

Implications for Agrarian Futures and the Rural Political Economy

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Patterns

- Operational consolidation into rentier-contractor formula to accommodate lumpy technology
- Retention of small farms via leasing and mortgaging in land from other small or absentee landholder, also increasingly disarticulated-rearticulated into rentier-contractor relations, with local service providers, shrunken technology and extended input-out chains
- Corporate agri-business—not yet examined (e.g. in North Bengal)

Context for these patterns (1)

- Increasing density of rural infrastructure, esp roads (state support for capital)
- Expansion and wider distribution of growth poles (GP)
- Related process of rurbanisation;
- GP hinterlands, crop changes, market access
- Fluidity of in-country migration
- Remittance income enabling leasing and mortgaging

Context for these Patterns (2)

- Rise in ag wage rates and peak scarcities
- Flight from agric: partial, full, land or labour, generational, hybridity of labour
- Consequent commodification of rural labour (groups and individually hired)
- Technical options to shrink lumpy technology (tillers/pumpsets) to match smaller plots and holdings
- Greater use of female labour (feminisation)
- Digital communications and remote land management
- Projected Decline of pop growth after peak

Permanency of evolving land tenure trends?

- New entrants via remittances/new incomes: transient/short term bolstering of small farms and family farm leasing out?
- Short term cross-subsidization of ‘non-viable’ sub-optimal small-scale production to deliver insurance subsistence?
- Eventual absorption of small scale farming into larger operational units or corporate a-b entities via leasing/mortgaging (affinity to land) prior to a full title transfer era?
- Implications for country’s geo-political economy: class, inequality, new forms of powerholding, political and welfare regime characteristics state, market, community and household)?

Agrarian political economy

- Land and *Boro lok*: remnants living off rural rents, but now diversified that wealth into urban rents, and industrial and trading, alongside rent taking from bank and offsetting risk/co-variance through overseas investments
- Such patrician classes joined by *nouveau riche*, patronized by the state and various types of comprador rents—a net of incorporation
- Separation of expanding coalitions of elites from excluded or adversely incorporated masses (small scale farmer/tenants, wage labour, alongside industrial and services working class across rural/urban)
- Emergence of contractor/trader/corporate classes hoovering up available rural profits and rents via extended input-output chains
- A rurbanised bourgeoisie controlling means of trade and services alongside acquiring dispersed rural property, albeit with land ownership (landlord or large personal farmer) a declining indicator of wealth and political leverage

Conclusion

- Returns to restructured agriculture moving away from landholding to providers of capital, technology and services
- Implications for: precarity of labour under commodified conditions, where they move from wage price makers to wage price takers, with weak state de-commodified welfare support. A welfare regime of labour wellbeing abandoned to the insecure, unregulated market
- How do such people duck and weave for livelihoods security: Faustian Bargains and adverse incorporation; Hybridity (individuals/households); protest and unionization: class in or for itself
- Implications for rural community institutions, wider democracy including civil society
- Villages as cognitive cities
- SE and East Asia?