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SMALL REVOLUTIONS ON THE TABLE: MODERNIZATION OF FOOD HABITS IN THE BULGARIAN TOWNS DURING THE 19TH CENTURY

“We may learn more about man’s problems from the menu of a banquet than from the account of war events, from a cookery book than from a set of diplomatic paper, and from the statistics of food products than from the story of court intrigues”¹

During the second half of the 18th and the 19th century the Balkans became a place where two different mainstream lines crossed – the European line of the Enlightenment and the Oriental one. As a result of this interaction several modernization processes started – the bourgeoisie was slowly formed and the urban intelligentsia was created. The latter was the main social power involved in the development of new mental processes, which transformed everyday life, people’s relations, attitudes to life and death, i.e., the transformation of everything that could be called mentality.

The presented paper is focused on only one aspect of the process of the modernization of mentalities, specifically the formation of diverse attitudes towards the feeding process that lead to radical changes in the living customs of the urban strata during this period. I will not discuss here what “modernization” is. I use the word “modern” according to its common usage, to indicate that a person or a practice are up to date, that they are different from the out-of date practices or people of the past.²

The region chosen for the research are the Central Balkans and specifically the Bulgarian lands. This region was situated in close proximity

of the Ottoman capital Istanbul, and, in addition, in an area that remained for a long time under Ottoman rule. As a center of the peninsula, the Bulgarian lands compounded influences from both East and West. The neighboring countries of the region – Greece, Walachia (Romania) and Serbia, became too a powerful source of influence over the urban life in the Central Balkans throughout the urban population that studied and worked there. This was a mixture of Balkan and European influences transformed in the light of the Balkan realities.

The main aim of my research is to trace the ways in which new ideas and realities reached the everyday life and customs of the Bulgarian urban population in the 19th century. The investigation is focused on the way in which the new mentalities lead to the creation of a new feeding culture. Here are some points to be demonstrated. The new feeding culture contained changed attitudes to feeding habits – as an instrument for healthy life and, at the same time, as an amusement. Scientific literature appeared and terms like “dietetics” and “healthful life” went into circulation. The new perspectives on life lead also to a different attitude towards religious fasts, which have been the only controller of the dietary customs for a long time. The religious view on abstinence conceded its place to the Enlightenment’s idea of moderation in feeding habits. For a long period this idea was contrary to another new moment in the attitude to feeding, like its relation to art and amusement. I will also analyze the reasons for which the feeding stereotypes were transformed and the reactions of the bourgeoisie to the new ideas.

The attitude to food could be understood only throughout an investigation of cookery. In the beginning of the 19th century it wasn’t sacrament or art or entertainment but housework. However, during the next decades cookery acquired all the above-mentioned characteristics. The publishing of the first cookbooks in the Balkans could prove this fact. It expresses not only the development of the urban environment, but also deep mental changes.

The comparative analysis used in the research will provide a representative picture of the researched areas. The sources, taken into consideration, range from memoirs and diaries of Bulgarian urban intelligentsia to various scholarly studies and articles in the Bulgarian nineteenth-century popular magazines (whose aim was not only to present different kinds of food but also to reveal the damages of being heavy-handed with food), and scholarly books on healthy living. Foreign travel notes

contain useful information on how the different national cuisines from the Balkans were seen by westerners. The first cookbooks published in the region constitute a rich source material for food habits and practices. Various guilds' and merchants' documents will be consulted, too.

One can examine food and feeding in several discourses – religious, scientific /mostly medical/, social, even in the context of amusement and entertainment. But before doing so, we can take a glimpse of what the urban population from the chosen region ate during the 19th century. Many factors influenced the development of the menu and food habits of a given society or region. First of all, the geographical factor determined the kinds of fruits and vegetables to be planted and the kinds of animals to be raised in the region. Besides, financial factors, which set the quantities and the quality of the food to be produced and bought, and even ethnical factors, were of no less importance. Due to the Ottoman rule in the Bulgarian lands, for instance, the Turkish cuisine had an enormous impact on the Bulgarian one. Another factor is the so-called “guildsman culture”, strongly patriarchal, whose main purpose was to make money, out of the food goods in particular.

My example is the usual menu of a family from Koprivshtitsa, which was a middle-size town, with a population of 6-8,000.³ In his memories, Mihail Madzharov, born in 1854, described the usual menu of his family, which included mostly bread, beans, peas, vegetables, cabbage and sauerkraut, pepper, pickled vegetables, onions etc.⁴ The vegetarian food predominated, but the meat was part of the family's menu. He wrote up the way of preparing various kinds of preserved pork and sheep. Here we should add that the Madzharov's family was among the rich families in the town, because of the merchant activities of the father who reached Egypt. We dispose also with the later observations of Jozef Antonin Voracek, who was of Czech origin. He worked in Sliven in late the 1870s and early 1880s of the 19th century. Since he was interested especially in Bulgarian everyday life, his publications on foods and feeding are quite detailed. According to him, Bulgarians were vegetarian nation because they were eating mostly vegetables and they had meat only on special occasions.⁵ However, the author lists quite a large number of various meat dishes, which were part of the Bulgarians' menu, when they did not fast. Among them were almost all kinds of meat – beef, lamb, goat, chicken, and

duck – boiled or roasted with vegetables; during the winter dried meat, different kinds of sausages, salt pork, and game, too.⁶

It is impossible, of course, to speak about townsmen's feeding habits without having in mind the social and professional stratification. There existed too many social boundaries between the poor and the rich, between guildsmen and their apprentices, between the urban people and villagers who moved recently to the town, between newly formed intelligentsia and the old community members. Here are some examples. Petko Slaveykov, a prominent Bulgarian poet, journalist, publisher and teacher, wrote that during his childhood his family happened to be very poor. For this reason his mother was compelled to weave for her neighbors and usually received for her work one *oka* flour. And his father was helping in a butchery where he was given chitterlings and this was the only meat they tasted.⁷

The different position in professional hierarchy led also to different menus. Kiro Tuleshkov from Târnovo provides a good example for this. In his "Memories"⁸ he dedicated several pages to the meals eaten by the master's assistants and apprentices from the town's guilds. The master paid their food. The bread for the workers was made of cheaper flour – a mixture of grain, rye, pear barley, millet and corn. In this way the masters reduced their expenses through the low quality and quantity of flour, and as a result the bread was not tasty and the workers were eating less of it. During the non-fasting days the master bought very fat meat for the same reason, and namely, to make the workers to eat less. Meat of good quality was not bought because its higher price. During the spring fasts the apprentices were picking nettle, after that pigweed, dock, and saltbush and were cooking soup. However they were not cooking spinach because it had to be bought from the market. During the winter the main dish was sauerkraut but it had to be cooked – usually boiled with rice, otherwise the workers were eating too much bread with it. Later the masters started to buy beans, too. During the non-fasting days pork or sheep meat and *pastârma* made from goat were added to the sauerkraut.⁹

Among the first developments were the merchants' and craftsmen' shops that appeared in such places, where different kinds of food and food products were sold. Most of the townsmen had their own garden and animals. For a long period of time this kind of food supply was basic for the bigger part of the urban population. Gradually, and due to various reasons, townsmen started providing themselves with food mainly from the

market. This led to changes in the menu of the urban population. It should be noted that bakeries, butcheries and groceries existed long before the 19th century, especially in the cities and bigger towns, where administration and garrisons existed. In the town of Bitola, for instance, there were more than twenty professions and different shops involved in public alimentation.¹⁰ We can divide them into several groups, and namely: producers of bread and related products such as bakers, producers of *simit* (small round bread), and *burek*, producers of meat and meat products like butchers, producers of salami, *pacha* (headcheese), *meze*, and *kebab*, producers of milk and cheese. The other group includes professions related to production and sale of different drinks and sweets such as coffee, *sheker*, *halva*, *leblebia* and other sweets, as well as sellers of lemonade and so-called *mrazari* who offered ice for the lemonade.

There were three different guilds responsible for the sale of vegetables and fruits – *bahchevandzhii* (gardeners), *zarzavatchii* (sellers of vegetables) and *emishchii* (sellers of fruits). And finally, to the professions which played role in the alimentation of the urban population we can add the owners of taverns, inns, and other different places for cooking and eating, among them *handzhii*, *ahchii*, *gostilnichari*, *krachmari*. Most of the people who were involved in these businesses belonged to guilds with numerous members.

Many other similar examples related to different guilds involved in food production and trade could be shown. Among the Christian guilds in Adrianople, for instance, whose members paid taxes to the local Christian community, there were guilds of *balaktsides* (fishermen), *furundzides* (bakers), *undzides* (producers of flour), *kaimaktsides* (cream makers), *handzides* (inn keepers), *patsadzides* (headcheese makers), *ahtsides* (cooks),¹¹ *mpozadzides* (*boza* makers).¹² In Skopje there was a guild of *dondurmadzhii* who made ice cream,¹³ in Shoumen – of *sherbetchii* (sherbet makers).

For sure not all of these crafts appeared only in the 19th century. Besides, all these towns were among the biggest in the region with a population exceeding 20,000 people. However, it was namely that century when guilds of bakers, butchers, *zarzavatchii*, *halvadzhii*, cooks, etc. were extant almost in every town. This fact only proves that the urban population gradually (faster in the bigger towns and slower in the small ones) pointed at buying not only the basic food products like bread and meat.

Some changes in the food habits could be provoked by the market opportunities, or more precisely, by offering of new food products, already known at other places. One of these products without which we cannot imagine today's Bulgarian cuisine are potatoes. They reached the Bulgarian lands via different ways and in different time. In 1825 the abbot of the Preobrazhenski (Transfiguration) Monastery, near Târnovo, noted in the monastery's chronicle that gardeners from Liaskovets had brought for the first time potatoes and had taught the monks and the local population how to cultivate them.¹⁴ Several years later, in 1835, D. Smrikarov from Samokov in West Bulgaria brought potatoes to the town, probably from Serbia. We can see where potatoes came from even from their names. The word "*kartoŭ*", which is today the name of this vegetable in standard Bulgarian language, derives from Romanian, while in Romanian it is borrowed from the German "*kartoffel*". Another name of the plant, which testifies the same Bulgarian – Romanian connection, was introduced by the above mentioned gardeners – "Wallachian beans". In some regions, it is a dialect wording still in use. From the Czech lands, probably again through Wallachia, came the word "*baraboy*" from the Czech "*brambor*".¹⁵ The German designation for potatoes "*grund birne*" passed into Serbian, where it was transformed into "*krompir*" or "*krumpir*" and afterwards it reached the west Bulgarian lands, where today potatoes are still called "*kompir*". From the Greek word "*πατάτες*" the word "*patati*" entered the south Bulgarian lands. This very detailed description only proves heterogeneous influence over the Bulgarians' every day life, and over the food habits, in particular.

Although the appearance of the potatoes proclaimed true nourishing revolution in Central Europe, nothing happened like this in the Bulgarian lands. French economist Jeromme Adolphe Blanqui who visited Bulgaria in 1841 noted in his book *Voyage en Bulgarie pendant l'année 1841* that the potatoes are almost unknown and he couldn't order potatoes anywhere during his visit.¹⁶ The potatoes were not much used in Koprivshitsa even during the 1860s. The grandmother of M. Madzharov had told him, that she remembered when they started to grow potatoes in the town. They were very rare and many of the people did not want to eat them because they looked like brain. But later when they started to roast them, people began to cultivate them more.¹⁷

Although several articles which included information about potatoes and advice on how to grow them were published in the first Bulgarian

periodicals (the first one was published in *Liuboslovie* magazine in 1844¹⁸) even during the 1870s they were still rare. Most of the articles dealing with the usefulness of the potatoes were published exactly during the 1870s. The prominent Bulgarian publisher Hristo Danov explained in his encyclopedic calendar *Letostrui* that potatoes are God's blessing during the cold years when there is not enough grain and in those regions, which are mountainous and cold, and the grain could not be grown there. According to him it is good in these mountainous regions to grow more potatoes because it would help the paupers.¹⁹ Another writer and publisher, Ivan Bogorov, in his article "The village's doctor" recommended:

"The "baraboy"- this priceless wart, which when there is starvation, feeds the European poor people, is food, very nice and good for the health; it is put on the table both in the rich and the poor house. It won't be bad if every one of the villagers sows in his yard several roots of "baraboy" and then it won't be necessary to loan grain and to return it after the harvest two or three times more."²⁰

The poor cultivating of potatoes impressed the Czech teacher who came in Bulgaria after the Liberation in 1878. Jan Wagner wrote in the beginning of the 1880s:

"The potatoes are sold in Bulgaria in kilos like the apples at home... Previously the cultivation of potatoes was almost unknown. More serious attempts for their distribution were made right after the Russians came but the results are not encouraging."²¹

A couple of years later, in 1884, the Czech Konstantin Jireček drew the same conclusions, explaining that potatoes started to disseminate slowly only then, and still they were almost unknown in some mountain regions.²²

Another plant, which is basic for the contemporary Bulgarian cuisine, but became known only during the second half of the 19th century, is the tomato. Considering the name "*domat*" it was probably brought from the Mediterranean. Although it was known by Bulgarians and before mid-19th century they were using only the green tomatoes for pickles. In his manual for healthy life, *Zdravoslovie* (1865), Sava Dobroplodni advised the readers to eat more plants and less meat. He listed a great number of

vegetables and fruits such as pumpkins, cucumbers, spinach, cabbage, salad, onions, turnip, leeks, melon, water melons, eggplants, gumbo, even anginari, which are not typical for the contemporary Bulgarian cuisine, but did not mention tomatoes.²³ Nikola Enicherev, who was a teacher in the town of Prilep in Macedonia, remembered that before his arrival in the town in late 1860s its inhabitants haven't eaten potatoes and ripe tomatoes.²⁴ In his *Memoirs*, Mihail Madzharov noted that only in 1868, when he was on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he tried for the first time salad made of ripe tomatoes.²⁵ In the region of Plovdiv and Rodopi mountains the word "*frankiove*" (that is "franks") was used as a name for this vegetable. Another similar name is "*frenk patladzhan*" (meaning "French eggplant").²⁶ The naming is probably connected to the French workers who built the railway of Baron Hirsh in the early 1870s. The first Bulgarian cookbook published in 1870 includes a recipe for stuffed tomatoes under the condition that "tomatoes are available".²⁷ However, in the second book, five years later, tomatoes were not mentioned among the vegetables known in the urban cuisine,²⁸ which shows that they were not popular enough even in the mid-1870s.

Corn was another less popular food. We do not have any information when not only animals, but also humans began consuming it. The first sources mentioning it are dated 1799. In the history of his life called *Legend*, the monk Sofroniy described how he was forced to eat bread made of corn in the house of a poor family from the town of Pleven during the Great Fast before Easter. It seemed to be something unusual for him.²⁹ The attitude towards corn as food is rather condescending even half a century after that if we have in mind some lines written in the Manual for ethnographic studies of G.S. Rakovski:

"It is remarkable that the Bulgarian peasants eat bread and not mamaliga (polenta) as some neighbor nations do. But some times they say: let's boil kachamak, i.e. mamaliga. One can see that the Bulgarians have eaten bread for a long time and they call the mamaliga *divenik*, i.e. food for wild people!"³⁰

In contrast to these new but still known foods many other products introduced to Bulgarian cuisine, were in fact previously totally unknown. They came in different ways with their own names. Unfortunately, we usually do not know how these innovations like macaroni, *franzela* (white

bread), *jambon*, and sandwich appeared for the first time in the Bulgarian towns. There are a few sources and one of them is Todor Burmov's *Memoirs*. He studied in Russia and came in the town of Gabrovo to work as a teacher. He was using *samovar* for preparing tea³¹ – a drink, which couldn't manage to become as popular among the Bulgarians as the coffee for example. Tea was usually used as a medicine and only those who had spent some time in Russia drank black tea. Again T. Burmov wrote about an Italian merchant who came in Gabrovo for business. He invited to a dinner teachers and merchants and served them "European food" prepared with *jambon*.³²

Although we don't have information about the quantities of food products sold in the urban markets, we can trace also changes in the quantity of some foods consumed. The most significant example for this is the meat. Further to the religious limitations in the consumption of meat, there were other regulations which prescribed when and what kind of meat to eat. For example mutton was cooked for the occasion of wedding, funeral, engagement, town's fair, memorial service; pork was cooked for Christmas, lamb – for the day of Saint George, chicken – for the day of Saint Peter. Besides these there were other limitations, too – no young animals were butchered until the Saint George's day, veal was eaten during autumn, when it was difficult to feed the cows.³³

The changes in meat consumption happened mainly for economical reasons. The trade with meat, mostly sheep, increased significantly in the Bulgarian towns from the late 18th and the early 19th century. Among the richest Bulgarians were the so called "*dzhelep*".³⁴ In conformity with special order of the sultan, they were supplying with meat the biggest Ottoman cities in the Peninsula like Istanbul and Adrianople. The increased trade led to an excessive meat supply on the market. In smaller towns like Drianoovo, Samokov, Sevlievo, etc., the merchants who were selling meat even created special "*dzhelep*" guilds. These guilds traded not with animals but with different meat products³⁵ Hristo Daskalov, a native of Triavna wrote:

"My grandfather used to say that earlier when Stoyan the Butcher was butchering one sheep, after that he was carrying it around whole week and could not sell the meat; and now even if twenty sheep would be butchered per day, they will be sold"³⁶

Religion was the only regulator in the field of nourishment until the end of the 18th century. As a matter of fact, the Orthodox fasting days all together take up almost two thirds from the year. The Long Lent (the main Easter fast) lasts forty-five days, the fasts before the day of Saint Peter (celebrated on June 29th) – thirty-five days, the fast of Holly Mother (celebrated in August) – fifteen days, and the advent (Christmas fasts) – forty days. We should add also to these holidays the Wednesdays and the Fridays because they are fasting days, too. So, there were only 134 non-fasting days during the whole year, while the number of the fasting days was 232.

Usually fasts days were kept very strictly. In Silistra those who did not observe the fast were labeled as “Jew”, “Frank-Mason” and “Turk” – i.e., someone who is an outsider of the Christian community.³⁷ And here is an indicative example from the mid-19th century town of Kalofer. Once, during the fasts of Saint Peter, eggs with butter were cooked in the house of a certain family. But the tasty smell of the butter spread fast in the *mahalla* and half of the townsmen became aware of that until the evening. The consequences for the family started after that. The child was laughed upon at school and was forced to go back home crying. The priest did not go to the house to sanctify water, even though he had been invited twice. When the townswomen happened to meet the sinful woman, they were watching at her badly, ready to beat her with their distaffs and wishing her bad things like a thunder striking her house, or the death for someone in her family. Moreover, a long period of drought and sickness of a lot of children was thought to be due of neglecting the fasts.³⁸

Nikola Enicherev, a teacher in Prilep, remembered that one of the town’s elders told him “My dear teacher, I like you very much, but if I see you greasing (i.e., eating meat or other animal food), I will kill you”.³⁹

In the town of Koprivshtitsa all the townsmen kept the fasts without exceptions, even those on Wednesdays and Fridays. Moreover, some women fasted on Mondays, too, as one of the church punishments, which generally excluded men.⁴⁰

However, the attitude towards fasting also became a subject of change. People belonging to the upper social stratum had rather neglectful attitude toward the observation of religious fasts. In this respect Petko Slaveykov’s autobiography provides a good example. In 1845 he was advised by Hagi Minco, one of the most influential people in Tryavna not to reveal to the villagers his fast inobservance. Hagi Minco himself confessed that

he had eaten meat during the Long Lent, but nobody could reproach him at all.⁴¹ Another evidences about this different attitude one can find in the above-mentioned memoirs of Kiro Tuleshkov who remembers how, during the fasts, the soup for the workers was cooked without butter, but the master cooked for himself with butter, because he did not consider that sinful.⁴²

Not only some of the rich people, but also some well-educated people had a different attitude to the religious limitations. The available sources provide a lot of such evidence. In late 1850s in Gabrovo the doctor Vicho Paunov told the young ordinary boys that fasts are a superstition, but was warned by one of the teachers to stop claiming this. Panov studied medicine in France and it was naturally for him to have different views on this issue. Ivan Seliminski's behavior provides another similar example. He studied in the famous Greek high school in Kidonia, then he was a student of medicine in Athens, and afterwards he lived for a long time in Bucharest and Brashov. Sava Dobroplodni, the translator of the first manual for healthy life, blamed Seliminski who, as an alumnus, had a mocking attitude towards the instructions from Atone and fasting.⁴³ Such a neglecting and negative attitude towards fasting was spread not only in the Bulgarian lands, of course. The Greek monk Athanasios Parios, teacher in the island of Chios and fierce opponent of the Enlightenment, wrote at the beginning of the 19th century that all these people, who went to study in Europe, boasted with their way of feeding and got free from their superstitions.⁴⁴

Besides the evolutionary attitude towards religious fasts, a new one, which could be called revolutionary, appeared during the 1870s. Zachari Stoyanov, participant in the uprising of April 1876, mentioned in his "Notes on the Bulgarian uprisings": *"Bay Ivan, as many other rebels, wasn't an absolute Christian... Except on Wednesdays and Fridays, he also didn't keep the fasts even during the Great Lent."*⁴⁵

Hristo Botev, a prominent Bulgarian poet, who also participated in the April uprising, and a great opponent to the Orthodox priests and church, appealed:

*"Instead of forbidding the different popular traditions... they could destroy the fasts which have killed the energy and the physiological power of the bigger part of the nation and which led this nation ...to the level of herbivores."*⁴⁶

Another step further on the development of attitudes towards feeding is the appearance of the first scientific publications – books and articles, which had to do with the different aspects of the feeding process, the various kinds of foods, and appropriate diets. This step became possible after the appearance of a small group of well-educated people who spoke foreign languages. On the other side, there were enough readers whom these – mostly translated, especially at the beginning – books were addressed to.

In 1837 Rayno Popovich, who was a teacher, translated from Greek into Bulgarian the book *Hrisotithia*⁴⁷, which could be translated as “A Manual of Useful Knowledge and Good Manners” or as “A Guide to Etiquette”. It was addressed mainly to the young people, but also to all others interested in these matters.

The book contained advices about how to behave both in public spaces and in the family, about the relations between the people. Moreover, it dealt with clothing, walking, the way of talking. The manual included gnomes from the ancient culture and described the lives of some Greek philosophers like Aristotle, Plato, Homer, and Pythagoras. It included also a part, which is of particular interest for us, dealing with culinary practices and table manners. The author gives some useful advices about the table manners – to wash hands before eating, not to spit, not to cough, not to scratch, not to eat fast and greedily, not to fill the mouth with food, not to sip, not to throw bones on the floor, not to lick the fingers, not to talk with a full mouth, which is according to the author “a rustic manner”, and many other advices about the proper behavior at the table.⁴⁸ This book was republished in 20 years – in 1855 in Tzarigrad/Istanbul/.

Igionomia was another similar publication, which became quite popular. The title could be translated as “A Guide to Health and Hygiene”. This book was written originally in French and Greek by the teacher Arhigen Sarantev and translated into Bulgarian by the teacher Sava Dobroplodni. It was published in three editions – in 1846 in Tzarigrad,⁴⁹ in 1853 in Zemun,⁵⁰ and in 1865 in Bolgrad.⁵¹ S. Dobroplodni noticed in the last edition’s introduction, that after so many books, which spoiled the mind, it is necessary to have one about health and health care.⁵² A separate chapter is dedicated to foods and feeding. The author drew attention to the main reason, which, according to him, brings sicknesses: uncontrolled feeding. And he continued:

224/909

ХРИСТОИΘΙΑ

ИЛИ

БЛАГОПРАВІЕ

ПРИГОВОКЪЩЕНА

СЪ ИСТОРИИТЕ НА КОИТО СА ПОМАНЪ-
ВАТЪ ВЪ НЕА ЗА ПОЛЪЗА И ОУПОТРЕБЛѢ-
НІЕ НА БОЛГАРСКОТО ЮНОШЕСТВО, И СѢКИМЪ
КОИТО ЛЮБИ ДА СА ПОЛЪЗОВА, Ꙗ ВЪЛИНСКИАТЪ
НА СЛАВЕНО - БОЛГАРСКИАТЪ НАШЪ МЪЗЫКЪ
ПРЕВѢДЕНА

Ꙗ

РИЙНА ПОПОВИЧА

ИЗЪ ЖѢРАВНА

КАРЛОВСКАГЪ ЕЛИНО - ГРЕЧЕСКАГЪ ОУЧИТЕЛА.

И

ПОСВѢЩЕНА

НА

ГОСПОДИНА Г. МЯЛКИ ВОЛКА ЧОРБАДЖИ К.
ЧАЛІКОГЛА

ИЗДАНИЕ ПЕРВОЕ

Chrestoethia.

ВЪ БУДИМЪ,
Писмены Крал: Тѹпограф: Оунгарск: 1857:

КАРЛОВКА СЪБИРАТЕЛЯ

ІГНОМІЯ

СИРЪЧА
ПРАВЛА

За да си вѣрдимъ здравіе-то,
сочинѣна Грѣчески ѿ Фрѣнски
ѡтъ цѣлїтеле-жтѣ

АРХІГЕНА САРАНТИВЪК:

ѿ превѣдена на Бѣлгарскїй-жтѣ ѡзыкъ

ѡтъ

САВВА Х. ИЛІЕВИЧА ДОБРОПЛОДНАГО СЛИ-
ВНАНИНА.

ИЗДАНІЕ ПЕРВО



ВЪ ЦАРИГРАДЪ

Въ Патріаршескѣ-тѣ Тїпографїѣ

1846.

“We do not have bigger enemy than the tasty dishes. Cookery is the most pernicious creature ... The art of the cook forces us to eat more than we need ... the main goal of the cooks is to create new dishes ... Therefore the dishes which are not unhealthy themselves, get pernicious when we mix them with many other different things”⁵³

As examples he refers to eggs, milk, butter, and flour. When one mixes them and prepares baklava, burek, mlin, the stomach is being tortured. The useful counsels are not avoided in this book, too. But here they are not related to good manners, but to health care – to wash and care for our teeth, not to eat cold and hot food together, not to engage in any intellectual activity when we are eating, to eat less in the evenings.

During the next two-three decades the number of publications on food and feeding was growing side by side with the increasing interest to the natural history and sciences and the emergence of urban intelligentsia. The first Bulgarian periodicals had an encyclopedic character and were paying attention to the feeding as social phenomenon, as connection to the nature and as immutable human privilege.⁵⁴ So, for example, Konstantin Fotinov published in Lyuboslovie a small article entitled “The Table”, in which he showed the damage that could be provoked by food:

“When I’m seeing a table full with many different dishes, it seems to me that I see among the plates there: all the parts of the body with edema, temperature, headache, and another multiple sicknesses, ordered there.”⁵⁵

The same author paid attention to the feeding value of different kinds of foods like grain, rye, barley, beans, lentil, pea, meat, etc.

The problem of nourishment had a special place in the works of one of the first Bulgarian philosophers – Todor Ikonomov. He examined the influence of food on the human body, how the various food products and the substances such as sugar, salt, fats and proteins reflected on the health. He described also the significance of drinks like coffee and tea, and of rakiya, too. According to Ikonomov, coffee influences in a very good way the mental work, because it stimulates it. He noticed also the social function, which coffee had as a mediator, making the boring conversation more interesting. Ikonomov did not avoid the harms caused by coffee to the people who have a nervous temperament. In his opinion, rakiya could

be useful if drunk fairly and in that case it acts like a medicine, helps digestion, and invigorates.⁵⁶ Todor Ikonov wrote that the three basic food substances are salt, bread and meat, which are not only products but also elements responsible for social peace. For example, he claimed the taxes imposed on salt were “a crime against mankind” and insisted that salt should be distributed to the poor for free because it helps them to endure their difficult life. Ikonov pointed out the fact that the high prices of bread brought not only diseases but also social conflicts and even revolutions. According to him, meat influences directly the activity of the mind, as well as the passions like love, patriotism, pride, courage, and hate. He gave an example with the Anglo-Saxons who eat more meat than the others and therefore the biggest philosophers originated from this nation. And the opposite, people who do not eat meat, get sick, become lethargic, cold and weak-kneed.⁵⁷

Another development is the emergence of the personal accounting of the urban population in the mid-19th century. I mean here not the bills related to the economical activity of a certain merchant or craftsman, but only those bills, which gave an account of the personal incomes and expenses of a household, including the expenses for foods.⁵⁸ The available sources are various personal bills of merchants, craftsmen, teachers, i.e., of the people who are representatives of the newly created bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. In fact, the earliest available sample of a personal accounting, including expenses for various foods bought, dates from the beginning of the 19th century. Todor Tsenov, a merchant from Vratsa who undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1803, bought “15 okas fish in Enes for 12 piaster, 8 okas small fish in kit for 6 piaster, in Sakas 2 okas caviar and fish for 4 piaster, and 35 oka pastarma in Enes for 22 piaster.”

Another example for personal accounting, circumstantial too, we can find in a letter written in 1827 by the well-known Bulgarian merchant, teacher, and publisher Konstantin Fotinov. On the back side of the letter Fotinov wrote down the expenses he had for food products during the period of December 9-20.⁵⁹

But the first real example for tactically kept personal record book is the one of Stefan Izvorski – a teacher, priest, and poet. His book covered, unfortunately, a small period of time – about two months, and namely January and February of 1866. It was published and analyzed by M. Todorova and D. Tsanev,⁶⁰ and for this reason here we will use

their analysis for the part related to food. The bigger part of the family expenses was spent for food products – about 52%. These expenses are pretty diverse – 150 loafs of bread, buns, 12 kg. meat and 55 chickens, fish, caviar, milk, eggs, flour, onions, olives, beans, mushrooms, hazelnuts and almonds, honey, different fruits – lemons, apples, oranges, alcohol – wine, rum, mastic, rakiya, also sweets, jam, tahan. Relatively low are the expenses for eggs, which according to M. Todorova means that the family had their own chickens. The absence of vegetables could be explained with the winter season, and the absence of yogurt – a typical food for Bulgarians – with the assumption that they had prepared the so-called “autumn yogurt”.

These records, even only for two months, allow us to compare the budget of this teacher’s family of Izvorski with another one – a worker’s family from the town of Samokov. In 1848-1849 two French scholars A. Daux and Le Play was sent to the Ottoman Empire to examine the status of the workers there. They chose for target of their study the family of a Bulgarian worker in samakov – a small manufacture for producing iron. Their study, which was published later on, was very detailed and covered both the family’s annual incomes (from the salary, the personal household, etc.) and expenses (for food, clothes, for house, debts, and taxes).⁶¹ As a matter of fact it is difficult to make a proper comparison between the two sources because of their different contents – Izvorski’s budget showed only the expenses for the food he bought, the occupations are different, the period of accounting is different, and we should not neglect the fact that almost 20 years separated them. However, the comparison made by M. Todorova, which shows in percentage the differences in the expenses for the food products, gives us a clear idea about food consumption in these two middle-class families.⁶² The family from Samokov spent more money for grain. On the other hand, the bigger part of the animal products in the same family could be explained with the above-mentioned fact, that in Izvorski’s record book only the foods that were bought were noticed. However, if comparing only the consumption of meat, one may conclude that it was bigger in Izvorski’s family. The French scholars underlined that even in the studied family of Samokov alcohol was not consumed at all, its head used to visit the town’s tavern (krachma) where he drunk rakiya – about 16 liters for the whole year.⁶³

Teacher N. Parvanov's notebook is also interesting. Although it was not systematically filled in, there are some curious moments in it. In the first place, these are the money spent for deserts – a bourgeois innovation. The other interesting moment is the creation of a steady tradition to go out for eating, i.e., to visit special places offering meals. His lunch menu in an Istanbul restaurant is interesting. He writes down on 12.04.1871, without noticing the prices of the dishes "vrasto razsol – soup with meat, patatis – meat with potatoes, posto – roasted meat, tas kebab – like yahniya (stew), kazartma – fried meat, chorba (i.e., soup) with bits, grilled steak, pacha – head cheese made of calf feet – good".⁶⁴ Not only that he describes the quite diverse menu, but he also gave the Turkish and Greek names of dishes and explained them in Bulgarian.

We could add the cookery books to the most important sources about everyday life. Cookbooks are not only instructional manuals for the culinary arts, but they also reflect food habits of a population, and they are repositories for traditional (or completely unknown) dishes. They could act as markers of major historical events, and record technological advances in a society. For all these reasons we can regard cookbooks as socio-historic and cultural, even economical, documents. Putting the first Bulgarian cookbook in the context of the first Balkan cookbooks will help us to analyze its place and its role in the development of new urban culture.

Although it wasn't printed, one of the first gastronomical texts in the Balkans that have been preserved is from the time of Wallachian Prince Constantin Brancoveanu (1688-1714). The manuscript is entitled *Cookery Book Writing about Fish and Crawfish Dishes, Oysters, Snails, Medicines, Herbs, and other Fast Days and Meat Days Dishes; Each One According to its Appropriate Place*.⁶⁵ The author of this gastronomical text is unknown. Obvious, but not surprising is the Italian influence because of the strong trade relationships between Wallachia and several Italian cities. At the same time, one could see the Oriental influence in using oriental cookery appliances like *filigean, tingire, tipsie*, etc.⁶⁶

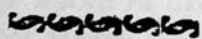
The first printed cookbook in the Balkans was published in Greek language in 1828 and had the very simple title of "Ἡ Μαγειρικὴ" or "Cookery".⁶⁷ The town of Ermoupolis, island of Syra, where the book appeared, remained free during the Greek Revolution (1821-1829) and kept its contact with the European countries, which supported and sympathized with the Greek struggle for independence.

Η
ΜΑΓΕΙΡΙΚΗ

Μεταφρασθεῖσα

ΕΚ ΤΟΥ

ΙΤΑΛΙΚΟΥ.



Ἐν Σύρῳ,

1828.

This made the urban environment, which the cookbook was published in, unique. The society in Ermoupolis consisted mainly of merchants from Chios and Smyrna, who brought with them into Syra different habits of well, contributing to the development of urban life. It attracted many Greeks from the continental part of Greece, which was still under Ottoman rule. For these reasons new influences penetrated much easier in the island. The famous Greek writer Emanuil Roidis wrote that in those years took place “the transformation of the inhabitants of the island into Europeans”.⁶⁸

The cookbook was translated from Italian by Panagiotis Zontanos, a man who, being a doctor, wasn't related directly to the cookery. It contained 100 recipes. Most of them are for cooking different kind of meat – lamb, pork, veal, goat, as well as some more rare kinds, like rabbit, birds; fish, vegetables. Although the original book was Italian, the translator included recipes from different places – boiled meat cooked like in Genoa, rabbit cooked in the style of the Spaniards, fried meat in the style of the Venetians, snipe (game) in the style of the Frenchmen. There are another recipes cooked like the Germans, Dutch, and Englishmen, from Prussia, Portugal, and Russia. Most of them are French. Except the diverse products and spices, this book gave women the opportunity to change them, so the dish could be different every time. For example, the basic recipe is entitled “Baked oysters cooked like the Germans”, but if the reader would like to cook in the Spaniard, English or Russian way, he could do this by adding some lemon, rum or wine.⁶⁹

The enlightened Romanian politicians and intellectuals Mihail Kogalniceanu and Costache Negruzi published in 1841 their famous book *200 Tested Recipes of Dishes, Cakes, and other Household Duties*.⁷⁰ It was printed on the expenses and under the care of a society striving for the progress and excellency of the Romanian nation. The book was reedited in 1842 and it was published for the third time four years later – in 1846. The authors understood how important this book was. They saw it as a factor of progress and civilization, and the privilege of an elite⁷¹ and they thought that in the future the people of Moldova would call them “those who introduced the culinary art in Moldova”.

In an article published in 1990, H. Notaker points out that, in spite of Kogălniceanu's “genuine and serious” interest in cookery, notwithstanding the fact that

“the book was truly innovative and was intended to produce a culinary revolution, and that, since it went into three editions, it was successful. Nevertheless, the cookbook does reveal certain ambiguities in Kogălniceanu’s attitude: between national and foreign: bourgeois and popular, modern and traditional.”

Actually, all these recipes couldn’t be used in a peasant’s house, for example, or in a modest town, because they are too exquisite. There were no recipes for *dulceață* – probably because every woman knew how to prepare it. But at the same time there are eleven recipes for jelly prepared in different ways. There aren’t recipes for *borsh* or *ciorba*, however there are some recipes called *mandelcuhen*, *consommé*, *supa de raci* and French soup.

The second cookbook published in Romanian was *500 Tested Recipes from the Great Kitchen of Robert, First Cook in the Court of France*,⁷² edited by *postelnic* Manolachi Drăghici. This book was a translation from French of the work of a certain Robert, a very famous cook during the 17th century, well known for his sauces. On the first page of the translation Drăghici wrote: “We should publish the works about household duties, because every nation has them.”

The third Romanian cookbook was entitled *Cookbook, contains 190 recipes, sweets, creams, jellies, ice-creams and how to preserve things during the winter, all selected and tasted by a friend of all housewives*. It was published in 1846 in Bucharest and republished five times during the next twenty years. Maria Maurer was a teacher in a boarding school in Bucharest. Probably her origin is Transylvanian Saxon. This book was written two years earlier for her students. It contained all the advice necessary for a marriage. But, according to the author, it could be useful for women in general.

It was addressed to the middle class, probably because the upper class had already learned to cook while in Paris and Vienna, and brought from there cookbooks. An evidence for this was the above-mentioned French book, published by M. Drăghici. This book differs from the others from several points of view. First, the measures used in the book are Wallachian. The ingredients for the recipes were easy to be found. The dishes weren’t luxury and were easy to cook.

The first Serbian cookbook was published by Jerotej Draganovic⁷³ in Belgrade in 1855 and was reedited twice in 1865 – in Novi Sad and

again in Belgrade. It had the title *Serbian cookbook, in German kochbuch*. The author was a monk in the Krushedol monastery and also the cook of patriarch Rajacic. The book had 6 chapters – about different soups, meat dishes, fishes, pastries, compotes, salads, and ice cream.

The first Bulgarian cookbook appeared much later than in the other Balkan regions. It was published by Petko Slaveykov in 1870 in Tzarigrad (Constantinople).⁷⁴

The book had no introduction, but it had a motto – “Nothing is more important for the household duties than the choice”. And the book begins with explanations on how to recognize and choose different kinds of meat, fish and other things for the dishes. The other eight chapters are dedicated to soups, kebabs, stews and meatballs, dishes prepared in *tava* (large baking dish), among them – egg plants, liver, different kinds of meat; next chapter is about the dishes made from pastry like *burek*, sweets – like *baklava* and *kadaif*. It comprises a separate section about *halva*, cooked vegetables, *sarmi*, pilaf, compotes, sweets. The book ends with an appendix with useful advices.

This work was an original compilation, not a translation of some foreign cookbook. Its title pointed out that the recipes were collected from different books. During the 70s, Bulgarian newspapers in Constantinople were publishing articles on political news from all over the world, philosophical essays of famous scholars, translations of novels. The cookbook achieved this information universality, too, and it was an answer to the interest of people in everything foreign and new. The recipes circulated were from many parts of the world, not only from Europe. For instance, in a recipe for stew, which was quite expensive and took much time to be prepared (the basic ingredient was tender veal, which should be cut in two pieces, drenched with garlic and offered with fried potatoes as side dish “because they are better”), P. Slaveykov motivated the waste of money and time with the explanation that this stew is “famous among the Frenchmen”. He also found in an English newspaper a recipe on how to preserve milk for longer time. But the most interesting part are the recipes for the preservation of meat. Slaveykov collected recipes not only from different countries, but also from different towns. So, one can find in the book English salt leg, Russian *presolica*, Italian, Dutch, French sausages, German *knack wurst*, and also sausages from Bologna, veal from Westfallen. There are several American recipes, too – for American yogurt, American wine, yeast from New York.

ГОТВАРСКА КНИГА

или

НАСТАВЛЕНИЯ ЗА ВСЯКАКВИ ГОСТЕЫ

споредъ както ги правятъ

ВЪ ЦАРИГРАДЪ

и разны домашни справы

Собраны отъ разны кницы.

Изданіе първо.



ЦАРИГРАДЪ.

Въ Печатницѣтъ на Македоніѣ.

1870.

If we compare the patriarchal culinary practice with the one suggested in the book, we could find many differences between them. In the patriarchal culinary practice the experience and the cooking skills were taught at home, they depended on the family and the settlement's tradition (or the absence of tradition). The cookbook eliminated this limitation – everybody who reads the book could learn how to cook.

The patriarchal table tradition was hierarchical – only the mother, mother in law, the older daughter in law, etc. could prepare the food. In this way they had the privilege to choose the menu, to divide the portions. But the book provided equality of the messmates. Even in the recipe for wedding meal – and this event was highly hierarchical – it was written expressly that there should be so many pieces of meat as many guest were invited.

The patriarchal table was closely bound with the rituals, calendar, etc. I mentioned in the previous section that there existed different rules about what to cook during the religious holiday, for instance roast lamb for Saint George's day, fish, usually carp, for Saint Nicolas' day, etc. The cookbook didn't mention these ritual tables.

Among the main principles of the patriarchal table are the moderation and economy. The author of this cookbook wasn't an austere or judicious person, neither the head of a patriarchal family, who should count his money to feed his relatives. He was an epicurean who shared his amusement and delight with the reader. His intervention in the recipes is for one only reason – to make the dishes tastier. In the recipe for *kebab* roasted in oven, Slaveykov recommended: "If they put hazelnuts and raisins, the mince would be even better." For the same reason he also recommended to add one or two eggs with lemon in the stew, to roast the *kebab* slowly in order to make it softer and tastier, etc. Gastronomic pleasure was the only criterion for the author.

It is difficult to say how popular this book was. Unfortunately, we don't have information about the total print of the book. The quantities of the products and the time for preparation suggest that probably it was addressed to the young people who came in Constantinople to work as cooks, confectioners or innkeepers.

Because of the different sources, Slaveykov used many measure units – together with the oriental *oka* (equal to 1,28 kg) and *dram* (equal to 1,78 g), he mentioned pound, gallon, even bottle as measures. In my opinion, because of this diversity and the fact that quite often the quantities of the

cooked products are approximate for Slaveykov it was more important to present these recipes, to teach the reader what the people in the world eat and drink, what are the names of the foods, hoping that some day that reader will even cook them.

Although, the books presented above were published in different places and in different times under different conditions, we can draw a picture of the Balkan cookbook. The authors were intellectuals not necessarily related directly to the cookery, who had spent some period of time in Europe. Most of the mentioned books were a balanced combination of Oriental and European cuisine – Italian, French, German. They tried to introduce a new type of table culture, which wasn't a mere stage in the development of the traditional cuisine but a completely new and different one. The authors wanted to help their contemporaries to penetrate into the urban culture, using examples, recipes, and the habits of the foreigners.

* * *

The paper presented is an attempt to create a picture of the modernization of everyday life of the Bulgarian urban population and to elucidate the dimensions of the cultural history of food through the "period's eye". The Orthodox religion kept its "monopoly" in determining the feeding norms and standards. But the deep mental changes and the different developments of mentality transformed the feeding stereotypes and customs. The attitude to food changed and a new "philosophy" of nourishment based on completely different understanding of cooking has been adopted. The clash between approval and refusal of new habits only demonstrates the difficulties in the process of legitimating modernization of Bulgarian society. The leading role in these transformations was assumed by the urban intelligentsia, as promoter of modernization in general. Further studies should analyze the changes in feeding of the other social strata, urban and rural, in order to establish the mechanisms in which the modernization promoted by the intelligentsia under this respect influenced and triggered the modernization of the entire society.

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