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The Morality of Relatedness in Medium-Sized Businesses in Central Anatolia

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Introduction

One summer afternoon at Çor-Mak,¹ when the pace of work had slowed down fairly and everyone was a little bit more relaxed in comparison to the busy morning routine, Sevim the receptionist, in her late thirties, whispered to me from behind her desk, calling me over. She seemed excited and amused about what she was about to tell me, and said: ‘Do you know what happened yesterday?’ As I did not, she started narrating the incident with exaggerated gestures. First, she had received a phone call from the security guard at the factory gate asking for clearance for a young man who had come to visit Cemal Bey,² the co-owner of the factory. This was a regular occurrence; she asked who she should say the visitor was and learned that he was one of Cemal Bey’s nephews. Keeping the security guard on hold, she called Fatih, the manager and Cemal Bey’s second cousin, on the other line and told him about the visitor. Fatih, instead of replying, rushed out of his office, walked towards reception and, in a louder voice than normal, said: ‘Cemal Bey has only three nephews:³ me, Enes and Osman! There are no other nephews!’ Enes and Osman were indeed other ‘nephews’ of Cemal Bey working in his factory. Fatih was not simply stating a fact: his immediate reaction and tone revealed an apparent discomfort about what he perceived as a potential threat. In the end, Sevim told me, the visitor turned out to be a co-villager of Cemal Bey who had probably introduced himself as a nephew in the hope of increasing his chances of getting into the factory to ask for a job. Both the

visitor's attempt to fake his identity and Fatih's reaction made the incident gossip-worthy for Sevim, who was not herself related to Cemal Bey. Consumed by the thrill of the gossip, she forgot to mention whether the visitor had been allowed inside.

For me, it was yet another indication of how different degrees of 'relatedness' and 'non-relatedness' to one's employer entailed different and sometimes contradictory meanings and expectations for those involved. The visitor assumed that Cemal Bey would feel more obliged towards a 'nephew' than he would towards a 'co-villager'. This suggests that different levels of relatedness carry different sets of obligations and expectations, which then shape the job-seeking strategies of young people. However, the visitor's strategy backfired, since there were already three 'nephews' working in the factory who harboured similar expectations of being the nephew of a rich uncle, and the nephew in charge was not willing to share the pie with a fourth potential recipient. Ultimately Sevim was aware of these distinctions between different levels of relatedness but was cynical about them, reflecting her status as an outsider.

This chapter aims to elaborate on the hints revealed by this vignette and to pose questions about the content and nature of 'relatedness' and its obligations and expectations in a workplace community in the provincial Turkish city of Çorum. More generally, I try to tackle questions such as: How do employers and workers use the discourse of kinship? What does it mean to be related to an employer as either a co-villager or a nephew? Are such obligations necessarily oppressive, or could they provide a degree of autonomy as well? How and when do different social roles and interests collide or conflict? What happens when personal interests outweigh social obligations, and how does this affect people of different degrees of closeness? What constitutes the limits to these roles and interests?

Based on ethnographic fieldwork in a medium-size machine firm in Çorum between 2015 and 2016, I aim to answer these questions and explore how individuals navigate these contradictory roles between the market and the community (Gudeman 2009). I look at practices of relatedness-based recruitment and promotion, problematize the moral content of relatedness in employment relations and discuss their implications for moral economy at work. In what follows, I first provide the reader with a theoretical framework that will help me answer these questions. I then present the ethnography in two parts. The first part focuses on the discourses involved in recruiting co-villagers and distant relatives and how the actual process unfolds. In the second part, I elaborate on the life and work stories of family members, including the nephews mentioned above, in order to tackle the questions raised in the vignette.

Theoretical Framework

Theories of modernity often treat the involvement of family and other relatives in business as an anomaly in modern capitalism (Yanagisako 2002). This idea mainly rests on the ideal-typical distinction made by Max Weber (1978) between economic action and other actions that correspond to his distinction between ‘modern’ Western capitalism and other forms of capitalism. Accordingly, economic action in modern capitalism ‘is concerned with the satisfaction of a desire for “utilities” . . . which is in its main impulse oriented toward economic ends’ (1978: 63), whereas households are committed to the ‘direct feelings of mutual solidarity rather than on a consideration of means for obtaining an optimum of provisions’ (ibid.: 156). Thus, Yanagisako (2002: 21) argues that the involvement of the family and other relatives in business brings community commitments and obligations into the equation and qualifies rather as an ‘oxymoron’ in the Weberian understanding. Following this fundamental distinction, many studies have discussed the ‘persistence’ of family relations in business as doomed to disappear, since their involvement violates the primary logic of the pursuit of profit accumulation. As I will demonstrate in the following section, the protagonists in my research also seem to be caught up in a dilemma between community commitments and profit-making, which they try to balance without jeopardizing their businesses.

In the Marxist understanding, too, the concept of the ‘family worker’ is a blurred category, obscuring the social relationships involved in the antagonism between labour and capital. As Karl Marx describes extensively in *Capital* (1978), the production of surplus labour, either by decreasing costs or improving technology, is necessary to create surplus value and thus make a profit. The extraction of surplus labour lies at the core of the logic of capitalism, having been infiltrated into local communities around the globe and created the institutional framework necessary for profit maximization. However, this supposedly all-pervasive capitalist logic comes with two major pitfalls in relation to our understanding of how relations of production are constituted. First, it fails to explain the capacity of cultural processes to shape capitalism (Yanagisako 2002). For instance, a ‘family worker’ might be given extra benefits or a share of the profits without having any claim on the means of production but just by being related to the employer, who negotiates surplus value with the family worker for his/her assumed loyalty. Thus, Yanagisako suggests that the role of sentiments, desires, gender, kinship and morality in the making of both the working class and the capitalist class should be taken into account (ibid.). In my investigation of the ‘moral’ content of relatedness in capitalist employment relations, I bring in the notion of a ‘moral economy’ from the work of E.P. Thompson (1971: 79), who

describes it as ‘a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community’. At the same time, I draw on Dimitra Kofti’s (2016) reformulation and expansion of the term to include different groups such as managers, workers with different statuses and employers, who ‘situationally draw from different values derived from antagonistic and coexisting moral frameworks’ (ibid.: 438) and thereby shape the relations of production.

Secondly, while the need to extract surplus value through the production of surplus labour is evident in the Marxist understanding, ‘the same cannot be said for the mechanism involved in the production of surplus labour and its extraction’ (Smart and Smart 1993: 10). That is to say, there has been a failure to explain how workers are made to work more while being paid less. It is often the case that the reallocation of production to less developed countries and resurgent regional economies is explained by their advantage in having cheap labour costs: this is also the case for local industrial provinces such as Çorum (Demir et al. 2004; Pamuk 2007). However, as Smart and Smart (1993: 10) rightly argue, ‘it would be overly simplistic to assume that the lower wages automatically generate greater surplus value.’ Working with relatives is also understood as being based on a similar simplistic assumption. Often, those who challenge the idea that working with relatives is anomalous tend to stress its function and advantages in the formation and development of the business (Khalaf and Shwayri 1966; Capello 2015). This argument is also shared by anthropologists to some extent, though the problem lies in the treatment of family workers’ utility as a natural outcome. This approach simplistically assumes that hiring relatives automatically ensures greater surplus value or enables development and economic growth by treating family, community and kin as ‘a stable cultural resource rather than a historically situated, negotiated process that is itself continually being produced’ (Yanagisako 2002: 3).

In this chapter, as well as following Yanagisako’s approach to family, community and kin outlined above, I am inspired by the turn in kinship studies in anthropology (Peletz 1995; Carsten 2000) that approaches ‘kinship in terms of social relations among variably situated actors engaged in the practice of social reproduction’ (Peletz 1995: 366). Following Carsten (2000: 4), I use ‘relatedness in opposition to or alongside kinship in order to signal openness to indigenous idioms of being related rather than a reliance on pre-given definitions’, which makes it possible to capture co-villagers and remote relatives whom Çorum people situationally refer to as kin. By approaching relatedness as a process and ‘emphasizing local practices and discourses of relatedness, and demonstrating how these impinge on and transform each other’ (ibid.: 14), I aim to show how the different moral frameworks of people with varying degrees of relatedness situationally col-

lide and conflict in everyday economic life, when it comes to making people work more while getting paid less. In other words, the processual and broader approach to kinship brings out the complex everyday practices that play a role in extracting surplus value in a workspace where antagonistic and coexisting moral frameworks are at play.

Several anthropological studies offer detailed ethnographic analyses of how family and kinship (and its discourses) operate in relation to the formation and organization of modern capitalist businesses in both western and non-western contexts. For this chapter, I rely primarily on ethnographies that reveal the politics of kinship in the workplace (De Neve 2005); the constitution, deployment or denial of discourses on kinship among workers and employers (Dubetsky 1976; Smart and Smart 1993; Haynes 1999; De Neve 2005); 'fictive' kinship that naturalizes relations of power and domination in the context of mutual obligations (White 2000, 2004); and ideas of 'collectivism' that obfuscate the gender, ethnic and other inequalities that enable flexible forms of capitalist accumulation (Greenhalgh 1994). I draw particularly on this literature because all these studies address the question of the production and extraction of surplus labour specifically in cases where kin are involved.

My use of 'moral' and 'morality' in this chapter generally denotes traditional social norms and obligations. However, how, when and to whom these norms and obligations do or do not apply also needs to be addressed theoretically. On the whole, kinship morality is discursively invoked by employers to create a more loyal and reliable labour force. Yet when it actually comes to recruiting, promoting or laying off kin, there appear to be limits to the benefit of incorporating relatives, both for workers and employers. Bloch suggests that we differentiate between the moral and tactical meanings of kinship terms, which, when used strategically, 'may have little to do with kinship in the strict sense of the word' (1971: 80). In a later paper, he clarifies the notion of the morality of kinship further and argues that the limits to kinship morality can be estimated 'by observing the degree of tolerance of imbalance in reciprocal aspects of the relationship. The greater the degree of tolerance, the more morality' (Bloch 1973: 77). Accordingly, relationships between distant kin, friends and neighbours fall into the category of 'short-term morality' because the willingness to accept an imbalance is less and therefore easier to discard when it becomes too costly in the short run. Kinship is subject to 'long-term morality', where it tolerates the imbalances of delays and remunerations in reciprocity. According to Bloch, 'the long term effect is achieved because it is not reciprocity which is the motive but morality' (ibid.: 76).

This last point resembles James Carrier's (2018) take on the 'moral economy', where he reformulates the content of the 'moral' in economic relationships. Accordingly,

the content of these relationships accumulates over the course of time. . . . Each interaction is shaped by those that preceded it and is part of the foundation of those that follow. In this sense, those interactions are not only the content of the relationship. They also are the basis of the expectations that each party to the relationship has about the other party, about the obligations each has toward the other and about the relationship itself. (Ibid.: 23)

In both Bloch's and Carrier's arguments, the 'moral' is achieved in the long run through recurring interactions and/or tolerance, regardless of the content of the reciprocity. One could argue that when working with kin, the moral content of these enduring bonds is actually that which enables the mutuality of the often-contradictory roles of being an 'individual' and a 'person-in-community', as also prevails with Çorum's business owners. Gudeman (2009) argues that the continuous shifting between these roles would on some occasions enable market gains to be transformed into communal commitments and vice versa or would lead to tensions between these mutually dependent realms and identities. As my ethnography will also show, regardless of how long established or morally motivated the interactions are, the tensions among kin who work together can also lead to a breaking point. This is not because they are immoral but because market practices have the capacity to 'erase their contingency [mutuality] and dialectically undermine their existence by continuously expanding the arena of trade, by cascading, by appropriating materials, labour and discourse and by mystifying and veiling the mutuality on which they are built' (ibid.: 37). This is why Bloch's and Carrier's emphases on longevity in the formation of the moral component of the interaction, while having great explanatory power, overlook the importance of the content of reciprocity that prevails even in relationships established in the long term. This chapter aims to contribute to literature on the politics and morality of relatedness – a broader concept than kinship, as explained above – and on moral economy at large by showing the limits of both short- and long-term 'moral' interactions. To do so, I draw on the ethnography of a medium-size industrial firm in Turkey.

The Puzzle of Recruitment of Distant Relatives and Co-villagers at Çor-Mak

Çor-Mak started operating in the early 1990s, producing flour factory parts in a small atelier; the business was later expanded and moved to an industrial zone.⁴ Today, the factory has sixty to seventy manual workers and around ten office workers, who provide Çorum's supply chain in the flour-machine sector through subcontracting relations both locally and abroad. The owners of the factory are Cemal Bey, an ex-factory worker

and foreman from a peasant family from a village near Çorum, and Bülent Bey, an engineer educated in Germany from a family of civil servants and with roots in Çorum's notables. Differences in their sociocultural and educational backgrounds manifested in the division of labour of their responsibilities. Cemal Bey dealt with the production process and workforce control; Bülent Bey with engineering and finance. They both knew most of their workers by name, as well as the calculations and technical drawings of the machines. But Bülent Bey did not seem to know much about matters related to the recruitment, promotion and control of the workers, nor did Cemal Bey know the details of the pages and pages of advanced calculations that Bülent Bey keeps in thick files in his office. The social organization of the factory therefore owed much to this basic premise.

As part of my research, I carried out a quantitative survey that included a few questions on employing family members or relatives. When Cemal Bey filled in the survey, he initially noted that no family members work in the factory. This was within the first few weeks of my presence in the factory, so I raised this topic with women office-workers. Sevim, an unrelated worker, laughed in my face when I told her I thought that relatives did not work here. She said: 'Inside (meaning the shop floor) is full of Cemal Bey's *akraba* (relatives) and *köylü* (co-villagers). He filled the whole place with them. Ayfer here (pointing to the tea lady who was present) is also a relative of Cemal Bey.' Ayfer herself later explained that her paternal grandmother was Cemal Bey's paternal aunt. She also explained her *akrabalık* (relatedness or kinship) to other workers through her being related to Cemal Bey and his wife. However, her descriptions were too complicated to follow, as she described the different branches of a lineage that were not necessarily from the same descent line.⁵ When Sevim referred to Cemal Bey's relatives working in the factory, she used the term in a general conventional sense, not because she knew exactly who is related to whom. In fact, most of those she described were either distant relatives or co-villagers rather than close relatives. The shop floor workers, who I spoke to on their tea break, similarly said that at least 80% of the workers were Cemal Bey's co-villagers, but over the years, this figure had decreased to half. Nonetheless, it was difficult for me to differentiate close relatives from distant ones or relatives from co-villagers. This ambiguity in the use of kin terms resonates with tactical usage of kinship terms as Bloch (1971) suggested. In the case of Çor-Mak, the tactical usage of kin terms does not denote kinship roles but shows that there is a value attached to being related (not really in respect of kinship but in having a relation with or link to someone born in the same village) to the employer. This apparently leads non-related workers to distinguish themselves from their co-villagers or employees who are relatives for a reason. I will elaborate on this reason below.

Later, when I was going over the survey questions with Cemal Bey, I brought up the topic again. This time he started explaining that Çor-Mak was not a family firm: after all, he was not related to Bülent Bey. He went on to tell me about the problems of working with relatives, that they would always expect privileges and that sentiment can become involved. When I pressed him further, he half-heartedly mentioned that Bülent Bey's son, Ulaş, had joined them that year after finishing his undergraduate studies and added that Yavuz, the foreman, was his brother-in-law but was going to retire that year. He was obviously reluctant to talk about the matter, as was Fatih, the manager and Cemal Bey's paternal second cousin, who said that they preferred not to hire relatives – even his brother – because people would rely on their good terms with them and become lazy or ask for more wages. While it was a little ironic to hear a relative of Cemal Bey say this, apparently they did not want to present themselves as a company that hires relatives and co-villagers. Even though Cemal Bey, Bülent Bey and Fatih would all say on other occasions that the firm was 'like a family', they would deny the discourse and existence of any kinship between them. This was puzzling: non-related workers would point out the ties of co-villagers and kin to employers, but the employers themselves would deny it. Hiring relatives and co-villagers seemed unprofessional, especially when they had recently hired an expert on management to modernize the labour process. This management expert brought in the Weberian formulation that since the family resonates with 'mutual solidarity' to work with family members was at odds with the company's interests, a sentiment repeated by Cemal Bey as well. Yet it was also obvious that they had initially hired relatives and co-villagers, only changing their policy later on. The question is therefore two-fold: why did Cemal Bey and Bülent Bey hire relatives and co-villagers to begin with, and why did they change their policy and now deny all relations of kinship with their workers?

Paul Stirling (1965) pointed out that Turkish villagers were uncomfortable in relating to others outside their own geographical vicinity, while Mübeccel Kıray (1984) found that one third of the townsmen and two thirds of the villagers she interviewed in Ereğli would consider anyone born outside their own settlement as a *yabancı* (stranger). Even in the middle-class urban context, it is common for someone to prefer to approach a *tanıdık* (acquaintance) to get things done, or to obtain advice or aid. Similarly, Carol Delaney (1991) links her villagers' self-identification with their roots in terms of both their relations and their relatedness to one another, with a sense of ethnic superiority informing 'their desire to remain one inside, closed group, untainted and unpolluted by mixture of outsiders' (ibid.: 149). When one projects these sentiments onto the recruitment of workers in small and medium-size workplaces like Çor-Mak, it is very likely that

co-villagers and relatives turned to Cemal Bey when they needed their sons to generate a new source of income at a time when subsistence farming could no longer meet the household's expenses.

Since the 1960s, many villagers have followed a similar pattern upon arriving in this central city. Rural young men in Çorum mostly migrated to the city gradually, first leaving their wives and children in the village, perhaps commuting at the beginning, but bringing their families once they could afford a proper flat to rent or purchase. Similarly, when young men and boys dropped out of school,⁶ they were given to the industry⁷ (*sanayiye verilme*) to work with someone whom the father knew and trusted or were sent on Quran courses or to religious schools for a while before finding industrial jobs as apprentices. Kadir (35) and Hasan (43), both welders at Çor-Mak, exemplify their respective generations, as both were sent to such schools. Hasan dropped out after a short time and found a job in the industry through his acquaintance with Cemal Bey. Kadir, on the other hand, pursued a religious education and wanted to make a career out of it, but he found the courses boring and too restrictive, so he too sought a job in industry. Both have migrated to the city, bought flats with bank loans and brought their families there.

As the life stories of Kadir and Hasan illustrate, young men who dropped out of school or who were simply not interested in studying found themselves in the industry either of their own or their fathers' choices. It is hence very likely that Cemal Bey would have employed his co-villagers and relatives, especially in the first years of their start-up, in order to build up a loyal workforce prepared to work long hours for low pay and be exploited. Today, Cemal Bey describes half of his workers as coming from apprenticeships and constituting the backbone of the factory. This recruitment procedure is quite different from what Alan Dubetsky (1976) described of Anatolian migrants in Istanbul. In comparison, in Çorum, Cemal Bey recruited almost solely from among his relatively unskilled co-villagers for whom there were hardly any other job opportunities. However, he and his co-villagers had a sense of familiarity with one another, sharing primordial ties based on common geographical origins and trust and loyalty generated from these demarcated and personalized relationships, similar to Dubetsky's Anatolian migrants. At the same time, being a co-villager of Cemal Bey would still help to distinguish yourself from others, as in the logic of the strategic usage of kinship terms by unrelated workers. Only co-villagers and relatives of Cemal Bey were not truly *yabancı* (stranger) in the sense that Stirling and Kıray indicated in their respective studies.

Nevertheless, the demarcated and personalized relationships with Cemal Bey meant that employees demanded more than just recruitment. As Douglas Haynes describes employers' understandings of such relation-

ships: 'Rarely did these characterizations refer to the fairness of salary or legal benefits; instead they concerned a wide range of social considerations beyond the wage relationship' (Haynes 1999: 149). It was common practice in Çorum (and probably elsewhere) for employers to provide for their workers, one example of this being moneylending. In the later months of my fieldwork, I came to realize that one of the reasons the recruitment policy was changed at Çor-Mak was to avoid having to lend money to workers. Cemal Bey eventually told me how common moneylending had been at the factory and that almost all workers would borrow money; for instance, a sum of 5000 TRY⁸ all at once, which would be paid back in instalments of 100 TRY through deductions from their monthly wages. However, the workers' debt had increased incrementally over the years to amounts they were finding difficult to pay back. As a result, Cemal Bey and Bülent Bey wanted to put an end to the practice by shifting workers' roles from 'persons-in-community' to 'individuals', thinking what was best for the business. They did so by legally laying off workers and having them receive their legal compensation, which the workers used to pay off their debts to Çor-Mak, and then re-employing some of them, whereas others, being at the age of retirement, were forced to leave. Outstanding debts determined the limits of short-term morality between Cemal Bey and his co-villagers and distant relatives because, as opposed to the long-term morality of kinship, the short term is less moral, is less willing to accept imbalances and delays, and is easier to discard (Bloch 1973). Many co-villagers of Cemal Bey developed the manual skills for more senior jobs at Çor-Mak; some bought flats in the city, while few others who no longer wanted to remain loyal to Cemal Bey, working long hours for low pay, started their own businesses. Cemal Bey resented them because he wanted to keep skilled workers and did not mind lending money to them; in other words, he was willing to shift to a 'long-term morality' of kinship, but his motive was not 'moral' (Bloch 1973) nor was it the longevity of the relationship that both sides felt obliged to transact in the future, as Carrier (2018) describes.

Hopes and Failures of Family Members in Çor-Mak

The longer-term morality of kinship applies only to family members and close relatives who are regarded as loyal and trustworthy in the longer run and who have a greater willingness to accept a lack of reciprocity. In Çor-Mak, as is the case in many other medium or even large companies, family members and close relatives are placed in management positions or are trained to take on such positions (see Figure 5.1). One exception was the least skilled worker, Özcan. As his son-in-law, Cemal Bey felt he could

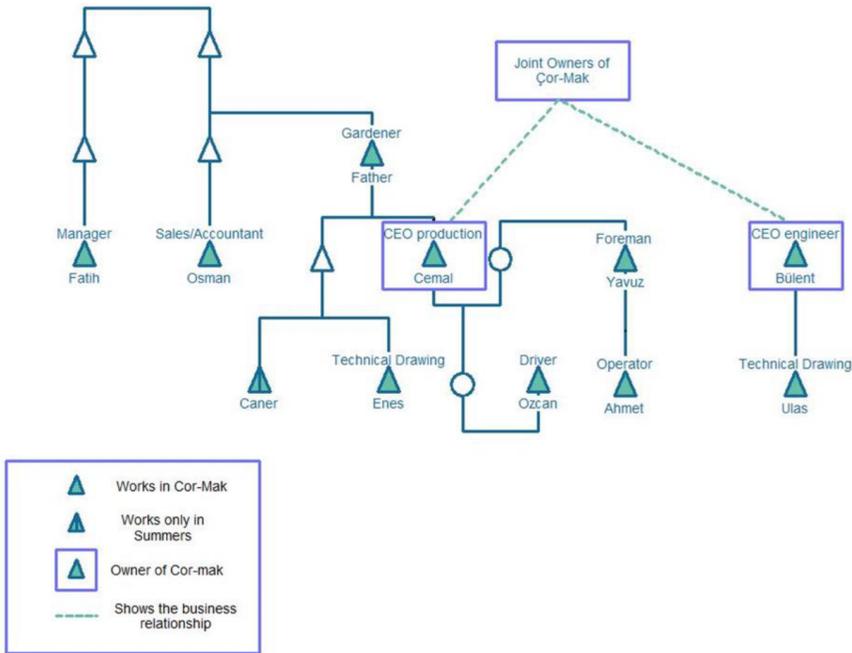


Figure 5.1. Kinship diagram of Çor-Mak. (Diagram produced by Ceren Deniz.)

not be dismissed as the provider for his daughter. By elaborating briefly on the life and work stories of three individuals who refer to themselves as the ‘nephews’, I shall illustrate how the long-term morality of kinship has benefits as well as high costs for both parties.

Fatih

Fatih is 33 years old and married with two children. He is Cemal Bey’s second cousin. Fatih started working at Çor-Mak around the age of thirteen, after dropping out of school. In his own words: ‘For nineteen years, all with patience. With patience. I never disobeyed them. I was never lazy. I did everything they asked me to do . . . and I believe I did more than they expected.’ Despite being disadvantaged by not finishing formal education, Fatih learned all the computer programs, including the 3D drawing techniques and Bülent Bey’s advanced engineering calculations, alongside the manual skills he had mastered on the shop floor. For the last four years, he has worked as the manager of the company, acting on behalf of Cemal Bey and Bülent Bey under their supervision. His work comes before everything else, and he expects the same dedication and ambition from others. At the

same time, he has a father–son-like relationship with Cemal Bey. Cemal Bey helped him with his father’s funeral and his wedding, as well as with his problems with his wife. He bought Fatih a flat, a *bağevi*⁹ next to his own, furniture for the new flat, a new laptop Fatih chose himself and an iPhone. Fatih has been paying the cost of the flat from his salary in instalments, but he does not know how much the *bağevi* cost because Cemal Bey will not tell him. Since Fatih became the manager, he demands that Enes, Osman and Ulaş work on some Saturdays,¹⁰ which he decides arbitrarily. None of them knows until noon on Friday if they will have to work or not the next day. Fatih’s moral framework is based on the values of dedication and hard work and the rules of paternalism and the authority that comes with it.

Enes

Enes is 23 years old and married. He is a classificatory nephew of Cemal Bey. He studied technical drawing at a provincial university for two years. Since his adolescence, he has been working in Çor-Mak after school and in the summer. He has been trained by Cemal Bey, Yavuz and Fatih in every step of machine production. He has also been taught to obey, to keep silent and to nod to the powerful male figures surrounding him. Enes’s memories of the early years of his employment as an apprentice in Çor-Mak are a bit bitter, especially when he talks about Yavuz, who disciplined him and other apprentices in cruel and abusive ways. He would describe the factory bells as school bells and the rules as military discipline. Nonetheless, he has a great deal of respect for Cemal Bey and Fatih, the kind of respect that is driven partially by fear and partially by envy of their wisdom and knowledge. He has the desire to become like them, a desire that includes having the power they have over others.

After he came back to Çorum from his undergraduate studies, Cemal Bey decided that Enes should work in the laser department¹¹ of the factory because there were none of ‘them’, meaning the lineage of either Cemal Bey or Bülent Bey, in that department. Enes made a few mistakes, which caused the company a substantial financial loss, plus he had a fight with his uncle Cemal Bey about being disrespectful towards his superior. As a result, he was either fired or left the factory himself – this was not clear to me – and with the encouragement of a friend he went to İzmir to work for a mining company. Separating from his uncle’s factory was a bold move, and he took risks in testing his ability to succeed in the ‘outside world’. However, in his first quarrel with his new supervisor he became very offended, could not handle being scolded by a stranger and felt lonely in İzmir. So, on a whim, he came back to Çorum, searched for a job and eventually found one, but he could not get along with the other employees there either. According to

the rumours, it was due to the insistence of his grandfather (Cemal Bey's father) that he was taken back by Çor-Mak.

During my presence there, he made several more mistakes in the technical drawing and shipping sections that meant substantial losses for the company. Each time, Cemal Bey became furious, swore at him and threatened to fire him. Enes nevertheless works very hard and in a more dedicated fashion to compensate for his failings. He is scared of making mistakes again and wants to prove himself and have a permanent position at Çor-Mak. Enes looks up to Fatih and dreams of a position like his. At the same time, he keeps his savings in Cemal Bey's account because he thinks it is safer than the banks. Moreover, he says that he does not want to lend money to acquaintances, who assume that as the nephew of a rich uncle he should have enough money to lend. He says he needs to keep it safe for the sake of his own household, meaning himself and his wife. Enes's moral framework is similar to Fatih's, but he desires autonomy for his household and wants to become the future authority and put an end to the humiliation that is so familiar to him.

Osman

Osman is in his mid-thirties and married with two small children. Unlike Fatih, he is a first cousin to Cemal Bey. He studied computer programming in a larger city of Turkey. Two years before starting to work in Çor-Mak, he owned a computer shop where he provided hourly internet usage to customers on his computers for some years. His dream was to start his own business and buy a house and a car before he turned thirty, a moral attitude shaped by the desire for stability and autonomy. Although he achieved this dream to a certain extent, by 2014 the computer shop was not making even a third of the profits it earned in 2006. Computer use was changing quickly, and Osman, lacking capital, could not really catch up with the sectoral developments. He had taken out a bank loan to buy his house and was looking for a way to pay this back without taking any more risks before he went into bankruptcy.

About that time, Fatih approached him with a job offer at Çor-Mak. The position he offered required skills in using certain advanced computer programs in which Osman had no training. Nonetheless, both Fatih and Cemal Bey believed he could manage it. Osman also felt encouraged, as he had some familiarity, he explained, having previously provided IT services to this company and also because he had kin and/or village ties to most of the workers. Yet, he could not cope with the position, so instead he was put in charge of sales and accounts. Other non-related employees who had worked there longer and had more experience in sales and accounting

were not given any priority for this position. Osman had some experience, since he had had his own business before, but he did not know the accounting programs, nor was he familiar with the materials purchased for the company. Two years on, and Osman is still struggling with his job. He is frustrated by the fact that he might be disappointing Cemal Bey and not fulfilling his expectations. He says that because he is related both to Fatih and Cemal Bey they would not lay him off or treat him the way they would treat a failing *el adamı* (a synonym for *yabancı*, outsider). Another problem is his discomfort in taking orders from his superiors and not being able to act on his own initiative; even in minor tasks he has to do what he has been told. He finds it increasingly hard to take orders from family members, whom he is not supposed to question.

Discussion

During my fieldwork, some of the most frequent answers of employers to the question ‘What do you think a good employee should be like?’ were that they should treat the job as if it were their own business, follow rules and orders and not ask for or negotiate over wages. At the same time, employers expected workers to take responsibility and be creative in problem-solving. The way they spoke about wages strongly implied that the worker should leave his or her side of the wage relationship open-ended. This kind of demand overlaps with kinship relations because they are primarily defined by mutual obligations and general reciprocity, which Jenny White described as ‘mutual indebtedness mean[ing] social relations are kept open-ended: that is without expectation of closure by a counter gift’ (2000: 132). Fatih, in this regard, is the perfect example of a ‘good employee’; he does what is expected of him in an open-ended manner and has been ambitious to develop his abilities further to be useful to the company. In return, he has been rewarded with economic privileges and offered a share of his uncle’s and Bülent Bey’s authority. However, we cannot talk about the long-term morality of kinship in the case of Fatih because no imbalances in reciprocity are tolerated, so remunerations cannot be delayed. It is rather the mutuality of business and kinship goals that are manifested reciprocally and in a processual manner. Fatih has willingly merged his identity with the interests of Çor-Mak; his financial and emotional indebtedness are interwoven. Cemal Bey has been a mentor, a ‘father’ and a ‘brother’ to him over the nineteen years of their relationship, which is more than half of his lifetime. Conversely, Cemal Bey invested in his ‘nephew’ as both an employee and his probable heir, and he needs Fatih’s dedication and skills to run his company, as he has no other successor but Fatih.¹²

As for Enes and Osman, long-term kinship morality is what keeps them working at Çor-Mak despite their failures and inefficiencies. It is indeed not the content of the reciprocity but the moral motive, as Bloch (1973) argued, and the obligation created by the endurance of the relationship itself, as Carrier (2018) suggests, that kinship/morality manifests. Enes keeps his relationship to Cemal Bey open-ended by keeping his own money in the latter's account, and he submits himself to the company and the family, as if he is not expecting a counter gift. Although he seems to be totally submissive, he struggles to obey and follow the rules. Still, for him being scolded and sworn at by his uncle is more acceptable than being ill-treated by a stranger, as shown by his decision to come back to Çorum. At least in this company he can hope to reach a higher living standard like Fatih and be given a share of Cemal Bey's authority one day, the counter-gift he is expecting. A higher living standard in which one has a position of authority, as he experienced in İzmir, is less likely to work out if he struggles with the moral codes of the kin ties he grew up with. After all, in larger cities there are plenty of other young men with similar or better qualifications. Although his story is shaped by episodes of oppressive treatment, he maintains a desire to convert his situation into some autonomy for his own household, as revealed by his sense of logic in keeping his savings in his uncle's bank account. Enes' case also shows that the long-term morality of kinship can also be discarded if there are high financial costs or disrespect, as Cemal Bey dismissed Enes once before. In both Enes' and Fatih's cases, the merger of family and company interests in individual behaviour is evidence of the paternalistic social organization of this workplace, which allows a kind of arbitrariness in decision making, such as the decision whether to work at the weekend or not. It suggests that some features of flexible regimes of capitalist accumulation are enabled by familial collectivism (Greenhalgh 1994).

Osman's situation is somewhat different from Enes and Fatih. First of all, he did not start working at Çor-Mak in his adolescence. However, he took refuge in Çor-Mak after self-employment failed due to difficulties in adapting to market changes. His high bank debts are related to his ideas of a 'good life' based on ownership, which is a very common trend among Turkish people. All of this led him to work in a 'family' business, which is familiar, yet still hard to adapt to. His problems in adapting stem first from the fact that his skills and previous work experience were secondary to the family relationship in his employers' decision to hire him. Cemal Bey and Fatih thought that Osman would 'manage' the work, whether on technical computer programs or in sales, as long as he remained trustworthy and loyal, values that are taken for granted within the family. Not only in this specific case but in other cases too, I often heard employers complain about

the lack of skilled, experienced and professional workers because they did not want to live in Çorum,¹³ even if employers offered them higher salaries. Therefore, in a context in which employers cannot recruit from a pool of skilled and experienced workers, recruiting a family member such as Osman, with a university degree and some experience, rather than someone with the same or lower skills, is preferable. In either case, the new employee will have to be trained for the specific job he has to do, but by hiring a family member the employer can expect full loyalty and dedication to the job more often than from a non-family member. Recruiting Osman was a traditional solution to a modern problem for his uncle and employer just as much as it was for Osman. As a result, both parties have fulfilled their mutual obligations as defined by the social structure and value system, and they seem to have solved their individual problems caused by the market conditions.

Another aspect of Osman's adaptation is that the ideas of meritocracy and certain freedoms to follow one's own mind are in conflict with the logics of how this company is run and the social structure in which the whole setting is embedded. Even in simple tasks employees are told to do things in certain ways by Fatih. This can be overwhelming for someone like Osman (as for any worker, but more so for related workers), who left Çorum for university studies, then came back to run his own business that eventually failed. Osman and Enes can avoid the risks of the outside world that they find uncomfortable and unpredictable and deal with the uncertainties of late capitalism by not being an '*el adami*' (stranger) to a rich uncle. By co-owning the company, Cemal Bey can act in the best interests of his family and his business. But Osman and Enes (like any other employee) can only do so at the cost of compromising their self-esteem and individuality in struggling to adapt to rules they did not create, fulfilling roles they might not be fit for and waiting patiently while working hard for the day their salaries improve and they gain some authority for themselves and some autonomy for their households.

Coming back to the reservation previously raised by scholars, that giving lower wages and hiring relatives automatically generates greater surplus value, these cases clearly illustrate that relatives sometimes actually cost more to the company, although at other times they may generate a greater surplus value by working harder, longer and in a more dedicated and loyal manner, hoping to acquire more authority and more autonomy one day. The related employees mentioned here all operated with slightly different moral frameworks. Their hopes, which fuel their hard work and dedication, are not solely motivated by the 'moral' nature of kinship or of the economic relationship that is specific to these cases. They are also a response to the volatility of the labour market, which makes it nearly impossible to fulfil

these hopes outside the ‘familiar’ setting. It is not that they did not try – it is because they tried and failed.

Conclusion

Why did Fatih become that angry when a co-villager-cum-‘nephew’ appeared at the factory gate to ask for a job? I hope the answer is by now clear that it is because the ‘fictive’ status of ‘nephew’ – a traditional kinship category a man can claim that is closest to being a brother or a son – has for Fatih been a negotiated status that has taken two decades of dedication, self-improvement and hard work. Fatih has not become ‘the manager’ just because he is a second cousin to Cemal Bey as co-owner. The case discussed here shows that, for distant relatives and co-villagers as well as family members, imbalances in reciprocity can end in discarding the relationship depending on how threatening the imbalance becomes to the interests of the company’s owners. A degree of relatedness can be a reason to hire someone at the initial stages of a firm, but merit and skills are needed for the long-term moral aspect to emerge in relationships that are less close. Even when long-term morality or the moral aspect of an economic relationship is present in kinship, as in the case of Fatih, the content of the reciprocity matters, a point that Bloch (1973) and Carrier (2018) miss in their arguments. It is rather the process of negotiation in the moral frameworks of related people and the mutuality of the goals and roles with which people identify that make the relationship work to the benefit of both business and kinship goals. This means that ‘morality’ in relatedness is not necessarily a natural component but rather a possibility to be negotiated at work (De Neve 2005). Yet, imbalances in reciprocity are still more tolerable for those family members who are not as efficient in their utility for the company, making these enduring bonds more ‘moral’. This does not mean that they are not dispensable or that the imbalance will be tolerated forever. Rather, it means that given the shortage of skilled workers in Çorum and the volatility of the labour market in the larger cities, both employers and workers are obliged to make the best of the circumstances they find themselves in.

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Notes

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1. A pseudonym for the factory generated by the author.
2. *Bey* is an equivalent of 'Mr' in Turkish.
3. They are not all the actual nephews, sons of Cemal bey's brothers, but they used the word *yeğen* (nephew) to refer to themselves, claiming a closer degree of relatedness to their employer.
4. Industrial zones were established in many provinces in the early 1980s in the framework of a state programme. The workplaces in the zones are provided with land and infrastructure, as well as tax reductions and discounts.
5. When Çorum people use the term *akraba*, they refer either to all related people through blood or marriage in general or to those who are *yakın akraba* (close relatives), which includes the relatives of the spouses. Others, such as the relatives of grandparents, would be described as *uzaktan akraba* or *hısım* (distant relatives), a distinction made by Delaney (1991: 154) in her study of Turkish village society.
6. Those who have not dropped out of school are more likely to skip apprenticeships and work as operators in factories or find white-collar jobs in the service sector.
7. The verb is used in the passive. The child or teenager is not the active agent of the choice, as the patriarchs in the family make the decision. They see industry, like school or the military, as somewhere where boys are disciplined, prepared for life, acquire merit and then become men.
8. At the time of the research in 2016, 1 Euro valued 3.2 New Turkish Lira (TRY).
9. A second house for leisure purposes that many provincial middle-class people own. It is usually located on the way to villages in the woods and has a garden.
10. Saturday is holiday for the manual workers on the shop floor and all the other staff except for these four and Cemal and Bülent Bey.
11. Where the steel sheets are moulded based on precise measurements required by the specific order. This is a one-off procedure: if done wrongly the raw material is wasted, which could mean a serious financial loss.
12. Cemal Bey has three daughters, but they are not interested in the company. One of them has studied at a university and pursues a career in a metropolitan city.
13. According to the Turkish Statistical Agency, Çorum's rate of net migration was -12% in 2015.

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