

## The Transitions of Traditional Ecological Knowledge From Turkish Oral Culture to Written Literature:

### Yaşar Kemal and His Works

#### Türk Sözlü Kültüründen Yazılı Edebiyatına Geleneksel Ekolojik Bilgi Geçişleri: Yaşar Kemal ve Eserleri

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#### Abstract

The main purpose of this article is to analyze the relationship between Yaşar Kemal and traditional ecological knowledge, culture and life. In the introduction of this article, the creative interaction approach, nature and human interaction and traditional ecological knowledge are explained. One of the basic assumptions of this research is that traditional ecological knowledge is kept alive not only in the context of traditional culture, but also in the written and printed works of Yaşar Kemal and in later electronic cultural contexts. Yaşar Kemal's relationship with traditional ecological knowledge is analyzed in detail with examples selected from different fields of expression such as folk literature, folk botany, traditional hunting, agriculture and animal husbandry, folk medicine, folk meteorology. As a result, this study reveals that Yaşar Kemal's originality and permanence stem from the fact that he produced works within the range of traditional culture and print culture, based on love for nature and humanity, and especially by making use of traditional ecological knowledge.

**Keywords:** Yaşar Kemal, traditional ecological knowledge, creative interaction, cultural inter-contextuality, comparative literature.

#### Öz

Bu makalenin temel amacını Yaşar Kemal ile geleneksel ekolojik bilgi, kültür ve yaşam ilişkisinin çözümlenmesi oluşturmaktadır. Bu yayının girişinde yaratıcı etkileşim yaklaşımı, doğa ve insan etkileşimi ile geleneksel ekolojik bilgi açıklanmaktadır. Geleneksel ekolojik bilginin sadece geleneksel kültür bağlamında değil yazılı-basılı dolayısıyla Yaşar Kemal'in eserlerinde ve daha sonraki elektronik

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kültür bağlamlarında da yaşatıldığı bu araştırmanın temel varsayımlarından biri olarak kabul edilmektedir. Halk edebiyatı, halk botaniği, geleneksel avcılık, tarım ve hayvancılık, halk hekimliği, halk meteorolojisi gibi farklı ifade alanlarından seçilen örneklerle Yaşar Kemal'in geleneksel ekolojik bilgi ilişkisi ayrıntılı olarak çözümlenmektedir. Sonuç olarak bu çalışmada Yaşar Kemal'in özgünlük ve kalıcılığının geleneksel kültür ve yazılı-basılı kültür aralığında, doğa ve insan sevgisi temelinde ve özellikle geleneksel ekolojik bilgiden yararlanarak eserler vermiş olmasından kaynaklandığı ortaya konulmaktadır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Yaşar Kemal, geleneksel ekolojik bilgi, yaratıcı etkileşim, kültürel bağlamlararasılık, karşılaştırmalı edebiyat.

## Introduction

Life and culture are the products, the whole and sources of creative interactions. In this context, we can talk about the existence of creative interactions between products, actors, traditions, fields, contexts and cultures. Therefore, creative interactions between oral and written/printed culture and literary traditions continue to be effective today as in the past.

Human and nature interaction forms the basis and essence of life and culture. Human and nature interaction has been influential since the early periods of culture and life. Man has formed and developed his life and culture by observing and imitating nature. Language, therefore oral or written and printed culture, can be considered as the product, whole and source of human interaction with nature. Curiosity and efforts of humans to understand, make sense of and analyze themselves and nature have given birth to verbal fiction and narration. Therefore, we can talk about the existence and influence of the creative interaction between human beings and nature at the origin of oral and written literature.

Like life, culture also expresses the knowledge and experience

memory of humanity. Traditional ecological knowledge memory has been formed with human experiences about nature (For traditional ecological knowledge, see Berkes, 1993; Özdemir, 2018; Yolcu & Aça, 2019; Yolcu, 2022 et al.) Plants, animals, sea and land, mountains, rivers, etc. The knowledge and experience memory that humanity has created and developed since the early periods of history about the elements that make up nature is transferred from the past to the present and the future through interactions between traditions. People have kept the traditional ecological knowledge memory they have created alive primarily through attractive oral traditional products. Oral narrative genres have been used effectively in the intergenerational transmission of traditional ecological knowledge. In this respect, it can be argued that oral narratives have been created to keep the traditional ecological knowledge memory alive.

Life, and therefore culture, basically consists of the memory of knowledge and experience. Folk culture as a set of traditions expresses the memory of knowledge and experience of traditional people and society. Although traditional knowledge is anonymous, it is the product of individual creative interaction. Traditional knowledge is individual in the process of creation and social in terms of protection and preservation. Traditional knowledge and experience memory determines all kinds of values in the relevant social life, thus shaping the whole life.

It is stated that folk knowledge generally consists of areas related to "folk medicine, folk meteorology, folk calendar and folk law". However, fields such as "settlement-settlement types

(permanent-permanent settlement), shelter-housing (type, construction technique, household furnishings), lighting-heating, vehicles-transportation techniques, economy types, animal husbandry, agriculture-herding, hunting, beekeeping, folk economy (production-consumption-marketing), nutrition-kitchen-plants, measuring, weighing, calculation units/time-distance concepts, folk arts and crafts" are also directly related to traditional knowledge (Örnek 2000: 17- 18).

In fact, all the fields that make up traditional culture (folk literature, folk architecture, folk mathematics, folk cuisine, etc.) are based on traditional and systematic knowledge that is the product of experience and includes technical and methodological knowledge. "Being oral, based on observation-experience, vital, inductive rather than deductive, instinctive and qualitative rather than analytical and quantitative, based on a database created through the use of resources, created by historical development rather than simultaneous data, etc." are some of the main characteristics of traditional knowledge (Johnson, 1992: 94). In essence, traditional knowledge is a set of vital knowledge or principles of life that people have created through centuries of interaction with nature and constantly revise and update. Just like Yaşar Kemal, the laboratory of traditional people is nature. Traditional ecological knowledge memory is also the main source of different kinds of creations. For this reason, fields, products and actors other than folklore also have the function of preserving, transmitting and perpetuating traditional ecological knowledge. As a matter of fact, it has been emphasized that

animals and plants have become units of measurement that determine time and space in Turkish society and elements related to this process are also found in narratives and beliefs (Türkmen, 2012).

In UNESCO's 2003 living cultural heritage convention, traditional knowledge is listed under the heading "knowledge and practices related to nature and the universe" and areas such as "folk knowledge and beliefs related to nature and the universe, folk medicine, folk agriculture and animal husbandry, folk cuisine, folk architecture, folk economy, folk transport, folk communication techniques, folk agriculture and zoology, folk biology and botany, folk mathematics, folk calendar and meteorology" are included in this sector.

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) defines traditional knowledge, which it considers together with folklore, traditional expressions and genetic resources, as "knowledge, know-how, skills, innovations and practices that are inherited from ancestors and passed down from generation to generation in a traditional context and are part of the traditional lifestyles of indigenous and local communities". WIPO emphasized that traditional knowledge systems and traditional cultural expressions are important and valuable in different fields such as "biodiversity conservation, food safety, environmental management, sustainable development, primary health, cultural identity, social solidarity, cultural diversity and development of socio-economic transition resources". It is stated that "agricultural, environmental and remedial knowledge related to genetic resources, traditional medicine

knowledge, traditional hunting and fishing techniques, animal migration knowledge, water management knowledge, etc." are considered within the scope of traditional knowledge. Again within the scope of WIPO, traditional cultural expressions or folkloric expressions (forms of expression of traditional culture) are defined as "dances, songs, crafts, designs, ceremonies, stories and other artistic and cultural expressions that are part of the identity and heritage of traditional and indigenous communities", and genetic resources are defined as "examples including animal and microbial materials, such as medicinal plants, agricultural seeds and animal breeds, which contain genetic information of value, which can be reproduced or reproduced" (URL-1).

This holistic approach of WIPO is very valuable in terms of analyzing the relationship between Yaşar Kemal's works and cultural ecological knowledge. Because Yaşar Kemal evaluated cultural ecological knowledge together with traditional cultural expressions and genetic resources in his works. This approach constitutes the core of this study.

There are creative interactions between oral, print, electronic and smart technology cultures. Printed and printed literature and culture have been fed and continue to be fed by oral literature and cultural traditions, which are the traditional ecological knowledge memory, product and source. Therefore, written and printed literature and culture can be considered as one of the main transmission areas of traditional ecological knowledge memory. As a matter of fact, this situation is more evident in the works within the

scope of village literature. The memory of traditional ecological knowledge transmitted within the scope of oral culture and literature has continued to be kept alive through the representatives and products of written and printed literature and culture. Traditional ecological knowledge can also be considered as a set of cultural genetic codes that distinguish the relevant society from others. For this reason, during the periods when oral-written/printed culture changes intensified, the traditional ecological knowledge, culture and life, and therefore cultural genetic codes were transferred and disseminated through written-printed cultural products and actors, as in the fields of cinema, radio and television. Just like the actors of electronic culture, the representatives of print culture have also benefited from the memory of traditional ecological knowledge due to oral culture to gain originality, difference and attractiveness. In summary, written literature products can be considered as the means of survival and transmission of cultural ecological knowledge memory. For this reason, traditional ecological knowledge can be analyzed not only within the scope of oral culture and literature but also through written and printed literature products. In this article, for the first time, because of the scans carried out, the relations between written and printed literature and traditional ecological knowledge will be analyzed on the basis of Yaşar Kemal's works.

### **Analysis: Yaşar Kemal and Traditional Ecological Knowledge.**

Yaşar Kemal said in his speech while receiving the Peace Prize of the German Publishers Association at the Frankfurt Book Fair: "The joy of life in people is immortal. I have always wanted to be the singer of

light and joy. I wanted those who read my novels to be full of love for human beings, wolves, birds, insects and nature in general. And I believe that the people of my country living in this glorious cultural soil will not stay like this, that they will re-grow this fertile soil of cultures" (Karasu, 2015: 32), revealing his holistic approach and perspective towards traditional ecological knowledge, culture and life.

It should be emphasized that Yaşar Kemal, who is of local origin, produced original works primarily because he closely knew and internalized oral culture and literature since his childhood. As a matter of fact, Yaşar Kemal was interested in folk literature from an early age, playing the saz, singing folk songs, singing laments, telling stories and tales, and meeting with the minstrels of Çukurova (he received praise from Âşık Rahmi and an invitation to come to him after he finished primary school. He also received the compliment of "if you are this much at this age, you will eventually become Karacaoğlan" from Âşık Ali; Aydoğan, 2015: 60) and started call-and-response duet under the name of Âşık Kemal (Karasu, 2015: 33). In summary, Yaşar Kemal learnt early on to reflect or convey the interaction of human beings with nature and the problems experienced in his works by interpreting them from the traditional cultural perspective and style of epic singers and minstrels. This perspective and style are based on the systematic knowledge, method and technical knowledge that constitute oral culture.

Myths, the science of primitive man and society, can be defined as the first oral products, sources and survival tools of traditional



ecological knowledge. While creating myths, which are products of oral culture with an approach extending to animistic and totemistic origins, human beings tried to find answers to their questions. On the other hand, they aimed to live a harmonious life with nature by establishing an origin/partnership bond with nature. Adaptation has been and continues to be the basic life principle of human beings as well as other living creatures. Culture is the product and the whole of humankind's efforts to adapt to life. Human beings and society have tried to protect the memory of knowledge and experience they have created, and therefore nature, which is the source of life and culture, by enchanting it through rituals, rites, myths and cults. In other words, people have created such verbal narrative products in order to protect the traditional ecological knowledge and experience memory they have acquired as a result of their interactions with nature. There are many mythological elements in Yaşar Kemal's novels. In his novels, Yaşar Kemal narrated myths by linking them with symbols such as paintings, sculptures, and walnut bark (Topcu, 2008: 66). Through these elements, the world of thought and perspective, which are the traditional ecological knowledge memory, have also been transferred to novels and written-printed culture. Among these became cult natural elements such as "horse, bird, crane, deer, tree, snake (dragon), holy water, plant (grass, flower, rose)" (Topcu, 2008: 31-66). While making use of such mythological elements originating from the earth-water beliefs of the past in his works, Yaşar Kemal has on the one hand created his own originality and on the other hand kept the memory of traditional ecological

knowledge alive.

The fact that he often states that he is descended from the epic tradition and lineage is another evidence that Yaşar Kemal comes from oral literature and culture. In addition to oral culture, Yaşar Kemal continued to observe nature while improving himself by getting to know the main national and international written and printed cultural actors and their works (writers and poets). While developing his own narrative language, he internalized the characteristics of oral culture and literature such as harmony, depth of meaning, freedom, naturalness, realism and simplicity. Myths, epics, legends and other beliefs have become realistic parts of Yaşar Kemal's novels.

In addition to writing beautifully, Yaşar Kemal's greatest dream was to research the folklore and ethnography of the East as a scientist (Bilir, 2015: 42). Yaşar Kemal saw himself primarily as a folklorist. At this point, it should be noted that folklore became widespread in Turkey in the early periods under the name of "folklore" in terms of research within the scope of cultural ecological knowledge. Therefore, folklore research in the first period, which Yaşar Kemal was also influenced by, was carried out under the title of folklore. Yaşar Kemal developed his power of expression and enriched his imagination in the context of traditional culture. Yaşar Kemal was aware of the fact that in order to understand the world, nature, human beings and society correctly and in depth, it is necessary to start with oral culture and literature.

Yaşar Kemal lived a life intertwined with the people by

working as a library janitor, laborer, head laborer and clerk, tractor driver, water guard, deputy teacher, gas control officer (Istanbul), water guard and petition clerk (Kadirli). Again, while publishing his interviews in Cumhuriyet newspaper, he had the opportunity to get to know and learn about Anatolian people (earthquake victims in Erzurum, people living in caves in Van, Istanbul fishermen, forest villagers, tradesmen of the bazaar, tile artists, street children, etc.) and thus their perspectives on human, society and the environment.

Yaşar Kemal, who opposed the strict rules specific to the novel genre, continued to maintain his connection with oral literature narratives. Otherwise, he realized that he would lose contact with the oral culture and literature that nourished him. For this reason, he stated that his language matured before his novels. Yaşar Kemal, who grew up and matured with the freedom of oral culture, opposed the prescriptive structure of the written-printed culture and did not remain in the same discourse and style in any period. This situation has caused some academics, especially those working in the field of literature and translation studies, who cannot comprehend Yaşar Kemal's novelism, to evaluate his works within the scope of different genres. Yaşar Kemal learnt how to enchant the spoken word or how to enchant life with the spoken word primarily from the representatives of oral culture and literature. Therefore, Yaşar Kemal's wisdom stems from his strong connection with traditional knowledge, literature, culture and life. Yaşar Kemal accepted the freedom and authenticity of traditional culture as a prerequisite or starting point for his creativity.

Yaşar Kemal made the geography he lived a homeland by making use of traditional knowledge, life and cultural memory in his novels. The tradition of making Anatolia a homeland, which started with oral culture and literature and continued with written and printed culture and literature, has continued in Yaşar Kemal's works. Places have created people and people have created places. The geography inhabited has been transformed into a homeland by gaining depth, originality and meaning through culture and literature. As a matter of fact, in Yaşar Kemal's novels, besides many place names, legends related to place names are also included. Such legends functioned as a means of transmitting and perpetuating traditional ecological knowledge in a different way. While mentioning legends about "Ali Kesiği, Binboğa, Bingöl, Deliktaş, Gülek Boğazı, Hasan Dağı, Kartal Çimek, Yanartaş" (Topcu, 2008: 107-112), Yaşar Kemal created unique cultural spaces for his novels. Therefore, the tradition of transforming Anatolia into a homeland through legends has been continued through printed culture.

Fairy tales are different types of oral anonymous creations that keep traditional ecological knowledge alive. Nature and natural elements are the main sources of fairy tales. Traditional ecological knowledge has been transferred to new generations especially through fairy tales. Yaşar Kemal also utilized fairy tales in his novels. Through the fairy tales identified in Yaşar Kemal's novels such as "Crying Pomegranate and Laughing Quince, Black Sheep, Şahmeran, Snake and Bird, Snake and Girl, Eagle Laying Golden Eggs, Nymph" (Topcu, 2008: 116-140), various elements of traditional ecological

knowledge and thus cultural genetic codes have been transferred to the generations (readers) of the written-printed cultural context.

Yaşar Kemal drew attention to the fact that Western culture should not be imitated and stated that the return to us and our culture started in the age of Mustafa Kemal, and then we turned our back to that culture and foundation (Bilir, 2015: 44). His conscious awareness and sensitivity on this issue is one of the main reasons for the intensive treatment of traditional knowledge, culture and life in Yaşar Kemal's novels, and thus of traditional people and society. Yaşar Kemal continued to return to the cultural essence with his works.

The period from his birth until he wrote his first story in 1946 can be considered as Yaşar Kemal's period of getting to know and internalizing traditional knowledge, culture, life and literature. During this preparatory period, Yaşar Kemal listened to epic singers until the morning, got to know the colors and motifs of rugs, observed the skills of handicraft masters on the one hand and the flowers and insects of Çukurova on the other, and learned to recognize the crops in the fields by their smell, He often went off on his own like the minstrels, reconstructed the tales he heard and told them to children, sang the folk songs of the minstrels who came to the village, moreover, he got to know Yunus Emre, Pir Sultan Abdal, Karacaoğlan, Dadaloğlu and other folk poets, and compiled and published laments (Bilir, 2015: 36-38).

Yaşar Kemal's strong ties with the tradition of minstrelsy and folk poetry constitute the source of his unique narrative language. He had the opportunity to learn and develop narrative language in the

cradle of creative interactions of traditions such as Çukurova. In his novels, Yaşar Kemal mentions minstrels such as "Pir Sultan Abdal, Karacaoğlan, Kel Âşık, Âşık Kıvrak Ali, Âşık Mustafa, Âşık Kıvrak Ali and Âşık Abdal Sofi". It is stated that Âşık Mustafa is Yaşar Kemal himself (Topcu, 2008:171). Yaşar Kemal modelled himself on master minstrels in matters based on systematic knowledge (technical and methodological knowledge) such as language, discourse, performance, motif and subject. Minstrels are the main representatives of both the minstrel tradition and traditional ecological knowledge in general. The traditional ecological knowledge and experience memory created on behalf of tradition and traditional society has been transmitted to the enthusiasts by minstrels through their attractive products and narration-demonstrations. Yaşar Kemal has also been original and permanent by continuing this tradition in the context of written and printed culture.

Yaşar Kemal is unique and attractive because he created his works within the range of oral and written/printed culture. His works have been welcomed with interest by people from both oral and written cultures. Cultural inter-contextuality constitutes the basic approach of Yaşar Kemal's works. His first-hand folklore compilations (legends, epics, elegies, tales, stories, folk songs, nursery rhymes, etc.) in the mountain villages of the region for the Adana People's House's magazine Görüşler when he was a secondary school student (Canpolat, 2015: 47) reveals the antiquity of Yaşar Kemal's ties with oral culture and thus his relations with traditional ecological

knowledge memory. It is noteworthy in this respect that Yaşar Kemal's first book (he published 49 books in total, including 1 short story, 26 novels, 1 poem, 9 interviews, 11 essays, 1 children's novel, 1 translation with his wife Tilda) was also a book of heavy compilations ("Ağıtlar" published in 1943). The book titled Gökyüzü Mavi Kaldı which he prepared together with Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, is also a selection of folk literature. All these data reveal that Yaşar Kemal formed and developed his creativity while transferring the memory of oral culture into written and printed culture. Therefore, it is seen that Yaşar Kemal reached the source of the epic language in his later novels during this period and that "the fish (himself) grew according to its lake" (Canpolat, 2015: 47). In all these processes, the traditional (ecological) knowledge and thus culture created because of human interaction with nature forms the basis of Yaşar Kemal's creativity. This situation has also continued to have an impact on Yaşar Kemal's cinema life.

In the process of Yaşar Kemal's artistic creativity, which evolved from folk narratives to short stories and then to novelism, the culture and life of tradition have functioned as the main source. Mythic, epic, romantic and realistic narrative transitions have shaped the narrative tradition of Anatolian people just like other societies. It is possible to find traces or sediments of these transitions in Yaşar Kemal's works. As a matter of fact, it has been stated that Yaşar Kemal creates his own novel language by using folk dialect and written language together in his novels and uses the style of folk storytellers by changing the narrative style while processing the plot (Aminova,

2018: 443). For this reason, his works were sometimes called epic stories and sometimes epic novels. As mentioned above, such evaluations can be encountered within the scope of literature and translation studies. This is due to the differences between countries in terms of literary genres, concepts and analytical approaches. In the end, these works are recognized in Turkey and other countries as Yaşar Kemal's novels, which have matured through creative interactions between oral culture and print culture.

Similarly, poets and writers influenced by Yaşar Kemal, such as Nazım Hikmet, Orhan Kemal and Kemal Tahir, create their works within the interaction or range of oral-written culture. As a matter of fact, it has been emphasized that these writers (Yaşar Kemal, Orhan Kemal, Kemal Binbaşar, Fakir Baykurt, etc.), who are also called Anatolian novelists, often make use of epic, folk tale, fairy tale and legend genres that contain patterns inherited from myth while shaping their stories, thus giving their works a literary form (Moran, 2004: 16). Those who produce works in the range of oral culture and written-printed culture can be considered as representatives of the wisdom originating from traditional knowledge and experience memory in different cultural contexts. Especially after 1950, when the migration from rural to urban areas intensified, it can be said that the fact that a significant part of the society continued their lives in the range of oral and print culture caused such writers to be met with interest.

The similarities of Yaşar Kemal's heroes with folk narrative heroes are remarkable. In Yaşar Kemal's works, folk narrative heroes



such as Dede Korkut, Beyböğrek, Köroğlu, Karacaoğlan, Bayramoğlu and Baysungur are mentioned (Topcu, 2008). The heroes in Yaşar Kemal's works can be regarded as the successors of the traditional hero typology of the Turkish narrative tradition and therefore of the noble bandit-type heroes, as in the Köroğlu-Ince Memed similarity. As a matter of fact, it has been written that the folk heroes of the Ince Memed type in English culture attracted more attention than expected in England due to their legends. This situation reveals the continuity of the influence of oral culture and literature on the hero typology of written and printed culture and literature. Therefore, through these narrative heroes, traditional (ecological) knowledge, which is carefully embedded in traditional narrative genres and products, is also transferred to written-printed culture and literature. Therefore, Yaşar Kemal has carried the memory of traditional (ecological) knowledge into his works together with the heroes of oral culture and literature. The value of traditional knowledge increases with the attractiveness of the transferred hero.

Through creative interactions between traditions, traditional knowledge and thus cultural memory is transferred from the past to the present and the future. Different forms of cultural expression accompanied by narrative, as in Zeybek folk songs and music, are quite common in Anatolia. Such creative interactions among traditions ensure the preservation of traditional (ecological) knowledge in a lively way. Yaşar Kemal has also benefited from these creative interactions among traditions. In order to show the different dimensions of Yaşar Kemal's creativity, it should be pointed out that

zeybek dance with a ballad called Ince Memet exists and is widespread among the Yoruk Turkmen communities in the Aegean Region, Western Taurus Mountains and Teke region, especially in Aydın (women's game played in the style of heavy Tavas zeybek; Sürmeli, 2010: 39), İzmir (Koca, 2009: 30; Ödemiş-Özbilgin, 2003: 326), Manisa (Ince Memed Türküsü; Özbilgin, 2003: 329) (Prof. Dr. Cenk Güray, 4 November 2023). Prof. Dr. Cenk Güray's oral presentation and live performance with his team in Adana on the occasion of the Yaşar Kemal Symposium are very important in this context). It is unclear whether folk dance is the source of folk song, folk song or folk dance, or whether folk dance and folk song are the source of Yaşar Kemal's novels. Nevertheless, creative interactions between traditions and contexts continue to shape the culture of Anatolian people.

In traditional culture and life, mourning and joy are intertwined. As a matter of fact, Yaşar Kemal answered the question as to whether he was happy to be nominated for the Nobel Prize by referring to Karacaoğlan's lines "While Çukurova is wearing its feast clothes/if they call you heaven, that perfectly suits you mountains/Mourning and joy wrestles mountains" (Canpolat, 2015: 52). This situation proves that Yaşar Kemal utilised traditional knowledge memory in his whole life. The fact that the people of Kadirli gave Yaşar Kemal the nickname "Koca (Big)" (Canpolat, 2015: 53) like "Kam Ana, Bekay, Irkıl Ata, Dede Korkut, Baba Dikhan and Yuşi Hoca" (Özdemir, 2023: 4) shows that he is accepted as a contemporary representative of wisdom with traditional knowledge

and experience.

Yaşar Kemal remained devoted to Çukurova until the end of his life. As a matter of fact, Yaşar Kemal resisted Cevat Fehmi's condition to remove the long Çukurova descriptions at the beginning of the text for the first edition of *Ince Memed* (first written as a script for a cinema film) despite being in an economically difficult situation. During the printing process, this section was shifted from the beginning of the novel to the inner section (Aydoğan, 2015: 62- 63). As a result, Çukurova created Yaşar Kemal and Yaşar Kemal kept Çukurova alive in his novels.

In Yaşar Kemal's novels, open spaces such as "mountains, streams, hills, bays, rocks, springs, sandbanks, etc." are presented with features such as "purity, naturalness, goodness, friendship, labour, attachment to the past, justice, rebellion, honesty, benevolence" (Dalyan, 2007, 2007)." Elements of nature such as "spring, lake, rock hollow, slope, waist, pass, cave" are also depicted vividly and realistically in Yaşar Kemal's epic novels (*Ince Memed 1*, *Üç Anadolu Efsanesi*, *Karacaoğlan*, *Binboğalar Efsanesi*, *Çakırcalı Efe* etc.) as exemplified below are depicted vividly and realistically. All these data reveal Yaşar Kemal's mastery of the geography inhabited and therefore his competence in terms of traditional ecological knowledge:

The thistle flowers were purple on the roadside. The meadows were fresh. A bird sang incessantly. Like a long, long lament. The ono was in bloom. A gentle mist was rising from the soil. Mushrooms broke the soil at one end, they are

about to come out. The soil was covered with green grass, laid out, wet (Yaşar Kemal, *Üç Anadolu Efsanesi*, Karacaoğlan, 1994: 108, Dalyan, 2007: 176-177).

The spring gurgled from a mossy old pine gutter and ran like a silver streak all the way down to the bottom. Its banks were covered with dark, fresh grass. Pennyroyal, orchis, bee, flower had taken over the summer wild. Under the pines, it was like a mattress made of sprouts. The tips of green grasses sprouted. Summer will be over, towards autumn. It is afternoon. A thin wind is blowing. A bird lands from branch to branch. There is no other sign of life (Yaşar Kemal, *Çakırcalı Efe*, 1996: 33; Dalyan, 2007: 433).

In traditional culture, therefore, there is no distinction between children and adults among the representatives of oral literature. For this reason, children also attended the performances of minstrels or epic tellers. Yaşar Kemal also did not agree with the distinction between children's and adult literature, but he changed his mind while writing the novel *The Sultan of Elephants* and the *Lame Ant with the Red Beard*, thinking that a different writing technique should be used due to children's lack of experience in idioms (Aydoğan, 2015: 65). It is noteworthy that Yaşar Kemal also adopted the approach that intergenerational sharing is important and valuable in the transmission of traditional ecological knowledge.

In his epic novels such as *The Legend of Three Anatolian Legends*, *The Legend of Ağrıdağı*, *The Legend of Binboğalar* and *Çakırcalı Efe*, Yaşar Kemal dealt with the struggles of the Anatolian people, particularly the village people of Çukurova. Çukurova has always been a fertile source for Yaşar Kemal (Aydoğan, 2015: 65). The

fertile lands of Çukurova formed the basis of Yaşar Kemal's novels as the main elements of traditional ecological knowledge.

On the other hand, Yaşar Kemal also depicted the sea and the people of the sea, which he first saw in Mersin, in his novels (Deniz Küstü, Al Gözüm Seyreyle Salih). Especially after he came to Istanbul, Yaşar Kemal had the opportunity to get to know the sea and the people of the sea more closely. The pollution and depletion of the sea has been a particularly emphasized subject in Yaşar Kemal's novels of this kind. Yaşar Kemal got to know the land in Çukurova and the sea in Istanbul and made it the main setting of his novels. In Yaşar Kemal's novels titled as Fırat Suyu Kan Akıyor Baksana, Karıncanın Su içtiği, Tan Yeri Horozları and Çıplak Ada Çıplak Deniz, the exchange and the process of acquiring a new homeland on an island are the subject of the novels. The relations of peasants with the land and sailors with the sea are the main source of Yaşar Kemal's works. The source of the problems in Yaşar Kemal's novels is generally the deterioration of the natural, healthy and creative interactions between nature and human beings, and moreover, the consumption of nature by people forgetting that they are a part of it. For this reason, Yaşar Kemal's novels aim to protect nature and cultural ecology, including the sea and land, with love.

Although he avoided in his recent times, local dialects and thus the folk language have naturally influenced Yaşar Kemal's novel language. In this language, it is possible to find the proverbs and idioms, applause and curses, praise and swearing, narratives, beliefs, folk song quatrains and slang of Çukurova. All these creations are

different types of expression and transmission tools of traditional ecological knowledge. Therefore, Yaşar Kemal's works functioned as different living spaces in terms of such verbal traditional knowledge patterns, types or forms of expression.

Like other creations of life and culture, language is basically the product and totality of human interaction with nature, and moreover, of human inspiration from and imitation of nature. Since the earliest periods of history, women have lived a life closer to nature than men and consciously intertwined with nature. For this reason, women have been regarded as the owners of tradition, traditional culture and life, and therefore of traditional ecological knowledge. As a matter of fact, language, which is the main means of expression of oral culture, is defined as "mother tongue". Children also learnt this cultural ecological knowledge memory primarily from their mothers. Likewise, the mother tongue lies at the root of traditional ecological knowledge memory. Over time, with the transformation of the goddess into a god, speech in the public sphere became masculinized, while narrative, fiction and discourse retained their feminine character. While men's life accelerated, women's time based on land and nature continued to flow slowly. This slowness, or the slow lifestyle integrated with nature and thus in accordance with the natural cycle, has made remembering, not forgetting, prominent, and thus women have become the main representatives of traditional ecological knowledge memory. As the tendency to forget increases and the memory of the man whose life speeds up, his ties with traditional ecological knowledge weaken. In traditional society and

life, women have maintained their dominance as the real owners of memory, either explicitly or implicitly. It should also be emphasized that this situation caused women to live longer, more productive and more conscious lives than men. As a result, the language and discourse of Anatolian people, moreover, the traditional ecological knowledge memory is largely matrilineal. Mother language and discourse are integrated with nature. Therefore, the creations of this language, which is pure, clear, attaches importance to details and leans on nature, are also loaded with traditional ecological knowledge. The language, fiction, narration and discourse of Yaşar Kemal, who leans on tradition, traditional culture and life and is nourished by it, is also to a great extent of matrilineal origin. As will be seen below, the language of Yaşar Kemal's novels is the language of Devlet Ana (Kemal Tahir), Cemo (Kemal Bilbaşaran), Irazca (Fakir Baykurt) and Leylim Nine (Firuzan), who are the successors of Kybele and Mother Kam, as well as Hürü Ana (Ince Memed) and Meryemce (Ortadirek) (Büyüktanır, 2015: 88):

...They opened their eyes wide and looked. The swaying of the bush branches was increasing. They walked to the pomegranate field; the branches of the bush cluster were intertwining, swaying more and more. The solid blue bird perched on the branch was tilting its head sideways, staring at the mad bush with one eye. "With wings," said the big girl. Her face turned pale, her mouth went dry, and she shuddered from head to toe, while the blue bird flew away, scattering its blue all over the neighbourhood. From where it flew, a long dazzling blue line was left far out to sea. Then the birds came and landed on the branches in clusters.

Branches swayed; flowers fell like rain. The trunks of the pomegranate trees swayed; their flowers scattered. Solid yellow birds, birds with crests, sun-winged birds, long navy-blue spotted birds scattered. The pomegranate trees creaked and hummed. Bees flashed and went out, butterflies came from the sea in a thousand colours... (Kemal, 2002:66; Büyüktanır, 2015:92).

The following descriptions of nature in the novel "Karıcanın Şu İçtiği" reveal that Yaşar Kemal's love, awareness and sensitivity for nature are filtered through the hearts of Anatolian people. In oral culture society, the intensity of traditional (ecological) knowledge determines the value of the word. The word that intensifies with knowledge is accepted as an indicator of the wisdom of its owner. In traditional culture and life, it is seen that traditional knowledge and words are essentialized and valued. Yaşar Kemal, through the representatives of oral culture and literature, has created and developed a pure and clear language and expression based on traditional ecological knowledge.

The slippery insects floating on the water of the spring, their shadows falling on the white pebbles of the spring, constantly sliding from one corner to another, three, five, seven insects waiting to slide in other corners, standing still and then suddenly starting their sliding games.... Everything, every creature, bees, hard-winged insects, everything, can come to this island from anywhere. They can come, but where and why can these slippery insects come to this island? Does a bird bring them on its wing, a bee in its mouth, a fly on its wing, a seed in its essence? And these violas, where in the world can one find such a fragrance whose



intense odor penetrates into one's skin and soaks into one's bones in the nooks and crannies far away from the lights? Where does this thin wind blowing the fragrance day and night come from? And the fig trees, the figs with yellow honey that will soon appear, the pink pomegranates, the grapes in the vineyards, each the size of a child's head, everything is a miracle. One cannot believe how rich this tiny island is... (Kemal, 2002:456; Büyüktanır, 2015:93).

Let me arrive at the spring where light, not water, is boiling, where the stars of the heavens fall to the bottom, let me see the boiling light, the shadows of the light, the slippery insects at the bottom of the light. If the last remaining leaves of the purple violas at the base of the bushes have not withered, let me inhale the scent of violets into my lungs and let the smell of violets penetrate under my skin to my bones... (Kemal, 2002: 478; Büyüktanır, 2015: 93).

It is seen that traditional ecological knowledge is preserved and transferred to future generations through folk beliefs and practices. The "technique/method/approach of preserving and perpetuating knowledge and experience by enchanting them with beliefs" of the people of tradition has ensured the protection of nature for a long time. When the ties between human beings and society in general and nature in general weakened due to different reasons, these beliefs also lost their effect. On the contrary, it is seen that such beliefs preserve their influence in the works of nature writers such as Yaşar Kemal. As a matter of fact, in the novel *Teneke* by Yaşar Kemal, who is passionate about nature, it is stated that herbal (garlic, pinecone, etc.) and animal elements (horse head skeleton or horseshoe, etc.) are used to protect from evil eye, evil spirits and to

ensure fertility (Kemal, 2010: 10; Sarıaslan, 2014: 37). The method or practice of utilizing beliefs in the protection of nature, which has animistic and totemistic origins, was used for animals as well as mountains, springs, caves, trees, plants, etc. Such beliefs and practices are common in Çukurova. Naturally, this situation is also reflected in Yaşar Kemal's works. As a matter of fact, the lines in Yaşar Kemal's novel *Yılanı Öldürseler* that the disturbance of the nests of swallows (although used as a symbol in the novel), which are believed to bring good luck, abundance and fertility to the house where they nest in Çukurova, is considered the greatest of sins, are one of the proofs that the traditional practice of protecting nature, and thus the traditional method of keeping traditional ecological knowledge alive, is also maintained in written and printed works of literature (Kemal, 1987: 86; Aminova, 2018: 452-453).

An important part of traditional ecological knowledge is related to agriculture and animal husbandry. In these areas, which constitute the basis of traditional life, traditional ecological knowledge is often kept alive together with other traditions that constitute oral culture. This approach, which evaluates the people of the tradition holistically within their own cultural ecosystem, is also adopted by Yaşar Kemal. In the novel *Ince Memed 1*, practices such as "running the farm, ploughing the field, picking cotton from the boll, recognizing the ploughed field by its smell, harvesting crops, threshing, ploughing, throwing stalks, threshing out, and winnowing" and the advice that "the farm can be run and the field can be ploughed two hours before dawn and after noon" due to the flies on the oxen,

etc., are used as examples of Yaşar Kemal's ecological knowledge. The advice of Yaşar Kemal reveals his knowledge and awareness of traditional agriculture (Kemal, 2012: 19-20, 33, 49-50, 209, 436; Sariaslan, 2014: 135-137). The data in the novel *Teneke* on paddy cultivation (if May passes, paddy cannot be cultivated, and if it is cultivated, it will not be productive; instead of giving eighty for one, it will give forty or at most fifty; it requires a lot of paddy from the sprout, etc.; Kemal, 2010: 50-69) and irrigation (the intermittent irrigation technique of giving water for ten days and cutting it for forty-eight hours, etc.; Kemal, 2010: 31) can be evaluated in this context (Sariaslan, 2014: 41-42). Again, collective work (*imecelik* in Turkish) (cultivating fields, building houses etc.; Kemal, 2012: 433-434) is one of the basic practices of traditional cultural economic life in Yaşar Kemal's novels.

One of the main areas of traditional ecological knowledge is animal husbandry. It is natural that Yaşar Kemal's novels frequently include elements of traditional knowledge related to animal husbandry in *Çukurova*, where a semi-nomadic life is maintained in spring and winter. The data in the novel *Ince Memed 1* (it should be reminded here that *Ince Memed* is a shepherd) such as "accustoming the sheep to the yoke, running the horse to the yoke, taking the goats to the forest with good leaves, making a bed of spring flowers next to the hearth for the newborn calves" are examples of this situation (Kemal, 2012: 40, 50, 54; Sariaslan, 2014:137-139).

Yaşar Kemal's novels also contain elements of hunting, which is one of the important parts of traditional ecological knowledge. In

Yaşar Kemal's novels, hunting is sometimes considered as a way of feeding and sometimes as a habit learnt from ancestors (Sariaslan, 2014: 140). The use of rituals and cults, which are methods of protection and survival in other traditional ecological knowledge areas, is also encountered in the field of hunting. Ince Memed is also a master deer hunter who knows the geography stone by stone, rock by rock, cave by cave (Kemal, 2012: 65, 289, 391, 403; Sariaslan, 2014: 140-141). Tracking is very important in the context of hunting. Topal Ali, one of the heroes of the novel Ince Memed 1, is skillful at tracking deer. As a matter of fact, in the novel, Topal Ali is introduced as a hero who "can track even a bird with one side of its wing touching the ground, who cannot see the world while tracking, whose mind goes out of his head, who says that he cannot live if he does not track, who does this job with passion rather than making a living" (Kemal, 2012: 105-106, 249, 256, 258, 414; Sariaslan, 2014: 141-142).

Yaşar Kemal also describes the waters of Çukurova in his novels in detail and vividly. For example, in the novel Ince Memed 1, he describes the Değirmenoluk water as "The place where the noise comes from is the eye of the Değirmenoluk water. It is not an eye, but the people here call it the eye of the water. That's how they know it. It boils from the bottom of a rock, throwing foam. If a piece of wood is thrown into it, it is seen floating on the water for a day, two days or even a week. It makes it spin. Some people claim that the boiling water even moves the stone on it but does not sink it. However, the eye of the water is not here. It comes from Akçadağ from far away, through the pines, carrying the scents of pennyroyal and thyme. Here,

it enters under this rock, foams and boils, and comes out at the other end with a mad grunt" (Kemal, 2012: 10). In a way, the creative, revitalizing, healing, livestock-raising water beliefs of the ancient Turkic life, moreover, the residues of the cult of earth-water continue to live on in Yaşar Kemal's novels. The archaic approach of traditional people to protect the elements of nature such as water through rituals, cults and other beliefs and practices and Yaşar Kemal's sensitivity towards nature are integrated in his novels.

Traditional ecological knowledge is seen to become evident in local life and culture, especially in folk medicine practices. This field, which consists of traditional medicine and treatment practices and folk physicians (hearth member, midwife mother, emci etc.), is shaped by the influence of the geography in addition to its traditional origins. In Yaşar Kemal's novels, elements related to traditional medicine in Çukurova are also encountered. As a matter of fact, in the novel *Ince Memed 1*, traditional healing practices such as "adding soil to the place where blood oozes; wrapping the swollen wound with moxibustion or applying healing ointment to the wound; washing the feet and hands with salty water" (Kemal, 2012: 13, 179, 183, 236; Sarıaslan, 2014: 125-127) are mentioned.

In Yaşar Kemal's novels, the people lived their lives according to the calendar of nature, just like in traditional life. The folk calendar and meteorology were shaped by the direct interaction of the local people with nature. Yaşar Kemal even states his birth according to the local folk calendar as "...I was born when the villagers came back from the plateau after their seasonal migration. Our Çukurova people used

to return from the plateau in late October" (Bosquet, 1993:32) (Topcu, 2008: 261). In Yaşar Kemal's novel *Orta Direk* (Orta Direk; Kemal, 1995: 12,28,29,36,98), "When the medlar growing in the mountains is very thick, the cotton will be fertile and abundant; when the medlar starts to fly in the Taurus Mountains, this is a sign that it is time to pick cotton for the workers living in the mountains". Again in Yaşar Kemal's works, the flight of the crane, one of the migratory birds, to the south with the emergence of the crazy grey wind is accepted as the beginning of winter (Ince Memed 1; Kemal, 1996:346) and its return to the north to Lake Van is accepted as the beginning of spring (The Legend of Ağrıdağı; Kemal, 1993:11) (Topcu, 2008:261). In Yaşar Kemal's novels, traditional calendar practices such as determining the time according to the rising and setting angles of the sun (the rise of the day by the height of a poplar/minaret/tree, the 45-degree time periods within the day, etc.; Orta Direk-Kemal, 1995:200; Yağmurcuk Kuşu-Kemal, 1995:180, 379; Ince Memed III; Kemal, 2004:66; KS: 191) are also encountered (Topcu, 2008:261). In summary, in Yaşar Kemal's novels, time and therefore life continued to flow in accordance with tradition and traditional ecological knowledge.

In Yaşar Kemal's novels, there are also elements of traditional measure and scale. Thus, traditional culture and life are presented in all aspects and naturally in Yaşar Kemal's works. In this context, "the length of a poplar (Orta Direk; Kemal, 1995: 48,200,300), the size of a swallow's nest (Fırat Suyu Kan Akıyor Baksan; Kemal, 2004: 199), a ring of fire in the size of ten threshing floors (Yılanı Öldürseler; Kemal,

1996: 70) etc." In Yaşar Kemal's novels, they are used as elements of natural measurement units (Topcu, 2008:262).

## Conclusion

In this research, it is emphasized that the essence of culture and life is formed by the creative interactions between nature and human beings. In addition, it is explained that culture that shapes and gives meaning to traditional life consists of traditions that contain different forms of expression of traditional ecological knowledge obtained by human interaction with nature. It is revealed that the traditional people and society transfer the knowledge distilled from their experiences in nature to future generations by embedding it in different forms of cultural expression such as myths, epics, legends, rituals, drama, music, dance, food, celebration, belief, clothing, etc. created according to its vital value. In other words, it is argued that these forms of cultural expression are primarily created and kept alive to preserve traditional ecological knowledge and thus the cultural genetic codes that give authenticity and identity to the relevant people and society.

The most important output of this publication is it demonstrates the fact that within the scope of existence and effect of creative interactions among different contexts, the representatives of written culture and a later successor electronic culture which benefit from traditional literature, culture and life, starting from Yaşar Kemal, continue to keep alive the traditional ecological knowledge memory and thus cultural genetic codes in their work. In other words, it is exemplified in this article that traditional ecological knowledge

continues to be kept alive in the contexts of print and electronic culture as well as traditional culture and life. In addition, it is made clear in this study that authors such as Yaşar Kemal, who works in the range of traditional-oral culture and written-printed culture, are more original, productive and permanent.

In this research, Yaşar Kemal's creative, original and lasting personality is revealed in detail by making traditional ecological knowledge, culture and life the basis of his works in the range and interaction of oral and printed literary and cultural traditions. As a result, this publication emphasizes that the memory of traditional ecological knowledge and its products, which have been obscured in the context of origin for various reasons, continue to nourish creators in the contexts of print culture and therefore literature and electronic/virtual/digital/smart culture. At the beginning of the 21st century, when the importance, value and attractiveness of the interaction of nature and culture are becoming clearer, it can be predicted that such nature, culture and human-friendly original creativity activities will increase.

In conclusion, this study emphasizes that Yaşar Kemal is a writer or novelist who is in love with nature and humanity based on the wisdom of traditional ecological knowledge, culture and life. The fact that the people of Çukurova address Yaşar Kemal as "Koca" can be considered as a basic indicator of the fact that he is accepted as a sage of traditional knowledge, life and culture, and thus his permanence. In summary, in today's world where the limitations of human knowledge in understanding nature and the universe have



become evident, traditional (ecological) knowledge memory continues to be a source of originality and creativity.

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