

THE GECEKONDU : RURAL MIGRATION AND URBANIZATION

**By Kemal H. Karpat, London : Cambridge University Press, 1976.
Pp. 291.**

In an attempt to analyze and evaluate the socio-economic causes and consequences of urbanward migration in Turkey, Prof. Karpat in his recent book **The Gecekondu : Rural Migration and Urbanization** studies three squatter settlements located in the northern hills of İstanbul. The research investigates the history and the physical, economic, social and political structures of the "gecekondu" settlements of Nafibaba, Baltaliman and Celalettin Paşa.

The squatter settlement in a cross-cultural perspective is viewed in this work, as part of a total process of modernization which leads to a quantitative and qualitative transformation of the economic, social, political and cultural order of society in developing countries. Prof. Karpat maintains that squatter settlements ranging from "gecekondu" (Turkey), "favela" (Brazil), "rancheros" (Venezuela) and "basti" (India) to "bidonville" (Algeria and Morocco), "must be seen as a part of the process of occupational change and social mobility, political participation, and eventual urban-national integration that is transforming the rural society in much of the third world." (p. 3).

A central hypothesis pursued throughout the book is that, rather than the inevitable development of a Wirthian "urban way of life" among rural migrants or the ruralization of the city as a consequence of its invasion by the "urban villagers", the squatter settlements in the cities of most developing countries display a harmonious coexistence of urban and rural cultures. This harmony manifests itself in the migrant's preservation of certain rural relations and values simultaneously with his acquisition of modern attitudes and behavior patterns characteristic of the urban environment.

In analyzing the causes of rural migration, population growth, economic development, industrialization, mechanization of agriculture, changes in land tenure system, and increased communication and transportation capacities are described as major stimuli common to all third world countries. Moreover, the significant contribution of specific socio-economic and historical factors to intense migration and rapid urbanization in each case is given due attention. In the

case of the factors responsible for urbanward migration in Turkey, the author places a heavy emphasis on the historical, socio-economic and cultural causes of migration from the Northeast Anatolia and the Black Sea regions. This emphasis is justified by the fact that the majority of the migrants living in the three squatter settlements studied originated from these regions. In this context, Prof. Karpat presents an elaborate historical analysis of the institution of "gurbetçilik" (seasonal migration) and its historical antecedents in the area. "Gurbetçilik", together with the movements of large masses throughout the recent history of the Ottoman Empire and in the early Republican era, is viewed as indicative of what may be called a "culture of migration". This "culture" is believed to facilitate the contemporary process of permanent rural migration by providing the migrants with prior knowledge about the employment and housing conditions in urban areas. It is significant in this context that the desire to end "gurbetçilik" is an oft-stated, though not a major, reason for permanent migration, by squatters interviewed for this study. Living difficulties and lack of adequate economic means in the village are stated as the most important factors in the migrants' decision to move, while reasons such as the desire for better educational and medical facilities, for independence from in-laws and for general social and economic advancement are secondary in importance.

The social and economic structures of the three squatter settlements are investigated in this book through an analysis of the prevailing family type and size, literacy rate, level of education and occupational distribution of the population. Furthermore, the book includes a study of the social-psychological aspects of urbanization based on a survey which attempts to trace the attitudes and aspirations of the rural migrant during his metamorphosis from a village dweller, to a rural migrant and low-paid worker, to a squatter and finally, if successful, to an urban dweller. In the discussion of the factors relating to the emergence of leaders in the gecekondu settlements, once again, the almost determining effect of the hybrid culture discussed above is emphasized. It is claimed in the book, that the most successful leader in the squatter settlement is the individual who can optimally achieve the fulfillment of three essential functions (a. maintenance - to some degree - of the village culture; b. preservation of order and security within the settlement; c. establishment and maintenance of relations with the outside world), that is, the individual "who could harmonize the old with the new". (p. 118). The far-reaching impact of the "sense of community" (or its absence)

is observed, on the one hand, in the emergence of the different types of leadership patterns and political organization and on the other, in the differential rates of social deviance and crime in gecekondu areas.

According to this reader, one of the most notable contributions of the present work is the attention it devotes to the often-neglected area of the migrant's relationship with the village he has left behind. The contention of Prof. Karpat is that, contrary to the general belief, very close contact is maintained by most migrants with their villages of origin. Thus, the migrant oftentimes becomes a modernizing agent of considerable impact in his village, so much so that Prof. Karpat found a greater degree of modernization in the economically less developed villages which typically experienced higher rates of out-migration. The perceived status of the rural migrant as a trusted, respected and obeyed fellow villager with greater life experience and wisdom enables him to exert such an influence on his native community.

Paradoxically enough, although he functions as a modernizing agent and can assume a central place in his native village, the migrant remains a socially marginal man in the city until he goes through a gradual process of integration into the urban environment. It is suggested in the book that the culminating phase of this process of urban integration is "political action". Political action comprises of, at the local level, the organization of gecekondu dwellers to nominate and elect their own candidate against the candidate of nearby established residential areas for local political office (muhtarlık). At the national level, political action primarily consists of a high voter turnout at elections, motivated mostly by the gecekondu dwellers' pragmatic concerns about the survival of their settlement, its incorporation into the city and obtaining the entailed benefits. The pragmatic attitudes on the part of the gecekondu dwellers are interpreted as largely explanatory of the general tendency of gecekondu dwellers to favor the party in power at national and municipal elections. This attitude is believed to be particularly inconducive to flourishing of radical ideology in squatter settlements. Thus, the findings of this study point to the existence of attitudes and values promoting the pursuit of rather "conservative" goals via "conventional" means by the squatters.

On the whole, Prof. Karpat regards the gecekondu as a rather creative and constructive solution to a most pressing contemporary

problem of developing countries. It is evaluated as a rather ingenious arrangement that functions to alleviate the dissatisfactions arising from a lack of adequate low-cost housing in the cities and to provide a cohesive and familiar social environment that facilitates the migrant's gradual urban assimilation. Furthermore, this arrangement is seen to positively affect the economic life of the city, since it enables the worker to maintain an acceptable standard of living with low wages. To the extent that the book provides the reader with detailed analysis of the urbanization process of the inhabitants of Nafibaba, Baltaliman and Celalettin Paşa it is a welcome contribution to the literature in this field. Its empirical account of the phenomenon of urban integration via the analysis of the situation from several angles (that is, as urbanization is related to the squatter's social-psychological development; as it pertains to the physical and socio-economic structure of the settlement itself; as it affects the rural community and finally, as it relates to the urban scene) is rather comprehensive in scope, though perhaps limited in generalizability due to the rather specific nature of the areas studied.

Despite its comprehensive coverage of the various aspects of the migrants' past and present political lives, Prof. Karpat's book stops short of shedding sufficient light on the direction and nature of future political action of the migrants. As the author himself admits, the relatively transitory, concrete goal oriented and "ad hoc" nature of the migrants' pragmatic political organizations and motivations, combined with the tendency of second generation squatters to be less impressed by the novelty and attraction of urban amenities and thus less influenced by feelings of relative betterment, raise serious questions as to the perpetuation of the squatters' present conservative and establishment-oriented political attitudes and behavior.

Prof. Karpat's present volume, I believe, will prove to be an enlightening source for most students of urbanization in developing countries and an interesting account of a most controversial phenomenon for the general reader.

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