (5) they were charged with a minimum of legal instructions but were periodically engaged in long sessions of criticism and self-criticism, sometimes in confrontation with the village people themselves (what Hinton has graphically described as “passing the gate”).<sup>16</sup>

An historical instance of the crucial role of cadres in China’s implementation of land reform was the sending of political cadres from the north to the southern province of Kwangtung. At a critical moment during the outbreak of the Korean War, when the land

12. Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1966).

13. Robert Sansom, *The Economics of Insurgency in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1970).

14. See P.J. Honey, “North Vietnam Re-Collectivizes Land: The Silent Struggle Between Le Duan and Truong Chinh,” *China News Analysis* No. 733 (1960).

15. William Hinton, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: Random House, 1966).

16. *Ibid.*

reform policy in the south took on a more radical turn, it was necessary for northern cadres to reinforce and take the place of their southern comrades to fully enforce land reform. The fact that political ideology was able to prevail over inherent regional rivalry speaks well of the cadres' political commitment to the specific task of nation-building they were engaged in.<sup>17</sup> Less well-studied though perhaps equally vital was the instrumental role of political cadres in North Vietnam's land reform program. In a letter written in 1956, Ho Chi Minh congratulated the peasants *and* cadres on the successful completion of land reform in the north.<sup>18</sup>

#### PEASANT GROUPS AND PEASANT UNREST

Peasants and cadres in the Asian Communist approach are thus inextricably linked in the implementation of land reform. If cadres provide the intermediary roles between a centralized government and millions of peasants, it is nonetheless the peasants themselves who constitute what Mao has called the "motive forces" for agrarian revolution.<sup>19</sup> In this light we shall now have to examine the crucial role of peasant groups, first in non-Communist countries, then in the entire Asian region as viewed from different perspectives on peasant unrest.

(1) *Non-Communist Countries*: Japan and Taiwan, considered by many to have effectively implemented land reform programs in the early 1950s ascribe no small degree of their success to the participatory role given to potential reform beneficiaries in the very process of land reform. Chiefly, this meant institutionalizing the participation of peasant small farmers in the carrying out of land reform on the local level.

In Japan, the role of local Land Commissions has been amply documented. Composed of five tenants, three landlords, and two owner-cultivators elected by their respective groups, together with three "learned and experienced persons," the commissions were

17. Ezra Vogel, *Canton Under Communism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1969) and "Land Reform in Kwangtung 1951-1953: Central Control and Localism," *China Quarterly* 38 (1969): 27-62.

18. Bernard Fall, ed., *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings 1920-66* (New York: Praeger, 1967).

19. "Motive forces" here mean the principal agents of revolution.



entrusted with a major share in implementing the land reform – i.e., the actual purchase and sale of land on the local level. Broad powers were exercised by these commissions – in drafting the suitability of the land; in establishing the eligibility of purchasers; in deciding unusual cases; in appraising cases of exemptions; etc. By relying on local people themselves to determine local conditions, the government was able to transfer 30-40 million plots of land in the space of three years. Approximately 150,000 commissioners, half of whom were tenants, were involved in this unique leadership experience.<sup>20</sup> A field observer has described the educational function of the whole reform effort thus:

The method by which the land reform programme was carried out constitutes an important adult educational programme, perhaps one of the most significant adult educational efforts ever launched. The purchases and resales of the land were made by village commissions – nearly 10,600 generally independent and highly responsible groups of 10 members each. Half of the members of each commission were farm tenants.<sup>21</sup>

A similar scheme, creating Farmland Committees, was promulgated in South Korea under Presidential Decree No. 275 in 1950. However, in actual practice the committees did not function due to the exigencies of the Korean War.<sup>22</sup>

Taiwan had three principal rural organizations connected with land reform and rural development – the multipurpose Farmers' Associations for the procurement of agricultural inputs and extension services; the Irrigation Associations for water management; and the Farm Tenancy Committees. The first two organizations were of long standing, established during the Japanese period, and reorganized by the Kuomintang government to remove the traditional domination of landlords.<sup>23</sup>

The Farm Tenancy Committees were more directly related to the land reform program, starting with the rent-reduction phase.

20. Max F. Millikan and David Hapgood, *No Easy Harvest* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1967), pp. 104-5; and Theodore Reynolds Smith, *East Asian Agrarian Reform: Japan, Republic of Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines*, Research Monograph No. 11 (Hartford, Conn.: John C. Lincoln Institute, 1971), pp. 47-50.

21. Arthur Raper, "Some Recent Changes in Japanese Village Life," *Rural Sociology* 16 (1951): 12, in Gerrit Huizer, *The Role of Peasant Organizations in the Japanese Land Reform*, I.S.S. Occasional Papers (The Hague: The Netherlands Institute of Social Studies, 1971), p. 24.

22. Robert Morrow and K.H. Sherper, *Land Reform in South Korea*, Spring Review (Washington: U.S. Agency for Inter-National Development, 1971), p. 24.

23. Hung-chao Tai, *Land Reform and Politics: A Comparative Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 397-402.



These committees closely resembled the Japanese Land Commissions upon recommendation of Ladejinsky who had visited Taiwan in 1949 at the invitation of the JCRR.<sup>24</sup> Comprising eleven members, the committee included the chief of the land affairs section of the local government and the chairman of the local farmers' association, five tenant farmers, two landlords, and two owner-farmers. Among the committee's major functions were to supervise the rent-reduction program, set up criteria for the total annual harvest of main crops, and arbitrate disputes between tenant farmers and landlords.<sup>25</sup> Tai summarizes the role and impact of these Farm Tenancy Committees:

As an indicator of the extensiveness of the committees' activities from 1952 to 1956 (when tenant-landlord conflicts were most intense and frequent), the committees settled a total of 62,645 disputes. By providing the reform beneficiaries with important roles in the process of implementation, these committees have been most effective in dispelling peasant indifference and in curbing the landlords' evasive and resistant tactics. By assuring the tenants and owner-farmers a privileged position vis-a-vis the landlords, these committees have also "raised the social status of the cultivators."<sup>26</sup>

The Taiwanese and Japanese success in incorporating the active participation of tenant beneficiaries in land reform implementation has been held up for other non-Communist Asian countries to emulate because of its emphasis on reconciling class interests rather than in heightening class conflicts. Almost no violence occurred during the Japanese land reform, Huizer observes.<sup>27</sup> Likewise, the reform in Taiwan has been described as adopting "equitable, rational, peaceful, and gradually progressive" methods, in implicit contrast to the Communist manner of agrarian revolution.<sup>28</sup>

However, efforts to adopt this proportionate-representation model in establishing implementing bodies on the local level have not succeeded in several countries of Southeast Asia. For a time, in the Philippines, Barrio Committees on Land Production (BCLP) were established composed of a proportionate number of tenants, landlords, and owner-cultivators. As in Japan and Taiwan, these

24. *Ibid.*, p. 400.

25. S.K. Shen, "Land Reform in Taiwan," p. 388.

26. Tai, *Land Reform and Politics*, pp. 401-2.

27. Huizer, *Peasant Organizations*, p. 26.

28. S.K. Shen, "Land Reform in Taiwan," p. 423.

committees were asked to determine the valuation of the land upon which the amount of amortization payments would be based. However, later government policy changes have modified this practice because of the inability of the committees to convene in the first place or to arrive at uniform valuation estimates within the same locality. As modified, the BCLPs are still functioning in some areas. However, most BCLPs have been hamstrung by several factors — e.g., the absence of landlord representatives; protracted reviews of BCLP decisions at MAR central office; no Land Bank follow-up in formalizing the amortization schedules; and, most of all, lack of sanctions in implementing the committees' decisions.<sup>29</sup>

During the preparatory stage for South Vietnam's LTTT program, recommendations were also made to entrust land tenure adjudication and administration to re-activated village councils. This theory of devolution, forwarded by Montgomery, would have aimed at a resolution of the foremost problem that plagued the South Vietnamese government up to the very end, which was how "to convert peasant indifference into commitment."<sup>30</sup>

(2) *Views on the Peasantry*: How then explain the continued indifference of many peasants to established governments and their commitment to "other" causes? Among the various views on peasants and peasant unrest in Asia, seven distinct though oftentimes overlapping categories may be briefly discussed by citing representative authors:

(a) *Traditional society and rural poverty*: A rapidly increasing population and an underdeveloped economy utilizing primitive methods of agriculture have been the principal causes for the economic stagnation of many Asian countries. In this view, the basic problem "is not simply unequal distribution, but poverty, and a value system not well adapted to the requirements of modern technological change."<sup>31</sup> Describing pre-revolutionary

29. For some accounts of the BCLP process, see Corazon Panganiban, "The Promise and Performance of the Emancipation of Tenants' Decree: A Case Study of a Farming Village" (M.A. thesis, University of the Philippines, 1979), pp. 78-97; and Antonio Ledesma, "Landless Workers and Rice Farmers: Peasant Subclasses under Agrarian Reform in Two Philippine Villages" (Ph. D. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1980), pp. 199-200.

30. Montgomery, "Land Reform in Vietnam."

31. Raymond Firth, "The Peasantry of Southeast Asia," *International Affairs* 26 (1950): 503-14.

China, Buck and Tawney have both stressed the parameters of the existing rural framework such as low productivity and the extreme fragmentation of farms, as well as tenure problems.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, referring primarily to the densely populated island of Java, Geertz has proposed his theory of "agricultural involution."<sup>33</sup> In this view of peasant society, modernization, particularly in terms of industrialization, becomes the recommended solution to rural Asia's problems. A concomitant phenomenon in this process is the "revolution of rising expectations."<sup>34</sup>

(b) *Defense of the Little Tradition:* In a suggestive historical reinterpretation of peasant unrest in modern colonial Southeast Asia, Benda contrasts the urban-based Great Tradition from the Little Tradition of the rural areas. Distinguishing peasant from nationalist movements in terms of locale and social, ideological, and organizational distance, he observes that peasant movements "were reactions to social *malaise*, as often as not backward-looking, and whose goal usually was the recreation of an imaginary state of primordial past tranquility." Examining earlier peasant revolts in Central Java, Lower Burma, North Annam, and Central Luzon, Benda concludes that specific causes of unrest were complex, but may be traced ultimately to the peasantry's "revolution of rising irritation" against outside interference.<sup>35</sup>

Along the same lines, Sturtevant notes common traits among several Philippine peasant sects: their mystical and chiliastic elements; their tendency toward anarchism; and aspects of hyper-nationalism. Questioning the primacy of economic causes such as tenancy problems for rural discord, Sturtevant maintains that these movements arise rather as highly creative "revitalization" attempts to cope with cultural alienation in the conflict between

32. John Lossing Buck, *Chinese Farm Economy: A Study of 2,866 Farms in Seventeen Localities and Seven Provinces in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1930) and *Land Utilization in China: A Study of 16,786 Farms in 168 Localities, and 38,256 Farm Families in Twenty-two Provinces in China* (Nanking: University of Nanking, 1937); and Richard Tawney, *Land and Labor in China* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1932).

33. Clifford Geertz, *Agricultural Involution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963).

34. Walter Froehlich, ed., *Land Tenure, Industrialization, and Social Stability: Experience and Prospects in Asia* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1961).

35. Harry J. Benda, "Peasant Movements in Colonial Southeast Asia," *Asian Studies* 3 (1965): 420-34.

modernization and the Little Tradition.<sup>36</sup>

(c) *Colonialism, nationalism, and communism*: A pioneering and sympathetic study by Jacoby of agrarian unrest in South-east Asia stresses among other points the intrinsic relationship between peasant unrest and nationalist movements, and maintains that the economic dependence forged under Western colonial rule is still of crucial importance in understanding the present tenurial systems.<sup>37</sup> Other writers, starting with an historical survey, point out several maladjustments brought about by the “*laissez-faire* revolution” of Western capitalism in the Asian region: agrarian indebtedness, concentration of landownership, and tenancy problems.<sup>38</sup>

The radical critique of peasant problems presents a more pointed attack against the continued influence of Western colonial powers, from the plantation economies of the pre-war era to the present-day penetration of Asian economies by multi-national corporations.<sup>39</sup> Thus, for instance, the head of the Philippine Communist party characterizes Philippine society as “semi-colonial and semi-feudal,” afflicted by the three basic problems of “U.S. imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat capitalism.”<sup>40</sup>

(d) *Land tenure problems*: Most authors explaining the causes of rural unrest have pointed to land tenure problems as the principal factor. Representative of this general agreement is Klatt’s article which surveys half-hearted attempts at land reform in Asia. Des-

36. David Sturtevant, *Agrarian Unrest in the Philippines; Guardia de Honor – Revitalization within the Revolution and Rizalistas – Contemporary Revitalization Movements in the Philippines* (Athens: Center for International Studies, Ohio University, 1969). See Eric R. Wolf, *Peasants* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966).

37. Erich H. Jacoby, *Agrarian Unrest in Southeast Asia*, rev. ed. (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1961).

38. V.M. Dandekar, “Fundamental Problems of Agrarian Structure and Reform in South and Southeast Asia,” in *Fundamental Problems of Agrarian Structure and Reform in Developing Countries*, comp. Nikolaus Newiger (Berlin: German Foundation for Developing Countries n.d.), pp. 11-30. See also James Allen, “Agrarian Tendencies in the Philippines,” *Pacific Affairs* 11 (1938): 52-65; and Donald Douglas, “An Historical Survey of the Land Tenure Situation in the Philippines,” *Solidarity* 5 (1970): 65-79.

39. Ernest Feder, *The New Penetration of the Agricultures of the Underdeveloped Countries by the Individual Nations and Their Multinational Concerns*, Occasional Papers No. 19 (Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Glasgow, 1975); and Joel Rocamora and David O’Connor, “The U.S., Land Reform, and Rural Development in the Philippines,” in *Logistics of Repression and Other Essays*, ed. Walden Bello and Severina Rivera (Washington D.C.: Friends of the Filipino People, 1975), pp. 63-92.

40. Amado Guerrero, *Philippine Society and Revolution* (Manila: Pulong Tala, 1971). See also “The Peasant War in the Philippines – An Analysis of Philippine Political Economy,” *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review* 23 (1958): 373-436.

cribing acute disparities existing in the rural areas of Asia, Klatt notes that those affected adversely are the small owners, tenants, and particularly, the growing number of landless agricultural workers.<sup>41</sup> Historical studies of the origins of land problems have also delineated the tightening bonds between landlords and peasants, and the rise of debt peonage and widespread tenancy.<sup>42</sup>

Still other writers such as Sansom have taken issue with the "revisionist" attack on the accepted doctrine of insurgent movements — i.e., the revisionist claim that peasant unrest is not caused primarily by land tenure problems.<sup>43</sup> Examples of this revisionist viewpoint are Mitchell's socio-econometric studies on the main causes of agrarian unrest in South Vietnam and the Philippines.<sup>44</sup> A final indicator of the causal nature of land tenure problems with regard to peasant unrest is the growth of peasant organizations themselves and their persistent demands for land reform.<sup>45</sup>

Related to tenure problems is the whole area of studies on patron-client relationships between landlords and tenants. Re-examining historical periods of peasant unrest in pre-war Southeast Asia, Scott provides a penetrating analysis of the precise moments of rebellion whenever the peasants' right to survive is being threatened.<sup>46</sup>

(e) *The green revolution and technological change*: The seed-fertilizer revolution introduced in the late 1960s has created another destabilizing dimension in the Asian countryside — but this time fraught with hopes of self-sufficiency in food by most if

41. Werner Klatt, "Agrarian Issues in Asia: I. Land as a Source of Conflict, II. Reform and Insurgency," *International Affairs* 48 (1972): 226-41; 395-443.

42. Marshall McLennan, "Peasant and Hacendero in Nueva Ecija: The Socio-Economic Origins of a Philippine Commercial Rice-Growing Region" (Ph. D. thesis, University of California-Berkeley, 1973); Joseph Hayden, *The Philippines: A Study in National Development* (New York: Macmillan, 1955); Karl Pelzer, *Pioneer Settlement in the Asiatic Tropics* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1945); and Pierre Gourou, *The Peasants of the Tonkin Delta* (New Haven, Conn.: Human Relations Area Files, 1955).

43. Sansom, *Economics of Insurgency*.

44. Edward Mitchell, *Land Tenure and Rebellion: A Statistical Analysis of Factors Affecting Government Control in South Vietnam* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, 1967) and "Inequality and Insurgency: A Statistical Study of South Vietnam," *World Politics* 20 (1968): 421-38.

45. See Huizer, *Peasant Organizations*, and his *Agrarian Unrest and Peasant Organizations in the Philippines*, I.S.S. Occasional Paper No. 17 (The Hague: Institute of Social Studies, 1972); also Jim Richardson, "Does Grass-Roots Action Lead to Agrarian Reform?," *Philippine Sociological Review* 20 (1972): 143-50.

46. James C. Scott, "Exploitation in Rural Class Relations: A Victim's Perspective," *SEADAG Papers* (New York: Asia Society, 1974).

not all agricultural countries in the region. Cautious voices, however, have also been raised warning against the deeper social cleavages that may arise. Reflecting the optimistic view of induced institutional change as a result of technological innovations have been the writings of Hayami and Ruttan.<sup>47</sup> On the other side, Griffin has argued forcefully that the Green Revolution has failed to raise the Asian region's agricultural production in aggregate terms, and has only widened the gap between the better-off farmers and the small farmers:

The reason lies not so much in inadequate technology as in inappropriate institutions and poor policy. The explanation for the latter, in turn, lies not in the ignorance of those who govern but in the powerlessness of most of those who are governed.<sup>48</sup>

(f) *Peasant differentiation into sub-classes*: A cumulative result of the intermingling processes of the Green Revolution, tenure changes, and modernization in general has been the more pronounced stratification of peasants into sub-classes. The Maoist analysis of rural classes in China had long ago indicated this more pragmatic and sophisticated understanding of various social groupings with divergent interests among the peasantry itself. More recently, several empirical findings by Japanese researchers on the village level have reinforced the crucial importance of distinguishing among peasant sub-classes – e.g., Takahashi in Bulacan; Umehara in Nueva Ecija; and Yano in northeastern Thailand.<sup>49</sup> Of special importance today is the plight of the landless agricultural laborers who may be pushed farther onto the margins of society by the very processes that were supposed to improve rural conditions.<sup>50</sup>

(g) *The vanishing peasant*: A final role of peasant groups may be to slowly fade away from the stage of main actors in Asia. Already,

47. Y. Hayami and V. Ruttan, *Agricultural Development: An International Perspective* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971).

48. Keith Griffin, *The Political Economy of Agrarian Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 255.

49. Akira Takahashi, *Land and Peasants in Central Luzon* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1969); Hiromitsu Umehara, "Socio-Economic Structure of the Rural Philippines: A Case Study of a Hacienda Barrio in Central Luzon," *Developing Economies* 7 (1969): 310-31; and *A Hacienda Barrio in Central Luzon* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1974); Toru Yano, "Land Tenure in Thailand," *Asian Survey* 8 (1968): 853-63; confer Griffin, *Political Economy of Agrarian Change*, pp. 252 ff.

50. See S. Hirashima, ed., *Hired Labor in Rural Asia* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1977).

the post-reform period in Japan has witnessed the decline of farmers' unions, with the more prosperous owner-operators and former landlords constituting a conservative wing in party politics.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, in Taiwan, farmers' associations have long been coopted within a centralized government network of agricultural services for the rural areas. This is the non-Communist end of the land reform spectrum. On the other extreme, peasants have been radically re-organized into collective groupings – in producers' cooperatives or the multi-faceted communes.

On either end of the spectrum, peasants have had to forfeit several or all of their distinguishing characteristics – e.g., of being independent producers on individual plots, tied to subsistence or traditional ways of farming, and utilizing mostly family labor.<sup>52</sup> In its stead, a more contemporary picture of the small farmer has begun to emerge – one who is perhaps half-proletarianized by engaging in off-farm work; perhaps more entrepreneurial in increasing the scale of farm business and utilizing hired labor; certainly more dependent on off-farm inputs, as well as on cooperative or collective forms of organization; and less likely to be left alone in subsistence farming that is isolated from markets and the urban areas.

Tai has pointed out the inverse relationship of land and politics: if land reform hastens the process of economic modernization in the developing countries, it reduces the relative economic as well as political importance of agriculture.<sup>53</sup> If the prognosis is correct, then the peasant too becomes a new socio-economic agent – as small-business farmer, semi-proletariat, or commune member – and loses the specific political pressures of an independent peasant class. It is thus part of the irony of history that peasant groups remain recognizably peasant only when land reform – or agrarian revolution – has not yet been carried out. East Asia has passed this stage. With the possible exception of Indochina, the current theatre of peasant groups extends to the rest of Southeast Asia.

51. Allan Cole, "Social Stratification and Mobility: Some Political Implications," *Annals* 308 (1956): 121-29.

52. Teodor Shanin, ed., *Peasants and Peasant Societies* (Penguin Books, 1971), pp. 14-15.

53. Tai, *Land Reform and Politics*, pp. 478-79.



#### IV. MODELS FOR AGRARIAN REFORM AND MODIFICATIONS

Depending on the political ideologies of the governing elites, the paradigms for land reform have taken on different and at times diametrically opposite directions in various countries. The pre-reform situation, the historical period, and the several stages of implementation are significant points to consider in any general comparison of land reform models in different countries.

At one end of the spectrum, following the capitalist strategy for development, based on the concepts of private property and free enterprise, owner-cultivatorship of the family farm has been upheld as the model for land reform in Asian countries influenced by U.S. policy in the post-war period.

The basic tenure pattern which has been woven into the experience of Western man is essentially that which was proposed by classical liberalism, and whose economic functioning was formulated in neoclassical economics. This remains true despite all the problems of surplus production, price support programs, and all the rest. This is the basic pattern which was adopted in Japan after World War II. The agricultural economy is based upon private ownership of land, individual entrepreneurship geared partially into a market economy, with credit facilities, appropriate education, market information, and so on.<sup>1</sup>

On the other end of the spectrum, following the socialist path to development, Communist countries such as China, North Korea, a reunited Vietnam – and, conceivably today, also Cambodia and Laos – have all stressed collectivized agriculture and the merits of the cooperative and/or the commune. It should be noted, however, that as with the term “land reform,” the term “cooperative” takes on a different meaning when applied to either a socialist or a capitalist economy. Cooperatives in Communist economies also have political functions.

Grouping the various countries according to the type of post-reform model ultimately introduced (distributive or collective), and according to the extent of implementation (full or partial), we have the following general scheme in Table 4:

1. Kenneth Parsons, “Problems of United States Policy,” in *Land Tenure, Industrialization, and Social Stability: Experience and Prospects in Asia*, ed. Walter Froehlich (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1961), p. 286.

**Table 4. Implementation and Orientation of Land Reform Programs in East and Southeast Asia**

		<i>Full Implementation</i>	
		China North Korea North Vietnam Burma?	Japan Taiwan South Korea
<i>Collective Land Reform</i>		(after 1975) South Vietnam? Cambodia? Laos?	Philippines Indonesia Malaysia Thailand
		<i>Partial Implementation</i>	
		<i>Distributive Land Reform</i>	

It is well to keep in mind that this table is merely a static approximation of the dynamic processes still going on in different countries. With the passing of the "Cold War" phase, and the varied experiences of land reform implementation in China as well as in Taiwan and Japan, several countries have introduced modified elements of both the distributive and the collective types of land reform. Similarly, the older reform countries themselves have begun to move into the "post-post-reform stage" where original paradigms have been recast to adapt to changing circumstances. It is in this light that we shall try to examine more closely: (a) the model of the family farm; (b) smallholdings, plantation economies, and land settlement schemes; (c) the collective pattern; and (d) the Philippine case as an example of the eclectic approach.

#### A. THE FAMILY FARM (JAPAN, TAIWAN, SOUTH KOREA)

Among the non-Communist countries advocating land reforms, the family farm has stood out as the ultimate model for realizing

socio-economic goals and political objectives of legitimacy, stability, and democracy. The post-war reforms in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, influenced heavily by American advisers, have followed this model.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, since the land had already been fragmented for cultivation by individual farm families, land reform simply meant the transfer of ownership from landlord to actual tiller of the soil, without rearranging the scale of farm management. “Japanese land reform,” comments Smith, “did very little to restructure actual farm size. The reform was simply an adjustment of title, and the tillers remained the same.”<sup>3</sup>

Other writers have calculated that farm sizes may have actually diminished on the average due to the increase of the rural population from returning soldiers and refugees. This does not take into consideration, however, the number of war casualties – in Japan, and during the Korea War. It was probably only Taiwan that experienced a net increase of the population, with the influx of over a million Kuomintang soldiers and officials.

In many respects, as discussed earlier, the small family farm in Japan and Taiwan proved to be highly successful – in terms of increased productivity per unit area, in raising farm-family incomes, in increased investments and technological innovations, and in giving farmers a stake in the land and more participation in their local governments. However, it is well to keep in mind that Japanese and Taiwanese farmers were only regaining productivity performances of pre-war levels, that the necessary infrastructure of roads and communications was basically left intact in the two areas, and that the peasant farmers themselves had long been experienced in farm management skills. Dorner comments thus:

It is especially difficult to visualize a repeat of the Japanese experience. The post-World War II land reforms in that country occurred in an economy, though shattered by war, that was already highly industrialized. The U.S. occupation force provided the required authority to impose the reform. Japan had a long history of technological development, especially in rice farming, and an entrepreneurial farming class even among its tenants. It had excellent land records and most of the other

2. Al McCoy, “Land Reform as Counter-Revolution: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Tenant Farmers of Asia,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 3 (1971).

3. Theodore Reynolds Smith, *East Asian Agrarian Reform: Japan, Republic of Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines*, Research Monograph No. 11 (Hartford Conn.: John C. Lincoln Institute, 1971), pp. 50-51.

strategic elements . . . .<sup>4</sup>

The other strategic elements — such as credit, marketing, and extension services — were made accessible to small farmers through institutionalized service cooperatives that were part and parcel of the reform.<sup>5</sup> It is for this same reason that the South Korean experience, though patterned after the Japanese model, did not fare as well — for lack of government auxiliary services, the short five-year span allotted for compensation payments, and the outbreak of the Korean War which prevented local farmers' associations or cooperatives from evolving properly.

The family farm therefore is only part of the post-reform model in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. What is perhaps more significant is the network of services channeled by the government through institutionalized farmers' cooperatives for the *system* of family farms to function well. Hsieh notes:

Taiwan's agricultural development experience, for 15 years, indicates that, under rational land tenure arrangements, a *small family-farm system supported* by modern agricultural technological improvement, effective extension education services, and efficient farmers' cooperative organizations manages to survive in the world competition of agricultural production.<sup>6</sup> (emphasis added).

Moreover, because of the restrictions on the maximum size of landownership and on the transferability of reform lands, the result of land reform in these countries, as in Japan in particular, has not been to establish a "free and independent owner farmer system" but, as Ogura prefers to call it, a "cultivator proprietorship system under the paternalism of the state."<sup>7</sup>

In the post-reform years, although the trend toward tenancy has effectively been reversed, other second-generation problems have arisen, due on the one hand to the growing income lag between

4. Peter Dorner, "Selected Land Reform Experiences: Problems of Implementation" (Madison: Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin, 1976), p. 13.

5. See Dalmacio Cruz, "A Comparative Study of Agricultural Cooperatives in Japan and the Philippines," *Agricultural Economics and Development* 1 (1971): 255-79.

6. S.C. Hsieh, "Land Reform in Taiwan," *Solidarity* 1 (1966): 44-52.

7. Takekazu Ogura, "Economic Impact of Postwar Land Reform on Japan," in *Land Reform in Developing Countries*, ed. James R. Brown and Sein Lin (Taipei: University of Hartford, 1968), p. 213. Harkin suggests a similar process taking place in the Philippines as a result of the devolution of the concept of private property by means of agrarian reform restrictions. See Duncan Harkin, "Philippine Agrarian Reform in the Perspective of Three Years of Martial Law" (Madison: Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin, 1976).

the agricultural sector and the industrial sector, and, on the other hand, to the limited size of agricultural holdings. "Small-scale farming and fragmentary holding of arable land have resulted in a bottleneck to the further development of the Japanese economy," Ouchi has observed.<sup>8</sup> Because of the deteriorating terms of trade between agriculture and industry, 80 percent of the heads of farm households have taken up side-jobs in industry, supplying cheap labor and indicating the need to supplement farm incomes with off-farm employment.<sup>9</sup> The principal remedy suggested for Japan has been to consolidate and enlarge farming units by modifying the earlier land reform restrictions on farm size.<sup>10</sup>

Taiwan has witnessed similar problems of size limitation. In addition to the three steps of land reform, a program of land consolidation, known as the fourth step of land reform, has been carried out.<sup>11</sup> In a resolution, entitled "Outline for Current Rural Economic Reconstruction," the Kuomintang's Central Committee has laid the groundwork to enlarge farms for mechanization and modern management while retaining the private ownership system. As distinguished from the earlier land consolidation program started in 1961, the new proposal would eliminate existing footpaths serving as boundaries and combine small private farms into larger production units adapted to mechanization. Farmers in these schemes would share crops and cash income in accordance with the land, cash, and labor supplied.<sup>12</sup>

In the case of South Korea, more acute problems concerning dwarf farms have been reported, since the average unit area of a tenant farm is only 2.7 *tanbo* (0.27 hectare). Due to land reform and the influx of North Korean refugees, a shrinking scale of farm management has occurred resulting in a decline of the farm economy. "Poor tenant farmers," comments Pak "become no more than

8. Tsutomu Ouchi, "The Japanese Land Reform: Its Efficacy and Limitations," *Developing Economies* 4 (1966): 129-50.

9. Masaharu Tokiwa, "Capitalism and Agricultural Structure in Post-War Japan," *Tochiseidoshigaku* No. 40, 10 (1968): 41-54; Makoto Hoshi, "The Aggravation of the Crisis in Japanese Agriculture in 1970 and the Prospects for its Reorganization," *Ibid.* No. 57, 15 (1972): 27-53.

10. Jun-ichi Nakae, "Peasant Farming System in Japan," *Ibid.* No. 41, 11 (1968): 24-36; Ogura, "Impact of Land Reform on Japan."

11. Yen-tien Chang, *Land Reform and its Impact on Economic and Social Progress in Taiwan* (Taipei: National Taiwan University, 1965).

12. Wen-jer Lee, "Taiwan's New Land Reform," *Free China Review* 20 (1970): 13-18.

poor landed farmers.”<sup>13</sup> Conducting empirical tests on a fragmented farming system, another researcher claims that “the farmers have exhausted the profitable production possibilities of the state of arts at their disposal and little economic surplus can be created.”<sup>14</sup>

Because of the acute shortage of land, disguised forms of tenancy contracts, mostly verbal, have been uncovered. And yet, the proposed alternative of enlarging farms, particularly the contemplated legislation to allow the re-emergence of absentee landlordism under the principle of “owner manager” or “entrepreneur owner” in defiance of the “tiller-owner” principle may merely complete the full cycle from reform to the pre-reform situation – an instance of the reversal of land reform policies a generation after the initial reform.<sup>15</sup>

B. SMALLHOLDINGS, PLANTATIONS, AND LAND SETTLEMENT SCHEMES (MALAYSIA, INDONESIA, THAILAND):

The phenomenon of fragmented smallholdings has posed a specially sensitive problem in Muslim countries like Malaysia and Indonesia where the Islamic law of inheritance specifies how property must be divided according to rules of consanguinity and sex.<sup>16</sup> Earlier provisions prohibiting further subdivision below a minimum limit have been disregarded. Likewise, attempts at land consolidation have been effectively stalemated. As a result, multiple ownership and a high turnover of owners have complicated the land tenure system. “Freehold ownership as a method of land tenure in a Muslim South-East Asian country,” Wilson concludes, “is, of itself, no guarantee of a ‘healthy system of peasant proprietors.’”<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the problem of smallholdings, both Malaysia and

13. Ki Hyuk Pak, “Economic Effects of Farmland Reform in the Republic of Korea,” in *Land Reform in Developing Countries*, ed. Brown and Lin. pp. 113-15.

14. Young-kyun Oh, “Agrarian Reform and Economic Development: A Case of Korean Agriculture,” *Koreana Quarterly* 9 (1967): 91-137.

15. Pak, “Farmland Reform in Korea,” pp. 115-16.

16. Robert Ho, “Land Ownership and Economic Prospects of Malayan Peasants,” *Modern Asian Studies* 4 (1970): 83-92.

17. T.B. Wilson, “Some Economic Aspects of Padi-Land Ownership in Krian,” *Malayan Agricultural Journal* 37 (1954): 125-35. Confer Wilson, “The Inheritance and Fragmentation of Malay Padi Lands in Krian, Perak,” *Ibid.* 38 (1955): 78-91; Mahmud bin Mat, “Land Subdivision and Fragmentation,” *Intisari* 1:11-17.

Indonesia have also had a significant agricultural sub-sector devoted to plantation economies, oftentimes enclave economies run by foreign companies for the export market.<sup>18</sup> Although rubber has been considered an ideal peasant smallholder crop, McHale notes that the Malayan rubber industry from the beginning under colonial rule was almost exclusively “European in orientation and plantation in form.”<sup>19</sup> A comparison with Indonesia’s rubber industry has also been made along with the effects of plantation agriculture in widening the gap in production techniques between the modern plantation and peasant agricultural sectors.<sup>20</sup>

The Malayan reform of plantation economies through subdivision during the period 1951-60 has, however, been severely criticized by Aziz who terms subdivision an “anti-development” process, while also exposing the practice of pseudo-subdivision. “The myth of peasant proprietorship,” he continues, “has turned out to be a reality of increasing proprietorship by capitalist, white-collar workers and ‘blue-trouser’ workers.”<sup>21</sup>

In a different study comparing capital-intensive sugar plantations in Java with the labor-intensive forms of economic organization in the pre-capitalistic stage, Geertz notes the anti-developmental effects of the plantation companies on the agrarian economy. He suggests a division of labor between peasant organizations and plantation companies in the distinct stages of cultivation, processing, and marketing to arrive at “a non-exploitative integration between an advanced technology and Javanese primary production in agriculture.”<sup>22</sup>

Land settlement schemes in frontier regions have been a third area of concern for the governments of Malaysia, Indonesia, and

18. The Philippines also has a growing number of plantation economies devoted to export crops, particularly on the islands of Mindanao, Negros, and Panay, situated below the typhoon belt.

19. Thomas McHale, “Rubber Smallholdings in Malaya: Their Changing Nature, Role and Prospects,” *Malayan Economic Review* 10 (1965): 35-48.

20. Kian Wie Thee, “Plantation Agriculture and Export Growth: An Economic History of East Sumatra, 1863-1942” (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1969).

21. Unku Aziz, et al., *Subdivision of Estates in Malaya 1951-1960* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, Department of Economics, 1962-63); cf. G. David Quirin, “Estate Subdivision and Economic Development: A Review Article,” *Malayan Economic Review* 9 (1964): 63-79; Aziz, “Subdivision of Estates in Malaya 1951-1960: An Author’s Reply,” *Economic Review* 11 (1966): 46-62.

22. Clifford Geertz, “Capital Intensive Agriculture in Peasant Society: A Case Study,” *Social Research* 23 (1956): 433-49.



Thailand. Usually the establishment of new agricultural settlements has been premised on the model of family farms. However, variations have arisen. In North Borneo, for instance, Lee has contrasted the Chinese land-settlement schemes, where each house is set amidst its own agricultural land, with the village pattern of indigenous settlements. He likewise notes a new form of “tertiary land tenure” whereby a group of people, voluntarily or by order of the government, exercises land rights in common.<sup>23</sup>

In Thailand, land settlement schemes and a reorganization of existing land tenure patterns have been attempted through various kinds of land cooperatives. Arguing that the Japanese and Taiwanese models are not applicable to Thailand because of differences in the pre-reform situations, Seetisarn favors “a system approach which will nurture and utilize cooperative efforts of the farmers.” He recommends small family farms, supported by land cooperatives, to be established first in irrigated areas, then expanded into rain-fed areas. However, typical problems of implementation have been encountered — such as lack of cooperation among farmer workers and lack of qualified personnel.<sup>24</sup>

Thailand has not seen fit to legislate a land reform program, but has rather re-emphasized its agricultural policy based on individual farm ownership.<sup>25</sup> Like many of its non-Communist neighbors, the diagnosis for its land problems strikes the same chords — lack of security of tenure, diminishing farm sizes, depressed farm incomes, etc.<sup>26</sup> In the same manner, the recommended remedy has a familiar ring — tenancy regulation, creating service cooperatives, changing farmers’ attitudes from subsistence farming to commercialized production, and the like.<sup>27</sup>

In the absence of a full-scale land reform program, each of the three countries — Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand — has tried to

23. Lee Yong Leng, *North Borneo (Sabah)* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 1965).

24. Manu Seetisarn, “Tenure Reform Through Land Cooperatives,” n.p., n.d.; see also Department of Land Cooperatives, *Land Cooperatives in Thailand: Its Development, Structure, Procedure and Prospect* (Bangkok: Cooperative Press, 1969).

25. Gordon Sitton, “The Role of the Farmer in the Economic Development of Thailand,” CECA Paper (New York: Council on Economic and Cultural Affairs, 1962).

26. Brewster Grace, “Population Growth in Thailand,” Parts I and II (New York: American Universities Field Staff, 1974).

27. V. Webster Johnson, *Report to the Government of Thailand on Land Tenure and Associated Institutions*, U.N. Development Program (Rome: FAO, 1969); Ronald Ng, “Some Land-Use Problems of Northeast Thailand,” *Modern Asian Studies* 4 (1970): 23-42.

deal separately with its various tenure systems. It is clear, however, that with growing populations and diminishing land frontiers, some of the options have gradually been curtailed. In this situation, government policy with regard to models for reform has to be more clearly defined to avoid a Malthusian situation of what has been called "static expansion."<sup>28</sup>

### C. COLLECTIVES: THE COMMUNIST PATTERN

Instead of being the final stage, land reform in the sense of land redistribution was only the beginning of the agrarian revolution in China, North Korea, and North Vietnam. Indeed, for Asian Communists, as with Marxist-Leninists elsewhere, the final solution of the land problem was not to be in terms of individual peasant ownership of family farms. Unlike the Soviet pattern, however, China's road to collectivized agriculture followed several progressive stages over a decade — from privately — held farms, through mutual-aid teams, to cooperatives, and finally to the people's communes.

The complete story itself of this massive institutional transformation of half a billion peasants has not yet been fully told. Suffice it to note that these changes were not carefully designed by a monolithic Communist hierarchy, as manifested by recurrent disputes among China's leaders, notably between Mao Tse-tung and Liu Shao-chi in the early years, and the ever-present "two-way struggle between socialism and capitalism" in China's rural areas.<sup>29</sup> "Socialistic transformation," however, has always been viewed as a prerequisite to "technological transformation," in a similar manner that several non-Communist countries have viewed tenure reform as a precondition to production increases.<sup>30</sup> "Humanitarian considerations aside," Fei remarks, "the willingness and capability for large-scale experiment may, in the long run, turn out to be a major

28. Boeke, in D.H. Penny, "The Economics of Peasant Agriculture: The Indonesian Case," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 5 (1966): 22-44.

29. Kang Chao, *Agricultural Production in Communist China, 1949-1965* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970); Su Hsing, "The Two-Way Struggle Between Socialism and Capitalism in China's Rural Areas After Land Reform," *Chinese Economic Studies* 1 (1968): 3-35; 2 (1968): 3-31; 50-80.

30. Confer Peter Schran, *The Development of Chinese Agriculture, 1950-1959* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969).

asset of the Communist system.”<sup>31</sup>

The period of land redistribution into private peasant plots did not last more than two years (1950-52). It was seen however as a necessary first step for the agrarian revolution – politically, for the peasants to exercise their power over the landlords; and economically, for the same peasants-turned-owner-farmers to realize the limits of traditional agriculture on small individual plots.<sup>32</sup> Starting from this situation, it was considered a logical step for the small peasant farmers to move further on to the next rung, the Agricultural Producers’ Cooperatives (APC). And by 1958, practically all of the 120 million peasant households had been communized. “Instead of 740,000 APC’s with an average of about 160 households,” Chao reports, “there are now about 24,000 people’s communes, averaging over 5,000 households each.”<sup>33</sup>

The present three-tier system of decision-making at the level of the commune, the brigade, and the local production team has been the result of large-scale experiments that resulted in the Great Leap Forward in 1958, followed by three years of disasters (1959-61), and subsequent periods of reassessments.<sup>34</sup> Thus the communes as they continue to develop today are the result of Chinese pragmatism as well as a long-term commitment to the socialist paradigm of collectivized agriculture.

Some notable features of the communes have been: (1) the organizational balance arrived at based on “democratic centralism”;<sup>35</sup> (2) the achievement of economies of scale, while allowing for the continuation of small private plots;<sup>36</sup> (3) the integration of simultaneous objectives such as: to develop agriculture to build local industry, and to advance education and culture;<sup>37</sup> and (4)

31. John C.H. Fei, “Chinese Agriculture Under Communism: A Review Essay,” (New Haven: Economic Growth Center, 1974), pp. 80-85.

32. *Agriculture in New China* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1953).

33. Kuo-chun Chao, “The Organization and Function of the People’s Communes,” *Contemporary China* 3 (1960): 131-45.

34. Shahid Javed Burki, “A Study of Chinese Communes,” in *Comparative Development of India and China*, by Kuan-I Chen and J.S. Uppal (New York: Free Press, 1971).

35. Kuo-chun Chao, “People’s Communes”.

36. Kenneth Walker, *Planning in Chinese Agriculture* (Chicago: Aldine, 1965); S.J. Burki, *A Study of Chinese Communes* (Cambridge, Mass.: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1969); Gargi Dutt, “Some Problems of China’s Rural Communes,” *China Quarterly* 16 (1963): 112-36.

37. Felix Greene, “Visit to a Rural Commune” (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Radical Education Project, 1960). Likewise, Hautfenne states that the commune in its present form has economic, administrative, military, medical, and socio-cultural functions. See Stephane Hautfenne, “Les etables de la collectivisation des campagnes en Republique Populaire de Chine,” *Civilisations* 22 (1972): 35-48.

the breakthrough toward the Chinese equivalent of a green revolution by the late 1960s.<sup>38</sup>

Several criticisms have been leveled at the communes – e.g., the undesirable features of a “command economy”;<sup>39</sup> totalitarian centralism;<sup>40</sup> and distrust of what have been labeled by Communist leaders as “revisionist policies”.<sup>41</sup> Considering China’s past, however, particularly the recurrence of floods and famines, and her suppliant posture before other powers in pre-revolutionary days, one would find it hard to disagree with Stavis’ conclusion:

Compared with other countries in Asia, China’s experiences in transforming agriculture can be considered successful. Food production has arisen slightly more rapidly than in the rest of East, Southeast and South Asia. On an overall average basis, China’s agriculture is the most advanced in Asia, after that of Japan and Taiwan; and China’s high and stable yield areas are comparable to the best areas in Japan and Taiwan. In terms of future prospects, China’s difficulties are certainly no greater than those of other countries.<sup>42</sup>

Implicit in this judgment is an evaluation of the system of people’s communes, which “still holds the key to Communist China’s future.”<sup>43</sup>

Following the Chinese pattern, North Korea has also carried out in successive stages the reorganization of the peasantry with a sweeping land reform program in 1946, the cooperativization movement in 1953-54 after the Korean War, and culminating with the enlargement of the cooperatives in 1958 after the commune movement in China.<sup>44</sup> A Communist writer provides a different categorization of the various phases in North Korea’s agricultural transformation – the stages of “anti-imperialism, anti-feudalism, a democratic revolution and socialistic revolution.”<sup>45</sup>

38. Benedict Stavis, *China’s Green Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell, 1974).

39. Yung-hwan Jo, *Agricultural Collectivization as the Developmental Model for Communist China* (Tempe: Arizona State University, 1967).

40. Sidney Klein, “Land Problems and Economic Growth in India and China: Another View,” *Malayan Economic Review* 5 (1960): 66-80; Henry Lethbridge, *The Peasant and the Communes* (Hongkong: Dragonfly, 1963).

41. Kung-chia Yeh, *Agricultural Policies and Performance* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, 1969).

42. Stavis, *China’s Green Revolution*.

43. Edgar Snow, *The Other Side of the River* (New York: Random House 1961).

44. Chong-sik Lee, “Land Reform Collectivization and the Peasants in North Korea,” *China Quarterly* 14 (1963): 65-81.

45. Sung-hyo Ko, “Characteristics of the Solution of Agriculture and Peasant Problem in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” *Tochiseidoshigaku* 8, No. 33 (1966): 1-15.

Reviewing North Vietnam's land reform process from 1945 to the present, Tran discusses its development strategy of balanced economic growth in agriculture and industry through the use of intermediate techniques and a network of regional production areas. Patterned after the Chinese experience, the first reforms involved rent reduction followed by a radical redistribution of land in 1953 that left the peasants with average holdings of one-tenth of a hectare. The second stage of collectivization involved a progression from mutual-help teams to the semi-socialist type of cooperative to socialist-type cooperatives. No general attempt has been made however to adopt the Chinese model of people's communes. "By the end of the first five-year plan (1961-65)," Tran concludes, "agriculture in North Vietnam had been basically socialised, while in the course of less than a generation the peasantry had undergone sweeping changes."<sup>46</sup>

#### D. THE PHILIPPINE CASE: PARADIGM LOST?

In 1963, the Philippine land reform program was legislated "to abolish share tenancy" and to establish "owner-operated family-size farms as the foundation of Philippine agriculture."<sup>47</sup> Tenure change was to be carried out in two stages: (1) from share tenancy to leasehold, and (2) from leasehold to owner-cultivatorship of family-size farms. In 1971, when the code was amended, the focus had shifted to "cooperative-cultivatorship among those who live and work on the land as tillers" and "a cooperative system of production, processing, marketing, distribution, credit, and services."<sup>48</sup> In 1972, one month after the declaration of martial law, Presidential Decree No. 27 proclaimed that all tenants, whether sharecropper or lessee, were "deemed owners" of the land they till.

For the first time, the size of family farms was calculated as

46. Tran Ngoc Bich, "Strategie de développement et évolution du cadre socio-économique au Nord-Vietnam," *Civilisations* 22 (1972): 49-78. For criticisms of the N. Vietnamese experience see Daniel Teodoru, "The Bloodbath Hypothesis: the Maoist Pattern in N. Vietnam's Radical Land Reform," *SE Asian Perspectives*, No. 9 (New York: American Friends of Vietnam, 1973), and Van Chi Hoang, *From Colonialism to Communism* (New Delhi: Allied, 1964). For a more balanced view, see Erich H. Jacoby, *Agrarian Unrest in SE Asia*, rev. ed. (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1961).

47. Republic Act 3844, Sec. 2.

48. R.A. 6389, Sec. 2.

three hectares of irrigated land or five hectares of unirrigated land. Likewise, the maximum retention limit for landowners on the basis of personal cultivation was set at seven hectares. An important provision however has been the requirement for the tenant-farmer to become "a full-fledged member of a duly recognized farmers' cooperative" before he can be eligible to receive the title to his land. In subsequent decrees and letters of instruction, this requirement has been interpreted to mean that a tenant can only receive a Certificate of Land Transfer, which makes him the amortizing owner of his land over the next fifteen years, on condition that he joins the government-sponsored *Samahang Nayan*. Henceforth, tenure shift would no longer be accomplished on an individual basis but on the *barrio* level. Likewise, an institutionalized form of peasant cooperation has become an integral part of the agrarian reform program.

In the period following P.D. 27, however, land transfer proceedings affected only landlords owning twenty-four hectares or more, with the exception of seventeen pilot municipalities where the original provision of zero retention for non-cultivating landlords was applied. Later on, Operation Land Transfer was indeed extended down to the seven-hectare level, but by this time with a significant concession to small landowners of twenty-four hectares or less: they may retain seven hectares of their land (even without personal cultivation). If there are tenants on the land, they shall not be evicted, but shall continue working the land under permanent leasehold arrangements.

With subsequent adjustments in scope and target beneficiaries, land tenure improvement by the end of the seventies included in its scope 1.0 million rice and corn tenants on 1.5 million hectares owned by almost 0.5 million landlords. Broken up into its two components, Operation Land Transfer, the original program, will at most benefit 400,000 tenants displacing 50,000 landlords. Nine-tenths of all landlords will retain the ownership of their lands under Operation Leasehold — a loophole for the continuation of absentee landlordism on small tenanted lands.<sup>49</sup>

Finally, in another policy decision which has been seen by some observers as working at cross purposes with the original intention of land reform, the government has encouraged large-

49. The figures have been rounded off, based on MAR year-end reports, 1973-79.

scale rice farming by private corporations (G.O. 47 and P.D. 472). In 1975, 129 operations under G.O. 47 were listed, but only three of these involved contracts with family farmers. By 1976, 158 corporations had presented plans for developing 28,000 hectares of public disposable land.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, the post-reform picture that emerges, granting full implementation for the sake of discussion, takes on the following configurations:

(1) Only a maximum number of 39 percent of all tenant farmers on rice and corn lands can become amortizing owners. These will not, however, be allotted the three hectares of irrigated land or five hectares of unirrigated land, but will retain the present actual size of their landholding. As of the end of 1979, it was reported that 81 percent of all eligible tenants had Certificates of Land Transfer "issued" to them — i.e., printed by the computer. Of these CLTs, only 54 percent were actually distributed.

(2) The other 61 percent of all rice and corn tenants will remain as permanent lessees on lands retained by small landlords. Although fixed rental payments may have been reduced, small tenant-farmers now face rising costs of production, particularly with the current increases in petroleum prices.<sup>51</sup>

(3) An estimated 3.4 million landless worker households in the agricultural sector are not covered by the scope of agrarian reform. The estimated 2.4 million landless workers on rice and corn lands even surpass the OLT/LHO scope of one million tenant beneficiaries.<sup>52</sup>

(4) Average holdings of reform beneficiaries have been calculated at 1.55 hectares in 1975, and are expected to decline further to 1.2 hectares by 1990.<sup>53</sup> With continuing population pressure, sub-tenancy and other labor tenure arrangements have emerged result-

50. Harkin, "Philippine Agrarian Reform"; and David Wurfel, "Philippine Agrarian Policy Today: Implementation and Political Impact," Occasional Paper No. 46 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1977), pp. 29-31.

51. V.G. Cordova, A.M. Mandac, and Fe Gascon, "Some Considerations on Energy Costs of Rice Production in Central Luzon," Paper presented at the PAEDA 26th annual convention, CLSU, Muñoz, 6-8 June 1980.

52. Philippines, National Census and Statistics Office, *1971 Census of Agriculture*, Vol. II (Manila: NEDA, 1974); Germelino Bautista, "Socio-economic Conditions of the Landless Rice Workers in the Philippines: the Landless of Barrio Sta. Lucia as a Case in Point," in *Hired Labor in Rural Asia*, by S. Hirashima (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1977), pp. 106-25.

53. Harkin, "Philippine Agrarian Reform," pp. 24-25.



ing in “intermediary landlordism” among some agrarian reform beneficiaries.<sup>54</sup>

(5) A network of cooperatives under the Samahang Nayon program is expected to supply the various needs of small farmers. However, the organization of SNs as well as Area Marketing Cooperatives has had only limited success, due principally to lack of participation from the grassroots.<sup>55</sup> At the moment, MAR personnel are also organizing Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Associations (ARBA) in reform areas.

(6) Various forms of group farming — such as compact farms, the *moshav*-type of cooperative operations, and land consolidation schemes in former estates — have been introduced in pilot areas. These have remained however on a limited scale.

(7) Corporate rice farming will most likely continue, with reported significant increases in production, but with questionable repercussions on tenants or settlers who may be displaced from their lands or from work opportunities. One observer estimates that 70,000 hectares of land tilled by 20,000 families may have slipped out of the control of the cultivator because of these government policies encouraging corporate farming — a form of “land reform in reverse.”<sup>56</sup>

(8) Land reform has been restricted to tenanted rice and corn lands. Lands devoted to agricultural export crops such as coconut, sugar, pineapple, bananas, etc. have not been touched, despite official pronouncements extending the scope of land reform to other crop areas and even to urban areas. The extent of illegal conversion of rice or corn lands to these other crop lands has not been well documented.

In many respects, therefore, Philippine policy-makers have followed the eclectic approach in searching for working solutions to the land problem — publicizing some, discarding none (except the socialist model). An exception has been the presentation of a position paper entitled, “The Agrarian Reform Plan Year 2000,” from MAR’s Planning Service. Taking into account the rapid growth rate of the population and the limits to alienable and disposable

54. M. Kikuchi, L. Maligalig-Bambo and Y. Hayami, “Evolution of Land Tenure System in a Laguna Village” (Los Baños: IRRI, 1977).

55. See Mary Hollnsteiner, “Mobilizing the Rural Poor Through Community Organization,” *Philippine Studies* 27 (1979): 387-416.

56. Wurfel, “Philippine Agrarian Policy Today,” p. 31.

land, the paper advocates the modification of the concept of private landownership into a form of stewardship under the state ensuring that "land shall no longer be treated as a chattel but as a resource" made accessible to the actual tillers. Due to adverse comments from certain quarters, however, this paper was quickly withdrawn from public scrutiny.

In the meantime, therefore, small farmers on rice and corn lands continue to exist alongside big landlords on exempt land or corporate rice farms. Leasehold tenancy becomes a permanent complement to small landlordism. And cooperatives have been introduced on a pilot farm-operation basis as well as institutionalized within land tenure reform. In following the incremental approach, ad hoc problems may have been solved, but underlying contradictions have been glossed over. The most obvious one should be spelled out: that the original paradigm of "owner-operated family-size farms" will not materialize for the majority of Filipino peasant farmers today.<sup>57</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

Thus, the search for lasting models continues. On the one hand, much of the current literature on agricultural development has focused on the small farmer and his specific problems.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, a growing body of studies has emerged discussing the merits and demerits of group farming.<sup>59</sup>

As more clearly perceived, land reform in terms of land redistribution can no longer be seen as a once-and-for-all phenomenon. Modern-day problems have become much more complex than even just three decades ago. And as populations grow, and the land frontier diminishes, and the clamor for food, security, and equity

57. As with the Philippine experience, South Vietnam's Land-to-the-Tiller program failed to attain its original objectives. The linkages between the two countries' experiences are instructive. Originally influenced by the Philippine example in land reform legislation in 1954 and 1963, South Vietnam's LTTT program became in turn the precursor of the "New Society's" Operation Land Transfer.

58. See Dale Adams and E. Walter Coward, Jr., "Small Farmer Development Strategies: A Seminar Report" (New York: Agricultural Development Council, 1972).

59. See Peter Dorner, ed., *Cooperative and Commune: Group Farming in the Economic Development of Agriculture*, Proceedings of a Conference on Group Farming, Madison, Wisconsin, 10-12 June 1975 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977); John Wong, ed., *Group Farming in Asia: Experiences and Potentials* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1979).

continues, the nations of Asia have begun to reassess their current strategies for rural – and national – development. Land reform remains a burning issue, but inherent in this sense of urgency is the related question of a restructuring of social institutions – or “man reform.”