Society and Culture in the Rural Philippines

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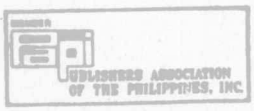

It has been ten years since the publication of the first edition of *Society and Culture in the Rural Philippines*. Today with the current thrust in countryside development, the need for a volume such as this is greater than ever.

Professor Irene L. Ortigas and Professor Felix B. Regalado deserve commendation for undertaking this work despite their full-time responsibilities. It is also a pleasure to acknowledge the invaluable work of Dr. Chester L. Hunt in making this volume possible.

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President

Central Philippine University
Iloilo City
24 October 1977

THE NATURE OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT

If one were to ask what seems to be the most spectacular and dynamic part of the Philippines, one would obviously take the cities. It is in the cities—Manila, Iloilo, Zamboanga, Cebu, and others—that you see tall buildings, heavy traffic, and instances of dramatic change. By contrast, the countryside may seem sleepy, dull, and stagnant although it is in the countryside where the battle for Philippine progress is won or lost. The rural areas produce not only the food for local consumption and export but also the raw materials which are needed for industrialization. Over two-thirds of the Philippine population live in the rural areas (according to the 1970 census, 68.1%). Here it is that the country will either progress to new heights or get stuck in the quagmire of poverty. Thus it is that the discipline of rural sociology is concerned with matters of major importance to the nation and to the world.

A Definition of Rural Sociology

Sociology is concerned with developing systematic knowledge about society and culture. Rural sociology is one specialization in sociology; others are urban sociology, family sociology, sociology of child development, sociology of religion, educational sociology, industrial sociology, social psychology, folk sociology, criminology, ecology, and race relations. Rural sociology emphasizes the study of rural society and culture with a view to promoting individual and group welfare. In this sense rural sociology is an applied science or the discipline which directs its efforts to understanding and correcting practical problems in rural areas. In the rural Philippines these are conditions which prevent society, as a system, from achieving internal integration or stability and external adaptation or adjustment to the changing environment.

Since rural sociology is a part of sociology in general, it is to that topic which we now turn.

The Meaning and Scope of Sociology

The principal tasks of the sociologist are: (1) to obtain data about changes and trends in interaction, including adjustments of people to changes, and (2) to interpret

these within the sociological frame of reference. The rural sociologist obtains data on social trends in the countryside and interprets these trends on the basis of sociological theory.

As with most of sociology, the bulk of pioneering work in rural sociology was done in the United States. Some features are worth mentioning. One was the appointment of an American Rural Life Commission in 1908 by President Theodore Roosevelt which gave the initial impetus to the scientific study of rural life. Another important landmark was an appropriation providing funds for research in rural sociology, agricultural economics, and home economics as part of the work of agricultural schools. Rural sociology developed slowly, but by 1925 it was a recognized academic discipline in the United States.

During World War II rural sociologists were used by the United States government to advise various technical assistance programs and to undertake research in foreign lands. In 1957 the European Society of Rural Sociology was organized and by 1959 it had a membership of 350. Similar societies were organized in Japan at the same time. Rural sociology "took in a worldwide orientation and . . . jumped the boundaries of the United States, making the world the laboratory of rural sociologists."[1]

Philippine interest in rural life and the teaching of world sociology was stimulated by the heightened interest in the rural areas during the Magsaysay administration in the 1950s. This was the time when, as never before, the importance of rural improvement and the participation of farm people was emphasized by government officials and social scientists alike.

The teaching of rural sociology in the Philippines was stimulated by the McMillan-Rivera[2] and the Hardie[3] reports. The former, *The Rural Philippines,* was prepared by Robert T. McMillan and Generoso F. Rivera of the Mutual Security Agency and the Philippine Council on United States Aid (PHILCUSA). The latter was submitted by Robert S. Hardie of the Special Technical and Economic Mission of the Mutual Security Agency. These reports were primarily analyses of the land tenure problems and their causes, and they brought into focus the plight of the rural millions in the country.

The Need for Sociology

According to Samuel Smith, sociological knowledge is necessary (1) to "assist the individual to understand himself, his resources and his limitations, his potentialities, and his role in society"; (2) to extend knowledge and to advance civilization; and (3) to solve common problems for the benefit of mankind.[4]

Since rural sociology is basically the application of the scientific method to the study of rural society, let us look briefly at what is involved in the scientific method.

The Meaning of Science

Science comes from the Latin word *scientia,* meaning knowledge. In common usage, science is a body of verified and systematized knowledge as well as a method of

[1] Everett M. Rogers, *Social Change in Rural Society* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1960), p. 31.

[2] Robert T. McMillan and Generoso F. Rivera, *The Rural Philippines* (Manila: Philippine Council on United States Aid, Mutual Security Agency, 1952).

[3] Special Technical and Economic Mission, Mutual Security Agency, "Philippine Land Tenure Reform: Analysis and Recommendations," mimeographed (Manila, 1952)

[4] Robert E. Park, *An Outline of the Principles of Sociology* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1939), p. vi.

obtaining it. Its major concern is the discovery of truth for the purpose of knowing in advance in order to do something about it. According to Ruch, science has four aims: (1) to describe regularities or uniformities; (2) to explain or interpret or to bring order and understanding out of the confusion and complexities of nature; (3) to predict or to foretell the future; and (4) to control or to influence future human behavior.[5]

The Steps in the Scientific Method

As a method, science is a distinctive way of thinking and working to know the truth, whether it is in chemistry, physics, mathematics, or human relations. In spite of the difficulties in the application of the method to sociological inquiry, sociologists use it to study their problems. Heiss, Obourn, and Hoffman say that it involves seven steps: (1) sensing a problem; (2) assembling data; (3) organizing and evaluating data; (4) proposing an explanation or hypothesis; (5) testing a hypothesis; (6) discovering truths; and (7) applying principles to specific cases.[6]

The Attitudes of the Scientist

The use of the scientific method requires certain ways of thinking and behaving, called *attitudes*. According to Heiss,[7] Gillin and Gillin,[8] and Bossard,[9] the following are some of these attitudes:

1. Curiosity or inquisitiveness about the world
2. Objectivity or detachment or freedom from bias
3. Faith in the universality of cause and effect or in the belief that for every effect there must be a cause, or vice versa
4. Open-mindedness, or receptivity to new ideas involving willingness to revise beliefs if they cannot stand the test of facts
5. Critical-mindedness, or the tendency to question or doubt appearances
6. Determination to throw superstition overboard
7. Intellectual honesty
8. Patience, hard work, persistence, and thoroughness

The rural sociologist is a scientist who uses every possible means of getting information about rural societies. These include census reports and other types of statistical data and may include special field studies in which observers go out to rural districts with carefully devised questionnaires. They may at times also include experiments in which a particular method of farming, such as a cooperative farm in which the farmers share equally in the profits of the farm, is tried out and then compared with other farm methods.

All of these and still other methods of research are used by the rural sociologist. The rural sociologist, in general, is a scientist trying to understand how rural culture functions because he feels that only through this understanding can really sound programs for rural improvement be devised.

[5] Floyd L. Ruch, *Psychology and Life*, 5th ed. (Chicago: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1958), pp. 18-19.

[6] Elwood D. Heiss, Ellsworth S. Obourn, and Charles W. Hoffman, *Modern Science Teaching* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1950), p. 49.

[7] Ibid.

[8] John L. Gillin and John P. Gillin, *An Introduction to Sociology* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1943), pp. 8-11.

[9] James H. S. Bossard, "What is Science?" *Man and His World* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1932), pp. 647-675.

Definition of Rural and Urban

Having talked about research in rural society, perhaps it is time to look at what we mean by *rural society* and how this society differs from an urban society. There are varied definitions of rural societies in various areas, and sometimes these definitions fluctuate from time to time within the same country. In general, a rural society is a community where the major occupation is directly connected with natural resources such as agriculture, fishing, or mining. In the Philippines, the census bureau defines rural places as those "not covered in the definition of urban places." *Urban places* is defined as follows:[10]

I. In their entirety, all cities and municipalities which have a population density of at least 1,000 persons per square kilometer.

II. Poblaciones or central districts of municipalities and cities which have a population density of at least 500 persons per square kilometer.

III. Poblaciones or central districts (not included in I and II) regardless of the population size which have the following:

a. Street pattern; i.e., network of streets in either parallel or right-angle orientation,

b. At least six establishments (commercial, manufacturing, recreational, and/or personal services); and

c. At least three of the following:

(1) A town hall, church, or chapel with religious services at least once a month;

(2) A public plaza, park, or cemetery;

(3) A marketplace or building where trading activities are carried on at least once a week; and

(4) A public building like a school, hospital, puericulture and health center, or library.

IV. Barrios having at least 1,000 inhabitants which meet the conditions set forth in III above, and in which the occupation of the inhabitants is predominantly non-farming/fishing.

The purpose of this complicated definition is to get away from a simple reliance on population density and to also consider the presence or absence of "urban" activities. Thus a rural barrio is one with less than a thousand inhabitants or one which may have a thousand or more inhabitants but lacks the urban street pattern and public facilities. McMillan and Rivera suggested the following characteristics of a rural Philippine barrio:

1. The group is small in size.
2. It consists of "one or more clusters of houses with relatively few families residing on scattered farmsteads."
3. "The people are homogeneous biologically, socially, and culturally."
4. "Nearly all persons of the barrio are kinsfolk."
5. "A high degree of self-sufficiency, group identity, and group unity develops at both family and community levels."[11]

[10] Bureau of the Census, Advance Report on Population and Housing, mimeographed (May 1972), p. iii.

[11] McMillan and Rivera, *The Rural Philippines*, p. 5.

The Census Bureau's effort to get away from population density as a means of classifying districts as urban or rural is similar to the sociologist's viewpoint.

The important distinction between rural and urban for the sociologist is not the size of the population unit so much as it is the type of social interaction which takes place. This point can be summarized by saying that the rural community is characterized by primary group interaction—one in which a relatively small group of people who are intimately acquainted with one another interact on the basis of their total life situation.

Urban society, however, is characterized by more of a secondary type of social system. This is one in which society is impersonal, where people interact with others of whom they have no personal knowledge. Examples of secondary interaction would include the flow of traffic on a city street or a large crowd at a theater. Neither the people in the traffic nor in the theater are personally acquainted with one another.

The ticket taker does not know the patrons of the theater, the traffic policeman does not know the drivers he directs. Like most persons in the city, they interact in a limited role and not as complete persons. By contrast, those in rural areas are intimately acquainted with most of the persons with whom they interact. The urban resident meets many people but knows only a few. The rural resident meets fewer people but he knows most of those he meets as individuals with their own particular personal qualities.

Rural Social Interaction

Francis E. Merrill[12] contrasts some of the typical forms of social interaction in the rural and urban community:

1. *Gemeinschaft* and *gesselschaft* are terms coined by a German sociologist, Ferdinand Tonnies, to show the basic relationship between the rural and urban community. The *gemeinschaft* type of relationship is represented by isolated rural communities with their kinship system, friendship, familiarity, and social control primarily based on unwritten norms, such as the folkways and mores, instead of on law. The *gesselschaft* type of relationship is represented by the metropolitan communities with their characteristic impersonal, formal relationship.

2. *Sacred* and *secular* are concepts introduced by Robert F. Park and developed by Howard Becker. The former is not used in its religious connotation to mean "spiritual" and "divine" but to refer to societies where there is a high degree of resistance to change. Secular societies are those where resistance to change is at a minimum.

3. *Homogeneity* and *heterogeneity* are two other terms. Homogeneity is typified by rural communities where the rural dweller is in continuous interaction with the basic structures of the family and the church, while heterogeneity refers to the metropolitan communities where the individual is a member of widely divergent groups and is more free to change his residence, his employment, and his spouse than is his rural counterpart.

4. *Complete* and *segmented* role is still another form of classification. A rural dweller knows a limited number of persons intimately and interacts with them wholeheartedly; in the urban community the individual interacts with a large number of people in a rather specialized or segmented manner. Although he knows many people, he knows only a few intimately.

[12] Francis E. Merrill, *Society and Culture,* 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), pp. 428-430.

5. *Anonymity* and *familiarity* are contrasts in rural and urban interaction arising from the degree of knowledge of other persons. The rural dweller is known to most, if not all, the people in his locality and is aware of his own status, whereas the urban dweller is known to comparatively few others and lives as an anonymous person.

RURAL-URBAN INTERACTION PATTERNS

Rural	*Urban*
Primary contacts	Secondary contacts
Complete	Segmented
Gemeinschaft	Gesselschaft
Sacred	Secular
Homogeneous	Heterogeneous
Familiarity	Anonymity
General competence	Specialization

The student should not overemphasize rural-urban contrasts. The list of such contrasts represents tendencies—what is likely to happen—rather than absolute patterns which always occur. Neither urban nor rural culture is completely consistent. For instance, the city is often thought of as the place for specialists, but specialists exist in the countryside as well. One person may gather tuba, another will be a tractor driver, still another will be an *herbolario,* not to mention merchants and teachers. Specialization is most common in the city but is not unknown in rural areas. Similar observations could be made on all the contrasting qualities. To take one more example, the rural community is known as "sacred" or resistant to change. Yet the methods of planting rice have probably changed more in recent years than have urban industrial techniques.

The city person who works with rural people does need to adjust to a culture which is more personal and traditional than that of the city. At the same time, however, he must remember that farmers are complex human beings capable of developing all the attitudes usually associated with city dwellers. The differences in the frequency of various types of interaction do impede understanding between urban and rural residents. When we speak of the rural *sanô* as contrasted to the urban *switik,* we are expressing the popular notion of differing urban and rural qualities. Personal and traditional patterns of interaction do often take place in rural communities. They will be referred to frequently here because interaction is the frame of reference used in this particular book. We will look at the interaction of people in family groups, in economic and political groups, in informal social associations, in religious groups, and in every possible sphere of life. While the frame of reference will be social interaction, this leads to a question of what the focus of the book will be. The focus of the book is that which is taken as the focus of the country and much of the world; namely, development. The 1970s are known as the second decade of development, the first decade of development having been proclaimed by the United Nations in 1960, and the 1980s will undoubtedly be known as the third decade of development.

Meaning of Development

What is meant by *development?* Why do we speak of developed, less developed, or developing countries? The reason is to indicate the tremendous gap in living standards

in various parts of the world. If we look at most of Asia, Africa, and South America, we find that the individual income (expressed in monetary terms) of people in these areas is perhaps one-tenth to one-twentieth of the average income in the industrialized nations of Europe and North America. This comparison is somewhat misleading because much of the income in developing areas is that of subsistence—agriculturists provide their own shelter, much of their own food, and some of their own clothing. It is extremely hard to give a monetary value to this type of income so that differences may not be quite as large as the monetary figures would indicate. However, when all allowances are made for these, the industrialized or developed part of the world is still much wealthier than the less developed, of which the Philippines is a part.

Why is the Philippines underdeveloped? It is not because it lacks the basic natural resources but simply because the application of human energy, with all the refinements of science, to these resources has not been sufficient to bring out the maximum potential. The goal of development is to make possible as high a utilization of human and natural resources as is found in the industrialized areas. Thus development has its economic aspect, and this is frequently regarded as central. This is, however, only one facet of the total situation since development is inadeqaute unless it also brings out the best of human potential. As the poet Oliver Goldsmith said, "Ill fares the land where wealth accumulates but men decay." The statement of a Philippine social worker expresses a similar sentiment:

> Economic and social developments are major facets of the entire operation. Our imperfect understanding of the relationship between the two is that they complement each other or that the former occurs within the context of the latter. Hence, the traditional concern of economic development with increasing productivity of goods and services must be broadened to cover the following: "the provision of first, programs and services for the preservation of human life and the development of human capacities and, second, of sufficient resources and opportunities for raising the levels of living and for ensuring a more equitable distribution of goods and services."[13]

The topic of development is closely related to that of liberation. Liberation, according to Webster's dictionary, involves the release from restraint or bondage. Frequently in the Southeast Asian context, the restraint or bondage from which freedom is sought has been from an imperial power which held a nation as a colony or from landlordism which denied elementary rights to the farmers. In recent years both colonialism and landlordism seem to be on the way out. Most one-time colonial areas have now achieved independence. Similarly, land reform has curtailed the rights of landlords and has given ownership of land to many former tenants.

The end of colonialism and the restriction of landlordism have not solved all the problems associated with these conditions. Since much of Philippines agricultural production is for the world market, we are still dependent on trade with the rest of the world and therefore subject to influence by other countries. At times our export prices have fluctuated so violently that it was hard for Philippine agriculture to adjust; sugar, for instance, dropped from 40 cents (US) a pound to 14 cents a pound in 1975. At other times prices have been more stable, but prices do not always move together and farm prices have often failed to rise as much as the prices of manufactured goods. The

[13] Leonora S. de Guzman, "Social Issues and Natural Development Goals," *Social Work* 17, no. 1 (January-March 1972): a.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) represents an effort to achieve greater equilibrium in the prices of agricultural and manufactured goods.

Nor has the end of landlordism solved all the problems of the former tenant farmer. Although the landlord may have been exploitative, he did furnish services needed to keep farms operational. With the aid of the middleman, the landlord did provide credit, see that tools and seeds were available, carry the tenants through the lean years of bad harvests, and transport and sell crops. The elimination of the landlord will be of little help to the farmer unless other ways are found to provide these services more cheaply, more efficiently, and with more respect for human dignity than was true of the landlord-tenant system.

Liberation from these and other external restraints, important as it is, is only one aspect of rural improvement. A type of liberation equally important is release from the restraints which may have been internalized in the mind, habits, and actions of the individuals involved.

We will list a number of factors from which liberation is needed, though not necessarily in the order of their importance. One of these is liberation from superstition. We have in the rural areas, and in the cities as well, a great many people who have unfounded beliefs about the activities of evil spirits. These outmoded beliefs are frequently referred to as "animistic" and imply a type of causation different from that which can be measured by science. As a result, people may fail to take proper measures of animal husbandry or seed selection, they may engage in practices inimical to their health, or they may fail to take advantage of measures which might preserve their well-being.

Closely related to superstition but not quite the same is the matter of ignorance. Simply through lack of knowledge, dwellers in rural communities may not be able to profit from the opportunities present in their neighborhood. They may be unaware of the types of crops which are most profitable or of the cultivation methods which will bring the largest yield. Likewise, they may fail to eat nutritious foods easily available in the locality. The school, of course, is a remedy for ignorance. But education is something that does not stop with graduation from elementary school, high school, or college. It must continue through life if one is to keep abreast of a changing world.

Related to ignorance is isolation. Isolation may come from lack of transportation facilities such as in a barrio which does not have adequate farm-to-market roads. In this case, it is costly to ship goods to the market and it is hard to bring supplies and services to the rural people. This type of isolation is rapidly being overcome through the expansion of rural roads. There may also be a second type of isolation—one brought about by factors pertaining to the human mind. One of these is the isolation of the illiterates who are unable to learn from the printed word and therefore are cut off from a great deal of modern culture. Usually the individual who lives in isolation has much less opportunity to learn how to adapt himself successfully to his world than the individual who has access to communication from many people who are wrestling with similar problems.

Another source of bondage is that of ill health. Millions of our rural residents are handicapped with preventable disease. The prevalence of intestinal parasites is perhaps a classic example of this. The person whose energy is only a fraction of that which might be available is, to a great extent, as much in bondage as though he were in chains. The spreading of the knowledge and practices which make for a healthy life is a major factor in liberation.