



MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND TOURISM
GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF
RESEARCH AND TRAINING

TURKISH COFFEE CULTURE & TRADITION



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TURKISH COFFEE CULTURE & TRADITION



Turkish coffee culture and tradition goes back to the 16th century when coffee started to be served at coffeehouses in Istanbul. The tradition has two distinguished aspects which makes its taste unique and provides means toward socialization.

As a beverage Turkish coffee carries special preparation and brewing techniques. It is one of the oldest coffee making methods still in use. The traditional techniques used in preparing coffee led to development of special tools and silverware such as like the boiling pot (cezve), coffee cup (fincan), mortars which have artistic value. Turkish Coffee leaves a long lasting taste at someone's palate due to its preparation techniques which require time and its freshness. It is softer, more aromatic and more concentrated than other types of coffee. It is easy to distinguish from other coffees with its aroma, ground and foam peculiar to it.

Turkish Coffee is not only a beverage but also a communal practice that brings together cultural spaces, social values and beliefs within a context of socialization process. Its role socialization can be traced back to opening of the first coffeehouses with its noticeable decorations in Istanbul. Coffee houses were then, and still are the places where people drink coffee, converse, share news, read books and socialize. The tradition itself is a symbol of hospitality, friendship, delicacy, and entertainment. All these are reflected in the famous Turkish proverb "the memory of a cup of coffee lasts for forty years." This saying represents how important and profound coffee is in Turkish culture.







Turkish coffee tradition is practiced by all members of the society in Turkey; especially, families, producers of cups and pots, master- apprentices at coffee houses, workers, ground coffee sellers have engaged in the tradition. In addition visiting foreigners regard this tradition as one of the symbols of the Turkish life style. The tradition is regarded by the whole of Turkish society as part of their cultural heritage and is shared by all individuals from every cultural and intercultural level. Since it was introduced to Turkish society in the 16th century, coffeehouses have been opened even in the smallest settlements. This is a proof of the continuing and increasing demands for the Turkish coffee from past to present. It is almost impossible to imagine a Turkish house without one or more sets of cups for Turkish coffee. Indeed, differently from other beverages, the Turkish coffee is perceived as a symbol of the Turkish life-style rather than need by all the bearers and practitioners of the tradition. Therefore the Turkish coffee and tradition provides strong social and dialogical interactions between all levels of the Turkish society.



The knowledge, skills, know-how and rituals pertaining to the Turkish coffee culture and tradition are kept in an informal way by all members of family through word of mouth, observation and participation. The person who is born in a Turkish family learns ways of Turkish coffee brewing from previous generation in a natural way and internalizes it as an element of Turkish life style. Besides family, coffeehouses, as cultural spaces, provide an environment in which this tradition has been transmitted professionally. The coffeehouses are indispensable for the tradition, since historically coffeehouses precede the domestic consumption of coffee at homes.

Actual preparation of Turkish coffee requires several and highly elaborated steps and skills. First, it should be freshly roasted good quality beans are grinded (preferably) in a mortar or in a mill until beans turn into a fine powder. Next, coffee, cold water, and sugar, if desired, are put into the coffee pot. It is placed on the stove and coffee is brewed slowly ensuring that foam is formed on the surface. Finally, it is served with a glass of water and Turkish delight. To catch the pleasant taste requires some skills such as the way and degree with which the coffee is roasted. It is crucial to roast all the coffee beans equally and wait some certain time.

Turkish coffee preparation method is learnt and carried on through families and coffeehouses without any specific strategy for its promotion, which is a sign for widespread consumption and for its cultural significance.

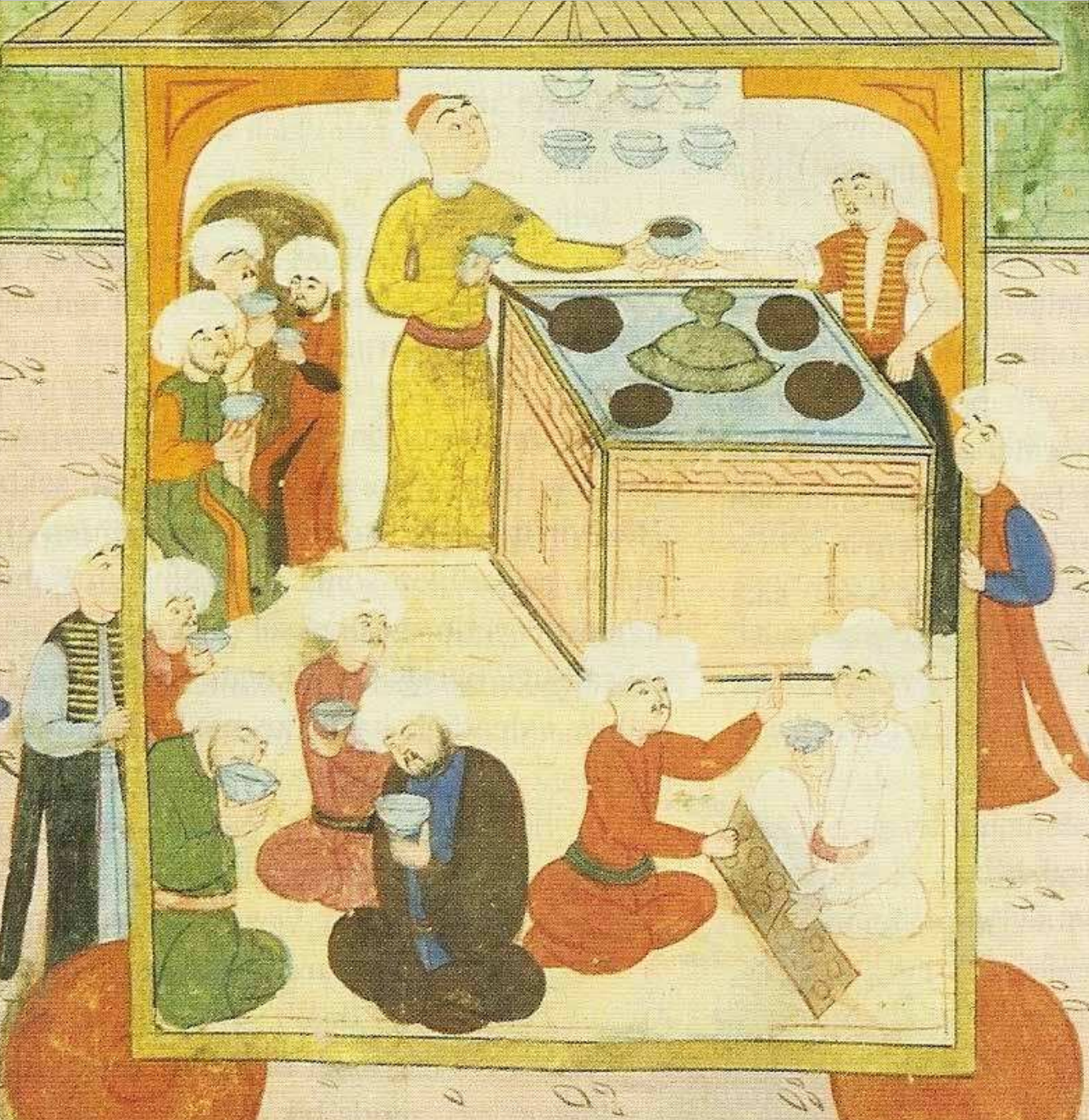




With its profound effect on Turkish lifestyle, Turkish coffee plays a central role in culture as beacon of hospitality and friendship. Special guests are served coffee in special coffee cups more elaborate than the ones used daily to honor their dignity. The tradition is permeated through all walks of life and it is taken as a pretext to further already existing social relations as expressed in the Turkish proverb “souls are after neither coffee nor coffeehouses; they are after close companionship; coffee is an excuse.” Invitation for coffee among friends is an indication for a need to intimate talk, or sharing daily issues. As a widespread tradition, after finishing coffee, the cup is rotated, a wish is made, the cup is turned upside down on the saucer, left for cooling. Apparent images are interpreted in the coffee cup according to the “rules” of fortunetelling as a part of entertainment.

Turkish coffee is always an indispensable part of certain social occasions such as engagement ceremonies, holidays, socializing meetings. Even in period of non-availability due to economic crisis coffee consumption has remained the same by replacing coffee beans by false grains from other species such as chickpea, wild pistachio, date seeds, proving that Turkish coffee tradition is an indispensable deep cultural custom.





Turkish coffee has huge impact on literature so that countless poems and songs have been written to describe the feelings and functions relevant to the tradition. It also holds a great place in mystic verses, rituals, miniature crafts and paintings. Therefore the tradition provides communities and groups involved with sense of identity and continuity in Turkish culture.





Drinking or serving Turkish coffee is always a form of social interaction with other individuals. Although Turkish coffee has a standard style, this makes it unique and different than other beverages since whenever or wherever one drinks Turkish coffee one can always remember precious moments with the others. People have become acquainted with coffee through the establishment of coffeehouses. The coffeehouses are not just a place to drink coffee; they function as cultural spaces in which people come from different cultural, social and professional backgrounds including writers, poets, artists to converse, to share their problems, to read newspapers, to discuss social and political issues, to display their works of arts, poetry and literature, or to play chess and backgammon in their leisure time. After the inscription, the coffeehouses would retain and develop their role as a center or a place where information and knowledge have exchanged, promoting socialization and communication.





Turkish coffee culture and tradition promotes respect for cultural diversity and human creativity since values and rituals surrounding the tradition are open to all individuals. The tradition prepares a fertile ground for human creativity and brings out human potential especially around the tradition of craftsmanship for making the special tools and utensils that are used for making Turkish coffee. Since most of the apparatus such as coffee roaster, coffee cups, trays, coolers, mortars, hand grinders, pot, coffee jug, special vessels made of precious materials like silver, have distinguished artistic value and constitute unique works of art in their forms, people prefer to display them on their private collections as antiques. The inscription would make coffee, coffeehouses and coffee craftsmanship continue to be source of inspiration for literature, crafts, lyrics etc., and would add value to the coffeehouse as unique places for cultural diversity and human creativity.







PHOTOGRAPHS

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