

Ideology, Utopia and Practice: Rural Development in Turkey Until the Late 1940s (*)

Selami Mete AKBABA (**)

Abstract

In this study, rural development policies implemented in a country with a large proportion of its population living in rural areas are evaluated with their ideological justifications and practices. The period considered is from the end of the Empire to the post-World War II period, which can be considered the first phase of the nation-state, when industrialization efforts were still quite weak and economic expectations were focused on rural production. In order not to reduce the early republican period to a narrative of top-down policies, the following three elements were considered in the background: capitalism, progressivism, and the international conjuncture. In this context, this study first examines the ideology of statism, which can be considered as the ideology of the period, and then its manifestation in the countryside, peasantism. For this purpose, both the organic intellectuals and the leaders of the period were consulted, and the rural activities of the Halkevleri (People's Houses) were analyzed. The implementation of this discourse is discussed through the Model Villages, a kind of visual modernization project, and the Village Institutes, which aimed to radically transform the countryside through education. It is concluded that rural development policies played an important role and were decisive in the nation-building process.

Keywords: Rural Development, Statism, Peasantism, Model Villages, Village Institutes.

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(**) PhD Candidate, Hacettepe University, Graduate School of Social Sciences, Political Science; Research Assistant, Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Sociology.

E-mail: s.meteakbaba@gmail.com

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9406-0252>



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İdeoloji, Ütopya ve Pratik: 1940'ların Sonuna Dek Türkiye'de Kırsal Kalkınma (*)

Selami Mete AKBABA (**)

Öz

Bu çalışmada, nüfusunun büyük bir bölümü kırsalda yaşayan bir ülkede uygulanan kırsal kalkınma politikaları -ideolojik gerekçeleri ve uygulamaları ile- değerlendirilmiştir. Zaman aralığı olarak imparatorluk sonundan ulus-devletin ilk aşaması sayılabilecek İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası sanayileşme çabalarının henüz oldukça cılız olduğu ve ekonomik beklentilerin kırsaldaki üretime yoğunlaştığı dönem belirlenmiştir. Cumhuriyet'in erken dönemini tepeden inen politikalar anlatısına indirgememek için arka planda şu üç unsur göz önünde bulundurulmuştur: Kapitalizm, ilerlemecilik ve uluslararası konjonktür. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmada öncelikle dönemin ideolojisi olarak kabul edilebilecek devletçiliğin ne olduğu, akabinde, bunun kırsaldaki tezahürü köycülük tartışıldı. Bunun için bir yandan hem dönemin organik aydınlarına ve liderlerine başvuruldu hem de Halkevleri adlı uygulamanın kırsala yönelik çalışmaları ele alındı. Bu söylemin nasıl somutlaştığı ise bir tür görsel modernleştirme projesi olan model köyler uygulaması ve kırsalın eğitim ile kökten dönüşümünün hedeflendiği köy enstitüleri üzerinden tartışıldı. Sonuç olarak, kırsal kalkınma politikalarının ulus-inşası sürecinde önemli rol oynadığı ve belirleyici olduğuna ulaşıldı.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kırsal Kalkınma, Devletçilik, Köycülük, Numune Köyler, Köy Enstitüleri.

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(**) Doktora Adayı, Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Siyaset Bilimi Anabilim Dalı; Arş. Gör., Erzincan Binali Yıldırım Üniversitesi, Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi, Sosyoloji Bölümü

E-posta: s.meteakbaba@gmail.com

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9406-0252>



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Introduction

The intellectual origins of developmentalism can be traced back to the concept of progress in modern Western philosophy. In economic terms, its execution, involving political intervention in the market or vice versa, finds its roots in the early stages of capitalism. However, the distinct field of development studies emerged after World War II.¹ To offer a comprehensive definition of developmentalism, it encompasses state intervention in the market for economic reasons, where this intervention has not only economic practices but also legal, political, and social implementations. Developmentalism cannot be considered in isolation from capitalism and the need to intervene in it. In fact, it can be said that developmentalism, as the ‘fetishization of development,’ is an ideological product of capitalism.² Moreover, it is well known that capitalism does not spread throughout the world by emergence or export, but by diffusion. In other words, the premise of developmentalism is capitalism, and how this developmentalism takes shape is also influenced by regional differences in the development of capitalism. It should also be kept in mind that agrarian capitalism has been transformed in a very different way from industrial capitalism, that is, from the mainstream narrative of capitalist development. Therefore, in order to study the origins of market interventionism and developmentalism in rural Turkey, it is necessary to look at specific historical context rather than engaging in a theoretical discussion of developmentalism.

The historical context for understanding the origins and development of the rural developmentalism in Turkey involves three intertwined transformations. One is the development of capitalism from the Ottoman Empire to Turkey and its impact on the countryside. Another is the idea of development that began as progressivism in late Ottoman thought and was inherited by Republican cadres. The fact that the political and bureaucratic cadres of the early Republic era were also bureaucrats or soldiers in the Ottoman Empire makes this situation less surprising. The last is that state policy was shaped according to the international conjuncture. These three historical formations are essential to comprehend the phenomenon of rural transformation, which is frequently marginalized in comparison to urban development and industrialization in the context of developmentalism. Nevertheless, the relative importance of these formations is not the primary organizing principle of this discussion; rather, they are organized thematically. As this is a thematic discussion, the historical material is not presented in a linear way under the main headings. Instead, there will be a degree of back-and-forth transpositions for specific events, which will cover the period of nation-building. Moreover, as there is no linear progression from thought to politics, or from the international structure to thought and politics, and it is not possible to determine the degree of their importance, it is necessary to consider these historical formations in a thematic manner. It is evident that capitalism has been a precursor to developmentalism. However, it is

1 Ayşe Trak et al., “Development Literature and Writers from Underdeveloped Countries: The Case of Turkey [and Comments and Reply],” *Current Anthropology* 26, no. 1 (1985): 90.

2 Arif Dirlik, “Developmentalism: A Critique,” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 16, no. 1 (2014): 30-31.

crucial to avoid the trap of local exceptionalism, as local transformations have also played a role in shaping capitalist development. In other words, there is no need for a capitalized narrative of capitalism. For this reason, rather than treating theory and practice as distinct entities, I examine their interrelationship in the context of rural practice.

Although it represents the most significant development within the nation-building process in Turkey, rural developmentalism, in particular, was unfortunately addressed by outdated rural sociological studies.³ A brief examination of the literature reveals that developmentalism is frequently discussed in the context of industrialization. Conversely, the nation-building period cannot be considered independent of rural developmentalism, given that the majority of the population and the dominant factor in production is rural. In order to gain insight into this period, I have primarily applied to seminal works in the field of Turkish modernization. However, the significance of this study lies in its reexamination of themes emerging at the nexus of rural developmentalism and nation-building through the consultation of various publications in books and journals that are currently out of print. This choice is intended to facilitate an original contribution to the existing body of literature.

From a more comprehensive perspective, the research question of this study can be formulated as follows: How was rural developmentalism functionalized in the process of nation-building in Turkey during the early republican period? Investigating this comprehensive question indirectly allows us to answer the following fundamental question, which is beyond the scope of this study: How did rural communities in Turkey survive as small commodity producers until the 1980s? As is well known, until the mid-1980s Turkey was an exceptional country in both Europe and the Middle East, where the overwhelming majority lived in rural areas.⁴ The origin of this exceptional situation can be traced back to the developmentalist approach to the countryside during the nation-building process. To address the main question, I examine three main themes. The first is the rural manifestation of Kemalist ideology in the context of nation-building, which can be seen in the concept of peasantry. The second distinction is the utopian vision of the village based on this ideology. The model village represents this vision in its most “visual” form. The third is the village institutes, which

3 Although it is the subject of another study, it is worth briefly mentioning that the village monographs studies that began with Mehmet Ali Şevki’s attempts and his followers continued until the late 1940s were essentially an attempt to map rural society, rather than offering an analytical analysis. In essence, they remain silent with regard to nation-building and rural transformation. In the 1950s, an attempt was made to analyze rural society through its social structure. Marxist studies were also highly prevalent during this period. The Erdost-Boratav debate represents the pinnacle of this theoretical discourse. Nevertheless, although these studies have evaluated the rural with different theoretical frameworks, they have focused on class, status, and social change rather than on nation-building. Furthermore, by the end of the 1980s, its value as a rural research unit had been lost due to the implementation of neoliberal policies. There are many studies that present and discuss the literature review on the subject. Özüoğlu’s study can be regarded as a significant critical overview: Metin Özüoğlu, *Küçük Köylülüğe Sermaye Kapanı: Türkiye’de Tarım Çalışmaları ve Köylülük Üzerine Gözlemler* (Ankara: NotaBene Yayınlar, 2013).

4 Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (London: Abacus Book, 1995), 291.

represent the most important and arguably one of the most successful implementations of rural developmentalism in nation building. In which theoretical framework will these three elements (ideology as peasantism, utopia as model villages and practice as village institutes), that started in the 1920s and continued until the end of the 1940s, make sense? In other words, which theory of modernization can assist in this debate?

It is evident that in order to discuss rural developmentalism through nation-building, it is necessary to adopt a theoretical framework. This framework is predicated on Ernest Gellner's emphasis on the peasantry in his analysis of nationalism.⁵ It is first necessary to note that Gellner does not have a specific work on rural development. Nevertheless, Gellner has developed some general views and conceptual frameworks regarding the relationship between nation-building and rural transformation. In general, it is believed that nations are the product of modern industrial societies. In these societies, nationalism is the dominant ideology. Peasants residing in rural areas typically exhibit a strong attachment to their local communities and traditions, whereas nations are typically associated with the process of urban modernization and industrialization. Nevertheless, Gellner posits that the peasantry plays a pivotal role in nation-building. According to Gellner, during the construction of modern nations, peasants are endowed with a national identity. This is accomplished through the implementation of educational programs, language standardization initiatives, media campaigns, and other modernization tools. The transformation of peasants into a modern national identity is typically the result of an active intervention by the state and the implementation of educational and cultural policies. Gellner elucidates the interconnections between the transformation of rural communities and the formation of national identity and nationalism. He also examines the impact of the nation-building process on the lifestyles and identities of peasants. Furthermore, he emphasizes that during the process of nationalization, peasants were regarded as the purest ethnic source of the nation. In other words, while the peasants were nationalized, they were also mythically assumed to be the source of the nation.

Gellner's theoretical approach represent a contrasting to the prevailing perspective theories of modernization and nationalism studies, which are largely informed by the processes of industrialization and urbanization. Moreover, it is of significant importance for elucidating the modernization process in Turkey, where the rural plays a pivotal role.⁶ If it is necessary to specify in this study, in the early years of the Turkish Republic, these nationalist developments emerged in the context of nation-building as a peasantist ideology, manifesting as both utopian and practical designs. As such, this article addresses the ideological and practical aspects of the incorporation of rural populations into the nation through development policies. As

5 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

6 I would be remiss if I did not share the intriguing anecdote in this context. Gellner did not focus his research on rural Turkey, but in an article on Kemalism, he presented his observations following his invitation to Turkey for a political science conference. At the end of the conference, which centered on the significance of religion in social life, he concludes that the main topic of the conference was the prevention of Anatolian peasants from casting their votes for a political party offering religious promises. Ernest Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 84.

I conclude this section on the methodological aspects of the research, I feel compelled to briefly mention that the theoretical framework that will be utilized in this study is presented herewith. A separate theoretical discussion will not be attempted. This debate will be evaluated in the context of Turkish modernization, with historical data referring to primary sources. In a word, this research examines the subject of rural developmentalism in the nation-building process of Turkish modernization in the early republican period. It falls under the umbrella of modernization-nationalism research, while the concepts of statism and its offshoot peasantry are discussed in historical context.

The Origins and Development of Rural Development

The second half of the 18th century is important for understanding the integration into the capitalist market economy that began in the Ottoman Empire. During this period, the fact that the Ottoman Empire became part of the interstate system and was located on the periphery of capitalist Europe radically changed the old form of agricultural production. In a sense, production shifted from subsistence to cash crops, and distribution networks were renewed. Especially in the western provinces of the Ottoman Empire, non-Muslim merchants and their financial relations in the metropolises constituted the productive forces instead of the old bureaucratic elites.⁷ In addition, developments in transportation, such as the construction of railroads have integrated the domestic market and accelerated the incorporation of agricultural production into the foreign market.⁸ Undoubtedly, the fact that farmers produce for the market, in addition to their subsistence, is an indicator of the development of a market economy. However, it is necessary to consider its size and territoriality. For example, in Erzincan province, where I conducted part of the fieldwork for doctoral research, the share of production for the market was 2 per cent even in the 1920s.⁹ For a number of reasons, this period of relatively liberal economic policies proved to be relatively short-lived. The first is that the late Ottoman Empire was a state essentially identified with debt to the extent that some scholars picture it as a 'semi-colony'.¹⁰ Indeed, the very existence of the state was at stake. Second, late Ottoman economic challenges are often attributed to non-Muslims. With the rule of the Union and Progress Party (CUP), the name of the intervention in the economy became 'national economy'.¹¹ The main goal was to replace the non-Muslim bourgeoisie with the local bourgeoisie, i.e., Turkish and Muslim businessmen. This goal was sometimes achieved indirectly. For example, one of the main aims of the cooperative movement in the Second Constitutional Era was to promote

7 Reşat Kasaba, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 35.

8 Zafer Toprak, "Türkiye Tarımı ve Yapısal Gelişmeler 1900-1950," in *Türkiye'de Tarımsal Yapılar (1923-2000)*, ed. Şevket Pamuk and Zafer Toprak (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1988), 20.

9 İlhan Tekeli and Selim İlkin, *1929 Dünya Buhranında Türkiye'nin İktisadi Politika Arayışları* (Ankara: Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, 1977), 38.

10 Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi 1908-2009* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi Yayınları, 2015), 19-20.

11 See Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Milli İktisat 1908-1918* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2012).

the Turkification of the capital.¹² On the other hand, it is worth recognizing that some of these practices were direct and harsh. The Armenian massacre of 1915, the Greek population exchange of early Republic, the 1942 Wealth Tax and the 6-7 September 1955 Istanbul Pogrom are the concrete results of this policy from the late Ottoman Empire through the Republic of Turkey.¹³

While efforts to nationalize the economy have been ongoing since the final years of the Ottoman Empire, the rural and its agricultural sector remained the focus of state support and intervention until the 1980s. Given that the majority of the population lived in rural areas and worked in agriculture, the state had compelling reasons to support the agricultural sector. In 1930, according to some sources, the agricultural sector accounted for ninety percent of GDP, while others estimated it at between forty and fifty percent, employing 50 per cent of the workforce.¹⁴ The share of agriculture in foreign trade was slightly more than 70 per cent in 1970, while there was a dramatic decline after 1980.¹⁵ Along with its significant economic contribution, the tax revenue from agriculture amounted to 29 per cent of the total budget in the early years of the Republic. One of the most important steps taken to support agriculture during the Republican period was the abolition of the tithe tax (*aşar*),¹⁶ which was one of the most important sources of state revenue. Decisions on state intervention in the agricultural sector, including the abolition of this tax, were first taken at the Izmir Economic Congress in 1923. Among the most notable issues were the reactivation of the Agricultural Bank (*Ziraat Bankası*), the provision of credit to small farmers, the promotion of mechanization in agriculture, and the provision of agricultural education.¹⁷ It can be asserted that this period, which began with the Republic and ended with the Great Depression of 1929, was characterized by liberal economic policies, at least in comparison with the period that lasted until the 1950s. The constraints of the Treaty of Lausanne, such as the maintenance of low tariffs, also played a

12 Toprak, *Türkiye'de Milli İktisat*, 368.

13 Ayşe Buğra, "Two Lives of Developmentalism: A Polanyian View from Turkey," in *Development As A Battlefield*, ed. I. Bono and B. Hibou (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 45

14 İbrahim İnci, "1923-1960 Döneminde Türkiye'de Tarım Faaliyetleri Üzerinden Alınan Vergiler," *SAÜ Fen Edebiyat Dergisi* 11, no. 1 (2009): 111. Burcu Durak and Neslihan Coşkun Karadağ, "Türkiye'de Tarım Politikaları ve Vergilendirilmesi-1," *Hukuk ve İktisat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 9, no. 1 (2017): 93.

15 Alper Demirdöğen and Emine Olhan, "Türkiye Tarımının Kısa Tarihi: Destekleme Politikası Özeli," *Tarım Ekonomisi Dergisi* 23, no.1 (2017): 4.

16 The abolition of the tax in 1925, which accounted for 28.6 per cent of budget revenues in 1924, cannot be explained solely in terms of creating an economic advantage for agricultural progress. There is another important reason: in the early years of the Republic, a significant portion of the members of parliament were large landowning farmers. To compensate for the lost budget revenue resulting from the abolition of *Aşar*, it was later replaced by the *Ağnam* tax on livestock, but this too failed to generate more than 5.9 per cent of the revenue. It is claimed that additional taxes were imposed on sugar and kerosene in order to close this gap. See Nevzat Evrim Önal, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndan Cumhuriyet'e Geçişte Büyük Toprak Sahiplerinin Sınıfsal Rolü ve Dönüşümü," *ODTÜ Gelişme Dergisi* 39, no.1 (2012): 155-157.

17 Oğuz Esen, "1. İzmir İktisat Kongresi (17 Şubat-4 Mart 1923)," in *İzmir İktisat Kongresi ve Gelecek 10 Yıl*, ed. Oğuz Esen and Ercan Enç (İzmir: İzmir İktisat Kongresi, 1992), 1-9.

role in the economic liberalism of this period. In addition, as will be discussed in the section on land, the adoption of the Swiss Civil Code gave peasants the right to own land as individuals.¹⁸ As a result, peasants who had been cultivating a form of state-owned land known as *mîrî* land for centuries found themselves in more autonomous production conditions.

Statism as the Development Ideology

The brief period of this relatively liberal environment was to be short-lived. During the Great Depression that started in 1929, interventionist policies called statism began to be implemented.¹⁹ In general terms, statism can be defined as the state producing not only public goods and services but also market goods and services.²⁰ Yet it must be pointed out that the predominance of statist policies in the 1930s cannot be explained by economic reasons alone. There is also the case of the establishment of the Liberal Republican Party as an experiment in transition to a multi-party system and sudden rise of the opposition. After this brief experience with the multi-party system, the ruling party realized that if something was not done immediately to accelerate economic development, not only the welfare of the people but also the political security of the regime would be jeopardized.²¹ In other words, statism served as the government's political apparatus, albeit often idealized as protecting the state's interests over liberal economic freedom. Some groups consistently found profitable opportunities within the market economy. For instance, 74 per cent of the founders of companies established between 1931 and 1940 were bureaucrats.²² It should also be underlined that there was no distinct ideological differentiation and conflict of interest between bureaucrats and politicians during the single party period.

One of the results of the statist policies of the 1930s was the emphasis on state-led industrialization. In fact, this debate goes back a long way. The question was about the priority for the country's development: industrialization or agriculturalization? The debate stems from the roles of agriculture and industry as saviors of the economy.²³ The former idea was to support agriculture and import industrial goods. In the 1920s, when countries introduced protective policies for their agricultural products, resulting in 'overproduction', the prices of agricultural products fell more than industrial products during the Depression.²⁴ In addition,

18 Demirdöğen and Olhan, "Türkiye Tarımının," 6.

19 Kaleb Herman Adney and Michael O'Sullivan, "Capitalism, Growth, and Social Relations in the Middle East: 1869-1945," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 14.

20 İlhan Tekeli and Selim İlkin, *Uygulamaya Geçerken Türkiye'de Devletçiliğin Oluşumu* (Ankara: Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, 1982), 320

21 Arzu Varlı, "Devletçilik Politikalarının Tarım Kesimi Üzerindeki Etkileri (1930-1940)," *Öneri Dergisi* 10, no. 38 (2012a): 114.

22 Çağlar Keyder, *Türkiye'de Devlet ve Sınıflar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1995), 135-149

23 Toprak, *Türkiye'de Milli İktisat*, 332-337

24 Nadir Özbek, "Kemalist rejim ve popülizmin sınırları: Büyük Buhran ve buğday alım politikaları, 1932-1937," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 96 (2003): 220.

worsening climate conditions after the Depression reduced cereals production, which accounts for a significant share of agricultural output in Turkey.²⁵ Since Turkey's foreign trade consisted mainly of exports of agricultural products and raw materials as well as imports of industrial goods, Turkey's agricultural sector was much more affected by the Depression.²⁶ During this period, three industrial plans were implemented throughout the country in the years 1934-1938, 1939-1943, and 1945-1946.²⁷ On the other hand, unlike industrialization, agricultural development is not planned and is driven by social and economic concerns.²⁸ Therefore, rural policies were highly fragmented.

In the 1930s, industrialization was on the agenda and there were claims that taxes from the agricultural sector were being used for industrialization. In fact, these were indirect taxes on agricultural products, but they were not ploughed back into agriculture as investment, they were used for industrialization.²⁹ Nevertheless, the government has not failed to intervene when it comes to agriculture. For example, in 1929, one hundred thousand acres of land were expropriated, a quarter of which was taken from big landowners. The expropriated land was distributed to landless peasants.³⁰ Furthermore, throughout the 1930s, in parallel with the increase in agricultural employment, innumerable lands opened for cultivation.³¹ The reason for this was that during the long war period that started with the Balkan Wars in 1912, villagers were displaced for military reasons and therefore there was a problem of land scarcity during the Republican period.

The statism of the 1930s has even been described as 'the most important experiment in the economic formation of the history of the Republic.'³² Moreover, it is even claimed that the most important function in the commodification of this era of the Republic was performed by the *Kadro* journal during this period. The reason for such a characterization is the utopian dream of the *Kadro* writers, who characterized the new nation-state as a classless state and their goal as the construction of a classless society. *Kadro*, published by a group of 'patriotic leftist' bureaucrat-intellectuals in 1932-1934 in a total of 36 issues, is an important document with its proposals

25 Şevket Pamuk "War, State Economic Policies and Resistance by Agricultural Producers in Turkey 1939-1945" in *Peasants And Politics In The Modern Middle East*, ed. F. Kazemi and J. Waterbury (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1991), 127.

26 Mehmet Kayıran and Mustafa Yahya Metintaş, "Türkiye'nin Tarım Politikaları (1918-1938)," *Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 12, no. 1 (2021): 121.

27 B. Ali Eşiyok, "Sanayi Planlarından 1947 Türkiye İktisadi Kalkınma Planı'na: Bir Dönüşümün Kısa Bir Öyküsü," *Memleket Siyaset Yönetim* 4, no. 11 (2009): 88.

28 İlhan Tekeli and Selim İlkin, (1988). "Devletçilik Dönemi Tarım Politikaları (Modernleşme Çabaları)," in *Türkiye'de Tarımsal Yapılar (1923-2000)*, ed. Şevket Pamuk, & Zafer Toprak (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1988), 37.

29 Arzu Varlı, "Devletçilik Politikalarının," 116.

30 Kayıran and Metintaş, "Türkiye'nin Tarım," 123.

31 Yahya Sezai Tezel, *Cumhuriyet Döneminin İktisadi Tarihi (1923-1950)* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1982), 325.

32 Yalçın Küçük, *100 Soruda Planlama, Kalkınma ve Türkiye* (İstanbul: Gerçek Yayınevi, 1971), 209.

for rural areas and their development.³³ Feudalism was the most frequently cited agrarian problem. However, they addressed it not only from an economic point of view but also from an ethnic one. For example, they claimed that Turks were becoming Kurds because of feudalism. Ironically enough, they contended that this was not a question of nationality but of class.³⁴ This claim also coincides with the vision of the nation-state. Because of this attitude, they were criticized quite harshly by the socialists³⁵ Nevertheless, the journal is an important document as it reflects the views of the nation-state's organic intellectuals on rural development. The writers advocated the need for land reform and argued that planned development should not be limited to industry but should also be applied to agriculture.³⁶ In a sense, the government's statist policies were criticized even by these organic intellectuals for concentrating on industry while agriculture was left out. In summary, the journal reflected the idea of peasants producing for the market and it developed their proposals on how this could be done in a systematic way.³⁷ In producing for the market, they envisioned that peasant producers would remain within the limits of production and distribution plans set by the state. It is also said that they added a planned economy to the national economy, thus inventing a statist socio-economic discourse.³⁸ Although characterized as a leftist intellectual movement at the time, they envisioned adapting statist planning to capitalist market conditions.

The issue of rural policies, which the *Kadro* writers also sought a solution through planning, is in fact an important indicator of the huge gap between discourse and practice. On the one hand, the discourse of Kemalist populism glorifies the peasantry and agriculture. There are many examples. For instance, the founding father of the Turkish Republic made the following remarks in his speech he delivered at the opening of the parliament in 1922:

“Who is the owner and master of Turkey? Let us answer this question together: The real owner and master of Turkey is the peasant, the real producer. Therefore, it is the peasant who deserves and is worthy of prosperity, happiness, and wealth more than anyone else. Therefore, the economic policy of the government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey is aimed at achieving this important goal.”³⁹

33 Mustafa Türkes, “The ideology of the Kadro [cadre] movement: a patriotic leftist movement in Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 4 (1998): 92-119.

34 Temuçin Faik Ertan, “Kadroculara Göre Türkiye’de Tarımsal Kalkınma ve Toprak Sorunu,” in *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nin Ekonomik ve Sosyal Tarihi Uluslararası Sempozyumu Bildiriler (Cilt 1)*, ed. E. Ünlen (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Yayınları, 2017), 635-638.

35 Muhammet Ali Sağlam, “Kadro Dergisinin/Hareketinin Kırsala Bakışı,” *Tarih Okulu Dergisi*, no. 48 (2020): 3457.

36 Ertan, “Kadroculara Göre,” 653.

37 Eşiyok, “Sanayi Planlarından,” 88

38 Arzu Varlı, “Kadro Dergisi Üzerinden Bir Deneme: “Milli İktisat’tan Devletçiliğe,” *Öneri Dergisi* 10, no. 37 (2012b): 167-174.

39 Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi, “Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi I. Dönem 3. Yasama Yılı Açılış Konuşmaları,” *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi* 18, no. 2 (1922). It should be noted that the block quotations from the official journals (*Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi* and *Resmî Gazete*) were translated from Turkish to English

Fifteen years after this speech, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk said the followings in another opening speech to the parliament:

“Agriculture is the foundation of the national economy. Therefore, we attach great importance to the development of agriculture. Programmed and practical efforts to be extended to the villages will facilitate the achievement of this goal. However, in order to achieve this important goal in a proper manner, it is first necessary to formulate an agricultural policy based on serious studies and to establish an agricultural system that can be easily understood and implemented by every farmer and citizen.”⁴⁰

In 1930, İsmet İnönü, also a prominent member of the founding cadre of the nation-state and the first prime minister and the second president of the Republic, said: ‘We are a peasant government established in the middle of Anatolia.’⁴¹ In the early years of the Republic, it is easy to find statements by the political elite glorifying the peasantry and claiming to prioritize their development. On the other hand, in practice, except for the abolition of the *Aşar*, the First Agricultural Congress,⁴² and the Agricultural Bank’s wheat procurement policy⁴³ and Agricultural Sales Cooperatives that prevented price fluctuations, there was no practical remedy for the village and agriculture in the 1920s and 1930s.⁴⁴

Peasantism as the Ideology of Rural Development

Although Turkey was not involved in World War II, statist policies were further tightened. Measures were intensified to provide food for one million soldiers and the big cities, while the National Protection Law (*Milli Koruma Kanunu*) was enacted in 1940. According to this law, all rural production relations were regulated by the state, including the quantities of production and consumption, the setting of prices, and the prevention of the free market.⁴⁵ However, the transformation of rural Turkey until the end of the 1940s cannot be explained by agricultural production alone because this economic practice of the state was accompanied by ideological

by the author.

40 Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi, “Atatürk’ün Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisinin V. Dönem 3. Yasama Yılına Açış Konuşmaları,” *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi* 20, no. 3 (1937).

41 “Türk Ziraat Tarihine Bir Bakış,” *Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi* (İstanbul: Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi Yayını, 1938), 277.

42 In 1931, the First Agricultural Congress was organized, which was attended by farmers and produced 120 final reports, but the outcome of this workshop only influenced the First Five-Year Industrial Development Plan in terms of raw material requirement of industries and was a precursor to the First Rural and Agricultural Development Congress in 1938. See Selma Yavuz, “Birinci Ziraat Kongresi, Alınan Kararlar ve Cumhuriyet Dönemi Ziraat Politikalarına Yansımaları” (MA diss., Niğde Üniversitesi, 2012). 110-111.

43 In 1938, this practice was separated from the Bank and institutionalized as the Turkish Grain Board (*Toprak Mahsülleri Ofisi*, TMO). See Yakup Kepenek, *Türkiye Ekonomisi* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2014), 72.

44 Tekeli and İlkin, *Uygulamaya Geçerken*, 331. Özbek “Kemalist rejim,” 237.

45 Sefer Şener, “İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yıllarında Türkiye’de Tarım Politikası Arayışları,” *Kocaeli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 7, no. 1 (2004): 73-92.

interventions. The concept of peasantism (*köycülük*) as a Kemalist sub-ideology in the early years of the Republic, along with its outcomes, such as the village institutes and the ideal republic village project, are significant socio-political developments. In a way, they can be seen as precursors to the socio-political and 'intellectual' aspects of rural developmentalism.

The origins of peasantism can be traced back to the Second Constitutional Era and the Turkish Hearth (*Türk Ocağı*) the institutional form of nationalism at the time. Some of the important intellectuals of this period had come to Turkey from Tsarist Russia and were impressed by Panslavism and the Russian *Narodniks'* ideologies of populism and peasantism. They published the magazines Turkish Homeland (*Türk Yurdu*) and Towards the People (*Halka Doğru*) as publications of Turkish Hearth in order to reach out to the Anatolian people.⁴⁶ They aimed to foster a stronger connection between working public and those working for the public. When they referred to 'the people,' they had in mind peasants with minimal or no land, small business owner, and laborers.⁴⁷ Peasantism makes its first official appearance with the Association of Peasantism (*Köycüler Cemiyeti*), founded by a group of doctors who were also members of the Turkish Hearth after World War I.⁴⁸ However, the ideology gained influence in the 1930s. In fact, the ideology of peasantism gained strength as an anti-communist third way against the influence of liberalism in European countries during the interwar period. While the economic reason for this was the impact of the Great Depression, the socio-political reason was the spread of nationalist ideologies which viewed villages and their peasants as the source of ethnic and national foundation.⁴⁹ In the case of Turkey, Kemalism necessitated the adoption of territorial nationalism. On the one hand, the founding cadre of the new state was involved in nation-building through citizenship. On the other hand, there were ongoing discussions about the origin of the term 'Turk,' where every citizen was considered to be a Turk. In a sense, the founding cadre was compelled to establish the ethnic origin of this nation, as theories were being developed to assert that those residing in Anatolia who were not Turkish had, in fact, originated as Turks but had deviated from this identity due to degeneration. Various theories were proposed, suggesting that many communities from antiquity to modern Anatolia could be considered as the ethnic ancestors of the Turks, the founding nation of the new-born state. Anatolia became the focal point for establishing this form of nationalism. Several intellectual or academic at first glance, but essentially highly ideological attempts emerged during this period. One should refer to the Turkish History Thesis, the Sun-Language Theory, Anatolianism, the Turkish renaissance or Anatolian humanism, and peasantism, aimed at addressing the issue of ethnic identity within the borders of the Republic. Nevertheless, in small towns and villages,

46 Zafer Toprak, "Osmanlı Narodnikleri: "Halka Doğru" Gidenler," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 24 (1984): 69-81.

47 See Füsün Üstel, *İmparatorluktan Ulus-Devlete Türk Milliyetçiliği: Türk Ocakları (1912-1931)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004).

48 M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu, "Türkiye'de Köycülük" in *Kemalizm Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt 2*, ed. A. İnsel (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009a), 285.

49 M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu, "Agrarian Populism as an Ideological Discourse of Interwar Europe," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 26, (2002): 59-93.

individuals' primary identity remained religious.⁵⁰ For this reason, Kemalist intellectuals undertook the mission of enlightening the rural population, a mission of modernization that would bring out the pure Turkishness in them. The claim that the rural population is less degenerate than the urban population is also in the background of this equation.

During the interwar period, *Ülkü*, one of the journals of *Halkevleri*⁵¹, became the advocate of the ideology of peasantism in Turkey. According to the authors of the journal, the peasant is an object that needs to be modernized, from democracy to agricultural production. For example, they believed that the peasants were not ready for democracy and needed to be educated. When talking about this civilizing mission to be brought to the villages, 'American missionaries' and 'colonists who brought civilization to Africa' were directly cited as successful examples.⁵² In addition, the development of villages instead of urbanization was the main issue.⁵³ In 1936, after the then prime minister Celal Bayar harshly criticized the journal for giving priority to agriculture in the question of industry or agriculture, the journal's advocacy of peasantism decreased.⁵⁴ Although the peasantism in the journal has lost its importance, the debates on peasantism were gaining practice at the socio-political level.

The Peasantist Branches (*Köycülük Kolları*) and its subgroup Village Chamber (*Köy Odası*) were set up as a branch of the People's Houses, with the task of 'enlightening' the villagers by going to the villages. The members of the division had two main tasks. One was to contribute to the social, sanitary, and artistic development of the villages. The other was to promote feelings of love and understanding between the villagers and the townspeople.⁵⁵ The main activity of this branch, which grew to 154,000 members in 1940, was for urban intellectuals to visit the villages and educate the peasants on every subject from agricultural production to health.⁵⁶

50 Anthony D. Smith, *Millî Kimlik*, trans. B.S. Şener (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 164.

51 Halkevleri (the People's Houses) were opened by the Republican People's Party in 1932. Also, Halkevleri were established in place of Türk Ocakları (Turkish Hearths), founded in 1912 by nationalists who had played an active role in the Second Constitutional Era, which was perceived as a political threat in the early Republican Era. Halkevleri was an important initiative of the Kemalist enlightenment project. Their purpose was to educate ideal citizens for the nation-state. See Kemal H. Karpat, "Social Effects of Farm Mechanization in Turkish Villages," *Social Research* 27, no. 1 (1960): 83-103. Moreover, the Halkevleri initiative was one of the measures taken after the success of the Liberal Republican Party. See M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu, "The People's Houses and the Cult of the Peasant in Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 4 (1998): 68. As I briefly mentioned above, the political aspect of statism in the 1930s was also shaped by the fear of losing power that the government experienced after this short-lived experiment with a multi-party system.

52 Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernizm ve Ulusun İnşası: Erken Cumhuriyet Türkiye'sinde Mimari Kültür* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2020), 125.

53 Funda Gençoğlu Onbaşı, "Halkevleri ve Ülkü Dergisi: Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Köycülük Tartışmaları," *Çağdaş Yerel Yönetimler* 20, no. 3 (2011): 80-84.

54 Karaömerlioğlu, "The People's Houses," 81-82.

55 Türkan Çetin, "Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye'de Köylü Politikası" (PhD diss., Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, 1997), 110.

56 Karaömerlioğlu, "The People's Houses," 70-71.

It would not be unfair to characterize these intellectual developments as the Turkish version of ‘white man’s burden.’ Although most of the interventions were no more than intellectual sketches, at their core was not socio-economic development, but the idea of a social revolution of the peasants. When this utopic revolution is realized, the already pure peasant will form the core of the classless utopian society. The task of the intellectuals is to eliminate the feudal residue and bring out the essence of the peasant. It is a very direct example of essentialism; the peasants are an object waiting for brave Kemalist intellectuals to reveal their pure but contaminated nature. Furthermore, it is reasonable to evaluate this debate by examining two projects of peasantism, namely the Ideal Republican Village Project and the Village Institutes.

Model Villages as the Utopia of Rural Development

The first concrete example of the discussions on the transformation of the village can be seen in the proposal of the Association of Peasantism to create a model village in 1919. According to this proposal, a group of peasantists comprising doctors, engineers, teachers, and agriculturalists would build a village in Anatolia and show the peasants how to produce more efficiently.⁵⁷ This project was rejected by the headquarters due to the proposal that peasantists should also work in the village.⁵⁸ However, during the Republican period, as an implementation of the 1924 Village Law, the Model Villages Project was put into practice. The primary reason for the establishment of new villages in the early years of the Republic was the settlement of immigrants who arrived in Anatolia following World War I and the Greek-Turkish War.⁵⁹ It is known that a total of 69 model villages (*numune köyler*) were built for immigrants until 1934.⁶⁰ This migration was called population exchange between Turkey and Greece. An architect described the situation as follows: “Every day, people of Turkish blood are coming to the mother country, caravan after caravan, to fill the population that Turkey needs. This phenomenon is a matter of internal colonization.”⁶¹ The emphasis on ‘internal colonization’ is important because it enables the Turkification of the rural as part of the nation-state’s settlement policy. In another article, the architect-author provides examples of internal colonization in various countries, citing Germany, during the National Socialist era, as one of the most successful instances.⁶² It is also claimed that ideal village plans are an implementation of the 19th century European ideal city plans. In accordance with the nation-building mentality, the mosque is excluded. In the center there is a public square, a café with a library and a school.⁶³ There are various

57 Üstel, *İmparatorluktan Ulus-Devlete*, 116-118.

58 Türkan Çetin, “Modern Türkiye Yaratma Projesinin Orijinal Bir Boyutu: Örnek Köyler,” in *75 Yılda Köylerden Şehirlere*, ed. O. Baydar (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1999), 232.

59 Özge Sezer, “Forming the Rural Settlements in Early Republican Turkey,” *SHS Web of Conferences* 63, no. 1004 (2019): 3.

60 Hilal Tuğba Örmecioglu, “Cumhuriyetin İlk Yıllarında Köycülük Tartışmaları ve Numune Köyler,” *Belleten* 83, no. 297 (2019): 735

61 Zeki Sayar, “İç kolonizasyon (Kolonisation interieure),” *Arkitekt*, no. 02-62 (1936a): 46.

62 Zeki Sayar, “İç Kolonizasyon (Başka memleketlerde)” *Arkitekt*, no. 08-68 (1936b), 231-235.

63 Özge Sezer, “Turkey’s Modernization and Nation-Building Processes,” in *Mapping Nations, Locating*

interventions to popularize secular nation-building in the countryside. For example, when drawing a grid-like village plan, the name of Ahi Mesud is changed to Etimesut.⁶⁴ In another example, the originally Arabic name of *Zulfazl* is now made into *Solfasol*. This is an attempt to reinvent and reconstruct the history by erasing the Islamic past.

In fact, at the core of this nation-building as social engineering is found a significant rationalization project. Similar to the position of the peasant in the ideology of peasantism, the village is not a living subject with its own dynamics, but rather an object awaiting rationalization through the intervention of architects. In essence, the desired outcome involves reconstructing the 'archaic' peasant and village by removing them from their historical contexts. For example, the two figures below show two village projects designed during the Kemalist period. The first is a grid plan prepared to be implemented as a model village according to the conditions of the time. The second is the Ideal Village Project, which seems to have been taken from a utopian text. Although the architect of the Ideal Republican Village (Figure 2) is unknown, it was presented in 1937 by Kazım Dirik to Afet İnan, one of the most important organic intellectuals of the time and the inventor of the Turkish History Thesis. Having served as governor and general supervisor, Dirik was one of the most important bureaucrats of his time. Moreover, Ideal Republican Village is included in the appendix of the book written by Afet İnan on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Republic.⁶⁵ In other words, although it may seem utopian today, this project was designed to be put into practice. It is an important document that is an affirmation and reflection of what a village should be like in the Kemalist discourse.

The village was designed in the shape of a circle. In the center of the circle there is an area for the monument. In the first ring around the monument, there are the cooperatives, the school, the studying room, the conference hall, the village hall, and the Republican People's Party mansion, as well as businesses that meet daily needs such as barbers, tailors, grocers, blacksmiths, carpenters, bakeries, and hotels. The mosque, bathhouse, agricultural and handicraft museum, village casino, veterinarian, midwife, and youth club are located in the second ring. The houses in the other rings are also arranged at regular intervals. The production units are the factories and the collective nursery in the last ring around the village, and outside the village there is a fairground, a sports field, a grove, a dairy farm, lime, and stone quarries. The map suggests that this village is designed as a self-sufficient unit, from construction to production to heating. The education of the villagers is as important as their daily needs. While the school and public education provide this, the party is also there. The fact that the largest production unit on the map is the factory is a claim that the village is also a center of industrialization, as some of the peasantists had previously argued.

In a setting where everything is measurable, the rationalization mechanism places the

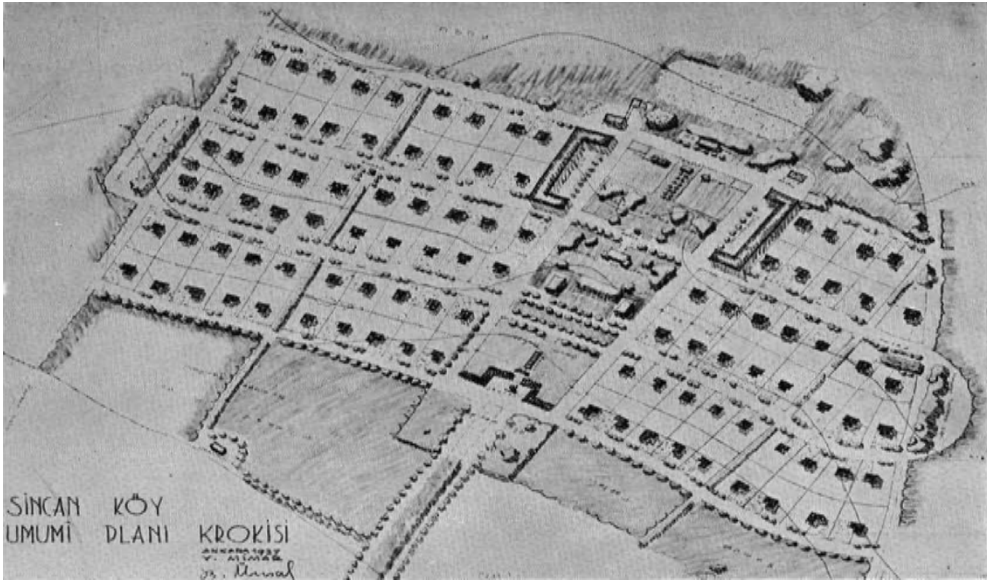
Citizens: Interdisciplinary Discussions on Nationalism and Identity, ed. D. Hambly (Toronto: Humber Press, 2017), 61.

64 Zeynep Eres, "Türkiye'de Planlı Kırsal Yerleşmelerin Tarihsel Gelişimi ve Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Planlı Kırsal Mimarisinin Korunması Sorunu" (PhD diss., İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi, 2008), 134-135

65 See Afet İnan, *Devletçilik İlkesi ve Türkiye Cumhuriyetinin Birinci Sanayi Planı 1933* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1972).

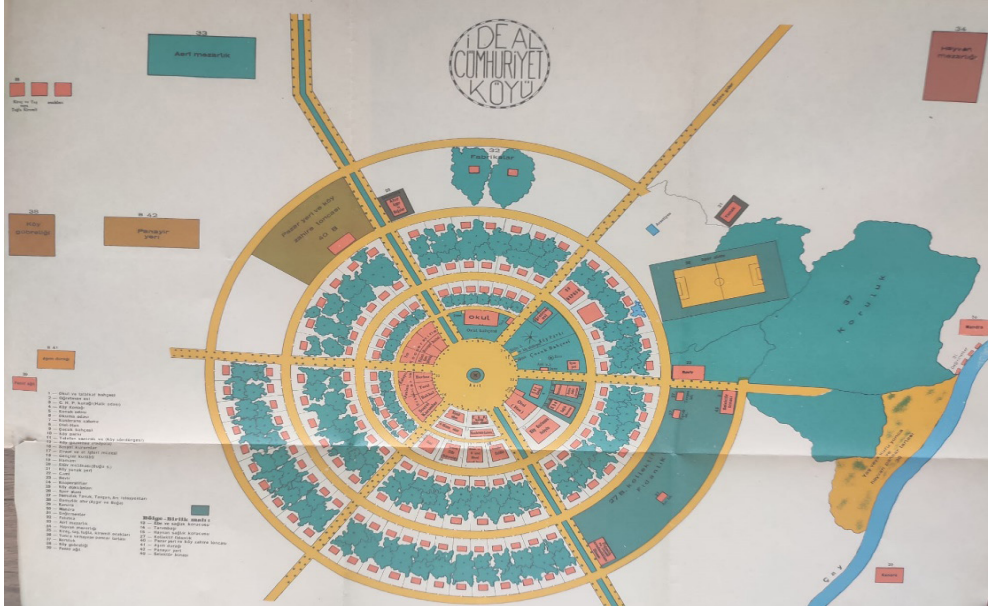
villagers in a village, almost like a chess piece. A mechanism that even works like a clock is envisioned for the countryside. However, what is not taken into account here is that rural production is based on agriculture and its determinant is often environmental and non-human conditions. For example, even today in villages the barn and the house are together, not because animal husbandry is a job with a shift schedule, but because it is a profession with emergencies and rituals that go on at all times of the day. In this project, however, the barn is on the outermost ring of the village and is a very small unit. Moreover, there are no farms and threshing floors. In fact, it looks more like a plan of a European city than a village. While researching whether rural planning projects similar to this utopian design were implemented in Turkey, I discovered the village of Atça in Aydın. At the forefront of this initiative was an engineer from Atça⁶⁶ who had studied in Paris at the time. He undertook the reconstruction of his war-damaged hometown in 1926, basing his approach on imitating the urban planning model of Paris. However, the reason why a village in Turkey could merit the application of a city plan can be understood in terms of the mission that the Kemalist ideology imposes on the people. In short, it is 'for the people despite the people.' Intervening without consent, especially in rural areas, as an object, is one of the main reasons why the Republican People's Party lost power in the multi-party period as a return of the repressed.

Figure 1. Today a district with a population of around 600,000, Sincan was re-designed in 1937 as a village outside Ankara for those who immigrated to Turkey from Romania.⁶⁷



66 For further information in Turkish regarding the village planning: Selma Çelikyay and Tuğçe Yurtkulu, "Atçadaki Peyzajı Biçimlendiren Planlı Kentsel Gelişim Üzerine İrdelemeler," *Bartın University International Journal of Natural and Applied Sciences* 1, no. 1 (2018): 18-28.

67 Behçet Ünsal, "Sincan Köyü Plânı," *Arkitekt*, no. 1-2(109-110) (1940): 15-18.

Figure 2. Ideal Republic Village (İdeal Cumhuriyet Köyü).⁶⁸

In the 1930s, Kemalism worked intensively on the production and dissemination of a “visual culture of modernity,” from clothing to architecture.⁶⁹ Architecture was an important pillar of this visual modernity. In the rural, however, with the exception of a few examples built for immigrants, model villages remained a utopia for the Kemalist modernization mission. On the other hand, Kemalism has been very effective in the education of the peasants. The Village Institutes are the most important institution with this kind of effectiveness. The Institutes (1940-1954) were one of the most important state interventions for rural development in the early Republican period. Also, for the ‘left-wing’ Kemalists, it is the most important artifact of Kemalism.⁷⁰ Hasan Ali Yücel emphasized that the Village Institutes, which were opened during his term as the Minister of Education, were inspired by the love of the nation and that their principles were not based on pedagogical books and educational theories, but on the development of the nation.⁷¹

Village Institutes

Professional agricultural education has been practiced since the mid-19th century, and during

68 İnan, *Devletçilik İlkesi*, appendix II-7.

69 Bozdoğan, *Modernizm ve Ulusun İnşası*, 80-81.

70 M. Asım Karaoermerlioğlu, “Köy Enstitüleri,” in *Kemalizm Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt 2*, ed. A. İnel (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009b), 286.

71 Gül Şimşek and Cansın Mercanoğlu, “Bir ‘Planlama Örneği’ Olarak Köy Enstitüleri Deneyimi,” *Planlama* 28, no. 3 (2023): 263.

the Single Party period. Courses were opened in villages.⁷² However, such a comprehensive attempt to transform the village socially and economically is unprecedented. One of the peculiarities of these schools, which were intended to educate the peasants in practical matters, was that their teachers were also chosen from among the peasants.⁷³ Assuming that a teacher trained in the city would not adapt to the village, the idea was to realize national education by employing someone who knew the village and lived there.⁷⁴ The conditions of service within these educational institutions, specifically designed to prepare teachers for rural environments, were characterized by a level of rigidity comparable to mandatory military service. However, it is important to note that these teachers are not recruited for military service; they are required to work for 20 years in locations designated by the Ministry of Education. The purpose of their service is outlined in the law as follows:

“Teachers who have graduated from village institutes are assigned to various teaching and educational roles in the villages to which they are designated. Their responsibilities include guiding villagers and ensuring that they benefit from the facilities, such as model farms, vineyards, gardens, workshops, etc., which the teachers themselves will establish to promote scientific agricultural practices.”⁷⁵

Due to the budgetary constraints of the World War II era, the Institutes were designed with minimal expense and primarily as self-sufficient organizations. Schools were established on large campuses in the countryside. Each institute had a regional sphere of influence and was specialized to serve and produce for the region. For example, the area of influence of the Cılavuz Village Institute (Susuz, Kars), which I visited by chance during the field research of my doctoral study, is Artvin, Ardahan, Kars, and Iğdir. Its local-specific productions are as follows: Cherry trees, cattle and sheep breeding, potato cultivation, beekeeping, orchards, hydroelectric power plant construction and electricity generation.⁷⁶ On the one hand, the production in accordance with the conditions of the region and, on the other hand, the technological advancement of the region. With this characteristic, the Institutes were one of the most important initiatives for the planned development of the rural areas in this period.

It is necessary to look at the framework of the formal responsibilities of their teachers to understand the mission of these schools. The duties of the teachers, who were responsible for everything from building the school to caring for the animals, were as follows:

1. To improve the national culture of the villagers, to educate them in accordance with the conditions and requirements of the century in the field of social life, to take

72 Toprak, “Türkiye Tarımı,” 26-28.

73 Pakize Türkoğlu, “Köy Enstitülerinde Köyden Alma-Köye Gönderme Politikası,” in *75 Yılda Köylerden Şehirlere*, ed. O. Baydar (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1999), 220-224.

74 Zeynep Kalyoncuoğlu, “Köy Enstitüleri’nde Hasan Ali Yücel’in Yeri,” *folklor/edebiyat* 16, no. 64 (2010): 239.

75 Resmî Gazete “Köy Enstitüleri Kanunu,” *Resmî Gazete*, no. 4491 (1940): 13682.

76 Şimşek and Mercanoğlu, “Bir ‘Planlama Örneği,’” 275-276.

the necessary measures to disseminate and strengthen the positive values of the village culture, to hold ceremonies on national holidays, school openings, and working days in accordance with local and national customs and to organize, regulate and conduct them on the basis of folk songs, dances, marches and musical instruments, and to enable the villagers to benefit as much as possible from the radio.

2. To carry out exemplary work in the fields of agriculture, art, and technology to improve the economic life of the village; to open exhibitions in schools and help organize fairs in other suitable places; to provide necessary assistance to villagers in taking measures to increase production, add value to products and revitalize the business life of the village; to interest the public and students in organizations related to the development of economic life such as markets, exhibitions, fairs, museums, etc., to try to increase the knowledge of forestry and to explain the benefits and protection of forests; to help in the protection of existing village forests and the establishment of new ones.

3. To cooperate with the village head, villagers, and other relevant organizations in the restoration of historical monuments and artifacts that have natural and technical value that constitute the beauties of the country; to identify and protect animal and plant species that should not be exterminated and atrophied.

4. To provide all possible assistance in all matters relating to the welfare and disaster of the villagers, to take the necessary protective measures, and in such cases to notify the governmental authorities in writing or to go and report to them in a timely manner.

5. To cooperate with the villagers in matters relating to the public interest and the survival of the State and the people of the village, such as national defense, cooperative work, helping soldiers' families, extinguishing forest and village fires, acquiring agricultural and transportation vehicles in partnership, establishing and operating all kinds of cooperatives, and to work according to the requirements of these works.

6. According to the environment and the equipment to be provided, to make all kinds of attempts, take possible measures and work for the realization of these issues in order to train the village youth in active and lively qualities such as swimmers, skiers, wrestlers, riders, shooters, hunters, bicycle, motorcycle, and tractor users.⁷⁷

In view of these broad terms of reference, it is not difficult to argue that the Institute's mission was to take care of everything rural. It could even be said that the state has placed the burden of rural services on the Institutes.

Culture is the most important issue in this model of education. It is even claimed that only culture-based subjects are taught twice as much as in regular schools.⁷⁸ In this context, culture aligns with the concept of technical progress. There are three main topics in the curriculum of these schools: cultural courses (50 percent), agricultural courses and practices (25 percent),

77 Resmî Gazete, "Köy Okulları ve Enstitüleri Teşkilat Kanunu," *Resmî Gazete*, no. 5141 (1942): 3244-3245.

78 Mevlüt Kaplan, *Aydınlanma Devrimi ve Köy Enstitüleri* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2002), 69.

and technical courses and practices (25 percent).⁷⁹ Designed as a catalyst for the cultural development of rural communities, this educational endeavor is also expected to transform the existing social order. However, the idea that the institute changed social relations is highly controversial. In fact, one of the main purposes of the institutes is to take the village out of a stable state and make it dynamic.⁸⁰ In this context, the village itself is not a fragmented structure, but a unified unit. In sum, the role of the Institutes is one of cultural transmission. Karaömerlioğlu even stated that ‘there was also a hostile attitude towards abstract knowledge in the institutes, which can be defined as anti-intellectualism.’⁸¹ As can be seen from the intensity of the practical courses in the curriculum, the aim of the school was not to change the established social order, but to produce peasants who struggled against nature. This was an idea inherited from peasantism.⁸² The aim was to develop the peasants technically and make them a master against nature. The planned technical development includes the knowledge and use of agricultural and mechanical tools and the knowledge of the rules of etiquette. In this case, as Norbert Elias explains its development in detail, the struggle against nature essentially stems from a dichotomy between humanity/culture/civilization vs. nature.⁸³ In this narrative of progress, modernization gains value as a result of humanity’s achievement and struggle against nature. The Institutes also undertook the mission of civilizing the peasants through education. There is an implicit but fundamental assertion that the peasants are still in the state of nature. In any case, at the time and in later debates, the Institutes was characterized as an enlightenment project.⁸⁴ This enlightenment was not meant to be philosophical, but to train ‘enlightened’ peasants for rural development.

By 1948, 21 Village Institutes were in operation and had more than 20,000 graduates.⁸⁵ However, it is imperative to acknowledge that the prevailing zeitgeist has exerted a discernible influence upon this establishment. Founded during World War II, the Village Institutes were directly affected by the bipolar world conditions of the Cold War that followed. In national politics, the establishment of the Democrat Party in 1946 and the transition to a multi-party system, made these institutes, the most important institution of official ideology in the countryside, the target of accumulated opposition. Due to this national and international

79 Alexandre Vexliard and Kemal Aytaç, “The “Village Institutes” in Turkey,” *Education and Culture* 30, no. 1 (2014): 44.

80 Toprak, “Türkiye Tarımı,” 26.

81 Karaömerlioğlu, “Köy Enstitüleri,” 287.

82 Karaömerlioğlu, “Köy Enstitüleri,” 290. It is not correct to say that these institutes are the direct legacy of peasantism. For example, the founder of the institutes İsmail Hakkı Tonguç criticizes the peasantists as romantics. See Türkoğlu, “Köy Enstitülerinde,” 221.

83 See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. E. Jephcott (Cornwall: Blackwell Publishing, 2003).

84 See Fay Kirby, *Türkiye’de Köy Enstitüleri* (Ankara: İmece Yayınları, 1962); Kaşlan, *Aydınlanma Devrimi*; Necet Aysal, “Anadolu’da Aydınlanma Hareketinin Doğuşu: Köy Enstitüleri,” *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi*, no. 35-36 (2005): 267-282; İsa Eşme, *Köy Enstitüleri: Yarım Kalan Aydınlanma Atılımı* (İstanbul: İKÜ Yayınevi, 2021).

85 Muzaffer Sencer, “Türkiye’de Köye Yönelme Hareketleri,” *Sosyoloji Dergisi* 2, no. 17-18 (1962): 234

political situation, communism was easily derived as a pretext for blame. For example, the founders Hasan Ali Yücel and İsmail Hakkı Tonguç⁸⁶ were dismissed in 1946 on the grounds that these schools were spreading communism. Another allegation is that there have been immoral incidents with an emphasis on male and female students. In 1947 the curriculum was changed and reformed. In 1948, the Higher Village Institute, which trained teachers for these institutes, was closed. In 1954, they were completely closed and replaced by primary teachers schools.⁸⁷ Still, The designation of 21 village institutes as education-based rural development zones represented a significant milestone in the history of rural development planning.⁸⁸

Conclusion

In the process of nation-building, until the late 1940s, there were many factors at play in the context of rural development, which initially took a rudimentary form through state intervention in rural areas, and consequently in the transformation of rural Turkey. Intellectually, the new manifestation of Turkish nationalism within the framework of the nation-state proved to be highly influential. In line with the nation-building efforts of the regime, there was a concerted effort to establish an ancestral lineage exclusive to Anatolia, accompanied by a deliberate erasure of historical religious antecedents. Since a significant portion of the population resided in rural areas, this process of identity construction had a direct impact on rural communities. At the international level, the Great Depression, World War II, and the subsequent anti-communist policies of the post-Cold War era played a central role. In particular, price fluctuations in agricultural production directly affected agricultural producers and policies toward them. In national politics, the fear of losing power caused by the attempts to establish a multi-party system was an influential factor in shaping the policies of the Republican People's Party. For example, the dysfunctionalization of the village institutes, one

86 The important bureaucrat of the Republican era was even the author of a book in which he denied the accusation of being a communist. See Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Türkiye'de Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2017), 699. In fact, this accusation of communism is based on a historical fact. One of the intellectual influences on Tonguç was Ethem Nejat who was one of the founders of the Turkish Workers and Peasants Socialist Party of Turkey, which was established in Germany in 1919. Nejat was also the secretary general of the Communist Party of Turkey in 1920. However, other thinkers who influenced Tonguç were Pestalozzi, Kerschensteiner, and Dewey. See Mehmet Anık, "Bir modernleş(tir)me projesi olarak köy enstitüleri," *DİVÂN İlmî Araştırmalar* 20, (2006): 279-309. These are pragmatists and pedagogues. It can be argued that John Dewey, an educationalist and philosopher who was invited to Turkey in 1924 to evaluate the education system and subsequently published a report on Turkish National Education, was the most influential figure on the Institutes. It is even claimed that Dewey's most explicit impact was the establishment of the Village Institutes see. Raşit Çelik, "Unity vs. Uniformity: The Influence of Ziya Gökalp and John Dewey on the Education System of the Republic of Turkey," *Education and Culture* 30, no.1 (2014): 30.

87 Vexliard and Aytaç, "The "Village Institutes"" 45. Anık, "Bir modernleş(tir)me," 300.

88 In order to underscore the significance of this educational institution, it is essential to highlight one final point: that the institutes are still remembered fondly in Kemalist and center-left narratives of Republican history almost 70 years after their closure. This indicates the ideological significance of this comprehensive initiative.

of the most important institutions of Kemalist ideology, began under the Republican People's Party.

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