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2011

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/39879/>
MPRA Paper No. 39879, posted 15 Jul 2013 15:48 UTC

4 ANALYZING SOCIO-CULTURAL CAUSES OF EXCESSIVE IRRIGATION IN TRIBAL SOCIETIES AND EXTENSION NEEDS: A CASE STUDY OF HARRAN PLAIN, ŞANLIURFA

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SUMMARY

THEME 3

Besides, natural and technical factors effecting excessive irrigation, training activities of some governmental offices also have some influences on excessive irrigation tendencies of farmers, but they do not have a distinctive role. The main hypothesis of this research is that, in Harran Plain more than natural factors and extension activities and training, socio-cultural system affects irrigation behaviour of farmers. In other words, the main cause of excessive irrigation is socio cultural system.

The main aim of this study is to analyze tribal system, to explain the excessive irrigation tendencies of farmers, and to develop and discuss a model which will help further studies.

In this survey, 86 farmers, heads and secretaries of 12 irrigation unions, directors and agriculturalists working for 5 chamber of farmers, 26 agricultural chemical dealers, and 34 agricultural extension workers working at government agricultural province and county offices, in total 163 people, have been interviewed.

In the survey the "situation-specific approach" has been used as the theoretical basis.

Keywords: Excessive irrigation, Tribal socio-cultural characteristics, attitude, Harran Plain

4.1 Introduction

Establishing irrigation facilities is a time consuming and expensive investment. Proper usage of available water for irrigation is also very important. However, farmers in Harran Plain have been using this scarce input excessively as if it will never cease, causing salinity and environmental pollution problems. Moreover, irrigation and irrigation water resources are not only a local problem of Harran Plain but also has national and global importance.

Harran plain, is in the upper Mesopotamia where many civilisations have risen in ancient times. Currently, Southeast Anatolia Rural Development Project (SAP) is being carried out in this region. Harran Plain covers 250 000 hectares of land of which 118 000 hectares is being irrigated since 1995. The Plain is in the south of Sanliurfa province, located at Turkish-Syrian border. Turkish citizens with Arabic roots form the majority of the population. Cotton is the main crop grown in the plain.

Since the formation of Water Users Associations in the Southeast Turkey, why farmers tend to irrigate excessively is frequently asked. Socio-cultural characteristics and tribalism in the region are considered to be the main factor causing this problem. In the previous literature distinctive life stile of the tribal system, the problems and causes of excessive irrigation have not seen studied in the Harran Plain before. The objective of

this study is to find out relationships between tribal system and irrigation tendencies of farmers and in addition to give some proposals to help further studies.

4.2 Materials and methods

At face to face interviews questionnaire forms have been used. The survey is done with 5 different groups being farmers, extension agents, agricultural chemicals dealers, Water Users Associations, and directors of the Provincial Farmers Agricultural Chambers.

Three counties in Sanliurfa Merkez İlçe, Harran and Akcakale and partner villages of Water Users Associations within these districts were determined. Eight villages having salinity problem have been included in the survey, two villages being in Merkez İlçe, two in Harran and four in Akcakale counties. At least 10 farmers in each village have been interviewed. In this survey, 86 farmers, heads and secretaries of 12 Water Users Associations, directors or agriculturalists working for 5 Farmers Chambers, 26 extension agents working for chemical dealers, and 34 agricultural extension workers working in the Provincial government and county agricultural offices, in total 163 informants, have been interviewed.

4.3 Theoretical research structure

As it is known every scientific survey should have a theoretical basis. In this survey, the Situation-Specific Approach (SSA) which is developed by Albrecht (1969, 1989) has been used as the theoretical bases. The SSA has been briefly summarized below.

Lewin (1963) have used field-theoretical hypothesis method to find out behaviour and instincts of individuals and to give some proposals. According to Lewin (1963, p 272) behaviour of an individual, is an end result of his interaction with its environment. These two elements form a dynamic system. The effective factor is not determined before the survey; instead, it is determined by analysing the specific status of individuals. Not only the socio-cultural and economic factors in the research area but also perceptions that affect the behaviours of individuals, experience, expectations, and the indigenous knowledge of producers have been considered. Perceptions emerge as a result of individuals own standard of values.

Considering the above approach, factors affecting excessive irrigation are not predetermined but analysed through their specific status. Thus, meaningful factors affecting attitudes of individuals living in the survey area have been analysed.

4.4 Research findings

2. In this section "tribal systems" and their general characteristics are defined. Secondly, characteristics such as religion, political structure, education level, communication, social status, and family as a production unit and management and roles in a tribe are reviewed. These in a way will define socio-cultural structure of a society. While some of these are influencing characters, others could be identifying characters. Which are influencing and which are identifying characters are determined according to the existing and pre-collected data.

3. Before the SAP because of dry farming and poor technology usage and low production level, economy in tribal societies was very different than other regions. Due to their specific poor circumstances they were socio-economically introvert and had a closed economy.

In 1995 agricultural producers started using public irrigation facilities almost with no charge.

Tribal leaders who own the majority of lands and thus have a social power benefit most from these irrigation facilities without any labour or financial payment.

In Sanliurfa Province, there are villages that do not belong to any tribe but also many small and large villages are connected to 60 tribes. A tribe is made up of clans and families. Size of a tribe depends on the number of clans it has. A village may have one or more clans or depending on its size or a clan may cover more than one village. Clans and tribes may have different leaders. This can be seen in Arabic tribes living in Harran Plain. In some tribes some families traditionally hold the management. These families are called as "dynastic families" (Republic of Turkey, Prime Ministry, SAP 1993, S. 606; Beşikçi, 1970). The presidency is under their monopoly. The tribe presidency is inherited from father to son. In tribal system every tribe has its own common land. But the group leaders have registered most of the lands as their own property during the land registry process. This has caused big land ownerships. As a consequence, for social and economic reasons, small land owners have to obey tribe leaders.

One of the reasons why tribe system still survives is its law concept as a super structure. Every tribe has its own unwritten rules about tolerance and on superiority of law. For example, when a tribal member faces injustice he seeks his rights and equity in tribe leader's justice. Both sides obey what ever decision the leader takes.

Tribe members are convinced to believe that, under current life style, he has no control on good and evil, and believe in faith. Thus, personal initiative of farmers is limited and minimized. Obligations and sanctions of religious beliefs are very powerful and distinctive. Although every village has one mosque or a mescit some do not have a school. Religious rules are accepted and practiced without any judgement. Religion, as a socio-cultural institution is consciously used by tribe leaders to reinforce tribal relations and to regenerate tribe members' faith in tribal system and to leaders. Another very important characteristic of tribe members is having very low education level. This helps the tribal system to run in the way it has been for years. In fact, the tribe leaders do not want the tribe members to have connections with people living in other towns, to learn how to read and write, and to increase their income level because they do not want to lose their control over them. So they try every way to stop them. For example, to ensure their dependency on tribe leaders, they even burn cereal stubble on purpose, not to let them use it as animal feedstuff and earn more money.

In tribal system the main communication mean in general is not written material but face to face dialogue. Every member in a tribe knows each other from childhood. This face to face direct communication habit is also closely related with the form of socialisation gained in family and poor literacy level, which limits their written communication. Messages and information from the outside world are transferred to tribal communities after being revised and filtered by tribe leaders and leader families so that they do not get any information to make them wish to have a change in their lives.

Tribal leaders always have the control of key positions in management, politics, and trade organisations (agricultural chemical dealers, gas stations etc.) For example, chamber of farmers, agricultural sales credit cooperatives, irrigation unions, local transportation cooperatives, and county or town mayors, head of all political parties are in the hold or under the control of tribal leaders.

Tribe leaders do not wish to be a village headman because of two reasons. First of all, they do not want to go under the rule of mayors, governor of provincial districts, gendarme, and managers of similar public offices because being a tribe leader they at least have an equal statue with them. Secondly, being a tribe leader they do not wish to be too close to tribe members and loose their prestige.

In tribal villages tribe members do not vote in elections. Depending on tribe-clan unity, clan leaders, heads of big families or village headmen vote for all the tribe members or the clan. In tribal villages they only vote for one political party. Tribe leaders reinforce the existing unity and interdependency in tribes by using political organisations and parties as well.

Decision making and implementation within a family or a tribe is slow because of tribes' special functioning order. Due to agricultural production structure and importance of kinship, large family structure is dominant. The oldest man in the family takes all the decisions and other family members can never protest or disobey. The key and sore point in tribal system is family bonds. Tribal system determines formation, relations, and logic in the family.

Family is the basic unit in a tribe and has a distinctive role in saving and reinforcing tribe unity. First step in socialisation is taken in families where values, measures, symbols, and forms are taught and identified. Tribe members get similar personality characteristics, collective attitudes and behaviours that they inherent from their families and accept them as if they are their own and practice them in life. Family members are in reconciliation with each other in a family and riveted together within the tribe as a whole, in socialisation process. As the last step existing values, measures, and symbols are reinforced to produce unity. This is conditioning them in the way they think and behave in agricultural practices, in social life, and in religion. Because of low technology, mainly labour-force is used in agricultural production and it is organised within families and head of the family undebatefully is the only authority. There is no concept as "individual" within the tribe. The holistic tribe and tribe members are the only concepts.

Having the above mentioned structure tribe has an unorganized harsh control and punishment mechanism for the ones who are in harmony and who have conflicts with the tribe rules. No one can think in a different way in a tribe. In this homogeneous structure no one other than tribe leaders, can ever have organized relations with other societies. Tribe leaders direct and control the tribe members as they want. The mechanism of the tribe members controlling each other is also very strong and accepted as a merit. For the ones who act against the tribe rules sanctions are put into action (for example, to leave the village, where they use to live). On the other hand, tribe leaders protect the members against dangers coming from outside world and keep them under security.

Under this socialization mechanism members have similar personalities. This holistic concept which is a result of tribal socialisation also causes similar effects on behaviours towards agricultural innovations. In other words collective behaviour of tribe members is a traditional character and condition. This homogeneous and monotonous characteristic of tribes and families stop them from seeking new information and skills. As a result, this causes tribes to close themselves down to innovations.

All tribe members are conditioned to act identically as a whole. Tribe leaders do not directly interfere to agricultural production style, but this covered sanctions form a secret force on members to act collectively.

4.5 A model to change the excessive irrigation tendency of the farmers

Below, the factors effecting perception and attitude of individuals in excessive irrigation have been explained under the light of above mentioned basic characteristics of tribe members.

As a tradition, tribe leaders practice excessive irrigation in cotton production. They repeat irrigation 10 times in one vegetation period. They do not irrigate according to

water needs of plants or the soil. In other words irrigation is not done according to water needs. Tribe members imitate tribal leaders. They think "If the tribe leader is irrigating for 10 times in one vegetation period it is because he has a good reason for it. Because farmers do not want to take risks they think they should irrigate more than they do to produce more". This attitude causes a race between tribe members. When province and county extension agents explain the problems caused by excessive irrigation they tend to think "they do not want us to overcome our poverty and thus they want us to reduce the irrigation number. They are not our friends but our enemies".

Due to the above mentioned characteristics the main reason of excessive irrigation appears to be the socio-cultural characteristics caused by the interactions between tribe leaders and tribe members. Description of the problem in this way reveals a simple and easy 2 step solution.

- As the first step tribal leaders in the region should be convinced about effective irrigation in cotton production by using face to face extension methods. This should be done at least once in every vegetation period. This new irrigation scheme selected according to soil and crop needs should be demonstrated in one of the tribe leaders' farm.
- After tribal leaders are convinced about the irrigation scheme than it should be disseminated to tribal members by using printed, audio, and visual mass media materials. This could be done by using radio and television programmes. In these programmes beside information on effective irrigation, pictures of these extension activities with tribal leaders should also be given. Further demonstrations should be done on effective irrigation.

For sure this system has some socio-cultural handicaps. First of all, the socio-cultural structure will be reinforced. Taking information to tribal leaders, extension service will deal less with small farms. The above mentioned proposals could only be effective on rational usage of irrigation water and on environmental protection by changing the irrigation tendencies of the farmers, and it will be an enough measure of success for extension system. Since the current Turkish government has no project for changing the social structure the extension system does not have the power to change it by itself.

4.6 Results

The term "tribe" could be defined as a cultural and geographic regional organization style and social group connected with religious, beliefs, ancestors and blood bonds; having specific laws and justice system; having a political view; and is man dominant feudalism left over structure. The characteristic which gives tribes a feudal characteristic is the style of land ownership and its effects on agricultural production being mainly on unpaid labor force.

In tribes, they have a simple logic. Everything is black or white. There is no acceptance to a different thought. Having no water and dry farming for decades and the life style and poverty it brings has affected everything and predetermined the structure. It is not wise to wish and possible to overcome this structure which has formed in years passing from one generation to another. In fact, it is easier to understand the attitude of tribe member farmers since no strategy has been developed nor encouraged to change this structure, in a systematic way.

The tribe members do not seek new information about irrigation technologies because they believe their indigenous knowledge is enough, but their indigenous knowledge is not enough for new technologies like irrigation. They tend to ask other members of the tribe or observe and imitate what tribe leaders do. Thus, importance should be given to extension activities on irrigation.

Introduction of irrigation channels has caused an economic and social stratification. While a decrease is observed in economic dependency of medium farm owners who have a lower level in tribal hierarchy, no change has been recorded in their dependency and obligations to higher tribal institutions.

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