

analysing the broad structural dimensions of agrarian change. Intra-village variables and trends such as 'class', 'faction', wage labour, migration patterns, and other demographic variables were discussed at the level of the social formation - stressing emergent features of rural change as they are exemplified in their aggregate quantitative dimension. Here, breakdowns were made at the regional, ecological, administrative, and even village level, but only - at least in the village cases - for purposes of illustration. Village case studies could then be introduced after the contextual framework has been established.

It was suggested in Chapter 1 (p. ) that the village unit constitutes the most appropriate unit for examining variables of change in the rural sector. There are practical and theoretical justifications for this assumption. The practical aspect relates to the fact that the village is the basic unit of administrative and statistical data. Official population figures, cadastral land surveys, periodic household surveys, and a host of other demographic data most frequently are broken down only up to the village level, but very rarely go beyond it. It follows from the administrative definition of the village area that a number of organizational contingencies impose themselves in reality, such as transport routes, local budgets, marketing networks, and the regional allocation of resources.

Conceptually, the village is a 'bounded unit' in the eyes of its inhabitants, as well as in the eyes of the outsiders. To use the language of classical sociology, it is the arena of 'aggregates... united by a cluster of intensive, multifunctional, exclusive, and persistent face to face relations' (Shanin, 1972b:357). One of the most compelling reasons for this 'boundedness' of the village community lies in the persistence, in most third world rural communities, of kinship units as a basic organizational principle, and the almost infinite