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Research Article

As A Living Culture of Traditional Herbal Coffee in Turkey: Chickpea Coffee

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ABSTRACT

It is generally preferred to use of plant species that have a natural spread in a region as a beverage. It is known that, different plants are used in making herbal coffee in our country. Especially in times of war and for economical reasons, it was not possible for our people to reach a cup of coffee made from coffee beans, and in such cases it was tried to benefit from different plants. Chickpea (*Cicer arietinum* L., known as “nohut” in Turkish), which is a member of the Fabaceae family, is one of the most important legumes as a source of vegetable protein and one of those herbal coffees. In this study we compiled the information we obtained about chickpea coffee such as how to make it, how to serve it and its features etc. in Işıkeli village of Biga (Çanakkale). We believe that, this study will contribute to the survival of the chickpea coffee tradition as the traditional usage of chickpea is about to disappear nowadays.

Keywords: Biga, Chickpea coffee, *Cicer arietinum*, Herbal coffee, Turkey

Türkiye’de Yaşayan Bir Kültür Olarak Bitkisel Bir Kahve: Nohut Kahvesi

ÖZET

Genellikle yerel bir içecek olarak bir bölgede doğal yetişen bitki türlerinin kullanılması tercih edilir. Ülkemizde bitkisel kahve yapımında farklı bitkilerin kullanıldığı bilinmektedir. Özellikle savaş zamanlarında ve ekonomik nedenlerle, halkımızın kahve çekirdeklerinden yapılmış bir fincan kahveye ulaşması mümkün olmamış ve bu gibi durumlarda farklı bitkilerden faydalanmaya çalışılmıştır. Fabaceae familyasının bir üyesi olan Nohut (*Cicer arietinum* L.), bitkisel protein kaynağı olarak en önemli baklagillerden biridir ve bitkisel kahve yapımında kullanılır. Bu çalışmada, Biga'nın (Çanakkale) Işıkeli köyünde nohut kahvesi hakkında elde edilen bilgiler ile nasıl yapıldığı ve nasıl servis edildiği hakkındaki bilgiler derlenmiştir. Bu çalışma ile günümüzde geleneksel kullanımı yok olmak üzere olan nohut kahvesi geleneğinin hayatta kalmasına katkıda bulunulacağı düşünülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Biga, Nohut kahvesi, *Cicer arietinum*, Bitkisel kahve, Türkiye

I. INTRODUCTION

All over the world, every culture has its own traditional beverages that are obtained from vegetables, fruits, and cereals such as fermented alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages [1-5]. It is generally preferred to use of plant species that have a natural spread in a region as a beverage. As an exception to this, we can give an example of coffee, which is obtained from the seeds of *Coffea arabica* L., *C. liberica* Hiern and *C. canephora* Pierre ex A.Froehner, the trees that grow in tropical climates. No one knows exactly when did cultivation of coffee start. Nowadays coffee is most popular beverage among people from younger to elderly throughout the World [6, 7]. Coffee has changed the entire world's drinking habits as a beverage and has become an indispensable part of our lives today. This popular use has led coffee seeds to have a great economic power.

Our people in Turkey first met coffee as a beverage in the 16th century [8-10]. Although coffee trees don't naturally grow in Turkey, coffee has a very significant place in Turkish culture. Beyond being a delighting drink, Turkish coffee takes place in many fields of our lives such as coffeehouses, marriage traditions, offering to the guests in our homes etc. Besides, Turkish coffee, which has a special place in the world due to its cooking method and its service is now in the lead to represent our culture. Coffee, which means much more than a hot drink in a cup of coffee, has been our social drink [6-11].

It is known that, coffee has been substituted for, or adulterated with the parts (seeds, fruits, bulbs etc.) of other plants from 38 families consisting of 98 genera and 213 species [12]. Especially in times of war and for economic reasons, it was not possible for people to reach a cup of coffee made from coffee beans, and in such cases, it was tried to benefit from different plants instead of coffee beans. This kind of coffee is known as "herbal coffee" or "cereal coffee". Herbal or cereal coffee is a common term to define the coffee product that has been prepared with roasted seeds. Roasting of seeds is preferred because it makes herbal coffee to have more flavored. For example, whole barley is roasted dark color and mixed with roasted coffee seeds to make coffee in Eastern Ethiopia and Chicory's (*Cichorium intybus* L.) dried root was used instead of coffee in Italy [13, 14]. Roasted date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera* L.) seeds also are used as date seed coffee with cardamom and saffron in Bahrain and some other Arabian countries [15]. Tulip bulb coffee was sold in Holland and some herbal substitutes like Chicory's root were sold in U.S. market during World War II [12].

It is known that, apart from coffee beans, different plants are also used in making coffee in the same way in our country. There are a lot of types of herbal coffee traditionally consumed in Turkey. Among these, especially the followings are remarkable; *Pistacia terebinthus* L. subsp. *terebinthus* fruit - "menengiç" coffee [16-22], *Gundelia tournefortii* L. fruit - "kenger" coffee [18, 19, 23, 24], *Nigella sativa* L. seeds - "çörekotu" coffee [18, 23], *Cichorium intybus* root - "hindiba" coffee [25, 26], *Lathyrus sativus* L. seeds - "müdürmük" coffee [19]. Making of this kind of coffees is similar to that of the Turkish coffee cooking method. Herbal coffee which is a traditional beverage can be a healthier alternative drink for today's people against the negative side effects of excessive coffee consumption.

Genus *Cicer* comprises 43 species worldwide and it is represented with 13 taxa which of 7 are endemic in Turkey [27, 28]. Chickpea (*Cicer arietinum* L., known as "nohut" in Turkish), which is a member of the Fabaceae (Leguminosae) family, is one of the most important legumes grown in arid regions as a source of vegetable protein. Origin of chickpea is known as South-East part of Turkey and North of Syria and it is one of the first grain legumes to be domesticated in the old world [29, 30]. Today the chickpea is grown in a very large area in Turkey. The chickpea is one of the most important human and

domestic animal foods all over the world. They are rich sources of dietary fiber, protein, carbohydrates, potassium, iron and contain vitamins and other minerals that are key for human health [31-34]. They have been used for centuries in Indian, Southeast Asian and Mediterranean cuisines.

The main place of chickpea in our culture is its food usage as a meal, chickpea bread, roasted chickpea or “leblebi” (in Turkish), it is also used to make various soup and pilaf. [29, 35-38]. Chickpea is also known to have traditional medicinal uses as to treat kidney stones, nephralgia, worms, wart and ringworm [39-41].

In this study, the use of chickpea as coffee was investigated. We believe that this study will contribute to the survival of the chickpea coffee tradition as the traditional usage of chickpea is about to disappear nowadays

II. METHODS

During the ethnobotanical studies carried out in the village of Işıkeli of Biga (Çanakkale) (Figure 1) between 2012-2013, chickpea coffee culture was seen to be still conserved in the local coffeehouse. Işıkeli is a village which was founded in 1896 by immigrants who came from Lokavitsa village of Plovdiv town of Bulgaria [42]. Our informants were the indigenous people of the village and the keeper of the village coffeehouse.

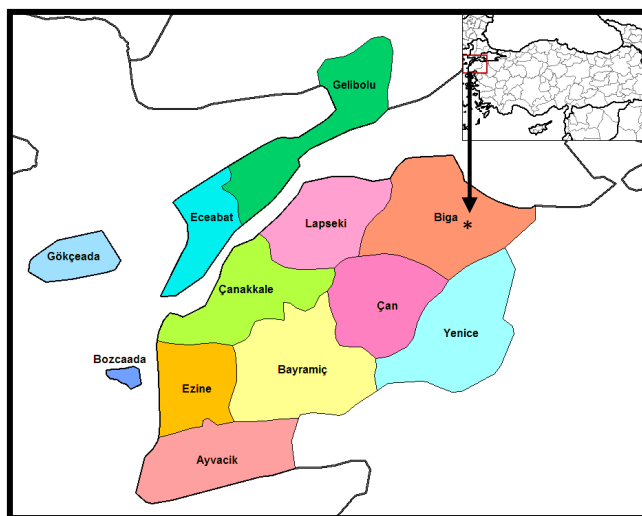


Figure 1. Geographical location of the study area (* Işıkeli village, Biga-Çanakkale / Turkey)

III. RESULTS

Chickpea or “nohut” coffee culture was seen to be still conserved in the coffeehouse of Işıkeli village (Figures 2, 3). In this study, we compiled the information we obtained about chickpea coffee such as how to make it, how to serve it and its features etc. The cooking method of chickpea coffee is similar to that of the Turkish coffee.



Figure 2. Işıkeli Village



Figure 3. Işıkeli Village Coffeeshouse

A. CHICKPEA COFFEE PREPARATION

The cultivated or sold on the market chickpeas are primarily taken to a long roasting process on strong fire. It is very important to continuously stir it during this operation. Otherwise, since it is not roasted equally it is likely to exhibit a change in its flavor. After that, it is grinded and made ready for use. Chickpea is being grinded in the amount to be consumed weekly. It is not preferable to grind more than the amount that can be consumed to protect its freshness. Prepared chickpea coffee flour is stored in a cool and dry place. The method of chickpea cooking is the same as Turkish coffee method which are mentioned as [10] roasting, grinding, cooking and serving. Only, in addition to chickpea flour, after sugar and water, very little amount of a teaspoon carbonate were put in the pot. The carbonate enables the formation of very fine foam during cooking. Cooked coffee is poured into coffee cups and served with a glass of water (Figure 4).

Being prepared and sold, chickpea coffee tradition is still continued today in Işıkeli village coffeeshouse. Chickpea coffee is consumed only as a drink, it is not used for therapeutic purposes or otherwise. Many people who hear about chickpea coffee visit the village in order to taste that coffee. Chickpea coffee, which is consumed more than Turkish coffee in the village and which we also tasted, was seen to be a kind of coffee whose flavor is very enjoyable.



Figure 4. a) General view of chickpea b, c) Collecting of seeds d, e) Chickpea coffee flour f) Cooking method g) Serving as coffee

IV. DISCUSSION

According to Lim and Mula et al., the roasted chickpea seeds have been used as a coffee substitute in Europe during or later war [33, 43]. In Turkey, in our oral culture, it takes place that coffee used to be made from chickpeas in various villages founded by Balkan immigrants. But this traditional culture is almost forgotten today because its preparation is not mostly available.

Within the scope of this study, also we have had some oral findings about the use of chickpeas. According to the 60-80 years old people living in Tekirdağ, İstanbul, Çanakkale, Edirne, Balıkesir and

Kırklareli cities, since it is difficult to reach the real coffee seeds in the time of absence-famine or war, coffee made from chickpea was made and coffee culture was continued for daily coffee consumption. And small amounts of real coffee seeds in the houses have been prepared for important guests only. According to our findings, chickpea coffee culture was seen to be still conserved in the local coffeehouse in Işıkeli village (Biga-Çanakkale). However, the places like Işıkeli village where chickpea coffee preparation is alive are not thought to be many.

Herbal coffees are natural alternatives for coffee lovers. So this traditional use of chickpea is seen as a candidate for the herbal coffee trade. By this study, it was aimed to contribute to the protection and survival of the chickpea coffee tradition by handing the next generations the culture of chickpea which is one of our cultural heritage.

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