

## **Turkish Borrowings in Bulgarian Lexis Related to Cuisine and Cooking**

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### **Abstract**

Lexical borrowings from Turkish occupy an important place in the lexis of modern Bulgarian. Attempts to eradicate Turcisms, which had been underway for several decades, have been unsuccessful. Even systemic measures have failed. It has not been possible to replace with native lexis or lexis borrowed from other languages in particular that vocabulary which has penetrated most deeply into the consciousness of Bulgarians, that is, words used for centuries in everyday life. This compact group, saturated to the brim with Turcisms, is formed by the vocabulary related to the kitchen and its equipment as well as cooking. The author discusses lexemes from this very thematic group. They were extracted from cookbooks and monographs devoted to Bulgarian culinary traditions.

### **Keywords**

modern Bulgarian language, lexis, colloquial language, Turcisms, cuisine, cooking

During the more than 500 years of Ottoman rule in the Balkans, Turcisms had managed to settle and spread in the everyday speech of Bulgarians to such an extent that when attempts were made in the early 19th century to create a New Bulgarian literary language, one of the most important tasks facing the writers and activists of the National Revival was to purge the language of Orientalisms. The puristic measures were long-lasting and quite extensive, but they could not be carried out with equal consistency in all spheres of language use – some areas of life proved resistant to such efforts. Therefore, it is not surprising that Turcisms in Bulgarian have become an object of inquiry for many

linguists and that a rich literature on the subject (both monographs and articles) now exists, focusing on, among other things, their history and use in modern Bulgarian,<sup>1</sup> their influence on Bulgarian vocabulary, and their presence in dialects.<sup>2</sup>

One area of life where the vocabulary of Turkish origin has become firmly established is cuisine.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this article is to show the persistence of lexis from this sphere in modern Bulgarian. To that end, examples taken from popular culinary books will be discussed – from the culinary guide published in 1870 by Petko Slaveykov,<sup>4</sup> considered to be the oldest Bulgarian culinary book, to contemporary books containing recipes for particular dishes and concerning cuisine described as “national,”<sup>5</sup> on the one hand, and “related to tradition and rituals,”<sup>6</sup> on the other. The lexis extracted from them and discussed here demonstrates that Bulgarian culinary vocabulary has remained largely unchanged since it was first recorded, that is, since the second half of the 19th century.

Before discussing culinary lexis, however, it is necessary to make a few remarks related to the process of the formation of the New Bulgarian literary language, for when the Bulgarian intellectual elite of the 19th century began to discuss language, one of the most important goals of their efforts turned out to be the replacement of numerous borrowings with native words. The conditions were not very favorable to such puristic actions, given the fairly widespread bilingualism (or even trilingualism since a large part of the population spoke not only their native language but also Turkish and Greek, which was necessary in urban settings),<sup>7</sup> however, writers who declared war on Greek and Turkish included whole lists of words translated into Bulgarian in their books. This was done, among others, by Neophyte of Rila, author of the first grammar rules published in print (1835),<sup>8</sup> who included a glossary at the end of the book entitled *Речи турски и неколко гречески, които са в употребување на сегашно време в сичката Болгария, истолкувани по можности с равнозначители славенски*

<sup>1</sup> Максим Стаменов, *Съдбата на турцизмите в българския език и в българската култура*, София: Изток-Запад, 2001; Alf Grannes, *Turco-Bulgaria. Articles in English and French Concerning Turkish Influence on Bulgarian*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Jordanka Georgiewa-Okon, *Turcyzmy w bulgarskich dialektach poludniowo-wschodnich. Dialekty rodopskie i wschodnie dialekty rupskie*, Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Bulgarian cuisine under Ottoman rule and its links to rituals and rites are discussed in a monograph on cultural anthropology: Иван Павлов, *Присъствия на храненето по българските земи през XV–XIX век*, София: Академично издателство «Проф. Марин Дринов», 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Петко Славейков, *Готварска книга или наставления за всякаквы гостбы според както гы правят в Цариград и разны домашны справы събрани от разны книги*, Цариград: Печатница на Македония, 1870 (reprint 2018, Ямбол: ИПК Светлина АД).

<sup>5</sup> Любомир Петров, Евгений Йорданов, Снежана Узунова, Николай Дзелепов, *Българска национална кухня*, София: Земиздат, 1983.

<sup>6</sup> Елица Минева, Татяна Карданова, *Старинни рецепти за празници и обреди. Над 200 питки и ястия от българската кухня*, София: СББ Медиа АД, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Надка Николова, *Билингвизмът в българските земи през XV–XIX век*, Шумен: Университетско издателство «Епископ Константин Преславски», 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Неофит Рилски, *Болгарска граматика*, фототипно издание, София: Наука и изкуство, 1984.

или русийски (Turkish words and a few Greek words that are now used throughout Bulgaria, translated as far as possible into Slavic and Russian equivalents). As the title suggests, native lexis proved insufficient, so Neophyte had to use words borrowed from Russian. The same was done decades later by Nayden Gerov, author of the first multi-volume dictionary of the Bulgarian language (the first volume was published in 1895, the fifth in 1905).<sup>9</sup> The most famous of those who strove to purge the Bulgarian language of Turcisms was Ivan Bogorov, a zealous wordsmith, whose name later became (not quite rightly) synonymous with purism taken to the verge of absurdity under Ottoman rule.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, the authors of books addressed to a wide range of readers, in order to make sure that they would be understood correctly, provided some of the words they used with their Turkish equivalents. This was done, for example, by Sophronius of Vratsa, the first translator of Aesop's fables,<sup>11</sup> and also Petar Beron, author of the so-called *Рибен буквар* (Primer with a fish), the first textbook for secular schools (published in 1824).<sup>12</sup> This proves the deep rootedness in the lexicon of Bulgarians of a large number of words that, although foreign, could not be easily replaced by new equivalents.<sup>13</sup>

The most resistant to the process of Bulgarianization was the colloquial vocabulary related to building, furnishing, and equipping a house (craft terminology) and the lexis related to cooking. Five hundred years of subordination to the Ottoman Empire resulted in the adoption of many behaviors and customs. The culinary tradition is a good example of this, as even today, reading cookbooks, and often also restaurant menus, requires knowledge of many Turkish terms. The same applies to the books on folk rituals, the calendar of religious and agrarian holidays, and cultural anthropology in the broadest sense, which have become very popular in recent years. Since most kitchen utensils and dishes considered traditional (and even national) bear Turkish names, there is no indication that anything is about to change in this regard. An example of this can be found in the titles of the chapters of the book *Българска национална кухня* (Bulgarian national cuisine)<sup>14</sup> and the names of some of the dishes described there:

<sup>9</sup> Найден Геров, *Речникъ на българскый языкъ*, т. 1–5, Пловдив: Дружествена печатница «Съгласие», 1895–1905.

<sup>10</sup> Mariola Walczak, *Język piśmiennictwa bułgarskiego. Zarys dziejów*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1998, 68–71.

<sup>11</sup> Mariola Walczak-Mikołajczakowa, *Bułgarski Ezop*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2009, 15–45.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, 46–55.

<sup>13</sup> We gained proof of this anew in the late 20th century. When the press was freed from censorship after the political changes of the 1990s, Turkish borrowings immediately appeared in it. As a loaded vocabulary, they facilitated the creation of emotionally charged and evaluative texts. On this topic in more detail: Mariola Walczak-Mikołajczakowa, Diana Ivanova, “O języku współczesnej prasy bułgarskiej i polskiej,” in *Słowiańszczyzna w kontekście przemian Europy końca XX wiek. Język – tradycja – kultura*, ed. Emil Tokarz, Katowice: Śląsk, 2001, 306–12.

<sup>14</sup> Петров, Йорданов, Узунова, Джелепов, *Българска национална кухня*, 276–95.

- *Салати и туршии* (*туршия* – Tur. *turşu* ‘vegetables preserved in brine or vinegar – peppers, tomatoes, carrots, cabbage, celery, and others’<sup>15</sup>);
- *Супи и чорби* (*чорба* – Tur. *çorba* ‘a dish of cooked vegetables and/or meat that contains a lot of water and should be eaten with a spoon, a thick soup’);
- *Ястия от ориз и булгур* (*булгур* – Tur. *bulgur* ‘cooking wheat, mashed or coarsely ground’);
- *Гювечи* (*гювеч* – Tur. *güveç* ‘1. a clay vessel for baking food in an oven, 2. a dish, usually of meat and vegetables, prepared in such a vessel’);
- *Кюфтета от зеленчуци и гъби* (*кюфте* – Tur. *köfte* ‘minced meat cutlet’);
- *Сарми* (*сарми* – Tur. *sarma*, literally, “wrapped,” ‘a dish of minced meat and rice wrapped in cabbage or grape leaves’);
- *Ястия от карантия* (*карантия/карънтия* – Tur. *kırıntı* ‘offal, head and feet of the animal intended for cooking’);
- *Качамаци* (*качамак* – Tur. *kaçamak* ‘boiled corn flour cake, mamalaya’).

Most of the names cited here come originally from Persian, and Turkish was just an intermediate language in the chain of borrowings during Ottoman rule. Words that originated in Persian or Arabic and penetrated other languages through Turkish are called Ottomanisms. Turkish was also an intermediate language in the borrowing of other popular modern culinary terms, such as *мезе* (Tur. *meze* ‘an appetizer or salad to accompany alcoholic beverages’). It was also an independent source of some borrowings, cf. *кайма* (Tur. *küta* ‘chopped meat’); *катък* (Tur. *katık* ‘1. addition to bread, a snack, such as white cheese, olives, pieces of sausage, etc., 2. sour condensed milk, 3. a type of white cheese, 4. sour cream’).

The names of many desserts popular to this day leave no doubt as to their Oriental origin: *баклава* (Tur. *baklava* ‘a syrup-soaked dessert made of thin slices of dough interleaved with nuts’), *халва* (Tur. *helva* ‘a confectionery product consisting of sugar, sesame flour, sesame oil, nuts, or their substitutes’<sup>16</sup>), *кадауф* (Tur. *kadayif* ‘1. dry dough in a thread-like form, 2. confectionery made of this dough’), *реване* (Tur. *revani* ‘a kind of cake made of eggs, flour, and semolina, soaked in syrup’), *курабуи* (Tur. *kurabüye* ‘a type of dry cookies’), *локум* (Tur. *lokum* ‘confectionery made of potato starch, sugar, and glucose, usually in the form of cubes’). The names of confectionery products have an Arabic origin, but they found their way into the Bulgarian language (and other Slavic languages on the Balkan Peninsula) through Ottoman Turkish.

The Turkish culinary tradition has become so popular that dishes prepared in the style of the Orient have become an integral element of Christian tradition and customs. No wonder that the names of dishes prepared on the occasion of Christian holidays

<sup>15</sup> All explanations of meanings are based on definitions taken from the dictionary: *Речник на чуждите думи в българския език*, съст. Мария Филипова-Байрова, Симеон Бояджиев, Елена Машалова, Кирил Костов, София: Издателство на БАН, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> The name of the sesame flour used to make *challah* (sometimes a synonym for *halva*) – *tahan* – is an Arabic word that found its way into Bulgarian through Turkish.

are also borrowings from the Turkish language. The authors of the book *Старинни рецепти за празници и обреди* (Old recipes for holidays and rituals)<sup>17</sup> recommend preparing *сарми по манастирски*<sup>18</sup> (that is, “monastery-style sarma”) for Christmas Eve. On the festive Christmas table, there should be a *капама*<sup>19</sup> (Tur. *капата* ‘stewed meat with onions’), and on New Year’s Day, a *сиропирана баница с локум* (that is, “dough in syrup with the addition of marshmallow”), as well as pork *кавърма* (Tur. *кавурма* ‘pieces of meat fried in its own fat’) and *пача* (Tur. *паџа* ‘a dish of legs, head, etc.’).<sup>20</sup> There are many more such examples among the dishes typically made for various holidays. Todor Boyadzhiev, the author of the popular textbook *Българска лексикология* (Bulgarian lexicology), argued that Turkish linguistic influence had been gradually waning since the National Revival, and yet he listed a number of commonly used food names among examples of borrowing, including some that have not been mentioned here: *бюрек*, *пастърма*, *петмез*, *суджук*, *яхния*.<sup>21</sup> The name of the popular strong alcoholic drink *ракия* is also of Turkish origin (Tur. *raki*).

To close this list of culinary borrowings, let us add that many celebrations are accompanied by an outdoor meal that includes a spit-roasted lamb, called *чеверме* (Tur. *çevirme*, literally, “rotated”). It is an obligatory dish during the celebration of St. George’s Day, the patron saint of shepherds, whose cult is very strong in Bulgaria.<sup>22</sup>

The second large group of culinary-related lexis consists of the names of kitchen utensils. A large part of it is also borrowed from Turkish. An excellent source for excerpting this kind of vocabulary is Petko Slaveykov’s book entitled *Готварска книга или наставления за всякаквы гостбы според както гы правят в Цариград и разны домашны справы събрани от разны книги* (A cookbook, that is, tips on all kinds of dishes, according to how they make them in Tsarograd, and various household matters collected from various books).<sup>23</sup> It is regarded today as the first Bulgarian cookbook, although in fact, it is not about traditional Bulgarian dishes but about the cuisine of the various peoples living in Istanbul, the multi-cultural capital of the Ottoman Empire called Tsarograd. Slaveykov’s cookbook contains 289 recipes of various kinds, in addition to advice on selecting various products (especially meat and fish) and the ways to store and preserve them. By compiling recipes from a variety of sources (their diversity is reflected both in the stylistic layer of language, as well as in the level of detail of the recipes), the Bulgarian writer created a panorama of Istanbul’s culinary landscape in the second half of the 19th century, and, as if by the way – because he did not devote special attention to it – also a historical testimony

<sup>17</sup> Минева, Карданова, *Старинни рецепти...*

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, 32.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, 55.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, 64–7.

<sup>21</sup> Тодор Бояджиев, *Българска лексикология*, София: Наука и Изкуство, 1986, 201.

<sup>22</sup> The day dedicated in the Orthodox calendar to St. George (*Гергьовден*), i.e., May 6, is an official state holiday, a day off from work.

<sup>23</sup> Славейков, *Готварска книга...*

concerning cooking utensils, the ways in which they were used, and the activities that could be carried out with their help.

The names of kitchen utensils mentioned in Slaveykov's book have survived to the present day, finding no competition either among their native equivalents or among borrowings from other languages.

Since most of the dishes described by Slaveykov are heat-treated dishes, they are prepared on the stove or in the oven (*на печка, в печка*), sometimes referred to by the Greek lexeme *фурна*. Cooking on the stove, baking, boiling, braising, or frying food requires different types of pots, pans, and sometimes a grate. Among the most common names for cooking utensils mentioned by Slaveykov are lexemes that are also used today: *тенджерa* (Tur. *tencere* 'deep cooking pot') and *тава* (Tur. *tava* '1. a shallow, wide vessel used for baking, 2. a wide vessel for frying jam'). The latter name – *тава* – is translated by the *Podręczny słownik bułgarsko-polski* (Handy Bulgarian-Polish dictionary) as 'brytfanna, baking tray',<sup>24</sup> but this translation seems to be inaccurate. Used in the Balkans, *тава* is a type of cookware unheard of in Polish cuisine – it differs from a baking dish in that it does not have a lid, and its shape and depth are different from those of a baking tray. This is because it is round with a fairly high rim but without handles like our baking trays. It is very versatile and can be used to prepare quite sophisticated dishes using various methods (such as sautéing or braising), although most often *тава* is put into the oven and the dish is baked. Slaveykov devoted an entire chapter to the dishes prepared in this way, entitling it *За ястиета които се правят в тави*. It includes recipes for both meat and fish, seafood, and vegetable dishes: *Месо в тава, Скабрица в тава, Миды в тава Патладжени в тава, Дроб (джигер)<sup>25</sup> в тава, Рыба хамсия в тава*.<sup>26</sup> *Тенджерa* (a pot) is used to cook or stew food, often under cover, i.e., *под капакът* (Tur. *kapak* 'lid').

The next two utensils needed for food preparation are *тeнция* (Tur. *tepsi*) and *таc* (Tur. *tas*). The Bulgarian-Polish dictionary translates them respectively as 'baking tray'<sup>27</sup> and 'bowl'.<sup>28</sup> It seems, however, that these translations are not accurate and do not fully reflect the purpose and variety of objects described with these terms. While *тeнция* does indeed encompass different types and forms of baking trays for baking something (e.g., *кадаифена тeнция* is used specifically for baking sweets called *кадаиф*), Slaveykov also mentions *дълбока тeнция*, which, according to him, was used for preparing food in a water bath, i.e., another vessel was put into it. *Тас*, on the other hand, can serve a variety of functions, not only those envisaged for bowls (e.g., in some recipes given by Slaveykov, it serves as a pot in which meat is cooked). Here,

<sup>24</sup> Franciszek Sławski, *Podręczny słownik bułgarsko-polski z suplementem*, Vol. 2, Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1987, 1069.

<sup>25</sup> The borrowed name *джигер* (Tur. *ciğer*) is synonymous with the native word for liver. Its placement next to the native word may indicate that liver was more widely known under the borrowed name.

<sup>26</sup> Славейков, *Готварска книга...*, 41–3.

<sup>27</sup> Franciszek Sławski, *Podręczny słownik...*, Vol. 2, 1078.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, 1072.

the author probably meant a deep copper vessel, characteristic of the countries of Asia Minor, tapering slightly toward the top and equipped with a handle. This is confirmed by the definition in the online dictionary of the Bulgarian language:

*Тас* (пер.-тур.) 1. Дълбока медна паница [Deep copper bowl]. 2. Металически съд за гребане вода в баня [Metal vessel for taking up water].<sup>29</sup>

The vessels referred to by Slaveykov as *тас* must have been diverse since, in some places, he specified their name by describing their purpose (cf. *чорбян тас*). In modern restaurant cuisine in Bulgaria, dishes cooked in special shallow, usually iron pans, called *сачове*, have become popular. It seems they were not common among Bulgarians living at the end of the 19th century because the author explains the meaning of the word *сач* several times, giving its equivalents in brackets or italicizing it in print, e.g., “тесто [...], което като разточат, пекаат на сач (връшник, железна черепия)” (p. 44); “ако сачът е меденъ по лесно става” (p. 46). Another popular type of pan is called *тиган*, which in turn comes from the New Greek (Gr. τηγάνι). Essential utensils in Bulgarian cuisine are skewers and skewers for frying meats on the grill (*шии* and smaller *шиичета*). The term *шии* (Tur. *şiş*), borrowed from Turkish, not only means ‘a long metal rod used to roast meat over embers’ but is also the name of the food prepared in this way. A frequently used instrument is a wooden or metal mortar, or *хаван* (Tur. *havan*), and a pestle – *токмак* (Tur. *tokmak*), which is an integral part of it. If the pestle was a separate tool, it had to be made of boxwood (*чимширов/чимширен токмак*), which guaranteed its hardness and durability. The name used for boxwood (*чимшир*) is also of Turkish origin – it comes from Tur. *şimşir*, which in turn was adopted from Persian.

The names of some vessels for storing and serving wine are also of Turkish origin. Among them, the most popular is *дамаджана* (Tur. *damacana*), meaning ‘a sizable bottle, usually enclosed in wickerwork.’ Although the name of this vessel was adopted by the Turks from Italian (It. *damigiana*), its origin actually lies in the name of the Iranian city of Damghan. Thus, reviewing the names of kitchen utensils and dishes, we easily come to the conclusion that only individual pieces of cutlery have Slavic names: *лъжица* ← PSI. \**lъžьka*, *нож* ← PSI. \**nožь*, *вилница* ← PSI. \**vidla*.<sup>30</sup>

Interestingly, verbs of Turkish origin were also used in the past to describe the activities performed in the kitchen during the preparation of meals. They were related to the preparation of specific dishes and were derived from their names, e.g., fry – *кавърдисвам* (cf. *кавърма*), chop – *кайдисвам* (cf. *кайма*), etc. They were still in use in the early 20th century, but over time, they were supplanted by Slavic equivalents and survived only in dialects.

<sup>29</sup> <https://ibl.bas.bg/rbe/lang/bg/tac> [accessed April 16, 2022].

<sup>30</sup> Wiesław Boryś, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2008.

The overview of the culinary-related borrowings from Turkish used in Bulgarian today clearly shows that the “purification” of the latter language has not succeeded in all areas of life. Thus, Todor Boyadzhiev was not entirely right when he wrote that “Turkish lexical influence on the Bulgarian language began to wane during the Renaissance, more specifically when cultural life and education began to develop under the influence of Russia and Western Europe.”<sup>31</sup> Indeed, colloquial language proved resistant to Western influence, and international lexis entered the salons but not the kitchen. The best evidence of this is the vocabulary excerpted from contemporary cookbooks discussed in this article.

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<sup>31</sup> “турското лексикално влияние върху българския език започва да отслабва през Възраждането и по-точно когато културният живот и просветното дело започват да се развиват под влиянието на Русия и Западна Европа.” Бояджиев, *Българска лексикология*, 201.

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