



Examples of Culinary Diplomacy in Late Era Ottoman Diplomacy

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Abstract

Throughout history, not only have meals served people as a source of nutrition, but they also have served as both an individual and official tool of diplomatic agreement between people. In being representative of the culture and traditions of the host country, they serve to establish effective communication with the counter party, create a positive atmosphere, and strengthen relationships. Today, politicians still employ the unifying effect of meals as one of many tools of diplomacy. Since the dawn of man, many a statesman had employed this method with the intent of giving a positive impression both on friend and foe alike; Ottoman statesmen were no exception to this rule. One can observe many examples of culinary culture having been employed in diplomatic affairs towards the final years of the Ottoman Empire. When we look at banquets that Ottoman Sultans had prepared for their foreign guests, not only do we see that they had offered them the crème de la crème of delicacies highlighting Turkish culinary culture offered, we also see that had been treated to dishes from their own gastronomies as well. Ottoman Sultans had hosted many banquets because of their power to unify, both in terms of foreign and domestic politics. This study has reviewed and exemplified how culinary diplomacy had been used during the late era of Ottoman diplomacy.

Keywords: Diplomacy, culinary diplomacy, Ottoman diplomacy, Turkish cuisine, culinary culture.

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Yakın Dönem Osmanlı Diplomasisinde Kuliner Diplomasi Örnekleri

Öz

Tarih boyunca yemek, yalnız bir beslenme aracı değil aynı zamanda bireysel ya da resmî anlamda diplomatik bir uzlaşma aracı olarak insanlar tarafından kullanılmıştır. Kültürün ve geleneklerin bir temsilcisi olan yemek, karşı tarafla daha etkili iletişim kurmak, olumlu bir hava yaratmak ve ilişkileri geliştirmek adına önemli bir araçtır. Bu amaçla bireysel olarak kullanıldığı kadar politikacılar tarafından da bir diplomasi aracı olarak yemeğin birleştirici etkisinden yararlanılmaya çalışılmaktadır. Tarihte pek çok devlet adamı bu yönetime başvurarak, dost ya da rakip devletler üzerinde olumlu bir etki bırakmayı planlamıştır. Osmanlı devlet adamları da bu yönetime başvuranlardır. Yakın dönem Osmanlı tarihinde yemeğin diplomatik bir araç olarak kullanımına dair birçok örnek bulunmaktadır. Osmanlı Sultanları bir taraftan yabancı konukları şereflerine verdikleri ziyafetlerde Türk mutfak kültürünün en önemli lezzetlerini sunmaya çalışırken diğer yandan da onları kendi gastronomi lisanlarında ağırlamayı tercih etmiştir. Osmanlı Sultanları gerek dış politika gerekse iç politikada yemeğin birleştirici ve ilişkileri geliştirici yönünden yararlanmak için pek çok ziyafet vermişlerdir. Bu

çalışmada, yakın dönem Osmanlı diplomasisinde mutfak diplomasisinin uygulanışı örnekler üzerinden incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Diplomasi, kuliner diplomasi, Osmanlı diplomasisi, Türk mutfağı, mutfak kültürü.

INTRODUCTION

Following World War II, looking for a way to establish a sustainable world peace and stability in international relations system, the United Nations found UNESCO (United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization). In striving to establish permanent peace between nations, UNESCO integrated cultural diplomacy into foreign policy. Now, the aim was for member states to get to know other states, and increase both mutual interaction and collaboration through assigned permanent representatives and cultural events (Purtaş, 2013, p. 3). In line with this, the element of culture took a more prominent place in international relations and diplomacy. Cultural elements were utilized to reduce conflicts between states and to heighten collaboration. In addition to beliefs, customs, traditions, art, literature, language, mindset, and lifestyle, the element of culinary culture became important as well. Although highlighting cuisine as a cultural value and using it in diplomacy conceptually emerged in the 2000s, the notion of *culinary diplomacy* has been used for centuries. This and the practices associated with it indicate that cuisine has the power to become a state tool, which materializes both corporate structuring and holistic change. Within the Ottoman context, the use of cuisine in diplomacy towards the end of the Ottoman Empire is significant in that it had reflected the deep changes that were taking place within.

Culinary diplomacy is the utilization of food and cuisine as a tool to create an intercultural understanding and to enhance interaction and collaboration between states (Chapple-Sokol, 2013, p. 161). States use cuisine in order to enhance official diplomacy when they are visited by head of states, emissaries, and other high ranking public officials (Rockower, 2014, p. 14). This practice is further split into public and private culinary diplomacy. Public culinary diplomacy falls under the umbrella of open cultural diplomacy, whereas private culinary diplomacy takes place behind closed doors. While its roots can be traced back to antiquity, a more modern version had emerged as part of French diplomatic customs at the beginning of 19th century as a critical instrument of diplomacy (Chapple-Sokol, 2013, pp. 161-162). In this context, the banquets held at all official events served as important examples of culinary diplomacy whereby authorities had the opportunity to showcase their nation's cuisine to foreign delegates (Türker, 2018, p. 16). During the same era, governments took advantage of culinary diplomacy in order to target the bourgeoisie. Proliferation of this feature in public scene was most notably seen in the last century (Rockower, 2014, pp. 14-15).

From the 2000s and onwards, the notion of gastrodiploamacy emerged as another important element of public diplomacy. Paul Rockower defines gastrodiploamacy as "the act of winning hearts and minds through the stomach" (Rockower, 2010; Wallin, 2013). The aim is to reach a wide part of the foreign community through national culinary culture by influencing the public through edible national brands. People often confuse gastrodiploamacy with culinary diplomacy up with one another and use them interchangeably (Luša and Jakešević, p. 102). Cultural diplomacy targets high level authorities and elite individuals, whilst gastrodiploamacy aims to influence whole communities, namely the public. Through gastrodiploamacy, the culinary culture of one state is introduced to other states, thus both creating international awareness and positioning a nation's culinary culture as a world brand (Rockower, 2014, pp. 14-16). This increases the mentioned state's recognition and its brand value in the international arena.

Culinary diplomacy was utilized during the era of closed diplomacy before 20th century, largely behind closed doors. Gastrodiploamacy, on the contrary, was practiced in the era of new diplomacy following World War I and on more open terms. Reaching out to a wider public and heightening awareness have greater impact than targeting a country's administrative elite class alone does. Therefore, this shift in tactics has had serious impact on how culinary diplomacy is practiced and whom it caters to. However, culinary diplomacy has not entirely been abandoned. Historians and political

science experts indicate that a good meal or ingredients used in the meal are extremely important in terms of aiding the message conveyed between states, and enhancing relations between countries (Karaca, 2015).

Examples of Culinary Diplomacy in the Tanzimat Reformation Period of Ottoman Politics

To emphasize what effect a good meal has on individuals and communities Brillat-Savarin has stated that “the fate of nations rest on their nutrition styles,” and that “the discovery of a new meal offers more joy to humanity than discovering a new star” (Brillat-Savarin, 1854, pp. 25-26). Today, there are numerous studies that look at whether the meal we eat influences the decisions we make. Many researchers indicate that food may influence human behavior, and that what we consume might induce the release of glucose and serotonin. They also claim that dining with others may trigger the release of endorphins as well. Therefore, what we consume can improve our spirits, and in turn influence our decisions. In this case, the menu offered at diplomatic dining events is expected to influence the success of the negotiations. A former protocol vice chief in the US government, Natalie Jones says that “dining is so important because fiercest negotiations take place at the table” (Spence, 2016, p. 9). The same holds true for more distant history as well. However, study only focuses on the practice of culinary diplomacy within the scope of 19th century Ottoman diplomacy.

Towards the fall of the Empire, the cuisine of the Ottoman palace was immensely rich thanks to its rich past. The Ottomans during this period espoused European table mores and a taste for Western cookery . It was Sultan Mahmud II who introduced this trend. He was the first sultan known to eat meals in European style with cutlery. This era also saw the first French style gold- and silver-plated cutlery as well. The Sultan had even apparently ordered silver cutlery from France before he died. Even though he ate in a more Ottoman fashion, his placing this order shows us how influential the West had become over the Ottoman cuisine (BOA. TS.MA.d. 7665, 17 Rabiülevvel 1255/31 May 1839; Samancı and Bilgin, 2010, p. 325).

During Mahmud II’s reign, even though a number of western innovations made their way into the culinary options served at the palace cuisine, traditional Ottoman palace cuisine culture was still dominant.. The first examples of this was the banquet held for British Ambassador Lord Stratford Canning. Based on observations made by Robert Walsh, who had attended the banquet with the British ambassador, eleven courses were served. Among these included chickpea soup, grilled fish, beans with mutton, sweet dough balls, game bird kebab, a kind of dessert with dough topping, apple stew, and lastly—in order to mark the closing of the banquet—rice pilaf and a large bowl of compote (Samancı and Bilgin, 2010, pp. 336-337). Thus, the ambassador had been served an Ottoman menu, which in turn had highlighted the Ottoman image. Furthermore, if we were to take the timing of the banquet into consideration, we can see that it was held with diplomatic goals in mind, for a few months prior to the banquet the Greeks rebelled at Wallachia and Moldova under the leadership of Alexander Ypsilantis (1792 - 1828). Unfortunately, the rebellion's limited effect and lack of success lead to another rebellion incited by the Greeks in Morea. Furthermore, there were rumors circulating that Russia would officially stand alongside the Greek rebels for the first time (Sertoğlu, 2011, pp. 2879-2880). At this point, the Sultan was determined to quell the European public by turning against his own country and searching for an ally who would stand with him against the Russian threat. It was evident that Britain would make a perfect ally for the Sultan due to the foreign policy that it had adopted to keep Russia away from Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. In addition to other political steps taken by the Sultan, he chose culinary diplomacy as a tactic to Ottoman relations with the British government.

The banquets held at Sûr-ı Hümâyün, in 1836, including the ceremonies held for Mahmud II's daughter Mihrimah's wedding as well as for the circumcision events of his sons Abdulmecid and

Abdulaziz were among other examples of the use of cuisine for diplomatic goals (Nutku, 1994, pp. 16-18). This is not to say that the Ottoman Empire did not hold similar weddings and banquets at other points in history. However, the Sûr-ı Hümâyün example had served both celebratory and diplomatic purposes. The Sûr-ı Hümâyün event however had been used as a means of finding a solution to various social, political, and sovereignty issues. Prior to this, the last three were marked by various important social, political, and economic issues for the Ottoman Empire. The longer term result was that the Sublime Porte was now in serious trouble (Danişmend, 1961, pp. 83-120; Sertoğlu, 2011, pp. 2858-2946).

It was at this point that Mahmud II had ordered a Sûr-ı Hümâyün. The Sultan's goal was not only to show the world that the Ottoman Empire would recover and regain its strength, but also to find a solution to diplomatic issues with Europe, and enhance its authority by mingling with the public. From the get go, it was very much apparent that this opulent ceremony was driven by diplomatic motives. Invitations were extended to the rulers of Britain, France, Russia, and Austria. As the invitations were being prepared, the Sultan took power of each state in the international arena into consideration, and made sure. The invitations for the kings of Britain and France were sent with the help of the Ottoman envoys in Paris and London. The remaining countries received through ambassadors in Istanbul (BOA. HAT. 487/23873, 29 Zilhicce 1251/16 April 1836). The Sultan had also taken the relations between states into careful consideration as well, thus making sure that no political crisis would emerge either (BOA. HAT. 487/23865, 29 Zilhicce 1251/16 April 1836). The Istanbul based ambassadors of the respective countries had attended the events. Mahmud's policy was for the events in question to be grandiose in order to prove to the ambassadors that the Ottoman Empire was still quite powerful as well to restore the Empire's broken image abroad. The dishes served at the ceremonies were especially prepared for the ambassadors with the intent of highlighting the image of a strong Turkish ruler and state. Helmuth Von Moltke, who was in Istanbul during this time, had witnessed the events and wrote (Moltke, 2017, p. 69):

The other day the Sultan held an incredible dinner for his second daughter Mihrimah's wedding. The gathering place was a mansion with windows on every facade, having views of Istanbul, Beyoğlu and the wide sea... One hour before dusk, they have taken us to a great ancient Turkish tent, a banquet table for hundred guests was prepared. Bronze plates, silver cutlery, and china were really incredible. Over 200 candles were illuminating the diplomatic corps, sultan's groom, viziers and the high ranking officials of the Empire...

Moltke's memoir, on the other hand, had also indicated that at one of the dinner events, the image of a strong Turkish ruler was very much conveyed. Hosting the guests under an ancient Turkish tent and with Turkish customs was proof of this. In his own words:

A few days ago, we were guests of the Sultan, more accurately his treasurer. At a large meadow called Tatlı Sular, festivities were ongoing due to the circumcision ceremonies of the young princes. Diplomatic corps were invited as well. Since this was a genuine Turkish festivity, we were treated with a genuine Turkish banquet. Of course there were no cutlery or wine. First meal was fried lamb stuffed with rice and grapes. Everyone was tearing off a piece and eating pilaf with their hands. Then halva, a dessert made of flour and honey was served, then again a fried food, some hot, some cold, some sour, some sweet, each meal was uniquely delicious; however, their combination was a style unknown to intestines of an European and also there was no wine. Ice cream was served right in the middle of the banquet. Eventually we have insisted on getting the pilaf, indicating the end of the banquet. Following this, a bowl of compote, boiled fruit were placed on the large round tray that we have eaten from and it was drained with spoons. They wash hands prior and after the meal. It is quite fun to see diplomats in their laced European uniforms in such a state! (Moltke, 2017, p. 72)

As is evident, the emissaries were treated with numerous Turkish delicacies. The table organization, the presentation of the meal and the way it had been consumed were all authentic to the Turkish culture. The sultan's aim to cast a strong ruling image for the Europeans was reflected in the way the food was plated and served. *Sûr-ı Hümâyun* had marked a significant point in terms of diplomacy.

Before the Reformation Period, Ottoman cuisine consisted mostly of Ottoman delicacies. Following this period, European-style dishes and banquets became more prominent. We can clearly see this shift in the menus that were prepared for official banquets and ceremonies. In a sense, the changing foreign policy of the Ottomans was reflected in its cuisine. In fact, Mahmud II had not only laid the foundation for massive reforms within Ottoman Empire in a number of areas, but he pioneered the switch to European cuisine and table layout. Even though Mahmud II had strived to highlight Ottoman cuisine in diplomatic relations, it nevertheless was evident that he was attracted both to Western table organization, and to creating a reformist sultan image, namely eating at a table and using cutlery (Samancı and Bilgin, 2010, p. 342).

Beginning with the Sultan Abdulmecid era, the Ottoman Empire's changed European policies were also reflected in the utilization of Ottoman cuisine during diplomacy. At the same time, a number of policies and ideologies had been developed to represent the integration of the Empire's political culture and identity with the West. The Westernization act, which was sped up in all areas, also brought a massive shift in culinary culture, especially for the palace. From the second half of 19th century, the Ottomans preferred offering French cuisine when hosting foreign guests at the palace. The domination of French cuisine throughout 19th century Europe world of gastronomy had played a huge part in this change. French cuisine was at its peak Europe in terms of its hierarchy, which therefore meant that many European sovereignties and select circles had adopted it. This trend had influenced the Ottoman palace as well. Ottoman statesmen could not resist the French dishes adopted by their opponents and allies as an indication of distinction, and thus opted to reciprocally host them using their own gastronomical language. They therefore had highlighted their own distinction and showed that they were capable of speaking the language as their opposition and allies. This did not mean, however, that Ottoman culinary values were altogether disregarded. On the contrary, foreign guests were often offered a fusion reflecting both the Ottoman and French culinary traditions. One of the first examples is a banquet held for General Prince and heir to the France, Emperor Napoleon, who came to Istanbul in 1854 and was hosted for 21 days at Neşetabad Sahil Palace. Among the ingredients purchased for the banquet included carrots, leeks, pods, artichokes, cabbage, okra, parsley, spinach, hibiscus leaves, chicory, celery, purslane, fresh vine leaves, onions, dill, mint leaves, potatoes, lemons, oranges, chestnuts, apples, grapes, pears, figs, nuts, mountain ash, rice, sugar, olive oil, almonds, chickpeas, salt, starch, almond, pistachios, currants, noodles, rosemary, palm leaves, yogurt, lobster, sardines, eggs, chicken, chicks, doves, geese, pheasants, quails, flour, stale bread, rusks, cloves, cinnamon, and pepper. The beverage of choice of French Cardone wine (BOA. C.SM. 66/3335, 29 Şaban 1270/27 May 1854).

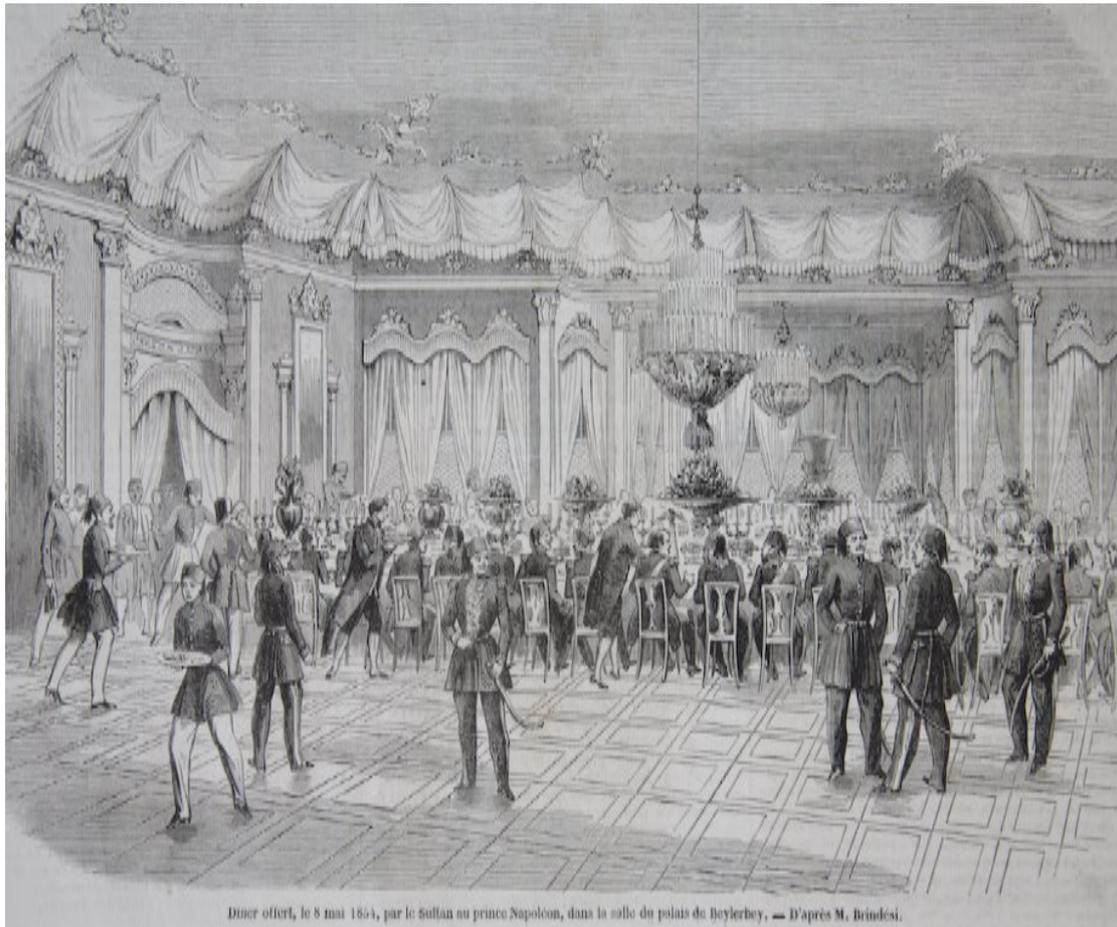


Figure 1. The Banquet for Prince Napoleon at Beylerbeyi Palace (Samancı, 2008, 125)

When we look at what banquet's royal shopping list, we see an emphasis on vegetable-based dishes. Ottoman statesmen might have opted so in thinking that it might suit Napoleon, or because Napoleon himself had preferred it. It is apparent that the Sultan aimed to host his French guest in the best way possible on the eve of the Crimean War. The result was that the Ottomans ultimately became allies with the French (Şeref, 1985, pp. 123-127). Therefore, utmost care was taken to organize a banquet that might appeal both to Prince's tastes and, in turn, his heart. That is, diplomatic support and complementing power of the cuisine had been utilized.

Another striking example was the banquet held in 1856 at Dolmabahçe Palace both for Ottoman generals and high ranking foreign military officers and envoys in order to celebrate the Ottoman's victory in the Crimean War.



Figure 2. Banquet Held at Dolmabahçe Palace for Marshall Pelissier (Dolmabahçe Palace Exhibition Hall, TBMM Foundation Press)

Both Ottoman and Western delicacies alike were served at the banquet. The menu included traditional Ottoman delicacies such as *börek*, *pilaf*, *kadayıf*, and *baklava*, alongside select French delicacies such as *potage Sévigné*, *paupiette à la reine*, and *croustade de foie gras à la Lucullus* (Samancı, 2008, pp. 215-217). Changes in how cuisine was utilized in diplomacy were very much apparent. In addition to highlighting Ottoman cuisine, French dishes had been added in alignment with the trend of the period, which in turn had yielded an East-West synthesis. This approach also reflects Ottoman policies of the era. We can observe that Ottoman policies, which pushed to westernize the Empire while preserving its Eastern roots, had also influenced the culinary diplomacy of the era as well.

The Ottoman Empire had held many a ceremony that invited foreign statesmen and royalty to Istanbul. Offering the guests delectable banquets merging both Ottoman and Western cuisine was a major highlight at these ceremonies. Interestingly, the same approach was adopted for unofficial visits as well. The utmost care was taken to satisfy the guests immensely. One example was a banquet held for Prince Edward's 1862 visit to Istanbul, which was part of a broader Eastern journey including Egypt. Although the Prince's Istanbul stopover was not official, he nevertheless was hosted according to official protocol from the moment he set foot on Turkish land (Belviranlı and Pilehvarian, 2018, pp. 610-611; Yalçınkaya, 2017, pp. 120-129). Furthermore, on Monday May 26th, the Sultan held a banquet at Gökusu Palace for the Prince. The Grand Vizier Fuad Pasha, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Âli Pasha, the British Ambassador Elliot, numerous Captain and Serasker Pashas, the Head of the Council of Assembly Kamil Pasha, and an Admiral were also among those who had attended the event. Up to that point, the custom was to have the Sultan and statesmen dine at different tables rather than take seats at the same table. In a twist of fate, Sultan Abdulaziz had shared the same table with his foreign guests and the statesmen (Ahmed Cevdet, 1980, p. 41). This abrupt change in Ottoman protocol can be interpreted as the Sultan taking steps towards enhancing his Empire's diplomatic relations with Britain. Furthermore, considering that Prince Edward was to become Britain's future king, we can better comprehend the will of Ottoman statesmen to use culinary diplomacy in order to entertain their guests with immaculate grandeur. It is known that European statesmen have been paying attention to culinary diplomacy since

the 18th century in order to please their guests and improve relations between countries (Küçük, 2018, pp. 76-77). Examples of this practice were frequently seen in the Ottoman palace in the 19th century.

Abdulaziz was the first and last Sultan to travel to Europe. In 1867, Napoleon III had moreover invited him as the guest of honor at the Paris International Exhibition. Before long, he was invited to Britain by Queen Victoria. With the United Kingdom added to his travel agenda, his 47-day journey began on Friday June 21, 1867, and included official visits to France, Britain, Belgium, and Austro-Hungary, as well as unofficial visits to Italy and Prussia (Kutay, 2012; Karaer, 2003; Gök, 2012, pp. 165-188). There is no doubt that Abdulaziz wanted to enhance his relations with Europe. Meanwhile, European statesmen too had demonstrated their own examples of culinary diplomacy. We can also see that Sultan Abdulaziz had himself entertained many guests in Istanbul following his own visit Europe in order to maintain enhancing diplomatic relations. The first of these guests were from Britain. Prince Edward, who had accompanied Sultan Abdulaziz during his various travels through Britain, had visited Istanbul for the second time in 1869, albeit this time with his wife, Princess Alexandra of Denmark. Sultan Abdulaziz was intensely interested in this visit and had declared the program four months in advance (Belviranlı and Pilehvarian, 2018, pp. 615-616).

As seen in many prior examples, Ottoman statesmen did their best to utilize cuisine as a diplomatic instrument in order to please foreign guests who were assigned to or merely visiting Istanbul. Ottoman culinary magic was at work in the Prince and Princess's visits as well. For his British guests, the Sultan hosted a lavish banquet at Dolmabahçe Palace. William Howard Russel, who had kept a travel journal for Prince Edward and made several notes detailing notes about the banquet. He had written that Âli Pasha had greeted the Prince and Princess were greeted at the entrance of the palace, and then introduced each of the high ranking Ottoman statesmen to them at the Grand Hall. Following that, Abdulaziz had accompanied the Princess into the hall, and then into the dining room with the other guests. The banquet had included 24 people. The Sultan sat at the head of the long dining table with the Princess on his right and the Prince on his left. Next to them sat the other the high ranking Ottoman statesmen as well as the French, Austrian, and Russian ambassadors. The guests were offered an array of authentic Turkish dishes including börek, stuffed vegetables, artichoke in oil, pilaf, and kadayıf, as well as a number of French dishes including *potage sévigné*, *foie gras en belle vue*, and *fromage glace*. The menu in its entirety featured *Potage Sevigne*, *Croquettes et Beurek*, *Poisson (levrek) a l'Imperiale*, *Filets do Bceuf a la Jardiniere*, *Midia-ilu Yalandji Dolmu*, *Filets de Chevreuil*, *Zeytoun-Yaghli Enghinar*, *Turban de Volaille a la Princesse*, *Kiata-Barbunia*, *Foie Gras en Belle Vue*, *Asperges*, *Punch a la Romaine*, *Faisans et Becassines*, *Pilav*, *Ananas a la Victoria*, *Kaikmakly*, *Tel Cada'if*, *Timbales a la Sicilienne*, *Tauk Gueuk-su*, *Fromage glace*, *Vins — Xeres*, *Sauterne*, *Bordeaux*, *Lafitte*, *Vin du Rhin (avec les plats froids)*, and *Champagne frappe*. What is striking is that the menu had also included wine and champagne. Considering Ottoman protocol, it is rare to see alcoholic beverages added to the menu. During dinner, the Sultan had conversed with Prince and Princess while Muzika-yı Hümayun (Özcan, 2006, pp. 422-423) added ambiance by playing music in a special room. Following dinner, Sultan Abdulaziz guided the Princess and his other female guests to the Harem to visit Valide Sultan (Russell, 1869, pp. 490-492). In conclusion, this is a prime example of the leverage banquets that were used for diplomatic means, given that everything from preparing the venue and entertaining the guests, to selecting the dishes and the hospitality shown had to be meticulously planned in order please the guests. The Ottomans had statesmen aimed to contribute to their relations between Britain and the Ottoman Empire by leveraging the unifying aspect of dining and selecting both Turkish and French delicacies, and thus pave the way to enhance diplomatic collaboration between the two nations. Furthermore, when we consider all of these elements as a whole, we see that Ottoman statesmen had also aimed to create an image of a state that was in align with the Western world had that had adopted Western culture and values. This message, too, was meant to be meant to be conveyed through culinary diplomacy.

Examples of Culinary Diplomacy in the Abdulhamid II Period of Ottoman Politics

It is also possible to see many examples of culinary diplomacy in the era of Abdulhamid II as well. The sultan was known to be very involved in the planning of all ceremonies that were held for foreign statesmen and representatives. Furthermore, he always inquired detailed information about his guests' characters before hosting them so that he could converse with them about their interests. Above that, he would also converse with the wives of his guests about women's issues and would personally tour them through both his palace and the harem as well, ensuring that they were comfortable (Koloğlu, 2010, p. 314). Many examples can be found of his leveraging cuisine as a diplomatic instrument throughout his 33-year reign. One such instance was a banquet that the Sultan organized for the British Ambassador Francis Clare Ford on June 4, 1893. Friedrich Max Müller, a tutor at Oxford University, also attended the banquet with his wife (Müller, 2010).

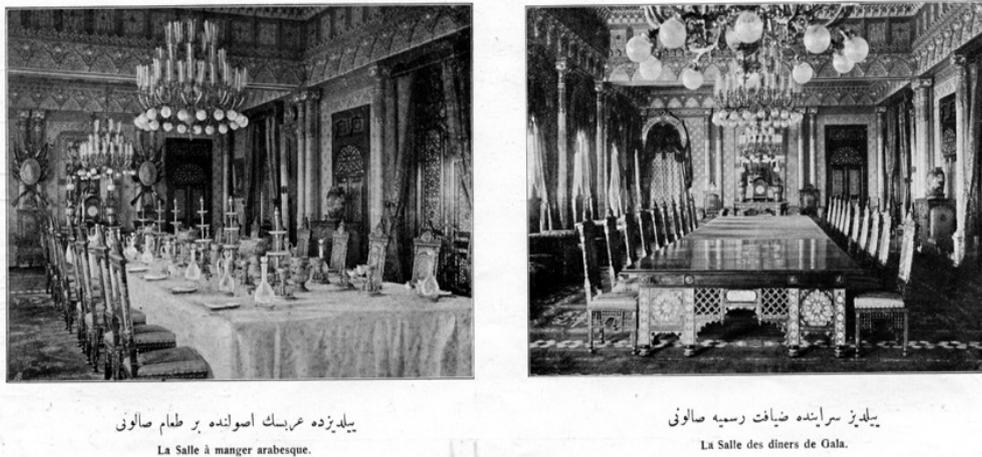


Figure 3. A Banquet at Yıldız Palace (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Atatürk Library Archive)

Travel notes published by Fredrich's wife Adelaide Müller tells us about their visit in detail. General Kent, who was in Istanbul at that time, embassy clerks, the Sultan's Son, the Naval Minister, the War Minister, the Tophane-i Amire Marshall, and a number of intermediary officers had attended the 30-guest event (Tercüman-ı Hakikat, "Tebliğat-ı Resmîye", No. 4474, 18 Zilkade 1310/3 June 1893). When the guests arrived at Yıldız Palace, they first were accompanied to the hall where pashas in uniforms were gathered, and then were introduced to the guests by the lead interpreter. The Head of Protocol Minister Munir Pasha, who had organized the event, had warmly welcomed the British Diplomacy Corps. When the Sultan himself arrived, he walked his guests into the dining room, whereupon they were greeted with a table adorned with elegantly engraved golden plates. The Sultan was seated at the head of the table with the Grand Vizier and the British ambassador on his right, and General Kent and the other guests on his left. The Sultan and invited Turks did not drink, no wine was placed at the table. Wine was reserved for non-Muslim guess only. In the words of Mrs. Müller:

However that was such a great Bordeaux wine, my husband couldn't keep from asking the Head of Protocol Minister who procured the wine for the palace. And he did shrug as to indicate "You know who". There was Punch on the list as well. Its distinct smell indicated the amount of alcohol in it. However, neither the Sultan nor the guests were uncomfortable with it since it was Punch and it was not forbidden in Quran... (Müller, 2010, pp. 65-66).

As specified by Mrs. Muller, alcoholic beverages had been served in order to please foreign guests at dinner. Although he attended the table as the khalif of the Islamic World and thus guided by his Islamic principles, the Sultan's manner seems rather, but nevertheless sheds light on his political

approach. The menu was printed both in Turkish and French, and included 13 courses selected from the cuisines of both nations.

Table 1. Meal List

<p><i>Meal List</i> <i>Windsor Soup</i> <i>Borek with meat, fish and cheese</i> <i>Joinville style turbot</i> <i>Royal style lamb</i> <i>Supreme style mushroom and chicken</i> <i>Borek with quail</i> <i>Asparagus</i> <i>Punch</i> <i>Chicken roast</i> <i>Pilaf</i> <i>Victoria style pineapple</i> <i>Vanilla Bavaroise</i> <i>Ice cream</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>June 4th, 1893</i></p>

Among the culinary delights, two of them were to be prepared especially for the British guests, including Windsor soup and Victorian-style pineapple. Following the dinner, a concert was held for the guests in an eloquently decorated room that was decked with flowers and pine trees (Müller, 2010, pp. 66-67). A custom introduced during the Reform era, the use of French cuisine during formal Ottoman events had continued during Abdulhamid II's reign. This approach to highlight the Western side of the Ottoman Empire and its presence within European diplomacy was reflected upon all foreign guests rather vividly. The influence that Abdulhamid II's balance policy and delicate diplomatic relations had had over Ottoman diplomacy is widely known. Although French dishes were served to British ambassador at the banquet, the addition of British delicacies such as Windsor soup and Victoria style pineapple also emphasize that influence. From this point of view, one could say that Ottoman Sultans' political approaches were reflected in palace cuisine.

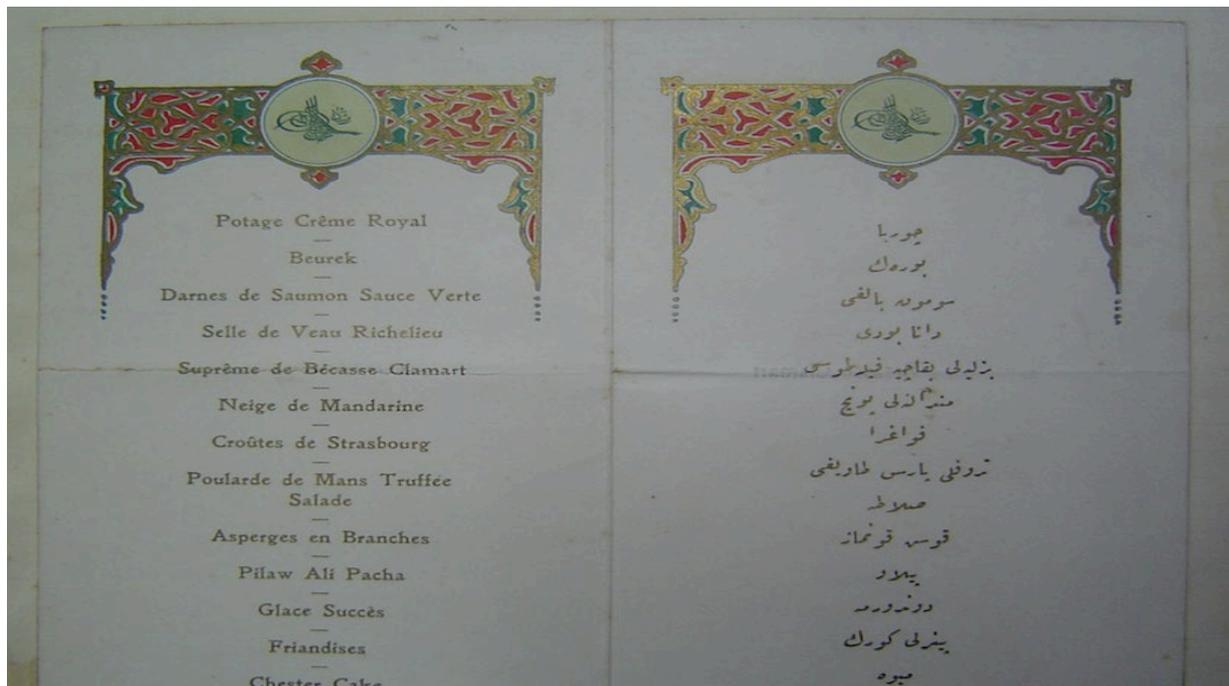


Figure 4. Menu; An Ottoman Palace Banquet Menu from The Beginning of 20th Century (Samancı, 2008, 217).

Undoubtedly during Abdulhamid II's reign, German Emperor Wilhelm II's excursions to the Ottoman Empire were some of the most prominent. Emperor Wilhelm had visited Ottoman lands twice, both in 1889 and 1898. It is apparent that his travels were based on political and economic reasons. During this period, the German-Ottoman relations were improving in terms of politics, economy, and military (Ortaylı, 1981, pp. 29-44). This evident progress regarding their bilateral relationship, visits from Emperor Wilhelm, and hospitality shown by Abdulhamid II were seemingly effective on a number of fronts. Sultan Abdulhamid had personally supervised the whole banquet program during both visits (BOA. Y.PRK.PT. 5/114, 13 Rabiülevvel 1307/7 November 1899; BOA. Y.PRK.TEŞF. 2/96, 29 Zilhicce 1307/16 August 1890). His approach was to leverage the unifying aspect of the banquet to further enhance German-Ottoman relations. During Emperor Wilhelm's second visit, his envoy was more crowded when compared with his first visit; regardless of this, paramount care was shown to host the guests. Arriving at Dolmabahçe Pier on the morning of October 17, 1898, Emperor Wilhelm and his wife, the Empress, were personally greeted by the Sultan. As the Empress was leaving the ship, the Sultan even extended his hand and helped her get off the ship. German guests were treated with a great banquet at Yıldız Palace that evening (BOA. Y.PRK.PT. 18/30, 1 Cemazielahir 1316/17 October 1898). The banquet started with the Hamidiye and Germany Marches. To the right of the Sultan sat the Empress, whilst to his left sat the Emperor. As all other banquets previous, foreign ambassadors had too been invited with their spouses. The Sultan personally supervised the banquet preparations and paid particular attention to the meals that were to be served. Specially ordered French olive oil was used as part of their preparation. The full menu included Bouillon soup with egg and beans, two types of börek, seabass with tomato paste, scad fish with tomato paste, turkey stuffed with truffle and mushrooms, cold game meat paste, pheasant and quail kebab, asparagus, pilaf, dessert with berries, almond cream, ice cream, and punch for drinks. Cognac, rum, champagne, white and red wine were also purchased and served to the foreign guests as well. Following the guests were offered coffee and cigarettes. Abdulhamid II would offer cigarettes rolled from specially blended tobacco. What is more, the Sultan asked the Ottoman Ambassador in Berlin Tefvik Pasha to send a few of the Havana cigars that the Emperor smoked, and offered to him as a thoughtful gesture (Demirel, 2007, pp. 58-65). Now, the Sultan was making great progress regarding German-Ottoman relations. Hence, taking great care to offer delicacies that suit the tastes of his guests, the Sultan made a great gesture by treating the Emperor to his favorite cigars. In short, Abdulhamid II had obviously aimed to skillfully utilize the food as a diplomatic instrument at this banquet. When we considering the great progress that took place in German-Ottoman relations starting from 1890's, we could argue that Sultan's aim to establish collaboration between the nations at the dining table was very much achieved.

Abdulhamid II's use of diplomacy in ruling over his Empire is well known. Beyond foreign policy, he also pursued his unique diplomatic approach in domestic politics as well. Similar to foreign diplomacy, culinary diplomacy was utilized to shape internal politics. For instance, following the declaration of Second Constitutional Era, he held a great banquet at the Greeting Hall of Şale Palace, to which members of parliament were invited.



YILDIZ SARAYI-SALİF

Figure 5. Şale Palace Grand Banquet Hall (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Atatürk Library Archive)

Again, as always, the Sultan personally watched over preparations down to the last detail, and even personally prepared the meal list. His selection of ‘Yedikardeş tatlısı’ (Seven Siblings’ Dessert) shows us his bright political intelligence. Given the Ottoman Empire was formed from seven nations, this dessert was selected on purpose; that is, the dessert conveyed a message of unison and fellowship. The Sultan had even prepared the seating for the banquet himself. He was to sit between the Head of the Parliament and his Grand Vizier, whereas the ministers and the members of parliament were to sit beside them. A “U” shaped table with sharp corners was especially prepared for the banquet. Sultan sat where both edges of the tables met, on the exterior, right in the center (Osmanoğlu, 2008, p. 140). This too gives us insight into both his mind and his approach to politics. From where he sat, he tried to convey the message that the sultanate was the unifying aspect of the government and the people. As the constitutional era dawned in the country, he may have been trying to convey a message that he was the most influential actor in politics. At the dining hall, many members of the parliament cheered in favor of the Sultan; a number of Arab members had even tried to kiss his feet—much to the Sultan’s delight. His response: “I have eaten with the representatives of my nation. They were utterly sincere with me. I am grateful to see and achieve this” [-sic-] (Osmanoğlu, 2008, pp. 140-141). Such a banquet had also served as a message to the opposition. Therefore, here, we can see that cuisine could also utilize as an instrument in internal politics as well.

CONCLUSION

The significance of food stretches beyond nourishment, and moreover can take on the role of unifying and enhancing relations between individuals and communities. Throughout history, many governments have utilized the unifying quality of cuisine and have taken advantage of it as a diplomatic tool. Although gastrodiploacy and culinary diplomacy as concepts became prominent in the last quarter of the 20th century, this does not mean that they had not already been used for centuries as diplomatic instruments. One of the nations that did such was the Ottoman Empire. Upon reviewing Ottoman diplomacy of the late era, we can see many examples of culinary diplomacy. We moreover have witnessed numerous shifts in 19th century Ottoman culinary diplomacy in particular. When we more closely culinary diplomacy during the reign of Mahmud II, we realize that the cuisine utilized for

culinary diplomacy drew from both Turkish and French influences. The official banquets held, and the many dishes served to the foreign guests during this period, still mostly consisted of Turkish cuisine, while presentation, table organization, and eating habits reflected Turkish culinary culture. Mahmud II's political approach too may have been influential for this practice. At a time when the Ottoman Empire was plagued with several internally and foreign issues, including the potential rise of Egypt and a new Muslim leader, we could argue that the Sultan tried to highlight Turkish and Ottoman influences his approach to culinary diplomacy as well. In contrast, starting with Sultan Abdulmecid era, the Ottoman palace cuisine fell under the influence of European culinary traditions and thus French culinary culture. Ottoman statesmen hence were unable to resist the Parisian dishes adopted by their opponents and allies as an indication of distinction. Rather, they gave in and opted to host them in their own gastronomical language. Therefore, they highlighted their own distinction and showed that they were capable of speaking the same language as their friends and foes alike. Meanwhile, the Ottoman culinary values were not disregarded. On the contrary, when the foreign guests were hosted, banquets reflected a fusion of Ottoman and French cuisine. The Sultan Abdulaziz and Abdulhamid II eras both pursued this practice as well. We can see that Ottoman Sultans took great care when planning the ceremonies held for foreign statesmen or representatives, and planned everything down to the smallest detail. Abdulhamid II was known for his due diligence in this matter—to the point that he would learn who his guests were and what made them tick before hosting them. He would also treat their wives with the same degree of respect and attention as well. Therefore, we might conclude that he used his banquets as an effective diplomatic tool in order to strengthen his international relationships.

The 19th century had marked the era when the Ottoman Empire needed diplomacy more than ever. During this period, the had government regressed in terms of economy, military, and administration and was faced several internal and foreign crises. Unable to provide any solution to these issues, sultans sought many a European ally to offer support. Furthermore, as the Empire established alliance with any given nation, balanced relationships were then required with other European nations as well. Undoubtedly, the government required constant and efficient diplomacy under such circumstances. Within that framework, we observe that the Ottoman Sultans tried capitalize on every opportunity as a potential diplomatic instrument, among which cuisine took center stage. Ottoman rulers tried to boost their relationships with other nations through cuisine, and in doing so, strived to expand their alliances with their friends meanwhile also restoring the relationships with their opposition.

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