



Communication-Etiquette and Social Structure

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ABSTRACT

The universe is a whole composed of interdependent entities. Each entity has different tasks, which are inherent in its creation and stem from the uniqueness of other entities around them. However, when it comes to humans, a distinct entity stands out from all others.

The fundamental characteristic that distinguishes humans from other entities is their intellect. Humans think with their minds, generate thoughts, translate their thoughts into behavior, and institutionalize their behaviors into rules. In this process of transformation, the organs of observation play a role, and norms of etiquette become structured.

Key Words: *Communication, Norm, Custom, Society*

INTRODUCTION

Jokes have a visible side; they make people laugh. They also have an invisible side; they make people think. There's this joke: Temel is walking down the street when someone steps on his foot. The person turns to Temel and says, "pardon." Temel didn't know the meaning of "pardon." He thinks the person cursed at him and gets into a fight with him.

Every society, even microsocial groups, has its own apology culture, born from its values and manners. If someone had said "I apologize, excuse me" to Temel, there probably wouldn't have been a problem.

Social Norms and Value Judgments

Individuals in society don't exist like trees in isolation. They form a network of behavior among themselves. This whole network of behavior is called the social behavior field.¹ For the individual, society life is as necessary as it is for society to have established (stereotyped, modeled) behavioral examples among individuals. However, not every behavior contains rules (normative). For example, there may be similarity and cohesion in behavior during an earthquake panic, but it doesn't imply a specific norm. For a behavior to become a norm (rule), there needs to be a jointly adhered-to behavior among individuals, an attribution of value to the behavior, and an acceptance of a collective sanctioning power if the behavior is not adhered to. In this sense, social norms are standardized guiding and governing forms of behavior within a specific group or society. They guide how individuals' behaviors will be evaluated by others. They reveal whether individuals' behaviors will be approved or not. Thus, norms are rules that compel members of society to behave in certain ways in response to specific events.²

Individuals achieve behavioral integrity by adhering to the socio-cultural norms of society. The norm systems developed by societies around certain fundamental needs are referred to as "**institutions.**" Thus, institutions such as **religion, education, family, economy, and politics** constitute the structures of society as norm systems.³

At the core of norms lie value judgments. However, not every value judgment forms a norm. Norms emerge as an explanation of value judgments. Therefore, while every norm contains a value judgment, not every value judgment is a

¹ J. J. Wössner, *Sociology*, Vienna-Cologne-Graz 1979, pages 37-39. J. Fichter, *What is Sociology?* (trans. Nilgün Çelebi), Ankara 1996, pages 38-39.

² Hubert Treiber, "Norm" (*Lexicon of Sociology*), page 470; Sulhi Dönmezer, "Sociology", pages 248-259; Erdoğan, Z. Erdoğan, "Sociology 1977-1978", pages 115-116.

³ P. J. Bauman, *Foundations of Sociology*, Stuttgart 1986, pages 58-62.

norm.⁴

Social values, like social norms, also demand that behavior adhere to certain patterns. At the foundation of norms lie value judgments, just as attitudes and beliefs underlie value judgments.

Attitude is the individual's inclination, whether positive or negative, towards objects. This inclination forms the basis of attitude and is innate, developing into attitude during the process of socialization. Every attitude carries with it a positive or negative psychological value judgment. These value judgments emerge in the forms of **good-bad, beautiful-ugly, right-wrong, beneficial-harmful, guilty-innocent, sinful-righteous**. Thus, a value judgment is an expression of the desires and feelings of individuals within a society towards objects, accepted in the same way by all members of the society. Consequently, all these value judgments, including **religious, legal, economic, aesthetic, and moral values**, constitute the fundamental institutions of society. In other words, at the core of social institutions lie value judgments.

Attitude is individualistic and, therefore, a psychological phenomenon. However, when individuals within a social group develop common attitudes towards common objects, this gives rise to group attitude. Thus, attitudes transcend individuality and become a social phenomenon, forming common value judgments and beliefs about the unique events, phenomena, and objects within the social group. When these common value judgments among individuals in a social group gain a sanctioning power, whether material or spiritual, they transform into rules (norms) that must be followed by everyone (the majority of the group).⁵

Not all norms are of the same nature. Norms are divided into informal (in-formal) norms and formal norms based on their sanctioning powers.

Informal norms emerge gradually and naturally within the course of society, without any official authority behind them. They derive their power from the dynamics and spirit of the community. Operating outside of individuals, they compel individuals to adhere to them through moral pressure. Informal norms serve as the basis for formal norms. In a society, it is not possible for formal norms that do not rely on these informal norms, or that contradict them, to become effective.⁶

Certain informal norms within the natural course of society acquire material sanctioning powers and transform into formal norms (legal norms). Similarly, over time, formal norms may lose their material sanctioning powers and revert to informal norms or become obsolete. For example, religious norms have, at certain times in history, served as formal norms, but today many religious norms exist as informal norms. Similarly, many moral norms have been part of formal norms in the past, but over time, they have either become informal norms or have been removed. However, this is not an arbitrary process. Individuals or groups responsible for legislating cannot change existing and functioning norms as they please. Such changes can lead to the obsolescence of formal legal norms and conflicts between formal and informal norms. Therefore, those who establish formal norms (legal norms) must be well aware of informal norms and take measures to ensure integration rather than conflict among them.

Social life requires order, which is based on social rules. In social life, rules emerge as commands and prohibitions. A legal rule that prohibits theft, for instance, prohibits theft. Conversely, it commands individuals to help their poor parents. However, the rules that govern individuals' behaviors within society are not limited to legal rules. Customs and traditions, moral and religious rules are also part of the set of social rules.

Customs and Traditions

In everyday language, we often use many terms related to customs and traditions together. Sometimes we use concepts such as tradition, custom, practice, tradition, and custom interchangeably. Of these, tradition and custom are Turkish in origin, while others are of Arabic origin.

Ziya Gökalp brings together all these concepts under the title of "custom". According to him, custom is all societal rules. In fact, in the Orkhon Inscriptions, "il" (state) and "custom" are used together.⁷

Customs and traditions are often confused. However, there is a general-specific relationship between these two concepts. That is, some customs are traditions, and likewise, some traditions are customs. However, not every tradition is a custom, nor is every custom a tradition. Both terms are of Arabic origin. The word "örf" is derived from the Arabic word "arefe," which means "to know." As a term, it refers to "being aware of a behavior," the mutual recognition, acceptance,

⁴ Erdoğmuş, page 116.

⁵ Erdoğmuş, pages 115-116.

⁶ Erdoğmuş, pages 116-117.

⁷ Ziya Gökalp, *Turkish Customs*, Istanbul 1990, pages 9-11.

and adoption of a behavior by the members of society, resulting in it becoming a common behavior. Custom is the name given to this structured behavior. The word "âdet" is also derived from the Arabic word "adede," which means "to count" or "to repeat." When applied to behavior, âdet describes a behavior that has been repeated and become a habit.

Âdet is a social rule passed down from previous generations. Individual habits are different from social customs. Âdet is not individual but social, and it is also inherited from ancestors. A newly emerging social rule cannot be called a custom; it is called an innovation (bid'ah). Therefore, it is necessary for customs to be passed down to the present generation from past generations. This transmission occurs not through biological inheritance but through social inheritance, namely, upbringing and education..

Not every custom is a tradition. This is because there are customs that are accepted and rejected by people in every era. Rejected customs exist because they were once accepted in past generations and are transmitted through upbringing. A behavior that previously failed to gain acceptance cannot be passed down through upbringing, hence it cannot become a custom. A rule that was accepted by people in past generations may be rejected by new generations. Therefore, just as there are accepted customs, there are also rejected customs. While there are accepted and rejected customs, there cannot be rejected traditions. Tradition consists solely of rules accepted by society. Therefore, accepted customs are included in tradition, while rejected customs remain outside of tradition.

The term "custom" does not solely mean "rules accepted by society." Custom also refers to the habit of distinguishing and appreciating rules that are accepted and rejected by society. Rules accepted by these habits are known to everyone (ma'ruf), while rules rejected by everyone are called (munkar), meaning the former are rules that people like, and the latter are rules that people find repulsive.

How can we distinguish customs, which mean social rules, from individual actions? For a rule to be social, it must exist beyond the biological nature and willpower of individuals. Actions stemming from biological instincts cannot be considered social, as they are inherited biologically and fall under the category of biological events rather than social ones. Similarly, actions done solely by our will and for which we have the freedom to perform or not perform are not social; they belong to the realm of psychological events.

Social rules exist beyond the biological nature. Just as life has a new nature distinct from the chemical elements that constitute it, the community also has a unique nature absent in the vital units forming it.

The community is not a mere mathematical sum of individuals but a phenomenon born of the harmony of individual spirits, possessing its own unique nature distinct from the vital nature. Therefore, the conceptions, judgments, and rules encompassing this phenomenon must also exist beyond individuals..

Social rules are above individual willpower. Because an individual's will is the synthesis of their temperament and disposition, and since each individual has a different temperament and disposition, actions stemming from individual wills cannot be uniformly categorized as rules. Even if these individual actions show some accidental similarity due to specific reasons, they still cannot acquire the status of a rule. Because a rule implies an action that is necessary or obligatory, and accidental similarities between some actions do not necessitate or oblige them.

When social rules, or customs, exist beyond the biological nature and individual willpower, they must force themselves upon individuals either forcefully or willingly since they do not exist in nature. When we examine accepted customs or good innovations, we see that these two qualities are present. They either compel individuals through their punitive force or perpetuate themselves by endearing individuals through their attractive force. This punitive force can be called the "force of affirmation," and the attractive force can be called the "force of prestige."

When we do not comply with accepted customs or good innovations, we face ridicule, condemnation, or censure from the public. The reaction we receive from the public is a social punishment, and due to the fear of this, we are compelled to adhere to many positive or negative rules. However, not everyone needs to think about these social punishments or feel this social fear to comply with these rules. Because most people obey these rules out of love or attraction, there is no place for fear from a beloved law. The feeling of fear is only necessary for those who do not love this law. Therefore, tradition influences us primarily with the power of love it inspires and secondarily with the punitive force it instills. In other words, the former is the beauty attribute of tradition, while the latter is its majesty attribute.

When these two attributes of tradition are revealed, it becomes apparent that the actions we consider "ma'ruf" are both desired and obligatory. "Ma'ruf" signifies actions that are desired and obligatory to be done, and at the same time, they must actually be carried out. This is the third condition that completely distinguishes individual actions from social norms. Because individuals may adorn some of their personal opinions with the guise of social norms, even claiming that these norms possess confirming and authorizing powers. These individuals are told, "Since you claim that the actions you mentioned are of a social normative nature, then carry them out upon the select few." If they cannot do this, it becomes evident that the rules they put forward are not social norms. Because a social action is one that can be done and is

appreciated. There is a confirming force in favor of this action, not against it. However, an action that cannot be done is an action that has a counter-confirming force, hence it cannot be realized. Therefore, it absolutely does not possess a social nature. However, concerning the actions being performed, a significant portion of these are carried out either by natural impulse, individual will, or by adhering to the surviving customs of the community or the customs of foreign nations. Therefore, not every action performed is necessarily considered part of tradition. Tradition encompasses rules possessing the attributes mentioned above.

Tradition consists of a set of idealistic rules proposed by the conscience of the community, and although individuals strive to adhere to these rules with great participation, they cannot fully attain them. The community always endeavors to elevate individuals to this social stratum through reinforcing and punitive forces. However, due to the hierarchical nature of individuals being at an animalistic level, they cannot entirely ascend from the lower realms of life, and only their thoughts can reach the social stratum. There is a significant difference between the actions of individuals and tradition, which is why some philosophers like Max Nordau have regarded traditions as "social lies." However, Max Nordau is unjust in this view. Because the conscience of the community is sincere in the rules it proposes to individuals, and individuals also possess a sincere desire and eagerness to reach these ideals. This apparent deceit arises from the gap between biological nature and social nature. Just as life has not completely bound the matter that constitutes it to itself, resulting in the emergence of human intelligence at every level, the community cannot transform all its individuals completely by binding them to its own inspirations.

Therefore, it is necessary to seek tradition not in the actions manifested within the community, but in the rules believed with social faith and loved with social affection. Actions more or less approximate these rules and are constantly under the influence of social pressures, namely reinforcing and punitive forces, to approximate them, yet they cannot entirely attain them. The idealistic nature of social rules primarily stems from social ideals.⁸

The terms "anane" and "teamül" also express the concepts of tradition and custom. "Anane" means to transmit something from one person to another, while "teamül" means to adopt something and make it one's own. On the other hand, tradition and custom refer to a person perceiving something, adopting it as perceived, repeatedly performing it, forming a habit out of it, and transmitting it to others. If the thing perceived and habitually performed is a socio-cultural behavior, then in a social context, tradition and custom come into play, expressing certain behavioral patterns. Traditions and customs generally represent simple rules that should be followed in everyday life but may lead to accusations of rudeness if not adhered to.⁹

The difference between all these behavioral patterns stems from the levels of adoption, repetition, habituation, and transmission from one generation to another, and naturally, the sanctioning powers will differ as a result.

In sociological terms, for a behavior to become a standardized behavior, it must be repeated and habituated. Although the terms we have used above may differ, we can encompass all these concepts under the terms "custom" and "tradition."

We refer to the behavioral rules (norms) that have been habitually repeated and accepted as beautiful alongside sound reason by the vast majority of the members of a social group for a long time as "custom and tradition."¹⁰

In the dictionary, "custom" means "to return to an old state; to reject, to repeat something, to habituate by doing it repeatedly." In this sense, "custom" means "a practice widely accepted by society and established by repetition over time." On the other hand, "tradition" in the dictionary means "to recognize, to know through one of the emotions, to understand by thinking about its works and traces." Its opposite is called "münker." Therefore, tradition refers to behaviors, actions, and words that are not disapproved and rejected by sound minds. In this case, "custom" encompasses events, situations, and behaviors belonging to both individuals and society, originating from reason and will, while "tradition" represents the part of customs and behaviors in the form of words and actions based on reason and will.¹¹

Every custom is a tradition, but not every tradition is a custom. This means that tradition is broader and more widespread than custom. Tradition, in turn, is specific to custom. The enforcement power of tradition is greater than that of custom. In other words, deviation from traditions results in much more serious consequences than deviation from customs. Often, traditions exert pressure on people and establish themselves as more powerful than legal rules.¹²

⁸ Ziya Gökalp, "What is Tradition?", *Islam Journal*, Vol. I, No. 10, Istanbul 1330-1332, pages 290-295.

⁹ Mustafa E. Erkal, *Cultural Foundations of Economic Development*, Istanbul 1994, pages 27-29. Hayrettin Karaman, "Custom", *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Vol. I, pages 369-373.

¹⁰ "Custom" by Hayrettin Karaman in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Volume I, pages 369-373.

¹¹ Karaman, pages 369-373.

¹² Dönmezer, pages 347-370.

Traditions and customs generally form a cohesive whole with other societal norms. Together, they constitute the socio-cultural structure. Therefore, any changes or disappearances are dependent on their harmony with this whole. For example, in a society, drinking alcohol, committing adultery, or theft may become widespread. However, this does not mean that they are well-received in society. Therefore, the socio-cultural system of the society either considers such behaviors as deviations and combats them, or institutionalizes them within certain frameworks without disrupting the societal system, isolating them within specific groups. For instance, there may be sexual relations between spouses within a family, but this is not considered adultery, as sexual relations are necessary for the reproduction of society. Similarly, in some societies, there are certain traditions related to theft. The relevant society has integrated these behaviors into the general societal system by allocating them to certain times and places.¹³

In the process of social change, traditions and customs undergo changes. Some disappear, while others undergo structural changes. With change, society gains dynamism. This change often occurs spontaneously over time and under certain conditions. However, sometimes, if it is perceived and understood by certain powers and individuals that societal norms hinder reaching the goals identified by society's needs, they are changed or attempted to be changed. In this case, it is essential to properly identify the social norms to be changed. Otherwise, arbitrary changes made by certain individuals or rulers can lead society into crisis and norm conflicts.¹⁴

Traditions and customs may belong to the entire society (in terms of geographical location, all regions) or to a specific social group (any region or a limited group, such as a certain class or group). The former is called "general tradition," and the latter is called "specific tradition." Similarly, a group may habitually use a word or phrase in a different meaning from its dictionary definition. This is called "verbal tradition." If any group has habitually adopted and continuously performs an action or behavior in a certain way, this is also called "behavioral tradition."¹⁵

For customs and traditions to become formal legal rules, three conditions need to be met:

✚ **Material element: For a custom to become part of customary law, it must have been practiced in society for a considerable period beforehand.**

✚ **Spiritual and mental element: Also known as legal belief. For a custom to become part of customary law, there must be an established belief in its necessity.**

✚ **Legal element: This refers to the enforcement power of the custom. For a tradition to become part of customary law, it must be supported by the state's enforcement power.¹⁶**

Mutual awareness and a sense of belonging together are necessary for the formation of a social group. The customs and traditions, as manifestations of the social group, emerge from the structuring of these relationships.

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION

Within the historical domain, societies have transitioned from unwritten rules (customary and traditional law) to written (formal) legal rules. It is not possible to govern and sustain the existence of a society (or a state) solely based on customs and traditions within the complex integrity of modern societies. However, the continuation of customs and traditions as a spiritual cultural element is essential. A society devoid of spiritual culture is inevitably prone to crisis. Yet, spiritual culture should not impede material progress.

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¹³ Necip Bilge, "The Origin of Law", Ankara 1983, pages 12-23.

¹⁴ Önal Sayın, "Introduction to Sociology", İzmir 1994, pages 149-159; Erkal, p. 28; Fichter, pages 83-93.

¹⁵ Karaman, pages 369-373.

¹⁶ "What is Tradition?", *Great Larousse*, Volume XVII, page 9047.