

## **Tradition, society and the concept of honor: stories on implementation<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

*This article tries to explore the many sides of traditional and patriarchal mentalities in Turkey regarding women and honor. It will discuss the importance of patriarchal implementations of power that construct gender and gender's function amongst traditional or tribal communities in the southeast of Turkey. We will also examine the sovereignty of the hegemony of the male perspective in these societies' value systems. In spite of the regional, economic and social diversity of Turkey, it is clear that religious values, regional traditions and ethnic beliefs all influence the construction of female gender roles, producing many similarities concerning the social status of women throughout Turkey's south-eastern and eastern rural areas. These gender constructions establish very serious segregations and inequalities within the public/private field in the name of "honor." Through legal codes, tribal laws, customs or traditional arrangements, we can witness the patriarchal dominance that occurs in the case of male-female relationships. The women who have suffered under these patriarchal constructions of gender tell stories of suppression and violence under the real side of honor. The women's stories presented in this article are from Kardam's (2005) study and KAMER's (Women's Center) report books (2005, 2006), which provide copious real-life examples of violence against women in the name of honor.*

**Keywords:** Honor killing, patriarchy, women, traditional values, tribal communities

### **Introduction**

There are close similarities between women's status, gender positioning and role models or role meaning in Middle Eastern or Muslim societies (Mernissi, 1977; Khan, 2006; İlkkaracan, 2004:11-32). This similarity or closeness cannot be explained by religious beliefs alone, because we cannot establish any standard implementation of gender construction and sexuality in all Muslim countries. For instance, we can see significant differences between perceptions of women in Muslim African societies

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and Iranian society (Faqr, 2001; İlkkaracan, 2004:12; Abdo, 2004:58-60; Haeri, 2004:153-62; Shaaban, 2004:175-93). The concept of “honor” (in Turkish: “*namus*”) itself is one of the main subjects of gender debates in Turkey. The act of killing in the name of “honor” unavoidably lead us to a discussion centered on the concepts of patriarchy, women and virginity, which have been dominated by male thought (Parla, 2001). Additionally, the perception of “honor” consists of those three aspects (patriarchy, women and sexuality), which are vague, uncertain, and varying terms (Mernissi, 2004:103; Khan, 2006; Jafri, 2008).

The analysis of the social background of “honor” as a cultural concept provides a foundation for understanding the fatal consequences of certain cultural traditions in Turkey (Kardam, 2005; Koğacioğlu, 2009; Onal, 2008). Firstly, we must establish that honor killings are not specifically related to only one ethnic group, region or social group. It has been well documented that these tragedies exists in other parts of Turkey, in big cities, in other countries, and in diverse communities throughout the world (Blok, 2001; Wikan, 2008; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2004; Abu-Odeh, 2004; van Eck, 2003). For instance, violence against women is frequently reported in the media, and such crime is not restricted to rural populations and can also be seen in big cities throughout the country. There is no effective difference between rural-traditional and modern social environments. However, it should be added that there are differences in implementation. However, this reality has always been deflected and veiled with traditional instruments in the societies in which honor killings occur. The media and entertainment industries have helped to bring visibility to this issue, but misrepresentations can occur when this subject is presented on television series, novels and films. The notoriety of “honor” crimes, although assisted by these industries, is deeply and fundamentally rooted in the communal patriarchal structure of rural communities, masculine mentalities, and other local values, which are reflected in these concrete cultural and historical subjects (Tillion, 2006; Kandiyoti, 1977; Blok, 2001; Khan, 2006; Hatty, 2000).

### **Traditional social context**

Turkey’s modernization process has been conducted by bureaucratic and military initiatives for the past two hundred years. The many different modernization efforts conducted by both the Ottoman Empire and the young republic were very similar in terms of implementation (Kandiyoti, 1977:58). They had significant effects on Turkish social structure. During these modernization processes, until recent decades the existing social structure’s dynamics have always been dominant, despite the efforts of Western-educated intellectual elite. Rather than the ideas of the intellectual elite, the greatest transformations in agrarian and peasant life were in fact caused by World War II (the Marshall Plan in particular), an external influence and one that had a far more significant impact on social change. Peasant populations began to migrate en masse from rural to urban areas after the 1950s, and this migration continues today, though the rate has varied over time. The migration of peasants, who settle in urban shantytowns (in Turkish, “*gecekondu*”), is responsible for many changes in Turkey’s social structure (Karpat, 2003). A further factor in this rural-urban migration was the forced evictions that accompanied the ethnic tensions of the 1990s.

In this socio-historical context and process, eastern and southeastern Anatolian has also witnessed striking changes in their various ethnic relationships and semi-feudal cultural structures (Çağlayan, 2007). In fact, this is especially true for the rural areas in these regions, which are still largely underdeveloped and undereducated. Religious beliefs among the rural population are stronger than in many other regions

of the country. The social structure of these regions is also characterized by traditional/semi-tribal values, close kin and consanguineous relationships. Despite internal migration, modernization and periods of violence, eastern and southeastern Turkey still maintain strong traditional community patterns (Yalçın-Heckmann, 2006). Within this semi-feudal or social context, the notions of woman and "honor" are important concepts in understanding the cultures in these regions, and how they construct gender, patriarchy, and sexuality through a woman's body and her virginity.

### **General patterns of family and kinship structures**

It is possible to say that traditional peasant/rural social (or semi-feudal) values are more powerful than the forces of "modernization" or legislation in eastern and southeastern Turkey. Despite the violent conditions of the past 25 years, resulting in mass forced migrations from rural to urban areas and from East to West, the social characteristics of village and peasantry relationships still exist in urban shantytowns along with the poverty, and the transformation of traditions in the urban environment. As a general assumption, dominant patterns of social structure in these regions can be characterized by extended family relationships, crowded patriarchal kinship ties, and a semi-feudal mentality, which persist in all female-male definitions (Yalçın-Heckmann, 2006:253-67; Yücel, 2008). There are also nuclear families in both regions, just as there are in other regions of Turkey, but even these modern families cannot escape the dominance of traditional relationships in efforts improve their economic and educational conditions.

As we know, division of labor in patriarchal extended families persists across all ages and both genders with the support of tribal or clan behaviors in rural/peasant societies. Male and female is defined according to age and sex (Schlegel, 1991; Coltrane, 1992). These roles are predetermined at every stage of life, as established by society or the community. All of these mechanisms have been constructed to control a woman's body and her sexuality as "secondary" or subsidiary (Berger and Wenger, 1973:666-8). Role transfers and role models that begin in early childhood reinforce, particularly for women, the precise boundaries and exact borders in society. Community value systems continuously consolidate these structures via strong social instruments. The individuality of a woman depends on the nature of her dependency on her husband, father or other males in the patriarchal establishment in which being a man has its own advantages and privileges (Faqr, 2001; Baxi et al., 2006; Blank, 2008). In fact, there are no individuals, regardless of sex, in the traditional social structure; instead, there is a total identity that includes families or kinship groups as a carrier of all values and rituals. It is extremely difficult to escape from this communal framework as a singular individual, but it becomes nearly impossible for a woman to escape due to the absence of economic and social independence.

"Honor" is a heavy burden of responsibility given to members of the community, tribe, family or clan to protect (Schlegel, 1991; Hatem, 1987:812-3). This honor, of course, generally exists within and is represented by the female body, her sexual activities in particular. A woman's life, from childhood and continuing into maturity and finally during old age, first depends on her father and other male members of the family, then (after marriage) the control of her husband and his relatives (Chakravarti, 2005:308-27). These mechanisms of control upon a woman and her body dominate both her marriage and all her other relationships.

Women are transformed into bearers of the public identity of the community that takes the family, kinship group or tribe's values as common representative objects. These confining conditions keep women in secondary positions and also cre-

ate contradictions and paradoxes within traditional mentalities. Women exist as the weakest point of the tribal society and often become the victims of violence when the community's expectations are not met. As noted earlier, the woman's role is defined by and depends on the male members of society. A woman (with men, of course) is responsible for her family or tribe's "honor." Consequently, even the perceived failure of a woman to realize the established female role may induce punishment, and mechanisms of violence may come into play.

"Honor," while an extremely important concept for society, can be mysterious and enigmatic during its implementation. There is an absence of a common and unique definition of "honor" in the traditional values system, which results in many contradictions, restrictions and punishments. It is not possible to present a standard definition of honor, its implementation or its approach to gender (Mojab, 2004:15; Sen, 2005:47-8). This ambiguity is due to cultural and regional differences. However, despite these differences, women are always subordinate to the male and imprisoned by the constraints of household duties and the role of motherhood. Honor is also closely related to appropriate female sexual behavior as defined by the respective kinship groups and tribal values. Honor has a key function not only in rural areas and amongst peasants or tribal communities, but also between individuals who have migrated and live in urban areas. Therefore, the idea of honor is related to a society's general class, culture and education. Despite the different interpretations of "honor" among different societies and cultures, there is an only one way woman to escape the confines of this values system: participation in the modern education system and raised self-awareness – as was the case in Italy (Bettiga-Boukerbout, 2005).

### **Virginity, women and sexuality**

Female sexual behavior is not only significant in rural areas of eastern and southeastern Turkey; it is also important and significant for all ethnic groups within Turkish society (Kandiyoti, 1977:58-60; Parla, 2001:66; Cindoğlu, 2004; van Eck, 2003). Explicit sexual contact, traditionally, has been forbidden for females until marriage, as are most other relationships and interactions with males (Pope, 2004:101-3). A woman's virginity is considered to be her and her family's most important asset (Blank, 2008; van Eck, 2003). In order to protect this value of virginity, there are many taboos and rules, both explicit and implicit, for women and their relatives. These regulations and their implementations can be observed, not only in eastern and southeastern Anatolia, but also throughout Turkish society – and in other societies as well (Cindoğlu, 2004:117-9; Jafri, 2008). However, on the other hand, there are no restrictions to male sexual behavior and experience, which may occur before marriage, although this same behavior is prohibited for women. We can say that the masculine rule holds key importance in the case of honor killings. The double standard inherent in traditional attitudes holds power over the female and her every physical activity, from clothing and interactions with relatives or non-relatives, to behavior, body language, speech, etc.

This blatant double standard is a fundamental aspect of the traditional community. "Honor" as conceptualized by the community becomes embodied in the female members of society, specifically through the "purity" of their sexual organs. This serves to define females through their sexual relationships, while reducing them to the status of "other" and restricting their individuality. This observation not only demonstrates the social-cultural patterns of the patriarchal mentality, but at the same time it points to the psychological "obsession" with the female body of the male subconscious.

### What does the concept of an 'honorable woman' signify?

Men's views in Turkey concerning women vary by region and in accordance with other factors, as noted earlier. However, rapid social change, cultural transformations, migration to urban areas, education and NGOs emphasizing gender issues and honor killings are bringing new perspectives concerning the concept of honor. According to typical, male-dominated expectations in Turkey, a female should keep her virginity until her wedding, ensuring that her first sexual experience is with her husband (Cindoğlu, 2004). A woman is constricted by her honor and is always under the control of her father, brothers or husband. After marriage, this circle of control grows to include her husband and his relatives, as well as the woman's male siblings (Chakravarti, 2005). Any "bad" or "dishonorable" behavior on the part of a woman must be reported to all of her kinship groups or family by her husband. This is because honor belongs to both sides of the woman's family, equally. One of a woman's first duties is - regardless of whether her marriage was voluntary - the offering of her virginity as a "gift" to her husband. This is an obligation of an "honorable" woman according to traditional society (Gay y Blasco, 1997).

In most traditional Muslim, Mediterranean, or Middle Eastern societies, the definitions of gender roles are not simply related to the society's economic conditions. With all cases we can argue that there are many attitudes underlying these sexual roles, which serve to reinforce the patriarchy. Thus, the notions of "honor," virginity and sexuality has a complex set of factors contributing to their construction (Bettiga-Boukerbout, 2005; Pimentel et al., 2005). The concept of the "honorable woman" does have a meaning that changes according to a woman's age. But we can say that, in principle, and according to traditional values, an "honorable woman" is one who has protected her virginity until her marriage (Gay y Blasco, 1977:529; Berger and Wenger, 1973:667) and who has avoided all behavior that could be seen as "sexual" except toward her husband. Ironically, the restriction, prohibition or suppressing of women's sexuality affects every human behavior that could be related to or interpreted as "sexual" in these traditional societies. This mentality defines any male/female interaction as sexual by its very nature. Therefore, these patriarchal, tribal and semi-feudal values system qualifies any usual human interactions between men and women (such as speaking, meeting, greeting, looking at one another or smiling) as sexual acts. Defining women exclusively through their sexuality, which is controlled and defined by a patriarchal mentality, reveals deep paradoxes. "Honor" and morality are more complex in traditional communities, and both "immorality" and "dishonorableness" refer to the same concept, one embodied in a woman's sexuality.

Nevertheless, and despite current legislations concerning women, their bodies, and the concept of honor, the power of the traditional patriarchy and the implementation of its values remain dominant, especially in rural regions of the country. A process can be observed that tolerates violence against woman in the name of honor. Despite changes in 2005, even when a woman has been raped by a man the penal code and *de facto* traditional norms can be used to accuse the woman, even though she has been identified as defenseless by others (Baron, 2006; Baxi et al., 2006:1239). This mechanism of assigning guilt to the individual embodying the "honor," always a woman, underlies the practice of honor killings in which the male executor of the violence is found not guilty and the female exposed to violence is found "guilty." Through this traditional assignment of guilt we have become familiar with many types of violence, such as honor killing and even forced suicide (the latter an unanticipated response to changes in the penal code), all of them carried out exclusively

against women. A number of interesting practices have developed in response to these repressive structures. For example, in urban areas, some women among the upper or middle classes undergo *hymenorrhaphy* (or *hymenoplasty*), a surgical procedure that repairs the hymen, thus 'restoring virginity.' These operations take place in private gynecology clinics and are attempts to avoid being labeled "dishonorable" by husbands and/or the community (Cindoğlu, 2004:115-30). This act may satisfy a man's demands that his wife be a virgin, but it also reveals a deep moral and ethical paradox. If a poor and uneducated woman is accused of dishonoring her society she has no way out, and could fall victim to an honor killing.

Another interesting aspect of honor killing is the way in which the legal system identifies and processes these instances of violence. Firstly, in official and police records we cannot find female deaths classed as "honor killings" or "forced suicides." Instead these acts were defined simply as "murder" or "suicide" and the usual bureaucratic procedures followed. Despite this lack of acknowledgment, many NGO activists and social scientists have expressed concerns about the increased rate in female suicides since the 1990s. The traditional patriarchal mentality supports and assists the killing of women in the name of "honor." As a result of this "obstacle," the traditional patriarchal social order seeks out different "solutions." Two of these solutions are forced suicide and the killing of women by a close male sibling below the age of accountability. The purpose of these alternative methods is to avoid punishment under the new legislation. Patriarchal values insist on the "purification" of honor through the killing of women. These values are not concerned with the justice for acts of murder or violence against these women. The most important value is compliance with traditional attitudes regarding honor, as faced in everyday life. These traditional values are significantly stronger than the newer legal codes.

In the cases of "forced suicide," we can observe the patriarchy adapting to the newer legislation in an attempt to maintain its tradition of enforcing honor codes in relation to women. In these cases, the family or close relatives of a "dishonored" woman fear punishment from the state-imposed legal system and avoid directly killing the woman themselves. Instead, they strongly advise her to kill herself. Typically, she will be given access to an instrument of violence such as a gun, knife or rope, and then secluded or locked in a place such as basement. The family will then wait for her to kill herself. These isolates, "shamed" women or girls have already been removed from society and denied social interaction or hope of a normal life because of their status as "dishonorable." Many "choose" to die rather than suffer further humiliation. Thus, police and judges have no evidence that the crime of murder was committed. Even if they want to seek justice for these women, the files are usually labeled as "suicide." There is a "silent reconciliation" between the state and the traditional patriarchy. There has been a tolerant approach towards the forced suicide in most juridical decisions until very recently. The government has implemented new and heavy punishment for forced suicide and has begun to investigate these crimes more carefully. Additionally, the media and NGOs have developed new campaigns against killing in the name of "honor" and violence against women across Turkey, the eastern and southeastern regions in particular. Because of these omissions we have no accurate statistical data concerning honor killings in Turkey. However, KAMER's (Women's Center) reports (2005, 2006) contain anecdotal and limited data regarding numerous cases of honor killings in southeastern and eastern Turkey. Kardam (2005) conducted another important study on honor killings with the support of the UNDP.

It may be said that "honor" crimes are more prevalent in Turkey's southeastern and eastern regions than in other areas of Turkey. However, these regions have experienced huge transformations. Traditional attitudes have been changing as people are

exposed to urban places and other poor conditions. However, tribal and semi-feudal mentalities have retarded changes in mentality towards women, gender and sexuality. However, there has been a pervasive trend of violence against women across Turkey in recent years, one which may not solely be involved with "honor" killing cases. For instance there was a 1400% increase in violence against women in 2009, according to the Eskisehir Bar.<sup>2</sup>

At this point the concept of "honor" should be clarified. The working and implementation of this institution as a perception has many sides and meanings amongst different people in different social, cultural and economic human geographies. As usual, the woman signifies and symbolizes the land in which the tribe, family or clan live. Soil, as the fundament of the land on which seeds, animals, etc. are raised is similar to the woman who gives birth. The female or woman with her vital importance for life is not enough; it would be insufficient without man's complementarities presence. According to this belief, the soil needs the seed and creativity of man: Without the seed (or man) woman is incomplete. Thus the man has to repulse all unwanted "seeds" from the woman's body ("soil") and has to control her purity. But this reality and the nature of the woman are not appreciated by the owner of the seed (Delaney, 2001; Welchman and Hossain, 2005:1-20). All men's prestige is built upon this protection, certainty and identifying of the seed. Only with this protection of the soil can he know the owner of the seed growing inside the woman. This reality also relates to the Neolithic agricultural revolution and the ownership of land and labor.

Thus the control of woman's all behaviors by males of community is basis of "honor." We can identify this as "patronage" (Campbell, 1976). As known, patronage acts upon a woman's body, behavior and punishment. Finally, a man, as an individual agent of his tribe, family or clan, must behave in line with the traditional punishment rules, which are established norms in his value systems.

In this paper, the focus is on stories from Turkey researched and registered by social scientists or NGOs in the country's southeast and east, only. Future studies may address this issue in other or more widespread geographies. Certainly, as discussed, it is not a phenomenon restricted to the geographies defined above.

The traditional, semi-feudal mentality and its all cultural paradigms, assumes "dishonorableness" as an inexcusable fault and a great threat to the way of life and the community. And on the basis of these assumptions this traditional mentality seeks violent retribution for this transgression. Here, we will take a closer look at the reasons behind and forms of this punishment in eastern and southeastern Anatolia.

Two studies form the basis of this analysis: Kardam's 2005 survey and KAMER's data book, both based on research in different parts of eastern and southeastern Anatolia. Kardam (2005) classifies dishonorable attitudes under several titles and provides details of individual punishments. Narrations from KAMER's report will be classified here in line with Kardam's headings.

### **When a married woman has an extra-marital relationship**

According to traditional values of honor, if a married woman has an extra-marital relationship with a man, she has to be killed by her husband and other relatives. A woman belongs to her husband in her entirety after marriage. According to traditional value systems (*töre*), a woman who has an extra-marital relationship with another man deserves to be killed (Kardam, 2005:29). This punishment can be planned with the cooperation of the woman's husband's relatives, her own brother or her fa-

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25024737/> Retrieved on 25.11.2009.

ther. This mentality accepts killing as a means of purifying honor. Another rule calls for the killing of both the woman and her lover. If the woman's current husband refuses to kill her and her lover, tribal values move to another rule in order to purify its honor. It becomes the woman's father and brother's duty to kill this woman. Should the woman's husband refuse to kill her after the incident, he too is labeled as "dishonorable" by the community.

"They do not at all forgive a married woman. Then they kill both of them, also the man I mean. Then nobody goes to court. Both of the families, on the side of the woman and the man, accept this." (Kardam, 2005:29)

In all of these stories, we can observe the people's approval of the killing and other violence committed. The tolerance and confirmation of these acts is important perpetrators of crimes in the name of "honor" in Turkey.

"They [the lover's family] also found it right. Nobody has accused anybody. Because of honor, since it is a matter of honor, if it is right and if the man is acting right, then nobody says anything. Nobody claims anything, from his [the lover's] side, I mean." (Kardam, 2005:29)

In another story, we see a different face of these social pressures. A man in prison hears gossip that his wife has had a relationship with another man. When he returns to the village after his time in prison, his first job was to kill his wife (with the cooperation of his father-in-law, her own father). Reflections on this event:

"Then, the man comes out and goes to his father-in-law... He says, 'look here, your daughter has done so and so. She is pregnant. What does she deserve?' He answers: 'This woman deserves to be killed. Whatever you say, I'm on your side.' That's what the father says... Then they sent the girl to the grave and covered everything up. The man [the lover] remained.

What does he deserve?

This time, the husband's family killed this man... Then, neither the husband, nor his father, nobody talked about this. The issue was closed. They covered it up. They cleared it up..." (Kardam, 2005:30)

In patriarchal communities honor killings may conceal incest and rape within this traditional relationship system, and of course women always suffer from these silent crimes. The following story tells us how patriarchal values can be blind, unjust and cruel to both women and men. A man propositions his sister-in-law, but she refuses and informs her husband. The husband trusts his wife, despite pressure from his family, neighbors and relatives. They told him he should kill his wife, but he refused:

"... It is very interesting do you know, nobody would say hello to this man. We walked together in the center of the village, the man greeted everybody but no one responded to him. Why? Because there was such gossip about his wife and the man still walked with dignity. This is impossible. Just because he did not kill his wife and did not clean his honor." (Kardam, 2005: 30)

"The woman, who had been raped by her maternal uncle, later willfully became involved in a relationship. She became pregnant as a result of this relationship and was able to hide her pregnancy from her family. When the time for her delivery approached, she went to stay with a relative who lived far away and had her baby



there. After giving birth, she returned together with her child. She planned to leave the baby in a mosque courtyard, but was unable to carry out her plan. She left the province where her family lives and came to KAMER (Women Center). When she came, her family was hunting her down to kill her." (KAMER, 2005:171)

"When rumors began to be spread that the woman, who was married to her paternal uncle's son, had a relationship with another man, her husband and step-brothers decided that she should be killed. The woman's husband had already gotten married for the second time a good while before and was living separately from the woman. (KAMER, 2005:182)

"When the woman's husband by religious marriage went off to the military, rumors that she was having an affair with another man began to be spread. The family of the couple decided that the woman and her lover should be killed and assigned the 14 year-old brother of the woman's husband with the task of carrying out the murder. After the woman had been shot multiple times, the villagers took her to the hospital." (KAMER, 2005:185)

### **When a married woman runs away with another man**

This is a serious and unforgiveable crime according to tribal values. As noted, a woman's whole existence is intrinsically tied to her paternal, maternal kinship ties and their patronage; this protection and "ownership" then pass to her husband and his ties. Thus all women's behavior has to be controlled and acceptable to all her patrons. Breaching these rules and eloping is perhaps the greatest "sin" in this environment, and means being without any of the protection of the ties of patronage. Elopement is an absolute crime. Both families involved behave as society expects them to. Running away is no solution in this context; ultimately, a woman's relatives will find her and kill her.

"A 19 year-old girl from Şanlıurfa was married to her uncle's son in line with regional traditions. However, she was raised in Antalya and this marriage was totally against her wishes. After a while, she ran away with her lover. However, her father and uncles found her, brought her to Şanlıurfa, tried to suffocate her with a scarf and threw her into the Euphrates. Since she could swim well she tried to act as if she was drowned and managed to remain alive until she was saved by some people and brought to police headquarters." (Kardam: 2005:31)

"The woman, who resided in Western Turkey, had been married around 15 years. She said that she experienced violence from the very beginning of her marriage. A while before she had become friends with a man via the telephone. They constantly had long telephone conversations. Her husband and her husband's family became aware of what was happening. They acted violently towards the woman. The woman told the man that she was conversing with over the telephone about the situation. The man gave the woman the name of a city in the Southeast and some addresses and told her to take her children and come to be with him. He promised that they would live together, and even get married at a later date. The woman took her children and did as the man said. However, it turned out that all of the addresses the man gave were false. The woman then understood that the man had deceived her. She applied to KAMER, saying that if she returned, her husband would kill her." (KAMER, 2005:176)

### **When a married woman gets separated or divorced**

A woman's social life can be described with two "*whites*" within semi-feudal com-

munities: the wedding gown and the shroud (Çağlayan, 2007:55). There is no way out for a woman who wants to divorce or escape bad conditions or violence. If she tries to leave, she is sentencing herself to death at the hands of her husband or her relatives (Kardam, 2005:32). Violence or unhappiness is not enough for a woman to decide to get divorced. A woman can only divorce her husband when he is dead.

“In one case, a woman who returned to her family when her husband was at military service was killed by her husband’s brother. In another case, a woman who left home and went to another city to get a divorce from her husband was killed by her 19 year-old son. In a third case a woman given as ‘berdel’<sup>3</sup> to a deaf and dumb man was killed by him after getting a divorce.” (Kardam, 2005:32)

“The woman divorced her husband because of domestic violence and then, together with her children moved in with her family. After a while she met someone who lived abroad and they began having a relationship. When her family heard about this, they decided that she should be killed, saying to her, ‘So you divorced your husband just so you could go have affairs with other men and sully our honor.’ She was going to be killed.” KAMER, 2006: 240)

### **When a divorced woman has a relationship with another man**

Being divorced does not mean freedom for a woman from network relationships. Her ex-husband or other relatives’ control her conduct. Tribal patriarchal values continue to exert an eternal influence upon these women.

“A man divorced his wife. After a few years his neighbor wanted to get married with his ex-wife. Then the man warned the neighbor by saying that if he gets married with this woman, they should go away from the village. ‘We are close neighbors, she is my former wife, if you bring her here, I will kill you.’ The man said: ‘I’ll do what I want.’ After a year, the ex-husband killed the person who had married his former wife with a gun. He was of course sent to jail. Then the Muhtar of the village called his council to a meeting and said: ‘Friends, let’s take a decision to forbid the divorced women from this village to marry anyone, whether they are their neighbors, uncle’s sons or somebody else.’ After that no such event took place. It is really not good anyway...” (Kardam, 2005:33)

“Because of the frequent violence she was subjected to at home, the woman took her children and went to stay with her family. After a while, she met and began seeing a man who was married and had children. After turning her children over to her previous husband, with whom she was still married by law, the woman ran off to another province together with the other man. They lived in that province for some time before returning to the province from which they had run away, hiding for a while in a shanty. Meanwhile, both of their families had sentenced them to death for running away and were searching for them....” (KAMER, 2006:208)

“The woman was divorced and she had relationships with other men. People around the village started to provoke her son. Then, the son killed the lover of his mother. I was in the room when the police interrogated him. I saw how the police officers were acting toward him. They were in a way praising him by saying ‘good for you; here, have a cigarette, have a cup of tea on my account,’ etc.” (Kardam, 2005:33)

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<sup>3</sup> *Berdel*: Exchange of brides between two families.

### **When a young unmarried girl has a 'relationship' with a man**

Many different types of interaction can be interpreted as "a dishonorable relationship"; there can be a sexual relationship; the boy and girl can be seen together (e.g., wandering around, meeting in a café or walking together in the street) or the girl can fall in love. All of these can be denoted as "dishonorable conduct" by her relatives (Kardam, 2005:33). But sometimes families can bargain with each other in order to reach an agreement resulting in marriage. If a woman's family is poor, then arranging a marriage may become more difficult, creating a negative and dangerous situation for the woman.

"I think the man said let's go around in the car for a while and the girl accepted this and the man brought her back to the village; this is very dishonorable indeed, how can a girl go around with a man like that... She was killed in a few weeks. The man [was killed], a year later." (Kardam, 2005:34)

"Before getting married, the woman and her husband had been friends for a long time. During that time, they lived in different provinces. The woman went to a friend's birthday party, where she was drugged and raped. When she woke up she didn't remember anything, but after some time she realized that she was pregnant. She married with her boyfriend, who was aware of the pregnancy and decided to support her in this matter. The woman was taken to the hospital where she gave birth three months after their marriage. The husband's family thus came to realize that and so they began making plans to kill her. When the husband's family members came and surrounded the hospital, armed with guns and intending to kill the woman, the hospital officials turned to the police and asked them to ensure the woman's safety as her life was in danger." (KAMER, 2006:235-6)

### **If a young unmarried girl runs away with a man**

In this category, the possibility of marriage between couples may decrease the likelihood of an honor killing. If the families accept marriage, traditional values allow for a more moderate way of responding to "dishonorable" relations between men and women. But, the economic power of a family is very important in finding a solution for the "problem."

"A man fell in love with a girl, kidnapped her and brought her here. But the girl had two older brothers; quite calamitous... He said 'I'll marry her,' had sexual relations with her and then gave the girl back to her family. And the girl was pregnant at that time. The man's family did not want this marriage because the man was married anyway and had two children." [This story recounts that both the girl and the man were killed by the girl's family.] (Kardam, 2005:35)

"That girl was engaged to the son of her uncle. On her night of henna [a special ceremony among women a night before the wedding to bid farewell to the girl and start her married life] the girl left the house and escaped to her lover. They ran away together. So in place of that girl the girl's family gave two girls to the man's family, one for the groom to be and the other one for a nephew. The girl is still not allowed to come to her father's house although he has forgiven her and did not kill her. When there is a 'berdel,' in exchange for blood, then they are not allowed to visit their families." (Kardam, 2005:37)

Honor killing also features another social reality for young people. The "youth" is a new category in terms of society's dynamics, born out of urbanization, modernization, industrialization, revised perception of the nation-state citizen, nationalism,

and mass educational movements. "Youth" is a reality in all societies that have modernized or are modernizing. But there was no such category in pre-modern agrarian societies and communities, where people were simply classified by broad age categories and by gender. Within their given category they lived as child and then, following adolescence, an adult man or woman. And their marital status was determined by their basic sexual roles; men married at fifteen, women younger. Thus people entered adulthood without experiencing youth. The category of youth evolved in the wake of the transformation of pre-modern social structures and complex modernization processes, with a new education, philosophy, and revolt against established social or political norms. Agrarian or pre-modern social systems have not been exempt from this process. The young have long been a source of power and energy but in the past this was consumed in war or other battles for feudal values. With modernity, this power became a concrete social and political one. Young people have begun to delay or resist marriage, clashing with tradition, family and the political system. The main problem is trying to reconcile the rules of pre-modern, traditional or rural/agrarian life with those of the modern era. Young people today want physical intimacy, as they have always done, but not necessarily within the bounds of marriage. Both traditional and modern ways insist on their own "truth" for female or male behavior.

Increasingly, young girls are clashing with their social environment. Refusal of the customary way of marriage and relationships are bringing women into direct conflicts with their family's members and values. And the result is often an honor killing.

#### **If a woman (married or unmarried) is kidnapped**

This category is very complex, but most of the women, regardless of consent, are deemed to deserve death. In some cases, if the victim of rape is very young, she may be married to an older man as his second or third wife ("*kuma*"). With this decision, a young girl's life can be saved.

The statements below show how people defend the murder of a woman even if she was assaulted or raped:

"... If I were in their place I would finish it.

Did the girl also want it?

No, it was against her wishes. But nevertheless I would also kill the girl... Now if the whole family is affected by this, if their dignity and honor is affected, it is better to strike it out totally rather than carrying it the whole life long..." (Kardam, 2005:39)

"The woman was raped by her maternal uncle. Her uncle threatened to kill her if she told anyone about it. Sometime later the woman met another man and had sex with him and became pregnant as a result. When her stomach began to grow, her family grew suspicious and took her to the doctor. When they found out that she was pregnant, she told her maternal aunt and her mother that her uncle had raped her. They then secretly called the uncle over and questioned him. He denied raping the woman and accused her of 'getting knocked up and trying to pass the child off' as his. The woman's family decided to kill her." (KAMER, 2006:247)

"In another incident, a young girl who was cognitively disabled was raped. The brothers of the girl offered her in marriage to the man and said that they would pay all wedding costs, all in an effort to avoid gossip. The man did not accept. They found mediators to convince him, but again he refused. In the end, they shot the

man dead. Later, they threw the girl in a water channel.”(Kardam, 2005: 39)

## Conclusion

Violence that occurs against women in the name of “honor” is expressed differently in rural and urban places. In rural areas, implementations of the killing usually occur by close relatives of woman who have labeled her as “dishonorable.” If the family or tribe does not want the "dishonorable" woman in their family to die, they may send her away to live with relatives or close friends living in a Western city of Turkey. This way, they will be rid of her shame. However, most women accused as “dishonorable” by their society are killed by their own brother.

The other reality in honor killings is forced suicide. In forced suicide, the family who forces the woman to kill herself wants to escape punishment by the state. Their main goal is to purify their “honor” according to the traditional patriarchal values dominant in their social world, despite the fact that their county’s legal system defines them as “murderers.” In this case we can witness that the power of traditional patriarchal values are much stronger than modern values. Hypocrisies, double standards and contradictions are fundamental to the social structures that result in honor killings and forced suicides in southeastern and eastern Turkey. However, the hypocrisy of patriarchal values can also be seen in other practices. Violence and an obsession with virginity (*purity*) create significant points of confrontation within patriarchal and traditional moral values, which have been constructed upon women’s bodies and their sexual interactions. Increased awareness has resulted in some progress in regard to violence against women due to the concept of honor in Turkey, but his progress has been isolated and limited. Finally, we can say that “honor” killing or crimes against women are also an urbanized modern problem in society, albeit one changed by new social environments and instruments.

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