https://doi.org/10.7592/YBBS8.2.01

Highland Festivals in Türkiye's Eastern Black Sea Region: A Cultural Sociological Analysis

Vildane Özkan

Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work and Counseling, Vocational School of Social Sciences, Gümüşhane University, Gümüşhane, Türkiye.

email: vildaneozkan@gmail.com

Abstract: This article examines the social functions of highland festivals in Türkiye's Eastern Black Sea uplands and their role in sustaining cultural continuity. Drawing on participant observation at major festivals in Gümüşhane, Rize, and Artvin, alongside relevant case studies, the research finds that these rituals generate strong collective effervescence and enact common values. Despite pressures from emigration and tourism, the festivals have adapted practices to maintain social cohesion. Interpreted through a cultural sociological framework, the analysis shows how ritual performances operate as symbolic practices that reinforce identity, embody shared habitus, and mediate the tension between tradition and modernity. The research thus illustrates how highland festivals function as sites of cultural reproduction and collective solidarity under conditions of social change.

Keywords: highland communities, highland festivals, rituals, social cohesion, cultural symbolism, collective effervescence, heritage tourism, modernisation, cultural sustainability.

Introduction

Türkiye's Eastern Black Sea highland culture – known locally as *yaylacılık* or *yayla* – is deeply rooted in centuries-old transhumant pastoralism and kinship networks. Its annual cycle of summer festivals coincides with the seasonal migration of people and livestock to high meadows and provides the most vibrant expression of local tradition. These festive communal rituals – featuring music, dance and collective feasting – serve to enact and reproduce shared values and identities across generations (İstanbul Ticaret Odası 1997; Haberal 2013; Somuncu & Ceylan 2015; Akbaş & Baykal 2022).

In modern times these celebrations have also become sites of negotiation between tradition and modernity. Rural emigration and the rise of heritage tourism have transformed the festivals' functions (Haberal 2013; Akbaş & Baykal 2022). Local authorities now promote events like the annual Kadırga Otçu Festival on the Gümüşhane–Trabzon border and the Kafkasör Highland Festival in Artvin, drawing thousands of visitors each season (Gümüşkoza 2024; Gündem Artvin 2024). Ayder (Rize) similarly blends highland customs with mountain wellness tourism. These processes revive local pride but also risk commodifying tradition, so communities curate the festivals carefully to preserve authenticity and core symbolism (Şişman 2010). Although scholars have noted the cultural importance of highland festivals, there is little analysis of how these rituals function to maintain social cohesion under modern pressures.

This research adopts a symbolic-interpretative cultural sociology framework. It draws on Émile Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence (Durkheim 1995) to explain how ritual gatherings generate intense communal energy and solidarity. Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus (Bourdieu 1977) highlights how embodied dispositions reproduce cultural traditions, while Clifford Geertz's interpretative approach (Geertz 1973) frames festivals as systems of meaningful symbols. Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspective (Goffman 1956) treats festival events as staged social interactions. Together, these lenses illuminate highland festivals as ritual sites of social reproduction and identity affirmation.

The aim of this paper is twofold. First, explore the historical roots and contemporary transformations of *yayla* festival culture in Türkiye's eastern Black Sea uplands. Second, as the main aim, show how an interpretative cultural

sociological lens reveals the role of these evolving rituals in sustaining communal solidarity and cultural continuity under modernising pressures. Based on ethnographic fieldwork at three highland sites – the Kadırga (Gümüşhane), Ayder (Rize) and Kafkasör (Artvin) uplands – the study examines how these summer celebrations continue to function as symbolic performances of community and identity. In doing so, it contributes to literature on ritual and local identity by arguing that even amid globalising forces, these festivals balance tradition and modernity while sustaining regional cohesion.

This article is structured as follows: first, the historical background of transhumance is reviewed; next, the analysis turns to current major highland festivals in Gümüşhane, Rize, and Artvin; and finally, their cultural significance for community cohesion is assessed.

Historical Context

For centuries, the upland plateaux of Türkiye's Eastern Black Sea region have served as communal summer pastures/highlands (*yaylalar*) for local villages. This transhumant practice – the seasonal migration of people with their livestock to high meadows – was firmly established by the Ottoman era, underscoring the deep historical roots of highland culture. The rugged terrain and temperate summer climate of provinces like Gümüşhane, Rize, and Artvin made these highlands ideal for grazing, and over time communities developed distinctive pastoral economies based on shared management of mountain grazing grounds. Oral histories and folk narratives attest that the highland tradition was crucial for both subsistence and the continuity of local culture, helping sustain remote populations economically while reinforcing communal identity (Şişman 2010). Highland life thus became deeply ingrained in regional culture long before any formal policies intervened.

Under Ottoman rule, imperial authorities took note of these vibrant highland communities and even sought to regulate them. During the Ottoman period, one of the most controversial issues among the public was the highlands. The main reason for these disagreements concerned the right to use the highlands. Archival records show that a special "pasture/highland tax" (*yaylak vergisi)* was levied on those using the high summer pastures (Karaman 2020), signalling the empire's administrative reach into mountain life. At

the same time, the highlands remained a robust vernacular sphere of cultural and spiritual practice. Seasonal gatherings on the *yayla* often coincided with religious holidays and agricultural cycles: villagers would organise festive rituals that included communal prayers, animal sacrifices and the sharing of sacrificial feasts. Such events wove spiritual devotion into pastoral life, merging sacred rites with the rhythms of herding and harvest. This era illustrates how *yayla* culture functioned not only as an economic strategy but also as a rich ritual domain nurturing social cohesion. By the early 20th century, however, this traditional way of life was confronting the forces of modernisation that followed the end of the empire.

The establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 brought an ambitious programme of modernisation that reached even the remote highland villages. New roads, schools and clinics were introduced into mountainous areas, gradually linking once-isolated pastures to the lowland towns and urban centres. State-driven agricultural reforms and land registration efforts began to formalise land use, challenging the informality on which transhumant communities had relied. Over the mid-twentieth century, improving education and employment opportunities in the cities accelerated rural emigration from the Eastern Black Sea highlands. Younger generations increasingly left for urban life, and the practical foundations of transhumance were weakened as fewer families tended livestock in the old patterns. Yet modernisation did not mark the end of *yayla* culture. Many highland communities adapted creatively: core social rituals and summer reunions persisted, providing a temporal anchor each year that drew kin networks back to the ancestral highlands. Annual highland festivals became homecoming events for families now scattered between villages and cities, helping to reaffirm a shared sense of place and heritage despite the pressures of change (Şişman 2010). In this way, the highland celebrations acted as resilient cultural touchstones even as daily life was transformed.

By the latter part of the twentieth century, the Black Sea highlands experienced a notable cultural revival under new social and economic conditions. On one hand, Turkey's rapid urbanisation and the rise of mass tourism sparked a renewed public appetite for "authentic" local traditions, including the summer highland festivals. Local authorities and businesses soon recognised the economic potential of these festivities and began to sponsor and promote them as regional attractions, seeing in them a driver for rural development and heritage tourism. Government support and commercial interest gradu-

ally transformed many highland festivals from modest, insular gatherings into larger public spectacles oriented towards outside visitors (Haberal 2013). In some cases, most plateaus were even earmarked as potential tourism hubs on the strength of their festival culture (Sezer 2015), reflecting the reimagining of highland culture as a marketable asset. One outcome of this period was a conscious rebranding of highland celebrations for broader audiences. Organised tour packages, professional sound stages and vigorous marketing campaigns became common, introducing a new standardisation to festival programmes and performances. Indigenous dances, music and costumes were increasingly presented as folkloric shows for spectators, a trend that encouraged "folklorisation" of local culture. This process risked homogenising the distinct practices of each highland, yet it also created opportunities to showcase the region's intangible cultural heritage on national and international stages. In short, the late 20th-century revival both commodified and elevated *yayla* traditions, as highland communities negotiated how to share their culture with the world without losing its essence.

Today, the highland festivals of Gümüşhane, Rize and Artvin exemplify the continuing tension – and interplay – between tradition and modernity. On one hand, improved transport links and digital media have made these once-remote celebrations far more accessible to outsiders than ever before. Tourists now travel long distances to attend, and images or live streams of horon dances and bull-wrestling contests can be circulated globally online within moments. On the other hand, local organisers and villagers are keen to preserve the cultural essence of their *yayla* festivals and resist any erosion of meaning. Time-honoured elements remain central. For instance, communities still offer prayers for plentiful harvests and favourable weather, sacrifice animals to feed all attendees, perform exuberant circle dances to the sharp tones of the *kemençe* fiddle or *tulum* bagpipe, and uphold an ethos of open-handed hospitality. All these practices endure as defining features of the highland festivals. (Şişman 2010; Haberal 2013). These practices maintain the spiritual and communal ethos that has characterised the highland gatherings for generations. At the same time, younger community members are finding new ways to engage with and reinterpret their heritage. Ethnographic observations suggest that many youths now see the annual highland festival as both a cherished link to their ancestors and a marker of cultural distinctiveness in an ever-globalising world (Haberal 2013; Akbaş & Baykal 2022). In the age of Instagram and You-

Tube, tech-savvy participants actively document and broadcast the festivities, turning local rituals into hybrid events that are experienced in person but also shared virtually with wider audiences. This blending of customary practice with digital media exposure epitomises the complexity of contemporary highland culture. Some traditions are deliberately revived or accentuated as heritage performances for the benefit of tourists and diaspora audiences, while other aspects evolve organically to meet the changing social needs of the community itself (Zaman 2007). The result is a dynamic cultural field in which old and new continually reshape one another, ensuring that the highland festivals remain both a celebration of the past and a conversation with the present.

Tracing this genealogy – from pastoral subsistence through imperial oversight, Republican reform, heritage tourism and digital-age adaptation – provides essential context for the analysis that follows. It shows how each era's pressures have reshaped but never erased the festival's core role: sustaining communal bonds and collective identity. Understanding this layered history will inform how we interpret the case studies from Gümüşhane, Rize and Artvin. Each locale's celebration can then be seen as a particular instantiation of the broader pattern by which tradition and modernisation intertwine.

Theoretical Framework

Drawing on an interpretative cultural sociology approach, this study employs insights from classical sociological theorists to illuminate the communal, performative, and symbolic dimensions of highland festivals. Concepts from Émile Durkheim, Pierre Bourdieu, Clifford Geertz, and Erving Goffman are applied to understand these events as rituals that generate social cohesion, arenas of cultural reproduction, meaning-laden texts, and stages for identity performance. These perspectives, complemented by Turkish scholarship on the Black Sea region's highland traditions (Şişman 2010; Yılmaz 2018; Kaya & Yılmaz 2018, 2024), provide a nuanced framework for analysing how highland festivals affirm shared values and adapt to modern influences.

Durkheim's work on religious and ceremonial life provides a valuable starting point. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Durkheim 1995), Durkheim introduces the concept of "collective effervescence" to describe how communal gatherings generate intense emotional energy that fosters a sense

of unity and shared identity. At Black Sea highland festivals, communal music, dance, and rituals similarly reaffirm social bonds. Also Durkheim's notion of "mechanical solidarity" aptly characterises these homogenous communities bound by kinship and tradition.

Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) concept of "habitus" offers another analytical lens to explain how individuals internalise and enact enduring cultural norms. Highland festivals are key sites for reproducing habitus: children witness and participate in dances like the horon, learn local dialects, and adopt communal values integral to highland life. Bourdieu's "forms of capital" (economic, social, cultural) are also at play in these events: economic capital accrues through festival-driven tourism; social capital is reinforced via networks formed at these gatherings; and cultural capital is embodied in local knowledge (expertise in regional music, dance, and cuisine) that distinguishes insiders from outsiders.

Clifford Geertz's (1973) interpretative anthropology emphasises "thick description" to unpack the layered meanings in cultural acts, a method that reveals the multi-vocal nature of Black Sea highland festivals. While these celebrations commemorate pastoral traditions, they also function as stages for complex social relations, negotiations of power, and articulations of identity. A single dance performance might simultaneously signal intergenerational continuity, religious devotion, and an invitation for tourist engagement. Through this interpretative lens, the festivals' gestures, music and rituals emerge not as mere aesthetics but as symbolic vehicles for meaning-making.

Erving Goffman's (1956) dramaturgical perspective – comparing social interaction to theatrical performance – is particularly relevant for understanding how festival participants "perform" cultural identity. The festival stage is set against a mountainous backdrop, and participants assume roles in dances, processions or communal feasts. Goffman's notions of "front stage" and "back stage" illuminate the conscious public presentation of tradition to outsiders versus the backstage realities of identity work. For instance, while organisers outwardly emphasise harmony and cultural authenticity, behind the scenes they focus on practical concerns – sponsorship and debates over how traditions should be enacted.

The synergy of these theoretical frameworks provides a holistic view. Durkheim highlights collective emotional and moral dimensions; Bourdieu emphasises embodied dispositions and power relations; Geertz adds interpretative depth, and Goffman illuminates interactional and performative aspects.

Together, these perspectives offer a layered understanding of how highland festivals in Gümüşhane, Rize and Artvin are at once sites of cultural continuity, social negotiation and communal display. Similarly, recent Turkish sociological studies (Sezer 2015; Somuncu & Ceylan 2015; Yılmaz 2018; Kaya & Yılmaz 2018; Akbaş & Baykal 2022; Kaya & Yılmaz 2024) reinforce these insights, showing that global and local forces intersect in the region's cultural practices, echoing Giddens's (1991) observation that tradition is continually reworked in modern conditions.

Overall, integrating these perspectives into a cultural sociological framework provides a theoretical context for understanding and interpreting how highland festivals create collective solidarity in settings of social change and serve as living repositories of cultural heritage.

Methodology

Between 2023 and 2025, ethnographic fieldwork was conducted at three major annual highland festivals in Türkiye's Eastern Black Sea region: the Kadırga festival (Gümüşhane), the Ayder summer festival (Rize) and the Kafkasör festival (Artvin). The researcher used immersive participant observation at each event, actively taking part in communal rituals, music and dances to gather qualitative data on local practices beyond surface impressions. No formal interviews or surveys were conducted; instead, multiple visits to the festival sites, their associated city centres, and nearby villages (including outside the festival season to observe off-season usage and atmosphere) allowed for extended observation and informal conversations with festival-goers and local residents. These observations and informal interactions formed the primary data, recorded in detailed fieldnotes and a reflexive field journal. While participant observation provided rich qualitative data, the absence of structured interviews or surveys means the findings rely mainly on fieldnotes and informal accounts. This limitation suggests caution in generalising beyond the observed communities.

In parallel, relevant case studies and ethnographic accounts of Black Sea highland culture (e.g., Şişman 2010; Haberal 2013; Sezer 2015; Somuncu & Ceylan 2015; Yılmaz 2018; Kaya & Yılmaz 2018; Mercan et al. 2020; Akbaş & Baykal 2022; Kaya & Yılmaz 2024) were reviewed. This secondary literature contextualised the field findings within broader cultural and historical patterns.

This immersive approach prioritised "thick description" (Geertz 1973), documenting not only visible activities (such as circle dances, communal prayers and feasts) but also their symbolic meanings and emotional resonance. Throughout the fieldwork, the researcher maintained a reflexive stance, critically considering how their participation might influence interpretations of cultural behaviour. Following Bourdieu's notion of "participant objectivation" (2003), the researcher positioned themselves as both an insider and an analyst, ensuring that deep immersion did not compromise analytical clarity. This self-aware, embodied engagement aligns with interpretative traditions of insider research (Wacquant 2004).

For data analysis, fieldnotes and journals were systematically coded to identify emergent themes and patterns. Interpretation was guided by an interpretative cultural sociology lens drawing on classical sociological perspectives. For instance, Durkheim's concept of "collective effervescence" (1995) elucidated the shared emotional energy at peak ritual moments, while Bourdieu's focus on habitus and embodied practice (2003) explained how ingrained dispositions were reproduced through festival traditions. Similarly, Geertz's interpretative approach (1973) helped decode the multilayered "web of meanings" in performances, and Goffman's dramaturgical frame (1956) cast the festivals as social stages for enacting communal identity before insiders and outsiders. Field findings were triangulated with published research on highland festivals and transhumance in the region (e.g., Şişman 2010; Haberal 2013; Fettahoğlu Şahin et al 2013; Somuncu & Ceylan 2015; Mercan et al. 2020; Kaya & Yılmaz 2024) to corroborate observed patterns and situate each case within wider regional trends, thereby strengthening the study's validity and depth. This combination of immersive observation, findings of other researchers, and theoretical analysis provides in-depth insight into how highland festivals function as sites of community performance, collective effervescence and cultural symbolism in contemporary Türkiye.

Case Analysis

The highland festivals of Gümüşhane, Rize, and Artvin exemplify how a shared regional tradition is adapted to different local contexts. Focusing on Gümüşhane, Rize, and Artvin allows an examination of highland festival cul-

ture through three distinct yet interrelated examples. Each province has been selected for its prominent *yayla* celebration, and each festival accentuates a different facet of Black Sea highland culture: Gümüşhane's Kadırga festival foregrounds social cohesion and communal ritual; Rize's Ayder festival integrates environmental consciousness into cultural celebration; and Artvin's Kafkasör festival highlights a tradition of harmonious pluralism. By mapping (see Figure 1) these sites and then exploring each case in turn, we can compare how a common regional tradition is expressed and negotiated under varying social and ecological conditions. This approach accords with our cultural-sociological framework, illustrating how cultural performances are simultaneously anchored in particular places and reflective of broader historical currents.

The thematic cartographic map of Türkiye's Eastern Black Sea region (see Figure 1) locates these three provinces along the Black Sea coast and marks their key highland plateaus (*yayla*) where major festivals occur. On the map black dots indicate provincial centres and red triangles show the highland festival sites: Kadırga highland (on the Gümüşhane–Trabzon border), Ayder highland (in Rize), and Kafkasör highland (in Artvin).

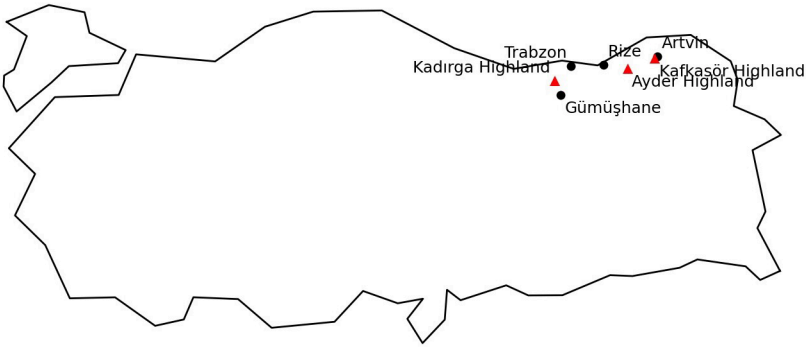

Figure 1. Map of Türkiye's Eastern Black Sea Region showing key city centres (black dots) and highland festival sites (red triangles). Map by the author.

Gümüşhane: Kadırga Highland Festival and Social Cohesion

Kadırga yaylası (Kadırga highland), officially located in Gümüşhane province (though often associated with neighbouring Trabzon), hosts one of the region's most renowned highland festivals. Known historically as the *Kadırga Otçu Şenliği*, this centuries-old summer gathering takes place annually on the third Friday of July, coinciding with the traditional peak of the transhumance season when communities ascend to cooler high pastures. Even today, thousands of people converge on the plateau for the festival, which functions as a focal point for renewing communal ties through music, dance, and shared ritual. The Kadırga festival serves as a communal performance of local identity, in which cultural continuity is both celebrated and reinforced (see Figure 2). Historically, the highland pasture provided not only summer grazing for livestock but also a social arena for inter-village interaction, fostering a robust tradition of collective celebration that persists in modified form (Şişman 2007; Yılmaz 2018; Kaya & Yılmaz 2018, 2024). According to fieldnotes from a pre-festival visit, villagers began arriving days in advance to prepare the site: they cleared the pasture, erected tents and rehearsed ritual dances, underscoring the communal organisation behind the event.

At Kadırga, participants enact time-honoured rituals that blend festive excitement with spiritual devotion. Central to the festivities is the horon dance, performed in large circular formations to the frenetic melodies of the kemençe, a three-stringed Black Sea fiddle. Men and women lock arms and execute intricate step sequences, occasionally punctuating the rhythm with high-pitched cries of joy (see Figure 3). These energetic dances (Kemençe TV 2024) are at once expressions of communal identity and displays of athletic skill, reflecting a physical culture honed by life in the mountains. Another cornerstone of Kadırga is the collective prayer held at noon on festival day: attendees gather at the summit's famous open-air mosque to perform Friday prayers on the grass (see Figure 4). This practice infuses the event with a sacred dimension, transforming an alpine meadow into a site of worship. The coexistence of exuberant dance and reverent prayer epitomises the dual nature of the festival. Beyond its entertainment value, the Kadırga gathering carries profound spiritual and emotional significance for participants. Many visitors include members of

the Black Sea diaspora who return to their ancestral highland each summer expressly for this occasion, underscoring how the festival functions as a homecoming that renews bonds across generations and distances (Şişman 2007, 2010; Yılmaz 2018; Kaya & Yılmaz 2018, 2024). The fieldnotes indicated that many festival-goers emphasised a strong sense of hemşerilik (fellowship among those from the same region). In local conversations, Kadırga was often described as an annual reunion where far-flung friends and kin could reconnect with their shared roots. The Kadırga highland festival remains a vital social institution, anchoring a dispersed community to its highland heritage through shared performance and belief. According to fieldnotes from the morning after the festival, the plateau returned to its usual quiet: only a few locals remained to clear away the makeshift stage and scattered decorations, emphasising the contrast between the festival's collective effervescence and the ordinary calm that followed.

From a Durkheimian perspective (Durkheim 1995), the Kadırga festival exemplifies what Durkheim termed "collective effervescence", the heightened emotional energy that arises from people gathering to perform rituals in unison. The horon dances, communal music-making, and group feasting generate an intense feeling of unity and exhilaration that reinforces social solidarity. Even those who have migrated to distant cities often return for Kadırga, bridging geographic and generational divides as they rekindle a shared sense of belonging. In these moments of collective joy, individual differences fade and the community experiences itself as a cohesive moral unit. At the same time, the festival illustrates how local practices become internalised as part of what Bourdieu (1977) calls the community habitus. Through repeated participation, young people learn traditional dance steps, prayers, and customs, gradually absorbing the dispositions and competencies that mark membership in the highland community (Kaya & Yılmaz 2018). Over years and decades, these embodied practices constitute a shared habitus – a durable set of learned traditions and ways of being – that helps preserve regional culture even as social and economic conditions change.

Figure 2. Women wearing traditional clothes at the Kadırga Highland festival. Photo by Gümüşkoza, 2024.

Figure 3. People dancing horon and a traditionally decorated horse on the Kadırga Highland festival. Photo by Gümüşkoza, 2024.

Figure 4. Open-air mosque in Kadırga Highland. Photo by Karadeniz Kültür Envanteri, n.d.

From a Geertzian perspective (Geertz 1973), the vivid practices at Kadırga constitute an enacted "text" of culture, each ritual element embedded in a web of local significance that only a thick description can fully unravel. The communal horon dance, for instance, is more than mere entertainment: it symbolically embodies social unity and historical continuity, as its tightly linked circle and synchronised steps enact a living narrative of shared identity. Similarly, the open-air mosque prayer imbues the highland landscape with sacred significance, transforming an everyday pasture into a spiritually resonant communal space that entwines religious devotion with a shared sense of place. Even the tradition of adorning a festival horse can be interpreted as an emblem of the region's pastoral heritage and communal pride, a tangible symbol laden with local meaning beyond its immediate spectacle.

Additionally, the Kadırga festival can be viewed through Goffman's dramaturgical lens (Goffman 1956) as a grand stage for the performance of cultural identity. The public "front stage" of the festival features well-choreographed dances, costumed performers, communal meals, and other visible displays of heritage that affirm a positive image of the community to both insiders and visitors. Meanwhile, behind the scenes (the "backstage"), local organisers, village leaders, and sponsors coordinate logistics and negotiate interests out of the

public eye from managing crowds and scheduling events to balancing religious propriety with celebratory freedom. This duality underscores how community leaders actively manage impressions to uphold tradition and solidarity, even as they adapt the event to new audiences. Finally, processes of modernisation and reflexive adaptation are evident in the recent evolution of Kadırga. Improved roads and digital media have made the highlands more accessible, spurring greater attendance by tourists and widespread dissemination of festival images. While some locals voice concern that commercialisation may dilute the festival's authenticity, many also welcome the economic opportunities that larger crowds bring. In this regard, Kadırga now occupies a delicate middle ground between safeguarding cultural habitus and embracing contemporary demands, a balance characteristic of what Giddens (1991) calls "reflexive modernity". Indeed, observers note that Kadırga and similar highland festivals today serve not only as markers of local identity but also as regional "event tourism" attractions, linking grassroots cultural sustainability to broader developmental goals (Haberal 2013; Akbaş & Baykal 2022).

Rize: Ayder Highland Festival and Ecological Awareness

East of Gümüşhane lies Rize, a province celebrated for its lush green hills, extensive tea plantations, and misty mountainous terrain. Among Rize's many upland pastures, the Ayder Plateau has become one of the most visited and symbolically significant. Ayder's annual summer festival – once a modest highland gathering timed with the transhumance cycle – has transformed into a large-scale event that integrates environmental awareness with traditional celebration (Fettahoğlu Şahin et al. 2013). Historically, families from surrounding valleys would ascend to Ayder in late spring with their herds, and communal festivities marked this seasonal migration. According to fieldnotes from the days before the festival, villagers arrived early to Ayder to prepare the plateau: they cleared trails, arranged event areas and set up stalls, reflecting the communal effort behind the celebration. In recent decades, as road access improved and tourism grew, the Ayder highland festival evolved into a multifaceted affair, featuring not only folk music and dancing but also concerts, craft fairs, and educational workshops on nature conservation. The festival is now positioned as both a cultural occasion and an environmental forum, reflecting local efforts

to respond to ecological concerns while sustaining heritage. This convergence of ecological consciousness and cultural performance is a defining characteristic of Ayder's contemporary festival identity (Fettahoğlu Şahin et al. 2013). Visitors encounter a celebratory atmosphere resonant with Black Sea folk traditions, yet one that explicitly foregrounds the value of the natural environment that makes those traditions possible (see Figure 5). During the Ayder festival, the researcher noted that some local residents were uneasy with the swelling tourist crowds, often remarking that the celebration was "better in the old days" before mass tourism. Nonetheless, the fieldnotes indicated that the festival grounds remained remarkably clean even amid the throngs of visitors, reflecting a collective effort to maintain order and respect for the environment.

One of the unique aspects of the Ayder highland festival is its deliberate emphasis on sustainable living and environmental stewardship. The event's programme (which now routinely spans several days) includes workshops on sustainable pasture management, guided nature walks through the surrounding alpine forests, and public panel discussions on issues like climate change and biodiversity loss. For example, villagers and agricultural experts jointly demonstrate traditional beekeeping practices and organic tea cultivation methods, linking local heritage to ecological sustainability. Such activities aim to educate both locals and visitors about the fragility of the mountain ecosystem and the importance of preserving highland landscapes for future generations. Local environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and activist groups have effectively used the festival as a platform to advocate for responsible tourism and stronger environmental protections. Through informational booths and scheduled talks, they press for policies to control unplanned development in Ayder and to safeguard water quality, forest cover, and wildlife in the Kaçkar Mountains (Fettahoğlu Şahin et al. 2013). These interventions have incrementally turned the festival into a site of grassroots environmental governance, where celebration of nature is coupled with calls for its conservation. Consequently, what was once a purely agrarian communal feast has become, in part, an exercise in environmental education and advocacy, blending new values into the fabric of an old tradition.

Figure 5. Folk dances in the Ayder Highland. Photo by Türkiye Kültür Portalı, n.d.

Figure 6. Ayder Highland. Photo by Türkiye Kültür Portalı, n.d.

The prominence of ecological themes at Ayder has fostered what Durkheim (1995) might term a "moral community" around environmental responsibility. Festival participants – whether local residents or tourists – are invited to unite around shared principles of sustainability and respect for nature. In effect, the highland gathering serves as an environmental ritual that symbolically reinforces a collective ethic of stewardship. This communal focus on protecting the upland environment binds people together in a sense of duty towards the land, adding a contemporary moral dimension to the festival alongside its celebratory functions. At the same time, each performance and practice at Ayder carries layers of cultural symbolism that can be "read" in multiple ways. Adopting Geertz's (1973) interpretative approach, we can view the Ayder festival as a text of symbols about local identity. The folk dances and songs, the marketplace of organic foods and handmade crafts, even the scenery of the green highland itself (see Figure 6), all convey messages about Rize's agrarian heritage and the community's relationship with nature. These symbols are not static: a local elder, a returning migrant, or a first-time urban tourist may interpret a given ritual or display differently. For instance, a local folk dance evokes ancestral memories for villagers, represents eco-cultural authenticity for visitors, or even serves as an "Instagrammable spectacle" for younger attendees. Such varied readings generate a dynamic cultural discourse within the festival, demonstrating how traditional forms are continually reinterpreted in context of new environmental values and audience perspectives.

Power dynamics are also at play in shaping the Ayder festivities. Using Bourdieu's (1977) concepts of capital and field, one can discern how various stakeholders imbue the festival with their priorities. Different groups bring different forms of capital: local authorities and businesses contribute economic and political capital, environmental NGOs contribute cultural capital in the form of expertise and credibility, while local artisans and performers have the social capital of community respect. These actors negotiate – sometimes tacitly, sometimes explicitly – over the festival's content and emphasis. The result is an ever-evolving programme where certain activities (say, an eco-tourism workshop or a popular folk concert) might gain prominence depending on which stakeholders exert influence and how resources are allocated. For example, if government tourism funding is substantial in a given year, there may be a push for more high-profile entertainment to attract visitors; conversely, if environmental activists are ascendant, educational components may increase.

The field of the Ayder festival thus becomes a microcosm of broader social forces, with the balance of cultural, social, and economic capital determining whose voices shape the narrative of the event. In this way, the festival not only reflects community values but also becomes an arena of subtle contestation, where the meaning of "heritage" and "ecological responsibility" is negotiated among participants with unequal influence.

From a dramaturgical standpoint (Goffman 1956), the Ayder festival "performs" an ideal of sustainable culture, even as it grapples with practical realities behind the scenes. On the front stage, the festival presents immaculate landscapes, organic food stalls, folk dancers in traditional attire, and recycling bins dotting the venue – in short, a harmonious image of tradition and modern eco-consciousness merged. This staged authenticity projects a cohesive narrative of an environmentally friendly community celebrating its heritage responsibly. Meanwhile, the backstage reveals the tensions inherent in this performance. Organisers must deal with infrastructure challenges such as waste management, traffic congestion on mountain roads, and the competing interests of economic development versus conservation. These backstage negotiations sometimes expose contradictions: for instance, efforts to accommodate more tourists (for economic benefit) can strain the very ecosystem the festival's ethos seeks to protect. Such dilemmas reflect what Giddens (1991) describes as the reflexive negotiation of modernity, i.e. the community continuously balancing growth-oriented ambitions with the imperative of environmental integrity. Ayder's highland festival thus vividly demonstrates the tightrope that many contemporary cultural events walk: it must remain true to its local roots and ecological message, yet it cannot escape the pressures of commercialisation and popularity that modern success brings. According to fieldnotes from the morning after the festival, the Ayder plateau returned to its usual quiet: only a few locals remained to dismantle stalls and collect litter, emphasising the fleeting nature of the celebration's collective effervescence.

Artvin: Kafkasör Highland Festival and Harmonious Plurality

Situated near the Georgian border, Artvin is distinguished by its steep mountains, dense forests, and a vibrant patchwork of local culture. The city of Artvin

and its surroundings have long been home to diverse ethnic identities (including mostly Turkish, but Laz, Georgian, and Hemshin), who despite their differences coexist in peace. The Kafkasör highland festival has emerged as a signature event of this province, celebrated for how it showcases regional culture through music, dance, cuisine, and communal revelry (Mercan et al. 2020). The festival's very name – Kafkasör, evoking the Caucasus – hints at the blending of influences present. Each summer, Artvin's residents and visitors gather on the Kafkasör Plateau to partake in a series of events that range from folk dance competitions and concerts to the famous bullfighting tournaments that are unique to this region (see Figure 7). These bullfights are a traditional spectacle in Artvin: unlike Spanish bullfighting, they involve bulls pitted against one another (with no human harm), and the winning bull is celebrated as a symbol of strength and communal pride. Such events draw crowds from across the province and even neighbouring Georgia, adding to the festival's reputation as a symbol of Artvin's spirited and inclusive highland culture. Overall, the Kafkasör festival has become emblematic of what locals describe as harmonious pluralism, the idea that multiple cultural identities can be expressed and enjoyed collectively in a single celebratory space.

Figure 7. Bullfights at the Kafkasör Highland festival. Photo by Gündem Artvin, 2024.

The experience of attending Kafkasör is often described as immersing oneself in a rich tapestry of multicultural expression. On the festival grounds, one can hear an array of musical styles and languages. A Laz *horon* dance might

be performed to the rapid drum and fiddle rhythms characteristic of coastal Black Sea villages, followed by a Georgian *kartuli* dance accompanied by accordions or bagpipes echoing the Caucasian highlands. It is not uncommon to see colourful costumes that reflect different regional styles: some dancers don the familiar Black Sea attire of layered skirts and waistcoats, while others wear garments influenced by Georgian or Caucasian traditions. The culinary offerings at Kafkasör are equally diverse. Food stalls prepare local favourites like *mıhlama* (a hearty cornmeal and cheese porridge) and *Laz böreği* (a sweet layered pastry), alongside dishes inspired by Georgian cuisine. Festival-goers thus quite literally taste the mixture of cultures. Perhaps most striking is how legends and folklore from various groups are openly shared on the Kafkasör stage. Members of different communities recount their folk heroes or ancestral tales – Laz seafarer epics, highland nomad stories, or Georgian love legends – sometimes translating or adapting them to be understood by the wider audience. These narratives inevitably emphasise themes of cooperation, neighbourly coexistence, and a collective regional identity that transcends linguistic or ethnic lines (Doğanay & Orhan 2014; Mercan et al. 2020). In the dances and stories of Kafkasör, cultural differences are not erased but rather celebrated under an overarching spirit of unity-in-diversity. The fieldnotes indicated that at Kafkasör, festival-goers from varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds openly acknowledged their differences while affirming a shared sense of belonging. Sometimes in conversations, it was to hear participants remark, "we are all different here, but part of the same whole" – a statement reflecting the festival's inclusive ethos of unity amid diversity. The festival arena thus becomes a living demonstration of how Artvin's people construct a unified regional identity out of heterogeneous cultural threads. Fieldnotes from the days before the festival noted that locals began preparations early: they pitched tents on the plateau, assembled the bullfighting arena and cared for the bulls, underscoring the communal organisation behind the event.

Analysed through Durkheim's framework (Durkheim 1995), the Kafkasör festival generates a powerful collective consciousness that encompasses the area's cultural diversity. The shared activities – whether joining a large circle dance or cheering side by side during a bullfight – produce a sense of communal belonging that transcends particular ethnic or linguistic affiliations. This Durkheimian collective effervescence is palpable when hundreds of participants interlock hands in a dance or sing a chorus together: the emo-

tional energy uniting the crowd affirms a common social bond. Importantly, this bond does not eliminate the recognition of diversity; rather, it provides a higher-level identity (an Artvin highlander, for instance) that contains and respects sub-group identities. In parallel, Artvin's festival life offers insight into the community's habitus in Bourdieu's sense (Bourdieu 1977). The repetition of certain highland customs – be it folk dances taught to each new generation, or the yearly cycle of preparing traditional foods for festival guests – inculcates dispositions and skills that become second nature to participants. Over time, children and grandchildren of festival-goers absorb these practices as normal parts of life, internalising a repertoire of cultural knowledge that persists even amid social change (Mercan et al. 2020). This shared habitus, built up through years of communal festivity, fortifies local identity: regardless of one's ethnic origin, knowing how to dance the region's dances or cook its dishes becomes a mark of belonging to Artvin's highland community.

Clifford Geertz's interpretative lens (Geertz 1973) further illuminates how Kafkasör communicates and consolidates meaning for Artvin's residents. The festival is replete with symbols with each dance style, costume variation, and culinary recipe carrying deeper meanings about history and values. A Geertzian "thick description" of the event reveals, for example, that a Laz dance performed on the Artvin stage is not only entertainment but also a statement about the region's Laz community claiming its place in the collective story. Similarly, a Georgian song sung in Turkish translation might symbolise the bridging of cultures, signalling that diverse heritages are cherished within a unified public narrative. These symbolic cues, when woven together, paint a picture of Artvin's cultural mosaic and its emphasis on unity rather than division. Local commentators often note that the festival's popularity stems in part from its success in framing diversity as a source of strength, a narrative explicitly reinforced by speeches and stories during the event (Mercan et al. 2020). The interpretative significance of Kafkasör lies in its role as a storytelling venue where the meaning of being from Artvin is continually co-created by participants. Through ritual and symbol, the community affirms a pluralistic identity: one that is inclusive and resilient, having adapted traditional highland festivity into an occasion that mirrors the province's complex social fabric. From a Goffmanian standpoint (1956), Kafkasör also involves front-stage and back-stage dynamics. On stage, diverse cultural groups perform their heritage to affirm collective unity; backstage, organizers negotiate representation of each group.

However, this enthusiastic and lively atmosphere was not permanent. According to fieldnotes taken the morning after the festival, the plateau had returned to near silence: only a few locals remained to dismantle stalls and collect scattered banners, emphasising the contrast between the festival's conviviality and the ordinary calm that followed.

Discussion

Our analysis of the Gümüşhane, Rize and Artvin highland festivals interprets ethnographic insights to identify common cultural dynamics alongside distinctive local nuances. Many attendees travel from urban centres as part of the Black Sea diaspora, treating the festival as a homecoming that renews ties with ancestral heritage. All three festivals revolve around exuberant communal performances – circle dances (horon), traditional music, shared feasts and collective rituals – that publicly reaffirm values of solidarity and collective identity. These events generate what Durkheim (1995) termed collective effervescence: through synchronised song, dance and prayer, villagers and visitors alike experience a heightened sense of unity. In such moments individual differences fade and the community feels like a cohesive moral unit. Our field observations confirm that each festival's core rituals – from Ayder's honed horon circles to Kadırga's open-air prayers – spark this intense shared emotional energy. This collective effervescence helps explain why these gatherings endure year after year as anchors of social cohesion.

In Goffman's dramaturgical perspective (Goffman 1956), each highland festival functions as a staged performance of communal identity. The mountain plateau becomes a "front stage" where villagers don traditional dress, perform folk dances and lead rituals that signal an authentic local culture to insiders and visitors alike. Mastery of these cultural scripts – knowing the right horon steps, songs and etiquette – confers symbolic capital and prestige (Bourdieu 1977). Fieldnotes noted visitors often gravitating to skilled horon dancers. This indicates that dancers and musicians occupy symbolic prestige at the festival. In one instance, a tourist in Kadırga was accompanying the most talented and enthusiastic *horon* dancer, while his friend recorded the event to share on social media. In other words, *horon* masters, those in the most traditional attire, the

best *kemençe* players, and so on, were positioned at the center of the festival, acting as symbolic capital and a focal point.

This front-stage display both unites the community in a shared image and subtly reproduces local hierarchies: elders and sponsors who organise the events accrue symbolic power by defining which customs are highlighted. Behind the scenes (the "backstage" in Goffman's sense), organisers negotiate logistical and cultural decisions out of the public eye, carefully managing impressions to uphold the festival's authenticity and communal reputation.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Bourdieu 1977) is evident in how these festivals transmit culture across generations. Each festival acts as a participatory classroom: children and youths learn by doing. Year after year they observe elders offering prayers, performing the dance or serving food, gradually absorbing the dispositions and skills of highland life. Over time these practices become second nature: one's familiarity with local songs or skill in the horon becomes a tacit marker of belonging. This ongoing socialisation reproduces the community's shared habitus, embedding values and rhythms from the past into each new generation. Yet because learning takes place in a living event, the habitus can also evolve. For example, a banner with environmental slogans was displayed during a dance performance at Ayder (fieldnotes), indicating youths' influence on programming. In this way the festivals both stabilise the culture and permit its incremental adaptation.

A Geertzian interpretative lens reminds us that every element of the festival is symbolic: each ritual is a "text" conveying layered meaning (Geertz 1973). For instance, the circular formation of the horon dance is itself a potent symbol of unity and continuity, while the open-air mosque on Kadırga's summit sacralises the landscape by merging the sacred with the ancestral land. In Rize, the Ayder festival's integration of nature workshops foregrounds the community's bond with the environment; in Artvin, the bull-wrestling and inclusion of performances from diverse groups signal a pluralistic regional identity. Even the decoration of horses or the choice of festival songs can be "read" as cultural meaning, telling stories of pastoral heritage, devotion or local pride. These symbolic readings show that the festivals act as dense cultural texts, in which music, movement and material objects communicate history and values as much as any spoken narrative.

Another common theme is the balance between continuity and change under modern pressures. All three festivals face tourism and media interest,

prompting organisers to adapt programmes for larger audiences. We observed that community leaders are generally cautious: they might introduce concerts or contests to attract visitors, but often only after extensive local consultation. Changes initiated and managed by locals (for example, Ayder's eco-education sessions) tend to be embraced as organic evolution of tradition, whereas top-down commercialisation is sometimes resisted as a dilution of authenticity. This dynamic reflects Bourdieu's notion of symbolic domination: when outsiders dictate cultural content, locals feel their symbolic power is undermined. Hence the most resilient festivals were those steered by local voices, blending new elements on the community's own terms. Such adaptive hybridity provokes debate – elders worry about losing sacred depth, youths welcome fresh themes –, but that debate itself is a sign of a living tradition. Across the cases, the core rituals (*horon*, music, prayer, folklore costumes) remain intact, even as their meanings are continuously rewritten by participants to address present concerns.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives provide a multi-layered analysis. Durkheim illuminates how the festivals generate communal effervescence and sacred community bonds (Durkheim 1995). Goffman reveals how participants consciously perform identity on the social stage, managing front-stage impressions and backstage realities (Goffman 1956).

Bourdieu's framework exposes how cultural capital and habitus operate in these settings, showing who holds symbolic authority and how tradition is reproduced (Bourdieu 1977). Geertz's interpretative approach underscores the depth of symbolism: every song, dance or ritual act can carry multiple local meanings (Geertz 1973). Viewed together, the festivals emerge as dynamic social institutions that are simultaneously celebrations of heritage, sites of social reproduction and stages for negotiation. They are not mere static customs but living cultural texts that anchor solidarity and allow adaptation. This discussion suggests that sustaining these traditions requires attention to their emotional and symbolic dimensions as much as to economic or touristic factors.

Conclusion

Our findings indicate that the Gümüşhane, Rize and Artvin festivals function as communal rituals generating collective effervescence, renewing social bonds,

and conveying shared values. They also show how communities adapt tradition (by adding ecological themes, etc.) while retaining core identity. By uniting villagers, kin and diasporic members in shared performances of dance, music and prayer, the festivals symbolically enact shared histories and values, reinforcing a common identity; this ritual process both binds participants together and delineates cultural boundaries, such that fluency in local traditions becomes a marker of belonging. At the same time, the festival space provides a forum for negotiating change on the community's own terms, as new themes (such as ecological advocacy or popular entertainment) are woven into the celebrations alongside time-honoured customs. This allows communities to adapt creatively to modern influences while maintaining their core heritage.

Drawing on Durkheim's notion of collective effervescence illuminates how the intense shared energy of festival rituals fosters communal unity and moral solidarity. Bourdieu's concept of habitus explains how embodied cultural dispositions – from mastery of the horon dance to local dialect and ritual roles – are reinforced and transmitted at these gatherings. Geertz's interpretative framework underscores the festivals as 'texts' rich in symbols through which local histories and values are communicated across generations. Goffman's dramaturgical perspective helps us see the festival as a stage on which cultural identity is performed, with distinctive frontstage displays for outsiders and backstage negotiations among insiders. Through this layered theoretical lens, the study demonstrates that the festivals' symbolic practices are dynamic processes of cultural reproduction rather than static relics of the past. These modern festival practices reflect a centuries-old pastoral tradition, demonstrating continuity between past and present.

These insights have broader implications. Highland festivals emerge as exemplars of how local cultural traditions can be revitalised even amid globalisation and tourism. The case of Türkiye's Eastern Black Sea communities underscores that communal rituals can anchor identity and place in an interconnected era. Methodologically, the research highlights the value of participant observation combined with interpretative analysis, showing that classical sociological concepts remain vital for understanding contemporary communal life. By bridging ethnographic findings with theory, the research contributes to the literature on ritual and social cohesion. However, this research was based on three case festivals and observational data; future research could include

additional sites or interview-based studies. For example investigating how younger generations engage with *yayla* culture would deepen these findings.

The findings suggest that supporting highland festivals as living heritage may benefit community cohesion. Cultural heritage management must balance tourism development with local community control, ensuring festivals remain inclusive and meaningful to participants. Environmental planning and sustainable development around festival sites are also crucial: protecting mountain pastures, regulating visitor numbers, and funding cultural education all help maintain the intangible skills (music, dance, ritual practices) that distinguish insiders. By integrating cultural conservation with environmental sustainability, policymakers can help preserve both the symbolic vitality of these festivals and the natural environment on which they depend.

Funding

No funding or financial support was received for this study.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Assistant Professor Artum Dinç for his kind assistance during fieldwork.

References

Akbaş, Ferdi & Baykal, Füsun (2022). Dünyada Yaylacılık Kültürüne Coğrafi Bir Bakış. *Journal of Geography,* 45: 195–213. https://doi.org/10.26650/JGEOG2022-1171902

Bourdieu, Pierre (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre (2003). Participant Objectivation. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 9 (2): 281–294. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3134650

Doğanay, Hayati & Orhan, Fatih (2014). Artvin İlinde Nüfusun Başlıca Özellikleri. *Doğu Coğrafya Dergisi*, 19 (31): 1–22. https://doi.org/10.17295/dcd.98734

Durkheim, Émile (1995). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (K. E. Fields, Trans.). Free Press. https://monoskop.org/images/a/a2/Durkheim_Emile_The_Elementary_Forms_of_Religious_life_1995.pdf

Fettahoğlu Şahin, Burcu; Demirel, Öner & Özkır, Duygu (2013). Ayder (Çamlıhemşin-Rize/Türkiye) Termal ve Yayla Turizm Bölgesinin Termal Koruma ve Turizm Gelişimi Açısından Değerlendirilmesi. İnönü Üniversitesi *Sanat ve Tasarım Dergisi*, 2 (5), 151–164. https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/iujad/issue/32465/360996

Geertz, Clifford (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Giddens, Anthony (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford University Press.

Goffman, Erving (1956). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. University of Edinburgh, Social Sciences Research Center. https://monoskop.org/images/1/19/Goffman_Erving_The_Presentation_of_Self_in_Everyday_Life.pdf

Gümüşkoza (2024). Binlerce Kişi Kadırga Yaylası'nda Otçu Şenliği İçin Bir Araya Geldi. *Gümüşkoza*. https://www.gumuskoza.com.tr/haber/20975238/binlerce-kisi-kadirga-yaylasinda-otcu-senligi-icin-bir-araya-geldi

Gündem, Artvin (2024). *Kafkasör Festivali Takvimi*. https://www.gundemartvin.com/kafkasor-festivali-takvimi

Haberal, Hikmet (2013). *Yayla Kültürü ve Yayla Turizmi*. Doğu Karadeniz Kalkınma Ajansı – Doğu Karadeniz Belediyeler Birliği - Kalkınma Bakanlığı.

İstanbul Ticaret Odası (1997). *Karadeniz Bölgesinde Yayla Turizminin Geliştirilmesi, Bölgesel Gelişme ve* Çevreye *Uyumlu Yapılaşma*. İstanbul: Mega Ajans.

Karadeniz Kültür Envanteri n.d. Kadırga Yaylası Üstü Açık Cami. https://karadeniz.gov.tr/kadirga-yaylasi-ustu-acik-cami-2/#prettyPhoto

Karaman, Oktay (2020). Osmanlı Devleti'nde Yaylalardaki Anlaşmazlıklar (1858-1918). *Jass Studies-The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies*, 82: 411–420. http:// dx.doi.org/10.29228/JASSS.46575

Kaya, Mutlu & Yılmaz, Cevdet (2018). Kültür Coğrafyası ve Kültürel Miras Açısından Doğu Karadeniz'de Otçu Göçü Geleneği ve Kadırga Otçu Şenlikleri. *Türk Coğrafya Dergisi,* 71: 69–79. https://doi.org/10.17211/tcd.454455

Kaya, Mutlu & Yılmaz, Cevdet (2024). Mythological Foundations of Highland Festivals: The Case of The Kadırga Otcu Festival. *Journal of Geography ,4*8: 17–31. https:// doi.org/10.26650/JGEOG2024-1233423

Kemençe TV 2024. 2024 Kadırga Yayla Şenlikleri. *Youtube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dy0qPW_Wbn0

Mercan, Mustafa; Yücel, Mehmet & Sanal, Şule (2020). Artvin İli Folklorunda Boğa Güreşi Festivalleri. *Mersin Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi Lokman Hekim Tıp Tarihi ve Folklorik Tıp Dergisi*, 10 (3): 317–326. https://doi.org/10.31020/mutftd.682357

Sezer, İbrahim (2015). Doğu Karadeniz'de Gelişme Potansiyeli Yüksek Bir Yayla Turizm Merkezi: Kulakkaya Yaylası. *Doğu Coğrafya Dergisi*, 20 (34): 89–114. https:// doi.org/10.17295/dcd.21997

Somuncu, Mehmet & Ceylan, Serdar (2015). Folk Music, Local Dances and Summer Pasture Festivals in Rural Areas of the Eastern Black Sea Region, Turkey. *Coğrafi Bilimler Dergisi*, 13 (2): 79–92. https://doi.org/10.1501/Cogbil_0000000165

Şişman, Bekir (2007). Karadeniz Yöresinde Yaşayan Kemençeli Âşıklık Geleneği. *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, pp. 210–224. https://www.sosyalarastirmalar. com/articles/minstrelsy-tradition-with-fiddle-in-the-black-sea-region.pdf

Şişman, Bekir (2010). Kültürel, Yapısal ve İşlevsel Açıdan Doğu Karadeniz'de Yaylacılık ve Yayla Şenlikleri (Hıdırnebi ve Kadırga Yaylaları Örneği). *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, pp. 549–559. https://www.sosyalarastirmalar.com/articles/kltrel-yapsal-ve-levsel-adan-dou-karadenizde-yaylaclk-ve-yayla-enlikleri-hdrnebi-ve-kadrga-yaylalar-rnei.pdf

Türkiye Kültür Portalı n.d. Ayder Yaylası - Rize. Rize İl Kültür ve Turizm Müdürlüğü. https://www.kulturportali.gov.tr/turkiye/rize/gezilecekyer/ayder-yaylasi

Wacquant, Loïc J. D. (2004). *Body and Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Yılmaz, Onur (2018). Doğu Karadeniz Kemençecilik Geleneğinde Yöresel Ekoller. *Motif Akademi Halkbilimi Dergisi*, 11(24): 124–136. https://doi.org/10.12981/mahder.445756

Zaman, Mehmet (2007). *Doğu Karadeniz Kıyı Dağlarında Yaylalar ve Yaylacılık*. Atatürk Üniversitesi Yayınları.

Vildane Özkan, PhD, sociologist, Assistant Professor at Gümüşhane University, specialises in comparative cultural sociology. Her current research interests include everyday life, historiography, institutions, protest movements, public sculpture, and symbolic practices, in different cultures. She conducts both theoretical and field-based studies.

email: vildaneozkan@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0002-1534-9948