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Economic structures, production processes and forms of kinship and cooperation in rural and pastoral societies in Greece (19th-20th centuries)*

Introduction

We will present the main primary productive activities that were agriculture and livestock, as well as the forms of socio-economic organization, namely *tsifliki* (large areas of agricultural land owned by one family) and *tselingat* (pastoral organizations). We will also talk about the forms and types of family organization in mainland Greece. Finally, we will be interested in the relationships, interactions, and developments of agriculture and livestock and forms of home organization and cooperation.

Primary productive activities and forms of socio-economic organization

Agriculture and animal husbandry were the main economic and productive activities for the Greeks, one of which complemented the other. During the Turkish occupation and later, the Greek farmer worked either on their own property and paid tax on the land they cultivated, or on *tsiflikis* originally owned by the Turks and after 1881 by Greek capitalists. Over the years and as we progress to the newer years, shipping, handicrafts, crafts and commerce have developed (Thanopoulos, 2002: 74).

The forms of socio-economic organization that emerged from agriculture and livestock farming were *tsifliki* and *tselingato*. Between the two productive mechanisms, there is an interdependent relationship, which reveals the grid of agricultural relations before the agricultural

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reform. In the past, the *tsifliki* was regarded as a survival of the feudal system. Recent studies have argued that they are the product of capitalist infiltration and all that it entails, from the commercialization of rural relations. The *tsifliki* is a form of land ownership that provides and maintains its cultivators. Originally, the term was used by the Ottomans referring to an area of land that a pair of oxen could plow in one day. In 1610, the term *çiftlik* was used for large tracts of land that were progressively converted into individual properties. It therefore came from the conversion of feudal lands into *timars*, where the *timar* owners began to have ownership rights over the estates they cultivated. The grower required to the owner of the *tsifliki* to share half of the production with him after the state tax was deduced. When the Greek state was formed, the *tsiflikis* were converted into individual possessions and the cultivation of the fields was extensive, while the peasants who worked on them were essentially owned by the *tsifliki* owner (Nitsiakos, 1997: 90-92).

Extensive cultivation is characteristic of the relationship of the *tsifliki* with the *tselinglato*. Large tracts of land that were left uncultivated were rented to pastoralists as pastures. For the landlords, renting land was a constant income from the uncertainty of cultivation and even reduced the fear of rebellion. Sources that testify to the issue of uncultivated land come from both travelers and scholars who argue that this phenomenon is widespread in Thessaly, Macedonia, Epirus, where nomadic breeders exist (*ibidem*, 92-93).

The *tsifliki* defined socio-economic relations with livestock groups. The *tselingas* was the one who hired the uncultivated land and made sure that had the materials needed for that purpose. A small number of breeders were attached to the original structure of the *tseligato* to ensure their livelihoods. This was one of the main causes of development of *tselingato*. The leader in this form of productive partnership was the *tselingas*, who had the general management of the consortium. He represented the *tselingato* to third parties, he was responsible for supplying products from the market, he was in charge of credit operations for shepherds – the shepherds worked and had a small livestock. In the spring and autumn, at the end of each season, they split profits and closed their accounts. The profits were divided according to the number of animals each member had, and the shepherds got what they had agreed to, also known as a wages, if any of the credits had been debited to their personal account. The size of the *tselingato* was related to the size of the herd and in some cases it could consist of several thousand animals and dozens of families (*ibidem*, 93-94).

Tselingas' office often became hereditary because the *tselingas* himself chose between his sons whom he considered more capable. He had to be smart, active and “social” according to the Sarakatsans. His father trained him to learn farming and also reading and arithmetic. Of course, if the father thought that the son was incapable, he would remove him and replace him with someone else. In addition to the mentioned above duties the *tselingas* had, the shepherds had to obey to *tselingas*, work with him, do the work they were given, participate in the expenses of the Joint

Establishment and whenever they needed to defend the *tselingato* even at the risk of their lives (Kavvadias, 1991: 176-177).

Forms and types of family organization in mainland Greece

When referring to the family, in the narrowest sense, we mean the relatives under the same roof or the relatives living in several houses but belonging to an architectural group (house). Exchange of domestic services between relatives is a key requirement. People who live, work, consume and exchange domestic services belong to the same “household group”, a term used by the social sciences which corresponds to the family in the narrow sense (Alexakis, 2002: 51-52).

The forms and types of family found in the continental Greece are the nuclear family, the multinuclear/extended, the (patri)lateral and the bilateral. The **nuclear** or conjugal family consists of a couple with or without children. Multinuclear is considered to be the family where more siblings married live together under one roof, with or without their parents. They may be enlarged with one or two relatives who have not married or have been widowed. The **multinuclear** family is found in many parts of the world and more in the Balkans, the well-known “zadruga”. It was widespread in Greece until the mid-20th century over much of mainland Greece in mountainous and semi-mountainous areas. A **lateral multinuclear family of unstable type** is considered to be one that the kinship is configured by men. It is based on the principle of patrilocation where the bride stays at her father-in-law’s house. Such a family is made up of brothers, sisters-in-law and parents. When parents die and siblings continue to live together, then the multinuclear family is called “brotherhood”. This type of family was widespread in the mountainous and semi-mountainous regions of Greece with low economic levels. It is found at the Vlachs of Pindos, at the farmers of the “Karagounides” of Thessaly (Greek race that lives in Central Greece, considered original ancestors of the first ancient Greeks to inhabit the area), in areas where livestock farming was developed and there was extensive cereal cultivation as well. In this type of family girls first marry and then men. There is also a form of actual or symbolic “redemption of the bride” with mainly dowry money (*ibidem*, 55-56). In the **lateral multi-nuclear family of fixed type**, marriages are without rule in the gender of children and in the order of age. “Bride redemption” is essential, with the exception of urban centers that are limited to clothing only. This type of family existed in several regions of Thessaly, Macedonia, Thrace and Epirus, and their economy was dependent on extensive cereal cropping. The farmers divided the land into two and three zones and cultivated one zone per year, the following year the zone was pastured and the third year was cultivated again. The method of cultivation with fallow was the one they used. When the children were married and the father was forced to divide the land into several pieces, problems

were created in the cultivation of cereals and therefore delayed the division of the land in the multi-nuclear family (*idem*, 2004: 51). One variant of the multinuclear family is **bilateral**, where one or more married sisters live together at home with their married brothers. This type of family is associated with more sophisticated forms of economy, as it combines extensive cereal cultivation and intensive cultivation of other products. This, of course, is a great need for the workforce and if the family is preceded by daughters, the loss of labor by marriage is a great loss to the family. The father must bring in grooms at home until the boys have reached adulthood. This type of family has a shorter cycle of development, not only because the groom decides to leave his father-in-law's home, but also because sophisticated forms of economics lead to intense social stratification. In the bilateral multinuclear family, the custom of "acquiring the bride" is absent, as opposed to the multinuclear family where the groom or his father offers the bride's male relatives money or a number of animals. In this type of family the so-called "groom's gift" is used, where the groom or father offers the bride himself some money or jewelry (*idem*, 2002: 57-58; *idem*, 2004: 52).

Relationships, interactions and developments in productive activities and forms of home organization and cooperation

Agriculture and livestock, as we said above, were the primary productive activities on which the Greeks relied to provide the goods they needed for their lives. The flora of the Greek area helped in the development of livestock farming, and especially in the mountainous areas, the large Greek family came together to ensure its livelihood. The children followed their father's occupation and their grouping led to the cultivation of sentimentally moving customs of mutual support and cooperation in community, rural and livestock work. The result was to develop, in addition to domestic livestock farming, the nomadic example of large cattle and sheep herds, which is typical Sarakatsan (Sarakatsani were nomadic race of Greek shepherds who now live in rural areas all over Greece). This meant the transition from the relative organization of production to the contractual one. *Tsiflikis* and *tselingatos* were kept for a long time. But they could not be unaffected by the developments in the agricultural and livestock sector (Thanopoulos, 2002: 80-81).

As far as rural areas are concerned, the agricultural reform that began in 1917 aimed at abolishing *tsiflikis*. On the one hand, the *tsifliki* was a permanent source of turmoil and, on the other, it impeded economic growth and the modernization of the agricultural sector. The law on the expropriation and land reclamation signaled the end of large land holdings, such as *tsiflikis*, and opened the way for free farming based on the small family lot. The distribution of land was accompanied by intensive cultivation against the extensive characteristic of *tsifliki*. This had a direct impact on livestock farming. Winter pastures have been reduced and the fallow system has

come to an end. Thus, the abolition of the *tsifliki* automatically meant the decline of the *tselingatos*. From then on, livestock farming will develop within the family business (Nitsiakos, 1997: 88-90). The *tselingato* has for a long historical phase been a key feature of the social morphology of livestock communities and affected the social stratification of these communities. Poor farmers could not cope with the difficulties, such as access, hiring of winter pastures, and lack of sufficient livelihoods, thus forcing them to compete with the strong *tselinges*. Livestock farming was directly dependent on the *tsifliki* from which it ensured the herds were wintered. The fate of the *tselingato* after the removal of the *tsifliki* appears in the figures from the statistics of the time, the reduction in animals was 38% and in households 43%. The relationship that developed between the two socio-economic formations was essentially due to the very characteristics of the productive activities they represented, with the dominant mode of production being both agriculture and livestock based on land. Land is a factor of complementarity and interdependence between the two branches of farming and herding (*ibidem*, 94-95).

The family as we have defined it, in the strict sense, was still the basic unit of farmland. The *tselingato* was considered a special social group that was part of the (patri)lateral multinuclear family and the economic cooperation. It received from the family the ethics found in the family farm, while the cooperative borrowed the contractual bond that unites the members. Thus, it is better equipped than the cooperative on one hand and on the other it is able to develop cooperative relationships with non-relatives. According to Georges Gurvitch (*The social frameworks of knowledge*, 1972) about *tselingato*, he argues that: “It is a group of kinship of economic feasibility, voluntary, lasting and over-functionality” (*apud* Kavvadias, 1991: 181-182).

Although the livestock and farming societies remained closed for many years, and for a long time their production techniques were stable, they did not remain unaffected by the developments. The transition from extensive cultivation to intensive farming led to the gradual disintegration of the extended family, but remained extensive. In a nuclear/extended family, agricultural hands were also recruited from the wider family environment (kin) during harvest. The participation of women in agricultural work has been constant, especially in mountain communities. Until the 1970s their participation was very significant. A very common form of co-operation for the cultivation of small farms was animal husbandry between two farmers and the sharing of production. Informal forms of cooperation consisted of mutual assistance and borrowing in the family environment. Such forms of collaboration were collecting fruits in agricultural and livestock emergencies, such as illness, death, pregnancy, caring for young children, as well as herd work, such as animal haircut, breeding, and more. They managed to secure the right working hands. These practices helped to strengthen the bonds between the community inhabitants, normalized and contributed to the reproduction of society (Economou, 2007: 145, 161-162).

Epilogue

Agriculture and animal husbandry have greatly influenced the evolution of the social and economic organization of the pastoral families in Greece. We noticed that the *tsifliki* and *tselngato* were directly related to each other and one complemented the other. The different types of families found in the Greek mainland are due to the different economic conditions in the area. It is the multinuclear family that supports nomadic farming and extensive farming. The changes that have taken place in agriculture, livestock, *tsifliki*, *tselngato* and the family are due to agricultural reform.

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