CHAPTER III

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLDINGS AND FARMS BY AREA

In the previous Chapter, we have examined the distribution of holdings and farms in terms of lots and/or sub-lots. In this Chapter, we shall extend the examination in a more detailed manner by looking at the distribution in terms of acreage.

Like what we did previously, we shall here examine the holdings and farms or parts thereof first in Block P, S.S.; then in the S.S. as a whole; and, finally, in the S.S. and outside.

TABLE 3.1

DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL ACREAGE OF HOLDINGS

Location	Total (To the Nearest Acre)	Cumulative Total (To the Nearest Acre)
Block P, S.S.	313	313
S.S. except Block P	18	331
Outside of S.S.	153	484

From Table 3.1, it can be seen that in total the 111 holdings found in Block P and the relevant areas comprise of 484 acres. Of these, 313 acres are in Block P, 153 acres in areas outside Block P.

As areas of "S.S. except Block P" are cultivated with padi, while those of "outside of S.S." are either kampong land or cultivated exclusively with coconut, the fact revealed by this Table points out that the holders of padi-land in Block P collectively own, in addition, far too many acres of non-padi land outside of S.S. than they own padi-land in other Blocks of S.S., the exact acreage being 153 and 18 respectively. Further, out of these 111 holdings, precisely 17 actually have the bigger parts of their holdings outside S.S.

The study reveals that this phenomenon is due to a number of factors, economic and otherwise. Firstly, there is the historical incident. Some of those coconut areas around S.S. were opened up fairly long before the S.S. itself was developed. Some of the holders of padi-land in Block P had already held land and settled in these coconut areas before the opening of the S.S. When the S.S. was ultimately developed, they acquired the ownership of the padi-land in this Block and others just as an addition to their existing holdings of coconut farms. Having done so, some of them move to stay in the Block for convenience, while others remained where they were. It is thus incorrect to assume that the holders of padi-land in Block P - and for that matter in other Blocks in the S.S. - were all pioneers made up of formerly landless people. No doubt some of them were, and most of these stay in the Block itself.

Secondly, there is - or rather was - an expressed provision of the Land Office that for every lot of padi-land alienated in the S.S., a kampong land of an acre would be provided elsewhere. Whatever the motive behind this provision, the result is that the holders come to hold land outside of S.S.

Thirdly, for the holders who have acquired the coconut-land later than the padi-land in the Block, there may be perhaps some economic considerations. Compared with single-cropping padi-land, coconut farm provide a more continuous source of employment and flow of income. Having been planted, coconut farms require comparatively less annual input of labour and capital than the padi-land. With regard to the magnitude of income, there are divergent views of the interviewees as to whether an acre of padi or an acre of coconut would yield more income. Obviously, these views were influenced in one direction or another by such factors as the price of the crops, the age of trees, the rate of taxation imposed on land, the prevalence of pest, drought and flood and the productivity of the land.

Finally, it was found out in the course of this study that it is certainly more prestigeous to hold both padi and coconut land than to hold only anyone.

From the consideration of the total acreage of all holdings, we proceed to consider the acreage of individual holdings. Column 2 in Table 3.2 shows the distribution of holdings as they are in Block P in respect of the ranges of acreage shown in Column 1. The holdings range in area from as small as less than one acre to as large as nearly eight acres. But concentration is heavy on the smaller half of the ranges. Seventy-six or 68.5% of the total holdings are in the range of "three acres and above but less than four", while another 20 or 18% are in the yet smaller range of "one acre and above but less than two". All in all, 92.8% of the holdings are within the ranges of acreage up to a little less than four acres, thus leaving only about 7% to be spread in the equally large ranges of four to eight acres.

TABLE 3.2

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLDINGS BY AREA CONSIDERED CUMULATIVELY IN BLOCK P, IN S.S., AND IN S.S. AND OUTSIDE

(1) Area (In Acres)	(2) Number of Holdings in Block P	(3) Percentage		(4) Number of Holdings in S.S.	(5) Percentage		(6) Number of Holdings in S.S. and Outside	(7) Percentage	
		Absolute	Cumulative		Absolute	Cumulative		Absolute	Cumulative
Less than 1	3	2.7	2.7	3	2.7	2.7	3	2.7	2.7
1 and above but less than 2	20	18.0	20.7	18	16.2	18.9	15	13.5	16.2
2 " " " " " 3	4	3.6	24.3	4	3.6	22.5	4	3.6	19.8
3 " " " " " 4	76	68.5	92.8	73	65.8	88.3	45	40.5	60.3
4 " " " " " 5	4	3.6	96.4	6	5.4	93.7	11	10.0	70.3
5 " " " " " 6	0	0	96.4	1	1.0	94.7	8	7.2	77.5
6 " " " " " 7	3	2.7	99.1	4	3.6	98.3	6	5.4	82.9
7 " " " " " 8	1	1.0	100.0	1	1.0	99.3	5	4.5	87.4
8 " " " " " 9	0	-	-	0	0	99.3	7	6.3	93.7
9 " " " " " 10	0	-	-	1	1.0	100.3	3	2.7	96.4
10 " " " " " 15	0	-	-	-	-	-	2	1.8	98.2
15 " " " " " 20	0	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.0	99.2
20 " " " " " 25	0	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.0	100.2

We have already noticed from Table 3.1, that not much land is held in other Blocks of the S.S. It is thus not surprising that Column 4 depicts only slight differences from the situation shown in Column 2. Slight decrease in the number of holdings occurs in low acreages and slight increase occurs in the high ones; while the range itself has been pushed up to a little less than 10 acres.

Column 6, however, depicts a totally different situation. Because of the substantial acreage being held by the owners outside S.S., this Column alters the original situation depicted in Column 2 significantly. There is a significant reduction of the number of holdings in low acreages and substantial addition in the high ones. In one extreme case, the range has been pushed up to a little less than 25 acres. Nevertheless, the concentration is still found in the low acreages with 45 or 40.5% of the holdings in the range of "three acres and above but less than four" and 15 or 13.5% in the range of "one acre and above but less than two". Compared with the original 92.8%, now only 60.3% of the holdings are below four acres in area.

A number of salient features of economic and social significance are observable in this distribution. Firstly, Column 2 depicts that 76 holdings or precisely 68.5% are in the range of "three acres and above but less than four". Incidently, all of these are actually three acres each in area. This figure thus represents the number of holdings that have remained intact, viz. They are still lots of the same area and layout as those originally alienated. The remaining 28 original lots have either been subdivided or agglomerated. Of the two processes, the first far more frequent, being responsible for the creation of 27 or 24.3% of the holdings of less than three acres as compared with eight or 7.3% brought about by the second process. What is important here is that within a period of less than a generation (approximately 40 years) already about 27% of the original lots alienated have been distorted by either subdivision or agglomeration - a sufficient rate indeed to indicate the seriousness of the problem.

Secondly, as has been pointed out in the previous Chapter, there is a very unequal distribution of ownership of the land, as depicted by Column 6. Some holders own less than one acre while others more than 10. Precisely, there are as many as 22 holdings of less than three acres each. On the other end of the scale, four very large holdings share among them 62 acres or about 13% of the total acreage of all holdings. The discrepency of ownership is brought out glowingly if we compare this situation with the size of 4.4 acres, which is the average size of a holding in the area concerned. As almost all of the people living in this Block are agriculturalists, this discrepency in land ownership may give rise to great inequality in income, which is too well-known as a source of a multitude of agricultural economic and socio-economic problems to merit elaboration.

And, finally, this discrepency in land ownership may further lead to the phenomenon of landlordism and tenancy which was discussed in the previous Chapter. It may also lead to the situations of non-optimum operation and fragmentation which will be discussed as we proceed.

TABLE 3.3

DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL ACREAGE OF FARMS

Location	Total (To the Nearest Acre)	Cumulative Total (To the Nearest Acre)
Block P, S.S.	313	313
S.S. except Block P	18	321
Outside of S.S.	112	433

Although there are 137 farms as compared with 111 holdings in the Block and the areas concerned, the total acreage of farms is nevertheless smaller than that of the holdings, the former being 484 acres and the latter 433 acres as shown in Table 3.3. Of these 433 acres, 313 acres are in Block P. Of the remaining 120 acres, 112 acres are in areas outside of S.S. while only eight acres are in other Blocks of the S.S.

The pattern of the distribution of total acreage of farms among these three areas coincides with that of the holdings previously examined, in that farmers do farm - in addition to the padi-land in Block P - far more coconut areas outside S.S. than they farm padi-land in other Blocks of the S.S. Again, 17 farmers operate either larger or just as large parts of their farms with coconut outside S.S. as with padi in Block P. The explanation is simple. It was noted previously that holders of land in Block P own far more coconut land outside of S.S. than they own padi-land in other Blocks of the S.S. The situation of tenancy is almost absent in the case of padi-land. Hence, all those farmers who own coconut-land outside S.S. operate them, thereby giving rise to the large acreage of coconut farms. This phenomenon further provides reinforcement to the contention previously put forward that some of the people concerned pay just as much attention - if not more - to coconut just as they do to padi, both in the ownership as well as the operation of the land.

Having reached this stage of our discussion, it is appropriate at this juncture to briefly examine the exact nature of this phenomenon and to speculate on a number of probable repercussions

arising therefrom. We have noted that a large acreage of coconut-land is being held and operated by the people concerned in the Block. The study further reveals that, excluding the one-acre kampong which may be cultivated with coconut, there are actually 36 holders who own, and 28 farmers who operate, coconut-land outside S.S. The number could have been larger but for the unavailability of relevant information in some instances. Further, as has been pointed out, there are 17 cases in which areas held and farmed in coconut are larger or thus as large as in padi. Again, it was revealed by the study that tenancy is almost absent in coconut holdings.

These and other similar facts already discussed point out to two conclusions. Firstly, in the case of some holders and operators, not all of their attention is given to the padi-land in the Block. This may partly explain why most of them indicate the resentment towards the introduction of double-cropping in padi. Secondly, to some of them, padi-land holding and padi cultivation is certainly not the only source of income, and still to some others, not even the primary one. To make matters worse, the study indicates that there are cases where people hold and/or operate the padi-land in the Block as a means of obtaining staple food only, while their cash income is derived from coconut-growing. This is the case with most of the landlord, absentee or otherwise, most of whom as we have seen in the last Chapter are paid in kind. It may also be the case with some absentee 'giftors'.

What is important from this discussion is that there seems to be the lack of and divided attention given to padi-land in the Block, the situation of non-specialisation, and the consideration of the padi-land being an unimportant source of income or even a source of staple food only. These phenomena, besides circumstances such as tenancy and landlordism, may affect the productivity of the land owned and/or operated. They may discourage improvement and may even hamper or at least present a difficult barrier to efforts undertaken to raise the productivity, the glaring example of which is the above-mentioned resistance to double-cropping.

We now turn our attention to the distribution of acreage among the individual farms as shown in Table 3.4. Column 2 shows that as far as the areas in Block P are concerned, the farms range from less than an acre in area to slightly less than eight acres. But heavy concentration of the number of farms occurs in the range of "one acre and above but less than two" where 66 farms or 48.2% of the total number are found, and in the range of "three acres and above but less than four" where 53 farms or 38.7% are found. In total, these two ranges take up 86.9% of the total farms, leaving only 3.1% to be distributed in the other six different ranges. These two concentrations are due to the heavy frequency of farms of three acres, representing those only lots which are farmed intact; and of farms of 1½ acres, representing those lots which are equally - and perhaps most conveniently - subdivided. The exact number of the former is 53, while the latter is 45.

TABLE 3.4

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLDINGS BY AREA CONSIDERED CUMULATIVELY IN BLOCK P, IN S.S., AND IN S.S. AND OUTSIDE

(1) Area (In Acres)	(2) Number of Farms in Block P	(3) Percentage		(4) Number of Farms in S.S.	(5) Percentage		(6) Number of Farms in S.S. and Outside	(7) Percentage	
		Absolute	Cumulative		Absolute	Cumulative		Absolute	Cumulative
Less than 1	2	1.5	1.5	2	1.5	1.5	2	1.5	1.5
1 and above but less than 2	66	48.2	49.7	63	46.0	47.5	56	41.8	42.5
2 " " " " " 3	7	5.1	54.8	9	6.6	54.1	6	4.4	46.9
3 " " " " " 4	53	38.7	93.5	52	38.0	92.1	40	29.2	76.1
4 " " " " " 5	5	3.6	97.1	6	4.4	96.5	10	7.3	83.4
5 " " " " " 6	0	-	97.1	0	-	96.5	7	5.1	88.5
6 " " " " " 7	2	1.5	98.6	3	2.2	98.7	7	5.1	93.6
7 " " " " " 8	2	1.5	100.0	2	1.5	100.2	3	2.2	95.8
8 " " " " " 9	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3.3	98.8
9 " " " " " 10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	98.8
10 " " " " " 15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	98.8
15 " " " " " 20	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	99.8
20 " " " " " 25	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	100.8

From this distribution, we notice that 75 farms or 54.8% of their total are below three acres, which is the area of a lot originally alienated. This demonstrates clearly the rate of subdivision in operation that has taken place during the past 40 years or so. The distribution also illustrates that in the breaking of lots into farms, there are of agglomeration. This is attested by the fact that only four farms are of more than five acres in area, and even then all of them are less than eight acres.

Column three does not alter the situation shown in Column 2 significantly, because - as has been pointed out - only a small acreage of padi is farmed outside Block P in S.S.

On the other hand, as there is a large acreage is farmed by the people concerned outside S.S., the situation is greatly altered in Column 4, which depicts the distribution of acreage in all areas. It can here be seen that the range has significantly been pushed to a little less than 25 acres; while the number of farms in the low acreage has been slightly reduced and that in the high acreage slightly increased. The heaviest concentrations, however, are still in the same two ranges, though with smaller number of farms. The unique feature depicted by this column is the existence of two extremely large farms of between 15 and 25 acres in area each.

The distribution of farm acreage as depicted by this Table can be considered from a very important point of view, that of the economic unit of operation. The most economic size of a farm for any crop in Malaya has, so far, not been scientifically established. If established, it may perhaps vary with the variation of such factors as the crop cultivated, the nature of the land, the amount of labour and capital at the disposal of the farmer and the stage of technology applied. If at all the alienation by the Land Office of a lot of mostly three acres each for the cultivation of padi in S.S. to a man who is presumably the head of an average family, together with the expressed condition not to subdivide this lot, may be taken as an attempt towards the establishment of the most economic size of padi cultivation in this area, then from the fact presented in this Table this study reveals that more than half of the total number of farms of padi in this Block are operated at a size which is not most economic to do so - that is, not optimum size. For, 75 of the padi farms or 54.8% are below three acres in area. Likewise, the Table also shows that there is a number of farms which are likely to be larger than the optimum size. The natural economic consequence of this divergence from the most economic unit of operation is that production is not carried out in the most efficient manner, with the result that productivity per acre - both in respect of the individual farm and the whole farming area - is lower than it could have possibly been.

The same argument applies to the distribution of acreage in Columns 3 and 4, though in these cases things are made more complicated as consideration has to be given to such facts as that more than one crop are now cultivated, and that there is now fragmentation in the operation of the land.