
The Helâl Pork Debate in Early Republican Turkey (1920-1950)

Burak Onaran*¹

¹Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi Sociology department – Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi Sosyoloji Bölümü Cumhuriyet Mah. Silahsörler Cad.No: 89 Bomonti/Sisli Istanbul, Turquie

Résumé

The first decades of the Republican period witnessed an entirely overlooked debate around the most strict and popular taboo of the Islamic dietary practice. For example, in 1925, the head veterinarian of Istanbul's slaughterhouse publishes an article in the official journal of the municipality. He explains that modern veterinary science is able to eliminate all of the possible health risks associated with the consumption of pork and concluded that "if Moses and Mohammad were living in our age they would permit their community to appreciate pork". Even more interesting is a book on all kinds of meat considered as haram in Islam, published in 1923 in Arabic and translated into Turkish in 1933. The author (İsmail Hakki Milasli, 1869-1938, a physician and an Islamist intellectual) concentrates mainly on the pork-eating taboo. By reinterpreting the most quoted verse about the Islamic prohibition of pork (the third verse of Sūratu al-Mā'idah), he argues that the Holy Book orders Muslims not to consume pork only until it became safe for their health. Around the same period, Time magazine publishes a short interview with Tefik R'uşd'u (Aras, 1883-1972), the Foreign Minister, on the new regime and the changing cultural customs of the Turkish people (15/08/1927). When he talks about the pork-eating taboo, the main theme of the interview, he is astonishingly assertive in his words: "Pork is a good food. One of the best. Religion may forbid it, but that idea will die with the older generation." The main objective of my presentation is to demonstrate the direct and indirect ramifications and echoes of the debate around the pork-eating taboo and to analyze this debate by concentrating on four main lines of inquiry: Islamic reformism, secularization politics in the early Turkish Republican period, Westernization, and finally biopolitics (specifically the rationalization of public nutrition).

Mots-Clés: Secularisation, Islamic reformism, public nutrition, multiple modernities, Turkey

*Intervenant