

Yayla Peasants and Environmental Movements*

Presented at the 74th Annual Meeting of the Eastern Sociological Society

February 19-22, 2004

Roosevelt Hotel, New York, NY

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**[*National Parks and Traditional Communities in the Mediterranean Landscapes of Anatolia \(Turkey\): Searching for a Balance. The Case of Koprulu-Kanyon National Park. Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts, 1993.*](#)
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ABSTRACT:

This study examines the challenge of integrating ecologically sustainable land use traditions into protected areas (Koprulu-Kanyon National Park) in Southern Turkey. It argues that conservation of resources among rural land-based communities (*yayla* peasants) depends on the traditional, well-established social governance system of people. It presents evidence of the local communities' conservation ethic and local knowledge correlating with their sociodemographic patterns. It recommends strategies to integrate these communities into the protected areas and emphasizes sustainable land use traditions as a communal choice to industrialization and proletarianization. When local people are excluded from sustainable land use traditions and management of natural resources, then local economies collapse, local knowledge is undermined, and farming families of rural areas move into cities. Saving a few remnants of traditionally protected land and techniques along with cultural diversity becomes vital for transitional villages. The Mediterranean region of Turkey has been experiencing rapid development activities, mostly large-scale tourism development. By examining such case studies, the environmental movement in Turkey should gain a better understanding of ways it can help rural communities struggling to protect their natural resource commons. Empowering local communities could be done through promoting ecotourism and participatory ecologically sound planning.

***Yayla* Peasants and Environmental Movements**

Introduction:

Today, a majority of the world's rural people live in these modified traditional lands, and where national parks were established, land is perceived as "crucial land-use" (Machlis & Tichnell 1985). Although the national parks in general have made important contributions to global conservation, national parks in developing countries seldom effectively meet all the functions for which they were designed: preserving both "living", contemporary cultures. Land-use of cultural and historical significance constantly faces the danger of being displaced by new technology, by rapid population growth and by urbanization (Ruddle & Manshard 1981; EPFT 1987; Kirdar 1992). Traditionally, Turkey is an agricultural country with almost 70% of the country's population dependent on the agricultural sector (Nyrop 1980; Pittman 1988). As a mountainous country, nearly 39.5% of the rural population (9.9 million people) live in forest villages (Caglar 1987). The Mediterranean countries have engaged in very strong traditional agricultural and pastoral activities for centuries, distinguishing them from the industrial economics of Central and Northern Europe (Greuter 1979).

Human-modified landscapes were considered as an obstacle to practice of conventional national parks. Within some areas, declared as national parks, the Köprülü-Kanyon National Park for instance, human modification is moderate because of established self-regulating and self-supporting land use systems. The people have established certain equilibrium between vegetation, livestock and simple techniques of cultivation, which can be important for the preservation of flora and fauna in this park area. The principal source of income for the forest villages, such as in Köprülü-Kanyon National Park, comes from subsistence production. In southern Anatolia, a Taurus mountainous region, due to the rugged relief and bio-climatic factors *yayla* peasantry has arisen. The sedentary pastoralism, mostly a combination of agriculture, pasture and forestry, has been adopted as a fundamental activity. This type of settlement and traditional activity, as we shall see fits seamlessly into the ecological conditions. Since they have lived on these lands for centuries, they have established a socially well-structured system which tends to ensure a balance between people and natural resources in isolated traditional societies. This is particularly evident in such areas as the Köprülü-Kanyon National Park area. There, traditional activities depend on a harmonious relationship with the local environment, which frequently contributes to minimizing disruption and maintaining an ecological equilibrium.

The Köprülü-Kanyon case exemplifies, to some extent, the strong ties of these communities with their land in terms of cultural, economic, and social dynamics within the park area. The central thought of this study, integration of local communities into park management, has raised the question: to what extent has maintenance and promotion of community-based institutions, resource-use and control systems actually contributed to preserving ecological balance and conserving of park resources within the context of the Mediterranean Ecosystem?

Therefore, it is evident that traditional societies which manage to maintain ecologically sound practices can play a significant role in various stages of development in the protected areas (Burrell 1986). These societies can participate and benefit directly in a manner consistent with their values and knowledge. As Burrell (1986) states

Success in protecting a landscape depends not just on government support and the local management organization; it also depends on the reaction and involvement of the local population (p. 21).

Contrary to the conventional conservation measures, national parks and reserves when designed and managed appropriately are recognized as offering major sustainable benefits to society by maintaining the environmental stability, productive capacity of the ecosystem, providing opportunities for research, monitoring, education, tourism, stewardship and most importantly socio-economic development of rural environments.

When the global demands for efficient and immediate use of natural resources increase, particularly in poverty-stricken countries with fast-growing populations, the need for national parks has to be justified on both ecological and socio-economic grounds. Although national parks are often viewed as islands in isolation from their neighboring communities, their mutual influences determine relationships between ecological, socio-cultural and economic conditions. Protected areas need to be designed, managed and served in a way that bring real benefits to both local and national communities if they are to survive in a period of increasing demands on natural resources. To ensure that social and economic development meet the real needs of human societies requires that national parks receive significant support not only from governments or other agencies, but particularly from local people. In considering the relationship of local people to national parks as Dasmann (1982) pointed out, "we must look well beyond the boundaries of those areas and work with the people to create ecologically sustainable systems of land and resource use" (p.670).

[...]

The Social Dimension of Traditional Park Concept

In developing countries, cultural adaptation to the traditional park concept is considered the most crucial and common threat to its "living" cultural populations and their traditional land-use patterns. Most of the Mediterranean countries have significant examples of earlier forms of land use of historical values along with living cultures. In some instances, it is recognized that within the boundaries of declared parks communities with traditional practices exist and tend to have a sustainable relationship with their environment (Dasmann 1982). According to site-specific studies, such traditions have ensured the conservation of certain species (Dasmann 1975; Alcorn 1991). Behind these realities, there was a debate on whether or not these areas (i.e., areas include *illegal settlements*) should have been considered parks in the list of IUCN criteria by in 1970s (IUCN 1974). Ultimately, the response was not in favor of local communities since the authorities and master plans aimed to dislocate these societies in the long-term (Constantino 1974).

Without analyzing the pattern and system of community resource use, as emphasized by Miller (1978), park planners often decided that use of natural resources by people living nearby declared national parks caused degradation of the environment. This notion tended to reflect a negative attitude on the part of local people towards protected areas. However, their attitudes were changed when lands were no longer under the local people's control (Miller 1978). The majority of the world's rural people live tied to their cultures and their land. They survive at a subsistence level, where national parks are established without realization of their existence. Hence, park imposed restrictions on local traditional ways of life, have led to cultural disintegration and the break down of social organization, causing undesirable natural and cultural changes in many local communities (Nietschmann 1984; Brechin & West 1991). In cases where local people were removed from their homes, the situation resulted in serious negative social impacts (West 1991). Even zoning regulations, which were considered an important trend in park management, did not resolve the questions concerning local people's socio-cultural and economic necessities (Dasmann 1973; Budowski 1977; Halffter 1980). Only marking the zoning at *ground-level* without taking into account or consulting with local communities has remained ineffective or detrimental. As a result, today's national parks in many countries are often *paper parks*. This means that these parks do not actually exist in their intended form. The ones that do exist are seriously threatened while others have no management plan, or are poorly managed (Ugalde 1989).

[...]

Research Hypothesis, Questions and Objectives (see my original work in 1993 for details)

The international conservation movement and the creation of a national park system tends to ignore traditional environmental knowledge and social control systems that were responsible for the maintenance of an ecological equilibrium on these traditional lands. Restrictions and inadequate incentives imposed on local populations in some cases caused the indigenous populations to partially abandon traditional ecologically sound activities. This resulted in the break down of social control systems and a weakening of the ecological balance. Rather than being subject to strict conservation measures, traditional societies' interaction with landscapes that are protected has undermined efforts of protection of natural resources, living culture preservation and local development under increasing demands for land.

These facts point out the need to maintain the conservation of natural resources and cultural integrity through a combined strategy that seeks to support the incorporation of the local people into national parks or protected areas. In order to achieve maximum use and to ensure the long-term security of the national park, it is imperative that planners understand and admit the rights of traditional societies over resources within their territories. Furthermore, the notion of seeing conservation as a human problem and acknowledging human beings as one of the park elements requires an integrated strategy for maintaining cultural and natural resources in the park environs. Support and participation by the local people in park activities are crucial steps towards establishing a harmonious relationships between these communities and park authorities. Subsequently, looking at the other side of conservation, i.e., the intention to meet the basic material, spiritual and cultural requirements of people in order to guarantee the security of their livelihood, is as necessary as biological conservation.

Behind these central thoughts, the specific hypothesis of this study is that an attempt to maintain the ecological balance and/or to conserve forestry resources by local people living within national parks (i.e., Köprülü-Kanyon National Park) and in surrounding areas (in Turkey) depends on the extent to which traditional social control system are retained on traditional lands. Accordingly, the *dependent variables* are: 1). Conservation/ maintenance of forestry resources [including preservation of *maquis* (see glossary) vegetation] within and around the park and 2). traditionally established social control system. To this extent, conservation will be measured by maps and site-specific ecological data.

An operationalization of the retention of traditionally oriented social control system within and surrounding the Köprülü-Kanyon National Park area is demonstrated by *the independent*

variables listed below. These independent variables, which are to be investigated, are based on some explanations and assumptions (see original work, Karaoglu 1993 for further explanations).

- 1). Existence/influence of leadership
- 2). Stability of population
- 3). Improved accessibility
- 4). Location and access to resources
- 5). Direct Economic Incentives [Forest Village Development Cooperatives (=FVDC)]
- 6). Settlement types

The related research questions are:

1. Is a traditionally-oriented social control system (on natural resource-use) positively correlated with the preservation or protection of the forestry resources including preservation of *maquis*) at the Köprülü-Kanyon Park area)?
2. What are the efforts of local people through their social systems in terms of maintaining forestry resources along with *maquis* within the park and protecting forestry resources outside the park at the Köprülü-Kanyon Park area so that their efforts can be incorporated into park management?
3. To what extent does the retention of traditionally-oriented social control systems change according to the following factors:
 - a. Existence/influence of a leadership
 - b. Stability of population (population growth vs. decrease in the selected villages)
 - c. Improved accessibility to districts
 - d. Types of settlement (mainly scattered or non-scattered type settlements)
 - e. Location and access to resources (highland vs lowland settlements)
 - f. Direct economic incentives (FVDC)
4. Is (Are) there any link(s) between their culture, religious beliefs and maintenance of resources in the Köprülü-Kanyon Park? To what extent are the ecologically-adapted customary practices positively correlated with preservation of resources-forestry at the Köprülü-Kanyon Park area?
5. What are the major factors that support or retain social dynamics in spite of maintaining natural resources-forestry within/outside the Köprülü-Kanyon Park area?

[...]

CONCLUSION: Koprulu-Kanyon National Park: From 1993-2004

[...]