

CHAPTER IV

OCCUPATION

This part of the study attempts to divide the population into 'economically active' and 'economically inactive' groups and to sub-divide the population in these two broad groups into their respective occupations or occupational status.¹

Those classified under farm workers, odd job workers, mixed occupation, teachers and clerks fall into the category of the 'economically active' group. The 'economically inactive' group would therefore be made up of the remainder of the population. A particularly important group which takes up this broad classification is the student group. The others are housewives or domestic workers and those too young to be attending school or be engaged in any form of economic activity. In addition, two persons above the age of 60 years have been classified as 'inactive economically'. In terms of occupational or economic status this last group is classified as 'old age'.

The classification.....'housewife or domestic work' has been adopted so as to secure consistency for the results obtained in the questionnaires for blocks C, J, O. In these blocks married females and those who are single and above the age of 10 years, who do not help in the farming activities, have been entered into either as housewives or domestic workers. In some instance married women have been classified as housewives; in other instances they are classified as domestic workers.

The term 'mixed occupation' implies that the person is doing more than one job. He may not necessarily be doing them simultaneously every-day. The best example would relate to a man employed in the D.I.D. During weekdays he would be fully occupied with the work in the Department of Drainage and Irrigation. During week-ends he would be farming his small pieces together with his wife, children and relatives if any, who may be part-time or full time workers in the farming activities. He would be necessarily needed for sowing and harvesting in particular.

The 'odd-job' worker on the other hand, has no single definite occupation, and works only when he could find a job to do. He could be self-employed or in most instances a paid worker.

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The classification of occupations and occupational status into types and by ethnic group is given in Table 14. Out of the total population 1017 persons, 539 or 53 % of the total are economically active. This percentage is exceptionally high when account is taken of the fact that 62 % of the population in the three blocks is in the 'young' age group.....below 20 years of age. The reason could be derived from the fact that in the ages between 15 and 19 only 13 persons attend school. The bulk of the others (there are 116 persons in the ages between 15 and 19), are farm workers.

Among the 539 economically active population 435 or 81.8 % are farm workers. The large size pertaining to this group forms the most interesting feature in the study on occupation and occupational status. Consequently it follows that the sawah piece/pieces operated forms/form the vital and main source of the livelihood of 125 families. Their level of living would therefore directly be influenced by the type of operation that prevail in the three blocks. This dependence on the single type of occupation is very intensified in the case of the Javanese group where out of 330 persons classified as economically active, 290 or 84.4 % are tied up solely in padi farming.

TABLE 14

OCCUPATION BY ETHNIC GROUP

Types of Occupation (1)	Ethnic Group			
	Malay		Javanese	
	No. (2)	% (3)	No. (4)	% (5)
1) Farm work	199	19.6	296	29.1
2) Housewife/Domestic work	8	0.3	22	2.2
3) Odd job	3	0.3	10	1.0
4) Mixed occupation	17	1.7	10	1.0
5) Teaching	2	0.2	1	0.1
6) Clerical	1	0.1	-	-
7) Schooling	106	10.4	110	10.3
8) Nil	110	10.8	124	12.1

(Footnote continued from preceding page)

.....by Barclay in 'Techniques in Population Analysis, N.Y. 1953

The information contained in Table 15 may help to depict the living conditions of 1017 persons in blocks C, J, O. Firstly of the 450 persons who are between the ages of 5 and 10, we are told that only 210 persons (or less than half) are schooling. They are economically inactive. Secondly among the remainder, 31 persons are too young to be attending school since they have not reached the age of 6. Thirty are obviously in the school going age, but are staying at home. The bulk of these 32 persons are girls. These persons are also economically inactive. In addition 8 persons are doing domestic work. The members of this group according to the concept used by Barclay, are economically inactive.¹ This has also been agreed upon by many economists who are writers in the field of National Income and the computations thereof. Thirdly, the 'student-group' declines with ages indicating that only the 'primary type' of education is felt 'adequate' for the child. Moreover pressed by the needs for labour resources the requirements of which are relatively large in this type of economic activity, children are relieved of their studies in school once they have completed their primary education and are aptly thought physically capable of helping in the farming activities.²

How do the above facts relate to the living conditions of the rural population? Looking back to Table 14 it will be found that only 539 persons or slightly more than half, are economically active. This means that 1017 persons are virtually living on the incomes of 539 persons. Approximately then, the returns got by a single income earner in the three blocks is shared by two persons. If the average annual income earned by a rural farmer as quoted by Datin Lady Thomson still prevails,³ (i.e. between \$60 and \$100)⁴, then the per capita income for the area under study blocks C, J, O, will be $\$ 80 \times 539 / 1017$, or \$42.

¹ See Barclay Techniques of Population Analysis J. Willey & Sons, Pg. 263-265

² I would call this a Malay 'peasantry' attitude as it seems to prevail among and therefore largely attributed to the Malay peasant class.

³ Datin Lady Thomson, The problem picture that Malaya faces, Straits Times, Tuesday Nov. 20th, 1932.

⁴ The average of which will be \$ 80/

An average income of \$40 per head of population is a low figure by international standard. Within the context of Development Economics, the area under blocks C, J, O, is under developed.¹ This is characterised by the low level of per capita income in relation to other areas, Petaling Jaya in particular.

A rising per capita income in an agricultural community is often the result of high and rising productivity. In the area under our study it has been found that the income per head of population is low. The income per head of working population is also low relative to the other sectors of the economy. This is evident from the findings of Professor Ungku Aziz, which was presented in the book..... Rencana Ekonomi dan Keriskinan, Pustaka Melayu 1959. Nor has this level of income risen to a satisfactory level in the last 10 years.² This fact could be linked up with low productivity prevailing in this area. And low productivity forms a link in the circle that is normally understood as the 'vicious circle' of poverty. In this way occupational status and population structure help to cast some light as to the conditions prevailing in many other padi areas which are subject to similar circumstances as in the area under blocks C, J, O.

¹The term 'under-developed' has been used to mean those countries with low level of per capita income in relation to the countries highly industrialised and whose economies have reached a high level of development and henceforth have higher per capita income. However the term could also be extended to areas in comparison with other areas within the same national boundary line or outside the national boundary line on the basis of income per head of population.

²The term 'satisfactory level' is ambiguous. It could well develop into a big issue especially when the Rural Development Programme is making a big headway in all parts of the country. However the term could be used on the basis of comparison with the levels attained in the other sectors of the economy, industry in particular commerce and also trade.

Yet another feature of fundamental importance associated with the area under blocks C, J, O, relates to the large use made of female labour resources in the farming activities. Out of 329 females above the ages of 9, only 30 persons are housewives or domestic workers. Another 36 persons are students and three persons have been classified under occupational status 'nil'. This means that 260 females are directly linked up with the farming activities. This number represents about 53.7 % of the total female population. This fact strongly supports the belief that for practical purposes it is difficult to separate farm operation from the family concern. A comparison with the highly industrialised communities would indicate that the large use of female resources in the agricultural sector is a symptom of low productivity or low agricultural output. For agriculture in the highly industrialised countries is highly capitalised, highly mechanised and use a lower amount of human resources, resulting in higher productivity.

Of the other types of occupation the 'mixed occupation' comes second in order of importance, followed by the other type classified as 'odd-job worker'. There are only three teachers, two of which are Malays, and 1 clerk also a Malay. It is evident from this that the 'professions' are uncommon in the area under study.

With respect to the economically inactive group the 'school going age' group predominates. But not all in the school going age attend school. However, the Malays and Javanese have almost the same number of persons attending school.

It is also evident from Table 14 that the number of Javanese housewives/domestic workers is more than the Malays. The same could be said of persons classified into the occupational status 'nil'. This difference could be attributed to the fact that the ratio of Javanese to Malays in the three blocks is about 5 : 6.

Before concluding this part of the study it is felt relevant to look into the position of the 'odd-job worker' and the problems arising therefrom. Thirteen persons have been classified under this type of occupation. In the very nature of their occupation it is most likely that their incomes are subject to fluctuations in the whole cycle of economic activity in the farming sector. Such being the case the level of income on average is low. Employment opportunities best arise, if they do, in the periods of planting and harvesting. Related to this is the fact that the outcome of the interviews seems to indicate that fishing as an odd-job occupation is rarely practised in the area.

TABLE 15

OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS BY AGE AND SEX

Age	Occupations														All Groups			
	F.W.		H./D.		O.J.		M.O.		Teac.		Clr.		Sch.		Nil		M	F
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)
0-4															92	75	92	75
5-9	4	5											77	40	29	32	110	77
10-14	22	37	2	2	1								52	34	-	2	75	75
15-19	40	55	6	4	2								11	2	-	-	53	63
20-24	34	34	4	4	1		4		2								41	38
25-29	14	25	8	8			3		1								18	33
30-34	15	24	1	1	4		4										23	25
35-39	12	25	1	1	2		3			1	1						18	26
40-44	17	15	3	3			5										22	18
45-49	14	12	1	1			2										16	13
50-54	33	15	2	2	1		2			1							36	17
55-59	10	2			2					2							12	2
60-64	10	5	2	2			2								1		13	7
Over 64	14	2			2											1	16	3

Abbreviations:

- F.W. Farm work
- H.D. Housewife/domestic work
- O.J. Odd job
- M.O. Mixed work
- Teac. Teaching
- Clr. Clerical
- Sch. Schooling

Rubber tapping does not prevail. Thus opportunities of finding an alternative work in rubber estates which has become an important source of earnings in many rural areas are non-existing. Apart from padi farming and coconut growing very few other activities are carried out at large in the nearby localities. Hence it becomes clear that the status of an odd job worker is reducible to that of an unstable income earner. Opportunities for employment that exist elsewhere, in developing areas as the trend seems to indicate, are therefore very much welcomed and attract those restless young men and women, the former in particular, who have been exposed to the high living standards of the highly industrialised societies through the principle of the 'demonstration effect'.¹

The above is an alarming realization and the occupational sector which envelops the whole economic system must be advanced (improved) to retard movement of people from one area to another which is likely to disturb the population composition which plays so vital a factor in the economic and social upliftment of the people.

Tables 14 and 15 are purposeful in that they convince us that padi farming is the mainstay of the source of living and therefore exert heavy influence on the level of living. A sample of 1017 persons in blocks C, J, O. It has earlier be noted that out of 339 persons economically active, 296 persons or 34.4 % are tied up solely in padi farming. Several inferences can be drawn from this heavy dependence on the single type of occupation. Firstly, by its very nature, padi farming is not a profitable enterprise. Run on a family basis it has never succeeded in competing with other business enterprises comparable to it. Secondly, by the very nature of its operation, related to the traditional system of marketing and distribution, the family output has never seemed to help the family in its desire to free itself from the clutch of heavy indebtedness and

¹The concept of 'demonstration effect' was presented clearly in Duesenberg in his book. See J.S. Duesenberry Income, Saving, and the Theory of Consumer Behaviour, Pg. 39.

mal-nutrition.

The facts and the implications therefrom that have so far been advanced in this study seem to point out that, besides improvement in the system of farming which many agricultural economists would advocate, or the entire shift of occupations to those largely industrial as a move towards better living conditions, it must not be entirely overlooked that factors like population check, improved nutrition, and education could become effective weapons side by side with the others in the economic upliftment of the rural people.

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