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Social structure and the labour market in Turkish agriculture

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Introduction

Landlessness and associated poverty are not significant features of Turkish agriculture. Rather, the observer is struck by the predominance of owner-occupied farms and the limited extent of wage labour. Such a situation clearly requires a radically different set of tools to identify and measure poverty than the more familiar one where landowners and landless are clearly delineated. To begin with, labour markets – types of employment and labour contracts, modes of payment, wage levels, permanence and certainty of employment – are not the primary determinants of the income and consumption levels of a majority of the rural inhabitants, but rather access to and quality of the land, and the amount of labour available to a family. These initial endowments provide the greatest part of the rural household's livelihood, the hiring out of labour usually being a subordinate and supplementary strategy.

In this article it is argued that there is a pattern of social differentiation within the peasantry, based on diverging paths of transformation in the rural sector. In the absence of a large landless category, this pattern results in the petty commodity producing sector supplying both permanent labour through emigration to urban areas and abroad, and temporary labour through seasonal migration to other rural areas. A seasonal labour market in agriculture matches the supply of labour from petty commodity producers with the demand from larger landlords.

The incidence of landlordism: Share-cropping and capitalist farming

The advent of tractors after the Second World War transformed Turkish agriculture. A much increased credit supply, permanent emigration to the urban areas and the formation of a large, efficient rental market in agricultural machinery all contributed to a decline in share-cropping and the consolidation of the traditional independent peasantry. Credit availability in

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state-subsidised organised markets broke the bond of usury; migration and remittances made it possible to hold on to small property despite output levels below subsistence; and the availability of labour-saving machinery severed the chain of causation that had led from productivity differentials to differential accumulation and from differential accumulation to land concentration: it became possible to farm even when the most productive categories of labour were in short supply.

Thus the post-war period saw the emergence of a new type of absentee owner who, despite migrating from the village, retained ownership of his land and leased it out. In most cases the "tenant" was a tractor owner whose own landholding was not large enough to use his technical capacity to the full. A 1970 census showed 16.5 per cent of all farmers cultivating more land than they owned [1] but unfortunately did not indicate the nature and extent of landownership of those renting in. According to a 1963 census, peasants farming no land or cultivating smallholdings of less than 2 hectares were also the major renters-out of land. In other words, small landowners were more likely to rent out their holdings while middle-sized owners tended to expand their farming activity through renting in of land. Farmers cultivating holdings of between 5 and 50 hectares on average rented in land equivalent to about one-eighth of their owned area.[2]

More recent studies indicate that this trend of renting out by small owners and renting in by middle-sized owners has continued. Such a pattern has a major consequence: it tends to preserve the existing rural ownership structure since small peasants (and possibly other categories of owners) are able to leave their villages without having to sell their land.[3] Thus members of small peasant households can offer their labour seasonally or permanently in rural or urban, national or world markets, while maintaining the security of the ownership of land, and possibly receiving some income from its cultivation.

This form of renting out of land is quite distinct from "classic" tenancy arrangements between large landlords and landless peasants. Even the 1970 census figure of 1.5 per cent of all holdings consisting entirely of rented land (that is, holdings operated by individuals who themselves own no land) probably includes a fair proportion of tractor tenancies.[4] And where a landless peasant with no other livelihood leases land, he deals with lessors who are predominantly smallholders. Thus a picture portraying the large landlord as enjoying a specially privileged position vis-à-vis the landless peasant – armed with superior economic power and dominating interlocking markets – would be misleading.

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[1] Devlet Istatistik Enstitüsü (DIE – State Institute of Statistics): *1970 Tarim Sayimi Geçici Sonuçlari* [Agricultural census: Provisional results] (Ankara, 1971).

[2] ibid.

[3] cf. the State Planning Organisation project in Çorum and Cankiri provinces, reported by G. Özler and K. Kartal. SPO, manuscript report, 1978.

[4] DIE: *1970* . . ., op. cit.

The 1970 census also shows 3 per cent of farmers with holdings consisting solely of land operated in a share-cropping arrangement (including other non-rental crop-sharing practices). The 1980 figure is just below 1 per cent. The 1963 census, which aimed only at enumerating the areas of holdings under different types of tenure, showed 9.2 per cent of the area as operated under share-cropping arrangements. The corresponding figure for 1970 was 2.8 per cent and that for 1980 only 0.7 per cent.[5] Share-cropping is, and has been, mainly confined to areas in the south-east populated by sedentarised Kurdish tribes.

Where share-cropping coexisted with petty production, the introduction of tractors enabled former share-croppers to establish themselves as independent peasants on land which had until then remained uncultivated. In the south-east, by contrast, the landlord's status was such that he could appropriate all the new land made accessible by technology, either using force or with the collusion of the political authorities. However, share-cropping remained a prevalent practice even after labour was made redundant through technical change. Although the landlord was powerful enough to appropriate newly opened up land, he was not sufficiently powerful simply to drive the peasantry off his new enclosure. As a result, a situation arose that was reminiscent of the coexistence of domain and peasant land in the manorial economy, with part of the village enclosed by the landlord and the rest share-cropped by families. It could, however, only be an uneasy coexistence since it was the landlord's ambition to enclose the entire village, and the villagers' ambition to establish full rights of possession over both their current and their former fields. The outcome depended on local and national politics. Faced with the threat of land reform and the belligerence of the villagers, some landlords chose to allow the land to be subdivided through inheritance or to sell plots to the peasants at nominal rates. In other cases the landlord succeeded in driving the most militant peasants out of the village, imposing only nominal rents on those who remained as collaborators. On the whole, in the small number of cases in the Mediterranean and Aegean regions subdivision seems to have been the predominant outcome, while in the south-east enclosures were relatively more successful.

The last point brings us to the incidence of wage labour in capitalist agriculture. As pointed out above, owing to the nature of the social structure the peasantry could not readily be dispossessed by large landlords; furthermore, the high land/labour ratio, i.e. ready availability of land, militated against the formation of a landless peasantry. However, in the south-east landlord regimes were not unusual, with the lands of entire villages held by single families. In these villages the introduction of machine-intensive techniques effectively made the peasantry redundant but did not introduce extensive wage labour. In the case of wheat farming, the number

[5] ibid. and DIE: *1980 Genel Tarim Sayimi* (Ankara, 1983), p. 56.

of permanent employees is often very small – a manager for the farm, as many driver-operators as there are tractors, and a few handymen. There is, in fact, no plantation-type agriculture in Turkey. In more labour-intensive crops, the employment of seasonal, temporary labour recruited not from the landless peasantry but from the petty commodity-producing sector, is prevalent.

There is no perfect correspondence between the landless peasantry and permanent wage labour categories in agriculture. In the censuses settlements of fewer than 5,000 inhabitants are considered rural, and the "landless" category naturally includes individuals whose primary occupation is not agriculture. In fact, even in the smaller settlements, the proliferation of consumer goods and of technology has created an increasing range of non-agricultural or ancillary ("non-basic") occupations. A quarter of a century ago, an Anatolian village supported one to three coffee houses and a general store, providing their owners' main source of income. Now, every village boasts a number of full-time taxi or van operators, tractor drivers and retail merchants, which means that the "landless" include a considerable contingent of the non-agricultural petty bourgeoisie. A 1970 study suggests that, while 16 per cent of the population surveyed could be considered landless in the sense of not owning or renting land, only one-tenth of the landless were agricultural labourers. Thus, when artisans (6.2 per cent), government employees (2.6 per cent), non-agricultural wage labourers (1.6 per cent), students (1.5 per cent) and the unemployed (2.4 per cent) are allowed for, only 1.7 per cent of the rural population (or one in 60) remain as agricultural labourers with incomes deriving exclusively from wage employment,[6] which in 1970 came to a total of fewer than 100,000 adult males. There are also a small number of permanent agricultural workers who own land of their own, and their inclusion would increase this number. It must not be forgotten, however, that agricultural workers are not necessarily found in typical capitalist relations of production. A striking example is the village shepherd who is usually landless and receives a fixed rate per sheep from each village household [7] and is thus by status a communal employee. Other agricultural workers are found in a capitalist relationship with the State. Some 5,000 permanent workers are employed on 22 state farms; a larger number work for the state forestry administration.[8]

Thus in Turkey capitalist relations of production, defined as the permanent employment of landless peasantry, play an insignificant role in agriculture. Nor is there any evidence that the number of peasants employed

[6] Cited by K. Boratav: "Türkiyede Tarimin 1960lardaki Yapisi ile Ilgili Bazi Gözlemler", in *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, Vol. XXVII, 1972, No. 3.

[7] According to our observations, there is at least one shepherd per village, usually a landless migrant from a different region. Larger and more prosperous villages usually have more than one. The shepherd category may thus account for a considerable number of landless wage labourers.

[8] See T. C. Gida: *Devlet Üretme Çiftlikleri* (Ankara, Tarim ve Hayvancilik Bakanliği, 1977).

as wage labourers has been increasing. On the one hand, landless peasants have the opportunity to migrate to urban areas or to other rural areas where they have a better chance of renting land or engaging in non-basic occupations. Since there does not seem to be any concentration of land at the expense of small owners, there have been no new dispossessions. On the other hand, problems of labour management, the law of inheritance, fear of land reform, and political pressure from below, have been forcing owners of large estates either to subdivide them among their heirs or simply to sell them in lots to the richer peasants. In other words there is gradual erosion of even the small amount of permanently labour-hiring capitalist agriculture that exists.[9]

Seasonal labour markets

We have established that strictly capitalist relations of production in agriculture are of limited importance in Turkey, and that there is no reason to think this will change. The defining characteristics of the agricultural labour market are to be found rather in the seasonal employment of small peasants. Let us begin by outlining the technological conditions creating a demand for temporary labour.[10] Technological change has tended to lead to an uneven and cyclical use of labour for all of the important crops except grains, where tractors and mechanical harvesters have replaced labour in all operations – preparing the field, ploughing, sowing and harvesting. In some labour-intensive crops, technology has not had any impact on the traditional cycle of labour use – examples are small-scale tea, hazelnuts, vineyards, and cultivation of the Turkish variety of tobacco (which does not lend itself to mechanical harvesting). For one important crop – cotton – unevenness in labour use has nevertheless been extreme. Cotton is grown on approximately 5 per cent of the land under cultivation;[11] it is a totally commercial crop, and the geographical area of its cultivation (the Çukurova and Söke plains) coincides with regions of relatively concentrated land ownership.

Before the large-scale use of tractors, commercial cotton was mostly grown on a share-cropping basis, the tenants also growing wheat for subsistence needs. After the introduction of tractors labour was no longer needed all the year round and it was possible for small producers to grow cotton commercially. The overall effects were a rapid increase in the area under cotton, the disappearance of share-cropping arrangements and an intensification of peak labour demand during the harvest season. There had

[9] For a similar assessment see O. Aresvik: *The agricultural development of Turkey* (New York, Praeger, 1975), pp. 37-38. ("The large holdings are being divided rapidly and the average size of the large holdings is diminishing even faster than their number.")

[10] This point is elaborated in T. Aricanli and Ç. Keyder: *Notes on labour demand during structural and technical transformation in agriculture*, ESA Working Paper No. 1 (Ankara, Ekonomik Sosyal Arastirmalar, 1979).

[11] Cotton cultivation peaked in the 1960s; since then there have been annual fluctuations but no long-term growth. See *Statistical Yearbook* (Ankara, DIE) for various years.

always been a need for labour from outside the area at harvest time even when share-cropping practices were the rule, but after mechanisation former share-croppers had the option of working on their own plots during the harvest, which increased the discrepancy between labour demand during ploughing and harvest seasons. As a result two distinct organisational forms of cotton cultivation emerged: one, on small plots, using primarily family labour and additional village labour under reciprocal arrangements; and the other, on larger farms, employing a small number of permanent (year-round) wage labourers together with a large number of seasonal migrant labourers.[12] These larger cotton-growing farms account for the bulk of seasonal wage employment in agriculture. Although no figures are available, an estimate (based on average weight of cotton picked by an individual) of around 200,000 persons (1.6 per cent of the agricultural labour force) entering the seasonal labour market each year to harvest the cotton crop seems reasonable. The supply of labour originates from all regions of Turkey, making this the only national and formal labour market in agriculture.

It has already been suggested that seasonal labour must derive from the small peasantry. Technically, most petty producers would be potentially available for seasonal employment during the cotton-picking season, but in order to identify actual labour supply sources we have to distinguish between different types of petty producers, their allocation of family labour, and the mechanisms which bring them into the capitalist sphere. In particular we need to focus on the various means of integrating different types of petty producing households into the national commodity and labour markets. From the point of view of the household, these amount to income-earning strategies. A decision-theoretic model, taking into consideration parameters imposed by the socio-economic environment, can explain the "rationality" of a household's behaviour in allocating its labour to wage employment. In our account, the dominant focus will be on the socio-economic environment of households and their economic behaviour.

In the Anatolian context this environment is the village. There are some 35,000 villages in Turkey, with an average population of 100 households.[13] For purposes of identifying types of rural transformation, the village provides an intermediate level of determination, between the household and the larger social formation, which serves to constrain structurally the behaviour of the household. Thus, by focusing on the village as an analytic choice, we can predict household behaviour based on the dominant structural characteristics of the village. It is not only because all the households in a

[12] According to the *Statistical Yearbook* for 1981, there are 110,480 farms growing cotton, of which 312 are larger than 100 hectares and comprise 15 per cent of the cotton area. The majority of the cotton-growing farms are found in the less-than-4-hectare category, with 53 per cent accounting for 18 per cent of the area. These are exclusively family farms and the above-100-hectare category exclusively capitalist farms. The middle category, between 4 and 100 hectares, may belong to either group.

[13] According to the 1980 census, 70 per cent of the villages had populations of between 200 and 1,000, the median population being between 400 and 500.

village share a physical environment, with the technical constraints it imposes, that they behave similarly. The common history of the village also plays an important role, for example, in migration decisions, in technology or crop innovations, or in land reclamation. Furthermore, communal decisions may circumscribe the choices of individual households. The best example is the two-year fallow pattern in wheat-growing areas, under which half of the village land is cropped while the other half is left as common grazing ground,[14] making it extremely difficult for any one family to change its cropping pattern.

Although the ratio of subsistence to commodity production may vary widely, households in all village types predominantly employ family labour in production processes that they themselves control. A majority of villages combine subsistence-oriented and market-oriented production but a small minority may be said to be totally commercialised. We may divide petty production into three different types: subsistence production, diversified commodity production that pursues a subsistence strategy, and accumulation-oriented petty production.[15] We will argue that what we have called subsistence production characterises villages which are suppliers of permanent migrants to national markets. "Diversified commodity production" describes a second type of village which is integrated into national labour markets essentially through the supply of seasonal workers; the "petty production" type is distinguished by crop specialisation and accumulation at levels sufficient to employ all of the existing family labour. Consequently, villages in this third type participate minimally in rural labour markets, and then only to hire in temporary workers, although, of course, their share in the demand for seasonal labour is much smaller than that of large cotton growers.

Subsistence-oriented villages and permanent migration

Villages in the "subsistence production" category are distinguished by a steady decline in population since the 1950s. Permanent out-migration has eroded their demographic base, resulting in a skewed age distribution towards the elderly and the very young. As a consequence their productive activities have suffered in terms both of current potential and of future prospects. Although the technical means of cultivation may be available, population decline has led to part of the marginal land being abandoned; and the departure of the working-age population has effectively precluded the introduction of new activities and other productive innovation.

These villages are net recipients of transfers from the urban (or frequently the world) economy. Migrants who have left the village continue

[14] See P. Stirling: *Turkish village* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965), pp. 48-49.

[15] For the full argument see Ç. Keyder: "Paths of rural transformation in Turkey", in *Journal of Peasant Studies* (London), Oct. 1983, pp. 34-49.

to maintain their ties with the family members remaining behind, often leave their children with the grandparents, and themselves spend part of the summer in the village. They also feel an obligation to support their elders financially. When – as has now started to happen – urban workers retire and earn pensions, they come back to the village to live and spend their incomes. The village thus emerges as an economy whose consumption exceeds its production potential.

In the case of permanent migration to urban centres, during the initial years of the move the worker seems to transfer a significant portion of his wage income back to the village.[16] As he becomes more permanently settled in the city, he no longer invests in the village (buying land or constructing a house) but he continues to send money or presents to his relatives. With migrants to the Federal Republic of Germany the process is even more clear since, at least in the beginning, they travel alone and leave their immediate family behind. Their contributions to the village economy are naturally more substantial: estimates indicate that up to one-third of a village's income may derive from such remittances.

In two villages [17] of the interior, which closely correspond to the above description, household surveys were carried out to determine the frequency of permanent migration. One village in the Ankara province came closest to the ideal type: of the 15 households surveyed 13 had members who had permanently migrated, averaging 2.5 persons per household. Among these people five had found work abroad, in the Federal Republic of Germany and Australia. As a consequence, eight out of 15 households had abandoned some previously cultivated fields. None supplied temporary labour, and only three sold any crops in the market. Furthermore, the average household size was only 3.9 and the average age of the head of the household was 51.

In a second village, in the province of Cankiri, 17 of the 20 households surveyed had on average 2.8 members who had permanently migrated, all within Turkey. Only five individuals in 20 households had done seasonal work over the past ten years, as temporary migrants. Nine of the 20 households had abandoned varying quantities of land and only eight marketed any part of their produce.

In different regions of the country, villages of the "subsistence production" type responded to the growth of employment opportunities at different times. In villages located on the tired soil of the arid Anatolian plateau, the excessive fragmentation of property, out-migration and consequent depopulation started in the late 1950s; in areas that had less access to urban centres or were institutionally disadvantaged in sending workers to the Federal Republic of Germany, the process did not start until

[16] This point has been illustrated through a survey of Ankara shanty towns in a study by S. Kemal Kartal: *Ekonomik ve Sosyal Yönleriyle Türkiyede Kentlilesme* (Ankara, 1983).

[17] These illustrations are from a survey conducted by a team at the Middle East Technical University in 1980-81. The research, funded by the Population Council, was directed by the author; T. Aricanli, B. Akşit, D. Seddon and N. Sirman were other members of the team.

the late 1960s. In the more distant eastern region it occurred even later. Depopulation was also geographically differentiated. While the share of rural population declined from 75 per cent in 1950 to 68 per cent in 1960, 61 per cent in 1970 and 56 per cent in 1980, regional rates of relative decline in rural population varied widely in each period.[18]

Commodity production and seasonal migration

The subsistence-oriented village with a declining population is not the norm. More common are villages in which a diversified commodity production strategy with alternative sources of income is pursued. There seems to be no single historical or geographical factor which determines whether a village will develop a subsistence orientation or diversified commodity production. There are numerous examples of villages making the transition from subsistence orientation to diversification, with consequent changes in their mode of involvement in the labour market because, as we have argued, subsistence orientation leads primarily to permanent out-migration while diversification generates a supply of seasonal rural labour.

Since the degree and timing of market integration or capitalist domination were linked with geographical location, villages in different regions made the transition at different times. There may be, for instance, villages in the eastern region which are moving towards diversification during the 1980s, while most villages in western Anatolia did so during the early 1960s. During the initial period of transition, seasonal employment in agriculture is more common but, once the transition is under way, an intensification of commitment to specifically agricultural activities is probable, which lessens involvement in temporary employment. In other words, there are large numbers of seasonal rural workers in villages that are just beginning to be substantially integrated into the national market.

In order to investigate further the nature of commodity and income source diversification, the example of an inland village in Western Anatolia may be useful.

Y is an old village, with relatively infertile soil, where holdings are small and fragmented as a result of population pressure and inheritance practices. Nevertheless, the economy is lively and the majority of the population is gainfully occupied. Up to the early 1950s it would have been impossible to predict the present vitality of this village. At that time it was much closer to the subsistence model, with traditional crops, some permanent out-migration and a stagnant population. Mechanisation, however, increased the demand for seasonal agricultural labour in the nearby cotton-growing provinces, providing opportunities for temporary employment and an extra source of income. Once connections were established, employment was available every

[18] See population censuses. It should be mentioned that 19 per cent of the rural population live in towns with more than 2,500 inhabitants; and as towns increase in size, so do employment opportunities in non-agricultural occupations.

picking season. As well as contributing to the household budget, income from seasonal employment allowed people to undertake new activities. Tobacco, among other new crops, came to be cultivated in the village during this period. Since tobacco growing is labour-intensive, an average family could not cultivate more than 0.5 hectares. So there were households that had a comparative advantage in cultivating tobacco and others that engaged in seasonal employment, both groups being low in the village land ownership scale. At the same time, villagers began to engage more actively in petty trade such as carrying vegetables to town and selling produce in weekly markets in nearby centres. Agricultural production diversified further, and tobacco, poppy, maize, poplars, grapes, chick peas and vegetable growing became important activities.

In the early 1980s petty trading, commerce, and small-scale transport were booming sectors, and there was a growing non-basic population in the village. In our survey of 20 households, seven heads of household gave their occupation as craftsman, shopkeeper or driver, which they regarded as their principal activities despite the fact that they also farmed.

The demographic history of the village clearly reflects its economic fortune. Stagnation and decline, which might have produced a profile similar to that of subsistence-oriented villages, were reversed in the 1960s, and population began to increase at a normal pace. More recently, there was even some migration into the village. This capacity to support a larger population resulted from the introduction of more labour-intensive agricultural practices and non-agricultural activities. Temporary wage employment was one mode of more intensive use of family labour. Of the 20 heads of households, five gave their principal occupation as agricultural (seasonal) worker, although they all owned land of between 0.5 and 3 hectares. In these households between two and five persons annually found employment outside the village for periods of between two weeks and four months. Eight more households in the survey supplied one to five family members as seasonal agricultural labourers. By contrast, there had been no permanent migration out of the village during the past ten years; and the demographic structure suggested a youthful population with each household consisting, on the average, of 7.5 persons.

Within this overall picture, it was the smaller landowners who engaged in activities involving the most drudgery, and produced labour-intensive crops – mostly tobacco – with family labour. They also earned a high proportion of the household income in the form of wages through temporary employment. It is not certain, however, that their overall income was smaller than that of larger landowners.

The village of Y provides an example of highly developed activity diversification. In most other cases diversification would not be as extensive. In villages of eastern Anatolia, for example, seasonal employment constitutes the most important and frequently the only secondary source of income. There, income from temporary employment tends to preserve

existing productive structures. It seems that as long as seasonal employment remains a possibility, small peasants can reproduce themselves economically, and are in a good position to resist any threat to their land from larger owners.

Petty commodity producers and sporadic labour demand

The third type of village development is that characterised by accumulation through petty commodity production. Households in such a village predominantly produce a single crop, most of which is marketed. Each family is able to expand its land holdings so as to absorb the production capacity of the household labour force using current technology.

The limits of family labour capacity become an effective constraint on further expansion because of the rigidities encountered in hiring outside labour. The family as an enterprise finds it difficult to manage a farm through formal wage relations. Employment of permanent wage labour is rare; temporary labour may be employed for short periods, at times of peak demand. The structure of production, and consequently the quantity of labour employed during peak demand periods, depend very much on the nature of the crop. When the single important crop is wheat, employment of temporary labour is sporadic. In one wheat-growing village,[19] despite land holdings of between 50 and 100 hectares, only four out of eight farmers hired any labour and then only one worker for periods of between three weeks and two months during the year. Those hired were taken on during harvest time to help in packing and transporting straw.

When a similar landholding structure is encountered in cotton growing, the seasonal demand for labour is much higher. Even when holdings are sufficiently small to be worked by family members during most of the production process, picking the cotton requires extra help, so that cotton-growing petty producers emerge as important sources of demand for seasonal labour. However, since the labour required by each family farm is small in absolute terms, it is possible to satisfy it through local labour markets and indeed mostly through informal relations that bypass the market. In one Aegean cotton-growing village [20] all the petty producers surveyed had access to such relations: cotton-picking teams were formed in which all the kin and neighbourhood youth participated. During the picking season, from mid-September to mid-November, the teams went from one holding to another, and outside labour was needed only by the larger farmers. In this exchange of labour, informal accounting ensured strict reciprocity, with deficits in labour time made up through the exaction of other chores. Since all of the

[19] This village is in a fertile area to the west of Ankara.

[20] This village is in Söke, the primary cotton-growing area in the west, to the south of Izmir. I am indebted to Nükhet Sirman for much of the information on cotton-picking practices.

households that participated in the exchange held similar amounts of cotton land (between 2 and 4 hectares) such deficits were not large. Despite the demand for seasonal labour, these cotton-growing families may be classified with the wheat-growing petty producers: both depend predominantly on family labour, and for both the scale of operation is a function of family size.

To summarise, accumulating petty commodity producers require temporary wage labour, but only seasonally and in small quantities. It may be added that this requirement tends to be met, as much as possible, through informal labour exchange arrangements. Even when these do not exist, the likelihood is that local labour supplies will be sufficient to meet demand. In other words, the participation of what we have termed accumulating petty commodity producers in the labour market is marginal when compared with the demand originating from larger cotton growers. In these latter operations the scale is no longer determined by family labour potential; family members often do not live on the farm, and year-round tasks are performed by permanent wage labour.

We now turn to the functioning of the seasonal labour market in which demand originates on the large cotton farms.

The seasonal labour market in cotton [21]

The crucial factor in the demand for labour in cotton is the strict timetable for picking the crop. As soon as cotton is ready for harvesting a team of pickers must enter the field and complete the first picking in sufficient time for the lint to ripen for the second picking. Depending on the weather, the usual interval between the beginning of the first picking and the end of the second is about six weeks. Labour supplies therefore have to be sufficient and secure for the duration of the harvest; otherwise the farmer risks losing his crop or part of it through spoilage.

Thus the large farmer seeks to secure a supply of labour for the whole of this period, and also to make sure that the workers do not abandon the fields in mid-harvest. All the practices that dominate the seasonal labour market may be interpreted by reference to this constraint. If the agrarian structure had been such as to provide an abundant supply of wage-dependent landless labour, technical limitations would not be as constraining. In that case, landlords could depend on a supply of casual labour engaged for short periods of time. The fact that most seasonal workers are also petty producers creates a more difficult situation. Such workers need to be attracted and contractually bound to work within a restricted schedule. During the earlier stages of the production process, in hoeing and weeding for example, more casual day labour is employed. This is because there is no strict agronomic requirement for the timing of these tasks, and because relatively small numbers of workers are needed. Consequently, labour from adjoining

[21] The information in this section is based on a 1981 survey of seasonal labour in Söke.

villages or nearby provinces is mostly employed for hoeing. It is also not uncommon for a worker to stay a few days on the job and then depart.

Cotton pickers are contracted to work for the entire duration of the first and second pickings. Because of the length of the contract, workers need to be from those villages which have not developed sufficiently as centres of economic activity, so that they are free to supply family labour after the summer wheat has been harvested. This is why most of the non-local labour comes from villages of petty production in the eastern highlands of Anatolia, and why workers can usually migrate (for the season) with their entire families. In the Aegean area of our survey, migration from the east involved a trip of two days by bus or truck. From the employers' point of view as well, labourers who have come from a distance are preferable since they are, in a sense, more captive. One finding of the survey was that the larger the group that was employed the farther they had come.

The distance between workers' homes and their place of employment requires an intermediary to handle preliminary contacts between capital and labour. In cotton picking this role has traditionally been performed by a contractor (known as the *dayibaşi* or *elçi*), who is usually from the same village as the workers. The employer negotiates only with this intermediary and makes no individual contracts with the workers. Typically the labour contractor will talk to one or more employers during the spring and will guarantee the supply of a certain number of workers for the duration of the first and second pickings. He will also receive a money advance to lend to and thus bind the individual workers as well as to cover the cost of transport. When the picking season comes the workers arrive at the place of employment and start working, again without directly entering into any contract with the employer. Any problems relating to the details of the contract or to supervision are handled through the labour contractor. In this fashion large employers attempt to avoid the problems associated with labour management.

The system of payment also facilitates labour management. There is no daily wage: remuneration is based on the weight of cotton collected each day. The payment, however, is not made until the end of the second picking. There is a price for the first picking, and sometimes a slightly higher price for the second, more difficult one. These prices are not known in advance. Workers contract for the job knowing the previous year's price and are reasonably sure – depending on the political climate – that the rate per kilogram will increase as a function of inflation and wages in the urban sector. Some time after the workers arrive the rate is announced by the farmers' association of the region, and is usually accepted by the workers without dispute. Even in the politically volatile late 1970s this rate did not give rise to argument and conflict, possibly indicating a reluctance by the large farmers to alienate the workers. The workers view this rate-setting process in the same way as the small cotton farmers: both parties say that it is for the large farmers to set the rate and for others to follow suit.

There is a rough correspondence between these rates and urban wage levels, but the expected relation between the demand for labour and workers' wages (given a constant supply) does not seem to obtain. An important jump in the area under cotton between 1980 and 1981 coincided with a real decline in the piece rate. This tends to confirm the impression that the piece rate in cotton picking is determined at a national level (with politics and non-agricultural labour markets playing important roles) rather than within the confines of the rural labour market.

The income derived from cotton picking depends very much on skill and experience. An experienced adult worker may pick between 100 and 150 kg a day, while newcomers average between 60 and 80 kg. It is usually the case that all the younger adults in a family, together with the children, travel to pick cotton while the land and animals are left in the care of an older father or uncle. This means that between two and five members of the same household may be working together, and their incomes are combined at the end of six to eight weeks. It is possible, on the basis of these figures, to calculate the average monetary earnings of such a family. Leaving aside provisions in kind provided by the employer (rudimentary housing or tent space, firewood and water), we can estimate that a family of four picking between 250 and 300 kg of cotton a day, or between 1,500 and 1,800 kg a week, would have earned between 130,000 and 160,000 Turkish lira (TL) over eight weeks in 1982. For comparison, the legal minimum wage in industry at the time was only 13,000 TL a month, and a university lecturer earned 50,000 TL a month. This is yet another reminder that the prevalence of petty producers and the low incidence of landlessness in Turkey make the market for labour more of a sellers' market than elsewhere.

Conclusion

Turkish agriculture has historically been characterised by the predominance of an independent small peasantry. This characteristic persists to the present day and the landless poor do not constitute an important category within rural society, with the result that the labour market for permanent wage employment is very small. The seasonal demand for and supply of labour, however, are much more extensive. The parties involved are, typically, small peasants with sufficient livelihood from agriculture who prefer not to emigrate permanently, and large farmers mostly growing cotton whose demand for permanent labour is very low. This agrarian structure gives rise to a particular pattern of labour demand and supply in seasonal employment, and the conditions in which such wage contracts are made are a further indication of just how important is the absence of a substantial landless category.