



## A Tribe is Burnt to the Ground: Reading *The Legend of the Thousand Bulls* as an Advocacy of Cultural Integrity

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### ABSTRACT

The nomads (yörüks) of Anatolia were forced to sedentarisation both during the Ottoman and the Turkish Republican eras. In today's Anatolia, only approximately one hundred families are left who maintain their nomadic way of life: the Sarkeçeli Yörüks whose inclusion in UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding is pending. In *The Legend of the Thousand Bulls* [*Binboğalar Efsanesi*] (1971), Yaşar Kemal tells, with genuine pathos, the story of the Karaçullu, a sixty-tent pastoralist clan living in the Middle Taurus area of Southern Anatolia. Kemal depicts the Karaçullu as one of the last surviving nomadic groups of the Turkish Republic in the early 1950s and follows their quest, from one spring to the next, to find a permanent pasture upon losing their hopes of the possibility of continuing a nomadic way of life. He demonstrates the correlation between sedentarisation and the tribe's disintegration over two axes. The first is the process from one stage of capitalism to the other as regards the ending of the nomadic way of life. The second axis is cultural integrity. Yaşar Kemal constructs the story of the tribe over the very intertwining of the fight for existence and the fight for cultural integrity laying emphasis on the inextricable link between them. Analysing Yaşar Kemal's emphasis on this link through the representations of nomadism in his novel as well as the connections he makes with historical events that led to the disappearance of the nomadic culture in Anatolia, I hope to contribute to cultural studies related with anthropological research on nomadism and create awareness about the situation of the last nomads of Anatolia.

**Keywords:** Nomads, Sedentarisation, Anatolian rural culture, Yaşar Kemal, Indigenous people, Aboriginal people



*To my father Yaşar Baki Cengiz, and to all my  
yörük ancestors who once freely moved between  
their summer pastures and winter quarters in  
and around Antalya*

## Introduction

The pastoralist nomads (*yörüks*) of Anatolia, who, one tribe after the other, had to switch to a sedentary way of life during the late Ottoman and early Turkish Republican eras, have significant similarities with Indigenous peoples of other continents, particularly in terms of their relationship with land. Like Indigenous people, a strong bond with land is at the centre of the life of Anatolian nomads. Once Indigenous people lose their land, their “cultures are in danger of extinguishment” (Gilbert, 2010, p. 31), and such a loss of culture has also been the case for the Anatolian nomads.

The nomads of Anatolia had been forced to sedentarisation both during the Ottoman and the Turkish Republican eras. In the Ottoman era, the state enforced sedentarisation with the intention of increasing productivity in the underdeveloped regions of the country, particularly in the periods of fast social and economic changes such as post-war periods (Erdal, 2016, p. 118). In the Ottoman era there were also times when the state implemented sedentarisation for security reasons (İnalçık, 2014, p. 480). When it comes to the Republican era, the state chose the sedentarisation policy either for economic reasons such as ensuring agricultural production on unused land, or for ideological motivations “to minimise the population who are not regulated and who cannot benefit from the achievements of the Republic” (Erdal, 2016, p. 119).

In *The Legend of the Thousand Bulls* [*Binboğalar Efsanesi*] (1971), Yaşar Kemal tells, with genuine pathos, the story of the Karaçullu, a sixty-tent pastoralist nomadic clan living in the Middle Taurus area of Southern Anatolia. Due to the changing proportions of both public and private lands as well as the state’s sedentarisation policies, the clan loses access to the lands which had been their home for generations and where they could freely move from one season to the next. They try to continue their nomadic movement but this becomes impossible after some time. They eventually accept defeat which means that they have no other option but to submit to a sedentary way of life. To be able to do that they need to acquire land as their own property. The Anatolian nomadic clan in the novel has a similar experience as that of aboriginal peoples in other parts of the globe:

If, in the context of the modern nation-state, aboriginal people wish to claim some form of control over their lands, and they wish those claims to be seen as legitimate by others, they must, as Richard Handler puts it, speak “in a language that power understands” (1991:71). And that language is, and has long been, the language of property. (Nadasdy, 2002, p. 253)

In the novel Kemal tells the story of the Karaçullu clan as they try to speak in this ‘language that power understands.’ They try to own a piece of land on which they can survive, simply *survive*, stripped of their nomadic way of life, in other words, their cultural integrity.

In their struggle to obtain this land, the clan members suffer terribly while some families break away from the clan. Within this framework, Yaşar Kemal could have chosen to tell the Karaçullu’s story as a fight for existence, keeping their deprivation of the right to cultural integrity as an element secondary to this fight. However, he constructs the story of the tribe over the very intertwinement of the fight for existence and the fight for cultural integrity laying emphasis on the inextricable link between them. Gilbert’s (2013) explanation of this link, for all indigenous peoples, is worth quoting at length:

From the most diverse and often remote places of the globe, from the frozen Arctic to the tropical rainforests, indigenous peoples have argued that their culture will disappear without a strong protection of their right to land. While indigenous communities are most diverse, most of them share a similar deep-rooted relationship between cultural identity and land. Many indigenous communities . . . have stressed that territories and lands are the basis not only of economic livelihood but are also the source of spiritual, cultural and social identity. (p.119)

In *The Legend of the Thousand Bulls*, Kemal depicts the correlation between sedentarisation and the tribe’s disintegration over two axes. The first is the process from one stage of capitalism to the other as regards the ending of the nomadic way of life. The second axis is cultural integrity which Kemal develops over two central themes. The first theme is the humiliation of the clan’s culture, either directly or indirectly through the humiliation of its seniors by various figures of power and prominence during their efforts to find a piece of land for the tribe. The second theme is the dissipation of the tribal ethos: a cultural degeneration and loss of values in the members of the clan as misery corrodes their dignity. In the following pages I will analyse this link through Yaşar Kemal’s realistic depictions of the Anatolian nomads’ lives and his references to historical events that brought the end of nomadism in Anatolia. I will also focus on the great pathos he achieves to create in his novel for the nomads who suffered incredible hardships in their struggle to preserve their way of life, and invite the reader to consider the situation of the last nomads of Anatolia, namely the remaining one hundred or so families of the Sarıkeçili Yörüks, with due empathy and support.

### **The Karaçullu’s struggle for survival in the absence of land rights**

Yaşar Kemal (1976), at the very beginning of the novel, makes a direct and explicit argument for the right of nomads to the lands they have been living on for generations. In the epigraph of the first chapter, the narrator explains that “since time out of mind” the valley behind the Aladağ Mountain has been the summer pasture of nomads while Çukurova

has always been their winter quarters (p. 5). Throughout the novel, Kemal stresses the crucial importance of land for nomads not only because they need it to survive but also to protect their nomadic culture, therefore their cultural integrity. As Gilbert (2014) explains, the cultural identity of nomadic communities “is usually expressed by mobile patterns of land usage including herding, hunting, and foraging which are essential to their way of life, not only in terms of livelihood but also culturally” (p. 175).<sup>1</sup> Kemal demonstrates what happens when nomads’ right to land is violated as he tells the story of the Karaçullu through a perfect blend of major and minor plot events leading to the inevitable disintegration of the tribe.

The novel starts on the third day of the Karaçullu clan’s seasonal migration, in a valley in the Middle Taurus area of Anatolia. It is spring time and the clan faces serious challenges about finding a pasture in which to camp. The leaders of the clan regret not accepting, some time back, the state’s offer of land in line with its sedentarisation policy, since this would have meant the end of their nomadic way of life. For them, at that time, the concept of *having land as their property* simply did not make sense in the context of their nomadic way of life. They regret that decision now because in their current situation public lands are shrinking while private lands are enlarging. Within the context of the unbalanced distribution of these lands it becomes more and more challenging for the clan to find a pasture. Therefore, they are resigned to renouncing their nomadic tradition in order to stay alive. They are now in a position where they simply want to have a piece of land and switch to a sedentary life, but they do not have the necessary resources for buying the land they need.

“Take the Yörüks away from their pastures or their winter quarters and they would die” (Kemal, 1976, p. 5) says the narrator in the opening chapter of the novel. He simply means that if they cannot continue their nomadic movement, they will not be able to stay alive, a statement that encapsulates the entire argument of the novel: the end of the nomadic way of life means the end of the nomadic tribe. The narrator goes on to describe nomads using the simile of grass whose roots are fastened to stones at the bottom of a rock. The reference to roots is twofold: nomads belong to this land and if they are forced out of it they will be cut off from their roots, and just like the grass cut from its roots they will not survive.

*The Legend of the Thousand Bulls* is one of the most widely read and acclaimed novels of late Yaşar Kemal (1923-2015), Türkiye’s prominent novelist.<sup>2</sup> The Thousand Bulls [Binboğalar] in the title indicates the Taurus mountains (Kemal, 1971, p. 5). Kemal depicts

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1 Gilbert (2007) convincingly argues that for the implementation of nomads’ land rights, their status as “nomadic indigenous peoples” must be recognised (p. 694).

2 The novel was first serialised in the newspaper Cumhuriyet in 1971 and then published by Can Publications in the same year. From then until 2004 when it was transferred to YKY, it had been reprinted numerous times by various publishers. YKY has reprinted the book thirty-one times until now. After the publication of its English translation by Thilda Kemal in 1976 in the United Kingdom, the book received the Choix du Grand Jury des Lettres award in France in 1979. In Yaşar Kemal’s bibliographies, *The Legend of the Thousand Bulls* is listed among the author’s epic novels (Bibliography, Yaşar Kemal).

the Karaçullu as one of the last surviving nomadic groups of the Turkish Republic in the early 1950s and follows their quest, from one spring to the next, to find a permanent pasture upon losing their hopes of the possibility of continuing a nomadic way of life.<sup>3</sup> Since the Karaçullu clan is the last surviving group of the related tribe, the clan here is practically the whole tribe.<sup>4</sup> In a stream interview with Bosquet, Kemal (2011) uses the words *aşiret* [tribe] and *oba* [clan] interchangeably as he refers to the Karaçullu (p. 151); and in the English translation of the novel, the Karaçullu clan [Karaçullu obası] is translated as the Karaçullu tribe. In this article, we will address the Karaçullu as a clan, in line with the word choice in the Turkish original of the novel, except the moments where our emphasis is on the fact that the disintegration of its last surviving clan means the disintegration of the whole tribe.

The fact that Yaşar Kemal worked as a petition writer at one point in his life prior to the writing of the novel, and that the novel includes a character, Blind Kemal, who is a petition writer, leads some readers to assume that Kemal is writing about his own experiences in the novel.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, they suppose that a clan named Karaçullu existed in history. It is not possible to verify whether or not a clan named Karaçullu existed in history, since even the most extensive lists of the nomadic tribes and lineages do not include information on the clan level (Sakin, 2016, p. 77-347; Sakin, 2010, p. 65-339). Nonetheless, in an interview with Erinç, Kemal (1971) makes it clear that he did not write this novel based on a story he had heard, but entirely on his own imagination (p. 5). He explains that while he creates his earlier epic novels based on folk tales, the story of *The Thousand Bulls* belongs entirely to him. Referring to some claims that the novel is based on old tales and/or legends, he strongly emphasises that the novel is *his* “fully, with its narration, its subject and everything” and also describes it as “probably his most realistic novel” (p. 5).

Regarding the factuality of the story, Dirlik (1991) makes the following apt observation:

The Legend of the Thousand Bulls is not to be construed as a history or even a historical novel, but it derives much of its critical power and radical immediacy from the historicized form in which Kemal casts the narrative. (p. 324)

References to historical events and clans, particularly within the epigraph of each chapter, are at the core of this historicised form. In the sixth chapter, Kemal (1976) writes about an incident related to the sedentarisation policy in the Ottoman era (pp. 71-72) and the factual Aydınlı tribe’s struggle “to pursue their nomadic ways” (p. 73) after that incident. The Aydınlı tribe was an Alevite nomadic tribe in Southern Anatolia, and the members of the Karaçullu in the novel are also Alevite. So, synthesising this detailed information in the novel on the history

3 Throughout the novel Yaşar Kemal uses the two terms of *yörük* [nomad] and *Türkmen* [Turkmen/Turcoman] interchangeably.

4 In the novel, Süleyman the Headman, one of the characters, says that they were once two thousand tents while now they are only sixty (Kemal, 1976, p. 198).

5 Yaşar Kemal having one blind eye might contribute to the assumption that Blind Kemal in the novel refers to Kemal himself.

of the Aydınlı with Yaşar Kemal's emphasis on the fictiveness of the novel, we can argue that, the Karaçullu is a fictional clan Kemal creates as surviving from the factual Aydınlı tribe.<sup>6</sup>

Yaşar Kemal tells the story of nomadic people whose culture is based on oral tradition with references to that tradition. By infusing the lexicon of the Southern Anatolian nomads with great mastery into the *Legend of the Thousand Bulls*, he not only strengthens the novel's realism, but also places emphasis on the oral tradition dimension of his work. He uses dialect not only in dialogues but also in narration, bringing the narrator's language closer to that of the characters. Making his narrator use colloquial language and dialect allows Kemal to oppose a hierarchy between the 'educated' (possessing written culture) narrator belonging to a sedentary way of life and the 'uneducated' (possessing oral culture) clan belonging to a nomadic way of life, a position integral to the message of the novel. In the quotation above "take the Yörüks away from their pastures" (Kemal, 1976, p. 5), the use of second-person narration creates a feeling of conversation. This communication channel between the narrator and the reader, which Kemal initiates at the very beginning of the novel, is akin to what we would find between a story-teller and her/his listener in the oral tradition. Put simply, as Kemal presents his novel as a legend with its very title and uses various stylistic features of a legend from the first page to the last, he blurs the lines between genres, and for that matter, between written and oral culture. Consequently, while *The Legend of the Thousand Bulls* resembles a folk legend with its content and various formal features, this similarity is not akin to postmodern pastiche.

In the novel, the first character Yaşar Kemal introduces us to is Haydar, the Master Blacksmith. Kemal depicts Haydar as an idiosyncratic man, giving vivid details of his appearance. Then we hear Haydar talking to God, rendered through a stream of consciousness. While he pleads for land from God, he addresses him like he is a human being, albeit superior: "great Allah, my beautiful, brave Allah, my friend, my lion . . . brother!" (Kemal, 1976, p. 6). He then tells God that he knows he will not give the land and adds: "You've deserted the skies and the stars the forests and the streams. You never come out of your mosques now" (7).

As Haydar openly challenges organised religion in this statement, the dichotomy he makes between the forests and the streams versus the mosques is worth attention: for the pastoralist nomad, God is associated with the spirituality of nature, and once God no longer expresses himself in nature but in mosques, i.e. organised religion, he is no longer the same God for the nomad. Haydar connects God's preference of the concrete mosques to the forests and the streams with his approval of the betrayal against nature brought by modernisation/urbanisation: "You've built huge bright cities for yourself. You've made birds of iron to fly in the sky. . . . You've set up houses on top of the other and multiplied the seas" (Kemal, 1976, p. 7). In the skies full of birds, which the nomad watches as he contemplates life in a spiritual

6 Kuşci (2018) explains that the Aydınlı were a tribe living around Adana. They were called Aydınlı because they first went to the city of Aydın and then came back to Adana (p. 22). The Karaçullu clan in the novel is also based near Adana.

experience that connects him with nature, now fly planes, birds of iron. As God prefers these iron birds to real birds and concrete buildings to forests and streams, the nomad feels himself in an alien world where God deserted him and his fellow nomads. He feels that nature is no longer a place that belongs to all beings in it: to every single bird, every single ant, every single nomad, where all these beings, as well as God himself, are part of it. As God allows nature to be encroached by the mechanisms of the capitalist economic system Haydar and his clan cannot even find a little piece of land on which to dwell. Within this context, Bryan's (2000) observation on the Aboriginal conception of ownership, and how it is challenged in the modern era, is worth quoting at length:

The forest is no longer a breathing reality but is timber to be negotiated over, and it cannot be understood in any other way. The *snams* leave the country because they are no longer seen there; and they are no longer seen because there is no way for them to arise in the new consciousness that understands things as materially different. This is what 'property as ontology' means: institutional relationships that define the way land and goods are understood and used must always be, in the first instance, a question of the ontological structure of daily life. (p. 29)

Haydar's bitter comments reveal the anxiety he feels in front of a completely unfamiliar ontological structure. An utterly proud man, Haydar ends his words by telling God that he will never beg him for land even if this will be the end of the clan. This indication of Haydar's pride, which he retains even in the face of God, is a painful foreshadowing of the humiliating events waiting for the doomed clan one after the other.

In the rest of the chapter Kemal goes on to give more information about the clan and their despair about finding a land to live on. He also presents, in an extensive passage (Kemal, 1976, pp. 10-14), vivid depictions of religious/spiritual rituals the clan members are holding at that moment, which come to the fore as an elaborate manifestation of the richness and rootedness of their culture.

### **Cultural integrity in the face of the clan culture's humiliation**

Haydar's sword is the central motif in the *The Legend of the Thousand Bulls* and is related with the humiliation of the clan's culture. The discrepancy between the rootedness of their culture and the way this culture is degraded in the modern era is epitomised in this motif. Haydar spends years making this sword and planning to present it to a landowner or a governmental figure with the expectation of taking land in response. His encounters with the possible receivers of the sword are among the most crucial passages of the novel where the humiliation of the sword, of Haydar, of the clan, and of the whole nomadic culture of Anatolia overlap.

Before analysing Haydar's encounters, it might be worthwhile to have a look at the interaction between Old Müslüm, an elderly respectable figure of the clan, and Muhtar Fehmi,

a former nomad who has recently switched to a sedentary way of life. Fehmi's father was a tribal chief, and until recently Fehmi was proud of that. In the related passage, the narrator tells in detail how this man who now lives in a mansion of fourteen rooms throws away all the objects and artefacts remaining from his family's nomadic past and buys his furniture and white goods from the city of Adana. While he does not even want to see the objects from the nomadic days, he admires the chairs and beds which symbolise the sedentary way of life: "his grandfather's purebreds, the old Turcoman traditions were put out of mind. If anyone so much as mentioned them he squirmed and at once took a strong dislike to the speaker" (Kemal, 1976, p. 74). When Karaçullu men arrive to ask his permission to camp on his land for the winter, he sends his assistant to tell them to leave. Then, Müslüm who is one of the most senior members of the clan decides to go and speak to him. Müslüm had been friends with Fehmi's father and grandfather in the past. He had also gifted Fehmi's father with a horse at some point.

The encounter between Müslüm and Fehmi passes as an incident of pure humiliation of the clan's culture. The first step of this humiliation is when Müslüm, with two companions from the clan, arrive at Fehmi's mansion. Müslüm feels offended when no one welcomes them in the yard: "Hadn't he come as a guest? Weren't these the age-old rules of hospitality?" (Kemal, 1976, p. 76). He waits there for a while but no one comes. Having never been so humiliated in his life, he feels he should leave but cannot do that because the clan is desperate for land. He sends one of his companions to tell Fehmi that Müslüm, a friend of his father's and grandfather's, came to visit him. Despite that, Fehmi does not come out to welcome them, so Müslüm goes inside feeling so belittled that he can hardly breathe.

Until this moment, Kemal presents the humiliation in the encounter subtly through a mastery of psycho-narration. However, once Fehmi appears, an artificial and exaggerated character, almost a caricature, the effect of the passage is weakened. Fehmi's comments about Müslüm's outfit, as he enters in the lounge, "what's this costume, this rig-out?" (Kemal, 1976, p. 77) sound both unnatural and unrealistic. The rest of the conversation between the two continues in a similar tone. When Müslüm introduces himself to Fehmi as his father's friend, Fehmi continues commenting about Müslüm's outfit. As Müslüm tries to introduce himself he gets interrupted once again by Fehmi: "'I suppose that's how our ancestors looked,' he said. 'But surely not as funny as this... The poor beggars'" (p. 77).<sup>7</sup> When Müslüm asks Fehmi's permission for the clan to pass the winter in his land Fehmi's reply is: "Quite impossible, my poor ridiculous fellow" (p. 78). At the end of the chapter, Müslüm feels dizzy as he leaves Fehmi's house after all the humiliation. Despite the shortcomings in the way Fehmi is depicted, this encounter is a significant moment in the novel as regards the humiliation of the clan.

Kemal, in a skilfully realistic manner, depicts Haydar's encounters with various figures in his quest to present the sword. Haydar's first stop is Adana where he plans to meet a member of the Ramazanoğlu family. Being a member of the ironsmith lineage, he expects to be hosted

7 Throughout the article, a set of three dots without spaces [...] belong to the original source used as punctuation.



by the members of the Ramazanoğlu with respect and he is optimistic about taking land in response for the sword. When Haydar arrives in Adana, it all feels very alien to him. He cannot make sense of what a city means, he thinks that Adana belongs to the Ramazanoğlu family. After a long hesitation, Haydar and his companion Osman, a young boy from the clan, asks a man on the street how to find the Ramazanoğlu family. The man cannot manage to explain to them that members of the family are spread around the city and that the family does not have a prominence in the way Haydar thinks. Finally, he tells them to see Hurşit, a member of the family, assuming that he would behave kindly to Haydar and his companion.

The encounter between Haydar and Hurşit is a complete miscommunication; they almost speak in different languages verbatim. Hurşit is an urban man living in a small house with many books and as Haydar tells him his clan's story and tries to explain his plan about the sword all that Hurşit does is repeatedly say "intéressant, intéressant" (Kemal, 1976, pp. 181-183). Eventually, Hurşit explains to Haydar that the land in Adana now belongs to different families such as the owners of the factory recently built in the city. When Hurşit does not even ask to see the sword, Haydar feels offended. In this encounter, the culture of the clan symbolised by the sword is ignored rather than humiliated. The great humiliation occurs in Haydar's attempt to see Hasip Bey, a prominent man coming from a nomadic family, who refuses to receive Haydar and his companion, and sends twenty liras with his janitor to them. The passage depicting this incident comes to the fore with the incredible pathos conveyed in it.

Haydar's quest to find the right recipient of the sword can actually be regarded as a road story extending from Adana to Ankara. As in all road stories, the main character meets various people. After Hurşit, Haydar meets Hasan Hüseyin, whom he approaches in Ankara to ask for road directions. Hasan Hüseyin happens to be an Alevite. He instantly realises that Haydar is a highly respectable figure for the Alevite community as an heir of the ironsmith lineage. He proudly hosts him at his home that night, and his neighbours come to greet Haydar. In the passages where Haydar is treated with great respect by Hasan Hüseyin and his neighbours, Yaşar Kemal underscores the authenticity of the clan's culture without resorting to a didactic explanation by the narrator.

After this, Haydar, overcoming various challenges, manages to see the president İsmet İnönü and offers him the sword. İnönü simply looks at it and says, "very beautiful, very beautiful" (Kemal, 1976, p. 242) and leaves. This is the point when Haydar loses all his hopes about taking land in response for the sword.

Five individuals Haydar meets in his quest are worthy of attention: Kerem Ali who helps Haydar and his companion in Adana showing great respect to Haydar, Hurşit who is neither polite nor rude, Hasip who is terribly disrespectful and arrogant, Hasan Hüseyin who hosts the pair in Ankara in the most respectful manner possible and İsmet İnönü who is neither rude nor polite. The wide scale of these characters adds successfully to the realism and cogency of the novel. Through the presentation of the moments of indifference to and humiliation

of the clan's culture together with the instances of its appraisal Kemal manages to create a convincing portrayal of the events.

The clan's encounter with the gendarmerie in Sarıçam is another significant incident in the novel in terms of the humiliation of the clan's culture. While the gendarmerie ruthlessly destroy the tents of the clan, women and children selflessly try to shield one specific tent. The commander eventually stops his men and with great curiosity goes into the tent. He cannot really make sense of the objects he sees inside and asks Süleyman the Headman if these are sacred: "Süleyman felt like sinking to the bottom of the earth. 'These are the tokens of our tribe,' he answered. 'They have never left us since we came over from Khorassan. Nobody would touch them'" (Kemal, 1976, pp. 210-211). This emphasis on the sacredness of the tent is another heart-wrenching foreshadowing of the tragic ending of the tribe.

### **Cultural integrity and the dissipation of the tribal ethos**

In *The Legend of the Thousand Bulls*, Yaşar Kemal articulates the loss of cultural integrity as the inevitable process leading to the disintegration of the tribe. He depicts the pressure on Ceren as the ultimate manifestation of the dissipation of the clan's tribal ethos. Desperate for a piece of land, the clan members pin their hopes on Ceren, a young and stunningly beautiful girl of the clan, who has received a marriage proposal from Oktay, a man whose family has vast areas of land. However, Ceren and Halil, the Bey of the clan (tribal chief), are in love with each other.

By putting pressure on Ceren to marry Oktay for his father's land the clan acts contradictory to the ethos of the tribe. Süleyman's thoughts on this issue midway into the novel serve as another foreshadowing of the tragedy awaiting the clan. Here he remembers in disgust that clan members tried to deceive Ceren by showing her a blood-stained shirt to convince her that Halil was dead, hoping that she would marry Oktay. Süleyman feels repulsed by such an act in a clan where normally girls would only marry for love. He compares his feelings about this with the times he has been humiliated in the past:

I've gone through a lot, humiliation, trials, blows... I've been dragged to police-stations, beaten, crushed, spit upon... There was nothing I could do about it. But this... The breakdown of all the traditions... The tribes are dwindling away to nothing. The tents, once so proudly upright, seven-poled, now old and tattered with only a pole or two. Everything was ending, withering away... (Kemal, 1976, p. 128)

After these thoughts, Süleyman gives the clan an ultimatum of respecting Ceren's feelings and never pressuring her to marry Oktay.

In the nineteenth chapter, in one of the most decisive passages of the novel, Yaşar Kemal depicts, with some great pathos, the tribe's loss of cultural integrity and its inevitable ending as two sides of the same coin. In the epigraph of the chapter the narrator explains the clan's

state as they are camping in Sariçam, having lost some families on the way, only to be removed once again after the arrival of the gendarmerie. The tents look sadly ragged and even children seem silent and unhappy, not playing any games. The chapter starts with the words of Süleyman speaking to Old Taniş, an elderly man of the tribe, almost repeating word by word his thoughts which we hear on p. 128, quoted above. Their conversation is as sorrowful as can be, and Süleyman's words effectively mean that they are now left with the task of burying the whole nomadic culture as he mournfully says:

It belongs to us, then, to bury the noble tribes of old, the days of glory, the great Turcoman, the Yörüks, the Aydins, the Horzumlus, to bury them like this, miserably, with no elegies, no words, no music, like dogs... (Kemal, 1976, p. 198).

Their conversation is described by the narrator as follows: "On and on they talked, these two old men, like a funeral lament" (p. 198).

The narrator then goes on to explain the great culture of the nomads in their heyday. He tells of their traditions, rituals, elements of their oral culture and their elaborate crafts (Kemal, 1976, pp. 198-199). He also mentions the tribe leaders whose reputation would cross countries, who would be welcomed by mayors and pashas. In this passage of the novel where its central message is at its most explicit and compelling, Yaşar Kemal depicts the process from cultural corrosion to total extinction as follows:

First the word had been lost, then the songs, the legends, the dances and rituals, Nasrettin Hoja, Yunus, the poet of all humankind, the semah, the solemn congregations... For forty years now the last remnants of the Turcomans had been agonizing all over the world. Everything had come to an end long ago. (Kemal, 1976, p. 199)<sup>8</sup>

In the penultimate chapter of the novel Halil comes back to the great disfavour of some clan members. Ceren is engaged to Oktay now, out of her own wish.<sup>9</sup> Müslüm Koca rages as he hears the clan's boys talking disrespectfully about Halil. He reminds them that he is still their Bey in whose keeping are the horsetail and the drum, which are the tokens of the clan (Kemal, 1976, p. 278). Hıdır replies to him saying: "But what is there left of Beys or Pashas now? A shrivelled drum, a moth-eaten horsetail, a tattered old standard" (p. 278). Müslüm explodes with anger telling him to shut up and adds: "The tribe's not dead yet that you should speak like that of our standard" (p. 278).

Halil and Ceren run away together. After some time, on the holy day of Hıdırellez when the Prophet Al-Khidr and the Prophet Elijah are believed to meet each other on earth, they

8 Semah is "a set of mystical and aesthetic body movements in rhythmic harmony" which is "one of the twelve main services found in Cem rituals, religious practices performed by adherents of Alevi-Bektaşî" (Semah). It is included in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

9 As a matter of fact, after the engagement the clan members understand that Oktay's family will not help them with their land. Only Süleyman is informed on that and for the time being he hides it from the clan members.

come back to meet the clan, since, according to the tradition, the chief must be with his clan on this day. Halil, in line with the tribal ethos, decides to meet his clan risking his life, since for him the tribal ethos is above everything, including his very life. However, the tribal ethos no longer means anything to some members of the clan who are full of vengeance, and they kill Halil.

Ceren buries Halil, meets the clan, and tells Süleyman that Halil has been killed. Following the tribal rule Ceren shoots Halil's horse tied in front of the Bey's tent. Süleyman gets wood for the fire and throws the tokens one by one over the pieces of wood. He tells the clan members to undo the Bey's tent. They undo the tent and throw its pieces over the pile. When Ceren makes a move towards it, Süleyman stops her saying: "Stop, my daughter. This is the Bey's tent. It is for me to burn it" (p. 287). As he sets the wood on fire the tribe gets buried into history.

## Conclusion

In *The Legend of the Thousand Bulls*, Yaşar Kemal portrays the loss of a significant component of Anatolian culture, that of the pastoralist nomads, through the poignant story of the Karaçullu. Doing this with an admirable realism and great pathos, Kemal attracts attention to the indivisible unity of livelihood and culture, as the humiliation of the clan's culture and dissipation of its tribal ethos mark the beginning of its end. Jackson (2007), in the context of the indigenous pueblo members of Colombia underscores that "a pueblo's 'culture,' or their 'otherness' will be restricted or otherwise diminished as a result of increased participation in modern life. 'Culture' is not the same as autonomy, but the two are deeply imbricated" (p. 231). Yaşar Kemal illustrates how the structural changes brought by the capitalist modernisation/urbanisation of the country result in the disappearance of the nomadic culture in Anatolia.

The nomads' bond with land was not a relationship of ownership but of membership: they felt themselves to be members of nature together with all other beings living in it. Campbell (2015), in the context of Amazonia, explains that:

In rural Amazonia, property is conjured—made to appear from seemingly nowhere, as if by magic. These conjurings are made with the belief that they might be recognized and thereby become the basis of individual wealth, a shared economy, and a rural way of life. (p. 5)

This was also the case for the nomads of Anatolia, as Kemal depicts in the story of the Karaçullu. To be able to continue their nomadic way of life and preserve their culture they needed certain land rights. In the absence of these rights the tribe was doomed to disappear.

In today's Anatolia, approximately one hundred families of the Sarıkeçili Yörüks (Nomads) continue the nomadic way of life (Horzumlu, 2014, p. 107). They are the last

Anatolian nomads.<sup>10</sup> In 2012, Türkiye presented the Nomadic movement of Sarıkeçili Yörüks to UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, and this item is currently in the backlog nomination category (Mendeş, 2001, p. 27). The Sarıkeçili Yörüks face various challenges as they are sometimes not allowed to herd their goats even though they have the necessary official permission (Yavuz, 2021). The future of the last Anatolian nomads depends on the granting of certain rights, primarily land rights. If reading *The Legend of the Thousand Bulls* today, some forty-one years after it was written, inspires us to support the Sarıkeçili Yörüks in their struggle, it would probably shine a little ray of light not only on the soul of late Yaşar Kemal but also on generations of nomads wherever they are in eternity.

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10 Yüksel Aksu (2010) made a documentary film about them with this title: *Anadolu'nun Son Göçerleri: Sarıkeçililer* [Last Nomads in Anatolia: Sarıkeçililer].

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