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A major trend in agrarian change during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in many countries of Southeast Asia had been the disappearance of reciprocal labour and its replacement by hired labour. Elson (1997), reviewing various literature on the Southeast Asian region, notes that while the spread of hired labour was in the first instance a replacement for co-operative labour, in time the former “began gradually to replace tasks which had previously been the preserve of household members of the farming unit” (ibid.: 164). Thus, hired labour has grown and in the process substituted both reciprocal and family labour in farming (cf. (Turton 1989, Ganajapan 1989; Hefner 1990; Horri 1981). Scholars on Philippine agrarian issues reviewing a number of local studies in various lowland regions of the country, has a similar conclusion. Generally, exchange labour has practically faded out, while family labour has declined and hired labour has increased considerably (cf. Castillo 1982: 348; Fegan 1989a: 131). A highpoint of the rapid rise of wage labour came in the early 1970s, when as a response to Presidential Decree 27 instituting land reform in the entire country, landowners transformed their tenants into wage labourers in order to prevent their land estates from being reformed (Boyce 1993: 135-136).

While the clear trend in farming villages all over Southeast Asia has been a general decline of reciprocal labour and family labour, this change is nonetheless uneven. Various studies noted that up to the 1960s and 1970s, the pervasiveness of reciprocal labour exchange and family labour in wet rice farming in the north-western plains of Malaysia (Dong 1987: 118-121) and in swidden and wet rice farming among forest and upland farmers of Thailand (cf. Kunstander 1978: 74-131; Hamilton 1976: 62-67;). In the Philippines, some local case studies have also noted the persistence of reciprocal labour exchange in remote upland areas occupied by indigenous communities such as Buhids of upland Mindoro (Lopez-Gonzaga 1983), the Kalingas (Lawless 1975), and the Kankanais of Sagada (Voss 1983).

Scholars of agrarian change in Southeast Asia have directly related the persistence/decline of reciprocal labour and family labour to the degree of market penetration or level of commercialization of a particular agrarian economy (cf: Elson 1997: 164; Hirashima & Muqtada 1986: 5-6; Chulasai et al. 1986: 168-169; Hamilton 1976: 226). While both forms of labour have been negatively affected by the deepening market penetration in agriculture, reciprocal labour in particular is seen as the one most incompatible with commercialisation of agriculture. Thus, findings in upland Indonesia have underscored that under conditions of large amounts of capital in a highly commercialised agriculture “even smallholders find it more convenient to hire wage labour rather than bother with the reciprocal calculus of *gentenan* which, according to farmers, is too difficult to co-ordinate and the quality of the labour inferior (Hefner 1990: 137). Such a trend is similar to the findings in upland areas in the Philippines. Duhaylungsod (1989), in her study of an upland village in the province of Laguna where farming is not mechanised, observed that local reciprocal labour-exchange institution has been confined to slashing and clearing swiddens, clearing undergrowth from coconut farms and building ricefields, and excluded from

the domain of tomato production for the market where wage labour is used instead. Studies in the upland province of Benguet have also noted that since the shift from subsistence food production to commercial vegetable gardening after the War, reciprocal labour declined dramatically. It is rarely applied to vegetable harvesting and is confined to a few remote communities where money is scarce (Lewis 1992: 146,154; Voss 1983: 231). Wiber's labour study (1985) in Kabayan, Benguet also suggests this incompatibility. There is a significant persistence of *oboan*, a reciprocal labour-exchange arrangement in rice production, but its absence is noticeable in commercial vegetable gardening where both household and daily wage labour are employed.

However, such observed negative correlation between commercialisation of agriculture on the one hand, and reciprocal and family labour on the other hand, may not be a straightforward and predictable path, where contemporary existence of the latter are merely assumed to be an exceptional degree of survival and persistence of dying traditional institutions. It does not always follow that reciprocal and family labour diminish in proportion to the penetration and growth of commercialism in agriculture. There may be other mediating factors which stymie the growth of hired labour and the demise of family and reciprocal labour. Such factors, for example, may be relative remoteness and sparseness of population of an area, few or no landlessness and equality among partners in the exchange relationship, absence of mechanisation and low use of modern inputs. This underscores the importance of looking into terms of the local community's engagement with the market, or the conditions, under which its livelihoods and agriculture have articulated with the broader market forces outside.

Further, while some authors have correctly identified the role of certain mediating factors, still the overall perspective underscores a decline, or at least, the inevitability of the demise of family and reciprocal labour exchange, expressed in such terms as 'survival' and 'persistence' of these forms (cf. Elson 1997: 164; Castillo 1982: 321). Thus, incompatibility of these forms of labour with market-orientation is implied, although it is conceded that such trend cannot be an accomplished fact overnight. This view is founded on an influential notion in agrarian studies that regard social institutions and traditional customs as constraints to the functioning of the market by setting up barriers to mobility of factors of production (Basu 1984: 179). These complex of institutions existing in peasant reproduction is seen as resisting commoditisation, a drag on capitalist development in the rural areas, and inevitably has to 'decompose' for the full development of capitalist production (cf. Friedman 1980: 163).

However, such presumed 'decomposition' of pre-existing non-market institutions as family and reciprocal labour as an inevitable and necessary path prior market integration of local agriculture may be an overly dichotomised view. It may be, as in the case in highland Sulawesi, Indonesia as argued by Schrauwes (1999), that optimal utilisation of non-market inputs of 'kin labour' and 'traditional labour exchange' shapes the condition wherein it becomes feasible for local peasants to engage in market-oriented production and produce cash incomes. Hence, such non-market forms of labour could not be interpreted to be mere vestiges of a 'natural economy' on the way out, but rather as creative and strategic forms of engagement by

marginalised upland peasants enabling them to engage in commercial production. They may not be obstacles to commercialisation but essential assets of local peasants sustaining their participation in the process.

This article examines the pervasiveness and dominance of family and reciprocal labour in an upland community of Duit in the province of Ifugao of northern Philippines in the introduction and spread of two-cropping system of modern rice variety and commercial cultivation of snap beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*. L.) since the early 1980s. Adoption of modern rice variety by local farmers has not only retained the pre-eminence of these two forms of labour vis-a-vis hired labour. These forms have also expanded and gained prime importance in the domain of a highly commercialised vegetable crop. In explaining the pervasiveness and much-enhanced importance of these labour arrangements, this paper examines the particular terms of engagement of local farming with the broader market in the last two decades of the 20th century. Two such factors serve as important contexts which exert great influence in the current pervasiveness of traditional or non-market forms of labour arrangements in the uplands: a) the persistence of smallholding pattern and absence of a mass of landlessness; and b) the lack of state patronage of the village elite. Both reflect a relatively high degree of social autonomy¹ in livelihoods which the indigenous uplanders have historically exercised vis-a-vis the state even during the period since the 1970s, an era strongly marked by state intrusiveness and massive development programs in lowland rural areas.. The paper discusses the influence of these two contexts and how local farmers have fitted non-market labour arrangements enabling them to engage in modernised and commercialised farming.

New farming and non-market forms of labour

According to elder informants, from the early 1900s up to the 1970s the core of farming and livelihood activities in the village of Duit were pondfield rice farming and cultivation of sweet potatoes in swiddens, a common characteristic of wet-rice terracing indigenous communities in the mountain region of the Cordillera in northern Luzon. Pondfields or *payo*, located in the vicinity's gentler mountain slopes and stream depressions, were planted with single-crop, late-maturing indigenous rice varieties². All households in varying degrees, on the other hand, engaged in swidden farming of sweet potatoes in clearings on steeper slopes. Households without or with only small rice pondfields had the most extensive swiddens. They coped with their lack of rice by substituting on sweet potato during the lean months. Swiddens were also an important food source for raising pigs and chicken, an important economic activity which allowed households to meet their need for ritual sacrifice.

Various types of labour were employed in these two farming activities. Family, reciprocal labour exchange and hired labour were used in varied proportions based on the specific phase of cultivation, and on the particular economic status of the

¹ I am using social autonomy in the way James Scott has referred to it as the degree of relative freedom from state control enjoyed by non-state social units such as the household, the kinship group, the village or settlement (as distinct from the individual freedom of the citizen) 'to determine their own residence, their community forms, their own forms of property and production as opposed to the imposition of state-mandated forms of residence, social organisation, property, and production'(Scott 1995: 1-3). For an excellent and more thorough discussion of this subject see Scott (1998).

²Traditional mountain rice varieties required five months to ripen, much longer than the shorter four-month maturation period of the modern rice varieties adapted for mountain areas.

household. Rice cultivation generally employed most intensively reciprocal labour exchange, in addition to family labour. Only a few households employed hired labour in this activity. Family labour however was dominant in swidden farming where hired labour is totally absent, and where, in a few cases, reciprocal labour was sometimes employed. In addition to these three types of farming labour, a type of festive co-operative labour (*dang-a*) was also practised in the community outside of regular farm tasks, except in hauling rice-bundle harvests from the fields to the owner's granary³. *Dang-a* was commonly used in house construction, timber hauling, and, in the case of female-headed households, gathering and chopping firewood.

In the early 1980s, two important changes in farming activities in Duit caused the intensification of labour use in village farming: first, the shift from single-cropping cultivation of the traditional, late-maturing rice variety to the double-cropping system using modern, early-maturing variety; and second, the introduction and spread of commercial vegetable gardening, particularly, snap bean cultivation. Such agricultural changes were catalysed by very limited livelihood intervention projects in the uplands in the late 1970s and early 1980s by the Philippine state that historically has constructed mountain agriculture as unproductive and marginal (Contreras 1990: 13-14; see also Li 1996: 5). Though limited to a few demonstration farms, free seed distribution, and initial marketing assistance, these official projects were seized by a few enterprising farmers of Kiangang, including some from Duit, who in turn spread of the new rice varieties and vegetable crop. (Some of these projects were actually unintended spill-overs from earlier Green Revolution program intensively implemented in the nearby lowland province of Nueva Viscaya). This type of low-level state intervention shaped a relatively autonomous trajectory of agrarian change in the village in the 1980s up to the present. Its social consequences largely contrast with that of strong rural development intervention program implemented by the state in the lowlands during this era, a point which will be discussed later.

In the upland village of Duit, the introduction of the modern rice variety, which has a shorter 127-day cycle, allowed for two cropping system⁴. This cropping intensification did not displace but absorbed farm labour. Previous labour slack months of six months has shortened to two and a half months. This development is much unlike what occurred in rice farming areas of lowland Philippines where increase in cropping intensity attributed to the introduction of the non-photosensitive, quick-maturing variety in the 1960s at first caused farm employment to rise. But later, by the 1970s to 1980s, this initial employment gains gave way to declines in farm employment as a result of labour-displacing technological change accompanying the Green Revolution rice variety (Boyce 1993: 150).⁵

³Unlike in the practise of reciprocal labour (*obbo*), immediate and exact repayment of labour was not required of the host by the participants in *dang-a*. Moreover, the festive mood in the *dang-a* contrasted with the *obbo* where each participant's work was far more efficient and strict. Unlike the reciprocal-labour exchange, the *dang-a* usually lasted for only a day, with every able-bodied male in the village participating. The host provided food and rice wine for all the participants.

⁴A second crop right after the May to June first-crop harvest, would be harvested in October or November, still leaving ample time to prepare the field immediately, between November and December, for a new round of rice cropping.

⁵The new rice varieties of the Green Revolution program which were propagated in the lowland Philippines did not inherently require that human labour be replaced by tractors, power tillers, herbicides or threshing machines. However, as Boyce (1993: 145) argues, in the particular political

The spread of the double-cropping system of rice farming coincided with the growth commercial vegetable gardening in 1981 in the village. This other major change in local agriculture quickly mobilised local labour to cultivate idle lands. Snap bean has a short crop cycle of 45 to 50 days and can be grown at any time of the year. Local farmers therefore could easily squeeze it into the labour-slack periods in rice farming, whenever household labour capacity and access to farm land allow. In addition, the cultivar requires much less water than rice. It is therefore adaptable to many pondfields that had been abandoned due to perennial drying up. Hence, snap bean cultivation ideally complements local rice farming both in terms of labour and land use. It has become a virtual year-round activity for many local households. Based on the author's survey of cultivation schedules involving a sample of 160 vegetable plots operated by 66 households, planting and harvesting of the plots are more or less spread evenly in 11 months of the year. On the other hand, swidden farming was virtually wiped out.

Based on the author's survey of 102 households, 72% cultivate snap beans. Local farmers buy their fertilisers, insecticides, and seeds from local merchants in Kiangang municipality who in turn purchase their vegetable produce from them. These vegetables are then resold to big trading centres in nearby lowland province of Nueva Viscaya which ultimately bring these vegetables to the large markets in Metro-Manila. For the majority of local households who regularly experience rice deficiency, snap bean cultivation serve mainly to provide cash for purchasing additional rice outside⁶. It is also their source of cash for other necessities such as food condiments, medical expenses, basic household articles and school children's matriculation and transportation .have farming.

In present-day Duit, both family labour and reciprocal labour have remained pillars of farming labour arrangement in the village. In the author's survey (1997) of 92 farming households, 91 (99%) contribute family labour to their farms. Only one person, who derives income from ownership of several hectares of irrigated farm in the lowland and from farm equipment services in the village operates as a pure farm manager, rely entirely on hired labour to cultivate his farm in the village. In this same survey, 82 out of 92 families (89%) reported regular participation in reciprocal labour-exchange groups.

The significance of both family labour and reciprocal labour in local farming is demonstrated in the figures in Table 1 drawn from the author's survey of a sample of 125 rice farms and 115 garden plots operated by 92 households. In both the subsistence sector of rice farming and the market-oriented sector of snap bean cultivation, hired labour trails reciprocal labour and family labour in significance. Reciprocal labour comprises 62 percent of all labour input in rice farming. Hence, despite the village's shift to the double-cropping modern rice variety in the early

economic landscape observed in the lowlands, the Green Revolution and mechanisation were bound together. Thus, farm labour under these conditions was inevitably displaced.

⁶In the village of Duit, rice cultivation today as in the past is commonly for household's food consumption. The community does not significantly export rice padi outside. With the decline of sweet potatoes in swidden and its substitution by vegetable gardens, more households today, 63%, are dependent in varying degrees on purchased rice outside.

1980s, reciprocal labour continues to dominate rice farming overwhelmingly as in the pre-war and early post-war decades. Family labour (21%) and hired labour (17%) lag far behind labour exchange in rice farming. On the other hand, in snap bean farming family labour constitutes the biggest chunk of labour input (45%). But even in this commercial endeavour, reciprocal labour contributes the next biggest share (33%), and hired labour again occupies the bottom rung.

Table 1
Types of labour, by major crop

Crop	Family labour	Hired labour	Reciprocal labour	Total
Rice*	1409 person-days (21%)	1147 person-days (17%)	4235 person-days (62%)	6791 person-days (100%)
Snap Beans**	2300 person-days (45%)	1109 person-days (22%)	1705 person-days (33%)	5114 person-days (100%)

*Based on the author's survey of 125 rice farms operated by 75 households.

** Based on the author's survey of 115 garden plots operated by 82 households.

In present-day Duit there is no great divide in the allocation of reciprocal labour between the two major crops. The traditional *obbo*, which was originally employed in rice farming -- and to a certain extent to swidden farming before the War -- is strongly utilised today to serve commercial vegetable gardening as well. When commercial vegetable farming spread in the village beginning in 1981, the practise of *obbo* dominant in rice farming merely extended to the new crop. Local farmers recruited extra labour to augment family labour in the cultivation of snap beans not by labour hiring, but by employing reciprocal labour. Moreover, current deployment of reciprocal labour in the village easily alternates between rice and snap bean cultivation. It is not uncommon for a reciprocal labour group which started work in rice cultivation to end up in subsequent rounds working in each member's vegetable plots. It is a usual occurrence too that hosts of *obbo* in rice harvesting would detach two or three people from the group after midday to shift their work on the hosts' vegetable gardens. According to local informants, it is entirely up to the *obbo*'s host to shuffle the some labourers between rice and garden plots as long as all members of the work group are dismissed by five o'clock in the afternoon.

Employment of the three types of labour varies not only by crop but also by size of the total farm holding of a household. In rice cultivation, the proportion of utilisation of family labour is substantial and fairly consistent, irrespective of the farm size (Table 2). In present-day Duit, virtually every household which operates a rice farm also works on the land. As a rule, those who are unable to work due to old age or engagement in urban-based livelihood let others operate their farms in a sharecropping arrangement. Nonetheless, in commercial vegetable gardening while

the percent of family labour is also fairly consistent among farms of 24 *bettek*⁷ or less, family labour drops substantially for families with farm holdings greater than 24 *bettek*. In this group a number of households in this farm size group contribute only a token share of family labour in their garden plots, relying heavily on hired labour to operate them. On the whole, however, despite the introduction of the double-cropping modern variety and commercial vegetable gardening, the current situation in this upland village is one of stable dependence on family labour. This phenomenon is much unlike the general trend in Philippine (mostly lowland) agriculture in which, according to IRRI⁸ data, hired labour increasingly substituted for family labour during the height of Green Revolution years beginning 1966 to the mid-1970s (Boyce 1993: 148).

Table 2
Type of labour, by farm size group and by major crop

Rice						
<i>Farm size group</i>	<i>0 btk.</i>	<i>1-5 btk.</i>	<i>6-12 btk.</i>	<i>13-18 btk.</i>	<i>19-24 btk.</i>	<i>> 24 btk.</i>
Percent of family labour	22	28	14	21	19	25
Percent of hired labour	3	10	8	9	35	41
Percent of reciprocal labour	75	62	78	70	46	34

Snap bean						
<i>Farm size group</i>	<i>0 btk.</i>	<i>1-5 btk.</i>	<i>6-12 btk.</i>	<i>13-18 btk.</i>	<i>19-24 btk.</i>	<i>> 24 btk.</i>
Percent of family labour	45	61	45	52	54	33
Percent of hired labour	7	4	19	8	31	47
Percent of reciprocal labour	48	35	36	40	15	20

N = 92 hhs operating 125 rice farms and 115 garden plots.

While reciprocal labour's percentage to total labour input generally declines as the size of farm holding rises⁹, overall it occupies a dominant position in labour

⁷*Bettek* is a local measure of pondfield area traditionally used in Kiangnan, Ifugao. Six *bettek* (abbr. *btk*) is roughly equals to .20 hectares.

⁸ International Rice Research Institute (Laguna, Philippines)

⁹On the other hand, Duit data on hired labour demonstrates the opposite trend. Share of hired labour generally rises as the household's farm ownership increases. This trend is shown clearly in rice farming (Table 2). While the shares of hired labour in the total farming labour of households belonging

arrangements in rice farming and a secondary position in commercial vegetable gardening. In rice cultivation, households with farm holdings of 18 *bettek* or less have a range of dependency on reciprocal labour between 62 percent and 78 percent (Table 2). In this sector, its dominant position is maintained in all farm size groups, except in the group of households owning more than 24 *bettek*, where it is displaced by hired labour. On the other hand, in vegetable gardening, family labour dominates for all farm size groups, except among farmers without land ownership where reciprocal labour dominates. In this sector, reciprocal labour retains its secondary importance to family labour (from 1 *bettek* to 18 *bettek* farm size groups), dislodged only in farm size group above 24 *bettek* where land rich farmers depend primarily on hired labour. The present situation of reciprocal labour in Duit thus tends to support similar findings in northern Thailand in the 1980s (Ganajapan 1989: 115), in West Malaysia in the 1970s (Horri 1981: 52) and in southern Vietnam in the 1950s (Elson 1997: 164) that mutual exchange and co-operative labour have been most common among poorer villagers or lower-scale farmers.

A roughly consistent major dependence on reciprocal labour by all farm-size groups from 0 to 18 *bettek* reaffirms the point that the arrangement works easily among farms and farmers of roughly equal size and social status. These size groups in land control comprise 79 percent of all households, representing a large concentration of farmers whose size of land control and status do not greatly differ. I now turn to a discussion of this important context underpinning dominance of family labour and reciprocal labour despite the spread of modern changes and commercialisation in local upland agriculture

Dynamics of local smallholding pattern

Empirical village-level studies have noted the greater prevalence of smallholdings¹⁰ in the uplands compared to the lowlands (cf. Cornista et. al. 1986). In the upland village of Duit in particular, landholding is certainly less skewed than in Philippine lowland areas. Based on the author's survey of 100 households, only 29 percent own no farm land. This is obviously less severe compared with the lowlands, where 50-64 percent of rural families own no farm land at all (Riedinger 1995: 76). In 20 of the 29 households which do not own any farm land in the village, one or both spouses is an immigrant from other Ifugao municipalities.

Land ownership alone, however, gives an incomplete picture of the reality in the village that most households make their living by having access to a piece of farm land. In Duit, a smallholding pattern predominates (see Table 3 below). Such a pattern can be seen in Table 3 below by focusing on land control¹¹ profile in each farm size

to farm size groups from zero to 18 *bettek* ranges only from three percent to nine percent, this figures rises dramatically to 35 percent and 41 percent in the groups owning 19-24 *bettek* and more than 24 *bettek* respectively. A similar trend is evident in snap bean cultivation -- the two largest farm size groups exhibit the highest degree of utilisation of hired labour..

¹⁰ Typical farm sizes in the Philippine uplands vary. They have been estimated to be as low as one hectare in overcrowded areas, and two to three hectares in less densely populated areas (WB 1989: 22).

¹¹ On land controlled, I have adopted Benjamin White's reference to it as "a measure of the area of land to whose yields the household has access, regardless of ownership" (1976: 132). Following White's method of computation (ibid.: 126-134; see also Hart 1986: 96; Hefner 1990: 116), a household's land controlled in the case of Duit is made up of the area of land cultivated by the household as owner or mortgagee, plus half the area of land that the household has rented in and also

group and the pertinent percentage of households and land within each group. The table, the columns between land ownership¹² and land control show significant differences. The most glaring one is that while 29 percent of all surveyed households have zero farm ownership, only three percent have actual zero land control. This indicates that the number of households having no land is drastically smaller due to arrangements which do provide them access to and control of a piece of land. Moreover, while seven percent of households own lands between 31 to 40 *btk* only two percent of households actually control farm lands in this size group, indicating that some of the biggest local landowners actually have relinquished control of a significant part their owned land to other households. Percentages of owned and controlled land in certain land size groups also vary significantly. For instance, size group six to 12 *btk* comprises only 14 percent of all owned farm lands while making up 32 percent of all controlled lands. On the other hand, size group 19-24 *btk* comprises 25 percent of all owned farm lands while making up only 18 percent of all controlled lands. This indicates that in farm-size group six to 12 *btk*, percent of controlled farm land has increased more than double of what is actually owned. The reverse is true for size group 19-24 *btk*. That is, land control on the basis of ownership has lessened, indicating that many farm lands owned by the respondents in this group are actually operated by others, likely land-poor households.

Table 3
Land Ownership and Control (1997)

Size Groups (<i>btk</i>)	Ownership		Control	
	% All Households	% All Farm land	% All Households	% All Farm land
0	29	0	3	0
1-5 <i>btk</i> (.03 to .16 ha)	11	6	18	5
6-12 <i>btk</i> (.20 to .40 ha)	32	14	39	32
13-18 <i>btk</i> (.43 to .60 ha)	12	17	19	16
19-24 <i>btk</i> (.63 to .80 ha)	12	25	10	18
25-30 <i>btk</i> (.83 to 1.0 ha)	7	17	9	22
31-40 <i>btk</i> (1.03 to 1.33 ha)	7	21	2	6

N = 100 hhs

Sharecropping has been the principal mechanism for expanding land control beyond what is owned or, in the case of households with big owned lands, relinquishing land to other households. The other mechanism for this is leasehold arrangement, which is usually done in commercial vegetable cultivation. Leasehold is secondary to

half the area it has rented out (in sharecropping involving ½: ½ sharing of yield) and/or, plus 2/3 of the area that the household has rented in and 1/3 of the area it has rented out (in sharecropping with a 2/3: 1/3 sharing of yield).

¹²By land ownership in this study, I refer to the land over which a household has legal rights of ownership, use and disposal, as recognised in the community and defined by normative order on land property rights existing in the local community at that time.

sharecropping as an instrument for gaining control of land for land-poor households. Through both sharecropping and leasehold, skewness of land control is mitigated. In the same random survey by the author, aggregate size of all sharecropped-in farms and all leased-in farms comprises 24% of the total size under land control.

While sharecropping is the single most important instrument by which persons owning no land in the village are able to gain access and control over a piece of farm land in order to make a viable living, inheritance, on the other hand, is the single most important mechanism for acquiring land ownership in the village. Inheritance far outstrips land purchase as a means of acquiring land¹³. Couples who did not inherit farm land from their parents seldom accumulated enough resources within their lifetime to be able to purchase one. These couples may be people who grew up in the village, but whose parents did not have enough farms to bequeath them. Or one or both of the spouses might have migrated to the village from a neighbouring municipality. A random survey done by the author of 98 households showed that only seven of the 40 couples without inheritance to start with were able to purchase farms.

A high degree of social autonomy historically exercised by upland communities in the Philippines vis-a-vis the state in defining and determining land ownership and transfer manifest in the continuing importance of indigenous inheritance customary laws in determining local land distribution over generations. In Duit, the reproduction and the continuing strength in the last several decades of the indigenous inheritance custom based on primogeniture¹⁴ has played the major role in determining the small holding pattern since the War. This Ifugao norm of inheritance has been the most important mediating mechanism effecting a levelling trend. Contrary to the commonly held notion that primogeniture creates a family centre for assistance to poorer siblings (cf. Barton 1919: 40; Goldman 1937: 163; Dumia 1979: 10), in practice the custom has not only disadvantaged the younger siblings in terms of their possessing no land but, at least in post-war decades, it has been the very mechanism by which a large part of the local population has been “purged” from the community, unable to make a living in the village. With many without inheritance being forced out, the practical outcome of this inheritance institution is actually to counter land polarisation in the locality by “exporting” landlessness. It has served to more or less

¹³Based on the author's random survey of 69 households owning farms, 78 percent gained part or all of their current land through inheritance transfer. The aggregate size of all farms inherited outstrips the aggregate size of all purchased farms by a ratio of 1 to 3.5. Moreover, the average size of farms gained through inheritance is larger than those acquired through purchase.

¹⁴The Ifugao inheritance institution is based on the principle of primogeniture. Anthropologist Roy Franklin Barton was one of the first to observe and study this principle of inheritance among the Ifugaos of Kiangang during the first decade of the twentieth century. According to him, the Ifugao customary law of primogeniture which regulates inheritance provides that “the elder children inherit a greater proportion of the property than the younger ones, the proportion being governed by the ordinal rank of the children as to birth. If there be but one rice field, the eldest takes it” (Barton 1919: 51). If the number of children exceeds the number of rice fields, the elder children take the fields. Ifugao custom of primogeniture does not discriminate between male or female children (ibid; see also Goldman 1937; Eggan 1967; Kikuchi 1989). Among the Kiangang Ifugaos benefits of the practice of primogeniture extend to the second child since the inherited property of the male and female spouses are not united in their marriage. The first child is bequeathed the larger set of ricefields inherited by either of the two spouses; the second child gets the smaller set of ricefields inherited by the other spouse. Thus either the father or the mother's inherited property goes to the eldest child (male or female) with the rest of the kinship property going to the second child.

level land ownership and, therefore, has been a stabilising force in maintaining the dominance of smallholding among the native population¹⁵ over generations.

Based on the author's random survey of 71 couples with spouses averaging 41 years of age and with a least one spouse who was born of local parents in the village, nearly 60 percent are actually couples with the husband or wife having a birth-order rank of first or second child. This category of couples make up the majority of the native population of the village. They have managed to sustain a living in the locality based on their ownership of small farms and have thus opted to stay. At present, these couples comprise the foundation of the village's small-landholding pattern. On the other hand, those with birth-order rank of third, fourth or fifth child are usually among the land-poor couples in the village.

Strong evidence of this "pushing out" of siblings with low birth-order ranks that allows mainly those with higher birth-order rank to stay in the village as small-farm owners can be seen in another survey of the author of couples who have siblings who permanently migrated out of the village between 1950 to 1995. In this random survey of 80 couples who have at least one spouse born in the village, 48 percent have two or three siblings who have settled permanently elsewhere and who are mostly of younger age, with a birth-order rank of mostly fourth and fifth child. On the other hand, at least half of these spouses who stayed in the village are actually eldest or second-eldest child.

Although primogeniture-based inheritance has been practised by the Ifugaos of Kiangnan since before the coming of the Americans in 1900, it did not necessarily lead to major out-migration of people from the settlement. Elder informants in the village recall that before the War, local people in Duit did not migrate out in significant numbers to settle in other areas. A normal response to rice insufficiency was to cultivate sweet potato in open-access lands or on borrowed lands (private owners at that time still readily lent out parts of their woodlots or fallowed swiddens free of charge to anyone who wanted to use them for sweet potato cultivation). Such staple food cultivation on the basis of relative availability of local land and less restrictive private ownership, in effect, tied poor people to the locality by enabling them to secure their food security. Thus in the pre-war period, the primogeniture-based institution of inheritance did not lead to a "purging" of the local people without inherited farm lands.

The fact that this indigenous custom has now resulted in many people of low birth-order rank to migrate out of the village is clearly a post-war phenomenon. Changed socio-economic conditions both within and outside the village since the War led to this. Historically existing autonomy of the operations of indigenous inheritance norm has had a different outcome in the context of contemporary changes in socio-economic environment characterized by the integration of the other aspects of the community's livelihoods with the broader state and market trends. For example, after

¹⁵ Most of the present population of Duit are descendants of Tuwali-speaking Ifugaos who settled in the place long before even the American colonial administration at the turn of the century. Only about 15 percent of local households belong to the Kalanguya ethno-linguistic group, mostly from the adjacent municipality of Asipulo who started to settle and farm in the village in the early 1980s, attracted by the livelihood opportunities offered by commercial vegetable gardening.

the War, land for swidden became more restrictive and limited due to inroads of commercial coffee cultivation. With this development, persons of low birth-order rank who were left without rice farms found it extremely difficult to augment their food staple. Limited options for making a living in the village also coincided with broader state-initiated developments that favoured population redistribution and mobility in the country. Beginning in 1948 there was a dramatic rise in the rate of migration within the archipelago resulting primarily from government expansion of land resettlement projects, its public health facilities, and improvements in the transportation networks during this period (Simkins & Wernstedt, 1963: 202). Hence, under both local and external changes affecting certain livelihood resources and options, the primogeniture-based inheritance custom became both a “purging” mechanism pushing those with low birth-order rank out of the village and a stabilising mechanism for the dominance of the small-landholding pattern among people ranking high in birth order who remained in the village. This has served as one important context underpinning the contemporary dominance of family and reciprocal labour despite market-related local transformations of farming. I now turn to a discussion of the other important context also related to the uplands’ historical social autonomy -- the absence of state patronage accompanying contemporary modernising trends and commercialisation of farming in the locality.

Local agricultural change without state patronage

In rural lowland Southeast Asia, the imperatives of increasing rice production by transforming the production base of rural society and gaining greater agrarian control promoted state patronage of the rural elite. The latter were to become the political and economic agents of the state in the countryside -- overseers, conduits and implementers of the state’s agricultural policies as well as the police force maintaining peace and stability (Hart 1989: 33). In most parts of the region, the rural elite became the state’s favoured clients. From the mid 1960s, they had privileged access to the torrent of resources which flowed into the villages -- subsidised credit, inputs, licenses, guaranteed prices on farm produce, and infrastructure building projects (Elson 1997: 224; Hart 1989: 33). In some places, as in Java for example, the upper stratum increasingly became incorporated into the state machinery as salaried government officials and minor functionaries, putting them in an even better position to secure and tend “substantial material interests” (Elson 1997: 225; Husken & White 1989).

The state’s relationship of patronage to the rural elite in the dual context of increasing agricultural production and securing agrarian control had major consequences for labour relations at the village level. An examination of this relationship is central to understanding particular forms of labour relations in the locality (Hart 1989: 36). In a number of cases in rural lowland Southeast Asia, certain village-level labour patterns emerged in the context of the elite’s preferential access to state resources and, also, to a range of highly remunerative non-agricultural activities. Other changes in local patterns of labour have been related to the state’s collaboration with the rural elite to institute social control (cf. Hart 1986: 194-95, 200).

In the lowland Philippines, the rural elite became no less favoured clients of the state as their counterparts in other Southeast Asian countries during the period of the Green Revolution which started in the mid 1960s. They were also the favoured clients

during the one and a half decades of the Marcos martial law regime, whose one important political agenda underpinning its agrarian policy was to counter agrarian unrest and the Communist leadership thereof and to transform the peasantry into a mass support for its own legitimisation (Wurfel 1988: 166). The Philippine rural elite's favoured status during the Green Revolution program, particularly during its first phase, was most manifest in their preferential access to government low-interest agricultural credit under the Masagana 99 program and to technology subsidies¹⁶. The large farmers and, to a certain extent, the upper stratum of tenants were the main beneficiaries of this institutional, low-interest massive credit program which peaked in 1974-75 in the lowland agricultural areas (Wurfel 1988, 173; Esguerra 1981). Because they had privileged access to credit for purchases of inputs, they were the early adopters of IRRI seeds and consequently, had the biggest gains (Boyce 1993 :138; Fegan 1989a: 165).

State patronage of the rural elite primarily through cheap and easy government credit and other forms of capital subsidies would have the most profound effect on labour arrangements in Philippine lowland agricultural areas. The flow of government financial resources of which they were the main beneficiaries enabled them to operate wholly and primarily by means of hired labour. Labour-displacing technologies were employed by the rural elite (Boyce 1993: 151). Farm tractors, acquired by the rural elite in lowland villages through expansion of government rural credit programs, ushered in, for instance, the demise of reciprocal labour in soil preparation in many areas and its replacement by hired labour and farm machines (cf. Rosario 1980: 220; Corsico 1981: 280). Moreover, availability of credit placed the rural elite in a financially secure position, enabling them to hire farm workers instead of depending on family labour and reciprocal labour groups. A large proportion of Masagana 99 loans were used to finance hired labour (Castillo 1982: 256). By the time government institutional credit dried up in the 1980s as a result of massive loan defaults (Fegan 1989b: 165), the basic profile of labour patterns in Philippine lowland farming areas had been radically altered, manifested by the rise of hired labour and steady substitution and decline of family labour in farming (Boyce 1993: 148) and the demise of reciprocal labour exchange.

In contrast to developments in the prime agricultural lowland areas of the Philippines, since the late 1970s major agricultural changes penetrated and spread in the upland village of Duit basically without government support and without state patronage of the rural elite. Double-cropping modern rice varieties, for example, spread among farmers in the village largely through their own initiatives, relying on informal networks to acquire and experiment on effective new rice varieties. On the other hand, government assistance in commercial vegetable gardening in the form of seed dispersal and market assistance was short-lived and had only token funding.

Lack of sustained government support and related state patronage to the local elite is most evident in the absence of a government credit program oriented towards rural

¹⁶During the first phase of the Green Revolution, the rural elite derived profits and privileges in rice production. But in the later phase, beginning in the early 1980s, as rice became an unprofitable crop, the rural elite shifted to commercial activities, staying out of farming and finding niches upstream and downstream of the farm (Boyce 1993: 154; Fegan 1989b: 176-177).

producers in Kiangán or in the whole of Ifugáo at a time when such assistance was flooding the rural lowlands. In an interview with the author, the former mayor of Kiangán recalled their repeated petitions to the Ministry of Agriculture in 1981 for substantial financial assistance to support local agricultural production or the expansion of the Masagana 99 credit among the Kiangán farmers. Their resolutions were flatly rejected since upland agriculture was defined as being outside the focus of the state program, consistent with the official definition of upland agriculture being marginal and high-risk investment. Government financing institutions such as the Land Bank and the rural banks had neither the capacity nor the interest to service the demand for production loans in the uplands (Cornista & King 1988: 9).

Particularly in Duit, the elite have neither been beneficiaries of lucrative off-farm political and economic activities connected with supra-village authorities outside the village. To date, they have not enjoyed any preferential access to state resources which in fact have been scarce and marginal in most municipalities of the Cordillera. De-linked from state patronage, the village elite embraced the modernisation of agriculture -- adoption of the modern double-cropping variety and commercial vegetable gardening -- without external financial credit or capital resources to incorporate massive wage hiring and labour-displacing mechanisation¹⁷ such as that which characterised the implementation of the massive Green Revolution programme in the rural lowlands. Much as they might have wanted to, they simply did not have the external state capital support nor the large internally generated savings required to adopt radical changes in local labour patterns in the new agriculture.

Members of the village elite in Duit have had to rely only on their own petty cash savings as farming capital. The biggest labour hirers in the village have had to draw from modest savings from cash income sources outside of the village such as, for example, salary as a petty government employee, military pension of a deceased spouse, income from farming a self-owned modest-size irrigated farm in Lamut, Ifugáo,¹⁸ and occasional or regular petty dollar remittances of children working abroad as domestic help. A handful of households who acquired farm equipment such as hand tractors and threshing machines did not acquire these through loans from the banking system or through government-subsidised credits as was common in lowland farming villages. These assets were bought after long years of slow accumulation relying on various aforementioned income streams.

Lacking external capital support from the state and without self-generated large cash savings, members of the village elite have had to strategize to mobilise adequate labour to operate their farm holdings without the option of being able to offer and sustain high daily wage rates. Thus, they themselves have had to continue to participate in reciprocal labour-exchange to mobilise local labour. Recall in Table 2 that while the participation of farm-rich households in *obbo* is far less than farm-scarce

¹⁷ Based on the author's random survey of 78 farming households in Duit, for instance, in field preparation for rice farming, 46% use the *carabao* and plough; 36% turn up the soil with spades (*mungaud*), while the rest (18%) employ hand tractors.

¹⁸ Three families in the village own and manage three to seven hectares of farm lands in the plateau of Lamut. These unirrigated lands were acquired through the government resettlement program during the 1960s. In the late 1970s, the government constructed an irrigation project in the area, benefiting the farms of some owners who came from Duit. Some of them alternate between operating their irrigated fields in Lamut and cultivating commercial vegetable gardens in their small farms in Duit.

households, it is nonetheless substantial (no less than 34 percent in rice and 15 percent in vegetable gardening). The most urgent concern of local big landowners in participating in *obbo* is securing adequate labour for their field especially during crucial phases of farming.. A land-rich farmer who owns one of the two mechanised threshers in the village explains her own compulsion in joining an *obbo*:

Many people here do not want to work in another person's farm in exchange for a daily wage. They are often busy working in their own farms. But if they become indebted to you in labour (*naobbohan*) within an *obbo* group, then they feel compelled to reciprocate by working in your field. They may negotiate on the schedule, but to be sure they will come and work in your own field (Author's interview with Conchita Dulnuan, September 28, 1996).

As a consequence, the elite members' strategies in labour security have been largely circumscribed by the continuing strength of traditional labour institutions and patterns of allocation which the overwhelming majority of local farmers, comprised of poor and middle strata, have themselves also harnessed in participating in the new farming technology and market setting. It is no wonder then that even as some members of the elite have started to engage in labour-tying consumption credit to corner local labour for the operation of their fields, they themselves have had to remain active in reciprocal labour exchange in order to serve their needs of adequate labour¹⁹.

Furthermore, farmers in this upland village, unlike those in certain lowland areas of the Philippines and Southeast Asia, have not been the focus of social control in counter-insurgency operations of the state. Traditional and popular forms of everyday peasant resistance in the village directed against abusive members of the local elite have not been subjected to state-initiated intimidation and harassment programs. Thus, the strong spirit of local underclass solidarity has not been effaced. In Duit, poor and lower strata farmers' solidarity to discipline members of the village elite who are known to be "mean" and "selfish" to date remains strong. The continuing major significance of cooperative labour in production gives weight to potential community sanctions (Hall 1980: 451-452). As in the past, *obbo* has remained a convenient mechanism for this type of class solidarity and for asserting traditional economic rights and bargaining for them. As long as this mechanism remains strong, most local farmers have exercised sufficient power to counter the village elite and to give labour service to them basically in the former's own terms. The members of the local elite, while trying every possible manoeuvre in consumption credit negotiations, do not really have much choice but to be subordinated to or manipulate these traditional mechanisms. But often their room for manoeuvre is narrowly circumscribed.

¹⁹ Labour security is not only served by being able to mobilise reciprocal exchange groups on their farms when members of the village elite join *obbo*. Creditor-employers, when they join *obbo*, are often given the opportunity to counter-check directly the truthfulness of common excuses given by the farmer-clients who fail to render a labour payment on agreed-upon dates. According to farmer informants who belong to the village elite, clients who reneged on their promise to render labour service have often argued to their creditors that they could not give labour service for the day because they had to comply to their *obbo* obligations. By being active in *obbo* work themselves, creditors are able to verify easily whether the defaulting client is just making up an excuse for payment delinquency, a strong deterrent against labour payment default.

Fitting Reciprocal Labour To Market-Oriented Farming

With the spread of modern rice variety and commercial snap cultivation in the village, labour utilisation in agriculture has not only intensified, farm work has also been desynchronised. The double-cropping system in rice has caused the demise of rites-elaborated and community-sanctioned synchronised farming schedules. Further, year-round activity of most households in commercial vegetable gardening also fundamentally breached the traditional rhythm of local agriculture. The combination of labour utilisation intensification and desynchronisation of local farm work has enhanced labour's value in livelihood. Its allocation has become an important component of farmers' strategies in making a living in local farming. There is now a strong tendency among local farmers to assert control over their household's own labour time. Individual maximisation of opportunity costs in the allocation of labour shapes the labour arrangements that farmers make or enter into. The first casualty of this trend has been the traditional loose festive labour (*dang-a*) which has today come to a virtual demise. Fewer people respond and come if a household calls a *dang-a*, since they are preoccupied with a much tighter farming schedules. On the other hand, reciprocal labour exchange (*obbo*) itself has been undergoing major alterations in recent years. Local farmers have made it more attune and efficient to meet the demands of the new farming.

The size of *obbo* has reduced considerably since the 1980s. Intensified utilisation of labour and desynchronisation in local farming have made cumbersome the organisation and mobilisation of big *obbo* to attend to the more fluid and scattered labour demands of farming in the village. Moreover, small labour exchange groups have proven themselves more attuned to the demands of the new farming situation. However, specific phases in rice farming which by their very nature require bursts of energy in short periods, such as planting and harvesting, do still use the relatively larger reciprocal labour groups today. Based on the author's survey (1997) of 64 male and female respondents from different hamlets (*sitios*), all of whom participated in reciprocal labour exchange in the second crop harvest season of 1996, the average size of their groups is only 11, a far cry from the consensus of elder informants which placed the common size of a rice harvest *obbo* at 50 persons. On the other hand, *obbo* for clearing and field preparation at present has an even lower range of only eight to 10 members.

A number of local farmers are developing new strategies to enhance the efficiency of local *obbo*. These enhancing measures are part of local farmers' response to seize livelihood opportunities in a local farming context that has diversified and become more labour intensive. Part of their strategy to cope with the new farming situation is to improve the working of the traditional labour-exchange arrangement in the village by maximising working time, minimising unnecessary postponement of work, observing strict equivalence in work exchange and upgrading the average skills level within a group.

Today, the various labour exchange groups follow unwritten but clear rules of conduct pertaining to work absences by members. These rules evolved from situations that farmers working in groups faced in the last two decades as they increasingly confront competing demands on their individual labour time which often is bound to an existing reciprocal arrangement. According to farmer informants, these

rules define what kinds of work absences are considered justifiable and which ones are tabooed and counted as delinquency. Frequent absences by an abusive individual which are considered delinquencies may cause him/her to be excluded by many farmers in group formation.

A common cause of an *obbo*'s postponement of work, according to local informants, has been the inability of the would-be host to secure the means to buy meat to feed the work party. Constant postponements leave gaps in what otherwise should be consecutive days of work. Some farmers have recently remedied this problem by forming small regular *obbo* groups of only four or five members, all belonging to the same lower-scale economic status who have banded together as a reciprocal exchange group but have each agreed to bring his or her own food on all occasions. Thus, no would-be host is constrained by the cost of meat. With the frequency of work postponements thus reduced, these groups have maximised their labour by being able to operate uninterruptedly for many days.

Moreover, certain practices directed towards upgrading the standard of skills within the group have also emerged. According to local informants, unlike decades ago when anybody might send a substitute worker when he or she was not available, today members refuse to accept such a substitute if they deem the person inferior to the pace and skill in farm work of the member who sent him/her. Particularly, the *obbo* host will emphatically reject the substitute's joining the group by saying "You owe me no labour, the one who sent you owes me one." This recently emerging strict code of reciprocation among members tends to standardise work quality at a higher level. In addition, a handful of men in the village began to form an exclusive *obbo* group which boldly challenges a long-held norm and popular practise.²⁰ The obvious aim is to form a reciprocal labour group with a superior level of work skills which can finish jobs more quickly and efficiently.

Conclusions

In their drive to modernise and commercialise their farming Duit upland peasants have relied on both market and non-market mechanisms for inputs. One such key input is labour which, to a large extent, is tied to and employed through the non-market institutions of family and labour exchange groups. In this particular upland village, family and reciprocal labour have not served as obstacles to local peasants participation in market-oriented farming but have been their key assets to engage in it. Today family and reciprocal labour continue to dominate the local farming scene, far surpassing hired labour in importance. Such a trend cannot be interpreted as vestigial phenomenon or mere survival of traditional labour institutions which are on the path of an inevitable decline. Rather, it is a present-day livelihood imperative of local peasants to engage in modern and commercial farming.

Such viability of family and reciprocal labour that sharply contrasts with the common trends in lowland rural Southeast Asian farming villages can only be understood from the perspective of two important local contexts: the persistence of a small holding

²⁰ Elder informants affirm and popular community discourse has been explicit about *obbo* not being exclusionary. In the past and now, people who refuse other person's participation have been regarded as selfish and mean. Thus anyone can approach an organized group without running the risk of being denied participation.

pattern in the upland village as a result of 'exportation' of landlessness arising from the impact primogeniture-based inheritance practices in post-war conditions; and, the absence of state patronage of the local village elite. Emigration of low-birth order rank siblings since after the War has created a mass of small holders who can be characterised as "just-enoughs" and "not-quite enoughs" (cf. Geertz 1993: 97) in terms of land control, stymieing local growth of landless wage farm workers. On the other hand, lack of robust economic and political linkages to urban-based supra-village bureaucrats by the village elite have seriously constrained them in mechanising farming and expanding labour hiring. This, in a situation where reciprocal labour exchange has remained to be a strong countervailing force against the village elite's control of and monopoly on farm labour due to its potency as an organised force which can threaten boycott against abusive or unfair employers. This case thus provides counterfactual support to the view that state patronage of rural elite in Southeast Asia in recent decades has led to the demise of more egalitarian traditional labour arrangements.

Nonetheless local farmers have increasingly made important alterations on reciprocal labour arrangements to suit the requirements of flexible deployment of labour in a intensified and desynchronised farming by reducing their size. They have also incorporated in their *obbo* practices today such innovations to maximise working time and minimise unnecessary postponements and to observe strict skill equivalence in work exchange, departing from the loose and 'less efficient' arrangements common prior to market transformations. Exclusionary labour exchange groups have also recently emerged.

The case of Duit suggests that in the uplands, where indigenous communities have relatively enjoyed a high degree of social autonomy vis-a-vis the state in livelihood affairs and where massive rural development programs such as the Green Revolution have not been as intensively implemented by the government as in the lowland rural areas, market penetration and adoption of modern farming need not necessarily lead to the extinction nor decline of pre-existing non-market forms of labour. The particular terms of engagement between the local agrarian conditions and market processes have to be carefully looked into. Studying distinct contexts is important in understanding why reproduction and adjustments of family labour and reciprocal labour may be an important part of local farmers' contemporary strategy in modern and commercial farming.

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