

ECONOMIC ETHIC IN TURKISH PROVERBS

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Economic ethic means sum of motifs and suggestions for the practical value and the preferred size in the regulating the daily lives of people. In this study that examines whether the attitude of economic ethic in proverbs, it has been argued in this study that proverbs have been inculcate an economic ethic to the Turkish society and proverbs that happen with influence of the culture of Sufism have not been consist of understanding of “a cardigan, a bite” (bir lokma, bir hrka). Economic ethic that express an attitude against the world in the conceptual basis, on hand, is ascetism and fasting against leave from the path of God of goods of world on the other hand, is seeking of balance between for acquisition of property and maintaining a modest life as indispensable means. Individual in the economic ethic is in an effort to reconcile these two different poles relating to goods in the world. While forming the boundaries of this study proverbs that used in Turkey Turkish in the context of economic ethic, economic ethic in proverbs refers to properties such as halal earnings, frugality, thrift, temperance and diligence. It is possible to specify culture that inculcates accumulation and savings, it has been influence past experience such as hunger, famine and a religion that order to work in the forming of codes of historical and social meaning. Additionally it has been influence of seeking of balance of Sufi culture in the attitude against world and ethic in the proverbs. As a result, it refers to properties such as halal earnings frugality, thrift, temperance and diligence, proverbs in Turkey Turkish and it has not been with one-dimension of proverbs that happen with influence of the culture of Sufism.

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Key words: Proverb, Economic Ethic, Cultural Context, Religion, Mentality.

Introduction

This study examines economic ethics in the sample of proverbs and it focuses on proverbs used generally in Turkey Turkish in terms of economic ethics. It is accepted from the basis that there is a direct relationship between economic ethics and proverbs. Economic ethics refers to the qualities such as frugality, thriftiness, temperance, diligence and halal earnings. Proverbs reflect culture; besides, they have historical, social and cultural codes of meaning. It is observed in Turkish people that there is an attitude towards being frugal and diligent. Past experiences such as famine, hunger, etc. are effective in formation of qualities such as frugality, thriftiness, temperance,

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diligence and halal earnings in culture. It is also necessary to attribute to Turkish culture that inculcates making savings and religion that orders to work. Diligence and halal earning are seen as a prayer especially in religion and therefore, it is possible to take the effects of religious norms into consideration. In addition, it is to be stated that distant and indecisive aspects of the attitude of economic ethics are effective in working and earning in Sufi culture.

Proverbs handed down from generation to generation indicate the attitude of society toward life, its mentality and world of meaning. Economic ethics in the proverbs of Turkey Turkish has an attitude toward the world. The purest and the most original statement of any culture related to problem of economic ethics can be inferred from proverbs. Indications of a society's view of life can be seen in the proverbs with this aspect. Moreover, proverbs reflect the dominant manners, attitudes and cultural patterns of the society in which people maintain their life. In this study, the author tries to identify some signs about understanding of economic ethics peculiar to Turkish culture itself by the help of proverbs in Turkey Turkish. After discussing economic ethics as an attitude toward the world on conceptual basis, proverbs from Turkish culture and with the influence of Sufism will be dealt.

1. Economic Ethics as an Attitude toward the World

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The common understanding of ethics in a society should be taken together with social values and value judgments. An individual should be evaluated with the society s/he lives in, and different societies with the cultural qualities coming through the past. According to this approach, concept of culture is a determinant factor for societies. As the individual is an element of society, evaluation of individual's values about any subject and attitudes developed toward any concept regarding the culture s/he lives in will enable to get more accurate results (Ünal and Çelik, 2010: 218).

Attitudes developed in Turkish culture toward concepts of frugality, temperance, diligence and halal earnings are evaluated in terms of economic ethics in the boundaries of this study. Economic ethics, which Max Weber brought in language of sociology, is defined in various ways. Economic ethics shows impulses and factors of economy resulting from society's system of moral-religious-ethical beliefs and values (Günay, 1986: 113-114) while it explains the whole of statements and idioms about judgmental value provisions such as "that's right" or "that's wrong" on our daily manners and behaviors. Evaluation as right or wrong refers its normative quality to ethical system's expression of itself in particular patterns instead of an introverted discipline of will. Economic ethics can be defined as collective expression of factors and motives leading to have an attitude against world relations. In this sense, economic ethics means sum of suggestions and motives for the practical values and preferred dimensions in regulating the daily life of

people (Ülgener, 2006: 19-21). Özkiraz (2000: 129) defines economic ethics as collective expression of norms and behavioral rules to be obeyed or performed.

According to Weber (2002: 340), since economic ethics system pointing at motive of act on psychological and pragmatic basis of religions is not a simple form of economic organization, there are a lot of determinants of economic ethics systems. It isn't possible to explain economic ethics system, an attitude against world, directly depending on religious or ethical factors. Lifestyle influenced by religion is formed with economic and political factors in certain geographical, political and social boundaries. It is necessary to accept religion as one of the determinants of lifestyle. Religious factor is just one of the determinants of economic ethics, too. Ülgener (2006: 7) states that it is impossible to get together the factors maintaining ethical and mental world through history in only one group. Weber (1999: 77) indicates that it isn't thought that efforts to get worldly things don't have an ethical value. The fine line between economic ethics and tendency in worldly things lies in fact of value because worldly things begin to have a value with religion, belief and an ethical value. Religiousness affects individual qualities such as work ethics, honesty and thriftiness, and thus the economic performance. Weber put forward that religiousness, an independent variable in protestant ethics, affects economic results by encouraging qualities such as work ethics, honesty, reliability, thriftiness, benevolence and hospitality (McCleary and Barro, 2006: 49-51).

Approach in Turkish culture to work and earn formed a different understanding of economic ethics from capitalist understanding. Weber focused on Protestant ethics in emergence and development of capitalism in Europe; however, it is significant to evaluate economic situation of the West in its own historical and socioeconomic process. It should be emphasized that religion ordering to work, a culture inculcating saving, past experiences such as famine and hunger in addition to Sufi culture are effective in formation of historical social codes of meaning. Çelik (2003: 671), who points at the necessity to evaluate according to context, states that distortion may occur instead of reality when context is not taken into account. He also indicates that evaluations peculiar to culture are required in evaluation of different historical phenomenon and social worlds. Economic ethics in Turkish culture should be evaluated in its own context. Ethical approaches, for instance, turn into pragmatism in approach of Benjamin Franklin, who was effective in formation of basis of capitalist understanding. Diligence, punctuality and temperance are a virtue and also useful because they provide us with credits in society (Weber, 1999:45).

According to Ülgener (2006: 8-31), economic ethic in Turkish culture marked all stratum of society due to its connection with religion. However,

it is more significant that religious inculcations should be made by conceptualizing in a simple and sincere atmosphere of monasteries and sects rather than abstract dogmatic patterns. It is possible to say that an economic ethics peculiar to Turkish society has developed. This kind of economic ethics doesn't mean a "capitalist" economic ethics in Weber's understanding. On one hand, there is a danger of going away from the path of God for the goods of world and ascetism and fasting against worldly things; on the other hand, there is the acquisition of property which is an indispensable means of maintaining a modest life. Economic ethics, an effort to balance between two factors in terms of religion as a relation with world in the sample of Turkish society, is a statement of internal feud in a matter-environment-time relation to meet the needs no matter what time and environment economic ethics belongs.

Günay (1986: 116-124) states that ethics of a society differs in various periods of that society and thus, factors affecting the formation of economic ethics are in a downward or upward degree of effect according to these periods. In this sense, it can be asserted that types of economic ethics in different periods of history take forms according to social, cultural and religious contexts and goes up and down according to periods. It is possible to mention that there are close and complicated relations between religion and economic ethics and actions, and almost all the religions have an economic ethics and attitude against the world. Balanced attitude of Islam against world and afterlife brings out a remarkable situation. That is, Islam accepts and confirms world life conditionally and what is real is afterlife happiness and world life is an exam to achieve this happiness in Islam. However, that doesn't mean denial of world life and wealth. A Muslim is required to be moderate in his attitudes toward world and afterlife, have a balanced way and work for both this world in case he never dies and afterlife in case he dies tomorrow. This shows that economic ethics with religion brings about economic development or it can be a factor blocking economic development.

It is possible to describe the value taken by Sufi belief into work life as ethics. It is also seen in economic ethics. According to Ünal and Çelik (2010: 231), a society's level of economic development is influenced by a good deal of factors such as historic and social processes of a society, geographic location and knowledge. However, when other factors are taken stable, it can be stated that having a strong work ethics will have a positive effect on this point. What is mentioned here is not an understanding of work ethics depending on a particular religion. Each society developed a specific understanding of work ethics and different attitudes toward working. It shouldn't be expected that they have a full correspondence to each other. Depending on current conditions, those understandings may be in a state of flux in each society for same or different reasons.

Effect of religion and Sufi belief on economic institutions in Turkish-Islamic geography cannot be ignored and nor can the effect of Islam on roots of work ethics. For instance, effects of Islam can be seen in organization and working of ahi community and trade guilds. Morals of ahi community had functions in four basic areas: economic, social, politic and military. It had important roles in formation of socioeconomic system in Anatolia. Organization and working of ahi community and trade guilds are not far from this reality. Understanding of ascetism and piety in Turkish language is defined “a cardigan, a bite”; in addition, aspects of Sufi culture about economic ethics are between two ends when it is considered that economic ethics in Sufi culture appears as a seeking of balance and expression of an internal feud. For this reason, it is not possible to take economic ethics as one-dimensional.

2. Reflections of Economic Ethics on Proverbs and Signs of Sufi Culture in Proverbs

It should be indicated that economic ethics is an element of culture while studying reflections of economic ethics on proverbs. Culture is the whole of people who live together and have spatial, temporal and associational connections between each other and the whole of knowledge that those people get from their ancestors, use in their life, transfer to the generation succeeding them and share together (Ünal and Çelik, 2010: 219). It is the historic and social context to form and enrich the culture which is composed of patterns. Proverbs have a context just as economic ethics has a social ethics. Various researchers (Arewa, 1970: 430; Yankah, 1989: 336) emphasize the “context” of proverbs and socio-cultural context reveals the message, logical frame, reality and each of images in proverbs (Başgöz, 1993: 130). According to Yılmaz (2000: 137), proverbs and idioms which are cultural products involve, in a secret way, the original understandings about life-related basic problems of the culture they are in. Carr (2003: 11) states that, in relation to socio-cultural context, work activities or ethical work efficiency varies according to social context of factors such as country, region, sector, work size and historical period. Proverbs, defined as aesthetical form of traditional communication, point at first verbal form of human-specific speech act by being compiled throughout the world, and they are full of observations concerning the culture they are produced in (Ong, 2003: 21; Yankah, 1989: 343).

As verbal cultures use the concepts according to context and in the frame of associational relation which is very close to life of living people, the concepts are not generally abstract. Contexts of use of proverbs that are products of verbal culture show that proverbs explain events and situations. They make explicit the ambiguity in events and situations and make events concrete. It is also indicated that same proverb may explain very different

situations and refer to different categories of meaning. They make norms concrete and are core of mental behavior which is socially adopted in the situation (Siran, 1993: 227; Lieber, 1984: 437-438).

Proverbs, passed from generation to generation in verbal culture, live in collective memory. They are an important indicator in that they explain a culture's way of thinking, perception and behavior patterns for the events. Behaviors, ideas and emotions of the individual in society will be influenced by this element of culture in which he grows up. There is no need to make practical observation and experiment with proverbs because they come into existence both in a mutual interaction according to their historical, social and cultural qualities and as a result of experiences of ages passing from past to today. In this context, proverbs are stereotyped statements adopted and used commonly by society. Their trueness is unquestionable and they are accepted as an authority by people. They provide people with short and practical suggestions about what to do in case of events and problems or how to interpret these events (McKenna, 1974: 377). According to Gökdayı (2008: 102), proverbs are used as stereotyped language units. Use of proverbs happens in a context. They can be used in every place and situation in daily life if they are considered to meet their function. One can make the situation concrete by the help of proverbs when he evaluates an event, takes a lesson from a situation, gives a moral advice, guides someone or, in short, sums up an event or situation.

As proverbs are statements of certainty showing life philosophy, in other words, view of world of a society, it can be found in proverbs how that society sees life or which social rules and principles are to be obeyed (Çotuksöken, 1983: 9). Proverbs explaining themselves with cultural forms in social environment help people have some kinds of judgments, beliefs, opinions, attitudes and behaviours while they play a preventing role in some others (Esen and Yılmaz, 2011: 251).

In this study, proverbs in Turkey Turkish were grouped generally in aspects of temperance, frugality, thriftiness, halal earnings and diligence in terms of economic ethics. These aspects give an idea about view of life of Turkish society in economic issues.

2.1. Proverbs about Temperance

Having an economic income and balance in maintenance is the first of attitudes of economic ethics. As a first aspect, proverbs suggesting temperance in ideas and words as well as behaviors and all actions are determined. Proverbs such as "stretch your feet according to your blanket (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 245), "He who pull in one's horn in fortune's lap, takes things easy on the rock" inculcate being temperance. The proverb "they asked the heritage where it was going. "To the prodigal tells" that what is

ready ends quickly while another proverb “a small gift comes from the heart; a big gift from the purse” shows the necessity to be balanced.

2.2. Proverbs about Frugality

Frugality is illustrated in these proverbs: “don't rely on wealth, become hard up for money”, “snow does not last long in heat” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 207), “he who lights a candle in the daytime will not have it at night” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 245), “he who makes his bread fit to his cheese does not rely on others” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 245), “inherited wealth is soon dissipated” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 226), “there is no boasting with one's mother and father”, (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 63), “stew in your own grease” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 232), “he is rich who asks nothing of others” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 225).

2.3. Proverbs about Thriftiness

These proverbs emphasize the necessity to make savings: “the white coin is for the black day” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 245), “little drops produce a shower” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 245), “Make hay while the sun shines”. He who does not appreciate one, cannot get one thousand (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 91). The proverbs “wealth makes one feel like making love; poverty, like quarrelling (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 226) inculcate to be wealthy while the another one “possession is a bit of one's being” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 213) tells the necessity to have possessions to maintain life and to earn to leave a legacy. “let it be your own fire, though smoky; let it be your own bread, though chaffy” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 220), “you cannot cook your meal in another man's pot (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 220), “if you look after it, it will be a vineyard; if you do not, a mountain (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 213), “it is difficult to save the pennies, not the gold” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 245).

2.4. Proverbs about Diligence

Diligence is frequently emphasized in Turkish proverbs as one of the virtues. Following proverbs suggest diligence especially to the young and strong people and they are advised that working at young ages is the insurance for the old ages: “the cauldron of the one who does not work does not boil” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 247), “the working iron does not rust” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 262), “without sweat pouring down from your forehead, your pocket does not overflow” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 247), “the fast horse increases his own food” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 225), “he who sweats in summer, will have meals in winter” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 247), “to work without pay is better than sitting idly” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 161), “look at the ant-prepare for the winter in summer” (Muallimoğlu, 1990:247), “he who did not burn in the sun does not appreciate the shade” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 65), “idleness is the root of evil” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 161).

2.5. Proverbs about Halal Earnings

Plenty and frequency of proverbs in a language with a religious content is the indicator of how much important the religion is in lives of people and society. As religion is a life system, proverbs produced on the basis of this system reflect the life with its all aspects and details and guide people in family and society life (Alkayış, 2011: 291). Halal earnings is inferred from these proverbs: “That which comes from a prohibited source goes to the prohibited” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 128), “ill-gotten gains cannot be structure”, “ill-gotten gains cannot do something” “oily food cannot eat with halal earnings”. The proverbs above suggest the necessity for halal earnings and improbability of achievement with ill-gotten earnings. In addition, halal earnings helps maintain a moderate life as indicated in the proverb “oily food cannot eat with halal earnings”.

Proverbs reflect culture and, as religion is an element of culture, it is possible to see signs of religion in proverbs. Signs of pillars of faith, known as “Amentü” among Muslims, in Turkish proverbs were tried to study and in the end, it was revealed that, among Turkish proverbs, there are proverbs reflecting religious understandings of Turkish Muslims (Yılmaz, 2007).

2.6. Proverbs with Sufi Culture

Another context of proverbs is in the aspect that Sufi culture reflects on proverbs. As Sufi understanding is effective in understanding of economic ethics, proverbs with influence of Sufism appear in Turkish language. In addition to the fact that understanding of ascetism and piety in Sufism is expressed as “a cardigan, a bite” in Turkish, it is possible to state that Sufi culture doesn't have one dimension in economic ethics because proverbs with influence of Sufism have many dimensions from Sufi culture to attitude toward world and having possessions. A difference in approach is identified between “laziness” and “not being ambitious” as to what is to be understood from being “satisfied” in mentality with influence of Sufi culture and reflections this mentality has on proverbs. The approach showing understanding of economic ethics influenced especially by Sufism is defined as “seeking of balance and expression of internal feud”.

It is possible to study the proverbs with influence of Sufism as follows: it is meant by the opinion in the proverbs “that a place to accommodate, a work to maintain life and a true friend will keep life in order, and therefore, the proverb “a coat and a friend are enough for me” (Gölpınarlı, 1977: 275-276) that there is no need to steal. It is seen in the proverb “I found today, I will eat today. Tomorrow? Well, God is great” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 91) that one has no problem when he survives by little and the proverbs “God will increase the guidance of the already guided” (Gölpınarlı, 1977: 21), If god decides to make one rich, he sends by strangers, by wind and by flood

(Muallimoğlu, 1990: 225) and “God builds a nest for the homeless bird” (Gölpınarlı, 1977: 130) that there is a surrender and belief in God as well as a state of laziness. “Contentment is an inexhaustible treasure” (Muallimoğlu, 1990: 91). But in Turkish proverbs with influence of Sufism such as “the lazy Christian becomes a friar; the lazy moslem becomes a dervish” (Gölpınarlı, 1977: 89), there is a critical view on dervishes and emphasis on importance of diligence. On the contrary, temporality of worldly things is indicated with the proverb “there is owner, there is proprietor, where is that have first dibs on something? Goods and possession are temporary. Pour oneself into something” (Gölpınarlı, 1977: 221) while it is stated in the proverb “the hand that gives is above the hand that takes” (Gölpınarlı, 1977: 350) that one has to have properties to help others. “When there are too many words, there are lies; when there is too much money, there is sin” refers to dispraise of having properties in case they are ill-gotten. Besides, it is seen in the proverb “property is both the friend and the enemy of the possessor” that there is a distantiation to be a man of property and an approach-avoidance conflict. However, the proverb “wealth whitewashes defect” (Gölpınarlı, 1977: 226-27) means that property hides one’s defects and having property is a significant approach even in Sufism. As seen above, there are a lot of dimensions of an understanding known as “a cardigan, a bite” in our daily life.

Conclusion

In this study examining reflections of economic ethics on proverbs used in Turkey Turkish, it was researched whether or not the proverbs inculcate Turkish people with an economic ethics and motives of economic ethics in the proverbs with influence of Sufi culture have one dimension. It was seen that proverbs inculcate Turkish people with an economic ethics and motives of economic ethics in the proverbs with influence of Sufi culture are not one-dimensional. Firstly, in the study, the proverbs which inculcate economic ethics pointing at the sum of motives for practical value and preferred dimensions in regulating life of people were studied and they were categorized according to qualities in Turkey Turkish such as frugality, thriftiness, diligence and halal earnings. After that, the proverbs in Turkish with influence of Sufism were examined.

For that reason, information about economic ethics as an attitude toward world was given and how it reflects on people’s lifestyles was focused at first. To illustrate reflections of economic ethics on proverbs, the examples from dictionary of proverbs were given in groups such as temperance, frugality, thriftiness and halal earnings. Regarding the presupposition that attitudes, ideas and beliefs reflect on language, how economic ethics is expressed in proverbs was illustrated through the examples chosen among the proverbs in Turkey Turkish.

Signs of Sufi culture were observed in the proverbs with influence of socio-cultural context and Sufism defined as “a cardigan, a bite” means laziness in economic ethics approach. It was also determined that this approach is not one-dimensional. Laziness, temporality of worldly things and getting by on what’s in hand are suggested in economic ethics approach of Sufi culture; moreover, diligence is regarded important by emphasizing that lazy Muslims become dervish. It is stated that givers will be superior to takers and it is necessary to work and have more than need in order to be a giver. In addition, the proverb “wealth whitewashes defect” tells that men of property cannot be blamed and properties can cover mistake.

Attitudes, ideas and beliefs about economic ethics reflect on individuals’ verbal statements and view of life. As proverbs are stereotyped expressions continuing to exist through an inheritance from generation to generation and reflect common opinions of a society, it is possible to state that proverbs have signs as to economic ethics, inculcate Turkish people with an economic ethics and understanding of “a cardigan, a bite” in proverbs with influence o Sufi culture are not one-dimensional.

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