

PERSISTENCE AS AN HISTORICALLY SPECIFIC POSSIBILITY

The case of tobacco production in Aegean Turkey

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Despite the pessimistic predictions of the classical theories of capitalist development, simple commodity production (SCP) has continued to persist under capitalism. While it has not been unique to any single branch of the economy, persistence of SCP has been more widespread within agriculture than in industry. In many parts of the world SCP has not only persisted but continued to be the predominant form of production in the agricultural sector.

Explanations for the persistence of SCP under capitalism vary. While some, following the classic Marxist-Leninist interpretation, insist that SCP is only a transitional phenomenon and will disappear eventually (Rahman 1986; Johnson 1981; de Janvry 1980), others argue that necessary conditions for the reproduction of simple commodity producing families may exist within capitalist formations and as long as these conditions exist, persistence of SCP will not be an anomaly (Friedmann 1980; Mann & Dickinson 1978; Vergopoulos 1978).

There are also significant differences between those who argue that SCP can survive under capitalism, in explaining the reasons for its persistence in agriculture. While some explain it in terms of the inability of capital to expand in various branches of agriculture due to certain obstacles (Mann & Dickinson 1978; Goodman & Redclift 1985; Buttel & LaRamee 1987), a second group argues that capital prefers to preserve SCP and other forms of non/pre-capitalist production and manages to appropriate the surplus labour of rural producers through various means (Banaji 1977; Roseberry 1978; Vergopoulos 1978; Wolpe 1978; Meillassoux 1981). A third group emphasizes the significance of the internal dynamics of household production. They argue that the specific organization of production and division of labour within the simple commodity producing unit gives it a competitive advantage over capitalist forms of production (Chayanov 1966; Hunt 1979; Durrenberger 1984). Finally, several others point to the possible role of state policies (usually in combination with other conjunctural phenomena) in the persistence of SCP in agriculture (Friedmann 1978; Mann & Dickinson 1980).

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The reason for the wide disparity among explanations for the persistence of SCP and its destiny lies partly in the fact that SCP has always appeared as a subordinate form. For this reason significant variations occur throughout the world, depending on the way it relates to the dominant capitalist mode of production. In this respect, empirical observations in different social formations would help to enhance our knowledge of these variations, while at the same time making possible more precise theoretical generalizations.

This paper will examine the post-World War II transformation in the tobacco sector that led to the consolidation of small ownership and simple commodity production in the Aegean region of Turkey. While previously most of the tobacco producers were sharecroppers working for large landlords, the situation changed drastically after the War. At present, tobacco production in the Aegean region, where around 75 per cent of the tobacco-producing families operate on less than half a hectare of land (1980), presents an extreme case of small-scale simple commodity production. Within the given historical and commodity context, this paper will examine the natural imperatives of tobacco production, characteristics of family production, the tobacco market and state policies and their roles in the emergence and persistence of SCP in tobacco production in Aegean Turkey.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Ottoman past

Although tobacco production in the Aegean region can be dated as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century, its expansion took place only in the nineteenth century in response to increasing demand in the European markets during the Crimean and American Civil Wars. The nineteenth century was also the time when the Ottoman economy was seriously confronted by expanding Western capitalism.

Integration of the Ottoman Empire into the world economy was typical of a semi-colonial peripheral country. Industry was backward and the country depended mainly on imports of finished products from the West. Despite increasing tendencies towards commodification in the agrarian sector, transformation of agriculture was partial. While commodity relations were penetrating the countryside, Ottoman land tenure, which was based on the recognition of the usufruct rights of peasants as long as they cultivated the land, was still largely intact, despite internal and external pressures. Although this regime had begun to crumble, the centralist tendencies of the Ottoman state had generally managed to prevent the local notables emerging as a powerful landed aristocracy. Availability and accessibility of land to peasant families, and consequently the shortage of

labour, created obstacles to the domination of capitalist relations of production in agriculture. In the case of tobacco production, labour shortage was a particular obstacle because tobacco was an immensely labour-intensive crop.

Another major obstacle to the expansion of capitalist relations of production in tobacco was the emergence of the *Régie* as a monopoly agency in the domestic market. Designed to raise revenue from tobacco in order to settle the Ottoman foreign debt, the *Régie Cointéressée de Tabacs de l'Empire Ottoman* was given the right to control production, processing, purchase and sale of tobacco within the Empire. In return, it was asked to buy all tobacco that was produced in the Empire, offer interest-free credit to the producers and arrange warehouses for storage. Given the high labour requirements of tobacco production and unavailability of cheap labour, the monopolistic price structure of the *Régie* became a major disincentive to the expansion of capitalist production in tobacco.

The Republican era

The Turkish Republic was built on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire which was invaded by the victorious allied powers after World War I. Industrial production was almost non-existent, trade networks had disintegrated, and agricultural production was disrupted. One legacy that remained intact was the strong centralist state. Disorganization of other social forces allowed the Turkish state to play a very significant role in restructuring the economy.

The first four decades, which can be identified as the primitive accumulation stage of capitalism in Turkey, were marked by the state's quest for a development strategy. In 1923 the new one-party regime announced its commitment to economic liberalism. Later, however, the crisis in the world economy forced the state to adopt an *etatist*, autarchic economic model in which the state agencies played a major role in all branches of the economy. This model was slowly abandoned after World War II. During this period, when political and economic regimes were being reconsidered throughout the world, Turkey announced its commitment to economic liberalism and political pluralism (multi-party regime). Later in the mid-1950s, as the initial velocity of post-war reconstruction began to slow down, a more cautious import substitution model of accumulation was adopted. Despite this see-sawing, however, neither economic liberalism nor state interventionism has been completely abandoned at any point. They remained as two antagonistic tendencies shaping the economic and political policies of the Turkish state. This point is particularly important for understanding the seemingly contradictory policies of the Turkish state and state-owned agencies, such as Tekel, towards private tobacco merchants as well as producers.

Throughout the republican era, agriculture played a vital role in the economy. It contributed to self-sufficiency in foodstuffs, fibre and other agricultural produce, kept export revenues flowing (up to the 1980s, 60 to 80% of exports were agricultural products), supplied necessary raw materials for domestic industry and provided a home market for the products of the emerging domestic industry. For these reasons, the state had a special interest in agriculture.

From the beginning, state agricultural policies aimed to promote commodity relations in the countryside. It was thought that the introduction of commodity relations in agriculture would – with the state helping to supply credit, means of production and distribution – accelerate the accumulation process in the countryside, a process that would parallel and supplement developments in the urban industrial sector.

One of the most important changes in the agrarian sector was the replacement in 1925 of the in-kind tithe tax with new cash taxes. This decision played an important role in the intensification of commodity relations by forcing peasants to enter into the commodity market. Another significant change was the new Civil Code which gave full legal recognition to private property rights on land that had an ambiguous status in the previous Ottoman state. Paralleling these measures were low interest credits which were granted by the state-owned Agricultural Bank, construction of railroads and highways throughout the country and establishment of agricultural schools. These measures were further extended in the 1950s, supported by a limited land distribution scheme and the introduction of mechanization in agriculture.

These developments have proved to be effective in facilitating the expansion of commodity relations in agriculture. However, they also increased the vulnerability of producers to market forces and natural disasters. Producers were relieved of the burden of tithe, but now had to pay taxes in cash rather than in kind. Subsidized credit saved the producers from usurers (at least partly), but it also led to increasing indebtedness and, more importantly, it made indebtedness routine. Recognition of private property rights, that was applauded by the propertied, prevented landless families from having access to land. While they could establish a farmstead on state property in the Ottoman era, they could now gain access to land only by tenancy or ownership.

This vulnerability meant that the state had to find means to avoid major crises that would seriously disrupt agricultural production and slow down the expansion of commodity relations in the countryside. Especially after the Great Depression, the state was actively involved in regulating agricultural commodity markets (through support buying and pricing policies) and distribution of credit.

Tobacco has been particularly important for the state. It was the country's most important export item and brought in vital foreign currencies

necessary for the import of capital goods which were necessary in turn for the industrial development of the country¹. Moreover, especially after the abolition of the tithe, indirect taxes coming from tobacco sales within the country constituted a significant portion of state revenue. One of the first acts of the young republican state was the nationalization of the *Régie* administration and foundation of a state monopoly for the purposes of purchasing tobacco for domestic consumption and the manufacturing and selling of cigarettes and other tobacco products. Private capital, however, was allowed to buy and process tobacco for export purposes.

Another major development in the tobacco sector during the republican period was the adoption of a support purchasing policy in 1946. To regulate the tobacco market and to protect producers from the ill effects of market fluctuations, the government authorized the Turkish State Monopolies (*Tekel*) to carry out support purchasing of tobacco exceeding domestic consumption and exporting capacity. Intended to be a temporary measure, support purchasing policy continued until recent revisions in the state tobacco policy in 1986 (Koc, forthcoming).

FORMS OF TOBACCO PRODUCTION

Initially, the majority of tobacco producers in the Ottoman Empire were peasants. Although they were producing for self-consumption, peasants also sold part of their crop in the market. With rising demand in foreign markets in the late nineteenth century and relaxation of the Ottoman land law allowing foreigners to buy land in the Empire, foreign entrepreneurs using wage labour entered into tobacco production. With the weakening authority of the central state, an emerging class of local notables gained partial control in some parts of the Empire, and they also entered into the lucrative tobacco business. However, as mentioned earlier, access to land among peasant families who wanted to till the land, shortage of labour and emergence of the *Régie* as the monopoly buyer in the domestic market, created major obstacles to the expansion of production on capitalist lines. Under these circumstances, most tobacco production was undertaken by sharecroppers working on the plots of large landlords, or by small and middle peasants.

Throughout the early years of the republic, the Ottoman legacy continued. Sharecropping became relatively more widespread in the years following the Great Depression. When commodity prices began to decline, landless or severely indebted peasants who were also hard-pressed by the new cash taxes, were left no choice but to accept sharecropping. Urban employment opportunities were negligible given the state of industrial development. Tenancy would also be very risky because of the uncertainties in the market. For the same reason, landlords also found sharecropping less risky.

The situation changed drastically after World War II². Simple commodity producers began to dominate tobacco production while the former large landlord-sharecropper relationship gradually disappeared. Disappearance of sharecropping was not unique to tobacco. Increasing use of tractors and other labour-saving and productivity-raising technology allowed large landowners to get rid of their sharecroppers and begin to produce crops that could benefit most from this technology. The reason they did not expand tobacco production through the use of such technology, can be found in the specific natural imperatives of tobacco production and in the unique characteristics of the tobacco market. Under the given historical circumstances, these two factors, in combination, have impeded the expansion of tobacco production through application of new technology or extensive use of wage labour.

Natural imperatives of tobacco production

Oriental tobacco can be grown on relatively infertile and arid land with little need of artificial irrigation and fertilizers. In fact, tobacco grown on such land will yield the best quality leaves demanded by the market. Although plants grown on the fertile, well-irrigated soils can give three to four times higher yields, they are not preferred since they will be overgrown and have coarse veins, high nicotine content and unpleasant smoke. Considered as inferior quality, the market value of these leaves is significantly lower. In the rugged terrain of the Aegean region, arid infertile land is abundant, and since concentration of ownership is mostly limited to fertile lands on the plains and in the valleys, land for small producers is relatively accessible and affordable. The soil that produces the best quality tobacco, however, is suitable for few other crops, mostly cereals, none of which compares with tobacco in terms of net annual revenue per hectare. Given the historical conditions, these characteristics have allowed small units that have limited land, mostly arid and poor quality, to respond to the requirements of tobacco production.

Labour is the most important requirement of tobacco production, which is an extremely labour-intensive process. Particularly during the harvesting season, labour demand climbs to a peak. The harvesting of tobacco is not concentrated in a short period and therefore differs from other crops such as cotton. Because the leaves are primed as they mature, harvesting extends through a three-month period with varying intensity of labour requirements. This makes regular use of wage labour costly and rather inefficient. There are, on the other hand, serious restrictions on the use of labour-saving technology in the production of oriental tobacco due to high field density and small size and fragility of the leaves.

Uncontrollable natural factors, such as abnormal weather and pest infestations, play a particularly important role. Any deviation from the

ideal conditions can affect the quality and quantity of the product because of the rather fragile nature of the plant and the method of drying (sun-curing) the leaves. This makes tobacco producers vulnerable to fluctuations in weather conditions. Although this vulnerability is not unique to tobacco, given its high labour requirements this implies extra risk.

Labour requirements for tobacco and the risks involved in production are potential obstacles to the emergence of capitalism, reducing the chances of profitability in such operations. However, none of these natural factors by themselves would create impossible obstacles. Under prevailing market conditions, capitalist units could become profitable by switching to less labour-intensive tobacco varieties, or using labour-saving and productivity-raising technology. Even without such changes, if the level of wages paid relative to prices received allowed an average rate of profit, these units could very well overcome natural obstacles. For this reason, in assessing obstacles to the emergence of capitalist forms of production in tobacco, we have to examine the effects of natural imperatives and market conditions of tobacco within the given state of the economy.

The tobacco market

From the foundation of the *Régie* in 1881, tobacco producers have faced a regulated and dualistic market, dominated by a monopoly in the domestic market and a group of private merchants in the export market. The production and marketing of tobacco in Turkey has been regulated by law. Although there have been changes over the years, the core principles have remained the same. The tobacco law gave the Turkish State Monopolies the monopoly for purchasing and processing tobacco for domestic consumption, manufacturing and selling cigarettes and engaging in matters pertaining to tobacco. Local and foreign buyers have been allowed to purchase and process tobacco only for export purposes.

Concerns about standardizing the quality of the commodity and losing revenues due to contraband have led the monopolies to define the ways in which production, handling and marketing of tobacco should take place. The law defines the areas where tobacco production takes place, the proper ways of preparing seedlings, planting, picking, drying and storing leaves. Production of tobacco has also been subject to licensing. Monopoly representatives have had the right to inspect tobacco fields and storage places regularly to check for any irregularities. Any malpractice could result in fines and punishment. Confiscation of the produce or the producer's licence have been among the possible forms of punishment.

State monopoly has been responsible for setting the prices for different quality categories annually. Exporters, however, have not had to follow

them. Yet for decades, (with few exceptions) prices offered by the merchants were more or less parallel to the Tekel prices. To understand how this dual market structure could produce quite harmonious prices, we have to look at the determinants of the Tekel and merchant prices.

Generally, merchants have had limited bargaining power in the export market which was dominated by a few multi-nationals and foreign national monopolies. Trading globally, these buyers have had flexibility to move from one market to another and manipulate prices as they wish. Competition between oriental tobacco-producing countries and between tobacco merchants within the producing countries has also strengthened their bargaining power. Under these circumstances, individual tobacco merchants in the producing countries have been reduced practically to agents of these large buyers. Since they have limited bargaining power against foreign buyers, they could only keep their ventures profitable by reducing the cost of operations – that is by paying as little as possible to producers – and also by getting state support. This support consisted of adjusting prices to levels which would not jeopardize competitiveness of the Turkish exporters in the foreign market and also offering subsidies, such as low interest credit, currency rate adjustments etc.

The pricing policies of the Tekel, on the other hand, have reflected varying concerns of the state in this sector. In the long run the state tried to keep prices at a level which would not threaten revenues coming from exports and domestic tobacco sales nor the reproduction of tobacco-producing families. The Tekel had the power to capture the export market, but the ideological commitments of the state to private capital, and the pressures of the foreign buyers who preferred to deal with independent merchants rather than a major monopoly, have prevented this possibility being realized.

This unique organization of the tobacco market has also impeded the expansion of capitalist production in tobacco. Legal restrictions and quality requirements set by buyers have restricted the use of productivity-raising technology. High labour requirements of tobacco production, on the other hand, have made the supply of cheap labour a vital issue in oriental tobacco production. Historically this has not been available in the Aegean region. In the Ottoman era, land tenure and population dynamics did not lead to the emergence of a large rural proletariat which would supply the cheap labour requirements of capitalist tobacco producers. The situation was no better in the republican era. As commodity relations expanded throughout the region, small units with limited means began to specialize in tobacco production. This meant that they could not supply any surplus labour during the harvesting season. For the dispossessed, on the other hand, urban or international labour markets offered better opportunities, since the price structure of the tobacco market did not

allow capitalist tobacco producers to offer higher wages and remain profitable.

Although the prices tobacco producers received were not sufficient to make a capitalist unit profitable, the crop offered quite high returns in comparison with other crops. It is calculated that a family of four with two children over the age of ten could meet the labour requirements of a 0.2 hectare plot of tobacco under favourable weather and market conditions. The relatively high prices for tobacco compared with other crops grown in the region and the moderate costs of the inputs involved in production, enabled a family to make a living on such a small scale operation. These conditions have made tobacco production a necessity for survival, rather than a mere choice for small or middle producers who had integrated commodity production into their cycle of reproduction.

For large landowners, however, dependence on tobacco subsided in the face of increasing alternatives in the post-war era. Technological changes and expansion of markets made several other crops competitive with tobacco in terms of net revenue (i.e. cotton, citrus, olives). Since harvesting periods of tobacco do not coincide with most of the alternative crops, seasonal labour requirements of the latter could be supplied by the small peasant families, some of whom were tobacco producers.

Increasing numbers of sharecroppers were driven out in parts of Turkey during the 1950s by large-scale employment of labour-saving technology by large landowners³. A few who could benefit from land distribution managed to stay on the land. For many, however, proletarianization was inescapable. Expanding industry and increasing job opportunities in urban centres during this decade caused mass migration from the rural sector. Rural-urban migration, which shifted the reserve army of labour from the rural to the urban sector, has also created an obstacle to the re-emergence of sharecropping. Large landowners who wanted to increase their market share in tobacco, found it increasingly difficult to find tenants willing to accept sharecropping conditions. Production by employing wage labour, on the other hand, was inconceivable due to high labour requirements of tobacco production and the price structure of the tobacco market. Thus, large owners began diverting their production to less labour-intensive crops or leaving agriculture altogether, with the hope of getting better returns in the rapidly flourishing urban sector.

DYNAMICS OF THE ORGANIZATION OF PRODUCTION

While natural and market constraints can explain why capitalist production could not expand in the tobacco sector, dynamics of family production show us how simple commodity producers responded effectively to the requirements of tobacco production and used mechanisms to deal

flexibly with the crisis which periodically occurred during the annual cycle of production and the demographic cycle of the family. SCP owes its flexibility to internal dynamics and labour strategies of family production. Both as an enterprise and as family, simple commodity producing units have maintained themselves under conditions in which capitalist producers could not persist.

Here lies the answer as to why tobacco production after World War II very rarely exceeded 0.20 to 0.25 hectare per unit, regardless of the amount of land available to the producer. The upper level was largely set by the availability of family labour. Excessive labour requirements of tobacco production and limitations on the use of labour-saving technology made it necessary to restrict the use of wage labour to a minimum. Excessive dependence on family labour, on the other hand, required certain adjustments throughout different phases of the family life cycle. This involved varying the scale of operation or intensity of labour (drudgery) throughout the demographic cycle of the family. Given the patterns of gender and age division of labour in the region, this often meant the exploitation of female and child labour during the phases of labour shortage in the family.

The conditions and strategies of survival are not the same for all simple commodity producing households. Although most production is carried out on a small scale, tobacco producers vary in terms of their access to land and other means of production. These differences, consequently, lead to different levels of vulnerability, different strategies of production and accumulation.

For those households that have limited access to the basic means of production, cultivation of tobacco appears as a prerequisite for survival. Under ideal market and weather conditions, production of tobacco with the maximum utilization of family labour would be sufficient for the reproduction of the family. However, these ideal conditions are rarely realized. For this reason most small-scale tobacco producers use every possible measure for survival. Among typical survival strategies are overspecialization in tobacco production by ignoring all kinds of subsistence production; drudgery; reduction of personal consumption by cutting spending on clothing, furniture, house repairs or delaying weddings; and selling family labour during the off season.

By contrast, tobacco producers with greater access to land and means of production either limit their scale of operation to a level at which they can respond to the labour requirements of tobacco production, mostly with family labour, or try alternative sources of labour, such as *igneatimcilik* (a form of contract labour) or sharecropping⁴. Unlike previous landlord-sharecropper relations that dominated tobacco production in the pre-war era, however, in this case the conditions of sharecropping are defined by the logic of simple commodity production.

The persistence of simple commodity producers has not been an unqualified success. There are periodic crises during the annual cycle of production and the demographic cycle of the family. There are also unforeseen crises due to unfavourable weather and market conditions. All these factors threaten the reproduction of small units with limited access to land and other means of production. While a majority of these units have managed to maintain themselves on the land, others have failed and migrated to urban or international labour markets. In this sense, persistence and disappearance have to be perceived as opposite parts of the same process.

Role of state policies

State policies affecting tobacco producers can be divided into two broad categories. First, there are general economic measures to intensify commodity relations in the countryside. These measures compel all peasant households into commodity production so that they are forced to make a choice between proletarianization and commodity production. Secondly, there are support pricing and purchasing policies which apply specifically to tobacco producers. This second category aims at regulating the market and keeping tobacco prices at levels which would not seriously threaten the reproduction of tobacco producers.

These policy opinions were designed to be universal in nature, benefiting small as well as large units, and are not supposed to favour any particular group. They have, however, helped small producers to cope with unfavourable production and market conditions and, therefore, have prevented a serious crisis of reproduction among simple commodity producers which would have led to a massive dispossession of small owners.

The way state tobacco policies are designed and implemented is based on the complex and sometimes contradictory effects of accumulation concerns, political pressures and bureaucratic structure. While supporting producers, the state has been careful to avoid jeopardizing the competitiveness (and consequently the profitability) of exporters in the foreign market. On the other hand, particularly in the highly competitive environment of the multi-party era, electoral concerns and political commitments have also had some influence on governmental decisions. Implementation of these policies, however, has been left more or less to the administrative body, Tekel. In this sense, conflicts within Tekel administration, and between Tekel and other branches of the state, have also had an effect on producers.

Depending on the socio-economic conjuncture and the strengths of the parties involved, state policies in the tobacco sector have varied over time and the results have not always been what the policy-makers desired.

the basic unit of production and consumption, and on its internal organization and strategies of dealing with the demands of the commodity economy. Second, such an approach has to examine market dynamics. These two factors, however, should be conceptualized in interaction with each other, not as completely separate entities. Third, the role of the state in mediating this interaction needs to be considered, since it is particularly instrumental in dealing with the problems that arise during the interaction. Fourth, differences between crops and their unique production requirements must be recognized. This recognition demands special attention to the particular imperatives of agricultural production and the way they limit the organization of production. Finally, considering the variability of actual conditions under which capital confronts and penetrates different agrarian social formations, the answer to the question of persistence of simple commodity production in agriculture has to be historically specific.

NOTES

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1. Although its significance declined gradually over the years, revenue coming from tobacco exports was very important for the state. Revenues from tobacco exports rose to a peak of 40 per cent in 1957, for example.
 2. For a comparison see Ecevit (1988) who studied conditions of tobacco production in a village in Northern Turkey.
 3. See Keyder (1983) for a more detailed account of the disappearance of sharecropping in Turkish agriculture.
 4. In this case sharecropping appears to be an alternative to using wage labour rather than a category of tenancy. The landowner has greater control over the decisions related to the production process in comparison to other forms of sharecropping (see Koc 1988).

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Support policies aimed to regulate the market, for example, led to over-production as pressures on land and worsening economic situations forced small units to produce more and more tobacco. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s large quantities of tobacco were bought and stored annually by the state while unsold stockpiles were waiting in monopoly warehouses.

State monopoly in the domestic market was abolished in 1986 and foreign multi-nationals entered into joint ventures with Turkish entrepreneurs with the goal of producing American blend cigarettes in Turkey. Interestingly, the proportion of tobacco in these blends varies around twelve to fifteen per cent. The few experiments with Virginia and Burley tobacco, the varieties that are commonly used in American blends, have so far been unsuccessful in Turkey. Under these circumstances Turkey is likely to become a major importer of Virginia and Burley tobacco. Several critics of the new state tobacco policy argue that the entry of foreign blends will have adverse effects on tobacco production in Turkey. Examples from France, Italy and Greece indicate that within four to five years of the abolition of national monopolies, the share of foreign cigarette brands rose sharply (Bag 1984). Given the fact that tobacco has been the livelihood of millions of families with limited means, this change may lead to dispossession of these units and polarization in agriculture. A follow-up study needs to be undertaken within the next decade in order to observe the effects of this drastic turnaround.

CONCLUSION

Persistence of SCP in agriculture cannot simply be dismissed as a transitional phenomenon. It has, so far, existed under capitalism and is likely to exist in the foreseeable future as long as the conditions that lead to its persistence are maintained. Persistence of SCP, however, does not deny the existence of differentiation or disappearance of individual units. Moreover, persistence of SCP cannot be attributed to one single factor, such as the unique nature of agricultural production, unique characteristics of family production, commodity markets or state policies. All these factors may contribute to the persistence of SCP in combination and the unique combination has to be considered separately within given historical and commodity contexts. The conditions that led to the consolidation and persistence of SCP among tobacco producers in the Aegean region cannot be examined apart from the conditions that have hindered expansion of capitalist production of tobacco.

From our review of the Turkish case we conclude that the persistence of simple commodity producers has to be seen as a historically specific possibility rather than a permanent feature and product of the expansion of capitalism in agriculture. In the light of this conclusion, the analysis of the persistence of SCP has to concentrate, first of all, on the household as