GSAPS  THE SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS
THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL APPROPRIATENESS IN FOOD ASSISTANCE
- The impact of food assistance on the acculturation of the recipient society -

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The aim of our research is to argue for more cultural sensitivity when it comes to food assistance. This dissertation would like to show examples where cultural difference was the reason for failed programs, cases where culture affected the efficiency or sustainability of the given program and where culturally inappropriate food assistance had an irreversible effect on the community, society and culture. Food aid is considered to be the most controversial and misunderstood instrument of foreign assistance of contemporary international politics and development economics. We aim to explore some of the problems that surround food aid policy and operations, examining the interests and motivations of the donor countries and detail the issues that contribute to the inefficiency and failure of the food aid programs with a special attention on the socio-cultural aspects.

Food is often discussed as the most basic necessity for survival. Development economists and agricultural experts mostly consider only the quantity side of the problem. However, food has not only a nutritional and physical significance to our lives but also carries socio-cultural values and meanings. Through the symbolical meanings and attached values, people create their self-identity, express themselves to the outside world and maintain their social contact to others. In the present research we dedicate a lengthy chapter to the topic of food culture in order to convince our readers about the cultural and social importance of food for every nation and every community. Furthermore, our intention is to find the causes of famines and explore not only the economical or developmental reasons, but also the cultural factors in the evolution of food insecurity. Also, we aim to discuss the impacts of various development programs and food assistance on traditional famine prevention and coping techniques. The main subject of our research is the connection between food culture and long-term food security. To be able to draw our final conclusion, we will discuss the socio-cultural significance of food and the absence of food, along with the existing and desired food assistance programs and regulations. In order to emphasize some of the weak parts of the current system, we will use case studies and examples of various food related issues from all over the world. To analyze one case in depth, we choose the Aeta indigenous group in the Philippines, whose struggle for cultural survival was largely made more difficult by culturally inappropriate food and development assistance.

Our study is an anthropological analysis of the relationship of the people with food and eating, examining the social and cultural reasons of food choices. We discuss the contemporary issues of food insecurity and aim to convince our readers that cultural awareness is crucial for a long-term solution. Food is not separable from emotions and cultural meanings; therefore the food problems can only be solved if these are taken into account.

There is extensive literature on the anthropology of food and on food aid. Food is discussed as a part of our culture and as an economic and developmental instrument. However, there is less discussion about the impact of food aid on local societies from the cultural point of view. The research intends to contribute to food aid studies examined from the social and anthropological perspective.

Generally the social and cultural perspectives of food assistance and food security receive modest attention. Despite the agreement on the cultural appropriateness of the food aid, the policy makers and food aid agencies cannot be extensively considered with the cultural effects of food aid in emergencies or during widespread famines. However, understanding the impact of food aid on societies and their cultures might reveal the source of broader changes and would also help to achieve a sustainable food security in more regions.

Moreover, with the current world food crisis it has become more important then ever to provide support for the developing countries to achieve self-sufficiency or become close to being self-sufficient in staple crops. For long, the development of the agricultural sector of the less-developed countries was hindered by the large multinational agrarian corporations and by the protective policy of the governments in Europe and the United States. Now, followed by the rising energy prices, crops are increasingly used for bio-fuel and less food is diverted to the markets of Africa and Asia. Therefore it has become crucial to reconsider the agricultural policy in the countries where food insecurity is prevalent and examine indigenous eating habits and indigenous agrarian technology to eliminate hunger in these societies.

Bibliography
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