



From Kars to İstanbul: Is Migration Causes Rootlessness? Kars'tan İstanbul'a: Göç Köksüzlüğe Neden Olur mu?

Arzu DURUKAN¹

ABSTRACT

In this study, it was aimed to determine the changing in eating habits of women who migrated from Kars to İstanbul. Kars, a city which is at the eastern tip of Turkey, İstanbul is a cosmopolitan city in the most western end. For this purpose, conversational interviews were done with 8 retired teachers who migrated almost 40 years ago. Before the interview, knowledge about the study was given to these participants and consent forms were taken. Interviews held in İstanbul during August 2019. The possible cultural diffusion after migration and the changes in food culture and the habits tried to be preserved were determined and thus, an evaluation was made about the power of diffusion in people's food choices.

Keywords: migration; food; identity; diffusion; Kars

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada Kars'tan İstanbul'a göç eden kadınların yeme alışkanlıklarındaki değişimin belirlenmesi amaçlandı. Türkiye'nin doğu ucunda yer alan Kars, İstanbul en batı ucunda kozmopolit bir şehir. Bu amaçla, yaklaşık 40 yıl önce İstanbul'a göç etmiş 8 emekli öğretmenle konu kapsamında görüşme yapılmıştır. Görüşme öncesinde bu katılımcılara çalışma hakkında bilgi verilmiş ve katılımcı rıza formları alınmıştır. Görüşmeler Ağustos 2019'da İstanbul'da yapılmıştır. Göç sonrası olası kültürel difüzyon ve gıda kültüründeki değişiklikler ve korunmaya çalışılan alışkanlıklar belirlendi ve böylece insanların gıda seçimlerinde difüzyonun gücü hakkında bir değerlendirme yapıldı.

Anahtar Kelimeler: göç, gıda, kimlik, difüzyon, Kars

INTRODUCTION

Meanings of food and cuisine which are important elements of culture are coded (Murcott, 1982). It is possible to understand the society by solving these codes since the common symbols support the social solidarity of the society that uses them. Dishes and recipes contain historical and sociological information and the table order contains information about the social order of the society to which belongs. Food, as a part of culture, is integrative, continuous and variable. Sharing food is also important for improving social ties, strengthening group solidarity and protecting family unity (Durukan, 2015). Food shared with hospitable behavior can lead to new friendships and new lives. Food sharing is also important for immigrants to adopt the new place (Carsten, 2000).

Foods have rich and complex meanings. These may differ from culture to culture. It is the information transmitted to us through our culture which allows us to decide what we will eat, how we will eat, when we will eat, how we will eat (Savage, Fisher, & Birch, 2007). This information helps to create a regional identity. However, the protection of this identity from changes by migration is controversial. Since changes in economic, political, social and geographical conditions may change the identity. While some of the studies conducted to understand this issue mention that the kitchen changes with the cultural diffusion experienced after the migrations (Ayinmoro & Jack, 2014), some claim that the last habits that changed after the migration are the food habits. If the latter is true, it can be said that people who change their living conditions, clothes, jobs and relationships after immigration protect their own culture in their own refrigerators.

¹ Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Yeditepe Üniversitesi Güzel Sanatlar Fakültesi, Gastronomi ve Mutfak Sanatları Bölümü,
e-Mail: arzu.durukan@yeditepe.edu.tr, ORCID No: 0000-0003-2255-1797

The food that allows us to live not only provides nutrition but forms our identity based on geography, culture and time. Since food is associated with society and culture, examining food and beverages in the 21st century means looking at every factor on the path from food production to consumption and the effectiveness of these factors. Production, distribution, consumption of food and their relationship with local areas are the research topics of anthropology. In addition, hospitality and tourism, and new spaces which emerge under the influence of visual, written and social media, new recipes, cooking programs, body perception are the areas of food anthropology.

The world's people are on the move due to migrations, travels, and trade, and it seems impossible to remain unchanged the cultural knowledge that we have learned, in this dynamism. As a result of the unstoppable cultural diffusion, different food and beverage cultures affect each other and cultures differentiate with the changing natural and sociopolitical environment. Food is a kind of language for immigrated people to describe their existence in the chaos they live in.

Recipes or rituals using these recipes are the means by which cultural heritage is transmitted from generation to generation.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In this study, the food habits of people who migrated from Kars to Istanbul were examined. Kars is a city in the east of Turkey, which is snowy for almost eight months of the year. It is understandable how difficult it is to live there when you feel cold, have problems with transportation due to heavy snow. It is an eight-county city with a surface area of 9939 km², built on highlands. Those living in the easternmost of the country complain about the difficulty of their living conditions and they think the central government has neglected people living in that region and has delayed in service.

To understand the changing in eating habits of people who migrated from Kars to Istanbul conversational interviews were done with 8 retired women teachers who migrated almost 40 years ago. Women were thought to be the primary users of the kitchen and were therefore selected as participants. Before the interviews, knowledge about the study was given to these participants and consent forms were taken. Interviews held in İstanbul during August 2019. During the interviews, audio recordings were taken with the permission of the participants and then deciphered and analyzed.

Conversational interviewing is a way used by research interviewers to generate verbal data through talking about specified topics with research participants in an informal and conversational way. Although all qualitative interviewing relies on speakers' everyday conversational resources, conversational interviewing foregrounds aspects of sociability, and reciprocity (Given, 2008). Semi-structured interviews were conducted within the framework of the subjects planned to be examined.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When the data obtained from the interviews are evaluated, it is understood that the participants continue to cook and eat the food they consume in Kars and even today they continue to feed the people around them with these foods.

The obtained data from the women who migrated almost 40 years ago represent that the culture, more specifically the food is related to identity.

First of all, when asked about the reasons for migration, what they all say jointly seems to be economic reasons. Due to lack of resources and unemployment and backwardness in the region, it was thought that going to the big city would be a solution and they emigrated.

“My father decided to emigrate when we could not reciprocate our production because of economic difficulties in 1970” (A.B, 65).

“Either I would marry a peasant and stay there, or I would wait for years to appointed to a metropolitan school. I met Mr. A., I got married. Then the whole family moved to Istanbul. It was very very good for me because I thought it would be good for my future, therefore, marriage was a beautiful decision for me” (C.D., 64).

Roland Barthes claims that food functions as a sign. With food, we are not just buying or consuming a product but a whole system or chain of meanings. He explains that eating habits and culture are very closely related. He claims that, food affects culture and culture affects food. Food as culture is related to tradition, nostalgia, identity (Stajcic, 1989). After 1991, the bond between the young migrants from Yugoslavia and the remaining mothers was established through local dishes. Ivana Bajic-Hajdukovic describes this bond as follows. The food that mothers send to their distant children not only helps them regain a sense of "integrity", but also serves to socially reborn (Bajic-Hajdukovic, 2013). C.D. described her identity problem as follows:

“We came here, but... I still have that dilemma! Good for children's better school, better life but who would we be if we stayed in Kars? We wouldn't have a problem of describing ourself to others” (C.D., 67).

A research on the identity problem of Lebanese in Australia also mentions the importance of food and cooking in protecting identity. According to this report even though many Lebanese attempted to hide their 'foreign-ness' from the general community, in the private sphere of the home many of the traditions of the old village society remained intact. This was particularly the case for food and cooking (Convy & Monsour, 2008).

“I am trying to make Kars dishes for my guests. I make noodles with rice (erişteli pilav). I don't know if I want to emphasize my own city is Kars, or if we are from Kars but not like you think, but I do” (E.F.,64).

Carsten (1997) said that individuals are made as kin through shared meals. The ways in which the souls of migrants are connected back to home and the shared substances are important points for researches. G.H. talked about making Kars dishes for her husband's family. She wants to make them love these foods;

“- I have made great efforts to introduce Kars dishes and even Kars's feast culture to my husband's family.

- Why did you make an effort?

- I think longing (crying), I miss my childhood” (G.H., 65)

Abbot quotes Caplan's findings and says that the food shows the differences between people and it is related to identity. What they consume creates a common relationship for a group and creates both individual and social identities (Abbot, 2016). The interviewees explained that they continue to live together in İstanbul and protect their cultural features together.

“I would definitely come to Istanbul again today. Now we have no one there. Everyone came, everyone emigrated, and we live Kars in Istanbul with many of my favorite friends. We are all together. We already cook Kars dishes, live Kars culture and do folk dances. When we get together, we are very Karsian. When I go home, my children understand that I have changed my accent that day I was with my friends from Kars” (G.R.66)

By keeping common foods up to date, she and her friends are thinking to maintain their old friendship relations and their cultural features. This seems to coincide with what David Sutton said. According to Sutton, who works in Kalymnos, Greece, conscious, meaningful eating gives pleasure, while at the same time it reminds the past, while also activating intuition about the future. Food not only addresses memory with flavors and smells, but also provides connections with places, events and people through the rituals that live together. All this shows that food connects with the house and the people in the house (Sutton, 2001).

In a study conducted with those who came to visit their homes after migration, the participants stated that the most important thing that makes them happy is spending time with family and friends. The most important factor that makes this important is to eat local dishes together and live the rituals together. The participants stated that they could not eat local food at the place of migration and that they did not find local rituals and customs meaningful, they could not imagine living in the village or home where they grew up and that they experienced changes in their self-sense (Marschall, 2017). The interviewees stated that they were careful not to change their eating habits. However, they also stated that they were not happy when they went to visit, despite their longing.

“I didn't see the old human relations when I have gone. There had no beauty of the old Kars. It had clear air. The Caucasian games had a nobility. Now the buildings have changed. Instead of the beautiful houses, it's made up of unaesthetic ones. In fact, like all the world is damaged, so is Kars” (I.K., 65).

In addition to the efforts of these people to protect their identity through the food they eat and serve to others, the cultural diffusion that they are subjected to is inevitable. Changing world conditions, advances in transportation, the internet and communication causes different cultures to come together and merge unnoticed. After migration, it seems possible that people may also be affected by new eating habits and lifestyles in the places where they live.

In a study examining the changes in the eating habits of Iranian women living in Sweden, it was stated that the group included many foodstuffs with the characteristics of the Swedish food tradition in their traditional diets. The same study shows that food prices are high, lack of Iranian food and children's preferences are the three most important reasons for the change. According to the interviews, children who meet different tastes in their schools want to be consumed in their homes (Koçtürk, 2004). L.M., who saw olive oil in Istanbul after her migration, said the first time she has seen leek and watched secretly how it was made.

“I never knew the dishes with olive oil. I never knew the leek. I was standing behind my mother-in-law while she was cleaning the leek and wondered what she would do. We didn't use olive oil because we did everything with butter. It was a good combination of two cultures, my kitchen was very nice now” (L.M., 66).

The effort to preserve Kars's food seems not to have prevented the testing of new foods.

“We have continued Kars dishes for a long time, and we love it. But in the meantime, you see different things in neighbors or other houses, of course you take them too. Vegetables entered our lives more abundantly. Like celery and artichokes, we've never eaten before” (N.O., 64).

The culture that is born into constitutes identity. Food, which is one of the elements of culture, is one of the means to protect identity. As a result of this study, interviews show that food is one of the important indicators of identity. However, with the changing conditions of the world, culture, which is a dynamic structure, is also undergoing changes. Cultural diffusions are changing people's lifestyles and eating habits. It is inevitable to undergo changes especially after migrations.

The following words, which are very striking, were thought to be the last sentences and the title of this study.

“We experienced this; I have always heard this pain, rootlessness! When you're in Kars, everyone knows and respects you. But here you feel the need to describe yourself. And who knows Kars, it is the other end of Turkey. You need to make an effort to describe them yourself” (A.B., 65).

As a result, migration is difficult, foods make it bearable. They are precious rescuers of life that are unawarded. They are life preserves, that protect identity, protect memory and prevent people from staying rootless. Therefore, food culture must be protected, and we must do our best not to lose it, and even to transfer it to future generations.

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