

THE EMERGENCE OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN THE PHILIPPINES

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This article provides a study of the middle classes in the Philippines. First, the process of their emergence was examined in relation to that of Philippine industrialization, which started in the 1930s but from the 1960s progressed slowly and was accompanied by the expansion of the tertiary industries and informal sector. Then, the composition and characteristics of the middle classes, including their relatively small population size, distinctness from the lower classes, and internal diversity were analyzed. Finally, based on the data of the middle-class-centered organizations formed during the anti-Marcos struggle, their political aspects were discussed, with emphasis placed on the new pattern of political participation which appeared after the Aquino assassination.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE purpose of this article is to examine the process by which middle classes emerged in the Philippines,¹ their characteristics, and their political aspects.

Section II divides the process of emergence into four periods from their actual origins during the American colonial period to the present, and traces the way they have evolved in relation to economic policy and economic change during those four periods. The section also analyzes the composition and characteristics of the middle classes in terms of their emergence process. Section III examines the political characteristics and role of the middle classes in mainly Metro Manila, and considers the way that their emergence changed the traditional political patterns. In particular, based on the data the author obtained through participant observations and interviews regarding the August Twenty-One Movement (ATOM) and other organizations centered around the middle classes, this section focuses on their political consciousness, organization, and behavior from the time of the anti-Marcos protest movement to the present and tries to identify new developments that were not observed before the Aquino assassination.

After the middle classes played an important role in the post-Aquino assassina-

¹ In this paper, the term "middle class" and its plural form, "middle classes," are deliberately used with a clear distinction in meaning. The former is used when the social stratum in question is reminiscent of the existing middle class in Western society, while the latter is employed to connote the distinctive complex or compound social classes that are emerging in Asian countries.

tion democratization process and began to draw scholarly attention, research was carried out along the lines of modernization and the democratization of the Third World as, for example, in Samuel P. Huntington's treatment of the middle classes as a force for democratization (Huntington 1991, pp. 59-72). However, very few empirical investigations had been conducted on the relation between the Philippine middle classes and politics in which their composition and characteristics were taken into full consideration. Only recently, did Temario C. Rivera examine the middle-class involvement in politics comprehensively from national independence to the present. He indicated that since under the actual historical circumstances, the middle-class political propensities and practices could range from right-wing conservatism and radicalism to liberal and left-wing political causes, there was no distinct and predictable role associated with them (Rivera 2000, p. 2; 2001, p. 233). However, while it is a fact that segments of the middle classes have participated in such a wide range of political organizations and movements and even assumed leadership, Rivera's statement pertains mainly to political and activist elements. In contrast, the present study sheds light on the middle-class people in general who had previously been apolitical and suddenly became actively involved in the democratization struggle that arose in the aftermath of the Aquino assassination.

Finally, this article defines the middle classes in terms of occupation and prestige in the Philippine social context and divides them into three types: the "new middle class" which consists of professional and technical workers on the one hand, and wage- and salary-earning administrators, executives, and managers on the other hand; the "marginal middle class" which refers to wage- and salary-earning clerical workers; and the "old middle class" composed of nonprofessional, nontechnical self-employed workers other than those in the informal sector and the primary industries, as well as employers outside the primary industries except for those holding administrative, executive, and managerial positions.

II. THE EMERGENCE PROCESS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PHILIPPINE MIDDLE CLASSES

A. *The Emergence Process*

In the Philippines as in other countries, the middle classes emerged mainly within the process of industrialization associated with socioeconomic change. Prior to industrialization, an agrarian society had been formed under Spanish colonialism that was characterized by a two-class structure composed of a handful of big landlords and the vast majority of small peasants, with an extreme inequality in the distribution of wealth between the two classes. It was not until the American colonial period that sizable middle classes began to emerge.

1. *The American colonial and commonwealth periods*

After the colonization by the United States in 1898, the Philippine Islands began to industrialize ahead of other colonies in Asia during the period up to the outbreak of the Second World War. Due to the free trade with the United States, the Philippines initially developed a monoculture economy dependent on the United States for about 70 per cent of its foreign trade (Doronila 1992, pp. 13–15; Kurihara 1945, pp. 7–10). However, with the establishment of the Commonwealth in 1935 in preparation for national independence, efforts at industrialization among Filipinos were promoted in anticipation of the withdrawal of the preferential trade arrangements upon independence, after a period of gradual yearly increases in tariffs that would begin in 1940. In 1934, the National Economic Protectionism Association (NEPA) was founded by a group of Filipino entrepreneurs (Rivera 1994, p. 7), and the National Developing Company (NDC), established as a quasi-government corporation in 1919, was transformed into a holding company for state enterprises in 1936, followed by the establishment of state enterprises in various areas of light industries (Doronila 1992, pp. 32–34). In the private sector as well, industrial investment increased, channeled by the sugar planters and Chinese commercial capital (Takahashi 1983, p. 224). As a result, the manufacturing industries had grown to account for 11.3 per cent of the country's employed workforce by 1939 (Kurihara 1945, p. 16).

Regarding the emergence of the middle classes, it would be reasonable to assume that the number of "old" rather than "new" type members increased in the process of industrialization, for most of the manufacturing was being operated by cottage industries at that time. However, it must be recognized that the number of "new" and "marginal" middle-class elements increased considerably in the government sector, due to the dissemination of mass education, including higher education, throughout the country and the implantation of American democratic political institutions that had continued from the early stage of American rule, combined with the Filipinization of the government organizations carried out in preparation for independence. Moreover, various middle-class occupations were proliferating in Manila, the country's political and economic center. Compared to 1903, when professional service, teaching, public service, and clerical occupations had accounted for 7.7 per cent of the workforce in the City of Manila, in 1939 these four occupational categories accounted for 18 per cent in Manila and its environs (Doeppers 1984, pp. 52–53).

2. *After independence*

The Philippines gained independence in 1946, and industrialization continued to be one of its main political objectives. In the 1950s, the country embarked on full-scale import-substitution industrialization and visible results followed. The percentage of national income generated by the manufacturing sector grew from 9.2 per cent in 1949 to 15.3 per cent in 1958 (Valdepeñas 1970, p. 13), and employment in

that sector increased from 6.6 per cent of the workforce in 1948 to 11.4 per cent in 1958 (Valdepeñas 1970, p. 14). However, at the beginning of the 1960s, industrialization slowed down because of small domestic markets, shortage in foreign currency reserves associated with trade deficits, and the impasse in policy measures.

The import-substitution industrialization which had continued through the 1950s and 1960s brought about significant changes in the Philippine social structure. To begin with, there was a growth in entrepreneurship in the manufacturing sector. While there were entrepreneurs belonging to that sector who had Chinese commercial capital origins and the professional backgrounds, their dominant segment was derived from the landed class who produced cash crops for export and at the same time attempted to diversify into manufacturing (Rivera 1994, pp. 44–72). Furthermore, the percentage of agricultural workers in the economy declined from 72 per cent in 1952 to 57 per cent in 1967 (Valdepeñas 1970, p. 14), reflecting the growth of the middle and industrial working classes. When changes in the middle classes are considered in terms of employment by occupation group, it appears that the total number of professionals and technicians, administrators, executives, and managers, and clerical workers together accounted for 9.4 per cent of the workforce in 1956 and 11.5 per cent in 1965 (see Table I).

3. *The Marcos era*

The impasse met by import-substitution industrialization was addressed by a new policy of export-oriented industrialization coupled with the provision of incentives to foreign capital. The authoritarian regime of President Ferdinand E. Marcos, which began with the declaration of martial law in 1972, accelerated this approach. In addition, Marcos tried to implement ambitious development projects such as “the eleven industrial projects” and resorted to massive government loans from abroad. Furthermore, Marcos attempted to undermine the economic basis of the traditional political and economic elite who opposed him by putting their enterprises under the control of his cronies. Also, many government corporations were set up to undertake various development projects sponsored by the government and put under the management of the same group of cronies (Aquino 1987, pp. 28–29). In this process, while many of the members of the traditional elite maintained their positions by yielding to the Marcos side, new entrepreneurs also emerged.

The economy during the Marcos regime was characterized by a grand vision that failed to take off into rapid economic growth due to corruption and inefficiency brought about by cronyism. The real GNP growth rate which was 6.2 per cent per annum on the average between 1970 and 1979, began to plummet during the following decade, becoming negative in 1984 and 1985 due to the political and social upheaval that arose from the assassination of former Senator Benigno S. Aquino, Jr. in August 1983. As for the economic structure, although the manufacturing sector grew in the former half of the 1970s due to the increase in the export of light indus-

TABLE
EMPLOYED PERSONS BY

Year	Professional, Technical, and Related Workers	Adminis- trative, Executive, and Managerial Workers	Clerical Workers	Sales Workers	Service Workers	Agricultural, Animal Husbandry, and Forestry Workers; Fishermen and Hunters
1956	2.8	4.6	2.0	5.9	7.0	58.8
1960	2.8	3.8	2.5	5.2	6.6	61.0
1965	3.7	4.3	3.5	6.7	8.3	56.2
1971	5.6	1.4	3.6	11.3	9.1	50.1
1980	6.4	1.0	4.5	10.2	7.6	51.1
1985	6.0	0.9	4.2	12.9	8.3	48.4
1990	6.2	1.2	4.4	13.4	9.2	44.5
1995	5.6	1.6	4.3	14.0	9.0	43.7
2000	5.8	2.3	4.6	15.5	10.8	37.0

Source: National Statistical Coordination Board (National Economic and Development Authority),

trial products, the impact on the transformation of the overall industrial structure was negligible (Fukushima 1989, pp. 25–26). In terms of employment by industry, after the manufacturing sector reached a peak in 1970 with an 11.9 per cent of the employed workforce, it continued to decline slightly, dropping below 10 per cent in 1985. On the other hand, the declining percentage of employment in the primary industries was continuously absorbed by the tertiary industries (see Table II). Especially in Metro Manila, which was created in 1975, the share of the workforce employed in the tertiary industries increased markedly, reaching a 72.7 per cent figure in 1985 (see Table III). Within this process, the urban informal sector expanded by absorbing the surplus rural workforce. As for employment by occupation group, the share of professionals and technicians, administrators, executives, and managers, and clerical workers making up the new and marginal middle classes remained almost unchanged, fluctuating around the 11 per cent figure (see Table I).

4. *The post-Marcos era*

The “people’s power revolution” of February 1986 restored democratic government under President Corazon C. Aquino. Crony capitalism was dismantled, and many government corporations were privatized. From that time, the economic policy was characterized by deregulation and trade liberalization in response to similar trends in the international economic system as well as the continuing efforts to attract foreign capital.

The economic performance following redemocratization was not satisfactory due to the political instability during the Aquino administration, but became stabilized

I

MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUP

(%)

Workers in Transport and Communication Occupations	Miners, Quarrymen, and Related Workers	Craftsmen, Production Process Workers, and Related Workers	Manual Workers and Laborers	Production and Related Workers, Transport Equipment Operators and Laborers	Occupation Not Adequately Defined or Reported	Total
1.9	0.4	13.9	2.2		0.5	100.0
2.2	0.3	13.3	1.9		0.5	100.0
2.7	0.1	12.6	1.5		0.4	100.0
4.1	0.2	12.6	1.8		0.2	100.0
				19.2	0.0	100.0
				19.3	0.0	100.0
				20.6	0.4	100.0
				21.7	0.1	100.0
				23.7	0.1	100.0

Philippine Statistical Yearbook, various years.

under Fidel V. Ramos's presidency (1992–98). Between 1988 and 1997, the real GNP growth rate averaged 4.1 per cent per year. Then the economy was adversely affected by the Asian financial crisis and the political upheaval where President Joseph Estrada, who had been elected in 1998, was ousted and the administration of new President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo was inaugurated in January 2001. From 1986 to the present, the declining shares of the primary industries in both GDP and employment were absorbed by the tertiary sector, while the manufacturing sector figures remained for the most part unchanged. This trend continued from the Marcos era. Regarding employment by occupation group, the percentage of the new and marginal middle-class occupations increased only slightly (see Table I).

B. *Characteristics of the Philippine Middle Classes*

The nature of the Philippine industrialization and emergence process of the middle classes described above have exerted a considerable influence on their composition and characteristics. Due to the stagnation of industrialization, to begin with, the ratio of the middle-class population to the total population has remained relatively low. According to the labor and employment statistics of 1995 cross-classified by occupation and employment status (see Table IV), the new middle class accounted for about 6.7 per cent of the total workforce with professional and technical workers on the one hand, and wage- and salary-earning administrators, executives, and managers on the other hand, accounting for 5.6 and 1.1 per cent, respectively. The marginal middle class (wage- and salary-earning clerical workers) in turn, accounted for 4.3 per cent. In addition to this total of 11.0 per cent, the figure for the

TABLE II
EMPLOYED PERSONS BY MAJOR INDUSTRY GROUP

Year	Agriculture, Fishery, and Forestry	Mining and Quarrying	Manufac- turing	Construction	Electricity, Gas, and Water	Wholesale and Retail Trade	Transporta- tion, Storage, and Communi- cation	Financing, Insurance, Real Estate, and Business Services; Community, Social, and Personal Services	Industry Not Adequately Defined or Reported	Total
1956	59.0	0.4	12.5	2.6	0.3	10.4	3.0	11.2	0.6	100.0
1961	60.6	0.3	11.3	2.5	0.2	9.6	3.1	11.9	0.4	100.0
1970	53.7	0.4	11.9	3.9	0.3	7.4	4.4	16.4	1.6	100.0
1975	53.5	0.4	11.4	3.1	0.3	11.2	3.4	16.5	0.3	100.0
1980	51.4	0.6	11.0	3.6	0.4	10.1	4.5	18.4	0.0	100.0
1985	49.0	0.6	9.7	3.5	0.4	13.2	4.7	18.9	0.0	100.0
1990	45.2	0.6	9.7	4.3	0.4	14.0	5.0	20.7	0.1	100.0
1995	44.1	0.4	10.0	4.8	0.4	14.6	5.8	19.9	0.1	100.0
2000	37.4	0.4	10.1	5.1	0.4	16.5	7.3	22.7	0.0	100.0

Source: Same as Table I.

TABLE III
EMPLOYED PERSONS BY MAJOR INDUSTRY GROUP (METRO MANILA)

Year	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Mining and Quarrying	Manufacturing	Construction	Electricity, Gas, and Water	Wholesale and Retail Trade	Transportation, Storage, and Communication	Financing, Insurance, Real Estate, and Business Services; Community, Social, and Personal Services	Industry Not Adequately Defined or Reported	Total	No. of Employed Persons (1,000 Persons)	
1977	1.5	0.6	24.6	7.4	1.1	16.0	8.9	39.3	0.6	100.0	1,792
1982	1.6	0.2	24.0	4.6	1.3	18.6	8.8	40.9	0.0	100.0	1,999
1985	1.3	0.1	19.8	6.0	0.6	22.7	9.6	39.8	0.1	100.0	2,121
1990	1.4	0.1	20.2	6.8	0.8	20.5	8.7	41.4	0.1	100.0	2,718
1995	1.5	0.1	18.7	7.6	0.4	20.7	10.9	40.4	0.0	100.0	3,115
2000	1.0	0.1	18.2	6.0	0.5	22.6	11.1	40.5	0.0	100.0	3,542

Source: Same as Table I.

TABLE
EMPLOYED PERSONS BY MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUP, MAJOR

	Profes- sional, Technical, and Related Workers	Adminis- trative, Executive, and Managerial Workers	Clerical Workers	Sales Workers	Service Workers
Agriculture, fishery, and forestry	14 (0.05)	5 (0.02)	16 (0.06)	16 (0.06)	26 (0.10)
Mining and quarrying	2 (0.01)	2 (0.01)	2 (0.01)	1 (0.00)	2 (0.01)
Manufacturing	71 (0.28)	64 (0.25)	120 (0.47)	90 (0.35)	83 (0.32)
Construction	42 (0.16)	8 (0.03)	21 (0.08)	4 (0.02)	12 (0.05)
Electricity, gas, and water	10 (0.04)	7 (0.03)	22 (0.09)	7 (0.03)	11 (0.04)
Wholesale and retail trade	21 (0.08)	17 (0.07)	128 (0.50)	3,320 (12.93)	86 (0.33)
Transportation, storage, and communication	21 (0.08)	58 (0.23)	163 (0.63)	10 (0.04)	41 (0.16)
Financing, insurance, real estate, and business services	71 (0.28)	46 (0.18)	190 (0.74)	62 (0.24)	128 (0.50)
Community, social, and personal services	1,177 ^b (4.58)	200 (0.78)	468 (1.82)	72 (0.28)	1,952 (7.60)
Industry not elsewhere classified	1 (0.00)	1 (0.00)	—	—	1 (0.00)
Total	1,430 (5.57)	408 (1.59)	1,130 (4.40)	3,582 (13.95)	2,342 (9.12)
Employers	13 (0.05)	59 (0.23)	4 (0.02)	164 (0.64)	35 (0.14)
Self-employed ^a	102 (0.40)	74 (0.29)	25 (0.10)	2,655 (10.34)	353 (1.37)
Wage and salary workers	1,316 (5.13)	276 (1.07)	1,101 (4.29)	762 (2.97)	1,956 (7.62)
Of which:					
Worked for government / government corporation	816 ^c (3.18)	172 (0.67)	379 (1.48)	13 (0.05)	379 (1.48)

Source: Calculated by the author using data from Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics, *of Labor Statistics* (Manila).

Note: Figures in parentheses denote percentages. ^a Includes unpaid family workers. ^b Includes

IV

INDUSTRY GROUP, AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS, 1995

			(1,000 persons)				
Agricultural, Animal Husbandry, and Forestry Workers; Fishermen and Hunters	Production and Related Workers, Transport Equipment Operators and Laborers	Occupations Not Elsewhere Classified	Total	Employers	Self-Employed ^a	Wage and Salary Workers	
						Total	Of Which: Worked for Government/ Government Corporation
10,940 (42.61)	130 (0.51)	—	11,147 (43.41)	538 (2.10)	8,252 (32.14)	2,356 (9.18)	27 (0.11)
1 (0.00)	96 (0.37)	—	107 (0.42)	2 (0.01)	25 (0.10)	79 (0.31)	3 (0.01)
18 (0.07)	2,164 (8.43)	7 (0.03)	2,617 (10.19)	75 (0.29)	676 (2.63)	1,866 (7.27)	23 (0.09)
10 (0.04)	1,203 (4.69)	1 (0.00)	1,302 (5.07)	10 (0.04)	148 (0.58)	1,144 (4.46)	25 (0.10)
2 (0.01)	54 (0.21)	—	114 (0.44)	1 (0.00)	6 (0.02)	106 (0.41)	34 (0.13)
20 (0.08)	174 (0.68)	2 (0.01)	3,767 (14.67)	151 (0.59)	2,651 (10.32)	965 (3.76)	10 (0.04)
5 (0.02)	1,179 (4.59)	1 (0.00)	1,477 (5.75)	40 (0.16)	505 (1.97)	932 (3.63)	43 (0.17)
1 (0.00)	35 (0.14)	2 (0.01)	535 (2.08)	10 (0.04)	40 (0.16)	484 (1.88)	35 (0.14)
29 (0.11)	687 (2.68)	14 (0.05)	4,600 (17.91)	66 (0.26)	604 (2.35)	3,930 (15.31)	1,841 ^c (7.17)
—	8 (0.03)	2 (0.01)	13 (0.05)	1 (0.00)	5 (0.02)	8 (0.03)	—
11,026 (42.94)	5,730 (22.32)	29 (0.11)	25,677 (100.00)	894 (3.48)	12,912 (50.29)	11,870 (46.23)	2,041 (7.95)
536 (2.09)	84 (0.33)	1 (0.00)	894 (3.48)				
8,244 (32.11)	1,457 (5.67)	4 (0.02)	12,912 (50.29)				
2,246 (8.75)	4,189 (16.31)	25 (0.10)	11,870 (46.23)				
40 (0.16)	232 (0.90)	10 (0.04)	2,041 (7.95)				

Philippine Industry Yearbook of Labor Statistics (Manila), 1996 and 1999 eds.; idem, 1995 *Yearbook*

676,000 school teachers. ^c Includes 407,000 public school teachers.

old middle class was about 10 per cent: the nonprofessional, nontechnical self-employed people outside the primary industries constituted 17.8 per cent² of the workforce with about half of them being considered to belong to the informal sector, while the old middle-class type employers accounted for 1.1 per cent.³ Also, while the share of government sector employment in the total working population was only 8.0 per cent, 53.8 per cent (half of which were public school teachers) of the new middle class and 33.5 per cent of the marginal middle class were employed in the government sector. This high proportion of the middle-class engagement in the government sector relative to the private sector did not decrease because of the industrial stagnation. In terms of geographical distribution, the middle classes have been heavily concentrated in big cities, especially Metro Manila. Of the employed workforce in Metro Manila which accounted for 12.1 per cent of the national total in 1995, 10.5 per cent consisted of professional and technical workers, 3.8 per cent of administrators, executives, and managers, and 10.9 per cent of clerical workers (see Table V).

Moreover, since the middle classes began to emerge a comparatively long time ago, and their percentage in the population has not been changed significantly over the last couple of decades, a high level of middle-class reproduction can be expected. According to a recent survey conducted in Metro Manila by Bautista et al. (1998), while 25.0 per cent of the marginal middle class and 22.3 per cent of the old middle class had either a working-class or agricultural-class origin, in the case of the new middle class, only 16.7 per cent of the administrators and 6.5 per cent of the professionals had such class origins. Practically the remaining part had a middle-class origin. Furthermore, 42.5 per cent of the old middle class, 37.0 per cent of the administrators, and 34.8 per cent of the professionals, let alone 46.0 per cent of the marginal middle class, all had a marginal-middle-class origin (see Table VI). The above data indicate that while there has been a relatively high social mobility among the different subcategories, the middle classes as a whole have become fairly distinct from the working class and agrarian population.

However, although they are distinct from the lower classes, they are not necessarily homogeneous. In fact, the middle classes are composed of diverse elements. Most importantly, the income differentials within them are so wide that it is difficult to characterize the middle classes in terms of income. This is because a large share of the economy is occupied by the tertiary industries, a large part of which is made up of the labor-intensive, low-productive informal sector, and because there are huge income differentials even within the same occupation groups, including those of the middle classes, across different subsectors (Bautista 1997, pp. 5–6). Furthermore, the salaries of the public school teachers and clerical government workers are con-

² $17.8 = (0.29) + (0.10) + (10.34) + (1.37) + (5.67) + (0.02)$.

³ Employers outside the primary industries except for those holding professional, technical, administrative, executive, and managerial positions. $1.1 = (0.02) + (0.64) + (0.14) + (0.33) + (0.00)$.

TABLE V
EMPLOYED PERSONS BY MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUP (METRO MANILA)

Year	Professional, Technical, and Related Workers	Administrative, Managerial, and Executive Workers	Clerical Workers	Sales Workers	Service Workers	Husbandry, and Forestry Workers; Fishermen and Hunters	Agricultural, Animal Related Workers, Transport Equipment Operators and Laborers	Production and Related Workers	Occupation Not Adequately Defined or Reported	Total
1977	10.6	3.7	11.6	12.8	20.5	1.5	38.3 ^a	1.0	100.0	
1982	13.4	3.0	15.6	17.8	17.2	1.5	31.5	0.0	100.0	
1985	9.5	3.5	11.8	21.1	19.3	1.2	33.5	0.1	100.0	
1990	10.6	3.0	11.1	19.4	18.4	1.3	34.5	1.7	100.0	
1995	10.5	3.8	10.9	19.5	20.2	1.5	33.5	0.1	100.0	
2000	8.8	5.2	10.2	20.8	21.9	0.9	32.1	0.1	100.0	

Source: Same as Table I.

^a Originally reported separately as communications-transport, production line workers, and miners.

TABLE VI
INTERGENERATIONAL CLASS MOBILITY (METRO MANILA)

(%)

	Class of Interviewee				
	Adminis- trators	Professionals	Merchants/ Entre- preneurs	White-Collar Employees	Blue-Collar Workers/ Agricultural Workers
Class of father of interviewee:					
Administrators	11.1	4.3	6.5	4.8	5.6
Professionals	16.7	26.1	2.8	5.3	0.0
Merchants / entrepreneurs	18.5	28.3	25.9	18.9	44.4
White-collar employees	37.0	34.8	42.5	46.0	33.3
Blue-collar workers / agricultural workers	16.7	6.5	22.3	25.0	16.7
Total (sample size)	100.0 (54)	100.0 (46)	100.0 (247)	100.0 (187)	100.0 (18)

Source: Bautista et al. (1998, p. 17) as quoted in Hsiao and Wang (2000, p. 7).

siderably lower than those being paid in the private sector. Therefore, since income determines every aspect of consumption and wealth is the most important measure of social prestige in the Philippines, each occupation group is composed of diverse rather than homogeneous elements. As a result, not only are the new, old, and marginal middle classes different from one another, but also each of the three categories itself is heterogeneous.

III. THE MIDDLE CLASSES AND POLITICAL CHANGE

A. *Before the Aquino Assassination*

Philippine politics before martial law can be characterized by oligarchic control under the formality of American-style democratic institutions. It was structured by vast pyramidal networks of patron-client relations extending from a relatively small number of powerful politicians who were big landlords and capitalists through political and other leaders of the provincial, municipal, and village levels until finally reaching down to the ordinary peasants and workers. The Nacionalista Party and the Liberal Party, which alternately came into power, were nationwide electoral coalitions which mobilized these networks cutting across social classes to get votes and were practically identical in social, occupational, and regional sources of support as well as policies. They were formed not on the basis of ideology or platform but for the purpose of particularistic distribution of spoils through dyadic relations in accordance with each individual's contribution to an election victory (Landé 1965, pp. 9–110).

The major challenge to such traditional politics came from the communist camp

that drew popular support from radical peasant and labor movements. In the background of this challenge lay the breakdown of patron-client relations due to socio-economic change and the formation of peasant and labor organizations along class lines. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, noncommunist forces that were critical of the government such as the Federation of Free Farmers, Philippine Democratic Socialist Party (PDSP), and Kapulungan ng mga Sandigan ng Pilipinas (KASAPI), also had gained increasing support of peasants, workers, and students, and were demanding political and economic reform.

The middle classes prior to martial law, except for those intellectuals and student activists deeply involved in communism and other political movements, were for the most part submerged in the patron-client networks with no distinct political demands of their own as a whole. Within the process of industrialization after independence, entrepreneurs did appear from the middle classes (Carroll 1965), but most of them were already part of the elite and stayed within traditional politics rather than forming a political force of their own. Also in postindependence local politics, there was an increase in the number of city and municipal mayors hailing from the middle classes instead of traditional members of wealthy, prominent families (Machado 1974), but they also maintained their political positions within the networks of the two major political parties. Even the government employees, including those belonging to the middle classes were incorporated into the patron-client relations, for the civil service was penetrated with the spoils system.

In 1972, Marcos declared martial law under the pretext of a communist threat, and consolidated his power base centered around the military. He cracked down on his opponents, put the economy under the control of his cronies, and appointed technocrats to the major government posts. When the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (KBL) was organized as the party in support of Marcos shortly before national elections were resumed in 1978, the majority of the traditional politicians joined it, while others formed some opposition parties. Among the nontraditional anti-Marcos forces were the rapidly growing Communist Party, the KASAPI and the PDSP which went underground for legal anti-Marcos activities were practically impossible, and organizations of human rights activists. In this situation, while a small activated portion of the middle classes joined the anti-Marcos forces, the majority of them as well as the people in general acquiesced.

B. *After the Aquino Assassination*

Under the slogan of “new society,” the Marcos regime at the beginning gave hopes for the restoration of peace and order, economic development, and agrarian reform. However, as its negative aspects including human rights violations, political corruption, and economic stagnation became apparent, the regime lost popular support. The assassination of former Senator Aquino, the arch political enemy of Marcos, on August 21, 1983, changed the political situation dramatically. Marcos

lost all his credibility and a serious economic crisis occurred. A massive protest movement arose especially in Metro Manila and staged various forms of frequent mass action. Many ordinary citizens, including members of the middle classes who had hitherto been apolitical joined the protest movement. While waging a leadership struggle with one another, the different anti-Marcos forces continuously coalesced and recombined to form anti-Marcos coalitions. When the Justice for Aquino, Justice for All (JAJA) was formed in September, most of the nontraditional opposition participated in it. Then in January 1984, on the initiative of Agapito A. Aquino, a younger brother of the murdered former senator, *Kongreso ng Mamamayang Pilipino (KOMPILO)* was formed for the purpose of bringing all the anti-Marcos forces together and was joined by even traditional opposition parties. However, the anti-Marcos camp split over the issue of participation in the national legislature (*Batasang Pambansa*) elections to be held in May: the majority supported a boycott of the elections and formed the *Coalition of Organizations for the Restoration of Democracy (CORD)* by taking over most of the member organizations of JAJA; the traditional opposition parties decided to put up candidates; and some others organized the *National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL)*. After a while, in a move to develop a more tightly organized anti-Marcos coalition, *Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN)* was founded in May 1985. However, the social democrats and liberal democrats who could not accept the dominance of the communists in the organization refused to join BAYAN, and in August formed *Bansang Nagkaisa sa Diwa at Layunin (BANDILA)*. Then BANDILA supported the Cory Aquino for President Movement, and contributed significantly to the Aquino campaign in the special presidential election of February 1986, along with traditional opposition parties. *Bagong Alyansang Makabayan*, on the other hand, boycotted the election in line with the Communist Party. The election was extremely fraudulent, and invited strong protests from various quarters of the society, throwing the country into chaos. Finally, the Minister of Defense Enrile, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Ramos, and the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) defected from Marcos and joined forces with the people, who were organized around BANDILA. As most of the remaining military defected, Marcos was forced to seek refuge in the United States. This was the so-called people's power revolution.

During this period, the middle classes undoubtedly played their most significant political role in Philippine history. Although we cannot ignore the middle-class people including the cronies and technocrats who sided with Marcos on the one hand,⁴ and those who avoided direct political involvement on the other hand, a large segment of the middle classes actually participated in the organizations forming the protest movement and some of the middle-class people assumed the movement's

⁴ For example, the staff members of the Ministry of Human Settlement headed by Imelda Marcos were mobilized for Marcos's campaign in the special presidential election.

leadership together with anti-Marcos capitalists. Around them were waves of unorganized people who supported democratization and frequently participated in the demonstrations. It must be noted, however, that, in spite of the active middle-class involvement, the protest movement leading to the “people’s power revolution” was not a middle-class movement, in that it drew support from all social classes and sectors.⁵

Then, how are the middle classes related to the different political forces that took part in the anti-Marcos struggle? At least, most of those who were organized into the protest movement distinguished themselves from the traditional opposition parties. The term “new politics” became fashionable among them and was used to reject “traditional politics” characterized by corruption and nepotism. At first, they rose up only to overthrow the Marcos regime in support of democratization without having any clear ideological concept. However, they were forced to take a stand in the midst of the leadership struggle within the process of alliance among the different anti-Marcos forces. As a result, except that organizations of businessmen tended to promote liberal democracy, there was no correspondence between the middle classes as a whole, as well as other social classes, on the one hand and any single political stance on the other hand. It was clear that both BAYAN and BANDILA were joined by organizations of all the different classes.

Despite the fact that the protest movement drew support from all the social classes, the organizations that the middle classes joined were not formed on the basis of patron-client relations characteristic of traditional political parties. Rather, they were organized into a large number of relatively small voluntary groups called “cause-oriented” groups based on networks of dyadic relationships.⁶ The memberships of these groups were either confined to a specific social class or cutting across class boundaries. In the former case, however, their memberships were neither based on class consciousness nor developed out of horizontal class solidarity (rather expansion tended to weaken organizational cohesion), while in the latter their unwillingness and inability to resort to the traditional means of providing particularistic rewards prevented their memberships from expanding into a pyramidal structure. Also in the latter case, although the members belonged to different social classes, they developed comradeship in which everyone was on a first name basis instead of superordinate-subordinate relationships. A large number of such voluntary groups called cause-oriented groups were the main building blocks of the anti-Marcos

⁵ Marcos also had supporters in all the classes. Whenever the distribution of resources is carried out mainly through particularistic networks which cut across social classes, it would be a mistake to characterize any class as either proestablishment or antiestablishment. This is because within each class there are always people who are benefiting from the establishment and those who become alienated and dissatisfied.

⁶ For example, of the 102 organizations that joined BANDILA at its inception, at least 37 organizations comprised of 100 members or less, and in at least 46, the membership was 200 or less (Kimura 1995, pp. 24–26).

coalitions. Because of their relatively small population size and lack of homogeneity and class solidarity beyond personalistic relationships, whenever they took political action, the middle classes had to join forces with other classes either within an organization or at a coalition level.

For example, the ATOM, one of the most influential cause-oriented groups within the protest movement, was organized immediately after the Aquino assassination by Agapito Aquino together with his close friends (mainly classmates from the Ateneo de Manila High School class of 1955) and some employees of the company he owned. At first, the membership of this group was limited to Aquino's personal friends and acquaintances who were mostly capitalists, top corporate managers, and professionals. After a while, in order to expand its organization, ATOM decided to recruit members more openly, resulting in a membership of around 300, whose class backgrounds were varied and no longer limited to the elite or new middle class. Nonetheless, except for those who were recruited when they participated in the demonstrations led by ATOM, the new members joined the group through some personal relationship with other members. In April 1985, the ATOM split into half over the issue of BAYAN. The anti-Aquino group (later named SAGIP) participated in BAYAN and the pro-Aquino half later joined BANDILA. Just after the "people's power revolution" of February 1986, the ATOM had 114 members with the following class backgrounds: 4 were capitalists (3.5%), 34 belonged to the new middle class (29.8%), 7 to the old middle class (6.1%), 39 to the marginal middle class (34.2%), 22 to the working class (19.3%), and the class backgrounds of the remaining 8 members were not identified (7.0%). As for their educational backgrounds, 7 had completed graduate school (6.1%), 69 were college graduates (60.5%), 22 had some college education (19.3%), 11 were high school graduates (9.6%), and 5 had not finished high school (4.4%). Furthermore, at least 13 members (11.4%) were practically unemployed when they joined the ATOM.⁷ It would have been difficult to act as a regular member of the group that staged demonstrations frequently on week days, unless one had been a capitalist, executive, self-employed worker, top manager, professional, employee of those who supported the anti-Marcos movement, student, or unemployed who could afford the time. Also, two members were professionals working for the then government-owned Philippine Airlines and one was an employee of the then crony-run Delta Motors, indicating that the post-assassination anti-Marcos movement was conducted out of moral outrage that transcended personal interests.

Other influential cause-oriented groups active under BANDILA included Manindigan!, AWARE (the Alliance of Women for Action toward Reform), and SANDATA (Sandata ng Bayan Laban sa Kahirapan). Manindigan! was founded by a small group of close associates including well-known businessmen such as Jaime

⁷ The social classes of the unemployed persons were determined based on their last employment.

Ongpin, with about 150 members at its peak, who were limited to businessmen, corporate managers, and professionals recruited mainly through personal networks.⁸ The Alliance of Women for Action toward Reform was an organization of about 25 women who were mostly professionals and wives of businessmen.⁹ The Militant and Responsible Involvement of Assumption Alumnae (MARIA),¹⁰ another women's group composed of about 50 members who were graduates of the same college, was among many other small groups whose memberships were limited to one class. On the other hand, SANDATA was another example of an organization like ATOM, whose membership cut across social classes. It was first formed by Teofisto Guingona, Jr. together with his friends who were businessmen and professionals, then expanded to include as many as 200 members recruited from the urban poor sector.¹¹

In February 1986, when the Aquino administration was formed, many leaders of the anti-Marcos movement, with the exception of the communist forces that boycotted the election, were appointed to key government positions including cabinet posts. At that time, except for those of the former opposition parties, most of the traditional politicians who had joined Marcos' KBL were alienated from the government and lost their political influence. As a result, leaders of the protest movement centered around BANDILA were able to enjoy political power to the extent they could never have attained under any other circumstances; and many members of their organizations also joined the government (Kimura 1995, pp. 6–8).

However, in 1987, when the new constitution was ratified and congressional elections were held, the traditional political forces once again came to the forefront, as many politicians who were previously on the Marcos side turned their allegiance to President Aquino's ruling coalition and were elected. Then, for this reason and due to the impact of series of coup attempts by a segment of the military, the Aquino administration became more conservative, and the former protest movement leaders were gradually removed from key positions in the government. Although restored Philippine democracy was stabilized by the time the Ramos administration was inaugurated in 1992, it resembled democracy during the pre-martial-law period in many aspects, because the "people's power revolution" did not bring about any significant change in the Philippine class structure or power relations among classes. Elections were dominated by candidates of the traditional parties, while the leftist forces, including those under the Communist control, had only limited electoral success in a few provinces.

⁸ Cited from interviews with Jake Lagonera (March 4, 1986) in Quezon City, and Alberto Lim (January 9, 1991) in Pasay City.

⁹ Cited from an interview with Yet Sevelino (March 1, 1991) in San Juan.

¹⁰ Cited from an interview with Tess Baltazar (January 11, 1991) in Makati.

¹¹ Cited from interviews with Edith Caingles (February 18, 1990) in Quezon City, and Jojo Sanchez (February 8, 1991) in Quezon City.

After the “revolution,” as democracy was restored and the political situation normalized, the ordinary citizens, including those belonging to the middle classes, returned to normal life, distancing themselves from political activism. Many of those who had belonged to the organizations that played leading roles in dismantling the Marcos regime and then joined the government, tried to resume their political campaign, after they were alienated from the Aquino administration’s rightward shift. But, they could no longer mobilize the general public. Also in the elections, they had neither the organizational nor vote-getting capability to match the traditional political parties. By 1992, as BANDILA became inactive and virtually dissolved, most of the cause-oriented groups born in the midst of the anti-Marcos struggle lay dormant or disappeared without having new objectives.

However, a certain pattern of political participation took hold where citizens are mobilized through many voluntary groups and express their political will when specific issues arise, as seen at times of the series of coup attempts during the Aquino regime, the ratification of the military bases agreement, and aborted constitutional amendment during the last years of the Ramos presidency. The pattern is characterized by single-issue-oriented ad hoc coalitions made up of different political organizations and many voluntary groups led by businessmen and the middle classes. The number and the combination of the organizations and groups that form a coalition vary depending on the nature of the issue at hand. Many of such voluntary groups are formed ad hoc around specific issues and are characterized by organizational forms similar to the cause-oriented groups of the time of the anti-Marcos struggle. In addition, the number of NGOs, most of which are run mainly under the middle-class leadership, increased remarkably during the Aquino time and have drawn much attention as examples of civil society organizations in the Philippines. In the post-Marcos era, NGOs have become a new means of political participation for those activists who had been deeply involved in the anti-Marcos struggle. In the recent movement aimed at the resignation of President Estrada, KOMPIL II was formed as a coalition drawing support from all the social classes and rallying diverse political forces towards that specific issue. Over one hundred and sixty citizens’ groups and political organizations, large and small and including middle-class members, participated. CODE-NGO, a coalition of NGOs, acted as the secretariat of KOMPIL II.¹² Furthermore, this pattern of political participation can now be observed not only in Metro Manila but also in other major cities of the country. As a result, even after redemocratization, the pattern of middle-class political involvement became different from the pattern before the Aquino assassination and is continuously developing.

¹² Cited from an interview with Bobit Librojo (August 26, 2002) in Quezon City.

IV. SUMMARY

The emergence of the Philippine middle classes began with the Filipinization of the government organizations under the American colonial rule and industrialization that started during the 1930s. However, the pace of industrialization had been slow, and from the 1960s progressed along with the expansion of the tertiary industries accompanied by the burgeoning of the informal sector, rather than with the manufacturing industries. The middle classes that emerged within this process, have a relatively small population, and have developed through reproduction characteristics distinct from the agrarian population and working class. At the same time, they display an internal diversity characterized by large income differentials even within similar occupations across different subsectors, and lack cohesiveness.

In politics, the middle classes are not organized on the basis of either class consciousness or occupation. Neither do they, as a whole, adopt a specific political stance. Rather, they organize themselves into a relatively large number of small groups based on personal relationships, and then join forces with other organizations to form ad hoc coalitions focusing on specific issues.¹³ Thus, due to their relatively small population and lack of cohesiveness, the middle classes exert relatively limited political influence under ordinary circumstances including elections. But, because of their large mobilization capability and geographical concentration in Metro Manila, the nation's capital, they can play an important role in time of crisis as they have proved it.

¹³ This offers an explanation for what Rivera called "decentralized nature" of the mobilization process of the middle classes (Rivera 2001, p. 255).

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