

An anthropological study of food tourism with the focus on Fooman town ship in Gilan province

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Abstract

Local food products, based on a specific conception of food heritage, play an important role in the development of the rural tourism sector in Gilan. This article seeks to better understand the role tourism plays in the creation, or revival, of cultural identity based on local food products and food heritage from the point of anthropology approach. The article highlights the consequences of the emergence of culinary and local food heritage for tourists in Gilan, and concludes that tourism increases the awareness of food heritage and strengthens local identity. The main purpose in this paper is To Anthropological Study of food tourism with the focus on Fooman town ship and to find types of native Gilanian food. This article is based on quality and tools of data collection is documental, Informal – in depth interviews and participant observations. It is mention in the theoretical framework the present research for its analysis of data, is based on STRUCTURALISM theory of Claude Lévi-Strauss.

Keywords: Anthropology, Fooman, Gilan, Food, Tourism

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Introduction

A food study is the critical examination of food and its contexts within science, art, history, society, and other fields. It is distinctive from other food-related areas of study such as nutrition, agriculture, gastronomy, and culinary arts in that it tends to look beyond the mere consumption, production, and aesthetic appreciation of food and tries to illuminate food as it relates to a vast number of academic fields. It is thus a field that involves and attracts philosophers, historians, scientists, sociologists, art historians, anthropologists and tourism.

While many cities, regions or countries are known for their food, culinary tourism is not limited by food culture. Every tourists eats at least three times a day, making food one of the fundamental economic drivers of tourism.

Food has always been a component of tourism but it is only recently that it has been truly recognized for the significant part it plays in the overall experience of a destination. Today's tourist is better informed, more cultured, well travelled and looking for new experiences. Food offers a gateway into other cultures, through taste, through food preparation and the whole eating environment. Foods provide lasting memories that define a holiday or travel experience.

Gilan province in Iran, especially Fooman region, due to a varied landscape consisting of alteration of mountain ranges, Green Forest Interesting folklore and unique Local Food has always been suitable place for Tourist visit

Therefore, it is necessary to document, analyze and introduction of the Local Food in the region from the point of anthropology, before it vanishes in the sea of socio-cultural change.

Justification of problem and Significance of study:

Why is culinary tourism so important? "Eating is a universal activity, "Not everyone gulfs or goes shopping, but everyone eats. Also, people are more attuned to food now than ever before. " The reason for this is twofold. On one hand is the desire to experience a

destination in a more intimate way than the traditional tourist overview. The food of a local people are a doorway into their culture.

By interacting with a country's food, a traveller is delving into its history. Culinary tourism "is a subset of cultural tourism, because cuisine is a manifestation of culture. And because food involves all five of the human senses, we'll remember a meal much longer than we will a museum or stained-glass windows."

Today's tourist is more cultured than visitors of 10-20 years ago, is well travelled, is searching for new experiences, is concerned about the environment, is interested in taking part in a health/well-being lifestyle and wants to experience the local culture when he goes on holiday. Food is a significant aspect of the tourist's experience of a destination, driven by the growing trends of authenticity and the need to have a high-quality experience.

Aims and objectives of the study:

- To Anthropological Study of food tourism with the focus on fooman town ship.
- To study relationship between food and culture in Gilan province.
- To understand and analyze of anthropology food tourism from the point of structuralism theory.
- To study types of local Gilanian food and its importance.

Methodological Considerations:

This article is based on quality method and tools of data collection is Informal interviews and participant observations comprise the methods of data collection. The qualitative data has been collected with the help of:

- i. Informal, In-depth and open ended Interviews with the help of an interview guide.
- ii. Participant, Empirical observations Structuralism theory.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, one of the founders of structural school, has constructed his culinary triangle to show the connection between culture and nature in human thought. The article explaining this idea was published in 1966 and although it is not as famous as Lévi-Strauss' works on myths and kinship, it is definitely worth discussing

in the context of anthropology's contribution to the new discipline exploring food cultures.

The triangle was not based on Lévi-Strauss own fieldwork, but rather many examples from other works were used to support this theoretical approach.

'The questions posed about food and eating from a structuralism perspective have a different emphasis as compared with those posed from a functionalist viewpoint. Rather than focusing upon practicalities and the social processes involved in producing, allocating and consuming food, the structuralism gaze is directed towards the rules and conventions that govern the ways in which food items are classified, prepared and combined with each other' (Beards worth & Keil:1997, 61).

After analyzing various cooking techniques Lévi-Strauss came to a conclusion that seeing the difference between the raw and the cooked as a reflection of the nature/culture opposition is a universal feature of human thinking (1966). That is why a diagram created by him shows a relation between the unelaborated (raw), the elaborated, transformed naturally (rotted) and the elaborated, transformed by culture (cooked).

Food serves as a medium between nature and culture, and the activity of cooking is a transformation, a change, and a process of 'civilizing nature'. If preparing food, even in a very primitive way, may be seen as a universal feature of human societies, by the same token thinking based on the opposite terms of nature and culture is, according to Lévi-Strauss, universal (1966:937). He has suggested including in the diagram the following oppositions: between vegetable and animal foodstuff, between food prepared with and without fat and with or without seasoning, so that the triangle, transformed into a more complex matrix, should include 'all the characteristics of a given culinary system Then it can be superposed on other contrasts of sociological, economic, aesthetic or religious nature: men and women, family and society, village and bush, economy and prodigality, nobility and commonalty, sacred and profane. Thus we can hope – writes the author – to discover for each specific case how the cooking of a society is a language in which it unconsciously translates its structure' (1966:940).

The critiques of Lévi-Strauss' triangle point out that his main assumption is unjustified: rules discovered by him in the French cuisine and French language may not exist in other societies. Jack Goody argues that:

'No rationale is provided for constraining the general elements of cooking by geometrical forms, whether triangles, squares, or circles. Their analysis requires a more complex ordering' (1991: 217).

Moreover, 'the structural approach tends to overestimate the unity of cultures' and 'neglects relations between consumption, production and the social-economic order' (1991:25-27). Peter Farb and George Armelagos write that for example 'Amharic language, spoken in Ethiopia, has distinct words for the boiling of solids and of liquids' (Farb and Armelagos, 1980:105) and so the categories like 'boiled' or 'grilled' may include various range of meals. According to Peter Atkins and Ian Bowler, generalizations made on the basis of habits of primitive peoples are not the best device to describe contemporary food cultures (2002:6).

In spite of this critique one has to admit that in the short article about the culinary triangle, written in the sixties, Lévi-Strauss managed to touch upon many issues which since then have become 'food studies staples'. These include: social divisions (endo- and exo-cuisine, aristocracy and lower classes), gender and symbolic meaning of food, not to mention the initial topic of his paper: cooking techniques. Because of this inspiring contribution, Lévi-Strauss' structuralism may be seen as one of the cornerstones of the interdisciplinary study of food.

Function

The goal of culinary tourism is to educate and inspire food enthusiasts while giving the traveller a chance to explore the local area and learn about local food trends, cooking techniques and food history. Travellers can do so by participating in a cultural immersion experience at select destinations around the globe. Culinary tours and travel packages can include activities related to cooking, food sampling, food trends. In addition to restaurant weeks in different cities, dining events and cooking competitions, culinary tourism encompasses culinary experiences, tours of restaurants and food

manufacturing plants, conferences and events with culinary professionals and cookbook authors, and ethnic food tastings.

Location of the study:

All the research villages - Maclawan, Masule, Jirdeh, Seyed-Abad and Lolman, are located In Fooman region in Gilan province in Iran.

Gilan Province: Gilan Province is one of the 31 provinces of Iran. It lies along the Caspian, in Iran's Region 3, west of the province of Mazandaran, east of the province of Ardabil, and north of the provinces of Zanjan and Qazvin. It also borders the Republic of Azerbaijan in the north, as well as Russia across the Caspian Sea.

The northern part of the province is part of territory of South (Iranian) Talysh. At the centre of the province is the main city of Rasht. Other towns in the province include Astara, Astaneh-e, Ashrafiyyeh, Lahijan, Langrud, Masouleh, Manjil, Rudbar, Roudsar, Shaft, Talesh, Soumahe Sara and fooman. (Wikipedia).

Fooman Township: Fuman is a beautiful city to the west of Gilan. It is located on the slopes of Alborz Mountain and surrounded by Rasht, Somesara, and Masal.

Rice has been cultivated in this region for many years, where some indigenous cultivars (landrace) were conventionally bred by farmers.

The ancient city of Masouleh and Roudkhan Castle are located in Fooman, which experiences a moderate Caspian weather.

Fooman is also known as the city of statues. There are many statues in various spots, which symbolize local traditions, customs and culture. For example, the statue of four girls is a symbol of endeavours of rural women.



Picture 1: Fooman, city of statues

Fooman's hospitable people speak in Gilaki and Taleshi dialects. The gardens and farms surrounding Fooman lend an enchanting ambience to the region. The city also boasts of numerous springs.

In addition to cultivation of rice, tobacco and tea, the occupations of Fooman's residents include animal husbandry, poultry breeding and production of traditional handicrafts. Roud Paskhan, Siahroud, Roudkhan and Masoulehroud are the major rivers of Fooman. Fooman has abundant trees like maple, beech, persimmon, blackberry and wild figs, as well as plants such as violet, chicory and spearmint. Fox, jackal and brown bear are among wildlife species that inhabit the region (Pandi, 2006).

Foods of Gilan Province:

The main food of the people of Gilan is rice, birds, vegetables and cereals. formerly they were accustomed to eat less bread. Eating bread was considered to be below dignity because rice was the main food and expensive in those days. below dignity. If someone continuously consumed bread for days together, then others wondered and asked how he survives without rice. People attributed the cause of

continuously eating bread to be a result of an individual's poverty (Fakhray, 1975).

H. L. Rabino has explained in the book 'Gilan' For the Gilan and Mazandaran people, the bread is deemed to be considered as an unhealthy food. Their main food included rice and a piece of salted fish (Rabino, 1995:23).

I) However, as a result of relatively high price of rice, the people of this region have adapted themselves to eat bread.

II) The breads baked in these regions include Sangak, Lavash, Barbari, Walnut bread and shortcake. The local breads are baked in some villages including Tabe Sariyeh, Koto, Dasteh, and walnut bread, Chilehnun or Zoghalnun.

i) The common food of the most of these regions was pilaf, yogurt, cheese, egg, birds, and vegetables.

ii) The major local and native foods are divided in two groups in following:

iii) Foods with meat: such as morgh(chicken)fasanjan(nuts, duck or chicken with pomegranate sauce), alo-mosamma polo (beef-apricot, rice...), kabab (barbecue and rice) koko-morgh (chicken-koko), naz-khaton (beef, vegetable,) longe (Nuts-vegetable-fish, ...), vavishka (beef, tomato, onion, ...).

iv) Foods without meat: such as Baghlaghatogh, Mirzaghasemi, Sabziko ko ko(vegetables pancake)Ash and SholeZard (rice pudding) that is a kind of porridge made from crushed rice, saffron, sugar and almonds mixed and cooked on special days such as Ashura and 28th day of Safar month.

v) The cookies including halva, jam, pickle, Reshteh Khoshkar, zoloobia and Bamieh.

The food items consumed by the people in the mountainous areas of this region such as Masuleh is a bread which was used more formerly by the residents of these areas along with bread 'dairy products formed the major part of their food.



Picture 2: Foods of Gilan Province

The cooking appliances are the same as modern civilization but still some traditional appliances such as copper utensils, Namakyar, Saj (a tray for baking bread), cleaver board and KamachDaneh are observed in some houses. In some houses excluding the kitchen, a field clay stove known as SahraKaleh or AtashKaleh is available and some of them use firewood instead of oven to cook food.

Despite the fact that modern appliances for cooking are used, some traditional appliances/ utensils for cooking are being used by the people in Gilan. These traditional appliances/utensils include the following:

Tiyan (big pot), malagh chobe(wooden scoop), majmae mesi (copper tray), gamaj(a kind of pot), nokhon(a kind of tray and pot operculum), haftaei shisha(a kind of bottle for vinegar, juiclemon, ...), namakyar (to pulverize salt, nuts, ...), kolobij (a kind of pan)gandelak(to chop of sugar lump), kolobij(a kind of pan).

Foods of fooman city

Considering that in most parts of Fooman city and the studied villages (except Masule village), cultivation of rice, citrus and tea is observable as well as fish and livestock husbandry due to common climatic features, as a result, most of studied villagers follow the same

food culture. However, more or less, some foods and the way of cooking of these foods are different in these regions.

In the studied villages where rice cultivation is almost the everyday activity of all the people, they eat at least one rice meal a day which is very high compared to other villages and even urban areas in Iran. In Seyed-Abad village, in addition to lunch and dinner, they eat rice for breakfast as well. Rice is eaten both in cold and hot ways in this region. The rice is eaten as breakfast in the morning is generally, the remaining or leftover of previous meals. If rice is eaten cold, it is usually eaten along with a salty or sweet combination together and if it is eaten hot, then it is usually mixed with sweet combination. For example, cold rice is usually eaten with garlic pickle, raw beans, onion and walnut while warm rice is usually eaten with a little milk or dates or grapes syrup. In the Maclawan village, vegetables, cheese omelettes, scrambled eggs, fried fish, yogurt, and fresh fruit (depending on the season, including watermelon, melon, grapes, etc.) are usual elements served with the rice for lunch (as the main daily meal) and dinner. In the Seyed-Abad village, many people believed that if there is no rice in their meals, they will not be full and satisfied and rice meant food for some people in this village.

Although bread is one of the most popular food materials on non-Gilani dining tables, but it is not popular among the rural people in Gilan especially the studied villages. In Maclawan village and Masule, to avoid being accused of poverty by other people, they even refuse to put bread on the table for guests and consider it as a sign of poverty. From the perspective of these people in the studied villages, eating bread more than any other things is considered as humiliation and poverty. In their view, others (especially people of Tehran) are often busy with chewing bread with open mouth, thus they sometimes use the adjective “wide open mouth” for them. In their view, people of Tehran are “only bread eaters” for whom rice is the most regretful and fantastic dish.

However, just like other Iranian Muslim people, bread is holy for these people in the studied villages and wherever a piece of bread dropped in the streets, they will kiss it and put it in a proper place not to be kicked or disrespect. They even take oath of the bread.

Among the foods that people in the studied villages are interested in, except rice, beef, olives and especially fish are in their main foods list while people of other regions are less interested in. To ridicule and to express hatred of these villagers, people of other regions sometimes call these people “Fish Head Eaters”. The people in the studied villages especially in Jirdeh and Maclawan believe that their neighbours envy is the main reason of that naming that never eat fresh fish and abundant rice all over their years. At the same time, when they have a stranger (non-Gilani) or a guest, they avoid eating fish heads or they don’t show interest in eating fish head. However, this is an exception among people in Lolman village where even they offered fish and fish heads to their guests as well as. This may be due to the presence of abundant and diverse fishes in the rivers and lakes around the village. The combination of rice and fish known as “Polu-Mahi” is one of the most original and most popular diets around the Maclawan, Lulaman and Fooman villages.

Conclusion

Food features of a region is not limited only to the nutrition domain. However, this is an important source to identify social differences and analyzing the reasons beyond these differences via links to other domains and fields like ethnic ethnology and climatology. The study of these phenomena to gather especially through folklore provides proper information for anthropologists and folklorists. Diet of various ethnic groups has a deep connection with ethnic characteristics attributable to particular ethnicity and differences between different races. Accordingly, for example, some of the beliefs attributed to the culture of the studied villages can be traced and found in the diet of this region and the intake of foods such as rice, fish, vegetables and fruit (which are all cold and wet). Of course, this is just one of many factors in this field and other factors are also involved. Many believe that there is a deep relationship between food, culture and socio-cultural practices and are of opinions that “tell me what is your food to tell you what you think”. In this respect, food plays a special role and has a significant place in anthropology studies.

On the other hand the effect of food on tourism, Food has always been an important component of the tourist experience. Tourists eat to survive, but they also consume to discover the place and the intrinsic environments of the visited region. Arousing all senses, food items and the practice of gastronomy include an exhaustive amount of information of significance for both personal well-being and for socializing with others.

Gilan province in Iran, especially Fooman region, due to a varied landscape consisting of alteration of mountain ranges, Green Forest Interesting folklore and unique Local Food has always been suitable place for Tourist visit.

Therefore, it is necessary to document, analyze and introduction of the Local Food in the region from the point of anthropology in order to attract tourists.

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