

Village Studis Are Still Important for Modern Turkey

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Abstract

Modern Turkey, an inheritor of the former Ottoman State, was an agrarian country from the very beginning. The country is in fast transition since a few decades; but its peasant origins are to be detected everywhere. Rural sociology, for that matter, is especially beneficial as an academic field of study for this changing country with the undeniable peasant roots and ways. Besides the economical agrarian basis, the strong traditions still leave their marks upon collective behavior patterns.

Key words: Rural sociology; Agrarian; Traditional; Turkish

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INTRODUCTION

The first settlements of mankind were in small units equivalent to today's villages. Those came into being when the human groupings gave up nomadic life style and took up settled life style. Eventually some of those units, the distinguished ones, were to develop into towns and cities. Some did not grow but declined in importance. Many disappeared from the earth's surface due to wars; massacres; natural disasters like epidemics, fires, earthquakes, floods, volcano eruptions, drought. New ones were continually established.

The world history was to witness a big revolutionary process with the first settlements onwards. The means of production began to change from hunting-gathering and stock-raising to agriculture. This was a drastic move towards the establishment of higher civilizations. Along with a change in occupations for a living; new ideas, value systems and mentalities emerged.

For instance: *The holiness of private property is one aspect of agrarian societies. Here the surrounding things one possesses, handle, and keep at disposal of living being involve a moral responsibility and priority. This undisputable confirming and evaluation of property, along with a will for stability, which has a memory of centuries, and finally the eagerness of inferiority under a general high, impossible-to-affect order crystallizes the order of law. In the previous hunting culture this concept had not been formed yet. In the industry culture it is not challenged any more. So, as Heichelheim puts it, The order of law is the deciding policy of mankind since his passage into peasant life style* (paraphrased from Gehlen 1957, p.72).

A movie about the Apache chief Geronimo is demonstrative about the importance attributed to certain concepts by nomadic and settled people. Geronimo first reluctantly agrees to come to the reservation in custody of blue uniformed men. The white men praise the new environment where survivability is under the guarantee of the government. Food is simply given here. There is no need to go after buffaloes endangering one's life for a chunk of meat, to begin with. But the chief shows his first reaction when the canteen attendant makes an ink mark in his palm, which indicates that he had received his first food ration here. He shouts that nobody can stamp him as if he were an animal. He quickly washes away the ink mark from his palm defiantly.

Soon after he runs into a former comrade who is married and seemingly content with the new conditions in his tent. The man enthusiasts about growing corn and tries

to convey his hopes about farming to the chief. Geronimo just gives him a disappointed cold look. Obviously dealing with land cultivation is not his business. It is a demeaning role for a former warrior. It turns out that the chief influences the new farmer rather than *vice versa*. They desert the camp and put up a fight against “Mr. Washington”. For all his courage and charisma, he is an illiterate man and even unaware of the name of the big white chief —then Grover Cleveland (1837-1908) — attributing him the name of his dwelling, which he vaguely remembers from some hearsay.

The resistance of the Taurus Turcoman *Avshar* nomads in early 1980’s against *Derviş Paşa*’s army resembles their case a lot. This was when the *rapsode* (epos-poet) *Dadaloğlu* cried “The decree (*ferman*) belongs to the Sultan but the mountains belong to us!” They too opposed sedentary¹ life in their time. (In his novel titled *The Lords of Akchasaz: Murder in the Ironsmiths Market*, *Yashar Kemal* names the hero, the last genuinely feudal *bey* “*Derviş*”. His grandfather had given him the name of the hostile but nevertheless respected Ottoman general).

Nevertheless Geronimo is under the cast of a beautiful Indian girl he had spotted and talked to. The young girl is doing a teaching job on the reservation. She is literate! The heroic chief captures her in a raid and takes with him. He tells her that their son should learn how to read and write. Being able to read is impressive for him too.

Today the Indian, at least, if he /s he is willing to integrate with the mainstream White-Protestant-Anglo-Saxon society, in a far more advantageous state than Blacks, Hispanics and Asians in the struggle for upper mobility. In Texas, one of my Special English Teachers, Sarah, was half-blood. Her father was a white naval officer and her mother a Cheyenne woman. (Her mother had chosen to become a social anthropologist, a very suitable education considering her tribe as a golden opportunity for her term papers). Sarah was a serious, hard-working, self-disciplined teacher and before dismissing her Friday class she always said “don’t bring shame on your name!” insinuating the necessity of proper behavior on weekend downtown.

1. RURAL SOCIOLOGY AS A SCIENTIFIC DISCIPLINE

Rural sociology is a specialized application of sociology, where sociology itself is simply the scientific study of human relationships per se as no other discipline focuses

¹ The decision to settle the nomads was taken in order to tax them and recruit soldiers from among them more easily. At the time the former professional armies were long obsolete just like in much of Europe and Tsarist Russia. The compulsory (draft) system was adapted instead. An anecdote is very explanatory: When the gendarme officers (*zaptiye zâbitleri*) came to an eastern landlord for the third time to conscript a few of his numerous sons again, the man finally exploded: “Go tell your Sultan not to wage wars so often, relying on my phallic potency!”

itself as such. General sociology concerns itself with properties and interactional relationships common to all social phenomena, whereas as a special branch of it, rural sociology is the study of human relationships in the rural environment. In other words, it is no more or less than the sociology of life in a rural setting. This fact has led T. Lynn Smith to suggest that the systematized knowledge of rural social relationships could more aptly be called the sociology of rural life. Despite some difficulties, fairly satisfactory definitions of rural and urban populations have been designed in turn, the criteria being size, incorporation [union of different things] and density (paraphrased from Bertrand, 1958, pp.8-9).

“Rural sociology is sociology as especially applied to the phenomena of rural society” (Anderson in Fairchild, 1961, p.303). It emerged after the Second World War (but in America in 1920’s) because of a necessity to recognize people involved in agriculture better. Moreover it is characterized more by its domain of action rather than its theoretical undertones (Boudon et al., 1997, p.198).

It was Robert Redfield who first considered the original structure of peasant societies in 1956. But Tchayanov had distinguished the peasant economy from the capitalist economy in the beginning of the twentieth century. Peasant societies conserving their traits in Europe² resisted to be incorporated by industrial capitalism until mid-twentieth century, whereas in the third world peasant population is continuing to grow (H. M. in Boudon et al., 2005, pp.175-176).

Rural sociology owes its foundations to human geography (P. Georges in Borlandi et al., 2005, p.614).

Traditional societies are above all agrarian societies, in which agricultural products are predominant in importance. They therefore are rural societies or peasant societies. City-people are in minority and peasants, who deal with agriculture constitute the majority. Artisans, commerce, cities, intellectual activities in such a society concern only a minority of the whole population. In comparison to modern societies, traditional ones are also called routine societies since economic activities are very dependant on habits, customs and religion. Concepts like productivity or rationality are not of primary significance but are limited to the low level of available technology. Those societies are also considered frozen societies since change and evolution are too slow. A dual society is one on whose bosom modern and traditional sectors overlap (Baud et al., 2003, p.397).

It is possible to say that rural sociology can be firstly considered as an auxiliary discipline of sociology concerned about the investigation of life in the village.

² In America during the same years, the Oklahoma farmers, for instance, were forced to move to California to work as wagers on strangers’ fruit gardens, as depicted by Steinbeck in his work *The Grapes of Wrath*. Erskine Caldwell also tells about farm owners in strict poverty who stays aloof from the capitalist urban world.

Secondly, it seems reasonable to regard rural sociology as a field of social ecology and finally rural sociology is a discipline enabling us to analyze certain secondary social systems functioning outside urban centers in a horizontal character (Kurtkan-Bilgiseven, 1988, p.5).

2. RURAL SOCIOLOGY STUDIES IN TURKEY

Within two basic sociological trends represented by [Prince] *Sabahattin Bey* and *Ziya Gökalp*, the village occupied a special location as a topic of research. Though it is hard to claim that *Gökalp* wrote directly about villages, village plays an important role in grounding his theory which differentiating between culture and civilization. For his cities were ottomanized while villages stayed far from this process of ottomanization and continued to keep and live the Turkish culture (Ertürk, 2008, p.186).

Nurettin Şâzi Kösemihal gave the first courses under the name “Rural and Urban Sociology” in 1962-1963 academic year in Istanbul University (Ertürk 2008: 189). Other scholars like *Muzafer Sencer*, *Oya Sencer*, *Cavit Orhan Tütengil*, *Mehmet Ali Şevki*, *Hilmi Ziya Ülken*, *Selâhattin Demirkan* busied themselves with rural sociology (Ertürk, 2008, p.191). (Professor *Tütengil* was unfortunately assassinated during the chaotic days paving the way to the 1980 coup).

Behice Boran's work titled “Researches on Social Structure” based on research in *Manisa* villages, *Niyazi Berkes*' study titled “A Research About some Villages of Ankara”, social psychology research carried out in *Afyon* region by *Muzaffer Şerif Başoğlu* and *Pertev Naili Boratav*'s collection of common folklore constitute efforts, which, though not referred to very often, preserved their influence for a long time (Kayalı, 1994, p.118).

Under the conditions prevailing after the Second World War, the village stopped being the unique support of our existence and the source compelling our development. Instead it came to be regarded as the unit of our society hindering our participation new developments ((Ertürk, 1997, p.82).

According to *Kemâl Karpat* the small town represents a social order which is grounded on top of the village and gains improvement by exploiting the village; so it is as individualistic and even as rebellious as it can be. To keep its established economic and social domination over the village, the small town is also excessively conservative. We share this view (Tütengil, 1983, pp.56-57).

Karpat's views are in parallel with those of an Italian scholar regarding the equivalent exploiters of the South Italian (*Montegrano*) peasantry:

The real enemies of the peasant, according to Carlo Levi [he wrote his book based on observations in his exile in mid 1930's], “those who cut them off from any hope of freedom and a decent

existence, are to be found among the middle-class village tyrants. This morally degenerate class lives off bastardized tradition of feudal rights” (Banfield, 1958, p.28).

A sort of populism directed towards the village and its problems came to be known as the movement of devotion to peasantry (*köycülük*). (Tütengil, 1983, p.77). In this context some excitement was pumped into the movement like the agriculture march written by *Behçet Kemâ Çağlar*: We plough, we plant and we harvest; all trustful for the future/All gains of the nation to the purse of the nation/We gathered around the voice of the Chief Farmer³ Atatürk / At the Front of agriculture against a fight with the soil. (“*Sürer eker biçeriz güvenip ötesine/Milletin her kazancı milletin kesesine/Toplandık Başçıftçı'nin Atatürk'ün sesine /Toprakla savaş için ziraat cephesine*”).

Intellectual interest in the sort of villagers is not excluded to scholarly works in rural sociology (and anthropology and some other close disciplines) but also to literary works. The first novel dealing with the village is *Karabibik* by *Nâbizade Nâzım*. The plot occurs in a village of *Antalya*. *Yakup Kadri*'s and *Reşat Nuri*'s novels are said to be somewhat superficial regarding the village themes. *Fakir Baykurt* and *Mahmut Makal* are prominent exclusive authors about village among less well-known other figures.

Hacieminoğlu (March, 1964, p.22) says: *We witness a new era regarding villages after the Second World War. In this social realistic trend, which is a reaction to the former romantic approach, it is again not possible to find the true village; because, this literature attempts to reflect the village under circumstances far worse than they are. We must nevertheless concede that even those exaggerations have served the purpose of bringing the village to attention.*

3. AN AUTHOR NOT FULLY APPRECIATED YET

Works about social history and education were also deeply involved with rural themes. One such work is the book titled “*Köyde Okul*” (schooling in villages) written by an education inspector, *Şaban Sunar*. Though his main concern is regular attendance to school in villages, he refers to numerous other aspects of rural life, on occasion.

First of all, he is aware of the potential brains of some peasant children:

We are chatting with an American scholar doing social investigations in Turkey.

— *Did you visit the villages?*

— *Yes, many of them.*

³ While establishing his own farm near Ankara (Gazi Farm), Atatürk also assumed the title of Chief Farmer as a role model in his very person. In late 1930's he donated this farm (along with some others elsewhere like *Yalova*) to the state. The farms persisted as state production farms. S.Ç.

— *What are your impressions?*
— *I liked many aspects of your villages, but most of all the stars!*
— *The stars?*
— *There are many talented students in your villages. If they are provided with proper education, you will have world-famous figures from among their ranks! (Sunar, 1961, p.3).*

Sunar (1961, pp.7-8) also makes comparisons among certain villages: *When entering a village of Bolu I could not spot a single male on the fields and gardens. When they migrated to cities as cooks [this province is famous for its cooks] all the tasks remained for females. On another occasion in a village of Hazro near Diyarbakır, I could not spot a feminine figure. Here customarily womenfolk were confined solely to housework. Still on another occasion, while entering a village of Ergani I noticed moving bundles of branches and twigs ahead of me. I speeded up my horse and saw young girls crushed under the weights, climbing uphill! Pitying them I asked:*

— *You must all be tired!*
— *This fatigue is not even enough!*
— *But how come?*
— *The tradition of our village! According to our custom, we can not get married unless we do manual work. She who carries most twigs gets sold [for a bride price] the soonest.*

On the eve of a new year, inspecting an Edirne village school, we wanted to buy a turkey and talked about our intention in the village coffee shop. None of the men could not decide to sell a turkey. Then we learned that in this village all affairs of the poultry fall into the domain of women and if they are sold the income goes to them.

Sunar has another work, a collection of riddles compiled in a book. On the foreword page *Şaban Sunar* wrote that riddles develop the memory and association powers in the child tremendously. I personally have a “keen” memory and a “fresh” power of association as proved on many occasions. (Once just after a graduate class discussion session my classmate *Leman* approached me. She asked how come I remembered the movie *répliques* so vividly. I must say I was delighted). I think I owe those capacities, at least partially, to the hundreds of riddles I had learned in my boyhood.

As early as in mid 1960's Sunar had preferred the respective words “*bellek ve çağrışım*” rather than “*hâfıza ve tedâî*”, the latter too being more Ottoman in nature. He was my *enişte*, the husband of my mother's elder sister — as a traditional nation's language, Turkish differentiates among specific kinship relations and possesses a rich related vocabulary as opposed to a lump-some *uncle* or *oncle* or *Onkel*— and had been an inspector of education (*maarif müfettişi*), an itinerant prestigious government job full of hardships though. He was a tall, handsome, early bleached haired man with a touch of the actor Spencer Tracy in facial features.

We had hundreds of issues in my grandfather's house. (Books of knowledge did not sell easily). Rural-Greece-immigrated grandparents were using the product of their son-in-law's copyright sweat as filling materials⁴ or other purposes for their face value. My younger brother at the pre-school age drew pictures on the plain and fractionally plain pages. (He was to become a teacher of painting in secondary schools). It is a pity that a single issue did not survive to this day except for the content as preserved in my head. *Sunar's* other work about schooling in villages (*Köyde Okul*), I was lucky enough to locate in a library and get a photocopy.

4. AID OF SOME KNOWLEDGE OF HISTORY

Some history is always necessary for better understanding the background of the agrarian situation in any country, turkey being no exception. History is a wonderful tool for sociology in general, anyhow. The converse is equally true but not as appreciated and as easily done. Braudel (1980 ix), in the foreword of a book, as a historian, says that the most difficult point in restructuring social sciences is for history to capture its relationship with that marvelous-sociology. Elias (1983, pp.7-8) asserts that since historical events are unique (each event happened just once), historiography undergoes difficulty when putting pieces together, while the pieces themselves (true documents) are all real. The historian, he goes on, for instance ignores the architecture of a palace whereas the sociologist is enlightened by the architecture in many ways.

⁴ This is what the world famous author and villager village teacher *Mahmut Makal* (himself a graduate of the village institutions) wrote in his novel as I recall from a previous reading now. Peasants were enthusiastic to ask for journals and magazines. He rejoiced after this, fetching them from a two hour distanced mid Anatolian center. Especially the big sized ones like the literature journal *Varlık* were in demand. He wrote something roughly like “*my goodness, I discovered that they were being used as a substitute for missing window panes!*”. I think, though shocking at first, it also shows the practical mind of the peasant, which is far superior to that of the *citadin*. Many poor peasant dwellings do not even have glass on the window to begin with. An opening is provided and a rectangular cloth is hung over it. (I read the original version of “*Bizim Köy*” long ago and presently I have some photocopies from the French translation by *Güzin Dino*).

Villages were poverty-stricken in the early republican era. Based on *Yusuf Ziya Yörükan's* research before 1930's, *Turhan Yörükan* (1998, p.440) relates that Yörük peasant men around Ankara used to wear trousers, jackets and coats from the flea market: “To observe that village men choose their clothing from second-hand stands, one just needs to visit the Old Bazaar (*Eski Bedesten*) quartier of Ankara or the peddlers around. One can not spot a single underwear or shirt without a patch on those miserable villagers”.

Immigration to Germany and to cities gave considerable economic impetus to those staying beyond. “Household ties are maintained with urban and overseas migrants whose remittances add to the family income and enable them to purchase land and to acquire or rent machinery” (*Pevsner*, 1984, p.14).

Some trends are also interpreted based on historical view even in some social anthropology tainted works. Leach (1977, p.282) writes that history is too difficult for British anthropologists to put on paper and this is why they proclaim the belief in its irrelevance. “We functionalist are not really ‘anti-historical’ by principle; it is simply that we do not know how to fit historical materials into our framework of concepts” he writes.

5. INTERRELATION WITH OTHER FIELDS OF SOCIOLOGY AND THE BACKGROUND OF THIS HUMBLE RESEARCHER

While attributing meaning onto the topics handling peasantry; sheer rural sociology would not suffice either. Zigzags in and out of other branches of the discipline like political sociology (partisanship in villages), forensic sociology (typical peasant crimes), educational sociology (why the villagers have a low level of formal education), linguistic sociology (folk ballads), sociology of literature (peasantry in Turkish novels) proves to be indispensable.

A researcher most suitable for rural sociology, I would say, is one who stems not from a village but from middle class circles. The middle class, as some American authors emphasize, has peculiar characteristics of its own in many respects. The higher classes are too cautious for instance because of their vested interests. Since childhood they have been indoctrinated with suspicion and raised with warnings like “be careful, they may kidnap⁵ you!”

The middle class also represents an honest impartiality when it comes to probe into delicate matters. Lower classes would not indulge in matters which would put their fellow people at stake either. They would feel like traitors. In his unforgettable play *Pygmalion*, George Bernard Shaw uses the father of the heroin (Cockney flower girl Eliza Doolittle) to emphasize the conspicuous English middle class morality. The dustman, when he undergoes an upward mobility, feels constraint to assume that middle class morality now that he is Mr. Doolittle. (The play was later adapted to a movie released under the title *My Fair Lady*).

I have a feeling that it is my relation to the peasantry as a middle class person which enables me to put this very

⁵ In early 1960's a small Istanbul girl got lost. Her well-to-do family kept giving announcements with promised prize offerings. The theory went that she got kidnapped by itinerant Gypsy groups. Her picture was visible in municipal bulletin-boards in towns with the caption “Lost Child *Aylâ Özakar*” just below. She occupied the media for many months but was never found dead or alive. The event, well-publicized, caused a mass craze and city children were horrified at the thought of getting lost. One of my mother's younger acquaintances was named after that girl. *Aylâ Hanım*, aged 48, is married to a construction bidder.

article on paper. This way, I am close enough to take the peasantry seriously while at the same time aloof enough to have a perspective view. In fact I locate myself just on the 50 to 50 “calibration point” on the middle class “scale”. I am the son of a retired army major. (My father in turn comes from a village. He sort of escaped from harsh conditions onto the military school. My mother comes from a big town). The middle-middle class imparts to a young person the impression of a very unstable, precarious place in the general society. Appointments of the father from place to place make the feeling worse. Emotional attachments to peers to break up and re-form continually.

On vacations we visited my mother's town and my father's village. Upon my father's forced retirement following the 1960-coup, we first came to the small Thracian town *Alpullu*. Atatürk had built one of the three first sugar plants here (along with *Turhal* and *Uşak*). There weren't houses for rent. All plant employees and regular workers had lodgings of some sort depending on their positions. Some commuted from villages. We rented a “flood” (*seylâb*) house in a suburb. The houses were all identical, all state-built after the river *Ergene* had spilled over the plain some years before our arrival.

Running water and electricity was absent. Grass used to cover the yard and was reaped off with scythes to prevent snake danger. Soon after; my parents broke up. My mother; a terrific feminist for her times (but reputed to be very beautiful in her youth unlike most feminist females); succeeded the necessary external examinations in not-far-away *Kepirtepe* Teacher Training School (transformed from a previous Village Institution).

She obtained a teaching post at the village of *Sinanlı* (the name was in accordance with my first name), where we were to stay for three years. This is a village of indigenous habitants as opposed to many other Thracian villages where the population consists of Balkan immigrants. I continued attending the last two years of primary school in *Alpullu*, commuting on foot between the small town and the village. I was a studious student and my teacher *Nurcihan Hanım*, too reluctant to loose me, convinced my mother not to transfer me to the village school. One day I reached the classroom all soaked up from rain and my teacher put me near the burning stove for drying up, despite my shameful protestations. Along with me, other boys and even a few girls were coming to the small town for their junior high school education. This too, I did for another year.

6. A “LIFER” IN GLEANING DATA AND MAKING OBSERVATIONS

During my early childhood time officers had orderlies assigned to their home services (in principle on a voluntary basis but a *de facto* prerogative compared to

the alternative hot training). They came and went, all village youths. I noticed even as a child the differences of culture, speech, education between those soldiers and the fellow-officers around my father and other civilian neighbors nearby. Accents set aside, the orderlies would talk about the “paint” of a fountain pen instead of the ink. They would say (*duvara*) “çalmak” instead of “vurmak” (banging one’s head to walls). They would refer to “tâze çarşaf” but not “yeni çarşaf” (newly changed bed sheets). For them “sidik” or “idrâr” was “işemik” (urine). “Af edersin !” exclamation was “af buyur !” (excuse me). They employed many local words too.

Especially in my high school and undergraduate years I was always preoccupied with thoughts of social classes because I could place myself nowhere when income, education, culture, life style were considered all together. I personified the peasant and the city-dweller simultaneously and was upset about it. I admired the upper classes or even resented them. I also envied pure villagers’ relaxed and secure airs and feelings of belonging somewhere⁶. When I once mentioned this to a left-wing classmate —his father was still in the army and held a colonel’s rank— he confessed the very same problem (for all his love of the proletariat) and came up with the diagnose. (*Levent S.* is now an associate professor somewhere) “This is just the shitty nature of your class. Your father had been an officer, too”.

This is why I had been a constant participant observer of especially individual villagers especially in displaced situations: in the settings of towns and cities whenever I had the opportunity. This opportunity I had very often. Quite an adventurous character⁷, after graduation I changed a number of jobs and lived in *Eskişehir, Çay-Afyon, Adana, Kütahya, Pınarhisar-Kırklareli, Çankırı, Ankara* and *Istanbul* as a grown-up; besides paying short visits to many other places extensively. Needless to say, using Cooley’s phrase, the *mirror image* I presented was more peasant-like in Istanbul and Ankara but the more *citadin*-like in the provincial environments though I was the same person.

(Dr. Vedat Fuat Belli, my former boss at the chair of

⁶ Being from Thracian origins I was also somewhat jealous of the strong compatriot solidarity of Anatolians, which Thracians lack. A feudal vestige, it was even stronger in agrarian classes.

⁷ I am somewhat *old fashioned* too when it comes to deal with highest technology of any sort. In this respect I resemble a novel character, Mr. Walnikoff, from *The Black Marble* by Joseph Wambaugh. *Walnikoff* is an American detective in California. The time is mid 1970’s. He is a descendant of the *White Russians*, who had escaped from *Russia* by ship (from the port of *Vladivostok*) after the *October Revolution*. Having grown up with old legends of the lost land; he turned out as a romantic, nostalgic adult, who invariably clings to the past values. (My ancestry also emigrated from the Balkans in accordance with the Lausanne treaty in 1923. My grandparents were always praising their own homeland). He even drives his official police car very slowly and if possible avoids the rush hours in traffic. He is fond of soft classical music only, especially works of his compatriot *Tschaikowski*.

Legal Medicine at Çukurova University, one day said that he was a “right-wing” supporter in the eyes of his Ankara associates but he was regarded as a “communist” in *Erzurum*, where he worked for five years at the Faculty of Medicine’s Chair of Psychiatry. Nevertheless, I had a recent trip to Thracian part of Turkey and the Aegean region to obtain some new rural impressions. I collected some artifacts and took some pictures.⁸

7. BEING QUALITATIVE IS GOOD ENOUGH AS A RESEARCHER

Many authors dealing with peasantry get submerged in unnecessary and boring figures and digits. What percent of the population of which the village voted for which political party at the last elections? What percent of the population from which the village has what level of education and so forth. A monumental figure in Turkish rural sociology, Paul Stirling, does not give numbers in his investigation of the village of *Sakaltutan* near *Kayseri*. He does not need to since he captures the essence of the entire village through a qualitative research. Carol Delaney, in her research of a village near Ankara, does not splash in complicated statistical information, either.

Let us also point out that, regarding numbers and statistics and so forth in Sociological work in general, it is a good approach the way Georges Gurvitch approaches sociology.

In many ways he was the French [version of] Sorokin [both are Russians; while Pitirim Sorokin (1889-1968) emigrated to America, Gurvitch (1894-1965) chose France for better opportunities of study], learned and erudite, combative, perceiving the role of sociology to be explanatory, for he abhorred the obsession with technical matters related to what he was pleased to call, with marked pejorative overtones, “testomania” and “quantophrenia” (Mitchell 1979, p. 93).

⁸ Many photograph shots were bad mainly due to inconvenient light effects but some succeeded. Taking pictures of people is a difficult task by itself. For a sheer foreigner it would have been easier. People wouldn’t much care and they would be more accepting. A person does not even like to be stared at as if he / she were an authentic representative “sample” of some sort of “getting-extinct-species”. It is also embarrassing on the part of the photographer. I sometimes got permission and sometimes did not even dare to ask. I took a few group pictures and let it go unnoticed. People are more disturbed if they are pictured individually.

Taking pictures of non-living things proved to be easier. Cooperation from people were possible then. On one occasion a young villager displaced himself from his sitting position on a tractor-towed hoe to enable me to picture the machine. On another occasion a villager explained to me the uses of the agricultural machines I pictured. One was used for spreading artificial fertilizers and the other was used for planting the seeds into the soil. An elderly villager sitting in front of his house and spotting a stranger with a photograph machine hung around his neck exclaimed: “I understand you are after something. You must be a researcher. Come over sit by me and let us talk!”. I confirmed to being a researcher and said that I had little time, thanking for his hospitality.

8. THE RURAL ORIGINS OF TURKEY AS A COUNTRY

The Republican Turkey is a modern continuation of the former Ottoman Empire in a possibly briefest definition. The “aftermath” of the republican revolution witnessed a sheer agrarian society with little industry and a very weak bourgeois class. Today’s Turkey possesses over thirty thousand villages. The majority of people lived on the country side until a few decades ago. Sometimes contrasts between sheer provincial cities, if not literally villages, and metropolitan centers as far as collective behavior patterns go; are also conspicuous enough to consider for academic purposes.

Although the rural conditions that assign the family and child (as labor force) a special meaning are still valid in Turkey, it is also true that the social structure is quickly changing and attributing some new changes to the family. Our society has been undergoing a structural change in the last thirty years. Internal migrations and urbanization have caused the rural part to dissolve, and thus the urban population is becoming more active. The most typical reflections of the mentioned structural change are seen on the formation and functions of the family (Kabacali, 1999, pp.10-11).

Certain research work regarding village societies constitute a part of social structure investigations, which in turn are defied as one of the basic topics in the social sciences. Even if we assume that village societies will stepwise change and eventually disappear altogether; works on social structure in relation to big and small societies will continue to occupy a predominant place in academic interest. After all, the insistence of certain village-like traits even in the most industrialized countries is an evidence that small societies preserving such traits are destined to be ever present (Saran, 1984, p.7).

It is a fact that Turks constitute a young nation and therefore are prone to very fast social changes. Villages had been diminishing in population ever since long years of literally pouring their inhabitants onto urban centers. This continuing process is causing many problems difficult to cope within the very town centers.

This tremendous phenomenon of change by no means, however, reduces the importance of analyzing and understanding the villages and related social dynamics. On the contrary, the undergoing changes render it more necessary to give attention to rural sociology studies. Quantity — peasants somehow still represent the slight majority in Turkey— left alone, the quality, the essence of the Turkish people conceals almost all secrets and keys to numerous solutions in provincial areas in general and in villages in specifics. Why is this so?

Because the impact of the countryside upon the urban world is vigorous and manifold. Firstly, the economic effects can never be negated. All raw materials go everywhere from the heart of the countryside: Food is

produced on the rural section and delivered to the towns and cities. As Professor *M.C.Ecevit* puts it, the *lasagnes* devoured at the most luxurious restaurants of the capital are prepared from wheat flours of the sown fields. Many commodities like the leather of the shoes worn by the city-dwellers originate from the peasant’s livestock. Carpets covering house floors and hanging on house walls find their way there from the weaving looms of village females. Ornamental furniture decorating and facilitating life in apartment buildings is merely the end results of forestry.

9. CULTURAL IMPRINTS OF PEASANTRY

All this account presents us only the material aspect of the game. Now, what about the social dimension? The nation’s collective conscience is uprooted in the verbal popular culture “molded” throughout centuries on the steps of Anatolia. Even the most elegant looking man or woman stepping into the elevator in a skyscraper in *Istanbul* preserves incredibly many traits of the his / her soil-based origins.

This is what I actually witnessed in the case of a friend of mine in a similar environment when he unexpectedly uttered a so-called archaic proverb. As a former American Field Service exchange student he had formerly passed a year of his adolescence in California. He was the one whom acquaintances teased for becoming a snobby admirer of the United States. In short he was a complete city boy.

He had just lost his general manager position in a private holding. The deadline for turning in the company’s expensive car was pressing down. I, personally, was helpless and awfully sorry for my comrade from the university days. I also had a guilty conscious in comparison to him, secure over my (modest) government salary. At the moment the best I could do be to console his grief and build up his morale with heartening eloquent words. We had just left the car, whose door he had slammed in fury. As we headed for the entrance of Hotel Hilton’s reception hall (he had two invitations and used one for me) he said: “He who mounts an entrusted horse should expect to dismount soon!” There was the good old country boy from his grandparents’ Anatolian origins speaking up; disguised in a suit and a silk striped tie. My goodness! *Citadins* don’t use such dictions full of old days’ wisdom. (Thankfully, he found another job soon after, if only far inferior to the previous one).

While on the verge of return from an instructor development course in Texas, we a few Turkish trainers course had a meal in a restaurant. Our friend *Levent* was especially pensive that evening. He was a pure city boy brought up in *İzmir*. He had fed himself with pizza, hamburgers, sausage sandwiches and milkshake. He had taken municipal buses to his downtown school, university and work place. He had listened to rock music. He had played basketball. Now, in the table he

was sad and depressive and playing with his jelly soaked fashionable hair. Finally he said “I hope we will all reach the fatherland safely and in good health. We looked at him irritated and questioning. He added: “[Champion Wrestler] *Koca Yusuf* couldn’t make it to his fatherland, you know!” (The champion had left America in 1898 boarding a ship in destination to Europe but the ship sunk in Atlantic ocean and he got drowned).

Then somebody toasted his beer glass to dissipate the sickly atmosphere. I was astonished about *Levent*’s knowledge about the wrestler. In the collective consciousness of the nation, I then noticed, the old values and historical evidences were always present even if vaguely colored. Oil wrestlers are the heroic idols of peasants. Until a few decades ago, conservative newspapers used to publish their adventures on the grass field in serials. Those serials were devoured by eager villagers and illiterate older generations were all ears to hear the read aloud episodes of *Aliço*, *Hergeleci İbrahim*, *Adalı Halil*. One very popular serial writer used the pen name “an old wrestler”.

10. PEASANTS AS ROLE MODELS

An equally important purpose or rather mission of rural sociology is to help better understand the peasant so that the city-dweller can learn from the peasant! The already automated, profit-driven, dissatisfied city man and woman have a lot to learn from the prototype peasant. The subject prototype is added here because, to tell the truth, peasantry is becoming contaminated or rather polluted with urban ways—not only physically but the more dangerous—spiritually. This is unfortunately happening fast and threatening to make the authentic precious candid peasant character disappear.

As Kündig-Steiner (1974, p.103) registers it, *the social change in Turkey has its negative effects, which partly overlap with those in Europe. The protection provided by the traditional system for the feeble, orphans, sick, poor and the old decreases. The state’s official social system on the other hand is not accordingly improved or sufficient.*

Indeed, the former high status and respect enjoyed by the elderly is weakening and the generation gap is getting wider. In a peripheral coffee shop frequented by peasants at the time of the weekly fair market in *Tekirdağ* I recently eavesdropped the complaint of a villager about his son. The bastard (he used the local word *kopil*) was a sheer good-for-nothing (again the local word *panta*) and needed some sort of correction.

Today, even in shanty towns the most contented people who can cope with poverty as equipped psychologically, is the first comers. They are free from destructive non-satiabile passions and can adjust to new conditions of scarcity thanks to their memories of much worse conditions back in the village.

CONCLUSION

Turkey has its roots in the peasantry. Rural sociology represents a tremendously important discipline for this country even in understanding her fast changing. In dynamics into urbanization, some peasant ways are still embedded in the behavior patterns of even the most urbanized *citadions*.

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APPENDIX: SOME VISUAL MATERIAL



Figure 1
Researcher Çaya Himself Clad Like a Peasant-Man With a Peaked Hat (*Casquette*), Thick Felt Trousers and Waistcoat (Photo by the Author's Wife—Feyhan Hanim)



Figure 2
Tractor-Driven Multiple Ploughs for Cultivating the Land, in Turkey Thracian (Photo by the Author—S.Ç.).



Figure 3
Men With Traditional Towels Wrapped Around Their Heads in a Suburb of the Aegean City of *Manisa* in 1990 (Photo by the Author—S.Ç.). At the Time, Impressed by the Sheer Anthropological Charm of the Sight, It Had Been Impossible for Me to Resist the Temptation for Taking a Snapshot. Two Decades Later, During My New Tour Around Rural Aegean Regions, I Deliberately Searched for a Man With Such an Authentic Headgear. To My Disappointment, I Could Not Locate A Single One. S.Ç.



Figure 4
Mobile Plates (*Sefer Tası*) for Carrying Meals, Especially to the Shepherds, on the Lower Shelf and a Coal-Iron From Non-Electrified Times for Pressing Laundry, on the Upper Shelf (Photo by the Author, at a Display in Istanbul—S.Ç.). Despite Recent Temptations Pumped by New Consumption Trends and the Media, Villagers Are Essentially Frugal and They Hate Waste. This Is Why Old-Fashioned Objects Are More Likely to Be Found in a Village



Figure 5
Home-Made Moccasins at a Display (Photo by the Author, at a Display in Istanbul—S.Ç.). They Were Long Replaced by Simple Black Plastic Shoes



Figure 6
After the Home-Made Moccasins Got Forgotten, for Many a Years, Villagers Used to Slip Their Woolen-Sock-Covered Feet Into Cheap Black Plastic Shoes in Summer and Plastic Boots in Winter. (Scanned by the Author—S.Ç.)



Figure 7
Return Trip to Village on an Open Tractor Trailer (the Younger Woman in Pants Represents the Social Changes in the Direction of Modernism) (Photo by the Author —S.Ç.)



Figure 8
A Typical Kitchen Shelf in a Village House (Photo by the Author —S.Ç.)

(a)



(b)



Figure 9
(a) Rugs Are Much Cheaper Than Fluffy Carpets, (b) Nevertheless, They May Be Almost Equally Picturesque and Beautiful (Miniature-Versions Scanned by the Author—S.Ç.)