

THE PROBLEMS THAT ARE FACED IN THE TURKISH PLATEAUS DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD FROM CATTLE BREEDING TO TOURISM

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Abstract. Transhumance is a traditional economic activity based on stock breeding that has been carried out for many years in Turkey. Turkey naturally has an uneven topography and has many plateaus due to its hilly areas. Even though there may be differences in the regional scale, tourism activities increased in the areas where cattle breeding was done until 1980. Plateau tourism can be considered as an important part of nature tourism. Damaging the nature in these areas will risk the growing tourism potential as well as the breeding areas of the animals that are raised as a traditional economic activity. Transhumance activities in the Keremali Mountain located on the western part of North Anatolian mountains will be studied due to its closeness and easy access to the North Western part, which is a highly populated area in Turkey. After the tourism potential of the plateaus in the area will be evaluated, the most important plateau in the region: Çiğdem Plateau will be studied as an example. The people who come from Sakarya, İzmit, İstanbul, Düzce settlements take (regretif) short term advantage of the Keremali Plateau. However, in order to keep nature tourism going, accommodation possibilities in the area should be increased without harming the nature and short term tourism should be converted to long term tourism.

Key words: Turkey, Keremali Mountain, Yayla settlement, transhumance, ecotourism ekoturizm, Çiğdem yaylası, sustainable growth

INTRODUCTION

The word plateaus, where cattle are bred, generally means hilly areas in Turkish. “Yaylak” means summer camping ground. In Ancient Anatolian Civilizations different names which mean summer house like (yayla evi, yazla evi, yaz evi) are used. In Ancient “Orhun”, Inscriptions words like “yaylağ”, “yayladım”, “yaylayan” give us information about the social activities that take place in summer.

Summer camping grounds (plateaus) mostly mean temporary settlement areas in geography. These areas are only occupied during the hottest months of the summer. People not only dwell in these areas, but also get involved in some

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economic activities. Nomads and summer dwellers make their living in the area; people in nearby towns and cities are also interested in the area for different reasons (Emiroğlu 1977:17).

The word plateau has two meanings in geography, in physical geography it means high grounds split by rivers (plateau), in human geography it means summer camping grounds (Doğanay, H, 1995: 273).

In Turkish, plateau means high and cool areas occupied in summer both to breed cattle and to farm for economic purposes.

Tunçdilek defines plateau as: highlands far away from the village, however connected to the village socially and economically and a shared property of the village people; added, secondary grounds where people populate at certain times of the year to breed cattle, to farm, do all kinds of work to make their living and sometimes to rest (Tunçdilek 1969: 16).

Alagöz states that the term plateau (yayla) has its origins in old Turkish, the root “yay” means summer and also to spread out which comes to the meaning to let out animals in summer (Alagöz, 1941:150-152, 1993:1-4).

The first inscriptions about life in the plateaus belong to Selchuks. Turkish people are the first to introduce this kind of lifestyle to Anatolia. Before the Turkish settled down for a sedentary life in Anatolia, they were nomads and the tradition of moving to the plateaus in summer lived on.

Seasonal nomadism (moving to the cool plateaus in summer) had its own rules until the law of 1858. Before that date the Ottoman Empire had different rules for each state, organizing the use of these areas, including the rules about the number of breeding areas and the number of cattle both in winter and summer. This situation apart from setting rules to organize life in these areas, also helped to calculate the amount of taxes. The 98th part of the law of 1858 about the usage of lands states that ‘the borders of the flatlands should be set and no changes should be made’. The 100th item defines that the cattle of each village must be grazed in their own areas and no other cattle should be allowed in the area.

Since the government did not have the complete control of these areas, plateau life had its own rules and traditions (Kızılırmak, 2006). Seasonal nomadism is popular in Turkey and has a long history like in many other Mediterranean countries (Emiroğlu, 1977).

Laws were made during the reign of both the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic to regulate the usage of grasslands, summer and winter settlements. However, they were ineffective. Many articles were written about seasonal nomadism in the Turkish Republic by many scientists (Alagöz 1941, Erinç 1945, Ardel 1963, Tunçdilek 1964, Emiroğlu 1977, İzbirak 1992, Somuncu 1994, Güner 1995, Koca 1995, Doğanay 1995, Somuncu 1997, Bakırcı 1999, Ertürk and others 2000, Zaman 2000, Başbüyük and others 2001, Aydınözü 2003, Aydınözü 2004, Kızılırmak 2006 etc.)

While the first studies about seasonal nomadism were about traditional vertical movement to higher pastures in summer, recent studies were about the changes in these camping grounds as they became alternative tourist destinations.

After the Turkish Republic was founded, a law about the villages was issued in March, 18, 1924, according to the 97th item of the Law no 442; some plateau grounds were within the borders of some of the villages. This law limited the freedom of nomadic activities and made life difficult for nomads and temporary settlers. As of today, there are very few nomads in Anatolia. This is partly due to fact that certain plateaus were allocated to certain villages, although nomadic activities take place in vast areas and mostly in the same region, it is an accepted life style (Alagöz, 1941). The average altitude is quite high in Anatolian lands and they are exposed to vertical activity from May through October. As a result, more land is used for economic purposes. Until 1990, the vertical activity mainly served to breed cattle. However, during the last 15-20 years, an increasing tourism activity is flourishing in the area.

The first change during this process was the decrease in the rural population and the increase in the city population which led to fewer people going to plateau grounds to breed cattle instead they went there to rest at certain months of the year. People who used plateau houses started to change their places of settlement due to the change in their economic conditions. *There are two kinds of change in plateau houses.* The first change is the **material used in the construction of the building**. The materials are no longer provided from the area and therefore they are not suitable to the natural environment. The concrete and bricks used in the construction of the buildings are not blended harmoniously into the landscape and caused many authorities to take action and certain limitations were introduced. According to the new law, natural materials like stone, wood and sun dried bricks should be used. The second major change about plateau houses was that since the villagers ceased to breed cattle some changes were made in the **structure of the buildings**. The new type of plateau houses do not have the place called dairy, where fresh milk is kept and processed. New type of plateau houses do not have a barn, instead they have many rooms, separate kitchen, bathroom and toilet. People who use summer houses for holiday purposes expect to have the comfort of their homes in the city and build their houses accordingly. The fact that electricity is available in plateau areas also allows the use of technology.

TRANSHUMANCE ACTIVITIES IN KERAMALI MOUNTAINS

Transhumance activities are especially wide spread in North Anatolia Mountains and the Toros Mountains. The Keramali Mountains, one of the target areas included in this study, are situated westwards of North Anatolia Mountains. Our research area which resembles a flattened ellipse shape stretches towards NE-SW beyond the waters of the Mudurnu. The Keramali Hill (1543 m) shares the

same name with the mountain. Because of this hill, the name of the mountain is mainly called Keremali Mountain in the Province of Sakarya. The area is divided by young valleys in the south, but completely split up in the east as in the case of Keremali Mountain, its highest peaks, which stretch from west to east are: Dirimdirim Hill (1560), Dikmen Hill (1760), Bayrak Hill (1780); its Hills with a lower altitude stretch eastward (Fig. no 1).



Secondary fault lines in the area favoured the emergence of drinking water springs and thermal water springs. Major investments in the area are Kuzuluk Thermal Water and Kuzuluk Mineral Water establishments. Although the water of some springs shrink in summer the abundance of springs does not allow any water shortage.

Another important necessity other than water in plateau areas is the **vegetation**. Since the main goal of temporary settlement in the highlands (transhumance) is cattle and cattle breeding, no grazing is possible without sufficient vegetation.

In Hendek, plateau areas are mainly located on the Keremali Mountain which is to the south of Hendek. In this region the vegetation mainly consists of large leafed oak trees at an altitude of 1550 m, at higher altitudes there are forests which consist of evergreen coniferous fir trees. In the region there is a significant change in the vegetation. Forests which solely consisted of oak (*Quercus*) trees were replaced by dense fir (*Abies sp.*) trees in some areas after the white poplars were cut (Fig. no 2). The reason of this may be the change in the climate or since the forest areas were under protection and there was decrease in nomadic activities, the pine cones were able to grow into new trees since they were not used for fire any longer.



Fig. no 2. A section of the changing vegetation. In the last 20 years fir (*Abies sp.*) trees have been replacing the cut oak (*Quercus*) trees. Although fir trees grow by itself, it may be possible that the change is due to climate changes in the area

Çiğdem, Turnalık, Dırındırın, Mayapınar, Öküzova and Keremali plateaus belong to Aksu and Dikmen villages in the province of Hendek and are still economically active. The Karabakkal Plateau used to be one of the settlement areas. However, the goats that were bred by the settlers harmed the forest. Therefore, the area received government protection and now the only thing in the area is the abandoned hut of the forest-guard.

THE CHANGES AND TRANSFORMATIONS IN NOMADIC ACTIVITIES

Since 1960s, the process of immigration from rural areas to cities have begun and in time plateaus areas were either abandoned or lost their importance. Breeding and farming left its place to plateau. Those who emigrated to big cities kept coming back to the highlands because they had the habit of spending the summer in the cool pastures. They wanted to get away from the hectic city life, hot sun and concrete buildings. However, plateau houses are no longer rudimentary simple houses, they are modern, luxurious summer homes. Also the main roads were improved to make car access possible. After the quality of transportation got better short sightseeing tours were organized for the tourists. Almost all highlands in Anatolia, close to the towns and suburbs became or is likely to become plateau areas (Kızılırmak 2006, Başbüyük & etl. 2001, Tunçdilek 1964).

The use of electricity carried another aspect of city life to the highlands. The change in the activities caused these places to become holiday destinations for many people. The potentially rich lands with lakes, rivers, streams, vegetation and fauna became the center of festivals and celebrations. Highlands (plateaus) are newly discovered places in terms of tourism and they are among rare areas that are still not polluted.

There are numerous plateau residential areas on Keremali Mountain. We detected almost 30 nomadic settlements other than the few that were abandoned

We have found out during our research that the previous occupations on the highlands of Keremali Mountain were replaced by new ones. Most of the settlers no longer breed cattle. Although few, there are still a few nomadic settlements where cattle are bred. It is also observed that the amount of vegetables like spinach (*Spinacia oleracea*), and potatoes (*Solanum tuberosum*) summer settlers produced in their little gardens, dropped. This is probably due to the ease of buying vegetables from the groceries; the length of their stay may not be long enough to produce vegetables, also.

In some nomadic settlements, there are settlers who continue to do the traditional breeding activity just because they have to. These are the settlers who breed, buy and sell cattle for economic purposes rather reluctantly. It is partly because herding cows is the only skill they have mastered throughout the years. They complain about the difficulties of competing with modern dairies. They also complain that it is not profitable to sell products like butter, yoghurt and cheese. However, the increasing demand for natural products can be turned into profit by initiating enterprises in the area. The settlers can establish a cooperation and work together to earn a reasonable income for their efforts. In this way, while the highlands welcome tourists, the settlers can be occupied with breeding cattle and increase their income by selling dairy products to tourists. Therefore, the plateaus of Anatolia may get involved in **ecological tourism** and herders can still continue to breed cattle.

The term ecotourism was first used as a result of nature friendly perspective and as a reaction to other applications of global ecotourism. Consequently, the aim

was to minimize the effects of tourism activities on the natural environment (the careless use of natural resources). This awareness increased the demand for ecotourism. These demands made consumers to try different holiday experiences which are more personel and enriching. Watching birds and whales, photographing wild flowers are just a few examples of alternative holiday activities. What is more, the nature factor plays an important role in these activities, (Kusler, 1991a, 1991b; Boo, 1992, 1993; Ceballos-Lascurain, 1991a, 1991b; Blamey, 1995a, 1995b;

Hvenegaard, 1994; Orams, 1995a, 1995b; Lindberg & McKercher, 1997; Dowling, 1996; Diamant is, 1998a, 1998b). All things considered, the plateaus of Keremali Mountain still untouched and unharmed, has a high potential in terms of ecotourism.

The act of splitting lands among inheritors is among the reasons of the decrease in the income of the settlers. The villagers with diminished income turned to different job opportunities and headed to factories established on the northern plains of Adapazarı and Düzce. As a result, these people worked in factories in winter and spend their summer holiday in the plateaus.

As a result of our observations we have come to the conclusion that most of the summer houses in the plateaus were used as a second house to spend the summer holiday. The elderly who do not have the energy to work and the young who do not care about cattle breeding, started to come to the highlands for holiday purposes. Most of the plateaus have become holiday destinations for people. Çiğdem Plateau is a good example for the transformations in the plateau settlements. Expensive houses were built in these plateaus, (Fig. no 3)

As the plateau population increased due to the festivals and organizations, additional mosques, public fountains and water closets were built in the highlands.



Fig. no 3. Traditional houses and new type of plateau houses (are seen together in the picture)

People of all ages and occupations came to the highlands to rest. Many people came to the highlands from İstanbul, Sakarya, Düzce, İzmit, Bolu and Bursa for a day's tour or for a few days to rest and to enjoy the scenery. Apart from ones who visit the highlands for a day, most of the visitors have some kind of connection with the highlands or with the people who live there. Establishments like hotels, motels and pensions are not

yet available in the plateaus, only a few guesthouses have been set up in a few plateaus and this is insufficient and does not meet the high demands. The high demand for a five star hotel recently established on Samanlı mountain to the north of Anatolian mountains made the Province of Sakarya seek a suitable land to establish a similar hotel on Keremali Mountain. Dikmen Hill, the highest summit within the borders of Sakarya stand out to be a perfect place for winter tourism. With the achievement of this project, profitable investments would be made and the lodges would be used for 12 months with full capacity. However, the main goal should be constructing small pension style, plateau houses which are in harmony with the nature instead of building large hotels. Special arrangements should be made to better the economy in the highlands, considering the preferences of the tourists who prefer to come to the plateaus as a result of alternative tourism. In this way, permanent economical improvements could be made by preventing the sale of daily products with little profit.

Summer houses in the plateaus are mostly occupied by elderly and retired people. They come to the plateaus for a weather change; to spend the summer in the cool highlands, to rest and to relax. For them, the plateaus are the first place to go when spring comes. A high number of people come to the plateaus for a few days for summer festivals in June and July. Hundreds of people came to the Çiğdem Plateau to join the plateau festivals in 2007 and the number continues to increase (Fig. no 4).



Fig. no 4. The plateau festivals in 2007

ÇİĞDEM PLATEAU

Çiğdem plateau is on Keremali Mountain, within the borders of Hendek Province in Sakarya, it is one of the largest and most important plateaus in the

region. The plateau takes its name from the flower autumn crocus which is widely grown in the area. Snowdrops, chamomiles (*Matricaria*) and many other flowers accompany the autumn crocuses. A special kind of grass called “Topukotu” covers the land and the slightly sloped hills (Fig. no 5).

The shortest way to the Çiğdem plateau is by Hendek-Karadere road. It can also be accessed through Akyazı-Dokurcun as well, but it takes considerably longer (18km).

Çiğdem plateau, one of the largest plateaus on Keremali Mountain, welcomes people who come from the towns of Hendek (Göksu, Aksu, Kurtuluş) and Akyaz (Maden, Dokurcun) in the month of June and stay until September. The plateaus have an altitude of 1540 m. At this altitude there are forests which mainly consist of fir and oak trees. The scents of pine trees mixes with the scents of thyme and 35-40 m high fir trees, pine trees and beech trees produce a mystic atmosphere in the area.



Fig. no 5. A section of Çiğdem Plateau.

Modern houses built with natural materials stand side by side with traditional houses exceeding the number of 120 altogether. Traditional plateau houses where the ground floor is used to keep cattle show that cattle breeding played an important part in their life. In newly built houses, families who breed cattle built a separate barn to keep their cattle. The original settlers of the plateaus have houses in İstanbul, Adapazarı and in neighbouring cities, but have a second house in the

plateaus to spend the summer. They spend the summer in the highlands to clean their body and spirit from the stress of the city and be one with nature.

The population in the plateaus increase 4-5 times between the dates July 13, 14 and 15, due to plateau festivals. Kadirga Festival is generally celebrated on the 3rd week of July. The population in the region mainly consist of people who emigrated to the lands during the war between the Ottomans and Russia and during World War I and they affected the culture of the settlers. Trabzon Kadirga Plateau and the festivals held there date back to many centuries. This is a traditional festival of the people who emigrated from the Black Sea region and they have been celebrating it for more than a century on Keremali Mountain.

The festival, celebrated since 1954, became a tradition and a social event which welcomed guests from neighbouring plateaus and starting from 1999 with the help of local organizations it reached larger groups of people. They made the festival known by means of local media, press and by handing out brochures about the festival. An increasing number of people join the celebrations every year. Traditional round dance “*horon*” and traditional music instrument three stringed violin “*kemençe*” come together in the festivals to entertain people. Also rice is cooked and given out to the public. Merchants and residents display their products in order to sell them.

Two kinds of nomadic activities are seen in the Çiğdem plateau. The first one is **the traditional activity**, where people come to breed their cattle. The second activity is where people come to **spend their holiday and relax**. It is the centre of attraction for many people who want to get away from the hot weather, enjoy the fresh air and the peaceful atmosphere.

The group, majority of which come from Göksu, travel to the plateaus to breed cattle. There are close to 500 locally bred cattle, sheep and goats. The animals are grazed by their owners on the green meadows and their milk production reaches 7-8 kg per day. Milk and meat production does not only increase, it gets tastier too, people think it is due to aromatic plants animals graze on. Milk is sold to milkmen who come from Akyazı for 0.35ytl/ kg and sour cheese is sold to merchants who come from Hendek for 1.5ytl/ kg. Among all dairy products, milk takes the lead and other milk products are not as popular. Thus, cattle breeders produce traditional dairy products like butter and cheese for their own consumption. If only milk and other dairy products could be given the value they deserve, the profit would increase by 50% .

Traditional nomadic dishes cooked with natural ingredients revives the nomadic culture and attracts the visitors. Herbs such as hawthorn (*Crataegus*), Amaranthe (*Amaranthus lividus* L), southernwood (*Artemisia*), spurge (*Euphorbia*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), Anise (*Pimpinella anisum* L.), borage (*Borago officinalis*), goosefoot (*Galega vulgaris*) and mallow mauve (*Malva*), have been known and used in dishes for many years, it also attracts the attention of interested tourists and ecologic tourism fans.

There are many traditional dishes made with natural herbs such as southernwood (yavşı) and spurge (sütliyen) soup made by mixing the two. Garlicky dish made with nettle and salty pastries. Amaranth (hoşkiran) is mixed with bulghur (parched crushed wheat) and stir fried. Anise (ezerten) is boiled to make a tasty dish with small red beans. Hemlock (baldıran) is mixed with maize, flour and red beans and stir fried. Mallow is stir fried to make a different dish.

All the dishes are cooked with butter and herders owe their health to these healthy herbs. Tea is made with the thyme (*Thymus vulgaris L.*) grown in the highlands. Jam and tea is made with the hibiscus (*Roza canina L.*) gathered from the forests.

According to the research, during the 2007 festivals celebrated in July on Çiğdem Plateau, people's interest in the plateaus has increased dramatically. Unfortunately, appropriate tourist accommodation is not available in the pastures and it is a necessity. The building that once belonged to the school of forestry, is now abandoned and could easily be transformed into a guesthouse where visitors can accommodate. During the festivals, visitors either come for a day's tour or spend the night in tents or in their cars. This ecologic tourism potential could easily be turned into profit by building little wooden huts which blend harmoniously into the surrounding landscapes.

In the past, the disputes among the settlers concerning the usage of lands prevented many young businessmen from taking action. However, qualified people among the settlers try to improve the conditions as much as they can. Construction of public toilets by Hendek Municipality solved an important problem and prevented pollution during the festivals.

Traditional transhumance activity generally takes place between the months of June and September, activities like nature walks, sport camps and sightseeing tours are organized in March. By making proper investments, the plateaus could be actively used all year long. Making investments in the plateaus, where electricity is available, is easier.

THE PROBLEMS CAUSED BY CHANGES AND TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE PLATEAUS AND THEIR SOLUTIONS

The increasing interest in the plateaus has brought about the protection of the nature and the resources. The pastures are natural legacies of our ancestors and they are of vital importance. The protection of these highlands is necessary for the conservation of water resources and for the existence of animal and plant species. The construction of roads and concrete houses and use of electricity on the mountains disrupt the natural landscape. The main goal should be enjoying the pastures without harming the nature.

One of the results of the transformations in the plateaus is the change in the cultural structure. Since highlands are flourishing as alternative tourist destinations,

people from different cultural backgrounds come to the area and bring with them all the negative effects of city life. Fizzy drinks may replace the favourite yoghurt drink (*ayran*) of the settlers and television may steal the joy of a friendly conversation around the fire.

Unplanned construction on the green pastures reduces the grazing area for livestock. The fact that houses are only used for a short period every year is an economical problem. The houses could be hired to the visitors by changing the law that prohibits the accommodation of outsiders in the valleys. We must admit that this solution was not liked by the residents. The valleys should be protected from the invasion of summer houses as in the case of coastal settlements which invade the coasts. This will result in the pollution of the landscape and natural resources. These pastures have a high potential of ecotourism and should be preserved. Instead of building second houses in the plateaus, small mountain huts, operated by the residents, should be built to accommodate the visitors. In this way, nature would be protected and dairy products could be marketed for high profits.

We must take advantage of the cool climate in the plateaus while the heat is difficult to stand in the cities due to the changes in the climate. However, long term measures must be taken and proper planning must be made to protect the nature. Unplanned construction should be stopped before it is too late and it should not be forgotten that pollution in the plateaus will pollute the water we drink. Today and in the future plateaus, with its unharmed nature, untouched species of plants and animals and fresh air will be essential areas for ecotourism. The production will increase, local traditions will be introduced and mutual advantage would be attained by proper planning.

RESULT

The transhumance activity, leading of livestock to the high mountains for the summer months changed due to the holiday needs of the people who emigrated to cities. This change is mainly caused by people who moved to cities but still could not abandon their previous habits and traditions. People who emigrated to cities and mastered different skills and occupations other than breeding cattle and farming still wish to keep their connection to the highlands by building a second house in the plateaus for summer use. The function of the plateaus may have changed slightly due to the construction of summer houses, but the fact that plateaus are the property of certain villages has not changed.

The vertical seasonal livestock movement took place until the 1990s, from then on especially for the last 15-20 years, the plateaus have become a fantastic base for summer holiday. One of the first changes was that fewer people were interested in herding cattle; instead they used their plateau houses to rest and to spend the summer. People lodged in their rudimentary stone houses at first, but due to the improvements in their economic conditions they moved into their newly built

fancy homes. The first change was about the materials used to construct the houses, the second change was about the design of the new homes. Since they no longer fed cattle, they did not need the dairy, traditionally built on the ground floor.

Temporary settlement areas on Keremali Mountain are not too far from the permanent settlement areas, so transportation is not a problem. The distance between the villages and the plateaus are in the range of 5-20 km.

Even though village settlements and plateau settlements are very close to each other, plateaus were preferred to breed cattle. The plateaus are at higher altitudes than the villages, so there is a vertical movement to the higher pastures in the summer for basically three reasons. The first reason is to avoid livestock from harming the plantation areas since villages are predominantly used for farming. Secondly, there is a better chance of finding flat green pastures on the highlands. Finally, it is a traditional activity people like to repeat every year.

Two types of transhumance activities are dominant on the Çiğdem Plateau. One is the traditional vertical movement to transfer livestock to the cooler pastures. The second is for holiday purposes. If the increasing impact of tourism could be transformed into ecotourism, traditional transhumance activities will be supported as well.

Conditions have improved in the plateaus with the use of electricity. The fact that all kinds of electronic devices can be used on the highlands has also affected the life style. The function of the plateaus have changed and have become alternative tourist destinations. With all their natural beauties, lakes, rivers, streams, vegetation and fauna the plateaus have become the center for festivals and celebrations. The highlands are the newly discovered and considerably untouched lands in terms of tourism. Thus, it is very important that the emphasis on tourism must be shifted from mass tourism to ecotourism and the herders must be rewarded for their efforts. In this way, long lasting developments could be maintained on the highlands. If the mentioned measures are not taken cattle breeding may come to an end and cultural balance may be disturbed.

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