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Turkish Villages: A Changing World View

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Dear Peter,

This newsletter examines the attitudes of Turkish villagers toward some of the major cultural issues in Turkish society -- religion, western-style television programs, secular education, and marriage. At the end, I explore the question of how villagers feel about themselves as villagers, their self-concept, when they enter the more sophisticated urban environment. My material is taken from interviews conducted in four Turkish villages and towns. One village, Gölcük, is located in Thrace, or European Turkey. The other three -- Akkişla, Sarioğlu, and Incesu -- are situated in Central Anatolia near the city of Kayseri.

Some of the evidence is ambiguous, but I do detect one overriding theme. It seems to me that Turkish villagers generally have become comfortable with western notions of technical and scientific progress. That is not to say they have become less Islamic; on the contrary, they are profoundly attached to their religion. But Turkish villagers have been able to integrate western methods -- if not values -- into their lifestyles more easily than have the neighboring Arabs. The Turks strike me as less legalistic and more practical -- less bound by the tyranny of tradition.

After visiting two Arab countries -- Egypt and North Yemen -- and then traveling in Turkey, I can make one claim with confidence: the Turks are different.

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When I arrived in Turkey during the summer of 1984, I visited the American embassy in Ankara to inform them of my plans to write about Turkish villages. Most of the discussions involved the technical details about acquiring the necessary permits. But I also found a lot of interest in a possible resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism in Turkish villages. Many observers had commented on this phenomenon in the urban centers, but nobody had a good handle on what was happening out there in the villages. How did the villagers feel about these issues?

First some background. Most of my readers are probably familiar with the story of how a general named Mustafa Kemal emerged from the chaos of World War I to become the dictator of modern Turkey and steer the country firmly in the direction of secularism. He abolished the veil for women, replaced the Arabic

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alphabet with the more practical Latin letters, began a massive program of secular education to replace the traditional Quranic schools, and created a modern, thoroughly secular state on European lines. This general, who adopted the title of Ataturk, 'Father of the Turks,' was always very clear on the point that politics and religion do not mix. 'The matter of religious belief is everyone's personal business,' he once said. 'Nobody can force anyone else to accept a religion or sect. Religion or sects must never be used as political instruments.'

With a passivity that seems rather astonishing, in retrospect, the Turkish people accepted these changes. But a backlash was inevitable. During the late 1970s, a right wing, religious-influenced group, the National Salvation Party, became an important force in parliament. It called for the institution of seriat (Islamic law) in Turkey and its leader, Necmetin Erbakan, used various excuses to avoid attending the customary memorial ceremonies at Ataturk's mausoleum. That last provocation enraged the military, which has always seen itself as the guardian of Kemalism, Ataturk's secular philosophy. Although the military takeover of 12 September 1980 was primarily aimed at destroying the growing leftist insurrection, the generals made a point of arresting Erbakan; he remains under some form of detention to this day.

Echoing Ataturk's earlier pronouncements, the head of the new military government, General (now President) Kenan Evren, spoke at a religious institution in Kenya and said that effective government is impossible 'if religion is mingled with the affairs of state.' As far as Evren is concerned, 'the nations of today cannot be governed with 1,300-year-old rules.'

Be that as it may, politicians the world over know that religious identification can be popular. Turkey's civilian prime minister, Turgut Özal, who came to power in the 1983 elections, has allowed his ruling Anavatan (Motherland) Party to play up to religious sentiments with various publicity stunts:

- \* Minister of Education Vehbi Dincerler forced female gymnastic students to wear baggy pants instead of their customary tights during the National Sports Day celebration on May 19, 1984. Dincerler also loudly proclaimed that he would provide Arabic courses in the universities, even though many universities already offer such courses. In another nod to religion, he announced that conservative Muslim female students would be allowed, for the first time, to wear head scarves at the universities.

- \* Tourism Minister Mukerrem Tasicioğlu kicked up a mighty fuss during the summer when he warned that legal action might be taken against foreign tourists who attempted to sunbathe nude on Turkish beaches. The tourism industry protested so loudly that Tasicioğlu had to retreat. 'I don't care who wears what,' he later told the press. 'What I said was interpreted wrongly.'

- \* State-owned Turkish television banned beer commercials.

- \* After heated debate, a mosque was built on the premises of the Turkish parliament. The Anavatan also introduced a bill providing heavier penalties for people making 'insulting remarks against God or the Prophet.'

- \* The government allowed two Islamic banks to begin operating in Turkey, although they are officially classified as

"special finance institutions," so sensitive is the government about the Islamic label.

Watching these events unfold, western observers naturally began drawing comparisons with neighboring Iran. Could a Khomeini-type rise to power in Turkey? Hence, all the interest in what the villagers thought about these matters.

In general, one can say that the Turks have shown a renewed interest in religious matters. After the 1980 takeover, the government decided to reintroduce compulsory religion classes in all Turkish schools, the idea being that more pious, traditional-minded youths would be less susceptible to Communist ideology. When he was once asked if he feared an Islamic revival in Turkey, Evren said, "Definitely not. If we had feared that, we would not have added religious lessons to the curriculum in our secular schools."

It is also true that the number of mosques and special religious schools has been increasing. In 1981, Turkey had 55,000 mosques of all sizes, 365 schools for preachers, and 2,700 authorized religious schools where the curriculum is based on the Quran.

Popular piety has always been strong in the rural areas. In the town of Sarioğlan (pop. 3,500), located in Central Anatolia 65 km northeast of Kayseri, I talked with 19-year-old Sener Osman, who works as a butcher. According to Sener, a mysterious light can be seen "only on Friday nights" on a hill a few kilometers from the town.

"Some Muslim holy men are buried near there, so the people of Sarioğlan are afraid to go there," said Sener. "They think this light is connected with religion. The light goes from west to east on the mountain." When I asked Sener if he had ever seen the mysterious light, he replied that he hadn't, but "my father told me about it; he has seen this light. When the old people sit down, they talk about the light."

"But why don't you just go to the hill and see for



Incesu in Central Anatolia. Men perform their ablutions before entering the mosque, which was built in the 17th century. Educated, urban Turks may be indifferent to religion, but Islam retains a profound hold on people in rural areas, like Incesu.

yourself?" I asked him. "It's too dangerous," he replied. "I might get paralyzed."

Paralyzed? This led to another of Sener's stories. It seems that one Sarioglan man lives near a cemetery and had the habit of putting water outside his house in pans every night so the spirits living nearby could perform their Islamic ablutions before praying (spirits are already dead; why do they need to pray?). One night, the man forgot to put out his pans of water. He was visited in his dreams by a spirit who warned him not to neglect this duty. But the man told the spirit he would do it "tomorrow." As a result, "he woke up the next morning paralyzed in his left side and he now walks with a cane."

Clearly, spirits are not to be trifled with.

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Lütfü Çetindülger, 45, is the hoca (religious teacher) of Gölcük, a small village of 800 people located in Thrace 10 km northwest of Şarköy, a resort town on the Sea of Marmara. A rather short man with a roly-poly body and basset hound-eyes, he leads the prayers and lectures on the Quran in Gölcük's two-story-high mosque, which the villagers themselves built in 1962.

Although being hoca is his "legal" job, for which he receives a government salary, Mr. Çetindülger also owns a small farm in Gölcük. "I have lots of time to deal with my farming activities," he said. The day I and my interpreter visited him, Mr. Çetindülger was busily engaged in pruning the branches of the trees in the mosque's yard. A skill with tools seems to run in the family. His father had been a carpenter. When Atatürk required that Turks adopt family names, his father incorporated the word dülger, "carpenter," into his.

Mr. Çetindülger was delighted to abandon his pruning activities temporarily and show us around the simple but tasteful interior of the mosque. We sat down on the carpeted floor and had a little chat. I had been a bit uncertain about questioning him on religious matters. But it turned out that Mr. Çetindülger was absolutely thrilled that I would ask him these questions and actually write his answers down in my notebook, as if his comments were very important. Clearly, this did not happen to him everyday.

A Gölcük native, Mr. Çetindülger attended primary school there and then left the village to attend what he called "junior" religious school. The curriculum of this school must have been limited because he did not learn any Arabic there. He said he picked up his Arabic in "private lessons." As far as I could tell, Mr. Çetindülger's knowledge of Arabic was confined mostly to pronunciation; I don't think he really understood the grammar or much of the vocabulary. When he preaches to his congregation, he reads from the Quran in Arabic and then explains the passages in Turkish. "There are Turkish commentaries on the Quran," he said. "Before giving the lecture, I study the commentaries to make sure I don't make any mistakes."

I asked Mr. Çetindülger how he felt about secularism in Turkey. "The Turkish people are not fanatical about religion," he replied. "Religion is a divine thing; it is between God and human beings. Secularism is good and, as a hoca, I am entirely in favor of it. Secularism can be taught with religion."

On the other hand, he did have some reservations. "Religion encourages people to follow certain social rules," he said. "But under secularism, people sometimes forget the religious rules. So sometimes they do things against the religious rules. That's the only thing I'm against."

"For example, look at women's clothes. Although we are Islamic, some women wear miniskirts and T-shirts. That leads to adultery and adultery is regarded as a big sin in the Islamic religion. Women mustn't show the attractive parts of their bodies to men." (It is interesting that Mr. Çetindülger went on in some detail about exactly which parts of the female body are "attractive;" but I'll leave that out.)

"Did you approve of the National Salvation Party?" I asked.

"As a government official, it is forbidden for me to support any official party. The National Salvation Party was marketing itself as a religious party and some of its representatives were fanatics, some were businessmen, and some were really good men. That's all I can say about this party."

When I asked Mr. Çetindülger how he felt about Khomeini, he again became rather evasive, prefacing many of his remarks with "It is said ..." or "It is rumored ...". My interpreter İhsan explained that Mr. Çetindülger probably does not read many newspapers and most likely picks up his information (and opinions) when he goes into town and chats with religious colleagues.

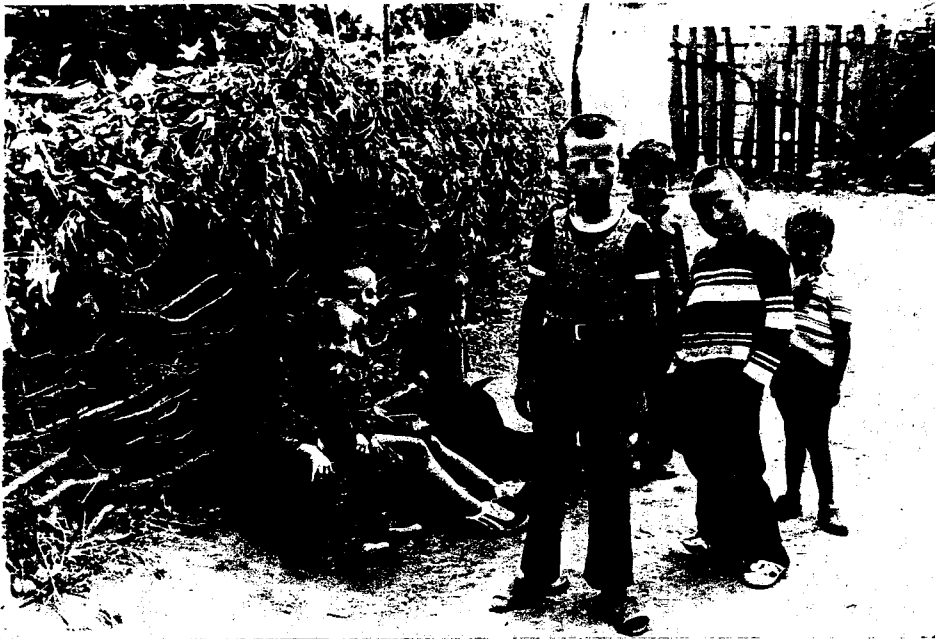
"I don't know much about Khomeini," Mr. Çetindülger began, "but it is said he is the leader of the Shiite Muslims." Like most Turks, Mr. Çetindülger is a Sunni Muslim and not naturally well-disposed to the Shiites. "I know something about this Shiite sect. I can't take Khomeini as a good religious man because he is encouraging the nonsense 'brother fight' in Islam" — a reference to the Iran/Iraq War — "especially during the religious festivals when enemies must cease fighting and reconcile all disputes between them."

"But Khomeini is never willing to cease the 'brother fight.' For these reasons, I don't approve of Khomeini. It is rumored that he has made some contributions to the Islamic religion, but I don't know what they are."

Perhaps the most interesting comment Mr. Çetindülger made came in response to a question about his opinions regarding American programs and movies shown on Turkish television. "I am an Islamic man and I can't criticize Christians," he began cautiously. But — "I am against programs like 'Dallas' because they demoralize our morality values and propagate nudism as if it were important."

"Although 80 percent of them are harmful, I like to see some American movies. For example, I like some science fiction films about space because they teach human beings to discover new ways to live in a comfortable way. I like 'Star Trek' with Mr. Spock. This kind of movie helps people to think and it helps to make people productive by teaching them those new ways."

Those last few remarks tell a lot about Islamic thinking in Turkey today, how it combines traditional morality with some western notions of scientific progress. Mübeccel Kiray,



Children in Gölcük. Like their elders, they grow up learning the Quran. But they also watch 'Star Trek' and 'Dallas' and receive a secular education.

an anthropologist at Istanbul's Marmara University, believes that 'fundamentalist ideology today doesn't have anything to do with the Islamic fundamentalism of 100 years ago.' Traditional Islam is fatalistic, she said, 'fatalistic in the sense that God is omnipresent, Mohamed is his representative, and the spiritual world is the real world for which we have to work. In this materialistic world, you have to be good and content. This means fatalism -- don't try to change, be true to yourself, and be at peace.'

But Mrs. Kiray has noticed that fundamentalist sermons on Turkish television today 'emphasize that to be a good Muslim, you have to work hard and look for new paths. You must be true to your word, but at the same time, compete and pass the others. It boils down to this: the spiritual world is important, but this world is equally important. To be accepted as a good Muslim in the spiritual world, you have to do as good as you can in this world.'

'I believe this is good Calvinism,' she said with a laugh.

'The philosophy for today is strictly for an industrial society. So whether you are fundamentalist or not doesn't really make much difference. Fundamentalism today preaches change, because anybody who doesn't accept change can't survive.'

Mrs. Kiray has conducted many studies of Turkish village life. In 1965, she surveyed four villages about what was considered haram, or forbidden by Islam. The answers she received 'had nothing to do with the classic teachings of fundamentalist Islam,' she said. For example, 19th century Islamic literature is full of discussions about whether western, or infidel, machinery is bad. 'So I repeated the question: is machinery sinful? That was the only time I confronted the possibility they might throw

me out of the village. They stood up. 'What do you take us for, teacher? Are we crazy or stupid?' So the concept of machinery being haram was 100 percent gone.'"

Mrs. Kiray found that the villagers had a practical attitude toward other supposedly haram activities. Although the Quran specifically condemns usury, the villagers said that charging interest was okay if done by government banks. Muslims have traditionally regarded the use of human images -- paintings, photographs, etc. -- as being an insult to God, but these villagers approved of photographs of weddings, festivals, and of their sons in military uniform. 'My last question was about alcoholic beverages. And what do you think they said? 'It's a sin, but we drink -- everyday.'"

Mrs. Kiray agreed that Turkish politicians are manipulating religious sentiments for their own purposes. 'Political organizations are trying to use any differentiation to make themselves into established and accepted groups. These groups use religion as one of several methods of differentiation, business and trade activities being others.' But she noted that even Turkey's biggest religious party, the National Salvation Party, had been keen on promoting heavy industry.

Ferhunde Üzbay, a sociologist and demographer at Istanbul's Boğaziçi University, said that modern religious fundamentalism in Turkey is a response to modern problems. 'It's not going backward, actually,' she said. 'It's using religion for some social and economic problems. Returning to religious activities is helping individuals to solve their problems in the modern world. It's not that people are going backward, but they are using religion for the problems of an underdeveloped country.'"

\* \* \*

As another example of changing attitudes in rural Turkey, there is a story told by Fevzy, 33, one of my interpreters.

After Fevzy graduated from high school in Incesu in 1969, he went to work as a teacher in the town of Himmetdede, 48 km northwest of Kayseri. 'I found the boys just sitting around in cafes; they weren't doing any sports. So I started a sports club and soccer team. I got some boys together and we bought uniforms. Then I went to Kayseri to talk to another team about having a match. I said my team would pay their way to Himmetdede and give them food, but they must not win the game. I was afraid my team would be too disappointed if they lost their first game. The Kayseri team said alright.

'As the day of the game approached, the town hoca called me in for a talk. He said soccer was un-Islamic on three counts. One, there is a religious story about the martyr Hussein's head being kicked back and forth. Two, soccer is a trick of the unbelievers because the English invented football and they are unbelievers. Third, he didn't want the girls to see the boys running around in their football shorts.

'Well, I said I would go see the governor in Kayseri. The hoca said, 'You're an unbeliever and he is too.'"

For awhile, the dispute polarized the town. "The young generation was against the hoca; they wanted to play. They said that if the hoca was against football, they wouldn't go to the mosque. Finally, the hoca said, 'Okay, you can play, but the young ladies can't watch.'"

Fevzy's team went on to play many matches in the area -- enthusiastically, if not well -- and encourage nearby villages to form teams.

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Electricity began reaching rural Turkey in the 1960s. Gölcük was one of the last villages to benefit -- in 1980. Because electricity means television, it has had a significant effect on village culture. At night, the men gather at the coffee house to watch television, and the women go to a neighbor's house. The outside world has reached Gölcük.

The people in Gölcük like television so much that they have rushed onward to keep up with the latest trends. According to Çetin Kaya, 25, video is now the big thing. "Video has greater appeal than television because it is new," said Çetin. "Saying 'I watched video today' gives great prestige to people." Yet, despite this enthusiasm

for the technology, people in Gölcük and in other villages express concern about the content of the programming their families now watch. In this realm more than any other, they see traditional values threatened.

"Television is demoralizing the people," said Çetin's father Nebi Kaya, 52. Mr. Kaya particularly disapproved of shows like "Dallas." "These programs are good from the respect of entertainment, but as they are demoralizing the people, I call them bad. If I were in the prime minister's shoes, I would never let the people watch these shows through such an important means of mass communication as television, especially the ones showing sexual freedom, trickery, and unreliable people."

Beker Şahar, 67, of Garipce, a village near Incesu in Central Anatolia, felt the same way. "I see a lot of things on television that are against our village traditions," he said. "For example, boys and girls kissing each other and making love in the bed. This is 100 percent against our traditions. I don't like to see the ladies on TV taking off their clothes. For example,



A Gölcük villager. Note the sash and baggy pants -- traditional rural Turkish costume.



sometimes I watch television with the women in my family. When they start kissing on TV, the women leave the room. I am so embarrassed about that. I want Turkish films to show our life in Turkey without kissing and sexual situations. Do you ever see men and women kissing in Turkey?" (My answer would have to be no.)

Mr. Sahar added that he liked some American films, "but I don't remember their names." "What about cowboy movies?" I asked. "I don't understand them," he replied. "That's not our life in Turkey."

On the other hand, Talib Kalinkara, 58, in Sariöglan claimed that "everybody in Turkey likes 'Dallas.'" Some people named their coffee houses and shops 'Dallas.' They named their children after the actors and actresses. 'Dallas' is better than 'Flamingo Road.' We also like 'Little House On The Prairie.'"

It seems that many Turks have the same attitude toward steamy 'Dallas' that they have toward alcohol -- it's sinful, but they enjoy it anyway.

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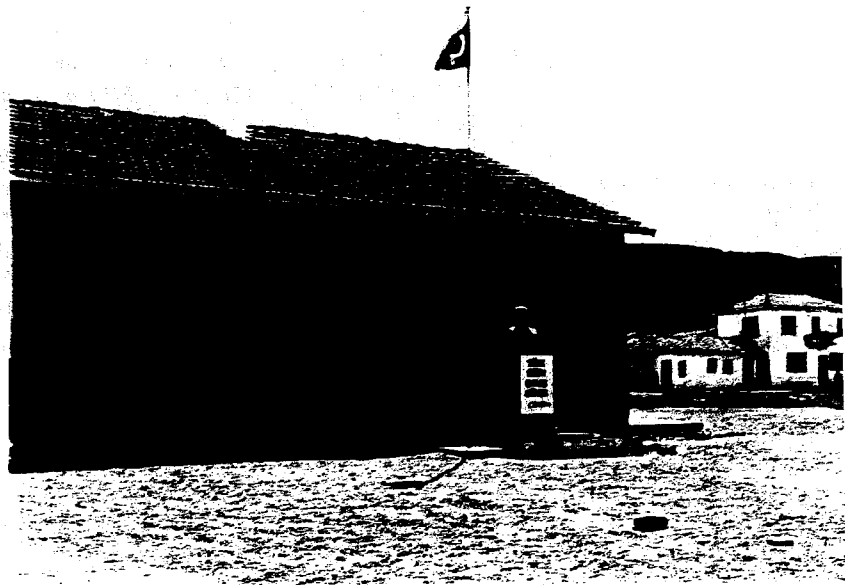
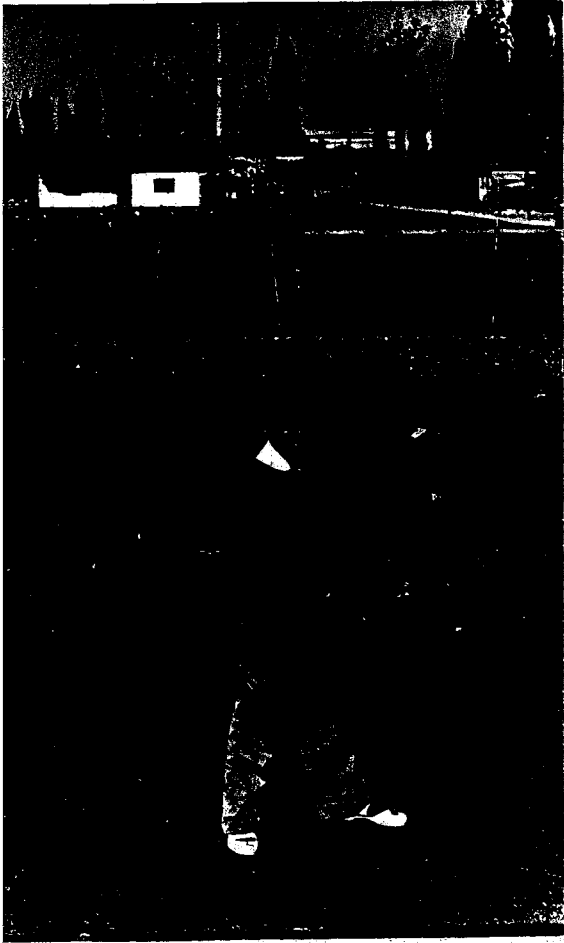
One key index of social change in Turkish villages has been the acceptance of secular education. Today, only about 1,000 of Turkey's 36,154 villages lack a primary school. Before 1924, only five percent of villages had traditional Quranic schools and none had modern secular ones.

Gölcük has had a primary school since the late 1920s. It's similar to most village schools -- a simple, sparsely-furnished, one-story structure with a bust of Atatürk out front. It usually has between 70 and 80 students. The five teachers live in the nearby town of Sarköy and commute to work in the mornings. When the roads are blocked with snow in the winter, the villagers will put them up.

"We are very pleased with the school," said Nebi Kaya. "It's very useful for all the people. In fact, we wish we had a university." A university in Gölcük? I suspected Mr. Kaya of making a little joke. But later, my interpreter Ihsan, who knows the family well, said that Mr. Kaya had been dead serious -- if rather unrealistic -- in his remark. "In Turkey, everyone wants schools and is mad about studying," said Ihsan.

Mr. Kaya's son Çetin was critical of his compatriots in eastern Turkey, traditionally the country's poorest and most backward region, because they were not as enthusiastic about education. Çetin did his military service in Agri in the east; the army has a habit of stationing boys from the west in the east, and vice versa. Çetin obviously thought the people in Agri were real bumpkins. "Because of their religious creeds operating strictly, the parents in the east don't send their children to schools," he said. "Also, they are afraid of the aga" -- tribal chieftain -- "and so don't send the children to school. The aga thinks that if the children go to school" -- using a Turkish expression -- "their eyes will be opened." Çetin related with approval how several villages in the Agri district opened schools immediately after the 12 September 1980 military takeover.

Historically, villagers in Central Anatolia, in the Kayseri region, have been suspicious of secular education. In



Secular education in rural Turkey is here to stay. Above, Gölcük's primary school. At left, a primary school student in Sariöğlan wearing the black shirt and white collar common to such students all over Turkey.

1940, the government established a system of teacher training schools known as Village Institutes. For both boys and girls in rural areas, these schools, which were also situated in the countryside, offered a five-year curriculum of academic subjects and practical courses on sanitation and simple technology. The youths were then sent back to their villages to serve as primary school teachers. They often encountered intense hostility from conservative peasants, a situation vividly described by Mahmut Makal in his book A Village In Anatolia (London: Vallentine, Mitchell & Co., Ltd., 1965). Makal's account of backward customs in some villages west of Kayseri created such a sensation when it first appeared in Turkish that Makal was briefly jailed for subversion.

The village of Akkişla (pop. 5,000), located 70 km northeast of Kayseri, was designated as the site of a teachers training school in 1934, according to 51-year-old Ismail Metin, a farmer and assistant to Akkişla's mayor. (I suspect that Mr. Metin had his dates wrong -- maybe it's 1944 -- and this was actually a Village Institute.) "The old people didn't want the school here," said Mr. Metin. "They thought it was" -- using a colloquial expression implying subversive foreign influences -- "'coming from abroad.'" Rebuffed by the residents of Akkişla, the government instead built the school in Pazaroran, 45 km away. As their attitudes toward the new school changed, the people of Akkişla began sending their children there, which was difficult because of the lack of



A scene at Incesu's restored 17th century caravansaray. Before the republic, women in Turkish villages had almost no access to education. Today, the illiteracy rate for Turkish women is still a very high 52 percent, compared to 25 percent for men. But now, village girls generally attend at least primary school. For Turkish women, by the way, this type of veiling is comparatively rare; it simply shows that some old habits die hard.

roads.

The people of Akkişla did not make that mistake again. Today, the village boasts three primary schools and one middle school. "Now, everybody wants his child to go to school and get a good future — even poor people go to school," said Mr. Metin. "In earlier times, education was not so important. We want our children to get a higher education and make themselves known in society. If they want to go to school, we are together with them. If not, their only opportunity is to farm and feed animals."

Mr. Metin noted with approval that 30 youths from Akkişla now attend university and "lets go to high school." But it's in the pursuit of post-primary school education that villagers encounter serious problems in Turkey. Higher schools are overcrowded and often located far from the villages. For example, Nebi Kaya in Gölcük has five children. Of the three boys, only Çetin attended the high school in Şarköy; he now works in a government office in Istanbul and is the family's great success story.

Çetin's 17-year-old brother Recai has had a more difficult time. Unsuccessful in getting a place in the overcrowded high school in Şarköy, Recai has been forced to attend another school in a town 23 km away. Şarköy, by contrast, is only 10 km

away from Gölcük. Another of Çetin's brothers, 21-year-old Kadir, is now in Cyprus doing his military service. He has only a primary school education and plans to work on his father's farm when he returns from the army.

Çetin's two sisters, Sermin, 19, and Gonca, 13, attended the Gölcük primary school, but pursued their education no further. Sermin is now married and living in Şarköy, where her husband, also a Gölcük native, works as a prison guard. Çetin said his father would have been willing to continue Gonca's education, "but because she is a girl and the school is far away in Şarköy, he didn't."

That's not unusual. In Turkey, only two percent of the women receive a university education and this two percent comes from the urban elite. Village girls now usually attend primary school, except in the eastern regions, but rarely go beyond that. According to 1975 figures, 52 percent of all Turkish women are illiterate, compared to 25 percent of the men.

Village girls who do seek more out of life encounter social problems. According to Çetin Kaya, only two girls from Gölcük have attended the high school in Şarköy (compared to 10 boys). Both have since continued living in Gölcük and both are having problems finding suitable husbands.

"These girls have an idea of what's happening in the world," said Çetin. "For example, when you have a conversation with them, they give you their opinions. They can be considered intellectuals. But they will have a hard time finding husbands equal to their own educational level."

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In terms of selecting a marriage partner, the young people of Gölcük have more freedom than they did in the past; arranged marriages are no longer common. "The general tendency is to let the young people marry if they like each other very much," said Çetin. "But if one of them, say the man, has bad habits like drinking and gambling, the parents refuse to let their daughter marry him. In those cases, the parents are dominant."

Çetin has noticed a tendency for girls in Gölcük to marry outside the village, but doesn't know the reason for that. He said the young men and women often meet each other at the Friday market in Şarköy.

Marriage negotiations are still conducted through the families. "If I am in love with a girl, I go and tell her parents I want to marry her," said Çetin. "The family thinks about my proposal. If they approve, they tell my family and a marriage is set."

Çetin himself is unlikely to marry a girl from his village. According to my interpreter İhsan, who is a good friend of Çetin's, Çetin wants to marry a girl from Istanbul, where he works. "Çetin thinks he must marry a girl who has finished high school at least and who has her own salary," said İhsan. Çetin lives in an Istanbul apartment with some relatives and finds that his own salary of 80,000 TL (roughly \$80) a month is not sufficient to support a family.

In cases where parents do not agree to a boy's

marriage proposal, the girl may decide to elope. But this causes a great strain between her and her parents. "In villages, it's a matter of prestige for the parents -- it means they can't control their daughter," said Çetin. "Her father particularly can't be as tolerant with her as before because our families are patriarchal." İhsan explained further that a girl who elopes is disowned by her family. If her husband's family mistreats her, she cannot easily return to her own family because she has burned her bridges behind her. "The father can't be as tolerant of her as before," reaffirmed İhsan.

Brideprices still play a role in this part of Thrace, but Çetin described the usual brideprice, 20,000 TL (about \$50), as "symbolic." "It's a tradition," he said. "We give the money as an aid to the girl's family. It shows that the parents value their daughter." Çetin thought it barbaric that the brideprices in the more traditional-minded east can reach 1 million TL (\$2,500). "In my opinion, the people in the east give the money lots of importance," he said.

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The quality of life in Turkish villages has greatly improved since the end of World War II. Amenities heretofore restricted to the cities, such as electricity, piped water systems, machinery, and schools, are now routine in the Turkish countryside. But villagers still see themselves in an inferior position vis-a-vis city people; they are painfully aware that they appear uncouth and stupid by comparison.

Nebi Kaya of Gölcük remembered how he first visited Istanbul while serving in the military. "Before, I hadn't even been to Şarköy," said Mr. Kaya, a lean, rugged man. "After I was recruited into the army, I went first to Şarköy and then to Istanbul. Every organ in my body changed after I saw our biggest city.

"At first, I didn't know how to behave in a large city. For example, I saw some trams in Istanbul but I didn't know how to get on or off them. I saw some people getting on a tram one day. I was obliged to catch it myself, so I ran up to it and jumped on. As the tram approached the station I wanted, I prepared to get off. But the silly tram didn't stop there. I decided to jump. It wasn't wise to jump -- the tram was going very fast -- but I had to do so. So I jumped out and hit a post.

"I turned completely around the post twice. Fortunately, I was able to protect my head from the collision. An old man approached me and asked, 'Has anything happened to you, my son?' 'No, why?' I replied, as if everything was normal. Then, I saw another tram coming toward me. I wanted to hide my ignorance and show that I was one of those inhabitants of Istanbul, so I jumped on this other tram."

Mr. Kaya is now proud of his experiences in the big city. "I learned many things while doing my military service," he said. "I now have a vast confidence in myself. For example, if I ever had to go to Germany, I would be able to find all the

addresses I was told to find."

If Nebi Kaya can be said to have brushed shoulders with the big city and to have survived, his son Çetin can be described as having conquered the city. He now lives and works in Istanbul. When Çetin visits his family in Gölcük on holidays, he returns as a man of the city, wearing a suit. It's partly his citified clothes and partly the way he carries himself. By Gölcük standards, he is a spectacular success, but the victory did not come easily.

"While I was attending the high school in Şarköy," he said, "some of the people in the village made fun of me. They said, 'What will you do after you graduate?' After I did graduate, I had to stay in the village awhile and they called me 'High School Graduate-Farmer.' They were always teasing me about that. It was a bit annoying and I began to get angry. I felt much pressure on my shoulders. My family expected me to be a great man compared to the usual village standard.

"After completing my military service, I went to Istanbul. I wanted to experience the big city life. I wanted to become a 'clever man' and do many things for my village. I don't know if you can imagine the respect villagers show to the man coming from the city. Whatever a city man says, the villagers tend to believe it. But some city men, especially traders, are tricky. I aimed at enlightening people here about this trading business and so on.

"I took an exam two years ago in Istanbul and found my present job. It's a nice job. My workplace in the Ataturk Cultural Center in Taksim Square is wonderfully furnished. My job is to deliver the monthly paychecks to the other employees. All this responsibility is on my shoulders. For example, in September, they sent me a telegram while I was staying here in Gölcük and called me back to Istanbul. They had to correct some figures and only I have the keys to the money box. Nobody can open that box without me, not even the director. So you see, it's a respectable position.

"But most of the people here didn't believe I was



Çetin Kaya, left, and my interpreter Ihsan, right, in Gölcük. Both of these fellows possess livelier personalities than the photo would seem to suggest.

working there as an official. They said I was a janitor there. Then, some relatives came to see me at the center. They were very surprised. They returned from that visit and told all the villagers about my job. My respect rose among the people here."

Each generation climbs the ladder a little higher. Çetin's children, if he has any, will grow up thinking of their father's village as a quaint and backward place, out-of-touch with the modern world and unfit for urban sophisticates such as themselves.

They will be wrong.

All best,

*Kenneth Cline*

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