

## SOCIAL LIFE IN FOUR ANATOLIAN VILLAGES

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### *A. Introduction*

This article summarizes some findings of a research on the relationship between social structure and political culture in two groups of villages. It is intended to give here basic traits of the social life in the villages studied. The theoretical purpose of the study is to test the reliability of the view that unless the material life conditions and chiefly production forces and production relations of village communities are not conducive to their integration with the larger society, the mere existence of mass media facilities does not contribute much to the development of political consciousness in these small rural communities. Because, it is held, people do not question the justice or legitimacy of the societal order unless they often come into contact with that order in their real life situations.

Thus it is held in this study that mass media of communication can not be expected to be used efficiently in small rural communities whose populations differ between a few dozen to a few hundreds of households, having very little and poorly co-ordinated common interests with the larger society, showing strong tendencies of autonomy towards it, staying nearer to natural rather than social environment and enjoying definite and carefully maintained boundaries. Only a few power persons whom we find in almost every village in Turkey are able to do so and to develop close relations with urban centers and with the larger society as a whole. Consequently mass media should be expected to reach peasant masses largely through these power persons in village communities. They are, however, not leaders, but domineering persons with the vested interests in the *status quo*; in other

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<sup>1</sup>The village and town names used in this study are all imaginary.

words they are landed bourgeois with more or less remnants of feudal characteristics. The contents of mass media they would communicate to peasants would be distorted and deformed by them.

The two groups of villages selected for this study are such in character as to make it possible for us to test the reliability of this basic hypothesis. The first group is formed by two villages located in the mountainous North Eastern Anatolia and lacking considerably in facilities of communication and transportation. They are *Ağaçlı* and *Beyköyü* villages<sup>1</sup> which administratively belong to *Zeytinci* district of the department *A*. The second group villages are located in Central Anatolia; they are very close to the big cities of this region and right on the railroad and highways enjoying the highest circulation in all Turkey. These are *Cebirliköy* and *Demir köprü* villages of *Yenice* and *Dolaşlı* districts both of which belong to the department *B*.

Despite this between contrast the locations of the two groups of villages, they are very similar to one another in their economic and therefore social life. In all of them the economic structure is based on cereal (mainly wheat and barley) growing and animal (mainly sheep and cow) raising. The production is organized in non-specialized and irrational small family farms. Consumption is very largely met by the family production and as a result there is no close relations with the surrounding cities, towns or villages, based on a division of labour. Consequently, despite the favourable location conditions of the villages in the department *B*, they can not be expected to use efficiently mass media and the differences that might exist in this respect between them and the villages in the department *A* can only be a small difference of degree and not a difference of nature. Accordingly, there can not be expected to be any significant differences between the social and political orientations of these two groups of villages. The research data that are presented in this work support this view considerably.

In the following pages are summerized major research findings on the *ecology, economy, public services, education, religion* and *power structure* in the villages studied.

### *B. Ecology of the villages*

The *Zeytinci* area where our first group villages are located is extremely mountainous and this fact reduces the proportion of the usable land to less than 10 % of the total area. The sudden altitude changes and the nar-

row and deep valley of a river have produced a sort of micro-climat in this area and made for the great variety of agricultural products.

There are two sorts of villages in this area: one of them is locally known as «mild-temperature-villages» and the other «mountain villages». The first type of villages, being located in the deep and well preserved valley of that river, can grow almost any sorts of fruits, vegetables, etc., whereas the second type of villages can nothing but cereals. It must be added, however, that the first type of villages also have lands at places similar to those of mountain-villages and that they have built at these places houses, barnes, etc., almost as many as in the main villages. These places are called *mezra*, that is, a place where farming is done, although only cereal can be grown there because of the very high altitudes. Peasants value *mezras* very highly despite the fact that land in *mezras* are very poor giving very low returns and extremely difficult to arrive at and to cultivate. But under the conditions of a more or less closed economy peasants depend on these lands for their bread and butter and thus value *mezras* more highly than the lands beside the river where they grow mostly rice, other vegetables and fruits. We shall return in the following pages to the significance of cereal production for the villages' relations with the outside world.

*Ağaçlı*, being one of the villages located right at the coast of a river, is a good example of the first type and *Beyköyü*, being located at the outskirts of a forest at an altitude of 1900 m., is an example (also a very good one) of the second type.

With respect to transportation facilities both villages are very poor, though the mountain village *Beyköyü* is the poorest of the two. The latter village does not have any roads convenient to motor vehicles and *Ağaçlı* is 3 km. distant to the earth road connecting *Şirin* county to *Zeytinci* district. There is a daily bus service (only one bus) between *Şirin* and *Zeytinci* which the villagers from *Beyköyü* and *Ağaçlı* can use at a limited degree. They use it most of the cases in order to go to *Erzurum* where they search for temporary non-rural works such as road construction (mostly for men from *Ağaçlı*) and bakery works (mostly for men from *Beyköyü*). It is almost only adult men who go outside and this they do quite rarely (in *Ağaçlı* karti-*cularey*). In order to go to the district center or to *Erzurum* people in *Beyköyü* have to walk or to ride on horse-back the 10 km. distance up to *Şirin* and to stay there overnight to catch the bus next morning. People in *Ağaçlı* mostly walk the 3 km. earth road which connects the village to the *Şirin-Zeytinci* road. As a result of the extremely broken topographical conditions

motor vehicles can not drive more than 20 km. per hour on the average on this road and on the one between *Şirin* and *Erzurum*. Thus, the bus can get *Zeytinci* from *Ağaçlı* (a distance of 9 km.) in 45 minutes and it gets *Erzurum* from *Zeytinci* (72 km.) in about 6 hours.

Another observation worth mentioning here is that, up until the recent years villagers in both *Ağaçlı* and *Beyköyü* (but particularly in *Ağaçlı*) did not appreciate much the value of roads. In fact people in *Ağaçlı* have even abstained from giving their consent for the construction of a road between the village and its *mezras*, when the Forestry Administration was willing to do it about six years ago. This despite the fact that they have to go back and forth between the village and the *mezras* 3 or 4 days a week throughout the year and that the path they follow in going there is extremely difficult to climb. Their motive was that in the absence of a road they would be freer in cutting trees and clearing grounds in the forests without much interference by the forest guardsmen.

Both *Cebirli* and *Demirköprü* villages in the department *B* are located in the central anatolian plain. Because of the lack of irrigation in *Cebirli* all villagers grow only cereals and in *Demirköprü* it is the same with the exception of the *ağa* (the traditional power person to be studied later in this article) families, as all the irrigable lands are in their hands.

Both villages have very large potentialities of communication and transportation. *Cebirli* is right on a major highway since 1938, at a distance of only 24 km. to the big city *B*. Although even today there are in this village those who remember that up until 1950 s they not very rarely had to travel on oxen-car to *B*, the number of motor vehicles circulating on this highway was greatly increased since that time. When we were conducting our field study in *Cebirli* we observed that it was possible to find a sit, at any hour of the day, in either a bus, a minibus, a share-taxi cab or at least on a truck, running between *B* and several Western Anatolian cities and towns. It takes only 25 minutes to get *Cebirli* from *B*.

As to *Demirköprü* it is a village with train station on Ankara - Istanbul railroad since 1922. Up until 1958 villagers mostly used train in going to *B* or to *Dolaplı* district which *Demirköprü* belongs to administratively. In 1958 a major highway was constructed in central anatolia and *Demirköprü* was connected to it with a touristic highway. Since then villagers began to use increasingly buses and minibuses in going to Ankara or *Dolaplı*. *Dolaplı* is 23 km. and the city *B* 95 km. from the village. Under normal conditi-

ons it takes 20 minu minutes to go to *Dolaplı* and one and a half hour to *B* by motor vehicle.

### C. Economy

It is intended to present under this headline some data concerning the population structure, production and consumption of the villages studied.

In four villages population varies between 500 and 1000. While the populations of *Cebirli* and *Demirköprü* regularly increased during the last three decades, that of *Ağaçlı* stayed stagnant and that of *Beyköyü* decreased since 1960. This fact in the villages of *Zeytinci* district is primarily due to the seasonal emigration of the adult men for temporary extra-village labour, who are absent during the population census in the village. Besides, a few villagers have permanently migrated from these villages (from *Beyköyü* in particular) to cities (chiefly to Erzurum, Ankara and Istanbul) with their immediate families.

Neither births and deaths nor marriages are regularly recorded in both groups of villages. Because of this we were not able to calculate birth or death rates. Religious ceremony in marriages is the only necessary condition of legitimacy for the peasants. There has not been in the histories of all four villages any case in which marriage was not consented to or denied later by either man or woman on the grounds that it was not officially recognized. Neither have governments been firm with respect to the enforcement of the civil law. On the contrary, in almost every ten years after the present civil law was adopted in 1928, officials had to visit villages in order to register the children of such parents and to render their marriages lawful.

Concerning the structure of production and consumption, too, one comes across to some basic features that are common to both groups of villages. These features are in short as follows: 1) production is centered on cereal growing and animal raising; 2) it is carried out in small, family enterprises which are not specialized, nor rationalized; 3) land is over-divided and each family-farm includes as many as 30, even 40 peaces of land located very far from one another; 4) there is no division of labour and occupational differentiation within any of these villages; whereas wealth differentiation is not seen among the peasant mass it is marked between this mass and the few power persons; 5) land renting or share-cropping relations are rather scarce and they involve both those who own lands larger than they themselves can cultivate and those whose lands are not large enough to make farming profitable. Thus among those who rent lands there are both large

landowners and small peasants who do not own enough land; 6) paid agricultural workers are also few, with the major exception of *Demirköprü* in the department B.

There are also basic similarities in the consumption patterns in these villages. First of all the fact that the production is centered on cereal growing and animal raising determines to a large extent the bulk of the peasants' consumption. Thus the peasant who produces, in his own family farm, wheat for bread, *bulgur* (boiled and pounded wheat) and *tarhana* (dried yogourt mixed with flour), and various peas and beans, butter, yogourt, eggs and meat (the least consumed aliment in all villages), meets this way the largest part of his limited needs. Consequently he does not get into close contacts with the outside world. Clearly, the kind of crop produced determines very largely the social life of the village. In all four villages people live a very contented life, though the level of living in *Cebirli* is higher than that of the other three villages, *Beyköyü* being the poorest of all. The great majority of the peasants can borrow from the Bank of Agriculture and from the agricultural credit cooperatives only very small amount of loans and consequently they depend on *ağas* in the village and tradesmen in towns to meet their clothing and other basic needs. The use of agricultural credits for consumption purposes has become, under such conditions, a very common practice.

As to the differences between the economic life of the two groups of villages, they can be summed up in four points: 1) In *Ağaçlı* and *Beyköyü*, as a result of the extremely steep and broken topographical conditions, the proportion of cultivable lands is less than 10 % of the total area. Forests cover about 20 % of that area, and the remainder is only rocky mountains. In *Cebirli* and *Demirköprü*, however, the proportion of usable lands (cultivation and grazing lands) amounts to 90 % of the total area. 2) Consequently, we observe in *Ağaçlı* and particularly in *Beyköyü* a seasonal migration of adult men every year out of the village in order to work mainly in construction and bakery works for extra farming income that is directly needed for mere subsistence. In *Cebirli* until very recently no villager had ever left the village because of land shortage. In this village there is almost no household without or with very little land. Together with the extended family system which is resorted to in the extreme degrees, villagers in *Cebirli* have strongly resisted against moving out for extra farming income. In *Demirköprü*, though the great majority of the villagers have little or no land they do not leave the village for the extra income they need. Instead, they

work as wage labourers in the large farms of the *ağas* or as railroad service men. 3) In *Ağaçlı* and *Beyköyü* the topographic conditions described above do not allow the use of machines, not even a wheeled carrier, in farming. Thus the horse-back riding is the only means of transportation except when going to the town or city. And ploughing and harvesting is done by animal power, mostly oxen. No improved techniques are practiced in cultivation or animal raising. In *Ağaçlı* for instance, instead of specializing on a few kinds of fruits one finds a few trees of almost all kinds in the orchards. Only recently villagers began to produce larger amount of apple, peach and grape because the chances of selling them in the Erzurum market are developing.

In *Cebirli* and *Demirköprü* agriculture which is centered on cereal growing is mechanized to a considerable extent. In both villages of the department *B* there are about 40 tractors, 10 or 20 of other major farming machines such as drills, etc. The harvesters which number about four or five in each village belong all to *ağas*. Other improved agricultural techniques such as use of fertilizer and insecticides and practice of artificial insemination in switching to merino sheep and montophane cows are more and more adopted during the last few years. But despite all these changes the underlying characteristics of the structure of production are still those of an irrational, non-specialized, small family farming. The great number of tractors is itself a sign of inefficiency and a proof of the lack of cooperation in the villages of *Cebirli* and *Demirköprü*. Particularly in *Cebirli* land is divided into very small and disperse peaces. The peasants are not aware of or at best do not take into account the fact that a definite area of grazing can support only a limited number of animals, and they try to increase the number of their sheep and cows as much as they can. This, however, results in very poorly nourished animals which is another sign of the inefficiency in the farming techniques. Finally in both groups of villages agricultural loans and even fertilizer credits are misused and changed into cash to be spent for consumption purposes on weddings, dresses and other necessities.<sup>2</sup>

#### *D. Services: relations with the public administration*

In both groups of villages relations with the central administration's

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<sup>2</sup> In *Cebirli* some villagers recently began to spend money on replacing the shapeless stones on their parents' or greatparents' graves by nicely cut and polished marbles with scriptures and identifications on them.

units in the districts are very poor. There is no dialogue between the peasants and the officials. The visits of the administrators and other civil servants to the villages are quite rare. The contacts between villagers and officials are very largely carried out through the mediations of headmen. In two of the villages (*Cebirli* in *B*, and *Beyköyü* in *A*) the power persons themselves are the headmen and in the other two (*Demirköprü* and *Ağaçlı*) the headmen are close relatives of the power persons. In both cases headmen keep the relations with the administration at the minimum. They do not carry out the major parts of the requirements of the Village Law. First of all they themselves do not always have the qualities required by this law for headmanship. For instance the headman in *Ağaçlı* is not literate despite the fact that article 25 of this law clearly requires it. Again, while the same article of the Village Law requires that headman be a resident of village, the headman of *Cebirli* does not actually have his residence in the village; he lives, instead, in the city *B* most of the time, where he runs a hotel. In four villages the records and statistics which the law clearly asks to be kept are entirely haphazard and incomplete. Illegal methods in the treatment of sick are commonly practiced and they are not informed to the officials by the headmen. The largest part of the conflicts between villagers are tried to be solved in the village, the same power persons being the chief mediators whom the peasants refer to. Particularly after the introduction of multi-party system in politics, the headmen all of whom belong to one of the major parties, always behave under the influence of vote factor and impede all kinds of public projects which might bring financial burden or physical work for villagers. More on the mediation role of the power persons and the interrelations between this fact and the party politics will be said later in this article where the power structure itself is studied.

Under such conditions the chief feature of the peasants' relations with the administration is their access to it through mediators. These mediators are the power persons in the villages, small or big businessmen, and other persons of liberal professions (lawyers, doctors, contractors ...) in the towns and cities. Besides them some officials also perform the services of a mediator. The relations between the peasants and the public servants are characterized by lack of confidence on the part of peasants and not very rarely involve bribery. Peasants have a firm conviction that it is impossible to get any service in the administration's offices without mediation. This conviction is expressed in sayings repeated very often, such as «A headman's stomach is needed for a hodja's appetite» or «He who dines with an official gets his teeth broken» etc.



On the other hand some villagers (particularly those who are close to the power persons) bring the officials under partizan pressures mostly through the power persons of the village. This is seen increasingly after the introduction of the party politics in Turkey.

### *E. Education in the villages*

The school and its teacher are not a natural and integrated part of the village community. School's activities do not cover the whole community. Though in recent years peasants appreciate more the value of literacy and non-attendance is no more a serious problem with the exception of *Cebirli* in *B*, they send their children -their daughters in particular- to school primarily because it is a legal obligation.<sup>3</sup> Literacy which is the major skill that the school provides is not an often used ability under the socio-economic structure of the villages described earlier. There are even those peasants who send their children to school mainly because they believe that after learning how to read the Latin alphabet the children learn to read the Coran, the sacred book in Arabic, with ease. The peasants who pay readily for the costs of the mosque and those of the Coran Reading Courses are strongly unwilling to pay or to do anything for the school and expect the Government to provide almost everything necessary for it.

Because the teacher himself is a «white-collar man», that is, because of the type of the work he does, he is largely outside the village community. We did not hear any respondent saying that he would recourse to the help or advise of the village teacher for any problem.<sup>4</sup>

The peasants would like the school to be primarily a channel of acquiring some non-agricultural skills for at least one or two of their sons and to make thus possible for them to quit the village and leave the insufficient land to their parents or brothers who have to remain in the village. But they see that only elementary school education can not provide such

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<sup>3</sup> In *Cebirli* the nearest village to *B* the prestige of the school is lowest and the schoolmaster receives, from time to time, unpleassant letters or messages from their pupils' parents. We came to know one such case where the father of a pupil who did not attend the school regularly wrote a note to the school master in which he asked him not to make any legal investigation about himself or his son, and added: «You know very well that in such a case even your life is not for us so worthy as a thider!»

<sup>4</sup> The two rural development researches carried out by State Planning Organization in 1961 and 1968 show the same trend throughout the rural Turkey.

skills and since most of them lack the resources to provide their sons with secondary and higher education in town or city, they do not pay much importance to the primary school in the village. In all four villages the respondents' answer to the question «What would you like your son to be?» has been «I would like him to be a government official, a teacher, a doctor, an engeneer ... anything nonrural. But I do not have the opportunity to send him to schools above the primary school.» No villager said that he would like his son to study agriculture and come back to the village to improve his farming. It is clear that every peasant parent would prefer his sons (or at least some of them) to leave the land and the village.

As to the education of daughters peasants' attitudes are clear from the following uniform answers: «I would not like her to be anything. I would like her to be a good wife to a farmer. I would like her just not to cause any shame to me. We do not consider proper sending girls to school.» This attitude is particularly strong in *Cebirli* and *Ağaçlı*, where the population pressure on land is the least of all four villages.

The case of *Cebirli* is particularly striking with respect to the peasants' attitude towards education: despite its closeness to the big city *B*, its large opportunities of communication and transportation and its more favorable economic conditions, no person in the village with the exception of just one boy has ever attended any school beyond primary school, whereas in the poorest village *Beyköyü* about forty boys up to now have attended secondary schools, farming schools, artizan schools and teacher training schools. In *Cebirli* the chief factor determining the attitudes towards education is that the population pressure on land has been least and was felt latest of all four villages; because mechanized farming was not largely practiced up to very recent years man-power was needed badly; and in order to cope with the increasing population peasants have resorted to the extended family system in the extreme degrees: even today many households in *Cebirli* include 30 or 35 members each. In order to prevent the division of land through inheritance, male members in almost every family stay together even after the death of the father. Only during the last two or three years some poorer peasants have been sending their sons as apprentices to some artizans in the city *B*, such as motor-repairmen, welders, electricians, shoemakers and so on, as the machine farming made the child labour largely obsolete. But it is interesting to note that even after this new development no villager in *Cebirli* has sent his son (let alone his daughter) to school beyond primary education. In this the power persons in the village play an

important role through an anti-school propaganda. They always propagate in the village the view that school teaches infidelity and immorality, and particularly those who attend the higher learning institutions such as high schools and universities become sheer atheists and communists. In all four villages the power persons do propagate such ideas, but in *Cebirli* this trend is much stronger and the peasants seem more homogeneous in sharing such views.

#### *F. Religion*

As it is known religion forms an important part of the rules regulating man's relations with nature and with other men. This regulating role of religion is particularly great in non-industrialized and non-urban societies. In urban, industrial societies human relations are largely governed on the basis of secular rules.

In human history religion has always been a means of preserving inequalities of the *status quo* in the hands of conservatives.<sup>5</sup> In Turkey today among those who hold the political and economic power at all levels there are many who openly declare that religion should be allowed to play a greater role in the social life. And among the people, among the peasant mass in particular, a *volk-Islam* is developing full of superstitions and fanaticism. The vote factor of the multi-party system has led many political parties to manipulate and exploit religious feelings of the people.

In all four villages that we studied we observed that religious performances and superstitious beliefs occupy a very large place in the peasants' lives and that the power persons particularly encourage such attitudes and behaviours. Most of the peasants regularly pray, fast and give alms. They believe in praying-for-rain, in evil-eye, in visiting the graves of persons believed to be blessed in order to be cured from a sickness, to have a baby, etc., in having a *hodja* (or sorcerer) to pray on oneself in order to be cured; in the irreligiosity of hanging human pictures on the walls at home and of translating the *Coran* into Turkish, etc. Again it was in *Cebirli*, the nearest village to a big city, where such superstitions were strongest. *Ağaçlı* came next. Thus we see that in those villages where the need for extra-rural activities was felt least religious feelings and superstitions were strongest,

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<sup>5</sup> See Maurice Duverger, *Sociologie Politique*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1966, p. 251.

and *vice versa*, and that the mere existence of mass media facilities is not the determining factor in the modernization of attitudes.

The hodjas in all four villages show conservative and even reactionary attitudes. All of them have declined to express their opinions on Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic who was a great reformer, on Atatürk reforms and secularism in particular. The newspapers, pamphlets and books that we observed them reading are all reactionary publications.

In these villages it seems that no peasant was member to such reactionary religious orders as *Nurculuk* or *Ticanilik*, etc., but that members of such orders do pay visits to the villages from time to time. In *Ağaçlı* and *Beyköyü* an important trend is the sending of 10 or 15 boys every year to *Rize* where these boys attend the Coran Reading Courses free from any expenses of room and board. The peasants who can not afford sending their sons to secondary schools are eager to send them to these Coran courses with the hope that they will become hodjas to villages.

In all four villages we observed that peasants' religious feelings are intensely manipulated as political propaganda material. Among the motives of political party preferences peasants mention very often such religious considerations as «This party improved religion,» «Now we can pray freely thanks to this party» or «The other party used the mosques as storehouses» «The other party encouraged infidelity» etc.

#### *G. The power structure*

Power means the ability and authority to dominate men, to coerce and control them and to compel their action in particular ways. In the following pages we shall study the power-persons in four villages, who they are, what background they have and what ideologies, actions and organization they support.

Before that, however, it will be proper to consider shortly the concept of *leadership* which is closely related to that of power. A leader is principally a person whom his group or community accept voluntarily; that is, the direction he shows are collectively shared and appreciated by the group. Identity of interests between the leader and his followers is essential. Leadership is to be distinguished from *domination*. In domination the group goal is chosen by the dominant person according to his own interests and is not internally determined by the group itself. The group is rather impelled by him to accomplish this goal. There is, in the dominance relation, a wide

social gap between the group members and the dominant person who strives to maintain this social distance as an aid to his coercion of the group. And most basically, these two forms of influence differ with respect to the source of the authority which is exercised. The leader's authority is spontaneously accorded him by his followers. The authority of the dominant person derives from some extra-group power which he has over the group members who can not be considered his «followers», but rather his «subjects».<sup>6</sup>

In all four villages that we studied the power-persons proved to be dominant persons rather than leaders.

In Turkey, even today, the State is not sufficiently able to carry out efficiently the services of law and security (including social security) in the countryside.

Consequently in many villages some persons - often with land holdings and some other feudal characteristics - emerge to meet partly the needs for order and security. These persons who are generally called *ağa* have a great influence on the peasants. The latter, to a large degree, are politically, legally and personally dependent to *ağas*.

In such villages, among the peasant majority there is not any significant differentiation of wealth, occupation, education, and status. Instead, such differences are very conspicuous between the peasant majority and the *ağas*. Those power-persons who are in the way of becoming capitalist farmers still maintain their feudal characteristics of *ağa*. On the one hand, because of the very limited degree of industrialisation in the country, these wealthy landowners can not go efficiently into industry or business and «keep one foot on the land», which perpetuates their traditional *ağa* position in the villages. On the other hand the party politics which Turkey went into after the World War II, have increased very much the influence of *ağas* on the public administration and brought a new support to their power position which began to show signs of weakening as a result of machine farming and of seasonal extra-rural activities necessitated by population pressures on land.

As Prof. Hauriou remarked, «in countries where economic power is at the hands of large land owners, political power, too, will inevitably concentrated in the same hands. Because the peasants can not resist against

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<sup>6</sup> Cecil A. Gibb, «Leadership,» in Gardner Lindzey (ed.), *Handbook of Social Psychology*, Reading, Mass., Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1954, p. 882.

the pressures put on them. This situation can only be corrected through urbanization and industrialization...»<sup>7</sup> The fact that the first person to organize efficiently an opposition political party in Turkey in 1946, and to win the power in only four years time was a big land-owner, was not just an accident.<sup>8</sup>

These general characteristics of the power structure observed in rural areas reflect very largely the power structure of the four villages that we studied.

### **Common Characteristics of the Power Structure in Four Villages**

#### **a) The Origin of the Power-Persons**

In all four villages the power-persons belonged to the same families throughout the 40 or 50 years of the Republican period. Before the Republican regime these same families were also the power-families. Their economic and political power have naturally reinforced each other. In all four villages the power families' lands and wealths are so much larger than the average peasant family that no comparison can be made.

Belonging to a family which is rich in male members plays an important role in the origin of the power-persons. The increase in the number of male members of a family means larger harvests, better defense and even the possibility of becoming aggressive in the village. A proverb often used by the villagers explains this very significantly: «Not he who has land, but he who has sons will flourish.» This is what they have been observing throughout their lifetime. Thus whoever in the village raises his voice against the *ağa*, he will immediately be physically punished by *ağa*'s sons and other relatives. Neither can he make any complaint against this to legal or administrative authorities. Because he is convinced that neither he will be able to stay in the village peacefully any more, nor he will get justice from the authorities.

Extremely few families in villages can enjoy large number of male members as a result of high child-death rates and relatively short average life-expectancy (particularly until recent years), and part of the children are naturally girls. Thus, families with 5,6 or more male members who are grown up together are very exceptional in a village.

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<sup>7</sup> André Hauriou, *Droit Constitutionnel et Institutions Politiques*, Paris, 1966, p. 507.

<sup>8</sup> Mr. Adnan Menderes.

During the Ottoman regime families with large number of male members could easily loose them in the successive wars. The republican period however, which is the only period of peace and economic development Turkish people has ever lived in centuries, has stabilized the position of power-families in villages. From the capitalistic type of national reconstruction efforts, it was principally those who already enjoyed the economic and social power who benefited mostly. Thus we see in all four villages that the same families have kept their power position throughout the republican regime. Only in one of them a new family has emerged as a successful rival to the existing power-family and this success it owes to its chief's being a wrestler (i.e., physically strong), to the growing up of its six male members of relatively the same age, the material and moral support it received from the ruling party's member of parliament representing the department A and from the altogether partizan administration in towns and cities.

Together with the factor of a period of peace in the origine of the power-position in villages, we must also mention the fact that none of the chiefs of the power families in these villages participated in the World War I or in the Wars of National Liberation either because they deserted or they entered the age of adulthood just after these wars. Whatever the case, this fact has played an important role in their power-position because in those days they were able to exploit their fellow villagers who were mostly old persons, women and children.

But once in power-position, these persons and their family members have enjoyed, throughout the Republican period, the support of the extra-village authority, that is, the central administration's authority and thus maintained their position. This observation that the power-structure in villages has been quite stable does not prove Mr. Paul Stirling's contention that after the death of the family-head the married brothers form separate families and divide the family lands and thus become one of the poor units of equal life chances in the village even if their original household were in power position.<sup>9</sup> Our field study shows that in none of the four villages has

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<sup>9</sup> See Paul Stirling, «The Domestic Cycle and the Distribution of Power in Turkish Villages,» in Julian Pitt-Rivers (ed.), *Mediterranean Countrymen*, Mouton and Co., 1963, pp. 203-216.

there been any such separation of sons in the power-families after the death of the head and any shifts of power from one family to another one.<sup>10</sup>

The power-persons in four villages are all physically very strong men and besides having many grown-up sons and large number of relatives their strong muscles also have been a factor of their power-position in the village. Everyone of them is capable of hitting on the face whoever would attempt to raise voice against his authority.

With respect to their level of education, the power-person in three of the four villages have had no schooling and learnt by themselves only how to read and write. Only in one village, in Demirköprü, the *ağa* families have male members with university degrees. Similarly, there are among them those who send their children (male children mostly) to secondary and higher schools as well as those who do not. But all of the power-persons in four villages consider school as the source of many evils (such as anti-religious opinions, equalitarian ideas, etc.) and efficiently try to make the peasants believe in that and thus to lower the prestige of education. They always talk so as to show themselves firm believers and criticize severely almost everything urban and see it as the outcome of Atatürk reforms. There are among them those who went to Mecca and became pilgrime and urged some peasants to do so by lending them money. Yet they actually behave quite to the contrary of religious morals: they drink a lot, hire dancing women and make parties with them, get involved in extra-marital relations with somebody else's wife, acquire illegitimately lands which belong to the public treasure, etc.

An increasingly important source of their power-position during the Republican period has been their close relations with the public administration: they have always had in their hands or under their absolute control the village headmanship which is the principal channel of establishing relation with various governmental services such as agricultural and veterinerian works, public works, banks, etc. Their influences on the civil servants have been reinforced through their membership in political parties. In fact they mostly belonged to both of the major political parties (the Democratic Party and the Republican Peoples' Party) at the same time, one brother belonging to DP and the other brother (or

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<sup>10</sup> İbrahim Yasa observed in his study of Hasanoğlan village that the two power-families in this village has been in this position since 150 years' time. See *Yirmibeş Yıl Sonra Hasanoğlan Köyü*, Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayını, Ankara, 1969, s. 172.



uncle, etc.) to RPP. This way they could maximize their profits from and influences on the public administration as well as the peasants. They manage to get very large amount of bank credits and in addition, the peasants depend on their sponsorship in order to get very modest amount of bank credits, such as 500 or 1000 TL. The village road, water, school, would be constructed by the administration in a shorter time and without difficulty when these power-persons mediate between the peasants and the public administration. Because of their party affiliation they have great partizan influences on the nomination and change of many civil servants in the district and even department center.

Among these power persons there are those who are district and department municipal assembly; they are chairmen or members in the executive boards of agricultural credit cooperatives, Farmers' Unions, political party organizations at the district or province levels, and various associations such as Mosque Construction Association, Koran Course Association, etc., which are organized under their leadership or sponsorship.

The power-persons maintained and increased their position after the introduction of multiparty system: some through shifting their former party and some through continuing to support the Republican People's Party. But many of these latter had one or two of their close relatives (brothers, cousins, etc.) to enroll to the other parties as well; on the other hand they were also still influential on the civil servants of the central administration even after the RPP lost power and became an opposition party. (Most of the power-persons supporting the RPP, however, have increasingly transferred to the Party of Confidence, which was formed by those dissident Republicans who protested after 1965 general elections against the RPP's new economic and social policy symbolized by the slogan of «Left of the Center»)

#### b) Power Persons-Peasant Relations

The main characteristics of the relations between the peasant mass and the power-persons are their exploiting nature and their being based on fear.

In the villages of *B*, before the recent spread of machine farming the *ağas* had many share-croppers and servants from among the peasants. And the peasants in general would not go to their own work unless the works on *ağa's* lands were completed. After the introduction of machine farming the *ağas* did not need any more share croppers and the number of their

servants decreased. A new way of influence emerged, however: the *ağas* had a monopoly over the ownership of most of the important farming machines, such as harvester, ... etc. Thus they began to till the peasants' lands with their machines for returns. But this change in machine farming has changed the character of the peasant-*ağa* relations. The term *Zor ağası* (= constraining *ağa*) is no more heard of so often as before 1960.

In Zeytinci villages machine farming is impossible and the man power is still very important in farming. However, due to the scarcity of land many villagers began to do seasonal non-rural works outside the village and this fact has decreased somewhat the peasants dependence on the *ağas*.

However the increase in *ağas*' influence on the administration, the accumulation of their wealth, the incapacity of the State in carrying out efficiently in many villages the services of social and economic security and the peasants' dependence on *ağa*'s mediation and sponsorship for even very small amount of credits from banks and businessmen keep peasants in their position of dependence on *ağas*. It is observed that peasants in all four villages refer to the traditional power persons and headmen (who are always either the power persons themselves or their close relatives or some very weak persons under their complete control) instead of official authorities in cases of conflicts among themselves. In the villages of *B* those who answered they would go in such cases directly to the official authorities in the district center amount only to 1/3 of the male respondents. Female respondents who answered in this way are very negligible in all four villages.

In both groups of villages the power persons are increasingly engaged in commerce and are thus taking steps towards extra-rural activities. Through these commercial activities they are expanding their influence to a larger area including other villages and even the neighbouring districts and departments. However, due to the lack of any efficient industrialisation and a real urbanization in the country as a whole, they can not afford to leave land altogether and consequently the *ağa*-peasant relations can not change its main characters significantly. The *ağas*' control over the peasants' communication is very great in all four villages. In *Beyköyü* and *Cebirli* they do not allow the opening of coffeehouses where one could engage in anonymous relations with others and with the outsiders; instead they impose on villagers to meet each-other in their own guest-rooms and it is here that villagers come together and discuss personal and village affairs most of the time. Naturally the *ağas* thus confirm their control and manipulation of village public opinion. In *Ağaçlı* the only coffee-house belongs to the one

of the power-persons himself and no anonymous relations can in fact be realized by the villagers in such a place.

The complete control of *ağas* over the headmanship as indicated above is another way through which the peasants' communication with the outside is kept under supervision. And the *ağas'* coffeehouses, shops, hotels, political party centers, lawyer, doctor, dentist... offices in the district or department centers are all the places where peasants automatically refer to when they are out of the village.

What makes the *ağas* functional within the village socio-economic structure is the fact that they have been rendering some services to the peasants. First and foremost, they are mediators between peasants and public administration. Secondly they give peasants the opportunity to buy on charge from their shops what they need for clothing, some foods such as sugar, tea, salt, gasoline etc. and such luxuries as bedstead, sawing machine, rug which only very few peasants and mostly in the villages of the department B can afford and thirdly, peasants see *ağas* as a social and economic security institution, since it is only *ağa* whom they have to rely on in case of need, for grain to sow, for oxen (in the villages of A) or tractor (in the villages of B) to plough and to harvest, for help in cases of natural disasters such as draught, sickness, etc., as there is not yet in Turkey an efficient service of agricultural insurance. In fact, even the public peace can not be efficiently secured by the Government in many villages and the *ağas* play a very important role in settling the disputes without letting the parties go to the official authorities in the district or department center. Peasants often voluntarily agree on that, as they have not confidence on the efficiency and impartiality of the officials; in addition they would thus avoid the expenses of the numerous legal and administrative formalities.

Of course there is a high price that *ağas* charge peasants for these services. He overcharges them when they buy on credit from his shop; he pays lower prices for their crops when they have to pay him in crop or underpays them when they pay him in labour in his farm. He gets their votes very largely for himself or for his party's candidates in national and local elections. Peasants have to close their eyes on *ağa's* many illegal interests which are often against their own interests. They are cowed by him. The relation between *ağas* and peasants are based primarily on fear of *ağa*.

Besides *ağas* there are a few secondary strong-men in all four villages. They are mostly relatives of the *ağas*; their lands are larger than those of

peasant majority and at the same time they are engaged in some sort of commercial activities such as grocery or commission merchandising. What is interesting is the fact that peasants who can not dare to oppose any action of *ağas* prefer discharging their discontentments through envying these second and third class strong-men and cause them difficulties in their way to develop their position in the village. The *ağas* themselves also cause very severe difficulties to such persons who tend to flourish conspicuously and these persons can not hope realistically to replace *ağas*.

Any study on village power structure must also take into consideration the great political influence that district-level power persons have on villages. This is the case for rather those villages which are far from the few large metropolitans, that is, for the very great majority of villages. In our case-studies this holds for the *Zeytinci* villages. These persons who are generally called district-level politicians are mostly engaged in various sorts of commerce (shop-keepers, contractors, hotel-keepers a.s.o). Politics is their second profession and through this they increase both their material wealth and their influence in their regions. There are interesting kinship relations between them and most of them come from landownership background. These district politicians are also in close solidarity with power persons in villages.

#### c) The Ideology of Power Persons:

It is intended here to study shortly communication behavior and political interests, knowledge, values and action of power persons in the villages.

*Communication behavior:* In this respect the first fact striking the eyes is that the power persons enjoy very large possibilities of using mass communication media and they actually use these possibilities. Communication among the people in the village and between the village and the outside world is always very largely under their control. They are the only ones to entertain close contacts with the public officials outside and to be informed first about the administration's new decisions and future projects. They are the key persons in the village whom the public officials refer to in putting into effect these decisions and in realising future projects. They have radios in their homes, they are subscribed to newspapers, and are in constant personal contacts with the power persons in other villages in district and department centers. Their shops, hotels, coffee-houses or guest-rooms, trucks or taxi-cabs, apartment houses (that they own in the city) are all sources of information for themselves.

*Political Orientations of Power Persons:*

In complete contrast to the peasant majority, the power persons entertain very vivid political interests; they are very well aware of the fact that politics is the major means of realising and maintaining their power and interests; they have the necessary knowledge and skills of political participation and make a good deal of use of them. In short, they are very well conscious in their choices and efficient in their actions. Up to the general elections of October 1965 there were, among the power persons, both those who sided with the Justice Party (the heir of the former Democratic Party which was banned after May 1960 coup d'Etat) and those who took side with the Republican People's Party, as there was not any significant difference between the economic programs and policies of these major parties in Turkey. But following the 1965 general elections during which the Republican People's Party began to advocate a new economic policy named by its leader as «Left to the Center Policy», those power persons in all four villages who had sympathized until then with the RPP, left rather quickly their party and turned to the Party of Confidence which was formed by those dissident elite members of the RPP.

As a result, the RPP has lost its powerful militants in all four villages. The Justice Party, on the contrary, is supported very heavily by these power persons in the villages, most of whom are engaged in some sorts of business activities and who approve very largely the economic policy of that party supporting large land owners and private business enterprises. All of these power persons pay very great attention to be known as firm believers. They propagate in the villages against the universities, the intellectuals and the youth in general. They accuse them of being infidel, etc.