

THE CHANGING STRUCTURE OF THE TRIBE IN THE PROCESS OF URBANIZATION

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ABSTRACT

The study deals with the changes faced by the tribes in the urbanization process. The city stands out as a place where modern life manifests. The tribe, on the other hand, is known to be an organizational form in which traditionalism and the sense of community is dominant. While the urban individual has an individual vision of the world, the individual in the tribal culture adopts a more collectivist attitude. In this sense, when compared to tribal relations, urban relations are a more superficial and not intimate. Basically, the tribe and the city refer to very different structures. The city structure and texture are unique to itself and the forms of social relations it dresses itself are therefore different from rural forms. Tribal structures are also very different from urban practices thereby causes conflict and difficulties for the individual. At this point, some adaptation problems arise because the tribe members strive to maintain a collectivist relationship. In addition, while there is no authority other than law in the city, a tribal individual needs to obey the tribal leader. As seen, the cities do not conform to the lifestyles of the tribesmen, forcing them to change. But not limited to this alone, this paradox ultimately results in the heterogeneity of the cities, leading to question the current issue of traditional tribal organizations in modern cities. Thus, the last word is that despite the rural areas that tribal background remains strong, the urban tribe has changed with the urbanization process.

Keywords: Tribe, City, Urbanization, Modernization, Changing

INTRODUCTION

Tribe¹ is a social division in a traditional society consisting of people linked by social, economic, political or blood ties, typically having an admitted leader. It has a communal identity based on the hierarchical structure. At the top of this hierarchy, it's a tribal chief or chieftain, called also *agalik*. Agalık is significant to both tribal continuity and tribal sovereignty. This organization especially applies best to more traditional societies, where the hierarchy in the organization is predominantly a hierarchy of authority, but not a hierarchy of competence.

Various causes, such as modernization, urbanization and accordingly individualization are estimated to bring pervasive changes for the traditional structures, one of which is *agalik* institution. Especially, the conformism of modern life, the possibilities of urban life and finally increasing individualism have shaken greatly this institution. They have had all detrimental effect on traditional authority, as a consequence contributing to decrease the attachment and adherence of tribal members for their tribe.

Most tribal structures, i.e. clans or tribes, dominate the east and southeast regions in Turkey. Many Turkmen, Yoruk and Kurdish tribes are also scattered across different regions. These tribal structures seem to resist urbanization because urbanization actually motivates them to keep a rural base. But if the length of stay in the city and preference for urban living increases, this may lead to decreased attachment for their tribes.

Rural communities in Turkey are characterized by having strong family, kinship and tribal ties, and a deeply rooted traditions. Strong ties and solidarity lead the individuals' obedience to tradition and the community leader to maturity. According to Güngör Ergan (2020, 67), this manifest itself in the dominant position of public life. But nevertheless there has been a gradual loosening of the bonds of a tribal loyalty, especially in urban areas. Industrialization and urbanization are primary reasons for the deteriorating of the tribal structures. In addition, schooling and politicization are also key drivers that very much matters for this. But this does not mean that the phenomenon of tribe or the individual's consciousness of belonging to a group completely disappear. A person who belongs to any tribe and lives in metropolitan cities, such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, for example, may introduce himself as "I am the descendant of this tribe" (Güngör Ergan, 2020, 82). As is seen from this example, people living in cities do not lose totally their tribal identity.

The current study is designed around a theoretical framework. In the conceptual framework, those fundamental issues are dealt with: the conceptual definition of tribe, the tribal leadership in the context of authority, and the impact of urbanization on the tribal structure.

1. TRIBE AND TRIBAL STRUCTURE

People live in a community because it offers them a huge variety of opportunities. Among these are the feelings of solidarity and togetherness, which cannot be accomplished by the individual himself. Uluç (2010, 39) in this respect points to the ties in the tribal structures that bind the members together as one. According to Uluç, this is achieved by the collective consciousness that leads to overcoming happy and unhappy times together.

A closer look at the sociology literature in Turkey reveals that a great many researchers have conducted researches on tribal structures. Ziya Gökalp is also among the leading figures of sociology discipline who has written scientific articles on the issue, e.g. "Sociological Studies about Kurdish Tribes" (Gökalp, 2007, 26). The article has prescribed the basic characteristics to be followed in the specification of tribes as follows: Tribes are like groups that are connected with each other. But these groups get the name 'political family communities' because they look like a family on the one hand and a political organization on the other. These groups are usually based on a genuine or imaginary relationship. There are 'blood revenge solidarity' and 'war solidarity' among them. In the light of this definition, it is clear that the tribe involves a

¹ The concept of tribe can be used interchangeably with the concept of "Aşiret". It refers to a social organization in Turkey especially known for its cultural characteristics.

spirit of solidarity, and this solidarity is based more on blood kinship. The blood and kinship ties therefore play a major role in tribal structures.

Heckmann (2006, 135) considers the tribe, on the other hand, as the sum of the people belonging to different families and parts of the tribe. With respect to the fact that it is based on blood ties, this refers to sharing or being descendants of the same ancestors. Beşikçi (1992) also thinks the same way. According to him, a tribe is a hierarchical blood kinship-based nomadic society who believe that they share the same the same ancestors, speak the same language or dialect, and have the same traditions or common cultural characteristics. At the bottom of this hierarchy, it is the family. After the family, the clan comes in the tribal hierarchy. Beşikçi's tribe definition, however, is not fully-fledged because his studies are limited only to the Kurdish tribes.

Besides blood kinship ties, Beşikçi also put a great emphasize on partnership in tribal structures. This partnership is based on characteristics such as ancestry, language, tradition and culture. For him, even if you do not share the same ancestor, the belief that you come from a common ancestor is also enough to feel yourself as a part of tribal structure. Another definition has been put forward by Bruinessen (2011, 82). Bruinessen's definition demonstrates a very elaborate perception of Kurdish tribal structure. According to him, Kurdish tribe is a social-political organization that have real or hypothetical kinship ties, and partly an absolute right to rule their own territories. Tapper (2004, 10), on the other hand, defines the tribe as "a typical common social organization model that is based on brotherhood, and follows the patrilineal line of descent. For Tapper, this type of organization is most common in the traditional or primitive societies except the West. The details may vary, but the definitions all share common grounds. Above all is blood and kinship ties. The blood and kinship ties are building blocks of tribal structure. But this tie does not have to be real. The belief that you all share the same ancestor is also enough to be recognized as a part of tribal structure.

Tribal structures, such as lineages (families), clans), phratries (tribes), moieties (divisions) can be effectively used to address the many challenges that arise in the societies. For Haviland (2002, 313), the main roles they play are: the preservation of the resources that cannot be shared without harm; fulfilling tasks that require so much labor that families cannot afford on their own; requesting support and protection from another group in case you need any help, etc. Beside these, there is also the good that is linked to the common value or ideal. It promotes solidarity of members towards each other, and this solidarity sets up itself based on sharing the same ancestor. In this regard, Ibn Khaldun (2004, 170-171) also emphasizes kinship ties to build the solidarity, i.e. social cohesion, in a community. He believes that kinship is the most fundamental basis of social cohesion. Whenever there would arise any threat or difficulty to any kinship based group, they would protect their social bond in whatever ways. Therefore, this feeling is a strong association that hold group members closely bound. Only with the spirited of group feeling, it becomes possible to live in the sahara and badiyas. But the spirit of group feeling or asabiyyah does not necessarily arise from the blood ties, but have a common view of sharing the same ancestor.

Tribe on the one hand possesses kinship provided by Asabiyyah, and on the other hand bolster a power as representative of society. Kurdish tribes actually give us a clear picture of this situation. For example, Bruinessen (1999, 17) asserts that nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes have a privilege to represent Kurdish society both militarily and politically because tribal bonds play an important role in Kurds' lives. Therefore, tribes have exercised control over the rooted peasant communities with non-tribal origins. But not every Kurd is with a tribal origin. There are also non-tribal Kurds.

The tribes have priority rights to own the lands they have traditionally used for centuries. For this reason, they have to come up with a way to protect their lands from the insults of others or rival tribes. But this in turn lead to disputes and conflicts between tribes. However, these conflicts and disputes do not deteriorate tribal structure. On the contrary, they seem to act as social glue that bind the tribal members together as one (Bruinessen, 2019, 35).

2. TRIBAL MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK: AGHA/CHIEFTAIN/LEADER

“Agha” is one of the concepts that comes to mind when we think of the word ‘tribe’. This word is actually associated with greatness, leadership and authoritarian. For Karadeniz (2012, 29-30), this term has long been used and still used to some extent as a respectful form of address and reference. In societies where the elderly is thought to occupy a better position, it has rather a symbolic meaning. But it became more formal title in the Ottomans, given to high rank officers. Today, this concept does not donate only tribal leadership, but its coverage includes big landowners, e.g. landowners in Çukurova. Apart from this word, the word chieftain is also used to denote the head of the tribe. Chieftain is originated from Arabic meaning “leader, head, president”. These two words actually are synonymous, and can therefore be used interchangeably. They all mean “leadership”, but the only difference is that agha is more specific word than the word chieftain.

The tribal chieftaincy has a huge impact on the lives of tribal members. Therefore, the traditional role that it plays in the tribal structure should not be underestimated. For example, he represents and protects the community, resolve disputes, develop trust and shows respect for all tribe members, and solves problems in practical life as well as bureaucratic ones (Parin, 2019, 91). In light of its importance to tribal structure, this is actually not surprising, as well as the fact that today the tribal leaders are prominent figures who play key roles in the politic and bureaucratic systems and institutions.

An important feature of the tribal leader is that he should have the inherent power or ability to govern all matters involving tribe members, and be descendant of lineages with common ancestry. As a rule, the most powerful member or clan would be referred to as leader (Bruinessen, 2011, 130). Even if the tribe is composed of clans with common ancestry, there are more powerful and closely connected assabiyahs (groups) within that community. In this sense, access to political power is traditionally through superiority. Superiority is the major element that is accompanied by group feeling, and likewise, leadership exists only with superiority. Leadership may change hands between the clans, but again this will be based on superiority (İbni Haldun, 2004, 176). Apart from this, another important necessity is royalty and possessing very well-established history. As long as the ruling family possesses very well-established history and enjoys the supports of other family members, the rule of their leadership would strengthen.

The traditional tribal structures are ruled by strong families, as has been noted before. According to Barth (2001), the most important feature of tribal leadership as prestige. The strong of the leadership is proportional to the prestige of the leader and his family. Besides, the following essential qualities of leadership are also important: androcentrism -the preference for the masculine over the feminine- and nobility, i.e. being a member of privileged upper class. Milingen (1998, 171), on the other hand, sees the authority as a key component of the leadership. He defines the hegemonic power of tribal leaders as follows: “The tribal leader is a strict despot. His authority has no limits. He can make someone he likes rich, punish someone he is angry with, even decide to put on death if he gets very angry”. From this definition, it is not difficult to deduce that an authoritarian personality does not hesitate to use force to keep the union together. The good reputation of the leader in terms of authority thus decidedly influences the unity and security of the tribe.

It is evident that the tribe is a hierarchical social organization in which formal leadership is monopolized by the tribal leadership. Mendras (2008, 569) at this point introduces different leadership models, e.g. “authoritarian”, “democratic” and “liberal” leaderships. The tribal leadership is best suited to the authoritarian leadership model. Given that authority serves as glue that bind the members together, thus ensuring the continuation of tribe, it is the most important groundwork of tribal leadership.

3. URBAN STRUCTURE

Marx and Weber, prominent classical sociologists, have tried to explain what was happening with the shift to industrialization. Both theoreticians consider society to be an economically, politically and culturally integrated system. But the main difference between them lies in the fact that Marx sees economics as a main driver that very much matters in class division, while Weber argues that cultural and political factors are

determinants of individual behavior and social classes or social history. For Marks, social stratification is mainly classified by production. In the early period of capitalism, this production was based on the struggle between rural and urban production powers. But for Weber, bureaucratization brought a greater level of social control. As societies plunged ahead on their own, this paved the way to shift from feudalism to the independent settlements and finally autonomous local governments (Kurtuluş, 2010, 179). As seen from these expressions, economics has profound effects and sets in motion important political and cultural formations. And all economical, cultural and political developments have profoundly influenced the growth of the modern cities.

The Chicago School is among the first who focused on human behavior shaped by social structures and physical environmental factors, rather than genetic or personal traits. Members of the school believed that the surrounding community inhabits is a major contributing factor in shaping the individual's behavior (Tatlidil, 2003, 331). Two bedrock assumptions of the Chicago School are the concepts of 'urban ecology' and 'urbanism'. The first is proposed by the school itself, and the second by Wirth. These concepts postulate that cities are not likely to succeed without advantageous characteristics of the environment. For example, cities in modern societies are usually formed on banks of rivers, fertile plains, or at the crossroads of important trade and railways (Giddens, 2012, 945). Besides, the conjunctural residential areas are also effective through this process. Cities formed on cyclical residential areas naturally develop at a rapid pace, thus raising awareness for the support of urbanism.

Urbanism is a concept in which inherits all the characters connected to the urbanization. Wirth argues that as the greater mobility tends to weaken ties to the community, urban dwellers live close together but without intimate relations. For Wirth, this is the most important feature that is unique to urban areas. Another important feature of urban life is competition among the dwellers. As urban people become more individualistic, self-centered and selfish, this leads to the attitude towards competition. But some small communities in the urban society may have different characteristics. For example, immigrants consider maintaining to tradition as an obligation. So, their relations with each other is intimate, as compared to non-immigrants. But the integration of immigrants in the cities leads to adaptation challenges, especially for new comers, thus deteriorating and weakening their ties to the society (Giddens, 2012, 948-949). But unlike new-comers, old-timer residents do not face those challenges throughout this process, and see urbanism as a way of life.

Urban life transforms the spatial and social hierarchies in the society due to the fact that people with different ethnics, religions, cultural backgrounds, social status live together. Therefore, people often engage in discrimination toward others who are different from them. But not limited to this alone, it also leads to a collective culture of life. The city as a cross-sectional construct integrates relation between sociality, culture and identity (Aytaç, 2020, 15). Looking at these unique features of the city makes it clear that the city is composed of highly heterogeneous components. This heterogeneity stems from the differences in the economic, social and cultural structure of the city. But this heterogeneity is not necessarily useful since it may cause a number of risks. At this point, individuals develop strategies in a bid to overcome those challenges. Among these is the strategy of 'civil inattention'. Civil inattention refers to the situation of knowing the "other", but ignoring it. Actually, Goffman (2015, 85) coined the term to denote the practice of acknowledging others with whom we live in close proximity, all the while showing indifference. According to Goffman, this type of behavior is inappropriate as they constitute others as objects that is not worthy of at all.

As seen, when compared to rural life, urban life is associated with more inattentive behaviors. Social relations in the city often result in greater indifference and disconnectedness (Bauman, 2016, 81). This in turn leads to alienation and loosening the values the individual attached, according to Simmel. Simmel further adds that money becomes an impersonal and objectified measure of value in modern societies. Simmel's sociology especially emphasizes the fact that money has both pros and cons. That is, individual freedom is expanded greatly, but it alienates one from society and from objects, thus producing some problems of characterless, indifference and alienation, etc. (Frisby, 2012, 134). Besides this, money also socializes human beings into objects. It produces universal alienation, which is viewed as in terms of distance, indif-

ference and detachment, the very terms that specify the stranger (Simmel, 2014, 336-337). Thus, urban life under capitalism alienates the individual, and disrupts friendship ties. So, the result is more deficits in the quality of interpersonal relations.

4. THE IMPACT OF URBANIZATION ON TRIBES

The major causes of dissolution in rural areas and urbanization are: population growth, economic problems, industrialization, mechanization of agriculture, education, health and social problems, as well as the growth of communication and transportation networks. The shift from agricultural society to industrial society has had a huge impact on the economic growth of the cities (Şengül ve Ersoy, 2000, 161-171). So, the result is rising migration to the cities. But this brings with it risks for the migrants, as well, e.g. housing, health, education, etc. In Turkey, the situation is also the same with the Kurdish tribesmen.

In the pre-modern era, Kurds were the non-capitalist societies, i.e., tribal, semi-feudal principalities or emirates. The emirates have taken supratidal form, exercising significant control over the weaker communities, i.e. tribes and non-tribal people, and were mostly under the domination of strong Kurdish tribal dynasties (Eppel, 2019, 37).

As has been already stated, tribal groups play an important role in shaping socio-political framework of the geography they inhabit. Here, the concept of tribe denotes a spirit of solidarity, and this is based more on blood kinship. Traditionally this kinship based tribal structures also have been a vital presence among Kurds. Because Kurdish tribes inhabit in the same geography, believe in the same God, and tribal leadership is monopolized mostly by the tribal leadership sheikhs, agha or mullah (Maisel, 2018, 83). On the contrary, the assortment of immigrant populations demotes cities as cultural melting points. Therefore, aforementioned practices, such as following the tribal leader, expressing commitment to religious value are not compatible with urban practices. As such, tensions arise between the modern and traditional practices. In Turkey, the situation is again the same with the tribes in the Eastern and Southeastern regions.

Kurdish tribes' migration experiences in East and Southeast Anatolia after 1970's in Turkey were mainly led by the regional and ethnical factors. Besides significant benefits and enrichment, these migrations bring with it tribal specific features. Urbanism at this point has led to the emergence of a new form of tribal structure that is fundamentally different from the traditional tribal form (Aytaç, 2018, 15-16). Hence, a new form of culture, i.e. urban culture, comes into the existence. But this culture is more based on pluralistic views and understandings in terms of exploiting potentials of the city, rather than individual and selfish perspectives that ignores tribal values (Mutlu, 2020: 48). For this reason, it becomes a current issue for tribesmen to preserve and enhance their traditional values throughout this process. But again not limited to this alone, the individual is the other sufferer, apart from the community. Because urbanization leads to create a sense of belonging for the individual himself.

At the heart of the urban identity formation, there may be a dialectical relation between the old and new identities. The citizenship is now inevitable part of our society, so there is more need to underline the value of citizenship. But people's old identities, i.e., traditional tribal past, can return to disrupt this new identity. In this regard, phenomena like ghettoization -locating away from urban community- are actually practices to retain the old identity. Because tribalism again serves as social glue that binds the tribesmen together, giving the members benefits for adapting to urban life (Özden and Salur, 2014, 60). Thus, it becomes easier for tribesmen to overcome the challenges of urbanization given it, such as housing, health, education, etc.

The mechanical bureaucratic organizations are instrumental in pushing the cities to become more actively involved in governing the social relations as well as the tribal relations. Therefore, the problems of self-centeredness, indifferentness and alienation, etc. are most pronounced in the cities and are mainly exacerbated by mechanical bureaucratic organizations. Thus, social relations in the city are characterized by a low degree of integration or common values and a high degree of isolation (Aytaç, 2020, 34). The tribal structures in this regard refers to an organization based on kinship, thus ensuring solidarity, social cohesion

and altruism. This is why very often tribal individuals, who are the most difficult to replace in the community, act on to create high levels of social capital through his tribal communities. Looking at the characteristics possessed by both a tribal individual and an urban individual, this paradox is clearly evident.

When compared with tribal individual, urban individual is only able to create lower degree of social capital, and this capital arises from mostly family and friend groups s/he interacts. But except for the level of two relation types, the quality of these relation also differs. Tribal individual builds strong relations with his/her tribal community, due to the fact that this type of relations is mostly based on kinship, while urban relations are surface levels and weak-tie relations.

As mentioned earlier, urbanization and modernization bring pervasive changes for the traditional structures. These changes have been noted in the structures of both urban and rural areas. Rural areas in this respect are more fertile lands for sustaining tradition than urban areas. But tribesmen somehow strive to maintain kinship and share culture in the city. But these efforts often result in becoming more urbanized. According to Jabar (2013), especially the new tribes are more keen on to adopt the urban practices because they have any more agricultural-based economy and regional community in the city. In addition, new tribal leaders are now members of self-employed and educated middle-class people.

There is too much differences between the tribe in the city and in the countryside to conclude that each type of social relations and social solidarities are dissimilar. The most important difference between them lies in the fact that the formal and bureaucratic structure of the city inevitably lead to the formal and surface levels relations for urban tribal structures. Actually, this is not surprising as the high numbers of tribal migrants are drawn to the cities in search of exploiting urban potentials. But one advantage may be that they are now playing highly active role in the urban community.

The city plays a vastly greater role in shaping the character of modern society. But this does not mean that they are wholly present. In the cities, it becomes more difficult for the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality against the historical heritage, social forces and culture. As the city orders so much of consciousness on the part of individual, this gives way to personal freedom. But this freedom is not cheap. According to Eskin (2016, 38), you have to pay the price of it, and the most expensive price is the difficulty of formation of new identity as modern life shakes the old identity of the individual, which is derived from the ethnic and traditional roots. Not limited to this alone, there are also prices that have to be paid by the tribal structures. The most expensive price on the part of the tribe is, on the other hand, the difficulty of maintaining tradition. According to Uluç (2020), modern life undercuts the tribal sovereignty, and as a consequence the responsibility for the tribesmen turns over to the modern community. Improvements on agricultural mechanization is also likely to be of great importance to this process, leading to urban migration trend. Apart from this, education also is a key driver that very much matters for this. Especially, increasing the availability of education, raising awareness for the support of gender equality in education contribute much to the formation of modern individual, thus loosening the bonds and the individual attachment to the tribal structures. Mass media also undermines the immediate familiarity of the individuals with each other. Besides, understanding of ethnicity as a state of mind is another reason. As a traditional structure, tribes act on to persist despite cultural and social relationships between another groups through this process. As such, urbanism can be characterized as fragmented as the traditional bonds of the tribal structures are loosened.

The opportunities the city offers, such as education, health and entertainment, etc. facilitate the adaptation of the tribal individuals. Accordingly, individuals appreciate these opportunities to engage with the urban society. Throughout this process, s/he may attempt to maintain some features of his tribal identity, as well. Here, another important issue is the generation gap. The effects of generation gap should not be underestimated on this issue. For example, the tribal identity of an individual who was born in the city or has lived in the city since childhood will not be the same with his/her parents. Because when compared with his/her family, the individual is exposed to much urban culture through school and peer groups s/he interacts. For this reason, the impact of the tribal structures on the identity of the individual is limited, as compared to the past.

CONCLUSION

The tribe plays an active and functional role in traditional and rural societies. In Turkey, there are also tribal structures, e.g. Turkmen, Yoruk and Kurdish tribes. Tribal structures are instrumental in social the individual with the community and forming his/her identity, especially in the social and traditionalist cultures. Because of this reason, individuals seem to maintain the traditional tribal structure in their daily lives.

Rapid urbanization, agricultural modernization, and industrialization have resulted in appalling changes in rural areas. For example, people who engaged in rural based activities and occupations were unable to access to the resources that would enable them to provide adequately for their households. The consequence of this is rising migration to the cities. But this widespread waves of urban migration bring with it big problems for the migrants, e.g. social, cultural and economic problems, etc. The situation is also the same with the tribes in the Eastern and Southeastern regions of Turkey.

The structures and organizations that play important role in rural area may feel wrong for the city because it is the opposite of rural area in terms of social structure. Given that the city structure and texture are unique to itself, the forms of social relations it dresses itself are also different from rural forms. Usually, tribal individuals hold to the traditional attitudes and behaviors after adopting urban practices but do not completely give up their traditions. Some features of tribal structures of course are preserved in their own right; but others are adapted to the requirements of urban life, such as abiding laws and discounting of the tribal heritage, etc. At this point, one might argue that city life has both pros and cons for the individual. On the one hand, it can be perceived to be consistent with individualism, but on the other hand, social relation in the city are more formal and surface levels.

To conclude, urban culture is based on individualism and revolves around formal relations and laws. Tribal structure is, on the other hand, a collectivistic and socialistic organization. It is mostly based on traditional ties. Here, urbanization represents a new and fundamental step that have a huge impact on tribal structures. But this relationship between city and tribal structures is not one-sided. They both clash and complement each other. Individuals on the one hand appreciate the opportunities the city offers to engage with the urban society, but on the other hand attempt to maintain some features of his tribal identity. However, this tribal identity is not as strong as rural identity. Tribal background in rural areas remains still strong, while in the cities the influence of tribal structure gradually weakens.

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