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“Conservation and Sustainable Management of Turkey’s Steppe Ecosystems”

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I’M FROM URFA ETERNALLY: LIFE IN ŞANLIURFA STEPPES



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I’M FROM URFA ETERNALLY: LIFE IN ŞANLIURFA STEPPE

This booklet was prepared by Doęa Koruma Merkezi within the scope of the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Turkey's Steppe Ecosystems Project carried out by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks (GDNCNP), General Directorate of Plant Production (GDPP) and General Directorate of Forestry (GDF) with the financial support of the Global Environment Fund (GEF).

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Conservation and Sustainable Management of Turkey’s Steppe Ecosystems Project

I’m from Urfa Eternally - Life in Őanlıurfa Steppes

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Introduction

Steppes constitute one of Turkey's most important ecosystems in ecological, economic, and social terms. Steppe ecosystems in Turkey include natural steppes, meadows, and rangelands. Steppes are found mainly in Central Anatolia, Eastern Anatolia, and Southeastern Anatolia regions. Steppe ecosystems in Turkey face threats such as habitat losses linked to investments, urbanization pressure, mining, overgrazing and afforestation practices in unsuitable areas and the effects of climate change.

Conservation and Sustainable Management of Turkey's Steppe Ecosystems Project is implemented by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks (GDNCNP), General Directorate of Plant Production (GDPP) and General Directorate of Forestry (GDF) with the financial support of Global Environment Facility (GEF). The project aims to improve the conservation of Turkey's steppe ecosystems through effective management of protected areas and mainstreaming of steppe biodiversity conservation into production landscapes. The activities within the scope of establishment of enabling environment for the effective conservation of steppe biodiversity across large landscapes are carried out by Doğa Koruma Merkezi (DKM; Nature Conservation Centre).

The project is implemented in Kızılkuyu Wildlife Reserve, Tek Tek Mountains National Park and Karacadağ steppes in Şanlıurfa.

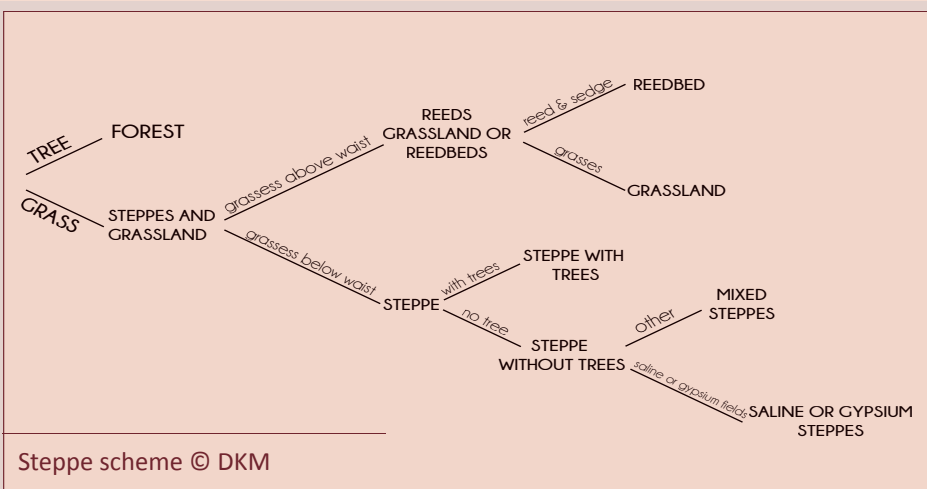
Within the scope of the project, publications were prepared with a view to providing information about the importance of the steppes, raising awareness and thus supporting the conservation of the steppes and sustainable use of their natural resources. These publications are aimed at different target groups, including teachers, students, experts, and decision-makers responsible for the management of protected areas. One of the publications prepared for the general public within the scope of the project is a set of five booklets aiming to provide information on different topics related to the steppes. These booklets were prepared on the following subjects: plant diversity of the Şanlıurfa steppes, animal diversity, life in the steppe, archeology, and the ancestors of the grains. The contents of these five booklets complement one another on different issues related to steppes of Şanlıurfa and Turkey. This booklet contains detailed information on the relationship of people living in the steppes of Şanlıurfa with the steppes and how the steppes affect their lives.

What is a Steppe?

Steppes can be defined as natural areas dominated by grasses and flowers. Trees can also be present in the steppes, but they are either very old remnants or small drought-resistant shrubs. The main reason for higher coverage of herbaceous plants and fewer trees in the steppes is the low amount of rainfall. If the amount of rainfall in an area falls below 500 mm-600 mm per year, there would not be many trees around.



On the other hand, rainfall alone is not the only reason why there are mostly herbaceous plants instead of trees in a given area. This situation is also caused by various climatic events, constantly recurring wildfires, changes that occurred during geological periods, avalanches, floods, and the soil and bedrock structure. Nevertheless, the main feature of the vast steppes that start from one end of Europe and spread to the east of China is the low rainfall.



The Importance of Steppes

Steppes are generally considered insignificant fields due to their uniform appearance. However, meadows and steppes that cover 40 percent of the world, except Antarctica and Greenland, represent some of the most important ecosystems for the maintenance of life.



- Staple foods such as **wheat, barley and oats** that feed the world grow in the steppes.



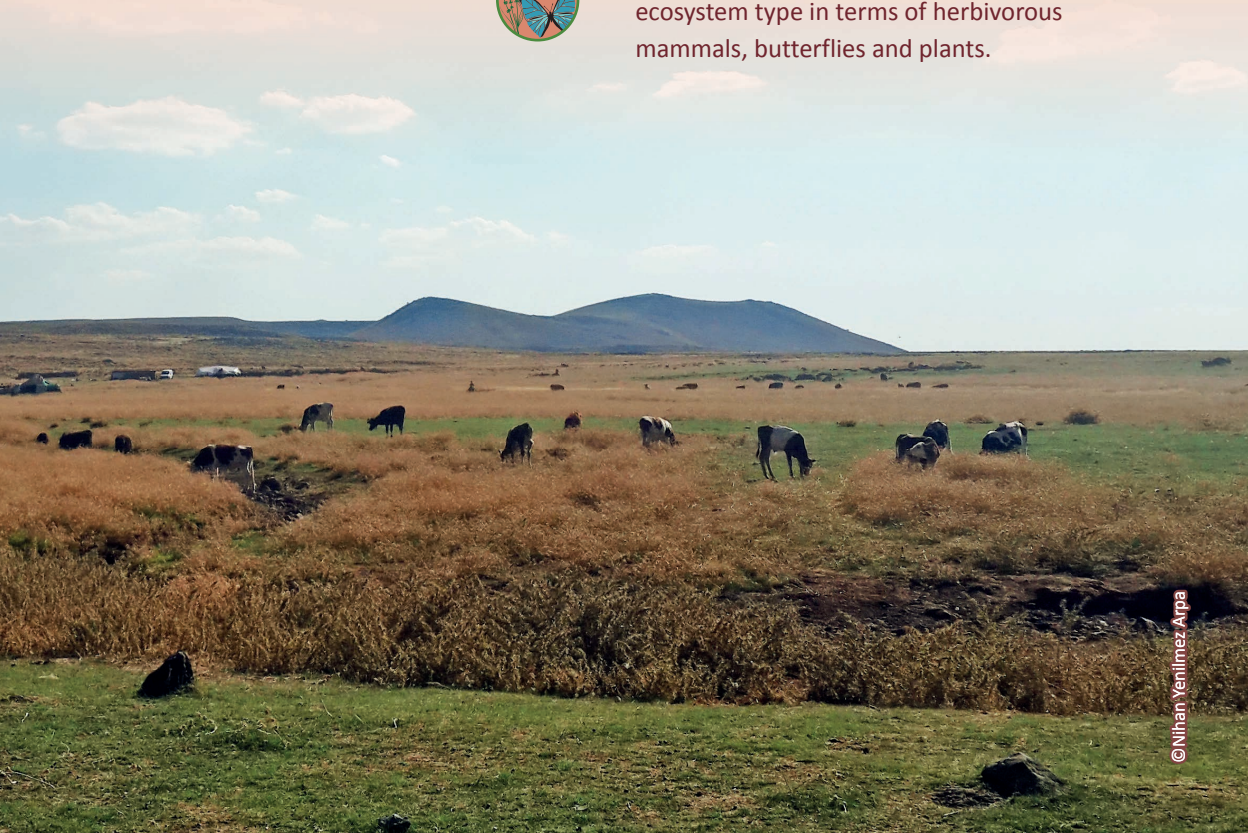
- Animal husbandry depends largely on steppes. Approximately, 1 billion people living below the poverty line earn a living from sheep and cattle breeding. Moreover, **27 percent** of milk production and **23 percent** of meat production come from the steppes.



- 33 percent of the carbon on earth is sequestered in the steppes.



- Steppes are the most important ecosystem type in terms of herbivorous mammals, butterflies and plants.





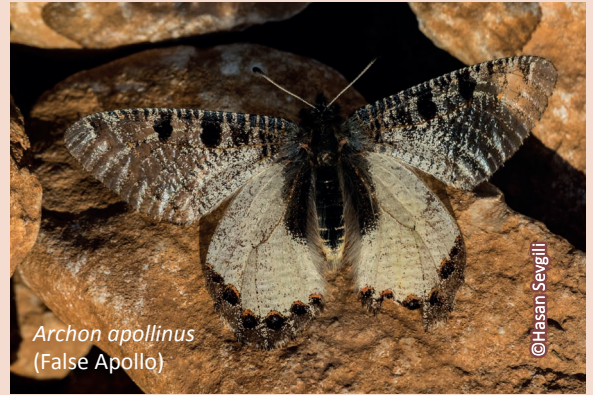
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Gazella marica
(Arabian sand gazelle)

Gazella gazella
(Mountain gazelle)

More than half of the herbivorous mammals in Turkey, majority of which are rodent species, live in the steppe ecosystems (ww.tramem.org; Krystufek and Vohralik, 2005; Krystufek and Vohralik, 2009). Vole (*Microtus* spp.), gerbil (*Meriones* spp.), jerboa (*Allactaga* spp.) and hamster (*Cricetidae* spp.) species contribute significantly to the faunistic richness of the steppe. Arabian sand gazelle (*Gazella marica*), one of the ecologically and culturally important species, is naturally seen in Şanlıurfa, the only place where this species can be naturally found today, whereas mountain gazelle (*Gazella gazella*) is seen only in Hatay. The Anatolian mouflon (*Ovis gmelini anatolica*), which is the ancestor of the domestic sheep, today lives in small populations in Karaman, Ankara and



Archon apollinus
(False Apollo)

© Hasan Sevgilli

Afyon because of successful reintroduction efforts. A similar situation goes for the butterfly species. Among 420 butterfly species in the country, 160 butterfly species only from the Lycaenidae family are distributed in the steppes in Turkey (Karacetin and Welch, 2011; Ambarlı et al., 2016).

Steppes represent ecosystems with highest plant wealth in Turkey and host most of the endemic species. Although the common belief is that forests and wetlands present a higher diversity, almost 80 percent of the endemic plant species in our country are distributed in the steppes (Ekim, 2019). Moreover, contrary to the general belief, steppes are not uniform but host various colorful plant species.

Ovis gmelini anatolica
(Anatolian mouflon)



© Deniz Özütlü

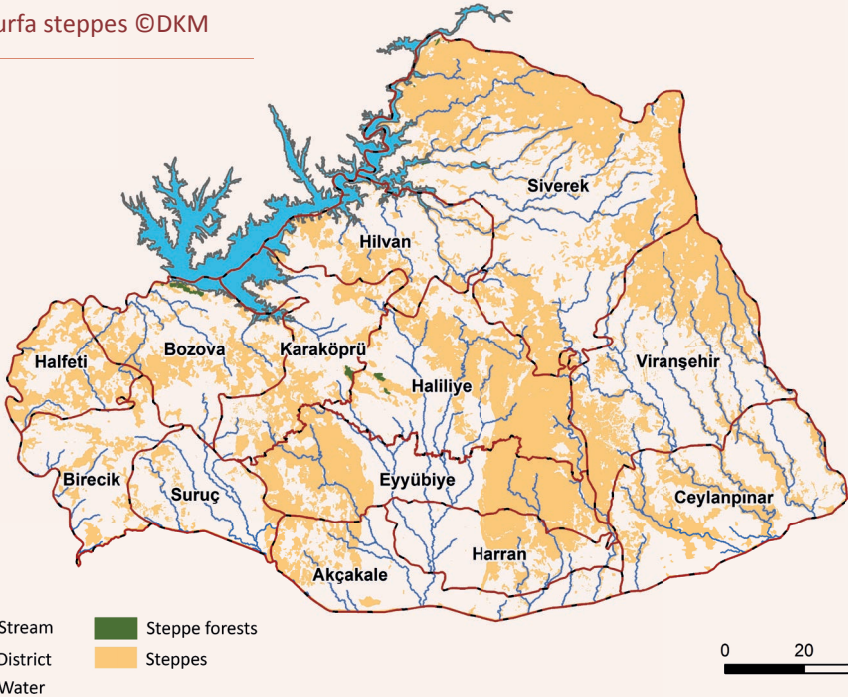
Şanlıurfa Steppes

Şanlıurfa province is one of the first places to come to mind when steppes of Turkey are considered. Steppes make up much of the natural vegetation in Şanlıurfa owing to the vast plains, semi-arid climate, and simple topographic structure of the province.

The most important factors that play a role in the formation of Şanlıurfa steppes are severe summer heat and droughts in autumn. These factors enabled the Şanlıurfa steppes to have their own unique characteristics, distinguishing them from the Central Anatolia and Eastern Anatolia steppes.



Şanlıurfa steppes ©DKM



The Bridge of Civilizations: Şanlıurfa

The region where Şanlıurfa is located serves as a bridge connecting the Middle East to the Asia Minor. It is a city with a history of approximately 12 000 years, which has come to host many civilizations because of its geopolitical location, historical background, cultural background, and religious importance. Today the population in the region consists of Kurds, Arabs and Turks.

Şanlıurfa is located in the Fertile Crescent Region that covers southeastern Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan and certain parts of Iran. The Fertile Crescent is the region where hunter-gatherer human societies settled, began to engage in agricultural activities and domesticated sheep and goats for the first time.

The history of settlements or ephemeral camps in the region goes back to the Paleolithic and Neolithic Periods as the region is rich in both plant species (flora) and animal species (fauna).

During archaeological excavations, oak (*Quercus* spp.), almond (*Amygdalus* spp.), pistachio trees (*Pistacia* spp.), as well as barley (*Hordeum* spp.) and wheat (*Triticum* spp.) species were found. As to fauna, gazelle, boar, sheep, goat, cattle, wild ass, and brown bear bones were found in the region.

Map of the Fertile Crescent Region



Aerial view of Harbetsuvan Tepe

View of Deyr Yakup Monastery ruins from the west



© Bahattin Çelik

Since this region serves as a bridge connecting the Middle East to Asia Minor, trade has always been an important field of activity here. It is known that in the period of the Assyrian Trade Colonies (1850-1750 BC), intense trade between Anatolia and Mesopotamia was carried out by a trade route extending in the east-west direction over the Euphrates River and the Harran Plain. Today, border trade is among the sources of livelihood for the local people, but it is not intensively practiced today due to the change of borders and various laws enacted over time (Kaya, 2008; FAO-Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2019).

The fact that religious leaders of Christianity, Judaism and Islam lived in or visited this region added to the value of Şanlıurfa as a sacred/religious land. As to the social structure of Şanlıurfa, "religion" is still a dominant feature of social life. Therefore, it is possible to come across religious motifs and rituals in many aspects of social life. Small groups of religious minorities still reside in the region (FAO-Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2019).



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Balıklı Göl



Steppe Culture

Today, the economic activity that shapes the lifestyle and culture of the local people is agriculture and animal husbandry that relies on animal grazing, facilitated by what the steppe ecosystem has to offer. Steppe ecosystems came to influence the life and culture of people with its climate, geographical features, vegetation and animal communities, and the people shaped the steppes in return. This is clearly seen when the present landscape features of the Şanlıurfa steppes are examined closely.

People opened up agricultural lands for themselves in order to survive in the steppes and used natural steppes as rangelands to graze their animals. Some activities in Şanlıurfa seem to have been sustained throughout the history of humanity. For example, it is known that terebinth (*Pistacia palaestina*) was collected in the region of Tek Tek Mountains National Park in the Neolithic Period. Today, it is still used in pistachio grafting and consumed by the local people in the form of terebinth (menengiç) coffee.

Steppe culture represents a unique lifestyle. In steppe culture, animal husbandry that relies on animal grazing, accordingly a nomadic life, mounts, tents and similar elements are prominent. The steppes affected not only the economic activities of the people but also many other aspects of their cultural lives. In a geography with such a deep-rooted past and where human settlement dates back to ancient times, the influences of the steppes can be seen in every field of life from music to literature, from traditional handicrafts to architecture.



Socio-economic Structure in Şanlıurfa Steppes

In rural areas with steppes, the village economy is generally based on agriculture and animal husbandry. Although plant production is low in villages, wheat (*Triticum* spp.), lentil (*Lens* spp.), barley (*Hordeum* spp.), and chickpea (*Cicer* spp.) are commonly grown. Karacadağ rice, which is named after Karacadağ, is a distinct variety of grain of the Karacadağ region.

Kırsal alanlarda büyükbaş ve küçükbaş Bovine and ovine breeding is common in rural areas. Ovine breeding, mostly sheep breeding, is carried out on rangelands using traditional methods based on grazing. On the other hand, traditional products of animal origin including milk, cheese and butter are usually consumed within the family, and market-oriented production is very little.



© Ömer Faruk Kaya

Natural plants are used very infrequently for economic purposes. There are many plant species that grow naturally in Karacadağ and have the potential to be marketed and/or exported as ornamental plants and medicinal-aromatic plants when reproduced. Reverse tulip (*Fritillaria* spp., also called the weeping bride), which is cultivated in the region, has the potential to be used in the pharmaceutical and cosmetic industry.

Most of the lands in the region are jointly owned. This creates problems in matters such as financial supports and setting up cooperatives. In recent years, due to insufficient income from agriculture and animal husbandry, and limited livelihood opportunities in non-agricultural sectors, villagers have turned to daily wage earning opportunities (FAO-Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2019).



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In rural areas where agricultural activities remain to be dominant, a traditional worldview prevails, which is largely influenced by the family structure, with mechanical division of labor where solidarity and social organizations are kept alive by a community spirit. The specified conditions have resulted in the formation of a closed social structure in Şanlıurfa. Traditional lifestyle, tribalism and the networking system are also prominent phenomena within this social structure (FAO-Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2019). The most distinctive feature of this social structure is the introversion of the society and the loyalty of local people to traditional system that has been intertwined with tribalism and agaluk.

Rather than individual identity, collective identities (tribe-family) are prominent in social life in the region. The dignity and strength that continues in the tribal culture depends on the number of people.

In the past, Şanlıurfa suffered from lack of population due to geographical factors, climatic conditions and public order problems. Accordingly, Şanlıurfa has been considered a tribal settlement since the end of the seventeenth century (FAO-Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2019).



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Women washing wool in Aşağı Karabahçe District



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The Life of Nomads

As a result of people's adaptation to steppes, a lifestyle called "nomadism" emerged. Especially the Karacadağ steppes in Şanlıurfa are important habitats for nomads, who have been living on animal husbandry for centuries. Karacadağ represents the highest plateau in the region with an altitude of approximately 2 000 m. Because of this feature, it was not chosen for permanent settlement, but was used mostly for seasonal settlement. This provided an ideal environment for grazing animals in the region during the summer months.

Karacadağ plateaus are one of the few camping areas used by nomadic tribes as rangelands in spring and summer. Nomads spend the winter in Ceylanpınar, Siverek, Hilvan, Viranşehir, Tek Tek Mountains and their surroundings. Although the hair tents, which are the only shelters of the nomads, look colorless like the steppes from the outside, they are very colorful inside.

Kejan Tribe constitutes the majority of nomads in Karacadağ. In addition, Karacadağ Turkmens, Karakeçili and Beritan Tribes also use Karacadağ as a plateau. In recent years, most of the tribes have moved to villages and the number of nomads has gradually declined. The main sources of livelihoods for the nomads are the sale of livestock and products of animal origin including milk, cheese, butter and wool (FAO-Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2019).





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Beginning of Animal Husbandry in the World

The use of Anatolian steppes by humans goes back to ancient times. The existence of vast steppe plains in Şanlıurfa has made agriculture and animal husbandry one of the main sources of income since those times. The first written piece of information regulating the use of the steppes for grazing can be seen in the famous Hittite Laws, drafted by the Hittites between 1390-1350 BC. The presence of domestic animals in the area dates back to the first domestication by humans.

Sheep and goats are among the first animal species domesticated by humans. It is estimated that sheep were domesticated in northern Iraq 10 750 years ago and goats in Anatolia 9 000 years ago. These small ruminant animals adapted well to Anatolia's rangelands and degraded lands. Turkey's semi-arid Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia Regions are more suitable for sheep and goat breeding than dairy cattle farming due to the natural rangelands. Therefore, the contribution of ovine farming to the economy of Şanlıurfa, located in southeastern Turkey, is considerable

The southeastern Anatolia region is where one of the first animal husbandry experiences in the world was gained. Animal breeds that adapted for so long to the flora, climate, and topography of Şanlıurfa contribute also to the livelihoods of farmers. These species transform natural vegetation into valuable products such as meat, milk, wool hair (mohair), leather, and fertilizer.



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Agricultural Production

One of the main sources of income in Şanlıurfa is agricultural production. In this region, dry farming techniques were used in the past. But with the introduction of the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) in 1995, agricultural techniques were changed and irrigated agriculture and greenhouse cultivation were introduced. Today, cotton, wheat, barley, red lentil, corn, red pepper, peanut, sunflower, chickpea, watermelon, melon, grape and olives are produced in Şanlıurfa with the development of irrigation facilities as well as agricultural culture. Karacadağ rice, which is grown especially in the foothills of Karacadağ, is one of the prominent agricultural products of Şanlıurfa. It grows on volcanic soil, is fed with spring water and is cultivated without use of chemicals and through no-till farming.

Karacadağ rice in the region can be traced back to ancient times.

I watered the rice

It flows finely

Among these youth

My darling is thin

Karacadağ rice
harvest

Karacadağ rice
harvest



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Karacadağ rice added value to the region with shallow and stony soil, which is not suitable for agriculture, and the rice became an important source of income for local people. Karacadağ rice is cultivated during April and May and harvested in late September and early October. It differs from other varieties of rice with its delicious taste because of high starch and protein content, its low tendency to become sticky due to high water absorption capacity, its unique smell, and its light brown color. As a result, Karacadağ rice has been geographically indicated because it is different from crops of similar nature, it has been associated with the region, and it has a certain quality.



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Traces of the Steppe in the Living Cultural Heritage

The living cultural heritage of Şanlıurfa is primarily shaped by its geography and steppes as well as its history dating back to very old times and civilizations that have come and gone in this process.

The interaction of people with steppe animals in Şanlıurfa dates back to quite old times. With the discovery of Göbeklitepe, this relationship was dated from approximately 12 000 years ago. The presence of reliefs of animals such as the desert monitor, wild boar, crane, stork, fox, snake, scorpion, lion, and spider on the pillars in Göbeklitepe, the oldest known temple in the world, indicates that the steppe animals had an influence on the ancient belief systems even 12 000 years ago.

Another place in Şanlıurfa, where this relationship can be seen precisely is Haleplibahçe Mosaic Museum. In the mosaics exhibited there, it is possible to see figures of many steppe animals such as gazelles and partridges still living in Şanlıurfa today.



The effects of steppes are most visible in agricultural activities. Agricultural activities, on the other hand, seem to have directly shaped the cuisine. Şanlıurfa cuisine relies on ghee (butter) and lamb meat, two significant products of livestock grazing on the steppes of Şanlıurfa. In fact, it is claimed that the ghee and flour of Gaziantep's famous baklava comes from Şanlıurfa (Durmaz, 2014).

Another determinant of Şanlıurfa cuisine is the use of abundant tomato paste and "isot" pepper. "Isot" (hot pepper) is a type of pepper specific to Şanlıurfa region, also known as the gold of Şanlıurfa. The most important feature of these red and green peppers is that they are very hot. These fleshy peppers, which have a unique shape, are very

special for Şanlıurfa people. They are used almost in every dish. The use of safflower, a type of saffron, is also noteworthy.

One of the dishes of Şanlıurfa cuisine known throughout the country is Turkish steak tartar (çiğ köfte). This steak tartar is more than just a food item in Şanlıurfa; it is the sought-after dish of the "sıra nights".

The tradition of "sıra nights", which corresponds to musical dinner conversations, is the first thing that comes to mind when speaking of living cultural heritage of Şanlıurfa. "Sıra nights", together with yaren and barana, is registered in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010, under the name of "traditional conversation meetings".



©Ali Rıza Öztürkmen

There are various forms of gatherings in Şanlıurfa similar to “sıra nights”. They can be listed as follows: “sahaniye”, chamber tradition, “harafene” and vineyard-garden-mountain trips. The purpose of all of them is to come together and chat, drink coffee, eat together and sometimes have a good time making music. Among these, vineyard-garden and mountain walks are carried out by going to an enjoyable natural area and staying there for some time. In a way, they can be considered a kind of holiday since they are viewed as a way of escaping the heat in the arid climate of the steppe.

Although Şanlıurfa cuisine relatively preserves its originality today, there is an increasing tendency towards ready-to-eat meals especially for special occasions (weddings, condolence meetings, etc.) due to the changing lifestyle, increasing transportation opportunities and technology (FAO-Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2019).

Handicrafts in Şanlıurfa also appear as a part and output of agriculture and animal husbandry in the steppe. Leatherworking, furriery, saddlery, fabric and carpet-rug weaving, saddle making, felt making, hemp rope-making, “kazazlık” (silver weaving on silk threads), wood and stone processing,

blacksmithing, cauldron making, milling, cone making, painting, herbalism are the main ones.

Handicrafts actually emerged for the production of utensils, tools and textile products needed in daily life. Some of these were made as dowry, which led to the production of top-quality crafts. Today, unfortunately, there is a tendency towards synthetic materials, easy techniques and motifs (FAO-Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2019; Akarpınarlı et al., 2012).

Among handicrafts of Şanlıurfa, furriery, leatherworking, felt making, and carpet-rug weaving are directly linked to the rangelands in steppes and ovine breeding. In carpet-rug weaving, the wool of the bred sheep is used. One of the outstanding motifs in the rugs of the region is scorpions. Horse breeding is of



©Nihan Yenilmez Arpa

great importance in keeping saddlery alive in Şanlıurfa. Nowadays, the saddlers, the number of which is gradually decreasing, continue working in Saraç Bazaar.

Şanlıurfa has special importance in terms of horse breeding. Arabian horses and British horses are popular in the world. Arabian horses that spread to the Middle East also came to Şanlıurfa. Half of the horse population of Turkey is present in Şanlıurfa. Stallions and mares raised by Şanlıurfa citizens were bought for the state studs. German Marshall Helmut von Moltke, who visited Şanlıurfa in 1838, was fascinated by the Arabian horses and highly impressed by a javelin game he watched. One of the Şanlıurfa breeding stallions, namely Şüveyme, was chosen as the World Champion

at an international exhibition held in Paris in 1900. An Equine Breeding Institution was established in 1947 to provide services for Şanlıurfa and all the Eastern Anatolia for horse breeding purposes. Şanlıurfa is one of the six provinces in Turkey, where official horse races are held. The Şanlıurfa Hippodrome grove, built on 750 decares of land, is in a position suitable for all kinds of development related to horse riding. Presently, the Turkey Association of Racehorse Breeders and Owners has 300 registered members from Şanlıurfa.

The horse is a dynamic animal by nature, which had an influence on human life. The horse kept the man company when giving them a ride rather than acting as a pack animal.



Karacadağ steppes

Horse was domesticated by the Turks in Central Asia between 8000-4000 BC (Erk, 1978). The horse, which came to be identified with the active nomadic lifestyle of the Turks, had reflections in many cultural aspects, including oral culture and games. In the steppe, the holy ox was replaced by a horse.

Horse is one of the animals known for its attachment to human beings. For this reason, the relationship between man and horse has been as high as a kind of brotherhood. It is possible to see this in the following lines of Karacaođlan:

*The valiant is the brother of the valiant
The horse is the real brother of the
valiant*

The close relationship between man and horse has been sustained from past to

present. The horse is also popular in Şanlıurfa, and the people of Şanlıurfa consider it a symbol of good luck. The saying goes "If you can't afford to feed a horse, drill a hole in your neighbor's wall to at least let the horse's breath enter your house." It is believed that the good luck benefits the house with a horse and the seven houses around it.

One of the ways to understand the place of the horse in Şanlıurfa culture is to follow its traces in oral culture. Here are two of the proverbs about the horse:

*One who rides someone else's horse
dismounts shortly
The noble horse adds to its feed*

An example that shows the place of the Arabian horse in Şanlıurfa culture is the following folk song. It is noteworthy that the folk song mentions not an ordinary horse but specifically the Arabian horse.



Gazella marica
(Arabian sand gazelle)



*Shakes her head like an Arabian horse
What did I say to pull down your dark
brows?*

(wow, wow, kohled eyes, wow)

*Can't let you go to strangers, to the
deserts, wow wow kohled eyes wow*

*The one with dangerous brows eyes
lashes, wow wow kohled eyes wow*

*Arabian horse does not get tired by being
ridden*

*A youth should not be shot with a five
shot mauser*

(wow wow kohled eyes wow)

One is not loved by a few golds

Chorus

Şanlıurfa sources many folk songs in our country. When Muzaffer Sarısözen came to Şanlıurfa in 1938 to compile folk songs, he said, "I spared three days for Urfa, gathered

five hundred melodies and couldn't finish it. I have visited so many places, but haven't seen one like Urfa."

Steppe animals and their place in culture can be seen clearly in Şanlıurfa folk songs. As shown by findings of archaeological excavations, the gazelle was hunted in the past too, but at the same time it won the hearts of the people with the beauty of its eyes. In folk songs, the lover is called as gazelle-eyed:

My darling, your eyes are gazelles

Your black locks are snakes

Wrap around the white neck

The brunette that burned me

(Lyrics-Music: Abdullah Balak)

An example of the reflections of the gazelle in Şanlıurfa folk songs is the following folk song. From this song, we understand that the gazelle was also hunted:

*A gazelle wanders in Urfa mountains (oh
dear, oh dear)*

Lost her fawn she is crying, dreadful

*I couldn't find a cure to the misery of my
little one*



Don't wander gazelle, in these mountains, they will hunt you

Separate you from mother father and lover

(Source: Cemil Cankat, Derleyen: Muzaffer Sarisözen)

Aviculture is a traditional activity in Şanlıurfa. There are birdhouses built in certain parts of the houses and birdman coffeehouses. Aviculture is commonly known as a tradesman's hobby. The

tradesman, who is at work all day, frees his birds after closing his shop in the evening, and goes home after spending some time with them. It is known that tens of thousands of birds are fed in houses of the city. Reared birds are listed as follows: House birds (ruddy shelduck), cage birds, wild birds accustomed to houses (pigeons), pure birds (trained, clinging birds (somersaults)) (Şanlıurfa Cultural Dictionary, 2001).

When it comes to Şanlıurfa culture, one should not forget the tattoo tradition, which is facing extinction today. Representing a tradition that disappears rapidly in the region, tattoos can only be seen today in people above a certain age, and they are made for general purposes such as protection from the evil eye, good luck-abundance, and health expectations. Although it varies among men and women, tattoos are usually applied to hand, arm, chin, forehead, neck, and temples.



When we look at the motifs, we come across an amazing variety of depictions of animals, plants, and the universe. Some of them are as follows: Sun, stars, gazelle (ceren), scorpion, fish, frog, rabbit, crane herd (V formation) or wheatear, tree, etc. What these creatures or natural elements represent in culture is a really interesting topic for research.

It is thought-provoking that these symbols, which have continuity through cultures and have been carried to the present, are also present on the stone reliefs in Göbeklitepe. For example, the scorpion depictions can be observed on stone reliefs in Göbeklitepe, on mosaics, in today's tattoos, and in carpet-rug motifs. Scorpion seems to stand somewhere between life and death.

It is clear that people who live close to nature know more about nature. Inhabitants of Şanlıurfa know, classify and use the plants around them in various ways. It was shown that 55 species of legumes distributed in the Birecik region had ethnobotanical characteristics (Akan et al., 2013).



Thymbra spicata var. *spicata*
(Mediterranean thyme)

Accordingly, these plants were used by the public for the following purposes: animal feed, treatment, fuel, utensils, and food and beverage. The best example of plants with ethnobotanical properties is licorice root (*Glycyrrhiza glabra* var. *glabra*; local name: Licorice root, licorice sherbet, biyam honey, sûs, ava sûse). A drink called "biyanbalı" is made from the roots of

Trigonella coelesyriaca

Fumaria parviflora
(Fine-leaved Fumitory)



licorice and is widely consumed. The local use of licorice syrup, which is believed to be good for stomach and kidney diseases, dates back to ancient times.

According to a study conducted in Tek Tek Mountains National Park, 120 plant species have ethnobotanical features that are used primarily for the following purposes: food, treatment, fuel, animal feed, ornamentation, dye making, toys and broom making.

Current Situation at the Project Sites

In Tek Tek Mountains National Park, Karacadağ Steppes and Kızılkuyu Wildlife Reserve, which are the pilot sites of the project, local people earn a living from



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agriculture and animal husbandry. Landless villagers, on the other hand, make a living through seasonal labor. The income of the local people from agriculture and animal husbandry has decreased due to increased costs, inefficient use of rangelands and high feed prices, and as a result, rural-urban migration has increased in recent years.

Ovine breeding is prominent in all project sites and cattle breeding in project sites except Kızılkuyu. Inefficient use and occupation of rangelands is a serious problem for the villages in all project sites. Wheat, lentil, and barley are crops that are grown in all sites. In addition to these, cotton is cultivated in Tek Tek Mountains and rice is cultivated in Karacadağ. The settlements in the region are scattered, so the number of hamlets is quite high.



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Steppes Under Threat!

Unfortunately, steppes are under significant threat with significant impacts on people, culture and general structure of Şanlıurfa. Especially the lowland steppes in Şanlıurfa are under threat due to different reasons. With the increase in mechanization in agricultural activities, steppes are converted into agricultural lands. Increasing construction pressure, irrigation projects, energy investments and mining activities also cause irreversible loss of steppes. Overgrazing is one of the important factors that cause degradation of the vegetation in Şanlıurfa steppes. Overgrazing leads to a change of natural vegetation in favor of thorny plant species that animals do not feed on, and over time these species dominate the area. This change threatens livestock breeding and communities that earn a living from animal husbandry. In this respect, studies are carried out to reduce the pressure on rangelands in the region.

In the region, illegal hunting, species smuggling, excessive plant picking and intensive farming are among the other threats to the steppe ecosystems and the species they host. Today, steppes continue to exist in stony or rocky areas as islets that contain remains of natural vegetation in between agricultural lands and grazing areas.

Lack of awareness of the importance of steppe species in the region and the fact that conservation studies for these species are mostly limited to protected areas are other factors that negatively affect biological diversity in steppes. In the face of these threats, studies for the protection and sustainable management of Şanlıurfa steppes are becoming increasingly important.



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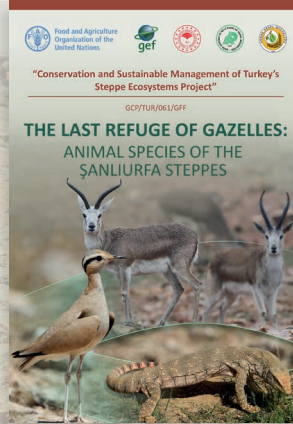
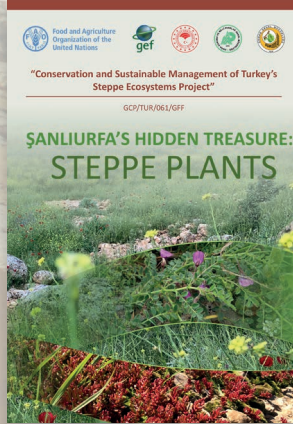
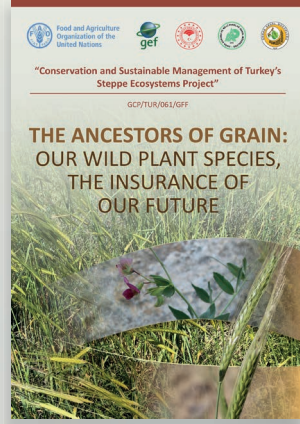
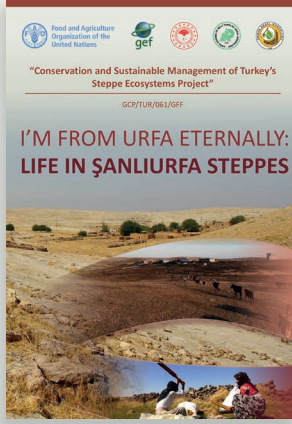
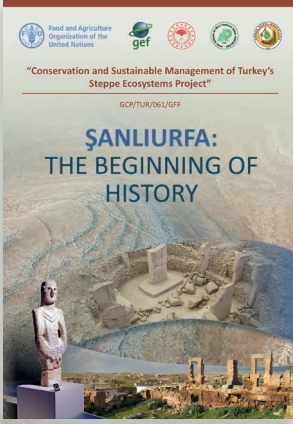
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The booklet set prepared within the scope of the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Turkey's Steppe Ecosystems Project includes the following:



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