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THE ECONOMY AND MORALITY OF ELOPEMENT IN RURAL WESTERN TURKEY

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In rural western Turkey, villagers use cultural and Islamic values of economic egalitarianism and care for the less fortunate to critique exploitation. They argue that cultural Islamic values of community and mutual assistance clash with the monetarization of kin relationships. In considering two ethnographic cases, I show how the community interprets daughters' struggles at the time of their marriage. When daughters make a move to separate from the natal household, their family's economic survival is threatened. To contain the loss of income, fathers attempt to delay daughters' marriages and daughters sometimes elope to solve the problem. This paper is about how the villagers analyze these events via their notions of morally correct behavior.¹

Keywords: weaving, elopement, Turkey, Islam, morality

In Örselli village in a region of rural western Turkey called the Yuntdağ, villagers rely upon an understanding of Islamic morality to solve concrete problems, which arise from their increased involvement in the globalized economy, including an engagement with commodities and work in an economic development project: a women's carpet weaving cooperative. They argue and demonstrate that economic egalitarianism and care for the less fortunate (Benthall 1999: 35; White 2002: 67–73) should be the foundation of a just society (Hart 2007b). In this paper, I focus on the consequences of this moral standpoint in cases when young women want to marry.

Villagers comment on how money has changed people by making them selfish and greedy, becoming more interested in material things and money than each other. They worry that the increase in material wealth and the importance of wage labor for mediat-

ing relationships between parents and children and husbands and wives may lead to wrongful behavior. I focus on how the community interprets daughters' struggles at the time of their marriage, as examples of a conflict between individual desires and collective needs for financial survival. For daughters who are in the process of marrying and separating from their natal households, the transition is filled with tension. Both sons and daughters need their fathers' permission to marry, but sons have more leeway and power. The groom's family benefits from marriage because a wife enters its lineage and though families live neolocally, a bride helps her husband's family. The family that "gives" its daughter in marriage, however, experiences the marriage as a loss. Families with only daughters or with sons who are in school, about to marry, or too young to earn wages, lose daughters' much-needed wages when they marry. For this rea-

son, fathers sometimes attempt to delay daughters' marriages, causing them, as the villagers argue, to elope to solve the problem. Daughters are judged and punished for having acted against their parents and disobeying by running off, which is the literal meaning of the verb "to elope" (in Turkish, *kaçmak*).

This paper, which explores moral consequences at the intersection of economic development, material prosperity, young women's desires for marriage, household survival, and the community's judgments, expands ethnographic literature in a number of domains often kept separate: ideologies of romantic love in marriage, the social and cultural consequences of economic development, and Islamic morality. Much has been written on ideologies of romantic love in marriage (Adrian 2003; Ahearn 2001; Collier 1997; Rebhun 1999; Yan 2003). Authors argue that romantic love is expressed within the context of societies that are undergoing economic change, causing social and cultural reinterpretations of filial piety and age-bound and gendered duties in households. In short, expectations about what is possible in love and marriage between spouses, and what the relationship between parents and children should be, are changing. In terms of elopement, ethnographers have shown that it is a traditional alternative to normative marriage practice, i.e. arranged marriage (Bates 1973; Bringa 1995), but that it transforms under modernizing conditions in which parental authority is on the wane (Ahearn 2001; Yan 2003). Thus, according to these recent studies, young people who have more emotional freedom than prior generations because their fathers are no longer as empowered, elope to fulfill individualistic desires, which they interpret as romance. In these studies, romantic love is an historically-based ideology, which emerged as western Europe began modernizing (Stone 1979). Earlier I have written on how the villagers interpret ideologies of modernization and romantic love and create a hybridized system of normative marriage to incorporate romantic love in arranged marriage (Hart 2007a). In this paper I argue that the modernizing effect of economic change causes the villagers to reinterpret the notion that fathers should always

be obeyed and that elopement is always wrongful behavior. Rather, in their judgments of correct moral practice, they demonstrate that an analysis of the social and economic conditions of those who act should be included. This change is a result of their involvement in modernizing processes, economic development and expanding ideologies of romantic love.

This paper is not on elopement or the consequences of new marital forms solely because I consider how villagers analyze conflicts surrounding marriage within daughters' households via their notions of morally correct behavior. In this case, morality is grounded in Islam. Islamic practice is highly diverse in Turkey (Shankland 1999; Silverstein 2003). This village is Sunni. Sunni Islam is disseminated by the Diyanet, the Presidency of Religious Affairs, a state institution, and this is the dominant version of Islam in the country. The villagers are eager to declare their allegiance to the state's ethnocentric (Yiftachel 1999) construction of a homogeneous, Sunni Muslim, Turkish identity. However, Islam is considerably more complex than being merely the product of the state. In addition to being a body of doctrine and a code of daily practice, villagers use Islam, as they interpret it, as a working body of knowledge, which they apply to solve problems and use to respond to strains in the community (Işık 2008; Loeffler 1988). As such, this paper contributes to an expanding body of literature on transformations in Islamic practice, including those of rural and urban communities, which use ideals of Islamic morality to manage modernity (Deeb 2006; Kresse 2009; Schultz 2008). This paper is part of a larger ethnographic project, which includes a consideration of the orthodoxization of Islamic practice (Hart 2009) and the performance of good deeds as a means to create a just local economy (Hart 2007b). I argue that the popular use and perception of Islam is connected to the villagers' understanding of theology and the text of the Koran, but also to local cultural understandings of morality, which are less codified by texts or the interpretation of textual sources. As devout Sunni Muslims, the villagers rely on an understanding of Islamic morality to cope with and interpret the ef-

fects of economic development, social change, and cases of conflict within households. One purpose of this paper is to explore how their understanding of morality is applied to concrete situations.

Gender and the Cooperative in Örselli Village

Örselli village has about ninety-five households and two hundred and fifty individuals. I began conducting research in 1998 with a preliminary visit, returned in 2000–01 for core doctoral fieldwork, and returned for short visits in 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2008. During most of my research, the villagers were engaged in a residual nomadic or *Yörükk*² economy (Bates 1973). They kept small herds of sheep, sold sheep and cows' milk to cheese workshops, worked as laborers making cheese, and wove carpets in the cooperative. They cultivated small plots of land producing one-half their annual consumption in wheat, collected wild plants, and kept tiny vegetable gardens. Much like nomads who live in nuclear family tents (Shahrani 2002), they lived in nuclear households, pooled their resources, sharing income, and the foods they gathered and grew.

It is important to point out that the structure of the household and therefore, I would argue, gender roles, in this area and among the former *Yörükk* are different from those in agricultural regions in Turkey, where land is a valuable resource (Beller-Hann & Hann 2001; Delaney 1991; Magnarella 1979; Sirman 1990; Stirling 1966). As these cited scholars of Turkey describe, patrilineal patriarchal households attempt to keep land intact. For this reason, young couples live patrilocally in extended household compounds, rather than dividing land for newly forming nuclear households when couples marry. Young wives are at the bottom of the social order in these extended households. They gain status as they give birth to children, especially sons, and eventually they rule over their own daughters-in-law (Kandiyoti 1988; Sirman 1995: 201; Stirling 1966: 110). Throughout the Yuntdağ, where land has little value and where cultural practices of a formally nomadic time linger, the majority of households are neolocal and nuclear in structure. However, young couples live near the

groom's family and for about six months, they eat with the groom's parents, combining their households. Afterwards they separate (*ev ayrılmak*) and live in their own house. This practice, as well as the relative comfort of the bride who is not under the thumb of her mother-in-law, resembles that of nomadic households (Bates 1973; Shahrani 2002: 142). For this reason, nuclear household structure among former nomads, unlike former agriculturalists, is not due to modernization or the fragmentation of an ideal household form, as Rasuly-Palczek argues is the case in Anatolian regions where nucleation is common (1996: 20–22), but an extension of a lingering nomadic economy and the marginality of the ecological region they inhabit (Shahrani 2002).

While village households maintained a modified nomadic economy, during the second half of the twentieth century they began to experience a pressing need for cash. Settled on an arid and rocky mountaintop, pasture was limited and therefore they were no longer able to sustain a household through herding. In addition, villagers wanted consumer goods, cell phones, clothing, satellite television, washing machines and so forth. Sending children to school, which they understood as essential to acquiring a well-paid job in a rapidly transforming, neoliberal economy, also required money. Their economic history in the twentieth century is one of struggle and scarcity in a region ignored by the state. Searching for a means to earn money in the 1970s, weavers began to participate in cooperatives, some organized by the Ministry of Culture. This was an attempt to monetize a skill all women had, which they used to create pieces for their trousseaux. Many of these cooperative experiences, as well as the difficulties they encountered when selling to middlemen and dealers, were negative. Through a stroke of fortune in the early 1980s, Harald Böhmer, a German chemist who had investigated plant dyes, traveled to the Yuntdağ where weaving was a strong craft, but where chemical dyes had taken over the local palette. He offered to teach villagers plant-dyeing techniques and to locate foreign dealers. In short, Böhmer with some help from expatriates and Turkish intellectuals, established a women's carpet weaving coopera-

tive in Örselli village, drawing upon weavers from six nearby villages. This cooperative, along with one founded earlier in the market town of Ayvacık, became the DOBAG project (*Doğal Boya Araştırma ve Geliştirme Projesi*, natural dye research and development project). The cooperative was founded in a beneficial national economic and political environment. The emergence of small-scale manufacturing resulted from state politics in 1980, which favored export-only industries (Dedeoğlu 2004: 3). The cooperative was one such small company, which helped bring foreign currency into the country.

While DOBAG is well known among textile experts and carpet dealers for its success in sustaining carpet knotting, natural dyeing, and women's artistic heritage (Anderson 1998; Böhmer 1983), one of the benefits of the cooperative is that the weaving is done in houses rather than in workshops. In this way, other household members can also help weave, through the membership of the mother of the family. Weavers are paid for their labor, calculated by the number of knots. Since weavers can predict their income, they can pace weaving in relation to other income earning activities, such as raising animals. And because they work at home, they can integrate childcare and the overall management of the household into their wage-earning labor.

DOBAG is a unique case in the literature on workshop and independent weavers, and has helped the villagers prosper for over two decades (Anderson 1998; Işık 2007; Hart 2005) because it frees weavers from the exploitation of the open market and workshop enterprises. In fact, prosperity is part of the problem from the villagers' standpoint. The inherent contradiction in cooperative projects, as Cohen describes it (1999), creates a system in which prosperity may be a sign of future collapse because the community cannot withstand the transformation in the social order (Kottack 1990). The villagers have gained a much higher level of material prosperity than they experienced through private sales of textiles or in poorly run cooperative enterprises. This new prosperity has benefited everyone. Many commented, "We are now comfortable." No one wants to return to the old economic struggles they once

faced, but this does not mean that they are uncritical of the transforming social and economic world that they now experience.

As I mentioned, the Yuntdağ cooperative is a "women's" cooperative. The project therefore resembles many other cultural heritage production enterprises, which attempt to combine gender emancipation with the promotion of indigenous crafts. As Milgram argues, these enterprises often fail to take into account the differences between groups of women, young, old, married, unmarried, etc. (2000: 108). However, this is not the case in DOBAG. Although Powell wanted to emancipate all women equally, the villagers did not. They were quick to redefine the structure of labor and membership in ways that were useful as well as culturally relevant, but which did not necessarily lead to female emancipation. In the cooperative and the village, *kadınlar* ("women") are currently or once married females: wives or widows. Married women weavers are members, but elderly widows who have given up weaving to become spinners, are not. *Kızlar* ("daughters, girls, virgins") are unmarried and remain in their natal households until they separate at marriage. Daughters, because they are not "women" are not members. This gendered structure of labor makes the household a place of work in which mothers manage their daughters' labor. Daughters are able to move up in the structure of the cooperative once they marry. With marriage, they become "women" who are able to become members. They then work on their own looms (owned by the cooperative), pooling labor with friends, neighbors, and their mothers-in-law. They enjoy the voting rights of membership, are paid a share in the annual profits, and receive their wages directly. However, in order to achieve this position, they have to marry. Thus, marriage brings tremendous advantages. Yet fathers retain the power to give permission to marry, thus creating a barrier to taking this much-desired step.

The Household as a Site of Production

Ethnographic studies of cottage industries (Cohen 1999: 67; Ehlers 2000: 7, 62; Wilkinson-Weber 1997: 56, 61) and small workshops (Dedeoğlu 2004; White

1994) show that when the household is the unit of production, capitalist relations are overlaid with familial relations. Familial and kin relationships, whether real or fictive, can be cooperative *and* exploitative (often simultaneously), tying individuals to the collective need for survival and the pooling of resources. These same relationships can be used to unfairly exploit kin for profit (Berik 1987, 1989; Cohen 1999; White 1994: 138). The cultural construction of unequal gendered roles and statuses exacerbates the potential for exploitation. Thus, mothers and daughters and fathers and sons have competing and at times diverging interests in maintaining the household. In Örselli, the cooperative has intensified the household as the location where production, consumption and the negotiation for resources intersect in gendered roles and identities. Due to economic necessity, families need their daughters to be obedient and willing workers who weave under their mothers' cooperative membership. Sons have a different social position, in part due to the lack of employment opportunities in the village for men. They usually leave a few months a year to work making cheese. They have more control over their wages than their sisters, though they also give some of their wages to their parents.

A daughter's departure threatens the survival of the unit, because the parents lose the daughter's wage contribution to the common pool. When daughters begin to want to marry, their previous commitment to the greater good of the household is offset by their newfound interest in leaving it. For this reason, the transition to marriage is fraught with struggles about when and how they marry, and what amount of property they can take with them. As Berik also found among young women weaving in workshops in Turkey, their fathers are reluctant to allow them to make this step to adulthood because they do not want to lose their wages (1989: 12). One clear indicator of the effect of the cooperative on relationships between daughters and fathers is that after the founding of the cooperative in 1982, the age at marriage among daughters rose. Before the 1980s, daughters married on average at 18. By 2001, the average age at marriage for daughters rose to 24. Since

many young women entering their twenties are eager to marry and formalize love relationships, they often find themselves trapped between the need to obey their fathers and wait for permission to marry and their eager boyfriends who push them to elope. The villagers consider that fathers who are reluctant to give their daughters permission to marry are exploiting them, because if the family can subsist without the daughter's labor, it is unfair to prevent her from making this step to adulthood. By denying her permission to become a full adult, who also would gain in status and fortune, her father profits from her loss. The villagers consider this immoral. However, they also regard daughters who run off without considering the economic constraints of her natal household immoral. There is, therefore, a careful balancing act about when and under what conditions a daughter will leave her natal household for marriage.

Islam, Morality, and Social Critique

Moral questions are addressed through cultural understandings of Islam, which in Örselli and throughout Turkey is a framework for constituting everyday life. Islam creates a sense of order in this world and a way to imagine the next (Delaney 1991). It is, as ethnographers of Islamic societies frequently remark, all-encompassing in its power to connect domains of life that are separate in secular society: law, cosmology, spirituality, individual and collective religious practice, the body, time, and space (Bringa 1995; Delaney 1991; Beller-Hann & Hann 2001). In addition, Islam provides a cultural framework for moral action which can be political in its potential applications (Göle 1996: 20; Scott 1985: 135; White 2002), meaning that moral arguments about correct behavior are used to influence individual and collective behavior. Islamic morality, as they understand it, is part of a contemporary spiritual practice, which creates a basis for social solidarity and a sense of responsibility to others. The villagers work every day to be devout and considerate of the condition of their kin, neighbors, and friends. They achieve this through daily prayer, redistributing wealth by practicing good deeds or informal alms (*hayır*) (see

also Benthall 1999: 30; Hart 2007b; Scott 1985: 172; Loeffler 1988: 15), celebrating major holidays such as *Aşura*, sacrificing an animal at *Kurban Bayramı* (the sacrifice holiday), fasting during *Ramazan*, and going on pilgrimage to Mecca (*hac*) (see also Delaney 1990). They are watchful of each other, keeping track of youth and ensuring that private love relationships are not allowed to go wild (Hart 2007a).³ Normally, they apply social pressure through critical gestures, observations, and commentary. In times of crisis, however, they may intervene and assist individuals who have become mentally unstable or physically ill.

These expressions of concern for individuals (and by extension the community), whether expressed economically or through pragmatic social intervention, are not open or free. They are targeted tools for social control. Scott describes how villagers gave *zakat* (the annual tithe), using it as a reward for villagers whose reputations as good workers were sound (1985: 171). Benthall also attests, in the decisions about how *zakat* be distributed, “the consensus seems to be that Islam calls on all people to work and the characters and reputations of poor people may be taken into account in deciding whether or not they deserve help” (1999: 32). The tithe is not an open-ended gift to those in need, but a means to control labor and create social conformity (Scott 1985: 172). The selectivity of the tithe makes it political, by rewarding behaviors and punishing others by declining to give support. In Örselli, the selectivity in providing assistance includes social action as well. The villagers considered the moral condition of the person who might be in need of assistance. They did not, for instance, actively mourn the death of a baby who had been conceived out of wedlock and who died after a year. They were not punishing the baby, who was “innocent” as one woman said, since she “did not witness the sin” that resulted in her conception, but the parents. They did not intervene when a young woman isolated herself by eloping and later was tormented by her mother-in-law, though they made critical remarks about the tyranny of the mother-in-law. They did not assist poor families when the husbands had been difficult and resentful of the cooperative in the past. They actively avoided

individuals with whom they had a quarrel, even on holiday occasions when people are expected to exchange greetings. These social sanctions are expressions of disapproval and they are meant to check the behavior of others. I did not find more antagonistic or violent threats, as did Stirling in his research on a village in Central Anatolia during the 1950s (1966: 246–254). There were no cases of “honor killing,” nor did men physically fight. Yet, in a community where people frequently comment on the need to be with others, social isolation is a stinging punishment.

Thus, Islamic cultural worldviews and practices create a moral world, in which a sense of communal solidarity is made through the pragmatic intervention of neighbors, kin and others, who are outside the immediate private realm of the household. Individuals, who are socialized in the need to reciprocate, express their gratitude for help and assistance. The structures of Islamic behavior create a framework within which individuals can reciprocate. A couple who enjoy a bountiful yield on their olive harvest contribute a part of their olive oil for redistribution to the poor in the village. This informal contribution is different from giving their children, who assisted in maintaining the trees and harvesting the olives, a part of the crop, which was their entitlement. As Loeffler also tells of a village in Iran, villagers respond to virtually every occurrence with, “[i]nnumerable offerings, sacrifices, dedications, contributions, alms, vows, *sufrahs* (meal offered for a religious purpose), invitations, and gifts made to obtain favors, ensure well-being, secure protection, avert evil, help the dead, give thanks, or simply show compassion” (Loeffler 1988: 15). Individuals, inspired by a sense of collective good, create a constituency of Muslims who act to mobilize communities in politically, spiritually, and culturally moralistic ways (White 2002: 72, 119–120). Islam is a tool of political mobilization, which generates a framework for establishing political and moral agendas for social change (Scott 1985; White 2002) in communities both large and small.

As I have described above, Islamic cultural practices play an essential role in how community is

created in the village, but there are two programs of social change, which work side by side. One is the carpet-weaving cooperative established on western, feminist ideals, and notions of economic development. The second, Islamic morality, attempts to create communal solidarity and a concern for the welfare of the group. While Islam is very important, the pressing needs of the monetized economy push villagers into the world of consumption, which they have accessed in part through their participation in the cooperative. The villagers comment on the fact that they have to work within the capitalist economy. They say, for instance, “*parasız bir hayat yok*” (there is no life without money), and “*para yok, ekmek yok*” (without money, there is no bread). Both these common refrains indicate the necessity of earning money in order to survive. Villagers see the effects of capitalist development and the transformation of the local economy, often critiquing the effects on the moral community, by creating economic and social differences between individuals and households. They point to the monetization of kin relations, and claim that people treat each other with greed, resentment, and envy.

Intensified material interests, such as those inspired and enabled by economic development, bother many in the village who expect that Islamic morality and communality should temper unrestrained consumption and individualized expressions of desire for material goods, as well as sexual and emotional fulfillment, which are regarded as individualistic and egocentric. People of all ages and genders remark on how the village has changed over the decades by saying “*insanlık yok*” (there is no humanity), “*ben seni tanımiyorum, sen beni tanımiyorsun*” (I don’t know you, you don’t know me), and “*insanoğlu ölmüş*” (humanity is dead). These expressions indicate that ideals of economic egalitarianism are collapsing beneath individual greed. I have been arguing that community is not vaguely situated in a loosely defined public space, but grounded in households that are linked together by ties of kinship, neighborhood, and friendship. Individuals are linked together through exchanges of labor, assistance, moral and emotional support, and through redistributions of

wealth, such as olive oil, milk and cheese, when one family has a surplus. This dense network shows that the villagers do not acknowledge a private space of the household as separate from a public space of the community. Therefore, they do not hesitate to observe and comment on the behavior of fathers, mothers, and children to determine whether or not they have acted justly.

Through these innumerable daily acts of observation and commentary, Islamic morality erases the distinction between public and private. This formulation contradicts Göle’s argument that “the culture of Islam... is established not only on the invisibility of the *mahrem* (literally, ‘forbidden’ but also meaning private or domestic) sphere and that of women but also on the ‘secrecy’ and ‘nonverbalization’ of the affairs taking place in the *mahrem* realm; it is a society of silence, thus, it is antiliberal in its very organization” (1996: 52). Göle is describing elite Islamists, who are revitalizing Islamic practice in Istanbul, and therefore individuals who are more self-conscious of the need to reinvent traditions, including dress, spheres of activity, and moral action. I do not doubt that there are Islamists who create a private sphere that eliminates women from public view. Nomadic and, in this case, formerly nomadic societies are more open in their treatment of women, their appearance in public life, their ability to act politically, as well as their power and influence in the so-called private realm of the household (Shahrani 2002: 139–141). In the village, women are not living in seclusion. There are no separate spaces within the house for men, the *selamlık*, or for women, the *harem*. Women move through public spaces, work outdoors, are influential leaders in the cooperative and in the village. They also conceptualize the village, as well as the space of the Yuntdağ, as home, meaning that there are no strangers (Ilcan 1999). For instance, women covered their village attire with enveloping raincoats, which women wear in urban spaces, when they stepped off the minibus in the large city to their south, Manisa. Once back in the domestic realm of the Yuntdağ, often on the minibus trip into the mountains, they removed their urban outfits, and returned to the comfort of being among relatives,

friends, and acquaintances. Thus, the social space of the village and the entire region of the Yuntdağ, in which community is generated through concrete exchanges, redistributions, acts of caring and consideration for others, is an extension of domestic life.

Through all these everyday practices, the village is made into a moral space, which is both safe and comforting and open to the critical observations of neighbors, friends, and enemies who consider everyone's behavior. In addition to considering behavior, villagers are quick to assess and remember economic exchanges, gift-giving practices, and contributions of labor. They measure the kinds and amounts of gifts given at ritual exchanges, how willingly individuals give labor, and the intensity with which they work at festivities, to gauge greed and selfishness. The wedding is a time of heightened anxiety about these economic and social exchanges of labor because everything is made public and transparent. Village women closely examine the bride's trousseau at her wedding, counting the numbers and quality of goods. They calculate the monetary value of these goods in order to decide whether her parents were generous or stingy. For brides with excessive property, they conclude that the parents were too generous and spoiled their daughter. For brides with limited goods, they openly comment about the parents' poverty and stinginess. Many brides feel ashamed and humiliated. These measurements, observations and gossip about what happens inside the household, and the common knowledge about how much each family makes weaving and in other labors, add up to how exploitative, selfish, and greedy individuals are regarded as being.

Marriage

Örselli, as I have described it, is a place where competing and contradictory movements are taking place. The cooperative has sustained village life, enabling villagers to remain in the Yuntdağ while increasing their engagement in consumption. Meanwhile the pleasures of this comfortable life bother many who turn towards intensified Islamic practice and moral concerns to address their interpretation of social inequities. Marriage marks an especially

anxious time when these issues come together: the desire for individual fulfillment and love, and visible consumption. For the bride, there are additional pressures from her natal family for expressions of loyalty, sadness over leaving, and heightened expressions of obedience. Thus, for young people, marriage marks the defining point in their lives when they become adults who are expected to act morally through Islamic cultural practices, and is a juncture when they are given a body of property, which establishes their new household, or *yuva* (nest) as the villagers say. Marriage thereby merges two strands of potential conflict in the village: expressions of individualism and pressures of collectivity.

In Örselli, as ethnographies of marriage also show, courtship and marriage are at the intersection of privacy, emotion, sexuality, and economic change (Ahearn 2001; Collier 1997; Rebhun 1999; Yan 2003). As I have already pointed out, this intersection brings cultural struggles over definitions of gender and inequality to the surface (Collier 1997). The literature on these trends in other places helps explain what is happening in Örselli. Among ethnographic works, Collier (1997) and Yan (2003) show how young women make strategic bargains with patriarchal authority (Kandiyoti 1988; White 1994) in transforming economic settings from ones based on agricultural production to wage labor. Collier's work on marriage practices in a Spanish village shows how social behaviors, which were once predicated on a sense of duty to kin and community, have shifted to individual desires for personal, intimate, and emotional fulfillment. Young people satisfy these desires through romance, wage labor, and an engagement with urban culture. In Collier's case, the results are not wholly beneficial for women, who become trapped in city apartments and oppressed by middle class standards (1997: 125–137). Yan's work in a village in China describes women, once at the bottom of the social order, who, in the transforming village economy, become masters of consumption. They negotiate for sexual and intimate desire before and during marriage, using their newfound economic power as a bargaining chip. In this Chinese village, women command respect in a crumbling

patriarchal order (Yan 2003: 71, 2006). The exercise of desire in companionate marriage, the fulfillment of sexual desire in or outside marriage, and the desire for things, are described by anthropologists, sociologists and historians as “individualistic” (Giddens 1990: 121–122; Stone 1979: 151). This nexus of transformation implies an effect of the economy on intimacy and a sense of personal freedom in a newly emerging youth culture (Liechty 2003: 209; Marsden 2007: 97; Neyzi 2001: 423).

The cooperative has affected kin relations in the household, leading to changing perceptions of female power and agency, as well as the role of economic development in courtship and marriage. Örselli presents a middle case between Collier (1997) and Yan (2003). Daughters’ experiences show how the patriarchal order of rural life is challenged by youthful desires and an increase in economic power. Communalism and Islamic morality, however, serve to check unrestrained individualistic behavior. This is because the community judges and tries to influence individual behavior. This social pressure restrains young women who attempt to realize the individual freedoms of consumption, sexual and intimate desire, which the individuals in Collier’s (1997) and Yan’s (2003) cases enjoy.

Heavily individualistic experiences like romantic love and personal expressions of desire in emotion and consumption, which are predicated on a split from extended kin networks and economic change, are perceived as dangerous in the village. While a daughter’s apparent greed in the amassing and eventual display of the trousseau is met with ambivalence, elopement is regarded as the ultimate act of her defiance, disobedience, and selfishness. While girls can achieve wifehood by eloping and bypassing their father’s permission, they are not given their trousseau if they do (Ilcan 1994: 281). Thus, gaining possession of trousseaux, where young women act as consumers, collecting and creating goods for marriage and focusing their dreams and desires on this cache of stuff (Appadurai 1996: 5), is dependent on their obedience. In this way, the moral economy of marriage includes the parents’ ability to use the trousseau as leverage. Much like the selectivity with

which *zakat* can be awarded, as Scott (1985: 172) and Benthall (1999: 32) describe, the trousseau is a gift that is used to influence correct behavior.

While the bride’s possession of the trousseau is contingent on her correct behavior from her parents’ standpoint, her fiancé’s parents can use gold, normally given in engagement and at the wedding, as a carrot as well. Typically, the groom’s family gives the bride about ten gold coins, worth a thousand dollars (see also Delaney 1991: 120). The groom’s family withholds this gift if the bride eloped, even when it was their son who convinced her. No one in the village said they would encourage a son to abduct a bride or persuade a girl to elope in order to save money, as is the case in Kyrgyzstan (Kleinbach, Albezova & Aitieva 2005) and Kazakhstan (Werner 2004). In Örselli, there are no social sanctions against families that cannot afford to give the bride the latest going rate. Brides and grooms consider the amount they might lose if they elope when they make their decision, thereby demonstrating that they are weighing all the effects of eloping. Not being able to give gold removes one of the couple’s incentives to wait for permission to marry. Couples consider the financial as well as social downsides of eloping, and parents attempt to enforce moral behavior through endowments and gifts. It should not be surprising then that villagers regard the blatant connection between moral behavior and monetary rewards as especially troubling.

Elopement

Literature on elopement inspires the “romance of resistance” (Abu-Lughod 1990). Elopement is used to demonstrate the defiance of patriarchal power, evidence of the empowerment of women (Ahearn 2001; Yan 2003), the exercise of agency and the manifestation of free will (Bates 1974; Stirling 1966: 193), or initiative among young people who chose a spouse independently (Beller-Hann & Hann 2001: 137; Delaney 1991: 178; Kudat 1974). It is used as a marker of modernity, in which individuals achieve autonomy from extended networks of kin and make choices based on individual desire (Giddens 1990: 121). Marriage by elopement sidesteps economic ex-

changes (Bates 1974: 277; Kudat 1974: 291), involves sexual and social experimentation (Bringa 1995: 125) or rape (Kudat 1974: 291), defies a father's reluctance to give his daughter away (Rebhun 1999: 152), or is the product of a love relationship (Stirling & Incirlioğlu 1996: 67; Marsden 2007). While researchers may romantically consider elopement as an expression of independence and freewill, villagers consider it less prestigious and immoral for the very same reasons (Ilcan 1994: 280). Although villagers view elopement with ambivalence, it is not a new feature of marriage practice.

While not a new practice, elopements are described and understood differently by the generations. I collected eighty-four accounts of how, when, and in what manner women married, which stretched from the late 1940s to 2004, including marriages contracted by arrangement, through love-match, a combination of love and arrangement (Hart 2007a), and elopements and abductions. I found, as did Ilcan in her work on a village in western Turkey (1994: 280), that women who are now elderly eloped to avoid an arranged match. They did not describe their decision to elope as one based on a choice to marry someone they loved, as Bates describes in the case of young *Yörük* men in Central Anatolia (1974: 276). Rather their elopements were transacted out of panic. The elderly said their fathers were wrong to try and force them to marry someone they did not want. For this reason, and because of the negative consequences of loveless marriages and elopements in the past, parents have ceded their authority in arranging their children's matches.

While young women now seem to be under less constraint and have more choice, they are not free to negotiate their own matches, nor can they instigate the ritual steps of marriage. Typically, young people have an emotional and possibly romantic relationship, but it has to be kept secret and it may not be more elaborate than exchanged glances and notes. When they decide they want to marry, the groom and his parents visit the bride's parents. If the bride's father gives permission, the negotiations for marriage and the ritual steps that lead to it begin. From that point, the marriage resembles an ar-

ranged match (Delaney 1991: 118–123), although more ritually complex and expensive than those of previous generations. If the bride's father does not give his permission, then the couple is stymied and sometimes they consider eloping as an alternative. It was clear in the accounts I collected that some young people did not bother with these negotiations and simply eloped, while others carefully weighed their options and were willing to wait (sometimes for years) before the bride's family could afford to let her marry.

Couples who elope typically remain in the village. They do not run away and leave forever. For this reason, their families are involved in the rituals of marriage that occur after the elopement. Thus, couples who elope go through more or less the same ritual steps, but the bride's family refuses to attend. The actual elopement happens when the couple leaves the village and goes to the city where they have a civil marriage. Unlike other couples who marry normatively, they do this alone, since they run off without relatives accompanying them. They return to the village officially married. The state marriage is never accepted as being a "real" marriage by villagers, especially for couples who are contracting a first marriage. For this reason, though already legally married, the couple have to have the village wedding ritual. This, for eloped couples, is an abbreviated village wedding feast (*düğün*), followed by the *nikah*, the Islamic rite of marriage. Normally, the wedding feast lasts three days and has elaborate rituals including applying henna, watching the bride (*gelini görmek*), mourning her departure from her family, and dancing. When a couple elopes, the wedding feast lasts one night and includes dancing by the groom's family and friends. The bride, at least as she appeared in photographs I saw of these weddings, seemed even more despondent and miserable than she usually is at her wedding.⁴ The fact that she had eloped was usually regarded as shameful. She suffered socially, emotionally, and financially. When other young women described the photographs to me, they would point out how the bride did not have gold and that no one pinned ribbons of bills to her dress. While the bride is made to suffer, the groom does

not. In all the cases I studied, his family accepted the bride, even when the groom's family was unprepared for the marriage and could not afford to build or furnish a separate house. Ordinarily a bride would not marry without a well-furnished, new home. While fathers have less authority in forcing their daughters to marry, sons have more power in encouraging a bride to elope. Elderly women who eloped in their youth, presented their story as their own decision, not one influenced by the man they ultimately married. Their husbands seemed ready to take a young woman who was looking for an escape from a bad match her father was forcing on her. The power of fathers has decreased, but this does not mean that all men have less power. In fact young men, especially in the heated atmosphere of romantic passion, have more than when couples did not engage in ideologies and practices of romantic love.

While elopements happen, it is not always clear from young women's accounts what occurred. Some young women claim openly that they eloped, while others frame their elopement as an abduction in an attempt to rhetorically reclaim their reputations (Werner 2004). Given the pressures of selecting a narrative in which they claim they act, claim they were forced to act, or claim they were acted upon against their will, the question of their agency is clear. However, in the cases I consider here, neither the ability to act nor the ability to actively constrain oneself helped avoid psychological stress or self-inflicted punishment. For the villagers, the agency of women was not the moral issue at hand. The freedom to act, or as Mahmood argues, an idea of agency, is predicated on a notion of progressive political action (2005: 14), similar to the "romance of resistance". In the literature on elopement, free-willing autonomy can be interpreted as a product of poststructuralist feminist thought, in which women seize their futures willingly and individualistically. The villagers in Örselli are not invested in the notion that women ought to gain political power and authority on a par with men, which is clear from their reluctance to give daughters membership in the cooperative. Although they work in a weaving cooperative, which attempts to emancipate women, they stress that "women are

not free." As Mahmood argues concerning women in the mosque movement in Egypt, "[t]he normative political subject of poststructuralist feminist theory often remains a liberatory one, whose agency is conceptualized on the binary model of subordination and subversion" (Mahmood 2005: 14). Applying this poststructuralist feminist reading of agency as active resistance does not help to reveal the critical and politically meaningful lens through which the villagers judge ethical and moral behavior, which the cases I present elucidate.

It is important to make a clear distinction between patriarchal authority and Islamic morality. Many researchers seamlessly combine submission to patriarchal authority with the proper function of Islamic morality (Beller-Hann & Hann 2001; Delaney 1991). The villagers make a distinction between fathers' authority and the apparent need to obey, and the potential that fathers' actions can be exploitative and therefore immoral and important to disobey. Rather than assuming that fathers demand and receive obedience and that the community supports this unconditionally, they base their judgment on who they thought acted selfishly, individualistically, and immorally. While the daughters in the ethnographic cases discussed below could not effectively solve their problems with action or constraint, obedience or disobedience, observers judged the situation through an understanding of Islamic morality, in which the plight of the less powerful was important to the welfare of the group. This shows that the villagers consider that being a good Muslim is not always synonymous with being an obedient daughter. But it also shows that the villagers weigh action and regard wrongful action, such as exploitation, as immoral and important to critique. All individuals are expected to be able to choose rightful action, and therefore the fact of being less powerful in the household does not justify choosing wrongful action. In other words, daughters are also called to account for their actions.

Şebnem's Story

I stood on Sultan's stoop, knocking at her door on a cold day in January 2004. Looking through the

patterned pane in the door, the house interior was dark. I stepped back and looked at the chimney; no tendrils of smoke were rising. Having heard the horn blowing on the truck to collect field laborers that morning, I knew that this 44-year-old mother of five had gone to work. Previously she had never labored in fields for meager daily wages because her three daughters were at home weaving. I regretted not being able to talk to her, although I felt guilty about following up on the story of her daughter's recent elopement, juxtaposed as it was with the economic necessities of her family's survival. Now that Sultan's three daughters were married, the sounds of the beater on the warp did not reverberate from her house. As I turned from Sultan's door, I noted that one could draw a straight line to her youngest daughter's front door, about three hundred meters away. Smoke rose from her chimney. I walked over to her house where she was sitting in a hot room, watching over her baby, who had not yet passed his fortieth day.⁵

Şebnem eloped when she was engaged. Her parents arranged the match, but later the young couple developed a romantic relationship and as they waited to marry, they grew frustrated. Şebnem's parents wanted her to wait because her elder sister was about to marry. The family would spend a great deal and they needed Şebnem to stay and help earn money by weaving carpets. Also, in order to marry Şebnem, they would need to save up again. This would take at least two years as Şebnem pointed out. She said she and her boyfriend knew they were not going to receive material property from either of their parents because both families were poor. This fact reduced some of their interest in marrying with Şebnem's father's permission. Şebnem said, as we sat together on her couch, an album of snapshots from the wedding in my lap, "I never would have gone, if I had not agreed to eloping." She meant that she had not been abducted and that her decision to leave was a choice. Describing the event, she said: "One day he came to my house, and we talked and decided." She left her house and went to his, and then they went to Manisa. Included in the booklet of photographs were ones of her sitting on a bed smiling and others of him ly-

ing seductively on his side, looking defiantly into the camera. They both had wet hair, which implied that these photographs were taken after they had had sex, after they had washed.⁶ Ten months later, she was suffering the social consequences. Both Şebnem's family and the villagers condemned her for eloping. They thought she acted selfishly and without regard for her natal family's survival.

In Şebnem's case, the shamefulness of running off was compounded by the fact that her older sister was going to marry in one month. Not only are siblings expected to marry in order of age, sisters are supposed to help with the wedding preparations. I thought of the work which would have fallen on her mother's shoulders, and the fact that Şebnem would not have bid her sister goodbye during the emotionally arduous marriage rituals. After she eloped, she was ostracized and isolated in the village. At the last big holiday, she and her husband visited her parents in an attempt to make peace (*barışlamak*). They were hoping for a concrete expression of forgiveness, namely the trousseau. Although Şebnem's parents agreed to see her, they did not give her the trousseau, nor did they visit after she gave birth.⁷ This showed everyone in the village, since none of these details went unnoticed, how angry her parents were. After visiting Şebnem, I went to her elder sister's house, the one whose wedding Şebnem had missed. She said: "Şebnem is afraid of visiting her parents because she is afraid of her mother-in-law." Her sister was trying to reassure me that it was not her parents, but her sister's mother-in-law who was controlling Şebnem. I remarked that in 2000–01, while I was conducting the bulk of my research, that Şebnem never seemed afraid of anything. She was witty and bold, cracking jokes, and playing the trickster. Now the signs that she was beaten down were unmistakable. Her shoulders drooped as she murmured her story. With her sister, over glasses of tea, I said I did not see what her mother-in-law could do. The elder sister exploded: "Exactly! That's what I say! What can *she* do?" Şebnem's sister believed to some extent that Şebnem was punishing herself. Later, when I discussed Şebnem's situation with the mother of the family I lived with, she used Şebnem's experience to argue that young

people should marry with their parents' permission. "You see how things are with Şebnem," she said, "she has absolutely nothing!" Şebnem's sister, foreshadowing that conversation and illustrating how her marriage worked in contrast, said: "See how it is with me, I can easily come and go, visit my mother, and be comfortable. It is not like that for Şebnem."

Şebnem's story illustrates how a young woman can be pressured to marry by an insistent and impatient young man. She emphasized in her story that she chose to elope. Her clear act of defiance and disobedience, connected as it was with the economic pressures of her family's situation, made her look selfish. The community judged her elopement to be the result of her impatience and lack of concern for her family's economic survival. They pointed out that eloping results in justifiable economic punishments. In her marital home, without protection or help from her natal family, she suffered a great deal. Her house was sparsely furnished. She had none of the comforting decorative items from her trousseau that she had once shown me: embroideries, towels, and headscarves. More importantly, because she was socially isolated in the village, Şebnem was downcast and depressed. She knew she had made a bold move which hurt her reputation and did not improve her situation. Many young women see the potential pitfalls of eloping, as I was instructed to take note. The next story demonstrates how the villagers regard self-restrained action as moral and can argue that in some cases (though hypothetical) eloping is better.

Yıldız's Story

In 1998 I became friends with Yıldız, a 21-year-old unmarried girl. One day, as we sat on a ridge of rocks looking over the village, Yıldız declared that she liked *arabesk* music because she was in love (see Stokes 1989). She described how she loved Hakim with all her heart and soul. They had been involved for over ten years. Although they both expressed their desire to marry, Yıldız's father had said that marriage was impossible since Mevlut, her elder brother, had to marry first. Mevlut was about 28 and had never married. He exhibited his simmering rage and perma-

nent disgruntlement as he lurked about the house, with overgrown hair, unshaven face, his shirt unbuttoned, showing his chest. In his swagger, he suggestively imitated gangsters in Turkish movies from the 1970s, which feature *arabesk* themes of dashed hope, thwarted love, and the pains of urbanization. Both brother and sister seemed trapped in dramas more commonly seen in films. While his sister was the "victim" of love, Mevlut was playing the "bad guy". Mevlut had become a dangerous joke in the village. He had loved a girl, who scorned him and married another. Yıldız, who seemed to see all love relationships as potentially tragic, claimed he could never love another. Other young women talked about how he had named every available girl as a potential wife. They laughed at the obvious signs of his desperation. No one would take him; he was unwanted and aging.

The family's monetary income came from weaving. Yıldız's father and elder brother planted the garden, took care of the animals, hunted, fished, and did occasional construction work. Yıldız's mother, a petite woman who was reserved and seemed to cower when men were around, took care of the house. Meanwhile, Yıldız and her younger sister wove together every day on large carpets. On average, they produced one high-quality carpet per month. These sold well. It was obvious that Yıldız's plans to marry would severely reduce this source of income.

On the day I arrived in February 2000 to begin my research, I heard about "Yıldız's illness" which began after the New Year, when Hakim's family had come to ask for Yıldız in marriage. Reportedly, her father refused, using Mevlut as an explanation. This excuse was not very convincing because Yıldız's eldest sister (who was younger than Mevlut) had married a few years before. Soon after this refusal, Yıldız fell ill. The middle-aged and older women described her sickness as being severe and extreme. Sitting among them, Yıldız claimed to not remember what had happened, but she also recounted her visions in a manic way. She said: "I saw terrible, weird things!" She predicted that her grandmother would die at the end of *Kurban Bayramı* (the sacrifice holiday). In fact, she did. The first week of my research was centered on Yıldız's grandmother's funeral. On the occasion

when I learned about this prediction, the women in the room were awed by her. Clearly, she was regarded as frightening and a bit mad. One woman reported how Yıldız did not sleep for eighteen days. The women sat up to protect her from flinging herself out the window. The woman I lived with described how she bound her face in a black scarf covering her mouth and nose, or covering everything but one eye. She could not stand, later she did not speak. I heard how she talked all the time, pacing, saying incoherently that she would kill herself and screaming that someone was going to die after *Ramazan*. She called for Hakim to take her away and save her.

Given this extreme illness, I wondered about her care. Her parents took her to doctors and *hocas* (religiously learned men). They prescribed baths in seawater, *muskas* (amulets), holy words dissolved in water, and *okunmuş suyu* (blessed water), which she drank. One day, Yıldız showed me her bottle of *okunmuş gül suyu* (holy rose water), which she wiped on her face. The perfume seemed to give her some relief. Doctors prescribed powerful and expensive drugs. I learned Yıldız stayed in a mental hospital for two weeks. During the spring of 2000, Yıldız's illness dragged on. One day, when I arrived to visit her elder married sister, Yıldız was lying inert on the couch. We had to plead with her to come eat with us. Yıldız had always been thin, but now her body was wasted. I rubbed her back, and felt her sharp shoulder bones and the lack of muscles. She pointedly remarked that she "could not weave". Yıldız's newly acquired *muska*, a tiny silver vial with a curled paper of holy words and a *nazar boncuğu* (evil eye bead) attached to her neck with a brilliant blue string, jangled as she lay down after eating, her face turned away from us. Her sister whispered a prayer, wiping her face in exhaustion and exasperation, glancing towards her sister's back.

As her illness unfolded, many speculated as to its causes. One theory was that a *muska* written against Yıldız was placed outside her house under a rock. I was told that there are some malevolent *hocas* who compose *muskas* that do harm. A middle-aged woman, who claimed to have read it, said the amulet was supposed to destroy Hakim's love for Yıldız, so he could marry someone else. Suspicious of the source,

Yıldız's family broke off relations with their next-door neighbors, Sultan's family, where her three marriageable daughters sat weaving. On another occasion, someone speculated that it was Yıldız's father who must have written the *muska* because he was the only one who was interested in eliminating Yıldız's marriage plans. Pragmatic villagers suggested Yıldız's father was preventing her from marrying to keep weaving income in the house. Another related theory was dietary. Some women speculated that Yıldız was malnourished, and this too was blamed on her father. The claim was that Yıldız needed fruit and vegetables, but her father was too stingy to buy them. These accusations were designed to show how Yıldız's father thought more about money, how to make it and save it, than about the health and welfare of his children. His actions were immoral because he cared more for money than people.

One day in the fall I visited the family and as I talked with her mother and eldest sister who were sitting with the new baby, Yıldız staggered into the room, the door creaking at her entrance. Her eyes were glazed, her limbs wooden; she lay on the floor between us. We discussed her situation, as if she were not touching us, pressed between our knees as we spoke, listening with her eyes shut. Her father came and sat with us. He asked me what they should do about her. Yıldız hid her mouth with her arm draped over her face. In a bizarre fashion, she opened one eye and listened. I paused and decided I would not pretend that Yıldız was not there, or that I was an "objective" observer. Instead of answering her father, I asked Yıldız if she had talked to Hakim lately. She smiled, which I could see in the wrinkle in the corner of her exposed eye and she mumbled through her arm: "No." I asked when he would come to the village (he was away working) and she said she did not know. I asked if Hakim had a cell phone and she said no. Then I said that his mother would know a number where he could be reached. Much to my surprise, her father acted as if this were a normal and realistic thing to ask. I hesitated before making my suggestion, but I also realized that I was probably the only person who could say this directly, though lots of people were behind their backs.

Seeing that her parents were listening to me, I became bolder and said I did not think doctors were going to do much for Yıldız. Taking on the posture of a doctor prescribing a tonic, I said that Yıldız needed to call Hakim every other day. I looked at her thin body and added, “and she needs to eat fruit.” I said that I would go to Manisa the next day and buy her some. Her father asked what she wanted. She said she wanted bananas and strawberries. Bananas and strawberries are two of the most expensive fruits. Bringing them up from Manisa, like bringing any easily crushed or perishable item, is not easy on the crowded minibus. After a few minutes Yıldız took my hand, smiled and got up. I think it was the first time someone asked her directly and openly what she wanted. Her suppressed agency and restraint took a huge force of will.

The next day, after returning from the city, I gave her the slightly crushed brown paper bag with some bananas. She was very pleased. She immediately and ravenously consumed two. She told me she had gone with her father to see a *hoca* that day. She reported that she felt much better, wove, and did not sleep during the day. The *hoca* wrote her a new *muska*. She now had three *uskas*, which she wore around her neck. The *hoca* prayed over sugar cubes and rose water. She was advised to wipe her face with the rose water several times a day and eat the sugar. I asked her what she wanted most in her life and she said: “I don’t know.” Then I said: “Yes, you do.” She smiled and said: “Marriage.” I asked if she had talked with Hakim. She said he called that day, but she was not home. Her brother passed on his greetings. At that moment, she was hoping he would call again.

After several months, her father allowed the first step to marriage, the *söz kesmek* (to cut the word, i.e. to promise). For this event, Hakim’s mother and father gave a strikingly wide gold band. The size of the ring showed how much they were willing to invest in her as a daughter-in-law. For a time, Yıldız was happy to begin the process of marrying, but she was not fully cured. As the months dragged, she returned to her deep depression and lay most of the day, inert or sleeping. One day Yıldız told me that she felt a terrible *sıkıntı* (depression) inside her which she

called a *hastalık* (illness). She clutched at her chest as if she were trying to pull it out.

One complication to marrying is that it takes steps; at each the couple must wait for the bride’s father to give permission. At every marriage, it struck me that the dates of these events were always *belli değil*, uncertain. Yıldız’s situation was no different, but the degree of ambiguity was more extreme. On a Wednesday in mid-January, Yıldız did not know whether or not she would be going to Manisa the next day to have the civil marriage. That afternoon, as Yıldız hung her head miserably over her needlework, she asked me how “we” get married. She asked: “Who says, ‘Let’s marry?’” I told her that the man and woman decide, plan the wedding and send out invitations, inviting their parents to the event. She thought this was amazing and added: “with us it’s very difficult” (*bizde çok zor*). She sat on the cushion under the window and looked miserable, trying to concentrate on her scarf. She said she felt “old and tired”. That evening I happened to meet Yıldız as I walked back to the house with Muhittin, the father of the family I lived with. She said she still did not know whether or not she was going to Manisa.

After we ate dinner and Muhittin had gone to the coffeehouse, I told the mother of the family I lived with that Yıldız still did not know whether or not she was going to get married. I asked how Yıldız could sleep that night, waiting to find out if she would go, waiting for the morning for someone to say something. We looked at each other and we both said: “It’s her father.” She said: “His wife does and says nothing. She’s afraid of him!” She asked rhetorically: “Don’t they sleep in the same bed?” She said: “When a man and a woman share a bed, they have to share everything! If I had a man like that I would strangle him!” This was all declared with expressive body language, wringing the neck of an invisible husband. I joked: “No wonder Muhittin’s scared!” “Under these circumstances,” she forcefully declared, “eloping is better!” Despite the waiting and uncertainty, Yıldız and Hakim married the next day. Two weeks later, they had the customary wedding feast.

Conclusion

In villager reactions to cases of young people who exert agency in eloping or in choosing not to elope, villagers show how they want to promote Islamic values of social justice above that of the unchecked authority of fathers to rule the members of their household. On the one hand, they do not unequivocally support children who flaunt paternal authority and elope. On the other, parents who do not work hard and expect their children to earn the main income for the household are judged harshly. And children who do not consider the welfare of their parents and siblings and thereby exhibit selfishness are criticized. By discussing these reactions, the villagers reason about what they consider wrongful action and identify how kin exploit each other. This shows that patriarchal authority that does not conform to Islamic morals is critiqued and challenged, not only by young people in the exercise of agency and in their decisions about how to marry (Yan 2006), but by the community which prioritizes social justice. Thus, elopement is not unequivocally wrong, but immoral and selfish behavior is.

One might expect, based on the ethnographic literature, that elopement is a clear demonstration of disobedience and transgressive behavior by both the bride and groom (Stirling 1966: 192–194; Bates 1974: 272; Ilcan 1994: 280). While parents in Örselli do not promote elopement as an option, observers with more distance from the politics of the household do not condemn it categorically (Marsden 2007: 100). The mother of the family I lived with said she prayed “day and night” that her daughter would not elope, but she saw that in some situations it might be the best option. Her remark showed she considered individual circumstances. The basis for judgment was to condemn individuals who acted selfishly, greedily, and individualistically, disregarding the collective need of the household to survive. Thus, moral behavior is not framed in terms of unbending rules, but as a flexible system, applied to particular cases.

In the first case, Şebnem acted decisively and eloped, which put her family in a difficult economic situation. The women in the village expected her to have been patient and obedient. In the second case,

Yıldız was viewed as a victim of her father’s greed. For this reason, the women in the village supported and cared for her when she tried to commit suicide. It was possible to support her because she was moral in her actions. She put aside her individualistic desires for marriage, worked to sacrifice herself for the good of her natal family, but was pushed too far when after trying to be patient and obedient, her father refused to grant her permission to marry.

This ethnographic evidence challenges the notion that Islam categorically supports and upholds the authority and rule of men, which has been the picture of rural life in Turkey in ethnographic writings (Delaney 1991; Ilcan 1994; Stirling 1966). But this local form of Islamic morality, however, does not categorically protect the weaker members of the household. Rather, the community regards both fathers and daughters as able to be good when they consider the welfare of the whole and bad when they only consider their selfish needs. One could argue that Yıldız’s father was considering the welfare of the household as a whole when he prevented his daughter from marrying, but the fact that he did nothing to make a monetary contribution himself made this argument less plausible. These community-wide judgments challenge black and white readings of social practice, such as elopement, in which the community seemingly does not take the full context of an action into account. I found that the villagers considered all facets of each case and were open to the possibility that doctrinally “wrong” actions might be the best option for some.

The competing pressures of Islamic morality and a blossoming consumerist society pit individual family members against each other as they all seek to fulfill their own needs and desires. Like thousands of other small communities around the world, Örselli is experiencing economic development and social change. However, in this village, Islamic morality and a sense of community step in to check the unrestrained power of fathers to exploit their daughters (for wages) and daughters to make demands without regard for the good of their natal households (for goods and the fulfillment of their desires). These cases stand in stark contrast to popular reports in

the media about the unrestrained patriarchal and oppressive authority of Muslim men over Muslim women. In my research, I found that Islam, as a cultural and not solely text-based religious practice, gives villagers a moral framework for addressing the consequences and inequities of economic development on the members of the community, rather than a rubber stamp for men to control women. Villagers remark on the failures of the new economy, and how money has changed everyone, but they also have an ideology for combating social change, which they consider a threat to community and kin relationships.

In comparing ethnographic literature on rural places in other parts of the world, Collier's and Yan's cases are especially striking because many of the social and economic transformations these two ethnographers describe are parallel to those here. Considering them as I have through the lens of elopement, Islamic morality creates a clear difference in how people manage the emergence of individualism and a monetized economy. The villagers, as practitioners of Islam as an all-encompassing cosmological, economic, social and moral framework, step in and judge what they perceive to be exploitation and wrongful action (Cook 2003). However, as the two cases also show, individuals who are willing to sacrifice themselves gain support, but they have to demonstrate extraordinary self-sacrifice.

Notes

- 1 I thank the villagers in Örselli for their extraordinary hospitality and willingness to include me in their lives. I am indebted to Harald Böhmer and Josephine Powell for their help and guidance. I thank Leslie Peirce for conversations on an earlier draft, the reviewers of the article for helping improve it, and editorial assistance needed to bring it to fruition. This research was funded by grants from Fulbright-Hays, the Institute for Turkish Studies, and the American Research Institute in Turkey.
- 2 *Yörük*, from the verb "to walk," refers to nomadic peoples in Turkey, who are now mostly settled.
- 3 This section relies on a discussion of good deeds explored at greater length in Hart 2007a.
- 4 Marriage is supposed to be an emotionally painful separation for the bride from her natal family, who per-

forms her sorrow through protracted tears. Married women come to watch the bride cry and they usually sob as well. Sometimes the stress of separation is so severe that the bride faints. Young women describe this as the most difficult day of their lives.

- 5 Babies are regarded as being in a vulnerable state before the fortieth day. Thereafter, there is a ritual bath for mother and baby and both are regarded as having survived the most dangerous period after birth.
- 6 After sexual intercourse, couples perform a full body ablution, which is physically and spiritually cleansing.
- 7 After any arduous illness or event, such as childbirth, all the women in the village visit the young mother, many remaining with her continuously up to the fortieth day. Her mother would be expected to be by her side. For a young woman who recently gave birth to be abandoned by her mother would be psychologically taxing.

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