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A Research on the Cuisine Culture off the Abhazs Living in Düzce

Düzce’de Yaşayan Abhazların Mutfak Kültürü Üzerine Bir Araştırma

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Abstract

Düzce province has received significant immigration from the Caucasus region in the past. Communities who came to Düzce through immigration brought their food cultures to this region with them. One of the most important of these migration communities is Abkhazians. In this study, it is aimed to reveal the culinary culture of Düzce Abkhazians, who contribute to the culinary culture of Düzce. In the study, the culinary culture of the Abkhaz living in Düzce was introduced and the products they used and the main dishes were tried to be determined. In this context, the study is limited to Yeşilyayla (Bıçkı) Village, Halilbey (Tsihinara) Village, Darıyeri Hasanbey Village and Derdin (Guma) villages, which are connected to Düzce province and where Abkhazians live. Qualitative research method was used in the study. Within the scope of the study, the data were obtained by interview technique. In order to better reflect the Duzce Abkhaz culinary culture, Abkhaz participants living in Düzce were preferred. As a result of the study, it was concluded that traditional foods still exist in Abkhaz cuisine, meat and vegetable dishes are in the majority, and dessert culture is not very common.

Key Words: Abhazs, Abhazian cuisine, Culinary culture, Düzce.

Öz

Düzce ili geçmiş dönemlerde Kafkasya bölgesinden önemli düzeyde göç almıştır. Göç yoluyla Düzce iline gelen topluluklar beraberlerinde yemek kültürlerini de bu bölgeye taşımışlardır. Söz konusu göç topluluklarından en önemlilerinden biri Abhazlar’dır. Bu çalışmada, Düzce’nin mutfak kültürüne katkı sağlayan Düzce Abhazlarının mutfak kültürünün ortaya konulması amaçlanmıştır. Çalışmada Düzce’de yaşayan Abhazların mutfak kültürü tanıtılarak, kullandıkları ürünler ve başlıca yemekler belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu bağlamda çalışma Düzce iline bağlı ve Abhazların yaşadıkları köylerden Yeşilyayla (Bıçkı) Köyü, Halilbey (Tsihinara) Köyü, Darıyeri Hasanbey Köyü ve Derdin (Guma) köyleri ile sınırlandırılmıştır. Çalışmada nitel araştırma yaklaşımı benimsenmiştir. Çalışma kapsamında veriler görüşme tekniği ile elde edilmiştir. Düzce Abhaz mutfak kültürünü daha iyi yansıtmaları bakımından Düzce’de yaşayan Abhaz katılımcılar tercih edilmiştir. Çalışma sonucunda, Abhaz mutfağında geleneksel yiyeceklerin varlığını sürdürdüğü, et ve sebze yemeklerinin çoğunlukta olduğu ve tatlı kültürünün çok yaygın olmadığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Abhazlar, Abhaz mutfağı, Mutfak kültürü

1. Introduction

Among the physiological needs, nutrition is one of the basic needs necessary to live and for continuity of people. For generations, many societies have had their own food culture, but factors such as the differentiation of cultures, the age, geographical and economic structure have caused food cultures to change (Akkuş, 2019: 731). In summary, the diversity and richness of the food culture of the societies is important as the geography, and the society in which they interact is one of the most important factors (Araz, 1990: 93).

The collective movement of individuals, that is, the migration situation, is usually due to special reasons. When defined in this context, migration refers to the fact that they start to live in a place other than their living place in the form of small or large masses due to certain reasons, namely economic, social and political reasons (Aksoy, 2012: 293). Turkey is one of the most important countries receiving immigration and is home to many ethnic groups from different parts of the world. For this reason, it has led to the formation of a rich cuisine culture in Turkey and different ethnic communities are of great importance in the formation of this (Yavuz and Mesci, 2020). Among these ethnic groups, Abkhazians draw attention with their different cuisine cultures (Karaca and Güçlü Nergiz, 2020: 52).

When we look at the communities that migrated due to the war, it is seen that one of the most important events is the communities that were exposed to migration from the Caucasus (Habicoğlu, 1993: 67). In this study, the cuisine culture of the Abkhaz, who settled in many provinces of Turkey in 1864, in Düzce was discussed and it was tried to transfer the culinary values of the past to the younger generations. In addition, when the subject is evaluated on the basis of gastronomy tourism and local tourism, local products and cultural diversity are evaluated as the attraction element of the tourism destination.

2. Societies of Caucasian Origin and Abkhaz Living in Düzce

There are various communities that migrated to Düzce due to the conditions that occurred after the negative events in the Caucasus in the past. Abkhazians from these communities have an important place in Düzce culture. Apart from the Abkhaz, different peoples settled in Düzce. The Caucasian origin communities in question are given below.

One of the most important Caucasian origin communities living in Düzce is the Circassians. The word meaning of the expression 'Circassian', although it is referred to as 'Çerkes' in many publications and among the public, it is included as "Çerkez" in the Turkish Language Association (TDK) Dictionary (2020). In this study, the Turkish Language Institution was taken as a criterion and used as "Circassian". The Caucasus, where Circassians are also located and many ethnic groups live takes its name from the Caucasian mountain range. The Caucasus covers the mountainous region from the north of the Black Sea to the west of the Caspian Sea (Ersoy, 2018: 799).

This region, where Circassians live, is located in the North Caucasus. When the Ottoman records are examined, it is expressed as "Çerkezistan", when the Russian and Western sources are examined, it is expressed as 'Çerkesya', namely Circassia (Özsoy, 2016: 375). Circassia is located between the Kuban (Kaban) and Georgia, including the Black Sea coast and the Elburs mountains (Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, 1986: 422).

Due to the importance of the geo-political and strategic position of the Caucasus, it has been invaded by different elements. As a result, the Caucasian peoples that are known for their devotion to their traditions and customs struggled for existence and tried to protect their identities and values. The Circassians, defeated as a result of the long-lasting war with the Russians, were exiled communally from their homeland in 1864 to countries such as Turkey, the Balkans, Syria and Israel (Özcan, 2019: 446-448).

While the largest group is Circassians in the Caucasus region, communities such as Abkhazians, Ossetians, Chechens, Dagestanis, Kumuks, Ingushs constitute the other large ethnic group (Karataş, 2014: 526). Today, Abkhazians living in various parts of Turkey continue their existence by keeping their cultures and cuisine cultures alive. Abkhazians, whose historical homeland is Abkhazia, will be mentioned below.

2.1. Abkhaz People

According to the statements of Roman and Byzantine historians, the ancestors of the Abkhazians were Apsil, Abazg, Misimyan and Sanig. Abkhazia was governed by the Abkhazian prince Georgi Chachba (Shervashidze) until the 16th century as a subordinate of Georgia (Erşan, 2017: 147). After this period, Abkhazia, which met with Ottoman domination, continued its existence as semi-independent and had to come under the rule of Russia in 1810 (Şogan, 2020). Today, the Republic of Abkhazia, which has been continuing its existence independently as a democratic, social state of law since 1992, is currently located on the western shores of the Black Sea and at the junction of the north and south of the Caucasus. In addition, Abkhazians are counted as a branch of Circassians (Kerimoğlu, 2017).

During the 1877-1878 War, the Russians settled immigrants brought from Russia to certain parts of Abkhazia. As a result of this planned resettlement, Abkhaz settlements were surrounded by Russian immigrants. Therefore, the "Caucasian-Russian" wars, which lasted for many years, resulted in the victory of the Russians, and the Abkhaz people, including the North Caucasus, were forced to migrate by experiencing great disasters and this migration caused great population losses and deaths in the history of Abkhazia (Erşan, 2017: 150).

Some of the Abkhaz people who migrated during the Ottoman period were settled in the Balkans, and then, with the end of the Ottoman-Russian war in 1877-78, a large majority began to live in Anatolia. Abkhazians have been living in Anatolia for a very long time. Today, generally speaking, those coming from Abkhazia and then from the Balkans are generally settled in Sakarya, Hendek, Düzce, Bilecik, İnegöl, Bursa, İzmit and Eskişehir. There are also Abkhazians living in Samsun, Tokat, Yozgat, Kayseri and Adana regions (Paşu, 2004: 122; Arslan, 2009: 97). Abkhazians living in many parts of Anatolia had the opportunity to live together with indigenous cultures in Anatolia and interacted with each other.

2.2. Food Culture of the Abkhazians

The guest occupies a very important place in Abkhaz culture. Especially when guests come, they are seated in a special place, and even the owner of the house, even the elderly, do not sit at the table. Standing in front of the guest, standing up when an old person (ahatsgilara) comes, shows the love and respect for the guest and the person (İnal-Ipa, 1965:423).

Abkhazians, who are closely connected to their culture, have a very rich gastronomic cuisine. Considering that the places where the Abkhazians of Turkey live are also affected, it can be said that there are changes in their tastes. Abkhaz cuisine consists of the harmony of Chechens, Ingushs, Dagestanis, Georgians, Azeris and Balkar cuisines due to having similar geography and characteristics (Aydın and Kaya, 2021: 225).

Unlike today's Abkhaz cuisine, which includes various dishes and drinks, the tables were more modest in terms of food variety. Meat and vegetable dishes from the rich folk cuisine were considered much more respectable. Traditionally, these foods are still present at weddings, funerals or holidays of Abkhazians. There are also maize flour (abista), cheese pie (açaşv), various cheeses, boiled meat (aquats), walnut dishes, chicken with various sauces, turkey dishes and the famous Abkhazian garlic and spicy salt (Kozlova, 2020).

In the kitchen, where there are many kinds of food, some of the things transferred to the present have been forgotten. Garlic and red pepper are used most often in cooking. Apart from these, spices such as kale, onions, black pepper, coriander and basil are used (Karaca and Güçlü Nargiz, 2020: 53). Meat and meat products of Circassian cuisine, which have similarities with Abkhaz cuisine, are generally made with light methods, namely drying, baking in the oven and various techniques such as boiling (Yılmaz, 2020: 39). Abkhaz cuisine products are especially made by boiling, drying and baking in the oven and corn bread, cheese and yogurt are among the indispensables of this cuisine (Gezimanya, 2020).

In Abkhazians, the preparations of important meal such as weddings, funerals and holidays begin long beforehand. Since the weddings and other family holidays of the Abkhazians are big, the family does not make the preparations alone, but their relatives and neighbors help them. The seating arrangement at the table is also very important. Guests are seated among important people in order of age. The table starts with appetizers first. The owner of the house explains the reason for the banquet in a way that everyone can hear and asks those who come to taste every dish without haste. At the end of his speech, the eldest person (eyhabı) at the table expresses "seizing the table", that is, starting the meal. This elderly person invites the guests and starts the meal, and the guests start to eat (Kozlova, 2020).

3. Method

Qualitative research method was utilized in the present study. Qualitative research is one of the ways of producing and collecting information that enables people to solve their inner world and explore the social systems they have created with their own efforts (Özdemir, 2010: 326). The data of the research conducted with the qualitative research method were obtained by the interview technique. Interview is the gathering of the participant's thoughts on a certain subject by asking open-ended questions (Kozak, 2015: 89).

The aim of the research is to introduce the cuisine culture of the Abkhazians. The research was carried out in Yeşilyayla (Bıçkı) Village, Halilbey (Tsihinara), Darıyeri Hasanbey Village and Derdin (Guma) Village, which are Abkhaz villages of Düzce, in order to examine the food of Abkhazians and various products used in the meals.

It is important that qualitative research has six important criteria that are validity and reliability, credibility, transferability, durability and confirmability (Şencan, 2005:

501). In this current study, opinions from experts on the subject were consulted in order to establish reliability. The role of the researcher in the process is clearly stated. In addition, details on data collection, processing, analysis, interpretation and reaching results were given. However, one participant was interviewed before the data were collected to see if the questions were understood. In this study, the data obtained in order to establish the validity were reported in detail and it was expressed how the results were reached. Consistency and meaningfulness of the findings, especially their compatibility with the conceptual framework, are among the issues to be considered (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006).

However, before the interviews were held, an appointment was requested from the individuals and interviews were held on the appointment date. The interviews took place between September 15 and October 21, 2021. The interviews lasted between 15 and 40 minutes. Participants were asked 5 questions. Interviews were conducted using a voice recorder, with the knowledge of the participants. As a result, 8 pages of data were obtained by listening to the audio recordings.

In the data collection process, two different methods were used to increase the validity and reliability of the research. The first of them is the interview method. The interview method was carried out around the questions created in the interview form. The interview was only held with 6 people due to time constraints and the fact that the interview was not favored one hundred percent during the epidemic process. The participants are people who know Abkhaz cuisine and they are all Abkhaz housewives. In this direction, it was carried out with 6 people: 2 people from Yeşilyayla (Bıçkı) Village, 2 people from Halilbey (Tsihinara) Village, 1 person from Darıyeri Hasanbey Village and 1 person from Derdin (Guma) Village, who agreed to participate voluntarily in the research.

The second method used in the research was the descriptive analysis technique for examining the data. The purpose of using the descriptive analysis technique is to test the data obtained through interviews as much as possible. The results obtained by partitioning and summarizing the data are summarized under the previously determined headings and explained in detail (Coşkun et al., 2015: 324). The analyzed data were shaped under the headings of special products belonging to the kitchen, the cooking methods they used, and the types of food.

4. Findings

The data obtained as a result of the interviews with the participants were analyzed. As a result of the analyzes, findings regarding the general characteristics of the participants and the Abkhaz cuisine culture were obtained. The findings obtained as a result of the analyzes are given below.

Table 1: Findings Regarding the Interviewed Persons

Participant Code	Age	Gender	Village	Occupation
Participant 1	67	Female	Halilbey (Tsihinara)	Housewife
Participant 2	55	Female	Yeşilyayla (Bıçkı)	Housewife
Participant 3	60	Female	Halilbey (Tsihinara)	Housewife
Participant 4	74	Female	Derdin (Dolay)	Housewife
Participant 5	62	Female	Darıyeri (Hasanbey)	Housewife
Participant 6	61	Female	Yeşilyayla (Bıçkı)	Housewife

Table 2: Interview Questions

1- Could you give us some information about the special products used in Abkhaz cuisine?
2- Could you give us some information about the cooking methods in Abkhaz cuisine?
3- Can you give a detailed description of your soups?
4- Can you give a detailed description of your main dishes?
5- Could you give a detailed description of your pastries or desserts?

As a result of the interviews, when the obtained data were evaluated, information about the Abkhaz cuisine culture was found out. Classification was made in line with the collected data. In line with the information obtained from the data, the elements in the Abkhaz cuisine culture are divided into categories. These categories are presented below.

4.1. Special Products Used in the Kitchen by Duzce Abkhazians

When the data obtained as a result of the interviews were evaluated, information about the Abkhaz cuisine culture was obtained. Classification was made in line with the data obtained. In line with the information obtained from the data, the elements in the Abkhaz cuisine culture are divided into categories. These categories are presented below.

Pırpılcıka (Adjika): After cooking adjika, red pepper, it is filtered in a sieve and crushed on a stone. Garlic, basil and ahuska (coriander) are crushed and added to the pepper smashed with salt. Prepared adjika is used in the form of ready-made tomato paste in meals (*Halilbey (Tsihinara) Village resident participant 1, age 67*).

Smoked Cheese: The cheese is stretched in hot water and shaped. Then, the shaped cheese is dried in wood fires and ovens (*Derdin Dolay Village participant 4, age 74*).

Abaza Cheese: After the milk is warmed, yeast is added and the cheese is collected. After 2 or 3 hours, it is put in boiling hot water and extended. After 2 or 3 hours salt is added and the cheese is ready to eat (*Derdin Dolay Village participant 4, age 74*).

4.2. Cooking Methods in Duzce Abkhaz Cuisine

In the interviewed Yeşilyayla (Bıçkı) Village, Halilbey (Tsihinara) Village, Darıyeri Hasanbey Village and Derdin (Guma) Villages, the participants stated that they mostly use boiling, frying and drying methods as cooking methods.

4.3 Types of Food

Soup

Atan (Meat Juice Soup) (*Yeşilyayla (Bıçkı) Village participant 2, age 55*) After the meat is cooked, it is fried in plenty of onion and adjika. This mixture is then added to the broth. This soup is drunk after eating, especially with the prepared meat dish.

Main Dishes

Agudırşşı (Shell Bean Paste) (*Halilbey (Tsihinara) Village resident participant 3, age 60*) Shell beans are soaked overnight. After cooking, it is crushed with plenty of onions and adjika. It is consumed with Abista (Corn Pastry).

Aktu Sızbal (Chicken with Walnut) (*Yeşilyayla (Bıçkı) Village participant 6, age 61*) First the chicken is boiled. While the chicken is boiling, some onion and garlic is added on it. Boiled chicken is removed from the water. After adding some bread, walnuts and adjika to the chicken broth, all products are crushed. The boiled chicken is shredded and added to the crushed products. After the walnut structure is removed, it is poured over the prepared Aktu Sızbal.

Ahulçapa (Cabbage Salad) (*Halilbey (Tsihinara) Village resident participant 1, age 67*) After the cabbage is boiled, walnuts are grinded and added to it. It is served by adding the oil made from crushed walnuts.

Abysta (Corn Pie) (*Derdin Dolay Village 4 participants, age 74*) A little salt is added to the hot boiling water. It is then cooked on fire with roasted cornflour. After it gains consistency, it is poured into a large tray and shaped. It is served with Abaza Cheese or Smoked Cheese on top.

Aştı (Boiled Meat) (*Yeşilyayla (Bıçkı) Village participant 2, age 55*) The mutton is boiled with salt and then put on the sides of abysta and consumed. On big and special days, it is served with abysta and other traditional foods.

Pastries or Dessert:

Abkhaz pie (*Darıyeri (Hasanbey) Village resident participant 5, age 62*). After the homemade dough is wet, walnuts and oil are poured between it and arranged on a tray in 10 layers. It is baked in the oven until it is colored. A dark syrup is prepared on the cooked pastry. After the pastry is cut, the syrup is poured on it and served.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The geography and changes in the life style affect the food culture. In this respect, there are significant differences in eating and drinking, and this difference also affects the food culture (Çetin 2006: 108). Circassians, who are very rich in food culture, migrated to different parts of Turkey from the Caucasus. Although it is known that the cuisine culture of the Circassians is unique to them, they still keep this cuisine culture alive.

In this study, in order to introduce the cuisine culture of Düzce Abkhazians, interviews were conducted with people from Yeşilyayla (Bıçkı) Village, Halilbey (Tsihinara) Village, Darıyeri Hasanbey Village and Derdin (Guma) Village in Düzce. In the cuisine culture of Düzce Abkhazians, information about special products and dishes is explained. It is aimed to transfer the cuisine culture of Düzce Abkhazians to the future generations. The research was evaluated in the sample of Düzce province, Yeşilyayla (Bıçkı), Halilbey (Tsihinara), Darıyeri Hasanbey and Derdin (Guma) villages. Interviews were conducted in the villages of the participants with a semi-structured interview form.

As a result of the research, it was concluded that the products used by Abkhazians in their kitchens are also frequently used in Turkish cuisine. It has been determined that the most used products of Abkhazians are adjika, abysta, garlic and ahuska (coriander).

He also understood that Abkhaz cuisine is very close to Circassian cuisine. İlhan and Mesci (2017) stated in their study that the most preferred products in Circassian restaurants are haluge and abstate. In addition, Akdemir and Selçuk, (2017) drew attention to the importance of traditional foods in the menus and the importance of traditional foods in terms of the sustainability of the culinary culture and its carrying to the future. While examining the literature, it has been seen that there are also Abkhaz dishes under the title of Circassian cuisine in Sakarya, Kocaeli and Yalova, which are close to Düzce. However, it can also be stated that there are differences in the products used in similar dishes and in some cooking methods in Circassian and Abkhaz cuisine.

It has been concluded that in Abkhaz cuisine culture, the dishes such as cabbage, corn flour and meat come to the fore, and that there is a food culture based mostly on red kidney beans and meat. It has also been understood that dessert culture is not very common in Abkhaz cuisine culture. This study was limited to the villages of Yeşilyayla (Bıçkı) Village, Halilbey (Tsihinara) Village, Darıyeri Hasanbey Village and Derdin (Guma) Village of Düzce Province. Because of the Covid-19 outbreak, it was not possible to conduct face-to-face meetings. The information obtained has been limited to these villages interviewed, and in this study, it is aimed to give a general idea about Düzce Abkhaz cuisine. In the future, this study may be carried out in a wide area, and it may be important both for the promotion of Abkhaz food culture and for the use of local cuisine as an attraction in tourism. For future studies, the number of restaurants serving Abkhaz food in Düzce can be determined, in-depth interviews and interviews can be conducted with them, and efforts can be made to solve the problems of Abkhaz cuisine and ensure its sustainability. In addition, it is thought that this food culture, which is still active and continuing through collective organizations to be organized by the public and private sector, will be very effective in terms of its permanence.

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T.C.
DÜZCE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
BİLİMSEL ARAŞTIRMA VE YAYIN ETİK KURULU KARARLARI

TOPLANTI SAYISI

2

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Düzce Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü İşletme Anabilim Dalı öğrencisi Öğr. Gör. Aslınur YAVUZ'un "Düzce Abhazlarının Yemek Kültürü" başlıklı çalışması kapsamında uygulamak istediği veri toplama araçları Etik Kurulumuzca incelenmiş olup ilgili çalışmanın araştırma protokolüne uyulması ve etik onay tarihinden itibaren geçerli olmak koşulu ile uygulanmasının etik açıdan uygun olduğuna;

Oy birliği ile karar verildi.