



Ståle Knudsen. *Fishers and Scientists in Modern Turkey: The Management of Natural Resources, Knowledge and Identity on the Eastern Black Sea Coast*. Studies in Environmental Anthropology and Ethnobiology Series. New York: Berghahn Books, 2009. x + 290 pp. \$80.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-84545-440-1.

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Published on H-Environment (June, 2011)  
Commissioned by Dolly Jørgensen



## Understanding Fishing Culture: A View from the Eastern Black Sea

In the last few decades, fisheries scientists have noted the precipitous decline of wild fish populations all around the world. The consensus is that the principal cause is systematic overfishing aided by factory ships with sophisticated technology compounded by widespread government mismanagement of fishery resources. Yet that is where scientific studies almost inevitably end. Thus, we are left asking *why* such overexploitation occurs and why mismanagement continues across different types of fisheries in disparate places. Are there underlying cultural reasons that have led people from very different geographic and cultural realities to treat fishery resources in similar ways?

Fortunately, historians, social scientists, and ethnologists have begun using interdisciplinary approaches (most notably, integrating fisheries studies and aquatic sciences) over the last decade to better understand the underlying cultural phenomenon associated with human relationships to fish and fisheries. Ståle Knudsen's *Fishers and Scientists in Modern Turkey* is an exemplary case study in this vein. While the title suggests a regional fishery study, the author expresses his desire to "illuminate how different forces come together in the changing relationships among state, peoples, substances and discourses in modernizing Turkey" by focusing on "fishers and marine scientists" (p. 14) Indeed, his introductory chapter does a good job of situating his work within a broader set of fisheries-related problems and a wide

range of historiographies, including the history of modern Turkey, other European fisheries studies, and key works of cultural history and cultural ecology.

Across ten chapters, Knudsen analyzes not only the Eastern Black Sea fishery, but the different classes of fishermen found there and the various ways social policies as well as science and technology have been acculturated, rejected, misunderstood, and mismanaged by fishermen to form their particular relationships to the Eastern Black Sea. In chapter 2, the author sets the stage with a discussion of the historical place of seafood consumption in Turkish culture as a whole that serves as a solid foundation for further discussion in the next five chapters where he treats specific relationships between fishermen and the state (chapter 3), fishermen and the sea (chapter 4), fisherman with each other (chapter 5), and even fishermen's social relationships with family and friends (chapter 6). The last three chapters deal with the fishermen's relationships to science, technology, and the politics of the fishery, with one chapter dealing with the controversy involving the use of sonar, another focusing on attempts to create fishing cooperatives, and the final chapter discussing the way knowledge of fisheries science is integrated into the Islamic culture in Turkey. These chapters come together to illustrate how the cultural dynamics between different human agents (common people, scientists, and the state) seeking to exploit the Black Sea fishery in their own way effectively stifles the develop-

ment of any progress toward sustainable management of the fishery.

The book is well organized and the study follows smoothly from one chapter to the next offering a well-informed analysis of the nature-culture dichotomy on the Eastern Black Sea coast. That said, the author's style and his attempt to make the book interdisciplinary also lead to some difficulties with the text. While the interdisciplinary approach lends itself to a broader audience and can address new questions, especially those that cross the boundaries of science and culture, they can also be encumbered by the lack of a common disciplinary vocabulary and attempts to say too many things to too many specialized audiences. In this particular study, this sometimes leads to prose that is overly verbose and terminology that is a bit awkward and occasionally confusing. The text is well annotated with a bibliography, index, and a glossary containing frequently used Turkish words. Readers will find the Turkish word glossary a valuable edition as the integration of local terminology related to fishing and fish is a major thrust of the book.

As I was reading this book, I was struck by some of the parallels that exist between earlier fishing practices elsewhere in Europe and even in North America. For example, a major theme of the text is the difficult relationship between the practical local knowledge and traditions of common fishermen and elitist, top-down, state-sponsored science, which can also be found in Jennifer M. Hubbard's study of cod in *A Science on the Scales*:

*The Rise of Canadian Atlantic Fisheries Biology 1898-1939* (2006). Another is the moral issues created by turning nature into a commodity, which has been well demonstrated in Bonnie J. McCay's *Oyster Wars and the Public Trust: Property, Law, and Ecology in New Jersey History* (1998). While the author recognizes these parallels, he does so only tangentially in his introduction. Had they been treated more explicitly, this book would be even more relevant to the broader historical literature on global fisheries.

Overall, despite its limited geographical scale, and a relatively constrained set of questions, this study is demonstrative of common problems found in fisheries around the world and a very welcome addition to a growing body of interdisciplinary work concerning global fisheries issues. The author succeeds in both objectifying fishermen and marine scientists within a broader theme of "changing relationships among state, peoples, substances and discourses in modernizing Turkey" and demonstrating those themes in the specific context of Turkish culture. This book's interdisciplinary approach should make it appealing to an array of audiences from fisheries scientists and managers to environmental historians and cultural geographers. For those looking to enrich student discussions on broader issues related to modern fisheries management, or simply highlighting the intersections of environment and culture, chapter 2, "Seafood Identities and Turkish Identities," and chapter 9, "Water Produce Cooperatives and the Cultivation of Ignorance," would make for an interesting discussion.

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**Citation:** Darin Kinsey. Review of Knudsen, Ståle, *Fishers and Scientists in Modern Turkey: The Management of Natural Resources, Knowledge and Identity on the Eastern Black Sea Coast*. H-Environment, H-Net Reviews. June, 2011.

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