Anthropology 103 Cultural Anthropology Article Analysis and Discussion Activity Spring 2018

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“Who has time for Čeif?”

Article Analysis and Discussion

When considering widespread and crucial events in history such as post-socialist migration or other significant population shifts, we often do not think of coffee. But, author of “Who Has Time for Čeif? Post-Socialist Migration and Slow Coffee in Neoliberal Chicago,” Ana Croegaert, uses Bosnian coffee as a symbol to demonstrate how Bosnian refugee-immigrants living in Chicago are dealing with their new life after the conflicts both in everyday life, but also politically. Throughout the article, Croegaert makes connections between Bosnia and the United States in order to draw conclusions of how these Bosnian refugee-immigrants are managing this uniquely new life. What follows is a brief discussion highlighting Croegaert’s central argument, the data and evidence she used to support this, and the relationship that lies between food, migration, and political identity.

In the article, Croegaert investigates coffee as it relates to the social positions of the Bosnian refugee-immigrants while they are living the United States, and she makes several arguments throughout her analysis. The main question she wished to address was “What can the social life of a cup of coffee contribute to our understandings of refugee migration and diasporan affiliations in the United States as well as to identity formations in the post-Cold War era?” (Croegaert 2011: 465). Before she dives deep into her journey to answer this question, she makes several claims. Croegaert argues that the commentaries constructed by women are not only a way to look back on their life before the war, but it is a way to practice reflection on how their social positions have been altered and what these interactions are like now. In turn, she suggests the memories associated with these commentaries help bring to light how the materialistic and psychological world has changed for these women. After her data was collected and she had the
opportunity to take field notes through her participant observation, she concluded that the act of
drinking coffee truly does create a critique of Western practice and it encourages Bosnian
refugee-immigrants that have become adults in Chicago to reclaim roots and their social dignity.

In order to support these arguments and conclusions, she draws upon several pieces of
evidence and data. First, she makes connections between her work and other anthropologists who
have come across similar inquiries. For instance, when she discusses her initial idea about an
object having a greater meaning to a social commentary, she references the work of Shalini
Shankar (2006). This anthropologist discussed how teenagers in the Silicon Valley area had
created relationships with certain objects that influenced objectifications of the materials.
Furthermore, this article referenced by Croegaert help support her argument that objects can have
attached meanings that can help us better understand groups of people and society. Croegaert
also calls upon her participant observation and her field notes to create connections to support
her argument. One that stood out among other stories was a flashback to when she first began to
learn about ćejff: the ability to enjoy the simple pleasures in life slowly, making sure that you are
not in a hurry. In Bosnia, those she talked with said that they felt as though back home before the
war, they felt as though they were able to enjoy their time without needing to actually buy it.
Now that they were in the United States, they claimed that they suddenly “felt the pressures of a
different sense of time… that marks current trends in US citizens’ coffee consumption”
(Croegaert 2011: 468). Details like these that are included in Croegaert’s article help support her
argument that there is a difference in the way people view materials throughout the world.

This article helps bring new insights into the overall relationship between food,
migration, and political identity. Throughout the world, we can see differences in the way we
value everyday things, and specifically in the case, food. Through Croegaert’s observations, we
can see that the majority of the Western world consumes coffee in order to energize and get through their busy days. However, in places like Bosnia, they view drinking coffee as a form of relaxation and creating social well-being. When people are victims of acts of violence, such as wars, we have seen the article that food and other practices of consumption help people reclaim their sense of dignity. Furthermore, the act of consumption after migration, it can help refugees feel safe and a sense of stability. In a way, Croegaert’s article helps emphasize that there is a close relationship between food, migration, and political identity.

Discussion Questions:

1. Assume that you were in the same position as the refugee-immigrants: do you think that would be able to see the differences in the value of coffee as easily as they did?

2. In what ways does čejf differ from drinking coffee here in the U.S. and why is are the differences, or similarities, important?
Who Has Time for Cejf?

“Who Has Time for Cejf” by Ana Croegaert is an article that examines the various links and relationships between Yugoslavian refugees, their commodity consumptions, specifically coffee, and what this all says about both their everyday lives and political identities. The Yugoslavian refugees discussed in the article are specifically adult, female, and living in Chicago as a result of their forced relocation due to violent political struggle and the end of Communism in their home country. The word “cejf” in the title is, in oversimplified terms, the Bosnian concept of enjoying something with no rush, which applies to the slow, methodical way they prepare their coffee.

In her essay, Croegaert examines the coffee consumption of female, adult-aged, Yugoslavian refugees living in Chicago. Croegaert argues that coffee consumption, for this demographic, is a means of adjusting to and managing their refugee status and forced relocation through the upkeep of social ties and everyday ritual. This “woman-hosted” practice transcends the traditional home, as shown by the author through the inclusion of a community center and a migrant owned cafe. It is also specified that the preparing and consuming of coffee is only a partner to the social aspect and specific type of conversation that comes with this act. The conversation accompanying a Yugoslavian coffee service usually revolves around pre-war life, memories, and mainly the distinction between “then” and “now”. The coffee is supposed to be consumed in a group of people with which to chat and discuss such things. The author recounts
times the Yugoslavian women she interacted with criticized and worried about her for taking her
coffee to go and drinking it alone.

Croegaert suggests that the link between food and migration lies in the concept of cejf.
Slowly sipping coffee, chatting among friends, and possibly enjoying a cigarette offer a time of
relaxation for people whose lives have been characterized by forced migration and other types of
chaos. Croegaert makes the link between food consumption and political identity when she
argues that coffee drinking assigns “value to Islam and to Ottoman and pre-Ottoman histories”,
an identity which may have earned them persecution in their home country.

Discussion Questions:

1. What further connections between political identity and consumption can we make?
2. Is Selma delegitimizing cejf by commodifying it? Or is she offering a service to the
   community by creating an atmosphere that embodies the concept and offering it at a
   price?
"Who Has Time for Cejf" Response Paper

After reading this paper on Bosnian immigrant life I have come to the conclusion that under socialism it was possible to earn enough to live comfortably while still taking the time to enjoy socialization especially the production and consumption of traditional Bosnian coffee. As immigrants under capitalism, it appears that many have experienced difficulty in covering all their expenses and have noticed that it is hard to find time to enjoy life outside of work as they once did. There is no time to “enjoy life without hurrying” anymore. There is no time for cejf.

Many immigrants have struggled grappling with their expectations of becoming a wealthy capitalist who would later come home and distribute their newfound wealth vs. the harsh reality of western life. Croegaert remarks, “My interlocutors repeatedly remarked on their sense that those who remained in Bosnia-Herzegovina had more than enough time to experience cejf—“they spend all their time sitting ’ in cafes,” as Amra put it—while the refugee diaspora in the United States had too much work to do to have time for cejf.” (Croegaert, 468). Western life has a sense of urgency that most immigrants had not experienced at home. Their lives now revolve around finding consistent work that they are often overqualified for but have to take due to their immigrant status. They are working constantly but yielding little reward: “Edita explained that everyone in Chicago was working so hard but receiving in return so little—in Bosnia, this kind of work would have yielded a “good life,” to which Joso expressed agreement. I asked them
what a “good life” consisted of, and together they marked this distinction with time: they would have time to sit, to visit, to rest, and to work together on household projects.” (Croegaert, 470). Many define their lives by “life before” vs. “life now” and especially note the different sense of time here. This reminiscing is often done in groups over coffee.

For Bosnians, coffee production and consumption holds special significance to their identity and status. Especially for the women whose job it is to host these social gatherings for other local women. The method of production depends on what class and generation you are, with some roasting the beans and preparing it over the stove top and some (typically younger generations) preparing it with modern espresso machines or coffee makers. For the generation of women who grew up under socialism in Yugoslavia the method of coffee production and consumption is seen as a status symbol. They take special pride in preparing and serving it properly. It is then traditional to sip the coffee while smoking a cigarette and conversating. It is their job to facilitate the social gathering. However, since migrating, many have found it tougher to find time to gather and slowly drink coffee while enjoying a frivolous discussion. Many, especially the younger generations, have begin to take up the western practice of drinking coffee on the go as a way to stay awake for the many hours of work they have throughout the day. Many have found that their class status has slipped since migrating.

Two discussion questions:

1. What factors in the transition to capitalism contributed to the immigrants’ loss of free time?

2. How does having time for cejf improve the quality of a person’s life and what is lost without it?
Reflection on, “Who Has time for Ceif”

In her Article *Who Has Time For Ceif*, Ana Croegaert explores the significance of coffee consumption practices for Bosnian refugee-immigrants in Chicago. In the article Croegaert explains that the way a certain group of people consumes a commodity can say a lot about that group's situation. In the case of Bosnian refugees, Coffee is something that is familiar in a time when so little is familiar. These refugees who have been displaced from their homes use coffee as a way to reflect on the past, the future, and their current situation. The practice of sitting down with one's friends and family members to enjoy coffee and conversation was carried over to America by these refugees, but in America, it takes on a new significance. Taking part in this familiar act becomes a way for these men and women to contextualize all of the changes that they are going through. For these refugees, the act of sharing coffee not only creates a link to their past home but also gives them a chance to place their new life in the context of the new and vice versa.

The Article also brings up the concept of Ceif which is the act of enjoying one's self without having to worry about the constraints set by time. The refugees that were interviewed for this article expressed that in their home country they were able to work eight hours a day and they could live “a good life”, but in America, they had to work much more to achieve the same level of comfort. In their busy lives, Ceif is a luxury that these immigrants can rarely afford, but
the practices surrounding coffee consumption allow them to have Ceif in their rapidly changing lives.