

History of Turkish Cuisine Culture and the Influence of the Balkans

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Abstract: Cuisine culture is one of the important parameters of the history of a society. Societies with deep-rooted histories have rich cuisine cultures. Within this context, the Turkish cuisine, which has been enriched by the journey of the Turks from Central Asia to the Balkans, holds a central place within the world cuisines. The main characteristic of Turkish cuisine that has increased the importance of Turkish cuisine is the diversity of tastes, which reflects the previous cultural exchanges and multicultural history of the Turks. The Balkan cuisine culture holds a special place in shaping the Turkish cuisine culture. In this regard, this study aims to reveal the historical phases in the development of the Turkish cuisine and to evaluate the effects of the Balkan culture over the Turkish cuisine culture.

Key Words:-*Turkish Cuisine Culture, Balkan Culture, Court Kitchen, Balkan Food*

I. INTRODUCTION

The demands and needs of the masses are in a process of constant change parallel to the developments in technology. Over time, various goods, which were once considered as luxury, have turned into necessity. Despite the process of constant change, the only demand that have never changed is the nutrition. In its most general sense, nutrition is a process, which starts with taking the foods that are required for the body and continues with the usage of the ingredients of the food after the body processes them (Irmak,1959, p.9). The most important point in this definition is that nutrition is vital for the survival of the human beings. In other words, nutrition is a life-sustaining need. From the earliest periods of the history, human beings have settled down or migrated in order to meet their nutrition need. The consequence of the constant settlement and re-settlement processes was the regional or local differences in terms of food types and nutrition habits. Geography is one of the fundamental factors that shape the nutrition need of the human beings. Within this context, the opportunities that different geographical areas provide have shaped the food habits and nutrition types (KılıçveAlbayrak, 2012, p.707). Within this context, the dominant food habits in a particular geographical region may not be relevant for the people living in another geographical area.

In addition to the characteristics of the geographical area that the humans have settled down, beliefs and the dominant religion in the particular geographical area have also shaped the food habits of the people. Goody (2013) states that while choosing what to consume, human beings stay away from the foods that are forbidden according to their beliefs. In addition to the geography that the people live and the dominant beliefs in the region, personal traits of the individuals, the characteristics of the people that they live and the psychological situations of the individuals shape the food habits (BeardsworthandKeil, 2011, p.22).

The change in food consumption habits, which are influenced by various individual, geographical and social factors should be evaluated within the context of cuisine culture. Cuisine culture is a unique culture that consists of all food types and habits, which are shaped by the geographical, religious, historical, sociological, psychological and economic characteristics of a society and which are shared by all the members of the particular community.

The usage of the food types and habits together with the concept of culture can be expressed with certain characteristics. Within this context (Beşirli, 2010, p.160);

- a. Culture is the fundamental determinant of what we eat
- b. Culture is learned. Food habits are also learned during the childhood and do not easily change once they are solidified
- c. Foods are integral components of the culture

The most characteristic good that signifies the cultural difference is the food. The selection, preparation of the food, the eating method, number of daily meals, meal hours and portion size, which are all shaped by the traditions and practices of the cuisine culture are integrated with the general cultural traits (Abdurrezzak, 2014,

p.3).In sum, nutrition, which is a vital need, may represent a geography, society or a state and may evolve into a culture with the influence of some of the factors.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Similar to other cuisines, Turkish cuisine is shaped by the cultural phases, different geographical characteristics and the religious motives. The analysis of the Turkish cuisine shows the traces of the path that the Turks took from the Central Asia to Europe (ArliandGüneş, 2007, p.145).Meat and milk products of the Central Asia, cereals of the Mesopotamia, fruits and vegetables of the Mediterranean region, and the species of the South Asia have been mixed and have evolved into a rich food culture. Given that the Turks depended upon animal breeding during the times they lived in the Central Asia, food of animal origin occupied a central place in the Turkish cuisine (Kekilli, 2008, p.8).

Table1:Names of food that are dealt in the dictionary, entitled “*Divan-ıLügat-iTürk*”

<i>Aş, aşlık</i> (Food)	<i>Kaşık</i>	<i>Yem</i> (Feed)
<i>Ayran</i> (Ayran)	<i>Katık</i>	<i>Yoğurt</i> (yogurt)
<i>Arzuk</i>	<i>Kımız</i> (Kumis)	<i>Yuvka-Yufka</i> (filo pastry)
<i>Bekmez</i> (Molasses)	<i>Kuyma-Kuymak</i>	<i>Bulgama-bulama</i>
<i>Kavurma</i> (Fried Meat)	<i>Çörek</i> (Pie)	<i>Kömeç</i>
<i>Etmek</i> (Bread)	<i>Şiş-Söğüş</i> (sish)	<i>Tutmaç</i>
<i>Süzme</i> (A Cheese Type)	<i>Et</i> (Meat)	<i>Epmek-Ekmek</i> (Bread)
<i>İçkü</i> (Drink)	<i>Ugurt</i>	<i>Kagut-Kavut</i>
<i>Yağ</i> (Butter)	<i>Kakuk-Kak</i>	<i>Yarma</i>

Source:Koşay, 1982, p.47

Since the Turks used meat for their meals frequently during the times they were in Central Asia, they learned to conserve the meat for a long time without spoiling the meat. Conserved meat was the most important good that the Turks exported to China (Talas, 2005, p.78). Within this context, the Turks produced meat products such as pastrami, sausage or *sızgit* by drying the meat with spices, frying the meat or storing the meat within a protective skin Excavations in Central Asia, especially in Anau¹, revealed agricultural goods and irrigation systems, which indicated that the Turks engaged in agricultural activities during the prehistoric periods. In this sense, in addition to the meat products, the Turks also consumed herbal products during their settlement in Central Asia (KılıçandAlbayrak, 2012, p.712).Once the Turks were converted to Islam, the Turkish cuisine refrained from using the goods that were banned by the new religion. Starting with the mid-8th century, religion became the main factor that shaped the Turkish cuisine. With their conversion to Islam, the Turks maintained their cuisine culture but adapted the rules and the prohibitions brought by Islam (Kızıldemir et al., 2014, p.195). Hence, they refrained from consuming odd-toed ungulates (horse, donkey, etc.) and reptiles(ErtaşandKaradağ, 2013, p.119).

The impact of Islam became more visible in the Seljuks period. The decrease in the number of meat types due to the Islamic rules was compensated with the increase in agricultural products. During the reign of the Seljuks, meat, flour and butter were the symbols of the Seljuks cuisine(Güler, 2010, p.25). Lamb, goat and chicken were the animals that were frequently consumed. The Seljuks had two meals, called the *kuşluk* (mid-morning meal) and *zevale* (dinner)(Batu, 2015, p.69). They preferred food products that were filling. There were various types of food for the dinner and the dinner was held before the sunset (Güler, 2010, p.25).

¹Anau is a city 8 km southeast of Ashgabat. City is known as the capital of Ahal Province and traces of habitation and localization Anau date back to the 4th millennia BC.

Table2:Names of the food that are dealt in the book, entitled “*Mesnevi*”

<i>Yufka</i> (Pastry)	<i>Kalye</i>	Leek
<i>Etliekmek</i> (Quick bread with ground meat)	<i>Borani</i>	Celery
<i>Tandır Ekmeği</i> (Village bread)	<i>Herise</i>	Apple
<i>Çörek</i> (Cupcake)	<i>Patlıcan Turşusu</i> (Egg-plantpickle)	Grape
<i>Börek</i> (Pastry)	<i>Helva</i> (Halvah)	Pomegranates
<i>Tutmaç</i>	<i>Kadayıf</i> (Shredded wheat desert)	Onion
<i>Tirit</i> (Boiled minced meat sauce)	<i>Gülbeşeker</i> (Rose Jam)	Turnip
<i>Pişmiş Baş</i> (Cooked sheep’s head) ²	<i>Zerde</i> (Saffron and rice desert)	Black-eyed pea
<i>Bulgur Aşı</i> (Bulgur)	<i>Şerbet</i> (Juice)	

Source:Gürsoy, 2013, p.85.

The Turkish cuisine further developed and reached to its peak during the Ottoman period. The foreign visitors that came to Istanbul were impressed by the Ottoman cuisine and sent their chiefs to Ottoman Empire for training (Şanlıer et al., 2012, p.154).The Seljuks cuisine influenced the Ottoman cuisine culture during the early times of the Ottomans. With the conquests during the 14th and the 15th centuries, the Ottoman cuisine enriched and the types of food products used by the Ottomans increased.

Food products used during the period were grouped by the Ottoman palace as follows (Gürsoy, 2013, p.105):

1. Cereals and Pulses: Bulgur, rice, flour, lentil, farina, chickpea.
2. Vegetables: Leek, cabbage, spinach, mangold, turnip, cucumber, onion.
3. Oil: Olive oil, tail fat, butter.
4. Flavors: Musk, saffron, olive, parsley, mustard, garlic, cilantro, mint, cumin, salt, gum, vinegar, pepper, cinnamon, clove, amber.
5. Meat and Food Products: Egg, chicken, cheese, milk, yogurt, Turkish cream, oyster, shrimp, lamb’s feet, freshwater fish, goose, tripe, honey, wildfowl, sheep’s head.
6. Fruits: Pear, grapes, pomegranates, watermelon, lemon, fig, plum, *nardenk* (molasses made of plum and pomegranates), chestnut, almond.

During the 15th and the 16th centuries, *pide* and *fodula*, which referred to flat bread, were used widespread. Pilaf, enrichment of the taste of meat by using oil and sugar³, and the production of manti and various types of pastry by using flour were among other important characteristics of the Ottoman cuisine. Furthermore, the consumption of fish gained importance during the same period (Yerasimos, 2002, p.25-26).The cuisine culture of the period also gave importance to banquets.

Table3:An Example of Banquet Menu from the 15th and 16th Centuries

Food	Soup and Pilaf	Desert and Pastry
Chicken	<i>Katisoup</i>	Meat pie
Sour chicken	Mullet soup	Pie with honey
<i>Tatamaç</i> (A type of manti)	Tripe	Saffron and rice desert
Whole meat	Sheep’s head and feet	Zucchini jam
Lamb kebab	Tarhanasoup	<i>Girde</i>
Duck	<i>İçpilav</i> (Seasoned pilaf)	<i>Gözde</i>
Farci	Chicken pilaf	<i>Nukul</i>
Lamb shawarma	Bulgurpilaf	Noah’s pudding
Gallimaufry	<i>Keşkek</i>	Juice and dried fruit compote

Source:Haydaroglu, 2010, p.6

The banquets were famous with their organizations and the variety of food served. Within this context, various travelers and statesmen dealt with their impressions about the Ottoman banquets in their memories. With the 17th century, the Ottomans started to consume vegetables and fruits, such as orange, banana, mandarin, pineapple and tomato. The reason behind this change was related with the increase in trade with the Europeans (Kızıldemiret et al., 2014, p.200).Starting with the late 18th century, vegetables such as tomato and bean became widespread. Furthermore, the Ottomans started to eat on tables, rather than using the floor table (Un, 2009, p: 24). With the Tanzimatreform era, European culture and lifestyle were adapted by the Ottoman elite.

Paradoxically it was during this era that the Ottoman cuisine became famous. What is now known as the Ottoman cuisine is not the Ottoman cuisine of the classical period but the cuisine of the period in which the Ottomans started to mimic the European lifestyle during the 19th century (Közleme, 2012, p.159).

The habit of eating on table, which started in the late 18th century, became widespread in the 19th century as a result of the process of westernization. Consequently, the usage of porcelain plates and metal spoon and fork turned into a habit. Furthermore, the variety of food consumed by the Ottomans increased and the consumption of tomato, bean, and partially potato and corn, became widespread (Kızıldemiret al., 2014, p.201).

Table4:Names of the food from the 19th century that are dealt in the book, entitled “Doğu'da Tatlıcılık” (Confectionary in the East)

<i>AcemPilavı</i>	<i>TencereKebabı</i> (Mutton shew)	<i>KayısıHoşafı</i> (Apricot Compote)
<i>KuzuKebabı</i> (Lamb Kebab)	<i>PeynirliBörek</i> (Pastry with cheese filling)	Various Juices
<i>Elmasi</i>	<i>TavukGöğsü</i> (Chicken breast)	<i>Baklava</i> (Baklava)
<i>EtlıBörek</i> (Meat Pie)	<i>Elma Kompostosu</i> (Apple Compote)	<i>YumurtaDolması</i> (Stuffed egg)
<i>SütlüEkmek</i>	<i>SüzmeAşure</i> (Strained Noah's Pudding)	<i>Elma Dolması</i> (Stuffed Apple)
<i>Dolma</i> (Farci)	<i>TandırKebab</i> (Tandoor Kebab)	<i>PilavPeltesi</i> (Rice Pudding)
<i>EnginarYahnisi</i>	<i>SütlüAş</i>	
<i>YaprakSarma</i> (Stuffed Vine Leaves)	<i>TerbiyeliÇorba</i>	

Source:Gürsoy, 2013, s.95.

One of the most important developments in the Ottoman cuisine during the late Ottoman period was the increase in consumption of sea products such as salted tunny, kipper and caviar. Cookbooks published during the late 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century reveal the change in Ottoman cuisine during the late Ottoman period. The new European food products consumed by the Ottomans included some gravies, bouillon, pate, roastbeef, beef steak, *istofato*, biscuits, European pies, cake, garnishes and canned food (Samancı, 2008, p.5). With the Republican era, the influence of the European culture over the Turkish cuisine increased. During the period, western-style banquet organizations and dinner parties were frequently conducted by the new elite. Furthermore, agricultural products, which were imported from Europe during the Ottoman period, started to be cultivated in modern Turkey. Consequently, these agricultural goods became to be frequently used by the Turkish citizens. With the increase in household income, food that was unique to the Ottoman palace, started to be consumed by the masses. Today, although the Turks continue to consume the authentic food products, consumption of fast food became widespread and the Turkish cuisine was influenced by this new food habit as a result of the popular culture.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Food culture, which is an abstract culture, reflect the lifestyle, beliefs and traditions of societies. Since the settlement of the Turks in Anatolia, they engaged in cultural interaction with the indigenous communities, which in turn, contributed to the variety of food products in Turkish cuisine. The conquerors of the Ottoman Empire further contributed to the diversity of food products consumed by the Turks. In this sense, the Turkish cuisine was influenced by various food cultures that the Turks met. Among these influences, we may claim that the Balkan cuisine has the greatest impact over the Turkish food culture. With the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans that started in 1354, eating habits and food types of the conquered areas influenced the Turkish cuisine. This influence was primarily visible for the Ottoman palace cuisine.

During the 14th century, the fruits used in the Ottoman palace kitchen came from the Balkans, primarily from the Thrace (Gürsoy, 2013, p.100). As the Ottomans conquered new places in the Balkans, most of the food used by the Ottomans were obtained from the region. During the 16th century, meat prices in Anatolian cities were arranged according to the distance of each city to the Balkans. Yerasimos (2002) states that one could buy 1120 grams of lamb in İstanbul and Edirne for one mite, but only 960 grams of lamb in Bursa. The difference in prices of lamb was related to the proximity of İstanbul and Edirne to the Balkans and the distance of Bursa to the same region. During the same century, meat, wheat, grapes and barley were traded from the Balkans, primarily Moldavia, Wallachia and Macedonia. Written sources indicate that salt came from Wallachia to Anatolia and the cheese came from the Balkans in the 17th century. Within this context, Tulum cheese came from Wallachia and Macedonia, *kaşkaval* (round sheep's cheese with yellow color) was brought from Tekirdağ and Limni, and round cheese came from Euboea (Gürsoy, 2013, p.111). As a heritage of the period, the cheese of Thrace region is widely used by the Turkish citizens. As it is seen, the Balkans provided important food products for the Ottoman cuisine. Furthermore, the Balkan food became an integral part of the Ottoman cuisine.

Although the roots of *boza* (bosa) can be traced back to Central Asia, the type of boza consumed today was shaped by the Balkan cuisine. Boza, which is made of barley and wheat was known to be produced by the Oghuzs (KılıçandAlbayrak, 2012, p.714).The boza, which was carried by the Turks to the Anatolia, was consumed by various cultures that the Turks met during their journey to Anatolia. The boza type with alcohol, known as the Armenian Boza and the boza made of farina, which was known was the Albanian Boza occupied an important place in the Ottoman cuisine.

On the other hand, the meatball, which is today known as the İnegöl meatball and as a part of Turkish cuisine, is originally a part of the Balkan cuisine. İnegöl meatball, which was also a part of the palace cuisinewas brought by the Turks that migrated from Bulgaria to Anatolia in the 19th century. In 1892, Mustafa Effendi, who migrated from Pazarcık city of Bulgaria to İnegöl district of Bursa, started to serve the İnegöl meatball. Today, the meatball is associated with the district of İnegöl (DoğdubayandSünnetçioğlu, 2015, p.53).Another type of meatball, known as the Sultan Ahmet meatball is originally a part of Bosnian cuisine, which is called as *Cevabiin* Bosnia (www.turkish-cuisine.org, 07.04.2016).Research of Kılıç (2010) on cuisine culture of Ayvalık districtfound that the pastry known as Bosnian Pastry was originally made by potato and minced meat brought by the migrants from Bosnia. The study also found that squash blossom pastry, Rum pastry with eggplant, *Koliçita* (made of zucchini and cheese), *Kalçunya* (made of whey cheese) and spring rolls were brought by the Bulgarian, Yugoslavian and Bosnian migrants and became an integral part of local cuisine culture of Ayvalık.

The end of Ottoman sovereignty in the Balkans in 1913 resulted with large-scale migration of the Muslim population. The Turks that migrated from the Balkans to Anatolia brought the Balkan cuisine culture to the new regions that they settled down. Today, the effects of the migrant population over the Turkish cuisine culture is still prevalent.

The characteristics of the Balkan cuisine can be listed as follows:

1. For the main meals, they used meat without nerve tissues
2. They primarily used milk and dairy products
3. They frequently used cabbage, zucchini, spinach, leek and potato.
4. As oil, they used sesame oil, tail fat and butter.
5. They frequently used offal
6. For deserts, they used farina, dough and milk

Table5:Examples to the Turkish Food that have Balkan origins

<i>Elbasan Tava</i> (Lamb Casserole with Yoghurt) (Albania)	<i>Güllaç</i> (Rose Pudding) (Macedonia)	<i>GüveçteEtlıKuruFasulye</i> (Lamb and White Bean Casserole) (Bosnia)
<i>ArnavutCiğeri</i> (Albanian style fried diced liver) (Albania)	<i>VezirParmağı</i> (Vizier’s finger-shaped pastry) (Macedonia)	<i>BoşnakKöftesi</i> ((Bosnian Meatball) (Bosnia)
<i>GülBöreği</i> (Albania)	<i>Şekerpare</i> (Dry Turkish Sweet) (Macedonia)	<i>KabakTatlısı</i> (Zucchini Desert) (Bosnia)
<i>Tirit</i> (Albania)	<i>BoşnakBöreği</i> (Bosnian Pastry) (Bosnia)	<i>IspanaklıGülBöreği</i> (Rose Pastry with Spinach) (Bosnia)
<i>IslamaKöfte</i> (Macedonia)	<i>İncirTatlısı</i> (Fig Desert) (Bosnia)	<i>KuruBamya</i> (Dried Okra) (Bosnia)

The characteristics listed above are seen in most of the Balkan food. For example, *IslamaKöfte*, *Elbasan Tava*, and*BoşnakKöftesi*are cooked by using meat without nerve tissue. On the other hand, *ArnavutCiğeri*, *İşkembeÇorbası*and*CiğerliBörek*are made of offal. Dishes, such as *Kabakyemeği*, *BoşnakBöreği*, *beyazlahanadolması*, and*lahanasarması*are examples to dishes that are made by using vegetables. Finally, *şekerpare*, *irmikhelvası*,*triliçe*, *güllaç*, *vezirparmağı*and*samsatatlısı* are examples to the deserts are made of farina, dough and milk. We may finally note that it is butter that gives the flavor to the delicious Balkan dishes.

IV. CONCLUSION AND EVALUATIONS

Migration from Central Asia to Anatolia, conversion to Islam and transition from a tribal community to an empire enriched the Turkish culture and influenced the Turkish cuisine. With these developments, new food products became a part of the Turkish cuisine and ended up with new dishes. Turkish cuisine, which has influenced various cuisine cultures is primarily shaped by the Balkan cuisine that the Turks have ruled for a long period. Crops of the fertile soil of the Balkans and the Balkan dishes found their place in the Turkish cuisine culture as a result of cultural exchange during the rule of the Ottomans and the migrations from the Balkans to Anatolia. Today, many of the Balkan dishes are consumed by the Turkish citizens. Various countries lay claims to the Turkish dishes that are essential elements of the Turkish cuisine culture. In order to overcome this serious problems, Turkish cuisine culture should be introduced to the younger generations and should be promoted so that collective consciousness about the Turkish cuisine culture can be maintained.

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