

Clifford Geertz goes further in his study of Indonesian agriculture under Dutch colonial rule and treats sharecropping as a levelling mechanism (for both work and wealth) among the Javanese peasantry (Geertz, 1963). Although later criticized for not taking sufficient account of internal differentiation among cultivators (Stoler, 1977), and for what may be termed 'ecological functionalism' (see Kanō, 1980:11-13; also ibid.:14-21 for an alternative interpretation) Geertz nevertheless seems to have illuminated an aspect of sharecropping that until then was ignored in the economic literature on the subject; namely the manner by which peasant traditional tenures devise methods of reducing the impact of peasant differentiation resulting from the uneven sizes of the holdings. "In share tenancy," he wrote then, "...the ever-driven wet rice village found the means by which to divide its growing economic pie into a greater number of traditionally fixed pieces and so to hold an enormous population on the land at a comparatively very homogeneous, if grim, level of living." (Geertz, 1963:100).

Geertz pointed out that the different statuses of "share tenant," "wage worker," and "landholding peasant," often portray different facets of labour allocation within the same peasant stratum. Moreover, the term "landlord" and "share-tenant" may be misleading, at least in the Javanese context, since the sharecropper might often be the stronger party (ibid.: 99 and note 24).

Similar patterns of overlapping categories can be observed historically in Palestine. There also the little differentiation that existed between cropper and hired worker during the mandate period has been attributed to seasonal factors (such as the fluctuations of crop yield in dry farming), and to the relations of patronage which the peasant may have enjoyed. The fact that the rural worker received a fixed wage (whether