CHAPTER FIVE

SETTLEMENT ISSUE AND SETTLEMENT ACTIVITIES

The Colonization of Peoples and Territories

Where is the nation? It is not there yet.
Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu

Today the Turkish villager is about to lose his existential self. (...) There are brothers who have forgotten their language and talk another language. There are brothers who consider it an insult if you called them Turk. It is our responsibility to construct their villages and to make our brothers talk, dress, and live like us.
Abdullah Ziya

Introduction

In the previous chapter a genealogy of key concepts brought us to approaches for the reorganization of rural space (new settlement types and structures). This had a history pre-dating the military coup of 1980, the subsequent growth of the PKK, its war with the Turkish state and the military response of wholesale evacuations and village destruction in large parts of the Southeast—which itself eventuated in the employment of the new settlement types and structures in civil authority plans for a rehabilitation of the region. A driving force behind the initial ideas for a reorganization of rural space was the desire for vertical integration (the development of an intermediate settlement connecting the rural grid to regional centers). In this chapter, the desire to develop a new settlement type and structure is related to ideas about nation-state building that actually emerged much earlier, in the 1930s. More specifically, this chapter will explain how the quest for nation-state building tools in the 1930s produced the idea of a new settlement type going beyond the modern rural-urban divide. This new settlement type, referred to as rurban, was not supposed to contribute to vertical integration (i.e. via urban centers, as was the case with the new settlement types developed in the 1960s and 1970s) but to completely erase the rural-urban divide.

1 Karaosmanoğlu 1934: 153 and Ziya 1933.
The somewhat ad hoc use of the approach of rural reorganization in attempting to set about dealing with the problem of the displaced persons and denuded territory of the Southeast in the 1990s thus in fact had its origins in a far more radical approach to the organization of socio-economic space, geo-political territory and contemporary life.

This chapter will commence with a discussion of the 1934 Settlement Act, Law Number 2510. In academic literature (particularly in Kurdish studies), Settlement Act No. 2510 has been generally regarded as a means for the colonization of Turkish Kurdistan and the assimilation of Kurds through forced and collective resettlement. This view is not necessarily wrong, but it is narrow and incomplete. The argument developed here is that Settlement Act, Law Number 2510, emerged against two different backgrounds: on the one hand, there were the policies and practices of deportation of rebellious Kurds, indeed, but on the other there was the settlement in Anatolia of Muslim populations from former Ottoman territories. The new law had the overall objective of creating a general framework for national settlement in Turkey. Although the view is not pushed here, it could be argued, somewhat against the conventional currents of thought operative in Kurdish studies, that the employment of the 1934 Settlement Act cannot be understood as an instrument to quell insurrection in the Kurdistan region, but must be analyzed as part of a larger, positive objective of creating a homeland of the Turks.

In the second part of this chapter, it is argued that the idea was rising in the 1930s that nation-building, a major preoccupation of intellectuals and politicians in the nascent country, should include the design of a new village types, intended to somehow imbue their inhabitants with ‘Turkishness’. Nations come about through processes of active creation, as considered in the first chapter, and Anatolian villagers, it was believed, needed to be guided and organized so as to identify themselves as Turks, to incorporate the nation and embody its ideals, and thence become part of the body politic. This idea resulted in series of architectonical blueprints for ‘the Turkish village’—to which a sociological dimension was added by the prolific thinker Nusret Kemal Köymen. Köymen saw villages (i.e. small rural settlements) as the basic cells of society, yet undermined by two processes: the coincidence of urbanization and industrialization in western modernization (alluded to in the last chapter, in connection with the development, and criticism, of the village-town concept), and the separation of culture from civilization (to be traced back to the division in Christian thought between the sacred