

Chapter 2

Online Representation of Culinary Heritage in Turkey in the Context of Cultural Policies

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ABSTRACT

This chapter offers a rich socio-cultural discourse analysis of the culinary heritage of Turkey that promotes the local food heritage nationally and internationally by analysing two government websites and policy texts. First of all, the chapter attempts to crystalize various factors which influence the intangible cultural heritage management in policy framework by providing an overview of the intangible cultural heritage management in Turkey. Then, it traces back the development of food culture in Turkey and its relationship with governing strategies by locating the culinary heritage and its representations in the digital domain. Finally, the last part of the chapter is dedicated to data analysis of official food related websites which aims to analyse the online representation of culinary heritage by using computer-mediated discourse analysis.

INTRODUCTION

With the aim of cultural negotiation and recognition, it is known that heritage politics are aiming to promote and revitalize the particular ‘traditional food routes’ of places as a new trend. With the recognition of different food features as Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO, the promotion of ‘routes’ of gastronomic heritage is a clear evidence of these trends. As a consequence, food cultures have started to gain importance in being identity markers among communities. While for many countries the production of food, food cultures and gastronomic traditions have become significant constituents of national and local identities, recently stronger emphasis is also being placed on regional development of the place where the food culture arises. With this growing interest, it is evident that culinary heritage of countries has become a key element of their heritage management, cultural expression and cultural diversity along with being a source of cultural and economic wealth for different regions. This recent rise of food culture

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has also corresponded with the growing interest around the world in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, a phenomenon similarly rooted in experiences of and responses to modernity and globalization. As a result, reflecting on and consolidating growing enthusiasm for culinary heritage, governments in many places in the world have started to formally recognize local food cultures and food ways as forms of cultural heritage and seek to protect and preserve them through varied official initiatives. In that respect, with the new information and communication technologies supported by globalization, the diversification of cultural expressions has enabled many different actors, groups and individuals to promote their cultural uniqueness and ensured the transmission of their intangible cultural heritage in particular. At an official level, UNESCO has accepted digital heritage as part of its Charter on the Preservation of the Digital Heritage and defined digital heritage as follows: ‘digital heritage consists of unique sources of human knowledge and expressions and should be preserved and made accessible, so as to assure over time representation of all peoples, nations, cultures, languages’ (UNESCO, 2003a, p. 5). With this new initiative, the department of Multimedia Archives of UNESCO has started the process of recording and archiving these forms of cultural expressions with digital technology in order to preserve the images and sounds of these masterpieces to ensure that it remains accessible to the public. This digitalization has not only implied profound changes for the tangible heritage, it has also changed the way people think about the intangible heritage, especially food traditions. In that context, it is argued that the digital media has started to have a role in both recreating and transmitting the food culture and in this way the digital media has started to create unofficial archives for culinary traditions of communities.

Based on the argument above, the primary aim of this chapter is to investigate the recent raised awareness of intangible cultural heritage management, specifically ‘culinary heritage’ in Turkey and to focus on the contemporary need to manage the cultural heritage in national and international contexts by looking at the opportunities the digital media may offer. In that given context, this chapter primarily aims to focus on revising cultural heritage management in the global context and constructing a general framework of how the Turkish state has responded to intangible cultural heritage management from a historical perspective. Afterwards, food heritage in Turkey will be analyzed from the intangible cultural heritage management perspective. Finally, the representations of food culture on the Internet by official bodies of Turkey will be interpreted and analyzed by using Computer- Mediated Discourse Analysis. In that given framework, this chapter will try to answer the following research questions: How and why intangible cultural heritage has been constructed and managed internationally in the context of cultural policies and globalization today? How does intangible cultural heritage, therefore food culture become an object of management in Turkey? and how is ‘Food as an Intangible Cultural Heritage’ represented through official websites of Turkey?

CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT: FROM PAST TO PRESENT PRACTICES

It is widely known that heritage has been in existence for a long time in human history. After World War II, an international movement started to be concerned with heritage-related issues. In the literature, there are many attempts to define heritage; however, its meaning, practice and perception have changed over the course of time due to the growing interest in other disciplines. Therefore, it can be argued that heritage has become an interdisciplinary broad term with this growing popularity (Bennett, 1997, Johnson, 1999). Defining cultural heritage has never been an easy task since it includes various fields such as archaeology, architecture, graphic arts, literature, anthropology, history and religious studies. When

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