

31-The analysis of the importance of Turkish coffee and coffeehouses with the comparison between British and Ottoman culture

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Abstract

Coffee is one of the most popular beverages around the world and its social and commercial value is high and widespread. Drinking coffee becomes some kind of a ritual and a favorite pastime activity for many societies. The word "coffee" is originated from the Arabic word qahwa, which later became kahve in Turkish language, and entered European languages after coffee is introduced to Europe from the Ottoman Empire. In the Ottoman Empire, especially in the 16th century, for the first time, Turkish people confronted with the coffee. After that time, "Turkish coffee" began to be considered as a special kind of coffee due to the differences both in preparation and presentation. Considering the presentation, roasted coffee beans are boiled in a special pot named *cezve* in Turkish, usually with sugar, and served in a cup named *fincan* which is generally similar to an Italian espresso cup in size. In Britain, first coffeehouse was opened by Pasqua Rosée in St. Michael's Alley, Cornhill, London whose real name was Paşa Rıza. After the introduction of coffee and the establishment of coffeehouses in Britain, the public gave a special meaning to Turkish coffee and coffeehouses as a means of socialization and education. Thus, coffeehouses served to illuminate British citizens for a long time. All in all, this study is aimed to analyse the interaction between British and Ottoman culture in relation to the introduction and negotiation of coffee and coffeehouses in the Ottoman and England.

Keywords: Ottoman culture, Turkish coffee, coffeehouses

Türk kahvesinin ve kahvehanelerin öneminin İngiliz ve Osmanlı kültüründe karşılaştırmalı analizi

Öz

Kahve, dünyadaki en popüler içeceklerden biridir. Sosyal ve ticari değeri yüksek bir ürün olarak geniş bir coğrafyaya yayılmıştır. Kahve içmek birçok toplum için bir çeşit ritüel ve en çok tercih edilen boş zaman aktivitesi haline gelmiştir. "Kahve" kelimesi, daha sonra Türkçede kahve haline gelen ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndan Avrupa'ya getirildikten sonra Avrupa dillerine giren Arapça qahwa kelimesinden gelmektedir. Türk halkı kahve ile ilk kez 16. yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda tanışmıştır. O zamandan sonra hem hazırlama hem de sunumdaki farklılıklar nedeniyle "Türk kahvesi" özel bir kahve türü olarak görülmeye başlandı. Sunumu göz önüne alırsak, kavrulmuş kahve çekirdekleri Türkçe'de "cezve" adı verilen özel bir kapta, genellikle şekerle pişirilerek, İtalyan espresso fincanı boyutunda olan "fincan" adı verilen özel kapta servis edilir. İngiltere'de ise ilk kahvehane, Pasqua Rosée veya gerçek adı Paşa Rıza olan bir Türk tarafından Londra, Cornhill, St. Michael's Alley'de açılmıştır. Britanya'da kahvenin tanıtılması ve kahvehanelerin kurulmasının

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ardından ise halk hem sosyalleşme hem de eğitim aracı olarak Türk kahvesine ve kahvehanelerine özel bir önem verdi. Böylece kahvehaneler uzun süre boyunca İngiliz vatandaşlarının aydınlanmasına hizmet etti. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma, Osmanlı ve İngiltere'de kahve ve kahvehaneleri anlatırken iki kültür arasındaki etkileşimi incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Osmanlı kültürü, Türk kahvesi, Kahvehaneler

1. Introduction

Coffee is the core of the fruit of a tree. Its family is Rubiaceae and genus is Coffea. Although there are many coffee species, two of them are economically significant; Coffea Arabica (Arabian Coffee) and Coffea Canephora (Robusta). Coffea Arabica (Arabian Coffee) is the first one to be cultivated and produced and thus has a high economic value. (Tunç, 2014: 10) Throughout the world, coffee is consumed widespread and specifically, Turkish coffee has been a significant commodity since the time of the Ottoman Empire. In time, Turkish coffee gained popularity across the Europe, specifically in Britain. Thus, this study aims at analysing the interaction between British and Ottoman culture in relation to the introduction and negotiation of coffee and coffeehouses in the Ottoman and England.

Initially, it can be said that Turkish coffee has spread throughout the world via Turks and it is identified as a significant symbol that indicates Turkishness. It is roasted and slowly brewed without high heat and served in special coffee cups, generally with water or sherbet as an accompaniment. Also, a traditional Turkish delight or chocolate is added to this traditional Turkish coffee ceremony. Coffee drinking requires a slow process. In this process, the consumer should sip his/her cup of coffee more slowly since coffee is nearly boiled during making. On the other hand, Turkish coffee is turbid with *telve* when it is first poured in a cup. So, the consumer should wait a minute for the *telve* to settle at the bottom of the cup. Thus, it can be said that “Coffee demands that you take your time” (Hattox, 1985: 88) and enjoy the drink. As an example of the general consumption and the popularity of Turkish coffee in the nineteenth century, French author Edmondo de Amicis’s experience about Turkish culture can be mentioned:

“Coffee is now everywhere, it is consumed on the top of Galata and Serasker towers, on all ferries, in cemeteries, barbershops, Turkish baths and bazaars. Wherever you are in Istanbul, there is no need for wandering around and searching for a coffee house. If you just shout out “Coffee Man!”, it will be enough. After three minutes, a steaming cup of coffee with lots of foam and plenty of coffee grounds is ready in front of you”² (Kuzucu and Koz, 2015: 138).

Nowadays, Turkish coffee is accepted as one of the trademarks of Turkish cultural heritage. Even, since 2013, it is recognized as a symbol of Turkishness by UNESCO (“Türk Kahvesi Kültürü ve Geleneği” n.d.). In Turkey, in the contemporary period or the era of the Ottoman Empire, Turkish coffee has never been considered as a colonial product. Because Turkey had neither colonial possessions nor became a coffee producer throughout history. But as a matter of fact, Turkey has bought and sold coffee products at a fair price and that has been one of the reasons that coffee consumed widespread (Özgen, Ergun and Kaymaz, 2019: 632).

² All translations by Sinem Çapar İleri, unless otherwise noted.

2. Ottoman Coffeehouses

At the beginning of the 16th century, the coffee was emerged in Yemen and spread to the Hejaz and Cairo. Then, it reached Istanbul in the middle of the century, possibly via pilgrimage caravans. Until the early eighteenth century, almost all coffee consumed in the Middle East as well as in Europe, came from Yemen (Hattox, 1985: 89). Coffee, which was among the delightful substances that were called *Mükeyyifât* in the Ottoman Empire, became widespread in a short period. After that, coffee-related culture and trade emerged. During that period, there were two types of coffee shopkeepers. The first one was coffee traders (esnaf-ı tüccar-ı kahveciyan) and the second one was coffee sellers (esnaf-ı kahve satıcıyan) (Tunç, 2014: 14). Even, coffee sellers either in Europe or Near East, sold coffee to passersby in the streets (Hattox, 1985: 89). Furthermore, at the end of the sixteenth century, the coffeehouses in Istanbul were over six hundred.

On the other hand, during the reign of Murad III, Ahmed I and Murad IV, coffee was forbidden. In the second half of the seventeenth century, there were a significant number of traders in Istanbul who were interested in the trade of coffee. These people, whom Evliyâ Celebi referred to as Mediterranean and Egyptian merchants, also caused the coffee trade to be accelerated. Thus, in the seventeenth century, coffee became a significant commodity in the world markets with the changing trade routes after the geographical discoveries throughout the century. That is the reason, coffee caused a revival in the Ottoman commercial life for a while. (Günay 1999:189-190). Since, great fortunes were amassed in the coffee trade, due to the position on coffee trade routes, few regions experienced temporary, but prolific economic revitalization. (Hattox, 1985: 8)

Thus, in Europe, the coffee drinking has started in some of the cities in the seventeenth century. Furthermore, in the eighteenth century, coffee market has begun to import from the Far Eastern and Latin American colonies since they were cheaper. In Istanbul, coffee was served with cups specifically designed for traders and foreign service officers from Europe. Thus, Ottoman statesmen started to bring special coffees and coffee sets away to Europe. Until the sixteenth century, historical sources do not mention coffeehouses in the Anatolia (Yalap 2017:1907-1911). As it is stated in Abdülkadir Emeksiz's section "İstanbul Kahvehaneleri" from the book *Karaların ve Denizlerin Sultamı İstanbul*, Hakem from Aleppo and Şems from Damascus started to sell coffee in Tahtakale for the first time in Istanbul (2009:126). Emeksiz mentioned various types of coffeehouses in the Ottoman Empire:

The segregation of the coffeehouses has been shaped according to the place, social function, historical period, customer types. In Istanbul, summer country coffeehouses that were established on the beach or in places that were situated with the view of Bosphorus have been formed. Similarly, mobile coffee houses, winter coffeehouses, boarding coffeehouses, Tatar, Albanian, Bosnian coffeehouses, all can be considered in the same group with summer country coffeehouses. (2009:126)

In time, coffeehouses became social gathering places where people from different social, cultural and economic backgrounds came together and socialized. They talked about intellectual, social ideas in coffeehouses, played board games like backgammon or chess. They even quarrelled about political issues in the Ottoman Empire. That is the reason, sometime in Ottoman history, coffeehouses were banned and they were closed. For instance, starting with Suleiman the Magnificent and till the reign of Murad IV, coffee and coffeehouses had been strictly forbidden from time to time. Even though coffee and coffeehouses were banned, it is a fact that these places constituted an important role in the

Ottoman society which became a place for exchanging social, political and intellectual ideas in a relatively free social gathering.

In Ralph S. Hattox's influential book *Coffee and Coffeeshouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East*, this changing situation of coffee is explained. Hattox mentioned that coffee and the coffeeshouse, had been seen as a threat to the society earlier. In time, coffee has been embraced by and gradually integrated into the society. Even, drinking coffee became an appreciated activity both in public and private life, thus it was no longer considered as a dangerous innovation. (Hattox, 1985: 9) Similarly, in an analysis about coffeeshouses and its effects entitled "Coffeeshouse Sociability: Themes, Problems and Directions", it is asserted that coffeeshouses formed a new form of sociability among Ottoman people in the sixteenth century:

Katip Çelebi in his *Mîzânü'l-Hakk fî İhtiyâri'l-Ehakk* (Evaluation of the Truth and Choosing the Rightest) and Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali in his *Mevâidü'n-Nefâis fî Kavâidi'l-Mecâlis* (Tables of Delicacies Concerning the Rules of Social Gatherings) gives the year 960 (1552-3) as the opening date of the first coffeeshouse... In fact, the era that gains importance in the historiography of coffeeshouses are the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries where they have been associated to new forms of sociability and have intellectual/political outcomes... the coffeeshouse was a novel social space where distinctions of rank were ignored, social, intellectual and political information was exchanged, and various forms of entertainment took place. (Çaykent and Gürses Tarbuck, 2007: 205-206)

3. British coffeeshouses

On the other hand, considering the European counterpart of coffee and coffeeshouses, it is important to mention that it similarly formed new social mobility among the European community. As it is asserted in the article "Coffeeshouse Sociability: Themes, Problems and Directions", both Western and Eastern culture were affected similarly from the coffee-related culture: "In fact, in the Ottoman Empire as well as in Europe and elsewhere, the coffeeshouse, it is said, was not only somewhere you could drink coffee and meet people, but it became a multifunctional sphere" (Çaykent and Gürses Tarbuck, 2007: 213).

In Britain, the first coffeeshouse was opened by Pasqua Rosée in St. Michael's Alley, Cornhill, London in 1652, who was a Turk whose real name was Paşa Rıza. Pasqua Rosée lived in Izmir (Smyrna) before emigrating to London and he became a manservant to a merchant who was a member of the Levant Company. Then, due to his work as a manservant, he emigrated to Britain. ("The London Coffeeshouse," n.d.) In Britain, the article "From Turkish Renegade to a Penny University: The Introduction and Negotiation of the Coffee-houses in England" asserted that the coffee from the Ottoman Empire initially had a biased reaction:

The coffee came with its already established image of the Orient, thus was taken by the English society with suspicion... The powerful resistance and enmity against coffee and the coffee-houses prepared a testimony for the government to take precautions. The King is informed of the inconveniency of the coffee-houses... The king signed a Royal Proclamation in the Christmas of 1675 to suppress and put down all the coffee-houses..." (Baktır, 2008: 141-150)

But in time, this negative attitude towards Turkish coffee changed gradually. Since "the coffee-houses were also in daily touch with people and there was more than gossip ... Coffee-houses became a public-sphere and forced the government to work for a better society" (Baktır, 2008: 150). Especially in the

eighteenth century, coffee houses became popular among English people. They created some kind of a civil social sphere in the public life in Britain and they together prepared the ground for an age of democratic revolutions. For instance, two of the significant intellectual figures of eighteenth-century London, essayist Joseph Addison and writer Richard Steele found in the coffeehouses “a virtual stage on which they might expose the false arts of life, disguises of cunning, vanity and affection, the general simplicity of dress and discourse to reform the public manners and enlighten the citizens of the Commonwealth” (155-156). Thus, it can be said that “Coffee-houses accomplished what the theater in the Renaissance England did for the public” (156), they became virtual stages that enlighten the British citizens.

In Britain, the coffeehouses became a reflection of the new generations’ mindsets, especially in the eighteenth century. For instance, young British men whom they called themselves “the Beaux”, had their favourite coffeehouse in Scotland Yard, which was named as “The Man’s Coffeehouse”. “The Beaux” was adventurous, young men who were also fashionable in their sense of styles during that period. “The Man’s Coffeehouse” became a representative of these young gentlemen. Even “the Beaux”, taught manners of high society, new styles in fashion and proper behaviour to the common people who also spent their leisure time in the coffeehouses.

Also similar to the “the Beaux”, another significant group in British society, preferred to socialize in the coffeehouses. They were the man of letters who were known as “the Virtuosi”. These men were known as experimental intellectuals and philosophers. They discussed contemporary politics, new aspects in scientific, literary and philosophical ideas that captured the eighteenth-century mind. So, “the Virtuosi”’s favourite place for meeting was The Grecian Coffeehouse, which was frequented by The Fellows of the Royal Society. (Baktır, 2008: 151-152) Both “the Beaux” and “the Virtuosi” had empowered the “free thought” in the eighteenth-century British society. The coffeehouses became a place where they could socialize without any distinctions of rank, class or religion. That is the reason, all layers of the British society were welcomed to join the coffeehouse sociability and had interacted with each other.

4. Conclusion

Considering the Eastern counterpart, in the Ottoman society, similarly, the coffee and coffeehouses were sometimes seen as a threat to the state, since being in a coffeehouse equated being in a place that empowered “free thought”. That is the reason it was not just a coffee-drinking place but a multifunctional sphere. Since in the eighteenth century, especially in Europe, the Enlightenment belief affected the society’s dynamics and the coffeehouses had that intellectual dimension as a social space:

The intellectual dimension is another aspect of coffeehouse studies. The Enlightenment belief that there could be extra-institutional spheres for intellectual sociability could be regarded as a foundational reason for a large number of clubs and societies that were created in the eighteenth-century Europe as well as the perception of coffeehouses as penny universities. (Çaykent and Gürses Tarbuck, 2007: 213)

Likewise, considering the Ottoman coffeehouse culture, historian Ahmet Yaşar asserted in his master thesis entitled “The Coffeehouses in Early Modern Istanbul: Public Space, Sociability, Surveillance,” asserted that the coffeehouses constituted an alternative place to an institutionally controlled sociability by the Ottoman state. When Ottoman people began socializing in the coffeehouses, outside

the mosques and the religiously-founded schools or *medreses*, that situation can be considered as one of the early signs of secularization and modernization of the Empire. (Yaşar, 2003: 54)

Thus, all in all, it may be concluded that the coffeehouses became an alternative place for intellectual interactions outside official institutions like *medreses* and mosques in the Ottoman Empire or universities and churches in England. That is the reason, coffee and coffee-related culture brought both a delightful leisure time activity and a way of socializing, exchanging intellectual ideas that had an impact on both Western and Eastern societies.

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